

Dynamic Energy Planning for Autonomous UAVs

University of Southern Denmark

Dynamic Energy Planning for Autonomous UAVs

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Robotics

by

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To Casio fx-991ES PLUS,
my eternal companion.

Acknowledgements

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Notation

\exists there exists

Abbreviations

LP	linear program
QP	quadratic program
MPC	model predictive control
NLP	non linear program
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle
OCP	optimal control problem
BVP	boundary-value problem

Chapter 1

Introduction

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$$\sin x = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{(-1)^{n-1} x^{2n-1}}{(2n-1)!} \quad (1.1)$$

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Chapter 2

The Planning Problem

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Chapter 3

State of the Art

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Chapter 4

Energy Models

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Chapter 5

State Estimation

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Chapter 6

Guidance

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Chapter 7

Optimal Control Generation

This chapter provides essential theoretical background on optimal control theory necessary to derive an optimal configuration of the path and computations of the flying UAV. It solves the problem posed in [Chapter 2](#) and illustrates an algorithm that generates the optimal configuration dynamically. The algorithm relies on a modern optimal control technique known as model predictive control (MPC), where the optimal control trajectory is evaluated on a receding horizon for each optimization step ([Rawlings et al., 2017](#)).

Optimal control deals with finding optimal ways to control a dynamic system ([Sethi, 2019](#)). It determines the control signal—the evolution in time of the decision variables—such that the model satisfies the dynamics and simultaneously optimizes a performance index ([Kirk, 2004](#)).

Many optimization problems originating in fields such as robotics, economics, and aeronautics can be formulated as optimal control problems (OCPs) ([Von Stryk and Bulirsch, 1992](#)). Optimization is often called mathematical programming ([Nocedal and Wright, 2006](#)) a term that means finding ways to solve the optimization problem. One can often find programming in this context in terms such as linear program (LP), quadratic program (QP), and nonlinear program (NLP). NLPs is the class of optimization problems that we use to derive the optimal configuration. OCPs can be seen as optimization problems with the added difficulty of continuous dynamics. The latter is to be integrated over the optimization horizon using numerical simulation. In the algorithm, we formulate the dynamic planning problem as an OCP that we solve with a numerical method: we transform the OCP in an NLP using numerical simulation and solve the NLP using numerical optimization, as proposed in ([Rawlings et al., 2017](#)). The process is illustrated in [Fig. 7.1](#).

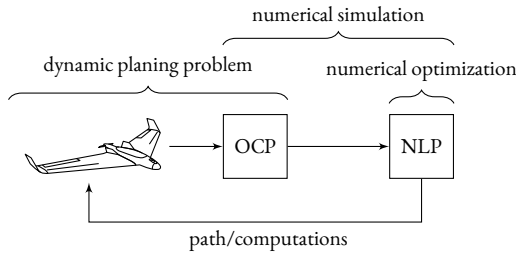


Fig. 7.1. Summary of the optimal control approach. The problem is formulated as an OCP, into finite-dimensional discrete NLP using numerical simulation. NLP is solved using numerical optimization and the optimal configuration for a given time horizon is returned to the UAV. The following horizon is evaluated again in a technique known as MPC.

A typical performance measure for an OCP is built such that the system: reaches a target set Q_f in minor time, reaches a given final state \mathbf{q}_f with minimum deviation, maintains the state evolution as close as possible to a given desired evolution, or reaches the target set with the minimum control expenditure effort (Kirk, 2004). In energy planning, it is desired to focus on the latter performance measure.

The outline of the chapter is as follows. After a brief history of optimal control, we introduce formally the OCP subject to continuous dynamics. We then illustrate numerical simulation approaches to convert the infinite-dimensional continuous dynamics into finite-dimensional discrete dynamics. We formulate later in the chapter the dynamic planning problem for the optimal configuration of the path and computations with proper constraints. Finally, we illustrate MPC to solve OCP on a receding horizon. We propose an algorithm to solve such OCP using a numerical method on the horizon along with the analysis of its practical feasibility.

The chapter builds on the rest of the work as follows. In the OCP formulation, we use the estimated state from Chapter 5 of a perfect model in Chapter 4 to solve the planning problem in Chapter 2 and guide the UAV with the obtained optimal configuration from this chapter with the technique in Chapter 6.

7.1 Brief History of Optimal Control

Optimal control originates from the calculus of variations (Sethi, 2019), based on the work of Euler and Lagrange. Calculus of variations solves the problem of determining the arguments of an integral, such that its value is maximum (or minimum). The equivalent problem in calculus is to determine the argument of a function where the function is maximum (or minimum). The work by Euler and Lagrange was later extended by Legendre, Hamilton, and Weierstrass (Paulen and Fikar, 2016). It has gained a renewed interest in the mid-twentieth century, as modern calculators offered prac-

tical ways of solving some OCPs for nonlinear and time-varying systems that were earlier impracticable (Bryson and Ho, 1975).

The conversion of the calculus of variation problems in OCPs requires the addition of the control variable to the dynamics (Sethi, 2019).

There are numerous methods to analytically and numerically solve these continuous time OCPs, although analytical solution is often impracticable except for very limited state dimensions (Rawlings et al., 2017). In the early day of optimal control, some analytical solutions were proposed with dynamic programming (Bellman, 1957), and with maximum (or minimum) principle (Pontryagin et al., 1962).

In computer science dynamic programming is fundamental to compute optimal solutions, yet it's original form was developed to solve optimal control problems (LaValle, 2006). Dynamic programming in optimal control theory is based on a partial differential equation of the performance index named Hamilton-Jacobi-Bellman (HJB) equation, which is solved either analytically for small dimensional state space problems, or numerically (Rawlings et al., 2017). Dynamic programming can be shown to be equivalent to the principle (Paulen and Fikar, 2016). The principle is related to HJB equation in that it provides optimality conditions an optimal trajectory must satisfy (LaValle, 2006). HJB offer sufficient conditions for optimality while the principle necessary; yet it is useful to find suitable candidates for optimality (LaValle, 2006).

All the numerical approaches discretize infinite-dimensional problems at a certain point (Rawlings et al., 2017).

A first class of these approaches solves the optimality conditions in continuous time using first-order necessary conditions of optimality from the principle (Böhme and Frank, 2017). This is done by algebraic manipulation using an expression that is similar to the HJB equation, and results in a boundary-value problem (BVP) (Rawlings et al., 2017). The class is commonly referred to as the indirect methods. The BVP is solved by discretization at the very end (Rawlings et al., 2017) and/or gradient-based resolution (Paulen and Fikar, 2016).

On the contrary, modern optimal control often first discretize an the control and state variables in the OCP to a finite dimensional optimization problem (usually NLP), which is then solved with numerical optimization (using gradient-based techniques). This other class of numerical approaches is referred to as direct methods. Some direct methods are single and multiple shooting and collocation methods. We employ direct methods in this chapter.

Modern OCPs are often solved on a finite and receding horizon using an approximation of the true dynamics using MPC techniques. It is a more systematic technique which allow to control a model by re-optimizing the OCP repeatedly (Paulen and Fikar, 2016; Poe and Mokhtab, 2017). It takes into account external interferences by re-estimating the model's state (with techniques that we introduced in Chapter 5).

MPC is extensively treated in modern optimal control literature (Camacho and Alba, 2007; Kwon and Han, 2005; Rawlings et al., 2017; Rossiter, 2004; Wang, 2009).

7.2 OCPs with Continuous Dynamics

7.2.1 Unconstrained Case

Given a state variable \mathbf{q} composed of m states and a control variable \mathbf{u} composed of n controls, the state variable dynamics at a given time instant t can be described by a differential model

$$\dot{\mathbf{q}}(t) = f(\mathbf{q}(t), \mathbf{u}(t), t), \quad \mathbf{q}(t_0) = \mathbf{q}_0 \text{ given, } \forall t \in [t_0, T], \quad (7.1)$$

where $t_0 \in \mathbb{R}_{\geq 0}$ is a given initial time instant, and $\mathbf{q}_0 \in \mathbb{R}^m$ a given initial state guess. The latest can be derived empirically from a previous execution or using some initial sensor data. $f : \mathbb{R}^m \times \mathbb{R}^n \times \mathbb{R}_{\geq 0} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^m$ maps the current state, control and time to the next state. The notations for $\dot{\mathbf{q}}(t) := d\mathbf{q}(t)/dt$, \mathbf{q} , and \mathbf{u} are the same from Chapter 4. The function f is assumed to be continuously differentiable. Physically, Equation (7.1) specifies the instantaneous change in state variable of a perfect model with no disturbances.

If the control trajectory $\mathbf{u}(t_0), \mathbf{u}(t_1), \dots, \mathbf{u}(T - \Delta t)$ is known for a given time horizon $t_0 \leq t \leq T$, the model in Equation (7.1) can be derived to obtain the state trajectory $\mathbf{q}(t_0), \mathbf{q}(t_1), \dots, \mathbf{q}(T)$, where Δt is the instantaneous change in time. The last state at the final time instant T is derived from the last control at the time instant $T - \Delta t$. The state trajectory has indeed one item more than the control trajectory.

Optimal control finds a control trajectory which maximizes (or minimizes) a performance index

$$L = l_f(\mathbf{q}(T), T) + \int_{t_0}^T l(\mathbf{q}(t), \mathbf{u}(t), t) dt, \quad (7.2)$$

where l, l_f are given instantaneous and final cost functions. The instantaneous cost function maps state, controls, and time to a value that quantifies the cost of a given instant $l : \mathbb{R}^m \times \mathbb{R}^n \times \mathbb{R}_{\geq 0} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$. The final cost function maps the state and time to a value which quantifies the cost of the final instant $l_f : \mathbb{R}^m \times \mathbb{R}_{\geq 0} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$. The performance index $L \in \mathbb{R}$ is then the sum of all the contribution on the time horizon.

Performance index found in (Bryson and Ho, 1975) is also found in literature as cost function in (Simon, 2006; Stengel, 1994), objective function in (Rao, 2019; Rawlings et al., 2017; Sethi, 2019), or performance measure (Kirk, 2004).

The control variable is usually constrained

$$\mathbf{u}(t) \in \mathcal{U}(t), \quad \forall t \in [t_0, T], \quad (7.3)$$

where $\mathcal{U}(t) \subseteq \mathbb{R}^m$ is the control constraint set. It delimits all the feasible values of the control for the horizon. There can be different control constraint sets for different instants.

The Equations (7.1–7.3) forms unconstrained OCPs. These problems are formalized

$$\begin{aligned} & \max_{\mathbf{u}(t) \in \mathcal{U}(t)} l_f(\mathbf{q}(T), T) + \int_{t_0}^T l(\mathbf{q}(t), \mathbf{u}(t), t) dt, \\ & \text{s.t. } \dot{\mathbf{q}}(t) = f(\mathbf{q}(t), \mathbf{u}(t), t) \\ & \mathbf{q}(t_0) = \mathbf{q}_0 \text{ given.} \end{aligned} \tag{7.4}$$

The evolution of the model is used to derive an optimal control trajectory $\mathbf{u}(t)$ from an initial guess of the state \mathbf{q}_0 and the horizon. This initial simplistic controller does not represent a realistic scenario. The controller implies that the horizon is known. However, it is often the case that only the initial time step of the horizon $[t_0, T]$ is known. In the model from Chapter 4 it is indeed unknown apriori when the UAV plan terminates. Moreover the controller does not include any constraint on the state \mathbf{q} , although UAVs are often bounded by strict battery requirements. Lastly, the optimal control generated with such controller is static given the initial state and the horizon. It is unrealistic to assume that the state of the UAV travelling the optimal control \mathbf{u} does not change for instants $t_0 + \Delta t, t_0 + 2\Delta t, \dots, T$.

All these initial assumption (known final time step, absence of state constraints, static optimal control law) will be eased in the remaining of the chapter.

7.2.2 Constrained Case

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