Foreword

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The papers in this special issue of *Acta Applicandae Mathematicae* are a side effect of the conference SPT2011, held in Otranto (near Lecce, Italy) on 5–12 June 2011. The conference was organized by Giuseppe Gaeta (Milano), Ferdinand Verhulst (Utrecht), Raffaele Vitolo (Lecce), and Sebastian Walcher (Aachen), and received financial support from GNFM-INdAM (Gruppo Nazionale di Fisica Matematica, Istituto Nazionale di Alta Matematica), from Università degli Studi di Milano, and from Università del Salento through a grant by Monte dei Paschi di Siena; these Institutions should be thanked again for their help, and this is also an occasion to thank D. Dell’Anna and P. Santo for their secretarial and technical help in running the conference.

In this occasion, contrary to previous SPT conferences [1–6], it was decided not to have conference proceedings; on the other hand, continuing an approach which was already taken in previous occasions [7, 8], we decided to ask some of the participants to prepare a “tutorial paper”, i.e. a paper providing a personal view of some active field of research an directed to a wide mathematical audience. Several of these were available in preliminary form prior to the Conference, contributed to structure the discussion in Otranto, and benefitted from this discussion; others were ready only after the conference, and in a couple of cases papers were invited in the course of the conference in response to specially clear and interesting expositions. In all cases, papers were submitted after the conference and underwent a thorough refereeing process which, thanks to the constructive attitude of the anonymous referees (whom I would like to thank again for their precious help), led to further improvements. We trust that the final result, represented by the papers collected in this issue, will be of interest to readers of *Acta Applicandae Mathematicae*.

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