

SFB/TR 8 Spatial Cognition / IQN Video Conference

Semantic Engineering for Interoperability

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At the Muenster Semantic Interoperability Lab (MUSIL, <http://musil.uni-muenster.de/>), we have spent the last five years exploring the vision of semantic reference systems from several angles and applying the results to improve semantic interoperability. In this presentation, I will first give an overview of our recent research and development results. This includes contributions to the discovery, annotation, and exposure of geospatial information as well as to similarity models and ontology grounding.

Then, I will present an emerging engineering view of semantics, rooted in radical constructivism. It adopts the principle that "words don't mean, people do" and treats ontologies as systems of constraints on interpretation. It avoids some pitfalls of realist as well as of cognitive semantics, and it integrates social semiosis, i.e., the process of (technical) language evolution. It does not need to invoke elusive notions like "truth" or "meanings" (seen as objects) and it only assumes that humans (as well as machines) somehow interpret the terms they use to communicate and that they can state and use constraints on such interpretation. Furthermore, the view gives folksonomies an explicit role to play as their own kind of constraints, raising fascinating new research questions.

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