

Preface

This volume contains the papers presented at the *Second International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Modeling and Using Context* (CONTEXT'99), held in Trento (Italy) from 9 to 11 September 1999. CONTEXT'99 is the second in the CONTEXT series. The first was held in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) in 1997.

The CONTEXT conference series is meant to provide an interdisciplinary forum where researchers can exchange ideas, methodologies, and results on context, and is increasingly becoming an important reference for all people doing research on context. This is testified by the larger number of research areas that are represented at CONTEXT'99 (in particular, Philosophy and Cognitive Psychology were not significantly present at the first conference), and by the number and quality of submitted papers. Specifically, we received 118 papers, mostly of good or excellent quality. Among them, 33 (28%) have been accepted as full papers, and 21 as short papers. We think it is fair to say that the 54 papers collected in this volume provide a significant picture of the international research on context currently going on.

The notion of context plays an important role in many areas, both theoretical and applied, such as Formal Logic, Artificial Intelligence, Philosophy, Pragmatics, Computational Linguistics, Computer Science, Cognitive Psychology. If, on one hand, this provides a promising ground for interdisciplinary events such as the CONTEXT conference series, on the other hand it does not mean *per se* that there is a general agreement on a unique, shared notion of context. Depending on the research goals and on the different conceptual tools and methods, various – and apparently quite heterogeneous – notions of context are introduced and used. Indeed, they diverge on several crucial issues, such as: is context internal (part of the state of the mind) or external (part of the state of the world)? Is context explicitly represented in the human mind or just implicitly? Is context to be thought of as a collection of parameters (such as time, location, speaker, ...) which affect the meaning of a linguistic expression, or rather as a collection of propositions which belong to a conceptual/mental/logical space?

This situation, however, is not hopeless. On the contrary, cross-fertilization among the various disciplines has just started, and we believe that the papers presented in this volume provide a good example of the results we may expect from such an interaction. We are extremely confident that the results will become even more apparent and significant in the near future.

We would like to express our gratitude to the five keynote speakers: A. Bonomi (Department of Philosophy, University of Milan), who spoke on *Fictional Contexts*; G. Fauconnier (Cognitive Science Department, University of California, San Diego), on *The Dynamics of Meaning Construction*, F. Giunchiglia (University of Trento and ITC-IRST, Italy), on *Local Models Semantics, or Contextual Reasoning = Locality + Compatibility*, D. Lenat (CYCorporation, Austin, Texas), on *The Dimensions of Context-Space*, and F. Récanati (Centre de Recherche en

Epistémologie Appliquée, École Polytechnique, Paris), on *Are ‘Here’ and ‘Now’ Indexicals?*

We would also like to thank the many people who made CONTEXT’99 possible. First of all, the program committee members and all the additional reviewers for all they did to ensure the high quality of accepted contributions. Second, Massimo Benerecetti and Francesca Castellani. They not only helped us to edit this volume, but also served as publicity chair and local chair, respectively. We thank Igino Fagioli, Head of the *Department of Theory History and Social Research* (University of Trento); Alessandro Zorat, Head of the *Department of Computer and Management Sciences* (University of Trento); Enrico Zaninotto, Dean of the *Faculty of Economics*; the administrative staff of the University of Trento, coordinated by Stefano Mariucci, who safely led us across the “bureaucracy jungle”; and Elisabetta Nones (Office for Public Relations, University of Trento). Finally, we would like to thank Valeria Ascheri and Ilaria Cecot for their help as volunteers in the local organization.

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Luciano Serafini
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Organization

CONTEXT'99 was organized by the *Department of Theory History and Social Research* and the *Department of Computer and Management Sciences* at the University of Trento. The former also partially funded the conference. CONTEXT'99 was hosted by the *Faculty of Economics* (University of Trento).

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- *Federazione Trentina delle Cooperative – Casse Rurali Operanti Società di Trento.*
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