

# Sharp regularity for the obstacle problem for quasilinear elliptic equations

João Vitor da Silva - [jdasilva@unicamp.br](mailto:jdasilva@unicamp.br)

Mostly Maximum Principle (MMP 2024) – PUC-Rio - Brazil

5th edition: in Latin America for the first time

June 24th to 28th, 2024



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Pontifícia Universidade Católica  
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Rua Marquês de São Vicente, 225, Gávea  
Rio de Janeiro – Brazil

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The results in this Lecture are based on joint works with



Figure: Elzon C. Bezerra Júnior (UFCA-Brazil) and Romário T. Frias (UNICAMP-Brazil)

## The obstacle problem: State-of-the-Art and our motivation

# The obstacle problem: Old and New

- The classical obstacle problem

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- The classical obstacle problem

Physically, the obstacle problem consists of finding the **equilibrium position** of an **elastic membrane**, which can be thought as the graph of a function  $x \mapsto u(x)$  on a regular domain  $\Omega \subset \mathbb{R}^n$ , with a fixed boundary condition  $u(x) = g(x)$  and subjected to a **transversal force**  $f(x)$  for  $x \in \Omega$ .

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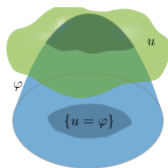
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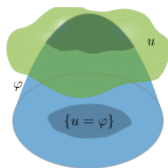
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✓ The region  $\{u > \varphi\}$  is denoted the non-contact set;

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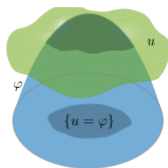
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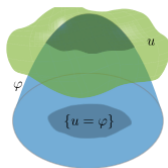
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# The obstacle problem: Old and New

- **Mathematical formulation via minimization:**

$$\min_{v \in \mathcal{K}} \left( \int_{\Omega} \frac{1}{2} |\nabla v|^2 dx + \int_{\Omega} f v dx \right) \text{ with } \mathcal{K} = \{v \in H^1(\Omega) : v \geq \varphi \text{ in } \Omega \text{ and } v = g \text{ on } \partial\Omega\} \text{ (con)}$$

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**Reformulating via Euler-Lagrange equation:** Minimizers satisfy

$$\begin{cases} \Delta u \leq f & \text{in } \Omega \text{ (in the weak sense)} \\ \Delta u = f & \text{in } \{u > \varphi\} \text{ (in the weak sense)} \\ u \geq \varphi & \text{in } \Omega \\ u = g & \text{on } \partial\Omega \end{cases}$$

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Moreover:

- 1 Existence/uniqueness of minimizers
- 2  $H^1$  regularity (Lions-Stampacchia Theorem):

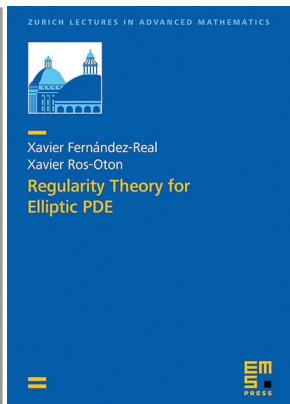
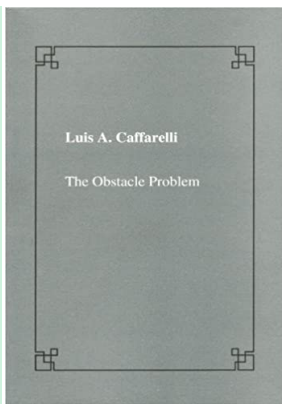
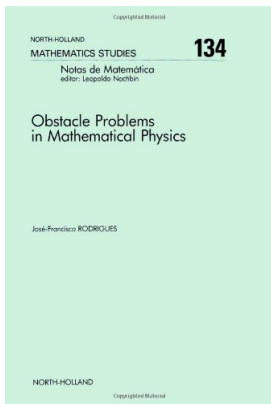
$$\|u\|_{H^1(\Omega)} \leq C(\text{universal}) \cdot (\|f\|_{L^2(\Omega)} + \|g\|_{H^1(\Omega)}).$$

- 3 **Optimal regularity:** If  $f \in L^\infty$  and  $\varphi \in C^{1,1}$ , then  $u \in C_{\text{loc}}^{1,1}$  (Freshe (1972) and Brézis-Kinderlehrer (1974))



# The obstacle problem: Old and New - References

- Rodrigues, José Francisco. **Obstacle problems in mathematical physics**. North-Holland Mathematics Studies, 134. Notas de Matemática [Mathematical Notes], 114. North-Holland Publishing Co., Amsterdam, 1987. xvi+352 pp. ISBN: 0-444-70187-7.
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- Quasi-linear scenario:

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$$\begin{cases} \text{Find } u \in \mathcal{K}_p \text{ such that} \\ \mathcal{J}_p(u) = \inf_{w \in \mathcal{K}_p} \mathcal{J}_p(w) \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

where

$$\mathcal{J}_p(w) = \int_{B_1} \left( \frac{1}{p} |\nabla w|^p + fw \right) dx, \quad w \in W_0^{1,p}(B_1),$$

and

$$\mathcal{K}_p := \{w \in W^{1,p}(B_1) : w \geq \phi \text{ and } w = g \text{ on } \partial B_1\} \quad (\text{admissible functions}),$$

and  $B_1 \subset \mathbb{R}^n$  with  $n \geq 2$ ,  $\phi \in C^{1,\beta}(\Omega)$ ,  $f \in L^\infty(B_1)$  and  $g \in W^{1,p}(B_1)$ .

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This statement is **equivalent** to find a function  $u$  such that

$$\begin{cases} \Delta_p u = f(x) & \text{in } \{u > \varphi\} \cap B_1 \\ \Delta_p u \leq f(x) & \text{in } B_1 \\ u(x) \geq \phi(x) & \text{in } B_1 \\ u(x) = g(x) & \text{on } \partial B_1. \end{cases}$$

They address the following optimal regularity estimate<sup>2</sup>:

### Theorem (Andersson-Lindgren-Shahgholian'2015)

Let  $p \in (1, \infty)$ ,  $\beta \in (0, 1]$ , and let  $u$  be a weak solution to the  $p$ -obstacle problem in  $B_1$  with obstacle  $\phi \in C^{1,\beta}(B_1)$  and  $f \in L^\infty(B_1)$ . Suppose further

$$\|\phi\|_{C^{1,\beta}(B_1)} \leq N \quad \text{and} \quad \|f\|_{L^\infty(B_1)} \leq L.$$

<sup>2</sup>For other regularity results in the quasi-linear setting, see:

Choe and Lewis - *SIAM J. Math. Anal.* (1991)

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$$\|\phi\|_{C^{1,\beta}(B_1)} \leq N \quad \text{and} \quad \|f\|_{L^\infty(B_1)} \leq L.$$

Then, for any point  $y \in \Gamma \cap B_{1/2}$  and for  $r < 1/2$

$$\sup_{x \in B_r(y)} |u(x) - u(y) - (x - y) \cdot \nabla u(y)| \leq C \cdot (N^{p-1} + L)^{\frac{1}{p-1}} r^{1+\alpha},$$

where  $C = C(\beta, p)$  and

$$\alpha = \min \left\{ \frac{1}{p-1}, \beta \right\}$$

In particular,

$$\sup_{x \in B_r(y)} |u(x) - \phi(x)| \leq (C + 1) (N^{p-1} + L)^{\frac{1}{p-1}} r^{1+\alpha}.$$

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In addition, they establish the following non-degeneracy result<sup>3</sup>:

### Proposition - Non-degeneracy of solutions

Let  $p \in (2, \infty)$  and let  $u$  be a weak solution to the  $p$ -obstacle problem in  $B_1$  with obstacle  $\phi \in C^2(B_1)$  with  $f \equiv 0$ . Suppose further that  $\Delta_p \phi < 0$ . Then there is a constant  $\varepsilon = \varepsilon(\sup \Delta_p \phi)$  such that for any  $x^0 \in \Gamma$  and  $r < \text{dist}(x^0, \partial B_1)$  there holds

$$\sup_{\partial B_r(x^0) \cap \{u > \phi\}} (u - \phi) \geq \varepsilon \cdot r^2.$$

<sup>3</sup>See, **Figalli, Krummel and Ros – Oton - J. Differential Equations** (2017) for a complete and crystal clear proof for  $p \in (1, \infty)$ ;

See also, **Challal, Lyaghfour, Rodrigues and Teymurazyan - Interfaces Free Bound.** (2014) for related results.  

# Mathematical Problem Statement



We will study **sharp regularity estimates** to obstacle problem of  $p$ -Laplacian type

$$\begin{cases} \operatorname{div} \mathbf{a}(x, \nabla u) = f(x) & \text{in } \{u > \varphi\} \cap B_1 \\ \operatorname{div} \mathbf{a}(x, \nabla u) \leq f(x) & \text{in } B_1 \\ u(x) \geq \varphi(x) & \text{in } B_1 \\ u(x) = 0 & \text{on } \partial B_1, \end{cases} \quad (2)$$

where  $B_1 \subset \mathbb{R}^n$  with  $n \geq 2$ ,  $\varphi \in C^{1,\beta}(B_1) \cap \mathfrak{X}_{p,q}$  where

$$\mathfrak{X}_{p,q} := \{v \in W^{1,p}(B_1); \operatorname{div} \mathbf{a}(x, \nabla v) \in L^q(B_1)\},$$

$1 < p < \infty$ ,  $q > n$ ,  $q \geq \frac{p}{p-1}$ , the vector field  $\mathbf{a} : B_1 \times \mathbb{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^n$  is  $C^1$ -regular at second variable.

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**Structural conditions:** for all  $x, y \in B_1$  and  $\xi, \eta \in \mathbb{R}^n$ , we have

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{ll} |\mathbf{a}(x, \xi)| + |\partial_\xi \mathbf{a}(x, \xi)| |\xi| & \leq \Lambda |\xi|^{p-1} \\ \lambda |\xi|^{p-2} |\eta|^2 & \leq \langle \partial_\xi \mathbf{a}(x, \xi) \eta, \eta \rangle \\ \frac{|\mathbf{a}(x, \xi) - \mathbf{a}(y, \xi)|}{|\xi|^{p-1}} & \leq \omega(|x - y|), \quad \forall |\xi| \neq 0, \end{array} \right. \quad (3)$$

where  $0 < \lambda \leq \Lambda < \infty$  and  $\omega : [0, \infty) \rightarrow [0, \infty)$  is a non-decreasing function with  $\omega(0) = 0$ .

Finally, we further assume

$$\omega \in C^{0,\sigma}(B_1) \quad \text{and} \quad f \in L^q(B_1) \quad \text{with} \quad 0 < \sigma \leq 1. \quad (4)$$

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The **archetypal model case** for (2) is the  $p$ -obstacle problem with continuous coefficients

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where  $0 < \lambda \leq \mathfrak{A}(\cdot) \leq \Lambda$  is a matrix with entries  $\sigma$ -Hölder continuous.

The previous archetypal model appears, for instance, when we consider the problem of an elastic membrane over a heated plane<sup>4</sup>:

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where  $0 < \lambda \leq \mathfrak{A}(\cdot) \leq \Lambda$  is a matrix with entries  $\sigma$ -Hölder continuous.

The previous archetypal model appears, for instance, when we consider the problem of an elastic membrane over a heated plane<sup>4</sup>: Find a pair  $(u, \Theta) \in \mathcal{K}_{\varphi,g} \times H^1(\Omega)$  such that

$$\begin{cases} \int_{\Omega} \Upsilon(\Theta) |\nabla u|^{p-2} \nabla u \cdot \nabla(v - u) dx & \geq \int_{\Omega} f(v - u) dx, & \forall v \in \mathcal{K}_{g,\varphi}. \\ \kappa \int_{\Omega} \nabla \Theta \cdot \nabla \Psi dx + \int_{\Omega} \Theta \Psi dx & = \int_{\Omega} \theta \chi_{\{u=\varphi\}} \Psi dx, & \forall \Psi \in H^1(\Omega). \end{cases}$$

<sup>4</sup>For more details, see:

Rodrigues - Calc. Var. Partial Differential Equations (2005)

## Main Theorems - Part I: Sharp regularity estimates

Motivated by the Anderson *et*'s work, and investigations to the fully nonlinear degenerate scenario<sup>5</sup>, we addressed:

### Theorem 1 - Sharp regularity estimates [Bezerra Júnior-Da S.-Frias'2023]

Assuming (3) and (4) with  $1 < p < \infty$  and  $n \geq 2$ , and considering  $\varphi \in C^{1,\beta}(B_1) \cap \mathfrak{X}_{p,q}$ , with  $\beta \in (0, 1]$ , there exists a unique weak solution  $u \in C_{loc}^{1,\alpha}(B_1) \cap W^{1,p}(B_1)$  of (2) with

$$\alpha = \min \left\{ \beta, \min \left\{ \sigma, 1 - \frac{n}{q} \right\} \cdot \min \left\{ 1, \frac{1}{p-1} \right\} \right\}.$$

<sup>5</sup>da Silva, J.V. and Vivas, H., The obstacle problem for a class of degenerate fully non- linear operators. *Rev. Mat. Iberoam.* 37 (2021), no. 5, 1991-2020.

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### Theorem 1 - Sharp regularity estimates [Bezerra Júnior-Da S.-Frias'2023]

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$$\alpha = \min \left\{ \beta, \min \left\{ \sigma, 1 - \frac{n}{q} \right\} \cdot \min \left\{ 1, \frac{1}{p-1} \right\} \right\}.$$

Furthermore, we have the following [regularity estimate](#)

$$\|u\|_{C^{1,\alpha}(B_{1/2})} \leq C_0 \cdot \left( \|\varphi\|_{C^{1,\beta}(B_1)}^{p-1} + \|f\|_{L^q(B_1)} \right)^{\frac{1}{p-1}},$$

where  $C_0 = C_0 \left( \alpha, n, p, q, \Lambda, \lambda, \|\omega\|_{C^{0,\sigma}(B_1)} \right)$ .

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- For the existence we use a strategy of penalization:

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<sup>6</sup>Dong and Zhu - J. Eur. Math. Soc. (2023)

Duzaar and Mingione - Calc. Var. Partial Differential Equations (2010)

Kuusi and Mingione - J. Funct. Anal. (2012)

- For the existence we use a strategy of penalization:

$$\begin{cases} \operatorname{div} \mathbf{a}(x, \nabla u_\varepsilon) & = & \mathbf{h}^+(x) \beta_\varepsilon(u_\varepsilon - \varphi) + f(x) - \mathbf{h}^+(x) & \text{in } \Omega \\ u_\varepsilon(x) & = & 0 & \text{on } \partial\Omega \end{cases}$$

where

$$\mathbf{h}(x) = f(x) - \operatorname{div} \mathbf{a}(x, \nabla \varphi)$$

for  $\varphi \in \mathfrak{X}_{p,q} \cap C^{1,\beta}(\Omega)$ . Moreover, for each  $\varepsilon \in (0, 1)$  consider  $\beta_\varepsilon : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow [0, 1]$  a non-decreasing Lipschitz function as follows

$$\beta_\varepsilon(s) = \begin{cases} 0, & \text{if } s \leq 0 \\ \frac{s}{\varepsilon} & \text{if } 0 < s \leq \varepsilon \\ 1, & \text{if } s > \varepsilon. \end{cases}$$

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- For the existence we use a strategy of penalization:

$$\begin{cases} \operatorname{div} \mathbf{a}(x, \nabla u_\varepsilon) & = & h^+(x) \beta_\varepsilon(u_\varepsilon - \varphi) + f(x) - h^+(x) & \text{in } \Omega \\ u_\varepsilon(x) & = & 0 & \text{on } \partial\Omega \end{cases}$$

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The sequence  $\{u_\varepsilon\}_{\varepsilon>0}$  is uniformly bounded in the space<sup>6</sup>  $C_{loc}^{1,\tau_0}(\Omega)$ , where  $\tau_0 \in (0, 1)$ , i.e.,

$$\|u_\varepsilon\|_{C^{1,\tau_0}(\Omega')} \leq C \left( n, \lambda, \Lambda, p, q, \Omega', \|\mathbf{a}\|_{C^{0,\sigma}(\Omega)}, \|u_\varepsilon\|_{L^\infty(\Omega)}, \|f_\varepsilon\|_{L^q(\Omega)} \right), \quad \forall \Omega' \subset\subset \Omega.$$

Moreover,  $u_0 := \lim_{\varepsilon \rightarrow 0} u_\varepsilon$  is a solution to original problem via stability (see, [Boccardo and Murat]).

<sup>6</sup>Dong and Zhu - J. Eur. Math. Soc. (2023)

Duzaar and Mingione - Calc. Var. Partial Differential Equations (2010)

Kuusi and Mingione - J. Funct. Anal. (2012)

We need the following A.B.P. estimates<sup>7</sup>:

**Theorem - Aleksandrov-Bakel'man-Pucci estimates [Bezerra Júnior-Da S.-Frias'2023]**

Let  $f \in L^q(\Omega)$  with  $q > \frac{n}{p}$ ,  $1 < p < \infty$ ,  $\frac{1}{p} + \frac{1}{q} \leq 1$  and  $u \in W^{1,p}(\Omega) \cap C(\bar{\Omega})$  be a subsolution (resp. supersolution) of

$$-\operatorname{div} \mathbf{a}(x, \nabla u) = f(x) \quad \text{in } \Omega.$$

Then, there exists a constant  $C > 0$  depending on  $p, q, n$  and  $\Lambda$  such that

$$\sup_{\Omega} u \leq \sup_{\partial\Omega} u^+ + C \cdot \operatorname{diam}(\Omega)^{\frac{p}{p-1} - \frac{n}{q(p-1)}} \cdot \|f^+\|_{L^q(\Omega, \psi_1)}^{\frac{1}{p-1}}$$


$$\left( \text{resp. } \inf_{\Omega} u \geq -\inf_{\partial\Omega} u^- - C \cdot \operatorname{diam}(\Omega)^{\frac{p}{p-1} - \frac{n}{q(p-1)}} \|f^-\|_{L^q(\Omega, \psi_2)}^{\frac{1}{p-1}} \right)$$

<sup>7</sup>See, **Argiolas, Charro and Peral - Arch. Ration. Mech. Anal.** (2011)

Talenti, G. *Ann. Mat. Pura Appl.* (1979), for related results

- For the proof of the regularity we need some important tools like [Weak Harnack Inequality](#), [Local Maximum Principle](#) and the following [regularity estimates](#)<sup>8</sup>.

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- For the proof of the regularity we need some important tools like **Weak Harnack Inequality**, **Local Maximum Principle** and the following **regularity estimates**<sup>8</sup>.


### Theorem 2 - Estimates for the linear case [Bezerra Júnior-Da S.-Frias'2023]

Let  $u \in H_0^1(\Omega)$  be a weak solution of (2) satisfying the conditions of Theorem 1 with  $p = 2$  and  $\varphi \in C^{1,\beta}(B_1) \cap \mathfrak{X}_{2,q}$ . Then,  $u \in C_{loc}^{1,\iota_0}(B_1)$  with

$$\iota_0 = \min \left\{ \beta, \sigma, 1 - \frac{n}{q} \right\} \quad \text{for } n < q \leq \infty$$

Furthermore, we have the following estimate

$$\|u\|_{C^{1,\iota_0}(B_{1/2})} \leq C_0 \cdot \left( n, \lambda, \Lambda, \beta, \sigma, q, \|f\|_{L^q(\Omega)}, \|\varphi\|_{H^1(\Omega)} \right).$$

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- The proof is based on some ideas from [\[Malý and Ziemer\]](#) and [\[Ok, J\]](#)

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- The proof is based on some ideas from [\[Malý and Ziemer\]](#) and [\[Ok, J\]](#)
- Sketch of the proof: Let  $B_R(x_0) \subset\subset B_1$ . Consider

$$\begin{cases} -\operatorname{div} \mathbf{a}(x_0, \nabla w) & = & -\operatorname{div} \mathbf{a}(x_0, \nabla \varphi) & \text{in } B_R(x_0) \\ w(x) & = & u(x) & \text{on } \partial B_R(x_0), \end{cases}$$




$$\begin{cases} -\operatorname{div} \mathbf{a}(x_0, \nabla \mathfrak{h}) & = & 0 & \text{in } B_R(x_0) \\ \mathfrak{h}(x) & = & u(x) & \text{on } \partial B_R(x_0), \end{cases}$$

<sup>8</sup>See, [Caffarelli and Kinderlehrer - J. Analyse Math. \(1980\)](#) for related results 



$$\int_{B_R(x_0)} |\nabla w - \nabla u|^2 dx \leq CR^{2\sigma} \int_{B_R(x_0)} |\nabla u|^2 dx + CR^{n+2\beta} + CR^{n+2\left(1-\frac{n}{q}\right)} \|f\|_{L^q(B_1)}^2.$$





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<sup>9</sup>Maly, J. and Ziemer, W.P., *Fine Regularity of Solutions of Elliptic Partial Differential Equations*, Mathematical Surveys and Monographs, 51. American Mathematical Society, Providence, RI, 1997. xiv+291 pp. ISBN: 0-8218-0335-2   

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Hence, there exists an  $R_0 > 0$  such that

$$\int_{B_r(x_0)} |\nabla u - (\nabla u)_{x_0,r}|^2 dx \leq C \left(\frac{r}{R}\right)^{n+2\alpha} \int_{B_R(x_0)} |\nabla u - (\nabla u)_{x_0,R}|^2 dx + Cr^{n+2\alpha}$$

for any  $0 < r \leq R \leq R_0$ . For  $R = R_0$  and  $0 < r \leq R_0$ , we have

$$\int_{B_r(x_0)} |\nabla u - (\nabla u)_{x_0,r}|^2 dx \leq Cr^{n+2\alpha}, \quad \text{with } \alpha = \min \left\{ \beta, \sigma, 1 - \frac{n}{q} \right\} \quad \text{for } n < q \leq \infty.$$

Therefore, using a **Campanato Embedding Theorem**<sup>9</sup>, we obtain the desired Hölder regularity.

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# Sketch of the proof of optimal regularity

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$$\|\varphi\|_{C^{1,\beta}(B_1)} \leq \frac{1}{2} \quad \text{and} \quad \|f\|_{L^q(B_1)} \leq 1.$$

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- (Normalization)

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- For  $y \in \partial\{u > \varphi\} \cap B_{1/2}$  and  $r < \frac{1}{2}$  we show that

$$\sup_{x \in B_r(y)} |u(x) - u(y) - (x - y) \cdot \nabla u(y)| \leq Cr^{1+\alpha} \quad (5)$$

where  $C = C(\beta, p, n, q, \|\varphi\|_{C^{1,\beta}(B_1)}, \|f\|_{L^q(B_1)}\lambda, \Lambda)$ .

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- **Case 1** :  $|\nabla u(y)| \leq r^\alpha$ .

$$\tilde{\varphi}(x) = \frac{\varphi(rx + y) - \varphi(y)}{r^{1+\alpha}} \quad \text{and} \quad \tilde{u}(x) = \frac{u(rx + y) - u(y)}{r^{1+\alpha}}.$$

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$$\|\tilde{\varphi}\|_{L^\infty(B_1)} \leq \frac{r^{1+\beta}}{2r^{1+\alpha}} + 1 \leq \frac{3}{2}.$$

Then,  $\tilde{u} \geq \tilde{\varphi}$ , it satisfies

$$\operatorname{div} \tilde{\mathbf{a}}(x, \nabla \tilde{u}) \leq \tilde{f}(x) \quad \text{in } B_1$$

for

$$\tilde{\mathbf{a}}(x, \xi) := r^{\alpha(1-p)} \mathbf{a}(rx, r^\alpha \xi) \quad \text{and} \quad \tilde{f}(x) = r^{\alpha(1-p)+1} f(rx + y).$$

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10

$$\text{(WHI)} \quad \|u\|_{L^\gamma(B_{\kappa r})} \leq C \left[ \inf_{B_{\tau_0 r}} u(x) + \|f\|_{L^q(B_1)}^{\frac{1}{p-1}} \right], \quad \kappa, \tau_0 \in (0, 1) \text{ and } \gamma \in \left( 0, \frac{n(p-1)}{n-p} \right), \quad u \text{ a weak super-sol.}$$

11

$$\text{(LMP)} \quad \sup_{B_{\kappa r}} u^+(x) \leq \frac{C(p, n, \lambda, j, r)}{\sqrt[j]{(1-\kappa)^n}} \left[ \|u^+\|_{L^j(B_r)} + \|f\|_{L^q(\Omega)}^{\frac{1}{p-1}} \right], \quad 0 < j \leq p, \quad u \text{ a weak sub-solution.}$$

Then,  $\tilde{u} \geq \tilde{\varphi}$ , it satisfies

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$$\begin{aligned} |\tilde{\mathbf{a}}(x, \xi) - \tilde{\mathbf{a}}(y, \xi)| &\leq r^{\alpha(1-p)+\sigma} \omega(|x - y|) |\xi|^{p-1} \\ &\leq \omega(|x - y|) |\xi|^{p-1}. \end{aligned}$$

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$$\begin{aligned} |\tilde{\mathbf{a}}(x, \xi) - \tilde{\mathbf{a}}(y, \xi)| &\leq r^{\alpha(1-p)+\sigma} \omega(|x - y|) |\xi|^{p-1} \\ &\leq \omega(|x - y|) |\xi|^{p-1}. \end{aligned}$$

$$\|\tilde{f}\|_{L^q(B_1)} = r^{\alpha(1-p)+1-n/q} \|f\|_{L^q(B_1)} \leq 1.$$

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Then,  $\tilde{u} \geq \tilde{\varphi}$ , it satisfies

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$$\begin{aligned} |\tilde{\mathbf{a}}(x, \xi) - \tilde{\mathbf{a}}(y, \xi)| &\leq r^{\alpha(1-p)+\sigma} \omega(|x - y|) |\xi|^{p-1} \\ &\leq \omega(|x - y|) |\xi|^{p-1}. \end{aligned}$$

$$\|\tilde{f}\|_{L^q(B_1)} = r^{\alpha(1-p)+1-n/q} \|f\|_{L^q(B_1)} \leq 1.$$

Therefore, using the **Weak Harnack Inequality**<sup>10</sup> and the **Local Maximum Principle**<sup>11</sup>, we obtain the desired regularity estimate.

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10

$$\text{(WHI)} \quad \|u\|_{L^\gamma(B_{\kappa r})} \leq C \left[ \inf_{B_{\tau_0 r}} u(x) + \|f\|_{L^q(B_1)}^{\frac{1}{p-1}} \right], \quad \kappa, \tau_0 \in (0, 1) \text{ and } \gamma \in \left(0, \frac{n(p-1)}{n-p}\right), \quad u \text{ a weak super-sol.}$$

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$$\text{(LMP)} \quad \sup_{B_{\kappa r}} u^+(x) \leq \frac{C(p, n, \lambda, j, r)}{\sqrt{j(1-\kappa)^n}} \left[ \|u^+\|_{L^j(B_r)} + \|f\|_{L^q(\Omega)}^{\frac{1}{p-1}} \right], \quad 0 < j \leq p, \quad u \text{ a weak sub-solution.}$$

- **Case 2:**  $\mathfrak{L} \geq |\nabla u(y)| \geq r^\alpha$ .

Let  $r_y^\alpha = |\nabla u(y)|$ . From Case 1, we know the following

$$\sup_{B_{r_y}(y)} |u(x) - u(y)| \leq Cr_y^{1+\alpha}. \quad (6)$$

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Define

$$\begin{cases} \hat{\varphi}(x) &= \frac{\varphi(r_y x + y) - \varphi(y)}{r_y^{1+\alpha}} \\ \hat{u}(x) &= \frac{u(r_y x + y) - u(y)}{r_y^{1+\alpha}} \\ \hat{f}(x) &= r_y^{1-\alpha(p-1)} f(r_y x + y). \end{cases}$$

Note that

$$|\nabla \hat{\varphi}(0)| = |\nabla \hat{u}(0)| = 1. \quad (7)$$



Moreover,  $\hat{u}(x) \geq \hat{\varphi}(x)$  in  $B_1$  and satisfies

$$\operatorname{div} \hat{\mathbf{a}}(x, \nabla \hat{u}) \leq \hat{f}(x) \quad \text{in } B_1$$

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$$\hat{\mathbf{a}}(x, \xi) := r_y^{\alpha(1-p)} \mathbf{a}(r_y x, r_y^\alpha \xi) \quad \text{and} \quad \hat{f}(x) = r_y^{\alpha(1-p)+1} f(r_y x + y).$$

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Using that  $\hat{u} \in C_{loc}^{1, \tau_0}(B_1)$  and  $|\nabla \hat{u}(0)| = 1$  we can find a radius  $r_0$  and a constant  $c_0$  such that

$$c_0 \leq |\nabla \hat{u}(x)| \leq c_0^{-1} \quad \text{in } B_{r_0}.$$

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Then,  $\hat{\mathbf{a}}(\cdot, \cdot)$  satisfies (3) (**Structural Conditions**) for “ $p = 2$ ” in  $B_{r_0}$ . From the Theorem 2 (linear case), we have  $\hat{u} \in C_{loc}^{1, \iota_0}(B_{r_0 r_y}(y))$ .

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Therefore, by re-scaling, we obtain the desired sharp regularity estimates

$$\sup_{B_r(y)} |u(x) - u(y) - (x - y) \cdot \nabla u(y)| \leq Cr^{1+\iota_0} \leq Cr^{1+\alpha},$$

for  $r \leq r_0 r_y = r_0 |\nabla u(y)|^{\frac{1}{\alpha}}$ .

## Main Theorems - Part II: Non-degeneracy of solutions and beyond

For obtaining further geometric properties of solutions, we need to assume:



$$\left| \frac{\partial \mathbf{a}_i}{\partial x_i}(x, \xi) \right| \leq \Lambda_0 |\xi|^{p-1} \quad (\text{for every } 1 \leq i \leq n, \text{ for } p \geq 2), \quad (8)$$

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• We will assume that  $\varphi \in C^{1,1}(B_1)$  such that

$$2^{p-2} n \Lambda_0 |\nabla \varphi|^{p-1} + \Lambda \max \{1, 2^{p-3}\} |\nabla \varphi|^{p-2} \sum_{i,j=1}^n \left| \frac{\partial^2 \varphi}{\partial x_i \partial x_j} \right| \leq c_0 - \delta, \quad (10)$$

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**Remark:** We must stress that the assumption (10) implies the following

$$\operatorname{div} \mathbf{a}(x, \nabla \varphi) < c_0$$

Therefore, under the previous assumptions, we can address the following non-degeneracy result:

### Theorem 3 - Non-degeneracy of solutions [Bezerra Júnior-Da S.-Frias'2023]

Assume assumptions (8) and (9) are in force. Let  $p \in (2, \infty)$  and  $u \in W^{1,p}(B_1)$  be a weak solution of the obstacle problem (2) for  $\varphi \in C^{1,1}(B_1)$  satisfying (10). Then, there exist  $r^* > 0$  and a constant  $\epsilon_0 = \epsilon_0(\text{universal})$  such that for every  $x^0 \in \overline{\{u > \varphi\}} \cap B_1$  and every  $r \in (0, r^*)$  fulfilling  $B_r(x^0) \subset B_1$  we obtain

$$\sup_{\partial B_r(x^0) \cap \{u > \varphi\}} (u - \varphi) \geq \epsilon_0 \cdot r^2.$$

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Particularly, along the set of critical points, i.e., if  $|\nabla\varphi(x^0)| = 0$ , then

$$\sup_{\partial B_r(x^0) \cap \{u > \varphi\}} (u - \varphi) \geq \epsilon_0 \cdot r^{1+\gamma},$$

for any  $\frac{1}{p-1} \leq \gamma \leq 1$ .

# Sketch of the proof of Non-degeneracy

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By continuity, it is sufficient to prove the result for  $y \in \{u > \varphi\}$ . Take  $y \in \{u > \varphi\}$ . Let

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$$\forall r \in (0, r^*), \quad \forall y \in \overline{\{u > \varphi\}}, \quad \forall x \in B_r(y) \subset B_1, \quad \operatorname{div} \mathbf{a}(x, \nabla v) \leq c_0$$

Since  $u(y) > \varphi(y) = v(y)$ , thus by the **Comparison Principle**, there must exist a  $z_y \in \partial(B_r(y) \cap \{u > \varphi\})$  such that  $u(z_y) \geq v(z_y)$ . Moreover, note that:

$$\partial(B_r(y) \cap \{u > \varphi\}) = (\partial B_r(y) \cap \{u > \varphi\}) \cup (B_r(y) \cap \partial\{u > \varphi\})$$

Since  $u < v$  in  $B_r(y) \cap \partial\{u > \varphi\}$ , we have  $z_y \notin B_r(y) \cap \partial\{u > \varphi\}$ , which implies that  $z_y \in \partial B_r(y) \cap \{u > \varphi\}$ .

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Therefore,

$$\sup_{\partial B_r(y) \cap \{u > \varphi\}} (u - \varphi) \geq \epsilon_0 \cdot r^2.$$

and along the set of critical points,

$$\sup_{\partial B_r(y) \cap \{u > \varphi\}} (u - \varphi) \geq \epsilon_0 \cdot r^{1+\gamma} \quad \text{for any} \quad \frac{1}{p-1} \leq \gamma \leq 1.$$

## Applications and beyond



As a result of Theorem 1, we obtain the following: if a solution of p-evolution obstacle problem has its time derivative  $L^q$ -integrable, then it exhibits optimal growth of  $(1 + \alpha_{\sharp})$ -order, where

$$\alpha_{\sharp} = \frac{1 - \frac{n+2}{q}}{(p-1)\left(1 - \frac{1}{q}\right) + \frac{1}{q}} = \frac{q - (n+2)}{(p-1)(q-1) + 1}.$$

Such a growth occurs in the **spatial variable** along **free boundary points**.

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### Theorem (Bezerra Júnior-Da S.-Frias'2023)

Let  $p \in (1, \infty)$ , and let  $u$  be a weak solution to the inhomogeneous  $p$ -parabolic obstacle problem

$$\begin{cases} \max \{ \operatorname{div} \mathbf{a}(x, \nabla u) - u_t - f, u - \varphi \} & = 0 & \text{in } Q_r^- \\ u & = 0 & \text{on } \partial_p Q_r^- \end{cases} \quad (11)$$

with the obstacle  $\varphi \in C_x^2(Q_1^-)$ . Suppose further that  $q > n + 2$ ,  $\sigma = 1$  and

$$\|u_t\|_{L^q(Q_1^-)} \leq \mathbf{L}_*, \quad \|f\|_{L^q(Q_1^-)} \leq \mathbf{L}_\sharp \quad \text{and} \quad \|\varphi\|_{C_x^2(Q_1^-)} \leq \mathbf{N}_*.$$

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Then, for any point  $(y, s) \in \partial\{u > \varphi\} \cap Q_{\frac{1}{2}}^-$  and for  $r \in (0, \frac{1}{4})$ , there holds

$$\sup_{(x,t) \in Q_r^-(y,s)} |u(x,t) - u(y,s) - \nabla u(y,s) \cdot (x-y)| \leq C(p, \mathbf{L}_*, \mathbf{L}_\sharp, \mathbf{N}_*) r^{1+\alpha_\sharp}.$$

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