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“drag and drop” it is only intended as one example of a method of manipulation of a representation of a software object that represents a technical object that is either conceptual, or a real world object, in order to control or perform an operation.

FIG. 11, Distribution interface, is visible when, for example, a tab 115 has been selected. The distributors available for configuring, such as load balancing groups LbGroups 112, 113, 114 are shown, as are two AtcGroups shown 116a, 116b, and three WorkAreas shown numbered 107 according to FIG. 10. Each WorkArea once configured, 110, 111, is a software representation of a work area of a machine or robot, (10, 11, 12 of FIGS. 1-4). These objects may be configured into Distributions arranged according to the product or item handled by dragging and dropping, to form an item distribution such as the two shown in the left side of the interface. Item distribution Item1, here numbered as 118, is shown to include one AtcGroup, 108, and three work areas shown here as 108a, 108b, 108c; a Reject function with a bypass element is also shown.

Item distribution Item2 is shown indicated by number 119, and Item2 includes an example of a load balancing group LbGroup 132, in which the work is to be balanced 33%-67% between work areas 111, ie WorkArea 1 and WorkArea3 in this example.

FIG. 12 shows the Order interface selected, for example, by means of a tab 121 which provides a method for a user to determine an order in which the objects reach (the work area of) each machine or robot 10, 11, 12 to be thus picked up and placed. Thus configurable objects in the right side of the interface are three work areas 107_{IC} available to work from a conveyor, InConveyor; and another type of work area called IndexedWorkArea 3, shown as 107'. On the left side of the interface the order in which the objects will make contact with the work areas (and the machines in them) are shown as 110 and in the order WorkArea1, WorkArea2, and WorkArea3 are shown in number order. Further objects may be dragged and dropped from the right to the left side (or deleted by the reverse action). The order of work areas on the left may be switched by dragging and dropping on the left side.

FIG. 13 shows an interface for selecting one or more Load balancing functions according to a further and advantageous embodiment. The available distributors on the right side which may be included in the configuration on the left side of the interface include first a new load balancing group, New LbGroup 130, WorkAreas 107, AtcGroups 116a, 116b, and a Bypass function. The load balance groups shown configured in the left part of the interface include three load balancing groups, LbGroup 132, LbGroup2 133 and LbGroup3 134. LbGroup 132 includes the three WorkAreas 110. The second load balancing group LbGroup2 shows two Bypass areas as well as three WorkAreas 110', which may or may not be the same as the previously used WorkAreas. The third load balancing group LbGroup2 shows an Atc group and one WorkArea.

It should be noted that while the above describes exemplifying embodiments of the invention, there are several variations and modifications which may be made to the disclosed solution without departing from the scope of the present invention as defined in the appended claims.

The invention claimed is:

1. A method for controlling a plurality of machines configured to pick up an item from one of a plurality of first positions and place the item in one of a plurality of second positions, the method comprising:

providing with a sensor member data on said first positions to a control member configured to control a plurality of

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machines each configured to pick the item from one of said first positions and place the item in one of said second positions,

sending a message from a master process of the control member comprising one or more of said first positions to a machine controller of all said machines controlled by said control member,

sending a message from said control member to all said machine controllers of said machines with an indicator member specifying which of the one or more first positions shall be used,

picking up with one of the machines an item from said one of first positions to be used and moving the item to one of the second positions,

receiving with said control member from the machine controller of one of said machines a message that said one of said first positions has been used, and

sending from the control member to the machine controllers of the machines that said one of said first positions has been used and an item may no longer be picked up from said one of said first positions.

2. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

sending a message with said control member comprising said first position, or more said first positions, to all said machines controlled by the control member in which message each said first position is marked with a status of used or not.

3. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

receiving at one of said machines the message comprising one or more said first positions,

handling an item placed one of the one or more of said first positions, and

sending a message to the control member comprising the information that one or more of said first positions where said item was handled has been used.

4. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

updating in said control member a marker of one of said first positions to read used, and

sending from the control member to all machines controlled by said control member a message that a status of the said first position consumed is equal to used.

5. The method according to claim 1, further comprising:

selecting with a control member one or more specific said first positions to be handled by a specific machine.

6. The method according to claim 5, wherein the control member uses an algorithm to select one of said first positions to be handled by one specific machine of all machines.

7. The method according to claim 5, wherein the control member carries out a repeated triggering of a first position.

8. The method according to claim 1, further comprising: registering said first position of the item together with a unique identity member, and marking each said first position with a status of used or not.

9. The method according to claim 8, wherein the unique identity member takes the form of a number.

10. The method according to claim 9, wherein the unique identity member takes the form of an alphanumeric string.

11. The method according to claim 1, further comprising: allocating one of said first positions to a specific machine dependent on load balancing for a plurality of machines controlled by the control member.

12. The method according to claim 11, further comprising: allocating said first position to a specific machine dependent on load balancing for all of the machines controlled by the control member.