

Snap-through phenomena induced by a rotating clamp



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Abstract

We considered the large deflection of a cantilever beam subject to a concentrated force at its free end in the case that the clamp can continuously rotate. The Euler elastic theory provides the relationship between the applied load and the deformed shape, so that theoretical paths can be found at varying the clamp angle. An innovative device, named Elastic Catapult, was designed to experimentally investigate this structural system. During experimental testing a typical snap-through behavior is observed at specific angles of the clamp when the load is higher than the buckling load. An analytical model is developed to theoretically predict the critical angles of snap-through experimentally observed with the Elastic Catapult.

The elastica equation

We consider an elastic cantilever beam of total length l and stiffness B , subject to a concentrated load applied to its free end with an inclination angle α . The beam is assumed as inextensible and shear deformations are not considered.

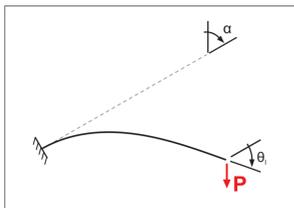


Figure 1: A sketch of the considered elastic structural system

The behavior of the rod is described by a non linear, II order differential equation which is provided by the analysis of the kinematics of the beam and the standard linear constitutive law:

$$\begin{cases} B\theta''(s) + P_1 \cos \theta(s) + P_2 \sin \theta(s) = 0 \\ \theta'(l) = 0 \\ \theta(0) = 0 \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

where P_1 and P_2 represents the vertical and the normal components of the applied load P , respectively.

The equilibrium path of the system

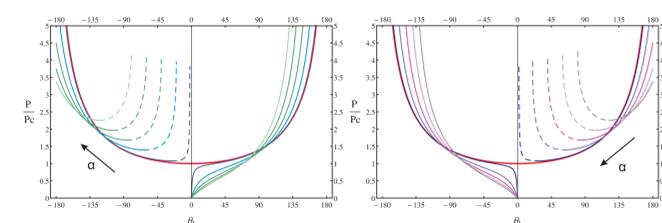
Through many mathematical steps, we find the closed form solution of equation (1), which provides the relationship between the applied load and the deflection of the beam, represented by θ_L , the rotation angle of the free end:

$$P = \frac{B}{l^2} [K(k) - K(\phi_0, k)]^2 \quad (2)$$

where $\phi_0 = \arcsin \left[\frac{\sin(\frac{\alpha}{2})}{k} \right]$

and $K(k)$ and $K(\phi_0, k)$ are two elliptic integrals of the first kind, complete and incomplete respectively.

Equation (2) provides the equilibrium paths of the system:



(a) Equilibrium paths for $\alpha > 0$ (b) Equilibrium paths for $\alpha < 0$

Displacements and deformations

The analysis gets along with the displacements field, that leads to define the deformed configurations of the beam. Figure (2) shows some examples of the configurations obtained for different values of the inclination angle of the load, α :

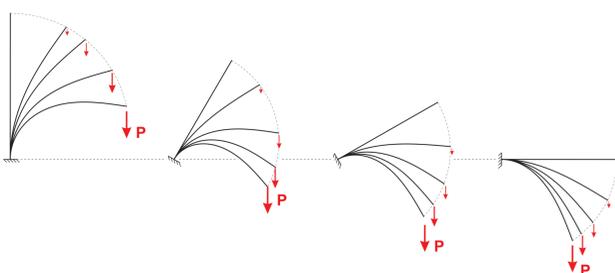


Figure 2: Deformed shapes

The elastic catapult

In order to study the critical and post-critical behavior of the system, we designed a novel device, called the elastic catapult. The set up consists in a polycarbonate beam, constrained to a rotating fixed joint.

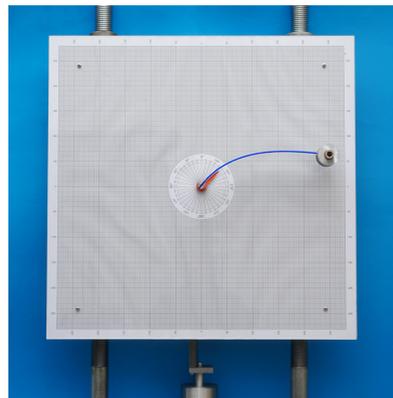


Figure 3: The Elastic Catapult as the experimental realization of the considered structural system

From an analytical point of view, the device simulates the behavior of a cantilever beam subjected to a concentrated force, which continuously changes its application angle α .

Experimental tests for $P < P_{cr}$

At first, some tests were run with an applied load which was lower than the Euler critical load of the beam. In this case, the system rotates without suffering instabilities and it gradually reverse its bending.

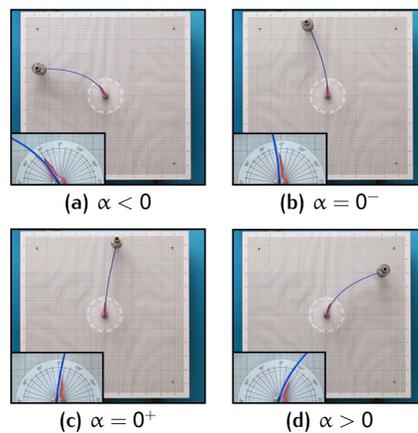


Figure 4: The path followed by the system

- when α is lower than α_{cr} , there are three different solutions to equation (2) and just as many intersections between the equilibrium curve of the system and the line that indicates the value of the applied load (see α_{II});
- when α is equal to α_{cr} , there are only 2 solutions to equation (2), since the equilibrium path is tangent to the line of the applied load. These solutions are equal in value but with different sign (see α_{II});
- when α is higher than α_{cr} , there is only one solution to equation (2) and it corresponds to a positive value of the bending θ_L (see α_{II}).

Figure (5) shows a comparison between the theoretical analysis and the experimental test, which confirms the reliability of the model.

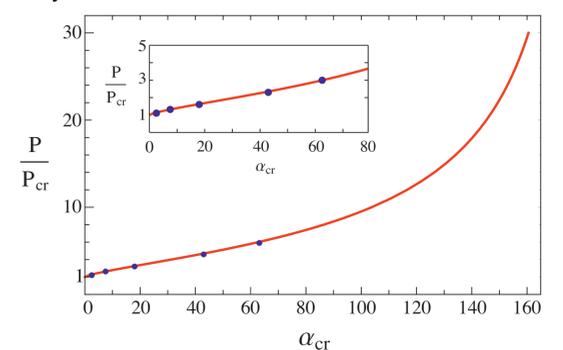
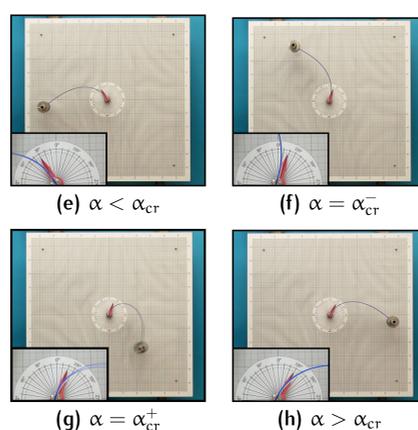


Figure 5: Comparison between theoretical and experimental results

Experimental tests for $P > P_{cr}$

When the applied load is greater than the Euler critical load, the system display a snap-through phenomenon: at a specific "critical" value of the inclination angle of the beam, instability occurs and the system suddenly revers its bending.



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