

Ciclope: micro Computed Tomography to Finite Elements

Original

Ciclope: micro Computed Tomography to Finite Elements / Iori, G., Crimi, G., Schileo, E., Taddei, F., Fraterrigo, G., Pani, M.. - In: JOURNAL OF OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE. - ISSN 2475-9066. - 8:84(2023). [10.21105/joss.04952]

Availability:

This version is available at: 11583/2982337 since: 2023-09-20T10:34:02Z

Publisher:

not applicable

Published

DOI:10.21105/joss.04952

Terms of use:

This article is made available under terms and conditions as specified in the corresponding bibliographic description in the repository

Publisher copyright

(Article begins on next page)

Ciclope: micro Computed Tomography to Finite Elements

Gianluca Iori¹✉, Gianluigi Crimi², Enrico Schileo², Fulvia Taddei², Giulia Fraterrigo², and Martino Pani³

¹ Synchrotron-light for Experimental Science and Applications in the Middle East, Allan, Jordan ² IRCCS Istituto Ortopedico Rizzoli, Bologna, Italy ³ School of Mechanical and Design Engineering, University of Portsmouth, United Kingdom ✉ Corresponding author

DOI: [10.21105/joss.04952](https://doi.org/10.21105/joss.04952)

Software

- [Review](#) ✉
- [Repository](#) ✉
- [Archive](#) ✉

Editor: [Dana Solav](#) ✉ 

Reviewers:

- [@dankusanovic](#)
- [@jacobmerson](#)

Submitted: 26 October 2022

Published: 02 April 2023

License

Authors of papers retain copyright and release the work under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License ([CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)).

Summary

The Python package `ciclope` processes micro Computed Tomography images to generate Finite Element models. `ciclope` is aimed to provide reproducible and fully open-source pipelines for simulating the mechanical behaviour of trabecular bone using the Finite Element method.

Statement of need

Micro Finite Element (microFE) models derived from micro Computed Tomography (microCT) volumetric data can provide non-destructive assessments of mechanical properties of trabecular bone. The technique is used to investigate the effect of pathologies, treatment and remodelling on the mechanical response of bone at the tissue level, and is applied both to human and animal samples. Linear elastic microFE simulations are implemented to back-calculate the tissue elastic modulus ([Bayraktar et al., 2004](#)), understand deformation mechanisms ([Zael et al., 2005](#)), or predict failure ([Pistoia et al., 2002](#)) of trabecular bone, as well as to estimate the stiffness of whole bones from small animals ([Oliviero et al., 2020](#)).

Different pipelines for the generation of microFE models of trabecular bone were proposed ([Cox et al., 2022](#); [Fernández et al., 2022](#); [Megías et al., 2022](#); [Stauber et al., 2004](#); [Verhulp et al., 2008](#)). Nevertheless, the validation and comparison of results across studies is hindered by the use of proprietary or non-open-source software, and by the general absence of reproducible FE pipelines. We present the Python package `ciclope`: a fully open-source pipeline from microCT data preprocessing to microFE model generation, solution and postprocessing.

Design

`ciclope` is composed of a core library of modules for FE model generation (`ciclope.core`), and a library of utilities for image and FE model pre- and postprocessing (`ciclope.utils`) that can be imported and used within Python. Additionally, the `ciclope.py` script generated during package installation allows to launch microCT-to-FE pipelines directly from the commandline.

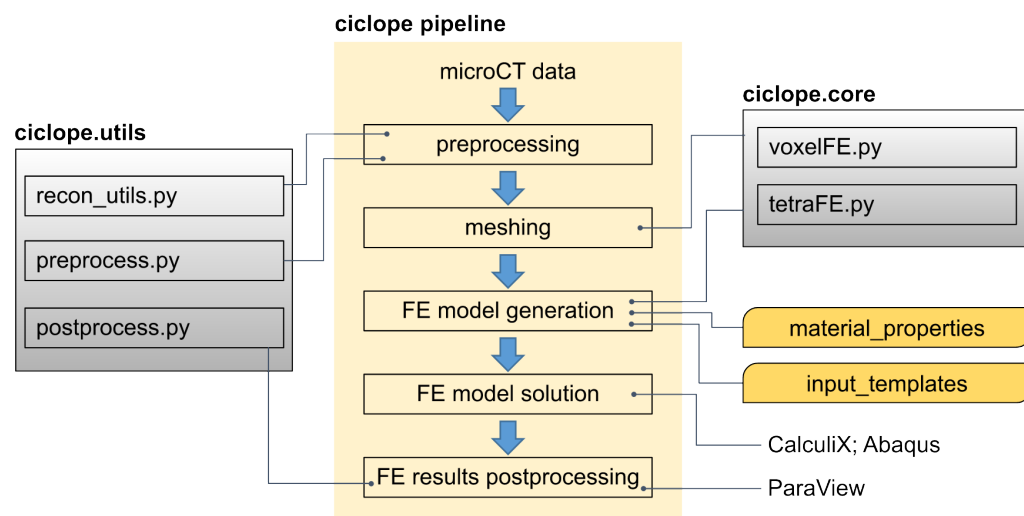


Figure 1: Design of ciclope, and application to a pipeline for FE model generation from microCT data.

A pipeline for the generation and solution of a FE model derived from 3D microCT data is shown in the central part of [Figure 1](#). **Image preprocessing:** a microCT dataset is loaded as a NumPy ndarray within Python and segmented to isolate bone voxels and background using Otsu's method ([Otsu, 1979](#)) as provided by scikit-image ([Walt et al., 2014](#)). A connectivity check is performed to remove isolated clusters of voxels, that the segmentation might have disconnected from the main structure. According to the user's needs, additional image processing can be applied for smoothing, cropping, resampling and rotating the dataset using the SciPy ([Virtanen et al., 2020](#)) and scikit-image Python libraries. Furthermore, additional layers of material can be added at the top and bottom surfaces of the sample should the user need to replicate the effect of endcaps in the actual mechanical testing conditions. **Meshing:** ciclope allows to create two types of FE meshes. Image voxels can be directly converted to 8-node, hexahedral brick elements with the voxelFE.py module. Alternatively, meshes of 4-node tetrahedra can be generated calling CGAL ([The CGAL Project, 2022](#)) through the tetraFE.py module. **FE model generation:** the mesh is converted to an .INP input file for Abaqus/CalculiX FE solvers. Within model generation, it is possible to assign material properties, define the boundary conditions, analysis type and steps, and request specific simulation outputs using a separate analysis template .TMP file. Libraries of material_properties and input_templates are provided for this process. Additional CalculiX user examples and templates are available online ([Kraska, 2022](#)). For voxel-FE model generation, different material mapping strategies can be used: uniform tissue material properties (elastic modulus and poisson ratio) can be applied to all bone voxels. Alternatively, the local image intensity (voxel grey values) can be converted to heterogeneous material properties using a mapping law defined by the user. **FE model solution and postprocessing:** FE models can be solved using the external software Abaqus or CalculiX. Simulation output files are read to compute, among other, total reaction forces on the model boundaries, or orthogonal cross-section plots of the model's displacement of stress fields.

The ciclope ecosystem

Ciclope relies on several other tools for 3D image and FE processing:

- Voxel and tetrahedra mesh exports performed with meshio ([Schlömer, 2022a](#)).
- Tetrahedra meshes generated with the Python CGAL frontend pygalmesh ([Schlömer, 2022b](#)).
- High-resolution surface meshes generated with PyMCubes ([Márquez Neila, 2023](#)).
- FE input files (.INP) generated by ciclope can be solved using the free software CalculiX ([Dhondt, 2004](#)) or Abaqus.

- 3D images and FE results can be visualized with `itkwidgets` ([Itkwidgets, 2022](#)), ParaView ([Henderson, 2022](#)), and `ccx2paraview` ([Mirzov, 2022](#)) as illustrated in the [example Jupyter notebooks](#).

Examples

Ciclope contains a library of Jupyter notebooks of example applications in the field of computational biomechanics ([Figure 2](#)). The main use case is a pipeline for the generation of microFE models from microCT scans of trabecular bone ([Figure 2A](#)). The microCT bone dataset used in the examples is part of the public collection of the Living Human Digital Library ([LHDL, 2006](#)), funded by the European Commission under grant ID: [FP6-IST 026932](#). Human tissues were collected according to the body donation program of Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), a partner of the LHDL project.

A linear elastic simulation of a mechanical compression test is used to calculate the apparent elastic modulus of trabecular bone. This procedure is demonstrated using hexahedra (voxel, [Figure 2B](#)), and tetrahedra ([Figure 2C](#)) finite elements. Two approaches for the local mapping of material inhomogeneities are illustrated using voxel and tetrahedra FE. Each example can be run within Jupyter or executed from the commandline with the `ciclope.py` script. Ciclope can be applied to microCT scans other than trabecular bone and in fields other than biomechanics. A simulation of a mechanical test of a whole human teeth, and a non-linear analysis of metal foam plasticity are illustrated in the software examples.

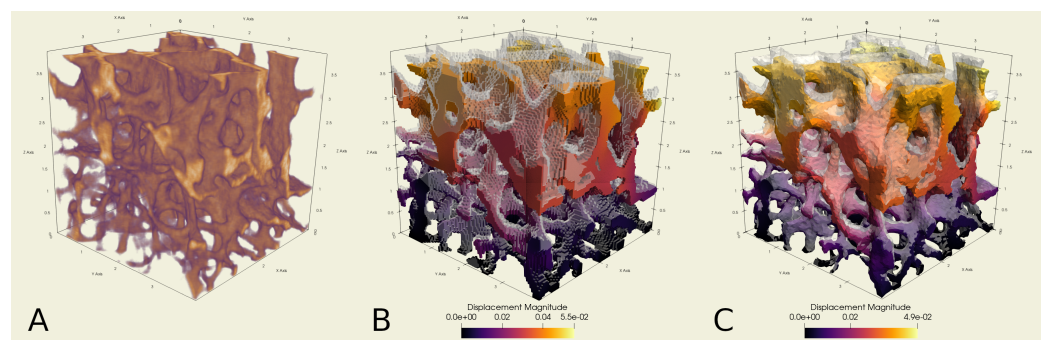


Figure 2: MicroFE models of trabecular bone generated from 3D microCT images with `ciclope`. (A) Input microCT volume data. (B) Hexahedra, and (C) tetrahedra finite element models generated with the `voxelFE.py` and `tetraFE.py` modules, respectively.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge support from the community for Open and Reproducible Musculoskeletal Imaging Research ([ORMIR](#)) and from Dr. Serena Bonaretti in particular. Ciclope was partially developed during the Jupyter Community Workshop “[Building the Jupyter Community in Musculoskeletal Imaging Research](#)” sponsored by [NUMFocus](#).

References

- Bayraktar, H. H., Morgan, E. F., Niebur, G. L., Morris, G. E., Wong, E. K., & Keaveny, T. M. (2004). Comparison of the elastic and yield properties of human femoral trabecular and cortical bone tissue. *Journal of Biomechanics*, 37(1), 27–35. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0021-9290\(03\)00257-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0021-9290(03)00257-4)

- Cox, J. M., Smith, J. D., Meulen, M. C. H. van der, & Cole, J. H. (2022). *Heterogeneous Tissue Modulus Improved Prediction of Mechanical Behavior in Osteoporotic Vertebral Cancellous Bone*. bioRxiv. <https://doi.org/10.1101/2021.11.30.470675>
- Dhondt, G. (2004). *The finite element method for three-dimensional thermomechanical applications*. John Wiley & Sons. <http://www.dhondt.de/>
- Fernández, M. P., Sasso, S. J., McPhee, S., Black, C., Kanczler, J., Tozzi, G., & Wolfram, U. (2022). Nonlinear micro finite element models based on digital volume correlation measurements predict early microdamage in newly formed bone. *Journal of the Mechanical Behavior of Biomedical Materials*, 105303. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmbbm.2022.105303>
- Henderson, A. (2022). *ParaView, a parallel visualization application*. Kitware inc. <https://www.paraview.org/>
- Itkwidgets. (2022). Insight Software Consortium. <https://github.com/InsightSoftwareConsortium/itkwidgets>
- Kraska, M. (2022). *CalculiX examples*. CALCULIX. <https://github.com/calculix/examples>
- Márquez Neila, P. (2023). *PyMCubes: Marching cubes for Python, v0.1.2*. <https://github.com/pmneila/PyMCubes>
- Megías, R., Vercher-Martínez, A., Belda, R., Peris, J. L., Larrainzar-Garijo, R., Giner, E., & Fuenmayor, F. J. (2022). Numerical modelling of cancellous bone damage using an orthotropic failure criterion and tissue elastic properties as a function of the mineral content and microporosity. *Computer Methods and Programs in Biomedicine*, 219, 106764. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cmpb.2022.106764>
- Mirzov, I. (2022). *CalculiX to Paraview converter*. <https://github.com/calculix/ccx2paraview>
- Oliviero, S., Owen, R., Reilly, G. C., Bellantuono, I., & Dall'Ara, E. (2020). Optimization of the failure criterion in micro-Finite Element models of the mouse tibia for the non-invasive prediction of its failure load in preclinical applications. *Journal of the Mechanical Behavior of Biomedical Materials*, 104190. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jmbbm.2020.104190>
- Otsu, N. (1979). A threshold selection method from gray-level histograms. *IEEE Transactions on Systems, Man, and Cybernetics*, 9(1), 62–66. <https://doi.org/10.1109/tsmc.1979.4310076>
- Pistoia, W., Rietbergen, B. van, Lochmüller, E.-M., Lill, C. A., Eckstein, F., & Rügsegger, P. (2002). Estimation of distal radius failure load with micro-finite element analysis models based on three-dimensional peripheral quantitative computed tomography images. *Bone*, 30(6), 842–848. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S8756-3282\(02\)00736-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S8756-3282(02)00736-6)
- Schlömer, N. (2022a). *Meshio v5.0.0: Tools for mesh files*. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1173115>
- Schlömer, N. (2022b). *Pygalmesh: Python interface for CGAL's meshing tools*. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5564818>
- Stauber, M., Huber, M., Lenthe, G. H. van, Boyd*, S. K., & Müller, R. (2004). A Finite Element Beam-model for Efficient Simulation of Large-scale Porous Structures. *Computer Methods in Biomechanics and Biomedical Engineering*, 7(1), 9–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10255840410001656408>
- The CGAL Project. (2022). *CGAL User and Reference Manual* (5.5 ed.). CGAL Editorial Board. <https://doc.cgal.org/5.5/Manual/packages.html>
- The Living Human Digital Library (LHDL)*. (2006). <http://projects.kmi.open.ac.uk/lhdl/>
- Verhulp, E., Rietbergen, B. van, Müller, R., & Huiskes, R. (2008). Indirect determination of trabecular bone effective tissue failure properties using micro-finite element simulations.

Journal of Biomechanics, 41(7), 1479–1485. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbiomech.2008.02.032>

Virtanen, P., Gommers, R., Oliphant, T. E., Haberland, M., Reddy, T., Cournapeau, D., Burovski, E., Peterson, P., Weckesser, W., Bright, J., Walt, S. J. van der, Brett, M., Wilson, J., Millman, K. J., Mayorov, N., Nelson, A. R. J., Jones, E., Kern, R., Larson, E., ... SciPy 1.0 Contributors. (2020). SciPy 1.0: Fundamental Algorithms for Scientific Computing in Python. *Nature Methods*, 17, 261–272. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41592-019-0686-2>

Walt, S. van der, Schönberger, J. L., Nunez-Iglesias, J., Boulogne, F., Warner, J. D., Yager, N., Gouillart, E., & Yu, T. (2014). Scikit-image: Image processing in Python. *PeerJ*, 2, e453. <https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.453>

Zael, R., Yeni, Y. N., Bay, B. K., Dong, X. N., & Fyhrie, D. P. (2005). Comparison of the Linear Finite Element Prediction of Deformation and Strain of Human Cancellous Bone to 3D Digital Volume Correlation Measurements. *Journal of Biomechanical Engineering*, 128(1), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1115/1.2146001>