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Master of Science in Computer Engineering

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Rethinking Automotive Software Development: Exploring Software Defined Vehicle and its potential

Supervisors

prof. Danilo Bazzanella

dott.sa Piera Limonet

Candidate

Lorenzo SCIARA

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Summary

This thesis project delves into the analysis of contemporary connected vehicle platforms, focusing on the benefits and challenges associated with these advanced solutions and emphasising aspects of safety and flexibility. A key trend in the current automotive sector is the prospect of transforming the car from a hardware-focused product to a software-driven device. The technology of choice for leading software development and production companies driving this change is the Software Defined Vehicle (SDV).

The primary objective of the thesis is to apply this paradigm to the development of a simulator for a vehicle control unit responsible for collecting telemetric data from the vehicle. The implementation of the simulator involves an in-depth analysis of the drawbacks of the automotive software production industry and the advantages of the Software Defined Vehicle solution. The simulator implementation also includes the creation of a scaled-down version of a connected vehicle platform, storage infrastructure and example application.

Using the Amazon Web Services (AWS), an environment in the cloud is established for the development of the necessary software for the operation of the vehicle control unit. Development of the vehicle control unit simulator is carried out, including client connectivity to interact with the cloud platform, telemetry generation, logic for remote operations, and optional applications. The final phase involves testing the simulator on compatible hardware to validate its functionality and performance.

The successful completion of this project in collaboration with Storm Reply, not only highlights the potential of the software-defined vehicle paradigm as a leading force in the future of the automotive sector, but also explores the economic, safety and security benefits associated with its adoption, paving the way for significant progress in the field and ensuring an advanced and safe end-user experience.

Acknowledgements

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Contents

List of Figures	7
List of Tables	8
Listings	9
1 Introduction	11
1.1 Context	11
1.2 Company	12
1.3 Thesis Goal	14
2 State-of-the-Art Analysis	16
2.1 Current Automotive Software Development	16
2.1.1 difficulties	17
2.2 Introduction to Software Defined Vehicle	18
2.2.1 Enablers	19
2.2.2 Benefits	19
3 Proof Of Concept	20
3.1 Amazon Web Services	20
3.1.1 Introduction	20
3.1.2 Used services	20
3.2 Design	20
3.2.1 Architecture	20
3.2.2 Security	20
3.3 Implementation	20
3.3.1 Code	20
3.3.2 Tools	20
3.4 Test and Validation	20
3.4.1 RPi demo	20

4	Conclding Remarks	21
4.1	Contribution Recaps	21
4.1.1	Have we meet the PoC goals?	21
4.2	Future Works	21
4.2.1	Transform the poc in a product	21
4.2.2	Virtual workbenches	21
4.2.3	Manage additional Use Cases (ML, Cockpit Apps, remote ECU etc..)	21
5	Conclusions	22
	Bibliography	23

List of Figures

1.1	World automobile production in million vehicles [1]	11
1.2	An incomplete overview of computers in a modern car [2]	12
1.3	Logo of the partenr company of the project	13
1.4	Here are a series of market research reports published by IT consulting firm Gartner that rely on proprietary qualitative data analysis methods to demonstrate market trends, such as direction, maturity and participants. [3]	13
2.1	Cost of fixing errors increases in later phases of the life cycle [4] . .	17

List of Tables

Listings

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Context

The automotive industry stands out as one of the fastest-growing sectors, playing a significant role as both an employer and an investor in research and development; at the same time, it represents one of the most crucial domains for the European Union’s economy. As reported in the article [1], in 2015, 21 million motor vehicles of all types were produced in Europe, representing a 23% share in the global production of more than 90 million units.

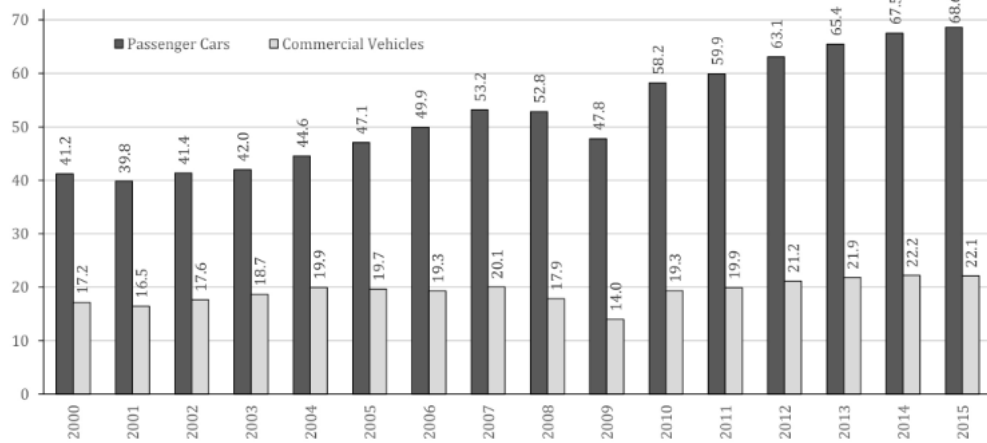


Figure 1.1. World automobile production in million vehicles [1]

In the evolving landscape of automotive technology, the imperative for automotive companies extends beyond the traditional realms of mechanical engineering to encompass a crucial reliance on both software and hardware components for vehicle construction. A glimpse into the intricate web of modern cars, as illustrated in Figure 1.2, reveals a mosaic of hundreds of distinct processors interfacing at various levels, earning contemporary vehicles the moniker of "Computers on wheels."

However, the proliferation of processors within vehicles, orchestrating communication to manage diverse components, presents a formidable challenge; each component often integrates a processor with unique logics, diverging from the logics

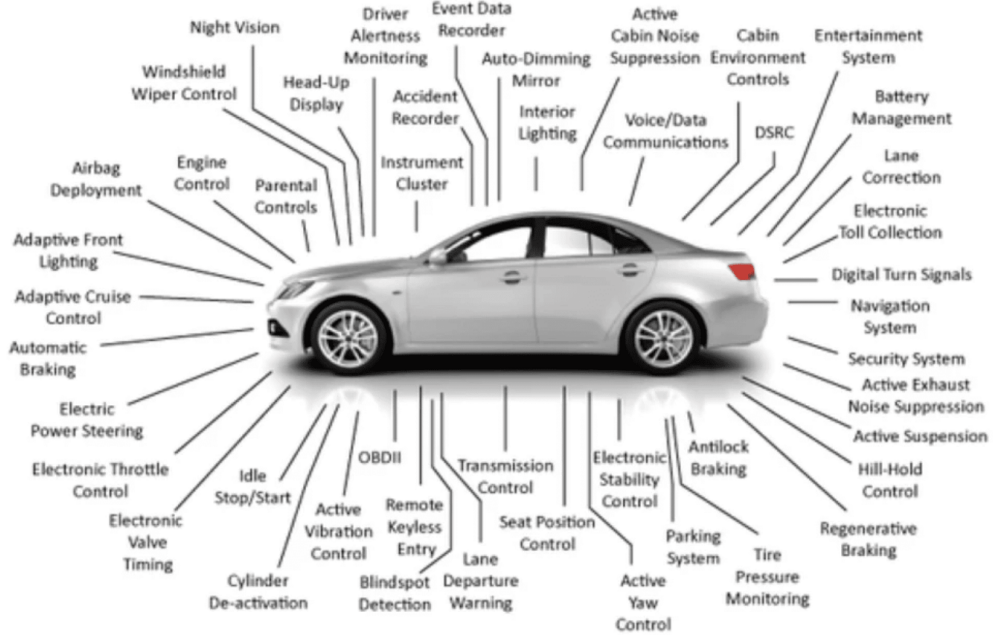


Figure 1.2. An incomplete overview of computers in a modern car [2]

embedded in processors of other components. Complicating matters further, these components are frequently supplied by companies with proprietary management logics, not readily accessible to the automotive companies themselves.

In addressing this intricate scenario, the transformative concept of a Software Defined Vehicle (SDV) comes to the forefront. Defined as "any vehicle that manages its operations, adds functionality, and enables new features primarily or entirely through software" [5], the notion of SDV offers a comprehensive solution to the challenges posed by the intricate interplay of software and hardware in modern vehicles.

Effectively navigating the development of SDV technology necessitates a collaborative approach across diverse companies, particularly in the realms of hardware and cloud computing. This collaborative synergy is exemplified in the realization of our project, made possible through the partnership with Storm Reply.

1.2 Company

Leveraging extensive experience in the cloud industry and fostering deep-rooted relationships within the automotive sector, Storm Reply stands out as the ideal choice to lead the project discussed in this thesis. A key player in the Reply group, Storm Reply specializes in designing and implementing innovative Cloud-based solutions and services [6].

With a diverse clientele spanning various sectors, notably the automotive industry, the company's expertise played a pivotal role in comprehensively understanding the project's context and internal dynamics. This profound knowledge served as the cornerstone for developing a tangible exemplification of the infrastructure.

- **Scalability:** The AWS Global Infrastructure allows companies to take advantage of the virtually infinite scalability of the cloud. This enables customers to provision resources based on actual needs, with the ability to instantly scale up or down according to business requirements.
- **Flexibility:** The AWS Global Infrastructure provides flexibility in choosing where and how workloads are run, whether globally, with single-digit millisecond latencies, or on-premises.
- **Global Footprint:** AWS boasts the largest global infrastructure footprint, continually expanding at a significant rate.

1.3 Thesis Goal

In the automotive context, the use of Software Defined Vehicle (SDV) plays a crucial role in terms of costs, innovation, and safety. The goal of the thesis intertwine with the opportunities provided by Software Defined Vehicle technology, addressing the primary challenge of managing the current difficulties associated with the presence of various specialized hardware platforms on the same vehicle.

The central objective of this thesis is to propose a Software Defined Vehicle solution capable of eliminating various phases of the software production pipeline. This would result in significant time and cost savings, enabling the investment of these resources in other sectors. Since, by definition, a Software Defined Vehicle is characterized by the ability to undergo software updates dynamically and flexibly, this solution offers significant security advantages in various aspects:

1. **Human Safety Critical Security:** From the moment that a vehicle can be classified as safety critical (as it is reported in the standard ISO 26262-1:2018 of the ISO society where is said that "safety is one of the key issues in the development of road vehicles" [8]), the elimination of software vulnerabilities related to the vehicle's systems is crucial for the overall safety of the vehicle itself.
2. **Intrinsic Software Security:** This approach allows for the prevention and resolution of vulnerabilities unknown at the time of software design, contributing to ensuring a high standard of security.

Consequently, the use of Software Defined Vehicle aims to completely separate software and hardware, allowing the production of high-level software on entirely generalized hardware systems. This results in significant savings in terms of time and money for hardware production, along with providing an advantage in terms of security due to the simplification of software.

For example, as demonstrated by NIST in the research on the Analysis Of The Impact Of Software Complexity [9], the increase in software complexity in different cases results in less analyzable programs. In some instances, the same vulnerability analysis tool may detect vulnerabilities, while in others, analyzing the same code, it may not.

From a practical standpoint, the project's goal is to provide, through the use of AWS services, a cloud infrastructure capable of managing the Software Defined Vehicle both in terms of software production and data analysis.

Chapter 2

State-of-the-Art Analysis

The following chapter constitutes an in-depth exploration of current technologies and methodologies within the automotive industry, with a specific focus on the complexity of vehicular software development. Firstly, the current automotive landscape will be examined, providing a detailed insight into challenges associated with software development in vehicles.

Subsequently, through meticulous analysis of scientific publications, technical reports, and practical implementations, the chapter delves into the radical transformation of the automotive sector facilitated by the concept of Software Defined Vehicle (SDV). This technology, crucial for technological progress and vehicular safety, will be explored from various perspectives. Particularly, the synergy between Cloud, software, and hardware will be investigated, highlighting solutions proposed by major industry players and analyzing their applications, benefits, and limitations.

The objective is to offer a comprehensive overview of current dynamics, emphasizing the pivotal role of SDV in the evolution of the automotive industry.

2.1 Current Automotive Software Development

In the past, the automotive industry advanced primarily through the development of technologies in mechanical engineering, focusing on perfecting combustion engines. Nowadays, the paradigm has radically changed due to multiple factors, including electrification, automation, shared mobility, and connected mobility.

Software technology development in the automotive field can be metaphorically compared to what has happened in smartphone development, as highlighted in the manifesto document regarding Bosch's Software Defined Vehicle (SDV) [10].

The ultimate goal is to achieve simple and user-friendly devices that fully meet the user's needs. Currently, many customers express dissatisfaction because their cars do not offer the same functionality and ease of use common in smartphones. Many ask: Why can't my \$50,000 car perform the same tasks as my \$300 smartphone?

A key difference between the automotive and smartphone industries is the level of complexity, which brings with it a number of issues.

2.1.1 difficulties

We can analyse in depth the problems of the current automotive software that is being developed via 4 main difficulties:

- **Specialized Hardware:** Today's vehicles are still complex systems of systems. Each subsystem in a car, from brakes to transmission, is a complex entity, supplied by a different manufacturer and integrated with a unique software architecture. The level of complexity and the need for seamless interoperability between systems far exceeds that of today's smartphones.
- **Time:** The software production pipeline involves many development and testing steps with a not inconsiderable amount of time spent on each one. This is greatly increased by the presence of different components, so development time must be considered for each different unit of the system.
- **Cost:** The complexity of the software systems in vehicles entails very high costs, aggravated by the fact that the test phase is often carried out directly on the boards (for hardware requirements), which means a much longer production process, especially in the event of errors.

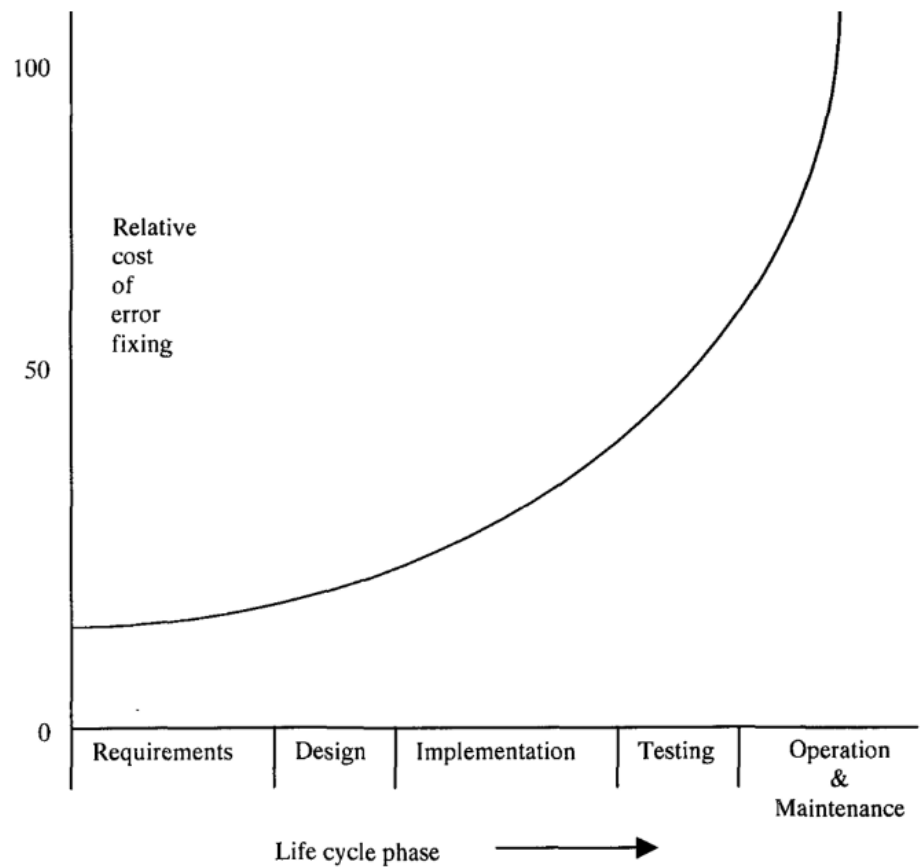


Figure 2.1. Cost of fixing errors increases in later phases of the life cycle [4]

- **Human Safety Security:** Automotive embedded software must meet stringent reliability and security requirements, while delivering performance and a reasonable memory footprint. To develop automotive embedded software, you need the right tools that meet safety and security standards to evaluate, prototype and test your software.

What lessons can be drawn from the study of barriers that can be applied to the vehicle lifecycle? Historically, the vehicle lifecycle has been characterised by the simultaneous production and deployment of tightly integrated hardware and software. Once the vehicle was in the hands of the consumer, its characteristics remained largely unchanged until the end of its life. However, the SDV paradigm introduces the possibility of decoupling hardware and software release dates, a prerequisite for adopting a digital-first approach. This approach brings the design and virtual validation of the digital vehicle experience to the forefront of the lifecycle. It also requires the application of the digital-first concept, which means that new ideas for the vehicle experience are first explored in virtual environments to ensure early user feedback, long before any custom hardware needs to be developed or a physical test vehicle is available. Digital first is the application of design thinking and lean startup principles, originally rooted in internet culture, to the tangible realm of automotive development.

2.2 Introduction to Software Defined Vehicle

The Software Defined Vehicle represents the new frontier of automotive manufacturing and is poised to completely change the paradigm of automotive production.

If we imagine bringing a feature update to one of today's vehicles, it will most likely take anywhere from one to seven years from the idea to when that feature is actually perceptible in the production vehicle; this takes so long because the vehicles produced up to this point have not been designed with frequent updates in mind [11]. Traditionally focused on physical functionality, the automotive industry has evolved from early electronic features such as airbags, vehicle stabilisation and braking systems to modern driver assistance and even automated driving. The current shift towards a digital experience is possible thanks to vehicle design that includes software integration as a fundamental part. Software should no longer be seen as an accessory to the vehicle, but as an integral part of the vehicle itself.

The simultaneous efforts of major automotive companies such as Bosch, Renault and Stellantis, in collaboration with leading computer developers such as Arm, BlackBerry and AWS, have given rise to the Software Defined Vehicle concept, which they define as "any vehicle that manages its own operations, adds functionality and enables new features primarily or entirely through software" [5].

It is evident that the Software Defined Vehicle represents the future of the automotive industry, promising an enriched and enduring user experience, coupled with the evolution of automotive technologies. This section further elucidates the current state of the industry, highlighting the key players that are working in the industry as enablers to develop the SDV technologies, and the benefits of this innovation.

2.2.1 Enablers

The software defined vehicle solution is nowadays being considered by several companies as the manifesto of a new era of vehicle development. An example is given by the renault group, which in an overview of its products describes: "Today, it is already possible to make remote updates of some vehicles via the Firmware Over The Air (FOTA) system. This keeps the vehicle safe by making it easier and faster to improve the on-board system and apply patches. Tomorrow, the Software Defined Vehicle's flexible and scalable architecture will enable the faster development and integration of new features throughout the vehicle lifecycle, directly into the cloud, that is, in secure online servers accessible from anywhere and anytime" [12].

Two key technology players, Arm and AWS, have played a pivotal role in advancing SDV by working together to define standards that accelerate technology development.

- Arm, a leading semiconductor design and software company, is a pillar in the advancement of SDV technology. Focusing on the development of energy-efficient processors and technologies, Arm's contributions enable SDVs to efficiently manage their operations, add functionality and introduce new features through the development of general-purpose processors that can be used in the cloud for software development and maintenance, and in the vehicle itself to maintain computing continuity.
- Amazon Web Services (AWS), a global leader in cloud computing, offers scalable and secure solutions for real-time application updates, enhanced connectivity, and efficient data management. The AWS services and technologies will be in depth described in the futher chapters.

The collaborative efforts of this two companies contribute to shaping a future where vehicles are not only defined by their physical attributes but are also dynamic entities capable of continual software-driven enhancements and innovations.

2.2.2 Benefits

Chapter 3

Proof Of Concept

3.1 Amazon Web Services

3.1.1 Introduction

3.1.2 Used services

3.2 Design

3.2.1 Architecture

3.2.2 Security

3.3 Implementation

3.3.1 Code

3.3.2 Tools

3.4 Test and Validation

3.4.1 RPi demo

Chapter 4

Concliding Remarks

4.1 Contribution Recaps

4.1.1 Have we meet the PoC goals?

4.2 Future Works

4.2.1 Transform the poc in a product

4.2.2 Virtual workbenches

4.2.3 Manage additional Use Cases (ML, Cockpit Apps, remote ECU etc..)

Chapter 5

Conclusions

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