

# Spatial Cognition 2008

International Conference  
Schloss Reinach, Freiburg, Germany



Sabine Timpf

## General Information

This year's Spatial Cognition 2008 (SC '08) continued a successful series of international and interdisciplinary conferences on spatial cognition held in Germany. SC'08 was organized by the Transregional Collaborative Research Center SFB/TR8 Spatial Cognition in cooperation with the Spatial Intelligence and Learning Center (SILC). SC'08 took place at Schloss Reinach, an estate near Freiburg im Breisgau, which provided a beautiful setting for discussions among ca. 150 researchers.

As is usual with this conference series, the conference lasted three days preceded by a workshop/tutorial day and followed by a workshop/doctoral colloquium day. The conference deals with every aspect of spatial cognition. About half of the papers were presented from a psychological perspective, the other half used computer science methods. 27 out of 54 submitted papers for the main conference were selected for publication in the Lecture Notes in Artificial Intelligence.

## Tutorials and Workshops

The tutorials and workshops ranged in topics from sketch understanding, similarity measures, spatial and temporal reasoning, spatial statistics, to a "sense

of place", cognitive modeling, spatial linguistics and biologically motivated models of human behavior. Four tutorials and four workshops provided ample opportunities to discuss hot topics and current work in depth.

## Three Conference Days

Each day of the main conference started with an invited keynote. On the first day Heinrich Bülhoff (MPI for Biological Cybernetics) provided insights into using virtual reality as a tool in spatial cognition research. Four sessions on spatial orientation, spatial navigation, learning, and maps&modalities followed throughout the course of the day. After dinner, the poster session produced many intense discussions.

The second day started with an excellent keynote on the role of salience in spatial descriptions by Laura Carlson (U of Notre Dame, US). The following two sessions were also devoted to issues of spatial communication and spatial language. The second half of this day allowed even more communication to take place during a hike of about 4 hours to the site of the conference dinner. Many spatial expressions were uttered during the up's and down's in the black forest.

The third day of the conference was opened by Dedre Gentner

(Northwestern U, US) with her keynote on 'Learning about space'. Sessions on similarity&abstraction, concepts&reference frames and spatial modeling and reasoning concluded the technical program of the conference. Finally, a panel discussion on future conferences, workshops and networking opportunities as well as publication strategies took place.

In the final session the best paper award of SC'08 was presented to Anthony Galton for his paper and excellent presentation on "Pareto-optimality of cognitively preferred polygonal hulls for dot patterns".

## Summary

All in all, Spatial Cognition '08 has been a very well organized, stimulating conference in a great place. The next Spatial Cognition conference will take place in 2010. Check the website *conference.spatial-cognition.de* for more information in 2009.

## Contact

Sabine Timpf  
Geoinformatics  
Department of Geography  
University of Augsburg  
sabine.timpf@geo.uni-augsburg.de