Editorial

The aim of the Discussion and Debate issues (D&Ds), as a new subseries of the European Physical Journal - Special Topics, is the balanced critical presentation of opinions on unsolved problems, controversial topics, rival theories, alternative methodologies, and negative results of interest at the cutting edge of scientific and technological development [1].

Indeed, in the view of the Editorial Board (Len Pismen, Yves Pomeau, Eshel Ben-Jacob, Manuel G. Velarde, with support from the journal's publishing editor, Christian Caron) contributions to such D&Ds should typically contain one or more of the following:

- substantiated critiques of (established) research methodologies,
- a presentation/assessment of alternative approaches/concepts compatible with experimental/observational status quo,
- a report, assessment and analysis of “negative” results,
- substantiated and educated guesses about future developments.

We are neither the first nor the only ones offering such a possibility, yet we want to stress how much we feel the need for it these days and why we intend to establish it in a more systematic way. Indeed, after submitting a manuscript for publication some of us feel unhappy when we receive a rejection with no substantial arguments provided by the referee(s). We also get frustrated when the Editor does not exercise judgment or take action when such cases arise. It seems pertinent here to refer to Volume 18 of the Discussions of the Faraday Society (1954).

Accordingly, once a topic is selected and a Guest Editor is chosen, this person communicates directly with potential contributors. In contrast to the more traditional manuscript formats, for the D&Ds invited authors are free and encouraged to choose one or more problems in order to provide their personal opinions on the matter being considered. Once a manuscript is received from a contributor, it is sent to *all* the other contributors for discussion, thus defining an internal albeit open reviewing process, as the names of the contributors/commentators are known to all. In addition, once commentators have given their opinions on one or more of the submitted manuscripts, these comments are sent to the respective, original contributing author in order to foster and encourage further discussion and, hopefully, a constructive debate. Several such rounds in this interactive and synergetic process can be foreseen in principle.

It is important to stress that this approach does not foresee any traditional (i.e. external and anonymous) refereeing process being carried out, while certainly being dependent also on the Guest Editor's “moral authority” to enforce a civilized discussion of (perhaps hotly) contested views on the subject matter. In this way, the myriad of views that may surround an ongoing and active area of research can be presented. The hope of the Editorial Board is that such a reviewing process could be invaluable in shaping the direction of a field for which there is not, at present, significant consensus in the scientific community.

Concerning “Wetting and Spreading Phenomena”, it appeared to the Editorial Board that although there have been numerous publications (research papers, review papers, monographs, handbooks, special issues in scientific journals, etc.) dealing with such phenomena and processes, only a few have actually contributed to the consensus building about what experiments and theories provide.

The contributors to the present issue have, in my opinion, significantly contributed to understanding aspects of the topic chosen for discussion and debate. I did request from them an opinion-like papers and not contributions full of calculations or with too many details about experiments or experimental data. I indicated that it was sufficient to refer to other papers to allow readers to obtain details on the problem being discussed. I insisted on arguments being exposed in such a way that fellow colleagues could easily follow and understand.

First, I express my gratitude to all contributors to this special issue. Second to none, I thank Dr. Chris Caron for his continuous support during the year and a half it has taken for the implementation of the project. Last but not least, this special issue would have not been possible without the professional job done by my secretary Ms. Maria J. Martín, whose dedication has been well beyond the call of duty.

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Manuel G. Velarde

References

1. http://www.epj.org/submission_st_dd.html