PATH AND TRAJECTORY PLANNING OF A RPRPR PLANAR PARALLEL ROBOT FOR PREVENTION OF HIGH-ORDER SINGULARITIES

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Abstract. Parallel robots have many remarkable advantages over their conventional serial counterparts. Highly accurate positioning capability and high payload-to-weight ratio are among the main ones. The main factor underlying all these advantages is their closed-loop construction. However, this constructional feature also causes a special singularity problem, which constitutes their biggest disadvantage. Characteristic singularities classified as Type II exist inside their workspace, around which the magnitude of the inverse dynamic solution grows unboundedly. This naturally yields the saturation of the actuators and eventually in uncontrollability of the robot. Consequently, the whole workspace becomes impossible to be used. In order to pass through a Type II singularity, the consistency of the motion equations of the robot must be maintained at that singularity. However, any Type II singular configuration can transform into a high-order singularity, which, in order to be passed through, requires additional conditions other than the consistency. Therefore, full utilization of the whole workspace with a minimum number of conditions requires to avoid high-order singularities. The present article contributes to the literature by developing path and trajectory planning principles for preventing a two-degree-of-freedom planar parallel robot with RPRPR structure from experiencing high-order singularities.

Key words: parallel robot, path planning, trajectory planning, singularity, high-order singularity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Thanks to their closed-loop structure, parallel mechanisms have many important capabilities such as highly accurate positioning, working under high loads, and performing high-speed and high-acceleration tasks [1, 2]. For these reasons, they are more and more preferred in simulator technologies [3, 4], industrial robots [5, 6], machining [7–9], additive manufacturing [10, 11], medical and surgical robotics [12–14].

The biggest disadvantage of parallel robots compared to their conventional serial counterparts is that there exist Type II singularities inside their workspace [15]. Around these singularities, the magnitude of the inverse dynamic solution diverges to infinity. Accordingly, the actuators get saturated, and the robot becomes uncontrollable [16]. Based on these dynamical aspects, they are also called drive singularities [17] or actuation singularities [17, 18].

As can be appreciated from the consequences mentioned above, Type II singularities cause a parallel robot to use only a small part of its workspace, and for this reason, they have been the subject of many studies in the literature. Initially, studies had generally focused on determining the loci of these singularities [19–22]. This is because it was common practice at the time to avoid singularities when planning paths [23, 24]. Over time, however, the focus has shifted more to developing methods that will enable parallel robots to pass through them. A condition to be met in this regard is that the motion equations of the robot must be consistent at the singularity to be crossed [17, 25, 26].

However, as shown by Özdemir [27], parallel robots may also encounter singularities that require additional conditions besides consistency in order to be passed through. These singularities are high-order singularities of parallel robots [28]. Any Type II singular configuration can transform into a high-order singularity depending on the path and trajectory of the end-effector [27–29].

High-order singularities of parallel robots are much more critical than their classical Type II singularities, as they are much more difficult to remove by requiring a greater number of conditions to be met. In this sense, avoidance of high-order singularities has a key role in the optimization of the desingularization process of parallel robots. The present article contributes to the literature by establishing the path and trajectory design principles of high-order singularity prevention for a two-degree-of-freedom planar parallel robot with RPRPR structure where R and P denote revolute and prismatic joints, respectively. This closed kinematic chain belongs to the classical five-bar family and it is one of the mostly used planar parallel robot architectures with two common actuation schemes, namely RPRPR and RPRPR [30] where the underlines show the actuated joints. The <u>RPRPR</u> architecture is considered in the present study.

2. EQUATIONS OF MOTION

The robot under study is shown in Fig. 1. The fixed Cartesian coordinate system xy has its origin at point A. Point E is the endpoint of the robot, and x_E and y_E are its horizontal and vertical Cartesian coordinates, respectively. The torques provided to the robot by the motors at joints A and B are T_1 and T_2 , respectively. Link 1 is the fixed link whereas links 2, 3, 4 and 5 are the moving links. The length of the fixed link is $a_1 = |AB|$. The prismatic joint variables are $s_1 = |AE|$ and $s_2 = |BE|$. The revolute joint variables θ_1 and θ_2 are defined on the figure. The gravity acceleration g is taken to be along the negative y-axis. Link i (i = 2, 3, 4, 5) has mass m_i , mass center G_i , and centroidal mass moment of inertia I_i . The distances used to express the positions of the moving mass centers are as follows: $r_2 = |AG_2|$, $r_3 = |EG_3|$, $r_4 = |BG_4|$ and $r_5 = |EG_5|$.

The velocity loop equations can be written as

$$\mathbf{J}\dot{\mathbf{q}} = \begin{bmatrix} 0\\0 \end{bmatrix} \tag{1}$$

where

$$\mathbf{q} = \begin{bmatrix} \theta_1 \\ s_1 \\ \theta_2 \\ s_2 \end{bmatrix}$$
(2)

$$\mathbf{J} = \begin{bmatrix} -s_1 \sin(\theta_1) & \cos(\theta_1) & s_2 \sin(\theta_2) & -\cos(\theta_2) \\ s_1 \cos(\theta_1) & \sin(\theta_1) & -s_2 \cos(\theta_2) & -\sin(\theta_2) \end{bmatrix}$$
(3)

The equations of motion of the robot can be expressed in joint space as

$$\mathbf{M}\ddot{\mathbf{q}} + \mathbf{N} = \mathbf{Q} + \mathbf{J}^T \boldsymbol{\lambda} \tag{4}$$

where

$$\mathbf{M} = \begin{bmatrix} M_{11} & 0 & 0 & 0\\ 0 & M_{22} & 0 & 0\\ 0 & 0 & M_{33} & 0\\ 0 & 0 & 0 & M_{44} \end{bmatrix}$$
(5)

$$\mathbf{N} = \begin{bmatrix} N_1 \\ N_2 \\ N_3 \\ N_4 \end{bmatrix} \tag{6}$$



Fig. 1 – A RPRPR planar parallel robot.

The diagonal elements of \mathbf{M} and the elements of \mathbf{N} are given by

$$M_{11} = m_2 r_2^2 + I_2 + m_3 (s_1 - r_3)^2 + I_3$$
⁽⁷⁾

$$M_{22} = m_3$$
 (8)

$$M_{33} = m_4 r_4^2 + I_4 + m_5 (s_2 - r_5)^2 + I_5$$
(9)

$$M_{44} = m_5$$
 (10)

$$N_1 = 2m_3 \dot{s}_1 \dot{\theta}_1 (s_1 - r_3) + (m_2 r_2 + m_3 (s_1 - r_3)) g \cos(\theta_1)$$
(11)

$$N_2 = -m_3(s_1 - r_3)\dot{\theta_1}^2 + m_3g\sin(\theta_1)$$
⁽¹²⁾

$$N_3 = 2m_5 \dot{s}_2 \dot{\theta}_2 (s_2 - r_5) + (m_4 r_4 + m_5 (s_2 - r_5)) g \cos(\theta_2)$$
(13)

$$N_4 = -m_5(s_2 - r_5)\dot{\theta}_2^2 + m_5g\sin(\theta_2)$$
(14)

 \mathbf{Q} is the vector of generalized nonconservative forces. We assume that the motor torques are the only external torques and no other external nonconservative forces or moments act on the robot. Then

$$\boldsymbol{Q} = \begin{bmatrix} T_1 \\ 0 \\ T_2 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} \tag{15}$$

 λ is the vector of Lagrange multipliers of the form

$$\boldsymbol{\lambda} = \begin{bmatrix} \lambda_1 \\ \lambda_2 \end{bmatrix} \tag{16}$$

3. HIGH-ORDER SINGULARITIES AND ESTABLISHMENT OF PATH AND TRAJECTORY PLANNING PRINCIPLES FOR PREVENTING THEM

It is seen from equation (15) that the elements of \mathbf{Q} that correspond to the unactuated joint variables are equal to zero. Based on this fact, equation (4) can be separated into two parts as follows:

$$\mathbf{M}_{a}\ddot{\mathbf{q}} + \mathbf{N}_{a} = \mathbf{Q}_{a} + (\mathbf{J}_{a})^{T}\boldsymbol{\lambda}$$
(17)

$$\mathbf{M}_{u}\ddot{\mathbf{q}} + \mathbf{N}_{u} = \mathbf{Q}_{u} + (\mathbf{J}_{u})^{T}\boldsymbol{\lambda}$$
(18)

where

$$\mathbf{M}_{a} = \begin{bmatrix} M_{11} & 0 & 0 & 0\\ 0 & 0 & M_{33} & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$
(19)

$$\mathbf{M}_{u} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & M_{22} & 0 & 0\\ 0 & 0 & 0 & M_{44} \end{bmatrix}$$
(20)

$$\mathbf{N}_a = \begin{bmatrix} N_1 \\ N_3 \end{bmatrix} \tag{21}$$

$$\mathbf{N}_{u} = \begin{bmatrix} N_{2} \\ N_{4} \end{bmatrix} \tag{22}$$

$$\mathbf{J}_{a} = \begin{bmatrix} -s_{1}\sin(\theta_{1}) & s_{2}\sin(\theta_{2}) \\ s_{1}\cos(\theta_{1}) & -s_{2}\cos(\theta_{2}) \end{bmatrix}$$
(23)

$$\mathbf{J}_{u} = \begin{bmatrix} \cos(\theta_{1}) & -\cos(\theta_{2}) \\ \sin(\theta_{1}) & -\sin(\theta_{2}) \end{bmatrix}$$
(24)

$$\mathbf{Q}_a = \begin{bmatrix} T_1 \\ T_2 \end{bmatrix} \tag{25}$$

$$\mathbf{Q}_u = \begin{bmatrix} 0\\0 \end{bmatrix} \tag{26}$$

Hence, provided that the matrix $(J_u)^T$ is invertible, equation (18) can be solved for λ as

$$\boldsymbol{\lambda} = [(\mathbf{J}_u)^T]^{-1} (\mathbf{M}_u \ddot{\mathbf{q}} + \mathbf{N}_u)$$
(27)

Then, the required motor torques can be computed as

$$\begin{bmatrix} T_1 \\ T_2 \end{bmatrix} = \mathbf{M}_a \ddot{\mathbf{q}} + \mathbf{N}_a - (\mathbf{J}_a)^T [(\mathbf{J}_u)^T]^{-1} (\mathbf{M}_u \ddot{\mathbf{q}} + \mathbf{N}_u)$$
(28)

When the determinant of $(\mathbf{J}_u)^T$ vanishes at a point, a Type II singularity occurs at that point [17]. Thus, Type II singularities of the robot can be determined from

$$\delta = det((\boldsymbol{J}_u)^T) = sin(\theta_1 - \theta_2) = 0$$
⁽²⁹⁾

It can be seen by inspecting the geometry of the robot that there are three possible cases at a Type II singularity. These are presented in Table 1. Notice that $(J_u)^T$ becomes rank-deficient by one at Type II singularities of the robot.

 Table 1

 Three different cases of Type II singular configurations of the robot

Type II singularity case	Values of the joint variables
1	$\theta_1 = \theta_2 = 0$
2	$\theta_1 = \theta_2 = \pi$
3	$\theta_1 = 0$ and $\theta_2 = \pi$

Equation (27) gives

$$\lambda_1 = \frac{\mu_1}{\delta} \tag{30}$$

$$\lambda_2 = \frac{\mu_2}{\delta} \tag{31}$$

where

$$\mu_1 = -\sin(\theta_2) \left(M_{22} \ddot{s}_1 + N_2 \right) - \sin(\theta_1) \left(M_{44} \ddot{s}_2 + N_4 \right)$$
(32)

$$\mu_2 = \cos(\theta_2) \left(M_{22} \ddot{s}_1 + N_2 \right) + \cos(\theta_1) \left(M_{44} \ddot{s}_2 + N_4 \right)$$
(33)

The condition that the robot must satisfy for maintaining consistency of its equations of motion at a singularity can be determined as follows:

$$\sigma(M_{22}\ddot{s}_1 + N_2) + M_{44}\ddot{s}_2 + N_4 = 0 \tag{34}$$

where the values of σ are provided in Table 2.

Values of σ Type II singularity case σ 11213-1

Table 2

Satisfaction of equation (34) at the singularity time t_s is equivalent to satisfaction of

$$\mu_1(t_s) = \mu_2(t_s) = 0 \tag{35}$$

So, if the trajectory is consistent, then

$$\lambda_1(t_s) = \lambda_2(t_s) = \frac{0}{0} \tag{36}$$

Note that $\mu_1(t_s) = 0$ is automatically satisfied for the robot under study. But to have $\mu_2(t_s) = 0$, equation (34) must be satisfied at the singularity.

The boundedness of the inverse dynamic solution requires the limits $\lim_{t \to t_s} \lambda_1$ and $\lim_{t \to t_s} \lambda_2$ to be finite. Equation (36) suggests the application of l'Hôpital's Rule as:

$$\lim_{t \to t_s} \lambda_1 = \lim_{t \to t_s} \frac{\frac{d\mu_1}{dt}}{\frac{d\delta}{dt}}$$
(37)

$$\lim_{t \to t_s} \lambda_2 = \lim_{t \to t_s} \frac{\frac{\mathrm{d}\mu_2}{\mathrm{d}t}}{\frac{\mathrm{d}\delta}{\mathrm{d}t}}$$
(38)

Equations (37) and (38) show that if $d\delta/dt$ vanishes at time $t = t_s$, then extra conditions other than consistency must be satisfied for a bounded inverse dynamic solution. This means that in order the robot to have a high-order singularity, it is required that

$$\left. \frac{\mathrm{d}\delta}{\mathrm{d}t} \right|_{t=t_s} = 0 \tag{39}$$

Recalling that sine and cosine of an angle cannot be simultaneously equal to zero, this high-order singularity condition can be equivalently expressed as

$$\dot{\theta}_1(t_s) - \dot{\theta}_2(t_s) = 0 \tag{40}$$

The velocity inverse kinematics solution gives

$$\dot{\theta}_{1} = -\frac{\sin(\theta_{1})}{s_{1}}\dot{x}_{E} + \frac{\cos(\theta_{1})}{s_{1}}\dot{y}_{E}$$
(41)

$$\dot{\theta}_2 = -\frac{\sin(\theta_2)}{s_2} \dot{x}_E + \frac{\cos(\theta_2)}{s_2} \dot{y}_E$$
(42)

In this study, we assume that there are no inverse kinematic singularities; hence s_1 and s_2 are always nonzero throughout the motion.

$$\dot{\theta}_1(t_s) = \frac{\psi}{s_1(t_s)} \dot{y}_E(t_s) \tag{43}$$

$$\dot{\theta}_2(t_s) = \sigma \frac{\Psi}{s_2(t_s)} \dot{y}_E(t_s) \tag{44}$$

where the values of ψ are provided in Table 3.

Table 3 Values of ψ

Type II singularity case	ψ
1	1
2	-1
3	1

Substituting equations (43) and (44) into equation (40), we get

$$\psi\left(\frac{1}{s_1(t_s)} - \sigma \frac{1}{s_2(t_s)}\right) \dot{y}_E(t_s) = 0$$
(45)

or

$$-\sigma \frac{a_1 \dot{y}_E(t_s)}{s_1(t_s)s_2(t_s)} = 0$$
(46)

Equation (46) reveals that a high-order singularity of the robot under investigation occurs when

$$\dot{\mathbf{y}}_E(t_s) = 0 \tag{47}$$

The condition given by equation (47) implies that a Type II singular configuration becomes of high order if the trajectory is such that the endpoint E has zero velocity at the singularity time or if the endpoint path is such that it has a horizontal tangent at that singular configuration; that is, if the following equation holds:

$$\left. \frac{\mathrm{d}y_E}{\mathrm{d}x_E} \right|_{t=t_s} = 0 \tag{48}$$

Hence, the path design principle to avoid the occurrence of a high-order singularity of the <u>RPRPR</u> robot is that the endpoint path must have a nonzero slope at the Type II singular configurations. Additionally, the trajectory design principle in this regard is that the endpoint must have a nonzero velocity at Type II singularities. These path and trajectory design principles are quite easy to implement in practice.

4. NUMERICAL EXAMPLES

To illustrate the application of our findings, let us consider an <u>RPRPR</u> robot with $a_1 = 6$ m. The task is to move the endpoint *E* along a cubic path from (x, y) = (2 m, -1 m) to (x, y) = (4 m, 1 m) in $t_f = 5$ s. It

is worth noting that the robot will inevitably pass through a Type II singular configuration because the endpoint path will cross the x-axis during the realization of this task. At the initial configuration, the joint variables are as follows: $\theta_1 = -26.5651^\circ$, $s_1 = 2.2361$ m, $\theta_2 = -165.9638^\circ$ and $s_2 = 4.1231$ m. The starting and ending velocities and accelerations are zero. In accordance with the task requirements, the x-coordinate trajectory of the endpoint is generated by the following quintic polynomial of time t:

$$x_E(t) = 2 + \frac{4}{25}t^3 - \frac{6}{125}t^4 + \frac{12}{3125}t^5$$
(49)

This equation is plotted in Fig. 2. From equation (49) it can be deduced that $\dot{x}_E > 0$ for all *t* in the open interval from 0 to 5 s. This guarantees that the endpoint will have a nonzero velocity when the Type II singularity occurs.



Fig. 2 – The x-coordinate trajectory of the endpoint.

As a first example, let us take the endpoint path given by

$$y = x^3 - 9x^2 + 27x - 27 \tag{50}$$

This path is the path 1 in Fig. 3, and it connects the required starting and ending positions of the endpoint. There are no inverse kinematic singularities along this path, but a Type II singular configuration occurs when the endpoint arrives at the point (x, y) = (3 m, 0) at time t = 2.5 s. So, $t_s = 2.5 \text{ s}$.



Fig. 3 - Endpoint paths considered in the examples.

The singularity encountered in this first example is of high order since we have $\delta(t_s) = \dot{\delta}(t_s) = \ddot{\delta}(t_s) = 0$ (see Fig. 4). This is because path 1 has zero slope and curvature at the singular point (x, y) = (3 m, 0).



Fig. 4 – Variations of the determinant δ over time in the examples with path 1 and path 2.

To prevent the singularity from transforming into a high-order singularity, the path planning principle introduced in this article must be applied. To show this, in our second example the endpoint path is slightly modified to have a nonzero slope at the singular point, namely, to have a slope of 0.2 at the point (x, y) = (3 m, 0). The new path is the path 2 in Fig. 3 and is given by

$$y = 0.8x^3 - 7.2x^2 + 21.8x - 22.2 \tag{51}$$

In this second example with path 2 there are again no inverse kinematic singularities, and the same Type II singular configuration is encountered again at the same time t = 2.5 s. However, this singular configuration is now not a high-order singularity since the first-order time derivative of the determinant δ at the singularity time is not equal to zero (see Fig. 4). Figure 5 shows the actuated joint variables required to follow path 2 in the second example.



Fig. 5 – Variation of the actuated joint variables over time in the second example with path 2.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The present article contributes to the literature by deriving the high-order singularity condition of a fivelink planar parallel robot with <u>RPRPR</u> architecture. It is shown that any Type II singular configuration of this

8

robot transforms into a high-order singularity if the slope of the endpoint path is zero at that singular configuration or if the endpoint velocity is zero at the singularity time. The occurrence of a high-order singularity can be prevented by properly planning the endpoint path and trajectory in accordance with these findings.

The application and effectiveness of these path and trajectory design principles are illustrated by numerical examples. These examples demonstrate that transformation of a Type II singularity of the <u>RPRPR</u> planar parallel robot into a high-order singularity can be avoided by planning the endpoint path to have a nonzero slope at the singular point and, additionally, by ensuring that the endpoint has a nonzero velocity at the singularity time. In order to better understand the practical importance of the results of this article, it should be recalled that it is necessary to pass through Type II singular configurations for fully utilizing the whole workspace of <u>RPRPR</u> planar parallel robots, and this can be achieved without any additional conditions other than consistency if and only if the occurrence of high-order singularities is prevented.

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