

# STRUCTURAL HEALTH MONITORING 2023

*Designing SHM for Sustainability, Maintainability, and Reliability*

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# Table of Contents

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*Preface*

## **KEYNOTE**

**Fielding a SHM System for an Aged Military Aircraft . . . . . 3**  
ANTON NORBERG VOOREN, KRISTIAN BAMRUD FAGERHUS,  
KIM KORSVIK, ROSHAN JOSEPH, SUSHEEL YADAV  
and AMRITA KUMAR

**Structural Health Monitoring –The Key Enabler of Condition  
Based Maintenance in Aviation . . . . . 14**  
DIMITRIOS ZAROUCHAS

**Computation-enabled Digital Twin in the Built Environment . . . . . 22**  
GENDA CHEN, IBRAHIM ALOMARI, ZHENHUA SHI,  
WOUBISHET Z. TAFFESE, TARUTAL G. MONDAL, JOEL RUNJI  
and MOHAMMAD H. AFSHARMOVAHED

**Physics Enhanced Machine Learning for Monitoring and Twinning . . . 30**  
MARCUS HAYWOOD-ALEXANDER, KIRAN BACSA, WEI LIU,  
ZHILU LAI and ELANI CHATZI

## **AEROSPACE STRUCTURES**

**Ultrasonic Solution for Structural Health Monitoring Using  
Embedded Non-Destructive Testing . . . . . 41**  
SIMON A. CLÉMENT, ALICE AUBRY, AROUSA FOURATI,  
GRÉGOIRE MARIN, FRÉDÉRIC JEAN and FRÉDÉRIC MOSCA

**Debonding Detection in Aerospace Stiffened Composite Structures  
Using Ultrawideband Electromagnetic Tunneling . . . . . 50**  
VITTORIO MEMMOLO, JOCHEN MOLL and VIKTOR KROZER

**Study of the Fiber Bragg's Grating Sensor Sensibility Subjected to Harsh Environmental Conditions .....57**

LUDOVIC GAVERINA, ANASTASIA LIAPI,  
JESUS EIRAS FERNANDEZ, EMMANUEL MARIN,  
JEREMY RIPTO, JEOFFRAY VIDALOT, SYLVAIN GIRARD  
and JEAN-MICHEL ROCHE

**Enhancing Interfacial Toughness in 3D-Printed Soft-Hard Interfaces by Fused Filament Fabrication ..... 64**

UMUT ALTUNTAS, DEMIRKAN COKER and DENIZHAN YAVAS

**The Application of Risk Minimization to the Selection of Fiber Optic Sensors for an Aerospace Structural Monitoring Application .... 71**

ADRIELLY HOKAMA RAZZINI, MICHAEL D. TODD, IDDO KRESSEL,  
YOAV OFIR and MOSHE TUR

**Influence of Residual Stresses on the Dispersion Behavior of Guided Ultrasonic Waves in Fiber Metal Laminates ..... 79**

JOHANNES WIEDEMANN, TILMANN BARTH, THOMAS ROLOFF,  
TOM KLUGE, NATALIE RAUTER and CHRISTIAN HUHNE

**Towards Optimisation of Forced Heating and Cooling Automated Infrared Thermograph ..... 87**

GIAN PIERO MALFENSE FIERRO and MICHELE MEO

**Thermoplastic Induction Welded Joint Design for Structural Health Monitoring Damage Detectability ..... 96**

MATTIA MAZZESCHI, ADRIAN PEDROSA VALBUENA,  
KARINA CARLA NUNEZ, MAITE FERNANDEZ,  
ESTEBAN CANIBANO and JUAN CARLOS MERINO

**Model-Assisted Probability of Detection of Cracks Under Fastener Head ..... 105**

YOUNGCHAN KIM, SEONHWA JUNG and DOOYOUNG LEE

**Impact Monitoring of Large and Complex Structures Based on Transfer Learning ..... 113**

BOWEN ZHAO, YILIANG ZHANG, XIANPING ZENG  
and XINLIN QING

**CIVIL STRUCTURES**

**Health Monitoring of a Lenticular Truss Bridge Using Wireless Strain Sensors and Finite Element Models: A Case Study ..... 123**

ALIREZA ENSHAEIAN, BEHZAD GHAHRAMANI  
and PIERVINCENZO RIZZO

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Scour Damage Detection of Bridge Piers Using the Vibration-Based Method: Numerical Study on a Steel-Concrete Bridge in France . . . . .</b>   | <b>131</b> |
| SOLAINE HACHEM, FREDERIC BOURQUIN<br>and DOMINIQUE SIEGERT   |            |
| <b>Dynamic Bridge Monitoring with Remote Sensing Techniques . . . . .</b>  | <b>140</b> |
| WERNER LIENHART, FLORIAN SCHILL and THOMAS MOSER   |            |
| <b>Bridge Frequencies Identification from the Dynamic Response of a Passing Vehicle . . . . .</b>  | <b>148</b> |
| SHOTA URUSHADZE and JONG-DAR YAU   |            |
| <b>Establishment and Initial In-Site Testing for the Structural Healthy Monitoring System of the Kinmen Bridge in Taiwan . . . . .</b>           | <b>156</b> |
| CHIN-KUO HUANG, HSIN-CHU TSAI, LI-TING CHUNG<br>and CHIN-TE LIN  |            |
| <b>Structural Utilization Prediction for the Health Monitoring of Tunnel Linings by Means of an Artificial Neural Network Ensemble . . . . .</b> | <b>167</b> |
| NICOLA GOTTARDI, STEFFEN FREITAG and GUNTHER MESCHKE   |            |
| <b>A Comparison of Structural Similarity Metrics within Population-Based Structural Health Monitoring . . . . .</b>                              | <b>176</b> |
| DANIEL S. BRENNAN, ELIZABETH J. CROSS and KEITH WORDEN   |            |
| <b>AI-Driven Structural Health Monitoring for the Tallest Curved Concrete Skyscraper . . . . .</b>   | <b>186</b> |
| JAFARALI PAROL, JAMAL AL QAZWEENI, EROL KALKAN<br>and HASAN KAMAL  |            |
| <b>Monitoring the Deformation Pattern of an Instrumented Concrete Arch Dam . . . . .</b>   | <b>195</b> |
| AVIRUP SARKAR, BIKRAM PATRA, SHARAD GHODKE<br>and ASHUTOSH BAGCHI  |            |
| <b>Structural Health Monitoring and Real-Time System Identification Analysis of the World's Tallest Sculptured Skyscraper . . . . .</b>          | <b>204</b> |
| JAFARALI PAROL, JAMAL AL QAZWEENI, HASAN KAMAL<br>and EROL KALKAN  |            |
| <b>Non-Destructive Testing and Evaluation of Timber and Steel H-Piles . . . . .</b>  | <b>213</b> |
| WAEEL ZATAR, HIEN NGHIEM, HAI NGUYEN,<br>BRADLEY FOUST and HAROON MALIK  |            |

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>Crack Monitoring of Lock Infrastructure Using Strain Sensors . . . . .</b>   | <b>222</b> |
| TRAVIS B. FILLMORE, BRIAN A. EICK and BILLIE F. SPENCER   |            |
| <b>Investigation of Retroreflective Sheeting Materials Response to Induced Strain While Mounted to Common Civil Substrates for Use as Passive Strain Sensors for Structural Health Monitoring . . . . .</b> | <b>231</b> |
| HANNAH M. POWER and HARRY W. SHENTON  |            |
| <b>Low-Cost Efficient Wireless Intelligent Sensor (LEWIS) Deployment for Community Driven Decision Making . . . . .</b>   | <b>238</b> |
| SANDEEP ALAMPALLI, KAVEH MALEK,<br>ALI MOHAMMADKHORASANI and FERNANDO MOREU   |            |
| <b>Development of Nanocarbon Black-enabled Self-strain Sensing Ultra-high-performance Cementitious Composites . . . . .</b>   | <b>246</b> |
| ABASAL HUSSAIN, TAO YU and FANGXIN ZOU  |            |
| <b>An Electrical Infrastructure Management Model for Long-Term Maintenance and Hazard Mitigation . . . . .</b>  | <b>254</b> |
| NATHANIEL M. LEVINE, KRISTEN HOLLINGSWORTH,<br>YINGJIE WU, MORGAN GRIFFITH and BRIAN MCDONALD   |            |
| <b>Evaluating Post-Tensioned Trunnion Girders: A Comparative Study of Scale Model Tests and Numerical Analyses . . . . .</b>  | <b>262</b> |
| WAEEL ZATAR, HIEN NGHIEM, JASON RAY, HAI NGUYEN<br>and SHAWN ANDERSON   |            |
| <b>Abnormality Detection Algorithm of Horizontal Displacement Monitoring Data During Foundation Pit Excavation Based on Temporal-spatial Characteristics . . . . .</b>                                      | <b>270</b> |
| HUI SU, JINFENG ZHANG, WEIHONG CHU, WEINAN CHEN,<br>ZHIHUA LUO and SHIJI LU   |            |
| <b>Development of the Novel Rail Dampers Utilizing Particle Damping for the Rail Track Structure . . . . .</b>  | <b>277</b> |
| XIN YE, YU-LING WANG, WAI KEI AO and YI-QING NI   |            |
| <b>A Model to Monitor Cracked Reinforced Concrete Structures Using Coda Waves . . . . .</b>   | <b>285</b> |
| FELIX CLAUß, MARK ALEXANDER AHRENS and PETER MARK   |            |
| <b>Experimental Characterization and Computer Vision-Assisted Detection of Pitting Corrosion on Stainless Steel Structural Members . . . . .</b>  | <b>293</b> |
| RILEY J. MUEHLER, JOHUA B. VENZ, MICHAEL D. TODD<br>and LONG WANG   |            |

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Validation of Data for Use in Civil Infrastructure Big Data Applications</b> .....  | <b>301</b> |
| CONNOR O'HIGGINS, CONNOR KENT, DAVID HESTER<br>and SU TAYLOR   |            |
| <b>Application of Neural Network Entropy Algorithm and Convolution Neural Network for Structural Health Monitoring</b> .....   | <b>310</b> |
| TZU-KANG LIN, YI-TING LIN and KAI-WEI KUO  |            |
| <b>Combining Ultrasonic and Electromagnetic Techniques for Early Detection of Corrosion Damage in Reinforced Concrete Structures</b> ....                              | <b>318</b> |
| WEIXIA CHENG, HAI-HAN SUN, KANG HAI TAN and ZHENG FAN  |            |
| <b>Strain and Acceleration-Based Finite Element Model Updating of a Concrete Highway Viaduct</b> .....   | <b>325</b> |
| DORON HEKIC, ANDREJ ANZLIN, DIOGO RIBEIRO,<br>ALES ZNIDARIC and PETER CESAREK  |            |
| <b>Implementation of Decision Analysis on a Structural Health Monitoring System Applied to a Bridge Benchmark Study</b> .....  | <b>333</b> |
| GABRIEL A. DEL POZO, BJØRN T. SVENDSEN and OLE ØISETH  |            |
| <b>Evaluation of Electro-Mechanical Impedance (EMI) for Structural Health Monitoring (SHM) of Post-Tensioned Ground Anchors</b> .....                                  | <b>346</b> |
| CLAYTON THURMER, JASON RAY, MATTHEW GLASSCOTT<br>and BRIAN EICK  |            |
| <b>Vehicle and Truss Bridge Interaction Adopting a Simplified 2D Model</b> .....   | <b>354</b> |
| SHAHED JAFARPOUR HAMEDANI,<br>MEHRISADAT MAKKI ALAMDARI, ELENA ATROSHCHENKO,<br>KAI-CHUN CHANG, CHUL-WOO KIM<br>and ANDRES FELIPE CALDERON HURTADO                     |            |
| <b>Structural Health Monitoring of CFRP Propellers by Piezoelectric Line Sensors</b> .....   | <b>364</b> |
| RYOTA HAMADA, TAKAFUMI OGURA, SHOGO FUJITA,<br>HIDEAKI MURAYAMA, TOSHIO YAMATOI, TOSHIYUKI INOUE,<br>KAZUYA HAYASHI, MAI TAKAHARA, KENTARO GOTO<br>and KOTARO FURUKAWA |            |
| <b>Online Monitoring System for Short Stator Maglev Train</b> .....  | <b>373</b> |
| YANG LU, SEMEI WANG, QI ZHU, SHENGYUAN LIU and YIQING NI   |            |
| <b>An Innovative Approach of Vibration Testing of Concrete Structures Using Performance Based Evaluation Techniques</b> .....  | <b>381</b> |
| GABRIEL RIVEROS and MARTIN BUTLER  |            |

## **DIAGNOSTICS**

- Diagnosis of Concurrent Sensor Faults in Structural Health Monitoring Systems** ..... 393  
CARLOS CHILLÓN GECK, THAMER AL-ZURIQAT,  
KOSMAS DRAGOS and KAY SMARSLY
- An Influence of Temperature on Additive Manufactured Composite with Embedded Fiber Bragg Grating Sensor** ..... 401  
MAGDALENA MIELOSZYK, KATARZYNA MAJEWSKA,  
RUTA RIMASAUSKIENE, MARIUS RIMASAUSKAS  
and TOMAS KUNCIUS
- Assessment of Corrosion Damage in Steel Samples Using Electro-Magnetic Acoustic Measurements** ..... 409  
LUKAS PETERSON, THANKGOD NWOKOCHA, ANDREI ZAGRAI  
and T. DAVID BURLEIGH
- Wayside Acoustic Fault Diagnosis of Train Wheelset Bearing Based on Improved Frequency Sparsity Bayesian Learning** ..... 417  
YOU-LIANG ZHENG, YOU-WU WANG and YI-QING NI
- Diagnostics of Anomaly Steam Turbine Behavior in Terms of Remote SHM and Cloud Computing** ..... 425  
JINDRICH LISKA, JAN JAKL and VOJTECH VASICEK
- Wind Turbines with Optimized Productivity through Fleet Monitoring without Additional Sensor Technology** ..... 433  
HERBERT FRIEDMANN, PETER KRAEMER,  
CHRISTOPH SCHMIDT, LUKAS BONEKEMPER  
and MARCEL WIEMANN
- Metal-Organic Frameworks-Based Sensors for Detection of Toxic Environmental Contaminants** ..... 440  
SARAH CLOUSE, MD ABU SHOHAG and MD HUMAYUN KABIR
- Structural Health Monitoring Application on Chemical Mill Line Cracking** ..... 448  
DANIELLE STEPHENS, PAUL SWINDELL, YONGZHE TIAN,  
WALTER SIPPEL, SETH KESSLER, AMRITA KUMAR,  
SUSHEEL KUMAR YADAV and FRANKLIN LI
- Variational Mode Spectrum Estimation for Wire Rope Defect Inspection Signals Analysis and Quantitative Evaluation** ..... 455  
SHIWEI LIU, YONG LIU, QIAOHUA WANG and WEIGUO LIN



**Inspection and Maintenance Scheme Optimization Considering Atmospheric Corrosion Using Bayesian Network . . . . . 466**  
TAESU CHOI and DOOYOUNG LEE

**Performance of a Novel Inerter-Based Isolation System for Medium-Rise Buildings Under Seismic and Wind Excitations. . . . . 475**  
JUBIN LU and SONGYE ZHU

## **ELECTROMECHANICAL IMPEDANCE BASED METHODS**

**Monitoring of Bolted Joints with Electro-Mechanical Impedance Spectra and Acousto-Ultrasonics . . . . . 485**  
A.-L. DREISBACH, P. KRAEMER and C.-P. FRITZEN

**Damage Sensitivity Study in 3D-Printed PLA of Different Infill Densities Using the Electromechanical Impedance Method . . . . . 493**  
SHISHIR KUMAR SINGH, MOHAMMAD ALI FAKIH,  
SAMIR MUSTAPHA and PAWEL H. MALINOWSKI

**Investigation of Impact Damage on GFRP/MWCNT for Structural Health Monitoring . . . . . 501**  
OZAN CAN ZEHNİ, IAN KINLOCH, MARK BISSETT  
and CHRISTINA VALLES

**Influence of Uniaxial Loads on Local Resonances . . . . . 508**  
KEPING ZHANG, YUNING WU, RANTING CUI and XUAN ZHU

**Crosstalk Effects in Matrix of PZT Sensors for SHM Applications Based on the Electromechanical Impedance Principle . . . . . 515**  
JOZUE VIEIRA FILHO, MARIO ROLANDO RODRIGUEZ CADALSO,  
NICOLÁS EUSEBIO CORTEZ LEDESMA,  
MARIO ANDERSON DE OLIVEIRA and GYUHAE PARK

**Electro-Mechanical Impedance Spectroscopy Leveraging Zero Group Velocity Modes for Structural Sensing . . . . . 523**  
RUNYE LU and YANFENG SHEN

## **GUIDED WAVES**

**Damage Diagnosis of Complex Connection Structures of Aircraft Fuselage Stringers with Guided Wave-Based Method . . . . . 535**  
YUSEN XU, JIAN CHEN, SHENFANG YUAN, YAHUI YANG  
and ZHEN QIN

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>On Measuring Material Changes at Molten Salt Reactor<br/>Temperatures in a Thermal Convection Loop with Guided<br/>Ultrasound Waves .....</b>  | <b>543</b> |
| INSU FIESLER SAXENA, BRUCE PINT and CLIFF LISSENDEN   |            |
| <b>Towards Passive Fiber Bragg Grating-Based Measurement of<br/>Ambient Elastic Noise for SHM Under Varying Environment .....</b>   | <b>551</b> |
| PIERRE CALMON, AMAUD RECOQUILLAY, NICOLAS ROUSSEL,<br>LAURENT MAURIN, TOM DRUET, GUILLAUME LAFFONT<br>and BASTIEN CHAPUIS   |            |
| <b>Promoting Novel Strategies for the Reliability Assessment of<br/>Guided Wave Based SHM Systems .....</b>   | <b>558</b> |
| VITTORIO MEMMOLO, JOCHEN MOLL, OLIVER SCHACKMANN,<br>STEFFEN FREITAG, ANASTASIIA VOLOVIKOVA, KILIAN TSCHOKE,<br>ENES SAVLI, YEVGENIYA LUGOVTSOVA, MARIA MOIX-BONET,<br>AHMED BAYOUMI and INKA MUELLER |            |
| <b>The Effect of Complex Corrosion Profiles on Remaining Wall<br/>Thickness Quantification Using Shear Horizontal Guided Waves .....</b>  | <b>567</b> |
| KONSTANTINOS TZAFERIS, MORTEZA TABATABAEIPOUR,<br>GORDON DOBIE, GARETH PIERCE, MAYORKINOS PAPAELIAS,<br>CHARLES MACLEOD and ANTHONY GACHAGAN  |            |
| <b>Virtual Frequency Data Fusion for Localization of Multiple<br/>Damages from Broadband Lamb Wave Velocity Field .....</b>   | <b>576</b> |
| M. KANNUSAMY, SAPTARSHI SASMAL and SANTOSH KAPURIA  |            |
| <b>Enhancing Guided-Wave-Based Structural Health Monitoring<br/>Using Metamaterial Devices Designed by Topology Optimization .....</b>  | <b>584</b> |
| ZE LIU, SHENGBO SHAN and LI CHENG   |            |
| <b>Data Acquisition and Health Analysis of In-service Railway Vehicle<br/>for Structural Health Monitoring .....</b>  | <b>592</b> |
| LEI ZU, CHANG PENG, LONG MA, SHI-PING GAO,<br>PING-YU ZHOU, BUZHAO NIU, FRANKLIN LI and AMRITA KUMAR  |            |
| <b>Physically Informed and Data Driven Direct Models for Lamb<br/>Waves based SHM: Advantages and Drawbacks of Existing<br/>Approaches .....</b>  | <b>601</b> |
| MARC REBILLAT, ERIC MONTEIRO and NAZIH MECHBAL  |            |
| <b>Experimental and Numerical Investigations on the Acoustoelastic<br/>Effect on Lamb Waves in Aluminum .....</b>   | <b>609</b> |
| TILMANN BARTH, NATALIE RAUTER and ROLF LAMMERING  |            |

**Design and Application of a Statistical Learning Methodology to Remove Temperature Effect on Static Signals for Bridge Structural Health Monitoring** ..... 617  
LORENZO BENEDETTI, FRANCESCO MORGAN BONO,  
LUCA RADICIONI and MARCO BELLOLI

**An Integrated Acousto-Mechanical Energy Approach for Monitoring Flexural Bond-Slip Behaviour of GFRP Bars and Concrete** ..... 626  
AMER ILIYAS RATHER, SAUVIK BANERJEE  
and ARGHADEEP LASKAR

**Damage Identification for Guided Wave Testing of Composite Structures Using Statistical Features** ..... 634  
SHRUTI SAWANT, SAUVIK BANERJEE and AMIT SETHI

## **MODELING, SIMULATION, AND DIGITAL TWINS**

**A Hybrid Surrogate Modeling Method for Corrosion Morphology Prediction Under Non-Stationary Dynamic Loading** ..... 643  
GUOFENG QIAN, DAVID NAJERA-FLORES, ZHEN HU  
and MICHAEL D. TODD

**A Reduced-Order Digital Twin for Structural Health Monitoring of Steel Bridges** ..... 651  
CHRISTOPH BRENNER, KLAUS THIELE and JULIAN UNGLAUB

**Vision-Based Displacement Estimation of Large-Scale Infrastructure—A Case Study** ..... 659  
CASEY RODGERS, SHUO WANG, BRIAN WELSH,  
SHAIK ALTHAF V. SHAJIHAN, THOMAS GOLECKI, BRIAN EICK,  
TRAVIS FILLMORE and BILLIE F. SPENCER

**Review of Various Curing Processes and Techniques of Printed Circuit Board (PCB) and Introduction of New Innovative Thermal Curing Technique** ..... 667  
MOHAMMED ATEEQ, ROLAND FEUSER, LOUI AL-SHROUF  
and MOHIEDDINE JELALI

**Efficient Lifecycle Reliability Assessment of Offshore Wind Turbines using Digital Twin** ..... 675  
XUKAI ZHANG and ARASH NOSHADRAVAN

**Towards Dynamic Digital Twin for Monopile-Supported Offshore Wind Turbines** ..... 683  
YING WANG, JUN LIANG and YUHAO FU

|  |            |
|--|------------|
| <b>Evolutionary Sensor Network Design for Structural Health Monitoring of Structures with Time-Evolving Damage .....</b>                               | <b>691</b> |
| MAYANK CHADHA, YICHAO YANG, ZHEN HU<br>and MICHAEL D. TODD   |            |
| <b>Degradation Model Updating for Failure Prognostics Using a Sequential Likelihood-Free Bayesian Inference Method and Video Monitoring Data .....</b> | <b>698</b> |
| JICE ZENG, MICHAEL D. TODD and HU ZHEN   |            |
| <b>Automated Crack Detection for Underwater Inspection of Miter Gates with Unmanned Underwater Vehicle .....</b>                                       | <b>706</b> |
| ZIHAN WU, ZHEN HU, MICHAEL D. TODD and JICE ZENG   |            |
| <b>Detection of Buckling in Columnar Structures by Shape Sensing with Multi-Core Optical Fibers .....</b>  | <b>713</b> |
| TAKAFUMI OGURA, MAKITO KOBAYASHI, YUE ZHAO,<br>DANIEL LEANDRO and HIDEAKI MURAYAMA   |            |
| <b>Developing an Experimentable Digital Twin of a Novel Forestry Machine: Application, Experiences, and Benefits .....</b>                             | <b>721</b> |
| SEBASTIAN SCHMID, ULRICH DAHMEN, LONGXIANG SHAO,<br>KAI-UWE SCHRODER and JURGEN ROSSMANN   |            |
| <b>Finite Element Model Updating Using Primal-Relaxed Dual Global Optimization Algorithm .....</b>   | <b>730</b> |
| TRENT E. SCHREIBER, YU OTSUKI and YANG WANG  |            |
| <b>Operational Health Monitoring of Bridges Using Bayesian Model Updating and Computer Vision Techniques .....</b>                                     | <b>737</b> |
| NILOOFAR MALEKGHAINI, HAMED EBRAHIMIAN,<br>FARID GHAHARI, VINAYAK SACHIDANANDAM,<br>MATTHEW BOWERS and ERTUGRUL TACIROGLU                              |            |
| <b>Physics-Informed Neural Network for Analyzing Elastic Beam Behavior .....</b>   | <b>744</b> |
| SOHEIL HEIDARIAN RADBAKHS, KAMYAB ZANDI<br>and MAZDAK NIK-BAKHT  |            |
| <b>Vibration Based Damage Identification in Welded Asymmetrical Steel Frames Using Regularization Techniques .....</b>                                 | <b>752</b> |
| MAYANK KAMAL and SAUVIK BANERJEE   |            |

**Structural Damage Detection Through Finite Element Model  
Updating Using Evolutionary Algorithm ..... 760**  
SAI SIDDHARTHA VIVEK DHIR RANGOJU,  
GOVARDHAN POLEPALLY, PRAFULLA KALAPATAPU  
and VENKATA DILIP KUMAR PASUPULETI

**Development of Deep Neural Network-Based Strain Values  
Prediction Models for Full-Scale Reinforced Concrete Frames  
Using Highly Flexible Sensing Sheets ..... 771**  
HUI ZHANG and SHERIF BESKHYROUN

## **MULTIFUNCTIONAL MATERIALS AND STRUCTURES**

**Design of Multifunctional Structural Battery Composites for the  
Next Generation of Electric Vehicles ..... 785**  
SAMAN FARHANGDOUST, SHABBIR AHMED,  
ALEXANDER STRANGE, UMUT ALTUNTAS, CHAOQUN DUAN,  
YAQOUB ABDULLAH, FRANKLIN LI, SERENA WANG  
and FU-KUO CHANG

**High-Dimensional Data Analytics for Sparse Recovery of  
Guided-Waves Dispersion Curves Using B-Splines ..... 796**  
HAMED MOMENI, MOHAMMAD JEDDI  
and ARVIN EBRAHIMKHANLOU

**Intelligent Manufacturing Principles for Structural Health  
Monitoring in Advance Composite Structures: A Machine  
Learning-Based Driven Placement Approach ..... 804**  
SEAN PSULKOWSKI, BRYANT RODRIGUEZ, ABDULLAH NOMAN,  
SERGIO TORINO and TARIK DICKENS

**Integrated Sensing System for Automotive Applications ..... 813**  
MAHMOUD GHANNAM, ISKANDER FAROOQ, ROSHAN JOSEPH,  
CODY GRAY, FRANKLIN LI and AMRITA KUMAR

## **RELIABILITY, VERIFICATION, AND VALIDATION**

**Covariance of Limit Defining Pairs (CLDP): A Novel Approach  
to Establishing Detection Sensitivity for Structural Health  
Monitoring Data ..... 827**  
SETH S. KESSLER and CHRISTINE M. SCHUBERT KABBAN

**Assessing the Performance CVM Sensors for Monitoring the 737  
Aft Pressure Bulkhead ..... 835**  
DENNIS ROACH, TREVOR LYNCH-STANTON, BRIAN SHAIGEC  
and DERRICK FORMOSA

**Robotic End-of-Line Testing for Hydrogen Pressure Vessels Using a Strain-Based SHM System . . . . . 843**  
REBECCA RICHSTEIN and KAI-UWE SCHRODER

**An Investigation of the Effect of Measurement Interval on the Autoencoder Based Damage Detection in Uncontrolled Structural Health Monitoring . . . . . 851**  
KANG YANG and JOEL B. HARLEY

**Optimization of a Vision-Based SHM System for Imaging Subsurface Impact Damage in Composite Structures . . . . . 859**  
T. BRYCE ABBOTT and FUH-GWO YUAN

**Analysis of Reliability and Effectiveness of Repeated Inspections Based on Probability of Detection Method . . . . . 870**  
SEONHWA JUNG, YOUNGCHAN KIM and DOOYOUNG LEE

## **PROGNOSTICS AND HEALTH MANAGEMENT**

**Least-Square Support Vector Regression for the Prognosis of the Deteriorating Structure Under the Seismic Excitations Using Autoregressive Model . . . . . 881**  
SHIVAM OJHA, AMIT SHELKE and ANOWARUL HABIB

**Autonomous Monitoring of Breathing Debonds in Bonded Composite Structures Using Nonlinear Ultrasonic Signals . . . . . 889**  
SHIRSENDU SIKDAR

**Structural Performance Monitoring Employing Linear Observer . . . . . 897**  
MOHAMMAD SHAMIM MIAH and WERNER LIENHART

**Generation of Mode-Selective Frequency Response Functions from Temporally Sampled, Broadband and Multimodal Guided Ultrasonic Wave Signals . . . . . 905**  
THOMAS ROLOFF and MICHAEL SINAPIUS

**Phononic Crystal Waveguides for Structural Health Monitoring Applications . . . . . 913**  
FRANCESCO CIAMPA

**Damage Detection of Rectangular Sections by 2D Curvelet, Contourlet and Wavelet Packet Transform . . . . . 921**  
SAJAD SHAHVERDI

## **SENSOR NETWORKS**

### **Case Study for Using Open-Source UAV-Deployable Wireless Sensor Nodes for Modal-Based Monitoring of Civil Infrastructure . . . . . 963**

JOUD N. SATME, RYAN YOUNT, JASON SMITH  
and AUSTIN R. J. DOWNEY

### **Versatile Sensor Node with Acoustic Data Communication Capabilities for FSAT Networks in Guided Wave-based Structural Health Monitoring Applications . . . . . 970**

OCTAVIO A. MÁRQUEZ REYES, FEDERICA ZONZINI,  
MASOUD MOHAMMADGHOLIHA, JOCHEN MOLL  
and LUCA DE MARCHI

### **Heterogeneous Sensor Placement Under Uncertainty . . . . . 978**

AMIN JABINI and ERIK A. JOHNSON

### **A Real-Time Framework for Structural Health Monitoring Based on the Internet of Things—An Experimental Study . . . . . 985**

ISHNA JAIN, AJAY KUMAR SREERAMA, PRAFULLA KALAPATAPU  
and VENKATA DILIP KUMAR PASUPULETI

### **Sensor Location Optimization for Efficient Structural Health Monitoring Through Intelligent Design . . . . . 995**

CHETHAN RAO BOINIPALLI, VANCHA VINESH REDDY,  
GOVARDHAN POLEPALLY, PRAFULLA KALAPATAPU  
and VENKATA DILIP KUMAR PASUPULETI

### **A Mobile Sensor Network System for Sound and Vibration . . . . . 1009**

SANG GEUN BAE, JEWOO CHOI and HYO SEON PARK

### **The Road to an Open and Secure Data Exchange Infrastructure for SHM . . . . . 1017**

HORST TRATTNIG and LUKAS BERBUER

### **Unsupervised Vehicle Classification Using a Structural Health Monitoring System . . . . . 1025**

AMIRHOSSEIN MOALLEMI, LUCA ZANATTA, ALESSIO BURRELLO,  
MATTIA SALVARO, MONICA LONGO, PAOLA DARO,  
FRANCESCO BARCHI, DAVIDE BRUNELLI, LUCA BENINI  
and ANDREA ACQUAVIVA

### **Exploring Crowdsensing Potentials for Structural Health Monitoring Applications: Challenges and Opportunities . . . . . 1033**

LEONARDO IACUSSI, MATTEO BRAMBILLA,  
PAOLO CHIARIOTTI, STEFANO MANZONI  
and ALFREDO CIGADA

**Certification of CVM™ Sensors for Monitoring 737 Aft Pressure Bulkhead** ..... 1041  
TREVOR LYNCH-STANTON, BRIAN SHAIGEC,  
DERRICK FORMOSA and DENNIS ROACH

**An Original Smart Data Sampling for Wireless Sensor: Application to Bridge Cable Monitoring** ..... 1052  
VINCENT LE CAM, LAURENT LEMARCHAND, ARTHUR BOUCHE,  
DAVID PALLIER and FRANÇOIS ILLIEN

## **SENSORS AND ACTUATORS**

**Implementation and Validation of a Low-Cost IoT-Enabled Shake Table System** ..... 1063  
THAMER AL-ZURIQAT, PATRICIA PERALTA ABADIA,  
CARLOS CHILLÓN GECK, KOSMAS DRAGOS and KAY SMARSLY

**Adapting Mach-Zehnder Interferometers for Vibration Sensing** .... 1071  
HOSSEIN MAHLOOJI, J. STEWART AITCHISON and FAE AZHARI

**High-Velocity Impact Detection and Localization Enabled by 10 MSa/s Sample-Rate FBG Interrogation** ..... 1079  
EGOR LIOKUMOVITCH, ZIV GLASSER, STAS BANK,  
IDDO KRESSEL, URI BEN-SIMON, SHAY SHOHAM  
and SHMUEL STERNKLAR

**High Sensitivity Wireless Strain Sensor for SHM Applications** ..... 1086  
HASSAN A. MAHMOUD, HUSSEIN NESSER, AHMED WAGIH  
and GILLES LUBINEAU

**Lamb Wave Actuation and Propagation Using Flexoelectric Transducers** ..... 1092  
SURAJ KUMAR ROUT and SANTOSH KAPURIA

**Fluorescence-Based Fiber Optic Sulphate Sensor for Long Term Sulphate Ion Monitoring in Concrete Structures** ..... 1101  
ZHEN LIN, YIQING NI and TONG SUN

## **SPECIAL SESSION: ACOUSTIC EMISSION AND HYBRID SHM**

**Validation of a Piezo Based Integrated Process and SHM System on Hollow Composite Aircraft Part Made by Vacuum Infusion Using a 3D Printed Smart Mold** ..... 1111  
MICHAEL SCHEERER, ZOLTAN SIMON, MICHAEL MARISCHLER,  
DAVID KAMPENHUBER and MARKUS HATZENBICHLER



|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| <b>Monitoring Damage Evolution in Carbon/ Epoxy and Carbon/ Thermoplastic Composites using Acoustic Emission Technique . . . . .</b>   | <b>1119</b> |
| MANOJ RIJAL, TRAVIS OBIE-ROLLE and MANNUR SUNDARESAN   |             |
| <b>A Comparison of Optical Sensing Systems with Piezo-Electric Sensors for Impact Identification of Composite Plates . . . . .</b>   | <b>1127</b> |
| NATALIA RIBEIRO MARINHO, RICHARD LOENDERSLOOT, FRANK GROOTEMAN, JAN WILLEM WIEGMAN and TIEDO TINGA   |             |
| <b>Computational Modeling of High-Temperature MEMS Sensor Array for Ultrasonics and Acoustic Emission in Structural Health Monitoring of High Temperature Advanced Reactor Pipes . . . . .</b> | <b>1135</b> |
| CHENXI XU, MATTHEW DALY, ALEXANDER HEIFETZ, DEREK KULTGEN and DIDEM OZEVIN   |             |
| <b>Combined Acoustic and Modal Structural Health Monitoring and Structural Assessment . . . . .</b>  | <b>1142</b> |
| HERBERT FRIEDMANN, PETER KRAEMER, ANDREAS NUBER, CHRISTOPH SCHMIDT and TOBIAS ADAM   |             |
| <b>Semi-supervised Learning for Acoustic Vision Monitoring of Tendons in Pre-stressed Concrete Bridges . . . . .</b>   | <b>1150</b> |
| ALEXANDER LANGE, MAX KÄDING, ROGHUA XU, STEFFEN MARX and JÖRN OSTERMANN  |             |
| <b>Non-Contact Acoustic Emission Monitoring of Corrosion-Fatigue Damage in Submerged Steel Structures . . . . .</b>  | <b>1158</b> |
| FILIPPO RICCIOLI and LOTFOLLAH PAHLAVAN  |             |
| <b>Automatic and High-Precision Acoustic Emission-Based Structural Health Monitoring of Concrete Structures . . . . .</b>  | <b>1166</b> |
| SEYYEDMAALEK MOMENI, THOMAS SCHUMACHER, LINDSAY LINZER and BRICE LECAMPION   |             |
| <b>Acoustic Emission Monitoring of Pre-Stressed Concrete Beams During Accelerated Corrosion of Pre-Stressing Tendons . . . . .</b>   | <b>1173</b> |
| SADEGH MAHMOUDKHANI, JUNHUI ZHAO, JASMIN COCHINGCO, AFTAB MUFTI and DOUGLAS THOMSON  |             |
| <b>Acoustic Emission Source Location Using Bayesian Optimisation for a Composite Helicopter Blade . . . . .</b>  | <b>1181</b> |
| C. A. LINDLEY, M. R. JONES, T. A. DARDENO, R. S. MILLS, N. DERVILIS and K. WORDEN  |             |

**Acoustic Emission Source Localization in Fiber-Reinforced Composites based on Multimodal Dispersion Compensation of Guided Waves . . . . . 1192**  
ARNAUD HUIJER, CHRISTOS KASSAPOGLOU  
and LOTFOLLAH PAHLAVAN

**Applicability of Data Augmentation Through Variational Autoencoder for Two-Dimensional Acoustic Emission Source Discrimination on Hollow Cylindrical Structures . . . . . 1200**  
GUAN-WEI LEE, STYLIANOS LIVADIOTIS  
and SALVATORE SALAMONE

**SPECIAL SESSION: AI-BASED DIAGNOSTICS & PROGNOSTICS OF LIGHTWEIGHT STRUCTURES**

**Advanced Health Monitoring of Composite Structures Through Deep Learning-Based Analysis of Lamb Wave Data for Developing Health Indicators . . . . . 1209**  
MORTEZA MORADI, FERDA C. GUL, JUAN CHIACHIO,  
RINZE BENEDICTUS and DIMITRIOS ZAROUCHAS

**Delamination Size Prediction for Compressive Fatigue Loaded Composite Structures Via Ultrasonic Guided Wave Based Structural Health Monitoring . . . . . 1217**  
FERDA C. GÜL, MORTEZA MORADI, RINZE BENEDICTUS,  
RAFIK HADJRIA, YEVGENIYA LUGOVTSOVA  
and DIMITRIOS ZAROUCHAS

**Pointwise Damage Mapping using Guided Wave Signals for Structural Health Monitoring . . . . . 1225**  
KARTHIK GOPALAKRISHNAN and V. JOHN MATHEWS

**Meta-Transfer-Learning based Damage Detection of CFRP Composite Structures . . . . . 1236**  
YAN CHEN and CHENG LIU

**Delamination Damage Detection of CFRP Composite Structures Using DSAN-based Deep Transfer Learning Approach . . . . . 1244**  
XUEBING XU and CHENG LIU

**SPECIAL SESSION: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR SHM: COMPUTER VISION APPROACHES**

**Next Generation 3D-DIC Technique with Sensor-Based Extrinsic Parameter Calibration and Natural Pattern Tracking . . . . . 1255**  
FABIO BOTTALICO, CHRISTOPHER NIEZRECKI  
and ALESSANDRO SABATO

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| <b>A Robotic-Based Framework for Quantifying Surface Cracks of Concrete Shear Walls</b> .....  | <b>1263</b> |
| PEDRAM BAZRAFESHAN and ARVIN EBRAHIMKHANLOU  |             |
| <b>Task-Significance-Aware Meta Learning for Few-Image-Based Structural Damage Recognition</b> .....                                   | <b>1269</b> |
| YANG XU, YI LI, YUNFEI FAN, XIAODONG ZHENG<br>and YUEQUAN BAO  |             |
| <b>Hyperspectral Imaging Applied for Pixel-Level Crack Detection with Background Interferences</b> .....                               | <b>1277</b> |
| SIYI CHEN, YOUWU WANG and YIQING NI  |             |
| <b>Automated Structural Surface Damage Identification, Classification and Severity Estimation Using Deep Learning Approaches</b> ..... | <b>1285</b> |
| MRINMOY KUMAR DAS, NIKHITA RAPOLU, DHATHRI MEDA,<br>PRAFULLA KALAPATAPU and VENKATA DILIP KUMAR PASUPULETI                             |             |
| <b>Enhancing Dam Inspection with Pixel-Level CNN-FCN Approach Via 3D Texture Mapping</b> .....   | <b>1294</b> |
| KRISADA CHAIYASARN, APICHAT BUATIK, VISHAL JANGID,<br>SIRISILP KONGSILP and NAVID KHADEMI  |             |
| <b>Real Time Condition Monitoring Using Camera and Phase-Based Motion Estimation</b> .....   | <b>1303</b> |
| SEUNGHWAN LEE, YINAN MIAO, YESEUL KONG,<br>HYEONWOO NAM and GYUHAE PARK  |             |
| <b>Intuitive and Less-Supervised Structural Damage Detection Using Phase-Based Vibration Imaging</b> .....                             | <b>1311</b> |
| YESEUL KONG, YINAN MIAO, SEUNG HWAN LEE<br>and GYUHAE PARK   |             |
| <b>Revolutionizing Road Maintenance: A Data Fusion and AI-Based Approach</b> .....   | <b>1319</b> |
| YU-TING HUANG, NIKKHIL VIJAYA SANKA,<br>MOHAMMAD R. JAHANSHAHI and FANGJIA SHEN  |             |
| <b>Enhancing Deep Learning-Based Damage Segmentation with Depth Hallucination</b> .....  | <b>1326</b> |
| TARUTAL GHOSH MONDAL and MOHAMMAD R. JAHANSHAHI  |             |
| <b>Target-Free, Vision-Based System Identification of Civil Structures Using Unmanned Aerial Vehicles</b> .....                        | <b>1333</b> |
| KHALID ALKADY, ACHILLES G. RASQUINHA, JOSEF T. BRANDL,<br>CHRISTINE E. WITTICH and CARRICK DETWEILER                                   |             |

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| <b>Accelerating Corrosion Surface-Area Measurements with Computer Vision and Deep Learning: An Ensemble Approach . . . . .</b>                              | <b>1341</b> |
| HAI D. NGUYEN, SHENGYI WANG, REBEKAH WILSON,<br>BRIAN EICK and NATALIE BECERRA-STASIEWICZ   |             |
| <b>Unleashing the Power of Multi-Source Data for Building Attribute Prediction Based on Deep Learning in Flood Risk Assessment . . . . .</b>                | <b>1349</b> |
| ABHISHEK SUBEDI, MOHAMMAD R. JAHANSHAHI<br>and DAVID JOHNSON  |             |
| <b>Two-Dimensional Convolutional Neural Networks for Wood Quality Assessment . . . . .</b>  | <b>1354</b> |
| MOHSEN MOUSAVI and AMIR H. GANDOMI  |             |
| <b>Multiview Vision-based Displacement Measurement of Full-Scale Miter Gate . . . . .</b>   | <b>1362</b> |
| JUNHWA LEE, SHUO WANG, TRAVIS FILLMORE<br>and BILLIE F. SPENCER   |             |
| <b>Novel Approach for Imaging Time Series for the Improvement of Classification Results “Grayscale Fingerprint Features Field Imaging (G3FI)” . . . . .</b> | <b>1369</b> |
| HAMMOUD AL JOUMAA, LOUI AL-SHROUF<br>and MOHIEDDINE JELALI  |             |
| <b>Bridge Point Cloud Completion Using Deep Learning Obtained in Actual Bridge Structures . . . . .</b>   | <b>1377</b> |
| GEN MATONO and MAYUKO NISHIO  |             |
| <b>Photorealistic Rendering and Modification of Motion Blur for the Simulation of Video Data for Structural Dynamics . . . . .</b>                          | <b>1384</b> |
| ANDRE GREEN, MOISES FELIPE SILVA, ALLISON DAVIS,<br>ALEXANDER KARPOWICZ, ANDREW SOMBORGER,<br>ALESSANDRO CATTANEO and DAVID MASCAREÑAS                      |             |
| <b>High-Resolution Vision Transformers for Pixel- Level Identification of Structural Components and Damage . . . . .</b>                                    | <b>1395</b> |
| KAREEM ELTOUNY, SEYEDOMID SAJEDI and XIAO LIANG   |             |
| <b>Structural Nonlinearity Extraction from Video Data for Damage Evaluation in Earthquake Events: Experimental Verification . . . . .</b>                   | <b>1403</b> |
| SIFAN WANG and MAYUKO NISHIO  |             |
| <b>Integrated Technology for Detection and Repair of Mechanical Component Surface Fatigue Microcracks Using Pulsed Laser . . . . .</b>                      | <b>1411</b> |
| QICHAO CHENG, DAMING ZHUANG, JUN HE and SHIXI YANG  |             |

**SPECIAL SESSION: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR SHM:  
MACHINE LEARNING APPROACHES**

**Development of an Artificial Intelligence (AI) for the Prediction of  
Fatigue Failure in Naval Structures: A Digital Twin Application . . . . . 1423**  
SOURAV BANERJEE, NAFISA MEHTAJ and BENJAMIN L. GRISSO

**Damage Localization Frameworks Based on Unsupervised Deep  
Learning Neural Networks . . . . . 1431**  
RAFAEL JUNGES, ZAHRA RASTIN, LUCA LOMAZZI,  
MARCO GIGLIO and FRANCESCO CADINI

**Deep Learning-Based Automatic Blind Identification Procedure for  
Structural Modal Identification . . . . . 1439**  
CONGGUANG ZHANG, JIANGPENG SHU, YUTONG GUO,  
YIFEI XU and YANBO NIU

**Structural Parameter Identification with a Physics-Informed  
Neural Networks-Based Framework . . . . . 1447**  
WEIJIA ZHANG, YI-QING NI, LEI YUAN, SHUO HAO  
and SU-MEI WANG

**GTRF: A General Tuples Recognition Framework Towards Deep  
Learning-Driven Structural Health Monitoring Adapted to  
Diverse Supervision Paradigms . . . . . 1455**  
QINGSONG XIONG, CHENG YUAN, HAIBEI XIONG  
and QINGZHAO KONG

**Exploring the Potential of Transfer Learning Applications for  
Structural Damage Classification . . . . . 1462**  
BURAK DURAN and SAEED EFTEKHAR AZAM

**iFlyNet: Inferring UAV Flight from Wing Behavior . . . . . 1470**  
O. TANAY TOPAC, CODY GRAY, AMRITA KUMAR  
and FU-KUO CHANG

**Population-Based SHM Under Environmental Variability Using a  
Classifier for Unsupervised Damage Detection . . . . . 1479**  
YACINE BEL-HADJ and WOUT WEIJTJENS

**Fundamental Study on Damage Detection of Civil Structures  
Modeled as MDOF System Based on Machine Learning . . . . . 1489**  
ATSUSHI MIKAMI

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| <b>Enhancing the Reliability of Structural Health Monitoring for Bolted Joint Connections in Segmented Rotor Blades Using Data Fusion . . . . .</b> | <b>1497</b> |
| ABDERRAHIM ABBASSI, NIKLAS ROMGENS, TANJA GRIEßMANN,<br>TILL JULIAN ADAM and RAIMUND ROLFES   |             |
| <b>Unsupervised Damage Detection for Smart Extraterrestrial Habitats Using Autoencoders and Information Fusion . . . . .</b>                        | <b>1505</b> |
| ZIXIN WANG, MOHAMMAD R. JAHANSHAHI, ILIAS BILIONIS,<br>YUGUANG FU, AMIN MAGHAREH and SHIRLEY J. DYKE  |             |
| <b>When is an SHM Problem a Multi-Task- Learning Problem? . . . . .</b>   | <b>1512</b> |
| S. C. BEE, L. A. BULL, N. DERVILIS and K. WORDEN  |             |
| <b>Low-Energy Impact Characterization Models and Damage Detection in Thin Monocoque Structures Using Artificial Intelligence . . . . .</b>          | <b>1521</b> |
| DANIEL DEL-RIO VELILLA, ANDRES PEDRAZA RODRIGUEZ,<br>ANTONIO FERNANDEZ-LOPEZ and ALFREDO GUEMES GORDO   |             |
| <b>Surface Damage Identification in 3D Printed Metal Parts Using Convolutional Neural Network . . . . .</b>   | <b>1529</b> |
| ALIREZA MODIR and IBRAHIM TANSEL  |             |
| <b>Enhancing Structural Health Monitoring and Management Through Edge, Fog and Cloud Computing Architectures . . . . .</b>                          | <b>1537</b> |
| VENKAT SURENDAR TALARI, VISVESH NARAHARISSETTY,<br>PRAFULLA KALAPATAPU and VENKATA DILIP KUMAR PASUPULETI   |             |
| <b>Impact Force Identification on Steel Pipelines Using Deep Learning and Bayesian Inference with Minimal Sensing Elements . . . . .</b>            | <b>1545</b> |
| MU'MEN HAMADNEH, MOHAMMAD ALI FAKIH<br>and SAMIR MUSTAPHA   |             |
| <b>On the Influence of Structural Attributes for Assessing Similarity in Population-Based Structural Health Monitoring . . . . .</b>                | <b>1553</b> |
| GIULIA DELO, CECILIA SURACE, KEITH WORDEN<br>and DANIEL S. BRENNAN  |             |
| <b>Graph Convolutional Neural Networks Based Strain Estimation . . . . .</b>  | <b>1563</b> |
| GIULIA MARASCO, SOHEILA SADEGHI ESHKEVARI<br>and SHAMIM N. PAKZAD   |             |
| <b>A Comparative Analysis of Concept Drift Detection Methods with a Systematic and Innovative Approach of Method Selection . . . . .</b>            | <b>1571</b> |
| M.SC. FABIAN GERZ, DR.-ENG. LOUI AL-SHROUF<br>and PROF. DR.-ENG. MOHIEDDINE JELALI  |             |

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| <b>Implementation of Information Entropy in an Industrial Internet of Things Approach for Structural Health Monitoring Applications .....</b> | <b>1579</b> |
| SARAH MALIK and ANTONIOS KONTSOS  |             |
| <b>Bidirectional Long Short-term Memory Network for Maglev Bridge Acceleration Data Reconstruction .....</b>                                  | <b>1588</b> |
| GAO-FENG JIANG, SU-MEI WANG and YI-QING NI  |             |
| <b>Vehicle-invariant Drive-by Monitoring Across Multiple Bridges through Bootstrapping-enhanced Unsupervised Domain Adaptation .....</b>      | <b>1596</b> |
| JATIN AGGARWAL, JINGXIAO LIU and HAE YOUNG NOH  |             |
| <b>Optimization of Damage Features Contaminated by Nonstationary Colored Noise Algorithms using Johansen Cointegration .....</b>              | <b>1604</b> |
| SAHAR HASSANI, ULRIKE DACKERMANN and AMIR H. GANDOMI  |             |
| <b>Two-Dimensional Acoustic Emission Source Localization on a Laminated Veneer Lumber Plate by Gaussian Process Regression ....</b>           | <b>1614</b> |
| XIANGDONG HE and XUAN ZHU   |             |
| <b>Piece-wise Ritz Analysis of Beams Subjected to Discontinuity in Slope .....</b>  | <b>1620</b> |
| SUDHARSAN PARTHASARATHY and RAKESH K. KAPANIA   |             |
| <b>Long-Period Dynamic Characteristics of Embedded Track Using Machine Learning .....</b>   | <b>1627</b> |
| YUANPENG HE, YANG ZHANG and YI-QING NI  |             |
| <b>Real-Time Crack Detection in Bridges Using Monitoring and Machine Learning—Verified with an Actual Damage Case .....</b>                   | <b>1636</b> |
| IMANE BAYANE, JACOB NYMAN, JENS HÄGGSTRÖM and JOHN LEANDER  |             |
| <b>SPECIAL SESSION: CHALLENGES OF AND SOLUTIONS FOR LONG-TERM STRUCTURAL HEALTH</b>   |             |
| <b>A Novel Numerical Approach for Fatigue Load Emulation of Offshore Wind Turbines Using Machine Learning .....</b>                           | <b>1647</b> |
| MIGUEL RESTREPO BOTERO, ALEXANDROS ILIOPOULOS, TOBIAS STINENBOSCH and LAURENT BEAUDET   |             |
| <b>An Autonomous Early Warning System Concept for Real-Time Remote Monitoring of Critical Structures .....</b>                                | <b>1656</b> |
| ASWIN HARIDAS, PAUL D. OKULOV, STEFAN NEUMANN and HOLGER SPECKMANN  |             |

**Smart Structural Health Monitoring for High-Speed Railway  
Bridges ..... 1664**  
RAFAEL CASTRO-TRIGUERO, RAFAEL GALLEGO SEVILLA  
and FERNANDO LEON-GARCIA

**Wireless Strain Monitoring System on the Hernando de Soto  
Bridge During Critical Repairs ..... 1671**  
MEHDI KALANTARI KHANDANI  
and MOHEB GHORBANISHEIKHNESHIN

**Technology Innovation in Developing the Health Monitoring  
Cloud Platform for Maglev Vehicle-Suspension-Guideway  
Coupling System ..... 1678**  
SU-MEI WANG, YANG LU, YI-QING NI and YOU-WU WANG

**Effects of Thermally Induced Distress on Adhesively Bonded  
Piezoelectric Wafer Active Sensors and Implications on Damage  
Detection and Localization ..... 1686**  
JESUS N. EIRAS, L. GAVÉRINA, L. MASTROMATTEO  
and J. M. ROCHE

**Novel Means and Ways of Getting Structural Health Monitoring  
into Application ..... 1695**  
CHRISTIAN BOLLER

**A Non-Parametric Mixed Learning Technique for Mitigating  
Environmental Effects on Structural Modal Frequencies ..... 1703**  
ALIREZA ENTEZAMI and STEFANO MARIANI

**Condition Monitoring of Steel Truss Bridge Using Acceleration  
Data ..... 1711**  
VAIBHAV GUPTA and U. SARAVANAN

**On Condition Monitoring of a Corroding Steel Truss  
Bridge – A Case Study ..... 1719**  
U. SARAVANAN and KAIBALYA LENKA

**SPECIAL SESSION: DISTRIBUTED AND QUASI-DISTRIBUTED  
FIBER-OPTIC AND ELECTRICAL SENSORS**

**Impact of Spectral Shift Quality (SSQ) on Fibre Optic Sensor  
Readings in Reinforced Concrete Beams ..... 1729**  
U. M. N. JAYAWICKREMA, H. M. C. M. HERATH,  
N. K. HETTIARACHCHI, H. P. SOORIYAARACHCHI,  
S. BANERJEE and J. A. EPAARACHCHI



**Performance of Crossed Long-Gauge Strain Sensors in the Spread  
Footing Foundation ..... 1737**  
YITIAN LIANG and BRANKO GLISIC

**Static and Dynamic Bridge Monitoring with Distributed Fiber  
Optic Sensing ..... 1745**  
LISA STRASSER, WERNER LIENHART and MADELEINE WINKLER

**Integrating Pre-Existing Telecommunication Fiber Cable  
Vibration Sensing and Drive-by Vehicle Vibration Sensing for  
Scalable BridgeHealth Monitoring ..... 1753**  
JINGXIAO LIU, SIYUAN YUAN, BIONDO BIONDI  
and HAE YOUNG NOH

**Vibration Propagation Analysis of Road Pavement Using Thin  
Layer Method for Fiber Optic Distributed Acoustic Sensing ..... 1761**  
KOTARO FUJIWARA, YUICHI YOSHIMURA,  
HIROYUKI AOSHIKA, MICHIO IMAI, AYAKA NASU,  
HIDEKI NAGATANI and JUNICHI KAWABATA

**SPECIAL SESSION: DYNAMIC DATA DRIVEN STATE  
AWARENESS FOR INTELLIGENT STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS**

**Topological Data Analysis for Real-Time Extraction of Time  
Series Features ..... 1773**  
ARMAN RAZMARASHOOLI, YANG KANG CHUA,  
VAHID BARZEGAR, HAN LIU, SIMON LAFLAMME, CHAO HU,  
AUSTIN R. J. DOWNEY and JACOB DODSON

**Microsecond Model Updating for 2D Structural Systems Using  
the Local Eigenvalue Modification Procedure ..... 1783**  
EMMANUEL A. OGUNNIYI, ALEXANDER B. VEREEN  
and AUSTIN R. J. DOWNEY

**Bayesian Damage Estimation with Regularized Data-Driven  
Stochastic Time Series Model ..... 1792**  
PEIYUAN ZHOU and FOTIS KOPSAFTOPOULOS

**A Data-sparse Approach to In-situ Fault Detection and  
Identification for Metal Additive Manufacturing ..... 1802**  
ALVIN CHEN, FOTIS KOPSAFTOPOULOS and SANDIPAN MISHRA

**Online Fatigue Damage Detection for Structures under Random  
Loading Using a Comparative Sensor-Data Approach ..... 1811**  
RANNAM CHAABAN and CLAUS-PETER FRITZEN

**SPECIAL SESSION: GUIDED WAVES IN STRUCTURES  
FOR SHM**

**Experimental and Numerical Studies of an Acoustic Coupler for  
Multiplexing of Guided Waves for SHM ..... 1821**  
CAMERON MARASHI, JEE MYUNG KIM and KARA PETERS

**Effects of Imperfect Interface on the Dispersion Curves of  
Torsional Waves in a Composite Hollow Cylinder ..... 1827**  
JUNZHEN WANG and JIANMIN QU

**Best Reconstruction Frequency of Lamb Waves Via Broadband  
Measurement ..... 1836**  
SANTOSH KAPURIA

**Wave-Based Damage Identification in Composite Strips and 2D  
Solids Using Inverse Multiresolution Wavelet Methods ..... 1844**  
DIMITRIS DIMITRIOU and DIMITRIS SARAVANOS

**Fiber Bragg Grating Sensor Based Mode Filtering Using Cosine  
Distance Metric ..... 1852**  
ROHAN SOMAN, KALEEESWARAN BALASUBRAMANIAM  
and PAWEL MALINOWSKI

**Sensitivity to Axial Stress and Temperature of Local Resonances  
in Rails ..... 1860**  
YUNING WU, KEPING ZHANG, XUAN ZHU and JOHN POPOVICS

**Structural Integrity Assessment of Nuclear Spent Fuel Canisters  
Using Guided Waves ..... 1865**  
STYLIANOS LIVADIOTIS, GUAN-WEI LEE, NATHAN WILSON  
and SALVATORE SALAMONE

**Uncertainty Quantification of Thickness Estimation Via  
Full-Field Ultrasonic Inspection ..... 1872**  
NEEL SHAH, ERICA M. JACOBSON, ERIC B. FLYNN  
and ADAM J. WACHTOR

**Detection, Localisation, and Quantification of Bolt Looseness in  
an Aluminium Plate Using Lamb Wave Analysis ..... 1881**  
A. BRASSINGTON, M. HAYWOOD ALEXANDER,  
N. DERVILIS, K. WORDEN and T. J. ROGERS

**The Effect of Temperature on Guided Wave Signal Characteristics  
in a Honeycomb Composite Sandwich Structure with Disbond  
and Delamination ..... 1891**  
RAMANA RAJA B, SIDDHARTH TALLUR and SAUVIK BANERJEE

|   |             |
|---|-------------|
| <b>Differential Strategy to High-Speed Inspection of Rails Via Passive Ultrasonic Monitoring .....</b>  | <b>1899</b> |
| IZABELA C. BATISTA, ALI ZARE HOSSEINZADEH,<br>DIPTOJIT DATTA and FRANCESCO LANZA DI SCALEA  |             |
| <b>Analysis of Acoustic Wave Generation by Low Frequency Air-coupled Transducers .....</b>  | <b>1907</b> |
| TOMASZ WANDOWSKI, MACIEJ RADZIENSKI,<br>PAWEL MALINOWSKI and PAWEL KUDELA   |             |
| <b>Ray Tracing Methodology for Elastic Wave Propagation Improve Simulation Applied to Aeronautic Composite Structures .....</b>                     | <b>1915</b> |
| FERNANDO SÁNCHEZ IGLESIAS, ANTONIO FERNÁNDEZ<br>LÓPEZ and ALFREDO GÜEMES GORDO  |             |
| <b>Analyses by Global-Local Method of Ultrasonic Guided Waves Propagation in Pristine and Defective Plates for Accurate Quantitative SHM .....</b>  | <b>1923</b> |
| MARGHERITA CAPRIOTTI, MINGYUE ZHANG,<br>LUIS ESCALONA, FRANCESCO LANZA DI SCALEA<br>and ANTONINO SPADA  |             |
| <b>Non-Destructive Evaluation of FSW Tool Plunge Depth in Thin Metallic Sheet Weld Using Ultrasonic Guided Waves .....</b>                          | <b>1931</b> |
| MANISH KUMAR MEHTA, GOVINDA GAUTAM,<br>D. M. JOGLEKAR and D. K. DWIVEDI   |             |
| <b>Application of Damage Detection of Steel Structure Lamb Wave Modal Superposition Imaging Based on Scanning Laser Vibration Measurement .....</b> | <b>1939</b> |
| ZIPING WANG, BINGQIAN LI, HANGRUI CUI,<br>ANTONIO FERNÁNDEZ-LÓPEZ and ALFREDO GÜEMES  |             |
| <b>Active Sensing Using LDV and T-Shaped Arrays in Metallic Plates for Damage Localization .....</b>  | <b>1952</b> |
| LUIS PAULO M. LIMA and GYUHAE PARK  |             |
| <b>Wave Propagation and Damage Localization in Thick-Walled Hollow Cylinders Through Inner Sensing .....</b>  | <b>1960</b> |
| YUANMAN ZHANG, SHENGBO SHAN and LI CHENG  |             |
| <b>Ultrasonic Guided Waves-Based Nonlinear Autoregressive Defect Detection for Railway Tracks Using Fiber Bragg Grating Sensing ...</b>             | <b>1968</b> |
| DA-ZHI DANG, YOU-WU WANG and YI-QING NI   |             |

**Debond Localization in Honeycomb Core Sandwich Composites Using A0 Guided Wave Mode ..... 1976**  
AUROVINDA KUMAR MITRA and DHANASHRI M. JOGLEKAR

**Lamb Wave Based Non Destructive Evaluation of Weld Quality in Thin Section Friction Stir Joints ..... 1984**  
GOVINDA GUAUTAM, MANISH KUMAR MEHTA, DHANASHRI M. JOGLEKAR and DHEERENDRA KR. DWIVEDI

**SPECIAL SESSION: HUMAN PERFORMANCE AND HUMAN-STRUCTURE INTERACTIONS**

**Wireless Gait and Respiration Monitoring Using Nanocomposite Sensors ..... 1997**  
TAYLOR PIERCE, YUN-AN LIN and KENNETH J. LOH

**Measuring the Golf Swing Pattern Using Motion Tape for Feedback and Fault Detection ..... 2005**  
SHIH-CHAO HUANG, YUN-AN LIN, TAYLOR PIERCE, ELIJAH WYCKOFF and KENNETH J. LOH

**Detecting Gait Abnormalities in Foot-Floor Contacts During Walking Through Footstep- Induced Structural Vibrations ..... 2013**  
YIWEN DONG, YUYAN WU and HAEYOUNG NOH

**Applying an Innovative User-Centric Co-Creation (UC<sup>3</sup>) Approach in Developing Intelligent Wearable Robots for Elderly Assistance: From a Transdisciplinary Lens ..... 2023**  
VIVIAN W. Q. LOU, CLIO Y. M. CHENG, KE CHEN, CALVIN K. L. OR, YONG HU and NING XI

**Improving Human Balance with Wearable Devices ..... 2036**  
YAFEI ZHAO, JIAMING CHEN and NING XI

**Emotion Recognition Using Footstep-Induced Floor Vibration Signals ..... 2046**  
YUYAN WU, YIWEN DONG, SUMER VAID, GABRIELLA M. HARARI and HAE YOUNG NOH

**Smart Sensing Technology and its Aid in Flood Data Analysis for Northern New Mexico ..... 2056**  
FERNANDO MOREU, TIMOTHY JACOB THIERGART, ALI MOHAMMADKHORASANI and KAVEH MALEK

**Human-Machine Interfaces Using Augmented Reality ..... 2064**  
FERNANDO MOREU and KAVEH MALEK

**Energy Based Ultrasonic Techniques for Earlystage Damage Detection in Concrete Structures . . . . . 2072**  
SUKANYA BASU and SAPTARSHI SASMAL

**Quasi-static Component Generation of Guided Waves and Its Applications on Damage Detection . . . . . 2080**  
WEIBIN LI, CHANG JIANG, MINGXI DENG and XINLIN QING

**SPECIAL SESSION: INSPECTING AND PRESERVING INFRASTRUCTURE THROUGH ROBOTIC EXPLORATION**

**Autonomous Robotic Inspection based on Active Vision and Deep Reinforcement Learning . . . . . 2091**  
WEN TANG and MOHAMMAD R. JAHANSAHI

**Robotic Ultrasonic Inspection of Large and Complex Structural Assets . . . . . 2099**  
ADAM GILMOUR, MORTEZA TABATABAEIPOUR,  
ROSS MCMILLAN, KONSTANTINOS TZAFERIS,  
RORY HAMPSON, WILLIAM JACKSON, DAYI ZHANG,  
ALISTAIR LAWLEY, AASIM MOHAMED, CHARLES MACLEOD,  
ANTHONY GACHAGAN, STEPHEN G. PIERCE and GORDON DOBIE

**Reinforcement Learning-based Bridge Inspection Management . . . . . 2107**  
XIN ZHANG, MANUEL SALMERON, BENJAMIN E. WOGEN

**A Streamlining Remote Sensing and Digitalization Process for Bridge Inspection . . . . . 2118**  
ZHENHUA SHI, HAIBIN ZHANG, TARUTAL GHOSH MONDAL,  
BRYAN A. HARTNAGEL and GENDA CHEN

**DamBot™: An Unmanned Amphibious Vehicle for Earth Dam Outlet Inspection . . . . . 2126**  
JORDAN KLEIN, STEVEN BUNKLEY, CHARLES ELLISON,  
GARRY GLASPELL, KENNETH NILES, CAROLINE WEBB,  
RICHARD BROWN, CHARLES DICKERSON and ANTON NETCHAEV

**Deep Learning-Based Corroded Crack Identification in Reinforced Concrete Using SCNet Model . . . . . 2134**  
YING XU and SIWEI ZHOU

**Structural Health Monitoring with Robot and Augmented Reality Teams . . . . . 2145**  
ALIREZA FATH, YI LIU, SCOTT TANCH, NICK HANNA, TIAN XIA  
and DRYVER HUSTON

**Augmented Reality with Live Video Streaming for Beyond Visual  
Line of Sight Inspection for a Steel Bridge ..... 2152**  
JOEL MURITHI RUNJI and GENDA CHEN

**Monitoring of Freezing Water or Melting Ice in Aircraft Fuel  
Tanks and Fuselages by Acoustic Emission ..... 2159**  
HELGE PFEIFFER, DAVID SEVENO, JOHAN REYNAERT,  
PIETER JAN JORDAENS, ÖZLEM CEYHAN and MARTINE WEVERS

**Vibration Monitoring of Hydropower Systems ..... 2167**  
ANITA H. BROWN, BRIAN EICK, JIM WILCOSKI  
and CLAYTON THURMER

**“Gen III” Piezoelectric PMN-PZT Single Crystal Sensors and  
Actuators for Structural Health Monitoring Application ..... 2175**  
HYUN-JAE JOO, MOON-CHAN KIM and HO-YONG LEE

**Curing Monitoring of Composite Patch Using Electromechanical  
Impedance ..... 2178**  
JINSHAN WEN, JIANJIAN ZHU, YISHOU WANG and XINLIN QING

**SPECIAL SESSION: INTEGRATING PHYSICS IN DATA-DRIVEN  
METHODS FOR SHM**

**A Few-Shot Learning Framework for Rotor Unbalance and Shaft  
Crack Fault Diagnostic Based on Physics-Informed Neural  
Network ..... 2189**  
WEIKUN DENG, KHANH T. P. NGUYEN, CHRISTIAN GOGU,  
JEROME MORIO and KAMAL MEDJAHER

**Evaluation of U-Net for Time-Domain Full Waveform  
Inversion Improvement ..... 2197**  
SHOAIB ANWAR, AUSTIN YUNKER, RAJ KETTIMUTHU,  
MARK A. ANASTASIO, UMBERTO VILLA and JIAZE HE

**Physics-Informed Gaussian Processes for Wave Loading  
Prediction ..... 2205**  
DANIEL J. PITCHFORTH, ROBIN S. MILLS,  
TIMOTHY J. ROGERS, ULF T. TYGESEN and ELIZABETH J. CROSS

**Fast Prediction of Dynamic Structural Response Using Reduced  
Basis Function Combined with Neural Network ..... 2215**  
JIXING CAO, SER-TONG QUEK, SHANLI ZHANG,  
CHI ZHANG, MINBO CAI and MICHAEL SI

**From Initial to Final State: Single Step Prediction of Structural Dynamic Response** ..... 2223  
LEI YUAN, YI-QING NI, SHUO HAO and WEI-JIA ZHANG

**Physics-Informed Transfer Learning in PBSHM: A Case Study on Experimental Helicopter Blades** ..... 2230  
J. POOLE, P. GARDNER, A. J. HUGHES, R. S. MILLS,  
T. A. DARDENO, N. DERVILIS and K. WORDEN

**Partially Structured Gaussian Processes for Grey-Box Learning in SHM** ..... 2241  
M. R. JONES, D. J. PITCHFORTH and E. J. CROSS

**Physics-Informed Neural Networks for One- Step-Ahead Prediction of Dynamical Systems** ..... 2253  
MARCUS HAYWOOD-ALEXANDER and ELENI CHATZI

**Physics-Informed Guided Wavefield Data Completion** ..... 2263  
HARSHA VARDHAN TETALI and JOEL B. HARLEY

**Damage Identification for Plate Structures Using Transfer Learning Physics-Informed Neural Networks** ..... 2272  
WEI ZHOU and YONGFENG XU

**SPECIAL SESSION: MULTIFUNCTIONAL MATERIAL AND METAMATERIAL STRUCTURES**

**Temperature-Responsive and Passive Wireless Mechanical Metamaterial Sensors** ..... 2283  
VISHNU R. NAIDU, YUJIN PARK and KENNETH J. LOH

**Resistive Response of Carbon-Black-Epoxy Nanocomposites Upon Exposure to Moisture** ..... 2291  
RÉMY FAUCHE, HELGE PFEIFFER, DAVID SEVENO  
and MARTINE WEVERS

**Multifunctional Soft Transducer for Electrical and Optical Sensing Applied to Fatigue Crack Monitoring** ..... 2299  
HAN LIU, MATTHIAS KOLLOSCH, SIMON LAFLAMME  
and DAVID R. CLARKE

**Recent Progress in Screen-Printed Smart Skin for Real-Time Load Detection in Structures** ..... 2308  
YU-JIN JUNG, HYE-KYOUNG JEON and SUNG-HWAN JANG

**Experimental Investigation on Flexural Vibration Control of Large-scale Reinforced Concrete Metaplates . . . . . 2315**  
JEWOO CHOI, TONGJUN CHO, SANG GEUN BAE  
and HYO SEON PARK

**Multifunctional Characterization of 3D Printed Structural Battery Composites for Battery Health Monitoring . . . . . 2322**  
YUEKUN CHEN and XIANGYANG DONG

**Identifying the Location of Cracks in Intelligent Carbon Based TRC Elements . . . . . 2330**  
MAHDI GABEN and YISKA GOLDFELD

**Sustainable Smart Self-Sensory Infrastructures for Leakage Detection . . . . . 2338**  
MEREL TANNOUS ABAYA and YISKA GOLDFELD

**Development of a Fiber-Shaped MLPerovskite Sensor for Structural Health Monitoring in Composites . . . . . 2345**  
LUCAS BRAGA CARANI, JAPHIA ROBINSON,  
MD. MOSTAFIZUR RAHMAN and OKENWA OKOLI

**Fire Safety of Rechargeable Battery Energy Storage Systems: Present and Future Prospects . . . . . 2353**  
DANIEL DARNIKOWSKI and MAGDALENA MIELOSZYK

**SPECIAL SESSION: NONLINEAR ACOUSTIC AND ULTRASONIC TECHNIQUES FOR STRUCTURAL HEALTH MONITORING**

**Monitoring of Phase Transition in Frozen Soil Using the Nonlinear (SPC-1) Ultrasonic Technique . . . . . 2363**  
UMAR AMJAD, UDDAV GHIMIRE, HAMAD ALNUAIMI,  
TEJO BHEEMASETTI and TRIBIKRAM KUNDU

**Non-Linear Signature in Ultrasonic Pulse- Echo Signal for Structural Health Monitoring of Fatigue Induced Composite Structures . . . . . 2371**  
HOSSAIN AHMED, ASEF ISHRAQ SADAF  
and SOURAV BANERJEE

**Ultrasonic Guided Wave Imaging Method Based on Particle Swarm Optimization for Composite Damage Monitoring . . . . . 2380**  
JIKANG YUE, XIAOBIN HONG, BIN ZHANG  
and ZONGQIANG LUO



**Nonlinear Guided Wave Mixing for Fatigue Damages  
Identification in Steel Pipe ..... 2388**  
RUI ZHANG, NING LI, SHULING GAO and YANAN YUE

**Assessment of Intermetallic Compounds within Dissimilar Joints  
Using Nonlinear Guided- Wave Features ..... 2398**  
MIMA MANSOUR, MOHAMMAD ALI FAKIH, FADI AL-BADOUR  
and SAMIR MUSTAPHA

### **SPECIAL SESSION: PROBABILISTIC SHM**

**Closed Form Solution for SHM-Based Bayesian Reliability  
Assessment ..... 2409**  
STEFANO ZORZI, DANIEL TONELLI, ALESSANDRO LOTTI,  
MARCO BROCCARDO and DANIELE ZONTA

**Metrological Validation of Non-Destructive Testing Techniques  
for Assessing the Condition State of Pre-Stressing Systems ..... 2417**  
STEFANO ZORZI, FRANCESCO ROSSI, DANIEL TONELLI,  
ALESSANDRO LOTTI and DANIELE ZONTA

**Natural Frequency and Displacement Ratio Based Probabilistic  
Damage Identification for Bridges Using FE Model Update ..... 2425**  
YOSHIYUKI YAJIMA, MURTUZA PETLADWALA,  
TAKAHIRO KUMURA and CHUL-WOO KIM

**Inverse Reconstruction of Unsteady Aerodynamic Loads Acting  
on Railway Vehicles ..... 2433**  
SHUO HAO, SU-MEI WANG, ZHENG-WEI CHEN,  
WEI-JIA ZHANG and YI-QING NI

**Hybrid Probabilistic Deep Learning for Damage Identification ..... 2441**  
YANG ZHANG, YOU-WU WANG and YI-QING NI

**A Comparison of Value-based and Policy-based Reinforcement  
Learning for Monitoring-informed Railway Maintenance  
Planning ..... 2449**  
GIACOMO ARCIERI, CYPRIEN HOELZL, OLIVER SCHWERY,  
DANIEL STRAUB, KONSTANTINOS G. PAKONSTANTINOU  
and ELENI CHATZI

**Deep Learning based Pothole Monocular Depth Estimation and  
Segmentation Using 3D Scanner-Derived Depth Maps ..... 2460**  
RAHMAT ALI and YOUNG-JIN CHA

**On Metrics for Information Value Quantification . . . . . 2468**  
SEBASTIAN THÖNS, MAYANK CHADHA, ZHEN HU  
and MICHAEL D. TODD

**Enabling Robustness to Vehicle-Bridge Variability in Drive-By  
Bridge Health Monitoring through Physics-Informed Signal  
Decomposition . . . . . 2476**  
PEIYAO XU, JATIN AGGARWAL, HAE YOUNG NOH  
and JINGXIAO LIU

**Explainable Machine Learning Framework for Guided Waves  
Signal Reconstruction and Structural Health Monitoring  
Under Varying Operating and Environmental States . . . . . 2484**  
YIMING FAN and FOTIS KOPSAFTOPOULOS

**Magnetic-Driven Swimming Microrobots . . . . . 2493**  
JINGFAN CHEN, HANWEN HU and YA WANG

**SPECIAL SESSION: RECENT ADVANCES ON DATA  
PROCESSING TECHNIQUES FOR ULTRASONICS-BASED  
SHM/NDE**

**Ultrasonic Connected Probe for In-Service Monitoring of  
Pressure Equipment . . . . . 2511**  
NATALIA MARCIAL ALFARO, OLIVIER BARDOUX, DANIEL GARY,  
SOPHIE WASTIAUX, VALENTIN PERRET and HUGO CENCE

**Study of the Guided Wave Sensing by Hybrid Piezoelectric-FBG  
Approach . . . . . 2518**  
SULTAN AHAMAD, PAWEL H. MALINOWSKI, ROHAN SOMAN  
and TOMASZ WANDOWSKI

**Ultrasonic Multi-Hole Imaging Using Full Waveform Inversion . . . . . 2526**  
SHOAIB ANWAR, MD. AKTHARUZZAMAN, JOHN DAY  
and JIAZE HE

**Defect Identification in Concrete Using Deep Learning  
Technique on Nonlinear Ultrasonic Wave . . . . . 2534**  
TONGHAO ZHANG and DIDEM OZEVIN

**Experimental Study on Debonding Detection for Grouted Jacket  
Connection of an Off-Shore Wind Turbine Supporting Structure  
Specimen with PZT Patches . . . . . 2543**  
QIAN LIU, BIN XU, XINHAI ZHU, JIANG WANG and WEI HU

**SPECIAL SESSION: RECENT SATELLITE-BASED STRUCTURAL HEALTH MONITORING OF STRUCTURES AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Multi-Scale MT-InSAR Techniques for Structural Health Monitoring: Applications to the Italian Cultural Heritage Context . . . 2553**  
AMEDEO CAPRINO, GIANMARCO BONALDO,  
FILIPPO LORENZONI and FRANCESCA DA PORTO

**Remote Structural Health Monitoring of Concrete Bridge Using InSAR: A Case Study . . . . . 2561**  
OTHMANE LASRI, PIER FRANCESCO GIORDANO  
and MARIA PINA LIMONGELLI

**Satellite Monitoring of Transportation Infrastructure . . . . . 2569**  
ISTEMI F. OZKAN, DANIEL CUSSON and SHAHROZ W. SHAIKH

**Satellite Multispectral and Infrared Imagery Analysis to Contextualize Bridge Structural Health Observations – A Study of the Samuel de Champlain Bridge in Montreal, Canada . . . . . 2577**  
HELEN STEWART and DANIEL CUSSON

**Technical Guidance on Satellite-based Deformation Monitoring of Bridges . . . . . 2585**  
DANIEL CUSSON and FERNANDO GREENE GONDI

**C-GMS, The Canadian Ground Motion Service-Assessment and Correction of Thermal Effects on Bridges . . . . . 2593**  
VALENTIN PONCOS and DANIEL CUSSON

**SPECIAL SESSION: SEISMIC SHM FOR CIVIL STRUCTURES**

**Coarse-to-Fine Seismic Assessment Based on Computer Vision . . . . . 2603**  
YANG XU, QIANGQIANG ZHANG and HUI LI

**Dynamic Behavior of Cabril Dam: Finite Element Model Calibration, Structural Health Monitoring (2008–2023) and Seismic Safety Assessment . . . . . 2611**  
SERGIO OLIVEIRA, ANDRE ALEGRE, RAFAEL RAMOS,  
JORGE PROENCA and PAULO MENDES

**Damage Assessment in a Reinforced Concrete Structure under Quasi-Static Shear Loading Using OFDR-based Fibre-Optic Distributed Strain Monitoring** ..... 2619  
ISMAIL HAMDI, SYLVAIN MAGNE, STÉPHANE ROUGEAULT,  
PHILIPPE MONGABURE, SANDRA VASIC,  
PIERRE-ETIENNE CHARBONNEL, FAN WANG,  
ESTELLE HERVÉ-SECOURGEON and FRANÇOIS VOLDOIRE

**Seismic Resilience Assessment of Instrumented Buildings:  
A Performance-based Monitoring Approach** ..... 2627  
MILAD ROOHI and MILAD CHERAGHZADE

**Strain Sensing in Thin Composite Laminates with Embedded  
Fiber Bragg Grating Sensors** ..... 2635  
BRAYDEN ALLER, SERGIO PELLEGRINO, NATHAN KINKAID,  
JUAN MEJIA-ARIZA, RICHARD OTIS, PATRICK HON MAN CHAN  
and FRANCISCO PENA

**A Multi-Frequency Virtual Time-Reversal Technique for Impact  
Localization on Stiffened Woven Composite Structures Using  
A0 Mode Lamb Wave** ..... 2643  
XU ZENG, DESHUANG DENG, LEI YANG and ZHANJUN WU

## **SPECIAL SESSION: SHM TECHNOLOGY IN WIND TURBINES**

**Radar-Based Structural Monitoring of Wind Turbines Blades:  
Field Results from Two Operational Wind Turbines** ..... 2653  
MORITZ MÄLZER, SEBASTIAN BECK, SERCAN ALIPEK,  
ELIAS REICHART, JOCHEN MOLL, VIKTOR KROZER,  
CHRISTOS OIKONOMOPOULOS, JÜRGEN KASSNER,  
MANFRED HÄGELEN, THOMAS HEINECKE, BURKHARD CERBE,  
JONAS ROSE, VESA KLUMPP, MARTIN BERGER and MARIO KOHL

**Separation of Physical from Mathematical Poles in Operational  
Modal Analysis Using Reduced, Reassembled Covariance  
Matrices** ..... 2661  
MARCEL WIEMANN, LUKAS BONEKEMPER, JONAS KAPPEL  
and PETER KRAEMER

**Tower Vibration-Based Icing Detection on Operational Wind  
Turbines** ..... 2669  
MUSTAPHA CHAAR, WOUT WEIJTJENS, YACINE BEL-HADJ  
and CHRISTOF DEVRIENDT

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| <b>Fleetwide Interface Fatigue Load Prediction of an Operational Offshore Wind Farm Using a Single Accelerometer and SCADA Data .....</b>                    | <b>2678</b> |
| FRANCISCO DE N. SANTOS, NYMFA NOPPE, WOUT WEIJTJENS<br>and CHRISTOF DEVRIENDT  |             |
| <b>A Concept of Radial Pseudo-Force for Damage Detection in Wind Turbine Towers .....</b>  | <b>2689</b> |
| WEI XU, MAOSEN CAO, ZHONGQING SU<br>and WIESLAW OSTACHOWICZ  |             |
| <b>Development and Installation of a Robust and Reliable Research Structural Health Monitoring System for Grouted Joints of Offshore Wind Turbines .....</b> | <b>2697</b> |
| JONAS KAPPEL, MARCEL WIEMANN, JOHANNES KASGEN,<br>MARCO JACKEL, THOMAS MAETZ, JOCHEN MOLL,<br>HOLGER HUHN and PETER KRAEMER                                  |             |
| <b>Dimensionality Reduction of Active Vibration Data for Detection and Monitoring of Progressive Damage in Wind Turbine Blade .....</b>                      | <b>2705</b> |
| MADS ANKER FREMMELEV, PURIM LADPLI,<br>ESBEN ORLOWITZ and NIKOLAOS DERVILIS  |             |
| <b>Vibration Transmissibility as a Method of Damage Detection on Horizontal Axis Wind Turbine Blades .....</b>   | <b>2712</b> |
| RACHEL HENDERSON, ANTHONY SINCLAIR and FAE AZHARI  |             |
| <b>Joint Input and State Estimation of a Scaled Wind Turbine Model: An Experimental Study .....</b>  | <b>2720</b> |
| ZIMO ZHU and SONGYE ZHU  |             |
| <b>Fatigue Evaluation of Offshore Wind Turbines Using In-Situ Strain Data .....</b>  | <b>2728</b> |
| HOU QIAO, GUANGMING XU, CE SHEN, YONGLEI SU, WEI LI<br>and CHUANRUI GUO  |             |
| <b>Quantifiable Scour Detection for Offshore Wind Turbines Using Resonance Frequency Monitoring and a Digital Twin .....</b>                                 | <b>2739</b> |
| MAXIMILLIAN WEIL, CARLOS SASTRE JURADO,<br>MUSTAFA CHAAR, KRISTOF WINKLER, WOUT WEIJTJENS<br>and CHRISTOF DEVRIENDT  |             |
| <b>Developing Digital Twins of Dynamic Systems Using Vision Techniques, Multi-View Stitching, and Expansion Methods .....</b>                                | <b>2750</b> |
| JAVAD BAQERSAD, RASOUL ATASHIPOUR<br>and FOROOGH ROUHOLLAHI  |             |

**Automated Operational Modal Analysis for the Monitoring of a  
Wind Turbine Blade . . . . . 2759**  
ANDRE TAVARES, DIOGO DRAPIER, EMILIO DI LORENZO,  
PETER ZOLTAN CSURCSIA, TIM DE TROYER, WIM DESMET  
and KONSTANTINOS GRYLLIAS

**Anomaly Detection in Offshore Wind Turbine Structures  
using Hierarchical Bayesian Modelling . . . . . 2767**  
SIMON M. SMITH, AIDAN J. HUGHES, TINAA A. DARDENO,  
LAWRENCE A. BULL, NIKOLAOS DERVILIS and KEITH WORDEN

**Wind Turbine Monitoring Using Optical Motion Magnification:  
Challenges and Opportunities . . . . . 2776**  
TYMON B. NIEDUZAK, NITIN N. KULKARNI, CHRISTOPHER  
NIEZRECKI and ALESSANDRO SABATO

**SPECIAL SESSION: STRUCTURAL MONITORING FOR THE  
SPACECRAFT STRUCTURES**

**Effect of Space Environment on Structural Diagnostics . . . . . 2787**  
FUNMILOLA NWOKOCHA, ANDREI ZAGRAI  
and MARY ANDERSON

**Durability of Surface Mounted PZT and FBG Guided Wave  
Sensors Under Reusable Launch Vehicle Representative  
Thermal Cycling . . . . . 2795**  
LOIC MASTROMATTEO, LUDOVIC GAVERINA,  
JEAN-MICHEL ROCHE, FLORIAN LAVELLE  
and FRANCOIS-XAVIER IRISARRI

**A Structural Health Monitoring System for Impact and Damage  
Detection in Space Structures . . . . . 2803**  
MARIYA POZHANKA, ANDREI ZAGRAI, ISABELLA WELLS,  
RAMON ROMERO, AMRITA KUMAR, ROSHAN JOSEPH,  
CODY GRAY and FRANKLIN LI

**Flexible Multifunctional Structural Health Monitoring Systems  
for Inflatable Space Habitat Structures . . . . . 2812**  
FRANKLIN LI, SERENA WANG, ROSHAN JOSEPH  
and AMRITA KUMAR

**Satellite InSAR Technology for Displacements Monitoring of  
Bridges: A Comparison with Onsite Topographic Measurements  
and Uncertainty Quantification . . . . . 2822**  
ANDREA VALENTINI, DANIEL TONELLI, ALFREDO ROCCA,  
ALESSANDRO LOTTI, STEFANO ZORZI  
and DANIELE ZONTA

## **STATISTICAL METHODS AND MACHINE LEARNING**

**On Engle-Granger Cointegration Using Treed Gaussian Processes** ..... 2833  
KEITH WORDEN and ELIZABETH J. CROSS

**A Decision Framework for Selecting Information-Transfer Strategies in Population-Based SHM** ..... 2844  
AIDAN J. HUGHES, JACK POOLE, NIKOLAOS DERVILIS, PAUL GARDNER and KEITH WORDEN

**Enhancing Structural Health Monitoring with Machine Learning and Data Surrogates: A TCA-Based Approach for Damage Detection and Localisation** ..... 2854  
R. S. BATTU, K. AGATHOS and E. PAPATHEOU

**On the Use of Model-Based Versus Data-Based Approaches for Virtual Sensing in SHM** ..... 2862  
EVANGELOS PAPATHEOU, KONSTANTINOS TATSIS, KONSTANTINOS AGATHOS, MARCUS HAYWOOD-ALEXANDER, NIKOLAOS DERVILIS and KEITH WORDEN

**Large-Span Bridge Strain Reconstruction Based on Bidirectional LSTM and ESN** ..... 2870  
YAN-KE TAN, YU-LING WANG, YI-QING NI, QI-LIN ZHANG and YOU-WU WANG

**Sharing Information Between Machine Tools to Improve Surface Finish Forecasting** ..... 2879  
D. R. CLARKSON, L. A. BULL, T. A. DARDENO, C. T. WICKRAMARACHCHI, E. J. CROSS, T. J. ROGERS, K. WORDEN, N. DERVILIS and A. J. HUGHES

**An Ensemble Learning-Based Alert Trigger System for Predictive Maintenance of Assets with In-Situ Sensors** ..... 2889  
DAN AO, GUGA GUGARATSHAN, DAKOTA BARTHLOW, SARAH MIELE, JERI BOUNDY and JAMES WARREN

**Hierarchical Bayesian Modelling of a Family of FRFs** ..... 2897  
TINA A. DARDENO, LAWRENCE A. BULL, ROBIN S. MILLS, NIKOLAOS DERVILIS and KEITH WORDEN

**Towards Multilevel Modelling of Train Passing Events on the Staffordshire Bridge** ..... 2906  
LAWRENCE A. BULL, CHIHO JEON, MARK GIROLAMI, ANDREW DUNCAN, JENNIFER SCHOOLING and MIGUEL BRAVO HARO

**Predicting Axial Stress in Continuous Welded Rails Using Machine Learning** ..... 2917  
MATTHEW BELDING, ALI ENSHAEIAN and PIERVINCENZO RIZZO

**Enhancement of Structural Health Monitoring Framework on Beams based on k-Nearest Neighbor Algorithm** ..... 2926  
Wael A. Altabay, Mohammad Noori, Zhishen Wu, Ahmed Silik and Vasilis Sarhosis

## **SYSTEM IDENTIFICATION AND STRUCTURAL DYNAMICS**

**Incorporating Modal Testing into Dynamic Load Identification from Structural Vibration Measurement** ..... 2937  
YUANCHEN ZENG, ALFREDO NÚÑEZ and ZILI LI

**Research on Modal Identification of High-Speed Maglev Guideway Structure Based on Data Fusion and Genetic Algorithm** ... 2945  
JINGYU HUANG, ZIYANG ZHANG, XIAONONG WANG and YUHAO ZHENG

**Rail Roughness Identification Via On-Board Acceleration Data and Bayesian Filtering** ..... 2953  
CHARIKLEIA D. STOURA, VASILIS K. DERTIMANIS and ELENI N. CHATZI

**Interaction between Mass and Stiffness Parameters of Connections for Structural Parameter Estimation of a Steel Grid** ..... 2960  
MILAD MEHRKASH and ERIN SANTINI-BELL

**Uncertainty Laws of MIMO Modal Identification** ..... 2968  
BINBIN LI and PEIXIANG WANG

**Continuous-Time State-Space Neural Network and Its Application in Modeling of Forced-Vibration Systems** ..... 2976  
HONG-WEI LI, YI-QING NI, YOU-WU WANG, ZHENG-WEI CHEN and EN-ZE RUI

**System Identification Via Auto-Encoders: A Comparison between Data-Driven and Physics-Informed Solutions** ..... 2984  
ROBERTA CUMBO, ROBERTO MORELLI, ALESSANDRO NICOLOSI and ABHISHEK KUMAR

**Vertical System Identification of a 52-Story High-Rise Building Using Seismic Accelerations** ..... 2992  
VIVIANA VELA, ERTUGRUL TACIROGLU and MONICA KOHLER



**Physics-Informed Neural Network for Nonlinear Structural  
System Identification ..... 3001**  
TONG LIU and HADI MEIDANI

**Improving Hybrid Model Accuracy for Structural Analysis:  
The Effects of Parameterized Joint Stiffness on System  
Equivalent Model Mixing ..... 3012**  
KANG-JAE PARK and YONG-HWA PARK

**Damage Localization in an Aluminum Plate Using Built-In  
Piezo-electric Sensor Induced Ultrasonic Signals ..... 3018**  
KAI JUN CHEN, GALEN JIANG, RUIDE “READER” WANG,  
EVAN HEDDING, SANJOT “SUNNY” SINGH, DANIEL OLUWALANA,  
JOONGHYUN LEE, NEILABJO MAITRA, ISAIAH COLOBONG,  
SAMAN FARHANGDOUST, SHABBIR AHMED and FU-KUO CHANG

*Author Index*

# Preface

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## Structural Health Monitoring 2023:

### Designing SHM for Sustainability, Maintainability, and Reliability

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## Preface

These proceedings are a collection of papers that were selected and accepted for presentation at the 14<sup>th</sup> International Workshop on Structural Health Monitoring (IWSHM) on September 12-14, 2023, detailing the most recent worldwide technology development in the field of Structural Health Monitoring (SHM) since 2021. The papers that were accepted for the workshop were presented at the event in the form of oral presentations and were collated into these proceedings with the authors' consent.

**The theme of the 2023 Workshop was “Designing SHM for Sustainability, Maintainability, and Reliability.”** The global demands on minimizing carbon footprint and enhancing renewable energy to deal with climate change requires the introduction of new materials, new energy sources, and new fabrication techniques in constructions throughout the industry, particularly in infrastructures and transportation systems. To cope with the new demands for sustainability, durability, and reliability, advanced designs with built-in SHM are needed that would enable autonomous inspection and intelligent data-driven diagnostics along with preventive maintenance to meet the needs of general applications in aerospace, mechanical engineering, and civil infrastructure.

The IWSHM 2023 with the theme of "Designing SHM for Sustainability, Maintainability, and Reliability" gained paramount importance for this purpose. It offered a crucial platform for

technology collaboration, knowledge exchange, and research at the intersection of Structural Health Monitoring, sustainable design, and operational robustness. By fusing these elements together, participants could envision and drive transformative changes, enabling structures and systems to meet present demands and future challenges. The event's focus on sustainable, maintainable, and reliable design underscores its significance. Participants contributed to solutions that elevated industry standards, combined advanced technology, and forward-looking perspectives.

In these proceedings, therefore, special topics were organized to address novel concepts and emerging technologies in SHM for Sustainability, Maintainability, and Reliability applications.

The IWSHM 2023 workshop was co-sponsored by the Air Force Office of Scientific Research (Dr. Les Lee) and Office of Naval Research (Dr. Ignacio Perez).

The editors would like to express their appreciation of the support of the International Organizing Committee, which includes the following members:

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The IWSHM Organizing Committee would like to express its sincere appreciation for the dedication and support provided by the Workshop Program Manager, Dr. Saman Farhangdoust, along with the Workshop Program Coordinators, Dr. Shabbir Ahmed and Dr. Pu Xie. We also extend our appreciation to Stanford's SACL Lab Members: Dr. Yaqoub Abdullah, Dr. Chaoqun Duan, Tanay Topac, Mattia Mazzeschi, Dominic Yamarone, Ryan Yin Liu, Joshua Liao, Umut Altuntas, as well as many volunteers who have worked very hard on preparing the event. The committee would also like to express its gratitude to Grace Fontanilla and other staff members from the Department of Aeronautics and Astronautics at Stanford University for making this Workshop possible.

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August 15, 2023

# A Non-Parametric Mixed Learning Technique for Mitigating Environmental Effects on Structural Modal Frequencies

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ALIREZA ENTEZAMI and STEFANO MARIANI

## ABSTRACT

Health monitoring of civil structures via machine learning is a powerful approach to the early detection of any damage pattern. Besides structural damage, also environmental and operational variabilities are known to affect the inherent structural properties. Although the induced variations in the monitored properties are not harmful, their confounding influence can lead to economic and human losses. For these reasons, a novel unsupervised learning strategy is here proposed, aiming to properly account for the environmental effects on the structural modal frequencies. The offered solution is a non-parametric mixed learning strategy resting on hierarchical clustering, local non-negative matrix factorization, and Mahalanobis-squared distance (MSD). By means of the hierarchical clustering, training data consisting of modal frequencies relevant to the undamaged condition are subdivided into local clusters, which are then exploited in order to get rid of the environmental effects. The reconstructed data are finally used to train a non-parametric novelty detector based on the MSD, to obtain scores for decision making regarding the current state. To validate the proposed method, a set of modal frequencies of a steel arch bridge in its long-term monitoring has been considered; results show that the proposed methodology is effective in taking aside the environmental variability from the time history of the collected modal frequencies of the structure.

## INTRODUCTION

Health monitoring of civil structures is of utmost importance in modern society, owing to their critical significance in our everyday life. It is therefore indispensable to avoid catastrophic events, such as partial or global collapses causing huge economic losses and human casualties. To prevent them, actions are needed to allow the prompt detection of a structural damage in its early stage. After having ascertained the occurrence of such a damage, one should next identify its location and quantify its severity, in order to make a decision on whether to repair or retrofit the damaged areas, or even replace the entire structural elements [1]. A structural health monitoring (SHM) project can be thus implemented to feature three main stages of early damage detection [2], damage localization [3, 4], and damage quantification [5].

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The prerequisites for the aforementioned stages of SHM include: (i) select a measurement technique; (ii) deploy sensors and record relevant data; (iii) define meaningful information brought by the measured data; and (iv) implement the SHM procedure via model-based or data-driven techniques. The first two steps pertain to the measurement science and sensing technologies [6]. The third step is termed feature extraction and plays a significance role in SHM. The fourth step exploits the information from the previous stage to properly implement the SHM strategy. Model-based SHM techniques usually rest on a numerical (finite element) model of the monitored structure, supplemented by the measured experimental data for model updating purposes [7]. In contrast, data-based SHM techniques take advantage of measured data only, in principle without any numerical model to be exploited for damage assessment. Hybrid solutions, trying to take advantage of the strengths of both the aforementioned approaches, have been recently proposed; interested readers can find thorough discussions in, e.g. [8, 9].

One of the widely-used and promising feature extraction methods for the SHM of large-scale civil structures is the operational modal analysis (OMA), which allows identifying properties like modal frequencies, mode shapes, and damping ratios when excitation forces are not recorded [10]. Due to the benefits of the data-based SHM, as compared to the model-based one, machine learning (ML) has become the main tool to perform data analytics [11]. ML is a branch of artificial intelligence that aims at developing a computational and intelligent model, by exploiting training data to solve complex problems. Supervised learning and unsupervised learning are two different strategies in ML. In the SHM realm, fully labeled data are needed when a supervised learning strategy is adopted, including the features related to the damaged structural state; on the contrary, an unsupervised learning strategy exploits unlabeled data regarding the undamaged state only. Because the (un)availability of fully labeled data for real-world SHM, most of the developed proposals have focused so far on unsupervised learning schemes, especially when early damage detection is the target [12, 13].

A cooperative integration of OMA and unsupervised learning can lead to a promising method for early damage detection, see [14]. In this way, a set of modal frequencies identified from measured vibration data are exploited, and an OMA algorithm is defined to provide the training data; such a dataset is then fed into an unsupervised learner. When modal frequencies related to the unknown state of the structure are obtained from the current measurements, those are fed on their own into the trained digital model for decision-making: any deviation from the formerly set baseline is therefore indicative of damage occurrence. A big challenge in such a strategy is that structural damage is not the only cause of variations of the modal frequencies: in real-world scenarios, especially when bridges are involved, environmental and operational conditions affect the collected data too [15]. These conditions are in fact able to alter inherent physical properties of the structure, such as mass and stiffness, and thus change the structural response in a way similar to, or undistinguishable from what induced by damage. Accurate and sensitive data analytics solutions have to be adopted in the analysis. Hence, whenever the confounding influences by the environmental and operational variabilities show up, false positive and false negative errors can show up; these errors are finally related to possible economic and human losses, so that it becomes indispensable to get rid of such variability conditions [16].

Locally unsupervised mixed learning methods have been recently proposed to address this problem. These methods avoid to handle the training dataset as a whole,

and take instead advantage of local information (namely, related to a portion of the sampling data) on the training space, and combinations of different unsupervised learning methods to address the issue linked to the confounding influences. In this regard, Entezami et al. [17] proposed an unsupervised meta-learning method that consists of a data segmentation via spectral clustering, and local damage detection based on the Mahalanobis-squared distance (MSD). Daneshvar et al. [18] developed a locally unsupervised hybrid learning method via Gaussian mixture to define the needed local information, and a discriminative reconstruction-based dictionary learning model to remove the environmental effects. Entezami et al. [19] also proposed a multi-task unsupervised learning method based on the density-based spatial clustering of applications with noise (DBSCAN) to remove outliers from the training data, spectral clustering to set the local information, and local empirical measures for anomaly detection.

In spite of the achieved results and of the noteworthy performance in removing environmental and operational variabilities, a major limitation of these techniques is related to their parametric nature. In other words, some stages of these methodologies rest on parametric algorithms, whose hyperparameters must be estimated/set beforehand. Therefore, the main objective of this work is the proposal of a new unsupervised mixed learning method, within a non-parametric framework. The proposed method consists of three non-parametric algorithms: hierarchical clustering, to provide local subsets of the training data; local non-negative matrix factorization, to develop a subspace learning algorithm; and MSD, to allow novelty detection. To evaluate the performance of the proposed method, a set of modal frequencies of a bridge in its undamaged state is considered. Results show that the proposed method can effectively remove the environmental effects from the modal frequencies, so that reliable information can be next moved onto the decision-making stage.

## **PROPOSED METHOD**

### **HIERARCHICAL AGGLOMERATIVE CLUSTERING**

A hierarchical clustering method is a non-parametric approach to subdivide unlabeled data into a hierarchy of clusters, called *dendrogram*. By means of this procedure, it is possible to represent the relationships between data in the clustering process, where clusters are arranged similar to a tree. Data clustering can be based on *agglomerative* (bottom-up) or *divisive* (top-down) algorithms: the former ones start by taking singleton clusters, each one containing one datum only, and keep merging two clusters at a time to build a *bottom-up* hierarchy; the latter ones start instead from all the data merged in a single macro-cluster, and then split it continuously into two groups in a *top-down* hierarchy. The main advantage of hierarchical clustering methods, as compared to the partition-based ones like k-means, k-medoids, fuzzy c-means, or Gaussian mixture, is the lack of a constraint in setting the number of clusters [20].

The implementation of the hierarchical agglomerative clustering consists of three steps. Generally, the process starts by clustering individual data points in a singleton cluster, which is then continuously merged based on similarity, until when it forms one big cluster containing all the data points. First, a dissimilarity (distance) measure is defined and used to compute the distance between any pair of data points in the training data, to generate a distance matrix for all the data points to be represented at the bottom

of the dendrogram. Second, the closest sets of the clusters are iteratively merged by using a *linkage* function to define the distance between two clusters, and the distance matrix is accordingly updated. The said linkage function exploits the distance measures generated in the first step, to determine the proximity of points to each other. Commonly used algorithms for linkage are based on single, complete, average, centroid, median, weighted, or Ward's functions. As data points are paired into binary clusters, the newly formed clusters are grouped into larger clusters until a hierarchical tree is formed. Third, a strategy is defined to set where the hierarchical tree is cut. One can then prune branches off the bottom of the hierarchical tree and assign all the objects below each cut to a single cluster, leading to a partition of the data [20].

Let us suppose that  $\mathbf{X} \in \mathbb{R}^{p \times n}$  is the training matrix, containing  $n$  vectorial feature points each of  $p$  variables. In concrete terms and in relation to the modal-based SHM of civil structures,  $\mathbf{X}$  is a matrix of  $n$  modal frequency samples from  $p$  identified modes, so that the mentioned samples represent the training data. Using the weighted average distance as the linkage function, the hierarchical agglomerative clustering subdivides  $\mathbf{X}$  into the two clusters  $\mathbf{C}_1 \in \mathbb{R}^{p \times r_1}$  and  $\mathbf{C}_2 \in \mathbb{R}^{p \times r_2}$ , where  $r_1$  and  $r_2$  denote the number of clustered features respectively belonging to the first and second clusters. The main reasoning behind handling two clusters only, departs from the real structural conditions. In fact, when the structure keeps its undamaged state, two types of features can be drawn: one is related to the undamaged state without the environmental and operational effects; the other pertains to the same state, with the environmental and operational effects instead included. Simply speaking, the hierarchical agglomerative clustering allows grouping the available undamaged features into the two groups.

## LOCAL NON-NEGATIVE MATRIX FACTORIZATION

*Non-negative matrix factorization* (NMF) is a dimensionality reduction technique based on a low-rank approximation of the feature space [21]. The major purpose of this technique is the factorization of a matrix into two non-negative matrices. By means of these matrices, having defined a factor rank, it is next possible to reconstruct the entire original data. As reconstruction-based, output-only data normalization is the main unsupervised learning method to remove the environmental and operational variability conditions, NMF can be used to that purpose. Given the clustered feature sets  $\mathbf{C}_1$  and  $\mathbf{C}_2$  as well as a rank factor  $f$ , NMF provides the non-negative matrices  $\mathbf{W}_l \in \mathbb{R}^{p \times f}$  and  $\mathbf{H}_l \in \mathbb{R}^{f \times r_l}$ , being  $l = 1, 2$ , to minimize the Frobenius norm  $\|\mathbf{C}_l - \mathbf{W}_l \mathbf{H}_l\|_F^2$  handled as the root mean square error (RMSE). Moreover, the rank factor  $f$  is simultaneously set by minimizing the said RMSE under these two conditions: (i)  $1 \leq f \leq (p - 1)$  when  $p \leq r_l$  and (ii)  $1 \leq f \leq (r_l - 1)$  when  $p > r_l$ . With the non-negative matrices  $\mathbf{W}_l$  and  $\mathbf{H}_l$ , the clustered features can be reconstructed via:

$$\hat{\mathbf{C}}_l = \mathbf{W}_l \mathbf{H}_l \quad (1)$$

The reconstructed clusters  $\hat{\mathbf{C}}_1 \in \mathbb{R}^{p \times r_1}$  and  $\hat{\mathbf{C}}_2 \in \mathbb{R}^{p \times r_2}$  then represent the output of the second step of the proposed method.

## MAHALANOBIS-SQUARED DISTANCE

Novelty detection is the unsupervised learning stage for feature analysis. In fact, the unsupervised learner or novelty detector is trained by the means of unlabeled data, to



finally make a decision on the test data regarding the current, unknown state. If the test data belongs to an abnormal situation characterized by a damaged structural state, the novelty detector should immediately detect it. In this work, a non-parametric novelty detector based on the MSD is adopted to investigate the evolution of the model output, namely of the novelty scores, and also understand whether the environmental and operational effects are mitigated.

Given the reconstructed features in  $\{\hat{\mathbf{C}}_1, \hat{\mathbf{C}}_2\}$ , the parameters handled by the MSD-based novelty detector are the mean vectors  $\{\boldsymbol{\mu}_1, \boldsymbol{\mu}_2\}$  and the relevant covariance matrices  $\{\boldsymbol{\Sigma}_1, \boldsymbol{\Sigma}_2\}$  of the reconstructed features. Each mean vector gathers  $p$  elements, while each covariance matrix has dimensions  $p \times p$ . To define the novelty indices, each training feature is exploited in the following form:

$$D_m(\mathbf{x}_i) = \min \left( (\mathbf{x}_i - \boldsymbol{\mu}_j)^T \boldsymbol{\Sigma}_j^{-1} (\mathbf{x}_i - \boldsymbol{\mu}_j) \right) \quad (2)$$

where  $i = 1, \dots, n$  and  $j = 1, 2$ . In the testing (inspection) period, the vectors  $\mathbf{x}_i$  are substituted in Eq. (2) by the new received test vectors  $\mathbf{z}_k$ , being  $k = 1, \dots, m$ , as follows:

$$D_m(\mathbf{z}_k) = \min \left( (\mathbf{z}_k - \boldsymbol{\mu}_j)^T \boldsymbol{\Sigma}_j^{-1} (\mathbf{z}_k - \boldsymbol{\mu}_j) \right) \quad (3)$$

For  $m$  test features,  $m$  novelty indices can be obtained as well. Accordingly, if the test features belong to the damaged state of the structure, there should be a clear distance or difference between the novelty indices relevant to these features and the novelty indices obtained for the training features, which are related to the undamaged condition. On the contrary, in case of test features belonging to the undamaged state, the corresponding novelty indices should be similar to those pertinent to training.

## EXPERIMENTAL INVESTIGATION: THE KW51 BRIDGE

To assess the performance of the proposed method, the steel arch bridge called KW51 [22] is here considered, see Figure 1. This structure is a railway bridge that connects Leuven and Brussels in Belgium, along the railway line L36N. The bridge is 115 m long and 12.4 m large. Since 2 October 2018, the bridge is equipped with an SHM system consisting in vibration and environmental sensors, to acquire acceleration time histories and environmental data too. The time histories of the modal frequencies between 2 October 2018 and 15 May 2019 are here considered, with reference to the normal condition; therefore, the effects of environmental factors on those modal frequencies are evaluated next.

An automated OMA was implemented by Maes and Lombaert [23], to identify the modal properties of the bridge including the relevant natural frequencies. The automated OMA allowed to yield information in time concerning 14 vibration modes. To avoid issues related to missing information regarding some of those modal features, only the modes 6, 10, 12, and 13 are here considered.



Figure 1. The KW51 Bridge.

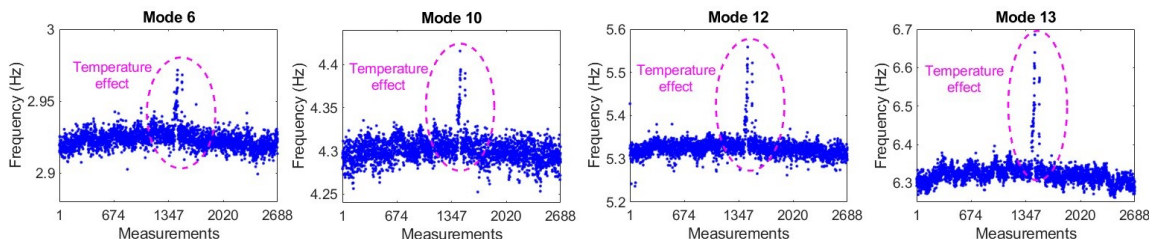


Figure 2. Time evolution of the modal frequencies of the KW51 Bridge.

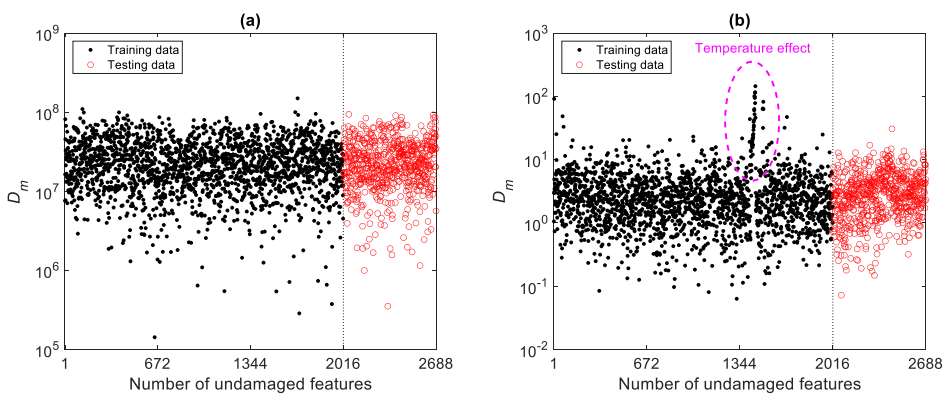


Figure 3. Evolution of novelty indices related to the training (black points) and testing (red points) data, as provided by: (a) the proposed method, (b) the direct use of the MSD-based novelty detection without data clustering and feature reconstruction.

The total number of samples in the time histories of the modal frequencies of the undamaged state are 2688: Figure 2 shows the said histories of the dynamic features. As can be seen, environmental effects show up as sudden jumps in the range of samples 1345-2017. Since such variability in any novelty detector provides a footprint similar to damage, the aim of the proposed methodology is to remove the aforementioned sudden jumps in the time histories. Therefore, the existence of two variability forms including the usual and sudden ones, provides a rationale to ascertain the accuracy of the two clusters adopted for the hierarchical clustering.

All the features in the time series of Figure 3 are divided into training and testing datasets, with a ratio of 75% : 25%. In the first step, the training data  $\mathbf{X} \in \mathbb{R}^{4 \times 2016}$  are partitioned into the two clusters  $\mathbf{C}_1 \in \mathbb{R}^{4 \times 1979}$  and  $\mathbf{C}_2 \in \mathbb{R}^{4 \times 37}$ , so resulting into  $r_1=1979$  and  $r_2=37$ . The clustered features are then exploited by the local NMF methodology, to reconstruct them. Regarding this stage of the analysis, on the basis of the first condition

needed for the rank factor, the parameter  $f$  can take a value between 1 and 3; its optimal value is selected as the one providing the minimum RMSE value. The result is shown in Figure 3(b), where the optimal rank for the first and second clusters are identified as 3 and 2, respectively. The clusters are then reconstructed to be adopted in the MSD-based novelty detection stage. Figure 3(a) shows the corresponding time evolution of the novelty indices related to the training and testing data points. For a comparison, the same process is repeated by using the MSD-based novelty detection without prior data clustering and feature reconstruction, so by directly handling the training and testing matrices via the MSD. The results of this latter strategy are displayed in Figure 3(b). As can be seen, the proposed method succeeds in removing the environmental effects caused by the freezing air temperature: sudden jumps in the modal frequencies are no longer visible in the novelty indices furnished by the proposed method. The other way around, the said jump is still clearly visible in Figure 3(b). It can be thus concluded that the proposed method, thanks to its mixed and non-parametric properties, is perfectly able to deal with the confounding influences induced by the environmental variability. It also turns out to be superior to the classical MSD-based novelty detection one.

## CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, a non-parametric mixed learning technique has been proposed, within an unsupervised learning strategy, to address the confounding effects caused by environmental and/or operational variability. The proposed method consists of the three steps of data clustering via the hierarchical agglomerative clustering, clustered feature reconstruction through local NMF, and novelty detection based on the MSD metric.

The time histories of the modal frequencies of the KW51 Bridge have been adopted to evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the proposed method. The obtained results have demonstrated that the proposed method can effectively remove the environmental variability, for instance showing up as sudden jumps in the structural vibration frequencies caused by a freezing air temperature. This method has been also shown to outperform the classical MSD-based novelty detection technique. This conclusion has confirmed the proposed unsupervised mixed learning strategy, if based on an ad-hoc defined data clustering to deal with the said variability effects, can properly lead to robust SHM strategies.

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