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Media Computing Group
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Abstract

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Acknowledgements

Thank you!

Conventions

Throughout this thesis we use the following conventions.

Text conventions

Definitions of technical terms or short excursus are set off in coloured boxes.

> **EXCURSUS:**
> Excursus are detailed discussions of a particular point in a book, usually in an appendix, or digressions in a written text.

Definition:
Excursus

Source code and implementation symbols are written in typewriter-style text.

```
myClass
```

The whole thesis is written in Canadian English.

Download links are set off in coloured boxes.

> **File: myFile**[a]
> _____
> [a]http://hci.rwth-aachen.de/public/folder/file_number.file

Chapter 1

Introduction

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Chapter 2

Related work

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Chapter 3

Hardware Prototype and Software Development

In this chapter we first describe the basic differences between the two most popular touch input technologies and which is best suited for wearable scenarios. Then we proceed with showing several iterations of the hardware prototypes using pinstripe and the corresponding software. Furthermore we describe the disadvantages and improvements of each iteration. The results of two user studies are discussed afterwards.

3.1 Resistive vs. Capacitive Touch

The two most popular touch input technologies are resistive and capacitive. Both serve the same purpose but the underlying principle differs making them more or less suited for wearable computing.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Resistive and Capacitive Touch Technology

3.1.1 Capacitive Touch

Characteristics of Capacitive Touch
ToDo: find simple explanation of capacitive touch.

The advantages of capacitive touch is the easy support for multi-touch input and the almost no need to press down the area of the sensor. The main disadvantage is the human body itself, since it generates its own capacitive field which makes it hard to detect the intentional touch. This flaw is intensified by the movement of the textile due to body movement. **TODO: source! Especially for earlier findings why it is worse than resistive**

3.1.2   Resistive Touch

Characteristics of Resistive Touch

Resistive touch technology uses two separated layers of striped electrodes such that it is arranged to a matrix. The spacing material in ordinary resistive touch screens is either an air filled chamber or a non-conductive material which separates both layers while no external force is applied. Therefore one can operate it with a stylus or with gloves since no conductivity is required. On the one hand this solves the main disadvantage of the capacitive method regarding wearable computing, on the other hand it is still prone to deformation and thus to unintentional contacts.

Going for Resistive Touch

After taking all characteristics into account we decided to go for the resistive touch technology, because we can drop all considerations of capacitive noise caused by the human body.

3.2   System Design

MSP430 for first prototype

ToDo: exact specification of pinstripe and micro-controller und den gripper probe Klemmkabeln!!

All prototypes presented here are using pinstripe, a fabric with separated conductive lines. For the first prototype we were using the Texas Instruments MSP430G2452 microcontroller. Each row and column of the pinstripe has to be connected to a *digitalRead* pin of the micro-controller. The MSP430 controller has 16 of these pins but only 14 can be used since two pins are used for serial communication. This results in a matrix resolution of 7 by 7 at maximum.

> **RESOLUTION IN PINSTRIPE CONTEXT:**
> When speaking of a certain resolution of our prototype, we talk about the number of connected rows and columns. Since the pinstripe fabric is of a static size, the higher the resolution the larger the prototype gets.

Definition:
Resolution in pinstripe context

We are using the TI EK-TM4C1294XL for the advanced prototypes. This board has the ability to connect more than 40 pins for *digitalRead* to operate a 20 by 20 pinstripe matrix. The board is connected to a Computer via USB for serial communication.

For programming the micro-controller we are using the Energia IDE[1]. It is an easy to use IDE to upload programs to the TI micro-controller. The micro-controller itself is solely responsible for sending the data of the sensor to the computer via serial communication. Meaning that it tests a pin against ground for each other line and column. A *1* is written to the serial-port when it is connected to another line or column and *0* otherwise. This is done for each pin where *numberOfPintripes* is the number of all lines and columns. For each prototype an integer array is declared and can easily be commented and uncommented depending on the prototype. The where the pin numbers are sorted such that the first pins correspond to the x-axis and the last pins to the negative y-axis. After all pins were tested we send a line-break to determine the end of the current input.

Programming Environment: Energia IDE and Processing to gather, send and process input data

We are using Processing[2], a Java based IDE, to structure the input stream from the micro-controller for further analyses. This includes several programs which either displays the raw touch points for debugging purpose or filters and interprets the sensor data. The changes of software are described along with each hardware iteration.

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[1]http://energia.nu
[2]http://processing.org

3.3   Early Testing

After deciding to go for the resistive approach, the essential challenge is to find a spacing material with certain characteristics. The material should

- be flexible by means of being wearable.

- reliably separate the pinstripe fabric while no touch is intended.

- concede rather easily when intended force is applied.

We start by trying some leftovers from recent research projects. Then we place the materials between the pinstripe fabric to examine different behaviors. We glued both layers of the pinstripe fabric to sheets of paper to eliminate stretching and curling of the fabric. Some of the the materials are cut with a laser cutter. We cut equidistant circular holes to provide space for the pinstripe layers to connect. We attached 4 by 4 pinstripes to the MSP430 microcontroller. For displaying where a touch is present, we created a simple program with Processing. Almost all available materials are not well suited for our purpose, since they are either too thick, thin or stiff. When combining up to two materials, which are leading to permanent contacts on their own, the results are improving. Nonetheless it is still susceptible to the slightest bend and therefore not well suited. Therefore we are using foam for the latest prototype.

3.4   The Prototype

In this section we will first talk about the materials and fabrics we use for our prototype and describe how it is built.

3.4.1   Material

After numerous trials we gathered some knowledge about the key elements needed for this technique to work properly. The first and crucial aspect is the spacing material. The prototype uses a 3 mm thick layer of foam which is coated with thin layer of cotton. Foam has the properties we need to separate the pinstripe layer while no force is applied and yield rather easily when the user presses on it. Another positive feature is the increased resistance to unintended pressure caused by bending or accidental contact with the sensor. When evaluating the prototype we will take a closer look to which extend we can bend the prototype and how it performs in marginal conditions.
We use a laser cutter to cut equidistant holes out of the foam to allow the pinstripe layers to connect. This procedure leaves enough foam between the holes to retain the properties we need.

3 mm foam as spacing material

ToDo: model of lasercutter?

Another problem we have to address is the stretchability and the translatory movement of the fabrics. Each time the user performs a gesture the upper layer moves in the respective direction due to the friction between the operating finger and the surface. This causes the the pinstripe fabric to shift such that the conductive stripes are not aligned to the holes properly, resulting in the prototype to stop working. When we started testing we used needles, clips, and nails to fix the materials to each other. Not only that these methods are not well suited for wearablity, also fixing the materials exclusively at the edges is not sufficient. Nonetheless the flexibility of the pinstripe fabric can cause the shift we want to eliminate.

Issues with flexibility and translatory movement

To deal with the issues described above we use Vliesofix. Vliesofix is an adhesive on paper which can be ironed on textile. The paper can be removed afterwards and another fabric can be ironed to the corresponding textile. This results in an extensive adhesive area between two fabrics. The application of Vliesofix not only resolves the translatory movement but also the curling of the pinstripe

Vliesofix for fixating the components of the prototype
ToDo: find exact product description

fabric.

3.4.2   Construction

We decide two to prototypes with different dimensions. The first prototype has a resolution of 14 by 14 pinstripes and the second prototype has a resolution of 20 by 20. Since the procedure of making the prototypes is similar we only describe its building procedure for the smaller one.

We start by cutting out a x by x cm piece of the 3 mm foam using the laser cutter. Then we cut out two sheet of Vliesofix with the corresponding dimensions and proceed by ironing them on both sides of the foam. This has to be done carefully since the applying heat for two long can cause the foam to melt. After cooling down the foam looses the desired properties to a certain degree. When removing the iron too soon the Vliesofix might not be adhesive enough.

ToDo: determine exact size of all used materials

Once the material is cooled off we can remove the paper of the Vliesofix. We proceed with cutting the holes in the foam with the Vliesofix. Making the laser cutter cut more rows and columns of holes ensures that the resistance of the foam is the same throughout the touch sensitive area. Otherwise more force is needed at the edges than around the center.

ToDo: check if its true and change it

To prepare the two pinstripe layer to adhere it to the foam we again use Vliesofix first for preventing the fabric from curling and easy stretching. We do so before cutting out the pinstripe to make handling the fabric easier. Note that, while using Vliesofix with the pinstripe fabric, it is even more important to apply heat for too long. When the Vliesofix becomes liquid it gets soaked into the fabric. In some cases we ascertained that for this reason the conductivity of the pinstripes gets lost in some places. This immediately renders the sensor useless. Apart from that we do not remove the paper of the Vliesofix at this point.

ToDo: maybe think about a detailed description of the fabric we have at the fab lab

We proceed with attaching the pinstripe layers to the foam. The stripes of each layer must be perpendicular to one another. Then we iron the untreated side of the one

pinstripe fabric to the foam and after cooling off the other pinstripe to the other side. We have to make sure that the conductive stripes and the holes in the foam are aligned properly. Now we can remove the paper from the pinstripe fabric.

After that we iron a corresponding piece of polyester on the upper side of the sensor to reduce the friction between the finger and treated pinstripe layer. The last step is to connect the sensor to the micro controller. Furthermore we connect a Bluetooth module for wireless data stream. The power source can either be a computer or an battery pack which are connected by a micro USB cable.

ToDo: bluetooth module?

3.5   The Software

The software is divided into two parts, the code running on the micro controller and the application running on the computer. The code for the micro controller is straight forward. We define an one dimensional array for each prototype in which the pin numbers are stored such that the first half of the array denote the horizontal x-axis starting from left to right and the second half the vertical y-axis starting from top to bottom. Now we can check each pin of the array respectively if it is connected to ground. This means that the conductive stripe connected to that pin has a connection to another stripe and a *1* is sent via the serial communication and a *0* otherwise. The line break after the *for* loop lets us determine if a complete input set is received.

Code for TI EK-TM4C1294XL

 In Processing we read the data from the serial communication and store it in a buffer including the time stamp. If at least one *1* per data set is read, we consider it to be a touch. Sometimes the contact of the pinstripe layer is lost while performing a gesture due to insufficient pressure or a undersized locating surface of the operating finger. Therefore we implemented a threshold in which we can read only *0* without the touch phase to end. This threshold is reset anytime if a *1* is read. The raw data is logged for potential analyses as shown in figure 3.1.

Receiving the data via serial communication in Processing

```
000010000000000000110000000;4.0
000001000000000000110000000;5.0
000000110000000000110000000;5.0
000000010000000000110000000;5.0
000000000100000000100000000;70.0
000000000111000000100000000;340.0
000000000000010000010000000000;340.0
000000000001000010000000000;340.0
000000000000000100000000000;340.0
000000000000000000000000000;358.0
000000000110001000000000000;433.0
000000000100001000000000000;720.0
000000011000000100000000000;720.0
000000010000000010000000000;720.0
000000010000000001000000000;721.0
000000010000000000100000000;721.0
000000011000000000010000000;789.0
000000011000000000001100000;1071.0
000000001000000000000010000;1071.0
000000001000000000000001000;1071.0
000000001000000000000000100;1072.0
000000000000000000000000010;1090.0
000001000000000000000000010;1141.0
000010000000000000000000100;1403.0
000100000000000000000001000;1404.0
000100000000000000000010000;1404.0
000100000000000000000110000;1404.0
000001000000000000000100000;1438.0
000000110000000000000100000;1489.0
000000001000000000000110000;1754.0
000000000001000000000010000;1754.0
000000000000010000000010000;1754.0
000000000000010000000010000;1754.0
000000000000010000000010000;1805.0
000000000000010000000000000;1856.0
000000000000000000000000000;2094.0
```

Figure 3.1: Example of the raw data of one gesture. On the left-hand side the sensor input and on the right the time stamps in milliseconds.

Use a filter algorithm to reduce the data

Since more than one vertical and horizontal pinstripe can be connected at the same time we apply a filter algorithm. This filter algorithm takes all x-coordinates and calculates the average and the same for the y-coordinates. The resulting triple composed of the coordinate and the time stamp is added to an *Arraylist* buffer. This is done for all input sets except for all those, who only consists of *0's*. There are two reasons for filtering the input data. The first is the resilience to noise caused by unintended connections or slow separation of the pinstripe layers. The second reason is fact that it is easier for implementing gesture recognition. Apart from this it is the user intends to press only one point at the sensor.
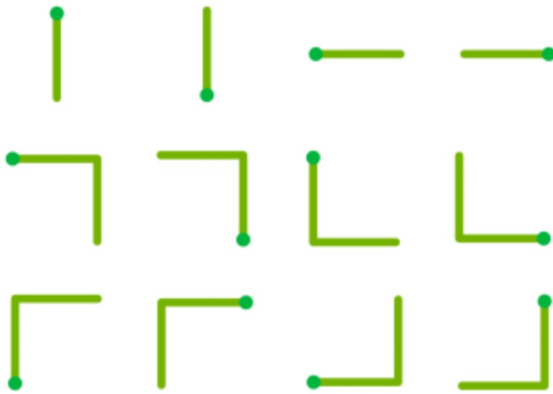
Figure 3.2: Mark-based gestures. Gestures start at the dots. Bragdon et al. [2011]

The next step is to actual recognize easy strokes performed on the prototype. Since our prototypes have a rather low resolution compared to typical touch input devices we focus on rather simple unistroke gestures. These mark-based gestures are shown in figure 3.2. We extend this gestures set by adding 5 gestures. These gestures are a tab and for each swipe gesture we expand it with a swipe in the opposite direction. This leads to a gesture set with 17 simple gestures.

Our gesture recognition works as follows. First of all we do not recognize in real-time. We analyze all filtered points, stored in the buffer, after a gesture is considered finished. Then the algorithm works as follows.

- check for tab
  - return *true* if the size of the buffer is 1
  - return *true* if the all coordinates have a *distance* smaller or equal to 1 respectively and the time elapsed is smaller than 200 milliseconds
  - else check for other gestures

- check for swipe
  - assume there is a swipe with the first and the last item of the buffer as terminal points

Implementing
mark-based gesture
recognition

- – calculate the $distance$ of the line
- – return $false$ if the $distance$ is smaller than 3
- – for all other points calculate the $distanceToLine$
- – return $false$ if at some index the $distanceToLine$ is greater than 1
- – else determine the direction of the swipe and return $true$

- check for angle

  - – check if there is a line between the point at $index - 1$ and last point in the buffer under the exact same conditions applied for swipe
  - – return $false$ if at some index the $distanceToLine$ is greater than 1
  - – calculate the directions of both lines and return $true$

- end of checking

This algorithm classifies each gesture as a tab, swipe, angle, or no gesture. In combination with the directions we calculate for each swipe we can distinguish between all 16 mark-based gestures. The orientation of a line is mapped to one of the four directions up, left, right, or down. Therefore our prototype is resilient to a certain degree of input error. With less effort we can further extend the gesture set by distinguish more directions.

Recognizing more complex gestures by making use of the 1\$ recognizer

After some testing we noticed that we we can recognize mark-based gestures to almost 100% correctly using our recognition algorithm.

Chapter 4

System Evaluation

In this chapter we will evaluate the robustness and amount of noise the system generates in different extreme conditions. We will take a closer look at the performance of the 14 by 14 prototype. Since the prototype is designed as a wearable, we are interested in its behavior under certain changing conditions. We conducted an informal user study to test the physical limitations of our prototype.

Testing the 14 by 14 prototype

4.1 Physical Limitation Study

 The human body is in motion almost all the time and the clothes we are wearing are not fixed to the skin. This *looseness* and the changing subsurface are variables that may influence the performance of our prototype. Another variable is the *friction* of the overlaying material. Depending on the fabric and method of fashioning, it can, more or less, likely, happen that the user slips of the touch-sensing area, or experiences an unpleasant feeling in the operating finger. Furthermore the *softness* of the underlying surface may influence the performance of our prototype. The human body has different softness almost everywhere. The amount of muscles, adipose tissue, and so forth also differs from hu-

Independent variables: friction, softness, looseness, and curvature

man to human. This, in the first place, affects the pressure needed by the user. Then there are the different levels of curvature. Our prototype has flexible spacing-material to separate the pinstripe layer. After a certain amount of bend the material starts creasing, causing some permanent contacts. In this study we will test our prototype in conditions which aim to simulate the in field circumstances. To test to which degree of bend the prototype breaks we used different foams with the same height but different softness.

4.2   Study Design

The participants had to perform 8 different gestures in different conditions. To control the curvature, we used aerosol cans with 53 mm diameter and 66mm diameter. As a baseline we also used the table with a flat surface. When we tried to perform gestures on a curvature below 53 mm we got permanent contacts immediately. To fixate the aerosol cans we build stands using a laser cutter. The prototype was fixed with duct tape to the surface of the cans and . To achieve the curvature with the foam, we used a book and wrapped the foam around the cover and clipped it in a vise. The fabrics (jeans, cotton,) were pinned with needles to the prototype. Nevertheless, there is still a certain amount of movement due to the flexibility of the fabrics. Since we aim to build a textile touch pad for eyes-free interaction, the user can not see the output on the screen.

ToDo: brown farbric?
ToDo: insert pictures

The conditions, at least curvature and softness, were chosen at random. In order to shorten the time of the study, we tested all fabrics consecutively changing the order. Some prior testing has shown that the foam with a density of todofind that paper with the numbers xxxxxx and xxxxxxx perform alike. Thus we dropped the foam with higher density after the first participant tested both foams in one condition without significant differences in terms of input error.

The participants were filmed while interacting with the prototype. Furthermore the screen with our program was captured to determine the by eye, whether the gesture was recognized correctly or, if not, should have been recognized correctly. Additionally, our program created two log-files for every condition. One logged the filtered data and one the raw sensor data. Both files logged the time it took to perform each gesture.

ToDo: mention participants

4.3   Study Procedure

After the user arrived we introduced her to our prototype. We explained the basic functionality and demonstrated how the output looks like. Then we let the user test the eight gestures and some freestyle strokes. This was done without foam or any additional fabric. We pointed out that a certain amount of pressure is essential for our prototype to recognize the touch. When they felt familiar enough, about 2 minutes of testing, we prepared the first condition.

For each condition we setup a GoPro Hero 3 to capture the prototype and the acting hand of the user. When we were ready to start recording the screen and setup, we told the user to continue. Since the user cannot see the output during the study, we told the user when insufficient pressure was applied or when the touch-sensing area was left. In both cases we most likely recognized one or two wrong gestures. We represent the number of wrong gestures with an x in the respective chart.

When one condition is completed we asked the user about their impressions of the fabric, softness, and curvature.

4.4   Observation

Chapter 5

Summary and future work

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5.1 Summary and contributions

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5.2   Future work

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Appendix A

TITLE OF THE FIRST APPENDIX

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Appendix B

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