Learning to Control Self-Assembling Morphologies
Generalization via Modularity

Deepak Pathak*

Chris Lu*

Trevor Darrell

Phillip Isola

Alyosha Efros

* equal contribution

Berkeley UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

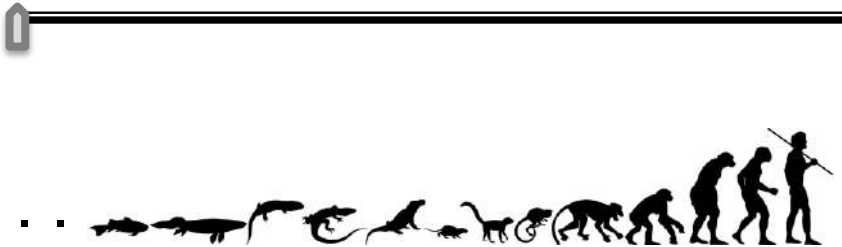
NeurIPS 2019

How do we train a robot?

- Multiple tasks
- Expert demonstrations
- Rewards, labels
- …

- Self-supervision
- Curious exploration
- Learning “common sense”
- …

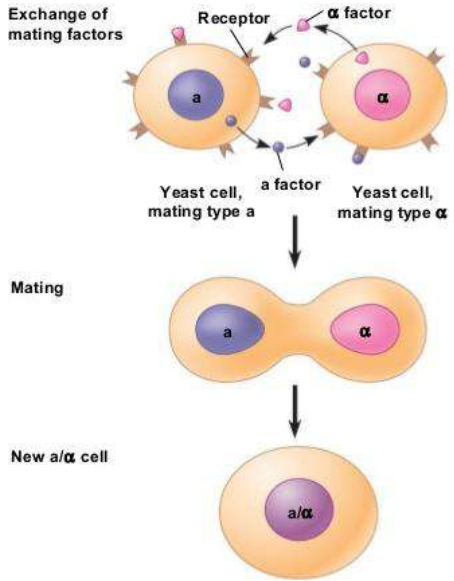
- Multiple tasks
- Expert demonstrations
- Rewards, labels
- …



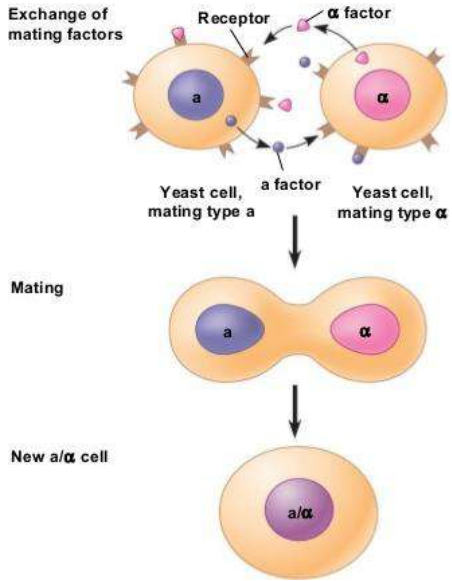
... even earlier?

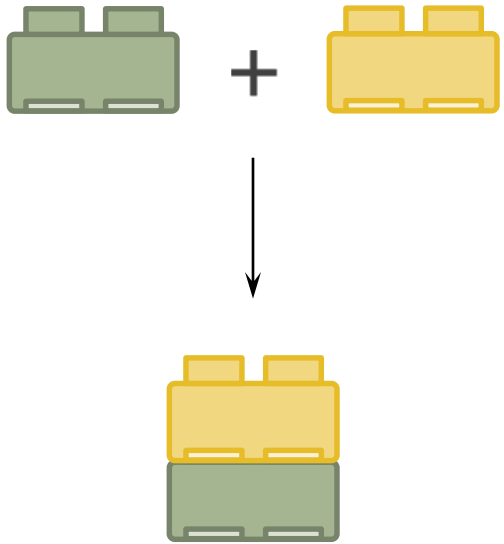
Single to Multicellular

Single to Multicellular *competition → collaboration*



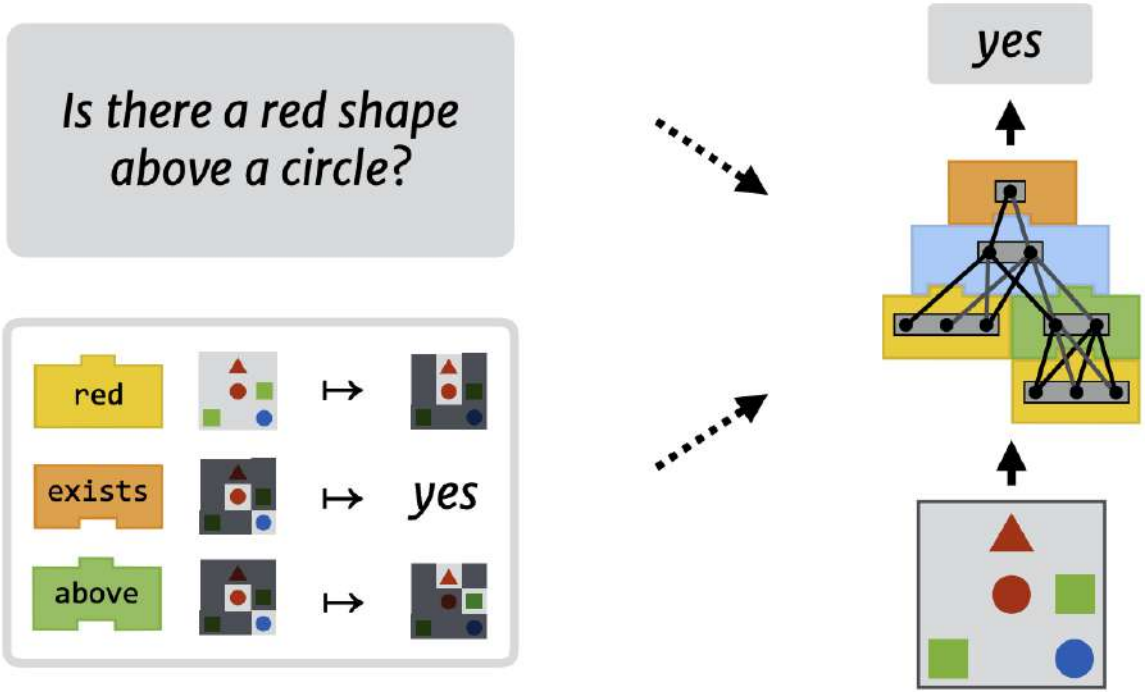
Single to Multicellular *competition → collaboration*





shared objective

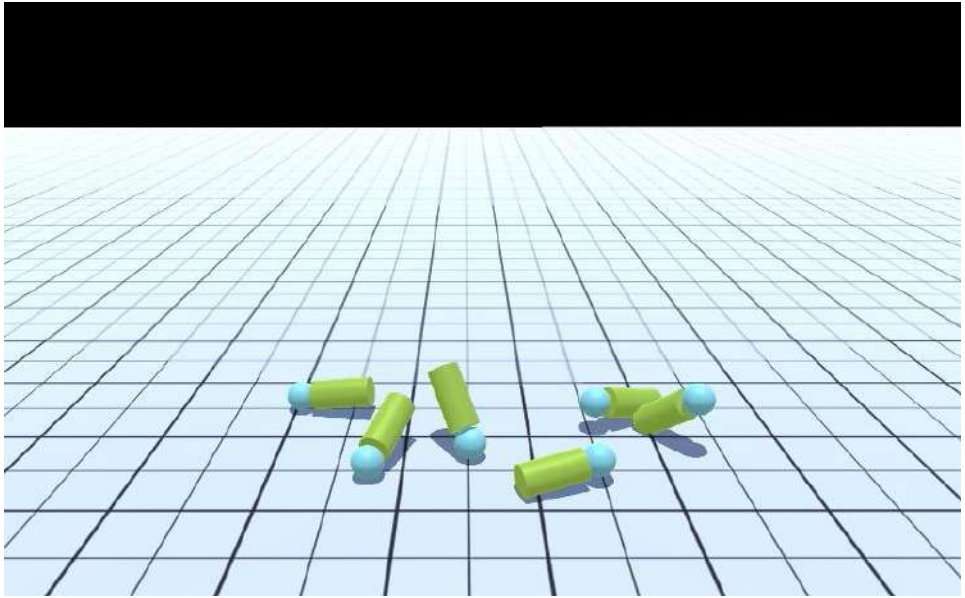
Compositionality has been useful in language …



[Andreas et. al. 2016]

How to implement compositionality in hardware?

Modular Co-evolution of Control and Morphology



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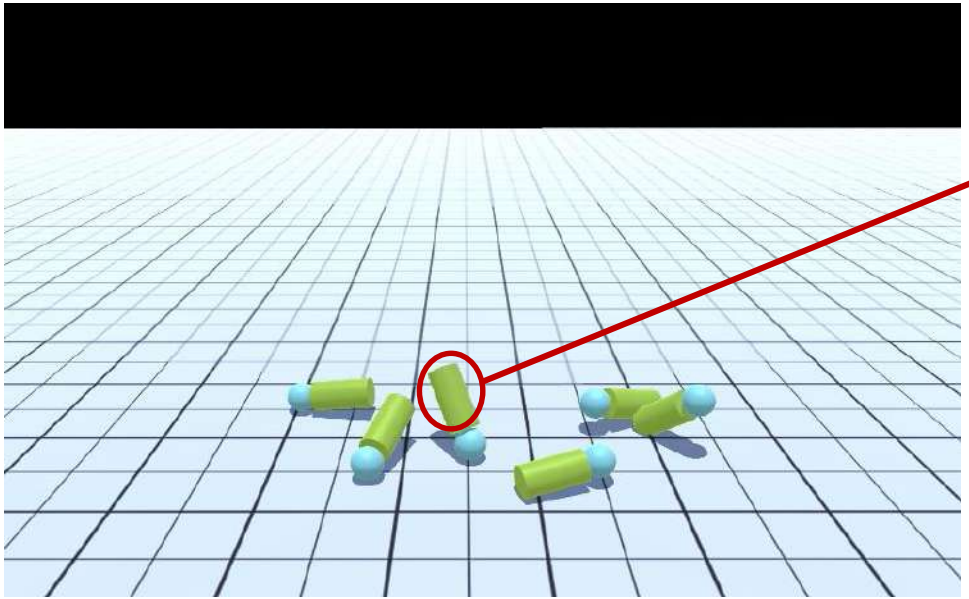
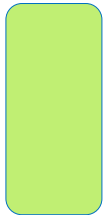


Cylindrical Limb



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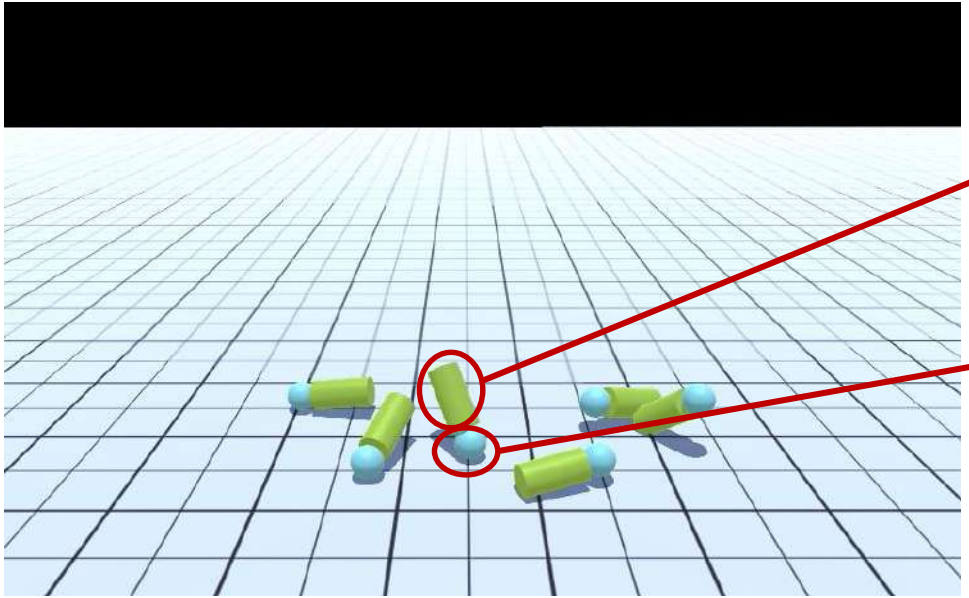
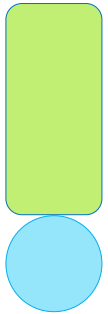


Cylindrical Limb

Configurable Motor Joint



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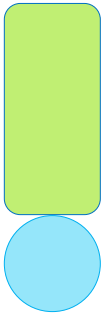

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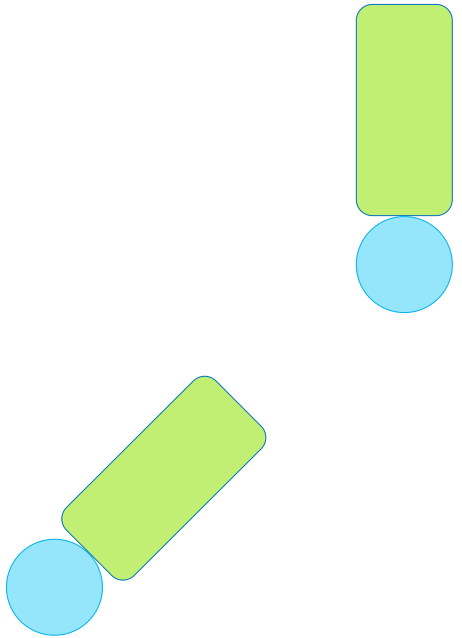

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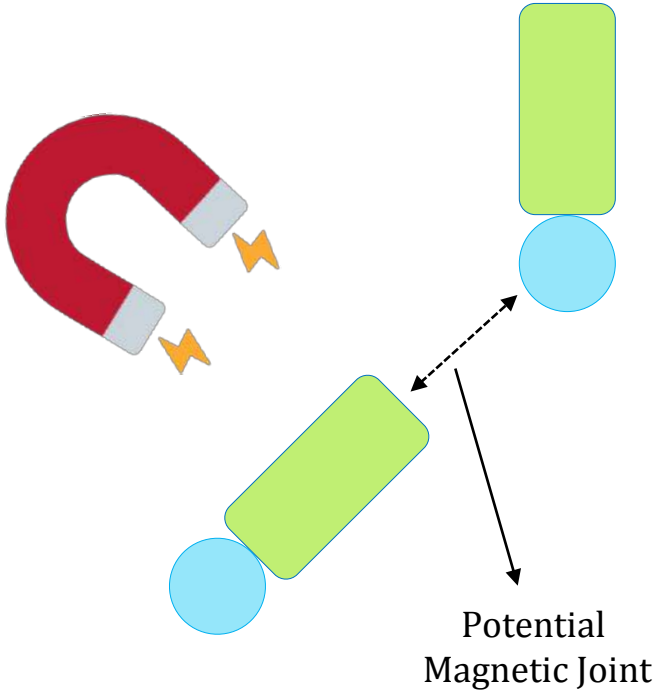

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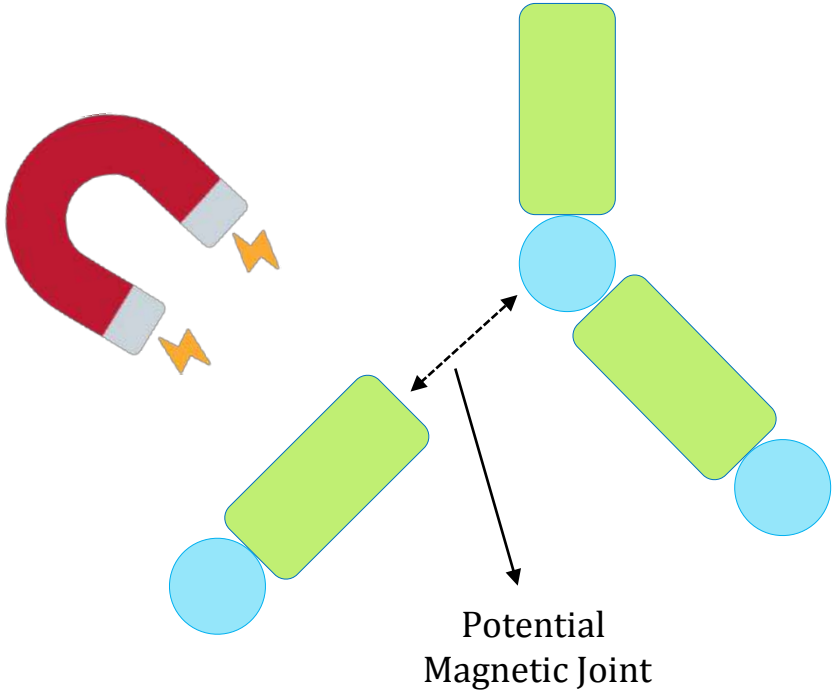

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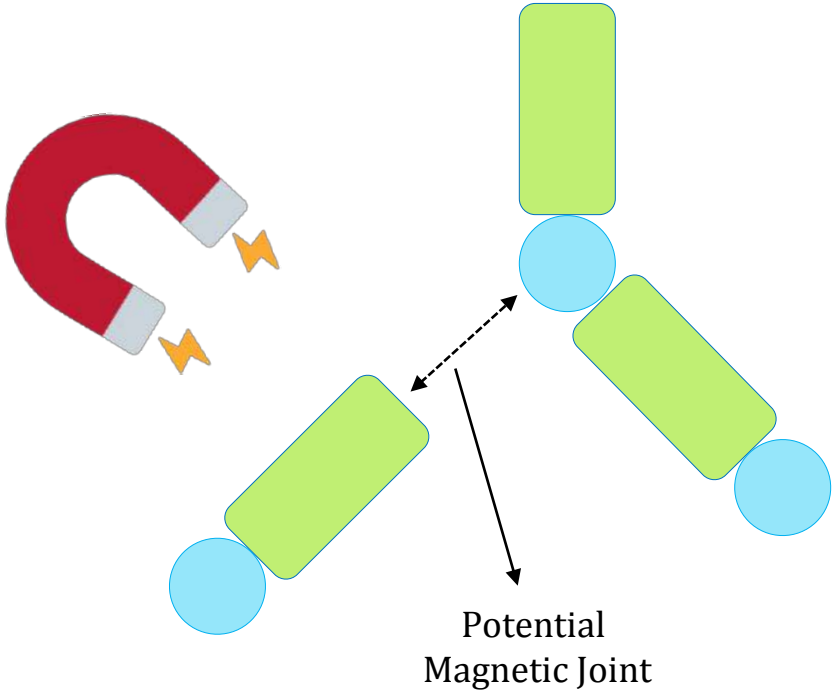
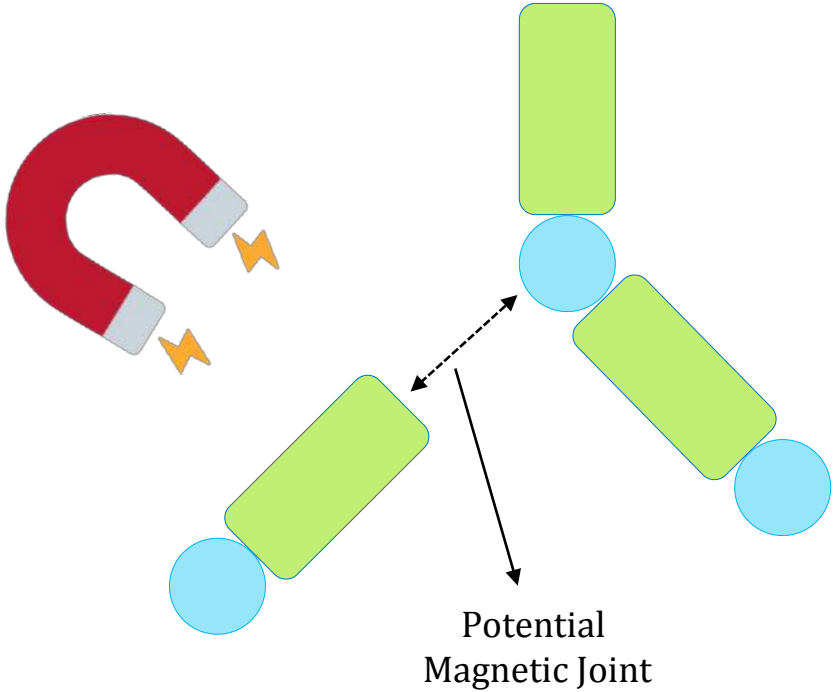


Acts as single agent upon joining

Rewards are shared!

Modular Co-evolution of Control and Morphology



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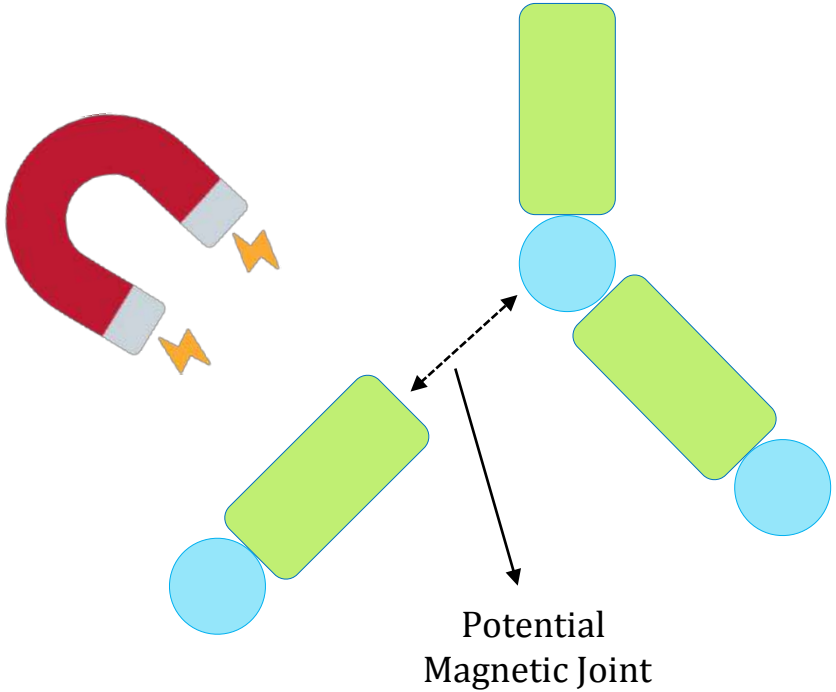

Acts as single agent upon joining

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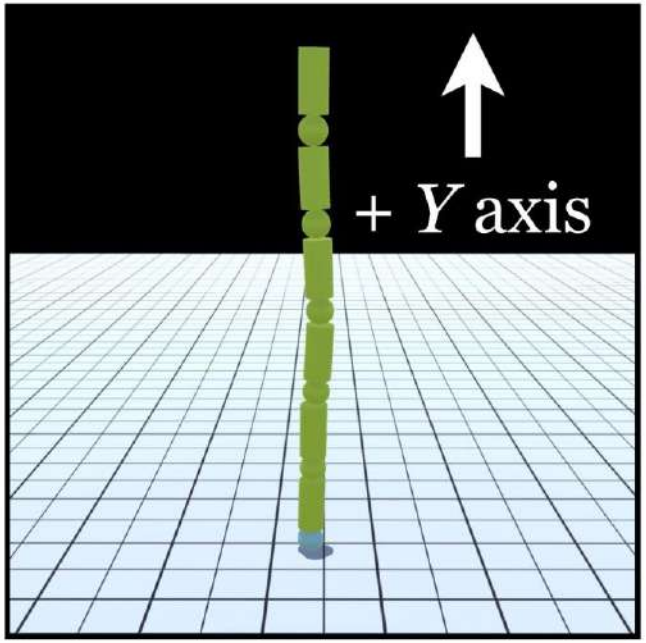
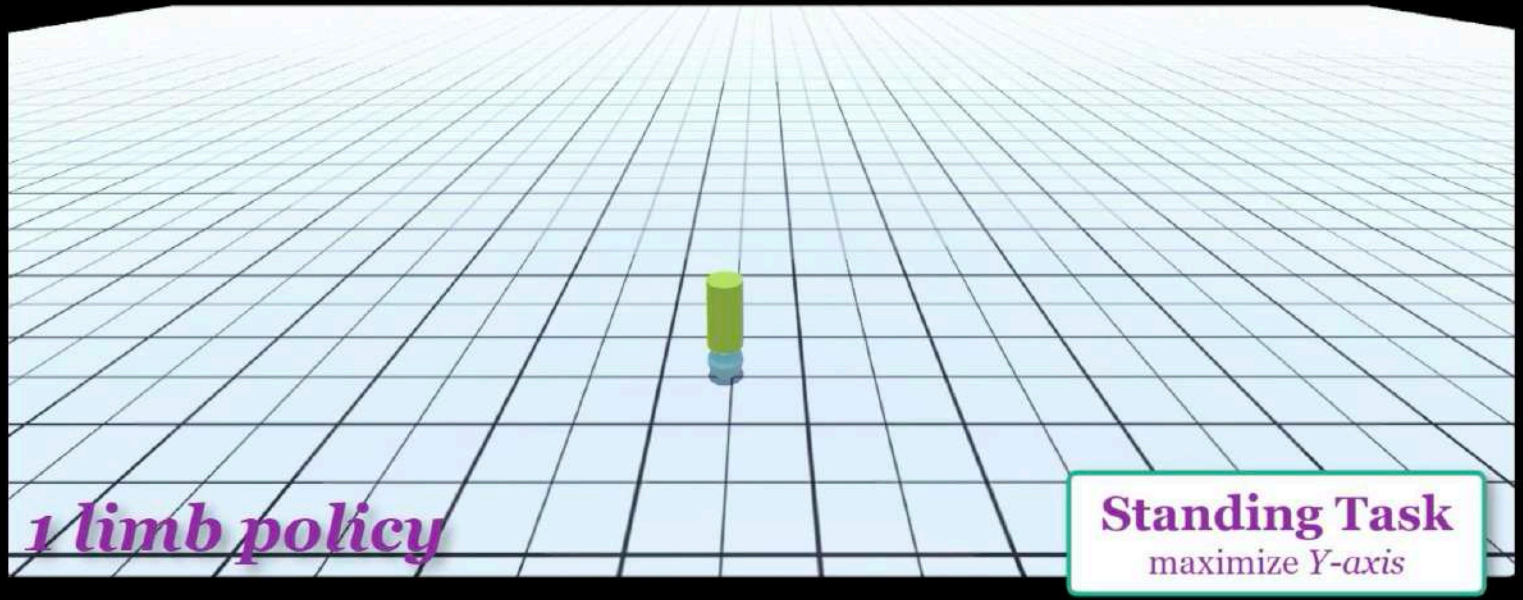
Consider the task of “standing up” …

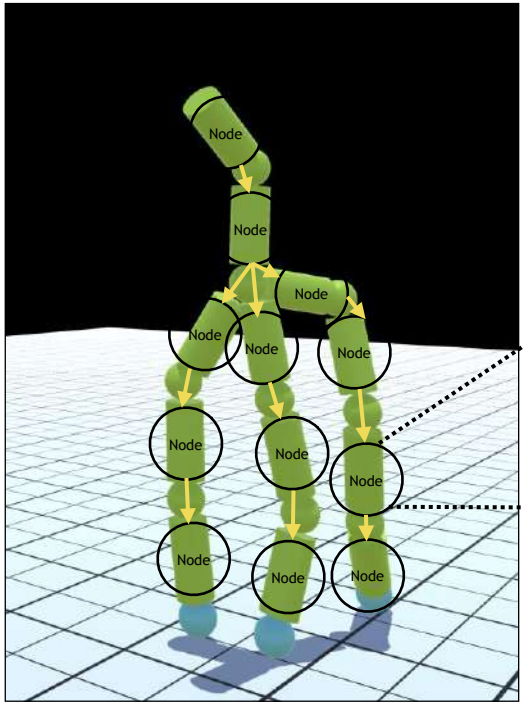


Vanilla Reinforcement Learning



How to learn compositional controllers?

Idea: Shared policy network across limbs



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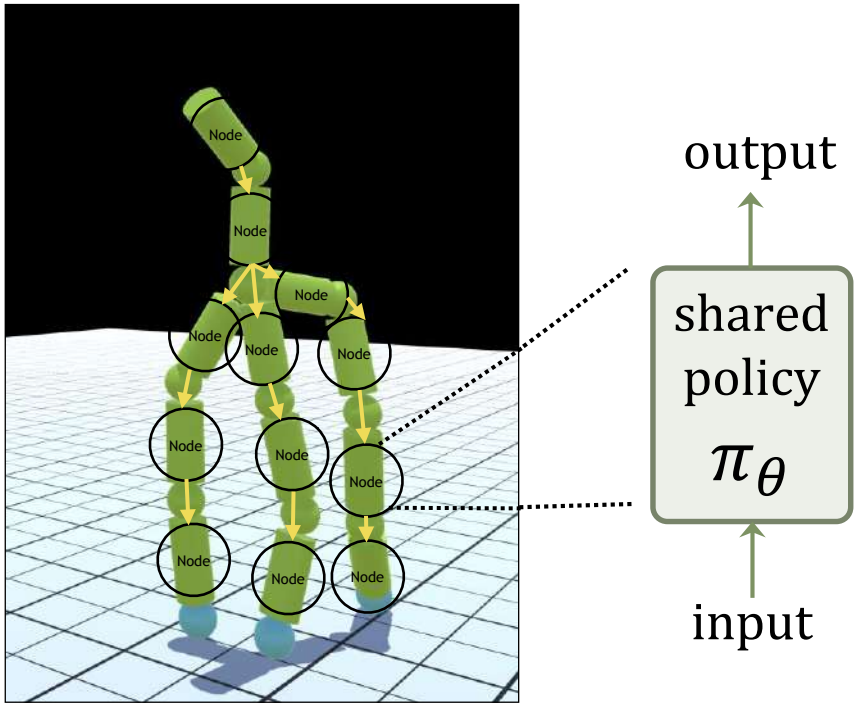
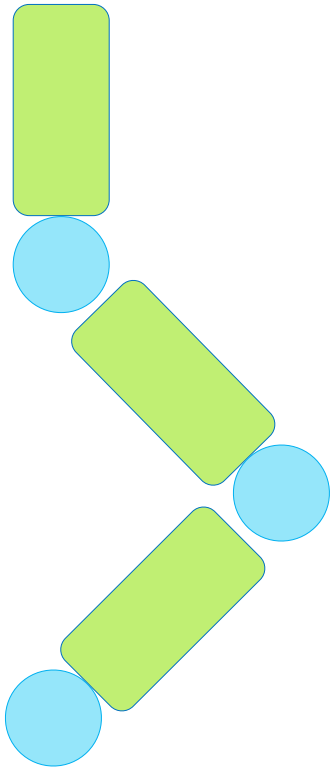


How to adapt when morphology changes?



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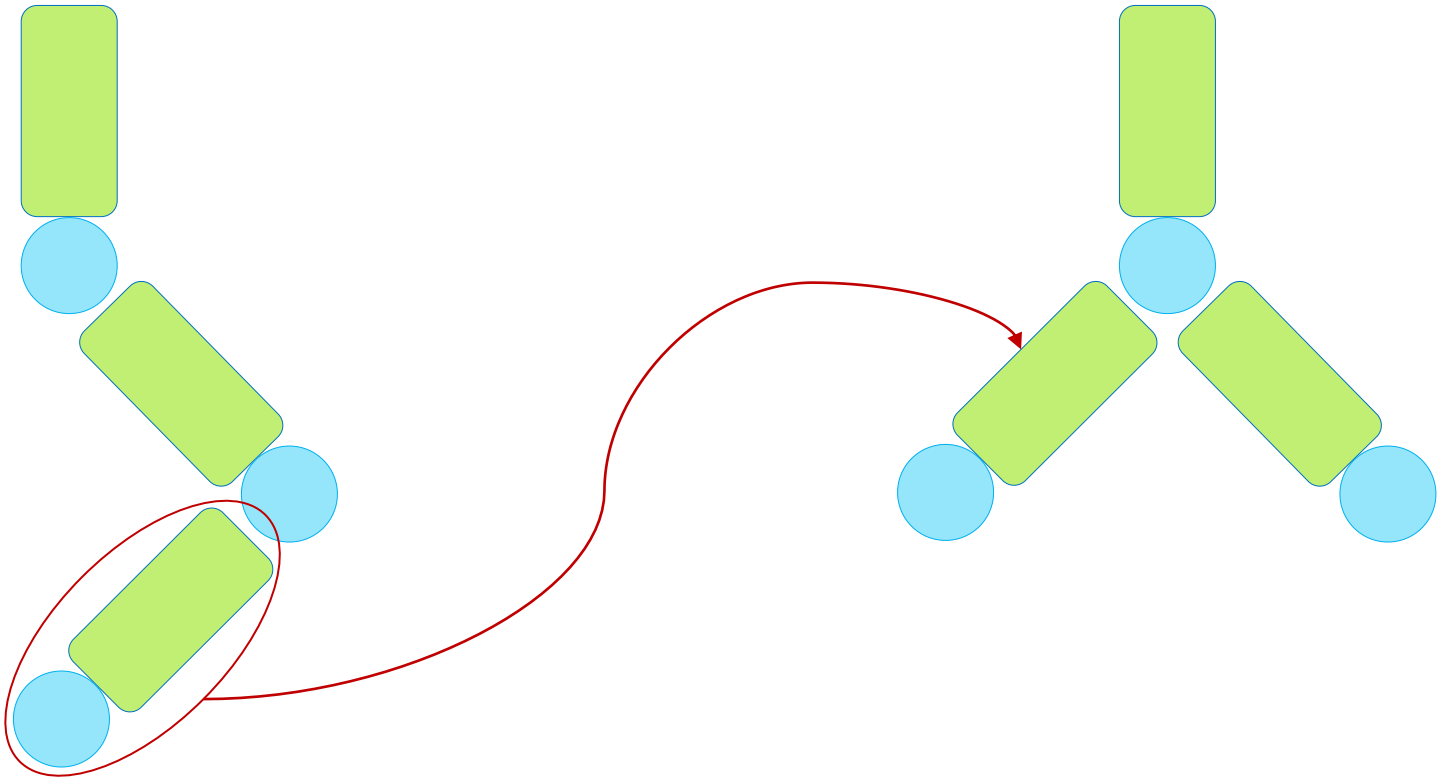

Network as reusable LEGO Blocks

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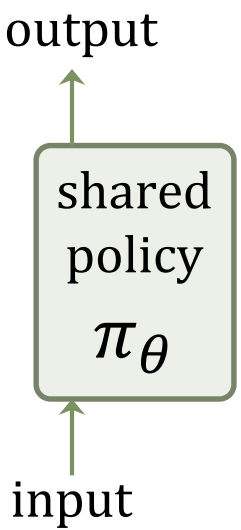

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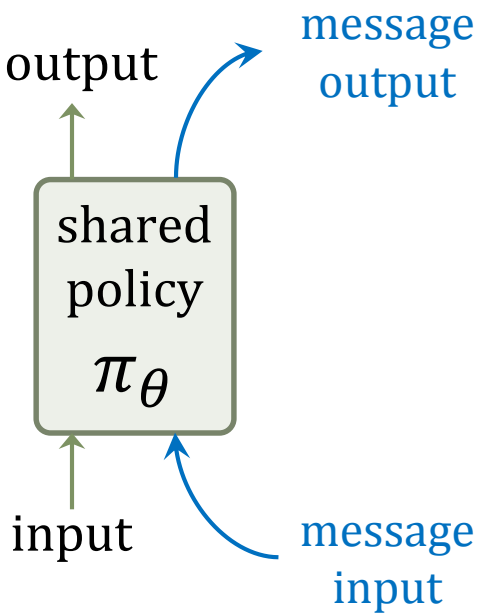

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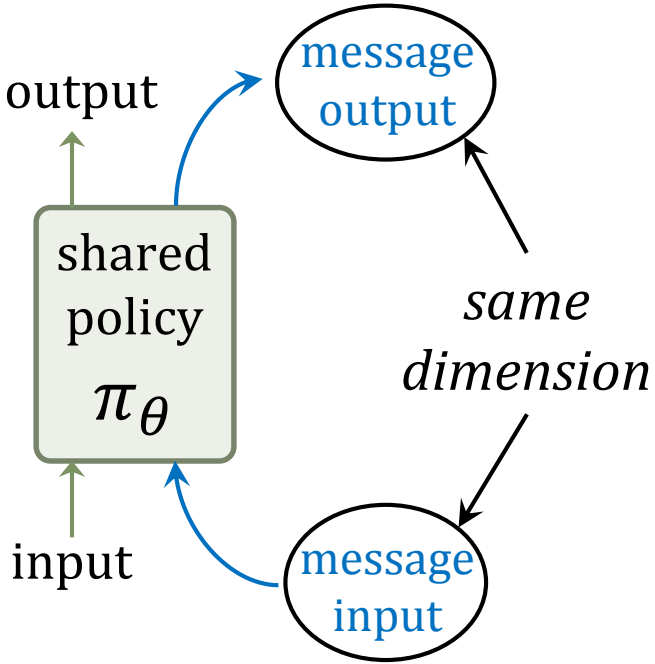

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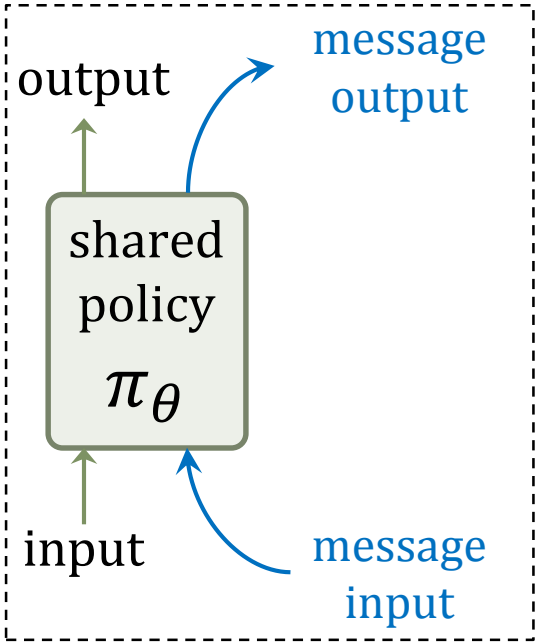

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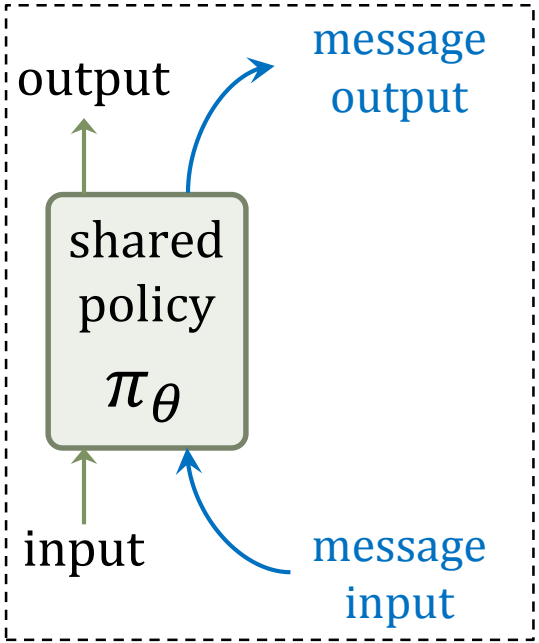

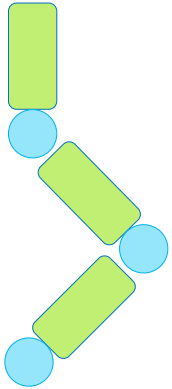

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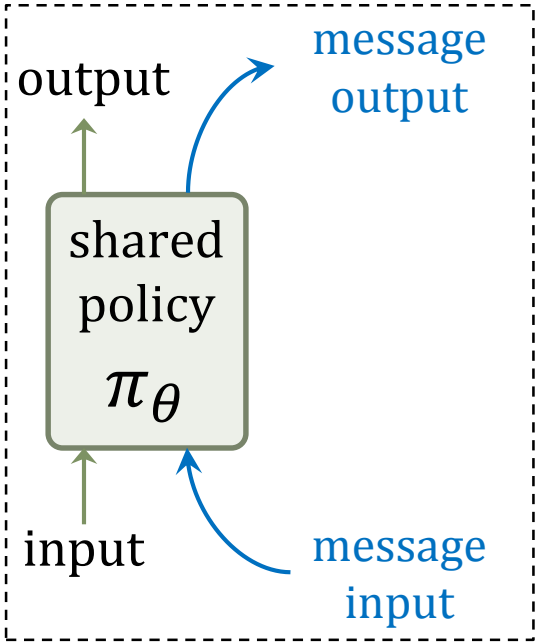

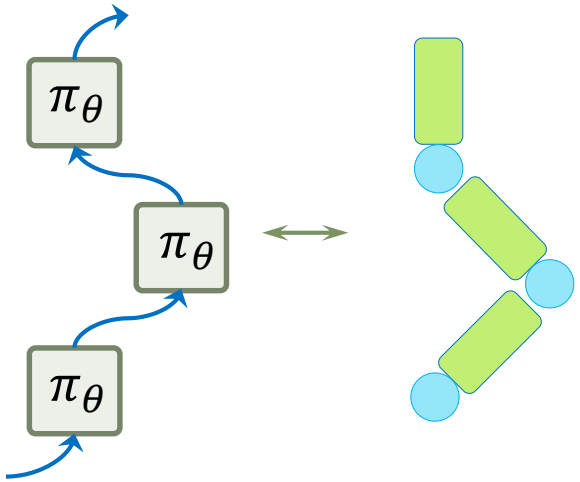

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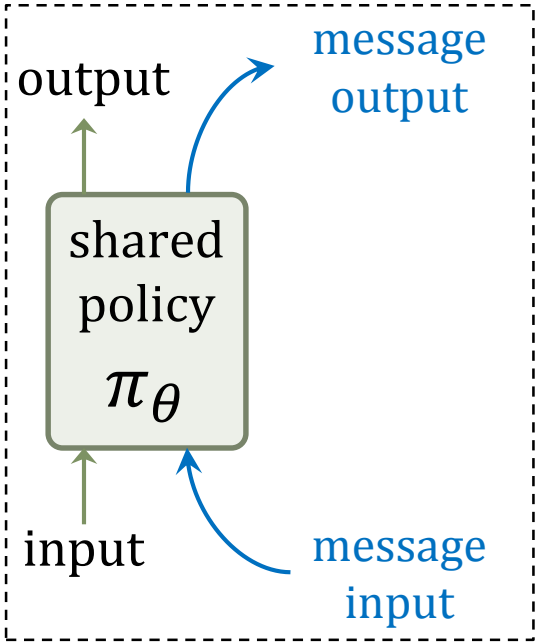

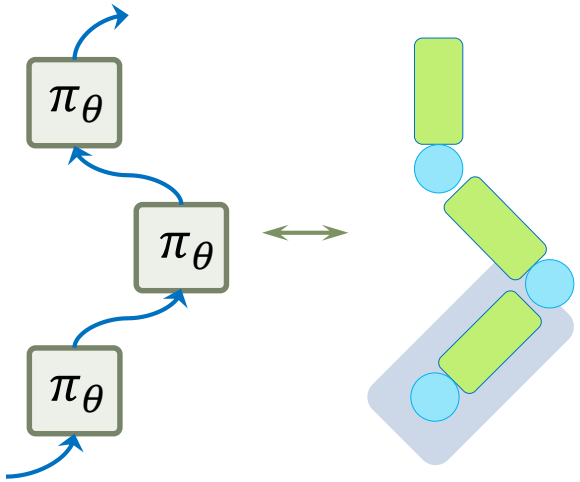

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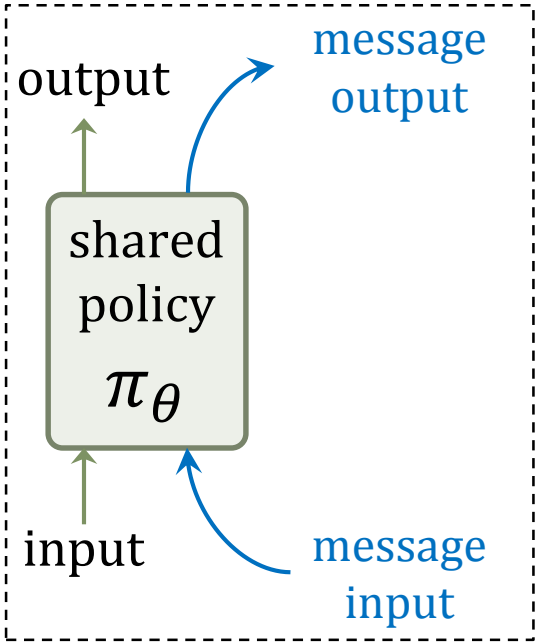

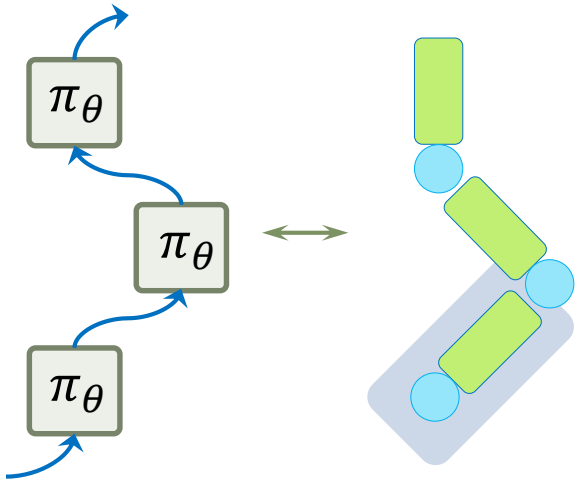

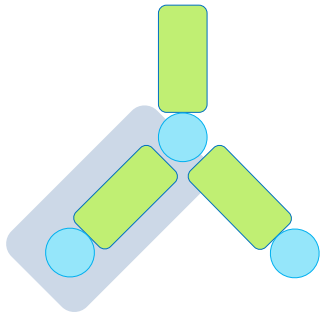

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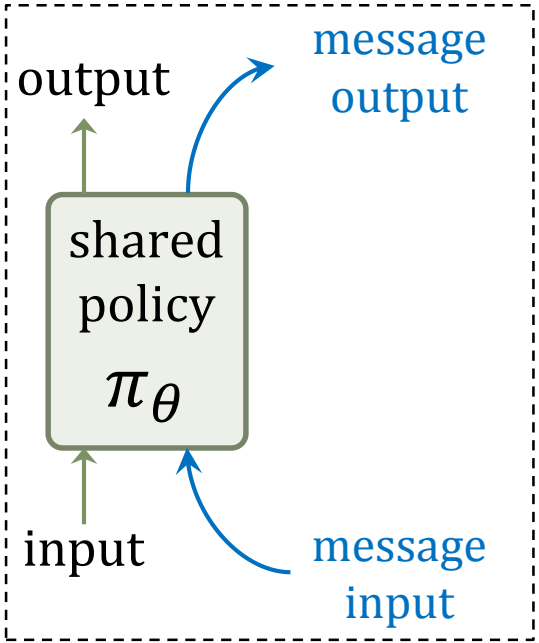
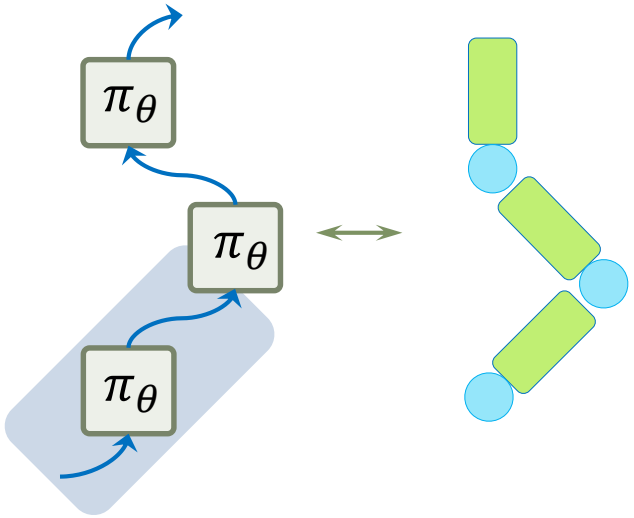
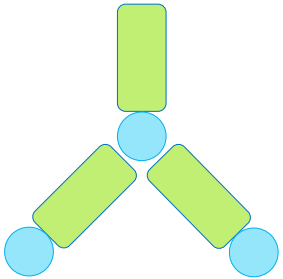




cut



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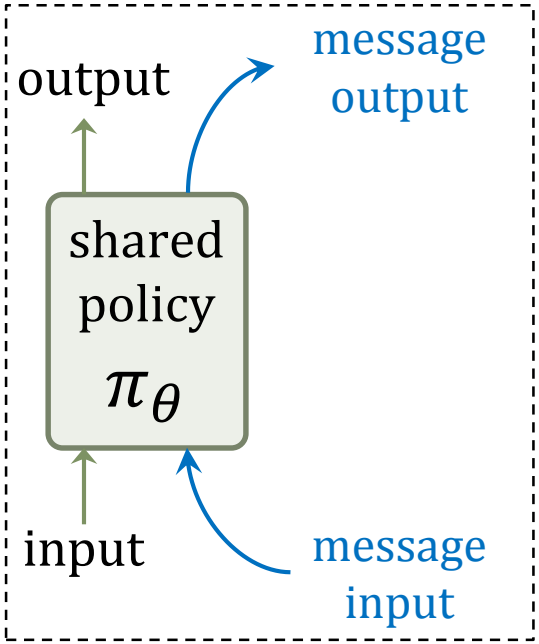
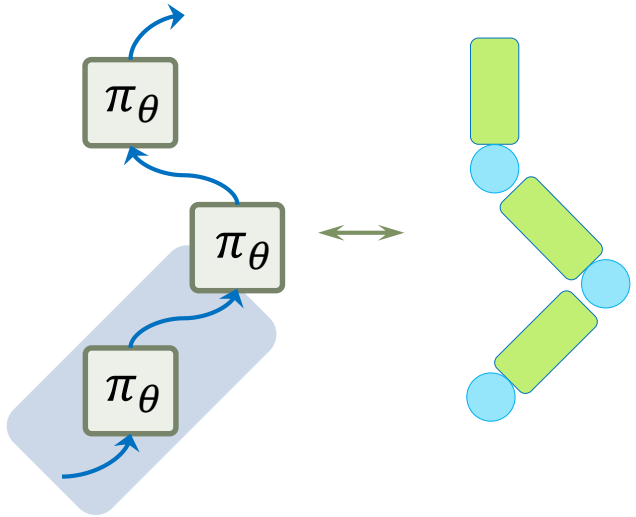
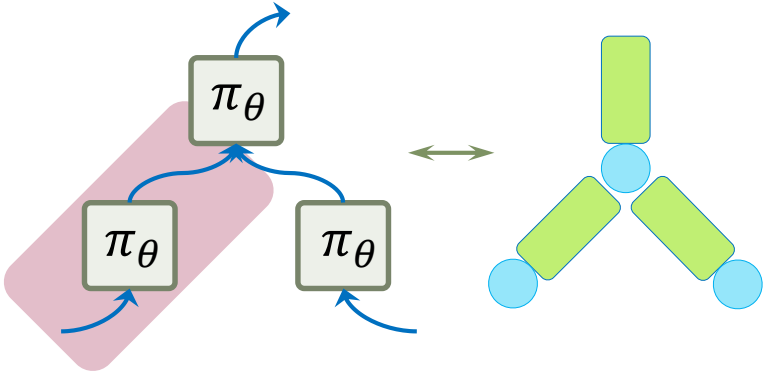




cut and ***paste***



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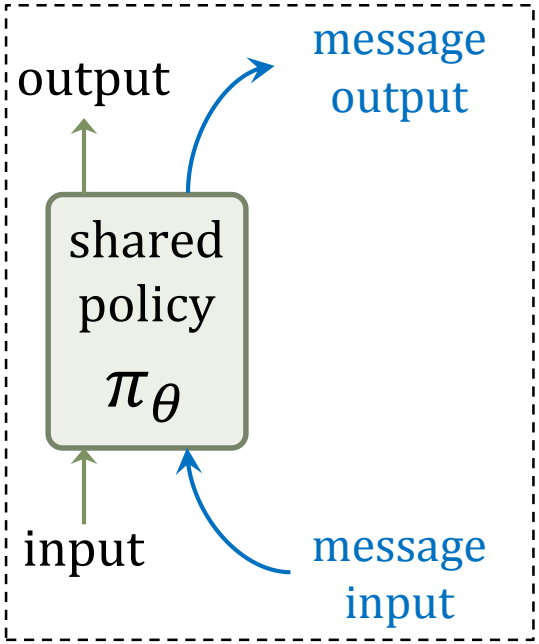
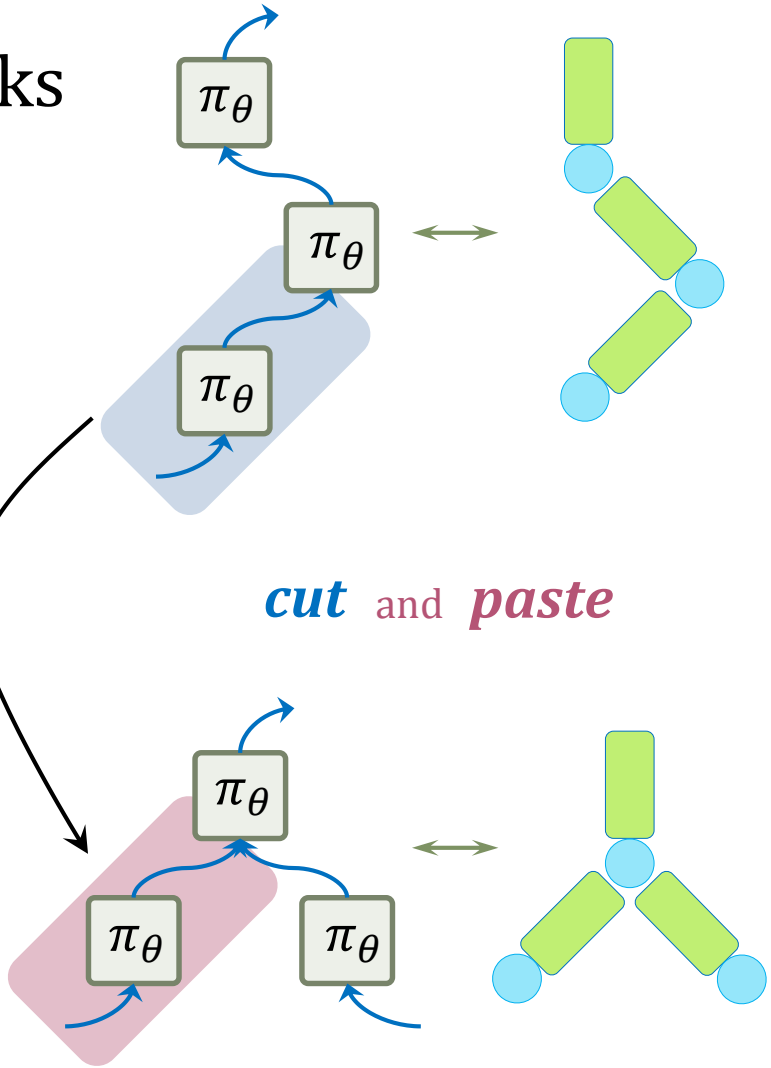
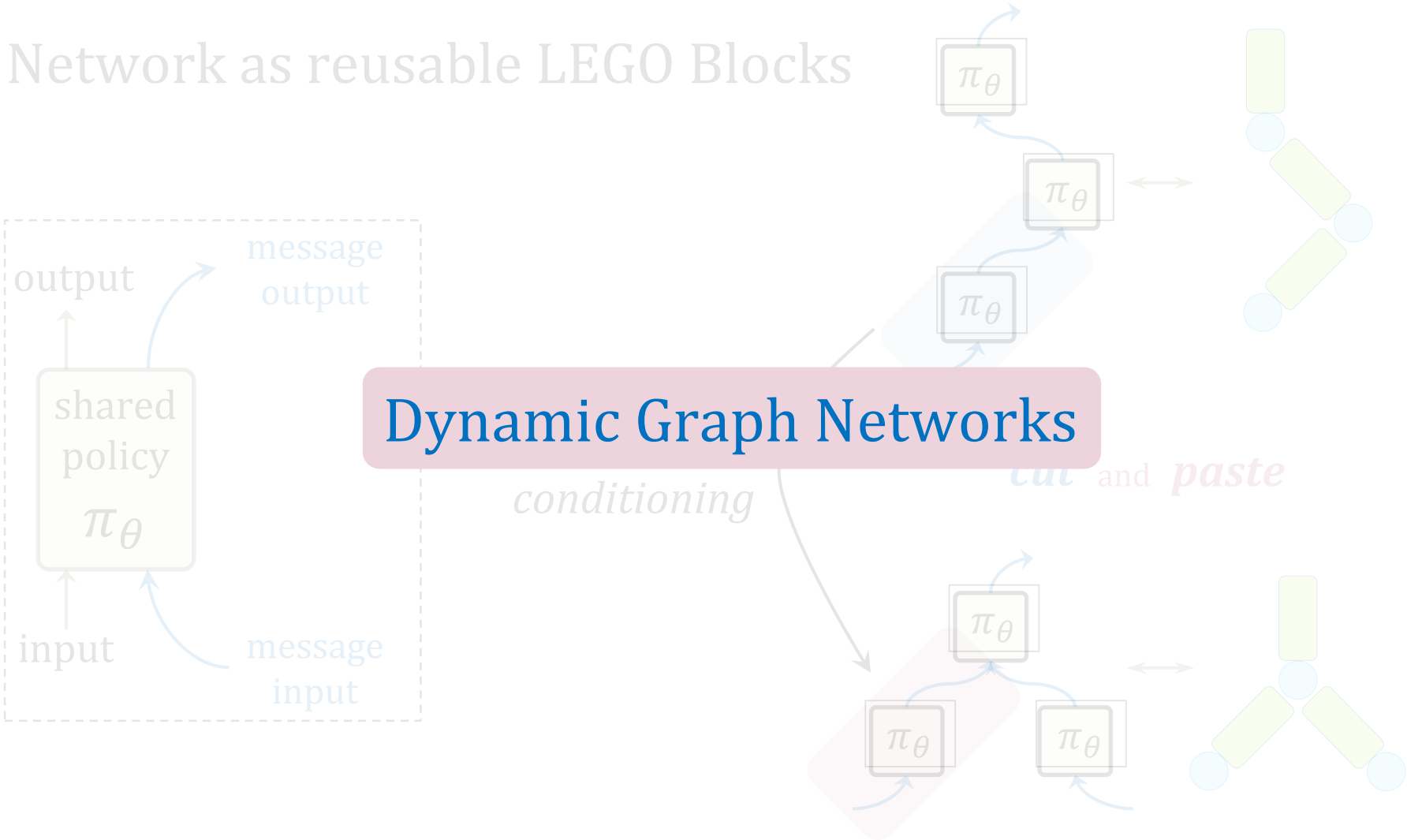


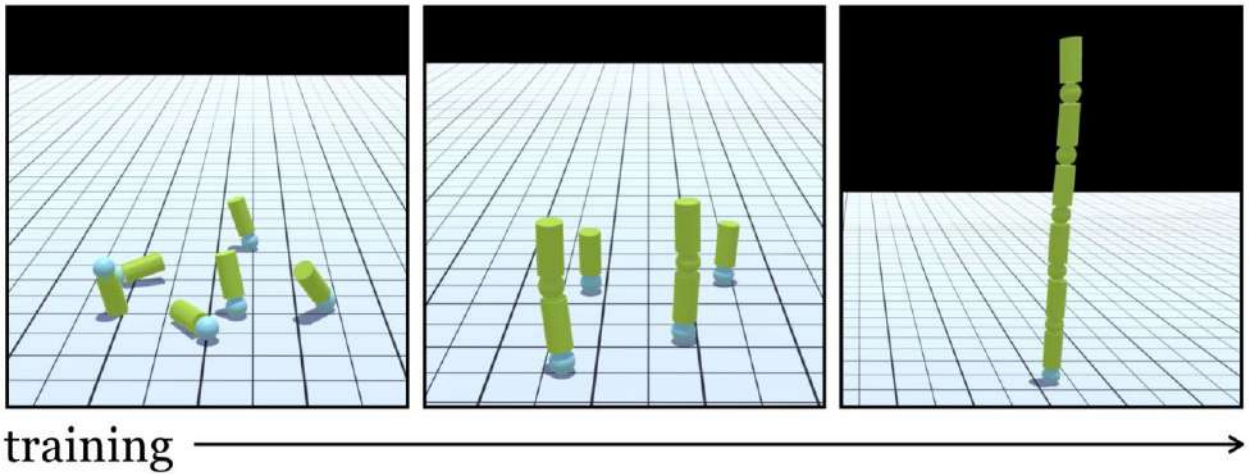
adaptation by conditioning



cut and ***paste***


Network as reusable LEGO Blocks
output
message output
shared policy
π_θ
input
message input
π_θ
π_θ
π_θ
Dynamic Graph Networks
conditioning
cut and paste
π_θ
π_θ
π_θ

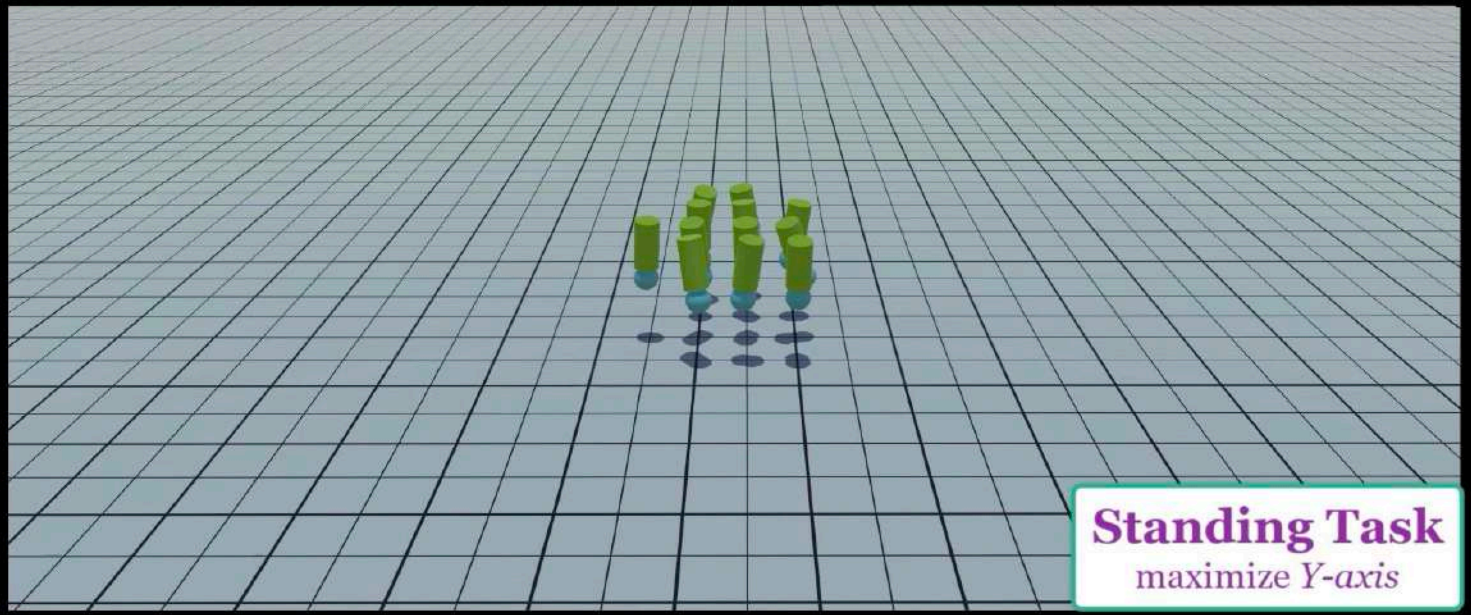
BTW, basically curriculum learning but in hardware



How well does it generalize?

Generalization w/o Fine-tuning

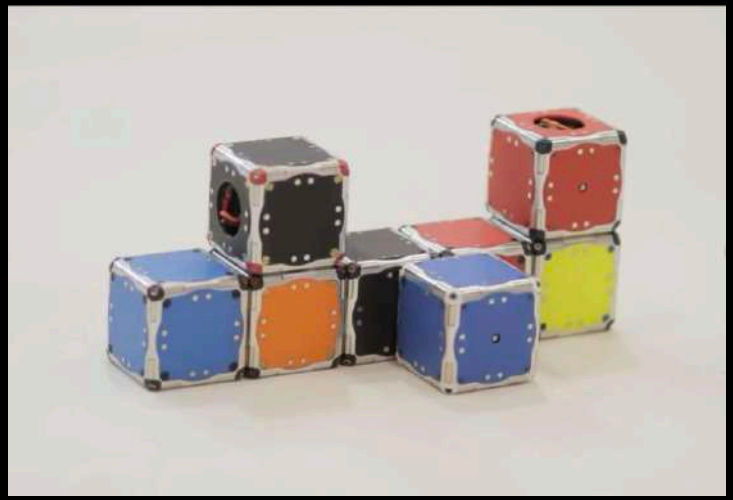
twice as many limbs



a bit crazy… is it even possible in real world?

Self-Assembling Robots in the Real World

[Mark Yim’s Lab at UPenn]



[Daniela Rus's Lab at MIT]

Also: [Modular Snake Robot – Howie Choset’s Lab at CMU]

code & data at

https://people.eecs.berkeley.edu/~pathak/

Poster # 197

Today (Tues)!!

Thank You!