

An Implementation of Interior-Point Methods Based on Kernel Functions for Linear Optimization

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Abstract

In this paper we present the theory and practical aspects of implementing the path following interior point methods for linear optimization, based on kernel functions. We investigate the influence of the choice of kernel functions on the computational behavior of the generic primal-dual algorithm for Linear Optimization. We find that the finite kernel function gives the best results for more than 50 % of the tested problems compared to the standard log-barrier method.

Keywords: Kernel function, Interior-point Algorithm, Large-update, Iteration number.

AMS Subject Classification: 90C51 90C05

1 Introduction

The study of Interior-Point Methods (IPMs) is currently one of the most active research areas in optimization. The name “interior-point methods” has originated from the fact that the points generated by the algorithms all lie in the interior of the feasible region. This is in contrast with the famous and well-established simplex method where the iterates move along the boundary of the feasible region from one extreme point to another. Nowadays, IPMs provide a powerful tool for solving Linear Optimization (LO) problems. They become an alternative to the simplex based methods and are particularly useful in applications where the size of the problem is very large.

Most IPMs can be categorized into two classes: large-update and small update IPMs depending on the strategy used in the algorithm to update the parameter with respect to the duality gap. It has been proven that the small-update IPMs has the best known worst-case complexity result $O(\sqrt{n} \log \frac{n}{\epsilon})$, where n is the size of the problem and ϵ is the accuracy. However, large-update IPMs perform much better in practice with a best known worst-case complexity $O(\sqrt{n} \log n \log \frac{n}{\epsilon})$.

The aim of this paper is to explore the use of path-following IPM algorithms based on kernel functions in practise. For this purpose we developed in MATLAB a practical variant of an IPM solver for LO problems so-called LP-IPM. We will solve by LP-IPM solver various LO problems from Netlib library testing problems [7] that has become the standard benchmark for testing and comparing LO algorithms. The results from our

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experiments with LP-IPM demonstrate that path-following algorithms are not only of theoretical interest but also can be effective IPM based software solution for LO.

The paper is organized as follows. In Section 2 we start introducing linear optimization problem and its transformation to self dual problem. In Section 3 where we discuss the classical search direction and the new search direction based on kernel functions. Numerical results are given in Section 4. In the final section we conclude with some remarks.

We use the following notational conventions. Throughout the paper, $\|\cdot\|$ denotes the 2-norm of a vector. The nonnegative orthant and positive orthant are denoted as \mathbf{R}_+^n and \mathbf{R}_{++}^n , respectively. Finally, if $z \in \mathbf{R}_+^n$ and $f : \mathbf{R}_+ \rightarrow \mathbf{R}_+$, then $f(z)$ denotes the vector in \mathbf{R}_+^n whose i -th component is $f(z_i)$, with $1 \leq i \leq n$.

2 Linear Optimization Problems

In this paper we consider the following *canonical linear* optimization problem:

$$\begin{aligned} \min \quad & c^T x \\ \text{s.t.} \quad & Ax \geq b, \\ & 0 \leq x_i \leq u_i, \quad i \in \mathcal{I}, \\ & 0 \leq x_j, \quad j \in \mathcal{J}, \end{aligned}$$

where $A \in \mathbf{R}^{m \times n}$ is a real $m \times n$ matrix of rank m , $x, c \in \mathbf{R}^n$, $b \in \mathbf{R}^m$, $u_i \in \mathbf{R}$, with \mathcal{I} and \mathcal{J} index sets such that $\mathcal{I} \cup \mathcal{J} = \{1, 2, \dots, n\}$ and $\mathcal{I} \cap \mathcal{J} = \emptyset$.

Without loss of generality the last two inequalities can be written as

$$\bar{F}x \leq u, \quad x \geq 0, \quad \bar{F} \in \mathbf{R}^{m_f \times n},$$

where $m_f = |\mathcal{I}|$, the rows of \bar{F} are unit vectors and $u = (u_1, u_2, \dots, u_{m_f})^T$. Let $F := -\bar{F}$ and $b_u := -u$, then the above problem can be written as:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{(P)} \quad \min \quad & c^T x \\ \text{s.t.} \quad & Ax \geq b, \\ & Fx \geq b_u \\ & x \geq 0, \end{aligned}$$

the dual problem of (P) is given by

$$\begin{aligned} \text{(D)} \quad \max \quad & b^T y - b_u^T y_u \\ \text{s.t.} \quad & A^T y - F^T y_u \leq c, \\ & y, y_u \geq 0. \end{aligned}$$

For solving (P) and (D), we use the *self-dual embedding* model [14]. We transfer the original problems to a slightly larger LO problem, called augmented problem that always has an optimal solution. The optimal solution of the augmented problem either proves that the original problem does not have an optimal solution or it exists and easily can be converted to an optimal solution of (P) and (D). The embedding problem can be formulated as follows. Let $x^0 \in \mathbf{R}_{++}^n$, $y^0 \in \mathbf{R}_{++}^m$, $y_u^0 \in \mathbf{R}_{++}^{m_f}$ and $k^0, \nu^0 \in \mathbf{R}_{++}$ be the given initial interior solution. Define $r_u \in \mathbf{R}^{m_f}$, $r_p \in \mathbf{R}^m$, $r_d \in \mathbf{R}^n$ to be the errors at this initial interior solution, and $r_g, \beta \in \mathbf{R}$, $\bar{n} \in \mathbf{R}_{++}$ be parameters defined as follows

$$\begin{aligned}
r_u &= y_u^0 + Fx^0 - b_u, \\
r_p &= y^0 - Ax^0 + b, \\
r_d &= x^0 - F^T x^0 + A^T y^0 - c, \\
\beta &= 1 + b_u^T y_u^0 - b^T y^0 + c^T x^0, \\
\bar{n} &= m_f + m + n + 2.
\end{aligned}$$

The self-dual embedding model can be written as follows

$$\begin{aligned}
(SP_0) \quad & \min && \bar{n}\nu \\
& \text{s.t.} && -Fx + b_u k + r_u \nu \geq 0 \\
& && Ax - bk + r_p \nu \geq 0 \\
& && F^T y_u - A^T y + ck + r_d \nu \geq 0 \\
& && -b_u^T y_u + b^T y - c^T x + \beta \nu \geq 0 \\
& && -r_u^T y_u - r_p^T y - r_d^T x - \beta \geq \bar{n} \\
& && y_u \geq 0, \quad y \geq 0, \quad x \geq 0, \quad k \geq 0, \quad \nu \geq 0.
\end{aligned}$$

The first four constraints in (SP_0) , with $k = 1$ and $\nu = 0$, represent primal and dual feasibility with $y_u \geq 0$, $y \geq 0$, $x \geq 0$ and reversed weak duality inequality associated with (P) and (D) . A normalizing variable ν is added to achieve feasibility of the initial point (x^0, y^0, y_u^0) and the fifth constraint is added to ensure self-duality. Let M , z and q be defined as follows

$$M := \begin{bmatrix} 0_{m_f \times m_f} & 0_{m_f \times m} & -F & b_u & r_u \\ 0_{m \times m_f} & 0_{m \times m} & A & -b & r_p \\ F^T & -A^T & 0_{n \times n} & c & r_d \\ -b_u^T & b^T & -c^T & 0 & \beta \\ -r_u^T & -r_p^T & -r_d^T & \beta & 0 \end{bmatrix}, \quad z := \begin{bmatrix} y_u \\ y \\ x \\ k \\ \nu \end{bmatrix}, \quad q := \begin{bmatrix} 0_{m_f} \\ 0_m \\ 0_n \\ 0 \\ \bar{n} \end{bmatrix}. \quad (1)$$

Then (SP_0) can be written as follows

$$(SP) \quad \min \{q^T z : Mz \geq -q, z \geq 0\},$$

where $M \in \mathbf{R}^{\bar{n} \times \bar{n}}$ is a skew-symmetric ($M^T = -M$) and (SP) is a self-dual LO problem. We associate to any vector $z \in \mathbf{R}^{\bar{n}}$ its *slack vector* $s(z)$ as follows $s(z) := Mz + q$. Then z is feasible for (SP) if and only if $z \geq 0$ and $s(z) \geq 0$.

Solving (SP) is equivalent to solve the following system:

$$\begin{aligned}
Mz + q &= s(z), \\
zs(z) &= 0
\end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

where $zs(z)$ denotes the coordinatewise product of the vectors z and $s(z)$, i.e.

$$zs(z) = [z_1 s(z)_1; z_2 s(z)_2; \dots; z_n s(z)_n].$$

We shall also use the notation

$$\frac{z}{s(z)} = \left[\frac{z_1}{s(z)_1}, \frac{z_2}{s(z)_2}, \dots, \frac{z_n}{s(z)_n} \right],$$

for $z, s(z) \in \mathbf{R}^n$ such that $s(z)_i \neq 0$, $i = 1, 2, \dots, n$.

3 IPM for the Self-dual Model

Classical Search Direction

The basic idea underlying IPMs is to replace the second equation in (2) by the nonlinear equation $zs = \mu\mathbf{1}$, with parameter $\mu > 0$, $s = s(z)$ and $\mathbf{1}$ denoting the all-one vector $(1, 1, \dots, 1)^T$. The system (2) becomes:

$$\begin{aligned} Mz + q &= s, \quad z \geq 0, s \geq 0, \\ zs &= \mu\mathbf{1}. \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

We assume that there exist (z^0, s^0) such that [14],

$$Mz^0 + q = s^0, \quad z^0 > 0, \quad s^0 > 0. \quad (4)$$

which is known as the *interior-point condition (IPC)* [14].

Without loss of generality we may assume that $z^0 = \mathbf{1}$. Then its slack vector $s^0 = s(z^0) = \mathbf{1}$. Observe that these z^0 and s^0 solve (3) when $\mu = 1$. If the *IPC* holds, the parameterized system (3) has a unique solution $z(\mu)$ for each $\mu > 0$; $z(\mu)$ is called the μ -center of (SP) . The set of μ -centers (with $\mu > 0$) defines a homotopic path, which is called *the central path* of (SP) . If $\mu \rightarrow 0$ then the limit of the central path exists. This limit satisfies the complementarity condition, and hence yields optimal solutions for (SP) [14]. IPMs follow the central path approximately. Let us briefly indicate how this works. at the start of our algorithm let $\mu = 1$, with $z(1) = s(1) = \mathbf{1}$. We then decrease μ to $\mu_+ := (1 - \theta)\mu$, for some $\theta \in (0, 1)$ and apply Newton's method to iteratively solve the non-linear equations (2), so for each step we have to solve for Δz and Δs in the following Newton system

$$\begin{aligned} M\Delta z - \Delta s &= 0, \\ s\Delta z + z\Delta s &= \mu\mathbf{1} - zs. \end{aligned} \quad (5)$$

From the assumption that A has full rank, M has full row rank, the system (5) uniquely defines a search direction $(\Delta z, \Delta s)$ for any $z > 0$ and $s(z) > 0$; this is the so-called Newton direction and this direction is used in all existing implementations of the primal-dual method. The first equation in (5) take care of the feasibility after a step along the Newton direction, whereas the second equation serves to drive the new iterates to the μ -centers. The second equation is called the *centering equation*. By taking a step along the search direction, with the step size defined by a line search rule, one constructs a new double $(z, s(z))$, with $z > 0$ and $s(z) > 0$. If necessary, we repeat the procedure until we find iterates that are close enough to $z(\mu)$. Then μ is again reduced by the factor $1 - \theta$ and we apply Newton's method targeting at the new μ -centers, and so on. This process is repeated until μ is small enough, say until $\bar{n}\mu \leq \epsilon$; at this stage we have found ϵ -solutions of the problem (SP) . Following the approach in [2, 14], we define the vector v by

$$v := \sqrt{\frac{zs}{\mu}}. \quad (6)$$

Note that the pair $(z, s(z))$ coincide with the μ -center $(z(\mu), s(z)(\mu))$ if and only if $v = \mathbf{1}$. Introducing the notations

$$\bar{M} := \mu D M D, \quad \text{where } D := \text{diag}(d), \quad d := \sqrt{\frac{z}{s}}, \quad (7)$$

and defining the *scaled search directions* d_z and d_s by

$$d_z := \frac{v\Delta z}{z}, \quad d_s := \frac{v\Delta s}{s}, \quad (8)$$

the system (5), can be rewritten as follows

$$\begin{aligned} \bar{M}d_z - d_s &= 0, \\ d_z + d_s &= v^{-1} - v. \end{aligned} \quad (9)$$

Note that d_z and d_s are orthogonal, because d_z belongs to the null space of the matrix \bar{M} and d_s to its row space. Hence $d_z = d_s = 0$ if and only if $v^{-1} - v = 0$, which is equivalent to $v = \mathbf{1}$. We conclude that $d_z = d_s = 0$ holds if and only if the pair $(z, s(z))$ coincides with the μ -center $(z(\mu), s(z)(\mu))$. The second equation in (9) is called the *scaled centering equation*. Note that the right-hand side $v^{-1} - v = -\nabla\Psi_c(v)$ where

$$\Psi_c(v) := \sum_{i=1}^n \left(\frac{v_i^2 - 1}{2} - \log v_i \right), \quad (10)$$

and the Hessian $\nabla^2\Psi_c(v) = \text{diag}(\mathbf{1} + v^{-2})$. Since $\nabla^2\Psi_c(v)$ is positive definite, then $\Psi_c(v)$ is strictly convex. Moreover, $\nabla\Psi_c(\mathbf{1}) = 0$, it follows that $\Psi_c(v)$ attains its minimal value at $v = \mathbf{1}$, with $\Psi_c(\mathbf{1}) = 0$. Thus it follows that $\Psi_c(v)$ is nonnegative and vanishes if and only if $v = \mathbf{1}$.

New Search Direction

Following the approach in [3, 4, 5, 13], we replace the scaled barrier function $\Psi_c(v)$ by a strictly convex function $\Psi(v)$, $v \in \mathbf{R}_{++}^{\bar{n}}$ such that $\Psi(v)$ is minimal at $v = \mathbf{1}$ and $\Psi(\mathbf{1}) = 0$. Thus the new scaled centering equation becomes

$$d_z + d_s = -\nabla\Psi(v). \quad (11)$$

Note that $d_z = 0$ and $d_s = 0$ if and only if $v = \mathbf{1}$. To simplify matters we restrict ourselves to the case where $\Psi(v)$ is separable with identical coordinate functions. We can write

$$\Psi(v) = \sum_{i=1}^{\bar{n}} \psi(v_i), \quad (12)$$

where $\psi(t) : \mathcal{D} \rightarrow \mathbf{R}_+$, with $\mathbf{R}_{++} \subseteq \mathcal{D}$, is strictly convex and minimal at $t = 1$, with $\psi(1) = 0$. In the present context we call the univariate function $\psi(t)$ the *kernel function* of the barrier function $\Psi(v)$. We will always assume that the kernel function is twice differentiable. As examples of kernel functions we give in Table 1 ten different kernel function that we will use for our numerical test in the next section. When there are parameters involved in the definition of a kernel function we used the parameters $p \in [0, 1]$, $q \leq 1$, and $\sigma \geq 1$. Observe that $\psi_1(t)$, is the kernel function yielding the Newton direction, as defined by (9). In this general framework we call $\Psi(v)$ a *scaled barrier function*.

$$\Psi(v) = \sum_{i=1}^{\bar{n}} \psi(v_i) = \sum_{i=1}^{\bar{n}} \psi\left(\sqrt{\frac{z_i s_i}{\mu}}\right). \quad (13)$$

One may easily verify that by application of this definition to the kernel function $\psi_1(t)$, we obtain — up to a constant factor and a constant term — the classical logarithmic barrier

Table 1: Example of kernel functions and complexity results for large-update methods.

i	kernel function ψ_i	iteration complexity	ref.
1	$\frac{t^2-1}{2} - \log t$	$O\left(n \log \frac{n}{\epsilon}\right)$	[6]
2	$\frac{t^2-1}{2} + \frac{t^{1-q}-1}{q(q-1)} - \frac{q-1}{q}(t-1)$	$O\left(qn^{\frac{q+1}{2q}} \log \frac{n}{\epsilon}\right)$	[13]
3	$\frac{t^2-1}{2} + \frac{(e-1)^2}{e} \frac{1}{e^t-1} - \frac{e-1}{e}$	$O\left(n^{\frac{3}{4}} \log \frac{n}{\epsilon}\right)$	[2]
4	$\frac{1}{2} \left(t - \frac{1}{t}\right)^2$	$O\left(n^{\frac{2}{3}} \log \frac{n}{\epsilon}\right)$	[11]
5	$\frac{t^2-1}{2} + e^{\frac{1}{t}-1} - 1$	$O\left(\sqrt{n} \log^2 n \log \frac{n}{\epsilon}\right)$	[2]
6	$\frac{t^2-1}{2} - \int_1^t e^{\xi-1} d\xi$	$O\left(\sqrt{n} \log^2 n \log \frac{n}{\epsilon}\right)$	[2]
7	$\frac{t^2-1}{2} + \frac{t^{1-q}-1}{q-1}$	$O\left(qn^{\frac{q+1}{2q}} \log \frac{n}{\epsilon}\right)$	[12]
8	$\frac{t^{1+p}-1}{1+p} - \log t$	$O\left(n \log \frac{n}{\epsilon}\right)$	[5]
9	$\frac{t^{p+1}-1}{p+1} + \frac{t^{1-q}-1}{q-1}$	$O\left(qn^{\frac{p+q}{q(1+p)}} \log \frac{n}{\epsilon}\right)$	[3]
10	$\frac{t^{1+p}-1}{p+1} + \frac{e^{\sigma(1-t)}-1}{\sigma}, \sigma \geq 1$	$O\left(\sqrt{n} \log n \log \frac{n}{\epsilon}\right)$	[4]

function. Any proximity function $\Psi(v)$ gives rise to a primal-dual IPM, as described in Figure 1. With \bar{M} as defined in (7), the search direction in the algorithm is obtained by solving the system

$$\begin{aligned} \bar{M}d_z - d_s &= 0, \\ d_z + d_s &= -\nabla\Psi(v), \end{aligned} \quad (14)$$

and then computing Δz and Δs by using (8). Solving (14) is equivalent to solve the following equation

$$(I + \bar{M})d_z = -\nabla\Psi(v), \quad (15)$$

where $I \in \mathbf{R}^{\bar{n} \times \bar{n}}$ denotes identity matrix, and then we compute d_s from

$$d_s = -d_z - \nabla\Psi(v). \quad (16)$$

In this way we avoid one of the disadvantages of the predictor-corrector [9] strategy and we solve the Newton system only once per iteration.

Note that $I + \bar{M}$ is a nonsingular matrix, and then $(I + \bar{M})^{-1}$ exists and we can solve (15) easily.

4 Numerical Results

The aim of this section is to investigate the influence of the choice of the kernel function $\psi(t)$ on the computational behavior of the generic primal-dual algorithm for LO, as given in Figure 1. The kernel functions that we used in our experiments are the ten kernel functions $\psi_i, i \in \{1, \dots, 10\}$, as presented in Table 1. When there are parameters involved in the definition of a kernel function we used several values of these parameters as indicated in Table 2 below. These values were chosen after some preliminary experiments that showed that these values gave the most promising iteration counts for the respective kernel functions. This left us with 19 different kernel functions. For the test problems we used problems from the well-known Netlib library. To limit the

Figure 1: Algorithm for LO

Generic Path-Following Algorithm for LO

Input:

A kernel function $\psi(t)$;
a threshold parameter $\tau > 0$;
an accuracy parameter $\epsilon > 0$;
a barrier update parameter θ , $0 < \theta < 1$;

begin

$z := 1$; $s := 1$; $\mu := 1$; $v := 1$;

while $n\mu \geq \epsilon$ **do**

begin

$\mu := (1 - \theta)\mu$;

while $\Psi(v) > \tau$ **do**

begin

Solve $(\Delta z, \Delta s)$

$z := z + \alpha\Delta z$;

$s := s + \alpha\Delta s$;

$v := \sqrt{\frac{zs}{\mu}}$;

end

end

end

Table 2: Choice of parameters.

Kernel function	Parameter values
ψ_2	$q \in \{1.5, 2\}$
ψ_7	$q \in \{1.5, 2\}$
ψ_8	$p = 0.8$
ψ_9	$p \in \{0.5, 0.8\}$, $q \in \{1.5, 2\}$
$\psi_{10} := \psi_{p,\sigma}$	$(p, \sigma) \in \{(0.5, 1), (0.8, 1), (1, 1)\}$ and $(p, \sigma) \in \{(1, 1.5), (1, 2)\}$

number of test problems we used only the problems in this library that are known to have optimal solutions. This left us with 95 test problems. To get a first impression of the iteration bounds for the several kernel functions we applied the algorithm to a selection of ten of these problems.

After this first set of experiments all 95 problems from the Netlib library with the kernel functions that gave the best performance on the aforementioned set of ten problems

are tested using a straightforward implementation of the algorithm in MATLAB [8]. The self-dual embedding model [14] is used to enable the start of the algorithm as indicated in Figure 1, namely with $z = s = 1$ and $\mu = 1$. Our experiments were performed on a standard PC with a Pentium 4 processor and with 1 GB internal memory. Since we wanted to compare iteration numbers for several kernel functions, and since these numbers depend on the parameters¹ τ , θ and the accuracy parameter ϵ . In this way the iteration numbers depend only on the kernel function and the problem instance. The results of the first set of experiments are given in two tables (Table 3 and Table 4). For each of the ten problems we used **bold** font to highlight the best, i.e., the smallest, iteration number. This information is summarized in Table 5, which gives for each of the ten problems the smallest iteration number, and for which kernel function(s) this was achieved. From Table 5 we conclude that the smallest iteration numbers were realized by five kernel functions. For these five kernel functions we solved in the second round the mentioned 95 problems in the Netlib library. The results of the second round are listed in two tables (Table 6 to Table 7). In the first set of experiments we encountered a problem

Table 3: Iteration numbers for ψ_i , $i = 1, \dots, 8$.

LP Problem	Number of iterations for $\psi_1, \psi_2, \psi_3, \psi_4, \psi_5, \psi_6$ and ψ_7									
	ψ_1	$\psi_2 (q = 1.5)$	$\psi_2 (q = 2)$	ψ_3	ψ_4	ψ_5	ψ_6	$\psi_7 (q=1.5)$	$\psi_7 (q=2)$	$\psi_8 (p=0.8)$
ADLITTLE	23	23	24	39	25	?	24	23	25	25
AFIRO	16	16	17	28	17	?	18	16	17	19
DEGEN2	24	26	26	46	25	?	27	25	25	27
DEGEN3	30	31	33	71	34	?	37	30	34	32
Grow15	37	39	38	77	41	?	43	39	41	39
MAROS	74	76	82	90	87	?	92	69	87	71
SC105	18	19	19	36	21	?	19	19	21	22
SC205	22	22	23	36	24	45	23	23	24	23
SCTAP2	26	28	30	41	31	?	32	27	31	30
SHELL	46	49	50	81	52	?	55	49	52	51

with kernel function ψ_5 , indicated by question marks in the corresponding column of Table 3. The reason is the occurrence of the expression $e^{\frac{1}{t}}$ in the definition of this kernel function. For values of t smaller than ≈ 0.0014 the value of this expression goes beyond the size of numbers that can be handled by MATLAB. Since such small values occur in the vector v during the execution of the algorithm for some of the test problems, the programme failed to run for nine of the ten problems in the first round. Only for SC205 it found the solution, but when comparing the number of iterations with the iteration count for the other kernel functions, the result is not very promising.

From the first two tables we may draw a few conclusions. For ψ_8 , it becomes clear that smaller values of the parameter p influence the iteration count negatively. Hence, $p = 1$ seems to be the best possible choice, which gives ψ_1 , the kernel function of the logarithmic barrier function. Furthermore, the kernel functions $\psi_3, \psi_4, \psi_5, \psi_6, \psi_8$ and ψ_9 never give the smallest iteration number. Special attention deserves the finite barrier kernel function $\psi_{p,\sigma}$. This kernel function differs from the other kernel functions in the sense that it has a finite value at the boundary of the feasible region [4]. The results in Table 4 show that for $\psi_{1,1}$ the iteration numbers in all ten cases are the same (or almost

¹We fixed $\tau = 1, \theta = 0.99$ and $\epsilon = 10^{-8}$ in our experiments.

Table 4: Iteration numbers for ψ_9 and $\psi_{p,\sigma}$.

LP Problem	Number of iterations for $\psi_{9(p,q)}$ and $\psi_{p,\sigma}$								
	(0.5, 1.5)	(0.5, 2)	(0.8, 1.5)	(0.8, 2)	$\psi_{0.5,1}$	$\psi_{0.8,1}$	$\psi_{1,1}$	$\psi_{1,1.5}$	$\psi_{1,2}$
ADLITTLE	34	35	27	29	29	26	24	24	25
AFIRO	29	29	20	21	24	20	16	17	17
DEGEN2	29	42	29	31	34	28	24	26	26
DEGEN3	42	47	33	37	39	36	32	31	31
GROW15	49	55	43	46	47	40	37	38	38
MAROS	77	95	80	80	77	77	62	64	68
SC105	30	33	22	25	28	22	18	19	20
SC205	34	38	26	28	31	24	22	22	23
SCTAP2	38	46	31	34	35	31	26	27	27
SHELL	61	67	52	56	57	53	50	52	51

Table 5: Smallest iteration numbers and corresponding kernel function(s)

Problem	Best It	Kernel functions
ADLITTLE	23	$\psi_1, \psi_2(q = 1.5), \psi_7(q = 1.5)$
AFIRO	16	$\psi_1, \psi_2(q = 1.5), \psi_7(q = 1.5), \psi_{1,1}$
DEGEN2	24	$\psi_1, \psi_{1,1}$
DEGEN3	30	$\psi_1, \psi_7(q = 1.5)$
GROW15	37	$\psi_1, \psi_{1,1}$
MAROS	62	$\psi_{1,1}$
SC105	18	$\psi_1, \psi_{1,1}$
SC205	22	$\psi_1, \psi_2(q = 1.5), \psi_{1,1}, \psi_{1,1.5}$
SCTAP2	26	$\psi_1, \psi_{1,1}$
SHELL	46	ψ_1

the same) as for the kernel function ψ_1 of the classical logarithmic barrier function.

In the second round we used only the kernel functions that appear in the second column of Table 5, namely ψ_1, ψ_2 and ψ_7 , both with $q = 1.5$, and $\psi_{1,1}$ and $\psi_{1,1.5}$. The iteration counts for the 95 problems are listed in Table 6, and Table 7. The results in these three tables justify the conclusion that the kernel functions $\psi_{p,\sigma}$ deserve further investigation. Their performance seems quite promising. These kernel functions are new and have not yet been optimized for practical use. To get a method that is useful from a practical point of view, one has to embed the generic algorithm of Figure 1 in a predictor-corrector scheme as proposed by Mehrotra [9]. A nice example of this is a recent paper of Zhu et al. [15]. They propose an algorithm, in which the search direction determined by the kernel function ψ_7 plays a role. The algorithm starts with a predictor step based on the so-called primal-dual affine scaling direction. If the maximum step size in this direction is sufficiently large, then the algorithm performs after the predictor step a Mehrotra corrector step, based on the classical primal-dual Newton direction, followed by a backtracking line search technique to keep the iterates in a certain neighborhood of the central path. If the maximum feasible step size in the predictor step is not large enough, then the algorithm uses the search direction determined by the kernel function ψ_7 to bring the iterate closer to the central path. From their paper it is clear that the iteration numbers presented in the last two tables can be reduced by about 50%.

Table 6: Numerical Results (I).

LP Problem	Number of iterations				
	ψ_1	$\psi_{2(q=\frac{3}{2})}$	$\psi_{7(q=\frac{3}{2})}$	$\psi_{1,1}$	$\psi_{1,\frac{3}{2}}$
25FV47	71	75	75	71	72
80BAU3B	100	104	104	103	104
ADLITTLE	23	23	23	24	24
AFIRO	16	16	16	16	17
AGG	43	44	44	42	43
AGG2	36	37	37	39	38
AGG3	39	45	41	43	41
BANDM	39	39	40	38	40
BEACONFD	23	23	24	25	25
BLEND	19	20	19	19	20
BNL1	69	70	69	68	68
BNL2	76	76	79	76	75
BOEING1	42	44	45	44	44
BOEING2	35	35	36	36	36
BORE3D	39	39	39	36	38
BRANDY	40	41	42	39	38
CAPRI	42	44	44	42	42
CYCLE	86	93	90	77	86
CZPROB	78	84	86	77	76
D2Q06C	107	112	112	110	109
D6CUBE	38	39	40	39	40
DEGEN2	24	26	25	24	26
DEGEN3	30	31	30	32	31
DFL001	81	85	85	83	83
E226	41	43	44	42	43
ETAMACRO	66	66	67	64	64
FFFFF800	64	66	65	64	64
FINNIS	60	60	61	56	56
FIT1D	32	33	32	33	33
FIT1P	33	33	35	34	34
FIT2D	42	43	42	41	42
FIT2P	40	42	43	40	40
FORPLAN	40	43	43	48	46
GANGES	43	43	42	44	44
GFRD-PNC	32	35	38	34	36
GREENBEA	119	125	130	123	125
GREENBEB	121	124	126	123	121
GROW15	37	39	39	37	38
GROW22	41	39	41	40	38
GROW7	35	36	37	35	35
ISRAEL	36	37	39	37	37
KB2	30	30	30	30	30
LOTFI	29	30	32	31	32
MAROS	74	76	69	62	64
MAROS-R7	37	37	38	37	39
MODSZK1	49	50	51	51	51
NESM	75	74	75	75	75

5 Conclusions and Remarks

In this paper we investigated the influence of the choice of the kernel functions on the computational behavior of the generic primal-dual path-following algorithm for LO.

Table 7: Numerical Results (II).

LP Problem	Number of iterations				
	ψ_1	$\psi_{2(q=\frac{3}{2})}$	$\psi_{7(q=\frac{3}{2})}$	$\psi_{1,1}$	$\psi_{1,\frac{3}{2}}$
PEROLD	73	72	75	73	71
PILOT	102	102	104	100	99
PILOT.JA	74	76	76	76	76
PILOT.WE	137	133	132	125	131
PILOT4	71	76	76	70	70
PILOT87	145	149	150	147	144
PILOTNOV	56	58	59	55	56
RECIPE	19	21	21	21	21
SC105	18	19	19	18	19
SC205	22	22	23	22	22
SC50A	18	17	18	17	18
SC50B	17	17	17	16	17
SCAGR25	32	33	36	33	33
SCAGR7	25	26	26	26	26
SCFXM1	42	44	44	43	43
SCFXM2	52	52	54	52	53
SCFXM3	57	51	54	57	56
SCORPION	33	34	36	35	35
SCRS8	51	51	53	50	52
SCSD1	32	41	46	39	33
SCSD6	50	45	54	67	61
SCSD8	45	36	50	39	41
SCTAP1	36	42	42	36	36
SCTAP2	26	28	27	26	27
SCTAP3	28	31	29	28	29
SEBA	54	56	57	53	54
SHARE1B	48	50	50	47	48
SHARE2B	22	22	23	24	23
SHELL	46	49	49	50	52
SHIP04L	30	30	30	30	31
SHIP04S	28	29	31	30	30
SHIP08L	36	34	34	32	33
SHIP08S	27	30	30	28	28
SHIP12L	48	53	55	50	48
SHIP12S	41	44	44	42	43
SIERRA	40	44	45	42	44
STAIR	33	33	35	34	34
STANDATA	29	31	30	30	30
STANDGUB	29	31	30	30	30
STANDMPS	35	39	38	38	38
STOCFOR1	27	27	27	25	25
STOCFOR2	65	64	66	68	68
STOCFOR3	120	121	121	122	123
TRUSS	61	62	65	63	64
TUFF	40	41	42	41	41
VTP-BASE	28	29	28	29	28
WOOD1P	37	35	40	33	34
WOODW	60	74	78	62	63

Numerical results show that by using a kernel functions $\psi_{p,\sigma}$, with finite barrier term, the best iteration complexity was achieved in most of the test problems, especially for the

functions $\psi_{1,1}$ and $\psi_{1,1.5}$. Compared to the standard choice ψ_1 , their practical performance seems quite promising for LO.

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