

SUSPENSION DEVICE AND METHOD DURING SPRING ACTION AND/OR DAMPING ACTION FOR A VEHICLE

TECHNICAL FIELD

- 5 The invention relates to a suspension device comprising an in- and an out-configuration respectively for a vehicle according to the preamble of claim 1. The invention also relates to method during damping action and/or springing action with in- and out-configuration of a vehicle according to the preamble of claim 10. The invention further relates to a vehicle according to claim 14. The
- 10 invention also relates to a computer programme according to claim 15 and a computer programme product according to claim 16 and 17 for performing the method.

BACKGROUND ART

- 15 Road holding, running characteristics and comfort are important parameters of vehicles such as cars, military vehicles, trucks and the like. In order to improve road holding, running characteristics and comfort vehicles are equipped with suspensions system, which is arranged to protect the vehicle, passengers and load from damages and wear. A suspension system
- 20 comprises spring members for supporting the vehicle at the correct level and to absorb impacts such that irregularities on the ground do not propagate to the vehicle body, and damp members for putting out vibrations, roll and rocking of the vehicle body.

- During for example cornering the vehicle rotates about its own roll axes, i.e.
- 25 the vehicle tend to incline. By so called hydro pneumatic springs the force of the spring levels out during spring expansion, as apposed to a helical spring which has a linear spring curve in which the force approaches zero by spring expansion. The high pre-load of hydro pneumatic springs results in that in the

spring expansion position there still is a relatively large spring force of the hydro pneumatic spring, which results in the fact that the vehicle will incline to a greater extent during for example cornering when roll occurs.

- By using so called stabilizers, i.e. a suspension attachment in the form of a bar connecting opposite wheels of the vehicle, a reduced inclination without stiffening of the vertical suspension is conceivable, facilitating improved running characteristics with a relatively good comfort. A problem with the use of stabilizer is that it transfers the power of a bumping wheel to the opposite wheel, wherein shakes from side to side occurs, which increase with the diameter and stiffness of the stabilizer, and where applicable may lead to lifting of the inner wheels by heavy cornering. Due to the high pre-load of hydro pneumatic springs strong stabilizers are required, which results in them having to be excluded in cross-country vehicles in certain cases since the traversability in terrain is heavily reduced.
- 15 Lately more active suspension systems have been developed which adapt to the present state of the vehicle. A so called semi-active suspension system is arranged to regulate the damping while the spring has a non-variable spring constant, alternatively is arranged to regulate the spring constant where the damping is kept constant. An active spring system is arranged to regulate both damping and spring action. Stabilizers may be replaced by semi-active/active systems where the spring is actively controllable. A problem with such semi-active/active suspension systems is that variable damping action by compression leads to, when the damping action is increased, the possibility of the wheel starting to bounce when the roadway is uneven, such that the vehicle loses its grip.
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US 4,153,237 discloses a hydro pneumatic damping device comprising a damper with a manually adjustable low speed damping on the return and compression and manually adjustable high speed damping on return. The suspension device does not have an active damp valve.

US 4,720,085 discloses a damping device with both adjustable compression and return, where adjustment of compression and return is done by means of an electric motor.

- 5 US 4,159,106 discloses a damping device with a damper having a pressure dependant return damping action, where regulation of the damper is done mechanically automatically. The damping of the damping device is not controllable.

OBJECT OF THE INVENTION

- 10 An object of the present invention is to provide a spring device for a vehicle which improves the running characteristics of said vehicle by for example cornering, breaking and acceleration without impairing comfort and traversability.

- 15 An additional object with the present invention is to provide a method by spring/damping action of a vehicle which improves the running characteristics of said vehicle by for example cornering, breaking and acceleration without impairing comfort and traversability.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

- 20 These and other objects, apparent from the following description, are achieved by a suspension device, a method, a vehicle a computer programme and computer programme product, which are of the type stated by way of introduction and which in addition exhibits the features recited in the characterising clause of the appended claim 1, 10, 14, 15, 16 and 17.
- 25 Preferred embodiments of the suspension device and the method are defined in appended dependent claims 2-9 and 11-13.

According to the invention the objects are achieved by means of a suspension device comprising an in- and out-configuration respectively for a vehicle comprising means for damping and/or spring action, said damping and/or spring action being controllable, wherein the controllability of said
5 damping and/or spring action comprises a locked or substantially locked state in the out-configuration. This results in the centre of gravity of the vehicle being lowered by heeling of the vehicle by for example cornering or driving with heavy inclination of the vehicle, in that the vehicle is lowered, whereby the risk of tipping is reduced. The angle of rotation about the roll
10 centre of the vehicle is reduced due to lowered centre of gravity and due to the out-configuration of for example the inner spring leg during cornering does not assist in rotating the vehicle since it is locked or substantially locked. In such a way comfort and grip is maintained.

According to an embodiment the suspension device is semi-active in such a way that said damping action is arranged to occupy a locked or substantially
15 locked state in the out-configuration. It is easier to control the damping action compared to controlling the spring action. It is easier to construct control of damping action and consequently cheaper. Control of damping action also results in shorter response time and requires less power.

According to an embodiment of the suspension device said damping is hydraulic. Hereby the spring force in the out-configuration of the e.g. inner
20 spring leg during cornering increases only marginally whereby comfort and grip are maintained. Prolonged anti-roll is dealt with due to the locking of the out-configuration of a hydro pneumatic system, since no oil is allowed to flow
25 through the throttle (damper) by the out-configuration, while damping action of the in-configuration, i.e. the spring compression is maintained which results in the vehicle still performing a spring action when it runs on irregularities. Due to the out-configuration being locked no time dependent throttling resulting in increased inclination during prolonged cornering or
30 inclination of the vehicle occurs.

According to an embodiment of the suspension device a valve configuration is present comprising a valve for control in said out-configuration. This results in a reliable way of providing the control in said out-configuration.

5 According to an embodiment of the suspension device the valve configuration comprises a separate valve in said in-configuration.

According to an embodiment of the suspension device the valve configuration comprises a throttle valve arranged in series with the valve for control. This facilitates use of a controllable valve which withstands high pressures and flows, which is advantageous in heavy vehicles such as e.g. cross-country vehicles.

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According to an embodiment the suspension device comprises means for sensing heeling of a vehicle during cornering, driving in uneven terrain etc. wherein said damping and/or spring action is arranged to be locked or substantially locked in the out-configuration, based on said heeling. In such a way the out-configuration is automatically controlled during driving.

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According to an embodiment of the suspension device said sensing means comprises a member for sensing lateral acceleration. This is one way of sensing cornering for activation for locking of the out-configuration.

According to an embodiment of the suspension device said sensing means comprises a member for sensing inclination of the vehicle relative to the horizontal plane. By sensing inclination of the vehicle, activation for locking of the out-configuration may also occur when the vehicle e.g. is driving aslant but not in a curve.

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According to the invention the objects are also achieved by means of a method during damping and/or spring action with in- and out-configuration of a vehicle comprising the step of controlling said damping and/or spring action, and the step of locking or substantially locking said damping and/or spring action in the out-configuration. This results in the centre of gravity of

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position of the vehicle being lowered by heeling of the vehicle during e.g. cornering or driving with heavy inclination of the vehicle in that the body of the vehicle is lowered, wherein the risk of tipping is reduced. The angle of rotation about the roll centre of the vehicle is reduced due to lowered centre of gravity and due to the out-configuration of e.g. the inner spring leg during cornering not assisting in rotating the vehicle since it is locked or substantially locked. In such a way comfort and grip is maintained.

According to an embodiment the method comprises the step of sensing heeling of vehicle during cornering, driving in uneven terrain etc. in order to, based upon the heeling, lock or substantially lock said damping and/or spring action in the out-configuration. In such a way the out-configuration is automatically controlled during driving.

According to an embodiment the method comprises the step of sensing lateral acceleration in order to, based upon the lateral acceleration, lock or substantially lock said damping and/or spring action in the out-configuration. This is one way of sensing cornering for activation for locking of the out-configuration.

According to an embodiment the method comprises the step of sensing inclination of the vehicle in order to, based upon said position, lock or substantially lock said damping and/or spring action in the out-configuration. By sensing inclination of the vehicle activation for locking of the out-configuration may occur also when the vehicle e.g. is driving on a slant but not in a corner.

25 DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A better understanding of the present invention will be had upon the reference to the following detailed description when read in conjunction with

the accompanying drawings, wherein like reference characters refer to like parts throughout the several views, and in which:

Fig. 1 schematically shows a suspension device according to a first embodiment of the present invention;

- 5 Fig. 2 schematically shows a suspension device according to a second embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 3 schematically shows a suspension device according to a third embodiment of the present invention;

- 10 Fig. 4 schematically shows a suspension device according to a fourth embodiment of the present invention;

Fig. 5a-b schematically shows the suspension device according to the first embodiment during compression and expansion, and during heeling restrain respectively;

- 15 Fig. 6a-b schematically shows the suspension device according to the second embodiment during compression and expansion, and during heeling restrain respectively;

Fig. 7a-b schematically shows the suspension device according to the third/fourth embodiment during compression and expansion, and during heeling restrain respectively;

- 20 Fig. 8a-c schematically shows a vehicle in an unsprung state, in a sprung state according to prior art, and a sprung state according to the preset invention respectively;

Fig. 9 schematically shows a control system for controlling the suspension device according to the present invention; and

- 25 Fig. 10 schematically shows a flow chart for controlling the suspension device.

DESCRIPTION OF EMBODIMENTS

Fig. 1 schematically shows a suspension device I according to a first embodiment of the present invention. The suspension device I comprises an in- and out-configuration, respectively. The suspension device I comprises a first space 10 and a second space 20 separated by means of a valve configuration 40, which is in fluid communication with the first and the second space, the valve configuration 40 being arranged to control the flow of the fluid between the first and second space.

10 The suspension device I further comprises a piston stem 12 glidably arranged in the first space. The piston stem 12 is intended to be connected to a wheel of the vehicle via a linkage. The piston stem 12 is arranged in the first space 10 in such a way that it is divided into a first cavity 14 and a second cavity 16, the first cavity 14 being in fluid communication with the valve configuration 40 and containing a first fluid, preferably oil, and the
15 second cavity containing a second fluid in the form of a gaseous medium, e.g. nitrogen, having a relatively low pressure.

The piston stem 12 is movable in the first space in a direction of compression, the oil being arranged to be pressed by means of the piston
20 stem 12 from the first cavity 14 towards the valve configuration 40, and in a direction of expansion, in which the oil is supplied to the first cavity 14. By compression is thus meant inward damping/ inward spring action of the vehicle and by expansion is intended outward damping/ outward spring action or return of the vehicle. The in-configuration comprises the direction of
25 compression of the piston stem, i.e. suppression of the piston stem, and out-configuration comprises the direction of expansion of the piston stem, i.e. expression of the piston stem.

The second space 20 is divided into a third cavity 24 and a fourth cavity 26 by means of a piston 22, which is glidably arranged in the second space 20.

The third cavity 24 is in fluid communication with the valve configuration 40 and contains the first fluid, e.g. oil, and the fourth cavity 26 contains a fluid in the form of a compressible gaseous medium, e.g. nitrogen, having a relatively high pressure. The second space 20 thus constitutes a hydro
 5 pneumatic spring accumulator with a high pressure.

The valve configuration 40 comprises a first valve member 42 in the form of a non return valve 42 which is arranged to allow oil through the first cavity 14 during compression, i.e. during movement of the piston stem in the direction of compression, i.e. during impression of the piston stem 12. The non return
 10 valve 42 is further arranged to not allow oil through from the third cavity 24 during expansion, i.e. during piston movement in the direction of expansion, i.e. during expression of the piston stem 12.

The valve configuration 40 further comprises a second valve member 44 in the form of a controllable valve member 44. The controllable valve member
 15 44 is arranged parallel to the non return valve 42. The controllable valve member 44 is controllably arranged between an open position where the first fluid, i.e. oil is allowed to pass and a closed, or locked, position where the first fluid is not allowed to pass. In the closed position of the controllable valve member 44 consequently only the first fluid, i.e. oil is allowed to pass
 20 the valve configuration 40 during compression, where the fluid passes through the non return valve 42. Expansion is consequently not possible in this position, i.e. the outward damping is locked.

The valve configuration further comprises a third valve member 46 in the form of a throttle valve 46 or a constriction. The throttle valve 46 is arranged
 25 in series with the first and second valve member. The throttle valve 46 constitutes a damping member, where the oil during compression and expansion is forced through the throttle valve 46, whereby a damping action of the piston movement and thus the vehicle is achieved.

Fig. 2 schematically shows a suspension device II according to a second embodiment of the present invention. The suspension device II comprises an in- and out-configuration, respectively. The suspension device II for a vehicle comprises in accordance with the first embodiment a first space 10 and a second space 20 separated by means of a valve configuration 50, which is in fluid communication with the first and second space, the valve configuration 50 being arranged to control the fluid between the first and second space.

The suspension device II according to the second embodiment differs from the suspension device I according to the first embodiment only by the design of the valve configuration.

The valve configuration 50 according to the second embodiment comprises a first pair of valves 52, 53, a second pair of valves 54, 55 and a controllable valve member 56. The first pair of valves is arranged parallel to the second pair of valves. The first pair of valves comprises a first non return valve 52 and a first throttle valve 53 arranged in series. The second pair of valves comprises a second non return valve 54 and a second throttle valve 55 arranged in series. The controllable valve member 56 is arranged in series with the second valve member 54, 55.

The first non return valve 52 is arranged to allow oil through from the first cavity 14 during compression, i.e. during movement of the piston stem in the direction of compression, i.e. during impression of the piston stem 12. The first non return valve is further arranged not to allow oil through the third cavity 24 during expansion, i.e. during movement of the piston in the direction of expansion, i.e. during expression of the piston stem 12.

The first throttle valve 53 constitutes a damping member, in which the oil during compression is forced through the first throttle valve 53, whereby a damping action of the piston movement and thus of the vehicle is achieved.

The second non return valve 54 is arranged to allow oil through from the third cavity 24 during expansion, i.e. during movement of the piston stem in the

direction of expansion, i.e. during expression of the piston stem 12. The second non return valve is further arranged not to allow oil through from the first cavity during compression, i.e. during movement of the piston in the direction of compression, i.e. during impression of the piston stem 12.

- 5 The second throttle valve 55 constitutes a damping member, in which the oil during expansion is forced through the second throttle valve 55, whereby a damping action of the movement of the piston and thus of the vehicle is achieved.

- 10 The controllable valve member 56 is controllably arranged between an open position where oil is allowed to pass and a closed, or locked, position where oil is not allowed to pass. In the closed position of the controllable valve member 56 oil is thus allowed to only pass the valve configuration 50 during compression, in which the fluid passes through the first non return valve 52. Expansion is thus not possible in this position, i.e. the outward damping
15 action is locked.

- Fig. 3 schematically shows a suspension device III according to a third embodiment of the present invention. The suspension device III comprises an in- and out-configuration, respectively. The suspension device III for a vehicle comprises a first space 10, a second space 20 and a third space 30.
- 20 The first space 10 and the second space 20 are separated by means of a first valve configuration 60, which is in fluid communication with the first and second space, the first valve configuration 60 being arranged to control the fluid between the first and second space. The first space 10 and the third space 30 are separated by means of a second valve configuration 70, which
25 is in fluid communication with the firsts and third space, the second valve configuration 70 being arranged to control the fluid between the first and the third space.

The suspension device further comprises a piston stem 12 glidably arranged in the first space. The piston stem 12 is intended to be connected to a wheel

of the vehicle via a linkage. The piston stem 12 is arranged in the first space in such a way that it is divided into a first cavity 14 and a second cavity 16, the first cavity 14 being in fluid communication with the first valve configuration 60 and containing a first fluid, preferably oil, and the second
 5 cavity is in fluid communication with the second valve configuration 70 and containing a second fluid, preferably oil.

The piston stem 12 is movable in the first space 10 in a direction of compression, in which the oil is arranged to be pressed by means of the piston stem 12 from the first cavity 13 towards the first valve configuration 60,
 10 and in a direction of expansion, in which oil is supplied to the first cavity 14, and in which oil is arranged to be pressed from the second cavity 16 towards the second valve configuration 70. By compression is thus intended inward damping /inward spring action of the vehicle, i.e. impression of the piston stem, and by expansion is intended outward damping /outward spring action
 15 or return of the vehicle, i.e. expression of the piston stem.

The second space 20 is divided into a third cavity 24 and a fourth cavity 26 by means of a second piston 22, which is glidably arranged in the second space 20. The third cavity 24 is in fluid communication with the first valve configuration 60 and contains the first fluid, e.g. oil, and the fourth cavity 26
 20 contains a fluid in the form of a compressible gaseous medium, e.g. nitrogen, having a relatively high pressure. The second space 20 thus constitutes a hydro pneumatic spring accumulator with high pressure.

The third space 30 is divided into a fifth cavity 34 and a sixth cavity 36 by means of a third piston 32, which is glidably arranged in the third space 30.
 25 The fifth cavity 34 is in fluid communication with the second valve configuration 70 and contains the second fluid, e.g. oil, and the sixth cavity 36 contains a fluid in the form of a compressible gaseous medium, e.g. nitrogen, having a relatively low pressure.

The first valve configuration 60 according to the third embodiment of the suspension device III comprises a first valve member 62 in the form of a first non return valve 62, and a second valve member 64 in the form of a first throttle valve 64, arranged parallel to the first non return valve 62.

- 5 The first non return valve 62 is arranged to allow oil through from the third cavity 24 during expansion, i.e. during movement of the piston in the direction of expansion, i.e. during expression of the piston stem 12. The first non return valve 62 is further arranged not to allow oil through the first cavity 14 during compression, i.e. during movement of the piston in the direction of
10 compression, i.e. during impression of the piston stem 12.

The first throttle valve 64 constitutes a damping member, where the oil during compression is forced through the first throttle valve 64, whereby a damping action of the piston movement and thus of the vehicle is achieved.

- 15 The second valve configuration 70 according to the third embodiment comprises a third valve member 72 in the form of a second non return valve 72, and a fourth valve member 74 in the form of a second throttle valve 74, arranged parallel to the second non return valve 72. The second valve configuration 70 further comprises a controllable valve member 76 arranged in series with the third and fourth valve member.

- 20 The second non return valve 72 is arranged to allow oil through from the fifth cavity 34 during compression, i.e. during movement of the piston in the direction of compression, i.e. during impression of the piston stem 12. The second non return valve 72 is further arranged not to allow oil through from the first cavity 14 during expansion, i.e. during movement of the piston in the
25 direction of expansion, i.e. during expression of the piston stem 12.

The second throttle valve 74 comprises a damping member, in which the oil during expansion is forced through the throttle valve, whereby a damping action of the piston movement and thus of the vehicle is achieved.

The controllable valve member 76 is controllably arranged between an open position where oil is allowed to pass and a closed, or locked, position where oil is not allowed to pass. In the closed position of the controllable valve member 76 oil is thus only allowed to pass the first and second valve configuration 60, 70 during compression, where oil from the first cavity 14 passes through the first throttle valve 64, and where oil from the fifth cavity 34 passes through a third non return valve 77 of the controllable valve member 76. Expansion is thus not possible in this position, i.e. the outward damping action is locked.

- 5 10 The suspension device according to the first, second and third embodiment is constituted by a hydro pneumatic suspension device, in which damping action is hydraulic and spring action is hydro pneumatic. The advantage with using hydro pneumatic spring action is that the spring curve is progressive, which results in that the spring does not strike through as often as in a conventional linear spring. Since the spring contains gas, e.g. nitrogen or air, a light spring occupying little space and being capable of handling great forces is achieved. It is further easy to adjust/compensate for weight. The pre-load of the spring yields better comfort on an uneven road, e.g. reduced rocking.
- 20 Fig. 4 schematically shows a suspension device IV according to a fourth embodiment of the present invention. The suspension device IV comprises an in- and out-configuration, respectively. The suspension device IV according to the fourth embodiment differs from the suspension device III according to the third embodiment in that the fourth cavity 26 of the second space 20 contains a fluid in the form of a compressible gaseous medium, e.g. nitrogen, having a relatively low pressure.
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The suspension device IV according to the fourth embodiment is formed as a damping cylinder, which may be combined with a separate spring member, which may be constituted by any suitable spring such as e.g. a helical spring, plate spring, torsion spring, air spring etc. The separate spring member is

arranged in such a way that inward and outward spring action is achieved during normal drive.

Fig. 5-7 shows the function of the suspension device I-IV during normal drive of the vehicle and during heeling of the vehicle, respectively, for the different
5 embodiments of the suspension device I-IV according to the invention. In the figures the small white-filled arrows A illustrate the flow of the oil during compression/ inward spring action, i.e. when the piston stem is impressed. The small black-filled arrows B illustrate the flow of the oil during expansion/
outward spring action. The white-filled arrow C shows the direction of
10 compression of the piston stem and the black arrow D shows the direction of expansion of the piston stem. The black arrow E shows a low pressure of the gaseous medium in the cavity 16 and the black arrow F shows high pressure of the gaseous medium in the cavity 26.

Fig. 5a-b schematically shows the suspension device I according to the first
15 embodiment during compression and expansion, and during heeling restrain, respectively.

Fig. 5a shows the function of the suspension device during normal inward and outward spring action, respectively i.e. during drive where no heavy curves or slopes occur, but only when normal irregularities on the roadway
20 are present. In this position the controllable valve member 44 is in its open position. During compression/ inward spring action the piston stem 12 is impressed whereby oil is flowing from the first cavity 14 through the non return valve 42 and further through the throttle valve 46, whereby damping
25 action is achieved, to the third cavity 24 of the second space 20, in which second space spring action is achieved by means of the nitrogen gas of high pressure. During expansion/ outward spring action the piston stem 12 is expressed whereby oil is flowing from the third cavity 24 through the throttle valve 46, whereby damping is achieved, further through the controllable valve member 44, being in its open position, to the first cavity 14.

Fig. 5b shows the function of the suspension device I during heeling, i.e. during heavy cornering of the vehicle, during heavy inclination etc. when the controllable valve member 44 is activated by means of a sensing means (not shown) arranged to sense said heeling. In this position the controllable valve member is in its closed position. During compression/ inward spring action the piston stem 12 is impressed whereby oil is flowing from the first cavity 14 through the non return valve 42 and further through the throttle valve 46, whereby damping action is achieved, to the third cavity 24, in accordance with the function during normal inward spring action according to fig. 5a.

During expansion/ outward spring action oil is prevented from flowing through the controllable valve member 44 which is now set to its closed position, whereby the piston stem 12 is not expressed, but remain in its normal position.

The suspension device I according to the first embodiment thus comprises a throttle valve 46 functioning as a damper damping the flow of oil in both directions, and a loop for inward spring action with non return valve 42 and a loop for outward spring action with an active controllable valve member 44.

The suspension device I constitutes a single-acting spring leg with oil in the first cavity 14 and gas in the second cavity 16 of the first space 10, which gas acts as a stop for outward spring action. The gas volume in the second cavity 16 of the first space 10 results in avoidance of negative pressure in the first cavity 14 containing the oil when the force/pressure from the gas volume in the second cavity 16 is about the size of the unsprung weight, i.e. the weight which e.g. is constituted by tires, rim, brake disc, hub etc.

Fig. 6a-b schematically shows a suspension device II according to the second embodiment during compression and expansion, and during heeling restrain, respectively.

Fig. 6a shows the function of the suspension device II during normal inward and outward spring action, respectively i.e. during driving where no heavy

curves or inclinations occur, but only normal irregularities on the roadway exist. In this position the controllable valve member 56 is in its open position. During compression/ inward spring action the piston stem 12 is impressed whereby oil is flowing from the first cavity 14 through the first non return valve 52 and further through the first throttle valve 53, whereby damping action is achieved, to the third cavity 24 of the second space 20, in which second space spring action is achieved by means of the nitrogen gas of high pressure. During expansion/ outward spring action the piston stem 12 is expressed whereby oil is flowing from the third cavity through the second non return valve 54 and further through the second throttle valve 55, whereby damping action is achieved, further through the controllable valve member 56, being in its open position, to the first cavity.

Fig. 6b shows the function of the suspension device during heeling, i.e. during heavy cornering of the vehicle, during heavy inclination etc. when the controllable valve member 56 is activated by means of a sensing means (not shown) arranged to sense said heeling. In this position the controllable valve member 56 is in its closed position. During compression/ inward spring action the piston stem 12 is impressed whereby oil is flowing from the first cavity 14 through the first non return valve 52 and further through the first throttle valve 53, whereby damping action is achieved, to the third cavity 24 of the second space 20, in accordance with the function during normal inward spring action according to fig. 6a. During expansion/ outward spring action, oil is prevented from flowing through the controllable valve member 56 which now has been set to its closed position, whereby the piston stem 12 is not expressed, but remain in its normal position.

The suspension device II according to the second embodiment thus has separate throttle valves (dampers) 55, 53 for inward and outward spring action, and non return valves 54, 52 in each loop. The suspension device II constitutes a single-acting spring leg with oil in the first cavity 14 and gas in the second cavity 16 of the first space 10, which gas acts as a stop for

outward spring action. The gas volume in the second cavity 16 of the first space 10 results in that negative pressure is avoided in the first cavity 14 containing the oil when the force/pressure from the gas volume in the second cavity 16 is about the size of the unsprung weight, i.e. the weight which e.g.
 5 is constituted by tires, rim, brake disc, callipers etc.

Fig. 7a-b schematically shows the suspension device according to the third/fourth embodiment III and IV during compression and expansion, and heeling restraint, respectively.

Fig. 7a shows the function of the suspension device during normal inward and outward spring action respectively, during drive, i.e. during driving where
 10 no heavy curves or inclinations occur, but only normal irregularities on the roadway. In this position the controllable valve member 76 is in its open position. During compression/ inward spring action the piston stem 12 is impressed whereby oil is flowing from the first cavity 14 of the first space 10
 15 through the first throttle valve 64 of the first valve configuration 60, whereby damping action is achieved, to the third cavity 24 of the second space 20, in which second space spring action is achieved by means of the nitrogen gas of thigh pressure. When the piston stem 12 is impressed oil is also flowing from the fifth cavity 34 of the third space 30 through the second valve
 20 configuration 70, i.e. through the controllable valve member 76, being in its open position, and further through the second non return valve 72 to the second cavity 16 of the first space 10.

During expansion/ outward spring action the piston stem 12 is depressed whereby oil is flowing from the third cavity 24 of the second space 20 through
 25 the first non return valve 62 of the first valve configuration 60 to the first cavity 14. When the piston stem 12 is depressed oil is also flowing from the second cavity 16 of the first space 10 through the second throttle valve 74 and further through the controllable valve member 76, being in its open position, to the fifth cavity 34 of the third space 30.

Fig. 7b shows the function of the suspension device during heeling, i.e. during heavy cornering of the vehicle, during heavy inclination etc. when the controllable valve member is activated by means of sensing means arranged to sense said heeling. In this position the controllable valve member 76 is in its closed position. During compression/ inward spring action the piston stem 12 is impressed whereby oil is flowing in accordance with normal inward spring action according to fig. 7a above. During expansion/ outward spring action oil is prevented to flow through the controllable valve member 76 which now is in its closed position, whereby the piston stem is not depressed but remains in its normal position.

The suspension device III according to the third embodiment is a hydro pneumatic suspension device, where the second space 20, with gas having high pressure in the fourth cavity 26 constitutes a gas spring, while the suspension device IV according to the fourth embodiment only constitutes a hydro pneumatic damper, whereby a spring member may be used for spring action, where the gas volume in the fourth cavity 26 in the second space 20 and the gas volume in the sixth cavity 36 in the third space 30 functions as a gas damper, i.e. pressurizes the oil, avoiding cavitation of the same or that the damping will not have to much play in the case of oil leakage.

The suspension device III, IV according to third and fourth embodiment constitutes a double-acting suspension device where both the first cavity 14 and the second cavity 16 of the first space 10 contain oil. This results in the risk of cavitation, i.e. splitting and/or formation of foam of the oil is minimized.

Fig. 8a-c schematically show a vehicle in an unsprung condition, in a sprung condition according to prior art, and in a sprung condition according to the present invention, respectively.

Fig. 8a schematically shows a vehicle 100 on a roadway Z in an unsprung state comprising a vehicle body 110, wheels 120, and a suspension device 1a, 1b connected between each wheel and the vehicle according to any of

the embodiments I-IV above, in the form of a spring leg. In the unsprung state each spring leg 1a, 1b has the length L. The vehicle has a so called roll centre RC about which the vehicle body rotates during heeling.

Fig. 8b schematically shows a vehicle 100 on the roadway Z in a sprung state during heeling according to prior art, where the vehicle lacks stabilizers. The vehicle comprises the vehicle body 110, the wheels 120, and a suspension device 1a', 1b' connected between each wheel and the vehicle body according to prior art. During e.g. driving in a curve heeling of the vehicle body occurs which rotates about its roll centre RC. In the case of the suspension device according to prior art the vehicle rolls during e.g. cornering so that the outer suspension device 1a, i.e. the outer spring leg, of the vehicle is impressed to a length L-x, while the inner suspension device 1b', i.e. the inner spring leg, is depressed to a length L+x, where x constitutes the impressed/expressed length of the spring leg 1a', 1b'. The vehicle thus gets a heavy rotation on the vehicle body 110 about the roll centre RC, with a roll angle α_1 .

The position of the centre of gravity during driving in a curve with a vehicle having conventional mechanical stabilizers will be raised in a hydro pneumatic suspension device due to the great spring force in the suspension device, whereby the whole vehicle body will be raised.

The rotation of the vehicle body during drive in a curve will be reduced in conventional mechanical stabilizers due to the great spring force. The outer spring leg will get a very high spring constant which worsens the comfort and the grip of the wheel on an uneven ground.

Fig. 8c schematically shows a vehicle 100 on a roadway Z in a sprung condition during heeling with a suspension device according to the present invention. During heeling of the vehicle the controllable valve member of the suspension device is arranged to be activated. In the case of a suspension device 1a, 1b according to the present invention the vehicle is rolling during

e.g. cornering so that the outer suspension device 1a, i.e. the outer spring leg, of the vehicle is impressed to a length $L-x$, while the inner suspension device 1a, i.e. the inner spring leg, is not expressed but maintains the length L , since the controllable valve member 44; 56; 76 is activated and thus locks
 5 the inner suspension device 1b. More generally the controllability of said damping and/or spring action comprises a locked or substantially locked state in the out-configuration. This leads to the achievement of a lower roll centre RC and a lower centre of gravity, where the roll centre RC/ centre of gravity is lowered with Y , and thus reduced rotation of the vehicle body, and
 10 thus a smaller angle α_2 .

The position of the centre of gravity of the vehicle will, during driving in a curve, be lowered, with the controllable valve member activated in the locked position, whereby the whole of the vehicle body is lowered to a great extent, which heavily reduces the risk of tipping.

15 The rotation of the vehicle body during driving in a curve will, with the controllable valve member activated in the locked position, get a lower angle of rotation α_2 since the centre of gravity is lowered, and since the inner spring leg does not contribute to any rotation of the vehicle. The spring force in the outer spring leg does only marginally increase whereby comfort and grip is
 20 maintained.

Fig. 9 schematically shows a system for controlling the suspension device according to the present invention. The control system comprises an electronic control unit 200, an accelerometer 210 arranged to sense the lateral acceleration of the vehicle, a roll angle sensor 220 arranged to sense
 25 the inclination of the vehicle about its roll centre, a speed sensor 230 arranged to sense the speed of the vehicle, a steering angle sensor 240 arranged to sense the steering angle of the vehicle, an inclination sensor 250 arranged to sense the inclination of the vehicle relative to the horizontal plane, and a controllable valve member 300, comprising any controllable
 30 valve member comprising the controllable valve members 44, 56, 76

according to the embodiments of the suspension devices I-IV. The inclination sensor 250 is according to a variant arranged to sense the position of the wheels in relation to right or left side of the vehicle in order to determine whether the vehicle is inclining or not.

- 5 The electronic control unit 200 is connected to and arranged to receive information from the accelerometer 210, the roll angle sensor 220, the speed sensor 230, the steering angle sensor 240 and the inclination sensor 250. The electronic control unit 200 is connected to the controllable valve member 300, wherein the electronic control unit 200 is arranged to transfer
10 information about lateral acceleration, roll angle, vehicle speed and steering angle to the controllable valve member 300. The controllable valve member is arranged to control the controllable valve member between an active, closed position and an inactive, open position based on the information transferred from the electronic control unit.
- 15 The controllable valve member of the suspension device according to the first, second, third and fourth embodiment according to above is arranged to be controlled by means of sensors arranged at each wheel of the vehicle, respectively, which according to a variant are arranged to determine the vertical position of each wheel and the amount of the force acting on each
20 wheel. Accelerometers 210 e.g. are arranged to transmit information to the electronic control unit 200 when the vehicle is accelerating, brakes and turns. The electronic control unit 200 is arranged to regularly process information and determine the position of each single wheel.

Fig. 10 schematically shows a flow chart for controlling the suspension
25 device by means of a computer programme being initiated and controlled by the electronic control unit 200. Alternatively the computer programme may be controlled by an external computer connected to the electronic control unit.

The electronic control unit initiates the computer programme, which is run continuously during vehicle drive. If the vehicle speed is less than v km/h,

e.g. 20 km/h the run is stopped, i.e. no activation of each controllable valve member. If the vehicle speed is greater than v km/h the roll angle α is controlled. If the roll angle α is greater than q degrees, e.g. 3 degrees in either direction, the controllable valve member is activated such that it is
5 locked on the suspension device on which expansion force is acting in the out-configuration, so that outward spring action/ outward damping action is locked.

According to an embodiment of the present invention the computer programme comprises a programme code for performing the step of locking
10 or substantially locking said damping and/or spring action in the out-configuration, when said computer programme is executed on a computer.

According to an embodiment of the present invention the computer programme comprises programme code for performing the step of sensing heeling of the vehicle during cornering, drive in uneven terrain etc. in order
15 to, based upon the heeling, lock or substantially lock said damping and/or spring action in the out-configuration, when said computer programme is executed on the computer.

According to an embodiment of the present invention the computer programme comprises programme code in order to, based upon the lateral
20 acceleration, lock or substantially lock said damping and/or spring action in the out-configuration, when said computer programme is executed on the computer.

According to an embodiment of the present invention the computer programme comprises programme code for performing the step of sensing
25 inclination of the vehicle relative to the horizontal plane in order to, based on said inclination, lock or substantially lock said damping and/or spring action in the out-configuration, when said computer programme is executed on the computer.

According to an embodiment of the present invention a computer programme product comprises programme code stored on a, by a computer readable, media for performing the step of locking or substantially locking said damping and/or spring action in the out-configuration, when said computer programme
5 is executed on a computer.

According to an embodiment of the present invention the computer programme product comprises programme code for performing the step of sensing heeling of the vehicle during cornering, drive in uneven terrain etc. in order to, based upon the heeling, lock or substantially lock said damping
10 and/or spring action in the out-configuration, when said computer programme is executed on the computer.

According to an embodiment of the present invention the computer programme product comprises programme code stored on a, by a computer readable, media for performing the step of sensing lateral acceleration in order to, based upon the lateral acceleration lock or substantially lock said
15 damping and/or spring action in the out-configuration, when said computer programme is executed on the computer.

According to an embodiment of the present invention the computer programme product comprises programme code stored on a, by a computer
20 readable, media for performing the step of sensing inclination of the vehicle relative to the horizontal plane, in order to, based upon said inclination lock or substantially lock said damping and/or spring action in the out-configuration, when said computer programme is executed on the computer.

According to an embodiment the present invention comprises a computer
25 programme product directly loadable in an internal memory into a computer, comprising a computer programme for performing the step of locking or substantially locking said damping and/or spring action in the out-configuration, when said computer programme is executed on the computer.

According to an embodiment the present invention comprises a computer programme product directly loadable in an internal memory in a computer, comprising a computer programme for performing the step of sensing heeling of vehicle during cornering, drive in uneven terrain etc. in order to, based upon the heeling, lock or substantially lock said damping and/or spring action in the out-configuration, when said computer programme is executed on the computer.

According to an embodiment the present invention comprises a computer programme product directly loadable in an internal memory in a computer, comprising a computer programme for performing the step of sensing lateral acceleration in order to, based upon the lateral acceleration, lock or substantially lock said damping and/or spring action in the out-configuration, when said computer programme is executed on the computer.

According to an embodiment the present invention comprises a computer programme product directly loadable in an internal memory in a computer, comprising a computer programme for performing the step of sensing inclination of the vehicle relative to the horizontal plane in order to, based upon said inclination, lock or substantially lock said damping and/or spring action in the out-configuration, when said computer programme is executed on a computer.

An advantage with the suspension device according to the present invention according to the embodiments above is that in heavy vehicles, such as cross country military vehicles, the unsprung weight per wheel station of the vehicle is used as a ballast for preventing roll and kneeling of the vehicle. The weight of the wheel stations reduces the risk that the wheel stations are lifted during too heavy cornering.

The embodiments of the suspension device mentioned above constitute so called semi-active suspension devices, but also so called active suspension devices are conceivable, i.e. where both spring action and damping action is

controllable, whereby e.g. harder spring would be achievable in the outer wheels during cornering where at the same time the outward damping action of the inner wheels is locked, which would further improve the running characteristics, i.e. reduce roll. By having an extra accumulator with gas
5 which is connected to accumulator of the spring leg, which works as a spring, i.e. a hydro pneumatic system, may from the additional accumulator more gas temporarily be pressed in the gas volume of the spring leg whereby a harder spring is achieved. This is conceivable in corners or when the vehicle starts to incline to a large extent. With such an active system locking of both
10 outward spring action and outward damping action results in backup, i.e. if one fails the other will provide locking during e.g. cornering.

Above expansion and compression respectively of the suspension device according to the different embodiments has been achieved by a piston stem. Alternatively expansion and compression of the suspension device according
15 to the invention be achieved by means of a membrane device.

Although only hydro pneumatic dampers have been mentioned, electric dampers or magnetic dampers are conceivable.

By vehicle is intended any kind of motor vehicle, such as a car, truck, military vehicle such as crawler-type vehicle, wheel vehicle, cross country vehicle,
20 but also non-motor driven vehicles such as tows, wagons etc.

The invention should not be considered to be limited by the above mentioned embodiments but may be varied within the scope of the appended claims.

CLAIMS

1. A suspension device (I; II; III; IV) comprising an in- and out-configuration, respectively, for a vehicle comprising means for damping action, said damping action being controllable, wherein the controllability of said damping
5 action comprises a locked or substantially locked state in the out-configuration, wherein a valve configuration (40; 50; 60, 70) is present comprising a valve (44; 56, 77) for control in said out-configuration, said valve configuration comprising a separate valve (42; 52, 53; 64, 72, 76) in
10 said in-configuration, **characterized in that** the means for damping action is part of a means for damping and spring action provision, said means for damping and spring action providing a spring and damping action state in the in-configuration arranged such that spring and damping action takes a constant unlocked state independent of locked or unlocked state in the out-configuration by means of said separate valve (42; 52, 53; 64, 72, 76).
- 15 2. A suspension device according to claim 1, wherein the suspension device (I; II; III; IV) is semi-active in such a way that said damping action is arranged to occupy a locked or substantially locked state in the out-configuration.
3. A suspension device according to claim 1 or 2, wherein said damping action is hydraulic.
- 20 4. A suspension device according to any of claims 1-3, wherein the valve configuration (40; 50; 60, 70) comprises a throttle valve (46; 55; 64) arranged in series with the valve for control (44; 56; 76).
5. A suspension device according to any preceding claim, comprising means (210, 220, 230, 240, 250) for sensing heeling of vehicle during
25 cornering, driving in uneven terrain etc. wherein said damping and spring action is arranged to be locked or substantially locked in the out-configuration, based on said heeling.

6. A suspension device according to claim 5, wherein said sensing means (210) comprises a member for sensing the lateral acceleration.
7. A suspension device according to claim 5 or 6, wherein said sensing means comprises a member for sensing inclination (220, 250) of the vehicle relative to the horizontal plane.
8. A method during damping action with an in- and out-configuration of a vehicle comprising the step of controlling said damping action, comprising the step of locking or substantially locking said damping action in the out-configuration, said out-configuration being controlled by means of a valve (44; 56; 77) of a valve configuration (40; 50; 60; 70) having a separate valve (42; 52, 53, 64, 72) in said in-configuration, **characterized in that** the step of controlling said damping action further comprises a step of controlling a spring action comprising the step of locking or substantially locking said spring action in the out-configuration, and further in the step of allowing said damping and spring action to be constantly unlocked in the in-configuration independent of locked or unlocked state in the out-configuration by means of said separate valve (42; 52, 53; 64, 72, 76).
9. A method according to claim 8, further comprising the step of sensing heeling of the vehicle during cornering, driving in uneven terrain etc. in order to, based upon the heeling, lock or substantially lock said damping and spring action in the out-configuration.
10. A method according to claim 8 or 9, further comprising the step of sensing the lateral acceleration in order to, based upon the lateral acceleration, lock or substantially lock said damping and spring action in the out-configuration.
11. A method according to any of claims 8-10, further comprising the step of sensing inclination of the vehicle relative to the horizontal plane, in order to, based upon said position, lock or substantially lock said damping and spring action in the out configuration.

12. A vehicle comprising a device according to any of claims 1-7.
13. A computer programme comprising a programme code for performing the method steps in any of claims 8-11, when said computer programme is executed on a computer.
- 5 14. A computer programme product comprising a programme code stored on a, by a computer readable, media for performing the method steps in any of claims 8-11, when said computer programme is executed on the computer.
- 10 15. A computer programme product directly loadable in an internal memory in a computer, comprising computer programme for performing the method steps according to any of claims 8-11, when said computer is executed on the computer.