



School of Economics and Finance
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SEF Working paper: 06/2014

InfSOCsol3

An updated MATLAB® package for approximating the solution to a continuous-time infinite horizon stochastic optimal control problem

Jacek B Krawczyk and Alastair S Pharo

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Further enquiries to:

The Administrator
School of Economics and Finance
Victoria University of Wellington
P O Box 600
Wellington 6140
New Zealand

Phone: +64 4 463 5353

Email: alice.fong@vuw.ac.nz

Working Paper 06/2014
ISSN 2230-259X (Print)
ISSN 2230-2603 (Online)

InfsocSol3
**An Updated MATLAB[®] Package for Approximating the Solution to a
Continuous-Time Infinite Horizon Stochastic Optimal Control Problem**

JACEK B. KRAWCZYK & ALASTAIR S. PHARO

ABSTRACT. This paper describes a suite of MATLAB[®] routines devised to provide an approximately optimal solution to an infinite-horizon stochastic optimal control problem. The suite is an updated version of that described in [1] and [2]. Its routines implement a policy improvement algorithm to optimise a Markov decision chain approximating the original control problem, as described in [3].

2014 Working Paper
School of Economics and Finance

JEL Classification: C63 (Computational Techniques), C87 (Economic Software).
AMS Categories: 93E25 (Computational methods in stochastic optimal control).
Authors' Keywords: Computational economics, Approximating Markov decision chains.

This report documents 2014 research into
Computational Economics Methods
directed by Jacek B. Krawczyk

Correspondence should be addressed to either:

Jacek B. Krawczyk. Faculty of Commerce and Administration, Victoria University of Wellington,
PO Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand. Fax: +64-4-4635014 Email:
J.Krawczyk@vuw.ac.nz Web page: http://www.vuw.ac.nz/staff/jacek_krawczyk

Alastair S. Pharo. Email: alastair.pharo@gmail.com

*Supported by the Victoria University Research Fund, Award Number 200757.

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INTRODUCTION

Computing the solution to a stochastic optimal control problem is difficult. A method of approximating a solution to a given infinite horizon stochastic optimal control (SOC) problem using Markov chains was outlined in [3] and [4]. This paper describes a suite of MATLAB[®]¹ routines implementing this method of approximating a solution to a continuous infinite horizon SOC problem.

The suite of routines developed updates and extends that described in [2]. Changes since version 2 of InfSOCSol are described in [Appendix C](#). The presentation given here is based on that given in [6], which describes a similar suite of MATLAB[®] routines that may be used to solve finite horizon SOC problems.

The method used here deals with discounted infinite horizon stochastic optimal control problems having the form

$$(1) \quad \min_{\mathbf{u}} J(\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{x}_0) = \mathbb{E} \left[\int_0^\infty e^{-\rho t} f(\mathbf{x}(t), \mathbf{u}(t)) dt \mid \mathbf{x}(0) = \mathbf{x}_0 \right]$$

subject to

$$(2) \quad d\mathbf{x} = g(\mathbf{x}(t), \mathbf{u}(t)) dt + b(\mathbf{x}(t), \mathbf{u}(t)) d\mathbf{W}$$

where \mathbf{W} is a standard Wiener process. In the optimisation method, we also allow for constraints on the control and state variables (local and mixed).

Note: Throughout the paper, the dimension of the state space shall be denoted by d , the dimension of the control by c , and the number of variables which are affected by noise by N ($N \leq d$).

To solve (1) subject to (2) and local constraints, we developed a package of MATLAB[®] functions similar to those introduced in [6]. The package is called InfSOCSol and is composed of four main modules:

1. *solution* of an optimal control problem (`iss_solve`)
2. determination of *optimal control rules* (`iss_plot_contrule` and `iss_odm_control` functions);
3. *simulation* of trajectories (`iss_plot_sim` and `iss_sim` functions); and
4. determination of expected value (`iss_plot_valgraph` and `iss_sim` functions).

InfSOCSol offers both a “high-level” and a “low-level” API, depending on the needs and preferences of the user. The former is oriented towards interactive or analytic usage. It is intended to be quick to get going with, and requires fewer lines of code. The latter are provided to enable embedding of InfSOCSol into other software.²

In the solution module, the `iss_solve` function provides a single interface for computing approximate numerical solutions to SOC problems. It uses a policy improvement algorithm to optimise a Markov decision chain approximating the original control problem, as described in [3]. The resulting solution can then be stored to disk for later analysis (using the `ProblemFile` configuration setting; see [Section 2](#)), or used directly.

¹See [5] for an introduction to MATLAB[®].

²An example of such embedding is VIKAASA; see [7].

In the optimal control module, the solution is used to determine the continuous-time, continuous-state control to apply for a given situation. The low-level interface provides a function (`iss_odm_control`) that takes a state-space point and returns the optimal control for that point. The high-level interface (`iss_plot_contrule`) plots a graph showing how the control rule is affected by system state.

In the simulation module the control rule is used to simulate trajectories from a given start state, optionally perturbed by random noise. The high-level API provides a function (`iss_plot_sim`) that plots time profiles showing how the values of the system's state-space points and controls vary over as the system evolves. The low-level API provides direct access to simulation data via `iss_sim`.

In the value determination module, a high-level function (`iss_plot_valgraph`) is provided for plotting changes to the system's expected value, as the initial conditions change. It uses the simulation module to determine expected value.

1. BASIC PROBLEM SPECIFICATION

In order to run InfSOCSol, it is necessary to define your problem. There are four basic details that InfSOCSol requires:

DeltaFunction is a function that represents the problem's equations of motion.³

- If the problem is deterministic, the function should return a vector of length d corresponding to the value of $g(\mathbf{x}(t), \mathbf{u}(t))$.
- If the problem is stochastic then the function should return a vector of length $2d$, the first d elements of which are $g(\mathbf{x}(t), \mathbf{u}(t))$ and the second d elements of which are $b(\mathbf{x}(t), \mathbf{u}(t))$. If some of the variables are undisturbed by noise, (i.e., $N < d$), then the variables for which the diffusion term is constantly 0 must follow those that are disturbed by noise.

In either case the function should have a signature of the form

```
function Value = Delta(Control, StateVariables, Time)
```

where **Control** is a vector of length c , **StateVariables** is a vector of length d , and **Time** should be ignored. The **Time** argument is included in order to allow reuse of function files between InfSOCSol and the finite-horizon SOCSol4L package (see [6]).

CostFunction is a function giving the instantaneous cost function $f(\mathbf{x}(t), \mathbf{u}(t))$.⁴

The function should have a signature of the form

³Functions can be passed to InfSOCSol in any format that `feval` accepts. That is, strings representing function names, function handles or "inline" (anonymous) functions, as created with the `inline` command. Note however that because the the high-level API works by saving and loading data to disk, some function formats may not work as well as others. For this reason, it is suggested throughout this manual to write your functions in stand-alone files that are in the MATLAB[®] path, and to pass functions to InfSOCSol as plain strings. See [Section 7](#) for more information, and [Appendix A](#) for an example using string function names.

⁴A maximisation problem can be converted into a minimisation problem by multiplying the performance criterion by -1 . Consequently, if the SOC problem to be solved involves maximisation, the negative of its instantaneous cost should be specified in **CostFunction**.

function Value = Cost(Control, StateVariables, Time, Conf)

where **Control** is a vector of length c and **StateVariables** is a vector of length d . As with the **DeltaFunction**, **Time** should be ignored.

The third argument, **Conf**, is a configuration data-structure which can be accessed if the cost function needs to make use of other information – see [Section 2](#) for more details. As with the **DeltaFunction**, it is possible to reuse cost functions written for InfSOCSol in SOCSol4L (see [6]), but because SOCSol4L does not pass in a **Conf** parameter, you will need to use a **varargin** term.

StateLB is a row vector of length d giving the lower bounds of the rectangular area over which solutions to the SOC problem will be sought.

StateUB is a row vector of length d giving the upper bounds corresponding to those lower bounds given by **StateLB**. It must be the same length as **StateLB**.

By default, the search space given by **StateLB** and **StateUB** is discretised (as described in [Section 3](#)) into 11^d points. The number of points can however be changed by way of the **StateStepSize** configuration setting. See [Section 2](#) for more details.

The solution can be disturbed close to the state boundaries **StateLB** and **StateUB**. Consequently, these should be chosen “generously.” Of course, larger state grids require greater computation times.

2. OPTIONS AND CONFIGURATION

2.1. Purpose. All the modules in InfSOCSol accept a common set of options. In the low-level API, these options are managed using the **iss_conf** function. In the high-level API, these options are specified once using the **iss_solve** command, and are then saved to disk. Any option that is not specified will get a default value, so it is not necessary to specify any of these options unless the default is not satisfactory.

2.2. Options. A full list of options follows, with defaults given in parentheses. Some options are only useful in very particular applications.

2.2.1. Options passed to fmincon. InfSOCSol uses **fmincon** to perform numerical optimisation. These options are either passed directly as parameters to **fmincon**, or are passed as options via **optimset**.

See *Optimization Toolbox: fmincon* in MATLAB[®] help for further information about many of these options.

A, **b**, **Aeq**, **beq** (all []). **A** and **b** allow for the imposition of the linear inequality constraint(s) $\mathbf{A}\mathbf{u} \leq \mathbf{b}$ on the control variable(s). In general, **A** is a matrix and **b** is a vector. If left empty (i.e., []). then the problem is treated as having no linear inequality constraints on the control variable(s).

Aeq and **beq** allow for the imposition of the linear equality constraint(s) $\mathbf{Aeq} \cdot \mathbf{u} = \mathbf{beq}$ on the control variable(s). In general, **Aeq** is a matrix and **beq** is a vector. If left empty (i.e., []). then the problem is treated as having no linear equality constraints on the control variable(s).

UserConstraintFunctionFile ([]). A reference to a MATLAB[®] function representing the problem constraints (in particular, non-linear problem constraints). This parameter corresponds to the `nonlcon` parameter in `fmincon`. Although any function handle can be used, it is recommended to pass a string containing the function name (no `.m` extension), as for **DeltaFunction**.

This function should return the value of inequality constraints as a vector **Value1** and the value of equality constraints as a vector **Value2**, where inequality constraints are written in the form $k(\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{x}) \leq 0$ and equality constraints are written in the form $keq(\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{x}) = 0$.

The function should have a header of the form

```
function [Value1, Value2] = Constraint(u, x, Conf)
```

where \mathbf{u} is a vector of length c , \mathbf{x} is a vector of length d , and **Conf** is a configuration data-structure as described in [Section 2.3](#). This means that all options (including default values) can be accessed via **Conf.Options**. For instance it is often helpful to make use of the time step for the relevant Markov chain time in constraints. This can be accessed as **Conf.Options.TimeStep**.

The default value ([]) indicates that there are no constraints requiring the use of a **UserConstraintFunctionFile**.

DerivativeCheck, **Diagnostics**, **DiffMaxChange**, **DiffMinChange**, **Display**, **LargeScale**, **MaxIter**, **MaxSQPIter**, **OutputFcn**, **TolCon**, **TolFun**, **TolX**, **Algorithm**, **UseParallel**. These options are all passed through to `fmincon` as options, using the `optimset` command.

See [5] for more information on what these options do. A description of some of the more important options, with their default values in `InfSOCsol` are as follows:

1. **Display** ('off'). This controls `fmincon`'s display level. The default value is 'off' (no display), but **Display** may also be set to 'iter' (display output for each of `fmincon`'s iterations), 'final' (display final output for each call to `fmincon`) and 'notify' (display output only if non-convergence is encountered).
2. **Diagnostics** ('off'). This controls whether `fmincon` prints diagnostic information about the cost-to-go functions that it minimises.
3. **MaxFunEvals** (100c). This sets `fmincon`'s maximum allowable number of function evaluations. The default value is dependent on the number of controls, c .
4. **MaxIter** (400). This sets `fmincon`'s maximum allowable number of iterations. It may be set to any natural number.
5. **MaxSQPIter** (Inf). This sets `fmincon`'s maximum allowable number of sequential quadratic programming steps. The default value is ∞ , but **MaxSQPIter** may be set to any natural number.
6. **TolCon** (1e-6). This sets `fmincon`'s termination tolerance on constraint violation. The default value is 10^{-6} , but **TolCon** may be set to any positive real number.
7. **TolFun** (1e-6). This sets `fmincon`'s termination tolerance on function evaluation. The default value is 10^{-6} , but **TolFun** may be set to any positive real number.
8. **TolX** (1e-6). This sets `fmincon`'s termination tolerance on optimal control evaluation. The default value is 10^{-6} , but **TolX** may be set to any positive real number.

9. **Algorithm** ('active-set'). This determines the underlying optimisation algorithm used by `fmincon`. In general, the `active-set` and `sqp` algorithms appear to work well with `InfSOCsol`. The set of available algorithms differs depending on the version of MATLAB[®] being used.
 10. **UseParallel** ('never'). This option can be switched on in order to tell `fmincon` to use more than one CPU. It is not recommended to turn on this option, as it is not compatible with `InfSOCsol`'s **PoolSize** option.
- If necessary, it is also possible to set:
11. **DerivativeCheck** ('off'). This controls whether `fmincon` compares user-supplied analytic derivatives (e.g., gradients or Jacobians) to finite differencing derivatives. The default value is 'off', but **DerivativeCheck** may also be set to 'on'.
 12. **DiffMaxChange** (1e-1). This sets `fmincon`'s maximum allowable change in variables for finite difference derivatives. The default value is 0.1, but **DiffMaxChange** may be set to any positive real number.
 13. **DiffMinChange** (1e-8). This sets `fmincon`'s minimum allowable change in variables for finite difference derivatives. The default value is 10^{-8} , but **DiffMaxChange** may be set to any positive real number.
 14. **OutputFcn** ([]). A string containing the name (no `.m` extension) of a file containing a MATLAB[®] function that is to be called by `fmincon` at each of its iterations. Such a function is typically used to retrieve/display additional data from `fmincon`.

See *Optimization Toolbox: Function Reference: Output Function* in MATLAB[®] help for more information on output functions.

For more information on `fmincon`, and `fmincon` options in particular, see *Optimization Toolbox: fmincon* and *Optimization Toolbox: Function Reference: Optimization Parameters* in MATLAB[®] help.

2.2.2. *Discretisation.* These options control the discretisation of time and space in the discrete numerical approximation of the real continuous problem.

StateStepSize ((`StateUB` – `StateLB`)/ 10). A row vector of length d which determines the distances between points of the state grid. It has to be chosen so that its entry corresponding to the i^{th} state variable exactly divides the difference between the corresponding entries of `StateLB` and `StateUB`. Of course, step size need not be the same for all state variables.

TimeStep (1). The scalar δ to be used when formulating the Markov decision chain approximating the SOC problem (see [3]). As small values of δ are frequently advantageous and computation time depends predominantly on the size of the `StateStep`, a relatively small choice **TimeStep** is advisable.

2.2.3. *Simulation options.* These options are used by `iss_sim`, `iss_plot_sim` and `iss_plot_valgraph` to control `InfSOCsol`'s simulation behaviour. For stochastic control problems, see also [Section 2.2.4](#).

NumberOfSimulations (1). This is the number of simulations that should be performed. Multiple simulations are normally performed when dealing with a stochastic system. Each simulation uses a randomly determined noise realisation (unless this is suppressed by the **UserSuppliedNoise** argument).

By default only a single simulation is performed.

LineStyle ('r-'). This specifies the line style, marker symbol and colour of time-paths. It is a string of the format discussed in the *MATLAB[®] Functions: LineSpec* section of MATLAB[®] help.

The default value gives a solid red line without markers.

TimepathOfInterest (0). This is an integer between 0 and $d + c$ (inclusive) that specifies which time-path(s) `iss_plot_sim` is to plot. If **TimepathOfInterest** is passed as zero `iss_plot_sim` plots time-paths for all state and control variables. Otherwise, if **TimepathOfInterest** is passed the value $i > 0$, `InfSim` plots the time-path of the i^{th} variable, where state variables precede control variables.

UserSuppliedNoise (-1). This entirely optional argument enables the user to override the random generation of noise realisations. If **UserSuppliedNoise** is passed the value 0, a constantly zero noise realisation is used. Otherwise, **UserSuppliedNoise** should be passed a matrix with N columns and a row for each entry of **SimulationTimeStep**. A value of -1 (the default) disables this feature, causing random noise to be generated instead. See also [Section 2.2.4](#).

Note that **NumberOfSimulations** should be 1 if **UserSuppliedNoise** is specified. If **UserSuppliedNoise** is left unspecified, `iss_sim` randomly selects a standard Gaussian noise realisation for each simulation. Naturally, **UserSuppliedNoise** has no effect on deterministic problems.

SimulationEnd (250). The final time value T at the end of simulation. The default value sets $T = 250$.

SimulationTimeStep (`ones(1, 250)`). This is a vector of step lengths that partition interval $[0, T]$; i.e., their sum should be T .

With more simulation steps there is less error in approximating the equations of motion using the Euler-Maruyama scheme and in approximating the performance criterion using the left-hand endpoint rectangle method.

The default value agrees with the default value of **SimulationEnd**, and partitions the time interval evenly into 250 blocks of unit-length.

VariableOfInterest (1). A scalar telling `iss_plot_contrule` and `iss_plot_valgraph` the index of the state variable to vary, i.e., numbers like “1” or “2” etc. have to be entered in accordance with the state variables’ order in the function **DeltaFunction**. The control rule profile appears with the nominated state variable along the horizontal axis.

ScaleFactor (1). A scalar used for plotting expected value graphs using `iss_plot_valgraph`. Maximisation problems must have all payoffs replaced by their negatives before entry into `iss_solve`, as it assumes that problems require minimisation. Setting the **ScaleFactor** to -1 “corrects” the sign on payoffs for maximisation problems.

2.2.4. *Stochastic control options.* These options control how `InfSOCSol` behaves when optimising and simulating a problem involving a stochastic process.

StochasticProblem (0). This should be set to 1 if your problem is stochastic. The default value is 0, i.e., the problem is assumed to be deterministic.

NoisyVars (d). This should be set to the number N , if $N < d$. The default value is d , i.e., all variables are assumed to be noisy. If the problem is deterministic, `InfSOCSol` ignores the value of this option.

NoiseSteps, **Noise** and **NoiseProb** (2, $[-1, 1]$ and $[1/2, 1/2]$, respectively). These options control how InfSOCSol determines transition probabilities in stochastic settings using an Euler-Maruyama approximation (see [3] and [4]). By default InfSOCSol constructs a “two-point” random variable, but could use a different scheme by altering these values.

2.2.5. Other options.

ProblemFile ([]). This is the prefix used to determine the file names to use to save results from running `iss_solve`. If specified, two files called `<<ProblemFile>>_options.mat` and `<<ProblemFile>>_solution.mat` will be created upon successful completion of `iss_solve`. The former contains all options used to run `iss_solve`, and the latter contains the resulting solution. Both files are in MATLAB[®]'s `.MAT` format, which can be opened and inspected using the `load` function.

DiscountRate (0.9). The scalar ρ .

ControlDimension (1). This specifies the value c for your problem. It must be given as a natural number (in a string). The default value is 1, indicating that there is only one control.

ControlLB and **ControlUB** (`-Inf` and `Inf`, respectively). In general, vectors of lower and upper bounds (respectively) on the control variables. Setting **ControlLB** to `-Inf` (the default) indicates a single control variable with no lower bound. Similarly, the default value of `Inf` for **ControlUB** indicates no upper bound as well. These vectors must have length of c (i.e., the value of **ControlDimension**).

Debug (0). If set to 1, `iss_solve` will output additional information to the MATLAB[®] console while running. This can be helpful in trying to understand how a particular solution is arrived at.

PolicyIterations (25). This specifies the maximum number of *value iterations* that may be performed in seeking a solution (see [3]). The default value is 25.

PoolSize (1). This specifies the number of CPUs to employ in running InfSOCSol. Any value higher than 1 requires that MATLAB[®] have access to the Parallel Computing Toolbox. See [Section 8](#) for more information.

TransProbMin (0.01). When using sparse matrices, this is the minimum transition probability that is considered significant. See [Section 9](#) for more details.

2.3. Configuring InfSOCSol. Each function in InfSOCSol presents the same uniform interface for configuration. Any of the options described in [Section 2.2](#) can be set at any time, regardless of whether they are useful at that stage. For instance, simulation options can be passed to `iss_solve`, even though they will not be useful until a simulation function (e.g., `iss_sim`) is called.

A *configuration data-structure* can be created by passing options to `iss_conf`. The syntax for this is as follows:

```
Conf = iss_conf(StateLB, StateUB, ...
                'Option1', value1, ...
                'Option2', value2, [...]);
```

where '[...]' is used to indicate that any number of options can be supplied. Here, `StateLB` and `StateUB` are vectors giving the minimum and maximum state-space points respectively, as detailed in [Section 1](#).⁵

It is also possible to obtain a configuration data-structure using only the default options:

```
Conf = iss_conf(StateLB, StateUB);
```

An existing configuration data-structure can be altered or augmented by passing it to `iss_conf` as follows:

```
Conf = iss_conf(StateLB, StateUB, OldConf, ...
                'Option1', value1, ...
                'Option2', value2, [...]);
```

or:

```
Options = struct('Option1', value1, ...
                 'Option2', value2, [...]);
Conf = iss_conf(StateLB, StateUB, OldConf, Options);
```

where `OldConf` is a configuration data-structure returned from a previous call to `iss_conf`.

The only difference between the two formats described above is that in the second instance, a `struct` has been created and passed through to `iss_conf`, whereas in the first instance, the `struct` is created implicitly. In either case, if no additional options are passed, the original `OldConf` data-structure will be returned unaltered.

Configuration options can be passed directly to InfSOCsol commands. For instance,

```
iss_sim(InitialCondition, ODM, ...
        DeltaFunction, CostFunction, ...
        StateLB, StateUB, ...
        'Option1', value1, ...
        'Option2', value2, [...]);
```

For low-level commands, this is generally a short-hand alternative to explicitly building a data-structure with the given options using `iss_conf` and then passing that data-structure to the command in question, as in the following example.

```
Conf = iss_conf(StateLB, StateUB, ...
                'Option1', value1, ...
                'Option2', value2, [...]);
iss_sim(InitialCondition, ODM, ...
        DeltaFunction, CostFunction, ...
        StateLB, StateUB, Conf);
```

⁵Note that the resulting `Conf` object will depend upon the values given for `StateLB` and `StateUB`. That is, it is not advisable to change these values without also re-running `iss_conf`.

When using the high-level API however (e.g., `iss_plot_sim`) building a configuration using `iss_conf` is not recommended, as the resulting configuration data-structure may override settings in the file. If this is required for some reason, the in-file configuration should be loaded first using `iss_load_conf`, as in the following example.

```
% Load settings from ProblemFile
[DeltaFunction, CostFunction, StateLB, StateUB, Conf] = ...
    iss_load_conf(ProblemFile);

% Augment settings using iss_conf, using StateLB and StateUB from the
% ProblemFile.
Conf = iss_conf(StateLB, StateUB, Conf, ...
    'Option1', value1, ...
    'Option2', value2, [...]);

% Pass the augmented configuration to iss_plot_sim.
iss_plot_sim('MyFile', InitialCondition, Conf);
```

Once a configuration data-structure has been created, all options passed to it (or the default values where no option was passed) are accessible via the `Options` field of the data-structure. For instance, the following retrieves the time-step, h .

```
% Assuming Conf has already been created/loaded ...
h = Conf.Options.TimeStep;
```

It is also possible to edit the configuration options in-place, but this is not recommended. Instead, one should pass the configuration data-structure to `iss_conf` in order to alter options.

More details and examples are given in the subsequent sections. Note that because setting up options will typically span multiple lines, it is easiest to define these arguments in a script, and then call that script in MATLAB[®]. See [Appendix A](#) for an example of this.

3. SOLUTION OF AN OPTIMAL CONTROL PROBLEM

3.1. Purpose. This section details using the `iss_solve` command from `InfSOCSol` to approximate a solution to a SOC problem with a Markov decision chain. When a `ProblemFile` option is given, both the configuration (as described in [Section 2.3](#) and the solution are saved to disk, and can hence be subsequently accessed using `iss_plot_contrule`, `iss_plot_sim` and `iss_plot_valgraph`.

3.2. Basic syntax. `iss_solve` is called as follows.

```
[ODM, UOptimal, Value, Flags] = ...
    iss_solve(DeltaFunction, CostFunction, ...
    StateLB, StateUB, Conf);
```

The parameters and return values are as follows. Unless using the low-level API, the return values can be ignored.

DeltaFunction, **CostFunction**, **StateLB** and **StateUB** are the core problem details, as described in [Section 1](#).

Conf can be a configuration data-structure, a sequence of name-value pairs, or a combination of these two, as described in [Section 2.3](#). It can also be omitted to use the default options.

ODM is a cell array containing the optimal control rules for each state in the discretised state space considered by InfSOCSol. It is not usually necessary to view the contents of this struct, but it is needed by low-level functions such as `iss_odm_control` and `iss_sim`. There are c cells in the array, and each cell contains a vector of length equal to the total number of discretised state space points.

UOptimal is the same data as in **ODM**, but arranged orthogonally. That is, the number of cells in the array is equal to the total number of discretised state space points, and each cell in the array is a vector of length c .

Value is a vector of length equal to the total number of discretised state space points, giving the value determination given in the last iteration of `iss_solve`. For more information on how to interpret this, refer to [\[3\]](#).

Flags is a cell array of length equal to the total number of discretised state space points, giving the value of any flags returned by `fmincon` when considering each individual point. Flag values are described [\[5\]](#), and are otherwise ignored by InfSOCSol.

3.3. High-level API. If intending to use the high-level API, it is important to specify a **ProblemFile** option at this stage. In this case the return values of the call to `iss_solve` can be ignored. For instance,

```
iss_solve(DeltaFunction, CostFunction, ...
          StateLB, StateUB, ...
          'ProblemFile', 'my_problem_file', ...
          [...]);
```

where `[...]` is used to indicate any other options used, as detailed in [Section 2](#). This will create two `.MAT` files, `my_problem_file_options.mat` and `my_problem_file_solution.mat`, containing the problem description and the problem solution, respectively. The string `'my_problem_file'` can then be used to refer to these files when doing analysis using the high-level API.

3.4. Output. While running, `iss_solve` will output information the MATLAB[®] console. An example of what would be printed is as follows.⁶

```
* Iteration #1 ... completed.
* Iteration #2 ... completed; norm: 0.146290; # of differences: 142.
* Iteration #3 ... completed; norm: 0.020000; # of differences: 19.
* Iteration #4 ... completed; norm: 0.000001; # of differences: 8.
```

⁶If the **Debug** option is turned on, then this output will contain additional information.

– Norm is less than stopping tolerance of 0.005000; Stopping.

- * Final value determination: -1574.665142
- * Number of policy iterations: 4
- * Errors: 137
- * Error Percentage: 12.580349

Each “iteration” represents an iteration of the policy improvement algorithm (see [3]). From the second iteration onwards a check is performed to see whether that iteration resulted in a “significant” change in policy. This is determined by comparing the Euclidean norm of the the change in policy against a stopping tolerance level, currently hard-coded to be $5 \times 10^{d-5}$.⁷ If the change is less than this stopping tolerance, the algorithm terminates and returns the control policy determined by the last completed policy improvement round.

The “final value determination” gives the value of $J(\dots)$ in the last point in the discretised state space.

The number of errors is also displayed. This is the number of states in the state space for which `fmincon` returned a `Flag` value that was not equal to 1. Values that are not 1 are not necessarily a cause for concern, but if the percentage of such states is high, then it may be worth checking the `Flags` value returned by `iss_solve` to see what is going wrong. See [5] for more information on how to interpret the individual flag values.

4. DETERMINATION OF OPTIMAL CONTROL RULES

4.1. **Purpose.** Having solved a SOC problem using `iss_solve`, `InfSOCSol` can be used to produce controls for given state-space points.

4.2. **High-level interface.** `iss_plot_contrule` produces graphs of the continuous-time, continuous-state control rule derived from the solution computed by `InfSOCSol`. Each control rule graph holds all but one state variable constant.

`iss_plot_contrule` is called as follows.

```
iss_plot_contrule(ProblemFile, InitialCondition, Conf);
```

The parameters in question are as follows.

`ProblemFile` is a string designating the pair of files saved by `iss_solve` containing the SOC problem’s details and its solution. See Section 2.2.5 for more information.

`InitialCondition` is a row vector of length d giving a point in the state space to use for constructing the plot. The plot will change the variable whose index is given by the `VariableOfInterest` option (defaults to 1) from its minimum to maximum value, as

⁷The norm is calculated as $\sqrt{((u_{1,1,i} - u_{1,1,i-1})^2 + \dots + (u_{1,n,i} - u_{1,n,i-1})^2) + \dots + ((u_{c,1,i} - u_{c,1,i-1})^2 + \dots + (u_{c,n,i} - u_{c,n,i-1})^2)}$ where n is the total number of discretised states under consideration (see 2.2.2), and $u_{a,b,c}$ is the control policy produced for dimension a , in state b from policy improvement iteration c .

determined by the `StateLB` and `StateUB` parameters provided to `iss_solve`, thereby drawing a line through the state-space that intersects with `InitialCondition`.

`Conf` can be either a configuration data-structure, a sequence of name-value pairs, or it may be omitted entirely. Any options that are passed will be merged with those originally passed to `iss_solve`. See [Section 2.3](#) for more information.

Options that are of particular relevance here are `VariableOfInterest`, which controls which variable will be changed, and `LineSpec`, which controls how the line in the plot appears. These options can be set at plot time, as shown in the following example.

```
iss_plot_contrule(ProblemFile, InitialCondition, ...
                 'VariableOfInterest', 2, ...
                 'LineSpec', '+');
```

If they are not set, then the values passed to `iss_solve` will be used, or otherwise, the defaults.

`iss_plot_contrule` may also be called with a single output argument, as in the following example.

```
ContValues = iss_plot_contrule('ProblemFile', InitialCondition, Conf);
```

In this instance, `InfContrule` also assigns the output argument the values of the control rules in the form of an $M \times c$ array, where

$$M = \frac{\text{StateUB}_{\text{VariableOfInterest}} - \text{StateLB}_{\text{VariableOfInterest}}}{\text{StateStep}_{\text{VariableOfInterest}}} + 1.$$

That is, the rows of this array correspond to points of the `VariableOfInterest`th dimension of the state grid, while its columns correspond to control dimensions.

4.3. Low-level interface. The function `iss_odm_control` can be used to return a single control vector for a given state-space point. To do this, it requires the `ODM` object returned by `iss_solve`.

```
ODM = iss_solve(DeltaFunction, CostFunction, StateLB, StateUB, Conf);
U = iss_odm_control(ODM, MyStateVector, StateLB, StateUB, Conf);
```

The first function call here uses `iss_solve` to generate a solution to the SOC problem. This solution is then fed into the call to `iss_odm_control`, along with a row vector `MyStateVector`, giving a state-space point.

As explained in [Section 2.3](#), `Conf` can either be a sequence of name-value pairs, or a configuration data-structure (or a mixture). Note however that it is necessary to pass the same values for `StateLB`, `StateUB` and `Conf` to both function calls in order to get sensible results. For this reason, it is recommended to build an configuration data-structure using `iss_conf`.

The return value, `U` will be a row vector of length `c`, giving the optimal control policy at for the given state, according to `InfSOCSol`.

5. SIMULATION OF TRAJECTORIES

5.1. **Purpose.** This section describes how to run simulations using the continuous-time, continuous-state control rule derived from the solution computed by `iss_solve`. `iss_plot_sim` provides a high-level API for plotting time-paths of the state and control variables and the associated performance criterion values for one or more simulations. `iss_sim` provides a corresponding low-level interface for use when embedding simulation functionality in other MATLAB[®] code.

5.2. **Implementation.** The derivation of the continuous-time, continuous-state control rule from the solution computed by `iss_solve` requires some form of interpolation in both state and time. In the effort to keep the script simple the interpolation in state is linear. States which are outside the state grid simply move to the nearest state grid point. For times between Markov chain times, the control profile for the most recent Markov chain time is used.

The differential equation which governs the evolution of the system is simulated by interpolation of its Euler-Maruyama approximation. The performance criterion integral is approximated using the left-hand endpoint rectangle rule.

5.3. **High-level API.** `iss_plot_sim` is called as follows.

```
SimulatedValue = iss_plot_sim(ProblemFile, InitialCondition, Conf);
```

The parameters and return value in question are as follows.

ProblemFile is a string containing the name (with no extension) of the problem. This name is used to retrieve the solution produced by `iss_solve` from the disk. See [Section 2.2.5](#) for more information.

InitialCondition is a row vector of length d that contains the initial condition: the point from which the simulation starts.

SimulatedValue, the return value of the function call, is a vector of the values of the performance criterion for each of the simulations performed. It can safely be ignored if not required.

If the problem is stochastic and noise realisations are random, then the average of the values from a large number of simulations can be used as an approximation to the expected value of the continuous stochastic system (under the continuous-time, continuous-state control rule derived from the solution computed by `iss_solve`). This average is left for the user to compute.

Conf can be either a configuration data-structure, a sequence of name-value pairs, or it may be omitted entirely. Any options that are passed will be merged with those originally passed to `iss_solve`. See [Section 2.3](#) for more information, and [Section 2.2.3](#) in particular.

5.4. **Low-level API.** `inf_sim` is called as follows.

```
[SimulatedValue, StateEvolution, DeltaEvolution, Control] = ...  
    iss_sim(InitialCondition, ODM, ...
```

```

DeltaFunction, CostFunction, ...
StateLB, StateUB, Conf);

```

The parameters and return values in question are as follows.

InitialCondition is the the same as described in [Section 5.3](#).

ODM is the solution data-structure returned by `iss_solve`.

DeltaFunction, **CostFunction**, **StateLB** and **StateUB** give the basic problem specification.

They are described in [Section 1](#).

Conf can either be a sequence of name-value pairs, a configuration data-structure (or a mixture), or it may be omitted, as described in [Section 2.3](#). Configuration options of particular relevance to `iss_sim` are described in [Section 2.2.3](#).

SimulatedValue is a cell-array, each element of which is a scalar giving the value of a simulation run.

StateEvolution is a cell-array, each element of which is a matrix with d rows giving the simulation's trajectory in the state space. Each row of the matrix corresponds to a state-space point, and the number of columns matches the length of the **SimulationTimeStep** option, plus one.

DeltaEvolution is a cell-array, each element of which is a matrix with d rows, each row giving the value of the problem's equations of motion a discretised time step, as specified in **SimulationTimeStep**. The number columns in each matrix is equal to the length of **SimulationTimeStep**.

Control is a cell-array, each element of which is a matrix with c rows, each row giving the control choice made by `iss_sim` at a discretised time step, as specified by **SimulationTimeStep**. The number columns in each matrix is equal to the length of **SimulationTimeStep**.

6. DETERMINATION OF EXPECTED VALUE

6.1. Purpose. This section details the process of computing expected values for the continuous system (under the continuous-time, continuous-state control rule derived from the solution computed by `iss_solve`) as the initial conditions change. Only a high-level API (`iss_plot_valgraph`) is provided for this purpose, as expected values are already returned by `iss_sim` for low-level use.

In a similar spirit to `iss_plot_contrule` above, it deals with one state variable at a time (identified by **VariableOfInterest**), while the other state variables remain fixed.

6.2. Syntax. `iss_plot_valgraph` is called as follows.

```

iss_plot_valgraph(ProblemFile, InitialCondition, ...
VariableOfInterestValues, Conf);

```

The parameters are as follows.

ProblemFile is a string containing the name (with no extension) of the problem. This name is used to retrieve the solution produced by `iss_solve` from the disk. See [Section 2.2.5](#) for more information.

InitialCondition is a vector determining the values of the fixed state variables, as described in [Section 5.3](#).

VariableOfInterestValues is a vector containing the values of the **VariableOfInterest** at which the system's performance is to be evaluated. **VariableOfInterest** defaults to 1, but it can be changed by specifying its value as an option.

Conf can either be a sequence of name-value pairs, a configuration data-structure (or a mixture), or it may be omitted, as described in [Section 2.3](#). Configuration options of particular relevance to `iss_plot_valgraph` are described in [Section 2.2.3](#). In particular, **ScaleFactor** can be used to scale the the value graph by a constant. A negative number can be used to reverse the sign; useful when the “true” problem involves maximisation.

7. LOADING AND SAVING

7.1. Purpose. This section describes low-level functions included in InfSOCSol for saving and loading configuration and solution files. It is usually not necessary to use these functions directly, unless interacting with the low-level API.

`iss_save_conf` can be used to save a complete InfSOCSol problem description. Usage is as follows.

```
iss_save_conf(DeltaFunction, CostFunction, ...  
             StateLB, StateUB, Conf);
```

DeltaFunction, **CostFunction**, **StateLB** and **StateUB** are the basic SOC problem details as described in [Section 1](#). **Conf** is a configuration data-structure, as described in [Section 2.3](#). Note that unlike elsewhere in InfSOCSol, options cannot be provided directly to `iss_save_conf`.

This function will find the **ProblemFile** option in the configuration file, and save to a file called `<<ProblemFile>>_options.mat` in `.MAT` format.

`iss_load_conf` can be used to restore a SOC problem previously saved using `iss_save_conf`. Usage is as follows.

```
[DeltaFunction, CostFunction, StateLB, StateUB, Conf] = ...  
  iss_load_conf(ProblemFile);
```

As elsewhere, **ProblemFile** should be a string giving only the prefix part of the file name (i.e., omitting the `_options.mat` part). The values returned should be identical to the ones passed to `iss_save_conf`.

Note that MATLAB[®]'s behaviour when loading data involving anonymous or inline functions is not well understood by the authors. It appears to be necessary at least to have the file where the functions were defined present in the MATLAB[®] path, but there may be additional requirements. This can be a source of problems if attempting to use the `iss_save_conf` and `iss_load_conf` functions with a **DeltaFunction** or a **CostFunction** that is not defined in its own file. To avoid these issues it is recommended always define these functions as separate files, and to refer to them using strings, (e.g., `'MyCostFunc'`) rather than function handles (e.g., `@MyCostFunc`).

`iss_save_solution` is used by `iss_solve` to save the solution from a successful run into a file. Using this function, one could potentially override a solution provided by `iss_solve` and then use that solution with the other functions provided in `InfSOCSol`, such as `iss_sim` or `iss_plot_valgraph`. Usage is as follows.

```
iss_save_solution(ODM, Conf);
```

`ODM` should be a cell array as described in [Section 3.2](#), and `Conf` should be a configuration data-structure created by `iss_conf`, as defined in [Section 2.3](#). The solution will be saved to a file called `<<ProblemFile>>_solution.mat` in `.MAT` format, where `ProblemFile` should be given via an option in the configuration data-structure.

`iss_load_solution` can be used to retrieve the solution to an SOC problem previously solved using `iss_solve`. Usage is as follows.

```
ODM = iss_load_solution(Conf);
```

The file to be loaded will be given by the `ProblemFile` option in the `Conf` configuration data-structure.

8. USING MULTIPLE CPUS

`InfSOCSol` provides the ability to utilise multiple CPUs in parallel using the `PoolSize` option (see [Section 2.2](#)). In `MATLAB`[®], this uses the `parfor` loop construct, and requires that the `MATLAB`[®] Parallel Toolbox be available.

Using parallel processors can significantly reduce the amount of time needed to run `iss_solve` and `iss_sim` (and other high-level functions that depend on `iss_sim`). However, it is important to note that it comes at the cost of increased memory usage. For problems with very large numbers of state space points to consider, memory usage can become as much of an issue as computation time, so it is important to be aware of both when deciding how many processors to use.

`InfSOCSol` will start and stop a worker pool automatically if one is not already running. If one is running, the `InfSOCSol` will attempt to detect whether it is running as the master process or as a worker process. In the former case, the parallel functionality will be enabled using the existing worker set-up. This means that the number of workers may not correspond to the `PoolSize` option. If running in a worker process, `InfSOCSol` will behave as if it is running on a single CPU, as it is not possible for workers to spawn more workers in `MATLAB`[®]. Whenever a worker pool is already running when `InfSOCSol` starts, it will not attempt to shut it down upon completion. This means that `InfSOCSol` can be embedded within other software that is already managing the worker pool without conflict.

9. LARGE PROBLEMS AND SPARSE MATRICES

`InfSOCSol` will automatically start using sparse matrices for certain operations in `iss_solve` whenever there are more than 5000 discretised state-space points under consideration. If

this happens, a message is displayed on the MATLAB® console. This is done in order to avoid exceeding MATLAB®'s size limitations with normal matrices.

When sparse matrices are in use, the **TransProbMin** option becomes significant. Reducing this number will increase the accuracy of the SOC solution, but at the cost of using more memory.

APPENDICES

A. SIMPLE EXAMPLE OF USAGE

This example corresponds to that given in the appendix of [6] (and to *Example 2.3.1* of [8]), but with discounting and an infinite horizon.

A.1. Optimisation Problem. The optimisation problem is determined in \mathbb{R}^1 by

$$(3) \quad \min_u J(u, x_0) := \frac{1}{2} \int_0^\infty e^{-\rho t} (u(t)^2 + x(t)^2) dt$$

subject to

$$(4) \quad \dot{x} = u, \text{ and}$$

$$(5) \quad x(0) = \frac{1}{2}.$$

As this problem is formulated with an infinite horizon, discounting is necessary. Here we take the discount rate to be $\rho := \frac{9}{10}$, giving a discount factor of $e^{-\rho} = 0.4066$ (4 s.f.).

A Markovian approximation to this problem is to be formed and then solved. The optimisation call for the routine that does this is `iss_solve(...)`, where the arguments inside the brackets are the same as those of [Section 3.2](#). Details of the specification of these arguments for this example are given below.

The following functions are defined by the user and saved in MATLAB[®] as `.m` files in locations on the path. Each file has a name (for example `Delta.m`), and consists of a header, followed by one (or more) commands. For this example we have:

DeltaFunction. This is called, for example, `Delta.m` and is written as follows.⁸

```
function v = Delta(u, x, t)
v = u;
```

CostFunction. This is called `Cost.m` and is written as follows.

```
function v = Cost(u, x, t, Conf)
v = (u^2 + x^2)/2;
```

The parameters used in `iss_solve` are described in [Section 2](#). In this example they are specified as follows.

StateLB and **StateUB:** For this one-dimensional Linear-Quadratic problem we give 0 and 0.5 respectively. This is because it is anticipated that the state value will diminish monotonically from 0.5 to a small positive value. Consequently smaller or larger values than these are unnecessary.

⁸It is also possible to specify functions in `InfSOCsol` as inline or anonymous functions, for instance, `Delta = @(u,x,t)u;` or `Delta = inline('u','u','x','t');`. However, when using the high-level interface, inline functions affect the robustness of the saved `.MAT` files, so they are not recommended. They are however perfectly fine to use with the low-level interface.

StateStepSize: This is given a value of 0.01, making the discrete state space the set $\{0, 0.01, 0.02, \dots, 0.49, 0.5\}$.

TimeStep: Given by the **scalar** 0.02.

DiscountRate: This is given a value of 0.9. This is the default.

ProblemFile: This is the name for the files that the results are to be stored in, say 'TestProblem'.

ControlLB and **ControlUB:** As the control variable is unbounded (which is the default), these options are not specified.

A.2. **Solution Syntax.** Consequently `iss_solve` could be called in MATLAB[®] as follows:

```
iss_solve('Delta', 'Cost', 0, 0.5, ...
          'StateStepSize', 0.01, ...
          'TimeStep', 0.02, ...
          'DiscountRate', 0.9, ...
          'ProblemFile', 'TestProblem');
```

'TestProblem' is just the prefix part of the names of the two result files saved by `iss_solve` and stored for later use (see [Section 5](#), for example).

While the call above is clear for such a simple problem, it is preferable to write MATLAB[®] scripts for more involved problems. For this example, a script could be written as follows.

```
StateLB = 0;
StateUB = 0.5;
Conf = iss_conf(StateLB, StateUB, ...
               'StateStepSize', 0.01, ...
               'DiscountRate', 0.9, ... % not strictly necessary
               'TimeStep', 0.02);

% The 'ProblemFile' option could also have been set using iss_conf.
iss_solve('Delta', 'Cost', StateLB, StateUB, Conf, ...
          'ProblemFile', 'TestProblem');
```

If this script were called `work_space.m` and placed in a directory visible to the MATLAB[®] path, it would then only be necessary to call `work_space` in MATLAB[®].

In each case, the `.m` extensions are excluded from the file names.

A.3. **Retrieving results using the high-level API.** The high-level API provides three types of figures: control versus state policy rules, state and control time-paths, and value graphs.

A.3.1. *Control vs. state.* The MATLAB[®] routine `iss_plot_contrule` is used to obtain a graph of the control rule from `iss_solve`'s solution. The following values are specified for the parameters described in [Section 4.2](#).

ProblemFile: As above, this is: 'TestProblem'.

InitialCondition: As there is no need to hold a varying variable fixed, this condition does not matter in a one-dimensional example, where we only have one state variable (namely **VariableOfInterest**) to vary. Consequently, this is set arbitrarily to 0.5.

VariableOfInterest: This is set to 1 (the default), as there is only one state variable to vary. If this example had more than one state dimension, **VariableOfInterest** could be any natural number between 1 and d (inclusive), depending on which dimension/variable was to be varied.

LineSpec: This is left unspecified, assuming its default of 'r-'.⁹

Consequently `iss_plot_contrule` is called as follows.⁹

```
iss_plot_contrule('TestProblem', 0.5);
```

This produces the red line in the graph of control rules shown in [Figure 1](#) below.

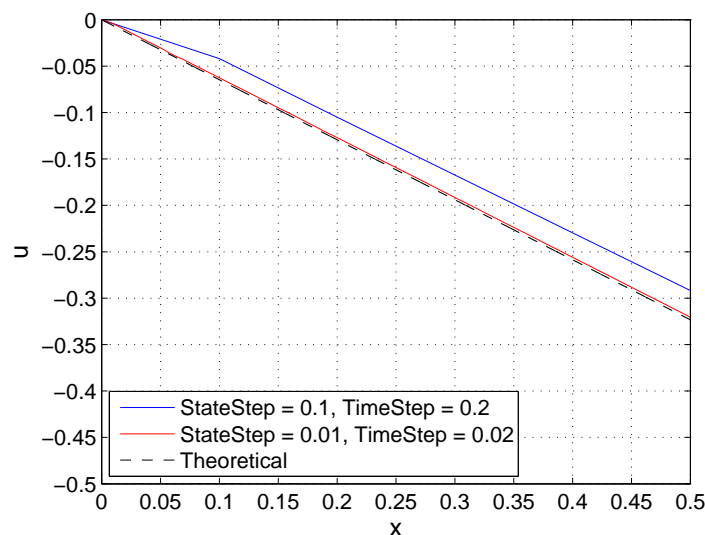


FIGURE 1. Optimal and approximated control rules.

A.3.2. *State and control vs. time.* The files `TestProblem_options.mat` and `TestProblem_solution.mat` are used to derive a continuous-time, continuous-state control rule. The system is then simulated using this rule. We use the MATLAB[®] routine `iss_plot_sim` with the following values for the parameters and functions described in [Section 5.3](#).

ProblemFile: This is 'TestProblem' as before.

InitialCondition: As the simulation starts at $x_0 = 0.5$, this is specified as 0.5.

SimulationTimeStep: For 10000 equidistant time steps each of size 0.01 this can be specified as `ones(1,10000)/1000`. This determines a horizon of length 10. In order to obtain a good approximation for the problem, it is necessary to choose a horizon for which the system has effectively become stationary and costless. The flattening of the time-paths in [Figure 2](#) indicates that 10 is sufficiently large in this case.

⁹Note that in this graph the optimal solution is presented as a dashed line, while our computed control rules are presented as solid lines. This convention is followed for subsequent graphs. The blue line is obtained on setting `StateStepSize` and `TimeStep` to 0.1 and 0.2 respectively and rerunning `iss_solve`.

NumberOfSimulations, **LineSpec** and **UserSuppliedNoise**: These are not passed, as the default values suffice.

Consequently `iss_plot_sim` is called as follows.

```

SimulatedValue = ...
    iss_plot_sim('TestProblem', 0.5, ...
                'SimulationTimeStep', ones(1,10000)/1000);

```

SimulatedValue gives the simulated value of the performance criterion. This is 0.08090 (4 s.f.) with the choice of parameters given here, which compares favourably with the actual performance criterion

$$\min_u J\left(u, \frac{1}{2}\right) = \frac{5}{18 + 2\sqrt{481}} = 0.08082 \quad (4 \text{ s.f.}).$$

`iss_plot_sim` also produces the red lines in the graphs of time-paths shown in [Figure 2](#) below.

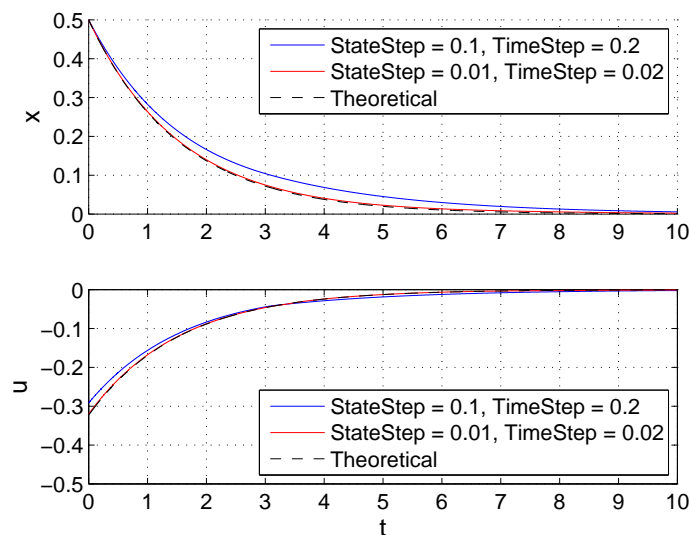


FIGURE 2. Optimal and approximated trajectories.

A.3.3. *Value vs. state*. Finally, the routine `iss_plot_valgraph` computes the expected value of the performance criterion for the continuous system as the initial conditions vary. This routine has the following values for the parameters described in [Section 6.2](#).

ProblemFile and **InitialCondition**: These are given the same values as the corresponding arguments in [Section A.3.2](#) above.

VariableOfInterestValues: This vector determines for what values of the variable of interest the performance criterion should be calculated. In this example, `0:0.05:1` is used.

SimulationTimeStep: For 10000 equidistant time steps each of size 0.1 this can be specified as `ones(1,10000)/1000`.

NumberOfSimulations, **VariableOfInterest** and **ScaleFactor**: These are not passed, as the default values suffice.

Hence `iss_plot_valgraph` is called as follows.

```
iss_plot_valgraph('ProblemFile', 0.5, 0:0.05:1, ...
                 'SimulationTimeStep', ones(1,10000)/1000);
```

This produces the graph shown in **Figure 3** below.

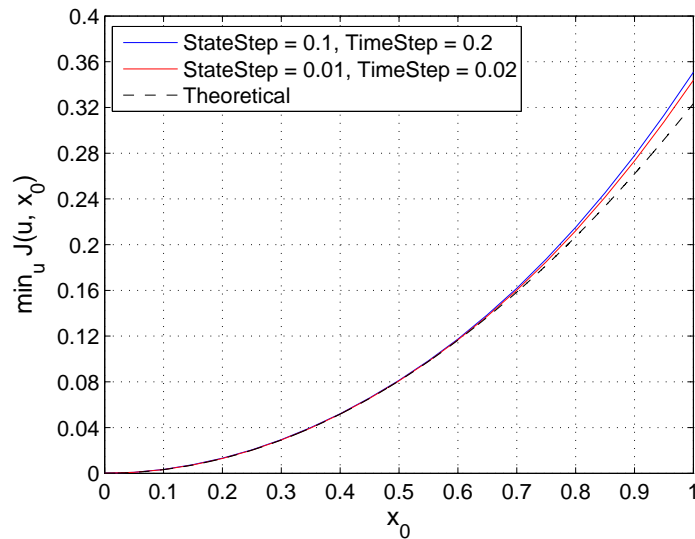


FIGURE 3. Optimal and approximated value functions.

A.4. Adding Constraints. We will explain the syntax when constraint enforcement is necessary.

A.4.1. Allowing for control constraints. In the previous example we did not allow for control constraints, luckily it is not difficult to do so. For example, if we need to add a constraint for the lower bound of the control we follow the same method as before. However, now when calling `iss_solve` we append an extra option, `ControllB`. For this new example the lower bound for the control is -0.2 .¹⁰ So, the `iss_solve` call is as follows:

```
iss_solve('Delta', 'Cost', 0, 0.5, ...
         'StateStepSize', 0.01, ...
         'TimeStep', 0.02, ...
         'DiscountRate', 0.9, ...
         'ProblemFile', 'TestProblem', ...
         'ControllB', -0.2);
```

¹⁰If for example it was -0.4 there would be no change to the graph; see the values of u in **Figure 2** that are contained in approximately $[-0.3, 0]$.

This will produce then produce the following graphs starting from the control rules shown in Figure 4.

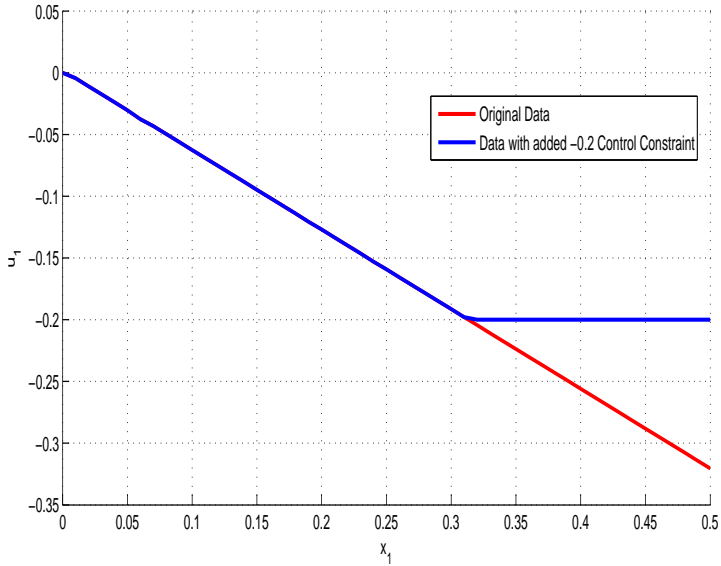


FIGURE 4. Approximately optimal control rules with a control constraint.

The following time-paths graph (see Figure 5) clearly shows what effect the control constraint of -0.2 has on the original profile.

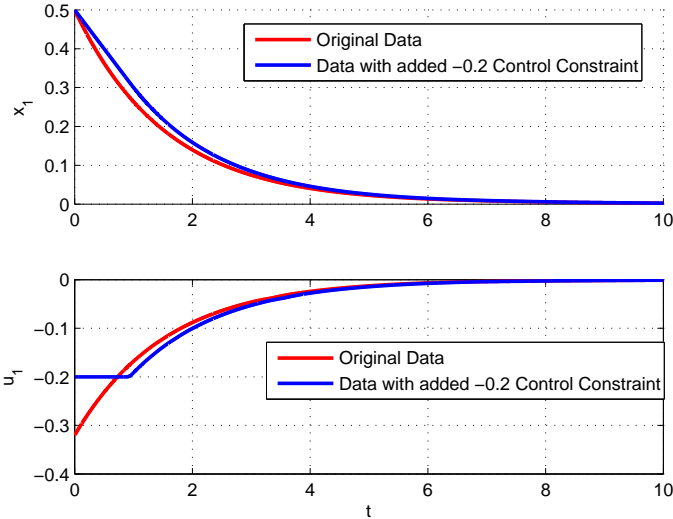


FIGURE 5. Approximately optimal state and control time profiles with a control constraint.

Lastly the value function's graph is shown in Figure 6.

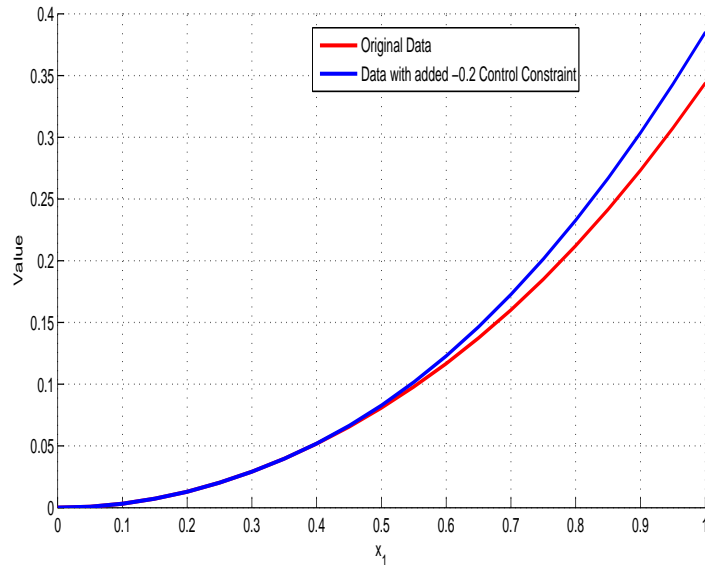


FIGURE 6. Approximately optimal value function with a control constraint.

A.4.2. *Allowing for state constraints.* Problems with state constraints may also be encountered but are also simple to implement. Firstly we need to create a constraint function for the `UserConstraintFunctionFile` option.¹¹

Suppose we want to enforce $x \geq 0.1$. Then we would write a function like the following.

```
function [c, ceq] = Constraint(u, x, h, Conf)
    c = -(x + h*u) + 0.1;
    ceq = [ ];
```

The easiest way for `InfSOCsol` to find this function is for it to reside in a file with the same name (plus a `.m` extension) in the MATLAB® path). Accordingly, we will place the above function into a file called `Constraint.m`.

Now we are ready to solve our original problem with the added state constraint. We call `iss_solve` as follows, with the additional `UserConstraintFunctionFile` option.¹²

```
iss_solve('Delta', 'Cost', 0, 0.5, ...
    'StateStepSize', 0.01, ...
    'TimeStep', 0.02, ...
    'DiscountRate', 0.9, ...
    'ProblemFile', 'TestProblem', ...
    'ControlLB', -0.4, ...
    'UserConstraintFunctionFile', 'Constraint');
```

¹¹Unlike other function options in `InfSOCsol`, this function has two return values, and so cannot be written as an inline or anonymous function.

¹²Please note that when calling `iss_solve` in this example the lower control bound is set to -0.4 and not -0.2

It should also be noted that in the following graph the `StateStepSize` and `TimeStep` options have been changed to 0.005 and 0.025, respectively, to produce smoother line of the control rules as shown in Figures 7–9 below.

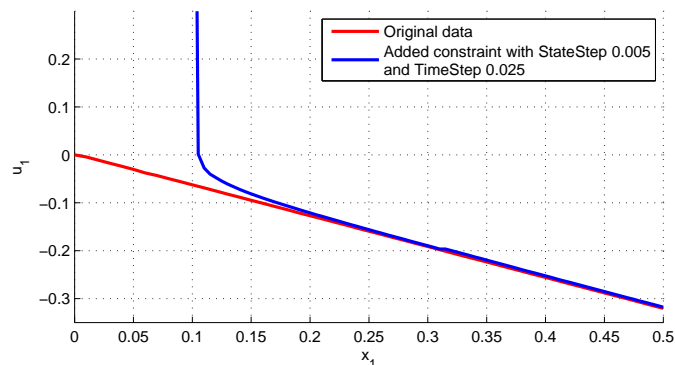


FIGURE 7. Optimal and approximated value functions with a state constraint.

`iss_plot_sim` is called as per the previous example. With our current constraints it produces time-paths shown in Figure 8 below.

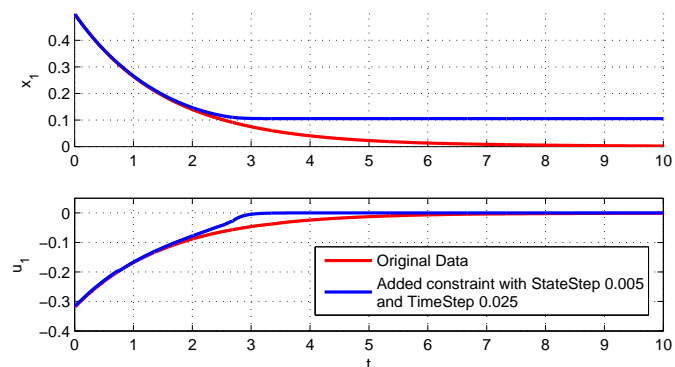


FIGURE 8. Approximately optimal state and control time profiles with a state constraint.

`iss_plot_valgraph` is also called as per the previous example, producing the optimal and approximated value functions in Figure 9 below.

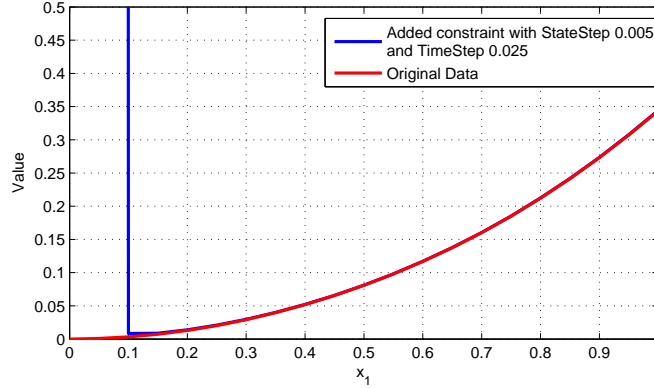


FIGURE 9. Optimal and approximated value functions with a state constraint.

B. AN EXAMPLE OF USAGE WITH A FISHERIES PROBLEM

This problem is adapted from [9], which is in turn adapted from [10]. Some of the results in [9] are themselves obtained using InfSOCsol with VIKAASA (see [7]) to solve a *viability theory* problem. Here, this problem has been modified to represent an infinite-horizon profit-maximisation problem for a fishing fleet.

B.1. Basic model. The elements of the model are as follows:

1. The system is described by two dynamic variables: fish biomass, $x(t)$ and effort, $e(t)$. Effort is exerted by the fishing fleet to extract the resource (i.e. fish) at time t . This is a fixed fleet-size model, so there is no variation in capital to consider. A “catchability coefficient” q_x is defined to determine the quantity of biomass that each unit of effort extracts, relative to the total size of the biomass at the time. Thus, the *harvest rate* at time t is

$$(6) \quad h_x(t) = q_x e(t) x(t).$$

The product of q_x and $e(t)$ is generally termed the level of fishing mortality and it is expressed as a proportion of biomass.

2. Two constraints are given. *Firstly*, we suppose that a “safe minimum biomass level” (SMBL), $x_{\min} > 0$ has been determined, which the industry’s regulator will not allow fish stocks to fall below.

The *second* constraint concerns minimum and maximum levels of effort. The minimum level e_{\min} is determined by social requirements for the preservation of employment and maintenance of traditional fishing communities. The maximum level e_{\max} is determined not by any normative considerations but rather by the physical capabilities of the fishing fleet. Given that there is no variation in capital and labour, it is supposed that maximum effort is constrained by a fixed production capacity.

3. The fleet’s objective is to maximise their infinite-horizon profit. Profit is given by

$$(7) \quad \pi_x(t) = p_x h_x(t) - ce(t) - C,$$

where p_x is the price of a unit of biomass (fixed in this model), and as explained above, $h_x(t)$ is the harvest rate, making $p_x h_x(t)$ the fleet's revenue flow. C is some fixed cost, and c is a variable cost for each unit of effort.

4. The fleet is able to select the effort level to exert, but effort variation is bounded by $U = [\delta^-, \delta^+]$, where $\delta^- < 0$ and $\delta^+ > 0$.
5. Fish population levels $x(t)$ are governed by a *logistic differential equation*,

$$(8) \quad \dot{x}(t) = r_x x(t) \left(1 - \frac{x(t)}{L_x} \right) - q_x e(t) x(t).$$

This equation is based on [11], and is common in models of population growth. The resource grows at a rate proportional to r_x , up to the limit carrying capacity, L_x of the resource's ecosystem, less the harvest rate, $h_x(t) = q_x e(t) x(t)$.

The differential equation for e is:

$$(9) \quad \dot{e}(t) = u(t) \in U = [\delta^-, \delta^+].$$

This equation represents bounds on the speed at which the fleet can change fishing intensity.

The parameter values for the considered model are:

$$(10) \quad r_x = 0.4$$

$$(11) \quad L_x = 600$$

$$(12) \quad x_{\min} = 60$$

$$(13) \quad p_x = 4$$

$$(14) \quad q_x = 0.5$$

$$(15) \quad c = 10$$

$$(16) \quad C = 150$$

$$(17) \quad e_{\max} = 1$$

$$(18) \quad e_{\min} = 0.1$$

$$(19) \quad \delta = 0.01$$

With these parameters the differential equations become:

$$(20) \quad \dot{x}(t) = \frac{2}{5} x(t) \left(1 - \frac{x(t)}{600} \right) - \frac{1}{2} e(t) x(t)$$

and:

$$(21) \quad \dot{e}(t) \in U = \left[-\frac{1}{100}, \frac{1}{100} \right].$$

The profit equation is:

$$(22) \quad \pi_x(t) = 2e_x(t)x(t) - 10e(t) - 150.$$

Finally, the discount rate ρ (see 1) has been reduced for this example from the default value of 0.9 to just 0.1. This means that the profit-maximising fishing fleet is more "patient", in that future profits have a higher present value. This has been added to this problem in order to simplify it by diminishing the trade-off between maintaining fish stock levels above the SMBL level in the long term, and exploiting the stock for short-term gain.

B.2. The fisheries problem in InfSOCsol.

B.2.1. *State space.* The system state will be represented by a vector of length 2, $[x(t), e(t)]$. InfSOCsol requires a rectangular area over which to seek optimal solutions, given by `StateLB` and `StateUB`. Constraints that we are interested in imposing on the system are a good place to start in determining these. In this case, those constraints are described in [item 2](#) in [Section B.1](#). Substituting the values from [Equation 11](#), [Equation 12](#), [Equation 17](#) and [Equation 18](#), we would have:

```
StateLB = [60, 0.1];  
StateUB = [600, 1];
```

Note that the upper bound on biomass is because [Equation 20](#) precludes $x(t)$ rising above $L_x = 600$.

B.2.2. *Equations of motion.* We will write the equations of motion for this problem, as described in [Equation 20](#) and [Equation 21](#) into a file called `fisheries_delta.m`.

```
function v = fisheries_delta(u,s,t)  
    % Extract the named values from the state vector  
    x = s(1);  
    e = s(2);  
  
    % Equation of motion for biomass  
    xdot = 0.4*x*(1 - x/600) - 0.5*e*x;  
  
    % Equation of motion for effort  
    edot = u;  
  
    % Combine into a vector  
    v = [xdot, edot];  
end
```

B.2.3. *Instantaneous cost function.* InfSOCsol needs an instantaneous cost function to minimise. In fact, we have a profit function to maximise. As described in [Section 1](#), we can multiply our profit function by -1 in order to convert our maximisation problem into a minimisation one suitable for InfSOCsol. We will write this cost function into a file called `fisheries_cost.m`.

```
function cost = fisheries_cost(u,s,t,Conf)  
    % Extract the named values from the state vector  
    x = s(1);  
    e = s(2);  
  
    % Profit  
    pi = 2*e*x - 10*e - 150;
```

```

% Convert to cost
cost = -pi;
end

```

B.2.4. *Constraint function.* In this section we define a function that specifies the *non-linear* constraints to be imposed on the control set, $U = \left[-\frac{1}{100}, \frac{1}{100}\right]$. For our purposes, any constraints that depend on either the system state or the system's dynamics need to be specified here. As stated in [item 2.](#) of [Section B.1](#), effort levels have been proscribed by $e(t) \in [e_{\min}, e_{\max}] = [0.1, 1]$. This means that effort variation, $\dot{e}(t)$ should be constrained when “close” to the boundaries of this set. because InfSOCsol uses a Euler-Maruyama approximation, this becomes a matter of determining whether the “next” state lies outside of $[0.1, 1]$ or not. Thus, the constraint function can be expressed as follows.

```

function [c, ceq] = fisheries_constraint(u, s, Conf)
% Extract the time-step.
h = Conf.Options.TimeStep;

% Determine the "next" state. The zero can be ignored.
next_s = s + h*fisheries_delta(u, s, 0);

% Extract the named values from the state vector
x = next_s(1);
e = next_s(2);

% The inequality constraints should be a vector of numbers that are
% negative iff the constraints are satisfied.
c = [0.1 - e, e - 1, 60 - x];

% There are no equality constraints
ceq = [];
end

```

B.2.5. *Other options.* We use `iss_conf` to create a configuration data-structure here, as described in [Section 2.3](#), in order to hold the other options. We need to set constraints on the controls, according to [Equation 9](#), and we will decrease the `StateStepSize` in order to consider more points. Additionally, we will set a `ProblemFile` option, so that the results of running `iss_solve` are saved to disk.

```

% Note that StateLB and StateUB were defined previously.
Conf = iss_conf(StateLB, StateUB, ...
    'ControlLB', -0.01, ...
    'ControlUB', 0.01, ...
    'DiscountRate', 0.1, ...

```

```
'StateStepSize', (StateUB - StateLB) / 20, ...
'UserConstraintFunctionFile', 'fisheries_constraint', ...
'ProblemFile', 'fisheries');
```

B.3. Solving the fisheries problem. Now we use `iss_solve` to compute the solution to the fisheries problem. `'fisheries_delta'` `'fisheries_cost'` are references to the functions we created earlier. It is assumed that `StateLB`, `StateUB` and `Conf` were defined in the current workspace, as described in the previous section.

```
iss_solve('fisheries_delta', 'fisheries_cost', ...
         StateLB, StateUB, Conf);
```

Running this will save the problem and then solution into files `fisheries_options.mat` and `fisheries_solution.mat`, respectively.

B.4. Checking the results. Here we plot some control rules and simulations in order to see what the result returned by `iss_solve` looks like.

To plot control rules against state, we use `iss_plot_contrule`, as follows.

```
% 'fisheries' is the problem file name.
iss_plot_contrule('fisheries', [60, NaN], ...
                 'VariableOfInterest', 2);
```

Here we have specified `NaN` instead of giving a second parameter, to make it clear that the second parameter will be varied. In [Figure 10](#) we show the result of running this command for various values of fish biomass (x).¹³ We can see that in all cases, the control policy involves reducing effort when effort is “high”, and increasing it when it is “low”. The threshold between “low” or “high” increases, the more biomass there is. This fits with intuition about how we would expect the fleet to manage the stock – fishing more when there are more fish, and less when there are fewer.

We can now plot some simulations using this control rule, in order to see how the system behaves when controlled in this way. To do so we use `iss_plot_sim` as follows.

```
% Add this in order to be able to plot all graphs together.
hold on

% Use the 'LineStyle' option to change the colour of each simulation.
iss_plot_sim('fisheries', [78, 0.1], 'LineStyle', '-b');
iss_plot_sim('fisheries', [78, 0.9], 'LineStyle', '-c');
iss_plot_sim('fisheries', [582, 0.1], 'LineStyle', '-g');
iss_plot_sim('fisheries', [582, 0.9], 'LineStyle', '-m');
```

¹³Note that “ x_2 ”, as displayed in [Figure 10](#) represents effort, e . The label is generated automatically by `InfSOCSol`.

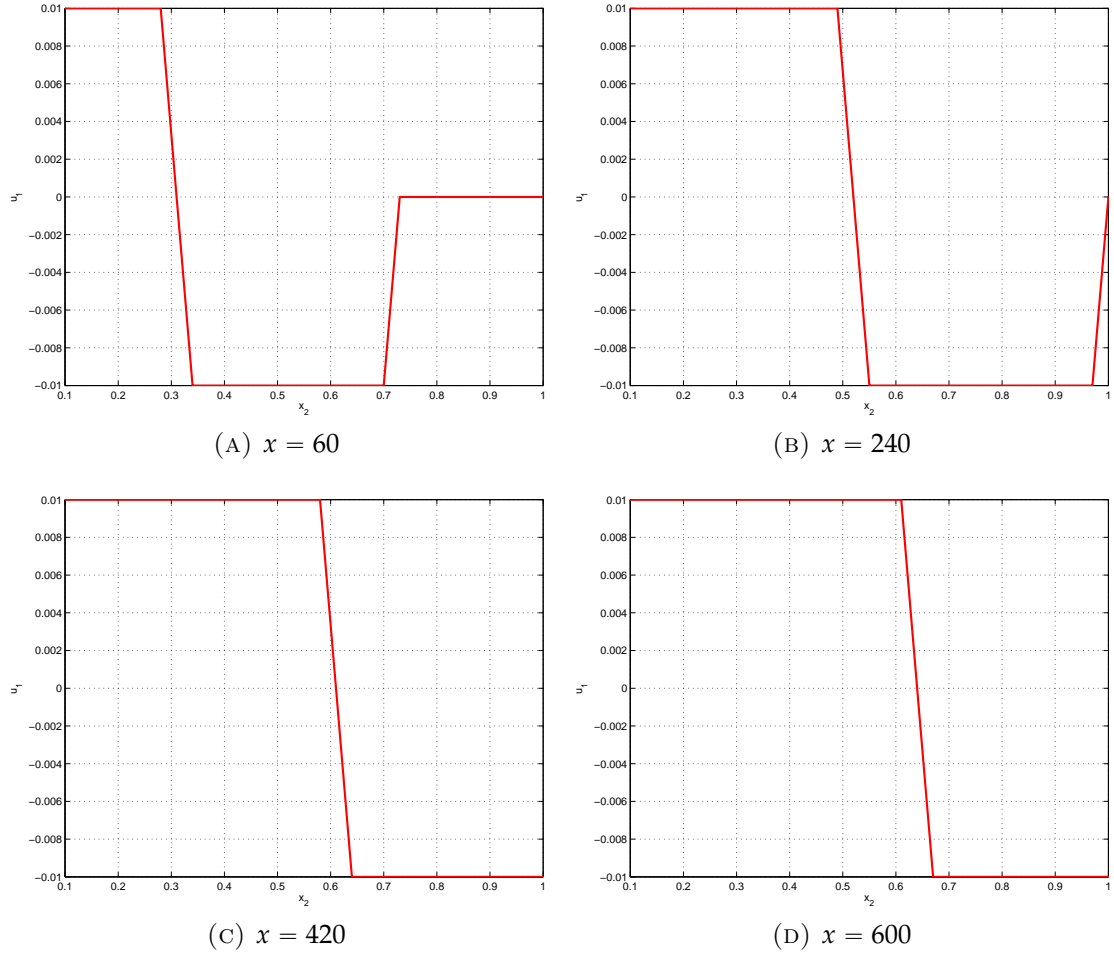


FIGURE 10. Control rules for the fisheries problem using deterministic settings.

% Add a red dashed line to show where the SMBL is

```
subplot(3, 1, 1);
plot([0, 250], [60, 60], 'r--');
```

The results of this are displayed in [Figure 11](#). We can see that the SMBL is avoided in all cases except where the initial state involves high effort and low stocks. In this case it appears that it is not possible, given the constraints of effort variation, to reduce effort quickly enough to avoid crossing the SMBL.

B.5. Adding stochastic noise. In this section we alter the fisheries problem presented in [Section B.1](#) so that biomass, $x(t)$ becomes a stochastic, rather than a deterministic process. For simplicity, the stochastic component does not vary in state or control size. That is,

$$(23) \quad dx = \left(r_x x \left(1 - \frac{x}{L_x} \right) - q_x e x \right) dt + nd\mathbf{W},$$

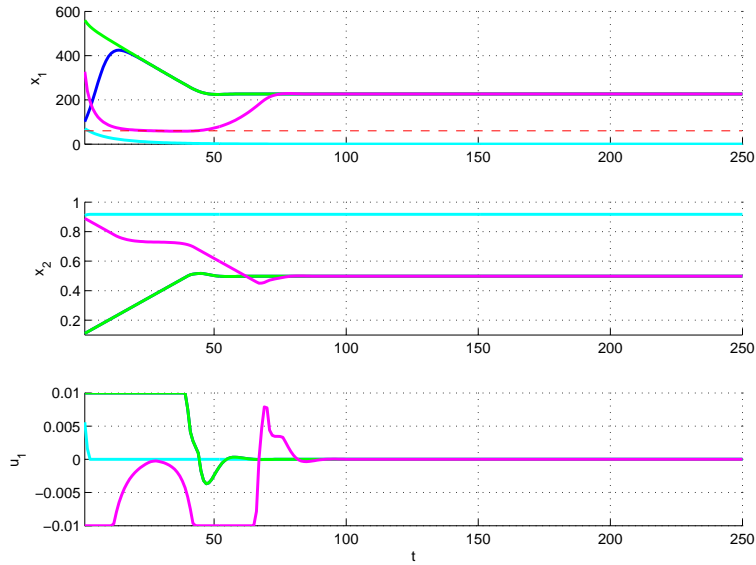


FIGURE 11. Simulations of optimally controlled trajectories for the fisheries problem using deterministic settings.

where n is a constant, and \mathbf{W} is a Wiener process.¹⁴ We will set the value of n to 10.

In order to analyse this new problem in InfSOCsol, we first need to define a modified delta function, as follows.

```
function v = fisheries_delta_stoch(u,s,t)
    % Extract the named values from the state vector
    x = s(1);
    e = s(2);

    % Equation of motion for biomass
    xdot = 0.4*x*(1 - x/600) - 0.5*e*x;

    % Equation of motion for effort
    edot = u;

    % Combine.
    v = [xdot, edot, 10, 0];
end
```

The only change is to include extra values in the return function, giving the size of the stochastic noise in each dimension.

We now create a new configuration data-structure, using the modified delta function, and passing the `StochasticProblem` option.

¹⁴It should be noted that this is not in fact a very good way of modelling a stochastic fish biomass process, as it does not preclude a shock from causing biomass to become negative. It is presented here purely as an illustration of InfSOCsol's capacities and is not supposed to present a realistic model.

```

Conf = iss_conf(StateLB, StateUB, ...
    'ControlLB', -0.01, ...
    'ControlUB', 0.01, ...
    'DiscountFactor', 0.1, ...
    'StateStepSize', (StateUB - StateLB) / 20, ...
    'StochasticProblem', 1, ...
    'UserConstraintFunctionFile', 'fisheries_constraint', ...
    'ProblemFile', 'fisheries_stoch');

```

This problem will also use a different `ProblemFile` setting than the previous one. Note that we can continue to use the existing `UserConstraintFunctionFile` option under an “expected value” interpretation, where we are constraining the expected next state.

As before, we can solve this problem as follows.

```

iss_solve('fisheries_delta_stoch', 'fisheries_cost', ...
    StateLB, StateUB, Conf);

```

Plots of control rules and simulations are given in [Figure 12](#) and [Figure 13](#), respectively. For the simulations, the default options were used (as described in [Section 2.3](#)) meaning random noise has been generated, and only one simulation run was performed for each starting point.

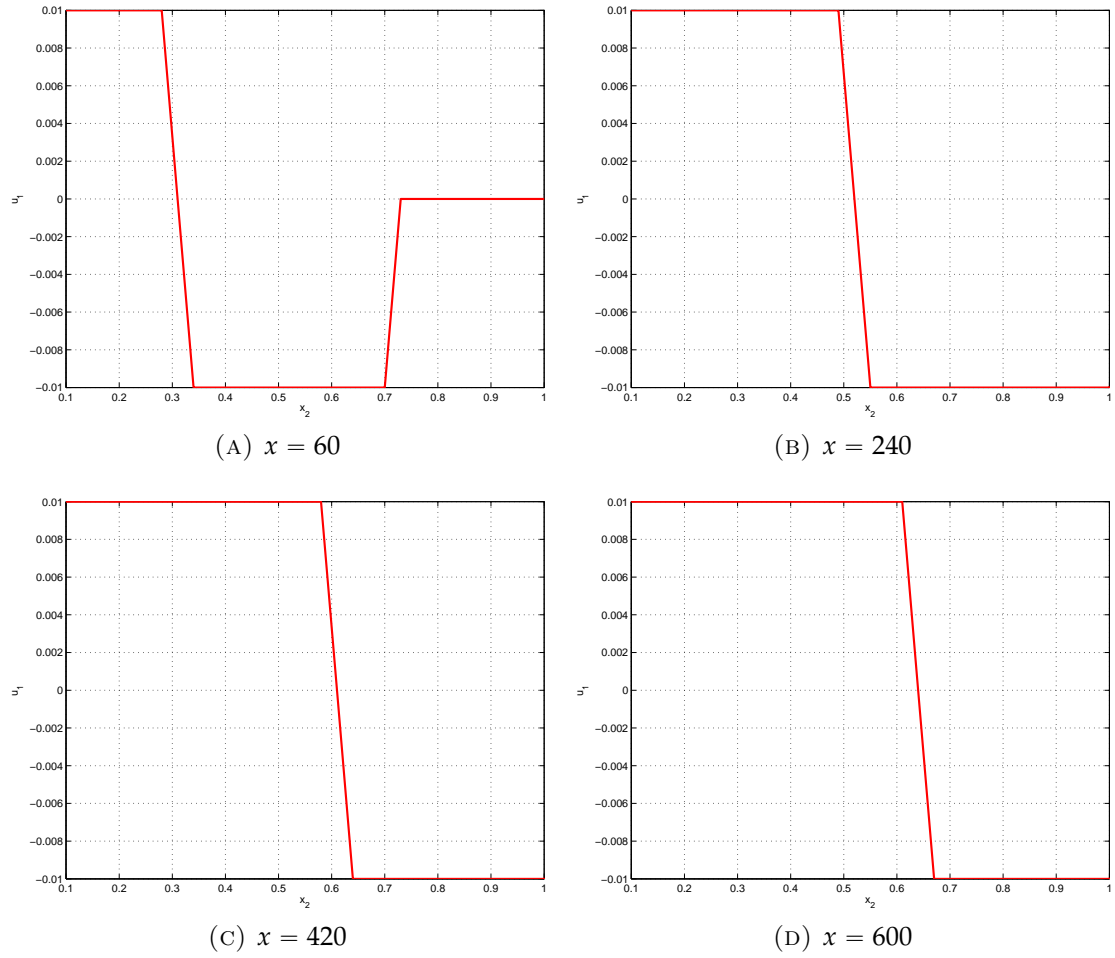


FIGURE 12. Control rules for the fisheries problem with stochastic noise.

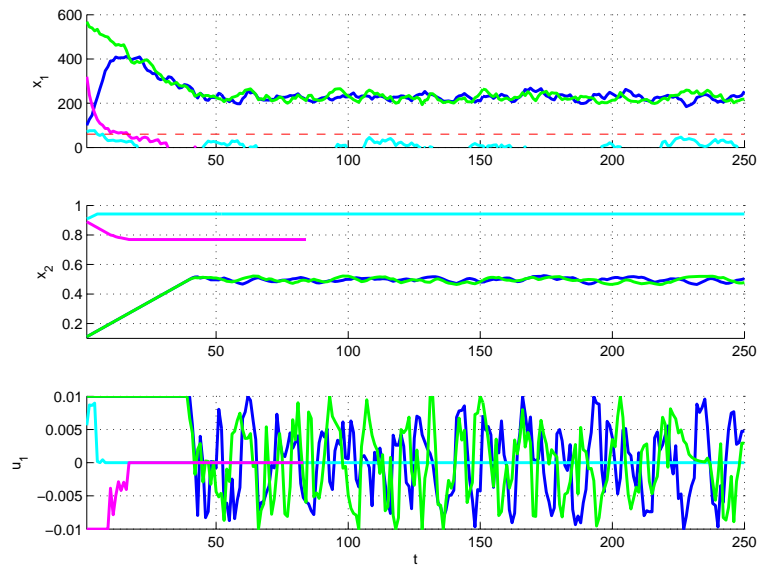


FIGURE 13. Simulations of optimally controlled trajectories for the fisheries problem with stochastic noise.

C. CHANGES SINCE VERSION 2

This section lists changes to InfSOCSol since the previous version, described in [2]. It can be used as a guide for migrating code depending on the previous version.

1. The old “legacy” API has been deprecated in favour of the one described in this document. See [Section C.1](#) for details about these changes.
2. Introduction of a distinction between “high-level” and “low-level” APIs, enabling InfSOCSol to be integrated into other software more easily, and without plotting or saving to disk where this is not required.
3. Support for arbitrary length vector controls was introduced. This did not work in InfSOCSol2 due to a bug.
4. Support for parallel processing was introduced. See [Section 8](#) for information.
5. Support for larger problems using sparse matrices to overcome matrix size limits in MATLAB[®]. See [Section 9](#) for details.
6. Initial support for GNU Octave. Functionality is largely the same, but with some caveats. See [Appendix D](#) for details.

C.1. Legacy API. Prior to version 3, InfSOCSol provided an API that more closely resembled the one provided by SOCSol4L (see [6]). In version 3, this interface has been deprecated in favour of the one described in this manual. However, in order to retain compatibility with code written for older versions of InfSOCSol, the old API is still available in InfSOCSol as a set of wrappers around the new functions. This is called the “legacy API”. The functions provided are:

- `InfSOCSol` (replaced by `iss_solve`),
- `InfContRule` (replaced by `iss_plot_contrule`),
- `InfSim` (replaced by `iss_plot_sim`) and
- `InfValGraph` (replaced by `iss_plot_valgraph`).

Calls to these functions should work as before (see [2] for details), with some caveats:

- The old `.DPS` and `.DPP` file formats are no longer supported, so InfSOCSol3 will not be able to open SOC problem and solution files created with older versions. Instead, the wrapper functions now use the new `.MAT` format.
- The `Options` parameter to `InfSOCSol` required numeric options to be encoded as strings in version 2. String conversion is no longer performed in version 3, so these options will not be understood if they are still encoded.
- The text output provided when running the functions is similar, but not the same.

D. OCTAVE SUPPORT

InfSOCSol3 provides basic support for [GNU Octave](#). This is done by utilising Octave’s basic compatibility with MATLAB[®] and substituting the functionality that is only present in MATLAB[®] with equivalent functionality in Octave. From the perspective of the end-user, InfSOCSol should usually function the same on either platform. However, there are a number of issues to be aware of, which are listed here.

- InfSOCSol uses Octave’s `sqp` function as a stand-in for `fmincon`. This function has a different set of options than `fmincon`, and as such most options in InfSOCSol relating to `fmincon` (e.g., `Algorithm`; see [Section 2.2.1](#)) will have no effect in Octave. The exceptions to this rule are `UserConstraintFunctionFile`, `TolX` and `MaxIter`, which are mapped to the appropriate options in `sqp`.
- The numeric flags returned by `sqp` are not the same as those returned by `fmincon`. InfSOCSol attempts to mask this difference by returning a flag of 1 on success (i.e., when `sqp` returns an `info` value of 101) and -2 when there is an error of any sort.
- In order to use multiple CPUs under Octave, the “parallel” package from [Octave-Forge](#) must be installed. See <http://octave.sourceforge.net/> for information on installing this.

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