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# DOMAIN DECOMPOSITION METHODS FOR THE DIFFUSION EQUATION WITH LOW-REGULARITY SOLUTION

P. CIARLET, JR., E. JAMELOT AND F. D. KPADONOU

**ABSTRACT.** We analyze matching and non-matching domain decomposition methods for the numerical approximation of the mixed diffusion equations. Special attention is paid to the case where the solution is of low regularity. Such a situation commonly arises in the presence of three or more intersecting material components with different characteristics. The domain decomposition method can be non-matching in the sense that the traces of the finite elements spaces may not fit at the interface between subdomains. We prove well-posedness of the discrete problem, that is solvability of the corresponding linear system, provided two algebraic conditions are fulfilled. If moreover the conditions hold independently of the discretization, convergence is ensured.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The diffusion equation can model different physical phenomena such as Darcy's law, Fick's law or the neutron diffusion. When formulated as a mixed system of equations, it allows to compute both the solution and its gradient. Hence, from a variational point of view, two approaches coexist. One uses either the primal variational formulation to focus on the solution; or the dual-mixed variational formulation to focus instead on the gradient of the solution.

The numerical analysis of domain decomposition methods for the mixed diffusion equation has already been studied for Darcy's law, see e.g. [1, 2, 3, 4], and also for Fick's law and the neutron diffusion equation, see e.g. [5, 6, 7]. In order to handle non-matching discretizations at the interface of the subdomains, a Lagrange multiplier can be introduced. This technique is known as the mortar finite element method [8], among its predecessors one can cite the hybrid finite element method (see [9] for the diffusion equation). From an algebraic point of view, the linear system obtained after discretization is similar to the one of the Schur complement method.

In this paper, we focus on matching and non-matching domain decompositions of the (dual) mixed formulation. We put special emphasis on the so-called *low-regularity solutions*. For the diffusion equation, we recall that the solution always belongs to the Sobolev space  $H^1$ . However, it may happen that the a priori regularity result (even for smooth, locally supported data) only guarantees that the solution is piecewise  $H^{1+r}$ , where  $r > 0$  can be arbitrarily small: one says that the problem is  $H^{1+r}$ -regular. On the other hand, in the above mentioned references, when the regularity issue is explicitly taken into account, it is assumed that the solution is at least:

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- piecewise  $H^{1+r}$  with  $r > 1/4$  in [7];
- piecewise  $H^{1+r}$  with  $r > 1/2$  in [1, 2, 4];
- piecewise  $H^{1+r}$  with  $r = 1$  in [3, 5].

So one aim of our paper is to devise a method that can be fully justified for a problem that is  $H^{1+r}$ -regular, with an exponent  $r > 0$  that can be arbitrarily small. In other words, we address the "technicalities" needed for the design of a theory that handles low-regularity solutions. To reach that end, one has to modify the existing mathematical and variational frameworks. The other aim is to derive abstract (algebraic) conditions after discretization, to guarantee well-posedness of the discrete problem, and convergence.

The outline of the paper is as follows. In Section 2, we introduce the notations, geometry and Hilbert spaces to define the problem setting. In particular, we will make use of vector-valued functions with  $L^2$ -jump of normal traces on the interface between subdomains. Then, in Section 3, we write the continuous equations and the associated variational formulations. We also define the *low-regularity case*. The well-posedness of the mixed, multi-domain formulation is studied in Section 4 in the continuous case and in Section 5 in the discrete case. In the discrete case, we exhibit two abstract algebraic conditions which imply the existence of a discrete inf-sup condition. This inf-sup condition ensures well-posedness of the discrete problem, and also convergence when it is uniform. In addition, these algebraic conditions drive the choice of the space of the Lagrange multipliers. Finally, we draw some conclusions and give perspectives in Section 6.

## 2. GEOMETRY, HILBERT SPACES AND NOTATIONS

Throughout the paper,  $C$  is used to denote a generic positive constant which is independent of the meshsize, the triangulation and the quantities/fields of interest. We also use the shorthand notation  $A \lesssim B$  for the inequality  $A \leq CB$ , where  $A$  and  $B$  are two scalar quantities, and  $C$  is a generic constant. Respectively,  $A \asymp B$  for the inequalities  $A \lesssim B$  and  $B \lesssim A$ .

Vector-valued (resp. tensor-valued) function spaces are written in boldface character (resp. capital boldface characters); for the latter, the index *sym* indicates symmetric fields. Given an open set  $O \subset \mathbb{R}^d$ ,  $d = 1, 2, 3$ , we use the notation  $(\cdot|\cdot)_{0,O}$  (respectively  $\|\cdot\|_{0,O}$ ) for the  $L^2(O)$  and  $\mathbf{L}^2(O) := (L^2(O))^d$  scalar products (resp. norms). More generally,  $(\cdot|\cdot)_{s,O}$  and  $\|\cdot\|_{s,O}$  (respectively  $|\cdot|_{s,O}$ ) denote the scalar product and norm (resp. semi-norm) of the Sobolev spaces  $H^s(O)$  and  $\mathbf{H}^s(O) := (H^s(O))^d$ , for  $s \in \mathbb{R}$  (resp. for  $s > 0$ ).

If moreover the boundary  $\partial O$  is Lipschitz,  $\mathbf{n}$  denotes the unit outward normal vector field to  $\partial O$ . Finally, it is assumed that the reader is familiar with vector-valued function spaces related to the diffusion equation, such as  $\mathbf{H}(\text{div}; O)$ ,  $\mathbf{H}_0(\text{div}; O)$  etc.

We let  $\mathcal{R}$  be a bounded, connected and open subset of  $\mathbb{R}^d$ , having a Lipschitz boundary which is piecewise smooth. Let us first introduce a tensor-valued function space:

$$\mathbb{L}_{sym, >0}^\infty(\mathcal{R}) = \{D \in \mathbb{L}_{sym}^\infty(\mathcal{R}) \mid D^{-1} \in \mathbb{L}_{sym}^\infty(\mathcal{R}), \lambda_{\min}(D) > 0 \text{ a.e. in } \mathcal{R}\}.$$

We split  $\mathcal{R}$  into  $N$  open disjoint parts, or subdomains,  $(\mathcal{R}_i)_{i=1,N}$  with Lipschitz, piecewise smooth boundaries:  $\overline{\mathcal{R}} = \cup_{i=1,N} \overline{\mathcal{R}_i}$  and the set  $\{\mathcal{R}_i\}_{i=1,N}$  is called a partition of  $\mathcal{R}$ . For a field  $v$  defined over  $\mathcal{R}$ , we shall use the notations  $v_i = v|_{\mathcal{R}_i}$ ,

for  $i = 1, N$ .

Given a partition  $\{\mathcal{R}_i\}_{i=1,N}$  of  $\mathcal{R}$ , let us introduce now function spaces with piecewise regular elements:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{P}H^s(\mathcal{R}) &= \{ \psi \in L^2(\mathcal{R}) \mid \psi_i \in H^s(\mathcal{R}_i), i = 1, N \}, \quad s > 0; \\ \mathcal{P}W^{1,\infty}(\mathcal{R}) &= \{ D \in L^\infty(\mathcal{R}) \mid D_i \in W^{1,\infty}(\mathcal{R}_i), i = 1, N \}; \\ \mathcal{P}\mathbb{W}_{sym,>0}^{1,\infty}(\mathcal{R}) &= \mathcal{P}\mathbb{W}^{1,\infty}(\mathcal{R}) \cap \mathbb{L}_{sym,>0}^\infty(\mathcal{R}). \end{aligned}$$

Given a partition  $\{\mathcal{R}_i\}_{i=1,N}$  of  $\mathcal{R}$ , we denote by  $\Gamma_{ij}$  the interface between two subdomains  $\mathcal{R}_i$  and  $\mathcal{R}_j$ , for  $i \neq j$ : if the Hausdorff dimension of  $\overline{\mathcal{R}_i} \cap \overline{\mathcal{R}_j}$  is  $d-1$ , then  $\Gamma_{ij} = \text{int}(\overline{\mathcal{R}_i} \cap \overline{\mathcal{R}_j})$ ; otherwise,  $\Gamma_{ij} = \emptyset$ . By construction,  $\Gamma_{ij} = \Gamma_{ji}$ . We define the interface  $\Gamma_S$ , respectively the wirebasket  $\partial\Gamma_W$  by

$$\Gamma_S = \bigcup_{i=1}^N \bigcup_{j=i+1}^N \overline{\Gamma_{ij}}, \quad \partial\Gamma_W = \bigcup_{i=1}^N \bigcup_{j=i+1}^N \partial\Gamma_{ij}.$$

When  $d = 2$ , the wirebasket consists of isolated crosspoints. When  $d = 3$ , the wirebasket consists of open edges and crosspoints. Introduce the subset of indices  $\mathcal{I}_S := \{i \in \{1, \dots, N\} \mid \partial\mathcal{R}_i \cap \Gamma_S = \partial\mathcal{R}_i\}$  and, for  $i = 1, N$ , the open set  $\Gamma_i = \partial\mathcal{R}_i \setminus \overline{\Gamma_S}$ . Let us define function spaces with zero boundary condition, for  $i = 1, N$ :

$$\begin{aligned} H_{0,\Gamma_i}^1(\mathcal{R}_i) &= \{ \psi \in H^1(\mathcal{R}_i) \mid \psi|_{\Gamma_i} = 0 \}; \\ \mathbf{H}_{0,\gamma_i}(\text{div}, \mathcal{R}_i) &= \{ \mathbf{q} \in \mathbf{H}(\text{div}, \mathcal{R}_i) \mid \mathbf{q} \cdot \mathbf{n}_i|_{\gamma_i} = 0 \}, \quad \text{for } \gamma_i \subset \partial\mathcal{R}_i; \\ \mathcal{P}H_0^1(\mathcal{R}) &= \{ \psi \in L^2(\mathcal{R}) \mid \psi_i \in H_{0,\Gamma_i}^1(\mathcal{R}_i), i = 1, N \}. \end{aligned}$$

When  $\Gamma_{ij} \neq \emptyset$ , let  $H_{\Gamma_{ij}}^{1/2}$  be the set of  $H^{1/2}(\Gamma_{ij})$  functions whose continuation by 0 to  $\partial\mathcal{R}_i$  belongs to  $H^{1/2}(\partial\mathcal{R}_i)$ . One can prove that this yields the same functional space, i.e.  $H_{\Gamma_{ij}}^{1/2} = H_{\Gamma_{ji}}^{1/2}$ .

Regarding jumps, let us set  $[\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{n}]_{ij} := \sum_{k=i,j} \mathbf{p}_k \cdot \mathbf{n}_k|_{\Gamma_{ij}}$  the jump of the normal component of  $\mathbf{p}$  on  $\Gamma_{ij}$  when  $\Gamma_{ij} \neq \emptyset$ . The global jump  $[\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{n}]$  of the normal component on the interface is defined by:

$$[\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{n}]|_{\Gamma_{ij}} := [\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{n}]_{ij}, \quad \text{for } i, j = 1, N.$$

We introduce finally the following Hilbert spaces:

$$\begin{aligned}
M &= \{ \psi_S \in L^2(\Gamma_S) \} , \| \psi_S \|_M = \| \psi_S \|_{0, \Gamma_S} ; \\
H_-^{1/2}(\Gamma_S) &= \{ \psi_S \in L^2(\Gamma_S) \mid \psi_S|_{\Gamma_{ij}} \in H^{1/2}(\Gamma_{ij}), \forall i \neq j \} , \text{ with graph norm ;} \\
\mathbf{Q} &= \left\{ \mathbf{q} := (\mathbf{q}_i)_{i=1, N} \in \prod_{i=1}^N \mathbf{H}(\text{div}, \mathcal{R}_i) \mid [\mathbf{q} \cdot \mathbf{n}] \in M \right\} , \\
\| \mathbf{q} \|_{\mathbf{Q}} &= \left( \sum_{i=1}^N \| \mathbf{q}_i \|_{\mathbf{H}(\text{div}, \mathcal{R}_i)}^2 + \| [\mathbf{q} \cdot \mathbf{n}] \|_M^2 \right)^{1/2} ; \\
\mathbf{X} &= \{ \xi := (\mathbf{q}, \psi) \in \mathbf{Q} \times L^2(\mathcal{R}) \} , \| \xi \|_{\mathbf{X}} := (\| \mathbf{q} \|_{\mathbf{Q}}^2 + \| \psi \|_{0, \mathcal{R}}^2)^{1/2} ; \\
\mathbf{W} &= \{ \mathbf{w} := (\xi, \psi_S) \in \mathbf{X} \times M \} , \| \mathbf{w} \|_{\mathbf{W}} := (\| \xi \|_{\mathbf{X}}^2 + \| \psi_S \|_M^2)^{1/2} .
\end{aligned}$$

In the definition of elements  $\mathbf{q} = (\mathbf{q}_i)_{i=1, N}$  of  $\mathbf{Q}$  it is important to note that one *does not require*  $\mathbf{q}_i \cdot \mathbf{n}_i|_{\Gamma_{ij}} \in L^2(\Gamma_{ij})$  for  $i, j = 1, N$ . This is based on the observation that in the case of a low-regularity solution, the normal trace on  $\Gamma_S$  of its gradient may not belong to  $L^2(\Gamma_S)$ . On the other hand, the *jump* of its (scaled) normal trace systematically belongs to  $L^2(\Gamma_S)$ . We shall use this observation to define a variational formulation which is conforming in  $\mathbf{Q}$ . In this sense, our approach is different from the one of Yotov et al [1, 2, 3, 4].

### 3. SETTING OF THE EQUATIONS AND THE VARIATIONAL FORMULATION

Given a source term  $S_f \in L^2(\mathcal{R})$ , we consider the following diffusion equation, written in its primal form:

Find  $\phi \in H^1(\mathcal{R})$  such that:

$$(3.1) \quad \begin{cases} -\text{div } D \mathbf{grad} \phi + \sigma \phi &= S_f & \text{in } \mathcal{R} \\ \phi &= 0 & \text{on } \partial \mathcal{R}, \end{cases}$$

where  $\phi$  is the primal unknown. The parameters  $\sigma$ , respectively  $D$ , are a scalar field, resp. a tensor field. They satisfy the assumptions below.

The parameter  $D$  is in  $\mathbb{L}^\infty(\mathcal{R})$  and there exist  $0 < D_* \leq D^*$  such that

$$D_* \| \mathbf{z} \|^2 \leq (D(\mathbf{x}) \mathbf{z}, \mathbf{z}) \leq D^* \| \mathbf{z} \|^2, \quad \forall \mathbf{z} \in \mathbb{R}^d, \text{ a.e. } \mathbf{x} \in \mathcal{R} ;$$

The parameter  $\sigma$  is in  $L^\infty(\mathcal{R})$  and  $0 < \sigma_* \leq \sigma \leq \sigma^*$  almost everywhere.

Classically, Problem (3.1) is equivalent to the following variational formulation:

Find  $\phi \in H_0^1(\mathcal{R})$  such that  $\forall \psi \in H_0^1(\mathcal{R})$ :

$$(3.2) \quad \int_{\mathcal{R}} D \mathbf{grad} \phi \cdot \mathbf{grad} \psi + \int_{\mathcal{R}} \sigma \phi \psi = \int_{\mathcal{R}} S_f \psi.$$

Under the assumptions on the parameters, the primal problem (3.1) is well-posed, in the sense that for all  $S_f \in L^2(\mathcal{R})$ , there exists one and only one  $\phi \in H^1(\mathcal{R})$  that solves (3.1), and in addition there holds  $\| \phi \|_{1, \mathcal{R}} \lesssim \| S_f \|_{0, \mathcal{R}}$ . Moreover, under additional mild assumptions on the parameters, the solution  $\phi$  has some extra regularity (see [10], Theorem 4.1 and [11], Theorem 3.1).

**Proposition 1.** *Let  $D \in \mathcal{PW}_{sym, >0}^{1,\infty}(\mathcal{R})$  and  $\sigma \in \mathcal{PW}^{1,\infty}(\mathcal{R})$ . There exists  $r_{\max} \in ]0, 1]$ , called the regularity exponent, such that for all source terms  $S_f \in L^2(\mathcal{R})$ , the solution  $\phi \in H^1(\mathcal{R})$  belongs to  $\bigcap_{0 \leq r < r_{\max}} \mathcal{PH}^{1+r}(\mathcal{R})$  ( $r_{\max} < 1$ ) or  $\mathcal{PH}^2(\mathcal{R})$  ( $r_{\max} = 1$ ) with continuous dependence:  $\|\phi\|_{\bigcap_{0 \leq r < r_{\max}} \mathcal{PH}^{1+r}(\mathcal{R})} \lesssim \|S_f\|_{0,\mathcal{R}}$  ( $r_{\max} < 1$ ) or  $\|\phi\|_{\mathcal{PH}^2(\mathcal{R})} \lesssim \|S_f\|_{0,\mathcal{R}}$  ( $r_{\max} = 1$ ).*

We keep those assumptions from now on. We define the *low-regularity case* as  $r_{\max} < 1/2$  above. Since crosspoints ( $d = 2$ ) and edges ( $d = 3$ ) are allowed in the wirebasket, this situation commonly arises in practice. As an illustration, let us mention the checkerboard setting. Set  $\mathcal{R} = ]-1, 1]^2$ , and divide it into four subsquares. Consider the problem: Find  $\phi \in H^1(\mathcal{R})$  such that  $-\text{div } D \mathbf{grad} \phi = 0$  with some boundary conditions.  $D$  is piecewise constant:  $D = \mathcal{D}$  in the bottom left and top right squares, and 1 elsewhere, as shown on Fig. 1. The solution  $\phi$

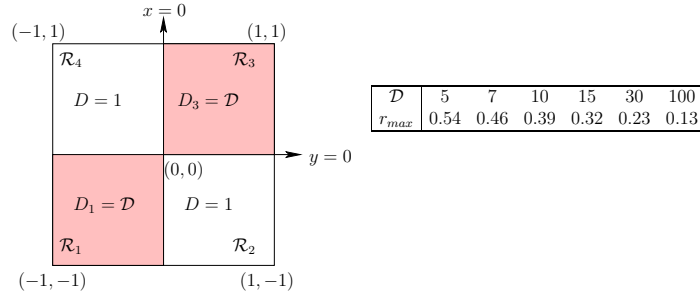


FIGURE 1. Checkerboard setting; associated regularity exponent.

behaves like  $\rho^{r_{\max}}$ , where  $\rho$  is the distance to the crosspoint  $(0,0)$ , whereas  $r_{\max}$  depends on  $D$ . The values of  $r_{\max}$  against  $D$  are given on the right table of Fig. 1. For instance, when  $\mathcal{D} \geq 7$ ,  $\phi$  is of low-regularity. Identical conclusions can be drawn in  $\mathcal{R} = ]-1, 1]^3$ , partitioned into four sub-parallelepipeds with a wirebasket now equal to the edge  $(0,0) \times ]-1, 1[$ . As a matter of fact, high contrast between piecewise constant diffusion coefficient often appears in neutronics [7].

Next, starting from the solution  $\phi$  to (3.1), if one introduces the two auxiliary unknowns  $\mathbf{p} := -D \mathbf{grad} \phi$ , and  $\phi_S := \phi|_{\Gamma_S}$ , one may write the diffusion problem in mixed, multi-domain, form as:

Find  $(\mathbf{p}, \phi, \phi_S) \in \mathbf{Q} \times \mathcal{PH}_0^1(\mathcal{R}) \times M$  such that:

$$(3.3) \quad \begin{cases} -D_i^{-1} \mathbf{p}_i - \mathbf{grad} \phi_i = 0 & \text{in } \mathcal{R}_i, & \text{for } i = 1, N, \\ \text{div } \mathbf{p}_i + \sigma_i \phi_i = S_{f,i} & \text{in } \mathcal{R}_i, & \text{for } i = 1, N, \\ \phi_i = \phi_S & \text{on } \partial \mathcal{R}_i \cap \Gamma_S, & \text{for } i = 1, N, \\ [\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{n}] = 0 & \text{on } \Gamma_S. \end{cases}$$

**Remark 1.** *In the low-regularity case,  $\mathbf{grad} \phi$  does not belong to  $\mathbf{H}^{1/2}(\mathcal{R})$  in general, and as a consequence its normal trace on the boundary or on the interface does not belong to  $L^2$ . As a consequence,  $\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{n}|_{\Gamma_S}$  does not automatically belong to  $L^2(\Gamma_S)$ , but obviously  $[\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{n}] = 0$  is in  $L^2(\Gamma_S)$ .*

Solving the mixed, multi-domain problem (3.3) is actually equivalent to solving (3.1), as the result below shows.

**Theorem 1.** *The solution  $(\mathbf{p}, \phi, \phi_S) \in \mathbf{Q} \times \mathcal{P}H_0^1(\mathcal{R}) \times M$  to (3.3) is such that  $\phi$  is a solution to (3.1) with the same data.*

*Proof.* In order to prove that (3.1)  $\Rightarrow$  (3.3), we define  $\mathbf{p} = D \mathbf{grad} \phi$  in  $\mathcal{R}$  and  $\phi_S = \phi|_{\Gamma_S}$ , and we just have to check that  $[\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{n}] = 0$ . Since  $\text{div}(D \mathbf{grad} \phi) \in L^2(\mathcal{R})$ , and  $\phi|_{\partial\mathcal{R}} = 0$ , integrating by parts twice (cf. §A), we have for  $\psi \in H_0^1(\mathcal{R})$ , such that  $\psi = 0$  in a neighbourhood of  $\partial\Gamma_W$ :

$$\begin{aligned} - \int_{\mathcal{R}} \text{div}(D \mathbf{grad} \phi) \psi &= \int_{\mathcal{R}} D \mathbf{grad} \phi \cdot \mathbf{grad} \psi = \sum_{i=1}^N \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} D_i \mathbf{grad} \phi \cdot \mathbf{grad} \psi \\ &= - \sum_{i=1}^N \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} \text{div}(D_i \mathbf{grad} \phi) \psi \\ &\quad + \sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{j=i+1}^N \langle [D \mathbf{grad} \phi \cdot \mathbf{n}]_{ij}, \psi \rangle_{(H_{\Gamma_{ij}}^{1/2})', H_{\Gamma_{ij}}^{1/2}}. \end{aligned}$$

It follows that  $[D \mathbf{grad} \phi \cdot \mathbf{n}]_{ij} = 0$  for  $i, j = 1, N$ .

Let us show that (3.3)  $\Rightarrow$  (3.1). According to the last equation of (3.3), we can prove that the distribution  $\text{div} \mathbf{p}$  belongs to  $L^2(\mathcal{R})$ , with the help of the density result of Theorem 5 (cf. §A) that allows to split interface contributions. So the second equation of (3.3) yields:  $\text{div} \mathbf{p} + \sigma \phi = S_f$  in  $\mathcal{R}$ . Whereas, according to the third equation, we have  $\phi \in H_0^1(\mathcal{R})$ . Using finally the first equation, we conclude that  $\phi \in H_0^1(\mathcal{R})$  is such that  $-\text{div}(D \mathbf{grad} \phi) + \sigma \phi = S_f$  in  $\mathcal{R}$ .  $\square$

In practice, writing the diffusion equation in its mixed form allows to compute precisely both the solution and its gradient: it avoids the propagation of the numerical error from the solution to its gradient. On the other hand, using a domain decomposition method is interesting for many reasons: it is necessary when one wants to compute the solution on a parallel computer. It is also useful when, for some physical reason, one needs to capture rapidly oscillating phenomena in some, but not all, subregions. This may happen when  $D$  has large variations (as it is the case in neutronics). In this case, approximations with different scales can be used. Hence the choice of a mixed, multi-domain setting.

On each subdomain, the last equation of (3.3) can be seen as a constraint. In order to obtain the variational formulation for the mixed, multi-domain problem (3.3), we consider any test functions  $\mathbf{q} \in \mathbf{Q}$  and  $\psi \in L^2(\mathcal{R})$ , we multiply the first equation of (3.3) by  $\mathbf{q}_i$ , the second equation of (3.3) by  $\psi_i \in L^2(\mathcal{R}_i)$ , we integrate over  $\mathcal{R}_i$ , and we sum over  $i = 1, N$ . Then we multiply the last equation by a test function  $\psi_S \in M$  and we integrate on  $\Gamma_S$ . We sum the volume and the surface integrals to reach:

$$\begin{aligned} (3.4) \quad \sum_{i=1}^N \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} & \left( -D_i^{-1} \mathbf{p}_i \cdot \mathbf{q}_i - \mathbf{grad} \phi_i \cdot \mathbf{q}_i + \psi_i \text{div} \mathbf{p}_i + \sigma_i \phi_i \psi_i \right) \\ & + \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{n}] \psi_S = \sum_{i=1}^N \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} S_{f,i} \psi_i. \end{aligned}$$

We recall that according to Theorem 1, we have globally  $\phi \in H_0^1(\mathcal{R})$ . One can integrate by parts (cf. §A) to remove the first order derivatives of  $\phi_i$ :

$$-\sum_{i=1}^N \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} \mathbf{grad} \phi_i \cdot \mathbf{q}_i = \sum_{i=1}^N \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} \phi_i \operatorname{div} \mathbf{q}_i - \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{q} \cdot \mathbf{n}] \phi_S,$$

where we used the third equation of (3.3) on  $\Gamma_S$ . Hence, the regularity requirement on the solution can be lowered to  $\phi_i \in L^2(\mathcal{R}_i)$ , ie.  $\phi \in L^2(\mathcal{R})$ . Finally we find that the solution to (3.3) also solves:

Find  $((\mathbf{p}, \phi), \phi_S) \in \mathbb{W}$ , such that  $\forall ((\mathbf{q}, \psi), \psi_S) \in \mathbb{W}$ :

$$(3.5) \quad \begin{aligned} & \int_{\mathcal{R}} (-D^{-1} \mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{q} + \phi \operatorname{div} \mathbf{q} + \psi \operatorname{div} \mathbf{p} + \sigma \phi \psi) \\ & + \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{n}] \psi_S - \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{q} \cdot \mathbf{n}] \phi_S = \int_{\mathcal{R}} S_f \psi. \end{aligned}$$

Above,  $\phi_S, \psi_S$  play the role of Lagrange multipliers, with  $M$  the space of those Lagrange multipliers. We call the mixed, multi-domain variational formulation the *domain decomposition+ $L^2$ -jumps method* (or DD+ $L^2$ -jumps method).

From now on, we use the notations:

- $\mathbf{u} = (\zeta, \phi_S)$ ,  $\zeta = (\mathbf{p}, \phi)$ ,  $\mathbf{p} = (\mathbf{p}_i)_{i=1,N}$  and  $\phi = (\phi_i)_{i=1,N}$ ;
- $\mathbf{w} = (\xi, \psi_S)$ ,  $\xi = (\mathbf{q}, \psi)$ ,  $\mathbf{q} = (\mathbf{q}_i)_{i=1,N}$  and  $\psi = (\psi_i)_{i=1,N}$ ;

and we define the bilinear forms:

$$(3.6) \quad c : \begin{cases} \mathbb{W} \times \mathbb{W} & \rightarrow \mathbb{R} \\ (\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{w}) & \mapsto \int_{\mathcal{R}} (-D^{-1} \mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{q} + \phi \operatorname{div} \mathbf{q} + \psi \operatorname{div} \mathbf{p} + \sigma \phi \psi) \end{cases},$$

$$(3.7) \quad \ell_S : \begin{cases} \mathbb{W} \times \mathbb{W} & \rightarrow \mathbb{R} \\ (\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{w}) & \mapsto \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{n}] \psi_S \end{cases},$$

and:

$$(3.8) \quad c_S : \begin{cases} \mathbb{W} \times \mathbb{W} & \rightarrow \mathbb{R} \\ (\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{w}) & \mapsto c(\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{w}) + \ell_S(\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{w}) - \ell_S(\mathbf{w}, \mathbf{u}) \end{cases}.$$

We consider the linear form:

$$(3.9) \quad f : \begin{cases} \mathbb{W} & \rightarrow \mathbb{R} \\ \mathbf{w} & \mapsto \int_{\mathcal{R}} S_f \psi \end{cases}.$$

We may rewrite the variational formulation (3.5) as:

Find  $\mathbf{u} \in \mathbb{W}$  such that  $\forall \mathbf{w} \in \mathbb{W}$ :

$$(3.10) \quad c_S(\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{w}) = f(\mathbf{w}).$$

**Theorem 2.** *The solution to (3.10) satisfies (3.3).*

*Proof.* Recall that  $\mathbf{u} = ((\mathbf{p}, \phi), \phi_S)$  and  $\mathbf{w} = ((\mathbf{q}, \psi), \psi_S)$ .

First, using  $\mathbf{q} = \mathbf{0}$ ,  $\psi = 0$ , and  $\psi_S = [\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{n}]$ , we obtain that  $[\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{n}] = 0$ .

Second, choose  $\mathbf{q} = \mathbf{0}$ ,  $\psi$  with  $\psi_i \in \mathcal{D}(\mathcal{R}_i)$ ,  $\psi_j = 0$  for  $j \neq i$ , and  $\psi_S = 0$ .

We have now:

$$\int_{\mathcal{R}_i} (\psi_i \operatorname{div} \mathbf{p}_i + \sigma_i \phi_i \psi_i) = \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} S_{f,i} \psi_i,$$

so that we recover  $\operatorname{div} \mathbf{p}_i + \sigma_i \phi_i = S_{f,i}$  in  $L^2(\mathcal{R}_i)$ .

For the remainder of the proof, we consider  $\psi = 0$ ,  $\psi_S = 0$ , i.e.

$$\forall \mathbf{q} \in \mathbf{Q}, \int_{\mathcal{R}} D^{-1} \mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{q} + \phi \operatorname{div} \mathbf{q} - \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{q} \cdot \mathbf{n}] \phi_S = 0.$$

Consider  $\mathbf{q}$  with  $\mathbf{q}_i \in \mathcal{D}(\mathcal{R}_i)^d$  and  $\mathbf{q}_j = 0$  for  $j \neq i$ . We have:

(3.11)

$$\begin{aligned} \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} (-D_i^{-1} \mathbf{p}_i \cdot \mathbf{q}_i + \phi_i \operatorname{div} \mathbf{q}_i) &= 0, \forall \mathbf{q}_i \in \mathcal{D}(\mathcal{R}_i)^d, \\ \Leftrightarrow - \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} D_i^{-1} \mathbf{p}_i \cdot \mathbf{q}_i - \langle \mathbf{grad} \phi_i, \mathbf{q}_i \rangle_{(\mathcal{D}(\mathcal{R}_i)^d)', \mathcal{D}(\mathcal{R}_i)^d} &= 0, \forall \mathbf{q}_i \in \mathcal{D}(\mathcal{R}_i)^d, \\ \Leftrightarrow -D_i^{-1} \mathbf{p}_i - \mathbf{grad} \phi_i &= 0, \text{ in } (\mathcal{D}(\mathcal{R}_i)^d)', \\ \Leftrightarrow -D_i^{-1} \mathbf{p}_i - \mathbf{grad} \phi_i &= 0, \text{ in } \mathbf{L}^2(\mathcal{R}_i). \end{aligned}$$

We reached the last line noting that  $\mathbf{p}_i \in \mathbf{L}^2(\mathcal{R}_i)$ . In particular  $\phi_i \in H^1(\mathcal{R}_i)$ .

Let us show next that  $\phi_i = \phi_j$  on  $\Gamma_{ij}$ , when  $\Gamma_{ij} \neq \emptyset$ . Introduce  $\mathcal{R}_{ij} := \operatorname{int}(\overline{\mathcal{R}_i} \cup \overline{\mathcal{R}_j})$ .

Consider  $\mathbf{q} \in \mathbf{Q}$  such that  $\mathbf{q}|_{\mathcal{R}_{ij}} \in (\mathcal{D}(\mathcal{R}_{ij}))^d$ , and  $\mathbf{q} = 0$  elsewhere. We have  $[\mathbf{q} \cdot \mathbf{n}] = 0$  by construction. We obtain that:

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{k=i,j} \int_{\mathcal{R}_k} -D_k^{-1} \mathbf{p}_k \cdot \mathbf{q} + \phi_k \operatorname{div} \mathbf{q} &= 0 \\ \Leftrightarrow \sum_{k=i,j} \int_{\mathcal{R}_k} \mathbf{grad} \phi_k \cdot \mathbf{q} + \phi_k \operatorname{div} \mathbf{q} &= 0, \text{ from (3.11),} \\ \Leftrightarrow \sum_{k=i,j} \int_{\partial \mathcal{R}_k} \phi_k \mathbf{q} \cdot \mathbf{n}_k &= 0, \text{ i.b.p. on } \mathcal{R}_i, \mathcal{R}_j \\ \Leftrightarrow \int_{\Gamma_{ij}} (\phi_i - \phi_j) \mathbf{q} \cdot \mathbf{n}_i &= 0, \end{aligned}$$

so that  $\phi_i = \phi_j$  on  $\Gamma_{ij}$ . It follows in particular that  $\phi \in H^1(\mathcal{R})$ .

We recover the homogeneous Dirichlet boundary condition on  $\partial \mathcal{R}$  choosing  $\mathbf{q} \in$

$(\mathcal{C}^\infty(\overline{\mathcal{R}}))^d$  since it holds:  $\int_{\mathcal{R}} \mathbf{grad} \phi \cdot \mathbf{q} + \phi \operatorname{div} \mathbf{q} = 0$ . We find  $\phi \in H_0^1(\mathcal{R})$ .

Finally, let us prove that  $\phi_i = \phi_S$  on a given  $\Gamma_{ij}$ . We consider  $\mathbf{q} \in \mathbf{Q}$  such that  $\mathbf{q}_i \in (\mathcal{C}^\infty(\overline{\mathcal{R}_i}))^d$ ,  $\mathbf{q}_i = 0$  in a neighbourhood of  $\partial \mathcal{R}_i \setminus \overline{\Gamma_{ij}}$  and  $\mathbf{q}_j = 0$  for  $j \neq i$ . We have:

$$\begin{aligned} \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} \mathbf{grad} \phi_i \cdot \mathbf{q}_i + \phi_i \operatorname{div} \mathbf{q}_i - \int_{\Gamma_{ij}} \mathbf{q}_i \cdot \mathbf{n}_i \phi_S &= 0, \\ \Leftrightarrow \int_{\Gamma_{ij}} \mathbf{q}_i \cdot \mathbf{n}_i (\phi_i - \phi_S) &= 0, \text{ i.b.p. on } \mathcal{R}_i, \end{aligned}$$

so that  $\phi_i = \phi_S$  on  $\Gamma_{ij}$ . □

In order to prove that Problem (3.3) has a unique solution, one can use Theorem 1 directly. In our case however, we would like to discretize and solve numerically the mixed, multi-domain variational formulation (3.10), so we elect to show the so-called inf-sup condition for the variational formulation (3.10).

## 4. WELL-POSEDNESS OF THE MIXED, MULTI-DOMAIN FORMULATION

**4.1. Lifting of Lagrange multipliers.** Consider  $\phi_S^* \in M$ , and  $\phi_i^* \in L^2(\mathcal{R}_i)$ .

- If  $i \in \mathcal{I}_S$  ( $\partial\mathcal{R}_i \cap \Gamma_S = \partial\mathcal{R}_i$ ), we add a constant value  $\delta_i$  to  $\phi_i^*$  so that  $\tilde{\phi}_i = \phi_i^* + \delta_i$  has a mean value equal to  $-\frac{1}{2}|\mathcal{R}_i|^{-1} \int_{\partial\mathcal{R}_i} \phi_S^*$ . We set  $\widetilde{\phi_{i,S}} := \phi_S^*|_{\partial\mathcal{R}_i}$ .
- If  $i \notin \mathcal{I}_S$ , we consider  $\widetilde{\phi_{i,S}} \in L^2(\partial\mathcal{R}_i)$ , the continuation of  $\phi_S^*|_{\partial\mathcal{R}_i \cap \Gamma_S}$  by a constant value  $\gamma_{i,S}$  to  $\partial\mathcal{R}_i$ .  $\gamma_{i,S}$  is chosen so that the mean value of  $\widetilde{\phi_{i,S}}$  is equal to  $-2|\partial\mathcal{R}_i|^{-1} \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} \phi_i^*$ . We set  $\tilde{\phi}_i = \phi_i^*$ .

For  $i = 1, N$ , one has  $\tilde{\phi}_i \in L^2(\mathcal{R}_i)$  and  $\widetilde{\phi_{i,S}} \in L^2(\partial\mathcal{R}_i)$  with:

$$\|\tilde{\phi}_i\|_{0,\mathcal{R}_i} + \|\widetilde{\phi_{i,S}}\|_{0,\partial\mathcal{R}_i} \lesssim \|\phi_S^*\|_{0,\partial\mathcal{R}_i \cap \Gamma_S} + \|\phi_i^*\|_{0,\mathcal{R}_i}.$$

In primal form, the lifting reads: Find  $u_i \in H^1(\mathcal{R}_i)$  such that

$$(4.1) \quad \begin{cases} -\Delta u_i &= \tilde{\phi}_i & \text{in } \mathcal{R}_i, \\ \frac{\partial u_i}{\partial n_i} &= \frac{1}{2} \widetilde{\phi_{i,S}} & \text{on } \partial\mathcal{R}_i. \end{cases}$$

This is a purely Neumann problem for which there is constraint on the data. It is automatically fulfilled since  $\int_{\mathcal{R}_i} \tilde{\phi}_i + \frac{1}{2} \int_{\partial\mathcal{R}_i} \widetilde{\phi_{i,S}} = 0$ , so well-posedness follows.

Note that in both cases,  $\|u_i\|_{H^1(\mathcal{R}_i)} + \|\Delta u_i\|_{0,\mathcal{R}_i} \lesssim \|\phi_S^*\|_{0,\partial\mathcal{R}_i \cap \Gamma_S} + \|\phi_i^*\|_{0,\mathcal{R}_i}$ .

As far as the regularity of  $u_i$  is concerned, we recall that, according to [12], there holds  $u_i \in H^{3/2}(\mathcal{R}_i)$ , and  $\|u_i\|_{3/2,\mathcal{R}_i} \lesssim \|\phi_S^*\|_{0,\partial\mathcal{R}_i \cap \Gamma_S} + \|\phi_i^*\|_{0,\mathcal{R}_i}$ .

However, in our case, it does not fit our formulation of the diffusion equation as the mixed, multi-domain problem (3.3) or (3.10). Hence we choose to solve instead the equivalent problem:

Find  $(\mathbf{v}_i, u_i) \in \mathbf{H}(\text{div}, \mathcal{R}_i) \times H^1(\mathcal{R}_i)$  such that

$$(4.2) \quad \begin{cases} -\mathbf{v}_i + \mathbf{grad} u_i &= 0, & \text{in } \mathcal{R}_i, \\ -\text{div } \mathbf{v}_i &= \tilde{\phi}_i, & \text{in } \mathcal{R}_i, \\ \mathbf{v}_i \cdot \mathbf{n}_i &= \frac{1}{2} \widetilde{\phi_{i,S}} & \text{on } \partial\mathcal{R}_i. \end{cases}$$

Well-posedness and continuity of the lifting follow, indeed for the latter we have

$$(4.3) \quad \|\mathbf{v}_i\|_{\mathbf{H}(\text{div}, \mathcal{R}_i)} \leq C_{lift,i} (\|\phi_S^*\|_{0,\partial\mathcal{R}_i \cap \Gamma_S} + \|\phi_i^*\|_{0,\mathcal{R}_i}).$$

Regarding now the regularity of  $\mathbf{v}_i$ , there holds  $\mathbf{v}_i \in \mathbf{H}^{1/2}(\mathcal{R}_i)$ , and  $\|\mathbf{v}_i\|_{1/2,\mathcal{R}_i} \lesssim \|\phi_S^*\|_{0,\partial\mathcal{R}_i \cap \Gamma_S} + \|\phi_i^*\|_{0,\mathcal{R}_i}$ . According for instance to [13, §7], an equivalent, mixed variational formulation of problem (4.2) reads:

Find  $(\mathbf{v}_i, u_i) \in \mathbf{H}(\text{div}, \mathcal{R}_i) \times L^2(\mathcal{R}_i)$  such that  $\forall (\mathbf{q}_i^0, \psi_i) \in \mathbf{H}_0(\text{div}, \mathcal{R}_i) \times L^2(\mathcal{R}_i)$ :

$$(4.4) \quad \begin{cases} \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} \mathbf{v}_i \cdot \mathbf{q}_i^0 + \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} \text{div } \mathbf{v}_i \psi_i + \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} \text{div } \mathbf{q}_i^0 u_i = - \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} \tilde{\phi}_i \psi_i, \\ \mathbf{v}_i \cdot \mathbf{n}_i = \frac{1}{2} \widetilde{\phi_{i,S}} \text{ on } \partial\mathcal{R}_i. \end{cases}$$

One actually solves the problem in the variable  $\mathbf{v}_i^0 := \mathbf{v}_i - \mathbf{v}_i^{lift} \in \mathbf{H}_0(\text{div}, \mathcal{R}_i)$ , where  $\mathbf{v}_i^{lift} \in \mathbf{H}(\text{div}, \mathcal{R}_i)$  is a continuous lifting of the normal trace  $\frac{1}{2} \widetilde{\phi_{i,S}}$ , and well-posedness is recovered with the help of an inf-sup condition.

**4.2. Inf-sup condition.** We can now proceed to obtain the well-posedness of (3.10) by proving in particular an inf-sup condition.

**Theorem 3.** *There exists a unique solution  $\mathbf{u} \in \mathbf{W}$  to the mixed, multi-domain variational formulation (3.10).*

*Proof.* To prove the claim, one looks for an inf-sup condition and a solvability condition [13, 14] to ensure well-posedness. The solvability condition writes

$$\text{The set } \{ \mathbf{w} \in \mathbf{W} \mid \forall \mathbf{u} \in \mathbf{W}, c_S(\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{w}) = 0 \} \text{ is equal to } \{0\}.$$

Given an element  $\mathbf{w} = (\mathbf{p}, \phi, \phi_S)$  of the set defined above, one checks that  $(\mathbf{p}, \phi, \phi_S)$  solves (3.3) with zero data: this is analogous to the proof of Theorem 2. By uniqueness of the solution (cf. Theorem 1), it follows that  $\mathbf{w} = 0$ . The inf-sup condition writes:

$$(4.5) \quad \exists \eta > 0, \quad \inf_{\mathbf{u} \in \mathbf{W}} \sup_{\mathbf{w} \in \mathbf{W}} \frac{c_S(\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{w})}{\|\mathbf{u}\|_{\mathbf{W}} \|\mathbf{w}\|_{\mathbf{W}}} \geq \eta.$$

• Assume first that  $\operatorname{div} \mathbf{p}_i = 0$  in  $\mathcal{R}_i$  for all  $i = 1, N$ , and  $\phi_S = 0$ . Then  $c_S(\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{w})$  writes:

$$(4.6) \quad c_S(\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{w}) = \int_{\mathcal{R}} (-D^{-1} \mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{q} + \phi \operatorname{div} \mathbf{q} + \sigma \phi \psi) + \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{n}] \psi_S.$$

By choosing  $\begin{cases} (\mathbf{q}, \psi) = (-\mathbf{p}, \phi) \in \mathbf{X}, \\ \psi_S = [\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{n}] \in M, \end{cases}$  one has:  $\|\mathbf{u}\|_{\mathbf{W}} \geq \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} \|\mathbf{w}\|_{\mathbf{W}}$ , and moreover the expression of  $c_S(\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{w})$  involves only positive terms, which yields the bound:

$$(4.7) \quad \begin{aligned} c_S(\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{w}) &= \int_{\mathcal{R}} (D^{-1} |\mathbf{p}|^2 + \sigma \phi^2) + \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{n}]^2, \\ &\geq \beta (\|\mathbf{p}\|_{\mathbf{Q}}^2 + \|\phi\|_{0, \mathcal{R}}^2), \text{ with } \beta := \min((D^*)^{-1}, 1, \sigma_*) > 0, \\ &\geq \beta \|(\mathbf{p}, \phi)\|_{\mathbf{X}}^2 = \beta \|(\mathbf{p}, \phi, \phi_S)\|_{\mathbf{W}}^2, \\ &\geq \frac{\beta}{\sqrt{2}} \|\mathbf{u}\|_{\mathbf{W}} \|\mathbf{w}\|_{\mathbf{W}}. \end{aligned}$$

• In the more general case  $\operatorname{div} \mathbf{p}_i \neq 0$  for some  $i$  and  $\phi_S = 0$ , one can still proceed along the same lines, as long as the terms in  $\phi_i \operatorname{div} \mathbf{p}_i$  cancel out. To fulfill the conditions, a possible choice to bound  $c_S$  is:

$$\begin{cases} \mathbf{q} &= -\mathbf{p} && \in \mathbf{Q}, \\ \psi_i &= \frac{1}{2} \phi_i + \frac{1}{2} (\sigma_i)^{-1} \operatorname{div} \mathbf{p}_i && \in L^2(\mathcal{R}_i), \text{ for } i = 1, N, \\ \psi_S &= [\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{n}] && \in M. \end{cases}$$

One can check that:  $\|\mathbf{u}\|_{\mathbf{w}} \geq \lambda \|\mathbf{w}\|_{\mathbf{w}}$ , with  $\lambda := (1 + \frac{1}{2}(\sigma_*)^{-2})^{-1/2} > 0$ . The bound on  $c_S$  now reads:

$$\begin{aligned} c_S(\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{w}) &= \int_{\mathcal{R}} \left( D^{-1} |\mathbf{p}|^2 + \frac{1}{2} \sigma^{-1} (\operatorname{div} \mathbf{p})^2 + \frac{1}{2} \sigma \phi^2 \right) + \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{n}]^2, \\ &\geq \gamma (\|\mathbf{p}\|_{\mathbf{Q}}^2 + \|\phi\|_{0, \mathcal{R}}^2), \text{ with } \gamma := \min \left( (D^*)^{-1}, \frac{1}{2} \sigma_*, \frac{1}{2} (\sigma^*)^{-1}, 1 \right) > 0, \\ &\geq \gamma \|(\mathbf{p}, \phi)\|_{\mathbf{X}}^2 = \gamma \|((\mathbf{p}, \phi), \phi_S)\|_{\mathbf{w}}^2, \\ &\geq \gamma \lambda \|\mathbf{u}\|_{\mathbf{w}} \|\mathbf{w}\|_{\mathbf{w}}, \end{aligned}$$

• In the general case,  $\operatorname{div} \mathbf{p}_i \neq 0$  for some  $i$  and  $\phi_S \neq 0$ , we now choose:

$$\begin{cases} \mathbf{q}_i &= -\mathbf{p}_i - \alpha \mathbf{v}_i & \in \mathbf{H}(\operatorname{div}, \mathcal{R}_i), & \text{for } i = 1, N, \\ \psi_i &= \frac{1}{2} \phi_i + \frac{1}{2} (\sigma_i)^{-1} \operatorname{div} \mathbf{p}_i & \in L^2(\mathcal{R}_i), & \text{for } i = 1, N, \\ \psi_S &= -\phi_S + [\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{n}] & \in M, \end{cases}$$

where  $\alpha > 0$  is to be fixed and  $\mathbf{v}_i$ ,  $i = 1, N$  are defined by (4.2) or (4.4) with  $\phi_S^* = \phi_S$  and  $\phi_i^* = 0$ .

We have:

$$\begin{aligned} c_S(\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{w}) &= \int_{\mathcal{R}} \left( D^{-1} |\mathbf{p}|^2 + \frac{1}{2} \sigma^{-1} (\operatorname{div} \mathbf{p})^2 + \frac{1}{2} \sigma \phi^2 \right) \\ (4.8) \quad &+ \int_{\Gamma_S} ([\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{n}]^2 + \alpha \phi_S^2) + \int_{\mathcal{R}} \alpha D^{-1} \mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{v} \\ &- \frac{\alpha}{2} \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}_S} |\mathcal{R}_i|^{-1} \int_{\partial \mathcal{R}_i} \phi_S \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} \phi_i. \end{aligned}$$

Using successively Young's and Cauchy-Schwarz' inequalities, one can bound the last term. We get that  $\forall i \in \mathcal{I}_S$ ,  $\forall \eta > 0$ :

$$-\frac{\alpha}{2} |\mathcal{R}_i|^{-1} \int_{\partial \mathcal{R}_i} \phi_S \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} \phi \geq -\frac{\alpha}{4} (|\partial \mathcal{R}_i| |\mathcal{R}_i|^{-1} \eta \|\phi_S\|_{0, \partial \mathcal{R}_i}^2 + \eta^{-1} \|\phi\|_{0, \mathcal{R}_i}^2).$$

Let us bound the last-but-one term of (4.8). We have for  $i = 1, N$ :

$$\begin{aligned} \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} \alpha D_i^{-1} \mathbf{p}_i \cdot \mathbf{v}_i &\geq -\frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} (D_i^{-1} |\mathbf{p}_i|^2 + \alpha^2 D_i^{-1} |\mathbf{v}_i|^2), \\ (4.9) \quad &\geq -\frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} D_i^{-1} |\mathbf{p}_i|^2 - \frac{\alpha^2}{2} (D_*)^{-1} C^2 \|\phi_S\|_{0, \partial \mathcal{R}_i \cap \Gamma_S}^2, \end{aligned}$$

according to (4.3), with  $C = \max_{i=1, N} C_{lift, i}$ .

Summing for  $i = 1, N$ , we deduce that:

$$\begin{aligned} c_S(\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{w}) &\geq \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathcal{R}} \left( D^{-1} |\mathbf{p}|^2 + \sigma^{-1} (\operatorname{div} \mathbf{p})^2 + \left( \sigma - \frac{\alpha}{2\eta} \right) \phi^2 \right) \\ (4.10) \quad &+ \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{n}]^2 + \alpha (1 - \alpha C^2 (D_*)^{-1} - \eta C') \int_{\Gamma_S} \phi_S^2. \end{aligned}$$

where  $C' = \frac{1}{2} \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}_S} (|\partial \mathcal{R}_i| |\mathcal{R}_i|^{-1}) > 0$ . Set  $\eta = \frac{1}{2}(C')^{-1}$ .

Choose  $\alpha > 0$  so that  $\alpha^* := \min \left( \alpha \left( \frac{1}{2} - \alpha C^2 (D_*)^{-1} \right), \sigma_* - \alpha C' \right) > 0$ . We have:

$$(4.11) \quad c_S(\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{w}) \geq \eta_0 \|\mathbf{u}\|_{\mathbf{w}}^2,$$

with  $\eta_0 := \min \left( \frac{1}{2}(D^*)^{-1}, \frac{1}{2}(\sigma^*)^{-1}, \frac{1}{2}\alpha^*, 1 \right) > 0$ . Finally one gets that:

$$(4.12) \quad \|\mathbf{u}\|_{\mathbf{w}} \geq \eta_1 \|\mathbf{w}\|_{\mathbf{w}},$$

with  $\eta_1 := \eta_1(\sigma_*, C, \alpha) > 0$ .

We obtain thus the inf-sup condition (4.5) with  $\eta = \eta_0 \eta_1$ .  $\square$

## 5. DISCRETIZATION

We study abstract, conforming, discretization of the variational formulation (3.10). To that aim, we introduce discrete, finite-dimensional, spaces indexed by a (small) parameter  $h$  as follows:

$$\mathbf{Q}_{i,h} \subset \mathbf{H}(\text{div}, \mathcal{R}_i), \text{ and } L_{i,h} \subset L^2(\mathcal{R}_i), \text{ for } i = 1, N.$$

For approximation purposes, and following Definition 2.14 in [14], we assume for every  $i$  that  $(\mathbf{Q}_{i,h})_h$ , resp.  $(L_{i,h})_h$  have the *approximability property* in the sense that

$$(5.1) \quad \begin{aligned} \forall \mathbf{q}_i \in \mathbf{H}(\text{div}, \mathcal{R}_i), \quad \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \left( \inf_{\mathbf{q}_{i,h} \in \mathbf{Q}_{i,h}} \|\mathbf{q}_i - \mathbf{q}_{i,h}\|_{\mathbf{H}(\text{div}, \mathcal{R}_i)} \right) &= 0, \\ \forall \psi_i \in L^2(\mathcal{R}_i), \quad \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \left( \inf_{\psi_{i,h} \in L_{i,h}} \|\psi_i - \psi_{i,h}\|_{0, \mathcal{R}_i} \right) &= 0, \end{aligned}$$

and also that  $L_{i,h}$  includes piecewise constant fields.

We impose the following requirements:

- $\mathbf{q}_{i,h} \cdot \mathbf{n}|_{\partial \mathcal{R}_i} \in L^2(\partial \mathcal{R}_i)$  for all  $\mathbf{q}_{i,h} \in \mathbf{Q}_{i,h}$ ,  $i = 1, N$ ;
- $\text{div } \mathbf{Q}_{i,h} \subset L_{i,h}$ ,  $i = 1, N$ .

Then, let

$$\mathbf{Q}_h = \prod_{i=1}^N \mathbf{Q}_{i,h} \quad \text{and} \quad L_h = \prod_{i=1}^N L_{i,h}.$$

In particular, the discretization  $\mathbf{Q}_h \times L_h$  is globally conforming in  $\mathbf{Q} \times L^2(\mathcal{R})$ . We endow  $\mathbf{Q}_h$  with the norm  $\|\cdot\|_{\mathbf{Q}}$ , while  $L_h$  is endowed with  $\|\cdot\|_{0, \mathcal{R}}$ .

We then define  $T_{i,h}$  as the space of the normal traces of vectors of  $\mathbf{Q}_{i,h}$  on  $\partial \mathcal{R}_i \cap \Gamma_S$ :

$$(5.2) \quad T_{i,h} := \{q_{i,h} \in L^2(\partial \mathcal{R}_i \cap \Gamma_S) \mid \exists \mathbf{q}_{i,h} \in \mathbf{Q}_{i,h} \mid q_{i,h} = \mathbf{q}_{i,h} \cdot \mathbf{n}|_{\partial \mathcal{R}_i \cap \Gamma_S}\}.$$

Several situations<sup>1</sup> can occur on a given interface  $\Gamma_{ij}$ :

- *non-nested meshes*:  $T_{i,h} \not\subset T_{j,h}$  and  $T_{j,h} \not\subset T_{i,h}$ ;
- *nested meshes*:  $T_{i,h} \subset T_{j,h}$  or  $T_{j,h} \subset T_{i,h}$ ;
- *matching meshes*: nested meshes with  $T_{i,h} = T_{j,h}$ .

**Remark 2.** *Matching domain decompositions correspond to matching meshes; resp., non-matching domain decompositions correspond either to non-nested, or nested but non-matching, meshes.*

<sup>1</sup>Non-nested meshes are also called sliding meshes in the literature, see [15].

Let us denote by  $M_h \subset M$  the discrete space of the Lagrange multipliers, and by  $M_h^{ij} \subset L^2(\Gamma_{ij})$  the discrete space of the Lagrange multipliers restricted to the interface  $\Gamma_{ij}$ . We introduce the discrete projection operators from the spaces of normal traces  $T_{i,h}$  to  $M_h$ , and vice versa:

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{ll} \Pi_i : T_{i,h} & \rightarrow M_h \\ q_{i,h} & \mapsto \Pi_i(q_{i,h}) \end{array} \right\}, \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{ll} \pi_i : M_h & \rightarrow T_{i,h} \\ \psi_{S,h} & \mapsto \pi_i(\psi_{S,h}) \end{array} \right\}.$$

These projections are defined by:

$$(5.3) \quad \forall q_{i,h} \in T_{i,h}, \forall \psi_{S,h} \in M_h \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \int_{\partial \mathcal{R}_i \cap \Gamma_S} (\Pi_i(q_{i,h}) - q_{i,h}) \psi_{S,h} = 0 \\ \int_{\partial \mathcal{R}_i \cap \Gamma_S} (\pi_i(\psi_{S,h}) - \psi_{S,h}) q_{i,h} = 0 \end{array} \right\}.$$

As the operators  $\Pi_i$  and  $\pi_i$  are orthogonal projections, they are continuous, with a continuity modulus equal to 1.

**Proposition 2.** *The following inequalities hold:*

$$(5.4) \quad \forall q_{i,h} \in T_{i,h}, \forall \psi_{S,h} \in M_h \quad \left\{ \begin{array}{l} \|\pi_i(\psi_{S,h})\|_{0, \partial \mathcal{R}_i \cap \Gamma_S} \leq \|\psi_{S,h}\|_{0, \partial \mathcal{R}_i \cap \Gamma_S} \text{ and} \\ \|\Pi_i(q_{i,h})\|_{0, \partial \mathcal{R}_i \cap \Gamma_S} \leq \|q_{i,h}\|_{0, \partial \mathcal{R}_i \cap \Gamma_S}. \end{array} \right.$$

Next, let  $\mathbf{p}_h \in \mathbf{Q}_h$ . We define the discrete jump of the normal component of  $\mathbf{p}_h$  on the interface  $\Gamma_{ij}$  as  $[\mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}]_{h,ij} := \sum_{k=i,j} \Pi_k(\mathbf{p}_{k,h} \cdot \mathbf{n}_k|_{\Gamma_{ij}})$ . The discrete global jump of the normal component,  $[\mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}]_h \in M_h$ , is defined by:

$$[\mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}]_{h|\Gamma_{ij}} := [\mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}]_{h,ij}, \text{ for } i, j = 1, N.$$

We finally define:

$$\mathbf{X}_h = \{ \xi_h := (\mathbf{q}_h, \psi_h) \in \mathbf{Q}_h \times L_h \}, \text{ endowed with } \|\cdot\|_{\mathbf{X}},$$

$$\mathbf{W}_h = \{ \mathbf{w}_h := (\xi_h, \psi_{S,h}) \in \mathbf{X}_h \times M_h \}, \text{ endowed with } \|\cdot\|_{\mathbf{W}}.$$

In the remainder of this Section, we develop the numerical analysis for the mixed, multi-domain diffusion equation. In our setting, the conforming discretization of the variational formulation (3.10) reads:

Find  $((\mathbf{p}_h, \phi_h), \phi_{S,h}) \in \mathbf{W}_h$ , such that  $\forall ((\mathbf{q}_h, \psi_h), \psi_{S,h}) \in \mathbf{W}_h$ :

$$(5.5) \quad \begin{aligned} & \int_{\mathcal{R}} (-D^{-1} \mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{q}_h + \phi_h \operatorname{div} \mathbf{q}_h + \psi_h \operatorname{div} \mathbf{p}_h + \sigma \phi_h \psi_h) \\ & + \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}] \psi_{S,h} - \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{q}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}] \phi_{S,h} = \int_{\mathcal{R}} S_f \psi_h. \end{aligned}$$

Or equivalently:

$$(5.6) \quad \text{Find } \mathbf{u}_h \in \mathbf{W}_h \text{ such that } \forall \mathbf{w}_h \in \mathbf{W}_h, \quad c_S(\mathbf{u}_h, \mathbf{w}_h) = f(\mathbf{w}_h).$$

For the study of the well-posedness in the discrete case, we have to lift continuously the discrete Lagrange multipliers. To that aim, one simply discretizes the variational formulation in §4.1. So we assume that, given  $\phi_{S,h} \in M_h$ , there exists for all  $i = 1, N$  a discrete lifting  $\mathbf{v}_{i,h} \in \mathbf{Q}_{i,h}$  that fulfills (4.3) with data  $\phi_S^* = \frac{1}{2} \pi_i(\phi_{S,h})$  and  $\phi_i^* = 0$ , (the constant is denoted by  $C'_{lift}$ ), and  $\mathbf{v}_{i,h}$  also fulfills the discrete conforming counterpart of (4.4) with boundary condition  $\mathbf{v}_{i,h} \cdot \mathbf{n}_i|_{\partial \mathcal{R}_i \cap \Gamma_S} = \frac{1}{2} \pi_i(\phi_{S,h})$ . We label those two discrete conditions (4.3h)-(4.4h).

**5.1. Discrete inf-sup condition.** The discrete inf-sup condition to be found writes:

$$(5.7) \quad \exists \eta_h > 0, \quad \inf_{\mathbf{u}_h \in \mathbb{W}_h} \sup_{\mathbf{w}_h \in \mathbb{W}_h} \frac{c_S(\mathbf{u}_h, \mathbf{w}_h)}{\|\mathbf{u}_h\|_{\mathbb{W}} \|\mathbf{w}_h\|_{\mathbb{W}}} \geq \eta_h.$$

Once (5.7) is achieved, one obtains existence and uniqueness of the discrete solution  $\mathbf{u}_h$ , hence the corresponding linear system is well-posed. So conditions ensuring that (5.7) holds can be viewed as *algebraic conditions*. More generally, our aim is to obtain that  $(\eta_h)_h$  is uniformly bounded away from 0. In this sense, one has a *uniform discrete inf-sup condition*, from which the error analysis can be derived.

**Theorem 4.** *Assume that the conditions*

$$(5.8) \quad \exists \beta_h > 0, \forall \mathbf{q}_h \in \mathbf{Q}_h, \quad \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{q}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}]_h [\mathbf{q}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}] \geq \beta_h \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{q}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}]^2$$

and

$$(5.9) \quad \begin{aligned} & \exists \gamma_h > 0, \forall \psi_{S,h} \in M_h, \\ & \sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{j=i+1}^N \int_{\Gamma_{ij}} (\pi_i(\psi_{S,h})^2 + \pi_j(\psi_{S,h})^2) \geq \gamma_h \|\psi_{S,h}\|_M^2, \end{aligned}$$

hold, then the discrete inf-sup condition (5.7) is fulfilled. If in addition  $\beta_h$  and  $\gamma_h$  can be chosen independently of  $h$  in these two inequalities, (5.7) is a *uniform discrete inf-sup condition*.

**Remark 3.** *In other words, (5.8)-(5.9) can be seen as the algebraic conditions. We discuss these conditions in the next subsection.*

*Proof.* In order to show the inf-sup condition (5.7), we consider  $\mathbf{u}_h := ((\mathbf{p}_h, \phi_h), \phi_{S,h}) \in \mathbb{W}_h$ , and we define  $\mathbf{w}_h := ((\mathbf{q}_h, \psi_h), \psi_{S,h}) \in \mathbb{W}_h$  as

$$(5.10) \quad \begin{cases} \mathbf{q}_{i,h} &= -\mathbf{p}_{i,h} - \alpha' \mathbf{v}_{i,h}, & \text{for } i = 1, N, \\ \psi_{i,h} &= \frac{1}{2} \phi_{i,h} + \frac{1}{2} (\sigma_i)^{-1} \operatorname{div} \mathbf{p}_{i,h}, & \text{for } i = 1, N, \\ \psi_{S,h} &= -\phi_{S,h} + [\mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}]_h, \end{cases}$$

where  $\alpha' > 0$  is to be determined, whereas the discrete lifting  $\mathbf{v}_{i,h}$  of  $\phi_{S,h}$  is governed by (4.3h)-(4.4h). To have  $\psi_h \in L_h$  in (5.10), we assume for the moment that  $\sigma_i$  is constant for  $i = 1, N$ . The general case will be considered hereafter. With this choice, we have:

$$(5.11) \quad \begin{aligned} c_S(\mathbf{u}_h, \mathbf{w}_h) &= \int_{\mathcal{R}} \left( D^{-1} |\mathbf{p}_h|^2 + \frac{1}{2} \sigma^{-1} (\operatorname{div} \mathbf{p}_h)^2 + \frac{1}{2} \sigma \phi_h^2 \right) \\ &\quad + \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}]_h [\mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}] \\ &\quad + \frac{\alpha'}{2} \sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{j=i+1}^N \int_{\Gamma_{ij}} \phi_{S,h} (\pi_i(\phi_{S,h}) + \pi_j(\phi_{S,h})) \\ &\quad + \alpha' \int_{\mathcal{R}} D^{-1} \mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{v}_h \\ &\quad - \frac{\alpha'}{2} \sum_{i \in \mathcal{I}_S} |\mathcal{R}_i|^{-1} \int_{\partial \mathcal{R}_i} \pi_i(\phi_{S,h}) \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} \phi_{i,h}. \end{aligned}$$

According to (4.3h), (5.4), and following (4.9) we can bound the last but one term like:

$$\int_{\mathcal{R}} \alpha' D^{-1} \mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{v}_h \geq -\frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathcal{R}} D^{-1} |\mathbf{p}_h|^2 - \alpha'^2 (D_*)^{-1} (C'_{lft})^2 \|\phi_{S,h}\|_M^2.$$

Moreover using the definition (5.3) of the projections  $\pi_i$  and  $\pi_j$ , we have:

$$\int_{\Gamma_{ij}} \phi_{S,h} (\pi_i(\phi_{S,h}) + \pi_j(\phi_{S,h})) = \int_{\Gamma_{ij}} (\pi_i(\phi_{S,h})^2 + \pi_j(\phi_{S,h})^2).$$

Then using Young's inequality for the last term in (5.11), it follows that  $\forall \eta > 0$ :

$$\begin{aligned} c_S(\mathbf{u}_h, \mathbf{w}_h) &\geq \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathcal{R}} \left( D^{-1} |\mathbf{p}_h|^2 + \sigma^{-1} (\operatorname{div} \mathbf{p}_h)^2 + \left( \sigma - \frac{\alpha'}{2\eta} \right) \phi_h^2 \right) \\ &\quad + \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}]_h [\mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}] \\ &\quad + \frac{1}{2} \alpha' (1 - \eta C') \sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{j=i+1}^N \int_{\Gamma_{ij}} (\pi_i(\phi_{S,h})^2 + \pi_j(\phi_{S,h})^2) \\ &\quad - \alpha'^2 (D_*)^{-1} (C'_{lft})^2 \|\phi_{S,h}\|_M^2, \end{aligned} \quad (5.12)$$

where  $C' = \frac{1}{2} \max_{i \in \mathcal{I}_S} (|\partial \mathcal{R}_i| |\mathcal{R}_i|^{-1}) > 0$ . Set  $\eta = \frac{1}{2} (C')^{-1}$  to obtain:

$$\begin{aligned} c_S(\mathbf{u}_h, \mathbf{w}_h) &\geq \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathcal{R}} (D^{-1} |\mathbf{p}_h|^2 + \sigma^{-1} (\operatorname{div} \mathbf{p}_h)^2 + (\sigma - \alpha' C') \phi_h^2) \\ &\quad + \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}]_h [\mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}] \\ &\quad + \frac{\alpha'}{4} \sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{j=i+1}^N \int_{\Gamma_{ij}} (\pi_i(\phi_{S,h})^2 + \pi_j(\phi_{S,h})^2) \\ &\quad - \alpha'^2 (D_*)^{-1} (C'_{lft})^2 \|\phi_{S,h}\|_M^2, \end{aligned} \quad (5.13)$$

Suppose that the condition (5.8) holds, then

$$\int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}]_h [\mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}] \geq \beta_h \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}]^2.$$

with  $\beta_h > 0$ . Then, provided that  $\alpha' \in ]0, \sigma (C')^{-1}[$ , it remains to bound from below the last two terms by  $\|\phi_{S,h}\|_M^2$  times a strictly positive constant, to achieve (5.7). For this to hold, one uses condition (5.9). Indeed, it implies

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\alpha'}{4} \sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{j=i+1}^N \int_{\Gamma_{ij}} (\pi_i(\phi_{S,h})^2 + \pi_j(\phi_{S,h})^2) \\ - \alpha'^2 (D_*)^{-1} (C'_{lft})^2 \|\phi_{S,h}\|_M^2 \geq \alpha' \left( \frac{\gamma_h}{4} - \alpha' (D_*)^{-1} (C'_{lft})^2 \right) \|\phi_{S,h}\|_M^2. \end{aligned}$$

So taking  $\alpha'$  "sufficiently small" leads to the claim when  $\sigma$  is piecewise-constant. When  $\sigma \in \mathcal{PW}^{1,\infty}(\mathcal{R})$  is not piecewise-constant, one modifies (5.10) by choosing

$$\psi_{i,h} = \frac{1}{2} \phi_{i,h} + \frac{1}{2} \pi_i^0 ((\sigma_i)^{-1}) \operatorname{div} \mathbf{p}_{i,h} \text{ for } i = 1, N,$$

where  $\pi_i^0$  is the orthogonal projection on piecewise constant fields in  $L^2(\mathcal{R}_i)$ . According to [14], Proposition 1.135, there exists  $C_\sigma$  independent of  $h$  such that

$$\|(\sigma_i)^{-1} - \pi_i^0 ((\sigma_i)^{-1})\|_{\infty, \mathcal{R}} \leq C_\sigma h. \quad (5.14)$$

Which this choice, there are extra terms in the expression of  $c_S(\mathbf{u}_h, \mathbf{w}_h)$  compared to (5.11), namely

$$\frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathcal{R}} (\pi_i^0((\sigma_i)^{-1}) - (\sigma_i)^{-1})(\operatorname{div} \mathbf{p}_h)^2 + (\pi_i^0((\sigma_i)^{-1}) - (\sigma_i)^{-1})\sigma_i\phi_h \operatorname{div} \mathbf{p}_h.$$

Thanks to (5.14), the first term has no influence, because one has the bound

$$\int_{\mathcal{R}} (\pi_i^0((\sigma_i)^{-1}) - (\sigma_i)^{-1})(\operatorname{div} \mathbf{p}_h)^2 \geq -C_\sigma h \|\operatorname{div} \mathbf{p}_h\|_{0,\mathcal{R}}^2.$$

Likewise for the second term. Indeed, using the Cauchy-Schwarz inequality with (5.14) yields

$$\int_{\mathcal{R}} (\pi_i^0((\sigma_i)^{-1}) - (\sigma_i)^{-1})\sigma_i\phi_h \operatorname{div} \mathbf{p}_h \geq -\frac{C_\sigma\sigma^*}{2} h (\|\phi_h\|_{0,\mathcal{R}}^2 + \|\operatorname{div} \mathbf{p}_h\|_{0,\mathcal{R}}^2).$$

Hence the claim still holds.  $\square$

A straightforward consequence of (5.8) is obtained by taking  $(\mathbf{q}_h, \psi_h, \psi_{S,h}) = (0, 0, [\mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}]_h) \in \mathbf{W}_h$  as a test-function in (5.5), which leads to

$$0 = \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}] [\mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}]_h \geq \beta_h \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}]^2.$$

Hence,  $[\mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}] = 0$  and so  $\mathbf{p}_h \in \mathbf{Q}_h \cap \mathbf{H}(\operatorname{div}, \mathcal{R})$ .

One infers the classical convergene result below [14].

**Corollary 1.** *Assume that the algebraic conditions (5.8)-(5.9) are fulfilled uniformly in  $h$ , that the discretization  $\mathbf{Q}_h \times L_h$  satisfies the approximability properties (5.1) and that it is globally conforming in  $\mathbf{Q} \times L^2(\mathbb{R})$ . Then the solutions  $(\mathbf{u}_h)_h$  to the DD+ $L^2$ -jumps method converge to the solution  $\mathbf{u}$  to (3.10). In other words:*

$$\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} (\|\mathbf{p} - \mathbf{p}_h\|_{\mathbf{H}(\operatorname{div}, \mathcal{R})} + \|\phi - \phi_h\|_{0,\mathcal{R}} + \|\phi_S - \phi_{S,h}\|_{0,\Gamma_S}) = 0.$$

**5.2. A study of the conditions (5.8)-(5.9).** Let us begin by some observations regarding the two conditions.

First, we noted that if (5.8) holds, then  $[\mathbf{p}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}] = 0$  and  $\mathbf{p}_h \in \mathbf{Q}_h \cap \mathbf{H}(\operatorname{div}, \mathcal{R})$ .

Second, if (5.9) holds, then  $\psi_{S,h} \mapsto \left( \sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{j=i+1}^N \int_{\Gamma_{ij}} (\pi_i(\psi_{S,h})^2 + \pi_j(\psi_{S,h})^2) \right)^{1/2}$  is a norm on  $M_h$ . Indeed, we conclude from (5.4) that  $\forall \psi_{S,h} \in M_h$

$$\gamma_h \|\psi_{S,h}\|_M^2 \leq \sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{j=i+1}^N \int_{\Gamma_{ij}} (\pi_i(\psi_{S,h})^2 + \pi_j(\psi_{S,h})^2) \leq 2 \|\psi_{S,h}\|_M^2.$$

To realize the conditions (5.8)-(5.9), one can think of two alternatives depending on whether the discrete space of the Lagrange multipliers  $M_h$  is build/inferred directly with the help of the discrete spaces of normal traces  $(T_{i,h})_{i=1,N}$ . That is, whether  $\sum_{i=1}^N T_{i,h} \subset M_h$  or not.

**5.2.1. The case  $\sum_{i=1}^N T_{i,h} \subset M_h$ .** One can disregard the situation where  $\sum_{i=1}^N T_{i,h}$  is a strict subset of  $M_h$ . In this case, there exists  $\psi_{S,h}^\perp \neq 0$  that belongs to the orthogonal subspace of  $\sum_{i=1}^N T_{i,h}$  in  $M_h$ , and if  $(\mathbf{p}_h, \phi_h, \phi_{S,h})$  is a solution to (5.5), then so is  $(\mathbf{p}_h, \phi_h, \phi_{S,h} + \psi_{S,h}^\perp)$ . This is a straightforward consequence of the fact for all test-functions  $(\mathbf{q}_h, \psi_h, \psi_{S,h})$ , it holds  $[\mathbf{q}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}] \in \sum_{i=1}^N T_{i,h}$  and so  $\int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{q}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}] \psi_{S,h}^\perp =$

0: the discrete solution is not unique. Hence in order to obtain a well-posed problem,  $M_h$  must be chosen as:

$$(5.15) \quad M_h = \sum_{i=1}^N T_{i,h}.$$

In this setting, conditions (5.8)-(5.9) follow readily with constants  $\beta_h$  and  $\gamma_h$  independent of  $h$ . In particular, all projections  $\Pi_i$  are equal to the identity so that :

$$\forall \mathbf{q}_h \in \mathbf{Q}_h, \quad \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{q}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}]_h [\mathbf{q}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}] = \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{q}_h \cdot \mathbf{n}]^2.$$

**5.2.2. Other constructions.** To our knowledge, the other alternative has been first studied by Yotov [16] (in case of RTN finite elements). This is a situation where *nested* meshes are considered, but where  $T_{i,h} + T_{j,h}$  and  $M_h^{ij}$  can be different on all interfaces  $\Gamma_{ij}$ . Here, the space  $M_h^{ij}$  must be tailored with care to obtain condition (5.8)-(5.9). As an example, in [16], a 2D domain  $\mathcal{R}$  was considered, with  $P_0$  discrete normal traces with given meshsize  $h_S = h_i$  on  $\Gamma_{ij}$ ,  $P_1$  discrete Lagrange multipliers with meshsize  $2h_S$  and where the triangulation used for the normal traces is a subdivision of the triangulation used for the Lagrange multipliers. The best constant in (5.8) can be computed on the reference element, with a value of the parameter  $\hat{\beta} = \frac{3}{4}$ , so that  $\beta_h = \frac{3}{4}$ . Other examples can be constructed for 3D geometries. For instance, with  $Q_0$  normal traces with given meshsize  $h_S = h_i$  on  $\Gamma_{ij}$ ,  $Q_1$  discrete Lagrange multipliers with meshsize  $2h_S$  and the same rule governing the triangulations as above. In this case one finds that  $\beta_h = \hat{\beta} = \frac{17}{32}$ . Also, one readily checks that  $\hat{\pi}\hat{\psi} = 0$  implies  $\hat{\psi} = 0$  on the reference element, so condition (5.9) is fulfilled too with a constant  $\gamma_h$  that is independent of  $h$ . We postulate that these results could be extended as follows. Let  $m \geq 2$ : in 2D (resp. 3D),  $P_0$  (resp.  $Q_0$ ) discrete normal traces with meshsize  $h_S = h_i$ , in conjunction with  $P_m$  (resp.  $Q_m$ ) discrete Lagrange multipliers with meshsize  $m h_S$  and again the same rule governing the triangulations as above.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The *DD+L<sup>2</sup>-jumps method* is a general framework which allows to show the well-posedness of the mixed, multi-domain diffusion variational formulation, especially in the case of a *low-regularity solution*. In the discrete case, the well-posedness depends on two algebraic conditions which will drive the choice of the discretized space of the Lagrange multipliers. One can choose two *different* discretizations in two adjacent subdomains, such as RTN, BDM, BDFM or ABF mixed finite elements [13]. The critical issue is in the choice of the discrete space of the Lagrange multipliers to enforce conditions (5.8)-(5.9). Note that one can use Hilbert spaces including  $L^2$ -jumps to model fractures (see the recent paper [17]).

As soon as the discrete inf-sup condition is satisfied uniformly, one can use Strang's lemma [14] to derive the error estimates: one must compute the error between the solution  $(\phi, \mathbf{p}, \phi_S)$  and its discrete interpolant. The convergence rate is driven by the error on  $\mathbf{p}$ . Let us give some details in the case of RTN finite elements [18, 19]. We refer to [20, 21] to state that for a low-regularity solution,  $\|\mathbf{p}_i - \mathbf{p}_{i,R}\|_{\mathbf{H}(\text{div}, \mathcal{R}_i)} \lesssim h^{r_{\max} - \epsilon}$  for all  $\epsilon > 0$ , where  $\mathbf{p}_{i,R}$  is the RTN interpolant on subdomain  $\mathcal{R}_i$ . While using a domain decomposition with matching meshes, one has  $[(\mathbf{p} - \mathbf{p}_R) \cdot \mathbf{n}] = 0$ . In

the other cases,  $[(\mathbf{p} - \mathbf{p}_R) \cdot \mathbf{n}] \neq 0$ . Nevertheless, one can prove that if the meshes remain nested and the triangulation are quasi-uniform on the non-matching interfaces, then  $\|[(\mathbf{p} - \mathbf{p}_R) \cdot \mathbf{n}]\|_{0,\Gamma_S} \lesssim h^{1/2}$ . This allows to recover the expected convergence rate of order  $r_{max}$  in the presence of low-regularity solutions:

$$\|\mathbf{p} - \mathbf{p}_h\|_{\mathbf{H}(\text{div}, \mathcal{R})} + \|\phi - \phi_h\|_{0,\mathcal{R}} + \|\phi_S - \phi_{S,h}\|_{0,\Gamma_S} \lesssim h^{r_{max}-\epsilon}, \quad \forall \epsilon > 0.$$

As a matter of fact, up to now this expected convergence rate was *extrapolated* from the known results for regular solutions. Following the methodology of [22], one can also recover the Aubin-Nitsche estimates:  $\|\phi - \phi_h\|_{0,\mathcal{R}} \lesssim h^{2r_{max}-\epsilon}$ , for all  $\epsilon > 0$ . For non-nested meshes, error estimates are difficult to obtain [23], unless there is some measure of structure in the non-nestedness.

The theory could be adapted to the case  $\sigma = 0$ , that is the single phase Darcy flow model with low-regularity solution. Classically, one has well-posedness of the primal and mixed problems, and furthermore one can prove the discrete inf-sup condition over a subspace of  $\mathbf{W}$  of finite codimension under the conditions (5.8)-(5.9). Provided the discrete inf-sup condition is uniform, Strang's lemma can then be used to find the error estimates in the coercive+compact framework (see for instance [24, §2]). A possible continuation of this paper is the study of the steady-state neutron diffusion problem. Mathematically, it can be expressed as a generalized eigenvalue problem, where the physical solution is the fundamental mode, that is the eigenfunction associated to the smallest eigenvalue [7]. The numerical analysis of this problem is carried out in [25].

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#### APPENDIX A. COMPLEMENTS: INTEGRATING BY PARTS

We recall below some integration by parts formulas that are used to build the variational formulations. We follow first [26, Section 3]. Introducing the trace space  $H^{1/2}(\partial\mathcal{R}_i)$  of elements of  $H^1(\mathcal{R}_i)$  on  $\partial\mathcal{R}_i$ ,  $i = 1, N$ , we recall Green’s first identity:

$$\forall(\mathbf{q}_i, \phi_i) \in \mathbf{H}(\text{div}, \mathcal{R}_i) \times H^1(\mathcal{R}_i),$$

$$\int_{\mathcal{R}_i} \text{grad } \phi_i \cdot \mathbf{q}_i + \phi_i \text{div } \mathbf{q}_i = \langle \mathbf{q}_i \cdot \mathbf{n}_i, \phi_i \rangle_{(H^{1/2}(\partial\mathcal{R}_i))', H^{1/2}(\partial\mathcal{R}_i)}.$$

Introducing the trace space  $H^{1/2}(\Gamma_i)$  of elements of  $H^1(\mathcal{R}_i)$  on  $\Gamma_i$ ,  $i = 1, N$ , we may rewrite Green’s first identity as:

$$\forall(\mathbf{q}_i, \phi_i) \in \mathbf{H}_{0, \partial\mathcal{R}_i \setminus \Gamma_i}(\text{div}, \mathcal{R}_i) \times H^1(\mathcal{R}_i),$$

$$\int_{\mathcal{R}_i} \text{grad } \phi_i \cdot \mathbf{q}_i + \phi_i \text{div } \mathbf{q}_i = \langle \mathbf{q}_i \cdot \mathbf{n}_i, \phi_i \rangle_{(H^{1/2}(\Gamma_i))', H^{1/2}(\Gamma_i)}.$$

Next, we recall some density results from [10] below. Let us introduce, for  $H \in \{H^1(\mathcal{R}), H_0^1(\mathcal{R}), (H_{0, \Gamma_i}^1(\mathcal{R}_i))_{i=1, N}\}$ :

$$H_- := \{\phi \in H \mid \phi = 0 \text{ in a neighbourhood of } \partial\Gamma_W\}.$$

**Theorem 5.** *Let  $H \in \{H^1(\mathcal{R}), H_0^1(\mathcal{R}), (H_{0,\Gamma_i}^1(\mathcal{R}_i))_{i=1,N}\}$ :  $H_-$  is dense in  $H$ .*

Finally, for  $i = 1, N$  Green's first identity in  $\mathcal{R}_i$  becomes with the help of the trace spaces  $H_{\Gamma_{ij}}^{1/2}$ :

$$\forall(\mathbf{q}_i, \phi_i) \in \mathbf{H}(\text{div}, \mathcal{R}_i) \times (H_{0,\Gamma_i}^1(\mathcal{R}_i))_-,$$

$$\int_{\mathcal{R}_i} \mathbf{grad} \phi_i \cdot \mathbf{q}_i + \phi_i \text{div} \mathbf{q}_i = \sum_{j=1}^N \langle \mathbf{q}_i \cdot \mathbf{n}_i, \phi_i \rangle_{(H_{\Gamma_{ij}}^{1/2})', H_{\Gamma_{ij}}^{1/2}}.$$

As a consequence, let  $\phi \in (H_0^1(\mathcal{R}))_-$  and  $\mathbf{q} \in \mathbf{Q}$ . Denoting by  $\phi_S = \phi|_{\Gamma_S}$ , we may write:

$$\begin{aligned} \int_{\mathcal{R}} \mathbf{grad} \phi \cdot \mathbf{q} + \phi \text{div} \mathbf{q} &= \sum_{i=1}^N \int_{\mathcal{R}_i} \mathbf{grad} \phi_i \cdot \mathbf{q}_i + \phi_i \text{div} \mathbf{q}_i \\ &= \sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{j=1}^N \langle \mathbf{q}_i \cdot \mathbf{n}_i, \phi_i \rangle_{(H_{\Gamma_{ij}}^{1/2})', H_{\Gamma_{ij}}^{1/2}}, \\ &= \sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{j=i+1}^N \langle [\mathbf{q} \cdot \mathbf{n}]_{ij}, \phi_S \rangle_{(H_{\Gamma_{ij}}^{1/2})', H_{\Gamma_{ij}}^{1/2}}, \\ &= \int_{\Gamma_S} [\mathbf{q} \cdot \mathbf{n}] \phi_S. \end{aligned}$$

According to Theorem 5, the result still holds for  $\phi \in H_0^1(\mathcal{R})$  and  $\mathbf{q} \in \mathbf{Q}$ .