

Local refinement of 3-D triangulations using object-oriented methods

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Abstract

The data structures used to model meshes for solving problems by finite element methods is based on different arrays. In these arrays information is stored related to, among other components, nodes, edges, faces, tetrahedra and connectivities. These structures provide optimum results but, in many cases, they need additional programming to be maintained. In adaptive simulation, the meshes undergo refinement/derefinement processes to improve the numerical solution at each step. These processes produce new elements and eliminate others, so the arrays should reflect the state of the mesh in each of these steps. Using traditional language, memory should be pre-assigned at the outset of the program, so it is only required to estimate the changes taking place in the mesh. In the same respect, it was necessary to compact the arrays to recover space from erased elements. With the advent of languages such as C, memory can be assigned dynamically, resolving most of the problem. However, arrays are costly to maintain, as they require adapting the mesh treatment to the data model, and not inversely. The object-oriented programming suggests a new focus in implementing data structures to work with meshes. The classes create data types that may be adjusted to the needs of each case, allowing each element to be modelled independently. Inheritance and encapsulation enable us to simplify the programming tasks and increase code reuse. We propose a data structure based on meshes-treating objects. Finally, we present an implementation of a local refinement algorithm based on 8-subtetrahedron subdivision and some experiments.

Key words: 3-D triangulations, unstructured grids, nested meshes, adaptive refinement, object oriented methods, data structures, finite element method.

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1 Introduction

Most programs currently using the finite element method rely on adaptive techniques based on an error estimation of our numerical solution, or at least on reliable error indicators that specify the elements that should be refined or derefined in the mesh.

In adaptive mesh generation we may consider two different aspects: domain discretization in accordance with its geometry or its numerical solution. There are many ways to approach these aspects. We first need to consider whether the meshes are structured or unstructured. In this respect, the use of unstructured meshes clearly provides more flexibility when meshing complex geometries using an optimum number of nodes. In this case, the classic methods of obtaining three-dimensional triangulations is based mainly on advancing front algorithms [1] or in those based on Delaunay triangulation [2,3]. Once the domain geometry has been discretized, the mesh should be adapted to the specific numerical solution. This process involves the introduction (refinement) or elimination (derefinement) of nodes in the current mesh. The changes may alter the current mesh locally or globally, depending on the method of triangulation chosen. Different refinement strategies have been developed for 2-D triangulations, and they have been generalized to 3-D. If we choose a refinement that affects the current mesh locally, another question is raised: nested or unnested meshes? In this case the answer is not clear. We may obtain sequences of nested meshes in a minimal CPU time. Furthermore, the multigrid method can be more easily applied to solve the system of equations associated with the problem. We may also automatically control the smoothness and degeneration of the mesh, as well as maintaining the defined surfaces in the domain, according to the characteristics of the initial mesh. If the domain has a complex geometry, a good way to proceed involves obtaining the initial mesh with an unstructured mesh generator and, subsequently, applying a nested local mesh refinement and derefinement technique using an error indicator appropriate to the problem. If we attempt to solve an unsteady problem, we may automatically approximate any initial solution defined in the domain. With the refinement and derefinement technique, we obtain optimum piecewise interpolation capable of approximating this solution with a required accuracy. In general, this technique can be applied to any discrete or analytic function defined in the domain.

With these ideas, adaptive techniques were developed previously in 2-D and obtained good results in different steady and unsteady problems, see for example [4–6]. In these studies Rivara's 4-T local refinement algorithm was used. All triangles which must be refined, bearing in mind the error indicator, are divided into four sub-triangles introducing a new node in the centres of its sides and connecting the node introduced in the longest side with the opposite vertex and the other two new nodes. Choosing the particular refinement algorithm is very important, since the derefinement algorithm may be understood as the inverse of the refinement al-

gorithm. Rivara's 4-T refinement algorithm has good properties in terms of mesh smoothness and degeneration. In addition, the number of possibilities that appear in the relation between a father element and sons is less than with other refinement algorithms in 2-D, after ensuring mesh conformity. Thus, it would be more complex to develop a derefinement algorithm, coupled with the local refinement algorithm as proposed in [7]. Here, all the triangles that must be refined, taking into account the error indicator, are divided into four subtriangles by introducing a new node in the centres of the sides and joining them to each other.

In 3-D, we have a different problem. Paradoxically, the extension of an adaptive algorithm that may be simpler than another in 2-D, may not be simpler in 3-D. In the refinement algorithms developed in 3-D, we note those based on the tetrahedron bisection [8–10] and those that use the 8-subtetrahedron subdivision [11–13]. The algorithm developed in [10] may be understood as the generalization to 3-D of Rivara's 4-T algorithm, which is based on the bisection of the triangle by its longest side. The problem in this extension to 3-D is the high number of possible cases in which a tetrahedron may be divided, maintaining the different possibilities of the 4-T division in its four faces, during the process of conformity of the mesh. However, the algorithms analysed in [11–13], which generalize to 3-D the partition into four subtriangles as proposed in [7], are simpler due to the number of possible partitions in a tetrahedron is much less than the case of the generalization of the 4-T algorithm.

All these local refinement algorithms have linear complexity in the number of tetrahedra chosen for refinement, since the mesh conformity is ensured in a local level using the neighbourhood among tetrahedra by an expansion process starting from the refined tetrahedra; see e.g. [10]. In general, only the refinement algorithms that allow the construction of transient tetrahedra are *truly* local; see e.g. [12]. So, the amount of additional refinement due to conformity for the 8-subtetrahedron subdivision is lower than that for the generalization to 3-D of Rivara's 4-T algorithm. Furthermore, as mesh quality is ensured in all these cases, we have chosen to implement a version of the algorithm which uses the subdivision in 8-subtetrahedra. This algorithm will be considered in section 3 of this paper and section 4 is devoted to its implementation.

In section 5, applications of the refinement algorithm on three-dimensional meshes, generated by a version of Delaunay triangulation method presented in [3], are carried out. This triangulation method is widely accepted due to the quality of the meshes produced. However, it presents serious problems, particularly in 3-D, because of the rounding errors which occur in the computer due to problems inherent in this method of triangulation. In [3] a procedure is presented for constructing a three dimensional triangulation similar to Delaunay technique which solves these problems. As Delaunay triangulation is constructed on a set of points located on the boundary and inside the domain, it may be that the resulting mesh does not contain all the main edges and faces defined in the boundary or inside the domain. This as-

pect constitutes an open problem and has been studied by several authors, although the proposed solutions are complex. The size of the mesh will depend on the complexity of the problem and accuracy of the numerical solution. When the meshes are fine we are faced with two problems: on the one hand, the space required to store the mesh; on the other, the time needed to process the information.

These problems are generally dealt with in everyday use. However large the data stored, more swift the process, whilst for greater economy of information, the processing will be more complex. One possible solution that satisfies these requirements would entail an appropriate organization of the information, thus minimizing the storage space and also information processing.

The data structures commonly used in mesh problems are based on different arrays that contain mesh information: nodes, edges, faces, tetrahedra, connectivity, genealogy, etc. In some traditional languages it is necessary to oversize these arrays to anticipate mesh changes. When refinements are applied, the increase in the number of elements must be estimated. Furthermore, when derefinements are carried out, the space of the eliminated elements should be recovered by compacting the arrays. All this memory work may lead to significant programming time wastage. Recovering memory space also takes time, depending on programming efficiency.

Some problems are solved through the development of languages such as C, Fortran 90, Fortran 95, etc., where memory may be used dynamically: when memory is needed, it is obtained from the system, and it may be returned when it is not needed and thus used again. The recovery and compacting of memory is left to the operating system, so the programming efforts may be concentrated on other aspects of the problem.

Structures are another advantage of C. They allow a clearer organization of information, thus facilitating the programming. In the structures, information for each element is grouped, independently of the type of data being treated. This does not save used memory space for storage, but does provide more program clarity.

The pointers are another tool. In C, objects can be named indirectly using references to their memory positions. We will see that this provides considerable savings when passing information between modules and increases the efficiency of information organization.

Considerable progress has been made with C++ that extends the concept of structure to class. A class contains all the operations which can be carried out with it and also element information. In other words, a type of data based on the element is established.

Furthermore, the object oriented programming introduces the concept of inheritance. A class may be inherited from another, so that it will get all the properties of its predecessor, plus the new ones that are its own. This permits us to develop

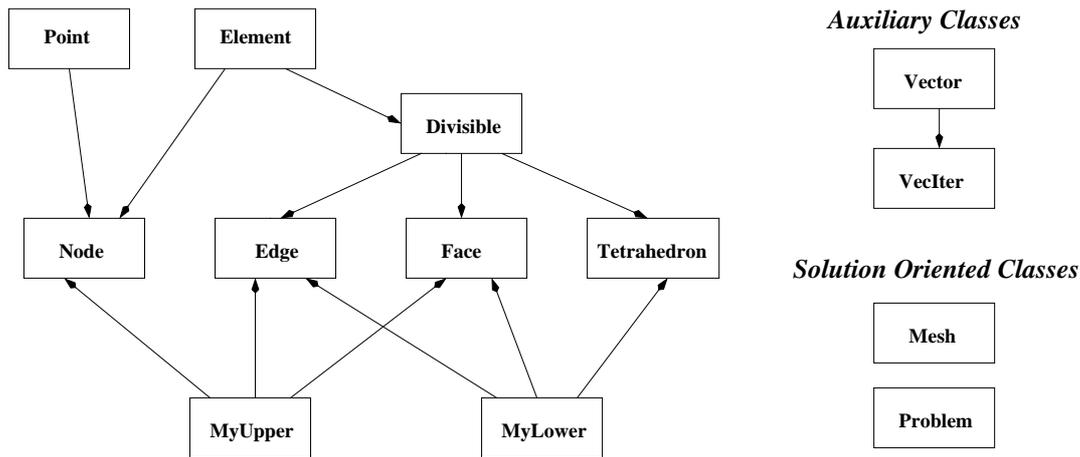


Fig. 1. Hierarchy of classes

hierarchies of classes, and continue creating increasingly complex modules from simpler ones.

Another interesting concept is encapsulation. In each class we may define what parts are accessible externally and which are restricted.

With these characteristics a class may be considered as a black box which provides interfaces with the remaining modules, whilst its inner workings are absolutely private. The number of programming errors is reduced, as only class-authorized operations may be carried out. Meanwhile code reuse increases.

C++ has serious issues with software maintenance. In order to avoid problems with portability of libraries between systems and compilers, the implementation of the refinement algorithm has been carried out using standard C++. Actually, although some usable modules exist in most compilers, we have written them to guarantee portability.

2 Hierarchy of Classes

Based on the classes and C++, a hierarchy has been defined for modelling the different elements that make up a mesh, and gather together the characteristics of a refinement/derefinement process when solving adaptive problems. The general structure may be seen in figure 1.

We begin by providing a detailed description of the auxiliary classes used by the rest of the modules for their internal tasks. Then we will consider the classes used for

modelling the mesh elements. Finally we present the classes oriented to resolution of problems.

a) *Auxiliary classes*. A so-called *Vector* class has been defined, which is an array with certain peculiarities. The most striking is that it does not contain duplicate elements and its elements are always pointers or references to objects. There are operations programmed for addition and extraction of elements, addition of contents of one array over another, and accesses to the array elements by index.

Dynamic memory is also carried out in this class, by borrowing and returning to the system. The rest of the classes use this class to maintain references to other objects.

From *Vector* class we can also define the *VecIter* class. It inherits all the *Vector* characteristics, and introduces operations that allow us to carry out revisions of the array elements, as well as simpler recovery methods.

b) *Point*. In this class the basic properties of a point in space are defined and some operations that may be carried out with it. It contains the point coordinates (x,y,z), and the operations for addition and subtraction of coordinates, multiplication by a constant and the distance between two points.

c) *Element*. This will be the basic class for all the elements of the mesh. It is very simple, only containing a single property called *Reference*, used in all the objects that make up the mesh.

d) *Divisible*. This class is inherited from *Element* and is the antecedent to all those that model objects which may be divided. It contains genealogical references of the elements. The sons are the elements into which the parent is divided. In the marked process to mesh element division, this class ensures that elements are not marked twice erroneously, and provides information on the current state of each.

e) *MyUpper*. For each given element, this class maintains the object references that compose it. For example, in the case of a node, this class indicates the edges connected to it.

f) *MyLower*. Contrary to the previous example, the object references that make up a given element are stored.

g) *Node*. This class is inherited from *Point*, *Element* and *MyUpper*. It contains the data necessary for modelling a mesh node. At any time, and through the data contained in the parent classes, it is possible to access to the rest of the elements that contain a certain node.

h) *Edge*. This class is inherited from *MyLower*, *Divisible* and *MyUpper*. Here, references to elements (faces) containing the edge are stored. In addition, *Edge* class allows us to reference the nodes that form an edge of the mesh. The reference to the

possible node that divides the edge is also stored in the refinement process. Another implemented procedure returns the edge length.

i) *Face*. This has the same inheritance as *Edge*. Note that references to possible inner edges, which may result from the division of the face, are stored.

j) *Tetrahedron*. This class is inherited from *MyLower* and *Divisible*. It contains references to the faces that form it. Furthermore, some indicators are stored for tetrahedra depending on the problem under consideration (refinement flags, information about the numerical solution, etc.).

k) *Classes oriented to solutions*. Two classes have been defined, directly related to the resolution of problems by using refinement and derefinement techniques. One is the *Mesh* class, which contains a list of references to node, edges, faces and tetrahedra, all related to each other, that form the mesh. Our version of the 8-subtetrahedron subdivision has been implemented in this module. To carry out this refinement, different processes have been programmed to reach the conformity of the mesh. The algorithm will be described in detail in the next section. The other class is *Problem*, that contains the procedures of information exchange with other modules for problem resolution. These procedures include reading and writing in files of several formats and generating mesh information in data structures used by other programs. In the *Problem* class there are lists of references to node, edges, faces and tetrahedra. These lists are not merely for reference purposes, but objects in their own right. From these lists an object is formed of the *Mesh* class copying references, so that the objects are only found once in memory, but may be referenced from many elements. The data transfers which are carried out between modules are references, that is, pointers, thus considerable time and memory consumption are saved. Refinement and derefinement processes are controlled in this class, as well as the transfer of information from problem resolution to the mesh in order to carry out a new refinement.

3 Refinement Algorithm

We propose a refinement algorithm based on the 8-subtetrahedron subdivision developed in [13]. Consider an initial triangulation τ_1 of the domain given by a set of n_1 tetrahedra $t_1^1, t_2^1, \dots, t_{n_1}^1$. Our goal is to build a sequence of m levels of nested meshes $T = \{\tau_1 < \tau_2 < \dots < \tau_m\}$, such that the level τ_{j+1} is obtained from a local refinement of the previous level τ_j . The error indicator ϵ_i^j will be associated to the element $t_i^j \in \tau_j$. Once the error indicator ϵ_i^j is computed, such element must be refined if $\epsilon_i^j \geq \theta \epsilon_{\max}^j$, being $\theta \in [0, 1]$ the refinement parameter, and ϵ_{\max}^j the maximal value of the error indicators of the elements of τ_j . From a constructive point of view, initially we shall obtain τ_2 from τ_1 , attending to the following considerations:

a) *8-subtetrahedron subdivision*. A tetrahedron $t_i^1 \in \tau_1$ is called of *type I* if $\epsilon_i^1 \geq \theta \epsilon_{\max}^1$. Later, this set of tetrahedra will be subdivided into 8 subtetrahedra as figure 2(a) shows; 6 new nodes are introduced in the middle point of its edges and each one of its faces are subdivided into four subtriangles following the division proposed by Bank [7]. Thus, four subtetrahedra are determined from the four vertices of t_i^1 and the new edges. The other four subtetrahedra are obtained by joining the two nearest opposite vertices of the octahedron which results inside t_i^1 . This simple strategy is that proposed in [13] or in [11], in contrast to others based on affine maps to a reference tetrahedron, as that analysed in [12] which ensures the quality of the resulting tetrahedra. Similar results were obtained by Bornemann et al [11] with both strategies in their numerical experiments. On the other hand, for Lohner and Baum [13], this choice produces the lowest number of distorted tetrahedra in the refined mesh. Evidently, the best of the three existing options for the subdivision of the inner octahedron may be determined by analysing the quality of its four subtetrahedra, but this would augment the computational cost of the algorithm.

Once the subdivision of *type I* tetrahedra is defined, we can find neighbouring tetrahedra which may have 6, 5, ..., 1 or 0 new nodes introduced in their edges that must be taken into account in order to ensure mesh conformity. In the following we analyse each one of these cases. We must remark that in this process we only mark the edges of the tetrahedra of τ_1 in which a new node has been introduced. The corresponding tetrahedron is classified depending on the number of marked edges. In other words, until the conformity of τ_2 is not ensured by marking edges, this new mesh will not be defined.

b) *Tetrahedra with 6 new nodes*. Those tetrahedra that have marked their 6 edges for conformity reason, are included in the set of *type I* tetrahedra.

c) *Tetrahedra with 5 new nodes*. Those tetrahedra with 5 marked edges are also included in the set of *type I* tetrahedra. Previously, the edge without new node must be marked.

d) *Tetrahedra with 4 new nodes*. In this case, we mark the two free edges and it is considered as *type I*.

Proceeding as in (b), (c) and (d), we improve the mesh quality and simplify the algorithm considerably regarding other possible strategies. One may think that this procedure can augment the refined region, but we must take into account that only 1 or 2 new nodes are introduced from a total of 6. Note that this ratio is less or equal to that arising in the 2-D refinement with the Rivara's 4-T algorithm, in which the probability of finding a new node introduced in the longest edge of a triangle is $1/3$. This fact is accentuated in the generalization of this algorithm in 3-D.

e) *Tetrahedra with 3 new nodes*. In this case, we must distinguish two situations:

e.1) If the 3 marked edges are not located on the same face, then we mark the

others and the tetrahedron is introduced in the set of *type I* tetrahedra. Here, we can make the previous consideration too, if we compare this step with other algorithms based on the bisection by the longest edge.

In the following cases, we shall not mark any edge, i.e., any new node will not be introduced in a tetrahedron for conformity. We shall subdivide them creating subtetrahedra which will be called *transient subtetrahedra*.

e.2) If the 3 marked edges are located on the same face of the tetrahedron, then 4 transient subtetrahedra are created as figure 2(b) shows. New edges are created by connecting the 3 new nodes to one another and these with the vertex opposite to the face containing them. The tetrahedra of τ_1 with these characteristics will be inserted in the set of *type II* tetrahedra.

f) *Tetrahedra with 2 new nodes*. Also here, we shall distinguish two situations:

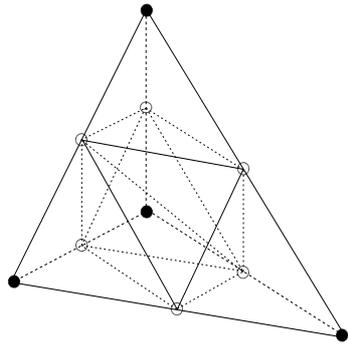
f.1) If the two marked edges are not located on the same face, then 4 transient subtetrahedra will be constructed from the edges connecting both new nodes and these with the vertices opposite to the two faces which contain each one of them. This tetrahedra are called *type III.a*; see figure 2(c).

f.2) If the two marked edges are located on the same face, then 3 transient subtetrahedra are generated as figure 2(d) shows. The face defined by both marked edges is divided into 3 subtriangles, connecting the new node located in the longest edge with the opposite vertex and with the another new node, such that these three subtriangles and the vertex opposite to the face which contains them define three new subtetrahedra. We remark that from the two possible choices, the longest marked edge is fixed as reference in order to take advantage in some cases of the properties of the bisection by the longest edge. These tetrahedra are called *type III.b*.

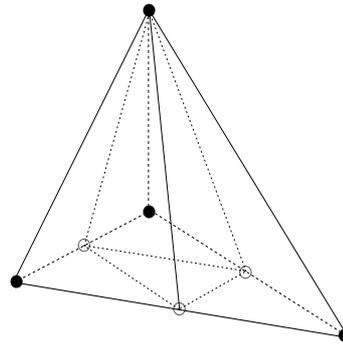
g) *Tetrahedra with 1 new node*. Two transient subtetrahedra will be created as we can see in figure 2(e). The new node is connected to the other two which are not located in the marked edge. This set of tetrahedra is called *type IV*.

h) *Tetrahedra without new node*. These tetrahedra of τ_1 are not divided and they will be inherited by the refined mesh τ_2 . We call them *type V* tetrahedra; see figure 2(f).

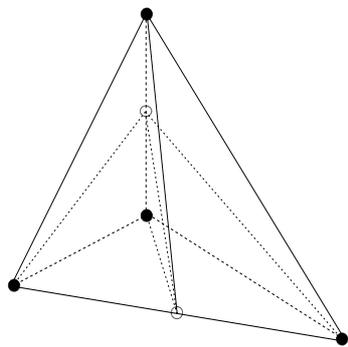
This classification process of the tetrahedra of τ_1 is carried out by marking their edges simply. The mesh conformity is ensured in a local level analysing the neighbourhood among the tetrahedra which contain a marked edge by an expansion process that starts in the *type I* tetrahedra of paragraph (a). Thus, when the run along this set of *type I* tetrahedra is over, the resulting mesh is conformed and locally refined.



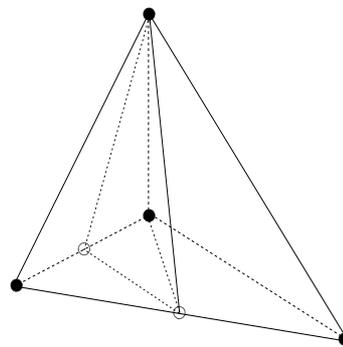
(a) *Type I*



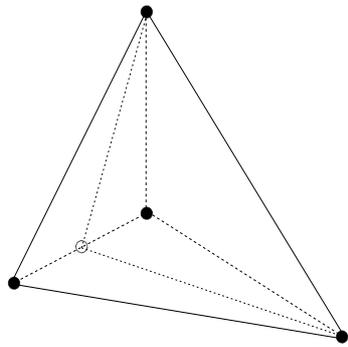
(b) *Type II*



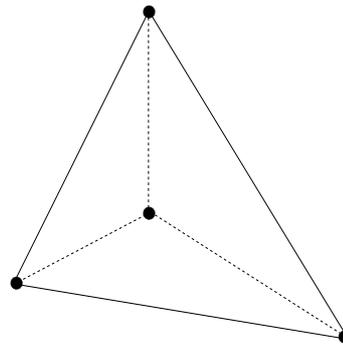
(c) *Type III.a*



(d) *Type III.b*



(e) *Type IV*



(f) *Type V*

Fig. 2. Subdivision classification of a tetrahedron in function of the new nodes (white circles).

Moreover, this is a low computational cost process, since the local expansion stops when we find tetrahedra whose edges must not be marked. Implementation details will be discussed in the next section.

Generally, when we want to refine the level τ_j in which there already exist transient tetrahedra, we shall perform it in the same way as from τ_1 to τ_2 , except for the following variation: if an edge of any transient tetrahedron must be marked, due to the error indicator or even to conformity reasons, then all the transient tetrahedra are eliminated from their parent (deleting process), all the parent edges are marked and this tetrahedron is introduced into the set of *type I* tetrahedra. We must remark that it will be only necessary to define a variable which determines if a tetrahedron is transient or not.

4 Algorithm Implementation

Algorithm development will basically contain two sequential revisions of the mesh. In the first, transient tetrahedra are studied. In the second, marked non-transient tetrahedra are considered.

In the first step two types of tetrahedra will be selected:

- Transient tetrahedra marked for refinement.
- The rest of transient tetrahedra with a neighbouring tetrahedron by any of its edges which is non-transient and up for refining. Note that the case of neighbouring tetrahedron, which were transient and up for refining, would be included in the previous item.

In both cases, the selected parent tetrahedron will be called *type I* to proceed to its division. The first point is based on the definition of the algorithm. In the second case there is an anticipation of what the algorithm is going to produce. As there is a marked, non-transient neighbour, it will be *type I*, so all its edges should be marked, and at least one of these marks should be on the tetrahedron under consideration, which is transient, so it should be divided by conformity, which is not allowed, but rather it will be the father of the divided. This is what is selected in the second case.

Once the tetrahedra are marked, an expansion to conform the mesh is generated. A recursive process takes place in which each step is studied; first, as to whether the tetrahedron is *type I*, or whether it should be converted to *type I*. If this is the case, for each edge which is still unmarked, a list of neighbouring tetrahedra is created by the edge. This edge is marked and for each tetrahedron a similar process is carried out. The following is a pseudo-code:

```

Main Process
  for every tetrahedron marked to be refined do
    Study (tetrahedron)

Study(Tetrahedron t)
  Drop_Inner_Division(t)
  if t have 6 marks return;
  if t is marked to be refined then
    Mark_All_Edges(t)
  else if t have 4 or 5 marks
    Mark_All_Edges(t)
  else if t have 3 marks not in the same face then
    Mark_All_Edges(t)

Mark_All_Edges(Tetrahedron t)
  for every edge of t do
    if edge is not marked then
      Mark_Edge(edge)

Mark_Edge(Edge a)
  for every tetrahedron of a do
    Drop_Inner_Division(tetrahedron)
  Make one mark in a
  for every tetrahedra of a do
    Study(tetrahedron)

Drop_Inner_Division(Tetrahedron t)
  if t is divided into 8 tetrahedra or not divided then
    return
  Remove inner tetrahedra of t
  for every face of t do
    Drop_Face_Division(face)

Drop_Face_Division(Face f)
  if f is divided into 4 faces or not divided then
    return
  For every tetrahedron of f do
    Drop_Inner_Division(tetrahedron)
  Remove division of f

```

As we can see, there are two stop criteria: the first is the *Study* process, when no marks should be made in a tetrahedron because it is adjusted to one of the types specified in the algorithm. The second is carried out after studying all the edges of a tetrahedron in the *Mark_All_Edges* process. The expansion process involves eliminating transient elements. Each time we study an element, and this is divided,

its subdivision is eliminated, and all the divisions of those neighbouring by its faces. Carrying out a new marking will lead to different internal partitions from those already existing. The elimination process takes place with another revision of the tetrahedron under study toward all its neighbours, stopping when we have non-divided tetrahedra, or divided permanently in 8 sub-tetrahedra.

Once the expansion process is completed, we have a conformed mesh, and can begin to partition marked elements. The mesh tetrahedra are revised, the division of their edges and faces is carried out and new elements joined.

The second mesh revision will only study the tetrahedra that should be refined due to the numerical solution of the problem. All these tetrahedra will be non-transient, as marked transient ones have already been eliminated. This revision is similar to the process of the transient ones: tetrahedra are studied and marked, then divided and joined. The difference is that it is not necessary to eliminate internal tetrahedral division (as we are not working with the parent of any element).

The algorithm and partition processes are programmed in the *Mesh* class. Objects created in the original mesh belong to the *Problem* class, while in each step of the refinement process, references to the original objects are used. When an object is divided by *Mesh* class, its reference is eliminated, but not the object itself which does not belong to this class. The objects created are internal to others, they belong to the parent, and pass their references on to the *Mesh* class. As we can see, this class works by inserting and erasing references to objects in its lists, but it never creates or destroys any object, since that would be utilized in a subsequent step. When a satisfactory solution is obtained, the *Mesh* class will be responsible for eliminating all the objects and returning memory to the system.

5 Numerical Experiments

The first experiment is related to a mesh which consists of 5072 tetrahedra and 1140 nodes. Here the refinement criteria is based on the distance from the tetrahedron's gravity centre to a corner of the domain.

In figure 3 we present the resulting meshes after two steps of the refinement algorithm. The first one contains 5386 tetrahedra and 1201 nodes, while the second refinement yields a mesh with 6270 tetrahedra and 1433 nodes.

Figure 4 represents another mesh refined using our algorithm. We have begun with a mesh of 5272 tetrahedra and 1229 nodes, obtained by the mesh generator developed by the authors in [14]; see figure 4(a). It has been refined according to an error indicator related to a wind field modelling using the finite element method. Two refinements has been computed. The first refined mesh, which contains 5408

tetrahedra and 1256 nodes, is shown in figure 4(b). The last one corresponds to figure 4(c) with 6696 tetrahedra and 1520 nodes. In this figure, only the lower surface and two vertical walls have been drawn in order to observe the local refinement around the mountain.

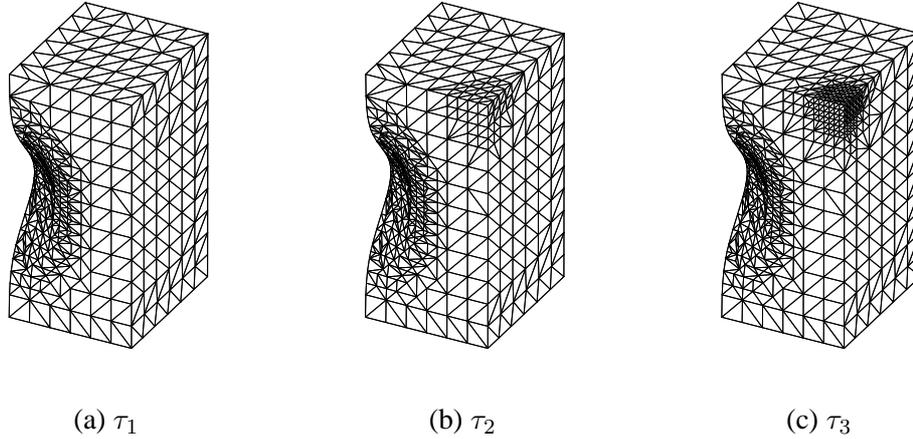
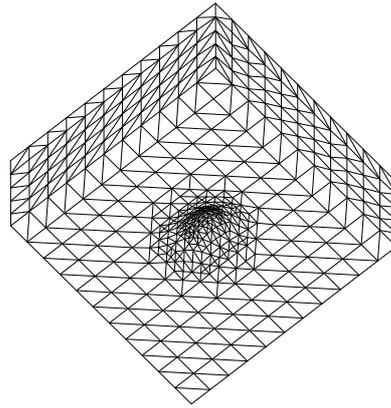


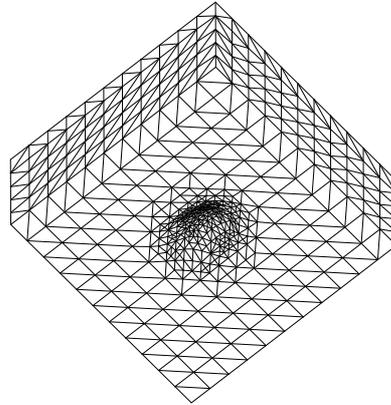
Fig. 3. First experiment of the refinement algorithm; (a) initial mesh, (b) and (c) resulting meshes after 1 and 2 refinement steps, respectively.

Finally, a $45600 \times 31200 \times 9000 \text{ m}^3$ domain with real data of the topography is discretized using the code developed in [14]. The maximum height in this zone of the La Palma Island is 2279 m . We start from a grid τ_0 containing $p_0 = 11416$ nodes and $n_0 = 55003$ tetrahedra; see figure 5(a). After a global refinement of τ_0 , it results a new mesh τ_1 with $p_1 = 83040$ nodes and $n_1 = 440024$ tetrahedra; see figure 5(b). Then, we consider N_r tetrahedra to be refined in τ_1 . So, the total number of tetrahedra in the local refined mesh τ_2 is $n_2 = n_1 + \Delta_r + \Delta_c$, where Δ_r is the increment in the number of tetrahedra arising from the 8-subtetrahedron subdivision of the N_r tetrahedra, i.e. $\Delta_r = 7N_r$, and Δ_c the increment in the number of tetrahedra to obtain conformity.

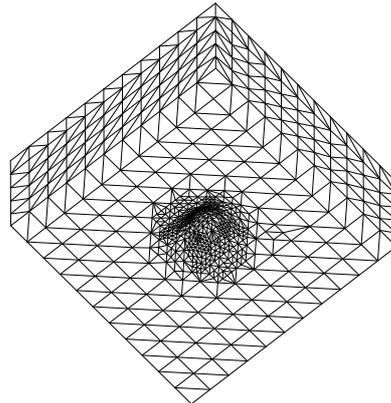
In order to compare timing data of different adaptive strategies, we have considered $N_r = 10000k$, being $k = 1, 2, \dots, 44$. figure 6(a) shows the evolution of Δ_c and n_2 versus N_r . Obviously, n_2 is an increasing function of N_r . However, Δ_c is linear at first (really local refinement), next it reaches a stable value and, finally, it tends to zero as N_r tends to n_1 (global refinement). For these strategies, in figure 6(b), we present CPU time in seconds on a XEON taken by the code proposed in section 4. This figure illustrates a linear complexity of the algorithm when the refinement is local. On the other hand, as the refinement tends to be global, CPU time decreases due to the cost for conforming the mesh is lower.



(a) τ_1

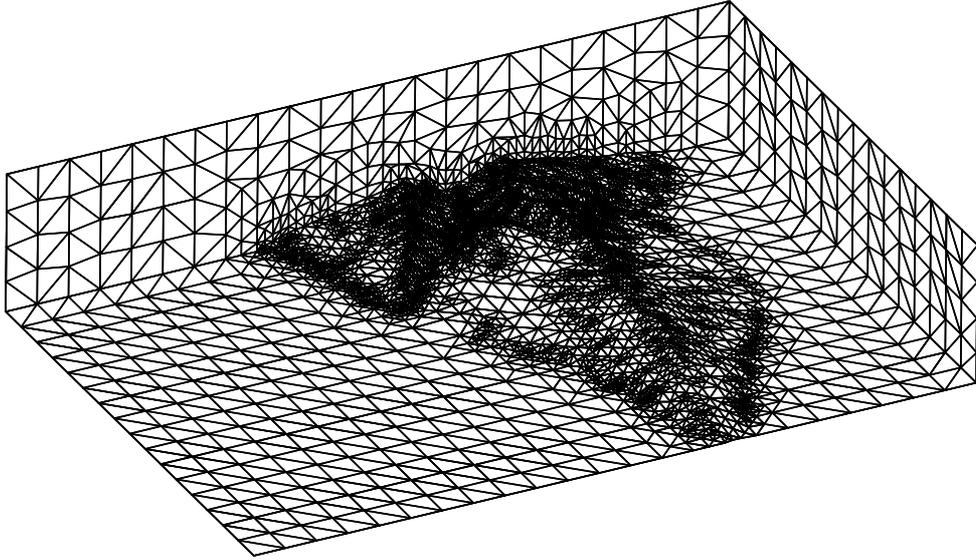


(b) τ_2

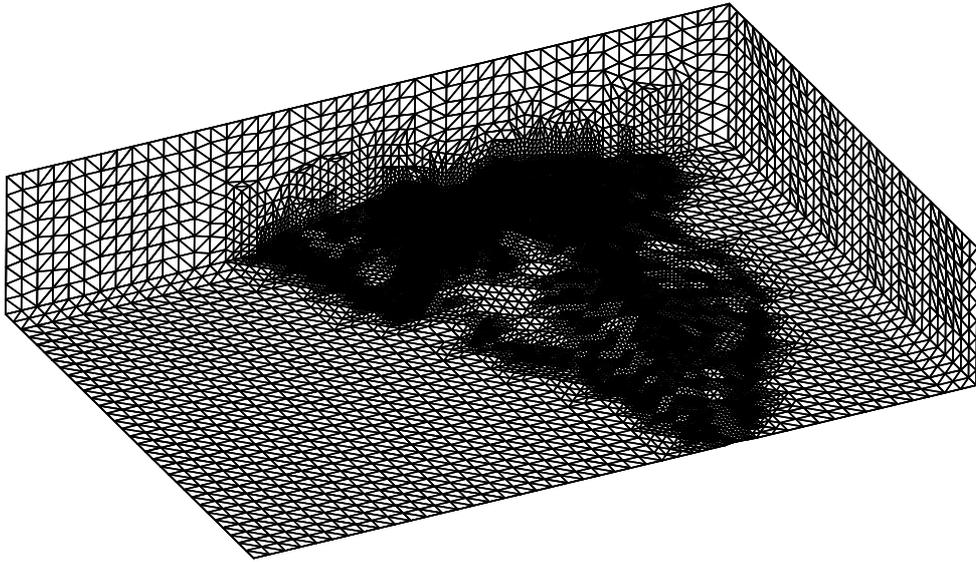


(c) τ_3

Fig. 4. Second experiment; (a) initial mesh, (b) and (c) refined meshes.

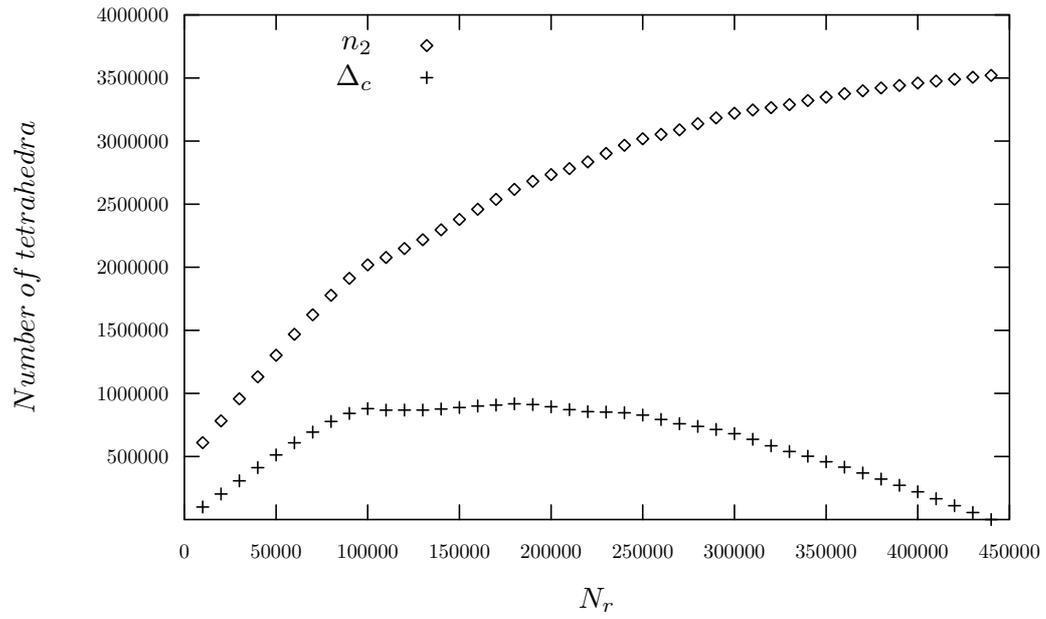


(a) τ_0

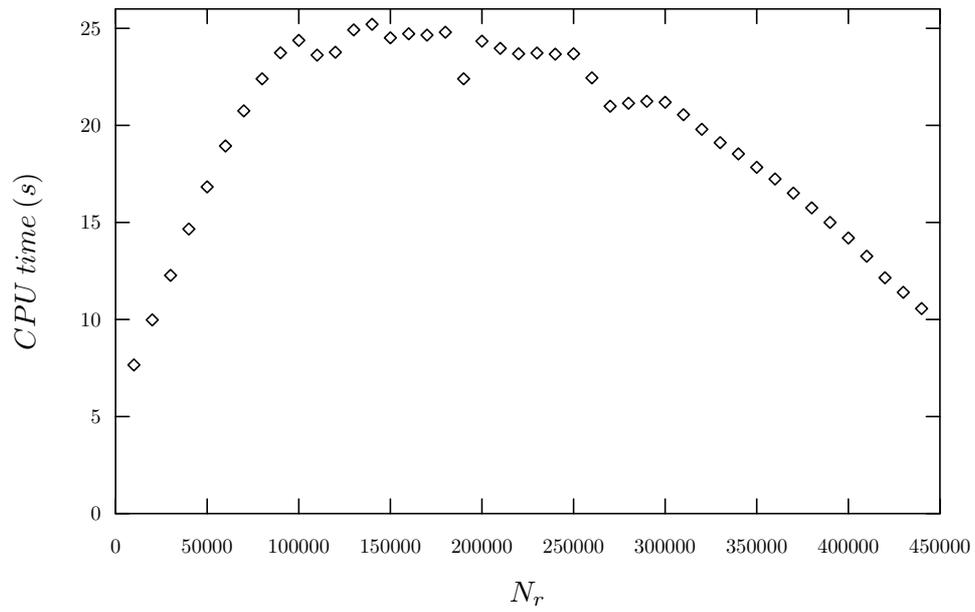


(b) τ_1

Fig. 5. Third experiment; (a) starting mesh and (b) global refined mesh.



(a)



(b)

Fig. 6. Third experiment; (a) evolution of Δ_c and n_2 versus the number of tetrahedra to be refined N_r and (b) CPU time for these adaptive strategies.

6 Conclusions

In this paper, some aspects of a 3-D mesh refinement algorithm have been presented. The class hierarchy is a robust tool for implementing the structure of meshes. New properties for elements were directly added when they were needed. Due to programming requirements, we consider from simpler characteristics to more complex ones. The implementation of the algorithm using class hierarchy has reached the proposal aims: low computational cost and minimal memory requirements.

On the other hand, the refinement algorithm has interesting properties about quality and degeneration of meshes after many refinement steps. It has been properly applied in 3D-meshes generated by the version of Delaunay triangulation proposed in [3].

Finally, in future research we will develop the derefinement algorithm associated to the refinement one presented in this paper.

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