Interview with António Portela

30.10.2008, in Lisbon

Informations concerning the book:

- Composed by interviews with researchers having experience and a previous activity that has influenced the foundation and the evolution the complexity studies;

- The book aims to present some historical points of view concerning the whole set of complexity studies;

- Reference to the difficulties faced until now;

- Perspectives of what hasn't been achieved yet – i.e., what are the research directions that the new students and researchers should embrace in their future work;

- The target of the book are the new master and PhD students, helping them to choose their research theme and captivating new students to our academic programs;

It wont be commercialized in "normally" (maybe only in the master or ICC web sites?); it will be available in university libraries and it will be offered to colleges and students

I hope to get a small found to publish the book, allowing to make maybe 300 copies.

Previous interviews: Gregoire Nicolis, at ULB (Bruxelles) and Jeff Johnson, Open University, UK (London)

Questions

What were the factors that, along your researcher career, have influenced your interest by the complexity studies? How did it all begin?

num dos seus últimos seminários discutiu o

poblema dos agregados - da validade de tirar conclusões gerais em sistemas sociais com base em valores médios quando os indivíduos são de facto diferentes. Pode explicar como vê este problema?

deixe-me agora ser advogado do diabo: a linguagem utilizada num agregado social não corresponde ao entendimento médio dos indivíduos sobre um conjunto de termos?

por outro lado se as medidas médias forem dinâmicas (isto é, evoluirem constantemente), e se nós conseguirmos acompanhar esta evolução, isso não as torna mais realistas?

In what kind of problems and situations can this approach be used?
(biological systems?)
(human societies?)

And aiming what kind of results?
(study of what has happened by the past?

making previsions?)

Is the approach applicable to human societies, characterized by being ill-structured (or at least founded in not well known social structures) and represented by data difficult to study, with noise ?

The study of new forms of social networks, for instance social networks supported by Internet is becoming more and more important nowadays. These are very dynamical networks. In your opinion, how could we approach the subject? For instance, would some metaphorical approach allow to make relevant analogies, helping the study of this sort of dynamic and ill-structured networks ?

propõe temas de doutoramento que procuram a

formalização das relações sociais a um nível abstracto, através da definição das regras de um jogo de interacções sociais. Qual o objectivo?

e termos gerais, quais os grandes temas de investigação em que os novos doutorandos poderão pegar nas ciências da complexidade? quais os grandes desafios ainda a resolver?

Finally, what would you say to encourage the new students and researchers that are starting a research activity and looking for an application domain for complexity sciences?