

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA SABAH

BORANG PENGESAHAN STATUS TESIS

JUDUL: REALIZATION OF MULTI-OBJECTIVE EVOLVED CONTINUUM ROBOTS USING 3D PRINTING

IJAZAH: MASTER OF ENGINEERING (ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONIC)

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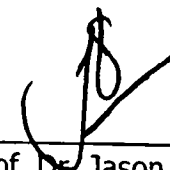
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I hereby declare that this thesis submitted to Universiti Malaysia Sabah as fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Engineering, has not been submitted to any other university for any degree. I also certify that the work described herein is entirely my own except for quotations, equations, summaries and references, which have been duly acknowledged.

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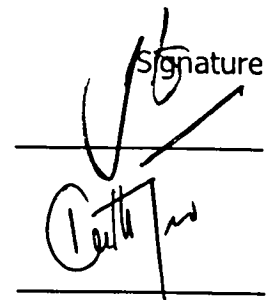
CERTIFICATION

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ABSTRACT

Continuum robots are recognized as one of the most flexible and versatile mobile robots that are capable of performing various kinds of motions to navigate in unknown and challenging environments. However, the large number of degrees of freedom leads to the difficulty in designing a continuum robot. Moreover, an open-ended synthesis problem arises whereby there exists no formal models thus far for a designer to determine the optimum control strategy, body structure, number of segments and suitable segment lengths during the design stage. Additionally, conventional methods for designing continuum robots do not consider the optimization of multiple objectives. As such, there has not been any research carried out thus far on co-evolving both the morphology and controller of continuum robots using a multi-objective evolutionary optimization approach. Therefore, in this research work, a system is developed to automatically design and optimize both the morphology and controller of continuum robots by employing a novel hybridized Genetic Programming and self-adaptive Differential Evolution algorithm. A multi-objective evolutionary algorithm is incorporated into the artificial evolutionary optimization process to simultaneously maximize the locomotion performance and minimize the complexity of the continuum robots. In addition, a novel GP tree-based encoding structure is proposed to allow for the representation of the continuum robot's morphology and controller to be optimized simultaneously during co-evolution. The artificial co-evolutionary process is carried out by using the Webots physics simulation software. Two types of continuum robots are to be evolved in this research, namely the snake-like continuum robot (SLCR) and multi-branching continuum robot (MBCR). The outcome of this work shows that the Pareto-optimal front of evolved solutions are successfully obtained for the simulated SLCRs where the evolved heterogeneous SLCRs can perform lateral undulation, narrow path crawling, vertical undulation and lateral rolling moving behaviours for locomotion. Additionally, the evolved solutions of the MBCRs are converging to a point where the MBCR with the least number of segments turns out to be the dominating solution. In order to validate the simulated results, the evolved SLCRs are transferred to real world for physical testing using 3D printing technology. The physical testing results demonstrate that the evolved SLCRs can be successfully transferred from simulation to the real world for actual physical deployment in its task environment. An 82.55% transference accuracy is achieved in this work which demonstrates that the proposed multi-objective co-evolutionary algorithm is feasible and practical to be employed for the automatic design of continuum robots.

ABSTRAK

REALISASI REKA BENTUK MULTI-OBJEKTIF ROBOT KONTINUM PENGUNAAN PENCETAKAN 3D

Robot kontinum adalah antara jenis robot mudah alih yang amat fleksibel dan serba berguna yang mampu melakukan pelbagai jenis pergerakan untuk menyeberangi persekitaran yang tidak diketahui dan mencabar. Namun demikian, kepunyaan bilangan banyak darjah kebebasan pergerakan menyebabkan robot kontinum sukar direka bentuk. Selain itu, masalah sintesis terbuka akan terbangkit oleh sebab setakat ini tiada model rasmi wujud untuk pencipta robot menentukan strategi kawalan, struktur badan, bilangan segmen dan ukuran segmen yang bersesuaian di peringkat reka bentuk robot kontinum. Seterusnya, kaedah konvensional untuk mereka bentuk robot kontinum tidak mempertimbangkan pengoptimuman pelbagai objektif. Oleh demikian, tiada sebarang penyelidikan yang telah menceburi bidang evolusi kedua-dua reka bentuk struktur dan sistem kawalan robot kontinum dengan menggunakan kaedah evolusi pengkomputeran. Oleh sebab itu, satu sistem telah dicipta dalam kerja penyelidikan ini untuk mereka bentuk dan mengoptimumkan kedua-dua reka bentuk struktur dan sistem kawalan robot kontinum secara automatik dengan menggunakan kaedah novel kombinasi Pengaturcaraan Genetik dan Pengkamiran Evolusi penyesuaian diri. Algoritma evolusi multi-objektif juga digabung bersama dengan proses pengoptimuman evolusi untuk meningkatkan prestasi pergerakan di samping mengurangkan kerumitan reka bentuk robot kontinum secara serentak. Selain itu, struktur berasaskan GP yang novel telah dicadangkan untuk membenarkan pengwakilan reka bentuk struktur dan sistem kawalan robot kontinum supaya kedua-dua ciri reka bentuk ini dapat dioptimumkan serentak dalam proses evolusi. Proses evolusi adalah dilaksanakan dengan penggunaan perisian fizik simulasi Webots. Dua jenis robot kontinum adalah direka bentuk dalam kajian penyelidikan ini, iaitu robot kontinum berbentuk ular (SLCR) dan robot kontinum bercabang (MBCR). Hasil kerja ini menunjukkan bahawa penyelesaian Pareto-optimum evolusi SLCR adalah berjaya diperolehi melalui simulasi di mana pelbagai SLCR yang berbeza dapat direka bentuk untuk melakukan gerakan lateral, gerakan merangkak, gerakan mengombak tegak dan gerakan menggulung untuk pergerakan. Di samping itu, keputusan kajian evolusi menunjukkan penyelesaian MBCR menumpu ke satu penghujung di mana MBCR yang mempunyai segmen yang paling kurang menjadi penyelesaian tunggal dan mendominasi penyelesaian lain. Dalam usaha untuk mengesahkan keputusan simulasi, SLCR yang direka bentuk melalui proses evolusi telah dipindah ke dunia sebenar untuk menjalankan ujian fizikal dengan menggunakan teknologi pencetakan 3D. Keputusan ujian fizikal menunjukkan bahawa SLCR yang direka bentuk melalui proses evolusi berjaya dipindahkan dari simulasi ke dunia sebenar untuk penggunaan realistik dalam persekitaran tugas. Ketepatan pemindahan robot sebanyak 82.55% telah dicapai dalam kerja kajian dan ini menunjukkan bahawa algoritma evolusi multi-objektif yang dicadangkan adalah realistik dan praktikal untuk digunakan dalam mereka bentuk robot kontinum secara automatik.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
TITLE	i
<i>BORANG PENGESAHAN STATUS TESIS</i>	ii
DECLARATION	iii
SUPERVISORS CONFIRMATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	v
ABSTRACT	vi
<i>ABSTRAK</i>	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
LIST OF TABLES	xi
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xx
LIST OF SYMBOLS	xxi
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Problem Statement	4
1.3 Hypothesis	4
1.4 Objectives	5
1.5 Research Scope	5
1.6 Organization of Thesis	6
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.1 Introduction	8
2.2 Continuum Robots	8
2.3 Evolutionary Robotics	16
2.4 Multi-objective Optimization	23
2.5 Evolutionary Computing	25
2.5.1 Genetic Algorithm (GA)	26
2.5.2 Evolutionary Strategies (ES)	27
2.5.3 Evolutionary Programming (EP)	28
2.5.4 Genetic Programming (GP)	28
2.6 Artificial Neural Network	32

2.6.1	Basic Elements in Neural Network	33
2.7	Learning Methods in Neural Network	34
2.8	Rapid Prototyping	36
2.9	Conclusion	39
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY		41
3.1	Introduction	41
3.2	Tree-based Structure and Morphology Representation	42
3.3	Chromosome and ANN Representation	46
3.4	Implementation of Genetic Programming (GP)	53
3.5	Implementation of jDE Algorithm	55
3.6	Multi-Objective Evolutionary Algorithm (MOEA)	58
3.7	Simulation	63
	3.7.1 Simulation Environment	63
	3.7.2 Continuum Robot Design	65
3.8	Hardware Design	69
	3.8.1 Hardware Control	70
	3.8.2 Continuum Robot Body Structure	75
	3.8.3 Hardware Fabrication	80
3.9	Conclusion	81
CHAPTER 4: EVOLUTIONARY OPTIMIZATION		83
4.1	Introduction	83
4.2	SLCR: Hybridized GP and jDE Algorithm	83
	4.2.1 SLCR Controller	84
	4.2.2 Fitness Function	84
	4.2.3 Experimental Results and Discussions	86
	4.2.4 Evolutionary Optimization Vs. Hand-coded	91
	4.2.5 Conclusion	97
4.3	SLCR: MOEA	98
	4.3.1 Non-dominant MOEA Approach	99
	4.3.2 Entire-archive MOEA Approach	99
	4.3.3 Post-MOEA Approach	99
	4.3.4 Experimental Results and Discussions	100
	4.3.5 Summary from SLCR MOEA Evolution	110
4.4	MBCR: MOEA	110
	4.4.1 Morphology of MBCR	111
	4.4.2 Controller for MBCR	112
	4.4.3 Experimental Results and Discussions	113
	4.4.4 Summary from MBCR MOEA Evolution	116
4.5	Conclusion	117
CHAPTER 5: EVOLUTION OF DIFFERENT BEHAVIOURS		119
5.1	Introduction	119
5.2	Narrow Path Crawling	119
	5.2.1 Simulation Experiment Setup	120
	5.2.2 Experimental Results and Discussions	121
	5.2.3 Conclusion	134

5.3	Vertical Undulation	135
5.3.1	Continuum Robot Design	136
5.3.2	Simulation	136
5.3.3	Experimental Results and Discussions	137
5.3.4	Conclusion	141
5.4	Lateral Rolling	142
5.4.1	Continuum Robot Design	142
5.4.2	Simulation	144
5.4.3	Experimental Results and Discussions	145
5.4.4	Conclusion	150
5.5	Summary	150
CHAPTER 6: PHYSICAL TESTING		152
6.1	Introduction	152
6.2	Narrow Path Crawling Continuum Robot	153
6.3	Other Moving Behaviours Evolved for Continuum Robot	161
6.3.1	Lateral Undulation	162
6.3.2	Vertical Undulation	165
6.3.3	Lateral Rolling	171
6.4	Conclusion	176
CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK		178
7.1	Introduction	178
7.2	Achievements	1799
7.3	Findings	180
7.4	Recommendations and Future Development	182
REFERENCES		184
APPENDICES		189

LIST OF TABLES

		Page
Table 2.1	Physical Properties of Existing Continuum Robot	11
Table 4.1:	Best Individual Evolved In Every Run	86
Table 4.2:	Segment Length Evolved for Overall Best Individual	89
Table 4.3:	Modular Segment Length of Evolved and Hand-coded SLCR	94
Table 4.4:	Comparison of Results between Co-evolved And Hand-coded SLCR	95
Table 4.5:	Overall Best Individuals Evolved with Different Total Number of Segments Using Different MOEA Approaches	101
Table 4.6:	Pareto-optimal Front Solutions Obtained Using Different MOEA Approaches	103
Table 4.7:	Overall Best MBCR Evolved with Different Total Number of Segments	113
Table 5.1:	Overall Best Individuals Evolved with Different Total Number of Segments (Narrow Path Crawling)	122
Table 5.2:	Segment Length Evolved for 9-Segment Continuum Robot	123
Table 5.3:	Pareto-optimal Front Solutions of The Narrow Path Crawling Continuum Robots Evolved	124
Table 5.4:	Archive results for 2nd run during artificial evolutionary process	125
Table 5.5:	Overall Best Individuals Evolved to Perform Crawling	131

	Behaviour	
Table 5.6:	Pareto-optimal Front Solutions for The Repeated Runs	132
Table 5.7:	Best Individual Evolved For Vertical Undulation Moving Behaviour	137
Table 5.8:	Pareto-optimal Front Solution Obtained for Vertical Undulation Moving Behaviour	138
Table 5.9:	Segment Lengths Evolved for The Best Performing Vertical Undulation Continuum Robot	140
Table 5.10:	Best Individual Evolved For Lateral Rolling Moving Behaviour	145
Table 5.11:	Pareto-optimal Front Solution Obtained for Lateral Rolling Moving Behaviour	146
Table 5.12:	Segment Lengths Evolved for The Best Performing Lateral Rolling Continuum Robot	148
Table 6.1:	Total Distances Travelled by Continuum Robots in Real Environment	159
Table 6.2:	Comparison of Results between Simulation and Real World Testing	161

LIST OF FIGURES

		Page
Figure 1.1:	Overview block diagram of research scope.	6
Figure 2.1:	Classification of reviewed SLCR.	12
Figure 2.2:	(a) Lisp expression for encodes programs as nested lists. (b) Parse tree representation of Lisp expression.	29
Figure 2.3:	(a) GP crossover operator. (b) GP mutation operator.	32
Figure 2.4:	Basic elements of an artificial linear neuron.	34
Figure 2.5	General classifications of neural network learning algorithms.	36
Figure 3.1:	(a) Illustration of tree-based structure designed with segment specification encoded within the structure unit. (b) Continuum robot morphology representation based on the tree-based structure.	43
Figure 3.2:	Attachment of segments and motors for a three segments MBCR.	44
Figure 3.3	Tree-based structure used for SLCR morphology representation.	45
Figure 3.4:	SLCR morphology representation.	45
Figure 3.5:	ANN weights generation method.	51
Figure 3.6	ANN representation for a two segment MBCR.	52
Figure 3.7	(a) Randomly chosen crossover sub-branches from two parents. (b) Recombination of two individuals by changing the pointer. (c) Segment number sorting and	54

maintenance of segment attachment position.

Figure 3.8:	Flowchart of different MOEA approaches.	62
Figure 3.9:	Simulation environment with open area.	64
Figure 3.10:	Simulation environment with a 15cm narrow path.	64
Figure 3.11:	Simulation environment used for vertical undulation moving behaviour.	65
Figure 3.12:	Continuum robot modelled in simulation (a) SLCR (b) MBCR.	66
Figure 3.13:	Overall flowchart of continuum robot design optimization process.	69
Figure 3.14:	Image of Arduino Atmega2560 main controller board.	70
Figure 3.15:	Image of G15 servo motor.	71
Figure 3.16:	Driver board for G15 servo motor.	72
Figure 3.17:	Micro limit switch used as touch sensors.	73
Figure 3.18:	Medium range infrared sensor with binary outputs.	73
Figure 3.19:	Layout design of daisy chain electronic board.	74
Figure 3.20:	Fabricated daisy chain electronic board.	74
Figure 3.21:	2D wireframe and conceptual view of modular segment block designed.	75
Figure 3.22:	Conceptual view on the segment block cover.	76
Figure 3.23:	Focus view on the part for the cover locking mechanism.	76
Figure 3.24:	Slot designed to insert the touch sensor on the block.	77

Figure 3.25:	Design of first segment modular block.	78
Figure 3.26:	Design of joint connector in 2D wireframe and conceptual view.	78
Figure 3.27:	Overall view of the rotation connector designed.	79
Figure 3.28:	2D wireframe side view and cross section view of the rotation connector.	80
Figure 3.29:	Usage of 3D printing software.	81
Figure 3.30:	3D printing process.	81
Figure 4.1:	Experiment setup for co-evolutionary process.	85
Figure 4.2:	Evolutionary process fitness score for first run of best evolved SLCR.	88
Figure 4.3:	Screenshot of moving behaviour performed by the overall best individual evolved.	90
Figure 4.4:	Moving behaviour of hand-coded SLCR with fixed modular segment length (7cm) and optimized ANN based controller.	92
Figure 4.5:	Moving behaviour of hand-coded SLCR with fixed modular segment length (3cm) and optimized ANN based controller.	93
Figure 4.6:	Moving behaviour of hand-coded SLCR with combination of maximum and minimum modular segment length.	95
Figure 4.7	Moving behaviour of hand-coded controller SLCR.	96
Figure 4.8	Self-collision of SLCR with random hand-coded controller.	97
Figure 4.9	Pareto-optimal front obtained using all different MOEA approaches.	104

Figure 4.10:	Population fitness score for 7th run using non-dominant MOEA.	105
Figure 4.11:	Population fitness score for 7th run using entire-archive MOEA.	105
Figure 4.12:	Population fitness score for 1st run using post-MOEA.	106
Figure 4.13:	Screenshot of forward moving behaviour performed by heterogeneous SLCR in the Pareto-optimal front set using post MOEA approach with (a) 4-segment (b) 11-segment (c) 17-segment.	109
Figure 4.14:	Example of different evolved morphology for MBCR.	114
Figure 4.15:	Screenshot of moving behaviour evolved for the two segments MBCR.	115
Figure 4.16	Population fitness score for MBCR in 7th run.	116
Figure 5.1:	Simulation environment for 15cm narrow path crawling moving behaviour.	120
Figure 5.2:	Pattern and distribution of Pareto-optimal front solutions.	125
Figure 5.3:	Archive results for 2nd run.	126
Figure 5.4:	Population fitness score for 2nd run.	127
Figure 5.5:	Screenshot of narrow path forward moving behaviour performed by (a) Best evolved Continuum Robot (b) Second Best evolved Continuum Robot in 2nd run.	129
Figure 5.6:	Pattern and distribution of Pareto-optimal Front of Solutions.	132
Figure 5.7:	Population fitness score for repeated run.	133
Figure 5.8:	Screenshot of new narrow path forward crawling moving	134

	behaviour performed by the best evolved individual.	
Figure 5.9:	Morphology of vertical undulation Continuum Robot.	136
Figure 5.10:	Pareto-optimal front for vertical undulation continuum robots.	138
Figure 5.11:	Population fitness score for 2nd run on vertical undulation moving behaviour.	139
Figure 5.12:	Screenshot of overall best individual evolved in performing the vertical undulation forward moving behaviour.	141
Figure 5.13:	Morphology of lateral rolling Continuum Robot.	143
Figure 5.14:	Pareto-optimal front for lateral rolling continuum robots.	146
Figure 5.15:	Population fitness score for 10th run on lateral rolling moving behaviour.	147
Figure 5.16:	Screenshot of overall best individual evolved in performing the sideways lateral rolling moving behaviour.	149
Figure 6.1:	Overview of constructed continuum robot using 3D printing.	153
Figure 6.2:	Image of fully constructed narrow path crawling continuum robots with different total number of segments.	155
Figure 6.3:	Constructed narrow path testing environment.	156
Figure 6.4:	Narrow path crawling moving behaviour performed by real world continuum robots with different total number of segments.	158
Figure 6.5:	4-segments continuum robot constructed for lateral	162

undulation moving behaviour testing.

Figure 6.6:	Lateral undulation moving behaviour performed by 4- segment continuum robot.	163
Figure 6.7:	Base for the 3D printed modular segment block.	165
Figure 6.8:	6-segment continuum robot fabricated to perform vertical undulation moving behaviour.	166
Figure 6.9:	Vertical undulation moving behaviour performed by 6- segment continuum robot.	167
Figure 6.10:	Obstacle climbing capability shown by continuum robot using vertical undulation motion.	170
Figure 6.11:	7-segment continuum robot constructed for lateral rolling moving behaviour.	173
Figure 6.12:	Lateral rolling moving behaviour performed by constructed 7-segment continuum robot.	174

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene
ANN	Artificial Neural Network
CPG	Central Pattern Generator
EP	Evolutionary Programming
ES	Evolutionary Strategies
FDM	Fused Deposition Modelling
GA	Genetic Algorithm
GP	Genetic Programming
HIPS	High Impact Polystyrene
jDE	Self-adaptive Differential Evolutionary Algorithm
MBCR	Multi-branching Continuum Robot
MOEA	Multi-objective Evolutionary Algorithm
ODE	Open Dynamics Engine
PC	Polycarbonate
PID	Proportional-integral-derivative
PLA	Polylactic Acid

- SLA** Stereolithography
- SLCR** Snake-like Continuum Robot
- SLS** Selective Laser Sintering

LIST OF SYMBOLS

$\phi_{i,ref}$	Joint reference angle
α	Amplitude
ω	Frequency
δ	Phase shift
ϕ_o	Offset control parameter
r	Individual
G	Generation
F	Weighting factor
F_l	Weighting factor lower limit
F_u	Weighting factor upper limit
CR	Crossover probability
$rand$	Random number
τ	Control Parameter Probability Threshold
U	Trial vector
X	Target vector
V	Mutant Vector

J_{rand}	Random structure number
N_{rand}	Scale random number
m	Segment mass
l	Segment length
θ	Motor position angle
O	Output
t	Time

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

In this modern era, autonomous robots are not only used for operations in factories and technology-related environments, instead they have become part of human lives in which they are customized to assist humans in daily jobs or other repetitive tasks. Different types of robots are also designed to replace humans to work in hazardous environments and tasks that are beyond the humans' capability. The usage of search and rescue robots during the incidents of the 9/11 World Trade Centre attack and the 2004 tsunami strike had exhibited the importance of the role of robots in locating the victims within the golden time rescue period (Albert and Henry, 2009). Rescue robots are either designed to overcome obstacles or are small in size in order to pass through narrow gaps which are unreachable for humans. Modular robots or more specifically known as continuum robots are becoming increasingly popular in search and rescue mission as they possess the ability to perform multiple movements, and thus have grown into one of the most flexible and versatile mobile robots (Crespi, Badertscher, Guignard, and Ijspeert, 2005). As the continuum robots are highly versatile and compact in size, they can easily navigate across narrow holes or pipes to carry out the assigned tasks or investigations. If there is an existence of obstacles, continuum robots can climb up and over the obstacles which might even be higher than the robot itself. Besides that, the continuum robots are also equipped with multiple degrees of freedom which make them capable to carry out various kinds of motions and can act as either locomotors or manipulators. Since the continuum robots are modular in form comprising of combinations of different module units, they are redundant in design,

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which means that the continuum robots can continue their locomotion even though one particular module is malfunctioning. Due to all these unique features, continuum robots possess the potential of meeting the needs for robotic mobility to travel and perform tasks in unknown and challenging environments.

However, in the field of robotic design, the open-ended synthesis problem is still a meta-challenge. This is due to the fact that there is no formal model that exists thus far for a designer to determine the optimized solutions on the combination of building blocks, in addition to their controllers (Lipson, 2006). Due to the limitations of understanding and the bias of the human designer, people tend to design robots with pre-defined morphologies where most of them are designed according to human experimental trials and errors. Thereafter, the control system is usually restricted to function within the morphologies designed. By using this method, the optimization problem will arise where the designer cannot ensure if the pre-defined robot morphologies and controller are able to provide the optimal performance in its task environment. Furthermore, most of the designs implementing this method are only aiming on achieving a single objective which is to accomplish the allocated task. Unfortunately, due to optimization problems in real world situations, designing of robots naturally involve multiple objectives which are equally important and eventually may lead to conflicting scenarios among them (Deb, 2004).

In the field of continuum robot design, numerous researches have been carried out in modelling and designing the continuum robots' morphology and controller inspired from the snake movements and neuronal control mechanism. From these studies, it was found that both morphology and control mechanism are contributing to the overall moving behaviour of the continuum robots (Lipson, 2006). Yet, there is still a lack of relevant information regarding how a continuum robot morphology and controller relates to its behaviour. This issue turns out to be an open-ended design problem where humans are unsure of the optimum control strategy, body structure, number of segments and suitable segment length in order to provide the best versatility of the continuum robots. Apart from that, the continuum robots possess large number of degrees of freedom which require significant effort from the designer to model and tune the predetermined

parameters so that the continuum robots can perform according to their respective initial design. Most of the time, such a process is very time consuming and costly. In order to overcome this open-ended design and optimization problem, a novel system is developed in this research by implementing the multi-objective co-evolutionary approach to design and optimize automatically both morphology and controller of continuum robots via an artificial evolutionary process with the aim to maximize the moving behaviour and minimize the complexity of continuum robots. Using this method, heterogeneous continuum robots with different morphologies along with the control system are able to be automatically designed and optimized. The continuum robots which were evolved with different morphologies and control systems for similar functionalities are referred to as heterogeneous continuum robots.

In evolutionary robotics, evolutionary optimization is carried out on the autonomous robots' candidate solutions. The population is repeatedly modified and selected according to the formulated fitness function. The favourable genetic traits will develop repeatedly and will be passed on to their offspring generation by generation and thus eventually resulting in better performance in subsequent generations. Hence, a large number of evolutionary iterations are involved in order to obtain the final optimum design. As a result, it is impractical to carry out such trials directly in the real world. For this purpose, a physical simulation software is used in this research to perform the evolutionary computation where a virtual environment will be created in the simulator for the autonomous robots to evolve. In most similar studies, the research is conducted up to the simulation stage only. This is because the fabrication of the designed robots involves high manufacturing cost and numerous manufacturing constraints will arise in fabricating heterogeneous body parts. However, the invention of 3D printers provides a solution for rapid prototyping with a relatively low cost. A prototype can be easily fabricated from a 3D printer within a short period. For that reason, 3D printers are being used in this research to fabricate heterogeneous robot bodies such that the evolved morphologies and controllers are able to be transferred into the real world for physical testing in order to validate on the feasibility of the system and to make the robotic design more practical whereby the robot is not constrained to the simulation world only.

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