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Modelling the interoperability and the use of control equipment in an electrical substation

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1. Introduction

Simulators can be defined as information systems which reliably reproduce specific phenomena and they are mainly used in training, although their field of application has grown to include manufacturing and medicine among others.

In electrical engineering, simulation is an indispensable tool when working with complex systems due to the fact that it enables engineers to understand how systems work without actually needing to see them. They can learn how they work in different circumstances and optimize their design with considerably less cost in terms of time and money than if they had to carry out tests on a physical system. By using computer simulation, not only can an electrical system be designed, but it can also be optimized and its behaviour examined in depth more quickly and cheaply than by using prototypes, tests or analytical studies. Therefore, by being able to see the responses produced as the different parameters are varied, a much deeper understanding of the system under study is reached.

In order to properly simulate a virtual world, technologies such as realistic graphics and dynamic simulation with real-time calculations must be used. Peripherals must be used for the system to interact with the user and the immersion comes as a result of stimuli to sight, hearing and touch. A critical factor is the possibility to solve the equations in real-time; that is, there should be no delay compared to the normal environment's response. There is an important amount of effort being directed towards these objectives.

This paragraph deals with the development of an operation simulator for training and the fundamental objective is to develop a simulator for electrical substations. It will present the methodology to model, simulate and optimize the interoperability and the use of control equipment in electrical an substation to train operators by means of a virtual reality environment.

This chapter is organized as follows. In Section 2, the objectives to develop in the successive pages are obtained and are analyzed the state-of-the-art concerning simulation of the electrical domain too, all of which allows writing the technical basis necessary to describe an application with the technical characteristics here presented. In Section 3, each of the substation components is reproduced in three dimensions and the laws of behaviour associated with it are implemented by using the Bond Graph technique to complete the functionality of the substation. It enables systems belonging to the different areas of physics

to be modelled in a way that is both intuitive and close to reality. Firstly, this part of the chapter develops the simulation models of different elements that characterise an electrical substation in isolation, such as sources, loads, switches and transformer. Later they are put together to model the full system and finally the system thus developed is compared with the one developed in a specific electrical simulation program working with different manoeuvres to validate it. Section 4 built the previous modules into a larger and more complex computer system composed of the actual substation control system, the Geographical Information System, which defines the topology of the network, and the functional system which simulates the electrical behaviour of the substation. One of the advantages of doing this is that the final application can automatically update in the virtual environment any changes to the substation's design and it allows access from this environment to information on every component. In Section 5, the visuals, the communications manager and the behaviour modules of the substation are implemented by using distributed interactive simulation in a hardware configuration and it has the same interface as that used in the control system of the real substation. In this way, the system developed can be integrated into a replica of the complete power supply network control system emulating a real substation, it being able to fully interact with the global system, and allow totally real situations to be simulated. Section 6 gives conclusions of this chapter.

2. Objectives

An electrical substation (fig. 1) is a subsidiary station of an electricity generation, transmission and distribution system where voltage is transformed from high to low or the reverse using transformers. Electric power may flow through several substations between generating plant and consumer, and may be changed in voltage in several steps.



Fig. 1. Real electrical substation

The operations at electrical substations, especially when performed manually or during maintenance, can be considered high-risk activities for the people performing them. Therefore, the use of simulators for training can be particularly beneficial.

In order to properly simulate a virtual world, technologies such as realistic graphics and dynamic simulation with real-time calculations must be used (Vince, 1995). Peripherals must be used for the system to interact with the user and the immersion comes as a result of stimuli to sight, hearing and touch (Miller et al., 1998). It is possible, therefore, to produce immersion in the system by providing visual, tactile and acoustic feedback to the user. One of the most common applications of virtual reality lies in simulator development.

Simulators can be defined as information systems which reliably reproduce specific phenomena (Houghton, 1989), (Farrington et al., 1994). The first simulators were mainly used in training (Bayarri et al., 1996), although their field of application grew to include manufacturing (Singh et al., 1996) and medicine (Schroer et al., 1996) among others.

An additional issue, also related to computing performance, is dynamic simulation. The idea is to reproduce the actual physical behaviour by applying the equations governing the simulated system (Weghorst, 1998). A critical factor is the possibility to solve the equations in real-time, that is, there should be no delay compared to the normal environment's response. There is an important amount of effort being directed to these objectives (García de Jalón & Bayo, 1993).

The fundamental objective is to develop a simulator for operations at electrical substations.

2.1 Features

Such as appear in the previous lines, the fundamental objective is to develop an operation simulator for training at electrical substations. Aimed at giving the simulator the highest possible degree of realism, it must be equipped with the following features:

- To be able to closely represent an electrical substation. This implies designing 3D geometrical models of all the elements which make up the substation.
- To be interactive. Communication between the Information System and the users must adopt as real a form as possible. Interactivity is obtained by the system responding through the peripherals to user-initiated events.
- To be immersive. For the user to feel he or she is inside the virtual environment, visual and acoustic feedback must be provided through the hardware (helmet with tracking system and sound), with the objects of the environment presented in 3D stereoscopic display.
- The system must replicate, as closely as possible, the actual functioning of the installation. To obtain it, the functioning logic of the installation must be coded into the system, so that objects react to user input with the appropriate movement and behavior. Furthermore, all objects must strictly adhere to the physical laws governing their behavior; in this case, the laws of movement affecting simultaneously 3D objects and the physical principles of electricity which, logically, define the behaviour of an electrical substation.
- To be integrated into a network, so that it becomes a multi-user system where multiple users can simultaneously input into the same virtual environment, following defined behavioural rules.

These objectives must be attained by interconnecting the different hardware and software elements. The following sections describe how these elements work and their relationship.

3. Modelling of installations

3.1 Three-dimensional geometrical models

Simultaneously to the development of the software application, the 3D geometrical models needed by the VR application can be constructed (fig. 2). These models are based on existing drawings, on paper or in digital format, and on actual pictures. The geometric models need to be optimized to a high level of realism by optimizing the mesh size, using LOD (Level Of Detail) objects, and applying textures.

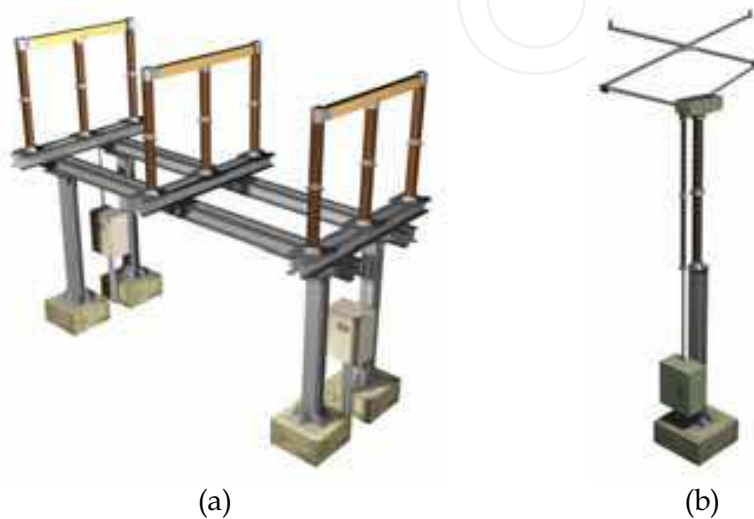


Fig. 2. Electric 3D models. (a) Thriphasic disconnector. (b) Monophase pantograph.

The models can be constructed using commercial 3D software, so that the system imports popular or standard commercial formats such as *AutoCAD*, *3Dstudio*, *Proengineer*, *Multigen*, *IGES*, *DXF*, or *VRML*. This will make maintenance by the technical department of the company where the application will be installed much easier.

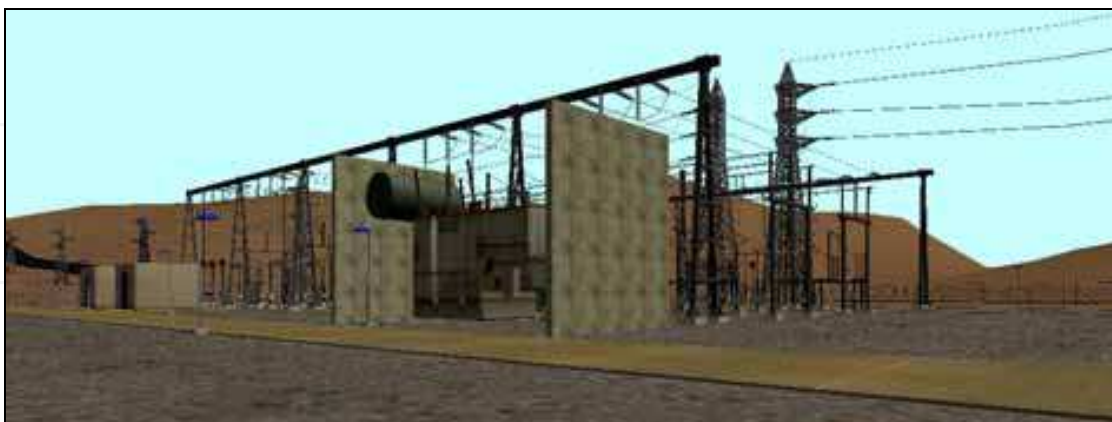


Fig. 3. 3D Geometry and textures of the full electrical substation's model.

When the 3D models of the different components need to be inserted to make the full 3D model of the substation (fig. 3), it's necessary the insertion of repeated elements as blocks, so that identical geometrical models (i.e., high voltage towers) need not be duplicated. This means a reduction in the resources necessary to store the substation, in download time from the network,

and in processing power to render the substation in real time. Excessive detail in the geometrical modelling means an increase in the time needed to render it, so that it can become impossible to offer real time experiencing. The rendering must be optimized by applying textures to the 3D model. This greatly simplifies the rendering without losing realism (fig. 3).

3.2 Laws of electrical behavior

When it comes to analyzing a three-phase electrical circuit, which is what we are dealing with, it may be assumed that the three phases are balanced and therefore behave similarly. For this reason, when simulating an electrical substation, it is possible to work with the single-line circuit of one of the phases where the line and the different elements to be taken into account can be more easily analyzed.

Figure 4 shows a typical single-line substation circuit diagram where two active input positions can be seen (lines 'L1' and 'L2') and two output positions (lines 'L3' and 'L4'). Additionally, there is one input and two output positions in reserve.

This diagram shows how the two input positions are connected to a common busbar and the two output positions terminate in another busbar, also common to both of them. This leads to the different input or output branches being placed in parallel and the power transformer being situated between both parts.

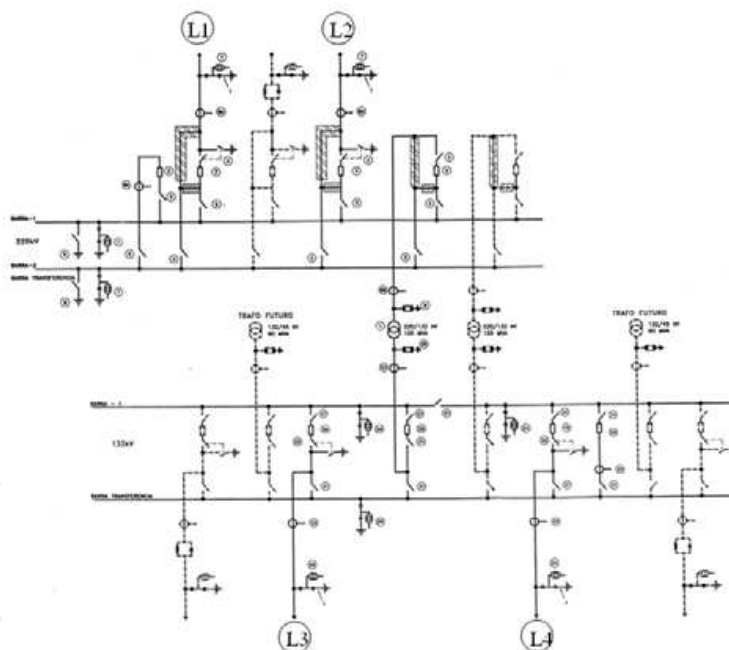


Fig. 4. Single-line electrical diagram of a substation

There is a wide range of commercial brands on the market offering products for electrical domain simulation (*SPICE, LabVIEW PSCAD, Dymola, Simulink, Simplorer,...*). These are powerful tools, but require the engineer to have a perfect knowledge of the electrical field.

An alternative methodology to can simulate an electrical substation is the Bond Graph technique. The Bond Graph technique enables systems belonging to the different areas of physics to be modelled in a way that is both intuitive and close to reality (Karnopp et al., 1990). It is a perfect technique for representing elements belonging to the area dealt with in

this paper and it's possible apply it in any program that permit the simulation of models based in this technique (Romero et al., 2008); in addition, no extraordinary knowledge of this technique and electric field are required to understand the process. There is a series of elements that are needed for this type of facility to operate, which are described below.

3.2.1. Switches

In an electrical system actions need to be carried out to vary its layout or topology. Certain manoeuvres are simply necessary to connect or disconnect loads, others to interrupt the passage of current in the event of failure and others to earth some part of the system (Poyraz et al., 1999).

An automatic switch can establish, support, and interrupt currents under normal circuit conditions, as well as establish, support for a determined period of time and interrupt currents under abnormal specified circuit conditions, such as a short-circuit. In a Bond-Graph, a resistance port placed in series (fig. 5) can be modelled with the rest of the circuit to which the values have to be introduced as a conditioned parameter. If the switch is closed, the resistance value will be zero, while if it is open the value is very high, preventing the passage of flow or current.

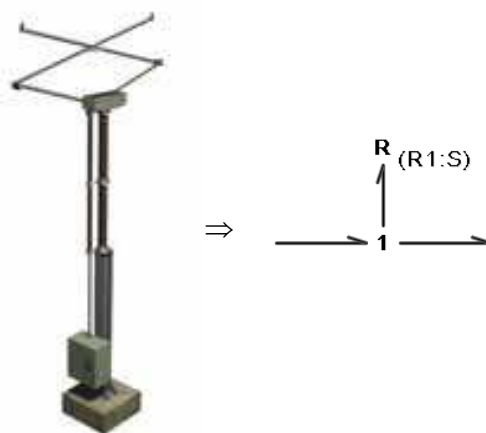


Fig. 5. Modelling a switch by using the Bond-Graph technique.

To open or close a switch, the resistance value can either be based on a function that evolves over time or set to the value that other circuit parameters acquire. In this latter case, relays can be generated to open the switch if a current level is exceeded in some element. Likewise, but making its operation conditional on normal circuit conditions or on abnormal conditions for a determined period of time, a contactor can be modelled. This type of apparatus can support and interrupt currents under normal circuit conditions, including specified in-service overload conditions temporarily, as well as support specified abnormal circuit conditions for a determined period of time, such as short-circuits. This is the case with voltage and intensity transformers that are at the beginning of the 'L1' and 'L2' input positions and at the end of the 'L3' and 'L4' output positions.

3.2.2 Loads

Regarding load modelling, it must be borne in mind that in an electrical node, the current is divided by the cables connected to it, the voltage at all points of the contact being equal. This

behaviour is obtained in a Bond Graph with type '0' nodes, where the (current) is equal to the sum of the output flows and the effort of the bonds it joins is the same, while with type '1' nodes the input current is equal to the output current less what is lost in the element, such as happens with elements in series.

In three-phase systems (Bose, 2005), the loads can be connected either in a triangle or a star, and this in turn, to earth or insulated. In an insulated three-phase star load the resistance and inductance of each phase will be joined by a type '1' node, since the Bond Graph elements are in series, and subsequently the bonds of each of the three phases will be joined by a type '0' node, of common potential representing the neutral of the star. If the neutral is rigidly earthed, the bonds joining it will need to be set to zero potential. This can be achieved with a zero level effort source joined to the '0' node representing the neutral, as shown in figure 6.

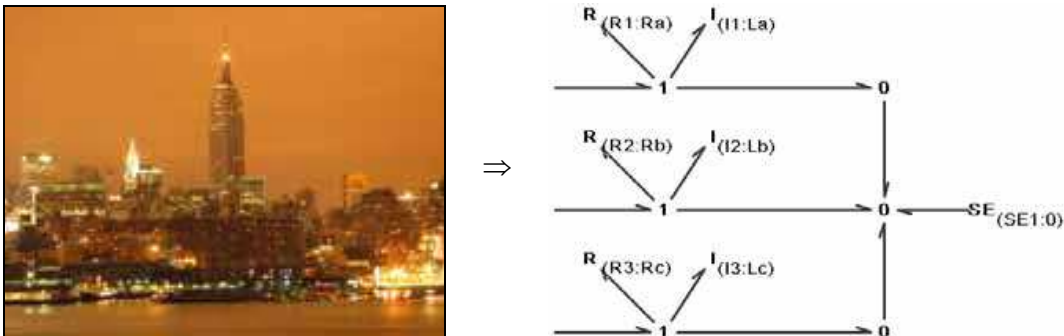


Fig. 6. Model of a three-phase load in a star with rigid neutral to earth in Bond Graph.

3.2.3 Sources

As with the loads, the effort sources (voltage) represented by the Bond Graph technique are ideal sources and generate a potential difference across the terminals that is constant and independent of the load. Unlike ideal sources the potential difference produced by real sources is dependent on the load to which they are connected. A real voltage source may be considered an ideal voltage source, 'U', in series with a resistance 'R', denominated internal resistance. In order to obtain real sources in a Bond-Graph, a resistance port needs to be added to act as an internal resistance using a node '1', so that it will be in series.

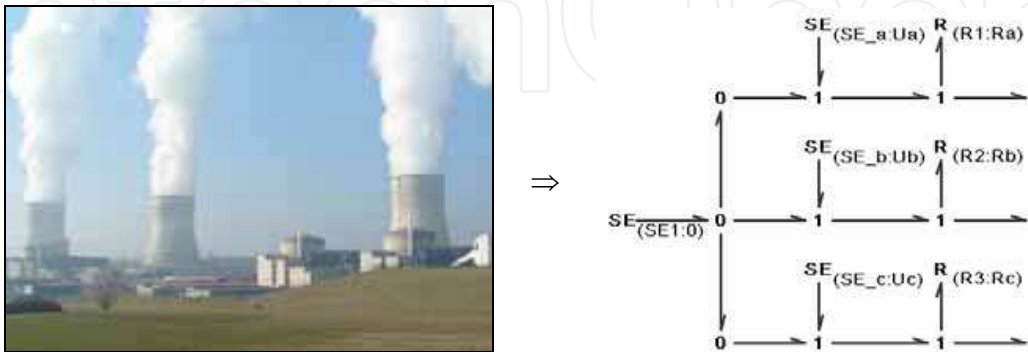


Fig. 7. Model of a three-phase voltage source with neutral to earth in Bond Graph.

By joining the single-phase effort forces in an appropriate star or triangular layout, three-phase systems can be attained. In the case under study, three-phase, star voltage sources can be obtained by connecting the different effort sources in type '1' nodes, and subsequently, all of them in a type '0' node and a zero value effort force that simulates the earth (fig. 7).

3.2.4 Transformer

The transformer comprises two primary and secondary coils and enables the electric power to be transformed, with specific magnitudes of voltage and intensity, into other usually different voltages. The electromagnetic part of a transformer comprises a magnetic nucleus and windings. The windings around the nucleus form the primary and secondary coils, with 'N1' and 'N2' number of turns respectively. When an alternating current is applied to the primary, an alternating current flows through it, which, in turn, produces an alternating flow in the nucleus whose direction is determined by Ampere's law applied to this coil.

Due to the periodical variation of this flow induced electromagnetic forces are created in the coils and this leads to a voltage in the terminals of the secondary coil whose ratio to the primary is 'r' -transformation ratio -, and which value is the relation between 'N1' and 'N2'. As commented in previous paragraphs, this suggests using the transformer element in a Bond Graph to model an electrical transformer where the output flow is equal to the input flow multiplied by the ratio of the transformer 'r', and the output effort is the input effort divided by the ratio, the same as happens with intensities and voltages in an ideal transformer. However, real transformers have losses and therefore, the resistance of the coils and the dispersion flows need to be taken into account. This must be done with the 'R1' and 'R2' resistances, for the primary and secondary coils, and with the 'X1' and 'X2' reactance. An approximate equivalent circuit (fig. 8) is usually worked with, which is obtained by grouping the impedances in series; in this way, the resistances and reactances of the short-circuit ('Xcc' and 'Rcc') can be obtained easily.

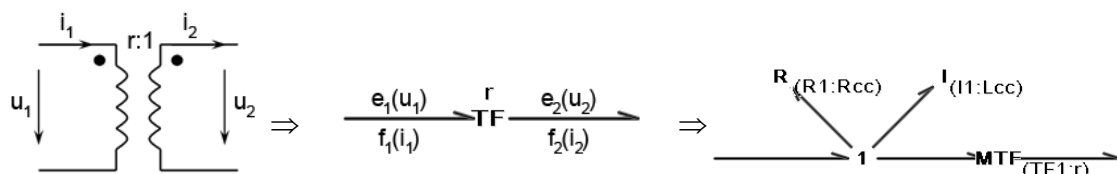


Fig. 8. Modelling a real simplified single-phase transformer in Bond Graph.

In this work, a three-phase transformer will be formed by using a single magnetic nucleus incorporating all the windings required. It will comprise three equal columns on which the turns are rolled that make up the primary and secondary coils of each phase. Each column is considered as a single-phase transformer, so that the same analytical techniques as in the single-phase study can be applied.

Depending on the types of winding connections of a transformer (star or triangle), some phase differences may appear between the primary and secondary compound voltages and the concept of phase-lag index appears. In our substation, a transformer with 'Yy' configuration has the primary and secondary connected in a star; in this type of connection, the phase-lag between the primary and the secondary is 0°, and therefore, can be modelled using three single-phase transformers with no parallel branch, since the effort outputs will be the effort inputs divided by the ratio of the 'TF' element. Since this value is a scalar, there will be no phase-lag between them, the same as with the flows.

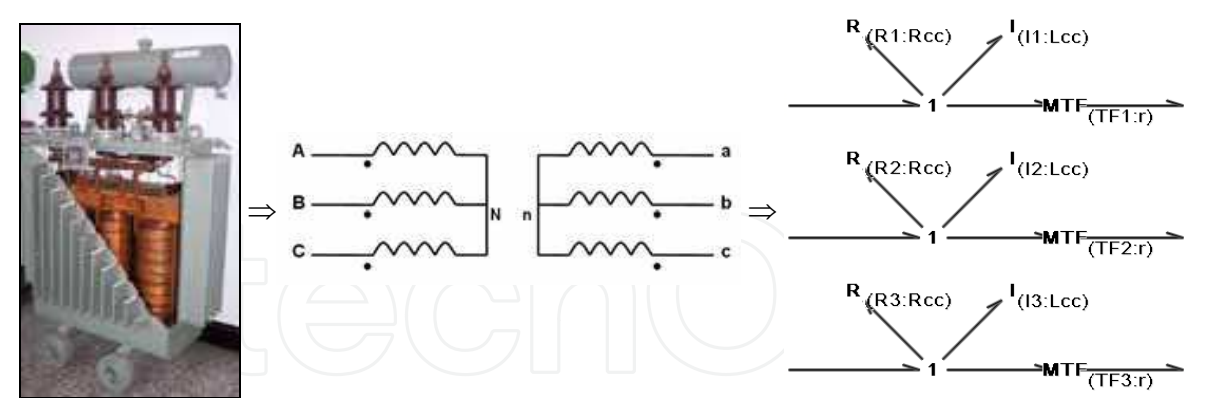


Fig. 9. Model of a three-phase transformer ‘Yy’ by Bond Graph.

3.3 Full electrical substation’s model

In order to proceed to the electrical substation simulation, it is necessary to draw a simplified three-phase diagram showing the different elements dealt with in the preceding paragraphs. The different Bond Graph models analyzed will have to be substituted in order to generate a valid simulation model like the presented in figure 10.

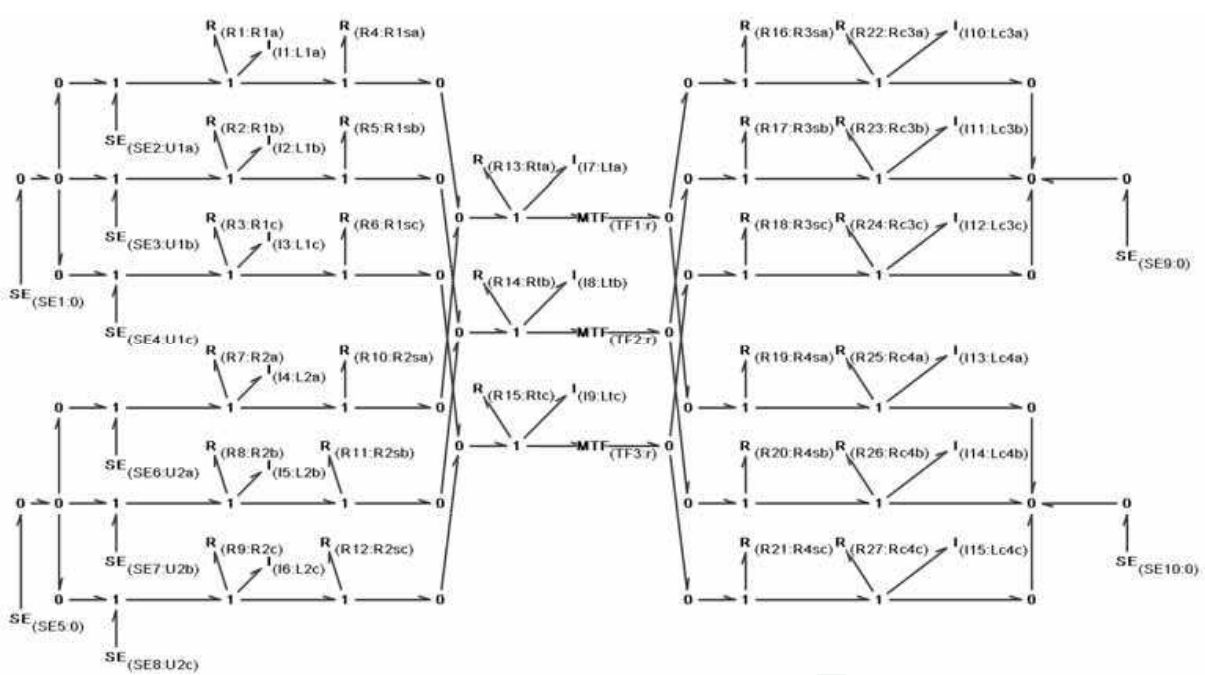


Fig. 10. Model of an electrical substation in a Bond Graph.

A typical configuration of a substation will contain a source and a load at each of the input positions, corresponding to some power stations, and a load in the output positions equal to the demand of a city, as can be seen in figures 10 and 11. A usual occurrence to simulate in this type of installation is a temporary interruption of the service at any of the input or output positions; for this reason, a series of switches must be also added corresponding to the cut-offs.

3.4 Opening and closing maneuvers

To be sure of the configuration of a typical substation it has been developed an example of electrical substation. In this sample, some apparent powers of 4 GVA and 5 GVA have been taken into account in the input positions respectively, and of 60 MVA and 90 MVA in the output positions; in the equations (1) to (4) the equivalent impedances and resistances has been obtained.

$$Z_{cc1} = \frac{(220\text{ kV})^2}{4\text{ GVA}} = 12,1\ \Omega \Rightarrow L_{cc1} = 38,515\text{ mH (with } R_{cc1} = 0,2\ \Omega) \tag{1}$$

$$Z_{cc2} = \frac{(220\text{ kV})^2}{5\text{ GVA}} = 9,68\ \Omega \Rightarrow L_{cc2} = 30,812\text{ mH (with } R_{cc1} = 0,2\ \Omega) \tag{2}$$

$$Z_{c3} = \frac{(132\text{ kV})^2}{60\text{ MVA}} = 290,4\ \Omega \Rightarrow L_{c3} = 402,921\text{ mH}, R_{c3} = 261,36\ \Omega \tag{3}$$

$$Z_{c4} = \frac{(132\text{ kV})^2}{90\text{ MVA}} = 193,6\ \Omega \Rightarrow L_{c4} = 268,611\text{ mH}, R_{c4} = 174,24\ \Omega \tag{4}$$

To see how one position affects another, 4 seconds will be simulated bearing in mind that the line 'L1' switches are open between t=0.3 sec. and t=1 sec., and those of the 'L2' line between t=2.3 sec. and t=3 sec., while the remainder will be closed at all times. In order to validate this, the same exercise has been done with PSCAD © elements too.

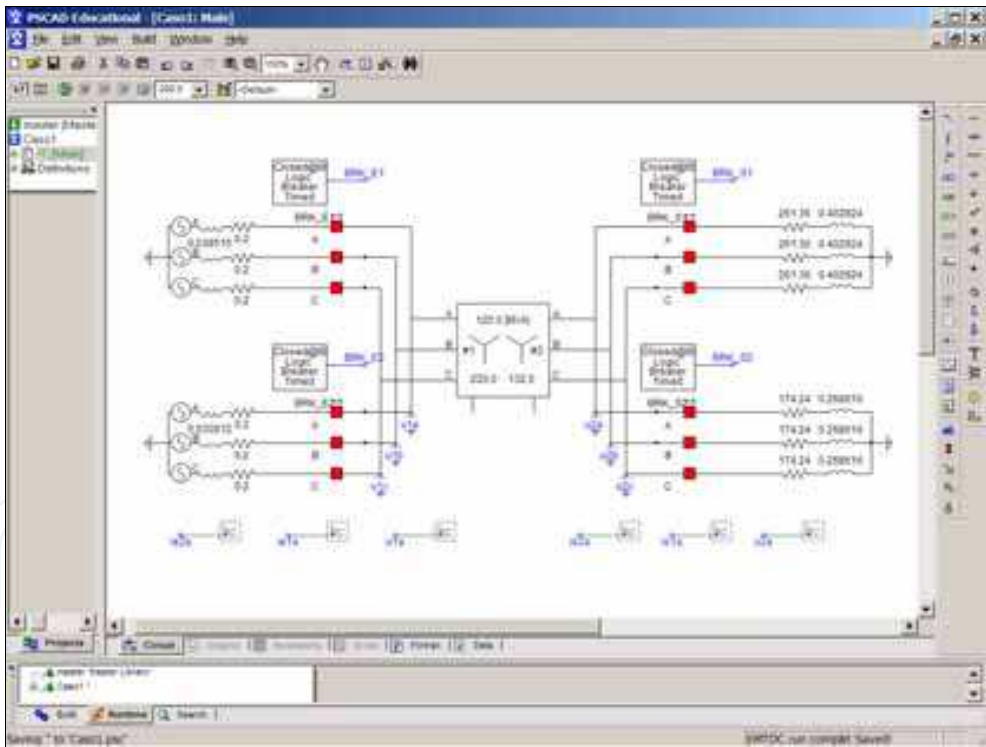


Fig. 11. Scheme of an electrical substation drawn in PSCAD © software.

In figure 12 the results show the intensity [A] vs time [seconds] flowing through a single phase in each of the positions 'L1', 'L2', 'L3' and 'L4'; they are equal to those performed with the Bond Graph model developed in figure 10 and obtained by using the dynamic simulation module of the developed simulator.

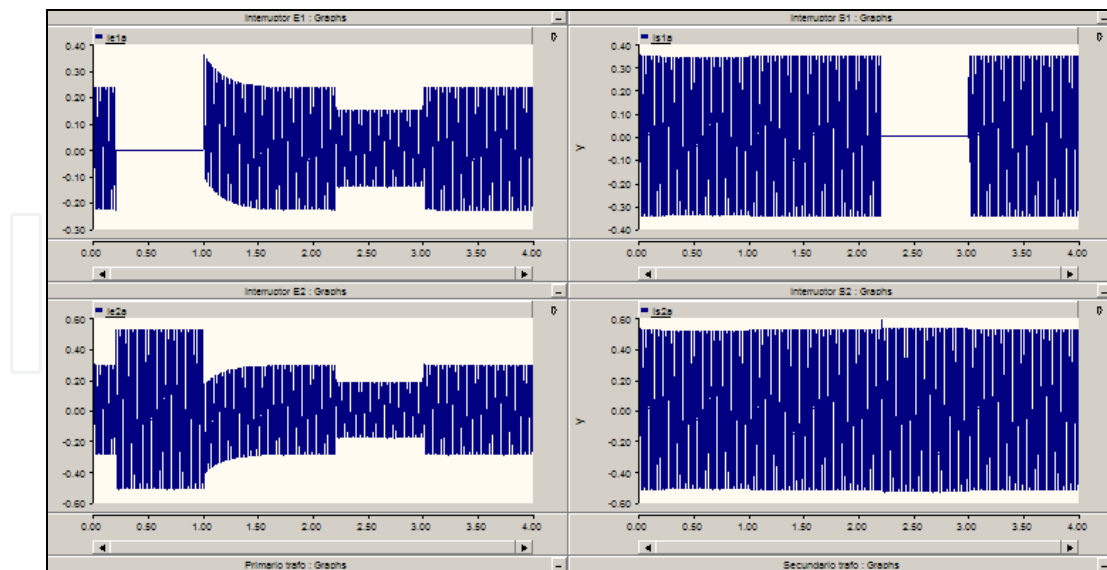


Fig. 12. Electric simulation results (Intensity [A] vs time [sec.]).

In this simulation the currents required for the 'L3' and 'L4' positions are 0.39 A and 0.55 A respectively when the four switches are closed. Regarding the supply from the power stations in the 'L1' and 'L2' positions, 0.24 A and 0.32 A are supplied respectively, whose sum after applying the transformation ratio is the total current required of 0.94 A. On the other hand, when the 'L1' position switch is opened, all the current must be supplied by the power station in position 'L2'. When it is closed again, in the transitory process it can be seen that the current in position 'L2' is the difference between that demanded by the load and that supplied by the power station in the other position.

Regarding the opening of the switch in position 'L3', it can be seen how the current demanded drops to 0.55 A.

Thus, the model developed for the simulation of an electrical substation using the Bond Graph technique may be considered as valid.

4. Implementation of the project

4.1 Additional applications

The relationship between the different modules of the simulator must be done in the Installations Database (BDI), which must be designed to maintain and look-up graphical and textual information on the installations and elements of the power supply and telecommunications networks.

The information stored in the BDI must be organized on different levels (planning, study, development, operation) together with cartographic information.

The basic functionality of the BDI is as follows:

- Queries: queries against graphical and textual information in the database.
- Maintenance: maintenance of the information in the database.
- Map editing: generation of hard copy and on-screen maps.
- Network analysis: queries based on the topological connections of the network.
- Information exchange: import/export information to/from other systems or official bodies.

The BDI must include the following data:

- a. Textual data:
 - Every element must be uniquely identified through a code.
 - Identification and technical data of each installation.
- b. Graphical data:
 - Cartographic database: Rural (communications, hydrographic information, limits, altitude, etc.) and urban (streets, sidewalks, blocks, etc.) maps.
 - Detail maps: precise location of the network over a cartographic background.
 - Location maps: larger scale representation of the network's location over a cartographic background.
 - Schematic drawings: schematic drawings of manoeuvres at substations and transformation centres.

The information included in the BDI affords, through the topological connections of its Geographical Informations System (GIS), a full overview of the substations and transformation centres, their internal and external connections and their operational logic (fig. 13).

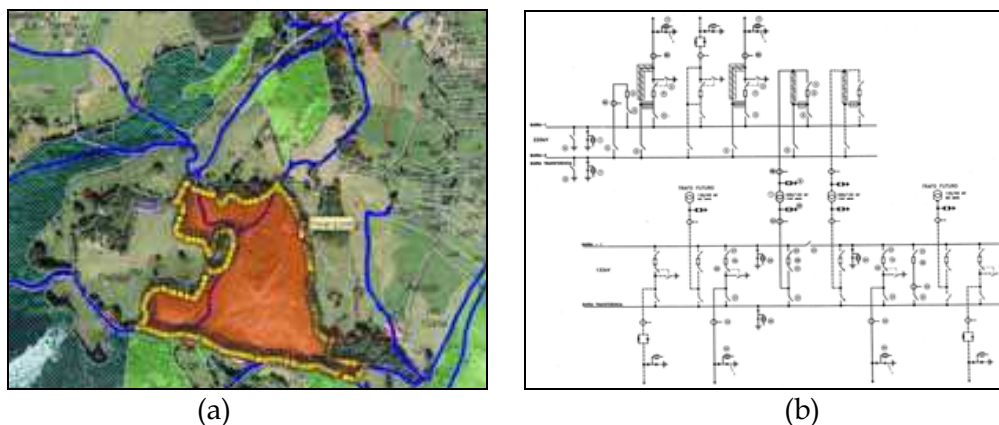


Fig. 13. (a) Geographical database. (b) Schematic drawings of electrical systems

4.2 Technical basis of the application

To arrive at the functionality indicated in the section 2, several software tools will be used. The core of the application will consist of C/C++ code, which accesses the 'OpenSceneGraph' graphical libraries APIs (Yuan et al., 2007).

The realist aspect of the application allows the user to work with a physical mechanism within a virtual reality environment; that is, to interact with it through devices such as a mouse, stereoscopic glasses, HMDs or gloves.

The 3D geometrical models can be imported by the virtual reality application, which applies to each object properties such as interference and object collision detection, pre-set trajectories and tasks. In order to increase the realism of the whole, colours, transparencies, labels, and lights have been added to the geometries.

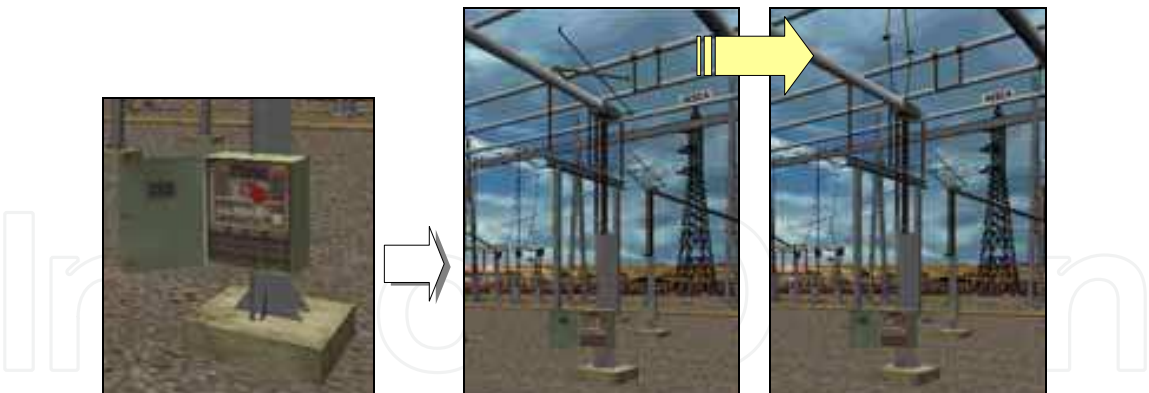


Fig. 14. Action sequence on the substation’s elements.

Once the geometrical and operational data have been loaded, the virtual environment of the substation can be manipulated. Figure 14 shows the controls of one of the pantographs of the substation. When the button on the pantograph’s control console is pressed, it moves from open (horizontal position) to closed (vertical position) or from closed to open.

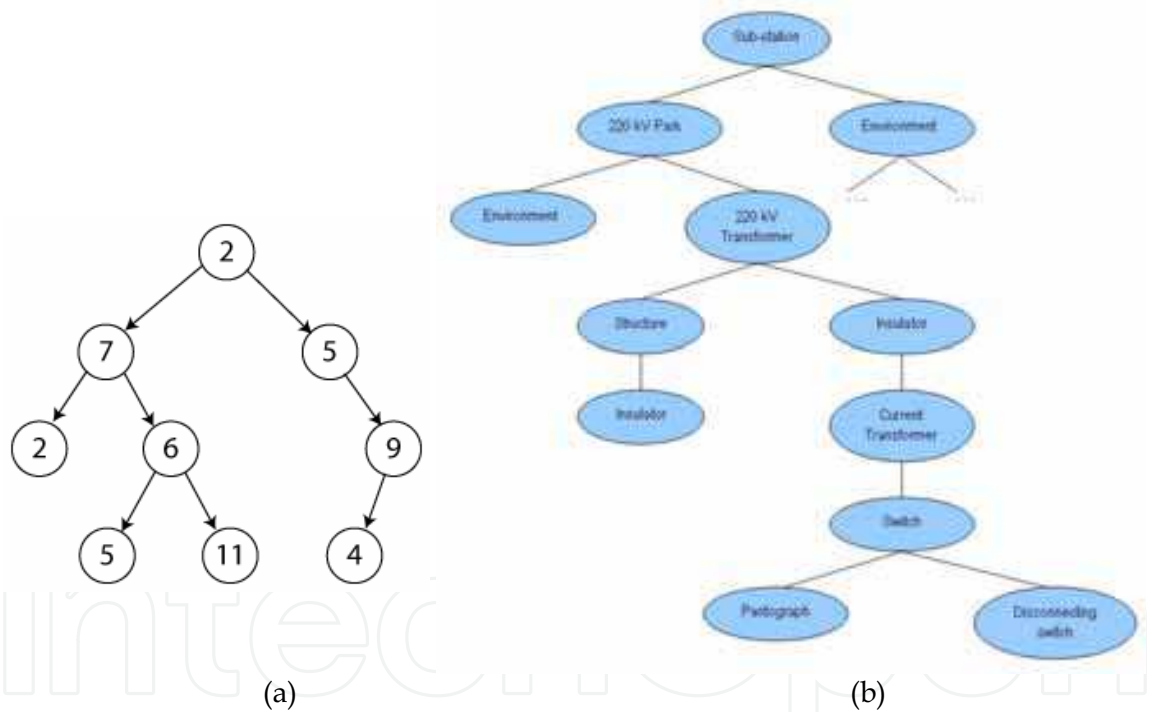


Fig. 15. (a) Scene graph philosophy. (b) Scene graph structure of an electrical substation.

In order to view the movement of the mechanisms in real time, a scene graph with hierarchical object structure (fig. 15.a) must be created. The nodes, that is, the elements which include information on geometry, position or light, are the elements which make up the scene graph; these elements contain the geometrical, position and light information respectively. The nodes are sorted by hierarchy, which means that they are linked vertically and present a tree-like structure. Figure 15.b shows a section of the scene graph corresponding to a sample substation.

Depending on the element with which we interact, several different actions must be performed on the virtual substation. The substation is composed of static physical elements, such as transformers, control elements such as consoles, and assemblies with movement such as pantographs or switches.

- The most general action, which can be applied to every element, is navigation. This consists of interactively changing the viewpoint through the mouse. This is done through what in virtual reality terminology is known as a 'motion link' between the computer's input device and the camera's viewpoint. As the input sensor (the mouse, in this case) moves, the viewpoint of the scene changes interactively.
- Operation of mechanisms. There is also a module which performs the kinematic calculations corresponding to show the positions of the parts which make up a mechanism, such as the pantograph in figure 16.a, so that the moment the system drivers are operated (degrees of freedom) the model will produce a movement following preset kinematic constraints. In order to define the mechanism's kinematic behaviour, the system drivers (system input), as well as the kinematic joints making up the system's movement constraints, must be configured. The corresponding scene graph is shown in figure 16.a:

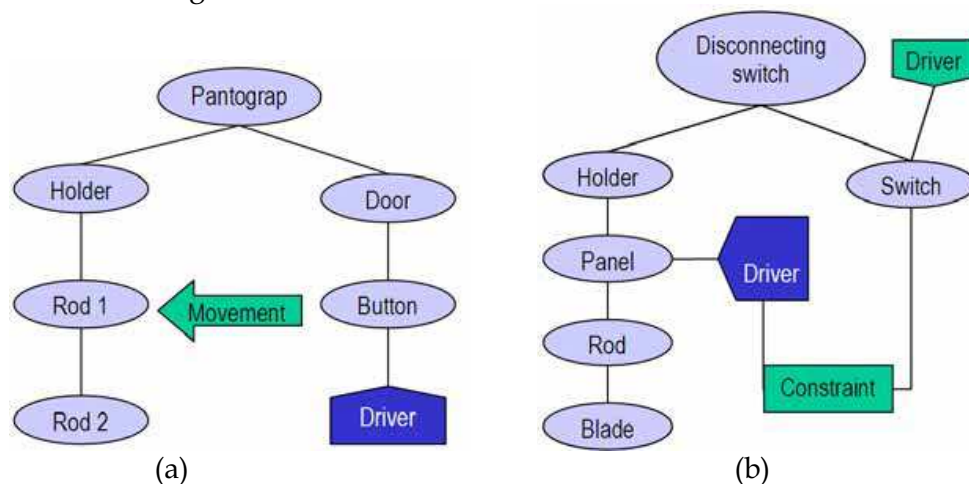


Fig. 16. Scene graph. (a) Manoeuvring of the pantograph. (b) Manoeuvre constraints.

- The third type of action is modifying the electrical state: connected, disconnected, grounded, etc. This type of action may or may not be accompanied by a concrete physical movement, but must always be registered and taken into account. In the virtual environment it is indicated by a change in colour, for instance. In most cases, electrical manoeuvres of this type are subject to operational constraints; i.e., you cannot ground a live element. These constraints are also shown in the scene graph, as in figure 16.b.

4.3 Integration of BDI and VR

When the Installations Database (BDI) and the virtual reality application (VR) are integrated, it allows transparent access to information in both systems and, depending on the level of difficulty, integration can be approached differently:

- LEVEL 1 - Queries

The following types of queries are allowed:

- Queries, from the VR application, of textual data corresponding to the modeled elements. A 3D element is selected and the Database Query Application invoked with the identification code of the selected element. A screen is then displayed allowing standard operations of this application (navigating through the hierarchy of installations, locating the element, generating reports, etc.).
- Accessing the virtual model of a substation: a substation is displayed using the corresponding textual data contained in the BDI.
- Locating an element from the BDI: from the BDI, an element can be physically located within the substation.

- LEVEL II - Symbolology / Behaviour

This level allows the user to define, based on specific textual attributes, the symbolology and/or dynamic behaviour of substation elements:

- Model: differentiate elements based on model or material.
- State: changing the appearance of an element, based on its state (open, closed).
- Voltage: same as above, following a live/without voltage criteria.

5. Distributed Interactive Simulation

The last phase consists in implementing this system within a Distributed Interactive Simulation (DIS) environment. The objective is to develop a virtual reality system which meets the specifications of the previous phases, i.e., integration in BDI, realistic behaviour laws, and which allows several users simultaneous access to the same installation from different workstations.

This application is based on Object/Property/Event architecture, and offers the following functionality:

- Standard storage, manipulation and retrieval of objects from a shared database.
- Creation of properties (such as the position of an object) that allow for easy storage of user-defined data (for instance, movement coordinates when an object is moved).
- Triggering of reactions to property changes. A property change is known as an event.
- Property sharing, enabling multi-user simulations.
- The final objective of this phase has been the development of a client/server architecture which allows multi-user, simultaneous generation of interactive graphic simulations.

The software developed is made up of a set of interconnected applications. This solution presents greater scalability if a single application is used that simultaneously takes charge of the substation graphic display and the simulation of its logic and behaviour.

This scalability allows the implementation of a multiuser environment. Moreover, it gives independence in respect of the power of the computer where the program is being run, since processing can be distributed among different computers.

This section describes the methodology implemented, which allows for the interconnection of new behaviour modules and the presence of several visuals, thus allowing simultaneous real-time interaction among various users. A distributed environment has been generated made up of the following applications:

5.1 Visuals

These are based on OpenSceneGraph and it gives great flexibility to the developed software, since it allows for a future migration towards operating systems that are different from Windows.

It must include its own programming language (macro language), which enables simple and efficient virtual environments to be generated along with their editing. This language not only allows objects to be inserted, but also contains a set of instructions that enables elements to be inserted, such as atmospheric effects, animated characters, etc... Thanks to this functionality, the user can generate a plain text file, which, together with the 3D geometries, allows any virtual scenario to be reproduced. It allows the loading of geometries generated by graphic design programs and has the capacity to reproduce large scale scenarios with the help of a dynamic load module.

5.2 Communications manager

This allows the state of the actuators to be sent from the behaviour modules to the visuals, as well as the position and orientation of all the elements in the simulation. It also allows the states of the sensors to be sent from the visuals to the behaviour modules.

Its main functions are to interconnect all the applications that form part of the simulation and to manage all the communication flows. Its main feature is to allow the automatic configuration of all the communications from a set of parameters supplied by the user of the software developed. These parameters will define both the policy and the features of these communications. It is based on 'CORBA' (Diaz et al., 2007), which means that applications generated with different programming languages can be integrated.

The following problems have had to be resolved while developing the application:

- Access to variables. A variable cannot be both modified and read at the same moment in time by two threads that are trying to access it simultaneously. Error detection and management. The application must detect errors associated with communications and rectify those capable of rectification.
- Thread management. The communications manager must simultaneously manage data transmission to the display units together with their receipt by the simulators..

Since we are dealing with an application through which all the communications pass, its code is highly optimized. Any loss of performance in the application will affect all the other applications it communicates with, transferring this low performance situation to them. Optimization has been carried out by a meticulous use of dynamic and fixed matrix lists, by minimizing the number of operations present in the algorithms, and selecting and compacting any areas that need to be blocked in order to avoid their simultaneous use by more than one thread.

The Communications Manager is based on a protocol that allows communications to be simply configured, it being possible to set their UDP or TCP type. However, as a general rule, one should tend towards UDP data transmissions whenever possible, since this type takes up fewer resources. The Communications Manager has been implemented with CORBA technology. The CORBA components are objects that display services through interfaces that are described in a standard language called IDL (Interface Definition Language), with a similar syntax to that of Java and C++. An IDL definition is then converted, using a language-dependent tool, into one or more files, from which the customer and server, respectively, are coded. In the software developed, an IDL has been

defined aimed at being implemented in simulators without the need to modify the different modules comprising the distributed architecture. Therefore, the programmer only has to develop the simulator or set of simulators making up this distributed environment.

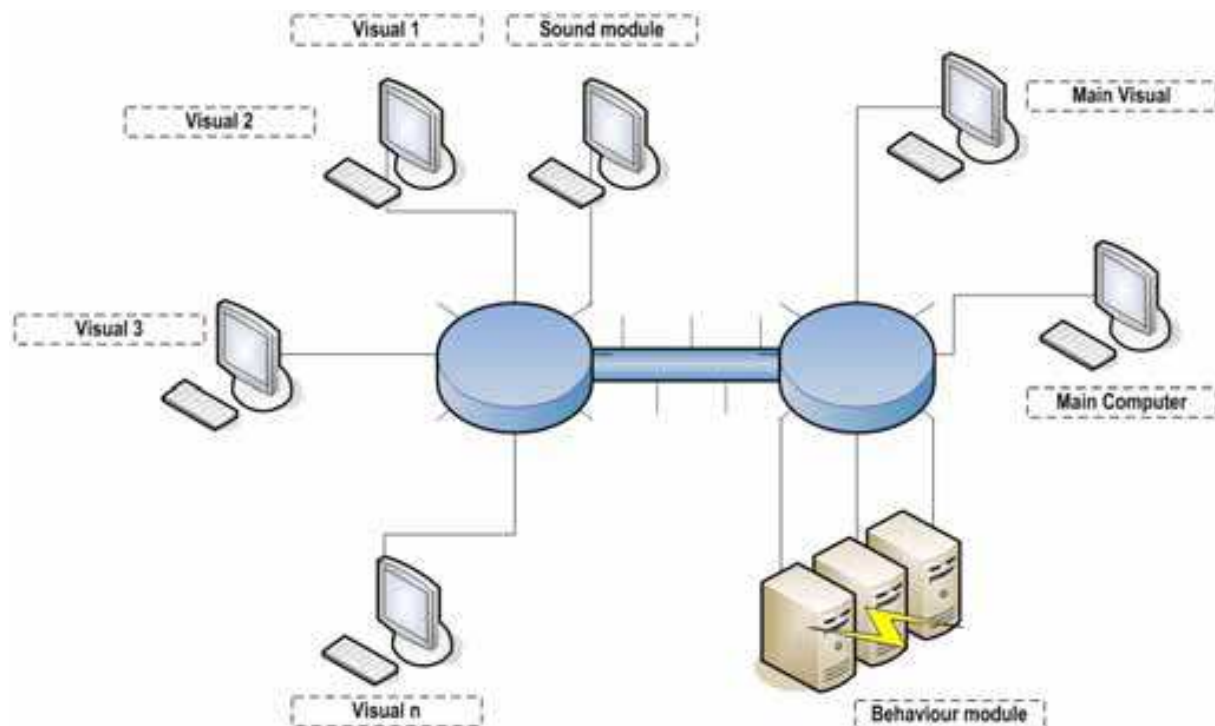


Fig. 17. General architecture of the system.

Moreover, with the help of the interface, the user need only worry about simulating the behaviours, leaving aside managing communications, detecting errors associated with such management, and developing a distributed architecture. The communications manager takes control of all communications by sending the necessary information to each module at an appropriate rate. To this end, each module carries out the following functions:

1. Starting up: the Communications manager assigns a single identifier to each module.
2. Synchronizing: The module clocks and the Manager become synchronized. To obtain good synchronization a maximum error must be set in accordance with a sequence in which it send the information from each of the objects controlled every 'n' milliseconds.

Figure 17 shows the general architecture of the developed system.

5.3 Behavior modules

A visual without a behaviour module allows a scenario to be reproduced at a particular instant. However, if it is wished to reflect the evolution of the environment according to time, and therefore represent the different states that the elements gradually acquire in that environment, a module entrusted to calculate this evolution is needed.

In the developed simulator, the logic associated with behaviour has been introduced by means of a module that allows the interpretation of a set of files containing the behaviour of the elements, coded in a language with syntax the same as a PLC. Thus, a programmable automaton language interpreter for inserting basic behaviour has been developed.

The programmable automation functions in such a way that the outputs depend on the instantaneous value of the inputs. However, the evolution of logic functions of automatism require a specific calculation time. In order to ensure that the input values are not changed during this evaluation, synchronous processing modes are used that only take account of the inputs, and update the outputs in specific instants of time. Their functioning can be summed up as follows:

1. Start of cycle.
Storage of input values at a particular instant. Running the program; during the entire process, the value of the inputs that is stored remains constant. Simultaneous updating of outputs.
2. End of cycle.
3. Repetition of the process.

The behaviour module, therefore, works as an automaton emulator in such a way that with some particular inputs some outputs are generated that are reflected in the environment. In order to generate the variables making up the emulator's outputs, the figure of the sensor has been created inside the visuals, which takes charge of reading the value of a particular property at the start of each automaton cycle.

The actuators have been created in the same way so that the environment can be acted on. These are elements that act on a particular property with the ability to change its value. Both the actuators (behaviour module outputs) and the sensors (behaviour module inputs) are treated as binary-type variables, that is, their possible values are '0' or '1'. Described below are the sensors implemented, their main features and scope of use.

Types of sensors implemented:

- State: This controls whether a visual element is activated or not. It thus allows the user not only to know if a geometry is visible or not, but also if a light is 'on' or 'off', if a fog-type node is active, etc.
- Position: This informs if a node is in a position near the sensor. This check is made by means of ranging. Linear position: This detects if a node intersects with the imaginary segment, which, setting out from a point 'P' at the centre of a node, has the direction of a vector '(x,y,z)'. The size of the segment is a user-specified parameter. The most typical example of one would be a photoelectric cell.
- Switch: This behaves like a push-button, that is, it lets current pass only and exclusively during a cycle. At that instant its value is true and then passes to false during the remaining instants even though the button continues to be pressed.
- Button: While the button remains pressed, it lets the current pass taking the true value, passing to false value when the pressing finishes. Movement: This checks the different properties of a movement.

Types of actuators implemented:

- Node visibility control: this lets a node be activated or deactivated, thereby allowing the geometries to be visible or not. If it is a light-type, it switches it 'on' or 'off', and if a fog-type, it can make it act or not. Variation in the properties of a movement.
- Determining the state of a sound.
- Acting on a Switch element: this allows the child of a switch to be selected each time that it takes the true value or rotate among the various children.

With the help of these sensors and actuators, all the actions needed to manage an electrical substation can be generated, opening or closing phases, operating switches, etc...

6. Conclusions

An application designed for training electrical substation operators by using a virtual reality application has been set out in this chapter.

The application allows full viewing of any of the substations in the power supply network, allowing navigation into the virtual world and interaction with the elements. Each of the substation components has been reproduced in the simulation model, including the behavior laws associated with it, so the complete functionality of the substation can be simulated. It may be said that the Bond Graph technique is a simple and effective mathematical modelling technique that lets the model be understood without losing the physical sense of each of its components, no matter how complex it may be. Its methodology unified for different physical domains enables the electrical part to be joined to other parts of the systems that appear in engineering, such as, mechanics or hydraulics, it being unnecessary to change the simulation environment or computer application when machines need to be joined to mechanical shafts, pumps or turbines,...

The virtual reality application has been implemented in such a way that the system developed can be integrated into a replica of the complete power supply network control system emulating a real substation, it being able to fully interact with the global system and allow totally real situations to be simulated.

There is no doubt that being able to simulate expensive installations with virtual models which afford the same functionality is an extremely interesting possibility. This virtual reality application is a tool aimed at this interest.

In this complex issue, important technologies and methodologies, such as virtual reality, dynamic simulation, databases, GIS, computer networking, all join together to offer a real time solution.

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Computer-Aided Design and system analysis aim to find mathematical models that allow emulating the behaviour of components and facilities. The high competitiveness in industry, the little time available for product development and the high cost in terms of time and money of producing the initial prototypes means that the computer-aided design and analysis of products are taking on major importance. On the other hand, in most areas of engineering the components of a system are interconnected and belong to different domains of physics (mechanics, electrics, hydraulics, thermal...). When developing a complete multidisciplinary system, it needs to integrate a design procedure to ensure that it will be successfully achieved. Engineering systems require an analysis of their dynamic behaviour (evolution over time or path of their different variables). The purpose of modelling and simulating dynamic systems is to generate a set of algebraic and differential equations or a mathematical model. In order to perform rapid product optimisation iterations, the models must be formulated and evaluated in the most efficient way. Automated environments contribute to this. One of the pioneers of simulation technology in medicine defines simulation as a technique, not a technology, that replaces real experiences with guided experiences reproducing important aspects of the real world in a fully interactive fashion [iii]. In the following chapters the reader will be introduced to the world of simulation in topics of current interest such as medicine, military purposes and their use in industry for diverse applications that range from the use of networks to combining thermal, chemical or electrical aspects, among others. We hope that after reading the different sections of this book we will have succeeded in bringing across what the scientific community is doing in the field of simulation and that it will be to your interest and liking. Lastly, we would like to thank all the authors for their excellent contributions in the different areas of simulation.

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