Preface

The field of bio-inspired computing and modeling has witnessed a rapid growth in the last 25 years. A relatively large and still increasing number of conferences and workshops, journals and special issues are devoted each year to different aspects related to the understanding of mechanisms in the natural world and to their reverse-engineering for the design of novel algorithms and hardware systems. Results from bio-inspired research find their successful application in a wide range of different fields, including, among others, optimization and operations research, networking, robotics, bioinformatics, and data mining.

While most conferences in the bio-inspired domain focus on a specific field of application (e.g., bio-inspired robot systems) or on specific families of bio-inspired approaches (e.g., swarm intelligence), the BIONETICS series of conferences avoid focusing on specific bio-inspired application domains or strategies, aiming instead at being truly interdisciplinary. BIONETICS is conceived as a general forum for researchers and practitioners from different disciplines and application fields who seek the understanding of fundamental principles and design strategies in biological systems, and leverage on this understanding to build bio-inspired systems for problem-solving and engineering applications.

The 2012 edition of BIONETICS, held in Lugano, Switzerland, during December 10–11, 2012, was the seventh in this series of conferences. The first edition was held in 2006, in Cavalese, in Italy, and was then held in Budapest, Hungary (2007), Hyogo, Japan (2008), Avignon, France (2009), Boston, MA, USA (2010), and York, UK (2011). The papers in this volume were orally presented at the conference, and represent a carefully selected sample of state-of-the-art research in the domain of bio-inspired modeling and applications. The conference featured 40 submissions, 23 of which were accepted as full papers, corresponding to a 57% acceptance rate, after a very careful blind-review process with three reviewers per paper. These submission numbers are similar to those of previous editions, showing a stable interest in the conference (apart from the 2010 edition, which had a surge of submissions), in spite of the fierce competition with the continually increasing number of conferences addressing related topics.

In line with the truly interdisciplinary philosophy of the conference, the papers included in this volume cover a wide range of topics and application domains: bio-inspired approaches for telecommunications, robotics and learning issues, modeling at the molecular scale, bioinformatics, optimization, and bio-inspired approaches to various problems such as social networking, game theory, and language analysis. Overall, these works provide a high-quality sample of the diversity in bio-inspired research, as well as its wide potential for use in real-world applications and as a tool for gaining a deeper understanding of biological and social processes.

Many people helped to make BIONETICS 2012 a successful event. In particular, I would like to thank Guy Theraulaz (general co-chair), Enrico Natalizio (publicity...
chair), Eduardo Feo (publication chair), Jawad Nagi (Web chair), and the BIONETICS Steering Committee (Imrich Chlamtac, Iacopo Carreras, Falko Dressler, Tadashi Nakano, Tatsuya Suda, Jun Suzuki). A special thank goes to the four invited keynote speakers: Nicola Gatti, Jürgen Schmidhuber, Franco Zambonelli, and Anthony Weiss, who presented an exciting and insightful overview of different applications and techniques of bio-inspired computing. Finally, I also want to express my gratitude to the European Alliance for Innovation (EAI), and in particular to Ms. Dina Shakirova and Ms. Elisa Mendini who provided full management support, and to the Scuola Universitaria Professionale della Svizzera Italiana (SUPSI), which sponsored the event.

June 2014

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Bio-Inspired Models of Network, Information, and Computing Systems
7th International ICST Conference, BIONETICS 2012, Lugano, Switzerland, December 10--11, 2012, Revised Selected Papers
Di Caro, G.A.; Theraulaz, G. (Eds.)
2014, XI, 323 p. 125 illus., Softcover
ISBN: 978-3-319-06943-2