



# Research status and quality improvement of wire arc additive manufacturing of metals

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**Abstract:** Wire arc additive manufacturing (WAAM) is a kind of additive manufacturing technology with excellent development potential in recent years. This work aims to summarize the current research status and challenges in WAAM and provide quality improvement methods. The research status of WAAM in surface finish and forming accuracy, microstructure and mechanical properties, residual stress and deformation, porosity and other defects is given. The methods of eliminating the above shortcomings and improving the microstructure and mechanical properties are summarized from pre-processing, on-line processing and post-processing perspectives. It is concluded that there are still many challenges to the widespread adoption of WAAM, and various perspectives may be needed to achieve this. The development of path planning and slicing algorithm, the combination of online monitoring systems with existing WAAM equipment, and composite post-processing technology will be the key research directions in the future.

**Key words:** wire arc additive manufacturing; material property improvement; process parameter control; in-process monitoring; post-treatment

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background

With the development of the aerospace industry, the demand for large-scale, integrated, lightweight, and complex manufacturing is increasing, and higher requirements have been put forward for metal materials performance. The traditional manufacturing mode is difficult to meet

the requirements of high efficiency and low cost.

Additive manufacturing (AM) is a new manufacturing technology with excellent development potential, which has attracted the interest of a large number of researchers. Unlike traditional manufacturing, AM does not make parts by removing materials, reducing the waste of raw materials, and making AM attractive at cost. In AM, raw materials are heated to a molten state and deposited ‘layer by layer’ along the predetermined

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path, forming the desired shape [1–3]. AM is highly flexible because it does not require custom molds or special tools, and the manufacturing process can be adjusted at any time [4,5]. This realizes digitization, intellectualization, and parallelization [2]. As a non-contact manufacturing process, AM is not limited by the shape/construction of the parts, so it is especially suitable for manufacturing complex parts [3]. These characteristics make AM competitive in the fast, efficient, near-net forming of large and complex components. In the future, AM will likely replace traditional manufacturing method and become the mainstream manufacturing technology.

## 1.2 Genres of AM

AM technology can be divided into different types according to the heat sources and material supply modes. Main AM technology includes selective laser melting (SLM), electron beam melting (EBM), laser engineered net shaping (LENS), electron beam freeform fabrication (EBFF), and wire and arc additive manufacturing (WAAM). The characteristics of these AM technologies are given in Table 1.

SLM and EBM are powder bed fusion (PBF) technologies, and these techniques produce parts by melting metal powder laid on a powder bed. LENS, EBFF and WAAM are direct energy deposition (DED) technologies. Unlike PBF, in DED, raw materials are sent into the heat source affected zone to produce components. The advantage of PBF is the high precision, and this is because DED doesn't have powder support [4]. However, the DED has a high deposition rate, so it has great application value in making significant components [5].

SLM is the most widely used laser-based AM technology, suitable for various metal materials and metal matrix composite materials [6], commonly used in industrial manufacturing, biomaterial,

medical fields, and so on [7]. SLM processes have high-speed heating and cooling rates [8], the components have refined grains, and mechanical properties can reach the forging level [9,10]. In addition, it also has the advantages of high material utilization and forming accuracy [11,12], attractive in precision manufacturing, when raw material costs are high. Electron beam is another common heat source with a high energy density [13]. EBMS can produce components quickly with low participation stress levels [14,15], and LENS has the advantage in the microstructure of manufacturing components because of the precise control of process parameters [16]. EBFF is another DED technology, which is the preferred AM technology for manufacturing refractory and active metal materials [17,18]. Compared with these AM technologies, WAAM has a higher deposition rate and is more environmentally friendly [19,20]. In addition, WAAM can use existing arc welding equipment, so the hardware cost is lower than that of other AM systems [21].

## 2 State-of-the-art

Although the performance of WAAM-manufactured components is comparable to that of conventionally-manufactured components in many cases, some deficiencies still need to be addressed. The surface finish of WAAM-manufactured components needs to be improved; high level of tensile residual stress and deformation, voids, cracking and other defects should also be avoided. There are many reasons for these defects, such as poor path planning, unstable welding pool dynamics caused by poor parameter setting, thermal deformation caused by heat accumulation, environmental impact, and equipment failure. The details of these common defects are discussed in this section.

**Table 1** Characteristics of different metal additive manufacturing

AM technology	Heat source	Process type	Material form	Manufacturing environment	Component size
SLM	Laser	PBF	Powder bed	Inert gas	Small/Medium
EBM	Electron beam	PBF	Powder bed	Vacuum	Small/Medium
LENS	Laser	DED	Powder feeding	Inert gas	Medium/Large
EBFF	Electron beam	DED	Wire feeding	Vacuum	Large
WAAM	Arc	DED	Wire feeding	Inert gas	Ultra-large

PBF–Powder bed fusion; DED–Direct energy deposition

## 2.1 Surface finish and dimensional accuracy

Macroscopically, the factors in evaluating WAAM quality mainly include surface finish and forming accuracy. The indexes in assessing surface quality include oxidation degree and surface roughness.

Oxidation is a defect worthy of attention in WAAM. Active metal materials commonly-used in aerospace structures, such as Ti–6Al–4V and aluminum alloys, easily react with oxygen at high temperatures to form oxides. As mentioned above, WAAM is a process of accumulation, and these oxides will enter the deposition layers during the remelting process, affecting the mechanical properties of the WAAM components [22]. YUE et al [23] pointed out that titanium oxidizes to form TiO<sub>2</sub> when the temperature exceeds 500 °C. When this material with high hardness and high brittleness diffuses into the matrix, it will seriously affect the ductility and fatigue properties of titanium. In WAAM, aluminum reacts with oxygen to form an Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> layer on the weld bead surface. However, if the process parameters are abnormal, the material may have uneven white accumulation. This abnormal oxidation phenomenon will change the mechanical properties of material, thus affecting the quality of the final part [24]. For Al–Mg alloy, MgO generated by oxidation weakens the solution strengthening effect, thus reducing the mechanical properties of the material. In addition, H<sub>2</sub> is produced during the oxidation process, which may increase the pores in the material [25].

As the molten pool is in a weak constrained state, and its ability to suppress complex disturbance is low, the stability of WAAM is insufficient. As a result, WAAM has some deficiencies in surface finish and dimensional accuracy [26,27]. This affects the mechanical properties (such as fatigue behavior, corrosion resistance, and creep life) and functional properties (such as friction, wear, reflection, heat conduction, and lubrication) of WAAM-manufactured parts. More seriously, this can lead to instability in subsequent deposition processes, resulting in defects such as pores, voids, and delamination, and reducing strength and fatigue life [28]. Some scholars have pointed out that the macroscopic accuracy of WAAM is strongly dependent on process parameters. Proper control of heat input and heat accumulation of deposition layers is beneficial

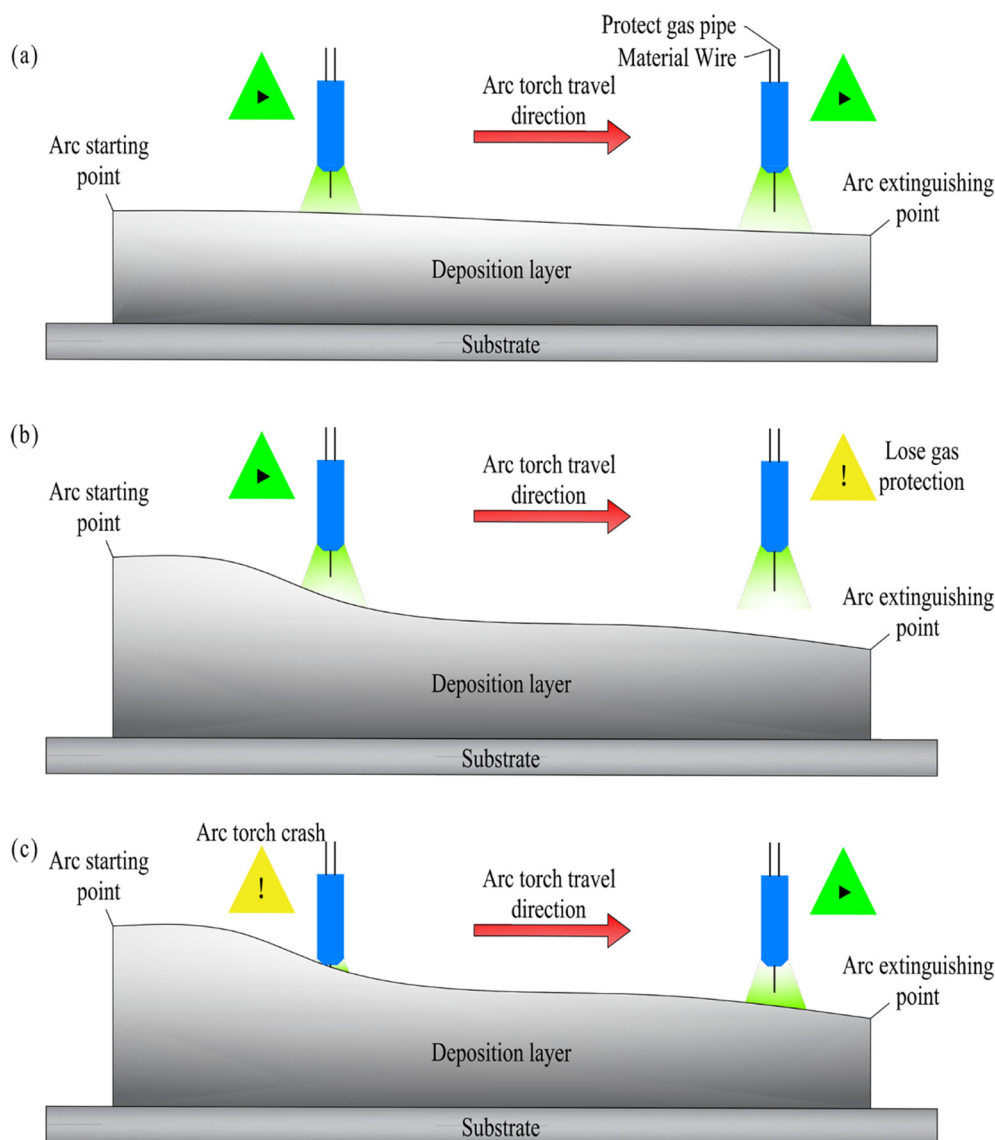
to improving the surface finish of WAAM components [29].

In WAAM, welding voltage is unstable in the arc starting and extinguishing areas. In addition, the molten liquid metal is subjected to a combination of gravity, surface tension, and support force [30]. These factors lead to the height difference between arc starting and arc extinguishing points, as shown in Fig. 1. With the accumulation of errors, the material cannot obtain a protective atmosphere, resulting in oxidation and porosity, as shown in Fig. 1(b). What's worse, the arc torch may collide with the deposit when it returns, resulting in actuator end precision loss or even damage to welding equipment, as shown in Fig. 1(c).

## 2.2 Microstructure

Different types of microstructures can be observed in WAAM parts, and this is due to the difference in component undercooling. In WAAM, the solidification rate (SR) and local temperature gradient (TG) are the main factors affecting the component supercooling. Specifically, a higher TG/SR ratio results in the transformation of grains into columnar crystals. On the contrary, the grains are transformed into equiaxed grains. For a single deposition layer, the top is in direct contact with air, with high heat exchange efficiency and a high cooling rate, and grains solidify before they fully grow and are small in size. In the bottom, the material can dissipate heat through the former layers and substrate, so the grain size in this area is also refined. However, in the middle area, thick columnar crystals are formed due to the lack of cooling [31].

After the deposition, a kind of alternating structure is formed inside the WAAM component, as shown in Fig. 2(f). ZHOU et al [32] studied this structure in detail and found that it was a typical non-uniform band structure with alternating equiaxed and columnar crystals. The formation of this structure is as follows. During the deposition of the (N+1)th layer, the top of the Nth layer was remelted, forming an inter-layer area. Since this area is in contact with the Nth layer, which is cooled during interlayer cooling, SR is larger and equiaxed crystals are formed. However, in the inner-layer area, columnar crystals are formed along the vertical direction due to the slow cooling rate and the effect of gravity. As the deposition process goes



**Fig. 1** Side view of WAAM deposition layers with small (a) and large (b, c) height differences between arc starting and extinguishing points

on, the above steps are repeated, and finally, the columnar crystals and equiaxed crystals are alternately distributed in the component.

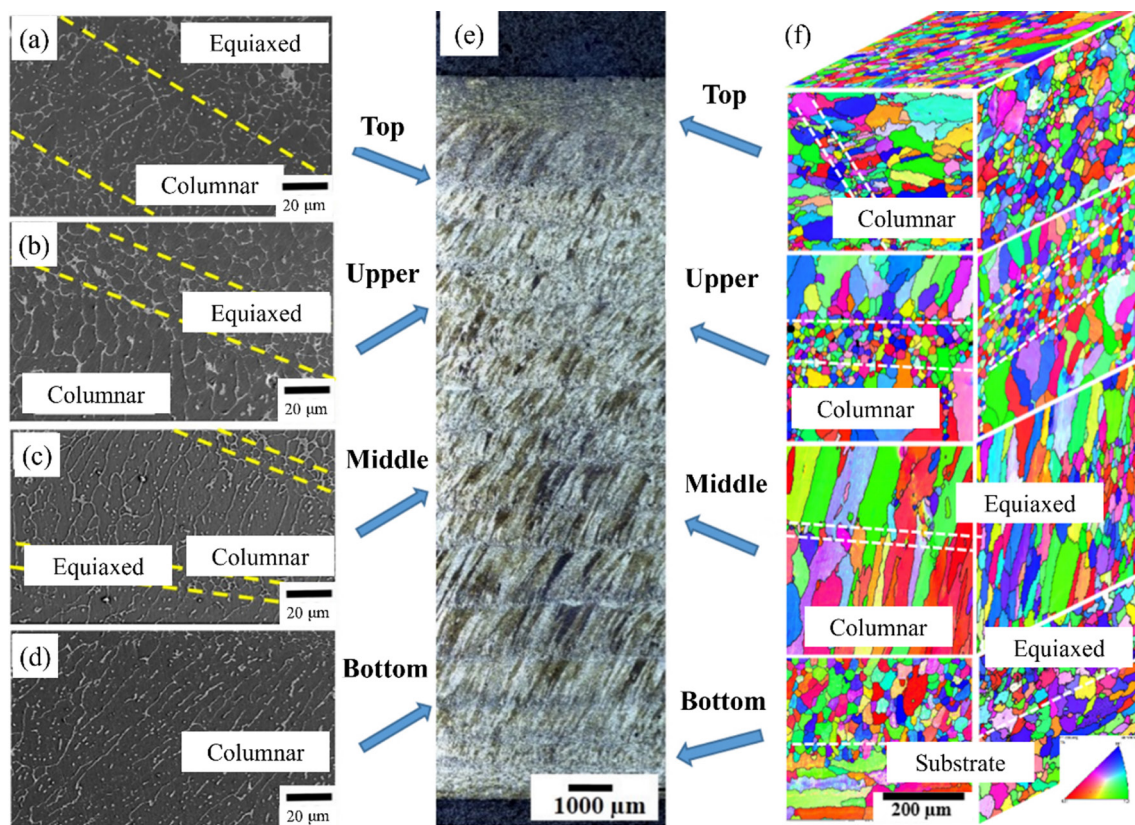
Similar to the deposition process, after the overlapping, a structure with an alternate distribution of inner-layer and inter-layer area is formed [33]. In the former, the grains grow along the heat conduction direction, and columnar crystals perpendicular to the fusion line are formed. In the latter, the grains cool rapidly, and equiaxed crystals are formed.

### 2.3 Mechanical properties

WAAM components have two disadvantages in mechanical properties. Firstly, there are a lot of

coarse columnar crystals in WAAM components, which produce poor mechanical properties. The researchers point out that WAAM components are typical cast-state structures, and UTS and YS are not up to the standard of conventional forging parts [34]. At the same time, the difference in microstructure brings about differences in mechanical properties.

The highly unidirectional grain structure formed in the WAAM leads to the anisotropy of the mechanical properties [35–38], and may affect the corrosion and fatigue properties of the components [39]. LAGHI et al [40] found that elastic and shear modulus of WAAM components is significantly different in different directions.



**Fig. 2** Microstructures of WC deposit: (a) Top zone; (b) Upper zone; (c) Middle zone; (d) Bottom zone; (e) Cross section; (f) 3D IPF photo [32]

SEOW et al [41] found that the tensile property of WAAM-718 alloy is diverse in different directions. HASSEL and CARSTENSEN [42] tested the mechanical properties of WAAM components in different directions, and the results are shown in Fig. 3. In the direction of  $90^\circ$  and  $0^\circ$  to building direction (BD), the material shows lower strength and higher plastic deformation capacity. The part also shows different hardness values in different directions, as shown in Fig. 3(b). In the direction of  $45^\circ$  to BD, the hardness of the material is minor. GU et al [43] studied the mechanical properties of Al–Cu–Mg alloy WAAM components. As shown in Fig. 3(c), UTS and elongation have significant differences between horizontal and vertical directions, but the YS differs little in different directions. The tensile test indicates no significant difference in the tensile curves (Fig. 3(d)) in different directions before fracture, but a fracture in the vertical direction occurs earlier.

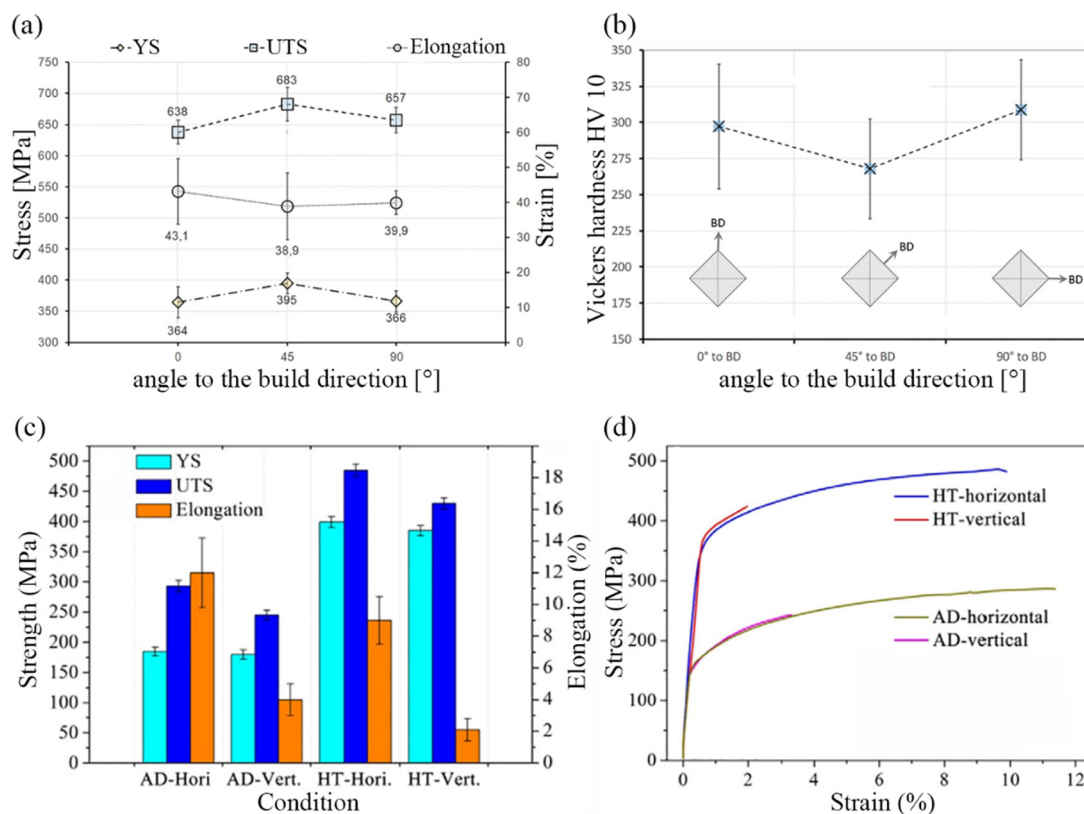
#### 2.4 Residual stresses and deformation

In WAAM, internal stress occurs in the components due to arc heat and fixture. When these

factors disappear, the stress caused by them still partially retains in the interior, that is, residual stress. The non-uniform distribution of the temperature field in WAAM is the main reason for residual stress formation [44].

The residual stress sometimes does not immediately show defects but gradually superposes with the working stress generated during the use, resulting in adverse effects such as deformation, delamination, cracking, and fatigue performance degradation. The plastic deformation will occur when the residual stress inside the component is huge, making the strain exceed the elastic limit. Residual stress also results in warping, delamination, and loss of edge tolerance [45,46]. Sometimes the residual stress of WAAM components is even close to its yield strength (YS), affecting fatigue performance and service life [47]. When the residual stress exceeds the tensile strength (TS), the parts will crack and cause economic losses. When the residual stress is between YT and TS, plastic deformation will occur in the material [48], which affects the dimensional accuracy and assembly performance.





**Fig. 3** Mechanical properties (a) and Vickers hardness (b) of WAAM specimen in different directions; Tensile properties [42] (c) and stress–strain curves [43] (d) of as-deposited (AD) and heat-treated (HT) WAAM parts

## 2.5 Porosity and crack

Porosity is the most common but challenging defect in WAAM [49]. According to formation mechanism, porosity can be divided into raw material-induced porosity and process-induced porosity [50]. Raw material-induced porosity appears, because raw materials are contaminated with moisture, oils, and other hydrocarbons. During the deposition process, these pollutants are easily absorbed into the molten pool, and porosity is formed after solidification [51]. Process-induced porosity is caused by poor path planning or process parameters. Failure in path planning and process parameter selection makes the deposition process unstable, resulting in spatter or virtual welding, and finally causing porosity [52]. Another reason is that the high temperatures and pressures are generated by the arc split water vapor into hydrogen and oxygen ions, which are absorbed by the molten pool during deposition. The solidification process changes the solubility of hydrogen ions, and when it exceeds the solubility limit, hydrogen pores will be formed in the material [53]. Therefore, ensuring the cleanliness of WAAM raw materials and selecting

appropriate process parameters are effective methods to avoid porosity. When subjected to tensile stress, micro-pores will gradually merge and eventually produce microcrack damage, thus reducing mechanical strength of components [54]. Stress concentration will occur around the porosity, which seriously affects the yield strength and fatigue strength of the material, and causes premature fracture. Porosity is also considered to cause mechanical anisotropy of WAAM forming parts [55].

Cracks are another common defects that may occur during WAAM. It is usually related to the thermal stress induced by AM process, and sometimes also related to the formation of micro-pores in the late curing stage [56]. Generally, cracks produced in WAAM are solidification cracks or grain boundary cracks [48]. The former is due to the different shrinkage rates of solidification in each part of the molten pool. The latter is due to the fact that the difference between the metal matrix and the precipitated phase, under the inner stress, produces cracking along grain boundaries. Crack is a defect that cannot be repaired by post-processing, which

will affect the strength and fatigue performance of the component [57]. Further expansion of crack may lead to fracture, resulting in unpredictable and irreversible losses.

### 3 Pre-processing before WAAM

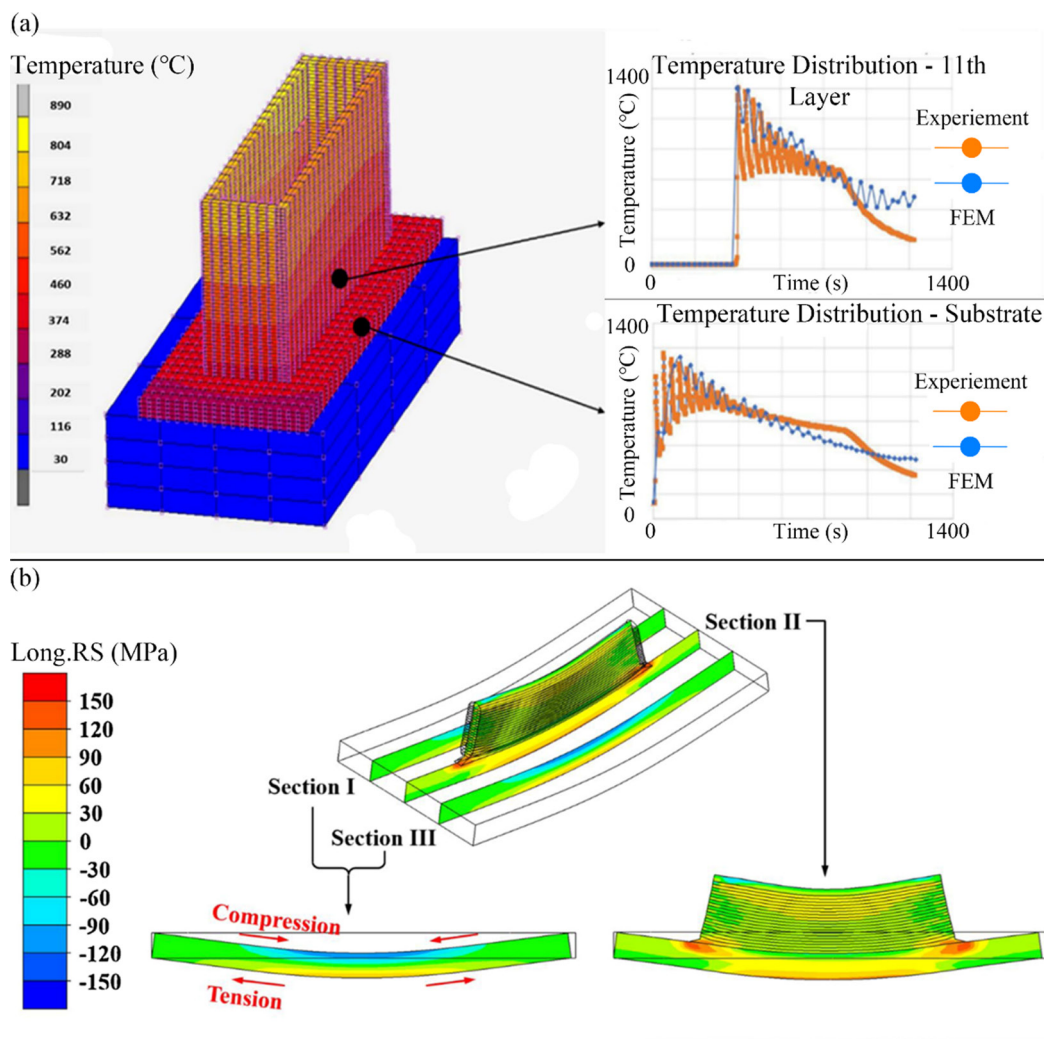
Pre-processing means anticipating and planning the process or result of WAAM to avoid failures and improve final quality before it starts. The pre-processing methods generally include numerical simulation and path planning, which can improve forming accuracy and alleviate residual stress.

#### 3.1 Numerical simulation

Understanding the evolution of physical fields in WAAM is very important for predicting

microstructure evolution and mechanical properties of the final components. Many factors must be considered and designed in the WAAM process, including heat source parameters, arc torch travel speed, interlayer cooling time, etc. To optimize WAAM process, numerical simulation is essential. Unlike traditional experimental trial-and-error method, numerical simulation technology can save time and money [58]. As shown in Fig. 4, the numerical simulation of WAAM mainly is focused on temperature distribution, residual stress distribution and component deformation [59–61].

In recent years, studying temperature/residual stress distribution in WAAM process using numerical simulation has become a popular research direction. DING et al [62] replaced the traditional Gaussian heat source with a uniformly distributed heat source, which reduces the calculation



**Fig. 4** Cloud diagram of temperature field distribution and temperature–time curves at certain point of parts and substrate during WAAM [59] (a); Residual stress distribution and deformation in parts and substrate after WAAM process [60] (b)

amount of the finite element model. ABE et al [63] established a numerical simulation model of WAAM process to study the relationship between temperature and shape of the deposition layer. They deduced the optimal heat input conditions based on the finite element analysis (FEA) model. In terms of residual stress distribution, HUANG et al [64] found that longitudinal stress is produced near the root of the thin-wall build. The size of the high tensile stress area increases with the height of the component. HUANG et al [65] studied the influence of deposition path on the residual stress distribution, and the results showed that the stress field under reciprocating path deposition is more uniform than that under unidirectional path deposition. GORNYAKOV et al [66] proposed a short implicit transient rolling model. In this model, the implicit method is used for numerical solution, and the short-length model is used to achieve accurate stress–strain prediction, while the calculation time is reduced by 96.5%.

Some scholars want to determine appropriate WAAM process parameters through numerical simulation because of its economy and convenience. CADIOU et al [67] used COMSOL to simulate WAAM process. The advantage of this model is that it simulates the process of melting drop, and considers the electromagnetic and fluid flow and Joule effect. Therefore, this method can simulate the WAAM process more accurately. HEJRIPOUR et al [68] established a numerical model to analyze the effects of torch travel speed (TS) and wire feeding speed (WFS) on the homogenization of WAAM parts. The result showed that the composition of the fusion zone is more uniform with the increase of WFS. SAADATMAND and TALEMI [69] found that increasing TS can reduce the effects of heat input. LI and XIONG [70] found that with the rise of interlayer idle time, the stress cycle curve tends to be uniform, and the residual stress on WAAM component and substrate decreases significantly. HACKENHAAR et al [71] simulated the impact of air jet impingement on the temperature field of the whole part. The results showed that air jet impingement can effectively limit the temperature rise. This is because air jet impingement increases the convective heat transfer rate. OYAMA et al [72] thought interval durations in the WAAM process should be as short as

possible to limit the structural distortion in the aluminium alloys.

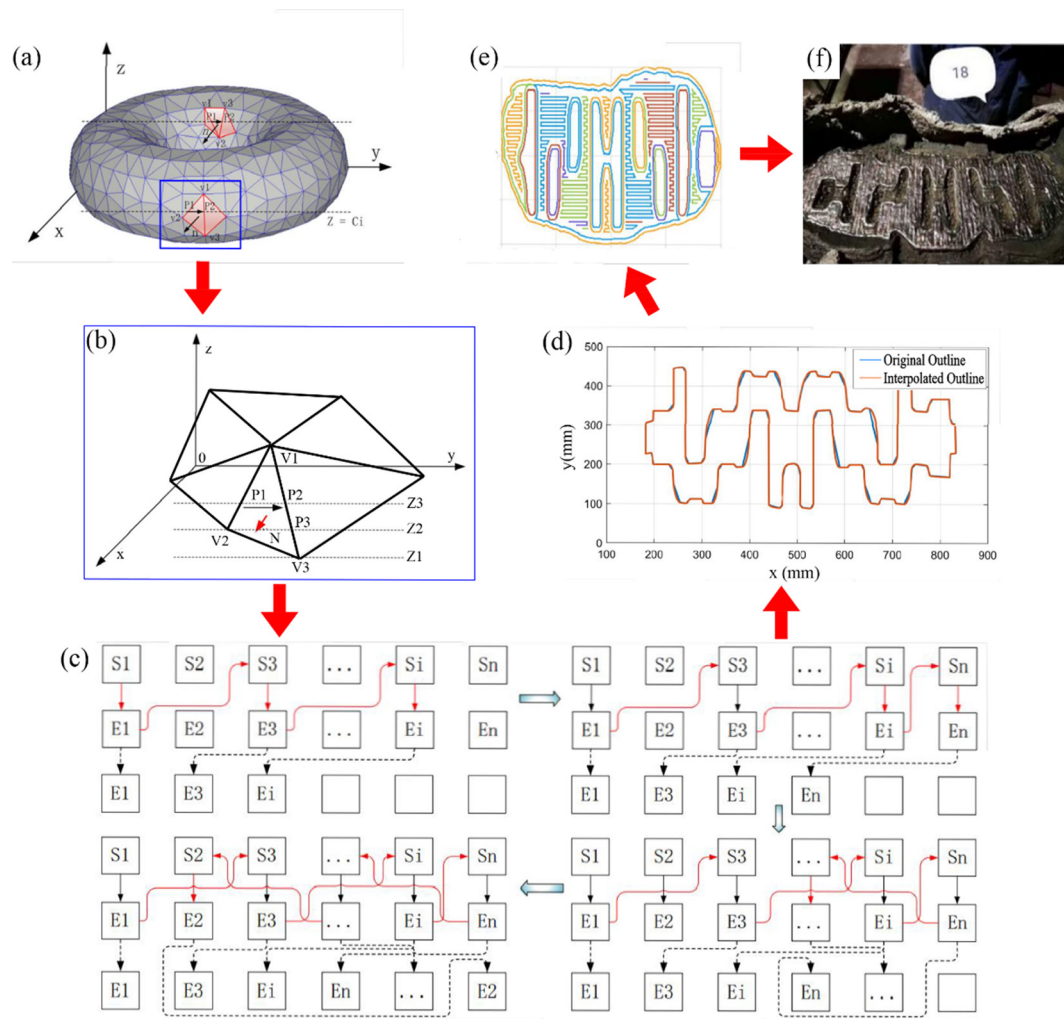
### 3.2 Slicing algorithm

Researchers have done a lot of work on slicing algorithms. The main slicing algorithms can be divided into simple plane, surface, and multi-direction slicing algorithms. The simplest slicing algorithm is planar slicing algorithm, which is applied to simple models. The surface slicing algorithm makes the deposition path a continuous spatial curve, which can avoid the problem of poor precision caused by path discontinuity. ZHANG et al [73] used curved laminated section algorithm to manufacture complex nine-way tube structure. The multi-direction slicing algorithm is suitable for complex parts, is the most appropriate algorithm for WAAM [74], and allows the WAAM to proceed in different directions, eliminating the need for support [75].

The algorithm of WAAM control software has two types. One is directly generating fixed spatial coordinate information. This method cannot be adjusted and can cause a significant error in the manufacturing process. The other way is to use closed-loop control, which has higher flexibility and adaptability [76], and can eliminate the error in the WAAM process in real-time. ZHAO et al [77] developed a slicing algorithm to achieve self-adaptive control through the process parameters and the size of the part itself. REBAIOLI et al [78] developed a closed-loop control strategy. The sensors collect dimensional data and transmit it to the computer. When the error reaches a certain level, the slicing program re-slices, re-constructs contour, plans a new path and transfers the new path data to the robot.

ZHANG et al [73] proposed a slicing algorithm, and the working process is shown in Fig. 5. Firstly, the algorithm obtains the contour polygon by the intersection of triangular block and slicing plane. Next, the algorithm judges the order of these intersection points with normal vector and puts them into the ‘starting’ or ‘ending’ arrays (Fig. 5(c)). Traversing these two arrays can improve treatment efficiency. Then, the contour of the sedimentary layer is obtained by interpolation algorithm, and finally, the deposition process is carried out along the designed path.





**Fig. 5** Slicing diagram of STL model: (a) Linear equation solving; (b) Intersection points solving; (c) Recombination of directed line segments of slices; (d) Contour of surface by using interpolation program; (e) Welding path of eighteenth layer; (f) Final result [73]

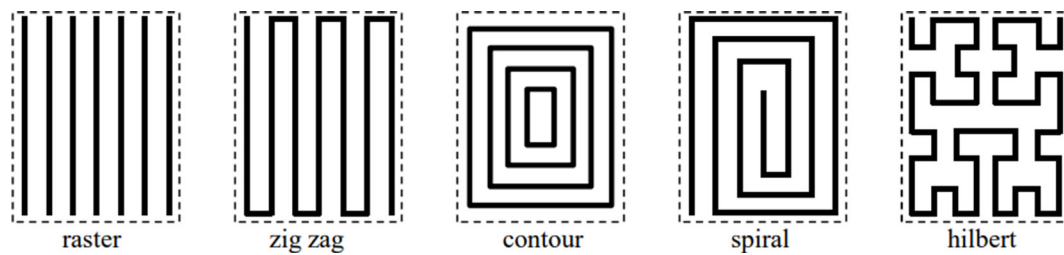
### 3.3 Path planning

Different deposit paths will affect the molding speed, precision, surface quality, microstructure, and performance of WAAM [79]. Typical deposit strategy includes raster, zigzag, contour, spiral, space-filling, grid, honeycomb, hexagonal, and Voronoi diagram-based infills (Fig. 6) [80].

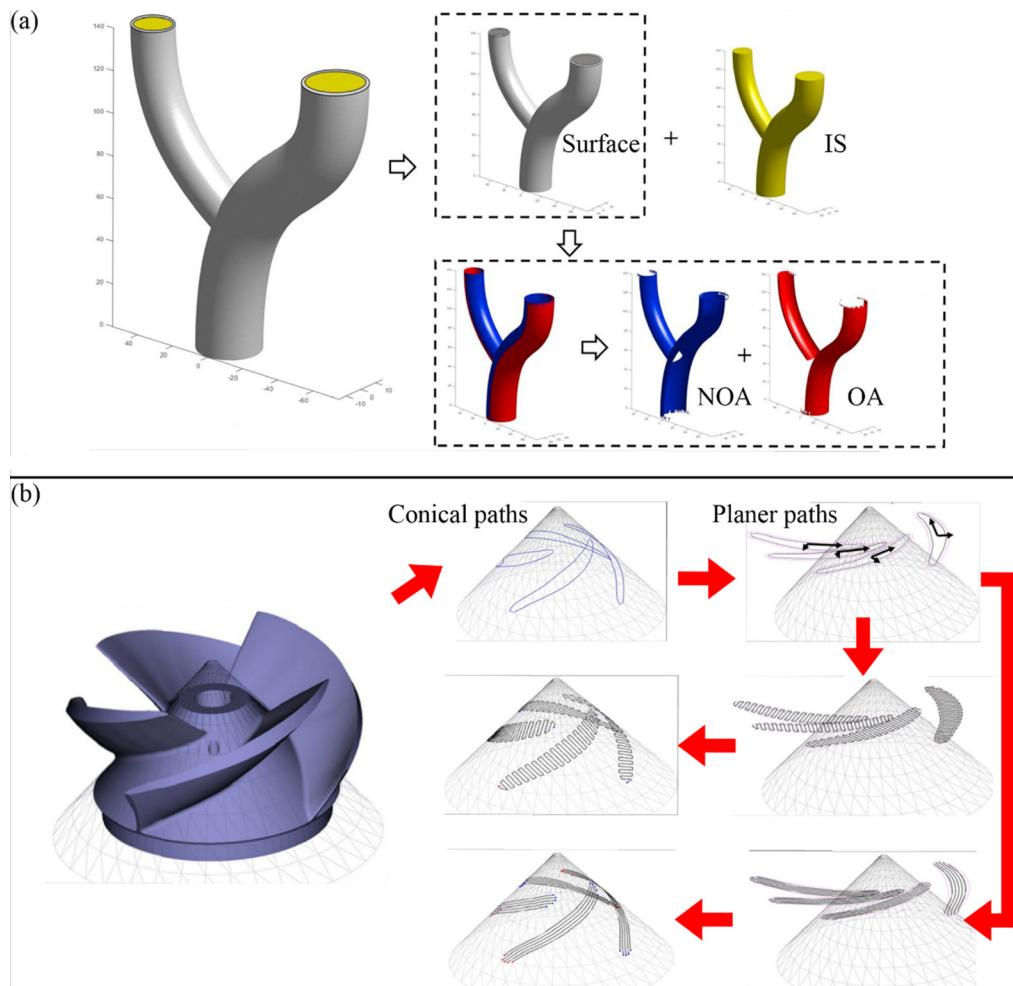
DING et al [81] found that path planning based on the geometric features of components can effectively improve the forming quality and accuracy of components. DIOURTE et al [82] proposed a deposition strategy called continuous 3D path planning (CTPP), a 3D trajectory generation strategy for thin-walled and closed-loop complex structures. This planning method ensures that parts remain in good shape during WAAM. FENG et al [83] developed a new path planning

method by combining fractal line filling method with bias filling method. The new method simplifies the complexity of the original algorithms and improves the forming efficiency. General Electric (GE) [84] combined WAAM and machine learning, using artificial intelligence technology to improve the manufacturing accuracy of WAAM parts.

It is essential to realize the support-free deposition of metal parts since the supporting structure is hard to remove. LIU et al [85] developed a support-free path planning method, as shown in Fig. 7(a). They divide components into internal solid (IS) and surface, and the surface is further divided into overhanging zone (OA) and non-overhanging zone (NOA). During deposition, NOA is deposited firstly as a support for OA, and



**Fig. 6** Common infill strategies in AM [80]



**Fig. 7** Schematic diagram of division of each part in process of support-free path planning [85] (a); Principal component analysis (PCA)-based path planning [86] (b)

further, OA is used as a support for IS. DAI et al [86] used principal component analysis (PCA) for path planning, as shown in Fig. 7(b). They found that the second principal component of a planar contour is a reasonable scanning direction to generate zigzag filling paths and parallel skeleton filling paths.

#### 4 Online-processing during WAAM

Online-processing is the method that can

maintain the process stability, reduce the failures and improve the quality of finished products through a series of operations such as monitoring, feedback and adjustment. Online-processing generally includes in-process monitoring, molten pool thermal management, process parameter control and other aspects, which positively affects the smooth and stable progress of WAAM, as well as the macroscopic morphology, micro-structure and mechanical properties of the final product.

#### 4.1 Thermal management

In the WAAM process, excessive heat input produces serious heat accumulation. The loss of thermal management leads to the instability of the molten pool, reduces the deposition rate, and produces uneven structure [87,88]. In WAAM, a large heat input leads to a slow cooling rate, providing sufficient time for grain growth. As a result, the strengthening effect of fine grain is weakened and the component strength is reduced [89,90].

Many scholars have studied the effect of heat input on WAAM components. DINOVITZER et al [91] studied the effects of current and TS on the morphology of weld bead, and with the increase of current, bead height decreases and bead width increases. This is because large heat input makes the material easier to spread out. KLEIN and SCHNALL [92] found that reducing welding current can decrease grain size. However, the mechanical properties of WAAM parts cannot be improved significantly by thermal management.

In addition to reducing the thermal power of the welding power supply, another idea is to increase the heat loss in WAAM, such as increasing the cooling time or using additional cooling processes/steps. Heat in WAAM is mainly dissipated through the heat transfer with the substrate, and the convection and radiation to the ambient environment [93]. But with the increase of layers, the heat dissipation through the substrate becomes more and more difficult, and the heat dissipation efficiency of convection and radiation is not high. As a result, heat accumulation becomes more serious, making WAAM process unstable and seriously affecting the quality of finished products. Introducing additional cooling can solve this problem.

WU et al [94] used CO<sub>2</sub> gas to cool the welding layers, and found that interlayer cooling can improve the hardness and strength of Ti–6Al–4V alloy. KARUNAKARAN et al [95] used a coolant to enhance the heat transfer efficiency between the deposition layers and the substrate, effectively reducing the thermal damage in WAAM parts. LI et al [96] studied the effect of cooling system on the morphology of welding beads. They found that the heat accumulation increases the width to height ratio (RWHT). After adding cooling device, the RWHT decreases. And

with the increase of cooling device power, the value of RWHT further decreases.

#### 4.2 External wire feeding

To reduce the negative impact caused by excessive heat input, in addition to reducing arc power and adding cooling, another idea is to increase the volume of the material fed into the arc heat-affected zone per unit time. LIU and XIONG [97] used external wires in the WAAM process, and the thermal damage decreased and the deposition efficiency increased. For the micro-structure, with the increase of the external filler wire feed speed (EFWS), the equiaxed dendrite size decreases as the material experiences supercooling and dendrite segregation. HAN et al [98] studied the effect of additional auxiliary wire on bead shape. They found that the height of the welding bead increases with the increase of  $v_{fa}$  (feeding speed of auxiliary wire), but the width seems not to be affected. This is because when the other parameters are identical, increasing WFS does not change the affected area of arc heat.

The change of WFS does not significantly change the mechanical properties of material [97]. Grain size is an important factor affecting the mechanical properties [99,100]. This method can only refine the grains at the top of the deposition layer, which is a benefit to mechanical properties. But the increase of WFS also enlarges the area of columnar crystals in the middle and bottom area. The increase of columnar crystals area will offset the improvement of grains in the top area. Finally, there is no significant improvement in mechanical properties.

#### 4.3 Cold metal transfer technology

Cold metal transfer (CMT) technology is a welding technology based on the short-circuit transition principle. CMT welding has four main steps. At first, the arc melts the metal wire. Under gravity, the droplets drop into the molten pool. Next, the arc is extinguished when the droplet contacts the molten pool, resulting in a sudden current drop. Then, the wire feeding system draws back the welding wire, accelerating the dropping of the droplet. Finally, the arc is reignited, and the process starts again. This “cold-hot-cold” cycle process is repeated until the welding is finished [101,102].

CMT can significantly reduce heat input and

splash in the welding process [103], and improve forming accuracy, morphology, microstructure and mechanical properties of WAAM parts. Compared with other heat sources, CMT-manufactured components have a refined microstructure and less anisotropy of mechanical properties. JIANG et al [104] fabricated 4043 aluminum alloy parts by CMT, and they found that the parts have a uniform microstructure and no anisotropy on mechanical properties. ELREFAEY [105] pointed out that compared with MIG welding, the grains of the workpiece manufactured by CMT were smaller, and the TS and elongation were higher. POSCH et al [106] found that using CMT can reduce the surface roughness. CONG et al [107] studied the effect of CMT technology on porosity in Al–6.3%–Cu components, and the results showed that the CMT produced less porosity due to smaller spatter and heat input.

#### 4.4 In-process monitoring and control

To ensure the accuracy and stability of WAAM, in-process monitoring and control are needed. Based on sensor type, WAAM in-process monitoring system can be divided into visual sensing based, acoustic sensing based, spectral sensing based, and thermal sensing based systems.

The sensitivity of the visual system is not high because of the lag of visual sensor. XIONG et al [108] introduced the monitoring data of the previous layer into the current layer to improve the response speed of the control system. The spectrum generated by the arc contains a lot of information that can be used to evaluate the quality of WAAM. ZHANG et al [109] developed an in-process monitoring system for GTAW welding defects based on spectral analysis. The system consists of a spectrometer and a set of detector lenses. The abnormal oxidation region can be accurately found by detecting changes in the wavelength of the spectrum. JIA et al [110] developed a plasma arc welding sensor and control system based on efflux plasma voltage sensor. Further, they determined the linear relationship between welding current, efflux plasma voltage and weld width, and finally ensured the stability of welding process. Acoustic signals can be used to characterize arc stability, deposition process dynamics and changes within the material. The advantages of acoustic sensors are non-contact, non-destructive and flexible, making acoustic

sensing become a competitive way of in-process monitoring. PAL et al [111] found that acoustic emission signals can reflect defects in the arc welding process. SHEVCHIK et al [112] used acoustic emission (AE) and machine learning (ML) to monitor the distribution of defects in the SLM process, thus improving the quality of finished products.

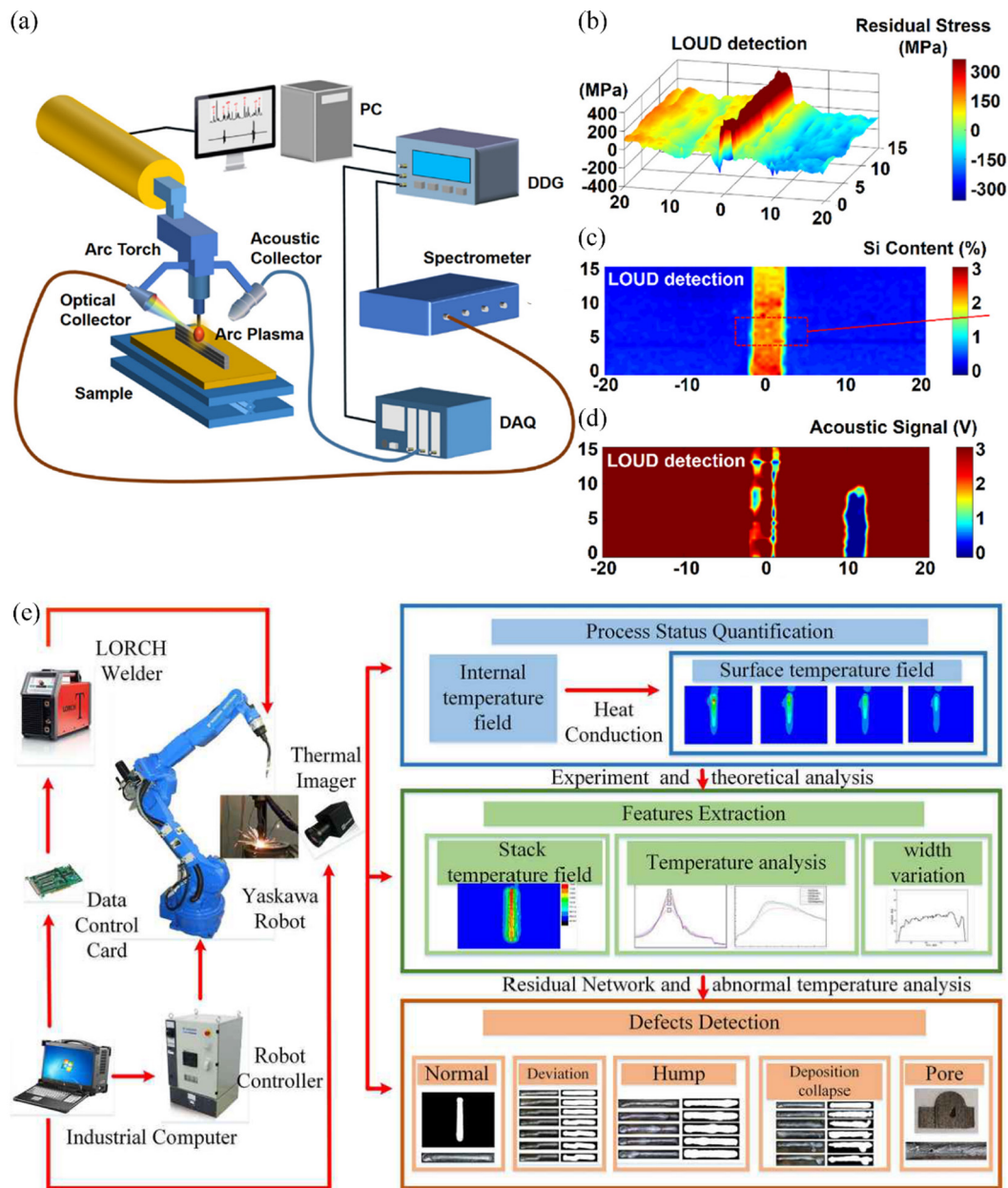
Ultrasonic detection is another commonly-used defect detection method, and it has the advantage of high sensitivity and high accuracy. RIEDER et al [113] conducted online ultrasonic measurement during AM and found that it can detect residual stress and porosity of materials. MA et al [114] developed a laser opto-ultrasonic dual (LOUD) detection device, as shown in Fig. 8(a). The system is equipped with a laser emitter, which produces laser ablating the surface of material, producing plasma and ultrasonic pulse, and thus generating spectral and ultrasonic signals. Ultrasonic signals and spectral signals are collected by an ultrasonic probe and a spectrometer. This system can detect residual stress distribution, element distribution and defects, as shown in Figs. 8(b–d). SUÁREZ et al [115] used thermal imaging to obtain dimensional images. Any defect can be located using image processing technology, which realizes the traceability of parts and avoids the propagation of defects. CHEN et al [116] pushed the existing infrared monitoring method to real-time detection and proposed a non-destructive detection method of multi-feature data fusion in process based on the WAAM process temperature field.

## 5 Post-processing after WAAM

Post-processing refers to applying some additional processes to the finished WAAM components, changing the surface finish, eliminating residual stress and deformation, reducing internal defects and improving mechanical properties. Post-processing generally includes plastic deformation, surface strengthening, compound subtractive manufacturing and heat treatment [117].

### 5.1 Rolling

Rolling is a widely-used technology to eliminate defects and improve microstructure and properties. Rolling imposes a huge load on the material to break the grains, refining the micro-



**Fig. 8** Schematic diagram of working principle of laser opto-ultrasonic dual (LOUD) device detection equipment (a); Using LOUD in-process monitoring equipment to detect residual stress distribution, element distribution, and defect in WAAM process [114] (b–d); Schematic diagram of WAAM in-process monitoring experimental device based on thermal imaging and process defect detection process [116] (e)

structure and improving the mechanical properties. In addition, rolling can reduce the harmful tensile stress formed in WAAM, thereby reducing part cracking and deformation [118,119], which has also been proven to weaken the texture in material, thereby decreasing the anisotropy [120].

#### 5.1.1 In-process hot rolling

The plastic deformation of the material at high temperatures will produce a rise in dislocation density, resulting in work hardening, and thus

improving the strength. In addition, hot rolling can also trigger a dynamic recrystallization (DRX) process, which significantly refines the microstructure [121,122]. In addition, materials have low strength at high temperatures, so they can improve the rolling-effect-depth, and reduce the rolling force. In hot rolling, the roller is usually installed together with actuator, and the roller will roll the material immediately after it is deposited [123,124].

Rolling can alleviate the internal defects



and improve the mechanical properties of the material. SOKOLOV et al [125] found that many dislocations are formed after rolling, which is beneficial to recrystallization process. POPOVICH et al [126] found that hot rolling can increase UTS of copper alloy WAAM parts by 20%–25%. OH et al [127] studied the effect of hot rolling on the mechanical properties of 316L stainless steel, and found that hot rolling can increase the elongation of the material. XIE et al [123] found that hot rolling can significantly reduce defects formed within materials during WAAM. After the rolling treatment, the number and size of defects in the specimen are reduced, as shown in Fig. 9.

The rolling process parameters have an important influence on final result. QIU et al [128] found that increasing the rolling depth decreases grain size and the microstructure becomes more uniform. The tensile test shows that the fracture behavior of the component gradually changes from brittleness to toughness with the increase of rolling depth, indicating that rolling refines the microstructure.

#### 5.1.2 Cold rolling

Cold rolling is relatively independent of the WAAM process, so it does not affect the stability of the WAAM process [129]. But due to the high strength of the material at low temperature, cold rolling needs a higher rolling force, which puts forward higher requirements for the rolling

equipment. To improve the efficiency of cold rolling, TANGESTANI et al [130] used inter-layer cold rolling to improve the rolling depth. ABBASZADEH et al [61] found that increasing the rolling depth and the rolling force or decreasing the roller radius can increase plastic deformation.

Cold rolling can effectively break the coarse columnar crystals. MARINELLI et al [131] found an equiaxial structure formed after cold rolling. DONOGHUE et al [132] found that rolling can significantly refine the microstructure of WAAM walls. The degree of grain refinement increases with the increase of rolling force, as shown in Fig. 10(a). ZHANG et al [133] found that the columnar dendrites are broken and transform into equiaxial crystals by cold rolling. The average grain size decreases from 83 to 26.2  $\mu\text{m}$ , as shown in Fig. 10(b). HÖNNIGE et al [134] found that inter-layer rolling can disrupt dendrite growth and make the microstructure more refined, as shown in Fig. 10(c).

Rolling can improve the residual stress distribution in WAAM-manufactured components. HÖNNIGE et al [135] studied the effect of rolling mode on component properties, as shown in Figs. 11(a, b). The results showed that vertical inter-pass rolling causes work hardening, thus improving the yield and tensile strength of the WAAM specimen. In comparison, side-rolling is very effective for controlling residual stresses and

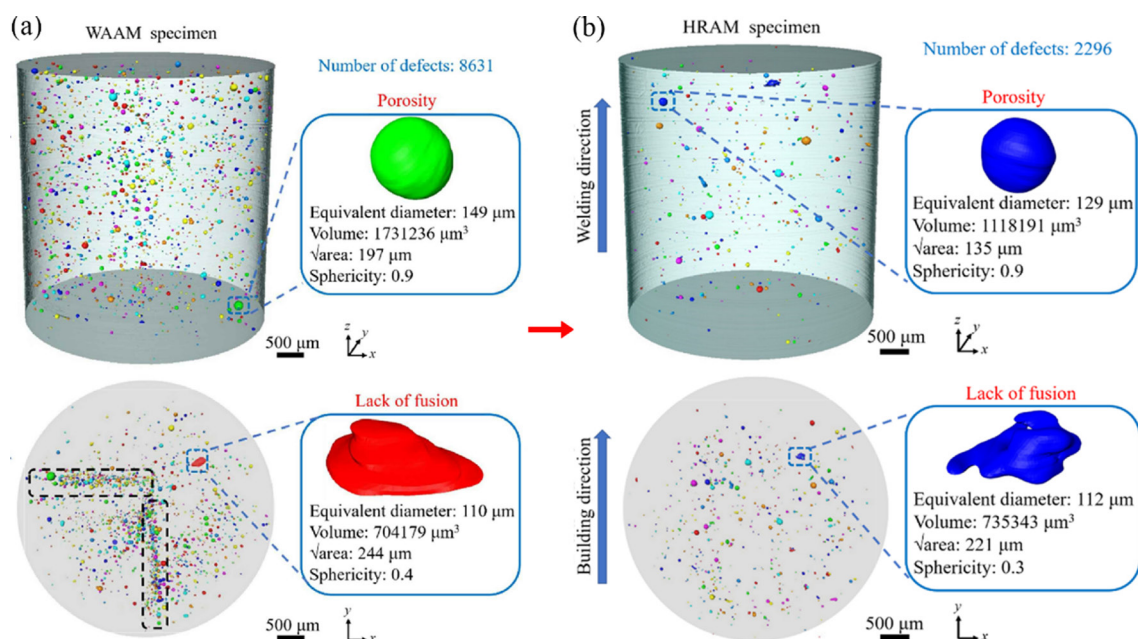
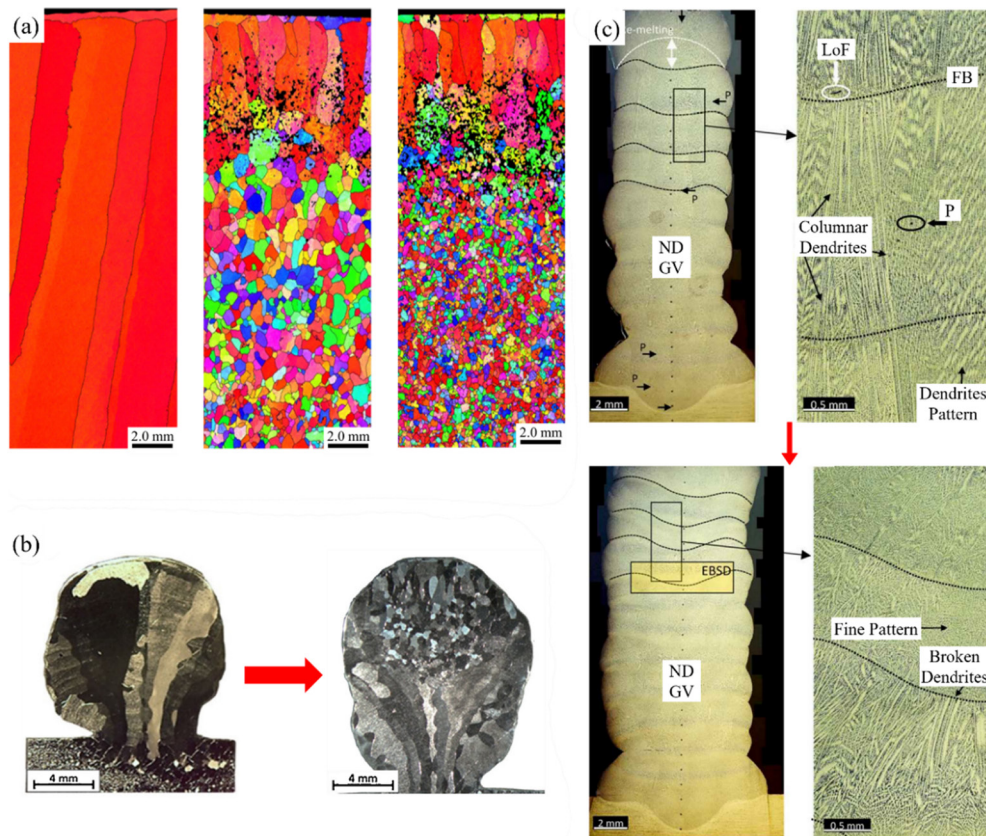


Fig. 9 SR-μCT-based reconstructed volumes: (a) Without rolling; (b) After rolling [123]



**Fig. 10** EBSD maps from undeformed control and rolled WAAM walls [132] (a); Optical micrographs of samples not rolled and rolled on top and between layers [131] (b); Microstructure characteristics of samples without rolling and with inter-pass rolling [134] (c)

distortion. TANGESTANI et al [130] found that rolling could transform the residual tensile stress inside WAAM parts into compressive stress. ABBASZADEH et al [61] established the rolling finite element model of 2319 aluminum alloy and found that increasing the rolling force and rolling radius can enlarge the residual compressive stress layer and increase the maximum residual compressive stress, as shown in Figs. 11(c, d). JU et al [136] studied the effect of interlayer rolling on the distribution of residual stress in WAAM Ti-6Al-4V alloy by finite element simulation. The results showed that the residual macroscopic stress in the metal and the overall stress in the sample are significantly reduced by interlayer rolling.

## 5.2 Surface strengthening

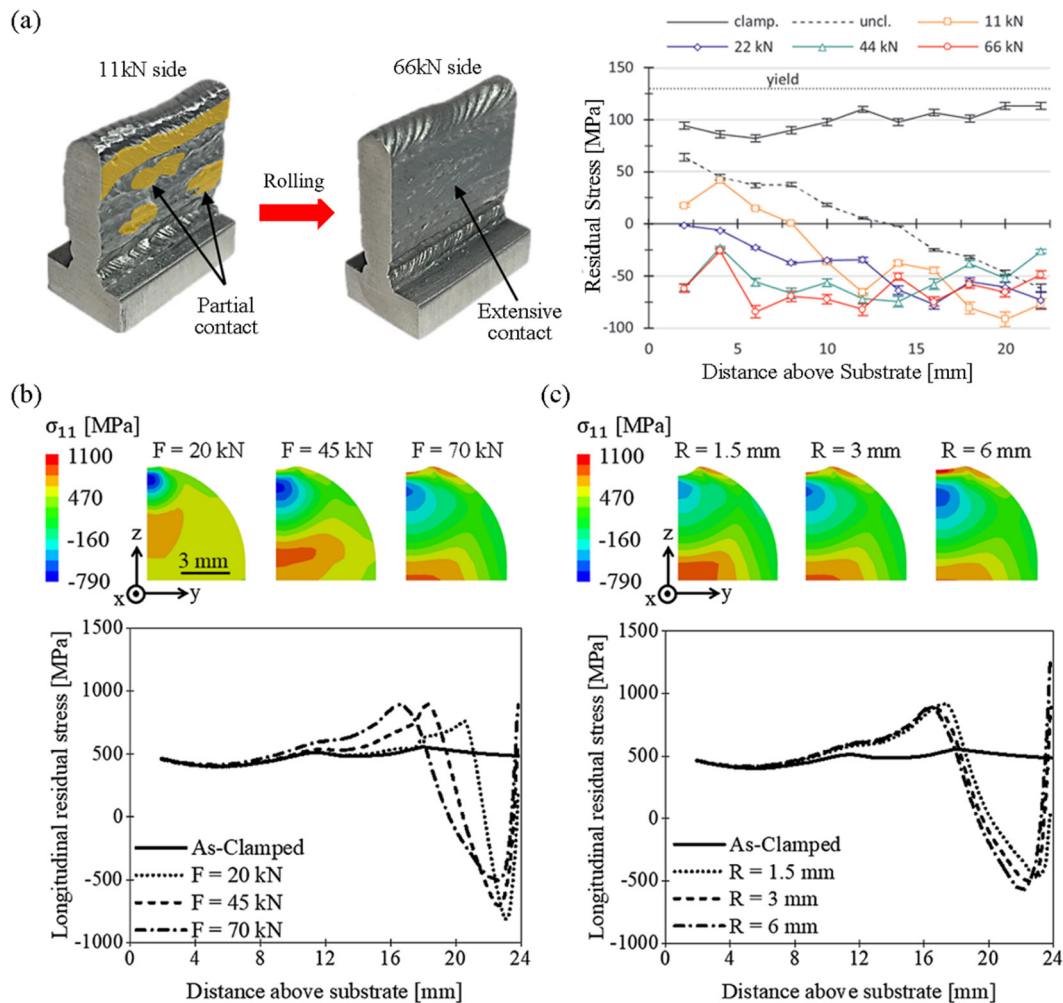
Surface strengthening generally includes laser shock peening (LSP), ultrasonic impact treatment (UIT), shot peening, etc. The principle of these methods is to use impact force to improve the quality of materials. Although the effect depth of

surface strengthening technology is not considered, it has high flexibility, so it is suitable for parts with complex structures.

### 5.2.1 LSP

LSP using a laser beam impacts the material, forms many dislocations and transforms the coarse columnar crystals into the fine equiaxed crystals. LSP can improve the fatigue resistance, wear resistance and corrosion resistance of the material. In addition, it can significantly reduce the harmful residual tensile stress and the porosity in the parts [137,138].

SUN et al [139] found that LSP can refine the microstructure significantly. CHI et al [140] using XRD and EBSD analyzed the effect of LSP on the microstructure of Ti17 WAAM parts, and the results are shown in Fig. 12. The decrease of grain size will increase the value of full width at half maximum (FWHM) [141]. In Fig. 12(b), after LSP, the increase of FWHM indicates a drop in grain size. In EBSD analysis, Kernel average misorientation (KAM) represents the degree of misorientation



**Fig. 11** Wall shape and residual stress of side-rolled WAAM specimen [135] (a); Longitudinal residual stresses in Ti-6Al-4V after rolling for different rolling loads (b) and rolling radii (c) [61]

between adjacent points [142], and a high value of KAM indicates a significant degree of plastic deformation. As can be seen from Figs. 12(c–e), after LSP, the deformation in the specimen increases (the red area rises). From Figs. 12(f–h), after UIT, the KAM values grow to 2.40 after LSP, showing that LSP can produce plastic deformation of grain. SUN et al [143] studied the effect of LSP on the grain size and mechanical properties of WAAM 2319 aluminum alloy parts. After LSP, the average diameter of grains decreases by 50.2%, from 68.86 to 34.32  $\mu\text{m}$ .

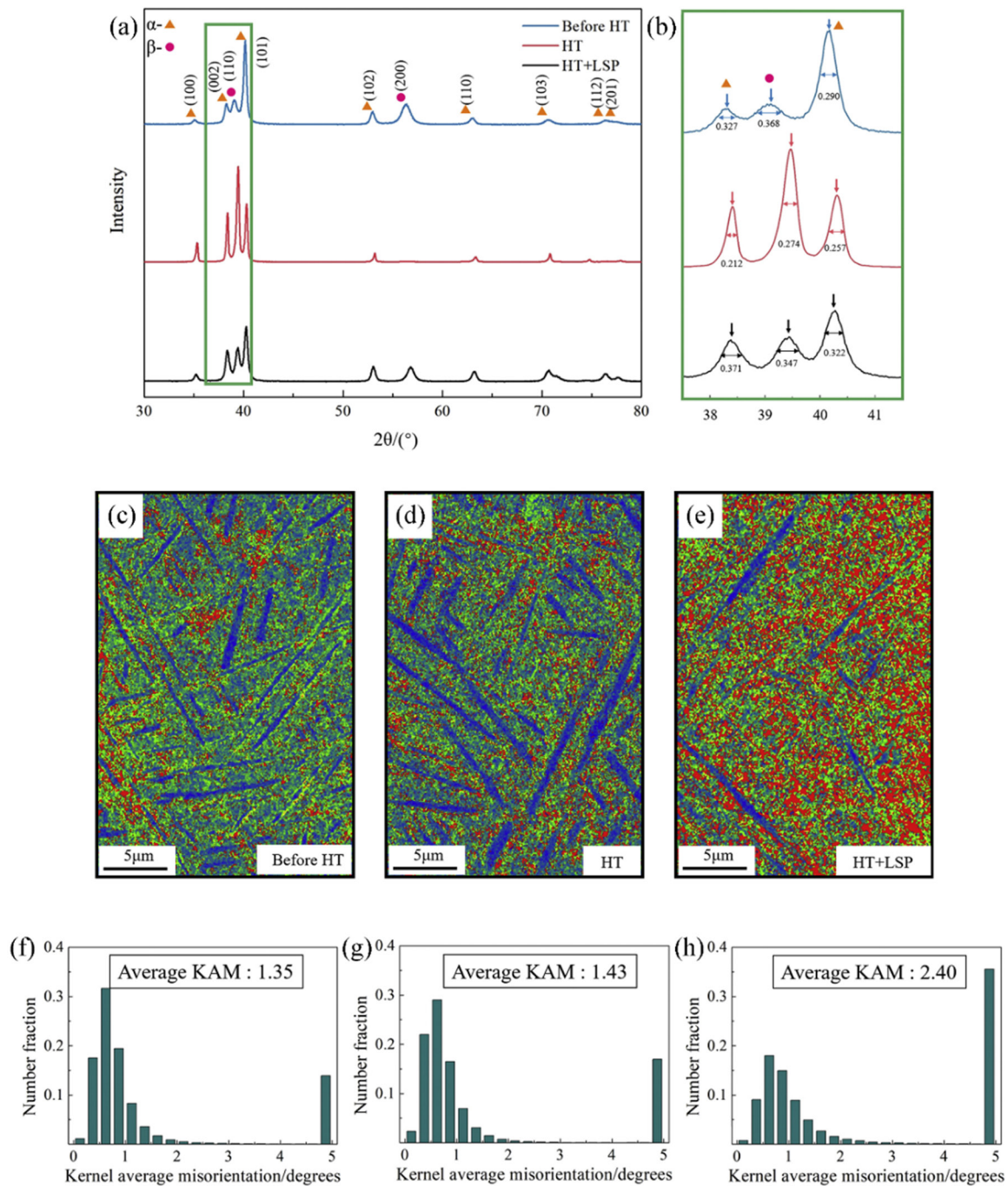
LSP can reduce the residual tensile stress formed during AM or transform it into compressive stress, thus preventing the deformation and cracking of parts and improving the hardness and fatigue resistance of the material. GUO et al [144] and LUO et al [145] had similar results: the residual

compressive stress is generated after LSP, and the fatigue resistance is greatly improved. KALENTICS et al [146] found that LSP can change the tensile stress of specimens into compressive stress.

### 5.2.2 UIT

In UIT, ultrasonic vibrations are generated by an ultrasonic transducer and amplified by the concentrator. The concentrator pushes the pin to impact the sample surface at a high frequency [147]. After UIT, the treated area can be divided into three zones: (1) Core zone (CZ) with a depth of several microns. The grains in this region are sufficiently refined. (2) Plastic deformation zone (PDZ), with a depth of hundreds of microns. Plastic deformation occurs in this region, the residual tensile stress is transformed into compressive stress, and the microstructure, mechanical, and fatigue properties are improved. (3) Stress relaxation zone (SRZ), with a





**Fig. 12** XRD patterns of WAAM part (a, b); KAM maps for samples without heat treatment (HT) (c), with HT (d) and with HT+LSP (e); KAM charts for samples without HT (f), with HT (g) and with HT+LSP (h) [140]

depth of several millimeters. Residual stress is partially released in this region [148].

YANG et al [149] found that interlayer UIT forms a “bamboo-like” structure [150]. This results from the superposition of “epitaxial grain growth” [151–153] and UIT. The average size of columnar crystals before UIT treatment was 785  $\mu\text{m}$ . After UIT treatment, the average lengths of short columnar and equiaxed crystals were 371 and

186  $\mu\text{m}$ , respectively. WANG et al [154] found that UIT reduces the average grain size from 420 to 280  $\mu\text{m}$ .

UIT can reduce the tensile stress generated during solidification [155]. WALKER et al [156] pointed out that the higher the residual compressive stress, the better the life and fatigue resistance of the part. GAO et al [157] found that ultrasonic can make stress distribution more uniform. ZHOU

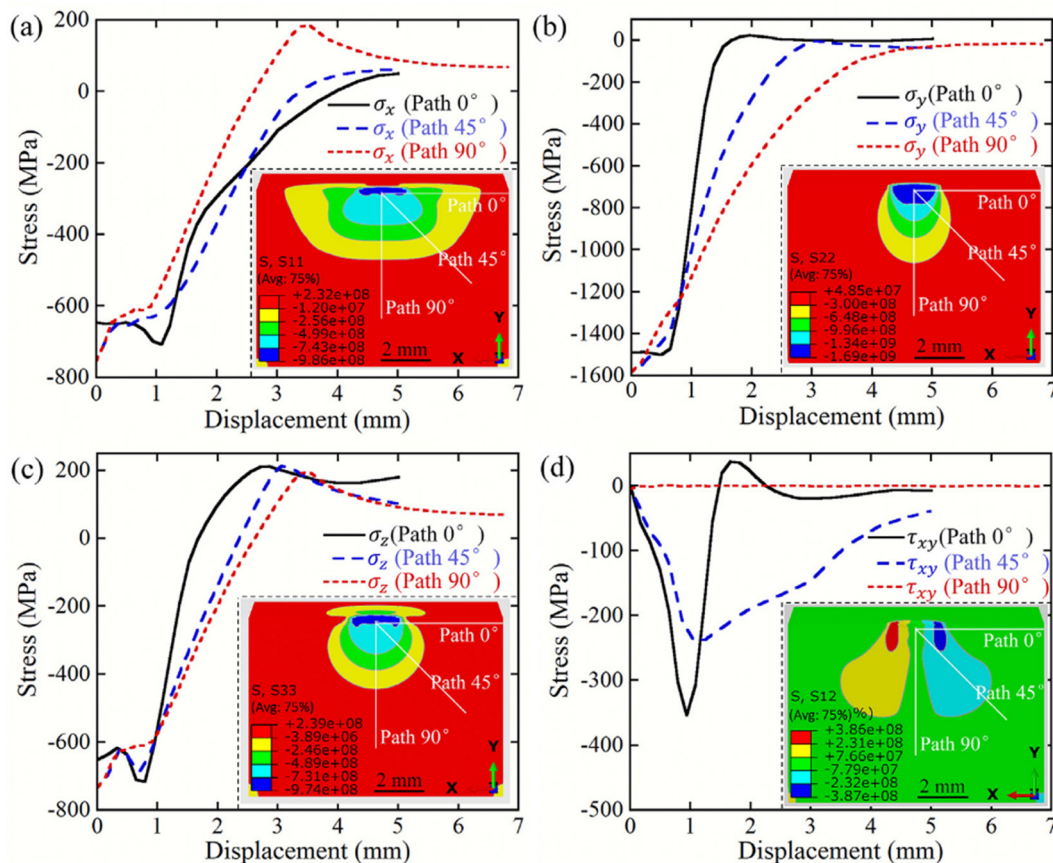
et al [158] established a UIT FEA model, and the results showed that UIT can produce a compressive stress layer of about 4 mm on the material surface, as shown in Fig. 13. Further, they studied the magnitude and direction of the principal stress and principal shear stress and analyzed the plastic deformation behavior of the specimen during UIT process. They found that the order of plastic slip in the plastic deformation zone is inconsistent with the direction of compressive stress (Figs. 13(a–c)). As a result, curved fibrous tissue is formed in the sample, which is thought to help reduce inherent defects such as porosity and cracks, improve performance and play an important role in densification of metal WAAM components.

UIT can improve the mechanical properties of materials. WANG and SHI [154] found that the microstructure and anisotropy of the specimens are improved after UIT. HE et al [159] found that UIT can enhance the mechanical properties and improve the anisotropy of WAAM titanium alloy parts. After UIT, the horizontal tensile strength increases by 5.1%, and the vertical direction increases by 12.5%.

CHEN et al [160] found that the fatigue strength of the 7A52 aluminum alloy welded joint increases by 32.33% after UIT. ZHANG et al [161] and LI et al [162] found that UIT can change the preferred orientation of materials to  $\langle 111 \rangle$ . SONG et al [163] used UIT after SLM and found that UIT can effectively reduce porosity. LESYK et al [164] found that after UIT treatment, the surface roughness and porosity are reduced, and the microhardness is improved.

### 5.3 Hybrid additive–subtractive manufacturing

WAAM is limited in industrial applications due to poor molding accuracy and surface quality, and large residual stress. To solve these problems, some researchers combine additive manufacturing with subtractive manufacturing. The traditional subtractive manufacturing, such as milling, can improve surface quality and size accuracy [165]. At the same time, removing materials can cause the release and redistribution of initial residual stress. These are believed to improve the performance of WAAM components.



**Fig. 13** Finite element model of residual stress distribution in 304 stainless steel after UIT treatment in different directions [158]: (a)  $\sigma_x$ ; (b)  $\sigma_y$ ; (c)  $\sigma_z$ ; (d)  $\tau_{xy}$

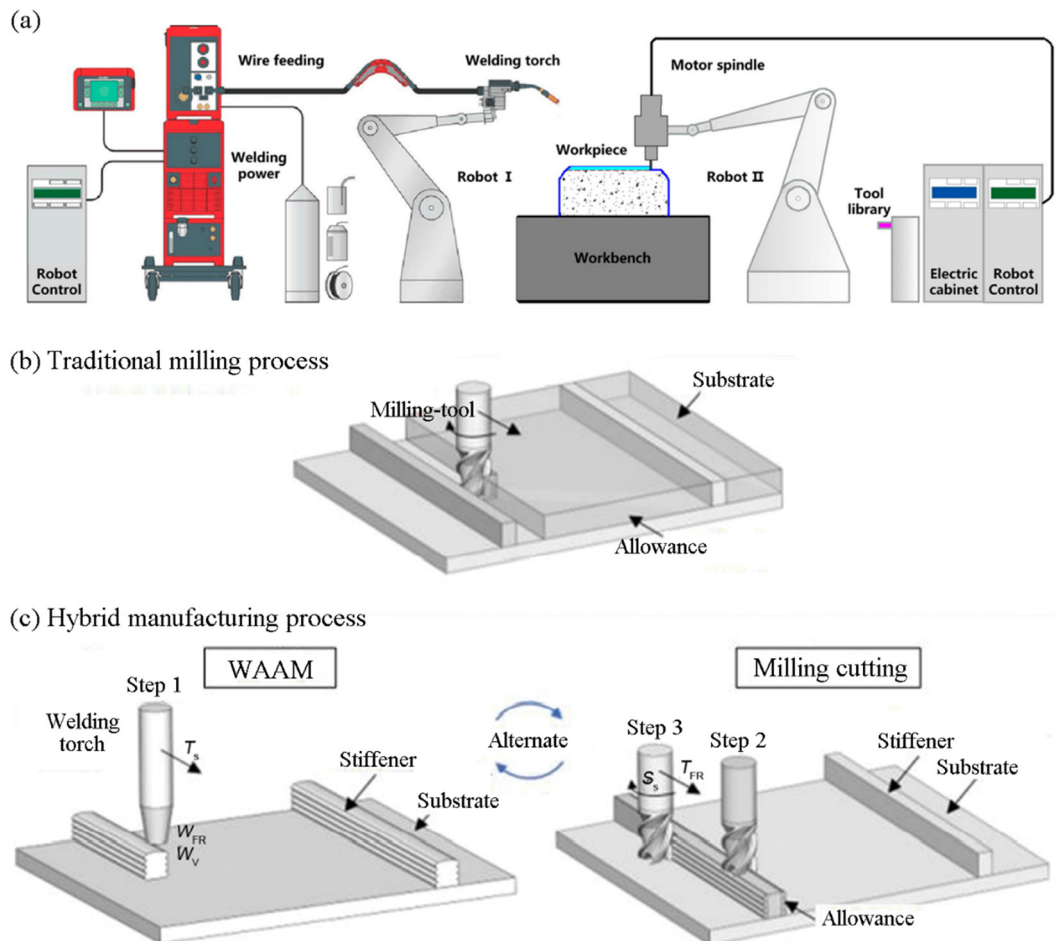


Figure 14(a) shows the hybrid additive–subtractive manufacturing (HASM) equipment composed of WAAM and milling robot systems. The control cabinets of the two robots communicate through explicit collaboration, enabling the integration of WAAM and the milling process. In HSAM, additive manufacturing (AM) and subtractive manufacturing (SM) are carried out alternately [166], as shown in Fig. 14(c). Compared to traditional SM, HASM can reduce engineering and material costs, making it more economically attractive for more expensive and harder-to-process materials [167].

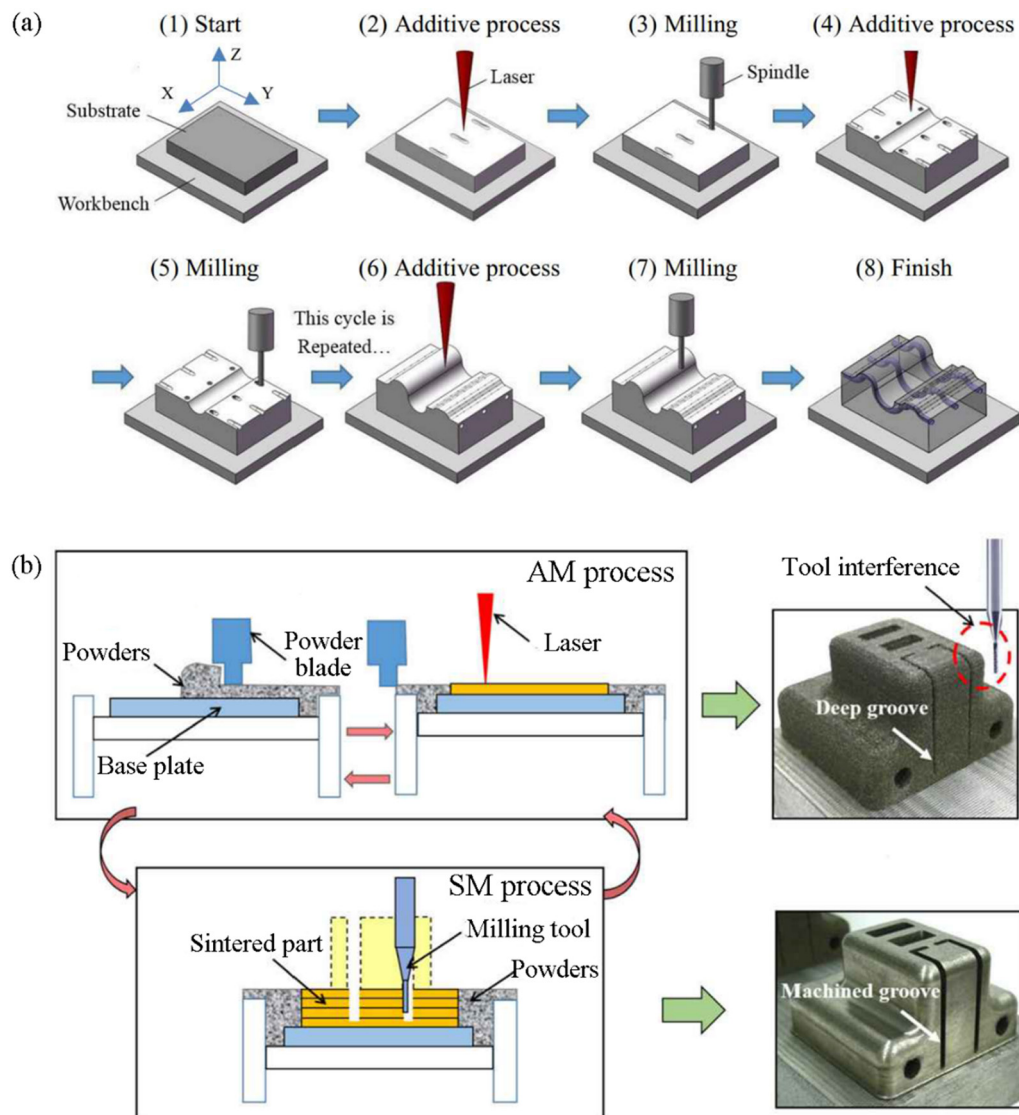
Subtractive manufacturing has been widely used after AM, which is necessary to improve the surface finish of the parts. DU et al [168,169] studied the composite manufacturing of reduced material manufacturing (SM) and SLM, as shown in Fig. 15(a). SM process is added after several layers are deposited, and the addition and subtraction processes alternate until the part is

complete. This manufacturing method allows for complex internal structures such as cooling water channels and deep grooves. After SM, the dimensional and geometric errors generated in AM can be greatly reduced, as shown in Figs. 15(b, c). KARUNAKARAN et al [95] introduced milling to arc welding and dramatically enhanced the forming accuracy of the finished parts. SONG et al [170–172] combined WAAM with milling, improving the surface topography of the parts significantly.

SM can improve the stress distribution in the forming parts, and transform the harmful tensile stress into compressive stress, thus reducing the deformation and increasing fatigue strength [173]. It is worth noting that the stress redistribution caused by SM may lead to secondary deformation, thus affecting dimensional accuracy and assembly accuracy [166]. SUNNY et al [174] studied the influence of initial residual stress on machining stress and deformation, and the results showed that



**Fig. 14** Schematic diagram of additive and subtractive composite manufacturing equipment [165] (a); Schematic diagram of thin-walled parts manufactured by traditional milling (b); Schematic diagram of thin-walled parts manufactured by additive and subtractive composite manufacturing [166] (c)



**Fig. 15** Schematic diagram of SM/SLM composite manufacturing process [168] (a); SM/AM composite manufacturing diagram and improvement of surface quality of parts [168] (b)

the initial residual stress can affect the improvement effect of the SM process. SALONITIS et al [175] came to similar conclusions. Through numerical simulations of HASM, they found that the ability of SM to correct the deformation of parts is limited when the initial residual stress is enormous.

## 6 Summary

(1) In the pre-treatment, numerical simulation technology can greatly simplify the experimental work of WAAM and provide guidance for the research direction. Excellent slicing software and path planning can also improve the quality of WAAM parts.

(2) In the WAAM process, proper parameters

are also the key to ensuring the quality of parts. Factors such as temperature, arc and droplet need to be monitored to ensure stability during surfacing. Morphology control is the premise of WAAM. The process parameters have a great influence on the morphology. The microstructures of different parts of the molten pool are different with different technological parameters. Therefore, the quality of WAAM parts can be improved only by clarifying the influence law of process parameters on the performance of WAAM parts. In addition, because WAAM is an unstable process, on-line monitoring and control system is essential, which is of great significance to improving the quality of WAAM parts.

(3) Post-treatment is usually used to reduce

residual stress and deformation. Standard post-treatment methods include rolling, impact strengthening and milling. The macroscopic characteristics, microstructure and mechanical properties of the component are controlled by plastic deformation in additive manufacturing. The stability of hot rolling deformation process is poor. Cold rolling is not suitable for stronger metals. Surface treatment has a limited effect on microstructure, but it is effective to redistribute and transform residual stress. Milling can improve the surface quality of WAAM parts and the residual stress, but the effect is insignificant when the initial residual stress is large.

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## 金属材料电弧熔丝增材制造研究现状与质量改进方法

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**摘 要:** 电弧熔丝增材制造(WAAM)是一种增材制造技术, 近年来在工业上有很大的发展潜力。总结目前 WAAM 的研究现状和面临的挑战, 并提出质量改进的方法。综述 WAAM 在表面质量、成形精度、显微组织、力学性能、残余应力和变形、孔隙及其他缺陷等方面的研究现状。从前处理、在线处理和后处理 3 个方面总结消除缺陷、改善显微组织和提高力学性能的方法。WAAM 的广泛应用仍然存在许多挑战, 可能需要从多个角度出发来实现 WAAM 的工业化应用。 路径规划和切片算法的开发、在线监测系统与现有 WAAM 设备的结合、后处理技术的复合等将是未来的重点研究方向。

**关键词:** 电弧熔丝增材制造; 材料性能改善; 工艺参数控制; 在线监测; 后处理

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