

Editorial Note *FQS* Conferences

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In the past we have published eight rather brief conference reports in *FQS*. With this issue 4(1) of *FQS* we will begin providing increased coverage of academic events such as conferences, topical workshops, and symposia. We are pleased that three detailed conference reports make their appearance and hope that within upcoming issues the rubric *FQS* Conferences will be increasingly used and that conference reports will be established in *FQS* as an independent type of contribution for discussion and discourse. [1]

Conferences are events at which participants can be updated about current trends in their field: running discourses on theory and methodology are (re-) opened and current empirical work is presented and discussed, sometimes for the first time. Conferences, workshops and symposia and other academic events provide opportunities for the exchange of information and provide a space for discussion that would hardly be possible otherwise. Finally, conferences provide opportunities for dialogue between theorists and practitioners and between (academic) experts and novices. [2]

Publishing information on conferences via the traditional means of printed media takes a great deal of time: a paper in (revised) written form may take up to two years to get published; often (submitted) papers never get published and the discussion presented therein will for that reason go unknown to a wider audience. In contrast to this traditional way of publishing information about conferences, in *FQS* Conferences we want to provide up-to-date information on current discussions and make it available—at least in outlines—to a wider readership (in the sense of—expert/professional/topical—audience). [3]

As for all of the contributions published in *FQS*, we encourage writers of conference reports to utilize the specific potentials of online-publishing when writing their contributions. The potentials of flexible publication space, hyper-text usage and multimedia integration can enable readers to get a much richer sense of what took place at a particular conference. For example, the integration of audio- and video-data allows for greater documentation and the presentation of papers/contributions in accordance with the original material (even if only partial contributions are presented as announced in the report by [Doris OHNESORGE and Peter OHLY](#)); also, papers—at least in short form—and the lectures they are based on can be included as text-files and made accessible (see the contribution by [Leo GÜRTLER](#)). These forms of publication and usage offer a wealth of information that goes far beyond the usual (mainly brief) reporting on conferences. *FQS* Conference reports can be seen as providing authors the opportunity to share with our readership, in a rich and meaningful way, what took place at a specific conference and what knowledge was shared, even when they are done without making use of the possibilities of hyper-text structure and video-/audio-files. The Report Essay on the "Conference on Ethnographic Organisational Studies" by [Manfred BERGMAN](#) is a vivid example of what can be

done in this medium. BERGMAN outlines the current state of discussion in this field, linking his comments on the conference itself and then describes future challenges facing the field of organizational studies. [4]

This contribution represents an example for future conference reports in *FQS*. As conference reports are directed at those who took part in a conference as well as at those who did not they should not be limited to merely reporting the day-to-day event's of a conference. Such information—as important it may be—does not justify an independent rubric and it can not be expected that it would be of interest to many readers. The rubric *FQS Conferences* takes up the task—from the conference as the starting point—of summarizing discussions and following up through commentary. With Internet technology it is possible for authors to "link" the contributions from a conference, thereby making it possible to provide a much richer synthesis of what was presented and discussed. With this capability, themes and issues that may have emerged at a particular conference may be shared with our readers, possibly generating further discussion and the creation of new ideas. [5]

To handle these tasks we have turned a vice into a virtue. As inappropriate as it would be for an author to write a review of her or his own book, an author of a conference report is often an active participant of the event, be it as lecturer, contributor, or organizer. Only in rare cases would a non-participant report on the event. It is not sufficient to report on only the positive aspects of a conference. On the contrary, it is vital to the effectiveness of *FQS Conferences* that conference discussions and contributions be discussed critically, i.e. to work out desiderata and to pointedly sketch out future tasks. This can best be done by one who actively participated in a particular conference. For example, if conference materials are available (e.g. audio/video recordings; lecture paper/abstracts) these can be utilized in a conference report to provide background information about a particular presenter or topic. Furthermore "genres" going beyond the actual event—e.g. interviews with the organizers or participants, or information on the background of the event—can be incorporated into a report. [6]

With the inclusion of such materials, conference reports can be enriched and extended, allowing for a discussion of presentations that were not "observed" by the writer. The possibility of using "primary" and "secondary" materials makes it necessary that authors of conference reports indicate in what way they participated in what they are reporting on. A conference report can be understood to be the result of an ethnographic procedure that relies on the author's own participation in a conference in the gathering of knowledge and information, i.e. primary material, such as one's own conference presentation or notes from observed presentations, or for an author who was not a direct participant in a conference to reference knowledge and information gathered from secondary material, such as abstracts, copies of delivered papers, and oral reports from others, and incorporating both in a complete text. [7]

Only as the rubric *FQS Conferences* develops will the effectiveness of the author qua conference participant in establishing a unique genre of conference reports

will be known; a genre in which conference reports can actually be ethnographic reports that can induce different voices to "speak." Possibly such ethnographic reports have another task as well: To "reproduce" the liveliness of conferences, taking into view the unofficial and informal qualities of such gatherings. An ethnographic procedure understood in this way could provide very important and interesting information about the processes of science: false starts, unusable data, and so forth. The "official" proceedings of conferences are usually given to the "products" of science: the results of one's research only. Such a "behind-the-scenes" look at science can be of interest to experts and novices and theorists and practitioners. [8]

Thus, FQS Conferences would offer the possibility to take up issues from a particular genre and discuss them critically by means of discourse, as they are addressed in FQS 3(3) in the newly opened debate [Doing Successful Research in the Social Sciences—Ethnography of the Career Politics of an Occupational Group](#). With scientific conferences understood as trading-places and forums of presentation it is possible to research "practices of (text- and research-) production and communication in the social sciences and their specific institutional and social structure and dynamic" (BREUER, REICHERTZ & ROTH 2002). [9]

The degree to which the aims of the rubric *FQS Conferences* will be reached depends, in part, on if the potentials of on-line publishing are reached. Also, the degree to which organizers or participants are willing to discuss the limits of their own event and the difficulties encountered and how they were overcome, will affect our ability to achieve our aims. Such an honest characterization of an event could provide insight into the state of the respective field of science. If our aims are achieved, a further step will have been taken in the direction of a critical-reflexive science as well as the creation of a forum for discussion of such events. In this sense we hope that we have taken the first right step with the three reports now presented. [10]

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