

'Invited talk with my baby'

In several years attending Physics conferences and workshops, I have rarely seen participants with their babies. Typically parents are forced to give up traveling in the first years of their daughters and sons. Are there alternatives?

Three women have been among the eight invited speakers of the 2nd Quantum Thermodynamics COST Conference held in Palma de Mallorca, Spain (19-24 April, 2015): a PhD student, a post-doc and a young professor from Chalmers University (Sweden), Janine Splettstösser. She accepted the invitation and also the challenge to contribute to this event with her baby son, Paolo. This is a short interview with Janine about her experience.

Would you have attended this international conference if no baby-sitting facilities were offered?

No, actually it wouldn't have been possible for me to accept the invitation.

Overall, have you been able to enjoy a fruitful conference attendance with your baby?

There have been clearly some moments in which I had some constraints, but overall I attended all the talks, discussions, and social events. I have even taken part into the MC meeting with my baby.

During the conference talks, a baby-sitter has taken care of your baby. Did you need to interrupt any session for any raised difficulty?

No, everything worked well.

Beyond the talks sessions, you have taken part in the social (welcome party, social dinner, trekking excursion) and in some scientific activity (meetings, poster session), staying with your baby. Did you have any particular difficulty?

No, not at all.

Which has been the general reaction and comments from the other participants?

Everyone was very positive and even helping when possible.

For me it has been important to see the supporting atmosphere in this situation. This is an important motivation for me to repeat this experience.

You have chosen baby-sitting at the conference place. Do you think that international nursery service is also an interesting option?

It could be an option for older babies...

Do you have any suggestion for future events?

In general, I believe that this possibility should be routinely

offered to parents, perhaps, if necessary, even up to the age at which the children can be left at home... Otherwise female and parents participation will be always limited.

Are you going to attend future conferences with your baby?

Yes, if childcare is offered!

What do you think about the fact that baby-sitting costs are not eligible for COST funding?

If they intend to be effective in promoting gender equality, then they should cover for the costs of the child-care.

Janine's attendance to this event with her son has been inspiring. Another format has been chosen by Massimiliano Esposito (Luxembourg) coming with his baby, Giulia, and wife (not attending the event and working on a grant proposal in those days). They managed to attend the event, as researchers and parents.

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Giulia and Paolo on the bus on their way to QTD2 venue