

A comparison of local parametric C^0 Bézier interpolants for triangular meshes

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Abstract

Parametric curved shape surface schemes interpolating vertices and normals of a given triangular mesh with arbitrary topology are widely used in computer graphics for gaming and real-time rendering due to their ability to effectively represent any surface of arbitrary genus. In this context, continuous curved shape surface schemes using only the information related to the triangle corresponding to the patch under construction, emerged as attractive solutions responding to the requirements of resource-limited hardware environments. In this paper we provide a unifying comparison of the local parametric C^0 curved shape schemes we are aware of, based on a reformulation of their original constructions in terms of polynomial Bézier triangles. With this reformulation we find a geometric interpretation of all the schemes that allows us to analyse their strengths and shortcomings from a geometrical point of view. Further, we compare the four schemes with respect to their computational costs, their reproduction capabilities of analytic surfaces and their response to different surface interrogation methods on arbitrary triangle meshes with a low triangle count that actually occur in their real-world use.

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1. Introduction

Computer graphics used for gaming and realtime rendering is about shading and animating with triangle meshes. A large body of work has been devoted to creating an increasing realism of the rendered surfaces. Shading techniques like phong shading, normal mapping and reflection mapping are commonly used to present cineastically looking surfaces. For animation [1], models are applied with a suitable skeleton structure during rigging [2], and then all triangle vertices can be moved according to this structure. Especially in computer games, its highly elaborate art pipeline builds upon the triangle mesh, which usually does not have stored neighbourhood information. Several techniques have been leveraged for processing on programmable graphics hardware recently [3, 4].

Continuous (C^0) interpolant curved shape surface schemes emerged to address specific requirements of the resource-limited hardware environments and to offer smooth surfaces by visually enhancing the resulting C^0 surface by using as little information as possible. More precisely, the smallest amount of information about neighbouring triangles has to be used in constructing the patch, thus these schemes use only the positions and normals at the three vertices of the triangle.

The interest in continuous surface patches comes primarily from saving bus bandwidth for transfers to the graphics hardware. In most situations exact geometric smoothness and continuity are not critical as long as the surface appears to be smooth as a result of the shading technique.

The aim of this paper is to provide a unifying comparison of the existing local parametric triangular curved shape C^0 schemes we are aware of. The paper is organized as follows. In section 2 we present four existing continuous surface schemes briefly describing their original construction and presenting a reformulation of every scheme in triangular Bézier patch form. This allows us to discuss their geometric interpretations and compare them in full detail. In section 3, we first analyse their computational costs (section 3.1), then we compare the schemes by looking at the reproduction of analytic surfaces like the sphere and the torus (section 3.2), and successively by looking at their response to surface interrogation methods on arbitrary triangle meshes with

a low triangle count, which actually occur in real-world use of these schemes (section 3.3). Finally, in section 4 we briefly describe the use of separated normal interpolation patches in the shading process and in section 5 we give the conclusions of our study.

2. Continuous Surface Schemes

Triangular Bézier patches have been around since the birth of Computer Aided Geometric Design. They were initially investigated by de Casteljau as extensions of Bézier curves to surfaces. They are a simple geometric primitive that can be used to interpolate scattered data while offering interactive manipulation by its control points and local control of a surface.

The key idea behind the C^0 curved shape schemes we are going to present is that each original flat triangle of the input mesh can be replaced by a curved shape, namely a parametric cubic or quadratic polynomial triangular Bézier patch interpolating the three positions and normals of the vertices. Therefore, the patch's control net is constructed only by means of the point and normal information at the vertices of the input mesh. According to requirements explained above, no additional data beyond the positions and normals of the triangle are used.

Let us denote the three triangle vertices by \mathbf{p}_0 , \mathbf{p}_1 , \mathbf{p}_2 , the respective unit normal vectors by \mathbf{n}_0 , \mathbf{n}_1 , \mathbf{n}_2 , and the edge vectors by $\mathbf{d}_1 = \mathbf{p}_1 - \mathbf{p}_0$, $\mathbf{d}_2 = \mathbf{p}_2 - \mathbf{p}_1$, $\mathbf{d}_3 = \mathbf{p}_0 - \mathbf{p}_2$, as shown in Figure 1. Additionally, we will refer

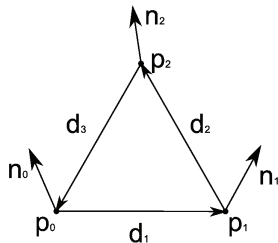


Figure 1: Notation for the vertices and respective normals of the input flat triangles.

to the tangent plane in \mathbf{p}_i , which is defined by \mathbf{n}_i , by τ_i , $i = 0, 1, 2$.

Although each scheme uses its own formulation, for comparison purposes we will describe all the schemes in the form of triangular Bézier patches and we will analyse their geometrical interpretation.

Using a triangular network of control points

$$\mathbf{b}_{ijk} : i + j + k = n, i, j, k \geq 0$$

and degree- n bivariate Bernstein polynomials

$$B_{ijk}^n(u, v, w) = \frac{n!}{i!j!k!} u^i v^j w^k, \quad u + v + w = 1,$$

a degree- n triangular Bézier patch is defined by

$$\mathbf{s}(u, v, w) = \sum_{i+j+k=n} \mathbf{b}_{ijk} B_{ijk}^n(u, v, w). \quad (1)$$

It maps a triangular domain $D \subset \mathbb{R}^2$ to an affine space, typically \mathbb{R}^3 , where u , v and w are the barycentric coordinates of a domain point relative to D . See [5] for details on the properties of these patches.

Together with the schemes that we are going to present in the following subsections, we would also like to cite [6, 7, 8, 9, 10] as interesting schemes related to the interpolation problem we are considering. However, we are not going to include them in our discussion because [6, 7] do not fit into the class of analytically representable curved patches, [8, 9] use neighboring triangles to construct cubic patches with approximate- G^1 continuity and, although in [10] Walton and Meek propose an interesting method leading to a G^1 surface, they make use of a blending type approach that results in a patch that is not purely polynomial.

2.1. PN Triangles

Curved PN triangles by Vlachos et al. [11], in a certain sense, are the pioneers in the study of parametric curved patches for C^0 interpolation of triangle meshes. The geometry of a PN triangle is defined by a cubic triangular Bézier patch and the construction of its control points is based on projections on the tangent planes at the vertices.

The scheme initially places the intermediate control points $\bar{\mathbf{b}}_{ijk}$ in the positions $(i\mathbf{p}_0 + j\mathbf{p}_1 + k\mathbf{p}_2)/3$, leaving the three corner points unchanged. Then, each \mathbf{b}_{ijk} on the border is constructed by projecting the respective intermediate control point $\bar{\mathbf{b}}_{ijk}$ into the plane defined by the nearest corner point and the normal in that corner. For example, Figure 2 shows the construction of \mathbf{b}_{210} .

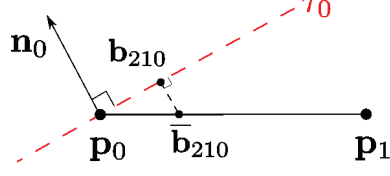


Figure 2: Construction of \mathbf{b}_{210} in PN triangle's scheme: projection of $\bar{\mathbf{b}}_{210} = (2\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_1)/3$ into the tangent plane at \mathbf{p}_0 .

Finally, the central control point \mathbf{b}_{111} is constructed moving the corresponding $\bar{\mathbf{b}}_{111}$ halfway in the direction $\mathbf{m} - \bar{\mathbf{b}}_{111}$, where \mathbf{m} is the average of the six control points just computed on the border.

In formulas:

$$\begin{aligned}
\mathbf{b}_{300} &= \mathbf{p}_0, & \mathbf{b}_{030} &= \mathbf{p}_1, & \mathbf{b}_{003} &= \mathbf{p}_2, \\
w_{ij} &= (\mathbf{p}_j - \mathbf{p}_i) \cdot \mathbf{n}_i, & i, j &\in \{0, 1, 2\}, & i &\neq j, \\
\mathbf{b}_{210} &= \frac{1}{3}(2\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_1 - w_{01}\mathbf{n}_0), & \mathbf{b}_{120} &= \frac{1}{3}(2\mathbf{p}_1 + \mathbf{p}_0 - w_{10}\mathbf{n}_1), \\
\mathbf{b}_{021} &= \frac{1}{3}(2\mathbf{p}_1 + \mathbf{p}_2 - w_{12}\mathbf{n}_1), & \mathbf{b}_{012} &= \frac{1}{3}(2\mathbf{p}_2 + \mathbf{p}_1 - w_{21}\mathbf{n}_2), \\
\mathbf{b}_{102} &= \frac{1}{3}(2\mathbf{p}_2 + \mathbf{p}_0 - w_{20}\mathbf{n}_2), & \mathbf{b}_{201} &= \frac{1}{3}(2\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_2 - w_{02}\mathbf{n}_0), \\
\mathbf{m} &= \frac{1}{6}(\mathbf{b}_{210} + \mathbf{b}_{120} + \mathbf{b}_{021} + \mathbf{b}_{012} + \mathbf{b}_{102} + \mathbf{b}_{201}), \\
\bar{\mathbf{b}}_{111} &= \frac{1}{3}(\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_1 + \mathbf{p}_2), \\
\mathbf{b}_{111} &= \mathbf{m} + \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{m} - \bar{\mathbf{b}}_{111}).
\end{aligned}$$

As shown in [11], each boundary curve stays close to its edge, because its control points constructed as above stay within a radius of $l/6$ of the edge, where l is the length of the longest triangle edge. Further, the particular choice for the central control point \mathbf{b}_{111} is, among other things, based on symmetry, see [12]. In this way, the curved patch provably remains close to the flat triangle, preserving the shape and avoiding interference with other curved triangles.

In [13] a reformulation of PN Triangles as a modified Nielson's side-vertex

triangular mesh interpolation scheme [14] can be found. Furthermore, the two recent works [15, 16] propose, respectively, a new application of PN triangles and add some improvements to the original construction. In particular, in the former, the key idea is to assign to each mesh vertex a set of three scalar tags that act as shape controllers, improving the surface geometry and shading. The latter proposes the use of PN triangles on silhouettes.

2.2. Phong Tessellation

Phong tessellation [17] is a recent work based on the idea that a real-time mesh refinement operator should be as efficient and simple as Phong normal interpolation. The main concept behind the scheme is that around each vertex the tangent plane defined by the vertex normal is the appropriate local geometry.

The patch is constructed by direct evaluation of the point of barycentric coordinates (u, v, w) in three simple steps. First, the barycentric combination between the three triangle vertices is computed. Then, this point is projected on the three tangent planes defined by the vertices and normals in input. Finally, the final evaluation point $\mathbf{s}^*(u, v, w)$ is obtained by the barycentric combination of these three projections.

Additionally, a shape factor α is proposed to interpolate between linear (flat) and Phong tessellation, controlling the distance from the flat triangle. Hence, the final surface can be written as:

$$\mathbf{s}_\alpha(u, v, w) = (1 - \alpha)\mathbf{p}(u, v, w) + \alpha\mathbf{s}^*(u, v, w),$$

where $\mathbf{p}(u, v, w) = u\mathbf{p}_0 + v\mathbf{p}_1 + w\mathbf{p}_2$ is simply the linear tessellation of the triangle and $\mathbf{s}^*(u, v, w)$ is detailed below.

Phong tessellation is the only scheme with a parameter to regulate the surface flatness. Unfortunately, this is a global parameter while sometimes only some local parts of the surface need to be changed. It is also true that Phong tessellation introduces such a parameter because usually the obtained surface is too inflated, while the other schemes do not have an issue with flatness and thus do not need a parameter. In [17], $\alpha = 3/4$ is proposed because this value experimentally provides convincing results in most of the situations. In Figure 3 the surfaces constructed from a simple mesh for different values of the parameter α show how this parameter controls the shape of the final Phong surface.

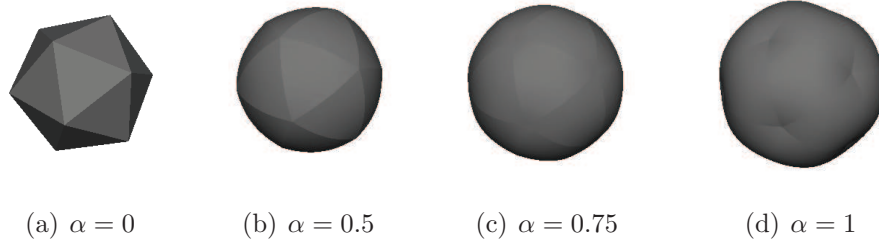


Figure 3: Surfaces constructed by Phong tessellation for different values of α .

Writing out the definition of Phong tessellation, we obtain that $\mathbf{s}^*(u, v, w)$ is a quadratic patch with control points

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{\mathbf{b}}_{200} &= \mathbf{p}_0, & \bar{\mathbf{b}}_{110} &= \frac{1}{2}[\pi_0(\mathbf{p}_1) + \pi_1(\mathbf{p}_0)], \\ \bar{\mathbf{b}}_{020} &= \mathbf{p}_1, & \bar{\mathbf{b}}_{011} &= \frac{1}{2}[\pi_1(\mathbf{p}_2) + \pi_2(\mathbf{p}_1)], \\ \bar{\mathbf{b}}_{002} &= \mathbf{p}_2, & \bar{\mathbf{b}}_{101} &= \frac{1}{2}[\pi_2(\mathbf{p}_0) + \pi_0(\mathbf{p}_2)].\end{aligned}$$

where $\pi_i(\mathbf{p}_j)$ is the projection of \mathbf{p}_j on the tangent plane τ_i defined by \mathbf{n}_i and \mathbf{p}_i (see Figure 4).

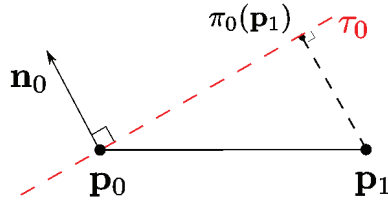


Figure 4: Projection of \mathbf{p}_1 into the tangent plane at \mathbf{p}_0 defined by \mathbf{n}_0 .

This allows us to compute a reformulation of the Phong tessellation patch

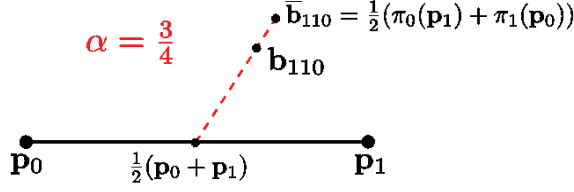


Figure 5: Geometric interpretation of the control point \mathbf{b}_{110} in Phong tessellation.

$\mathbf{s}_\alpha(u, v, w)$ in quadratic Bézier triangle form with control points:

$$\begin{aligned}
\mathbf{b}_{200} &= \mathbf{p}_0, & \mathbf{b}_{020} &= \mathbf{p}_1, & \mathbf{b}_{002} &= \mathbf{p}_2, \\
\mathbf{b}_{110} &= \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_1) + \alpha \left[\bar{\mathbf{b}}_{110} - \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_1) \right], \\
\mathbf{b}_{011} &= \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_1 + \mathbf{p}_2) + \alpha \left[\bar{\mathbf{b}}_{011} - \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_1 + \mathbf{p}_2) \right], \\
\mathbf{b}_{101} &= \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_2) + \alpha \left[\bar{\mathbf{b}}_{101} - \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_2) \right].
\end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

In this form Phong tessellation has a simple geometric interpretation: the three control points \mathbf{b}_{110} , \mathbf{b}_{011} and \mathbf{b}_{101} are obtained by moving the middle-edge point in the direction given by the average of the projections of the edge corners, scaled by α . In Figure 5 the geometric interpretation of \mathbf{b}_{110} is shown.

Thanks to this clear geometric interpretation we found an interesting relation between PN triangles and Phong Tessellation. Looking at the edge \mathbf{d}_1 , for example, we can compute the corresponding control point \mathbf{b}_{110} for Phong Tessellation with $\alpha = 1/3$ and with simple algebraic calculus we prove that

$$\begin{aligned}
\mathbf{b}_{110}^{phong} &= \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_1) + \frac{1}{3} \left[\frac{1}{2}(\pi_0(\mathbf{p}_1) + \pi_1(\mathbf{p}_0)) - \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_1) \right] = \\
&= \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_1) + \frac{1}{3} \left[-\frac{1}{2}((\mathbf{p}_1 - \mathbf{p}_0) \cdot \mathbf{n}_0)\mathbf{n}_0 - \frac{1}{2}((\mathbf{p}_0 - \mathbf{p}_1) \cdot \mathbf{n}_1)\mathbf{n}_1 \right] = \\
&= \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_1) + \frac{1}{6}(\mathbf{p}_0 \cdot \mathbf{n}_0 - \mathbf{p}_1 \cdot \mathbf{n}_0)\mathbf{n}_0 - \frac{1}{6}(\mathbf{p}_0 \cdot \mathbf{n}_1 - \mathbf{p}_1 \cdot \mathbf{n}_1)\mathbf{n}_1 = \\
&= \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{b}_{210}^{PN} + \mathbf{b}_{120}^{PN}).
\end{aligned}$$

The control point for the quadratic Bézier triangle of Phong Tessellation with $\alpha = 1/3$ is the average of the two control points of PN triangles relative to the same edge.

2.3. Nagata Triangles

The central idea in the scheme proposed by T. Nagata in [18] is quadratic interpolation of a curved segment from the position and normal vectors at the end-points, with the aid of generalized inverses (or pseudo-inverses).

More precisely, this scheme first replaces each edge of the planar triangle with a curve orthogonal to the normals given at the end-points, then fills the interior of the patch with a parametric quadratic surface reproducing the modified boundaries. Central in the patch construction is a coefficient \mathbf{c}_1 (respectively $\mathbf{c}_2, \mathbf{c}_3$) that defines the boundary curve in the monomial form $\mathbf{x}_1(t) = \mathbf{p}_0 + (\mathbf{d}_1 - \mathbf{c}_1)t + \mathbf{c}_1 t^2$ as concerns the edge given by \mathbf{d}_1 , for example. The analytical formula used for the generalized inverse \mathbf{A}^+ is

$$\mathbf{A}^+ = \lim_{\alpha \rightarrow 0^+} (\mathbf{A}^* \mathbf{A} + \alpha \mathbf{E})^{-1} \mathbf{A}^*,$$

where \mathbf{A} and \mathbf{A}^* are an arbitrary matrix and its transposed conjugate, respectively, and \mathbf{E} is the identity matrix of consistent dimension. This allows to solve the system of equations with unknown \mathbf{c}_1 .

The solution for the coefficient \mathbf{c}_1 related to the edge \mathbf{d}_1 results in

$$\mathbf{c}_1 = \begin{cases} \frac{\Delta d}{1-\Delta c} \boldsymbol{\nu} + \frac{d}{\Delta c} \Delta \boldsymbol{\nu}, & c \neq \pm 1 \\ \mathbf{0}, & c = \pm 1 \end{cases} \quad (3)$$

where $\boldsymbol{\nu} = \frac{\mathbf{n}_0 + \mathbf{n}_1}{2}$ and $\Delta \boldsymbol{\nu} = \frac{\mathbf{n}_0 - \mathbf{n}_1}{2}$ are the average and the deviation of the unit normals, $d = \mathbf{d}_1 \cdot \boldsymbol{\nu}$ and $\Delta d = \mathbf{d}_1 \cdot \Delta \boldsymbol{\nu}$ their inner products with \mathbf{d}_1 and

$$\Delta c = \mathbf{n}_0 \cdot \Delta \boldsymbol{\nu}, \quad c = \mathbf{n}_0 \cdot \mathbf{n}_1 = 1 - 2\Delta c.$$

The coefficient \mathbf{c}_1 is set to zero when $\mathbf{n}_0 \cdot \mathbf{n}_1 = \pm 1$ because obviously the two denominators should not become zero.

Although the monomial form allows an easy and fast coefficients computation (see computational costs in subsection 3.1), a triangular Bézier formulation of the patch, which can be obtained by means of a change of parametrization, allows a better geometrical insight. The three control points \mathbf{b}_{110} , \mathbf{b}_{101} and \mathbf{b}_{011} are defined by moving the average of the vertices on an

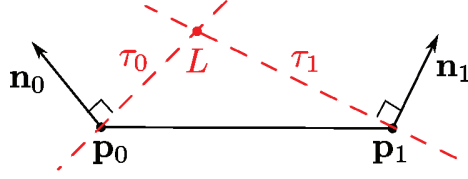


Figure 6: The intersection line L between the two tangent planes τ_0 and τ_1 (schematic view).

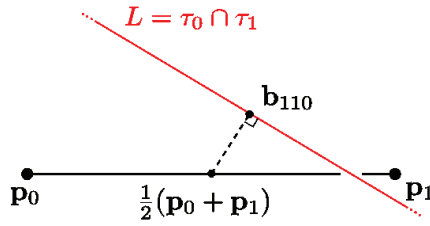


Figure 7: Geometric interpretation of the middle-edge control point in Nagata's scheme. \mathbf{b}_{110} is the point on the line L that minimizes the distance between the middle-edge point $\frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_1)$ and the line L .

edge halfway the direction given by the curvature coefficient related to that edge:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{b}_{200} &= \mathbf{p}_0, & \mathbf{b}_{110} &= \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_1) - \frac{1}{2}\mathbf{c}_1, \\ \mathbf{b}_{020} &= \mathbf{p}_1, & \mathbf{b}_{011} &= \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_1 + \mathbf{p}_2) - \frac{1}{2}\mathbf{c}_2, \\ \mathbf{b}_{002} &= \mathbf{p}_2, & \mathbf{b}_{101} &= \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_2) - \frac{1}{2}\mathbf{c}_3. \end{aligned}$$

In this formulation some easy calculations allow to show that the central control point on one edge, for instance \mathbf{b}_{110} , is on the intersection line L between the two tangent planes τ_0 and τ_1 , i.e. $L = \tau_0 \cap \tau_1$. Moreover, the control point \mathbf{b}_{110} is the point on that line L that minimizes the distance between the middle-edge point $\frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_1)$ and the line (see Figures 6 and 7).

Equation (3) defining the curvature coefficient \mathbf{c}_1 in Nagata's scheme has a stability problem that might strongly affect the surface.

As pointed out before, in eq. (3) defining the curvature coefficient \mathbf{c}_1 there are two denominators that obviously should not become zero. This happens when $c = \mathbf{n}_0 \cdot \mathbf{n}_1 = \pm 1$ or equivalently when $\Delta c = 0$ or $\Delta c = 1$, and in these cases the curvature coefficient is set to be zero. This means that when the angle between the two normals in the vertices of one edge is 0° or 180° , the curvature coefficient cannot be calculated and it is set to zero, leading the surface to be linear on that edge.

Looking at the geometric interpretation of Nagata's patch, this stability problem is even clearer. If the two tangent planes are parallel or nearly parallel, their intersection line L goes to infinity and as a consequence the middle-edge control point goes to infinity too, making the patch very inflated on that edge because this minimum distance point can be spatially very far away from the model edge.

One way to correct this problem is to use a threshold ϵ in the coefficient definition (3), setting \mathbf{c}_1 to $\mathbf{0}$ if $\Delta c \leq \epsilon$ or $1 - \Delta c \leq \epsilon$ (or equivalent conditions on c). For instance, in Figure 8 we give an example of how the final surface changes depending on the choice of ϵ .

In most of our experiments in section 3, the threshold ϵ must be set quite high to have an acceptable result. This means that, depending on the configuration of the normals, the intersection line L can be far away from the plane of the triangle. But, with very regular meshes as for instance the torus and the sphere (see subsection 3.2), surfaces with no artifacts can be obtained with small ϵ thanks to symmetry and well-conditioned configurations.

2.4. NLSA Triangles

The last scheme we describe presents the construction of a curvilinear mesh using quadratic curves with near least square acceleration (NLSA). This scheme was proposed by Barrera et al. in [19]. It constructs a quadratic surface using quadratic curves which are derived using vertex normals and vertex points only, as Nagata's scheme above, but with different minimizations.

Consider the edge with direction \mathbf{d}_1 . The authors' approach, after computation of tangent vectors $\mathbf{t}_0 \in \tau_0$ and $\mathbf{t}_1 \in \tau_1$ from the normals \mathbf{n}_0 and \mathbf{n}_1 , first computes a curve $\mathbf{q}_1(t)$ such that its derivative in \mathbf{p}_0 is equal to the tangent \mathbf{t}_0 and the derivative in \mathbf{p}_1 is as close to the tangent \mathbf{t}_1 as the least square minimization allows. Then, they compute a curve $\mathbf{q}_2(t)$ with the derivative equal to the tangent in \mathbf{p}_1 and optimized at \mathbf{p}_0 . Finally, by taking

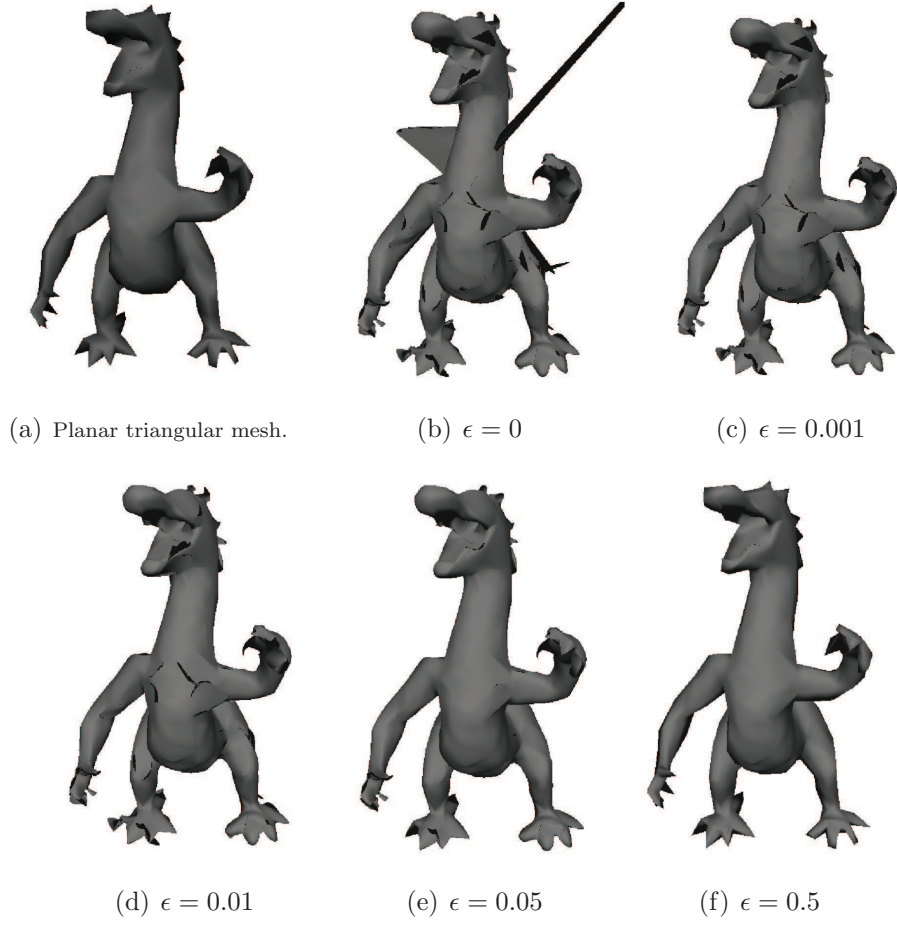


Figure 8: Stability problem of Nagata's scheme.

the average of $\mathbf{q}_1(t)$ and $\mathbf{q}_2(t)$, they get the near least square acceleration second degree curve $\mathbf{x}_1(t)$ which is close to optimal in both ends.

The curve $\mathbf{q}_1(t)$ is computed by solving a system of two equations in the unknowns α_1 and β_1 whose solution is

$$\alpha_1 = \frac{\mathbf{t}_0 \cdot \mathbf{t}_1}{\mathbf{t}_0 \cdot \mathbf{t}_0} \text{ and } \beta_1 = \frac{\mathbf{d}_1 \cdot \mathbf{t}_0}{\mathbf{t}_0 \cdot \mathbf{t}_1}, \quad (4)$$

and analogously the curve $\mathbf{q}_2(t)$ is computed by solving a system whose solution is

$$\bar{\alpha}_1 = \frac{\mathbf{t}_0 \cdot \mathbf{t}_1}{\mathbf{t}_1 \cdot \mathbf{t}_1} \text{ and } \bar{\beta}_1 = \frac{\mathbf{d}_1 \cdot \mathbf{t}_1}{\mathbf{t}_0 \cdot \mathbf{t}_1}. \quad (5)$$

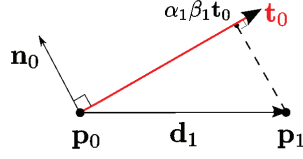


Figure 9: $\alpha_1\beta_1\mathbf{t}_0$ is the projection of \mathbf{d}_1 on \mathbf{t}_0 .

The same procedure can be repeated for the edges \mathbf{d}_2 and \mathbf{d}_3 to obtain the curves $\mathbf{x}_2(t)$ and $\mathbf{x}_3(t)$ defined respectively by the parameters $\alpha_2, \beta_2, \bar{\alpha}_2, \bar{\beta}_2$ and $\alpha_3, \beta_3, \bar{\alpha}_3, \bar{\beta}_3$.

Having the three border curves in monomial form, it is easy to compute their Bézier formulation. The three central control points, together with the vertices, are then used as control net for a quadratic Bézier triangle. In formulas:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{b}_{200} &= \mathbf{p}_0, & \mathbf{b}_{110} &= \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_1) + \frac{1}{4}(\alpha_1\beta_1\mathbf{t}_0 - \bar{\alpha}_1\bar{\beta}_1\mathbf{t}_1), \\ \mathbf{b}_{020} &= \mathbf{p}_1, & \mathbf{b}_{011} &= \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_1 + \mathbf{p}_2) + \frac{1}{4}(\alpha_2\beta_2\mathbf{t}_1 - \bar{\alpha}_2\bar{\beta}_2\mathbf{t}_2), \\ \mathbf{b}_{002} &= \mathbf{p}_2, & \mathbf{b}_{101} &= \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_2) + \frac{1}{4}(\alpha_3\beta_3\mathbf{t}_0 - \bar{\alpha}_3\bar{\beta}_3\mathbf{t}_2). \end{aligned}$$

Note that $\alpha_1\beta_1\mathbf{t}_0$ is just the projection of the edge vector \mathbf{d}_1 on \mathbf{t}_0 . Similarly, $\bar{\alpha}_1\bar{\beta}_1\mathbf{t}_1$ is the projection of \mathbf{d}_1 on \mathbf{t}_1 (see Figure 9).

It means that NLSA triangles in Bézier formulation have a simple geometric interpretation: the central control point on one edge is defined moving the average of the two edge vertices in the direction given by the subtraction of the projections of the edge on the tangents at the two vertices.

This subtraction results in the same direction as the one used in Phong tessellation control points definition (see equation (2)). More precisely, by using GramSchmidt process the tangents $\mathbf{t}_0 = \mathbf{n}_1 - (\mathbf{n}_0 \cdot \mathbf{n}_1)\mathbf{n}_0$ and $\mathbf{t}_1 = (\mathbf{n}_0 \cdot \mathbf{n}_1)\mathbf{n}_1 - \mathbf{n}_0$ can be defined and substituted in equations (4) and (5). This results in:

$$\begin{aligned} \alpha_1\beta_1\mathbf{t}_0 &= \left(\frac{\mathbf{d}_1 \cdot \mathbf{t}_0}{\mathbf{t}_0 \cdot \mathbf{t}_0} \right) \mathbf{t}_0 = \left(\frac{a - lb - c + ld}{\mathbf{t}_0 \cdot \mathbf{t}_0} \right) (\mathbf{n}_1 - l\mathbf{n}_0), \\ \bar{\alpha}_1\bar{\beta}_1\mathbf{t}_1 &= \left(\frac{\mathbf{d}_1 \cdot \mathbf{t}_1}{\mathbf{t}_1 \cdot \mathbf{t}_1} \right) \mathbf{t}_1 = \left(\frac{la - b - lc + d}{\mathbf{t}_1 \cdot \mathbf{t}_1} \right) (l\mathbf{n}_1 - \mathbf{n}_0), \end{aligned}$$

where $a = \mathbf{p}_1 \cdot \mathbf{n}_1$, $b = \mathbf{p}_1 \cdot \mathbf{n}_0$, $c = \mathbf{p}_0 \cdot \mathbf{n}_1$, $d = \mathbf{p}_0 \cdot \mathbf{n}_0$ and $l = \mathbf{n}_0 \cdot \mathbf{n}_1$. Therefore,

$$\begin{aligned} \alpha_1 \beta_1 \mathbf{t}_0 - \bar{\alpha}_1 \bar{\beta}_1 \mathbf{t}_1 &= a \mathbf{n}_1 - b \mathbf{n}_0 - c \mathbf{n}_1 + d \mathbf{n}_0 \\ &= \pi_0(\mathbf{p}_1) + \pi_1(\mathbf{p}_0) - (\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_1), \end{aligned}$$

because $\mathbf{t}_0 \cdot \mathbf{t}_0 = \mathbf{t}_1 \cdot \mathbf{t}_1$ and $\frac{(1-l^2)}{\mathbf{t}_0 \cdot \mathbf{t}_0} = 1$, and thus

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{b}_{110}^{NLSA} &= \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_1) + \frac{1}{4}(\alpha_1 \beta_1 \mathbf{t}_0 - \bar{\alpha}_1 \bar{\beta}_1 \mathbf{t}_1) = \\ &= \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_1) + \frac{1}{2} \left(\frac{1}{2}(\pi_0(\mathbf{p}_1) + \pi_1(\mathbf{p}_0)) - \frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_1) \right) \\ &= \mathbf{b}_{110}^{phong(\alpha=\frac{1}{2})}. \end{aligned}$$

The triangular patch obtained by the NLSA method is thus nothing else than the Phong tessellation patch with $\alpha = \frac{1}{2}$.

3. Comparison

We implemented all the schemes as an Autodesk Maya® plug-in (*MPx-HwShaderNode*), based on the plug-in from [20]. The Polygons part of Autodesk Maya® is a classic polygonal modeller, and lots of low-level and high-level functions are available for surface creation.

3.1. Computational costs

Before comparing the surface quality of the four schemes, we compare their computational costs. We computed manually the number of scalar additions and scalar multiplications required for evaluation of a point on the cubic or quadratic Bézier triangle. Then, for the difference in practice, we measured the time required for the tessellation on the CPU by using a 1000 triangles Bunny mesh, tessellating every triangle patch into 210 points (tessellation factor $f = 20$). In the vertex shader on the GPU, we tessellated the patch into 210 points (tessellation factor $f = 20$) and 1830 points (tessellation factor $f = 60$), which are handled as OpenGL vertex buffer objects. As the shading is completely vertex shader-bound, we measured the time for vertex shading and fragment shading together. These measurements were performed in Maya 2008 on a MS Windows 7 (64bit) system with Intel

P8700 (2.5 GHz) processor and NVidia Geforce 9600GT (512 MB) mobile graphics with driver version 258.96.

Table 1 gives the required operations for the evaluation of a point on the surface in the Bézier form, split into control points (cp) computation and patch evaluation according to definition (1). We computed the same values for the original construction given by the respective papers of Nagata triangles and Phong tessellation (Table 2). Note that Phong tessellation in their original construction makes use of a direct per-point computation; there is no separate per-patch computation anymore.

Bézier form	Per-patch: cp construction		Per-point: evaluation		Total		CPU $f = 20$	GPU	
	add	mult	add	mult	add	mult	ms	$f = 20$ ms	$f = 60$ ms
PN triangles	93	81	27	57	120	138	0.112	0.0068	0.054
Nagata triangles	72	87	15	27	87	114	0.071	0.0067	0.050
NLSA triangles	123	153	15	27	138	180	0.071	0.0068	0.054
Phong tessellation	57	45	15	27	72	72	0.070	0.0059	0.043

Table 1: Scalar additions and multiplications required by all the schemes to evaluate the patch and time required for the tessellation on the CPU and on the GPU using the Bézier form.

Original form	Per-patch		Per-point		Total		CPU $f = 20$	GPU	
	add	mult	add	mult	add	mult	ms	$f = 20$ ms	$f = 60$ ms
PN triangles	93	81	27	57	120	138	0.112	0.0068	0.054
Nagata triangles	54	69	21	21	75	90	0.054	0.0061	0.045
NLSA triangles	123	153	15	27	138	180	0.071	0.0068	0.054
Phong tessellation	–	–	30	36	30	36	0.094	0.0042	0.037

Table 2: Scalar additions and multiplications required by all the schemes to evaluate the patch using the original construction proposed by their authors. Note that PN triangles and NLSA triangles are originally defined in the Bézier form; we just repeat the numbers from Table 1 for them.

In general, the evaluation of a surface point on the cubic patch is more expensive than on a quadratic patch, which makes a difference for the scalar CPU implementation (not using SIMD extensions). The tessellation time for the cubic PN patch is larger than for any of the quadratic patches. Concerning the difference between the Bézier formulation and the original formulation on the CPU, Nagata triangles are the most efficient (19 fps) due to the formulation in the canonical basis in u and v . In contrast, the combination of construction and point evaluation into one step for Phong tessellation is slower on the CPU as it needs to be done per surface point and requires

more operations than the evaluation of a quadratic Bézier triangle (15 adds, 27 mults). This combination into one step is especially beneficial for the evaluation in the vertex shader of the GPU.

For the GPU evaluation, we compare the time differences for tessellation factor $f = 60$. Interpolation in the vertex shader requires patch construction and evaluation per surface point, so that the schemes with small total costs (Phong tessellation and Nagata triangles) are advantageous. PN triangles and NLSA triangles are the slowest due to the largest total costs among all the schemes. Nagata triangles and Phong tessellation require less additions/multiplications in their original construction compared to the Bézier form (Table 2), as argued in [17] and [18]. This results also in better timings and framerates: 22 fps for Nagata triangles and 27 fps for Phong tessellation, which become even more significant for larger tessellation factors.

3.2. Sphere and Torus Interpolation

In this section, we compare the behaviour of the four schemes with respect to a known surface. We compare the signed distance between the analytic surface (a sphere and a torus) and the piecewise parametric interpolants computed by the schemes on a sampling of points and normals from that surface. We are especially interested in the schemes behaviour when refining the base mesh of the piecewise parametric surface.

The base mesh for the sphere is an icosahedron sampled from a sphere of radius r . At any refinement step i it is refined by means of a 4-split division of the triangles, which results in triangle meshes with $20 \cdot 4^i$ triangles, *i.e.*, 20 for $i = 0$, 80 for $i = 1$, 320 for $i = 2$, and 1280 triangles for $i = 3$.

The base mesh for the torus is generated by a subdivision of the bivariate parameter domain $[0, 2\pi) \times [0, 2\pi)$ into j^2 quadrangular regions. After the refinement, the quadrangular mesh is triangulated adding the diagonals. This results in $2 \cdot j^2$ triangles at any refinement step j ($j = 1, 2, 3, \dots$).

We measure the signed distance between the analytic surface and the piecewise parametric interpolant along the patch normal for the refinement steps $i = 0, 1, 2, 3$, in case of the sphere, and for $j = 0, \dots, 19$, in case of the torus. Iterations $i = 3$ and $j = 19$, respectively, yield acceptable average distance values.

Figure 10 shows the approximation behaviour of the average signed distance to the sphere with radius $r = 1$. For this radius, the Phong triangles bend to the exterior, whereas the NLSA triangles and PN triangles are always interior to the sphere. The Nagata triangles ($\epsilon = 0$) result in the best

average distances, which is a consequence of reproducing the tangent planes at the vertices for this degree-2 scheme. PN triangles also reproduce the given tangent planes in the sphere points but, due to the general choice of the control point \mathbf{b}_{111} , are less curved than the sphere.

Figure 11 shows the approximation behaviour of the average signed distance to a torus with radii $r_1 = 1$ and $r_2 = 0.5$. The behaviour of the different schemes is qualitatively the same for the torus as for the sphere above. Again Nagata triangles ($\epsilon = 0$) result in the best average distance. Due to the general choice of the control point \mathbf{b}_{111} , the PN triangles are less curved than the original torus and consequently are always in the interior. The same is true for NLSA triangles, while the contrary occurs for Phong tessellation.

Data in Table 3 confirm the following classification of the methods with respect to their approximation behaviours: Nagata triangles perform best, followed by PN triangles and NLSA triangles, whereas Phong tessellation exhibits the worst approximation behaviour.

3.3. Arbitrary Triangle Meshes

In this section, we want to compare the surfaces constructed by the four schemes on arbitrary triangle meshes with a low triangle count (1000 – 3000 triangles) because similar meshes will occur in a real-world use of the schemes.

Table 4 gives detailed information about the meshes in our experiments. As the vertex normals have strong influence on the constructed surfaces, the table gives statistics on the angle cosine between the vertex normals and the triangle normals. This is a rough measure for the curvedness of the triangular patches. Additionally, the border curves are classified into convex, concave, and inflection, by the directions of the two vertex normals relative to a plane orthogonal to the edge (details in [11, 21]).

We analyse the surfaces from four meshes, Bunny, Monsterfrog, Vase and RoundedCube, by using highlight lines and Gaussian curvature plots [22]. Bunny and Monsterfrog represent two arbitrary fine triangle meshes. The remaining two meshes, Vase and RoundedCube, were chosen because they exhibit certain special effects for some of the schemes. We use the exact surface normals $\mathbf{n}(u, v) = \frac{\frac{\partial \mathbf{s}}{\partial u}(u, v) \times \frac{\partial \mathbf{s}}{\partial v}(u, v)}{\left\| \frac{\partial \mathbf{s}}{\partial u}(u, v) \times \frac{\partial \mathbf{s}}{\partial v}(u, v) \right\|}$ for computing the Gaussian curvature. Table 5 contains the minimum, maximum and mean values, with standard deviation defined as $\sqrt{\frac{1}{n-1} \sum_{k=1}^n (x_k - \bar{x})^2}$, of the Gaussian curvature computed on a dense sampling grid of 210 points per patch.

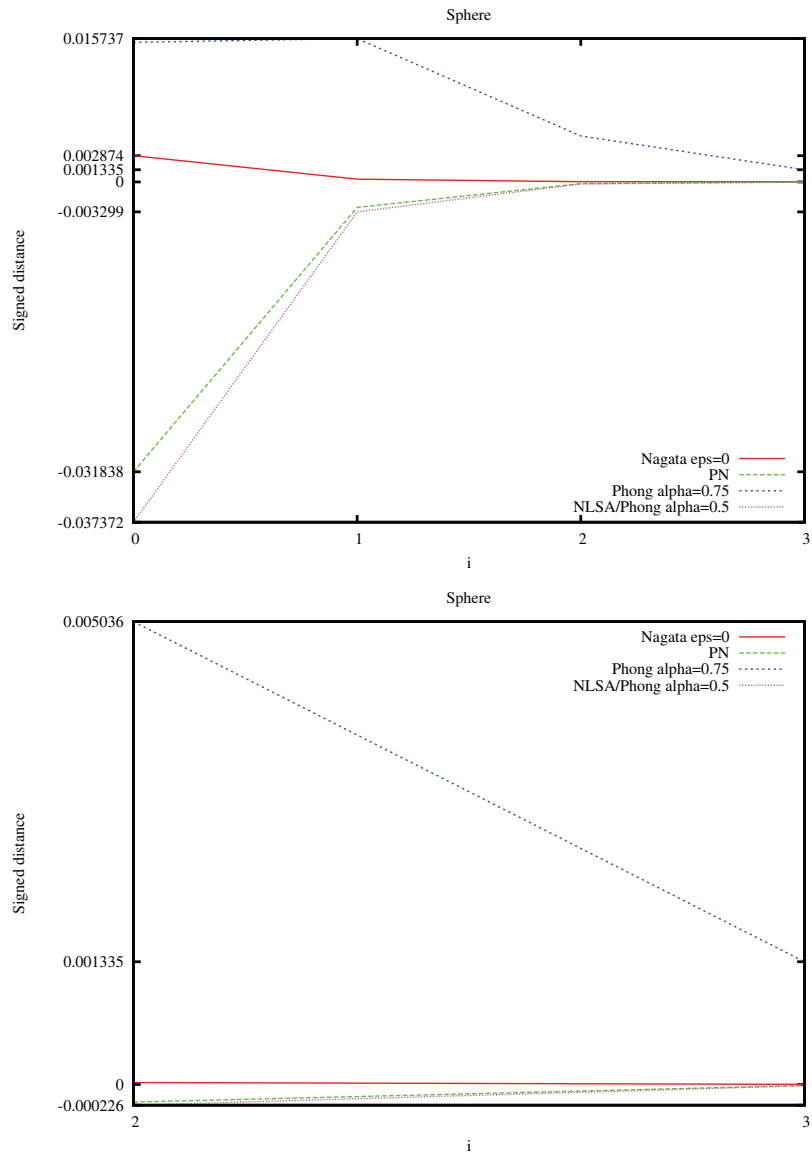


Figure 10: Average signed distance of sphere interpolation depending on the refinement step i . Top: approximation behaviour for $i = 0, \dots, 3$. Bottom: zoom on $i = 2, 3$.

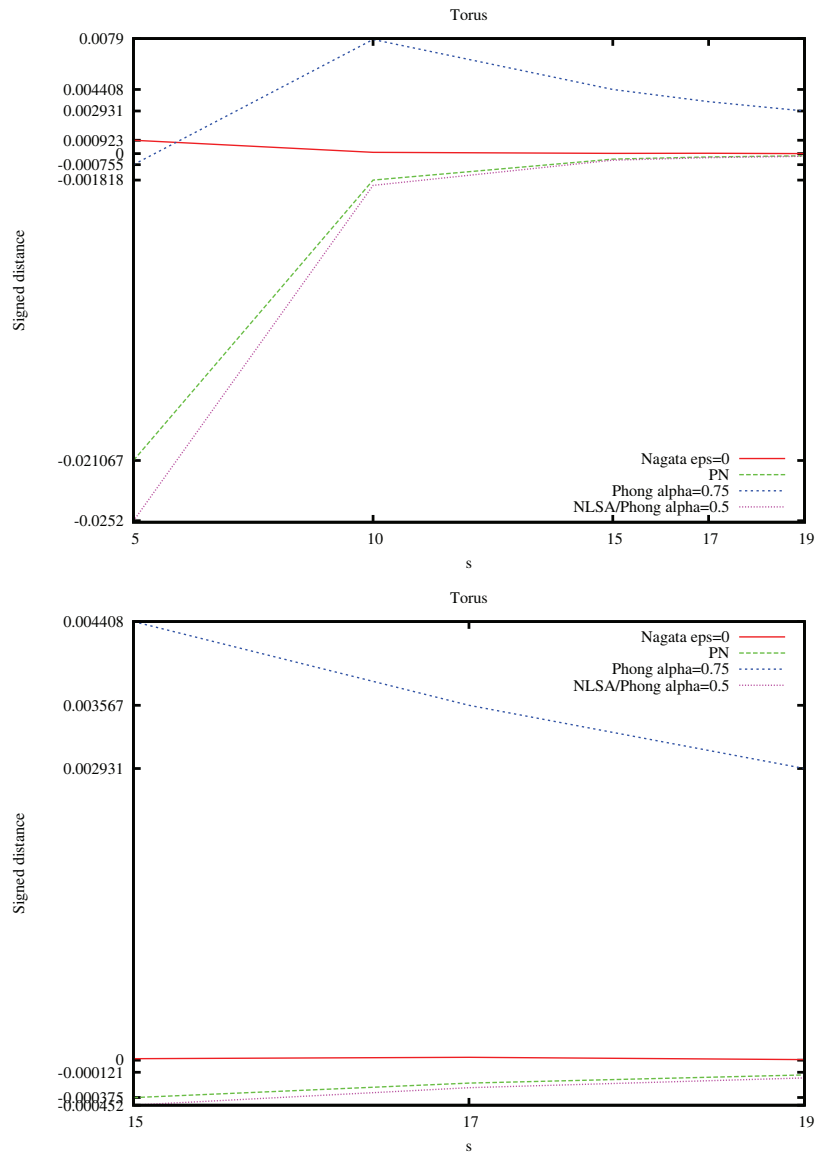


Figure 11: Average signed distance of torus interpolation depending on the refinement step j . Top: approximation behaviour for $j = 5, 10, 15, 17, 19$. Bottom: zoom on $j = 15, 17, 19$.

Name	Step	Mean Distance \pm std dev		Min,Max Distance
Sphere	$i = 0$	Phong	0.0153196 ± 0.00940232	[0, 0.0269864]
		Nagata $\epsilon = 0$	$0.00287491 \pm 0.00437559$	[-0.00290352, 0.0131106]
		NLSA	-0.0373717 ± 0.0231368	[-0.0586981, 0]
		PN	-0.0318387 ± 0.0225525	[-0.0586009, 0]
	$i = 1$	Phong	0.0157366 ± 0.00930732	[0, 0.0233265]
		Nagata $\epsilon = 0$	$0.000301524 \pm 0.000336243$	[-7.21216e-5, 0.00125933]
		NLSA	$-0.00329917 \pm 0.00209737$	[-0.00633496, 0]
		PN	$-0.0028053 \pm 0.00203187$	[-0.00632477, 0]
	$i = 2$	Phong	$0.00503575 \pm 0.00300305$	[-5.96046e-8, 0.00815177]
		Nagata $\epsilon = 0$	$2.07119e-5 \pm 2.18946e-5$	[-1.13249e-6, 8.9407e-5]
		NLSA	$-0.000225536 \pm 0.000143714$	[-0.000468373, 0]
		PN	$-0.000191595 \pm 0.000139045$	[-0.000467658, 0]
$i = 3$	Phong	$0.00133509 \pm 0.000797624$	[-5.96046e-8, 0.00221264]	
	Nagata $\epsilon = 0$	$1.29748e-6 \pm 1.37613e-6$	[-1.78814e-7, 5.84126e-6]	
	NLSA	$-1.44418e-5 \pm 9.19883e-6$	[-3.06964e-5, 0]	
	PN	$-1.22342e-5 \pm 8.88072e-6$	[-3.05772e-5, 0]	
Torus	$j = 5$	Phong	$-0.000754569 \pm 0.0315128$	[-0.111965, 0.0630175]
		Nagata $\epsilon = 0$	$0.000922857 \pm 0.0386565$	[-0.112992, 0.0931029]
		NLSA	-0.0252151 ± 0.0498816	[-0.195886, 0.0383056]
		PN	-0.0210668 ± 0.0457862	[-0.195886, 0.0467965]
	$j = 10$	Phong	$0.00783327 \pm 0.00929549$	[-0.00958499, 0.0287549]
		Nagata $\epsilon = 0$	$9.40043e-5 \pm 0.00211594$	[-0.00666818, 0.00601918]
		NLSA	$-0.00217635 \pm 0.0041617$	[-0.0149165, 0.00385857]
		PN	$-0.00181822 \pm 0.00374165$	[-0.0147308, 0.00398123]
	$j = 15$	Phong	$0.00440836 \pm 0.00541819$	[-0.00492978, 0.0166597]
		Nagata $\epsilon = 0$	$1.57127e-5 \pm 0.000580865$	[-0.00252217, 0.00191915]
		NLSA	$-0.000451227 \pm 0.000939187$	[-0.00340354, 0.00134289]
		PN	$-0.000376097 \pm 0.000814623$	[-0.00340357, 0.00117016]
$j = 17$	Phong	$0.00356666 \pm 0.00441199$	[-0.00393245, 0.0138325]	
	Nagata $\epsilon = 0$	$2.97925e-5 \pm 0.00039676$	[-0.00130969, 0.00172943]	
	NLSA	$-0.000275727 \pm 0.000596803$	[-0.00208876, 0.000976563]	
	PN	$-0.000229708 \pm 0.000509889$	[-0.00208879, 0.000768423]	
$j = 19$	Phong	$0.00293179 \pm 0.00364289$	[-0.0032014, 0.0115674]	
	Nagata $\epsilon = 0$	$6.28688e-6 \pm 0.000270014$	[-0.00122377, 0.000931621]	
	NLSA	$-0.000177753 \pm 0.0004006$	[-0.00135079, 0.000708401]	
	PN	$-0.000148038 \pm 0.000337174$	[-0.0013507, 0.000557363]	

Table 3: Statistics of signed distances to sphere and torus surfaces: mean distance with standard deviation (defined as $\sqrt{\frac{1}{n-1} \sum_{k=1}^n (x_k - \bar{x})^2}$, x_k being the distance values) and minimum and maximum distance.

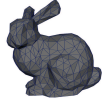




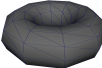
Name	#V/#E/#T	Mean Angle Normals \pm std dev	Min,Max Angle Normals	#E convex/concave/inflection
 Bunny	502/1500/1000	0.911775 \pm 0.11007	[0.00118579, 0.999985]	556/71/873
 Monsterfrog	1308/3876/2584	0.867032 \pm 0.131679	[-0.263223, 0.999968]	1602/233/2040
 Vase	241/690/460	0.91861 \pm 0.0825731	0.428546, 0.999982]	122/115/452
 Rounded Cube	30/84/56	0.812907 \pm 0.136409	[0.688079, 1]	44/0/40
 Sphere $r = 1.0$	162/480/320	0.98479 \pm 0.00113563	[0.982247, 0.985606]	320/0/160
 Torus $r_1 = 1.0$ $r_2 = 0.5$	100/300/200	0.927627 \pm 0.0169889	[0.901404, 0.951429]	135/25/140

Table 4: Statistics of triangle meshes: number of vertices/edges/triangles, angle cosine between vertex and triangle normals (mean \pm standard deviation, minimum and maximum), number of convex, concave, inflection edges.

Analysing these statistics we found that the mean and maximum values of curvature for NLSA triangles are always smaller in the absolute value than the respective mean and maximum values for Phong Tessellation, meaning that the shape parameter, in a certain sense, controls also the curvature of the constructed surface. Further, NLSA triangles have the lowest standard deviation values of all the methods, meaning that the curvature is in general nearby the average value and few points have strongly deviating curvatures. Finally, in all the models there is a remarkable difference between the minimum and maximum value of the curvature for Nagata triangles, confirming that the stability problem deeply affects the resulting overall surface shape.

Additionally, in Table 6 we computed the angle cosine of the two normals in the same point of the edge between two adjacent patches. Although the C^0 patch construction does not guarantee G^1 continuity, this can be approximately the case, indicated by a mean value close to 1. It can be seen in a certain sense as a measure of “how far the patches are from having G^1 continuity”. The average cosine angle is computed by sampling 20 points along each edge.

In general, for all our examples, PN triangles give the best continuity, in the sense that the mean angle cosine between the normals is the nearest to 1 with the least standard deviations (except for the sphere). For the Bunny, Monsterfrog, Vase and RoundedCube models, in terms of G^1 continuity performance, PN triangles perform best, followed by Phong tessellation (rank 2), and NLSA triangles (rank 3). For these models Nagata triangles turn out to be the worst, due to the use of the threshold ϵ to control the stability problem which produces linear edges reducing considerably the mean values of the cosine. But Nagata triangles are nearly optimal in the sphere and torus, confirming the results obtained in section 3.2. Looking at minimum and maximum values for these angles, note that almost in all situations there exist points in which adjacent patches have the same normals ($\cos = 1$), but also that there are unwanted situations, especially in Bunny, Monsterfrog and RoudedCube, where there are points in which the angles between the normals are π ($\cos = -1$ or nearby), meaning that there are points in which the two normals are parallel but pointing in opposite directions.

In the following we analyse each model in detail. The Bunny mesh is of moderate size (1000 triangles) with no degenerate normals, *i.e.*, all normals point into the positive halfspace defined by the triangle. It has a large fraction of inflection edges (58%), which results in patches of high curvature magnitude for the PN patches. For Nagata triangles a fairly large value

Name	Mean Gaussian Curv \pm std dev	Min,Max Gaussian Curv
Bunny Phong	-276.54 ± 7782.39	$[-962065.0, 57399.7]$
Bunny Nagata $\epsilon = 0.03$	$-23256.3 \pm 2.4e+6$	$[-9.0e+8, 2.4e+8]$
Bunny NLSA	-28.1 ± 2709.6	$[-50854.5, 28265.6]$
Bunny PN	-383.9 ± 7981.8	$[-348286.0, 412429.0]$
Monsterfrog Phong	0.177 ± 3.8	$[-516.303, 186.17]$
Monsterfrog Nagata $\epsilon = 0.01$	-2.974 ± 412.0	$[-174208, 48027.7]$
Monsterfrog NLSA	0.109 ± 1.8	$[-174.445, 90.0984]$
Monsterfrog PN	0.141 ± 13.9	$[-496.404, 8768.75]$
Vase Phong	-0.00171 ± 0.0132	$[-0.350, 0.024]$
Vase Nagata $\epsilon = 0.06$	-0.02402 ± 0.7317	$[-94.715, 0.012]$
Vase NLSA	-0.00053 ± 0.0052	$[-0.049, 0.011]$
Vase PN	-0.00161 ± 0.0237	$[-0.380, 0.547]$
RoundedCube Phong	1.235 ± 0.690	$[0.123, 2.538]$
RoundedCube Nagata $\epsilon = 0$	-1.766 ± 4.84	$[-27.775, 1.653]$
RoundedCube NLSA	0.550 ± 0.314	$[0.091, 1.239]$
RoundedCube PN	0.468 ± 0.938	$[-1.093, 4.351]$
Sphere Phong	2.032 ± 0.046	$[1.847, 2.097]$
Sphere Nagata $\epsilon = 0$	0.972 ± 0.010	$[0.933, 0.985]$
Sphere NLSA	0.930 ± 0.010	$[0.887, 0.945]$
Sphere PN	0.950 ± 0.029	$[0.900, 1.047]$
Torus Phong	-1.503 ± 3.310	$[-9.476, 1.978]$
Torus Nagata $\epsilon = 0$	-0.412 ± 3.483	$[-4.027, 92.277]$
Torus NLSA	-0.672 ± 1.544	$[-3.901, 0.978]$
Torus PN	-0.638 ± 1.610	$[-5.612, 2.894]$

Table 5: Statistics on Gaussian curvature. The mean value for Gaussian curvature (mean \pm standard deviation) and the minimum and maximum value measured from the surfaces.

$\epsilon = 0.03$ has to be used, but still the resulting patches are exaggeratedly curved. Looking at the shaded images in the first row in Figure 12, no significant differences can be noticed between the four methods, but the highlight line plots in the second row confirm that PN triangles have less discontinuous normals. The Gaussian curvature plots in the third row, instead, show that, due to inflections introduced by the cubic patches on the inflection edges, the PN triangles curvature changes sign much more often than that of the three quadratic schemes, which therefore, have bigger regions of positive and negative curvature.

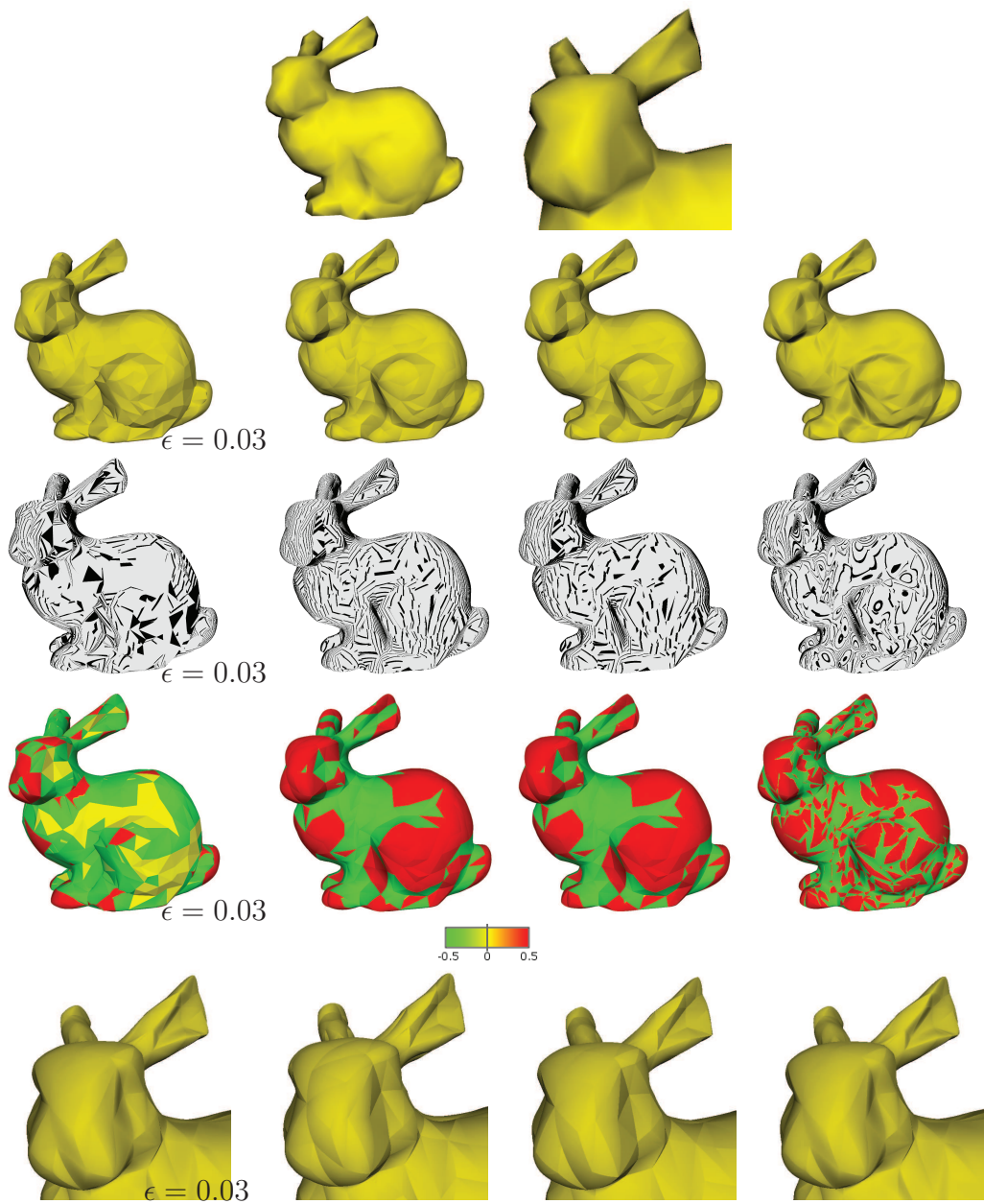


Figure 12: Bunny in columns from left to right: Nagata, Phong, NLSA, PN triangles. First row: shaded planar mesh; second row: shaded surfaces; third row: highlight lines; fourth row: Gaussian curvature; fifth row: close-ups on silhouettes.

Name	Mean Angle Normals \pm std dev	Min,Max Angle Normals
Bunny Phong	0.959583 ± 0.0759962	$[-0.474661, 1]$
Bunny Nagata $\epsilon = 0.03$	0.813598 ± 0.470506	$[-1, 1]$
Bunny NLSA	0.949725 ± 0.0989627	$[0.0668511, 1]$
Bunny PN	0.983522 ± 0.0454926	$[0.0154815, 1]$
Monsterfrog Phong	0.949468 ± 0.128726	$[-0.999867, 1]$
Monsterfrog Nagata $\epsilon = 0.01$	0.822587 ± 0.950974	$[-1, 1]$
Monsterfrog NLSA	0.934331 ± 0.149359	$[-0.999826, 1]$
Monsterfrog PN	0.971483 ± 0.102529	$[-1, 1]$
Vase Phong	0.944903 ± 0.114099	$[0.0978981, 1]$
Vase Nagata $\epsilon = 0.06$	0.796925 ± 0.44401	$[-0.999999, 1]$
Vase NLSA	0.936506 ± 0.143869	$[-0.0187727, 1]$
Vase PN	0.987425 ± 0.0318718	$[0.684518, 1]$
RoundedCube Phong	0.938795 ± 0.0550764	$[0.796848, 0.980378]$
RoundedCube Nagata $\epsilon = 0$	0.67767 ± 0.457164	$[-1, 1]$
RoundedCube NLSA	0.880881 ± 0.153709	$[0.525784, 0.987624]$
RoundedCube PN	0.976669 ± 0.0390528	$[0.843874, 1]$
Sphere Phong	0.997072 ± 0.000765733	$[0.995723, 0.99874]$
Sphere Nagata $\epsilon = 0$	$0.999996 \pm 3.27602e-6$	$[0.999988, 1]$
Sphere NLSA	$0.999979 \pm 9.69038e-6$	$[0.999958, 1]$
Sphere PN	$0.999991 \pm 6.6563e-6$	$[0.999975, 1]$
Torus Phong	0.987918 ± 0.0157815	$[0.915295, 0.999999]$
Torus Nagata $\epsilon = 0$	0.997556 ± 0.0086036	$[0.938828, 1]$
Torus NLSA	0.994738 ± 0.0067909	$[0.969450, 1]$
Torus PN	0.998873 ± 0.0018468	$[0.989164, 1]$

Table 6: Statistics on the mean of angle cosines between normals of adjacent patches (mean \pm standard deviation), and the minimum and the maximum angle cosine.

The Monsterfrog mesh is of larger size (2584 triangles) with a fraction of 52% inflection edges. Unlike the Bunny mesh, there are some degenerate normals at the frog’s teeth and in the tail. It is actually in these locations that the tangent-plane continuity is violated the most, see Table 6.

On this fine base mesh, the difference between all the schemes gets smaller with the exception of Nagata triangles, which need to cope with the stability problems elucidated above in section 2.3.

The Vase model in Figure 14 is a modified cylinder, where the circle is deformed into a star shape in the lower part. The original quadrangle mesh

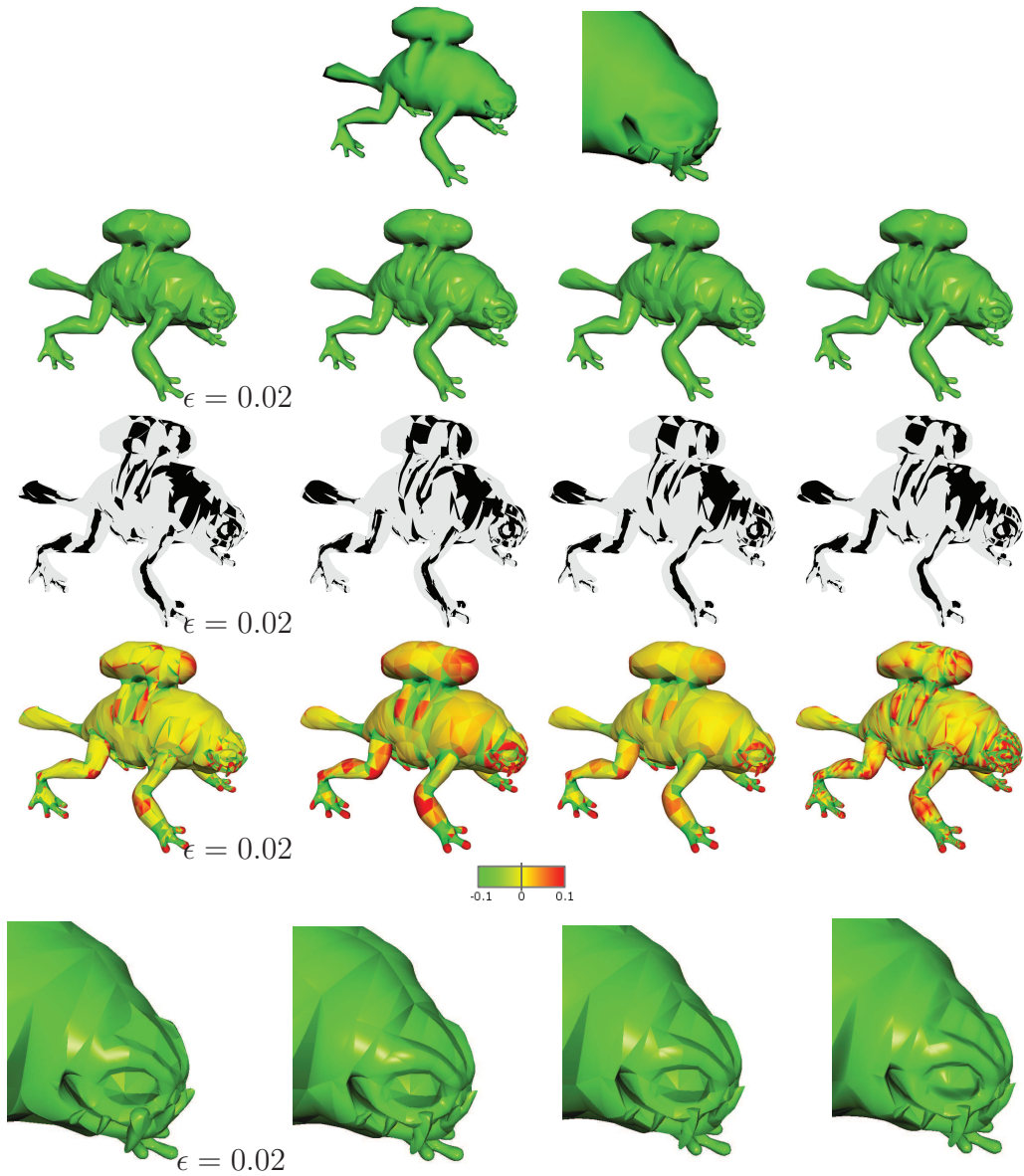


Figure 13: Monsterfrog in columns from left to right: Nagata, Phong, NLSA, PN triangles. First row: shaded planar mesh; second row: shaded surfaces; third row: highlight lines; fourth row: Gaussian curvature; fifth row: close-ups on silhouettes.

was triangulated by introducing one of the diagonals. For this special configuration, all of the degree-2 schemes generate fairly planar patches. Nagata triangles require the largest threshold $\epsilon = 0.06$ among all the models considered. PN triangles generate typical curvature patterns for the two triangles adjacent to the diagonal edge: one has positive and the other one has negative Gaussian curvature in vicinity of the edge. In Figure 15, we have reproduced the different behaviors in the vicinity of a diagonal curve depending on the normals configuration. A characterization of the qualitative shape of a planar cubic Bézier curve is described in [23, 24]. Following this characterization, only the cases 1. (no inflection point) and 3. (one inflection point) can occur for PN triangles due to the way the edge control points are constructed by the projection of interior points $\bar{\mathbf{b}}_{210} = (2\mathbf{p}_0 + \mathbf{p}_1)/3$ and $\bar{\mathbf{b}}_{120} = (\mathbf{p}_0 + 2\mathbf{p}_1)/3$ into the tangent planes. When PN triangles have to deal with configurations like in Figure 15 left or center, they can produce artifacts or undulations due to these inflections. For these configurations a solution could be the use of PN-quads [25], although switching of triangles to quads is computationally not very convenient and advantageous.

Finally, the RoundedCube mesh has 56 triangles of large size, which also results in patches of large size. The cube corners are cut and the remaining faces are triangulated into a fan with respect to an added center vertex. For this highly symmetric base mesh the differences between the surfaces constructed by the four schemes are clearly visible in Figure 16. The PN triangles reproduce the tangent planes and also give good approximate tangent-plane continuity along the triangle edges. NLSA and Phong triangles are not enough curved and do not reproduce the tangent planes, which is evident on this mesh. Nagata triangles, on the contrary, reproduce exactly all the tangent planes in the corners but connect patches with curvature of different sign. The corner caps have positive Gaussian curvature, the others have negative Gaussian curvature, which results in a bad approximate tangent-plane continuity along edges.

Looking at the silhouette close ups of the above four models we observe the following behaviour: Nagata triangles yields the bumpiest silhouette, Phong and NLSA triangles exhibit small artifacts (where NLSA seems to be slightly smoother) and PN triangles have the smoothest silhouette.

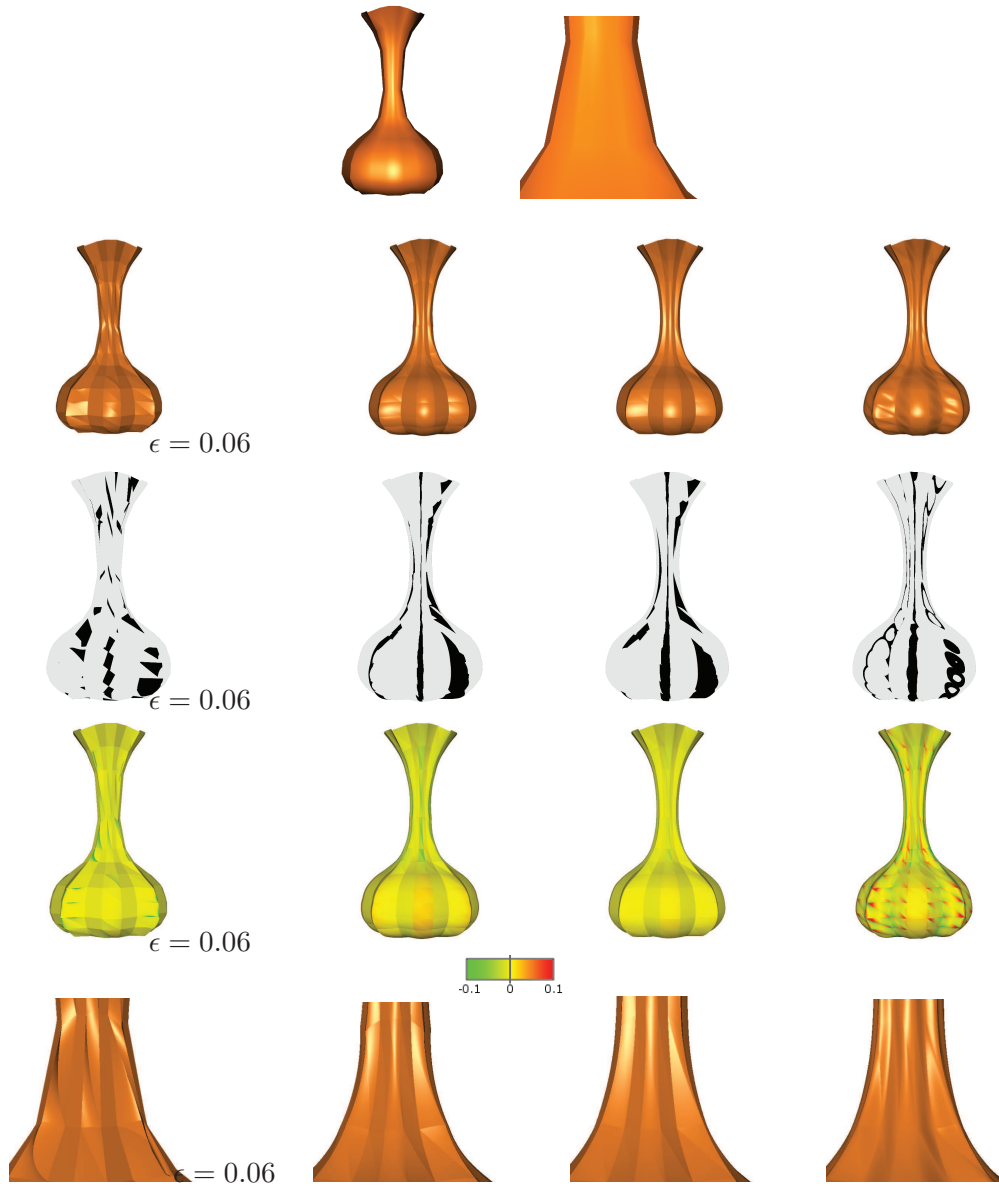


Figure 14: Vase in columns from left to right: Nagata, Phong, NLSA, PN triangles. First row: shaded planar mesh; second row: shaded surfaces; third row: highlight lines; fourth row: Gaussian curvature; fifth row: close-ups on silhouettes.

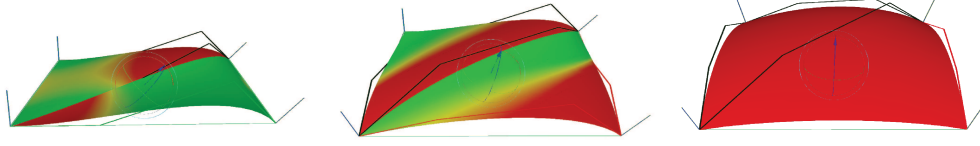


Figure 15: Different behaviors in the vicinity of a diagonal curve depending on the normals configuration for PN triangles. Left: the diagonal has an inflection. Center and Right: two different configurations with a convex diagonal curve, but only the patches on the right are convex.

4. Separate normal interpolation patch

It is evident from the examples in the last section that C^0 continuity is not enough for providing the desired smooth appearance in applications.

Thus, as solution, an independent normal patch (usually linear or quadratic) has been proposed together with the surface to improve the surface visualization as a sort of normal smoothing. Using these normals in the shading process, the surface appearance gives us the impression that it is smoother because curvature discontinuities are alleviated. We point out that in this way the surface is simply enhanced in its visualization and not at all smoothed in its geometry.

When an independent *linear normal variation patch* is used in a shading process, the value of the normal at the parameter point (u, v, w) is simply computed as the normalized average of the normal values at the vertices of the triangle:

$$\mathbf{n}(u, v, w) = \frac{u\mathbf{n}_0 + v\mathbf{n}_1 + w\mathbf{n}_2}{\|u\mathbf{n}_0 + v\mathbf{n}_1 + w\mathbf{n}_2\|}.$$

One problem with linearly varying normals, is that such a patch ignores inflections in the geometry, as illustrated for instance in Figure 17 (bottom-left). More details can be found in [21].

As a solution to this problem the option of a *quadratic normal variation patch* is proposed by the authors of PN triangles [11] who took the idea from [21]. A quadratic function $\mathbf{n}(u, v, w)$ is used to compute normals at the evaluation points (u, v, w) :

$$\mathbf{n}(u, v, w) = \sum_{i+j+k=2} \mathbf{n}_{ijk} u^i v^j w^k, \quad w = 1 - u - v, \quad u, v, w \geq 0.$$

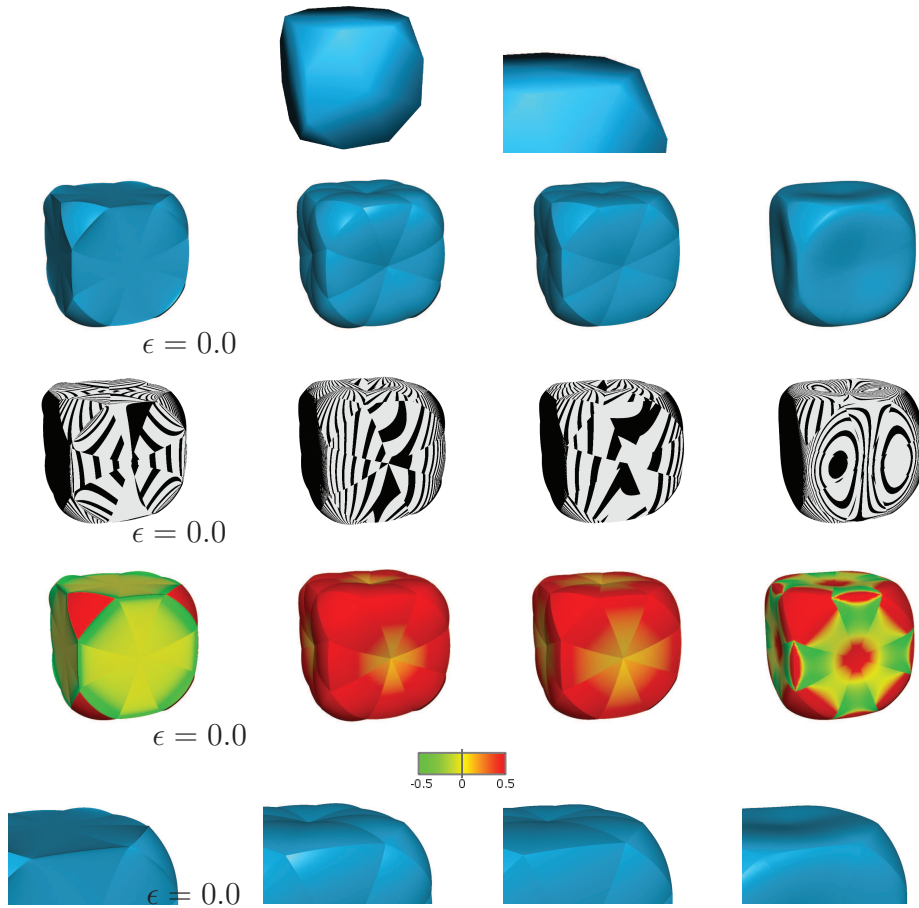


Figure 16: RoundedCube in columns from left to right: Nagata, Phong, NLSA, PN triangles. First row: shaded planar mesh; second row: shaded surfaces; third row: highlight lines; fourth row: Gaussian curvature; fifth row: close-ups on silhouettes.

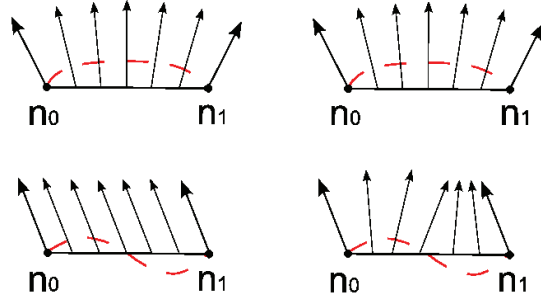


Figure 17: Comparison between the configurations obtained from a linear and a quadratic normal variation patch in two different cases. The dashed curve indicates the profile of the surface that should be simulated. Left: linearly varying normals. Right: quadratically varying normals.

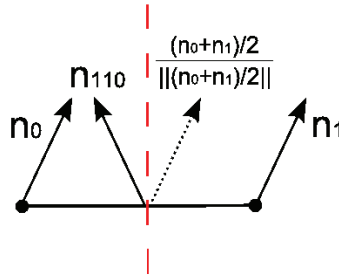


Figure 18: Construction of the mid-edge normal coefficient \mathbf{n}_{110} for quadratically varying normals: the average of the end-normals is reflected across the plane perpendicular to the edge.

The values of $\mathbf{n}(u, v, w)$ are then normalized and passed on to the shading process. The choice of the mid-control normal from [11] is sketched in Figure 18.

In Figure 19 the four schemes are compared using three different normal patches in the shading process. Also the Walton and Meek G^1 scheme [10] is included for a deeper comparison confirming the competitiveness of the C^0 methods.

In the first row analytic normals are used, directly computed from the patch as

$$\mathbf{n}(u, v) = \frac{\frac{\partial \mathbf{s}}{\partial u}(u, v) \times \frac{\partial \mathbf{s}}{\partial v}(u, v)}{\left\| \frac{\partial \mathbf{s}}{\partial u}(u, v) \times \frac{\partial \mathbf{s}}{\partial v}(u, v) \right\|}.$$

In this case we can analyse the real surface geometry as in the models of the last section. The second and third row show the difference between linear and quadratic normals, which give the impression of higher continuity in the interior. Here the visual appearance of all the schemes is very similar and differences in the geometry are only visible at the silhouette. Linear normal patches result in more flat-appearing surfaces. For instance, compare the transition from the mouth region towards the rest of the model.

Figure 20 shows close-ups on silhouettes from models in Figures 12, 13, 14 and 16 by using quadratic normal interpolation. Even if slightly attenuated, the silhouette close-ups in Figures 19 and 20 confirm the observations of subsection 3.3.

5. Conclusions

In this paper we made a comparison of local parametric C^0 curved shape schemes, based on a reformulation of their original constructions in terms of polynomial Bézier triangles. The main emphasis of this comparison is to look at the surface quality of the different schemes available. Related techniques to improve the surface quality or the silhouette only (as the one in [26]) were not taken into account, except for the use of a separated normal interpolation patch briefly treated in section 4. The comparison comprises four different schemes based on Bézier triangles: PN triangles that are of degree 3; Phong triangles, NLSA triangles and Nagata triangles, all of degree 2.

Our reformulation in terms of triangular Bézier patches allows a geometric interpretation of the control points defining the patches. In particular, for Nagata triangles our geometric interpretation gives a very clear explanation of the stability problem explained in section 2.3. Moreover, we found that a NLSA triangles patch is equal to a Phong tessellation patch with $\alpha = \frac{1}{2}$ and this result leads to two important observations. The first is that the Phong tessellation patch with $\alpha = \frac{1}{2}$ minimizes the near least square acceleration. This non-obvious result is readily seen from the NLSA triangles construction. The second observation is related to computational costs. The cost of the construction of NLSA triangles can be highly reduced by computing it using the Phong tessellation method.

In fact, Phong tessellation is the least expensive in terms of computational costs, and PN triangles are more expensive in the time required for the tessellation both on the CPU and GPU due to their higher degree. In particular, for instanced tessellation on the GPU, the schemes with small



Figure 19: A triangular head model rendered with different schemes and normals: (a) Nagata triangles ($\epsilon = 0.04$), (b) Phong tessellation, (c) NLSA triangles, (d) PN triangles and (e) Walton-Meek triangles. First row: Analytic normals. Second row: Linear normals. Third row: Quadratic normals. Fourth row: Side view with quadratic normals.

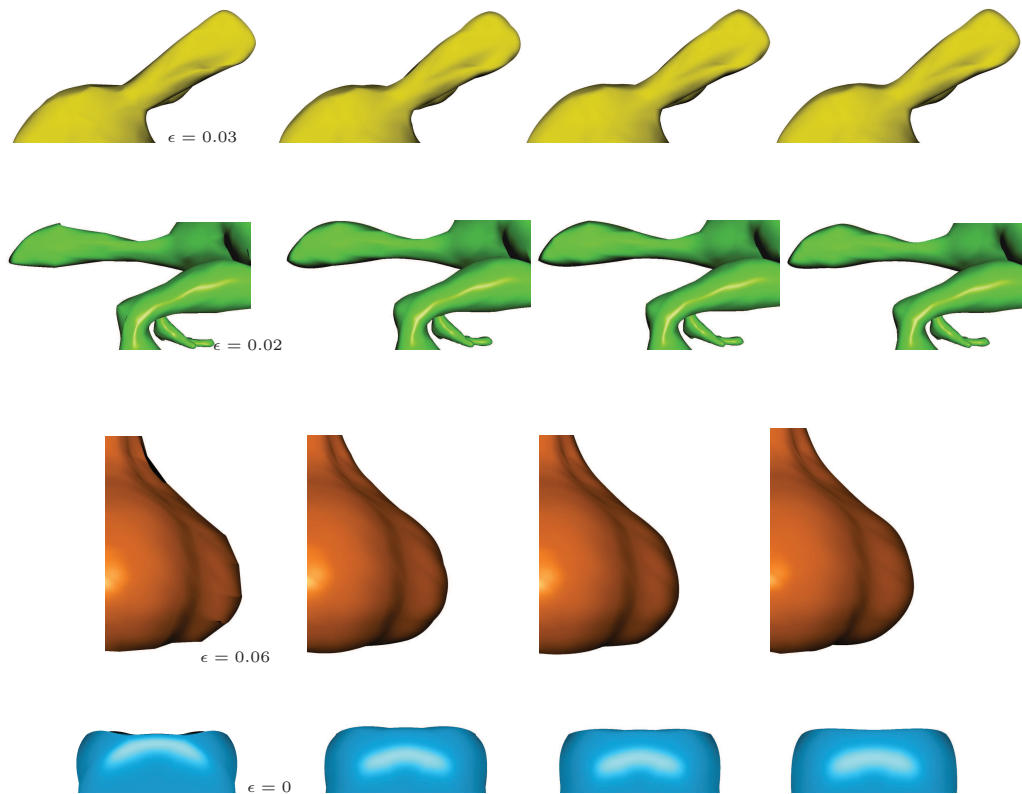


Figure 20: Silhouettes close-ups in columns from left to right: Nagata, Phong, NLSA, PN triangles with quadratic normal interpolation. First row: close-ups from Figure 12; second row: close-ups from Figure 13; third row: close-ups from Figure 14; fourth row: close-ups from Figure 16.

total costs (Phong tessellation and Nagata triangles) are advantageous. PN triangles and NLSA triangles are the slowest.

From the geometric analysis we made, it also follows that PN triangles and Nagata triangles are the only two schemes that exactly reproduce the tangent planes given by the normals in input. This is an advantage in the approximation behaviour of these two schemes with respect to a known surface, like the sphere and the torus treated in section 3.2. Nagata has in general the best approximation behaviour, followed by PN triangles and NLSA triangles methods which behave similarly, whereas Phong tessellation has the worst approximation behaviour.

We have performed a wide range of experiments and statistics involving

meshes with a low triangle count. Analysis on the Gaussian curvature values helped to investigate regularity of the surfaces in detail. By comparing curvature values for NLSA triangles and Phong tessellation we found that the shape parameter, in a certain sense, controls the curvature of the constructed surface. Moreover, we had a confirmation that the stability problem in Nagata triangles deeply affects the resulting overall surface shape.

For real-world models the differences in terms of approximate G^1 continuity between all the schemes are quite small, but our results permit the following classification: PN triangles have the smallest angles of adjacent tangent-planes along edges to neighbours, followed by Phong tessellation and NLSA triangles methods. Nagata's method suffers from stability problems and performs worst for these real word examples. But for known analytic surfaces, such as the sphere and the torus, Nagata outperforms the other methods confirming its best approximation behaviour.

Regarding the silhouette we observed that PN triangles yield the smoothest one followed by NLSA and Phong triangles (in this order) which exhibit small artifacts, and Nagata triangles perform worst.

Based on the above comparison results a user thus has the means of deciding which method best suites his/her specific application, in terms of criteria such as computational cost, analytic surface reproduction, Gaussian curvature behaviour and approximate G^1 continuity.

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