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DESIGN OF AN ADVANCED ROBOTIC CELL IN THE CONTEXT OF INDUSTRY 4.0
NÁVRH POKROČILÉ ROBOTICKÉ BUŇKY V KONTEXTU PRŮMYSLU 4.0

DOCTORAL THESIS
DIZERTAČNÍ PRÁCE

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Declaration of Authorship

I declare that I have written my doctoral thesis on the theme of "Design of Advanced Methods in the Field of Industrial Robotics, Fitting into the Concept of Industry 4.0" independently, under the guidance of the doctoral thesis supervisor, and using the technical literature and other sources of information, which are all quoted in the thesis and detailed in the list of literature at the end of the thesis.

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February 29, 2024

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Date Ing. Roman Parák

Preface

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

"An automated machine that does just one thing is not a robot. It is simply automation. A robot should have the capability of handling a range of jobs at a factory."

— Joseph Engelberger (1925 - 2015), *"The Father of Robotics"*

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CHAPTER 2

Current State in the Field of Industry 4.0

The following chapter provides an overview of Industry 4.0, which was first introduced by Professor Wolfgang Wahlster at the Hannover Messe trade fair in Germany in 2011 [1]. Industry 4.0 represents the fourth industrial revolution, characterized by the integration of digital technologies into manufacturing processes. In 2013, Professor Wahlster elaborated on this vision, outlining key principles and components during the same trade fair [2]. This chapter explores the significance of Industry 4.0 in revolutionizing manufacturing and technology. It provides a foundation for understanding its key components and recent developments since its inception in 2011.

The chapter begins with a concise overview of the historical context surrounding the emergence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (Section 2.1). Following this, it delves into the fundamental characteristics of Industry 4.0 (Section 2.2) and explores the key pillars underpinning this industrial revolution (Section 2.3). The emphasis is placed on the essential aspects of system integration (Subsection 2.3.1), autonomous robotics (Subsection 2.3.2), and simulation (Subsection 2.3.3). While providing a succinct overview of the remaining pillars (Subsection 2.3.4), the chapter concludes by examining future trends in the industrial field (Section 2.4). This exploration considers the possibility of a new revolution or the evolution of the existing concept of Industry 4.0, with a focus on improving its key pillars.

2.1 History of the Industrial Revolution

In this section, we present a brief overview of the historical development that led to the emergence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, commonly known as Industry 4.0 [3]. The historical process of industrial modernization, from the First to the Third Industrial Revolution, is thoroughly depicted in the book "The Industrial Revolution in World

History" [4], and a brief review of these three revolutions can be found in [5, 6, 7]. The Fourth Industrial Revolution is discussed in the book "The Fourth Industrial Revolution" [8], but as a still relatively new area of research, it is more widely described in scientific publications (see [9, 10, 11, 12, 13]).

The historical process of the sequence of industrial revolutions with key pillars is depicted in Figure 2.1.

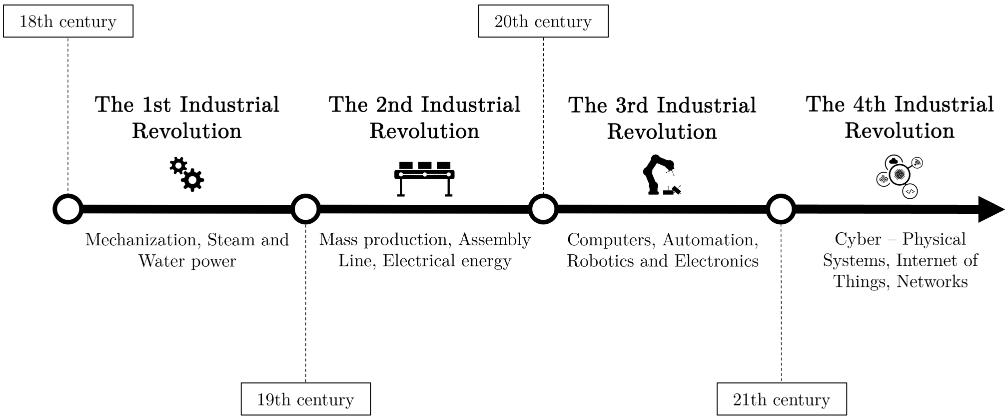


Figure 2.1: A visualization of the historical process of industrial revolutions that began in the 18th century and continues to the present day.

The First Industrial Revolution

The first phase of the Industrial Revolution began at the end of the 18th century, more precisely in 1760, and lasted until 1880.

The major milestones of the first industrial revolution include the invention of the steam engine and the development of steam power, as well as the use of turbine engines and water as power sources. The steam engine allowed the transition from agriculture to a new production process. This transition involved the use of coal as the main source of energy.

The combination of steam power and mechanized production brought about a significant change in performance, not only in terms of the growth of the regional and global market economy but also in education. This inspired the science and technology sector to restructure academic fields.

The Second Industrial Revolution

The second phase of the Industrial Revolution began in 1880 and lasted until 1950.

One of the major milestones of the first industrial revolution was the invention of the internal combustion engine. This invention facilitated technological advances in the industry, leading to rapid industrialization through the utilization of oil and electricity for mass production and assembly lines. A wave of systemic change has led to the belief that science and technology are the means to a better life, and that progress is necessary in many ways. The revolution has brought fundamental changes in standardization and precision manufacturing, as well as large-scale technological infrastructure, such as electricity grids and new forms of public transport based on the internal combustion engine.

Alongside innovations such as steamships, telephones, and gas turbines, there was a growing public demand for goods, travel, and information. These factors played a significant role in shaping future developments.

The Third Industrial Revolution

The third phase of the Industrial Revolution began in 1950 and lasted until 2010.

A characteristic feature of the Third Industrial Revolution was the implementation of electronics and information technology to automate production. The establishment of computer infrastructure brought about a significant change in information theory and data processing, and new channels were created to share information. The rapid advancement towards increased computing power has led to more interconnected and complex problems that require attention.

Innovations, such as programmable logic controllers and single/multiple purpose robotic systems, as well as the advancement of nuclear power, have opened the door to new areas of research, including space, robotics, and biotechnology.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution

The fourth phase, also known as Industry 4.0, was initially introduced in 2011 by Professor Wolfgang Wahlster at the Hannover Messe trade fair in Germany [1] and continues to the present day.

A characteristic feature of Industry 4.0 is the transformation of industrial production through the integration of digital and internet technologies, the utilization of cyber-physical systems, artificial intelligence techniques, augmented reality, physical simulation, additive technologies, and other key aspects to achieve the greatest possible flexibility in the production process.

A more detailed description of Industry 4.0, including the characteristics of the industrial concept and a brief introduction to the main pillars, is provided in Section 2.2.

2.2 Characteristics of the Fourth Industrial Revolution

The following section introduces the characteristics of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, as the title suggests.

The concept of Industry 4.0 involves the integration of intelligent machines and systems into the manufacturing processes of industrial enterprises [14, 15]. It is based on nine main pillars (see Fig. 2.2) [16, 17, 18], which together form the core idea of industrial digitalization. The concept aims to increase work efficiency and personalization, resulting in greater flexibility in the production of a given range of products. The Fourth

Industrial Revolution focuses not only on technological advances, but also on the way people work and apply their creativity across industries. The integration of AI techniques increases the level of information processing and evaluation, leading to improvements in areas such as safety, human-machine collaboration [19], predictive maintenance, and visual inspection. This concept affects not only the industrial sector, of which the Industry 4.0 initiative is an integral part, but also the development of education [20, 21], transportation, agriculture, and many other fields.

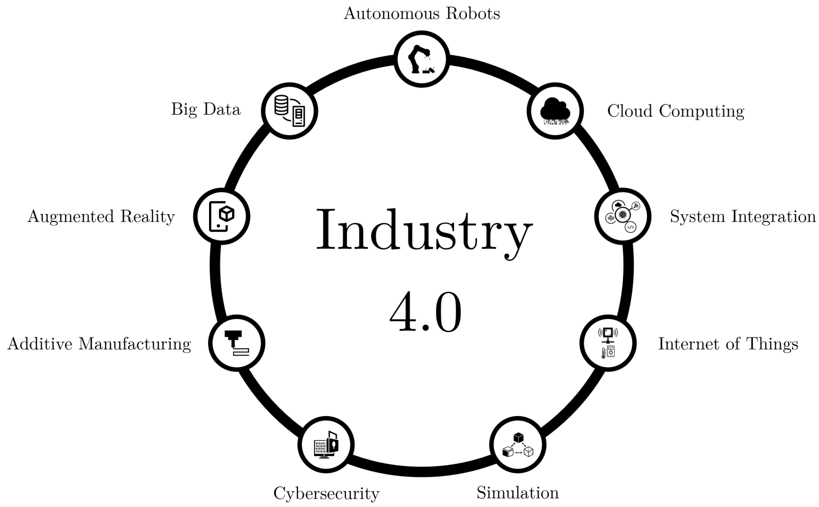


Figure 2.2: The nine main pillars of the concept of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Industry 4.0 encompasses six design principles [22, 23, 24], namely modularity, interoperability, etc. These principles contribute to the design or transition process from Industry 3.0 to Industry 4.0. They are referred to as design principles because of their contribution to the design process.

The main design principles of Industry 4.0

(a) Modularity

The principle of modularity refers to the ability to customize and adapt to different requirements, offering scalability, flexibility, and the ability to upgrade or replace specific components without affecting the entire system.

(b) Interoperability

The principle of interoperability pertains to the fact that a cyber-physical system (CPS) consists of intelligent machines and storage systems that can exchange information, initiate actions, and control each other autonomously. This involves using standardized communication protocols and data formats to ensure compatibility between different components and technologies.

(c) Decentralization

The principle of decentralization refers to the ability of various components and machines to make independent decisions based on real-time data, thereby reducing the need for a central controller. Tasks are only delegated to a higher level in the event of a failure.

(d) Real-time capability

The principle of real-time capability refers to the ability of systems, manufacturing processes, and intelligent machines to operate and respond to events in real-time or near-real-time.

(e) Virtualization

The principle of virtualization involves creating virtual representations or simulations of physical entities, processes, or systems within the industrial environment. Sensor data is linked to virtual plant models and simulation models, allowing for the creation of a virtual copy of the physical world.

(f) Service orientation

The principle of service orientation emphasizes organizing and delivering functionality as services, which marks a shift from selling products to offering integrated products and services that provide more value to the customer. This involves the use of Service-Oriented Architectures (SOA) architecture.

2.3 Main Pillars of Industry 4.0

In this section, we introduce the main pillars of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, as shown in Figure 2.2 from the previous section. We will focus more on key pillars, such as system integration, autonomous robots, and simulation, as they are more crucial for the practical implementation of the presented thesis.

As we can see in [14, 15, 18, 25], the key pillars of Industry 4.0 do not include AI techniques such as machine learning, deep learning, etc. AI technologies are still a relatively new field in practical applications that have not been sufficiently tested to be incorporated into the pillars that form the Fourth Industrial Revolution. However, it is important to note that machine learning, deep learning, and other AI techniques are significant components in most of the key areas mentioned above.

2.3.1 System Integration

In the Industry 4.0 landscape, system integration plays a crucial role in the transformation of manufacturing processes into interconnected, intelligent, and efficient systems. The use of system integration is essential for the successful implementation of Industry 4.0. It helps incorporate various technologies, including the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence techniques, cloud computing, robotics, single/multiple purpose machines, and cyber-physical systems. It ensures interoperability and real-time communication among different components within an intelligent manufacturing environment.

There are three dimensions of system integration within Industry 4.0 [25]: vertical integration, horizontal integration, and end-to-end integration.

(a) Vertical Integration

Vertical integration involves the seamless interconnection and collaboration between different levels of the production process hierarchy. The concept of vertical integration refers to the interconnectedness of the entire industrial enterprise, including all logical levels within the organization, from the production floor to the research department, product management, quality assurance, and sales department. This type of integration refers to flexible and reconfigurable systems within the factory that are fully integrated with each other.

(b) Horizontal Integration

Horizontal integration involves the sharing of data outside the organization, i.e., from suppliers through manufacturers to distribution, to the end customer, and subsequent service. This type of integration facilitates the exchange of information and resources between different entities within a specific phase of the production process.

(c) End-to-End Integration

The objective of end-to-end integration is to establish a smooth and interconnected flow of information and processes across the entire value chain, from the initial design phase to the delivery of the final product to the customer. This type of integration applies to all engineering processes throughout the product lifecycle.

Considering that vertical system integration enables seamless interoperability and optimal interconnection among different components within Industry 4.0, we will briefly describe the most commonly used Ethernet-based communication protocols, which are integral to the presented thesis.

Ethernet POWERLINK

Ethernet POWERLINK [26] is a real-time communication protocol used in industrial automation systems to ensure reliable and deterministic communication between devices. It was introduced in 2001 by Bernecker & Rainer (B&R) Industrie Elektronik GmbH and has since become a reliable solution for various applications. In 2002, the Ethernet Powerlink Standardization Group was formed, leading to the release of Ethernet Powerlink V2 in 2003. The revised version introduced an application layer, expanding the standard and enhancing its capabilities.

Ethernet POWERLINK achieves impressive real-time properties through a purely software-based solution, utilizing the Ethernet communication standard and eliminating the need for additional hardware. The POWERLINK standard is cyclical, with a user-settable cycle time. Communication parameters can be adjusted to meet specific user requirements. Ethernet POWERLINK is a communication standard based on Fast Ethernet. It supports transmission speeds of up to 100 Mb/s and allows a maximum segment length of 100 m. Ethernet POWERLINK can be used with both star and tree topologies.

One of its key features is the ability to provide precise and synchronized communication, which is essential for applications where timing and accuracy are critical. This is accomplished through the use of a time-scheduled communication approach, which enables devices on the network to exchange data with predictable and low-latency performance. This deterministic communication is critical in industries such as manufacturing, where precise control and coordination of devices and processes are essential for optimal performance.

EtherNet/IP

EtherNet/IP (EtherNet/Industrial Protocol) [27] is one of the most widely used standards that provides users with the tools to deploy standard Ethernet technology (IEEE 802.3 combined with the TCP/IP Suite) in industrial automation applications. The protocol was developed through the collaborative efforts of organizations such as ODVA (Open DeviceNet Vendor Association), ControlNet International, and Rockwell Automation.

EtherNet/IP is a fully compatible industrial protocol according to the IEEE 802.3 standard, which utilizes a standard communication model with a solution at the application layer. Compliance with IEEE Ethernet standards provides a network interface with speeds ranging from 10 Megabits per second (Mbps) to 1 Gigabit per second (Gbps), which can be adjusted to meet user requirements. Additionally, it offers a flexible network architecture that is compatible with commercially available Ethernet installations. Within the EtherNet/IP network, individual nodes are assigned device types with specific characteristics and functions. The assigned device types and the communication network's application layer are created by the Common Industrial Protocol (CIP), which is used in industrial communications such as DeviceNet and ControlNet, employing a producer-consumer communication principle. The use of the CIP protocol achieves interoperability among all networks that support this protocol.

PROFINET

PROFINET (Process Field Network) [28, 29] is a widely used industrial communication protocol that plays a crucial role in real-time communication and data exchange within control systems. It was developed and standardized by PROFIBUS & PROFINET International (PI) to meet the demanding requirements of modern industrial environments. The PROFINET communication standard enables the control of manufacturing processes by linking the control of the production process to collect data from individual sensors. These sensors are capable of processing information at 100 Mb/s and are based on ISO/IEC 8802.3. It is an essential element of industrial automation.

PROFINET is divided into two main components: Profinet CBA (Component Based Automation) and Profinet IO. Profinet CBA is used for modular systems like Programmable Logic Controllers (PLCs) and sensors, while Profinet IO is used for distributed field devices. Both Profinet IO and Profinet CBA systems can operate simultaneously on the same network and can be implemented in the same communication station. The industrial PROFINET network can communicate in real-time (RT) at a speed defined by the cycle time.

OPC UA

OPC UA (Open Platform Communications Unified Architecture) [30] is an international standard for secure, reliable, interoperable, and platform-independent industrial communication in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. It provides a solid foundation for modern industrial automation and control systems. The OPC UA industrial standard was published in 2008 and was standardized by the OPC Foundation [31] with the IEC 62541 norm.

The OPC UA supports various communication patterns, such as request/response and publish/subscribe, which can be adapted to different levels of real-time requirements. The real-time performance of the OPC UA depends on several factors, including the network infrastructure, system load, and the specific configuration of the OPC UA application. In applications where strict real-time requirements are critical, additional measures may need to be taken, such as implementing Quality of Service (QoS) mechanisms or optimizing network settings. It is important to note that although OPC UA supports real-time communication, it is not a real-time protocol. The speed at which OPC UA can communicate depends on several factors, including network conditions, system load, and specific implementation details of OPC UA server and client applications.

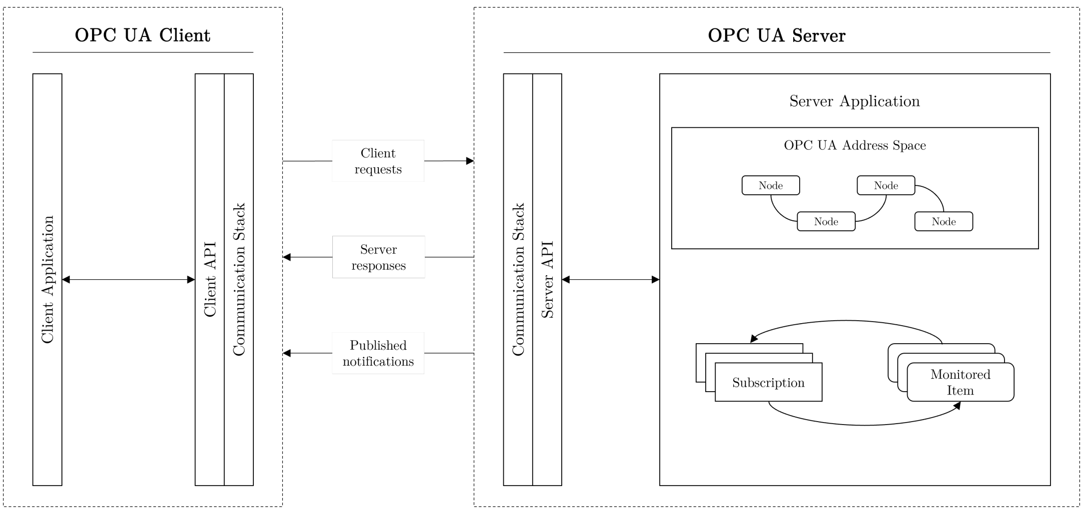


Figure 2.3: Typical client/server architecture of the OPC UA international standard [31].

The OPC UA standard is designed to seamlessly integrate automation systems vertically, allowing for any combination of client/server components at different levels of the automation hierarchy for a specific application. It employs object-oriented techniques to model information, which are then represented in the OPC UA address space.

2.3.2 Simulation

Simulation, more specifically simulation tools, tools can be employed in production processes to capture real-time data and replicate the behavior of the physical world in a virtual model, commonly referred to as the digital twin. The virtual model includes machines, sensors, products, and even people, resulting in increased productivity and production quality. By utilizing simulation tools, it is possible to optimize machine settings in a virtual environment before implementing them in the physical world. Simulations can be created for both 2D and 3D spaces to improve the production process, enhance product quality, and prevent collisions and unexpected situations. Advanced simulation, which incorporates a physical representation of individual parts within the production process, has the potential to enhance efficiency, safety, and production quality while avoiding failures.

Digital Twin

The term "digital twin" has evolved over the years, but in the context of Industry 4.0, it has become more generalized. A digital twin is a virtual representation of a physical object, system, or process created through the integration of real-time data from sensors, devices, and other sources connected to the physical entity. The digital twin replicates the structure, behavior, and performance of the physical object, enabling simulation, analysis, and monitoring throughout its entire lifecycle, from design and manufacturing to operation and maintenance.

According to [32, 33], digital twins can be categorized into three subcategories (shown in Figure 2.4) based on the level of data integration. In the following text, all the major subcategories are briefly described: the digital model, the digital shadow, and the digital twin.

(a) Digital Model

A digital model is a digital representation of a physical object. There is no automated data flow between the physical and digital objects, meaning that a change in the state of the physical object does not directly affect the digital object, and vice versa.

(b) Digital Shadow

A digital shadow is a representation of an object in the digital realm with unidirectional data flow between physical and digital entities. It reflects changes from the real world to the virtual world, but not vice versa.

(c) Digital Twin

A digital twin is a complete representation of a physical object that facilitates bidirectional data flow between the physical and digital counterparts. Any change in the state of the physical object results in a corresponding change in the state of the digital object, and vice versa.

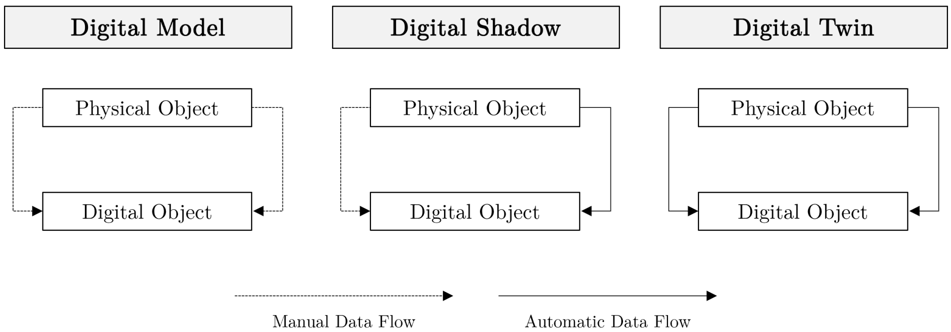


Figure 2.4: Three subcategories based on the data integration level of the digital twin model.

Deloitte's article [34] presents a conceptual architecture that explains the general workings of the digital twin (refer to Figure 2.5). The architecture comprises five enabling components: sensors, data, integration, analytics, and actuators. Additionally, it includes a six-step process that involves creating, communicating, aggregating, analyzing, gaining insights, and taking action. Sensors and actuators are located in a physical space, while data analysis is performed in a virtual space. Integration technologies should be utilized to facilitate seamless data communication between the physical and virtual worlds. The conceptual architecture comprises six operational steps based on digital twins: Create, Communicate, Aggregate, Analyze, Insight, and Act. More information about the conceptual architecture can be found in [35] and [36].

2.3.3 Autonomous Robots

Autonomous robotics is a crucial component in the context of Industry 4.0. It is primarily utilized in industries to address complex and hazardous tasks that are not suitable for humans. Furthermore, autonomous robotics replaces stereotypical tasks traditionally performed by humans, preventing the under-utilization of human potential. The use of robots in industrial enterprises is growing exponentially [37], as they significantly increase productivity, efficiency, repeatability, and human safety. Autonomous robots are used in various industries, including manufacturing, agriculture, and healthcare, to perform a wide range of tasks, such as intelligent sorting, safe interaction, and visual inspection.

A more detailed discussion of the principles of autonomous robotics, including the methods employed for motion planning and control, is provided in Section 4.

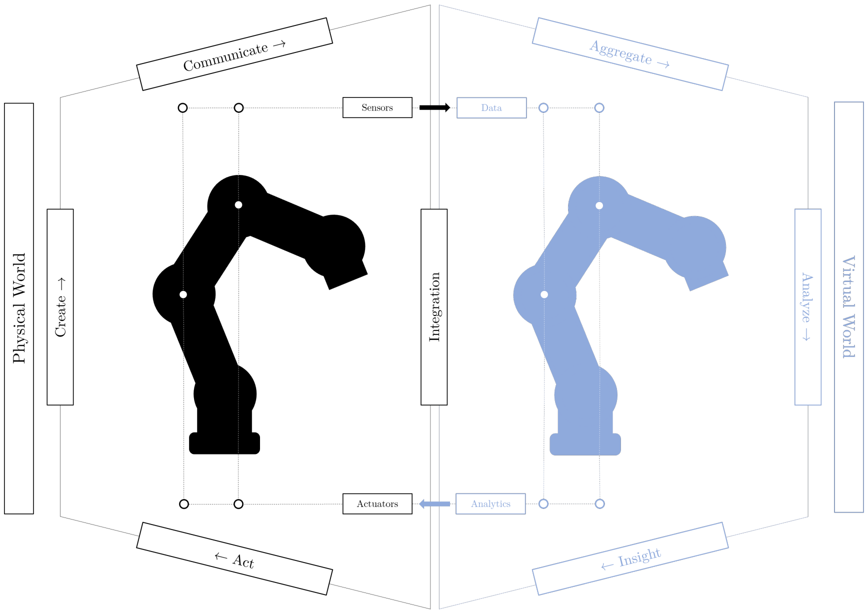


Figure 2.5: A conceptual architecture, consisting of five basic components and a six-step process, illustrates the general functioning of a digital twin.

2.3.4 Other Pillars

In addition to the technological pillars already described, there are other key aspects of the Fourth Industrial Revolution that are necessary to maintain the basic concept.

Cloud Computing

Cloud computing is a crucial component of Industry 4.0 because it enables industrial enterprises to manage and visualize data in real-time with minimal interaction with service providers. The industrial revolution promotes increased data sharing between workplaces, driven by the imperative to optimize production, thereby minimizing the restrictions on individual companies. Cloud computing enables user mobility, conserves resources, and facilitates distributed data analytics to address network-related issues. It also supports decentralization and intelligent processing of data generated by various Internet of Things (IoT) devices that integrate the physical world into cyberspace.

There are three main cloud service models [18, 38]: Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS), Platform as a Service (PaaS), and Software as a Service (SaaS).

(a) Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS)

The Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) cloud service model offers virtualized computing resources, such as virtual machines, storage, and networking, over the internet.

(b) Platform as a Service (PaaS)

The Platform as a Service (PaaS) cloud service model provides a platform that encompasses not only the underlying infrastructure but also the necessary development tools and services for application building, deployment, and management.

(c) Software as a Service (SaaS)

The Software as a Service (SaaS) cloud service model provides software applications over the internet on a subscription basis. Users can access these applications through a web browser.

Internet of Things

The Internet of Things (IoT) enables industrial communication among interconnected and uniformly addressed objects, such as industrial devices. These devices communicate through standard protocols. In a broader sense, IoT offers advanced interconnection capabilities for systems, services, and physical objects, enabling seamless communication between industrial devices and efficient sharing of substantial data. Implementing IoT in industrial enterprises can provide significant benefits. These benefits include improved integrability, which allows for smoother coordination of various processes, improved agility to adapt to changing circumstances, and ultimately providing competitive advantages. For example, real-time monitoring of machinery or predictive maintenance through IoT can optimize production processes and minimize downtime, contributing to improved overall efficiency and competitiveness for the company.

The Internet of Things (IoT) consists of the Internet of Services (IoS), the Internet of Manufacturing Services (IoMs), the Internet of People (IoP), embedded systems, and the Integration of Information and Communication Technology (IICT) [25].

Cybersecurity

Cybersecurity is a critical aspect of Industry 4.0, as it has the potential to significantly impact the business environment through various attacks. As connectivity increases and standard communication protocols are adopted (refer to Subsection 2.3.1) in accordance with the Fourth Industrial Revolution, protecting critical industrial systems and production lines from cybersecurity threats becomes increasingly important. The primary objective of cybersecurity is to ensure secure and reliable communication, along with sophisticated machine access management. By securely connecting both the physical and digital worlds, we can improve the quality of information required for planning, optimization, and production.

Closely related to cybersecurity is the concept of the Cyber-Physical System (CPS), which plays a crucial role in Industry 4.0. CPS has been defined as a system in which the physical world is fully integrated with computing, communication, and control systems, collectively referred to as the digital world. The main characteristics of CPS are decentralization and automatic control of the production process. The interconnection between the physical and digital worlds can enhance the quality of information required for planning, optimizing, and operating production systems.

Additive Manufacturing

Additive manufacturing, also known as 3D printing, revolutionizes the production process by creating parts from computer-generated 3D models. It involves the production of small batches of personalized products based on customer specifications, providing construction benefits such as intricate and lightweight designs. This method streamlines production, bypassing the need for extensive technological preparation, reducing construction timescales, and utilizing prototypes instead of finished products. Consequently, time-to-market is significantly reduced. Accurate estimation of material quantities and simulation of the production process are crucial for optimizing order management. Gradually adding materials during production allows for precise determination of consumption and enhances overall efficiency.

Additive technologies allow for the production of structurally complex parts without the need for machine reconfiguration or complex software modifications. This production process can be customized to meet the specific needs of the customer.

Augmented Reality

Augmented reality is an interactive technology that connects the physical world with the virtual world. It is used to enhance human-machine interaction, machine and equipment maintenance, and visual product inspection in industrial enterprises. Spatial data are a key aspect of augmented reality, enabling the connection of various information to a specific location. The combination of a computer-generated environment and physical objects has numerous possibilities, as creativity knows no bounds.

From a technical standpoint, the augmented reality system must solve two spatial problems in real-time: localizing the user and providing spatial vision. To achieve this, augmented reality utilizes a combination of sensors, such as a gyroscope and accelerometer, along with computationally intensive machine vision algorithms that are based on artificial intelligence techniques.

Big Data

The concept of big data applies to large, diverse, and complex amounts of data that impact the decision-making processes of industrial enterprises. According to Forrester's definition [39], Big Data comprises four dimensions: (1) data volume, (2) data variety, (3) data velocity, and (4) data value. The volume of data in the industry is growing exponentially, increasing the potential amount of usable information. However, it is necessary to collect and comprehensively evaluate the information for further development. Therefore, the increase in data level and technological capabilities accelerates productivity and innovation.

In the context of Industry 4.0, big data analytics is beneficial in several areas of an industrial enterprise. It aids in predictive maintenance, improves equipment service, optimizes production quality, and saves energy. Previously recorded data is analyzed to detect threats that have occurred in various production processes and to predict new problems that may arise in order to prevent them.

2.4 Forecasting the Future Trends of the Industry

Predicting the future of any industry involves uncertainty, as it depends on various factors such as technological advances, economic conditions, regulatory changes, consumer preferences, and global crises. This section presents the key trends and research areas that are likely to shape the industry's future.

Although Industry 4.0 is still in development, some scientific publications (see [40, 41, 42]) predict that the next step will lead to improvements in sustainability, modularity, efficiency, human-centered solutions, and universality. This could be the next industrial revolution, referred to as Industry 5.0, or the evolution of Industry 4.0 with enhanced pillars.

Artificial intelligence (AI) techniques are expected to play a crucial role in the future development of the industrial segment. These techniques will be integrated into the improvement of individual technologies within the overall concept. Autonomous robots will become increasingly important in manufacturing as they can increase productivity without replacing human workers [43, 44]. The integration of advanced physical simulations [45], representing both the physical and virtual worlds, will become crucial. Additionally, it will be important to evaluate and optimize supply chains in smart and sustainable manufacturing processes. The transformation of data driven by IoT, Big Data, and cloud computing will also be crucial.

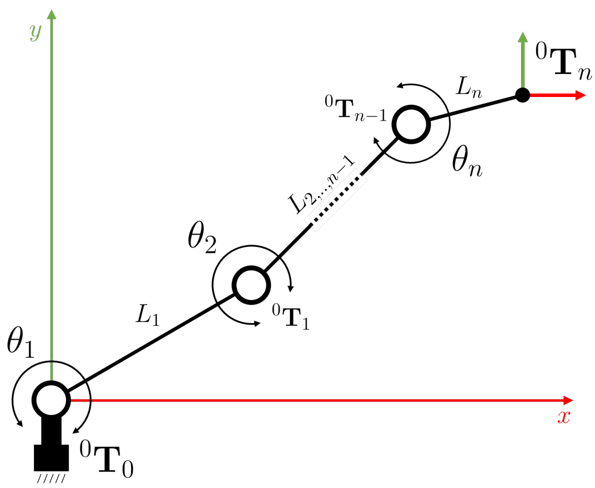
The industrial segment is experiencing a revolution to create a more flexible, scalable, and adaptable system. This will be achieved through improved technology, efficient and modular system integration, increased levels of robotic automation with a focus on autonomy, and harnessing the power of human creativity. These advancements are expected to increase productivity in the industry.

CHAPTER 3

Kinematics

Kinematics in robotic manipulators is a fundamental aspect that deals with the study of motion principles, without considering forces and torques [46, 47]. It involves the transformation of objects based on the position and orientation of different components within the mechanical structure of a robot. In general, the kinematic description is a geometric representation of the robot mechanism defined by specific conventions known as the Denavit-Hartenberg conventions.

The problem of manipulator kinematics is typically divided into two categories [48]: forward kinematics and inverse kinematics. Forward kinematics establishes the relationship between joint variables and the homogeneous transformation matrix of the end-effector (Eq. 3.18), while inverse kinematics determines the joint configurations necessary to achieve a desired end-effector pose (Eq. 3.19).



Forward Kinematics

$f(\theta_{1,\dots,n}) = {}^0\mathbf{T}_n$

Forward Kinematics

$\theta_{1,\dots,n} = f^{-1}({}^0\mathbf{T}_n)$

Figure 3.1: A simple representation of an n-line robotic manipulator in two-dimensional space, illustrating the basic concept of kinematics computation.

The chapter begins by delving into the fundamentals of coordinate transformations (Section 3.1), clarifying their role in representing position (Subsection 3.1.1) and rotation (Subsection 3.1.2) within Euclidean space. This discussion leads to an exploration of homogeneous transformations (Subsection 3.1.3), a pivotal aspect in the study of robotic manipulator kinematics. Following this introduction, the chapter provides a concise overview of the general representation of robotic manipulators (Section 3.2). Within the context of kinematics, the geometric representation of robotic mechanisms is elucidated, using the Denavit-Hartenberger convention (Section 3.3). The culminating section of the chapter focuses on the computation of forward (Section 3.4) and inverse (Section 3.5) kinematic problems for serial-chain manipulators. The discussion of the inverse kinematic problem encompasses both the closed-form solution and the numerical solution.

3.1 Coordinate Transformations

The study of kinematics for robotic manipulators or objects generally focuses on characterizing motions without considering forces and torques. In particular, the dynamics of the robotic system is neglected in this research area. In this context, coordinate transformations play a central role [46, 49, 50], referring to mathematical techniques used to describe the position and orientation of rigid bodies in different coordinate frames. These transformations are essential for accurate modeling and control of robot motion because they facilitate the conversion of coordinates from one reference frame to another. This feature provides a method to analyze and predict the spatial configuration of the robot.

In the context of Euclidean space, the pose of an object includes its position and orientation. For a rigid object, the required pose coordinates are defined by at least six parameters. Spatial pose can be represented using sets of redundant coordinates that have auxiliary relations between them. The difference between the number of coordinates in the set and six determines the number of independent constraints. The poses of an object are described with respect to the coordinate reference frame, which consists of an origin of the frame i, denoted O_i, and a set of three orthogonal basis vectors, denoted $(\vec{x}_i, \vec{y}_i, \vec{z}_i)$, all fixed within a particular body [46]. The pose of a body is consistently expressed relative to another body, conveyed as the pose of one coordinate frame relative to another.

This section is a compilation of content from various sources, including both scientific articles (see [51, 52, 53, 54]) and book publications (see [46, 49, 50, 55]).

3.1.1 Representation of Position

In a three-dimensional Euclidean space, the position, also called translation, of the origin of the coordinate frame i relative to the coordinate frame j, can be expressed by the vector ${}^{j}\mathbf{p}_i \in \mathbb{R}^3$.

$$
{}^{j}\mathbf{p}_i = \begin{bmatrix} {}^{j}p_i^x \\ {}^{j}p_i^y \\ {}^{j}p_i^z \end{bmatrix} . \tag{3.1}
$$

The individual components of this vector are the Cartesian coordinates of the origin O_i in the coordinate frame j, which represent projections of the vector ${}^{j}\mathbf{p}_i$ onto the corresponding axes x, y, and z.

3.1.2 Representation of Rotation

The concept of expressing a rotation in three-dimensional space as a mathematical formulation is considerably broader than the straightforward representation of position. According to Euler's rotation theorem, any arbitrary rotation of a rigid body in a three-dimensional space can be represented as a single rotation about a fixed axis. Based on this statement, we can conclude that any rotation can be described by at least three parameters.

There are various ways of expressing rotation in three-dimensional space, all of which are described by three degrees of freedom. In the field of robotic manipulators, the most commonly used representations are rotation matrices, Euler angles, and quaternions. This section provides a brief description of each of these representations.

Rotation Matrices

In a three-dimensional Euclidean space, the orientation of the coordinate frame i relative to the coordinate frame j can be denoted by expressing the basis vectors $(\vec{x}_i, \vec{y}_i, \vec{z}_i)$ of the frame i in terms of the basis vectors $(\vec{x}_j, \vec{y}_j, \vec{z}_j)$ of the frame j. In this way, we obtain a so-called rotation matrix ${}^{j}\mathbf{R}_i$, in which each component is the scalar product of the basis vectors of both the i and j coordinate frames, denoted $({}^{j}\vec{x}_j, {}^{j}\vec{y}_j, {}^{j}\vec{z}_j)$.

$$
{}^{j}\mathbf{R}_i = \begin{bmatrix} \vec{x}_i \cdot \vec{x}_j & \vec{y}_i \cdot \vec{x}_j & \vec{z}_i \cdot \vec{x}_j \\ \vec{x}_i \cdot \vec{y}_j & \vec{y}_i \cdot \vec{y}_j & \vec{z}_i \cdot \vec{y}_j \\ \vec{x}_i \cdot \vec{z}_j & \vec{y}_i \cdot \vec{z}_j & \vec{z}_i \cdot \vec{z}_j \end{bmatrix} . \tag{3.2}
$$

The basis vectors are equal to unit vectors, and the scalar product of any two unit vectors is the cosine of the angle between these vectors. The components of this angle are called directional cosines.

The rotation of frame i about the $\vec{x}_j$ axis through an angle θ can be expressed by the rotation matrix with the values

$$
\mathbf{R}_x(\theta) = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \cos\theta & -\sin\theta \\ 0 & \sin\theta & \cos\theta \end{bmatrix} , \tag{3.3}
$$

while the same rotation about the $\vec{y}_j$ axis can be expressed by the rotation matrix with the values

$$\mathbf{R}_y(\theta) = \begin{bmatrix} \cos\theta & 0 & \sin\theta \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ -\sin\theta & 0 & \cos\theta \end{bmatrix}, \tag{3.4}$$

lastly, the $\vec{z}_j$ axis can be expressed by the rotation matrix with the values.

$$\mathbf{R}_z(\theta) = \begin{bmatrix} \cos\theta & -\sin\theta & 0 \\ \sin\theta & \cos\theta & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}. \tag{3.5}$$

The general three-dimensional rotation is achieved by combining the above rotation matrices into one matrix through matrix multiplication. Since matrix multiplication is non-commutative, it is important to consider the order of the rotations, as follows

$$\mathbf{R}_x\mathbf{R}_y\mathbf{R}_z \neq \mathbf{R}_z\mathbf{R}_y\mathbf{R}_x. \tag{3.6}$$

This statement implies that rotation about the x, y, and z axes does not produce the same rotation as rotation about the z, y, and x axes. This property is consistent with the fact that rotations are also non-commutative.

The rotation matrix ${}^j\mathbf{R}_i$ contains nine elements (see Eq. 3.2), while only three parameters are needed to define the orientation of an object in a three-dimensional Euclidean space. Therefore, there are six additional auxiliary relations between the elements of the matrix. Since the basis vectors of both coordinate frames i and j are mutually orthonormal, the columns of ${}^j\mathbf{R}_i$ formed by the scalar products of these vectors are also mutually orthonormal. A matrix composed of mutually orthonormal vectors is called an orthogonal matrix and has the property that the inverse matrix of rotation is equal to the transpose matrix of rotation.

$${}^j\mathbf{R}_i^{-1} = {}^j\mathbf{R}_i^T. \tag{3.7}$$

This property provides the six auxiliary relations. Three of them require that the column vectors have unit length, and three require that the column vectors be mutually orthogonal.

Euler Angles

The orientation of the coordinate frame i relative to the coordinate frame j can be represented as a vector of three independent coordinates (α, β, γ), commonly known as Euler angles. These coordinates, employed in the Euler angle representation, describe three consecutive rotations about an axis of a moving coordinate frame. As the order of rotation about the axes is essential, the specification of rotations for Euler angles must always be accompanied by an appropriate convention, providing a detailed description of the axes.

Assuming that the moving frame i and the fixed frame j are initially coincident, the Euler angles of the Z-Y-X convention can be obtained by three successive rotations in the order α, β, γ, corresponding to rotations about the z, y, and x axes of the frame i. In terms of the basic rotation matrices, the resulting rotational transformation of the Z-Y-X convention can be formed as the product of

$$\begin{aligned} {}^{j}\mathbf{R}_i(\alpha,\beta,\gamma) &= \mathbf{R}_z(\alpha)\mathbf{R}_y(\beta)\mathbf{R}_x(\gamma) \\ &= \begin{bmatrix} c_\alpha c_\beta & c_\alpha s_\beta s_\gamma - s_\alpha c_\gamma & c_\alpha s_\beta c_\gamma + s_\alpha s_\gamma \\ s_\alpha c_\beta & s_\alpha s_\beta s_\gamma + c_\alpha c_\gamma & s_\alpha s_\beta c_\gamma - c_\alpha s_\gamma \\ -s_\beta & c_\beta s_\gamma & c_\beta c_\gamma \end{bmatrix}, \end{aligned} \tag{3.8}$$

where c and s are abbreviations of the cosine and sine functions.

However, Euler angles have significant disadvantages, such as susceptibility to gimbal lock and low accuracy in integrating incremental changes over time. Therefore, researchers have started using alternative rotation representations, such as quaternions, to effectively represent rotations.

Quaternions

The quaternion representation of orientation, which was introduced by W. R. Hamilton in the 19th century, is a mathematical concept that is commonly used in three-dimensional geometry. Unlike traditional representations such as Euler angles, a quaternion can be expressed as a four-dimensional vector in the form

$$\mathbf{Q} = q_w + iq_x + jq_y + kq_z, \tag{3.9}$$

where q_w, q_x, q_y, $q_z \in \mathbb{R}$, are the four constituents of the quaternion $\mathbf{Q}$, sometimes referred to as Euler's parameters, denoting arbitrary real quantities: positive, negative, or zero. The symbols i, j, k are operators or simply symbols that represent three imaginary quantities.

A quaternion $\mathbf{Q}$,, particularly a unit quaternion $\|\mathbf{Q}\| = 1$, is commonly expressed as a combination of a scalar and a vector. The scalar component contains information about the angle of rotation, while the vector component defines the axis of rotation. Quaternions offer a concise and effective method for performing three-dimensional rotations, avoiding certain mathematical ambiguities and gimbal lock issues associated with other rotation representations.

In terms of the basic rotation matrices, the resulting rotational transformation of a unit quaternion can be formulated as follows

$${}^{j}\mathbf{R}_i = \begin{bmatrix} q_w^2 + q_x^2 - q_y^2 - q_z^2 & 2(q_xq_y - q_wq_z) & 2(q_wq_y + q_xq_z) \\ 2(q_wq_z + q_xq_y) & q_w^2 - q_x^2 + q_y^2 - q_z^2 & 2(q_yq_z - q_wq_x) \\ 2(q_xq_z - q_wq_y) & 2(q_wq_x + q_yq_z) & q_w^2 - q_x^2 - q_y^2 + q_z^2 \end{bmatrix}. \tag{3.10}$$

The corresponding rotation matrix ${}^{j}\mathbf{R}_i$ (see Eq. 3.10) is obtained as a rotation about the unit axis in the direction of the vector part of the unit quaternion $(iq_x + jq_y + kq_z)$ by an angle of rotation $2\cos^{-1}(q_w)$.

3.1.3 Homogeneous Transformations

The previous sections dealt with the representation of position (Sect. 3.1.1) and orientation (Sect. 3.1.2) separately. However, when computing the pose representation in Euclidean space, it is often convenient to work with a combined representation known as the homogeneous transformation. In this representation, the position vector ${}^{j}\mathbf{p}_i$ and the rotation matrix ${}^{j}\mathbf{R}_i$ are combined in a compact notation. It follows from this statement that the homogeneous transformation allows the combination of both algebraic operations of translation and rotation within a fixed and consistent homogeneous transformation matrix ${}^{j}\mathbf{T}_i$.

$$ {}^{j}\mathbf{T}_i = \begin{bmatrix} {}^{j}\mathbf{R}_i & {}^{j}\mathbf{p}_i \\ \mathbf{0}^T & 1 \end{bmatrix}. \tag{3.11} $$

The matrix ${}^{j}\mathbf{T}_i$ transforms the vectors from the coordinate frame i to the coordinate frame j. On the other hand, the inverse ${}^{j}\mathbf{T}_i^{-1}$ transforms the vectors from the coordinate frame j to the coordinate frame i.

$$ {}^{j}\mathbf{T}_i^{-1} = \begin{bmatrix} {}^{j}\mathbf{R}_i^T & -{}^{j}\mathbf{R}_i^T\,{}^{j}\mathbf{p}_i \\ \mathbf{0}^T & 1 \end{bmatrix}. \tag{3.12} $$

The composition of homogeneous 4x4 transformation matrices is achieved by a simple matrix multiplication between the frames 0 and n, which is built from multiple piecewise transformations as described in

$$ {}^{0}\mathbf{T}_n = {}^{0}\mathbf{T}_1\,{}^{1}\mathbf{T}_2 \ldots {}^{n-1}\mathbf{T}_n. \tag{3.13} $$

This equation is suitable for describing the complex kinematic transformation along a serial chain of bodies connected by joints, which is a typical model for robotic manipulators.

The homogeneous transformation of a rotation about a particular axis can be denoted as **Rot**, so the rotation of α about the x axis can be expressed in the form

$$ \mathbf{Rot}_{x,\alpha} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \cos\theta & -\sin\theta & 0 \\ 0 & \sin\theta & \cos\theta & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}, \tag{3.14} $$

while, the homogeneous transformation of a translation along a particular axis can be denoted as **Trans**, so the translation of t along the x axis can be expressed in the form

$$ \mathbf{Trans}_{x,t} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & t \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}. \tag{3.15} $$

Although homogeneous transformation matrices technically contain sixteen elements, four of them are defined as a vector of zeros or identity values to ensure the proper composition and representation of transformations. The remaining elements consist of a rotation matrix and a position vector.

3.2 General Representation of Robotic Manipulators

Robotic manipulators generally consist of links (rigid bodies) connected by joints that allow controlled (linear) or free relative motion, forming a so-called kinematic chain [56] (see Fig. 3.2). The joints are usually represented as revolute (rotational motion) or prismatic (translational motion) and serve as a connection between two links. Equally important components in the representation of a robotic manipulator are the base, which is typically connected to the ground and directly linked to the world coordinate system, and the end-effector, which is the last link of the robotic structure and can be used to hold tools.

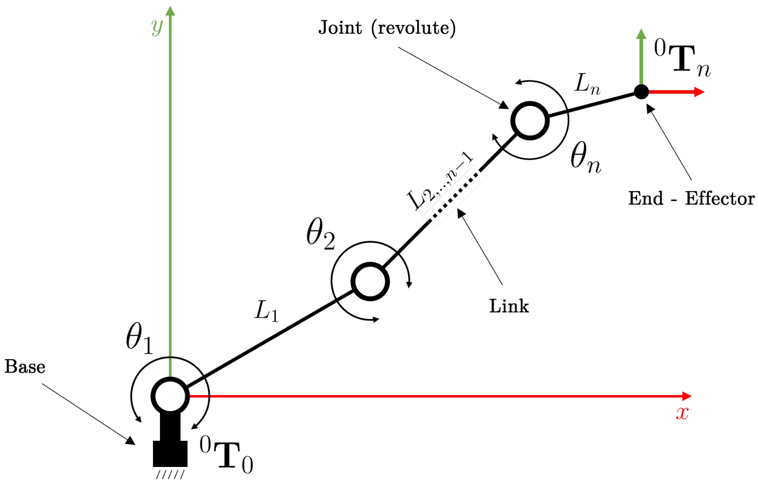
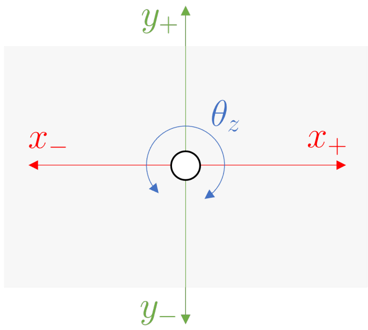


Figure 3.2: A simple representation of an n-link robotic manipulator in two-dimensional space, which describes the basic components of the robotic structure.

3.2.1 Degree of Freedom

The Degree of Freedom (DoF) refers to the number of independent motions or variables through which a rigid object can move within a defined space. The number of DoF is, therefore, equal to the dimension of the configuration space. A rigid object in two-dimensional space has 3 DoF (two for translation and one for rotation), while in three-dimensional space it has 6 DoF (three for translation and three for rotation), as we can see in Fig. 3.3.

In robotics, the concept of degrees of freedom (DoF) is crucial for understanding and designing robotic systems, especially robotic arms and manipulators. DoF refers to the number of independent motions a manipulator can perform, which is determined by the total number of joints and the constraints imposed by the robot's design [47].



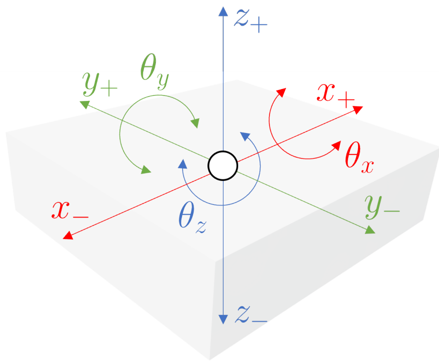


Figure 3.3: The number of degrees of freedom of the rigid body in two-dimensional (left) and three-dimensional (right) space.

According to this statement, the degrees of freedom in a robotic system can be categorized into two main parts: translational and rotational. The translational part involves linear motion along a specific axis, enabling the robot to move in a straight line. In contrast, the rotational part involves motion about a specific axis, enabling the robot to change its orientation.

A higher degree of freedom increases the redundancy of available variable joint configurations, leading to mathematical challenges such as singularities and suboptimal extrema [57]. Robotic manipulators with fewer DoFs are considered under-articulated, while those with more than six DoFs are described as over-articulated, or more precisely, kinematically redundant.

3.2.2 Types of Joints

Joints are essential components of the robotic structure that enable robots to achieve movement and flexibility. They are designed to mimic the range of motion found in natural limbs, providing the robot with the ability to perform diverse tasks. There are various types of robot joints available to define either translational or rotational motion of the individual segments. The most common types of robot joints include revolute, prismatic, helical, cylindrical, universal, and spherical [47].

The revolute joint, also known as a hinge joint, enables rotational motion about a specific axis. In contrast, the prismatic joint, or linear joint, facilitates translational motion along a designated axis. The helical joint, commonly referred to as a screw joint, allows simultaneous rotation and translation along a screw axis. All of these types of joints provide one degree of freedom.

Moving to joints with two degrees of freedom, the cylindrical joint permits independent translation and rotation about a single fixed axis. Similarly, the universal joint, composed of two revolute joints with orthogonal axes, also boasts two degrees of freedom. This joint is frequently employed to transmit motion between non-collinear axes, showcasing its versatility.

The spherical joint, also known as a ball-and-socket joint, has three degrees of freedom and functions similarly to the human shoulder joint. This design enables a wide range of motion and is utilized in various mechanical systems.

3.2.3 Workspace

The workspace of a general-purpose robotic manipulator is defined as the total volume covered by the end-effector during all possible motions. This space is determined by the manipulator's geometry and the movement limits of each joint. The workspace is commonly categorized into two types [46, 56]: reachable workspace, representing the total set of points accessible by the end-effector, and dexterous workspace, which is a subset of these points allowing arbitrary end-effector orientations.

Most serial-chain robotic manipulators exhibit regional and orientational structures [46]. The position of the end-effector in space is determined by the regional structure, which is formed by inner joints. On the other hand, the orientation of the end-effector is determined by the orientational structure, which is comprised of outer joints. The volume of the regional workspace can be calculated using the known geometry and joint motion limits of the serial-chain robot manipulator [46] or through a simplified version employing the Monte Carlo method [58].

3.3 Denavit-Hartenberg Convention

The geometric representation of a robotic mechanism is defined by attaching coordinate frames to a specific link within the structure. Although the coordinate frames can be positioned anywhere, it is advantageous for both clarity and computational efficiency to adhere to a mathematical convention for frame placement within the links. Jacques Denavit and Richard Hartenberg introduced this fundamental convention in 1955 [59], known as the Denavit-Hartenberg (DH) standard method. This method was subsequently modified by Etienne Dombre and Wisama Khalil [60] and is referred to as the Denavit-Hartenberg (DH) modified method. While the standard method exhibits ambiguities when applied to closed or tree-structured robots, the modified method allows a unified description of complex and serial structures in articulated mechanical systems [61]. It is important to note that, despite the differences, the transformation matrices derived from both conventions will yield the same end-effector position and orientation.

In both forms, determining the relative location of one coordinate frame to another requires only four parameters, in contrast to the six parameters needed to describe any transformation in Euclidean space. The parameters, based on the Denavit-Hartenberg (DH) convention, include two link parameters: the link length a_i and the link twist α_i, along with two joint parameters: the joint offset d_i and the joint angle θ_i.

The reduction in the number of parameters is achieved by strategically placing the origins and axes of the coordinate frames. Specifically, the x axis of one frame is positioned to intersect both perpendicularly and tangentially with the z axis of the subsequent coordinate frame.

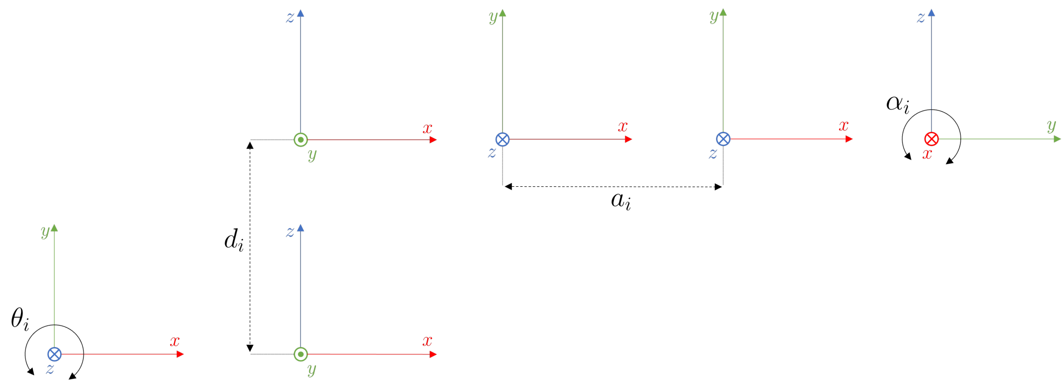


Figure 3.4: Illustration of the Denavit-Hartenberg convention defined by the four parameters a_i, α_i, d_i, and θ_i.

In the standard DH convention, each homogeneous transformation ${}^{i-1}\mathbf{T}_i$ is represented as a product of four basic transformations about particular axes

$$
\begin{aligned}
{}^{i-1}\mathbf{T}_i &= \mathbf{Rot}_{x,\alpha_i}\mathbf{Trans}_{x,a_i}\mathbf{Rot}_{z,\theta_i}\mathbf{Trans}_{z,d_i} \\
&= \begin{bmatrix} c_{\theta_i} & -s_{\theta_i}c_{\alpha_i} & s_{\theta_i}s_{\alpha_i} & a_i c_{\theta_i} \\ s_{\theta_i} & c_{\theta_i}c_{\alpha_i} & -c_{\theta_i}s_{\alpha_i} & a_i s_{\theta_i} \\ 0 & s_{\alpha_i} & c_{\alpha_i} & d_i \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix},
\end{aligned}
\tag{3.16}
$$

and in the modified DH convention, similar to the previous case, but with the modified transformation rules

$$
\begin{aligned}
{}^{i-1}\mathbf{T}_i &= \mathbf{Rot}_{x,\alpha_{i-1}}\mathbf{Trans}_{x,a_{i-1}}\mathbf{Rot}_{z,\theta_i}\mathbf{Trans}_{z,d_i} \\
&= \begin{bmatrix} c_{\theta_i} & -s_{\theta_i} & 0 & a_{i-1} \\ s_{\theta_i}c_{\alpha_{i-1}} & c_{\theta_i}c_{\alpha_{i-1}} & -s_{\alpha_{i-1}} & -d_i s_{\alpha_{i-1}} \\ s_{\theta_i}s_{\alpha_{i-1}} & c_{\theta_i}s_{\alpha_{i-1}} & c_{\alpha_{i-1}} & d_i c_{\alpha_{i-1}} \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}.
\end{aligned}
\tag{3.17}
$$

The matrix ${}^{i-1}\mathbf{T}_i$ is a function of a single variable, with three of its four parameters determined by the joint type and geometry. In the case of a prismatic joint aligned along the z axis, only the joint offset d_i varies, while all other parameters remain constant. Conversely, for a revolute joint revolving around the z axis, only the joint angle θ_i is variable, and the remaining parameters are fixed.

3.4 Forward Kinematics

The computation of the forward kinematics problem involves determining the homogeneous transformation matrix ${}^0\mathbf{T}n$ for a serial-chain manipulator, represented by Equation

3.18. This matrix describes the end-effector's position and orientation relative to the base. The computation utilizes joint variables $\theta 1, \ldots, n$ in a recursive process, where coordinate transformations are performed along each link, leading from the base frame to the end-effector frame.

It is crucial to note that the frame attached to the end-effector is commonly known as the tool frame. This frame, which maintains a constant displacement in both position and orientation, plays a significant role in the kinematic analysis. Importantly, the tool transformation matrix must be added as the last element in the chain.

$$f(\theta_{1,\ldots,n}) = {}^{0}\mathbf{T}_n. \tag{3.18}$$

The forward kinematics problem is critical to the development of robot coordination algorithms because the orientation of joints is typically measured by sensors integrated into the design of a particular joint. In practice, solving the forward kinematics problem involves computing the transformation between the tool and the station frames [46]. This process is straightforward for a serial chain because the transformation describing the pose of the end-effector relative to the base is obtained by simply concatenating transformations between frames fixed in adjacent links of the chain, as explained using the Denavit-Hartenberger convention in Sect. 3.3. It is important to note that the calculation of forward kinematics always provides a unique solution.

3.5 Inverse Kinematics

The computation of the inverse kinematics problem, expressed in Eq. (3.19), for a serial-chain manipulator involves identifying joint variables denoted as $\theta_{1,\ldots,n}$. These variables correspond to a given homogeneous transformation matrix ${}^{0}\mathbf{T}_n$, representing the end-effector's position relative to the base. Unlike the forward kinematics problem, determining this set of joint parameters is not straightforward. Equation (3.13) underscores the necessity of solving systems of non-linear equations to address the challenges posed by the inverse kinematics problem.

$$\theta_{1,\ldots,n} = f^{-1}({}^{0}\mathbf{T}_n). \tag{3.19}$$

Addressing the characterization of an identical Cartesian target with different joint configurations poses a challenging issue, potentially resulting in zero to infinite solutions. While algebraic solutions can be obtained for simpler geometries, their applicability diminishes for more complex cases. Consequently, numerous methods are based on numerical solutions [62, 63, 64, 65]. Although analytical solutions may prove useful in specific cases [66, 67], a numerical approach generally offers greater universality. However, it is crucial to recognize that numerical solutions come with challenges, including suboptimal extremes, computational cost, and the potential to encounter singularities.

It is important to highlight that singularities present a significant challenge in the field of robot kinematics. Singular points lead to an immediate reduction in degrees of freedom during the resolution of motion postures. To address this challenge, a strategic approach involves transforming the task into a workspace region where configurations with singularities are avoided [68, 69]. This transformation helps maintain a higher level of flexibility in the robot's movements. For instance, this may involve adjusting the angles of the joints. Such strategies can effectively mitigate the effects of singularities on robot kinematics.

3.5.1 Closed-Form Solutions

The methods for obtaining closed-form solutions in inverse kinematics problems strongly depend on the geometry of robotic mechanisms and are, therefore, not sufficiently general. However, the solutions obtained are exact and can provide all existing joint configurations for a particular reachable Cartesian pose. Although these methods have a lower computational cost, they are typically only available for specific geometries, primarily for non-redundant manipulators with fewer degrees of freedom. The complexity rapidly increases with each additional degree of freedom. The necessary conditions for a closed-form solution of a non-redundant six-degree of freedom robotic mechanism are as follows [70]:

(a) Three consecutive revolute joint axes intersect at a common point, as in a spherical wrist.

(b) Three consecutive revolute joint axes are parallel.

The most effective methods for obtaining closed-form solutions involve analytical techniques that utilize specific geometric features of particular mechanisms. Generally, closed-form solutions can only be obtained for six-degree of freedom systems with a special kinematic structure characterized by a large number of geometric parameters, as described in Section 3.3.

3.5.2 Numerical Solutions

The numerical methods for solving inverse kinematics problems are not dependent on the geometry of the robotic mechanisms, unlike the closed-form solutions discussed in the previous section (see Sect. 3.5.1). Therefore, they can be applied to any kinematic structure, regardless of the number of degrees of freedom. Since numerical methods require the approximation of derivatives, they are computationally more expensive than methods based on closed-form solutions. However, it is possible for them to operate directly in a joint space. This simplifies the use of joint limits and allows for greater flexibility in including additional objectives.

In general, the numerical solution of the discussed problem provides the relationship between the joint velocities and the corresponding end-effector linear and angular velocity. In other words, it is desirable to express the linear velocity of the end-effector $\dot{\mathbf{p}}_e$ and the angular velocity of the end-effector $\dot{\omega}_e$ as functions of the joint velocities $\dot{\theta}$.

$$\dot{\mathbf{p}}_e = \mathbf{J}_P(\theta)\dot{\theta}, \tag{3.20}$$

$$\dot{\omega}_e = \mathbf{J}_O(\theta)\dot{\theta}, \tag{3.21}$$

where $\mathbf{J}_P \in \mathbb{R}^{3\times n}$ represents the translational part of the manipulator that relates the contribution of the joint velocities to the linear velocity of the end effector, while $\mathbf{J}_O \in \mathbb{R}^{3\times n}$ represents the rotational part of the manipulator that relates the contribution of the joint velocities to the angular velocity of the end effector.

In compact form, equations (3.20) and (3.21) can be written as

$$\mathbf{v}_e = \begin{bmatrix} \dot{\mathbf{p}}_e \\ \dot{\omega}_e \end{bmatrix} = J(\theta)\dot{\theta}, \tag{3.22}$$

which represents the general numerical kinematics equation. The vector $\mathbf{v}_e$ is the spatial velocity of the end-effector expressed in an arbitrary frame, $\dot{\theta}$ is an n-dimensional vector composed of the joint velocities, and $J(\theta) \in \mathbb{R}^{6\times n}$ is the so-called Jacobian matrix of non-linear functions of θ, expressed relative to the same coordinate frame as the spatial velocity $\mathbf{v}_e$. The Jacobian matrix is a matrix of first-order partial derivatives of each joint variable, providing a linear approximation of the resulting end-effector velocities in Cartesian space.

$$J(\theta) = \begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{J}_P \\ \mathbf{J}_O \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{J}_{P_1} & \dots & \mathbf{J}_{P_n} \\ \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ \mathbf{J}_{O_1} & \dots & \mathbf{J}_{O_n} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \frac{\partial p_e^x}{\partial \theta_1} & \dots & \frac{\partial p_e^x}{\partial \theta_n} \\ \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ \frac{\partial \omega_e^z}{\partial \theta_1} & \dots & \frac{\partial \omega_e^z}{\partial \theta_n} \end{bmatrix}. \tag{3.23}$$

It can be observed from Equation (3.23) that the i-th column of the Jacobian matrix corresponds to the i-th joint of the robot manipulator. Depending on whether the i-th joint is prismatic or revolute, it takes one of two forms [56, 48], as follows

$$J_i(\theta) = \begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{J}_{P_i} \\ \mathbf{J}_{O_i} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{cases} \begin{bmatrix} p^z_{e_{i-1}} \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \text{prismatic joint} \\ \begin{bmatrix} p^z_{e_{i-1}} \times (\mathbf{p}_{e_i} - \mathbf{p}_{e_{i-1}}) \\ p^z_{e_{i-1}} \end{bmatrix} \rightarrow \text{revolute joint} \end{cases} \tag{3.24}$$

To solve the linear system of equations in the joint velocities obtained by the decomposition, expressed in Eq. (3.22), into its component equations when $\mathbf{v}_e$ is known, it is necessary to invert the Jacobian matrix as follows

$$\dot{\theta} = J(\theta)^{-1}\mathbf{v}_e. \tag{3.25}$$

However, the numerical approach is only feasible if the Jacobian matrix J is invertible. This requires the matrix to be square-shaped and have a non-zero determinant. It is clear from that statement that redundant manipulators will not be invertible because the Jacobian matrix will not be square. Although the robotic mechanism is not in a singularity configuration, but only in a near-singular configuration, the values of J^{-1} become very large, leading to very high joint space velocities and instability in the numerical solution approach. Various methods are employed to address the aforementioned shortcomings, specifically to reduce instability and enhance the usability of redundant robotic structures. These methods will be discussed further.

Jacobian Transpose Method

The numerical computation of the inverse kinematics problem can be achieved using the Jacobian transpose method, which involves using the transpose of the Jacobian matrix instead of its inverse [71, 72]. This method modifies the general equation (3.25) of numerical inverse kinematics solutions as follows

$$\dot{\theta} = \alpha J(\theta)^T \mathbf{v}_e, \tag{3.26}$$

for some appropriate scalar α, to minimize the new value of the vector after the update. The method of expressing the parameter α was described in [73], where the relationship between the desired change $\mathbf{v}_e$ and an approximated change of the end-effector, defined as $J(\theta)J(\theta)^T\mathbf{v}_e$, was used. Assuming that $J(\theta)J(\theta)^T\mathbf{v}_e$ is the real change, α is chosen to be as close as possible to $\mathbf{v}_e$ as follows

$$\alpha = \frac{\left\langle \mathbf{v}_e, J(\theta)J(\theta)^T\mathbf{v}_e \right\rangle}{\langle J(\theta)J(\theta)^T\mathbf{v}_e, J(\theta)J(\theta)^T\mathbf{v}_e \rangle}. \tag{3.27}$$

It is important to note that the transpose method generates smooth motion but often suffers from slower convergence.

Newton-Raphson Method

The numerical computation of the inverse kinematic problem is often solved using the Newton-Raphson method [47]. A common implementation involves taking advantage of the Moore-Penrose pseudoinverse [74], leading to what we will refer to as the pseudoinverse method. This method is defined by the equation as follows

$$\dot{\theta} = J(\theta)^\dagger \mathbf{v}_e, \tag{3.28}$$

where $J(\theta)^\dagger = J(\theta)^T(J(\theta)J(\theta)^T)^{-1}$ represents the pseudoinverse of $J(\theta)$ with the same dimensions. This definition holds for all matrices $J(\theta)$, even those that are not square or do not have full row rank.

The pseudoinverse method is a technique used to enhance the stability and usability of redundant robotic structures where ordinary inversion is not feasible [73]. In simple terms, it helps address the challenges posed by having more degrees of freedom than necessary. However, it is important to note that the pseudoinverse method can exhibit instability in nearly singular configurations. In these situations, the system may experience jerky movements, lacking the desired smoothness and stability. Additionally, it may encounter difficulties in finding feasible solutions due to the peculiarities of these configurations.

Gauss-Newton Method

The Gauss-Newton method is a numerical approach employed to enhance the solvability and compatibility of the inverse kinematics problem, particularly in the context of redundant robotic manipulators [75, 64]. This method utilizes the Jacobian matrix $J(\theta)$ to approximate the Hessian matrix $\mathbf{H}$. The approximation is necessary because computing the exact Hessian matrix can be computationally expensive, and often, it is not necessary to obtain the exact Hessian.

$$\dot{\theta} = (\mathbf{H})^{-1} J(\theta)^T \mathbf{W}_e \mathbf{v}_e, \tag{3.29}$$

where $\mathbf{W}_e = \mathrm{diag}(\mathbf{w_e})(\mathbf{w_e} \in (\mathbb{R}^+)^n)$ is a diagonal weighted matrix that prefers the corresponding error term, and $\mathbf{H} = J(\theta)^T \mathbf{W}_e J(\theta)$ describes the approximate Hessian matrix.

However, equation (3.29) is only valid if $\mathbf{H}$ is invertible, as described in [76]. This issue can be resolved, as mentioned earlier, by using the Moore-Penrose pseudoinverse applied to the aforementioned part ($\mathbf{H}^{-1} \rightarrow \mathbf{H}^{\dagger}$).

Levenberg-Marquardt Method

The Levenberg-Marquardt method, also known as the Damped Least Squares (DLS) method, is designed to address issues associated with the pseudoinverse method, particularly when dealing with near singularities in the Jacobian matrix, denoted as $J(\theta)$. It provides a numerically stable approach for selecting the parameter $\dot{\theta}$.

$$\dot{\theta} = (\mathbf{A})^{-1} J(\theta)^T \mathbf{W}_e \mathbf{v}_e, \tag{3.30}$$

where $\mathbf{W}_e = \mathrm{diag}(\mathbf{w}_e)$ $(\mathbf{w}_e \in (\mathbb{R}^+)^n)$ is a diagonal weighted matrix that prefers the corresponding error term, and $\mathbf{A}$ is defined as follows

$$\mathbf{A} = J(\theta)^T \mathbf{W}_e J(\theta) + \mathbf{W}_n, \tag{3.31}$$

where $\mathbf{W}_n = \mathrm{diag}(\mathbf{w_n})(\mathbf{w_n} \in (\mathbb{R}^+)^n)$ is a diagonal damping matrix. The damping matrix guarantees that $\mathbf{A}$ is both non-singular and positive definite. As is evident, the performance of the method is highly dependent on the selection of $\mathbf{W}_n$.

The diagonal damping matrix w_n was first described as a constant by Wampler [77]. A little later, Chan and Lawrence [78] proposed a damped least-squares method where w_n directly depends on the error value E. Last but not least, Sugihara [64] proposed a robust method for obtaining the variable, as follows

$$\mathbf{W}_n = E\mathbf{1}_n + \mathrm{diag}(\tilde{\mathbf{w}}_n), \tag{3.32}$$

where the biasing value $\tilde{\mathbf{w}}_n$ ensures the computation converges sufficiently robustly, with $\tilde{\mathbf{w}}_n = 1.0 \times 10^{-4}$.

CHAPTER 4

Motion Planning and Control

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CHAPTER 5

Versatile Intelligent Robotic Workstation in the Context of Industry 4.0

Text ...

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

"If you want to improve something, you must first understand it. The combination of theoretical and practical knowledge is not an option, it is a must."

— Roman Parak

Text ...

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Appendix A: Activities Related to Doctoral Studies

Text ...

Appendix B: List of Scientific Publications

Text ...

Appendix C: Source Codes

"Active participation within the open-source community, not only as a user but also as a contributor, is essential to ensuring continued growth."

— Roman Parak

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