

Report of the IFIP WG 1.5 Business Meeting during AUTOMATA 2023

31 August 2023

1 Introduction

The business meeting of the IFIP Working Group 1.5 *Cellular Automata and Discrete Complex Systems* was held in hybrid mode at the University of Trieste, Italy, on August 31, 2023 starting at 16:00 CET. The members participating to the meeting in presence were: Nazim Fatès, Enrico Formenti, Luca Manzoni, Luca Mariot, Kévin Perrot, Guillaume Theyssier, Barbara Wolnik. The members participating online were: Pedro Paulo Balbi, Pierre Guillon, Alonso Castillo Ramirez, Jarkko Kari, Dipanwita Roy Chowdhury Ilkka Törmä.

Maximilien Gadouleau participated as a guest.

The agenda of the meeting was as follows:

- point on the working group and on the memberships;
- report on AUTOMATA 2023;
- discussion about the workshop, submissions, proceedings, future, etc.;
- presentation of the bid for 2024 by Maximilien Gadouleau;
- election of new members;
- other topics and announcements.

2 Point on the working group

Nazim Fatès opens the IFIP WG 1.5 business meeting by illustrating the recent revision of the members list. In the past month, a survey has been conducted among the WG members by email, asking them whether they wanted to be still listed as active members of the group, or moved into the emeriti category. As a result of this survey, an updated list has been published on the WG website (<https://ifipwg15.inria.fr/members/>), which now counts 35 regular members and 24 emeriti members. Further, the status of 9 members is still pending since they have not responded to the survey yet.

3 Report on AUTOMATA 2023

Luca Mariot, co-chair of AUTOMATA 2023 together with Luca Manzoni, described the organization and the participation details of the workshop. The regular track of the workshop received 11 submissions in total (after extending the deadline twice). After the reviewing process, the program committee decided to accept 7 papers to be included in the Springer LNCS proceedings. This edition of the workshop was a particular case, since there were also the 3 submissions accepted as regular papers from AUTOMATA 2022, which last year were not enough to grant the publication of an LNCS volume. Springer offered to merge the papers from 2022 with those of 2023 in a single issue, a proposal which was later accepted and handled by the program chairs of AUTOMATA 2023. Therefore, overall the LNCS volume published by Springer featured the 3 full papers from 2022, the 7 full papers accepted in 2023, and an invited paper by one of the keynote speakers of AUTOMATA 2023 (see <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-42250-8>).

Concerning the exploratory track, a similar number of submissions were received: 8 exploratory papers and 3 extended abstracts. After the review phase, the program committee decided to accept all the 8 exploratory papers and 2 extended abstracts. Furthermore, one of the papers rejected in the regular track was accepted as an exploratory paper. Out of 11 accepted submissions overall, 5 were withdrawn by the authors. Thus, 6 submissions of the exploratory track were presented at the workshop, and included in an informal proceedings volume published on Zenodo.

Regarding the participation, 15 delegates registered to the workshop, paying a fee determined by their respective status (i.e. IFIP WG members and students paid a lower fee, while regular attendees paid the full fee). Counting also the invited speakers and some members from the organizing committee, the total attendance rate was of 20 participants.

In general, AUTOMATA 2023 fared better than the previous year's edition in terms of accepted submissions and participation rate. However, the program chairs noticed a consistent decrease in the number of submissions with respect to 5-6 years ago, where usually around 30 papers were submitted for the regular track only. This raises the question of the future sustainability of the workshop.

4 Discussion about the AUTOMATA workshop

In this part of the meeting, the president of the WG 1.5, Nazim Fatès, moderated a round table discussion about the future of the AUTOMATA workshop, considering the remarks and the data shown by the program chairs of the 2023 edition. In the following, a summary of the opinions of each member who participated to the meeting is reported.

Luca Manzoni proposed the co-location of AUTOMATA with other workshops centering on similar topics and scope, and mentioned conferences in the evolutionary computing community (e.g. Evostar) who follow a similar model.

The idea would be to group 3-4 conferences with similar scope, and organize them under a single event. Nonetheless, each conference would retain its independence regarding the scientific program (thus having different program chairs and committees).

Barbara Wolnik brought up the issue of the publication model. In her view, attending AUTOMATA does not help to have a better administrative evaluation of her work, even with the LNCS proceedings. Indeed, in Poland research is evaluated from a list of well-ranked journals. AUTOMATA traditionally has a special issue on *Natural Computing* or similar journals, but apparently these are not included in this list. She is nevertheless satisfied with the possibility to participate to workshop with an extended abstract.

Kévin Perrot and Guillaume Theyssier spoke in favor of the survival of AUTOMATA, emphasizing the nice and relaxed interactions fostered by the informal atmosphere of the workshop.

Enrico Formenti argued against continuing the publication of the proceedings on LNCS, due to the fact that very little benefits seem to come from this venue. Luca Mariot reacted by observing that a couple of years ago the proceedings were temporarily published in another venue (Dagstuhl OASICS), but that this year the choice of Springer was obligated due to previous arrangements for the 2022 edition. Nazim Fatès added that publication with Springer is mandated by the affiliation with IFIP (which is the reason why the proceedings venue was reverted to LNCS for 2022 and 2023). Finally, Enrico Formenti remarked on the need of making the PC members more responsible and active to promote the workshop. He also mentioned the possibility to invite authors who published in previous conferences to present their work in AUTOMATA (at their own expenses).

Luca Mariot raised the matter of expanding the topics of the AUTOMATA workshop. This has been partially done in the last couple of editions, adding for instance connections with algorithmic information theory and machine learning in the call for papers, but in his opinion the topics should be broadened even more. In particular, the idea would be to reach out to people working on closely related communities (e.g., Boolean networks and Boolean functions).

Dipanwita Roy Chowdhury supported the call for exploratory papers and extended abstracts, and also proposed the idea to add a call for posters.

Ilkka Törmä supported the idea of co-hosting AUTOMATA with other workshops, and also liked the idea of having extended abstracts.

Jarkko Kari also supported the idea of co-hosting, and as candidate workshops for co-location suggested to consider those organized by other IFIP working group in the Technical Committee 1 (Foundations of Computer Science).

Alonso Castillo-Ramirez proposed to keep AUTOMATA as a hybrid event, ensuring in particular the possibility of remote attendance to people who cannot participate in presence to the workshop.

Nazim Fatès summarized the various oppositions to publishing the proceedings in LNCS, and asked if someone instead supported it. Jarkko Kari, Pedro Paulo Balbi and Dipanwita Roy Chowdhury spoke in favour of keeping the publications of the workshop in LNCS, if possible.

5 Bid for AUTOMATA 2024

Maximilien Gadouleau presented the bid for the 2024 edition of AUTOMATA. The plan is to host AUTOMATA 2024 in Durham, UK. Maximilien presented a few slides about the city of Durham and its university, and illustrated how the prospective venue could be reached from several international airports nearby. The proposed dates are **22-24 July 2024**. This choice is mainly due to the fact that the conference room at Durham University needs to be booked very early, and these were the only reasonable dates that were still available. Usually, AUTOMATA has always been organized either in June or late August/September, which raised the point whether people would participate in July due to other commitments. A quick survey among the participants of the meeting revealed that most of them would not object if the workshop was to be held in these dates. As no one opposed the proposition, the bid was accepted. Therefore, AUTOMATA 2024 will be held in Durham.

6 Election of new members

Luca Mariot proposed Maximilien Gadouleau as a new member to be included in the IFIP WG 1.5. Maximilien has participated to the AUTOMATA workshop for several years, and its contribution to the research community of cellular automata is quite evident, as witnessed by his publications. All members participating to the meeting were in favour of this proposition. Hence, Maximilien Gadouleau was nominated as a member of the IFIP WG 1.5.

7 Any other business

With no other matters to be discussed, the meeting is ended at 17:30 CET.