OPTIMAL PATH PLANNING FOR A DYNAMIC PLATFORM

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Abstract: This paper presents a complete modelling, singularity characterization and path planning design for a newly developed 3 legs 6 degree-of-freedoms (DOFs) parallel manipulator. In the presented architecture, the base platform has three linear slideways actuated respectively by a linear DC motor, where each flexible vertical link connecting the upper and base platforms is actuated by an inductive AC servo motor. Special emphasis is put on characterizing the platform singularity characterization and singularity avoidance of the moving platform path planning based on DNA algorithms. A new path planning scheme is proposed which uses a DNA search algorithm, whose coding technique speeds up the execution of DNA search, for fast path generation on the available workspace. Copyright © 2005 IFAC

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Stewart platform is an example of a parallel connection robot manipulator which was obtained from generalization of the mechanism originally proposed by Stewart (Stewart, 1965). Each leg is connected to the base by a two degree-of-freedom (DOF) universal joint and connected to the moving platform by 3-DOF spherical joints (Fichter, 1986).

There has been many research topics concerning Stewart platforms were presented which included platform construction, singularity and working space determination, forward and inverse kinematic solutions, dynamic forces computation, motion control, and practical applications (Raghavan, 1993; Ceccarelli, 1997; Wang, et al., 1997, Ryu, et al., 2001; Honegger, et al., 1997). Recently, great interests in the design of spatial multiple-DOF parallel manipulators for specific purposes were extensively developed (Ceccarelli, 1997; Wang, et al., 1997, Ryu, et al., 2001).

In this paper, we present the modeling and analysis of a new 6-DOF platform manipulator which has three linear slideways, each actuated by a linear DC motor, where each flexible vertical link connecting the upper and base platforms is actuated by an inductive AC servo motor.

Genetic algorithms (GAs) and evolutionary algorithms (EAs) have been widely applied for system optimization and industrial applications in recent years. GAs and EAs, DNA computing methods, pioneered by Adleman (1998) who showed the potential of using bio-molecules for effectively solving computational problems, have recently captured more and more attention (Garzon, et al., 1999) since DNA sequences encode plentiful genetic information. Advantages of DNA computing are massive parallelism and enormous information storage capability. These benefits allow a large problem space that can be reached in almost limited time. In (Kiguchi, et al., 2001), the planar trajectory planning of mobile robots was addressed using Watson-Crick pairing. In (Ding, et al., 2000), the authors proposed a DNA genetic method to design the generalized membership-type Takagi-Sugeno fuzzy control system and applied it to robot motion control.

In the proposed approach, the search space is divided into several slices in which less blocks of every slices
correspond to the areas containing loosely dense singularities and vice versa. The shortest path for singularities avoidance in the search space is characterized with the DNA evolutionary process. The proposed approach is verified by checking a variety of scenarios of the path planning problem.

2. PLATFORM KINEMATICS

2.1 Coordinates Transformation

The parallel manipulator under consideration consists of a lower base platform, an upper platform, three flexible vertical links, and three actuating horizontal links. Each horizontal link is actuated by a synchronous linear motor, and each flexible vertical link is actuated by an inductive AC servo motor, see Fig. 1. Figure 2 shows the top view of the upper (moving) and base platforms. In Fig. 2, \( P_i \) \( (i = 1,2,3) \) denote the position vectors of the joint points between the three links and the moving platform, which are concentric joint points with respect to the upper platform coordinate frame \( \{ P \} \). \( B_i \) \( (i = 1,2,3) \) denote the position vectors of the joint points on the base platform with respect to the base platform coordinate frame \( \{ B \} \).

We denote the Cartesian coordinate vector \( \mathbf{x} = [\mathbf{p}^{T}, \mathbf{q}^{T}] \) where \( \mathbf{p} = [x \ y \ z]^{T} \) and \( \mathbf{q} = [\mathbf{q}^{T}, \mathbf{q}^{T}] \) denotes the position and orientation of the moving platform’s mass center respectively, the joint coordinate vector \( \mathbf{q} = [l_1 \ l_2 \ l_3 \ d_1 \ d_2 \ d_3]^{T} \), where \( l_i \) is the length of the \( i \)-th vertical link, and \( d_i \) is the distance between the \( i \)-th joint and the starting position of the slide way on the base platform.

The coordinate transformation from the coordinate system \( \{ p \} \) with respect to the inertial coordinate system \( \{ q \} \) is given by

\[
R = \begin{bmatrix}
\cos \theta \cos \phi & \cos \theta \sin \phi & -\sin \theta \\
\sin \phi \sin \theta \sin \psi + \cos \phi \cos \psi & \sin \phi \cos \theta \sin \psi + \cos \phi \cos \psi & -\sin \phi \cos \psi \\
-\sin \phi \cos \theta \sin \psi + \cos \phi \cos \psi & -\sin \phi \cos \theta \cos \psi + \cos \phi \sin \psi & \sin \phi \cos \psi
\end{bmatrix}
\]  

(1)

2.2 Inverse Kinematics

For the base platform, the coordinates of the hexagon terminal points shown in Fig. 2 are

\[
\begin{align*}
BB_a &= \left( \frac{2}{3} B \cdot 1 \cdot 0 \right), & BB_b &= \left( \frac{2}{3} B \cdot 1 \cdot k \cdot 0 \right) \\
BB_c &= \left( \frac{2}{3} B \cdot k \cdot 0 \right), & BB_d &= \left( \frac{2}{3} B \cdot k \cdot \frac{\pi}{6} \cdot k \cdot 0 \right) \\
BB_e &= \left( \frac{2}{3} B \cdot -k \cdot \frac{\pi}{6} \cdot k \cdot 0 \right) & BB_f &= \left( \frac{2}{3} B \cdot -k \cdot 0 \right)
\end{align*}
\]

where \( B \) is the height of the equilateral triangular forming within the base plate, \( k \) is the half length from \( BB_a \) to \( BB_b \) with \( k_s = k \sin \frac{\pi}{6} \) and \( k_e = k \cos \frac{\pi}{6} \).

For simplicity, this can be represented in a compact form:

\[
L_i = T_i + R^{T} P_i - B_i, i = 1,2,3
\]  

(2)

where \( T_i \) denotes the origin’s line vector of frame \( \{ P \} \) with respect to frame \( \{ B \} \). Considering the relative position between the joint of the upper platform and linear motor’s translator on the base platform illustrated

\[
B_i = B_{ai} - B_{bi} B_i + B_{bi} B_{ai} - B_{ai} B_{bi}, i = 1,2,3
\]  

(3)

where \( B_{ai} = [B_{ai}, 0]^{T} \) and \( B_{bi} = [B_{bi}, 0]^{T} \) and we have the following constraints:

\[
(B_{ai} - B_{bi}) L_i = 0, i = 1,2,3
\]  

(4)

Combining (3) and (4) \( B_i \) can be solved for the motors’ translators as

\[
B_i = \left( B_{ai} - B_{bi} \right) P_i + \left( P_i - C \right) \left( B_{ai} - B_{bi} \right)
\]  

(5)

where

\[
A = B_{ai} - B_{bi}, C = \frac{B_{ai} B_{bi} - B_{bi} B_{ai}}{B_{ai} - B_{bi}}
\]

In summary, constraint equations of the links are characterized by

\[
\Phi_i = \Phi_i \left( P_i, -B_i \right) \left( P_i, -B_i \right) - l_i = 0, i = 1,2,3
\]  

(6)

\[
\Phi_i = \Phi_i \left( P_i, -B_i \right) d_k = 0, i = 4,5,6, k = i - 3
\]  

(7)

where \( d_k \) is the unit vector of the linear motor’s slide way.

Next, attention is turned to the link frames \( \{ i, j, k \} \) \( i = 1,2,3 \). The unit vectors of the link coordinate \( \{ ixy \} \) are defined as

\[
i_i = \frac{L_i}{|L_i|} = i_x i + i_y j + i_z k
\]  

(8)

\[
\hat{j}_i = i_x \times (-k)
\]  

(9)

\[
k_i = i_x j + i_y j + i_z k
\]  

(10)

The coordinate transformation matrix from frame \( \{ B \} \) to frame \( \{ i \} \) is the transpose of \( R_i \):

\[
R_i = R_i^{T} = \begin{bmatrix}
i_x & i_y & i_z \\
k_x & k_y & k_z
\end{bmatrix}
\]  

(11)

We first rotate frame \( \{ B \} \) about \( \hat{Z} \)-axis by an angle \( \phi \) to get frame \( \{ B' \} \), then rotate \( \{ B' \} \) about \( \hat{Y} \)-axis by an angle \( \theta \) to get frame \( \{ B'' \} \) and finally rotate \( \{ B'' \} \) about \( Z'' \)-axis by an angle \( \psi \) to get frame \( \{ i \} \).

The sequence gives a transformation matrix as follows

\[
R = R_{y} R_{x} R_{z} = \begin{bmatrix}
\cos \phi \cos \theta \cos \psi - \sin \phi \sin \psi + \cos \phi \cos \psi \\
\cos \phi \sin \theta \cos \psi + \sin \phi \cos \psi \\
-\sin \phi \cos \theta \cos \psi + \cos \phi \cos \psi
\end{bmatrix}
\]  

(12)
Combining (11) and (12), the corresponding Euler angles of the \( i \) th link can be obtained as
\[
\phi = \tan^{-1} \left( \frac{k_i}{k_{i+1}} \right) \\
\theta_i = \tan^{-1} \left( \frac{k_i \cos \phi + k_i \sin \phi}{k_{i+1}} \right) \\
\psi_i = \tan^{-1} \left( \frac{-j_i \sin \phi + j_i \cos \phi}{-j_{i+1} \sin \phi + j_{i+1} \cos \phi} \right) \\
(13)
\]
Since the vertical link is orthogonal to the horizontal link for this specific architecture, the angle \( \phi \) can be determined for the given sideways. Also, all \( \psi_i \) are zeros. The angular velocity \( \omega_i \) expressed by Euler angles can then be represented with respect to link frame \( \{i\} \) as
\[
\omega_i = \dot{\phi} k + \dot{\theta}_i f + \dot{\psi}_i k' = \begin{bmatrix}
-\dot{\phi} \psi_i & \dot{\psi}_i & \dot{\phi} \\
\dot{\phi} \psi_i & \dot{\phi} & \dot{\theta}_i \\
\dot{\theta}_i & -\dot{\phi} & \dot{\psi}_i
\end{bmatrix}
(14)
\]
The angular acceleration \( \alpha_i \) of the \( i \) th link can also be obtained as
\[
\alpha_i = \begin{bmatrix}
-\dot{\dot{\phi}} \psi_i & \ddot{\psi}_i & \dot{\phi} \\
\dot{\phi} \psi_i & -\dot{\dot{\phi}} & \ddot{\theta}_i \\
\ddot{\theta}_i & \dot{\dot{\phi}} & -\dot{\dot{\psi}}_i
\end{bmatrix} + \begin{bmatrix}
\dot{\phi} \dot{\psi}_i & \phi \dot{\psi}_i & \dot{\phi} \dot{\theta}_i \\
\dot{\phi} \dot{\psi}_i & \dot{\phi} & \psi_i \\
\dot{\phi} \dot{\theta}_i & -\psi_i & \dot{\phi}
\end{bmatrix}
(15)
\]
Similarly, the angular velocity \( \omega_p \) can be represented as
\[
\omega_p = \dot{\phi}_p k + \dot{\theta}_p f + \dot{\psi}_p k' = \begin{bmatrix}
-\dot{\phi}_p \psi_p & \dot{\psi}_p & \dot{\phi}_p \\
\dot{\phi}_p \psi_p & \dot{\phi}_p & \dot{\theta}_p \\
\dot{\theta}_p & -\dot{\phi}_p & \dot{\psi}_p
\end{bmatrix}
(16)
\]
The angular acceleration \( \alpha_p \) can be obtained straightforward as
\[
\alpha_p = \begin{bmatrix}
-\dot{\dot{\phi}} \psi_p & \ddot{\psi}_p & \dot{\phi}_p \\
\dot{\phi}_p \psi_p & -\dot{\dot{\phi}} & \ddot{\theta}_p \\
\ddot{\theta}_p & \dot{\dot{\phi}} & -\dot{\dot{\psi}}_p
\end{bmatrix} + \begin{bmatrix}
\dot{\phi}_p \dot{\psi}_p & \phi \dot{\psi}_p & \dot{\phi}_p \dot{\theta}_p \\
\dot{\phi}_p \dot{\psi}_p & \dot{\phi}_p & \psi_p \\
\dot{\phi}_p \dot{\theta}_p & -\psi_p & \dot{\phi}_p
\end{bmatrix}
(17)
\]
3. DYNAMICS ANALYSIS
3.1 Link Dynamics
Let us now focus on the \( i \) th link’s mass center \( O_i \). Each link is placed along the \( x_i \) axis; therefore, its inertia tensor about \( X_i, Y_i \) and \( Z_i \) is a diagonal matrix with diagonal elements \( I_{x_i}, I_{y_i}, \) and \( I_{z_i} \). The angular momentum of the \( i \) th link is
\[
H_i = I_{x_i} \omega_{x_i} i + I_{y_i} \omega_{y_i} j + I_{z_i} \omega_{z_i} k
(18)
\]
\[
\dot{H}_i = (\dot{H}_i)_{xyz} \times \alpha_i \times H_i
(19)
\]
It follows from Fig. 3 that the torque about the link’s mass center \( O_i \) is given by
\[
\sum M_{rin} = r_{rin} \times F_{rin} + r_{in} \times F_n
(20)
\]
where \( r_{rin} \) is the vector from \( O_i \) to \( P_i \) with respect to the link frame \( \{i\} \) and \( r_{in} \) is the vector from \( O_i \) to \( B_i \) with respect to frame \( \{i\} \).

3.2 Moving Platform Dynamics
Only the force terms \( F_{p_i} \) and \( F_{n} \) were obtained in the equations of link motion, so to calculate the force terms \( F_{pin} \) and \( F_{p} \) the moving platform dynamics should be taken into consideration.

The angular momentum of the moving platform is described by
\[
\mathbf{H}_p = I_{ps} \omega_{ps} i_p + I_{ps} \omega_{ps} j_p + I_{ps} \omega_{ps} k_p
(23)
\]
where \( I_{ps}, I_{po}, \) and \( I_{pp} \) are the mass moments of inertia of the upper platform about \( X, Y \) and \( Z \) axes of frame \( \{P\} \) respectively. The corresponding angular momentum change is
\[
\dot{\mathbf{H}}_p = (\dot{\mathbf{H}}_p)_{xyz} \times \alpha_x \times \mathbf{H}_p
(24)
\]
The total torque acting on the moving platform mass center \( O_p \) is given by
\[
\sum M_{rin} = \sum_{i=1}^{3} F_{pin} \times \mathbf{r}_{pin} + \sum_{i=1}^{3} F_{p} \times \mathbf{r}_{pin}
(25)
\]
where \( r_{pin} = \mathbf{r}_{pin} \times F_{pin} \). \( F_{pin} \) can be expressed in coordinate frame \( \{i\} \) by the rotation matrix \( \mathbf{R}_p \). From Fig. 5 we have the force equation acting on \( O_p \):
\[
-W_p + \sum_{i=1}^{3} \mathbf{R}_p \times F_{pin} + \mathbf{r}_n \times F_n = m_p \mathbf{a}_p
(26)
\]
where \( W_p = [0 \ 0 \ W_n]^T \), with \( W_n \) and \( m_p \) being, respectively, the weight and mass of the moving platform; and \( \mathbf{a}_p \) denotes the acceleration of the moving platform. Furthermore, the actuating force on each vertical link can be calculated as follows
\[
F_{lin} = F_{pin} + \mathbf{R}_p \times W_n + m_n \mathbf{a}_n
(27)
\]
4. EXPERIMENTAL ARCHITECTURE
Optimal mechanism of the platform is designed by means of the Taguchi Method (Madhav, 1989) to maximize orientation of the moving platform under the constraint of the slide range of the translators of
5. SINGULARITY ANALYSIS BASED ON GA

The configuration singularity depends only on individual configuration. Based on the inverse kinematic equation, the angle change of the moving platform orientation can be tested when $z=1050$ mm. The maximal orientation angles of the presented platform are given by $\phi = 124$ deg, $\theta = 164$ deg, and $\psi = 74$ deg.

To proceed, we first determine the Jacobian matrix and then propose a genetic searching algorithm to find singular points. Differentiating (6) and (7) with respect to time $t$ gives

$$\frac{\partial \Phi}{\partial t} = \Phi \cdot \dot{X} + \Phi \cdot \dot{\theta} = 0, i = 1, \ldots, 6, j = 1, 2 \quad (28)$$

i.e.

$$J \dot{X} = \dot{q} \quad (29)$$

where $J = -\Phi^{-1} \Phi_x$.

5.1 Singularity Searching Method

A GA-based approach proposed to search singular points over the available workspace is addressed. For this method to operate, we first partition the workspace into several tiny zones.

**Coding and decoding:** GAs work with a population of chromosomes or strings. In the proposed GA, the strings for the coordinate parameters expanded by $(x, y, z, \phi, \theta, \psi)$ are formed by concatenating substrings, each of which is a binary coding of a parameter of the search space expressed by

$$s_r = s_{r1}s_{r2}s_{r3}s_{r4}s_{r5}s_{rb} \quad (30)$$

Using the binary coding method, every element, $\theta_i$, of the parameter vector $\theta = [x \ y \ z \ \phi \ \theta \ \psi]^T$ is coded as a string of $l_k$ for the desired resolution $R_k$:

$$R_k = \frac{\theta_n - \theta_i}{2^{l_k - 1}}$$

A set $S$ of individuals, called a population, is expressed as:

$$S = \{s_1, s_2, \ldots, s_m\}$$

The decoding process is simply an inverse procedure of the coding process.

**Cost function:** The fitness evaluation function is a measure to evaluate the suitability of a chromosome. An appropriate cost function is defined by

$$S = |\det[J(x, y, z, \phi, \theta, \psi)]| \quad (31)$$

**Reproduction:** The chromosome of the current reproduction in each generation is reproduced in the next generation according to the reproduction probability $p_n = \frac{F_n}{\sum_{m=1}^{n} F_m}$.

**Crossover:** Two chromosomes in the mating pool are first selected randomly according to the crossover probability $p_c$ and their information are interchanged.

**Mutation:** Randomly alter a bit in the string, which assists in keeping delivery in the population. It is used to ensure that all points in the search space can be ultimately researched according to the mutation probability $p_m$.

6. PATH PLANNING AND SINGULARITY AVOIDANCE

Assume that the initial positions of the object and goal are specified. Furthermore, we characterize a minimal cuboid, with the width $x - \bar{x}$, the length $y - \bar{y}$, and the height $z - \bar{z}$, that can include the whole workspace inside it. The whole 3D workspace is then partitioned into $l$ equal slices each part equally portioned into $m \times n$ regions in 2D space. This yields the range of each sub-cuboid, with origin $(x_{ik}, y_{ik}, z_{ik})$, characterized by

$$Z_{ik} = \left[ x_{ik} - \delta x_{ik} \right], \left[ y_{ik} - \delta y_{ik} \right], \left[ z_{ik} - \delta z_{ik} \right],$$

$$i = 1, \ldots, l, j = 1, \ldots, m, k = 1, \ldots, n$$

where $\delta x_{ik} = \frac{x - x}{m}$, $\delta y_{ik} = \frac{y - y}{n}$, $\delta z_{ik} = \frac{z - z}{l}$.

**Fitness:** Suppose that $w$ is the number of singular areas existing on the $i$-th slice of the workspace, an appropriate fitness function is proposed as

$$F_i(x, y, z) = \sum_{j=1}^{w} \left( 1 - \frac{1}{n} \prod_{i=1}^{n} P_{\alpha} \right) \quad (32)$$

with

$$P_{\alpha} = \begin{cases} 1, & \text{if } d_j \geq 2r \\ 0, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

where $\alpha$ and $\beta$ are the weighting factors, which can be used to shape the path profile for the moving platform; and

$$d_j = \frac{|x_{ik} - \bar{x}| + |y_{ik} - \bar{y}| + |z_{ik} - \bar{z}|}{|y|}$$

$\epsilon$ is a small positive constant, and $d_j = \frac{x_{ik}^{\alpha} y_{ik}^{\beta}}{|y|}$.

7. DNA COMPUTING ALGORITHM

The concept of DNA computing algorithm uses chromosomes of DNA to illustrate specific optimization problems. The basic elements of biological DNA are nucleotides. Due to their different chemical structure, nucleotides can be
The optimal and virus operation is suggested and to determine whether a single or more base pairs are inserted into sequence. They can be used to expand or shrink chromosome sequences. See Figs. 8 and 9.

The use of virus and enzyme operations is closed related to the distribution of singularities and the optimal path in workspace. In the original equally portioned slices on the search space, the distances (i.e. \( d_{s} \) and \( d_{o} \)) between the reference path, programmed path and areas of singularity are calculated respectively. Define \( d_{s}^{\prime} = \frac{d_{s}}{d_{o}} \), see Fig 10. Furthermore, we define

\[
d_{s}^{\prime} = \frac{d_{s}}{d_{o}}, \quad d_{o}^{\prime} = \frac{d_{o}}{d_{s}}, \quad i = 1, \ldots, m
\]

The roulette wheel selection technique is applied with reference to \( d_{o}^{\prime} \) to determine whether an enzyme or a virus operation ought to be executed on each originally equally portioned slice. For a slice with a large \( d_{o}^{\prime} \), the virus operation is suggested which means that the obstacles may be close to the programmed path.

7. DEMONSTRATION AND VERIFICATION

Singularities of the 3-legs 6 degree-of-freedom platform distributed on six areas have been obtained previously. Suppose that coordinates of the known start and goal points were respectively given by \([-131.25, -118.125, 998.125] \) (mm) and \([131.25, 118.125, 1251.875] \) (mm). The optimal moving path was obtained by applying the proposed evolutionary method with the fitness function defined by (32) and the weighting factors \( \alpha \) and \( \beta \) being 1 and 0.01, respectively. The specific path planning was found after 1000 generations. Figure 11 shows the resulting path generation. From the path planning figures we found that the paths obtained were not smooth enough (the best solution should be close to the reference path while avoiding the singular zones) due to genetic drift.

Suppose that coordinates of the known start and goal points were respectively given by \([-112.5, -101.25, 1016.25] \) (mm) and \([150, 135, 1270]\) (mm). After specifying the singular region and start and goal positions, the genetic searching algorithm is activated in the path planner to generate via-points for a short and safe path to the goal.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This paper presents modeling, singularity characterization and optimal path planning design for a prototype 3-legs 6-DOF parallel manipulator. The issues of characterizing kinematic and dynamic models, workspace, singularity and path planning of the platform are presented. A novel process for searching the manipulator’s singularity based on the DNA algorithm is developed. A DNA-based path planning scheme is also proposed for navigation of the moving platform over the workspace while avoiding singularities.

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REFERENCES


Fig. 1 The experimental parallel manipulator

Fig. 2 Top view of the upper and base platforms

Fig. 3 Force and torque of the linear motor and link

Fig. 4 Relation between link and joint of the linear motor

Fig. 5 Force and torque on the upper platform

Fig. 6 Path computation in 3D space

Fig. 8 Virus operation

Fig. 9 Enzyme operation

Fig. 10 Definitions of $d_{up}$ and $d_{dp}$

Fig. 11 Path generation-I while avoiding the whole singular area (unit: 100 mm)