

Numerical Trajectory Optimization of Airborne Wind Energy Systems with Stroboscopic Averaging Methods

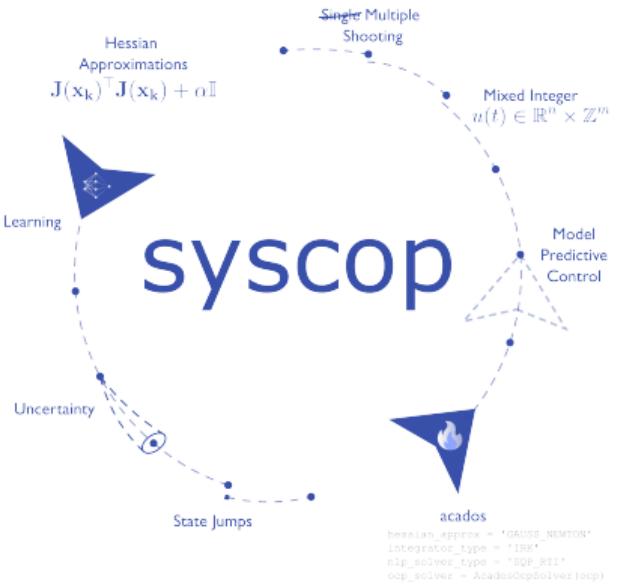
Jakob Harzer, Jochem De Schutter, Moritz Diehl

Conference for Decision And Control 2025

November 21, 2025

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Airborne Wind Energy

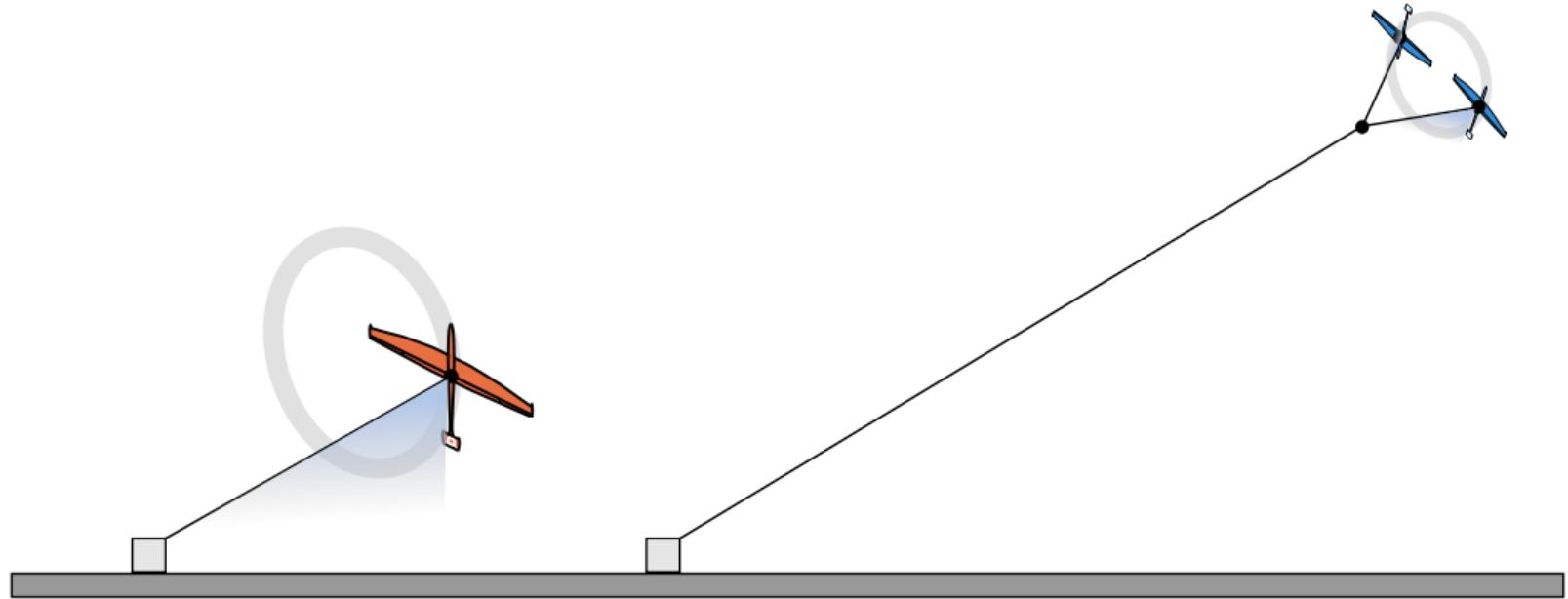


Image from Skysails Power

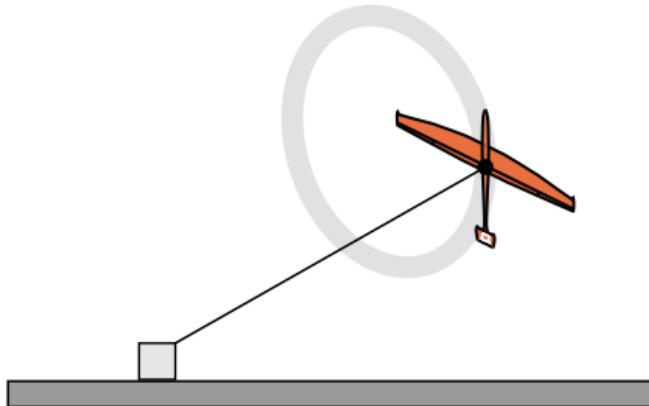


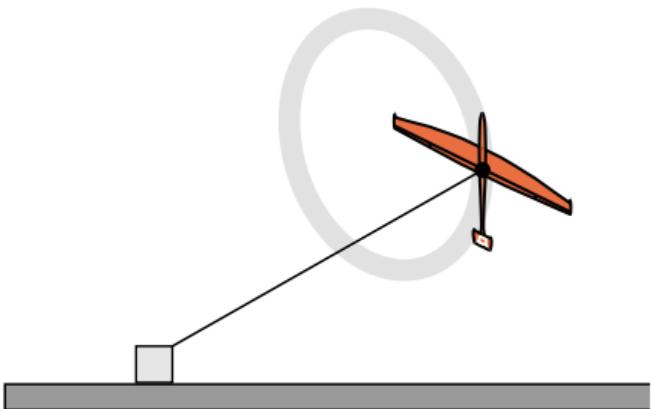
Image from Makani Power

Single vs Dual Kite Systems



- ▶ High-Fidelity 6-DOF model of the plane [5]



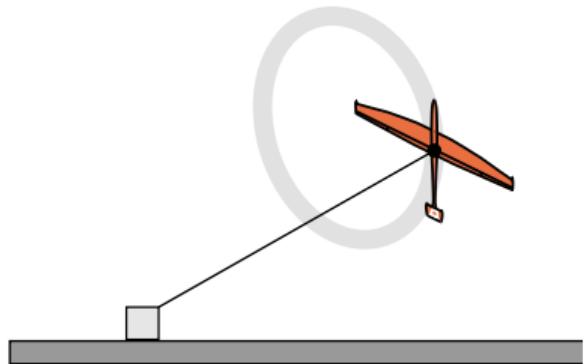


- ▶ High-Fidelity 6-DOF model of the plane [5]
- ▶ System Dynamics (Index-1 DAE)

$$f(x, u, z) = 0$$

with $x \in \mathbb{R}^{23}$, $u \in \mathbb{R}^4$, $z \in \mathbb{R}^1$, based on index-reduced Lagrangian dynamics

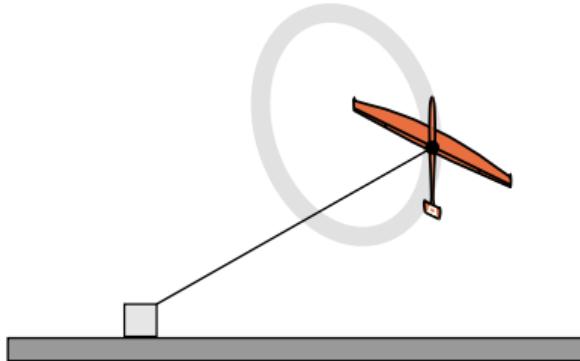
Trajectory Optimization



Trajectory Optimization



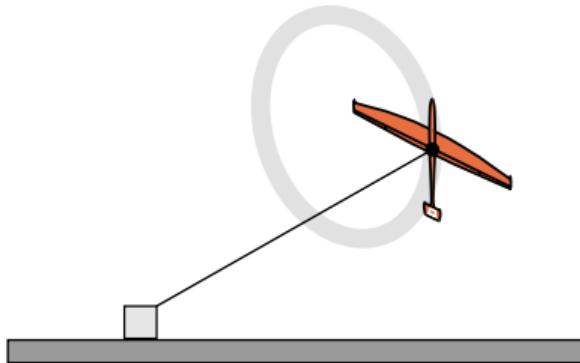
- ▶ Optimize a single pumping cycle of a single-kite AWE system



Trajectory Optimization



- ▶ Optimize a single pumping cycle of a single-kite AWE system
- ▶ Formulate OCP



Trajectory Optimization



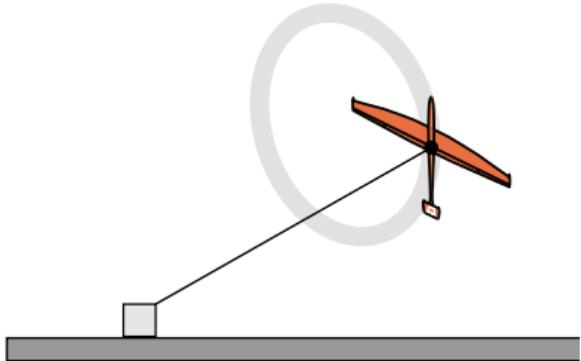
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- ▶ Formulate OCP

$$\max_{\substack{x(\cdot), u(\cdot), \\ z(\cdot), t_f}} P_{\text{gen}}(x, u, z, t_f)$$

$$\text{s.t.} \quad 0 = f(\dot{x}(t), x(t), u(t), z(t)), \quad \forall t \in [0, t_f],$$

$$0 \leq h(\dot{x}(t), x(t), u(t), z(t)), \quad \forall t \in [0, t_f],$$

$$0 = p(x(0), x(t_f))$$

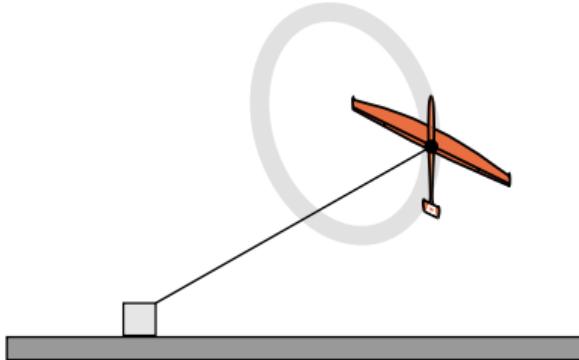


Trajectory Optimization



- ▶ Optimize a single pumping cycle of a single-kite AWE system
- ▶ Formulate OCP → discretize to NLP

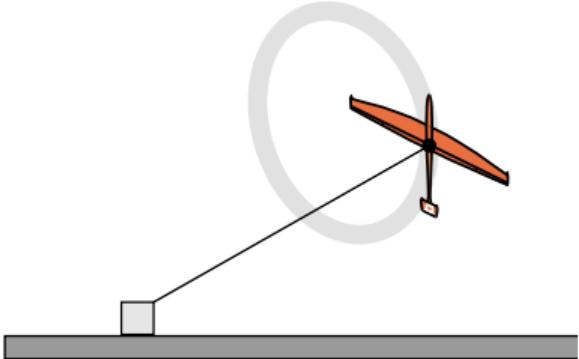
$$\begin{aligned} \min_w \quad & F(w) \\ \text{s.t.} \quad & 0 = G(w), \\ & 0 \leq H(w) \end{aligned}$$



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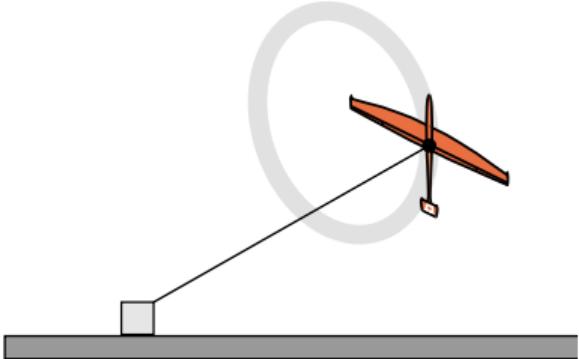

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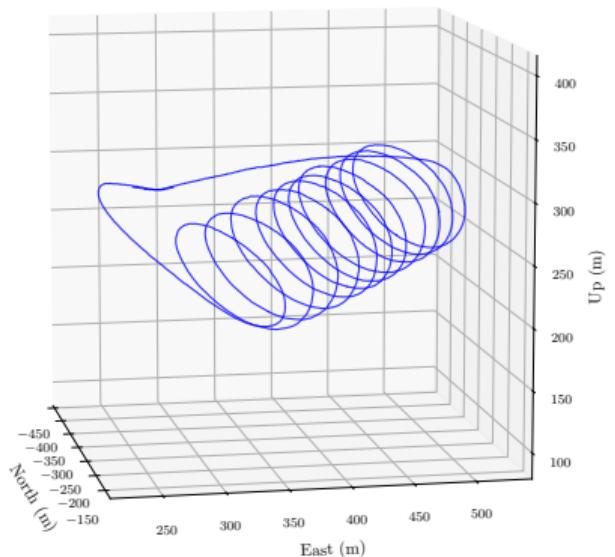
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- ▶ Very large, complicated nonlinear problem, need good strategy and initialization to solve
- ▶ Software Packages such as the AWEBox[2]

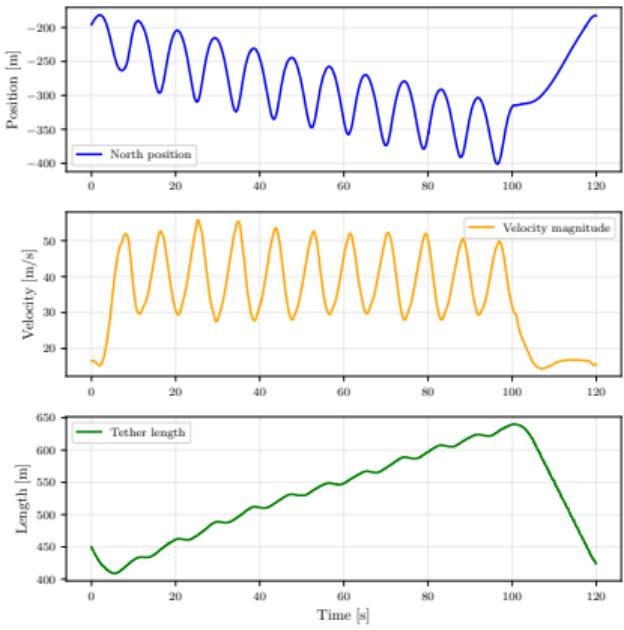


[IPOPT Video]

Some Observations from Real Data



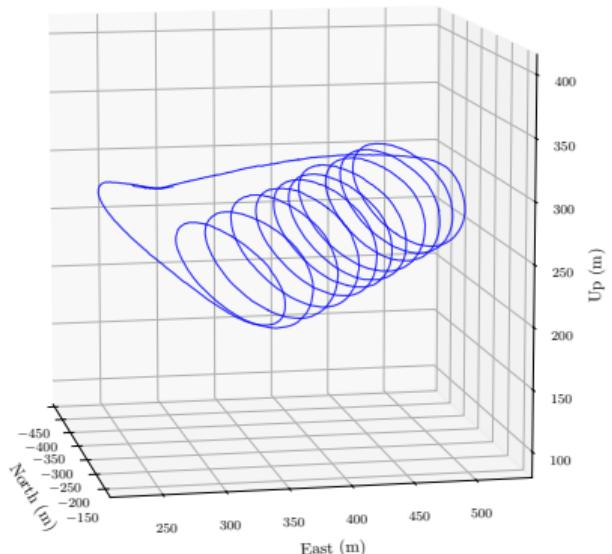
Produced from <https://github.com/kitemill/Flight-log>



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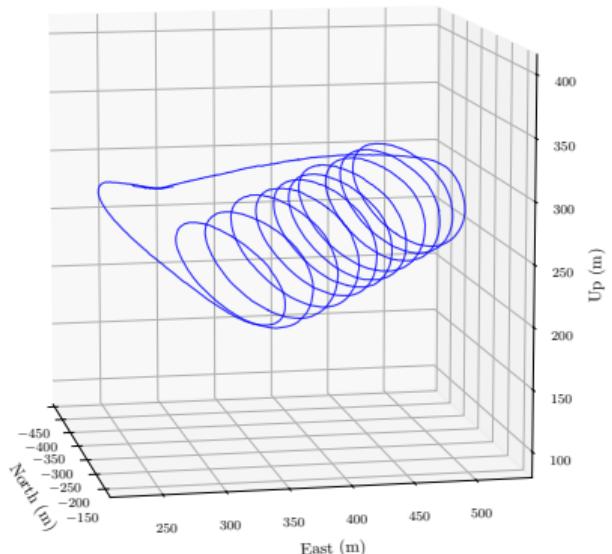


- ▶ Up to now: practically impossible to solve problems with many subcycles



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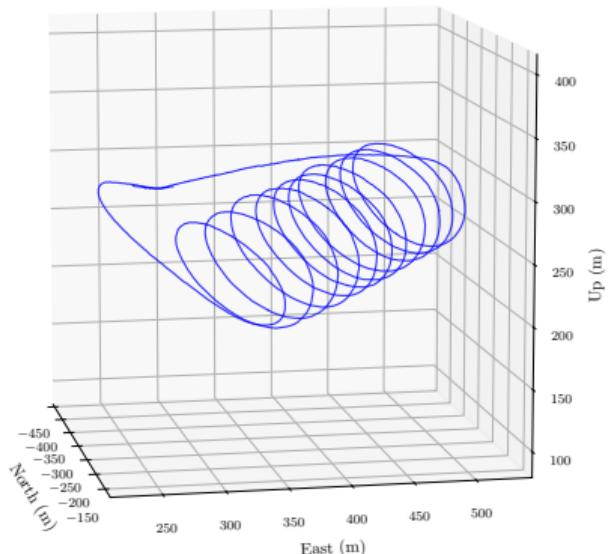
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- ▶ In the reel-out phase, the subcycles look similar

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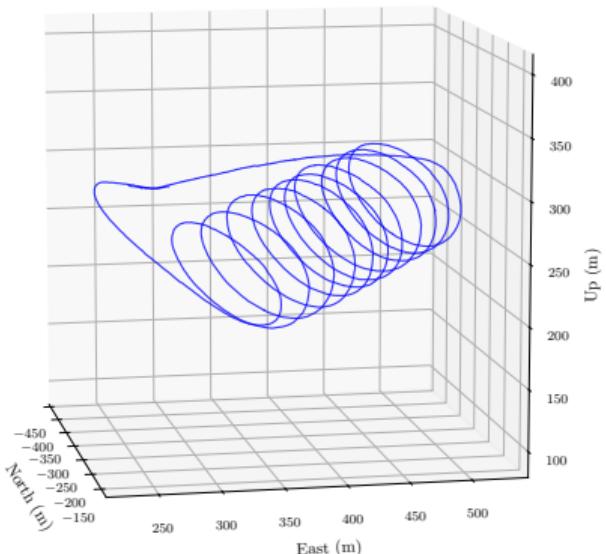
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- ▶ Up to now: practically impossible to solve problems with many subcycles
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- ▶ There is some 'slow' or 'average' mode of the trajectory

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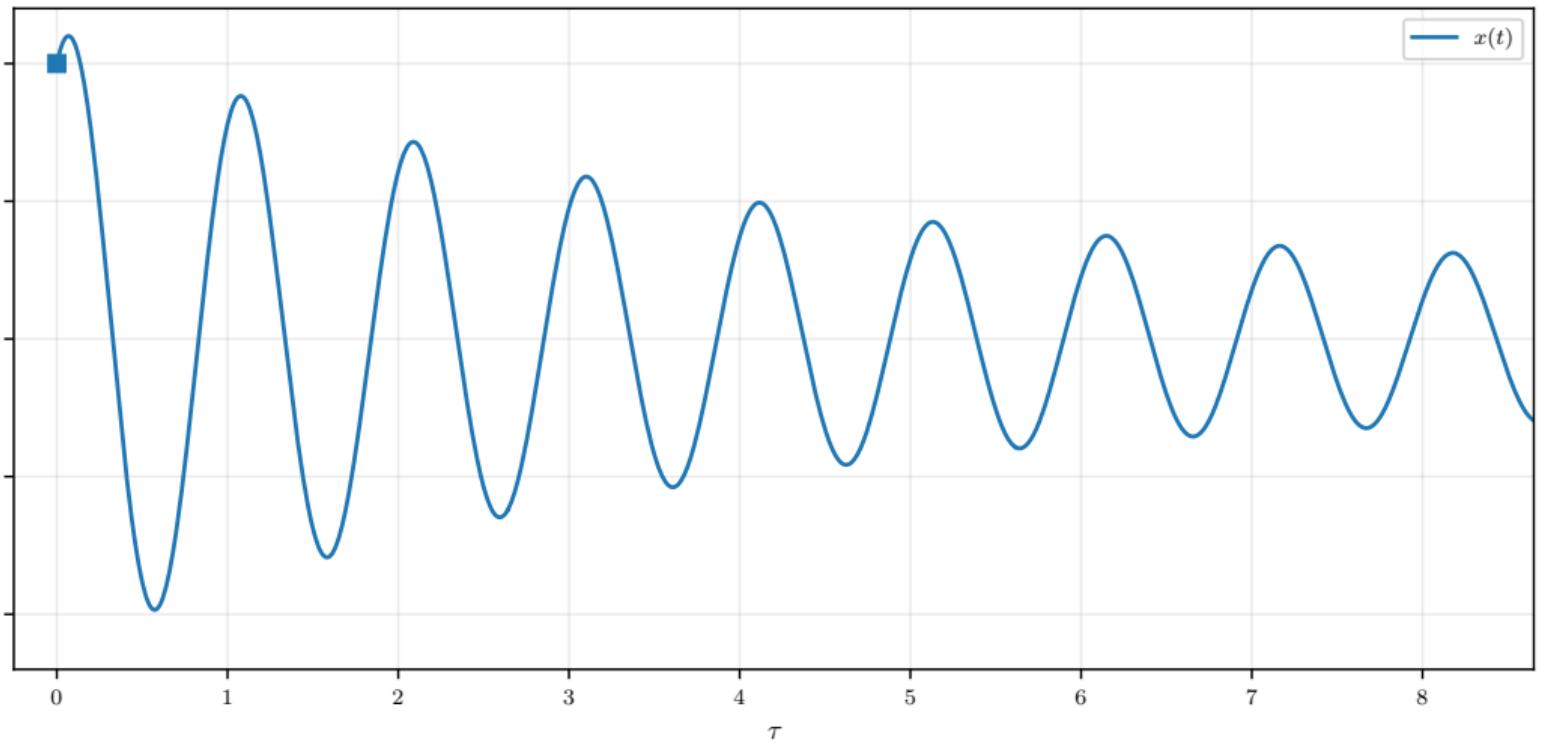
Strong Assumption

In the reel-out phase, the power optimal trajectory $x^*(t)$ and the corresponding control $u^*(t)$ consist of many similar, slowly changing cycles.



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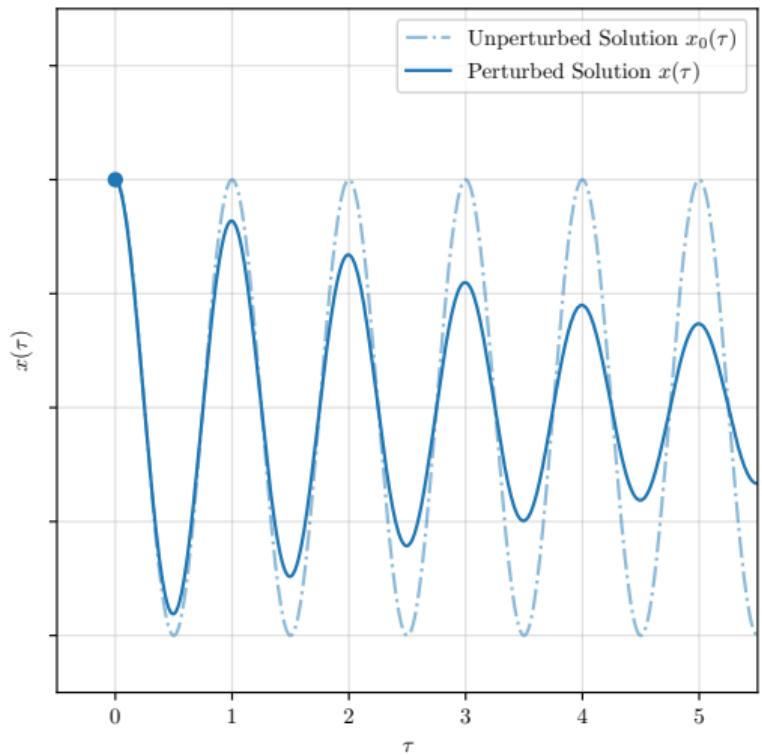
Highly Oscillatory Systems



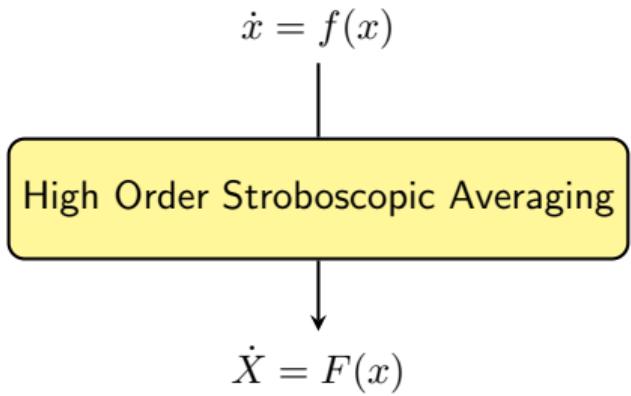
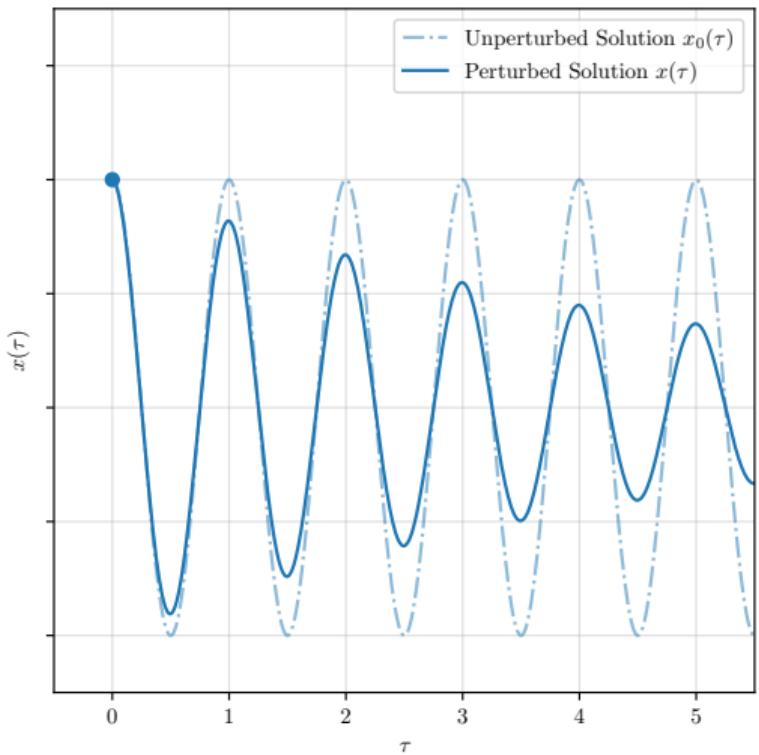
Averaging Methods for Highly Oscillatory Systems



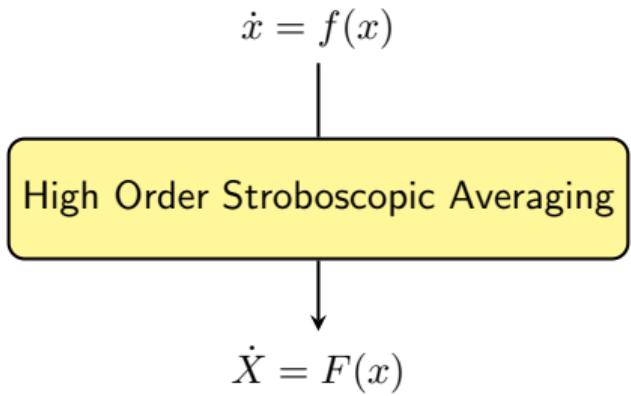
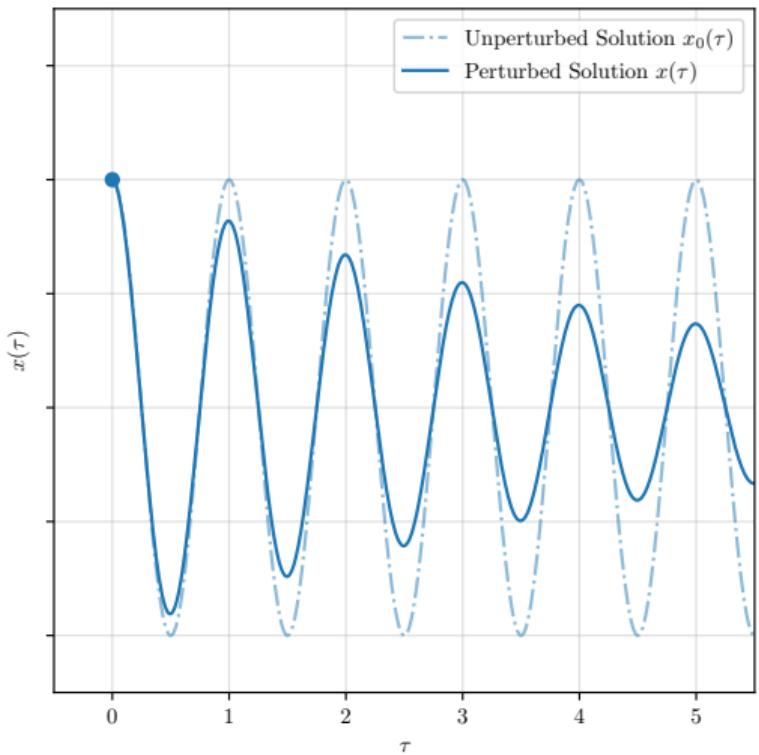
$$\dot{x} = f(x)$$



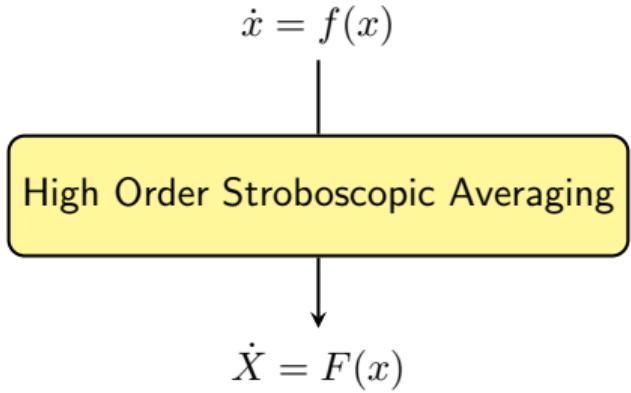
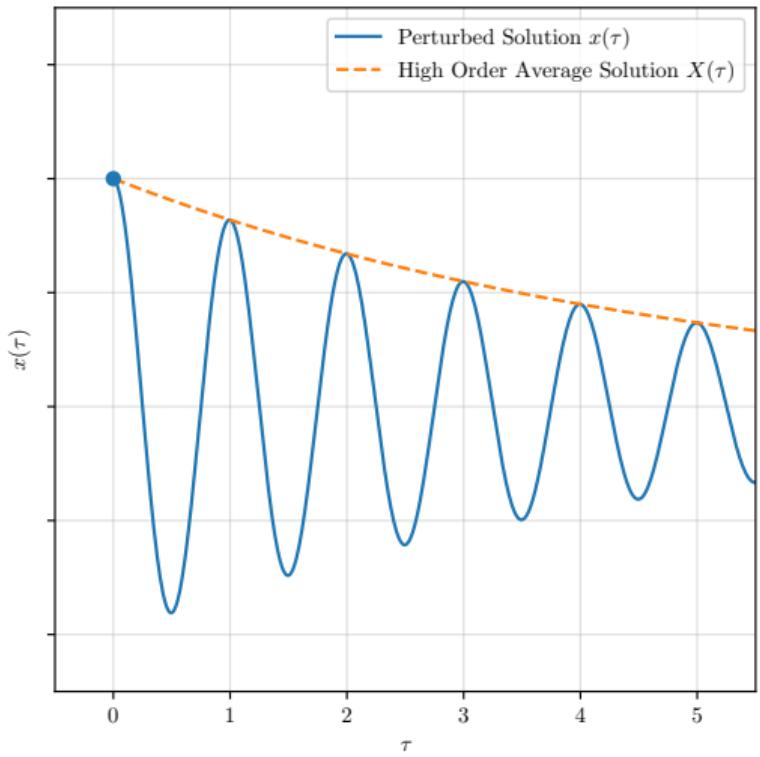
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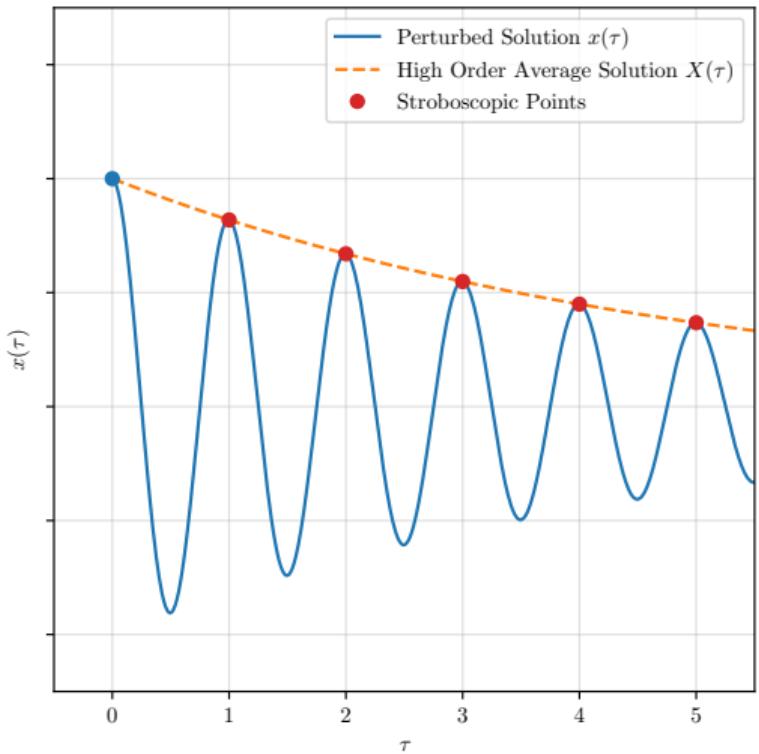
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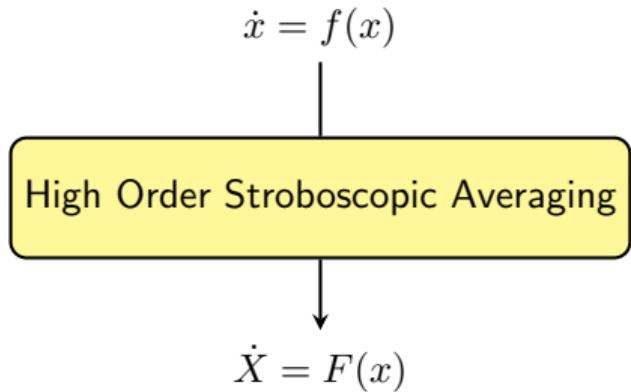
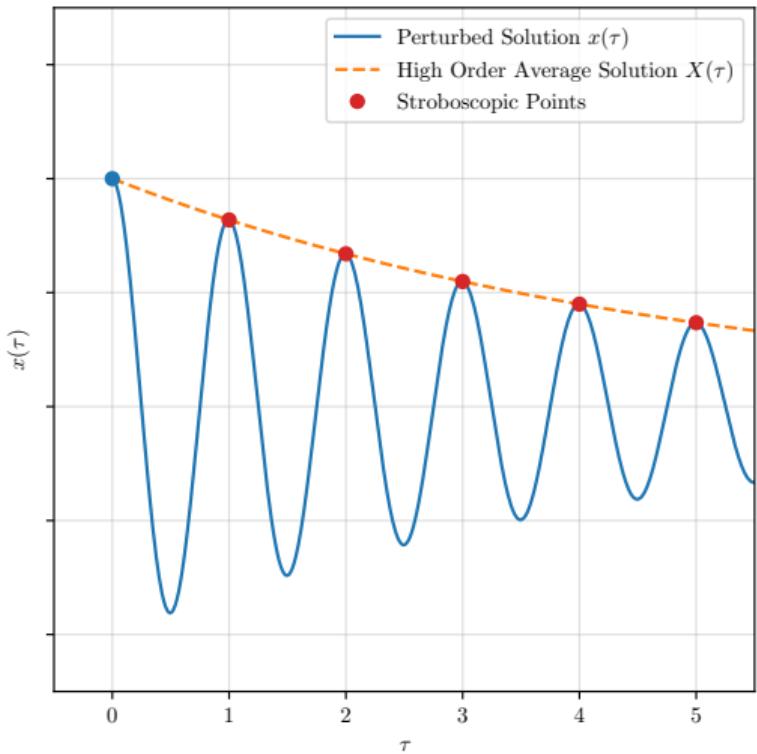
High Order Stroboscopic Averaging

$$\dot{X} = F(x)$$

- ▶ If $x(0) = X(0)$ then the solution to averaged system satisfies

$$x(k) = X(k), \quad k \in \mathbb{Z}$$

Averaging Methods for Highly Oscillatory Systems

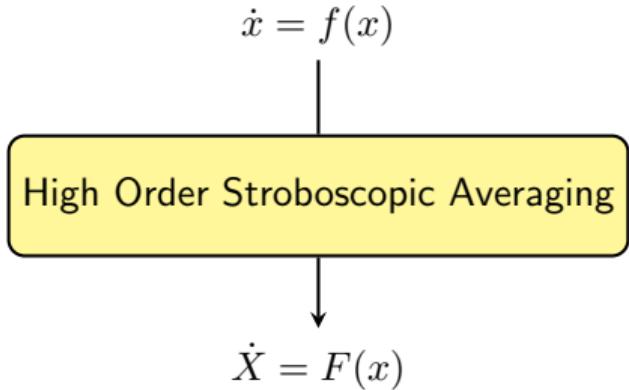
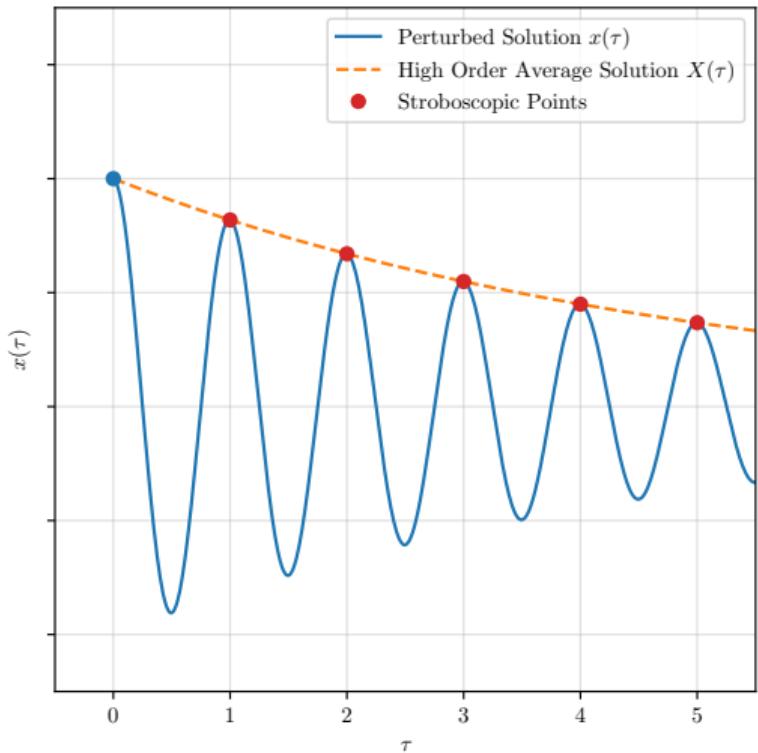


- ▶ If $x(0) = X(0)$ then the solution to averaged system satisfies

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- ▶ Original system f on a fast timescale

Averaging Methods for Highly Oscillatory Systems

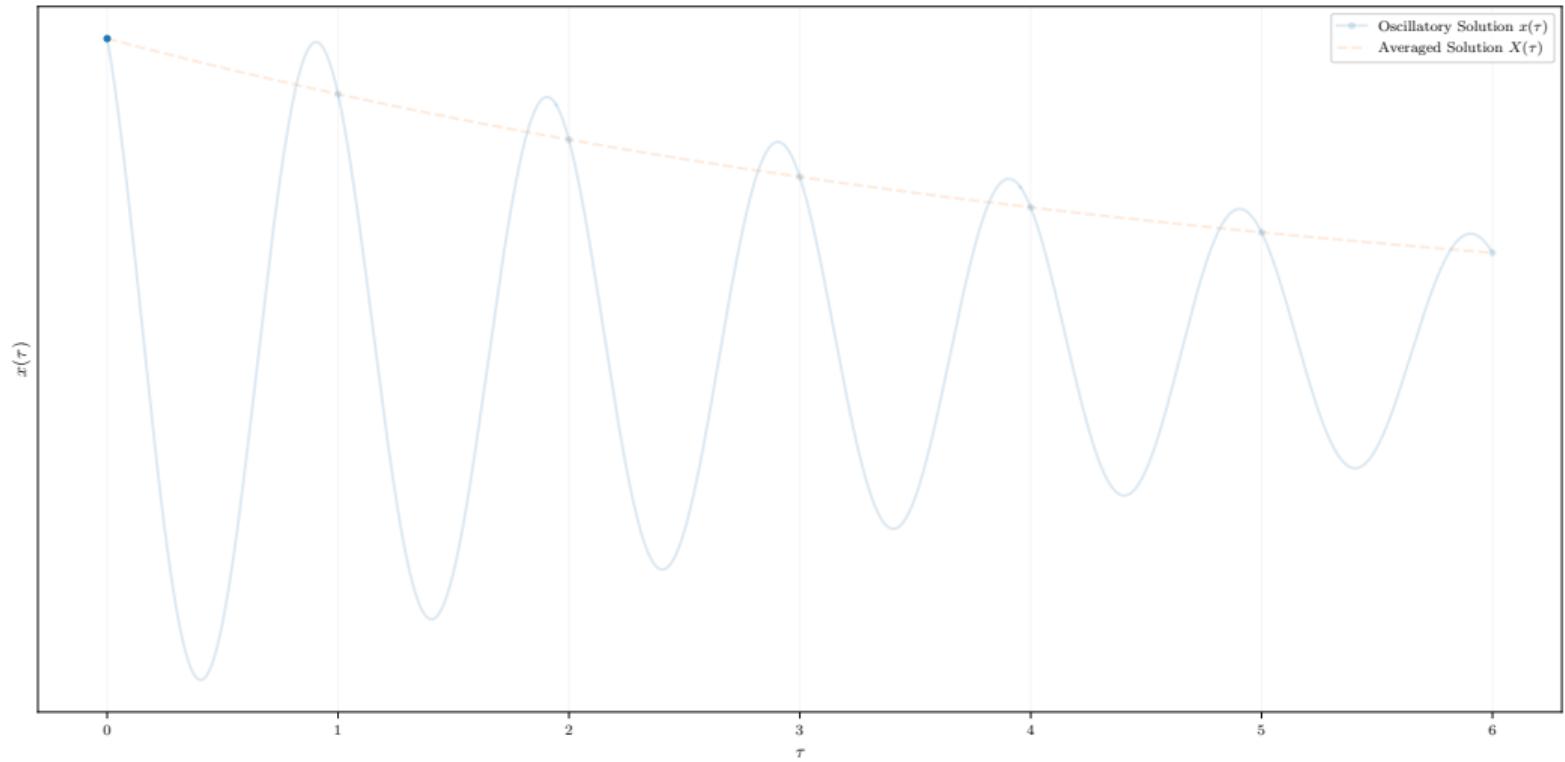


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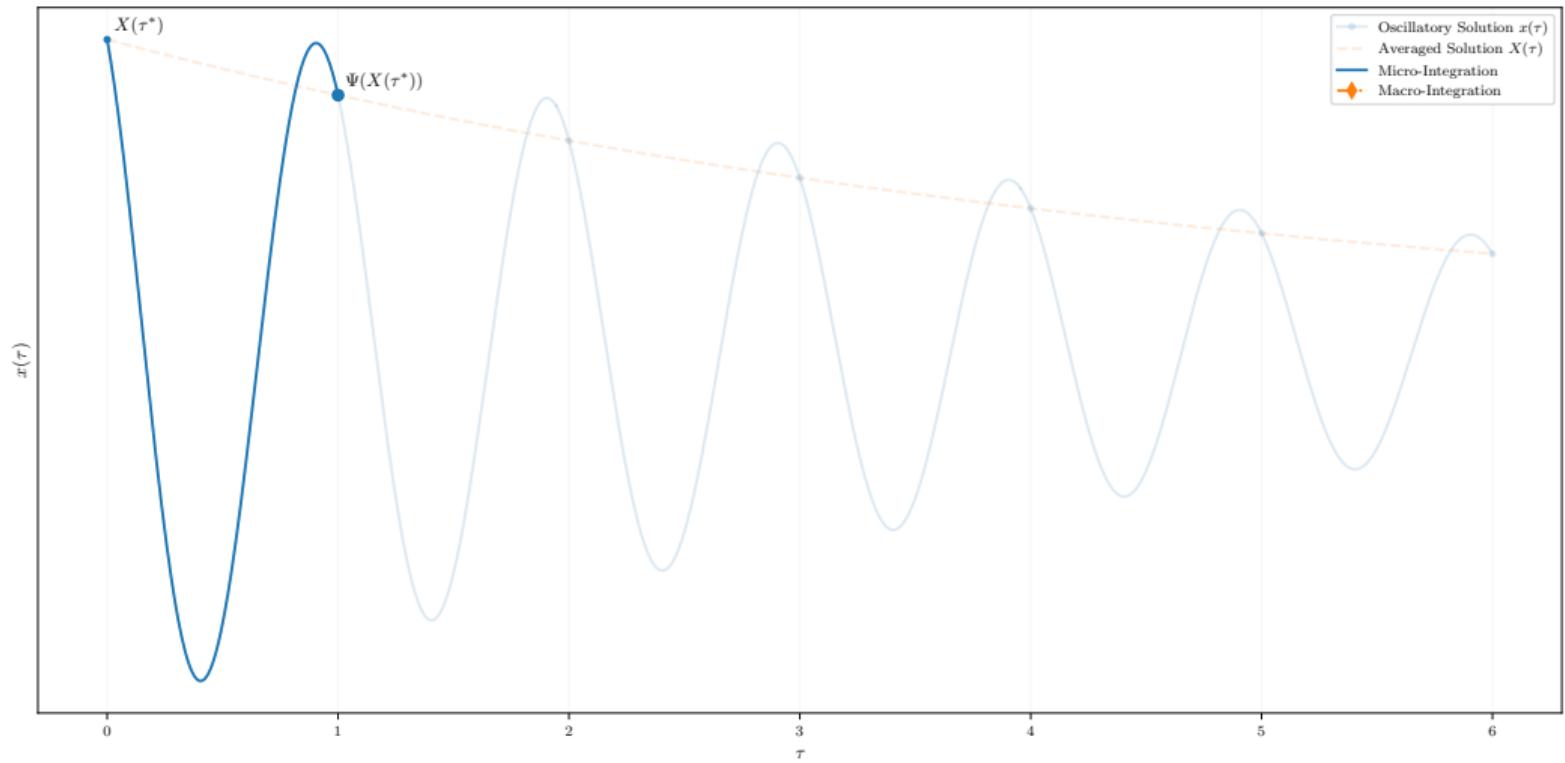
$$x(k) = X(k), \quad k \in \mathbb{Z}$$

- ▶ Averaged system F on slow timescale

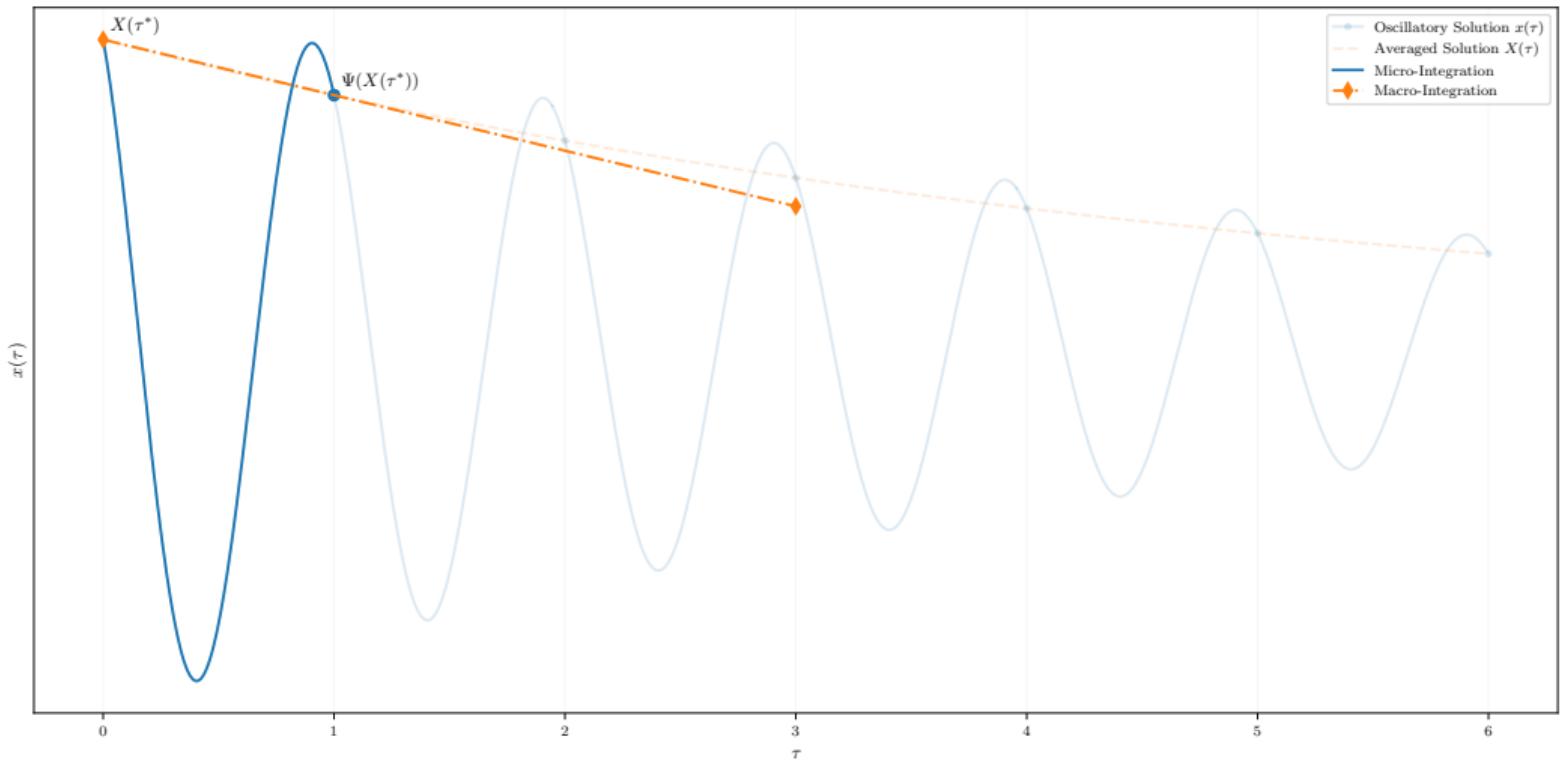
Stroboscopic Average Method (SAM)



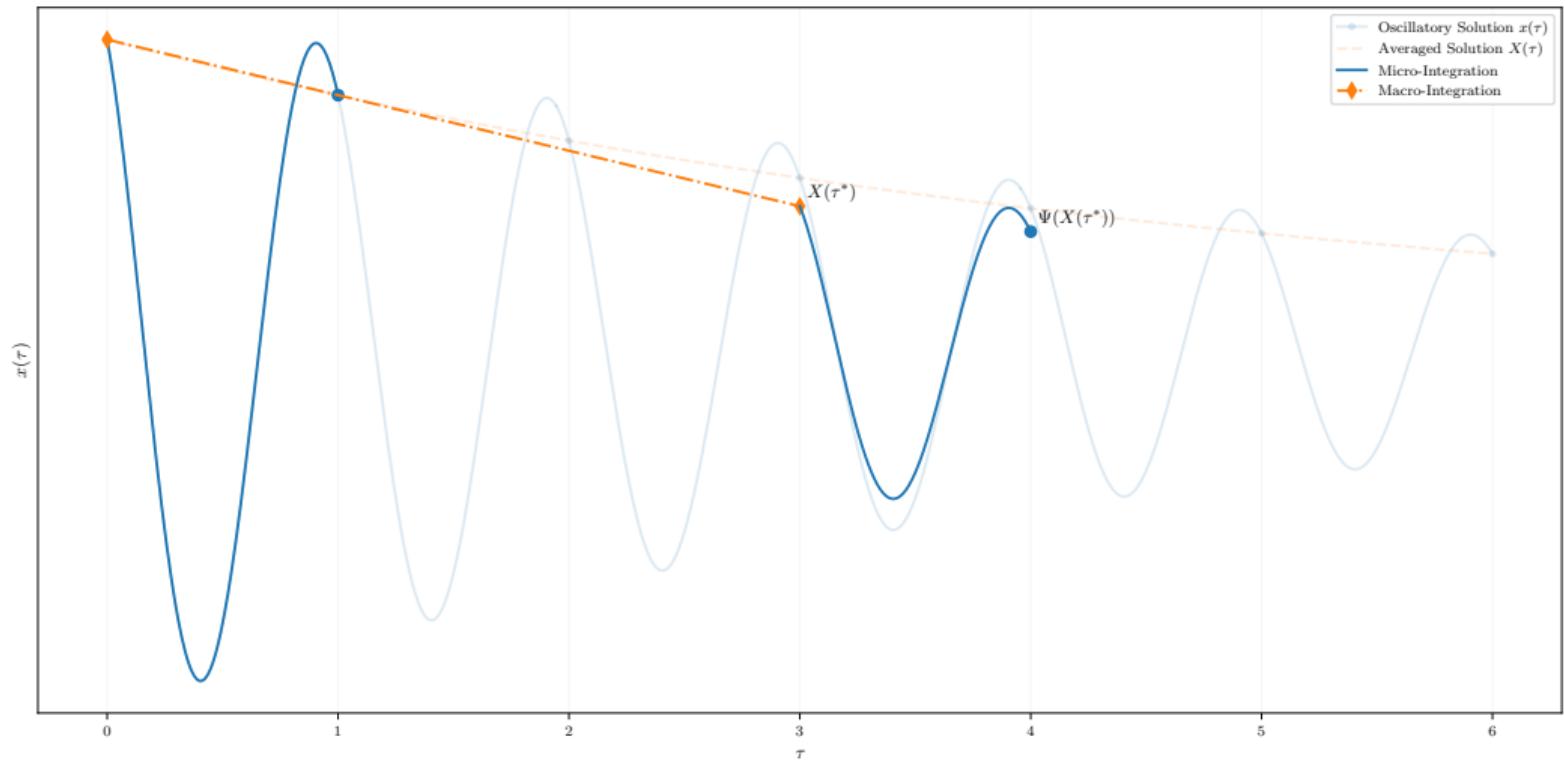
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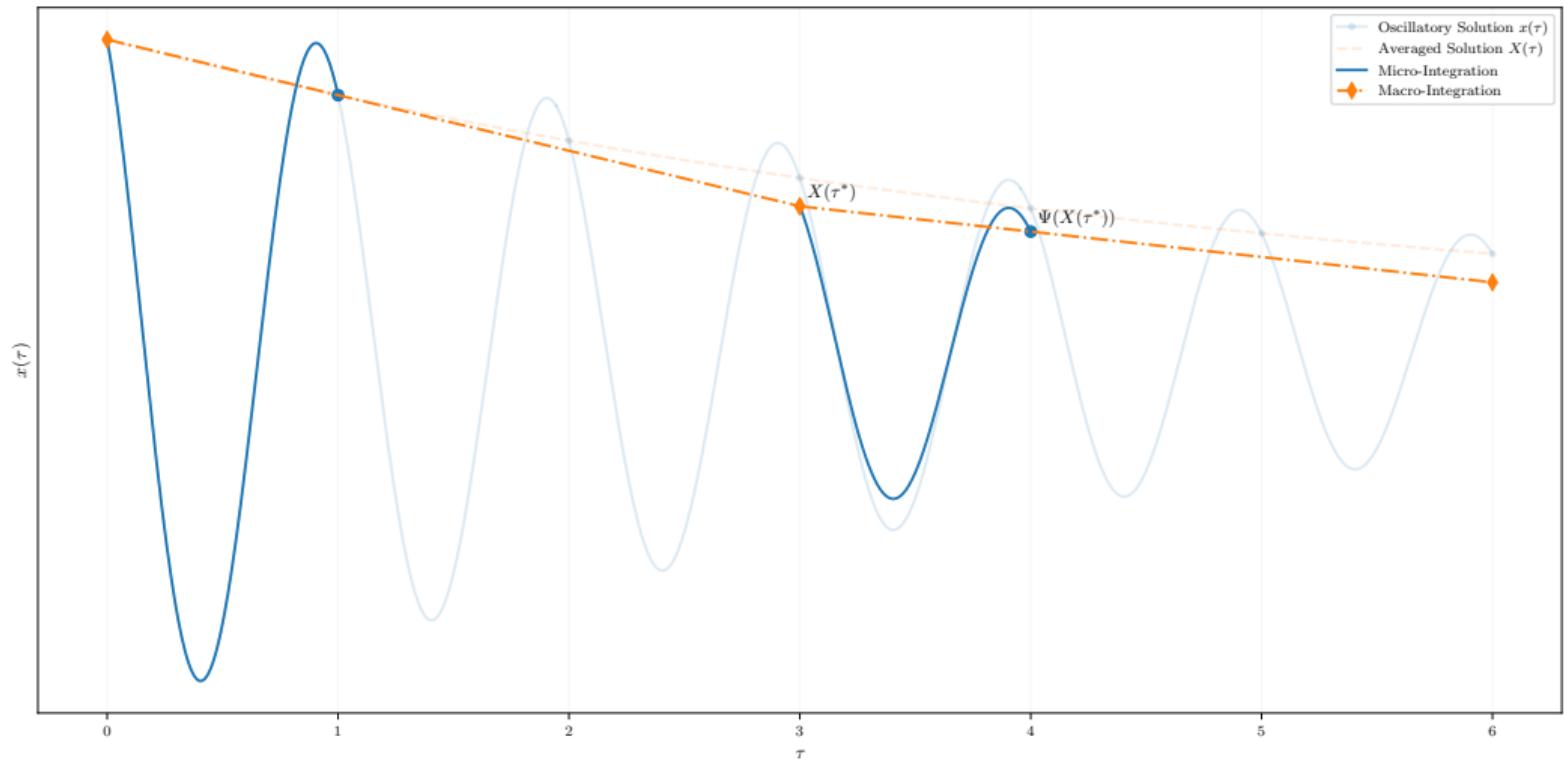
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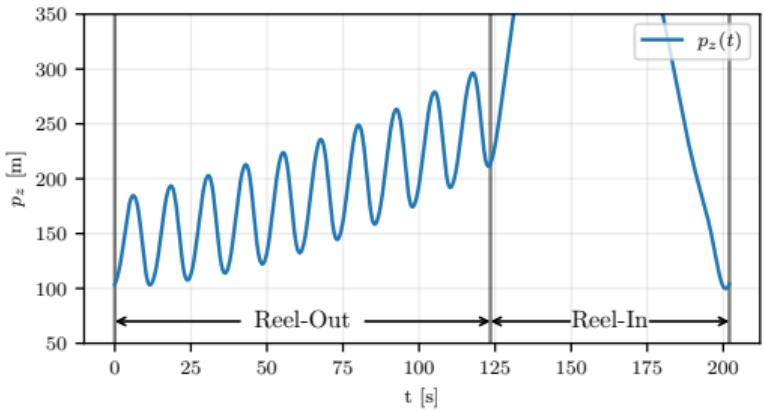


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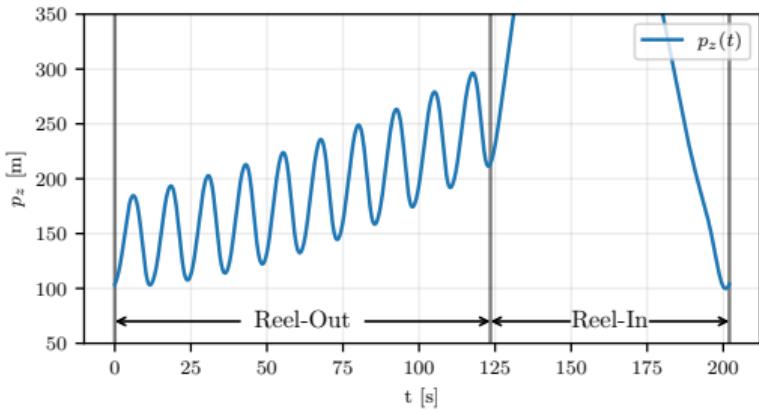
OCP Timescaling



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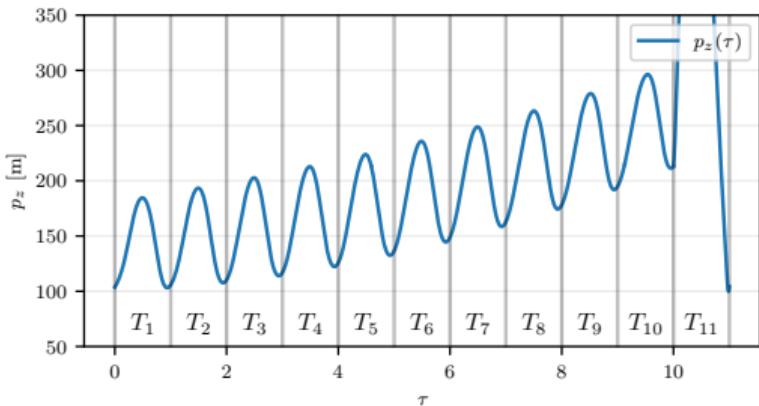
- ▶ Conceptually divide the trajectory into $N + 1$ section



OCP Timescaling



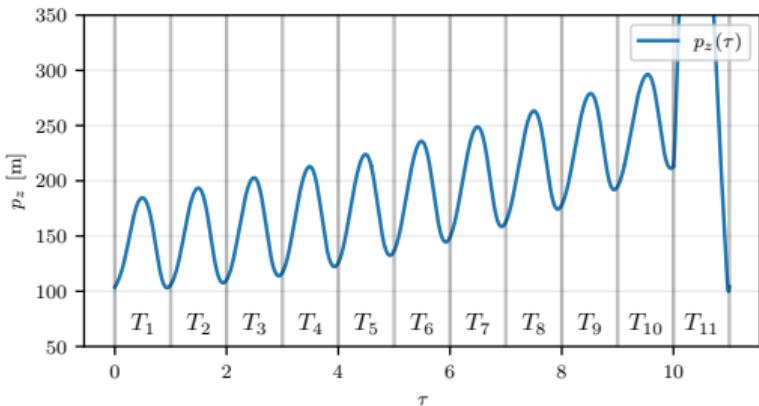
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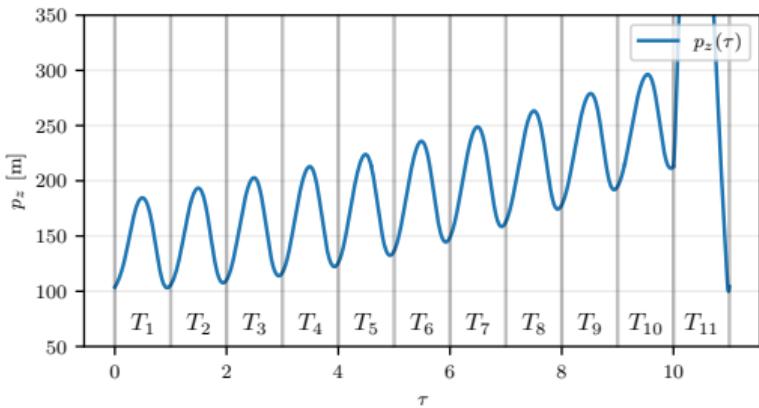
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- ▶ Of duration T_1, \dots, T_N, T_{N+1}



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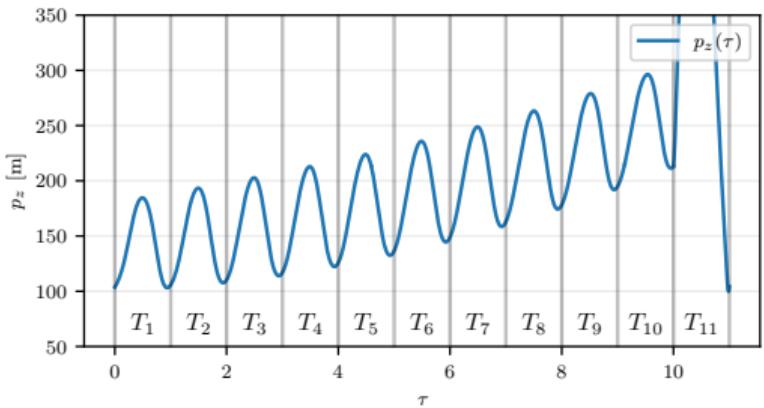
- ▶ Conceptually divide the trajectory into $N + 1$ sections
- ▶ Of duration T_1, \dots, T_N, T_{N+1}
- ▶ Now: Numerical time $\tau \in [0, N + 1]$

$$\min_{\substack{x(\cdot), u(\cdot), z(\cdot) \\ T_1, \dots, T_{N+1}}} \int_0^{N+1} l(x(\tau), u(\tau), z(\tau)) \, d\tau$$

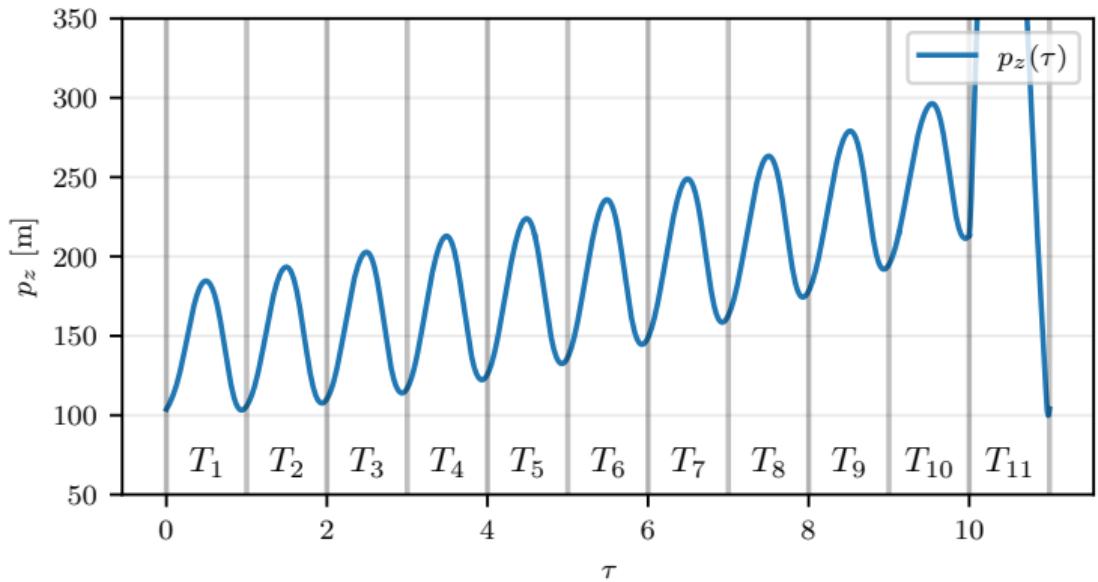
$$\text{s.t.} \quad 0 = f\left(\frac{1}{T(\tau)} \frac{dx(\tau)}{d\tau}, x(\tau), u(\tau), z(\tau)\right),$$

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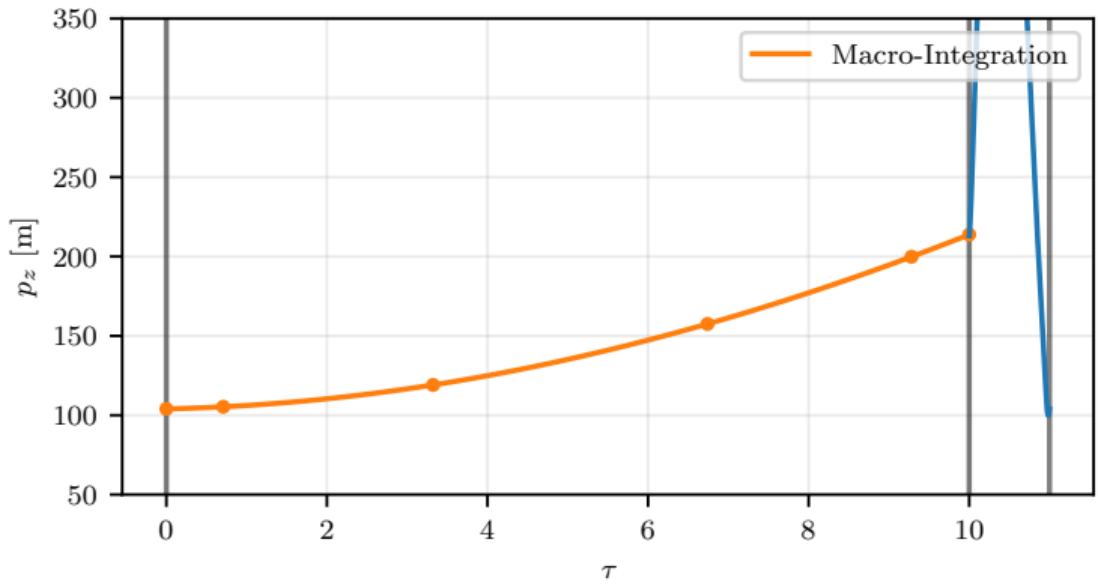
$$0 = x(0) - x(N + 1)$$



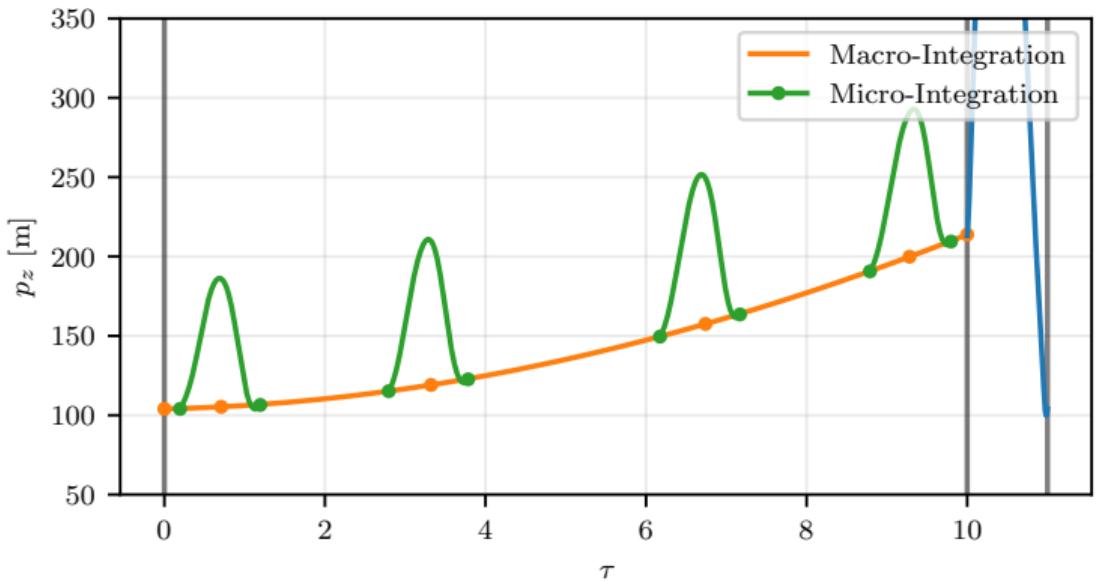
Stroboscopic Averaging for AWE System



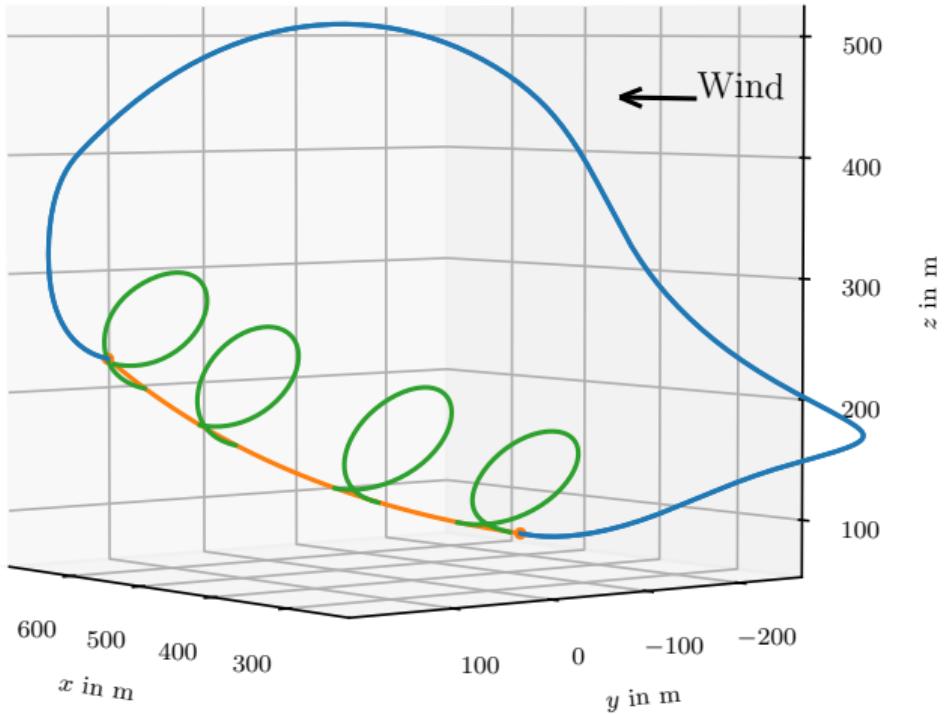
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Regularization

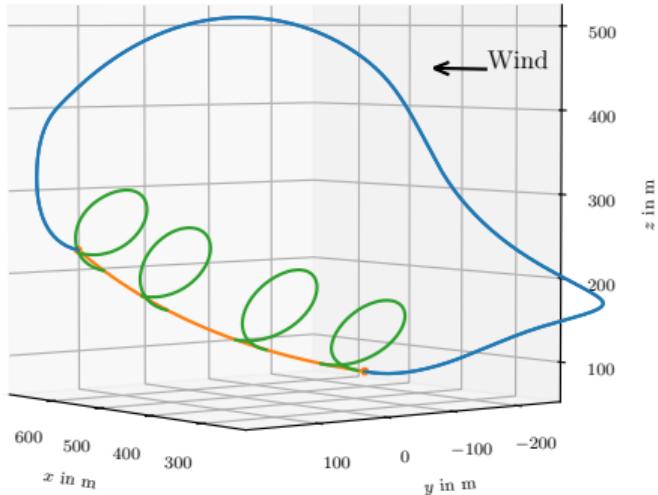


Regularization



Strong Assumption

In the reel-out phase, the power optimal trajectory $x^*(t)$ and the corresponding control $u^*(t)$ consist of many similar, slowly changing cycles.



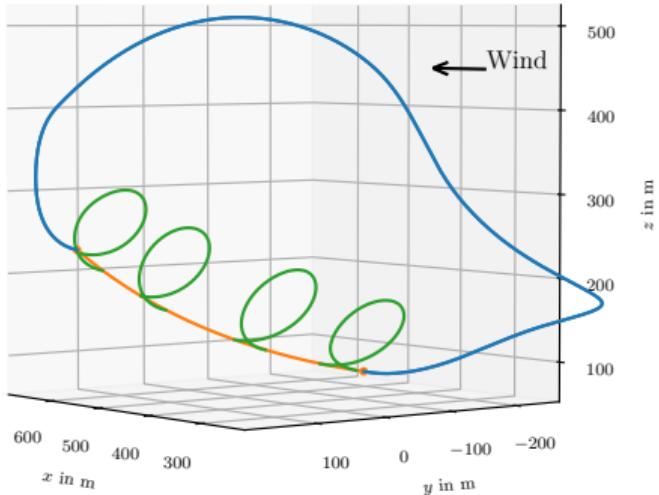
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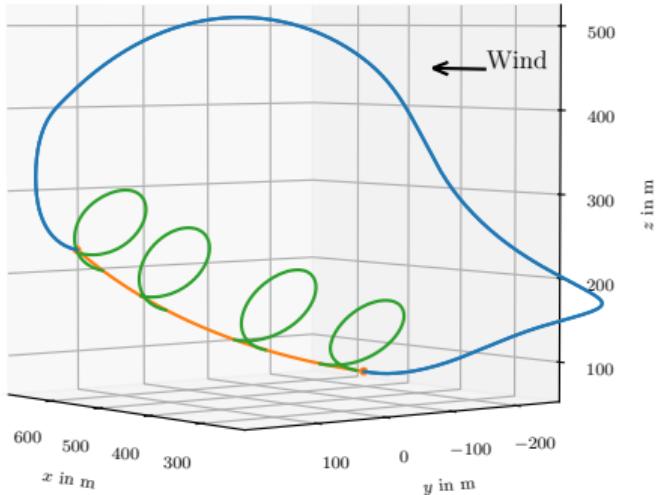


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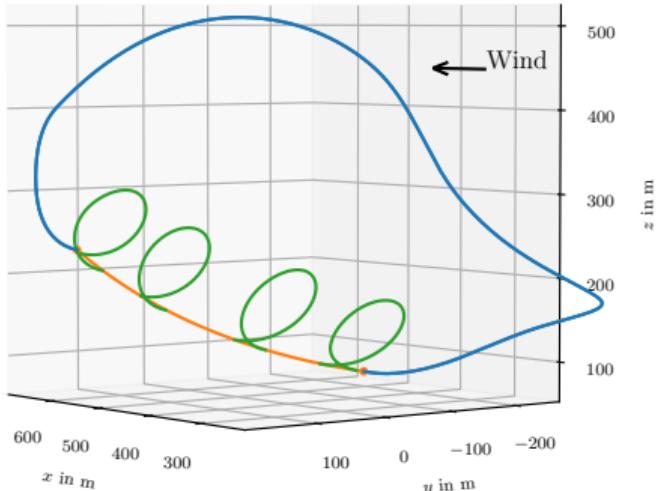


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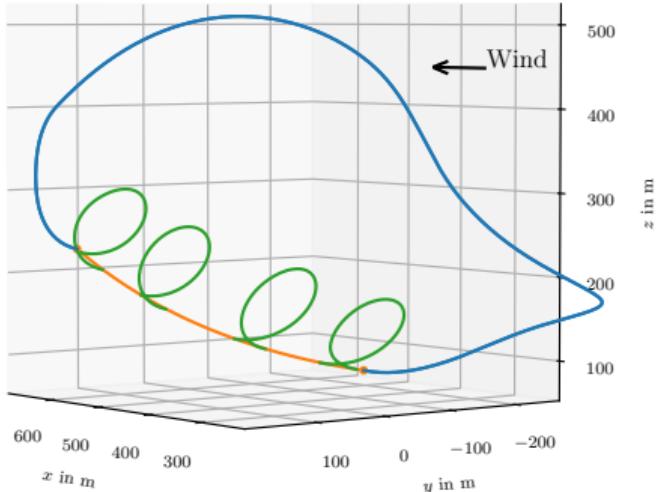


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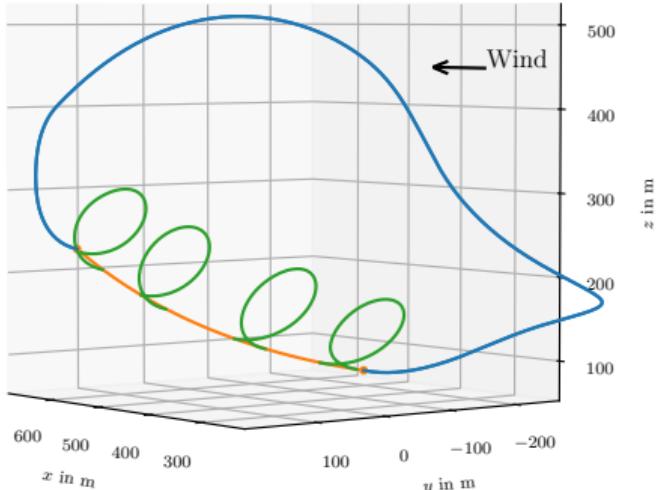


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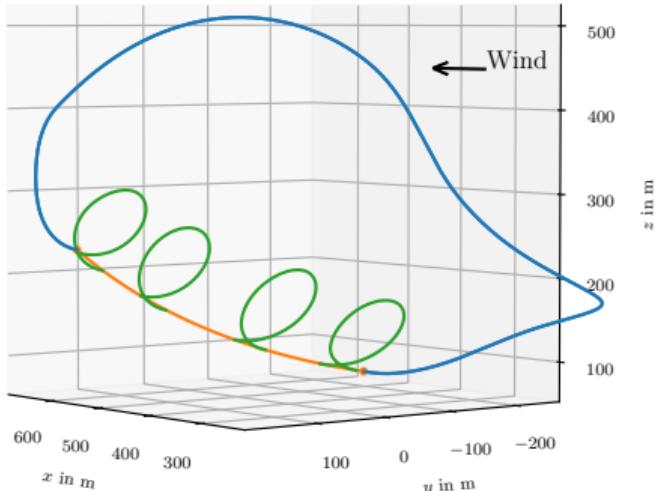


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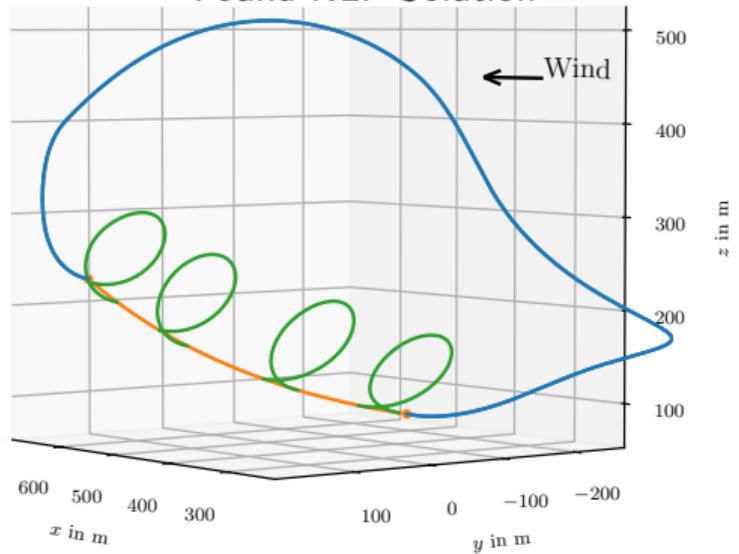


- ▶ Keeps the errors small
- ▶ Strong geometric assumption!

Stroboscopic Averaging for AWE System (cont.)



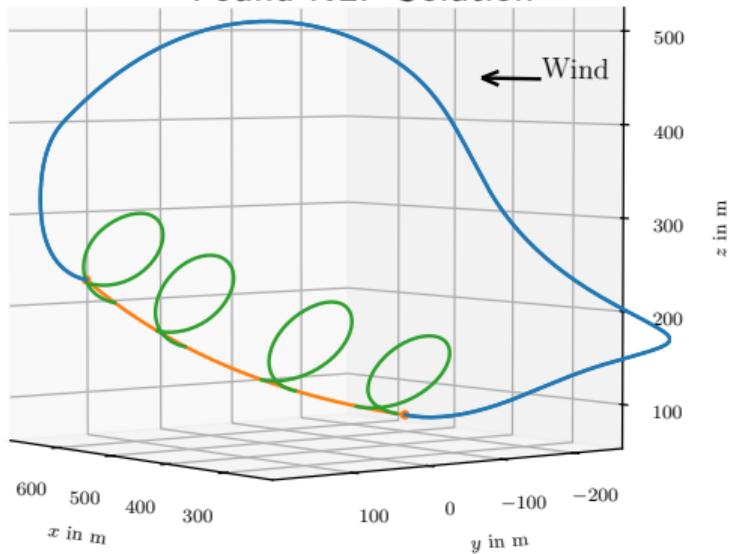
Found NLP Solution



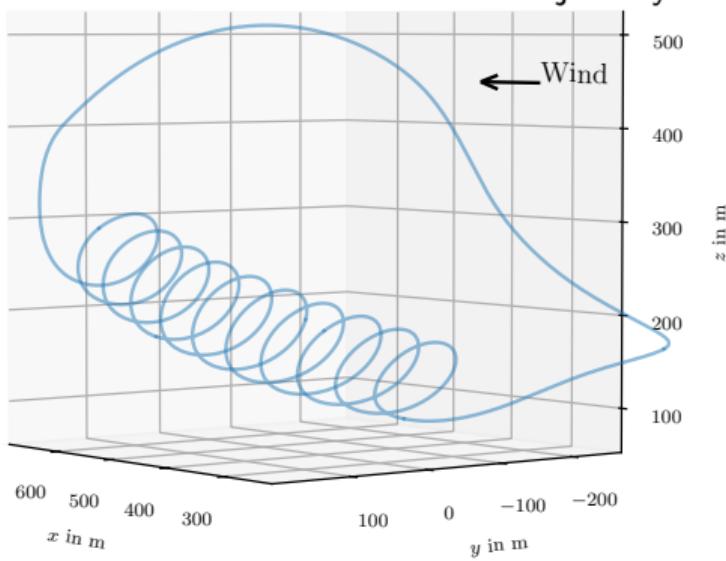
Stroboscopic Averaging for AWE System (cont.)



Found NLP Solution



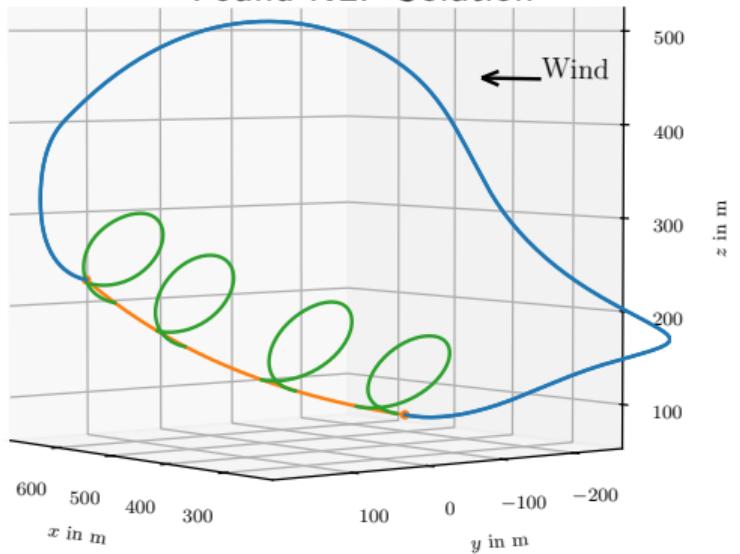
Reconstruction of the Full Trajectory



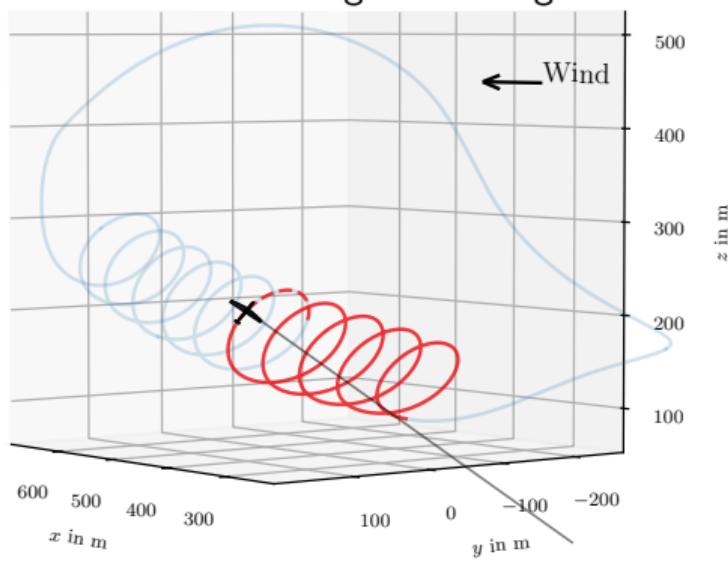
Stroboscopic Averaging for AWE System (cont.)



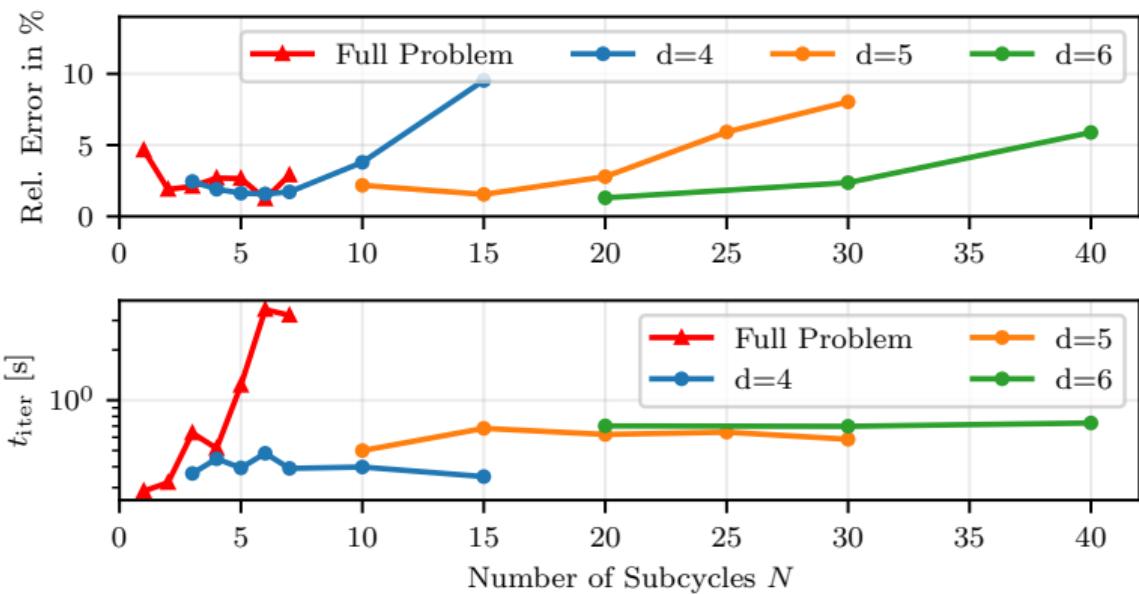
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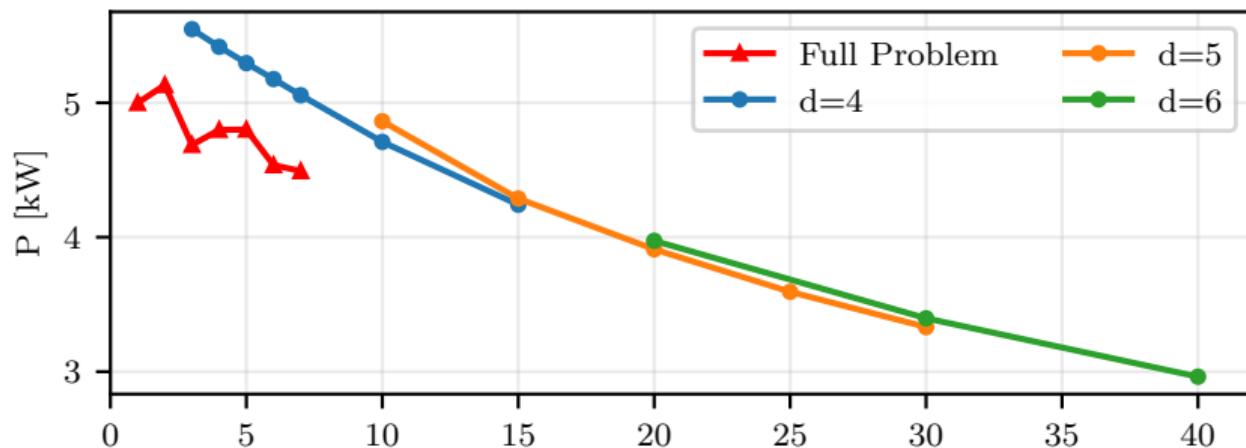
Verification using a Tracking MPC



Results 1 - Computational Efficiency



Results 2 - Generated Power



Wrap Up



- ▶ SAM enables us to optimize trajectories of AWE systems with many subcycles in the reel-out phase

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- ▶ ... but is based on a strong geometric assumption that we need to guarantee.



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Open Problems:



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- ▶ How do we know the 'optimal' number of subcycles?



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- ▶ ... but is based on a strong geometric assumption that we need to guarantee.

Open Problems:

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- ▶ ...



Thank you for your attention!

Useful Sources



-  **Mari Paz Calvo, Philippe Chartier, Ander Murua, and Jesús María Sanz-Serna.**
A stroboscopic numerical method for highly oscillatory problems.
In Björn Engquist, Olof Runborg, and Yen-Hsi R. Tsai, editors, Numerical Analysis of Multiscale Computations, pages 71–85. Springer Berlin Heidelberg, 2012.
-  **J. De Schutter, R. Leuthold, T. Bronnenmeyer, E. Malz, S Gros, and M. Diehl.**
AWEbox: An optimal control framework for single- and multi-aircraft airborne wind energy systems.
Energies, 16(4):1900, 2023.
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