From Marseille 1992 to Carry-le-Rouet 2024: the way the XTOP conferences were conceived and evolved

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Abstract

In 1990 the ESRF management asked me to coordinate a meeting of experts in Bragg diffraction imaging (historically called "X-ray topography"), to prepare the construction of a devoted beamline at this facility. I invited a dozen of colleagues for a two days meeting in Grenoble. This invitation spread through the community, and more than 50 colleagues asked to attend this meeting. This was a clear indication that there was a need for a Conference where the evolutions of these techniques, and not only the scientific results they produced in the various fields, could be discussed, as it was the case for the schools of Limoges (1975) or Durham (1980).
A team from Marseille (Jo Gastaldi, Gérard Grange, Claude Jourdan) offered to organise such a conference in 1992. The topic of the conference included imaging and all Bragg diffraction techniques requiring dynamical theory (this being recalled by the conference logo where a "Borrmann triangle" is schematically shown). This first Conference set the background for all the following ones: familiar atmosphere and non-expensive resorts, to facilitate the attendance by postdocs and PhD students (a two days school was later added to the Conference for them, to teach/recall the basics of the techniques), possibility to present recently published work for discussion with the colleagues, and publication policy differing from the usual "proceedings", with only original papers with a complete peer-review processing.

The name XTOP ("TOP" being initially a contraction of "topography") came later, in Berlin (1994): this was a brilliant move because it allowed the new technical and scientific interests of the community attending this conference to be easily integrated in the topics of the Conference: as an example, we can mention the coherence of the modern synchrotron beams, their associated phase images and ptychography, or, also, the new capabilities associated to the new sources.

This successful format was retained for the successive XTOP conferences, which were held, from 1992 to 2018, in different locations in Austria, Czech Republic (2 times), France (3 times), Germany (2 times), Italy (2 times), Poland, Russia and UK (2 times).
To conclude this abstract let us mention the conference talks on the work of colleagues who left us and highly contributed to our field: this was the case for instance for Norio Kato, Gerhard Borrmann, Andrew Lang, and is now, for the present XTOP, the case for André Authier, who attended many of the previous XTOP Conferences.

Keywords: Conference history and evolution

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