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# DESCRIPTION

Description

## TECHNICAL FIELD

**[0001]** The presently disclosed subject matter relates to unmanned vehicles, and more particularly, to excavation by such vehicles.

## BACKGROUND

**[0002]** An unmanned ground vehicle (UGV), also referred to as an uncrewed vehicle, is a motorized machine that travels and operates autonomously, by a tele-operator, or by personnel who cannot see the environment (for example when windows are non-existent, or are blocked for safety reasons).

**[0003]** One technical aspect of UGV operation is autonomous navigation. When navigating the terrain, the UGV must have awareness of obstacles that are located within the traversed area and use this information to determine a route that avoids the obstacles - so as to enable safe travel of the vehicle through the area.

**[0004]** UGVs can additionally conduct various other types of operations - including, for example, excavation. A UGV that is configured for excavation is equipped with a suitable digging implement such as, for example, a shovel or blade, as well as related subsystems for operating the digging implement - to accomplish operations such as digging, filling trenches, smoothing roads, clearing obstacles etc. Additionally the excavating UGV performs navigation as a part of its excavation activities - for example: the UGV might approach the site where excavation is required, lift material, and then navigate to move material away from the site. Unmanned excavators, tractors, bulldozers, and backhoes are examples of such UGVs

**[0005]** Patent document US 2013/006484 A1 represents a relevant piece of prior art.

## GENERAL DESCRIPTION

**[0006]** Tracking a UGV with a GPS may be insufficiently accurate and suffer from discontinuities which can lead to mishaps such as collisions with obstacles or entering non-traversable areas. Additionally, GPS tracking sometimes provides insufficiently accurate vertical

positioning data (i.e. altitude or "z-axis"). Other tracking techniques include use of an Inertial Navigation System (INS) which calculates the position of the UGV upon readings received from an Inertial Measurement Unit (IMU).

**[0007]** In some examples of the presently disclosed subject matter, the UGV is tracked using a map of the environment using, for example, an inertial navigation system with conjunction with realtime scanning - as disclosed in "METHOD OF NAVIGATING AN UNMANNED VEHICLE AND SYSTEM THEREOF" (Israeli patent application 250762, filed 29/06/2017,) The aspects of the invention are presented in the appended claims.

## **BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS**

**[0008]** In order to understand the invention and to see how it can be carried out in practice, embodiments will be described, by way of non-limiting examples, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

**Fig. 1** is a stylized before-and-after illustration of a mound-clearing excavation task, in accordance with some examples of the presently disclosed subject matter;

**Fig. 2** is a stylized before-and-after illustration of a trench-digging excavation operation, in accordance with some examples of the presently disclosed subject matter;

**Fig. 3** is a stylized before-and-during illustration of a rock-clearing excavation task, in accordance with some examples of the presently disclosed subject matter;

**Fig. 4** illustrates a schematic block diagram of an excavation-capable UGV, in accordance with some examples of the presently disclosed subject matter; and,

**Fig. 5** illustrates a generalized flow-chart of a method for controlling the excavation conducted by a UGV, in accordance with some examples of the presently disclosed subject matter.

## **DETAILED DESCRIPTION**

**[0009]** In the following detailed description, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the invention. However, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that the presently disclosed subject matter may be practiced without these specific details. In other instances, well-known methods, procedures, components and circuits have not been described in detail so as not to obscure the presently disclosed subject matter.

**[0010]** Unless specifically stated otherwise, as apparent from the following discussions, it is appreciated that throughout the specification discussions utilizing terms such as "processing",

"computing", "determining", "regarding", "representing", "comparing", "checking", "generating", "matching", "updating", "creating" or the like, refer to the action(s) and/or process(es) of a computer that manipulate and/or transform data into other data, said data represented as physical, such as electronic, quantities and/or said data representing the physical objects.

**[0011]** The terms "computer" or "processing unit" or "control unit" should be expansively construed to include any kind of electronic device with data processing circuitry, which includes a computer processor as disclosed herein below (e.g., a Central Processing Unit (CPU), a microprocessor, an electronic circuit, an Integrated Circuit (IC), firmware written for or ported to a specific processor such as digital signal processor (DSP), a microcontroller, a field programmable gate array (FPGA), an application specific integrated circuit (ASIC), etc.) and executes computer instructions (e.g. loaded on a computer memory) as disclosed herein.

**[0012]** The operations in accordance with the teachings herein may be performed by a computer specially constructed for the desired purposes or by a general-purpose computer specially configured for the desired purpose by a computer program stored in a computer readable storage medium. In the following detailed description, numerous specific details are set forth in order to provide a thorough understanding of the invention. However, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that the presently disclosed subject matter can be practiced without these specific details. In other instances, well-known methods, procedures, components and circuits have not been described in detail so as not to obscure the presently disclosed subject matter.

**[0013]** The term "scanning device" as used herein should be expansively construed to include any kind of device configured to identify that an object is present at a specific distance and at a specific direction relative to the device. Examples of scanning devices include, but are not limited to: laser scanners (including LIDAR), RADAR, image sensor, sonar, etc. A scanning device can scan for example,  $360^{\circ}$  on a plane surrounding the device, or at some other smaller scanning angle (e.g.  $180^{\circ}$ ). Alternatively, the scanning device can scan a sphere or part thereof around the UGV. A scanning device can provide information for generating a 3 dimensional map of the scanned area. In some examples, in order to save resources, a 2.5 dimensional map may be generated, as detailed below.

**[0014]** The term "unmanned ground vehicle" (UGV) as used herein should be expansively construed to include any kind of vehicle that can be operated either autonomously, by a tele-operator, or by on-board personnel who cannot see the environment and steers in accordance with a map or with explicit steering instructions.

**[0015]** The term "map" as used herein should be expansively construed to include any data structure representing a geographical area. A map may be absolute, i.e., comprise indications of absolute coordinates of an object or a location, or relative, i.e., comprise information about locations or objects, regardless of their locations in absolute coordinates. A map may consist of a reference to another map, combined with information regarding how the reference map has changed or should change. A map may be represented on a computerized display device,

paper or any other tangible medium. In some examples of the disclosure, a 2.5 dimensional map may be generated and used. A 2.5 dimensional map relates to a map which indicates the lowest height of an obstacle above the ground, i.e., the vertical distance between the ground and the obstacle at each ground location. In other words, there is provided for each ground location, the height of the free space above the ground. Thus, the information in the map indicates for each location the clearance height for the UGV. For example, the lowest height of a treetop or a bridge at a certain point. It will be appreciated that for obstacles that are on the ground, such as a house or a trunk of a tree, this height may be indicated as zero. Thus, for path planning purposes, the clearance height may be taken into account, when determining, for example, whether the UGV can pass under a tree or a bridge.

**[0016]** Figs. 1, 2, and 3 illustrate types of operations that can be conducted by an excavator UGV, according to some examples of the presently disclosed subject matter.

**[0017]** Reference is now made to Fig. 1, illustrating a stylized before-and-after illustration of a mound-clearing excavation task, in accordance with some examples of the current subject matter.

**[0018]** Fig. 1a shows an excavator UGV 100 including a Digging Implement 110 (e.g. shovel or blade) positioned to begin the operation. The excavator UGV 100 is positioned on flat terrain. In front of the excavator UGV 100 is a mound 120 that is 3 meters across, and 3 meters high. On the side of the mound that is behind the excavator UGV100, there is a half-meter deep trench 130.

**[0019]** Fig. 1b shows the excavator UGV 135 on flat terrain 140, after the completion of the operation i.e. the mound 120 has been removed and the trench 130 has been filled.

**[0020]** Reference is now made to Fig. 2, which is a stylized before-and-after illustration of a trench-digging excavation task, in accordance with some examples of the current subject matter.

**[0021]** Fig. 2a shows an excavator UGV 200 positioned on flat terrain 210. Fig. 2b shows the excavator UGV after the completion of an operation i.e. there is now a trench 230 10 meters across and 3 meters deep.

**[0022]** Reference is now made to Fig. 3, which is a stylized before-and-during illustration of a rock-clearing excavation task, in accordance with some examples of the current subject matter.

**[0023]** Fig. 3a shows an excavator UGV 300, positioned to begin the operation. The Digging Implement 310 of the excavator UGV is positioned to begin moving rocks from a pile 320.

**[0024]** Fig. 3b shows that some rocks have been moved from the pile 340, even as the shape of the rock pile 340 remains. Meanwhile, the excavator UGV 330 has dropped some rocks 350

from the pile **340** at some distance from the original site.

[0025] In Fig. **3c**, the rock pile **370** is shorter (for example, because the pile **370** has collapsed due to the absence of the rocks that were removed in Fig. **3b**), while the excavator UGV **350** has placed its Digging Implement **360** at a location where there are no rocks or earth present (for example, the map maintained by the UGV **350** may not have received updated information about the collapsed pile **370**, and accordingly moved its Digging Implement **360** to a location where rocks were located previously). In some examples of the presently disclosed subject matter, the implement can be configured to provide the control systems of the UGV with Digging Implement **360** position data, or with data regarding the amount or composition of the material contained in the Digging Implement **360**. The UGV control systems can use this data to update the UGV current topography map - as will be described in more detail below.

[0026] Reference is now made to Fig. **4**, showing a schematic block diagram of an excavation-capable UGV **400**, in accordance with some examples of the presently disclosed subject matter. The UGV **400** can include an Excavation Vehicle Control System **405**, which can include units for control and monitoring of an excavation task. Communication between the units can take place, for example, via a wired network technology such as ethernet or a wireless network technology such as Bluetooth, or any other appropriate communication infrastructure, known in the art.

[0027] The Communications Unit **480** can, for example, receive data such as excavation commands from, for example, a remote operator (human or machine) and it can, for example, transmit data such as excavation UGV status information to such an operator. The transmission/reception can take place via a cellular communication network or any other suitable wireless or wired communication medium.

[0028] In particular, the Communications Unit **480** can receive a command from a remote manager to perform an excavation operation so that the terrain matches a particular target map. The High Level Vehicle Control **473** grouping of units can be operably connected to the Communications Unit **480** and can store received target map data to the structure Target Map **437**.

[0029] The Digging Implement **410** is an implement used by the excavation vehicle to lift up, deposit, push, drag or otherwise move earth or other excavatable material. The Digging Implement **410** can be, for example, an excavator bucket or shovel, a bulldozer blade of a particular type (such as a straight blade, tilting blade, combtooth blade etc.), or a backhoe bucket etc. The Digging Implement **410** can be equipped, for example, with a cutting edge, and can be tailored for moving a specific type of material e.g. moving dirt, moving quarry, moving gravel, moving snow, moving sand etc. In some examples of the presently disclosed subject matter, the Digging Implement **410** can hold excavated or other material within it. In some examples of the presently disclosed subject matter, the Digging Implement **410** can push excavated or other material along the ground as the vehicle moves. In some examples, the Digging Implement **410** can be attached to a digger ami (not shown) which is itself attached to

the vehicle.

**[0030]** The Digging Sensors **420** can be operably connected to the Digging Implement **410** and can receive and/or detect information pertaining to the Digging Implement **410**. The Digging Sensors **420** can comprise a single sensor device or multiple sensor devices.

**[0031]** In some examples of the presently disclosed subject matter, the Digging Sensors **420** can detect the position and orientation of the Digging Implement **410**.

**[0032]** The position and orientation data may include, for example, the height of the Digging Implement **410** relative to the bottom of the excavation vehicle or relative to the ground, the distance of extension of the Digging Implement **410** relative to the front of the excavation vehicle, the bucket trajectory of the Digging Implement **410**, the horizontal tilt or vertical tilt of the Digging Implement **410** etc.

**[0033]** In some examples, the Digging Sensors **420** can detect data pertaining to the current weight or current volume of excavated material or other material that is currently being contained in, pushed, or otherwise manipulated by the Digging Implement **410**.

**[0034]** The position, orientation, and content detection functionality of the Digging Sensors **420** can be implemented mechanically, for example: by including a spring-based scale for measuring weight of material contained within the Digging Implement **410**, or by including mechanical components that measure the positions of the UGV components (such a digger arm) that can move the Digging Implement **410**. The position, orientation, and content detection functionality of the Digging Sensors **420** can be implemented electronically, for example: by including a scanning device e.g. a camera-based image analysis system that can evaluate (e.g. by using an onboard image processor configured to execute appropriate image processing algorithms) the volume (quantity) and composition of material in the Digging Implement **410**, as well as detect the distance of the Digging Implement **410** from the ground, the front of the vehicle, the bottom of the vehicle and/or other points of reference. The status detection functionality of the Digging Sensors **420** can be implemented by other suitable mechanisms, or by suitable combinations of the aforementioned.

**[0035]** The Navigation Sensors **465** can be a self-contained navigation system which use measurements provided by an Inertial Measurement Unit to track the position, velocity, and orientation of an object relative to a starting position, orientation, and velocity.

**[0036]** In some examples, the Navigation Sensors **465** can enable inertial navigation with obstacle avoidance as shown in **Fig. 3** of the aforementioned Israeli patent application 250762.

**[0037]** The Mapping Sensors **445** can comprise a scanning device (e.g. cameras, laser, LIDAR, etc.) that surveys the area around the vehicle.

**[0038]** The Digging Control Unit **430** can be operably connected to the Digging Implement **410**

and can control the movement of the Digging Implement **410**. The Digging Control Unit **430** can control the Digging Implement **410** using electronic, mechanical, or other suitable mechanisms, or combinations thereof.

**[0039]** In some examples of the presently disclosed subject matter the Digging Control Unit **430** can, for example, raise and lower the Digging Implement **410** to a particular height. In some examples the Digging Control Unit **430** can, for example, extend and retract the Digging Implement **410** to a particular distance relative to the the ground, the bottom of the excavation vehicle **100**, or another reference point. In some examples the Digging Control Unit **430** can, for example, increase and decrease the bucket angle with respect to the ground (bucket trajectory) of the Digging Implement **410**. In some examples the Digging Control Unit **430** can, for example, increase and decrease the horizontal tilt or vertical tilt of the Digging Implement **410**.

**[0040]** The Digging Control Unit **430** can be operably connected to the Digging Sensors **420** and can, for example, receive status information regarding the Digging Sensors **420**. In some examples the Digging Control Unit **430** can, for example, receive data regarding the activation, deactivation, calibration, or other status information pertaining to the the operation of the Digging Sensors **420**.

**[0041]** The Vehicle Subsystems Control Unit **435** can control various subsystems of the excavation vehicle, including, for example, the steering, acceleration, and braking subsystems of the vehicle etc.

**[0042]** The Low Level Vehicle Control **415** can be a grouping of units that can comprise the Digging Control Unit **430** and the Vehicle Subsystems Control Unit **435**.

**[0043]** The Navigation Unit **470** can be operably connected to the Navigation Sensors **465** and can receive the Navigation Sensors **465** data such as current vehicle location and supply it to the Unseen Areas Unit **425**.

**[0044]** The 3D Mapping Unit **440** can be operably connected to the Mapping Sensors **445** and to the Navigation Unit **470**. The 3D Mapping Unit **440** can generate and maintain mapping information regarding the terrain immediately surrounding the vehicle as well as the larger area. The mapping information can be generated based on data obtained for example, by the Mapping Sensors **445** (utilizing for example a scanning device) and the inertial navigation techniques performed by the Navigation Unit **470** in conjunction with the Navigation Sensors **465**.

**[0045]** The Unseen Areas Unit **425** can be operably connected to the 3D Mapping Unit **440**, and the Digging Sensors **420**, and can, for example, receive 3D mapping data from the 3D Mapping Unit **440**, as well as sensor data from the Digging Sensors **420**.

**[0046]** The location of the vehicle can be known from the 3D Mapping Unit **440** data and the

relative position and orientation of the Digging Implement **410** can be determined based on the Digging Sensors **420**. From this information, the map location and orientation of the Digging Implement **410** can be inferred.

**[0047]** The Unseen Areas Unit **425** can utilize this data to, for example, derive topographical information pertained to terrain areas that are not within line-of-sight - or are otherwise inaccessible to the mapping unit - for example: an area currently being dug out. Derivation of topographical information from Digging Sensors **420** data is described in more detail below, with reference to **Fig. 5**.

**[0048]** Topographical information - together with relevant contextual mapping information - can then be made available to, for example, the Terrain Comparison Unit **460** as described below.

**[0049]** The Terrain Comparison Unit **460** can be operably connected to the Unseen Areas Unit **425**. The Terrain Comparison Unit **460** can receive, for example, topographical data as well as, for example, associated 3D mapping data from the Unseen Areas Unit **425** and accordingly update, for example, the data structure Terrain Comparison Map **427**.

**[0050]** The Terrain Comparison Map **427** can be a data structure maintained by, for example, the Terrain Comparison Unit **460**, and utilized by, for example, the Excavation Control Unit **450**. The Terrain Comparison Map **427** can be a representation of terrain as it changes during the process of excavation. The Terrain Comparison Map **427** can include metadata which indicates to the Excavation Control Unit **450** the actions that need to be performed in order to complete an excavation operation. The Terrain Comparison Unit **460** can utilize the Target Map **437** in its maintenance of the Terrain Comparison Map **427** - for example the Terrain Comparison Unit **460** can utilize the Target Map **437** to evaluate what excavation operations are remaining and accordingly create metadata in the Terrain Comparison Map **427**.

**[0051]** The Digging Control Unit **430** can be operably connected to the Excavation Control Unit **450** and can receive instructions from the Excavation Control Unit **450**. The instructions from the Excavation Control Unit **450** to the Digging Control Unit **430** can be - for example - instructions pertaining to the movement of the Digging Implement **410** as demonstrated above. The actual position and orientation of the Digging Implement **410** as indicated by the Digging Sensors **420** can differ from the position to which the Digging Control Unit **430** previously directed its placement. For example, it might happen that the Digging Control Unit **430** directs the placement of Digging Implement **410** to a particular coordinate, but a physical obstacle makes it physically impossible for Digging Implement **410** to be placed there. In this situation, the Digging Sensors **420** can indicate the actual location.

**[0052]** The Vehicle Subsystems Control Unit **435** can control the physical subsystems (by way of non-limiting example: steering, brakes, etc. but not the digging implement) utilized in the course of carrying out navigation and digging tasks.

**[0053]** The High Level Vehicle Control **473** can be a grouping of units that can comprise the

Path Planning Unit **490** and the Excavation Control Unit **450**. Additionally, the High Level Vehicle Control **473** can communicate with the Communication Unit **480**, and write target map data to the Target Map **437**.

**[0054]** The Path Planning Unit **490** can be operably connected to the Terrain Comparison Map **427**. The Path Planning Unit **490** can be operably connected to the Vehicle Subsystems Control Unit **435** and can send commands to the Vehicle Subsystems Control Unit **435**. The Path Planning Unit **490** can be responsible for high level control of vehicle maneuvering (e.g. determining when the metadata of the Terrain Comparison Map **427** indicate that the position and orientation of the vehicle need to change) and can issue appropriate commands to the Vehicle Subsystems Control Unit **435**.

**[0055]** The Excavation Control Unit **450** can, for example, control the integrated digging operation of the excavation vehicle and direct other control units so that the UGV **400** can accomplish useful multi-stage tasks such as digging, moving earth, and dropping the earth in another location so as to dig out a particular area.

**[0056]** The Excavation Control Unit **450** can be operably connected to the Digging Control Unit **430** and the Terrain Comparison Map **427**.

**[0057]** The Excavation Control Unit **450** can control the vehicle's digging and moving of earth or other materials (via the Digging Control Unit **430**). The Excavation Control Unit **450** can send commands to and can receive status information from the Digging Control Unit **430**.

**[0058]** The operation of the Excavation Control Unit **450** is described in more detail below with reference to **Fig. 5**.

**[0059]** Attention is now directed to **Fig. 5**, which depicts a generalized flow diagram of the excavation sequence, according to certain examples of the presently disclosed subject matter. It is noted that while some operations are described herein with reference to elements described in **Fig. 4** above, this is done by way of example only and should not be construed as limiting in any way.

**[0060]** It is noted that during excavation there can be a temporary inability of the Mapping Sensors **445** to scan the relevant area (for example when a trench being dug is inaccessible to the view of the scanning device, outside of the view of the scanning device). Scanning the area so as to monitor the progress of the excavation could then necessitate the UGV to move away from the digging site in order to properly scan the area being dug. The method disclosed in **Fig. 5** can enable mapping of the area being dug while eliminating the need for the UGV to move away from the digging site.

**[0061]** The vehicle (e.g. the Terrain Comparison Unit **460**) can receive **(510)** mapping data (or "map") representing the current terrain from, for example, the 3D Mapping Unit **440**. In some examples the data from the 3D Mapping Unit **440** includes data from, for example, mapping

sensors **445**. In some examples, mapping sensors **445** comprise a scanning device (for example: LIDAR, cameras, laser etc.) that can provide scanning output data providing information about distances between objects in the area and the UGV in a multiplicity of directions. In some examples the data from the 3D Mapping Unit **440** includes data from, for example, navigation sensors **465**.

**[0062]** The vehicle (for example the Excavation Control Unit **450**) can receive (**510**) target mapping data (also termed "target map") representing the intended configuration of the terrain after completion of an excavation operation.

**[0063]** In some examples of the presently disclosed subject matter, the Communication Unit **480** can receive target mapping data from, for example, a remote manager. The Communication Unit **480** can then, for example, communicate the target mapping data to the High Level Vehicle Control **473** unit group, which can then store the data to the structure Target Map **437**.

**[0064]** The term "target mapping data" is herein used to provide simplicity and clarity, and denotes data indicative of completion of the excavation task. In some examples, the target mapping data is simply a representation of the intended terrain result using the same mapping method being used by the 3D Mapping Unit **440**.

**[0065]** In other examples, the target mapping data can consist, for example, of data representing the difference between an initial terrain configuration and the intended terrain result. By way of non-limiting example: the data indicative of completion of the excavation task could consist of eight coordinates indicating the corners of a trench to be dug. If the terrain is currently flat, the target map data might specify that there should be a trench of dimensions 2 meters deep x 2 meters wide x 50 meters long in a particular location, and that a ramp (in a particular location) with 20 degrees incline and a certain width and length should connect the trench to the level ground.

**[0066]** In some examples, the reception of the target mapping data by the vehicle can in effect constitute a command to carry out a particular excavation task, i.e. in this particular case the digging of the trench with the specific dimensions is the excavation task.

**[0067]** Performance of the excavation task can be complex. For example, digging a trench can involve moving the vehicle to a particular location, manipulating the Digging Implement **410** to remove earth, moving the vehicle to a different location, dropping the earth etc. The vehicle (e.g. the Terrain Comparison Unit **460**) can maintain, for example, a computer-implemented data structure Terrain Comparison Map **427** describing the current terrain as it changes during excavation.

**[0068]** The vehicle (e.g. the Terrain Comparison Unit **460**) can include computer-implemented methods for comparing the current terrain (for example: as reflected by data from the 3D mapping unit and stored in Terrain Comparison Map **427**) with the target terrain (for example:

as stored in Target Map **437**), and determining the sequence of individual manipulations of vehicle components (such as raising or lowering the Digging Implement **410**, extending or retracting the Digging Implement **410**, turning the vehicle wheels, accelerating the engine, braking, etc.) which are required to complete the excavation task. These individual manipulations of vehicle components are hereforward termed "incremental excavation operations" or simply "excavation operations".

**[0069]** Having received a target map (for example, stored in Target Map **437**), the vehicle (e.g. the Terrain Comparison Unit **460**) can, for example, calculate (**510**) one or more incremental excavation operations to be performed in order to complete a commanded excavation task.

**[0070]** In some examples of the presently disclosed subject matter, the Terrain Comparison Unit **460** can then, for example, write metadata describing these incremental excavation operations to the Terrain Comparison Map **427**. When the current terrain is identical to the target map, there are, for example, no more incremental excavation operations written to the Terrain Comparison Map **427**.

**[0071]** In some examples of the presently disclosed subject matter, the Terrain Comparison Unit **460** can then, for example, write data describing these incremental excavation operations to a structure separate from the Terrain Comparison Map **427** (such as a command queue).

**[0072]** Following the calculation of the next incremental operation(s), the vehicle (for example: a unit such as the Digging Control Unit **430** being controlled by the Excavation Control Unit **450** reading from the Terrain Comparison Map **427**) can, for example, execute (**520**) the first pending incremental excavation operation (for example: raising or lowering the Digging Implement **410**, extending or retracting the Digging Implement **410**).

**[0073]** It is noted that on some occasions, the determined incremental excavation operation might not involve the Digging Implement **410**, but instead, for example, accelerating the engine, activating brakes or other operations controlled by, for example, the Vehicle Subsystems Control Unit **435**. On such occasions, the Path Planning Unit **490** can read the incremental excavation operation from the Terrain Comparison Map **427** and instruct the Vehicle Subsystems Control Unit **435** to perform the incremental excavation operation.

**[0074]** The vehicle (e.g. the Unseen Areas Unit **425**) can next receive (**530**) Digging Sensors **420** data from the Digging Sensors **420**. This data can include, for example, the position of the Digging Implement **410**, the horizontal or vertical tilt of the Digging Implement **410**, the trajectory of the Digging Implement **410**, the volume or mass of the material currently contained in the Digging Implement **410** etc. The Digging Sensors **420** data can comprise, for example, information that is sensed as a consequence of the recently executed incremental excavation operation.

**[0075]** By way of non-limiting example, if the recently executed incremental excavation placed the Digging Implement **410** at a location where - according to the current terrain map - earth is

located, the measurement of material contained in the Digging Implement **410** as indicated in the Digging Sensors **420** data can reflect the amount of earth that is actually present at that location as will be described below.

**[0076]** Next, the vehicle (e.g. the Unseen Areas Unit **425**) can infer **(540)** topographic information from the Digging Sensors **420** data, and then the vehicle (e.g. the Terrain Comparison Unit **460**) can update **(540)** the Terrain Comparison Map **427** accordingly to reflect, for example, the actual current terrain topography. In some examples, the vehicle (e.g. the Terrain Comparison Unit **460**) can update **(540)** the Terrain Comparison Map **427** to reflect, for example, the required next incremental excavation operations.

**[0077]** The following are non-limiting examples of how the Unseen Areas Unit **425** can infer topographic information from the data that it receives from Digging Sensors **420**:

1. a) Consider a circumstance where i) the most recently executed incremental excavation operation was moving the Digging Implement **410** to a particular coordinate in three-dimensional space, and ii) Digging Sensors **420** data now indicates that the Digging Implement **410** is located at that particular coordinate and is empty. This might occur, for example, if the vehicle (e.g. Excavation Control Unit **450**) has been excavating earth from e.g. a mound at a particular location, and the mound has now been cleared (i.e. the excavation is complete).

**[0078]** This might also occur, for example, if the vehicle (e.g. Excavation Control Unit **450**) attempted to excavate earth from a particular location, but the earth was no longer present (for example because the earth fell away on its own).

**[0079]** The Unseen Areas Unit **425** can regard this Digging Sensors **420** data as an indication there is no earth, obstacle or other object at the current Digging Implement **410** coordinate, and that there is no earth, obstacle or other object on the path between the previous Digging Implement **410** 3D coordinate and the current Digging Implement **410** 3D coordinate. The Terrain Comparison Unit **460** can receive this information from the Unseen Areas Unit **425** and then update the Terrain Comparison Map **427** accordingly.

**[0080]** b) Consider a circumstance where i) the most recently executed incremental excavation operation was moving the Digging Implement **410** to a particular 3D coordinate, and ii) Digging Sensors **420** data now indicates that the Digging Implement **410** is located at a coordinate -- different from the one previously intended - located on the path between the previous Digging Implement **410** 3D coordinate and the intended Digging Implement **410** 3D coordinate and that the Digging Implement **410** contains earth.

**[0081]** The Unseen Areas Unit **425** can regard this Digging Sensors **420** data as an indication that there exists earth or some other type of unanticipated obstacle at the current Digging Implement **410** coordinate. The Terrain Comparison Unit **460** can then update the Terrain

Comparison Map **427** accordingly.

**[0082]** Following the update of the Terrain Comparison Map **427**, the Terrain Comparison Unit **460** can compare the Terrain Comparison Map **427** with the Target Map **437** and calculate **(550)** one or more next incremental excavation operations. As described above, the Terrain Comparison Unit **460** can, for example, write metadata to the Terrain Comparison Map **427** to indicate to the Excavation Control Unit **450** which incremental excavation operations remain to be performed. If the Terrain Comparison Map **427** is substantially the same the Target Map **437**, then there is no next incremental excavation operation.

**[0083]** The vehicle (e.g. by the Excavation Control Unit **450**) next checks **(560)** if a next incremental excavation remains to be performed. If not, then the excavation task has completed. Otherwise the vehicle (eg. the Excavation Control Unit **450**) performs another cycle by executing **(520)** the next incremental excavation operation.

**[0084]** It is noted that the teachings of the presently disclosed subject matter are not bound by that described with reference to **Fig. 5** and the components described with reference to **Fig. 4**. Equivalent and/or modified functionality can be consolidated or divided in another manner and can be implemented in any appropriate order or combination of software, firmware and hardware and executed on a suitable device. The arrows shown in **Fig. 4** exemplify possible transfer of commands and/or data between components, but do not indicate that such commands/data are required or that commands/data do not flow in the opposite direction or between other components.

**[0085]** It is to be understood that the invention is not limited in its application to the details set forth in the description contained herein or illustrated in the drawings. The invention is capable of other examples and of being practiced and carried out in various ways. Hence, it is to be understood that the phraseology and terminology employed herein are for the purpose of description and should not be regarded as limiting. As such, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the conception upon which this disclosure is based may readily be utilized as a basis for designing other structures, methods, and systems for carrying out the several purposes of the presently disclosed subject matter.

**[0086]** It will also be understood that the system according to the invention may be, at least partly, implemented on a suitably programmed computer. Likewise, die invention contemplates a computer program being readable by a computer for executing the method of the invention. The invention further contemplates a non-transitory computer-readable memory tangibly embodying a program of instructions executable by the computer for executing the method of the invention.

**[0087]** Those skilled in the art will readily appreciate that various modifications and changes can be applied to the examples of the invention as hereinbefore described without departing from its scope, defined in and by the appended claims.

# REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

## Cited references

This list of references cited by the applicant is for the reader's convenience only. It does not form part of the European patent document. Even though great care has been taken in compiling the references, errors or omissions cannot be excluded and the EPO disclaims all liability in this regard.

## Patent documents cited in the description

- [US2013006484A1 \[0005\]](#)
- [IL250762 \[0036\]](#)

## PATENTKRAV

1. Computerimplementeret fremgangsmåde til styring af en udgravningsopgave ved hjælp af et autonomt udgravningskøretøj (100), der omfatter en scanningsindretning og et inertinavigationssystem (INS), hvor et  
5 ønsket resultat af udgravningsopgaven er beskrevet ved hjælp af et målkort (437), hvilken fremgangsmåde omfatter:

a) drift af scanningsindretningen til gentagen scanning af et område, der omgiver det autonome udgravningskøretøj, og gentagen opdatering baseret på data, som opnås ved scanningen, hvor et kort gengiver mindst en del af området,  
10 hvor kortet vedrører en lokalitet af køretøjet og omfatter celler, der hver især er klassificeret til en bestemt klasse og er **kendetegnet ved** en størrelse, som er lig med eller større end en akkumuleret forskydningsværdi for INS'et over en foruddefineret afstand;

modtagelse, fra INS'et, af INS-data, der angiver en aktuel lokalitet og  
15 orientering af køretøjet i forhold til en tidligere lokalitet og orientering; og

opdatering af en lokalitet af køretøjet i forhold til cellerne i kortet baseret på INS-dataene;

b) udførelse af en udgravningssekvens, der omfatter:

bevægelse af et graveredskab (410), der er forsynet med en sensor (420),  
20 til udførelse af en udgravningsoperation;

modtagelse af data, der angiver en aktuel terræntopografi, fra sensoren;

opdatering af kortet ifølge dataene, der angiver en aktuel terræntopografi;

beregning af en udgravningsoperation ifølge en forskel mellem kortet og målkortet; og

25 udførelse af udgravningsoperationen.

2. Fremgangsmåde ifølge krav 1, der desuden omfatter:

gentagelse af udgravningssekvensen i trin b), indtil kortet i det væsentlige er identisk med målkortet.

3. Fremgangsmåde ifølge et hvilket som helst af kravene 1-2, hvor dataene, der angiver en aktuel terræntopografi og modtages fra sensoren, indbefatter  
5 terræntopografidata vedrørende en lokalitet, der er utilgængelig for scanningsindretningen.
4. Fremgangsmåde ifølge krav 3, hvor den lokalitet, der er utilgængelig for scanningsindretningen, omfatter et område, som er neden under køretøjet.
5. Fremgangsmåde ifølge et hvilket som helst af kravene 1-4, hvor dataene,  
10 der angiver en aktuel terræntopografi, omfatter lokaliteten af graveredskabet.
6. Fremgangsmåde ifølge et hvilket som helst af kravene 1-5, hvor dataene, der angiver en aktuel terræntopografi, omfatter data, der angiver en mængde materiale, som er indeholdt i graveredskabet.
7. Fremgangsmåde ifølge et hvilket som helst af kravene 1-6, hvor dataene,  
15 der angiver en aktuel terræntopografi, omfatter data, der angiver en sammensætning af materiale, som er indeholdt i graveredskabet.
8. Fremgangsmåde ifølge et hvilket som helst af kravene 1-7, hvor terrænkortet er tredimensionalt, og hvor opdatering af kortet indbefatter opdatering af det tredimensionale kort over topografien.
- 20 9. Fremgangsmåde ifølge et hvilket som helst af kravene 1-8, hvor terrænkortet er 2,5-dimensionalt.
10. Fremgangsmåde ifølge et hvilket som helst af de foregående krav, hvor den bestemte klasse er valgt fra en gruppe, der omfatter krydsbare og ikke-krydsbare celler.
- 25 11. System, der kan monteres på et ubemandet landkøretøj (UGV), hvilket system omfatter  
mindst én processor, der er konfigureret til at udføre fremgangsmåden ifølge et hvilket som helst af kravene 1 til 10.

12. Ubemandet landkøretøj (UGV), der omfatter systemet ifølge krav 11, hvilket system er konfigureret til at fungere om bord på UGV'et; hvor UGV'et yderligere omfatter:

et redskab, der omfatter en sensor;

5 en scanningsindretning, der er konfigureret til at scanne et område, som omgiver UGV'et, for derved at tilvejebringe scanningsuddata, der giver information om afstande mellem objekter i området og UGV'et i en flerhed af retninger;

et inertnavigationssystem (INS), der tilvejebringer data, der angiver en aktuel lokalitet og orientering af UGV'et i forhold til en tidligere lokalitet og orientering;

10 et køretøjsstyresystem, der er konfigureret til at modtage køretøjsstyreinstruktioner og styre UGV'et i overensstemmelse med instruktionerne, herunder styreinstruktioner, som genereres til udførelse af udgravningsopgaven.

13. UGV ifølge krav 12, hvorved systemet omfatter en anden processor, hvor sensoren er konfigureret til at udføre opdateringen af kortet, og den anden

15 processor er konfigureret til at udføre udgravningssekvensen.

14. Computerlæsbart lagermedie, der omfatter instruktioner, som ved afvikling med en computer får computeren til at udføre trinnene ifølge et hvilket som helst af kravene 1 til 10.

# DRAWINGS

Drawing

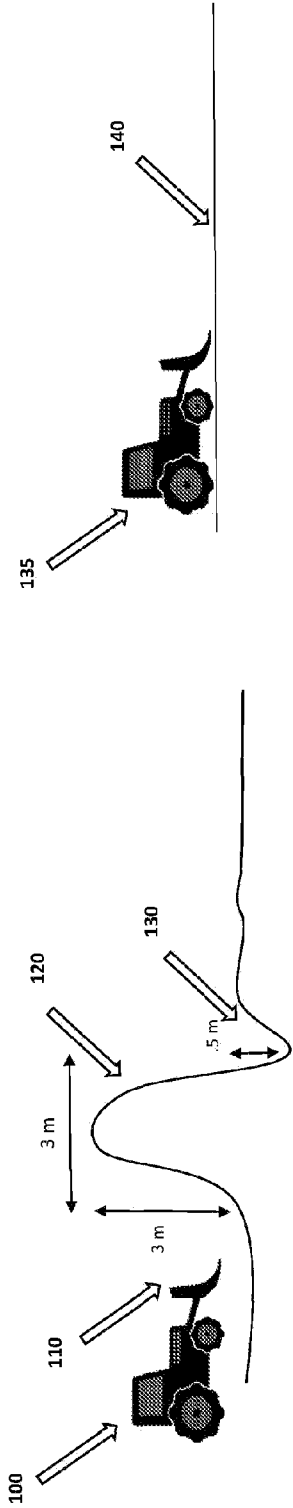


FIG. 1a

FIG. 1b



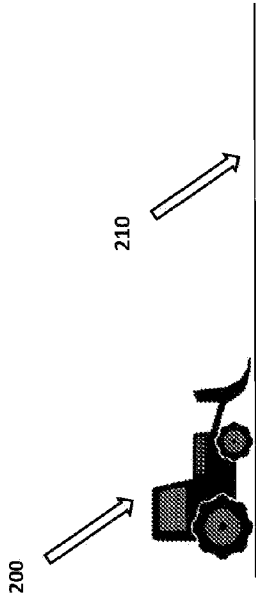


FIG. 2a

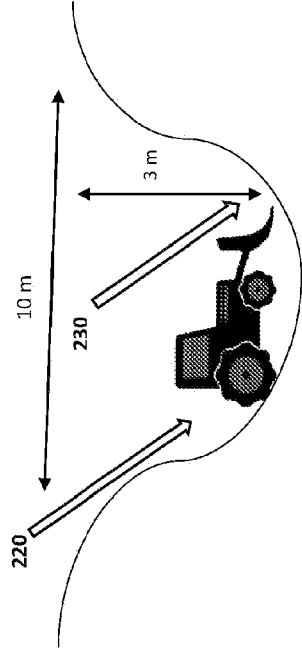


FIG. 2b

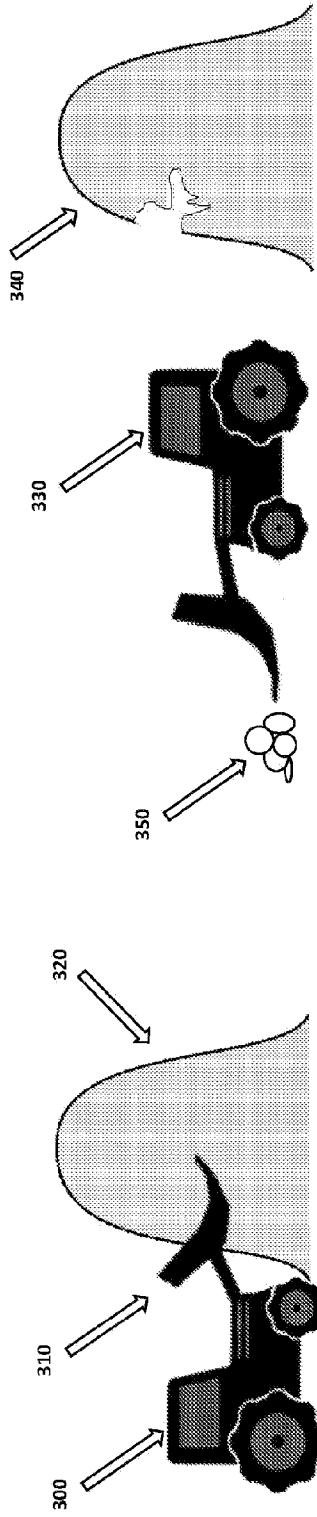


FIG. 3b

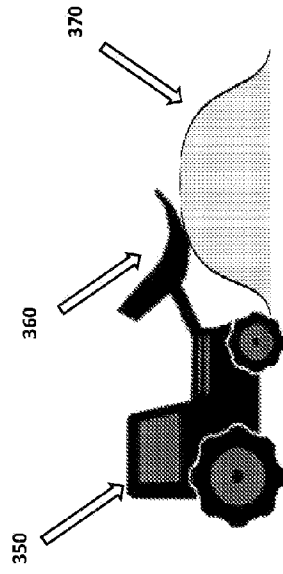


FIG. 3c

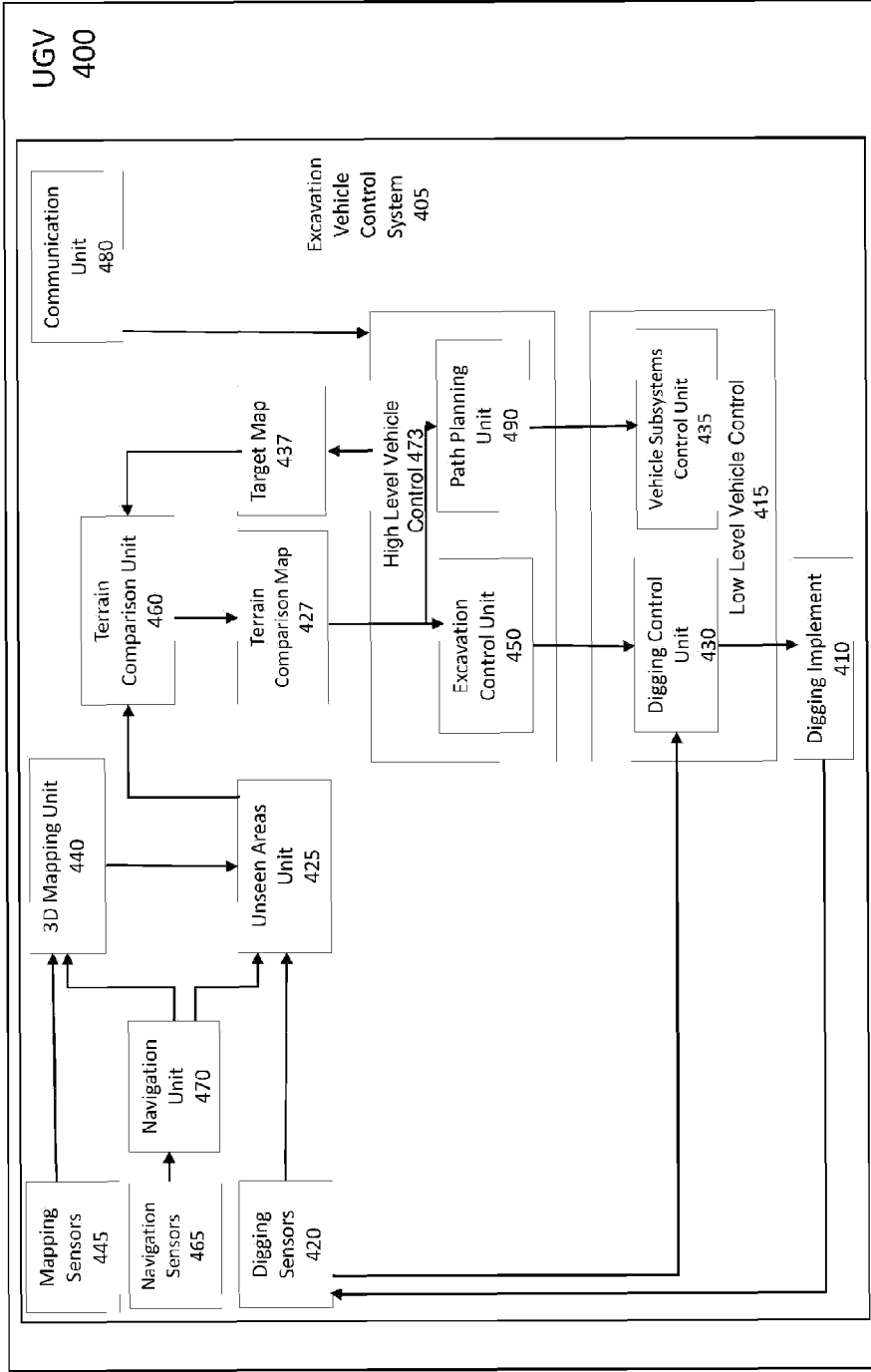


FIG 4

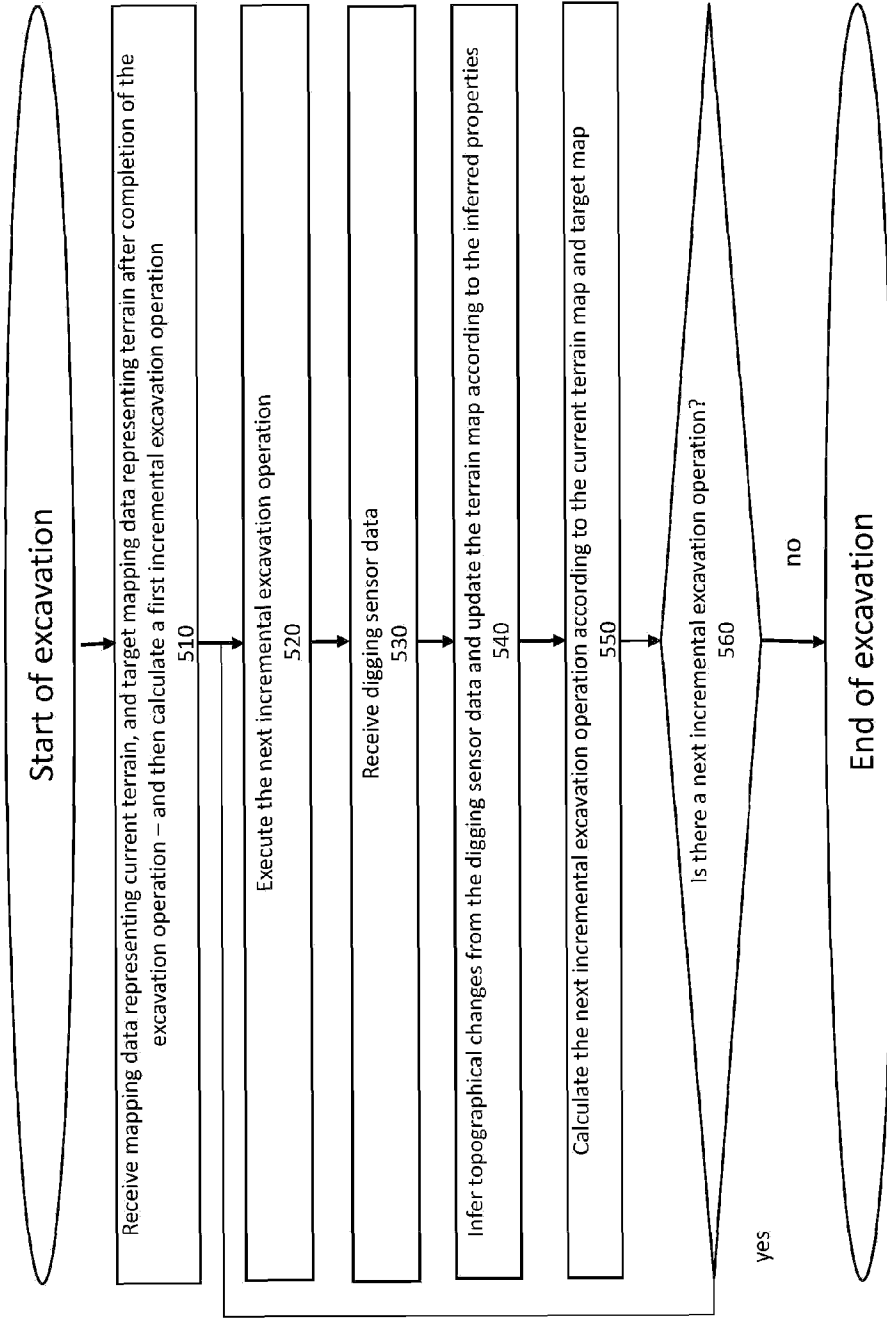


FIG. 5