

## **2016 PhD Seminar Impression**

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This past summer I had the opportunity to take part in ISTR's PhD Seminar in Stockholm. I had attended some regional ISTR events but this year's seminar and conference were going to be my first international events, so my expectations for both events were high.

It all started at the welcome meeting where I realized the event, in its third edition, had a much larger scale and diversity than I had imagined. Not only were there participants from every region of the world very diverse backgrounds, and stages of their programs, but also an interesting group of very qualified scholars that would lead the different sessions and activities. It seems the seminar is well on its way to becoming an ISTR institution.

The ice was broken from the start, as the organizers did a nice job at creating a very friendly environment for us. The first dinner, where we had the chance to try some delicious local food, allowed us to get to know each other and our research interests and expectations.

The following morning we split into groups of 8 to 9 participants that were created based on our research topics. Despite the diverse nature of our projects and profiles, my group's topics were very closely related and we were able to get up to speed on each other's research fairly quickly.

I chose to be the first to present as –I must admit- I was a little anxious about sharing my project with my colleagues and was looking forward to some relief. The participants listened carefully for about 10 minutes and what followed was a round of feedback from every other group member and leading faculty. Even when it is hard to provide valuable feedback based on an abstract and a 10 minute overview, the participants in my group provided me with useful insight, questions, tips and –what I consider most valuable- a fresh, qualified perspective on questions I have been asking myself for years. In the end, there wasn't much to feel antsy about.

Unexpectedly, and thanks to the friendly and honest atmosphere under which the sessions were carried out, the seminar turned out to be a very nice space to vent our anxieties and worries. As many of you must know, life as a PhD student can be very challenging on a personal level. It was nice to find that, despite our different cultural and academic backgrounds, we were able to relate and share not only our concerns but also strategies to achieve a better balance.

As you can see, the PhD seminar is a unique opportunity to get quality feedback, season your communication skills and meet fellow students and faculty with an interest in the Third-Sector. If you are considering applying for the next seminar or now someone that could, I definitely recommend it.

Finally, I would like to thank ISTR for organizing such an enriching experience for us students and for providing the much needed travel support without which many of us would not have been able to participate.