About CISCL

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The organizers have asked me to briefly describe the birth and some essential features of the history of CISCL. Here I am, with these few lines on the occasion of Luigi’s 60th birthday.

CISCL was born toward the end of the year 1999. That was a time of special enthusiasm and lively activity for linguistics in Siena (where we had both arrived in the fall of 1996), which culminated with Chomsky’s visit to the University of Siena for the whole month of November, and with the two workshops in the same month organized at the Certosa of Pontignano, emanating from the conclusion of the first Cartographic Project, nationally coordinated by Luigi Rizzi. A clear need was felt at that point of creating a gravitational center, toward which the cognitive formal studies on language carried out in Siena could converge. In the imagined design, the center should function as a unifying pole for the research activity of doctoral and master students and young post-docs and, hopefully, it should attract long and short-term visitors from other national and international institutions. Indeed, this is what CISCL has become and has been over the years. Luigi’s constant presence and personal involvement as the center director, his determination in making CISCL not just an abstract entity, but rather a very concrete physical place where professors, students, visitors go on a regular basis, where ideas are developed and collaborations arise and new projects are put forth, has been crucial to the growth of CISCL and its acquired international dimension. CISCL has been, over the years, a real center for the activity of senior and young researchers together, without any attention to unproductive hierarchies; in this center researchers could all pursue their studies in generative linguistics in a very broad perspective, ranging from studies in formal syntax, semantics, phonology, discourse pragmatics, to philosophical studies in the domain of the philosophy of language and mind, to experimental studies in the domain of language acquisition and language pathology. The list of research-seminars given at CISCL over the years is quite significant if we consider the quality and international reputation of the guest speakers, as is the rich list of visitors. I think we all very much hope that CISCL will continue to be the pole of attraction it has been over the last decade and we all thank Luigi, for his fundamental impulse to the new adventure that CISCL has represented for linguistics in Siena and the enhancement in language related research it has generated.