

# From model-free control to HEOL setting

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**Workshop on data-driven control and  
analysis of dynamical systems**



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September 30th-October 1st, 2025, ENSEEIHT, Toulouse, France

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1/ Story of Model-Free Control

2/ Principles of Model-Free Control

3/ Academic examples

4/ Industrial examples

5/ What to do with a model

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# Historical background

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## Key elements

Algebraic estimation techniques, early 2000s, [MF, MM, HSR]

Creation of INRIA AL.I.E.N. team, 2004, [MF, CJ, MM, FO, AS]

Non-asymptotic estimation of noisy signals derivatives, 2005, [MF, CJ, MM, HSR]

First publication with model-free control, 2006, [MF, CJ, HSR]

Foundational article, 2013, [MF, CJ], citations > 1000

Collaboration of more than 20 years with Michel Fliess

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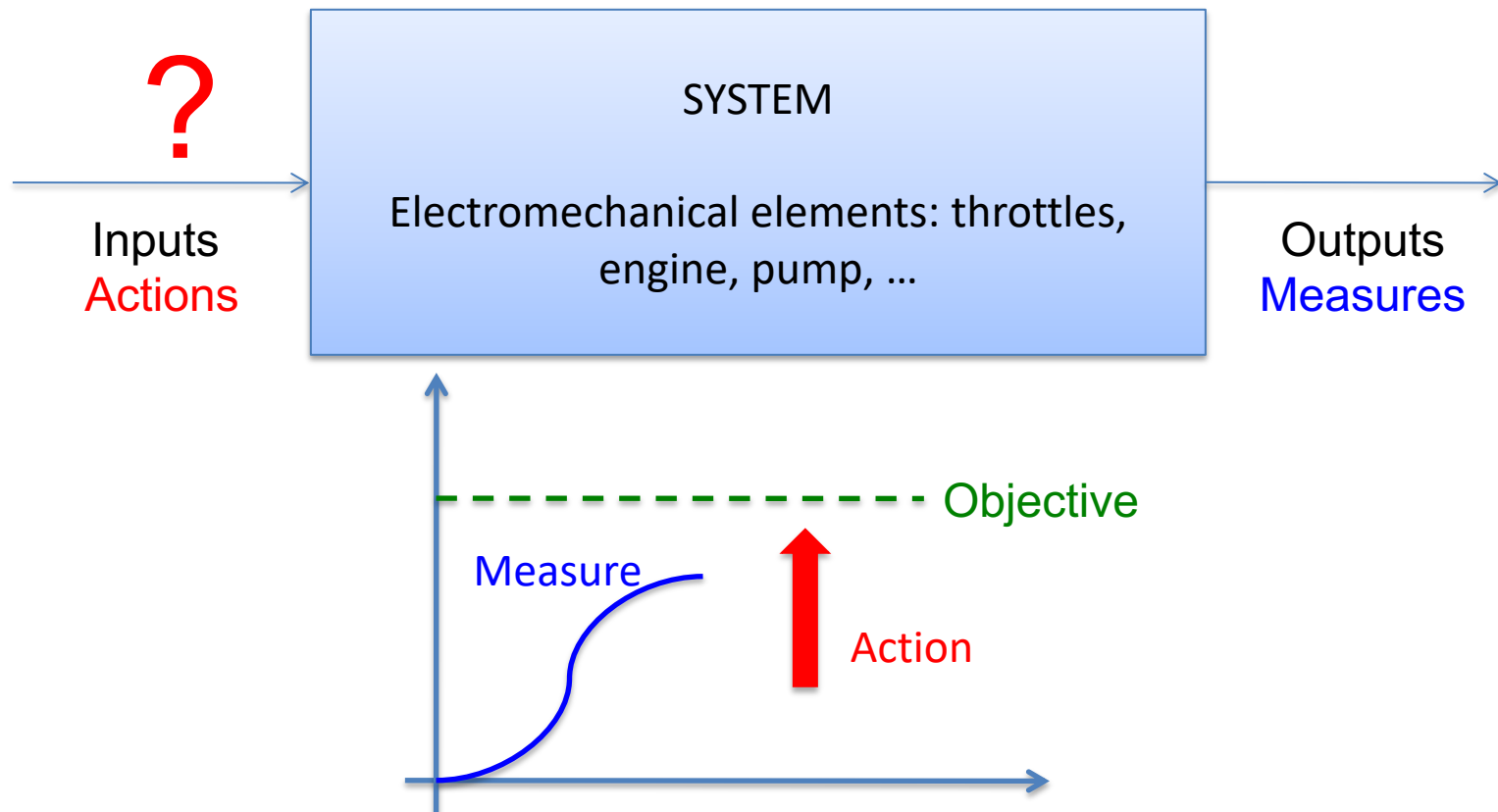
5/ What to do with a model

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# Model-Free Control: introduction

## The control problem

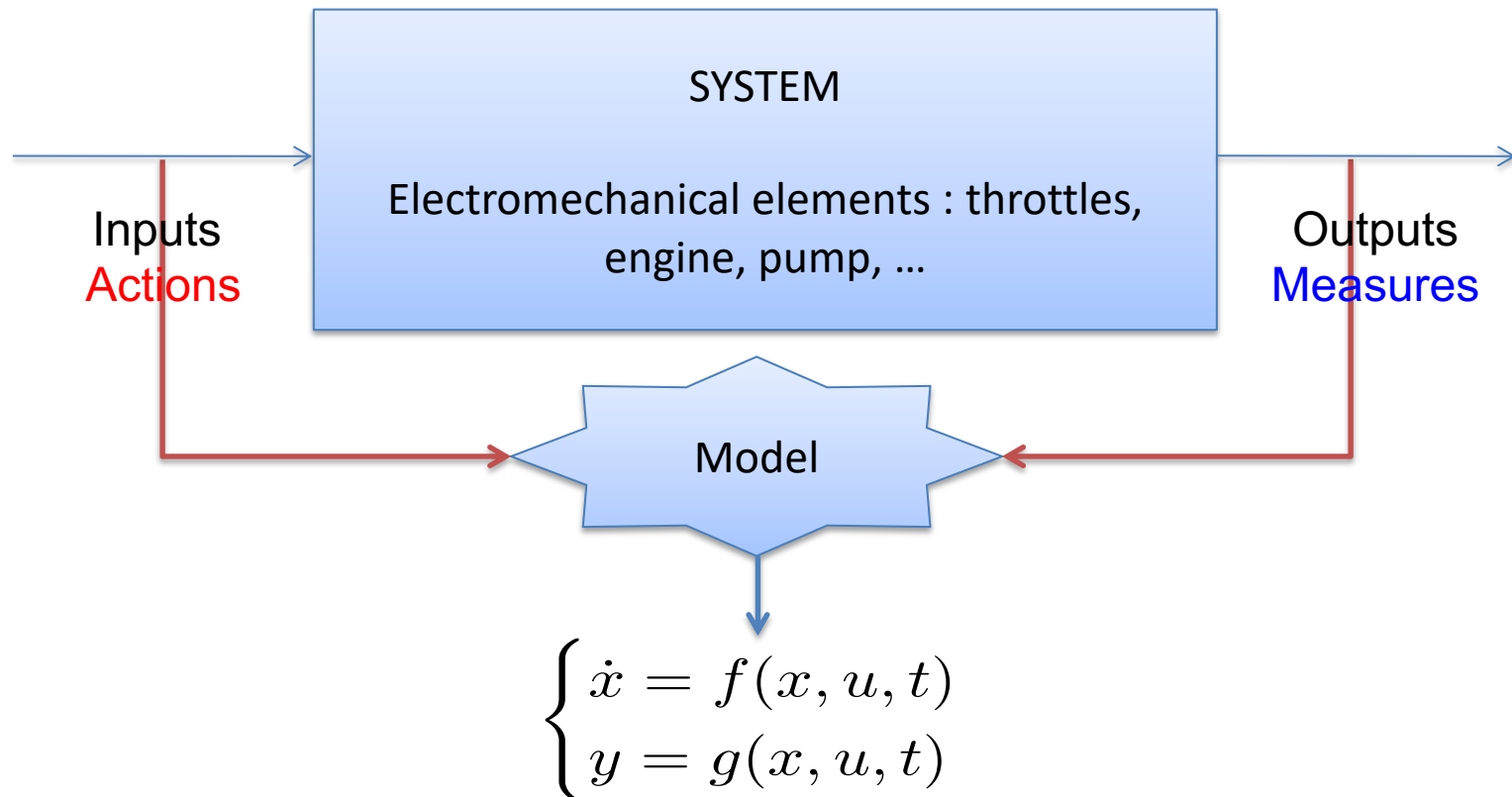
How to **act** on a system in order to accomplish a task successfully with good performances?



# Model-Free Control: fundamental principle

## Usual approach

Based on prior knowledge, mathematical equations/models are designed to reproduce the behavior of the system as accurately as possible.

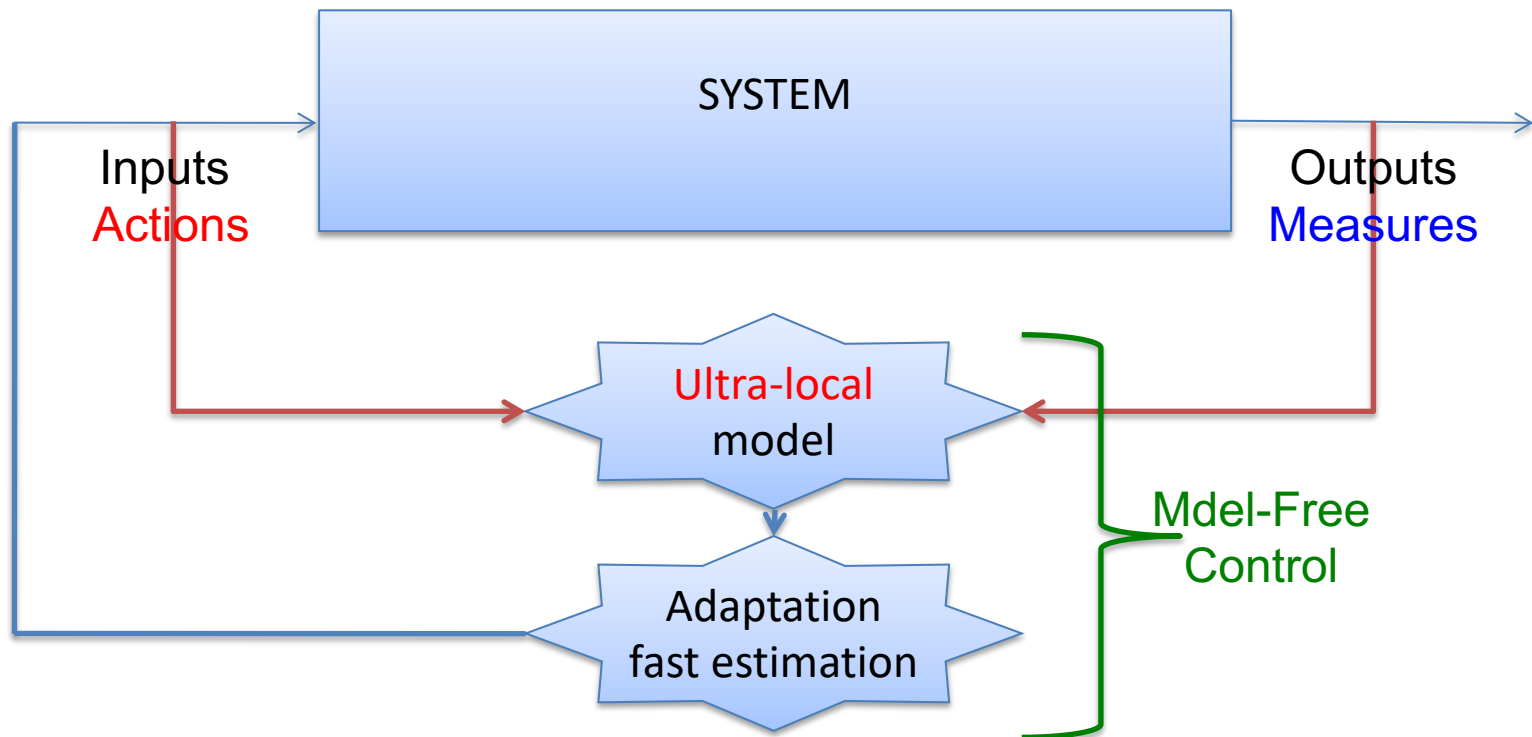


# Model-Free Control: fundamental principle

## Proposed approach

Control design:

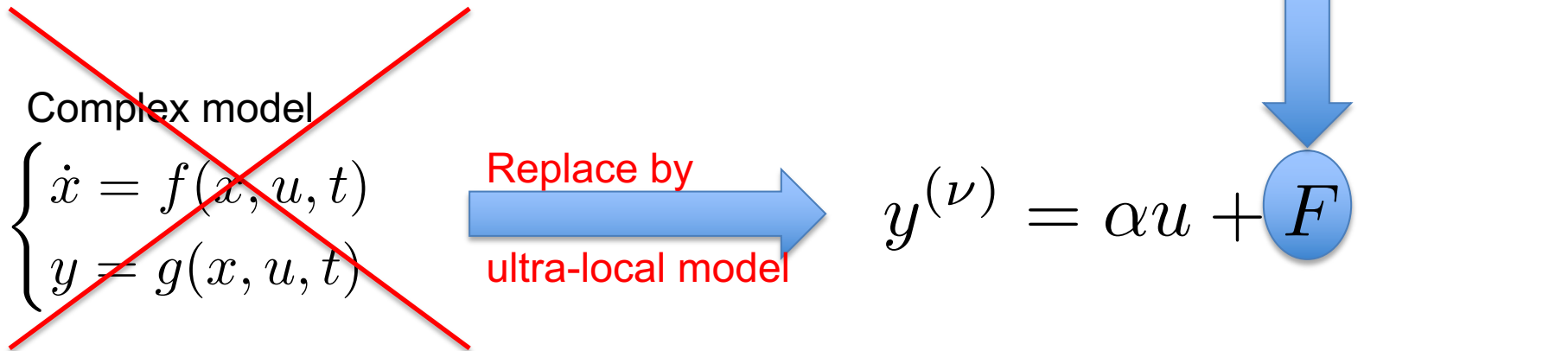
- Without parametric estimation
- Fast and non-asymptotic algebraic estimation tools





# Model-Free Control: fundamental principle

## Proposed approach



Ultra-local model control based

$$u = \frac{1}{\alpha} \left( -F + y_*^{(\nu)} \right) + \textit{Correction}(e)$$

# Model-Free Control: fundamental principle

## Proposed approach

$$y^{(\nu)} = \alpha u + F$$

$$u = \frac{1}{\alpha} \left( -F + y_*^{(\nu)} \right) + \textit{Correction}(e)$$

$$\nu \leq 2$$

With perfect estimation of  $F$

Iterative integrals

F estimation  
is decisive

$$e^{(\nu)} = \textit{Correction}(e)$$

# Model-Free Control: fundamental principle

## Algebraic estimation of F

For the example, consider the ultra-local model

$$\dot{y} = F + \alpha u$$

"good" approximation: piecewise constant approximation  $\Phi$ ,

$$sY = \frac{\Phi}{s} + \alpha U + y(0) \quad \leftarrow \text{Laplace domain}$$

$$Y + s \frac{dY}{ds} = -\frac{\Phi}{s^2} + \alpha \frac{dU}{ds} \quad \leftarrow \text{after } \frac{d}{ds}$$

$$F_{est}(t) = -\frac{6}{\tau^3} \int_{t-\tau}^t (\tau - 2\sigma)y(\sigma) + \alpha \sigma(\tau - \sigma)u(\sigma) d\sigma \quad \leftarrow \text{time domain}$$

$$\begin{matrix} u(\sigma) \\ y(\sigma) \end{matrix} \in [t - \tau, t]$$

# Model-Free Control: in summary

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- **Ultra-local Model** estimated at each laps of time
- No distinction between **different sources of uncertainty** (model, disturbance, fault, ...)
- **Process adaptability**
- **Highly robust**
- **Very lightweight implementation**

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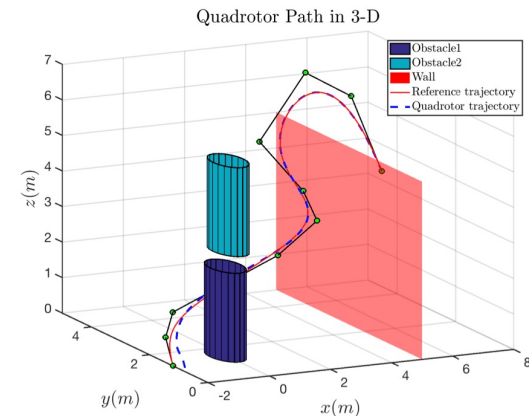
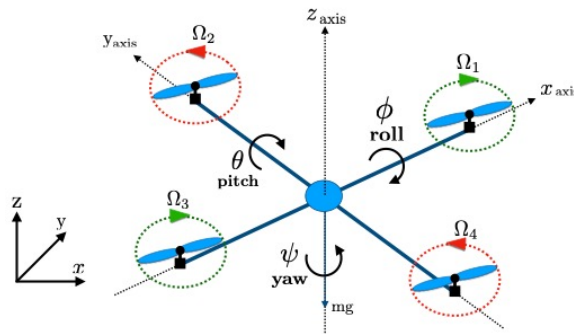
5/ What to do with a model

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# UAV

- Drone

- *Cascaded Model-Free Control for trajectory tracking of quadrotors*, M Bekcheva, C Join, H Mounier, *International Conference on Unmanned Aircraft Systems (ICUAS)*, 1359-1368, 2018 (**Centrale/Supélec**)



- *A robust but easily implementable remote control for quadrotors: Experimental acrobatic flight tests*, M. Clouatre, M. Thitsa, M. Fliess, C. Join, <https://hal-polytechnique.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-02910179> (**Mercer University, USA**)

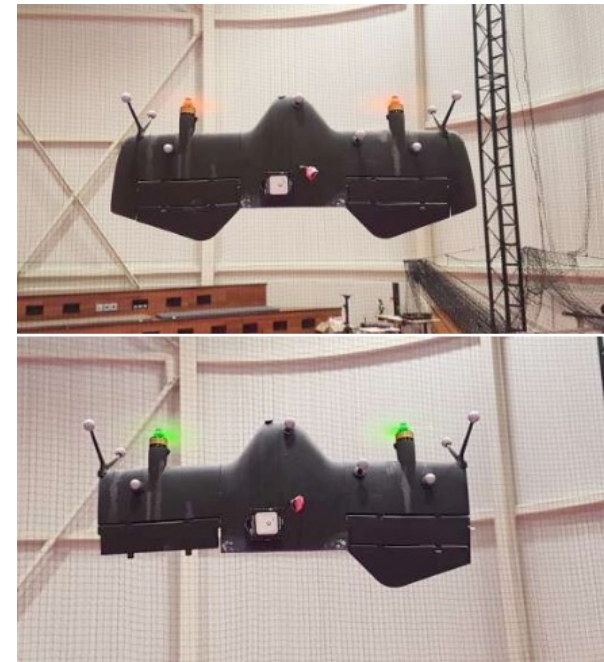
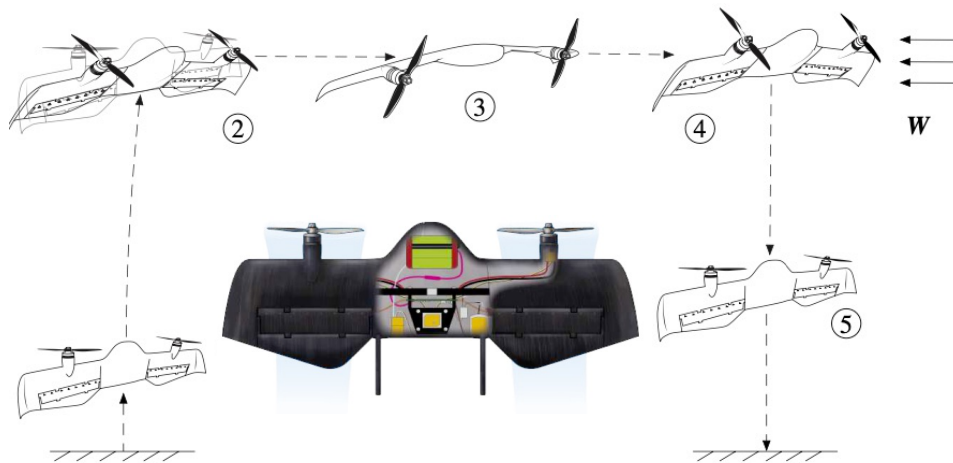
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtSLaIA4szc&t=35s>

# UAV

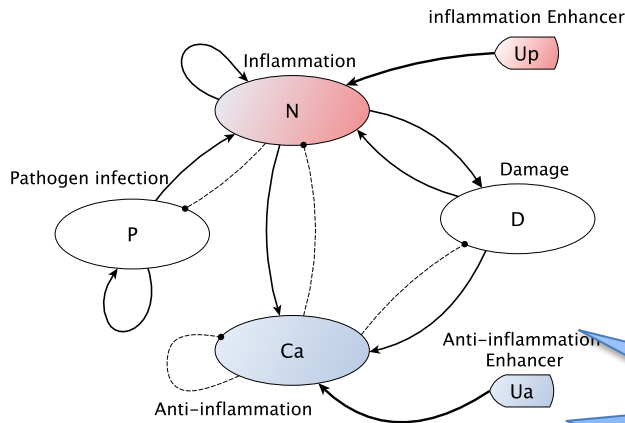
- **Fixed wing**

- « Best Paper Award 2020 » décerné par l'American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA)

*Towards a unified model-free control architecture for tailsitter micro air vehicles: Flight simulation analysis and experimental flights, J. M. Olszanecki Barth, J.-P. Condomines, M. Bronz, G. Hattenberger, J.-M. Moschetta, C. Join, M. Fliess, AIAA Scitech 2020 Forum, 2020 (ISAE/SUPAERO)*



# Inflammation control



in the process  
of recovery  
369 dead

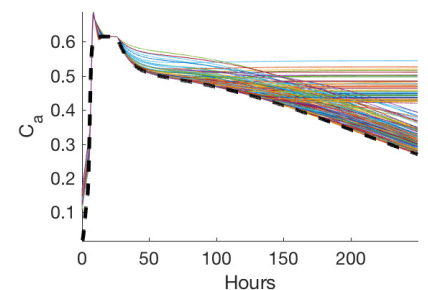
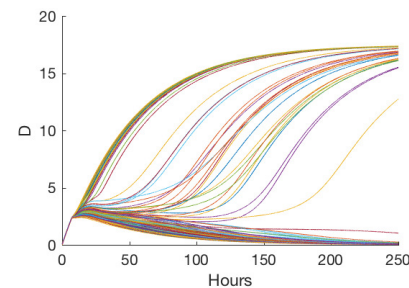
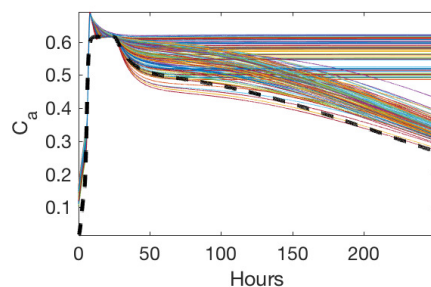
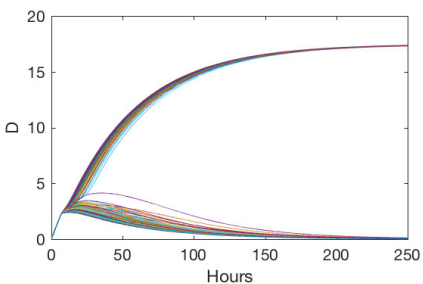
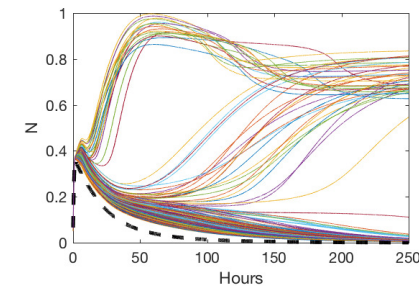
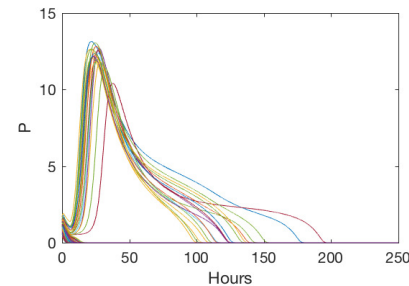
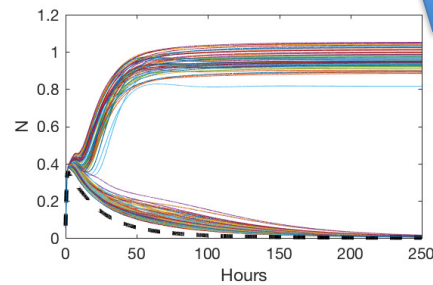
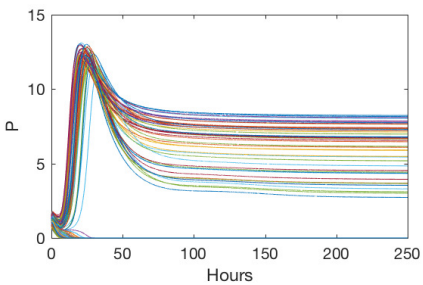
1000 virtual patients

| Therapy Type:                          | Placebo   | Model-free control therapy |
|----------------------------------------|-----------|----------------------------|
| <b>Percentage Healthy:</b>             | 40% (252) | 85.66% (518)               |
| <b>Percentage Aseptic:</b>             | 37% (228) | 6.4% (40)                  |
| <b>Percentage Septic:</b>              | 23% (141) | 7.8% (49)                  |
| <b>Percentage Harmed (out of 252)</b>  | n/a       | 0% (0/252)                 |
| <b>Percentage Rescued (out of 369)</b> | n/a       | 75.88% (280/369)           |

The choice of trajectory  
is important in

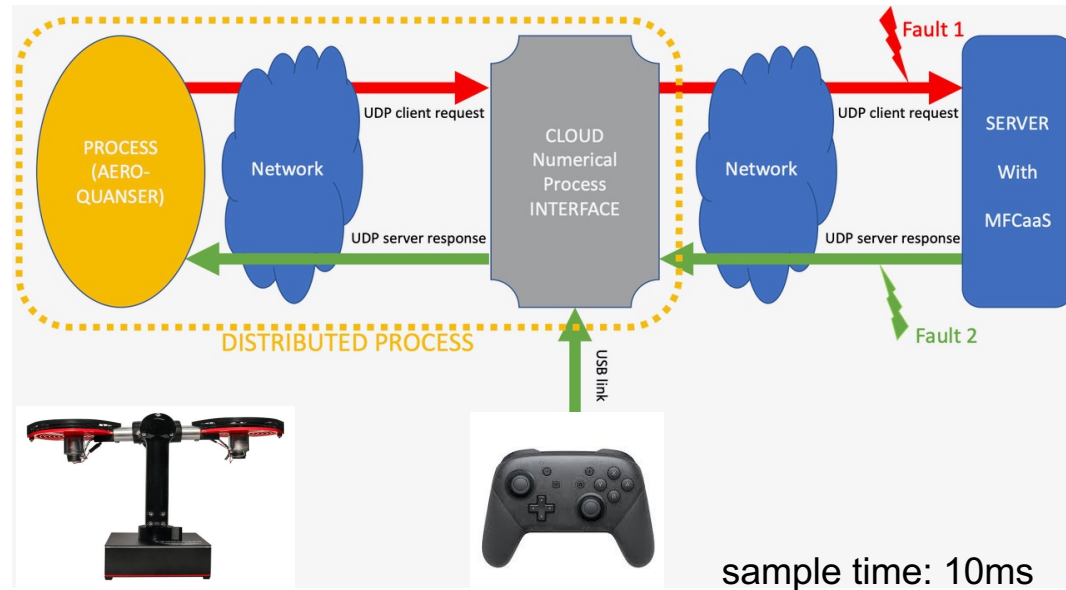
141 septic patients

228 aseptic patients



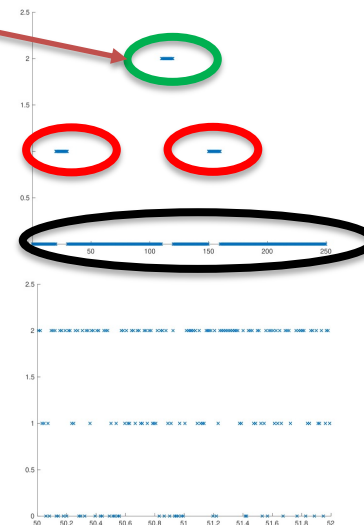
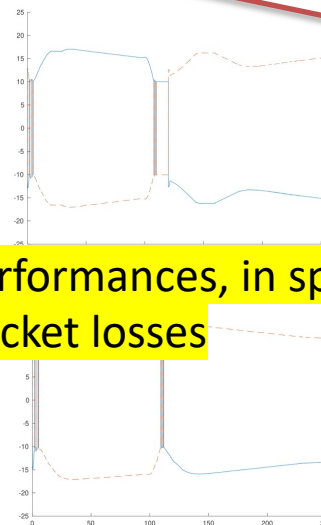
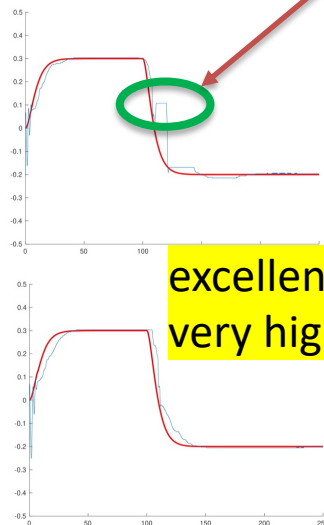


# MFC as a service



tracking quality decreases

3 longues pertes de transmission



Control do not reach the plant

Measurements do not reach the server

No loss

excellent performances, in spite of very high packet losses

80% of transmission faults

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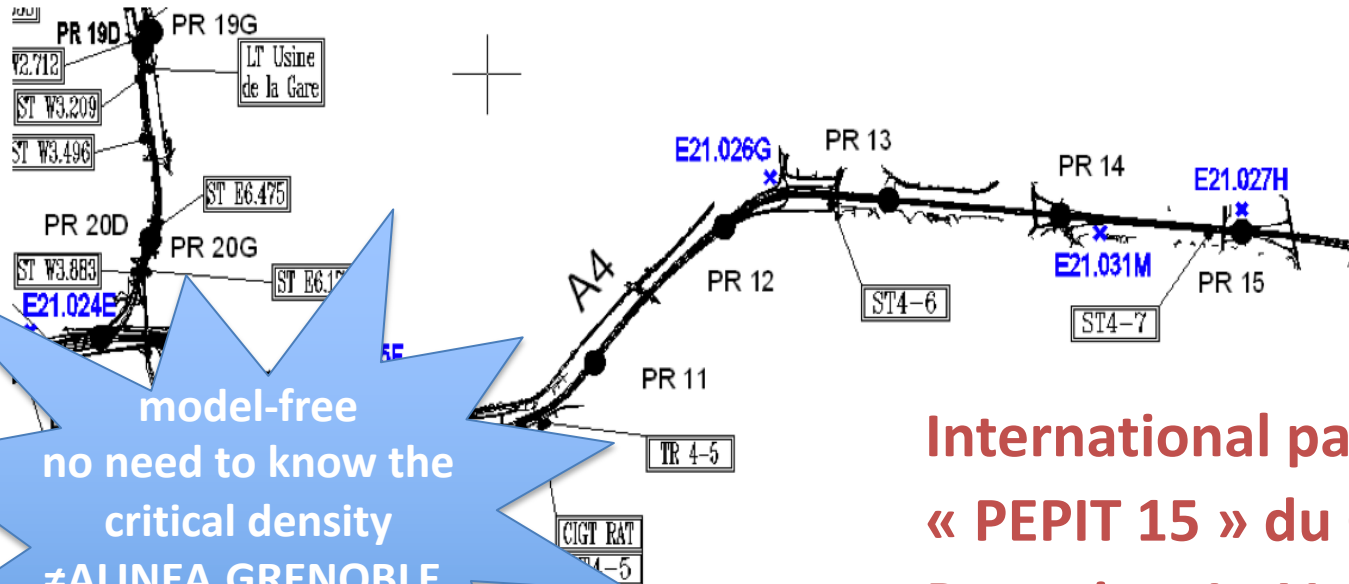
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# Examples of industrial applications

## Traffic control (DIR IF & N)



**International patent  
« PEPIT 15 » du CRAN  
Paper in « La Voix du Nord »**



**In operation** on the A25, A4  
**Deployment** on the A1, A22,  
and A23

# Examples of industrial applications

## Speed control for ALSTOM buses

Training of 20 engineers  
in our techniques

« Dans le logiciel embarqué d'APTIS, nous avons implémenté une régulation de vitesse basée sur l'algorithme Commande Sans Modèle de la société A.L.I.E.N.

Cette régulation de vitesse doit répondre à des critères :

- de dynamique : temps de réponse
- de charge : 14 tonne à vide jusqu'à 20 tonne en charge maximale
- et enfin de pente: du profil plat jusqu'à une pente de 12%!

Avec **un jeu de paramètre**, la Commande Sans Modèle a pu répondre à l'ensemble de ces exigences.

Comparée à un PI classique, la CSM est **plus robuste** et présente un gain indiscutable sur **le temps de validation sur simulateur et sur bus électrique.** »



# Other applications

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## Collaborations

### Other industrial applications

- EdF (hydroelectric dam regulation) : international patent
- ENGIE (Degrémont, Suez) (pressure regulation) : international patent
- GE, PSA, Renault, ...

### Other academic collaborations

- Autonomous car (J. Villagra, Madrid)
- Computer network management (E. Delaleau, Brest; H. Mounier, Paris)
- Fuel cell control and diagnosis (M. Ait Ziane, Belfort-Réunion, Longwy)
- Pandemic control (A. D'Onofrio, Trieste)
- ...

### Other independent external applications

- Electric motor speed regulation, Princeton/Oak Ridge, USA
- Building and grid energy management, ORNL, USA
- Power control, Université de Heifi, Chine
- Autonomous vehicle, Université de Kanagawa, Japon
- ....

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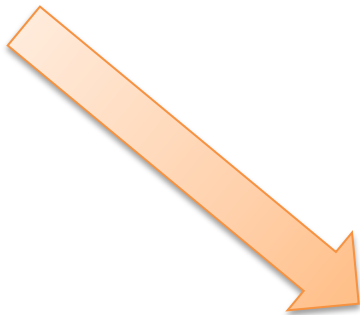
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# What to do with a Model?

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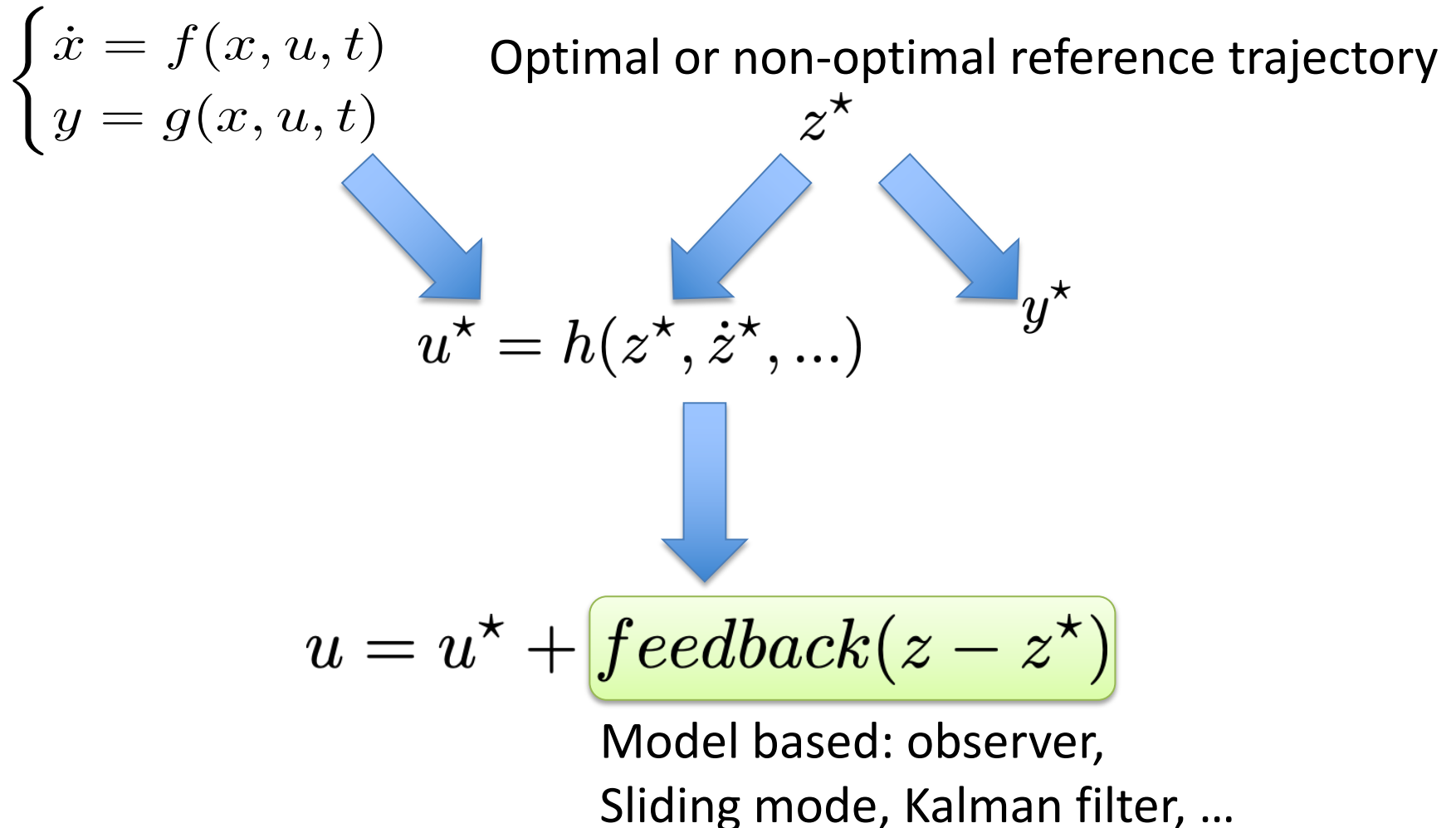
- Legitimate question
- Why not take advantage of *a priori* knowledge?
- How?



Flatness-based Control, 1992, [MF, JL, PM, PR]

# What to do with a Model?

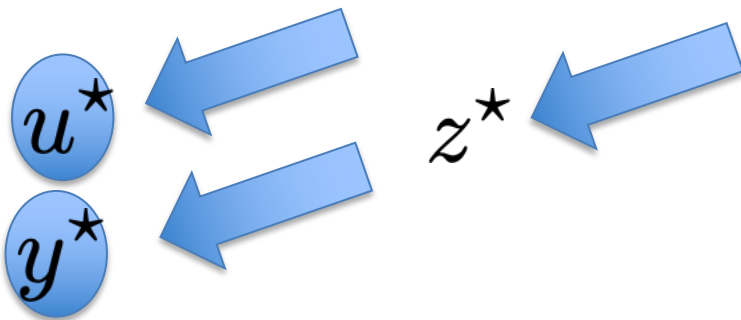
- Flatness-based control: better Model Predictive Control?





# What to do with a Model?

## Control along the reference trajectory

$$\Delta u = u - u^*$$
$$\Delta y = y - y^*$$


flat or partially flat model

$$\begin{cases} \dot{x} = f(x, u, t) \\ y = g(x, u, t) \end{cases}$$

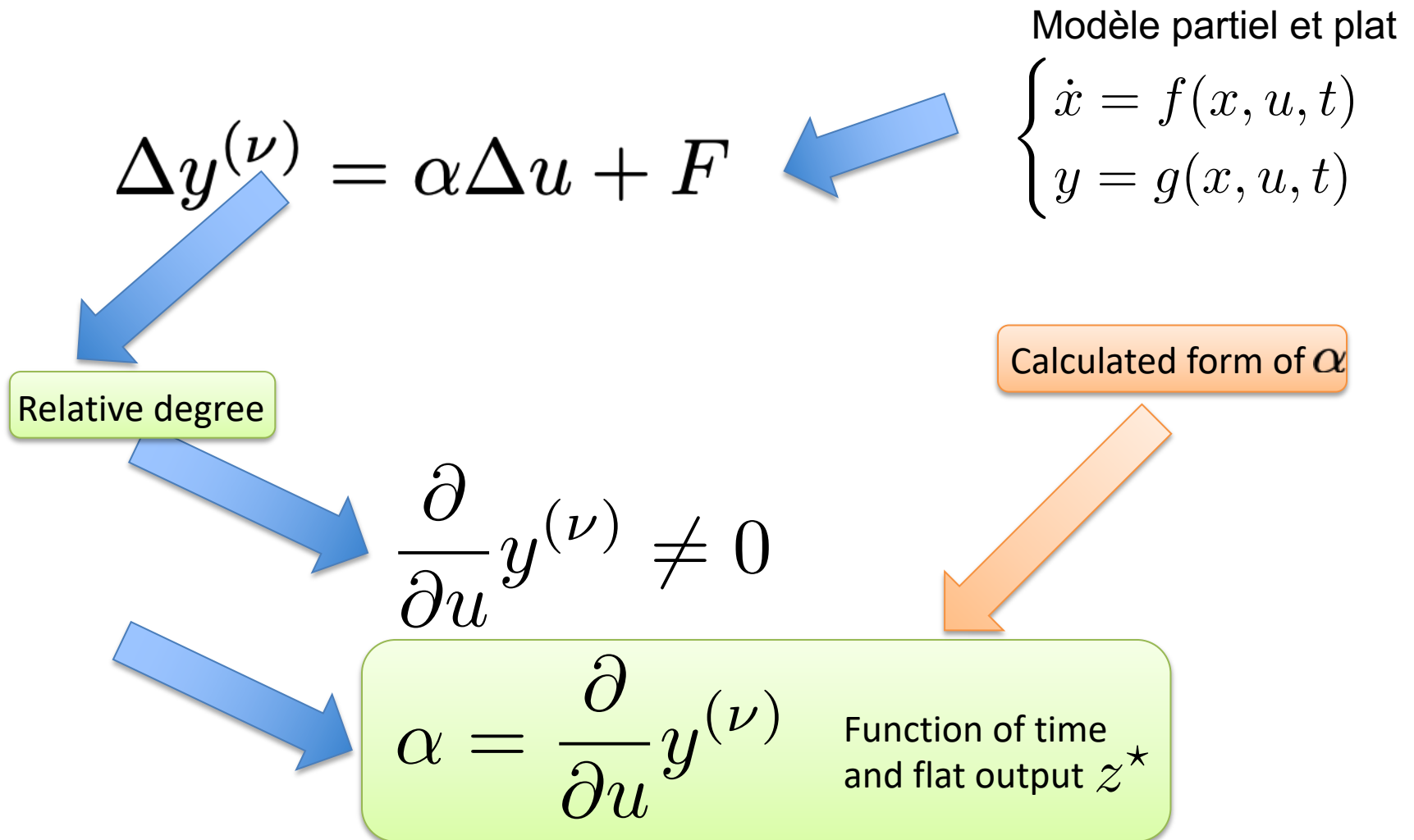
Stabilization at 0

$$\Delta y^{(\nu)} = \alpha \Delta u + F$$

$$u = u^* - \frac{F}{\alpha} + \textit{Correction}(\Delta y)$$

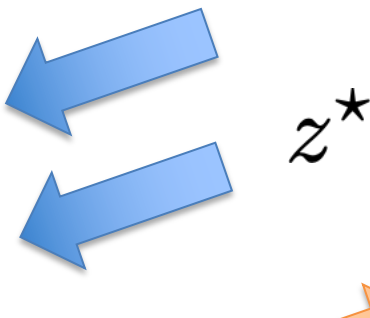
# What to do with a Model?

## Control along the reference trajectory: HEOL (soleil)



# What to do with a Model?

## Control along the reference trajectory: invariant error

$$\Delta u = u - u^*$$
$$\Delta y = y - y^*$$


Stabilization at 0

Projection into invariant space

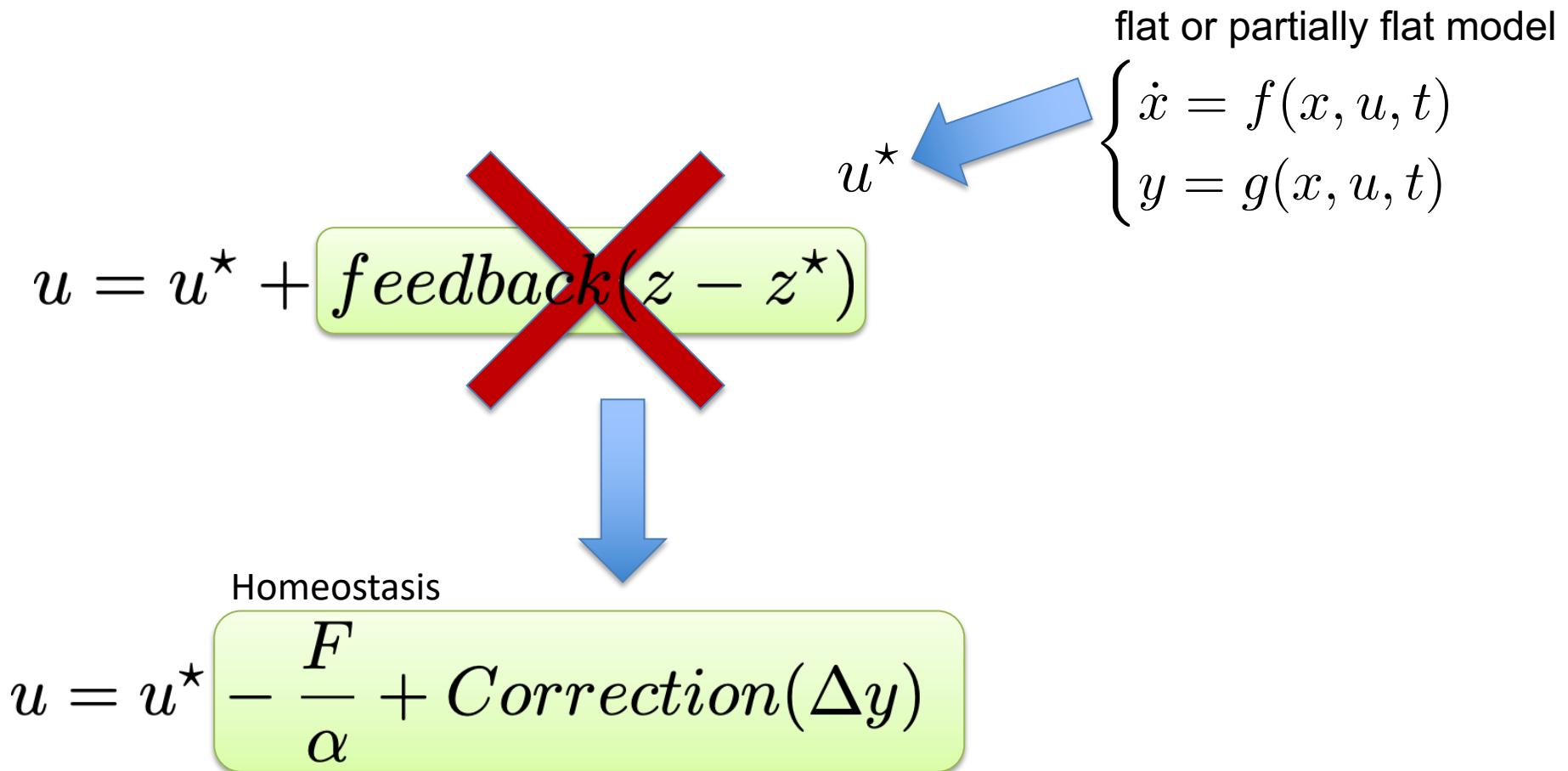
- Error behaviour
- Simplified form of  $\alpha$
- Singularity vanishing

$$\Delta y^{(\nu)} = \alpha \Delta u + F$$

$$u = u^* - \frac{F}{\alpha} + \textit{Correction}(\Delta y)$$

# What to do with a Model?

## HEOL : in summary



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# Conclusions

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- New paradigm: « model-free control »
- Limitations of “pure” CSM
  - non-minimal phase shift
  - physical pure control delay [MD,FH]
- Price to pay: sampling, noise level, dynamics
- Combining flatness + MFC: recently published HEOL offering answers to recurring questions

# References

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## General references

### Model-free control

M Fliess, C Join

International Journal of Control 86 (12), 2228-2252, 2013

### An alternative to proportional-integral and proportional-integral-derivative regulators: intelligent proportional-derivative regulators

M Fliess, C Join

International Journal of Robust and Nonlinear Control 32 (18), 9512-9524, 2022

### Flatness-based control revisited: The HEOL setting

C Join, E Delaleau, M Fliess

Comptes Rendus. Mathématique 362.G12, 1693-1706, 2024

## UAV

### Cascaded Model-Free Control for trajectory tracking of quadrotors

M Bekcheva, C Join, H Mounier

2018 international conference on unmanned aircraft systems (ICUAS), 1359-1368, 2018

### A robust but easily implementable remote control for quadrotors: Experimental acrobatic flight tests

M Clouatre, M Thitsa, M Fliess, C Join

arXiv preprint arXiv:2008.00681, 2020

### Model-free control algorithms for micro air vehicles with transitioning flight capabilities

JMO Barth, JP Condomines, M Bronz, JM Moschetta, C Join, M Fliess

International Journal of Micro Air Vehicles 12, 2020

# References

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## Inflammation control

### **Toward a model-free feedback control synthesis for treating acute inflammation**

O Bara, M Fliess, C Join, J Day, SM Djouadi  
Journal of theoretical biology 448, 26-37, 2018

## Traffic control

### **On ramp metering: Towards a better understanding of ALINEA via model-free control**

H Abouaïssa, M Fliess, C Join  
International Journal of Control 90 (5), 1018-1026, 2017

## MFC as a service

### **Model-free control as a service in the industrial internet of things: Packet loss and latency issues via preliminary experiments**

C Join, M Fliess, F Chaxel  
2020 28th Mediterranean Conference on Control and Automation (MED), 299-306, 2020