Viharos Zs. J.; Solutions of various assignments in different levels of machining using a general ANN-based process model; MOSYCUT - Model-based monitoring systems for cutting tools and processes, *MOSYCUT Workshop*-Ljubljana, 1999, pp. 65-72.

Solutions of various assignments in different levels of machining using a general ann-based process model

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1. Introduction

Modelling methods can be used in several fields of production e.g. in planning, optimisation or control. The production in our days incorporates several stages, the workpiece goes through a number of operations (Figure 1.).

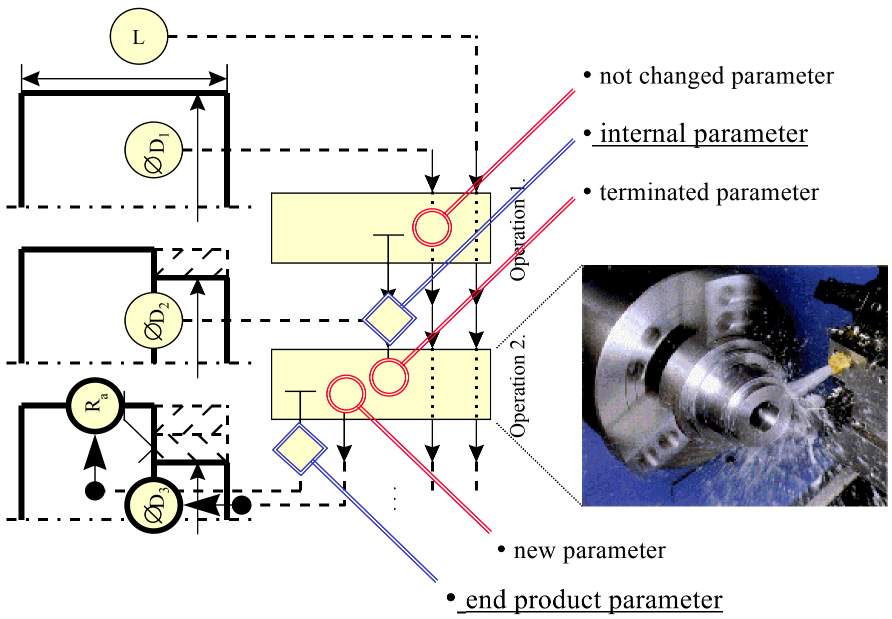

Figure 1. Connections of the operations of the production chain through workpiece parameters. On the left side, the stages of material removal from an axle, the related operations in the middle, on the right side the related parameter stream of the workpiece along the production chain are presented [15][16].

The output of one operation is the input of an another one or it is a feature of the end product. To build a model for a production chain, models have to be ordered to every stage of production. A chain of operations connected by their input-output parameters (Figure 2) can model the sequence of production operations. Operations have several input- and output parameters and dependencies among them are usually non-linear, consequently, the related model has to handle multidimensionality and non-linearity.

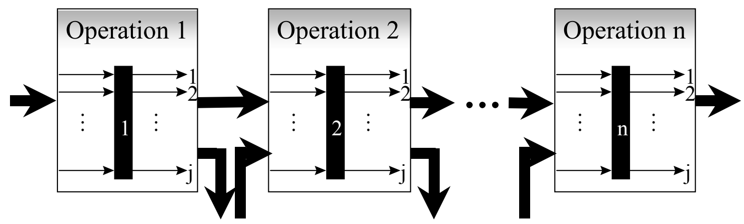

Figure 2. Operation model based production chain model. Arrows indicate the parameter flow along the production chain.

Artificial neural networks (ANNs) can be used as operation models because they can handle strong non-linearites, large number of parameters, missing information. Based on their inherent learning capabilities, ANNs can adapt themselves to changes in the production environment and can be used also in case there is no exact knowledge about the relationships among the various parameters of manufacturing.

Some error is usually incorporated into modeling of real processes, the model estimates its output variables only with a limited accuracy. The error by the output side of an operation model in the production chain depends on its own error and the error incorporated into the input variables of the model. These input variables are usually output parameters from previous operations. Consequently, model errors can be summed up and, therefore, the accuracy of the individual models is a crucial factor in the modeling of production chains.

A lot of effort has been made to apply ANNs for modeling manufacturing operations [11][12]. The assignments to be performed determined the input-output configurations of the models, i.e. the parameters to be considered as inputs and the ones as outputs.

Considering the input and output variables of a given task together as a set of parameters, the ANN model estimates a part of this parameter set based on the remaining part. This selection strongly influences the accuracy of the developed model especially if dependencies between parameters are non-invertable. In different stages of production (e.g. in planning, optimisation or control) tasks are different, consequently, the estimation capabilities of the related applied models are different even if the same set of parameters is used.

One of the main goals of the research to be reported here was to find a general model for a set of assignments, which can satisfy the accuracy requirements. Research was also focused on how to apply the general model for various tasks.

2. ANN-based approaches to modeling of machining processes

The aim of this paragraph is to show the large variety of machining assignments and input-output configurations of the related ANNs. It should be stressed that in every application the input-output configuration of the applied ANN model is determined by the given assignment, namely known parameters serves as inputs and unknown parameters serves as outputs. The estimation capabilities of the applied ANN models are determined as results after the model building and testing stage.

An interesting example was presented by Knapp & Wang [5] who used an ANN in planning. The input vector of the ANN consists of parameters to identify the type of feature to be machined, the related geometrical parameters of the feature and parameters to identify the previous machining operations. The output of the ANN identifies the next operation. The goal of this research was to generate operation order.

In the ANN used for ordering of resources to workcenters, the performance measure values of operation policy of generated production plan act as network input [1]. The output of the ANN determines the number of resources for each workcenter.

Cutting tool selection is realised by Dini [2]. The inputs of the ANN are machining type, cutting conditions, clamping type, workpiece material, workpiece slenderness and outputs are five of parameters identifying the cutting tool.

To generate an optimum set of process parameters at the design state of injection molding, Choi *et al.* use an ANN model with inputs of filling time, melt temperature, holding time, coolant temperature and packing pressure and with outputs of melt temperature difference, mold temperature difference, overpacked element, sink index and average and variance of linear shrinkage [1].

The compensation of thermal distortion was the goal of Hatamura *et al.* [3]. On the input side of the used ANN were parameters from deformation sensors and the outputs were used to decide if cooling, heating or no intervention are necessary.

For monitoring, features calculated from three signals (force, acceleration and power) are the inputs and five tool condition classes are the outputs of the developed model used by Li & Elbestawi [7]. The model is a fuzzy neural network. The target of their research was the monitoring of the tool condition. Outputs of the used ANN model were force, power and temperature for monitoring the cutting process and for estimation of workpiece roughness inputs were cutting parameters presented in the work by Rangwala & Dornfeld [13]. Optimisation and search for input variables are presented in this paper, too.

Monostori described models to estimate and classify tool wear [10]. The paper presents variable input-output configurations of ANN models according to variable tasks.
By building a model for creep feed grinding of aluminium with diamond wheels, presented by Liao & Chen [8], bond type, mesh size, concentration, work speed and depth of cut as the inputs and surface finish, normal grinding force per unit width and grinding power per unit width are used as the outputs of the ANN model. The paper also calls the attention to the problem that an ANN results the same values for output parameters when the input values were the same.

3. Four different assignments of engineers

In the following space, results are presented with four engineering assignments where the required models work on the same parameter set but the feasible input-output configurations of these models are different.

1. The first task is planning. A surface has to be machined by turning to achieve roughness (parameter: R_a[mm]) demands of the customer. The engineer has to determine the tool (parameters: cutting edge angle: χ[rad], corner radius: r_ε[mm]), the cutting parameters (parameters: feed: f[mm/rev], depth of cut: a[mm], speed: v[m/min]) and predict phenomenon during cutting (parameters: force: F_c[N], power: P[kW] and tool life: T[min]) consequently a model is needed where R_a serves as input and other parameters are outputs. Usually, the customer gives only an upper limit for the roughness, which means an interval of R_a is acceptable, in contrast to other parameters because other known parameters are given by their values.
2. The second task is to satisfy the roughness demands of the customer but with a given tool. In this case the R_a, χ, r_ε are inputs and f, a, v, F_c, P, T are outputs.
3. The third task is to control the running cutting process with measured monitoring parameters such as force and power. Measured values of these parameters can be used as information about the current state of the cutting process. In this case R_a, χ, r_ε, F_c, P serve as input and f, a, v, T are outputs. The CNC controller has to select the appropriate cutting parameters to produce the requested surface.
4. The fourth task is the same as the third one but the CNC controller can change only the ‘f ‘and ‘a’ parameters because v is prescribed. This case needs a model with inputs R_a, χ, r_ε, F_c, P, v and with outputs f, a, v, T.

These assignments show several input-output configurations for modelling dependencies between the different elements of a parameter set. The question arises: Which model describes the cutting process in the best way, i.e. with the highest accuracy? The heuristic search algorithm can answer this question.

4. Selection of the appropriate input-output configuration of the ANN-based process model

Outlying the multidimensional and non-linear nature of the machining operations and the fact that closely related assignments require different model settings, Viharos *et al.* [14] addresses the problem of automatic input-output configuration and generation of ANN-based process models with special emphasis on modeling of production chains. In this paper an algorithm is presented to build up a general ANN model through automatic selection of its input-output configuration. The algorithm does not have any regard to the given assignment of engineers its target is to satisfy the accuracy requirements. The following three tasks are solved with help of the developed algorithm:

1. Determination of the (maximum) number of output parameters (No) from the available N parameters which can be estimated using the remaining Ni = N - No input parameters within the prescribed accuracy.
2. Ordering of the available parameters into input and output parameter sets having Ni and No elements, respectively.

3. Training the network whose input-output configuration has been determined in the preceding steps.

In practical implementation sensors, machine controllers and computers would provide a part of parameters of an ANN operation model. For simulating the machining process all information were generated via theoretical models, which are functions of several input variables. It should be stressed that in a practical implementation theoretical models are not necessary. They are used in the present case only to provide simulated samples for training and testing purposes. The validity of the equations is determined by the minimum and maximum boundaries of the parameters. Four equations are used in this paper for engineering tasks above (force, power, tool life and roughness) [6].

$$F_c = 1560 \cdot f^{0.76} \cdot a^{0.98} \cdot (\sin(\kappa))^{-0.22}$$
$$P = 0.039 \cdot f^{0.79} \cdot a \cdot v$$
$$T = 1.85 \cdot 10^{10} \cdot f^{-0.7} \cdot a^{-0.7} \cdot v^{-3.85}$$
$$R_a = 8.5 \cdot f^{1.8} \cdot a^{0.08} \cdot v^{-0.9} \cdot r_\varepsilon^{-0.5},$$

where the boundaries of the equations are as follows:

$$f : 0.1 \cdots 0.4 [mm/rev]$$
$$a : 1 \cdots 4 [mm]$$
$$\kappa : 1.3 \cdots 1.66 [rad]$$
$$v : 75 \cdots 200 [m/\min]$$
$$r_\varepsilon : 0.4 \cdots 1.2 [mm]$$
$$T : 5 \cdots 60 [\min]$$

, consequently

$$Fc \approx: 800 \cdots 3000 [N]$$
$$P \approx: 3.8 \cdots 13.5 [kW]$$
$$R_a \approx: 0.0015 \cdots 0.023 [mm]$$

To create learning and testing parameter sets random values were determined in the allowed range of f, a, χ, v, r_ε considering also the boundaries of T and R_a, Fc, P, T while calculating their values using the above equations. The dependencies between parameters f, a, χ, v, r_ε, Fc, P, T, R_a were experienced as invertable in the given parameter range only the variable χ is the exception, consequently, to get an accurate ANN model the variable χ has to be always input. A hundred data vectors were created as stated above. To test this type of problems the described input-output configuration and model building approach were repeated a hundred times. As result, several variations of input-output configurations were generated. The variable χ is always on the input size of the ANN model as expected. One of these automatic generated input-output configurations is shown in the figure 3.

5. Satisfying the given assignments with the general ANN-based process model

The user usually knows some parameters of a process and the modelling has the task to determine the other parameters while satisfying some constraints. In the previous paragraph a search method was introduced to select a general ANN model which is accurate enough and can be used for different assignments. Consequently, in almost every case a part of input and a part of output variables of the general model are known by the user and the task of the modelling is to search for the remaining, unknown input and output parameters like in the engineering tasks presented before (Figure3.). A search method can solve this task. The search space consists of unknown input parameters. The task for the search method can be formulated as follows: It has to find the unknown input parameters but at the same time it has to satisfy three conditions (Figure 3):

1. One point of the search space can be represented by one possible value set of the unknown input parameters. After placing these parameters together with the known input parameters to the

input side of the given ANN an output vector can be calculated by the ANN estimation (forward calculation). The first condition assures that only that points of the search space can be accepted as result, which can adequately estimate the known output parameters by using the forward calculation. To measure the deviation between estimated and known output parameters an error can be calculated. For the search algorithm the user can prescribe upper limit for this error.

2. The second condition for the unknown input parameters is determined by the validity of the ANN model. This validity is usually determined by the data set used for the training [9]. Boundaries of the model can be handled by minimum and maximum values of the related parameters like in the engineering tasks presented above. This means that the search algorithm can take values for the unknown input parameters only from the related allowed intervals.
3. The third condition relates also to the validity of the ANN. These boundaries come forward by that part of the estimated output vector, which is unknown by the user. Because of the limited validity of the ANN model there are also boundaries for parameters of this part of the estimated output vector. Values of the unknown input parameters are only acceptable if the estimated values of the unknown output parameters are within their allowed range. To measure this condition an error can be calculated for that unknown output parameters, which estimated values are out of their boundaries. For the search algorithm the user can prescribe an upper limit also for this type of error.

The search algorithm is terminated if all of these three conditions are met. Simulated annealing has been selected as search method [4]. In the simulated annealing search an error value is ordered to all

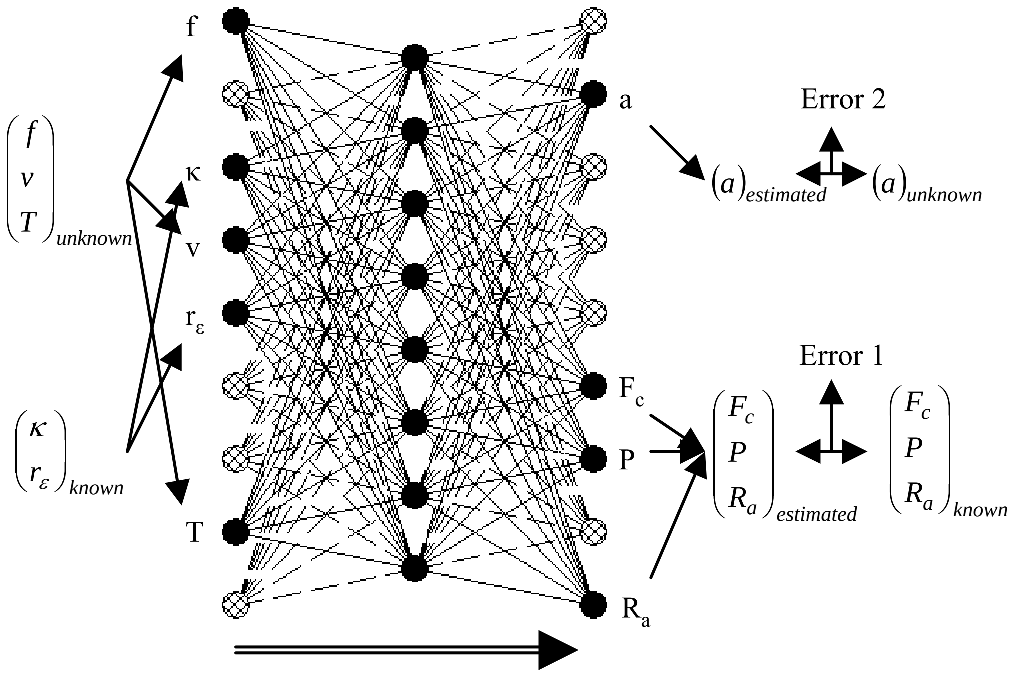

Figure 3. The simulated annealing search is used to satisfy variable tasks of the user without regard to the given ANN configuration. Error 2 is used to hold the search between the boundaries of the ANN model, error 1 measures the distance between estimated and known outputs. The search space consists of unknown input parameters, the evaluation of one point is realised throughout the maximum of error 1 and error 2. The developed algorithm searches the minimum error value. This picture shows the third engineering task presented above.

points of the search space. In the developed algorithm this value is the maximum of errors presented in the picture. The algorithm searches for the minimum error point.

The simulated annealing method has a special parameter, the temperature, which decreases during the search algorithm. The algorithm discovers the search space by repeated change from the current point into a neighbour point. A probability value is used to evaluate a neighbour incorporating information about the error difference between the neighbour and the current point and about the current temperature. The algorithm stops if no neighbour can be selected and the current error value is below the prescribed error limit. This simulated annealing algorithm works on

the discrete points of the search space. To realise this, the parameters of unknown part of the input vector consist of the discrete points of the related intervals. The distance between two points of an interval is chosen to satisfy the accuracy requirements of the estimation prescribed by the user.
As a result, this algorithm gives one solution for a given assignment of the user. To look for a larger number of solutions the search has to be repeated.

Interesting are the results of the four engineering assignments presented in paragraph 3.1. There is a large number of solutions for each of the enumerated assignments. To represent the whole interval of solutions for each parameter the search algorithm was repeated a hundred times at each assignment. To get a simple view about the possible solution field the maximum and minimum values of the results were selected for all parameters, for each task. These parameter fields are listed in Figure 4. Results in this table show the descending interval of acceptable parameters from the planning phase to the CNC control. The requested value of parameter R_a is special because the user gives only upper limit for this parameter. In the assignments the allowed highest value for the roughness of the produced surface is 0.014 mm. The tool used for cutting is determined in the second task, values of related parameters are χ=1.549 rad, r_ε=0.7394 mm. By the control with monitoring, measured value of force was Fc=2247N and of power P=8.69kW. In the fourth engineering task the prescribed speed value was v=161 m/min. In every case the task of the modeling was to satisfy the roughness demand of the user through choosing appropriate values of related parameters.

By every case from planning to CNC control one or more new parameter(s) becomes to be restricted to one value.

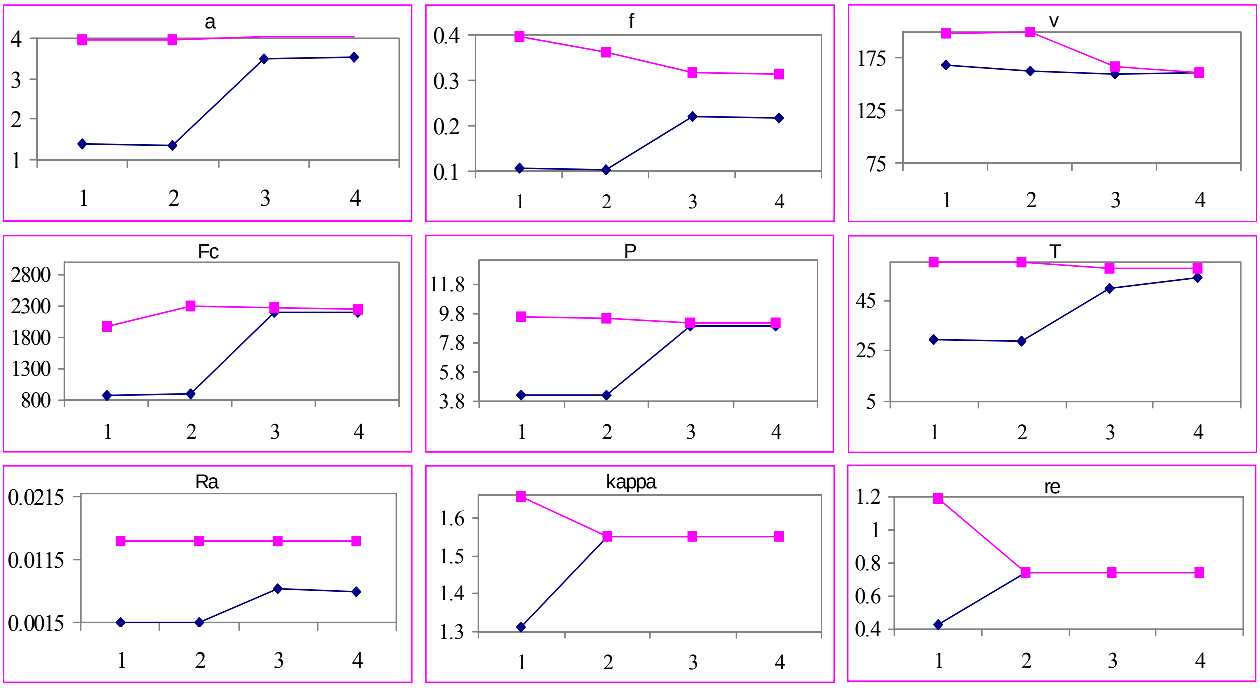

Figure 4. Descending intervals of allowed parameter fields in cutting in the four engineering tasks presented above. The 'X' axis represents number of the given tasks. By every case from planning to CNC control one or more new parameter(s) becomes to be restricted to one value.

Results show that by the first planning task a large field of parameters can be chosen to satisfy the user demands. Using the given tool in the second task possible fields of intervals are only a bit smaller. The intervals in the third task, in monitoring the cutting process with measured monitoring parameters, are much smaller. In the fourth task when the speed is prescribed allowed intervals become much smaller. It should be stressed that these results were received with only one ANN model with the same input-output configuration and using the developed simulated annealing search method, indicating the acceptability of the techniques presented here. The developed sequential forward selection algorithm determined the appropriate input-output configuration automatically. These show that the realization of the new concept works adequately.

6. Conclusions and further research issues

Outlying the importance of accurate process models in the control of production chains, generation and application of ANN-based process models were addressed in the paper with special emphasis on the automatic input-output configuration of general process models which are expected to satisfy the accuracy requirements of a set of related modelling assignments. Combined use of sequential forward search, ANN learning and simulated annealing were proposed. The applicability of the elaborated techniques was illustrated through results of experiments.

Several steps of the new model are to improve further. Some of them are:

- By searching the appropriate input-output configuration a method could be useful which prunes the variables which are not important for output estimations.
- By searching the unknown variables an optimization should be included in this method like in the paper of Rangwala & Dornfeld [13]. E.g. cost minimization, manufacturing time minimization etc. This is important only if there are more solutions for the given task.

The above improvements will be subject of future publications.

6. Acknowledgement

This work was partially supported by *National Research Foundation,* Hungary, Grant No. F026326, T026486 and by MosyCut Project between Metal Cutting Laboratory of the Department of Manufacturing Technologies of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering of the University of Ljubljana and Department of Manufacture Engineering of the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering of the Technical University of Budapest.

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