ROS 2
Node configuration

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Roadmap

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1 Namespaces

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Why Parameters?

Example: The Camera Node

Suppose you have to integrate an **RGB camera** into your architecture, by writing a ROS 2 node that acts as a **driver**:

- the node uses the necesary libraries to interact with the camera hardware;

- RGB frames are constantly published on some topic;

- during constant operation, you would like to **change some values** to tune image quality, e.g. exposure.

Why Parameters?

Example: The Controller Node

Suppose you implemented some **discrete-time control law** in a ROS 2 node:

- subscribers constantly sample sensor measurements, and callbacks embed the control algorithm;

- the control law depends on some **parameters**;

- you would like to change the parameters without having to **recompile** your software each time;

- you would like to have **other modules** to change such parameters automatically if need be.

Node Parameters

A ROS 2 node can have one or more **parameters**: values that can be specified at startup, changed at runtime, and used in the implementation.

The parameter system is **decentralized** and **built on messages and services**: each node has its own parameters and related service, and updates are **broadcasted** to every other node.

Parameters can be **listed**, **queried**, **described** and **set**, using either **CLI tools** or **service calls**; YAML configuration files may be **loaded** or **dumped**.

It is possible to specify what to do when a parameter update is requested by defining a **callback**.

A parameter may be **read-only** and its type may be **dynamic**[1].

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[1]Only from Galactic.

Parameter Types

From the `rcl_interfaces/msg/ParameterType` message file:

- bool

- integer

- double

- string

- byte array

- bool array

- integer array

- double array

- string array

Parameters CLI Commands

- `ros2 param list NODE_NAME`
  Lists available parameters of a node.

- `ros2 param describe NODE_NAME PARAMETER_NAME`
  Shows information about a parameter.

- `ros2 param get NODE_NAME PARAMETER_NAME`
  Returns the value of a parameter.

- `ros2 param set NODE_NAME PARAMETER_NAME VALUE`
  Sets a given value for a parameter.

- `ros2 param dump NODE_NAME`
  Dumps the current parameter configuration in a YAML file.

- `ros2 param load NODE_NAME PARAMETER_FILE`
  Loads parameters from a YAML file.

Coding with Parameters

Parameters Best Practices

- Parameters are referred to by their **name**.

- Before being used, a parameter must be **declared** to the middleware: this is usually done in the constructor of a node.

- Parameter values can be retrieved **atomically** by calling an API, but accessing the middleware's internals to do this might be **slow**: it is best to define **local variables** that track the value of each parameter by being updated each time the parameter is.

Example: Parametric Publisher

Now go have a look at the ros2-examples/src/parameters_example package!

Roadmap

Scripting ROS 2 Architectures

A ROS 2-based control architecture for a robot can easily get to have 20 nodes or more.

It then becomes critical to be able to **automate startup and configuration** of all the modules, or some subsets, also for testing.

That is what the ROS 2 **Launch System** is for.

Launch Files

Launch files are **Python scripts** that specify how ROS 2 modules must be **located**, **configured** and **started**. Their format is such that the Launch System can parse and integrate them when invoked.

Many things can be configured about modules in such files:

- console and text files **logs**;

- command line **arguments**;

- node **parameters**;

- **remappings**.

Targeted modules may even not be ROS 2 nodes.

Launch files may be **included**, so that large architectures can be started with single commands.

Launch Files

```python
1  from launch import LaunchDescription
2  from launch_ros.actions import Node
3
4  # The following function MUST be specified
5
6  """Builds a launch description."""
7  def generate_launch_description():
8      ld = LaunchDescription()
9      node = Node(
10         package='PACKAGE_NAME',
11         executable='EXECUTABLE_NAME'
12     )
13     ld.add_action(node)
14     return ld
```

Listing 1: Minimal example of a launch file

Coding Launch Files

Launch Files Best Practices

- Their extension is usually `.launch.py`.

- They are usually placed in a directory named `launch` that is installed in the workspace path during build.

- A module can have its own launch files but those for the entire architecture must form an appropriate package, whose name is usually `PROJECT_bringup`.

A comprehensive description of all the features of launch files can be found in launch_files.md.

Example: Bringup Package

Now go have a look at the ros2-examples/src/ros2_examples_bringup package!