Symbolic Recovery of PDEs from Measurement Data

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Abstract

Models based on partial differential equations (PDEs) are powerful for describing a wide range of complex relationships in the natural sciences. Accurately identifying the PDE model, which represents the underlying physical law, is essential for a proper understanding of the problem. This reconstruction typically relies on indirect and noisy measurements of the system's state and, without specifically tailored methods, rarely yields symbolic expressions, thereby hindering interpretability. In this work, we address this issue by considering existing neural network architectures based on rational functions for the symbolic representation of physical laws. These networks leverage the approximation power of rational functions while also benefiting from their flexibility in representing arithmetic operations. Our main contribution is an identifiability result, showing that, in the limit of noiseless, complete measurements, such symbolic networks can uniquely reconstruct the simplest physical law within the PDE model. Specifically, reconstructed laws remain expressible within the symbolic network architecture, with regularization-minimizing parameterizations promoting interpretability and sparsity in case of L^1-regularization. In addition, we provide regularity results for symbolic networks. Empirical validation using the *ParFam* architecture supports these theoretical findings, providing evidence for the practical reconstructibility of physical laws.

Keywords: Physical law, model learning, symbolic recovery, neural networks, rational functions, inverse problems

MSC Codes: 35R30, 93B30, 68Q32, 65M32, 41A20

1 Introduction

Many complex relationships in the natural sciences are governed by systems that evolve in space and time, driven by rates of change. The underlying physical laws can be effectively modeled using partial differential equations (PDEs), which provide a powerful mathematical framework for describing such effects while enabling the analysis and prediction of system behavior. Examples include modeling fluid dynamics with the Navier-Stokes equations Batchelor (2000), behavior of quantum systems with Schrödinger's equation Griffiths & Schroeter (2018), biological pattern formation through reaction-diffusion equations Turing (1952), climate dynamics and weather prediction Vallis (2017), and biological processes such as population dynamics or transport mechanisms Murray (2002; 2003); Perthame (2015). Despite their versatility, a central challenge in PDE-based modeling lies in identifying the precise form of the governing equations, which is often unclear or

imprecise. This uncertainty stems from multiple factors, such as insufficient understanding of the underlying mechanisms or oversimplifications during the abstraction process that prevent accurate representation of reality. Moreover, the data available in practice are often indirect, incomplete, and noisy, further complicating the task.

Inverse problems perspective on model learning. The reconstruction of physical laws in PDE-based models from measurement data can be formulated as an inverse problem. Applications range from estimating single parameters, through identifying structural components that augment approximate models, to discovering the full governing physics that best explain observed dynamics. Approaches span classical techniques, purely data-driven model learning, and hybrid methods.

In parameter identification the physical model structure is assumed to be known and only the physical parameters are learned from data. Early contributions include Acar (1993), Alessandrini (1986), and Knowles (2001) on elliptic equations. Related works on reconstructing nonlinear heat conduction laws from boundary measurements, together with stability estimates, include Cannon & DuChateau (1980), Egger et al. (2014), and Rösch (1996). An excellent overview on aspects of parameter identification and beyond is provided by the foundational reference works Banks & Kunisch (1989) on parameter estimation and control for PDE-governed systems, Klibanov (2013) on different aspects of coefficient inverse problems, Engl et al. (1996) on deterministic regularization theory for ill-posedness, and Kaipio & Somersalo (2005) on a Bayesian framework for inverse problems.

Beyond coefficient estimation, model identification infers unknown structural components of PDEs, e.g., full functional terms, from data, including recovery of sources in reaction-diffusion systems DuChateau & Rundell (1985); Kaltenbacher & Rundell (2020a; 2025), joint reconstruction of conductivity and reaction kinetics Kaltenbacher & Rundell (2020b), determination of nonlinearities in semilinear equations Feizmohammadi et al. (2024); Kian (2023); Kian & Uhlmann (2023), inverse source problems for hyperbolic dynamics Yamamoto (1995) and hidden reaction law discovery Ngoc Nguyen (2025). See also the related works Bukhgeim & Uhlmann (2002); Jiang et al. (2017); Nachman (1996).

Efficiency is a central consideration, as measurement data are often high dimensional. For that reason, dimensionality reduction is a natural preprocessing step prior to inferring physical laws. Representative approaches include projection-based model reduction for parametric PDE systems Benner et al. (2015) and data-driven dynamic mode decomposition (DMD), which extracts dominant spatio-temporal modes from measurements Schmid (2010). Another central consideration is uncertainty. The framework Stuart (2010) for Bayesian inverse problems on function spaces enables probabilistic inference with principled uncertainty quantification, facilitating the identification of governing parameters and laws from partial, noisy data.

In recent years, scientific machine learning has shown strong potential by linking data-driven methods with classical models. For an overview of learning PDE-based models from data, see the comprehensive reviews Azizzadenesheli et al. (2024); Boullé & Townsend (2024); Brunton & Kutz (2024); De Ryck & Mishra (2024); Nganyu Tanyu et al. (2023). A selection of methods include DeepONets Lu et al. (2021), Fourier Neural Operators Li et al. (2020), DeepGreen Gin et al. (2021) and model reduction with neural operator methods Bhattacharya et al. (2021). Hybrid methods have also proven effective in optimal control, including learning-informed optimal control Dong et al. (2022; 2024; 2025), nonlinearity identification in the monodomain model Court &

Kunisch (2022) and identification of semilinear PDEs Christof & Kowalczyk (2024). In the setting of learning-informed PDE-constrained optimization, we refer to Riedl et al. (2025); Sirignano et al. (2023). These contributions formulate and analyze PDE-constrained optimization problems augmented with neural networks, provide adjoint-based optimization frameworks, and establish global convergence guarantees for neural PDEs and neural-network-enhanced PDE models. On learning-informed identification of PDE nonlinearities, we refer further to Aarset et al. (2023) for well-posedness of the learning problem and Holler & Morina (2024a) for uniqueness of reconstructing the physical law, along with the references therein. These contributions employ an all-at-once formulation, justified in Kaltenbacher (2016); Kaltenbacher & Nguyen (2022), that facilitates the direct use of measurements and avoids explicit parameter-to-state maps. A growing body of recent research investigates how embedding problem-specific conservation laws into machine-learning frameworks can aid in discovering governing physical laws. We refer to the related works discussed in Holler & Morina (2025b) for a recent overview.

Learning interpretable models from data. A key objective in learning scientific models from data is to obtain representations that are not only accurate but also interpretable, compact, and aligned with physical principles. In many applications, one aims to identify physical laws that are as simple as possible while still adequately capturing the data (see, e.g., Angelis et al. (2023); Quade et al. (2016)). Beyond interpretability, symbolic models are advantageous over black-box alternatives for capturing fundamental physical principles and are more robust in terms of generalization Rudy et al. (2017). Interpretable models also offer reduced computational complexity for real-time applications Schmidt & Lipson (2009). Finally, symbolic expressions offer the additional advantage of being easier to verify for physical consistency, while analytical properties (such as stability and equilibria) are easier to extract Brunton et al. (2016). For background of various methods on symbolic regression, see La Cava et al. (2021). This includes genetic programming approaches Augusto & Barbosa (2000); Cranmer (2023); Schmidt & Lipson (2009; 2010), reinforcement learning formulations Mundhenk et al. (2021); Petersen et al. (2021); Sun et al. (2023), neural-network based methods Heim et al. (2020); Lampert & Martius (2017); Sahoo et al. (2018); Scholl et al. (2025), and transformer-driven expression models Biggio et al. (2021); Holt et al. (2023); Kamienny et al. (2022). Within symbolic recovery of dynamical systems, substantial progress has been made on identifying parsimonious laws for nonlinear dynamics. The SINDy framework Brunton et al. (2016) introduced sparse regression to discover governing ODEs, and PDEs in Rudy et al. (2017). Physical structure can be promoted through priors and constraints, including symmetry-based inductive biases Udrescu & Tegmark (2020) and the incorporation of established scientific laws Cornelio et al. (2023), improving physical consistency, and data efficiency.

Identifiability of physical laws. In physical law learning, fundamentally an identification problem, it is crucial that the learned equations and parameters are uniquely determined by the data, ensuring the model captures the true underlying mechanism rather than one of many indistinguishable alternatives. The works Bellman & Åström (1970); Cobelli & DiStefano (1980); DiStefano & Cobelli (1980); Miao et al. (2011) establish the theoretical foundations of structural and parameter identifiability in dynamical systems. They rigorously define conditions for unique parameter inference from input-output data and analyze ambiguities that arise from observability and model structure. See for example Isakov (1993) investigating conditions under which inverse problems for semilinear parabolic equations admit unique solutions and Kaltenbacher & Rundell (2021) on identifiability and constructive recovery of a nonlinear diffusion coefficient in parabolic equations.

In the context of symbolic recovery of differential equations, identifiability, specifically, the classification of uniqueness, has been addressed by Hauger et al. (2025); Scholl et al. (2023a;b) both for specific classes of physical laws (e.g., linear, algebraic) and for robust symbolic recovery of differential equations. More recently, Casolo et al. (2025) study the structural identifiability of sparse linear ODEs and show that, unlike in the dense case, non-identifiability occurs with positive probability under realistic sparsity assumptions. An interesting recent result by Shumaylov et al. (2025) shows that a system's governing equations are, in general, discoverable from data only when the system exhibits chaotic behavior. Finally, we also refer to Holler & Morina (2024a), addressed above, which discusses an analysis-based guideline for expecting unique reconstructability of practical physical law learning setups in the limit of full measurements in a variational formulation.

Scope and contributions of this work. Our focus is the joint recovery of an unknown physical law f in a concise symbolic form and state u satisfying the PDE

$$\partial_t u(t,x) = f(t, u(t,x)), \qquad (t,x) \in (0,T) \times \Omega,$$

on a given spatio-temporal domain, from indirect, noisy and possibly incomplete measurements of the state. The aim is not merely to fit the physical law f numerically, but to recover it as a human-interpretable expression that is verifiable by domain experts. To achieve this, we approximate f by a family of parameterized models designed for symbolic expressiveness and interpretability. Concretely, we employ *symbolic networks*, a neural-network based architecture whose trainable components are rational functions (fractions of polynomials with trainable coefficients) and whose activations are user-defined base functions (such as trigonometric or exponential functions). Architectures commonly used for neural-network based symbolic regression, including *EQL*-type designs Lampert & Martius (2017); Sahoo et al. (2018) and *ParFam* Scholl et al. (2025), inspired our choice of symbolic neural networks and are subsumed as special cases within our framework. The design outlined above is crucial since rational functions naturally encode arithmetic operations, such as products and divisions, while the base functions provide the vocabulary for non-algebraic relationships. Together, they yield a modeling class that can represent compact formulas and is supported by strong approximation capabilities grounded in those of rational functions (see Boullé et al. (2020); Holler & Morina (2025a); Telgarsky (2017)). We integrate symbolic networks into the model learning framework proposed in Holler & Morina (2024a), that recovers the state and the physical law simultaneously from data. This allows to incorporate measurement operators and noise models directly into the learning scheme. Within this formulation, sparsity-promoting regularization on the model parameters is used to enhance interpretability of the resulting physical law. As a result, among all admissible models consistent with the data, a concise symbolic law within the chosen architecture is preferentially selected.

Our main theoretical contribution is an identifiability result tailored to this symbolic setting. This result shows that, for ground truth physical laws expressible within a user-defined symbolic network architecture, the proposed model learning approach recovers both the physical law and the state in the limit of complete measurements. Furthermore, the recovered parameterization of the physical law is regularization minimizing, which is particularly interesting if the regularization scheme is designed to promote sparsity in the parameterization. When the physical law is not representable by a fixed architecture, techniques developed in Holler & Morina (2024a) can be employed, but fall outside the scope of this work. Beyond theory, we provide a numerical validation using ParFam,

demonstrating the practical feasibility of reconstructing interpretable laws from indirect data. All numerical experiments of this work can be reproduced with the publicly available source code[1].

What distinguishes this work from existing literature on neural-network based symbolic regression is a rigorous analysis-driven framework for identifying humaninterpretable physical laws from realistic measurement data, together with a formulation that preserves the continuous nature of the underlying PDE. Rather than assuming idealized, full, noise-free observations, we model measurements as they arise in practice. In this regime, we prove reconstruction of both the state and an admissible symbolic representation of the physical law within the chosen architecture. A central methodological choice is to model the dynamics directly in function space prior to discretization. This function-space formulation retains the continuous structure of the PDE and enables consistency guarantees before numerical approximation. Within this setting, we introduce symbolic networks for compact, interpretable representations of physical laws. We analyze these networks as operators on function spaces, establishing regularity properties required for the learning framework. These elements provide a foundation for symbolic recovery of physical laws from measurement data, combining expressive modeling with identifiability and convergence guarantees in the limit of vanishing noise.

Structure of the paper. Section 2 introduces symbolic networks based on rational functions, as detailed in Subsection 2.1. The network design is outlined in Subsection 2.2, and approximation properties are discussed in Subsection 2.3. Subsection 2.4 discusses the extension to function space, including regularity properties of symbolic networks. The main identification results for symbolic model learning are presented in Section 3, with numerical experiments provided in Section 4. The detailed proofs of the regularity result from Subsection 2.4 can be found in Appendix A, and those for Section 3 in Appendix B. Appendix C verifies the regularity properties of sampling operators utilized in the numerical experiments.

2 Symbolic networks

Neural network-based symbolic regression provides an alternative to traditional black-box models by aiming to discover human-interpretable equations that describe data (e.g., originating from physical systems). Unlike genetic programming approaches, which rely on evolutionary algorithms to combine mathematical symbols, these methods exploit the potential of optimization techniques for neural networks (e.g., gradient-based methods). In addition, neural network-based approaches enable the construction of concise symbolic expressions and, when properly trained, generalize well to unseen data. We focus on *symbolic networks*, a generic class of architectures which we motivate by the parameterized feed-forward neural networks proposed in Lampert & Martius (2017); Sahoo et al. (2018); Scholl et al. (2025) in the context of symbolic regression. These networks utilize user-defined base functions (e.g., trigonometric, exponential) as activation functions, which may vary across different layers. Transformations between layers are parameterized functions which are "simpler" than the activations and can range from affine linear transformations (as used in Lampert & Martius (2017); Sahoo et al. (2018)) to polynomial and rational transformations (see Scholl et al. (2025)). The symbolic networks investigated here specifically employ certain rational functions as transformations between layers, i.e., quotients of polynomials, encompassing polynomial and linear functions as special cases. Rational transformations can represent products and divisions, which

[1] See `https://anonymous.4open.science/r/unique_sym_anon-3CDD/README.md`.

are essential arithmetic building blocks for symbolic expressions. Additionally, they exhibit strong approximation capabilities, which will be discussed in more detail later.

2.1 Rational functions

From both a theoretical and practical perspective, it is advantageous to restrict transformations between layers to rational functions that do not exhibit poles. Rational functions with poles (e.g., outside the domain of the PDE model) are beyond the scope of this work, as the focus here is to enable a more universal and comprehensive analysis. This restriction guarantees essential regularity properties of symbolic networks, as proven in Subsection 2.4, while also simplifying the training process in practice. Furthermore, as we will discuss in Subsection 2.3, this limitation does not affect the approximation capabilities of rational functions.

Before introducing rational functions in the context described above, we first recall some definitions related to multivariate polynomials. For $m, n \in \mathbb{N}$ the degree of a multivariate polynomial $\pi : \mathbb{R}^n \to \mathbb{R}$ of the form

$$\mathbb{R}^n \ni x \mapsto \sum_{k_1,\dots,k_n=0}^{m} a_{k_1,\dots,k_n} \prod_{l=1}^{n} x_l^{k_l}$$

is defined by $\deg(\pi) := \max(k_1 + \cdots + k_n : \ a_{k_1,\dots,k_n} \neq 0)$. Note that a polynomial of degree d in n variables involves at most $\binom{n+d}{d} = \frac{(n+d)!}{d!n!}$ non-zero coefficients. Additionally, note that two multivariate polynomials p, q are *coprime* if they do not attain a nontrivial common polynomial divisor. Building on these definitions, we can now introduce rational functions and define an associated notion of degree.

Definition 1 (Rational and base function)**.** *For $n \in \mathbb{N}$, a function $r : \mathbb{R}^n \to \mathbb{R}$ is called rational if there exist coprime multivariate polynomials $p, q : \mathbb{R}^n \to \mathbb{R}$ with $q(x) > 0$ for all $x \in \mathbb{R}^n$, such that $r(x) = \frac{p(x)}{q(x)}$ for $x \in \mathbb{R}^n$. The degree of r is given by $\deg(r) := \max(\deg(p), \deg(q))$ if $p \neq 0$ and zero otherwise. For $n, m \in \mathbb{N}$ a function $r : \mathbb{R}^n \to \mathbb{R}^m$ with $r(x) = (r_i(x))_{i=1}^m$ for $x \in \mathbb{R}^n$ is called rational if r_i is rational for $1 \leq i \leq m$ and the degree is given by $\deg(r) := \max_{1\leq i\leq m}(\deg(r_i))$.*

A continuous function $\sigma : \mathbb{R}^n \to \mathbb{R}^m$ is called base function if it is not rational.

To simplify the parameterization of denominator polynomials in the representation of rational functions (Definition 1), we introduce the set of coefficients for polynomials of a given degree that are positive over the real numbers.

Definition 2 (Positive polynomials)**.** *For $d, n \in \mathbb{N}$ let $Q(d, n) \subset \mathbb{R}^{\binom{n+d}{d}}$ be the set of coefficients parameterizing positive polynomials of degree $\leq d$ in n variables,*

$$Q(d,n) = \{a \in \mathbb{R}^{\binom{n+d}{d}} : \ q(a,x) := \sum_{0\leq k_1+\cdots+k_n\leq d} a_{k_1,\dots,k_n} \prod_{l=1}^{n} x_l^{k_l} > 0 \text{ for all } x \in \mathbb{R}^n\}.$$

To characterize the set of coefficients $Q(d, n)$ more explicitly, it is crucial to examine the geometric properties of polynomial roots, which form a rich area of research. However, as this is not the focus of the present work, we limit our discussion to classical one-dimensional results presented in (Jacobson, 2009, Chapter 5), specifically *Sturm's theorem* (Jacobson, 2009, Theorem 5.5) and *Tarski's theorem* (Jacobson, 2009, Theorem 5.9). By Sturm's theorem, the number of roots of a polynomial within a

given interval is determined by the difference in the number of sign changes in the *standard sequence* evaluated at the endpoints of the interval. For $n = 1$, this establishes an implicit characterization of $Q(d, n)$ insofar as the number of variations in sign of the standard sequence remains constant for every real number. While an explicit characterization of $Q(d, n)$ is likely infeasible, it is typically sufficient to work with the following subset: Denominator polynomials consisting solely of monomial terms with even degrees, nonnegative coefficients, and a positive constant term. Such polynomials are positive over the real line and hold practical significance, as discussed next.

In Boullé et al. (2020), it is demonstrated that suitably regular functions can be uniformly approximated by rational functions on compact sets. The rational functions employed are *Zolotarev* sign-type functions, whose denominators, as noted previously, exclusively consist of monomials with even degrees. Similarly, this applies to the *Newman* sign-type functions used in Holler & Morina (2025a), which establish a first-order universal approximation result with rational functions. From a practical perspective, this eliminates the need for explicitly characterizing $Q(d, n)$, allowing one to instead focus on working with this proper subset without losing approximation properties.

2.2 Network design

The symbolic networks introduced in this work are inspired by the feed-forward neural networks proposed in Lampert & Martius (2017); Sahoo et al. (2018); Scholl et al. (2025). They extend the (shallow) ParFam architecture presented in Scholl et al. (2025) by incorporating multiple layers, and generalize the EQL architectures in Lampert & Martius (2017); Sahoo et al. (2018) by utilizing rational functions, according to Definition 1, as transformations between layers. The proposed symbolic network architecture is formally defined as follows.

Architecture. The depth of the network is denoted by $L \in \mathbb{N}$ and the widths by $(n_i^\sigma)_{i=0}^L, (n_i^r)_{i=1}^L \subset \mathbb{N}$. With this, we consider rational functions

$$r_i : \mathbb{R}^{n_{i-1}^\sigma} \to \mathbb{R}^{n_i^r}$$

of degree $d_i \in \mathbb{N}$ for $1 \leq i \leq L$ as transformations between the intermediate layers. The activation functions are given by fixed multivalued n_i^r-ary base functions

$$\sigma_i : \mathbb{R}^{n_i^r} \to \mathbb{R}^{n_i^\sigma}$$

for $1 \leq i \leq L$. Recall Definition 1 that *base function* cannot be expressed by a rational function. Note further that the presented setup also covers single unary base functions stacked within a multi-dimensional array by choosing $n_i^r = n_i^\sigma$ for $1 \leq i \leq L$. This is the case, for example, in the shallow ParFam architecture in Scholl et al. (2025). Finally, the transformation of the output layer is given by a rational function, including a skip connection, as described in Scholl et al. (2025), taking the form

$$r_{L+1} : \mathbb{R}^{n_L^\sigma + n_0^\sigma} \to \mathbb{R}.$$

The proposed symbolic network architecture is now generally given by

$$\begin{aligned} \mathfrak{S}_\sigma : \mathbb{R}^{n_0^\sigma} &\to \mathbb{R} \\ x &\mapsto r_{L+1}((\sigma_L \circ r_L \circ \cdots \circ \sigma_1 \circ r_1)(x), x). \end{aligned} \tag{1}$$

A schematic illustration of $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma$ is provided in Figure 1. We denote parameterizations of $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma$ by $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta$ for

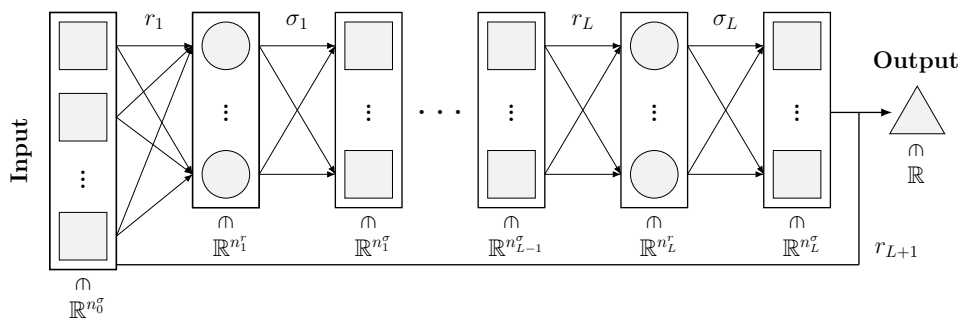


Figure 1: Scheme of symbolic network $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma$

$\theta \in \Theta$ for a suitable parameter set Θ, which will be explained in detail below. The complexity of the network $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta$ is controlled by the choice of the depth $L \in \mathbb{N}$, the layer widths $(n_i^\sigma)_{i=0}^L, (n_i^r)_{i=1}^L \subset \mathbb{N}$, and the degrees $(d_i)_{i=1}^{L+1} \subset \mathbb{N}$ of the underlying rational functions.

Parameterization. The trainable parameters $\theta = (\theta_i)_{i=1}^{L+1}$ of the network in (1), denoted in parameterized form by $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta$, consist of the coefficients θ_i of the polynomials that define the rational functions r_i for $1 \leq i \leq L+1$ (see Definition 1). In practice, the parameterization is restricted to ensure both closedness of the parameter set and numerical stability during parameter training. Notably, the set $Q(d,n)$, from which the coefficients of the denominator polynomials of the rational functions r_i are drawn (see Definition 2), is not closed. To ensure closedness of Θ, we require a restriction of the denominator polynomials as follows. We define for $d, n \in \mathbb{N}$ and $\epsilon > 0$, for $q : \mathbb{R}^{\binom{n+d}{d}} \times \mathbb{R}^n \to \mathbb{R}$ given as in Definition 2, the set

$$Q^\epsilon(d,n) := \left\{ b \in \mathbb{R}^{\binom{n+d}{d}} : q(b,x) \geq \epsilon \quad \text{for all } x \in \mathbb{R}^n \right\}.$$

Closedness of $Q^\epsilon(d,n)$ follows from continuity of q, since

$$Q^\epsilon(d,n) = \bigcap_{x \in \mathbb{R}^n} [q(\cdot,x)]^{-1}([\epsilon,\infty)).$$

Another issue that arises alongside closedness is that rational functions, as introduced in Definition 1, are scaling-invariant, i.e., the numerator and denominator polynomials can be scaled by a positive factor without changing the rational function itself. To avoid scaling invariance, we normalize the coefficients of the denominator polynomials with respect to the standard Euclidean norm $\|\cdot\|_2$, i.e.,

$$\bar{Q}^\epsilon(d,n) = \{ b \in Q^\epsilon(d,n) : \|b\|_2 = 1 \}.$$

Note that this strategy is also applied in ParFam Scholl et al. (2025). Taking this normalization into account, along with the earlier considerations regarding the design of the neural network, we can now define the closed parameter set Θ, with $m_i = n_i^\sigma$ for $0 \leq i \leq L-1$ and $m_L = n_L^\sigma + n_0^\sigma$, for a small $\epsilon > 0$ by

$$\Theta = \bigotimes_{i=1}^{L+1} \left(\otimes_{k=1}^{n_i^r} \mathbb{R}^{\binom{m_{i-1}+d_i}{d_i}} \times \otimes_{k=1}^{n_i^r} \bar{Q}^\epsilon(d_i, m_{i-1}) \right),$$

where, for $i = 1, \dots, L+1$, the first component $\otimes_{k=1}^{n_i^r} \mathbb{R}^{\binom{m_{i-1}+d_i}{d_i}}$ captures the coefficients of the numerator polynomials, and the second component $\otimes_{k=1}^{n_i^r} \bar{Q}^{\epsilon}(d_i, m_{i-1})$ captures the coefficients of the denominator polynomials.

2.3 Universal approximation

This subsection provides an overview of the universal approximation properties of symbolic networks $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma$ as introduced in (1). The ability of $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma$ to approximate functions of suitable regularity is fundamentally connected to the approximation capabilities of rational functions, which form the trainable components of the network. Reducing the question of approximability to rational functions is particularly significant, as it allows deriving results that are qualitatively independent of the specific choice of the activation (base) functions σ within $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma$.

In the context of rational functions, we highlight the seminal work Telgarsky (2017), which investigates the reciprocal approximability of certain ReLU-activated neural networks and rational functions. Following this, related results in Boullé et al. (2020) focus on rational functions defined as compositions of low-degree rational functions, showing that comparatively simpler rational functions retain significant approximation capabilities. Moreover, for the uniform first-order approximation of smooth functions by rational functions, we refer to recent advances in Holler & Morina (2025a). Further classical results on rational approximation theory can be found in Petrushev & Popov (1988).

To conclude, we briefly discuss some key approximation properties of the symbolic network (1) as studied in Holler & Morina (2025a). It is shown that functions possessing sufficient regularity can be uniformly approximated up to their first-order derivatives by rational functions, as introduced in Definition 1, with positive denominator polynomials. This result can be extended directly to $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma$, given its architecture, which incorporates a rational skip connection. Finally, we provide a restricted formulation of the results in (Holler & Morina, 2025a, Lemma 16, Corollary 18), which discusses universal approximation properties of the network in (1) in the case where the layers are of equal size.

Proposition 3. *Consider symbolic networks in* (1) *with* $d = n_i^r = n_i^\sigma$ *and Lipschitz continuous activations* $\sigma_i : \mathbb{R}^d \to \mathbb{R}^d$*, such that* $\sigma_i^{-1} \in \mathcal{C}^3([0,1]^d)$ *for* $1 \le i \le L$*. Then, for every* $f \in \mathcal{C}^3([0,1]^d)$ *there exists a sequence of networks* $(\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^m)_m$*, with*

$$\lim_{m\to\infty} \|\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^m - f\|_{L^\infty([0,1]^d)} = 0.$$

If $\nabla\sigma_i$ *is Lipschitz continuous for* $1 \le i \le L$*, then* $(\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^m)_m$ *can be chosen such that*

$$\lim_{m\to\infty} \|\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^m - f\|_{L^\infty([0,1]^d)} + \|\nabla\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^m - \nabla f\|_{L^\infty([0,1]^d)} = 0.$$

Proof. See (Holler & Morina, 2025a, Lemma 16, Corollary 18). □

2.4 Extension to function space

The data arising from physical problems, while often measured discretely, is inherently functional in nature, representing some observable state variable (e.g., temperature or concentration) and potentially its higher-order derivatives. This motivates studying symbolic networks $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma$ within a

function space formulation. Modeling the dynamics directly in function space preserves the inherent structure of the continuous problem and ensures consistency and stability prior to numerical discretization (see Hinze et al. (2009); Kaipio & Somersalo (2005); Stuart (2010)). To rigorously justify the application of symbolic networks to functional data, it is necessary to analyze the behavior of their architecture within the context of function space analysis.

2.4.1 Framework

We follow the setup of Holler & Morina (2024a) and consider for fixed $T > 0$ the state $u \in \mathcal{V}$ as $u : (0,T) \to V$ with $\mathcal{V}$ the dynamic extension of V, the static state space consisting of functions $v : \Omega \to \mathbb{R}$. Here, $\Omega \subset \mathbb{R}^d$ denotes a bounded Lipschitz domain for some $d \in \mathbb{R}$. For $\kappa \in \mathbb{N}_0$, the order of differentiation, $\mathcal{J}_\kappa$ is a derivative operator

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{J}_\kappa : V &\to \otimes_{k=0}^{\kappa} V_k^{\times} \\ v &\mapsto (v, J^1 v, \dots, J^\kappa v) \end{aligned} \tag{2}$$

and Jacobian mappings $J^k : V \to V_k^{\times}, v \mapsto (D^\beta v)_{|\beta|=k}$, for $1 \le k \le \kappa$. The spaces V_k are such that $V \hookrightarrow V_k$ and $D^\beta v \in V_k$ for $1 \le k = |\beta| = \beta_1 + \dots + \beta_d \le \kappa$ and $\beta \in \mathbb{N}_0^d$. With $V_0 := V$ the spaces $V_k^{\times}$ are further defined as $V_k^{\times} = \otimes_{i=1}^{p_k} V_k$, where $p_k = \binom{d+k-1}{k}$ for $0 \le k \le \kappa$. For W the static image space, with $\mathcal{W}$ its dynamic extension, some unknown physical law f is given as the Nemytskii operator of

$$f : \ (0,T) \times \otimes_{k=0}^{\kappa} V_k^{\times} \to W$$

where the latter is obtained by extending $f : (0,T) \times \otimes_{k=0}^{\kappa} \mathbb{R}^{p_k} \to \mathbb{R}$ via $f(t,v)(x) = f(t, v(x))$. In the setup discussed in Section 2, we aim to determine a symbolic expression for f using parameterized networks $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta$ of the form in (1). Since $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta$ operates pointwise in time and space, we require the operator $\mathcal{J}_\kappa$ for the parameterizations $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta$ to depend on derivatives of the state. In the following, we specify the framework outlined above on the basis of (Holler & Morina, 2024a, Subsection 2.1).

Assumption 4 (Space setup)**.** *Suppose that the spaces V_k, for $1 \le k \le \kappa$, the state space V, the image space W and the space $\tilde{V}$ are reflexive, separable Banach spaces. Assume for some $1 \le \hat{q} \le \hat{p} < \infty$ the embeddings*

$$V \hookrightarrow \tilde{V} \hookrightarrow W, \ V \hookrightarrow\!\!\!\!\rightarrow W^{\kappa,\hat{p}}(\Omega), \ V \hookrightarrow Y, \ L^{\hat{q}}(\Omega) \hookrightarrow W,$$

$$L^{\hat{p}}(\Omega) \hookrightarrow V_k \hookrightarrow L^{\hat{q}}(\Omega), \ \textit{for } 1 \le k \le \kappa, \ \textit{and either } W^{\kappa,\hat{p}}(\Omega) \hookrightarrow \tilde{V} \ \textit{or } \tilde{V} \hookrightarrow W^{\kappa,\hat{p}}(\Omega).$$

The dynamic spaces are defined as Sobolev-Bochner spaces (Roubíček, 2012, Chapter 7), by

$$\mathcal{V} = L^p(0,T;V) \cap W^{1,p,p}(0,T;\tilde{V}), \ \mathcal{W} = L^q(0,T;W), \ \mathcal{Y} = L^r(0,T;Y),$$

$$\mathcal{V}_0 = \mathcal{V}_0^{\times} := \mathcal{V}, \ \mathcal{V}_k = L^p(0,T;V_k), \ \mathcal{V}_k^{\times} = L^p(0,T;V_k^{\times}) \ \textit{for } 1 \le k \le \kappa$$

for some $1 \le p, q, r < \infty$ with $p \ge q$. Finally, for some constant $c_{\mathcal{V}} > 0$, for all $v \in \mathcal{V}$, we assume uniform state space regularity

$$\|\mathcal{J}_\kappa v\|_{L^\infty((0,T)\times\Omega)} \le c_{\mathcal{V}} \|v\|_{\mathcal{V}}. \tag{3}$$

Remark 5 (State space regularity)**.** *The required compact embedding $V \hookrightarrow\!\!\!\!\rightarrow W^{\kappa,\hat{p}}(\Omega)$ holds, e.g., for V being a Sobolev space with suitable parameters, such that the Rellich-Kondrachov Theorem (see (Adams & Fournier, 2003, Theorem 6.3) and (Evans, 2010, §5.7)) applies. The extended state space embedding behind* (3) *follows for $\tilde{V}$ being a sufficiently regular Sobolev space by (Roubíček, 2012, Lemma 7.1). We refer to (Holler & Morina, 2024a, Remark 9) for the details.*

2.4.2 Regularity

We justify that the parameterized symbolic networks $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta$, of the form as introduced in (1), can be extended to corresponding operators acting on underlying function spaces. Furthermore, we establish first regularity properties of these operators, formulated in function space. Note that these properties are necessary for (Holler & Morina, 2024a, Assumption 3) to hold true. To this end, we apply analogous arguments as in (Aarset et al., 2023, Lemma 4) for the extension to function space and (Holler & Morina, 2024a, Lemma 17) for the regularity result. The proof of the following statement is provided in Appendix A.

Proposition 6. *Suppose that Assumption 4 holds true. Then the symbolic network $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta : \mathbb{R}^{n_0^\sigma} \to \mathbb{R}$ induces well-defined Nemytskii operators $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta : \otimes_{k=0}^\kappa \mathcal{V}_k^\times \to L^q(0,T; L^{\hat{q}}(\Omega))$ and $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta : \otimes_{k=0}^\kappa \mathcal{V}_k^\times \to \mathcal{W}$, both via $[\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta(u)](t) = \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta(u(t,\cdot))$. Furthermore, if the $(\sigma_l)_{1\le l\le L}$ are locally Lipschitz continuous, then*

$$\begin{aligned} \mathfrak{S} : \Theta \times \mathcal{V} &\to \mathcal{W} \\ (\theta, v) &\mapsto \mathfrak{S}(\theta, v) =: \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta(\mathcal{J}_\kappa v) \end{aligned}$$

is weak-strong continuous. Moreover, for bounded $U \subset \mathbb{R}^{n_0^\sigma}$, the map given by

$$\Theta \ni \theta \to \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta \in L^\infty(U)$$

is continuous.

Proof. See Appendix A. □

3 Symbolic model learning

The central objective of this work is the identification of a (partially) unknown state $u^\dagger \in \mathcal{V}$ and a corresponding physical law $f^\dagger : \otimes_{k=0}^\kappa \mathcal{V}_k^\times \to \mathcal{W}$, ideally expressed in a symbolically simple form, that satisfies the partial differential equation

$$\begin{aligned} &\partial_t u(t,x) = f(t, \mathcal{J}_\kappa u(t,x)), \quad \text{for } (t,x) \in (0,T) \times \Omega, \\ &\text{s.t. } K^\dagger u = y^\dagger. \end{aligned} \tag{$\mathcal{E}$}$$

Here, $\mathcal{Y} \ni y^\dagger = K^\dagger u^\dagger$ denotes the full measurement data and $K^\dagger$ is the measurement operator mapping the state $u^\dagger$ to the observation $y^\dagger$. The measurement data y is modeled as $y : (0,T) \to Y$, with a static measurement space Y and time extension $\mathcal{Y}$. In practice, the data $y^\dagger$ is provided via approximate measurements $\mathcal{Y} \ni y^m \approx K^m u^\dagger$, where $K^m : \mathcal{V} \to \mathcal{Y}$, for $m \in \mathbb{N}$, are reduced measurement operators. The measurements are further assumed to satisfy the noise estimate

$$\|y^m - K^m u^\dagger\|_{\mathcal{Y}}^r \le \delta(m), \tag{4}$$

where $\delta : \mathbb{N} \to \mathbb{R}_{\ge 0}$ fulfills $\lim_{m\to\infty} \delta(m) = 0$. For the purpose of reconstruction, we approximate the physical law using symbolic networks $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta$, parameterized by $\theta \in \Theta$, as introduced in (1) in Section 2. In this work, we adopt the assumption that $f^\dagger \in \left\{\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta \mid \theta \in \Theta\right\}$ is representable by a fixed architecture and briefly discuss a more general setup in the context of Holler & Morina (2024a)

later. Motivated by Holler & Morina (2024a) and following an approach similar to that in Scholl et al. (2025), we aim to solve the reconstruction problem using the all-at-once formulation

$$\min_{u\in\mathcal{V},\theta\in\Theta} \lambda^m \|\partial_t u - \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta(\mathcal{J}_\kappa u)\|_{\mathcal{W}}^q + \mu^m \|K^m u - y^m\|_{\mathcal{Y}}^r + \mathcal{R}(u,\theta) \qquad (\mathcal{P}^m)$$

where $\lambda^m, \mu^m > 0$ for $m \in \mathbb{N}$, and $\mathcal{R}$ denotes a suitable regularization functional. Next, we provide a more detailed discussion of the underlying framework.

3.1 Framework

In addition to Assumption 4, we pose the following assumptions on the data acquisition, the existence of an admissible solution to $(\mathcal{E})$, and the regularization.

Assumption 7.

Measurements. Let the full measurement operator $K^\dagger$ be injective and weak-strong continuous. Suppose further that the operators $K^m : \mathcal{V} \to \mathcal{Y}$ are weak-weak continuous, for $m \in \mathbb{N}$, and that for any weakly convergent sequence $(u^m)_m \subset \mathcal{V}$

$$K^m u^m - K^\dagger u^m \to 0 \quad \text{in } \mathcal{Y} \quad \text{as } m \to \infty. \tag{5}$$

Admissible solution. Assume that for the given full measurement data $y^\dagger \in \mathcal{Y}$, there exists $f^\dagger : \otimes_{k=0}^\kappa \mathcal{V}_k^\times \to \mathcal{W}$, to be understood as the space-time extension of an underlying scalar version $f^\dagger : (0,T) \times \otimes_{k=0}^\kappa \mathbb{R}^{p_k} \to \mathbb{R}$, and $u^\dagger \in \mathcal{V}$ fulfilling $(\mathcal{E})$.

Regularization. Suppose that the regularization functional $\mathcal{R}$ is of the form

$$\mathcal{R} : \mathcal{V} \times \Theta \to [0,\infty], \quad \mathcal{R}(u,\theta) = \|u\|_{\mathcal{V}}^p + \mathcal{R}_0(\theta),$$

for $\mathcal{R}_0 : \Theta \to [0,\infty]$ a proper, coercive and weakly lower semicontinuous functional.

Remark 8 (Approximation of $K^\dagger$)**.** *The abstract notion of convergence in* (5) *encompasses a broad range of scenarios. It is applicable to sequences of bounded linear operators $(K^m)_m$ that converge to $K^\dagger$ in the operator norm. In case of nonlinear operators, this concept can be extended to sequences $(K^m)_m$ that converge uniformly to $K^\dagger$ on bounded subsets of $\mathcal{V}$, using boundedness of weakly convergent sequences. Notably, there exist specific examples, such as the sampling operators introduced in Subsection 4.1, where the general condition* (5) *is satisfied, as shown in Appendix C, while the stricter conditions mentioned above fail to hold.*

Remark 9 (Choice of $\mathcal{R}_0$)**.** *A sensible choice for $\mathcal{R}_0$ is the L^1-norm, as it promotes sparsity of the parameters governing f_θ. This, in turn, leads to a more concise and interpretable symbolic representation of the reconstructed physical law (see, e.g., Scholl et al. (2025)). Accordingly, in the experiments in Section 4, we adopt $\mathcal{R}_0(\cdot) = \|\cdot\|_{L^1}$.*

Remark 10 (Uniqueness of admissible solution)**.** *The uniqueness of $u^\dagger \in \mathcal{V}$ satisfying $K^\dagger u^\dagger = y^\dagger$ is guaranteed by the injectivity of $K^\dagger$. Conditions ensuring the uniqueness of the physical law $f^\dagger$ have been comprehensively analyzed in Scholl et al. (2023a).*

Remark 11 (Regularity of admissible solution)**.** *Ensuring the existence of an admissible solution to $(\mathcal{E})$ with state regularity $\mathcal{V}$, as required by Assumption 7, may in practice be difficult, given the*

regularity typically provided by the underlying equation. For instance, in the case of the transport equation, this issue is discussed after (Holler & Morina, 2024a, Proposition 1). Nevertheless, it is important to observe that this requirement is implicitly an assumption on the model f, since the regularity of the state is generally inherited from the regularity of the model itself. A comprehensive discussion of these regularity assumptions, together with further related considerations, can be found in (Holler & Morina, 2024a, Subsection 2.1).

As a first step toward establishing the reconstructibility of a solution to $(\mathcal{E})$ via solutions to $(\mathcal{P}^m)$, we argue well-posedness of $(\mathcal{P}^m)$ under Assumption 4 and 7.

Lemma 12. *Under Assumption 4 and 7 problem $(\mathcal{P}^m)$ is well-posed for $m \in \mathbb{N}$.*

Proof. See Appendix B for the details. □

3.2 Identification results

In the following, we examine the problem of physical law learning, where an admissible state $u^\dagger$ and physical law $f^\dagger$ are reconstructed by u^m and $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^m}$ for $m \in \mathbb{N}$, respectively, obtained from (u^m, θ^m) solving $(\mathcal{P}^m)$. The analysis focuses on the setup where $f^\dagger$ can be represented within a predefined architecture parameterized by a set Θ. This approach relies on the assumption that $f^\dagger$ admits a concise and interpretable symbolic representation and presumes that the chosen architecture, designed by the user (e.g., ParFam from Scholl et al. (2025)), is sufficiently expressive to capture such representations. We state our main result:

Theorem 13. *Let Assumption 4 and 7 hold true and suppose that there exists*

$$f^\dagger \in \left\{ \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta \mid \theta \in \Theta \right\},$$

admissible to $(\mathcal{E})$. Let (u^m, θ^m) solve $(\mathcal{P}^m)$ for $m \in \mathbb{N}$ and $\lambda^m, \mu^m > 0$ such that

$$\lambda^m \to \infty \quad \text{and} \quad \mu^m \to \infty \quad \text{with} \quad \mu^m \delta(m) \to 0 \quad \text{as} \quad m \to \infty.$$

Then there exists a subsequence $(\theta^{m_l})_l$ converging to some $\tilde{\theta} \in \Theta$ such that

$$\partial_t u^\dagger = \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\tilde{\theta}}(\mathcal{J}_\kappa u^\dagger) \quad \text{and} \quad \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^{m_l}} \to \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\tilde{\theta}} \text{ in } L^\infty_{loc}(\mathbb{R}^{n_0^\sigma}) \text{ as } l \to \infty. \tag{6}$$

This holds for any convergent subsequence. In addition also $u^m \rightharpoonup u^\dagger$ as $m \to \infty$.

Moreover, the tuple $(u^\dagger, \tilde{\theta})$ is a regularization minimizing solution, i.e., for all $(u^\dagger, \theta^\dagger)$ solving $\partial_t u^\dagger = \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^\dagger}(\mathcal{J}_\kappa u^\dagger)$ it holds true that $\mathcal{R}(u^\dagger, \tilde{\theta}) \leq \mathcal{R}(u^\dagger, \theta^\dagger)$.

Proof. See Appendix B for the details. □

The concluding assertion of Theorem 13 is particularly interesting from a practical standpoint. Regularization of the parameter θ in the L^1-norm promotes the reconstruction of a sparse parameterization of $f^\dagger$ through the solution of $(\mathcal{P}^m)$. This parameterization can be understood as a concise symbolic expression of the underlying physical law, offering enhanced interpretability. Another important observation is that if an appropriate identifiability condition, as established in Scholl et al. (2023a), holds, a stronger result can be obtained. Specifically, Scholl et al. (2023a) demonstrates

that the unique identifiability of a linear/algebraic function f based on full state measurements is equivalent to the linear/algebraic independence of the state variables (e.g., derivatives up to order κ) on which f acts. Here, we state the *identifiability condition* under consideration in a general formulation as follows:

$$\text{For} \quad f_1, f_2 : \otimes_{k=0}^{\kappa} \mathcal{V}_k^{\times} \to \mathcal{W} \quad \text{with} \quad f_1(\mathcal{J}_\kappa u^\dagger) = f_2(\mathcal{J}_\kappa u^\dagger) \quad \Rightarrow \quad f_1 = f_2 \qquad (\mathcal{I})$$

Assuming condition $(\mathcal{I})$, the convergence in (6) holds for the entire sequence $(\theta^m)_m$.

Corollary 14. *Let the assumptions of Theorem 13 and $(\mathcal{I})$ apply. Then*

$$\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^m} \to \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^\dagger} = f^\dagger \quad \text{in } L^\infty_{loc}(\mathbb{R}^{n_0^\sigma}) \text{ as } m \to \infty.$$

Proof. See Appendix B for the details. □

The results of Theorem 13 and Corollary 14 can be directly extended to more general setups. One such generalization considers the case where, instead of a fixed architecture $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta$ for $\theta \in \Theta$, we consider growing architectures $\mathfrak{S}_{\sigma^m}^{\theta,m}$ for $\theta \in \Theta^m$ such that $f^\dagger$ is only representable by some $\mathfrak{S}_{\sigma^m}^{\theta,m}$ for sufficiently large $m \in \mathbb{N}$.

Another scenario is the case where admissible physical laws $f^\dagger$ are not representable by any finite-dimensional architecture, regardless of size. This occurs when $f^\dagger$ is not expressible in a symbolically concise form (e.g., the Gaussian error function) or when the architecture is not designed in a suitable way, e.g., a purely rational network. Such networks essentially represent rational functions and inherently fail to express base functions such as the exponential. From a practical perspective, along with theoretical results on the approximation properties of symbolic networks Holler & Morina (2025a), it is natural to approximate $f^\dagger$ using growing architectures in the limit as regularization-minimizing solution. This approach aligns with Holler & Morina (2024a), which study unique reconstructibility in this generalized setting. However, two technical challenges associated with these reconstructions require careful consideration (see (Holler & Morina, 2024a, Assumption 2-5)), namely i) the weak lower semicontinuity of the $\mathcal{C}^1(U)$-seminorm of $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta$ for bounded $U \subseteq \mathbb{R}^{n_0^\sigma}$ with respect to the parameterization $\theta \in \Theta$ and ii) an approximation capacity condition as in (Holler & Morina, 2024a, Assumption 5 iii)). We believe that i) can be similarly obtained following the arguments proving Proposition 6 under additional notational technicalities. For ii), the underlying approximation (rate) follows for symbolic networks from the considerations in Holler & Morina (2025a) on first order approximation results in case the target function is sufficiently regular. Although the growth of the parameters that realize the approximating networks, as considered in the work Holler & Morina (2024b), is not addressed there, we believe that this can also be achieved with technical effort.

Once a regularization-minimizing solution $\tilde{f}$ has been reconstructed, a practical strategy to refine its representation involves identifying a suitable parameterization $f_{\tilde{\theta}} \approx \tilde{f}$. This can be accomplished using a fixed, expressive symbolic network and applying L^1-regularization to $\tilde{\theta}$, promoting sparsity in the symbolic representation.

4 Numerical experiments

In this section, we present a numerical setup to illustrate the analytical identification results established in Section 3. Specifically, we aim to evaluate whether the results predicted by Theorem 13 and Corollary 14 can be observed in practice. To achieve this, we focus on the identification of unknown physical laws f and states u using one-dimensional PDEs of the form

$$\partial_t u = f(t, u, \partial_x u),$$

where f depends on the state u and its first spatial derivative $\partial_x u$. This simplified framework allows us to test the validity and practical applicability of the theoretical results within a controlled computational environment. All numerical experiments of this work can be reproduced based on the publicly available source code[2].

4.1 Implementation framework

To numerically evaluate the identification results, we outline a framework consisting of two components. The analytic setup specifies the theoretical conditions, while the implementation setup outlines the computational and numerical details.

4.1.1 Analysis setup

In view of Assumption 4, we adopt a Hilbert space framework with parameters $p = q = \hat{p} = \hat{q} = r = 2$, domain $\Omega = [0, 4]$, time $T = 3$, state space $V = H^2(\Omega)$, image space $W = L^2(\Omega)$, measurement space $Y = L^2(\Omega)$ and the corresponding dynamic spaces as defined in Assumption 4. The state space V is assumed to have higher regularity to ensure a compact embedding into $H^1(\Omega)$, which is crucial, since the unknown physical law depends on up to $\kappa = 1$ spatial derivatives of state u (compare with Remark 11). Similarly, the space $\tilde{V}$ requires additional regularity to guarantee condition (3), as ensured by (Holler & Morina, 2024a, Remark 9) for $\tilde{V} = H^2(\Omega)$. We further choose the full measurement operator $K^\dagger$ as the embedding operator $\iota : \mathcal{V} \to \mathcal{Y}$, i.e., $K^\dagger u = \iota u$. This operator is injective and weak-strong continuous, due to the compact embedding $\mathcal{V} \hookrightarrow\!\!\!\!\rightarrow \mathcal{Y}$, as guaranteed by the Aubin-Lions Lemma (Roubíček, 2012, Lemma 7.7). Specifically, with $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ denoting the inner product in $L^2(\Omega)$ and an orthonormal system $(e_i)_{i\in\mathbb{N}}$ of $L^2(\Omega)$ (e.g., for $\Omega = [0, 1]$, $\Omega \ni x \mapsto e_i(x) = \cos(i\pi x) \in L^2(\Omega)$), we can express $K^\dagger$ by

$$K^\dagger : \mathcal{V} \to \mathcal{Y}, \quad [K^\dagger u](t) = \sum_{i\in\mathbb{N}} \langle e_i, u(t)\rangle e_i$$

for $u \in \mathcal{V}$ and $t \in [0, T]$. The reduced measurement operators, corresponding to low-frequency sampling operators (or truncated Fourier measurement operators), are given as follows. Let $0 = t_1 < t_2 < \cdots < t_m < t_{m+1} = T$ be the m-equidistant grid on $[0, T]$ for $m \in [0, T]$ and $\Delta_m := T/m$. Then, for $1 \le j \le m - 1$ and $t \in [t_j, t_{j+1})$ or $j = m$ and $t \in [t_m, t_{m+1}]$, we define K^m for $m \in \mathbb{N}$ by

$$K^m : \mathcal{V} \to \mathcal{Y}, \quad [K^m u](t) = \sum_{i=1}^{m} \left(\Delta_m^{-1} \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \langle e_i, u(s)\rangle \, \mathrm{d}s \right) e_i \tag{7}$$

[2]See `https://anonymous.4open.science/r/unique_sym_anon-3CDD/README.md`.

for $u \in \mathcal{V}$. Note that the operator K^m performs time averaging over the respective time intervals. The well-definedness of $K^\dagger$ and K^m for $m \in \mathbb{N}$, along with the convergence condition (5) in Assumption 7, are discussed in detail in Appendix C.

4.1.2 Simulation setup

We now detail the concrete choices made for the quantities appearing in Theorem 13. Since letting $m \to \infty$ is infeasible in practice, we fix a even maximal value $M \in \mathbb{N}$ and consider measurements for $m = M/2, \dots, M-1$. Guided by the preceding analysis, we apply a low-pass filtering strategy by defining K^m to retain the lowest m/M fraction of frequency components. Throughout all experiments we set $q = r = 2$ and use the parameter choices

$$\lambda^m = \frac{m^3}{M}, \qquad \mu^m = \frac{m}{M}, \qquad \delta^m = 0.1\,\frac{M}{m^3}. \tag{8}$$

Measurement noise is simulated by multiplicative noise according to

$$y^m = K^m(u^\dagger) \cdot \epsilon^{\delta^m}, \tag{9}$$

with uniform perturbations $\epsilon \sim \mathrm{Unif}(0.5, 1.5)$. As δ^m decreases with m, the factor ϵ^{δ^m} approaches 1 for large m, producing weaker distortion. We employ multiplicative noise to reflect the wide dynamic range of the solution function, ensuring that small values are perturbed less strongly than large ones.

Following Theorem 13, we model f_θ using ParFam Scholl et al. (2025) and represent u as function evaluations on a discretized grid. The ParFam architecture, introduced in Equation (1), adopts the practical design of Scholl et al. (2025), who observed that a single hidden layer ($L = 1$) is sufficient for expressive modeling while simplifying optimization. We select numerator polynomials of degree 3, denominator polynomials of degree 2, and sine and exponential activation functions. ParFam permits custom loss functions, which we specify using the objective of $(\mathcal{P}^m)$. Parameter optimization is performed using basin-hopping Wales & Doye (1997) combined with BFGS, both run for 100 iterations with default settings otherwise.

To approximately solve the minimization problem $(\mathcal{P}^m)$, we employ an alternating optimization scheme. Specifically, we iteratively optimize with respect to θ, keeping u fixed, and then optimize with respect to u while fixing θ. The parameter θ is updated using the ParFam procedure described above, while u is trained using ADAM Kingma & Ba (2015) with a learning rate of 0.0004, up to 300 epochs, with early stopping. This alternating optimization scheme is repeated for 100 full cycles.

4.2 Numerical results

In this subsection, we present results on two different PDEs, selected from the numerical section in (Scholl et al., 2023a, Subsection 5.1).

4.2.1 Uniquely identifiable PDE

First, we focus on an uniquely identifiable PDE, specifically the equation

$$u_t = au + bu_x,$$

which attains the analytical solution $u^\dagger(t,x) = (x + bt)\exp(at)$. We set $a = 1$ and $b = 2$, and sample u on an equidistant grid over the domain $[0,3] \times [0,4]$, with 100 grid points along spatial x-direction and 80 along temporal t-direction. In Figure 2 (a), we report the results for $M = 100$ and $m = 50, \dots, 99$. To assess the statements from Theorem 13, we present the L^2-distance between $f_{\theta^m}(u^\dagger, u^\dagger_x)$ and $u^\dagger_t$, as well as between the learned solution u^m and the ground-truth $u^\dagger$. These results clearly demonstrate the convergence predicted by Theorem 13. Furthermore, since the PDE is uniquely identifiable, Corollary 14 implies that f_{θ^m} converges to $f^\dagger$ where $f^\dagger(v,w) = v + 2w$. This is supported by the learned approximation:

$$f_{\theta^m}(u, u_x) = 1.006u - 0.005u_x^2 + 2.116u_x - 0.535,$$

for $m = 100$, which closely matches the true operator. Note that in Figure 2 (a) the deviation of f_{θ^m} from $f^\dagger$ is considered on the domain U_0 depicted in Figure 2 (c) (the range of $(u^\dagger, u^\dagger_x)$ corresponds to U). In Figure 2 (c) this deviation is shown for different choices of the underlying domain.

4.2.2 Not uniquely identifiable PDE

As a second example, we consider the function $u(t,x) = \exp(x - at)$, which solves for any choice of coefficients $a_1, a_2 \in \mathbb{R}$, satisfying $a_1 + a_2 = -a$, the equation

$$u_t = a_1 u + a_2 u_x.$$

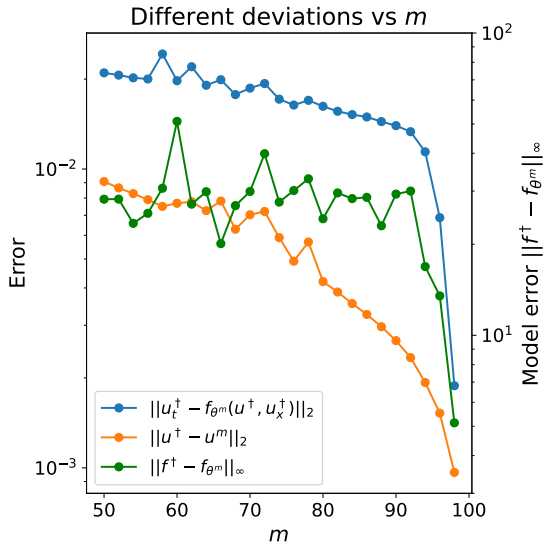
We set $a = 1$ and sample u on an equidistant grid over the domain $[0,3] \times [0,4]$, with 100 grid points along x-direction and 80 grid points along t-direction. In Figure 2 (b), we report the results for $M = 100$ and $m = 50, \dots, 99$. To assess the statements from Theorem 13, we present the L^2-distance between $f_{\theta^m}(u^\dagger, u^\dagger_x)$ and $u^\dagger_t$, as well as between the learned solution u^m and the ground-truth $u^\dagger$. These results clearly demonstrate the convergence predicted by Theorem 13.

Since $u^\dagger$ does not solve a unique PDE, we cannot employ Corollary 14. Nevertheless, the result in Theorem 13 guarantees that the learned parameters θ^m converge to a L^1-minimizing parameterization of the underlying PDE model f_{θ^m} which is solved by $u^\dagger$. This is supported by the learned approximation for $m = 100$:

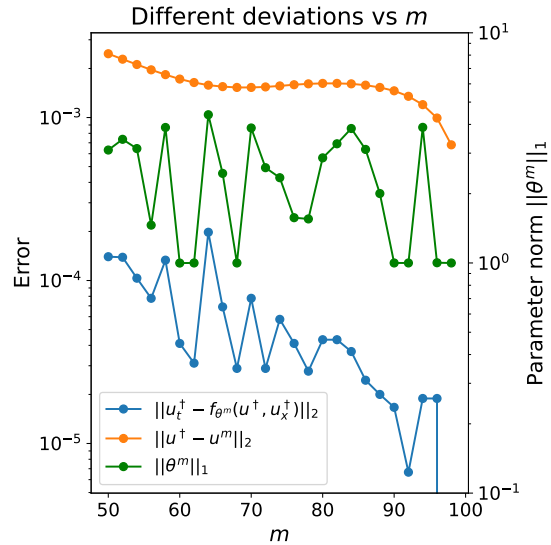
$$f_{\theta^m}(u, u_x) = -0.982u - 0.016u_x.$$

5 Conclusions

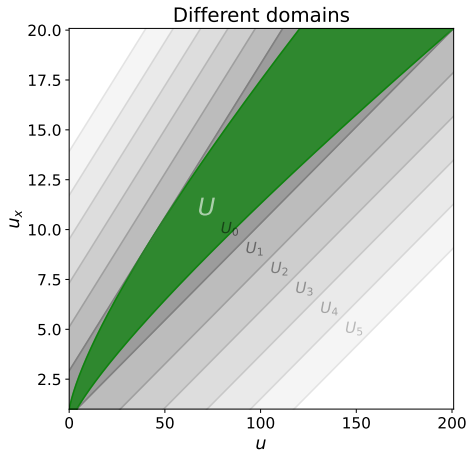
This work focused on investigating the identifiability of symbolic (human interpretable) expressions for unknown physical laws corresponding to the right-hand side of a PDE model, as well as reconstructing the unknown state based on noisy and incomplete measurements. We proposed an all-at-once minimization formulation in function space and introduced symbolic networks for approximating the physical law. These networks leverage rational functions as transformations and base functions as activations, harnessing both the approximation capabilities of rational functions and their inherent flexibility to represent arithmetic formulas. In addition to reconstructibility results, another key contribution of our work are certain regularity properties of symbolic networks in function space. Our main result addresses the framework where the physical law can be represented by a specific symbolic network architecture. We show in the limit of complete measurements:

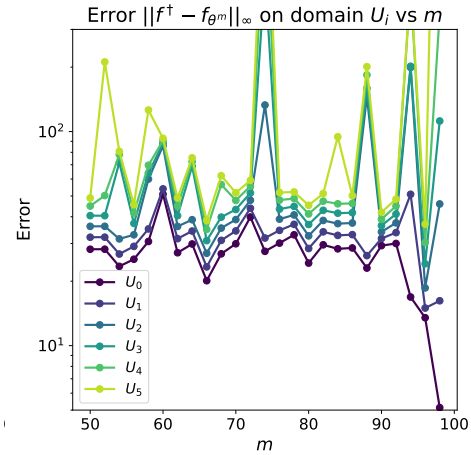


(a) Deviations for uniquely identifiable PDE.



(b) Deviations for not uniquely identifiable PDE.





(c) Model error for different domains for the uniquely identifiable PDE.

Figure 2: Numerical performance.

1) **State reconstruction:** The state is reconstructed, and the sequence of symbolic networks converges to an admissible physical law of the PDE model.

2) **Symbolic network representation:** The limit of these networks remains expressible within the underlying symbolic network architecture, and its parameterization is regularization minimizing. Notably, if the regularization functional is designed to promote sparsification, the proposed approach reconstructs preferentially a simple admissible expression of the physical law.

3) **Unique identifiability:** When the underlying physical law is uniquely identifiable, subject to appropriate conditions, the reconstructed symbolic network in the limit aligns exactly with the unique true physical law.

These theoretical results were supported by first numerical experiments, which provide further confidence in the validity and practicality of the proposed approach.

The theoretical and numerical results of our work pave the way for addressing deeper challenges in both symbolic representation and reconstruction of physical laws in PDE models. A promising research direction is to also investigate the case where the physical law cannot be represented within the symbolic network architecture. Even though we briefly outlined an idea for addressing this case, we expect the underlying problem to be significantly more complex. Also interesting are convergence rates and statistical aspects, which we have not considered in this work. Investigating broader designs for symbolic networks could further enrich their applicability. Examples include allowing rational functions with poles or introducing more general base activation functions. From a practical point of view, it is interesting to extend and deepen the numerical experiments to more general classes of PDEs, which of course depends heavily on the problem at hand.

A Regularity of symbolic networks

In this section, we provide the proof of the extendability and regularity result stated in Proposition 6 from Subsection 2.4. We first establish the extension property of symbolic networks to function spaces, following (Aarset et al., 2023, Lemma 4).

Lemma 15. *Suppose that Assumption 4 holds true. Then the symbolic network* $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta : \mathbb{R}^{n_0^\sigma} \to \mathbb{R}$ *induces well-defined Nemytskii operators* $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta : \otimes_{k=0}^\kappa \mathcal{V}_k^\times \to L^q(0,T;L^{\hat{q}}(\Omega))$ *and* $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta : \otimes_{k=0}^\kappa \mathcal{V}_k^\times \to \mathcal{W}$*, both via* $[\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta(u)](t) = \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta(u(t,\cdot))$*.*

Proof. For fixed $\theta \in \Theta$ we derive continuity of $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta$ by continuity of the base functions σ_i for $1 \le i \le L$ (see Definition 1) and continuity of the parameterized rational functions r_i for $1 \le i \le L+1$. As a consequence, for $u \in \mathcal{V}$ implying $\mathcal{J}_\kappa u \in L^\infty((0,T)\times\Omega)$ by (3), we obtain that

$$\sup_{0\le t\le T, x\in\Omega} |\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta(t, \mathcal{J}_\kappa u(t,x))| < \infty \tag{10}$$

and hence, the inclusion $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta(t, \mathcal{J}_\kappa u(t,\cdot)) \in L^{\hat{q}}(\Omega)$ (which is separable) for a.e. $t \in (0,T)$. Now the map $t \mapsto \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta(t, \mathcal{J}_\kappa u(t,\cdot))$ is weakly measurable, which is Lebesgue measurability of $t \mapsto \int_\Omega \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta(t, \mathcal{J}_\kappa u(t,x)) w(x)\,\mathrm{d}x$ for all $w \in L^{\hat{q}^*}(\Omega)$. This follows from continuity of $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta$,

Lebesgue measurability of $w, \mathcal{J}_\kappa u(t,\cdot)$ and due to preservation of measurability under integration. Using Pettis theorem (Roubíček, 2012, Theorem 1.34) we obtain Bochner measurability of $t \mapsto \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta(t, \mathcal{J}_\kappa u(t,\cdot)) \in L^{\hat{q}}(\Omega)$ and with (10) well-definedness of the Nemytskii operator $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta : \otimes_{k=0}^\kappa \mathcal{V}_k^\times \to L^q(0,T; L^{\hat{q}}(\Omega))$. The remaining assertion follows immediately by $p \geq q$ and $L^{\hat{q}}(\Omega) \hookrightarrow W$. □

We now turn to the regularity of symbolic networks in function space.

Rational functions. For that, we first require the following auxiliary continuity property of rational functions with respect to their parameterization.

Lemma 16. *Let $d, n \in \mathbb{N}$ and $U \subset \mathbb{R}^{\binom{n+d}{d}}$ be bounded, then the map*

$$\mathbb{R}^{\binom{n+d}{d}} \times Q(d,n) \ni (a,b) \mapsto \frac{\sum_{0\leq k_1+\cdots+k_n\leq d} a_{k_1,\ldots,k_n} \prod_{l=1}^n x_l^{k_l}}{\sum_{0\leq k_1+\cdots+k_n\leq d} b_{k_1,\ldots,k_n} \prod_{l=1}^n x_l^{k_l}} \in \mathcal{C}^1(U)$$

is strong-strong continuous, with the set $Q(d,n)$ given as in Definition 2.

Proof. Let $(a^m, b^m)_{m\in\mathbb{N}} \subset \mathbb{R}^{\binom{n+d}{d}} \times Q(d,n)$ and $(a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^{\binom{n+d}{d}} \times Q(d,n)$ such that $(a^m, b^m) \to (a,b)$ as $m \to \infty$. Denote

$$P^m(x) = \sum_{0\leq k_1+\cdots+k_n\leq d} a^m_{k_1,\ldots,k_n} \prod_{l=1}^n x_l^{k_l} \quad \text{and} \quad Q^m(x) = \sum_{0\leq k_1+\cdots+k_n\leq d} b^m_{k_1,\ldots,k_n} \prod_{l=1}^n x_l^{k_l}.$$

Similarly, denote by P, Q the polynomials resulting from the coefficients a and b, respectively. We aim to show

$$\left\| \frac{P}{Q} - \frac{P^m}{Q^m} \right\|_{\mathcal{C}^1(U)} \to 0 \text{ as } m \to \infty. \tag{11}$$

For that, first note that

$$\left\| \frac{P}{Q} - \frac{P^m}{Q^m} \right\|_{L^\infty(U)} \leq \left\| \frac{1}{Q} \right\|_{L^\infty(U)} \left\| \frac{1}{Q^m} \right\|_{L^\infty(U)} \|PQ^m - P^m Q\|_{L^\infty(U)}. \tag{12}$$

By definition of $Q(d,n)$ (see Definition 2) there exists $\epsilon > 0$ with $Q(x) > \epsilon$ for all $x \in \mathbb{R}^n$. Thus, it holds true that $\|Q^{-1}\|_{L^\infty(U)} \leq 1/\epsilon$. Denote by $M = \max(|x_i| : x \in U, 1 \leq i \leq n) < \infty$. Since $b^m \to b$ as $m \to \infty$, we derive for $x \in U$

$$|Q^m(x) - Q(x)| \leq \sum_{0\leq k_1+\cdots+k_n\leq d} |b^m_{k_1,\ldots,k_n} - b_{k_1,\ldots,k_n}| M^{k_1+\cdots+k_n} \leq C|b^m - b|$$

for some $C > 0$ independent of $m \in \mathbb{N}$. Since this estimation is independent of $x \in U$ we infer that $\|Q^m - Q\|_{L^\infty(U)} \to 0$ as $m \to \infty$. Similarly one can show that $P^m \to P$ in $L^\infty(U)$ as $m \to \infty$. As a consequence, it holds true, using $Q > \epsilon$, for sufficiently large $m \in \mathbb{N}$ with $\|Q^m - Q\|_{L^\infty(U)} \leq \epsilon/2$, that

$$\left\| \frac{1}{Q^m} \right\|_{L^\infty(U)} \leq \left\| \frac{1}{Q - \|Q^m - Q\|_{L^\infty(U)}} \right\|_{L^\infty(U)} < \frac{2}{\epsilon}. \tag{13}$$

Using (13) and that

$$\|PQ^m - P^mQ\|_{L^\infty(U)} \leq \|P\|_{L^\infty(U)}\|Q^m - Q\|_{L^\infty(U)} + \|Q\|_{L^\infty(U)}\|P^m - P\|_{L^\infty(U)} \underset{m\to\infty}{\to} 0$$

by the previously discussed convergence of the polynomials P^m to P and Q^m to Q, respectively, implies that the the term on the left hand side of (12) converges to 0 as $m \to \infty$. It remains to show that

$$\left\|\nabla\left(\frac{P}{Q} - \frac{P^m}{Q^m}\right)\right\|_{L^\infty(U)} \to 0 \text{ as } m \to \infty.$$

Due to $\nabla(P/Q) = (Q\nabla P - P\nabla Q)/Q^2$ and similarly for $\nabla(P^m/Q^m)$ we obtain

$$\begin{aligned}\left\|\nabla\left(\frac{P}{Q} - \frac{P^m}{Q^m}\right)\right\|_{L^\infty(U)} \leq &\left\|\frac{(Q\nabla P - P\nabla Q) - (Q^m\nabla P^m - P^m\nabla Q^m)}{Q^2}\right\|_{L^\infty(U)} \\ &+ \left\|(Q^m\nabla P^m - P^m\nabla Q^m)\left(\frac{1}{Q^2} - \frac{1}{(Q^m)^2}\right)\right\|_{L^\infty(U)}. \quad (14)\end{aligned}$$

We show that both terms converge to zero as $m \to \infty$. As $\|Q^{-2}\|_{L^\infty(U)} \leq \epsilon^{-2}$ for the first term, it suffices to show that $Q^m\nabla P^m \to Q\nabla P$ in $L^\infty(U)$ as $m \to \infty$. The convergence $P^m\nabla Q^m \to P\nabla Q$ in $L^\infty(U)$ as $m \to \infty$ follows by a symmetrical argument. By a similar argument as previously, one can show that $\nabla P^m \to \nabla P$ in $L^\infty(U)$ as $m \to \infty$. Together with $Q^m \to Q$ in $L^\infty(U)$ as $m \to \infty$, convergence of the first term on the right hand side of (14) to zero follows. For the second term note that $\|Q^m\nabla P^m - P^m\nabla Q^m\|_{L^\infty(U)} \leq \|Q\nabla P - P\nabla Q\|_{L^\infty(U)} + 1$ for sufficiently large $m \in \mathbb{N}$. By (13) for sufficiently large m with $\|Q^m - Q\|_{L^\infty(U)} \leq 1$ we have

$$\|Q^{-2} - (Q^m)^{-2}\|_{L^\infty(U)} \leq \frac{4}{\epsilon^4}(2\|Q\|_{L^\infty(U)} + 1)\|Q^m - Q\|_{L^\infty(U)},$$

which converges to zero as $m \to \infty$, proving convergence of (14) to zero and finally, the claim in (11). This concludes the assertions of the lemma. □

Symbolic Networks. We address the regularity statements in Proposition 6 following a similar strategy as in the proof of (Holler & Morina, 2024a, Lemma 17) based on Lemma 16.

Lemma 17 (Weak-strong continuity of $\mathfrak{S}$)**.** *Suppose that Assumption 4 holds true and that the base functions $(\sigma_i)_{1\leq i\leq L}$ are locally Lipschitz continuous, then*

$$\begin{aligned}\mathfrak{S} : \Theta \times \mathcal{V} &\to \mathcal{W} \\ (\theta, v) &\mapsto \mathfrak{S}(\theta, v) =: \mathfrak{S}^\theta_\sigma(\mathcal{J}_\kappa v)\end{aligned}$$

is weak-strong continuous.

Proof. We follow a similar strategy as in the proof of (Holler & Morina, 2024a, Lemma 17). Let $(\theta^m, u^m) \rightharpoonup (\theta, u) \in \Theta\times\mathcal{V}$ weakly as $m \to \infty$. We prove that $\mathfrak{S}(\theta^m, u^m) \to \mathfrak{S}(\theta, u)$ in $\mathcal{W}$ as $m \to \infty$. Since Θ is finite dimensional, the convergence of the parameters $(\theta^m)_m$ holds in the strong sense. The weak convergence of $(u^m)_m$ in $\mathcal{V}$ implies strong convergence in $L^p(0, T; W^{\kappa,\hat{p}}(\Omega))$, which can be seen as follows. In case $W^{\kappa,\hat{p}}(\Omega) \hookrightarrow \tilde{V}$ the Aubin-Lions Lemma (Roubíček, 2012, Lemma 7.7) implies

$$\mathcal{V} = L^p(0, T; V) \cap W^{1,p,p}(0, T; \tilde{V}) \hookrightarrow\!\!\!\!\rightarrow L^p(0, T; W^{\kappa,\hat{p}}(\Omega)).$$

Otherwise for $\tilde{V} \hookrightarrow W^{\kappa,\hat{p}}(\Omega)$ above embedding follows again by the Aubin-Lions lemma, since in this case $\mathcal{V} \subseteq L^p(0,T;V) \cap W^{1,p,p}(0,T;W^{\kappa,\hat{p}}(\Omega))$. With this, applying (Holler & Morina, 2024a, Lemma 31) we derive that $\mathcal{J}_\kappa u^m \to \mathcal{J}_\kappa u$ strongly in $\otimes_{k=0}^{\kappa} L^p(0,T;L^{\hat{p}}(\Omega)^{p_k})$ as $m \to \infty$. Another important conclusion that can be drawn from the weak convergence of $(u^m)_m$ in $\mathcal{V}$ is boundedness of $(\mathcal{J}_\kappa u^m)_m$ due to (3). Thus, there exists an origin-centered ball $\mathcal{B}_{M_0}(0) \subseteq \mathbb{R}^{1+\sum_{k=0}^{\kappa} p_k}$ of radius $M_0 > 0$ such that $(t, \mathcal{J}_\kappa u^m(t,x)) \in U$ for a.e. $(t,x) \in (0,T) \times \Omega$ for all $m \in \mathbb{N}$. In the following we denote by $z = \mathcal{J}_\kappa u, z^m = \mathcal{J}_\kappa u^m \in \otimes_{k=0}^{\kappa} L^p(0,T;L^{\hat{p}}(\Omega)^{p_k})$ for $m \in \mathbb{N}$ and show first

$$\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^m}(z^m) \to \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta}(z) \quad \text{in } L^q(0,T;L^{\hat{q}}(\Omega)) \quad \text{as } m \to \infty. \tag{15}$$

Omitting the notational dependence of $z, (z^m)_m$ on time and space we estimate for a.e. $(t,x) \in (0,T) \times \Omega$ pointwise

$$|\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^m}(t,z^m) - \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta}(t,z)| \leq \underbrace{|\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^m}(t,z^m) - \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^m}(t,z)|}_{\text{(I)}} + \underbrace{|\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^m}(t,z) - \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta}(t,z)|}_{\text{(II)}}. \tag{16}$$

Estimation of (I). We recall that for θ^m parameterizing the rational functions r_i^m (and θ parameterizing r_i) for $1 \leq i \leq L+1$ we have for $(t,y) \in \mathbb{R}^{1+\sum_{k=0}^{\kappa} p_k} = \mathbb{R}^{n_0^\sigma}$

$$\begin{aligned} \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^m} &: \mathbb{R}^{n_0^\sigma} \to \mathbb{R} \\ &(t,y) \mapsto r_{L+1}^m((\sigma_L \circ r_L^m \circ \cdots \circ \sigma_1 \circ r_1^m)(t,y),(t,y)). \end{aligned}$$

For $1 \leq i \leq L$ we define iteratively origin-centered balls $\mathcal{B}_{M_i}(0) \subseteq \mathbb{R}^{n_i^\sigma}$ as follows. We fix $\epsilon > 0$. As the rational function r_i is continuous, the image $r_i(\mathcal{B}_{M_{i-1}}(0))$ is bounded and included in $\mathcal{B}_{\tilde{M}_i}(0) \subseteq \mathbb{R}^{n_i^r}$ for some $\tilde{M}_i > 0$. By Lemma 16, for sufficiently large $m \in \mathbb{N}$, it holds true that $r_i^m(\mathcal{B}_{M_{i-1}}(0)) \subseteq \mathcal{B}_{(1+\epsilon)\tilde{M}_i}(0)$. Similarly, by continuity of σ_i there exists some $M_i > 0$ with $\sigma_i(\mathcal{B}_{(1+\epsilon)\tilde{M}_i}(0)) \subseteq \mathcal{B}_{M_i}(0) \subseteq \mathbb{R}^{n_i^\sigma}$.

Thus, with $U_i := \mathcal{B}_{M_i}(0) \subseteq \mathbb{R}^{n_i^\sigma}$ and $V_i := \mathcal{B}_{(1+\epsilon)\tilde{M}_i}(0) \subseteq \mathbb{R}^{n_i^r}$ for $0 \leq i \leq L$, we derive that $r_i^m(U_{i-1}), r_i(U_{i-1}) \subseteq V_i$ and $\sigma_i(V_i) \subseteq U_i$ for $1 \leq i \leq L$. Furthermore, it holds true that $z^m(t,x), z(t,x) \in U_0$ for a.e. $(t,x) \in (0,T) \times \Omega$.

Now as $r_i \in \mathcal{C}^1(U_{i-1})$ it is Lipschitz continuous on U_{i-1} with some constant $\mathcal{L}_i^r > 0$ (indeed one can choose $\mathcal{L}_i^r = |r_i|_{\mathcal{C}^1(U_{i-1})}$) for $1 \leq i \leq L+1$. Employing Lemma 16, we infer that for sufficiently large $m \in \mathbb{N}$ also the r_i^m are Lipschitz continuous on U_{i-1} with Lipschitz constant $\mathcal{L}_i^r + \epsilon$ for $1 \leq i \leq L+1$. Using local Lipschitz continuity of the σ_i, we obtain Lipschitz continuity of the σ_i on V_i with constant $\mathcal{L}_i^\sigma > 0$ for $1 \leq i \leq L$. As a consequence, we can estimate the term in (I) by

$$|\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^m}(t,z^m) - \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^m}(t,z)| \leq \underbrace{(\mathcal{L}_{L+1}^r + \epsilon)(1 + \prod_{i=1}^{L}(\mathcal{L}_i^r + \epsilon)\mathcal{L}_i^\sigma)}_{=:\mathcal{L}} |z^m - z| \tag{17}$$

Estimation of (II). Assume w.l.o.g. that the Lipschitz constants fulfill $\mathcal{L}_i^r, \mathcal{L}_i^\sigma \geq 1$. Again employing Lemma 16 we can choose $m \in \mathbb{N}$ sufficiently large such that

$$\|r_i - r_i^m\|_{L^\infty(U_{i-1})} < \epsilon \tag{18}$$

for $1 \leq i \leq L+1$. We define the auxiliary networks $(\mathcal{S}_i)_{i=0}^{L+1}$ as follows

$$\mathcal{S}_0(\theta^m, \theta, \cdot) = \mathfrak{S}(\theta^m, \cdot), \quad \mathcal{S}_{L+1}(\theta^m, \theta, \cdot) = \mathfrak{S}(\theta, \cdot) \quad \text{and for } 1 \leq s \leq L$$

$$\mathcal{S}_s(\theta^m, \theta, \cdot) = r_{L+1}((\sigma_L \circ r_L \circ \cdots \circ \sigma_{L-s+2} \circ r_{L-s+2} \circ \sigma_{L-s+1} \circ r^m_{L-s+1} \circ \cdots \circ \sigma_1 \circ r^m_1)(\cdot), \cdot).$$

Note first that due to the considerations on the estimation of (I) (with $0 \in U_0$) it follows that there exists some $C > 0$ such that for sufficiently large $m \in \mathbb{N}$

$$(\sigma_s \circ r^m_s \circ \cdots \circ \sigma_1 \circ r^m_1)(0) < C$$

for $1 \leq s \leq L$. We estimate the term in (II) by the telescope sum

$$|\mathfrak{S}^{\theta^m}_\sigma(t,z) - \mathfrak{S}^\theta_\sigma(t,z)| \leq \sum_{s=0}^{L} |\mathcal{S}_{s+1}(\theta^m, \theta, t, z) - \mathcal{S}_s(\theta^m, \theta, t, z)|. \tag{19}$$

Using the Lipschitz constants derived in view of the estimation of (I) we obtain for sufficiently large $m \in \mathbb{N}$, defining $\mathcal{T}^m_s = \sigma_s \circ r^m_s \circ \cdots \circ \sigma_1 \circ r^m_1$, that

$$\begin{aligned} &|\mathcal{S}_{s+1}(\theta^m, \theta, t, z) - \mathcal{S}_s(\theta^m, \theta, t, z)| \\ &\leq (\mathcal{L}^r_{L+1} + \epsilon) \prod_{i=L-s+2}^{L} (\mathcal{L}^r_i + \epsilon)\mathcal{L}^\sigma_i |(\sigma_{L-s+1} \circ r_{L-s+1}) - (\sigma_{L-s+1} \circ r^m_{L-s+1})|(\mathcal{T}^m_{L-s}(t,z)). \end{aligned} \tag{20}$$

Since both $r_{L-s+1}(\mathcal{T}^m_{L-s}(t,z)), r^m_{L-s+1}(\mathcal{T}^m_{L-s}(t,z)) \in V_{L-s+1}$ and $\mathcal{T}^m_{L-s}(t,z) \in U_{L-s}$ we can estimate using (18)

$$\begin{aligned} &|(\sigma_{L-s+1} \circ r_{L-s+1}) - (\sigma_{L-s+1} \circ r^m_{L-s+1})|(\mathcal{T}^m_{L-s}(t,z)) \\ &\qquad \leq \mathcal{L}^\sigma_{L-s+1} |r_{L-s+1}(\mathcal{T}^m_{L-s}(t,z)) - r^m_{L-s+1}(\mathcal{T}^m_{L-s}(t,z))| \leq \epsilon \mathcal{L}^\sigma_{L-s+1}. \end{aligned} \tag{21}$$

Combining (19),(20),(21) together with the Lipschitz constants assumed to be larger than one, we conclude that

$$|\mathfrak{S}^{\theta^m}_\sigma(t,z) - \mathfrak{S}^\theta_\sigma(t,z)| \leq \epsilon L \mathcal{L}. \tag{22}$$

Finally, by (16), (17) and (22) we derive the pointwise estimate

$$|\mathfrak{S}^{\theta^m}_\sigma(t,z^m) - \mathfrak{S}^\theta_\sigma(t,z)| \leq \mathcal{L}|z^m - z| + \epsilon L \mathcal{L}. \tag{23}$$

Convergence in function space. In view of (15) we derive using (23) and the triangle inequality that

$$\|\mathfrak{S}^{\theta^m}_\sigma(z^m) - \mathfrak{S}^\theta_\sigma(z)\|_{L^q(0,T;L^{\hat{q}}(\Omega))} \leq \mathcal{L}\|z^m - z\|_{L^q(0,T;L^{\hat{q}}(\Omega))} + \epsilon L \mathcal{L} T^{1/q} |\Omega|^{1/\hat{q}}. \tag{24}$$

Employing Hölder's inequality, we can estimate for some generic constant $C > 0$

$$\|z^m - z\|_{L^q(0,T;L^{\hat{q}}(\Omega))} \leq C\|\mathcal{J}_\kappa u^m - \mathcal{J}_\kappa u\|_{\otimes L^p(0,T;L^{\hat{p}}(\Omega)^{p_k})} \leq C\|u^m - u\|_{L^p(0,T;W^{\kappa,\hat{p}}(\Omega))} \tag{25}$$

where the last inequality follows by definition of the differential operator $\mathcal{J}_\kappa$. Since $u^m \to u$ in $L^p(0,T;W^{\kappa,\hat{p}}(\Omega))$ as $m \to \infty$ and ϵ can be chosen arbitrarily small (with resulting larger m to fulfill underlying inequalities), we conclude by (24) and (25) that (15) holds true. With the embedding $L^q(0,T;L^{\hat{q}}(\Omega)) \hookrightarrow \mathcal{W}$ this implies that

$$\mathfrak{S}(\theta^m, u^m) \to \mathfrak{S}(\theta, u) \text{ as } m \to \infty \text{ in } \mathcal{W},$$

proving the claimed weak-strong continuity of the joint operator $\mathfrak{S}$. □

Following the proof of Lemma 17 we can extract the following regularity property.

Corollary 18. *Suppose that Assumption 4 holds true and that the base functions $(\sigma_i)_{1\leq i\leq L}$ are locally Lipschitz continuous. Then for bounded $U \subset \mathbb{R}^{n_0^\sigma}$ the map*

$$\Theta \ni \theta \to \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta \in L^\infty(U)$$

is continuous.

Proof. Let $(\theta^m)_m \subset \Theta$ with $\theta^m \to \theta \in \Theta$ as $m \to \infty$. Following the proof of Lemma 17 we derive by (23) that for every $\epsilon > 0$ the estimation

$$|\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^m}(w) - \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^\theta(w)| \leq \epsilon L \mathcal{L}$$

holds true for sufficiently large $m \in \mathbb{N}$ for all $w \in U$, proving the assertion. □

Combining Corollary 18 with Lemmata 12 and 17 completes the proof of the statement in Proposition 6. Note that a crucial key property to derive Lemma 17 and, consequently, Proposition 6, apart from Lemma 12, is the uniform state space regularity assumption in (3). This raises the question whether one can avoid the underlying embedding under stronger regularity assumptions on the activation base functions $(\sigma_i)_{1\leq i\leq L}$. An alternative approach is presented e.g., in (Holler & Morina, 2024a, Lemma 17), where global Lipschitz continuity of the activation functions is sufficient, rather than local Lipschitz continuity, in the case of affine linear transformations. However, this result does not cover rational transformations, which are the focus here. Some initial considerations addressing this question are outlined below.

Remark 19. *We conjecture that the regularity assumption* (3) *can be avoided. For the special case of rational transformations $r = p/q$ with $\deg(p) \geq \deg(q) \geq \deg(p) - 1$ and $q > 0$, already covering a large class of rational functions with rather strong approximation properties (see Boullé et al. (2020) and Holler & Morina (2025a)), one can argue w.l.o.g. in one dimension as follows. Rational functions of the type above behave like affine linear functions towards $\pm\infty$ and their seminorm fulfills $|r|_{\mathcal{C}^1(\mathbb{R})} < \infty$. Furthermore, for r parameterized by coefficients $\theta \in \Theta$ and coefficients θ^m parameterizing rationals $r^m = p^m/q^m$ (fulfilling $\deg(p^m) \geq \deg(q^m) \geq \deg(p^m) - 1$ and $q^m > 0$) with $\theta^m \to \theta$ as $m \to \infty$ it follows that $|r^m|_{\mathcal{C}^1(\mathbb{R})} \to |r|_{\mathcal{C}^1(\mathbb{R})}$ as $m \to \infty$. In other words r and $(r^m)_m$ are jointly globally Lipschitz continuous with the same constant. With this, an analogous result as in (Holler & Morina, 2024a, Lemma 17) can be obtained following its proof in combination with the one of Lemma 17. If the rational transformations are general polynomials of degree d, we conjecture that* (3) *can be weakened to the regularity assumption that the state space is of the form that $(\mathcal{J}_\kappa u^m)_m$ converges in space in $L^{\hat{p}\rho_0}(\Omega)$ and is bounded in $L^{(d-1)^i \hat{p}\rho_i}(\Omega)$ for the layer index $1 \leq i \leq L$ where $\sum_{i=0}^L \rho_i^{-1} = 1$. We expect a similar result for general rational transformations $r = p/q$ for polynomials p, q with $\deg(p) - \deg(q)$ instead of d. These regularity assumptions are obviously more difficult to fulfill the deeper the network is and the more complex the rational transformations are.*

B Proofs of identification results

In the following we provide the detailed arguments of the assertions in Section 3, starting with the proof of Lemma 12.

Proof of Lemma 12. The assertion essentially follows from the *direct method*. Since the regularization $\mathcal{R}$ is proper, there exists an infimizing sequence $(u_k, \theta_k)_k \subset \mathcal{V} \times \Theta$ of problem $(\mathcal{P}^m)$. Due to coercivity of $\mathcal{R}$, $(u_k)_k$ is bounded in $\mathcal{V}$ and $(\theta_k)_k$ in Θ. As a consequence, due to reflexivity of $\mathcal{V}$, the sequence $(u_k)_k$ admits a weakly convergent subsequence in $\mathcal{V}$ with limit $\hat{u} \in \mathcal{V}$, and $(\theta_k)_k$ a strongly convergent subsequence in Θ with limit $\hat{\theta} \in \Theta$, since Θ is finite dimensional (w.l.o.g. for the entire sequences) and closed by design (see Subsection 2.2). We derive

$$\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta_k}(\mathcal{J}_\kappa u_k) \to \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\hat{\theta}}(\mathcal{J}_\kappa \hat{u}) \quad \text{in } \mathcal{W} \quad \text{as } k \to \infty$$

using Proposition 6. Now since $\partial_t u_k \rightharpoonup \partial_t \hat{u}$ in $L^p(0,T;\tilde{V})$ as $k \to \infty$ the weak convergence also holds in $\mathcal{W}$ as $L^p(0,T;\tilde{V}) \hookrightarrow \mathcal{W}$ by $\tilde{V} \hookrightarrow W$. Furthermore, weak-weak continuity of K^m implies $K^m u_k \rightharpoonup K^m \hat{u}$ in $\mathcal{Y}$ as $k \to \infty$. Combining these convergences with weak lower semicontinuity of $\lambda^m \|\cdot\|_{\mathcal{W}}^q$, $\mu^m \|\cdot\|_{\mathcal{Y}}^r$ and the regularization $\mathcal{R}$ in the respective spaces, it follows that $(\hat{u}, \hat{\theta})$ solves $(\mathcal{P}^m)$. □

We conclude this section by providing the proof of our main result, Theorem 13.

Proof of Theorem 13. Since $f^\dagger$ is representable, there exists $\theta^\dagger \in \Theta$ such that $f^\dagger = \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^\dagger}$. We estimate the objective functional of $(\mathcal{P}^m)$ by

$$\begin{aligned}\lambda^m \|\partial_t u^m - \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^m}(\mathcal{J}_\kappa u^m)\|_{\mathcal{W}}^q + \mu^m \|K^m u^m - y^m\|_{\mathcal{Y}}^r + \mathcal{R}(u^m, \theta^m) \\ \leq \lambda^m \|\partial_t u^\dagger - \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^\dagger}(\mathcal{J}_\kappa u^\dagger)\|_{\mathcal{W}}^q + \mu^m \|K^m u^\dagger - y^m\|_{\mathcal{Y}}^r + \mathcal{R}(u^\dagger, \theta^\dagger). \quad (26)\end{aligned}$$

As $\partial_t u^\dagger = \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^\dagger}(\mathcal{J}_\kappa u^\dagger)$ and $\|K^m u^\dagger - y^m\|_{\mathcal{Y}}^r = \delta(m)$, the right hand side of (26) converges to $\mathcal{R}(u^\dagger, \theta^\dagger)$ as $m \to \infty$. This implies boundedness of $(\|u^m\|_{\mathcal{V}})_m$ and $(\|\theta^m\|)_m$ by coercivity of $\mathcal{R}$. As a consequence, there exists a weakly convergent subsequence of the $(u^m)_m$ with limit $\tilde{u}$ in $\mathcal{V}$. We denote it w.l.o.g. by the original indices as we will show $u^m \rightharpoonup u^\dagger$ in $\mathcal{V}$ as $m \to \infty$. Since $\lim_{m\to\infty} \mu_m = \infty$ the convergence $\lim_{m\to\infty} \|K^m u^m - y^m\|_{\mathcal{Y}} = 0$ follows. We estimate

$$\begin{aligned}\|K^\dagger \tilde{u} - K^\dagger u^\dagger\|_{\mathcal{Y}} \leq \|K^\dagger \tilde{u} - K^\dagger u^m\|_{\mathcal{Y}} + \|K^\dagger u^m - K^m u^m\|_{\mathcal{Y}} \\ + \|K^m u^m - K^m u^\dagger\|_{\mathcal{Y}} + \|K^m u^\dagger - K^\dagger u^\dagger\|_{\mathcal{Y}}.\end{aligned}$$

The first term converges to zero by weak-strong continuity of $K^\dagger$. The second and fourth term converge to zero by (5), since $(u^m)_m$ and the constant sequence $(u^\dagger)_m$ are weakly convergent. The third term converges to zero by (4), since $K^m u^\dagger = y^m$ and $\lim_{m\to\infty} \delta(m) = 0$. Thus, we conclude that $K^\dagger \tilde{u} = K^\dagger u^\dagger$ and finally, $\tilde{u} = u^\dagger$ by injectivity of $K^\dagger$. Since $(\|\theta^m\|)_m$ is bounded, there exists a convergent subsequence $(\theta^{m_l})_l$ with limit $\tilde{\theta} \in \Theta$ by closedness of Θ. Using $\lambda^m \to \infty$ as $m \to \infty$ we derive

$$\lim_{l\to\infty} \|\partial_t u^{m_l} - \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^{m_l}}(\mathcal{J}_\kappa u^{m_l})\|_{\mathcal{W}} = 0 \quad (27)$$

and with $\partial_t u^{m_l} \rightharpoonup \partial_t u^\dagger$, as in the proof of Lemma 12, boundedness of $(\partial_t u^{m_l})_{m_l}$. As a consequence, also $(\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^{m_l}}(\mathcal{J}_\kappa u^{m_l}))_{m_l}$ is bounded and there exists $g \in \mathcal{W}$ such that $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^{m_l}}(\mathcal{J}_\kappa u^{m_l}) \rightharpoonup g$ in $\mathcal{W}$ as $l \to \infty$ (w.l.o.g. for the entire sequence). Employing weak lower semicontinuity of the $\|\cdot\|_{\mathcal{W}}$-norm

in (27) yields $g = \partial_t u^\dagger$. Using Proposition 6 we obtain that $u^\dagger$ and the reconstructed physical law $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\tilde{\theta}}$ fulfill

$$\partial_t u^\dagger = \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\tilde{\theta}}(\mathcal{J}_\kappa u^\dagger). \tag{28}$$

The assertion on $L^\infty_{\mathrm{loc}}(\mathbb{R}^{n_0^\sigma})$-convergence follows directly by Proposition 6. Finally, for any solution $(u^\dagger, \theta^\dagger)$ of $\partial_t u^\dagger = \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^\dagger}$ it follows by (26) that

$$\liminf_{m\to\infty} \mathcal{R}(u^m, \theta^m) \leq \mathcal{R}(u^\dagger, \theta^\dagger)$$

which by weak lower semicontinuity of $\mathcal{R}$ implies $\mathcal{R}(u^\dagger, \tilde{\theta}) \leq \mathcal{R}(u^\dagger, \theta^\dagger)$. □

As a consequence of Theorem 13 the result in Corollary 14 holds.

Proof of Corollary 14. Following Theorem 13, we conclude from (28) that

$$\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\tilde{\theta}}(\mathcal{J}_\kappa u^\dagger) = \partial_t u^\dagger = \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^\dagger}(\mathcal{J}_\kappa u^\dagger).$$

Using the identifiability condition $(\mathcal{I})$, we deduce that $\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\tilde{\theta}} = \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^\dagger}$. Since this equality is independent of the convergent subsequence of $(\theta^m)_m$, together with the result of Theorem 13, we conclude, as claimed that

$$\mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^m} \to \mathfrak{S}_\sigma^{\theta^\dagger} = f^\dagger \quad \text{in } L^\infty_{\mathrm{loc}}(\mathbb{R}^{n_0^\sigma}) \text{ as } m \to \infty.$$ □

C Convergence condition for sampling operators

In this section we provide a proof of the convergence condition (5) for the measurement operators defined in Subsection 4.1. Recall the full measurement operator

$$K^\dagger : \mathcal{V} \to \mathcal{Y}, \quad [K^\dagger u](t) = \sum_{i\in\mathbb{N}} \langle e_i, u(t)\rangle e_i \tag{29}$$

for $u \in \mathcal{V}$ and $t \in [0,T]$ with $(e_i)_{i\in\mathbb{N}}$ a fixed orthonormal system of $L^2(\Omega)$. Note that $K^\dagger u$ is Bochner measurable for $u \in \mathcal{V}$ by Pettis theorem since $L^2(\Omega)$ is separable and for $w \in L^2(\Omega)$ the map $[0,T] \ni t \mapsto \langle [K^\dagger u](t), w\rangle = \langle w, u(t)\rangle$ is Lebesgue measurable (by Bochner measurability of u). Well-definedness follows from Bessel's inequality. The reduced measurement operators are given for $1 \leq j \leq m-1$ and $t \in [t_j, t_{j+1})$ or $j = m$ and $t \in [t_m, t_{m+1}]$ by

$$K^m : \mathcal{V} \to \mathcal{Y}, \quad [K^m u](t) = \sum_{i=1}^m \left(\Delta_m^{-1} \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \langle e_i, u(s)\rangle \,\mathrm{d}s \right) e_i \tag{30}$$

for $u \in \mathcal{V}$. Here $0 = t_1 < t_2 < \cdots < t_m < t_{m+1} = T$ is the m-equidistant grid on $[0,T]$ for $m \in [0,T]$ and $\Delta_m := T/m$. Bochner measurability follows again by Pettis theorem since $[0,T] \ni t \mapsto \langle [K^m u](t), w\rangle$ is a step function for $w \in L^2(\Omega)$. We will verify shortly that the operator in (30) is in fact well defined. Now since K^m is linear, weak-weak continuity is equivalent to continuity. Since $(e_i)_i$ is an orthonormal system we derive for $t \in [t_j, t_{j+1}]$ that

$$\|[K^m u](t)\|^2_{L^2(\Omega)} = \Delta_m^{-2} \sum_{i=1}^m \left(\int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \langle e_i, u(s)\rangle \,\mathrm{d}s \right)^2.$$

As a consequence, for $u \in \mathcal{V}$ it holds

$$\|K^m u\|_{\mathcal{Y}}^2 = \int_0^T \|[K^m u](t)\|_{L^2(\Omega)}^2 \,\mathrm{d}t = \sum_{j=1}^m \Delta_m \Delta_m^{-2} \sum_{i=1}^m \left(\int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \langle e_i, u(s) \rangle \,\mathrm{d}s \right)^2$$

which due to Hölder's inequality using $\Delta_m = t_{j+1} - t_j$ implies that

$$\|K^m u\|_{\mathcal{Y}}^2 \leq \sum_{j=1}^m \Delta_m^{-1} \sum_{i=1}^m \Delta_m \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} |\langle e_i, u(s) \rangle|^2 \,\mathrm{d}s = \sum_{j=1}^m \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \left(\sum_{i=1}^m |\langle e_i, u(s) \rangle|^2 \right) \mathrm{d}s.$$

By employing Bessel's inequality and the embedding $\mathcal{V} \hookrightarrow \mathcal{Y}$ we derive

$$\|K^m u\|_{\mathcal{Y}}^2 \leq \sum_{j=1}^m \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \|u(s)\|_{L^2(\Omega)}^2 \,\mathrm{d}s = \int_0^T \|u(s)\|_{L^2(\Omega)}^2 \,\mathrm{d}s = \|u\|_{\mathcal{Y}}^2 \leq c\|u\|_{\mathcal{V}}^2$$

for some suitable $c > 0$ proving continuity of K^m and more importantly well definedness of the operator K^m. It remains to show (5) that $K^m u^m - K^\dagger u^m \to 0$ in $\mathcal{Y}$ as $m \to \infty$ for any weakly convergent sequence $(u^m)_m \subset \mathcal{V}$. For that, let $u^m \rightharpoonup u$ in $\mathcal{V}$ as $m \to \infty$. Then, similar transformations as above yield

$$\|K^m u^m - K^\dagger u^m\|_{\mathcal{Y}}^2 = \sum_{j=1}^m \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \left\| \sum_{i=1}^m \left(\Delta_m^{-1} \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \langle e_i, u^m(s) \rangle \,\mathrm{d}s \right) e_i - \sum_{i \in \mathbb{N}} \langle e_i, u^m(t) \rangle e_i \right\|_{L^2(\Omega)}^2 \mathrm{d}t.$$

Again using that $(e_i)_i$ is an orthonormal system gives

$$\begin{aligned}
&\sum_{j=1}^m \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \left\| \sum_{i=1}^m \left(\Delta_m^{-1} \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \langle e_i, u^m(s) \rangle \,\mathrm{d}s \right) e_i - \sum_{i \in \mathbb{N}} \langle e_i, u^m(t) \rangle e_i \right\|_{L^2(\Omega)}^2 \mathrm{d}t \\
&\qquad = \sum_{j=1}^m \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \left\| \sum_{i=1}^m \left(\langle e_i, u^m(t) \rangle - \Delta_m^{-1} \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \langle e_i, u^m(s) \rangle \,\mathrm{d}s \right) e_i \right\|_{L^2(\Omega)}^2 \mathrm{d}t \\
&\qquad\qquad + \sum_{j=1}^m \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \left\| \sum_{i \geq m+1} \langle e_i, u^m(t) \rangle e_i \right\|_{L^2(\Omega)}^2 \mathrm{d}t. \qquad (31)
\end{aligned}$$

We argue that the right-hand side of (31) converges to zero as $m \to \infty$. For the second term on the right-hand side of (31) we derive by previous arguments

$$\begin{aligned}
\sum_{j=1}^m \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \left\| \sum_{i \geq m+1} \langle e_i, u^m(t) \rangle e_i \right\|_{L^2(\Omega)}^2 \mathrm{d}t &= \int_0^T \left\| \sum_{i \geq m+1} \langle e_i, u^m(t) \rangle e_i \right\|_{L^2(\Omega)}^2 \mathrm{d}t \\
&\leq 2 \int_0^T \left\| \sum_{i \geq m+1} \langle e_i, u^m(t) - u(t) \rangle e_i \right\|_{L^2(\Omega)}^2 \mathrm{d}t + 2 \int_0^T \left\| \sum_{i \geq m+1} \langle e_i, u(t) \rangle e_i \right\|_{L^2(\Omega)}^2 \mathrm{d}t \\
&= 2 \underbrace{\int_0^T \sum_{i \geq m+1} |\langle e_i, u^m(t) - u(t) \rangle|^2 \,\mathrm{d}t}_{=:\mathrm{I}} + 2 \underbrace{\int_0^T \sum_{i \geq m+1} |\langle e_i, u(t) \rangle|^2 \,\mathrm{d}t}_{=:\mathrm{II}}.
\end{aligned}$$

The term I can be estimated using Bessel's inequality by

$$\mathrm{I} \leq \int_0^T \|u^m(t) - u(t)\|^2_{L^2(\Omega)} \,\mathrm{d}t = \|u^m - u\|^2_{\mathcal{Y}}$$

which converges to zero as $m \to \infty$ due to the compact embedding $\mathcal{V} \hookrightarrow\!\!\!\!\rightarrow \mathcal{Y}$. For term II note that due to Bessel's inequality, $t \mapsto \sum_{i \geq m+1} |\langle e_i, u(t)\rangle|^2$ is majorized by $t \mapsto \|u(t)\|^2_{L^2(\Omega)}$ which is integrable on $[0,T]$ by $\mathcal{V} \hookrightarrow \mathcal{Y}$. As a consequence, since $\sum_{i\in\mathbb{N}} |\langle e_i, u(t)\rangle|^2$ is convergent by Parseval's identity, its tails converge to zero, such that with Lebesgue's dominated convergence we recover convergence of the term II to zero as $m \to \infty$. It remains to verify that the first term on the right-hand side of (31) converges to zero as $m \to \infty$. It can be rewritten by

$$\begin{aligned}\sum_{j=1}^m \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \sum_{i=1}^m \left(\langle e_i, u^m(t)\rangle - \Delta_m^{-1} \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \langle e_i, u^m(s)\rangle \,\mathrm{d}s \right)^2 \mathrm{d}t \\ = \Delta_m^{-2} \sum_{j=1}^m \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \sum_{i=1}^m \left(\int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \langle e_i, u^m(t) - u^m(s)\rangle \,\mathrm{d}s \right)^2 \mathrm{d}t. \quad (32)\end{aligned}$$

Using that for $t, s \in [0,T]$ and $i \in \mathbb{N}$ it holds

$$\langle e_i, u^m(t) - u^m(s)\rangle = \langle e_i, u^m(t) - u(t)\rangle + \langle e_i, u(t) - u(s)\rangle + \langle e_i, u(s) - u^m(s)\rangle$$

we can estimate (32), employing the scalar Hölder inequality by

$$\begin{aligned}3\Delta_m^{-2} \sum_{j=1}^m \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \sum_{i=1}^m \left(\int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \langle e_i, u^m(t) - u(t)\rangle \,\mathrm{d}s \right)^2 \mathrm{d}t \\ + 3\Delta_m^{-2} \sum_{j=1}^m \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \sum_{i=1}^m \left(\int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \langle e_i, u(t) - u(s)\rangle \,\mathrm{d}s \right)^2 \mathrm{d}t \\ + 3\Delta_m^{-2} \sum_{j=1}^m \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \sum_{i=1}^m \left(\int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \langle e_i, u(s) - u^m(s)\rangle \,\mathrm{d}s \right)^2 \mathrm{d}t. \quad (33)\end{aligned}$$

The third summand in (33), omitting the constant factor, can be estimated by Hölder's inequality regarding temporal integration in s by

$$\Delta_m^{-1} \sum_{j=1}^m \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \sum_{i=1}^m \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} |\langle e_i, u^m(s) - u^m(s)\rangle|^2 \,\mathrm{d}s \,\mathrm{d}t,$$

which by Bessel's inequality and $\Delta_m^{-1} \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \mathrm{d}t = 1$ is bounded by

$$\sum_{j=1}^m \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \|u(s) - u^m(s)\|^2_{L^2(\Omega)} \,\mathrm{d}s = \|u^m - u\|^2_{\mathcal{Y}}, \quad (34)$$

and converges to zero as $m \to \infty$ due to $\mathcal{V} \hookrightarrow\!\!\!\!\rightarrow \mathcal{Y}$. Convergence of the first summand in (33) to zero can be argued analogously. It remains to show that

$$\lim_{m\to\infty} \Delta_m^{-2} \sum_{j=1}^{m} \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \sum_{i=1}^{m} \left(\int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \langle e_i, u(t) - u(s) \rangle \, \mathrm{d}s \right)^2 \mathrm{d}t = 0.$$

Applying the integration-by-parts formula of (Roubíček, 2012, Lemma 7.3) with $H = V = L^2(\Omega)$ (which is justified since $\mathcal{V}$ attains at least $H^1(\Omega)$ spatial regularity), we infer that,

$$\langle e_i, u(t) - u(s) \rangle = \int_s^t \langle e_i, \partial_t u(z) \rangle \, \mathrm{d}z,$$

for every $i \in \mathbb{N}$. With this, Bessel's and twice Hölder's inequality we derive that the second summand in (33) can be estimated by

$$\begin{aligned}
&\Delta_m^{-1} \sum_{j=1}^{m} \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \sum_{i=1}^{m} \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} |\langle e_i, u(t) - u(s) \rangle|^2 \, \mathrm{d}s \, \mathrm{d}t \\
&\qquad \leq \Delta_m^{-1} \sum_{j=1}^{m} \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \sum_{i=1}^{m} \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} |t - s| \int_s^t |\langle e_i, \partial_t u(z) \rangle|^2 \, \mathrm{d}z \, \mathrm{d}s \, \mathrm{d}t \\
&\qquad\qquad \leq \Delta_m^{-1} \sum_{j=1}^{m} \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} |t - s| \int_s^t \|\partial_t u(z)\|^2 \, \mathrm{d}z \, \mathrm{d}s \, \mathrm{d}t.
\end{aligned}$$

Using that $|t - s| \leq \Delta_m$ we can estimate this term by

$$\left(\sum_{j=1}^{m} \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \int_{t_j}^{t_{j+1}} \mathrm{d}s \, \mathrm{d}t \right) \|\partial_t u\|_{\mathcal{Y}}^2 = \Delta_m T \|\partial_t u\|_{\mathcal{Y}}^2$$

which converges to zero as $m \to \infty$ (since $\Delta_m = T/m$ does). This finally concludes the regularity property (5) for $K^\dagger$ as in (29) and the reduced measurement operators K^m as in (30). □

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