3.3 An Excellent Guest Professor at Ghent University

Drs. Chris Cornelis\textsuperscript{1,2}, Martine De Cock\textsuperscript{1}, Glad Deschrijver\textsuperscript{1}, Mike Nachtegae\textsuperscript{1}, and Steven Schockaert\textsuperscript{3}

\textsuperscript{1} Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium
\textsuperscript{2} University of Granada, Granada, Spain
\textsuperscript{3} Cardiff University, Cardiff, UK

Prof. Dr. Da Ruan was officially appointed as a guest professor at the Department of Applied Mathematics and Computer Science, Ghent University, since October 1, 2005. However, as many former students will be able to confirm, Da was already deeply involved in research and teaching at the university long before receiving the official title of guest professor. In this chapter, five of those former students reminisce about Da's great influence in their professional lives as well as that of other students and researchers at the department.

Guest Lectures

Da loved to teach and share his knowledge with students. He was a very welcome guest lecturer in graduate courses on computational intelligence, where he would teach with great credibility about the application of soft computing techniques in practice. His lectures in courses such as "Guest Lectures on Current Aspects in Computer Science", "Capita Selecta from Fuzzy Set Theory" and "Computational Intelligence" stood out and left deep impressions on students in Computer Science and Mathematics at Ghent University.

Steven Schockaert recalls: "I particularly remember a guest lecture Da gave to the students of the Computational Intelligence course, about the use of fuzzy control in nuclear science. Rather than giving a standard lecture on the advantages of fuzzy controllers, he presented a very balanced story, addressing both virtues and vices of fuzzy controllers, and fuzzy methods in general. Clearly he was in a unique position to comment on this, being both involved in fundamental research as well as in industrial applications. His continued efforts to find new ways in which the theory of fuzzy sets could be applied in nuclear science will surely have a lasting impact on the field."

Martine De Cock recalls: "In one of the lectures that I attended, Da stressed how difficult it is to put a new method based on fuzzy systems into practice in a nuclear
application, because of strict regulations w.r.t. safety guarantees of new methods. He told the class that for this reason, there is a tendency to hold on to the old methods, even when they are more costly. This was an eye-opener for me because, until that point, I had always assumed that a new method with a clear potential to save money and resources would immediately be embraced... The clearest evidence of Da's love and devotion to teaching was perhaps the fact that he never seemed to hesitate to take time out of his very busy schedule at SCK-CEN – the Belgian Nuclear Research Centre – and travel the long distance from Mol to Ghent each time to teach at Ghent University. We are really going to miss him as a valued guest lecturer and a source of inspiration for new generations of students."

Master Thesis Students

Throughout the years, Da's involvement at Ghent University was of great influence on the master theses of many graduate students in Mathematics as well as Computer Science, and often even the start of their scientific career.

Mike Nachtegael (master thesis in Mathematics, 1997-1998): "Although I was not a master thesis student of Da, his work has had a great and crucial impact on the start of my scientific career! During Prof. Etienne Kerre’s course on Fuzzy Set Theory, we used the book 'Introduction to the Basic Principles of Fuzzy Set Theory and some of its Applications'. I became very much intrigued by this new world that opened up to me. In that book there was a chapter dedicated to just one type of logical operators: the implication! That chapter was written by our good friend Da. I was so fascinated by it that I proposed to do my master thesis on that subject. Prof. Kerre immediately agreed, and what followed was a thorough journey in the world of implications. It was my chance to show my scientific capabilities, which finally resulted in Prof. Kerre’s initiative to let me join his research group as a PhD student. I do not know how things would have worked out – and if I would still be active at Ghent University now – if it wasn’t for that great chapter of Da in that book..."

Chris Cornelis (master thesis in Computer Science, 1999-2000): "In 2000, while I was working on my master thesis, Da offered me the possibility to write an overview chapter on the generalized modus ponens for a book he was editing together with Prof. Etienne Kerre. I vividly remember the sense of pride I felt that a paper I had contributed to, would actually be printed and published in a real book."

Through his appointment as guest professor, Da actively stimulated master theses and internships in cooperation with other SCK-CEN members. For instance, Sofie Van Landeghem (master thesis in Computer Science, 2006-2007) was co-supervised by Dr. Rafi Benotmane from the Laboratory of Radiobiology, and Bert Bonte (master thesis in Computer Science, 2006-2007) was co-supervised by Paul