

## REGULARITY CRITERIA FOR THE $p$ -HARMONIC AND OSTWALD-DE WAELE FLOWS

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ABSTRACT. This paper considers regularity for the  $p$ -harmonic and Ostwald-de Waele flows. Some Serrin's type regularity criteria are established for  $1 < p < 2$ .

### 1. Introduction

In this paper, we consider the regularity criteria of the weak solutions of the  $p$ -harmonic flows:

$$\begin{aligned} (1.1) \quad & u_t - \operatorname{div}(|\nabla u|^{p-2}\nabla u) = u|\nabla u|^p, \\ (1.2) \quad & |u| = 1, \\ (1.3) \quad & u(\cdot, 0) = u_0, \quad |u_0| = 1, \quad \text{in } \mathbb{R}^n. \end{aligned}$$

When  $p = 2$ , it is the well-known harmonic heat flow, which has been widely studied [5, 6, 7, 11, 19]. The papers [11, 19] proved some regularity criteria.

When  $p > n \geq 3$ , Fardoun-Regbaoui [12] showed the global well-posedness of strong solutions for large data. Hungerbühler [14] established existence of global weak solutions of the  $p$ -harmonic flow between Riemannian manifolds  $M$  and  $N$  for arbitrary initial data having finite  $p$ -energy in the case when the target  $N$  is a homogeneous space with a left invariant metric when  $2 < p < n$ . Chen-Hong-Hungerbühler [8] proved existence of global weak solutions when  $p \geq 2$ .

When  $1 < p < 2$ , Misawa [18] proved that the problem (1.1)-(1.3) has a global weak solution satisfying

$$(1.4) \quad \frac{1}{p} \int |\nabla u|^p dx + \int_0^T \int |u_t|^2 dx dt \leq \frac{1}{p} \int |\nabla u_0|^p dx.$$

Very recently, Iagar-Moll [15] studied the  $p$ -harmonic flow ( $1 < p < 2$ ) from the unit disk  $D^2$  to the unit sphere  $S^2$  under the rotational symmetry and they showed that the Dirichlet problem with constant boundary conditions

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is locally well-posed in the class of classical solutions and they also gave a sufficient condition for the derivative of the solutions to blow-up in finite time.

The first aim of this paper is to prove some regularity criteria for the weak solutions of the problem (1.1)-(1.3) when  $1 < p < 2$ . We will prove:

**Theorem 1.1.** *Let  $n = 3$  and  $1 < p < 2$ . Let  $\nabla u_0 \in L^2 \cap L^p$  and  $|u_0| = 1$  in  $\mathbb{R}^n$ . Let  $u$  be the weak solution constructed in [18]. If  $\nabla u$  satisfies one of the following two conditions:*

$$(1.5) \quad (i) \quad \nabla u \in L^r(0, T; L^s) \quad \text{with} \quad \frac{p}{r} + \frac{3}{s} \leq 1,$$

$$(1.6) \quad (ii) \quad \nabla u \in L^p(0, T; BMO),$$

$$r = \frac{p \left( 2q - 3 + \frac{6}{p} \right)}{2q - 3}, \quad s = \frac{q}{2}r, \quad \frac{3}{2} < q \leq \infty,$$

then we have

$$(1.7) \quad \nabla u \in L^\infty(0, T; L^2 \cap L^p) \cap L^p(0, T; W^{1,p}).$$

Here *BMO* denotes the spaces of functions of bounded mean oscillations.

*Remark 1.1.* The system (1.1) has a scaling invariance under  $u \rightarrow u_\lambda := u(\lambda x, \lambda^p t)$  for any  $\lambda > 0$ . In this sense, the conditions (1.5) and (1.6) are optimal. We also point out that the paper [15] gave a special solution blowing up in finite time, while we here give a general blowing up condition.

Next, we consider the regularity of the weak solutions of the pseudo-plastic Ostwald-de Waele non-Newtonian models [2, 3]:

$$(1.8) \quad \begin{aligned} \partial_t u_i + u \cdot \nabla u_i + \partial_i \pi - \sum_j \partial_j \Gamma_{ij} &= 0, \\ \operatorname{div} u &= 0, \\ \Gamma_{ij} &:= |E(\nabla u)|^{p-2} E_{ij}(\nabla u), \\ E_{ij}(\nabla u) &= \frac{1}{2}(\partial_j u_i + \partial_i u_j), \quad i, j = 1, 2, 3, \\ u(\cdot, 0) &= u_0 \quad \text{in } \mathbb{R}^3. \end{aligned}$$

Here  $u$  is the fluid velocity field and  $\pi$  is the pressure.

**Definition 1.1.** Let  $u_0 \in L^2$  with  $\operatorname{div} u_0 = 0$ . We call  $u \in L^\infty(0, T; L^2) \cap L^p(0, T; W^{1,p})$  a weak solutions of (1.8) with bounded energy, if

$$(1.9) \quad - \int_0^T \int u \phi_i dx dt - \int_0^T \int u \otimes u : \nabla \phi dx dt + \int_0^T \int |\nabla u|^{p-2} \nabla u : \nabla \phi dx dt = \int u_0 \phi(0) dx$$

for all  $\phi \in C^\infty(\mathbb{T}^3 \times [0, T])$  with  $\operatorname{div} \phi = 0$  and there holds the following energy inequality

$$(1.10) \quad \frac{1}{2} \|u(t)\|_{L^2}^2 + \int_0^t \int |\nabla u|^p dx ds \leq \frac{1}{2} \|u_0\|_{L^2}^2$$

for almost all  $t \in (0, T)$ .

**Definition 1.2.** Let  $u_0 \in H^1$ . We say that a weak solution  $u$  is a strong solution to (1.8) if

$$\begin{aligned} \nabla u &\in L^3(\mathbb{R}^3 \times (0, T)) \cap L^\infty(0, T; L^p \cap L^2), \\ u_t &\in L^2(\mathbb{R}^3 \times (0, T)), \end{aligned}$$

and there holds

$$(1.11) \quad \int_0^T \int |\nabla u|^{p-2} |\nabla^2 u|^2 dx dt < \infty.$$

The existence of weak solutions is shown in [16, 17] with the periodic boundary condition, and in [20] in the whole space, and in [10, 21] in a bounded domain. The existence of strong solutions is proved in [16] for  $p \geq \frac{11}{5}$  with the periodic boundary condition. For  $\frac{9}{5} < p < 2$ , the existence of weak solutions of bipolar fluid is given in [17]. For  $\frac{7}{5} < p < 2$ , the short time existence of strong solutions are obtained in [4, 9] with the periodic boundary condition. For  $2 < p$  and  $\Omega := \mathbb{T}^3$  or  $\mathbb{R}^3$ , the short time existence of strong solutions are proved in [3].

In [2], Bae-Choe-Kim proved the following regularity criterion

$$(1.12) \quad u \in L^\beta(0, T; L^\alpha) \text{ with } \frac{3}{\alpha} + \frac{5p-6}{2\beta} \leq \frac{5p-8}{2} \quad \left( \frac{8}{5} < p < 2 \right) \text{ and } \frac{6}{5p-8} < \alpha.$$

Very recently, Bae-Kang-Lee-Wolf [3] showed the following regularity criterion:

$$(1.13) \quad \nabla u \in L^\beta(0, T; L^\alpha) \text{ with } \frac{3}{\alpha} + \frac{2}{3-p} = \frac{2}{3-p} \quad \left( 2 < p < \frac{11}{5} \right) \text{ and } \frac{3(3-p)}{2} < \alpha.$$

If we consider the scaling invariance for the system (1.8), the following scaling property of solutions is satisfied:

$$(u_\lambda, \pi_\lambda) := \left( \lambda^{\frac{p-1}{3-p}} u(\lambda x, \lambda^{\frac{2}{3-p}} t), \lambda^{\frac{2p-2}{3-p}} \pi(\lambda x, \lambda^{\frac{2}{3-p}} t) \right).$$

Therefore, a Serrin's type condition for  $u$  is given as

$$(1.14) \quad u \in L^\beta(0, T; L^\alpha) \text{ with } \frac{3}{\alpha} + \frac{2}{3-p} = \frac{p-1}{3-p}.$$

In this sense, (1.12) is not optimal and (1.13) is optimal.

The second aim of this paper is to give more regularity criteria for the problem (1.8). We will prove:

**Theorem 1.2.** Let  $\frac{7}{5} < p < 2$  and  $u_0 \in H^1$  with  $\operatorname{div} u_0 = 0$  in  $\mathbb{R}^3$ . If  $\nabla u$  satisfies one of the following two conditions

$$(1.15) \quad (i) \quad \nabla u \in L^\beta(0, T; L^\alpha) \text{ with } \frac{3}{\alpha} + \frac{2}{3-p} = \frac{2}{3-p}$$

$$(1.16) \quad \text{and } \frac{3(3-p)}{2} < \alpha \leq \infty, \\ \text{(ii) } \nabla u \in L^1(0, T; BMO),$$

then we have

$$(1.17) \quad u \in L^\infty(0, T; H^1) \cap L^p(0, T; W^{2,p}).$$

In the following proofs, we will use the following interpolation inequality [13, 1]:

$$(1.18) \quad \|f\|_{L^p} \leq C \|f\|_{L^q}^{\frac{q}{p}} \|f\|_{BMO}^{1-\frac{q}{p}}$$

with  $1 \leq q < p < \infty$ .

## 2. Proof of Theorem 1.1

This section is devoted to the proof of Theorem 1.1. We only need to establish (1.7) under (1.5) or (1.6) by formal calculations.

Testing (1.1) by  $u_t$  and using  $u \cdot u_t = 0$ , we see that (1.4) holds true.

Testing (1.1) by  $-\Delta u$  and using  $-u \cdot \Delta u = |\nabla u|^2$ , we deduce that

$$(2.1) \quad \frac{1}{2} \frac{d}{dt} \int |\nabla u|^2 dx - \int |\nabla u|^{p-2} \sum_{i,j} \partial_j u_i \Delta \partial_j u_i dx = \int |\nabla u|^{p+2} dx.$$

We estimate the second term of the left hand side as follows

$$(2.2) \quad \begin{aligned} I &:= - \sum_{i,j} \int |\nabla u|^{p-2} \partial_j u_i \Delta \partial_j u_i dx \\ &= \sum_{i,j} \int |\nabla u|^{p-2} |\nabla \partial_j u_i|^2 dx + \sum_{i,j} \int \partial_j u_i \cdot \nabla \partial_j u_i \cdot \nabla |\nabla u|^{p-2} dx \\ &= \int |\nabla u|^{p-2} |\nabla^2 u|^2 dx + \frac{1}{2} \int \nabla |\nabla u|^2 \cdot \nabla |\nabla u|^{p-2} \\ &\geq \int |\nabla u|^{p-2} |\nabla^2 u|^2 dx + C_0 \int \left| \nabla |\nabla u|^{\frac{p}{2}} \right|^2 dx. \end{aligned}$$

Case 1. Let (1.5) hold true.

Letting  $w := |\nabla u|^{\frac{p}{2}}$ , we estimate the right hand side of (2.1) as follows.

$$\begin{aligned} J &:= \int |\nabla u|^{p+2} dx \\ &\leq \int w^{2+\frac{4}{p}} dx = \int w^{\theta_1+\theta_2+\theta_3} dx \quad (\theta_1 + \theta_2 + \theta_3 = 2 + \frac{4}{p}) \\ &\leq \|w^{\theta_1}\|_{L^{p_1}} \|w^{\theta_2}\|_{L^{p_2}} \|w^{\theta_3}\|_{L^q} \quad \left( \frac{1}{p_1} + \frac{1}{p_2} + \frac{1}{q} = 1 \right) \\ &= \|w\|_{L^{\theta_1 p_1}}^{\theta_1} \|w\|_{L^{\theta_2 p_2}}^{\theta_2} \|w\|_{L^{\theta_3 q}}^{\theta_3} \\ &\leq C \|w\|_{L^6}^{\theta_1} \|\nabla u\|_{L^{\frac{2}{2}\theta_2 p_2}}^{\frac{2}{2}\theta_2} \|\nabla u\|_{L^{\frac{2}{2}\theta_3 q}}^{\frac{2}{2}\theta_3} \quad (\theta_1 p_1 = 6) \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
 &\leq \frac{C_0}{2} \|\nabla w\|_{L^2}^2 + C \left( \|\nabla u\|_{L^{\frac{2}{\theta_2}}}^{\frac{p}{2}\theta_2} \|\nabla u\|_{L^s}^{\frac{p}{2}\theta_3} \right)^{\frac{2}{2-\theta_1}} \\
 &\quad \left( p\theta_2 p_2 = 4, \frac{p}{2}\theta_2 \cdot \frac{2}{2-\theta_1} = 2, \frac{p}{2}\theta_3 q = s, \frac{p}{2}\theta_3 \cdot \frac{2}{2-\theta_1} = r \right) \\
 (2.3) \quad &\leq \frac{C_0}{2} \|\nabla w\|_{L^2}^2 + C \|\nabla u\|_{L^2}^2 \|\nabla u\|_{L^s}^r,
 \end{aligned}$$

where we have used the following choice of the constants:

$$\theta_1 = \frac{3}{q}, \quad p_1 = 2q, \quad \theta_2 = \frac{2}{p} \left( 2 - \frac{3}{q} \right), \quad p_2 = \frac{4}{p\theta_2}, \quad \theta_3 = 2 - \frac{3}{q} + \frac{2}{p} \cdot \frac{3}{q}.$$

Inserting the above estimates into (2.1) and using the Gronwall inequality, we obtain

$$(2.4) \quad \int |\nabla u|^2 + \int_0^T \int |\nabla u|^{p-2} |\nabla^2 u|^2 dx dt \leq C.$$

On the other hand, it is easy to verify that

$$\begin{aligned}
 &\int_0^T \int |\nabla^2 u|^p dx dt = \int_0^T \int |\nabla u|^{\frac{p(2-p)}{2}} \cdot |\nabla u|^{\frac{p(p-2)}{2}} |\nabla^2 u|^p dx \\
 &\leq \left( \int_0^T \int |\nabla u|^{p-2} |\nabla^2 u|^2 dx dt \right)^{\frac{p}{2}} \left( \int_0^T \int |\nabla u|^p dx dt \right)^{\frac{2-p}{2}} \\
 (2.5) \quad &\leq \frac{p}{2} \int_0^T \int |\nabla u|^{p-2} |\nabla^2 u|^2 dx dt + \frac{2-p}{2} \int_0^T \int |\nabla u|^p dx dt \leq C.
 \end{aligned}$$

(2.4) and (2.5) imply (1.7).

This completes the proof of the case 1.

Case 2. Let (1.6) hold true.

We still have (1.4), (2.1) and (2.2).

We use (1.18) to bound  $J$  as follows.

$$\begin{aligned}
 (2.6) \quad J &\leq \int w^{2+\frac{4}{p}} dx \\
 &\leq C \int |\nabla u|^{p+2} dx \\
 &\leq C \|\nabla u\|_{L^2}^2 \|\nabla u\|_{BMO}^p.
 \end{aligned}$$

Inserting (2.2) and (2.6) into (2.1) and using the Gronwall inequality, we have (2.4) and (2.5) and thus (1.7) holds true.

This completes the proof.

### 3. Proof of Theorem 1.2

This section is devoted to the proof of Theorem 1.2, like that in [2], we only prove the a priori estimates (1.17) under the condition (1.15) or (1.16) by formal calculations.

First, we have the well-known energy inequality (1.10).

Testing (1.8) by  $-\Delta u$  and using the divergence free property, we see that

$$\begin{aligned} & \frac{1}{2} \frac{d}{dt} \int |\nabla u|^2 dx + \sum_{i,j} \int \partial_j \Gamma_{ij} \Delta u_i dx = \sum_{i,j} \int u_j \partial_j u_i \Delta u_i dx \\ (3.1) \quad & = - \sum_{i,j} \int \nabla u_j \partial_j u_i \nabla u_i dx \leq C \int |\nabla u|^3 dx. \end{aligned}$$

By the same calculations as that in [2], we find that

$$\begin{aligned} & \partial_k (|E(\nabla u)|^{p-2} E_{ij}(\nabla u)) \partial_k E_{ij}(\nabla u) \\ & = \partial_k ((E_{lm}(\nabla u) E_{lm}(\nabla u))^{\frac{p-2}{2}} E_{ij}(\nabla u)) \partial_k E_{ij}(\nabla u) \\ & = |E(\nabla u)|^{p-2} \partial_k E_{ij}(\nabla u) \partial_k E_{ij}(\nabla u) \\ (3.2) \quad & + (p-2) |E(\nabla u)|^{p-4} E_{lm}(\nabla u) \partial_k E_{lm}(\nabla u) E_{ij}(\nabla u) \partial_k E_{ij}(\nabla u). \end{aligned}$$

Hence we obtain that

$$(3.3) \quad \sum_{i,j} \int \partial_j \Gamma_{ij} \Delta u_i dx \geq C_0 \int |E(\nabla u)|^{p-2} |\nabla E(\nabla u)|^2 dx + C_1 \int |\nabla |E(\nabla u)|^{\frac{p}{2}}|^2 dx.$$

Case 1. Let (1.16) hold true.

We use (1.18) to estimate the right hand side of (3.1) as follows.

$$(3.4) \quad \int |\nabla u|^3 dx \leq C \|\nabla u\|_{BMO} \|\nabla u\|_{L^2}^2.$$

Inserting (3.4) and (3.3) into (3.1) and using the Gronwall inequality, we conclude that

$$(3.5) \quad \int |\nabla u|^2 dx + \int_0^T \int |E(\nabla u)|^{p-2} |\nabla E(\nabla u)|^2 dx dt \leq C.$$

Similarly to (2.5), we have

$$(3.6) \quad \int_0^T \int |\Delta u|^p dx dt \leq C.$$

This completes the proof of the case 1.

Case 2. Let (1.15) hold true.

We denote  $w := |E(\nabla u)|^{\frac{p}{2}}$  and estimate the right hand side of (3.1) as follows.

$$\begin{aligned} \int |\nabla u|^3 dx & \leq C \int w^{\frac{6}{p}} dx \\ & = C \int w^{\theta_1} \cdot w^{\theta_2} \cdot w^{\theta_3} dx \quad \left( \theta_1 + \theta_2 + \theta_3 = \frac{6}{p} \right) \\ & \leq C \|w^{\theta_1}\|_{L^{p_1}} \|w^{\theta_2}\|_{L^{p_2}} \|w^{\theta_3}\|_{L^q} \quad \left( \frac{1}{p_1} + \frac{1}{p_2} + \frac{1}{q} = 1 \right) \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}
 &= C \|w\|_{L^{\theta_1 p_1}}^{\theta_1} \|\nabla u\|_{L^{\frac{p}{2}\theta_2 p_2}}^{\frac{p}{2}\theta_2} \|\nabla u\|_{L^{\frac{p}{2}\theta_3 q}}^{\frac{p}{2}\theta_3} \\
 &\quad \left( \theta_1 p_1 = 6, \frac{p}{2}\theta_2 p_2 = 2, \frac{p}{2}\theta_3 q = \alpha \right) \\
 &\leq \frac{C_1}{2} \|\nabla w\|_{L^2}^2 + C \left( \|\nabla u\|_{L^2}^{\frac{p}{2}\theta_2} \|\nabla u\|_{L^\alpha}^{\frac{p}{2}\theta_3} \right)^{\frac{2}{2-\theta_1}} \\
 &\quad \left( \frac{p}{2}\theta_2 \cdot \frac{2}{2-\theta_1} = 2, \frac{p}{2}\theta_3 \cdot \frac{2}{2-\theta_1} = \beta \right) \\
 (3.7) \quad &= \frac{C_1}{2} \|\nabla w\|_{L^2}^2 + C \|\nabla u\|_{L^2}^2 \|\nabla u\|_{L^\alpha}^\beta.
 \end{aligned}$$

Here we have used the following choice of the constants

$$\theta_1 = \frac{3}{q}, \quad p_1 = 2q, \quad \theta_2 = \frac{2}{p} \left( 2 - \frac{3}{q} \right), \quad p_2 = \frac{4}{p\theta_2}, \quad \theta_3 = \frac{2}{p} - \frac{3}{q} + \frac{2}{p} \cdot \frac{3}{q}.$$

Inserting (3.3) and (3.7) into (3.1) and using (1.10) and the Gronwall inequality, we arrive at (3.5) and (3.6).

This completes the proof.

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