

Moduli and Automorphic Forms: A Meeting for Women in Mathematics

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Angela Ortega



In the frame of the International Research Training Group “Moduli and Automorphic Forms”¹ we have resources to fund activities to encourage the participation of women in research in Mathematics. Together with Anna von Pippich² we decided to organise a three-days-conference at Humboldt University where most of the participants were women, so we invited female outstanding mathematicians in algebraic/ arithmetic geometry as speakers. We tried that their research topics were as closed as possible. In my opinion, an essential part in the motivation of young women to continue a career in mathematics is to have

examples of female established mathematicians, who have succeeded to forge her own path in research, therefore the importance of giving to these models more visibility. One of the goals of the conference was to provide the space where women could share their experience in academia with young mathematicians, create contacts for future joint projects and discuss gender related situations that female scientists may encounter.

The first edition of this conference took place in 2014 and it was a very refreshing experience. Before that I have not attended to a so called “women conference” and frankly, I was sceptical about the interest of an event address uniquely to women. I think that organising a conference with exclusively female

¹IRTG 1800 funded by the German Research Foundation.

²Former member of the IRTG, currently Junior Professor at the technical University of Darmstadt.

participants, would be against the spirit of diversity aimed in academic meeting. However, I believe that a conference where many established women mathematicians give talks and discuss with students in a friendly ambience can have a very positive impact on female participants, particularly on the young ones.

We had funds available to cover travel and accommodation expenses for six or seven PhD students and young postdocs. Although the announcement was not gender restrictive, we expected to receive more applications from female students. In the end we offered financial support to 5 female PhD students and 2 male young postdocs. I still believe that there were more female young mathematicians out there that could have attended but perhaps they did not know about the conference.

All the invited speakers were very enthusiastic about the initiative of having a conference specially address to female young researches. On the other hand, one of the invitations was rejected on the base that it would be unfair for the male collaborators of her work. My impression is that some female mathematicians do not think of “women conferences” as something useful, that could help to boost the participation of women in

mathematics, but as a conference where they were invited not for academic merit but only for the fact of being women.

In both meetings of Women in Mathematics I noticed a big difference in the atmosphere with respect to regular conferences. It is more relaxed, friendlier and participants connect to each other quickly; as a result, young participants feel free to discuss with senior ones, not only mathematical questions but also about more personal experiences in academia, how to balance family and work, job opportunities, etc. Myself have arrived to know better other mathematicians in these occasions, learned a great deal from them and extended my networking in these conferences.

For the next edition of this meeting in 2018 we want to invite high-profile women in algebraic/arithmetical geometry and give the opportunity to young female researches to present their work. We hope that the number of female participants will increase by publicising broadly the event.

More details about the conference:
https://www2.mathematik.hu-berlin.de/~grk1800/intense_courses_moduli_and_automorphic_forms_2016.html