

A RoundD-like Roundabout Scenario in CARLA Simulator

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Abstract

Evaluating the challenges and opportunities of cooperative autonomous vehicles (CAV) require an adapted simulation methodology reproducing realistic driving and sensory contexts. In this paper, we propose a RoundD-like CARLA scenario reproducing in CARLA the driving context recorded in the RoundD dataset. We focus in particular on roundabout scenarios, as they are considered particularly challenging for CAV. We present the methodology followed to generate the CARLA scenario and describe challenges to reproduce trajectories corresponding to RoundD. Origin and destination of vehicles, waypoint and speed are extracted from RoundD for CARLA vehicles to closely reproduce the driving patterns observed in RoundD. The benefit of such scenario are manifold, such as evaluating control algorithms of CAVs, deep AI reinforcement learning, or vehicular sensor data sampling under realistic driving contexts. It notably will reduce the gap of AI mechanisms for CAV between simulation scenarios and realistic conditions.

Keywords: Carla, roundabout, RoundD, synthetic scenario, traffic simulation for C-ITS

1 Introduction

Evaluating control algorithms under realistic driving and sensory contexts are critical to the success of future C-ITS applications. Over the last decades, various synthetic scenarios have been designed and calibrated for microscopic simulators (e.g. LuST [Cod15], MoST [Cod17] for SUMO). Realistic traffic datasets such as RoundD [Kra20] have been used to extract and learn precise driving statistics but cannot be modified to evaluate the impact of traffic control or control algorithms in the dataset environment. And if adapting the dataset in a microscopic simulator such as SUMO could be envisioned, the corresponding synthetic scenario would not be realistic enough for modeling the CAV control algorithm or its sensory context. The driving simulator CARLA [Dos17] has been designed to model robotic and sensory context in highly precise driving environment. Joining ROS control mechanisms with OpenDrive

HD maps enables CARLA to reproduce driving and sensory context extremely precisely. However, most of the studies using CARLA focuses primarily on the control or the perception of an ego-vehicle either isolated or under unrealistic traffic handled by CARLA traffic manager (i.e. autopilote mode). Evaluating control or perception of an ego vehicle in an immersive realistic driving or environmental context is missing and remains challenging due to the lack of calibrated synthetic scenarios in CARLA. Deschaud [Des21] recently partially addressed that challenge and designed an ego-vehicle in CARLA with similar sensor configurations as the KITTI dataset [Gei13]. This first attempts to create calibrated scenarios in CARLA was however limited to testing the KITTI sensors under configurable simulated heterogeneous sensory contexts. If benefiting from realistic sensory input is important to trajectory planning for cooperative autonomous ego-vehicles, realistic behavior and trajectories of other vehicles are equally critical to the ego-vehicle’s trajectory planning and hazard avoidance.

In this paper, we address that challenge and describe our methodology to design a synthetic driving scenario in CARLA reproducing the Round dataset. Without loss of generalities, we focus on one single Round roundabout in this work. Our proposed methodology is threefold: (i) reproduce the Round roundabout in CARLA as precisely as possible; (ii) extract trajectories and speed data from Round; (iii) design a CARLA agent following Round short and long term planning. Our CARLA Round-like scenario will be provided open-source to the community.

The rest of this extended abstract is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces CARLA and Round and emphasizes the benefits of dataset-based CARLA scenarios. Section 3 describes the methodology followed to configure CARLA according to Round. Section 4 discusses the results, while Section 5 concludes the extended abstract.

2 Background

2.1 Round Dataset

The Round (Roundabout Drone) dataset [Kra20] provides naturalistic trajectories of vehicles and vulnerable road users of selected German roundabouts. Each trajectory is recorded by drones with a error less than 10 cm and includes vehicles (car, bus, trucks) as well as vulnerable road users (pedestrians, bicycles). The Round dataset, as well as its related datasets (HighD, ExiD etc.) is a major source of naturalistic data for various applications, such as traffic data inference, AI/ML training, etc. However, as a dataset Round cannot be dynamically altered and as such does not allow to evaluate the impact of a particular C-ITS application or CAV control algorithms on the round traffic.

2.2 CARLA

CARLA is an open-source simulator for autonomous driving research [Dos17]. CARLA not only allows to simulate the precise trajectories (throttle, heading) followed by CAV, but also support models for various on-board sensors (lidars, cameras, etc.), which makes CARLA



Figure 1: The RoundD dataset.

a powerful toolbox for developing and evaluating control or sensory algorithms for CAV. Compared to the well-known traffic simulator SUMO [SUM22], CARLA is based on High Definition (HD) OpenDrive maps and enables a total control of the vehicles (throttle, heading, waypoints) rather than modeling them according to car-following algorithms (speed, inter-distance only). Moreover, the available digital assets available in CARLA enables more realistic sensor modeling compared to SUMO. CARLA finally supports co-simulations with SUMO, VISSIM, ROS, Matlab, or CarSIM through open APIs.

2.3 C-ITS & CAV Simulation Strategy Comparison

Traffic simulators such as SUMO have been widely favored for simulating C-ITS applications. But CAVs need a higher granularity in vehicular control or sensory environments requires to rely either on naturalistic datasets or on finer-grained simulators such as CARLA or Gazebo. However, such approach is usually limited to one single ego-vehicle, and background traffic is either not available or modelled as a simplistic “autopilot” mode (e.g. CARLA traffic manager).

In order to illustrate the need for a CARLA scenario representing naturalistic driving contexts, we compare in Table 1 four C-ITS simulation methodologies against four representative metrics for obtaining realistic CAV simulations. As it can be seen, if realistic CAV simulations require naturalistic, alterable, robotic-ego, robotic background traffic, a *dataset* strategy only fulfils two of them. *SUMO*, *CARLA* or *SUMO/CARLA* strategies fulfil two complementary metrics. In this work, we propose a CARLA scenario representing the naturalistic dataset RoundD and accordingly fulfilling all requirements for realistic CAV simulations.

3 Methodology

We describe now the three phases followed to extract data from the RoundD dataset in CARLA.

Table 1: Simulation methodology comparison.

	naturalistic	alterable	robotic control	background traffic
Dataset	✓	x	x	✓
SUMO	x	✓	x	LuST/MoST
CARLA	x	✓	✓	auto-pilot
CARLA/SUMO	x	✓	✓	x
this work	✓	✓	✓	✓

3.1 Scenario Design

The first step is to design the roundabout in CARLA closely machining the one from Round. We selected one of the 4 different roundabouts contained in Round (Thiergarten, Alsdorf) and visualized it with the trajectories of all vehicles (see Figure 2a). We then extracted the geometric parameters of the roundabout via basic trigonometry on the trajectories¹ and obtained the roundabout metrics depicted in Figure 2c. Finally, we designed the roundabout using the Mathwork tool *Roadrunner*² (see Figure 2b).

3.2 Round Dataset Extraction

The second step is to extract the origin-destination (O/D) matrix and average speed from Round. In this version, we only extracted data for private vehicles, although Round contains trucks, pedestrians and bicycles as well.

The extracted O/D matrix of the considered roundabout in Round is depicted in Table 2.

Table 2: O/D matrix of the Thiergarten roundabout in Alsdorf, Germany.

	Inboud 1	Inboud 2	Inboud 3	Inboud 4	Total	Probability
Outboud 1	0	21	97	2	120	46 %
Outboud 2	33	0	4	0	37	14 %
Outboud 3	87	14	1	0	102	39 %
Outboud 4	0	0	0	0	0	0 %
Total	120	35	102	2	259	100 %
Probability	46 %	14 %	39 %	1 %	100 %	

¹ Extracting such roundabout from OpenStreetMap did not lead to sufficient accuracy. We also did not have access to commercial HD maps.

² <https://fr.mathworks.com/products/roadrunner.html>

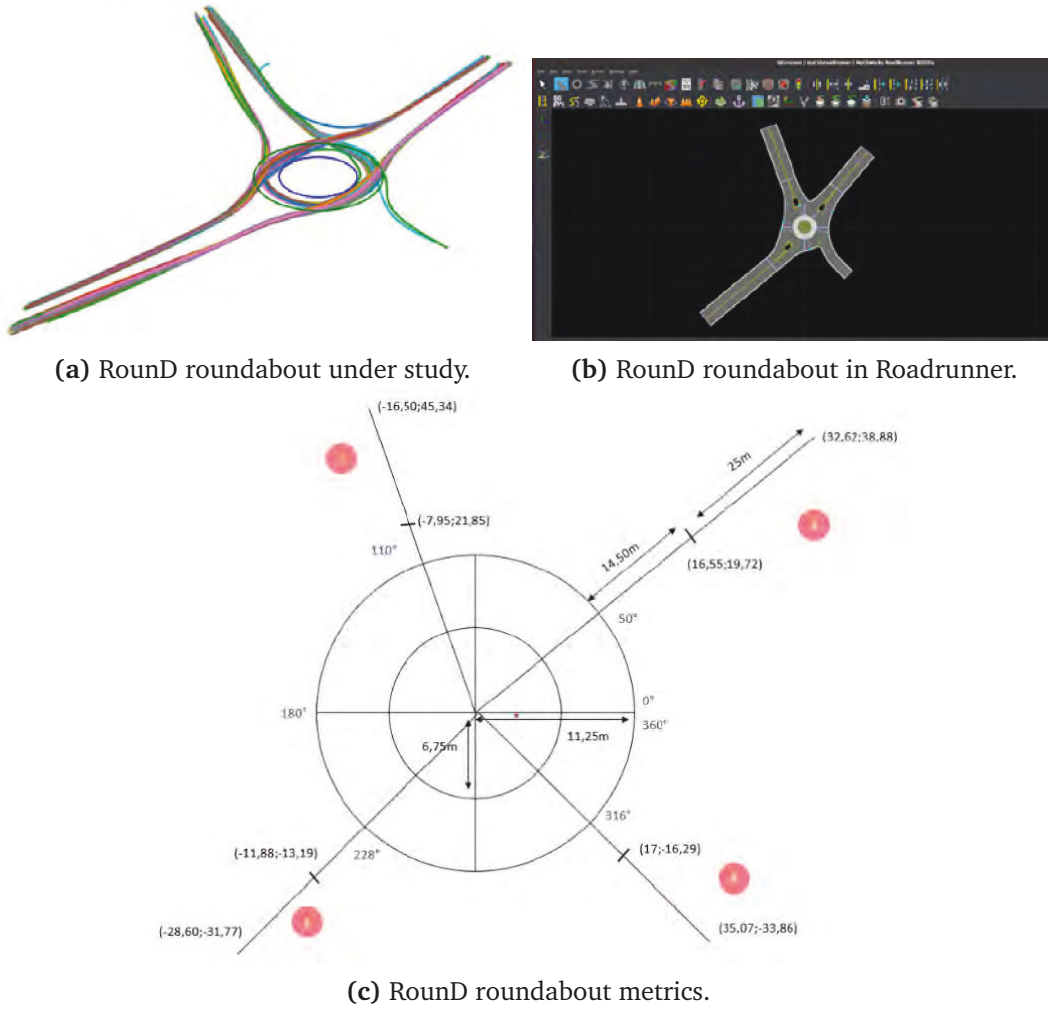


Figure 2: RoundD scenario extraction for CARLA.

3.3 Vehicle Integration in CARLA

Once the roundabout schema and the O/D matrix are extracted from RoundD, the final step is to integrate the RoundD vehicles in CARLA. Two steps are possible: direct waypoint input or O/D-based input.

Direct Waypoint Input

The direct waypoint input consists of indicating to the CARLA traffic manager for each spawn vehicle to follow the waypoints at a target velocity described by the set of positions and speed extracted from RoundD. Vehicles should therefore follow the same trajectories and speed in CARLA than in RoundD. This however is challenging in CARLA. First, CARLA does not operate with *exact* rather *target* speed inputs, for which a PID (proportional–integral–derivative) controller needs to adjust the throttle. In other words, a target speed needs several steps to be reached. Such slow convergence with the significant number of waypoints (from RoundD) lead to jigsaw effects on the speed profile and a non-negligible drifting between the CARLA

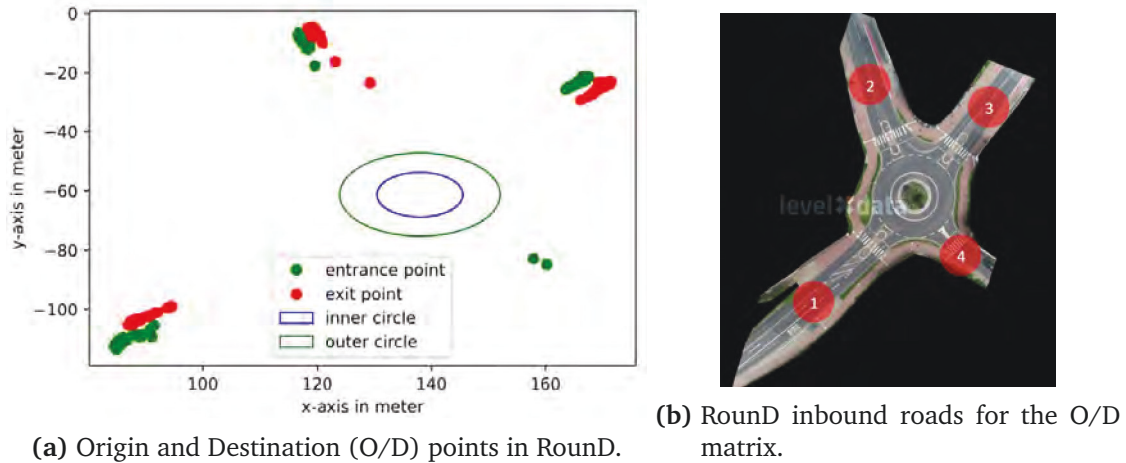


Figure 3: RoundD O/D data extraction for CARLA.

and the RoundD speed profiles. This drift desynchronizes the various trajectories and lead to traffic patterns and time-to-collision values not observed in RoundD. Moreover, exact vehicle size are also required to avoid potential overlapping between vehicles in CARLA, which calls for vehicle blueprints in CARLA matching those from RoundD.

O/D-based Input

As having *similar* driving patterns from RoundD might be more important than *exact* ones, another strategy is to only generate O/D for each vehicle corresponding to the extracted RoundD O/D matrix. CARLA global planning generates waypoints between these O/D to closely match the RoundD trajectories. And CARLA local planning set a target speed corresponding to the mean speed observed in RoundD. Collisions detection and avoidance are also handled by an internal CARLA agent function. However, even if O/D and speed data match RoundD, collision avoidance will naturally make the scenario deviate from exact RoundD driving patterns. It will however provide a RoundD-like CARLA scenario.

4 Results and Discussion

The two described strategies have been evaluated, which generated a CARLA roundabout scenario containing 259 vehicles, reproducing the traffic density and average speed of RoundD. Figure 4a depicts the integration in CARLA of one RoundD trajectory. Challenges when applying the direct trajectory approach with respect to matching car size to RoundD can be seen on Figure 4b. If the O/D and the waypoints correspond to RoundD, cars overlap at the interactions of the flows in the roundabout, where the inter-distance between vehicles is the smallest. The provided RoundD dataset does not provide sufficient details to extrapolate the right vehicle size and blueprint and as such, selected assumptions need to be taken on unavailable data.



(a) Origin and destination points in RoundD. (b) RoundD inbound roads for the O/D matrix.

Figure 4: CARLA roundabout scenario.

The major weakness of the two approaches followed in this work lies in the unrealistic management of the driving patterns by the default CARLA PID controllers and obstacle detection & avoidance entity. A more precise strategy is to rely on advanced controllers for throttle and heading control (e.g. PID and Stanley Law), which more closely follow speed and trajectory profiles observed in real traffic, as well as an anticipatory collision detection to avoid conflict in a smoother way.

5 Conclusions

In this paper, we presented our methodology to reproduce a RoundD-like roundabout scenario in the simulator CARLA. If a direct RoundD trajectory integration in CARLA is challenging, a looser strategy to only match RoundD speed and Origins/Destinations, showed to be an appealing alternative. Both strategies have been implemented and evaluated. The RoundD-like CARLA scenarios will be released as open-source to the community and are expected to be beneficial to evaluate CAV sensing and control mechanisms to safely navigate through roundabouts. One weak point yet remains the realistic vehicular speed and heading control followed by CARLA traffic manager, which is critical for a realistic reproduction of any dataset into CARLA. This is our future work.

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