

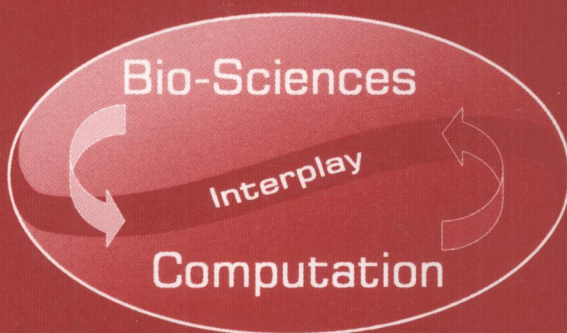
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LNCS 4528

Nature Inspired Problem-Solving Methods in Knowledge Engineering

Second International Work-Conference on the Interplay
Between Natural and Artificial Computation, IWINAC 2007
La Manga del Mar Menor, Spain, June 2007, Proceedings, Part II

2 Part II



TP18-53
161.8
2007
V.2
José Mira José R. Álvarez (Eds.)

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Proceedings, Part II



 Springer



E2007003268

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2007928351

CR Subject Classification (1998): F.1, F.2, I.2, G.2, I.4, I.5, J.3, J.4, J.1

LNCS Sublibrary: SL 1 – Theoretical Computer Science and General Issues

ISSN 0302-9743
ISBN-10 3-540-73054-0 Springer Berlin Heidelberg New York
ISBN-13 978-3-540-73054-5 Springer Berlin Heidelberg New York

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Printed on acid-free paper SPIN: 12076178 06/3180 5 4 3 2 1 0

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Preface

The Semantic Gap

There is a set of recurrent problems in AI and neuroscience which have restricted their progress from the foundation times of cybernetics and bionics. These problems have to do with the enormous semantic leap that exists between the ontology of physical signals and that of meanings. Between physiology and cognition. Between natural language and computer hardware. We encounter this gap when we want to formulate computationally the cognitive processes associated with reasoning, planning and the control of action and, in fact, all the phenomenology associated with thought and language.

All “bio-inspired” and “interplay” movement between the natural and artificial, into which our workshop (IWINAC) fits, faces this same problem every two years. We know how to model and reproduce those biological processes that are associated with measurable physical magnitudes and, consequently, we know how to design and build robots that imitate the corresponding behaviors. On the other hand, we have enormous difficulties in understanding, modeling, formalizing and implementing all the phenomenology associated with the cognition field. We do not know the language of thought. We mask our ignorance of conscience with the term emergentism.

This very problem recurs in AI. We know how to process images, but we do not know how to represent the process for interpreting the meaning of behaviors that appear in a sequence of images computationally, for example. We know how to plan a robot’s path, but we do not know how to model and build robots with conscience and intentions. When the scientific community can link signals and neuronal mechanisms with “cognitive magnitudes” causally we will have resolved at the same time the serious problems of bio-inspired engineering and AI. In other words, we will know how to synthesize “general intelligence in machines.”

To attempt to solve this problem, for some time now we have defended the need to distinguish between own-domain descriptions of each level and those of the external observer domain. We also believe that it is necessary to stress conceptual and formal developments more. We are not sure that we have a reasonable theory of the brain or the appropriate mathematics to formalize cognition. Neither do we know how to escape classical physics to look for more appropriate paradigms.

The difficulty of building bridges over the semantic gap justifies the difficulties encountered up to now. We have been looking for some light at the end of the tunnel for many years and this has been the underlying spirit and intention of the organization of IWINAC 2007. In the various chapters of these two books of proceedings, the works of the invited speakers, Professors Monserrat and Paun, and the 126 works selected by the Scientific Committee, after

the refereeing process, are included. In the first volume, entitled “*Bio-inspired Modeling of Cognitive Tasks*,” we include all the contributions that are closer to the theoretical, conceptual and methodological aspects linking AI and knowledge engineering with neurophysiology, clinics and cognition. The second volume entitled “*Nature-Inspired Problem-Solving Methods in Knowledge Engineering*” contains all the contributions connected with biologically inspired methods and techniques for solving AI and knowledge engineering problems in different application domains.

An event of the nature of IWINAC 2007 cannot be organized without the collaboration of a group of institutions and people who we would like to thank now, starting with our university, *UNED*, and its Associate Center in Cartagena. The collaboration of the Universitat Politècnica de Cartagena and the Universitat de Murcia has been crucial, as has the enthusiastic and efficient work of José Manuel Ferrández and the rest of the Local Committee. In addition to our universities, we received financial support from the Spanish Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia, the Fundación SENECA-Agencia Regional de Ciencia y Tecnología de la Comunidad de Murcia, *DISTRON s.l.* and the Excelentísimo Ayuntamiento de Cartagena. Finally, we would also like to thank the authors for their interest in our call and the effort in preparing the papers, condition *sine qua non* for these proceedings, and to all the Scientific and Organizing Committees, in particular, the members of these committees who have acted as effective and efficient referees and as promoters and managers of pre-organized sessions on autonomous and relevant topics under the IWINAC global scope.

My debt of gratitude with José Ramón Alvarez and Félix de la Paz goes, as always, further than the limits of a preface. And the same is true concerning Springer and Alfred Hofmann and their collaborators Anna Kramer and Erika Siebert-Cole, for the continuous receptivity and collaboration in all our editorial joint ventures on the interplay between neuroscience and computation.

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Table of Contents – Part II

High Performance Implementation of an FPGA-Based Sequential DT-CNN	1
<i>J. Javier Martínez-Alvarez, F. Javier Garrigós-Guerrero, F. Javier Toledo-Moreo, and J. Manuel Ferrández-Vicente</i>	
HANNA: A Tool for Hardware Prototyping and Benchmarking of ANNs	10
<i>Javier Garrigós, José J. Martínez, Javier Toledo, and José M. Ferrández</i>	
Improvement of ANNs Performance to Generate Fitting Surfaces for Analog CMOS Circuits	19
<i>José Ángel Díaz-Madrid, Pedro Monsalve-Campillo, Juan Hinojosa, María Victoria Rodellar Biarge, and Ginés Doménech-Asensi</i>	
Wavelet Network for Nonlinearities Reduction in Multicarrier Systems	28
<i>Nivaldo Rodriguez, Claudio Cubillos, and Orlando Duran</i>	
Improved Likelihood Ratio Test Detector Using a Jointly Gaussian Probability Distribution Function	37
<i>O. Pernía, J.M. Górriz, J. Ramírez, C.G. Puntonet, and I. Turias</i>	
Performance Monitoring of Closed-Loop Controlled Systems Using dFasArt	45
<i>Jose Manuel Cano-Izquierdo, Julio Ibarrola, and Miguel Almonacid</i>	
Normalising Brain PET Images	54
<i>Elia Ferrando Juliá, Daniel Ruiz Fernández, and Antonio Soriano Payá</i>	
Automatic Segmentation of Single and Multiple Neoplastic Hepatic Lesions in CT Images	63
<i>Marcin Ciecholewski and Marek R. Ogiela</i>	
Biometric and Color Features Fusion for Face Detection and Tracking in Natural Video Sequences	72
<i>Juan Zapata and Ramón Ruiz</i>	
Identifying Major Components of Pictures by Audio Encoding of Colours	81
<i>Guido Bologna, Benoît Deville, Thierry Pun, and Michel Vinckenbosch</i>	

Towards a Semi-automatic Situation Diagnosis System in Surveillance Tasks	90
<i>José Mira, Rafael Martínez, Mariano Rincón, Margarita Bachiller, and Antonio Fernández-Caballero</i>	
An Implementation of a General Purpose Attentional Mechanism for Artificial Organisms	99
<i>J.L. Crespo, A. Faiña, and R.J. Duro</i>	
Optimal Cue Combination for Saliency Computation: A Comparison with Human Vision	109
<i>Alexandre Bur and Heinz Hügli</i>	
The Underlying Formal Model of Algorithmic Lateral Inhibition in Motion Detection	119
<i>José Mira, Ana E. Delgado, Antonio Fernández-Caballero, María T. López, and Miguel A. Fernández</i>	
Novel Strategies for the Optimal Registration of Biomedical Images	130
<i>Jorge Larrey-Ruiz, Juan Morales-Sánchez, and Rafael Verdú-Monedero</i>	
Characterization of Artificial Muscles Using Image Processing	142
<i>Rafael Berenguer Vidal, Rafael Verdú Monedero, Juan Morales Sánchez, and Jorge Larrey Ruiz</i>	
Segmentation of Sequences of Stereoscopic Images for Modelling Artificial Muscles	152
<i>Santiago González-Benítez, Rafael Verdú-Monedero, Rafael Berenguer-Vidal, and Pedro García-Laencina</i>	
A Support Vector Method for Estimating Joint Density of Medical Images	162
<i>Jesús Serrano, Pedro J. García-Laencina, Jorge Larrey-Ruiz, and José-Luis Sancho-Gómez</i>	
Segmentation of Moving Objects with Information Feedback Between Description Levels	171
<i>M. Rincón, E.J. Carmona, M. Bachiller, and E. Folgado</i>	
Knowledge-Based Road Traffic Monitoring	182
<i>Antonio Fernández-Caballero, Francisco J. Gómez, and Juan López-López</i>	
Comparison of Classifiers for Human Activity Recognition	192
<i>Oscar Pérez, Massimo Piccardi, Jesús García, and José M. Molina</i>	
A Multi-robot Surveillance System Simulated in Gazebo	202
<i>E. Folgado, M. Rincón, J.R. Álvarez, and J. Mira</i>	

Context Data to Improve Association in Visual Tracking Systems	212
<i>A.M. Sánchez, M.A. Patricio, J. García, and J.M. Molina</i>	
Automatic Control of Video Surveillance Camera Sabotage	222
<i>P. Gil-Jiménez, R. López-Sastre, P. Siegmann, J. Acevedo-Rodríguez, and S. Maldonado-Bascón</i>	
Complex Permittivity Estimation by Bio-inspired Algorithms for Target Identification Improvement	232
<i>David Poyatos, David Escot, Ignacio Montiel, and Ignacio Olmeda</i>	
Context Information for Human Behavior Analysis and Prediction	241
<i>J. Calvo, M.A. Patricio, C. Cuvillo, and L. Usero</i>	
Road Sign Analysis Using Multisensory Data	251
<i>R.J. López-Sastre, S. Lafuente-Arroyo, P. Gil-Jiménez, P. Siegmann, and S. Maldonado-Bascón</i>	
Video Tracking Association Problem Using Estimation of Distribution Algorithms in Complex Scenes	261
<i>Miguel A. Patricio, J. García, A. Berlanga, and José M. Molina</i>	
Context Information for Understanding Forest Fire Using Evolutionary Computation	271
<i>L. Usero, A. Arroyo, and J. Calvo</i>	
Feed-Forward Learning: Fast Reinforcement Learning of Controllers	277
<i>Marek Musial and Frank Lemke</i>	
An Adaptive Michigan Approach PSO for Nearest Prototype Classification	287
<i>Alejandro Cervantes, Inés Galván, and Pedro Isasi</i>	
Behavioural Modeling by Clustering Based on Utility Measures	297
<i>Philip Hoelgaard, Ángel Valle, and Fernando Corbacho</i>	
Two-Stage Ant Colony Optimization for Solving the Traveling Salesman Problem	307
<i>Amilkar Puris, Rafael Bello, Yailen Martínez, and Ann Nowe</i>	
Solving Dial-a-Ride Problems with a Low-Level Hybridization of Ants and Constraint Programming	317
<i>Broderick Crawford, Carlos Castro, and Eric Monfroy</i>	
Profitability Comparison Between Gas Turbines and Gas Engine in Biomass-Based Power Plants Using Binary Particle Swarm Optimization	328
<i>P. Reche López, M. Gómez González, N. Ruiz Reyes, and F. Jurado</i>	

Combining the Best of the Two Worlds: Inheritance Versus Experience	337
<i>Darío Maravall, Javier de Lope, and José Antonio Martín H.</i>	
Towards the Automatic Learning of Reflex Modulation for Mobile Robot Navigation	347
<i>C. Galindo, J.A. Fernández-Madrigal, and J. González</i>	
Evolving Robot Behaviour at Micro (Molecular) and Macro (Molar) Action Level	357
<i>Michela Ponticorvo and Orazio Miglino</i>	
Discretization of ISO-Learning and ICO-Learning to Be Included into Reactive Neural Networks for a Robotics Simulator.....	367
<i>José M. Cuadra Troncoso, José R. Álvarez Sánchez, and Félix de la Paz López</i>	
Towards Automatic Camera Calibration Under Changing Lighting Conditions Through Fuzzy Rules.....	379
<i>M. Valdés-Vela, D. Herrero-Pérez, and H. Martínez-Barberá</i>	
Social Interaction in Robotic Agents Emulating the Mirror Neuron Function	389
<i>Emilia I. Barakova</i>	
Integration of Stereoscopic and Perspective Cues for Slant Estimation in Natural and Artificial Systems	399
<i>Eris Chinellato and Angel P. del Pobil</i>	
An Approach to Visual Scenes Matching with Curvilinear Regions	409
<i>J.M. Pérez-Lorenzo, A. Bandera, P. Reche-López, R. Marfil, and R. Vázquez-Martín</i>	
Supervised dFasArt: A Neuro-fuzzy Dynamic Architecture for Maneuver Detection in Road Vehicle Collision Avoidance Support Systems	419
<i>Rafael Toledo, Miguel Pinzolas, and Jose Manuel Cano-Izquierdo</i>	
Neuro-fuzzy Based Maneuver Detection for Collision Avoidance in Road Vehicles	429
<i>M.A. Zamora-Izquierdo, R. Toledo-Moreo, M. Valdés-Vela, and D. Gil-Galván</i>	
The Coevolution of Robot Behavior and Central Action Selection	439
<i>Fernando Montes-Gonzalez</i>	
WiSARD and NSP for Robot Global Localization	449
<i>Paolo Coraggio and Massimo De Gregorio</i>	

Design and Implementation of an Adaptive Neuro-controller for Trajectory Tracking of Nonholonomic Wheeled Mobile Robots	459
<i>Francisco García-Córdova, Antonio Guerrero-González, and Fulgencio Marín-García</i>	
Sharing Gaze Control in a Robotic System	469
<i>Daniel Hernandez, Jorge Cabrera, Angel Naranjo, Antonio Domínguez, and Josep Isern</i>	
An AER-Based Actuator Interface for Controlling an Anthropomorphic Robotic Hand	479
<i>A. Linares-Barranco, A. Jiménez-Fernandez, R. Paz-Vicente, S. Varona, and G. Jiménez</i>	
Tackling the Error Correcting Code Problem Via the Cooperation of Local-Search-Based Agents	490
<i>Jhon Edgar Amaya, Carlos Cotta, and Antonio J. Fernández</i>	
Strategies for Affect-Controlled Action-Selection in Soar-RL	501
<i>Eric Hogewoning, Joost Broekens, Jeroen Eggermont, and Ernst G.P. Bovenkamp</i>	
An Agent-Based Decision Support System for Ecological-Medical Situation Analysis	511
<i>Marina V. Sokolova and Antonio Fernández-Caballero</i>	
A Meta-ontological Framework for Multi-agent Systems Design	521
<i>Marina V. Sokolova and Antonio Fernández-Caballero</i>	
Design of an Agent-Based System for Passenger Transportation Using PASSI	531
<i>Claudio Cubillos, Sandra Gaete, and Broderick Crawford</i>	
The INGENIAS Methodology for Advanced Surveillance Systems Modelling	541
<i>José M. Gascueña and Antonio Fernández-Caballero</i>	
Propos: A Dynamic Web Tool for Managing Possibilistic and Probabilistic Temporal Constraint Networks	551
<i>Francisco Guil, Ivan Gomez, Jose M. Juarez, and Roque Marin</i>	
BIRD: Biomedical Information Integration and Discovery with Semantic Web Services	561
<i>Juan Miguel Gomez, Mariano Rico, Francisco García-Sánchez, Ying Liu, and Marília Terra de Mello</i>	
Neural Networks to Predict Schooling Failure/Success	571
<i>María Angélica Pinninghoff Junemann, Pedro Antonio Salcedo Lagos, and Ricardo Contreras Arriagada</i>	