



UNA DEMO DI SIMULAZIONE DI REALTÀ VIRTUALE

A VIRTUAL REALITY SIMULATION DEMO

Genova, 28 febbraio 2024

CNR IEIIT, Scuola di Robotica

Scuola di Robotica, via Balbi 1A, 16126 Genoa

h. 10-12; 15-17

Il progetto Horizon Europe REXASI-PRO sta sviluppando strumenti trustworthy-by-design per aiutare le persone con mobilità ridotta. Un caso studio è l'impiego di sedie a rotelle intelligenti che si muovono autonomamente tra le persone. In questo contesto, i Partner stanno progettando i robot in modo che esibiscano comportamenti sociali che siano confortevoli per l'utente seduto sulla sedia a rotelle e che siano percepiti come amichevoli dalle persone che condividono gli stessi spazi.

Presentiamo il 28 febbraio 2024 una dimostrazione del setup che stiamo utilizzando per testare gli algoritmi di navigazione tra esseri umani: i soggetti si immergono in una simulazione di realtà virtuale popolata da sedie a rotelle e pedoni virtuali (dotati di algoritmi di navigazione bio-ispirati [3]), sono liberi di muoversi e sperimentano come gli agenti virtuali si comportano e reagiscono alle loro azioni.

La realtà virtuale si presta bene a sperimentare l'interazione cognitiva uomo-robot, come quando utilizziamo gesti per indicare e selezionare oggetti o destinazioni [1]. La simulazione facilita lo sviluppo, ad esempio isolando gli algoritmi di controllo dalla percezione. Inoltre, possiamo sperimentare anche se non abbiamo robot nei nostri laboratori. La realtà virtuale estende la simulazione includendo esseri umani reali in uno sviluppo centrato sugli utenti. Nel nostro contesto, possiamo misurare il comportamento delle persone durante la simulazione e raccogliere il loro feedback per migliorare iterativamente la navigazione della sedia a rotelle in situazioni critiche, come



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement **No 101070028-2**

Disclaimer: The content reflects the views of the authors only. The European Commission is not liable for any use that may be made of the information contained herein. This document contains information, which is proprietary to the REXASIPRO consortium. Neither this document nor the information contained herein shall be used, duplicated or communicated by any means to any third party, in whole or in parts, except with the prior written consent of the REXASIPRO consortium. This restriction legend shall not be altered or obliterated on or from this document. Neither the European Commission nor the REXASIPRO project consortium are liable for any use that may be made of the information that it contains.

il passaggio di strettoie occupate da persone. Tali esperimenti integrano le simulazioni offline su larga scala che misurano invece la sicurezza e l'efficienza della navigazione [2].

Nella demo del 28 febbraio, gli utenti indossano un visore VR (Meta Quest 3), collegato in modalità wireless a un simulatore di robotica (CoppeliaSim) che esegue diverse scene di navigazione con sedie a rotelle e pedoni virtuali. Mentre gli utenti si muovono in un'area vuota di circa 6 x 6 metri, i loro movimenti nella scena virtuale sono visualizzati su uno schermo, in modo che gli spettatori siano consapevoli di ciò che sta accadendo nella simulazione. Gli utenti possono sperimentare due modalità: nella realtà virtuale, sono completamente immersi per percepire gli agenti virtuali in un ambiente virtuale; nella realtà mista, invece, percepiscono gli agenti virtuali nell'ambiente reale. Un video che presenta una versione precedente del setup limitata alla realtà virtuale è disponibile online [4].

Navigazione cooperativa in una realtà virtuale. Come funziona?

In REXASI-PRO sviluppiamo algoritmi che consentono alle sedie a rotelle intelligenti di muoversi in spazi interni popolati da persone. Li testiamo in simulazione per assicurarci che siano efficienti e sicuri.

Utilizzando la realtà virtuale, anche gli esseri umani partecipano agli esperimenti: in diversi scenari, misuriamo l'impatto dei loro movimenti e ci forniscono un feedback sul comportamento delle sedie a rotelle intelligenti, per renderle sempre più socialmente consapevoli.

In questo video: Test di navigazione su sedia a rotelle in Realtà Virtuale:

<https://rexasi-pro.spindoxlabs.com/cooperative-navigation-in-a-virtual-reality-rexasi-pro/>

A VIRTUAL REALITY SIMULATION DEMO

The Horizon Europe project REXASI-PRO is developing trustworthy-by-design tools to help people with reduced mobility, like smart wheelchairs that navigate autonomously among people. In this context, we are designing social-compliant behaviours that are comfortable for the user sitting in the wheelchair, as well as perceived as friendly by people sharing the same spaces. We present a demonstration of the setup we are using to test navigation algorithms with humans-in-the-loop: subjects immerse themselves in a virtual reality simulation populated with virtual wheelchairs and pedestrians (equipped with bio-inspired navigation algorithms [3]), are free to move around and experience how the virtual agents behave and react to their actions.

Virtual reality is well suited to experiment with cognitive Human-Robot interaction, like when using pointing gestures to select objects or destinations [1]. Simulation speeds up development, for instance, by isolating control algorithms from perception. Moreover, we can experiment with robots that we don't have in our labs. Virtual reality extends simulation to include real humans in a human-driven development. In our context, we can measure the behaviour of people during the simulation and gather their feedback to iteratively improve wheelchair navigation in critical situations, like when negotiating narrow passages with people. Such experiments complement large-scale offline simulations that measure instead navigation safety and efficiency [2].

In this demonstration, users wear a VR headset (Meta Quest 3), connected wirelessly to a robotics simulator (CoppeliaSim) running different navigation scenes with virtual



wheelchairs and pedestrians. While users move in an empty area of about 6 x 6 meters, their movements in the virtual scene are visualized on a screen, so that spectators are aware of what is happening in simulation. Users can experience two modalities: in virtual reality, they are fully immersed to perceive virtual agents in a virtual environment; in mixed reality, they perceive virtual agents in the real environment instead. A video featuring a previous version of the setup limited to virtual reality is available online [4].

Cooperative navigation in a virtual reality. How does it work?

In REXASI-PRO, we develop algorithms that let smart wheelchairs navigate indoor spaces populated by people. We test them in simulation to make sure they are efficient and safe.

Using virtual reality, real humans participate in the experiments too: in different scenarios, we measure how their movements are impacted and they give us feedback on the smart wheelchairs' behaviour to make it more and more socially-aware.

In this video: Testing wheelchair navigation in a Virtual Reality:

<https://rexasi-pro.spindoxlabs.com/cooperative-navigation-in-a-virtual-reality-rexasi-pro/>

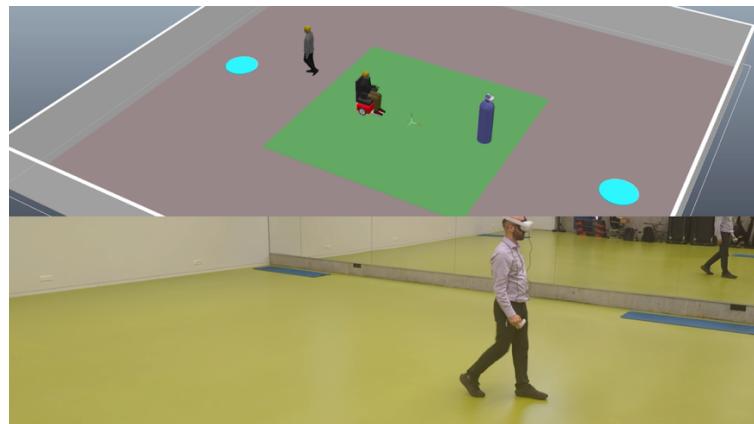
Jerome Guzzi

Jérôme Guzzi holds a Master's degree in Physics for ETH Zurich and a PhD in Informatics from USI Lugano. He is a senior researcher at the Dalle Molle Institute for Artificial Intelligence (IDSIA, SUPSI-USI) in Lugano, Switzerland. His research spans several topics in mobile robotics: perception, path planning and navigation, swarm robotics, human-robot interaction, and educational robotics. Currently, his primary interest is in the relationships between communication, coordination, and complexity in multi-human/multi-robot systems.

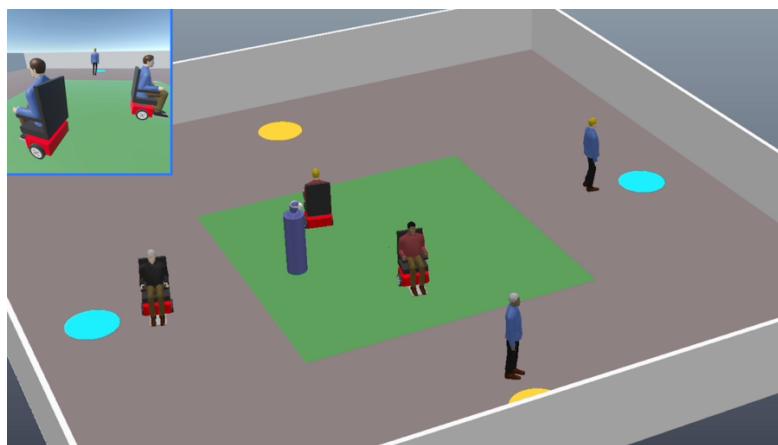
References

- [1] Jérôme Guzzi, Gabriele Abbate, Antonio Paolillo, and Alessandro Giusti. Interacting with a conveyor belt in virtual reality using pointing gestures. In 2022 17th ACM/IEEE International Conference on Human-Robot Interaction (HRI), pages 1194–1195. IEEE, 2022.
- [2] Jérôme Guzzi, Alessandro Giusti, Luca M. Gambardella, Guy Theraulaz, and Gianni A Di Caro. Human-friendly robot navigation in dynamic environments. In 2013 IEEE international conference on robotics and automation, pages 423–430. IEEE, 2013.
- [3] Jérôme Guzzi. Navground. <https://github.com/idsia-robotics/navground>, 2023.
- [4] REXASI-PRO. Cooperative navigation in a virtual reality. how does it work? <https://rexasi-pro.spindoxlabs.com/cooperative-navigation-in-a-virtual-reality-rexasi-pro>, 2023.

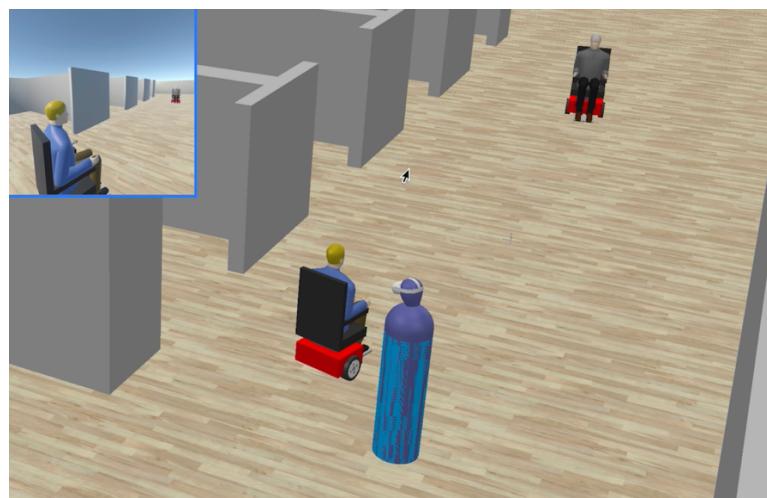




Virtual Reality setup. Top: view in simulation with one virtual wheelchair, one virtual pedestrian and the avatar of one user (blue). Bottom: external view of the user wearing the VR headset while participating in the scene.



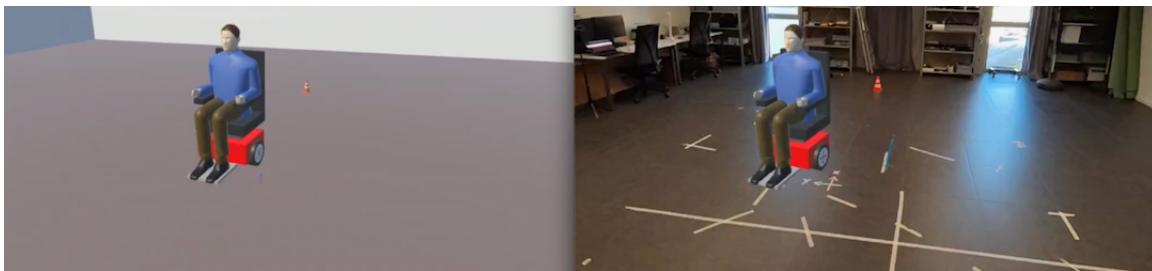
Simulated navigation experiment in Virtual Reality where agents move between waypoints, crossing in the middle. Top-Left: user view in Virtual Reality.



Simulated navigation experiment in Virtual Reality where agents move in an indoor space. Top-Left: user view in Virtual Reality.



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement **No 101070028-2**



Same scene in Virtual Reality (left) or Mixed Reality (right).



This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement **No 101070028-2**