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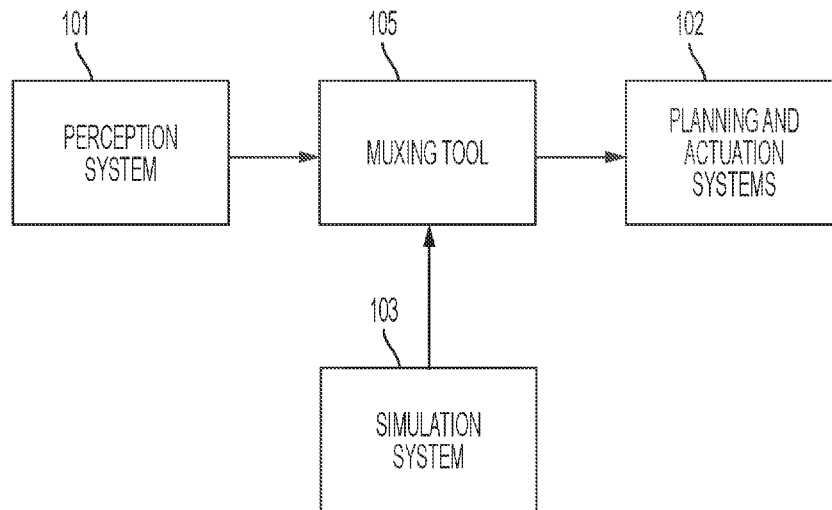
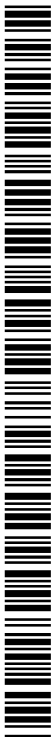


FIG. 1

(57) Abstract: This document describes methods by which an autonomous vehicle deploys a simulation scenario while operating in a real-world environment. The vehicle's sensors collect perception data. During a run of the vehicle in a real-world environment, the vehicle's on-board computing system will: (i) receive the perception data; (ii) publish the perception data to a muxing tool of the on-board computing system; (iii) generate simulation data that identifies and labels one or more simulated objects in the environment; (iv) publish the simulation data to the muxing tool; (v) use the muxing tool to add at least a portion of the simulation data to the perception data to yield augmented perception data; and (v) use at least a portion of the augmented perception data to make one or more navigation decisions based for the autonomous vehicle.



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IN-VEHICLE OPERATION OF SIMULATION SCENARIOS DURING AUTONOMOUS
VEHICLE RUNS

CROSS-REFERENCE AND CLAIM OF PRIORITY

[0001] This patent document claims priority to U.S. Patent Application No. 17/074,807 filed October 20, 2020, the entirety of which is incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND

[0002] Autonomous vehicles (AVs) contain many different systems that work together to allow a vehicle to drive itself. The AV achieves this by seeing the world, applying reasoning to the perceived data, and acting on decisions that it made through reasoning. To ensure that an AV will properly operate under many different scenarios, it is desirable to test an AV's reaction to many different combinations of perceived data.

[0003] However, testing of all combinations of data can be difficult. Some scenarios, such as testing reactions to other actors in an environment, require multiple actors to coordinate with the AV. Other situations could be risky to test with real-world actors or objects. To do this, in addition to real-world tests, AVs are often tested via simulated operating scenarios. However, testing by simulation runs the risk of not accurately testing how the AV would respond in a real-world environment.

[0004] To solve this problem, some have proposed the use of augmented reality to add simulated virtual environments to actual environments that an AV perceives. However, to date existing attempts to do this are not seamless and do not always yield reliable results.

[0005] This document describes methods and systems that address the problems described above, and/or other issues.

SUMMARY

[0006] This document describes methods by which an autonomous vehicle may deploy a simulation scenario while operating in a real-world environment. The vehicle will have sensors that collect perception data, which is sensed data that identifies and labels one or more perceived objects in the vehicle's environment, such as other vehicles, people, animals, stationary objects, etc. During a run of the vehicle in a real-world environment, the vehicle's on-board computing system will: (i) receive the perception data; (ii) publish the perception data to a muxing tool of the on-board computing system; (iii) generate simulation data that identifies and labels one or more simulated objects in the environment; (iv) publish the simulation data to the muxing tool; (v) use the muxing tool to add at least a portion of the simulation data to the perception data to yield augmented perception data; and (v) use at least a portion of the augmented perception data to make one or more navigation decisions based for the autonomous vehicle.

[0007] Optionally, before the muxing tool adds at least a portion of the simulation data to the perception data, the system may determine whether a conflict exists between a portion of the simulation data and a portion of the perception data to which the portion of the simulation data would be added. If the conflict can be corrected, the system will correct the conflict. If the conflict cannot be corrected, the system will discard the conflicting portion of the simulation data.

[0008] To determine whether a conflict exists, the system may analyze simulated objects in the simulation data and discard at least one simulated object that would conflict with one or more perceived objects in the simulation data by: (i) analyzing labels assigned to the perceived objects; (ii) analyzing labels assigned to the simulated objects; and (iii) identifying as the conflict one or more of the simulated objects having a label that matches a label assigned to one or more of the perceived objects. Another method of determining whether a conflict exists may include analyzing labels and identifiers assigned to the perceived objects, along with those assigned to the simulated objects, and identifying as a conflict one or more of the simulated objects having a label and an identifier that matches both a label and an identifier assigned to one or more of the perceived objects.

[0009] Another method of identifying a conflict may include receiving, from one or more sensors of the autonomous vehicle, vehicle characteristic data indicating one or more of the following: location, pose, speed, or trajectory of the autonomous vehicle. The system may

determine that a conflict would exist if a simulated object was generated via a simulation scenario having vehicle characteristic requirements that conflict with the received vehicle characteristic data.

[0010] In some embodiments, the system also may monitor location data as received by one or more sensors of the autonomous vehicle. If so, it may only permit the muxing tool to generate augmented perception data when the location data corresponds to a designated simulation zone. Alternatively, the system may not generate the simulation data at all unless the location data corresponds to a designated simulation zone. In addition, the system may reset generation of the simulation data when the location data no longer corresponds to a designated simulation zone.

[0011] The present document also concerns a computer program product comprising a memory and programming instructions that are configured to cause a processor to perform the methods described herein, for example, during a run of an autonomous vehicle in a real-world environment.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] FIG. 1 illustrates core system components for deploying a simulation scenario in an autonomous vehicle (AV).

[0013] FIG. 2 is a flow diagram illustrating an example of an AV testing process using augmented reality.

[0014] FIG. 3 illustrates example systems and components of an autonomous vehicle.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0015] As used in this document, the singular forms “a,” “an,” and “the” include plural references unless the context clearly dictates otherwise. Unless defined otherwise, all technical and scientific terms used herein have the same meanings as commonly understood by one of ordinary skill in the art. As used in this document, the term “comprising” means “including, but not limited to.” Definitions for additional terms that are relevant to this document are included at the end of this Detailed Description.

[0016] An autonomous vehicle (AV) is designed to consume and act upon actual perception data. “Perception data” is data that a vehicle receives in real time from one or more sensors that provide the vehicle with information about the current state of the vehicle’s immediate surroundings. Perception data may include, for example, data received from one or more cameras, a LiDAR system, a radar system, a temperature sensor, a GPS sensor, a precipitation sensor and/or other sensors via which the system may perceive features of its immediate environment. An AV’s perception system is the system that includes all such sensors, together with one or more processors and programming instructions that are operable to process perception data and identify actors and stationary objects in an environment.

[0017] FIG. 1 is a block diagram illustrating core system elements of a computing system that will deploy a simulation scenario during an actual vehicle run. The AV’s on-board computing system includes a perception system **101** as described above, along with motion planning and actuation systems **102** that include hardware and software that cause the AV to move and react to real-world conditions and actors. Example planning and actuation systems are known in the prior art and may include, for example, braking subsystems, steering subsystems, steering controllers, and the like, along with any number of processors and programming instructions that cause the vehicle make decisions about how and where to move around an environment in response to the perception data.

[0018] In typical operation of an AV, a stream of data from the perception system **101** is used by the planning and actuation systems **102**, either directly or after some pre-processing to remove, for example, noise and/or potentially unreliable data. In the systems and methods of this document, perception data from the perception system **101** is routed to a muxing tool **105** before the data is sent to the planning and actuation systems **102**. The muxing tool **105** also receives simulated perception data from a simulation system **103**. The simulation system **103** will include processor(s), programming instructions and data sets of simulated actors and objects that an AV could perceive in a real-world environment, such as other vehicles, pedestrians, animals, and the like. The simulation system **103** may also be part of the AV’s on-board computing system. Alternatively, the simulation system **103** may be in whole or in part a separate system that shares data with the AV via a communication link, such as a mobile electronic device that a rider in the

vehicle carries, or a remote cloud-based computing system that communicates with the AV via a wireless communication network.

[0019] The simulated perception data may be stored in a simulation data set as simulation scenarios, generated in real time based on rules that identify simulations to apply to perceived real-world scenarios, or a combination of the two.

[0020] The muxing tool **105** includes one or more processors and programming instructions that cause the processor(s) to modify and augment the perception data with the simulation data to yield augmented perception data. In other words, “muxing”, which also may be referred to as multiplexing or mixing, combines some or all of the simulation data into the perception data. The combined data is then delivered to the planning and actuation systems **102**.

[0021] The real-world perception data will include various objects, each of which is assigned a category label and a unique identifier. The simulation data also will include various objects, each of which is assigned a category label and a unique identifier. These labels and identifiers will be described in more detail below. The muxing tool **105** will analyze identifiers of each of the perception data and the simulation data to avoid overwriting the real-world (perception) data in the event that a conflict exists in the data. In addition, the muxing tool **105** will help avoid conflicts between perceived objects within the perception data and simulated objects within the perception data. This will also be described in more detail below.

[0022] To augment the perception data with simulation data, the muxing tool may subscribe to system communication channels on which updates to perception data (i.e., real data received from sensors) and simulation data are published. The channel that publishes perception data will receive real-world data from the sensors, attach labels and other identifiers to the data, and publish it to the vehicle’s motion planning system, optionally via the muxing tool. The channel that publishes simulation data will receive the data from a processor that is implementing a simulation scenario, as described below. The muxing tool may: (1) receive a perception message published by the perception system **101**, in which the perception message includes one or more identifiers and multiple tracks; (2) receive a simulation message published by the simulation system **103**, in which the simulation message also includes one or more identifiers and multiple tracks; and (3) append the simulation message tracks to the perception message tracks (without modifying or

deleting the perception message tracks) to yield and publish a combined message that includes tracks from both the perception system **101** and the simulation system **103**, such as:

[0023] Perception system publishes -> Perception Message (Track1, Track2, Track3)

[0024] Simulation system publishes -> Sim Message (SimTrack1, SimTrack2)

[0025] Muxing combines to publish -> TrackMessage (Track1, Track2, Track3, SimTrack1, SimTrack2).

[0026] In various embodiments, the processors of the perception system **101**, motion planning and actuation system(s) **102**, simulation system **103** and muxing tool **105** may be separate processors. Alternatively, some or all of these systems may share one or more processors of the vehicle's on-board computing system. As noted above, the simulation system may include hardware elements that are in whole or in part separate from the of-board computing system. In addition, any of the other system elements may use or incorporate off-board processing, data storage or programming instruction elements.

[0027] FIG. 2 illustrates an example process by which an AV's on-board computing system may deploy a simulation scenario. At **201** during deployment of the AV the system receives perception data from one or more sensors of the AV's perception system. The perception data may include data representative of one or more perceived objects in the real-world environment. The perception system will process the data to identify the objects and assign categorical labels and unique identifiers to each object detected in a scene. Categorical labels may include categories such as vehicle, bicyclist, pedestrian, building, and the like, and the unique identifiers will help the system distinguish between multiple objects of a particular category in a scene (such as *vehicle1*, *vehicle2*, etc.) Methods of identifying objects and assigning categorical labels to objects are well known in the art, and any suitable classification process may be used, such as those that make bounding box predictions for detected objects in a scene and use convolutional neural networks or other computer vision models. Some such processes are described in Yurtsever et al., "A Survey of Autonomous Driving: Common Practices and Emerging Technologies" (arXiv April 2, 2020). At **202** the system will publish the perception data (with its perceived object labels and identifiers) from the perception system in one or more tracks to the muxing tool. Each perception track will include a globally unique identifier (GUID) to distinguish it from other tracks.

[0028] At **203** the system will generate simulation data. The simulation data also will include one or more tracks with GUIDs, with simulated objects that do not appear in the real-world scene, along with categorical labels and unique identifiers for each simulated object. To generate the simulation data, the system may access a set of programming instructions that correspond to a simulation scenario, in which the instructions are to generate one or more simulated moving actors or other objects to place within the vehicle's environment. The simulation scenario may include a set of actors and, for at least some of the actors, movement sequences. The simulation data may be generated by loading a user-specified simulation scenario that contains the data, by loading a simulation scenario that is stored in a memory, or by other processes. When loading a scenario or offering candidate scenarios for a user to select, the system may use any suitable rule sets to automatically identify a simulation scenario, such as rules that require the system to select a scenario that has not yet been tested, or by randomly selecting a scenario. In addition, scenarios may be location-specific, and only may be run when the vehicle is within a particular location on a map, moving in a particular direction, and/or operating with a specified speed range. In either situation (manual selection or automatic selection of a scenario), the scenario may be deployed to the vehicle as configuration files, which are executed and/or accessed upon launch of the vehicle's motion planning and/or perception subsystems.

[0029] At **204** the simulation system may perform one or more initialization checks to assess the simulation scenario to determine whether it is compatible with the vehicle's current location and state. For example, each simulation scenario may include a map identifier (ID) indicating the region and/or version of a map for which the simulation scenario was designed. If the version ID, region ID, or other ID map that the vehicle is currently using does not match that of the simulation scenario, then the system will not apply the simulation scenario. Optionally, a user interface of the system (either in-vehicle, or in a remote system that is in communication with the vehicle) may notify the user of the incompatibility so that the user can initiate a download to the vehicle of either: (a) a map upgrade that is compatible with the simulation scenario; or (b) a simulation scenario that is compatible with the map.

[0030] At **205** the system will route the resulting compatible simulation data (with its object labels and identifiers) from the simulation system to the muxing tool.

[0031] At **206** the muxing tool may ensure the integrity of data received from the perception system and simulation system by checking to determine whether the simulation data may conflict with the perception data. To do this, the system may determine whether the same identifier is used for both data sets, or by calculating a checksum from each data set and determining whether the checksums match. Alternatively or in addition, the system may determine whether the vehicle's location, pose, speed, trajectory, or other characteristics conflict with requirements of the simulation scenario. The system may receive these characteristics from one or more vehicle position and orientation sensors, such as global positioning system (GPS) sensors; accelerometers, gyroscopes and/or inertial measurement units; cameras and/or LiDAR systems that provide visual representations of the environment in which the vehicle is moving; and/or near-field communication systems that receive signals from beacons or other transmitters that are positioned in the environment and which transmit location data to the vehicle. If a conflict exists, then the system may discard any simulated objects generated the conflicting conditions, and the system will consider the discarded objects in the planning and actuation operations (step **226**).

[0032] At **207** the muxing tool may determine whether any simulated object would conflict with an actual object that appears in the real world. This may be done either before generating the preliminary augmented perception data to screen conflicts, or after generating the preliminary augmented perception data to identify conflicts within that data. A conflict may exist if two actors (one simulated, one real) will appear in a same location in the scene that the perception system is detecting. A conflict also may exist if a simulated object duplicates a real-world object, as identified by category (or optionally both category and identifier). For example, if the real-world perception data includes a deer that is about to cross the road, then a conflict may exist if the simulation data also includes a deer. As another example, if the real-world perception data includes three vehicles and the simulation data includes four vehicles, then conflicts may exist for the first three vehicles in the simulation data.

[0033] Some conflicts may be able to be corrected (**226:yes**). If so, the system may correct the conflict at **227**. For example, if the simulation track has a GUID that conflicts with the perception data track's ID, the system may generate a new GUID for the simulation data that conflicted with the perception (real) data and append the new GUID to the simulation track. If the system cannot correct a conflict (**226:no**) (for example if a simulated object would conflict with a real-word

object), then at **228** the muxing tool may discard any simulated data tracks that would conflict with the perception data as described above.

[0034] At **208** the muxing tool may then augment the perception data with the simulation data by combining the two and yielding preliminary augmented perception data, in which the simulated objects will appear in the real-world environment. This was described above, in which the simulation system tracks of a simulation message are appended to the perception data tracks of a perception message, without modifying the perception data tracks.

[0035] At **209** the system may determine whether any unnatural augmentation may occur during the muxing. Unnatural augmentation will occur if an error exists in the simulation data that will cause a simulated actor or other simulated object to appear incomplete and/or malformed when placed in the scene. This may be done at any step of the process (not necessarily in the position of the sequence shown in FIG. 2), whether before generating the preliminary augmented perception data to screen conflicts, or after generating the preliminary augmented perception data to identify conflicts within that data. At **229** the muxing tool may discard any simulated objects that appear to be unnatural if combined with the perception data as described above.

[0036] At **211** the resulting augmented perception data after any of steps **206**, **208** and/or **209** are performed will be delivered to the vehicle's motion planning and actuation system. The vehicle will use motion planning techniques to react to the augmented perception data at **212**. Example reactions may include causing the AVs brake system to actuate, causing the AV's acceleration subsystem to increase speed of the AV, or by causing the vehicle's steering subsystem to turn the AV. Various motion planning techniques are well known, for example as described in Gonzalez et al., "A Review of Motion Planning Techniques for Automated Vehicles," published in *IEEE Transactions on Intelligent Transportation Systems*, vol. 17, no. 4 (April 2016).

[0037] At **213** the system may record the AV's reaction and the augmented data (or an identifier for the augmented data set) so that the vehicle's system or an external server may assess such data and initiate any number of reactive motions to such data,

[0038] The system may repeat this process for multiple simulation scenarios, or for multiple runs of the AV. If so, then the state of the simulation may be reset at **214** before each run. This may happen automatically, such as via the system detecting a proximity trigger – i.e., GPS data

indicating that the AV has reached a designated endpoint of a run or existed a designated zone for simulation. Alternatively or in addition, simulation may be reset at **214** via a command input into the system by an operator by from a remote system.

[0039] In some embodiments, the simulation system may be separate from the AV, and the simulation system may transmit the simulation data to the AVs on a communication channel to which the AV is communicatively connected and subscribes. In this way, a simulation may be generated and published to multiple AVs in a fleet of AVs. Each AV's muxing tool will generate vehicle-specific augmented perception data that combines the published simulation data with vehicle-specific perception data that that AV's perception system collected. Each of the AVs may then transmit, on a vehicle-specific basis, navigation decisions that the AV made in response to its vehicle-specific perception data.

[0040] Typically, the system would not generate simulation data or combine simulation data with perception data until one or more triggers have occurred (**230:yes**). For example, the augmentation of perception data with simulation data may only be permitted when the vehicle is in designated geographic locations, such as designated zones, streets or other areas. If so, augmentation may be triggered when the AV's location matches a designated geographic location. The system may determine the AV's location using data received from the vehicle's global GPS and determining whether the vehicle's current GPS coordinates that match or are otherwise compatible with (such as by being in range of) the coordinates of a designated geographic location. Alternatively, the system may compare information about objects perceived by system cameras and/or LiDAR sensors (such as buildings, road signs, and other landmarks) to identify a map location that contains the perceived objects. Alternatively, the system may receive, via a near-field or other communication receiver, location signals from one or more traffic infrastructure beacons or other transmitters that are positioned in the environment.

[0041] In addition, upon startup of the vehicle the generation of simulation data and/or muxing tool operation may be disabled until an event occurs, such as a period of time lapsing or the vehicle reaching a geographic location in which a trigger is set for simulation data augmentation. In this case, simulation may be permitted (**230:yes**) only after the triggering event occurs.

[0042] FIG. 3 illustrates an example system architecture for an autonomous vehicle **399**, including additional details of system elements that are described at a high level in FIG. 1. The vehicle includes an engine or motor **302** to power movement of the vehicle, along with various sensors for measuring various parameters of the vehicle and/or its environment. Operational parameter sensors include, for example: a position sensor **336** such as an accelerometer, gyroscope and/or inertial measurement unit; a speed sensor **338**; and an odometer sensor **340**. The vehicle also may have a clock **342** that the system uses to determine vehicle time during operation. The clock **232** may be encoded into the vehicle on-board computing device, it may be a separate device, or multiple clocks may be available.

[0043] The vehicle's perception system will include various sensors that operate to gather information about the environment in which the vehicle is traveling. These sensors may include, for example: a location sensor **360** such as a global positioning system (GPS) device; object detection sensors such as one or more cameras **362**; a LiDAR sensor system **364**; and/or a radar and/or a sonar system **366**. The sensors also may include environmental sensors **368** such as a precipitation sensor and/or ambient temperature sensor. The object detection sensors may enable the vehicle to detect moving actors and stationary objects that are within a given distance range of the vehicle **399** in any direction, while the environmental sensors collect data about environmental conditions within the vehicle's area of travel. The system will also include one or more cameras **362** for capturing images of the environment.

[0044] During operation of a vehicle run, information is communicated from the sensors to an on-board computing device **320**. The on-board computing device **320** analyzes the data captured by the sensors and optionally controls operations of the vehicle based on results of the analysis. For example, the on-board computing device **320** may include programming instructions to provide motion planning and actuation operations to control vehicle movement systems. For example the motion planning function of the computing device **320** may control braking via a brake controller **322**; direction via a steering controller **324**; speed and acceleration via a throttle controller **326** (in a gas-powered vehicle) or a motor speed controller **328** (such as a current level controller in an electric vehicle); a differential gear controller **330** (in vehicles with transmissions); and/or other controllers.

[0045] Geographic location information may be communicated from the location sensor 360 to the on-board computing device 320, which may then access a map of the environment that corresponds to the location information to determine known fixed features of the environment such as streets, buildings, stop signs and/or stop/go signals. Captured images from the cameras 362 and/or object detection information captured from sensors such as a LiDAR system 364 is communicated from those sensors) to the on-board computing device 320. The object detection information and/or captured images may be processed by the on-board computing device 320 to detect objects in proximity to the vehicle 300. In addition or alternatively, the AV may receive and/or transmit any of the data to an external computing device 380 such as a cloud-based server via a transceiver for processing.

[0046] In the various embodiments discussed in this document, the description may state that the vehicle or on-board computing device of the vehicle may implement programming instructions that cause the on-board computing device of the vehicle to make decisions and use the decisions to control operations of one or more vehicle systems. However, the embodiments are not limited to this arrangement, as in various embodiments the analysis, decision making and or operational control may be handled in full or in part by other computing devices that are in electronic communication with the vehicle's on-board computing device. Examples of such other computing devices 380 include an electronic device (such as a laptop or tablet computing device) associated with a person who is riding in the vehicle, as well as a remote server that is in electronic communication with the vehicle via a wireless communication network. The processor of any such device may perform the operations that will be discussed below.

[0047] Terminology that is relevant to the disclosure provided above includes:

[0048] The term "vehicle" refers to any moving form of conveyance that is capable of carrying either one or more human occupants and/or cargo and is powered by any form of energy. The term "vehicle" includes, but is not limited to, cars, trucks, vans, trains, autonomous vehicles, aircraft, aerial drones and the like. An "autonomous vehicle" is a vehicle having a processor, programming instructions and drivetrain components that are controllable by the processor without requiring a human operator. An autonomous vehicle may be fully autonomous in that it does not require a human operator for most or all driving conditions and functions. Alternatively, it may be semi-autonomous in that a human operator may be required in certain conditions or for certain

operations, or that a human operator may override the vehicle's autonomous system and may take control of the vehicle. Autonomous vehicles also include vehicles in which autonomous systems augment human operation of the vehicle, such as vehicles with driver-assisted steering, speed control, braking, parking and other advanced driver assistance systems.

[0049] A “run” of a vehicle refers to an act of operating a vehicle and causing the vehicle to move about the real world. A run may occur in public, uncontrolled environments such as city or suburban streets, highways, or open roads. A run may also occur in a controlled environment such as a test track.

[0050] The term “object,” when referring to an object that is detected by a vehicle perception system or simulated by a simulation system, is intended to encompass both stationary objects and moving (or potentially moving) actors, except where specifically stated otherwise by terms use of the term “actor” or “stationary object.”

[0051] A “computing device” refers to a device that includes a processor and memory. Each device may have its own processor and/or memory, or the processor and/or memory may be shared with other devices as in a virtual machine or container arrangement. The memory will contain or receive programming instructions that, when executed by the processor, cause the electronic device to perform one or more operations according to the programming instructions.

[0052] The terms “memory,” “memory device,” “data store,” “data storage facility” and the like each refer to a non-transitory device on which computer-readable data, programming instructions or both are stored. Except where specifically stated otherwise, the terms “memory,” “memory device,” “data store,” “data storage facility” and the like are intended to include single device embodiments, embodiments in which multiple memory devices together or collectively store a set of data or instructions, as well as individual sectors within such devices.

[0053] The terms “processor” and “processing device” refer to a hardware component of an electronic device that is configured to execute programming instructions, such as a microprocessor or other logical circuit. A processor and memory may be elements of a microcontroller, custom configurable integrated circuit, programmable system-on-a-chip, or other electronic device that can be programmed to perform various functions. Except where specifically stated otherwise, the singular term “processor” or “processing device” is intended to include both single-processing

device embodiments and embodiments in which multiple processing devices together or collectively perform a process.

[0054] In this document, when relative terms of order such as “first” and “second” are used to modify a noun, such use is simply intended to distinguish one item from another, and is not intended to require a sequential order unless specifically stated.

[0055] The above-disclosed features and functions, as well as alternatives, may be combined into many other different systems or applications. Various components may be implemented in hardware or software or embedded software. Various presently unforeseen or unanticipated alternatives, modifications, variations or improvements may be made by those skilled in the art, each of which is also intended to be encompassed by the disclosed embodiments.

CLAIMS

1. A method of deploying a simulation scenario during an autonomous vehicle run, the method comprising:

by an on-board computing system of an autonomous vehicle during a run of the autonomous vehicle in a real-world environment:

receiving perception data from one or more vehicle sensors, wherein the perception data identifies and labels each of one or more perceived objects in an environment;

publishing the perception data to a muxing tool of the on-board computing system;

generating simulation data, wherein the simulation data identifies and labels each of one or more simulated objects in the environment;

publishing the simulation data to the muxing tool;

using the muxing tool to add at least a portion of the simulation data to the perception data to yield augmented perception data; and

using at least a portion of the augmented perception data to make one or more navigation decisions based for the autonomous vehicle.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising, by the on-board computing system before the muxing tool adds at least a portion of the simulation data to the perception data:

determining whether a conflict exists between a portion of the simulation data and a portion of the perception data to which the portion of the simulation data would be added;

if the conflict can be corrected, correcting the conflict; and

if the conflict cannot be corrected, discarding the portion of the simulation data.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein determining whether the conflict exists comprises analyzing simulated objects in the simulation data and discarding at least one simulated object that would conflict with one or more perceived objects in the simulation data by:

analyzing labels assigned to the perceived objects;

analyzing labels assigned to the simulated objects; and

identifying as the conflict one or more of the simulated objects having a label that matches a label assigned to one or more of the perceived objects.

4. The method of claim 2, wherein:

the perception data for each of the perceived objects also includes an identifier;
the perception data for each of the simulated objects also includes an identifier; and
analyzing the simulated objects and discarding at least one simulated object that would conflict with one or more of the perceived objects comprises:

analyzing the labels and identifiers assigned to the perceived objects,
analyzing the labels and identifiers assigned to the simulated objects,
identifying as a conflict one or more of the simulated objects having a label and an identifier that matches both a label and an identifier assigned to one or more of the perceived objects, and
discarding each of the simulated objects that are identified as a conflict.

5. The method of claim 2, further comprising:

receiving, from one or more sensors of the autonomous vehicle, vehicle characteristic data indicating one or more of the following: location, pose, speed, or trajectory of the autonomous vehicle; and

wherein analyzing the simulated objects and discarding at least one simulated object that would conflict with one or more of the perceived objects comprise analyzing any simulated object that was generated via a simulation scenario having vehicle characteristic requirements that conflict with the received vehicle characteristic data.

6. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

monitoring location data as received by one or more sensors of the autonomous vehicle;
and

only permitting the muxing tool to generate augmented perception data when the location data corresponds to a designated simulation zone.

7. The system of claim 1, further comprising:
monitoring location data as received by a one or more sensors of the autonomous vehicle;
and
only generating the simulation data when the location data corresponds to a designated simulation zone.
8. The system of claim 1, further comprising:
monitoring location data as received by a one or more sensors of the autonomous vehicle;
and
resetting generation of the simulation data when the location data no longer corresponds to a designated simulation zone.
9. The method of claim 1, further comprising, before generating the simulation data:
identifying a simulation scenario that will be used to generate the simulation data;
determining an identifier for a map that the autonomous vehicle is using;
determining whether the simulation scenario has an identifier that is compatible with the identifier for the map; and
using the identified simulation scenario to generate the simulation data only if the simulation scenario has an identifier that is compatible with the identifier for the map, otherwise selecting an alternate simulation scenario or requesting a map update.
10. The method of claim 1, wherein:
the simulation data is also generated in part by a remote computing system that is external to the autonomous vehicle; and
the method further comprises, by the remote computing system:
publishing the simulation data to a fleet comprising the autonomous vehicle and one or more additional vehicles, and
receiving, from a plurality of the vehicles to which the simulation data was published, navigation decision data that is responsive to vehicle-specific augmented perception data.

11. A vehicle, comprising:
one or more sensors for collecting data corresponding to objects;
an engine or motor for powering movement of the vehicle; and
an on-board computing system comprising a processor and a memory device with programming instructions that are configured to cause the processor to, during a run of the vehicle in an environment:
- receive perception data from one or more of the vehicle sensors, wherein the perception data identifies and labels each of one or more perceived objects in the environment,
 - publish the perception data to a mixing tool of the on-board computing system, generate simulation data that identifies and labels each of one or more simulated objects in the environment,
 - publish the simulation data to the mixing tool,
 - use the mixing tool to add at least a portion of the simulation data to the perception data to yield augmented perception data, and
 - use at least a portion of the augmented perception data to make one or more navigation decisions for movement of the vehicle.
12. The vehicle of claim 11, further comprising additional programming instructions that are configured to cause the processor to, before the mixing tool adds at least a portion of the simulation data to the perception data:
- determine whether a conflict exists between a portion of the simulation data and a portion of the perception data to which the portion of the simulation data would be added;
 - if the conflict can be corrected, correct the conflict; and
 - if the conflict cannot be corrected, discard the portion of the simulation data.
13. The vehicle of claim 12, wherein the instructions to determine whether the conflict exists comprise instructions to analyze simulated objects in the simulation data and discarding at least one simulated object that would conflict with one or more perceived objects in the simulation data by:
- analyzing labels assigned to the perceived objects;

analyzing labels assigned to the simulated objects; and
identifying as the conflict one or more of the simulated objects having a label that matches a label assigned to one or more of the perceived objects.

14. The vehicle of claim 12, wherein:
the perception data for each of the perceived objects also includes an identifier;
the perception data for each of the simulated objects also includes an identifier; and
the instructions to analyze the simulated objects and discard at least one simulated object that would conflict with one or more of the perceived objects comprise instructions to:
analyze the labels and identifiers assigned to the perceived objects,
analyze the labels and identifiers assigned to the simulated objects,
identify as a conflict one or more of the simulated objects having a label and an identifier that matches both a label and an identifier assigned to one or more of the perceived objects, and
discard each of the simulated objects that are identified as a conflict.

15. The vehicle of claim 12, further comprising additional programming instructions that are configured to cause the processor to:
receive, from one or more position or location sensors of the autonomous vehicle, vehicle characteristic data indicating one or more of the following: location, pose, speed, or trajectory of the vehicle; and
wherein the instructions to analyze the simulated objects and discard at least one simulated object that would conflict with one or more of the perceived objects comprise instructions to analyze any simulated object that was generated via a simulation scenario having vehicle characteristic requirements that conflict with the received vehicle characteristic data.

16. The vehicle of claim 11, further comprising additional programming instructions that are configured to cause the processor to:
monitor location data as received by one or more sensors of the vehicle; and
only permit the mixing tool to generate augmented perception data when the location data corresponds to a designated simulation zone.

17. The vehicle of claim 11, further comprising additional programming instructions that are configured to cause the processor to:

monitor location data as received by a one or more sensors of the vehicle; and
only generate the simulation data when the location data corresponds to a designated simulation zone.

18. The vehicle of claim 11, further comprising additional programming instructions that are configured to cause the processor to:

monitor location data as received by a one or more sensors of the vehicle; and
reset generation of the simulation data when the location data no longer corresponds to a designated simulation zone.

19. The vehicle of claim 11, further comprising additional programming instructions that are configured to cause the processor to, before generating the simulation data:

identify a simulation scenario that will be used to generate the simulation data;
determine an identifier for a map that the autonomous vehicle is using;
determine whether the simulation scenario has an identifier that is compatible with the identifier for the map; and
use the identified simulation scenario to generate the simulation data only if the simulation scenario has an identifier that is compatible with the identifier for the map, otherwise selecting an alternate simulation scenario or requesting a map update.

20. The vehicle of claim 11, wherein the vehicle is part of a fleet of vehicles that are all configured to receive at least a part of the simulation data from an external, remote computing system that is external to the vehicle.

21. A computer program product comprising a memory and programming instructions that are configured to cause a processor to during a run of an autonomous vehicle in a real-world environment:

receive perception data from one or more vehicle sensors, wherein the perception data identifies and labels each of one or more perceived objects in an environment;

publish the perception data to a muxing tool of an on-board computing system;

generate simulation data, wherein the simulation data identifies and labels each of one or more simulated objects in the environment;

publish the simulation data to the muxing tool;

use the muxing tool to add at least a portion of the simulation data to the perception data to yield augmented perception data; and

use at least a portion of the augmented perception data to make one or more navigation decisions based for the autonomous vehicle.

AMENDED CLAIMS

received by the International Bureau on 10 January 2022 (11.01.2022)

1. A method of deploying a simulation scenario during an autonomous vehicle run, the method comprising:

by an on-board computing system of an autonomous vehicle during a run of the autonomous vehicle in a real-world environment:

receiving perception data from one or more vehicle sensors, wherein the perception data identifies and labels each of one or more perceived objects in an environment;

publishing the perception data to a muxing tool of the on-board computing system;

generating simulation data, wherein the simulation data identifies and labels each of one or more simulated objects in the environment;

identifying at least one object of the simulation data that is duplicative of an object in the perception data or has a same location in a scene as the object of the perception data;

modifying the simulation data to remove data therefrom that is associated with the at least one object which was identified;

publishing the simulation data to the muxing tool;

using the muxing tool to add at least a portion of the simulation data to the perception data to yield augmented perception data; and

using at least a portion of the augmented perception data to make one or more navigation decisions for the autonomous vehicle.

2. The method of claim 1, further comprising, by the on-board computing system before the muxing tool adds at least a portion of the simulation data to the perception data:

determining whether a conflict exists between a portion of the simulation data and a portion of the perception data to which the portion of the simulation data would be added;

if the conflict can be corrected, correcting the conflict; and

if the conflict cannot be corrected, discarding the portion of the simulation data.

3. The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one object of the simulation data is identified as being duplicative of the object of the perception data based on an analysis of labels assigned to the perceived objects and labels assigned to the simulated objects.
4. The method of claim 1, wherein:
the perception data for each of the perceived objects includes an identifier and a label;
the simulation data for each of the simulated objects includes an identifier and a label;
and
the at least one object of the simulation data is identified as being duplicative of the object of the perception data when the label and the identifier of the at least one object of the simulation data respectively match the label and the identifier of the object of the perception data.
5. The method of claim 2, further comprising:
receiving, from one or more sensors of the autonomous vehicle, vehicle characteristic data indicating one or more of the following: location, pose, speed, or trajectory of the autonomous vehicle; and
wherein the portion of the simulation data that is discarded comprises at least one simulated object that was generated via a simulation scenario having vehicle characteristic requirements that conflict with the received vehicle characteristic data.
6. The method of claim 1, further comprising:
monitoring location data as received by one or more sensors of the autonomous vehicle;
and
only permitting the muxing tool to generate augmented perception data when the location data corresponds to a designated simulation zone.

7. The system of claim 1, further comprising:
monitoring location data as received by a one or more sensors of the autonomous vehicle;
and
only generating the simulation data when the location data corresponds to a designated simulation zone.
8. The system of claim 1, further comprising:
monitoring location data as received by a one or more sensors of the autonomous vehicle;
and
resetting generation of the simulation data when the location data no longer corresponds to a designated simulation zone.
9. The method of claim 1, further comprising, before generating the simulation data:
identifying a simulation scenario that will be used to generate the simulation data;
determining an identifier for a map that the autonomous vehicle is using;
determining whether the simulation scenario has an identifier that is compatible with the identifier for the map; and
using the identified simulation scenario to generate the simulation data only if the simulation scenario has an identifier that is compatible with the identifier for the map, otherwise selecting an alternate simulation scenario or requesting a map update.
10. The method of claim 1, wherein:
the simulation data is also generated in part by a remote computing system that is external to the autonomous vehicle; and
the method further comprises, by the remote computing system:
publishing the simulation data to a fleet comprising the autonomous vehicle and one or more additional vehicles, and
receiving, from a plurality of the vehicles to which the simulation data was published, navigation decision data that is responsive to vehicle-specific augmented perception data.

11. A vehicle, comprising:
- one or more sensors for collecting data corresponding to objects;
 - an engine or motor for powering movement of the vehicle; and
 - an on-board computing system comprising a processor and a memory device with programming instructions that are configured to cause the processor to, during a run of the vehicle in an environment:
 - receive perception data from one or more of the vehicle sensors, wherein the perception data identifies and labels each of one or more perceived objects in the environment,
 - publish the perception data to a mixing tool of the on-board computing system,
 - generate simulation data that identifies and labels each of one or more simulated objects in the environment,
 - identify at least one object of the simulation data that is duplicative of an object in the perception data or has a same location in a scene as the object of the perception data,
 - modifying the simulation data to remove data therefrom that is associated with the at least one object which was identified,
 - publish the simulation data to the mixing tool,
 - use the mixing tool to add at least a portion of the simulation data to the perception data to yield augmented perception data, and
 - use at least a portion of the augmented perception data to make one or more navigation decisions for movement of the vehicle.
12. The vehicle of claim 11, further comprising additional programming instructions that are configured to cause the processor to, before the mixing tool adds at least a portion of the simulation data to the perception data:
- determine whether a conflict exists between a portion of the simulation data and a portion of the perception data to which the portion of the simulation data would be added;
 - if the conflict can be corrected, correct the conflict; and
 - if the conflict cannot be corrected, discard the portion of the simulation data.

13. The vehicle of claim 11, wherein the at least one object of the simulation data is identified as being duplicative of the object of the perception data based on an analysis of labels assigned to the perceived objects; and labels assigned to the simulated objects.
14. The vehicle of claim 11, wherein:
the perception data for each of the perceived objects also includes an identifier and a label;
the simulation data for each of the simulated objects includes an identifier and a label;
and
the at least one object of the simulation data is identified as being duplicative of the object of the perception data when the label and the identifier of the at least one object of the simulation data matches the label and the identifier of the object of the perception data.
15. The vehicle of claim 12, further comprising additional programming instructions that are configured to cause the processor to:
receive, from one or more position or location sensors of the autonomous vehicle, vehicle characteristic data indicating one or more of the following: location, pose, speed, or trajectory of the vehicle; and
wherein the port of the simulation data that is discarded comprises at least one simulated object that was generated via a simulation scenario having vehicle characteristic requirements that conflict with the received vehicle characteristic data.
16. The vehicle of claim 11, further comprising additional programming instructions that are configured to cause the processor to:
monitor location data as received by one or more sensors of the vehicle; and
only permit the mixing tool to generate augmented perception data when the location data corresponds to a designated simulation zone.

17. The vehicle of claim 11, further comprising additional programming instructions that are configured to cause the processor to:
- monitor location data as received by a one or more sensors of the vehicle; and
 - only generate the simulation data when the location data corresponds to a designated simulation zone.
18. The vehicle of claim 11, further comprising additional programming instructions that are configured to cause the processor to:
- monitor location data as received by a one or more sensors of the vehicle; and
 - reset generation of the simulation data when the location data no longer corresponds to a designated simulation zone.
19. The vehicle of claim 11, further comprising additional programming instructions that are configured to cause the processor to, before generating the simulation data:
- identify a simulation scenario that will be used to generate the simulation data;
 - determine an identifier for a map that the autonomous vehicle is using;
 - determine whether the simulation scenario has an identifier that is compatible with the identifier for the map; and
 - use the identified simulation scenario to generate the simulation data only if the simulation scenario has an identifier that is compatible with the identifier for the map, otherwise selecting an alternate simulation scenario or requesting a map update.
20. The vehicle of claim 11, wherein the vehicle is part of a fleet of vehicles that are all configured to receive at least a part of the simulation data from an external, remote computing system that is external to the vehicle.

21. A computer program product comprising a memory and programming instructions that are configured to cause a processor to during a run of an autonomous vehicle in a real-world environment:

receive perception data from one or more vehicle sensors, wherein the perception data identifies and labels each of one or more perceived objects in an environment;

publish the perception data to a muxing tool of an on-board computing system;

generate simulation data, wherein the simulation data identifies and labels each of one or more simulated objects in the environment;

identify at least one object of the simulation data that is duplicative of an object in the perception data or has a same location in a scene as the object of the perception data;

modify the simulation data to remove data therefrom that is associated with the at least one object which was identified;

publish the simulation data to the muxing tool;

use the muxing tool to add at least a portion of the simulation data to the perception data to yield augmented perception data; and

use at least a portion of the augmented perception data to make one or more navigation decisions based for the autonomous vehicle.

Statement under Article 19(1)

The International Searching Authority (ISA) rejected claims 1-21 under Article 33 PCT. However, the ISA noted that the independent claims are not novel in view of U.S. Patent Publication No. 2020/0209874 to Chen et al. (D1). Independent claim 1 has been amended to now recite a method that involves: identifying at least one object of the simulation data that is duplicative of an object in the perception data or has a same location in a scene as the object of the perception data; and modifying the simulation data to remove data therefrom that is associated with the at least one object which was identified. D1 teaches in paragraphs [0054] and [0056] generating simulation data using real world perception data, where the simulation data includes objects that are duplicative of objects in the real world perception data and objects that have the same locations in a scene as the corresponding objects in the real world perception data. This is an important distinction between the present solution and that of D1 because these claimed features provide an improved autonomous vehicle control system by reducing conflicts between perceived objects and simulated objects within perception data used to make navigation decisions for an autonomous vehicle. Therefore, the ISA's rejection is believed to be overcome.

Please acknowledge receipt of the above noted claim amendments.

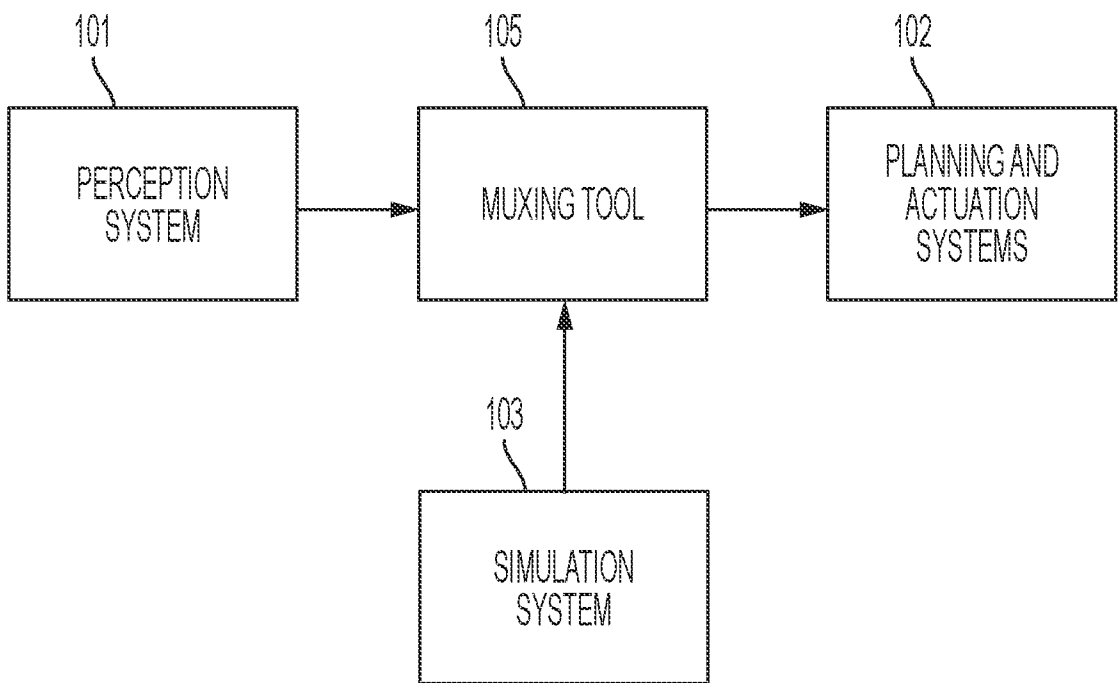


FIG. 1

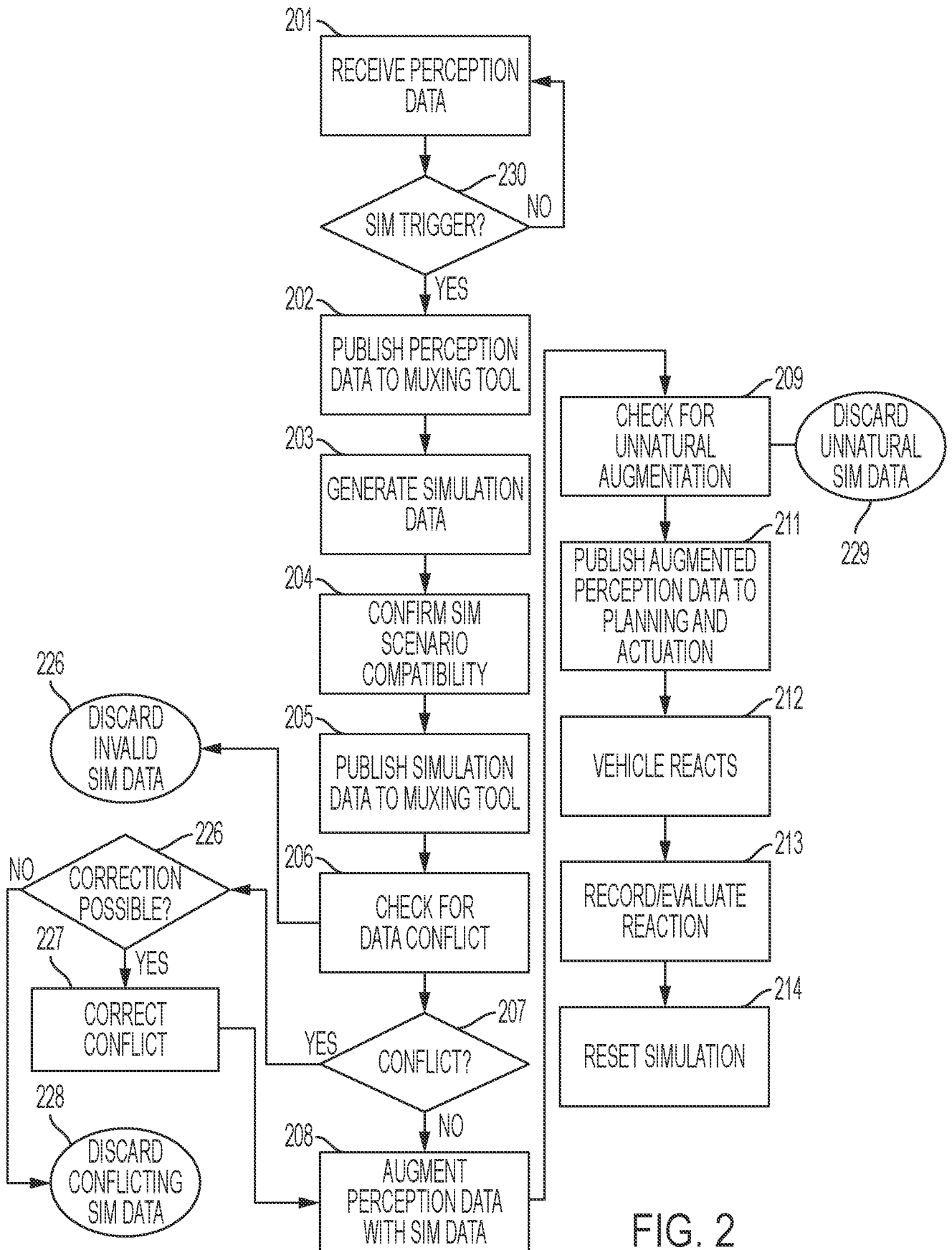


FIG. 2

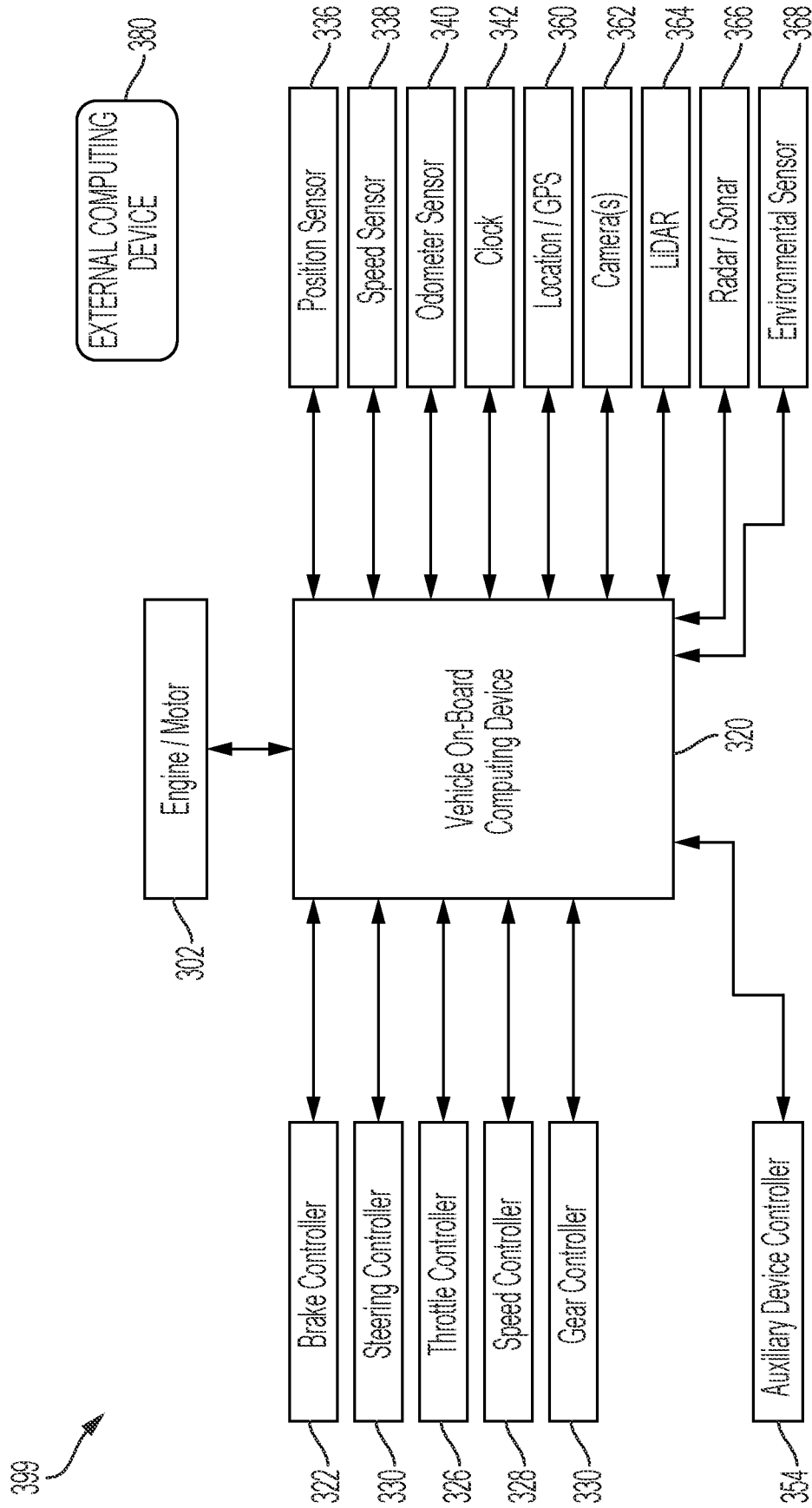


FIG. 3

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US2021/053898

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
 IPC (20210101) G06F 30/20, G05D 1/02, B60W 60/00
 CPC (20200101) G06F 30/20, G05D 1/0221, B60W 60/001
 According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
 IPC (20210101) G06F 30/20, G05D 1/02, B60W 60/00
 CPC (20200101) G06F 30/20, G05D 1/0221, B60W 60/001

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)
 Databases consulted: Esp@cenet, Google Patents, Orbit, Similari (AI-based)
 Search terms used: autonomous vehicle, combining, perception, simulation

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US 2020209874 A1 Chen et al 02 Jul 2020 (2020/07/02) the whole document	1-21
A	US 9836895 B1 Nygaard et al . 05 Dec 2017 (2017/12/05) the whole document	1-21
A	US 2019301886 A1 Elangovan et al . 03 Oct 2019 (2019/10/03) the whole document	1-21

Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:
 "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
 "D" document cited by the applicant in the international application
 "E" earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date
 "L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
 "O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
 "P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed
 "T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
 "X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
 "Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art
 "&" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search 29 Dec 2021	Date of mailing of the international search report 29 Dec 2021
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Name and mailing address of the ISA: Israel Patent Office Technology Park, Bldg.5, Malcha, Jerusalem, 9695101, Israel Email address: pctoffice@justice.gov.il	Authorized officer ROASH Yoaela Telephone No. 972-73-3927256
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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT
Information on patent family members

International application No. PCT/US2021/053898
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Patent document cited search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication Date
US 2020209874 A1	02 Jul 2020	US 2020209874 A1	02 Jul 2020
US 9836895 B1	05 Dec 2017	US 9836895 B1	05 Dec 2017
US 2019301886 A1	03 Oct 2019	US 10943414 B1 US 2019301886 A1	09 Mar 2021 03 Oct 2019
		US 10982968 B2 WO 2019191380 A1	20 Apr 2021 03 Oct 2019