

Analysis of the Generalized Shape Operator

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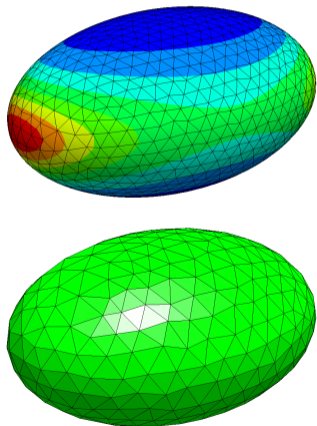


FWF Austrian
Science Fund

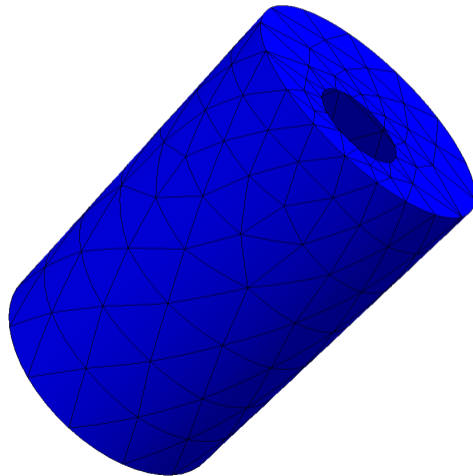
Project J 4824-N

Austrian Numerical Analysis Day 2026, Graz, May 8th, 2026

Approximate extrinsic curvature of non-smooth surfaces

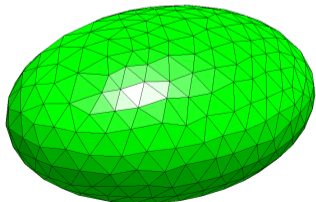
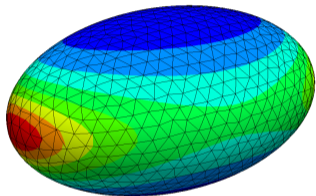


Application to shells



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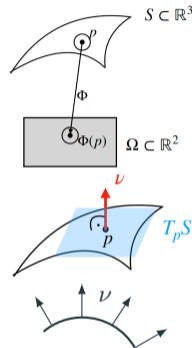


Extrinsic curvature

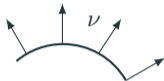
- Surface \mathcal{S} embedded in \mathbb{R}^3
- Normal vector $\nu : \mathcal{S} \rightarrow \mathbb{S}^2$
- Shape operator, Weingarten tensor, second fundamental form $\nabla \nu$
- Eigenvalues $0, \kappa_1, \kappa_2$

Mean curvature $H = 0.5(\kappa_1 + \kappa_2) = 0.5 \operatorname{tr}(\nabla \nu) \Rightarrow$ extrinsic curvature

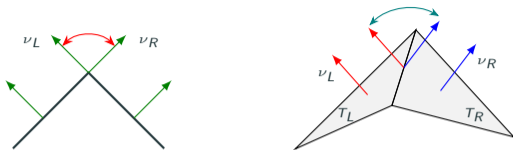
Gauss curvature $K = \kappa_1 \kappa_2 = \det(\nabla \nu + \nu \otimes \nu) \Rightarrow$ intrinsic curvature



Intrinsic curvature is independent of the embedding (surrounding space)



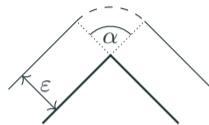
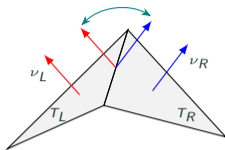
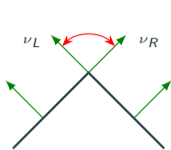
- Weingarten tensor $\nabla \nu$, ν normal vector, well-defined for C^1 surfaces



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- Consider piecewise affine surface
- Normal vector ν is piecewise constant and jumps




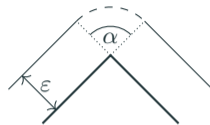
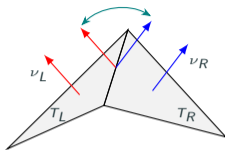
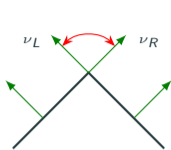
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- Dihedral angle formula (from Steiner's offset formula): $\sum_{E \in \mathcal{E}} \alpha_E |E|$

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 GRINSPUN, GINGOLD, REISMAN, ZORIN Computing discrete shape operators on general meshes, *Computer Graphics Forum* (2006)



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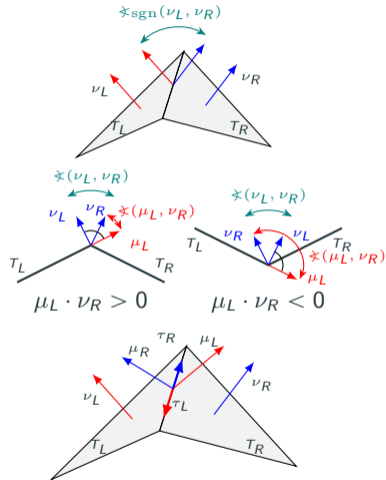
How to define a generalized Weingarten tensor object? Combine FEM & DDG!

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- Sobolev perspective: $\nu \notin H^1$, but $\nu \in L^2$
- $\nabla \nu \notin L^2$, it is a distribution (or measure)
- Define distributional Weingarten tensor ($\Psi_{\mu\mu} = (\Psi\mu) \cdot \mu$)

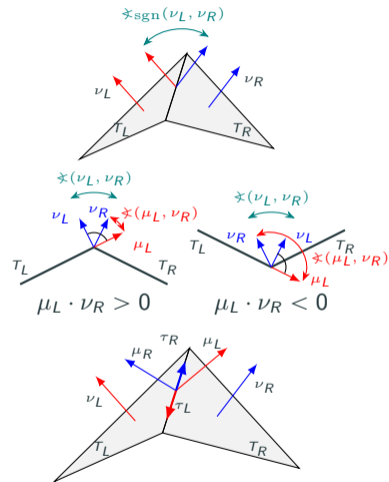
$$\widetilde{\nabla} \nu(\Psi) = \sum_{T \in \mathcal{T}} \int_T \nabla \nu : \Psi \, dx + \sum_{E \in \mathcal{E}} \int_E \mathfrak{X}_{\text{sgn}}(\nu_L, \nu_R) \Psi_{\mu\mu} \, ds$$
- Signed dihedral angle $\mathfrak{X}_{\text{sgn}}(\nu_L, \nu_R) = \text{sgn}(\nu_L \cdot \mu_R) \mathfrak{X}(\nu_L, \nu_R)$



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$$\widetilde{\nabla}v(\Psi) = \sum_{T \in \mathcal{T}} \int_T \nabla v : \Psi \, dx + \sum_{E \in \mathcal{E}^\circ} \int_E \mathfrak{X}_{\text{sgn}}(v_L, v_R) \Psi_{\mu\mu} \, ds$$
- Signed dihedral angle $\mathfrak{X}_{\text{sgn}}(v_L, v_R) = \text{sgn}(v_L \cdot \mu_R) \mathfrak{X}(v_L, v_R)$
- Test function space

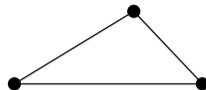
$$\Sigma = \{ \sigma \in L^2(\mathcal{T}, \mathbb{R}_{\text{sym}}^{3 \times 3}) : (\sigma\nu)|_T = 0, (\sigma_{\mu\mu})|_{T_L} = (\sigma_{\mu\mu})|_{T_R} \}$$
- Motivation: TDNNS method: $\nabla H(\text{curl}) \subset H(\text{div div})^*$
 $\Sigma \dots$ Hellan–Herrmann–Johnson space



Lagrange elements:

$$H^1(\Omega) = \{u \in L^2(\Omega) \mid \nabla u \in [L^2(\Omega)]^d\}$$

$$\text{Lag}_h^k(\mathcal{T}_h) = \mathcal{P}^k(\mathcal{T}_h) \cap C(\Omega) \subset H^1(\Omega)$$



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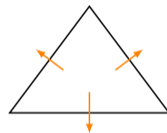
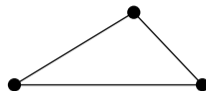
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Raviart–Thomas/Brezzi–Douglas–Marini elements:

$$H(\text{div}, \Omega) = \{\sigma \in [L^2(\Omega)]^d \mid \text{div} \sigma \in L^2(\Omega)\}$$

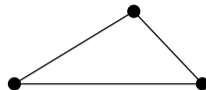
$$\text{BDM}_h^k = \{\sigma \in [\mathcal{P}^k(\mathcal{T}_h)]^d \mid [[\sigma_n]]_F = 0\} \subset H(\text{div}, \Omega)$$



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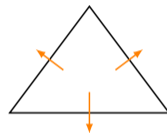
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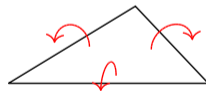
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Hellan–Herrmann–Johnson elements:

$$H(\text{divdiv}, \Omega) = \{\sigma \in [L^2(\Omega)]_{\text{sym}}^{d \times d} \mid \text{divdiv} \sigma \in H^{-1}(\Omega)\}$$

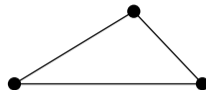
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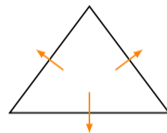
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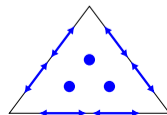
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Regge elements:

$$H(\text{curl curl}, \Omega) = \{\sigma \in [L^2(\Omega)]_{\text{sym}}^{d \times d} \mid \text{curl curl} \sigma \in H^{-1}(\Omega)\}$$

$$\text{Reg}_h^k(\mathcal{T}_h) = \{\sigma \in [\mathcal{P}^k(\mathcal{T}_h)]_{\text{sym}}^{d \times d} \mid \llbracket t^T \sigma t \rrbracket_F = 0\}$$



Lifting of distributional Weingarten tensor

Find $\kappa \in \Sigma_h^{k-1}$ for \mathcal{T} with curving order k such that for all $\sigma \in \Sigma_h^{k-1}$

$$\int_{\mathcal{T}} \kappa : \sigma \, dx = \widetilde{\nabla} \nu(\sigma) = \sum_{T \in \mathcal{T}} \int_T \nabla \nu : \sigma \, dx + \sum_{E \in \mathring{\mathcal{E}}} \int_E \chi_{\text{sgn}(\nu_L, \nu_R)} \sigma_{\mu\mu} \, ds.$$

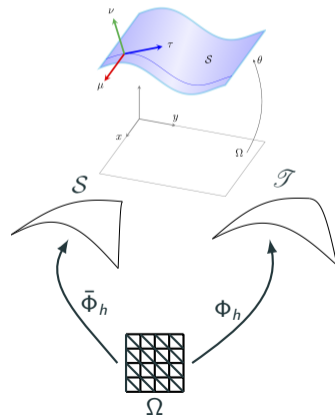
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- If $\mathcal{T} \rightarrow \mathcal{S}$, does $\kappa \rightarrow \nabla \bar{\nu}$?
- Dihedral angle $\chi_{\text{sgn}}(\nu_L, \nu_R)$ is highly nonlinear
- Approach: Parameterize $\Phi(t) = \bar{\Phi}_h + t(\Phi_h - \bar{\Phi}_h)$ and use integral representation of the error

$$\widetilde{\nabla} \nu(\sigma) - \int_S \nabla \nu : \sigma \, dx = \int_0^1 \frac{d}{dt} \widetilde{\nabla} \nu(\sigma) \, dt$$



Lifting of distributional Weingarten tensor

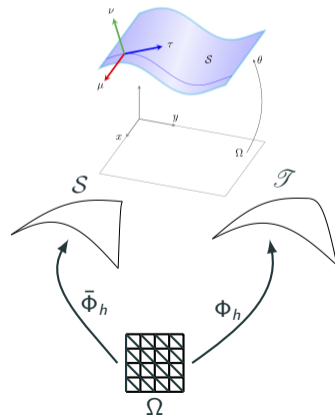
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- **Problem:** Test function σ depends on embedding Φ



Lifting of distributional Weingarten tensor

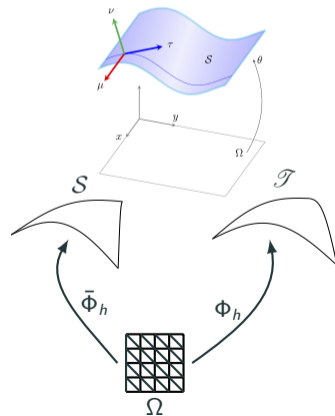
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- **Problem:** Test function σ depends on embedding Φ
- **Solution:** Use fixed reference domain (Uhlenbeck trick)
- Then estimate integrand



Evolution of quantities in direction $X \circ \Phi = \hat{X} := \dot{\Phi}$ (shape optimization techniques)

Lemma (linearization of geometric quantities)

$$\frac{d}{dt} J = (\operatorname{div}_S X) \circ \Phi J \quad \text{surface determinant}$$

$$\frac{d}{dt} (\nu \circ \Phi) = -((\nabla_S X)^T \nu) \circ \Phi \quad \text{surface normal}$$

$$\frac{d}{dt} (\sigma \circ \Phi) = (-2\operatorname{div}_S(X)\sigma + 2\operatorname{sym}(\nabla_S X \sigma)) \circ \Phi \quad \text{HHJ test function}$$

$$\frac{d}{dt} (\sigma_{\mu\mu} \circ \Phi) = (-2(\nabla_S X)_{\tau\tau} \sigma_{\mu\mu}) \circ \Phi$$

$$\frac{d}{dt} (\nabla_S \nu \circ \Phi) = \left(\sum_{i=1}^3 \nu_i \nabla_S^2 X_i - (\nabla_S X)^T \nabla_S \nu + \nabla_S \nu ((\nabla_S X^T \nu) \otimes \nu - \nabla_S X) \right) \circ \Phi$$

$$\frac{d}{dt} (\angle_{\operatorname{sgn}(\nu_L, \nu_R)} \circ \Phi) = [(\nabla_S X)_{\nu\mu}] \circ \Phi \quad \text{dihedral angle}$$

$$F = \hat{\nabla} \hat{X}, \quad J = \sqrt{\det(F^T F)}$$

Theorem (Gopalakrishnan, N.)

There holds for $\sigma \in \Sigma$ and $X = \dot{\Phi}$


$$\frac{d}{dt} \widetilde{\nabla} \nu(\sigma) = a(\Phi; \sigma, X) + b(\Phi; \sigma, X),$$

where with $\mathcal{H}_\nu(X) = \sum_{i=1}^3 \text{hesse}(X_i) \nu_i$

$$a(\Phi; \sigma, X) = \sum_{T \in \mathcal{T}} \int_T -\text{div}(X) \nabla \nu : \sigma - \sum_{E \in \mathring{\mathcal{E}}} \int_E (\nabla X)_{\tau\tau} \chi_{\text{sgn}(\nu_L, \nu_R)} \sigma_{\mu\mu},$$

$$b(\Phi; \sigma, X) = \sum_{T \in \mathcal{T}} \int_T -\mathcal{H}_\nu(X) : \sigma + \sum_{E \in \mathring{\mathcal{E}}} \int_E [(\nabla X)_{\nu\mu}]_E \sigma_{\mu\mu}.$$

Bilinear form $b(\Phi; \sigma, X)$ is closely related to the surface Hellan–Herrmann–Johnson method

 WALKER: The Kirchhoff plate equation on surfaces: the surface Hellan–Herrmann–Johnson method, *IMA J. Numer. Anal.* (2021)

Perform all estimates on the reference domain: Transform bilinear forms back

Lemma (pull-back)

$$\begin{aligned}
 a(\Phi; \sigma, X) &= \sum_{\hat{\tau} \in \hat{\mathcal{T}}} \int_{\hat{\tau}} -J^{-1} \text{tr}(\hat{\nabla} \hat{X} F^\dagger) \hat{S} : \hat{\sigma} - \sum_{\hat{E} \in \hat{\mathcal{E}}} \int_{\hat{E}} J_{\text{bnd}}^{-3} (\hat{\nabla}_{\hat{\tau}} \hat{X}) \cdot (F \hat{\tau}) \times_{\text{sgn}} (\nu_L, \nu_R) \circ \Phi \hat{\sigma}_{\hat{\mu}\hat{\mu}}, \\
 b(\Phi; \sigma, X) &= \sum_{\hat{\tau} \in \hat{\mathcal{T}}} \int_{\hat{\tau}} - \sum_{i=1}^3 J^{-1} (F_1 \times F_2) \left(\hat{\nabla}^2 \hat{X}_i - \sum_{\alpha=1}^2 (\hat{\nabla}_\alpha \hat{X}_i) \Gamma^\alpha \right) : \hat{\sigma} \\
 &\quad + \sum_{\hat{E} \in \hat{\mathcal{E}}} \int_{\hat{E}} \left[\sum_{i=1}^3 J^{-1} (F_1 \times F_2) \cdot \left(\hat{\nabla}_{\hat{\mu}} \hat{X}_i - J_{\text{bnd}}^2 (F^T F)_{\hat{\tau}\hat{\mu}} \hat{\nabla}_{\hat{\tau}} \hat{X}_i \right) \right] \hat{\sigma}_{\hat{\mu}\hat{\mu}} \Big|_E
 \end{aligned}$$

Christoffel symbols of second kind: $\Gamma_{\beta\gamma}^\alpha = \sum_{\ell=1}^3 F_{\alpha\ell}^\dagger \hat{\nabla}_\beta F_{\ell\gamma}$

$\hat{S} = \sum_{i=1}^3 \nu_i \circ \Phi \hat{\nabla}^2 \Phi_i$ pull-back of Weingarten tensor: $\nabla_S \nu \circ \Phi = -F^{\dagger T} \hat{S} F^\dagger$

$\sigma \circ \Phi = J^{-2} F \hat{\sigma} F^T$, $\nu \circ \Phi = J^{-1} F_1 \times F_2$

Note: $\hat{X} = \dot{\Phi} = \Phi_h - \bar{\Phi}_h \Rightarrow$ gives convergence

1. $\widetilde{\nabla\nu}(\sigma) - \int_S \nabla\nu : \sigma \, dx = \int_0^1 \frac{d}{dt} \widetilde{\nabla\nu}(\sigma) \, dt$ with $\Phi(t) = \bar{\Phi}_h + t(\Phi_h - \bar{\Phi}_h)$
2. $\frac{d}{dt} \widetilde{\nabla\nu}(\sigma) = a(\Phi; \sigma, \dot{\Phi}(t)) + b(\Phi; \sigma, \dot{\Phi}(t))$ sum of the bilinear forms a and b
3. Estimate $a(\Phi(t); \sigma, \dot{\Phi}(t))$ and $b(\Phi(t); \sigma, \dot{\Phi}(t))$ $\|\chi_{\text{sgn}}(\nu_L, \nu_R)\|_{W^{1,\infty}} \leq h \|\bar{\Phi}_h\|_{W^{\min\{k,2\},\infty}}$

Theorem (Gopalakrishnan, N.)

Let $(\Phi_h)_{h>0} \in \text{Lag}_h^k$ be a family of embeddings such that $\|\Phi_h - \bar{\Phi}_h\|_{W^{1,\infty}} \rightarrow 0$. Then there holds

$$\|\widetilde{\nabla\nu} - \nabla\bar{\nu}\|_{H^{-1}} \leq C(1 + \max_{\hat{T} \in \hat{\mathcal{T}}} h_{\hat{T}}^{-1} \|\Phi_h - \bar{\Phi}_h\|_{W^{\min\{k,2\},\infty}(\hat{T})}) \|\Phi_h - \bar{\Phi}_h\|_{H^1} \leq C h^k.$$



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Dihedral angle $\chi_{\text{sgn}}(\nu_L, \nu_R)$ always converges in H^{-1} !



1. $\widetilde{\nabla\nu}(\sigma) - \int_S \nabla\nu : \sigma \, dx = \int_0^1 \frac{d}{dt} \widetilde{\nabla\nu}(\sigma) \, dt$ with $\Phi(t) = \bar{\Phi}_h + t(\Phi_h - \bar{\Phi}_h)$
2. $\frac{d}{dt} \widetilde{\nabla\nu}(\sigma) = a(\Phi; \sigma, \dot{\Phi}(t)) + b(\Phi; \sigma, \dot{\Phi}(t))$ sum of the bilinear forms a and b
3. Estimate $a(\Phi(t); \sigma, \dot{\Phi}(t))$ and $b(\Phi(t); \sigma, \dot{\Phi}(t))$ $\|\mathfrak{X}_{\text{sgn}}(\nu_L, \nu_R)\|_{W^{1,\infty}} \leq h \|\bar{\Phi}_h\|_{W^{\min\{k,2\},\infty}}$

Theorem (Gopalakrishnan, N.)

Let $(\Phi_h)_{h>0} \in \text{Lag}_h^k$ be a family of embeddings such that $\|\Phi_h - \bar{\Phi}_h\|_{W^{1,\infty}} \rightarrow 0$. Then there holds

$$\|\widetilde{\nabla\nu} - \nabla\bar{\nu}\|_{H^{-1}} \leq C(1 + \max_{\hat{T} \in \hat{\mathcal{T}}} h_{\hat{T}}^{-1} \|\Phi_h - \bar{\Phi}_h\|_{W^{\min\{k,2\},\infty}(\hat{T})}) \|\Phi_h - \bar{\Phi}_h\|_{H^1} \leq C h^k.$$

Dihedral angle $\mathfrak{X}_{\text{sgn}}(\nu_L, \nu_R)$ always converges in H^{-1} !

Theorem (Gopalakrishnan, N.)

Let $(\Phi_h)_{h>0} \in \text{Lag}_h^k$ be a family of embeddings such that $\Phi_h = \mathcal{I}_h^{\text{Lag}^k} \bar{\Phi}_h$ for $k \geq 1$. Let $\kappa \in \Sigma_h^{k-1}$ be the lifted Weingarten tensor. Then $\|\kappa - \nabla\bar{\nu}\|_{H^{-1}} \leq C h^{k+1}$.

Shells

$$\mathcal{W}(u) = \frac{t}{2} \|\mathbf{E}(u)\|_{\mathcal{M}}^2 + \frac{t^3}{24} \|\mathbf{F}^T \nabla(\nu \circ \phi) - \nabla \hat{\nu}\|_{\mathcal{M}}^2$$

u ... displacement of mid-surface

t ... thickness

\mathcal{M} ... material tensor

$$\mathbf{F} = \nabla u + \mathbf{P} = \nabla \phi, \quad \mathbf{P} = \mathbf{I} - \hat{\nu} \otimes \hat{\nu}$$

$$\mathbf{E} = \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{F}^T \mathbf{F} - \mathbf{P}) = \frac{1}{2}(\nabla u^T \nabla u + \nabla u^T \mathbf{P} + \mathbf{P} \nabla u)$$



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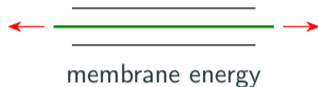
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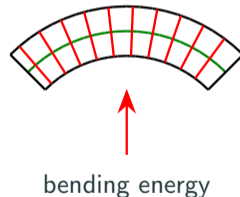
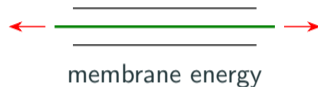
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Lifted shape operator:
$$\int_{\mathcal{T}} \boldsymbol{\kappa} : \boldsymbol{\Psi} \, dx = \widetilde{\nabla} \nu(\boldsymbol{\Psi}) := \sum_{T \in \mathcal{T}} \int_T \nabla \nu : \boldsymbol{\Psi} \, dx + \sum_{E \in \mathcal{E}^{\circ}} \int_E \chi_{\text{sgn}}(\nu_L, \nu_R) \boldsymbol{\Psi}_{\mu\mu} \, ds$$

- Lifted curvature difference $\boldsymbol{\kappa}^{\text{diff}}$ via three-field formulation

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{L}(u, \boldsymbol{\kappa}^{\text{diff}}, \boldsymbol{\sigma}) &= \frac{t}{2} \|\mathbf{E}(u)\|_{\mathcal{M}}^2 + \frac{t^3}{12} \|\boldsymbol{\kappa}^{\text{diff}}\|_{\mathcal{M}}^2 - \langle f, u \rangle \\ &+ \sum_{T \in \mathcal{T}} \int_T (\boldsymbol{\kappa}^{\text{diff}} - (\mathbf{F}^T \nabla(\nu \circ \phi) - \nabla \hat{\nu})) : \boldsymbol{\sigma} \, dx \\ &+ \sum_{E \in \mathcal{E}} \int_E (\chi_{\text{sgn}}(\nu_L, \nu_R) - \chi_{\text{sgn}}(\hat{\nu}_L, \hat{\nu}_R)) \boldsymbol{\sigma}_{\hat{\mu}\hat{\mu}} \, ds \end{aligned}$$

- Lagrange parameter $\boldsymbol{\sigma} \in \Sigma_h^k$ **moment tensor**
- Eliminate $\boldsymbol{\kappa}^{\text{diff}}$ \rightarrow two-field formulation in $(u, \boldsymbol{\sigma})$

 N., SCHÖBERL: The Hellan–Herrmann–Johnson and TDNNS methods for linear and nonlinear shells, *Comput. Struct.* (2024)

 N., SCHÖBERL: The Hellan–Herrmann–Johnson method for nonlinear shells, *Comput. Struct.* 225 (2019).

$$\mathcal{W}(u) = t E_{\text{mem}}(u) + t^3 E_{\text{bend}}(u) - f \cdot u, \quad f = t^3 \tilde{f}$$

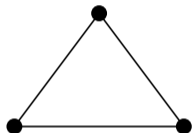
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Enforces $E_{\text{mem}}(u) = 0$ in the limit $t \rightarrow 0$

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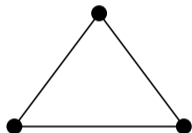


$$\text{Lag}_h^k(\mathcal{T}_h) = \mathcal{P}^k(\mathcal{T}_h) \cap C(\Omega) \subset H^1(\Omega)$$

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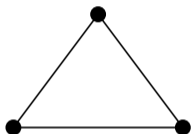


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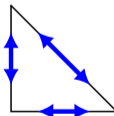
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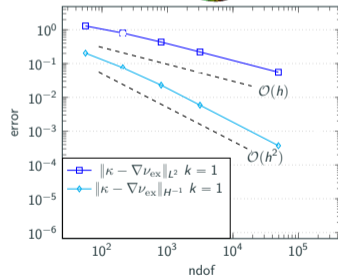
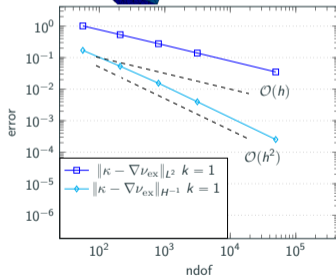
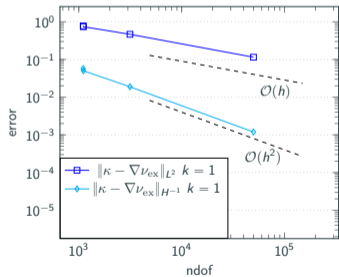
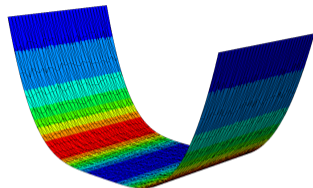
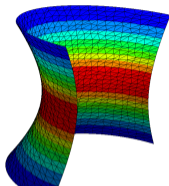
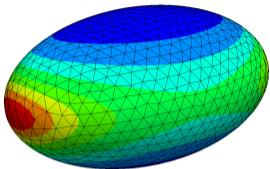
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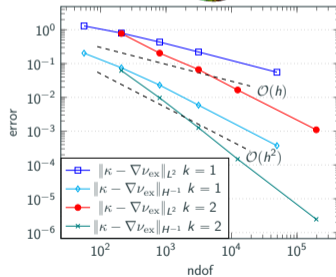
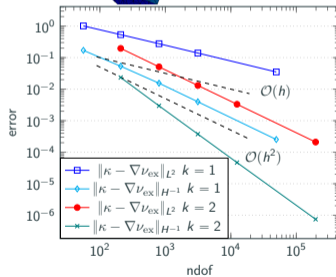
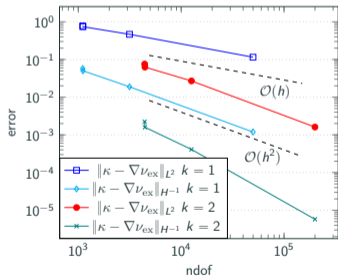
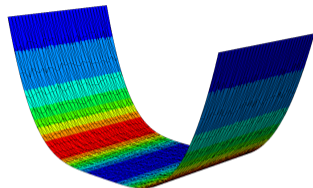
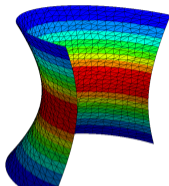
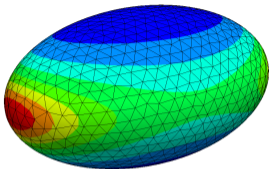
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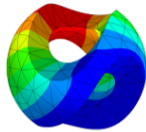


N., SCHÖBERL: Avoiding membrane locking with Regge interpolation, *Comput. Methods Appl. Mech. Engrg* 373 (2021).

Numerics & Applications



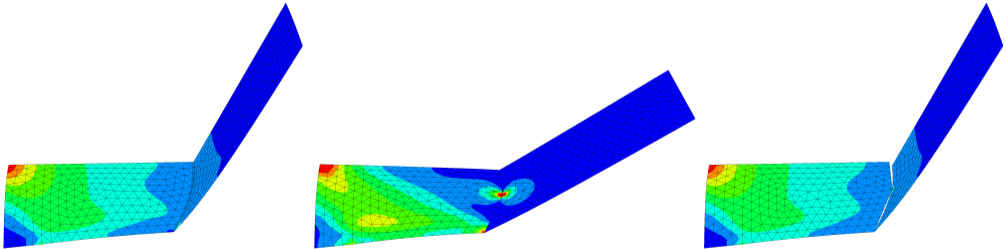
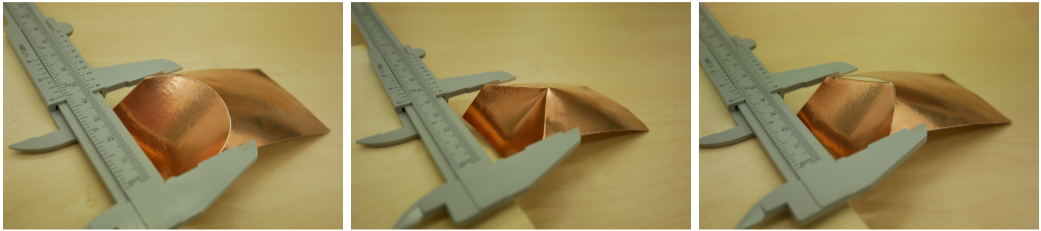





NGSolve

Example (cantilever bending)

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 BARTELS, BONITO, HORNING, N., Babuška's paradox in a nonlinear bending-folding model, *Interfaces and Free Boundaries* (2026).

Canham–Helfrich–Evans energy:

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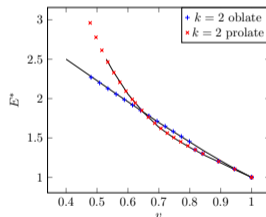
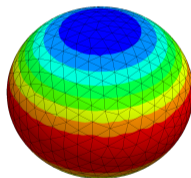
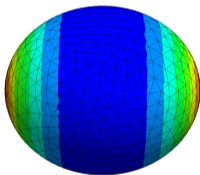
κ_b bending elastic constant


$H = 0.5 \operatorname{tr}(\nabla \nu)$ mean curvature

$2H_0$ spontaneous curvature

Constraints: $|\Omega| = V_0, \quad |\mathcal{S}| = A_0$

Functional: $\mathcal{J}(\mathcal{S}) = \mathcal{W}(\mathcal{S}) + c_A(|\mathcal{S}| - A_0)^2 + c_V(|\Omega| - V_0)^2$



 N., SCHÖBERL, STURM, Numerical shape optimization of Canham-Helfrich-Evans bending energy, *JoCP* (2023)

 GANGL, STURM, N., SCHÖBERL, Fully and Semi-Automated Shape Differentiation in NGSolve, *Structural and Multidisciplinary Optimization* (2021)

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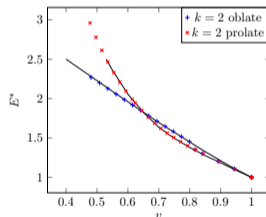
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- Applications (origami, cell membranes)

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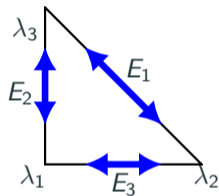
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Thank You for Your attention!

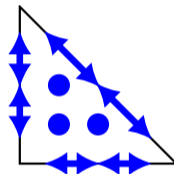
-  GOPALAKRISHNAN, N.: Analysis of generalized shape operator on surfaces (*in preparation*)
-  BARTELS, BONITO, HORNING, N., Babuška's paradox in a nonlinear bending-folding model, *Interfaces and Free Boundaries* (2026).
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-  N.: Mixed Finite Element Methods for Nonlinear Continuum Mechanics and Shells, *PhD thesis* (2021).
-  N., SCHÖBERL: The Hellan–Herrmann–Johnson method for nonlinear shells, *Comput. Struct.* (2019).

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$$\varphi_{E_i} = \nabla \lambda_j \odot \nabla \lambda_k, \quad \mathbf{t}_j^\top \varphi_{E_i} \mathbf{t}_j = c_i \delta_{ij},$$

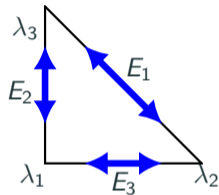


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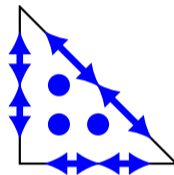
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-  LI: Regge Finite Elements with Applications in Solid Mechanics and Relativity, *PhD thesis, University of Minnesota* (2018).
-  N.: Mixed Finite Element Methods For Nonlinear Continuum Mechanics And Shells, *PhD thesis, TU Wien* (2021).

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$$\mathcal{I}_{\mathcal{R}}^k : C^0(\Omega) \rightarrow \text{Reg}_h^k \quad \text{canonical interpolant}$$

$$\int_E (g - \mathcal{I}_{\mathcal{R}}^k g)_{tt} q \, dl = 0 \text{ for all } q \in \mathcal{P}^k(E)$$

$$\int_T (g - \mathcal{I}_{\mathcal{R}}^k g) : Q \, dx = 0 \text{ for all } Q \in \mathcal{P}^{k-1}(T, \mathbb{R}_{\text{sym}}^{2 \times 2})$$