

Replacement of the bimonthly SP2 colloquia

As the CoViD-19 pandemic is still lasting and a considerable improvement of the situation is not in sight, the organizing committee of the bimonthly SP2 colloquia has been looking for functioning alternatives to in-person meetings. We weighted the positive and negative points of the different options and we propose a solution.

Suggestion:

Based on the handling of most recent conferences, we would suggest replacing the bimonthly colloquium by a monthly video revelation. More precisely, in this scenario, every month, a doctoral candidate will be asked to prepare a short video about himself/herself and his/her research (25 minutes max.). We would like to put the videos under the umbrella logo of the SP2 and make them available online. A suitable digital platform (e.g. the SP2 webpage if possible, or a YouTube channel) will help to keep track of the released videos and to build a uniform set of presentation videos.

To strengthen uniformity, we suggest the following content for the videos:

- The first 3 minutes should be devoted to the presentation of the doctoral candidate;
- The next 7 minutes should be devoted to a high-level presentation of the candidate's research topics so as to be understandable by a general audience;
- The last 10 minutes should be devoted to an expert level presentation of the candidate's research outputs or research goals so as to satisfy viewers who relate more closely to the topic at hand than the general audience.

This form of science communication will be relatively new to most PhD students and requires a new set of skills. However, it seems that in future, this skill may be required on a regular basis and will thus complete the PhD candidates' skillset with an important transversal skill.

To foster a constructive learning environment, we subdivide the PhD candidates' video production into three main steps:

- 1) **Introduction:** First, Sascha Helsper (head of the UL media centre) will provide the entire SP2 colloquium with an introductory session (mandatory for PhD candidates) on the production of scientific outreach videos. He will furthermore explain the facilities (UL video production studio) and equipment (mobile self-recording kit) that can be made available to SP2 candidates.
- 2) **First recording, closed group presentation and discussion:** Based on the introduction session, every month, a doctoral candidate will be asked to prepare an initial video. As part of the general design process, this video will be presented to the SP2 group, joined by Sascha Helsper in his role as a media expert, and other invited people during our monthly (1-2h) colloquium. The remaining time of the colloquium will be devoted to providing the PhD candidate with constructive feedback about the video as well as the described research topics.
- 3) **Second recording and publication of the final output:** Upon the discussion, the PhD candidate may change (parts of) their video. If the doctoral candidate agrees, the final output will be published on the internet. At all stages, the candidate preserves their full rights to not publicly make their video available or to withdraw their consent at a later stage.

Motivation:

Although a monthly video revelation does not allow direct interpersonal communication required for constructive feedback, we found multiple arguments favouring this unconventional choice.

Most doctoral candidates in our group entered recently their third PhD year. Thereby, the general focus changed. Whereas previously constructive feedback guided the candidates to the right research track, they need now to concentrate on publishing and getting in touch with external researchers and the public. Videos published on the SP2 website might help to achieve this second goal (outreach) as the videos will be accessible to the external public.

Furthermore, the videos might be used for identity shaping purposes. Undeniably, this holds for the doctoral candidates, but more generally also for the SP2 group, the university and the FNR. More precisely, the doctoral candidate might use their video for future job applications. Additionally, the presentation of the doctoral candidate (background, research interests, etc.) and the high-level presentation of their research topics allow the non-specialized public to follow the video. On the other hand, the creation of these videos might be exploited by either the SP2 group or the university for publicity work (in terms of doctoral school offers for example) or for the justification of research funds. Finally, the videos, being online, can be watched by external researchers which boosts the international recognition of the speaker.

Finally, yet importantly, the videos are pragmatic. Certainly, the overall workload of the doctoral candidates will not be significantly increased compared to the current implementation of the SP2 colloquia. Instead of thoroughly preparing their yearly 30 minutes presentation, they will prepare a 20 minutes video; the return-on-invest will however likely be much superior given the versatile format and increased audience. The same holds for the supervisors, who will have a look into the videos. A positive side effect is however that one will neither have time conflicts nor miss parts of the presentation, as one can replay it multiple times.

Up to date, this radical change in the functioning of our group is merely a suggestion, triggered by the current situation. Upon review by the DTU coordinator, the candidates and supervisors are expected to express their opinions in order to validate or reject the present proposal.