

# Unstructured hexahedral mesh generation of complex vascular trees using a multi-block grid-based approach

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## 1. Introduction

2 Computational grids comprising of hexahedral instead of tetrahedral vol-  
3 ume elements have been reported to require less cells to obtain a mesh in-  
4 dependent result, especially when simulating the flow in segments of the  
5 cardiovascular or the respiratory system using computational fluid dynamics  
6 (CFD) (Longest and Vinchurkar, 2007; De Santis et al., 2010). This has  
7 been ascribed to the fact that adequate hexahedral grids consist of well or-  
8 ganized cells along the predominant direction of the flow, aligning the cell  
9 face normals with the physical flux (Antiga et al., 2002; Liu et al., 2004)  
10 and allowing an efficient distribution of the cells as they can be stretched  
11 or subdivided anisotropically without deteriorating the cell quality (Biswas  
12 and Strawn, 1998; De Santis et al., 2010). However, the construction of hex-  
13 ahedral meshes for a vascular tree is a complex and time-consuming task for  
14 the operator (Antiga et al., 2003; Vinchurkar and Longest, 2008; De Santis  
15 et al., 2011a). This problem is amplified when the geometry presents com-  
16 plex features such as multiple bifurcations, high-curvature regions, stenoses  
17 and aneurysms.

18

19 Mesh generation methods based on sweeping a quadrilateral decomposi-

20 tion of the cross section for creating (block) structured hexahedral grids of  
21 tubular structures (Berthier et al., 2002; Gao et al., 2006; Shimogonya et al.,  
22 2009) and bifurcations (Long et al., 1998; Younis et al., 2007) have been  
23 proposed in the last decade. This led to the development of robust and au-  
24 tomated strategies where the sweeping is based on a skeleton (Antiga et al.,  
25 2002), on the solution of a thermal conduction problem (Verma et al., 2005)  
26 or on geometrical features and operator choices using a graphical user inter-  
27 face (De Santis et al., 2011a). Decomposition templates for various branching  
28 configurations have been proposed (Zhang et al., 2007). However, a configu-  
29 ration with a single bifurcation may already lead to skewed elements at this  
30 bifurcation region, limiting the use of these sweeping techniques to ‘simple’  
31 bifurcations only.

32  
33 When geometries comprise multiple branching points or n-furcations, hex-  
34 ahedral meshing strategies based on mapping can be used. These strategies  
35 combine a preliminary generated multi-block structure with a volumetric  
36 block refinement to create the grid points. A body-fitted grid is then gener-  
37 ated by mapping the volume mesh to the volume of interest and by mapping  
38 the border mesh onto the surface of the image-based geometry (Grosland  
39 et al., 2009). A boundary layer grid can be included by introducing build-  
40 ing blocks with a so-called ‘butterfly’ pattern, in which four blocks surround  
41 a fifth block at the core (Zhang et al., 2000). This approach can be semi-  
42 automated by building multi-block structures inside and outside the vessel  
43 geometry as demonstrated by De Santis et al. (2011b). However, current  
44 procedures for generating adequate multi-block structures are still not fully

45 automated or lack robustness, and manual interventions are required to cor-  
46 rect self-intersecting or low quality blocks (De Santis et al., 2011b; Ramme  
47 et al., 2011, 2012) leading to intensive and extensive operator tasks. More-  
48 over, block corrections to assure a proper mapping in high-curvature regions  
49 of complex geometries – by pursuing small variations in the local geodesic  
50 distance between the geometry and the multi-block structure – typically de-  
51 teriorate the quality of the blocks and the cells of the final mesh.

52

53 The rationale of this work is to address these shortcomings by providing  
54 a robust and high-quality hexahedral meshing procedure that allows auto-  
55 mated mesh generation of complex vascular trees and is able to handle any  
56 combination of vessel segments, side branches, stenoses and aneurysms. This  
57 paper presents a novel procedure for auto-generating an interconnection of  
58 hexahedral blocks (Section 2.1). The resulting multi-block structure is fur-  
59 ther processed and used as input for a grid-based method to generate an  
60 unstructured hexahedral grid of the fluid domain (Section 2.2). Finally, the  
61 performance of the generated grids is analyzed in two numerical examples  
62 (Section 3).

## 63 **2. Materials and methods**

64 The methods proposed in this paper were implemented in a pyFormex  
65 framework combined with output from a geometrical analysis using the vmtk  
66 software.

67 *2.1. Multi-block structure generation*

68 In this section a strategy is proposed to generate a hexahedral multi-block  
69 structure of a treelike network by expressing the branching topology in terms  
70 of ‘parent vessels’ (Section 2.1.1), followed by the construction and alignment  
71 of vessel-enclosing squares (Section 2.1.2) and their interconnection into a set  
72 of hexahedral blocks (Section 2.1.3).

73 *2.1.1. Branching topology*

74 Given the in- and outlets of the geometry, a centerline with a constant  
75 prescribed distance  $d_0$  between the centerline nodes is computed, together  
76 with the radii of the maximum inscribed spheres, and the distances between  
77 the surface geometry and the centerline (Antiga et al., 2008). Each set of  
78 centerline nodes, corresponding to a vessel segment between two consecutive  
79 branching points or between a branching point and an inlet or outlet, is fur-  
80 ther referred to as a ‘branch’.

81 The connectivity between the branches is extracted from the centerline data  
82 and used to define the complete branching topology in terms of ‘parent ves-  
83 sels’, Figure 1(a). Starting with the branch at the inlet, consecutive branches  
84 are gathered into one (non-bifurcating) parent vessel, the so-called zeroth or-  
85 der parent vessel. This is done such that for every branching point the angle  
86 between the direction vector of the incoming and outgoing parent branch is  
87 minimal. The remaining child branches are listed per branching point using  
88 a FIFO-buffer, and set as start branches to retrieve the first order parent  
89 vessels. This procedure is repeated as long as the FIFO-buffer is filled with  
90 start branch labels of next order parent vessels.

91 *2.1.2. Square alignment*

92 For each branch, squares are constructed of which the centroids are lo-  
 93 cated at the centerline nodes, of which the normals are tangent to centerline  
 94 and of which one side is oriented parallel to the local transversal direction  
 95 vector, which gets calculated such that a smooth transition of the squares is  
 96 realized in every branch and across the branching points, Figure 1(b). There-  
 97 fore, a bifurcation normal is constructed at every branching point, normal  
 98 to the plane defined by the direction vectors of the outgoing parent branch  
 99 and a child branch. Then, each bifurcation normal is rotated in steps of  $\frac{\Pi}{2}$   
 100 radians around the direction vector of the outgoing parent branch until the  
 101 deflection angle with the upstream bifurcation normal (of the same parent  
 102 vessel) is minimal. The resulting bifurcation normals are projected onto the  
 103 planes perpendicular to the direction vectors of the surrounding branches,  
 104 Figure 1(a). The projected normals are interpolated along the centerline,  
 105  $\vec{n}_p^m$ , to compute the local transversal direction vector,  $\vec{e}_t^m$ , at every center-  
 106 line node  $m$ , Equation (1), with  $\vec{e}_a^m$  the local axial direction vector and  $N_c^b$   
 107 the number of centerline nodes at branch  $b$ .

$$\vec{n}_p^m = \vec{n}_p^0 + \frac{m}{N_c^b - 1} \left( \vec{n}_p^{N_c^b - 1} - \vec{n}_p^0 \right), \quad m \in [0, N_c^b - 1] \quad (1a)$$

$$\vec{e}_t^m = \begin{cases} \frac{\vec{n}_p^m \times \vec{e}_a^m}{\|\vec{n}_p^m \times \vec{e}_a^m\|} & , \quad \vec{n}_p^m \times \vec{e}_a^m \neq \vec{0} \\ \frac{\vec{e}_t^{m-1} - (\vec{e}_t^{m-1} \cdot \vec{e}_a^m) \cdot \vec{e}_a^m}{\|\vec{e}_t^{m-1} - (\vec{e}_t^{m-1} \cdot \vec{e}_a^m) \cdot \vec{e}_a^m\|} & , \quad \vec{n}_p^m \times \vec{e}_a^m = \vec{0} \end{cases} \quad (1b)$$

108

109 Each square gets an edge length relative to the local diameter of the  
 110 maximum inscribed sphere with a scaling factor  $f_s > 1$  to radially enclose

111 the surface geometry (De Santis et al., 2011b).

### 112 2.1.3. Block generation and interconnection

113 The squares are auto-connected into a multi-block structure, based on  
114 the branching topology as defined in Section 2.1.1 (Figure 1(c)). Note that  
115 there exists only one parent vessel of the zeroth order ( $i = 0$ ). A block  
116 structure for this parent vessel is built by interconnecting the consecutive  
117 squares of its branches. First, a *curved block structure* is generated for its  
118 first branch. As long as this branch is not the last branch of the parent  
119 vessel, this step is followed by the generation of a curved block structure for  
120 this next (downstream) branch and a *branch connection block*, connecting  
121 the curved block structures of both branches. Similar procedures are used  
122 to build the parent vessel block structures of order  $i > 0$  with the difference  
123 that additional connection blocks, towards the corresponding parent vessels  
124 of order  $i - 1$ , are built too. These *vessel connection blocks* are constructed  
125 by extracting branch connection blocks from a FIFO-buffer, which got filled  
126 when building the parent vessel block structures of order  $i - 1$ .  
127 The generated multi-block structure is axially smoothed – keeping the faces  
128 at the inlet, the outlets and the branch connection blocks in place – to avoid  
129 self-intersection and to improve the vessel connection blocks.

### 130 2.2. Unstructured hexahedral mesh generation

131 In this section, a refined multi-block structure (Section 2.2.1) and a ra-  
132 dially compressed surface mesh of the vascular tree are provided as input to  
133 the well-known grid-based method (Ho-Le, 1988). The result is an unstruc-  
134 tured set of (centerline aligned) hexahedral volume elements for the core of

135 the fluid domain (Section 2.2.2). This unstructured hex-core resembles the  
136 volume of the original geometry well and allows the creation of a high-quality  
137 boundary layer grid between the interface of the hex-core and the original  
138 surface mesh (Section 2.2.3).

### 139 *2.2.1. Multi-block structure refinement*

140 The multi-block structure from Section 2.1 is refined by introducing a  
141 grid in every block, Figure 2(a). The resulting grids are the outcome of  
142 a refinement procedure which is based on two parameters: the axial edge  
143 refinement factor,  $f_{edge,a}$  ( $\in \mathbb{N}$ ), and the transversal edge refinement factor,  
144  $f_{edge,t}$  ( $\in \mathbb{N}$ ). The first subdivides the edges in the direction of the centerline,  
145 where the latter defines the refinement of the edges in a plane perpendicular  
146 to the centerline and at all the edges of the branch connection blocks (where  
147 axial and transversal directions are not unambiguously defined).  $f_{edge,a}$  may  
148 vary throughout the model, where  $f_{edge,t}$  is kept constant to avoid a non-  
149 conformal mesh at the interface regions between two refined, consecutive  
150 blocks.

### 151 *2.2.2. The multi-block grid-based method*

152 In the grid-based method, an initial Cartesian grid is overlaid on the  
153 input surface geometry and the grid cells falling outside the computational  
154 domain are removed. To obtain a body-fitted grid, the stair-step surface  
155 mesh is projected onto the bounding surface of the input geometry (Schnei-  
156 ders, 1996). A mesh resulting from the grid-based method is unstructured  
157 and consists of hexahedral volume elements with an excellent cell quality  
158 in the object interior and near the boundaries that are parallel to one of

159 the coordinate planes of the initial grid. A drawback of this method is the  
160 generation of highly skewed cells near the boundaries which are not parallel  
161 to one of the coordinate planes. The quality of these cells largely depends  
162 on the orientation of the initial grid. Therefore, the authors apply the grid-  
163 based method onto a refined multi-block structure and not onto a Cartesian  
164 grid. This new approach is further denoted by the multi-block grid-based  
165 method. The multi-block structure comprises curved block structures which  
166 are aligned with the centerline and take into account the local vessel radius.  
167 During the projection phase this results in stretching the cells towards the  
168 boundary rather than skewing them. To allow a proper projection, the vol-  
169 ume of the remaining cells – further denoted as the hex-core (Figure 2(b)) –  
170 is corrected by removing all cells with non-manifold edges. Then, the stair-  
171 step surface mesh of the hex-core is smoothed and projected onto the input  
172 surface geometry to obtain a body-fitted hex-core, Figure 2(c).

### 173 *2.2.3. Boundary layer grid generation*

174 The cell quality at the boundary can be further improved by inserting  
175 buffer layers (Tchon et al., 1997; Kovalev, 2005; Shepherd et al., 2006). In  
176 this work a similar effect is obtained by performing the grid-based method  
177 onto an input surface geometry of which the interface mesh (i.e. the sur-  
178 face mesh excluding the faces at the in- and outlets) is a radially compressed  
179 isomorphism of the original (lumen-wall) interface mesh. This allows the cre-  
180 ation of a boundary layer grid with a controllable thickness, e.g. by setting  
181 the distance between the original and the compressed interface as a function  
182 of the local distance to centerline, Figure 3(a), combined with a threshold  
183 to limit the maximum thickness of the boundary layer grid (for instance in



184 aneurysm regions).

185 The body-fitting process of the grid-based method projects the interface  
186 nodes of the hex-core onto the compressed interface mesh. Isoparametric  
187 coordinates for each of these nodes are computed with respect to the face  
188 where they are projected onto. As the compressed interface mesh holds the  
189 same mesh topology as the original interface mesh, isoparametric coordinate  
190 transformations map the hex-core interface onto this original interface mesh.  
191 The mapped nodes are then connected to the corresponding nodes of the  
192 isomorphic hex-core interface, generating one layer of hexahedral cells which  
193 can be further refined radially to obtain multiple layers at the boundary  
194 layer. While keeping the border mesh in place, a final Laplacian smoothing  
195 is performed to improve the cell quality at the transition region between the  
196 hex-core and the boundary layer grid, Figure 3(b).

### 197 **3. Numerical examples**

198 In this section, numerical analyses of two applications illustrate the effi-  
199 cacy of the unstructured hexahedral grids.

#### 200 *3.1. CFD model of an abdominal mouse aorta*

##### 201 *3.1.1. Grid sensitivity analysis*

202 A grid sensitivity analysis is performed for a steady state CFD simulation  
203 at peak systole of an abdominal mouse aorta, using the flow solver Fluent  
204 (Ansys). The geometry (Figure 4(b)) and the boundary conditions (the peak  
205 systolic inflow of *case AA7* combined with the mean outflow fractions) were  
206 taken from Trachet et al. (2011).

207 Pressure drops and velocities were analyzed along the centerline for mul-  
 208 tiple hexahedral grids with increasing mesh densities. Their mean error and  
 209 maximum error with respect to the reference grid are presented in Table 1,  
 210 relative to the total pressure drop  $\Delta p = 6.822 \text{ mmHg}$  and the maximum  
 211 change in velocity along the centerline  $\Delta v = 32.310 \frac{\text{cm}}{\text{s}}$ . To allow an ad-  
 212 equate comparison of the wall shear stress (WSS) for different grids, it is  
 213 evaluated on a global level by considering the surface area enclosed by a  
 214 WSS iso-contour in function of WSS,  $A_{iso}(wss)$ , normalized by the total sur-  
 215 face area,  $A_{tot}$ . The mean and maximum errors with respect to the reference  
 216 grid are presented in Table 1. As the errors are small, the derivative of this  
 217 function is visualized in Figure 4(a) for values larger than 5% of the maxi-  
 218 mum surface area change. To evaluate WSS on a local level the iso-contour  
 219 of  $10.8 \text{ Pa}$ , which corresponds to both a high WSS value and a high change  
 220 in WSS surface area, is visualized in Figure 4(b) for different mesh densities  
 221 in the region distal to the coeliac artery and proximal to the trifurcation.

222 Table 1 shows small errors for all three flow variables and a converging  
 223 trend. 53k, 98k and 798k cells are required in the fluid domain to obtain  
 224 a maximum error of about 1% for respectively the pressure along the cen-  
 225 terline, the global change in WSS surface area and the velocity along the  
 226 centerline. Moreover, Figure 4(b) shows only a small error and a converging  
 227 trend for the WSS surface area on a local level.

228 The efficacy of hexahedral grids becomes clear when comparing the velocity  
 229 along the centerline to results obtained for a grid sensitivity analysis involv-  
 230 ing tetrahedral grids (with a prismatic boundary layer grid near the wall),  
 231 Figure 5, where 201k hexahedral cells provide the same accuracy as 11870k

232 tetrahedral cells.

### 233 *3.1.2. Multi-block structure extension*

234 In more complex geometries, high-curvature regions may lead to low-  
235 quality cells. The presented meshing strategy can be extended by additional  
236 block-structures. For example, consider the aneurismatic mouse aorta of  
237 Figure 6(a). The multi-block structure is constructed after adapting the,  
238 in Section 2.1.1 defined, branching topology as suggested in Figure 6(b).  
239 Then, based on the bounding box of the aneurysm and trifurcation region,  
240 an additional connection block structure is generated to replace the branch  
241 with label 1 and the corresponding branch connection blocks, Figure 6(c).  
242 Detailed views of the fluid mesh and an equiangle skewness histogram are  
243 provided in Figure 6(d).

### 244 *3.2. Local grid refinement in an FSI model of aortic coarctation*

245 This example analyses the pressure drop along an aorta with aortic coarctation,  
246 which is a congenital disease characterized by a narrowing of the upper  
247 descending aorta. The pressure difference between the ascending and  
248 descending aorta is the most important indication of aortic coarctation. Because  
249 this pressure drop is difficult to assess in a non-invasive way, its simulation  
250 is of high clinical relevance. As simulations with rigid walls fail to capture  
251 some physiological patterns, the fluid-structure interaction (FSI) between the  
252 blood flow and the deformation of the arterial wall was taken into account.  
253 To obtain an accurate calculation of the stress on the fluid-structure interface,  
254 the flow equations were solved in the Arbitrary Lagrangian-Eulerian formulation  
255 on a deforming mesh, using Fluent (Ansys). The structural equations

256 were solved in a Lagrangian frame, using Abaqus/Standard (Simulia). The  
257 solvers were strongly coupled with the IQN-ILS technique (Degroote et al.,  
258 2009).

259 The geometrical model was obtained from MRI images of a healthy 39y  
260 old male volunteer. The functional impact of aortic coarctation was modeled  
261 by including a stenosed region with a length of 1 cm (L) and a coarctation  
262 index ( $CI = D_{\text{coa}}/D_{\text{desc}}$ ) of 0.5, Figure 8(a). Flow rates were measured with  
263 phase-contrast MRI and imposed as physiological boundary conditions at  
264 the ascending aorta and the three side branches. At the descending aorta,  
265 a three-element Windkessel model was implemented ( $Z = 0.08 \frac{\text{mmHg}}{\text{ml/s}}$ ,  $R =$   
266  $1.024 \frac{\text{mmHg}}{\text{ml/s}}$ ,  $C = 2.0 \frac{\text{ml}}{\text{mmHg}}$ ), in which the parameters of the model were  
267 defined such that physiological pressure variations were retrieved. Blood was  
268 modeled as a Newtonian fluid (viscosity 3 mPas, density 1050  $\frac{\text{kg}}{\text{m}^3}$ ). As a non-  
269 conformal mesh is allowed at the fluid-structure interface, the quadrilateral  
270 interface can be simplified, Figure 7(a). This improves the quality of the mesh  
271 for the arterial wall which is generated by radially expanding the quadrilateral  
272 interface into a hexahedral mesh with multiple layers (diameter to thickness  
273 ratio: 10%). Only radial displacement was allowed at the in- and outlet  
274 boundaries of the solid domain and the material behavior of the aortic tissue  
275 was described using a polynomial hyperelastic model (hyperelastic constants:  
276  $C_{10} = 18.9 \text{ kPa}$ ,  $C_{01} = 2.75 \text{ kPa}$ ,  $C_{20} = 400 \text{ kPa}$ ,  $C_{11} = 847.2 \text{ kPa}$ ).

277 For a constant square scaling factor, Figure 7(b), four different meshes  
278 were constructed with an increasing cell density (R1, R2, R3, R4). The  
279 number of cells are depicted in Table 2, together with the calculation time  
280 required to compute one cardiac cycle (on two 10-core Intel Xeon E5-2680v2

281 processors). As FSI simulations are computationally expensive and time  
282 consuming, it is important to use a computational grid for which accurate  
283 results are obtained with a limited number of cells. To illustrate how the  
284 proposed meshing strategy is able to provide an adaptively refined grid, a  
285 fifth mesh is constructed (R5) by locally adapting  $f_{edge,a}$  and  $f_s$ , Figure 7(c).  
286 The resulting fluid mesh has, compared to the finest mesh (R4), a higher  
287 mesh density in the coarctation zone, but a coarser grid proximal to the  
288 stenosis and in the lower part of the descending aorta.

289 The results of the grid refinement study are shown in Figure 8(b), depict-  
290 ing the pressure evolution along the centerline of the aorta at peak systole,  
291 and in Table 2, showing the mean error of the pressure evolution in different  
292 cross sections. These errors are defined with respect to the reference grid  
293 R4 and relative to the pressure amplitude in the corresponding cross section.  
294 From the results in Table 2, it can be seen that even for meshes with a low  
295 cell density, the mean errors proximal, halfway and distal to the coarctation  
296 zone remain low ( $< 2\%$ ). When comparing the locally refined grid R5 with  
297 the uniformly refined grids R3 and R4, an important reduction in computa-  
298 tion time is gained (23 h 38 min per cardiac cycle versus 30 h 33 min and 40 h  
299 38 min) without a loss in accuracy. The mean error obtained with the mesh  
300 R5 stays below 1.15% and comparable errors are found as for the mesh R3.

#### 301 4. Conclusion

302 This work proposes a novel strategy to generate unstructured hexahedral  
303 grids for the fluid domain of complex treelike structures. By only providing  
304 the grid refinement parameters, a multi-block structure is generated, refined,

305 and used – together with a radially compressed surface mesh of the geometry  
306 of interest – as input for the grid-based method. The resulting hex-core is  
307 extended with a boundary layer grid to generate a mesh for the fluid domain  
308 with high-quality cells, even in regions of high curvature. The methodology  
309 allows local refinements in both the axial direction and the cross sections, and  
310 is able to handle aneurysms by extending the multi-block structure with ad-  
311 ditional blocks. A grid dependency study, for a steady state CFD simulation  
312 of an abdominal mouse aorta, shows a fast converging trend for the pressure  
313 gradient, the velocity and the wall shear stress. The accuracy is superior  
314 compared to tetrahedral grids with a prismatic boundary layer grid, and  
315 for the same accuracy a hexahedral mesh appears to reduce the number of  
316 cells by a factor 0.1 - 0.01. Finally, a numerical example of aortic coarctation  
317 shows the applicability of the meshing strategy to complex geometries in FSI  
318 models and the efficacy of local grid refinements in reducing the computation  
319 time without accuracy loss.

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## 323 **Conflict of interest statement**

324 The authors report that there is no conflict of interest regarding this  
325 study.

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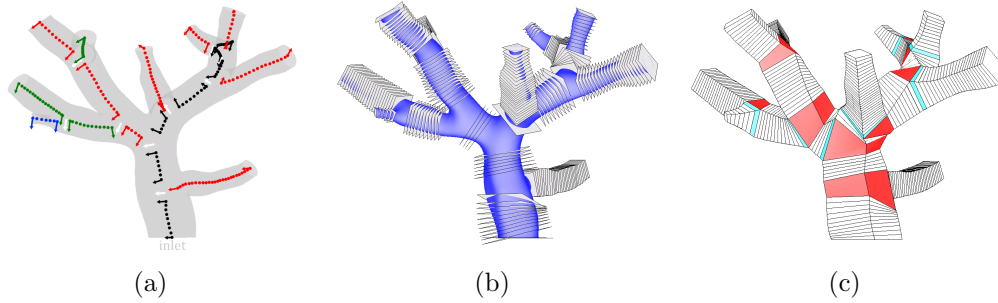


Figure 1: (a) Branches of a vascular tree (coloured by increasing parent vessel order: black, red, green, blue), (Section 2.1.1). Bifurcation normals (white) and projected bifurcation normals (coloured by parent vessel order), (Section 2.1.2). (b) Squares positioned along the branches (Section 2.1.2). (c) Multi-block structure of the vascular tree with the *curved block structures* in white, the *branch connection blocks* in red and the *vessel connection blocks* in cyan (Section 2.1.3).

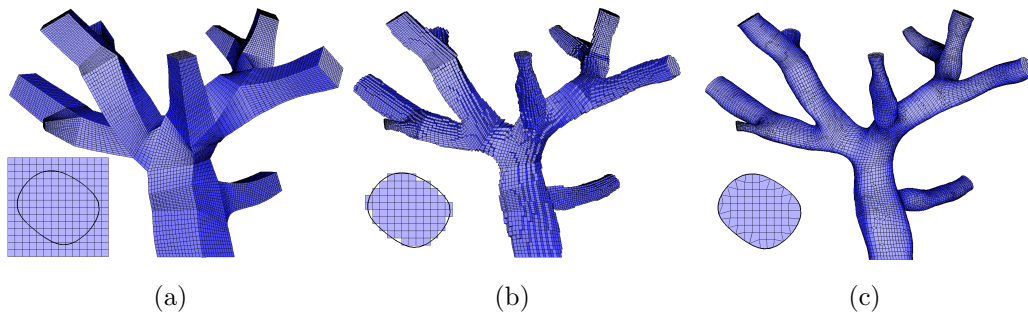


Figure 2: (a) Refined multi-block structure, of the vascular tree (Section 2.2.1). (b) and (c) Unstructured hex-core before and after the body-fitting procedure of the grid-based method (Section 2.2.2). A two-dimensional view of the inlet is presented in the lower left corner of every subfigure.

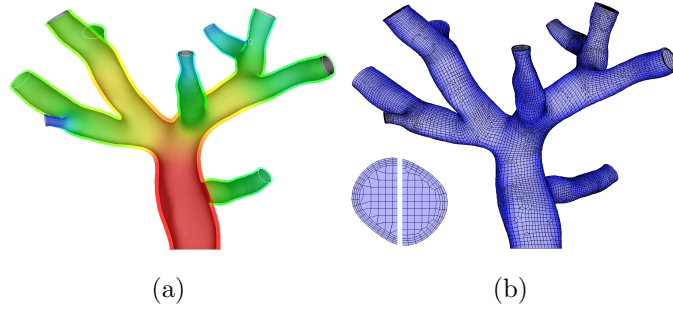


Figure 3: (a) Radially compressed interface and boundary layer region (coloured by thickness). (b) Final fluid mesh with a two-dimensional view of the inlet before (left) and after (right) smoothing. (Section 2.2.3)

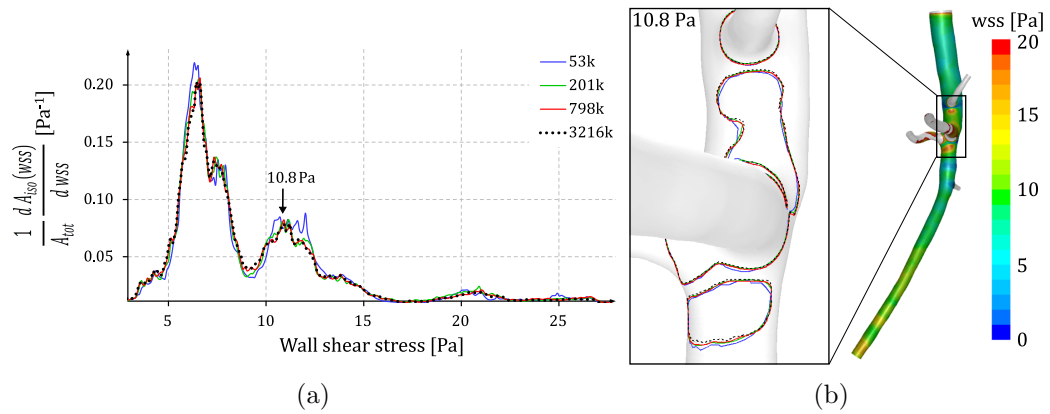


Figure 4: (a) Change in enclosed surface area in function of the wall shear stress for hexahedral grids with different mesh densities. (b) Contour plot of the wall shear stress (right) and iso-contours (left) at the trifurcation region (for the peak in wall shear stress change at 10.8 Pa and for different mesh densities)

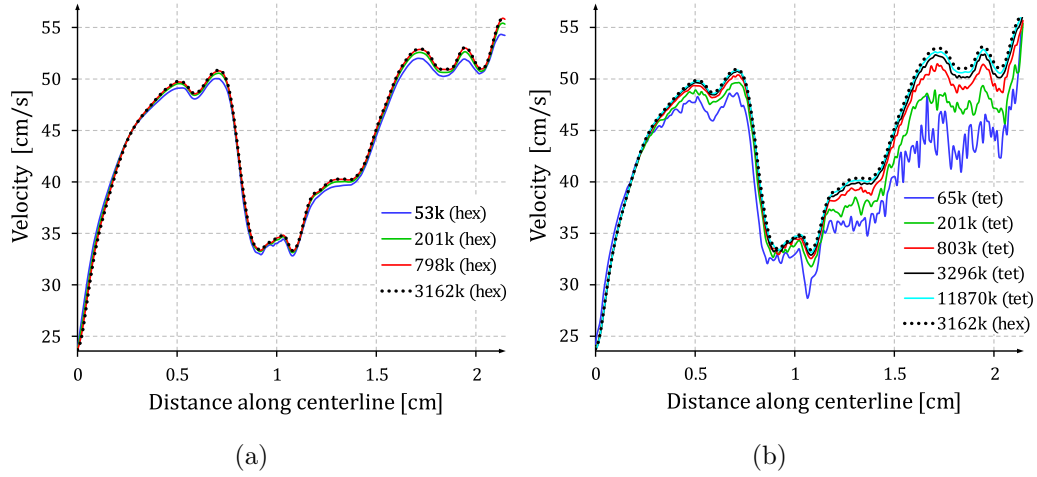


Figure 5: (a) The velocity along the centerline of the abdominal mouse aorta for hexahedral grids with different mesh densities and (b) compared to tetrahedral grids with different mesh densities. ( $0.1\text{ mm}$  between the data points)

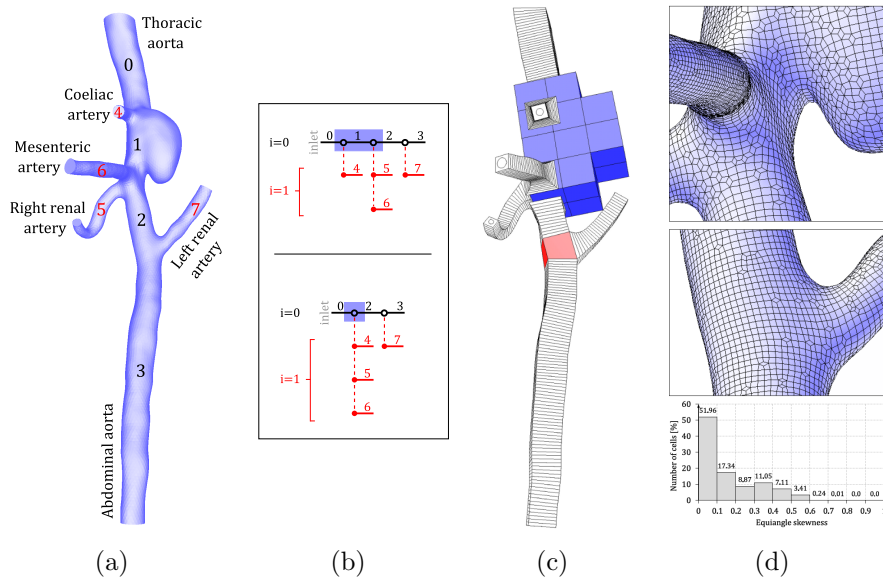


Figure 6: (a) Geometry of an abdominal mouse aorta (with aneurysm), including the branch labels (coloured by parent vessel order:  $i$ ). (b) Schematic representation of the branching topology as defined in Section 2.1.1 (top) and after adaptation (bottom). (c) Multi-block structure with an adapted *branch connection block* comprising the aneurysm and trifurcation region (blue). (d) Detailed views of the generated fluid mesh (top, middle) and the corresponding equiangle skewness distribution (bottom).

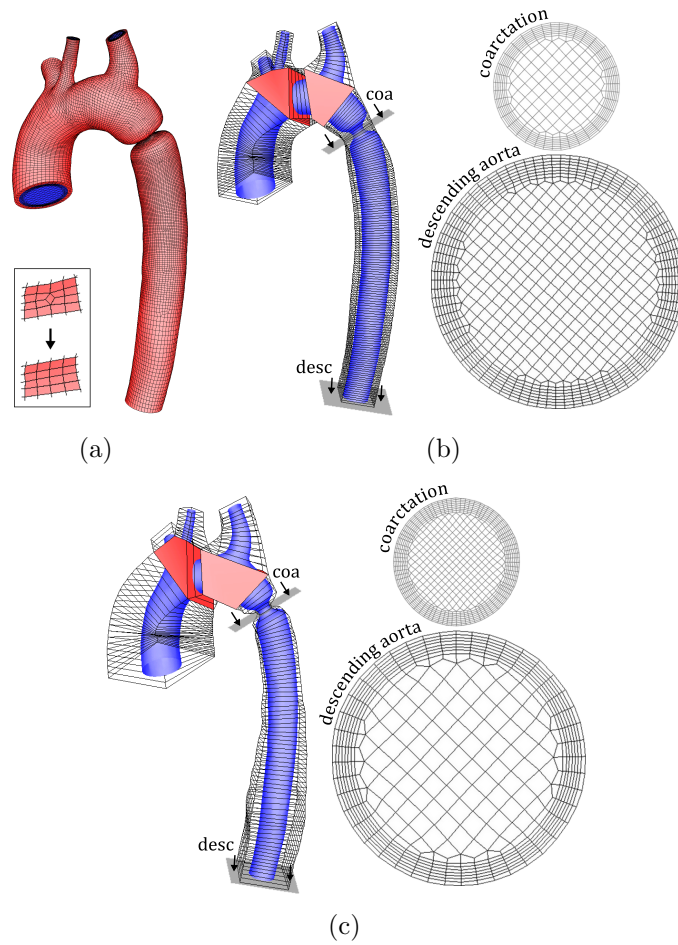


Figure 7: (a) Mesh for the fluid domain (blue) and the arterial wall (red) of an aortic arch with aortic coarctation. The lower left box demonstrates the quality improvement of the solid mesh. Note the axial coarsening towards the descending aorta (R5). (b) and (c) The cross sectional grids of the fluid mesh at the coarctation (coa) and the descending aorta (desc), which result from multi-block structures R4 (uniform grid refinement) and R5 (local grid refinement).



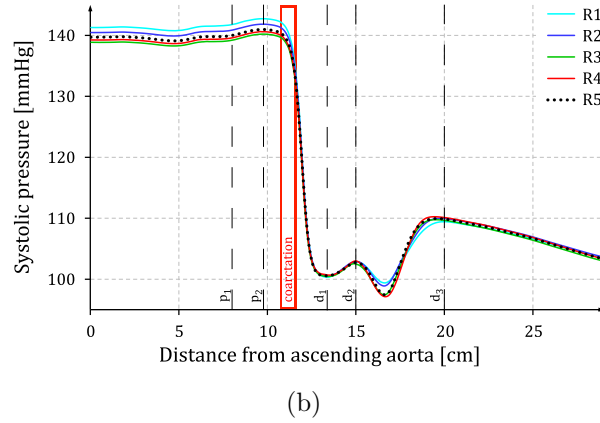
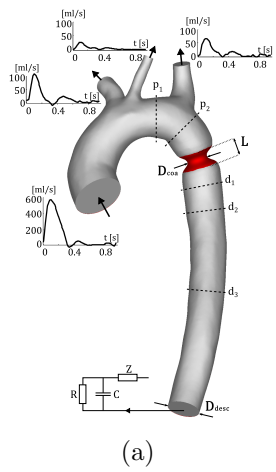


Figure 8: (a) Geometrical model of the aortic arch with aortic coarctation (red), including the boundary conditions for the fluid domain and the cross sectional regions ( $p_1$ ,  $p_2$ ,  $coa$ ,  $d_1$ ,  $d_2$ ,  $d_3$ ,  $desc$ ) in which the convergence was analyzed numerically (see Table 2). (b) Pressure along the centerline at peak systole for increasing mesh densities (R1 to R4) and a grid with a local refinement at the coarctation region and a gradual coarsening towards the descending aorta (R5).

Table 1: Mean and maximum values of the pressure, velocity and the wall shear stress error variables for different grid densities

# Fluid cells	Pressure drop along centerline				Velocity along centerline				Wall shear stress area	
	$\Delta p$ [mmHg]	$e_{\Delta p}$ [%]	$e_{mean,p}$ [%]	$e_{max,p}$ [%]	$\Delta v$ [ $\frac{cm}{s}$ ]	$e_{\Delta v}$ [%]	$e_{mean,v}$ [%]	$e_{max,v}$ [%]	$e_{mean,wss}$ [%]	$e_{max,wss}$ [%]
53k	6.877	0.795	0.151	0.795	30.528	0.0552	2.028	6.101	0.268	1.728
98k	6.853	0.443	0.171	0.443	31.106	0.0373	1.460	5.096	0.193	1.088
201k	6.844	0.319	0.0536	0.319	31.696	0.0190	0.825	3.174	0.138	0.827
413k	6.836	0.204	0.0318	0.204	31.960	0.0108	0.476	2.269	0.100	0.693
798k	6.827	0.0638	0.0359	0.107	32.206	0.00324	0.186	1.090	0.0629	0.437
1602k	6.826	0.0449	0.00875	0.0449	32.267	0.00134	0.0977	0.428	0.0323	0.265
3216k	6.822				32.310					

Table 2: Grid refinement study of the pressure in an FSI model of aortic coarctation

Grid	# Fluid cells	# Solid elem.	Calc. time per cycle	Mean error [%]							
				asc	p1	p2	coa	d1	d2	d3	desc
R1	42k	21k	12 h 29 min	1.44	1.42	1.42	1.72	1.61	1.56	1.33	0.77
R2	105k	37k	17 h 29 min	1.01	0.98	0.98	1.26	1.54	1.88	1.26	0.71
R3	281k	74k	30 h 55 min	0.38	0.34	0.34	0.75	1.22	1.07	0.94	0.64
R4	408k	102k	40 h 38 min	Reference grid							
R5	216k	51k	23 h 38 min	0.5	0.47	0.47	0.86	1	1.15	0.98	0.6