


Non-planar Additive Manufacturing

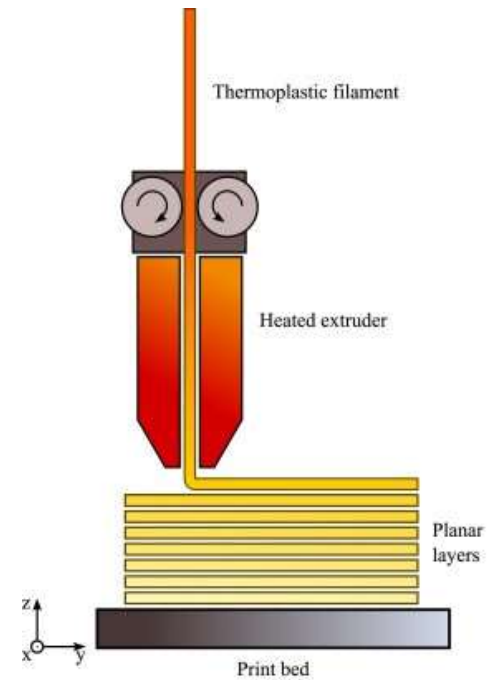
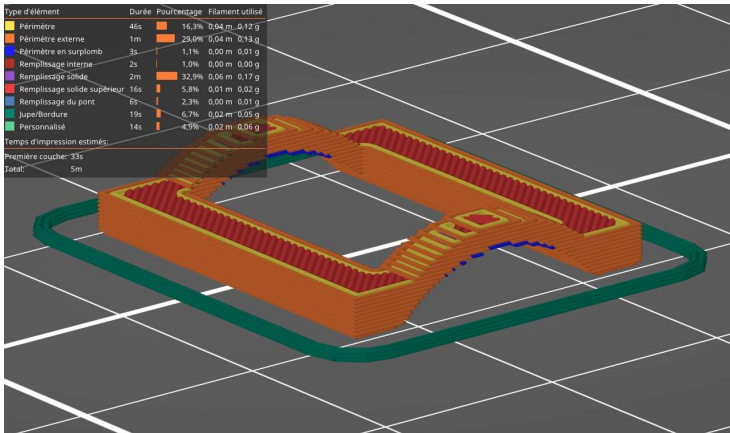
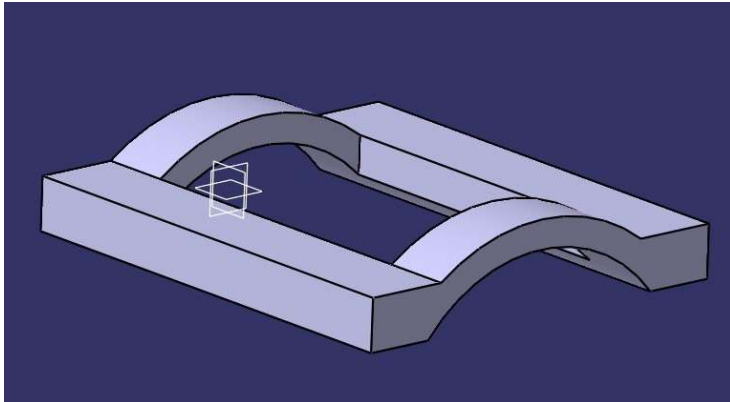


Laura Bosch Galdeano
Luciano Calcoen
Clément Chalut
Aron Dagur Beck
Manuel Fernandez Alonso



Context

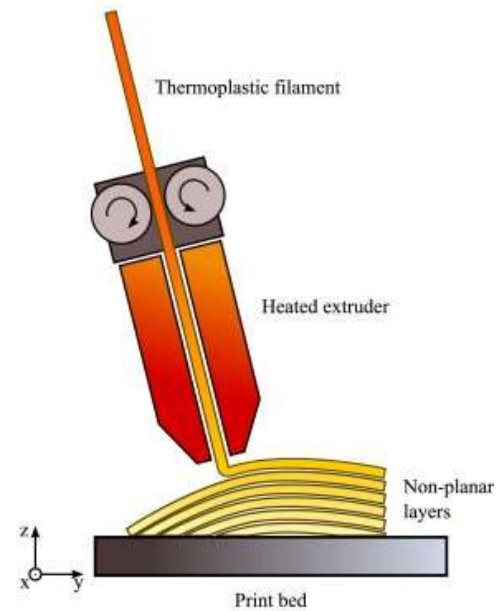
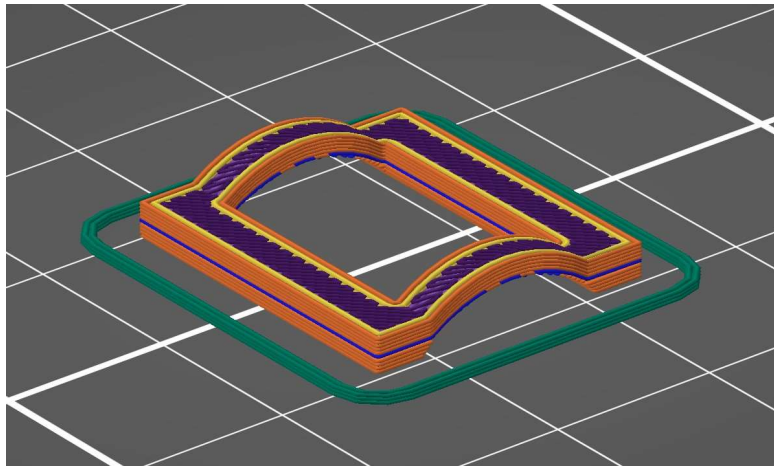
What is Planar Additive Manufacturing (PAM) ?



■ Guidetti et al, *Stress flow guided non-planar print trajectory optimization for additive manufacturing of anisotropic polymers*

Speaker: Luciano M. Calcoen

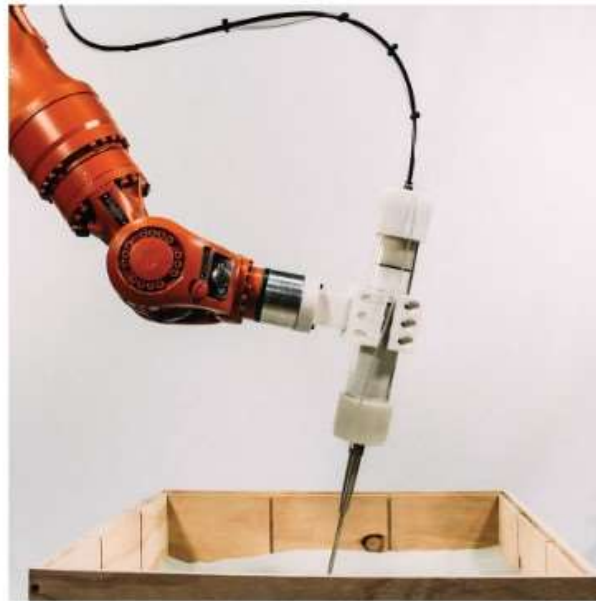
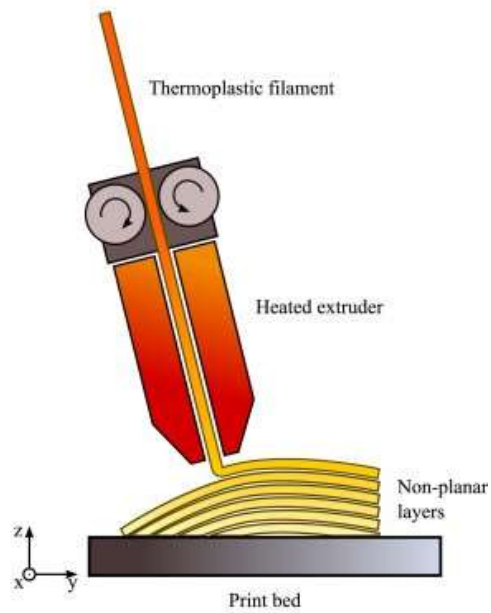
What is Non-Planar Additive Manufacturing (NPAM) ?

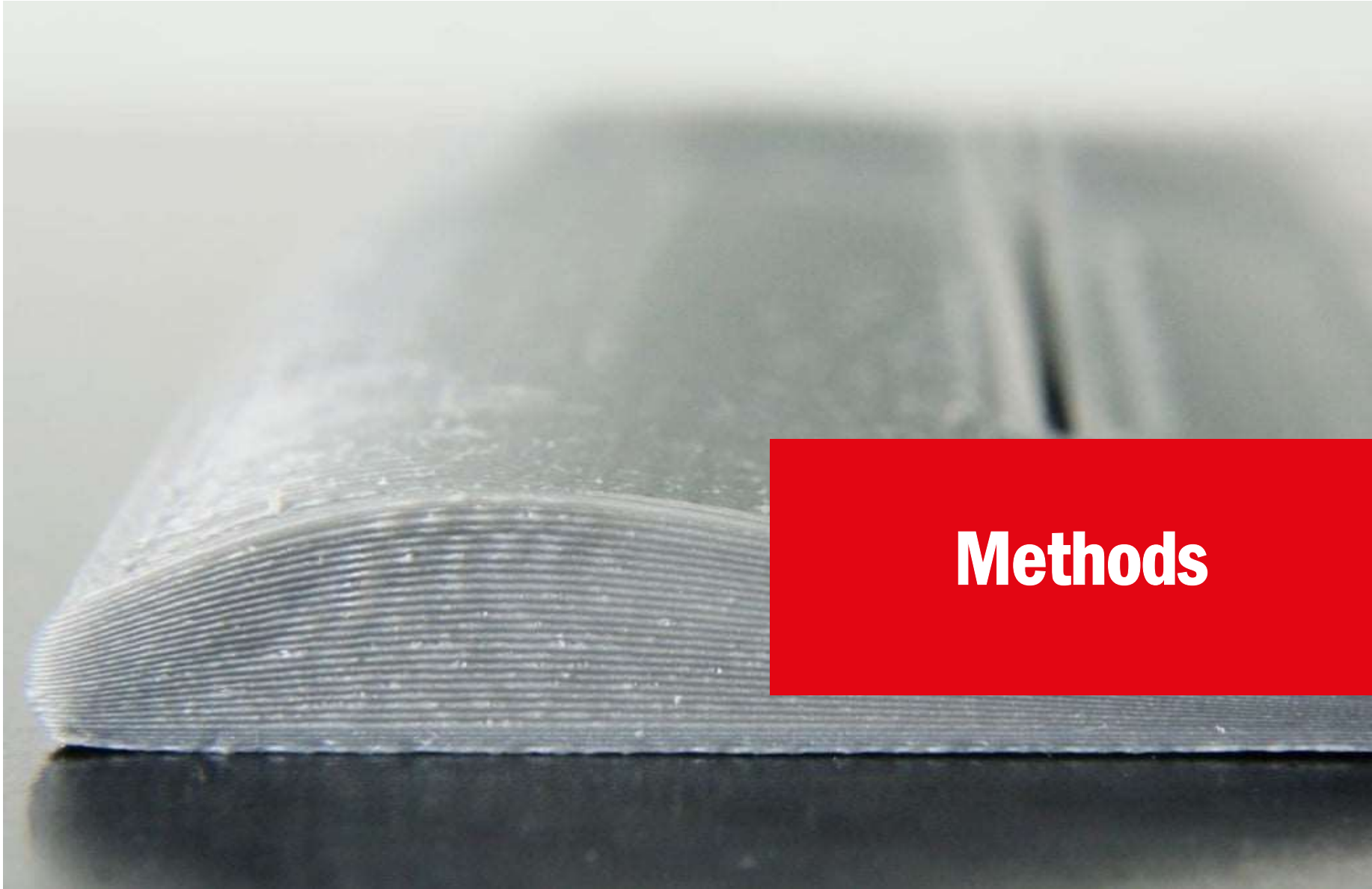


■ Guidetti et al, *Stress flow guided non-planar print trajectory optimization for additive manufacturing of anisotropic polymers*

Speaker: Luciano M. Calcoen

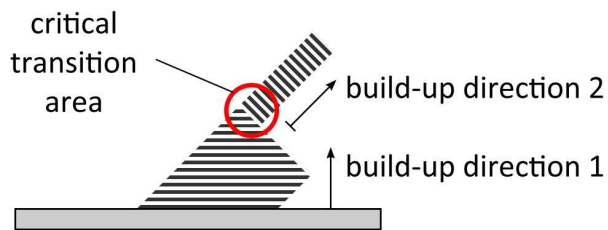
Examples of NPAM



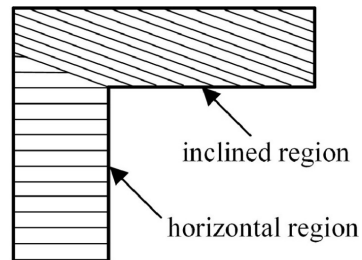


Methods

Multi-Direction Slicing



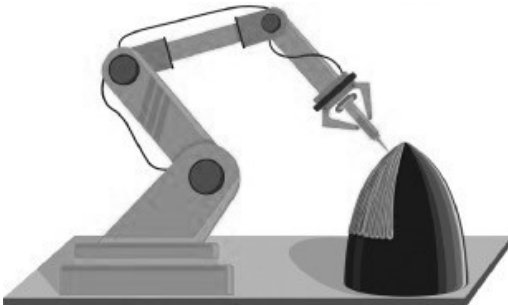
Inclined Layer Printing



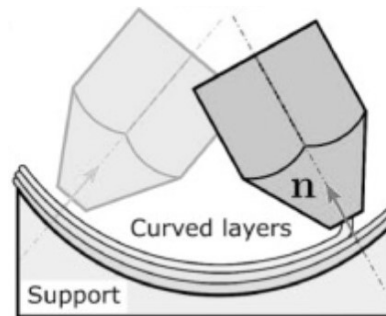
Active Z Printing



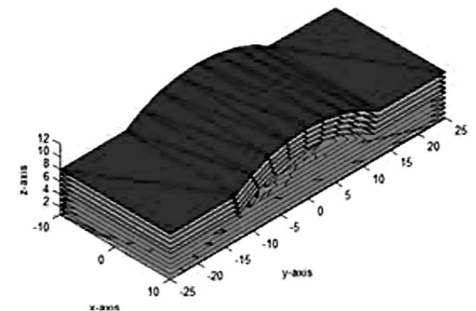
Multi-Axis Material Extrusion



Curved Layer Fused Deposition Modeling



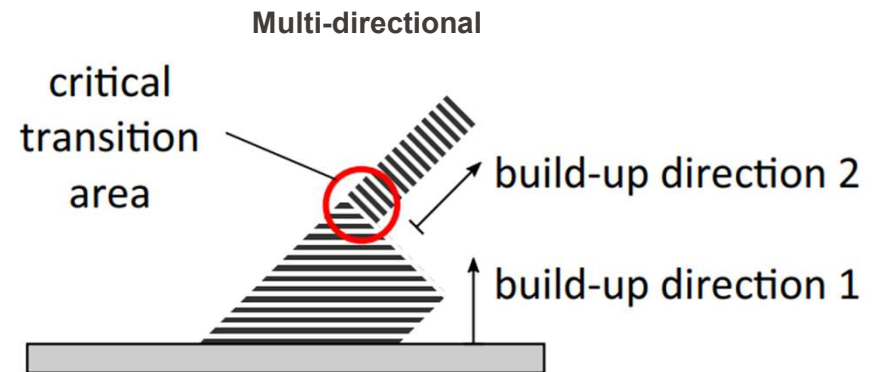
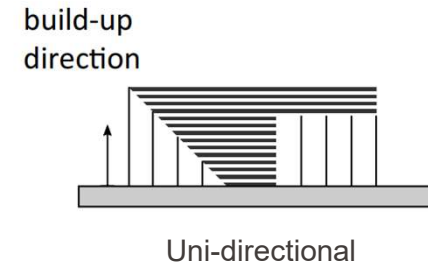
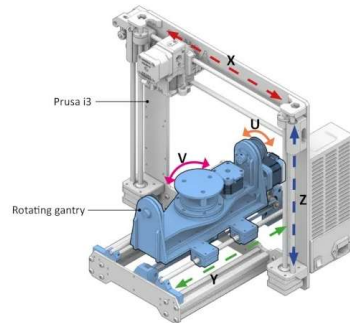
Combining Flat and Curved Layers



Speaker: Laura Bosch

1. Multi-Direction Slicing

- ❖ Objects with significant overhangs **without supports**.
- ❖ Creates **non-horizontal layers** to handle overhangs.
- ❖ Utilizes multi-directional toolpath planning, typically for **5-axis printers**.



1. Multi-Direction Slicing: Modules

❖ Volume Decomposition Module

- Identifies and groups concave loops to **form subvolumes**.
- **Fills holes** created during decomposition.
- Stores subvolume positions for **reassembly post-slicing**.

❖ Slicing Module

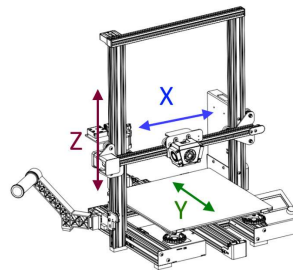
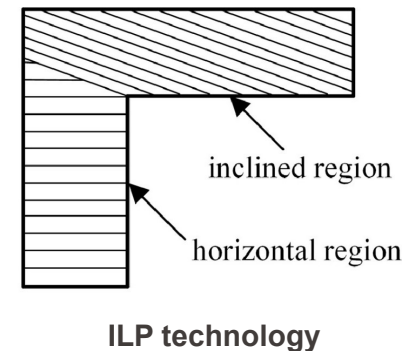
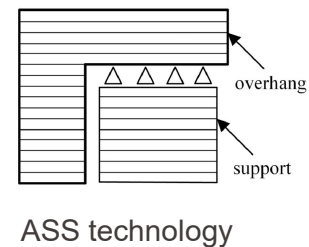
- Calculates **optimal** printing **direction** for each subvolume.
- Slices subvolumes using **planar slicing algorithm**.
- Rotates and translates toolpaths back to initial positions.

Results in efficient, high-quality prints without supports.

▪

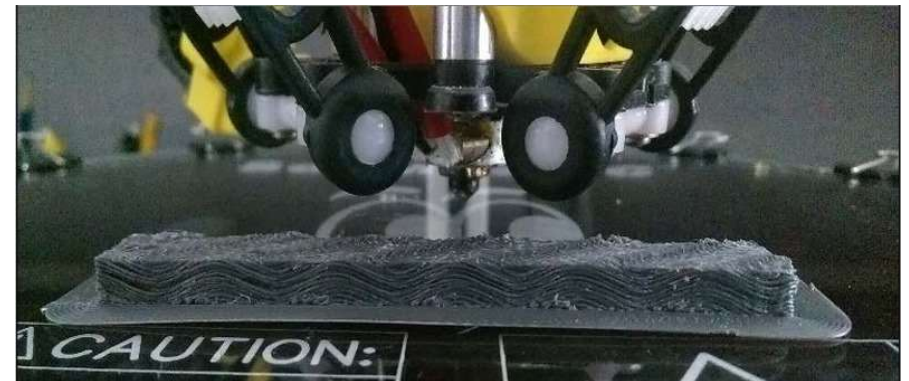
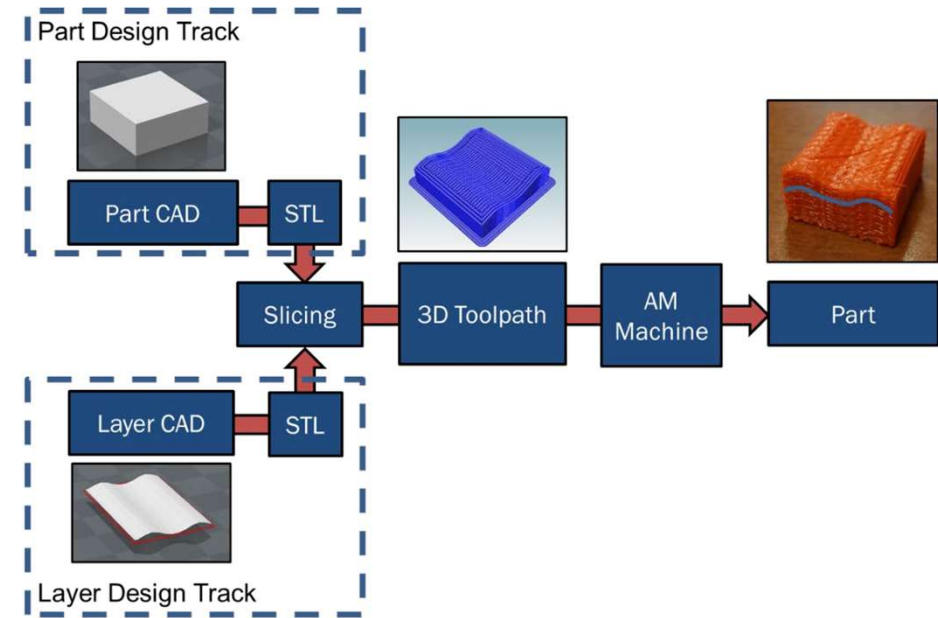
2. Inclined Layer Printing

- ❖ Prints protruding regions at different angles.
- ❖ **Divides** object into regions based on **overhangs**.
- ❖ Rotates and slices regions for optimal printing.
- ❖ Multi-directional toolpath on **standard 3-axis printers**.



3. Active Z Printing

- ❖ Enhances strength using **curved layers**.
- ❖ Tests show nonplanar layers **improve strength** and **stiffness**.
- ❖ Employs Bread Slicer software requiring two STL files.
- ❖ Uses a **3-axis printer** to move in x, y, and z axes simultaneously.



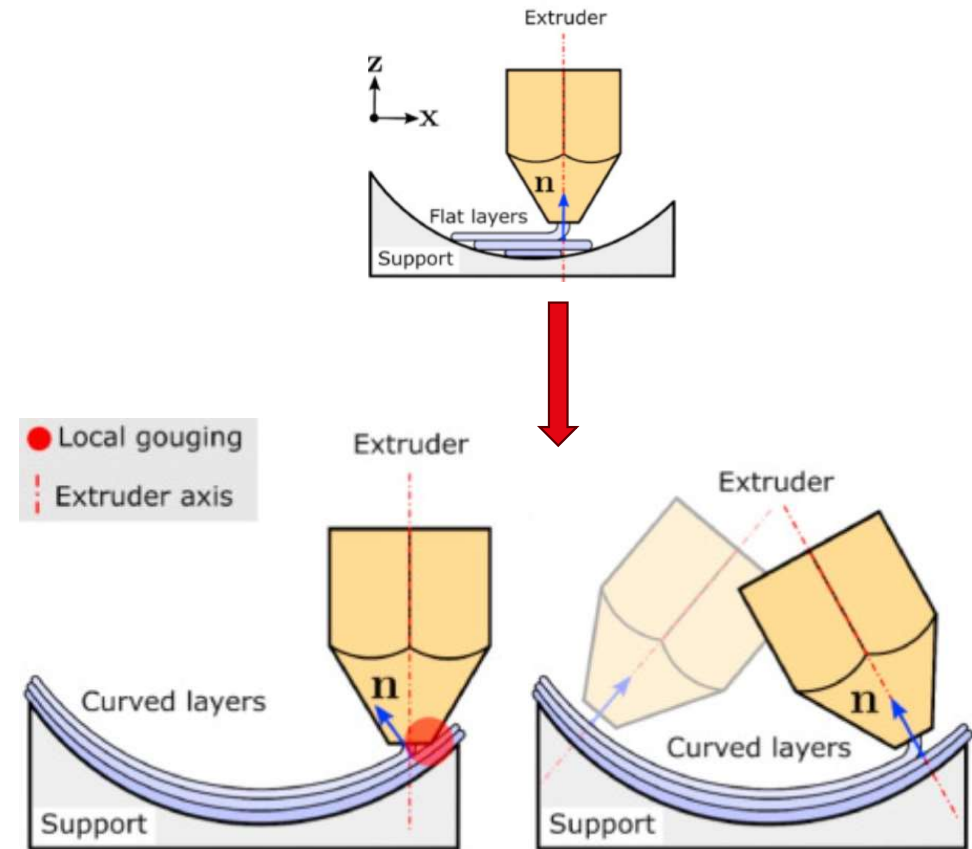
4. Multi-Axis Material Extrusion

- ❖ Prints a **reinforced shell** over a **core**, enhancing mechanical properties.
- ❖ Shifts **stress** from layer bonding to the object's **shell**.
- ❖ Path generation **follows specified angles** around the object.
- ❖ Uses a **six-axis robotic arm** printing system.



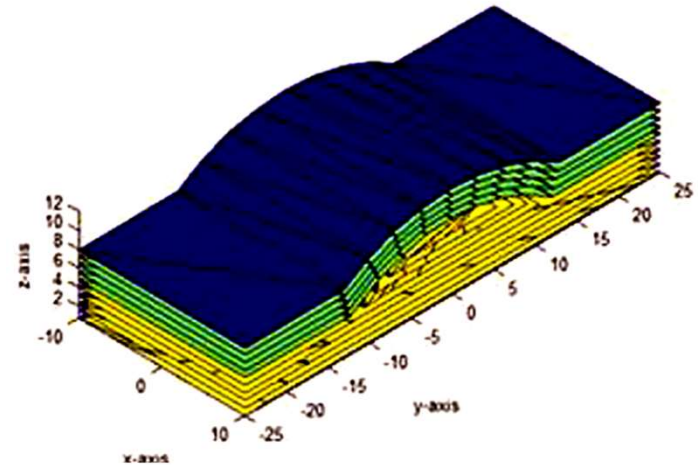
5. Extrusion Curved Layer Fused Deposition Modeling

- ❖ Prints nonplanar curved layers at **different z-heights**.
- ❖ Requires proper toolpath generation, filament orientation, and bonding.
- ❖ Assumes improved **inter-layer** bonding with **curved layers**.
- ❖ Uses **three-axis** or **five-axis** printers.

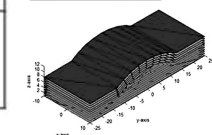
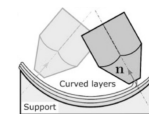
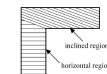
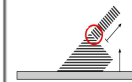


6. Combining Flat and Curved Layers

- ❖ **Eliminates stair-stepping** artifacts.
- ❖ Classifies and merges surface areas for curved printing.
- ❖ **Offsets surfaces** to create **shell layers**.
- ❖ Enhances mechanical strength, best printed in **load direction**.
- ❖ Uses **three-axis** printers.



Technique	Printer Type	Key Feature
Multi-Direction Slicing	5-axis printer	Slices model in various directions to create non-horizontal layers. Prints overhangs without supports using multi-directional toolpaths.
Inclined Layer Printing	3-axis printer	Prints protruding regions at angles. Rotates regions to desired angles to avoid supports.
Active-Z Printing	3-axis printer	Prints curved layers, moving in x, y, and z axes simultaneously.
Multi-Axis Material Extrusion	6-axis robotic arm	Prints a reinforced surface on a core with the shell oriented differently to enhance mechanical properties.
Curved Layer Fused Deposition Modeling	3-axis or 5-axis	Prints nonplanar curved layers at different z-heights to improve surface quality.
Combining Flat and Curved Layers	3-axis printer	Combines flat and curved layers to eliminate stair-stepping artifacts.



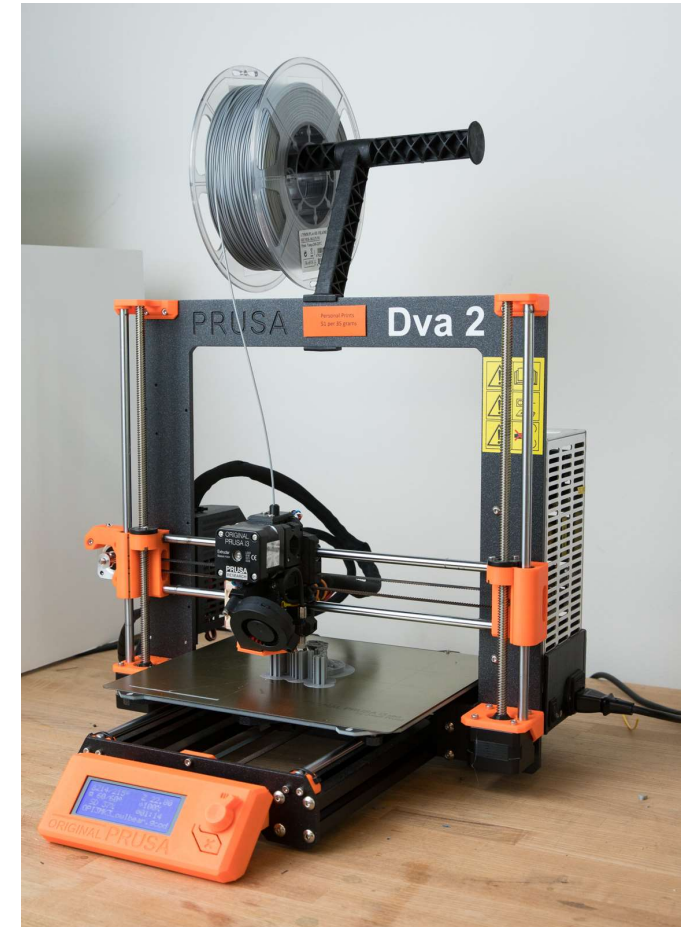


Improvements and limitations

Advances in non-planar slicing

❖ Need for further development:

- Main objective for non-planar layers is to^[1]:
 - Increase surface quality
 - Eliminate support structures
 - Increase strength
- One slicing algorithm not suitable to increase all objectives
- A software capable of allowing user to specify requirements and select slicing algorithms required based on them required for robust manufacturing with non-planar layers.



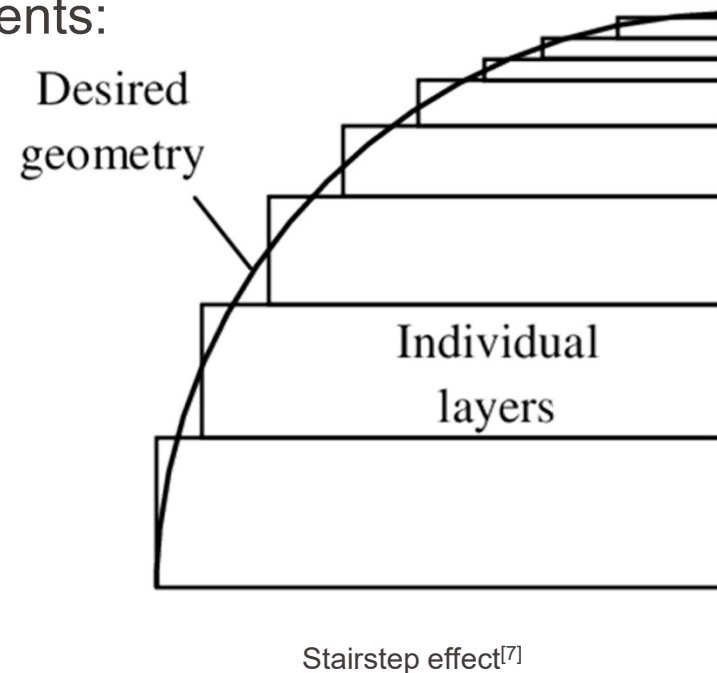
FDM printer, Prusa i3 MK3S^[2]

■ [1] Nayyeri et al, *The international Journal of Advanced Manufacturing*, 2024

[2] Santa Clara University

❖ Goal and advances with surface enhancements:

- Elimination of stairstep effect^{[3][4][5][6]}
- Higher printing speed compared to if variable layer height is used to improve surface quality^[3]
- Main methods:
 - Conversion to spherical coordinates for spherical objects^[6]
 - Non-planar outermost layer^[4]



[3] Maity et al, *Recent Advances in Manufacturing and Thermal Engineering*, 2022

[4] Fortunato et al, *Additive Manufacturing*, 2023

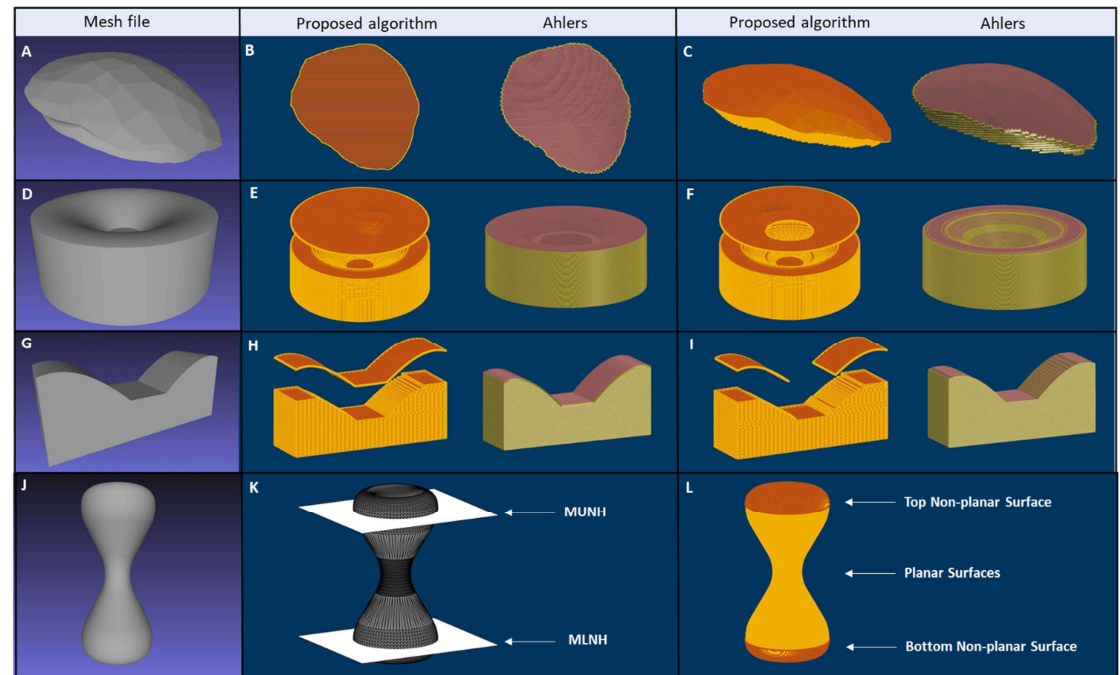
[5] And et al, *Advances in Additive Manufacturing and Metal Joining*, 2023

[6] Yigit et al, *Progress in Additive Manufacturing*, 2020

[7] Hadley et al, *Innovative Developments in Virtual and Physical Prototyping*, 2011

❖ Better surface quality for outermost layers^[4]

- Decomposition of slicing path into
 - Top surface
 - Middle part
 - Bottom surface
- Planar slicing for middle layers
- Decomposed parts merged to one slicing path
- Robust collision avoidance based on safety height and advance angle based on nozzle geometry



Demonstration of proposed algorithm^[4]

[4] Fortunato et al, Additive Manufacturing, 2023

❖ Support structures can be consuming and costly^[8]

- Two main methods:
 - Volume decomposition
 - Complex geometries decomposed into simpler objects
 - Each object sliced from the most desirable direction^{[8][9]}
 - Nozzle or bed tilting
 - Goal to make sure filament bonds with already extruded part^{[10][11][12][13]}



■ [8] Zhao et al, *Journal of Intelligent Manufacturing*, 2020

[9] Zhao et al, *The International Journal of Advanced Manufacturing Technology*, 2018

[10] Sarma et al, *Next Generation Materials and Processing Technologies*, 2021

[11] Dai et al, *AMC Journals*, 2024

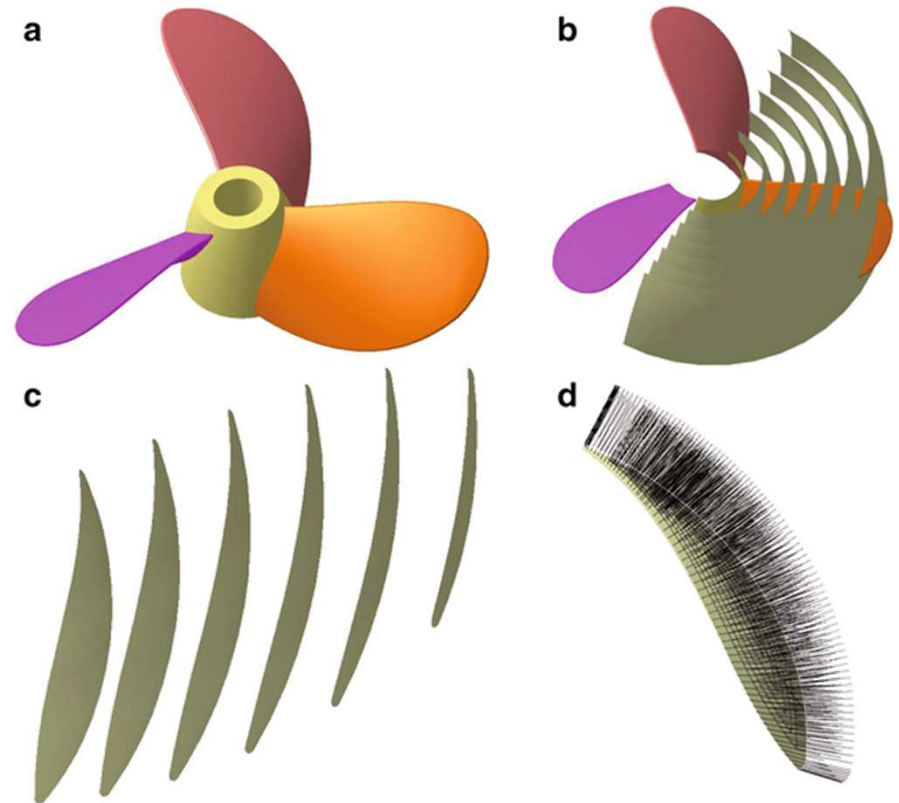
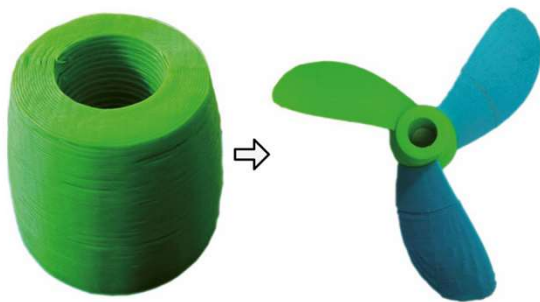
[12] Wu et al, *Cornell University*, 2024

[13] Murtezaoglu et al, *Procedia CIRP*, 2018

[14] 3D Printing Support structures, 2018

❖ Volume decomposition

- Complex geometries decomposed into simpler subparts^[8]
- Geometrical shape identification used to select slicing method for each path^[9]
- Each subpart sliced from the most desirable direction^[8]



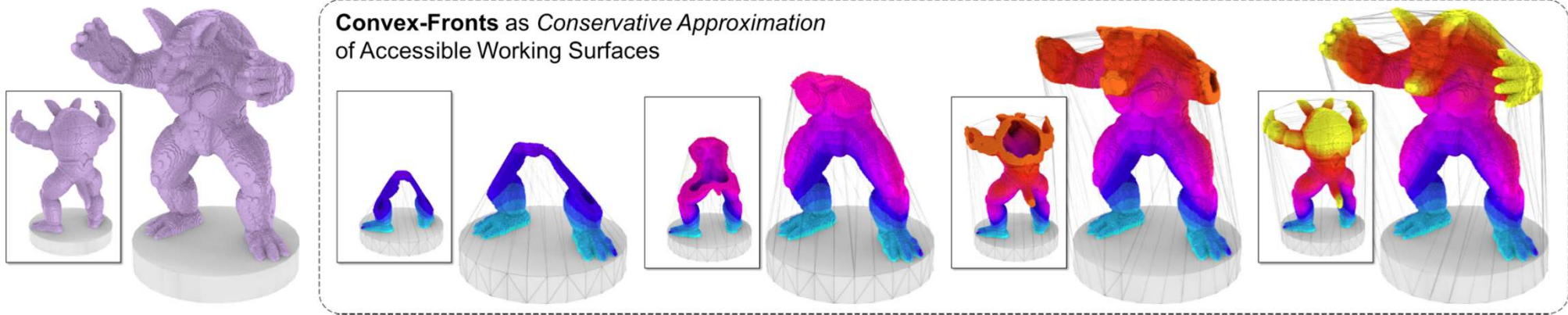
[9] Zhao et al, *The International Journal of Advanced Manufacturing Technology*, 2018

[8] Zhao et al, *Journal of Intelligent Manufacturing*, 2020

EPFL Continuous angle variation of the printing bed

22

- ❖ Goal to tilt printing bed so that filament is extruded on a level surface^[11]
 - Part discretized into voxels
 - Stable neighbour sides defined as sides connecting to already layered voxels
 - Greedy optimization scheme used to calculate iso-layers that fulfill stability criteria



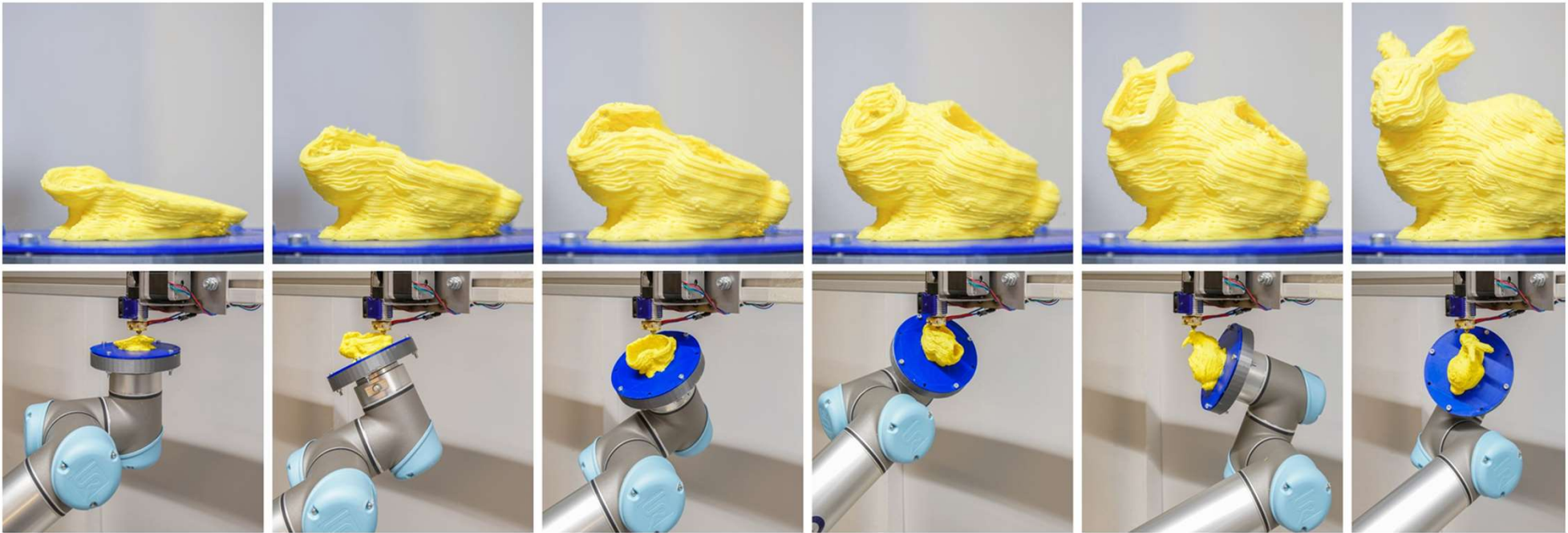
[11] Dai et al, *AMC Journals*, 2024

Speaker: Aron D. Beck

EPFL Continuous angle variation of the printing bed

23

❖ Poor surface quality and large overhangs



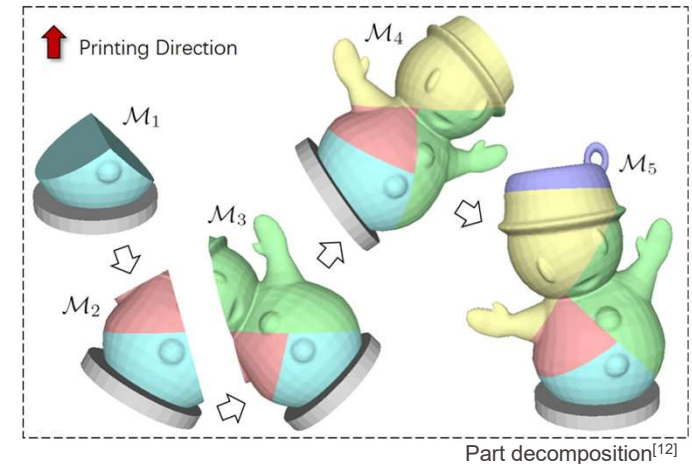
Printing of an object using the method of Dai et al^[11]

[11] Dai et al, *AMC Journals*, 2024

Speaker: Aron D. Beck

❖ Fewer tilting procedures

- Wu et al^[12] suggested a simpler method in slicing
- User selects finite number of subparts
- Greedy scheme used to find planes which minimizes risky area of fabricated part
- Better overall surface quality but seams between subparts visible



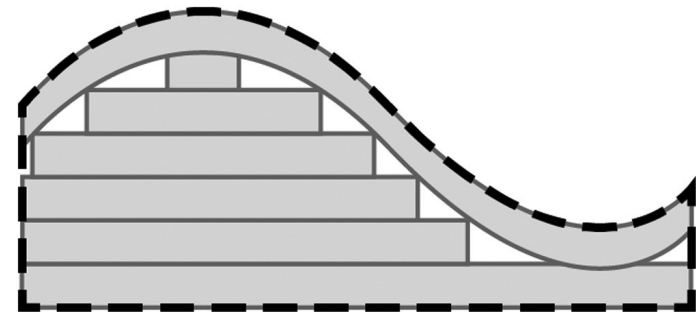
[12] Wu et al, Cornell University, 2024

❖ Problem with previous methods:

- Poor bonding between layers using planar methods
- Problem of large air gaps in algorithms used to improve surface quality
- Search for criteria to impose curvature between layers



Mechanical testing machine [16]



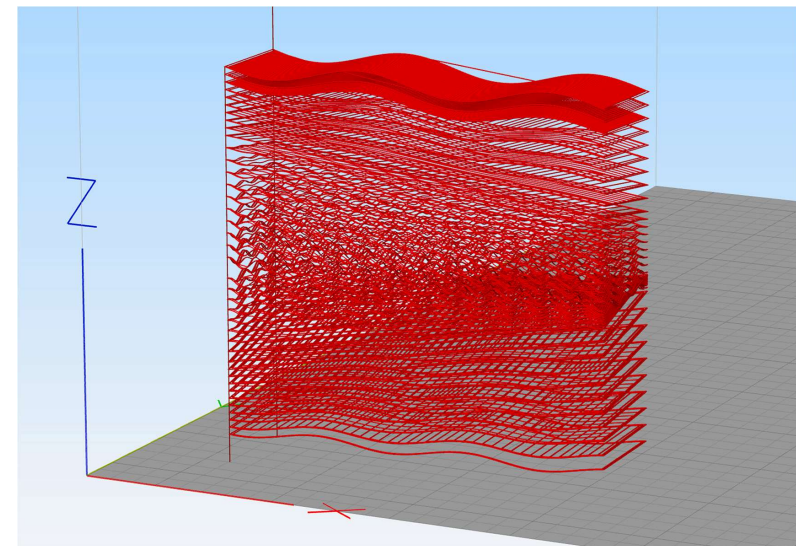
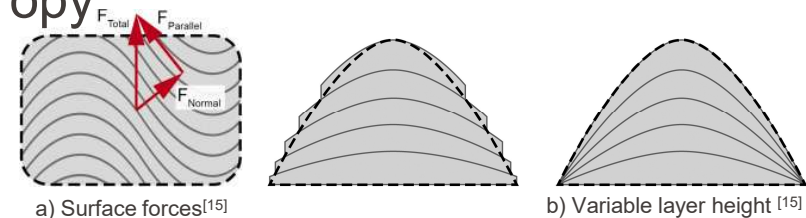
Air gaps between planar and non-planar layers [15]

■ [15] Pelzer et al, *Additive Manufacturing*, 2021

[16] Instron, 2024

❖ Improved strength through increased isotropy

- Goal of reducing normal force
- Parts manually decomposed into subsection which each is either sliced with curved layers or titled parallel layers
- Promising technology but unable to demonstrate increase in strength.



[15] Pelzer et al, *Additive Manufacturing*, 2021

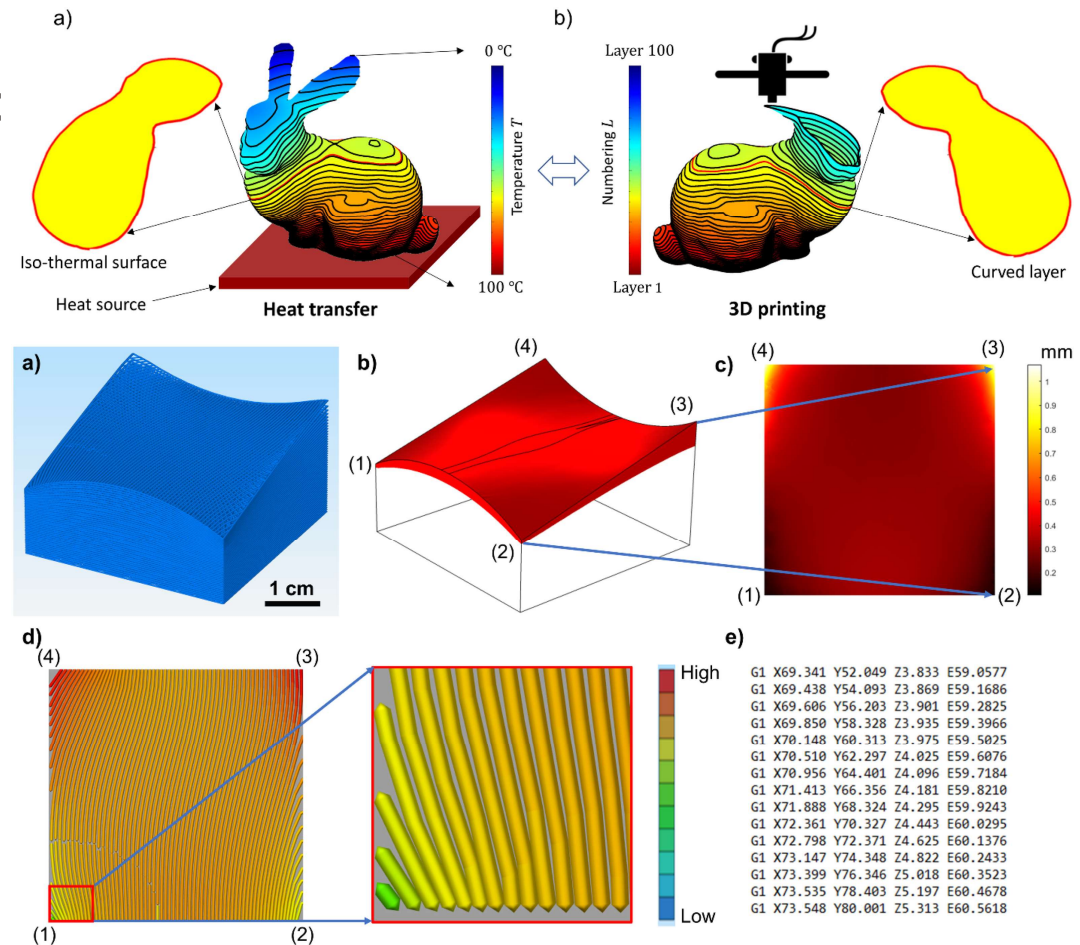
❖ Method of generating curved layers:

- Shan et al^[15] proposed to create the non-planar layers with heat conduction modelling and used the isothermal layers to slice objects

$$\rho C_p \frac{\delta T}{\delta t} = \Delta(k \Delta T) + Q$$

- Tensile strength improved by 14% compared to planar slicing and 63% better surface roughness reported.

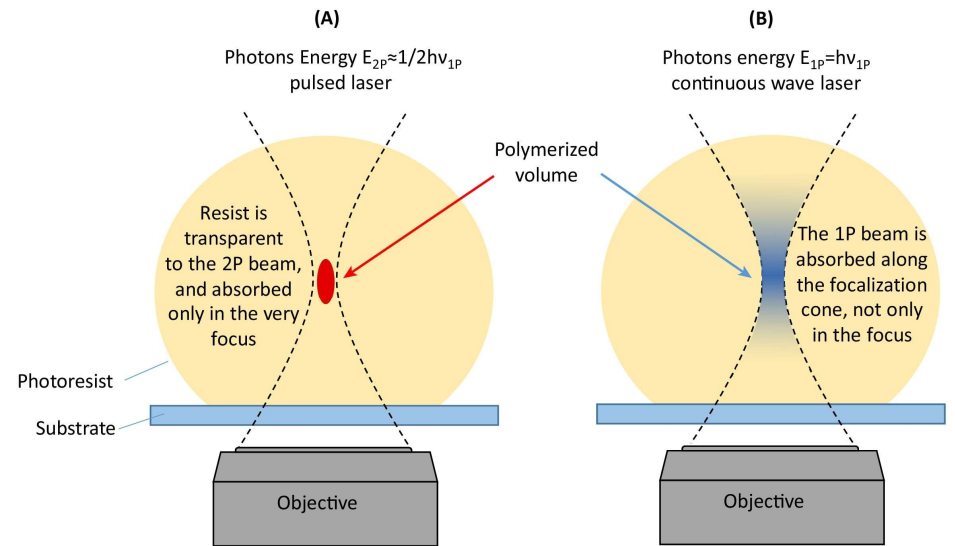
[15] Shan et al, *Journal of Manufacturing Processes*, 2024



Speaker: Aron D. Beck

❖ Literature review has revealed that:

- Most research on FDM due to poor surface quality and bonding of material
- Not possible for powder-based processes due to a requirement of even spreading of powder
- Not widespread in stereolithography but possible with 2 photon curing^{[17][18]}.
 - 2 photon curing machine available at EPFL



Trends in Biotechnology

Explanation of 2 photon curing^[18]

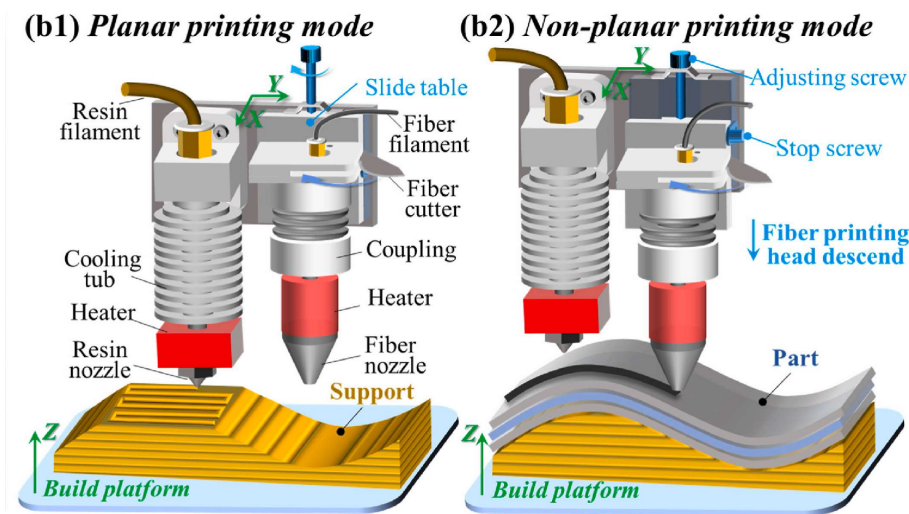
[17] Nanoscribe, *Photonic Professional GT2*, 2024

[18] Enrico et al, *Trends in Biotechnology*, 2019



NPAM vs. PAM

- **Planar AM (PAM):** Traditional layer-by-layer stacking in flat, horizontal layers.
- **Non-Planar AM (NPAM):** Introduces curved or freeform layers aligned with the part's geometry.

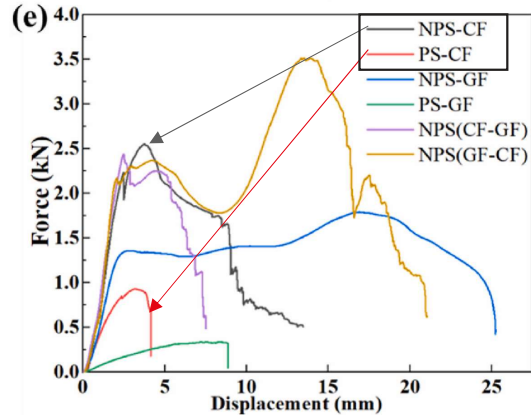


PAM:

- Layers stacked in flat planes, resulting in weaker strength along the Z-axis.
- Prone to delamination and anisotropic behavior.

NPAM:

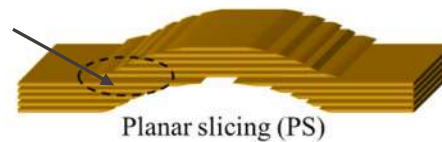
- Curved layers can be aligned with stress trajectories.
- Reduced anisotropy and enhanced overall mechanical strength.



a) force-displacement curves

+70% bending force (CF)
-63% roughness (CF)

Weaker
bonding

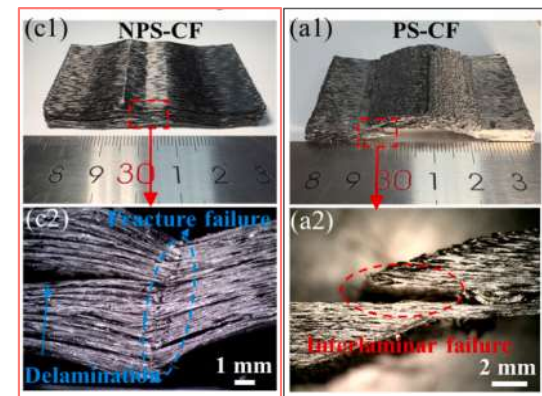


Planar slicing (PS)



Non-planar slicing(NPS)

b) The physical pictures of the failed specimens printed with single fiber and their side morphologies

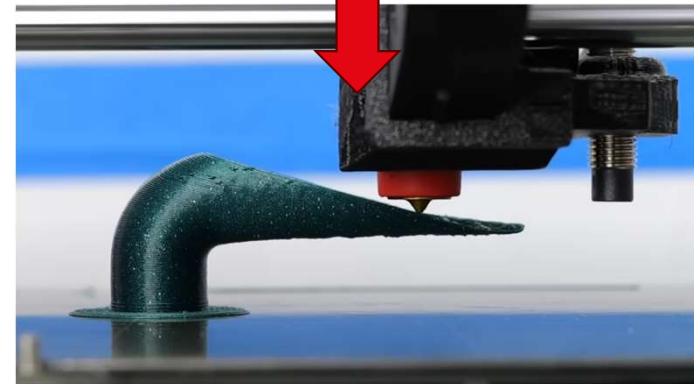
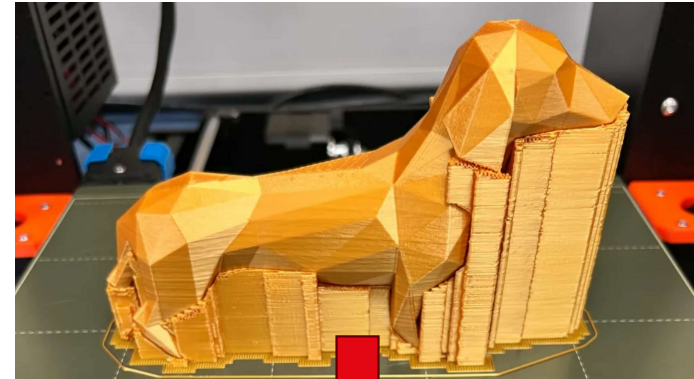
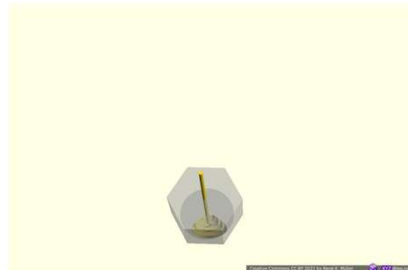


PAM:

- Necessary support increase waste and post-processing for complex shapes
- Material compatibility needs to be taken into consideration for supports.

NPAM:

- Layer orientation can eliminate/reduce supports.
- Techniques like conical slicing enable stable deposition at steep angles.



<https://all3dp.com/2/3d-printing-supports-guide-all-you-need-to-know/>

- CNCKitchen. Conical Slicing: A different angle of 3D printing <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1i-1TEdByZY>
<https://xyzdims.com/3d-printing/slicer4rtn/>

EPFL Concrete example



Parameters :

- **Material Cost:** 20.- per kilogram (PETG).
- **Labor Cost:** 33.-/h (hourly rate for 3D printing technician in CH)
- **Printing Parameters :**
- **PAM:** Prusa Mk3S (PrusaSlicer)
- **NPAM:** Prusa Mk3S optimized with opensource slicing algo (Slicer)

■ <https://www.salaryexpert.com/salary/job/3d-printing-technician/switzerland>
<https://www.3djake.ch/en-CH/the-filament/the-filament-petg-filament>
<https://www.prusa3d.com/category/original-prusa-i3-mk3s/>
<https://github.com/makertum/non-planar-layer-fdm>

Speaker: Clément CHALUT

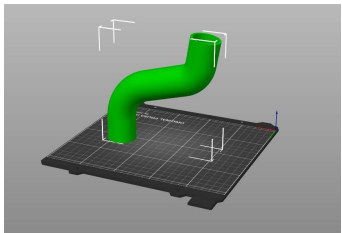
EPFL Printing Time



3D benchy

1.5 – 2 hours

1.5 – 2 hours



S-shaped cylinder

15 hours

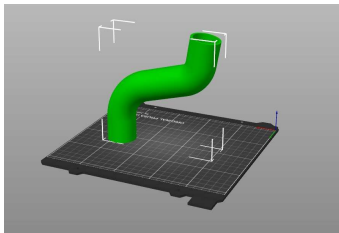
8h30 hours



Material Cost



3D benchy



S-shaped cylinder

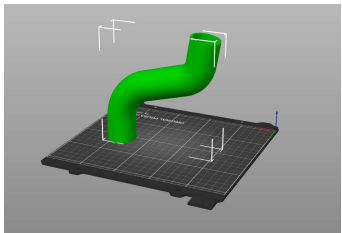
PAM	NPAM
0.3.-	0.3.-
3.6.- (20% support)	2.9.-



EPFL Post-Processing



3D benchhy



S-shaped cylinder

PAM

NPAM

15min

10min

20min

10min

Depends on
application

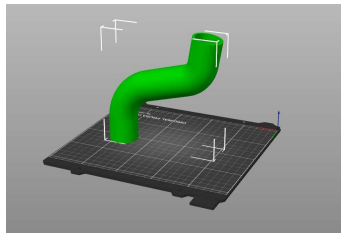
Speaker: Clément CHALUT



EPFL Final cost

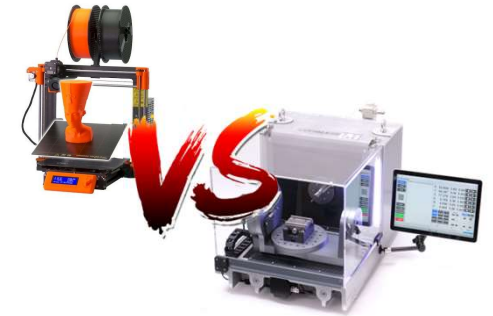


3D benchy



S-shaped cylinder

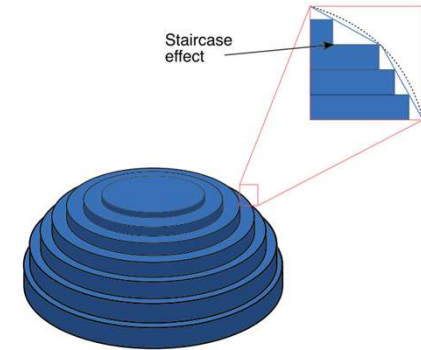
PAM	NPAM
1h45 / 8.55.-	1h40 / 5.8.-
15h45 / 14.6.-	8h40 / 8.4.-



PAM:

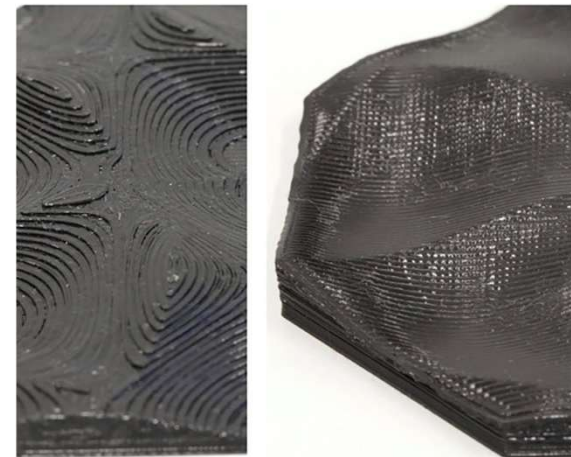
- “staircase effect” on curved surfaces
- Smoother surfaces need finer layers, increasing print time.

-76% surface roughness



NPAM:

- Curved layers conform to the part's shape, reducing visible stepping.
- Improved surface quality out-of-the-printer, minimizing finishing work.
- "Lines" of printing are still present.



EPFL Equipment and Implementation Challenges

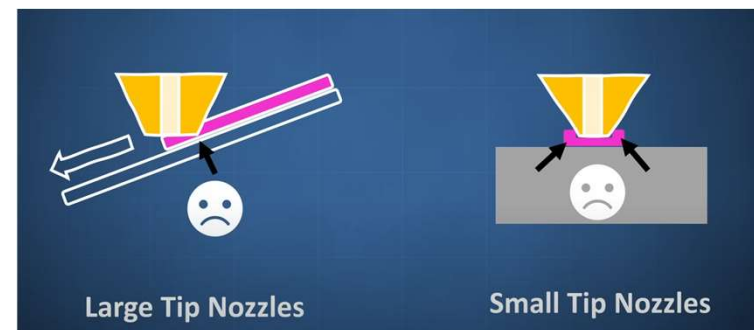
39

PAM:

- Standard 3-axis setups are simple and widely available.
- Straightforward slicing and toolpaths, making it cost-effective and beginner-friendly.

NPAM:

- Requires multi-axis systems or modified hardware for nozzle orientation.
- Advanced slicing algorithms and longer, specialized nozzles



- CNCKitchen. Conical Slicing: A different angle of 3D printing <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1i-1TEdByZY>.
<https://www.fabbaloo.com/news/innovation-alert-5-axis-fff-3d-printer-5x-developed-at-iwk-institute-in-germany>

Speaker: Clément CHALUT



Case studies



POLITÉCNICA

1. Axisymmetric non-planar slicing and path planning strategy for robot-based additive manufacturing ^[19]

- Polytechnic University of Madrid, Spain
- Lead to a “MAKE Project”
- Focused on slicing and trajectory generation



2. Supportless 3D-printing of non-planar thin-walled structures with the multi-axis screw-extrusion additive manufacturing system ^[20]

- Zhejiang Normal University, China
- New approach to NPAM

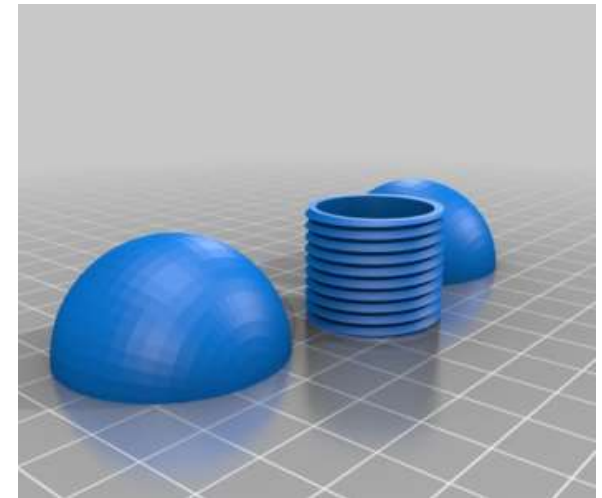
[19] López-Arrabal et al, *Materials & Design*, 2024

[20] Li et al, *Materials & Design*, 2024

EPFL Case study 1: Axisymmetric non-planar slicing

42

- **Axisymmetric elements:** those whose shape and properties remain unchanged when rotating a layer around the axis of symmetry.
- Slicing and trajectory generation:
 - ✓ Simple axisymmetric surfaces
 - ✗ Free-form surfaces
- **Contribution:**
 - Algorithm capable of slicing and generating trajectories for any kind of axisymmetric shapes
 - Use of commercial planar slicer software



Speaker: Manuel F. Alonso

EPFL Case study 1: Axisymmetric non-planar slicing

43

❖ Methodology

■ Two case studies:

Cylindrical helical spring

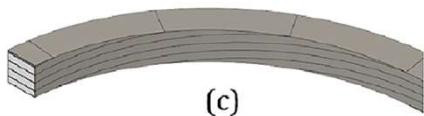
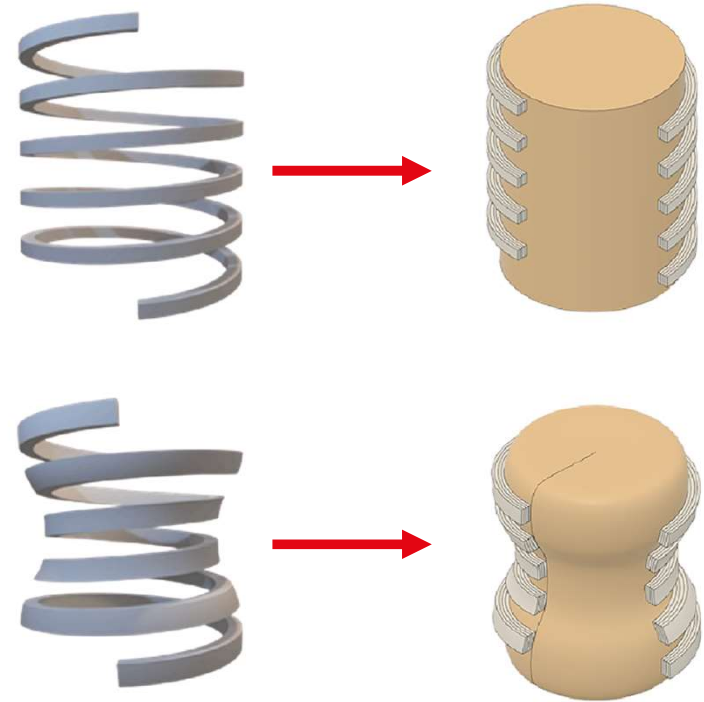
- Cylindrical layers

Hourglass-shaped helical spring

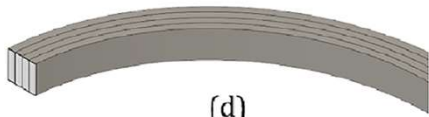
- Hourglass-shaped layers

Motivations:

- × Staircase effect
- × Support structure



(c)



(d)

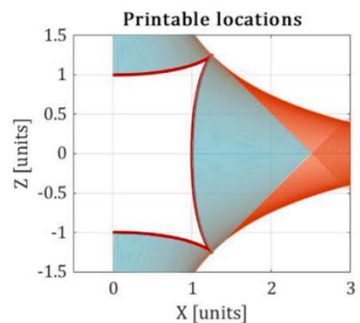
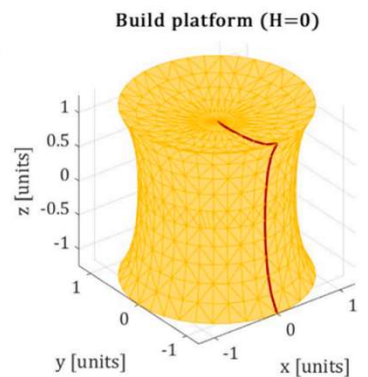
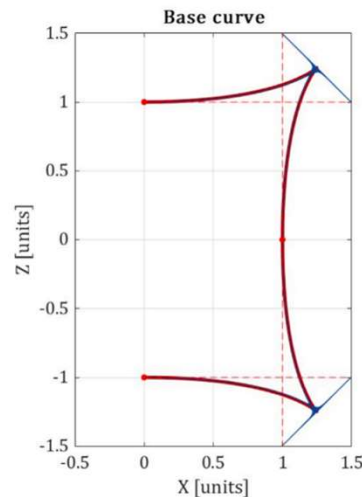
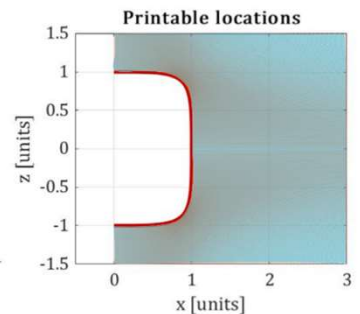
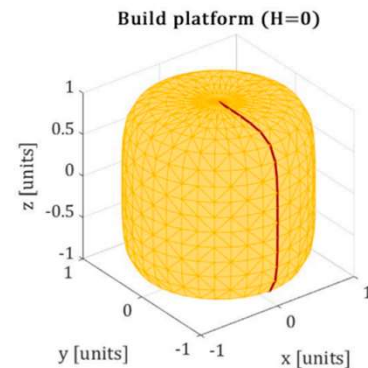
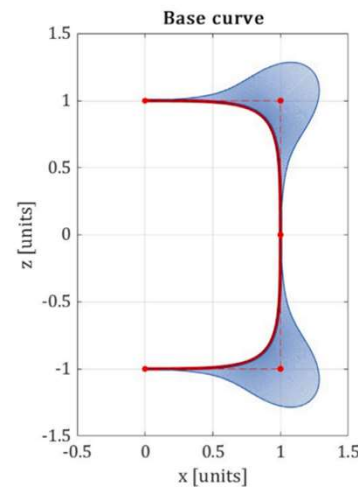
Speaker: Manuel F. Alonso

EPFL Case study 1: Axisymmetric non-planar slicing

44

❖ Slicing and trajectory generation

- Slicing by surfaces of revolution parallel to the build platform
 - Cylindrical and hourglass surfaces
- Build platform \Leftrightarrow Composite Bézier
 - B-spline generatrix curve
 - Control points + polynomial = Spline
 - Spline: piece of curve
 - Rotation around the Z axis
- Cylindrical: 2 splines, 4 control points
- Hourglass: 4 splines, 4 control points



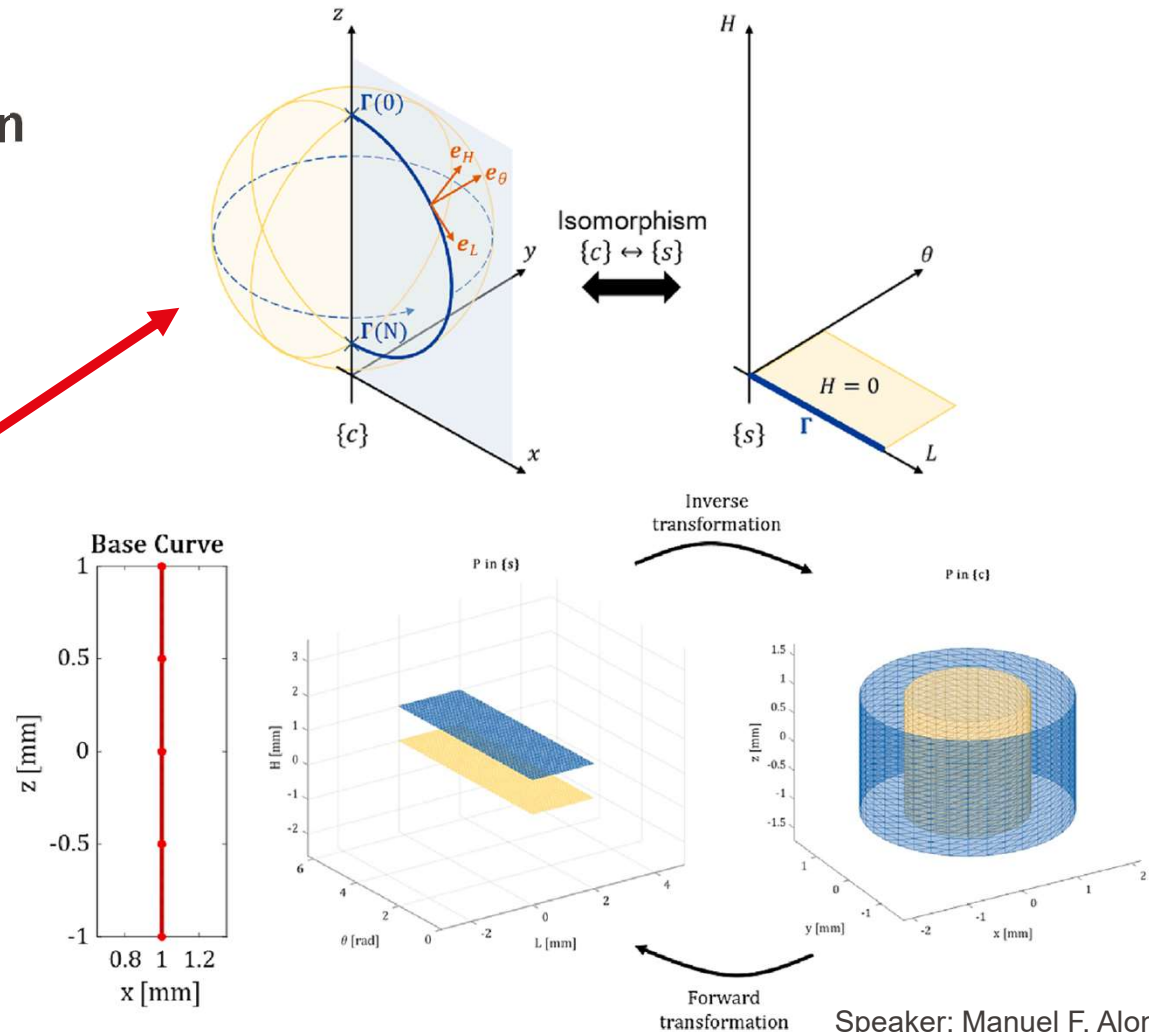
Speaker: Manuel F. Alonso

EPFL Case study 1: Axisymmetric non-planar slicing

45

❖ Slicing and trajectory generation

- Slicing by surfaces of revolution parallel to the build platform
 - ✗ Commercial planar slicers
- Algorithm based on isomorphism:
 - Cartesian coordinate system $\{c\}$
 - Slicing coordinate system $\{s\}$
 - Mathematical transformation
- Algorithm:
 1. $\{c\} \leftrightarrow \{s\}$: flat surface
 2. Planar slicing in $\{s\}$
 3. $\{s\} \leftrightarrow \{c\}$: non-planar layers, conforming the object's geometry



Speaker: Manuel F. Alonso

EPFL Case study 1: Axisymmetric non-planar slicing

46

❖ Slicing and trajectory generation

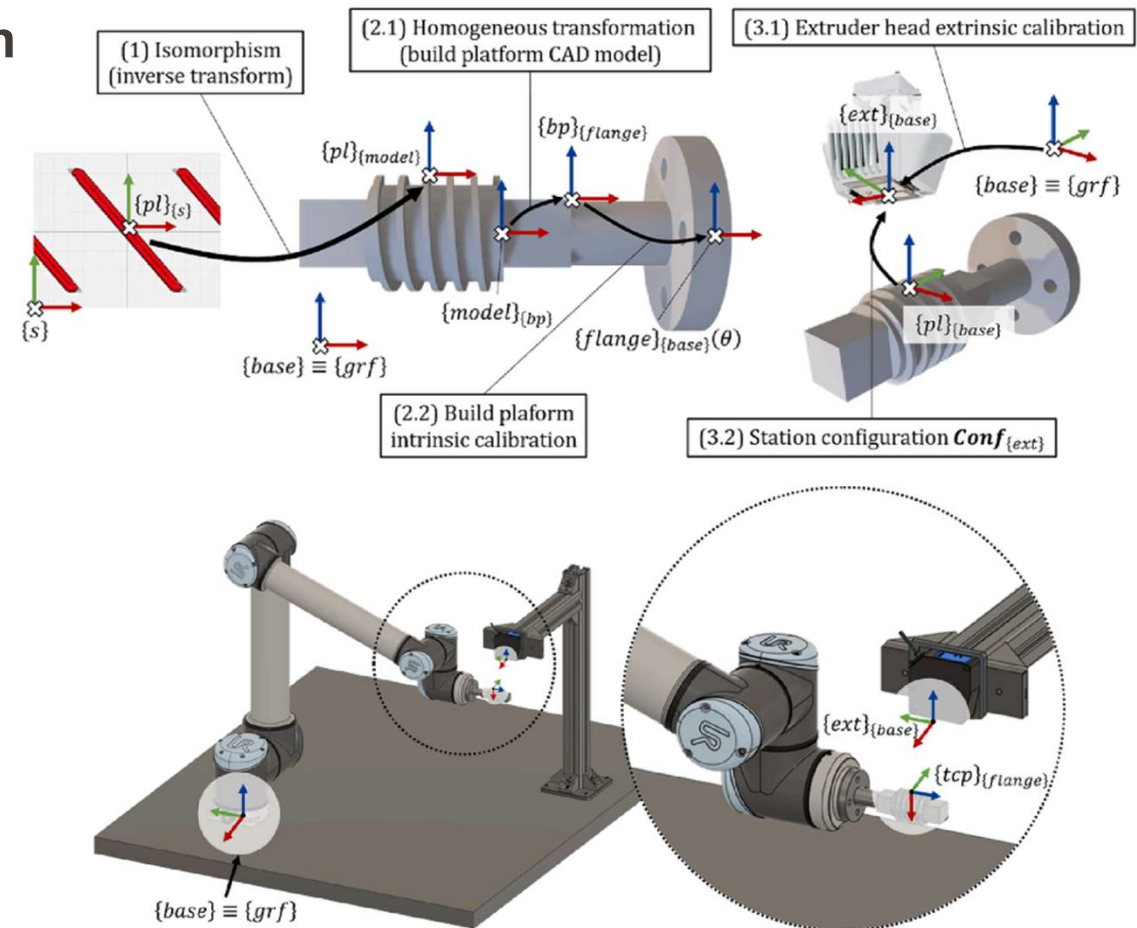
■ Algorithm:

1. List of points and trajectories in $\{s\}$ (nozzle always orthogonal)
2. Inverse transformation to $\{c\}$
3. Matrix multiplications \rightarrow fixed extruder reference frame

■ Setup: robot + fixed extruder

■ Robot:

- Calibration workflow
- Not focused on the study

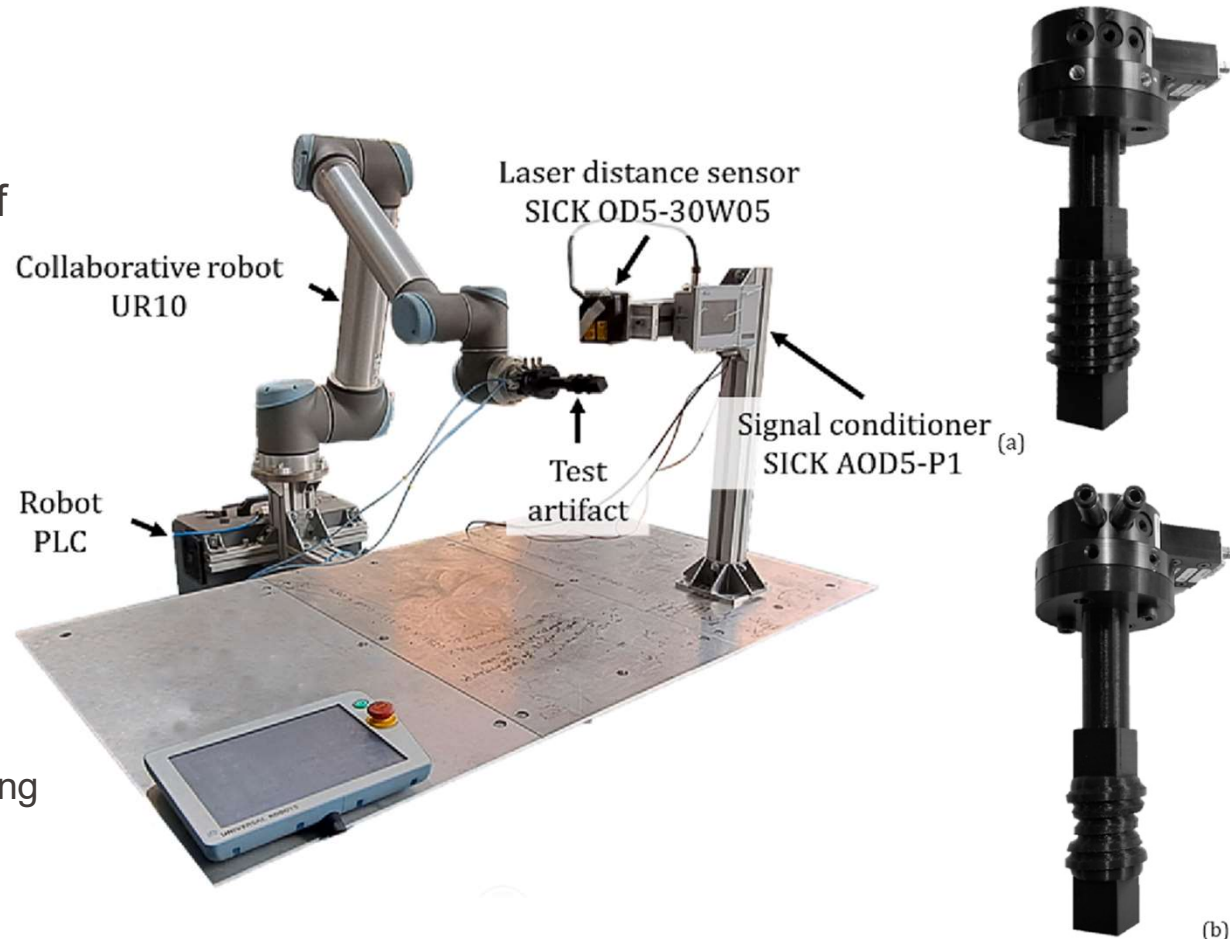


EPFL Case study 1: Axisymmetric non-planar slicing

47

❖ Experimental setup

- Objective: validate the accuracy of the generated printing trajectories
 - ✗ Analysis of the printed object
- Extruder → laser distance sensor
 - Distance $\{tcp\} - \{ext\}$
 - While executing trajectories
- Build platform + helical spring **planarly printed**
 - Measure the accuracy of maintaining a constant distance
- UR10 robotic manipulator



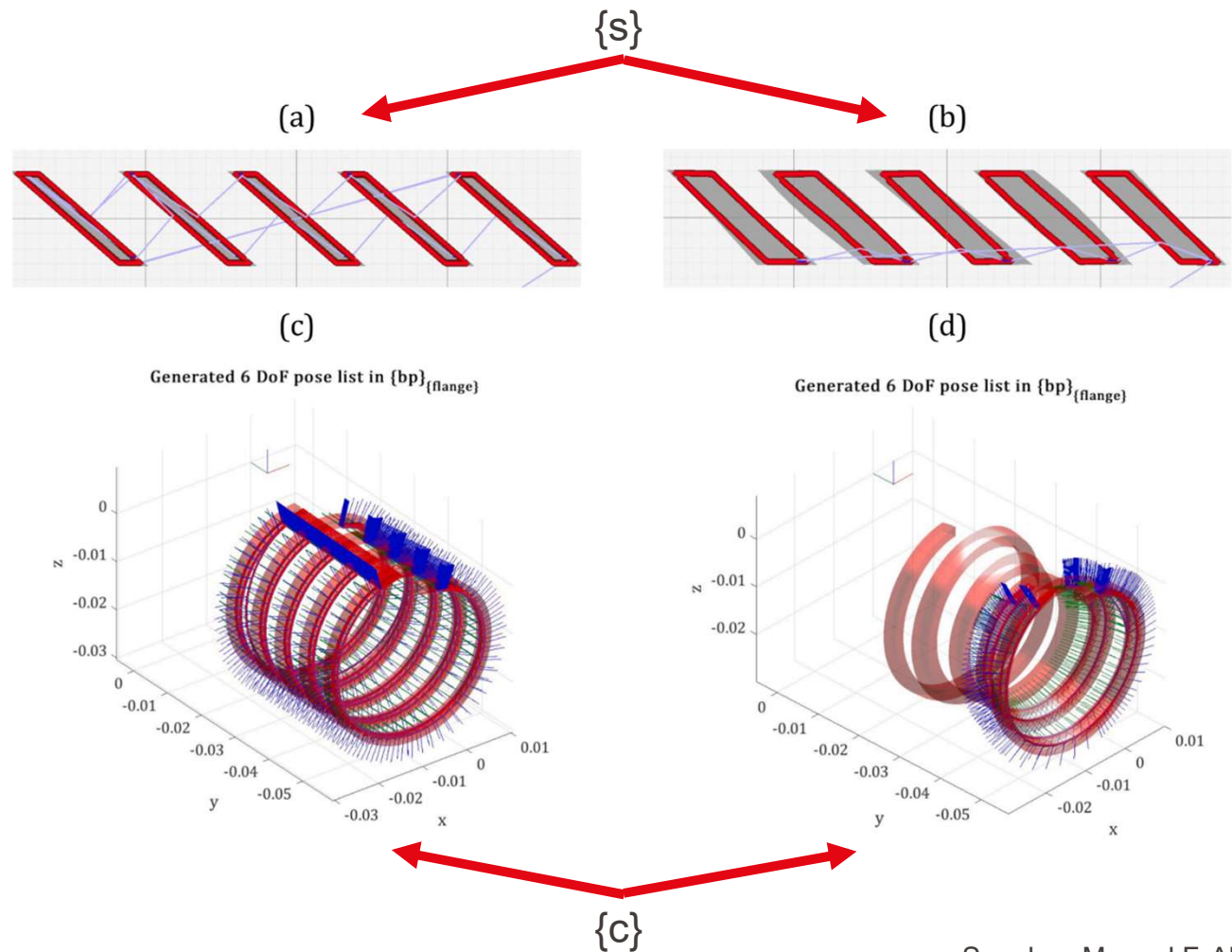
Speaker: Manuel F. Alonso

EPFL Case study 1: Axisymmetric non-planar slicing

48

❖ Results and validation

- Algorithm implemented in MATLAB 2023b
- Generated trajectories for both use cases
 - Only the first layer presented



Speaker: Manuel F. Alonso

EPFL Case study 1: Axisymmetric non-planar slicing

49

- ❖ **Results and validation**
 - Trajectories tested for only one and a half coil of each spring
 - Cylindrical helical spring
 - Hourglass-shaped helical spring



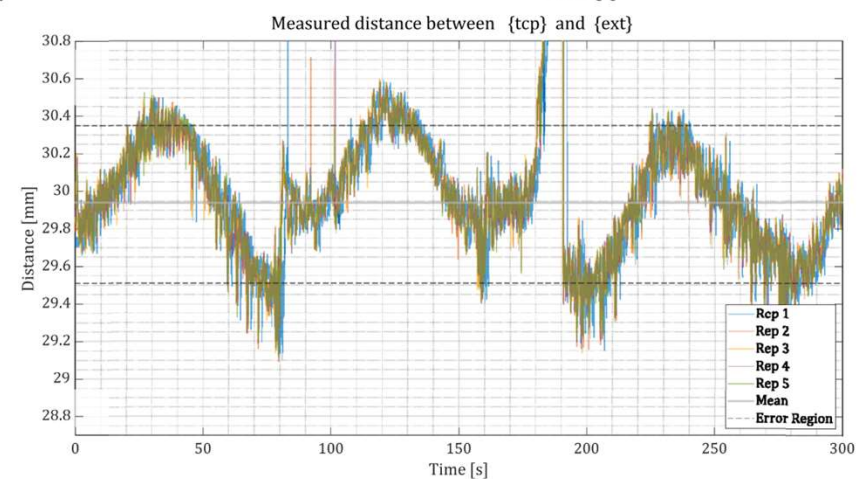
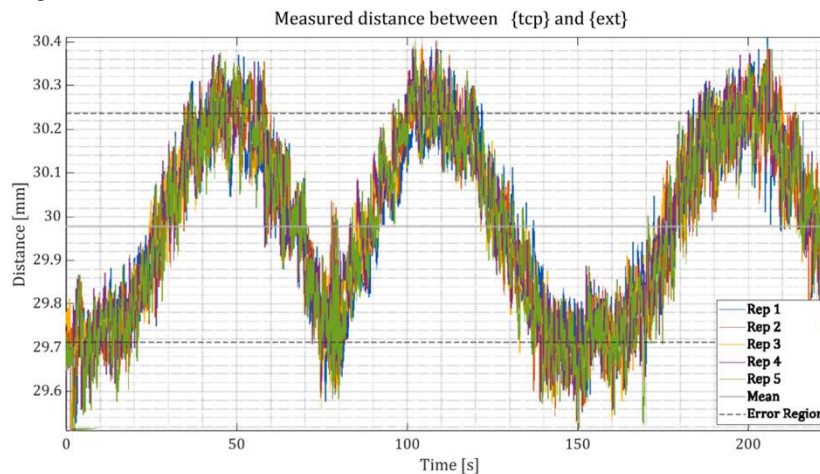
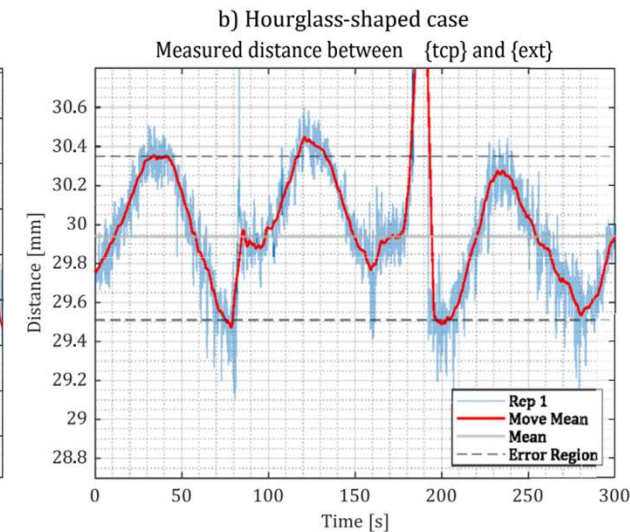
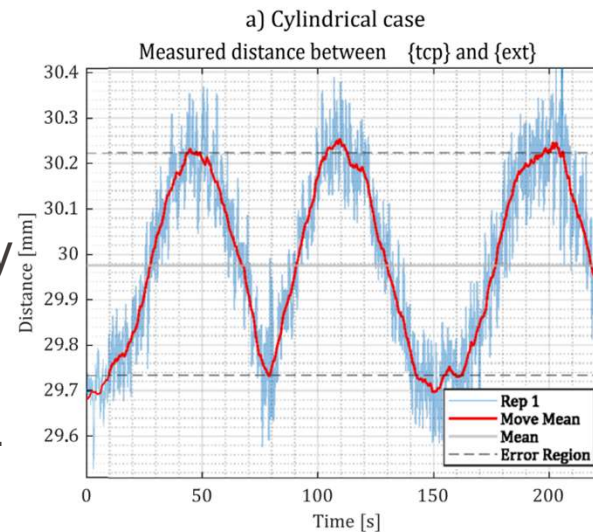
Speaker: Manuel F. Alonso

EPFL Case study 1: Axisymmetric non-planar slicing

50

❖ Results and validation

- ✓ Constant distance {tcp} – {ext}
- ✓ Error: planned – actual trajectory
 - Cylindrical: $\pm 250 \mu\text{m}$
 - Hourglass: $\pm 350 \mu\text{m}$
 - Intrinsic calibration + inverse kin.
- ✓ Repeatability of the method



EPFL Case study 1: Axisymmetric non-planar slicing

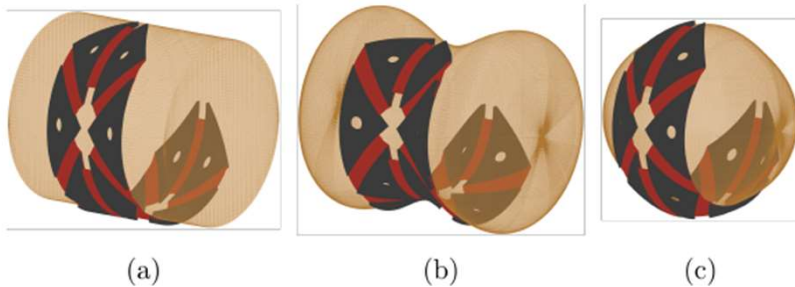
51

❖ Ongoing research

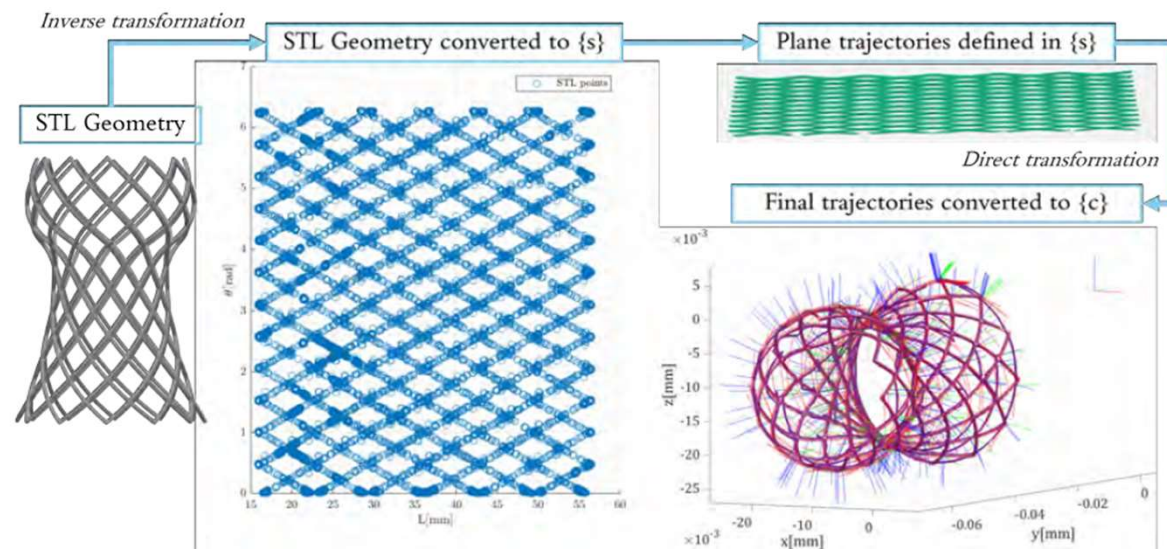
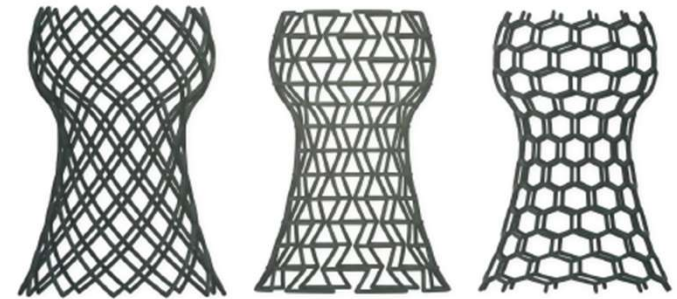
CONFIDENTIAL

- Investigating two new case studies:
 - Soft robotic grippers
 - Coronary stents

■ Soft robotic grippers



■ Coronary stents



Speaker: Manuel F. Alonso

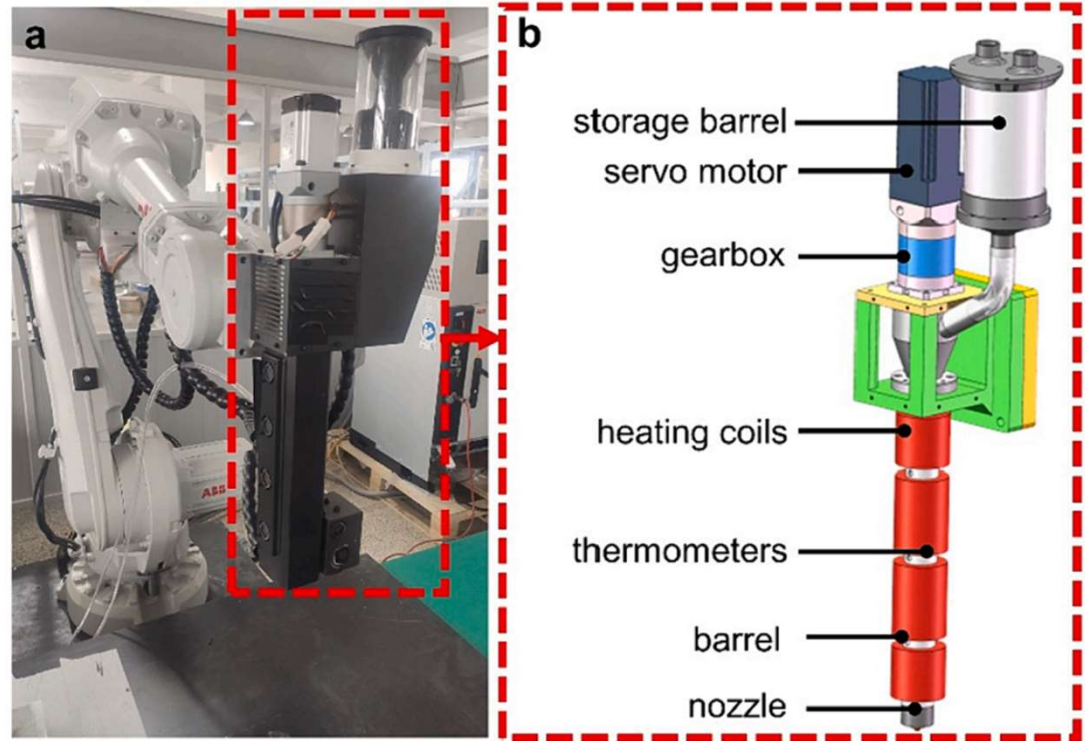
Case study 2: Supportless-3D printing

- **Thin-walled structures:** hollow tubes and thin shells are key elements in fields like aerospace, automotive and renewable energy
- 3D-printing:
 - ✓ Versatility, affordability
 - ✗ Support structures, undesired weight
 - ✗ Low throughput rates (< 0.05 kg/h)
- Screw-Extrusion Additive Manufacturing (SEAM)
 - Rotating screw + heated barrel = extrude molten plastic
 - ✓ Higher deposition rates
 - ✗ Limited to PAM
- **Contribution:**
 - SEAM + 6 DoF robotic arm = NPAM



❖ Materials and methods

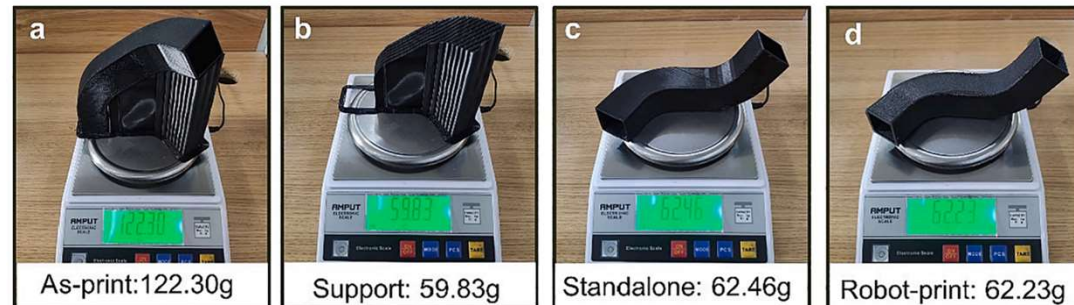
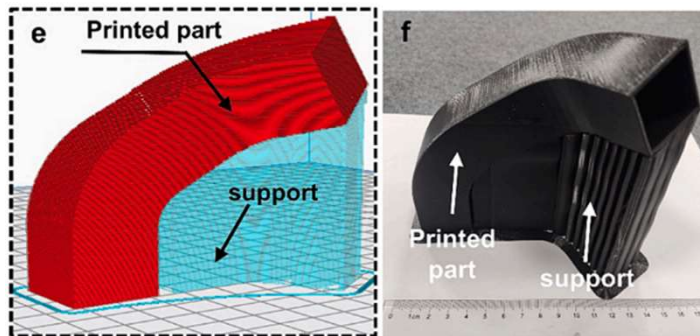
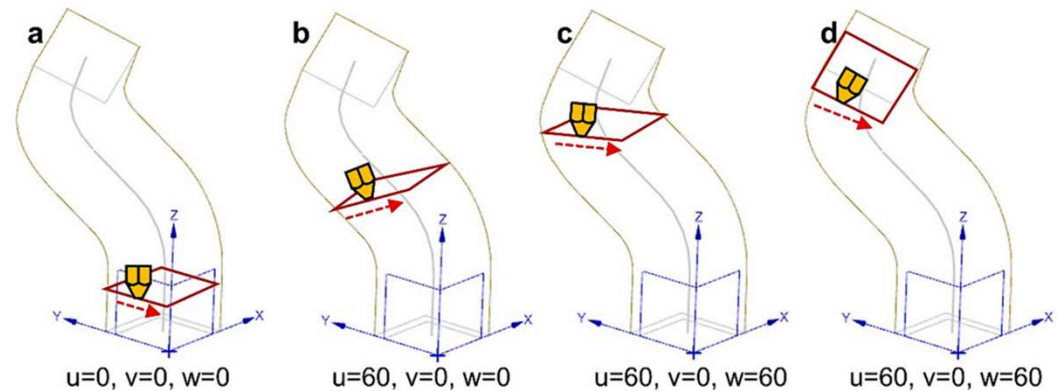
- SEAM + 6 DoF ABB arm
 - Extrusion system vertically attached to the 6th joint
 - Single screw, driven by a 400W servomotor
 - Extrusion can reach over 450°C and 3 kg/h rate
- PLA and carbon-fiber reinforced PLA pellets
- Custom slicing algorithm:
 - Slicing paths that conform to the geometry
 - Nozzle always perpendicular



Case study 2: Supportless-3D printing

❖ Experimental results – twisted hollow tube

- Key component for connecting pipes
- Support structure unavoidable in PAM
- Slicing algorithm:
 - Eliminate the support structure
 - Pivoting the nozzle along the normal direction of the deposition surface
- Result: support structure is 48.9% of weight



❖ Experimental results – twisted hollow tube

Robotic arm-assisted 3D-printing of non-planar thin-walled structures with the screw-extrusion additive manufacturing system

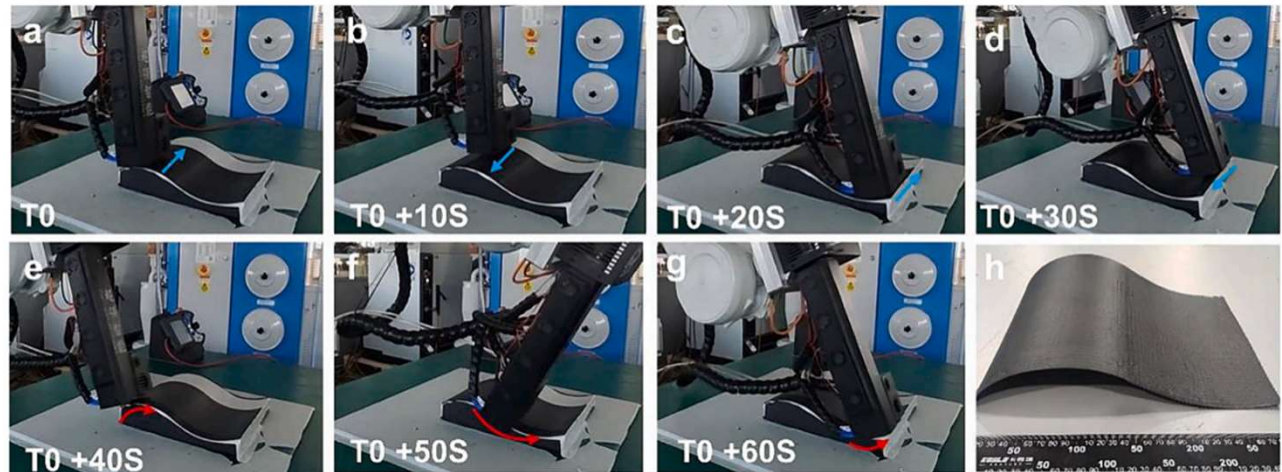
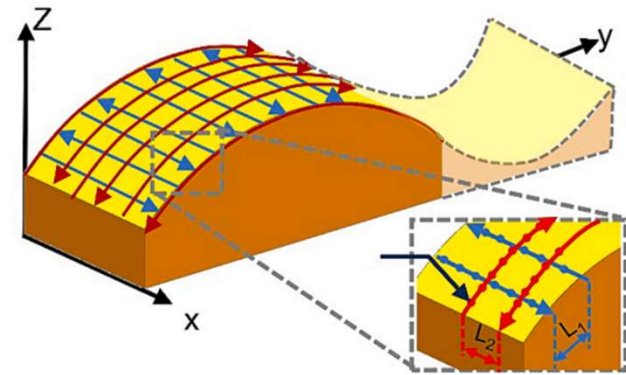
Movie S1:

Supportless printing of a twisted hollow tube with the robotic SEAM system



❖ Experimental results – curved surface

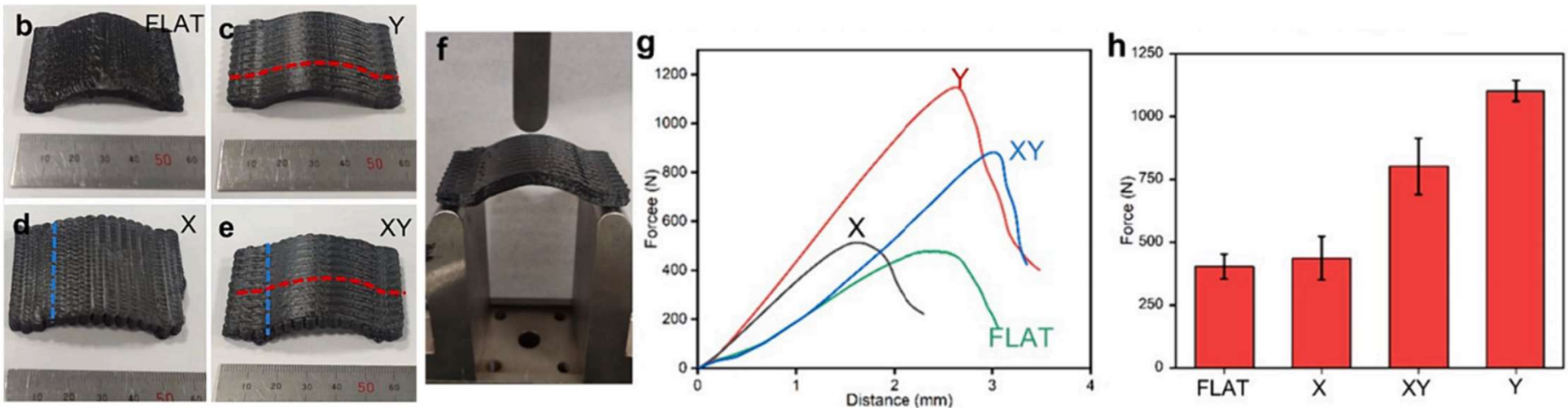
- Light weight load-bearing applications
 - Air foils, airplane skins
- Support structure unavoidable in PAM
- Robotic SEAM system ➔ directly print through conformal depositing layers onto a pre-made support structure
- Double-cross pattern:
 1. Parallel to X-axis
 2. Parallel to Y-axis
- Line spacing highly customizable



Speaker: Manuel F. Alonso

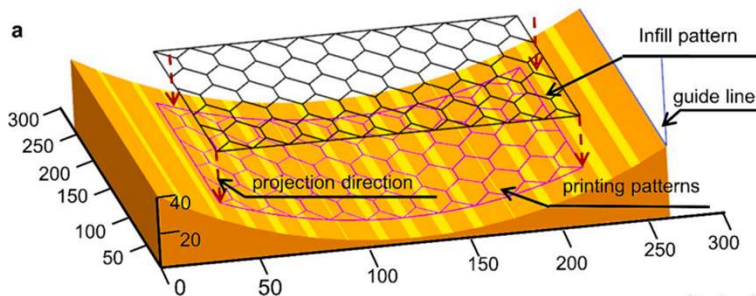
❖ Experimental results – curved surface

- Effect of the printing orientation → Flexural tests
- Maximum bending force achieved by the Y pattern → 1102.6 N



❖ Experimental results – 3D structure

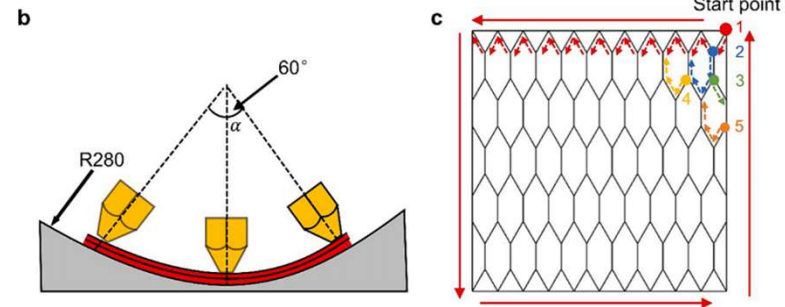
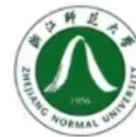
- Curved surfaces with infill patterns
 - Reduces structural weight
- Continuous conformal path cannot be used ➔ need for a different path planning
- Start-point and end-point of the nozzle need to be taken into account



Robotic arm-assisted 3D-printing of non-planar thin-walled structures with the screw-extrusion additive manufacturing system

Movie S2:

Curved printing with honeycomb filling on a concave surface.



Speaker: Manuel F. Alonso

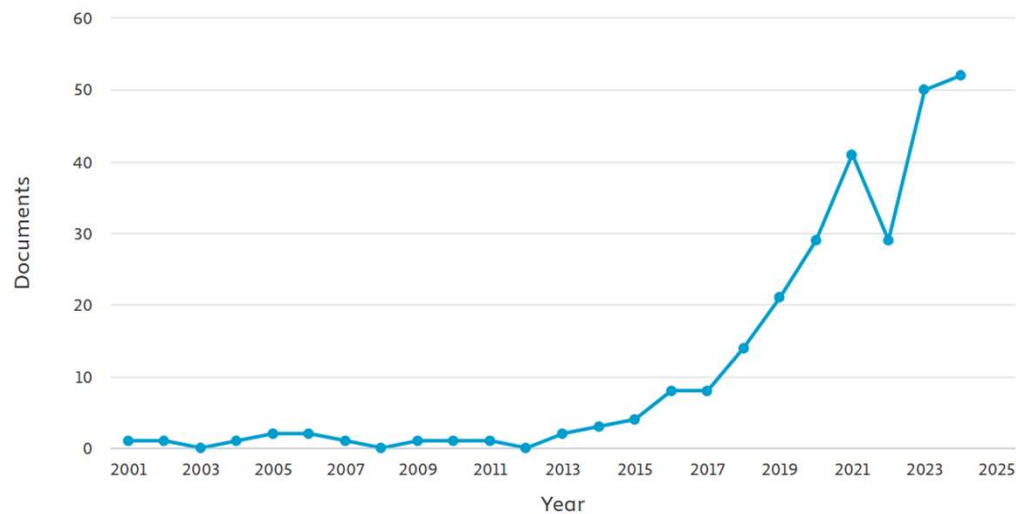


Current status of NPAM

Current status of NPAM - Research

- Non-Planar FDM
- Curved Layer Printing
- Non-Planar Slicing
- Conformal 3D Printing
- Curved Surface Printing
- Freeform 3D Printing
- 3D Printing with Non-Planar Tool Paths

■ Non-planar additive manufacturing

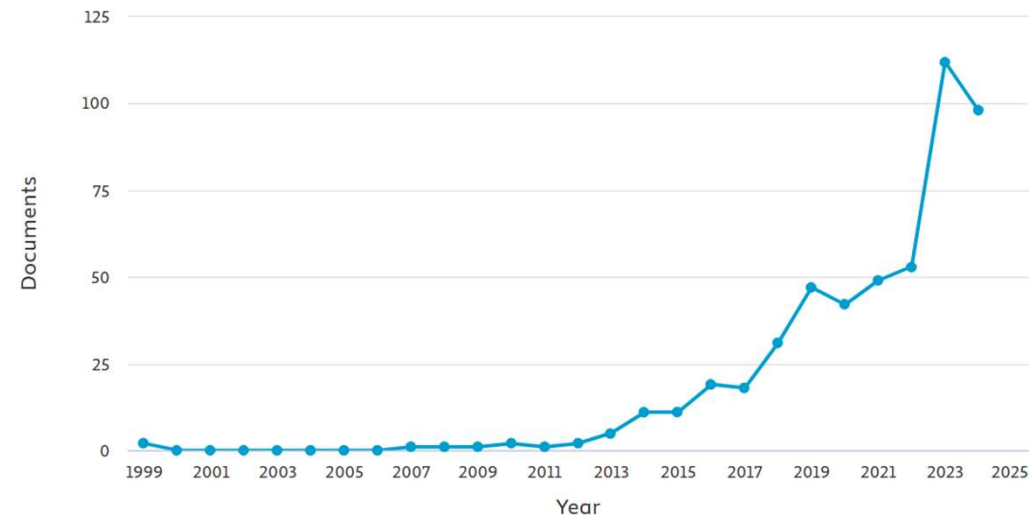


■ 272 papers



Scopus®

■ Curved surface 3D printing

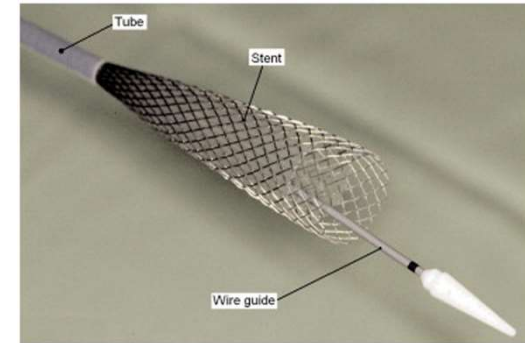


■ 506 papers

Speaker: Luciano Calcoen

Current status of NPAM - Applications

- Significant advances and some industries are incorporating NPAM
- Not yet widely implemented or commercialized
 - High costs: hardware and software
 - Lack of standardized processes (slicing algorithms are developed for specific applications)
- NPAM has great potential:
 - Aerospace: lightweight geometries
 - Biomedicine: personalized implants
 - Automotive: engine parts
 - Renewable energy: complex geometries
 - Tooling and molds: improved surface finish





Conclusion

Advantages of NPAM

- Overcomes PAM Limitations:
 - Reduces **anisotropy**
 - - **support structures**
 - - **staircase effects**.
- Enhanced **Mechanical Integrity**
- Improved **Surface Quality**
- Applicable to **aerospace**, **automotive**, and **biomedical engineering**.

Challenges of NPAM

- **Nozzle Design:**
 - Requires dynamic orientations and **thermal stability**.
- **Complex Trajectory Planning:**
 - Multi-axis movements without **collision**.
- **Algorithm Robustness:**
 - Needs wider adaptability for diverse **geometries** and **materials**.

Future Outlook

- Substantial improvements in mechanical performance, surface quality, and material efficiency.
- Focus on addressing technical challenges for wider adoption.

▪

**Thanks for
listening!**

Any questions?