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Multi-Robot Task Allocation for logistic applications

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Abstract

Robotics technology has recently matured sufficiently to deploy autonomous robotic systems for daily use in several applications: from disaster response to environmental monitoring and logistics. In this project we present and evaluate the main difference of central allocator task coordinator. In this application we address off-line coordination, by casting the Multi-Robot logistics problem as a task assignment problem and proposing three solution techniques: Single robot Single task (SR:ST), which is a baseline greedy approach, Greedy Set Partition Strategy - Single robot Multiple task (GSP1:N) and Set Partition Strategy - Single robot Multiple task (SPS1:N), which are based on composing task to minimize the task completion time.

We evaluate the performance of our system in a realistic simulation environment (build with ROS and stage). In particular, in the simulated environment we compare our task assignment approaches with the baseline greedy approach. Results show that fully exploiting the capacities of robots is key to optimize system performance and that the GSP1:N achieves similar performance to SPS1:N while being able to scale up to many tasks.

Keywords: Multi-Robot Task Allocation, logistic applications, Multi-Robot systems, coordination, task assignment

Chapter 1

Introduction

The use of MRS is a key aspects to obtain effective solutions in several real world applications such as for example ¹.

More particularly, this thesis addresses the cooperation of a team of mobile robots in logistic missions. The main aspects studied herein are strategies for effective logistic performance, agent's coordination, scalability and applicability in real-life situations. In our logistic application the robot team execute specific tasks modeled as exogenous events that are characterized by a pick-up location and a delivery location each.

This introductory chapter presents the context of the research in order to clarify the motivation and significance of the problem. In addition, some guidelines about MRS in general and, more specifically, agents in logistic missions are herein introduced to lay the groundwork to approach the problem in hands. Finally, we provide an overview of the thesis content.

1.1 Context and Motivation

In recent years, robotics has been one of the scientific fields with the most substantial advances. Among the different areas of robotics, mobile robotics gained in the last decades significant attention roboticists (i.e., researchers on robotics) around the world. In particular, issues such as autonomous nav-

¹See for example the Kiva system used by Amazon in their warehouse <https://www.wired.com/2009/01/retailrobots/>.

igation, path planning, self-localization, coordination of robots, cooperative dynamics, mapping, exploration and coverage have become popular topics and have exploited the progress of artificial intelligence, control theory, real-time systems, sensors' development, electronics, communication systems and systems integration [1].

Nowadays, we see different types of robots operating in different environments as on land, underwater, in the air, suspended on wires, climbing and so on. This evident growth is extremely motivating for the development and contribution of new developments by the community.

Security applications are a fundamental task with unquestionable impact on society. Combining this fact with the technological evolution observed in the last decades, it becomes clear that robot assistance can be a valuable resource by taking advantage of robots' ability to carry out tedious or dangerous tasks for a very long time.

The principal scope of the MRS in logistic application is reduce the costs of the production phase and increase the productivity that the robots guarantee in these applications.

In particular, Multi-Robot allocator task for logistic applications has high utility and is considered as a key area where the use of robots can have a dramatic impact on productivity in last decade, especially in terms of strategies for coordinating teams of robots. A key point in for effective application of MRS in logistic application is to coordiante actions of the robot platforms [2]. However, many of the studies in the literature present unrealistic simplifications, strong limitations or questionable applicability as illustrated 1.3. Therefore, there is an eminent potential to explore in this context.

Task allocation for logistic applications problem is very challenging in the context of MRS , because agents must navigate autonomously, coordinate their actions and acquire information about the surrounding enviroment, possibly with communication constraints and should be able to achieve good performance on the number of robots in the team and the enviroment's dimension. Clearly, cooperation among robots is one of the most decisive issues in this context, since robots most efficiently work together in order to improve the performance of the system as a whole. All of these features lead to an excellent case study in mobile robotics and conclusions drawn from such

studies may support the development of future approaches not only in the logistic domain but also in MRS in general.

1.2 Multi-Robot Systems

During the last two decades, researchers in the field of mobile robotics have begun to investigate problems that involve multiple robot rather than using single robot, and research in MRS has witnessed notorious progress an never before. In many applications, an autonomous mobile robot equipped with different sensors may adequately complete a given assignment. However, in several situations. it proves to be more expensive, less efficient and less robust than using a MRS . In some cases, due to the need of combining different tasks and the dynamics of the environment, it is only viable to achieve the mission with a multiple distributed autonomous robotic system. Some characteristics of MRS include distributed control, autonomy, communicative agents and greater fault-tolerance. A single robot may be vulnerable to hostile environments or attackers, for example, in military actions. In such scenarios, agents would greatly benefit from the assistance of nearby agents during emergencies, failures or malfunctions.

Logistic applications can significantly benefit from the use of several robots, however (as we discussed above) the effective use of MRS in logistic applications requires a significant effort to delevop an effective and efficient coordinated solution.

Most missions are solved much quicker it robots operate in parallel. Increasing robustness and reliability of the solution is also feasible in MRS by introducing redundancies in the capabilities across robot team member and graceful performance degradation, remaining functional if some of the agents fail.

One of the main difficulties when approaching these systems is to coordinate many robots to perform a complex, global task in an efficient manner, maximizing group performance under a wide range of conditions, with the flexibility to take advantage of the resources available, embrace the requirements and constraints imposed and resolve issues like action selection, coherence, conflict resolution and communication. This cannot be done by just

increasing the number of robots assigned to a task. A coordination mechanism must exist to establish relationships between agents so that they can accomplish the mission effectively.

1.3 Multi-Robot Systems for logistic applications

Logistic application an infrastructure with multiple robots is no different than other Multi-Robot assignments, in the sense that it incorporates all the previously mentioned characteristics of MRS . To understand this problem, it is important to first introduce the definition of logistic application.

Definition 1. *The industrial logistics is the process of planning, organization and control of all the activities of handling and storage of goods, which, starting from the suppliers and reaching up to the end user, guarantee an adequate level of service to the customer consistent with the costs to it associated* ².

A traditional warehouse employee typically spends most of his or her time walking around the warehouse to gather all of the items for an order. In manual warehouse, a picker might walk between seven and fifteen miles per shift ³. To save labor by reducing the time spent walking, a lot company adopt MRS to improving the productivity and have an efficient service for customers.

Many real-world applications of MRS require agents to operate in known common environments. Our logistic scenario is a map of laboratory for industry 4.0 (ICE lab) with a modern production line, extended with equipment for augmented reality and digital production, and connected with the university computational platform plus new hubs.

Below is reported the Figure 1.1 of the Industrial Computer Engineering Laboratory used in our logistic scenario.

²See Basic concepts of Industrial Logistics and Logistics System https://elearning.unito.it/sme/pluginfile.php/36284/mod_folder/content/0/LOGISTICA

³<http://www.businessinsider.com/working-conditions-at-an-amazon-warehouse-2013-2?IR=T>

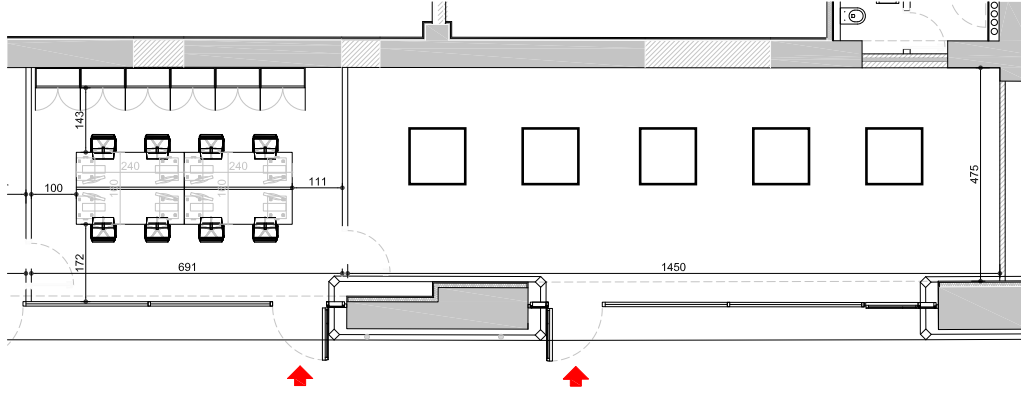


Figure 1.1: This is our logistic scenario of Industrial Computer Engineering Laboratory

The map used in the simulator is scaled to have measurements in real environment. In this map we have build the logistic system to perform pick-up and delivery tasks.

An pick-up and delivery task is characterized by a pickup location and a delovery location. An agent has to move from its current location via the pickup location of the task to delivery location of the task. When the agent reaches the pickup location, it starts to execute the task and the task is removed from the task set.

Wheeled mobile robots mostly operate over a differential drive mechanism. It consists of two motors attached wirh wheels on a similar axis. Both motor drives are independent of each other's movement. The common access of both motors is known as their center of curvature. The agent cannot move in the direction along axis. Since both motors can move independently, their velocities are also different and we can easily vary the trajectory of move-

ment by varying velocities. The velocities of both drivers must be synchronized in order to move the agent in the desired path. The robot constructs a two-dimensional geometric representation of its environment using the laser scanner. It utilizes a combination of this geometric data and odometry information supplied through the wheel encoders to determine its current location. For more information about navigation and localization see section 4.2. We focus our study to task-allocation problems where one wants to minimize the team cost subject to the constraint that each task must be executed by a given number of cooperative agents simultaneously. For MRS coordination in logistic application there are a lot technique, in automated warehouse, where agents are constantly engaged with new task, one agent has to be assigned to each delivery task avoiding collisions with other agents. In [3] and [10] paper has recently received a lot of attention. They present two decoupled MAPD algorithms, Token Passing (TP) and Token Passing with Task Swaps (TPTS). Where agents operate in known common environments modeled such as grids, for each task in a given 2-dimensional 4-neighbor grid with blocked and unblocked cells. The multi-agent pathfinding problem is to compute collision-free paths for multiple agents, in a post-processing step to adapt its paths to continuous forward movements with given translational velocities and point turns with given rotation velocities. They take kinematic constraints for instance the robot can turn around only 90 degree at time and can perform only one task at time. In our techniques not consider kinematic constraints and our robots can perform more than one task at time, if the capacity of robots are enough. Then we can allocate more than one task and execute its in one shot. The agents are constantly engaged with new tasks and have to navigate between locations where the tasks need to be executed. In particular, the MRS for logistic applications, the set of robots must complete a stream attend to stream of incoming pickup-and-delivery tasks.

1.4 Thesis contribution

1.5 Thesis outline

Having answered the questions "What problem is addressed in this thesis?" and "Why are we studying this problem?", it is fundamental to answer an additional question, which is: "How is the problem going to be solved?". This question requires a more in-depth answer, that is detailed throughout the rest of thesis.

Initially, an analysis of relevant literature concerning related work to the MRS is conducted in chapter 2. This allows to formulate the problem and extract some weaknesses inherent to previous works, so as to present the goals and contributions proposed in this thesis.

In chapter 3 we detail our reference scenario for MRS coordination and well as the formalization of the problem we addressed and the solutions we propose. Where we introduce the baseline approach for our experiments to then focus on two techniques which are based on composing task to minimize the task completion time.

Later on, in chapter 4 a preliminary framework to solve the MRS in logistic application.

Finally, the last chapter sums up the work and provides final conclusions and future directions of research.

Chapter 2

Background and Related Works

In this section, we detail the main issues for MRS coordination in industrial domains, then we provide a detailed discussion on coordination approaches, highlighting challenges and main solution techniques.

2.1 Multi-Robot System for Logistics Applications

In this thesis we focus on industrial scenarios where robots have a high degree of autonomy and operate in a dynamic environment.

In article [2] robots must cooperate to maximize the number of packages completed in the unit of time. To this end a crucial component is to avoid interferences when moving in the environment. They have formalised that problem as a Distributed Constrained Optimization problem based their solution on the binary max-sum algorithm.

The most recent paper in logistic scenario [3], uses a Token Passing approach that solves the pickup-and-delivery tasks. The resulting algorithm takes kinematic constraints during planning, computes continuous agent movements with given velocities that work on non-holonomic robots.

In this work, we consider a similar setting where a set of robots are involved in transportation tasks for logistics. However, we focus on the specific problem of task assignment.

2.2 Coordination in Multi-Robot Systems

Coordination for MRS has been investigated from several diverse perspectives and nowadays, there is a wide range of techniques that can be used to orchestrate the actions and movements of robots operating in the same environment. Specifically, the ability to effectively coordinate the actions of a MRS is a key requirement in several applications domains that range from disaster response to environmental monitoring, military operations, manufacturing and logistics. In all such domains, coordination has been addressed using various frameworks and techniques and there are several survey papers dedicated to categorize such different approaches and identifying most prominent issues when developing MRS .

In the paper [4] present and evaluate new ROS package for coordinated multi-robot exploration. The packages allow completely distributed control and do not rely on (but allow) central controllers.

Robotics systems may range from simple sensors, acquiring and processing data, to complex human-like machines, able to interact with the environment in fairly complex way. Moreover, it is not easy to give a definition of the level of autonomy that is required for a robot in order to be considered an entity acting in the environment, as opposed to a simple machine that provides services to the operator. From an engineering standpoint, the MRS can improve the effectiveness of a robotic system either from the viewpoint of the performance in accomplishing certain tasks, or in the robustness and reliability of the system, which can be increased by modularization. In fact, MRS are useful not only when the robots can accomplish different functions, but also when they have the same capabilities. Even when a single robot can achieve the given task, the possibility of deploying a team of robots can improve the performance of the overall system. Another significant development of MRS is technological improvements both in the hardware and in the associated software are two of the key reasons beyond the growing interest in MRS . The increased availability of complex sensor devices and robotic platforms in the research laboratories favored their development and customization, resulting in robots equipped with reliable and effective hardware that improves their basic capabilities. In addition, the software techniques developed for

the robotic applications take advantage of the hardware improvements and provide complex and reliable solutions for the basic tasks that a robot should be able to perform, while acting in real world environments: localization, path planning, object transportation, object recognition and tracking, etc.

Given our focus on logistic scenarios, here we restrict our attention to coordination approaches based on optimization and specifically on task assignment as this the most common framework for my reference application domain.

Chapter 3

Multi-Robot task allocation for pick-up and delivery

In this section we detail our reference scenario for MRS coordination and as well as the formalization of the problem we addressed and the solutions we propose.

3.1 Problem description

Our reference scenario is based on a warehouse that stores items of various types. Such items must be composed together to satisfy orders that arrive based on customers' demand. The items of various types are stored in particular sections of the building (*loading bay*) and must be transported to a set of *unloading bays* where such items are then packed together by human operators. The set of items to be transported and where they should go depends on the orders.

In our domain a set of robots is responsible for transporting items from the loading bays to the unloading bays and the system goal is to maximize the throughput of the orders, i.e., to maximize the number of orders completed in the unit of time. Now, robots involved in transportation tasks move around the warehouse and are likely to interfere when they move in close proximity, and this can become a major source of inefficiency (e.g., robots must slow down and they might even collide causing serious delays in the system).

Hence, a crucial aspect to maintain highly efficient and safe operations is to minimize the possible spatial interferences between robots.

3.2 Problem fomalization

In this section we formalize the MRS coordination problem described above as a task allocation problem where the robots must be allocated to transportation tasks.

In our formalization we have a finite set of task. A robot can execute a task if it is available else the robot will go at start position. For how the system is built, a robot to request a task must arrive at the previous vertex of the loading bay.

In more detail, our model considers a set of items of different types $E = \{e_1, \dots, e_N\}$, stored in a specific loading bay (L). The warehouse must serve a set of orders $O = \{o_1, \dots, o_M\}$. Orders are processed in one or more than one of the unloading bays (U_i). Each order is defined by a vector of demand for each item type (the number of required items to close the order). Hence, $o_j = \langle d_{1,j}, \dots, d_{N,j} \rangle$, where $d_{i,j}$ is the demand for order j of items of type i . When an order is finished a new one arrives, until the set of task is finished. The orders induce a set of $N \times M$ transportation tasks $T = t_{i,j}$, with $t_{i,j} = \langle d_{i,j}, dst_{i,j}, P_{i,j} \rangle$, where $t_{i,j}$ defines the task of transporting $d_{i,j}$ items of type i for order o_j (hence to unloading bay U_j). Each task has a destination bay for centralized coordination the $t_{i,j}$ has a set of edges $P_{i,j}$ which respects the strategy used. We have a set of robot $R = \{r_1, \dots, r_K\}$ that can execute transportation tasks, where each robot has a defined load capacity for each item type $C_k = \langle c_{1,k}, \dots, c_{N,k} \rangle$, hence $c_{i,k}$ is the load capacity of robot k for items of type i .

We consider in our logistic scenario, homogenous robots, which have the same radius and the same capacity. Because often in the logistic environments robots are all equal.

3.3 Proposed solution

In this section we propose the approaches with centralized coordination. In a warehouse the connection between robots is efficient and has no big limitations; in section 6 the decentralized coordination will be dealt with.

1. The first strategy, mentioned above, is the SR:ST which consider only one task allocated for one robot.
2. The second strategy (GSP1:N) extends the first, the main concept of this strategy is composing the tasks in a single travel with greedy approach.
3. The last strategy SPS1:N extends the second algorithm using an optimal approach to compose tasks.

3.3.1 Single robot : Single task (SR:ST)

This method is a baseline for our logistic scenario. The important constraint of this approach is to consider only one task allocated for one robot at time. Given a set of tasks, the `task_planner` (in section 4.5.3) assigns only one task at time, if the robot request a task.

The set of tasks is ordered by the function mentioned below.

```

1 inline bool pop_min_element(const Task &A, const Task &B) {
2     if ((A.dst < B.dst) && (A.demand < B.demand)) {
3         return 1;
4     } else if (A.dst == B.dst) {
5         return 1;
6     }
7     return 0;
8 }
```

Such function sorts the tasks based on the distance of the unloading bays and the demand of a specific task. For distance we consider the distance between loading bay L and unloading bays U_j . Instead for demand is the weight of the item. If the demand of the task is less equal of the capacity of the robot then it can be allocated.

After the choose of the task to allocate by using the function `compute_route()` return the path π of the task such as vector of vertices $\pi = \{v_1, \dots, v_n\}$. This vector is the path to execute the task, its start at loading bay and finish at the previously vertex of the staring vertex. For this path we calculate the path distance $|\pi|$, precisely the cost of this trail.

This algorithm take linear time or $O(n)$ time, its time complexity is $O(n)$. This means that the running time increases at most linearly with the size of the input. More precisely, this means that there is a constant c such that the running time is at most cn for every input of size n .

3.3.2 Set Partition Strategy - Single robot : Multiple task (SPS1:N)

This method consists to compute all possible coalitions of the task set using Set Partition algorithm [7] and use only the best coalition which is based on the previously mentioned heuristic $v(\cdot)$.

After initialization phase `init_agent()` which all agents send their capacity and identifier, start the partition algorithm [7] that return all possible combination of task. Then foreach combination the heuristic $v(\cdot)$ has been used to calculate the gain $G(C)$ of the combination. Furthermore the combination with the lowest gain has been choose. So a subset of combination as been sort in a crescent order. Then the first subset of combination has the lowest value of heuristic function and is the first task assigned at the first request from a robot.

The function `partition(.)` take exponential time.

More formally, this algorithm is exponential time because $T(n)$ is bounded by $O(2^{n^k})$ for some constant k .

Algorithm 1 Set Partition Strategy

```

1: procedure SPS( $T^N$ )  $\triangleright T^N = \text{partition}(T)$ 
2:  $\triangleright$  define  $C$  the maximum capacity of the robots
3:   for  $T_i \in T^N$  do
4:     if  $\text{demand}(T_i) > C$  then  $T^N \setminus T_i$ 
5:     end if
6:     for  $t_j \in T_i$  do  $v(t_j)$ 
7:     end for
8:   end for  $\triangleright$  sort all  $T_i$  for lowest  $v(\cdot)$ 
9:   return the first  $T_i$ 
10: end procedure

```

An example of solution with set $|T| = 4$:

iteration	partition size	partition
1	1	$\{\{a, b, c, d\}\}$
2	2	$\{\{a, b, c\}, \{d\}\}$
3	2	$\{\{a, b, d\}, \{c\}\}$
4	2	$\{\{a, b\}, \{c, d\}\}$
5	3	$\{\{a, b\}, \{c\}, \{d\}\}$
6	2	$\{\{a, c, d\}, \{b\}\}$
7	2	$\{\{a, c\}, \{b, d\}\}$
8	3	$\{\{a, c\}, \{b\}, \{d\}\}$
9	2	$\{\{a, d\}, \{b, c\}\}$
10	2	$\{\{a\}, \{b, c, d\}\}$
11	3	$\{\{a\}, \{b, c\}, \{d\}\}$
12	3	$\{\{a, d\}, \{b\}, \{c\}\}$
13	3	$\{\{a\}, \{b, d\}, \{c\}\}$
14	3	$\{\{a\}, \{b\}, \{c, d\}\}$
15	4	$\{\{a\}, \{b\}, \{c\}, \{d\}\}$

For $|T| = 4$ takes 0.000043 seconds. If we increase the set, time increases exponentially. An example of $|T| = 12$ takes 2.8 seconds and $|T| = 13$ takes 21.2 seconds.

For this reason in our experiment we limited the size of the task set at

most 9 task.

3.3.3 Greedy Set Partition Strategy - Single robot : Multiple task (GSP1:N)

The main concept of this approach is merging tasks using Greedy Coalition Formation based on [6] and [5]. Where one wants to minimize the team cost subject to the constraint that each task must be executed by a given number of cooperative agents simultaneously. Each task requires a number of different demands, and each coalition for the task needs to provide the required capabilities.

For compute coalition the heuristic is based on the concept of Gain, which can be defined for any pair of coalitions C_i, C_j as:

$$G(C_i, C_j) = v(\{C_i \cup C_j\}) - v(C_i) - v(C_j)$$

where $v(C)$ is value of the characteristic function v for coalition C . In other words, this gain function captures the value of synergies between coalitions and is computed in constant time.

The function v for a coalition C_i is defined as:

$$v(C_i) = \frac{|\pi_i|}{|demand_i|}$$

where $|\pi_i|$ is the path distance between the loading bay L and the unloading bays U_j and the $|demand_i|$ is the demand of the task.

The same function for a pair of coalition C_i, C_j can be defined as:

$$v(\{C_i \cup C_j\}) = \frac{|\pi_i|}{|demand_i|} + \frac{|\pi_j|}{|demand_j|} = \sum_{i,j} \frac{|\pi_{i,j}|}{|demand_{i,j}|}$$

We want minimize the cost of the gain, that can be defined as:

$$G(C_i, C_j) < 0$$

if the gain G is less than 0 then we allocate the pair and delete the element which form the coalition.

Later initialization phase `init_agent()` which all agents send their capacity and identifier, start the Coalition Formation algorithm [6]. When compute

new one possible coalition the heuristic $v(\cdot)$ has been used to calculate the gain $G(C_{i,j})$ and if is negative that coalition is insered into the formation and the C_i , C_j are deleted from this set.

Algorithm 2 Greedy Coalition Formation

```

1: procedure GCF( $T$ ) ▷  $T$  = set of tasks
2: ▷ define  $C$  the maximum capacity of the robots
3:   for  $t_i \in T$  do
4:     for  $t_j \in T$  do ▷ define  $t_{i,j} = t_i \cup t_j$ 
5:       if  $(t_i \neq t_j) \wedge (\text{demand}(t_{i,j}) \leq C)$  then
6:         if  $v(t_{i,j}) - v(t_i) - v(t_j) < 0$  then  $T \setminus \{t_i\} \setminus \{t_j\} \cup \{t_{i,j}\}$ 
7:         end if
8:       end if
9:     end for
10:  end for
11:  return  $T$ 
12: end procedure

```

This algorithm take polynomial time, its running time is upper bounded by a polynomial expression in the size of the input for the algorithm.

More precisely, this algorithm take $O(n^k)$ for some positive constant k .

Example with 9 tasks and 4 robots

Given a set of tasks $T = \{\{t_0\}, \{t_1\}, \dots, \{t_8\}\}$ defined like:

$$t_i = (item, demand, unloading_bay).$$

The agents have the same capacity $C_{0,1,2,3} = 4$.

task	item	demand	unloading bay
0	A	1	0
1	B	2	1
2	C	3	2
3	A	1	0
4	B	2	1
5	C	3	2
6	A	1	0
7	B	2	1
8	C	3	2

The result of the Greedy Coalition Formation is:

task	item	demand	unloading bay
{3,2}	{A,C}	4	{0,2}
{0,1}	{A,B}	3	{0,1}
{6,4}	{A,B}	3	{0,1}
5	C	3	2
8	C	3	2
7	B	2	1

The result of the Set Partition is:

task	item	demand	unloading bay
{4,7}	B	4	{1}
{0,1,3}	{A,B}	4	{0,1}
{2,6}	{C,A}	4	{0,2}
5	C	3	2
8	C	3	2

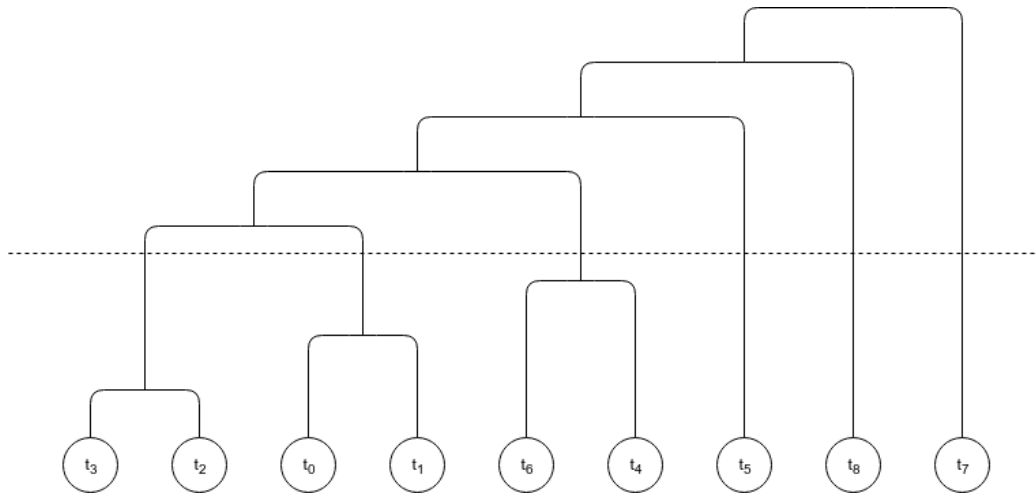


Figure 3.1: The horizontal line represents a cut of the dendrogram and defines the coalition structure.

Chapter 4

Empirical Setting

Writing software for robots is difficult, particularly as the scale and scope of robotics continues to grow. Different types of robots can have wildly varying hardware, making code reuse non trivial. On top of this, the magnitude of the required code can be daunting, as it must contain a deep stack starting from driver-level software and continuing up through perception, abstract reasoning, and beyond.

4.1 Robot Operating System (ROS)

Our choice fell on ROS (Robot Operating System) which is a widespread open-source, meta-operating system for a robot. It provides several services that are commonly offered by an operating system, including hardware abstraction, low-level device control, implementation of commonly-used functionality, message-passing between processes, and package management. It is worth noting that the full source code of ROS is publicly available, ROS is distributed under the terms of the BSD license, which allows the development of both non-commercial and commercial projects.

4.1.1 Nomenclature and Architecture

In this section we simply outline the terminology adopted in the ROS community to allow an easy comprehension of the following discussion.

The fundamental concepts of the ROS implementation are *nodes*, *messages*,

topics, and *services*. In ROS a system is typically comprised of many nodes. In this context, the term "*node*" is interchangeable with "*software module*". The use of term "*node*" arises from visualization of ROS-based systems at runtime: when many nodes are running, it is convenient to render the peer-to-peer communications as a graph, called the *computation graph*, with process as graph nodes and the peer-to-peer links as arcs.

Nodes communicate with each other by passing *messages*. A message is a a strictly typed data structure. Standard primitive types (integer, floating point, boolean, etc.) are supported, as are arrays of primitive types and constants. Messages can be composed of other messages, and arrays of other messages, nested arbitrarily deep. Messages descriptions are usually stored in `my_package/msg/MyMessageType.msg` and define the data structures for messages sent in ROS, called custom message.

Here is a simple example of a `*.msg` file that uses a header, some integer primitive, arrays of integer and array of other `*.msg` files. The message is specified in a language neutral interface definition language (IDL) which uses very short text files to describe its fields and allow an easy composition of complex messages:

<hr/> <pre> 1 Header header 2 bool take 3 bool go_home 4 uint32 ID_ROBOT 5 uint32 item 6 uint32 order 7 uint32 demand 8 uint32 dst 9 uint32 path_distance 10 uint32[] route </pre> <hr/>	<p>resent a <code>Task.msg</code> which contains the basic information to define a task in the system. Instead, the custom message below, represent a <code>Mission.msg</code> which is composed of task messages addressed to a specific robot.</p> <hr/> <pre> 1 Header header 2 uint32 ID_ROBOT 3 uint32 capacity 4 Task[] Mission </pre> <hr/>
---	--

The custom message above rapp-

These simple high-level message definitions is then parsed and processed by a code generator module, one for each support language (currentlry `C++`), which generates native implementations that "feel" like native objects, and

are automatically serialized and deserialized by ROS as messages are sent and received.

A node sends a message by publishing it to a given *topic*, which is simply a string such as `/topic` or `/pkg/topic`. A node that is interested in a certain kind of data will subscribe to the appropriate topic. There may be multiple concurrent publishers and subscribers for a single topic, and a single node may publish and/or subscribe to multiple topics. In general, publishers and subscribers are not aware of each other existence (decoupling). It is important to point out that because nodes connect to each other at runtime, the graph can be *dynamically* modified.

Although the topic-based publish-subscribe model is a flexible communications paradigm, its “broadcast” routing scheme is not appropriate for synchronous transactions, which can simplify the design of some nodes. For this purpose ROS includes the concept of *services*, defined by a string name and a pair of strictly typed messages: one for the request and one for the response. A providing node offers a service under a name and a client uses the service by sending the request message and awaiting the reply.

As for the topic-based paradigm a high-level description of a service is then parsed and processed by a code generator module which generates the corresponding native implementation in a supported target language. Usually C++ messages are generated in `my_package/msg_gen/cpp/include/my_package`, while C++ services are generated in `my_package/srv_gen/cpp/include/my_package`.

To support collaborative development, the ROS software system is organized into *packages*. A ROS package is simply a directory which contains an XML file describing the package and stating any dependencies. A collection of ROS packages is a directory tree with ROS packages at the leaves: a ROS package repository may thus contain an arbitrarily complex scheme of subdirectories. This structure is primarily meant to partition the building of ROS-based software into small, manageable chunks of functionality.

In ROS, a *stack* of software is a cluster of nodes that does something coherent as a whole, as is illustrated in the simple *navigation* example reported in Figure. To allow for “packaged” functionality such as a navigation system, ROS provides a tool called `roslaunch`, which reads an XML-like description of a graph and instantiates the graph on the cluster, optionally on specific

hosts. Thus ROS is able to instantiate a set of nodes with a single command, once the nodes are described in a `launch` file, the simple usage is:

```
1  roslaunch [package] [filename.launch]
```

4.1.2 The Stage 2D Simulator

For visualization purposes we adopted the Stage 2D robot simulator which provides a virtual world populated by mobile robots and enriched with sensors, actuators and both approximate and exact localization. Stage is designed to be sufficiently simple to allow an easy set-up but at the same time it is intended to be just realistic enough to enable users to move controllers directly between Stage robots and real robots.

Stage is made available in ROS with the `stageros` node which wraps the simulator and exposes its functionality to the rest of the system. The following code reports how it is launched:

```
1  <?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8" ?>
2  <launch>
3      <arg name="map" default="grid" />
4      <arg name="stage_pkg" default="stage_ros"/>
5      <arg name="custom_stage" default="false" />
6      <group unless="$(arg custom_stage)">
7          <node name="stageros" pkg="$(arg stage_pkg)" type="stageros"
8              args="$(find patrolling_sim)/maps/$(arg map)/$(arg map).world"
9              output="screen" />
10     </group>
11 </launch>
```

The `*.world` file specified tells Stage everything about the world, from obstacles (usually represented via a `*.pgm` image), to robots and other objects. In particular, after the definition of some parameters related to general camera and GUI options, we specify the static map on which the robot has to navigate (we will describe its characteristics shortly) and finally we include two specific files which aims defining the properties of respectively the laser sensor and the robot. The last instruction just throws the robot in the map by indicating its x , y , z and θ coordinates, this is summarized in:

```

1 include "../hokuyo.inc"
2 include "../crobot.inc"
3 include "../floorplan.inc"
4 include "../cpoint.inc"
5 window
6 ( size [ 460 180 1 ]
7   rotate [ 0.000 0.000 ]
8   center [ 11.5 4.0 ]
9   scale 20
10  show_data 1)
11 floorplan
12 ( size [23.0 8.0 1]
13   pose [11.5 4.0 0 0]
14   bitmap "model5.pgm")
15 include "robots.inc"
16 include "point.inc"

```

The first included file (hokuyo.inc) defines the physical and technical properties of the particular laser range finders support that we adopt: we define it to have a circular shape and to be mounted on top of the robot base which has the same circular shape. As for the sensor properties we specify the following parameters described in:

```

1 define hokuyo ranger
2 (sensor(
3   range [ 0.0 5.0 ] # the max/min range reported by the scanner, in meters.
4   fov 230 # the angular field of view of the scanner, in degrees.
5   samples 1081 # the number of laser samples per scan.)
6 # model properties
7 color "orange"
8 size [ 0.1 0.1 0.1 ]
9 block( points 4
10  point[0] [0 0]
11  point[1] [0 1]
12  point[2] [1 1]
13  point[3] [1 0]

```

```
14      z [0 1]))
```

The second included file (crobot.inc) defines the physical properties of the robot, as mentioned above we define it to have a circular shape which is suffice for our purpose of having a mobile camera that moves around the world:

```
1      define crobot position(
2      size [0.3 0.3 0.2]
3      origin [0 0 0 0]
4      gui_nose 0
5      drive "diff"
6      # This block approximates a circular shape of a Robot
7      block( points 16
8          point[0] [ 0.225 0.000 ]
9          point[1] [ 0.208 0.086 ]
10         point[2] [ 0.159 0.159 ]
11         point[3] [ 0.086 0.208 ]
12         point[4] [ 0.000 0.225 ]
13         point[5] [ -0.086 0.208 ]
14         point[6] [ -0.159 0.159 ]
15         point[7] [ -0.208 0.086 ]
16         point[8] [ -0.225 0.000 ]
17         point[9] [ -0.208 -0.086 ]
18         point[10] [ -0.159 -0.159 ]
19         point[11] [ -0.086 -0.208 ]
20         point[12] [ -0.000 -0.225 ]
21         point[13] [ 0.086 -0.208 ]
22         point[14] [ 0.159 -0.159 ]
23         point[15] [ 0.208 -0.086 ]
24         z [0 1])
25     hokuyo( pose [0.15 0 -0.1 0] )
26     # Report error-free position in world coordinates
27     localization "gps"
28     #localization_origin [ 0 0 0 0 ]
29     # Some more realistic localization error
30     localization "odom"
```

31 odom_error [0.01 0.01 0.0 0.1])

4.2 Localization and Navigation

Purpose of this section is to describing how we address the two main problems in the context of mobile robotics: *localization* and *navigation*. The former deals with tracking the pose of the robot during its motion allowing it to localize itself in the map, the latter deals with driving the robot from a starting position to a goal position trying to avoid potential obstacles.

TODO: Figura della simulazione

4.2.1 Mapping

The robot navigation system can be initialized with or without an a priori, *static map*. When initialized without a map, the robot only knows about obstacles that it has seen, and will make optimistic global plans through areas that it has not yet visited which may traverse unknown space, potentially intersecting unseen obstacles. As the robot receives more information about the world, it replans accordingly to avoid obstacles. Initialized with a static map, the robot will make informed plans about distant parts of the environment, using the map as prior obstacle information. In our case we provide ROS with a static map of real laboratory in University of Verona. Doing so requires us to set the *map_server* node that reads a map from disk and offers it via a ROS service:

```

1 <!-- Run the map server -->
2 <node name="map_server" pkg="map_server" type="map_server"
3 args="$(find patrolling_sim)/maps/$(arg mapname)/$(arg mapname).yaml" />

```

The current implementation of *map_server* convert color values in the map image data into ternary occupancy values: *free*(0), *occupied*(100), and *unknown*(-1).

Maps manipulated by the tools in the *map_server* package are stored in a pair of file: the *.yaml file describes the map meta-data and names the image file while the image file encodes the occupancy data.

The *.yaml file given as an argument to the *map_server* node is reported below with a brief description of it's parameters.

```

1 # path to the image file containing the occupancy data.
2 image: src/patrolling_sim/maps/model5/model5.pgm
3 # resolution of the map, meters/pixel.
4 resolution: 0.014100
5 # the 2-D pose of the lower-left pixel in the map, as (x, y, yaw).
6 origin: [0.000000, 0.000000, 0.000000]
7 # whether the white/black free/occupied semantics should be reversed.
8 negate: 0
9 # pixels with occupancy probability greater than
10 # this are considered completely occupied.

```

```

11 occupied_thresh: 0.65
12 # pixels with occupancy probability less than
13 # this are considered completely free.
14 free_thresh: 0.196

```

4.2.2 Localization

Both in the case of a given static map or without a given static map, we require that the robot's pose be tracked in a consistent global coordinate frame. When not using a map, the robot's pose is usually estimated by integrating wheel odometry, possibly fused with data from an inertial measurement unit (IMU). When using a map, as in our case, the robot is usually localized using a probabilistic technique, in particular we adopt the Adaptive Monte Carlo Localization (`amcl`) system:

```

1 <group if="$(arg use_amcl)">
2   <!-- AMCL -->
3   <include file="$(find patrolling_sim)/params/amcl/amcl_diff.launch" />
4   <!-- Override AMCL Frame Params to include prefix -->
5   <param name="/$(arg robotname)/amcl/base_frame_id"
6     value="$(arg robotname)/base_link"/>
7   <param name="/$(arg robotname)/amcl/odom_frame_id"
8     value="$(arg robotname)/odom"/>
9   <!--common map frame for all robots -->
10  <param name="/$(arg robotname)/amcl/global_frame_id" value="map"/>
11 </group>

```

`amcl` is a probabilistic localization system for a robot moving in 2D. It implements the Adaptive (or KLD-sampling) Monte Carlo Localization approach which uses a particle filter to track the pose of a robot against a known map. The map of the environment where the robot has to localize itself must be given to the robot beforehand. In our case the map is provided by the `map_server` node. This map is the so called *occupancy map* like before mentioned: it contains a value for every location which indicates the probability that this location is occupied by an object such as a wall. `amcl` takes in a laser-based map, laser scans and outputs pose estimates. On startup, `amcl`

initializes its particle filter according to the parameters provided. In this respect we remark that the `amcl` node is launched only after having setting up three categories of ROS parameters that we use to configure its behaviour: *overall filter*, *laser model* and *odometry model*. The complete configuration file is reported in section 6.

4.2.3 Navigation

At high level the navigation system is quite simple. It takes in data from sensors, odometry, and a navigation goal, and outputs velocity commands that are sent to a mobile base. The low-level architecture of system, however, is complex and consist of many components that interacts together.

For navigation purposes we rely on the *move_base* package which provides an interface with the entire ROS navigation stack. The *move_base* package provides an implementation of an *action* that, given a goal in the world, will attempt to reach it with a mobile base. It links together a *global* and *local* planner to accomplish its navigation task, it also maintains two costmaps, one for the global planner and one for the local planner. An architecture view of the node its interaction with other components is show in Figure below.

The pre-requisites of navigation stack, along with a brief description of it's main components, are provided in the section below.

Trasformations

Robotics systems often need to track spartial relationships between *frames* for a variety of reasons: between a mobile robot and some fixed frame of reference for localizzation or, as in our case, between the frame related to the mobile base and the one related to the laser sensor. To simplify the treatment of spartial frames, a trasformation system has been written for ROS, called `tf`. The `tf` system constructs a dynamic *trasformation tree* which realtes all frames of reference in the system. At an abstract level, a trasformation tree define *offsets* in terms of both translation and rotation between different coordinate frames.

Referring to our case of a simple robot consisting of a circular mobile base with a single laser support mounted on top of it we define two coordinate

frames: one corresponding to the center point of the base of the robot and one for the center point of the laser support that is mounted on top of the base. We've called the coordinate frame attached to the mobile base `base_link` and the coordinate frame attached to the laser support `base_laser_link`. Once this configuration is defined, every time that we have some data from the laser in the form of distances from the laser's center point and we want to take this data and use it to help the mobile base avoid obstacles in the world we invoke the `tf` system which in the general case transforms the information towards the `base_link` coordinate frame. Below we reported the Figure which represents the configuration of `base_link` and the `base_laser_link` frames. Our robot can thus use this information to reason about laser scans in the `base_link` frame and safely plan around obstacles in its environment.

Sensor Information

The navigation stack uses information from sensors to avoid obstacles in the world, it assumes that these sensors are publishing either `sensor_msgs/LaserScan` or `sensor_msgs/PointCloud` message over ROS. Publishing data correctly from sensors over ROS is important for the navigation stack to operate safely. If the navigation stack receives no information from a robot's sensors, then of course it will drive blindly and, most likely, hit things. Our `sensor_msgs/LaserScan` message type, like many other messages sent over ROS, contain `tf` frame and time dependent information. To standardize how this information is sent, the `Header` message type is used as field in all such messages. The three fields in the `Header` type are shown below.

```

1 # Standard metadata for higher-level flow data types
2 uint32 seq
3 time stamp
4 string frame_id

```

The `seq` field corresponds to an identifier that automatically increases as messages are sent from a given publisher. The `stamp` field stores time information that should be associated with data in a message. The `frame_id` field stores `tf` frame information that should be associated with data in a message. The body of the `sensor_msgs/LaserScan` message holds information

about any given scan and contains the associated geometric informations in the following form:

```

1 # Laser scans angles are measured counter clockwise, with 0 facing forward
2 Header header
3 float32 angle_min # start angle of the scan [rad]
4 float32 angle_max # end angle of the scan [rad]
5 float32 angle_increment # angular distance between measurements [rad]
6 float32 time_increment # time between measurements [seconds]
7 float32 scan_time # time between scans [seconds]
8 float32 range_min # minimum range value [m]
9 float32 range_max # maximum range value [m]
10 float32[] ranges # range data [m] (Note: values < range_min or > range_max
11 should be discarded)
12 float32[] intensities # intensity data [device-specific units]
```

Odometry Informations

The navigation stack requires that odometry information be published using `tf` and the `nav_msgs/Odometry` message. The last message is required because `tf` alone does not provide any information about the velocity of the robot, it is thus required that any *odometry source* publishes both this kind of information to *move_base*.

The `nav_msgs/Odometry` message stores an estimate of the position and velocity of a robot in free space:

```

1 # The pose in this message should be specified in the coordinate frame given
2 by header.frame_id.
3 # The twist in this message should be specified in the coordinate frame
4 given by the child_frame_id
5 Header header
6 string child_frame_id
7 geometry_msgs/PoseWithCovariance pose
8 geometry_msgs/TwistWithCovariance twist
```

The *pose* in this message corresponds to the estimated position of the robot in the odometric frame of reference along with an optional covariance for

the certainty of that pose estimate. The *twist* in this message corresponds to the robot's velocity in the child frame, normally the coordinate frame of the mobile base, along with an optional covariance for certainty of that velocity estimate.

In our case since the **stageros** node represents the odometric source for the system, it is going to publish all the relevant transformations between the coordinate frames it manages towards the `/tf` topic which maintains the current transformation tree for our system, and a `nav_msgs/Odometry` message to the `/odom` topic so that the navigation stack can retrieve velocity information from it.

Base Controller

As previously specified the navigation stack assumes that it can send velocity commands using a `geometry_msgs/Twist` message assumed to be in the base coordinate frame of the robot on the `/cmd_vel` topic. This means there must be a node subscribing to the `/cmd_vel` topic that is capable of talking $(v_x, v_y, v_\theta) \longleftrightarrow (\text{cmd_vel.linear.x}, \text{cmd_vel.linear.y}, \text{cmd_vel.angular.z})$ velocities and converting them into motor commands to send a mobile base. In this work the **stageros** node subscribes to the `/cmd_vel` topic simulating the movement of a real robot in a real environment.

4.2.4 Global and Local planner algorithms

The `base_local_planner` is responsible for computing velocity commands to send to the mobile base of the robot given a high-level plan. In particular, this package adheres to the `BaseLocalPlanner` interface specified in the `nav_core` package which provides common interfaces for both *global* and *local* action planning.

As we shall see, the local planner is seeded with the high-level plan produced by the global planner and the purpose of the `nav_core` package is just to provide common interfaces for navigation.

Global planner

The global planner is given the obstacle and cost information contained in the global costmap, information from the robot's localization system, and a goal in the world. From these, it creates a high-level plan for the robot to follow to reach the goal location. In more detail, the global planner will create a series of way-points for the local planner to achieve, these way-points assumes that the robot is circular in shape, and may in fact be infeasible for a more general case. Also, the global planner doesn't take the dynamics of the robot into account so it can produce plans that are dynamically infeasible as well. While this ensures that the global planner returns in a small amount of time, it also means that the planner is *optimistic* in the plans that it creates. However our robot is not much affected by this problems because it is circular in shape and does not have a particular dynamics to take into account.

The global planner used for this navigation system is `ROS navigation stack`. This planner, as started before, assumes a circular robot and operates on a costmap to compute a navigation function that can later be used to find a *minimum cost plan* from a start point to an end point in a grid.

As outlined before, the global planner may produce a path for the robot that is infeasible, such as a plan that turns through a narrow way too tightly, causing the corners of the robot to hit the surrounding obstacles. Because of its shortcomings, the global planner is used only as a high-level guide for navigation in an environment and we also need a *local planner* for navigation.

Local planner

The local planner is responsible for generating velocity commands for the mobile base that will safely move the robot towards a goal. The local planner is seeded with the plan produced by the global planner, and attempts to follow it as closely as possible while taking into account the kinematics and dynamics of the robot as well as the obstacle information stored in the costmap.

The local planner used for this navigation system is `base_local_planner`. This package supports any robot footprint that can be represented as a convex polygon or circle, so it is fine for our circular-shaped robot. The

`base_local_planner` package provides a *controller* that drives a mobile base in the plane. This controller serves to connect the path planner to the robot. Using a map, the planner creates a trajectory for the robot to move from a start to a goal location. Along the way, the planner creates, at least locally around the robot, a value function, represented as a grid map. This value function encodes the costs of traversing through the grid cells based on their occupancy status. The controller uses this value function to determine v_x , v_y and v_θ velocities to send to the robot.

In order to generate safe velocity commands to send to the mobile base, the local planner we adopt makes use of a technique known as the *Dynamic Window Approach* (DWA) to forward simulate and select among potential commands based on a cost function. The basic idea is as follows:

- First it discretely samples the robot's control space (which means samples from the set of achievable velocities v_x , v_y and v_θ for just one simulation step given the acceleration limits of the robot);
- Then for each sampled velocity, it performs forward simulation from the robot's current state to predict what would happen if the sampled velocity were applied for some (short) period of time;
- Next it evaluates (score) each trajectory resulting from the forward simulation, using a metric that incorporates characteristics such as *proximity to obstacles*, *proximity to the goal*, *proximity to the path produced by the global planner* and *speed* and it discards illegal trajectories (those that collide with obstacles);
- Finally it picks the highest-scoring trajectory and sends the associated velocity to the mobile base;
- Rinse and repeat.

In order to score trajectories efficiently, a map grid is used. For each control cycle, a grid is created around the robot (the size of the local costmap), and the global path is mapped onto this area. This means some of the grid cells will be marked with distance 0 to a path point, and distance 0 to the goal. A propagation algorithm then efficiently marks all other cells with their

Manhattan distance to the closest of the points marked with zero. The goal of the global path may often lie outside the small area covered by the map grid, so when scoring trajectories for proximity to goal, what is considered is the “local goal”, meaning the first path point which is inside the area having a consecutive point on the global path outside the area.

We report here our configuration file for the local planner we adopt, it is worth noting that through setting the weights on each component of the cost function differently it is possible to change drastically the behaviour of the robot: for example it is possible to force it to stay close to the projection of the global path into the local costmap, or to stay quite far from obstacles changing consequently it’s trajectory across the map. The values below works well for our case since they take into account both the shape of the robot and the needs for computation. For a detailed description parameters see code below.

```

1 controller_frequency: 5.0
2 TrajectoryPlannerROS:
3   # Robot Configuration Parameters
4   max_vel_x: 1.00
5   min_vel_x: 0.10
6   max_trans_vel: 1.00
7   min_trans_vel: 0.10
8   max_rot_vel: 1.0
9   min_in_place_rotational_vel: 0.1
10  acc_lim_th: 0.75
11  acc_lim_x: 0.50
12  acc_lim_y: 0.50
13  holonomic_robot: false
14  # Goal Tolerance Parameters
15  yaw_goal_tolerance: 6.28
16  xy_goal_tolerance: 0.40
17  # Controller Parameters
18  pdist_scale: 0.6
19  gdist_scale: 0.8
20  occdist_scale: 0.01
21  meter_scoring: true

```

```

22 # Forward Simulation Parameters
23 sim_time: 1.5
24 vx_samples: 6
25 vtheta_samples: 20
26 # Trajectory Scoring Parameters
27 heading_lookahead: 0.325
28 dwa: true
29 # Oscillation Prevention Parameters
30 oscillation_reset_dist: 0.05

```

4.3 Cost-maps configurations

The navigation stack uses two costmaps to store information about obstacles in the world. One costmap is used for *global planning*, meaning creating long-term plans over the entire environment, and the other is used for *local planning* and obstacle avoidance.

In particular, the ROS package `costmap_2D` provides an implementation of a 2D costmap that takes in sensor data from the world, build a 2D occupancy grid of the data and inflates costs in a 2D costmap based on the occupancy grid and a user specified *inflation radius*.

Because the robots we study are constrained to drive on flat ground, and cannot, for example, step or jump over obstructions, we assemble obstacle data into a planar costmap on which the planners operates. The costmap is initialized with our laboratory static map, but updates as new sensor data comes in to maintain an up-to-date view of the robot's local and global environment.

As previously specified, the laboratory image describes the occupancy state of each cell of the map in the color of the corresponding pixel. Cells with occupancy probability greater than the value stored in `occupied_thresh` are considered completely occupied and are assigned a lethal cost, meaning that no part of the robot's circular footprint is allowed to be inside of the corresponding two-dimensional cell. Then, inflation is performed in two dimension to propagate costs from obstacles out to user-specified *inflation radius*. Cells that are less than one inscribed radius of the robot away from an obstacle

are assigned a uniformly high cost, after which an exponential decay function is applied that will cause the cost to decrease with the distance from the obstacles.

4.3.1 Common configuration

There are some configuration options that we want both global and local costmap to follow. In our case the global configuration settings for both the costmaps are as follows:

```

1 obstacle_range: 0.50
2 raytrace_range: 3.0
3 robot_radius: 0.33
4 inflation_radius: 0.33
5 observation_sources: laser_scan_sensor
6 laser_scan_sensor: {sensor_frame: base_laser_link,
7   data_type: LaserScan, topic: base_scan, marking: true, clearing: true}

```

The first two parameters set thresholds on obstacle information put into the costmap. The `obstacle_range` parameter determines the maximum range sensor reading that will result in an obstacle being put into the costmap. The `raytrace_range` parameter determines the range to which we will ray-trace freespace given a sensor reading.

Next we set the radius of the robot since it is circular and the inflation radius for the costmap. The inflation radius should be set to the maximum distance from obstacles at which a cost should be incurred.

The `observation_sources` parameter defines the sensor that is going to be passing information to the costmap, the last line sets its parameters. The `sensor_frame` parameter is set to the name of the coordinate frame of the sensor, the `data_type` parameter is set to `LaserScan` since this is the type of message used by the topic, and the `topic` parameter is set to the name of the topic that the sensor publishes data on. The `marking` and `clearing` parameters determine whether the sensor will be used to add obstacle information to the costmap, clear obstacle information from the costmap, or do both.

4.3.2 Global configuration

Below are our configuration settings for the *global* costmap along with a description of their semantics:

```
1 global_costmap:
2   global_frame: /map
3   robot_base_frame: base_link
4   update_frequency: 3.0
5   publish_frequency: 0.0
6   static_map: true
7   inflation_radius: 0.66
```

The `global_frame` parameter defines what coordinate frame the costmap should run in, in this case, we'll choose the `map` frame. The `robot_base_frame` parameter defines the coordinate frame the costmap should reference for the base of the robot. The `update_frequency` parameter determines the frequency, in Hz, at which the costmap will run its update loop. The `static_map` parameter determines whether or not the costmap should initialize itself based on a map served by the *map_server*.

4.3.3 Local configuration

Below are our configuration settings for the *local* costmap along with a description of their semantics:

```
1 local_costmap:
2   global_frame: odom
3   robot_base_frame: base_link
4   update_frequency: 3.0
5   publish_frequency: 2.0
6   static_map: false
7   rolling_window: true
8   width: 4.0
9   height: 4.0
10  resolution: 0.05
```

The `global_frame`, `robot_base_frame`, `update_frequency` and `static_map` parameters are the same as described previously. The `publish_frequency` parameter determines the rate, in Hz, at which the costmap will publish visualization information. Setting the `rolling_window` parameter to true means that the costmap will remain centered around the robot moves through the world. The `width`, `height` and `resolution` parameters set the width [m], height [m] and resolution [m/cell] of the costmap.

4.3.4 Local and global coordinate frames

We now briefly discuss why it is important to distinguish between global and local coordinate frames when building a navigation system. A global coordinate frame, such as the one used by the *global planner* and specified through the `global_frame: /map` parameter, is advantageous in that it provides a globally consistent frame of reference, but it is flawed in that it is subject to discontinuous jumps in its estimation of the robot's position. For example, when the localization system is struggling to determine the robot's position, it is not uncommon for the robot to teleport, on a single update step, from one location to another that is one meter away.

A local coordinate frame, such as the one used by the *local planner* and specified through the `global_frame: /odom` parameter, has no such jumps, but presents its own flaws in that it is prone to drifting over time.

In theory, all planning and obstacle avoidance could be performed in the global frame, but this may lead to problems when discrete jumps in localization occur. To illustrate this, consider the case in which a robot navigates through a narrow way with limited clearance on either side. If the navigation system attempts to plan in a global frame, localization jumps may drastically affect the robot's obstacle information and a jump in the robot's position of just a few centimetres to either side, combined with new sensor data, may actually be enough for the robot to consider that way as unfeasible. If the robot instead operates in a local frame, nearby obstacles are not affected by jumps in localization, and the robot can traverse through the way independently of any difficulties with the localization system. Thus, we use the global coordinate frame to create high-level plans for the robot but also a

local coordinate frame for local planning and obstacle avoidance. To relate the two frames, the plan produced by the global planner is mapped from the global coordinate frame into the local coordinate frame on every cycle.

4.4 Recovery behaviours

The navigation system as described until now works well most of the time, attempting to achieve a goal pose with its base to within a user-specified tolerance, but there are still situations where the robot can get stuck. One common cause of failure for the navigation system is *entrapment*, where the robot is surrounded by obstacles and cannot find a valid plan to its goal. When the robot finds itself in this situation, a number of increasingly aggressive recovery behaviours are executed to attempt to clear out space, Figure shows the relations among them. First, obstacles outside of a user settable region will be cleared from the robot's map. If this fails, the robot performs an in-place rotation to attempt to clear out space. If this too fails, a more aggressive map reset is attempted where the robot clears all obstacles that are outside of its circumscribed radius. After this, another in-place rotation is performed to clear space, and if this last step fails, the robot will abort on its goal which it now considers infeasible. After each of these behaviour completes, `move_base` will attempt to make a plan. If planning is successful, `move_base` will continue normal operation. Otherwise, the next recovery behaviour in the list will be executed.

4.5 logistic_sim package

The `logistic_sim` is the extension of the `patrolling_sim` package ¹. In this thesis, the problem of allocation task for logistic applications a given environment with an arbitrary number of robots is studied. In this section, details are given on how agents obtain the representation of the environment.

¹Multi-Robot Patrolling Stage/ROS Simulation Package.
http://wiki.ros.org/patrolling_sim

4.5.1 Obtaining a Topological representation

In `patrolling_sim` package the topological map represent the area to travel by a graph $G = (V, E)$ with vertices $v_i \in V$ and edges $e_{i,j} \in E$, enabling robots to assess the topology of its surroundings. In this representation, vertices represent the load, unload bays and the travel locations, the edges represent the connectivity between those locations. The cost of an edge $|e_{i,j}|$ is defined by the metric distance between vertex v_i and v_j . $|V|$ and $|E|$ represent the cardinality of the set V and E , respectively. Seeing as undirected graphs are assumed, then: $|E| \leq \frac{|V| \cdot (|V|-1)}{2}$. A path π is composed of an array of vertices in V .

Since the topological maps considered in this context represent real-world 2D environments, it is assumed that G has the following properties:

- *Undirected*: where $|e_{i,j}| = |e_{j,i}|$ and the edge weights satisfy the triangle inequality.
- *Connected*: where $\forall v_h, v_i \in V, \exists x = \{v_h, \dots, v_i\}$.
- *Simple*: where two neighbor vertices v_i and v_j are connected by a unique edge $e_{i,j}$ and no graph loops exist.
- *Planar*: where a pair of edges $e_{g,h}, e_{i,j} \in E$ never crosses each other.

As a consequence of there properties, G is usually *non-complete*; for every pair $v_h, v_i \in V$ there may not exist an edge $|e_{h,i}|$ connecting each pair of vertices.

In this work, it noteworthy that any generic planar graph may be addressed, but for our logistic application in the laboratory map the topological graph G is a *regular grid*.

4.5.2 actionLib and move_base

The `actionLib` package provides tools to create servers that execute long-running tasks that can be preempted and create clients that interact with servers. Then this library is a standardized interface for interfacing with preemptable tasks. It is used when a node A sends a request to node B to

perform some task. If the task is "instantaneous", *services* are suitable. The *actions* are more adequate when task takes time and we want to monitor, have continuous feedback and possibly cancel the request during execution. The action client and server communicate with each other using a predefined action protocol. This action protocol relies on ROS topic in a specified namespace in order to transport messages.

Action Interface

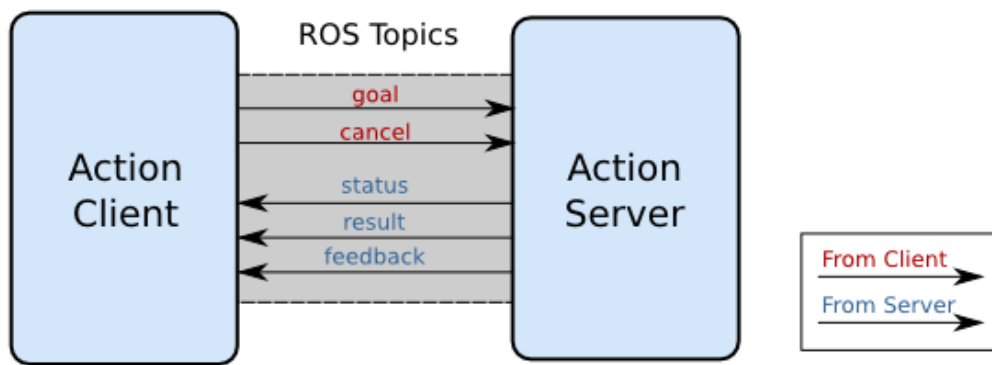


Figure 4.1: Client-Server Interaction

The communication messages used in this library is:

- **goal** - used to send new goals to server.
- **cancel** - used to send cancel requests to server.
- **status** - used to notify clients on the current state of every goal in the system.
- **feedback** - used to send clients periodic auxiliary information for a goal.
- **result** - used to send clients one-time auxiliary information upon completion of a goal.

Action templates are defined by a name and some additional properties through an `*.action` structure defined in ROS. Each instance of an action has a unique *Goal ID* which provides the action server and the action client

with a robust way to monitor the execution of a particular instance of an action.

In our system, its used a **SimpleActionServer** that implements a single goal policy. So only one goal can have an active status at a time. When received new goals preempt previous goals based on the stamp in their *Goal ID* field. And a **SimpleActionClient** which implements a simplified *ActionClient*.

As previously mentioned, the `move_base` package provides an implementation of an action that, given a goal in the world, will attempt to reach it with a mobile base.

An example of `move_base ActionServer`:

- **Action Subscribed Topics:**

- `move_base/goal` (`move_base_msgs/MoveBaseActionGoal`): a goal for `move_base` to pursue in the world.
- `move_base/cancel` (`actionlib_msgs/GoalID`): a request to cancel a specific goal.

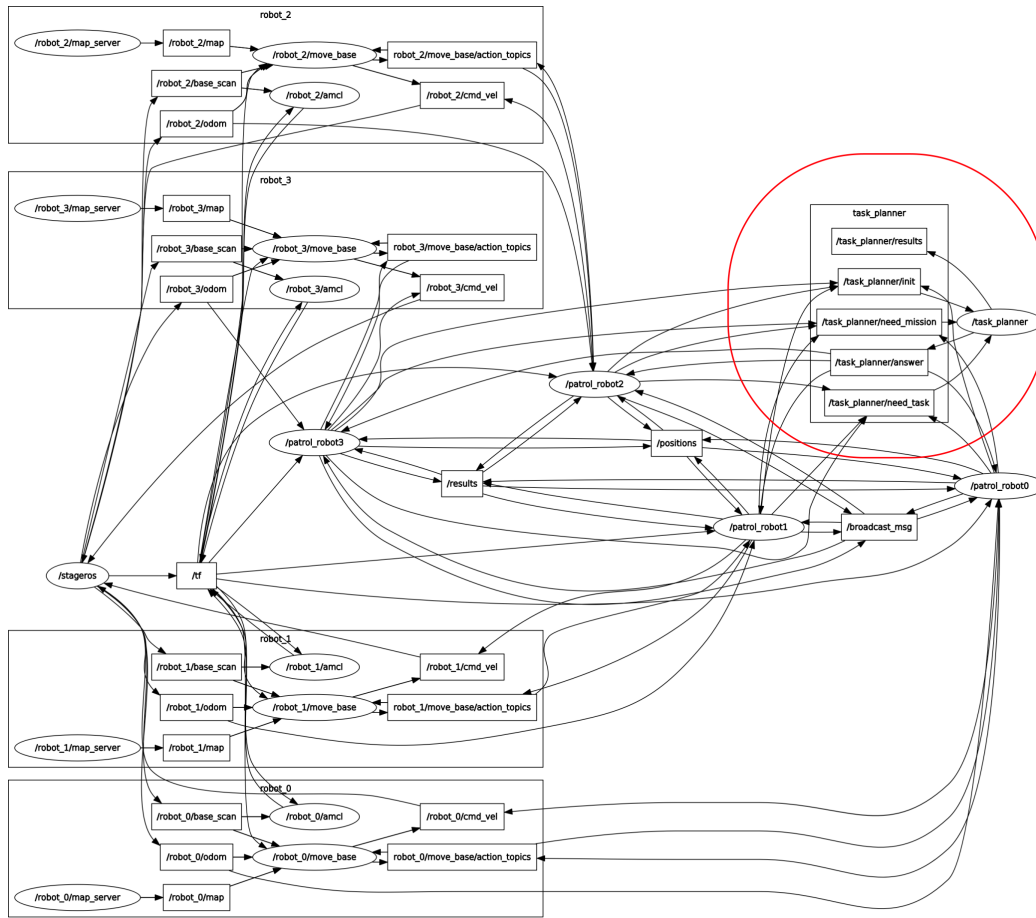
- **Action Published Topics:**

- `move_base/feedback` (`move_base_msgs/MoveBaseActionFeedback`): feedback contains the current position of the base in the world.
- `move_base/status` (`actionlib_msgs/GoalStatusArray`): provides status information on the goals that are sent to the `move_base` action.
- `move_base/result` (`move_base_msgs/MoveBaseActionResult`): result is empty for the `move_base` action.

4.5.3 task_planner package

We extend the `patrolling_sim` package creating a new extern package which communicate with it. The `task_planner` generate the finite task set, its receive the initialization message from each robot and depending on the message start the different algorithm. Then this package implements the centralized coordinator and return the `mission` for the robots.

In Figure 4.2 we can see the communication between robots (`/patrol_robotN`) and `task_planner`.

Figure 4.2: Report the `rqt_graph`

The most important topics are:

- `/task_planner/init`: receive the initialization message.
- `/task_planner/need_task`: receive the task request.
- `/task_planner/need_mission`: receive the mission request.
- `/task_planner/answer`: after computation phase for different algorithm return the subset of task must be allocate.

Chapter 5

Empirical Results

Configuration	Algorithm	\overline{Time}	$\overline{Interference}$	$\overline{Distance}$	$\bar{\sigma}(Distance)$
*6/-/2	SR:ST	218.32[±6.19]	63.45	3747.90	87.8
*6/3/2 *	GSP1:N	194.52[±6.42]	49.65	3401.15	251.37
	SPS1:N	177.00[±1.99]	49.34	3132.5	0
*6/5/2 *	GSP1:N	142.08[±1.39]	42.2	2714.25	206.43
	SPS1:N	138.98[±2.41]	39.38	2601.25	156.47
*6/-/4	SR:ST	124.52[±3.12]	42	2194.75	114.2
*6/3/4 *	GSP1:N	117.44[±1.85]	35.75	1769	43.83
	SPS1:N	115.28[±4.10]	33.5	1702.5	23.67
*6/5/4 *	GSP1:N	93.4[±1.01]	29	1688.5	34.5
	SPS1:N	91.8[±2.14]	30.75	1546.5	35.8
*9/-/2	SR:ST	292.24[±3.06]	85.5	5201.5	34.76
*9/3/2 *	GSP1:N	265.72[±2.64]	71.5	4491.5	0
	SPS1:N	240.74[±10.42]	75.5	4232.5	310.43
* 9/5/2 *	GSP1:N	232.84[±4.71]	68.85	4041.25	236
	SPS1:N	168.34[±2.03]	50.5	3132.5	0
*9/-/4	SR:ST	178.55[±4.23]	52	2755.75	135.8
*9/3/4 *	GSP1:N	152.55[±2.87]	46.75	2200	113.4
	SPS1:N	134.23[±3.25]	40.63	2182.5	27
*9/5/4 *	GSP1:N	134.23[±3.26]	40.6	2098.3	93.45
	SPS1:N	93.05[±5.15]	32.25	1530.25	0
*21/-/2	SR:ST	629.10[±8.84]	154.6	11773.5	229.75
@21/3/2	GSP1:N				-
@21/5/2	GSP1:N				-
*21/-/4	SR:ST	402.12[±5.06]	132.25	6232.35	295.1
@21/3/4	GSP1:N				-
@21/5/4	GSP1:N				-
*42/-/2	SR:ST	1283.2[±25.27]	336	22446.63	323.8
@42/3/2	GSP1:N				-
@42/5/2	GSP1:N				-
@42/-/4	SR:ST				-
@42/3/4	GSP1:N				-
@42/5/4	GSP1:N				-

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Future Work

Appendices

Appendix A

ROS: amcl configuration

```
1    <?xml version="1.0" encoding="UTF-8" ?>
2    <launch>
3    <arg name="robotname" default="robot_0" />
4    <node pkg="amcl" type="amcl" name="amcl" args="scan:=base_scan">
5      <!-- Publish scans from best pose at a max of 10 Hz -->
6      <param name="odom_model_type" value="diff"/>
7      <param name="odom_alpha5" value="0.1"/>
8      <param name="transform_tolerance" value="0.2" />
9      <param name="gui_publish_rate" value="-10.0"/>
10     <param name="laser_max_beams" value="30"/>
11     <param name="min_particles" value="100"/>
12     <param name="max_particles" value="500"/>
13     <param name="kld_err" value="0.05"/>
14     <param name="kld_z" value="0.99"/>
15     <param name="odom_alpha1" value="0.2"/>
16     <param name="odom_alpha2" value="0.2"/>
17     <!-- translation std dev, m -->
18     <param name="odom_alpha3" value="0.8"/>
19     <param name="odom_alpha4" value="0.2"/>
20     <param name="laser_z_hit" value="0.5"/>
21     <param name="laser_z_short" value="0.05"/>
22     <param name="laser_z_max" value="0.05"/>
23     <param name="laser_z_rand" value="0.5"/>
```

```
24     <param name="laser_sigma_hit" value="0.2"/>
25     <param name="laser_lambda_short" value="0.1"/>
26     <param name="laser_lambda_short" value="0.1"/>
27     <param name="laser_model_type" value="likelihood_field"/>
28     <!-- <param name="laser_model_type" value="beam"/> -->
29     <param name="laser_likelihood_max_dist" value="2.0"/>
30     <param name="update_min_d" value="0.2"/>
31     <param name="update_min_a" value="0.5"/>
32     <param name="odom_frame_id" value="odom"/>
33     <param name="base_frame_id" value="base_link"/>
34     <param name="resample_interval" value="1"/>
35 </node>
36 </launch>
```

Appendix B

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
SR:ST	6	-	218.33
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	3	3739	63
1	3	3757	57

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
GSP1:N	6	3	194.52
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	2	3286	48
1	2	3516	51

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
SPS1:N	6	3	177
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	2	2970	47
1	2	3295	52

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
GSP1:N	6	5	142
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	2	3074	47
1	1	2355	38

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
SPS1:N	6	5	138.98
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	2	2847	43
1	1	2355	35

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
SR:ST	6	-	124.52
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	2	2060	31
1	2	2337	59
2	1	2434	38
3	1	1949	40

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
GSP1:N	6	3	117.44
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	1	1860	32
1	1	1853	31
2	1	1675	40
3	1	1688	40

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
SPS1:N	6	3	115.28
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	1	1897	30
1	1	1854	37
2	1	1647	35
3	1	1412	32

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
GSP1:N	6	5	93.4
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	1	1753	32
1	1	1960	35
2	1	2414	34
3	0	(627)	(15)

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
SPS1:N	6	5	91.8
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	1	1105	29
1	1	2407	37
2	1	1959	33
3	0	(715)	(24)

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
SR:ST	9	-	292.24
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	5	5631	93
1	4	4772	78

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
GSP1:N	9	3	265.72
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	3	4578	69
1	3	4405	74

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
SPS1:N	9	3	240.74
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	3	4412	79
1	3	4571	82

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
GSP1:N	9	5	232.84
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	3	4207	71
1	3	3875	67

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
SPS1:N	9	5	168.34
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	2	2970	45
1	2	3295	56

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
SR:ST	9	-	178.55
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	3	3582	64
1	3	2833	55
2	2	2635	46
3	1	1973	43

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
GSP1:N	9	3	152.55
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	2	2921	61
1	2	2167	49
2	1	1994	39
3	1	1718	38

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
SPS1:N	9	3	134.23
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	2	2826	52
1	1	1960	35
2	1	2135	39
3	1	1809	36

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
GSP1:N	9	5	134.23
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	2	2785	52
1	1	1960	35
2	1	2135	39
3	1	1514	36

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
SPS1:N	9	5	93.05
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	2	1374	42
1	1	2067	35
2	1	2054	36
3	0	(626)	(16)

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
SR:ST	21	-	629
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	11	12091	165
1	10	11456	145

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
@GSP1:N	21	3	629
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	11	12091	165
1	10	11456	145

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
@GSP1:N	21	5	629
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	11	12091	165
1	10	11456	145

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
SR:ST	21	-	402
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	6	7069	152
1	5	5731	119
2	5	5928	109
3	5	6201	129

Algorithm	Number of task	Capacity	Time
SR:ST	42	-	1283.2
robot	processed task	distance	interference
0	21	22243	335
1	21	22651	338

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