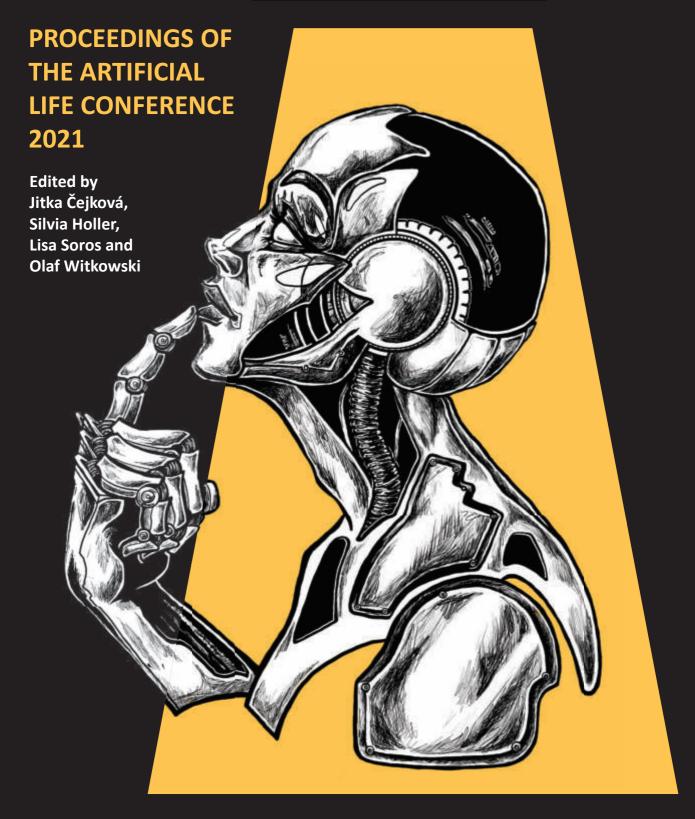
ALIFE 2021



Preface

This volume contains the proceedings of the 2021 Conference on Artificial Life (ALIFE 2021) which was originally scheduled to be held in Prague (Czech Republic) 19 - 23 July 2021, but because of the covid-19 pandemic and its repercussions, is being held virtually only. (https://2021.alife.org/). The International Conference on the Synthesis and Simulation of Living Systems (ALIFE) and the European Conference on Artificial Life (ECAL) have been the major meetings of the artificial life (ALife) research community since 1987 and 1991, respectively. Currently, these scientific gatherings are supported by the International Society for Artificial Life (ISAL) - a democratic, international, professional society dedicated to promoting scientific research and education relating to artificial life, including sponsoring this conference annually, publishing scientific journals and proceedings, and maintaining web sites related to artificial life.

Prague hosted the ECAL conference in September 2001 and the witnesses say that the team of organizers then, led by Jozef Kelemen, prepared for the participants a great scientific gathering with several social activities. However, the witnesses also mentioned that the conference was affected by the September 11 attacks. This historical incident affected not only the ECAL conference in Prague, but everything across the globe. This year the global external circumstances affected the Prague ALIFE conference again and even in such a way that the situation did not allow a face-to-face conference in the heart of Europe at all and the conference had to be switched to the virtual format. The organising committee had to take into consideration the continued erratic development of the worldwide covid-19 pandemic and the accompanying restrictions on worldwide travel as well as the safety and health of the ALife community. It was not an easy decision, because the organizers had amazing plans for how to arrange not only a scientific program in Prague, but also the side events, that would include visiting of restaurants with Czech cuisine and drinking of good Czech beer, various guided tours related to artificial life themes and namely going to the theatre to watch the one hundred year old play *R.U.R.* (subtitled as "*Rossum's Universal Robots*"). In this play, which was premiered in the National Theatre in Prague in Czechoslovakia on 25 January 1921, the word "*robot*" was used for the first time, so all the robots celebrate the centenary of their name this year. On this occasion, the theme of ALIFE 2021 conference is "*Robots*: The century past and the century ahead", as discussed in the introductory paper with the same title by the conference chair Jitka Čejková.

Although the 2021 Conference on Artificial Life takes place solely online and requires attendees to focus on a screen for hours at a time, the organizing committee was working intensively to create a virtual conference that gives as much of a real conference atmosphere as possible. Besides 9 keynote talks, 27 hours of 6 special sessions, almost 40 hours of 11 workshops, 5 tutorials and 64 talks in parallel sessions, there are also a virtual art gallery, virtual pubs and virtual coffee rooms. The social program offers the documentary movie *Solutions* and a THEAITRE project *Can a robot write a theatre play?* Further, we have announced a student essay competition this year and we have obtained almost thirty essays related to the artificial life, artificial intelligence, robots and/or *R.U.R.*.The program offers also a dedicated session *1971-2021: Fifty Years with Autopoiesis*, in memory of Francisco Varela and Humberto Maturana, who passed away this year.

The ALife 2021 Program

We received a total of 158 submissions. All submissions were reviewed by typically three reviewers. Senior program committee members then performed a topic-wide meta-review to derive acceptance decisions. As a result, we accepted 58 full papers and 50 extended abstracts for publication.

The conference program this year included:

- Six special sessions:
 - Artificial Life and Society, organized by Alex Penn, Jesus Mario Siqueiros Garcia, Olaf Witkowski, Alan Dorin, Erik Hom, Imran Khan, and Andy Philippides
 - Artificial Perception: Machines with Lifelike Failings, organized by Lana Sinapayen, Eiji Watanabe, and Sofian Audry
 - Bio-inspired Approaches for Modular Robotics, organized by Giovanni Iacca, Eric Medvet, and Stefano Nichele
 - Complexity ALI[FIV]E: Socializing & Eco-integrating Robots with Living Organisms, organized by Thomas Schmickl, Donato Romano, Ronald Thenius, and Martin Grube
 - Hybrid Life IV: Approaches to Integrate Biological, Artificial and Cognitive Systems, organized by Manuel Baltieri, Keisuke Suzuki, Hiroyuki Iizuka, Olaf Witkowski, and Lana Sinapayen

- Illusions of Self: Beyond Human, Animal, and Robot, organized by Olaf Witkowski, Elizaveta Solomonova,
 Thomas Doctor, and Bill Duane
- Eleven satellite workshops:
 - ABMHuB'21: 3rd International Workshop on Agent-Based Modelling for Human Behaviour, organized by Soo Ling Lim and Peter J. Bentley
 - A(rt)life'21: (Accidental) art from life-like systems, organized by Silvia Holler and Richard Löffler
 - COST Workshop on Chemobrionics, organized by Jitka Čejková, Geoff Cooper, Erik Hughes, and Tan Phat Huyn
 - Developing Artificial Life Web Resources, organized by Emily Dolson
 - Emerging Researchers in Artificial Life, organized by Abe Leite, Kira Breithaupt, Austin Ferguson, Alex Lalejini, and Josheta Srinivasan
 - LIFELIKE 2021: Lifelike Computing Systems Workshop, organized by Anthony Stein, Sven Tomforde, Jean Botev, and Peter Lewis
 - OEE4: Open-Ended Evolution 4, organized by Mark Bedau, Norman Packard, Alastair Channon, and Tim Taylor
 - Robots for Good, organized by Olaf Witkowski, Alex Penn, Jesus Siqueiros, Imran Khan, Erik Hom, Alan Dorin, and Andy Philippides
 - SLACE 2021: The Fifth Workshop on Social Learning and Cultural Evolution, organized by James M. Borg, Simon Powers, Chris Marriott, Nathan Brooks, and Peter Andras
 - Synthetic Approaches to Biology and Artificial Intelligence: from R.U.R. to contemporary Artificial Life research, organized by Luisa Damiano, Yutetsu Kuruma, and Pasquale Stano
 - TEMC 2020: 2nd International Workshop on Theoretical and Experimental Material Computing, organized by Susan Stepney, Matt Dale, Simon O'Keefe, Angelika Sebald, and Martin Trefzer

• Five tutorials:

- Behavioral and Cognitive Robotics, an adaptive perspective, organized by Stefano Nolfi
- Cartesian Genetic Programming, organized by Julian F. Miller
- Differentiable Self-Organisation, organized by Alexander Mordvintsev, Ettore Randazzo, and Eyvind Niklasson
- Gene Regulatory Networks: Computational Models in Contexts of Morphogenesis and Evolution, organized by Anyela V Camargo and Jan T Kim
- Open Science Project with Lenia, organized by Bert Chan and Will Cavendish

About the Editors

Jitka Čejková is an Associate Professor at the Laboratory of Chemical Robotics at the University of Chemistry and Technology in Prague, where she also studied chemical engineering and successfully defended her doctoral degree. Her primary interests include the investigation of organic droplets with life-like behaviour and recently she proposed to call such droplets "liquid robots". On the 100th anniversary of *R.U.R.*, she edited the book *Robot 100*.

Silvia Holler is a Postdoctoral researcher at the University of Trento, where she completed her bachelor and master after a 6 months apprentship at the ETH Zurich. She completed her PhD in biotechnology at the University of Trento too. Her primary interest include chemotactic droplets and protocells, droplet based synthetic biology, DNA labelled droplet aggregation and chemical gardens.

Lisa Soros is a Postdoctoral Researcher at Cross Labs in Kyoto, Japan. She was previously a Research Associate in the Game Innovation Lab at New York University, an Assistant Professor of Computer Science at Champlain College and was more previously a Ph.D. student in the Evolutionary Complexity Research Group at the University of Central Florida. Her primary interests include open-ended evolution, virtual worlds, and generative systems writ broadly.

Olaf Witkowski is the director of research at Cross Labs, a research institute in machine intelligence, cognitive science, and artificial life, based in Kyoto, Japan. He co-founded ventures in science and technology on three continents, including YHouse in New York— a nonprofit transdisciplinary research institute focused on the origins of consciousness in the

universe – and the Center for the Study of Apparent Selves in Kathmandu – studying ancient philosophies and AI. He is also a lecturer at the University of Tokyo, a research scientist at the Tokyo Institute of Technology, and a regular visitor at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, and is the Industrial Relations Chair of the board of directors of the International Society for Artificial Life, and he was a Program Chair for the ALIFE 2018 conference 'Beyond AI' in Tokyo.

Acknowledgements

Organising a virtual conference and publishing a proceedings requires a team effort. ALIFE 2021 would not have been possible without the help of many people. I (Jitka Čejková) am very happy to write this acknowledgement note on behalf of the Organising Committee of ALIFE 2021. I would like to start by calling special attention to co-organizers and co-editors of this proceedings: Silvia Holler, Lisa Soros and Olaf Witkowski. Together, they performed a massive amount of work on this proceedings, conference program, review process and many other things, even small details. I consider myself so lucky to work remotely with such hard-working individuals. Although everyone was on the other side of the world, each of them replied to all of my messages, which could seem to be unimportant for discussion for the others. However, these three friends always provided a useful feedback. Their continued support and all of the help they provided was invaluable. I never have to worry about anything being overlooked or the deadline being missed when I worked with them. Their enthusiasm, never-ending positivity and sense of humor made organising of this conference a pleasure.

Further I would like to thank to all conference co-organisers and the organisers of workshops, special sessions and tutorials. I am so grateful to have in the organising committee Richard Löffler and Bára Hudcová, who were responsible for the workshops and tutorials. I deeply appreciate the work of all members of the art jury and student essay competition jury, especially their chairs Juan Manuel Castro and (again) Olaf Witkowski.

We wish to thank all of the reviewers and meta-reviewers who contributed to the review process and without whom a successful conference would not be possible. We thank them for their time, hard work and dedication to this conference. We appreciate their support and giving the suggestions to both, authors and organisers. Without reviewers' services the organisers could not maintain the high standards of artificial life conferences. And of course, we would like to thank all authors who submitted their papers and extended abstracts to this conference and thanks to them this high quality conference proceedings originated.

We wish to extend sincerest thanks to the following organisations and all who have directly or indirectly involved in making this conference a success. First of all the University of Chemistry and Technology in Prague, namely Daniela Šídlová and Jan Kříž for administrative and technical assistance. A sincere word of appreciation has to go to the graphic designers Tereza Tomáštíková and Jonáš Ledecký. We appreciate the support of Marek Rosa and his GoodAI. We are also grateful for the generous support of the International Society for Artificial Life (ISAL), namely its chair Charles Ofria and vice-chair Susan Stepney, for their kind advice and suggestions to the organisers and the willingness to help with anything anytime.

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Conference Program

Intro	oduction	1
1	Robots: The century past and the century ahead, an Introduction to the 2021 ALIFE conference Jitka Čejková	
Shor	rt abstracts of keynote presentations	5
5	The autonomous Earth: How humans created a planetary civilisation that is beyond their control <i>James Dyke</i>	
7	Complexity begets complexity Jessica Flack	
9	Artificial Life at Scale? Lessons from Machine Learning David Ha	
11	Homage to R.U.R.: 100 Ways to Play a Robot Jana Horáková	
13	Experiments in Machine Behavior <i>Iyad Rahwan</i>	
15	Soft Robots: Increasing Robot Diversity with Soft Materials Daniela Rus	
17	Order from Order: How Life Emerged from a Convection-driven Submarine Spring Mike Russell	
19	Ageing in artificial and real life: can we code a cure? Andrew Steele	
21	Weird Tales: Early Visions of Machines That Can Reproduce and Evolve, and Their Relevance Today <i>Tim Taylor</i>	
Spec	ial session: ALife and society	23
23	ArchaeaBot: A Post Singularity and Post Climate Change Life-form Anna Dumitriu and Alex May	
25	Towards Guidelines for Mechatronic Ecosystem Monitoring and Management Alan Dorin, Hazel Parry and James Cook	
28	Listening to Ecosystems as Complex Adaptive Systems Alice Eldridge	
36	SARS-CoV-2 pandemic dynamics and infection tracing in Denmark Morten W. N. Jørgensen, Niels Høiby, Hans J. Ziock and Steen Rasmussen	
39	How Artificial Life Researchers Can Help Address Complex Societal Challenges Hiroki Sayama	
42	Emergence of more contagious COVID-19 variants from the coevolution of viruses and policy interventions <i>Aymeric Vie</i>	
45	Creating Artificial Societies through Interaction Analysis: Translating Qualitative Observational Study into Agent-Based Modelling Selin Zileli, Jiayu Wu, Cyriel Diels and Stephen Boyd Davis	
Spec	ial Session: Artificial Perception: Machines with Lifelike Failings	51
51	Artificial Cognitive Map System based on Generative Deep Neural Networks Hiroki Kojima and Takashi Ikegami	
54	A Monocular Depth Estimator to Perceive Crater Illusions in Several Characteristics Ryota Mima, Yuki Kubota and Masahiko Inami	

57	How Artificial Life Can Advance Artificial Intelligence Ali Tehrani-Saleh and Christoph Adami	
Spec	ial session: Bio-inspired approaches for modular robotics	60
60	The Impact of Early-death on Phenotypically Plastic Robots that Evolve in Changing Environments <i>Karine Araujo, Jim Cuijpers, Bahadir Gülhan and A.E. Eiben</i>	
68	Evolving Modular Robots: Challenges and Opportunities Andres Faina	
72	The effect of selecting for different behavioral traits on the evolved gaits of modular robots Babak Hosseinkhani Kargar, Karine Miras and A.E. Eiben	
81	Decomposing the Prediction Problem; Autonomous Navigation by neo-RL Per Roald Leikanger	
89	Differentiable Programming of Reaction-Diffusion Patterns Alexander Mordvintsev, Ettore Randazzo and Eyvind Niklasson	
95	Evolution of morphology through sculpting in a voxel based robot Kathryn Walker and Helmut Hauser	
Spec	ial session: Complexity ALI[F V]E: Socializing & Eco-integrating robots with living organisms	103
103	Toward Population-Level Biohybrid Systems: Bioinspiration and Behavior Eric Aaron and John Long	
106	Biomimetic robots promote the 3R Principle in animal testing David Bierbach, Fritz Francisco, Juliane Lukas, Tim Landgraf, Moritz Maxeiner, Pawel Romanczuk, Lea Musiolek, Verena V. Hafner and Jens Krause	
110	Underwater communication with artificial electric sense Mohamed Boukens, Vincent Lebastard and Frédéric Boyer	
113	Investigating the influence of probabilistic robot motion parameters on archerfish behavior in fish-robot interactions	
	Alexander Brown, Michael Brown and Brent Utter	
116	The logic of biorobotics Edoardo Datteri	
118	WatchPlant: Networked Bio-hybrid Systems for Pollution Monitoring of Urban Areas Heiko Hamann, Stjepan Bogdan, Antonio Diaz-Espejo, Laura Garcia-Carmona, Virginia Hernandez-Santana, Serge Kernbach, Andreas Kernbach, Alfredo Quijano-lopez, Babak Salamat and Mostafa Wahby	
127	Bio-Hybrid Systems for Ecosystem Level Effects Asya Ilgün, Kostadin Angelov, Martin Stefanec, Sarah Schönwetter-Fuchs, Valerin Stokanic, Jutta Vollmann, Daniel N. Hofstadler, Martin Kärcher, Heinrich Mellmann, Volha Taliaronak, Armands Kviesis, Vitalijs Ko- masilovs, Matthias A. Becher, Martina Szopek, David M. Dormagen, Rafael Barmak, Erol Bairaktarov, Matthieu Broisin, Ronald Thenius, Rob Mills, Stamatios C. Nicolis, Alexandre Campo, Aleksejs Zacepins, Sergey Petrov, Jean-Louis Deneubourg, Francesco Mondada, Tim Landgraf, Verena Vanessa Hafner and Thomas Schmickl	
137	Acute Citalopram administration alters zebrafish social dynamics in a behavioral teleporting experiment Mert Karakaya, Simone Macrì and Maurizio Porfiri	
140	Can Robots Inform a Honeybee Colony's Foraging Decision-Making? Dajana Lazic and Thomas Schmickl	
144	Control of collective behaviours through artificial feedbacks Stamatios C Nicolis, Mariano Calvo Martin, Alexandre Campo and Jean Louis Deneubourg	
147	Controlling invasive species with biologically-inspired robots	

Giovanni Polverino and Maurizio Porfiri

151	Toward artificial cells/living cells communication in hybrid ensembles Giordano Rampioni, Yutetsu Kuruma, Livia Leoni, Luisa Damiano and Pasquale Stano	
154	Any colour you like: using animal-robot interaction to unravel mechanisms promoting phenotypically heterogeneous fish aggregations Donato Romano and Cesare Stefanini	
160	Towards animal phenotype transfer into biomimetic robots: the LAMPETRA project Cesare Stefanini and Donato Romano	
163	Biohybrid Entities for Environmental Monitoring Ronald Thenius, Wiktoria Rajewicz, Joshua Cherian Varughese, Sarah Schoenwetter-Fuchs, Farshad Arvin, Alexander Casson, Chao Wu, Barry Lennox, Alexandre Campo, Godfried Jansen van Vuuren, Cesare Stefanini, Donato Romano and Thomas Schmickl	
173	Robots communicating with fish: Integration requires reciprocal interaction Gerhard von der Emde and Martin Worm	
176	A concept of full plant morphology modeling for robot-plant bio-hybrids Mostafa Wahby, Julian Petzold and Heiko Hamann	
Speci	ial Session: Hybrid life IV: Approaches to integrate biological, artificial and cognitive systems	179
179	Towards Autopoietic SB-AI Luisa Damiano and Pasquale Stano	
182	Social Search Evolves with the Emergence of Clustered Environments Mahi Luthra and Peter M. Todd	
191	Studying Embodied Cognition in the Android Alter Norihiro Maruyama, Atsushi Masumori and Takashi Ikegami	
194	An organismic inspired strategy for adaptive control Alvaro Ovalle	
197	Evaluation of the effect of mimicry on facial expression in Avatar-Mediated Communication <i>Mikihiro Suda and Mizuki Oka</i>	
206	A Design of a Virtual Agent that Facilitates a Spatial and Online Communication by Use of Social Particle Swarm Model Meito Tsuruta, Reiji Suzuki and Takaya Arita	
Illuci	ions of Self: Beyond Human, Animal, and Robot	213
213	Can Being Aware of the Illusion of Self Augment an Agent's Affordances: Integrating Buddhist Philosophy, Cognitive Science, and Artificial Life Thomas Doctor, Elizaveta Solomonova, Bill Duane and Olaf Witkowski	213
217	On the Scales of Selves: Information, Life, and Buddhist Philosophy Carlos Gershenson	
223	Monks, Labs, Cyborgs: the Plasticity of Personhood in Tibetan Buddhism Ana Cristina Lopes	
226	You, Robot. Empathy in a Hybrid World Jesús Siqueiros	
Gene	eral Conference	229
229	A graph-theoretic approach to understanding emergent behavior in physical systems Alyssa Adams	
232	The Comparative Hybrid Approach to Investigate Cognition across Substrates Sarah Albani, Acacia Ackles, Charles Ofria and Clifford Bohm	
241	Searching for initial parameters in cell colony spatial pattern generation Nicolás Araya, Guillermo Iglesias and Martín Gutiérrez	

- 248 Emergence of structures from parasitic species in a spatially distributed molecular system *Nathanael Aubert-Kato, Guillaume Gines, Teruo Fujii and Yannick Rondelez*
- Towards open-ended evolutionary simulator for developing novel tumour drug delivery systems Igor Balaz, Tara Petric and Namid Stillman
- 259 Efficient Spike Timing Dependent Plasticity rule for Complex-Valued Neurons Alex Baranski and Tom Froese
- 268 Reaction kinetics exploration of a protocellular metabolism Ditlev Hartmann Bornebusch, Hans-Joachim Ziock and Steen Rasmussen
- 271 Modeling behavioral experiments on uncertainty and cooperation with population-based reinforcement learning Elias Fernández Domingos, Jelena Grujic, Juan Carlos Burguillo, Francisco C. Santos and Tom Lenaerts
- 274 Growing Opportunities to Grow: Achieving Open-Ended Multi-Agent Communication Learning *Marina Dubova*
- 277 Random Networks with Quantum Boolean Functions

 Mario Franco, Octavio Zapata, David A. Rosenblueth and Carlos Gershenson
- 280 A Probabilistic Game of Life on a Quantum Annealer Thomas Gabor, Marian Lingsch Rosenfeld and Claudia Linnhoff-Popien
- 283 Goals for Self-Replicating Neural Networks

 Thomas Gabor, Steffen Illium, Maximilian Zorn and Claudia Linnhoff-Popien
- 292 The Dynamical Landscape of Reservoir Computing with Elementary Cellular Automata Eivind Glover
- 301 A life/dinner paradox: emergence of a proto-amygdala in response to virtual agents' fears on an artificial neural substrate
 - Kevin Godin-Dubois, Sylvain Cussat-Blanc and Yves Duthen
- 309 A Genome-Wide Evolutionary Simulation of the Transcription-Supercoiling Coupling *Théotime Grohens, Sam Meyer and Guillaume Beslon*
- 317 Active Dynamical Prospection: Modeling Mental Simulation as Particle Filtering for Sensorimotor Control during Pathfinding

 Jeremy Gordon and John Chuang
- 326 Safer Reinforcement Learning through Transferable Instinct Networks *Djordje Grbic and Sebastian Risi*
- 336 Generating Agent Based Models From Scratch With Genetic Programming Rory Greig and Jordi Arranz
- 346 A regulation dilemma in Artificial Intelligence development The Anh Han, Francisco C. Santos, Luis Moniz Pereira and Tom Lenaerts
- 349 An evolutionary game theory analysis of trust in repeated games and lessons for human-machine interactions *The Anh Han, Cedric Perret and Simon T. Powers*
- 352 Physical reservoir computing in a soft swimming robot Yuta Horii, Katsuma Inoue, Satoshi Nishikawa, Kohei Nakajima, Ryuma Niiyama and Yasuo Kuniyoshi
- 361 Computational Hierarchy of Elementary Cellular Automata Barbora Hudcová and Tomáš Mikolov
- 369 Liquid Crystal Phase Assembly in Peptide-DNA Coacervates as a Mechanism for Primitive Emergence of Structural Complexity
 Tony Z Jia and Tommaso P Fraccia
- 371 Quality Evolvability ES: Evolving Individuals With a Distribution of Well Performing and Diverse Offspring *Adam Katona, Daniel W. Franks and James Alfred Walker*
- 380 Introducing asymptotics to the state-updating rule in Lenia Takako Kawaguchi, Reiji Suzuki, Takaya Arita and Bert Chan

- 383 Reservoir computing with self-organizing neural oscillators
 Sina Khajehabdollahi, Emmanouil Giannakakis, Jan Prosi and Anna Levina
- 386 The emergence of collective response to decisions in a group of physical agents *Yara Khaluf*
- 394 Adaptation-By-Proxy: Contagion Effect of Social Buffering in an Artificial Society *Imran Khan and Lola Cañamero*
- 404 Tracking data flow in digital brains exposes coincidental encryption Douglas Kirkpatrick, Victoria Cao and Clifford Bohm
- 407 Using MAP-Elites to direct the evolution of desired neural characteristics Douglas Kirkpatrick and Arend Hintze
- 416 Diversity control in evolution of movement Maciej Komosinski and Konrad Miazga
- 424 Architecture of the Genotype-Phenotype Map and the Coevolution of Complexity Bhaskar Kumawat and Luis Zaman
- 431 Tracking Multiple Fast Targets With Swarms: Interplay Between Social Interaction and Agent Memory Hian Lee Kwa, Jabez Leong Kit and Roland Bouffanais
- 440 Hyperdescriptions of Quantum Dynamics A Case Study for Avian Magnetoreception Dragana Laketic
- 449 Generating reward structures on a parameterized distribution of dynamics tasks Abe Leite and Eduardo Izquierdo
- 458 Imprecise Fusion Operators for Collective Learning Zixuan Liu, Michael Crosscombe and Jonathan Lawry
- 466 Objective Sampling Strategies for Generalized Locomotion Behavior with Lexicase Selection Jared Moore and Adam Stanton
- 474 Supervision and Evolution: Pretraining Neural Networks for Quadrupedal Locomotion Jared Moore and Anthony Clark
- 482 Friendly rivalry solutions for direct reciprocity *Yohsuke Murase and Seung Ki Baek*
- 485 Sensorimotor behavior under informational constraints: a robotic model of prey localization in the bat Micronycteris microtis
 - Thinh Nguyen, Dieter Vanderelst and Herbert Peremans
- 494 The Role of Speaker Prestige in Synthetic Language Evolution Geoff Nitschke and Greg Furman
- 497 Asynchronicity in Neural Cellular Automata

 Eyvind Niklasson, Alexander Mordvintsev and Ettore Randazzo
- 500 A Representation of Artificial Spin Ice for Evolutionary Search Arthur Penty and Gunnar Tufte
- 509 Species in Morphogenesis: Introducing Symbiogenesis as an Additional Method for the Evolutionary Process of an Artwork
 - Tiago Barros Pontes E Silva and Marilia Lyra Bergamo
- 517 The dynamical regime and its importance for evolvability, task performance and generalization.

 Jan Prosi, Sina Khajehabdollahi, Emmanouil Giannakakis, Georg Martius and Anna Levina
- 526 Connections between Noisy Fitness and Selection Strength Vincent Ragusa and Clifford Bohm
- 534 Designing Considerate Swarms
 Nishant Ramakuru and Namid Ram Stillman

- 543 Exploring collective intelligence in animal fission-fusion dynamics Gabriel Ramos-Fernandez, Tania M. Palacios-Romo and Sandra E. Smith Aguilar
- 546 Recursively Fertile Self-replicating Neural Agents

 Ettore Randazzo, Luca Versari and Alexander Mordvintsev
- 555 A Sustainable Ecosystem through Emergent Cooperation in Multi-Agent Reinforcement Learning Fabian Ritz, Daniel Ratke, Thomy Phan, Lenz Belzner and Claudia Linnhof-Popien
- When a Robot Writes a Play: Automatically Generating a Theatre Play Script
 Rudolf Rosa, Tomáš Musil, Ondrej Dusek, Dominik Jurko, Patrícia Schmidtová, David Marecek, Ondřej Bojar,
 Tom Kocmi, Daniel Hrbek, David Košťák, Martina Kinská, Marie Nováková, Josef Doležal, Klára Vosecká,
 Tomáš Studeník and Petr Žabka
- 568 Evolution of Neural Complexity in Division of Labor Tasks Ekaterina Sangati, Soheil Keshmiri and Federico Sangati
- 578 Exploration in Evolutionary Space by Hashtag Evolution on a Social Web Service Hiroki Sato, Yasuhiro Hashimoto, Mizuki Oka and Takashi Ikegami
- 585 Learning to Penalize Other Learning Agents

 Kyrill Schmid, Lenz Belzner and Claudia Linnhoff-Popien
- 594 Influence of the geometry on the agglomeration of a polydisperse binary system of spherical particles

 Johannes Schneider, Alessia Faggian, Silvia Holler, Federica Casiraghi, Jin Li, Lorena Cebolla Sanahuja, HansGeorg Matuttis, Martin Hanczyc, David Barrow, Mathias Weyland, Dandolo Flumini, Peter Eggenberger Hotz
 and Rudolf Füchslin
- 603 Major transitions in evolution and finite time singularities: Human wealth history Paolo Sibani and Steen Rasmussen
- 606 What is a Parasite? Defining reaction properties in an open ended automata chemistry *Susan Stepney and Simon Hickinbotham*
- 615 Co-evolution of Initial Configuration and Control in Evolutionary Robotics *Kasper Stoy*
- 618 Growing 3D Artefacts and Functional Machines with Neural Cellular Automata
 Shyam Sudhakaran, Djordje Grbic, Siyan Li, Adam Katona, Elias Najarro, Claire Glanois and Sebastian Risi
- An Artificial Creature Approach to the Origin of Acoustic Communication Reiji Suzuki, Ryohei Seki, Takahiro Banno, Kouki Kawai and Takaya Arita
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- 639 Identification of Lifelike Characteristics of Human Crowds Through a Classification Task Jamie Webster and Martyn Amos
- 649 Resurrecting FPGA Intrinsic Analog Evolvable Hardware Derek Whitley, Jason Yoder and Nicklas Carpenter
- 657 Increased Complexity and Fitness of Artificial Cells that Reproduce Using Spatially Distributed Asynchronous Parallel Processes

 Lance Williams
- 666 Incentive for Self-Protection in a Collective System: a Swarm Robotics Case Study Payam Zahadat