Mean curvature flow with generic initial data

Felix Schulze,

University of Warwick

Joint work with O. Chodosh (Stanford), K. Choi (KIAS, Seoul) and C. Mantoulidis (Rice)

Warwick Maths Society Colloquium

17 October 2024

Outline

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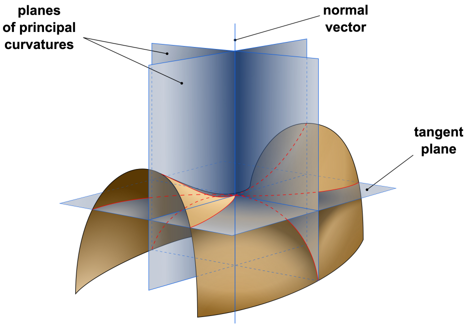
Background

Consider $(M^n(t))_{0\leq t<T}$ a smooth mean curvature flow of hypersurfaces in $\mathbb{R}^{n+1}$, i.e.

$$\left(\frac{\partial F}{\partial t}\right)^{\perp} = \vec{H} = -H\nu = \Delta_{M(t)}F$$

for a smooth family $F(\cdot, t)$ of parametrisations, and its space-time track

$$\mathcal{M} = \cup_{0\leq t<T} M_t \times \{t\} \subset \mathbb{R}^{n+1} \times \mathbb{R}\,.$$



Mean curvature $H = \lambda_1 + \cdots + \lambda_n$

(Source: Wikipedia)

Background

Basic properties:

- Gradient flow of area, geometric heat equation
- Quasi-linear parabolic: smooth short-time existence
- Avoidance principle: if $(M_1(t))_{0\leq t<T}$ and $(M_2(t))_{0\leq t<T}$ two solutions of mean curvature flow, then

$$M_1(0)\cap M_2(0)=\emptyset \implies M_1(t)\cap M_2(t)=\emptyset$$

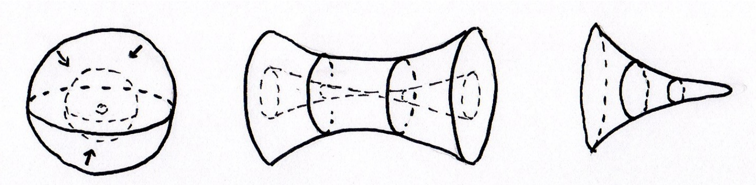
- Finite existence time $\rightsquigarrow$ singularities
- Convexity and mean convexity preserved
- Continuation through singularities as weak mean curvature flow, possibly non-unique

Background

Theorem (Gage-Hamilton ('86), Grayson ('87)): Curve shortening flow contracts a simple, closed curve in $\mathbb{R}^2$ in finite time to a 'round point'.

Theorem (Huisken ('84)): Mean curvature flow contracts a closed, convex hypersurface in $\mathbb{R}^{n+1}$ in finite time to a 'round point'.

Problem: Singularities



Monotonicity formula: backwards heat kernel based at $X_0 = (x_0, t_0)$:

$$\rho_{X_0}(x,t) = \frac{1}{(2\pi(t_0-t))^{n/2}} e^{-\frac{|x-x_0|^2}{4(t_0-t)}},$$

then

$$\frac{d}{dt}\int_{M_t} \rho_{X_0}\, d\mathcal{H}^n \leq -\int_{M_t} \left|\vec{H} + \frac{(x-x_0)^\perp}{2(t_0-t)}\right|^2 \rho_{X_0}\, d\mathcal{H}^n$$

Tangent flows: Consider $\mathcal{D}_\lambda : (x,t) \mapsto (\lambda x, \lambda^2 t)$ and $\lambda_i \to +\infty$, then subsequentially

$$\mathcal{D}_{\lambda_i}(\mathcal{M} - X_0) \rightharpoonup \mathcal{M}'.$$

and by the monotonicity formula $\mathcal{D}_\lambda(\mathcal{M}' \cap \{t<0\}) = \mathcal{M}' \cap \{t<0\}$, i.e.

$$\mathcal{M}'(t) = \sqrt{-t}\cdot\Sigma$$

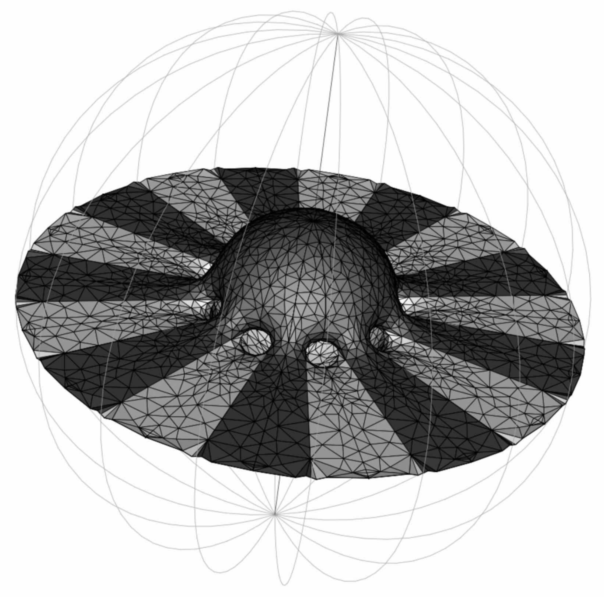
and Σ satisfies

$$\vec{H} = -\frac{x^\perp}{2}.$$

We call such a Σ a *self-shrinker*.

Examples:

- Plane: $\mathbb{R}^n \subset \mathbb{R}^{n+1}$
- Sphere: $\mathbb{S}^n_{\sqrt{2n}} \subset \mathbb{R}^{n+1}$
- (Generalized) cylinders: $\mathbb{S}^{n-k}_{\sqrt{2(n-k)}} \times \mathbb{R}^k \subset \mathbb{R}^{n+1}$ for $k = 1, \dots, n-1$
- Huisken ('90): If $H \geq 0$ (which is preserved under the evolution), then these are the only possibilities.
- Angenent ('89): torus of revolution
- Kapouleas-Kleene-Møller ('11), X.H. Nguyen ('11): desingularisation of $\mathbb{R}^2 \cup \mathbb{S}^2_2$



Tom Ilmanen's conjectural shrinker of genus 8 with 9 Scherk handles

(picture used with his permission)

Monotonicity formula and tangent flows

Structure of self-shrinkers:

- $\lim_{\lambda \searrow 0} \lambda \cdot \Sigma = C_\infty$ asymptotic cone (as sets)
- We call Σ *asymptotically conical* if C_∞ and convergence smooth
- L. Wang ('16): $\Sigma^2 \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ embedded with finite genus $\Rightarrow \Sigma^2$ has only cylindrical or smoothly conical ends ('16)
- S. Brendle ('16): the only embedded genus zero shrinkers in $\mathbb{R}^3$ are the sphere and the cylinder

Generic singulartities

Fundamental issue:

Zoo of singularities, no hope of classification

Genericity principle:

Generic solutions, obtained by small perturbations of the initial data, exhibit simpler singularities.

Conjecture (Huisken):

A generic mean curvature flow in $\mathbb{R}^3$ has only spherical and cylindrical singularities

Colding-Minicozzi ('12):

- The only linearly stable singularity models are spheres and (generalised) cylinders

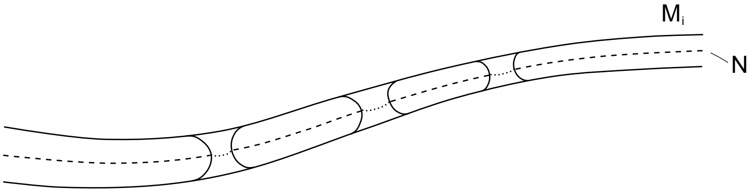
Question:

- How to perturb away unstable singularity models?
- Perturb only the initial condition, past singularities?

Perturbative results

Theorem 1 (CCMS ('20), CCS ('23)): *Let $M^\circ \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ be a closed embedded surface. There exist arbitrary small C^∞ graphs M over M° so that mean curvature flow starting at $M(0) := M$ has only spherical and cylindrical singularities for as long as its singularities have multiplicity one.*

Problem: Multiplcity



Convergence of the surfaces M_i with multiplicity two to the dotted surface N, while "necks" are pinching off.

Perturbative results

Theorem (Bamler – Kleiner ('23)): *For closed embedded surfaces $M(0) \subset \mathbb{R}^3$, mean curvature flow has only singularities with multiplicity one at the first non-generic time.*

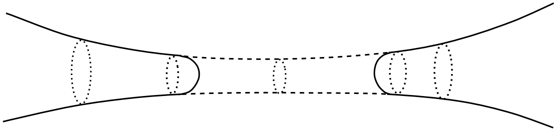
Corollary: *Let $M^\circ \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ be a closed embedded surface. There exist arbitrary small C^∞ graphs M over M° so that mean curvature flow starting at $M(0) := M$ has only multiplicity one spherical and cylindrical singularities.*

Remarks:

- A (weak) mean curvature flow with only multiplcity one generic singularities is unique.
- The space of (weak) mean curvature flows with only multiplicity one generic singularities is open. Thus the set of M in the theorem above is both dense and open.

Flows with surgery

Surgery:



- Close to a cylindrical singularity, replacing a cylindrical piece by two spherical caps.
- Surgery for mean curvature flow of 2-convex surfaces (Huisken-Sinestrari ('09), Haslhofer-Kleiner ('17), Brendle-Huisken ('16, '17))

Theorem (Daniels-Holgate ('21)): *Any (weak) mean curvature flow with only spherical and cylindrical singularities starting from a smooth closed embedded hypersurface* $M^2 \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ *can be approximated by smooth flows with surgery.*

Corollary: *Let* $M^\circ \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ *be a closed embedded surface. There exist arbitrary small* C^∞ *graphs* M *over* M° *and a smooth mean curvature flow with surgery starting from* M.

Strategy of proof of Theorem 1

- Consider $M_0 \subset \mathbb{R}^{n+1}$ a fixed hypersurface, $\mathcal{M}_0$ a weak mean curvature flow starting at M_0.
- Consider a foliation $\{M_s\}_{s\in(-1,1)}$ around M_0. Embedd the flow $\mathcal{M}_0$ into a family of (weak) flows $\mathcal{M}_s$ starting at M_s.
- Avoidance principle: $\mathcal{M}_s(t) \cap \mathcal{M}_{s'}(t) = \emptyset$ for $s \neq s'$.
- Consider (x_0, t_0) a singular point of $\mathcal{M}_0$ and $\lambda_i \to \infty$ such that $\mathcal{D}_{\lambda_i}(\mathcal{M}_0 - (x_0, t_0)) \rightharpoonup \mathcal{M}'$, a tangent flow at X.
- Pass the whole foliation to the limit simultaneously, i.e. consider the flows $\mathcal{D}_{\lambda_i}(\mathcal{M}_s - (x_0, t_0))$ as $\lambda_i \to \infty$.
- Choosing $s_i \searrow 0$ carefully as $\lambda_i \to \infty$, up to a subsequence, $\mathcal{D}_{\lambda_i}(\mathcal{M}_{s_i} - (x_0, t_0))$ will converge to a non-empty flow $\overline{\mathcal{M}}$ that stays on one side of the original tangent flow $\mathcal{M}'$ and is ancient.
- Show that $\overline{\mathcal{M}}$ is unique up to parabolic scaling, moves in a rescaled sense in one direction $\Rightarrow$ thus has only spherical and cylindrical singularities and has genus zero near $(0, 0)$.
- Use this to find a choice of s small so that $\mathcal{M}_s$ has only spherical and cylindrical singularities near (x_0, t_0) and strictly drops genus.
- Iterate this.

Thank you!