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## **Error estimates for elasto-plastic problems**

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## ERROR ESTIMATES FOR ELASTO-PLASTIC PROBLEMS (1)

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*Abstract.* — Under some reasonable smoothness assumptions on the displacements, we are able to derive an error estimate of the form  $\|\sigma - \sigma_h\|_{L^2(\Omega)} \leq Ch$ , for the approximation of the stress field  $\sigma$  in some problems in elasto-plasticity.

Using the same ideas, we also find a piecewise linear approximation of Mosolov's problem, for which we still get an  $O(h)$  error estimate.

### I. INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we consider the approximation of some stationary elastic-perfectly problems formalized by Duvaut-Lions [7]. Our main purpose is to derive error estimates for the approximation of the stress field  $\sigma$  given by a finite element method, appearing in Mercier [16]. The approximate problems we solve, however, will be in terms of the displacements, which are the natural variables for computation.

This work appears to parallel that of Johnson [12], who considered the derivation of error estimates for evolution problems in plasticity. In this stationary case, we are able to obtain improved error estimates over those derived in [12].

Using some ideas from Johnson [11], we are able to establish the existence of a displacement in  $L^2(\Omega)$  for a class of problems in stationary elasto-plasticity.

Finally, we apply the method to obtain error estimates for the elasto-plastic torsion, and Mosolov's problem.

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## II. PHYSICAL PROBLEM

Let us consider (as in [7]) a continuous medium  $\Omega \subset \mathbf{R}^N$ , submitted to body forces inside  $\Omega$ , and to pressure loads on a part  $\Gamma_F$  of its boundary.

On the other part  $\Gamma_U$ , it is assumed to be fixed.

The stress field  $\sigma \in K$ , and the displacement field  $u \in V$ , are shown ([7]) to be solutions, if they exist, of the following relations :

$$(g(\sigma), \tau - \sigma) - (\varepsilon(u), \tau - \sigma) \geq 0 \quad \forall \tau \in K; \quad (1)$$

$$(\sigma, \varepsilon(v)) = L(v) \quad \forall v \in V; \quad (2)$$

with the following notation :

$$V = \{ v \in (H^1(\Omega))^N \mid v = 0 \text{ on } \Gamma_U \}$$

is the set of the admissible displacements.

$$K = \{ \tau \in Y \mid \tau(x) \in P \text{ a. e. } \}$$

is the convex set of plastically admissible stress fields, where

$$Y = \{ \tau \mid \tau_{ij} \in L^2(\Omega); \tau_{ij} = \tau_{ji}; i, j = 1, \dots, N \}$$

and  $P$  is a fixed closed convex subset of  $\mathbf{R}^{N^2}$ .

We denote by  $|\cdot|$  the euclidean norm of  $\mathbf{R}^{N^2}$ , and observe that  $Y$  is a Hilbert space with the scalar product

$$(\tau, \sigma) = \int_{\Omega} \sum_{i,j=1}^N \sigma_{ij} \tau_{ij} dx,$$

and associated norm

$$\|\tau\| = \left( \int_{\Omega} |\tau|^2 dx \right)^{1/2}.$$

$\varepsilon : V \rightarrow Y$  is the strain operator given by

$$\varepsilon_{ij}(v) \equiv \frac{1}{2} \left( \frac{\partial v_i}{\partial x_j} + \frac{\partial v_j}{\partial x_i} \right).$$

$L(v)$  is the work of the external loads in a "virtual" displacement  $v \in V$  ( $L \in V'$ ).

$g : \mathbf{R}^{N^2} \rightarrow \mathbf{R}^{N^2}$  is an isomorphism representing the elasticity coefficients (the analogue of (1) in the elastic case would be  $\varepsilon(u) = g(\sigma)$ ).

We make the following monotonicity hypothesis on  $g$ , i.e. there exists  $\alpha > 0$  such that

$$J(\tau) \equiv \frac{1}{2} (g(\tau), \tau) \geq \alpha \|\tau\|^2 \quad \forall \tau \in Y. \quad (3)$$

We note this implies a coercivity condition on the "complementary energy"  $J(\tau)$ .

Finally, we introduce the set of statically admissible stress fields

$$M = \{ \tau \in Y : (\tau, \varepsilon(v)) = L(v), \forall v \in V \}.$$

We choose  $\tau \in K \cap M$  in (1). (We suppose the set  $K \cap M$  is non empty.)

We then eliminate  $u$ , and we see that  $\sigma$  is the solution of the problem (P) : Find  $\sigma \in K \cap M$  such that

$$J(\sigma) = \inf_{\tau \in K \cap M} J(\tau).$$

Using hypothesis (3), we have the existence and uniqueness of  $\sigma$ . We are not able to prove, in the general case, that there exists a  $u \in V$  such that  $(\sigma, u)$  is a solution of (1), (2). However, in a slightly more restrictive case, we are able to prove the existence of a weak solution  $u \in [L^q(\Omega)]^N$  (see section IV).

For the derivation of error estimates, we will assume that  $u$  satisfies the regularity condition

$$u \in V \cap [H^2(\Omega)]^N \tag{4}$$

From the exact solutions, given by Mandel [14], we see that this hypothesis is not an unreasonable one, provided we are not near plastic collapse.

III. APPROXIMATION

Let us assume for simplicity that  $\Omega$  is a bounded polytope. Corresponding to each value of a parameter  $h, 0 < h < 1$ , let  $\mathcal{T}_h$  be a regular triangularization of  $\Omega$  by  $N$ -simplices  $T$  of sides less than or equal to  $h$ . Define  $V_h \subset V$  as the subspace of functions in  $V$  which are continuous on  $\Omega$  and linear on each  $T$  of  $\mathcal{T}_h$ , and  $Y_h \subset Y$  as the subspace of tensors in  $Y$  which are constant on each  $T \in \mathcal{T}_h$ . For properties of such finite element spaces, we refer the reader to [5], [6]. We note that

$$\varepsilon : V_h \rightarrow Y_h. \tag{5}$$

Using the above notation, we define our approximate problem

$(P_h)$  : Find  $\sigma_h \in K \cap M_h$  such that

$$J(\sigma_h) = \inf_{\tau_h \in K \cap M_h} J(\tau_h),$$

where

$$M_h = \{ \tau_h \in Y_h : (\tau_h, \varepsilon(v_h)) = L(v_h), \forall v_h \in V_h \}.$$

Applying the results of [16], we know that there exists a unique solution  $\sigma_h$  to problem  $(P_h)$  and that it converges to  $\sigma$  as  $h \rightarrow 0$ . Our purpose, in this paper, is to derive an error estimate for  $\|\sigma - \sigma_h\|$ .

THEOREM 1 : If  $u \in [H^2(\Omega)]^N$ , we have the error estimate

$$\|\sigma - \sigma_h\| \leq Ch \|u\|_{[H^2(\Omega)]^N}$$

where  $C$  is a constant independent of  $h, u$ , and  $\sigma$ .

*Proof:* From (1), we get with  $\tau = \sigma_h$

$$(g(\sigma), \sigma_h - \sigma) - (\varepsilon(u), \sigma_h - \sigma) \geq 0 \quad (6)$$

and from the definition of  $\sigma_h$ , we have

$$(g(\sigma_h), \tau_h - \sigma_h) \geq 0 \quad \forall \tau_h \in K \cap M_h. \quad (7)$$

Writing  $\tau_h - \sigma_h$  as  $\tau_h - \sigma + \sigma - \sigma_h$ , and adding (7) to (6), we get

$$(g(\sigma - \sigma_h), \sigma_h - \sigma) + (g(\sigma_h), \tau_h - \sigma) - (\varepsilon(u), \sigma_h - \sigma) \geq 0 \quad \forall \tau_h \in K \cap M_h.$$

Hence, applying (3)

$$\alpha \|\sigma - \sigma_h\|^2 \leq (g(\sigma_h), \tau_h - \sigma) - (\varepsilon(u), \sigma_h - \sigma). \quad (8)$$

Since  $\sigma_h \in M_h$ , and  $\sigma \in M$ , we have

$$(\sigma - \sigma_h, \varepsilon(v_h)) = 0 \quad \forall v_h \in V_h,$$

so that

$$(\varepsilon(u), \sigma_h - \sigma) = (\varepsilon(u - v_h), \sigma_h - \sigma) \quad \forall v_h \in V_h.$$

Since

$$\begin{aligned} (\varepsilon(u - v_h), \sigma_h - \sigma) &\leq \|\varepsilon(u - v_h)\| \|\sigma_h - \sigma\| \\ &\leq \frac{1}{2\alpha} \|\varepsilon(u - v_h)\|^2 + \frac{\alpha}{2} \|\sigma_h - \sigma\|^2, \end{aligned}$$

we obtain, after collecting terms, that

$$\frac{\alpha}{2} \|\sigma - \sigma_h\|^2 \leq (g(\sigma_h), \tau_h - \sigma) + \frac{1}{2\alpha} \|\varepsilon(u - v_h)\|^2, \quad \forall v_h \in V_h, \quad \tau_h \in K \cap M_h. \quad (9)$$

We now choose  $\tau_h = \Pi_h \sigma$  where  $\Pi_h$  denotes the projection of  $Y \rightarrow Y_h$  associated with the norm  $\|\cdot\|$ . Then

$$(\sigma - \tau_h, \gamma_h) = 0, \quad \forall \gamma_h \in Y_h. \quad (10)$$

Applying (5) and using the fact that  $\sigma \in M$ , we see that

$$(\tau_h, \varepsilon(v_h)) = (\sigma, \varepsilon(v_h)) = L(v_h) \quad \forall v_h \in V_h,$$

and hence  $\tau_h \in M_h$ . Since  $Y_h$  is a space of piecewise constants,

$$\tau_h|_T = \frac{1}{\text{meas}(T)} \int_T \sigma \, dx.$$

Then, since  $\sigma \in P$  a.e., and  $P$  is closed and convex, we get  $\tau_h \in P$  for all  $T \in \mathcal{T}_h$ .

Thus  $\tau_h \in K \cap M_h$ , and from (10),

$$(g(\sigma_h), \tau_h - \sigma) = 0.$$

Thus (9) becomes

$$\|\sigma - \sigma_h\| \leq \frac{1}{\alpha} \|\varepsilon(u - v_h)\| \quad \forall v_h \in V_h. \tag{11}$$

Using the continuity of  $\varepsilon$  and the well known approximation properties of the space  $V_h$  [5], we obtain

$$\|\sigma - \sigma_h\| \leq Ch \|u\|_{[H^2(\Omega)]^N}.$$

IV. REMARKS ON THE EXISTENCE OF A DISPLACEMENT

As in [7], we make the following additional hypotheses. Let  $\|\cdot\|$  be the  $L^\infty$  norm defined by

$$\|e\|_\infty \equiv \text{ess sup}_{x \in \Omega} |e(x)|.$$

We assume

$$\exists \delta > 0 \text{ and } \chi \in M \text{ such that } \chi + e \in K, \quad \forall e \in Y \text{ with } \|e\|_\infty \leq \delta. \tag{12}$$

Furthermore, we shall restrict ourselves to the case where

$$\Gamma_F = \emptyset \text{ and where } L(v) = \int_\Omega f v \, dx, \quad f \in [L^q(\Omega)]^N \text{ with } q = N.$$

Choosing  $\chi_h = \Pi_h \chi$ , we see that  $\chi_h \in M_h$ , and using the convexity of  $P$ , that  $\chi_h$  belongs to the relative interior of  $K$  in  $Y_h$ . We may then apply the Kuhn-Tucker theorem [18] to show the existence of  $u_h \in V_h$  such that

$$(g(\sigma_h), \tau_h - \sigma_h) - (\varepsilon(u_h), \tau_h - \sigma_h) \geq 0 \quad \forall \tau_h \in K. \tag{13}$$

We now define  $(D\tau)_i = - \sum_{j=1}^N \frac{\partial \tau_{ij}}{\partial x_j}$  and notice that  $D : Y \rightarrow V'$  is the adjoint of  $\varepsilon$ .

Using the regularity we assumed on  $L$ , we see that the solution  $\sigma$  of  $(P)$  satisfies

$$-D\sigma + f = 0$$

in the distribution sense on  $\Omega$ . Then

$$\sigma \in K_1 = \{ \tau \in Y : D\tau \in [L^q(\Omega)]^N \}.$$

We shall now prove the existence of a displacement  $u$  which satisfies the following relation

$$(g(\sigma), \tau - \sigma) - (u, D(\tau - \sigma)) \geq 0 \quad \forall \tau \in K_1, \tag{14}$$

which can be considered as a weak formulation of (1).

**THEOREM 2 :** *Under hypothesis (12), the sequence  $\varepsilon(u_h)$  is bounded in  $[L^1(\Omega)]^{N^2}$ . Hence a subsequence of  $u_h$  is converging weakly to  $u \in [L^{q'}(\Omega)]^N$  when  $q' = \frac{N}{N-1}$  and  $(\sigma, u)$  is a solution of (14).*

*Proof* : Let  $e \in Y$  satisfy  $\|e\|_\infty \leq \delta$  and let  $\chi$  be as defined in (12). Since  $\tau_h = \Pi_h e + \chi_h \in K$ , we may use this choice of  $\tau_h$  in (13) to obtain

$$(g(\sigma_h), \Pi_h e) + (g(\sigma_h), \chi_h - \sigma_h) - (\varepsilon(u_h), \Pi_h e) - (\varepsilon(u_h), \chi_h - \sigma_h) \geq 0. \quad (15)$$

Using the definition (10) of  $\Pi_h$ , we can replace  $\Pi_h e$  by  $e$  everywhere in (15). Since  $\chi_h$  and  $\sigma_h \in M_h$ , the last term of (15) is zero. Applying the continuity of  $g$ , we get

$$(e, \varepsilon(u_h)) \leq (g(\sigma_h), \chi_h - \sigma_h) + C\delta \|\sigma_h\| \quad (16)$$

Since  $\Omega$  is bounded,  $\sigma_h$  being bounded in  $Y$  implies  $\sigma_h$  is also bounded in  $[L^1(\Omega)]^{N^2}$ . As (16) is true for all  $e \in Y$  with  $\|e\|_\infty \leq \delta$ , we get

$$\|\varepsilon(u_h)\|_{[L^1(\Omega)]^{N^2}} \leq C.$$

We then apply a result of Strauss [19] to obtain

$$\|u_h\|_{[L^{q'}(\Omega)]^{N^2}} \leq C \|\varepsilon(u_h)\|_{[L^1(\Omega)]^{N^2}} \leq C.$$

From this, we deduce that a subsequence of  $u_h$  (which we still denote by  $u_h$ ) is converging weakly to  $u$  in  $[L^{q'}(\Omega)]^N$ .

For any  $\tau \in K_1$ , we choose  $\tau_h = \Pi_h \tau$  in (13) and obtain

$$(g(\sigma_h), \sigma_h) \leq (g(\sigma_h), \tau_h) - (\varepsilon(u_h), \tau_h - \sigma_h). \quad (17)$$

Now

$$(\varepsilon(u_h), \tau_h) = (\varepsilon(u_h), \tau) = (u_h, D\tau) \rightarrow (u, D\tau),$$

and since  $\sigma_h \in M_h$ ,

$$(\varepsilon(u_h), \sigma_h) = (f, u_h) \rightarrow (f, u) = (D\sigma, u).$$

Also

$$(g(\sigma_h), \tau_h) = (g(\sigma_h), \tau) \rightarrow (g(\sigma), \tau),$$

because  $\sigma_h$  converges to  $\sigma$ , and  $g$  is continuous. In the same way  $(g(\sigma_h), \sigma_h)$  converges to  $(g(\sigma), \sigma)$ . Hence letting  $h \rightarrow 0$  in (17), we obtain (14), which is the desired result.

## V. OTHER APPLICATIONS

### 5.1. Elastic-plastic torsion

This problem is usually formulated as the following minimization problem, where  $N = 2$ , [7] :

Find  $u \in K$  minimizing

$$\frac{1}{2} \|\nabla v\|^2 - (f, v) \quad \text{over } K, \quad \text{where} \quad (18)$$

$$K = \{ v \in H_0^1(\Omega) : |\nabla v| \leq 1 \text{ a.e. in } \Omega \}, \text{ and}$$

$$\|\cdot\| = \|\cdot\|_{[L^2(\Omega)]^{N^2}}.$$

LEMMA 1 : Problem (18) is equivalent to the problem :

Find  $p \in K_1 \cap M$  minimizing  $\frac{1}{2} \|p\|^2 - (\varphi, p)$  over  $K_1 \cap M$ , where  $\varphi$  is any solution of  $\text{rot } \varphi \equiv \frac{\partial \varphi_2}{\partial x_1} - \frac{\partial \varphi_1}{\partial x_2} = -f$  (19)

$$K_1 = \{ p \in [L^2(\Omega)]^2 : |p| \leq 1 \text{ a.e. in } \Omega \}, \text{ and}$$

$$M = \{ p \in [L^2(\Omega)]^2 : (p, \nabla \Psi) = 0, \forall \Psi \in H^1(\Omega) \}.$$

Proof : The result follows easily by using the fact that  $p \in M$  is equivalent to  $p = \text{rot } v$  for some  $v \in H_0^1(\Omega)$  (see [13]),

$$(\varphi, \text{rot } v) = (f, v), \quad \forall v \in H_0^1(\Omega)$$

$$|\nabla v| = |\text{rot } v| \quad \text{for } v \in H_0^1(\Omega)$$

(Recall that when  $v$  is a scalar,  $\text{rot } v$  is the vector deduced from the gradient by a rotation of  $+\frac{\pi}{2}$ )

REMARK : We note that problem (19) is in fact the original problem (see [7]).

We further note that problem (19) can be derived from the more general problem :

Find  $(p, \chi) \in (K_1 \cap M) \times H^1(\Omega)$  satisfying

$$(p, q - p) - (\varphi + \nabla \chi, q - p) \geq 0 \quad \forall q \in K_1. \quad (20)$$

Using a result of Brezis [2], it was proved in [15] that there exists a solution to problem (20), when  $f$  is constant.

We will assume, as in section II, that  $\chi$ , which may be interpreted as a displacement, belongs to  $H^2(\Omega)$ . We know from [3] that  $p \in [H^1(\Omega)]^2$  for  $f \in L^2(\Omega)$ .

Following the ideas of section III, we approximate problem (19) by the problem

Find  $p_h \in K_1 \cap M_h$  minimizing

$$\frac{1}{2} \|p_h\|^2 - (\varphi, p_h) \text{ over } K_1 \cap M_h, \text{ where} \quad (21)$$

$$M_h = \{ p_h \in Y_h : (p_h, \nabla \Psi_h) = 0 \forall \Psi_h \in V_h \},$$

$Y_h$  is the subspace of  $[L^2(\Omega)]^2$  of piecewise constants, and

$V_h$  is the subspace of  $H^1(\Omega)$  of continuous piecewise linear functions.



THEOREM 3 : If  $\varphi \in [H^1(\Omega)]^2$  and  $\chi \in H^2(\Omega)$ , then we have the error estimate

$$\|p - \mathcal{P}_h\| \leq Ch [\|\varphi\|_1 + \|\chi\|_2],$$

where  $\cdot$  is a constant independent of  $\varphi$ ,  $\chi$  and  $h$ . ( $\|\varphi\|_1$  is the norm of  $\varphi$  in  $[H^1(\Omega)]^2$  and  $\|\chi\|_2$  is the norm of  $\chi$  in  $H^2(\Omega)$ ).

*Proof* : Proceeding in an identical fashion to the proof of theorem 1, we easily obtain the estimate

$$\frac{1}{2} \|p - p_h\|^2 \leq \frac{1}{2} \|\nabla(\chi - \chi_h)\|^2 + (\varphi, p - q_h) \quad \forall \chi_h \in V_h,$$

where  $q_h$  has been chosen as the  $[L^2(\Omega)]^2$  projection of  $p$  onto  $Y_h$ . Since

$$(\varphi_h, p - q_h) = 0 \quad \forall \varphi_h \in Y_h,$$

we get

$$\begin{aligned} (\varphi, p - q_h) &= (\varphi - \varphi_h, p - q_h) \leq \|\varphi - \varphi_h\| \|p - q_h\| \\ &\leq Ch_2 \|\varphi\|_1 \|p\|_1 \end{aligned}$$

(using the standard approximation properties of  $Y_h$  and the assumed regularity of  $p$  and  $\varphi$ ). Estimating

$$\|\nabla(\chi_h - \chi)\|^2 \leq Ch^2 \|\chi\|_2^2$$

as before, we obtain the desired result.

We remark that the approximation given by (21) is not equivalent to the usual direct approximation of problem (18) by piecewise linear finite elements [10], since this would lead to an internal approximation of  $M$ , which is not the case here ( $M_h \not\subset M$ ). For the direct approximation, non-optimal error estimates have previously been derived in [8].

## 5.2. Mosolov's problem [7]

This problem is usually formulated as the following :

Find  $u \in H_0^1(\Omega)$  minimizing

$$\frac{1}{2} \|\nabla v\|^2 + j(\nabla v) - (f, v) \text{ over } H_0^1(\Omega), \text{ where} \quad (22)$$

$$j(p) \equiv g \int_{\Omega} |p| \, dx.$$

Since  $\Omega \subset \mathbf{R}^2$ , we form an equivalent problem in a similar fashion to lemma 1. We get problem

Find  $p \in M$  minimizing

$$\frac{1}{2} \|q\|^2 + j(q) - (\varphi, q) \text{ over } M, \text{ where } \varphi \text{ and } M \text{ are chosen as in section 5.1.} \quad (23)$$

Using duality theory, we have that problem (23) is the dual of the problem

$$\sup_{\psi \in H^1(\Omega)} -\frac{1}{2} \|\{|\varphi + \nabla \Psi| - g\}^+\|^2 \quad (\text{see [17]}). \tag{24}$$

Since the problem is coercive in  $H^1(\Omega)/\mathbf{R}$ , we know that it has a solution  $\chi \in H^1(\Omega)$ . Hence  $(p, \chi)$  satisfies the following extremality relation

$$(p, q - p) + j(q) - j(p) - (\varphi + \nabla \chi, q - p) \geq 0 \quad \forall q \in [L^2(\Omega)]^2.$$

We will again assume that  $\chi \in H^2(\Omega)$ , which is a valid assumption at least for the exact solution computed by Glowinski [9]. Using our general technique once more we approximate (23) by the following problem.

Find  $p_h \in M_h$  minimizing

$$\frac{1}{2} \|q_h\|^2 + j(q_h) - (\varphi, q_h) \quad \text{over } q_h \in M_h, \tag{25}$$

where  $M_h$  is defined as in section 5.1.

**THEOREM 4 :** *If  $\varphi \in [H^1(\Omega)]^2$  and  $\chi \in H^2(\Omega)$ , then we have the error estimate*

$$\|p - p_h\| \leq Ch [\|\varphi\|_1 + \|\chi\|_2]$$

*Proof :* Proceeding in an identical fashion to the proof of theorem 3, we easily obtain the estimate

$$\frac{1}{2} \|p - p_h\|^2 \leq Ch^2 [\|\varphi\|_1 + \|\chi\|_2]^2 + j(q_h) - j(p),$$

where  $q_h$  is again the  $[L^2(\Omega)]^2$  projection of  $p$  onto  $Y_h$ . Hence

$$\forall T \in \mathcal{T}_h \quad q_h|_T = \frac{1}{\text{meas}(T)} \int_T p \, dx,$$

and the convexity of  $j$  implies that  $j(q_h) \leq j(p)$ . Thus, we get the desired result.

We remark that this approximation is again different from the direct approximation of (22) for which quasi-optimal error estimates have already been derived [9].

As far as we know, the approximate problem (25) has not been solved numerically. What we should suggest for such a numerical computation is to try to solve directly the approximation of the dual problem (24), when  $H^1(\Omega)$  is approximated by  $V_h$ , because this problem would be the dual of (25). Furthermore, it is a problem of unconstrained minimization of a differentiable (but not strictly convex) function.

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