
ALPS ADRIA PSYCHOLOGISTS' COMMUNITY

Alps-Adria Psychology Cooperation

The cultivation of academic and personal relationships within scientific communities plays an essential part in scholarly activity. This used to consist of occasional personal contact, the exchange of letters, periodically writing an academic article and attending conferences. Modern telecommunications media have enriched the possibilities for interaction between scientists in several new ways.

Today it is no longer unusual for books or articles to be written by authors who live far away from each other and exchange their pieces by e-mail without seeing each other in person. Written correspondence is regularly dealt with by e-mail as a matter of course. If information is needed, of whatever sort, use of the Internet provides more than could be desired. Appointments are no longer (only) made through personal contacts; all those who might be interested are notified of vacant jobs by e-mail, which reaches a far greater number of potential candidates. A literature search for an essay, which a few years ago would have taken days or weeks, can now be accomplished in a few hours with the aid of literature data banks.

In short, communication by various means is both possible and also required with ever increasing speed and volume. The knowledge explosion, which has been widely discussed, increases the pressure even more to pick up information and pass it on. Subjects, which are constantly being split into more and more specific areas, conform to these conditions to variable extents and at different speeds.

New communications technologies have in any case fundamentally changed classical patterns of interaction. However, they are not in a position to replace personal contact or face-to-face relationships between scientists. In spite of, or perhaps because of, the arrival of new communications technologies in academia in the last ten years there is a *need for informal contact and personal exchange of opinion*.

The Alps-Adria Working Community has now existed for over twenty years. It was established on the basis of political, historical, academic, regional and cultural traditions its establishment was also possibly motivated by a need to add a new, third level between private relationships and existing international agreements, to help realise meaningful and urgent aims both quickly and regionally. The Alps-

Adria Working Community is distinguished above all by its broadly informal character in the extent to which the autonomy and sovereignty of member states is emphasised. This is also made possible by a high degree of flexibility and individuality in project proposals. It might, by some, be seen as a disadvantage, that the results of individual proposals are not as spectacular and are not as easily sold, either politically or to the media, as perhaps agreements by national governments. It is however becoming increasingly clear that this informal character is well suited to providing impetus to the development of sustainable personal relationships between those concerned. A solid basis is thus ensured for many communicative activities, which applies above all to the practice of Psychology in the Alps-Adria countries.

It must not be forgotten that present academic links in the Alps-Adria countries have many important forerunners. In the case of Psychology the influences of the departments in Padua and Graz are especially significant. A form of 'academic tourism' also existed in previous centuries. Klagenfurt and Carinthia profited in the past from the export of knowledge from Zagreb, to mention just one example of such contacts. In the 17th Century Franz Xaver Marcovich (1652) and Johannes Despotovich (1683), both born and teaching in Croatia, traveled to Klagenfurt to teach 'Religious Observation of Nature' and 'Poetics' respectively at the 'Collegium Sapientiae et Pietatis' (a forerunner of today's university).

Since 1986 a variety of research, congress, teaching and other contacts have developed between members of Psychology departments in Alps-Adria countries. These have arisen above all in the context of the Alps-Adria Psychology Conference, which is supported by the University Principals' Conference of the Alps-Adria universities. The trend towards cooperation is ever increasing. The foundation of the 'Review of Psychology', edited and published by the Psychology department in Zagreb, is an important, new contribution to this cooperation. This high quality journal is available to all psychologists in the Alps-Adria region for publishing their work. Its development and distribution will be an important task for the future as, so to speak, a second spine of Alps-Adria contacts.

Five Alps-Adria Psychology Conferences in five different states since 1987 are a good reason to take a brief look back. At these five conferences there were a total 450 contributions, of which 70% were presented as lectures and 30% as posters by over 700 authors. Working groups, discussion groups or the like were rarely registered. There were keynote lectures at almost all conferences. The (mostly male) speakers came from the Alps-Adria countries along with several from the USA.

In four-fifths of the contributions, which were composed by several authors, the authors came from one university. In the remainder the authors came from different universities in the same country or different countries. Only 3% (a total of 15) came from contributors who work at different universities in different countries.

Women make up 40% of all authors and 47% of the contributions have a woman as first author. The proportion of female first authors rose from one third at the start to over one half of contributions presented. On average half of the first authors came from the host country of the conference. Slightly over half of the contributions came from single authors, more than a quarter had two authors and the remainder had three or more authors.

The Klagenfurt conference (then called a Symposium) managed with seven different subject areas; the Zagreb and Pecs conferences needed 11 and 12 subject areas respectively, in order to be able to co-ordinate the many contributions adequately. The subject areas, which received the most contributions at all the conferences, were 'Cognitive Psychology', 'Social Psychology', 'Developmental Psychology', 'Perception and Cognition', 'Educational/ School Psychology', 'Personality Psychology' and 'Applied Psychology'.

Participants at the conferences came from all the Alps-Adria countries, as well as Denmark, France, Britain, Yugoslavia, Sweden, Slovakia and the USA. They represented more than 50 universities in these countries. The 'greatest travelers' seem to be those from Rijeka, Ljubljana, Zagreb, Zadar and Padua, but also those from Trieste, Klagenfurt and Maribor. They have made the highest numbers of contributions at conferences abroad.

The differences between the conferences, as far as the programme structure is concerned, have been very clear. Every conference has had a different structure.

The first Alps-Adria conference took place in Klagenfurt in 1987. In terms of the number of contributions and authors this was the smallest conference. Single authors, in the other conferences this proportion was between 40% and 60%, delivered three-quarters of the contributions. The international proportion was very high with three out of four, only a quarter coming from the host country.

The second conference took place in Trieste in 1991. It had by far the highest proportion of men of all the conferences, as well as the absolute and relative highest number of contributions presented by groups of authors. The proportion of posters at 50% was also the highest of all the conferences.

The conference in Ljubljana took place in 1993 under difficult external conditions and showed a strong home component: 40% of all contributions came from authors from the host university. The papers have been published by the organizers.

The conference in Zagreb in 1996 had the highest proportion of women authors and was the only conference at which the proportion of female first authors was greater than that of males. This conference with its high proportion of international contributions showed a markedly different programme structure.

The conference in Pecs in 1999 was an impressive demonstration of the state of Hungarian Psychology. It had the largest proportion of contributions coming from the host country of all the conferences and together with the Trieste event had the biggest number of contributions in the greatest spread of different subject areas.

The sixth conference in Rovereto was the second conference organized by the Italian colleagues. More than 200 psychologists from all Alps-Adria countries presented 80 papers and 40 posters concerning all major psychological subject areas. The seventh conference will be held in the year 2005 at the University of Zadar/Croatia.

Even though numbers are not the most important criterion for judging the Alps-Adria conferences, they can offer a valuable insight into their strengths and weaknesses and the range of cooperation. The increasing numbers of contributions, the high proportion of international contributions and the consistent maintenance of the three-year cycle are all gratifying. It can therefore be concluded that there is strong solidarity in pursuit of a common goal in the Alps-Adria region. The amount of co-operation between countries and universities is more limited. When there is such cooperation in Psychology research, then it only rarely finds its way to the Alps-Adria conferences.

One of the fundamental aims of the foundation of the Alps-Adria conferences was to stimulate the exchange of ideas between psychologists who are collected at the universities in the Alps-Adria countries and to prepare the way for cooperation. This founding idea, to encourage scientific communication on a neighbourly level, has been largely realised. However, many new challenges must be taken on and met.

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