RANDOM WALKS AND DISCRETE POTENTIAL THEORY

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The following pages contain the table of contents and preface of the proceedings volume of the conference held in Cortona (Italy) in June 1997.

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Preface

This book contains the proceedings of the conference on "Random Walks and Discrete Potential Theory" that was held in Cortona, a town in southern Tuscany, Italy, in June 1997.

The scientific committee of the meeting consisted of V. A. Kaimanovich (Rennes), L. Saloff-Coste (Toulouse, now Ithaca), M. A. Picardello (Rome) and W. Woess (Milan), the latter two being the local organizers and editors of this volume. The papers presented here were written upon invitation of the editors, and underwent a process of (mild) refereeing. "Mild" because we are very happy to be able to unite a representative cross-section of recent work on Random Walks, Discrete Potential Theory, and several intimately related topics authored by such prominent contributors.

We are grateful to all organizations that directly or indirectly supported this conference. It was held at the "Palazzone", a 16th century castle close to Cortona. It is owned by the Scuola Nationale Superiore di Pisa, who rents it for serveral months every year to the INdAM - the Italian National Insitute of Higher Mathematics. The meeting was patronized by the INdAM, which took care of the logistical infrastructure and the most substantial part of the funding. Significant financial support also came from the Italian National Research Council (CNR - GNAFA), the MURST project "Problemi nonlineari" coordinated by Prof. A. Fasano, and the Departments of Mathematics of the Universities of Milan and Rome II.

In some sense, we understand this conference as the continuation of a "tradition" that began in 1988 with a meeting, also held in Cortona, on "Harmonic Analysis on Trees and Graphs" (organized by M. A. Picardello and A. Figà-Talamanca), and was continued in the 1991 conference in Frascati on "Harmonic Analysis and Discrete Potential Theory" (organized by M. A. Picardello, editor of the proceedings that appeared in Plenum Press, NY, 1992) and the workshop on "Harmonic Functions on Graphs" (organized by A. Korányi, editor of the proceedings that appeared in Contemporary Mathematics, Vol. 206, 1997). The next event in this row can be expected in 2001: a special semester on "Random Walks" at the Schrödinger Insitute in Vienna is in its preparatory phase.

May 1999 Massimo A. Picardello and Wolfgang Woess