

Report from the workshop on “Exocomets: Understanding the Composition of Planetary Building Blocks”

13 – 17 May 2019 @ Oort

The workshop was the very first exocomet workshop to be held. It brought together experts from lots of different communities together in the same room to share ideas and exchange knowledge which undoubtedly fostered new insights and developed fresh approaches to a very timely topic.

The aims of the workshop were to:

- Bring together the exocomet, Solar System, exoplanet, disk and astrobiology communities
- Establish collaborations, foster new insights and develop fresh approaches.
- Determine the most expedient approaches for detecting exocomet compositions.
- Establish what future work would most benefit our understanding of how exocomets affect exoplanet atmospheres and the emergence of life throughout the Universe.

Beyond the insights gained and the new collaborations which were established, there were also tangible outcomes with more expected in the future. The first was a telescope proposal which was written by one of the working groups of the workshop. After two days of intense work it was submitted on time. We are still waiting to hear about the outcome of this. The second is a paper which is currently being written and which is in a draft stage. It is titled: “*Exocomets from a Solar System Perspective*” and is planned to be published in the Publications of the Astronomical Society of the Pacific. During the writing of the paper we have brought together the Exocomet and Solar System communities and realized that we have a lot in common. The last tangible outcome so far is the website <https://www.exocomets.org/> which acts as resource to the community by providing the talks and posters from the workshop.

Organization / Format

The workshop devoted a lot of time to group work (typically all the time after lunch). This allowed for enough time for two group working sessions to be done. This was good because it allowed people to try out two different groups, and thus get the opportunity to work with even more people (as apposed to only people in one group). We did experiment with having open discussions and having a discussion with a panel made up of the previous speakers. Both worked very well, although I’d say the latter was the most effective.

Other comments:

We had full control of the workshop schedule via our own website. This allowed us to make changes to it on the fly. This worked out very well as there was never any confusion about the schedule. Having it updated continuously allowed us to easily make changes to the workshop as we saw fit. The Lorentz center were very flexible and quick to act on schedule changes and we thank them for that. An example is when we ended over 1 hour early one day. We asked to have the wine + cheese reception moved forward whilst we went out to have a group photo taken. This was no problem. After the photosession we came back, and it was all ready. Flexibility is key and the Lorentz center is very capable of handling it!

- Paul A. Wilson (lead organiser)