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# A Systematic Literature Review and Research Directions of Agent-based Simulation for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles in Civilian Applications

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## Abstract

Recently, the civilian applications of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) are gaining more interest in several domains. Due to operational costs, safety concerns and legal regulations, Agent-Based Simulation (ABS) are commonly used to implement models and conduct tests. This has resulted in abundant research works addressing ABS in UAVs. This paper aims at providing a comprehensive overview of this domain by conducting a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on relevant research works in the previous ten years. Eight research questions are considered at the beginning of the review, including the understanding of the evolution of UAV simulations in multi-agent systems in the last decade, identifying the key components of the agent-based UAV models and frameworks. From the SLR results, seven research directions are highlighted, including problems related to autonomy, explainability, security, flight duration, integration within smart cities regulations, and validation & verification of the models.

*Keywords:* Multi-Agent Systems, Agent-Based Simulation, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle, Systematic Literature Review, Civilian Applications

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## 1. Introduction

2 Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), most commonly known as drones, are  
3 becoming increasingly popular for civilian applications in several domains such  
4 as agriculture, transportation, products delivery, energy, emergency response,  
5 telecommunication, environment preservation and infrastructure. According to

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6 Teal Group’s 2018 World civilian UAV Market Profile and Forecast report [1],  
7 civilian UAV production will total US\$88.3 billion in the next decade, with a  
8 12.9% compound annual growth rate. The same report states that the civil-  
9 ian UAV sector promises to be the most dynamic growing sector of the world  
10 aerospace industry in the following years. Furthermore, fueled by a growing de-  
11 mand from governments and private consumers, civilian UAV market is expected  
12 to quadruplicate over the next decade. The key features making the UAVs inter-  
13 esting to use are their small dimensions, ability to take-off and land vertically,  
14 good maneuverability, simple mechanics, and payload capability. These features  
15 make UAVs accessible for civilian applications deployed in urban environment  
16 where they started to be used as a practical solution for cost-efficient and rapid  
17 delivery. One of the mostly known examples is Amazon Prime Air where UAVs  
18 are used to deliver packages to customers [2, 3]. Another important example  
19 that comes from the health-care sector is the transportation of medical sam-  
20 ples and products using a UAV health-care delivery network [4]. Even though  
21 there were some concerns about the safety of this procedure in such transporta-  
22 tion environments, it has been shown that the UAV transportation systems  
23 are a viable option for the transportation of medical samples and products [5].  
24 Another notable example comes from the Oil&Gas industry. The tragic Deep-  
25 water Horizon accident in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, as well as the increase  
26 in deepwater offshore activity, have increased public interest in Health, Safety  
27 and Environment (HSE) counter-measures for sub-surface releases of hydrocar-  
28 bons. To attain a proper contingency planning, response managers urge for a  
29 system allowing instant detection and characterization of accidental releases. To  
30 meet these requirements, a heterogeneous robotic system involving UAVs was  
31 developed for early detection of hydrocarbons [6].

32 Despite these initial successes, UAV technology is still in its early stages  
33 of development. For this reason, considerable limitations should be addressed  
34 before a large scale deployment of UAVs in civilian applications is possible. The  
35 main drawbacks to mention are related to the safety of humans facing UAV  
36 failures [7], and the high amount of energy consumed by these devices cou-  
37 pled with their limited battery life [8]. Moreover, since civilian applications are  
38 mostly deployed in urban environments involving multiple actors, considerable  
39 research efforts should be dedicated to enhancing the UAV perceptual intelli-  
40 gence required to coordinate complex environments [9], and more importantly to  
41 address the possible consequences, especially on people safety, of a mechanical  
42 failure that may cause a crash and the costs of such incident.

43 To guarantee it is safe for UAVs to fly over people’s heads and to reduce costs,  
44 different scenarios must be modeled and tested. However, currently, most of the  
45 regulations in force restrict the use of UAVs in cities. For this reason, to perform  
46 tests with real UAVs, one needs access to expensive hardware and field tests that  
47 are costly, time-consuming, and require trained and skilled people to pilot and  
48 maintain the UAVs. Moreover, in the field, it may also be hard to reproduce  
49 the same scenario several times [10]. To overcome these limitations, simulation  
50 frameworks have been developed to allow transferring real-world scenarios into  
51 executable models (*i.e.* simulating UAV activities in a digital environment).

52 An agent is defined as an autonomous software entity that is *situated* in  
53 some environment and where it is capable of actions and coordination with  
54 other agents to achieve specific goals [11]. For these reasons, the resulting Multi-  
55 Agent System (MAS) technology have been established as a suitable platform  
56 for implementing autonomous behavior and decision-making in computer sys-  
57 tems [12, 13]. An Agent-Based Simulation (ABS) model is a set of interacting  
58 intelligent entities that reflect, within an artificial environment, the relation-  
59 ships in the real world [14]. The results make ABS a natural step forward  
60 into understanding and managing the complexity of today’s business and social  
61 systems.

62 Despite this promising research efforts, very few works were dedicated to  
63 understand and analyze existing works using ABS in civilian UAV applications.  
64 Very few surveys outlined a comprehensive set of research questions pertaining  
65 to multi-agent simulations for civilian UAV applications.

66 Against this background, the objective of this paper is two-fold:

- 67 1. Conduct a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of the research address-  
68 ing MAS in civilian UAV applications. This SLR aims to identify the  
69 most important research questions, analyze the literature, and outline key  
70 challenges and research directions.
- 71 2. Outline and discuss the research directions of UAVs in civilian applications

72 To the best of our knowledge, no systematic literature study has been conducted  
73 to review the research addressing ABS in civilian UAV applications.

74 The rest of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 states and defines  
75 the SLR methodology adapted from [15, 16]. Section 3 details the analysis and  
76 results of the SLR. Based on the results of the SLR, Section 4 identifies the  
77 major research directions. Section 5 discusses the related works. Section 6  
78 concludes this paper and identifies future research perspectives.

## 79 2. SLR Methodology

80 Recently, research on computer science in general and on artificial intelli-  
81 gence, in particular, has witnessed a significant increase both qualitatively and  
82 quantitatively. For this reason, SLRs are becoming popular to help analyze  
83 the evolutions of these domains. Kitchenham and Charters [17] define SLR  
84 as follows: “*A form of secondary study that uses a well-defined methodology*  
85 *to identify, analyze and interpret all available evidence related to a specific re-*  
86 *search question in a way that is unbiased and (to a degree) repeatable.”* Where  
87 *secondary study* refers to “*a study that reviews all the primary studies relating*  
88 *to a specific research question.”* In this paper, we define a *primary study* as a  
89 research paper addressing a specific research question in the domain of UAVs.  
90 The aim of SLRs can be threefold [17]: *(i)* to summarize the existing evidence  
91 concerning a specific technology that is being used broadly, *(ii)* to identify gaps  
92 in the existing research in order to suggest areas for future investigation, and  
93 *(iii)* to provide a background allowing to position new research activities.

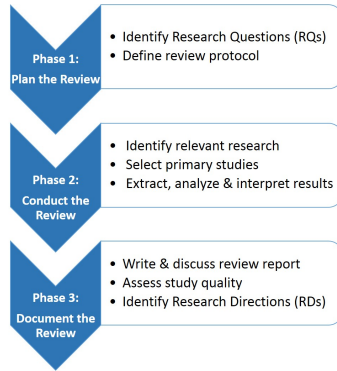


Figure 1: The systematic literature review process (the figure adapted from [18, 19]).

94 With these goals in mind, we base our systematic literature review on [15,  
95 16], which are among the most common methodologies for computer science  
96 SLRs. Such an approach ensures rigorousness, fairness, and reproducibility.  
97 Figure 1 illustrates the review process.

98 This section is organized as follows. First, Section 2.1 highlights the research  
99 questions. Second, Section 2.2 explains the review protocol, how conflicts are  
100 resolved and biases overcome. Third, in Section 2.3, the defined protocol is  
101 executed and the review process is undertaken (document collection, conflict  
102 resolution, *etc.*).

### 103 2.1. Key Research Questions

104 Following the Goal Question Metric (GQM) [16], we define our generic free-  
105 form question as “Discover and evaluate the possible scientific MAS contribu-  
106 tions to the civilian UAV applications.” On the field, it may be hard to deploy  
107 UAVs because of safety and security issues. Moreover, it may be difficult to re-  
108 produce the same scenario several times in order to test hypotheses and validate  
109 the UAV behaviors. ABS is a suitable tool for overcoming these limitations. In  
110 order to reflect this aspect, the generic free-form question becomes “Discover and  
111 evaluate the possible scientific ABS contributions to the civilian UAV applica-  
112 tions.” This question is broken down into Research Questions (RQs) exploring  
113 key issues in ABS for civilian UAV applications. The research questions are  
114 mainly concerned with this type of applications. More specifically, these ques-  
115 tions cover the purposes, issues, used simulation frameworks, publications date,  
116 authors, countries, *etc.* These questions were formulated based on the authors’  
117 knowledge in the UAV and ABS domains as well as the common practices from  
118 other SLRs. In what follows, eight RQs are considered within this review, and  
119 listed below:

120 **RQ1:** Understand the evolution of UAV simulations in MAS in the last decade  
121 in terms of key contributors (research labs), geographic distributions,  
122 growth over the years. Having answers to this RQ will help researchers

123 determine the liveness of the MAS modeling domain for civilian UAV  
124 applications. Moreover, this RQ will enable highlighting the active con-  
125 tributors. In this way, it may help researchers to find quickly new con-  
126 tributions in the domain.

127 **RQ2:** Identify the main UAV *research topics* and civilian *application domains*  
128 addressed in the studied papers. On one hand, we consider it is impor-  
129 tant to determine active research topics in order to highlight less active  
130 research topics where more contributions are needed. On the other hand,  
131 and as the market of civilian UAVs is expanding rapidly in several ap-  
132 plication domains [1], a synthetic view of these application domains will  
133 enable researchers to determine the typical applications for their research,  
134 and possibly identify new application domains.

135 **RQ3:** Identify the artificial intelligence models scaffolding the solutions in the  
136 reviewed papers. This RQ is set up in order to have a view on the types  
137 of agent architectures used for implementing civilian UAV applications.  
138 It also helps researchers understand the potential of these agent & system  
139 architectures, and their limitations. The following sub-questions focus  
140 on specific types of models and architectures.

141 **RQ3.1:** Investigate the agent architecture used in the solution (*e.g.*  
142 cognitive agent, Belief-Desire-Intension (BDI) agent, reactive  
143 agent, *etc.*).

144 **RQ3.2:** Investigate the architecture of the system in the studied papers  
145 (decentralized vs centralized).

146 **RQ3.3:** Investigate whether the proposed model (agent or simulation  
147 architectures) includes the environment, and how the UAVs in-  
148 teract with their environment.

149 **RQ4:** Investigate whether models and technologies enabling to implement con-  
150 cepts related to Internet-of-Things (IoT), pervasive systems or ubiqui-  
151 tous systems are considered in the studied papers. IoT is a technological  
152 domain that is more and more used within smart cities. This RQ will  
153 highlight if technologies like wireless sensor networks, connected vehicles,  
154 connected buildings, *etc.* are considered as a component of the agent-  
155 based system in the studied papers. In such systems, IoT contributes to  
156 the model at the agent level (objects may be modeled as agents) and at  
157 the agent environment level (objects are not agents). This RQ will also  
158 highlight how IoT devices and UAVs are interacting together.

159 **RQ5:** Identify the communication technology used by the UAVs to connect  
160 to other entities: In order for UAVs to be deployed and used in their  
161 environment, especially in smart cities, they could either be connected  
162 to infrastructure entities, *i.e.* Vehicle-to-Infrastructure (V2I), or to other  
163 UAVs, *i.e.* Vehicle-to-Vehicle (V2V). Understanding the communication  
164 technology of the UAV in the proposed simulated works is key to assess  
165 whether frameworks are capable of producing realistic simulations.

166 **RQ6:** Identify the main model category used by the proposed work (*e.g.* mathe-  
167 matical, algorithm-based, *etc.*) This RQ is set up in order to determine if  
168 the contributions to civilian UAV applications are formal or semi-formal.  
169 It will lead us to a statement and arguments regarding the validation of  
170 UAV models.

171 **RQ7:** Assess the evaluation of the proposed model: Simulation for civilian UAV  
172 applications needs scenarios to be set up, and the use of datasets may  
173 help to create such simulation in a realistic way. This RQ assesses if the  
174 evaluation relies on a dataset, on a generated synthetic dataset, or no  
175 dataset. This will highlight the different datasets, and the scenarios (if  
176 no dataset is used) from literature.

177 **RQ8:** Identify the simulation frameworks used to implement the proposed so-  
178 lutions, and the main advantages & disadvantages of each framework  
179 especially if it excels in a specific civilian UAV application domain. This  
180 RQ is related to the technological means used by the researchers for  
181 implementing the MAS for civilian UAV applications. It should help  
182 researchers to determine and choose the best framework for their own  
183 model implementation.

## 184 2.2. Defining The Review Protocol

185 As shown in Fig. 1, defining the *review protocol* is done right after having set  
186 the RQs. The protocol we used for this article involves the following steps. First  
187 Section 2.2.1 chooses the databases used as sources of information and defines  
188 the *stop criterion*. Section 2.2.2 defines the exclusion/inclusion criteria used by  
189 the reviewers to exclude/include articles chosen from the databases before the  
190 stop criterion was triggered. Section 2.2.3 presents the quality criteria used by  
191 the reviewers to assess the quality of the primary studies. Finally, Section 2.2.4  
192 explains the policies used to mitigate subjective biases and resolve conflicts.

### 193 2.2.1. Database Selection

194 This process is composed of the following couple of steps:

- 195 a) IEEE Xplore, ACM Digital Library, and Google Scholar are selected as  
196 the three databases constituting the source of information. The selection  
197 of the first two databases is obvious in computer science. Google Scholar  
198 is selected because it provides a large list of documents that are not indexed  
199 into the two previous databases, *e.g.* papers from conference proceedings,  
200 Ph.D. and Master theses. Despite not being peer-reviewed, these articles  
201 obtained from Google scholar might be important given that the interest  
202 in the studied topic is rapidly increasing in the recent years.
- 203 b) The databases are queried with a set of keywords. These keywords are  
204 devised based on the authors knowledge of the UAV and MAS domains.

205 When queried with these keywords, each database responded with a set of  
206 articles that are considered by the reviewing process. The numbers of articles  
207 to be produced by the queries is relatively large for IEEE Xplore, ACM DL, and  
208 Google Scholar databases. However, only a few of these articles were relevant  
209 to the research questions raised in the previous section. For this reason, as in  
210 [20], the following stop criterion was applied: “*Stop the collecting of articles*  
211 *after a sequence of 10 titles, completely incoherent with the query, appeared in*  
212 *the list.*” Determining whether an article is coherent is left to the reviewers’  
213 subjective view when they deemed that there was no adherence between the  
214 query performed on the database and the title/abstract of the article appearing  
215 in the result.

### 216 2.2.2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria definition

217 The articles appearing in the resulting pool of articles are not necessarily  
218 useful to answer the research questions defined above. For this reason, most of  
219 literature review methodologies [19, 20] apply a set of exclusion criteria to retain  
220 only pertinent articles. The set of exclusion criteria, defined by the authors, is  
221 listed below:

222 **ExC1:** *Not a recent research work* — Papers that were published before 2008,  
223 *i.e.* with a publication year  $< 2008$ , are excluded. It is assumed that  
224 the non-recent research is not up-to-date due to the high evolution rate  
225 of the UAV technologies and usages.

226 **ExC2:** *Invalid type of paper, the document is a poster or a demo* — It is  
227 assumed that a poster or a demo cannot give enough details on the con-  
228 tributions, as there is no enough contributed content for evaluation.  
229 Ph.D. theses, Master theses, technical reports are included.

230 **ExC3:** *Invalid type of paper, the paper is a survey* — It is assumed that the  
231 survey papers (*i.e.* secondary studies) do not provide contributions  
232 directly on the UAV models nor UAV technologies.

233 **ExC4:** *Impossible to access the paper text* — It is impossible to evaluate a paper  
234 when its text cannot be accessed (PDF download, online text, *etc.*)

235 **ExC5:** *Extended paper* — The paper is extended by another paper by the same  
236 authors. The contributions in the extended paper are enclosing the ones  
237 from the original paper, so that the latter is excluded.

238 **ExC6:** *Unrelated to UAV* — The paper has no contribution neither in the fields  
239 of UAV models nor UAV technologies.

240 **ExC7:** *Unrelated to agent-based systems* — The paper has no contribution in the  
241 fields of agent-based technologies nor distributed artificial intelligence.  
242 Generally, only multi-agent applications are included, but if the system  
243 includes agents that communicate with other entities like Infrastructure  
244 (refer to ExC14), then they will also be included.



- 245 **ExC8:** *UAV manufacturing only* — The paper’s contribution is related to the  
246 manufacturing of UAVs, *i.e.* it is related to the design and implemen-  
247 tation of hardware, mechanic or electronic components.
- 248 **ExC9:** *Positioning system only* — The paper’s contribution is related to the  
249 definition of novel positioning systems within UAVs. The contribution  
250 focuses on a perception model that enables each UAV to compute its  
251 position in the air.
- 252 **ExC10:** *UAV detection system only* — The paper’s main concern is UAV detec-  
253 tion within the system. In other words, the contribution is not related  
254 to UAV behavior, but to a system that is detecting the UAV in the air.
- 255 **ExC11:** *No civilian application* — The paper contains only military applications  
256 that cannot be applied to civilian fields.
- 257 **ExC12:** *No simulation contribution* — The paper’s contribution cannot be ap-  
258 plied to UAV simulation. In several papers, the model is deployed on  
259 real UAVs without simulation. Even if the paper has not a direct con-  
260 tribution to UAV simulation, if the proposed model could be deployed  
261 within a simulation environment, the corresponding paper is not ex-  
262 cluded.
- 263 **ExC13:** *Simulation in 2D* — The paper’s contributions include a simulation  
264 model in 2D that cannot be extended to the third dimension. It is as-  
265 sumed that 2D simulation of UAVs cannot achieve the highly detailed  
266 reproduction of the UAV behavior when they are in the air. Addi-  
267 tionally, they do not provide detailed environment model. However, to  
268 estimate the portion of 2D and 3D simulations, we keep track of this  
269 exclusion criterion, and plot how many papers were excluded due to  
270 being based on 2D simulation (c.f. Section 2.3).
- 271 **ExC14:** *No UAV cooperation nor interaction* — The paper contains a contribu-  
272 tion related to neither the cooperation of UAVs nor interaction between  
273 UAVs. V2I and V2V communications are assumed to be the base frame-  
274 work for supporting UAV interaction. If a paper contains a model for  
275 a single UAV that has V2I communication, it is not excluded since this  
276 type of models could be duplicated in order to set up a more complex  
277 simulation environment based on stigmergy<sup>1</sup> communication.
- 278 **ExC15:** *Human interaction with no autonomous UAV* — The paper contains  
279 only a contribution related to the interaction between humans and the

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<sup>1</sup>This term has been introduced by the French biologist Pierre-Paul Grassé in 1959 for describing the termite behavior. It is defined as: “*Stimulation of the workers by the work that they performed.*” This term expresses the notion that the actions of an agent leave signs in the environment. These signs are perceived by itself and other agents, which determine their next actions [21]

Table 1: The Quality Questions

#	Quality Question
Q1	Do the authors provide a sound rationale ( <i>i.e.</i> motivation) for their work?
Q2	Is there an adequate description of the context in which the study has been conducted?
Q3	Is there a clear statement of the findings and the results including data that support the findings?
Q4	Are the limitation of the study discussed and highlighted?

280 UAVs, for piloting or controlling the UAVs. In other words, the con-  
 281 tribution focuses on the human-UAV interaction without autonomous  
 282 control of the UAVs.

283 These exclusion criteria are applied to the documents in two steps. In the  
 284 first *coarse-grained* step, the articles were only eliminated if their titles and  
 285 abstracts satisfied at least one of the exclusion criteria. In the second *fine-*  
 286 *grained* step, the remaining papers are screened but this time reading the whole  
 287 body of the paper.

### 288 2.2.3. Quality Criteria

289 As has been recommended by Kitchenham and Charters [17] and Kitchen-  
 290 ham et al. [22], most of the SLRs rely on quality criteria allowing to assess the  
 291 quality of primary studies, (*c.f.* [19, 20] for another example). Defining quality  
 292 criteria as a list of questions is a common practice. Typical quality criteria  
 293 include: (*i*) whether the authors of primary studies provided a sound rationale  
 294 for their work, (*ii*) details provided about the context and the design of the  
 295 technical evaluation, (*iii*) the statement of the results.

296 Note that, as it is the case in [19], the quality criteria are not used to  
 297 exclude/include primary studies. Rather, they are used to report the overall  
 298 quality of primary studies included by the SLR. To assess the quality of the  
 299 reviewed works, Table 1 defines four quality questions, adapted from [19]. Note  
 300 that Q3 is of particular interest since having an overview of the quality of  
 301 evaluations of the set of articles dealing with a specific research question can  
 302 give a good idea on the maturity of this research question.

### 303 2.2.4. Biases and disagreements

304 In order to mitigate the subjectivity of the reviewing process, certain mea-  
 305 sures were taken to overcome biases and resolve conflicts. In particular, each  
 306 task of Phase 2 in Fig. 1 was conducted by at least 2 reviewers. Thus, as shall  
 307 be discussed later, the steps of article exclusion/inclusion (*c.f.* Section 2.2.2),  
 308 answering the RQs, and quality assessment (*c.f.* Section 2.2.3), were under-  
 309 taken by at least two reviewers for each article. A third reviewer intervened as  
 310 a referee to resolve a conflict in the exclusion/inclusion and in the RQ answer-  
 311 ing steps. As for the quality assessment task, quality assessments provided by  
 312 reviewers for each article were averaged.

Table 2: The results of the coarse-grained exclusion/inclusion step

Database	Number of Papers	Percentage
Selected from Keyword Set 1	131	≈ 41%
Selected from Keyword Set 2	185	≈ 59%
Sum from Set 1 & 2	316	=100%
<b>Total Included</b>	123	≈ 39%
<b>Total Excluded</b>	193	≈ 61%

Table 3: The results of the fine-grained exclusion/inclusion step

	Number of Papers	Percentage
Included	30	≈ 24%
Excluded	70	≈ 57%
Conflict	23	≈ 19%
Referee Included	12	≈ 10%
<b>Total Included</b>	42	≈ 34%
<b>Total Excluded</b>	81	≈ 66%

### 313 2.3. Performing The Review

314 This section gives an account of how the SLR has been conducted and dis-  
315 cusses the results of the exclusion/inclusion step. Two keyword sets were ap-  
316 plied to the three databases (IEEE Xplore, ACM DL, and Google Scholar). The  
317 first keyword set is {UAV, agent, simulation}, whereas the second keyword set  
318 is {UAV, agent-based simulation, drones, civil, multi-agent systems}. A  
319 stop criterion of 10 articles was applied to the results of each keyword set and  
320 database. After the stop criterion was applied, the total number of articles re-  
321 tained was 316. The next step is to apply the coarse-grained exclusion/inclusion  
322 step. Note that since this step screens papers based on their titles and abstracts,  
323 some exclusion criteria might be more helpful than others (*e.g.* ExC1 and ExC2).

324 Table 2 shows the results of the *coarse-grained exclusion/inclusion step*. As  
325 can be seen from the third row in the table, the total number of papers acquired  
326 from the two sets combined is 316 papers. The results listed in Table 2 show  
327 that about 39% (123 papers) of the total number of papers were included by  
328 the coarse-grained exclusion/inclusion step.

329 Fig. 2 plots the geographical distributions of papers before the fine-grained  
330 inclusion/exclusion step. The number of papers published by US researchers  
331 is highest worldwide. The geographical distribution of the papers could be  
332 partly explained by the investment rate in R&D in each country [23], illustrated  
333 by Fig. 3. The notable exception is China, which invests 2% of its GDP  
334 (US\$370, 589.7M) but has a number of papers equal to France (2.3% of GPP,  
335 US\$60, 781.6M). Another notable point is the Czech Rep., which has 11 papers  
336 with an average R&D investment (2% of GPP, US\$6, 719M). All the authors  
337 from Czech Rep. are collaborating with partners within US-funded projects.  
338 This fact may explain the high number of publications for this country. From  
339 Fig. 2, it is interesting to note that, even if civilian UAV-related regulations  
340 in USA are less restrictive than in Europe (*c.f.* Section RD6), the number  
341 of papers over Europe is two times higher than the number of papers in North

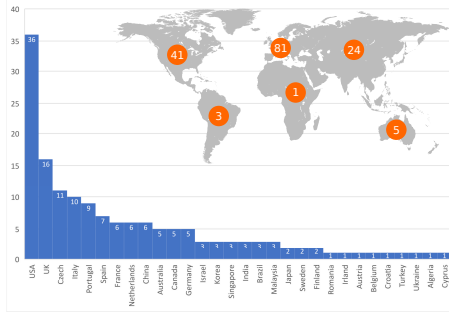


Figure 2: The geographical distribution of papers after the coarse-grained exclusion/inclusion step.

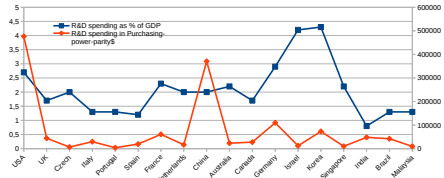


Figure 3: The investments in R&D for the 18 most publishing countries [23] after the coarse-grained exclusion/inclusion step.

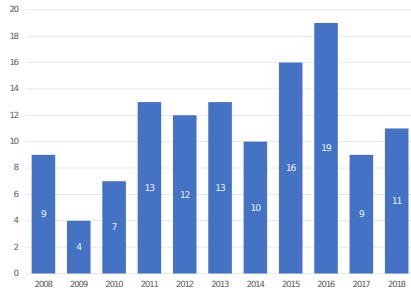


Figure 4: The number of papers per year after the coarse-grained exclusion/inclusion step.

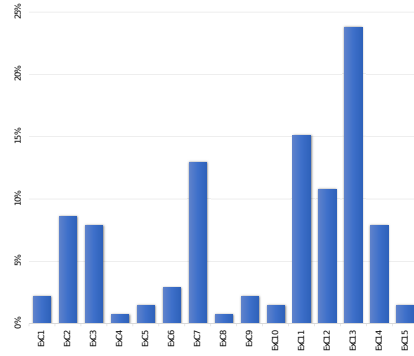


Figure 5: The percentage of excluded papers per exclusion criteria in the fine-grained exclusion/inclusion step.

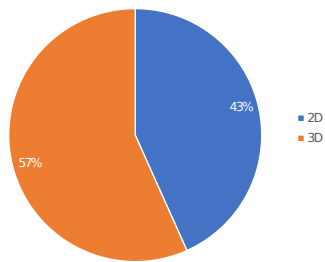


Figure 6: The percentage of papers with 2D simulation scenario vs. papers with 3D simulation scenario.

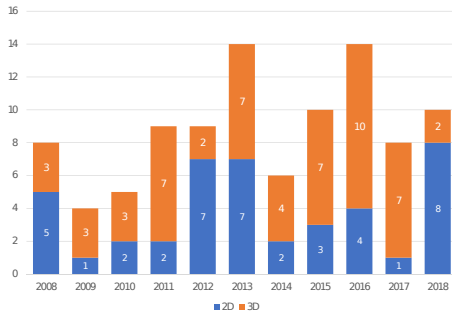


Figure 7: The number of papers with 2D and 3D simulation scenarios per year.

342 America. This can be attributed to the EU research policy that enforces funding  
343 on breaking technologies, such as UAVs. Fig. 4 plots the number of papers per  
344 year since 2008 after the coarse-grained exclusion/inclusion step. The number  
345 of papers grows with a slop of 0.6364.

346 The next step within the review process is the *fine-grained exclusion/inclusion*  
347 *step*. It is applied to the 123 papers selected during the previous step. More  
348 specifically, the content of the paper is screened and the paper is excluded if  
349 it satisfies at least one of the 15 exclusion criteria defined in Section 2.1. Ta-  
350 ble 3 shows the results of the fine-grained exclusion/inclusion step. Each paper  
351 was reviewed by at least two reviewers. If all the reviewers of a paper decided  
352 that it should be included in the review, the paper is included (*c.f.* the first  
353 row of the table). The paper is excluded if all of its reviewers agreed upon its  
354 exclusion (the second row of the table). Otherwise, in case of a conflict among  
355 reviewers, we relied on a referee to resolve this conflict. If the referee accepts  
356 the paper, then it is included in the review. As shown in the table, 23 papers  
357 (about 19% of the total number of the papers) generated conflicts among the  
358 reviewers. Out of these papers, 12 papers were added by the referee raising the  
359 total number of included papers to 42 (about 34% of the papers remaining after  
360 the coarse-grained exclusion/inclusion step). For a list of the 42 papers, please  
361 refer to Table 6.

362 Most of the papers screened in the fine-grained step were highly related  
363 to the RQs. As indicated by Table 3, 66% of them were excluded, and Fig.  
364 5 plots the percentage of excluded papers per exclusion criterion. Note that  
365 some papers were excluded because of satisfying multiple exclusion criteria.  
366 Examining the reviews shows that approximately 24% of excluded papers were  
367 excluded because of ExC13, which filters out a paper if it is not addressing 3D  
368 simulation scenario. Fig. 6 compares the percentage of papers presenting 2D and  
369 3D simulations in the pool of papers before the fine-grained exclusion/inclusion  
370 (whose total number is 123), excluding 26 papers that were not determined  
371 either they use simulation or not, or either they are 2D or 3D. As can be seen  
372 from the figure, despite ExC13 being the most common cause for exclusion, the  
373 majority of the papers whose simulation dimension was determined ended up  
374 addressing 3D simulations. In order to understand the general tendencies of  
375 2D and 3D simulations, Fig. 7 plots the number of papers proposing 2D/3D  
376 simulations per year. As shown in the figure, the number of papers proposing 3D  
377 simulations is witnessing a confirmed and significant increase (2018 should not  
378 be considered since this review was conducted in August 2018). This is mainly  
379 due to the fact that UAV systems are intrinsically in three dimensions, and this  
380 third dimension must be included within the models in order to evaluate the  
381 behaviors of the UAVs regarding the safety concerns. Additionally, simulating  
382 UAVs in a 2D model forbids the deployment of the algorithms in real UAVs  
383 except in very specific cases in which the altitude of the UAVs is constant.  
384 Nevertheless, in this later case, the deployed algorithms must ensure that the  
385 UAVs remain at the same altitude regardless of the environment conditions.

386 This section offered a detailed account of how the review was performed and  
387 provided useful statistics about the included/excluded papers. Furthermore,

388 it discussed the most common exclusion criteria. Next section presents and  
389 discusses the results of the SLR regarding the research questions presented in  
390 Section 2.1.

### 391 **3. Results of the Review and Analysis**

392 This section provides a detailed analysis of the SLR results. It analyzes  
393 the papers retained after the fine-grained exclusion/inclusion step and discusses  
394 each one of the RQs defined in Section 2.1 respectively. Note that the results are  
395 related to MAS in civilian UAV applications and are derived from the research  
396 questions and the exclusion criteria defined in the SLR methodology.

#### 397 *3.1. Demographic Data (RQ1)*

398 To understand the evolution of UAV simulations in MAS in the last decade  
399 (stated as a question by RQ1), Fig. 8 plots the number of papers per year after  
400 the fine-grained exclusion/inclusion step. Despite a decrease in the number  
401 of papers in 2009 and 2012 (2018 should not be considered since this review  
402 was conducted in August 2018), it appears from the figure that there is a stable  
403 growth in the numbers of papers, with a slop of 0.2727. Furthermore, comparing  
404 the results of this figure with those of Fig. 4 confirms this observation since in  
405 Fig. 4, the number of papers witnesses a roughly stable growth between 2008  
406 and 2016.

407 To understand the geographic distributions of the main contributors in the  
408 studied domain, Fig. 9 plots the number of papers per country after the fine-  
409 grained exclusion/inclusion step. Compared with Fig. 2, The number of papers  
410 published by US researchers is still highest worldwide. As previously noticed,  
411 researchers from the Czech Rep. are collaborating with partners within US-  
412 funding projects. This fact may explain the high number of publications for  
413 this country compared to its R&D investment, illustrated in Fig. 10. In the  
414 mentioned figure, it is interesting to note that, even if civilian UAV-related  
415 regulations in USA are less restrictive than in Europe, the number of papers  
416 over Europe (32 papers) is three times higher than the number of papers in North  
417 America (9 papers). We explain this by the fact that the EU research policy  
418 enforces funding on breaking technologies, such as UAVs. Additionally, with  
419 a relatively lower R&D investment rate of EU countries (Fig. 10), researchers  
420 from these countries have fewer opportunities for funding UAV deployment on  
421 real fields. This pushes them to resort to simulation environments for validating  
422 the UAV behaviors before any deployment.

#### 423 *3.2. Research Topics & Application Domains (RQ2)*

424 This section discusses the results and answers the research questions raised  
425 in RQ2 (*c.f.* Section 2.1). In particular, it deals with the research topics (Section  
426 3.2.1) and the application domains (Section 3.2.2).

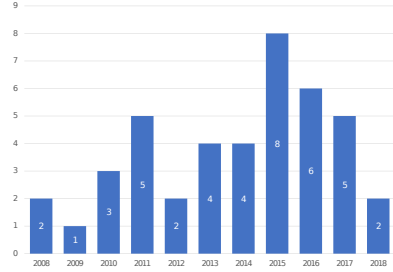


Figure 8: The number of papers per year after the fine-grained exclusion/inclusion step.

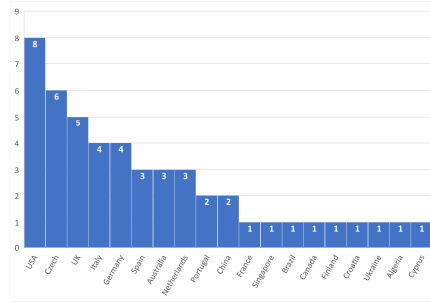


Figure 9: The geographical distribution of papers after the fine-grained exclusion/inclusion step.

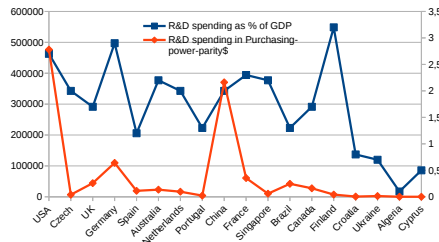


Figure 10: The investments in R&D [23] of the publishing countries after the fine-grained exclusion/inclusion step.

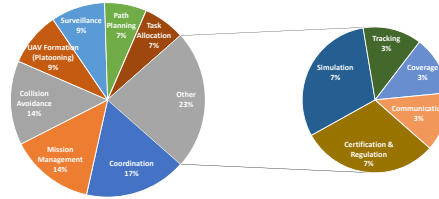


Figure 11: The main research topics related to civilian UAVs applications.

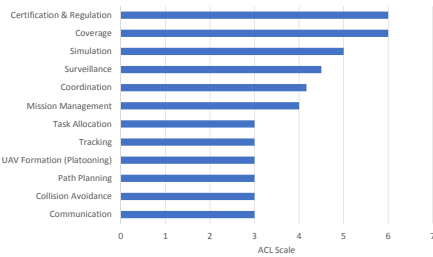


Figure 12: The average ACL for each research topic.

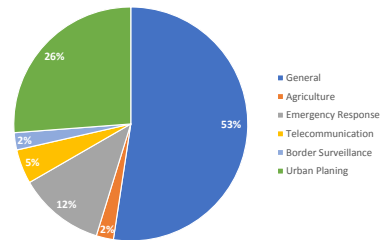


Figure 13: The main civilian UAV application domains.

427 *3.2.1. Research Topics*

428 Subjects or issues that a researcher is interested in when conducting research  
429 on UAVs. These “research topics” provide the general directions to researchers  
430 for exploring, defining, and refining their ideas. Fig. 11 plots the main research  
431 topics addressed in the reviewed articles, and Table 4 lists the papers per each  
432 research topic. It is worth mentioning that some papers were flagged as having  
433 more than one research topic. Therefore, and to normalize the weights given  
434 by each paper to the research topics distribution, we have decided to assign the  
435 most dominant research topic per paper. The addressed research topics are:

436 **T1:** *Coordination* (17%), UAVs interact in order to coordinate their actions for  
437 reaching their common objectives;

438 **T2:** *Mission Management* (14%) addresses the optimal dynamic assignment of  
439 high-level missions, *i.e.* objectives, to UAVs. High-level missions are those  
440 where the UAVs rely on a high-level description of their objectives without  
441 many details and without human guidance;

442 **T3:** *Collision Avoidance* (14%) allows to increase UAV safety by avoiding col-  
443 lisions among UAVs, persons, animals, and other objects;

444 **T4:** *UAV Formation (Platooning)* (9%) addresses the definition of flight forma-  
445 tions for UAVs;

446 **T5:** *Surveillance* (9%) enables UAVs to help the detection of dangerous and  
447 illegal situations;

448 **T6:** *Path Planning* (7%) focuses on the statical and dynamical computing of  
449 the best paths to fly along according to the environmental constraints;

450 **T7:** *Task Allocation* (7%) is the optimal dynamic (potentially distributed) as-  
451 signment of tasks to the UAVs;

452 **T8:** *Certification & Regulation* (7%) is related to the definition of regulations  
453 dedicated to UAVs, and of the associated certifications for UAVs or pilots;

454 **T9:** *Simulation* (7%) focuses on the design and implementation of developed  
455 simulation frameworks to understand and validate UAV behaviors;

456 **T10:** *Communication* (3%) is related to the definitions of the means of commu-  
457 nication between the UAVs, and between a UAVs and the ground infras-  
458 tructure;

459 **T11:** *Coverage* (3%) addresses the problems of map coverage;

460 **T12:** *Tracking* (3%) focuses on the detection and tracking of objects in the en-  
461 vironment of the UAVs.



Table 4: The reviewed papers per research topic

Research topic	Papers per topic
<i>Coordination</i>	Bürkle et al. [24], Zhu et al. [25], Rollo et al. [26], De Benedetti et al. [27], Cimino et al. [28], Ciarletta et al. [29], Obdržálek [30]
<i>Mission Management</i>	Wei et al. [31], Gunetti et al. [32, 33], Stenger et al. [34], Sampedro et al. [35], Fulford et al. [36]
<i>Collision Avoidance</i>	Ashraf et al. [37], Kandil et al. [38], Šišlák et al. [39], Arokiasami et al. [40], Zou et al. [41], Kucherov and Kucherov [42]
<i>UAV Formation (Platooning)</i>	Van der Walle et al. [43], Sutton et al. [44], Benedetti et al. [45], Bürkle and Leuchter [46]
<i>Surveillance</i>	Semsch et al. [47], Khaleghi et al. [48], Bentz and Panagou [49], da Silva et al. [50]
<i>Task Allocation</i>	Wei et al. [51], Evertsz et al. [52], Vasilijevic et al. [6]
<i>Path Planning</i>	Volf et al. [53], Peng et al. [54], Ma et al. [55]
<i>Certification &amp; Regulation</i>	Webster et al. [56, 57], Schatten [58]
<i>Simulation</i>	Pechoucek et al. [59], Veloso et al. [60], De Benedetti et al. [61]
<i>Communication</i>	Agogino et al. [62]
<i>Coverage</i>	Albani et al. [63]
<i>Tracking</i>	Ferrag et al. [64]

462 Therefore, as Fig. 11 shows, the research topics have diverse aims and tackle  
463 several aspects related to UAVs, ranging from low-level (*i.e.* close to hardware)  
464 issues, such as UAV communication, to high-level concerns that require consid-  
465 erable UAV autonomy (*e.g.* mission management).

466 In order to assess the UAV autonomy involved in each research topic, we  
467 rely on an autonomy metric proposed by Clough [65] to measure Autonomous  
468 Control Levels (ACL) of UAVs. This metric is a scale ranging from 0 (for a  
469 remotely piloted non-autonomous UAVs) to 10 (for a fully autonomous UAVs).  
470 Fig. 12 plots the average ACL for each research topics. Note that ACL values  
471 were either mentioned explicitly by the authors of the primary studies or were  
472 determined by the reviewers by evaluating the UAV autonomy according to the  
473 ACL scale.

474 As can be seen in Fig. 12, some research topics tended to endow UAVs with  
475 more autonomy than others. For instance, coverage, coordination, surveillance,  
476 and mission management need more autonomy than path planning, collision  
477 avoidance and communications.

478 Note that research topics such as certification & regulation and simulation  
479 attained relatively high ACL. However, the main concerns of these works were  
480 building a simulation environment for the UAVs (in case of the simulation re-  
481 search topic) and certifying that UAVs adhere to the enforced regulations &  
482 norms (in case of the certification & regulation research topic). For this reason,  
483 the UAVs implementation provided by these works were mainly case-studies  
484 lacking details about the evaluations and the implementations.

485 Furthermore, no reviewer reported a paper with an ACL scale higher than  
486 6. This is explained by the fact that higher levels of autonomy in the ACL scale

487 were associated with specific military application requirements (*e.g.* battle-  
488 space knowledge, battle-space cognizance, *etc.*), and this SLR focuses on work  
489 related to civilian applications only. Note that this issue could be solved by  
490 relying on other metrics allowing to evaluate the maturity of the contributions.  
491 Technology Readiness Level (TRL) [66] is one metric that would help in this  
492 direction. Yet, unlike the ACL, it is not focused on UAV autonomy. For this  
493 reason, we opted for ACL in this paper.

### 494 3.2.2. Application Domains

495 In addition to the research topics, RQ2 addresses the application domains of  
496 UAVs. They refer to the applied research, in which scientific studies and research  
497 works aim to solve practical problems in specific application domains. Fig.  
498 13 shows the distribution of the civilian UAV application domains of studied  
499 papers, and Table 5 lists the papers per each application domain. It is worth  
500 mentioning that some papers tackle several application domains. Therefore,  
501 and to normalize the weights given by each paper to the application domains  
502 distribution, we have decided to assign the most dominant application domain  
503 per paper. For the paper that has no dominant application domain, or if its  
504 contribution is application independent, it is considered to be in the General  
505 domain. The resulting application domains are:

- 506 **D1:** *General* (53%);
- 507 **D2:** *Urban Planning* (26%);
- 508 **D3:** *Emergency Response* (12%);
- 509 **D4:** *Telecommunication* (5%);
- 510 **D5:** *Agriculture* (2%);
- 511 **D6:** *Border surveillance* (2%).

512 As seen in Figure Fig. 13, *Urban planning* and *General* are the most com-  
513 mon application domains. This figure shows the growing attention given to  
514 UAV applications in civilian and urban environments since the share of urban  
515 planning is about 26%, while other application domains such as agriculture,  
516 emergency response, border surveillance, which often take place outside the  
517 urban environment, received less attention.

518 In order to assess the maturity of the reviewed primary studies, we resorted  
519 to the quality criterion Q3 defined in Table 1. Q3 evaluates the quality of the  
520 experiments conducted by the authors of primary studies and the statements of  
521 the obtained results. The intuition here is that the more mature the application  
522 domain is the higher would be its score for Q3.

523 Fig. 14 shows the average Q3 score obtained per application domain. As can  
524 be seen from the figure, based on their maturity, the application domains can  
525 be classified into two clusters. The first cluster represents relatively mature ap-  
526 plication domains (agriculture, telecommunications, and emergency response).

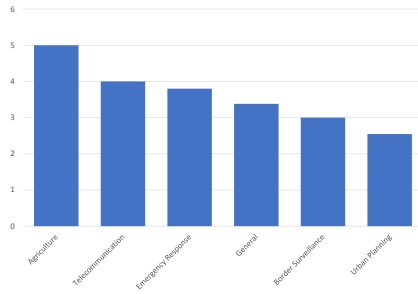


Figure 14: The average of quality metric Q3 given by reviewers per application domain.

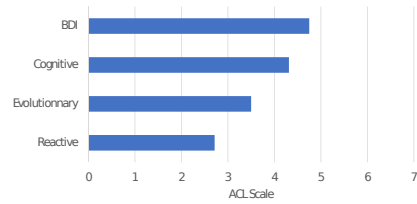


Figure 15: The average ACL per agent architecture.

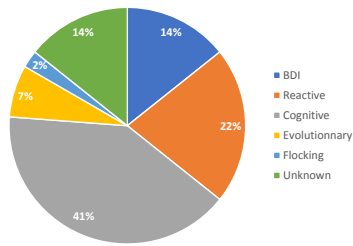


Figure 16: The agent architectures used in the reviewed papers.

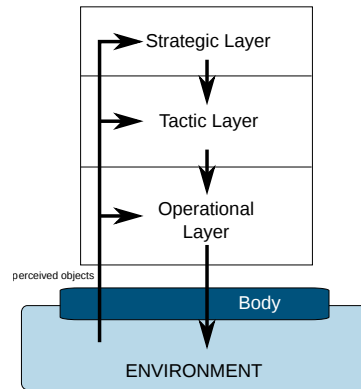


Figure 17: The multi-layer architecture of the agents, adapted from [67].

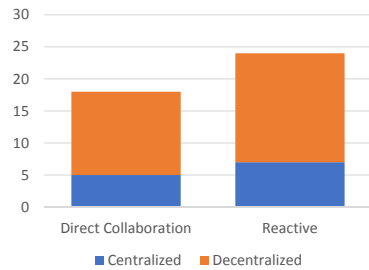


Figure 18: The number of papers with system model (direct collaboration/reactive) and with system architecture (centralized/decentralized).

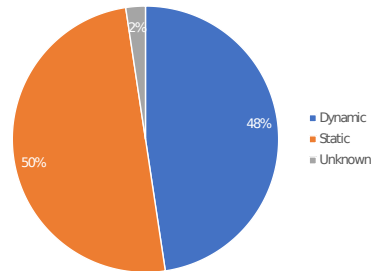


Figure 19: The proportion of dynamic and static agent environments.

Table 5: The reviewed papers per application domain

Application domain	Papers per application domain
<i>General</i>	Ashraf et al. [37], Wei et al. [51], Bürkle et al. [24], Wei et al. [31], Rollo et al. [26], Gunetti et al. [32, 33], Evertsz et al. [52], Webster et al. [57], Sampedro et al. [35], Sutton et al. [44], Peng et al. [54], Zou et al. [41], Ma et al. [55], Bentz and Panagou [49], da Silva et al. [50], De Benedetti et al. [27, 61], Obdržálek [30], Fulford et al. [36], Kucherov and Kucherov [42], Ferrag et al. [64]
<i>Urban Planning</i>	Semsch et al. [47], Volf et al. [53], Webster et al. [56], Kandil et al. [38], Arokiasami et al. [40], Pechoucek et al. [59], Veloso et al. [60], Šišlák et al. [39], Khaleghi et al. [48], Bürkle and Leuchter [46], Schatten [58]
<i>Emergency Response</i>	Zhu et al. [25], Van der Walle et al. [43], Benedetti et al. [45], Cimino et al. [28], Vasilijevic et al. [6]
<i>Telecommunication</i>	Agogino et al. [62], Ciarletta et al. [29]
<i>Border Surveillance</i>	Stenger et al. [34]
<i>Agriculture</i>	Albani et al. [63]

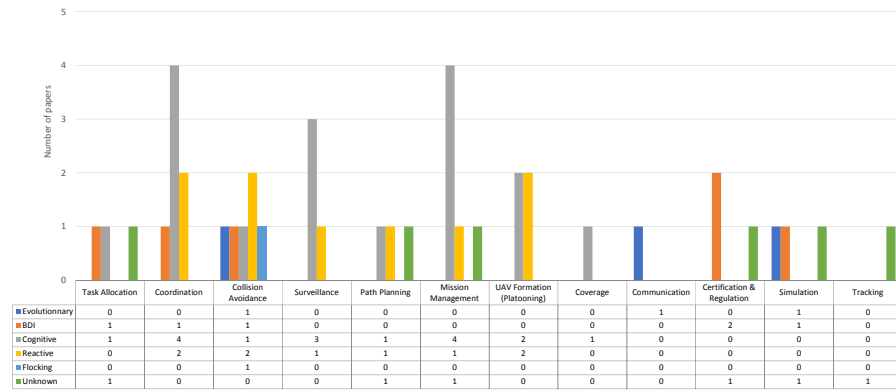


Figure 20: The number of papers with agent architecture as per research topic.

527 The second cluster represents less mature application domains (general, urban  
 528 planning, and border surveillance). Note that these assessments only concern  
 529 works using ABS for civilian UAV applications.

### 530 3.3. Artificial Intelligence or Agent Architecture Type (RQ3)

531 This section deals with the RQ3. First, in Section 3.3.1 the used agent archi-  
 532 tectures are identified and discussed. Second, in Section 3.3.2, the used system  
 533 architectures are analyzed. Finally, Section 3.3.3 discusses how the primary  
 534 studies dealt with the dynamicity of the environment.

#### 535 3.3.1. Agent Architecture (RQ3.1)

536 The results of the SLR concerning the agents' architectures showed that  
 537 agents used in the studied research works, mainly fall into five categories:

538 (i) Reactive agents, (ii) Flocking agents, (iii) Belief–Desire–Intention (BDI)  
539 agents, (iv) Agents using cognitive architectures, and (v) Evolutionary agents.  
540 The following list presents these architectures respectively.

541 • **Reactive agents:** The behavior of reactive agents is driven by their  
542 reactions to external stimuli (*e.g.* a message from another agent) or a  
543 change in their environment (a perceived obstacle).

544 Within the reactive agent behaviors, **Flocking agents** behavior is the  
545 behavior exhibited when a group of agents, *e.g.* birds, fishes are moving  
546 together. Basic architectures of flocking behavior are controlled by three  
547 simple rules: (i) separation for avoiding crowding neighbors, (ii) align-  
548 ment for steering towards average heading of neighbors, (iii) cohesion for  
549 steering towards average position of neighbors. With these three simple  
550 rules, the flock moves in an extremely realistic way, creating complex  
551 motion and interaction that would be extremely hard to create otherwise.

552 • **Cognitive agents:** Agents of this type rely on cognitive architecture.  
553 The latter aims at describing human cognitive processes as precisely as  
554 possible. In contrast to BDI, whose main inspiration is *philosophical* and  
555 relies on Michael Bratman’s theory of human practical reasoning and on  
556 modal logic [68], cognitive architectures are inspired by an in-depth under-  
557 standing of the human brain from biological and neurological perspectives.  
558 There are many implementations of cognitive architectures. Soar [69] is  
559 one of the widely used ones.

560 A special type of cognitive agents are **BDI agents**. They are rational  
561 agents that having a “mental attitudes” of Beliefs, Desire, and Intention  
562 representing respectively the information, the motivational, and the de-  
563 liberative states of the agent [70]. BDI agents are capable of integrating  
564 planning, scheduling, execution, information gathering, and coordination  
565 with other agents [13].

566 • **Evolutionary agents:** They are agents that are based on evolution-  
567 ary algorithms. An evolutionary algorithm is a subset of evolutionary  
568 computation [71], a generic population-based meta-heuristic optimization  
569 algorithm. It uses mechanisms inspired by biological evolution, such as re-  
570 production, mutation, recombination, and selection. Candidate solutions  
571 to the optimization problem play the role of individuals in a population,  
572 and the fitness function determines the quality of the solutions. Evolution  
573 of the population then takes place after the repeated application of the  
574 above operators.

575 Fig. 16 shows the agent architectures used in the papers. As can be seen  
576 from the figure, cognitive architectures were the most common among the pri-  
577 mary studies ( $\approx 41\%$ ) followed by Reactive agents ( $\approx 22\%$ ) and BDI ( $\approx 14\%$ ).  
578 This result shows that proactive agents, those agents capable of goal-directed  
579 behavior (BDI agents, and cognitive agents) constitute about 55% of all the an-  
580 alyzed studies whereas reactive agents (including those with flocking behavior)

581 are less common ( $\approx 24\%$  of the analyzed works). This shows that most of the  
582 research works seek to equip the UAVs with greater autonomy and goal-directed  
583 behavior.

584 In order to understand the correlation between the agent architectures and  
585 the autonomy, Fig. 15 shows the average ACL per agent architecture (*c.f.* [65]  
586 and Section 3.2). The BDI agents offered the highest level of autonomy, followed  
587 by cognitive agents, evolutionary agent, and lastly reactive agents. This result  
588 confirms our expectations and suggests that cognitive architecture and BDI  
589 agents are promising paradigms allowing to build more autonomous UAVs.

590 Fig. 20 shows the number of papers with agent architecture as per research  
591 topic. The most used agent architectures are cognitive (without BDI) (17) and  
592 reactive (without flocking) (9), considering all the research topics.

593 This fact is explained by the characteristics of the research topics: the ideal  
594 agent-based modeling of UAVs is usually based on a multi-layer architecture  
595 [67], illustrated by Fig. 17. The operational layer corresponds to the (very-  
596 )short term, *i.e.* the control of the UAVs. The tactic layer is associated with  
597 the planning of the UAV actions, *e.g.* path planning. The strategic layer is  
598 associated with the missions of the UAVs. In this layer, mission and task man-  
599 agement need more complex models typically found in the cognitive scope. It  
600 is interesting to note that a low number of papers contains a multi-layer model.  
601 The other papers focus on a single layer, mostly tactic or strategic.

### 602 3.3.2. Decentralization/Centralization (RQ3.2)

603 Fig. 18 shows the number of papers with reactive / direct collaboration sys-  
604 tem model, and with the system architecture used by the model (decentralized  
605 / centralized). As expected, the majority of the papers are related to decentral-  
606 ized architectures, which correspond to one of the major characteristics of MAS  
607 and UAV systems. However, 12 papers contain proposals that correspond to a  
608 centralized architecture, *i.e.* the model contains a central agent, or the model  
609 is formalized in such a way that it could be implemented only with centralized  
610 frameworks, *e.g.* Simulink [72] (*c.f.* Section RQ8).

### 611 3.3.3. Environment Dynamicality (RQ3.3)

612 Immersing agents in dynamic physical, virtual or mixed environments is still  
613 a challenge for MAS researchers. As has been established in [73], an essential  
614 part of such systems is the MAS environment, in order to provide the services  
615 allowing agents to interact with it. However, defining what is the interface  
616 between the agents and their environment is not obvious. A key aspect is to  
617 both respect their autonomy and ensure that the environment rules are enforced.  
618 Weyns et al. [73] define *agent environment* as the software layer between the  
619 external world and the agents.

620 *Dynamic agent environments* include endogenous processes that enable the  
621 environment's state to evolve dynamically outside the control of the agent. In a  
622 *static agent environment*, such process is not included. Additionally, the agent  
623 environment state could evolve only as a consequence of the agents' actions. If  
624 an action is never applied to the agent environment by the agents, it is *passive*.

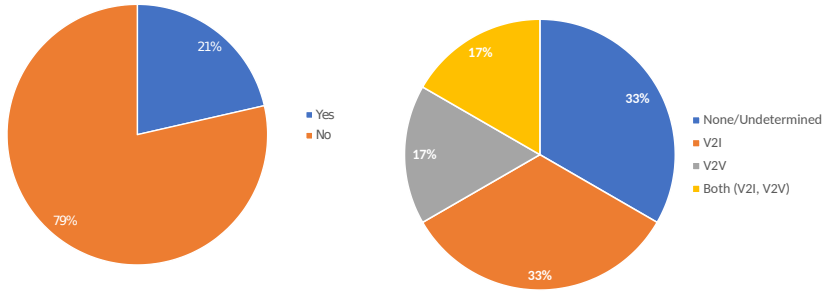


Figure 21: The proportion of the models that are including or not the IoT concept.

Figure 22: The types of communications.

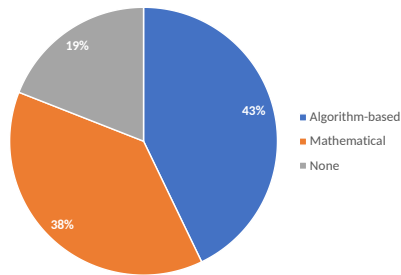


Figure 23: The main families of models.

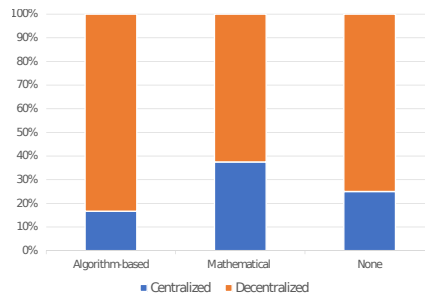


Figure 24: The main formal models correlated with the agent architecture (decentralized/centralized).

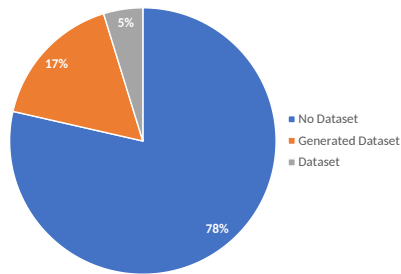


Figure 25: The use of datasets by the reviewed papers.

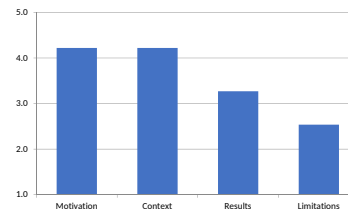


Figure 26: The qualitative evaluation of the reviewed papers.

625 Fig. 19 shows the proportion of the dynamic and static agent environments.  
626 Half of the papers propose models based on a static environment, 48% on a  
627 dynamic environment. Due to the complexity of the UAV systems, static agent  
628 environments are used in order to control the complexity of the modeling and  
629 enabling an easier validation.

630 Agent environments in most of the reviewed papers are passive. In these  
631 cases, UAV missions are mainly surveillance, collision detection, coordination,  
632 *etc.* However, as UAVs become involved in more application domains where  
633 acting on the environment is necessary, there are likely to become more *active*  
634 to the agent environment.

#### 635 3.4. UAV Environment with IoT (RQ4)

636 The smart city concept integrates Information and Communication Tech-  
637 nology (ICT) (*c.f.* Section RQ5), and various physical devices connected to the  
638 network, *e.g.* IoT or Wireless Sensor Network (WSN) [74].

639 Fig. 21 shows the proportion of papers that include the IoT concept against  
640 the papers that do not. 9 papers include IoT, and 33 do not. According to  
641 [74], several opportunities for UAVs use to support a smart city exist. These  
642 opportunities will be very beneficial to any smart city that would utilize UAVs  
643 for their economic growth and development. Therefore, it is important to inves-  
644 tigate whether IoT is considered in the reviewed models. The low proportion of  
645 reviewed papers that are considered IoT indicates that it is still an open issue.  
646 According to our knowledge, this proportion may be explained by the fact that  
647 researchers focus on the UAV behavior itself, not on the UAV environment.

#### 648 3.5. UAV Interaction and Communication (RQ5)

649 Vehicle-to-everything (V2X) communication is the passing of information  
650 from a vehicle to any entity that may affect the vehicle and vice versa [75]. It is  
651 a vehicular communication system that incorporates other more specific types  
652 of communication as Vehicle-to-Infrastructure (V2I), Vehicle-to-Network (V2N),  
653 Vehicle-to-Vehicle (V2V), Vehicle-to-Pedestrian (V2P), Vehicle-to-Device (V2D)  
654 and Vehicle-to-Grid (V2G). The purpose of this research question is to identify  
655 the V2X used by the UAVs to connect to other entities. Among all these types  
656 of communication, reviewers have found references to V2I and V2V only.

657 The main motivations for V2X are road safety, traffic efficiency, and energy  
658 savings within smart cities. UAVs are one of the means for setting up the smart  
659 city concept [74]. Therefore, it is important to highlight the V2X technologies  
660 that are considered within UAV models.

661 Fig. 22 plots the type of communications used: 33% of the papers includes  
662 a communication between the UAVs and the infrastructure (V2I), 17% between  
663 UAVs (V2V) by using: (i) implicit communication, *i.e.* the communication  
664 means are not explicitly described; (ii) direct communication means, *e.g.* Wire-  
665 less; or (iii) by using stigmergy communication. 17% of the papers propose a  
666 model with both V2I and V2V components.

667 Finally, 33% of the papers do not consider any specific communication ap-  
668 proach. Therefore, when communication is considered within these primary



669 studies, it is not detailed; and the authors seem to assume that the information  
670 is exchanged whatever the communication mean is. These papers are not ex-  
671 cluded because they contain models that support interaction among the UAV  
672 agents, even if it is in an abstract level.

673 It is interesting to note that 66% of the papers consider that UAVs are  
674 connected entities that need to interact with their environment or with other  
675 UAVs. This is in-line with the fact that UAVs may contribute to set up the  
676 smart city concept (*c.f.* Section RQ4).

### 677 3.6. Family of models (RQ6)

678 The purpose of this RQ is to identify the family of the models that are used  
679 within the proposed works. Three major families are considered:

- 680 • **Mathematical model:** including formal models enable to verify and  
681 validate the behavior of the UAVs. Formal verification is the act of prov-  
682 ing or disproving the correctness of UAV algorithms with respect to a  
683 certain formal specification, using formal methods of mathematics. The  
684 verification of these systems is done by providing a formal proof on an  
685 abstract mathematical model of the system, the correspondence between  
686 the mathematical model and the nature of the system being otherwise  
687 known by construction.
- 688 • **Algorithm-based model:** are the models based on the general com-  
689 puter programming theory. These models are basically instances of a logic  
690 written in a software to produce the UAV behaviors. These algorithms  
691 are not based on mathematical models, such that it is hard to give a proof  
692 of completeness and stability.
- 693 • **Not-categorized model:** If a paper’s contribution can be classified  
694 neither mathematically nor as algorithm-based, it is put into the “None”  
695 category. In most of the reviewed papers, the contributions within this  
696 category are presented with abstract or general explanations without equa-  
697 tions, algorithms, state machine, *etc.* For example, the UAV behavior is  
698 described by a schematic drawing.

699 Fig. 23 shows a repartition of the models according to their family. It is  
700 interesting to note that 38% of the proposed models are mathematical, and  
701 43% are algorithm-based. Indeed, even if mathematical models are harder to  
702 define than algorithm-based models, safety concerns related to UAVs lead re-  
703 searchers to give a proof of safety and stability of the UAV behaviors over the  
704 time by providing mathematical models. Safety validation is not outside the  
705 algorithm-based models. In all the related papers, simulation testbeds are used  
706 for validating the behaviors of the proposed models.

707 As mentioned within the RQ3 analysis, the architecture in the reviewed  
708 models could be classified as centralized or decentralized architectures. Fig.  
709 24 shows the correlation between the system architecture classification and the  
710 mathematical/algorithm-based model classification. As expected for MAS, the  
711 architectures are mostly decentralized, whatever the type of model.

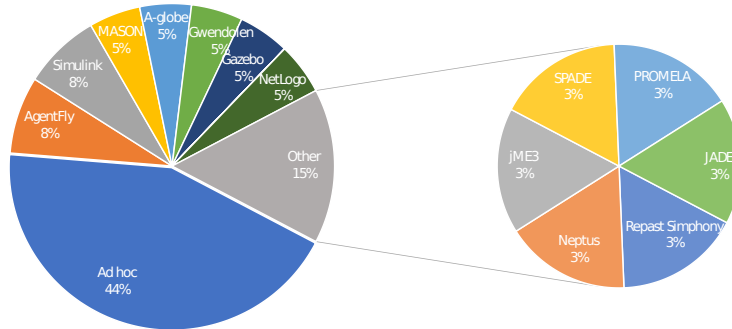


Figure 27: The used simulation frameworks.

### 712 3.7. Evaluation and simulation scenarios (RQ7)

713 The purpose of this research question is related to the evaluation of the  
 714 proposed models: whether it relies on a dataset, or on a generated synthetic  
 715 dataset, or no dataset. Only a few of the reviewed papers (5%) have a reference  
 716 to a dataset for setting up the UAV simulations; 17% of the papers have gen-  
 717 erated a specific dataset for evaluation; While, the majority have no dataset.  
 718 In papers with no datasets, simulation scenarios are defined as ad hoc by the  
 719 authors.

720 This relatively low number of papers with datasets may be explained by the  
 721 difficulties for building such sets, *e.g.* it is hard to gather realistic data and  
 722 initialize a UAV model from it. This issue is related to the research direction  
 723 RD7 detailed below. Having well-established testbeds with datasets helps to  
 724 unify the testing process, and allows for systematic comparisons between the  
 725 solutions proposed by researchers.

### 726 3.8. Simulation Frameworks (RQ8)

727 Enabling early validation of a UAV system design requires the simulation of  
 728 its components. This requires the development of adapted simulation environ-  
 729 ment. Identifying the frameworks used to implement the proposed solutions,  
 730 and the main advantages & disadvantages of each of them is a challenge by  
 731 itself.

732 Fig. 27 shows the used simulation frameworks in the reviewed papers. Sev-  
 733 eral frameworks are used: AgentFly [76], Simulink [72], Gazebo [77], NetLogo  
 734 [78], MASON [79], A-globe [80], Repast Simphony [81], JADE [82], PROMELA  
 735 [83], Gwendolen [84], Neptus [85], jME3 [60], and SPADE [86]. Table 6 pro-  
 736 vides the list of these frameworks. All used frameworks are open source except  
 737 for AgentFly, A-globe and Simulink. In our previous work [87], a comparison  
 738 between open-source ABS frameworks was provided. However, the comparison  
 739 lacked some frameworks that were revealed by the SLR provided in this work.

Table 6: The reviewed papers per used framework

Framework	Papers using the framework
Ad hoc	Agogino et al. [62], Ashraf et al. [37], Wei et al. [51, 31], Bürkle et al. [24], Rollo et al. [26], Gunetti et al. [33], Evertsz et al. [52], Kandil et al. [38], Sampredo et al. [35], Peng et al. [54], Benedetti et al. [45], De Benedetti et al. [27, 61], Bürkle and Leuchter [46], da Silva et al. [50], Schatten [58]
MASON [79]	Albani et al. [63], Zou et al. [41]
AgentFly [76]	Semsch et al. [47], Pechoucek et al. [59], Šišlák et al. [39]
PROMELA [83]	Webster et al. [56]
A-globe [80]	Volf et al. [53], Stenger et al. [34]
NetLogo [78]	Cimino et al. [28], Zhu et al. [25]
Simulink [72]	Gunetti et al. [32], Ciarletta et al. [29], Kucherov and Kucherov [42]
Gwendolen [84]	Webster et al. [57]
Gazebo [77]	Arokiasami et al. [40], Ma et al. [55]
Repast Simphony [81]	Khaleghi et al. [48]
Neptus [85]	Vasiljevic et al. [6]
jME3 [60]	Veloso et al. [60]
SPADE [86]	Obdržálek [30]
JADE [82]	Fulford et al. [36]
n/a	Van der Walle et al. [43], Sutton et al. [44], Bentz and Panagou [49], Ferrag et al. [64]

740 The two most used frameworks by the papers in the SLR are AgentFly (7%),  
741 Simulink (7%). However, the result indicate that no framework was favored by  
742 researchers for civilian UAV applications. The larger part of the of implemen-  
743 tations in the reviewed papers is using an ad hoc framework (43%). These  
744 simulation frameworks are typically developed by the authors of the reviewed  
745 papers from scratch. This fact leads us to consider that the existing frame-  
746 works do not cover all the needs mandatory for implementing a UAV simulation  
747 software. Moreover, and due to the abundance of frameworks with no clear  
748 distinguished features related to UAVs, the authors generally prefer to setup  
749 their own configuration and build the simulation framework from scratch even  
750 though it is time-consuming. Regarding the public availability of the imple-  
751 mented solution, only one paper has provided full access to the code [41], and  
752 some papers provided partial access to pieces of code or to open source tools  
753 that they used [35, 48, 6, 55, 60, 29, 58, 30], while the rest of papers did not  
754 provide any access.

### 755 3.9. Discussion

756 The results and the discussion above help to understand the recent tenden-  
757 cies in the studied domain. Nevertheless, the conclusions drawn in this paper  
758 are only valid within the predefined domain of ABS and MAS for civilian UAV  
759 applications. Thus the tendencies discussed in Section 3 cannot be generated  
760 to all UAV applications. Their scope and validity are limited by the keywords  
761 and the exclusion criteria defined in Section 2.

762 Based on the quality criteria defined in Section 2.2.3, the quality of the  
763 papers were evaluated according to the four quality criteria defined in Table 1

764 related to the explanations on the motivations (Q1), the study context (Q2),  
765 the theoretical and experimental results (Q3), and the limitations and research  
766 directions (Q4). Fig. 26 shows the average evaluation for each of these criteria.  
767 Reviewers have provided a score, according to their background and knowledge,  
768 based on three levels of quality: “bad”, “average”, “good”. Each paper was  
769 evaluated by at least two reviewers and the results were averaged into a scale  
770 from 1 to 5. Over the entire set of the papers, motivations and contexts are  
771 clearly explained. Presentation of the results is described with the minimum  
772 set of details to allow a researcher to reproduce the presented results. Finally,  
773 as can be seen from the figure, reviewers have considered that the limitations of  
774 the proposed models and approaches are not enough detailed within the papers.  
775 However, as UAV technology evolves and new UAV manufacturers claim new  
776 customers and social flight clubs enlist fresh enthusiast amateur pilots, these  
777 open issues and limitations are becoming significant challenges.

778 For instance, regulation and collision avoidance are among the prominent  
779 challenges to be settled. Yet, the air is still largely unregulated and unmarked,  
780 especially to the naked eye, unequipped with height measuring methods, without  
781 prior knowledge of any restrictions regarding the filming of surrounding people,  
782 and the seriousness of the threat a UAV poses as it zooms past or above people.  
783 Moreover, enhanced availability of better GPS-trackers, quieter copters, and  
784 smaller “footprint” also raises new legal issues and requires current and up-  
785 to-date regulation. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the world still remains  
786 behind on effective UAV control. Yet, these issues have not received enough  
787 attention in the reviewed papers. Namely, regulation is addressed directly in  
788 no more than 7% of the papers. while collision avoidance and UAV safety are  
789 addressed only by 11% of the papers.

790 To help address these understudied open issues and limitations, the next  
791 section identifies the main research directions.

#### 792 4. Challenges and Research Directions

793 In this section, the major challenges and research directions related to UAVs  
794 are listed. These directions are either mentioned in the reviewed papers or  
795 identified based on our own experience. The following list provides a synthesis  
796 of these challenges and research directions.

797 **RD1: Making the UAV autonomous;** This research direction is neither specif-  
798 ically control-related, nor concerned with inner-loop feedback stability  
799 and control. Since the early UAV research works [88], several related  
800 issues have been considered: (i) secure communications, unjammable  
801 data link (this point is specifically addressed in RD3); (ii) coordination;  
802 (iii) target identification; (iv) target assignment; and (v) deconfliction.  
803 References cite automated decision aiding/decision making as one of the  
804 most difficult problems leading to autonomy. Man-machine interface,  
805 communications, task and path planning, and target identification are  
806 real and difficult issues.

807 The aim of a typical UAV planning algorithm is to determine a path  
808 through the environment while satisfying all the constraints and the  
809 mission objectives. Such a planning algorithm involves several levels of  
810 planning: (i) pre-mission planning where all the information is static.  
811 This is the best plan that can be made based on the available informa-  
812 tion. (ii) near term plan, which is executed in the air and involves the  
813 physical flying of the UAVs. This can be looked at as a trajectory track-  
814 ing task, which can be completely automated through inner-loop control,  
815 autopilot design, tracking, and short-term on-line trajectory generation.  
816 It is the intermediate level of planning where the desired capability of  
817 autonomous control is achieved. (iii) Near real-time in-flight replanning  
818 is needed as new sensor information or commands are received by the  
819 UAVs. The challenge is to optimally update the off-line plan as per the  
820 new received information and/or the unforeseen occurred events. The  
821 optimization problem is dominated by size, complexity, uncertainty, and  
822 the fact that the mission could be shared by different UAVs. This leads to  
823 problems related to the cooperation and coordination of the autonomous  
824 UAVs, and opens the door for challenges like flexible autonomy [24] and  
825 initiative decision-making [89].

826 **RD2:** *Explaining the UAV Behavior;* As shown in the previous section, there  
827 is a confirmed tendency towards the development of increasingly au-  
828 tonomous UAV systems. This evolution would minimize the human in-  
829 tervention by relieving the human operator from the burden of contin-  
830 uously monitoring the UAVs. Nevertheless, in unpredictable situations,  
831 the UAV behavior might not conform to expectations of the human oper-  
832 ator. For instance, in a product delivery scenario, an autonomous UAV  
833 may choose to deviate from its expected path because of an unforeseen  
834 event. Enhancing the UAVs with explaining capabilities would allow  
835 the human operator to understand the reasons behind UAV behavior  
836 and raises its trust in the autonomous UAV system. Moreover, the re-  
837 cent developments of the domain of eXplainable AI (XAI) help UAVs  
838 to move in this direction. As a matter of fact, UAV has been cited  
839 as one of the applications where XAI would be needed [90]. Further-  
840 more, developing explainable UAV would have a very positive impact  
841 on human-machine teaming. Recently, this research direction is being  
842 explored by military UAV applications. Similar efforts should be con-  
843 sidered for civilian applications [91]. As shown by recent studies, using  
844 BDI agents is a promising approach to develop explainable agents [92].  
845 A key explanation for this success lies in the fact that BDI paradigm  
846 is inspired from *folk psychology* which means that “*the core concepts of*  
847 *the agent framework map easily to the language people use to describe*  
848 *their reasoning and actions in everyday conversations*” [93]. Therefore,  
849 BDI architecture offers a more straightforward description making mod-  
850 els easier to explain for end-users. For this reason, UAV agents relying  
851 on BDI architectures, which represent only 14% of papers reviewed in

852 this SLR (*c.f.* Figure 16), are likely to increase in numbers if the issue  
853 of explainable UAV behavior is to become a hot research topic.

854 **RD3:** *Ensuring Security and Authentication;* The quest of developing auto-  
855 nomous and decentralized UAV systems raises several challenges related  
856 to security and authentication. For instance, within a swarm, a UAV  
857 must be able to detect and entrust its peers, and ensure data confiden-  
858 tiality and integrity. Otherwise, faulty or malicious UAVs may deviate  
859 the swarm behavior [94]. These challenges are accentuated by the fact  
860 that most UAV swarms are designed to operate autonomously without  
861 a central regulating authority. Recent research has outlined *Block-Chain*  
862 *Technology* (BCT) as a potential solution to overcome this problem. In  
863 addition to providing a platform allowing for secured interactions among  
864 UAVs, BCT can also be used to enhance the decentralized decision mak-  
865 ing of the UAV swarm since it allows all the participants to share an  
866 identical view of the world, and facilitate agreements among UAV teams  
867 [94]. Yet, before BCT is ready to be used with UAVs, several limitations  
868 must be solved [94]: *(i) latency:* the time required to update the block-  
869 chain is too long to allow real-time compliance (a common requirement  
870 in UAV applications); *(ii)* Most of the UAVs are resource-constrained  
871 devices which might be unable to undertake the heavy computations de-  
872 manded by BCT. For this reason, recent research works in BCT propose  
873 lightweight techniques (*e.g.* “proof of stake”) that can be handled by  
874 resource-constrained devices such as the UAVs; *(iii)* On the long run,  
875 BCT can be very demanding in terms of bandwidth and communication  
876 overhead since all agents should share a copy of a long “ledger” of inter-  
877 actions [95]. This issue, known as “bloat”, poses a considerable challenge  
878 to UAV teams which have limited hardware and communication capa-  
879 bilities.

880 **RD4:** *Increasing the flight duration;* Another problem is the UAV battery life.  
881 This well-known problem is related to the UAV design and concerns the  
882 improvement of the UAV battery life. Currently, the battery of a typical  
883 UAV allows for up to 13 to 20 minutes of continues flight. In a large  
884 number of application cases, this duration is not long enough to enable  
885 UAVs to achieve their objective before they run out of power and fall  
886 down. There are some technical solutions allowing to increase the battery  
887 life. Yet, as the battery capacity increases, its size and weight generally  
888 increase, which cause the UAVs to consume more power. Battery man-  
889 agement can help handle this issue by managing battery consumption  
890 prediction and planning [96], scheduling [97], and replacement of battery  
891 [98, 99]. Battery wireless charging is also an option through power lines  
892 [100], or an automatic charging system that uses charging stations posi-  
893 tioned along the path of the UAV mission [101]. For long-endurance and  
894 high-altitude flights, solar-powered UAVs could be used [102, 103, 104].

895 **RD5:** *Integrating UAVs into smart cities;* A smart city integrates heteroge-  
896 neous connected objects to automate or simplify autonomous and trans-  
897 parent accomplishment of various daily tasks, both personal and pro-  
898 fessional [74]. A smart city is an urban area that uses different types  
899 of electronic data collection sensors to supply information which is used  
900 to manage assets and resources efficiently. This includes data collected  
901 from citizens, devices, and assets that are processed and analyzed to mon-  
902 itor and manage traffic and transportation systems, power plants, water  
903 supply networks, waste management, law enforcement, information sys-  
904 tems, schools, libraries, hospitals, and other community services [105].  
905 The smart city concept integrates ICT, and various physical devices con-  
906 nected to the network to optimize the efficiency of city operations and  
907 services and connect to citizens [106]. According to Farhan et al. [107],  
908 several opportunities for UAVs uses to support a smart city exist. These  
909 opportunities will be very beneficial to any smart city that would utilize  
910 UAVs for their economic growth and development.

911 One of the new trends in civilian UAV applications in smart cities is using  
912 UAVs in geospatial surveying. The main design of a smart city requires  
913 the optimization of data flows provided by wireless sensor networks as  
914 sensors are the main component of any autonomous system such as those  
915 involving UAVs. This combination of technologies creates a wide range  
916 of applications and opportunities such as fire management in open areas  
917 where the use of UAVs and micro-UAVs is very beneficial. The potentials  
918 vary from a wide range of available solutions and innovations that are  
919 evolving quickly. Due to the reliability of most UAV designs, integration  
920 of such technologies make it possible to install wireless sensors on-board  
921 to make the UAVs usable in geospatial, land surveying and Geographic  
922 Information System (GIS) applications in smart cities in addition to  
923 being helpful for environmental analysis. These opportunities may lead  
924 to cost reduction and cutting down on the number of manpower hours  
925 involved in such activities.

926 The integration of UAV solutions with machine-to-machine, Radio-  
927 frequency identification (RFID) and live video streaming increased the  
928 role of UAVs in public safety areas. This new trend will move the cities  
929 management personnel from being reactive to proactive and will lever-  
930 age data. Furthermore, the involvement of UAVs in surveillance activi-  
931 ties will reduce costs and increase the efficiency of the operations. The  
932 efficiency of security and safety systems in a city has become a serious  
933 concern not only for smart cities but also for any type of cities or com-  
934 munities. Involvement of UAVs in smart policing activities has lately  
935 been supported by the US Congress and top level federal agencies such  
936 as the Bureau of Justice Assistance, and the US Department of Justice.

937 UAVs can act as a third party technology to coordinate information  
938 from various systems within a smart city. Since they are controlled at  
939 the ground station once they receive information the ground system can

940 send commands to UAVs to direct the information to another system or  
941 UAVs.

942 In addition to integrating UAVs into smart cities, integrating them into  
943 large, open and isolated space is another research direction. Applica-  
944 tions in agriculture, environment preservation and sustainable energy  
945 (*e.g.* solar farms monitoring, electric transport, *etc.*) are countless.

946 **RD6:** *Proposing and Evaluating UAV regulations*; Regulations about introduc-  
947 ing UAVs, including air traffic regulations, landing/taking off regulations,  
948 *etc.* are not yet fully developed, and there exist serious safety and privacy  
949 problems mostly due to the lack of regulations.

950 Globally, regulations regarding the use of UAVs are still immature. So  
951 far, at the multilateral level, the International Civil Aviation Organiza-  
952 tion (ICAO) is the lead platform for framing regulations for UAV op-  
953 erations. Several regulations were passed to regulate the use of UAVs;  
954 however, no proposals were made from a technological point of view.  
955 Moreover, legislation varies from region to region and between countries  
956 [108].

957 Recognizing the enormous potential growth of UAVs, the European Avi-  
958 ation Safety Agency (EASA) has been tasked by the European Commis-  
959 sion to frame regulations for UAV operations. In 2014, the Commission  
960 published “A new era for aviation—Opening the aviation market to the  
961 civilian use of remotely piloted aircraft systems in a safe and sustainable  
962 manner” [109] but this does not include the UAVs. The EASA published  
963 a comprehensive proposal in May 2017 covering the technical and oper-  
964 ational aspects of operating UAV. According to the proposal, all UAVs  
965 above 250 g need to be registered. The proposal put the alignment of  
966 different national UAV legislations as one of Horizon 2020 goals. How-  
967 ever, these goals have been postponed until 2050. Moreover, different  
968 European countries have different regulations – for instance, one can fly  
969 UAVs commercially in Switzerland if line-of-sight can be ensured, within  
970 certain altitude limitations and not flying near protected areas such as  
971 airports. On the other hand, France has more restrictive regulations in  
972 place where it is mandatory that any UAV operation over a city needs to  
973 be authorized by aviation authorities. In Belgium, Brussels is planning  
974 to create “U-space” in 2019, a European controlled space for UAVs flying  
975 above 150 m in height and weighing less than 150 kg.

976 In India, some work examines civilian UAV operations and analyses the  
977 major policy gaps in the country’s evolving policy framework. It argues  
978 that ad hoc measures taken by agencies have been ineffective, whether in  
979 addressing issues of quality control, or response mechanisms, questions  
980 of privacy and trespass, air traffic, and legal liability [110].

981 USA has by far the most mature civilian UAV regulations in place.  
982 The New Small UAS Rule (107) of the Federal Aviation Administra-  
983 tion (FAA) that was issued in August 2016 regulates most of the UAV



984 operations, especially those related to commercial or civilian purposes.  
985 The FAA has relaxed the regulations for UAV operations in the com-  
986 mercial sector considering that the UAV applications are estimated to  
987 generate an additional US\$82 billion for the economy of USA.

988 Making progress on the issue of reaching a common legislation will be  
989 a complicated task. This is because international conventions on inter-  
990 national civilian aviation, such as the Chicago Convention, apply only  
991 to civilian manned aircraft but not to unmanned ones [108]. It is neces-  
992 sary to have a legislation that will be open and generic in the technical  
993 aspects. This is because legislations that are limited to specific aircraft  
994 types or only permit the use of remote controls with certain character-  
995 istics would become obsolete in the near future, as new advances in the  
996 field of UAVs appear. Furthermore, regulations should not only consider  
997 the civilian liability of these devices but also aspects that will assure the  
998 security of the citizens, for example, the protection of data in deployed  
999 vehicles [108].

1000 **RD7:** *Verifying and validating the UAV behavior;* According to [111], the more  
1001 complex a UAV software function gets, the more difficult it becomes  
1002 to test. Furthermore, functional requirements are only one aspect of a  
1003 system. Beyond the pure verification of a requirement lies the benchmark  
1004 of the implemented solution. The resulting outcome may be determined  
1005 by a test of the requirement, but the specific path to the solution can  
1006 have different levels of quality. Therefore, additional tests have to verify  
1007 that the specified safety boundaries, as well as additional constraints, are  
1008 met by this algorithm. To be able to assess highly automated functions  
1009 and to be able to assure a high-quality software system, it is, therefore,  
1010 necessary to implement a scoring system or a benchmark to evaluate  
1011 the autonomy using non-functional requirements. For example, for path  
1012 planning the standardized benchmark by [112] is utilized to measure the  
1013 correctness and result quality by expressing a set of pass/fail criteria  
1014 from the standardized baseline solution.

1015 It is important to notice that benchmarks are problem specific, and not  
1016 implementation specific. This enables developers not only to test a path-  
1017 planning algorithm automatically, without a manual review from an en-  
1018 gineer, but also to evaluate algorithms and compare them with different  
1019 implementations and solution approaches. The development of such au-  
1020 tomatic tests and benchmarks for additional problems, such as sensor  
1021 fusion and computer vision, to generally assess the capability to fulfill  
1022 navigation safety and performance requirements, will be critical to the  
1023 progress of UAVs and the evaluation of new approaches [111].

1024 The growing pressure to innovate and the demand for shorter develop-  
1025 ment cycles require changes in the UAV development methodology. As a  
1026 result, there is a shift in the demands on testbed systems. This desire for  
1027 shorter development times stands opposed to the growing complexity re-

1028           required for developing of increasingly automated and autonomous systems  
1029           [113]. Enabling early validation of such system designs requires the simu-  
1030           lation of components. This requires the development of adapted simula-  
1031           tion environment, possibly real-time, composed of a collection of reusable  
1032           modules combining real and virtual components (also called XiL: X-in-  
1033           the-Loop, where X meaning alternatively Model/Software/Hardware and  
1034           Human).

## 1035 **5. Related Works**

1036           Recently, several works surveyed the emerging topics of UAVs. However,  
1037           these works mainly focused on vertical applications without considering the  
1038           aspects and challenges across multiple application domains and research topics.  
1039           For instance, Hayat et al. [114] focused on the characteristics and requirements  
1040           of UAV networks for envisioned civilian applications between 2000 and 2015  
1041           from a communications and networking point of view. Motlagh et al. [115]  
1042           reviewed Low-altitude UAVs highlighting their potential use in the delivery of  
1043           IoT services from the sky. Other surveys focused on traffic management [116],  
1044           environmental monitoring [117], ad hoc networks in UAV applications [118],  
1045           routing and energy efficiency in UAV communication networks [119], and UAV  
1046           coverage [120].

1047           One interesting survey is provided by Chmaj and Selvaraj [121] in which  
1048           the authors surveyed the applications implemented using cooperative swarms of  
1049           UAVs that operate as a distributed processing system. However, this survey did  
1050           not consider the challenges facing UAVs in these applications and the potential  
1051           role of new technologies in UAV uses.

1052           Shakhatreh et al. [122] reviewed civilian UAV applications and challenges.  
1053           They identify current research trends and future challenges for civilian UAV  
1054           applications, including: charging, collision avoidance, swarming, networking and  
1055           security-related challenges. Yet, this survey was mainly inspired by low-level  
1056           aspects of the UAV like networking and wireless communication. Moreover, the  
1057           listing of the comparison was in sequence without a cross-application domain  
1058           discussion.

1059           Other surveys focused on system identification and UAV-human interactions.  
1060           In particular, current methods and applications of system identification for small  
1061           low-cost UAVs were provided by Hoffer et al. [123], while the interaction between  
1062           UAVs and humans applications were considered in another survey [124]. In this  
1063           later work, a taxonomy of control methods that enable operators to control  
1064           swarms effectively was developed. With highlighting challenges, unanswered  
1065           questions, and open problems for Human-Swarm interaction.

## 1066 **6. Conclusions**

1067           UAVs are becoming increasingly popular for civilian applications. The aim  
1068           of this paper is twofold. First, conduct a SLR on research addressing MAS,

1069 and specifically ABS, in civilian UAV applications. Second, outline and analyze  
1070 the challenging research direction of civilian UAV applications. The following  
1071 section states the principal findings. Note that while the SLR concentrated on  
1072 research using ABS for civilian UAV applications, some of the findings below  
1073 pertain to key research issues in agent and MAS (*e.g.* agent architectures,  
1074 decentralization, *etc.*).

1075 Following a well established SLR methodology, we identified 8 Research  
1076 Questions (RQ) helping to assess the contributions of MAS and ABS in civilian  
1077 UAV applications. The main findings were:

- 1078 1. Research on MAS and ABS for civilian UAV applications has witnessed a  
1079 considerable increase in the past decade, and most of the reviewed papers  
1080 were written in Europe followed by North America and Asia.
- 1081 2. Coordination, mission management, UAV formation (platooning), colli-  
1082 sion avoidance, task allocation, and path planning were the most studied  
1083 research topics while “Urban planning” and “General” accounted for the  
1084 majority of application domains.
- 1085 3. The majority of papers covered by the SLR opted for a goal-directed agent  
1086 architecture to model their agents. Furthermore, most of these studies  
1087 adopted a decentralized system architecture.
- 1088 4. Despite the key role that the UAV is expected to assume in smart cities  
1089 and connected smart environments, only a fifth of the reviewed paper  
1090 integrate IoT technologies in their research works.
- 1091 5. The majority of the reviewed papers address UAV connectivity. This  
1092 shows that most of the reviewed papers view UAVs as connected entities  
1093 both among themselves and with their environment.
- 1094 6. Algorithm-based models were used slightly more than the mathematical  
1095 models by the reviewed papers.
- 1096 7. To evaluate their contributions, only 5% of papers rely on public datasets  
1097 and less than 20% use generated datasets. The remaining majority do  
1098 not use any dataset for evaluation purposes. This underlines the absence  
1099 of common testbeds and datasets allowing to evaluate and compare these  
1100 works.
- 1101 8. In a related finding, the results showed that to conduct their experiments,  
1102 about 40% of the studied papers implement their own ad hoc simulations.  
1103 This might be an indication that existing frameworks are not meeting all  
1104 the needs required for implementing UAV simulations.

1105 As a result of this analysis, we outlined the following key challenges and research  
1106 directions: (*i*) Model design of fully autonomous UAV; (*ii*) Explanation of the  
1107 UAV behaviors when they are part of a complex system; (*iii*) Security and  
1108 authentication of UAV; (*iv*) Increasing of the flight duration; (*v*) Technical

1109 integration of UAV into smart cities; *(vi)* Proposal and evaluation of UAV-  
1110 related regulations; and *(vii)* Verification and validation the UAV behaviors.

1111 Regarding the SLR, a future work will be to compare the contributions based  
1112 on MAS to those using real UAVs. In this way, it will be possible to highlight  
1113 the position and the growth of MAS within the UAV community.

1114 Additionally, RD7 and the need for simulation testbeds suggest that the  
1115 use of ABS frameworks for UAVs will gain more interest in complex civilian  
1116 applications scenarios. Therefore, one future work is to rely on the results of this  
1117 SLR to select specific criteria allowing to define a methodology to compare ABS  
1118 frameworks and evaluate them based on civilian UAV application considerations.

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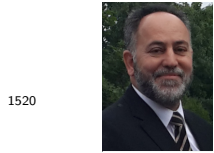
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