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An Inexact Trust-Region Algorithm for Nonsmooth Risk-Averse Optimization

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Goal: Develop an efficient algorithm to solve the **risk-averse optimization problem**,

$$\min_{x \in X} f(x) + \mathcal{R}(F(x)) + \phi(x).$$

- X and Y are Hilbert spaces and $\mathcal{R} : Y \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ is a coherent risk measure;
- $\phi : X \rightarrow (-\infty, +\infty]$ is proper, closed and convex, but may be nonsmooth;
- $f : X \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ has Lipschitz continuous gradients on an open set containing $\text{dom } \phi$;
- $F : X \rightarrow Y$ has Lipschitz continuous Jacobians on an open set containing $\text{dom } \phi$;
- $J := f + \mathcal{R} \circ F + \phi$ is bounded below.



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$$\min_{x \in X} \sup_{\theta \in \mathfrak{A}} f(x) + (\theta, F(x))_Y + \phi(x).$$

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Examples

- Risk Averse/Distributionally Robust:** $Y = L^2(\Omega, \mathcal{F}, \mathbb{P})$ and \mathfrak{A} is a subset of pdfs.
- Convex Constraints:** ϕ is the indicator function of a nonempty, closed, convex set.
- Sparse Regularization:** ϕ is the L^1 -norm or other nonsmooth regularizer.



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$$\sigma_{\mathfrak{A}}(y) = \mathcal{R}(y) = (1 - \lambda)\mathbb{E}[y] + \lambda \text{AVaR}_p(y), \quad 0 \leq \lambda, p \leq 1$$

$$\text{AVaR}_p(y) = \min_t \left\{ t + \frac{1}{1-p} \mathbb{E}[y - t]_+ \right\}$$

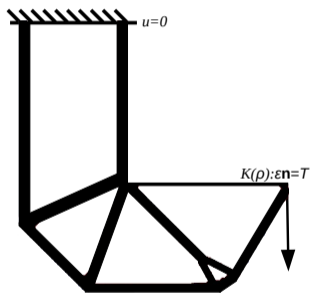
$$\mathfrak{A} = \left\{ \theta \mid \mathbb{E}[\theta] = 1, (1 - \lambda) \leq \theta \leq (1 - \lambda) + \frac{\lambda}{1-p} \text{ a.s.} \right\}.$$

Goal: Determine a **binary** ρ that is maximally stiff and that satisfies the volume constraint.

Given a domain $D \subset \mathbb{R}^d$ and a volume fraction $v \in (0, 1)$,

$$\min_{\rho \in L^2(D)} \mathcal{R} \left(\int_{\Gamma_t} T_\xi(x) \cdot [S(\rho)](x) dx \right)$$

subject to $\int_D \rho(x) dx \leq v|\Omega|, \quad 0 \leq \rho \leq 1 \text{ a.e.,}$



where $S(\rho) = u : \Xi \rightarrow (H^1(D))^d$ solves the weak form of

$$\begin{aligned} -\nabla \cdot (K(\rho) : \varepsilon) &= 0, & \varepsilon &= \frac{1}{2}(\nabla u + \nabla u^\top) && \text{in } D, \text{ a.s.} \\ K(\rho) : \varepsilon \mathbf{n} &= T_\xi &&&& \text{on } \Gamma_t, \text{ a.s.} \\ u &= 0 &&&& \text{on } \Gamma_d, \text{ a.s.} \end{aligned}$$

Challenges: Objective function is **expensive** and highly **nonconvex** due to material models like the **Solid Isotropic Material with Penalization (SIMP)**.

4 Key Algorithm Requirements



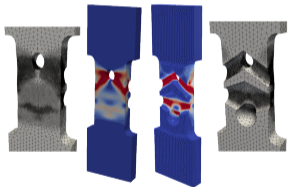
1. **Large-Scale Problems:** Rapid convergence, mesh independence, and matrix free.

4 Key Algorithm Requirements

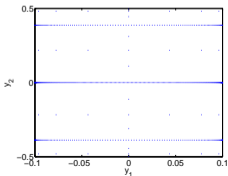
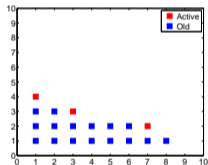


- 1. Large-Scale Problems:** Rapid convergence, mesh independence, and matrix free.
- 2. Leverage Inexactness:** Converges even when f , ∇f , F , and F' are computed inexactly via adaptive discretization, reduced-order modelling, compression, etc.

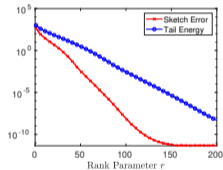
Adaptive Finite Elements



Adaptive Quadrature



Adaptive Compression



Inexact Risk-Averse Trust Regions



Input: An initial guess x_1 , initial radius $\Delta_1 > 0$, τ_1 , α , $\beta > 0$, $0 < \eta_1 < \eta_2 < 1$ and $0 < \gamma_1 \leq \gamma_2 < 1$

1: **for** $k = 1, 2, \dots$ **do**

2: **Model Selection:** Choose a *smooth* local models q_k of f and ℓ_k of F around x_k

3: **Step Computation:** Compute x_k^+ that *approximately* solves

$$\min_{x \in X} \{m_k(x) := q_k(x) + \sigma_{\alpha}(\ell_k(x)) + \phi(x)\} \quad \text{subject to} \quad \|x - x_k\| \leq \Delta_k$$

4: **Evaluate Objective:** Compute the *actual reduction* $\text{ared}_k \approx J(x_k) - J(x_k^+)$

5: **if** $\rho_k := \frac{\text{ared}_k}{m_k(x_k) - m_k(x_k^+)} < \eta_1$ **then**

6: $x_{k+1} \leftarrow x_k$ and $\Delta_{k+1} \in [\gamma_1 \Delta_k, \gamma_2 \Delta_k]$

7: **else**

8: $x_{k+1} \leftarrow x_k^+$

9: **if** $\rho_k < \eta_2$ **then**

10: $\Delta_{k+1} \in [\gamma_2 \Delta_k, \Delta_k]$

11: **else**

12: $\Delta_{k+1} \in [\Delta_k, \infty)$

13: **end if**

14: **end if**

15: **end for**



Trust-Region Subproblem: At each iteration, we approximately solve

$$\min_{x \in X} \{m_k(x) := q_k(x) + \underbrace{\sigma_{\mathfrak{A}}(\ell_k(x)) + \phi(x)}_{=:\psi_k(x)}\} \quad \text{subject to} \quad \|x - x_k\| \leq \Delta_k,$$

where $\Delta_k > 0$ is the trust-region radius.



Trust-Region Subproblem: At each iteration, we approximately solve

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where $\Delta_k > 0$ is the trust-region radius.

Trust-Region Models: We choose q_k and ℓ_k based on quadratic models of the Lagrangian

$$L(x, \theta) := f(x) + (\theta, F(x))_Y$$

akin to *sequential quadratic programming*. Given the k -th iterate (x_k, θ_k) , we choose

$$q_k(x) := \frac{1}{2}(B_k(x - x_k), x - x_k)_X + (g_k, x - x_k)_X + q_k(0) \quad \text{and} \quad \ell_k(x) := A_k(x - x_k) + b_k,$$

where $B_k \approx L_{xx}(x_k, \theta_k)$, $g_k \approx \nabla f(x_k)$, $A_k \approx F'(x_k)$ and $b_k \approx F(x_k)$.



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where $\Delta_k > 0$ is the trust-region radius.

We generalize the *Cauchy point* to nonsmooth problems using the *proximal gradient path*

$$x_k^{\text{cp}} = p_k(t_k) \quad \text{with} \quad p_k(t) := \text{prox}_{t\psi_k}(x_k - tg_k),$$

where $P_{\mathfrak{A}}$ denotes the projection onto \mathfrak{A} and the *proximity operator* is given by

$$\text{prox}_{t\psi_k}(x) := \arg \min_{y \in X} \left\{ \frac{1}{2t} \|y - x\|^2 + \psi_k(y) \right\}.$$



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How do we evaluate $\text{prox}_{t\psi_k}$? In general, **no analytical expression** for $\text{prox}_{t\psi_k}$ exists!
Solve the dual problem

$$\max_{\theta \in \mathfrak{A}} \underbrace{\min_{v \in X} \left\{ \frac{1}{2t} \|v - x\|^2 + (\theta, \ell_k(v))_Y + \phi(v) \right\}}_{=: d_k(\theta)} \implies v_k(\theta) := \text{prox}_{t\phi}(x - tA_k^* \theta).$$

1. If $\dim Y = 1$, maximize d_k using Golden Section, Brent's, etc.
2. Otherwise, maximize d_k using spectral projected gradient, i.e., $\nabla d_k(\theta) = \ell_k(v_k(\theta))$.

7 Nonsmooth Trust Regions

Generalized Cauchy Point



We set $x_k^{\text{cp}} = p_k(t_k)$, where the step length t_k satisfies both

1. Trust-Region Feasibility:

$$\|x_k^{\text{cp}} - x_k\| \leq \nu_1 \Delta_k$$

2. Sufficient Decrease:

$$m_k(x_k^{\text{cp}}) - m_k(x_k) \leq \mu_1 [(\mathbf{g}_k, x_k^{\text{cp}} - x_k) + \psi_k(x_k^{\text{cp}}) - \psi_k(x_k)]$$

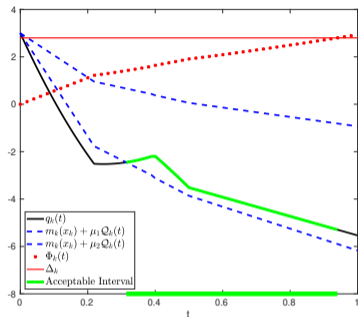
and at least one of the following conditions:

$$t_k \geq \nu_2 t'_k \quad \text{or} \quad t_k \geq \nu_3,$$

where t'_k either satisfies

$$m_k(p_k(t'_k)) - m_k(x_k) \geq \mu_2 [(\mathbf{g}_k, p_k(t'_k) - x_k) + \psi_k(p_k(t'_k)) - \psi_k(x_k)]$$

$$\text{or} \quad \|p_k(t'_k) - x_k\| \geq \nu_4 \Delta_k.$$



The interval of **acceptable** t_k is depicted by the **green** line on the horizontal axis.

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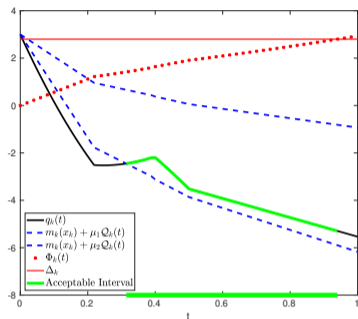
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$$\text{or} \quad \|p_k(t'_k) - x_k\| \geq \nu_4 \Delta_k.$$

We can compute x_k^{cp} with **finitely many evaluations** of the proximity operator using a **backtracking or bidirectional proximal search**.



The interval of **acceptable** t_k is depicted by the **green** line on the horizontal axis.

8 | Nonsmooth Trust Regions

Generalized Cauchy Point



- ▶ Computing the Cauchy point x_k^{cp} requires **finitely many evaluations** of $p_k(t)$.

¹Baraldi & Kouri, [Efficient proximal subproblem solvers for a nonsmooth trust-region method](#), COAP, 2025.

8 Nonsmooth Trust Regions

Generalized Cauchy Point



- ▶ Computing the Cauchy point x_k^{cp} requires **finitely many evaluations** of $p_k(t)$.
- ▶ We compute a trial iterate x_k^+ that produces at least a **fraction of Cauchy decrease**, i.e.,

$$\begin{aligned} \|x_k^+ - x_k\| &\leq \nu_{\text{rad}} \Delta_k, \quad \nu_{\text{rad}} \geq \nu_1 \\ m_k(x_k) - m_k(x_k^+) &\geq \mu_3 [m_k(x_k) - m_k(x_k^{\text{cp}})], \quad 0 < \mu_3 \leq 1, \end{aligned}$$

using spectral projected gradient, truncated nonlinear CG, etc. subproblem solvers.¹

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- ▶ The trial iterate x_k^+ satisfies the so-called **fraction of Cauchy decrease condition**

$$\begin{aligned} \|x_k^+ - x_k\| &\leq \nu_{\text{rad}} \Delta_k \\ m_k(x_k) - m_k(x_k^+) &\geq \kappa_{\text{fcd}} h_k \min \left\{ \frac{h_k}{1 + \omega_k}, \Delta_k \right\}, \end{aligned}$$

(FCD)

where $h_k := \|p_k(t_k) - x_k\|/t_k$ for $t_k \in [t_{\min}, t_{\max}]$.

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For the subproblem model, we employ quadratic and linear approximations of f and F , respectively, i.e.,

$$q_k(x) := \frac{1}{2}(B_k(x - x_k), x - x_k)_X + (g_k, x - x_k)_X + q_k(0) \quad \text{and} \quad \ell_k(x) := A_k(x - x_k) + b_k,$$

and require that the model components b_k , g_k and A_k satisfy:

$$\begin{aligned} \exists \kappa_{\text{grad}} > 0 \quad & \text{such that} \quad \|\nabla f(x_k) - g_k\|_X \leq \kappa_{\text{grad}} \min\{h_k, \Delta_k\} \quad \forall k \\ \exists \kappa_{\text{val}} > 0 \quad & \text{such that} \quad \|b_k - F(x_k)\|_Y \leq \kappa_{\text{val}} \min\{h_k, \Delta_k^2\} \quad \forall k \\ \exists \kappa_{\text{jac}} > 0 \quad & \text{such that} \quad \|A_k - F'(x_k)\|_{\mathcal{L}(X, Y)} \leq \kappa_{\text{jac}} \min\{h_k, \Delta_k\} \quad \forall k. \end{aligned}$$



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Can compute model quantities in *finitely* many iterations!



We also handle inexactness when evaluating the objective function. We replace the *actual reduction* ared_k with the *computed reduction*

$$\text{cred}_k \approx \text{ared}_k := (f(x_k) + \sigma_{\mathfrak{A}}(F(x_k)) + \phi(x_k)) - (f(x_k^+) + \sigma_{\mathfrak{A}}(F(x_k^+)) + \phi(x_k^+)),$$

which is required to satisfy:

$$\exists \kappa_{\text{obj}} > 0, \quad \zeta > 1, \quad \eta < \min\{\eta_1, 1 - \eta_2\}, \quad \text{and} \quad \theta_k \searrow 0 \quad \text{such that} \\ |\text{ared}_k - \text{cred}_k| \leq \kappa_{\text{obj}} [\eta \min\{m_k(x_k) - m_k(x_k^+), \theta_k\}]^\zeta \quad \forall k.$$



Main Result: If $t_k \in [t_{\min}, t_{\max}] \forall k$, then the iterates produced by the TR algorithm satisfy

$$\liminf_{k \rightarrow \infty} \{h_k := \frac{1}{t_k} \|\text{prox}_{t_k \psi_k}(x_k - t_k g_k) - x_k\|_X\} = 0$$

$$\implies \liminf_{k \rightarrow \infty} \{\hat{h}_k(t) := \frac{1}{t} \|\text{prox}_{t \hat{\psi}_k}(x_k - t \nabla f(x_k)) - x_k\|_X\} = 0 \quad \text{for fixed } t > 0,$$

where $\hat{\psi}_k(x) := \sigma_{\mathfrak{A}}(F'(x_k)(x - x_k) + F(x_k)) + \phi(x)$.

Finite Termination: $\forall \tau > 0 \exists K_\tau \in \mathbb{N}$ such that $h_{K_\tau} \leq \tau h_1$ and $\eta_{K_\tau} \leq \tau \eta_1$.



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Strong Convergence: There exists a subsequence \mathcal{K} on which any **strong accumulation point** \bar{x} of $\{x_k\}_{\mathcal{K}}$ is a **stationary point**. See, e.g., **finite dimensions**.

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Finite Termination: $\forall \tau > 0 \quad \exists K_\tau \in \mathbb{N}$ such that $h_{K_\tau} \leq \tau h_1$ and $\eta_{K_\tau} \leq \tau \eta_1$.

Tikhonov Regularization: If $f(x) = f_0(x) + \frac{\alpha}{2} \|x\|_X^2$, $\alpha > 0$, and F, F' and ∇f_0 are **completely continuous**, then there exists a subsequence \mathcal{K} on which any **weak accumulation point** \bar{x} of $\{x_k\}_{\mathcal{K}}$ is a **stationary point**. Moreover, if f_0 is α_0 -weakly convex with $\alpha_0 \in (0, \alpha)$, then $x_k \rightarrow \bar{x}$ on \mathcal{K} .



- Goals:**
1. Compare TR method with Primal-Dual Risk Minimization.
 2. Demonstrate TR method with inexact nonlinear PDE solves.

Let $\Omega = (0, 1)$, $\Xi = [0, 1]^4$ and $\alpha = 10^{-3}$, and consider

$$\min_{z \in L^2(\Omega)} \mathcal{R} \left(\frac{1}{2} \|S(z) - 1\|_{L^2(\Omega)}^2 \right) + \frac{\alpha}{2} \|z\|_{L^2(\Omega)}^2$$

where $S(z) = u : \Xi \rightarrow H^1(\Omega)$ solves the weak form of Burger's equation

$$\begin{aligned} -\nu(\xi) \partial_{xx} u + u \partial_x u &= f(\xi) + z \quad \text{in } \Omega \text{ a.s.} \\ u(0) &= d_0(\xi), \quad u(1) = d_1(\xi) \quad \text{a.s.} \end{aligned}$$



Discretization: Piecewise linear FEM for states and piecewise constant for controls.

Problem Size: 256 control degrees of freedom and 10,000 Monte Carlo samples.

Risk Measure: $\mathcal{R} = (1 - \lambda)\mathbb{E} + \lambda \text{AVaR}_p$ with $\lambda = 0.75$ and $p = 0.9$.

Stopping Tolerances: 10^{-8} (primal) and 10^{-6} (dual)

method	iter	nfval	ngrad	nhess
TR	6	7	7	102
PD-Risk	8	79	73	128
Bundle	69	182	182	---

TR method required 11x fewer nonlinear PDE solves than PD-Risk and 26x fewer than bundle!



PDEs solved using damped Newton's method with TR-controlled relative tolerance.

Accurate PDE Solves: Relative Residual Tolerance = $10^{-4} \sqrt{\epsilon_{\text{mach}}}$

Inexact PDE Solves: Tolerance Scaling Parameter $\kappa_{\text{obj}} = \kappa_{\text{grad}} = \kappa_{\text{jac}} = \kappa_{\text{val}} = 1$

k	$J(x_k)$	h_k	Δ_k	$\ x_k^+ - x_k\ $	val tol	grad tol	itsp
0	2.3839e-2	3.7618e-3	1.0000e+1	---	---	---	---
1	1.3854e-2	1.7076e-3	2.5000e+1	7.8350e-1	---	---	15
2	1.2456e-2	1.6069e-3	6.2500e+1	4.2606e-1	---	---	15
3	1.2243e-2	9.3483e-4	1.5625e+2	1.7313e-1	---	---	15
4	1.1990e-2	7.2187e-4	3.9062e+2	4.9320e-1	---	---	15
5	1.1980e-2	1.1940e-4	9.7656e+2	3.4825e-2	---	---	15
6	1.1977e-2	9.7123e-5	2.4414e+3	6.7072e-2	---	---	15
0	2.3424e-2	4.3324e-3	1.0000e+1	---	1.000e-2	4.332e-3	---
1	1.4550e-2	2.1675e-3	2.5000e+1	6.1175e-1	1.657e-4	2.167e-3	15
2	1.2337e-2	9.2366e-4	6.2500e+1	7.1732e-1	3.826e-5	9.237e-4	15
3	1.2063e-2	5.8787e-4	1.5625e+2	3.1769e-1	3.914e-6	5.879e-4	15
4	1.2008e-2	3.0646e-4	3.9062e+2	1.3349e-1	6.617e-7	3.065e-4	15
5	1.1979e-2	7.4265e-5	9.7656e+2	1.5709e-1	3.335e-7	7.426e-5	15



Goal: Demonstrate rapid convergence on a highly nonconvex problem.

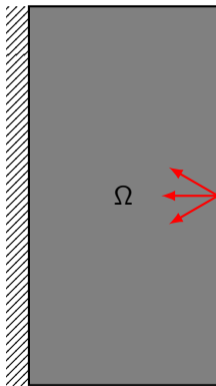
Let $\Omega = (0, 1) \times (0, 2)$, $\Xi = [0, 1]^2$ and $\nu = 0.4$, and consider

$$\min_{\rho \in L^2(\Omega)} \mathcal{R} \left(\int_{\Gamma_t} T_{\xi}(x) \cdot [S(\rho)](x) dx \right)$$

subject to $\int_{\Omega} \rho(x) dx = \nu |\Omega|$, $0 \leq \rho \leq 1$ a.e.,

where $S(\rho) = u \in (H^1(\Omega))^{d+1}$ solves

$$\begin{aligned} -\nabla \cdot (K(\rho) : \varepsilon) &= 0 && \text{in } \Omega \\ \varepsilon &= \frac{1}{2}(\nabla u + \nabla u^T) && \text{in } \Omega \\ K(\rho) : \varepsilon \mathbf{n} &= T_{\xi} && \text{on } \Gamma_t \\ u &= 0 && \text{on } \Gamma_d \end{aligned}$$





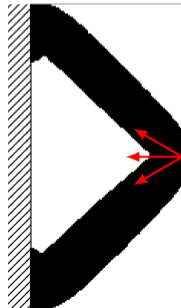
Formulation: Cubic SIMP with Helmholtz filtering (radius= 0.1).

Discretization: Q1 FEM for displacement variables and piecewise constant for density.

Problem Size: 7,500 density degrees of freedom and 1,000 Monte Carlo samples.

Risk Measure: $\mathcal{R} = \text{AVaR}_p$ with $p = 0.9$.

k	$J(x_k)$	h_k	Δ_k	$\ x_k^+ - x_k\ $	nfval	ngrad	nhess	itsp
0	4.9617e+0	1.6622e+0	1.0000e+1	---	1	1	0	---
1	3.4673e+0	1.1176e+0	2.5000e+1	2.6884e+0	2	2	17	15
2	2.6872e+0	4.9080e-1	6.2500e+1	2.3967e+0	3	3	35	15
3	1.9243e+0	2.0510e-1	1.5625e+2	9.5495e+0	4	4	53	15
4	6.4746e-1	6.0598e-2	1.5625e+2	5.7689e+1	5	5	71	15
5	4.9045e-1	6.5601e-4	1.5625e+2	4.6057e+1	6	6	89	15
6	4.7909e-1	1.5554e-4	3.9063e+2	2.1277e+1	7	7	107	15
7	4.7721e-1	8.9386e-5	9.7656e+2	1.3371e+1	8	8	111	1



On average, required 19 SPG iterations to compute $\text{prox}_{t\psi_k}$ to a tolerance of 10^{-10} !



Sparse Control: Let $\Omega = (0, 0.6) \times (0, 0.2)$, $\Omega_b, \Omega_o \subset \Omega$,
 $a = -10, b = 10, w = 0.2, \alpha = 10^{-4}, \beta = 10^{-2}$,
 $\kappa = 0.25, \gamma = 1.45$ and consider

$$\min_{a \leq z \leq b} \max \left\{ 0, w - \frac{1}{|\Omega_o|} \int_{\Omega_o} S(z) dx \right\} + \frac{\alpha}{2} \|z\|_2^2 + \beta \|z\|_1$$

where $u = S(z) \in H^1(\Omega)$ solves

$$\begin{aligned} -\kappa \Delta u + \gamma u^3 &= 12 \chi_{\Omega_b} && \text{in } \Omega \\ u &= 0 && \text{on } \Gamma_d = [0, 0.6] \times \{0\} \\ \kappa \nabla u \cdot n &= 0 && \text{on } \partial\Omega \setminus \Gamma_d. \end{aligned}$$

dim	2,400	9,600	38,400	153,600
iter	3	3	3	3
nhess	31	40	51	51
av-prox	20.5	20.1	10.7	20.1

Variational Inequalities: Bingham flow in a cylindrical pipe¹ satisfies a VI of the 2nd kind that admits the dual problem

$$\begin{aligned} \min_{z \in L^2(\Omega)^2} \quad & \frac{1}{2} \int_{\Omega} \mu \nabla S(z) \cdot \nabla S(z) dx \\ \text{subject to} \quad & |z(x)|_2 \leq g \quad \text{for a.a. } x \in \Omega \end{aligned}$$

where $u = S(z) \in H^1(\Omega)$ solves

$$\int_{\Omega} \{\mu \nabla u \cdot \nabla v - fv + z \cdot \nabla v\} dx = 0 \quad \forall v \in H_0^1(\Omega).$$

Note: In this application, $\mathfrak{A} = \{0\}$ and $F(z) \equiv 0$.

dim	65,536	262,144	1,048,576	4,194,304
iter	3	3	3	3
lsolve	57	35	39	39
nproj	102	68	69	69

TR algorithm exhibits mesh independence!

¹de los Reyes & González, Path following methods for steady laminar Bingham flow in cylindrical pipes, ESAIM: M2AN, 2009.

Conclusions:

- **Numerical solution** of infinite-dimensional problems requires **expensive approximations**
- Often, the objective function and its gradient can only be computed **inexactly**
- Nonsmooth risk-averse trust region is **provably convergent** even with **inexact computations**
- SPG trust-region subcomponent solvers are **matrix free**, but may **require** many iterations
- **Future:** Can we incorporate inexact prox computations? Can we handle nonconvex ϕ ?
- **What can we say about the local convergence rate?**

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