

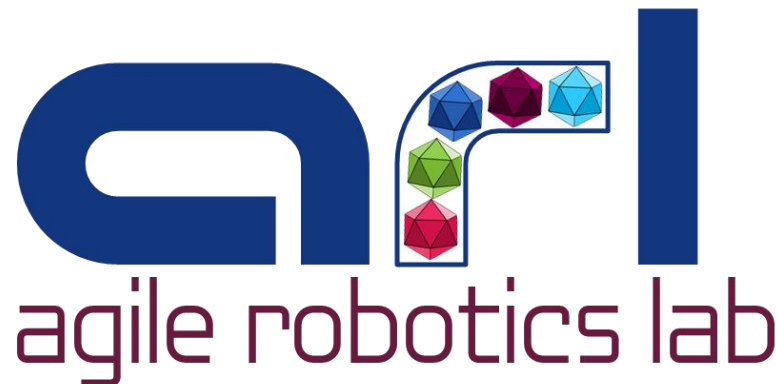
Geometric Static Modeling Framework for Piecewise-Continuous Curved-Link Multi Point-of-Contact Tensegrity Robots

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Motivation

Discontinuous, curved morphology well suited for space applications

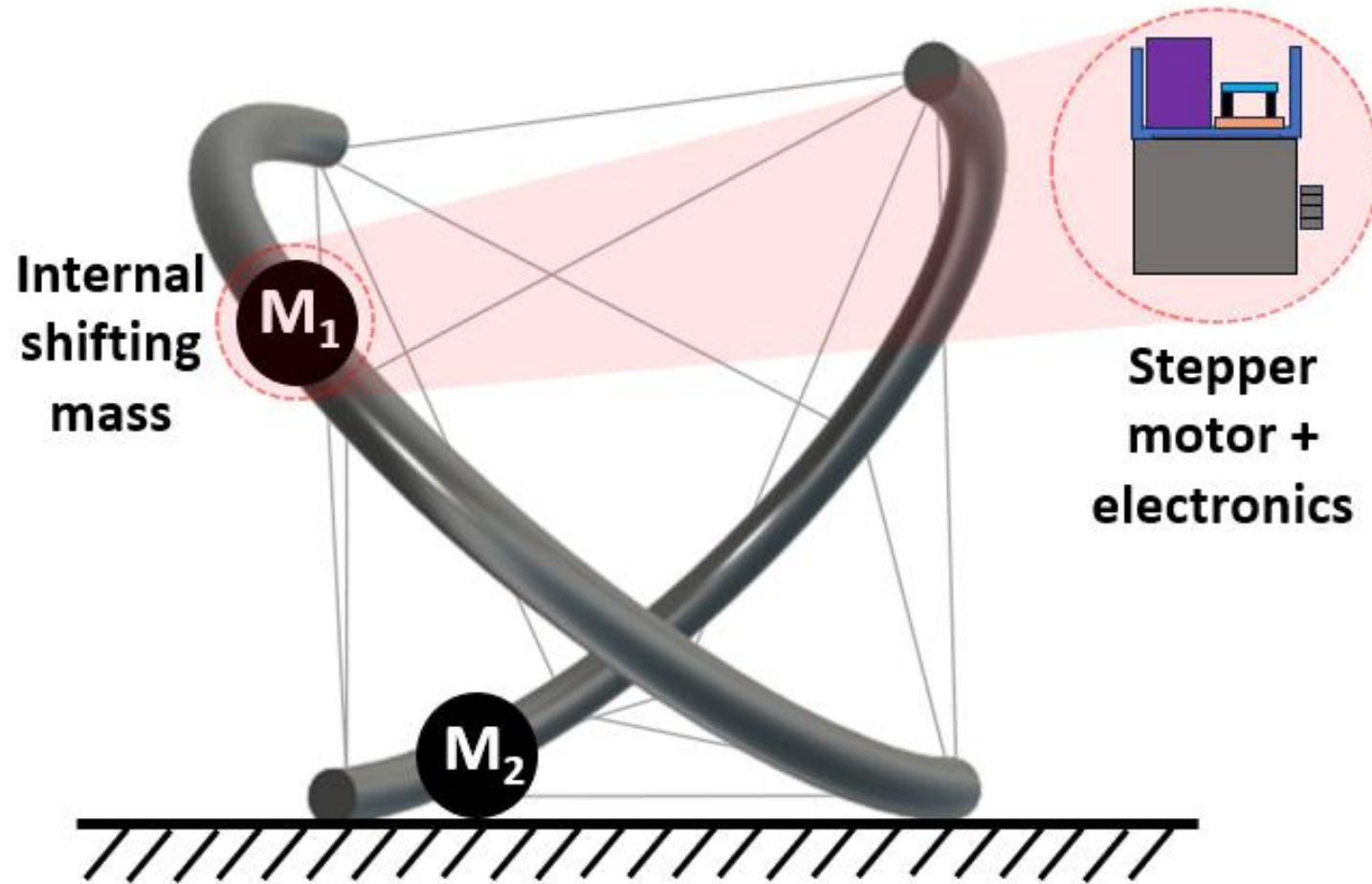


Critical Terminology

- **Tensegrity mechanism** – Synergistically combine *tension* elements (pre-stressed cables) with *compression* elements (rigid rods) to achieve *structural integrity*
- **Screw Theory**– Framework used to geometrically model motion of rigid bodies as twists along a screw axis
- **Hybrid system** – The robot moves in four different states: it always rolls along the entirety of one arc while pivoting about an endpoint of the other until swapping arcs
- **Piecewise continuous movement** – Rolling produces continuous movement in different directions that instantaneously flip when updating pivot points; when combined, the movement generates a straight path
- **Stability** – A robot orientation where tip-over does not occur regardless of internal mass positions

Tensegrity eXploratory Robot (TeXploR) Design

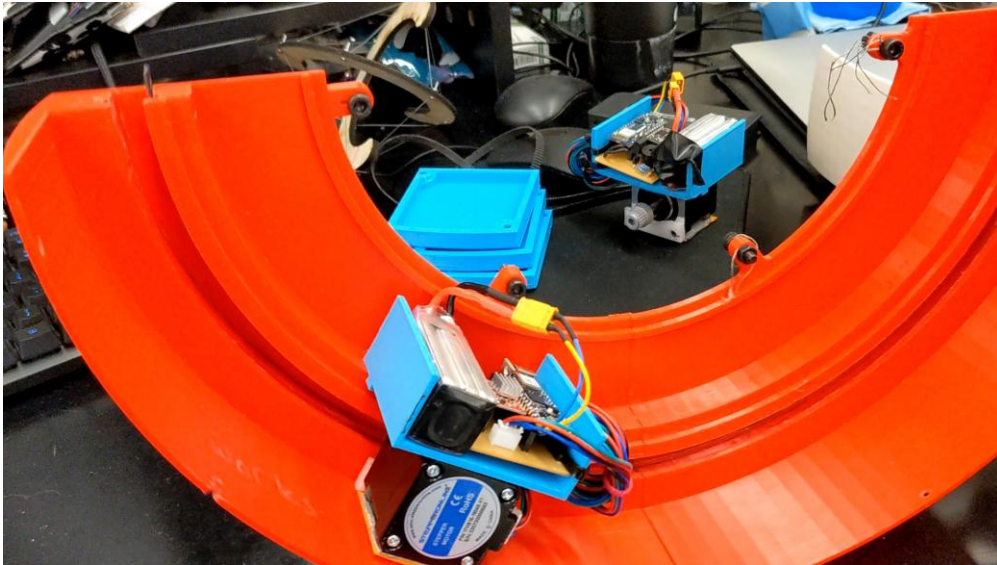
Curved-links with two points of contact



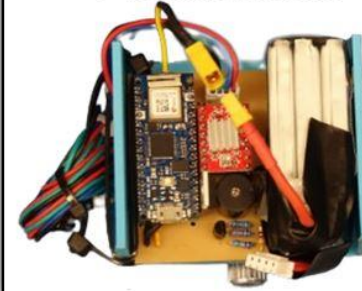
TeXploR Prototype Mechatronics

All electronics mounted internally and shift along arc

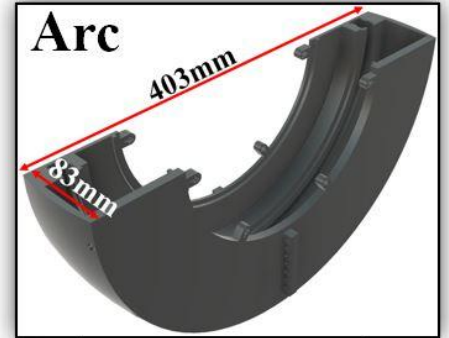
Internal Mass Shifting



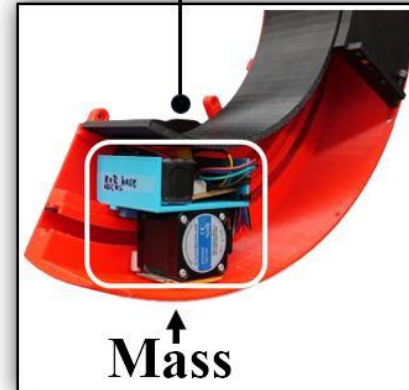
Electronics



Arc



Mass

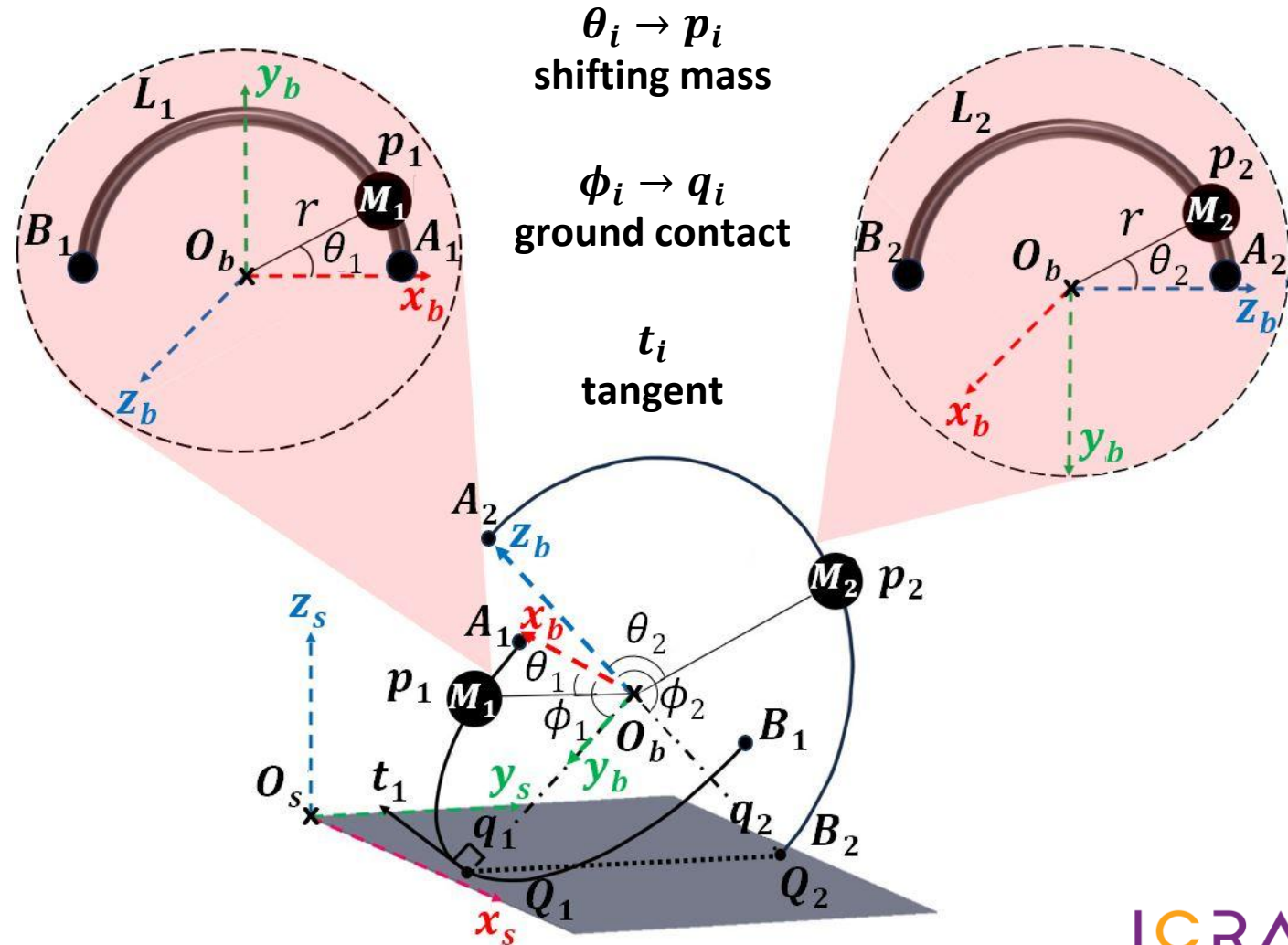


Kinematics

Geometric representation using Screw Theory

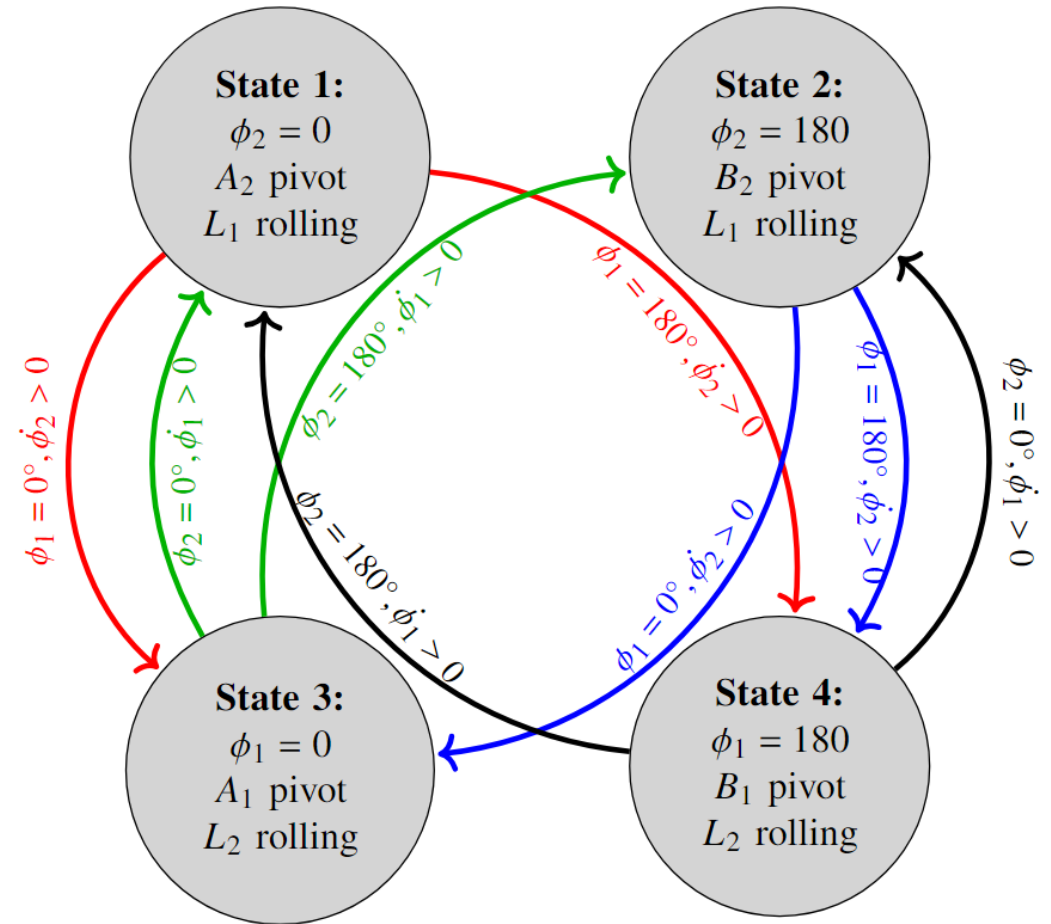
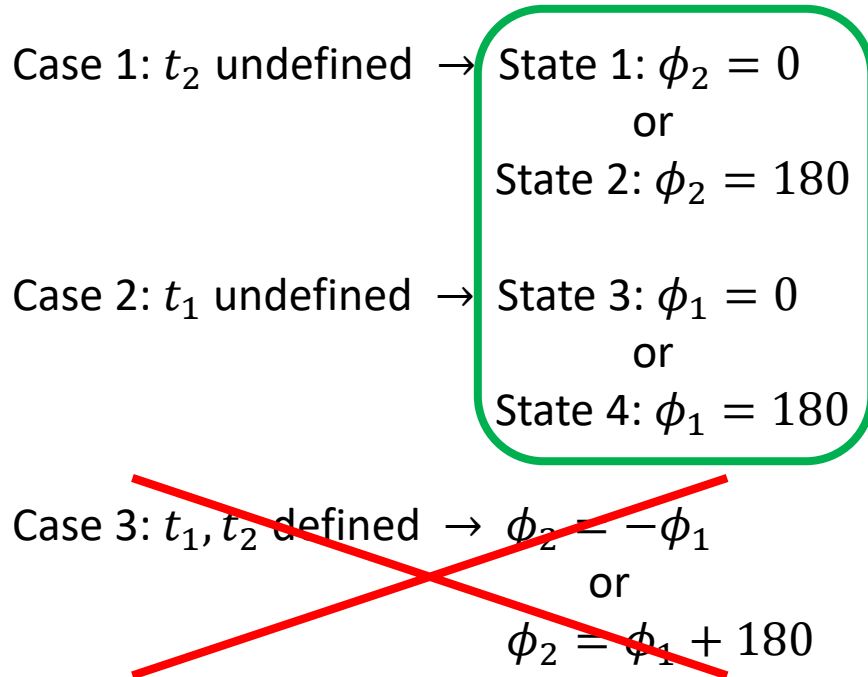
$$\mathbf{p}_i^i = r \begin{bmatrix} c \theta_i \\ s \theta_i \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}, \quad \mathbf{q}_i^i = r \begin{bmatrix} c \phi_i \\ s \phi_i \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$T_{12} = \begin{bmatrix} R_{12} & \mathbf{o}_{12}^1 \\ \mathbf{0}_{1 \times 3} & 1 \end{bmatrix}, R_{12} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & -1 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}, \mathbf{o}_{12}^1 = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}$$



Hybrid State System

Four states of locomotion for rolling sequence from holonomic constraints



Geometric Static Modeling Framework

Internal mass inputs \rightarrow static equilibrium position output

Holonomic constraints



$$\mathcal{F} = \begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{f} \\ \mathbf{m} \end{bmatrix} = \sum_{i=1}^2 \begin{bmatrix} (M_i + m_i)g\mathbf{z}_s + \mathbf{F}_{ri} \\ M_i g \hat{\mathbf{p}}_i \mathbf{z}_s + m_i g \hat{\mathbf{r}}_i \mathbf{z}_s + \hat{\mathbf{q}}_i \mathbf{F}_{ri} \end{bmatrix} = 0 \quad \text{s.t.}$$

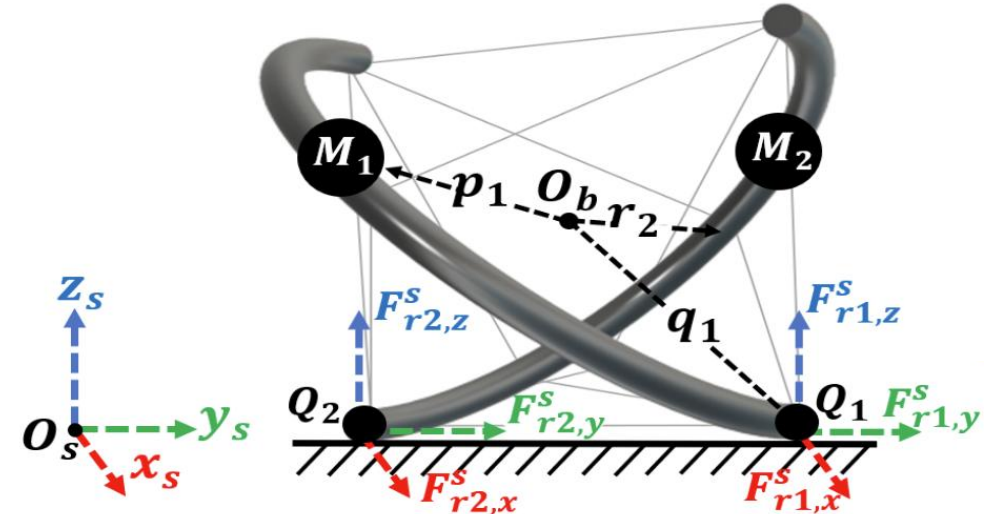
$$\mathbf{f}^s = \begin{bmatrix} F_{r1,x}^s - F_{r2,x}^s \\ F_{r1,y}^s - F_{r2,y}^s \\ (M_1 + M_2 + m_1 + m_2)g - (F_{r1,z}^s + F_{r2,z}^s) \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\mathbf{m}^b = \sum_{i=1}^2 \left(M_i g \hat{\mathbf{p}}_i^b + m_i g \hat{\mathbf{r}}_i^b - F_{ri,z}^s \hat{\mathbf{q}}_i^b \right) \mathbf{z}_s^b + \left(F_{r1,x}^s \hat{\mathbf{q}}_1^b - F_{r2,x}^s \hat{\mathbf{q}}_2^b \right) \mathbf{x}_s^b + \left(F_{r1,y}^s \hat{\mathbf{q}}_1^b - F_{r2,y}^s \hat{\mathbf{q}}_2^b \right) \mathbf{y}_s^b$$

$$\mathbf{z}_s^b = -\frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} [c\phi_1, s\phi_1, 1]^T, \quad \tan \phi_1 = \frac{s\theta_1 - s\theta_2}{c\theta_1}$$

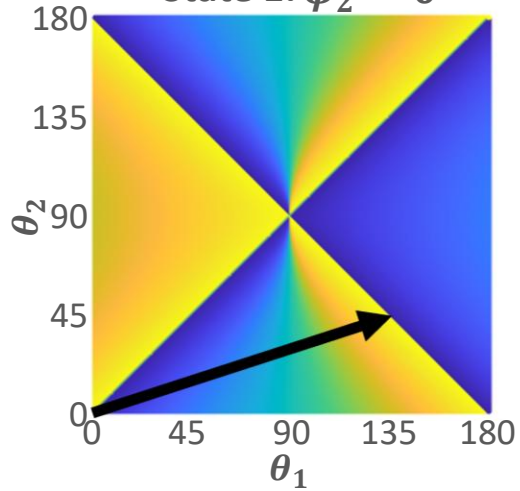
$$F_{r1,z} = Mg \left[-1 + \frac{c\phi_1 + \theta_2}{2} - c\theta_2 + c\phi_1 - \theta_1 - \frac{c\phi_1 - \theta_2}{2} \right] - mg$$

$$F_{r2,z} = Mg \left[-1 - \frac{c\phi_1 + \theta_2}{2} + c\theta_2 - c\phi_1 - \theta_1 + \frac{c\phi_1 - \theta_2}{2} \right] - mg$$

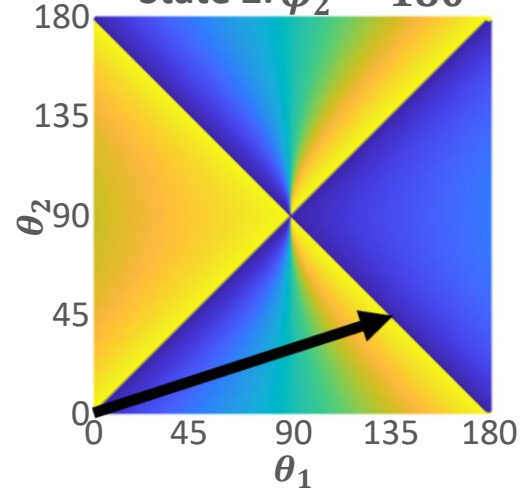


Quasi-Static Simulations

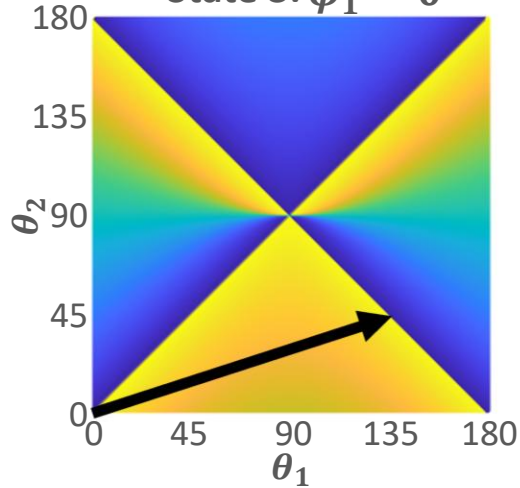
State 1: $\phi_2 = 0$



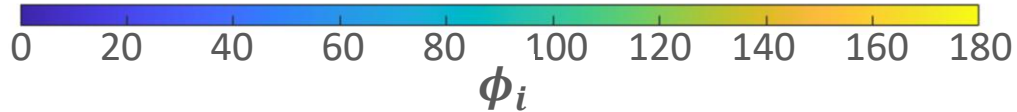
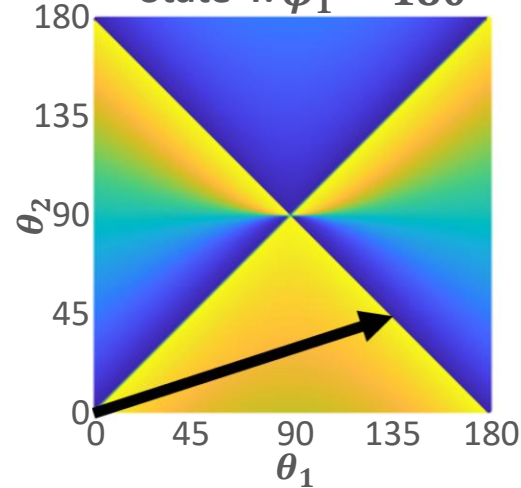
State 2: $\phi_2 = 180$



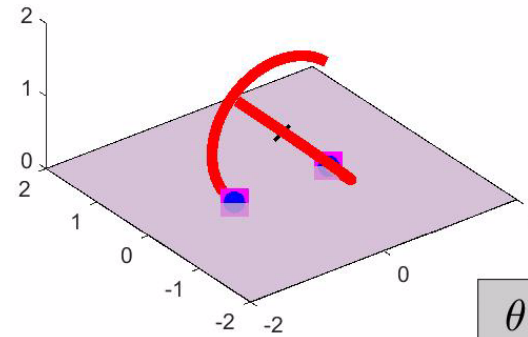
State 3: $\phi_1 = 0$



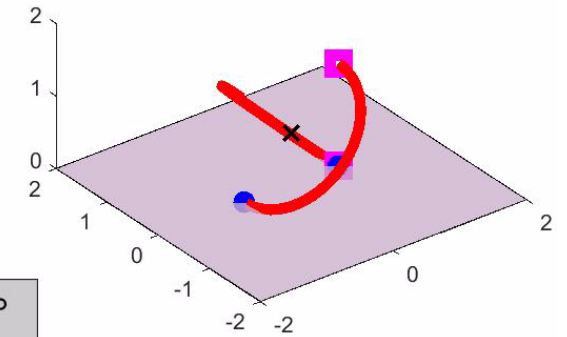
State 4: $\phi_1 = 180$



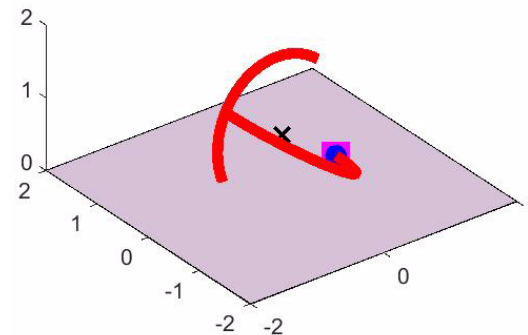
State 1, $\phi_1=0^\circ, \phi_2=0^\circ$



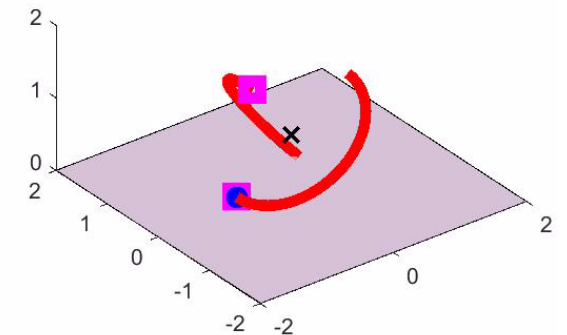
State 2, $\phi_1=0^\circ, \phi_2=180^\circ$



State 3, $\phi_1=0^\circ, \phi_2=0^\circ$

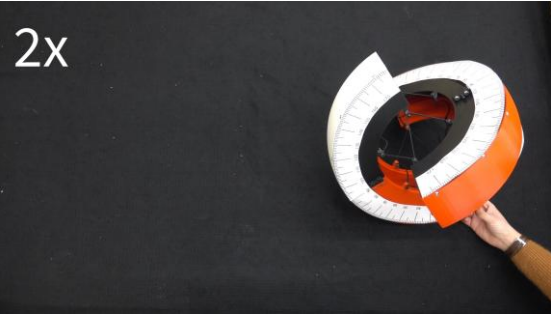


State 4, $\phi_1=180^\circ, \phi_2=0^\circ$



Experimental Validation

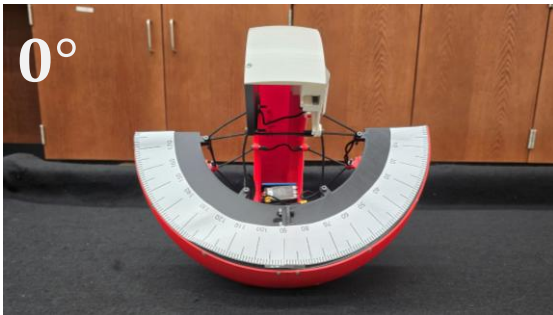
State 3, $\theta_1 = 135^\circ, \theta_2 = 135^\circ$



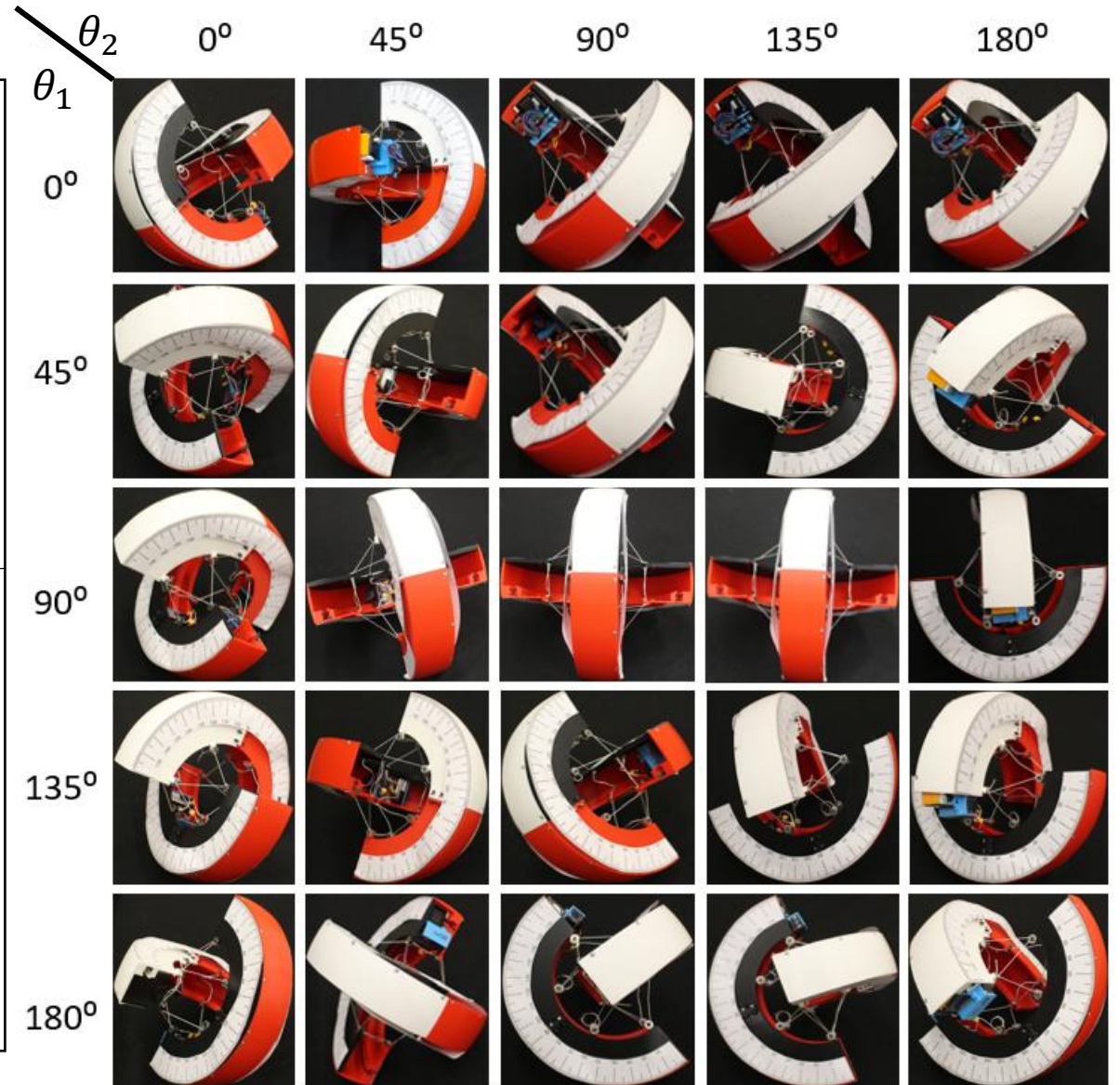
State 4, $\theta_1 = 45^\circ, \theta_2 = 135^\circ$



$\phi_1 = 90^\circ, \phi_2 = 0^\circ, 0^\circ$ incline

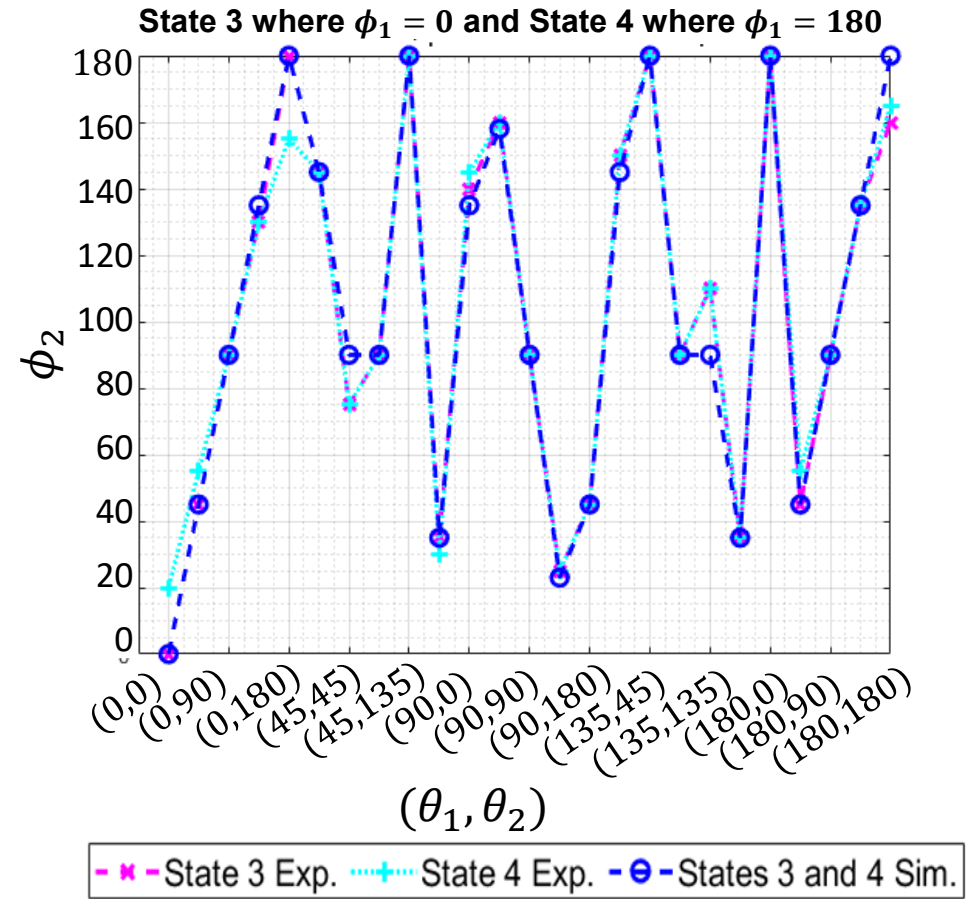
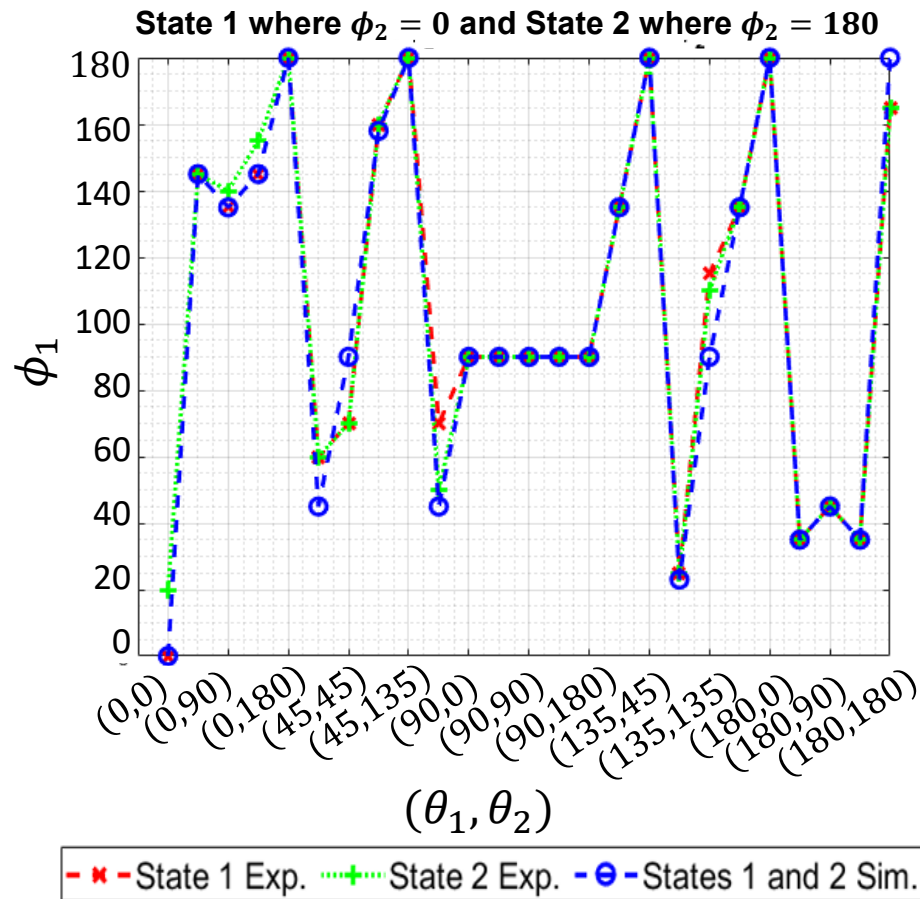


$\phi_1 = 90^\circ, \phi_2 = 0^\circ, 5^\circ$ incline

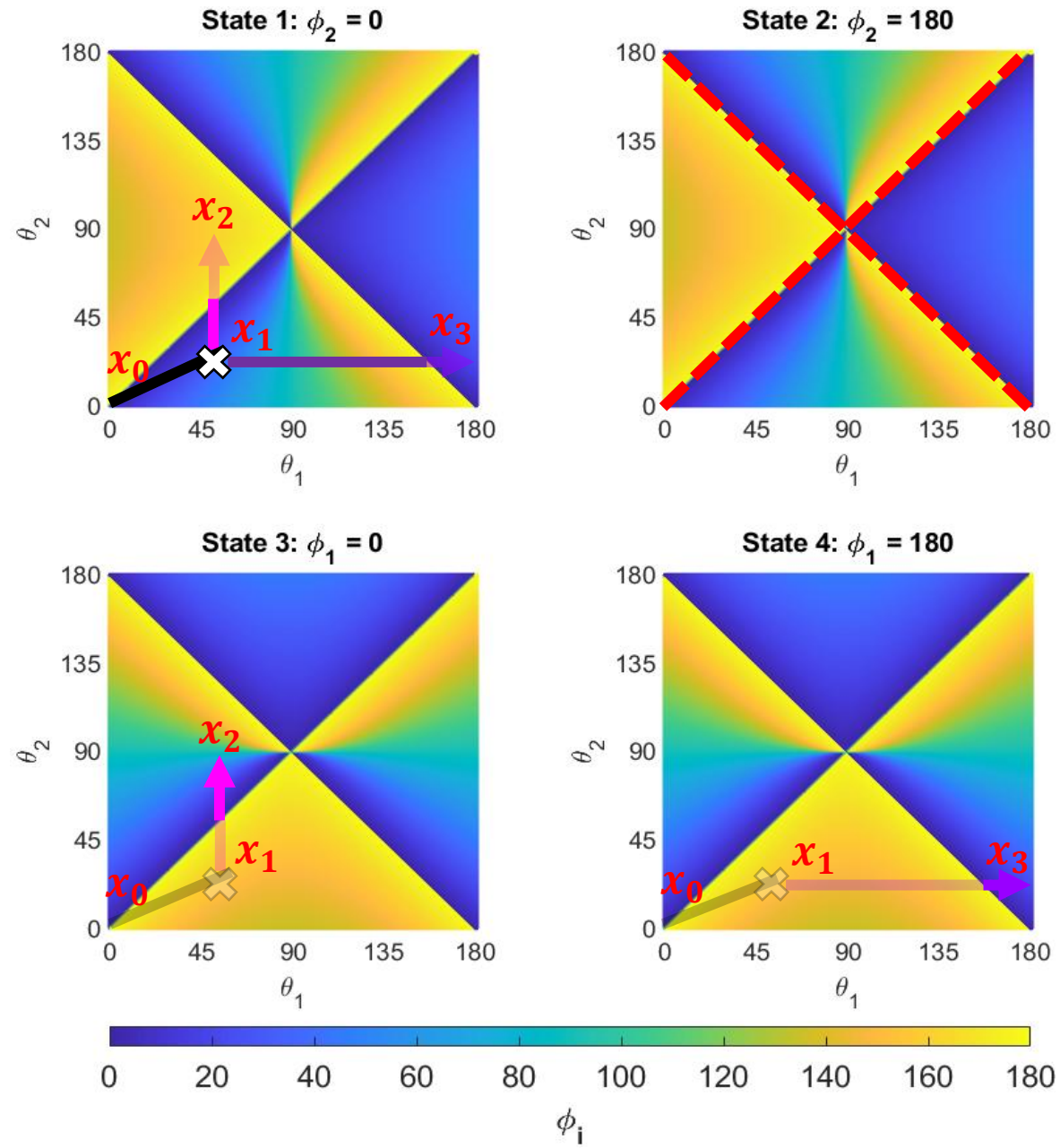


Simulated vs. Experimental Results

$MAE\ 4.36^\circ$ ✓



Quasi-Static Simulations



Generalizable to Variable Morphologies



Shape morphing



Number of curved links



Curved link length

Takeaways and Research Impact

1. The paper statically models a mobile, curved-link tensegrity robot using a **geometric representation** and provides subsequent simulation and validation. The **generalizable modeling framework** is adaptable to robots with multiple points of contact and different morphologies;
2. The model analytically **proves the hybrid nature** of the system where the robot exists in **four states**. Each state corresponds to the motion where the robot instantaneously pivots about the end of one curved-link and rolls along the other;
3. **Static simulations** provide input-output relationship between the internal mass position and ground contact points, equivalently, the robot orientation;
4. A tetherless robot prototype **experimentally validates** the static model with **high accuracy**.

Questions?



L. Ervin and V. Vikas, "Geometric Static Modeling Framework for Piecewise-Continuous Curved-Link Multi Point-of-Contact Tensegrity Robots," in *IEEE Robotics and Automation Letters*, vol. 9, no. 12, pp. 11066-11073, Dec. 2024, doi: 10.1109/LRA.2024.3486199.

