

Travel Report from MPSoC'05

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In July 11-15 2005 I attended the 5th International Forum on Application-Specific Multi-Processor System on Chip (MPSoC). MPSoC is a multidisciplinary forum which brings together world class R&D speakers from academia and industry to discuss issues related to Multi-Processor SoC design, and naturally also people like me who are just there to listen and learn. MPSoC 2005 took place at Relais de Margaux near the city of Bordeaux in France.

The trip to Bordeaux went without any problems, but at Bordeaux airport I had to take a taxi to the hotel since I was too late for the bus transport that had been arranged. The taxi driver did not know any English but he seemed to understand where I was headed. I guess Margaux, which was a relatively small village, had already gotten more than its usual share of visitors that day.

Margaux was slightly further from Bordeaux than I had imagined, and the hotel where the event took place was located 3 km from the village centre, so there was not that much to see or do around the hotel. On the other hand, there wasn't really that much time left after the sessions that started at 8.30 and ended 17.00 each day, followed by a dinner which usually rendered one incapable of any further activities other than discussing more or less MPSoC related matters.

Generally each day was divided into four sessions separated by lunch or coffee breaks. There were two types of sessions, either with two or three longer presentations or five short 12-minute presentations. The sessions with the short presentations proved to be very interesting and varying, although some speakers had some difficulty to squeeze in everything they had to say in 12-minutes. The first day was started off with two keynotes. The first one was by Lisa Su from IBM, who discussed digital media as the new frontier for supercomputing. Su explained the problems and limitations of today's semi conductor technology and stated that in the future increased performance will depend on innovation rather than technology, presenting the Cell processor as an example. The second keynote was presented by Alain Artieri from ST Microelectronics and described the Nomadik Multimedia Processors from ST. The rest of the first day included tutorial sessions, which focused on HW and SW challenges of MPSoC design.

One of the most interesting sessions during the week was entirely dedicated to the IBM Cell processor and included two presentations describing the architecture and implementation of the processor. Another interesting presentation was given by André DeHon on Sub Lithographic Semiconductor Computing Systems, which seemed slightly more futuristic than the other presentations. Many of the presentations during the week pointed out the increasing need for software development tools and programming models for multi processor systems.

The week proved to be very interesting although it was somewhat difficult to stay focused at the end of the week.