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STATE-CONSTRAINED CONTROLLABILITY OF LINEAR REACTION-DIFFUSION SYSTEMS

PIERRE LISSY¹ AND CLÉMENT MOREAU¹

Abstract. We study the controllability of a coupled system of linear parabolic equations, with non-negativity constraint on the state. We establish two results of controllability to trajectories in large time: one for diagonal diffusion matrices with an “approximate” nonnegativity constraint, and another stronger one, with “exact” nonnegativity constraint, when all the diffusion coefficients are equal. The proofs are based on a “staircase” method. Finally, we show that state-constrained controllability admits a positive minimal time, even with weaker unilateral constraint on the state.

Résumé. On s'intéresse à la contrôlabilité d'un système couplé d'équations paraboliques linéaires avec une contrainte de positivité sur l'état. On énonce deux résultats de contrôlabilité aux trajectoires en temps grand : un pour des matrices de diffusion diagonales avec contrainte de positivité “approchée”, et un autre, plus fort, avec une contrainte de positivité “exacte”, dans le cas de coefficients de diffusions identiques. Les preuves s'appuient sur une méthode “en escalier”. Enfin, on montre que le temps minimal de contrôlabilité avec contrainte sur l'état est strictement positif, y compris sous une contrainte unilatérale moins restrictive sur l'état.

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This article is dedicated to Enrique Zuazua for the occasion of his 60th birthday, with admiration for his outstanding achievements and all the new paths he explores in control theory, that are sources of inspiration notably for the younger generation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Let d in \mathbb{N}^* . Let Ω be a bounded open connected set of \mathbb{R}^d with C^∞ boundary $\partial\Omega$, and ω an open subset of Ω . Let $T > 0$, $\Omega_T = (0, T) \times \Omega$ and $\omega_T = (0, T) \times \omega$. Let n, m in \mathbb{N}^* , with $n \geq 2$. Let \vec{n} be the outward normal on $\partial\Omega$. We consider the following parabolic linear system of n coupled scalar equations with homogeneous Neumann boundary conditions and internal control:

$$\begin{cases} \partial_t Y - D\Delta Y &= AY + BU\mathbf{1}_\omega & \text{in } \Omega_T, \\ \partial_{\vec{n}} Y &= 0 & \text{on } (0, T) \times \partial\Omega, \\ Y(0, \cdot) &= Y^0(\cdot) & \text{in } \Omega. \end{cases} \quad (1.1)$$

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In (1.1), $A = (a_{ij})_{1 \leq i, j \leq n}$ and $D = (d_{ij})_{1 \leq i, j \leq n}$ are square matrices in $\mathcal{M}_n(\mathbb{R})$ and B is a matrix in $\mathcal{M}_{n,m}(\mathbb{R})$. Assume that D satisfies the ellipticity condition given by

$$\exists \alpha > 0, \forall \xi \in \mathbb{R}^n, \langle D\xi, \xi \rangle \geq \alpha |\xi|^2. \quad (1.2)$$

The spaces in which the initial condition Y^0 and the control U lie will be made more precise later on. Notice that m represents the number of controls. Notably, we may have $m < n$, which means that we can have an underactuated system.

The controllability to trajectories of system (1.1) in arbitrary time has been established under a Kalman-type condition in [1]. The question we address in this paper is the following : is it possible to ensure that the state remains nonnegative while controlling (1.1) from a nonnegative initial state towards a nonnegative trajectory? This question is relevant because reaction-diffusion systems like (1.1) frequently model phenomena in which the state is nonnegative (*e.g.* concentrations of chemicals). In these cases, a controlled trajectory that does not remain nonnegative would have no interest for applications.

State-constrained controllability is a challenging subject that has gained popularity in the last few years, notably at the instigation of Jérôme Lohéac, Emmanuel Trélat and Enrique Zuazua in the seminal paper [2], in which some controllability results with positivity constraints on the state or the control for the linear heat equation are proved, under a minimal time condition which turns out to be necessary. This question yielded to an increasing number of articles in different frameworks, many of them being coauthored by Enrique Zuazua: for ODE systems [3, 4], semilinear and quasilinear heat equations [5, 6], monostable and bistable reaction-diffusion equations [7, 8], the fractional one-dimensional heat equation [9, 10], wave equations [11], and age-structured systems [12]. The spirit of most of these results can be summarized this way: when the considered system is controllable in the classical sense, and sometimes under assumptions on the initial and target states or on the system properties, controllability with a constraint on the state is possible with a positive minimal time.

Our goal in this paper is to state similar results for coupled parabolic systems of the form (1.1) with internal control. This framework raises several difficulties. Indeed, for boundary control or equations satisfying a maximum principle, there is an equivalence between nonnegativity of the state and nonnegativity of the control, which is useful as control-constrained problems are better understood in general. This equivalence does not hold anymore for System (1.1): the state might remain positive even if the control is negative. Moreover, due to the coupling terms, the asymptotic behaviour of the trajectories is difficult to know precisely. This means that we cannot rely on dissipativity or stabilization to a steady state to obtain controllability, with the notable exception of the case where the diffusion matrix D is equal to the identity matrix.

One of the ideas we present in the following to bypass this difficulty is an original version of the “staircase” method, where we drive the system along a path of non-constant trajectories, while this approach is usually employed to follow a path of constant steady states [2, 5]. Adapting it to non-constant trajectories requires supplementary arguments to make sure that these trajectories do not go too far away from each other.

In the case $D = I_n$, we establish controllability to trajectories in large time with nonnegative state (Theorem 2.6). When D is only assumed to be diagonal, we show that (1.1) is also controllable in large time, but with state remaining “approximately” nonnegative, *i.e.* greater than $-\varepsilon$ for any fixed $\varepsilon > 0$ (Theorem 2.7). Additionally, we show that there exists a positive minimal controllability time as soon as the initial state and the target trajectory are different, even if we allow the state to be greater than a negative constant instead of being nonnegative (Theorem 2.10). The article is structured as follows: the main results are stated in Section 2, the proofs of the results on state-constrained controllability and minimal time are respectively developed in Sections 3 and 4, and we provide some perspectives for future research in Section 5.

2. MAIN RESULTS

In the following, for Y a vector in \mathbb{R}^n and $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}$, we write $Y \geq \alpha$ and $Y > \alpha$ if all of the n components of Y are respectively greater or equal to α and greater than α . Moreover, $|Y|$ is the usual Euclidean norm of Y on

\mathbb{R}^n and $\max Y$ refers to the greatest component of Y . Finally, for $r \in \mathbb{Z}$ and Q some open subset of \mathbb{R}^q with $q \in \mathbb{N}^*$, $H^r(Q)$ denotes the Sobolev space $W^{r,2}(Q)$. In what follows, we will also consider the free evolution

$$\begin{cases} \partial_t \tilde{Y} - D\Delta \tilde{Y} &= A\tilde{Y}\mathbf{1}_\omega & \text{in } \Omega_T, \\ \partial_{\vec{n}} \tilde{Y} &= 0 & \text{on } (0, T) \times \partial\Omega, \\ \tilde{Y}(0, \cdot) &= Y^0(\cdot) & \text{in } \Omega. \end{cases} \quad (2.1)$$

It is well-known that, for every $Y^0 \in L^2(\Omega)^n$ and $U \in L^2(\omega_T)^m$, the Cauchy problem given by System (1.1) admits a unique solution $Y \in L^2((0, T), H^1(\Omega)^n) \cap H^1((0, T), H^{-1}(\Omega)^n) \hookrightarrow C^0([0, T], L^2(\Omega)^n)$. If, in addition, $Y^0 \in L^\infty(\Omega)^n$ and $U \in L^\infty(\omega_T)^m$, by a linearity argument, we also have the following standard well-posedness estimation for PDE systems:

Proposition 2.1 (Well-posedness). *Let $T > 0$. There exists $C(T) > 0$ such that, for any $Y^0 \in L^\infty(\Omega)^n$ and any $U \in L^\infty(\omega)^m$, the solution of (1.1) with initial condition Y^0 and control U satisfies*

$$\forall t \in [0, T], \|Y(t, \cdot) - \tilde{Y}(t, \cdot)\|_{L^\infty(\Omega)^n} \leq C(T)\|U\|_{L^\infty(\omega)^m}, \quad (2.2)$$

where \tilde{Y} is the solution of the free System (2.1) with same initial condition Y^0 .

2.1. Results on state-constrained controllability

Before stating our main results, let us state a few preliminary properties satisfied by System (1.1). To preserve the nonnegativity of the trajectories of the uncontrolled System (2.1), we assume that the diffusion matrix D is diagonal:

$$\forall i, j \in \{1, \dots, n\}, i \neq j \Rightarrow d_{ij} = 0, \quad (2.3)$$

and that the coupling matrix A is quasipositive, i.e.

$$\forall i, j \in \{1, \dots, n\}, i \neq j \Rightarrow a_{ij} \geq 0. \quad (2.4)$$

Then, we have the following property:

Proposition 2.2 (Positivity [13, Lemma 1.1]). *Assume (2.3). For any initial condition $Y^0 \in L^\infty(\Omega)^n$ such that $Y^0 \geq 0$, the corresponding solution \tilde{Y} of (2.1) satisfies $\tilde{Y}(t, \cdot) \geq 0$ for all time $t \geq 0$ if and only if (2.4) is satisfied.*

Our goal is to control System (1.1) with a positivity constraint on the state Y . Therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that free trajectories naturally stay nonnegative, hence assumptions (2.3) and (2.4).

We recall the classical notion of controllability to (free) trajectories:

Definition 2.3 (Controllability to trajectories). *Let $T > 0$. System (1.1) is *controllable to trajectories* in time T if, for all $Y^0 \in L^2(\Omega)^n$, and for all solution \tilde{Y} of the free system (2.1) associated to another initial condition $\tilde{Y}^0 \in L^2(\Omega)^n$, there exists a control U in $L^2(\omega_T)^m$ such that the solution Y of (1.1) with initial condition Y^0 and control U satisfies*

$$Y(T, \cdot) = \tilde{Y}(T, \cdot). \quad (2.5)$$

The Laplace operator $-\Delta$ with Neumann boundary conditions admits a sequence of eigenvalues repeated with their multiplicity $(\lambda_p)_{p \in \mathbb{N}}$ such that

$$0 = \lambda_0 < \lambda_1 \leq \lambda_2 \leq \dots, \quad \lim_{p \rightarrow +\infty} \lambda_p = +\infty.$$

To each eigenvalue λ_p , we associate a corresponding normalized eigenvector $e_p \in H_0^1(\Omega)$ in such a way that $\{e_p\}_{p \in \mathbb{N}}$ forms a Hilbert basis of $L^2(\Omega)$. Notice that $e_p \in C^\infty(\Omega)$ by elliptic regularity, since $\partial\Omega$ is smooth.

Given two matrices \tilde{A} in $\mathcal{M}_n(\mathbb{R})$ and \tilde{B} in $\mathcal{M}_{n,m}(\mathbb{R})$, we use the following notation for the *Kalman matrix* associated to \tilde{A} and \tilde{B} :

$$[\tilde{A}|\tilde{B}] = [\tilde{A}^{n-1}\tilde{B} \mid \tilde{A}^{n-2}\tilde{B} \mid \dots \mid \tilde{B}]. \quad (2.6)$$

Controllability to trajectories is ensured for the System (1.1) under a Kalman-type condition:

Proposition 2.4 (Controllability [1]). *System (1.1) is controllable to trajectories at any time T if and only if, for all $p \in \mathbb{N}$,*

$$\text{rank} [(-\lambda_p D + A)|B] = n. \quad (2.7)$$

Remark 2.5. In the case $D = I_n$, condition (2.4) simply becomes

$$\text{rank} [A|B] = n. \quad (2.8)$$

Our first two main results establish state-constrained controllability of the System (1.1) under the aforementioned quasipositivity and controllability assumptions.

Theorem 2.6 (Case $D = I_n$). *Assume that $D = I_n$ and that A and B satisfy (2.4) and (2.8).*

Let $Y^0, Y^{f,0}$ in $L^\infty(\Omega)^n$ and Y^f the solution of (2.1) with initial condition $Y^{f,0}$. Assume that

$$Y^0 \geq 0, Y^{f,0} \geq 0, \quad (2.9)$$

and that none of the components of Y^0 and $Y^{f,0}$ is a.e. zero on Ω .

Then, there exists $T > 0$ and $U \in C_0^\infty(\omega_T)^m$ such that the solution Y of (1.1) with initial condition Y^0 and control U satisfies

$$Y(T, \cdot) = Y^f(T, \cdot), \quad (2.10)$$

and, for all t in $[0, T]$,

$$Y(t, \cdot) \geq 0. \quad (2.11)$$

Theorem 2.7 (General case). *Assume that A, B and D satisfy (1.2), (2.3), (2.4) and (2.7). Let \tilde{Y} and Y^f in $L^2(\mathbb{R}_+ \times \Omega)^n$ be trajectories of (2.1), starting respectively at Y^0 and $Y^{f,0}$ in $L^\infty(\Omega)^n$. Assume that*

$$Y^0 \geq 0, Y^{f,0} \geq 0.$$

Then, for all $\varepsilon > 0$, there exists $T > 0$ and $U \in C_0^\infty(\omega_T)^m$ such that the solution Y of (1.1) with initial condition Y^0 and control U satisfies

$$Y(T, \cdot) = Y^f(T, \cdot), \quad (2.12)$$

and, for all t in $[0, T]$,

$$Y(t, \cdot) \geq -\varepsilon. \quad (2.13)$$

Remark 2.8. Theorem 2.7 can be indifferently stated with Neumann or Dirichlet boundary conditions in (1.1).

Remark 2.9. This theorem establishes a form of ‘‘approximate nonnegative controllability’’. The tools we use for its proof do not yield exact nonnegative controllability in general. Indeed, the proof is based on ensuring that the controlled trajectory remains close to a path (‘‘staircase’’) of nonnegative trajectories taken between \tilde{Y} and Y^f . With this method, we can drive the system from \tilde{Y} to Y^f , but it might take a long time to get to Y^f . Whereas waiting a large time is usually not an obstacle to controllability, here it causes an inconvenience if \tilde{Y} or Y^f goes too close to zero when T becomes large. Then, the path of nonnegative trajectories also goes close to zero, and we cannot ensure anymore that the controlled trajectory stays close enough to the path to remain nonnegative.

Nevertheless, it is worth noticing that exact nonnegative controllability can be achieved in some favorable particular cases. More precisely, assume that \tilde{Y} and Y^f are globally bounded (if they are not, perform a change of variable $Y \mapsto e^{\lambda t}Y$ with $\lambda > 0$ sufficiently large and apply the following to the new system). Then, let

$$\zeta = \min \left(\inf_{(\mathbb{R}_+ \times \Omega)^n} \tilde{Y}(t, x), \inf_{(\mathbb{R}_+ \times \Omega)^n} Y^f(t, x) \right). \quad (2.14)$$

If $\zeta > 0$, then one can replace $-\varepsilon$ with $\zeta - \varepsilon$ in (2.13) and conclude that (1.1) is controllable between \tilde{Y} and Y^f with nonnegative state, for ε small enough. The proof of this – somewhat anecdotal – result steadily follows the proof of Theorem 2.7, with ζ being added in the relevant inequalities.

The proofs of Theorems 2.6 and 2.7, presented in Section 3, are based on a “staircase” strategy, that has proven its efficiency for the study of state-constrained or control-constrained controllability [3, 5, 8, 11]. The idea is to make small steps towards the target, following a path of trajectories such that the controlled trajectory stays always close to a nonnegative free trajectory, and therefore almost nonnegative (see Figures 1 and 2). In the aforementioned references the steps trajectories are restricted to be connected steady states. The proof of Theorem 2.6 features a change of variables that decouples the equations and allows the similar use of constant steady states. On the other hand, in the proof of Theorem 2.7, we relax this steady state assumption and follow a path of non-constant free trajectories.

2.2. Minimal time

In this section, we do not assume anymore that A, B and D satisfy (2.3), (2.4) and (2.7). Our main result is the following:

Theorem 2.10. *Assume that assumption (1.2) holds and that $\omega \neq \Omega$. Let $M > 0$. Let $Y^0 \in H^1(\Omega)^n$ with $\partial_{\vec{n}} Y^0 = 0$ on $\partial\Omega$, and let $Y^f \in L^2(\Omega_T)^n$ be a trajectory of System (2.1) such that $Y^f(0, \cdot)|_{\Omega \setminus \omega} \neq Y^0|_{\Omega \setminus \omega}$. We define the minimal controllability time*

$$\bar{T}(Y^0, Y^f) = \inf \{ T > 0 / \exists u \in L^2(\omega_T)^m \text{ s.t. } Y(0) = Y^0, Y(T, \cdot) = Y^f(T, \cdot) \text{ and } \forall (t, x) \in \Omega_T, Y(t, x) \geq -M \},$$

(with the convention $\inf \emptyset = +\infty$.) Then, $\bar{T}(Y^0, Y^f) > 0$.

Remark 2.11. Under the assumptions (2.3), (2.4) and (2.7) made in the previous section, Theorems 2.6 and 2.7 ensure moreover that $\bar{T}(Y^0, Y^f) < +\infty$ either if $M < 0$, or if $M = 0$ and $D = I_n$ (or in the particular cases described in Remark 2.9). As mentioned in Remark 2.9, the question of whether or not $\bar{T}(Y^0, Y^f) < +\infty$ if $M = 0$ and $D \neq I_n$ remains open.

Remark 2.12. In the proof of Theorem 2.10, we study the auxiliary scalar system (4.2) that features a source term containing the zero-order and diffusion coupling terms of one of the n equations of (1.1). Because of the diffusion coupling terms, in order for this source term to have L^2 -regularity, we need to assume extra regularity on Y^0 .

Nonetheless, if D has at least one real eigenvalue, one can perform a change of variable to get rid of the diffusion coupling in at least one of the equations in (1.1), so that (4.2) does not contain any diffusion term anymore and Theorem 2.10 can be proved with an initial Y^0 only in $L^2(\Omega)^n$.

Remark 2.13. The assumption $Y^f(0, \cdot)|_{\Omega \setminus \omega} \neq Y^0|_{\Omega \setminus \omega}$ corresponds to the “interesting” case where the control needs to act on regions over which it is not supported in order to reach the target trajectory. Therefore, we left out the case where $Y^f(0, \cdot)|_{\Omega \setminus \omega}$ and $Y^0|_{\Omega \setminus \omega}$ differ only on ω , which however does not seem entirely trivial (notably, the strategy proposed in [2, Remark 16] does not work). The positivity of the minimal time in that latter case may depend on whether Y^f is a constant steady state or a space-varying trajectory.

Theorem 2.10 shows that relaxing the constraint $Y \geq 0$ to allow the controlled trajectory to be negative still implies the existence a minimal controllability time. This is not surprising: it has been numerically observed

that, when there is no state constraint and as the time T allowed to control the equation goes to zero, the control and the state tend to become highly oscillating [2, 14] and reach therefore very high absolute values. Hence, it is intuitively understandable that setting an unilateral constraint on the state restricts this behaviour and implies that $\bar{T}(Y^0, Y^f) > 0$.

Theorem 2.10 extends to general linear parabolic systems like (1.1) the result stated in [2, Theorem 4], that establishes the existence of a positive minimal controllability time for the scalar heat equation. The proof, presented in Section 4, relies on similar arguments as in [2].

3. PROOFS OF THEOREMS 2.6 AND 2.7

Before proving our results on state-constrained controllability, let us state a useful estimation on the cost of the control.

Proposition 3.1 (Control cost). *Assume that (2.7) holds. Let $Y^0 \in L^2(\Omega)^n$ and let Y^f be a trajectory of System (2.1) associated to the initial condition $Y^{f,0} \in L^2(\Omega)^n$. There exists a control $U \in C_0^\infty(\omega_T)^m$ such that the corresponding solution Y of (1.1) satisfies $Y(T, \cdot) = Y^f(T, \cdot)$, and satisfying moreover: for any $s \in \mathbb{N}$, there exists $C_s(T) > 0$ such that*

$$\|U\|_{H^s(\omega_T)^m} \leq C_s(T) \|Y^0 - Y^{f,0}\|_{L^2(\Omega)^n}. \quad (3.1)$$

Proposition 3.1 is classical but is not an immediate consequence of the results in [1]. For the sake of completeness, we provide a short proof, based on the strategy given in [15, Theorem 4].

Proof. We consider the adjoint equation

$$\begin{cases} \partial_t Z &= D^* \Delta Z + A^* Z & \text{in } \Omega_T, \\ \partial_{\vec{n}} Z &= 0 & \text{on } (0, T) \times \partial\Omega, \\ Z(0, \cdot) &= Z^0 & \text{in } \Omega. \end{cases} \quad (3.2)$$

First of all, we decompose the initial condition Z^0 in the Hilbert basis defined before (2.8):

$$Z^0(x) = \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} Z_k^0 e_k(x), \quad Z_k^0 \in \mathbb{R}^n.$$

We can then decompose the solution Z of (3.2) as

$$Z(t, x) = \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} Z_k(t) e_k(x),$$

where Z_k is the unique solution of the ordinary differential system

$$\begin{cases} Z_k' &= (-\lambda_k D^* + A^*) Z_k, \\ Z_k(0) &= Z_k^0. \end{cases} \quad (3.3)$$

Let us recall the spectral inequality for eigenfunctions of the Dirichlet-Laplace operator as obtained in the seminal paper by Gilles Lebeau and Enrique Zuazua [16] (see also [17]): for any non-empty open subset $\tilde{\omega}$ of Ω , there exists $C > 0$ such that for any $J \in \mathbb{N}^*$ and any $(a_1, \dots, a_J) \in \mathbb{R}^J$, we have

$$\sum_{k \leq J} |a_k|^2 = \int_{\Omega} \left(\sum_{k \leq J} a_k e_k(x) \right)^2 dx \leq C e^{C\sqrt{\lambda_J}} \int_{\tilde{\omega}} \left(\sum_{k \leq J} a_k e_k(x) \right)^2 dx. \quad (3.4)$$

Writing (3.4) for each component of B^*Z and summing on n , we obtain that there exists $C > 0$ such that, for all $t \in (O, T)$,

$$\sum_{k \leq J} |B^* Z_k(t)|^2 \leq C e^{C\sqrt{\lambda_J}} \int_{\tilde{\omega}} \left| \sum_{k \leq J} B^* Z_k(t) e_k(x) \right|^2 dx. \quad (3.5)$$

Assume that $\tilde{\omega}$ is strongly included in ω and let $\varphi \in C_0^\infty(\omega)$ be such that $\varphi = 1$ on $\tilde{\omega}$. We can deduce from (3.5) the inequality

$$\sum_{k \leq J} |B^* Z_k(t)|^2 \leq C e^{C\sqrt{\lambda_J}} \int_{\omega} \varphi(x) \left| \sum_{k \leq J} B^* Z_k(t) e_k(x) \right|^2 dx. \quad (3.6)$$

Integrating (3.6) between $T/4$ and $3T/4$, we obtain

$$\int_{T/4}^{3T/4} \sum_{k \leq J} |B^* Z_k(t)|^2 dt \leq C e^{C\sqrt{\lambda_J}} \int_{T/4}^{3T/4} \int_{\omega} \varphi(x) \left| \sum_{k \leq J} B^* Z_k(t) e_k(x) \right|^2 dx dt. \quad (3.7)$$

Now, we consider the system of ODEs (3.3). Let $k \in \{1, \dots, J\}$. Assumption (2.7) implies that System (3.3) is observable on the time interval $(T/4, 3T/4)$ and we have the existence of some constant $C(\lambda_k) > 0$ such that

$$\left| Z_k \left(\frac{3T}{4} \right) \right|^2 \leq C(\lambda_k) \int_{T/4}^{3T/4} \|B^* Z_k(t)\|^2 dt. \quad (3.8)$$

Moreover, it is proved in [15, Appendix] that there exists $p_1, p_2 \in \mathbb{N}$ (depending on n but independent of k) such that (3.8) holds with

$$C(\lambda_k) \leq C \left(1 + \frac{1}{T^{p_1}} \right) \lambda_k^{p_2}. \quad (3.9)$$

Since $-\lambda_k A^* + D^*$ is dissipative for k large enough, there exists $C > 0$ independent on k and T such that

$$\|Z_k(T)\|^2 \leq C e^{CT} \|Z_k \left(\frac{3T}{4} \right)\|^2. \quad (3.10)$$

Hence, restricting to the case $T \leq 1$ and combining (3.10) together with (3.8) and (3.6), we deduce that for another constant $C > 0$,

$$\|Z_k(T)\|^2 \leq C \left(1 + \frac{1}{T^{p_1}} \right) e^{C\sqrt{\lambda_J}} \int_{T/4}^{3T/4} \int_{\omega} \varphi(x) \left| \sum_{k \leq J} B^* Z_k(t) e_k(x) \right|^2 dx dt. \quad (3.11)$$

Let $\psi \in C_0^\infty(0, T)$ such that $\psi = 1$ on $(T/4, 3T/4)$. We deduce from (3.11) that

$$\|Z_k(T)\|^2 \leq C \left(1 + \frac{1}{T^{p_1}} \right) e^{C\sqrt{\lambda_J}} \int_0^T \int_{\omega} \varphi(x) \psi(t) \left| \sum_{k \leq J} B^* Z_k(t) e_k(x) \right|^2 dx dt. \quad (3.12)$$

Inequality (3.12) is a low-frequency observability inequality for the solutions of (3.2). It is well-known that it is equivalent to a partial controllability result for the solutions of (1.1). More precisely, we consider as an initial condition

$$\widehat{Y}^0 = Y^0 - Y^{f,0}.$$

Then, we deduce that there exists $U_J \in L^2(\omega_T)$, such that the corresponding solution \widehat{Y} of (1.1) with initial condition \widehat{Y}^0 satisfies that $\langle Y(T, \cdot), e_j \rangle = 0$ for any $j \in \mathbb{N}$ with $j \leq J$. Moreover, following [16, Proof of Proposition 2], it is possible to prove that one can choose U_j in the smooth class $C_0^\infty(\omega_T)$, in such a way that for any $s \in \mathbb{N}$, we have

$$\|U_J\|_{H^s(Q_T)} \leq C \left(1 + \frac{1}{T^{p_1}}\right) \frac{C}{\sqrt{T}} (1 + \lambda_j^s) e^{C\sqrt{\lambda_j}} \|Y^0 - Y^{f,0}\|_{L^2(\Omega)^n}. \quad (3.13)$$

Hence, by applying the Lebeau-Robbiano strategy as described in [18, Fin de la preuve du Théorème 1], we can create a control $U \in C_0^\infty(\omega_T)$ (that is alternating phases of C^∞ controls with compact support and phases of dissipation) satisfying the estimation (3.1) such that the corresponding solution of (1.1) with initial condition \widehat{Y}^0 and control U satisfies $\widehat{Y}(T, \cdot) = 0$. Then, by linearity, $Y = Y^f + \widehat{Y}$ is a solution of (1.1) (associated to the control U) with initial condition Y^0 and satisfies $Y(T, \cdot) = Y^f(T, \cdot)$. \square

Combining Propositions 2.1 and 3.1, with s large enough such that $H^s(Q_T) \hookrightarrow L^\infty(Q_T)$, which is possible by Sobolev embedding, yields the following result, that features an estimation of the L^∞ distance between the free trajectory and the controlled trajectory by the L^2 distance between the initial states of the free and the target trajectories.

Proposition 3.2. *Let $Y^0 \in L^\infty(\Omega)^n$, \tilde{Y} the corresponding solution of (2.1), and Y^f a trajectory of (2.1) with an initial condition $Y^{f,0} \in L^\infty(\Omega)^n$. Then, for all $T > 0$, there exists a control $U \in C_0^\infty(\omega_T)$ and $C(T)$ such that the solution Y of (1.1) with initial condition Y^0 and control U satisfies $Y(T, \cdot) = Y^f(T, \cdot)$ and*

$$\forall t \in [0, T], \|Y(t, \cdot) - \tilde{Y}(t, \cdot)\|_{L^\infty(\Omega)^n} \leq C(T) \|Y^0 - Y^{f,0}\|_{L^2(\Omega)^n}. \quad (3.14)$$

Proposition 3.2 is a key ingredient in the proofs of Theorems 2.6 and 2.7.

Proof of Theorem 2.6. For $t \geq 0$ and $Y \in \mathbb{R}^N$, define

$$Z = e^{-tA}Y. \quad (3.15)$$

Notice that Y is a solution of (1.1) if and only if Z is solution of the following system:

$$\begin{cases} \partial_t Z - \Delta Z &= e^{-tA}BU\mathbf{1}_\omega & \text{in } \Omega_T, \\ \partial_{\vec{n}} Z &= 0 & \text{on } (0, T) \times \partial\Omega, \\ Z(0, \cdot) &= Y^0(\cdot) & \text{in } \Omega. \end{cases} \quad (3.16)$$

It is obvious that System (3.16) is controllable if and only if System (1.1) is controllable. Moreover, combining Proposition 3.2 and the definition of Z yields the following estimation for the trajectories of (3.16):

Lemma 3.3. *Let $Z^0 \in L^\infty(\Omega)^n$, \tilde{Z} the solution of (3.16) with initial condition Z^0 and no control, and Z^f a trajectory of (3.16) with another initial condition $Z^{f,0}$. Then, for all $T > 0$, there exists a control U in $C_0^\infty(\omega_T)$ and $C(T)$ such that the solution Z of (3.16) with initial condition Z^0 and control U satisfies $Z(T, \cdot) = Z^f(T, \cdot)$ and*

$$\forall t \in [0, T], \|Z(t, \cdot) - \tilde{Z}(t, \cdot)\|_{L^\infty(\Omega)^n} \leq C(T) \|Z^0 - Z^{f,0}\|_{L^2(\Omega)^n}. \quad (3.17)$$

Let Z^f be the solution of (3.16) with initial condition $Z^{f,0} = Y^{f,0}$ and no control. We are going to show the existence of $T > 0$ and a control U such that the solution Z of (3.16) with initial condition $Z^0 = Y^0$ and control U satisfies

$$Z(T, \cdot) = Z^f(T, \cdot) \quad (3.18)$$

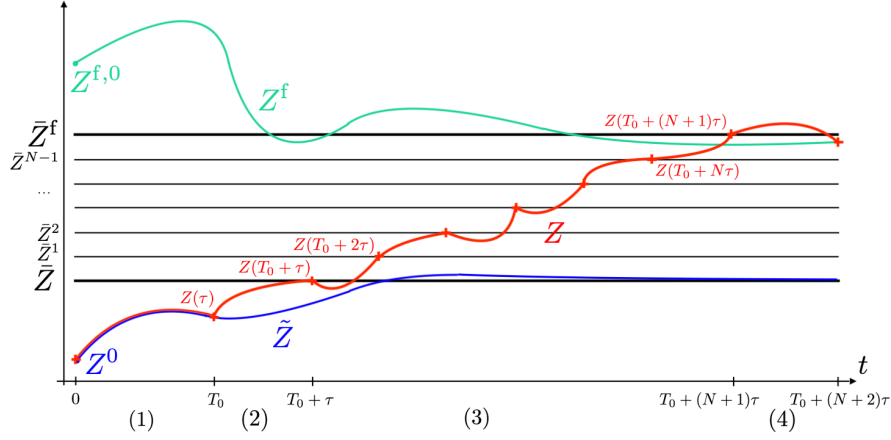


FIGURE 1. Schematic representation of the staircase method used for the proof of Theorem 2.6.

and, for all $(t, x) \in \Omega_T$,

$$Z(t, x) \geq 0. \quad (3.19)$$

As already noted above, it is clear that such a control U is such that the solution Y of (1.1) with initial condition Y^0 and control U satisfies

$$Y(T, \cdot) = Y^f(T, \cdot). \quad (3.20)$$

Moreover, for all $(t, x) \in \Omega_T$,

$$Y(t, x) = e^{tA} Z(t, x) \geq 0, \quad (3.21)$$

because of (3.19) and the fact that the exponential of a quasipositive matrix has only nonnegative entries (if A is quasipositive, write $A = P + \alpha I_n$ with $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}$ such that P has only nonnegative entries, then it is clear that e^P is nonnegative and so is $e^A = e^{\alpha I_n} e^P = e^\alpha e^P$ [19]).

When $U = 0$, (3.16) becomes a system of n decoupled parabolic equations. Then, using a spectral expansion, we immediately have that the solutions \tilde{Z}^0 and Z^f starting respectively at Z^0 and $Z^{f,0}$ converge in norms L^∞ and L^2 (and any other L^p -norm) to

$$\bar{Z} = \frac{1}{|\Omega|} \int_{\Omega} Z^0 \quad \text{and} \quad \bar{Z}^f = \frac{1}{|\Omega|} \int_{\Omega} Z^{f,0},$$

with $|\Omega| = \int_{\Omega} 1 dx$. Assumption (2.9) in Theorem 2.6 ensures that all the components of \bar{Z} and \bar{Z}^f are positive. Therefore, there exists $\zeta > 0$ such that $\bar{Z} \geq \zeta$ and $\bar{Z}^f \geq \zeta$.

We are now in a position to build the trajectory Z going from Z^0 to Z^f . This will take several steps that are summarized on Figure 1. Let $\delta > 0$ and $\tau > 0$.

(1) We define a time T_0 (depending on δ) such that, for all $t \geq T_0$,

$$\|\tilde{Z}_0(t, \cdot) - \bar{Z}\|_{L^2(\Omega)^n} \leq \delta \quad \text{and} \quad \|Z^f(t, \cdot) - \bar{Z}^f\|_{L^2(\Omega)^n} \leq \delta. \quad (3.22)$$

The positivity of the initial conditions ensures that, with the control equal to 0 on $[0, T_0]$,

$$\forall (t, x) \in [0, T_0] \times \Omega, Z(t, x) = \tilde{Z}_0(t, x) \geq 0. \quad (3.23)$$

(2) On the time interval $[T_0, T_0 + \tau]$, let $V \in C_0^\infty((T_0, T_0 + \tau), \omega)^m$ be a control such that the solution Z of

$$\begin{cases} \partial_t Z - \Delta Z &= e^{-tA} B V \mathbf{1}_\omega & \text{in } \Omega_T, \\ \partial_{\vec{n}} Z &= 0 & \text{on } (T_0, T_0 + \tau) \times \partial\Omega, \\ Z(T_0, \cdot) &= \tilde{Z}^0(T_0) & \text{in } \Omega. \end{cases}$$

satisfies $\tilde{Z}(T_0 + \tau) = \bar{Z}$. Lemma 3.3 ensures that V can be taken such that, for all $t \in [T_0, T_0 + \tau]$,

$$\|Z(t, \cdot) - \tilde{Z}_0(t, \cdot)\|_{L^\infty(\Omega)^n} \leq C(\tau) \|\tilde{Z}_0(T_0) - \bar{Z}\|_{L^2(\Omega)^n}, \quad (3.24)$$

and therefore, using (3.22), for all $(t, x) \in [T_0, T_0 + \tau] \times \Omega$,

$$Z(t, x) \geq \zeta - C(\tau)\delta. \quad (3.25)$$

(3) Let $M = \max(1, \max \bar{Z}_0, \max \bar{Z}_0^f)$ and $N \in \mathbb{N}^*$ such that $\frac{M}{N} \leq \delta$. For $k \in \{0, \dots, N\}$, we define

$$\bar{Z}_k = \left(1 - \frac{k}{N}\right) \bar{Z} + \frac{k}{N} \bar{Z}^{f,0}, \quad (3.26)$$

(this way one has $\bar{Z}_0 = \bar{Z}$ and $\bar{Z}_N = \bar{Z}^f$.) The \bar{Z}^k define a sequence of constant steady states such that for all k in $\{0, \dots, N-1\}$, $\|\bar{Z}_{k+1} - \bar{Z}_k\|_{L^2(\Omega)^n} \leq \delta$.

Then, for each $k \in \{0, \dots, N-1\}$, on the time interval $I_k = [T_0 + (k+1)\tau, T_0 + (k+2)\tau]$, we define a control U_k in $C_0^\infty(I_k \times \omega)^m$ such that the solution Z of

$$\begin{cases} \partial_t Z - \Delta Z &= e^{-tA} B U_k \mathbf{1}_\omega & \text{in } \Omega_T, \\ \partial_{\vec{n}} Z &= 0 & \text{on } I_k \times \partial\Omega, \\ Z(T_0 + (k+1)\tau, \cdot) &= \bar{Z}_k & \text{in } \Omega. \end{cases}$$

satisfies $Z(T_0 + (k+2)\tau) = \bar{Z}_{k+1}$. According to Lemma 3.3, the control U_k is such that one has, for all $t \in I_k$,

$$\|Z(t, \cdot) - \bar{Z}_k\|_{L^\infty(\Omega)^n} \leq C(\tau) \|\bar{Z}_{k+1} - \bar{Z}_k\|_{L^2(\Omega)^n}, \quad (3.27)$$

which means that

$$\forall (t, x) \in I_k \times \Omega, Z(t, x) \geq \zeta - C(\tau)\delta. \quad (3.28)$$

At the end of this step, we have reached the steady state $\bar{Z}_N = \bar{Z}^f$.

(4) On the time interval $[T_0 + (N+1)\tau, T_0 + (N+2)\tau]$, we define a control W in $C_0^\infty((T_0 + (N+1)\tau, T_0 + (N+2)\tau) \times \omega)^m$ such that the solution Z of

$$\begin{cases} \partial_t Z - \Delta Z &= e^{-tA} B W \mathbf{1}_\omega & \text{in } \Omega_T, \\ \partial_{\vec{n}} Z &= 0 & \text{on } (0, T) \times \partial\Omega, \\ Z(T_0 + (N+1)\tau, \cdot) &= \bar{Z}^f & \text{in } \Omega. \end{cases}$$

satisfies $Z(T_0 + (N+2)\tau, \cdot) = Z_f(T_0 + (N+2)\tau, \cdot)$. Lemma 3.3 ensures one more time that W can be taken such that for all $t \in [T_0 + (N+1)\tau, T_0 + (N+2)\tau]$,

$$\|Z(t, \cdot) - \bar{Z}^f\|_{L^\infty(\Omega)^n} \leq C(\tau) \|Z^f(T_0 + (N+1)\tau) - \bar{Z}^f\|_{L^2(\Omega)^n}, \quad (3.29)$$

which gives, using (3.22): for all $(t, x) \in [T_0 + (N+1)\tau, T_0 + (N+2)\tau] \times \Omega$,

$$Z(t, x) \geq \zeta - C(\tau)\delta. \quad (3.30)$$

Overall, taking $T = T_0 + (N + 2)\tau$,

$$\delta = \frac{\zeta}{C(\tau)},$$

which is possible since τ and ζ does not depend on δ , and

$$U(t) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{on } [0, T_0), \\ V(t) & \text{on } [T_0, T_0 + \tau), \\ U_k(t) & \text{on } [T_0 + (k+1)\tau, T_0 + (k+2)\tau), k \in \{0, \dots, N-1\}, \\ W(t) & \text{on } [T_0 + (N+1)\tau, T_0 + (N+2)\tau], \end{cases}$$

we have found a control U in $C_0^\infty(\omega_T)$ such that Z satisfies (3.18) and (3.19). \square

The proof of Theorem 2.7 is again based on building a “staircase”, made this time of non-constant trajectories. Note that, to ensure that these trajectories do not go too far away from each other, we start the proof with a simple change of variable that makes the trajectories globally bounded. Like for the change of variable (3.15) in the proof of Theorem 2.6, this change of variable preserves the quasipositivity of the coupling matrix and the nonnegativity of the solutions.

Proof of Theorem 2.7. Let $\tau > 0$, $\varepsilon > 0$, $Y^0 \in L^\infty(\Omega)^n$ such that $Y^0 \geq 0$, and Y^f in $L^\infty(\mathbb{R}_+ \times \Omega)^n$ a trajectory of (1.1) associated to the initial condition $Y^{f,0} \geq 0$.

By means of a change of variable $Y \mapsto e^{\lambda t}Y$ with $\lambda > 0$ sufficiently large (which is equivalent to changing A into $A - \lambda I_n$, which does not affect the quasipositivity of the coupling matrix A), we can always assume that A satisfies the following condition:

$$\forall \xi \in \mathbb{R}^N, \langle A\xi, \xi \rangle \leq 0. \quad (3.31)$$

We deduce from (3.31) that the solution Y of (2.1) starting at any Y^0 is globally bounded. Indeed, take the scalar product of (1.1) with Y and integrate over Ω :

$$\int_{\Omega} \langle \partial_t Y, Y \rangle - \int_{\Omega} \langle D\Delta Y, Y \rangle = \int_{\Omega} \langle AY, Y \rangle,$$

which rewrites as

$$\frac{1}{2} \frac{d}{dt} \int_{\Omega} |Y|^2 = \int_{\Omega} \langle DY, Y \rangle + \int_{\Omega} \langle AY, Y \rangle \leq 0,$$

because of assumption (3.31), an integration by parts and assumption (1.2). Hence, for all $t > 0$,

$$\int_{\Omega} |Y(t)|^2 \leq \int_{\Omega} |Y^0|^2. \quad (3.32)$$

Let $\delta > 0$. Let $N \in \mathbb{N}^*$ such that $\frac{1}{N} \|Y^0 - Y^{f,0}\|_{L^2(\Omega)^n} \leq \delta$. For $k \in \{0, \dots, N\}$, we define

$$Y_k^0 = \left(1 - \frac{k}{N}\right)Y^0 + \frac{k}{N}Y^{f,0}, \quad (3.33)$$

(this way one has $Y_0^0 = Y^0$ and $Y_N^0 = Y^{f,0}$.) Let \tilde{Y}_k be the solution of System (2.1) with initial condition Y_k^0 . According to Proposition 2.2, \tilde{Y} and Y^f are nonnegative. Let $M > 0$ be such that $\|\tilde{Y}\|_{L^2(\mathbb{R}_+ \times \Omega)} \leq M$ and $\|Y^f\|_{L^2(\mathbb{R}_+ \times \Omega)} \leq M$ (M exists thanks to (3.32)). Then, one has

$$\|\tilde{Y} - Y^f\|_{L^2(\mathbb{R}_+ \times \Omega)} \leq M,$$

and it follows by linearity of System (2.1) and the definition of the \tilde{Y}_k that, for all $k \in \{0, \dots, N-1\}$, one has

$$\|\tilde{Y}_{k+1} - \tilde{Y}_k\|_{L^2(\mathbb{R}_+ \times \Omega)} \leq M\delta. \quad (3.34)$$

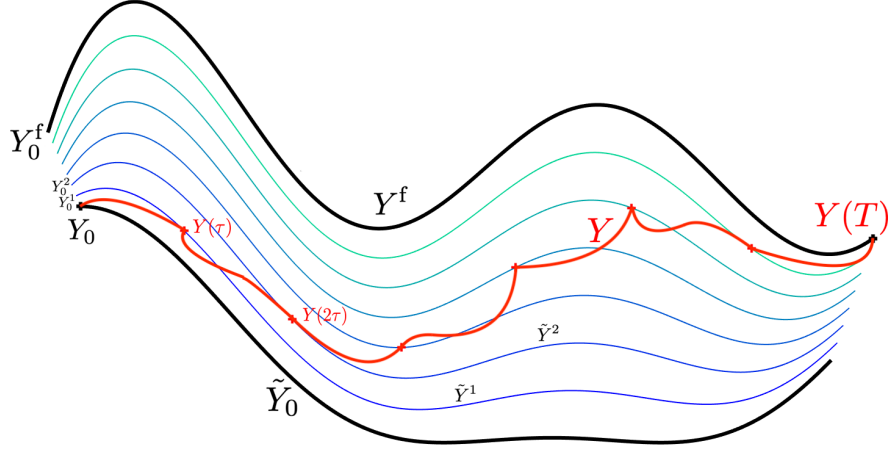


FIGURE 2. Schematic representation of the staircase method used for the proof of Theorem 2.7.

Notice that, for all $k \in \{0, \dots, N\}$, $t \geq 0$ and $x \in \Omega$,

$$\tilde{Y}_k(t, x) \geq 0.$$

We now build the controlled trajectory Y using the staircase strategy. The steps of the construction of Y are represented on Figure 2.

Let us start by steering the system from Y^0 to the trajectory \tilde{Y}_1 . According to Proposition 3.2, there exists a control $U_1 \in C_0^\infty((0, \tau) \times \omega)^m$ such that the solution of (1.1) with initial condition Y^0 and control U_1 satisfies

$$Y(\tau, \cdot) = \tilde{Y}_1(\tau, \cdot), \quad (3.35)$$

and, for all $t \in [0, \tau]$,

$$\|Y(t, \cdot) - \tilde{Y}(t, \cdot)\|_{L^\infty(\Omega)^n} \leq C(\tau) \|Y^0 - \tilde{Y}_1^0\|_{L^2(\Omega)^n}. \quad (3.36)$$

Using (3.34), we get

$$\forall t \in [0, \tau], Y(t, \cdot) \geq -C(\tau)M\delta. \quad (3.37)$$

Next, let $k \in \{1, \dots, N-1\}$. We repeat the step above to steer the trajectory Y from $\tilde{Y}_k(\cdot, k\tau)$ to $\tilde{Y}_{k+1}(\cdot, (k+1)\tau)$ in time $(k+1)\tau$ with a control $U_{k+1} \in C_0^\infty((k\tau, (k+1)\tau) \times \omega)^m$ such that, for all $t \in [k\tau, (k+1)\tau]$,

$$\|Y(t, \cdot) - \tilde{Y}_k(t, \cdot)\|_{L^\infty(\Omega)^n} \leq C(\tau) \|\tilde{Y}_k(\cdot, k\tau) - \tilde{Y}_{k+1}(\cdot, k\tau)\|_{L^2(\Omega)^n}. \quad (3.38)$$

Using (3.34) again, we have

$$\forall t \in [k\tau, (k+1)\tau], Y(t, \cdot) \geq -C(\tau)M\delta. \quad (3.39)$$

Overall, let us set

$$\delta = \frac{\varepsilon}{MC(\tau)}, \quad (3.40)$$

$T = N\tau$, and U the control defined on $[0, T]$ by $U(t, \cdot) = U_k(t, \cdot)$ if $t \in (k\tau, (k+1)\tau)$. The solution Y of (1.1) starting at Y^0 and with control U in $C_0^\infty(\omega_T)$ satisfies (2.12) and (2.13), which concludes the proof. \square

4. PROOF OF THEOREM 2.10

Our proof of the existence of a positive minimal time for controllability of System (1.1) relies on proving the existence of such a minimal time for a scalar heat equation with a potential, a source term and boundary control. The arguments are inspired by those presented in the proof of [2, Theorem 4.1], which proves the same result for the standard heat equation.

Proof. Let $M > 0$ and $Y^0 \in H^1(\Omega)^N$ with $\partial_{\vec{n}} Y^0 = 0$ on $\partial\Omega$, and let $Y^f \in L^2(\Omega_T)^N$ be a trajectory of System (1.1). Assume that there exists $T > 0$ and $U \in L^2(\omega_T)^m$ such that the solution of (1.1) starting at Y^0 with control U satisfies $Y(T, \cdot) = Y^f(T, \cdot)$ and

$$\forall (t, x) \in \Omega_T, Y(t, x) \geq -M. \quad (4.1)$$

Since $Y^0 \in H^1(\Omega)^n$ with $\partial_{\vec{n}} Y^0 = 0$ on $\partial\Omega$, according to [20, Theorem 5, p. 360] (where the Dirichlet boundary conditions are replaced by Neumann boundary conditions), Y belongs to $L^2((0, T), H^2(\Omega)^n)$.

Assume without loss of generality that there exists an open ball B contained in $\Omega \setminus \omega$ and such that the first components of Y^0 and $Y^f(T, \cdot)$ differ on B , and consider the restriction to B of the first equation of System (1.1):

$$\begin{cases} \partial_t y_1 - \Delta y = a_{11} y_1 + f(t, x) & \text{in } (0, T) \times B, \\ y_1(t, x) = v(t, x) & \text{on } (0, T) \times \partial B. \end{cases} \quad (4.2)$$

In (4.2), $f(t, x) = \sum_{j=2}^N (a_{1j} + d_{1j} \Delta) y_j$ contains the coupling terms from System (1.1), and $v(t, x)$ is the trace of the solution Y of (1.1) with control U . The fact that Y belongs to $L^2((0, T), H^2(\Omega)^n)$ notably ensures that $f \in L^2((0, T) \times B)$. Thus, (4.2) can be seen as a scalar heat equation with a linear potential, a source term, and Neumann control on the whole boundary. Moreover, Assumption (4.1) requires that the control v in (4.2) satisfies $v \geq -M$ at all times.

Since we will only be considering System (4.2) from now on, let us rename y_1 by y and a_{11} by a to lighten notations.

Let y^0 and y^f be the restrictions to $(0, T) \times B$ of the first component of Y^0 and Y^f . Let also $y^{f,0} = y^f(0, \cdot)$. We define as above the minimal controllability time for (4.2) as

$$\bar{T}(y^0, y^f) = \inf \{ T > 0 / \exists v \in L^2((0, T) \times \partial B) \text{ s.t. } y(0, \cdot) = y^0, y(T, \cdot) = y^f(T, \cdot) \text{ and } \forall (t, x) \in (0, T) \times \partial B, v(t, x) \geq -M \}. \quad (4.3)$$

Notice that by construction of (4.2), we have $\bar{T}(y^0, y^f) \leq \bar{T}(Y^0, Y^f)$. Therefore, if (4.2) has a positive minimal controllability time, then so does (1.1).

Assume that $\bar{T}(y^0, y^f) = 0$. Following the ideas used in [2] for proving the existence of a minimal time for the heat equation, we will study a spectral decomposition of the solution y of (4.2). Consider the sequence of eigenvalues $(\lambda_n)_{n \in \mathbb{N}^*}$ and the associated sequence of eigenvectors (p_n) of the following Sturm-Liouville problem on $[0, 1]$:

$$\begin{cases} p_n''(r) + \frac{d-1}{r} p_n'(r) + a p_n(r) = -\lambda_n p_n(r), \\ p_n(1) = p_n'(0) = 0 \text{ and } p_n(0) \text{ s.t. } \omega_{d-1} \int_0^1 p_n^2 r^{d-1} dr = 1. \end{cases} \quad (4.4)$$

In (4.4), $\omega_{d-1} = \int_{\partial B} d\Gamma_x$. It is well-known that the sequence (λ_n) is increasing and that $\lim_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \lambda_n = +\infty$.

We define $\varphi_n(x) = p_n(\|x\|)$ for $x \in B$, and $\alpha_n = p_n'(1)$, so that φ_n satisfies the adjoint problem

$$\begin{cases} \Delta \varphi_n + a \varphi_n = -\lambda_n \varphi_n & \text{in } B, \\ \varphi_n(x) = 0, \nabla \varphi_n \cdot n(x) = \alpha_n & \text{on } \partial B. \end{cases} \quad (4.5)$$

Notice that, thanks to the requirement made on $p_n(0)$ in (4.4), we have $\|\varphi_n\|_{L^2(B)} = 1$ for all n in \mathbb{N}^* . Moreover, straightforward computations (see [2, Equation (18)]) give the identity

$$\|\varphi_n\|_{L^2(B)} = \omega_{d-1} \frac{\alpha_n^2}{2(\lambda_n + a)} (= 1), \quad (4.6)$$

that will be useful in the following.

Let $T > 0$ and a control $v^T \in L^2((0, T) \times \partial B)$ such that the solution y of (4.2) starting at y^0 with control v^T reaches y^f in time T . For $n \in \mathbb{N}^*$ and $t \in (0, T)$, define $y_n = \int_B y(t, x) \varphi_n(x) dx$. Then, we compute

$$\dot{y}_n(t) = \int_B (\Delta y(t, x) + ay(t, x) + f(t, x)) \varphi_n(x) dx, \quad (4.7)$$

$$= \int_B y(t, x) (\Delta \varphi_n + a \varphi_n) dx - \int_{\partial B} y(t, x) \nabla \varphi_n \cdot n(x) d\Gamma_x + \int_B f(t, x) \varphi_n(x) dx, \quad (4.8)$$

$$= -\lambda_n y_n(t) - \alpha_n \int_{\partial B} v^T(t, x) d\Gamma_x + \int_B f(t, x) \varphi_n(x) dx, \quad (4.9)$$

which gives, after integrating on the time interval $(0, T)$,

$$y_n(T) = e^{-\lambda_n T} y_n(0) - \alpha_n \int_0^T e^{-\lambda_n(T-t)} \int_{\partial B} v^T d\Gamma_x dt + \int_0^T e^{-\lambda_n(T-t)} \int_B f \varphi_n dx dt, \quad (4.10)$$

that we rewrite, using that $v^T = v^T + M - M$:

$$\begin{aligned} & \int_0^T e^{-\lambda_n(T-t)} \int_{\partial B} (v^T + M) d\Gamma_x dt \\ &= -\frac{1}{\alpha_n} \left(y_n^f(T) - e^{-\lambda_n T} y_n(0) - \int_0^T e^{-\lambda_n(T-t)} \int_B f \varphi_n dx dt \right) + M \int_0^T e^{-\lambda_n(T-t)} \int_{\partial B} d\Gamma_x dt. \end{aligned} \quad (4.11)$$

Now, since $v^T + M \geq 0$, we have upper and lower bounds on the right-hand side of (4.11), depending on the sign of λ_n :

$$\begin{aligned} & \int_0^T \int_{\partial B} (v^T + M) d\Gamma_x dt \\ & \leq -\frac{1}{\alpha_n} \left(y_n^f(T) - e^{-\lambda_n T} y_n(0) - \int_0^T e^{-\lambda_n(T-t)} \int_B f \varphi_n dx dt \right) + M \int_0^T e^{-\lambda_n(T-t)} \int_{\partial B} d\Gamma_x dt \\ & \leq e^{-\lambda_n T} \int_0^T \int_{\partial B} (v^T + M) d\Gamma_x dt, \end{aligned} \quad (4.12)$$

if $\lambda_n \leq 0$, and

$$\begin{aligned} & e^{-\lambda_n T} \int_0^T \int_{\partial B} (v^T + M) d\Gamma_x dt \\ & \leq -\frac{1}{\alpha_n} \left(y_n^f(T) - e^{-\lambda_n T} y_n(0) - \int_0^T e^{-\lambda_n(T-t)} \int_B f \varphi_n dx dt \right) + M \int_0^T e^{-\lambda_n(T-t)} \int_{\partial B} d\Gamma_x dt \\ & \leq \int_0^T \int_{\partial B} (v^T + M) d\Gamma_x dt, \end{aligned} \quad (4.13)$$

if $\lambda_n > 0$. Now, we want to take the limit when T goes to 0 in (4.12) and (4.13). It is obvious that

$$\lim_{T \rightarrow 0} M \int_0^T e^{-\lambda_n(T-t)} \int_{\partial B} d\Gamma_x dt = 0 \quad \text{and} \quad \lim_{T \rightarrow 0} M \int_0^T \int_{\partial B} d\Gamma_x dt = 0. \quad (4.14)$$

Moreover, using the Cauchy-Schwarz inequality and the fact that $\|\phi_n\|_{L^2(B)} = 1$, we have the following bound:

$$\left| \int_0^T e^{-\lambda_n(T-t)} \int_B f \varphi_n dx dt \right| \leq \|f\|_{L^2((0,T) \times B)} \int_0^T e^{-\lambda_n(T-t)} dt, \quad (4.15)$$

and therefore

$$\lim_{T \rightarrow 0} \int_0^T e^{-\lambda_n(T-t)} \int_B f \varphi_n dx dt = 0. \quad (4.16)$$

Using (4.14) and (4.16) into (4.12) and (4.13) when taking the limit yields

$$\lim_{T \rightarrow 0} \int_0^T \int_{\partial B} v^T d\Gamma_x dt = \frac{y_n^{f,0} - y_n^0}{-\alpha_n}. \quad (4.17)$$

Since the left-hand side of (4.17) does not depend on n , it means that there exists $\gamma \in \mathbb{R}$ such that for all $n \in \mathbb{N}^*$,

$$y_n^0 = y_n^{f,0} + \alpha_n \gamma. \quad (4.18)$$

The next step is to show that $\gamma = 0$. Since $y^0 \in L^2(B)$, we know that the series $\sum_{n=1}^{+\infty} |y_n^0|^2$ converges. Plugging (4.18) into this series yields

$$\sum_{n=1}^{+\infty} |y_n^0|^2 = \sum_{n=1}^{+\infty} |y_n^{f,0}|^2 + \sum_{n=1}^{+\infty} \gamma \alpha_n (2y_n^{f,0} + \alpha_n \gamma). \quad (4.19)$$

The first sum on the right-hand side converges because $y^{f,0} \in L^2(B)$. Therefore, the last sum is also finite, so

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \gamma \alpha_n (2y_n^{f,0} + \alpha_n \gamma) = 0. \quad (4.20)$$

Then, notice that

$$y_n^{f,0} = \int_B y^{f,0} \phi_n dx = \frac{1}{\lambda_n + a} \int_B y^{f,0} (\lambda_n + a) \varphi_n dx = \frac{1}{\lambda_n + a} \int_B y^{f,0} \Delta \varphi_n dx = -\frac{\alpha_n}{\lambda_n + a} \int_{\partial B} y^1 d\Gamma_x,$$

and use the identity (4.6) to obtain

$$\alpha_n y_n^{f,0} = \frac{2}{\omega_{d-1}} \int_{\partial B} y^{f,0} d\Gamma_x, \quad (4.21)$$

which does not depend on n . Since $\lim_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \alpha_n = +\infty$, we deduce that (4.20) holds only if $\gamma = 0$.

This means that, for all $n \in \mathbb{N}$, $y_n^0 = y_n^{f,0}$. Therefore $y^0 = y^{f,0}$. By contraposition, this proves the theorem. \square

5. DISCUSSION AND OPEN PROBLEMS

We have studied the problem of nonnegative controllability for coupled reaction-diffusion systems. Our results show that one can control such a system in large time to trajectories using the staircase method with approximately nonnegative state. Moreover, in the case $D = I_n$, controllability in large time with nonnegative state holds. In a broader framework (less assumptions on A , B and D), we also proved the existence of a positive minimal controllability time with whichever constraint of type $Y \geq -M$ with $M \geq 0$.

We list a few remarks and open questions below.

Regularity of the control for minimal time. In [2], the authors show that the heat equation is controllable with nonnegative state constraint with a positive minimal time. Moreover, by considering a sequence of controls weakly converging in L^1 , they show that controllability in exactly the minimal time can be achieved with a Radon measure control. This result easily transposes to System (1.1). As stated in [2], the question of whether the control in the minimal time can be more regular is still open.

Controllability with nonnegative state in the general case. It would be interesting to know if it is possible to achieve exact nonnegative controllability in Theorem 2.7. We have briefly explained in Remark 2.9 the reasons why the staircase method fails to show controllability with nonnegative state when the free trajectory or the target trajectory goes to 0 when T goes to infinity: in that case, being close to the steps of the staircase is not sufficient to conclude that the state is nonnegative. Moreover, reducing the size of the steps is useless because it may increase the time needed to reach the target trajectory.

Since this obstacle does not arise when $D = I_n$, the fact that the diffusion occurs at different speeds on each equation seems to play a key role in the system's constrained controllability properties. Let us explain in a few words why it could intuitively be an obstruction to controllability. Assume that the diffusion is very slow on one of the equations, say the one governing y_1 , and that at a given time y_1 is close to 0 on ω . The slow diffusion means that it will remain close to zero for a relatively long time. Meanwhile, we can imagine that y_2 is increasing whereas the target for y_2 is a small, constant value. To make y_2 decrease, the control would have to be taken negative. However, it cannot be so for too long, because then it would make y_1 negative itself. This seems to be (one of the reasons) why coupled systems with different diffusions could be “more difficult” to control with a state constraint. We are currently investigating this question.

Nonlinear case. A natural extension of this work would be the generalization of our results to semilinear parabolic systems. Let us do a short review of the state of the art for controllability and state-constrained controllability of such systems and give some perspectives on future research. Consider the following system

$$\begin{cases} \partial_t y - \Delta y &= f(y) + Bu\mathbf{1}_\omega & \text{in } \Omega_T, \\ \partial_{\vec{n}} y &= 0 & \text{on } (0, T) \times \partial\Omega, \\ y(0, \cdot) &= y^0(\cdot) & \text{in } \Omega, \end{cases} \quad (5.1)$$

with $f : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ a locally Lipschitz-continuous function satisfying $f(0) = 0$ and the following properties:

$$\exists C > 0, \forall s \in \mathbb{R}, |f'(s)| \leq C(1 + |s|^{1+4/d}), \quad (5.2)$$

and

$$\exists \alpha > 0, \frac{f(s)}{|s| \log^\alpha(1 + |s|)} \xrightarrow{|s| \rightarrow +\infty} 0. \quad (5.3)$$

Due to the nonlinearity f , in absence of a control u , the state can exhibit blowup in finite time. The controllability properties of System (5.1) depend on the value of α in (5.3):

- for $\alpha \leq 3/2$, (5.1) is controllable to trajectories in arbitrary time [21, Theorem 1.2],
- for $\alpha > 2$, (5.1) might fail to be controllable and blow up in finite time [21, Theorem 1.1],
- for $3/2 < \alpha \leq 2$, assuming $sf(s) > 0$ for any $s \neq 0$, (5.1) is null-controllable in large time [22, Theorem 2.5].

As for nonnegative-state controllability, first results have been stated in [6] in two particular cases:

Theorem 5.1 ([6, Theorems 1.1 and 1.2]). *(1) (Steady-state controllability). Let y_0 and y_1 in $L^\infty(\Omega)$ be two positive steady states of (5.1). Assume y_0 and y_1 are connected, i.e. there exists a continuous map $\gamma = [0, 1] \rightarrow L^\infty(\Omega)$ such that $\gamma(0) = y_0$ and $\gamma(1) = y_1$. Moreover, assume that for all $s \in [0, 1]$, $\gamma(s) > 0$. Then, there exists a time $T > 0$ and a control $u \in L^\infty((0, T) \times \Gamma)$ such that the solution y of (5.1) with initial condition y_0 satisfies $y(T) = y_1$ and, for all t in $(0, T)$, $y(t) \geq 0$.*

- (2) (*Controllability in the dissipative case*). In the dissipative case ($sf(s) \geq 0$ for all $s \in \mathbb{R}$), System (5.1) is controllable to trajectories in large time with nonnegative state.

In both cases, there exists a positive minimal time. Let us also mention [5], in which are shown similar results for a semilinear equation with *boundary* control, and also that state-constrained controllability fails outside of these two particular cases.

To extend the results of Theorem 5.1 to more general nonlinearity f or arbitrary initial and target data, the main challenge in the semilinear case compared to the linear case is that, even in a favourable case where the nonlinearity f is globally Lipschitz, the staircase method does not work anymore, because the trajectories might move away from each other exponentially in time. Therefore, the small fixed-size steps of the staircase do not ensure that the controlled trajectory will eventually reach the target trajectory. We even conjecture that this type of behaviour might make state-constrained controllability fail, and are conducting research to find a counterexample.

Finally, for a semilinear system of coupled equations,

$$\begin{cases} \partial_t Y - D\Delta Y &= f(Y) + Bu\mathbf{1}_\omega & \text{in } \Omega_T, \\ \partial_{\vec{n}} Y &= 0 & \text{on } (0, T) \times \partial\Omega, \\ Y(0, \cdot) &= Y^0(\cdot) & \text{in } \Omega, \end{cases} \quad (5.4)$$

with $Y \in \mathbb{R}^N$, little is known on global controllability to trajectories. Moreover, for scalar equations, most state-constrained controllability results rely to some extent on the maximum principle, which does not hold for coupled systems like (5.4). Hence the question of state-constrained controllability for these systems remains largely open.

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