

# PROCCEDINGS

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# FACULTY OF COMPUTER SCIENCE AND AUTOMATION



# **COMPUTER SCIENCE MEETS AUTOMATION**

# **VOLUME I**

- **Session 1 Systems Engineering and Intelligent Systems**
- Session 2 Advances in Control Theory and Control Engineering
- Session 3 Optimisation and Management of Complex Systems and Networked Systems
- **Session 4 Intelligent Vehicles and Mobile Systems**
- **Session 5 Robotics and Motion Systems**



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#### Preface

Dear Participants,

Confronted with the ever-increasing complexity of technical processes and the growing demands on their efficiency, security and flexibility, the scientific world needs to establish new methods of engineering design and new methods of systems operation. The factors likely to affect the design of the smart systems of the future will doubtless include the following:

- As computational costs decrease, it will be possible to apply more complex algorithms, even in real time. These algorithms will take into account system nonlinearities or provide online optimisation of the system's performance.
- New fields of application will be addressed. Interest is now being expressed, beyond that in "classical" technical systems and processes, in environmental systems or medical and bioengineering applications.
- The boundaries between software and hardware design are being eroded. New design methods will include co-design of software and hardware and even of sensor and actuator components.
- Automation will not only replace human operators but will assist, support and supervise humans so that their work is safe and even more effective.
- Networked systems or swarms will be crucial, requiring improvement of the communication within them and study of how their behaviour can be made globally consistent.
- The issues of security and safety, not only during the operation of systems but also in the course of their design, will continue to increase in importance.

The title "Computer Science meets Automation", borne by the 52<sup>nd</sup> International Scientific Colloquium (IWK) at the Technische Universität Ilmenau, Germany, expresses the desire of scientists and engineers to rise to these challenges, cooperating closely on innovative methods in the two disciplines of computer science and automation.

The IWK has a long tradition going back as far as 1953. In the years before 1989, a major function of the colloquium was to bring together scientists from both sides of the Iron Curtain. Naturally, bonds were also deepened between the countries from the East. Today, the objective of the colloquium is still to bring researchers together. They come from the eastern and western member states of the European Union, and, indeed, from all over the world. All who wish to share their ideas on the points where "Computer Science meets Automation" are addressed by this colloquium at the Technische Universität Ilmenau.

All the University's Faculties have joined forces to ensure that nothing is left out. Control engineering, information science, cybernetics, communication technology and systems engineering – for all of these and their applications (ranging from biological systems to heavy engineering), the issues are being covered.

Together with all the organizers I should like to thank you for your contributions to the conference, ensuring, as they do, a most interesting colloquium programme of an interdisciplinary nature.

I am looking forward to an inspiring colloquium. It promises to be a fine platform for you to present your research, to address new concepts and to meet colleagues in Ilmenau.

In Sherte

Professor Peter Scharff Rector, TU Ilmenau

"L. Ummt

Professor Christoph Ament Head of Organisation

**Table of Contents** 

### CONTENTS

| 1 Systems Engineering and Intelligent Systems  | Page |
|--|------|
| A. Yu. Nedelina, W. Fengler<br>DIPLAN: Distributed Planner for Decision Support Systems  | 3    |
| O. Sokolov, M. Wagenknecht, U. Gocht<br>Multiagent Intelligent Diagnostics of Arising Faults   | 9    |
| V. Nissen<br>Management Applications of Fuzzy Conrol   | 15   |
| O. G. Rudenko, A. A. Bessonov, P. Otto<br>A Method for Information Coding in CMAC Networks   | 21   |
| Ye. Bodyanskiy, P. Otto, I. Pliss, N. Teslenko<br>Nonlinear process identification and modeling using general<br>regression neuro-fuzzy network                | 27   |
| Ye. Bodyanskiy, Ye. Gorshkov, V. Kolodyazhniy , P. Otto<br>Evolving Network Based on Double Neo-Fuzzy Neurons  | 35   |
| Ch. Wachten, Ch. Ament, C. Müller, H. Reinecke<br>Modeling of a Laser Tracker System with Galvanometer Scanner   | 41   |
| K. Lüttkopf, M. Abel, B. Eylert<br>Statistics of the truck activity on German Motorways  | 47   |
| K. Meissner, H. Hensel<br>A 3D process information display to visualize complex process<br>conditions in the process industry                                  | 53   |
| FF. Steege, C. Martin, HM. Groß<br>Recent Advances in the Estimation of Pointing Poses on Monocular<br>Images for Human-Robot Interaction                      | 59   |
| A. González, H. Fernlund, J. Ekblad<br>After Action Review by Comparison – an Approach to Automatically<br>Evaluating Trainee Performance in Training Exercise | 65   |
| R. Suzuki, N. Fujiki, Y. Taru, N. Kobayashi, E. P. Hofer<br>Internal Model Control for Assistive Devices in Rehabilitation Technology                          | 71   |
| D. Sommer, M. Golz<br>Feature Reduction for Microsleep Detection   | 77   |

| F. Müller, A. Wenzel, J. Wernstedt<br>A new strategy for on-line Monitoring and Competence Assignment to<br>Driver and Vehicle   | 83  |
|--|-----|
| V. Borikov<br>Linear Parameter-Oriented Model of Microplasma Process in<br>Electrolyte Solutions   | 89  |
| A. Avshalumov, G. Filaretov<br>Detection and Analysis of Impulse Point Sequences on<br>Correlated Disturbance Phone  | 95  |
| H. Salzwedel<br>Complex Systems Design Automation in the Presence of Bounded<br>and Statistical Uncertainties  | 101 |
| G. J. Nalepa, I. Wojnicki<br>Filling the Semantic Gaps in Systems Engineering  | 107 |
| R. Knauf<br>Compiling Experience into Knowledge  | 113 |
| R. Knauf, S. Tsuruta, Y. Sakurai<br>Toward Knowledge Engineering with Didactic Knowledge   | 119 |
| 2 Advances in Control Theory and Control Engineering   |     |
| U. Konigorski, A. López<br>Output Coupling by Dynamic Output Feedback  | 129 |
| H. Toossian Shandiz, A. Hajipoor<br>Chaos in the Fractional Order Chua System and its Control  | 135 |
| O. Katernoga, V. Popov, A. Potapovich, G. Davydau<br>Methods for Stability Analysis of Nonlinear Control Systems with Time<br>Delay for Application in Automatic Devices | 141 |
| J. Zimmermann, O. Sawodny<br>Modelling and Control of a X-Y-Fine-Positioning Table   | 145 |
| A. Winkler, J. Suchý<br>Position Based Force Control of an Industrial Manipulator  | 151 |
| E. Arnold, J. Neupert, O. Sawodny, K. Schneider<br>Trajectory Tracking for Boom Cranes Based on Nonlinear Control<br>and Optimal Trajectory Generation                   | 157 |

| K. Shaposh<br>The methoo<br>magnetic fi        | nikov, V. Astakhov<br>I of ortogonal projections in problems of the stationary<br>eld computation  | 165 |
|--|--|-----|
| J. Naumenk<br>The compu<br>bounded co          | o<br>ting of sinusoidal magnetic fields in presence of the surface with<br>onductivity   | 167 |
| K. Bayramk<br>The methoo<br>stationary f       | ulov, V. Astakhov<br>I of the boundary equations in problems of computing static and<br>ields on the topological graph                       | 169 |
| T. Kochube<br>The compu-<br>using the Ir       | y, V. Astakhov<br>tation of magnetic field in the presence of ideal conductors<br>ntegral-differential equation of the first kind            | 171 |
| M. Schneide<br>U. Stark, J.<br>Artificial ne   | er, U. Lehmann, J. Krone, P. Langbein, Ch. Ament, P. Otto,<br>Schrickel<br>ural network for product-accompanied analysis and control         | 173 |
| I. Jawish<br>The Improv<br>Fuzzy Logic         | ement of Traveling Responses of a Subway Train using<br>Techniques   | 179 |
| Y. Gu, H. Su<br>An Approac<br>Neural Netv      | ı, J. Chu<br>ch for Transforming Nonlinear System Modeled by the Feedforward<br>vorks to Discrete Uncertain Linear System                    | 185 |
| 3 Opt<br>and                                   | imisation and Management of Complex Systems<br>Networked Systems   |     |
| R. Franke, J<br>Advanced r                     | . Doppelhammer<br>nodel based control in the Industrial IT System 800xA  | 193 |
| H. Gerbrach<br>An efficient                    | nt, P. Li, W. Hong<br>optimization approach to optimal control of large-scale processes  | 199 |
| T. N. Pham,<br>Modifying t<br>multi-criteri    | B. Wutke<br>he Bellman's dynamic programming to the solution of the discrete<br>a optimization problem under fuzziness in long-term planning | 205 |
| S. Ritter, P.<br>Optimale Pl<br>liberalisierte | Bretschneider<br>anung und Betriebsführung der Energieversorgung im<br>en Energiemarkt   | 211 |
| P. Bretschne<br>Intelligente                   | eider, D. Westermann<br>Energiesysteme: Chancen und Potentiale von IuK-Technologien  | 217 |

| Z. Lu, Y. Zhong, Yu. Wu, J. Wu<br>WSReMS: A Novel WSDM-based System Resource Management Scheme   | 223 |
|--|-----|
| M. Heit, E. Jennenchen, V. Kruglyak, D. Westermann<br>Simulation des Strommarktes unter Verwendung von Petrinetzen   | 229 |
| O. Sauer, M. Ebel<br>Engineering of production monitoring & control systems  | 237 |
| C. Behn, K. Zimmermann<br>Biologically inspired Locomotion Systems and Adaptive Control  | 245 |
| J. W. Vervoorst, T. Kopfstedt<br>Mission Planning for UAV Swarms   | 251 |
| M. Kaufmann, G. Bretthauer<br>Development and composition of control logic networks for<br>distributed mechatronic systems in a heterogeneous architecture   | 257 |
| T. Kopfstedt, J. W. Vervoorst<br>Formation Control for Groups of Mobile Robots Using a Hierarchical<br>Controller Structure                                  | 263 |
| M. Abel, Th. Lohfelder<br>Simulation of the Communication Behaviour of the German Toll System  | 269 |
| P. Hilgers, Ch. Ament<br>Control in Digital Sensor-Actuator-Networks   | 275 |
| C. Saul, A. Mitschele-Thiel, A. Diab, M. Abd rabou Kalil<br>A Survey of MAC Protocols in Wireless Sensor Networks  | 281 |
| T. Rossbach, M. Götze, A. Schreiber, M. Eifart, W. Kattanek<br>Wireless Sensor Networks at their Limits – Design Considerations<br>and Prototype Experiments | 287 |
| Y. Zhong, J. Ma<br>Ring Domain-Based Key Management in Wireless Sensor Network   | 293 |
| V. Nissen<br>Automatic Forecast Model Selection in SAP Business Information<br>Warehouse under Noise Conditions  | 299 |
| M. Kühn, F. Richter, H. Salzwedel<br>Process simulation for significant efficiency gains in clinical departments –<br>practical example of a cancer clinic   | 305 |

| D. Westermann, M. Kratz, St. Kümmerling, P. Meyer<br>Architektur eines Simulators für Energie-, Informations- und Kommunikations-<br>technologien  | 311 |
|--|-----|
| P. Moreno, D. Westermann, P. Müller, F. Büchner<br>Einsatzoptimierung von dezentralen netzgekoppelten Stromerzeugungs-<br>anlagen (DEA) in Verteilnetzen durch Erhöhung des Automatisierungsgrades | 317 |
| M. Heit, S. Rozhenko, M. Kryvenka, D. Westermann<br>Mathematische Bewertung von Engpass-Situationen in Transportnetzen<br>elektrischer Energie mittels lastflussbasierter Auktion                  | 331 |
| M. Lemmel, M. Schnatmeyer<br>RFID-Technology in Warehouse Logistics  | 339 |
| V. Krugljak, M. Heit, D. Westermann<br>Approaches for modelling power market: A Comparison.  | 345 |
| St. Kümmerling, N. Döring, A. Friedemann, M. Kratz, D. Westermann<br>Demand-Side-Management in Privathaushalten – Der eBox-Ansatz  | 351 |
| 4 Intelligent Vehicles and Mobile Systems  |     |
| A. P. Aguiar, R. Ghabchelloo, A. Pascoal, C. Silvestre , F. Vanni<br>Coordinated Path following of Multiple Marine Vehicles: Theoretical<br>Issues and Practical Constraints                       | 359 |
| R. Engel, J. Kalwa<br>Robust Relative Positioning of Multiple Underwater Vehicles  | 365 |
| M. Jacobi, T. Pfützenreuter, T. Glotzbach, M. Schneider<br>A 3D Simulation and Visualisation Environment for Unmanned Vehicles<br>in Underwater Scenarios  | 371 |
| M. Schneider, M. Eichhorn, T. Glotzbach, P. Otto<br>A High-Level Simulator for heterogeneous marine vehicle teams under real<br>constraints  | 377 |
| A. Zangrilli, A. Picini<br>Unmanned Marine Vehicles working in cooperation: market trends<br>and technological requirements  | 383 |
| T. Glotzbach, P. Otto, M. Schneider, M. Marinov<br>A Concept for Team-Orientated Mission Planning and Formal Language<br>Verification for Heterogeneous Unmanned Vehicles                          | 389 |

| M. A. Arredondo, A. Cormack<br>SeeTrack: Situation Awareness Tool for Heterogeneous Vehicles  | 395 |
|---|-----|
| J. C. Ferreira, P. B. Maia, A. Lucia, A. I. Zapaniotis<br>Virtual Prototyping of an Innovative Urban Vehicle  | 401 |
| A. Wenzel, A. Gehr, T. Glotzbach, F. Müller<br>Superfour-in: An all-terrain wheelchair with monitoring possibilities to<br>enhance the life quality of people with walking disability | 407 |
| Th. Krause, P. Protzel<br>Verteiltes, dynamisches Antriebssystem zur Steuerung eines Luftschiffes   | 413 |
| T. Behrmann, M. Lemmel<br>Vehicle with pure electric hybrid energy storage system   | 419 |
| Ch. Schröter, M. Höchemer, HM. Groß<br>A Particle Filter for the Dynamic Window Approach to Mobile Robot Control  | 425 |
| M. Schenderlein, K. Debes, A. Koenig, HM. Groß<br>Appearance-based Visual Localisation in Outdoor Environments with an<br>Omnidirectional Camera                                      | 431 |
| G. Al Zeer, A. Nabout, B. Tibken<br>Hindernisvermeidung für Mobile Roboter mittels Ausweichecken  | 437 |
| 5 Robotics and Motion Systems   |     |
| Ch. Schröter, HM. Groß<br>Efficient Gridmaps for SLAM with Rao-Blackwellized Particle Filters   | 445 |
| St. Müller, A. Scheidig, A. Ober, HM. Groß<br>Making Mobile Robots Smarter by Probabilistic User Modeling and Tracking  | 451 |
| A. Swerdlow, T. Machmer, K. Kroschel, A. Laubenheimer, S. Richter<br>Opto-acoustical Scene Analysis for a Humanoid Robot  | 457 |
| A. Ahranovich, S. Karpovich, K. Zimmermann<br>Multicoordinate Positioning System Design and Simulation  | 463 |
| A. Balkovoy, V. Cacenkin, G. Slivinskaia<br>Statical and dynamical accuracy of direct drive servo systems   | 469 |
| Y. Litvinov, S. Karpovich, A. Ahranovich<br>The 6-DOF Spatial Parallel Mechanism Control System Computer Simulation   | 477 |

| V. Lysenko, W. Mintchenya, K. Zimmermann<br>Minimization of the number of actuators in legged robots using<br>biological objects   | 483 |
|--|-----|
| J. Kroneis, T. Gastauer, S. Liu, B. Sauer<br>Flexible modeling and vibration analysis of a parallel robot with<br>numerical and analytical methods for the purpose of active vibration damping | 489 |
| A. Amthor, T. Hausotte, G. Jäger, P. Li<br>Friction Modeling on Nanometerscale and Experimental Verification   | 495 |
| Paper submitted after copy deadline  |     |
| 2 Advances in Control Theory and Control Engineering   |     |
| V. Piwek, B. Kuhfuss, S. Allers<br>Feed drivers – Synchronized Motion is leading to a process optimization   | 503 |

#### M. Lemmel / M. Schnatmeyer

# **RFID-Technology in Warehouse Logistics**

Wireless technology becomes more important in logistics processes. Beside the usage of GPS or GSM technology for tracking and tracing of goods in the external logistics also internal logistics processes have a high demand on wireless technologies, which supports the quality, environmental and safety management. This paper resumes results from research projects, which have examined wireless technologies for positioning and identification of goods in warehouses.

### State-of-the-Art in Wireless Technologies

Wireless technologies open the possibility for the seamless tracking and tracing of logistics process. For external logistics processes GPS and GSM technologies are in use for the position finding of logistics items. For internal logistics processes in a covered warehouse GPS is not available and GSM to imprecise for location goods on pallet level.

Alternative technologies for in-door processes are for example optical (Infrared), DECT, WLAN or RFID. WLAN utilizes spread-spectrum technology based on radio waves to enable communication between devices in a limited area, also known as the basic service set. This gives users the mobility to move around within a broad coverage area and still be connected to the network<sup>1</sup>. Further the WLAN infrastructure enables determining the position of a user or item in this network.

## **Radio-frequency identification**

Radio-frequency identification (RFID) is an automatic identification method such as barcode, relying on storing and remotely retrieving data using devices called RFID tags or transponders. An RFID tag is a device that can be attached to or incorporated into a product, animal, or person for the purpose of identification using radio waves. Chipbased RFID tags contain silicon chips and antennas. It operates at standardised frequencies between 134 kHz (LF), 13,56 MHz (HF) up to 868 / 915 MHz (UHF) [1].

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> <u>http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wireless\_LAN</u> (3/22/2007)



Figure 1: Principle of RFID

Passive tags require no internal power source<sup>2</sup>. The antenna uses the radio field of an RFID reader for supplying the chip with energy. After the chip starts to operate, the transponder can exchange data with the reader (see Figure 1). Besides reading data, the reader can also write data on the transponder.

A typical application for passive RFID systems is the gate solution (see Figure 2).



Figure 2: Principle of reader gate

In the centre of the gate it is possible to identify many tagged goods simultaneously. This type of configuration is often in use for retail and wholesale applications. Figure 3 shows a passive transponder which operates at 134 kHz.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> <u>http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rfid</u> (3/22/2007)



Figure 3: LF-Transponder (134 kHz)

Active transponders have onboard power supply. They have the opportunity to transmit data without being electromagnetically activated. This is reasonable in RFID-S (-sensor) for sensorial supervision of temperature or humidity etc.

For certain applications RFID has significant advantages against ordinary barcode. Some examples are:

- complicated optical detection, e.g. in refrigerated warehouse
- detection of piles, e. g. pallet full packed with different goods (see Figure 2)
- secondary data to be stored on tag, e. g. classification of hazardous goods
- sensorial supervision, e. g. temperature, humidity etc.
- high rate of circulation, e. g. tag integrated into deposit pallet

As the well known systems for positioning like GPS or GSM are just suitable for outdoor purposes, other systems have to be considered for in-house use. Nowadays many factories and warehouses facilities are already equipped with WLAN for data transmission. This existing infrastructure can also be used for position purposes. These in-house positioning systems, such as ekahau<sup>3</sup> base on triangulation between a couple of access points and enables positioning on a cheap way. WLAN based positioning systems have also been evaluated within several research projects for in-house applications with the following disadvantages as results:

- The accuracy of ca. 3 m is insufficient for positioning goods in sizes of a europellet or less.
- Due to the complex algorithms for processing the position the system is not suitable for real-time applications.
- The performance of the system is varying with the signal quality of the WLAN access, which can be alloyed by certain goods such as metal und fluids.

Therefore a new method for in-house positioning based on RFID has been implemented within a couple of actual research activities.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> http://www.ekahau.com

## **RFID Positioning**

Figure 4 describes a RFID positioning system, which was developed and used within the research project OPAK (Optimized PAcKing logistics in the life cycle economy) funded by the German ministry of education and research (BMBF). The project was focussing on the optimisation of the redistribution of plastic materials for recycling processes. Main goal was to improve logistic processes and optimise available technological infrastructures through RFID technology.<sup>4</sup>



For identification one RFID antenna is placed above the fork. This is responsible for reading information from the handled good or its pallet. A second RFID antenna is attached beneath the fork lift. This antenna reads the geographic data coming from the RFID transponder embedded into the warehouse ground.

Two additional ultrasonic sensors are installed at the front of the forklift: One sensor detects picked products on the fork. A second sensor measures the distance between fork and ground for calculating the storage level. This functionality is necessary for block and rack storage applications.

Combined with WLAN access, data collected from the cargo and the warehouse ground can be transmitted to a central WMS (Warehouse Management System) which traces the material movements and placement in the warehouse (or production plant) and provides the driver of the forklift with new transport orders after finishing the actual job.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> http://www.biba.uni-bremen.de/projects/opak/Opak\_homepage.htm



Figure 5: OPAK demonstrator overview

In addition this system can also be used to provide the fork lift driver with additional information, e.g. about dangerous materials, which have to be handled with care. As an example Figure 6 shows the user interface of the touch screen display. If the system identifies dangerous goods the traffic light will change from green to yellow (semi dangerous goods) or red (high dangerous goods).

This semi automated system is optimised for SMEs [3]. High investments in full automated systems seem to be inefficient at this type of industry because the logistic process can not be standardised.

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Figure 6: Display of the fork lift terminal [4]

## Conclusion

The usage of RFID technology instead of barcode systems is depending on the specific application scenario. For in-house positioning the described RFID system is an attractive opportunity with sufficient accuracy at real time.

For identification purposes it is nowadays difficult to apply existing RFID systems to a

whole process chain regarding to missing standards.

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