

The first **Student Retreat of SystemsX.ch** was a **success**. 25 PhD students and three guest speakers got to know one another and exchanged experiences.



Doctoral students get to know one another's projects in a poster session.

Photo VDM

Andrej Bicanski* **Weggis**. The first SystemsX.ch meeting for graduate students that took place on the 11th/12th of September 2009 was the first of its kind. All participants were correspondingly timid to start with. Who are these people that have made their way to this more or less remote, but idyllic, Weggis, was what many participants were probably asking themselves. But the welcome from the conference manager (chair) Franziska Biellmann and a presentation that was both interesting and educative from Greg Stephanopolous (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) quickly broke the ice.

Funny situation fosters exchange

The concluding boat trip on Lake Lucerne and a ramble through the geologically interesting Rigi region surrounded by a breathtakingly beautiful landscape, raised the spirits to even higher levels. Unfortunately, tenacious fog made it impossible to admire the spectacular views, but it provided the excursion with an element of situation

comedy that fostered social exchanges between the participants. It was also an occasion where it was possible to enter into conversation with guest speakers.

Numerous guest speakers

During an aperitif and snacks followed by a poster session, more information was gained about the scientific background of participants and their work within the framework of the SystemsX.ch initiative. At the dinner in the evening in Hotel Alpenblick is was surprising to find that in a single day this colorful and diverse group of young scientists had developed a degree of intimacy among themselves. The three invited guest speakers also enriched their dinner conversations with personal experiences and scientific expertise. The eventful day ended with a glass of good wine.

The following day, Saturday, was entirely devoted to science. The two plenary speakers, David Fell (Oxford Brookes University) and Erik van Nimwegen (University of Basel) opened the morning and afternoon sessions with highly

interesting lectures in which the stage was handed over to the graduate students.

Foundations are laid

Even though, on reflection, there were clear thematic emphases in the meeting, participants were able to look back on a wide range of interesting presentations. Despite the variety it was possible to gain an overview of the different approaches used in the SystemsX.ch initiative. And, perhaps more importantly, those working on the projects gained a first, rudimentary feeling of belonging. Although the timetable was somewhat fast-forwarded this first SystemsX.ch doctoral students day successfully laid the foundations for future friendships and fruitful professional contacts.

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A boat trip from Weggis to the valley station of the Rigi train in Vitznau.

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