A Journey with ConTEXT

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Autumn 2015: starting to write a long article, organising what was shown at 3 previous ConTEXt meetings.
The departure

Autumn 2015: starting to write a long article, organising what was shown at 3 previous ConTEXt meetings.

Some floating figures ← chart module, METAPOST.
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Some floating figures $\iff$ chart module, METAPOST.

Excerpts given in Scheme.
Experience

Very important experience using \LaTeX, including:
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- *semantic* commands,
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- reuse of previous parts.
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Using Plain \TeX for some special effects.
Experience

Very important experience using \LaTeX, including:

- semantic commands,
- reuse of previous parts.

Using Plain \TeX for some special effects.

Significant experience using XSL-FO.
\LaTeX vs \Context

Basis: $\begin{\ldots} \ldots \end{\ldots}$ in $\LaTeX$
\textsc{\LaTeX} vs \textsc{Con\TeX t}

Basis: $\begin{\ldots} \ldots \end{\ldots}$ in \LaTeX

is $\begin{start} \ldots \end{stop}$ in Con\TeX t,
\LaTeX \textbf{vs} Con\TeX t

Basis: $\begin{\ldots}\end{\ldots}$ in $\LaTeX$

is $\texttt{\textbackslash start\ldots\textbackslash stop\ldots}$ in Con\TeX t, with:

$\texttt{\textbackslash setup\ldots}$ for customisation.
What is a paragraph?

Last year, at BachoTeX, here we had fun! Hadn't we?
What is a *paragraph*?

Last year, at BachoTEX, here we had fun! Hadn't we?

1 paragraph? Or 3?
What is a paragraph? (con’d)

\[
\text{\LaTeX} \iff 1 \\
\text{Plain \TeX} \iff 3 \\
\text{Con\TeX t} \iff 3
\]

In fact, Con\TeX t is close to XSL-FO.
By the way... 

XSL-FO’s terminology avoids the ‘paragraph’ word and introduces the elements fo:block and fo:inline.
By the way...

XSL-FO’s terminology avoids the ‘paragraph’ word and introduces the elements \texttt{fo:block} and \texttt{fo:inline}.

Attributes control space between blocks, and conflicts between adjacent blocks.
By the way...

XSL-FO’s terminology avoids the ‘paragraph’ word and introduces the elements `fo:block` and `fo:inline`.

Attributes control space between blocks, and conflicts between adjacent blocks.

The mark-up is always explicit in XSL-FO, whereas it may be *implicit* in ConTeXt.
Let’s go back to ConTEXT

Some words here.
[\stopsomething]

[\indentation | \noindentation] continued
Let’s go back to ConTEXT

Some words here.
[\stopsomething]

[\indentation | \noindentation] continued

\stopsomething can close a floating object’s specifi-
cation.
What I like

Homogeneous syntax, better distinction between style and content.
What I like

Homogeneous syntax, better distinction between *style* and *content*.

*Semantic* commands:

\definehighlight[packagename][style=type]
\definehighlight[varname][style=\tt\sl]
What I like

Homogeneous syntax, better distinction between style and content.

*Semantic commands:*

```latex
\definehighlight[packagename][style=type]
\definehighlight[varname][style=\tt\sl]
```

`\definetype[TEXcode][option=TEX]` better than `\verb+...+!`
What I like

Homogeneous syntax, better distinction between *style* and *content*.

*Semantic commands:*

\definehighlight[packagename][style=type]
\definehighlight[varname][style=\tt\sl]
\definetype[TEXcode][option=TEX] better than \verb+...+!

Integration **METAPOST**/text.
Good

Table building.
Table building.

Font switching commands, including directives for tables.
Good

Table building.

Font switching commands, including directives for tables.

Defining *labels* and referring to it (`\in`).
Hmmmh!

The documentation available on Internet is really usable if you know commands’ names.
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If you are looking for a concept or an action, that may be tedious.
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Difficult to search source files ← I don’t know how they are built and organised.
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If you are looking for a concept or an action, that may be tedious.

Difficult to search source files ← I don’t know how they are built and organised.

No section (or chapter) zero?
Is ConTeXt clean? or too clean?

In \LaTeX{}, some tricks allows users to solve problems quicky, even if results are debatable, even if these tricks may be dirty.
Is ConTEXt clean? or too clean?

In \LaTeX, some tricks allows users to solve problems quickly, even if results are debatable, even if these tricks may be dirty.

Examples: tabbing environment, direct handling of counters, placing figures.
Is ConTExt clean? or too clean?

In LaTeX, some tricks allows users to solve problems quickly, even if results are debatable, even if these tricks may be dirty.

Examples: tabbing environment, direct handling of counters, placing figures.

In ConTeXt, either a clean solution exists, or such a solution does not exist, or a workaround is difficult to implement in practice (e.g., section zero).
Atomic transaction

\LaTeX \leftarrow users are in charge of solving cross-references, calling external tools, such as \texttt{BIBTEX} or \texttt{makeindex}.
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After running \LaTeX, the result’s state may be \textit{inconsistent}.
Atomic transaction

\LaTeX \leftarrow \text{users are in charge of solving cross-references, calling external tools, such as } \texttt{BIBTEX} \text{ or } \texttt{makeindex}.

After running \LaTeX, the result’s state may be \textit{inconsistent}.

Possible \textit{manual} interventions (e.g., .bbl files).
Atomic transaction (con’d)

How to change an external program?
Atomic transaction (con’d)

How to change an external program?

How to arrange the files such a program has just built (even if we shouldn’t do that).
TEX & Co.

Programs and tools built out of TEX are still used, because there are many people capable to help you in case of a problem:
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with some requirements,
TEX & Co.

Programs and tools built out of \TeX\ are still used, because there are many people capable to help you in case of a problem:

with some requirements,

with \TeX\’s language (cf. a previous talk at Bacho\TeX).
Players

Bernd Raichle in DANTE 200? (autumn): some hierarchy of \LaTeX{} users. . .
Players

Bernd Raichle in DANTE 200? (autumn): some hierarchy of \LaTeX users. . .

little players $<$ medium players $<$ master players
Intermezzo

What does ‘LMD’ stand for? (A question for students!)
Intermezzo

What does ‘LMD’ stand for? (A question for students!)

Little players
Master ......
Damned ......
Players in Context

From my point of view, no medium one.
Players in ConTEXT

From my point of view, no medium one.

Master players $\equiv$ developers.
Players in ConTEXT

From my point of view, no medium one.

Master players $\equiv$ developers.

The rest $\exists$ little players.
The professional side

Conferences $\iff$ automatic management of submission/acceptance/final version’s deposit
The professional side

Conferences $\leftrightarrow$ automatic management of submission/acceptance/final version’s deposit

with (archaic) version of \LaTeX and (bugged) \texttt{.bst} styles.
The professional side

Conferences ↔ automatic management of submission/acceptance/final version’s deposit

with (archaic) version of \LaTeX{} and (bugged) .bst styles.

How to manage an evolution towards modern tools?
The professional side

Conferences ← automatic management of submission/acceptance/final version’s deposit

with (archaic) version of \LaTeX{} and (bugged) .bst styles.

How to manage an evolution towards modern tools?

In addition: working urgently.
Teaching activities

Reusing and combining parts already used.
Teaching activities

Reusing and combining parts already used.

Updating examples and solutions.
Teaching activities

Reusing and combining parts already used.

Updating examples and solutions.

Quite urgently, too. Stable version.
The journey’s end?

Leaving for a trip gives strength to do that again.
The journey’s end?

*Leaving for a trip gives strength to do that again.*

(Advertisement for Nouvelles Frontières, a French travel agency.)
Final conclusion

I don’t regret anything.
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I don’t regret anything.

I’ll go on other journeys with ConTeXt,
Final conclusion

I don’t regret anything.
I’ll go on other journeys with ConTeXt,
but I don’t plan to use it intensively.
Final conclusion

I don’t regret anything.

I’ll go on other journeys with ConTEXT, but I don’t plan to use it intensively.

I think it will take several years before ‘quite-industrial’ use.