

Kinematics and Statics Including Cable Sag for Large CableSuspended Robots

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Abstract

Cable sag can have significant effects on the cable length computation in a cable suspended robot and this is more pronounced in largescale outdoor systems. This requires modeling the cable as a catenary instead of an approximated straight-line model. Furthermore, when there is actuation redundancy involved, the modeling and simulation of the system becomes much more complex, requiring optimizing routines to solve the problem. A cable-sag-compensated (catenary) model was implemented in simulation for an example large outdoor cable-suspended robot system to solve the coupled kinematics and statics problems. This involved optimization of cable tensions and finding the errors involved in the cable length. A comparative analysis between the straight-line and cable sag model is presented, the main contribution of this paper. Based on the qualitative and quantitative results obtained, recommendations were made on the choice of model and solution methodologies.

Index terms— cable ?suspended robot, cable sag, nonnegligible cable mass, catenary model, forward and inverse position kinematics, pseudostatics

1 I. Introduction

distinct attribute of cable-suspended robots is the possibility of achieving very large workspaces which is difficult or impossible to achieve using rigid link manipulators. In the past two decades major progress has been made in the design and implementation of large scale robots throughout the world. The Five hundred meter Aperture Spherical radio Telescope (FAST) is large scale cable-suspended robot under development in China for astronomical study [1]. Another example is the Skycam [2], which is an aerial camera system that is widely used in sporting arenas. Other examples include CoGiRo (Control of Giant Robots) used for industrial purposes [3] and the Large Cable Mechanism (LCM) used for Radio Telescope Application [4].

Kozak et al. [5] addressed the issue of cable sag by studying the effects of considering mass in the statics and stiffness analysis of the FAST robot. This research used the "elastic catenary" discussed by Irvine [6], to model the cable lengths and subsequently address the inverse pose kinematics problem. Kozak et al. [5] also provided experimental validation and showed that the equations of the elastic catenary are in good agreement with experimental results. Additionally, Russell and Lardner [7] provided experimental validation of the elastic catenary model and quantified the difference between theoretical and experimental cable tensions.

An accuracy and error compensation study of the 6-dof FAST robot was presented by Yao et al. [8] and force distribution in the cables by Li et al. [9]. These results showed that cable sag has a considerable effect on the overall accuracy and control of the robot.

Research on the effects of sag on the workspace and cable characteristics was performed by Riehl et al. [10]. The findings, based on simulations for a 3-cable, 3-dof robot, showed that the workspace and the cable tension distribution for straight-line and elastic catenary (cable sag) models differ. Cable tension under cable sag, unlike the cable tension for the straight-line model, is not constant throughout the cable.

Irvine [6] presented a simplified model for cable sag based on perturbation analysis. This was used by Gouttefarde et al. [11] to model and simulate a 6-cable, 6-dof robot. Although this model is still nonlinear

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system. This system of equations is also solved using the `fsolve()` command in MATLAB and its solution yields the XYZ position of the robot. In summary, the method consists of finding the initial values and necessary transformations. This is followed by solving a system of nonlinear equations whose solution gives the position. A major difference in this FPK problem, when compared to the inverse position problem, is the absence of optimization step, thus making it considerably faster to solve. However, both problems must be solved numerically (i.e. iteratively), when the effect of cable sag has to be considered.

8 III.

9 Results and Discussion

Based on the methods described in the previous section, simulations were performed. This included simulating snapshot examples, a trajectory, and parameter variations. The results obtained and their interpretations are discussed in this section. The simulation results presented here use the values in Table 2. When the code for the inverse problem is executed with these snapshot points as inputs, the program calculates the cable lengths and tensions. Table ?? : Cartesian coordinates of snapshot points First, the circular check is performed to verify and partly validate the results obtained. To serve this purpose, both the inverse and forward problems were solved for all the five snapshot points. The results are summarized in Table 4 and the circular check is verified (the highlighted columns have equal corresponding values). The cable length difference between the cable sag and straight model is calculated, followed by cable length error computation: (9) (10) The results of difference in cable lengths and their percentage error are plotted in Figure 7 and 8. i e i D L L ? ? 100% i e i i i L L ER L ? ? ?

Along with computation of cable lengths, the cable tensions were also calculated using two methods; Linear Programming (LP) and Pseudoinverse Method (PI). These two methods give different values for cable tensions as the objective functions in both cases are different. The resulting graph is shown in Figure 9. From the graphs, it can be observed that the difference in cable lengths obtained from the straight-line model and cable sag model ranges from 0 -2600 mm, which appears to be significantly high. However, when the relative error is computed, the range is 0-3 %. The current cable-suspended Robot System, unlike the FAST [1] or LCM [4], is not meant for accurate positioning of the end-effector, hence from the snapshot examples the effects of cable sag appears to be tolerable. But the five examples are a small sample size of random points; this necessitates running the program to simulate a trajectory.

10 b) Trajectory Example

A pick-and-place robot trajectory was simulated with a step size of 0.5 m as shown in Figure ??0. The ideal Cartesian coordinates and straight-line cable lengths for this trajectory are shown in Figures 11 and 12. Similar to the snapshot example, the cable length differences between the cable sag and straight-line models are calculated, followed by cable length error computation. This is shown in Figure 13 and 14. As observed from the graphs, the difference in cable lengths obtained from the straight-line model and cable sag model ranges from 0-800 mm and the relative error ranges from 0-1.4%. These values further indicate that, although cable sag contributes to erroneous cable length computation, the error is low enough for purposes where high accuracy is not a prime requirement. The cable tensions were calculated for all the steps in the trajectory by both methods. This was followed by finding the difference between the summation of cable tensions obtained from linear programming (LP) and pseudoinverse (PI) methods From Figures 9, 15, and 16, a straightforward observation is that the two methods (LP and PI) give different solutions for cable tensions except when the cable lengths are equal. Except for this case, the linear programming method gives a solution such that the overall cable tensions are less, when compared to the corresponding pseudoinverse solution.

Another major advantage of using linear programming is that we can restrict the solution space by using the bounds (Tmin and Tmax). For example, in this simulation Tmin was set to be equal to the weight of end-effector, which can be increased if the cable tensions are found to be insufficient to keep it taut and decreased if feasible. A similar argument can be made for Tmax. In this simulation, Tmax was set to be +? to get an idea of the maximum tension that a particular configuration reaches.

The pseudoinverse method on the other hand does not give this flexibility. But a major merit of the pseudoinverse approach is that it has a closed-form analytical solution, unlike the iterative linear programming method.

There are a few issues associated with the use of the LP method that require attention. The LP approach at times gives an abrupt increase or decrease in the tension solutions, thus not resulting in smooth curves for trajectories (see Figure 15). Another issue is that the LP solution at times tends to give a solution that is the lower bounds or upper bounds (T min or T max) for one of the cables. Regardless, a valid solution can be obtained by this method and research is being done in this field to get smoother results with less iterations. Borgstrom et al. [15] show that linear programming can be suitably modified and, with the assistance of suitable control systems, make it more efficient and computationally less expensive. Considering all of these factors, use of linear programming for cable tension calculation is advisable. A summary of this discussion is provided in the form of a comparison chart in Table ??.

11 Linear Programming (LP)

Moore Penrose Pseudoinverse (PI) Minimize the sum of the cable tensions; Min From the effects of cable sag, it is evident that if the cable weight increases, then cable sag increases, which in turn increases the error or cable length difference between the cable sag and straight-line models. Increasing cable diameter and / or cable material density increases cable weight. Based on the nature of the catenary equations, we expect a nonlinear increase in the difference in cable lengths when cable diameter and density is increased, as verified by the simulations of Figures 17 and 18. The trends for increasing cable density are very similar to increasing cable diameter and hence are not shown [16].

Another important parameter is the end-effector mass. This is of special importance since it may vary during the operation of a cable-suspended robot. The variation of difference in cable length between the cable sag and straight-line models with an increase in end-effector mass is shown in Figures 19 and 20.

Figure 19: Difference in cable length vs. end-effector mass for nominal position For this case there is an inverse relationship, i.e. the cable lengths differences decrease as the end-effector mass increases. This makes sense since, for a given cable size, larger end-effector mass will dominate more and more relative to the cable mass, meaning the straight-line model becomes more and more accurate.

12 d) Effects of Footprint Dimensions

As the size of the robot footprint increases, the cable length and its overall weight increases, thus increasing the cable sag and increasing the difference in cable length. Keeping the ratio of footprint length to width constant ($L/W = \text{constant}$), the area was increased in steps from 1 to 6 acres and the difference in cable lengths was computed. As expected, the cable length difference increases with an increase in area as shown in Figure 21. Complimentary to the previous case, we next study the effects of variation of length to width (L/W) ratio, keeping the area constant. For the nominal position, at a constant tower height, the variation of the Euclidean norm length depends on the footprint length L and width W . By the Pythagorean Theorem, this is dependent on the term $\sqrt{L^2 + W^2}$. Also, the point where the length and width interchange their values, we expect the difference in cable lengths to remain the same. All these facts are verified by simulation results as shown in Figure 22. The straight-line model has been used in most cable-suspended robot systems when compared to the cable sag model. One of the main reasons for this is its simplicity and an analytical model which is easy to use, manipulate, and implement in control systems.

The cable sag model which uses the catenary equations describes the profile of the cable more accurately when compared to the straight-line model. However, the methods required to handle this are highly complicated. Ultimately, any model has to be implemented in a real-time control system to manipulate the cable-suspended robot system. Hence, understanding the computational complexities involved is important.

The catenary equations by themselves are highly nonlinear and are implicit. These equations have to be solved simultaneously with other equations by the accuracy of the solution, such approximations have to be made with more terms in a series expansion, hence requiring more data storage and ultimately increasing the computational cost.

To investigate this issue, during the computation of cable lengths the number of iterations for both snapshot points and trajectory was recorded for the cable sag model. This information is presented in Figures 23 and 24. For comparison, the straight-line model requires no iteration, so the number of iterations for that case is always 1.

13 L W ?

L / W numerical methods iteratively, which is not only time consuming, but may also involve iteration errors. This is a major drawback to the cable sag model. Another major impediment in using iterative methods is the truncation errors involved. These are especially dominant when exponential and hyperbolic terms are approximated using truncated infinite series, thus reducing the accuracy of the solution. To improve There is no definitive prediction that can be made on the number of iterations for a different trajectory or snapshot example, but the examples shown above are representative. They show that even for the simplest trajectories or snapshot points, each cable length computation requires a considerable number of iterations, ranging from 10-40. Thus, the cable sag model, despite being an accurate model, suffers from increased computational requirement. A relative comparison between the straight-line model and cable sag model is shown in Table 6.

14 Iterative errors, truncation errors

Solving the cable tension and length problems independently in separate steps (i.e. using the straight-line model) offers significant practical benefits. Firstly, it offers easy control system implementation, since ensuring positive cable tension is a necessary condition and cable sag computation can be circumvented if the corresponding error is within limits. Secondly, solving the steps separately greatly reduces the computational time. Additionally, if the steps are combined (i.e. using the cable-sag model) the problem becomes a constrained non-linear optimization problem (instead of a robust linear programming problem) which needs more sophisticated optimization routines and is not practical to implement in simple, cost-effective, real-time control system architectures.

15 IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

The current research was conducted primarily with an intention of studying and understanding the qualitative and quantitative effects of cable sag on the calculation of cable lengths in cable-suspended robots. The research also involved studying the effects of cable density, cable diameter, robot footprint size, and computational requirements.

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kinematics and statics including cable sag for large cable-suspended robots

17 Control system application Straight-forward Difficult

Based on the results of the snapshot and trajectory examples (for a 1-acre footprint robot), the relative error in cable lengths does not exceed 3%. The cable sag model suffers from computational complexities. On the other hand, the straight-line model is simple to manipulate, control, and implement practically. Considering all these factors and quantitative comparison results presented earlier, the straight-line model is preferred over the cable sag model at this particular scale (1-acre footprint, 4047 m²). In cases where the cable sag and errors are greater, the use of a Cartesian servo controller based on GPS sensing of the end-effector location is recommended.

Cable tension distribution is an important aspect of cable-suspended robots and, based on the results of this research, linear programming serves as an efficient tool for computing and ensuring appropriate cable tensions in cables (the pseudoinverse-based method is much more common). An additional benefit of the LP method is to help in finding if a given cable tension range is acceptable for motion control of a cable-suspended robot system and is within the torque limitations of a winch / motor. Conversely, the simulation results could be used for appropriate choices in winch / motor design.

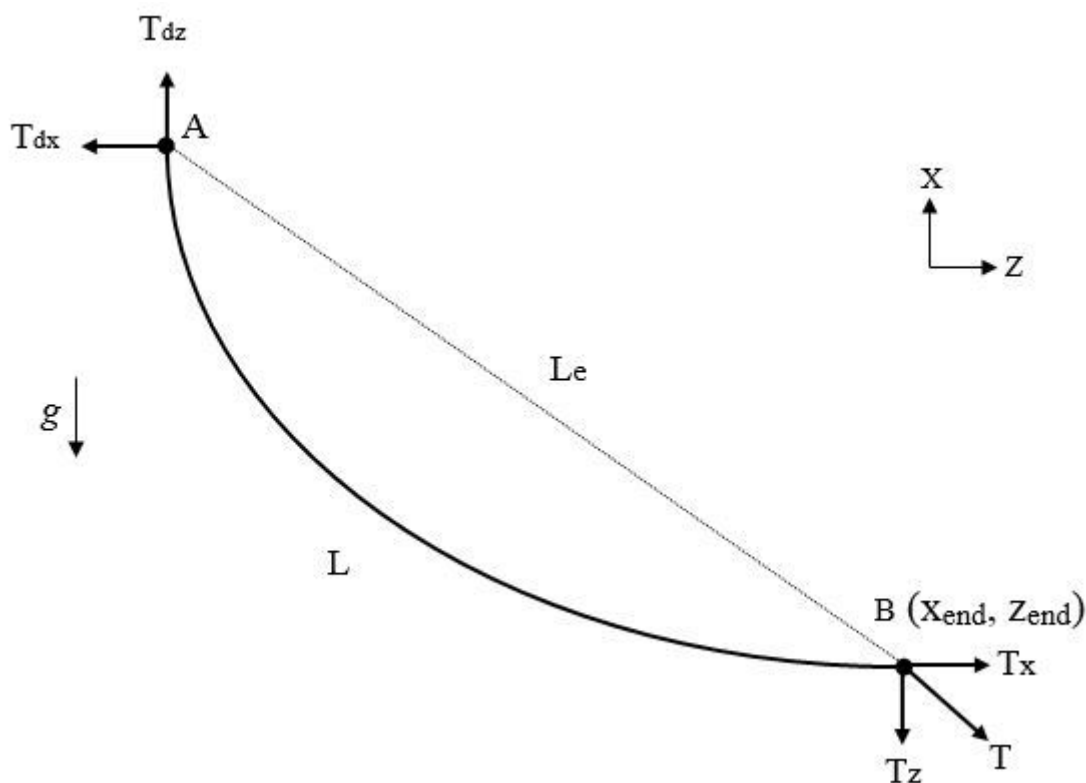


Figure 1: Figure 2 :

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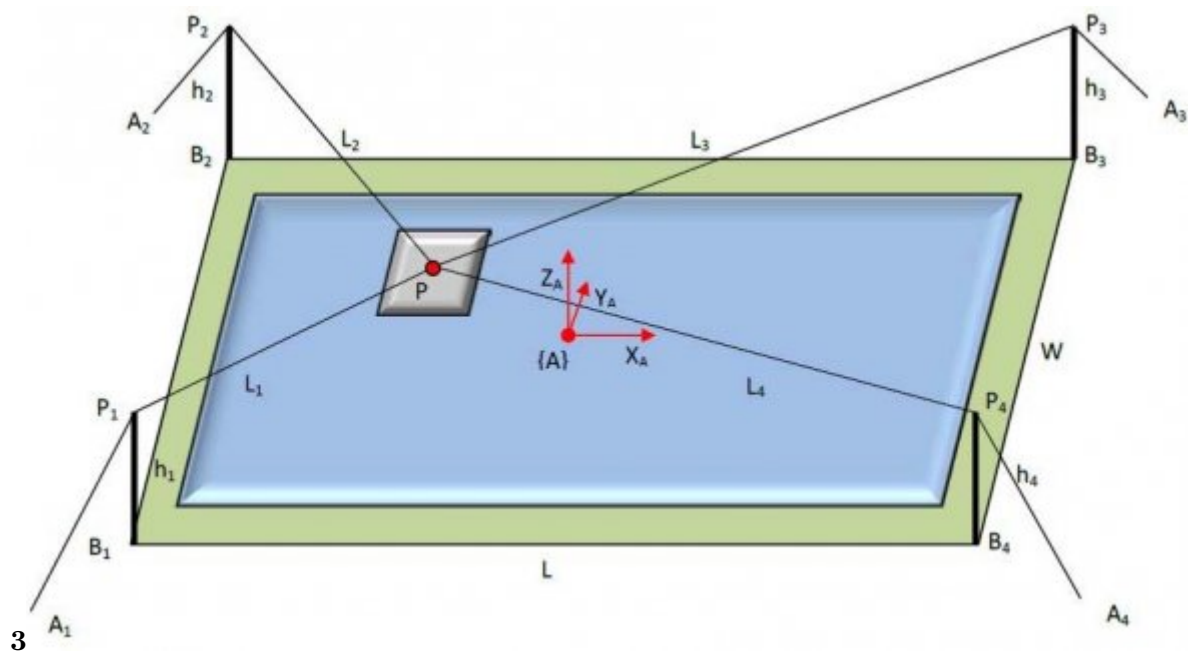


Figure 2: Figure 3 :

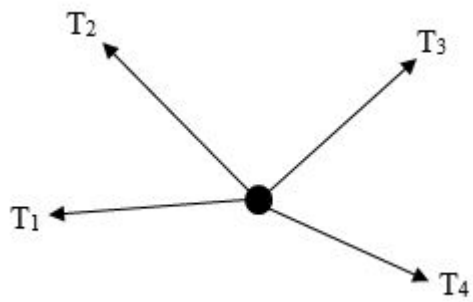


Figure 3:



Figure 4: Figure 4 :



Figure 5: ? 1 2 3 T 4 TT

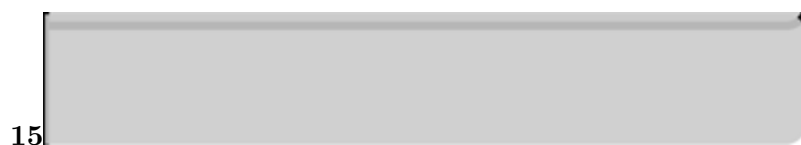


Figure 6: 1 ?Figure 5 :



Figure 7: Figure 6 :



Figure 8: Figure 7 :

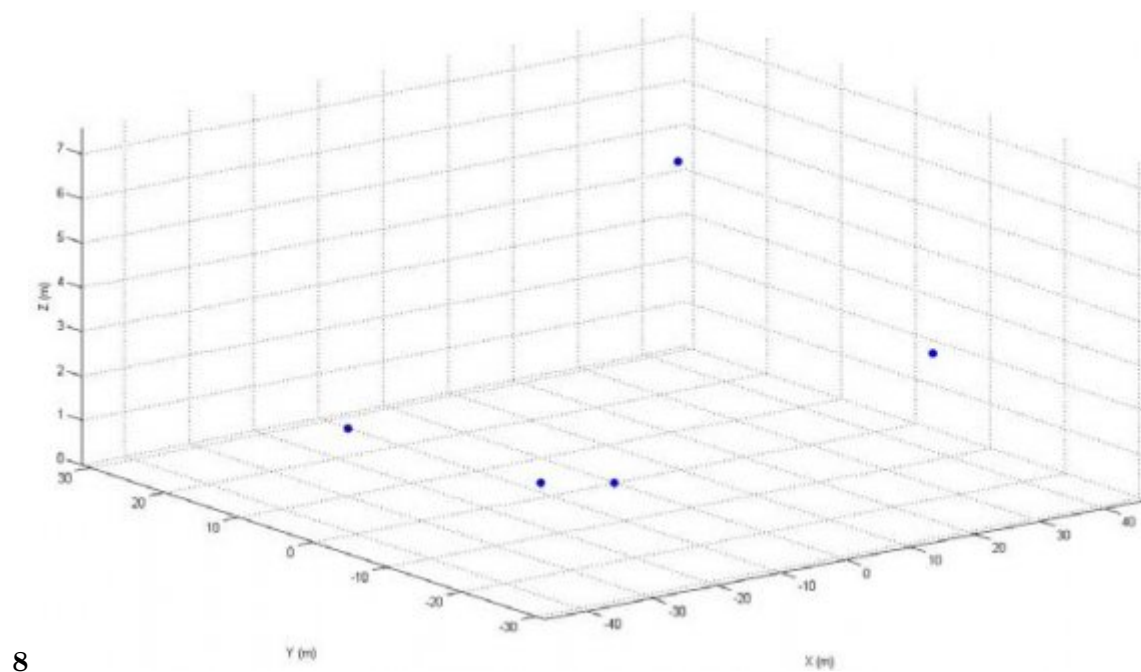


Figure 9: Figure 8 :

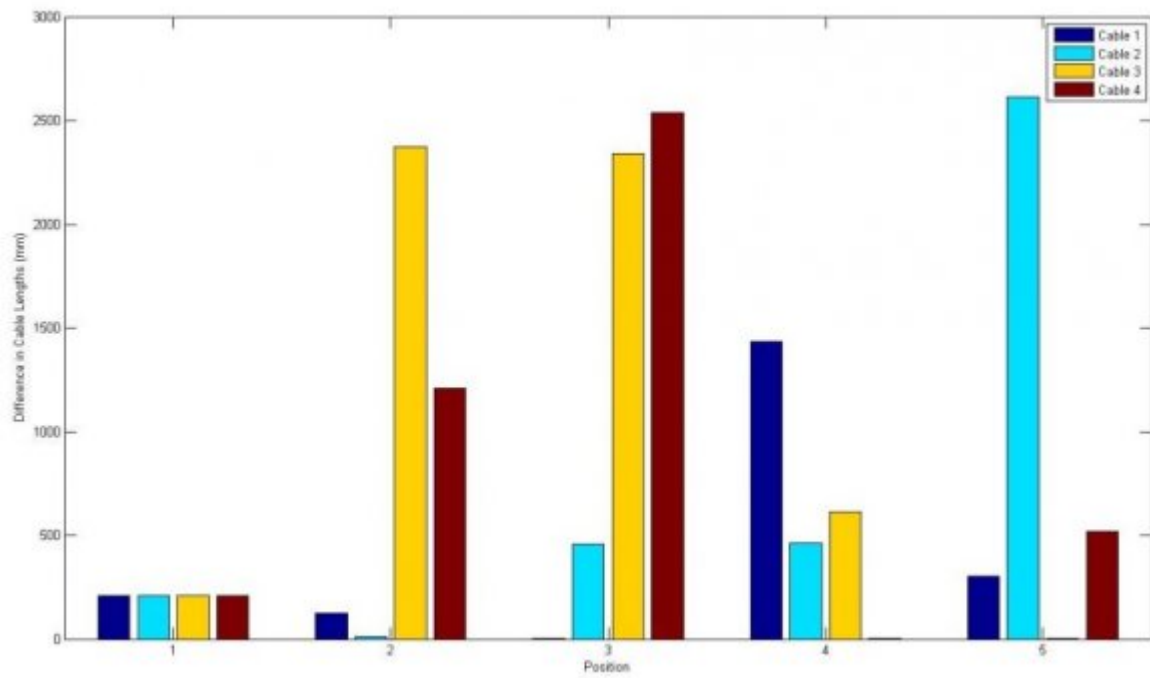
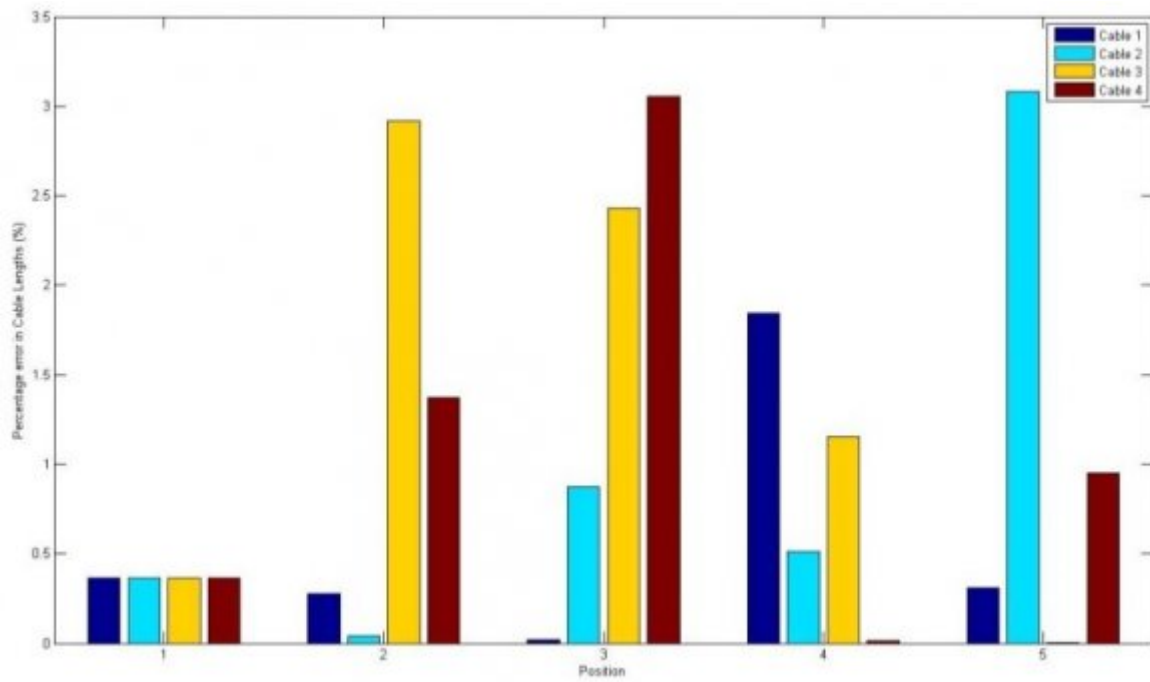
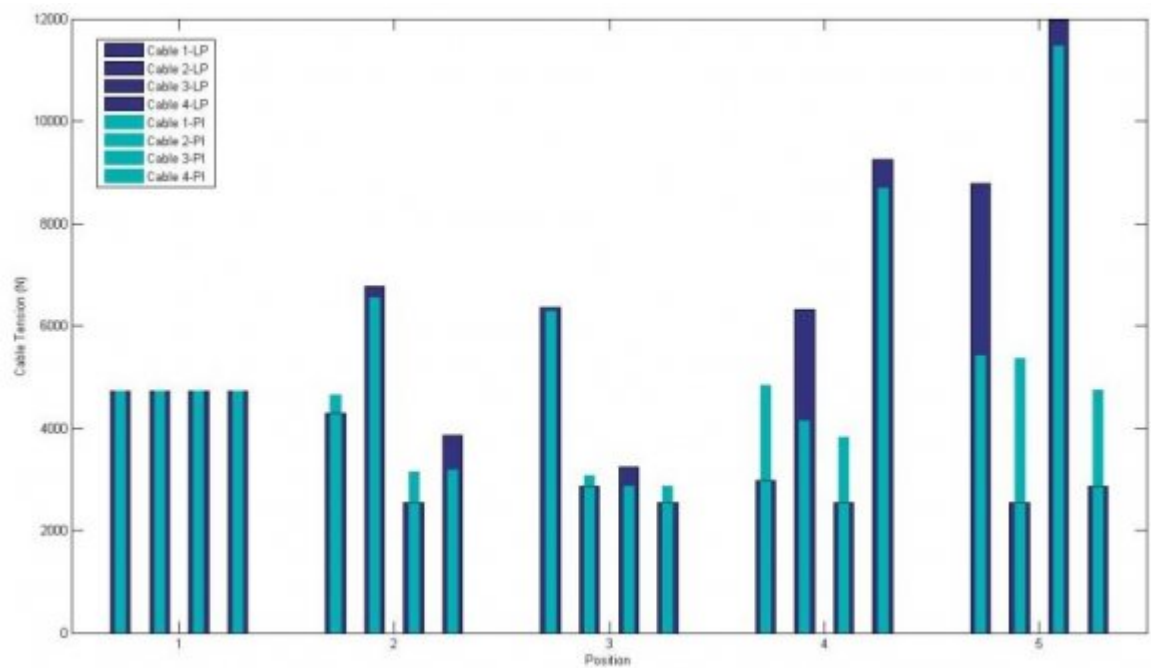


Figure 10:



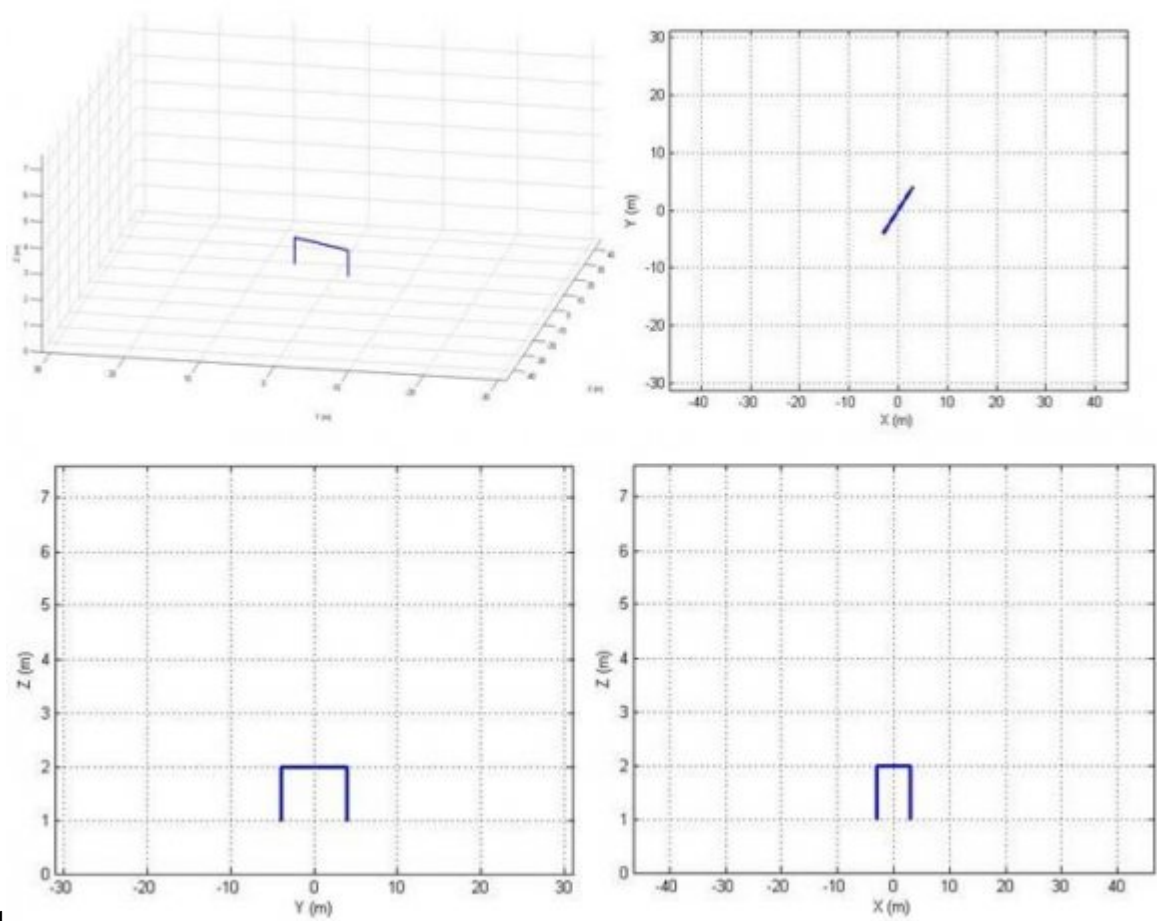
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Figure 11: Figure 9 :



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Figure 12: Figure 10 :Figure 11 :



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Figure 13: Figure 13 :Figure 14 :

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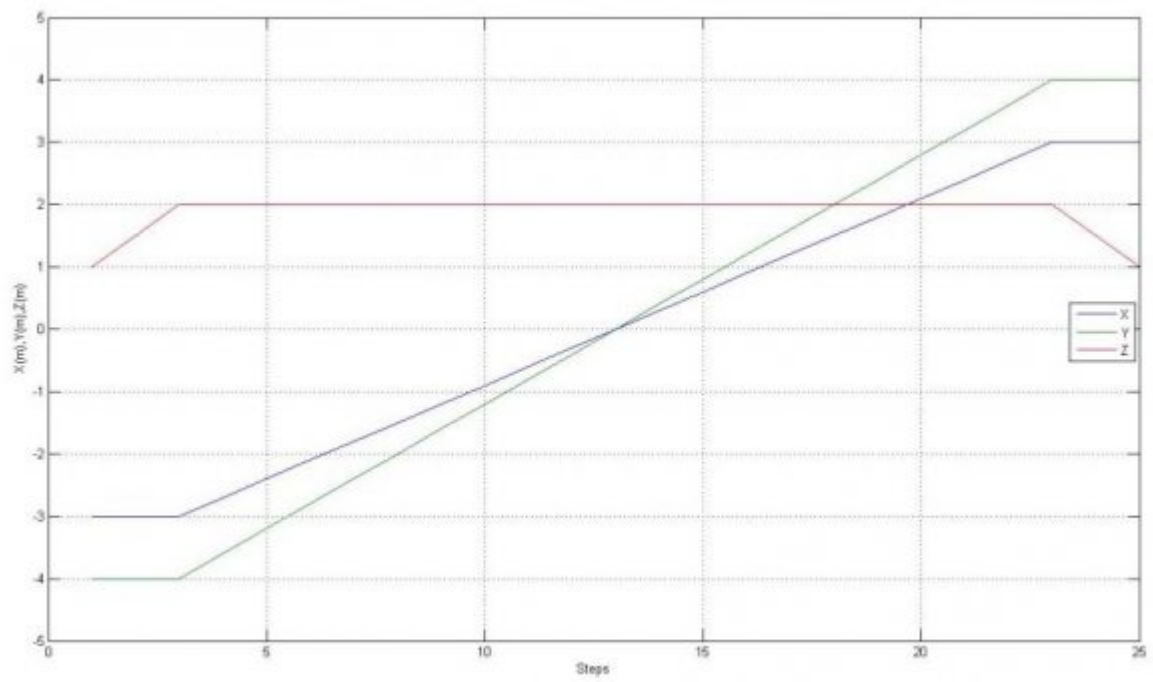


Figure 14: Figure 15 :Figure 16 :

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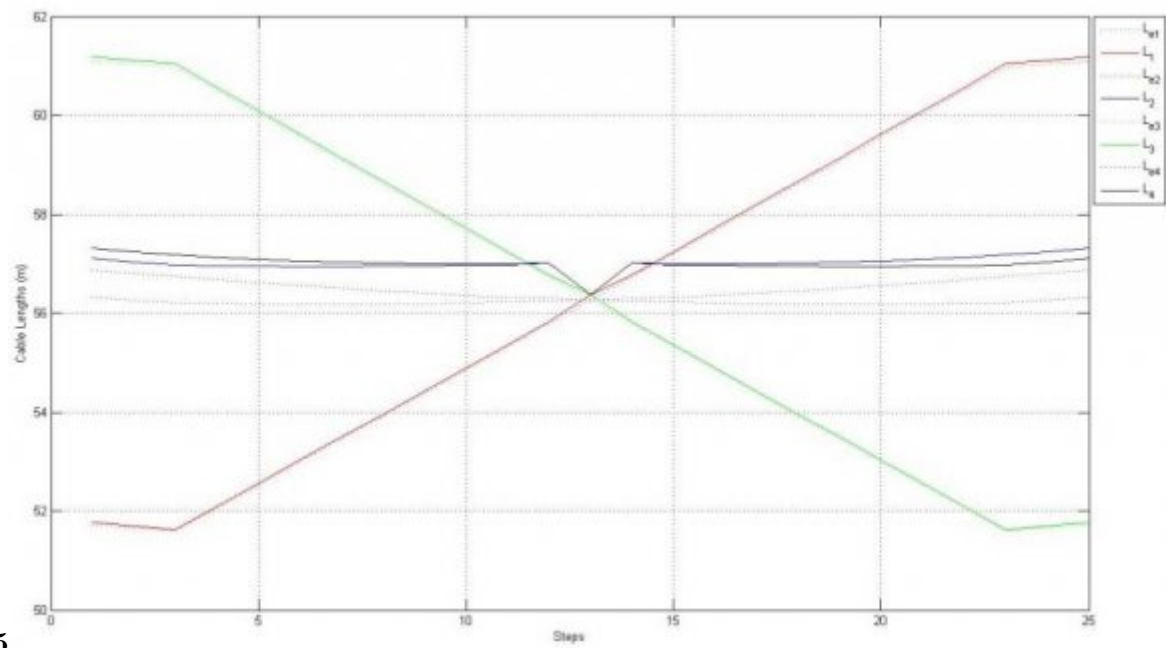
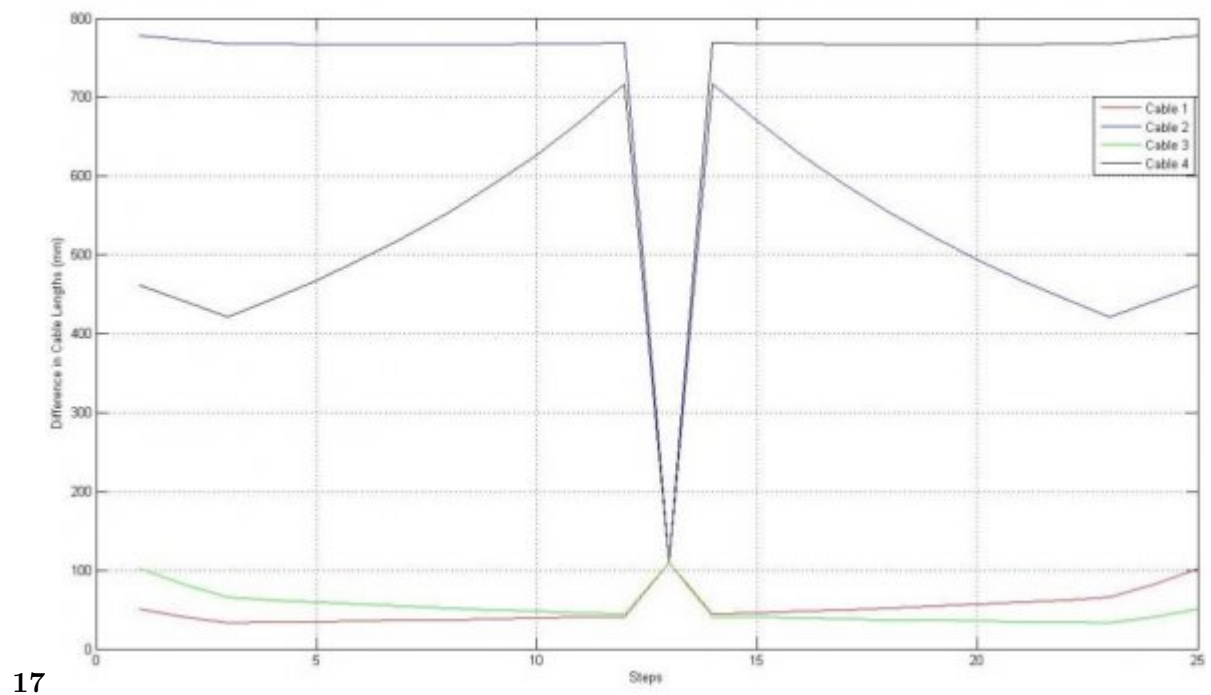


Figure 15: Table 5 :



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Figure 16: Figure 17 :

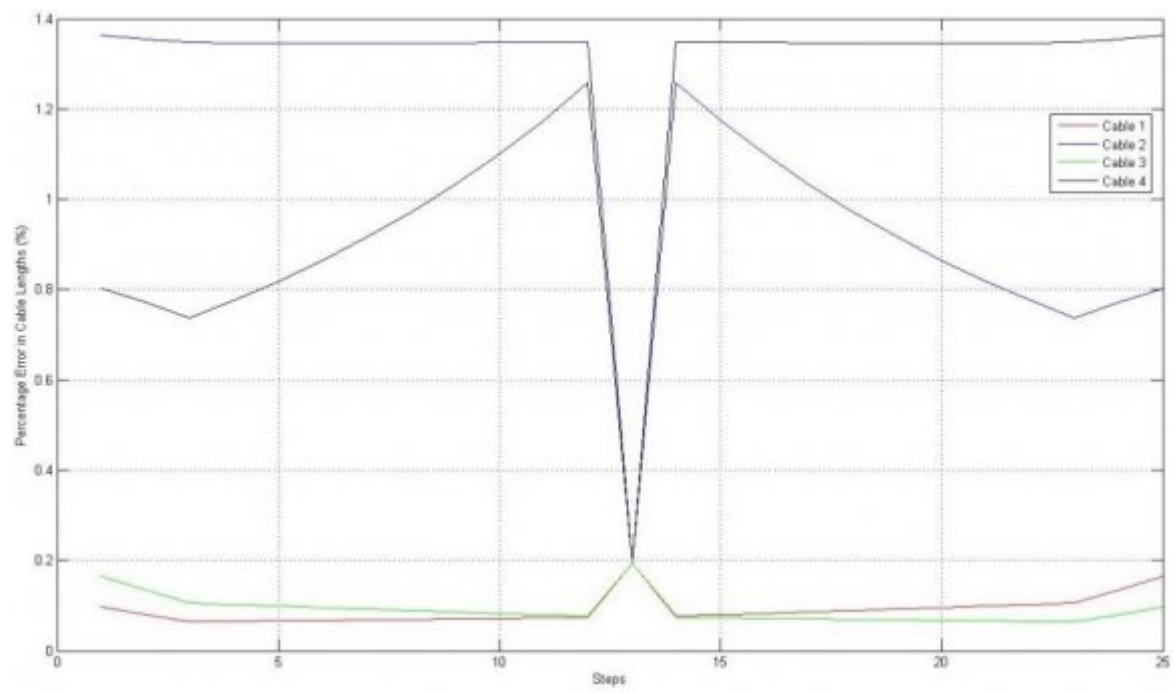
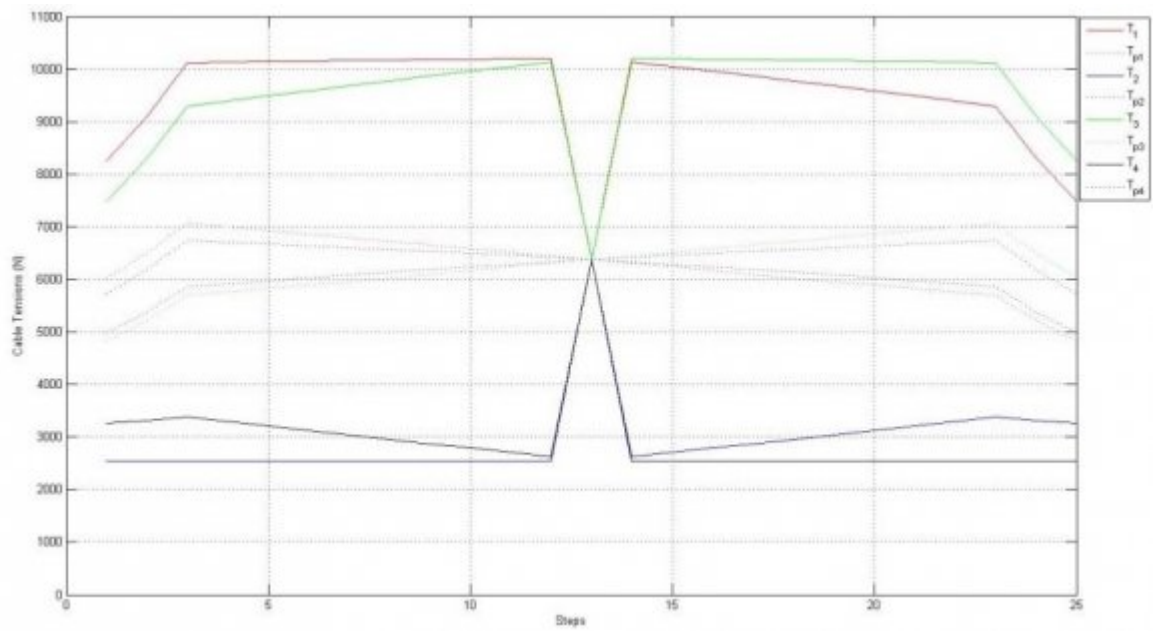
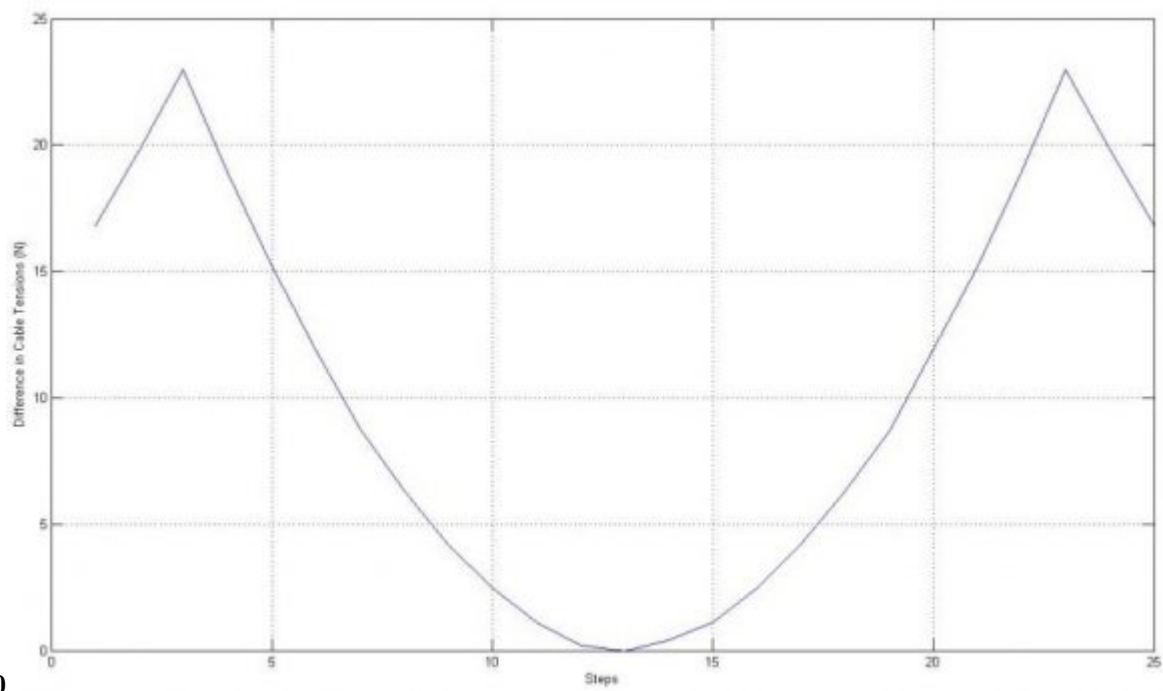


Figure 17: H



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Figure 18: Figure 18 :



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Figure 19: Figure 20 :

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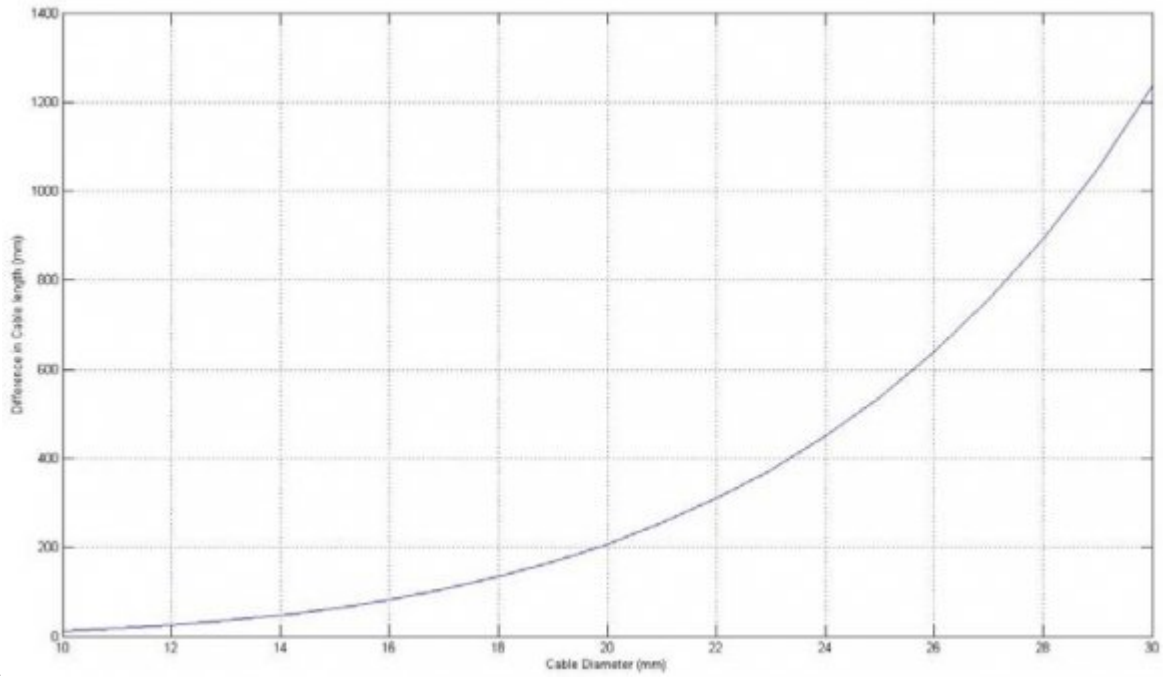


Figure 20: Figure 21 :

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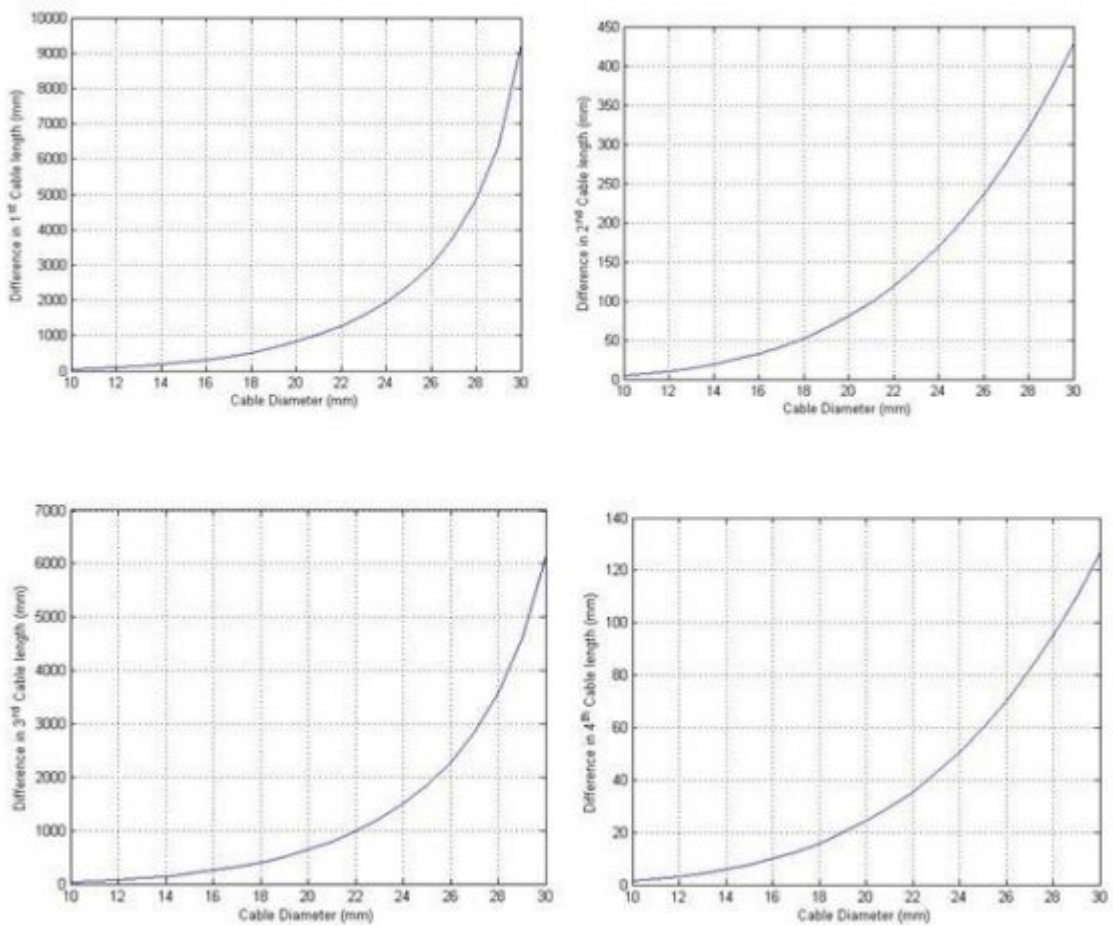
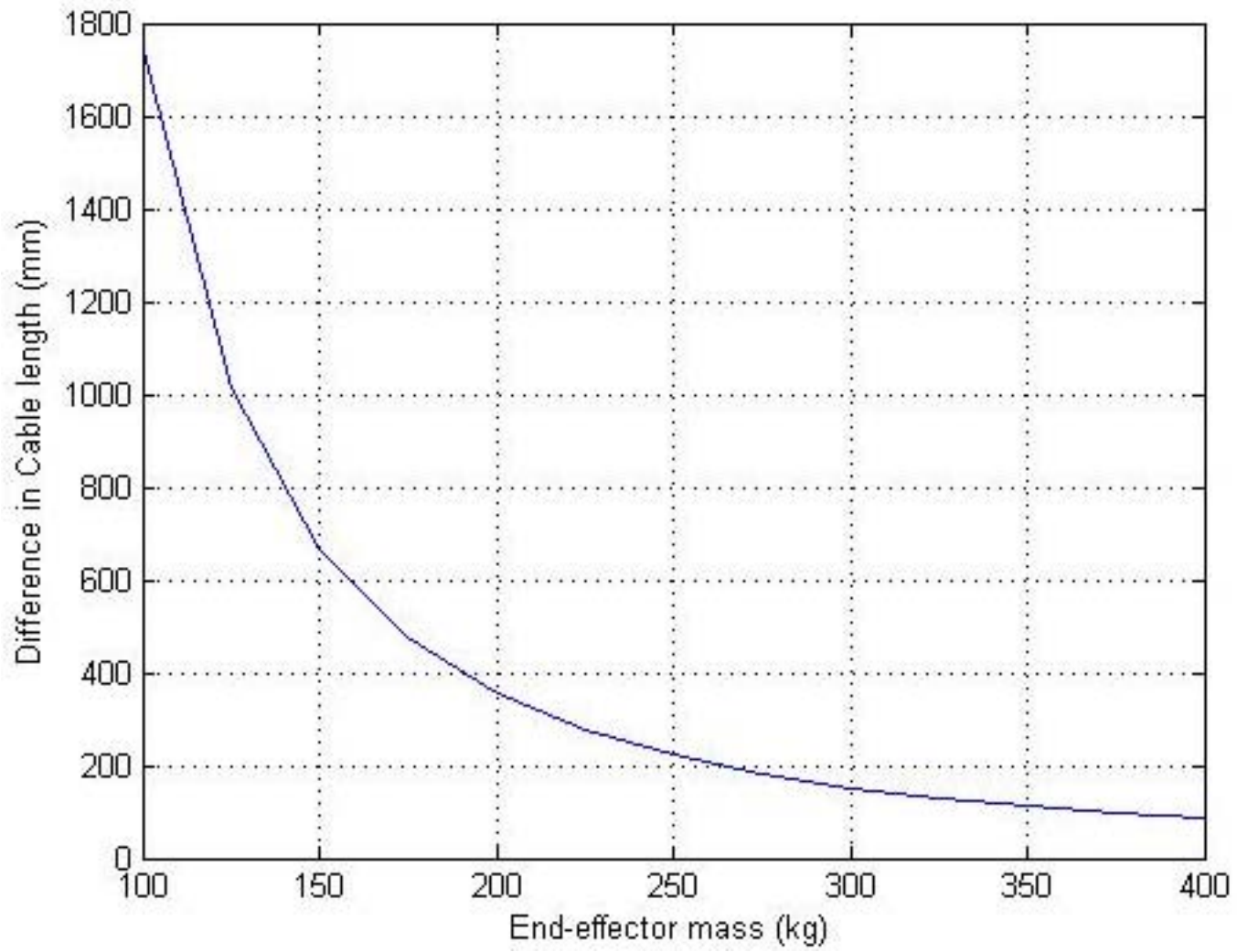


Figure 21: Figure 22 :



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Figure 22: Figure 23 :

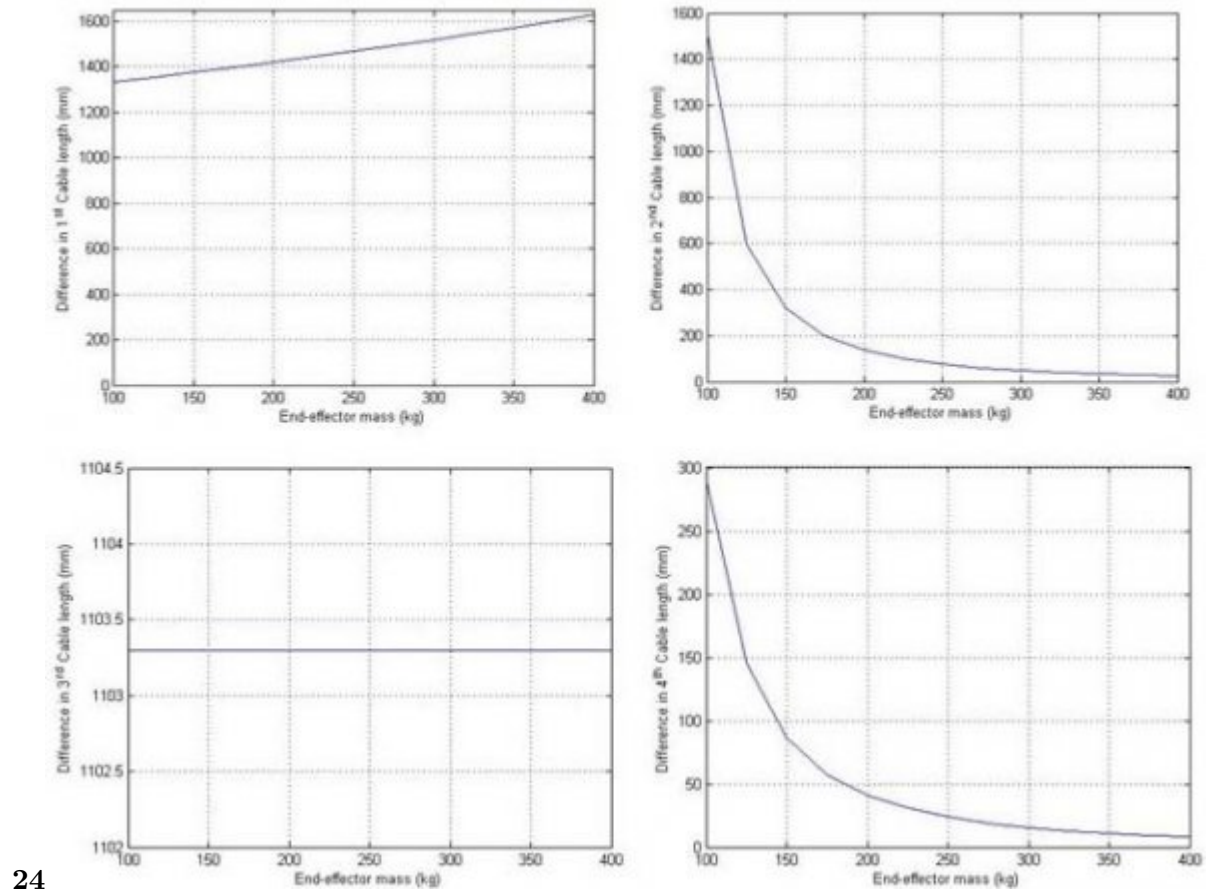


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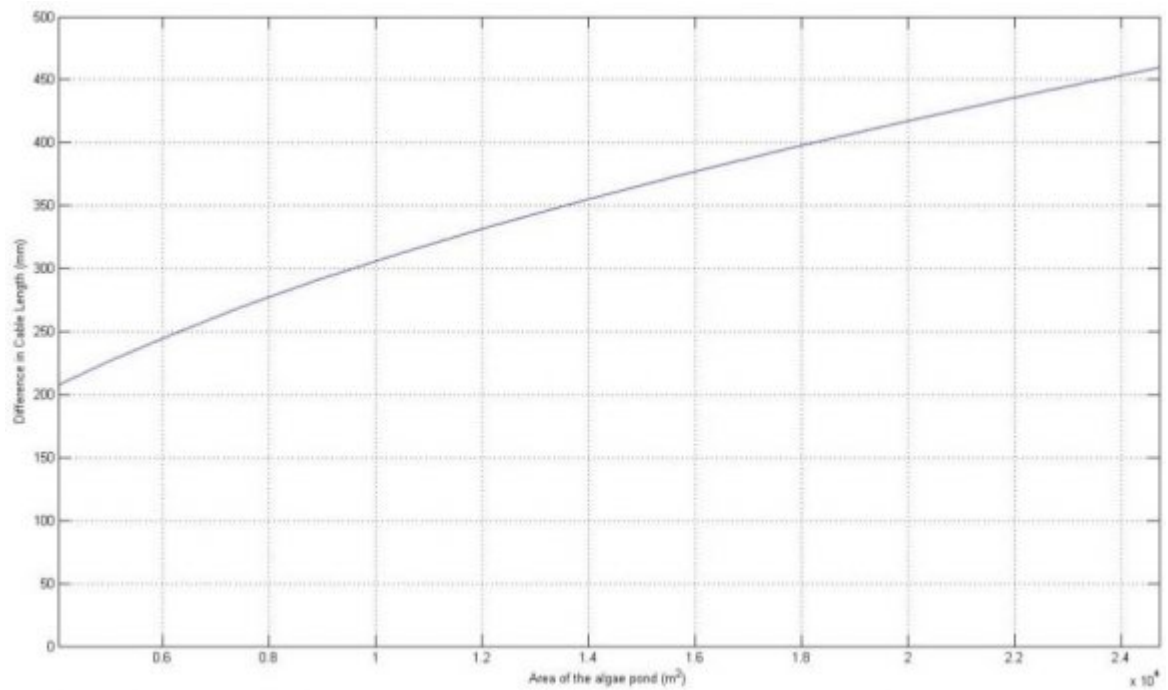


Figure 24:

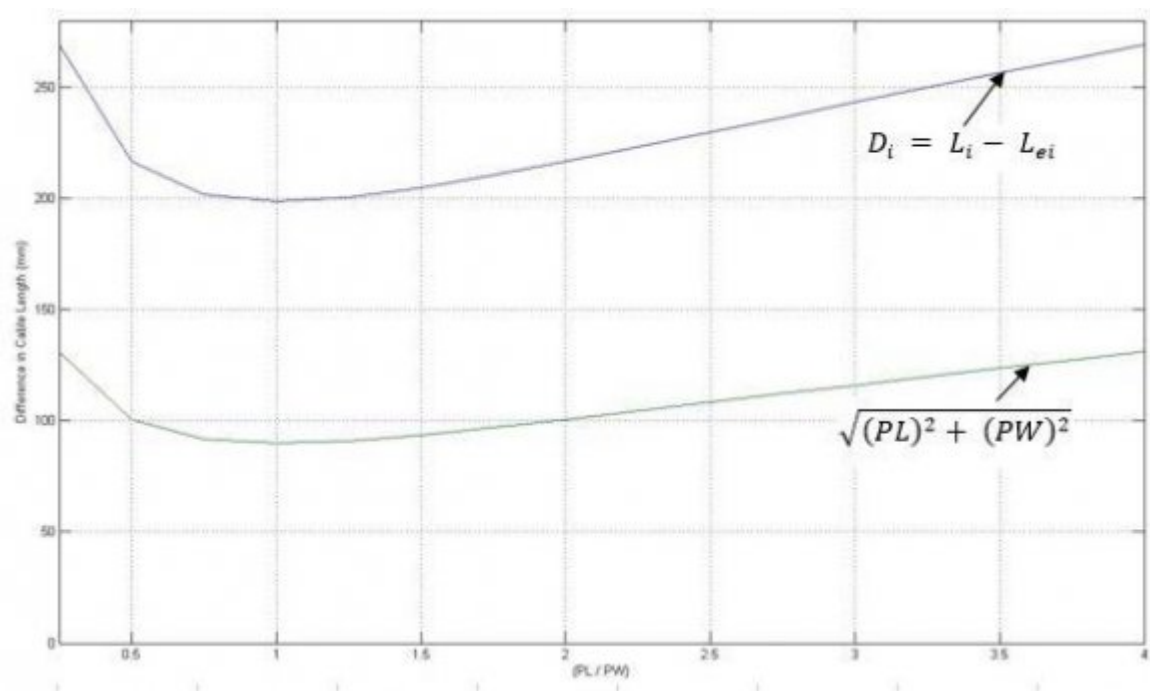


Figure 25:

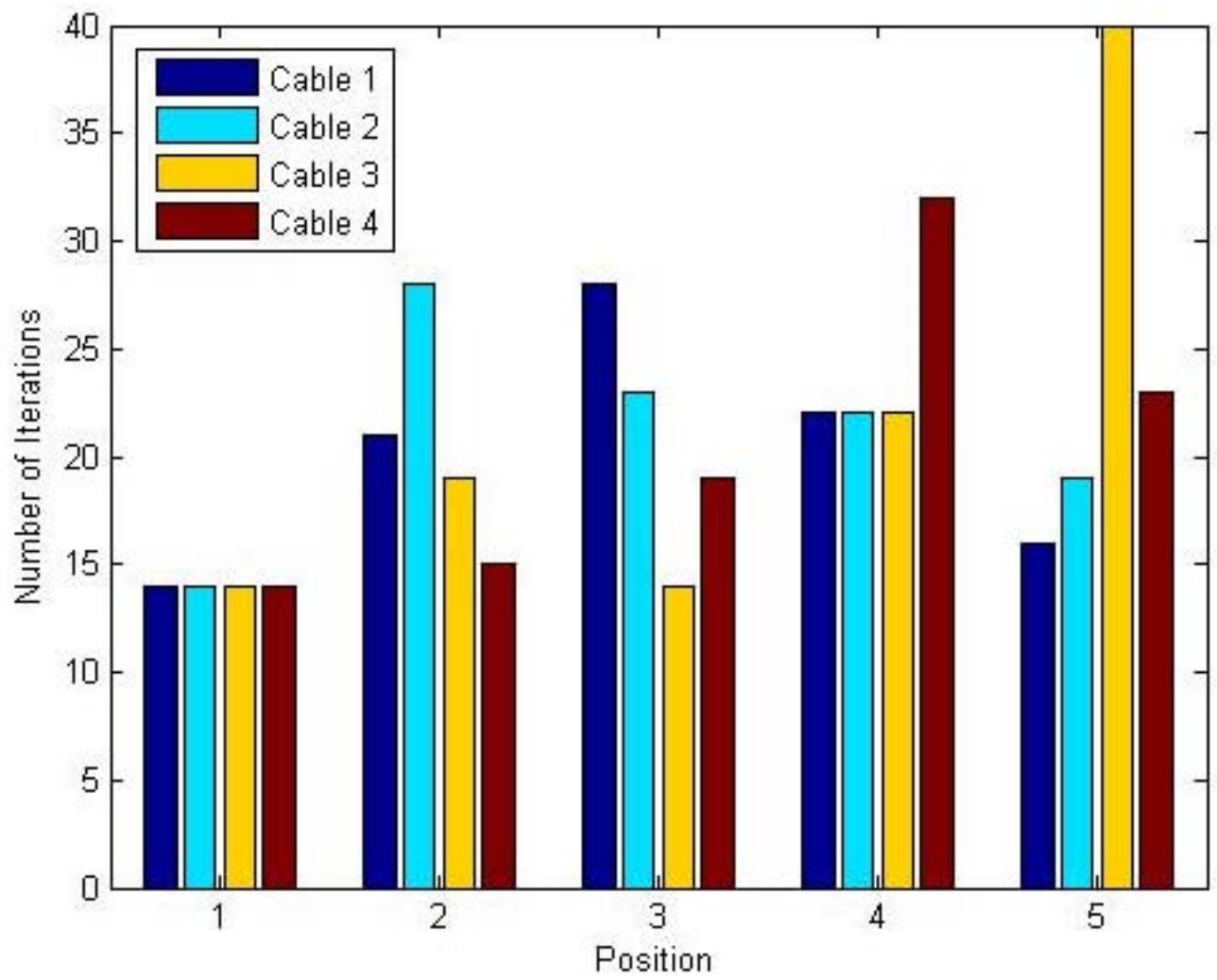


Figure 26:

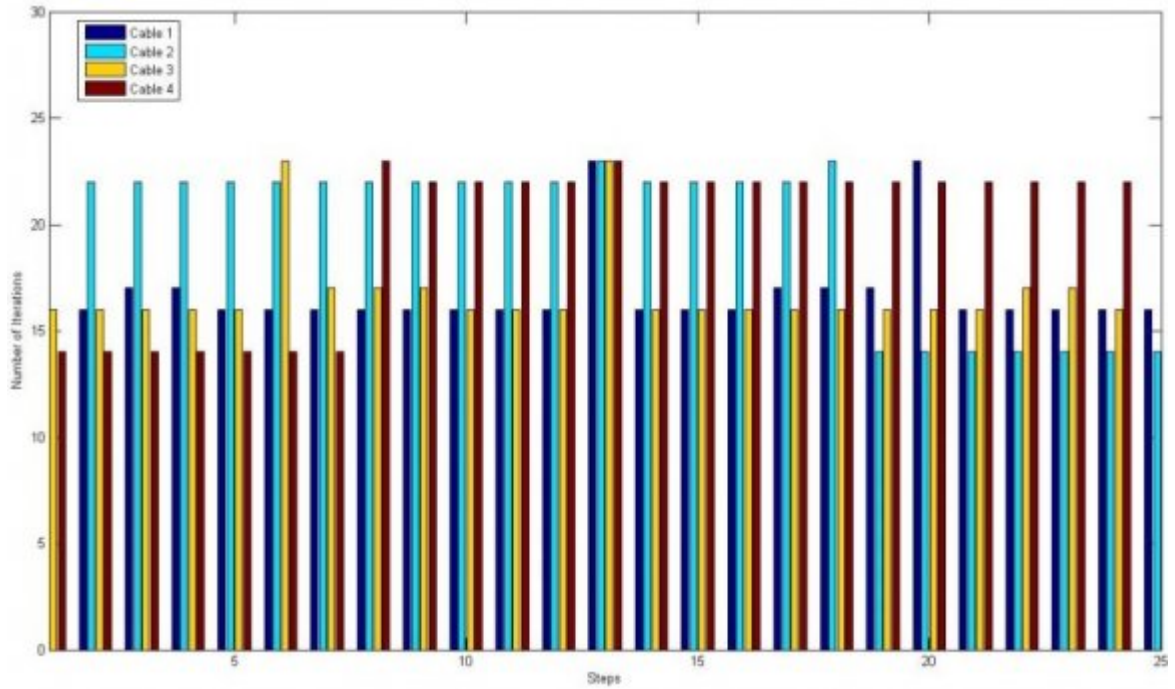


Figure 27:

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Variable	Value	Notes
Length (L)	50 m	1 acre footprint
Width (W)	80.9 m	
Pole Height (h)	7.6 m	All poles are same height
End-effector mass (m)	258.6 kg	-
Cable Diameter (d)	20 mm	-
Density of the Cable (?)	7860 kg/m ³	Density of a steel cable
External Force (A F)	{0}	0 xyz vector
Tension Lower Limit (T min)	2537 N	-
Tension Higher Limit (T max)	+ ?	To find the maximum force
? 0 0 0 ?		

Figure 28: Table 2 :

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		Point No.									X	End-effector position (m)			Y	Z				
		1									0	0			0					
		2									-29.4	10.2			1.5					
		3									-33.0	-			2.0					
												18.8								
		4									28.5	-			3.1					
												18.0								
		5									35.0	22.0			5.0					
		Inverse Position Solution										Forward Position Solution								
No.	Input									Output				Input				Output		
	Point	L 1								L 2	L 3	L 4	L 1	L 2			L 3	L 4	Point	

[Note: Global Journal of Researches in Engineering () Volume XVII Issue I Version I]

Figure 29: Table 4 :

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Criteria	Straight-line model	Cable sag model
Governing equations	Euclidean norm between two points	Catenary equations
Type of model	Approximate model	Accurate model
Kinematics and Statics	Analytical solution for both; problems solved independently.	Both problems are coupled and there is no analytical solution.
Nature of solutions	Analytical	Numerical
Mass of the cable	Neglected	Included
Areas of application	Small scale robots and where accuracy is not a prime concern.	Any cable-suspended robot system, especially large outdoor systems.
Errors involved	Cable length computation errors	

Figure 30: Table 6 :

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