Hierarchical Modeling of Heterogeneous Plates¹

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Abstract. We describe here the modeling of highly heterogeneous plates, when three different lenght scales are present: the area of the middle surface, the plate thickness, and the heterogeneity scale. We derive a two-dimensional PDE model for such problem, which turns out to have rough coefficients. We employ asymptotic techniques to estimate the modeling error with respect to the thickness. To tame the numerical troubles of the resulting model we use finite elements methods of multiscale type.

1. Introduction

The first step to model plate problems is to perform some sort of dimension reduction, and approximate a three-dimensional problem with a two-dimensional one. Most likely the most common arguments to obtain plate models are based on physical properties of the underlying problem, often combined with some mathematical reasoning. It is also possible to derive the models using asymptotic techniques, usually with a sound mathematical basis. The asymptotic arguments consist in taking the plate thickness to zero and finding "limit problems." For instance, linearly elastic plates have as limit biharmonic equations [8]. For heterogeneous materials however, an extra issue arises. There are situations when the attempts of homogenizing the material may lead to different models, depending on which limit is considered first, i.e., homogenization first and then dimension reduction, or the other way around [9].

To avoid such undesirable peculiarity, we shall use *hierarchical modeling*. In such approach, the solution can defined as critical points of certain functionals, in the subspace of functions that are polynomials in the transverse direction.

In this work we consider the Poisson equation in a heterogeneous plate of thickness 2δ given by $P^{\delta} = \Omega \times (-\delta, \delta)$, where $\Omega \subset \mathbb{R}^2$ is a bounded open domain with Lipschitz boundary $\partial\Omega$. Let $\partial P_L^{\delta} = \partial\Omega \times (-\delta, \delta)$ be the lateral side of the plate, and $\partial P_{\pm}^{\delta} = \Omega \times \{-\delta, \delta\}$ its top and bottom. We denote a typical point of P^{δ} by $\underline{x} = (\underline{x}, x_3)$, where $\underline{x} = (x_1, x_2) \in \Omega$. Accordingly, we write

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 $\nabla = (\nabla, \partial_3) = (\partial_1, \partial_2, \partial_3)$, where ∂_i indicates the partial derivative with respect to \bar{x}_i . Also, $\partial_{ij} = \partial_i \partial_j$.

Let $u^{\delta} \in H^1(P^{\delta})$ be the weak solution of

$$-\operatorname{div}\left(\underline{A} \ \underline{\nabla} \ u^{\delta}\right) = f^{\delta} \quad \text{in } P^{\delta},$$
$$u^{\delta} = 0 \quad \text{in } \partial P_{L}^{\delta}, \qquad \frac{\partial u^{\delta}}{\partial n} = g^{\delta} \quad \text{in } \partial P_{\pm}^{\delta},$$
$$(1.1)$$

where $f^{\delta}: P^{\delta} \to \mathbb{R}$ and $g^{\delta}: \partial P^{\delta}_{\pm} \to \mathbb{R}$. The matrix $\underline{\underline{A}}: P^{\delta} \to \mathbb{R}^{3 \times 3}_{\text{SYM}}$ is such that

$$A(\underline{x}) = \begin{pmatrix} a(\underline{x}) & 0\\ \approx & 0\\ 0 & a_{33}(\underline{x}) \end{pmatrix},$$

where $a_{\approx} : \Omega \to \mathbb{R}^{2 \times 2}_{\text{SYM}}$, and $a_{33} : \Omega \to \mathbb{R}$. We also assume that a_{ij} , f^{δ} , and g^{δ} are C^{∞} functions, and that there exist constants α and β such that

$$\alpha \|\underline{\xi}\|^2 \leq \underline{\xi} \cdot \underline{\underline{A}}(\underline{x})\underline{\xi}, \qquad \underline{\xi} \cdot \underline{\underline{A}}(\underline{x})\underline{\eta} \leq \beta \|\underline{\xi}\| \|\underline{\eta}\|, \tag{1.2}$$

for all $\underline{\xi}, \underline{\eta} \in \mathbb{R}^3$, and for all $\underline{x} \in P^{\delta}$. The norm $\|\cdot\|$ is the Euclidian norm in \mathbb{R}^3 . Note that the heterogeneity is in the horizontal direction. This model mimics a plate with transverse inclusions.

We next describe the contents of this paper. In Section 2., we derive our hierarchical model. The resulting equations depend on two small parameters, the thickness and the length scale of the heterogeneity, and pose nontrivial numerical challenges [2, 3, 4]. Next, in Section 3., we state that our model is *asymptotically consistent*, i.e., it converges in a proper sense to the solution of the original problem as the plate thickness goes to zero. Modeling error estimates come by after a somewhat lengthy asymptotic analysis of both the exact and approximate solution. We present only the results, without proofs. We describe finite elements methods of multiscale type in Section 4., and perform computational experiments using the Residual Free Bubbles (RFB) Method and the Multiscale Finite Element Method in Section 5..

2. Derivation of the Model

To derive our model we first note that if $V(P^{\delta}) = \{v \in H^1(P^{\delta}) : v|_{\partial P_L^{\delta}} = 0\}$, then

$$u^{\delta} = \underset{v \in V(P^{\delta})}{\arg\min} \mathcal{I}(v), \quad \text{where } \mathcal{I}(v) = \frac{1}{2} \int_{P^{\delta}} \sum v \cdot A \sum v \, d\underline{x} - \int_{P^{\delta}} f^{\delta} v \, d\underline{x} + \int_{\partial P^{\delta}_{\pm}} g^{\delta} v \, d\underline{x}$$

Our model solution \tilde{u}^{δ} , which approximates u^{δ} , is defined as the minimizer of the potential energy in the space of functions of $V(P^{\delta})$ which are linear in the transverse direction, i.e.,

$$\tilde{u}^{o} = \arg\min_{v \in V_{1}(P^{\delta})} \mathcal{I}(v),$$

and $V_1(P^{\delta}) = \{ v \in V(P^{\delta}) : v(x, x_3) = v_0(x) + x_3 v_1(x), v_0, v_1 \in H_0^1(\Omega) \}.$ If we write

$$\tilde{u}^{\delta}(\underline{x}, x_3) = w_0(\underline{x}) + x_3 w_1(\underline{x}), \qquad (2.1)$$

then $w_0, w_1 \in H_0^1(\Omega)$ solve

$$-2\delta \operatorname{div}\left[\underset{\approx}{a}(\underset{\sim}{x}) \sum w_{0}\right] = \int_{-\delta}^{\delta} f^{\delta}(\underset{\sim}{x}, x_{3}) dx_{3} + g^{\delta}(\underset{\sim}{x}, \delta) + g^{\delta}(\underset{\sim}{x}, -\delta) \quad \text{in } \Omega,$$

$$-\frac{2\delta^{3}}{3} \operatorname{div}\left[\underset{\approx}{a}(\underset{\sim}{x}) \sum w_{1}\right] + 2\delta a_{33}(\underset{\sim}{x}) w_{1}$$

$$= \int_{-\delta}^{\delta} f^{\delta}(\underset{\sim}{x}, x_{3}) x_{3} dx_{3} + \delta[g^{\delta}(\underset{\sim}{x}, \delta) - g^{\delta}(\underset{\sim}{x}, -\delta)] \quad \text{in } \Omega,$$

$$w_{0} = w_{1} = 0 \quad \text{on } \partial\Omega.$$

$$(2.2)$$

3. Modeling Error Estimate

In this section we estimate the modeling error with respect to the thickness δ . This becomes nontrivial since the domain itself depends on δ . Thus we scale the domain to remove such dependence, and compare the solutions in a plate with fixed thickness. Let $P = \Omega \times (-1, 1)$. Making the change of coordinates $\underline{\hat{x}} = (\underline{x}, \delta^{-1}x_3)$, and defining

$$u(\delta)(\underline{\hat{x}}) = u^{\delta}(\underline{x}), \quad f(\underline{\hat{x}}) = f^{\delta}(\underline{x}), \quad g(\underline{\hat{x}}) = \delta^{-1}g^{\delta}(\underline{x}),$$

it follows that

$$\operatorname{div}\left[\underset{\approx}{a(\hat{x})} \bigvee_{\sim} u(\delta)\right] + \delta^{-2} \partial_3 \left[a_{33}(\hat{x}) \partial_3 u(\delta)\right] = -f \quad \text{in } P,$$

$$u(\delta) = 0 \quad \text{on } \partial P_L, \qquad \delta^{-1} a_{33}(\hat{x}) \partial_3 u(\delta) = \delta \hat{x}_3 g \quad \text{in } \partial P_{\pm}.$$

$$(3.1)$$

Assuming that f and g are δ -independent, it is possible to show [14] that

 $u(\delta) \sim \omega_0 + \delta^2 u_2 - \delta^2 U_2 + \delta^4 u_4 - \delta^4 U_4 + \cdots,$

where

$$\partial_3 \left[a_{33}(\hat{x}) \partial_3 u_2 \right] = -f - \operatorname{div} \left[a_{\widehat{x}}(\hat{x}) \sum \omega_0 \right],$$

$$\partial_3 \left[a_{33}(\hat{x}) \partial_3 u_{2k} \right] = -\operatorname{div} \left[a_{\widehat{x}}(\hat{x}) \sum u_{2k-2} \right] \quad \text{for all } k \ge 2.$$

The boundary conditions on ∂P_\pm are

$$a_{33}(\hat{x})\partial_3\omega_0 = 0, \qquad a_{33}(\hat{x})\partial_3u_2 = \hat{x}_3g, \qquad a_{33}(\hat{x})\partial_3u_{2k} = 0 \text{ for all } k \ge 2.$$
 (3.2)

and the following compatibility conditions holds

$$\int_{-1}^{1} u_{2k}(\hat{x}, \hat{x}_3) \, d\hat{x}_3 = 0.$$

Note that the first term in the asymptotic expansion matches w_0 , solution of (2.2).

The above equations define a sequence of Neumann problems with respect to \hat{x}_3 in (-1, 1), parameterized by $\hat{x} \in \Omega$. From the Dirichlet condition in (3.1), we would like to have $u_k = 0$ on ∂P_L , but note that this does not hold in general, making necessary the introduction of correctors

$$U \sim \delta^2 U_2 + \delta^4 U_4 + \cdots,$$

where $U_{2k} \in H^1(P)$ solves

$$-\delta^{2} \operatorname{div}\left[\underset{\approx}{a}(\hat{x}) \sum U_{2k}\right] - a_{33}(\hat{x})\partial_{33}U_{2k} = 0 \quad \text{in } P,$$

$$\frac{\partial U_{2k}}{\partial n} = 0 \quad \text{on } \partial P_{\pm}, \qquad U_{2k} = u_{2k} \quad \text{on } \partial P_{L}.$$

$$(3.3)$$

Next we state some results that are necessary to estimate the modeling error. The constants are generally denoted by c, even if they are not the same in different occurrences. These are independent of δ but might depend on α , β , Ω and also on Sobolev norms of f and g. We have then the following classical regularity estimates. See [7] for complete proofs.

The result below follows from classical estimates.

Lemma 3.1. Let ω_0 and u_{2k} be defined as above, for $k \in \mathbb{N}$. Then there exists a constant c such that

$$\|\omega_0\|_{H^1(\Omega)} + \|u_{2k}\|_{H^1(P)} \le c.$$

From the following result, we obtain an estimate for problem (3.4) in the $\|\cdot\|_{H^1(P)}$ norm.

Lemma 3.2. Let $F \in L^2(P)$ and $\Theta \in H^1(P)$ weak solution of

$$-\delta^{2} \operatorname{div}\left[\underset{\approx}{a}(\hat{x}) \sum \Theta\right] - a_{33}(\hat{x})\partial_{33}\Theta = F \quad in \ P,$$

$$\frac{\partial \Theta}{\partial n} = 0 \quad on \ \partial P_{\pm}, \qquad \Theta = 0 \quad on \ \partial P_{L}.$$
(3.4)

Then there exists a constant c such that

$$\|\Theta\|_{H^1(P)} \le c\delta^{-2} \|F\|_{L^2(P)}.$$

To estimate (3.3), we consider now the problem of finding $\Psi \in H^1(P)$ such that

$$-\delta^{2} \operatorname{div}\left[\underset{\approx}{a}(\hat{x}) \nabla \Psi\right] - a_{33}(\hat{x})\partial_{33}\Psi = 0 \quad \text{in } P,$$

$$\frac{\partial \Psi}{\partial n} = 0 \quad \text{on } \partial P_{\pm}, \qquad \Psi = w \quad \text{on } \partial P_{L},$$
(3.5)

Lemma 3.3. Let Ψ as in (3.5). Assume also that $\int_{-1}^{1} w(\hat{x}, \hat{x}_3) d\hat{x}_3 = 0$ on ∂P_L . Then there exists a constant c such that

$$\|\Psi\|_{L^2(P)} \le c \|\partial_3\Psi\|_{L^2(P)}.$$

Lemma 3.4. Let Ψ be the solution of (3.5), where $w \in W^{1,\infty}(P)$. Then there exists a constant c such that

$$\| \nabla \Psi \|_{L^2(P)} \le c \delta^{-1/2} \| w \|_{W^{1,\infty}}.$$

Using Lemmas 3.3 and 3.4, we have that if U_{2k} , $k \in \mathbb{N}$, solve (3.3), then

$$||U_{2k}||_{H^1(P)} \le c\delta^{-1/2}$$

We next estimate the residue $r = u^{\delta} - (\omega_0 + \delta^2 u_2)$. We first note that

$$-\delta^2 \operatorname{div}\left[\underset{\approx}{a}(\hat{x}) \sum r\right] - a_{33}(\hat{x})\partial_{33}r = \delta^4 a_{33}(\hat{x})\partial_{33}u_4 \quad \text{in } P$$
$$\frac{\partial r}{\partial n} = 0 \quad \text{on } \partial P_{\pm}, \qquad r = -\delta^2 u_2 \quad \text{on } \partial P_L.$$

The following result holds.

Theorem 3.1. Let r as above. Then there exists a constant c such that

 $||r||_{H^1(P)} \le c\delta^{3/2}.$

The following result presents and estimate for the difference between u^{δ} and the first term of the asymptotic expansion.

Lemma 3.5. Let u^{δ} be the solution of (1.1), and ω_0 be the solution of (2.2). Then

$$||u^{\delta} - \omega_0||_{H^1(P)} \le c\delta^{3/2}$$

To estimate the modeling error, we need the following result [1].

Lemma 3.6. Let $w_1 \in H_0^1(\Omega)$ be the solution of (2.2). Then

 $||w_1||_{H^1(\Omega)} \le c\delta^{1/2}.$

Note that it is also possible to show the above result by modifying the proofs of Theorem 3.2 and Lemma 3.4.

From Lemma 3.6, we have that $\|\delta \hat{x}_3 w_1\|_{H^1(P)} \leq c \delta^{3/2}$. Let

$$\tilde{u}(\delta)(\underline{\hat{x}}) = \tilde{u}^{\delta}(\underline{x}) = \omega_0(\underline{\hat{x}}) + \delta \hat{x}_3 w_1(\underline{\hat{x}}).$$

Thus

$$\|\tilde{u}(\delta) - u(\delta)\|_{H^1(P)} \le \|\tilde{u}(\delta) - \omega_0\|_{H^1(P)} + \|u(\delta) - \omega_0\|_{H^1(P)} \le c\delta^{3/2} + c\delta^{3/2} \le c\delta^{3/2}.$$

We then have the following result.

Theorem 3.2. Let $u(\delta)$ be the solution for (3.1) and $\tilde{u}(\delta)$ the model solution. Then there exists a constant c such that

$$\|\tilde{u}(\delta) - u(\delta)\|_{H^1(P)} \le c\delta^{3/2}.$$

4. Multiscale Numerical Schemes

The plate problem we consider here has rough coefficients, and the reduced model inherits such characteristic. Thus, although the PDEs in (2.2) are much easier to solve than their original three-dimensional counterparts, they still pose a tough computational challenge. In fact, for highly heterogeneous materials, the coefficients $a_{(\cdot)}$ and $a_{33}(\cdot)$ can be oscillatory, making the traditional finite element and difference methods almost useless. In the second problem in (2.2) a new difficulty arises since the PDE is singularly perturbed with respect to δ .

To overcome such troubles we employ two finite element methods of multiscale type. We first briefly describe the *Residual Free Bubbles* (RFB) Method [5, 6, 10], which consists in enriching the usual finite element space of polynomials with bubbles, functions that vanish on the border of each element.

Consider the second order elliptic problem

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{L}u &= f \quad \text{in } \Omega, \\ u &= 0 \quad \text{on } \partial\Omega, \end{aligned} \tag{4.1}$$

where the differential operator \mathcal{L} is defined as below:

$$\mathcal{L}v = -\operatorname{div}\left[\underset{\approx}{a}(\underline{x}) \sum_{i} v\right], \qquad \mathcal{L}v = -\frac{2\delta^3}{3}\operatorname{div}\left[\underset{\approx}{a}(\underline{x}) \sum_{i} v\right] + 2\delta a_{33}(\underline{x}),$$

cf. (2.2). Let $a: H_0^1(\Omega) \times H_0^1(\Omega) \to \mathbb{R}$, be the bilinear form associated with (4.1).

Let \mathcal{T}_h be a regular partition of Ω into finite elements K. Associated with such partition, let $V_1 \subset H_0^1(\Omega)$ be the space of continuous piecewise linear functions, and the bubble space

$$V_B = \{ v \in H^1_0(\Omega) : v|_{\partial K} = 0 \text{ for all } K \in \mathcal{T}_h \}.$$

The residual free bubble method consists in applying the Galerkin method in $V_1 \oplus V_B$, i.e., we search for $u_1 + u_b$, where $u_1 \in V_1$, $u_b \in V_B$, and

$$a(u_1 + u_b, v_1 + v_b) = (f, v_h), \text{ for all } v_1 + v_b \in V_P \oplus V_B.$$
 (4.2)

The basic idea now is to apply a static condensation trick and write u_b in terms of u_1 . Testing (4.2) with functions in V_P only, we gather that $u_b = \mathcal{L}_*^{-1} f - \mathcal{L}_*^{-1} \mathcal{L} u_1$, where $\mathcal{L}_*^{-1} : L^2(\Omega) \to V_B$ is such that if $v = \mathcal{L}_*^{-1} g$, for $g \in L^2(\Omega)$, then

$$\mathcal{L}v = g \quad \text{in } K, \\ v = 0 \quad \text{on } \partial K,$$
 (4.3)

for all $K \in \mathcal{T}_h$. Thus

$$a(u_1 - \mathcal{L}_*^{-1}\mathcal{L}u_1, v_1) = (f, v_1) - a(\mathcal{L}_*^{-1}f, v_1), \text{ for all } v_1 \in V_1.$$

In terms of finite element implementation, if $\{\psi_i\}_{i=1}^N$ is a basis of V_1 , where ψ_i are the usual hat functions, we define λ_i such that

$$\mathcal{L}\lambda_i = 0 \quad \text{in } K,$$
$$\lambda_i = \psi_i \quad \text{on } \partial K.$$

Next, if $u_1 = \sum_{i=1}^N u_i \psi_i$, then

$$\sum_{i=1}^{N} a(\lambda_i, \psi_j) u_i = (f, \psi_j) - a(\mathcal{L}_*^{-1} f, \psi_j), \quad j = 1, \dots, N.$$

The other method that we used to discretize our model is the Multiscale Finite Element Method (MsFEM) [11, 12, 13]. The MsFEM consists simply in using Galerkin method with the subspace generated by functions $\{\lambda_i\}_{i=1}^N$.

5. Numerical Tests

We assume here that a_{\approx} is periodic with respect to ε . We use both the RFB and MsFEM for the operator $-\operatorname{div}\left[a(x) \nabla(\cdot)\right]$, and both yield indistinguishable results. We follow [15] and assume $\Omega = (0, 1) \times (0, 1)$, and

$$\mathop{a}_{\approx}(x_1, x_2) = \frac{9}{2}\sin(2\pi\epsilon^{-1}x_1)\cos(2\pi\epsilon^{-1}x_2) + \frac{11}{2}, \qquad f(x) = 1$$

We start by computing the basis functions. Figure 1 shows $\psi - \lambda$ for a fixed element $K = [0, 1/16] \times [0, 1/16]$, and a subgrid of 128×128 elements. Then, Figure 2 shows λ , and Figure 3 shows its level curves.

Next, Figure 4 display the profile at x = y of various approximation solutions, and also an "exact" solution, obtained using a over-refined mesh.

Resumo. Desenvolvemos neste trabalho a derivação de modelos bidimensionais para placas heterogêneas. Além disto, estimamos o erro de modelagem, e resolvemos as equações diferenciais resultantes usando métodos de elementos finitos multiescala.

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Figure 2: Basis function λ .



Figure 4: Diagonal profiles for exact, RFB, MsFEM and Galerkin solutions.

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