

Editorial

Foreword to the Special Issue “In Honor of Professor Serge Galam for His 70th Birthday and Forty Years of Sociophysics”

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I am deeply moved and honored by this Special Issue of the journal *Physics* celebrating my seventieth birthday and forty years of sociophysics [1]. Retrospectively, such an issue seems amazing, especially when recalling that, over forty years ago, in the late seventies, the founding paper coining the word sociophysics [2] and co-signed with Yuval Gefen and Yonathan Shapir, was confiscated by the Chairman of the Physics Department at Tel-Aviv University. Furthermore, almost all academics at that time supported the confiscation, deeming our paper a threat to the Department’s reputation [3].

We then brandished academic freedom but, not being tenured, the faculties asserted that we did not have the academic freedom to mention an affiliation to the department without the approval of a tenured Professor. Eventually, Alexander Voronel, a newly emigrated Soviet physicist who had suffered censorship there, endorsed our paper. Thanks to him, we got our paper back and submitted it to the *Journal of Mathematical Sociology*, where it underwent about two years of reviewing before being accepted and published in 1982 [2].

Throughout the subsequent decades, I kept fighting on my own to gain acceptance for sociophysics within the worldwide community of physicists, first in the US, and then in France [4–6]. That was a significant challenge, and I only managed to convince a very few of them, which was already an accomplishment. I believe that most physicists currently engaged in sociophysics are unaware of, and even unable to, figure out the scale of the rejection sociophysics faced in the 1980s.

At the same time, I kept developing sociophysics, supporting its feasibility through the publication of additional papers [7–9], always with long and tedious prior exchanges with referees of the related journals.

Over time, after a long and arduous journey, sociophysics has become an established field of physics, with the papers now published in most of the major physics research journals and physics magazines, as seen with the following non-exhaustive list of journals, given in alphabetical order: *Chaos, Solitons and Fractals* [10], *Entropy* [11], *European Physical Journal Plus* [12], *European Physics Letters* [13], *Frontiers in Physics* [14], *International Journal of Modern Physics* [15], *Journal of Statistical Mechanics* [16], *Journal of Statistical Physics* [17], *Review of Modern Physics* [18], *Scientific Reports* [19], *Physica A* [20], *Physics Letters A* [21], *Physics Reports* [22], *Physical Review E* [23], *Physical Review Letters* [24], *Physics Today* [25], *Physics World* [26], and *PLoS One* [27]. In addition, arXiv [28] has a section titled “Popular Physics, Physics and Society”, which is devoted, in good part, to sociophysics preprints.

With this Special Issue dedicated to sociophysics, the newly born journal *Physics* is joining the trend, thus enriching the numerous recent Special Issues on the topic [29–33]. In this respect, I express my gratitude to the five Guest Editors, Soumyajyoti Biswas from India, Taksu Cheon from Japan, Bastien Chopard from Switzerland, André Martins from Brazil and Xijin Tang from China.

The Special Issue is now completed, featuring a total of 17 papers published and available online in open access. This is a significant achievement and I warmly thank all the authors who contributed, making this a truly special issue. I also thank the authors whose submissions were not accepted by the journal.



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In this regard, the richness and diversity of this Special Issue demonstrates that, after forty or so years, sociophysics has gone a tremendous way towards becoming solid and promising. I believe that we, as a community of researchers, will succeed in discovering the basic laws governing the social interactions among humans, thus turning sociophysics into an established hard science to tackle social and political phenomena.

That goal is also desirable given the many social and political issues that today societies are currently facing, with seemingly no solution at hand, amidst multiple growing and threatening polarizations.

Given the current level of research associated with in sociophysics, my optimism is sound. Yet, to build a tool that could intervene, as an active key in changing the fate of a society, is both exciting and scary. However, that is inherent to all fields of knowledge and related discoveries. The ethical responsibility of applying sociophysics to real social community will lie among the future users, policy makers and others. For us, the makers of sociophysics, one safety measure to prevent its misuse could be to ensure that the results of our respective works are freely accessible to all.

The next decade should tell us to what extent these hopes, expectations and fears were justified. See you then!

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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