

Studies in Computational Intelligence, Volume 388

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Tiansi Dong

Recognizing Variable Environments

The Theory of Cognitive Prism

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To my parents, Peiling, and Sophia

Foreword

Tiansi Dong sent me an e-mail asking whether he can read for some days a book which I borrowed from the library. This way I came in contact with a young scholar sitting not more than 150 m away in another building on the same campus. I went to his office to bring him the book, and interested in his research work, in particular, his motivation to read the book. Our chatting soon went beyond the book. He told me about his background, how he came to Germany and what brought him to Fernuniversität in Hagen. Especially interesting was what he experienced as doctoral student in Bremen, where his research was integrated in the framework of the so-called “Cluster of Excellence for Spatial Cognition”.

Dong’s doctoral work challenged several basic assumptions of qualitative spatial representation, established an axiom governing the connection relation which is missing in the well-known Region Connection Calculus and neglected in the formalism of Whitehead’s *Process and Reality*. Dong’s work does not only lead to the fact that all qualitative orientation frameworks can be unified, but also that qualitative and quantitative orientation relations form a continuum. Having made these remarkable contributions he spent a couple of years in understanding why his supervisor discouraged him to submit his results to journals for publication and, even more, that a “Cluster of Excellence” shall not just praise itself as excellent, rather shall justify its existence by making contributions to the tax-payer.

After his doctorate, with great efforts Dong managed to publish some of his results in scientific journals and at conferences. Also, he received some recognition by being invited to serve on the panel of Zentralblatt MATH, maintained by the European Mathematical Society, Leibniz Institute for Information Infrastructure Karlsruhe, Heidelberg Academy of Sciences and Humanities, and Springer-Verlag. Nevertheless, due to many obstacles Dong did not succeed in publishing his results in their entirety. Therefore, I persuaded him to choose a way where he would not encounter censorship in form of reviewing, viz. as a book, which, I convinced him, is the genuine form of publication – books are read even after centuries, whereas journal contributions are considered obsolete within just a few years.

The resulting book you hold in your hands starts with an interesting story to motivate its arguments in a natural way, analyzing the problem considered and laying

ground in psychology and philosophy for the results developed later. Readers can enjoy Dong's interesting ideas and solid arguments from Chapter 1 through 4 without any knowledge of mathematics. To understand Chapter 5, readers are assumed to know a little bit about first-order logic. Chapter 6 should be interesting to programmers and engineers who like to implement algorithms.

Hagen, May 2011

Wolfgang A. Halang

Preface

This book is based on my research that has spanned over a couple of last years, resulted in my PhD dissertation and papers after that. To put it briefly, the topic of my research, including that of my PhD dissertation, is how dynamic environments could be recognized by artificial systems. The focus was placed on identifying a simple method to represent spatial knowledge, which anchors as much as possible to cognitive psychology, linguistics, philosophy and neurology. One of the results obtained is an axiom system which represents spatial knowledge. If this system is correct, the Region Connection Calculus (RCC), currently prevailing in science for the purpose of spatial knowledge representation, will turn out to be incomplete and flawed, and all orientation frameworks could be considered as trivial cases of the system presented here. This is indeed the case.

This book should not only be interesting for researchers in the field of spatial knowledge representation and reasoning, but also for scientists working in areas related to computational intelligence, for which spatial intelligence plays a fundamental role. Since the book demonstrates a way to integrate research results from different fields into a unified system, it should also be interesting for those carrying out interdisciplinary research. Particularly, I dedicate this book to talented doctoral students to make them aware of the possibility that ground-breaking research results they may come up with are not welcomed, and that they may even encounter difficulties in their lives. Allan Baddeley mentioned this in his lecture during the Summer School in Cognitive Science'03 in Sofia, Bulgaria, which I tested in my PhD research and proven to be correct.

I am indebted to the Chinese Christian communities in Germany for their understanding and support during my difficult times – if there is an original contribution in this book, it will be to *give glory to our Father in heaven*. I am definitely indebted to Wolfgang Halang, Janusz Kacprzyk and Thomas Ditzinger who helped me publishing this book in high quality in a renowned book series for an easy accessibility to the scientific community.

Contents

1	An Introduction	3
1.1	The Aim	5
1.2	How Can We Recognize Variable Spatial Environments?	5
1.3	Interdisciplinary Perspectives	6
1.3.1	Neurology	6
1.3.2	Cognitive Psychology	7
1.3.3	Psycho-linguistics	7
1.3.4	Formal Spatial Ontologies	7
1.3.5	Computational Modelling	8
1.4	The Assumption and the Criteria	8
1.5	Results and Contributions	9
1.6	The Organization of This Thesis	10
2	The State of the Art	11
2.1	Psychological Spaces	11
2.2	Object Recognition (Figural Spatial Cognition)	12
2.2.1	Object Recognition at the Preferred Category	12
2.2.2	Gestalt Grouping Laws	13
2.2.3	View-Dependent vs. View-Independent Models	14
2.3	Cognitive Maps, Frames, and Other Schemata	16
2.3.1	The Existence of the Represented World of MSR	17
2.3.2	The Partial Hierarchical Structure of the MSR	17
2.3.3	Cognitive Reference Points in the MSR	18
2.3.4	Exploring the Structure of the MSR through Spatial Linguistic Descriptions	19
2.4	Spatial Ontologies	19
2.4.1	SNAP and SPAN Ontologies	19
2.4.2	<i>Fiat</i> Boundaries and <i>Fiat</i> Objects	20
2.5	Modelling Commonsense Knowledge	21
2.6	Qualitative Spatial Representations	22
2.6.1	Classic Topological Relations	22

2.6.2	Orientation Representations between Extended Objects . . .	23
2.6.3	Distance Representations between Extended Objects	25
3	Research Topics and Research Questions	27
3.1	The Puzzle of Recognizing Environments	27
3.2	The Commonsense Knowledge of Spatial Environments	28
3.3	Recognizing Spatial Environments	30
3.4	A Computational Approach to Recognizing Spatial Environments	31
3.5	Towards the Theory of Cognitive Prism	32
4	Recognizing Spatial Environments: A Commonsense Approach	33
4.1	Knowledge about Extended Objects Based on Observation	33
4.1.1	Preferred Categories of Objects Based on Observation	33
4.1.2	Sides of Recognized Objects	34
4.1.3	Spatial Relations among Sides	34
4.2	Spatial Relations as Spatial Extensions	34
4.2.1	Distances: The Extension from One Object to the Other . . .	36
4.2.2	Orientations: The Extension to Which Side	36
4.3	The Relative Spaces	38
4.4	Knowledge of the Relative Stability	39
4.5	The Reference Ordering	40
4.5.1	The Principle of Reference in Spatial Linguistic Descriptions	40
4.5.2	The Cognitive Reference Objects	42
4.6	Cognitive Spectrums of Spatial Environments	43
4.6.1	A Diagrammatic Representation of Cognitive Spectrums	43
4.6.2	A Symbolic Representation of Cognitive Spectrums	44
4.7	Relations between Two Cognitive Spectrums	47
4.7.1	The Categorical Comparison	47
4.7.2	The Process of Mapping Cognitive Spectrums	49
4.7.3	The Spatial Difference	50
4.7.4	The Compatibility	50
4.7.5	Recognition as the Judgment on the Compatibility	51
4.8	The Theory of Cognitive Prism	53
5	The Formalism: A Region-Based Representation and Reasoning of Spatial Environments	55
5.1	The Object Region and Its Properties	55
5.2	Spatial Relations between Regions	56
5.2.1	'Connectedness' Is Primitive	56
5.2.2	The Representation of Spatial Extensions	57

5.2.3	Defining Qualitative Distances Using <i>Extension</i> Regions	59
5.2.4	Defining Qualitative Orientations Using the <i>Nearer</i> Predicate	60
5.3	<i>Fiat</i> Containers: Formalizing Relative Spaces	61
5.4	The Principle of Selecting <i>fiat</i> Containers	65
5.5	Formalization of Cognitive Spectrums: $\mathcal{C}$	65
5.6	A Location and the Location	66
5.7	Relations between Two $\mathcal{C}$ s	67
5.7.1	The Primitive Relation	67
5.7.2	The Relations between Two Sets of Object Regions	67
5.7.3	The Relation between <i>fiat</i> Containers	68
5.7.4	The Relation between Two Sets of <i>fiat</i> Containers	69
5.7.5	Mapping Object Regions and Mapping <i>fiat</i> Containers	69
5.7.6	The Judgement Process	74
5.8	The Mereotopological Formalism of the Theory of Cognitive Prism	78
6	A List Representation of Recognizing Indoor Vista Spatial Environments: The LIVE Model	79
6.1	The General Architecture of the LIVE Model	79
6.2	How to Start the LIVE Model?	80
6.3	The Furniture System	81
6.4	Configurations in the LIVE Model	83
6.4.1	Spatial Relations in the LIVE Model	83
6.4.2	The Drawing System	84
6.5	The Configuration File	85
6.6	The View System	85
6.7	Testing the Principle of Selecting <i>fiat</i> Containers	85
6.8	The Comparison System	89
6.8.1	The Main Structure	89
6.8.2	The Structure of Mapped <i>fiat</i> Containers	90
6.9	The Simulation of Recognizing Mr. Bertel's Apartment	91
7	Conclusions, Evaluations, Discussions, and Future Work	97
7.1	Conclusions	97
7.2	Evaluation on the Representation and the Reasoning	98
7.2.1	Obtainable by Cognitive Agents	98
7.2.2	Meaningful to Languages	99
7.2.3	Representing Distortions	99
7.2.4	Computable	100
7.3	Discussions and Future Work	100
7.3.1	The Granularity of Object Categorizations	100
7.3.2	Object Categories Recognized by Different Sensors	100

7.3.3 Detecting Objects’ Movements 101

7.3.4 Humor: A Window to the Commonsense Knowledge 101

7.3.5 Situations of Spatial Environments 101

References 103

Relations between the Sizes of Regions 111

Theorem Proof Sketches 115

Index 123

List of Figures

1.1	The layouts of Mr. Bertel's apartment (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), (f); the layout of Mr. Certel's apartment (g); the layout of Mr. Bertel's apartment as his mother remembers (h)	4
2.1	Three kinds of sides of a cube	14
2.2	In (a) the mixer is viewed from top to down (a bird view); in (b) the same mixer is viewed normally (a field view). People are more easily to recognize the mixer with the field view (b) than the bird view (a). The picture is copied from (Biederman, 1987, p.144)	15
2.3	The <i>fiat</i> boundary around the stars of the Constellation "Great Bear"	21
2.4	Ephemeral <i>fiat</i> boundary established by the use of indexical terms (Smith, 2001, p.142)	21
2.5	The Enclaves of Baarle-Hertog and Baarle-Nassau. The picture is copied from (Smith, 2001, p.156)	21
2.6	The RCC-8 relations between regions	23
2.7	The geometric interpretation of 8 topological relations between regions with the connectedness relation, Egenhofer (1994)	24
2.8	The 'disconnected'-relation between the white rectangle and the black rectangle might not be suitably represented with the method in Guesgen (1989)	25
2.9	The cardinal direction relation between two extended objects, A and B, is interpreted by the 'connected'-relation among the location object and the projection-based partitions of the reference object. The picture is copied from (Goyal, 2000, p.39) . . .	25
2.10	The lattice definition of spatial orientations as shown in (Brennan et al., 2004, p.173)	26
3.1	People might have difficulty in distinguishing the twin sisters — Sandy and Mandy	27

3.2	In (a) the observer stands at P and faces to the corner. He perceives only part of the stimuli of the objects. However, he can recognize the couch, the tea-table, the door, and the walls of the room, shown in (b)	28
3.3	When white light passes through a triangular optical prism, a spectrum will be formed	29
3.4	When a scene passes through a cognitive system, a cognitive spectrum will be formed. Dotted arrows represent the ordering	29
4.1	Different sides of a TV set	34
4.2	Spatial relations based on observation	35
4.3	Qualitative orientation relations among the cup, the chair, and the desk will be described as <i>the cup is on the right side of the desk</i> and <i>the chair is in front of the desk</i>	37
4.4	A <i>fiat</i> projection of the observer to the white ball	37
4.5	Four object classes of indoor spatial environments based on the relative stability	40
4.6	The cups are referenced to the tea-table; the balloon is referenced to the writing-desk; the picture is referenced to the walls; etc.	41
4.7	When a scene passes through a cognitive prism, a cognitive spectrum will be formed	43
4.8	A diagrammatic representation of a cognitive spectrum. The gray (cotton), green (marble), and blue (grid) represent rarely moved objects; the sandy beige (nut tree) represents seldom moved objects; the amber color (oak) represents often moved objects	44
4.9	Mr. Bertel's mother looked at Mr. Certel's apartment (a) and <i>mapped</i> it with her target layout — Mr. Bertel's apartment (b). She concluded that it was not Mr. Bertel's apartment. At last she found her son's apartment (c)	46
5.1	(a) The extension region X; (b) the anchor region A; (c) the <i>near</i> extension region of A by X; (d) the near extension region of Mr. Bertel by his arms	58
6.1	The general architecture of the LIVE model: (a) The furniture system, (b) configuration files, (c) the view system, (d) the drawing system, (e) the comparison system. Arrows represent information flow	80
6.2	Before starting the LIVE model, you had better go into the "LIVE-PACKAGE"	80
6.3	The main menu of the LIVE model	81
6.4	The view window of the LIVE furniture system	81
6.5	The drawing system creates a new configuration	85
6.6	The diagrammatical representation of Mr. Bertel's apartment with full furniture and decoration	86

6.7	The window framework of three hierarchical structures	87
6.8	The diagrammatic representation of linguistic reference relations of objects in Mr. Bertel's apartment	87
6.9	The diagrammatic representation of partial hierarchical structure of reference objects of Mr. Bertel's apartment	87
6.10	The diagrammatic representation of partial order lattice of relative stability of Mr. Bertel's apartment	88
6.11	The comparison system in the LIVE model	89
6.12	The mapped objects of Mr. Bertel's apartment in mind and his apartment perceived are listed in the mapped <i>flat</i> containers. Objects left and right of "&&" are <i>mapped</i>	92
6.13	The view system shows the diagrammatic representation of Mr. Bertel's apartment with full furniture and decoration	92
6.14	The view system shows the diagrammatic representation of Mr. Bertel's apartment after Mr. Certel's first visiting who moved the balloon to the tea-table	93
6.15	The comparison system compares two configurations, and only finds the spatial difference of the balloon. It believes that the perceived configuration is the target	93
6.16	The view system shows the diagrammatic representation of Mr. Bertel's apartment with the after-party layout	94
6.17	The view system shows the diagrammatic representation of Mr. Certel's apartment	94
6.18	The comparison system of the LIVE model judges that Mr. Certel's apartment and Mr. Bertel's apartment are HARDLY the same	95
6.19	The comparison system of the LIVE model judges that Mr. Bertel's apartment with a after-party layout might be Mr. Bertel's apartment	95
7.1	The framework of vista spatial cognition	98
A.1	The fact that region X_0 is smaller than region X_1 can be tested by given two regions A and B as follows: If X_1 can be moved to such a place that it is connected both with A and B , while for X_0 there is no such a place.	112
A.2	The fact that region X_0 is of the same size as region X_1 can be tested as follows: For any two regions A and B , if X_1 can be moved to such a place that it is connected both with A and B , so can X_0 , and there is no such a place for X_1 that it is connected both with A and B , neither is X_0	112

List of Tables

4.1	The table of knowledge of objects	45
4.2	The structure of the table of relative spaces	45
4.3	The table of connectedness relative spaces	46
4.4	The table of distance relative spaces	46
4.5	The table of orientation relative spaces	46