

Free Boundary Minimal Surfaces in the Unit 3-Ball

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Definition : *Free boundary minimal surfaces = Properly embedded minimal surfaces in \mathbf{B}^3 which meet $\mathbf{S}^2 = \partial\mathbf{B}^3$ orthogonally.*

Topological classification :

- ▶ - J.C.C. Nitsche 1980 : The only **simply connected** free boundary minimal surface in \mathbf{B}^3 is the equatorial disk.
- ▶ A. Fraser, M. Li 2012, **Conjecture** : The unique (up to congruences) free boundary minimal **annulus** in \mathbf{B}^3 is the critical catenoid:

$$(s, \theta) \mapsto \frac{1}{s_* \cosh s_*} (\cosh s e^{i\theta}, s), \quad s_* \tanh s_* = 1$$

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(M^2, g) - compact Riemannian manifold, with $\partial M \neq \emptyset$

$$u \in C^\infty(\partial M) \rightsquigarrow \hat{u} : \begin{cases} \Delta_g \hat{u} = 0 & \text{on } M, \\ \hat{u} = u & \text{on } \partial M \end{cases}$$

Dirichlet-to-Neumann operator :

$$L_g : C^\infty(\partial M) \longrightarrow C^\infty(\partial M), \quad L_g u = \frac{\partial \hat{u}}{\partial \eta}$$

non-negative, self-adjoint,

diskrete spectrum: $\sigma_0 < \sigma_1 \leq \sigma_2 \leq \dots$ (**Steklov eigenvalues**)

$$\sigma^*(0, n) := \sup \sigma_1(g) \text{Length}_g(\partial M).$$

1. Weinstock theorem : $\sigma^*(0, 1) = 2\pi$, Σ_0 - flat unit disk
2. A. Fraser, R. Schoen :
 - ▶ For all $n \in \mathbb{N}$ a maximizing metric is achieved by a free boundary minimal surface Σ_n in \mathbf{B}^3 (if $n = 2$, then $\sigma^*(0, 2) = 4\pi/1.2$ and Σ_1 is a critical catenoid)
 - ▶ $n \rightarrow \infty$, Σ_n converges on compact sets of \mathbf{B}^3 to a double equatorial disk. ($\sigma^*(0, n)$ converges to 4π).
 - ▶ For large n , Σ_n is approximately a pair of nearby parallel plane disks joined by n boundary bridges \sim scaled down versions of half-catenoids.

$\mathbb{R}^3 \longleftrightarrow \mathbb{C} \times \mathbb{R}$, $\mathfrak{S}_n \subset O(3)$ a subgroup of isometries generated by

$$(z, t) \mapsto (\bar{z}, t), \quad (z, t) \mapsto (z, -t), \quad (z, t) \mapsto (e^{\frac{2\pi i}{n}} z, t)$$

Theorem (A. Folha, F. Pacard, —)

For n large enough we

- ▶ *Give an alternative proof of existence of **genus 0** free boundary minimal surfaces with \mathbf{n} boundary components (invariant under \mathfrak{S}_n),*

$$\Sigma_n \xrightarrow{n \rightarrow \infty} \text{double copie of } D^2.$$

- ▶ *Prove the existence of **genus 1** free boundary minimal surfaces $\tilde{\Sigma}_n$ with \mathbf{n} boundary components (invariant under \mathfrak{S}_n),*

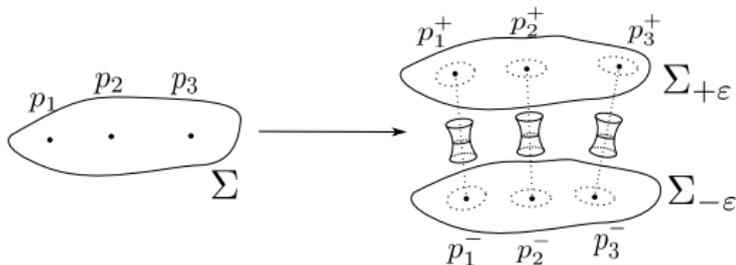
$$\tilde{\Sigma}_n \xrightarrow{n \rightarrow \infty} \text{double copie of } D^2 \setminus \{0\}.$$

Ingredients: An initial compact, oriented embedded **minimal** surface Σ and a set of points $p_1, \dots, p_n \in \Sigma$.

- ▶ Construct two "nearby copies" $\Sigma_{\pm\epsilon}$ of Σ , which converge uniformly to Σ when $\epsilon \rightarrow 0$:

$$\Sigma_{\pm\epsilon} = \Sigma \pm \epsilon \Psi N_{\Sigma}, \quad \Psi \in \mathcal{C}^2(\Sigma).$$

- ▶ Perform a **connected sum** of $\Sigma_{\pm\epsilon}$ at p_1, \dots, p_k and then deform it to a CMC surface.



Question : Under what conditions is it possible to carry out a doubling construction based on given minimal surface?

Neck configuration : The number, the size and the positions of the necks.

Jacobi operator : $J_{\Sigma} = \Delta_{\Sigma} + |A_{\sigma}|^2 + \text{Ric}(N_{\Sigma}, N_{\Sigma})$.

Σ is said to be **nondegenerate** if

$$J_{\Sigma} w = 0, \quad w|_{\partial\Sigma} = 0 \quad \Rightarrow \quad w = 0.$$

F. Pacard, T. Sun : If Σ is a **nondegenerate minimal hypersurface** in a Riemannian manifold, one can choose Ψ . s.t. $H(\Sigma \pm \Psi N_{\Sigma}) = \pm 1$ and produce a CMC surface with $H = \varepsilon$ by doubling Σ at any nondegenerate critical point of Ψ (**neck size** $\sim \varepsilon$).

Question : What if Σ is degenerate?

- ▶ **Green's function method** (R. Mazzeo, F. Pacard, D. Pollack) :
consists to study the solutions to

$$J_{\Sigma} \Gamma = \sum_{i=1}^k c_i \delta_{p_i}, \quad \Gamma|_{\partial\Sigma} = 0,$$

and construct $\Sigma_{\pm\epsilon}$ as a normal graphs about Σ of the functions $\pm\epsilon\Gamma$
($\Sigma_{\pm\epsilon}$ converge to Σ uniformly on compact sets when $\epsilon \rightarrow 0$).

- ▶ **Balancing considerations** (using the first variation formula).

A. Butscher, F. Pacard : Surfaces with $H = \epsilon$ in \mathbf{S}^3 can be constructed by doubling the minimal Clifford torus at the points of a square lattice that contains $2\pi\mathbb{Z}^2$ (neck size $\sim \epsilon$).

- ▶ **N. Kapouleas, S.D. Yang** : Construction of minimal surfaces in \mathbf{S}^3 by doubling the Clifford torus at the points of the square lattice $\frac{2\pi}{n}\mathbb{Z}$, with n large enough.
- ▶ **N. Kapoules** : Construction of minimal surfaces in \mathbf{S}^3 by doubling the equatorial sphere
- ▶ **D. Wiygul** : Construction of minimal surfaces in \mathbf{S}^3 by stacking Clifford tori.

! A certain relation should be satisfied between the number of necks and the size of the necks \Rightarrow **Construction works only for large n !**

The expansion of the Green's function in a neighborhood of the poles reads :

$$\varepsilon \Gamma = \varepsilon c(n) + \varepsilon \log r + \dots$$

On the other hand, **catenoid** scaled by a factor ε (neck size)

$$X_{cat}^\varepsilon : (s, \theta) \in \mathbb{R} \times S^1 \mapsto \varepsilon (\cosh s \cos \theta, \cosh s \sin \theta, s)$$

can be seen as a bi-graph of the function

$$G_\varepsilon = \varepsilon \log \frac{2}{\varepsilon} + \varepsilon \log r + \mathcal{O}\left(\frac{\varepsilon^3}{r^2}\right)$$

! We need the constant terms to match exactly : $c(n) = \log \frac{2}{\varepsilon}$, which gives the relation between the size and the number of the necks.

We choose the following parametrization of \mathbf{B}^3 :

$$X : \mathbf{D}^2 \times \mathbb{R} \longrightarrow \mathbf{B}^3, \quad X(z, t) = A(z, t) (z, B(z) \sinh t),$$

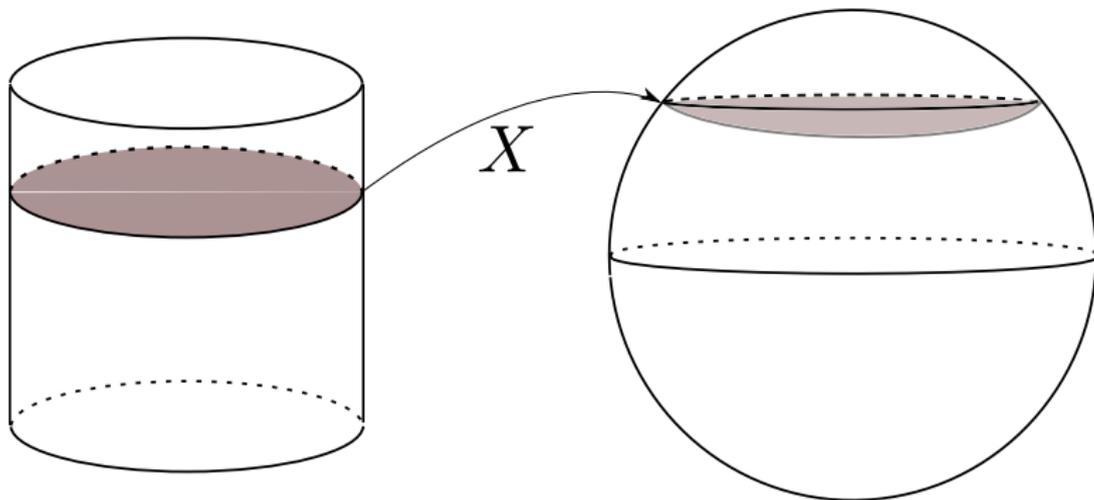
where $B(z) = \frac{1+|z|^2}{2}$ and $A(z, t) = \frac{1}{1+B(z)(\cosh t - 1)}$.

- ▶ $t = 0$ - horizontal disk $\mathbf{D}^2 \times \{0\}$
- ▶ $|z| = 1$ - unit sphere \mathbf{S}^2
- ▶ $t = t_0$ - CMC leaf with $H = \sinh t_0$ that meets \mathbf{S}^2 orthogonally.

Induced metric :

$$X^* g_{eucl} = A^2(z, t) (|dz|^2 + B^2(z) dt^2)$$

Parametrization of the unit ball



Take $w \in \mathcal{C}^2(D^2)$ and consider the image in \mathbf{B}^3 of the vertical graph of w :

$$z \mapsto X(z, w(z)).$$

Lemma

1. $X(z, w(z))$ is orthogonal to $\mathbf{S}^2 = \partial\mathbf{B}^3$ at the boundary iff

$$\partial_r w|_{r=1} = 0;$$

2. Mean curvature of $X(z, w(z))$ is given by

$$H(w) = \frac{1}{A^3(\cdot, w) B} \operatorname{div} \left(\frac{A^2(\cdot, w) B^2 \nabla w}{\sqrt{1 + B^2 |\nabla w|^2}} \right) + 2 \sqrt{1 + B^2 |\nabla w|^2} \sinh w.$$

The linearized mean curvature operator is given by

$$L_{gr}w = \Delta(Bw) = \Delta\left(\frac{1 + |z|^2}{2}w\right)$$

Remark:

- ▶ The operator L_{gr} has a kernel :

$$\text{Ker}(L_{gr}) = \left\{ \frac{2x_1}{1 + |z|^2}, \frac{2x_2}{1 + |z|^2} \right\}.$$

This corresponds to tilting the unit disk $D^2 \times \{0\}$ in \mathbf{B}^3 .

- ▶ One can **eliminate the kernel** by asking the function w to be invariant under a group of rotations around the coordinate axis $Ox_3 \Rightarrow$

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Green's functions

Take $\varepsilon, \tilde{\varepsilon} \in \mathbb{R}_+$ and $z_m := e^{2\pi im/n}$, $m = 1, \dots, n$

and consider the catenoids in \mathbb{R}^3 centered at $z = 0$ and $z = z_m$:

$$(s, \theta) \in \mathbb{R} \times \mathbb{S}^1 \mapsto (\tilde{\varepsilon} \cosh s e^{i\theta}, \tilde{\varepsilon} s)$$

$$(s, \theta) \in \mathbb{R} \times \left[\frac{\pi}{2}, \frac{3\pi}{2} \right] \mapsto (\varepsilon \cosh s e^{i\theta} + z_m, \varepsilon s)$$

which can be seen as bi-graphs of the functions

$$\mathcal{G}_{\tilde{\varepsilon},0}(z) = \left(z, \pm \left(\tilde{\varepsilon} \log \frac{\tilde{\varepsilon}}{2} - \tilde{\varepsilon} \log |z| + \mathcal{O}(\tilde{\varepsilon}^3/|z|^2) \right) \right)$$

$$\mathcal{G}_{\varepsilon,m}(z) := \left(z, \pm \left(\varepsilon \log \frac{\varepsilon}{2} - \varepsilon \log |z - z_m| + \mathcal{O}(\varepsilon^3/|z - z_m|^2) \right) \right)$$

in small neighborhoods of $z = 0$ and $z = z_m$.

Goal : To find the solution to the problem (*) invariant under rotations by the angle $\frac{2\pi}{n}$.

$$(*) \begin{cases} \Delta(B\Gamma) = c_0 \delta_0 & \text{in } D^2 \\ \partial_r \Gamma = \sum_{m=1}^n c_m \delta_{z_m} & \text{on } S^1 \end{cases}$$

If $\Gamma(z) = G(z^n)/B(z)$, then G satisfies

$$(**) \begin{cases} \Delta G = d_0 \delta_0 & \text{in } D^2 \\ \partial_r G - \frac{1}{n} G = d_1 \delta_1 & \text{on } S^1 \end{cases}$$

in the sense of distributions.

We construct explicitly G_0 and G_1 , such that

$$(1) \begin{cases} \Delta G_0 = d_0 \delta_0 & \text{in } D^2 \\ \partial_r G_0 - \frac{1}{n} G_0 = 0 & \text{on } S^1 \end{cases} \quad (2) \begin{cases} \Delta G_1 = 0 & \text{in } D^2 \\ \partial_r G_1 - \frac{1}{n} G_1 = d_1 \delta_1 & \text{on } S^1 \end{cases}$$

▶ $G_0 := -\log |z| - n$ - satisfies (1)

$$\forall k \in \mathbb{N}, \quad H_k(z) = \frac{1}{n^k} \operatorname{Re} \sum_{j=1}^{\infty} \frac{z^j}{j^{k+1}}$$

$$H_0(z) = -\log |1 - z|, \quad \partial_r H_k|_{r=1} = \frac{1}{n} H_{k-1}$$

$$G_1(z) := -\frac{n}{2} + \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} H_k(z) - \text{satisfies (2)}$$

▶ $\forall \alpha, \beta \in \mathbb{R}, \quad \Gamma_n(z) := \frac{1}{B(z)} (\alpha G_0(z^n) + \beta G_1(z^n))$ satisfies (*)

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$$\Gamma_n(z) = \begin{cases} c_0(n) + 2n\alpha \log |z| + \mathcal{O}(\alpha |z|^2), & \text{as } z \rightarrow 0 \\ c_1(n) + \beta \log |z - z_m| + \mathcal{O}(\beta |z - z_m|), & \text{as } z \rightarrow z_m, \end{cases}$$

where $c_0(n) \sim c_1(n) \sim n$. We obtain :

$$\varepsilon \sim \tilde{\varepsilon}, \quad n \sim \log \varepsilon, \quad \alpha \sim \frac{\varepsilon}{n}, \quad \beta \sim \varepsilon.$$

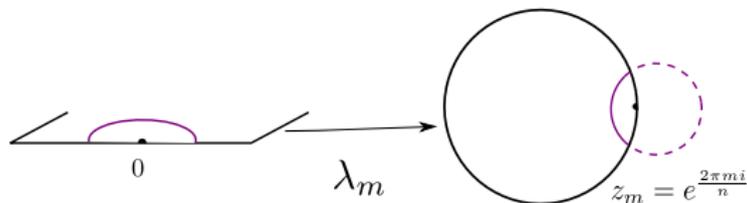
and do the "gluing" in the regions

$$|z| \sim \varepsilon^{1/2}, \quad |z - z_m| \sim \varepsilon^{2/3}, \quad m = 1, \dots, n$$

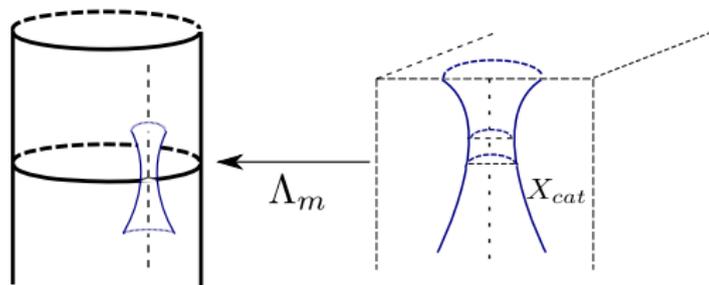
Catenoidal bridges orthogonal to S^2

$\mathbb{C}_- := \{\zeta \in \mathbb{C} : \operatorname{Re}(\zeta) \leq 0\}$. Consider the diffeomorphisms

$$\lambda_m(\zeta) : \mathbb{C}_- \longrightarrow \bar{D}^2, \quad \lambda_m(\zeta) = e^{2\pi i m/n} \frac{1 + \zeta}{1 - \zeta}$$

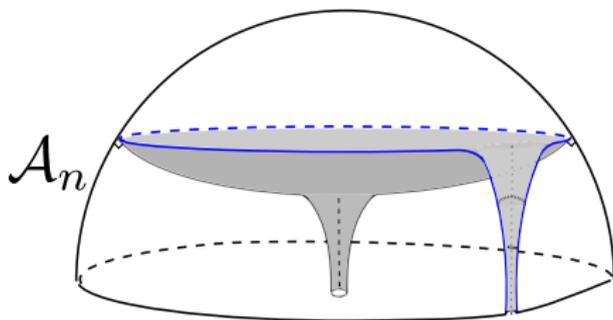


and $\Lambda_m(\zeta, t) : \mathbb{C}_- \times \mathbb{R} \longrightarrow \bar{D}^2 \times \mathbb{R}$, $\Lambda_m(z, t) = (\lambda_m(z), 2t)$



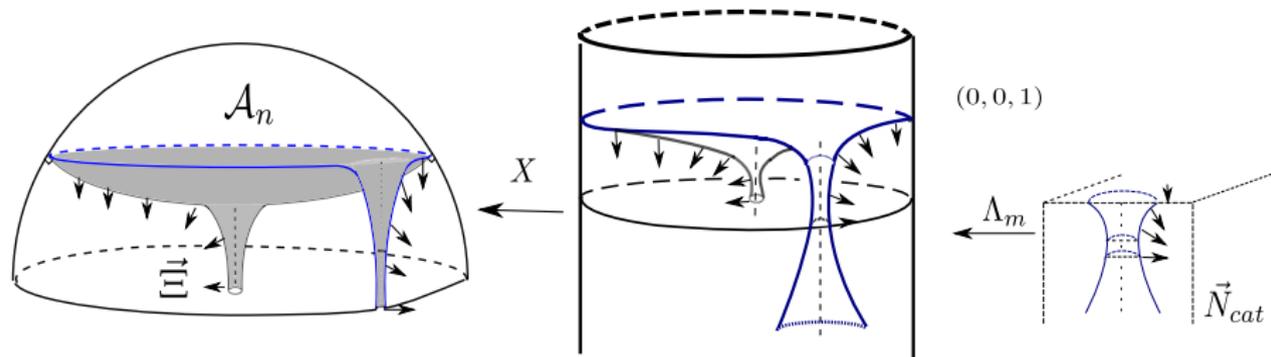
Approximate solution \mathcal{A}_n

$\mathcal{A}_n =$ **connected sum** of the graph of the Green's function Γ_n with n half-catenoidal bridges and 1 catenoidal neck.



Orthogonality to \mathbf{S}^2 at the boundary:

- ▶ The half-catenoid X_{cat} is foliated by horizontal leaves orthogonal to $\partial\mathbb{C}_- \times \mathbb{R}$ at the boundary.
- ▶ The restriction $X \circ \Lambda_m$ to the horizontal planes is conformal.
- ▶ The surface parametrized by $X \circ \Lambda_m \circ X_{cat}$ is foliated by spherical-cap leaves orthogonal to \mathbf{S}^2 at the boundary.



Define a vector field Ξ transverse to \mathcal{A}_n

(smoothly interpolating between the "normal" to the catenoids and the "vertical" vector field), s.t.

if ξ_t is the associated flow : $\xi(\mathcal{A}_n, 0) = \mathcal{A}_n$ and $\frac{\partial \xi}{\partial t} = \Xi(\xi(\cdot, t))$

then $\mathcal{A}_{n,t} := \xi_t(\mathcal{A}_n)$ meets \mathbf{S}^2 orthogonally along $\partial \mathcal{A}_{n,t}$.

Take $w \in \mathcal{C}^2(\mathcal{A}_n)$ and put $\mathcal{A}_n(w) = \{\xi(p, w(p)), \quad p \in \mathcal{A}_n\}$.

- ▶ The Taylor expansion of the mean curvature of $\mathcal{A}_n(w)$ satisfies

$$H(\mathcal{A}_n(w)) = H(\mathcal{A}_n) + \mathcal{L}_n w + \mathcal{Q}_n(w, \nabla w, \nabla^2 w),$$

\mathcal{L}_n - the linearized mean curvature operator,

\mathcal{Q}_n - smooth nonlinear function, s.t. $Q(0, 0, 0) = DQ(0, 0, 0) = 0$.

- ▶ If w satisfies the **Neumann boundary condition** : $\frac{\partial w}{\partial \eta} = 0$ on $\partial \mathcal{A}_n$

$\Rightarrow \mathcal{A}_n(w)$ meets \mathbf{S}^2 orthogonally at the boundary.

Our goal is to solve the equation $H(\mathcal{A}_n(w)) = 0$ or

$$\mathcal{L}_n w = - (H(\mathcal{A}_n) + \mathcal{Q}_n(w, \nabla w, \nabla^2 w))$$

- ▶ If $H(\mathcal{A}_n) \xrightarrow{n \rightarrow \infty} 0$ in a suitable topology
- ▶ and if \mathcal{L}_n were invertible with its inverse bounded uniformly in n

\Rightarrow we could apply **Banach fixed point theorem** in a ball of an appropriate Banach space (the radius of the ball being defined by $\|H(\mathcal{A}_n)\|$).

Weight function : $\gamma(x) = |x| \prod_{m=1}^n |x - e^{\frac{2\pi im}{n}}|$, $x \in \mathcal{A}_n$.

For $\nu \in \mathbb{R}$, $w \in L_{\nu}^{\infty}(\mathcal{A}_n)$ iff $|\gamma^{-\nu} w| < \infty$.

Then, we find $\|H(\mathcal{A}_n)\|_{L_{\nu-2}^{\infty}} \leq c \varepsilon^{\frac{5}{3}-\nu} \leq c e^{-n(\frac{5}{3}-\nu)}$

and take $\nu \in (0, 1)$. Moreover we have :

$$\mathcal{L}_n : L_{\nu}^{\infty}(\mathcal{A}_n) \longrightarrow L_{\nu-2}^{\infty}(\mathcal{A}_n).$$

In the same manner we define Hölder weighted spaces $\mathcal{C}_{\nu}^{k,\alpha}$.

As $n \rightarrow \infty$,

In the "graph" region : $\mathcal{L}_n \sim L_{gr} = \Delta(B \cdot)$,

In the "catenoidal" regions : $\mathcal{L}_n \sim J_{cat} = \frac{1}{\varepsilon^2 \cosh^2 s} \left(\partial_s^2 + \partial_\theta^2 + \frac{2}{\cosh^2 s} \right)$.
(*Jacobi operator about the catenoid*)

We should study the corresponding operators in noncompact domains $\bar{D}^2 \setminus \{0, z_1, \dots, z_n\}$, $\mathbb{R} \times S^1$, and $\mathbb{R} \times \left[\frac{\pi}{2}, \frac{3\pi}{2} \right]$.

Problem : The catenoid is degenerate \Rightarrow there are **small eigenvalues** of the operator \mathcal{L}_n (eigenvalues that tend to 0 as fast as $n \rightarrow \infty$).

Linear analysis on the half-catenoid

Study the homogeneous problem

$$\begin{cases} \frac{1}{\varepsilon^2 \cosh^2 s} \left(\partial_s^2 + \partial_\theta^2 + \frac{2}{\cosh^2 s} \right) w = 0 & \mathbb{R} \times \left[\frac{\pi}{2}, \frac{3\pi}{2} \right], \\ \partial_\theta w = 0 & \mathbb{R} \times \left\{ \frac{\pi}{2}, \frac{3\pi}{2} \right\}. \end{cases}$$

Fourier series $w = \sum_{j \in \mathbb{Z}} w_j(s) e^{i\theta j}$.

- ▶ $|j| \geq 2$, **maximum principle** $\Rightarrow w_j = 0$;
- ▶ $|j| = 1$ (rotations + horizontal translations),
Neumann boundary condition + symmetry $w(s, \theta) = w(s, 2\pi - \theta)$
 $\Rightarrow w_{\pm 1} = 0$;
- ▶ $j = 0$ (dilatation + vertical translation),
symmetry $w(s, \theta) = w(-s, \theta)$ + suitable function space $\Rightarrow w_0 = 0$.

Lemma

For $|\nu| < 1$ and for all $f \in (\varepsilon \cosh s)^{\nu-2} L^\infty(\mathbb{R} \times [\frac{\pi}{2}, \frac{3\pi}{2}])$ there exist

$v_{cat} \in (\varepsilon \cosh s)^\nu L^\infty(\mathbb{R} \times [\frac{\pi}{2}, \frac{3\pi}{2}])$ and $c_{cat} \in \mathbb{R}$, s.t.

$w_{cat} = v_{cat} + c_{cat}$ satisfies

$$\begin{cases} \frac{1}{\varepsilon^2 \cosh^2 s} \left(\partial_s^2 + \partial_\theta^2 + \frac{2}{\cosh^2 s} \right) w_{cat} = f & \mathbb{R} \times \left[\frac{\pi}{2}, \frac{3\pi}{2} \right], \\ \partial_\theta w_{cat} = 0 & \mathbb{R} \times \left\{ \frac{\pi}{2}, \frac{3\pi}{2} \right\}, \end{cases}$$

and $\|(\varepsilon \cosh s)^{-\nu} v_{cat}\|_{L^\infty} + |c_{cat}| \leq C \|(\varepsilon \cosh s)^{-\nu+2} f\|_{L^\infty}$.

Deficiency space : $\mathfrak{D}_{cat} = \text{span}\{1\}$.

We are interested in the problem

$$(*) \begin{cases} \Delta(Bw) = f & \text{in } D^2 \setminus \{0\}, \\ \partial_r w = 0 & \text{on } S^1 \setminus \{z_1, \dots, z_n\}. \end{cases}$$

Suppose that f and w are invariant under rotations by the angle $\frac{2\pi}{n}$

\Rightarrow no bounded kernel.

Put $w(z) = W(z^n)/B(z)$, then $(*)$ is equivalent to

$$(**) \begin{cases} \Delta W = F & \text{in } D^2 \setminus \{0\}, \\ \partial_r W - \frac{1}{n} W = 0 & \text{on } S^1 \setminus \{1\}. \end{cases}$$

Fix a cut-off function $\chi \in C^\infty(D^2)$, which is identically equal to 1 in a neighborhood of $z = 1$ and to 0 in a neighborhood of $z = 0$.

Weight function : $\gamma(z) = |z| |z - 1|$.

Lemma

Assume that $\nu \in (0, 1)$, then $\forall n$ large enough and for all F , such that $F \in L_{\nu-2}^\infty(D^2)$, there exists a unique function V_{gr} and unique constants c_0 and c_1 , such that $W_{gr} = V_{gr} + c_0 n + c_1 \chi$ is a solution to (**) and

$$\|V_{gr}\|_{L_{\nu}^\infty} + |c_0| + |c_1| \leq C \|F\|_{L_{\nu-2}^\infty}$$

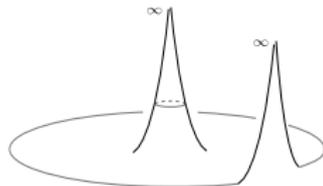
Deficiency space : $\mathfrak{D}_{gr} = \text{span}\{n, \chi\}$.

Gluing the parametrices together

We need to solve

$$\mathcal{L}_n w = f, \quad \text{for } f \in L_{\nu-2}^{\infty}(\mathcal{A}_n).$$

We divide \mathcal{A}_n in 2 symmetric parts, extend f to



and solve the problem in $\mathbb{R} \times S^1$, $\mathbb{R} \times [\frac{\pi}{2}, \frac{3\pi}{2}]$ and $D^2 \setminus \{0, z_1, \dots, z_n\}$, restrict the solutions to \mathcal{A}_n , and glue the restricted solutions together to produce :

$$w_n : \|\mathcal{L}_n w_n - f\| \ll \|f\|.$$

(We need to treat the terms decaying at infinity and deficiency terms separately).

So, we have

$$\mathcal{M}_n : f \mapsto w_n, \quad \mathcal{L}_n \circ \mathcal{M}_n - \text{Id} = R_n, \quad \|R_n\| \ll 1$$

Finally, $\mathcal{L}_n^{-1} := \mathcal{M}_n \circ (\text{Id} - R_n)^{-1}$.

Remark: $\|\mathcal{L}_n^{-1}\| \sim n$ - explodes when $n \rightarrow \infty$.

Conclusion: $\mathcal{L}_n^{-1} \circ \mathcal{Q}_n$ - a contraction mapping in a ball of radius $\|\mathcal{L}_n^{-1} H(\mathcal{A}_n)\|$ of $\mathcal{C}_\nu^{2,\alpha}(\mathcal{A}_n)$. Banach fixed point theorem is applied.

Thank you for your attention!