

MINUTES FROM THE SECOND BUSINESS MEETING OF THE SIEF YOUNG SCHOLARS WORKING GROUP (YSWG)

held at the 13th SIEF Congress, 26 – 30 March 2017, Göttingen

28 March 2017, 12:30 – 13:45

In Attendance

YSWG Bord Members: Nada Kujundžić, Mathilde Lamothe-Castagnous, ArnikaPeselmann, Jón ÞórPétursson, Alessandro Testa

Present and future members of the YSWG

1. Introductions

Board Members, present and future members of the YSWG introduced themselves. New members were invited to sign up for the Group's mailing list.

Alessandro Testa briefly introduced the YSWG, its history, aims and future plans.

2. Report

ArnikaPeselmann prepared a report on the activities of the YSWG since its last meeting in 2015. In the two years since the last meeting, the Group has aimed to increase its online visibility (via its website and Facebook page) as well as its visibility within SIEF (through contributions to its newsletter). It has also sought to create contacts with similar organizations (e.g. making connections with young scholars of the Deutsche Gesellschaft fürVolkskunde). The Group's main accomplishment to date has been the organization of an international conference, entitled "Coming of Age: Young Scholars in the Field of Folkloristics, Ethnology, and Anthropology", held in Göttingen on 25 March 2017. The Conference brought together around 40 scholars and other experts in the fields of Anthropology, Ethnology and Folklore Studies. The Conference opened with two parallel sessions – "How to Learn Our Trade" and "Paradigm Shifts and Disciplinary Crossing of Borders" – in which participants gave short presentations on their home institutions, the state of Anthropology/Ethnology/Folklore Studies in their countries, the new directions they are taking and challenges they are facing. The sessions were followed by a workshop in which participants presented their current research projects (MA/PhD thesis, etc.) and received feedback from the audience. The Conference ended with a roundtable discussion in which experts working both within and outside academia (journalists, members of non-governmental organizations, etc.) discussed their individual research paths and shared their experience.

3. Feedback on the Conference

Audience members who attended the YSWG Conference were asked to provide feedback. The majority of the positive feedback was aimed at the overall atmosphere of the Conference, which was described as relaxed, positive, supportive and safe. According to the participants, this type of atmosphere facilitated their interaction and helped relieve the stress of presenting their work in front of an audience. The feedback received and audience questions were also described as highly supportive and positive. The participants were pleased by the fact that the majority of Conference attendants were their peers, which helped them feel more at ease. They also appreciated the numerous networking opportunities provided by the Conference.

While the participants found the final roundtable discussion highly informative and interesting, they expressed concerns regarding the gender imbalance among the discussants (four men and one woman), and said they would like to have seen more discussants working outside academia.

Alessandro Testa and Arnika Peselmann responded to the criticism by explaining that more female and non-academic discussants were, in fact, invited, but were not able to join the Conference due to various obstacles (financial or other).

4. Election

The election for the new Board of the YSWG was conducted. Arnika Peselmann and Jón ÞórPétursson stepped down, and the candidature of the following YSWG members was announced: Nada Kujundžić, Mathilde Lamothe-Castagnous, Alessandro Testa and Franziska Weidle. All candidatures were unanimously accepted, and the following new YSWG Board was formed:

- Nada Kujundžić (University of Turku/Zagreb): Co-Chair
- Mathilde Lamothe-Castagnous (University of Pau): Secretariat
- Alessandro Testa (University of Vienna): Co-Chair
- Franziska Weidle (University of Göttingen): Secretariat

5. Open discussion

The new YSWG Board opened the floor to questions, comments and suggestions. YSWG members were also invited to express their suggestions and expectations from the Group in writing.

When asked to express their expectations from the YSWG, Group members listed the following:

- future international conferences;
- sharing information regarding conferences and similar events, job opportunities and other topics that are of interest to young scholars;

- creating a safe space for discussion;
- facilitating communication between young and senior scholars;
- providing opportunities for networking and collaboration between Group members;
- increasing the visibility of young scholars within SIEF.

YSWG members also raised the following questions/concerns:

- the YSWG should become involved with the organization of the SIEF Summer School;
- to increase the visibility of young scholars within SIEF, representatives of the YSWG should sit on the SIEF Board and be included in relevant decision-making processes;
- the YSWG should facilitate communication among its members.

6. Final remarks

The new YSWG Board emphasized the need for establishing good relationships with the new SIEF Board. The Board will continue building connections with similar organizations (e.g. CASA – the Czech Association for Social Anthropology). The possibility of organizing another international conference or other scholarly event (e.g. workshop, seminar) in 2019 has been discussed. Mentorship programs in which senior scholars would help young scholars prepare for their presentations and/or give them feedback afterwards was suggested as a possible future addition to YSWG conferences, aimed to facilitate interaction between young and senior scholars. While no definitive decision has so far been made, Board Members addressed the need to contact participants of this year's Conference from Spain to discuss cooperation possibilities.

7. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the YSWG will be held in 2019, during the 14th SIEF Congress in Santiago de Compostela.

Minute taker: Nada Kujundžić