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Article

Negative Mass in the Systems Driven by Entropic Forces

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Abstract: The paper addresses the phenomena of the negative effective mass and negative effective density emerging in the systems driven by the entropic elastic forces. The elasticity of polymers is, at least partially, of entropic origin, and it represents the tendency of a polymer to evolve into a more probable state, rather than into one of lower potential energy. Entropy forces are temperature dependent; thus, the temperature dependence of the effective mass and effective density arises. The effect of the negative effective mass is a resonance effect, emerging in core-shell mechanical systems, which takes place when the frequency of the harmonic external force acting on core-shell system connected by an ideal spring, approaches from above to the eigen-frequency of the system. We address the situation, when the ideal spring connecting core to shell is made from the polymer material, and its elasticity is of an entropic origin. The effective mass is calculated, and it is temperature-dependent. The chain of core-shell units connected with polymer spring is studied. The effective density of the spring is temperature dependent. The negative mass and density become attainable under the variation of the temperature of the system. Exemplifications of the effect are addressed.

Keywords: core-shell system; negative mass; negative density; entropic force; polymer spring; temperature dependence

1. Introduction

Entropic forces are emergent forces that arise from the statistical tendency of a system to increase its entropy (Taylor & Tabachnik, 2013, Wissner-Gross & Freer 2013). Unlike other fundamental forces (like gravity or electromagnetism), entropic forces originate from the system's tendency to maximize the number of accessible microstates (Sokolov, 2010). Entropic origin of these forces represents the tendency of a system to evolve into a more probable state, rather than simply into one of lower potential energy (Taylor & Tabachnik, 2013). Elasticity of polymers is driven to a much extent by entropy (Gedde, 2001; Rubinstein & Colby, 2003, Graessley, 2004; Kartsovnik & Volchenkov, 2022). Maximizing entropy of a polymer chain implies reducing the distance between its two free ends. Consequently, an entropic elastic force emerges, that tends to collapse the chain. Elasticity of the muscles arises from entropy in a way very similar to the entropy-driven elasticity of polymer chains (Tskhovrebova, 1997). Entropic forces drive contraction of cytoskeletal networks (Braun et al. 2016). Verlinde suggested that gravity is actually the entropic force (Verlinde, 2011). According to Verlinde, gravity emerges from fundamental principles of statistical mechanics and information theory rather than being a fundamental interaction like electromagnetism. His idea is rooted in holographic principle and thermodynamics (Verlinde, 2011). Verlinde showed that if information about matter is stored on a holographic screen (a surface encoding information about space), then the tendency of

entropy to maximize leads to an effect that mimics Newton's law of gravity (Verlinde, 2011). In a similar way the Coulomb interaction was treated as an entropic force (Wang, 2010).

Usually, entropic forces grow with temperature, however, the exceptions to this rule were reported, when the system of elementary magnets supposed to be in the thermal equilibrium with the thermal bath is exposed to external magnetic field (Bormashenko, 2022).

Our paper addresses the situation when the entropic/polymer spring gives rise to the effect of the negative mass). The effect of the negative mass is a resonance effect, emerging in core-shell mechanical systems. This effect occurs when the frequency of the harmonic external force acting on core-shell system connected by a Hookean massless spring, approaches from above to the eigenfrequency of the system (Liu et al., 2000, Chan et al., 2006; Milton & Willis, 2007, Liu et al., 2011, Yang et al. 2013). Negative-inertia converters for both translational and rotational motion were introduced (Lončar, Igrec, & Babić, 2022).

The energy of the vibrated core-shell system is not conserved, due to the fact that it is exposed to the external harmonic force, as it occurs, for example, in the famous Kapitza pendulum, in which the pivot point vibrates in a vertical direction, up and down (Ramachandran & Nosonovsky, 2014; Hasan & Nosonovsky, M. 2020). Unlike the Kapitza pendulum, the effect of "negative effective mass" arises in the linear approximation to the analysis of the motion (Liu et al., 2000, Chan et al., 2006; Milton & Willis, 2007, Bormashenko, 2025). The effect of the negative effective mass/negative effective density may be achieved with the plasma oscillations of the free electron gas in metals (Huang, Sun & Huang, 2009, Bormashenko & Legchenkova, 2020; Bormashenko et al., 2020).

The effects of negative mass and negative density gave rise to the novel mechanic and thermal metamaterials (Kshetrimayum, 2004; Wu et al., 2019; Li et al., 2021; Karami & Ghayesh, 2024; Wang et al., 2024). The negative effective mass materials were manufactured by dispersion of soft silicon rubber coated heavy spheres in epoxy, acting as the mechanical resonators (Liu et al., 2000). The negative density metamaterial was manufactured in an aluminum plate, comprising the resonant structure (Sang, Mhannawee & Wang, 2019). Soft 3D acoustic metamaterials polymer materials demonstrating negative effective density were reported (Brunet et al. 2014). Our paper is devoted to the possibility of realization of negative mass/density metamaterials exploiting entropic elastic forces.

2. Results

2.1. Negative Mass in the Core-Shell System Driven by Entropic Elastic Force

Consider the core-shell mechanical system, depicted in **Figure 1**. The core mass m is connected to the shell M with two polymer stripes/springs. The entire system is subjected to the external sinusoidal force $Im(\hat{F}(t)) = F_{0x} \sin \omega t$, as shown in **Figure 1**. We assume that the masses of the polymer stripes are much smaller than both masses of the core and shell; thus, the masses of polymer springs are negligible. The core-shell system may be replaced with a single effective mass m_{eff} expressed with Eq. 1 (for the rigorous derivation of Eq. 1, see: Chan et al. 2006; Milton & Willis, 2007, Liu et al., 2011; Huang, Sun & Huang, 2009, Bormashenko, 2025).

$$m_{eff} = M + \frac{m\omega_0^2}{\omega_0^2 - \omega^2}, \quad (1)$$

where $\omega_0 = \sqrt{\frac{2k}{m}}$, and k is the elastic constant of the polymer stripe (the core mass is driven by the pair of polymer springs). It is easily seen from Eq. 1 that, when the frequency ω approaches ω_0 from above, the effective mass m_{eff} will be negative (Chan et al. 2006; Milton & Willis, 2007, Liu et al., 2011; Huang, Sun & Huang 2009, Bormashenko, 2025). For the sake of simplicity we assume that the polymer stripe/spring is built of ξ identical polymer chains, each of which may be represented by the ideal Kuhn equivalent freely jointed chain, built of N Kuhn monomers, the Kuhn length of the monomer is b (Rubinstein & Colby, 2003). The elastic constant k of the polymer spring is given by Eq. 2:

$$k = 3\xi \frac{k_B T}{N b^2}, \quad (2)$$

where k_B is the Boltzmann constant, and T is the temperature; we assume that the temperature is constant along the addressed core-shell system (Rubinstein & Colby, 2003). Substitution of Eq. 2 into Eq. 1 yields for the effective mass of the entire core-shell system (the masses of the polymer springs are neglected):

$$m_{eff}(\omega, T) = M + \frac{\frac{6\xi k_B T}{N b^2}}{\frac{6\xi k_B T}{m N b^2} - \omega^2} \quad (3)$$

Now we fix the frequency of the external force ω , and vary the temperature of the core-shell system T . It is easily seen, that the effective mass $m_{eff}(\omega, T)$ becomes negative when the temperature of the core-shell system approaches the critical temperature T^* from below, where T^* is given by Eq. 4:

$$T^* = \frac{m N (b\omega)^2}{6\xi k_B} \quad (4)$$

The dependence $m_{eff}(T)$ is presented in **Figure 2** (the value of ω is fixed). It is instructive to calculate the asymptotic values of $m_{eff}(T)$. When, $T \gg T^*$ we derive from Eq 3.

$$\lim_{T \gg T^*} m_{eff}(T) = M + m, \quad (6)$$

which is intuitively clear for an infinitely stiff spring. The low-temperature limit of the effective mass is also easily calculated.

$$\lim_{T \ll T^*} m_{eff}(T) = M \quad (7)$$

Eq.7 is also intuitively clear; indeed, the influence of the “weak” polymer spring (the temperatures are low) becomes negligible.

2.2. Negative Density of the Chain of Core-Shell Systems Driven by Elastic Forces

The concept of negative resonant density emerging in the chain of core-shell units, depicted in **Figure 3**, was introduced (Huang, Sun, & Huang 2009). The effective density of the chain depicted in **Figure 3** $\rho_{eff}(\omega)$, was calculated (Huang, Sun, & Huang 2009); and it is given by Eq. 8:

$$\rho_{eff}(\omega) = \rho_{st} \frac{\theta}{\delta(1+\theta)\left(\frac{\omega}{\omega_0}\right)^2} \left\{ \cos^{-1} \left\{ 1 - \frac{\delta}{2\theta} \frac{\left(\frac{\omega}{\omega_0}\right)^2 \left[\left(\frac{\omega}{\omega_0}\right)^2 - (1+\theta) \right]}{\left(\frac{\omega}{\omega_0}\right)^2 - 1} \right\} \right\}^2, \quad (8)$$

where m_1 and m_2 are the masses of the shell and core correspondingly, the static linear density of the chain ρ_{st} is given by: $\rho_{st} = \frac{m_1 + m_2}{a}$; $[\rho_{st}] = \frac{kg}{m}$ and $\theta = \frac{m_2}{m_1}$; $\delta = \frac{k_2}{k_1}$; and a is the lattice constant (see **Figure 3**), $\omega_0 = \sqrt{\frac{k_2}{m_2}}$. It was demonstrated that the effective density becomes negative, when the frequency of external force ω approaches ω_0 from above (Huang, Sun, & Huang 2009).

Now we assume that both of the springs are polymer stripes. The elasticity of the stripes is given by Eqs. 9-10 (Rubinstein & Colby, 2003):

$$k_1 = 3\xi_1 \frac{k_B T}{N_1 b_1^2}, \quad (9)$$

$$k_2 = 3\xi_2 \frac{k_B T}{N_2 b_2^2}, \quad (10)$$

where $\xi_i, N_i, b_i, i = 1, 2$ are the numbers and parameters of the Kuhn chains, constituting the strings. It is noteworthy that the parameter; $\delta = \frac{k_2}{k_1}$ is temperature-independent. Thus, the squared resonant frequency ω_0^2 is given by Eq. 11:

$$\omega_0^2 = 3\xi_2 \frac{k_B T}{m_2 N_2 b_2^2} = \alpha_2 T, \quad (11)$$

where $\alpha_2 = 3\xi_2 \frac{k_B}{m_2 N_2 b_2^2}$. Hence, the effective density of the chain appears as follows:

$$\rho_{eff}(\omega, T) = \rho_{st} \frac{\theta}{\delta(1+\theta)\frac{\omega^2}{\alpha_2 T}} \left\{ \cos^{-1} \left\{ 1 - \frac{\delta}{2\theta} \frac{\frac{\omega^2}{\alpha_2 T} \left[\frac{\omega^2}{\alpha_2 T} - (1+\theta) \right]}{\frac{\omega^2}{\alpha_2 T} - 1} \right\} \right\}^2 \quad (12)$$

Now we fix the frequency of the external force ω . The plot $\rho_{eff}(T)$ is depicted in **Figure 4**. The graph is numerically built with Wolfram Mathematica software. The blue curve depicts the dependence $\rho_{eff}(\omega, T)$ for the dimensionless parameters: $k_1 = k_2 = 1 \times T$; $m_1 = 1$; $\delta = 1$; $\theta =$

$\frac{1}{\alpha_2}$; $a = 1$. It is recognized that $\rho_{eff}(T)$ becomes negative, when the temperature of the core-shell system approaches to the critical temperature T^* from below, where T^* is given by Eq. 13:

$$T^* = \frac{\omega^2}{\alpha_2}, \quad (13)$$

where $\alpha_2 = 3\xi_2 \frac{k_B}{m_2 N_2 b_2^2}$. Set of the brown curves, appearing in **Figure 4**, depicts the temperature dependencies of the effective density $\rho_{eff}(T)$ calculated for the different values of α_2 . It is easily demonstrated that the high-temperature limit of the effective density is given by Eq. 14:

$$\lim_{T \rightarrow \infty} \rho_{eff}(\omega, T) = \rho_{st} = \frac{m_1 + m_2}{a}, \quad (14)$$

which is well-expected for the massless, infinitely stiff springs.

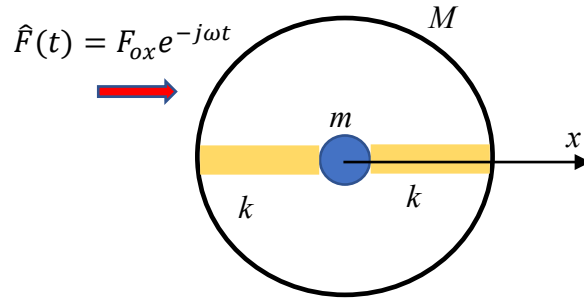


Figure 1. The core-shell unit giving rise to the effect of the “negative effective mass”. The core mass m is connected with two polymer elastic Hookean springs k to the shell M . The core-shell system is exposed to the harmonic external force $\hat{F}(t) = F_{ox}e^{-j\omega t}$.

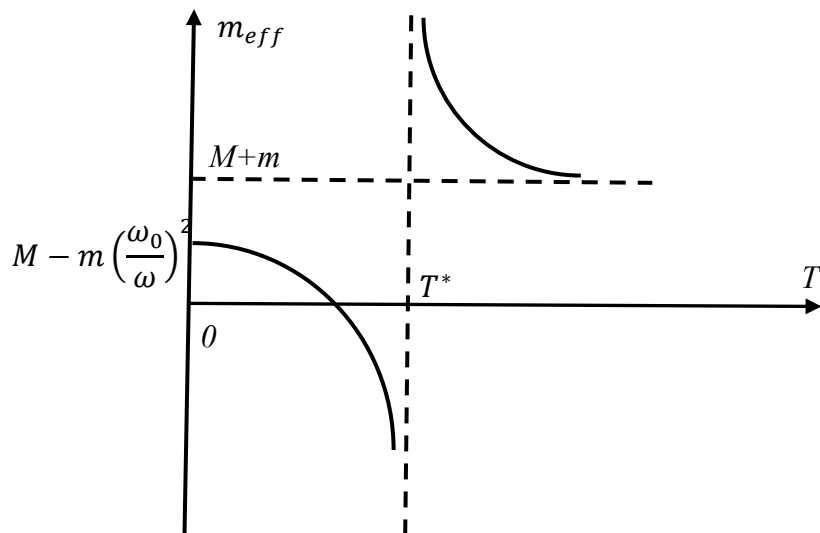


Figure 2. Temperature dependence of the effective mass $m_{eff}(T)$ is depicted. $T^* = \frac{mN(b\omega)^2}{6\xi k_B}$. Dashed lines demonstrate the asymptotic behavior of $m_{eff}(T)$.

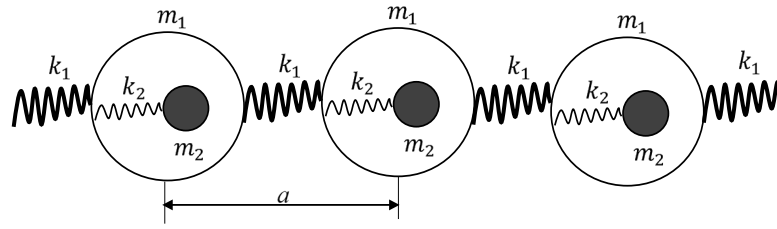


Figure 3. Chain of the core-shell units giving rise to the effect of temperature dependent negative density (Huang, Sun, & Huang 2009). The lattice constant of the chain is a , the mass of the core is m_1 , the mass of the shell is m_2 , k_1 and k_2 are entropic strings.

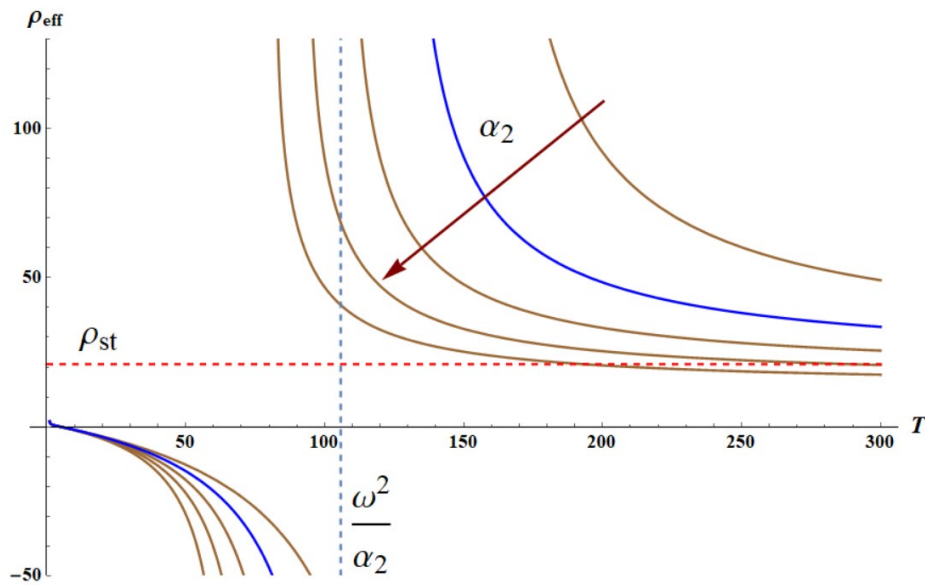


Figure 4. The temperature dependent effective density of the chain, shown in **Figure 3** is depicted. The blue curve depicts the dependence $\rho_{\text{eff}}(\omega, T)$ for the dimensionless parameters: $k_1 = k_2 = 1 \times T$; $m_1 = 1$; $\delta = 1$; $\theta = \frac{1}{\alpha_2}$; $a = 1$. The resonance occurs when $T^* = \frac{\omega^2}{\alpha_2}$. Set of brown curves depicts the temperature dependencies of the effective density calculated for the different values of α_2 . Blue dashed line demonstrates the asymptotic behavior of $\rho_{\text{eff}}(T)$. Red dashed line is $\rho_{\text{eff}} = \rho_{\text{st}} = \frac{m_1 + m_2}{a}$.

3. Discussion

Resonances are ubiquitous in nature and engineering (Feynman, 1964; Ogata, 2005; Manevich & Gendelman 2011). It is well known, that the resonant phenomena may be temperature dependent. The temperature dependence of the resonance frequency of the fundamental and four higher order modes of a silicon dioxide microcantilever was established (Sandberg et al. 2005). Temperature effects in resonant Raman spectroscopy were registered (Fantini et al. 2004). Temperature dependent Raman resonant response in UO_2 was reported (Livneh, 2022). The temperature dependence of the Fano resonance discovered in infrared spectra of nano-diamonds was discussed (Shiryaev et al. 2022). We address the temperature dependent resonant effects giving rise the phenomenon of the “negative effective mass effect”, exerted to the intensive research in the last decade.

It is unnecessary to say that actually there is no negative mass (Yao, Zhou & Hu, 2008; Huang, Sun & Huang 2009). The phenomenon of the “negative effective mass” arises when we substitute the core-shell mechanical systems comprising a pair of masses (M and m) and the massless Hookean spring k by a single effective mass m_{eff} , that is to say that the internal mass m is hidden and its influence is expressed by the introduction of the mass m_{eff} (Chan et al. 2006; Milton & Willis, 2007, Liu et al., 2011; Yao, Zhou & Hu, 2008; Huang, Sun & Huang, 2009). The negative effective mass

represents the contra-intuitive situation of “anti-vibrations”, when the harmonic acceleration of the system is in an opposite direction to the sinusoidal applied force (Chan et al. 2006; Milton & Willis, 2007; Liu et al., 2011; Huang, Sun & Huang, 2009, Bormashenko, 2025). We considered the situation when the vibrations are driven by temperature-dependent entropic forces, inherent for polymer systems. The stiffness of the polymer spring is temperature-dependent, and the physical situation resembling the parametric resonance emerges, when the temperature is varied (Landau & Lifshitz, 2000). Thus, the temperature-dependent effective mass emerges. The effect may be exemplified with polymer acoustic meta-materials (Brunet et al., 2015; Fok & Zhang, 2011).

4. Conclusions

We conclude that the effect of the temperature-dependent effective mass becomes possible in the core-shell systems in which the spring connecting the core mass to the shell is driven by the temperature-dependent entropic elasticity, such as that inherent for polymer materials. The core-shell system may be replaced with a single effective mass $m_{eff}(\omega, T)$ exposed to the external harmonic force. When the frequency of the external force ω is fixed and the temperature of the core-shell system T is varied, the resonance becomes possible, and the harmonic acceleration of the shell may move in an opposite direction to the applied force. We demonstrate that the effective mass $m_{eff}(T)$ becomes negative when the temperature of the core-shell system approaches to the critical temperature T^* from below.

We also considered the chain built of core-shell units, in which entropic forces are acting. In this case, the effect of “negative density” is attainable under variation the temperature of the system. Again, the negative density $\rho_{eff}(T)$ becomes negative when the temperature of the core-shell system approaches the critical temperature T^* from below. The critical temperature is defined by the parameters of polymer chain and frequency of the external force ω . The effect may be demonstrated experimentally with polymer meta-materials.

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