

Topic: Observability/Controllability

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1 Overview

- Controllability/Reachability is the property of a system concerning the ability to steer the state from arbitrary x_0 to arbitrary x_1 on a given time interval $[t_0, t_1]$.
- Observability is the property of a system concerning the ability to uniquely recover the initial state x_0 given the observation y .

1.1 Controllability/Reachability

For simplicity, let $D(\cdot) \equiv 0$ and consider our state space to be \mathbb{R}^n .

Definition 1 (Controllable). The system $\mathcal{D} = (A(\cdot), B(\cdot), C(\cdot))$ is controllable on $[t_0, t_1]$ if for all $(x_0, x_1) \in \mathbb{R}^n$, there exists $u_{[t_0, t_1]} \in \mathcal{U}$ which steers x_0 at t_0 to x_1 at t_1 .

We tend to break controllability into two different concepts:

- Controllability from the origin (reachability): the reachability map is given by

$$\mathcal{L}_r u(t) = \int_{t_0}^t \Phi(t, \tau) B(\tau) u(\tau) d\tau$$

If this map is surjective (i.e., $\text{Im}(\mathcal{L}_r) = \mathbb{R}^n$) then the system is reachable.

- Controllability to the origin (often simply referred to as controllability, hence, one should take care to identify the precise definition in the given reference they are looking at): the controllability map is given by

$$\mathcal{L}_c u(t) = \int_{t_0}^t \Phi(t_0, \tau) B(\tau) u(\tau) d\tau$$

If this map is surjective (i.e., $\text{Im}(\mathcal{L}_c) = \mathbb{R}^n$) then the system is controllable.

We can compute the adjoint of these two maps \mathcal{L}_r^* and \mathcal{L}_c^* respectively, and define the corresponding gram-mians

$$\mathcal{L}_r \mathcal{L}_r^* = \int_{t_0}^{t_1} \Phi(t_1, \tau) B(\tau) B^*(\tau) \Phi(t_1, \tau)^* d\tau$$

and

$$\mathcal{L}_c \mathcal{L}_c^* = \int_{t_0}^{t_1} \Phi(t_0, \tau) B(\tau) B^*(\tau) \Phi(t_0, \tau)^* d\tau$$

These are both linear operators and hence by the matrix representation theorem there is a finite dimension matrix representation $W_r \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times n}$ and $W_c \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times n}$, respectively. The finite rank operator lemma let's us show that

$$\text{Im}(\mathcal{L}_r) = \text{Im}(\mathcal{L}_r \mathcal{L}_r^*) = \text{Im}(W_r)$$

and

$$\text{Im}(\mathcal{L}_c) = \text{Im}(\mathcal{L}_c \mathcal{L}_c^*) = \text{Im}(W_c)$$

Moreover, we have the following equivalences:

$$\begin{aligned}
 (A(\cdot), B(\cdot)) \text{ controllable on } [t_0, t_1] &\iff \text{Im}(\mathcal{L}_r) = \mathbb{R}^n \\
 &\iff \text{Im}(\mathcal{L}_c) = \mathbb{R}^n \\
 &\iff \text{Im}(\mathcal{L}_r \mathcal{L}_r^*) = \mathbb{R}^n \\
 &\iff \text{Im}(\mathcal{L}_c \mathcal{L}_c^*) = \mathbb{R}^n \\
 &\iff \det(W_r) \neq 0 \\
 &\iff \det(W_c) \neq 0
 \end{aligned}$$

LTI Systems. Things get much easier in the LTI setting. Cayley Hamilton allows us to show that the condition on the controllability (reachability) grammian can be essentially reduced to checking a rank condition on the so called controllability matrix:

$$\mathcal{C} = [B \quad AB \quad A^2B \quad \dots \quad A^{n-1}B] \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times nm}$$

Fact 2. The following equality holds:

$$\text{Im}(W_r) = \text{Im}(\mathcal{C})$$

Let $\Delta = t_1 - t_0$ for some $t_1 > t_0$.

Theorem 3. The following are equivalent:

$$\begin{aligned}
 &\text{The LTI system is completely controllable on some } [0, \Delta] \\
 \iff &\text{rank}([B \quad AB \quad \dots \quad A^{n-1}B]) = n && \text{(Rank Test)} \\
 \iff &\text{rank}([sI - A \quad B]) = n, \quad \forall s \in \mathbb{C} && \text{(PBH Test)}
 \end{aligned}$$

1.2 Observability

The pair $(A(\cdot), C(\cdot))$ is observable if given output $y(t)$, the initial state x_0 can be uniquely recovered.

Definition 4. The state x_0 is unobservable on $[t_0, t_1]$ if and only if its zero input response is zero on $[t_0, t_1]$.

Analogous to controllability, we can define the observability map $\mathcal{L}_o : \mathbb{R}^n \rightarrow \mathcal{Y}_{[t_0, t_1]}$ by

$$\mathcal{L}_o x_0(\cdot) = C(\cdot) \Phi(\cdot, t_0) x_0$$

That is, $\mathcal{L}_o x_0$ is an operator in $\text{PC}([t_0, t_1])$ such that

$$(\mathcal{L}_o x_0)(t) = y(t) = \int_{t_0}^t C(t) \Phi(t, \tau) B(\tau) u(\tau) d\tau$$

We have the following equivalences:

$$\begin{aligned}
 (A(\cdot), C(\cdot)) \text{ is completely observable (CO) on } [t_0, t_1] &\iff \text{Ker}(\mathcal{L}_o) = \{0\} \\
 &\iff \text{Ker}(\mathcal{L}_o^* \mathcal{L}_o) = \{0\} \\
 &\iff \det(W_o) \neq 0
 \end{aligned}$$

where

$$W_o = \int_{t_0}^{t_1} \Phi(\tau, t_0)^* C(\tau)^* C(\tau) \Phi(\tau, t_0) d\tau$$

LTI Systems. Just as with controllability, we can use Cayley Hamilton to construct an observability matrix:

$$\mathcal{O} = \begin{bmatrix} C \\ CA \\ CA^2 \\ \vdots \\ CA^{n-1} \end{bmatrix}$$

Theorem 5 (LTI Observability Tests). The following are equivalent:

The LTI system is completely observable on some $[0, \Delta]$

$$\Leftrightarrow \text{rank} \left(\begin{bmatrix} C \\ CA \\ \vdots \\ CA^{n-1} \end{bmatrix} \right) = n \quad \text{(Rank Test)}$$

$$\Leftrightarrow \text{rank} \left(\begin{bmatrix} sI - A \\ C \end{bmatrix} \right) = n, \quad \forall s \in \mathbb{C} \quad \text{(PBH Test)}$$

2 Problems

We will start with some warm up problems.

Problem 1. (Controllability & Observability.) Consider the linear system given by

$$\begin{aligned} \dot{x} &= \begin{bmatrix} -3 & 3 \\ \gamma & -4 \end{bmatrix} x + \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} u \\ y &= [1 \quad 1] x \end{aligned}$$

for some parameter γ .

- How should we choose γ such that the system is controllable but not observable?
- How should we choose γ such that the system is observable but not controllable?

solution.

- Choosing $\gamma = -1$, the system is controllable but not observable since

$$\text{rank} ([B \quad AB]) = \text{rank} \left(\begin{bmatrix} 1 & -3 \\ 0 & \gamma \end{bmatrix} \right) = 2$$

and

$$\text{rank} \left(\begin{bmatrix} C \\ CA \end{bmatrix} \right) = \text{rank} \left(\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ -3 + \gamma & -4 \end{bmatrix} \right) < 2$$

- Choosing $\gamma = 0$, the system is observable but not controllable:

$$\text{rank} ([B \quad AB]) = \text{rank} \left(\begin{bmatrix} 1 & -3 \\ 0 & \gamma \end{bmatrix} \right) = 1 < 2$$

and

$$\text{rank} \left(\begin{bmatrix} C \\ CA \end{bmatrix} \right) = \text{rank} \left(\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ -3 + \gamma & -4 \end{bmatrix} \right) = 2$$

Problem 2. (Controllability & Observability.) Consider the linear system given by

$$\dot{x} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ -1 & -2 \end{bmatrix} x$$

Suppose you have the ability to add one sensor and one actuator.

- Which state should we control with the actuator to make the system controllable?
- Which state should we measure with the sensor to make the system observable?

solution.

- The controllability matrix is such that

$$\text{rank}([B \ AB]) = \text{rank}\left(\begin{bmatrix} b_1 & b_1 \\ b_2 & -b_1 - 2b_2 \end{bmatrix}\right)$$

Hence if we choose to control state 1 but not state 2, we have

$$\text{rank}([B \ AB]) = \text{rank}\left(\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 0 & -1 \end{bmatrix}\right) = 2$$

On the other hand if we control state 2 but not 1, \mathcal{C} drops rank.

- The observability matrix is such that

$$\text{rank}\left(\begin{bmatrix} C \\ CA \end{bmatrix}\right) = \text{rank}\left(\begin{bmatrix} c_1 & c_2 \\ c_1 - c_2 & -2c_2 \end{bmatrix}\right)$$

Hence, if we observe state 1 and not state 2 we have

$$\text{rank}\left(\begin{bmatrix} C \\ CA \end{bmatrix}\right) = \text{rank}\left(\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}\right) < 2$$

Yet if we observe state 2 and not state 1, we have that

$$\text{rank}\left(\begin{bmatrix} C \\ CA \end{bmatrix}\right) = \text{rank}\left(\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ -1 & -2 \end{bmatrix}\right) = 2$$

Problem 3. (Reachability.) Consider a unit point mass under control of force—i.e.,

$$\begin{bmatrix} \dot{x} \\ \dot{\dot{x}} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x \\ \dot{x} \end{bmatrix} + \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} u$$

This is equivalent to $\ddot{x} = u$. Suppose we want to reach $(x(T), \dot{x}(T)) = (1, 0)$ from $(x(0), \dot{x}(0)) = (0, 0)$ using a controller of the form

$$u(t) = \begin{cases} u_0, & 0 \leq t < T/10 \\ u_1, & T/10 \leq t < 2T/10 \\ \vdots & \vdots \\ u_{10}, & 9T/10 \leq t \leq T \end{cases}$$

Find $u = [u_1 \ u_2 \ \cdots \ u_{10}]^T$.

Recall that the reachability map is

$$x(T) = \int_0^T \Phi(T, \tau) B(\tau) u(\tau) d\tau$$

Hence, we have that

$$x(T) = \underbrace{\begin{bmatrix} L_1 & L_2 & \cdots & L_{10} \end{bmatrix}}_{\mathcal{L}_r} \begin{bmatrix} u_1 \\ u_2 \\ \vdots \\ u_{10} \end{bmatrix},$$

where

$$\begin{aligned} L_1 &= \left(\int_0^{T/10} \Phi(T, \tau) B(\tau) d\tau \right) = \frac{T}{10} \begin{bmatrix} T \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} \\ L_2 &= \left(\int_{T/10}^{2T/10} \Phi(T, \tau) B(\tau) d\tau \right) = \frac{T}{10} \begin{bmatrix} 0.9T \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} \\ &\vdots \\ L_{10} &= \frac{T}{10} \begin{bmatrix} 0.1T \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} \end{aligned}$$

Now to determine if we can drive the state to the desired position, we need to check if \mathcal{L}_r is onto (surjective) which means we need to check the rank of the resulting matrix to see if its equal to two. Indeed, we have

$$\mathcal{L}_r = \frac{T}{10} \begin{bmatrix} T & 0.9T & \cdots & 0.1T \\ 1 & 1 & \cdots & 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

Then for example if $T = 10$, we have

$$\mathcal{L}_r = \begin{bmatrix} 10 & 9 & \cdots & 1 \\ 1 & 1 & \cdots & 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

and

$$W_r = \mathcal{L}_r \mathcal{L}_r^\top = \begin{bmatrix} 385 & 55 \\ 55 & 10 \end{bmatrix}$$

which is full rank. Thus, from the finite rank operator lemma, $\text{Im}(W_r) = \text{Im}(\mathcal{L}_r)$ implies that we can drive the state to the desired location with a piecewise constant controller.

What is interesting about this example, is that if we make the number of pieces in the piecewise constant controller bigger and bigger then

$$\mathcal{L}_r \mathcal{L}_r^\top \rightarrow \int_{t_0}^{t_1} \Phi(t_1, \tau) B(\tau) B(\tau)^\top \Phi(t_1, \tau)^\top d\tau$$

Therefore for the continuous time linear system is controllable over the interval $[t_0, t_1]$ if and only if W_r is full rank.

Problem 4. (Minimum Norm Control.) As we saw in the recorded lecture (and its worth re-emphasizing) that the controllability Grammian is related to the cost of control. Given $x(t_0) = x_0$, find a control function or sequence $u(\cdot)$ so that $x(t_1) = x_1$. Let $x_d = x_1 - \Phi(t_1, t_0)x_0$. Then we must have

$$x_d = \mathcal{L}_{r, [t_0, t_1]}(u)$$

where \mathcal{L}_r is the reachability map. Since we saw the continuous time version in the recorded lecture, for some variety let's focus on the discrete time case:

$$L_{r, [k_0, k_1]}(u) = \sum_{k=k_0}^{k_1-1} \Phi(k_1, k+1) B(k) u(k) = \mathcal{C}(k_0, k_1) U$$

where

$$\mathcal{C}(k_0, k_1) \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times (k_1 - k_0)m}, \quad \text{and } U = \begin{bmatrix} u(k_0) \\ \vdots \\ u(k_1 - 1) \end{bmatrix}$$

Since $x_d \in \text{Im}(L_{r,[k_0,k_1]})$ for solutions to exist, we assume $\text{Im}(L_{r,[k_0,k_1]}) = \mathbb{R}^n$. This implies that $W_{r,[k_0,k_1]}$ is invertible. Generally there are multiple solutions. To resolve the non-uniqueness, we find the solution so that

$$J(U) = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{k=k_0}^{k_1-1} u(k)^\top u(k) = U^\top U$$

is minimized.

Solution. This is a constrained optimization problem (with $J(U)$ as the cost to be minimized, and $L_r U - x_d = 0$ as the constraint). It can be solved using the Lagrange Multiplier method of converting a constrained optimization problem into an unconstrained optimization.

Define an augmented cost function, with the Lagrange multipliers $\lambda \in \mathbb{R}^n$ as follows:

$$\tilde{J}(U, \lambda) = J(U) + \lambda^\top (L_r U - x_d)$$

The optimal solution necessarily satisfies the first order conditions

$$\nabla_U \tilde{J} = 0 \quad \text{and} \quad \nabla_\lambda \tilde{J} = 0$$

and the constraint. That is,

$$L_r U^* = x_d \quad \text{and} \quad L_r^\top \lambda^* + U^* = 0$$

Solving we get that

$$\lambda^* = -(L_r L_r^\top)^{-1} x_d = -W_r^{-1} x_d \quad \text{and} \quad U^* = -L_r^\top \lambda^* = L_r^\top W_r^{-1} x_d$$

And, the optimal cost of control is

$$J(U^*) = x_d^\top W_r^{-1} L_r L_r^\top W_r^{-1} x_d = x_d^\top W_r^{-1} x_d$$

Thus, the inverse of the reachability Grammian tells us how difficult it is to perform a state transfer from $x = 0$ to x_d . In particular, if W_r is not invertible, for some x_d , the cost is infinite.

Let's look at a Geometric View Now. Geometrically, we can think of the cost as $J = U^\top U$, i.e. the inner product of U with itself. In notation of inner product, this is

$$J = \langle U, U \rangle_R$$

The advantage of the notation is that we can change the definition of inner product, e.g. $\langle U, V \rangle_R = U^\top R V$ where R is a positive definite matrix. The usual inner (dot) product has $R = I$. We say U and V are normal to each other if $\langle U, V \rangle_R = 0$.

Any solution that satisfies the constraint must be of the form

$$(U - U^p) \in \text{Ker}(L_r)$$

where U^p is any particular solution—i.e., $L_r U^p = x_d$.

Fact: Let U^* be the optimal solution, and U is any solution that satisfies the constraint. Then, $(U - U^*) \perp U^*$, i.e.

$$\langle (U - U^*), U^* \rangle_R = 0$$

which is the normal equation for the least norm solution problem.

Problem 5. (Pole Placement.) Consider

$$\dot{x} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 2 \end{bmatrix} x + \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} u$$

and the desired characteristic polynomial $p(s) = (s + 1)(s + 3)$. Design a feedback controller of the form $u = -kx$ to place the poles at those of $p(s)$.

solution. First,

$$\text{rank } \mathcal{C} = \text{rank} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 1 & 2 \end{pmatrix} = 2$$

Then for $u = -kx$,

$$\begin{aligned} \det(sI - A + bk) &= \det \left(\begin{bmatrix} s & 0 \\ 0 & s \end{bmatrix} - \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 2 \end{bmatrix} + \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} [k_1 \quad k_2] \right) \\ &= \det \begin{pmatrix} s - 1 + k_1 & k_2 \\ k_1 & s - 2 + k_2 \end{pmatrix} \\ &= (s - 1 + k_1)(s - 2 + k_2) - k_2 k_1 \\ &= (s - 1)(s - 2) + k_1(s - 2) + k_2(s - 1) \\ &= s^2 - 3s + 2 + k_1 s - 2k_1 + k_2 s - k_2 \\ &= s^2 + (k_1 + k_2 - 3)s + 2 - 2k_1 - k_2 \end{aligned}$$

So then by equating coefficients of the above and

$$p(s) = s^2 + 4s + 3$$

we get

$$\begin{aligned} 4 &= k_1 + k_2 - 3 \implies 7 - k_2 = k_1 \\ 3 &= 2 - 2k_1 - k_2 \implies 1 = -2k_1 - k_2 \implies 1 = -2(7 - k_2) - k_2 = -14 + k_2 \end{aligned}$$

so that

$$k_1 = -8 \quad \text{and} \quad k_2 = 15$$

and the closed loop system is thus

$$\dot{x} = (A - BK)x = \begin{bmatrix} 9 & -15 \\ 8 & -13 \end{bmatrix} x$$

Problem 6. (Connections between Observability & Lyapunov.) Let (A, C) be observable and suppose that P is any solution to $A^*P + PA = -C^*C$. Note that we are not assuming that $\mathcal{L}(\cdot)$ is an invertible operator here so there may be more than one solution. Show that $P \succeq 0$ if and only if A is stable.

solution.

(\implies): Suppose $P \succeq 0$ but A is not stable. Then there is a non-trivial (i.e. $v \neq 0$) vector $v \in \mathbb{C}^n$ and $\lambda \in \mathbb{C}$ with $\text{Re}(\lambda) \geq 0$ and $Av = \lambda v$. For this (λ, v) pair we also have that $v^*A^* = \bar{\lambda}v^*$. Since (A, C) is observable, we have that $Cv \neq 0$. Note that

$$-\|Cv\|^2 = -v^*C^*Cv = v^*(A^*P + PA)v = (\bar{\lambda} + \lambda)v^*Pv = 2\text{Re}(\lambda)v^*Pv$$

Since $\|Cv\| > 0$ and $\text{Re}(\lambda) \geq 0$, it must be the case that $\text{Re}(\lambda) > 0$ and hence from above, we have $v^*Pv < 0$ meaning that P is not positive semidefinite. $\longrightarrow\longleftarrow$.

(\impliedby): Suppose that A is stable. We will prove this implication directly. Since A is stable there is only one solution to the equation $A^*P + PA = -C^*C$; we saw this in the examples on Lyapunov stability—namely that if A stable this is equivalent to $\bar{\lambda}_i + \lambda_j \neq 0$ for all $\lambda_i, \lambda_j \in \text{spec}(A)$ which is in turn equivalent to the operator $\mathcal{L}(\cdot)$ being invertible. We also that the solution is

$$P = \int_0^\infty e^{A^*\tau} C^* C e^{A\tau} d\tau$$

This is clearly a positive semidefinite matrix.

Problem 7. (Controllable Canonical Form.) We saw in the recorded lecture and the lecture notes that if a system is completely controllable there is a transformation to the controllable canonical form. In many references this form is actually called the "controller canonical form" since its structure is invariant under the use of a feedback controller (for SISO systems this is easy to see). An alternative to this is what is called the "controllability canonical form" which is given by

$$\dot{x} = \underbrace{\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 & \cdots & 0 & -a_{n-1} \\ 1 & 0 & \cdots & 0 & -a_{n-2} \\ 0 & 1 & & 0 & -a_{n-3} \\ \vdots & & \ddots & & \vdots \\ 0 & 0 & & 1 & -a_0 \end{bmatrix}}_{A_c} x + \underbrace{\begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ \vdots \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}}_{B_c} u$$

$$y = \underbrace{[c_1 \quad c_2 \quad c_3 \quad \cdots \quad c_n]}_{C_c} x$$

The controllability matrix for this system is the identity $C_c = I$ and (A_c, B_c) is of course controllable.

Consider another system (A, B) and suppose that it is controllable. Derive a transformation such that $x_c = T^{-1}x$ is in controllable form:

$$A_c = T^{-1}AT, \quad B_c = T^{-1}B$$

solution. First off the transformation of the controllability matrix is given by

$$C = TC_c$$

This is because

$$\begin{aligned} C &= [B \quad AB \quad \cdots \quad A^{n-1}B] \\ &= [TB_c \quad TA_cT^{-1}TB_c \quad (TA_cT^{-1})^2TB_c \quad \cdots \quad (TA_cT^{-1})^{n-1}TB_c] \\ &= T [B_c \quad A_cB_c \quad \cdots \quad A_c^{n-1}B_c] \end{aligned}$$

since $(TA_cT^{-1})^k = \underbrace{(TA_cT^{-1}) \cdots (TA_cT^{-1})}_{k \text{ times}} = TA_c^kT^{-1}$. Then, since $C_c = I$, we have that $T = C$.

Another way to show this is to consider T of the form

$$T = [t_1 \quad t_2 \quad \cdots \quad t_n]$$

Then, from $B = TB_c$ we have that $B = t_1$ (since $B_c = [1 \quad 0 \quad \cdots \quad 0]^T$). From $AT = TA_c$ we have that

$$\begin{aligned} [At_1 \quad At_2 \quad \cdots \quad At_n] &= [t_1 \quad t_2 \quad \cdots \quad t_n] \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 & \cdots & 0 & -a_{n-1} \\ 1 & 0 & \cdots & 0 & -a_{n-2} \\ 0 & 1 & & 0 & -a_{n-3} \\ \vdots & & \ddots & & \vdots \\ 0 & 0 & & 1 & -a_0 \end{bmatrix} \\ &= [t_2 \quad t_3 \quad \cdots \quad -t_1a_{n-1} - t_2a_{n-2} - \cdots - t_na_0] \end{aligned}$$

from which we have that

$$t_1 = B, \quad t_2 = At_1 = AB, \quad t_3 = At_2 = A^2B, \quad \dots, \quad t_n = A^{n-1}B$$

so that $T = C$.