
UAV Path Planning for Maximum-Information Sensing in Spatiotemporal Data Acquisition

By:

Andreas Nordby Vibeto

andreanv@stud.ntnu.no

Supervisor: **Tor Arne Johansen**

Co-supervisor: Joo F. Fortuna



NTNU

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) are today widely used in ground observation, and by equipping them with different sensors they can be used in different situations. While the use of UAV eases many cases of ground observation, there are some difficulties related to the attitude of the aircraft. When the sensor is attached directly to the aircraft the sensor will be coupled with the UAV's states, so that any change in the UAV states will cause a change in what is actually observed by the sensor. An illustration of this is shown in figure 1.1.

A common solution to decouple the sensor from the UAV states is to attach the sensor to a gimbal which will counteract most of the movements of the UAV. While this is a good solution for decoupling, it raises some new issues regarding its weight and size. As one of the benefits of UAVs is their small size the gimbal can quickly be too big and heavy for the UAV, and it may give less effective aerodynamics. This may again lead to increased fuel consumption for the UAV.

This paper will investigate methods to reduce image errors caused by the UAV's attitude, while also avoiding the extra costs associated with a gimbal. This will be accomplished by optimizing a pre-defined curved path that is to be observed with a model of the UAV. The control method will be developed with a hyperspectral pushbroom camera that is fixed to the UAV in mind.

1.1 Related Work

The most common method to decouple the UAV attitude states from the sensor today is to equip the aircraft with a gimbal, which allows "NORMAL" UAV operation without losing track of the features that is to be observed. However, gimbals have limited range and if the UAV angles are too big, the features may be lost from the sensor field of view

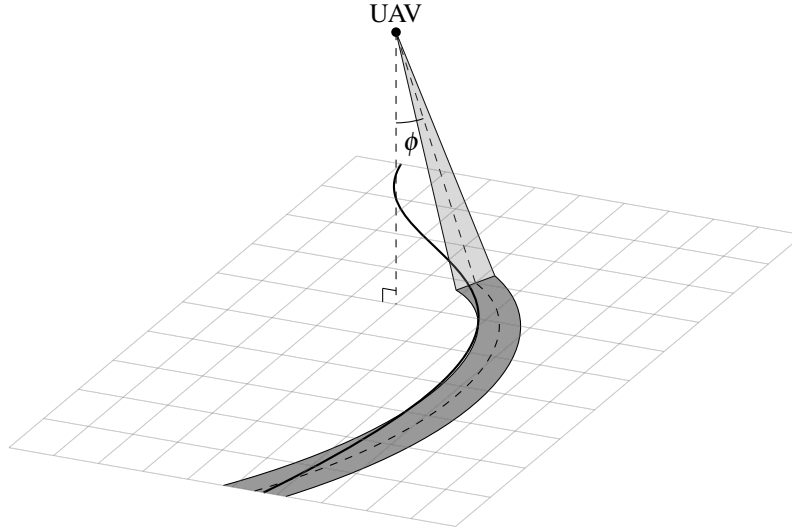


Figure 1.1: An illustration showing a UAV that uses a camera fixed to its body to observe a ground path, and how the position of the camera footprint relates to the UAV attitude.

(FOV). One solution to this problem is to use optimization [1]. Another solution that uses optimization without the use of gimbal is to put constraints on the UAVs roll angle and altitude [2].

A simpler solution to avoid lateral movements of the FOV is to change the UAV course by using the rudder instead of the ailerons. The rudder deflection creates a yawing moment [3] which causes the aircraft to change course. This type of controller is referred to both as a Rudder Augmented Trajectory Correction (RATC) controller [3] and a skid-to-turn (STT) controller [4]. Results show that the performance of these controllers are comparable to conventional controllers using roll to change course, and that errors in the images is greatly reduced [3] [4] [5].

While the controllers offer a solution to the control problem that reduces the errors in the images, they do not ensure that the ground path that is to be observed will always stay inside the sensors FOV. Optimization is a commonly used method for ensuring that the application succeeds at some "outside" goal, and can be used to e.g. minimize the risk of being identified by radars [6] or plan a path that ensures that a slung load attached to a helicopter do not collide with obstacles [7]. The use of optimization to minimize the error of the sensor footprint for a fixed camera has been done by Jackson [8], by using on-board motion planning.

Jackson presents a path planner that aims to minimize the error between the target on the ground, and the footprint of a camera fixed to a UAV. To achieve this a Nonlinear Model Predictive Controller (NMPC) based on a kinodynamic (an explanation of this would be nice) model of the aircraft is created. The NMPC is compared to a PID and

a sliding-mode controller that seek to follow the same path. Simulations of the three controllers show that while the PID controller had much bigger crosstrack errors than the other two, the NMPC and the sliding-mode controller had similar performance. However, the simulations proved that the NMPC controller was able to find a near optimal solution with the performance characteristics of a real-time application.

1.2 Hyperspectral Imaging

The control method developed in this paper will be developed with the use of a fixed hyperspectral, pushbroom sensor in mind. A hyperspectral sensor/camera makes it possible to accurately detect types of material from the UAV by sensing the wavelength of the received light.

1.2.1 Description

Hyperspectral imaging uses basics from spectroscopy to create images, which means that the basis for the images is the emitted or reflected light from materials [9]. The amount of light that is reflected by a material at different wavelengths is determined by several factors, and this makes it possible to distinguish different materials from each other. The reflected light is passed through a grate or a prism that splits the light into different wavelength bands, so that it can be measured by a spectrometer.

When using a hyperspectral camera for ground observation from a UAV, it is very likely that one pixel of the camera covers more than one type of material on the ground. This means that the observed wavelengths will be influenced by more than one type of material. This is called a composite or mixed spectrum [9], and the spectra of the different materials are combined additively. The combined spectra can be split into the different spectra that it is build up of by noise removal and other statistical methods which will not be covered here.

1.2.2 UAV Ground Observation

Hyperspectral imaging is already being used for ground observation from UAVs. Its ability to distinguish materials based on spectral properties means that it can be used to retrieve information that normal cameras are not able to. For example in agriculture it can be used to map damage to trees caused by bark beetles [10], or it can be used to measure environmental properties, for example chlorophyll fluorescence, on leaf-level in a citrus orchard [11].

Systems for ground observation with hyperspectral cameras can be very complex, which often leads to heavy systems. In [12], a lightweight hyperspectral mapping system was created for the use with octocopters. The purpose of the system is to map agricultural areas using a spectrometer and a photogrammetric camera, and the final

”ready-to-fly” weight of the system is 2.0 kg. The resolution of the final images made it possible to gather information on a single-plant basis, and the georeferencing accuracy was off by only a few pixels.

The tests were performed at a low altitude, maximum 120 m. While this was mainly because of local regulations, it also gave a benefit as there was less atmosphere disturbance in the measurements. The UAVs orientation data combined with surface models was used when recovering the positional data in the images. However, they found that externally produced surface models was not accurate enough as they do not take vegetation into consideration. For this reason they supplemented the existing surface models with information gathered during flight.

1.3 Thesis Outline

Chapter 2

Kinematics

What is captured by the camera, the camera footprint, when the camera is fixed to the aircraft body is dependent of the position and the attitude angles of the aircraft. In this section a model for calculating the camera footprint on the ground assuming flat earth will be presented, as well as the necessary UAV states for this thesis.

2.1 Linear UAV Model

2.2 UAV States

The position of the UAV will be given using the North East Down (NED) coordinate frame, denoted $\{n\}$:

$$\mathbf{p}_{b/n}^n = \begin{bmatrix} N \\ E \\ D \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} x_n \\ y_n \\ z_n \end{bmatrix}, \quad (2.1)$$

with the corresponding velocities

$$\mathbf{V}_g^b = \begin{bmatrix} u \\ v \\ w \end{bmatrix}. \quad (2.2)$$

The attitude of the UAV will be given as Euler-angles:

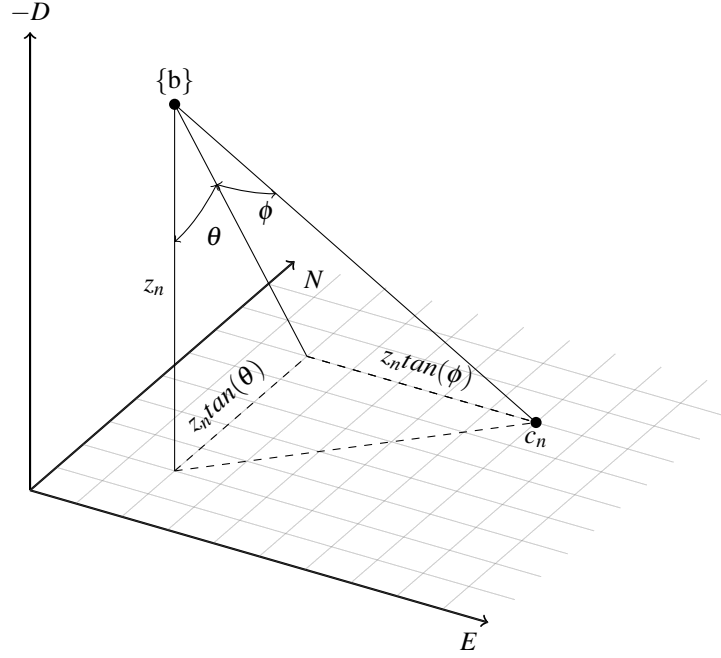


Figure 2.1: Illustration of how the aircraft attitude influence the camera position.

$$\Theta_{nb} = \begin{bmatrix} \phi \\ \theta \\ \psi \end{bmatrix} \quad (2.3)$$

with corresponding angular velocities:

$$\dot{\Theta}_{nb} = \begin{bmatrix} p \\ q \\ r \end{bmatrix}. \quad (2.4)$$

2.3 Camera Footprint

The camera footprint is coupled with all of the three angles given in Θ . The position of the camera footprint will be calculated using forward kinematics, and the situation is shown in figure 2.1.

2.3.1 Centre Position

The attitude of the UAV is given in the body frame $\{b\}$ and the height z_n is given in the NED frame $\{n\}$, and the model assumes flat earth. The position of the footprint centre point \mathbf{c}_b^b in the body frame $\{b\}$ is expressed as the geometric (??) distance from the UAV position to the footprint centre point:

$$\mathbf{c}_b^b = \begin{bmatrix} c_{x/b}^b \\ c_{y/b}^b \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} z_n \tan(\theta) \\ z_n \tan(\phi) \end{bmatrix}. \quad (2.5)$$

The coordinates of the camera position in $\{n\}$ can be found by rotating the point \mathbf{c}_b^b with respect to the aircraft heading ψ , and by translating the rotated point to the aircrafts position in the $\{n\}$ frame. The rotation matrix for rotating with respect to the heading is given as

$$\mathbf{R}_{z,\psi} = \begin{bmatrix} \cos(\psi) & -\sin(\psi) \\ \sin(\psi) & \cos(\psi) \end{bmatrix}. \quad (2.6)$$

The final expression for the camera footprint centre position \mathbf{c}^n in the $\{n\}$ frame then becomes:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{c}^n &= \mathbf{p} + \mathbf{R}_{z,\psi} \mathbf{c}_b^b \\ &= \begin{bmatrix} x_n \\ y_n \end{bmatrix} + \mathbf{R}_{z,\psi} \begin{bmatrix} c_{x/b}^b \\ c_{y/b}^b \end{bmatrix} \end{aligned} \quad (2.7)$$

2.3.2 Edge Points

A hyperspectral pushbroom sensor captures images in a line, and the centre point of the camera footprint does not express the entire area that is captured by the sensor. The edge points of the camera footprint are calculated with respect to the sensor's field of view, as shown in figure 2.2. These points \mathbf{e} can be found by altering 2.5:

$$\mathbf{e}_{1,b}^b = \begin{bmatrix} z_n \tan(\theta) \\ z_n \tan(\phi + \sigma) \end{bmatrix}, \quad \mathbf{e}_{2,b}^b = \begin{bmatrix} z_n \tan(\theta) \\ z_n \tan(\phi - \sigma) \end{bmatrix}. \quad (2.8)$$

The steps for writing the edge points \mathbf{e} in the $\{n\}$ is similar as in equation 2.7:

$$\mathbf{e}^n = \mathbf{p} + \mathbf{R}_{z,\psi} \mathbf{e}_b^b. \quad (2.9)$$

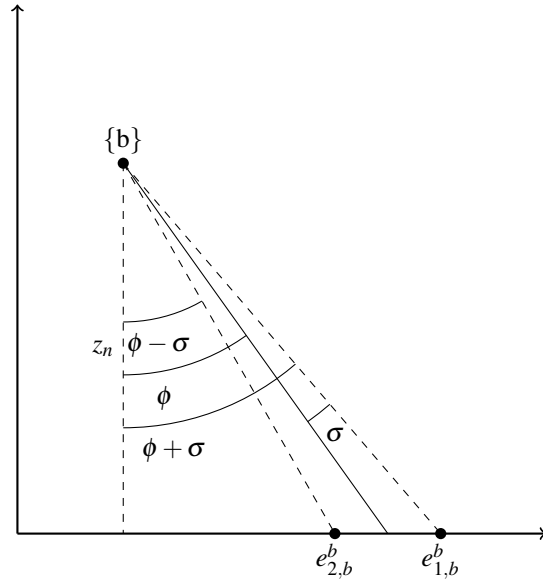


Figure 2.2: Illustration of how the field of view for a pushbroom sensor is calculated.

Chapter 3

Model Predictive Control

Model Predictive Control (MPC) is a term used to describe control methods that uses knowledge about the process to calculate the future control inputs to the system in order to follow a reference trajectory [14]. In this chapter the equations for an *offline intervalwise MPC* that seeks to minimize the distance between the camera centre point and the ground path that is to be observed will be given. A linear state space-model for the UAV will be used to predict the future states and control inputs.

3.1 MPC Method

The MPC strategy can be broken down into three tasks [14]:

1. Predict the future outputs of the process for the given prediction horizon using past inputs to the process and the past measured states of the process, and by using the future control signals.
2. Optimize an objective function in order to determine the future control signals that follows a given reference trajectory as closely as possible.
3. Apply the optimal control signals to the process, and measure the resulting output so that it may be used to calculate the next prediction horizon in the first task.

In short MPC problems are made up of three elements [14]: Prediction model, objective function and the control law. The prediction model represents the model of the process that is to be controlled, and will in this case consist of the differential equations for the states of the UAV. The objective function is the function that is to be minimized by the optimization algorithm, in this case this will be the distance from the camera centre point to the desired ground path together with some of the UAV states that will give a stable flight. The objective function represents the reference trajectory that the UAV is

to follow. The control law introduces constraints on the problem, reducing the number of feasible solutions. These constraints can be put on either the states or the control inputs for the UAV.

A common mathematical formulation of the three elements that make up the optimization problem is shown in 3.1 [15]. $f(x)$ represents the objective function that is subject to equality and inequality constraints respectively. The equality constraints are used to represent the UAV model, while the inequality constraints represent the constraints used for the control law. A MPC differ from other optimization problems mostly in the objective function, which will be described in detail chapter 3.3.

$$\begin{aligned} \min_{x \in R^n} \quad & f(x) \\ \text{s.t} \quad & c_i(x) = 0, i \in \mathcal{E}, \\ & c_i(x) \geq 0, i \in \mathcal{I}. \end{aligned} \tag{3.1}$$

3.2 Offline Intervalwise MPC

The control problem in this thesis will be solved by using an offline intervalwise MPC to generate an optimal path that will reduce the image error when using a fixed camera to survey a ground track. The generated path is intended to be tracked by the autopilot on the actual UAV that will perform the survey, with the intention of optimally surveying the ground path.

3.2.1 Offline MPC

An *offline MPC* means that the initial state of the MPC is not a measurement of the UAV states, but rather the result of a simulation of the UAV. This means that the result from the prediction model used in the MPC will act as the physical system, and the outputs of the model will be fed back as inputs to the MPC for every iteration. The equations of the offline MPC are the same as the ones for the online version.

Rawlings & Mayne [16] refers to this kind of problem as a *deterministic problem* since there is no uncertainty in the system. A feedback loop in this kind of system is also not needed in principle, since it does not present any new information. They also state that an MPC action for a deterministic system is the same as the action from a *receding horizon control law* (RHC), which is another kind of predictive control.

3.2.2 Intervalwise MPC

Although the feedback is not needed to give new information, it eases the computational load of the control problem as optimizing the path over a long time horizon leads to a very complicated problem. For this reason a *intervalwise MPC* will be used. The term

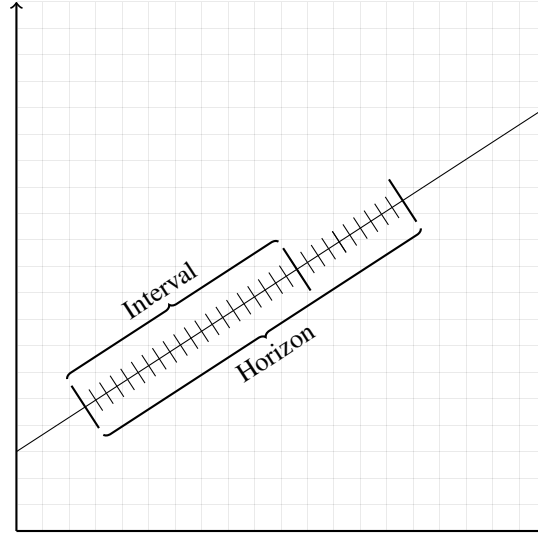


Figure 3.1: The figure shows how the path is divided into sections and horizons when using the intervalwise MPC.

intervalwise has been introduced by Kwon & Han [17] to describe a type of receding horizon controller that implements the same strategy.

Commonly a MPC is used to optimize the model over a given *horizon*, where the initial states are given. After the optimization has finished the first timestep of the optimization is returned and applied to the system, before a measurement of the system is performed. The new measurements are given as initial states for the next horizon, and so on.

The principle is the same for an intervalwise MPC. However, instead of only returning the first timestep an *interval* of timesteps are returned, and the last timestep of the interval is used as initial states for the next optimization horizon. This way the number of MPC iterations is reduced, and the increased complexity by having long optimization horizons is avoided. Figure 3.1 shows how timesteps, intervals and horizons relate to each other.

3.3 Objective Function

The main objective of the MPC developed in this thesis is to minimize the cross track error between the centre point of the camera footprint and the ground path that is to be observed. This, together with other objectives, will be defined in the objective function of the optimization problem. In this section a way of formulating the objective function, least-squares, will be described, and how it can be expressed to function as a MPC.

3.3.1 Least-Squares Problem

In many applications the objective function is formulated as a least-square (LSQ) problem. LSQ is a form of regression where the distance from a certain point to a known model is measured [source]. In this case the known model is the reference signals and the distance between the current states and the reference signal is calculated by the LSQ. The general mathematical formulation for LSQ is [15]:

$$f(x) = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{j=1}^m r_j^2(x). \quad (3.2)$$

In equation 3.2 r_j is called the residual function, the distance between the point and the model. In relation to the MPC, the residual function is what the MPC seeks to minimize. The residual function is minimized by finding the parameters x that minimize the residual function r .

3.3.2 MPC Objective Function

The objective function is where the goal of the optimization is expressed, together with the optimization horizon of the problem. Typical goals of the optimization is to follow a predefined trajectory or reference signal while reducing the control inputs used. This can be expressed as follows [14]:

$$J(N_1, N_2, N_3) = \sum_{j=N_1}^{N_2} \delta(j) [\hat{y}(t+j|t) - w(t+j)]^2 + \sum_{j=1}^{N_u} \lambda(j) [\Delta u(t+j-1)]^2. \quad (3.3)$$

The first term of equation 3.3 represents the costs from the states of the model, and the second term represents the cost of the control effort. In the first term \hat{y} is the value of the prediction model, which is compared to the desired trajectory w . In the second term the changes in control Δu is expressed. The change in control is used instead of the value of the control signal itself, since the steady state of the control signal may not be zero. δ and λ are weighting variables which offers a way of tuning the MPC. The three different N coefficients defines the horizon over which the states and the control effort should be optimized. The optimization horizon for states and control effort can be different, but they will stay the same for this problem.

3.4 Problem Definition

$$\begin{aligned} \min_{\mathbf{z}} \quad & \mathbf{J}_k = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=k}^{k+L} [\mathbf{h}(\mathbf{z}_i)^\top \mathbf{Q} \mathbf{h}(\mathbf{z}_i)] + \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=k}^{k+L} [\mathbf{u}_i^\top \mathbf{R} \mathbf{u}_i] \\ \text{s.t} \quad & \mathbf{x}^{low} \leq \mathbf{x}_i \leq \mathbf{x}^{high} \\ & \mathbf{u}^{low} \leq \mathbf{u}_i \leq \mathbf{u}^{high} \\ & \dot{\mathbf{x}} = f(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{u}) \end{aligned} \quad (3.4)$$

The equations for the full optimization problem is shown in equation 3.4. The objective function uses the same setup as shown in equation 3.3, but on matrix form. Each of the three components of the problem definition will be described in detail in the following sections.

3.4.1 Objective Function

$$\mathbf{J}_k = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=k}^{k+L} [\mathbf{h}(\mathbf{z}_i)^\top \mathbf{Q} \mathbf{h}(\mathbf{z}_i)] + \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=k}^{k+L} [\Delta \mathbf{u}_i^\top \mathbf{R} \Delta \mathbf{u}_i] \quad (3.5)$$

The first term of the objective function calculates the distance between the UAV states and the reference trajectory. The vector \mathbf{z} is the optimization vector that contains the UAV states that will be included in the optimization problem and \mathbf{Q} is the weighting matrix. The states included in the optimization vector are

$$\mathbf{z} = [p_N \ p_E \ h \ u]^\top. \quad (3.6)$$

The function \mathbf{h} is where the distance between the reference signal and the UAV states is calculated. For the the north-east position of the camera centre point is compared to the observation path, while the height h and speed u is compared to a constant reference signal h_d and u_d respectively:

$$\mathbf{h} = \begin{bmatrix} p_N - p_{Nd} \\ p_E - p_{Ed} \\ h - h_d \\ u - u_d \end{bmatrix}. \quad (3.7)$$

In order to reduce the control effort for the optimization problem the rate of change of the control inputs $d\mathbf{u}$ will be minimized. Since all the control rates is to be compared to zero no function is needed. The matrix \mathbf{R} is the weighting matrix. The vector u contains of the four control rates:

$$\Delta \mathbf{u} = [d\delta_e \ d\delta_a \ d\delta_r \ d\delta_t]^\top. \quad (3.8)$$

3.4.2 Prediction Model

The linear decoupled 12 DOF UAV model presented in chapter 2 will be used as the prediction model for the MPC. The model is associated with the following states and control inputs:

$$\mathbf{x} = [p_N \ p_E \ h \ u \ v \ w \ \phi \ \theta \ \psi \ p \ q \ r]^\top \quad (3.9a)$$

$$\mathbf{u} = [\delta_e \ \delta_a \ \delta_r \ \delta_t]^\top. \quad (3.9b)$$

The prediction model relates to the equality constraints of equation 3.1 in the form of differential equations. As explained in the previous chapter the control rates $\Delta\mathbf{u}$ shown in equation 3.8, which means that by the optimization solver $\Delta\mathbf{u}$ will be handled as the control input. The control surfaces \mathbf{u} are calculated from the rates $\Delta\mathbf{u}$ through integration:

$$\dot{\mathbf{u}} = \Delta\mathbf{u}. \quad (3.10)$$

Based on the control inputs and current states, $\dot{\mathbf{x}}$ is calculated by the differential equation. The attitude angles will be expressed in Euler angles. Even though quaternions offer more efficient computations and no gimbal lock [13], this optimization will be run on an offboard computer/offline so that computation capacity is not a big issue and the UAV is not going to undergo any extreme maneuvers so that a gimbal lock should never occur.

3.4.3 Control Law

$$\mathbf{x}^{\text{low}} \leq \mathbf{x} \leq \mathbf{x}^{\text{high}} \quad (3.11a)$$

$$\mathbf{u}^{\text{low}} \leq \mathbf{u} \leq \mathbf{u}^{\text{high}} \quad (3.11b)$$

$$\Delta\mathbf{u}^{\text{low}} \leq \Delta\mathbf{u} \leq \Delta\mathbf{u}^{\text{high}} \quad (3.11c)$$

The control law for the optimization problem consists of inequality constraints put on the UAV states and on the control signals. When constraints are put on the optimization problem the number of feasible solutions is reduced, so if too many constraints are put on the problem it will make the problem more difficult than necessary.

In an attempt to reduce the complexity of the optimization problem, the constraints put on UAV states shown in equation 3.11a will not be included to begin with. This is because it is assumed that the "easiest" way to fly the aircraft is the "correct" way. However, if this proves wrong during testing, constraints on some or all of the states may be included.

The control states, shown in equation 3.11b, are restricted by the physical maximum value of deflection. Since these constraints directly relates to physical values they are needed in order to get a meaningful optimization of the aircraft.

The constraints put on the control rates of the control surfaces and throttle shown in equation 3.11c also relate to a physical value, and are therefore needed to get a meaningful simulation as well. It is worth noting that $\Delta\mathbf{u}$ is also present in the objective function shown in equation 3.5, with a reference signal of zero. This means that the problem already seeks to minimize the values of $\Delta\mathbf{u}$ so that the constraints may be unnecessary.

Chapter 4

MPC Implementation

The offline intervalwise MPC presented in chapter 3 will be implemented using C++. It will consist of two main parts: the MPC algorithm and the optimization solver. The optimization solver will be implemented using the ACADO Toolkit [18].

4.1 MPC

The task of the MPC part of the implementation is to supply the ACADO implementation with the information needed to perform the optimization, and also control the optimization algorithm so that the correct horizon is calculated, as well as storing the results in the correct order. The algorithm is shown below.

Algorithm 1 MPC Algorithm

- 1: **procedure** MPC
 - 2: $path \leftarrow$ path from file
 - 3: $pathlen \leftarrow$ length of $path$
 - 4: $timestep \leftarrow$ duration of timestep
 - 5: $horizonlen \leftarrow$ number of $timestep$ in horizon
 - 6: $intervallen \leftarrow$ number of $timestep$ in interval
 - 7: $no\ sections \leftarrow$ number of $interval$ to cover $path$
 - 8: $x0 \leftarrow$ initial values of model states
 - 9: $u0 \leftarrow$ initial values of control states
-

4.2 ACADO toolkit

The ACADO Toolkit is an open-source toolkit that supports several different methods for solving optimization problems. The toolkit provides four problem classes that it can solve: Optimal control problems, multi-objective optimization and optimal control problems, parameter and state estimation problems, and model predictive control. Even though this thesis is to solve an MPC problem, the optimal control problem class will be used. This is because the reference trajectory has to be calculated between each step of the MPC, which is easier done outside of the ACADO toolkit.

To solve the optimization problems the toolkit uses many different algorithms. It also has its own Runge-Kutta and BDF integrators to simulate both ODE's (Ordinary Differential Equation) and DAE's (Differential Algebraic Equation). A MATLAB interface is also supplied by the toolkit, but this will not be used for this thesis.

4.2.1 Algorithms

In this chapter the most important algorithms that are used by the ACADO Toolkit to solve the optimization problem will be briefly presented.

4.2.2 Runge-Kutta Integrator

Appendices

Appendix A

ACADO Code

Appendix B

MPC Code

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