# On uniqueness and ill-posedness for the deautoconvolution problem in the multi-dimensional case

BERND HOFMANN<sup>\*</sup>, FRANK WERNER<sup>†</sup> and YU DENG<sup>‡</sup>

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Abstract: This paper analyzes the inverse problem of deautoconvolution in the multidimensional case with respect to solution uniqueness and ill-posedness. Deautoconvolution means here the reconstruction of a real-valued  $L^2$ -function with support in the *n*-dimensional unit cube  $[0, 1]^n$  from observations of its autoconvolution either in the full data case (i.e. on  $[0, 2]^n$ ) or in the limited data case (i.e. on  $[0, 1]^n$ ). Based on multi-dimensional variants of the Titchmarsh convolution theorem due to Lions and Mikusiński, we prove in the full data case a twofoldness assertion, and in the limited data case uniqueness of non-negative solutions for which the origin belongs to the support. The latter assumption is also shown to be necessary for any uniqueness statement in the limited data case. A glimpse of rate results for regularized solutions completes the paper.

**Keywords:** deautoconvolution, multi-dimensional inverse problem, uniqueness and ambiguity, nonlinear integral equation, local ill-posedness, Titchmarsh convolution theorem

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# 1 Introduction

Motivated by applications to spectroscopy, to the structure of solid surfaces and to nano-structures (see, e.g., [2, 8, 16, 30]) the inverse problem of deautoconvolution, which means that a function x with compact support is to be reconstructed from its autoconvolution y = x \* x, has been considered for the one-dimensional case extensively in the literature of the past decades. Ill-posedness, uniqueness and ambiguity as well as regularization of the deautoconvolution problem for a real-valued function with compact support had been first analyzed in [18]. Subsequent studies in this direction can be found in [3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 13, 14, 25]. After the turn of the millennium, the one-dimensional deautoconvolution problem for a complex-valued function with compact real support became of interest for modern methods of ultrashort laser pulse characterization, and we refer in this context to the article [17] as well as to the further mathematical studies in [1, 4, 15]. The object of research in this article is to present an ensemble of results for the deautoconvolution problem in the multi-dimensional case in an  $L^2$ -setting. We are going to extend, with respect to

<sup>\*</sup>Faculty of Mathematics, Chemnitz University of Technology, 09107 Chemnitz, Germany,

e-mail: hofmannb@mathematik.tu-chemnitz.de.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>†</sup>Institute for Mathematics, University of Würzburg, Emil-Fischer-Str. 30, 97074 Würzburg, Germany, e-mail: frank.werner@mathematik.uni-wuerzburg.de

 $<sup>^{\</sup>ddagger}$  Chemnitz University of Technology, Faculty of Mathematics, 09107 Chemnitz, Germany, e-mail: yu.deng@math.tu-chemnitz.de

the reconstruction of real functions with n real variables, assertions on uniqueness, ambiguity and ill-posedness that previously had been proven in the one-dimensional case. We also complement and generalize findings of our recent paper [10], where such results have been stated for the twodimensional case. Our focus is on the reconstruction of a square integrable real function x = x(t)with  $t = (t_1, t_2, ..., t_n)^T \in \mathbb{R}^n$  of  $n \ge 2$  variables with support in the unit *n*-cube  $[0, 1]^n$  from its autoconvolution [x \* x](s) = y(s) with  $s = (s_1, s_2, ..., s_n)^T \in \mathbb{R}^n$ . In this context, the elements xand y both can be considered as tempered distributions with compact support, where  $\text{supp}(\cdot)$  is regarded as the essential support with respect to the Lebesgue measure  $\lambda$  in  $\mathbb{R}^n$ . Precisely, we consider x as an element of the real Hilbert space  $L^2(\mathbb{R}^n)$  with  $\text{supp}(x) \subseteq [0, 1]^n$ . For short, in such a case we write  $x \in L^2([0, 1]^n)$  by taking into account that x(t) is assumed to be zero for  $t \in \mathbb{R}^n \setminus [0, 1]^n$ . It is well-know that, for the convolution of two functions f and g with  $f, g \in L^2(\mathbb{R}^n)$ and compact supports, it holds that  $f * g \in L^2(\mathbb{R}^n)$  as well as

$$\operatorname{supp}(f * g) \subseteq \operatorname{supp}(f) + \operatorname{supp}(g). \tag{1.1}$$

Here, we use the arithmetic sum A + B of two subsets A and B of  $\mathbb{R}^n$  defined as

$$A + B = \{a + b \in \mathbb{R}^n : a \in A, b \in B\}.$$

As a consequence of (1.1) we have for  $x \in L^2(\mathbb{R}^n)$  with  $\operatorname{supp}(x) \subseteq [0,1]^n$  that  $y = x * x \in L^2(\mathbb{R}^n)$ with  $\operatorname{supp}(x * x) \subseteq [0,2]^n$ , or in other words that  $y \in L^2([0,2]^n)$ .

The simplest application of our deautoconvolution problem in n dimensions is the recovery of the square integrable density function x of an n-dimensional random variable  $\mathfrak{X}$  with support in the unit n-cube  $[0, 1]^n$  from observations of the density function y = x \* x of the n-dimensional random variable  $\mathfrak{Y} := \mathfrak{X}_1 + \mathfrak{X}_2$ , where  $\mathfrak{X}, \mathfrak{X}_1$  and  $\mathfrak{X}_2$  are assumed to be of i.i.d. type. Then by definition the function x obeys the conditions  $x(t) \geq 0$  a.e. on  $[0, 1]^n$  and  $\int_{\mathbb{R}^n} x(t) dt = \int_{[0,1]^n} x(t) dt = 1$ . The inverse problem of deautoconvolution is equivalent to the solution of a quadratic-type operator equation

$$F(x) = y \tag{1.2}$$

with the nonlinear Volterra integral operator  $F : \mathcal{D}(F) \subseteq X \to Y$  mapping between the real Hilbert spaces  $X := L^2([0,1]^n)$  and Y with norms  $\|\cdot\|_X$  and  $\|\cdot\|_Y$ , respectively, and having the domain  $\mathcal{D}(F)$ . Here, the nonlinear operator F possesses the convolution integral form

$$[F(x)](s) := [x * x](s) = \int_{\mathbb{R}^n} x(s-t) x(t) dt \qquad (s, t \in \mathbb{R}^n).$$
(1.3)

To ease the notation in the sequel, we will make use of the following abbreviations of *n*-dimensional cuboids and cubes. If  $s, t \in \mathbb{R}^n$  are given, we denote by

$$[s,t]^n := [s_1,t_1] \times \ldots \times [s_n,t_n]$$

the corresponding *n*-cuboids spanned by *s* and *t*. Clearly, if  $s_j > t_j$  for some  $j \in \{1, ..., n\}$ , then  $[s, t] = \emptyset$ . Note that - with a slight abuse of this notation - for  $s, t \in \mathbb{R}$  we also write  $[s, t]^n$  for the *n*-cube of the form  $[s, t] \times ... \times [s, t]$ .

In this paper, we will distinguish two data situations. First we consider the full data case with  $X := L^2([0,1]^n), Y := L^2([0,2]^n)$  and forward operator F as

$$[F(x)](s) := \int_{[\max(s-1,0),\min(s,1)]^n} x(s-t) x(t) \,\mathrm{d}t \,, \tag{1.4}$$

where y(s) = [F(x)](s) is observable for all  $s \in [0, 2]^n$ , which implies due to (1.1) that all relevant information about x \* x is available, but in practice based on noisy data  $y^{\delta} \in Y$  with noise level  $\delta > 0$  and deterministic noise model

$$\|y - y^{\delta}\|_{Y} \le \delta. \tag{1.5}$$

Secondly, we are treating again with noise model (1.5) the limited data case with  $X = Y := L^2([0, 1]^n)$  and forward operator F as

$$[F(x)](s) := \int_{[0,s]^n} x(s-t) x(t) \,\mathrm{d}t \,. \tag{1.6}$$

Here, y(s) = [F(x)](s) is only available for s on the unit n-cube  $[0,1]^n$ . Since here the scope of the data is only  $1/2^n$  compared to the full data case, the chances of accurately recovering x from noisy observations of y are decreasing more and more in the limited data case as n gets larger. In contrast to the full data case, where we assume in the sequel that  $\mathcal{D}(F) = X = L^2([0,1]^n)$ , we focus in the limited data case also on the domain  $\mathcal{D}(F) = \mathcal{D}^+$  defined as

$$\mathcal{D}^+ := \{ x \in X = L^2([0,1]^n) : x \ge 0 \text{ a.e. on } [0,1]^n \}.$$
(1.7)

This set  $\mathcal{D}^+$  collects the non-negative functions from  $L^2([0,1]^n)$  and contains as a subset the square integrable density functions with support in the unit *n*-cube.

It is well known that, in an  $L^2$ -setting, the nonlinear autoconvolution operator F is weakly sequentially continuous and non-compact, but possesses everywhere a compact Fréchet derivative of linear convolution type. This is true for  $F: X = L^2([0,1]^n) \to Y$  in both data cases  $Y = L^2([0,2]^n)$  and  $Y = L^2([0,1]^n)$ , where the Fréchet derivative  $F'(x): X \to Y$  for all  $x \in X$  attains the form

$$F'(x) h = 2x * h$$
  $(h \in X).$  (1.8)

With this Fréchet derivative, the operator F satisfies the nonlinearity condition

$$\|F(\tilde{x}) - F(x) - F'(x)(\tilde{x} - x)\|_{Y} = \|F(\tilde{x} - x)\|_{Y} \le \|\tilde{x} - x\|_{X}^{2} \qquad (\tilde{x}, x \in X)$$
(1.9)

such that the degree of nonlinearity of F in the sense of [23, Def. 1] is (0, 0, 2). Note that a degree of nonlinearity  $(c_1, 0, 0)$  with  $0 < c_1 \leq 1$  of tangential cone condition-type has even not been shown for F in the one-dimensional situation of n = 1.

For any function  $x \in L^2([0,1]^n)$  the autoconvolution products F(x) = x \* x and F(-x) = (-x) \*(-x) coincide for both data cases. However, it is of interest whether for  $y = x \cdot x$  the elements x and of -xare the only solutions equation (1.2)with  $F: L^2([0,1]^n) \to L^2([0,2]^n)$  from (1.4) in the full data case or not. In the limited data case, for  $F: \mathcal{D}^+ \subset L^2([0,1]^n) \to L^2([0,1]^n)$ , it is of interest whether the solution x is under nonnegativity constraints even uniquely determined. Based on different versions of the Titchmarsh convolution theorem some answers to both questions are given in Section 3 below. Before that, we recall in Section 2 some basic assertions on convolution in form of three lemmas and the definitional concept of local ill-posedness for nonlinear operator equations. In Section 4, it will be shown that the *n*-dimensional deautoconvolution problem leads in both data cases to operator equations (1.2), which are locally ill-posed everywhere. This requires the use of some kind of regularization in order to construct stable approximate solutions. Even though a detailed study on regularization of the problem is beyond the scope of this manuscript, we briefly report on some error norms and rate results for regularized solutions occurring in a numerical case study in Section 5. There, we restrict ourselves for simplicity to the classical variant of quadratic Tikhonov regularization for nonlinear operator equations along the lines of the seminal paper [12] and best possible regularization parameters. For a more detailed numerical study in the two-dimensional case we refer to [10].

# 2 Preliminaries

Unfortunately, the formula (1.1) concerning the support of the convolution function f \* g is an inclusion and not an equation. However, for n = 1 and functions  $f, g \in L^2(\mathbb{R})$  with compact supports, which are not identically zero a.e., one can formulate an equation for the minima (smallest values) of the supports as

$$\min \operatorname{supp}(f * g) = \min \operatorname{supp}(f) + \min \operatorname{supp}(g), \qquad (2.1)$$

which is a consequence of the Titchmarsh convolution theorem from [31]. Based on (2.1) it could be shown in [18, Theorem 1] that the one-dimensional deautoconvolution problem has a uniquely determined solution in the limited data case under non-negativity constraints. By the same argument it could be shown in [17, Theorem 4.2] that x and -x are the only solutions in the full data case of the one-dimensional deautoconvolution problem. An extension of those uniqueness and twofoldness results to the *n*-dimensional deautoconvolution problem require extensions of Titchmarsh's theorem to the multi-dimensional case, and we recall two versions of such extension by the following two lemmas.

The first lemma goes back to Lions (cf. [26, 27]) and replaces min supp(f), the support minimum occurring in (2.1) for n = 1, with the convex support occurring in Lemma 1 for general  $n \in \mathbb{N}$ . Here, conv supp(f) denotes the convex hull of supp(f), i.e., the smallest closed convex set outside which the function f vanishes a.e. on  $\mathbb{R}^n$ .

**Lemma 1.** Let the functions  $f, g \in L^2(\mathbb{R}^n)$  with  $n \in \mathbb{N}$  have compact supports  $\operatorname{supp}(f)$  and  $\operatorname{supp}(g)$ . Then we have for the convolution that  $f * g \in L^2(\mathbb{R}^n)$  and that the equation

$$\operatorname{conv}\operatorname{supp}(f * g) = \operatorname{conv}\operatorname{supp}(f) + \operatorname{conv}\operatorname{supp}(g)$$
(2.2)

holds true. In the special case that  $\operatorname{supp}(f * g) = \emptyset$ , i.e., the function f \* g vanishes a.e. on  $\mathbb{R}^n$ , then we have that at least one of the sets  $\operatorname{supp}(f)$  or  $\operatorname{supp}(g)$  is the empty set, which means that the underlying function f or g vanishes a.e. on  $\mathbb{R}^n$ .

Lemma 1 will allow us to prove the twofoldness assertion for the full data case of the multidimensional deautoconvolution problem in Theorem 1 below.

We also present an extension of the Titchmarsh convolution theorem to the multi-dimensional case by using Mikusiński's n-hyperpyramid technique adapted to our situation as Lemma 2, and we refer in this context to [28, Theorem VIII].

**Lemma 2.** Let us introduce for  $\gamma \geq 0$  the *n*-hyperpyramids

$$\Delta(\gamma) := \{ (t_1, t_2, \dots, t_n)^T \in \mathbb{R}^n : 0 \le t_1, 0 \le t_2, \dots, 0 \le t_n, t_1 + t_2 + \dots + t_n \le \gamma \}$$

in  $\mathbb{R}^n$ . For functions  $f, g \in L^2(\mathbb{R}^n)$  with compact supports  $\operatorname{supp}(f)$  and  $\operatorname{supp}(g)$  covered by  $[0, \infty)^n$ , we conclude from

$$[f * g](s) = \int_{\mathbb{R}^n} f(s-t) g(t) dt = 0 \quad a.e. \text{ for } s \in \Delta(\gamma) \quad (\gamma \ge 0)$$

that there are numbers  $\gamma_1, \gamma_2 \geq 0$  with  $\gamma_1 + \gamma_2 \geq \gamma$  such that

f(t) = 0 a.e. for  $t \in \Delta(\gamma_1)$  and g(t) = 0 a.e. for  $t \in \Delta(\gamma_2)$ .

Lemma 2 will be used in Theorem 3 below to prove that for the limited data case of the multidimensional deautoconvolution problem under non-negativity constraints the solution is uniquely determined.

As an inverse problem the operator equation (1.2) with forward operator (1.4) mapping from the real Hilbert space  $X = L^2([0,1]^n)$  to the Hilbert space  $Y = L^2([0,2]^n)$  in the full data case of multi-dimensional deautoconvolution tends to be ill-posed. A probably stronger ill-posedenss phenomenon is to be expected for the limited data case under non-negativity constraints where  $F: \mathcal{D}(F) \subset X = L^2([0,1]^n) \to Y = L^2([0,1]^n)$  and  $\mathcal{D}(F) = \mathcal{D}^+$  characterize the forward operator. For a precise theoretical verification of the ill-posedness phenomenon we adopt the *concept of local ill-posedness* for nonlinear operator equations, and we recall this concept by the following definition (cf., e.g., [24, Def. 1.1]).

**Definition 1.** An operator equation F(x) = y with nonlinear forward operator  $F : \mathcal{D}(F) \subseteq X \to Y$  mapping between the Hilbert spaces X and Y with domain  $\mathcal{D}(F)$  is called

locally ill-posed at a solution point  $x^{\dagger} \in \mathcal{D}(F)$  if there exist, for all closed balls  $\overline{\mathcal{B}_r(x^{\dagger})}$  with radius r > 0 and center  $x^{\dagger}$ , sequences  $\{x_k\} \subset \overline{\mathcal{B}_r(x^{\dagger})} \cap \mathcal{D}(F)$  that satisfy the condition

 $||F(x_k) - F(x^{\dagger})||_Y \to 0$ , but  $||x_k - x^{\dagger}||_X \not\to 0$ , as  $k \to \infty$ .

Otherwise, the operator equation is called locally well-posed at  $x^{\dagger}$ .

For n = 1, local ill-posedness everywhere on the non-negativity domain

$$\mathcal{D}(F) = \{x \in X = L^2([0,1]) : x \ge 0 \text{ a.e. on } [0,1]\}$$

was proven for the deautoconvolution problem in the limited data case in [18, Lemma 6]. We will extend this result to the multi-dimensional situation below in Theorem 4.

Local ill-posedness everywhere on  $L^2([0,1])$  could also be shown for the full data case of deautoconvolution and n = 1 in [14, Prop. 2.3] by perturbing the solution with an appropriate sequence of square integrable real functions, which is weakly convergent in  $L^2([0,1])$ . By considering such sequences as 'rank one perturbations' we can also show local ill-posedness everywhere on  $L^2([0,1]^n)$ in the multi-dimensional situation of deautoconvolution with full data. For preparation we present here the following lemma, the proof of which is an immediate consequence of Lebesgue's dominated convergence theorem.

**Lemma 3.** Let  $\{h_k\}_{k=1}^{\infty} \subset L^2([0,1])$  be a sequence of real functions of one real variable, which is weakly convergent to zero, i.e.  $h_k \rightarrow 0$  in  $L^2([0,1])$  as  $k \rightarrow \infty$ . Then we have for arbitrary real functions f of n real variables with  $f \in L^2([0,1]^n)$  that the sequence  $\{f_k = f + h_k\}_{k=1}^{\infty} \subset L^2([0,1]^n)$ defined as

$$f_k(t_1, t_2, ..., t_n) := f(t_1, t_2, ..., t_n) + h_k(t_1) \qquad ((t_1, t_2, ..., t_n)^T \in \mathbb{R}^n, \ k \in \mathbb{N})$$

is weakly convergent to f, i.e.  $f_k \to f$  in  $L^2([0,1]^n)$  as  $k \to \infty$ . In this context, we have that  $\|f_k - f\|_{L^2([0,1]^n)} = \|h_k\|_{L^2(0,1)}$  for all  $k \in \mathbb{N}$ .

# 3 New assertions on twofoldness and uniqueness for the multi-dimensional deautoconvolution problem

#### 3.1 Results for the full data case

**Definition 2.** For given  $y \in L^2([0,2]^n)$ , we call  $x^{\dagger} \in L^2([0,1]^n)$  a solution to the operator equation (1.2) with  $F : L^2([0,1]^n) \to L^2([0,2]^n)$  according to (1.4) in the full data case if it satisfies the condition

$$[x^{\dagger} * x^{\dagger}](s) = y(s) \quad a.e. \ for \quad s \in [0,2]^n \,. \tag{3.1}$$

Lemma 1 allows us to prove the following theorem on solution twofoldness in the full data case of multi-dimensional deautoconvolution.

**Theorem 1.** If, for given  $y \in L^2([0,2]^n)$ , the function  $x^{\dagger} \in L^2([0,1]^n)$  is a solution in the full data case in the sense of Definition 2, then  $x^{\dagger}$  and  $-x^{\dagger}$  are the only solutions in this sense.

Proof. Let  $x^{\dagger} \in L^2([0,1]^n)$  be a solution in the full data case in the sense of Definition 2 and consider an arbitrary function  $h \in L^2([0,1]^n)$  such that  $x^{\dagger} + h$  is also a solution in the full data case in the sense of Definition 2. This means that  $[x^{\dagger} * x^{\dagger}](s) = [(x^{\dagger} + h) * (x^{\dagger} + h)](s)$  a.e. for  $s \in [0,2]^n$ , which implies that  $[(x^{\dagger} + h) * (x^{\dagger} + h) - x^{\dagger} * x^{\dagger}](s) = [h * (2x^{\dagger} + h)](s) = 0$  a.e. for  $s \in [0,2]^n$ . By setting f := h and  $g := 2x^{\dagger} + h$  we can apply Lemma 1. Taking into account that  $\sup(h * (2x^{\dagger} + h)) \subseteq [0,2]^n$ , we then have  $[h * (2x^{\dagger} + h)](s) = 0$  a.e. for  $s \in \mathbb{R}^n$ , or in other words  $\operatorname{supp}(h * (2x^{\dagger} + h)) = \emptyset$  and consequently conv  $\operatorname{supp}(h * (2x^{\dagger} + h)) = \emptyset$ . This implies, due to equation (2.2), that either  $\operatorname{supp}(h) = \emptyset$  or  $\operatorname{supp}(2x^{\dagger} + h) = \emptyset$  is true. On the one hand,  $\operatorname{supp}(h) = \emptyset$  leads to the solution  $x^{\dagger}$  itself, whereas on the other hand  $\operatorname{supp}(2x^{\dagger} + h) = \emptyset$  leads to  $[2x^{\dagger} + h](t) = 0$  a.e. for  $t \in [0, 1]^n$  and thus with  $h = -2x^{\dagger}$  to the second solution  $-x^{\dagger}$ . Alternative solutions are therefore excluded. This proves the theorem.

#### 3.2 Results for the limited data case

**Definition 3.** For given  $y \in L^2([0,1]^n)$ , we call  $x^{\dagger} \in L^2([0,1]^n)$  a solution to the operator equation (1.2) with  $F: L^2([0,1]^n) \to L^2([0,1]^n)$  according to (1.6) in the limited data case if it satisfies the condition

$$[x^{\dagger} * x^{\dagger}](s) = y(s) \quad a.e. \text{ for } s \in [0,1]^n.$$
(3.2)

If moreover such solution satisfies the condition  $x^{\dagger} \in \mathcal{D}^+$  with  $\mathcal{D}^+$  from (1.7), then we call it a non-negative solution in the limited data case.

For solutions  $x^{\dagger}$  in the limited data case in the sense of Definition 3 it is important whether the condition  $0 \in \operatorname{supp}(x^{\dagger})$  or its counterpart  $0 \notin \operatorname{supp}(x^{\dagger})$  is fulfilled. In this context,  $0 \in \operatorname{supp}(x^{\dagger})$  means that for any ball  $B_r(0)$  around the origin with arbitrary small radius r > 0 there exists a set  $M_r \subset B_r(0) \cap [0,1]^n$  with Lebesgue measure  $\lambda(M_r) > 0$  such that  $x^{\dagger}(t) \neq 0$  a.e. for  $t \in M_r$ . Vice versa, for  $0 \notin \operatorname{supp}(x^{\dagger})$  we have some sufficiently small radius r > 0 such that  $x^{\dagger}(t) = 0$  a.e. for  $t \in B_r(0) \cap [0,1]^n$ .

In a first step we generalize by Theorem 2 those aspects that had been fixed for n = 1 in [18, Theorem 1] concerning the strong non-injectivity of the autoconvolution operator in the limited data case to the multi-dimensional situation with arbitrary  $n \in \mathbb{N}$ .

**Theorem 2.** If, for given  $y \in L^2([0,1]^n)$ , the function  $x^{\dagger} \in L^2([0,1]^n)$  is a solution in the limited data case in the sense of Definition 3 that fulfills the condition

$$0 \notin \operatorname{supp}(x^{\dagger}), \tag{3.3}$$

then there exist infinitely many other solutions  $\hat{x}^{\dagger} \in L^2([0,1]^n)$  in this sense.

*Proof.* Under the condition (3.3) there is some  $0 < \varepsilon < 1/2$  such that  $x^{\dagger}(t) = 0$  a.e. for  $t \in [0, \varepsilon]^n$ . Now there exist infinitely many  $h \in L^2([0, 1]^n)$  such that

$$h(t) = 0$$
 a.e. for  $t \in [0,1]^n \setminus [1-\varepsilon,1]^n$ . (3.4)

For any such h we have

$$[(2x^{\dagger} + h) * h](s) = \int_{[0,s]^n} (2x^{\dagger} + h)(s-t) h(t) dt = \int_{[1-\varepsilon,s]^n} (2x^{\dagger} + h)(s-t) h(t) dt.$$

But for  $s \in [0,1]^n$  and  $t \in [1-\varepsilon,s]^n$ , we have component-wise that

 $0 \le s_i - t_i \le 1 - t_i \le \varepsilon < 1 - \varepsilon$ 

due to  $\varepsilon < \frac{1}{2}$ , so that  $(2x^{\dagger} + h)(s - \cdot) = 0$  a.e. for  $[1 - \varepsilon, s]^n$ . Therefore

$$[(2x^{\dagger} + h) * h](s) = 0$$
 a.e. for  $s \in [0, 1]^n$ ,

which implies

$$[(x^{\dagger} + h) * (x^{\dagger} + h)](s) = x^{\dagger} * x^{\dagger}(s) + [(2x^{\dagger} + h) * h](s) = y(s) \quad \text{a.e. for} \quad s \in [0, 1]^n.$$

This yields the claim.

Now we are ready to formulate and to prove with the following theorem a main new result of this paper, which extends the solution uniqueness assertion for the limited data case under non-negativity constraints published for n = 1 in [18, Theorem 1] to the multi-dimensional situation with arbitrary  $n \in \mathbb{N}$ . The proof of this theorem is based on Mikusiński's *n*-hyperpyramid technique introduced above by Lemma 2.

**Theorem 3.** If, for given  $y \in L^2([0,1]^n)$ , the function  $x^{\dagger} \in L^2([0,1]^n)$  is a non-negative solution in the limited data case in the sense of Definition 3 that fulfills the condition

$$0 \in \operatorname{supp}(x^{\dagger}), \tag{3.5}$$

then  $x^{\dagger}$  is the uniquely determined non-negative solution in this case.

*Proof.* First we will show that under the condition (3.5) the non-negative solution  $x^{\dagger}(t)$  is uniquely determined a.e. for  $t \in \Delta(1)$ . Namely, supposed that there exists a function  $h \in L^2([0,1]^n)$  with  $x^{\dagger} + h \ge 0$  satisfying the equation

$$[(x^{\dagger} + h) * (x^{\dagger} + h)](s) = y(s) \quad \text{a.e. for} \quad s \in [0, 1]^n,$$
(3.6)

we would have that

$$[h * (2x^{\dagger} + h)](s) = 0 \quad \text{a.e. for} \quad s \in [0, 1]^n.$$
(3.7)

Because of  $[0,1]^n \supset \Delta(1)$ , Lemma 2 applies with f := h,  $g := 2x^{\dagger} + h$  and  $\gamma = 1$ . Obviously, we have  $\gamma_2 = 0$  due to the fact that  $[2x^{\dagger} + h](t) \ge x^{\dagger}(t)$  a.e. for  $t \in [0,1]^n$ , which implies together with condition (3.5) that  $0 \in \operatorname{supp}(2x^{\dagger} + h)$ . Then we find as a consequence of  $\gamma_1 + \gamma_2 \ge \gamma$  that  $\gamma_1 \ge 1$  must hold, which yields h(t) = 0 a.e. for  $t \in \Delta(1)$ .

In a second step of the proof we show that also perturbations  $h \in L^2([0,1]^n)$  with  $x^{\dagger} + h \ge 0$ and  $\operatorname{supp}(h) \subseteq \overline{[0,1]^n \setminus \Delta(1)}$  are only possible if h is the zero function almost everywhere on  $[0,1]^n \cap \Delta(2)$ . Now assume, for such function h, that it obeys the condition (3.6) and consequently (3.7). From (3.7) we derive that

$$[(-2x^{\dagger}) * h](s) = [h * h](s) \quad \text{a.e. for} \quad s \in [0, 1]^n ,$$
(3.8)

which allows us to apply Lemma 2 with  $f := -2x^{\dagger}$ , g := h, f \* g = h \* h and the associated values  $\gamma_1, \gamma_2$  and  $\gamma$ , respectively. Evidently, we have

$$\operatorname{supp}(h * h) \subseteq 2\operatorname{supp}(h) \subseteq \overline{[0,2]^n \setminus \Delta(2)}$$

and thus  $\gamma = 2$ . This yields  $\gamma_2 = 2$  and hence h = 0 a.e. on  $[0,1]^n \cap \Delta(2)$ , because  $\gamma_1 = 0$  as a consequence of condition (3.5). Now, for n = 2 the proof is complete, because of  $[0,1]^2 \subset [0,1]^2 \cap \Delta(2)$ . For n > 2, however we must repeat the second step in an analog manner m times until  $2^m \ge n$  such that h = 0 a.e. on  $[0,1]^n \cap \Delta(2^m) \supseteq [0,1]^n \cap \Delta(n) = [0,1]^n$ . Then the proof is complete.

## 4 III-posedness phenomena

For nonlinear inverse problems modelled by operator equations (1.2) in Hilbert spaces, the character and strength of ill-posedness may be a local property and may depend on nonlinearity conditions of the forward operator F, see for discussions and examples of the articles [20, 22, 23]. Therefore, the concept of local ill-posedness at a solution point  $x^{\dagger}$  (see Definition 1 above) applies for (1.2) with the autoconvolution operator F from (1.3). It could be proven for the one-dimensional situation that the deautoconvolution problem is *locally ill-posed everywhere* on  $\mathcal{D}(F) = L^2([0, 1])$ for the full data case (cf. [14, Prop. 2.3]) and on  $\mathcal{D}(F) = \mathcal{D}^+ \subset L^2([0, 1])$  with  $\mathcal{D}^+$  from (1.7) with n = 1 for the limited data case (cf. [18, Lemma 6]). The following two theorems extend the results to the multi-dimensional situation for arbitrary  $n \in \mathbb{N}$ .

**Theorem 4.** For the limited data case of deautoconvolution, the operator equation (1.2) with  $X = Y = L^2([0,1]^n)$  and forward operator  $F : \mathcal{D}^+ \subset X \to Y$  from (1.6) with non-negativity domain  $\mathcal{D}^+$  from (1.7) is locally ill-posed everywhere on  $\mathcal{D}(F) = \mathcal{D}^+$ .

*Proof.* Let  $x^{\dagger} \in \mathcal{D}^+$  be a non-negative solution in the limited data case in the sense of Definition 3. To show local ill-posedness at  $x^{\dagger}$  we introduce for fixed r > 0 the sequence  $\{h_k\}_{k=3}^{\infty} \subset L^2([0,1]^n)$  of perturbations of the form

$$h_k(t) := \begin{cases} k^{n/2} r & \text{for } t \in [1 - \frac{1}{k}, 1]^n \\ 0 & \text{for } t \in [0, 1]^n \setminus [1 - \frac{1}{k}, 1]^n \end{cases}$$

with  $x_k := x^{\dagger} + h_k \in \mathcal{D}^+$ ,  $\|h_k\|_{L^2([0,1]^n)} = r$  and consequently  $x_k \in \overline{\mathcal{B}_r(x^{\dagger})} \cap \mathcal{D}^+$  for all  $k \ge 3$ . To complete the proof of the theorem we still need to show that the norm  $\|F(x_k) - F(x^{\dagger})\|_{L^2([0,1]^n)}$  tends for all r > 0 to zero as k tends to infinity. Owing to  $F(x_k) - F(x^{\dagger}) = 2x^{\dagger} * h_k + h_k * h_k$  and  $\|h_k * h_k\|_{L^2([0,1]^n)} = 0$ , this rewrites as

$$||x^{\dagger} * h_k||_{L^2([0,1]^n)} \to 0 \text{ as } k \to \infty$$

Evidently, for  $s = (s_1, s_2, ..., s_n)^T$ ,  $t = (t_1, t_2, ..., t_n)^T \in \mathbb{R}^n$ , the non-negative values

$$[x^{\dagger} * h_k](s) = \int_{[0,s]^n} h_k(s-t) x^{\dagger}(t) dt$$

can be different from zero only for  $s \in [1 - \frac{1}{k}, 1]^n$ . Using the Cauchy-Schwarz inequality and taking into account that  $x^{\dagger} \in \mathcal{D}^+$  we have for those  $s \in [1 - \frac{1}{k}, 1]^n$  the estimate

$$[x^{\dagger} * h_k](s) = k^{n/2} r \int_{[0,s-(1-\frac{1}{k})]^n} x^{\dagger}(t) dt$$

$$\leq r \|x^{\dagger}\|_{L^2([0,1]^n)}$$

This, however, yields

$$\|x^{\dagger} * h_k\|_{L^2([0,1]^n)} \le r \|x^{\dagger}\|_{L^2([0,1]^n)} \left(\int_{\left[1-\frac{1}{k},1\right]^n} 1 \,\mathrm{d}s\right)^{1/2} = \frac{r \|x^{\dagger}\|_{L^2([0,1]^n)}}{k^{n/2}}$$

tending for all r > 0 to zero as k tends to infinity. This completes the proof of the theorem.  $\Box$ 

**Theorem 5.** For the full data case of deautoconvolution, the operator equation (1.2) with  $X = L^2([0,1]^n)$ ,  $Y = L^2([0,2]^n)$  and forward operator  $F : X \to Y$  from (1.4) is locally ill-posed everywhere on  $\mathcal{D}(F) = X$ .

*Proof.* Let  $x^{\dagger} \in L^2([0,1]^n)$  be a solution in the full data case in the sense of Definition 2. For showing local ill-posedness at  $x^{\dagger}$  we fix r > 0 arbitrary and introduce the sequence  $\{h_k\}_{k=1}^{\infty} \subset L^2([0,1])$  of functions of one real variable of the form

$$h_k(t) := \sqrt{2} r \sin(k^2 t^2) \qquad (t \in [0, 1], \ k \in \mathbb{N}).$$
(4.1)

For finding properties of  $h_k$  and  $F(h_k) = h_k * h_k$  one needs to use the Fresnel integrals

$$S(s) := \int_0^s \sin(t^2) dt$$
 and  $C(s) := \int_0^s \cos(t^2) dt$ 

For  $s \in [0, \infty)$  the range of both continuous functions is covered by the interval [0, 1]. One easily finds that  $0.5 r < \|h_k\|_{L^2([0,1])} < r = \lim_{k \to \infty} \|h_k\|_{L^2([0,1])}$  and that the weak convergence  $h_k \to 0$ in  $L^2([0,1])$  as  $k \to \infty$  takes place. The latter is a consequence of the fact that, for all  $0 \le s \le 1$ ,

$$0 \le \int_0^s h_k(t)dt = \frac{\sqrt{\pi} r S(k\sqrt{2/\pi})s)}{k} \le \frac{\sqrt{\pi} r}{k} \to 0 \quad \text{as} \quad k \to \infty$$

Now we consider the perturbed functions  $x_k := x^{\dagger} + h_k \in L^2([0,1]^n)$  defined as

$$x_k(t_1, t_2, ..., t_n) := x^{\dagger}(t_1, t_2, ..., t_n) + h_k(t_1) \qquad ((t_1, t_2, ..., t_n)^T \in \mathbb{R}^n, \ k \in \mathbb{N}),$$

with  $x_k \in \overline{\mathcal{B}_r(x^{\dagger})}$  and  $||x_k - x^{\dagger}||_{L^2([0,1]^n)} = ||h_k||_{L^2([0,1])} \not\to 0$  as  $k \to \infty$ . To complete the proof, we still have to show that

$$||F(x_k) - F(x^{\dagger})||_{L^2([0,2]^n)} \to 0 \text{ as } k \to \infty.$$

Since  $F(x_k) - F(x^{\dagger}) = F'(x^{\dagger})(x_k - x^{\dagger}) + F(x_k - x^{\dagger})$  and  $x_k - x^{\dagger} \to 0$  as  $k \to \infty$ , we have  $\lim_{k\to\infty} ||F(x_k) - F(x^{\dagger})||_{L^2([0,2]^n)} \leq \lim_{k\to\infty} ||F(x_k - x^{\dagger})||_{L^2([0,2]^n)} \leq \lim_{k\to\infty} ||h_k * h_k||_{L^2([0,2])}$  by taking into account Lemma 3 and that  $F'(x^{\dagger})$  is a compact operator. To complete the proof we finally show that  $\lim_{k\to\infty} ||h_k * h_k||_{L^2([0,2])} = 0$ . Owing to the properties of Fresnel integrals mentioned above, this is a consequence of  $||h_k * h_k||_{\xi}||\xi|| \leq \frac{\bar{C}}{k}$  for  $\xi \in [0, 2]$  with a uniform constant  $\bar{C} > 0$ , which follows from the two formulas

$$\int_{0}^{s} \sin(k^{2}(s-t)^{2}) \sin(k^{2}t^{2}) dt = \frac{\sqrt{\pi}ks \left(S(ks/\sqrt{\pi})\sin(k^{2}s^{2}/2) - C(ks/\sqrt{\pi})\cos(k^{2}s^{2}/2)\right) + \sin(k^{2}s^{2})}{2k^{2}s}$$

valid for  $0 \le s \le 1$ , and

$$\int_{s-1}^{1} \sin(k^2(s-t)^2) \sin(k^2t^2) dt = \frac{\sqrt{\pi}ks \left( S(k(2-s)/\sqrt{\pi}) \sin(k^2s^2/2) - C(k(2-s)/\sqrt{\pi}) \cos(k^2s^2/2) \right) + \sin(k^2s(2-s))}{2k^2s}$$

valid for  $1 < s \leq 2$ .

We are going to illustrate with Figure 1 the ill-posedness phenomenon for the full data case of deautoconvolution along the lines of the ideas of the proof of Theorem 5. For this purpose we exploit as an example solution the function

$$x^{\dagger}(t_1, t_2) = \left[\frac{2}{3}(t_1+1)\right] \cdot \left[\frac{\pi}{2+\pi} \left(\cos\left(\left(t_2 - \frac{1}{2}\right)\pi\right) + 1\right)\right],$$

which characterizes a factorable probability density function of a two-dimensional random vector with two uncorrelated one-dimensional components. For the sequence introduced in (4.1) we use the function  $h_k(t) = \frac{\sqrt{2}}{8} \sin(k^2 t^2)$ , which leads to the perturbed solution  $x_k(t_1, t_2) = x^{\dagger}(t_1, t_2) + h_k(t_1)$  that converges weakly in  $L^2([0, 1]^2)$  to  $x^{\dagger}$  as  $k \to \infty$ , but not in norm as the pictures of  $x_k - x^{\dagger}$  on the left in Figure 1 for k = 5, 10 and 20 clearly show. However, the pictures on the right indicate convincingly the norm convergence of  $y_k = x_k * x_k$  to  $y = x^{\dagger} * x^{\dagger}$  in the space  $L^2([0, 2]^2)$ .

# 5 A glimpse of rate results for regularized solutions

The goal of this concluding section is to mention some unexpected behavior of regularized solutions occurring in a brief case study on deautoconvolution, where in a setting analogous to [12] and [11, Sect. 10.2] the regularized solutions

$$x_{\alpha}^{\delta} \in \underset{x \in \mathcal{D}(F)}{\operatorname{arg\,min}} \left[ \|F(x) - y^{\delta}\|_{Y}^{2} + \alpha \|x - \bar{x}\|_{X}^{2} \right]$$
(5.1)

are minimizers of the Tikhonov functional. For both operators (1.4) and (1.6) under consideration, the element  $y^{\delta} \in Y$  denotes the available data satisfying (1.5),  $\bar{x} \in X$  is a reference element (initial guess), and  $\alpha > 0$  is a regularization parameter. Our study is reduced to the case that best possible regularization parameters  $\alpha = \alpha_{opt}$  in the sense of

$$\alpha_{opt}(\delta) = \min_{\alpha > 0} \|x_{\alpha}^{\delta} - x^{\dagger}\|_{X}$$
(5.2)



Figure 1: Development of differences  $x_k - x^{\dagger}$  and  $y_k - y$  for increasing k

are evaluated. From the three density functions of one real variable with supports in [0, 1],

$$x_1(t_1) = \frac{2(t_1+1)}{3}, \quad x_2(t_2) = \frac{\pi}{2+\pi} \left( \cos((t_2 - \frac{1}{2})\pi) + 1 \right), \quad x_3(t_3) = \begin{cases} \frac{5}{4} & 0 \le t_1 < \frac{1}{2} \\ t_1 & \frac{1}{2} \le t_1 \le 1 \end{cases}$$

we assemble two solutions  $x^{\dagger}$  for the two- and three-dimensional situation of deautoconvolution as

$$x^{\dagger}(t_1, t_2) = x_1(t_1)x_2(t_2)$$
 for  $n = 2$ 

and

$$x^{\dagger}(t_1, t_2, t_3) = x_1(t_1)x_2(t_2)x_3(t_3)$$
 for  $n = 3$ ,

which are density functions with supports  $[0,1]^n$ . To the discretization level with a uniform meshwidth of  $\frac{1}{50}$  in each direction, the regularized solutions  $x_{\alpha_{opt}}^{\delta}$  according to (5.1) have been calculated with a constant initial guess  $\bar{x} \equiv 0.5$  in the discretized form for n = 2, 3 and randomly generated noisy data  $y^{\delta} \in L^2([0,2]^n)$  (full data case) as well as for  $y^{\delta} \in L^2([0,1]^n)$  (limited data case). The relative empirical errors in % measured in the discrete  $L^2$ -norm for different  $\delta$ , each simulated from 10 independent runs, are listed in Table 1. The bottom line of the table contains the Hölder exponent  $0 < \kappa < 1$  of the convergence rate  $||x_{\alpha_{opt}}^{\delta} - x^{\dagger}|| = \mathcal{O}(\delta^{\kappa})$  as  $\delta \to 0$  for the different situations, which had been estimated by regression from the selection of  $\delta$ -values under consideration in the table.

relative input errors	relative output errors of $x^{\delta}_{\alpha_{ont}}$			
$rac{\ y^{\delta}-y^{\dagger}\ _{Y}}{\ y^{\dagger}\ _{Y}}$	$\frac{\ x_{\alpha_{opt}}^{\delta} - x^{\dagger}\ _{X}}{\ x^{\dagger}\ _{X}}$			
	full data case		limited data case	
	n=2	n = 3	n=2	n=3
10%	9.85%	13.48%	17.54%	23.59%
8%	8.70%	12.12%	17.21%	22.59%
5%	6.38%	9.82%	15.17%	19.99%
2%	3.61%	6.26%	9.74%	14.54%
1%	2.31%	4.12%	7.95%	11.58%
0.8%	1.98%	3.57%	7.39%	10.50%
0.5%	1.44%	2.61%	5.94%	9.24%
0.2%	0.78%	1.42%	4.10%	6.85%
0.1%	0.48%	0.87%	2.70%	5.47%
0.05%	0.30%	0.53%	1.76%	4.31%
estim. Hölder exponent $\kappa$	0.66	0.61	0.43	0.32

Table 1: Relative error norms of regularized solutions

An inspection of Table 1 shows for both dimensions n = 2 and n = 3 a substantial reduction of the regularization error norms in the full data case compared to the limited data case. This is intuitively explained by the lack of data in  $[0,2]^n \setminus [0,1]^n$ , but even though this lack is considerably larger in dimension n = 3 (factor 8) compared to n = 2 (factor 4), the error norms do not fully reflect this behavior.

Based on ten different noise levels  $\delta$ , a rough estimation of convergence rates of the corresponding error norms as  $\delta$  tends zero indicates Hölder exponents  $\kappa > 0.5$  in the full data case and  $\kappa < 0.5$ in the limited data case. However, both results cannot fully be explained by available theory. It is known from [12] and [11, Theorem 10.4] that a  $\kappa = 0.5$  rate (i.e.  $\mathcal{O}(\sqrt{\delta})$ ) is obtained under a range-type source condition  $x^{\dagger} - \bar{x} = (F'(x^{\dagger}))^* w$  in combination with a smallness condition on  $\|w\|_Y$ . On the other hand, it has been shown in [5, Prop. 2.6] that such theory is hard to apply for the autoconvolution operator F even in the one-dimensional case. To obtain rates with  $\kappa > 0.5$ , it is i.e. known from [29] and [11, Theorem 10.7], that a rate  $\mathcal{O}(\delta^{\frac{2}{3}})$  can be obtained under the higherorder range condition  $x^{\dagger} - \bar{x} = (F'(x^{\dagger}))^*F'(x^{\dagger})v$  in combination with a smallness condition on  $\|v\|_X$ . But in view of [5, Prop. 2.6] it is also questionable whether such a result can be applied for the autoconvolution operator F at hand. In both situations, one reason seems to be fact that the compact Fréchet derivatives F'(x) carry too little information about the non-compact operator F. Also variational source conditions introduced in [21] and, for example, further analyzed in [19, 32] could not be successfully exploited for obtaining convergence rates in deautoconvolution. Solely in [4, Prop. 5.1 and Cor. 5.2] a convergence rate could be derived by means of variational source conditions, but only under strong sparsity assumptions on the solution  $x^{\dagger}$ . Nevertheless, the numerical experiment in the context of Table 1 indicates the practical occurrence of Hölder convergence rates for regularized solutions to the multi-dimensional deautoconvolution problem.

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