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Real time visualization and analysis of sensory hair arrays using fast image processing and proper orthogonal decomposition

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Abstract This paper presents an approach both to receiving multiple sensor data from a flow in real time and to analyzing these data in order to characterize the flow condition and, if necessary, control the flow. In order to obtain the data, an optical micro-pillar array acting as distributed wall-shear sensor was developed and interrogated optically with an *LDM* (long distance microscope). Together, the micro-pillar array and the *LDM* form a channeling optics, which allows magnified imaging of larger numbers of individual pillars simultaneously. The sensor was tested in a turbulent wall shear stress field under varying conditions (Reynolds number). A frame rate of 3000 *fps* was used since the higher the temporal resolution is, the more specific flow control strategies might be applied later in realistic application. However, the temporal high resolution would lead to a vast amount of data, which is difficult to analyze in real time. Therefore, a fast image processing algorithm is developed, which detects the tip deflections of the pillars and vectorizes the wall-shear stress field online. The extracted data fields are then broken down into equidistant and overlapping windows in order to guarantee fast *POD* (proper orthogonal decomposition) modes calculation. The *POD* is applied to each of these windows and the extracted modes are compared, summarized and collected in a library. Finally, this library is again applied to the flow but under different conditions in order to identify the state of the current flow in real time.

1. Introduction

Real time flow observation close to the wall is still a challenging process, when it comes to detect flow separation or transition under highly unsteady conditions. A promising technique is the use of flexible micro-pillars to detect the wall-shear stress field [1,2,5]. Due to the drastic performance increase of computational power, direct analyses – even with small delay – have moved into the scope of practical implementation. The possibilities of direct investigation as well as the possible forecast of critical flow conditions establish the basis for new methods of live flow control (investigation).

In the first part, this paper describes a real time image analysis approach of an unsteady wall shear stress field by using *Matlab*'s built-in processing routines. An optically interrogated micro-pillar array sensor field is used to capture 21 scattered wall-shear vectors in a flow field. The sensory hairs are fully submerged in the viscous sublayer of a turbulent wall jet and serve as wall-shear stress sensors. The main goal is to identify from these hair motions dominant structures that specify the flow characteristics by means of the observed deflection data of the pillar tips. Furthermore, the presented algorithm reduces the data amount dramatically. Instead of saving image data for each time step, only 21 vectors (wall-parallel x- and y-direction of the wall-shear stress vector of each pillar) are processed and stored.

The second part of this paper describes a real time *POD* (*Proper Orthogonal Decomposition*) approach which is applied to the pillar data. The focus concentrates on the extraction of dominant flow features in real time in order to characterize the underlying dynamics.

All presented benchmark tests were performed on the same computer with the following technical specifications. Processor: Intel Core i7 3930K (6 physical cores at 3,2 *GHz*), Graphics: Nvidia GeForce GTX 560, Memory: 32 *GB*.

MatLab provides a wide range of image processing algorithms and additional ones to find specified shaped geometries (in this case circles) [3]. However, during previous tests, the used detection algorithms tended to fail at higher pillar deflections due to blurring caused by the bending of the pillar shaft. Furthermore, a clear loss of speed performance was noticeable, too. Consequently, a simple but robust cross-correlation was chosen to detect the centroids of the pillars.

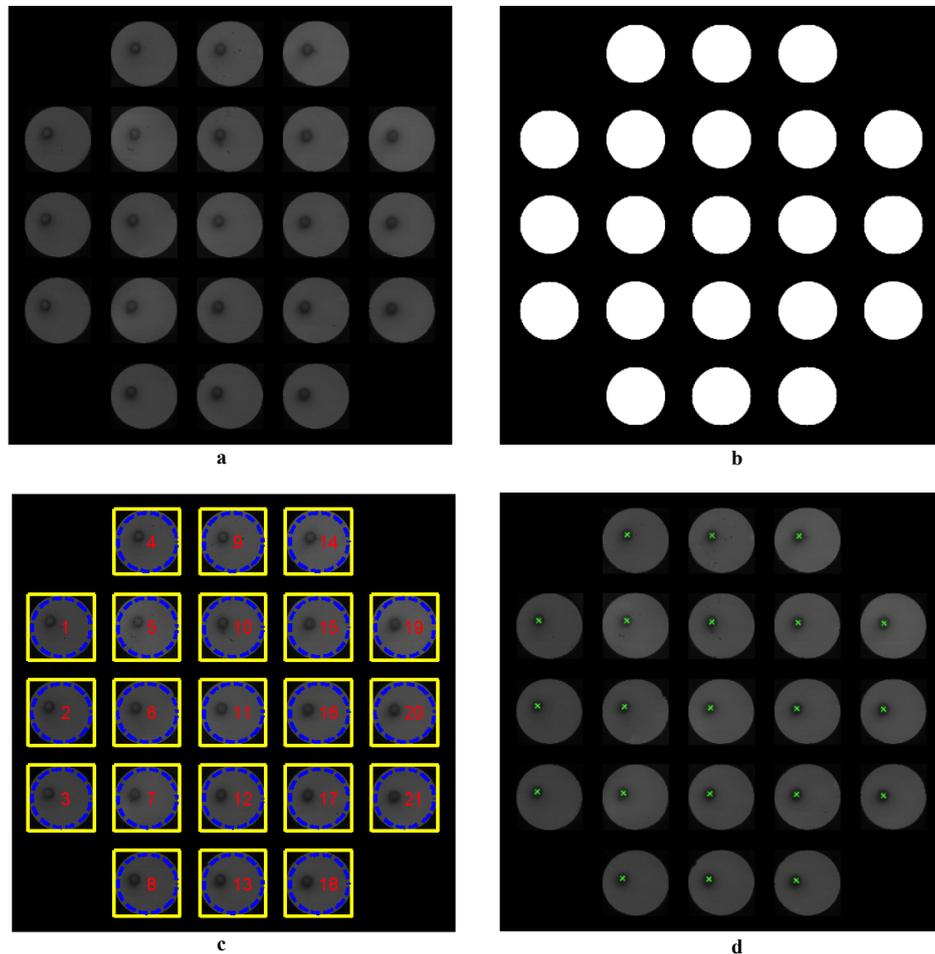


Figure 2: Image processing steps for calibration, (a) captured image (grey scaled), (b) mask of detected lens array (black-white), (c) lenses registration 1-21, visualization of their edges (yellow) and perimeters (dotted blue) highlighting the area of investigation for cross-correlation, (d) detected pillar centroids of zero deflection (green cross)

Therefore, each lens cutout is edited separately to highlight the pillar shape in order to achieve good correlation results. The sequence of applied image filters is presented in Figure 3 (a)-(d).

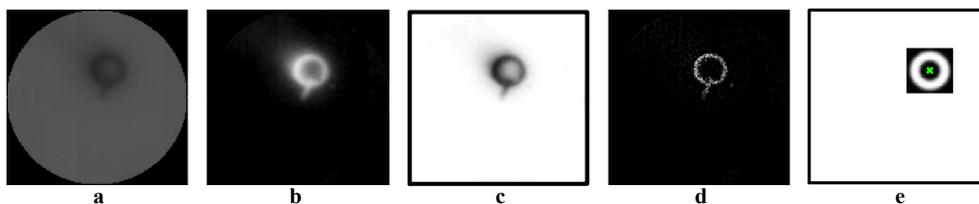


Figure 3: Image editing process of one pillar, (a) original image (gray scaled) showing the shape of the pillar from top, (b) applied image filter and masking, (c) inverted image, (d) image with applied edge detection filter, (e) sample of an ideal micro-pillar shape with highlighted centroid spot (green cross)

To implement the cross-correlation, an ideal micro-pillar shape is defined (28 x 28 *pix*) including its exact center position. Figure 3 (e) shows the described sample. In a next step, the sample is cross-correlated with

the filtered micro-pillar image.

The resulting 2d-correlation distribution is visualized in Figure 4 (a) and shows a clear peak, which indicates the position of the best fit. By means of that, the center point of the sample is shifted to obtain the micro-pillar position of zero deflection in the calibration. This routine is repeated for all 21 lenses.

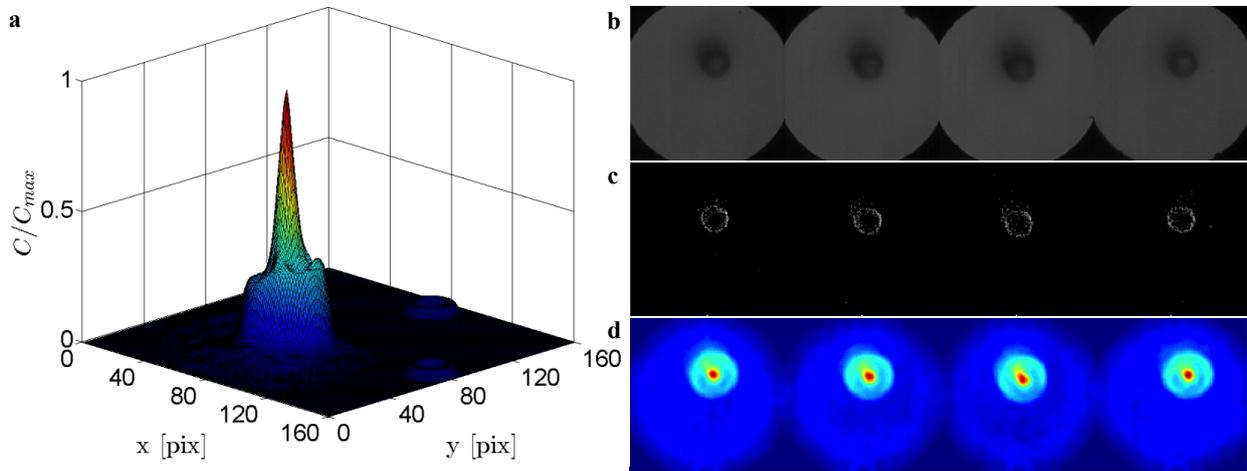


Figure 4: (a) Result of the normalized 2d cross-correlation between micro-pillar sample and one filtered pillar image, peak indicates best matching position (shift), (b)-(d) overview of 4 out of 21 stringed lens cutouts, (b) original, (c) image filtered, edges highlighted, (d) results of cross-correlation, peaks clearly visible (red spots)

For a proposed analysis at real time frame rate, this process has to be improved in order to reduce computational effort. The lens cutouts – each with the same dimensions – are stringed together to form a new image as shown in Figure 4 (b). All image filters as well as the cross-correlation are applied to this particular new image as shown in Figure 4 (c) and (d). This procedure prevents the use of loops. Instead of computing 21 small data files, only one data file, yet 21-times bigger in memory, is processed.

The main advantage of this method becomes obvious when cross-correlation is done by the *GPU*. For that purpose, the image data has to be transferred from the computer memory to the memory of the *GPU*. By reducing the number of transfers, the operation becomes faster. However, depending on the data size of the image and the limited memory size of the *GPU*, the cross-correlation is not always executable in this way. After cross-correlation, a peak search is performed for each sector of a lens cutout to obtain the shift and to calculate the corresponding center position of a particular micro-pillar.

4. Results of fast image processing

The following Figure 5 (a) presents an example of the original image footage at $Re = 1290$ with visualized detection results as well as the corresponding vector plot in Figure 5 (b).

As a benchmark test, the micro-pillar detection was performed on *CPU* and *GPU*. The results are illustrated in Figure 5 (b). The average *CPU*-frame rate is approximately 34.6 *fps*, whereas the *GPU* frame rate reaches 47.3 *fps*, which equals an increase by 36.7 %. The benchmark does not include the monitoring of the detected micro-pillars on a screen. With such an additional output the average *GPU*-frame rate decreases to approximately 20.1 *fps* and the *CPU*-frame rate to 13.4 *fps*.

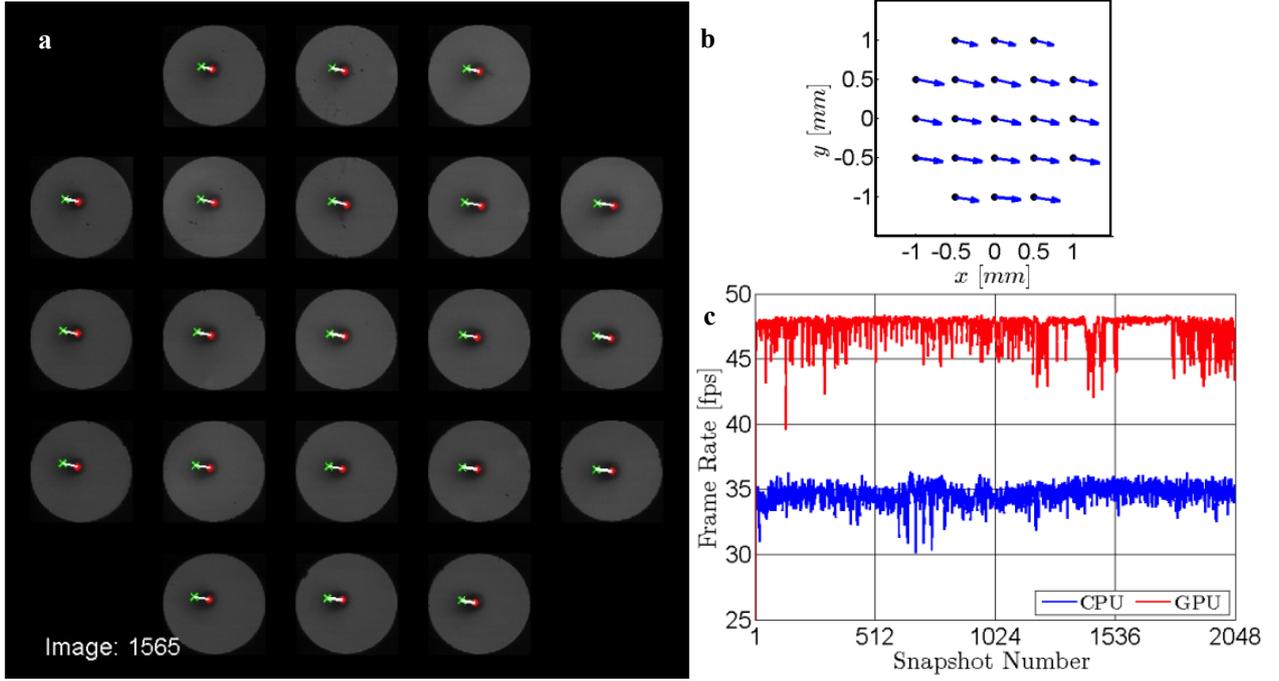


Figure 5: (a) Example of pillar detection including pillar centroids (red dots) and calibration positions of zero deflection (green crosses), (b) plot of corresponding vector field, (c) comparison of micro-pillar detection between *CPU* and *GPU*, average *CPU*-frame rate 34.6 *fps*, average *GPU*-frame rate 47.3 *fps*

5. Analysis of signal quality

This section focuses on the influence of noisy data on proper orthogonal decomposition. The *POD*-analysis is performed as a separate or post-processing operation, due to the limited *CPU*-performance. As already mentioned, the above-described algorithm is suitable for fast image processing to detect relevant data, which requires an adequate signal quality. Furthermore, it is necessary to investigate the influences of disturbed signals on the decomposition process. The main and most important source of erroneous data is the pillar detection which tends to be inaccurate in some cases, especially at high pillar deflections caused by intensified blurring at the pillar shaft. Also, relative motion caused by vibrations of the pillar field, the lens array or the camera itself influence the detection quality. All of those might be improved by detection of reference points on the wall and coating of the pillar tips with reflective material.

In order to evaluate the *POD*-decomposition based on varying signal quality, the original data sequence K_O is smoothed by a moving average filter (*MAF*) to get a new signal K_S , which is supposed to contain fewer disturbances. It is assumed that the larger the span of *MAF*, the better the signal quality, however, the reproduction of fluctuations decreases. This leads to an optimization problem of finding a threshold to distinguish disturbances (noise) from fluctuations.

The data sequence K is constructed by

$$u_j = \{dx_1 L \ dx_{M/2}, dy_1 L \ dy_{M/2}\}^T \in \mathcal{E}^{M \times 1}, \quad (1)$$

which is a column vector containing the detected pillar deflections dx and dy at a specific time step j . In this case the dimension of observables M is 42. All snapshots of the time series are stacked such that follows

$$K = [u_1, K, u_N] \in \mathcal{E}^{M \times N}, \quad (2)$$

where N denotes the dimension of snapshots, which is 2048 for that particular sequence.

The following equation is used to characterize the signal level between K_O and K_S

$$S = 10 \log_{10} \left(\frac{\frac{1}{MN} \sum_{i=1}^M \sum_{j=1}^N (K_s(i,j))^2}{\frac{1}{MN} \sum_{i=1}^M \sum_{j=1}^N (K_o(i,j) - K_s(i,j))^2} \right). \quad (3)$$

Next, different interpolation spans $MAF = 1 \dots 201$ are used to obtain a smoothed signal in order to determine S . Please note that this equation is analog to the calculation of the signal to noise ratio (SNR) but it does not mean the same. Here, it is used as a tool to locate the initial limits of the MAF . To identify the influence of MAF on S the partial differential $\partial S / \partial MAF$ is calculated as shown in Figure 6 (a). The red line highlights the point, where the slope of the curve becomes quite linear. This point indicates the upper limit for a smoothing interpolation with $MAF = 51$, which stands for best signal quality. Figure 6 (b) shows an example of covered deflections of one pillar and the resulting smoothed signal with $MAF = 51$.

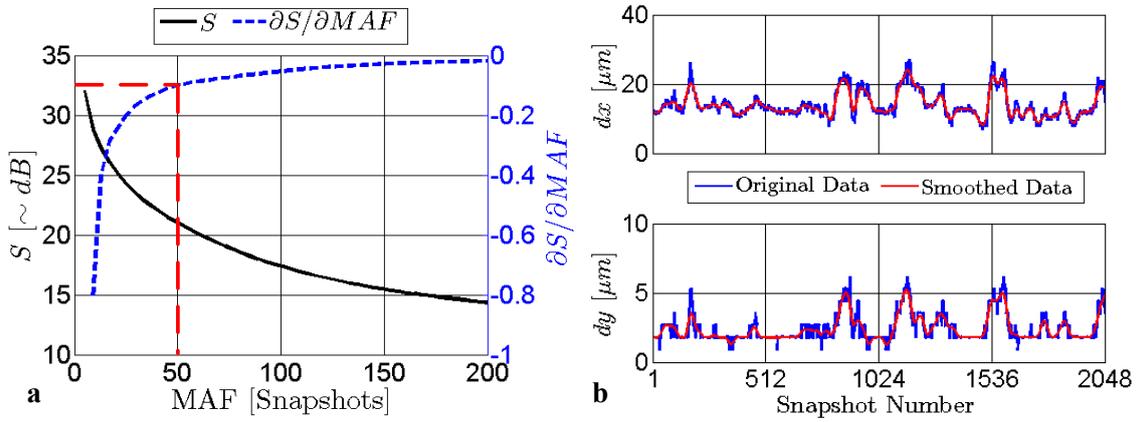


Figure 6: (a) Signal level over interpolation span of MAF , red dotted line indicates upper limit of interpolation span, (b) example of covered pillar deflection (blue) and its smoothed signal (red) with $MAF = 51$

6. Proper orthogonal decomposition and mode correlation

In the next step, the POD is applied to the original data sequence K_o and the smoothed one K_s ($MAF = 51$) in order to see the maximum influence of the filtering on the decomposition. In fluid dynamics, the POD is used to extract dominant flow characteristics by identifying coherent structures. Therefore, the mean data field

$$\bar{u}_i = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N u_i \quad (4)$$

is subtracted from each snapshot to achieve a time series of fluctuations

$$K' = [u_1 - \bar{u}, u_N - \bar{u}] \in \mathcal{E}^{M \times N} \quad (5)$$

to which the decomposition is applied. Therefore, the covariance matrix C is calculated by the following equation

$$C = K'^T K' \in \mathcal{E}^{N \times N}. \quad (6)$$

The eigendecomposition of C leads to the eigenvectors μ and eigenvalues λ as described by

$$C\mu = \lambda\mu. \quad (7)$$

Finally, the normalized *POD*-modes are calculated as follows

$$\phi = K \begin{bmatrix} \frac{\mu_1}{\sqrt{\lambda_1}} & L & \frac{\mu_N}{\sqrt{\lambda_N}} \end{bmatrix} \in M \times N. \quad (8)$$

The results of the most energetic modes of the applied *POD*-algorithm as well as the mean data field are shown in Figure 7. It is obvious that the shapes of the modes are nearly identical.

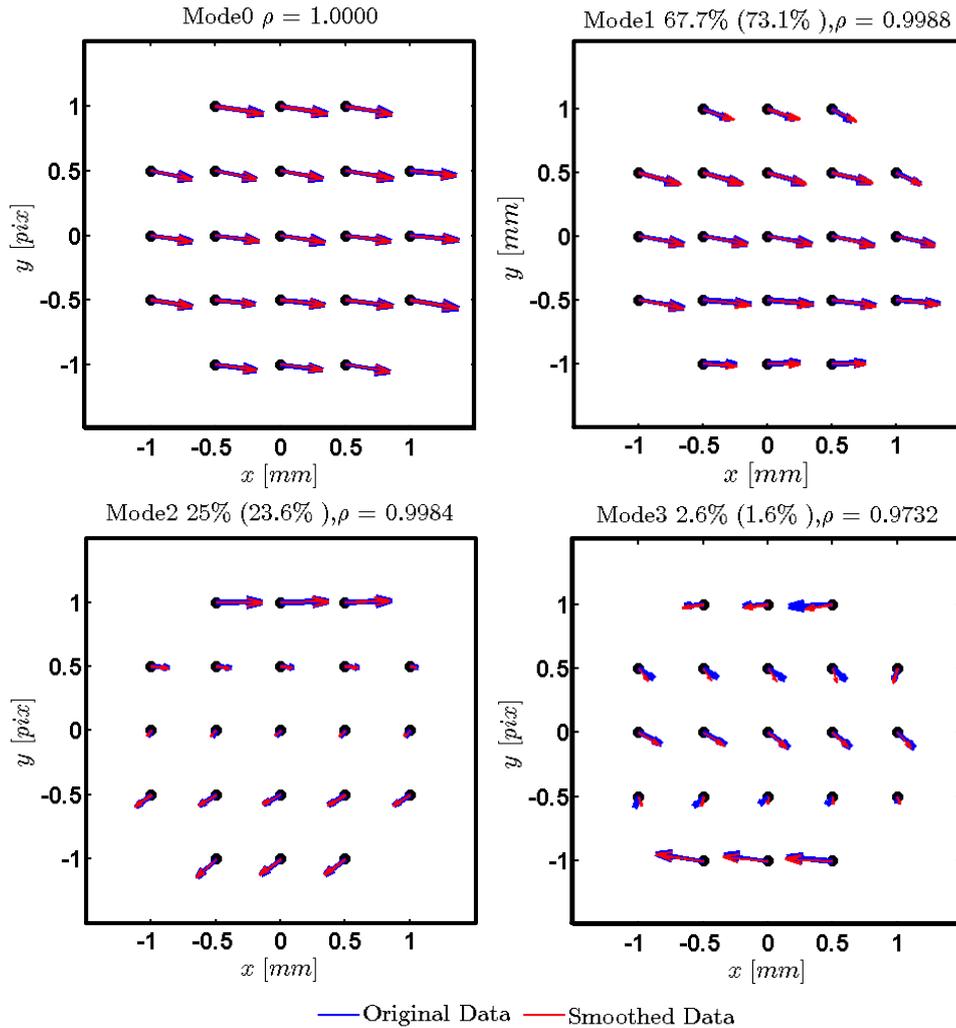


Figure 7: *POD*-results of the first three modes and the mean data field (Mode0) of the original data sequence and the smoothed one, the numbers in brackets indicates the energy of the smoothed data, ρ denotes the correlation coefficient between original and smoothed data

In order to quantify the matching, a correlation coefficient ρ is introduced

$$\rho_{i,j} = \frac{\phi_i \circ \phi_j}{\|\phi_i\| \|\phi_j\|}, \quad (9)$$

where ρ is in range from -1 to +1. In this case, +1 means 100 % correlation; direction and length of the vectors match perfectly, -1 stands for identical vector length but in opposite direction; however, 0 indicates two completely different data fields.

The correlation can only be performed with normalized modes, yet the standard *POD*-algorithm generates orthogonal structures. Thereby the equation is simplified to

$$\rho_{i,j} = \phi_i \circ \phi_j. \quad (10)$$

Furthermore, in case of correlating two *POD*-modes where $\rho_{i,j} = -1$, both modes describe the same orthogonal structure, however, they are in opposite direction. This statement is based on the fact that each *POD*-mode Φ is multiplied by a corresponding time dependent weighting factor $\alpha(t)$ (chrono) in order to recalculate the original data field. Thus, if $\rho_{i,j} = -1$, then $\alpha_i(t) = -\alpha_j(t)$, which can be brought into the following context

$$\alpha_i(t)\phi_i = \alpha_j(t)\phi_j. \quad (11)$$

By means of Figure 7, it is recognizable that the higher the energy of a mode, the better the correlation. The total sum of fluctuation energy for the three modes is 95,3% for the original and 98,3% for the smoothed case, which is a negligible difference of approximately 3%. Also, the energy distribution is remarkable. The main fluctuation energy is contained in the first and second *POD*-mode, whereas the third one contains only a small portion. Mode0 defines the mean data field and contains no fluctuation energy. However, it is also necessary to investigate the correlation of these data structures since they determine the sequence of fluctuations and by means of that, the *POD*-modes.

Based on these results, with an $MAF = 51$ it is possible to smooth the data without changing the structures (modes), which are responsible for the majority of energy content of the whole data sequence. The *POD*-algorithm ranks the structures according to their energy content, that is, this value demonstrates the occurrence of each mode in the data ensemble. In order to reduce the influence of noise, it is recommended to compare “higher” energetic modes [4]. Unfortunately, there is no fixed value for that. It depends on the dynamic data and the resulting energy distribution of the decomposition process. In the case presented here, mode one and two describe the main fluctuations. These modes show the best matching results since they are obviously not affected by noise. The smaller the energy content of a mode, the more it is influenced by disturbance and therefore not comparable. For a decomposition with a window size of $N = 2048$ (whole snapshot sequence), there are no notable differences in the identified structures of K_O and K_S .

7. Sliding window base analysis

As already mentioned, a real time *POD* is aimed at. Unfortunately, it turned out that the window size (number of snapshots), which the *POD* is applied to takes too long to handle the data amount in an adequate time interval. The idea is to reduce the window size and to make the window moveable. This means that instead of applying the *POD* to the whole sequence at once, the sequence is split into equidistant and overlapping time intervals (windows) on which the actual analyzing process is performed. After the analysis of the current window is finished, the window slides one time step forward, the analysis starts again and the identified structures are compared.

Downsizing the window of observation is always connected with advantages and disadvantages. At this point it is obvious that the smaller the window size N_{window} (fewer snapshots), the more the influence of disturbance (noise) on the resulting decomposed modes, even if they are “higher” energetic ones. In the worst case it seems to be impossible to find coherent modes of consecutive observation windows. On the other hand, if the window size is too large, minor changes in the flow field may not be detected, however, they play an important role. Then they are represented in “lower” energetic modes, which are not considered for observation and correlation purposes, since they also include the actual noise. Furthermore, the sliding window decomposition is spanned over the current snapshot plus the $N_{\text{window}}-1$ previous snapshots. It becomes clear that if the flow changes at the current snapshot (e.g. pillar deflections start increasing), the algorithm detects this circumstance a few snapshots later first, namely when the deflections become a dominant structure. Thus, the window size also dictates the delay of the observation process. A last point

considers the processing power of the computer. The more snapshots are observed by *POD*, the larger the data matrices become which reduces the calculation speed immensely. Figure 8 (a) demonstrates the dependency of the *POD*-calculation time t_{pod} (which is inverted to get the calculation speed in *fps*) over the sliding window size N_{window} for the used computer. The analysis shows an exponential decrease of the calculation speed. The red line indicates the maximum window size to ensure a calculation speed of 50 *fps*, which equals the processing speed of the *GPU*-powered pillar detection. Figure 8 (b) presents the total calculation time t_{total} of the *POD*-analysis over the relative sliding window size N_{window}/N . With increasing N_{window} the number of *POD*-operations N_{op} decreases since N is a fixed number. The comparison presented here is only possible if the length of the whole data sequence is known ($N = 2048$ snapshots). The curve shape is determined by multiplying the *POD*-calculation time t_{POD} for a particular window size N_{window} by its number of *POD*-operations N_{op} , assuming the window slides one time step forward for each operation.

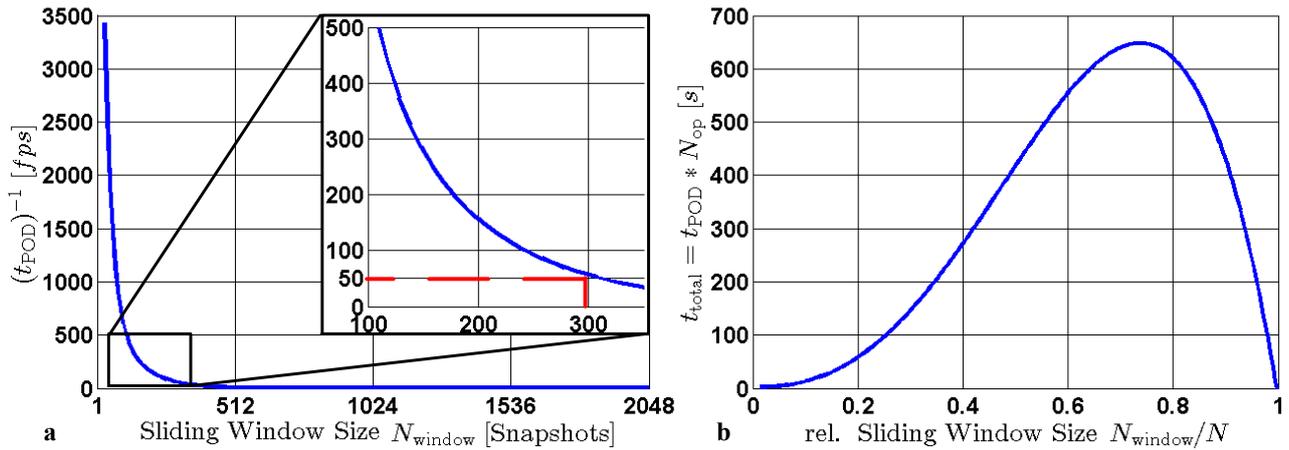


Figure 8: (a) Influence of the window size N_{window} on the *POD*-calculation time t_{POD} , red line in magnification cut out highlights the calculation speed of 50 *fps*, which is approximately the same as in the pillar detection process (b) total calculation time t_{total} (*POD*-calculation time t_{POD} multiplied by the number of *POD*-operations N_{op}) over the relative sliding windows size N_{window}/N , where $N = 2048$

The curve behavior indicates the fastest processing speed in range of $0.1 * N$. The curve reaches the maximum at $0.75 * N$ before it decreases strongly and reaches a minimum at $1 * N$ again. Although the total calculation time at the beginning and ending of the curve seems to be at the same level, the goal is to perform a real time observation that reacts immediately. Furthermore, in practical adaption the sequence length N will be unknown or comparatively infinite.

At this point the preliminary considerations lead to the following parameter limitations. The maximum moving average filter $MAF = 51$ in order to describe a good quality signal (nearly disturbance free signal). The main fluctuation energy (over 90%) is represented by the first three *POD*-modes and the maximum sliding window size $N_{window} = 300$. These limitations are used to find the optimal MAF and N_{window} . A new process calculates the *POD*-modes by varying $MAF = 1 \dots 51$ and $N_{window} = 25 \dots 300$. The energy contents of the first three *POD*-modes are summed up for each window and averaged afterwards. The results are presented in Figure 9.

As a first conclusion for all $MAFs$, the mean energy becomes more stable, the larger the window size. Starting at a sliding window size $N_{window} = 200$, the curves become clearly linear. $MAF = 5$ shows the strongest increase of energy, whereas larger MAF increase the energy level only barely. The value of $MAF=5$ lies within the range of the strongest influence of the signal (see Figure 6). Please note that $MAF = 1$ and $MAF = 3$ do not influence the signal quality and hence they share the same mean energy curve as the original data set K_0 .

Since the mean fluctuation energy is plotted, sometimes the energy value can be higher or lower respectively.

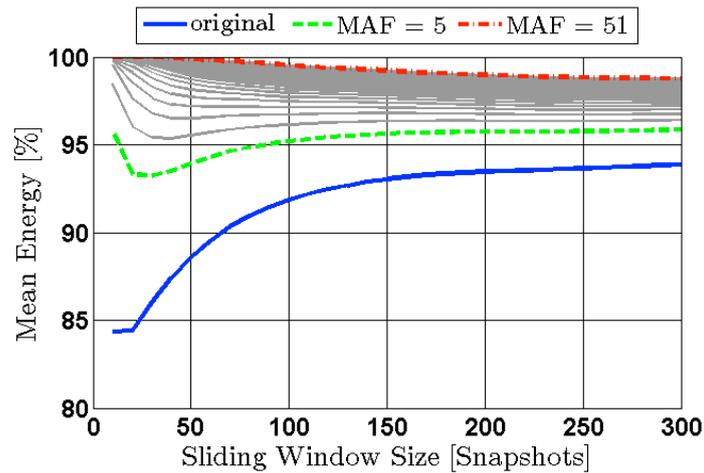


Figure 9: Results of the mean energy distribution against sliding window size and moving average filter (*MAF*)

8. Decomposition of calibration data and evaluation

The upcoming section describes the analysis of the first data series ($Re=1290$). The analysis is performed under varying conditions. In a first instance, the sliding window *POD* is applied to the data sequence under differing signal conditions K_1 (signal quality increases). This is called calibration process. In a second step the extracted modes are used to characterize the flow conditions of the same data sequence under similarly varying signal conditions K_2 . This procedure is called evaluation process. It is done to prevent the following circumstance: a system is calibrated with a special flow phenomenon that is used to observe an unknown flow structure and the same flow phenomenon occurs as in the calibration process. Now the signal quality decreases due to disturbances and the modes will not be identified as a known state.

In the calibration process, all *POD*-modes with energy higher than 2 % are captured and compared – if available – with prior identified ones in the *POD*-library. The minimum energy is defined as a threshold in order to distinguish between necessary and negligible modes and orientates on the results of the *POD*-decomposition of the whole data sequence. A mode correlates when $\rho \geq 0.96$, where ρ is chosen with respect to the former investigations. If $\rho \geq 0.96$, the mode does not need to be stored. All extracted *POD*-modes obtained from one signal state of K_1 form the *POD*-library, which is used in the evaluation process to characterize the same data sequence K_2 (under different signal quality) again.

The results of the calibration evaluation can be seen in Figure 10 under four different sliding window sizes 100, 150, 200 and 250 snapshots. For better presentation, the identified energy of each sliding window for one *POD*-library of K_1 , which correlates with one sequence of K_2 , was averaged.

By means of the evaluation it is shown that a minimum of 90 % energy can be identified independently from the degree of disturbance of the signal. The better the signal (high *MAF*) of both sequences K_1 and K_2 , the better the identified energy. Interestingly, a worse signal of K_1 (low *MAF*), which forms the *POD*-library, identifies more energy on a good signal of K_2 (high *MAF*) than vice versa (except for sliding window size 100). A black line in Figure 10 highlights the *MAF*-value of K_1 (signal quality) that matches best with all signal states of K_2 . It should also be mentioned that the range of the mean identified energy for different signal states K_1 has a minimum *MAF* = 23 of K_2 for window size 200 and *MAF* = 29 of K_2 for window size 250. After these points, the range of the mean identified energy becomes wider, the better the signal quality of K_2 .

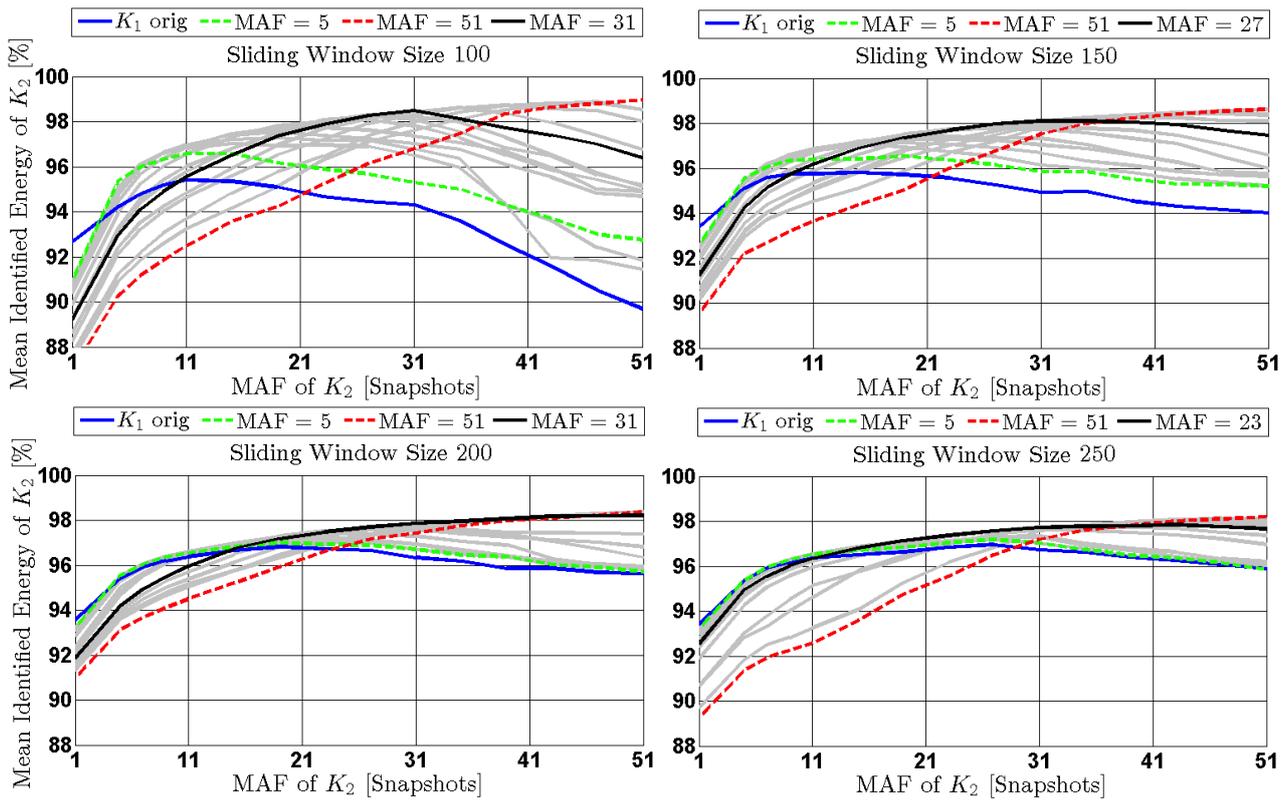


Figure 10: Results of the evaluation process of the calibration showing the mean identified energy of the evaluation sequence K_2 over varying signal quality of K_2 and calibration sequence K_1 , black line indicates best signal quality of K_1 (in terms of MAF) for correlation, analysis was performed under different sliding window sizes 100 - 250 snapshots

9. Application of identified structures to unknown data sequence

In a last step, a *POD*-library is created in order to identify an unknown sequence of the wall shear stress field. Here, K_1 stands for the calibration sequence at $Re = 1290$ in order to obtain the *POD*-library and K_2 denotes the sequence of unknown flow. The analysis includes the variation of the signal quality $MAF = 1 \dots 51$ of K_1 and K_2 as well as the inspection under different sliding window sizes of 100, 150, 200 and 250. Figure 11 presents an overview of the analysis. It is clearly visible that, with increasing window size, the mean identified energy raises its level up to 73 % for a sliding window size of 250. In contrast to Figure 10, the energy range $MAF = 1 \dots 51$ of K_1 is closer and seems to be independent of the signal state (MAF) of K_2 . The smallest range of identified mean energy can be identified for a sliding window size of 200, where the range varies between 1 and 3 %. This seems to be an ideal window size since the identified energy content does not differ noticeably under changing signal quality.

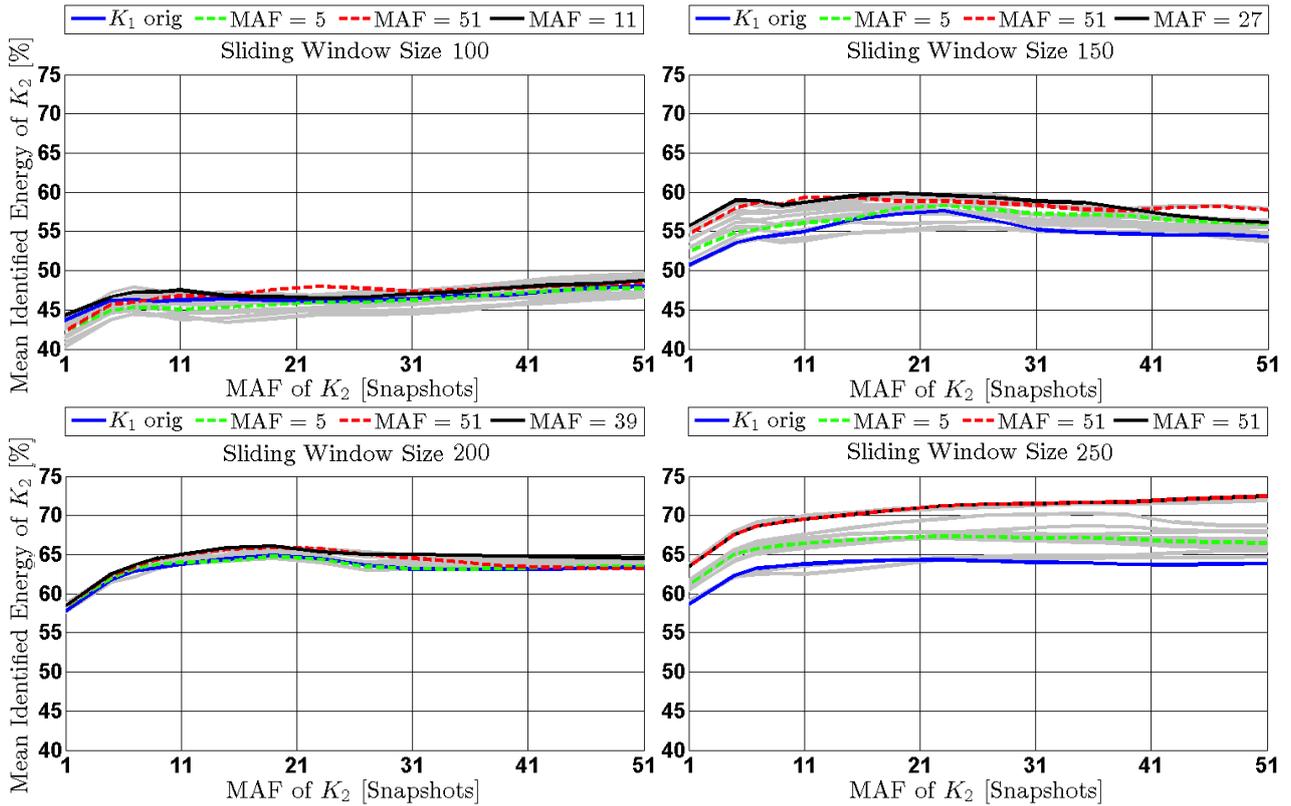


Figure 11: Results of the identification process showing the mean identified energy of the investigated sequence K_2 over varying signal quality of K_2 and calibration sequence K_1 , black line indicates best signal quality of K_1 (in terms of MAF) for correlation, analysis was performed under different sliding window sizes 100 - 250 snapshots

10. Conclusion and outlook

This paper describes two methods; first, in order to obtain multiple sensor data by applying a new optical sensor and second, in order to analyze these data to characterize dominant features of the observed flow. The optical sensor consists of a micro-pillar array and a channeling *LDM* (Long Distance Microscope), which is used to magnify distributed regions of interest which would not fit on the camera chip at the same magnification level. This paper presents a method to obtain deflections from 21 pillars by using a cross-correlation approach in order to achieve fast image processing.

The developed algorithm is applied to two time series (2048 images each) of an unsteady wall shear stress field, which were captured under $Re = 1090$ and $Re = 1290$. Furthermore, a benchmark test of the algorithm was performed on *CPU* (34,4 *fps*) and *GPU* (47,3 *fps*), where *GPU* turned out to be faster. However, the *GPU*-process is slowed down by data transfer of the memory. For future studies, the implementation and modification of the algorithm on an *FPGA* (Field Programmable Gate Array) is aimed at. These *FPGAs* are designed for fast logical operations. Particularly image processing and cross-correlation, both significant steps, can be performed well and much faster on an *FPGA*-board compared to a computer running *MatLab*. In this upcoming step, the camera is connected directly to the *FPGA*-board to guarantee a fast data transfer and to prevent disturbing delays in the processing pipeline. This device combination will allow increasing the presented algorithm up to the projected limit of 500 *fps*.

In the second part, the paper describes a real-time *POD*-approach, which is applied to a small range (window) of equidistant and overlapping snapshot sequences instead of the whole data set. It explains the influence of the signal quality on the decomposition process in order to simulate the effect of inaccuracies, which arise due to the pillar detection. Furthermore, it explains the problem of finding an ideal window size for *POD*-analysis. The identified structures of all sequences are compared in order to find coherent modes, which form a *POD*-library. This library is evaluated by the same calibration data under varying signal states. Finally, the *POD*-library is used to identify states of an unknown flow by comparing present modes to a prior determined mode library. However, in order to better characterize this approach further tests are necessary.

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