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The  
ShanghaiAI  
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AI  
Lectures

授  
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# The ShanghAI Lectures

## An experiment in global teaching

Fabio Bonsignorio

The BioRobotics Institute, SSSA, Pisa, Italy and Heron Robots  
Cecilia Laschi

The BioRobotics Institute, SSSA, Pisa, Italy

欢迎您参与  
“来自上海的人工智能系列讲座”

# Lecture 5

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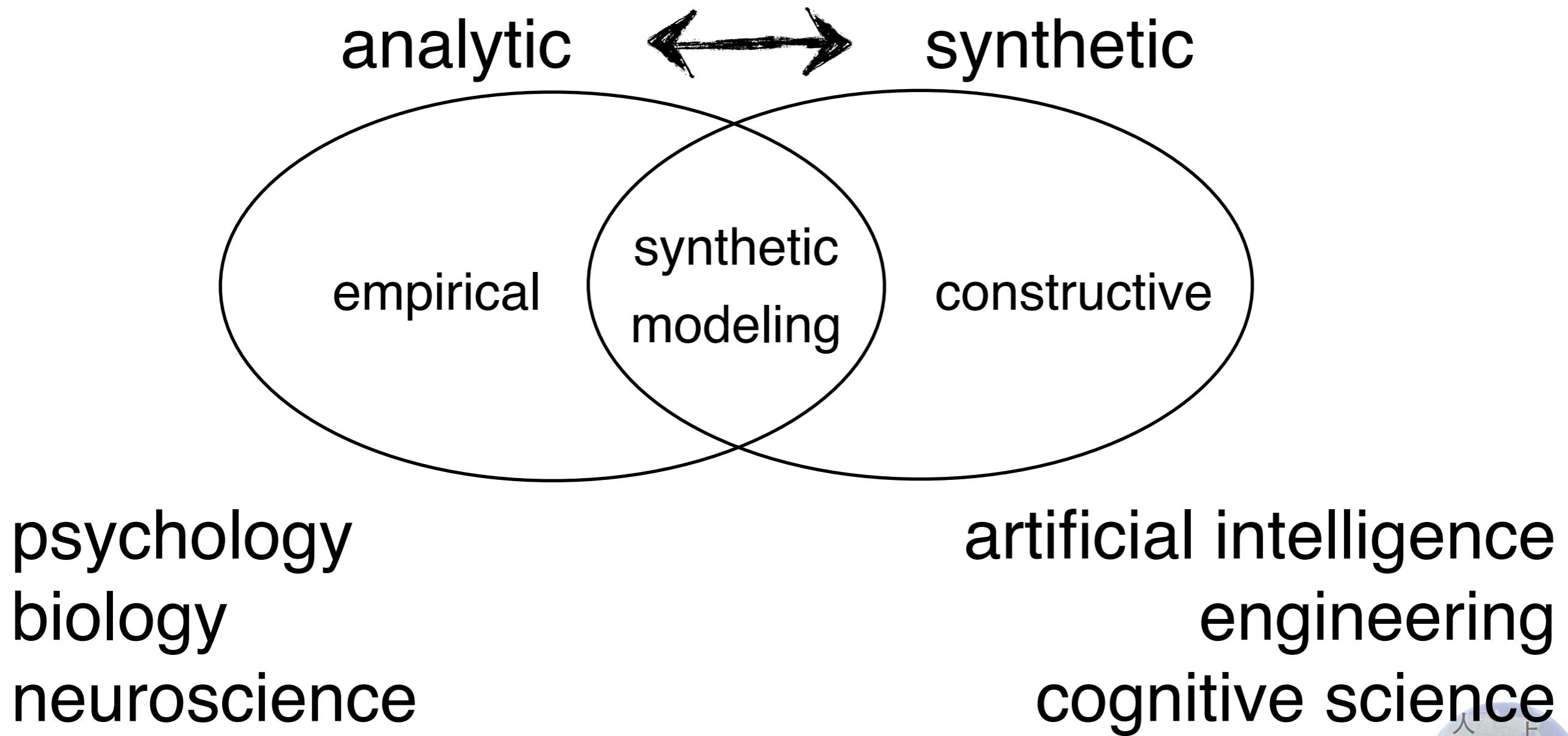
**Design principles for intelligent systems:  
Soft Robotics and Bioinspiration**

**13 November 2014**



# How to study intelligence?

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# The synthetic methodology

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Slogan:

**“Understanding by building”**

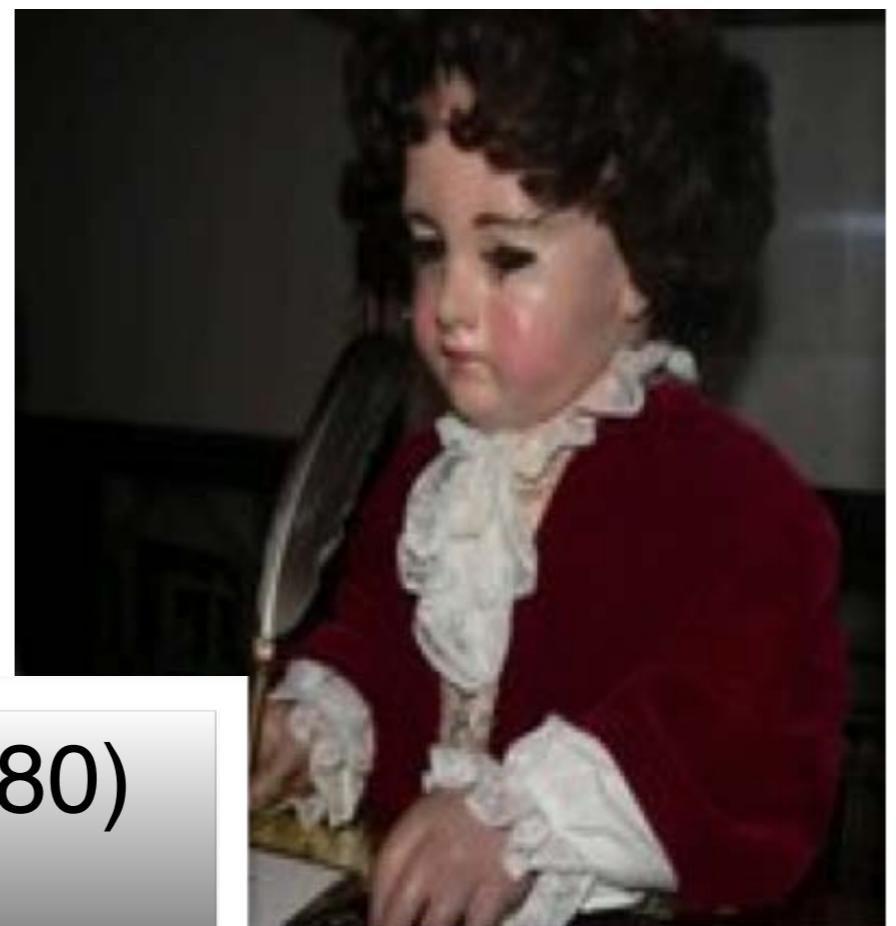
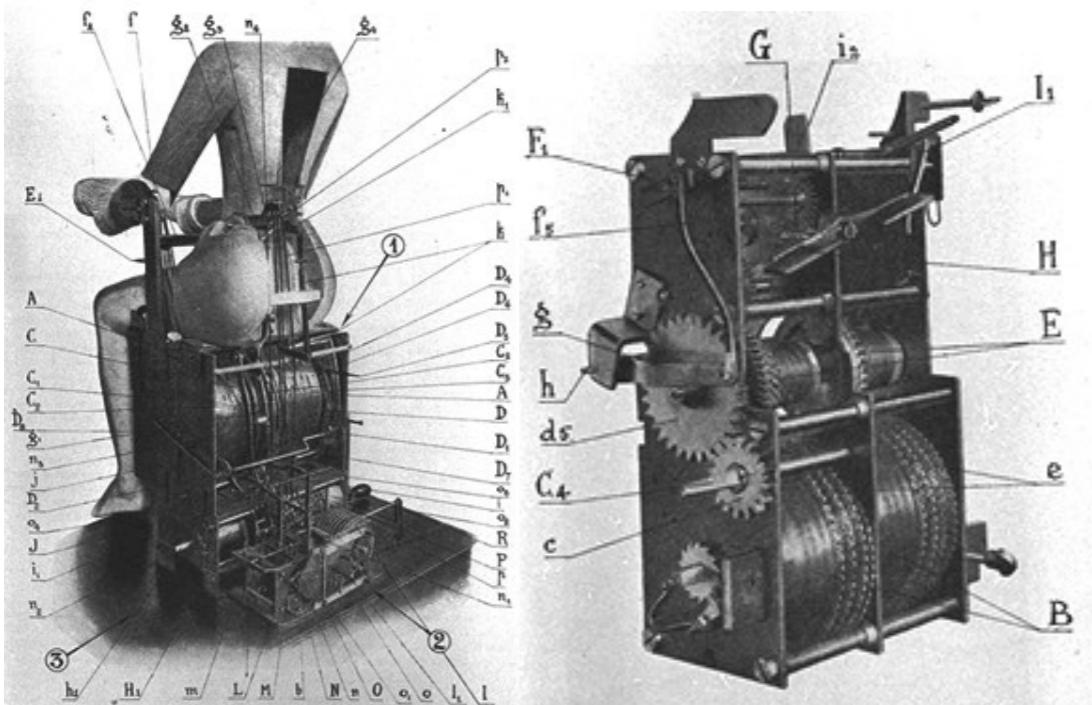
**modeling behavior of interest  
abstraction of principles**



**robots as tools for scientific  
investigation**



# Old attempts



Jaquet-Droz Brothers (1720-1780)

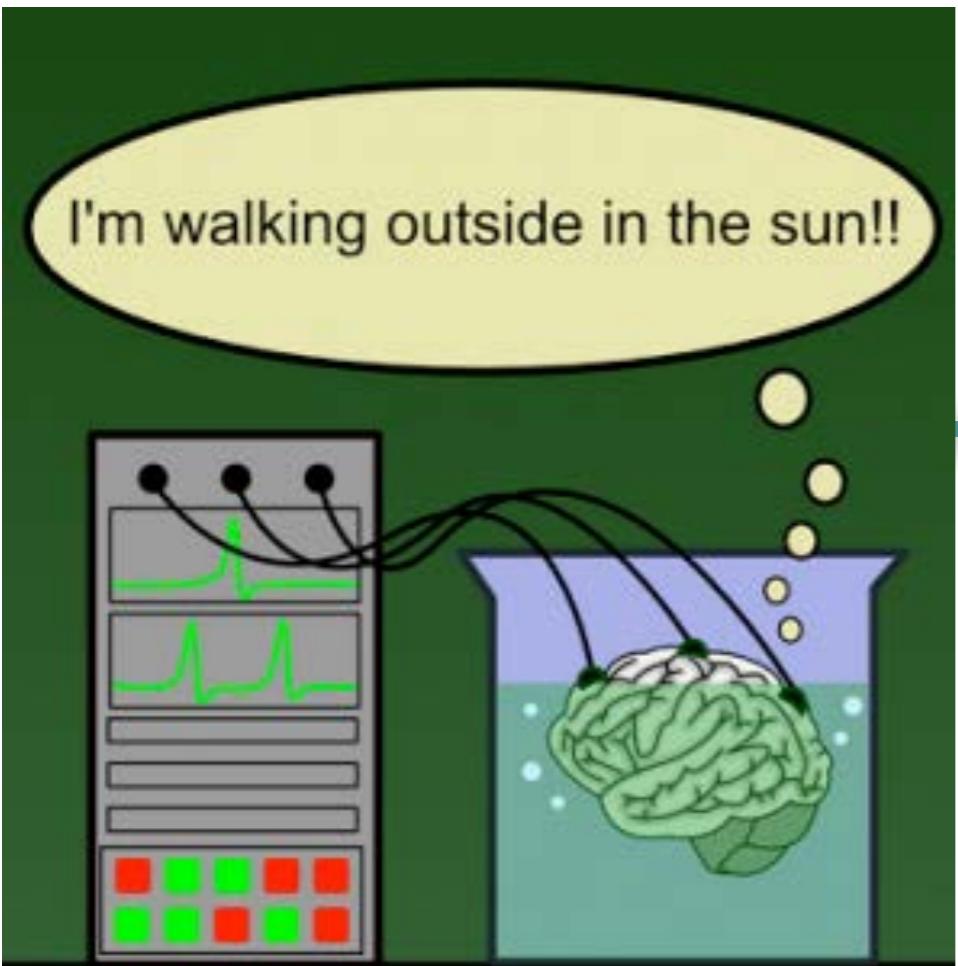
# Old attempts



**Karakuri Dolls**  
Chahakobi Ningyo (Tea Serving Doll) by SHOBEI Tamaya IX, and plan from 'Karakuri Zuii' ('Karakuri - An Illustrated Anthology') published in 1796.



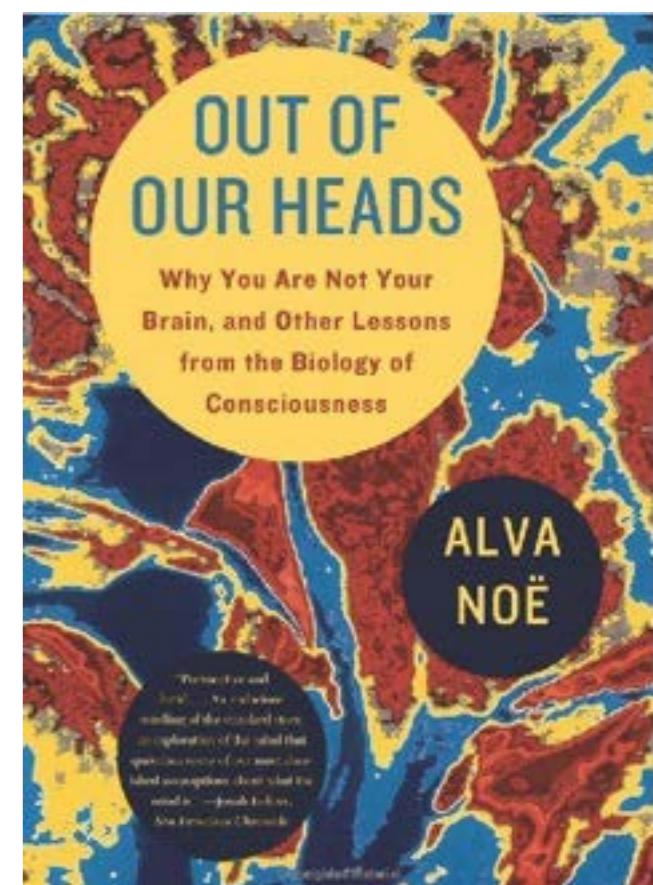
# “Brain-in-a-vat”



Alva Noë, “Out of our heads - why you are not your brain”, New York, Hill and Wang, 2009



- supply energy
- flush away waste products
- complicated: providing stimulation comparable to that normally provided to a brain by its environmentally situated body



# **Scaling issue: the “Brooks-Kirsh” debate**

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**insect level → human level?**

**David Kirsh (1991): “Today the earwig, tomorrow man?”**

**Rodney Brooks (1997): “From earwigs to humans.”**



# Life vs Cognition

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?



# Today's topics

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- short recap
- characteristics of complete agents
- illustration of design principles
- parallel, loosely coupled processes: the “subsumption architecture”
- case studies: “Puppy”, “Passive Dynamic Walkers”



# Hard to agree on definitions, arguments

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- **necessary and sufficient conditions?**
- **are robots, ants, humans intelligent?**

more productive question:

**“Given a behavior of interest, how to implement it?”**



# **Successes and failures of the classical approach**

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**successes**

**applications (e.g.  
Google)**

**chess**

**manufacturing**

**(“controlled”artificial  
worlds)**

**failures**

**foundations of  
behavior**

**natural forms of  
intelligence**

**interaction with real  
world**

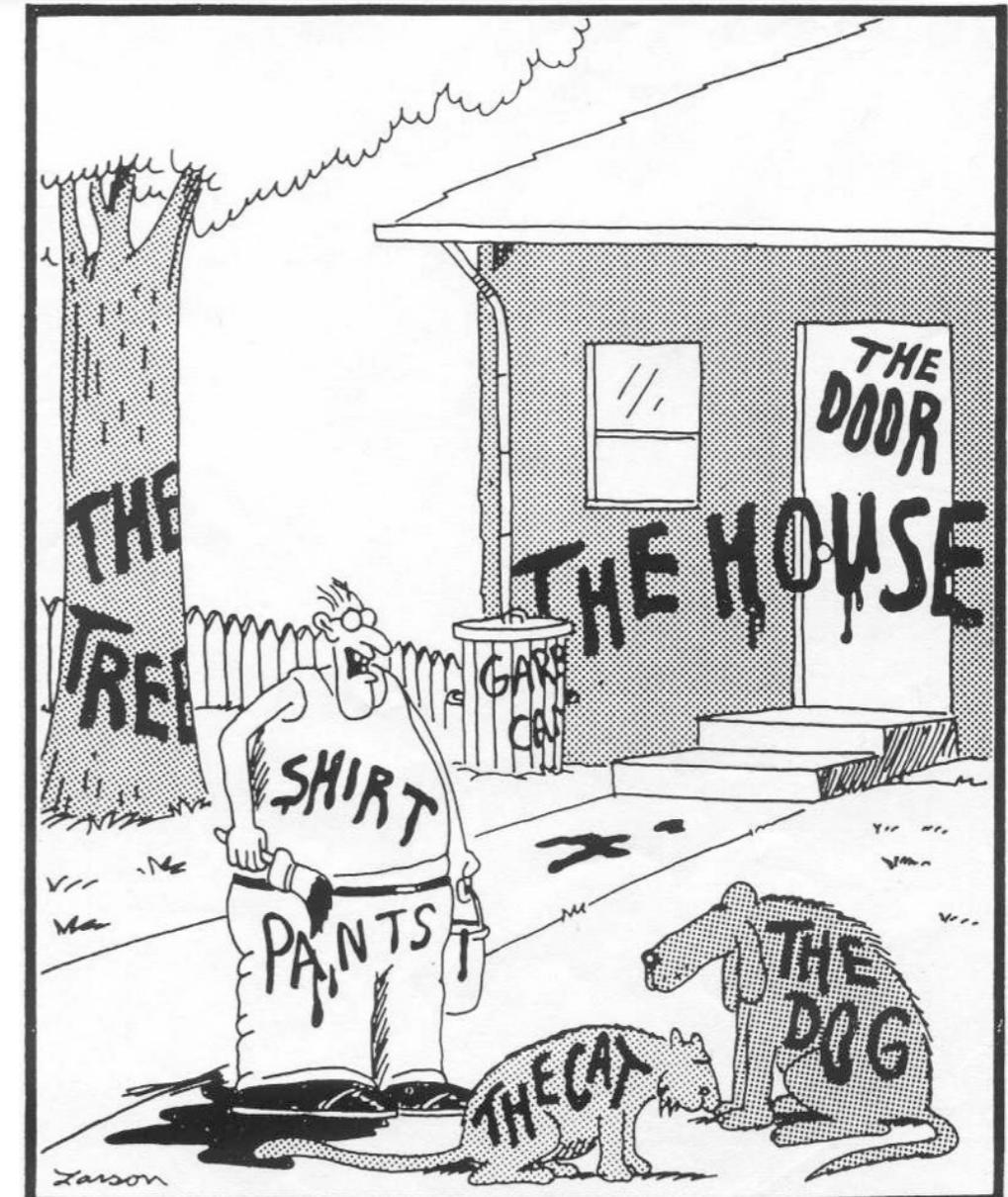


# The “symbol grounding” problem

**real world:  
doesn't come  
with labels ...**

**How to put the  
labels??**

Gary Larson



*"Now! ... That should clear up  
a few things around here!"*



# Two views of intelligence

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classical:  
**cognition as computation**



embodiment:  
**cognition emergent from sensory-motor and interaction processes**



# The need for an embodied perspective

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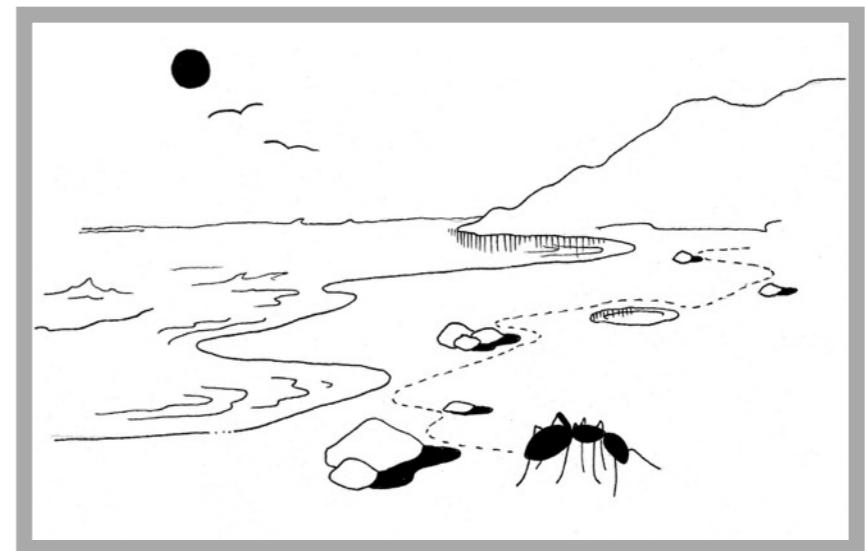
- “failures” of classical AI
- fundamental problems of classical approach
- Wolpert’s quote: Why do plants not ...?  
(stay tuned for Barbara Mazzolai’s lecture...)
- Interaction with environment: always mediated by body



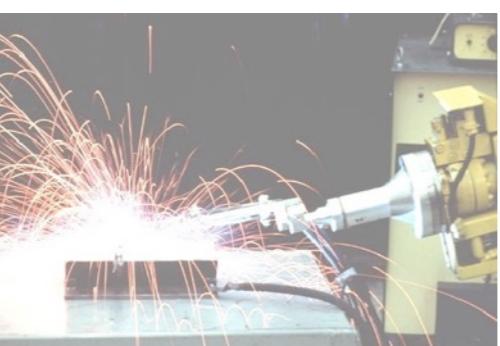
# “Frame-of-reference”

## Simon’s ant on the beach

- simple behavioral rules
- complexity in interaction,  
not — necessarily — in brain
- thought experiment:  
increase body by factor of 1000



# Industrial robots vs. natural systems



**robots**



**no direct transfer of methods**

**principles:**  
**- low precision**  
**- compliant**  
**- reactive**  
**- coping with uncertainty**

**humans**



# Communication through interaction with

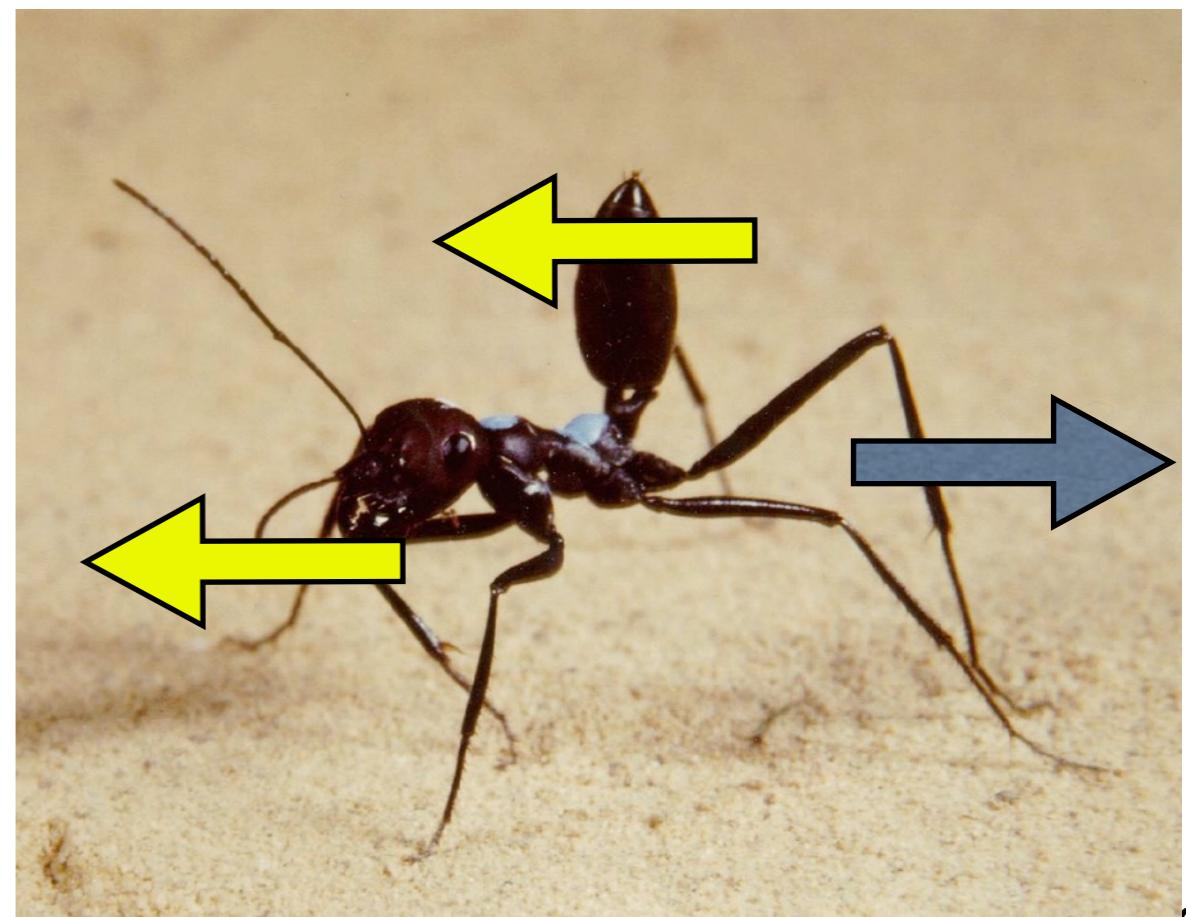
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- exploitation of interaction with environment

→ simpler neural circuits

angle sensors  
in joints

“parallel, loosely coupled processes”

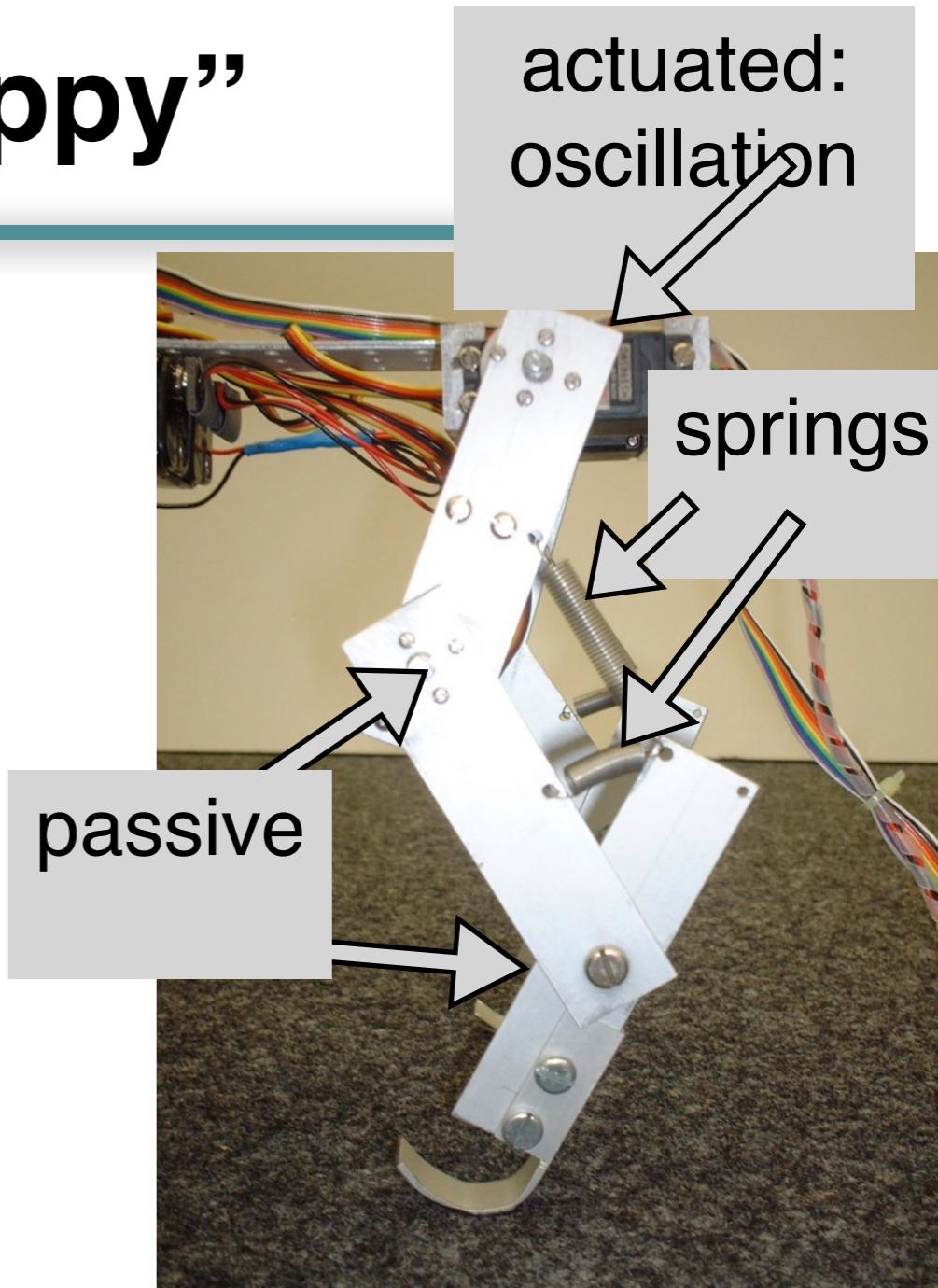


# Emergence of behavior: the quadruped “Puppy”

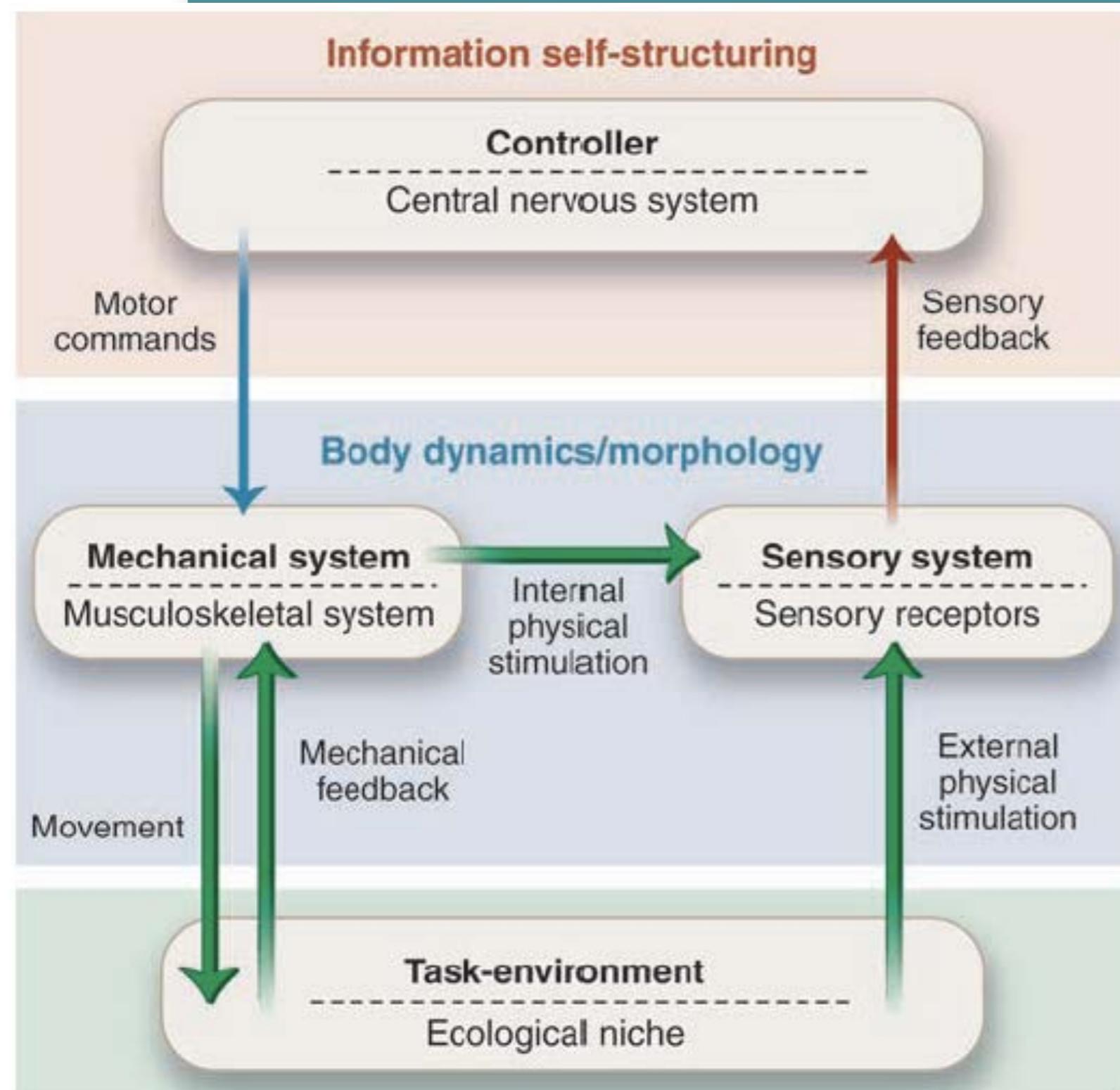
- simple control (oscillations of “hip” joints)
- spring-like material properties (“under-actuated” system)
- self-stabilization, no sensors
- “outsourcing” of functionality



morphological  
computation



# Implications of embodiment

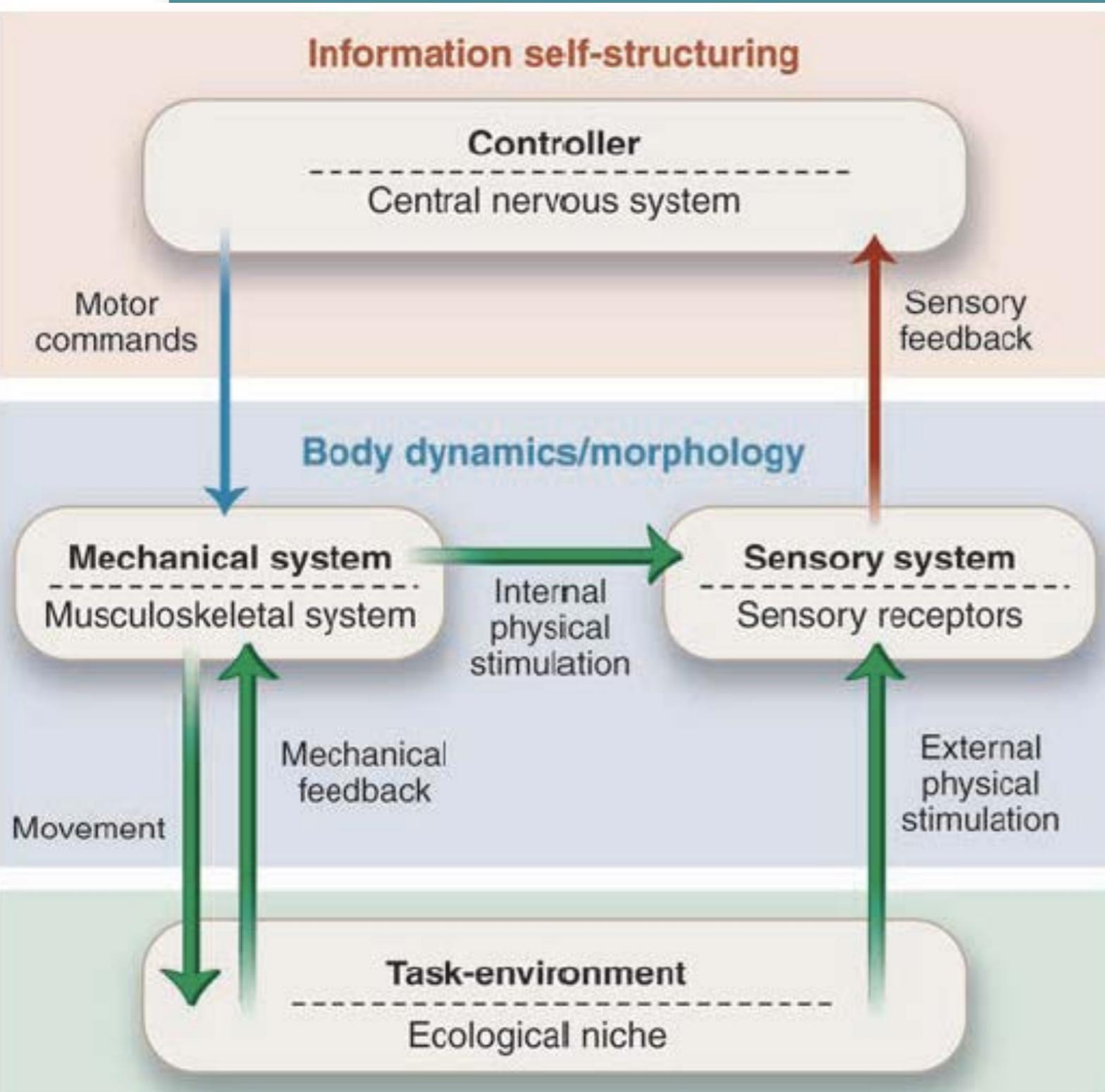


“Puppy”

Pfeifer et al., Science,  
16 Nov. 2007



# Implications of embodiment



“Puppy”  
which part of  
diagram is  
relevant?



Pfeifer et al., Science,  
16 Nov. 2007



# Soft Robotics

## Research, challenges, and applications

adapted from Iros 2014 session keynote  
on soft robotics

by Cecilia Laschi

The BioRobotics Institute  
Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna, Pisa,  
Italy



**IROS - IEEE/RSJ International Conference on**  
**Intelligent Robots and Systems**  
Chicago, Illinois, September 15, 2014



Image: Massimo Brega, The Lighthouse

Image: Jennie Hills, London Science Museum

# Outline

- \* A working **definition** of Soft Robotics
- \* The **need** for soft robots: from robotics, from one side, and AI, from another side
- \* The **challenges** of Soft Robotics, at the merge of many disciplines and technologies
- \* The **innovation potential** of Soft Robotics: fields of application
- \* **Perspectives** of Soft Robotics: increasingly rich state of the art, promising research and technological developments, growing and active community, coordination activities



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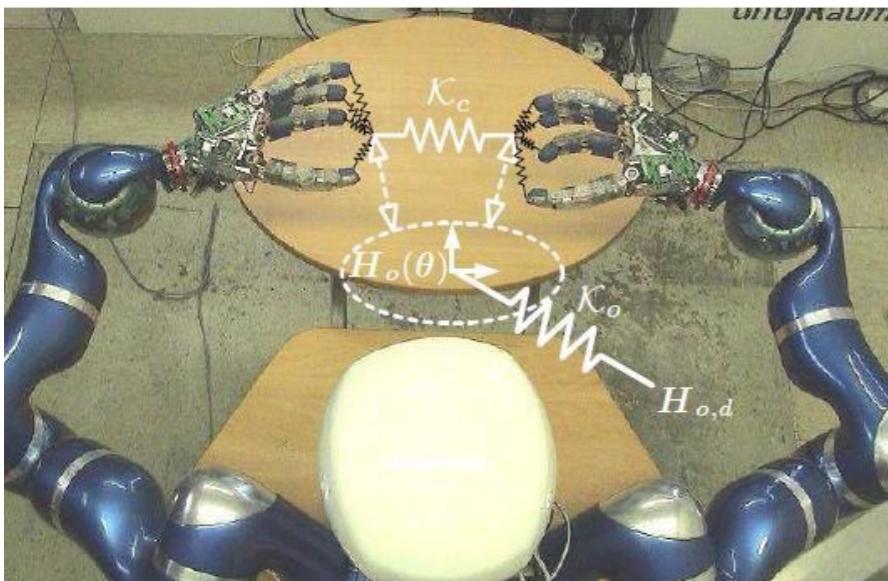
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# Soft Robotics: a working definition

## Variable impedance actuators and stiffness control

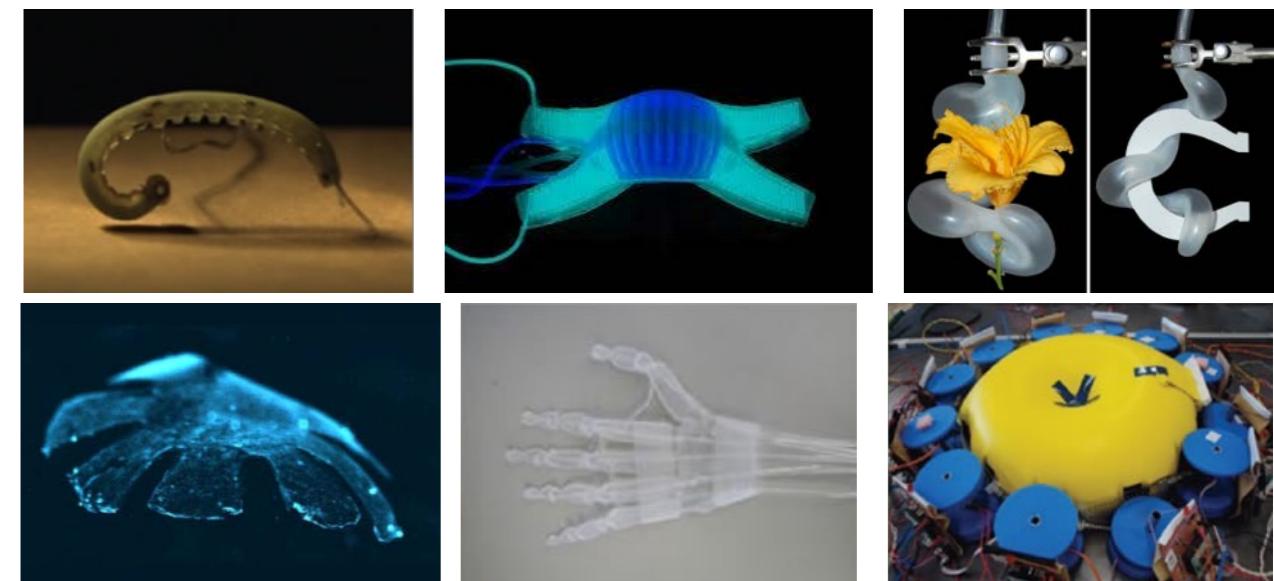
- \* Actuators with variable impedance
- \* Compliance/impedance control
- \* Highly flexible (hyper-redundant or continuum) robots



IEEE Robotics and Automation Magazine,  
Special Issue on Soft Robotics, 2008  
A. Albu-Schaffer et al. (Ed.s)

## Use of soft materials in robotics

- \* Robots made of soft materials that undergo high deformations in interaction
- \* Soft actuators and soft components
- \* Control partially embedded in the robot morphology and mechanical properties



Kim S., Laschi C., and Trimmer B. (2013) Soft robotics: a bioinspired evolution in robotics, *Trends in Biotechnology*, April 2013.  
Laschi C. and Cianchetti M. (2014) "Soft Robotics: new perspectives for robot bodyware and control" *Frontiers in Bioengineering and Biotechnology*, 2(3)

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# Soft Robotics stems from robotics, from one side...



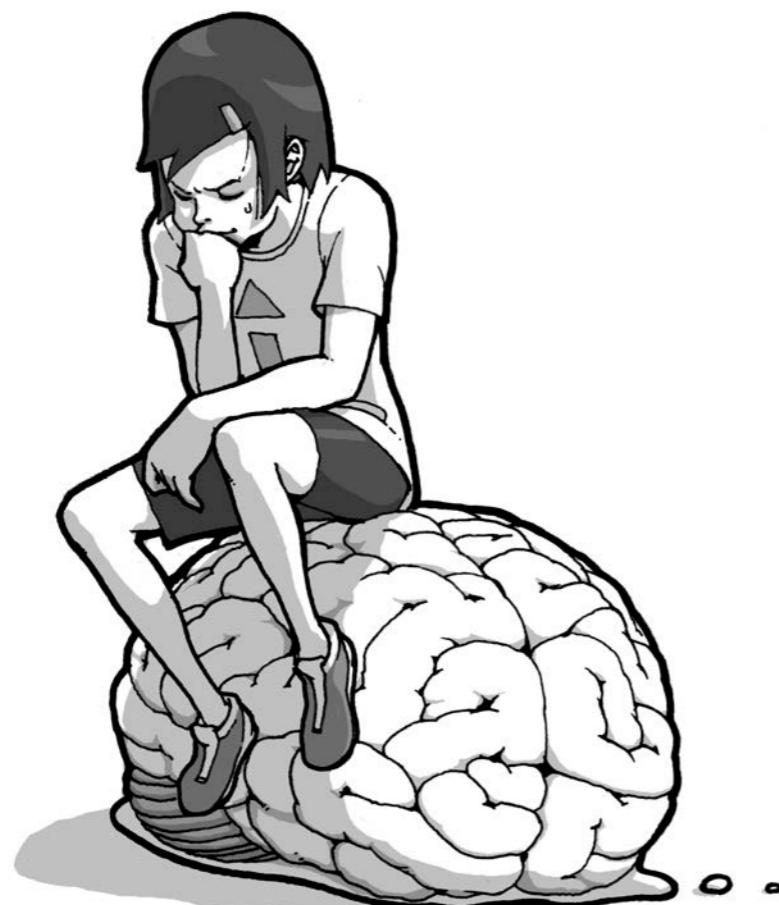
Biological systems  
exploit **soft structures** to move  
effectively in  
complex environments

**Soft robotics**

# Embodied Intelligence or Morphological Computation: the modern view of Artificial Intelligence

## Modern approach

The focus is on interaction with the environment. Cognition is emergent from system-environment interaction



## Classical approach

The focus is on the brain and central processing



Rolf Pfeifer and Josh C. Bongard, *How the body shapes the way we think: a new view of intelligence*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 2007

# Soft Robotics stems from robotics, from one side, and AI, from another side

## Soft Robotics at the convergence of Robotics and AI

### Robotics

From industrial to service robotics

Soft robotics is not just  
a new direction of technological  
development.

The use of soft materials in  
robotics is going to unhinge its  
fundamentals.

### Soft robotics

Soft robotics is going to stand as a **novel approach to robotics and artificial intelligence**, and it has the potential to produce a new generation of robots, in the support of humans in our natural environments.

### Artificial Intelligence

From central processing to  
Morphological Computation



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# The OCTOPUS showcase



Image: London Science Museum/Jennie Hills

## OCTOPUS IP (2009-2013)

**Novel Design Principles and Technologies for a New Generation of High Dexterity Soft-bodied Robots Inspired by the Morphology and Behaviour of the Octopus**



*EU-funded Project # 231608  
ICT-FET Proactive:  
ICT-2007.8.5 “Embodied Intelligence”  
Total grant: 7.6 M€*

C. Laschi, B. Mazzolai, M. Cianchetti, L. Margheri, M. Follador, P. Dario, “A Soft Robot Arm Inspired by the Octopus”, *Advanced Robotics (Special Issue on Soft Robotics)*, Vol.26, No.7, 2012.

M. Calisti, M. Giorelli, G. Levy, B. Mazzolai, B. Hochner, C. Laschi, P. Dario, “An octopus-bioinspired solution to movement and manipulation for soft robots”, *Bioinspiration & Biomimetics*, Vol.6, No.3, 2011, 10 pp.

C. Laschi, B. Mazzolai, V. Mattoli, M. Cianchetti, P. Dario, “Design of a biomimetic robotic octopus arm”, *Bioinspiration&Biomimetics*, Vol.4, No.1, 2009.

# The octopus as a model for both soft robotics and embodied intelligence



What are the principles that give rise to the octopus dexterity and intelligence?



# Soft Robotics is at the merge of many disciplines and technologies

From biology to robotics



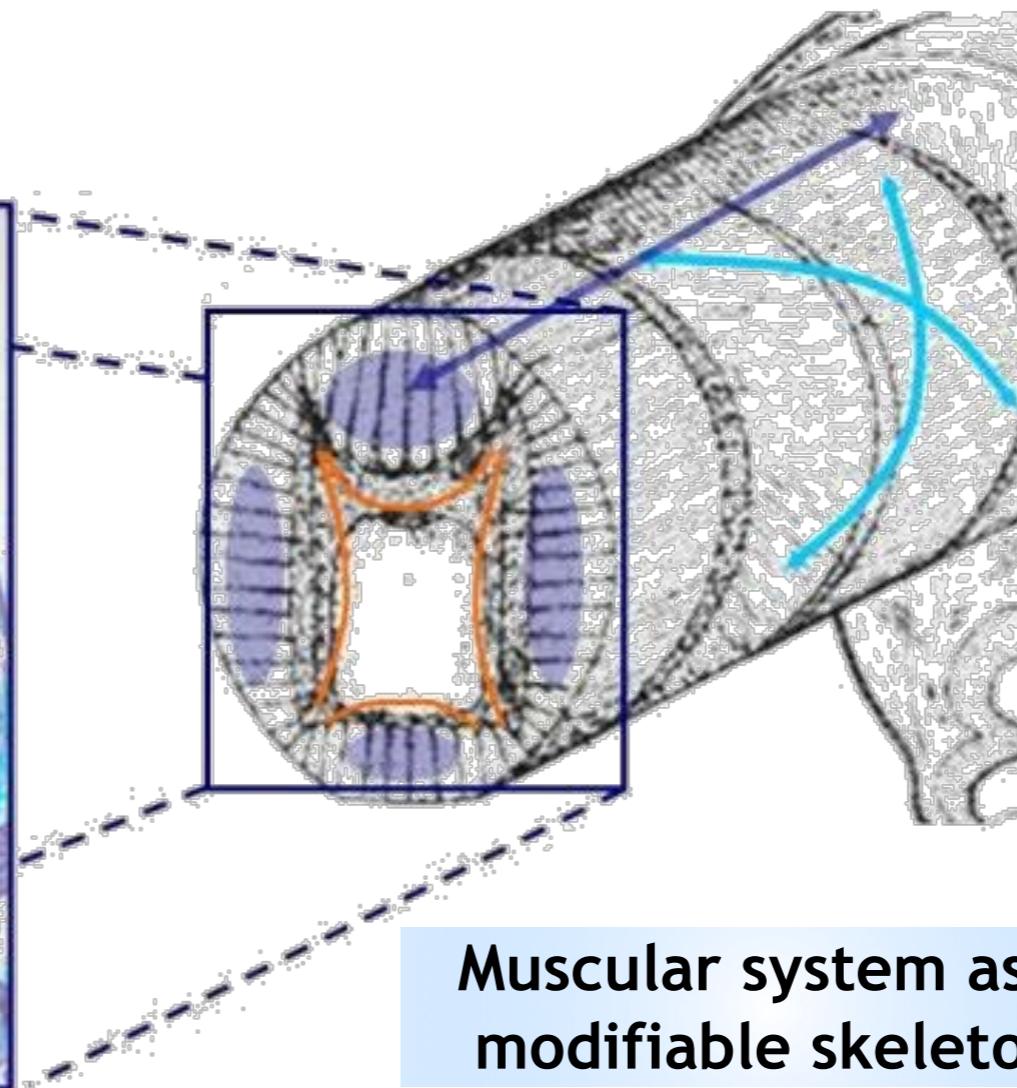
L. Margheri, C. Laschi, B. Mazzolai, "Soft robotic arm inspired by the octopus. I. From biological functions to artificial requirements", *Bioinspiration & Biomimetics*, Vol.7, No.2, June 2012.

B. Mazzolai, L. Margheri, M. Cianchetti, P. Dario, C. Laschi, "Soft robotic arm inspired by the octopus. II. From artificial requirements to innovative technological solutions", *Bioinspiration & Biomimetics*, Vol.7, No.2, June 2012.

# The octopus muscular hydrostat

Constant volume  
during contractions

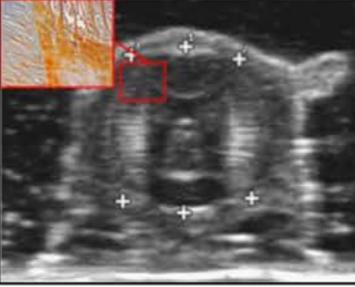
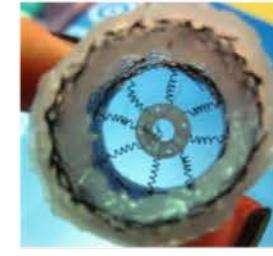
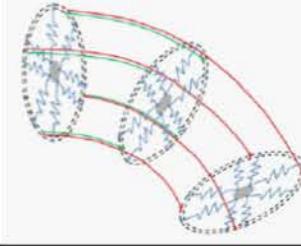
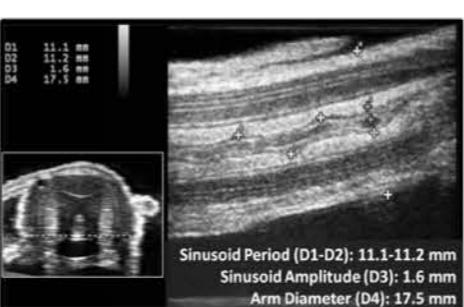
- Longitudinal muscles
- Transverse muscles
- Oblique muscles



Muscular system as a  
modifiable skeleton

# From biology to robotics

L. Margheri, C. Laschi, B. Mazzolai, "Soft robotic arm inspired by the octopus. I. From biological functions to artificial requirements", *Bioinspiration & Biomimetics*, Vol.7, No.2, June 2012.  
 B. Mazzolai, L. Margheri, M. Cianchetti, P. Dario, C. Laschi, "Soft robotic arm inspired by the octopus. II. From artificial requirements to innovative technological solutions", *Bioinspiration & Biomimetics*, Vol.7, No. 2, June 2012.

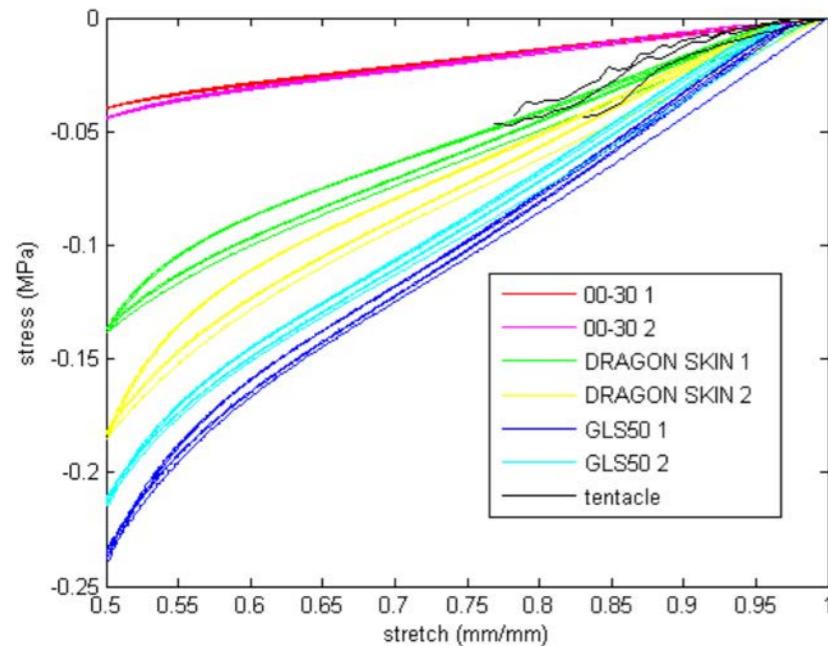
		Biological Specification ( <i>Octopus vulgaris</i> )			Robotic Solution and Performance		
Transverse Muscles	Design Arrangement					Patent pending	
	Mechanical performance	70% of arms mean elongation corresponding to 23% of diameter reduction					
Longitudinal Muscles	Design Arrangement					Input to model for the design of the SMA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NiTi Alloy mechanical properties</li> <li>• Wire diameter</li> <li>• Average spring diameter</li> <li>• Number of coils</li> <li>• Heat treatments</li> </ul>	
	Mechanical performance	Max Pulling Force	Mean Pulling Force	Time			
Grasp Point Position		0.75 of total arm length			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Longitudinal cables</li> <li>• sheaths to reduce friction and avoid silicon damages</li> <li>• Calibration parameters (<math>t, F</math>)</li> </ul>		
Nerve Cord Arrangement	Design Arrangement				Sinusoidal arrangement at the arm rest length while has a distension during the elongation		
					Wire sinusoidal arrangement		

# Soft Robotics is at the merge of many disciplines and technologies

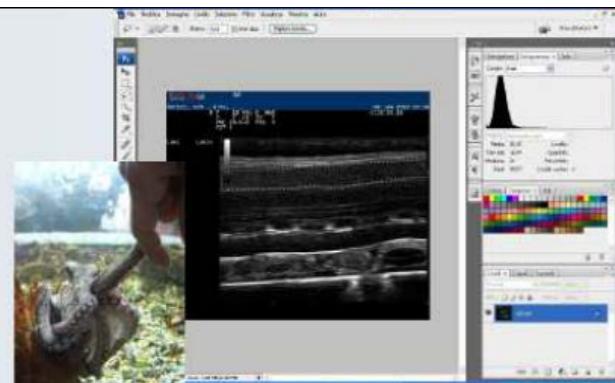
## Materials

### Mechanical properties

#### Stiffness



#### Density (US investigation)

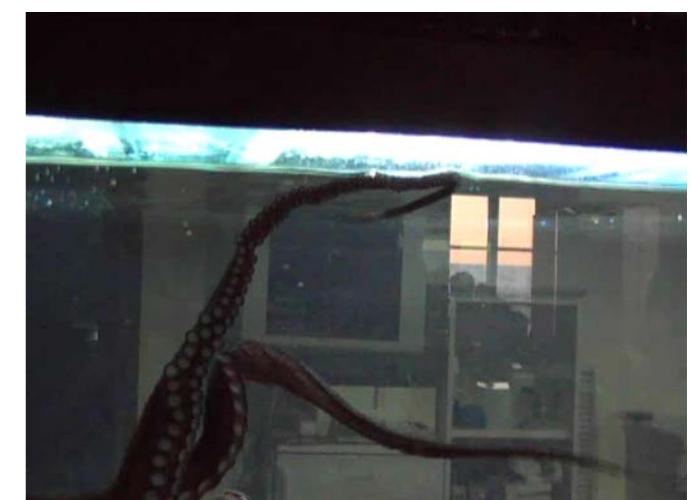
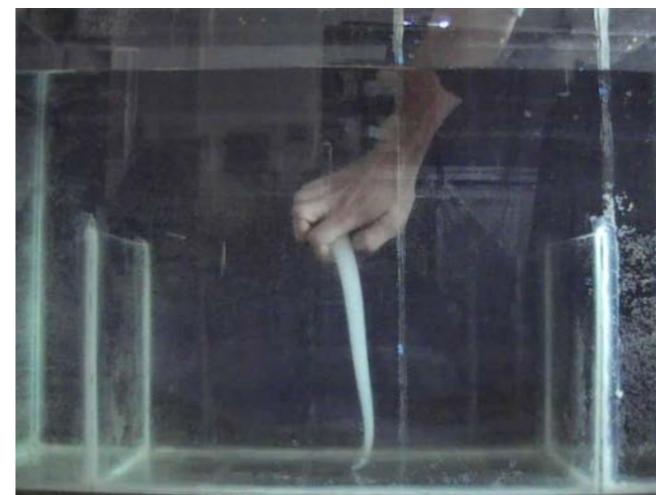


THE DISROBOTICS  
INSTITUTE



Scuola Superiore  
Sant'Anna

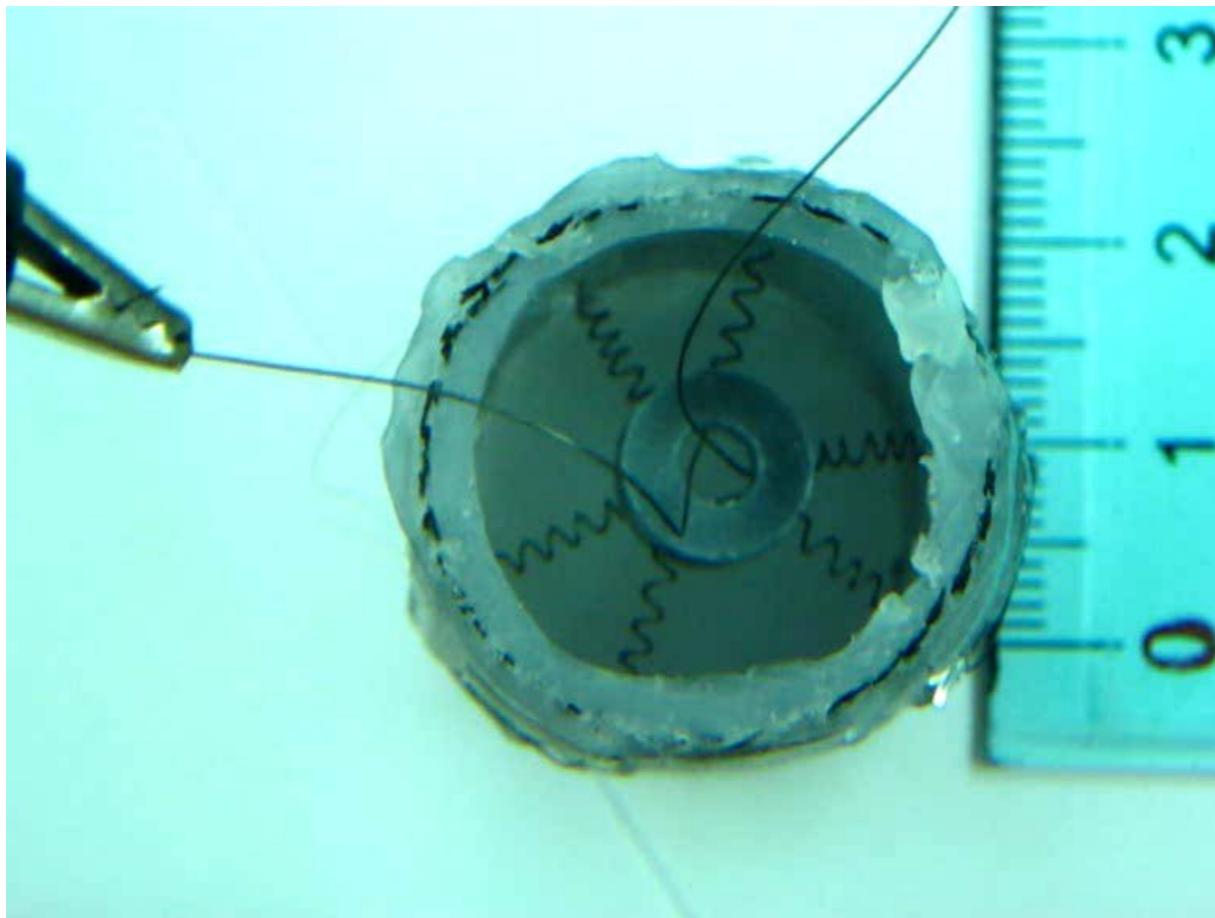
#### Passive interaction with water



B. Mazzolai, C. Laschi, M. Cianchetti, F. Patanè, L. Bassi-Luciani, I. Izzo, P. Dario, "Biorobotic Investigation on the Muscle Structure of an Octopus Tentacle", IEEE Annual International Conference of the Engineering in Medicine and Biology Society (EMBC 2007), Lyon, France, August 23-26, 2007, pp.1471-1474.

# Soft Robotics is at the merge of many disciplines and technologies: soft actuators

1 second of 600 mA direct current and then 50% duty cycle pulse current



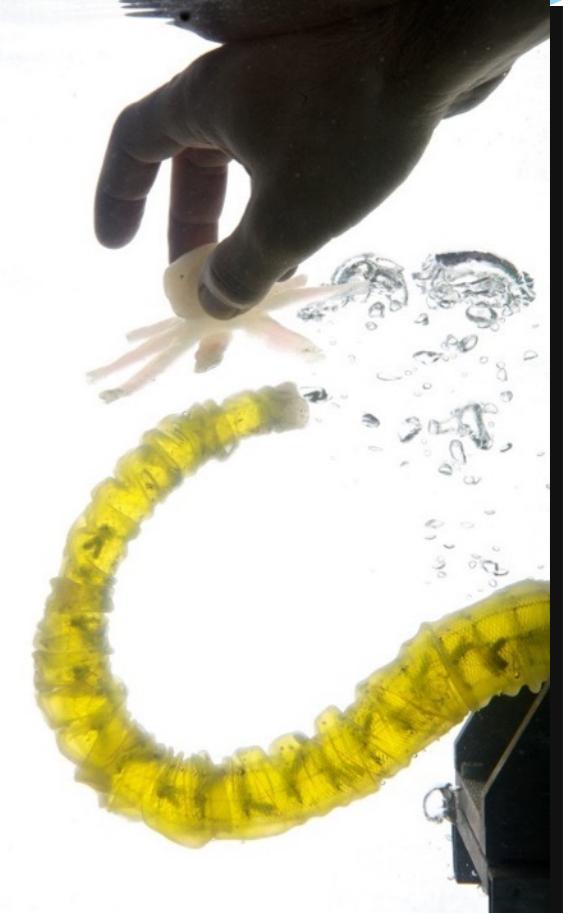
6 SMA springs:

- 0.2 mm Flexinol® wire diameter
- $\langle D \rangle / d = 6$  (cycle life parameter)
- Spring internal diameter = 1 mm



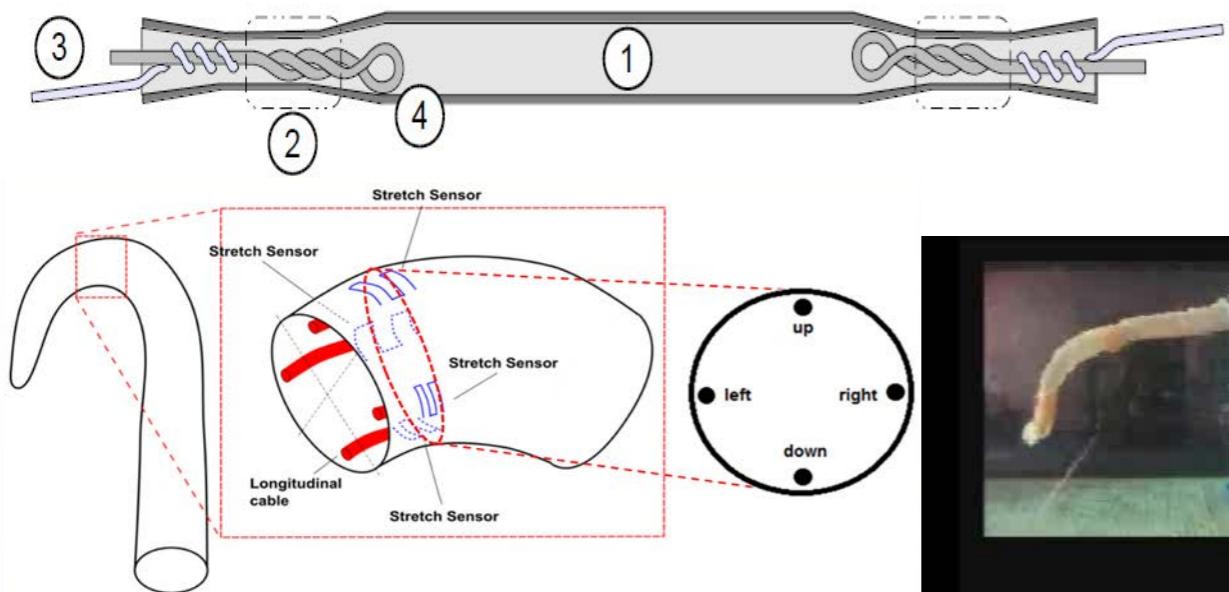
Silicone / braided sleeve:

- External diameter = 28mm
- Internal diameter = 20mm



# Soft Robotics is at the merge of many disciplines and technologies: soft sensors

*Electrolycra tubular body*



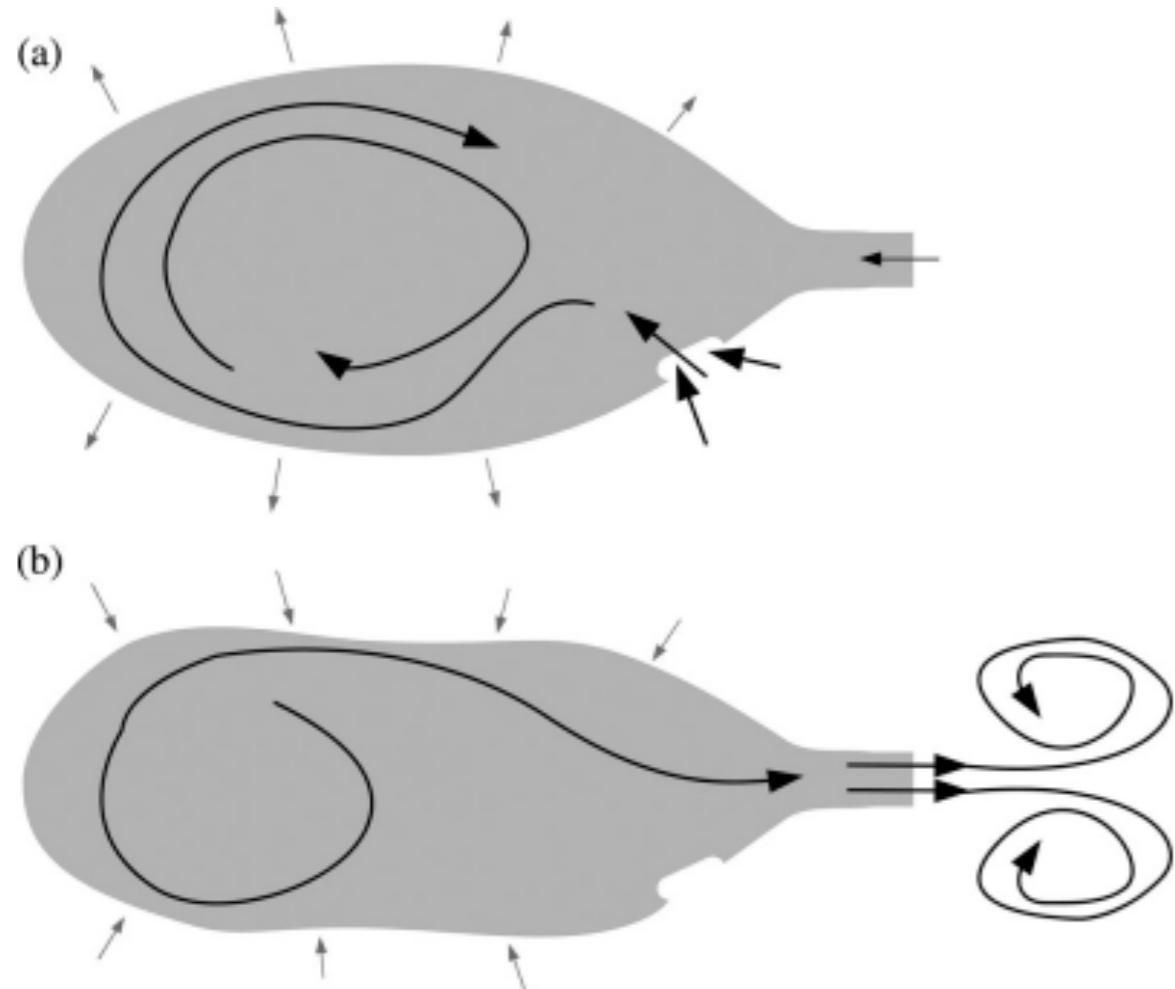
Five groups of four  
sensors (quadruplets)  
placed along the arm



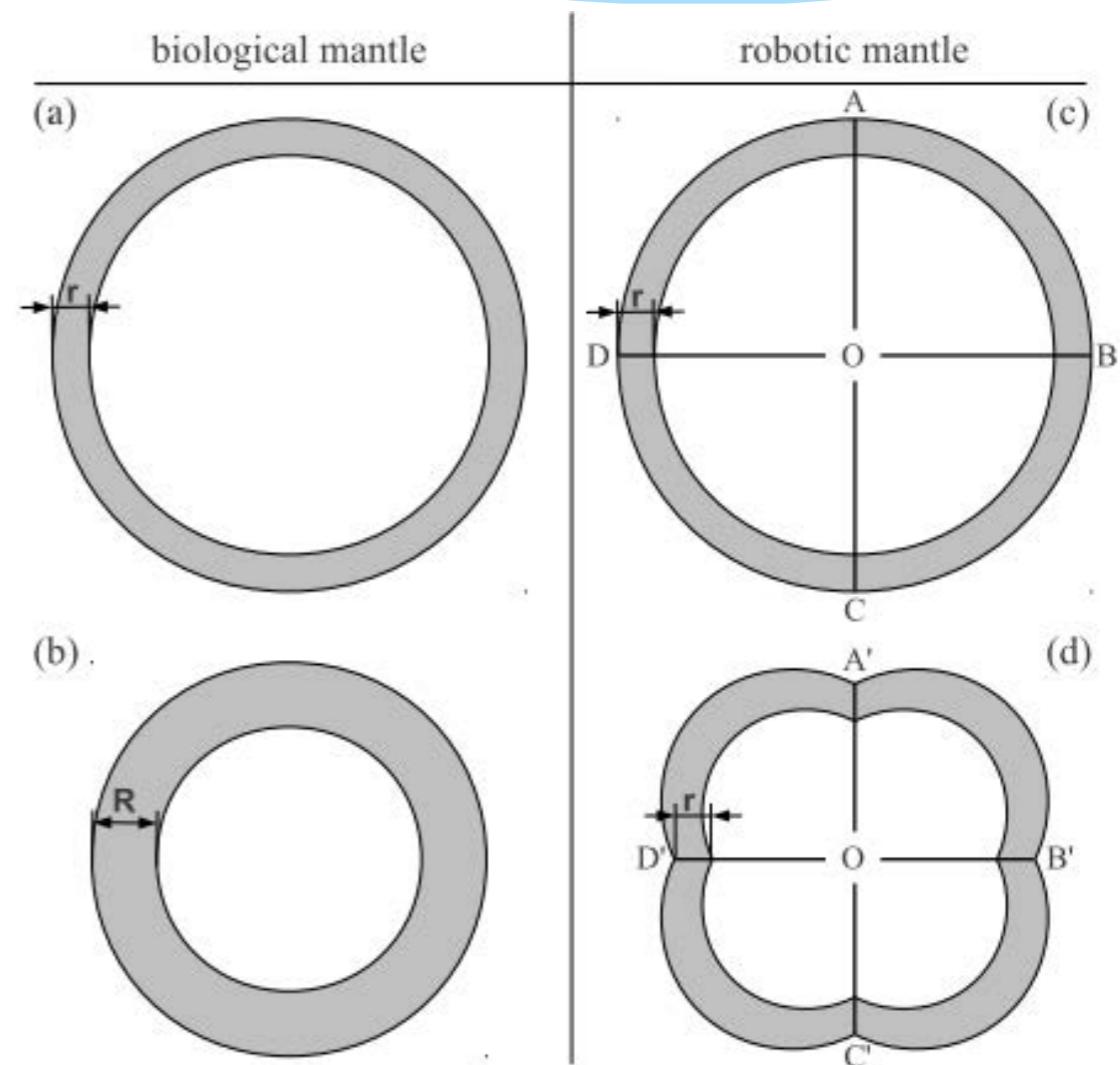
# Soft Robotics is at the merge of many disciplines and technologies: fluido-dynamics

*Pulsed-jet propulsion in cephalopods*

How does a cephalopod swim?



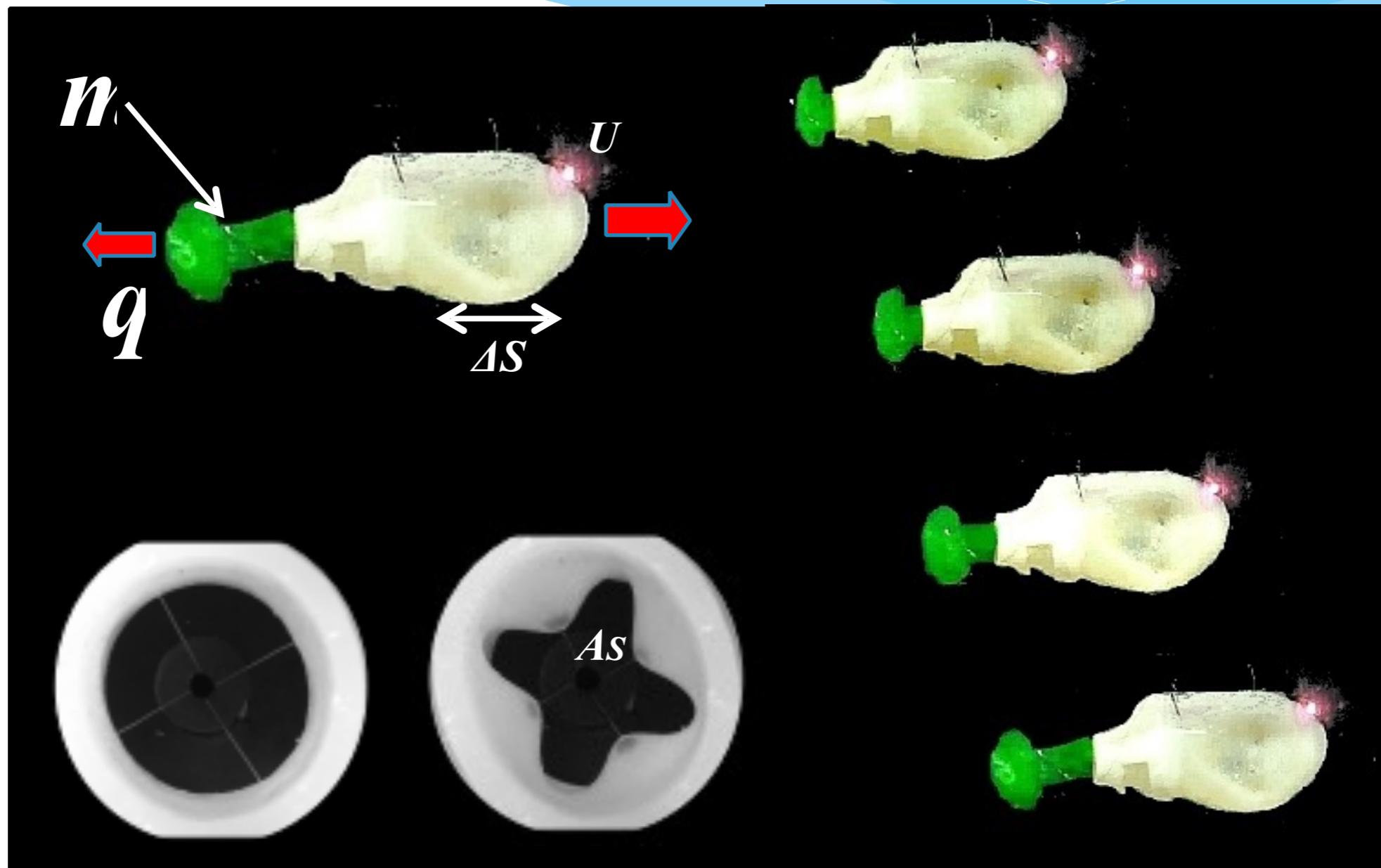
How do we translate this into a soft robot?



Giorgio Serchi F., Arienti A. and Laschi C. (2013) "Biomimetic Vortex Propulsion: Toward the New Paradigm of Soft Unmanned Underwater Vehicles", *IEEE/ASME Transactions on Mechatronics*, 18(2), pp. 484-493

# Soft Robotics is at the merge of many disciplines and technologies: fluido-dynamics

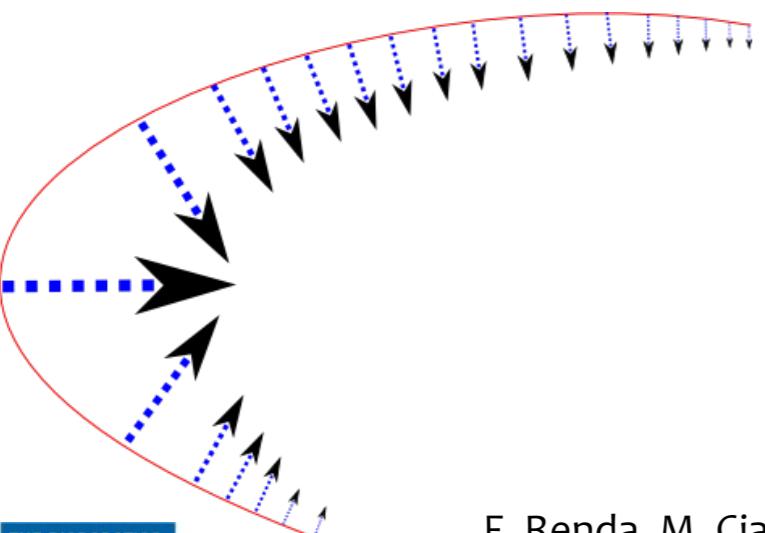
*Pulsed-jet propulsion in cephalopods*



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# Soft Robotics is at the merge of many disciplines and technologies

## Modelling and control



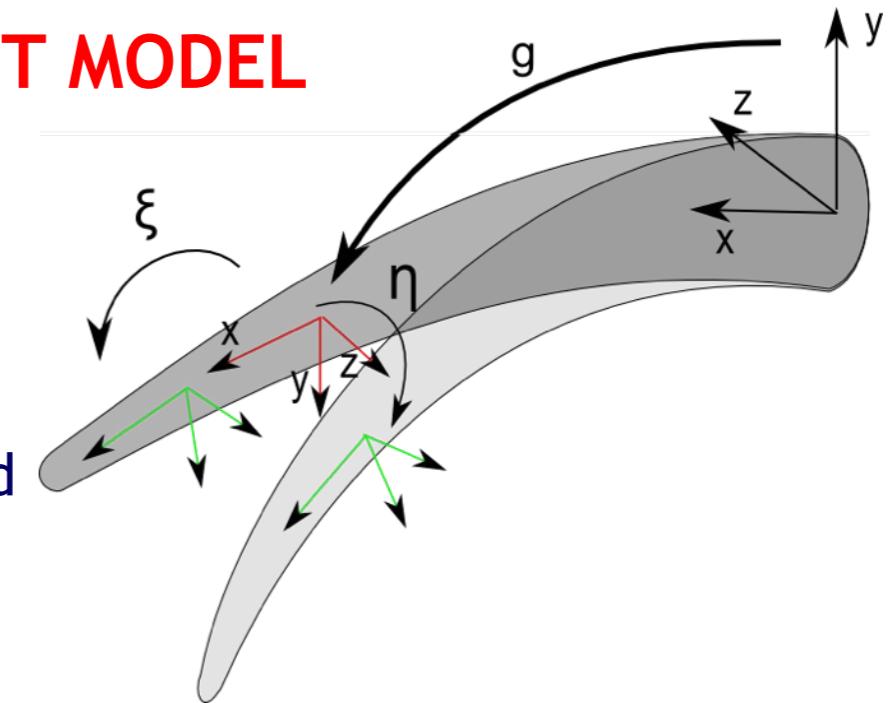
CABLES TENSION  
function of time



ROBOT CONFIGURATION  
parameterized by the curvilinear  
abscissa X and time t

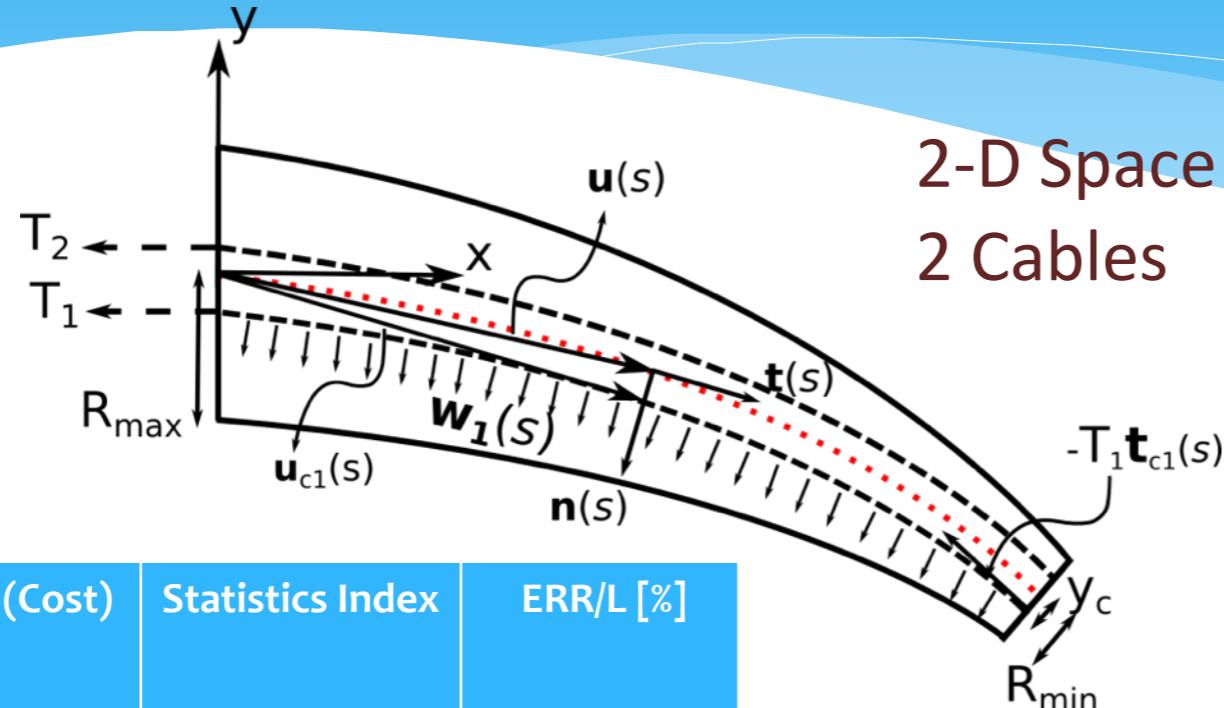
FORWARD DYNAMICS with a:  
**COSSEURAT GEOMETRICALLY EXACT MODEL**

- The cables are embedded inside the body of the soft robot
- They exert a load proportional to the cable tension and to the curvature and it is directed toward the centre of the curvature

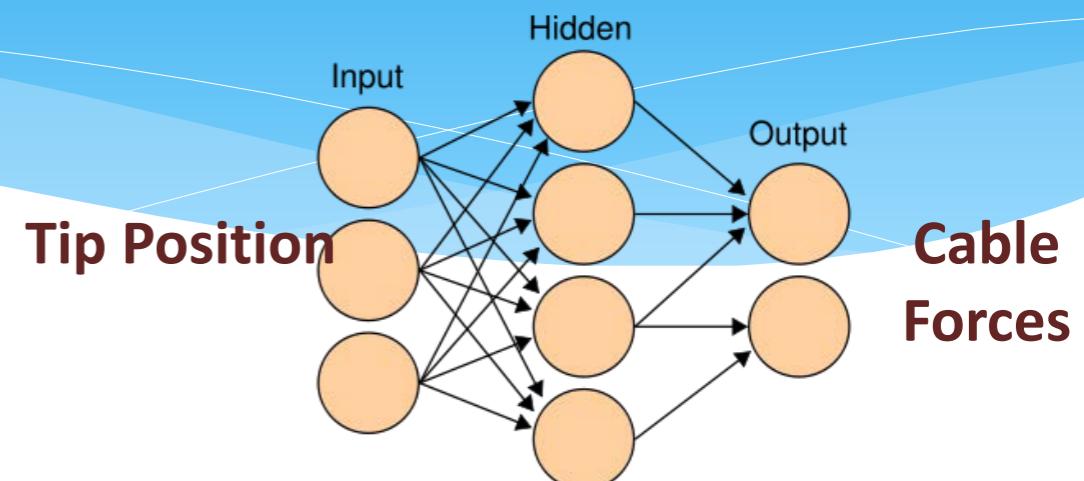
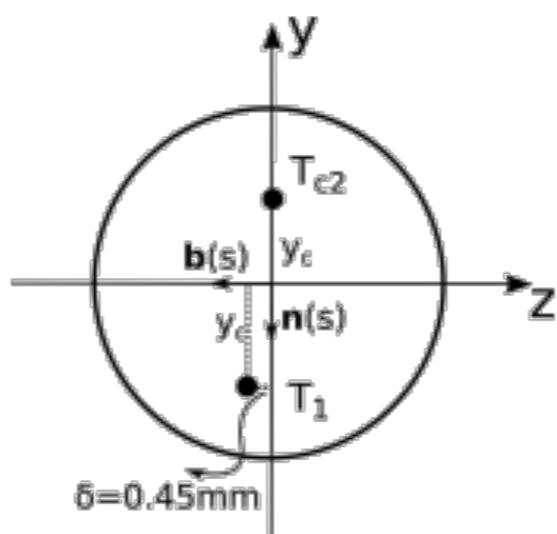


F. Renda, M. Cianchetti, M. Giorelli, A. Arienti, C. Laschi, "A 3D Steady State Model of a Tendon-Driven Continuum Soft Manipulator Inspired by Octopus Arm", *Bioinspiration & Biomimetics*, Vol.7, No.2, June 2012.  
Renda F, Giorelli M, Calisti M, Cianchetti M, Laschi C, "Dynamic Model of a Multi-Bending Soft Robot Arm Driven by Cables", *IEEE Transactions on Robotics*, June 2014

# Inverse Kinematics: Jacobian Method (JM) or Neural Networks (NN)?



Method (Cost)	Statistics Index	ERR/L [%]
JM (351ms)	Mean	0.27
	Std	0.03
	Max	0.32
NN (0.125ms)	Mean	0.73
	Std	0.55
	Max	3.1



Defective Model

Method (Cost)	Statistics Index	ERR/L [%]
JM (351ms)	Mean	1.30
	Std	0.55
	Max	2.62
NN (0.125ms)	Mean	0.75
	Std	0.68
	Max	3.51

M Giorelli, F Renda, G Ferri, C Laschi, "A Feed-Forward Neural Curvature Soft Manipulators Driven by Cables", ASME Dynamical Systems and Control Conference, October 21-23, Stanford University, Palo Alto, CA, USA, 2013

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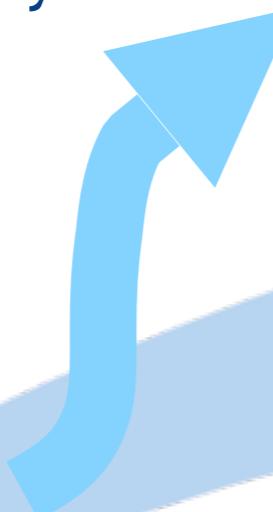


# Soft Robotics applications



Biomedical applications:  
endoscopy, assistance to  
elderly and disabled people

The initial challenge:  
can we build robots  
with soft materials?



# Application of OCTOPUS technologies in surgery

## STIFF-FLOP

STIFFness controllable Flexible and Learn-able Manipulator for surgical OPERations



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
European Research Area

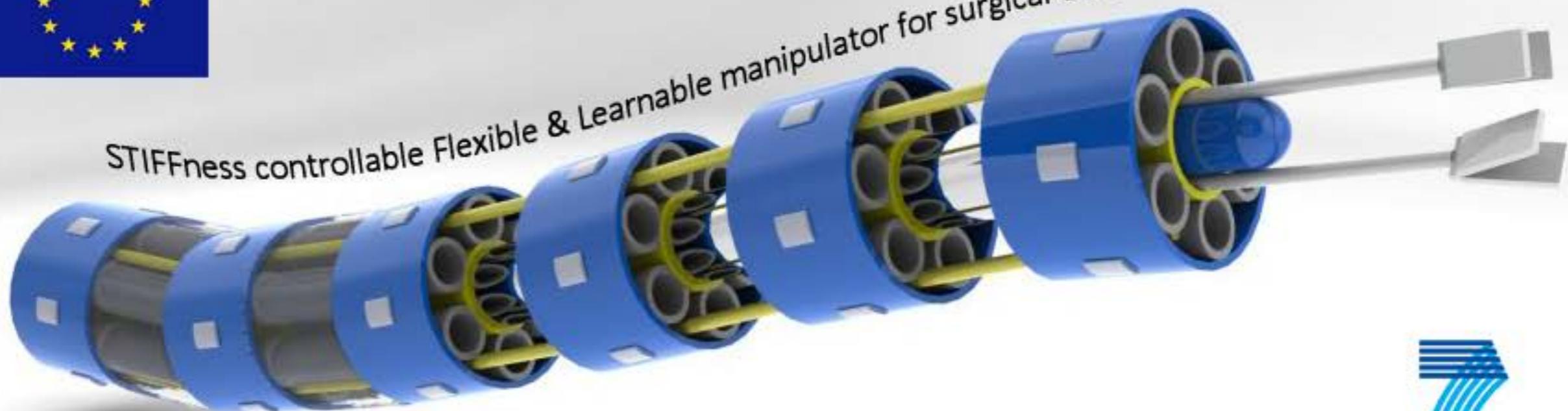


SEVENTH FRAMEWORK  
PROGRAMME

Home | The Project | Partners | Guest Book | Gallery | Internal | Newsletter | Contact & Disclaimer | Ext. Links



STIFFness controllable Flexible & Learnable manipulator for surgical Operations



KING'S  
*College*  
LONDON

University of London

<http://www.stiff-flop.eu/index.php/home>

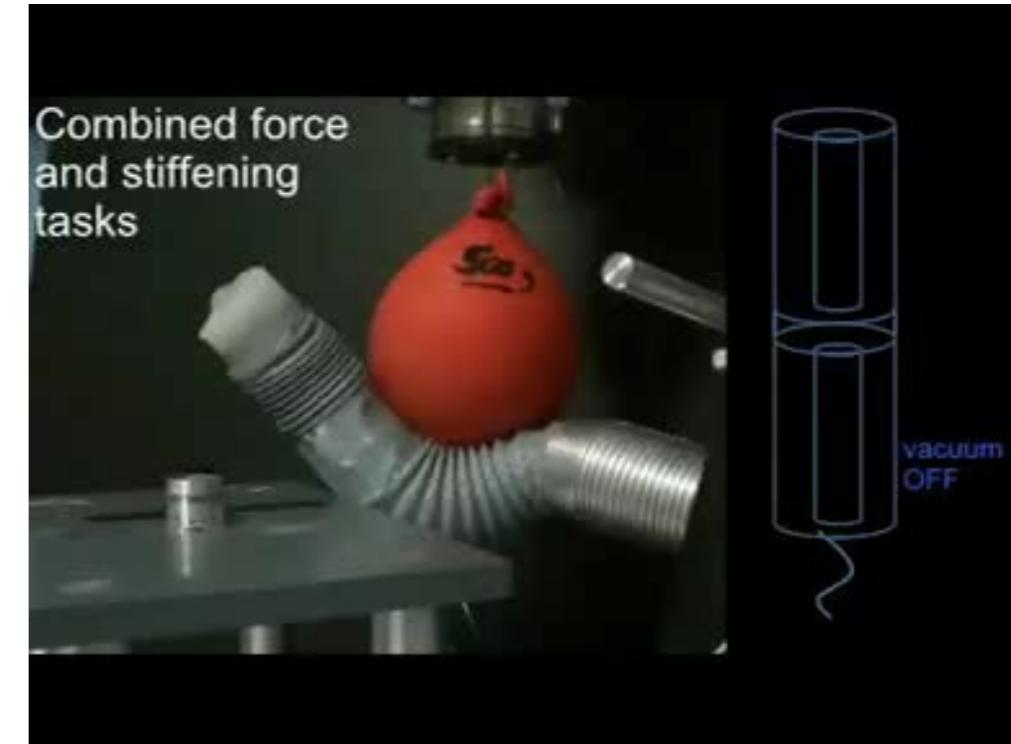
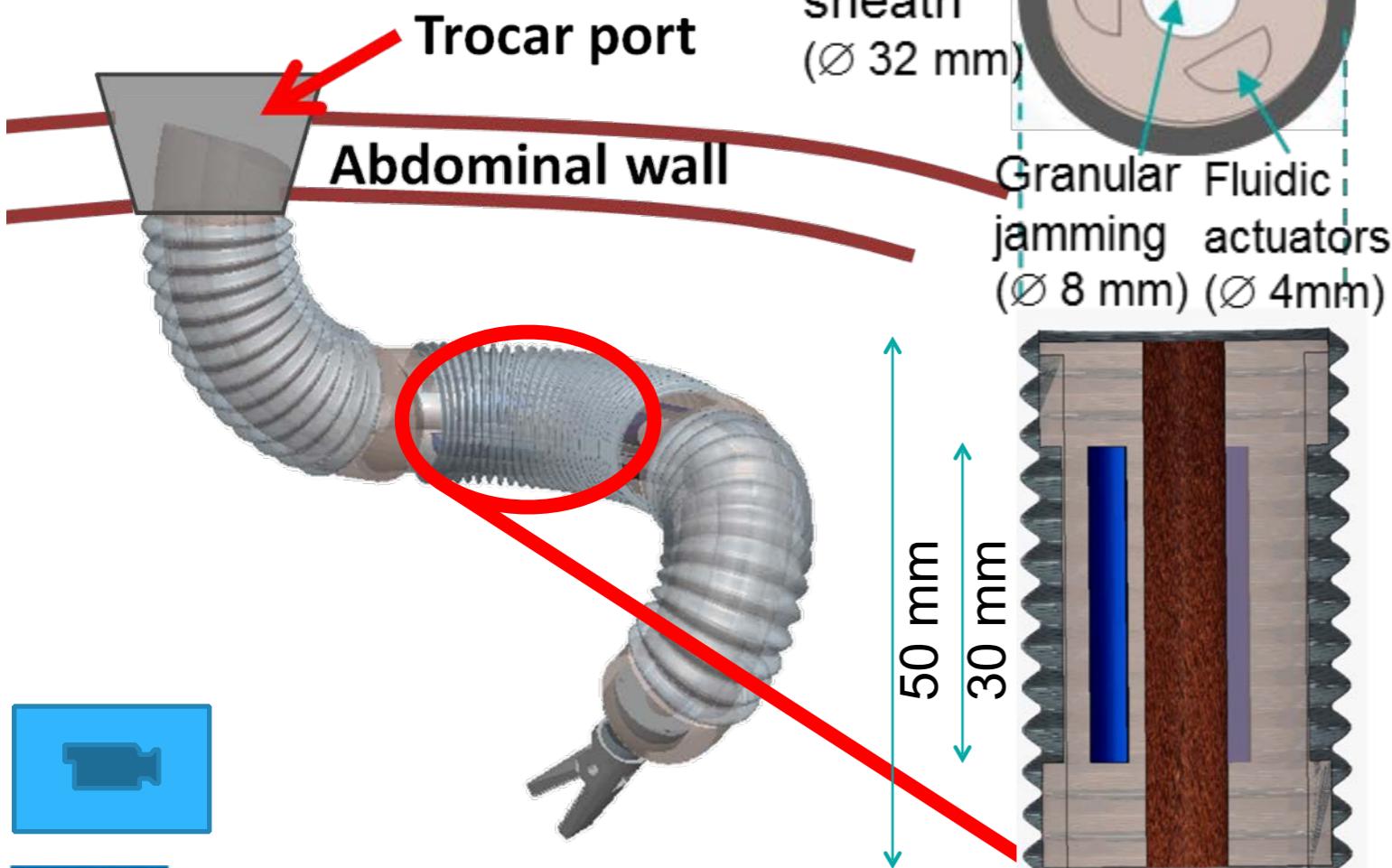


STIFF  
Flop

# The STIFF-FLOP robotic manipulator

STIFFness controllable Flexible and Learn-able manipulator for surgical OPerations

WWW.STIFF-FLOP.EU



THE BIOROBOTICS  
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Scuola Superiore  
Sant'Anna

Cianchetti M, Ranzani T, Gerboni G, De Falco I, Laschi C, Menciassi A (2013) "STIFF-FLOP Surgical Manipulator: mechanical design and experimental characterization of the single module", IEEE on Intelligent and Robotic Systems – IROS 2013, 3567-3581

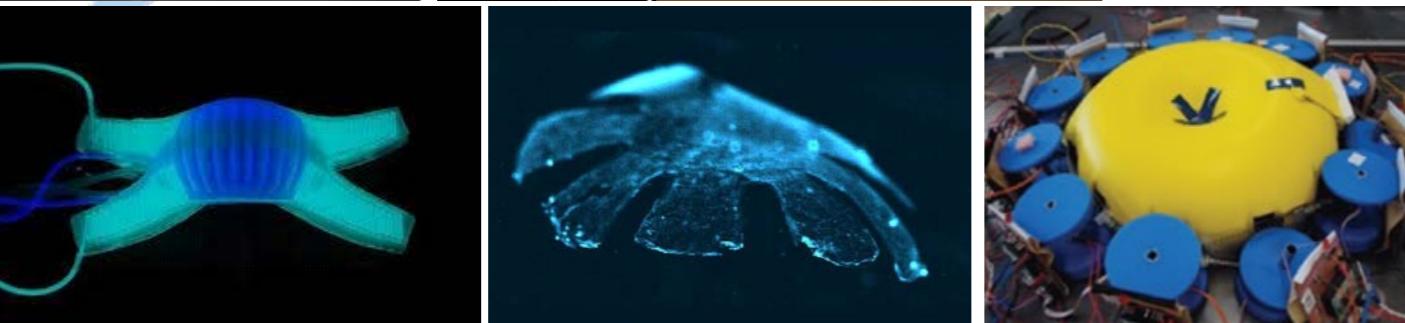
# Soft Robotics applications



Biomedical applications:  
endoscopy, assistance to  
elderly and disabled people

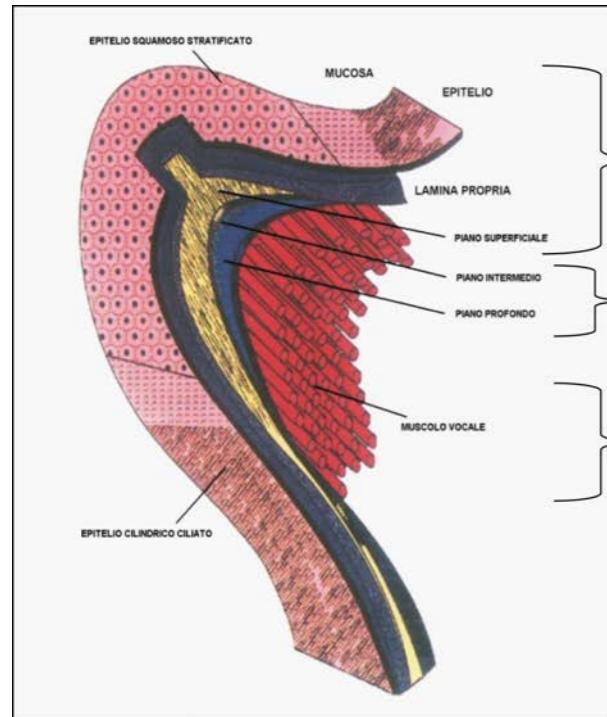
Realistic  
simulators of  
body parts

The initial challenge:  
can we build robots  
with soft materials?



# Realistic larynx simulator

Artificial biomimetic device mimicking the principal functions of a larynx by replicating its **main structures and material properties**.



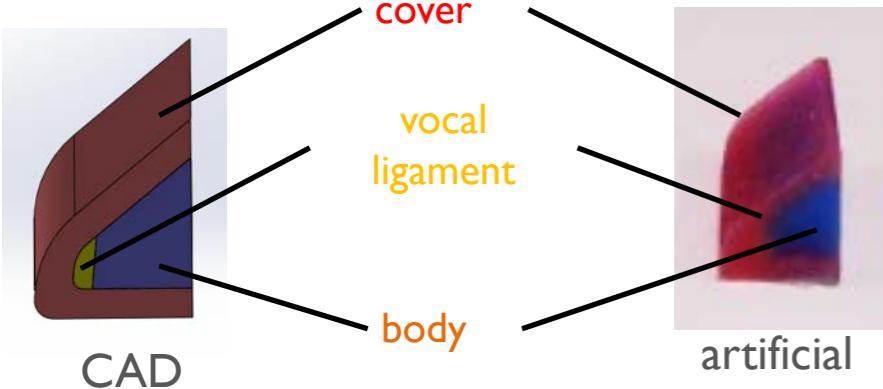
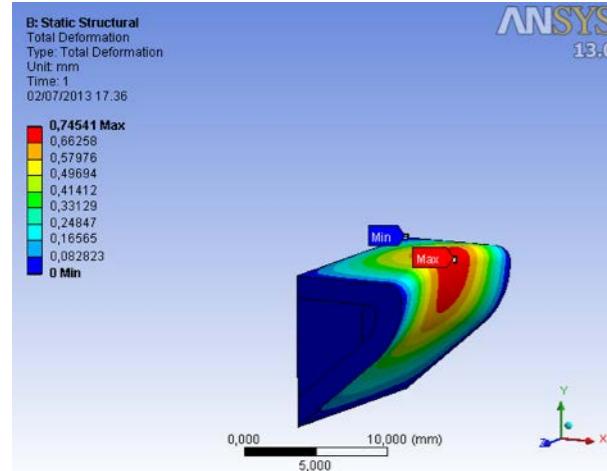
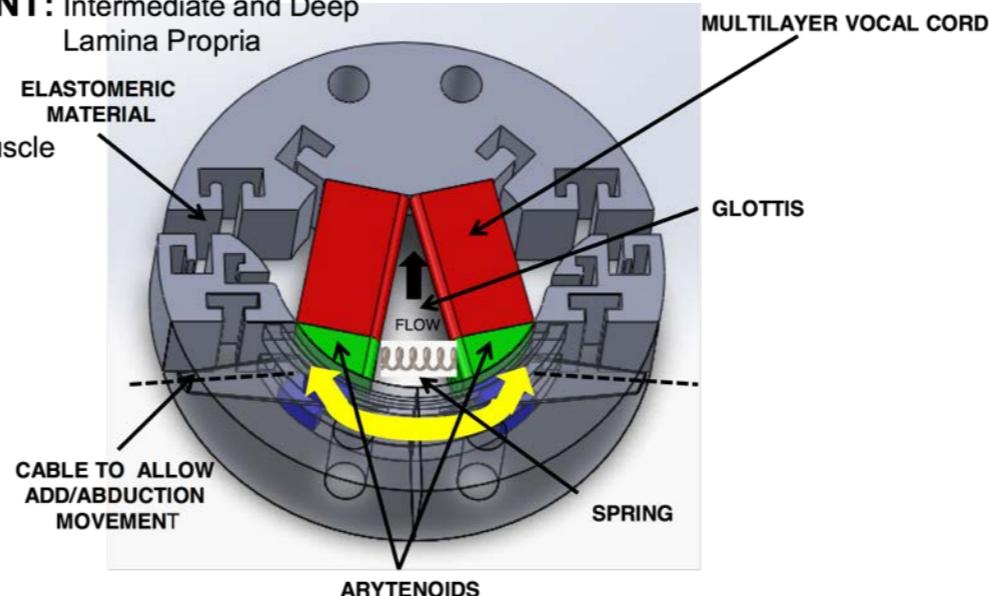
**Vocal cord**

*In collaboration with University of Pisa,  
Cisanello Hospital, Prof. Ursino*

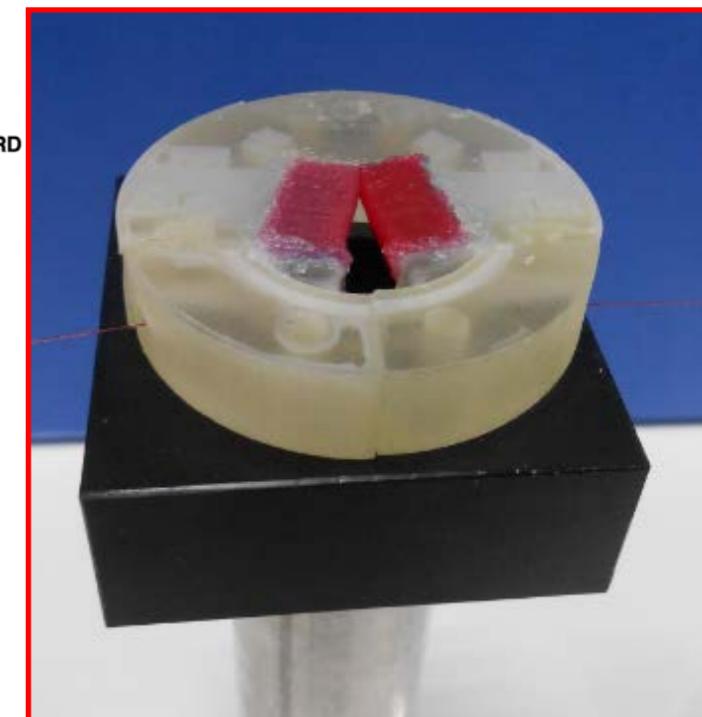
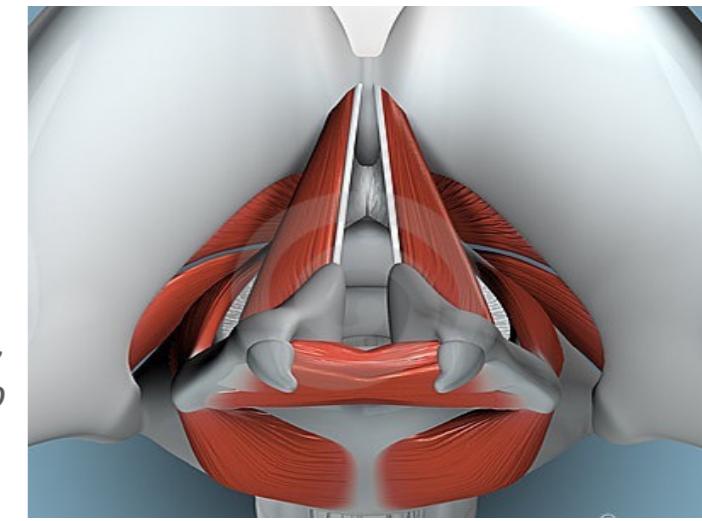
**COVER:** Epithelium and Superficial Lamina Propria

**VOCAL LIGAMENT:** Intermediate and Deep Lamina Propria

**BODY:** Vocal Muscle



Anisotropic materials



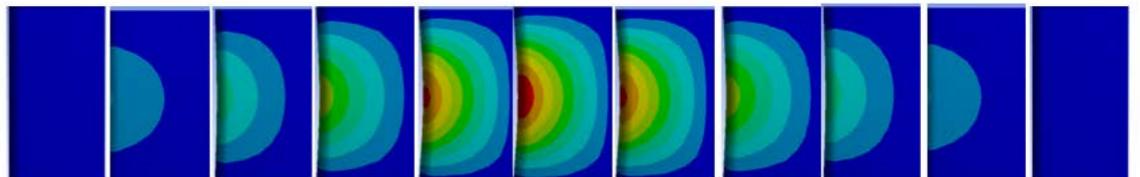
Biological model : Laryngostroboscopy



Full Larynx Configuration: High Speed Camera



Fluid Structure Interaction



# Soft Robotics applications



The initial challenge:  
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Biomedical applications:  
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Realistic  
simulators of  
body parts

Industrial project on  
soft actuators



# Industrial project on soft actuators



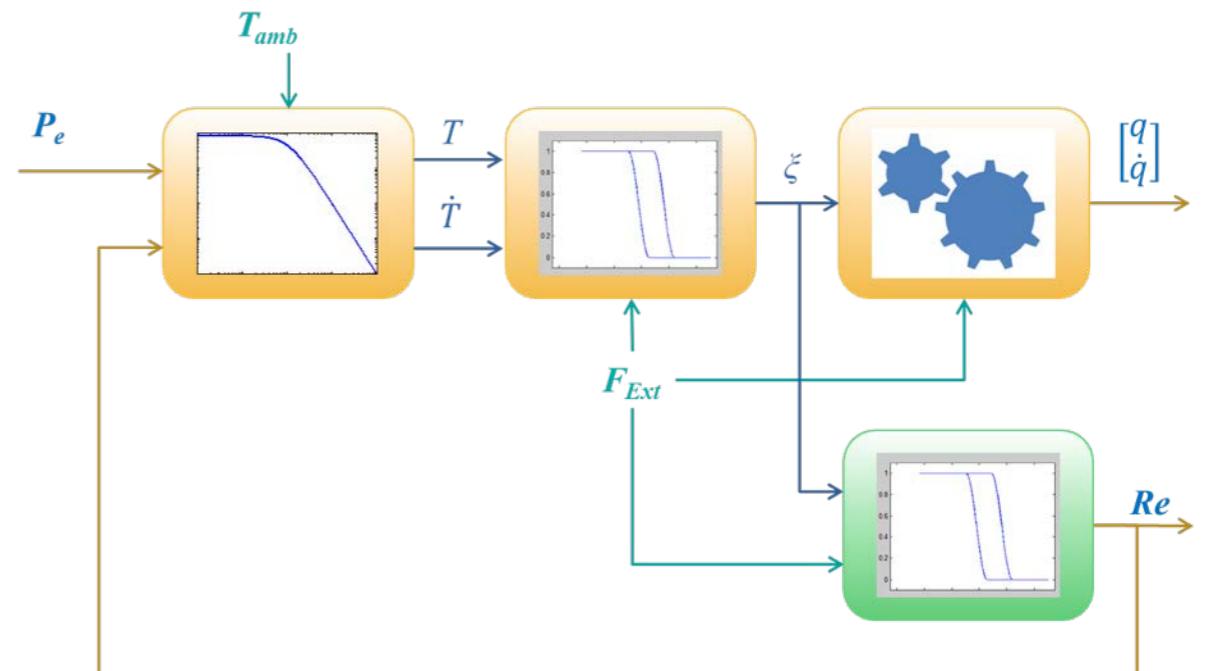
Leader in consumer electronics



Leader in SMA providing  
and manufacturing



The use of Shape Memory Alloys for actuation represents a technological opportunity for replacing the today's electro-mechanical actuators with simpler, more compact and reliable ones.



# Soft Robotics applications



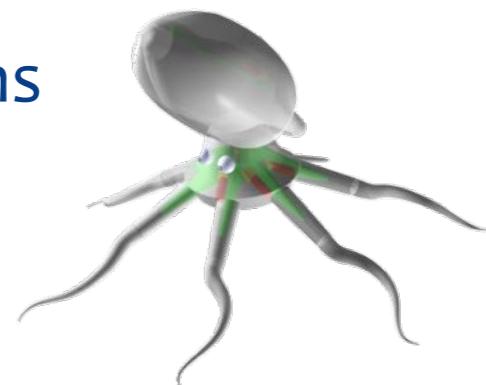
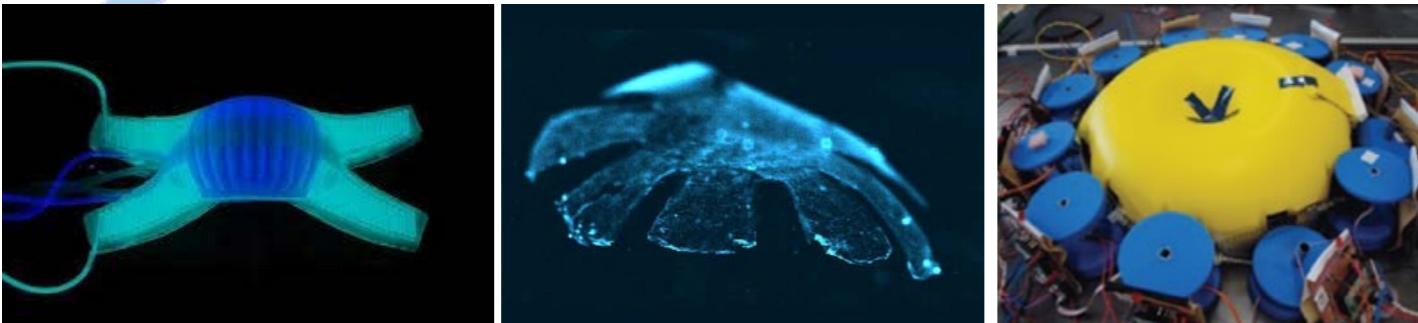
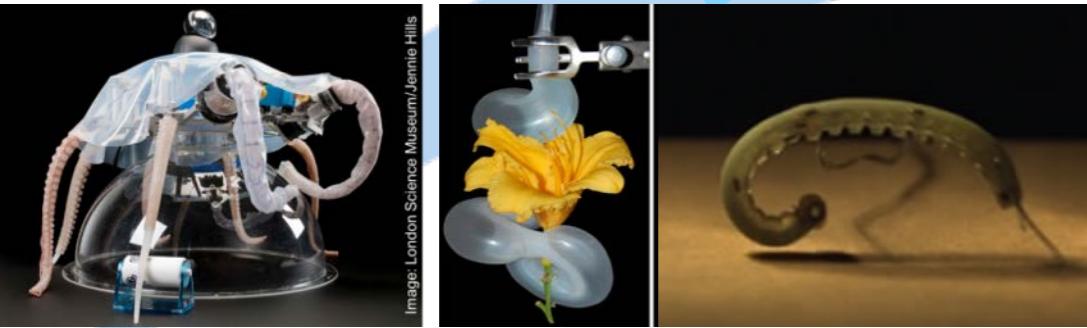
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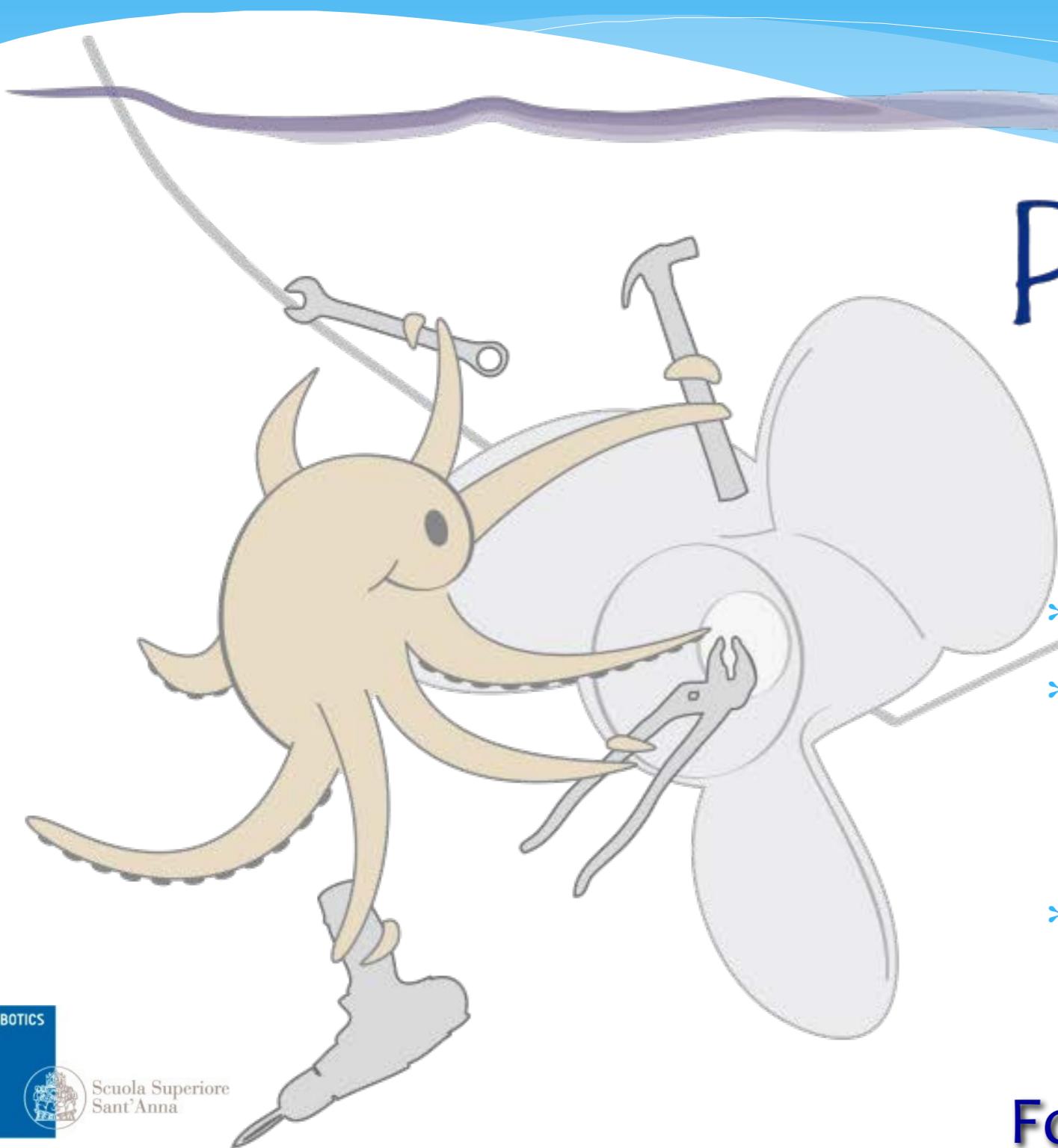
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simulators of  
body parts

Industrial project on  
soft actuators

Marine  
applications



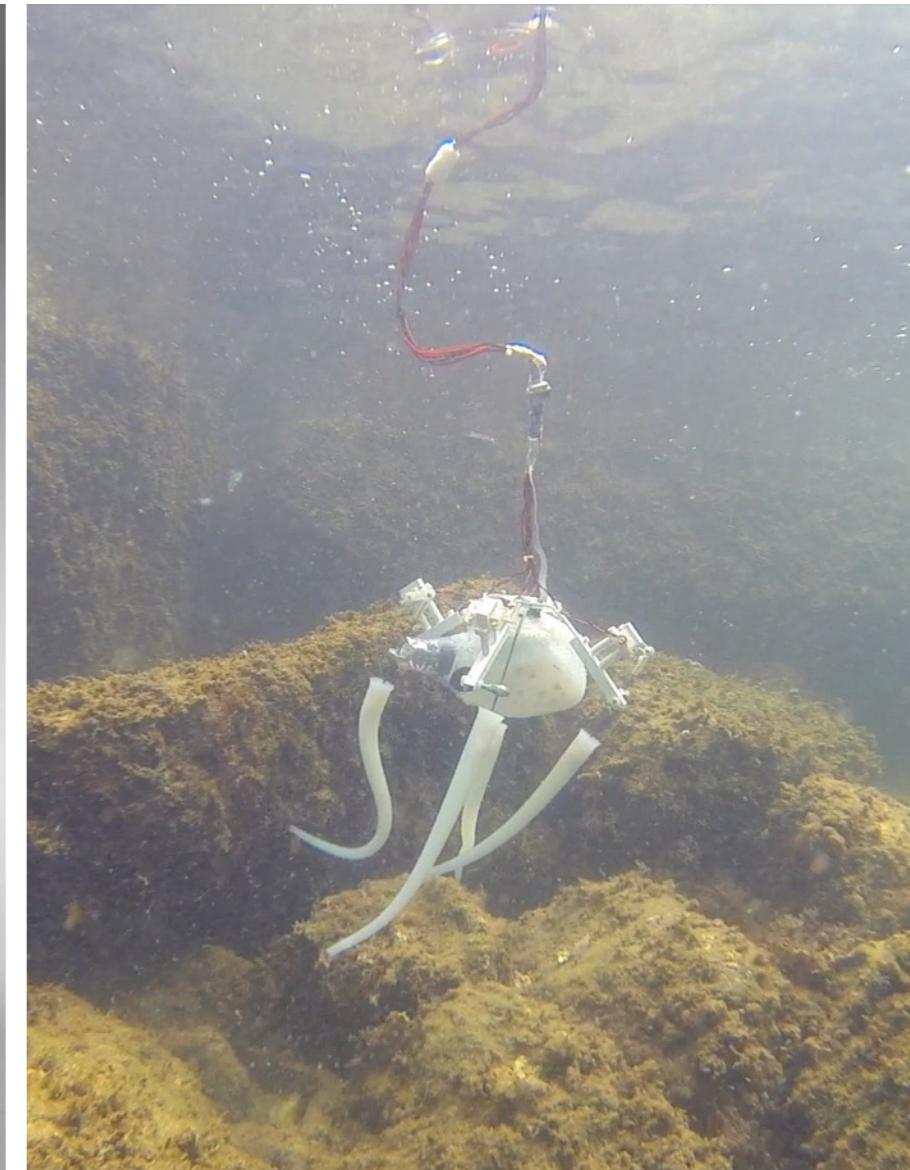
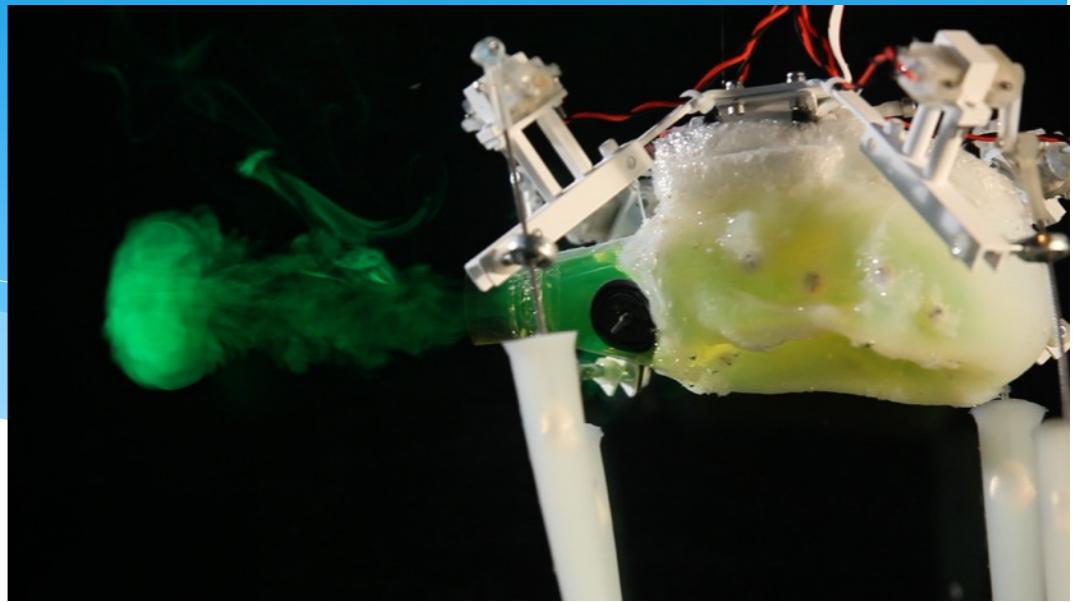
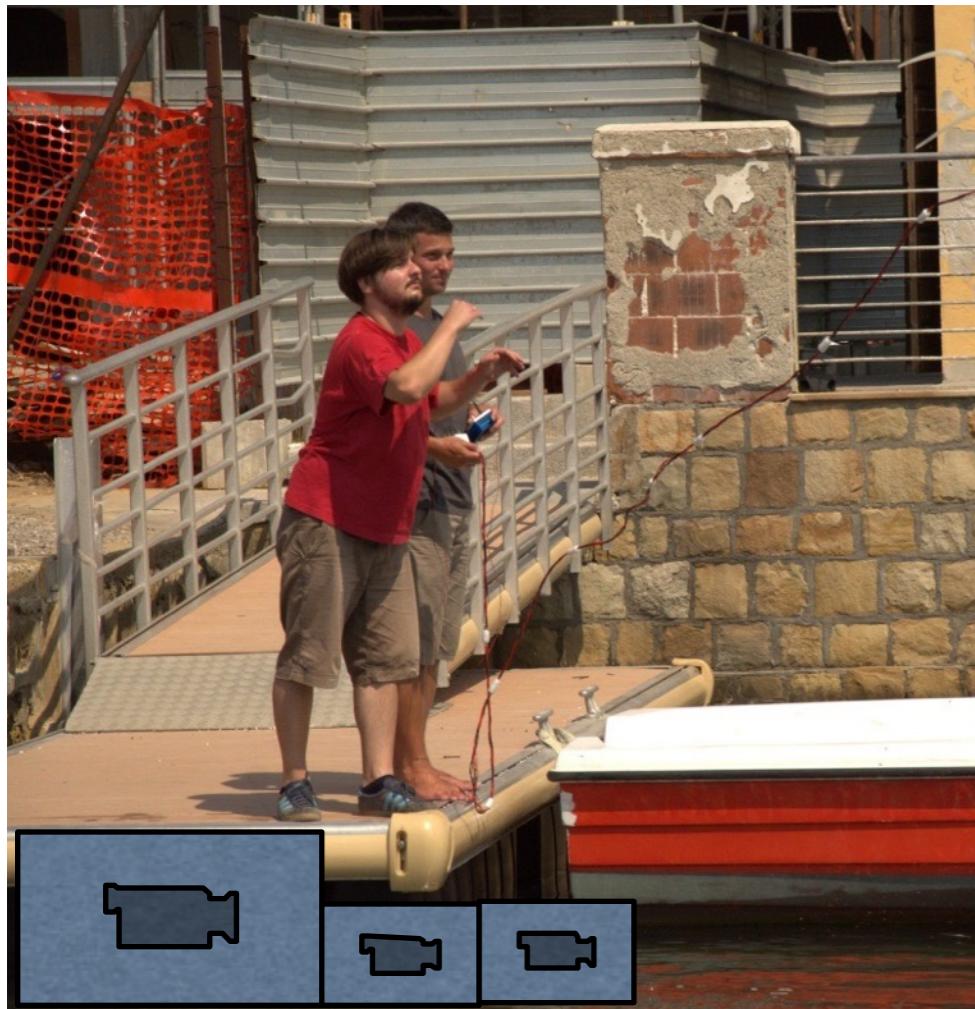
# Soft Robotics for marine applications



## PoseiDron<sub>e</sub>

- \* Marine ‘soft’ robot
- \* Can operate in contact with the sea bottom or the manufacts to explore
- \* Locomotion and grasping capabilities

# First PoseiDRONE prototype



F. Giorgio Serchi, et al, 2013 OCEANS

M. Giorelli et al, 2013 OCEANS

A. Arienti et al, 2013 OCEANS

M. Calisti et al, 2013 SoftRob

# Soft Robotics applications



The initial challenge:  
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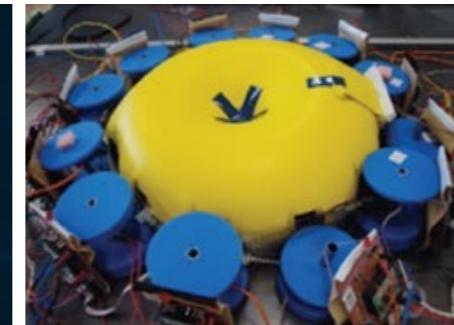
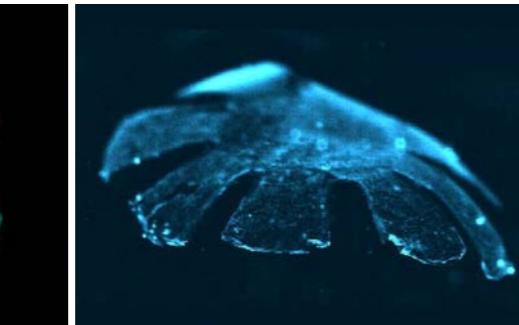
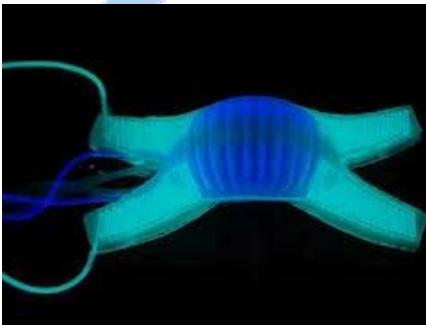
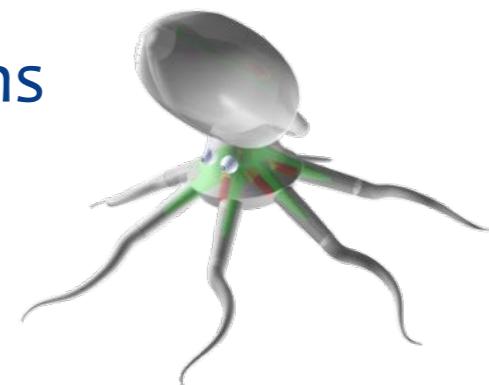
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soft actuators

Manufacturing,  
Agriculture

Marine  
applications



# SMART-E ITN (Marie Curie)

## Topic1: Dexterous, Soft and Compliant Robotics in Manufacturing

This topic area will address issues in development of end-effectors focusing on novel mechanical design that promotes **a new softer, more compliant philosophy**.

This will require research in mechanism design, actuation, control, sensing and cognition and this will form key research targets.

New research sub-programmes will investigate **specific issues on soft robotics and morphological computation based control** for manufacturing.

The SMART-E training network will prepare the next generation of leading Advanced Roboticians to ensure a Sustainable Manufacturing sector in Europe.



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**Salford**  
MANCHESTER

The University  
Of Sheffield

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Zurich<sup>UZH</sup>

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UNIVERSITY  
OF SALFORD  
Samia Nefti-Meziani

**USFD (UK)**  
UNIVERSITY  
OF SHEFFIELD  
Keith Ridgway

**UZH (CH)**  
UNIVERSITY  
OF ZURICH  
Rolf Pfeifer

**IIT (IT)**  
ITALIAN INSTITUTE  
OF TECHNOLOGY  
Darwin Caldwell



**SSSA (IT)**  
SCUOLA SUPERIORE  
SANT'ANNA  
Cecilia Laschi

TUM  
TECHNISCHE  
UNIVERSITÄT  
MÜNCHEN

**TUM (DE)**  
TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY  
OF MUNICH  
Matthias Althoff

**FESTO (DE)**  
FESTO DIDACTIC  
GMBH & CO. KG  
Dirk Pensky

**AIRBUS**

**AIRBUS (UK)**  
AIRBUS OPERATIONS  
LIMITED  
Mark Summers



# Soft Robotics applications



The initial challenge:  
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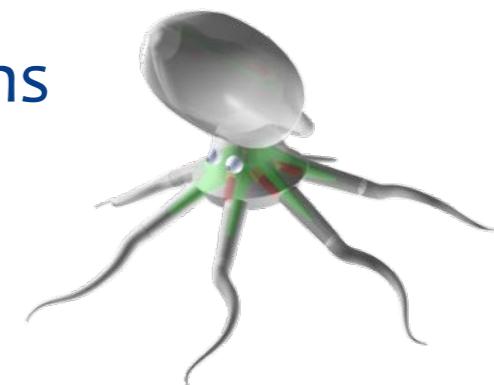
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applications



More to  
come!

# Outline

- \* A working **definition** of Soft Robotics
- \* The **need** for soft robots: from robotics, from one side, and AI, from another side
- \* The **challenges** of Soft Robotics, at the merge of many disciplines and technologies
- \* The **innovation potential** of Soft Robotics: fields of application
- \* **Perspectives** of Soft Robotics: increasingly rich state of the art, promising research and technological developments, growing and active community, coordination activities



# Soft Robotics worldwide

## Locomotion

Highly Deformable 3-D Printed Soft Robot Generating Inchting and Crawling Locomotions with Variable Friction Legs



Takuya UMEDACHI<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>, Vikas Vishesh<sup>1</sup> and Barry A. Trimmer<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Biology, Tufts University

<sup>3</sup>Department of Science, Hiroshima University

<sup>4</sup>JST CREST, <sup>4</sup>Japan Society for the Promotion of Science



Umedachi et al., IROS, 2013



Seok et al., ICRA, 2010



Majidi et al., Int. J. Robotics Research, 2013,



Lin et al., Bioinsp. & Biomim., 2011



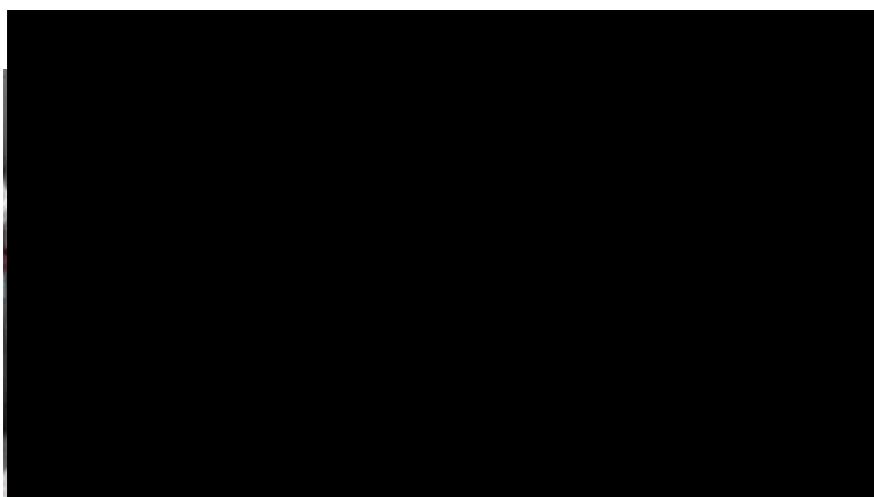
Steltz et al., IROS, 2009



Marchese et al., Soft Robotics, 2014

# Soft Robotics worldwide

## Manipulation



Deimel et al., ICRA, 2013



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INSTITUTE

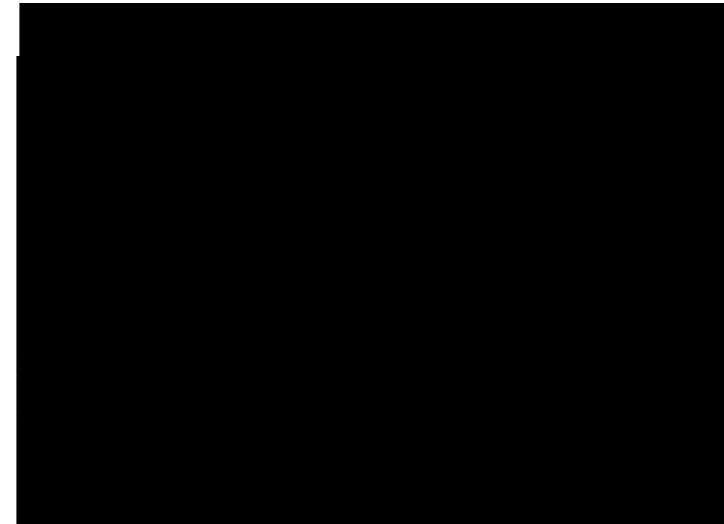


Scuola Superiore  
Sant'Anna

Brown et al., PNAS, 2010



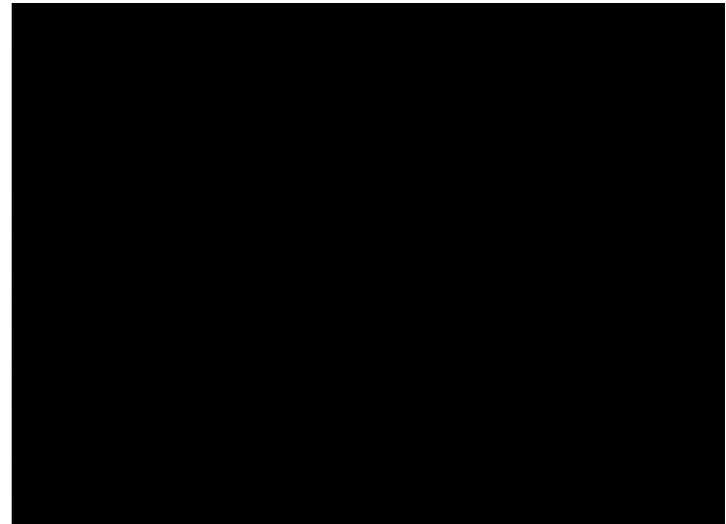
Suzumori, J. Robotics & Mechatronics,  
1993



Martinez et al., Advanced Materials,  
2013

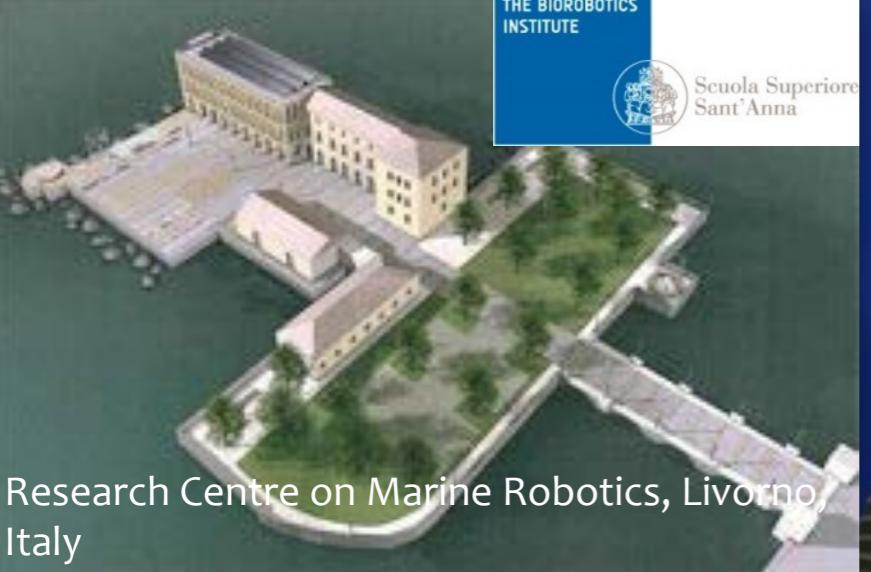


Shepherd et al., PNAS, 2011



Cheng et al., ICRA, 2012

# Cecilia&friends (non exhaustive list)



# How to quantify?

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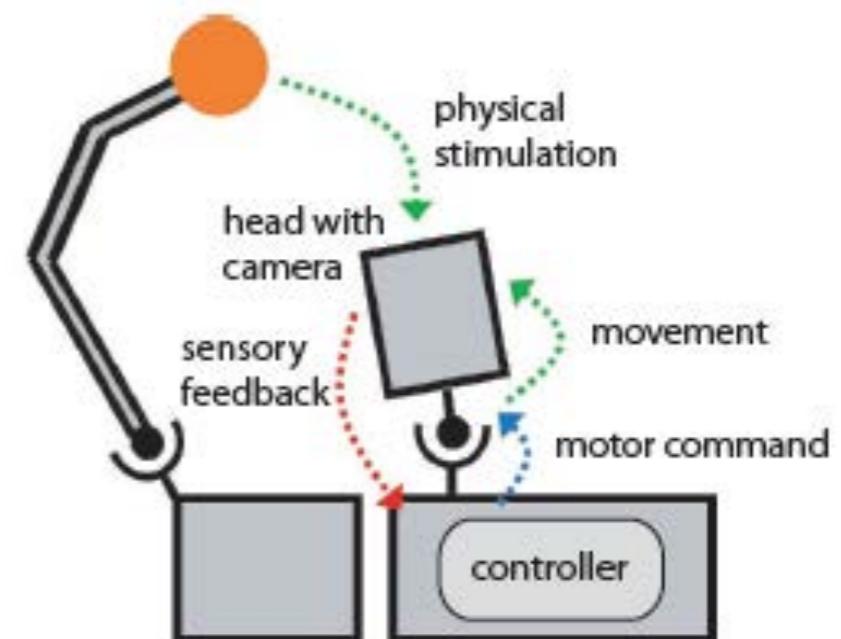
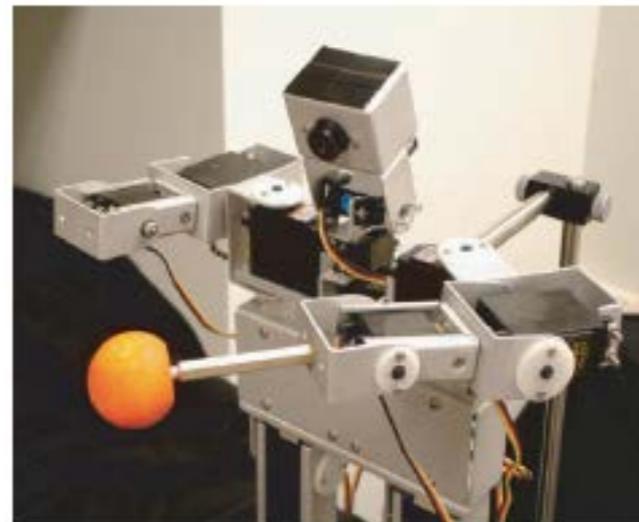
# Information self-structuring

Experiments:

Lungarella and Sporns, 2006

Mapping information flow  
in sensorimotor networks

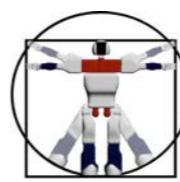
PLoS Computational Biology



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Zurich<sup>UZH</sup>

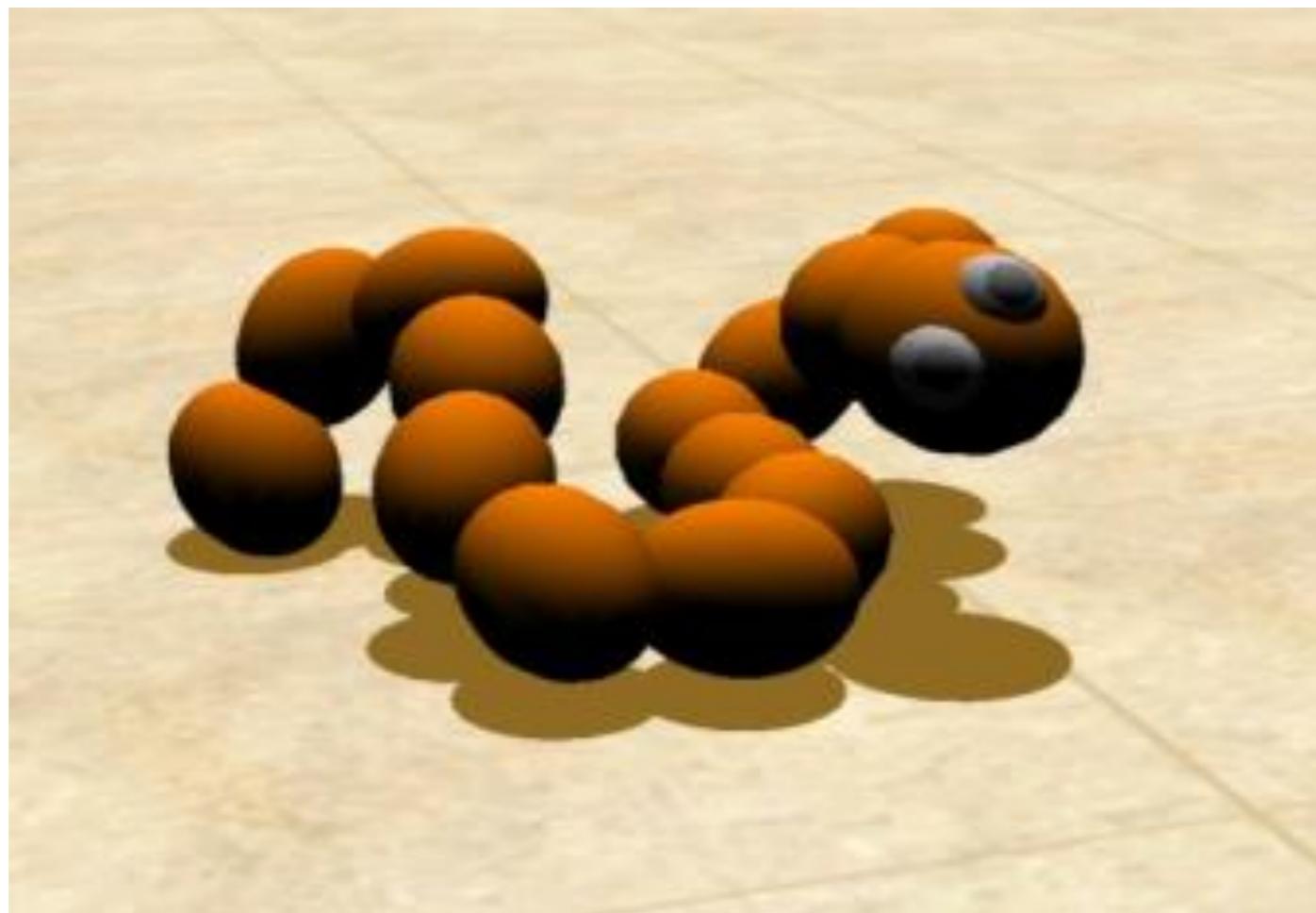


ai lab



# Snakebot

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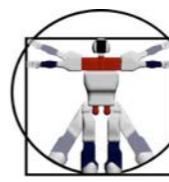
see: Tanev et. al, IEEE TRO, 2005



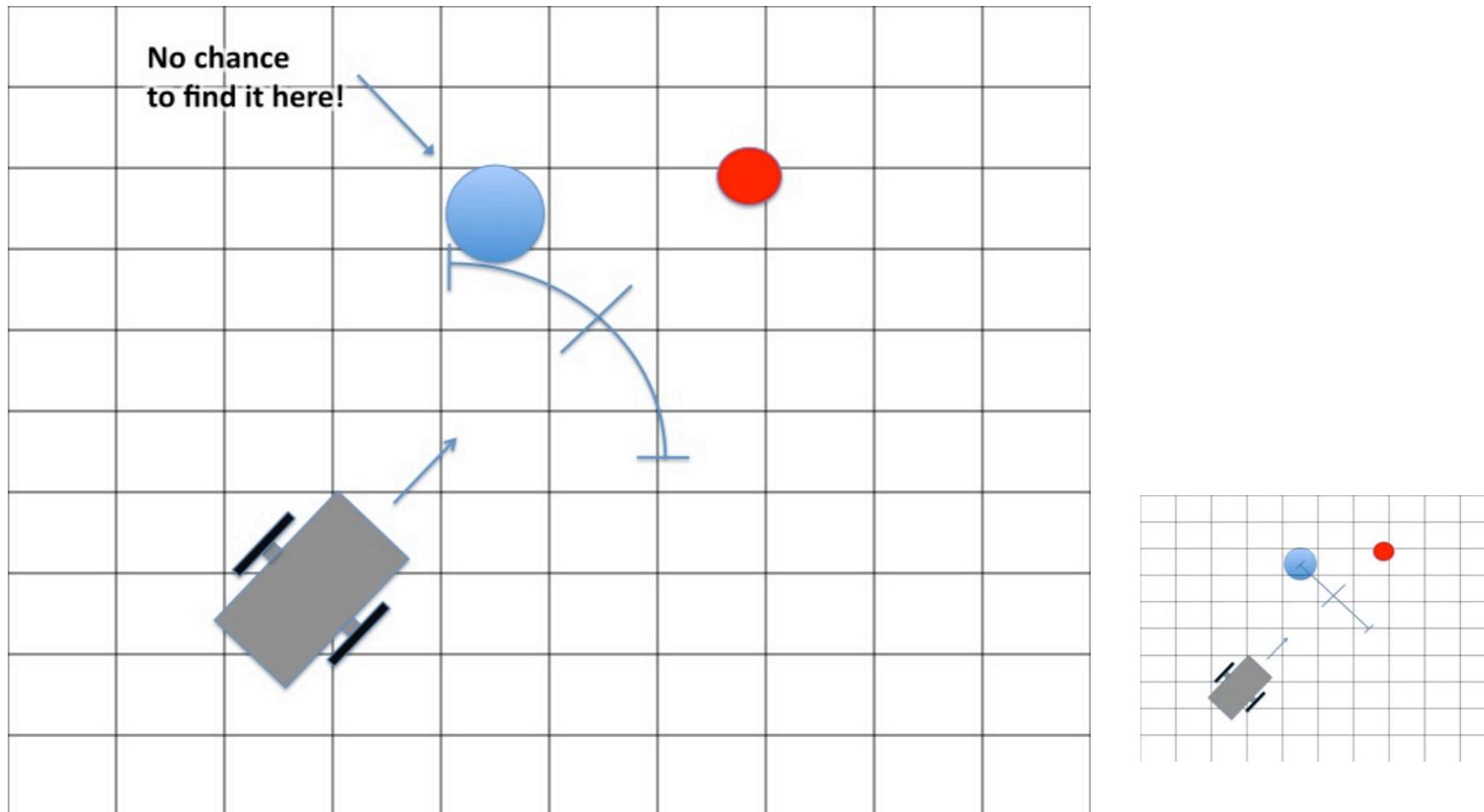
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# Maybe not GOF Euclidean space? :-)



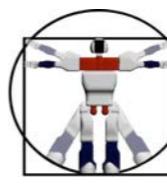
see: Bonsignorio, Artificial Life, 2013



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# Next lecture: Cognition and embodiment

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- Check chapters 6 and 7 in  
“How the body ...”



# End of lecture 5

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**Thank you for your attention!**

**stay tuned for Lecture 6**

**“Cognition and embodiment”**

