

# Thomas Stastny

## SENIOR RESEARCHER

Autonomous Systems Lab, ETH Zürich

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## EDUCATION

- 2014 - 2020 **Doctor of Science in Robotics** | ETH ZÜRICH, Zürich, Switzerland.  
Supervised by Prof. Roland Siegwart in the *Autonomous Systems Lab*  
Dissertation: *Low-Altitude Control and Local Re-Planning Strategies for Small Fixed-wing UAVs*
- 2012 - 2014 **Master of Science in Aerospace Engineering (with Honors)** | UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS, Lawrence, Kansas, USA.  
Thesis: *Collision and Obstacle Avoidance for Fixed-wing UAVs using Morphing Potential Field Navigation with Robust and Predictive Control*  
GPA: 4.0/4.0
- 2012 **Study Abroad** | TU DELFT, Delft, Netherlands.  
Coursework in Systems & Control and Aerospace Engr. M.Sc. Programs.
- 2008 - 2012 **Bachelor of Science in Aerospace Engineering** | UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS, Lawrence, Kansas, USA.  
GPA: 3.7/4.0

## PUBLICATIONS

📄 <https://scholar.google.ch/citations?user=R5Fs1A4AAAAJ&hl=en>

### Journal Papers

- 2020 Long-duration Fully Autonomous Operation of Rotorcraft Unmanned Aerial Systems for Remote-sensing Data Acquisition  
D. Malyuta, C. Brommer, D. Hentzen, **T. Stastny**, R. Siegwart, and R. Brockers  
*Journal of Field Robotics (JFR)*. Vol. 37(1). pp. 137–157.
- 2019 Attitude and Cruise Control of a VTOL Tiltwing UAV  
D. Rohr, **T. Stastny**, S. Verling, and R. Siegwart  
*IEEE Robotics and Automation Letters*. Vol. 4(3). pp. 2683–2690.
- 2018 Free LSD: Prior-free Visual Landing Site Detection for Autonomous Planes  
T. Hinzmann, **T. Stastny**, C. Cadena, R. Siegwart, and I. Gilitschenski  
*IEEE Robotics and Automation Letters*. Vol. 3(3). pp. 2545–2552.
- 2018 Robotic Technologies for Solar-powered UAVs: Fully Autonomous Updraft-aware Aerial Sensing for Multiday Search-and-rescue Missions  
P. Oettershagen, **T. Stastny**, T. Hinzmann, K. Rudin, T. Mantel, A. Melzer, B. Wawrzacz, G. Hitz, and R. Siegwart  
*Journal of Field Robotics (JFR)*. Vol. 35(4). pp. 612–640.
- 2017 Design of Small Hand-launched Solar-powered UAVs: From Concept Study to a Multi-day World Endurance Record Flight  
P. Oettershagen, A. Melzer, Mantel, K. Rudin, **T. Stastny**, B. Wawrzacz, T. Hinzmann, S. Leutenegger, K. Alexis, and R. Siegwart  
*Journal of Field Robotics (JFR)*. Vol. 34(7). pp. 1352–1377.
- 2015 Collision and Obstacle Avoidance in Unmanned Aerial Systems Using Morphing Potential Field Navigation and Nonlinear Model Predictive Control  
**T. Stastny**, G. Garcia, S. Keshmiri  
*Journal of Dynamic Systems, Measurement, and Control*. Vol. 137(1).
- 2015 Nonlinear Model Predictive Controller Robustness Extension for Unmanned Aircraft  
G. Garcia, S. Keshmiri, **T. Stastny**  
*International Journal of Intelligent Unmanned Systems*. Vol. 3(2/3). pp. 93–121.

- 2014 Robust and Adaptive Nonlinear Model Predictive Controller for Unsteady and Highly Nonlinear Unmanned Aircraft  
G. Garcia, S. Keshmiri, **T. Stastny**  
*IEEE Transactions on Control Systems Technology*. Vol. 23(4). pp 1620–1627.

## Book Chapters

- 2017 Model Predictive Control for Trajectory Tracking of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles Using Robot Operating System  
M. Kamel, **T. Stastny**, K. Alexis, R. Siegwart  
*Robot Operating System (ROS), The Complete Reference (Volume 2)*. pp. 3–39.

## Conference Papers

- 2021 Full Envelope System Identification of a VTOL Tailsitter UAV  
C. Olsson, S. Verling, **T. Stastny**, and R. Siegwart  
*AIAA Guidance, Navigation, and Control (GNC) Conference*. Accepted for publication
- 2020 Differential Sweep Attitude Control for Swept Wing UAVs  
M. Harms, N. Kaufmann, F. Rockenbauer, N. Lawrance, **T. Stastny**, and R. Siegwart  
*International Conference on Unmanned Aircraft Systems (ICUAS)*.
- 2019 On Flying Backwards: Preventing Run-away of Small, Low-speed, Fixed-wing UAVs in Strong Winds  
**T. Stastny** and R. Siegwart  
*IEEE/RSJ International Conference on Intelligent Robots and Systems (IROS)*.
- 2019 Disturbance Estimation and Rejection for High-Precision Multirotor Position Control  
D. Hentzen, **T. Stastny**, R. Siegwart, and R. Brockers  
*IEEE/RSJ International Conference on Intelligent Robots and Systems (IROS)*.
- 2019 Locally Power-optimal Nonlinear Model Predictive Control for Fixed-wing Airborne Wind Energy  
**T. Stastny**, E. Ahbe, M. Dangel, and R. Siegwart  
*American Control Conference (ACC)*.
- 2019 Fault-tolerant Flight Control of a VTOL Tailsitter UAV  
S. Fuhrer, S. Verling, **T. Stastny**, and R. Siegwart  
*IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA)*.
- 2018 Towards Autonomous Stratospheric Flight: A Generic Global System Identification Framework for Fixed-Wing Platforms  
J. Lee, T. Muskardin, C. Pacz, P. Oettershagen, **T. Stastny**, I. Sa, R. Siegwart, and K. Kondak  
*IEEE/RSJ International Conference on Intelligent Robots and Systems (IROS)*.
- 2018 Nonlinear Model Predictive Guidance for Fixed-wing UAVs Using Identified Control Augmented Dynamics  
**T. Stastny** and R. Siegwart  
*International Conference on Unmanned Aircraft Systems (ICUAS)*.
- 2017 Gone with the Wind: Nonlinear Guidance for Small Fixed-wing Aircraft in Arbitrarily Strong Windfields  
L. Furieri, **T. Stastny**, L. Marconi, R. Siegwart, and I. Gilitschenski  
*American Control Conference (ACC)*. **Best Paper Award**
- 2017 Model-based Transition Optimization for a VTOL Tailsitter  
S. Verling, **T. Stastny**, G. Bättig, K. Alexis, and R. Siegwart  
*IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA)*.
- 2017 Model-based Wind Estimation for a Hovering VTOL Tailsitter UAV  
Y. Demitri, S. Verling, **T. Stastny**, A. Melzer, and R. Siegwart  
*IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA)*.
- 2017 Nonlinear MPC for Fixed-wing UAV Trajectory Tracking: Implementation and Flight Experiments  
**T. Stastny**, A. Dash, and R. Siegwart  
*AIAA Guidance, Navigation, and Control (GNC) Conference*.
- 2016 Perpetual Flight with a Small Solar-powered UAV: Flight Results, Performance Analysis and Model Validation  
P. Oettershagen, A. Melzer, T. Mantel, K. Rudin, **T. Stastny**, B. Wawrzacz, T. Hinzmann, K. Alexis, and R. Siegwart  
*IEEE Aerospace Conference*.

- 2016 Collaborative 3D Reconstruction Using Heterogeneous UAVs: System and Experiments  
T. Hinzmann, **T. Stastny**, G. Conte, P. Doherty, P. Rudol, M. Wzorek, I. Gilitschenski, E. Galceran, and R. Siegwart  
*International Symposium on Experimental Robotics (ISER)*.
- 2016 A Collaborative Framework for 3D Mapping Using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles  
P. Doherty, J. Kvarnström, P. Rudol, M. Wzorek, G. Conte, C. Berger, T. Hinzmann, **T. Stastny**  
*International Conference on Principles and Practice of Multi-Agent Systems*.
- 2015 Long-Endurance Sensing and Mapping using a Hand-Launchable Solar-Powered UAV  
Oettershagen, **T. Stastny**, T. Mantel, A. Melzer, K. Rudin, P. Gohl, G. Agamennoni, K. Alexis, and R. Siegwart  
*Field and Service Robotics (FSR)*.
- 2015 Victim Detection from a Fixed-Wing UAV: Experimental Results  
A. Vempati, G. Agamennoni, **T. Stastny**, and R. Siegwart  
*International Symposium on Visual Computing (ISVC)*.
- 2015 Robust Three-Dimensional Collision Avoidance for Fixed-Wing Unmanned Aerial Systems  
**T. Stastny**, G. Garcia, S. Keshmiri  
*AIAA Guidance, Navigation, and Control (GNC) Conference*.
- 2013 Nonlinear Parameter Estimation of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles in Wind Shear Using Artificial Neural Networks  
**T. Stastny**, R. Lykins, S. Keshmiri  
*AIAA Guidance, Navigation, and Control (GNC) Conference*.
- 2012 Flight Testing and Evaluation of the Structural Response to Flight Loads of a Small Scale Unmanned Aerial System  
J. Sebes, W. Vanskike, M. Williams, S. McCandless, **T. Stastny**, G. Worden, N. Brunkhorst  
*AIAA Infotech@Aerospace*.
- 2011 Hawkeye UAV Dynamic Analysis  
W. Vanskike, M. Williams, **T. Stastny**, A. Ghatte, S. McCandless, T. Peckman  
*AIAA Modeling and Simulation Technologies Conference*.

## Magazine Articles

- 2013 Mars Exploration? Unleash the Swarms!  
**T. Stastny**  
*Ruimtevaart. Vol. 2013(1), pp. 8–11. Netherlands Space Society (NVR)*.

## Patents

- 2019 Vehicles Configured For Navigating Surface Transitions  
M. Arigoni, R. Simpson, S. Fuhrer, P. Beardsley, D. Mammolo, M. Burri, M. Bischoff, **T. Stastny**, L. Rodgers, D. Krummenacher, and R. Siegwart  
*US Patent 10,464,620*.

## PROJECTS

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- 2021-2024 **AvalMapper**: Remote Avalanche Mapping with Long Flight Duration UAVs  
SUPPORTED BY ETH GRANT ETH-10 20-1  
  - Co-authored project proposal.
- 2020-2021 **Drill Drone**: Autonomous Retrieval of Ice Samples by Unmanned Aerial Vehicle  
SUPPORTED BY THE SWISS POLAR INSTITUTE, TECHNOGRANT  
  - Co-authored project proposal.<https://swisspolar.ch/spi-technogrants-2019/>
- 2019 **Drop & Recovery Drones**: Automated Remote Sensor Management via Unmanned Aerial Systems  
SUPPORTED BY ARMASUISSE SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (PROJ. NO. 050-45, CONTRACT NO. 20190201)  
  - Co-authored project proposal.
  - Supervised/managed student/engineering work on platform and payload development and aided field campaign on Gorner Glacier, Switzerland.
  - Fully automatic BVLOS dropping of long-term GNSS monitoring stations on Gorner Glacier, Switzerland.<https://youtu.be/1tvYj1aGEUc>

- 2018 **Predicting the Weather:** On-board Forecasting of Local 3D Wind Fields for Autonomous and Environment-aware Operation of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles  
SUPPORTED BY INTEL NETWORK ON INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS (PROJ. 3-26-15)
- Co-authored project proposal.
- 2017 - 2019 **Sun2Ice:** Monitoring calving glaciers from solar-powered UAVs  
SUPPORTED BY ETH GRANT ETH-12 16-2
- Co-authored project proposal.
  - Organized / lead UAV operations in Qaanaaq, Greenland during glacier monitoring field campaign.
  - *First-ever* autonomous, solar-powered flights of a UAV in a polar region, including a flight of more than 12 hours duration, and the survey of the calving front of Bowdoin Glacier, **Northwest Greenland**, which revealed the opening of a crack leading to a major calving event the following week.
- 🔗 <http://sun2ice.ethz.ch>
- 2016 **SolAIR:** Solar-powered Automated Aerial Imaging and Reconnaissance using Infrared Cameras  
SUPPORTED BY ARMASUISSE SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY (CONTRACT #043-12)
- Developed and deployed autonomous take-off and landing algorithms/logic for the AtlantikSolar UAV.
  - Demonstrated a fully autonomous, 26 hour, solar-powered flight with the AtlantikSolar UAV while live-streaming onboard infrared camera feed and tracking thermal updrafts.
- 🔗 <https://youtu.be/8m76Mx9m2nM>
- 2015 **Adventura AtlantikSolar@Brazil**  
SUPPORTED BY SWISSNEX BRAZIL, SWISSANDO, AND ETH GLOBAL
- Co-organized field campaign, supported field demonstrations, gave public workshops and talks.
  - Performed the *first-ever* autonomous solar-powered flight over the **Amazon rain forest**, supporting Brazilian partners at SIPAM (Brazilian Amazon Protection System, part of the Brazilian Ministry of Defense) in the aerial monitoring and mapping of a disaster site on the Rio Pará - a sunken ship involving 4400 dead cattle and 750 tons of spilled oil.
- 🔗 <http://www.swissnexbrazil.org/atlantiksolar/>
- 2014 - 2017 **AtlantikSolar:** A UAV for the first-ever autonomous solar-powered crossing of the Atlantic Ocean  
SUPPORTED BY PRIVATE INVESTORS AND INTERNAL LABORATORY BUDGET
- System identification & modeling, flight control, guidance, & planning for robust autonomous flight behavior in high winds and uncertain environments.
  - Autopilot and onboard software framework development.
  - Current world solar-powered endurance record for aircraft below 50kg after 81.5hr flight demonstration in Summer 2015.
- 🔗 <http://www.atlantiksolar.ethz.ch/>
- 2014 - 2017 **SHERPA:** Smart collaboration between Humans and ground-aerial Robots for improving rescuing activities in Alpine environments  
SUPPORTED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION UNDER THE 7TH EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME (#600958)
- Platform specific integration within SHERPA Delegation Framework: C++/ROS based programming for task allocation among the multi-actor SHERPA team.
  - Aircraft integration, flight-testing, and autonomy development for senseSoar solar-powered UAV.
  - Field demonstration of an autonomous multi-UAV, collaborative aerial mapping and 3-D reconstruction mission with the senseSoar solar-powered UAV and an R-MAX helicopter.
- 🔗 <http://www.sherpa-project.eu/>
- 2014 - 2016 **ICARUS:** Robotic Search and Rescue  
SUPPORTED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION UNDER THE 7TH EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME (#285417)
- Designed and demonstrated a LiDAR-based auto-landing controller for fixed-wing platforms.
  - Field demonstration of robotic search and rescue missions including real-time victim detection from fixed-wing aircraft with live-streaming GPS localization.
- 🔗 <http://www.fp7-icarus.eu/>
- 2014 **Multi-Agent Airborne Laboratory for Cryospheric Remote Sensing**  
SUPPORTED BY THE PAUL G. ALLEN FAMILY FOUNDATION
- Aided writing of full proposal.
  - Applied integrated guidance, control, and trajectory generation to the case of UAS formation concepts supporting aerial ice penetrating synthetic aperture radar systems in a relative formation holding approach.

2012 - 2014

## **CRISIS: Center for Remote Sensing of Ice Sheets**

SUPPORTED BY THE NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION (NSF) UNDER GRANT ANT-0424589

- Designed and manufactured various components for radar integration and Arctic outfitting of the University of Kansas Aerospace Department's G1X UAS.
- Participated in **8-week deployment** as mission planner and ground station operator for autonomous operations of a radar-integrated UAS platform in **Western Antarctica**.
- Conducted the first successful bedrock mapping of Antarctic ice sheets via radar sounding from an autonomous UAV, BVLOS.

🔗 <https://www.cresis.ku.edu/>

## **TEACHING**

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2015 - Present

### **Lecturer: Masters Course – Robot Dynamics (151-0851-00L)**

INSTITUTE FOR ROBOTICS AND INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS, ETH ZÜRICH

- Developed lecture notes, exercises, and presentation material and taught for the fixed-wing portion of the course related to fundamentals of aerodynamics, performance, aircraft design, flight mechanics, and flight control.
- Held weekly office hours and bi-weekly exercises.
- Designed and graded final examinations.

2014 - Present

### **Student Supervision**

AUTONOMOUS SYSTEMS LAB, ETH ZÜRICH

- **24** Masters Theses
- **18** Masters Semester Projects
- **14** Bachelor Theses
- Focus Projects (teams of 8-12 Bachelors Students develop and product from A-Z – 🔗 <https://asl.ethz.ch/research/focus-projects.html>):
  - Dipper 🔗 <https://dipper.ethz.ch/index.html>
  - ftero (year 1 and 2) 🔗 <https://www.ftero.ch/>
  - VertiGo 🔗 <https://www.vertigoproject.ch/>

2013

### **Guest Lecturer: Masters Course – Optimal Controls (KU-AE750)**

DEPARTMENT OF AEROSPACE ENGINEERING, UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

- Gave two guest lectures on optimal output feedback control. Topics included derivation of necessary conditions, simulation examples and comparisons with suboptimal methods, and the controller design process using gradient descent numerical methods.
- Held a session for KU-AE550 Flight Dynamics class on useful tools in MATLAB for dynamic analysis and simulation.

2010 – 2012

### **Undergraduate Teaching Assistant: Bachelors Courses –**

Introduction Topics in Mathematics (KU-MA105)

Elementary Statistics (KU-MA365)

DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS, UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

- Conducted tutor sessions three times a week for class section (apprx. 20-30 students).
- Held office hours.
- Graded tests, quizzes, and homework.

## **AWARDS**

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2018

O. Hugo Schuck Best Paper Award 🔗 <http://a2c2.org/awards/o-hugo-schuck-best-paper-award>

Paper title: “Gone with the wind: Nonlinear Guidance for Small Fixed-wing Aircraft in Arbitrarily Strong Windfields”

2014

Awarded United States Department of Defense Antarctica Service Medal

2012 - 2013

C&C Chaffee Engineering School Scholarship

2012

University of Kansas Aerospace Undergraduate Researcher Award

## ACADEMIC SERVICE

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**Reviewer** IEEE Transactions on Robotics  
IEEE Transactions on Aerospace and Electronic Systems  
Springer Journal of Intelligent and Robotic Systems  
IEEE Robotics and Automation Letters (RA-L)  
IEEE Control Systems Letters (L-CSS)  
IEEE International Conference on Robotics and Automation (ICRA)  
IEEE/RSJ International Conference on Robots and Intelligent Systems (IROS)  
IEEE International Conference on Unmanned Aircraft Systems (ICUAS)

**Associate Editor** Frontiers in Robotics and AI, Field Robotics (2020)

## TECHNICAL SKILLS

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**Robotics** State estimation, system identification/modeling, control theory/design, and path planning for unmanned aerial systems.  
Flight instrumentation experience including avionics and sensors.  
Practical knowledge of electronic components and circuits, soldering, and crimping techniques.  
Practical knowledge of structural design/fabrication.  
Radio controlled piloting experience on small fixed-wing platforms.

**Software** MATLAB/Simulink, MSC Nastran/Patran (Finite Element Analysis), Unigraphics NX (CAD), National Instruments LabVIEW, LaTeX, MS Office, Gimp (open-source graphics editor), Inkscape (open-source graphics editor), Ubuntu(Linux)/Mac/Windows Operating Systems

**Programming** C/C++, Python, Robotic Operating System (ROS), Open-source software management with version control (Git), microcontroller programming (ARM), HTML

## INVITED TALKS

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- 2019      **Monitoring Glaciers Beyond the Horizon**  
**T. Stastny**  
Workshop on Informed Scientific Sampling in Large-scale Outdoor Environments  
*IEEE/RSJ International Conference on Robots and Intelligent Systems (IROS).*  
[🔗 https://scientific-sampling-robots.github.io/iros-2019-workshop/](https://scientific-sampling-robots.github.io/iros-2019-workshop/)
- 2018      **Towards Fully Autonomous Long-range Remote Sensing via Solar-powered Fixed-wing Unmanned Aerial Vehicles**  
**T. Stastny**  
Application of Unmanned Aerial Systems  
*WSL Applied Remote Sensing Lectures. Davos, Switzerland.*
- 2018      **Multi-hour Autonomous Flight and Environmental Monitoring Over the Arctic Region**  
**T. Stastny**  
Tutorial on Autonomous Navigation for Aerial Robotics in Extreme Environments: From Subterranean Environments to the Arctic  
*International Conference on Unmanned Aircraft Systems.*
- 2015      **Adventura AtlantikSolar@Brazil**  
**T. Stastny, T. Hinzmann, P. Oettershagen**  
*Drone Show Latin America. São Paulo, Brazil.*