

(19) **DANMARK**

(10) **DK/EP 3565969 T3**



(12)

Oversættelse af europæisk patentskrift

Patent- og
Varemærkestyrelsen

-
- (51) Int.Cl.: **F 03 D 80/50 (2016.01)**
- (45) Oversættelsen bekendtgjort den: **2024-08-19**
- (80) Dato for Den Europæiske Patentmyndigheds bekendtgørelse om meddelelse af patentet: **2024-06-26**
- (86) Europæisk ansøgning nr.: **17807738.4**
- (86) Europæisk indleveringsdag: **2017-11-10**
- (87) Den europæiske ansøgnings publiceringsdag: **2019-11-13**
- (86) International ansøgning nr.: **EP2017078826**
- (87) Internationalt publikationsnr.: **WO2018145784**
- (30) Prioritet: **2017-02-09 DE 102017202064**
- (84) Designerede stater: **AL AT BE BG CH CY CZ DE DK EE ES FI FR GB GR HR HU IE IS IT LI LT LU LV MC MK MT NL NO PL PT RO RS SE SI SK SM TR**
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- (54) Benævnelse: **FREM GANGSMÅDE OG INDRETNING TIL HÆVNING ELLER SÆNKNING AF EN LAST PARALLELT MED ET VINDMØLLETÅRN**
- (56) Fremdragne publikationer:
WO-A1-2015/078480
WO-A1-2015/140357
JP-A- 2014 208 989
US-B2- 8 057 605

DESCRIPTION

Description

[0001] Method and apparatus for raising or lowering a load parallel to a wind turbine tower.

[0002] The present invention relates to a method and an apparatus for raising or lowering a load parallel to a wind turbine tower.

[0003] Objects such as spare parts need to be mounted to wind turbines, in particular inside of nacelles of wind turbines.

[0004] EP 2 520 533 B1 discloses a service crane placed in the nacelle of the wind turbine. The service crane is designed as an extendable boom capable of reaching through a hatch of the nacelle to lift a load from a position adjacent to a base of the tower to the nacelle. However, there is a risk of damaging the load and/or the tower through possible collisions between the load and the tower. One way of avoiding such damages is addressed by EP 2 520 792 B1 suggesting placing spacers between the load and the tower during hoisting.

[0005] It is one object of the present invention to provide an improved method and apparatus for raising or lowering a load parallel to a wind turbine tower. In particular, it is desired to provide a method and apparatus which will allow assisting the raising or lowering procedure and reduce the movements of the load during raising or lowering.

[0006] Accordingly, a method according to claim 1 and an apparatus according to claim 12 are provided.

[0007] Raising the load here means that the load is hoisted, or lifted. For example, the load might be raised from a position adjacent to a base of the tower to a nacelle located on top of the tower. Lowering the load designates the opposite movement, namely that of releasing, descending, or letting down the load. The respective operations of raising and lowering the load only differ in that they are opposite in direction. In the following description, only a raising operation will be described. It goes without saying that the lowering operation may be identically performed.

[0008] The load is raised parallel or at least substantially parallel #which the load is raised corresponds to a vertical direction.

[0009] The load is an object that needs to be placed atop or descended from the wind turbine, such as spare parts or service equipment. Often, these objects are too large and/or too heavy to be raised through the interior of the wind turbine tower, and are hence raised exterior of the

wind turbine.

[0010] The cable used to raise the load is usually a steel cable. The cable provides a vertical force on the load for raising or lowering the load. "Vertical" herein includes deviations from exactly vertical of up to 30°, more preferred up to 15°. A lower end of the cable might be provided with a hook or carabiner to easily attach the load to the cable.

[0011] The guiding means are provided in addition to the cable, i.e. the guiding means and the cable are different elements. The guiding means are supported by the tower by directly contacting a surface thereof, or by contacting a surface of the tower indirectly, for example by placing an element such as a spacer between the guiding means and the tower. To apply a force to the load, the guiding means might be directly attached to the load. Alternatively, the guiding means can be attached to the hook or carabiner at the bottom end of the cable, or to a portion of the cable that is adjacent to the load.

[0012] The force exerted by the guiding means on the load prevents the load from moving away from the tower by more than a maximum distance dictated by the guiding means, in general by its length. Said force or length might be adjusted to account for factors such as the size and weight of the load, the height of the tower or weather conditions. As will be explained in more detail below, said force is in particular adjusted by adjusting a configuration of the guiding means. The force exerted by the guiding means on the loads reduces movements, in particular swinging movements of the load during raise of the load. This is especially advantageous at high wind conditions that are often observed at offshore wind turbines. Thereby, damaging of the load and/or of the tower is prevented.

[0013] According to the invention, the guiding means are moveably supported at the tower and move along the tower when raising or lowering the load.

[0014] The guiding means may move in a direction that is parallel to the tower, in particular to an outer surface of the tower wall. In this case, the guiding means is raised or lowered together with the raising or lowering load. For example, a track might be fixed on the surface of the tower for guiding the guiding means.

[0015] According to an embodiment, the load is arranged facing downwind from the tower.

[0016] In this embodiment, the force of the wind on the load pushes the load away from the tower. In other words, the force of the wind is parallel and opposite in direction to the force exerted on the load by the guiding means. The force exerted on the load by the guiding means might be chosen such as to closely or entirely balance out the force exerted on the load by the wind, by appropriately adjusting the configuration of the guiding means. Then, the load can be raised or lowered in parallel to the tower, without any swinging towards or away from the tower, thereby preventing damaging of the load and/or tower due to collisions.

[0017] According to the invention, the guiding means comprise a closed loop around the tower.

[0018] To form a closed loop around the tower, the guiding means can be laid around the tower and directly or indirectly attached to the load. That way, the guiding means are reliably supported by the tower, and the attachment of the guiding means to the tower is not invasive for the tower since it is not necessary to provide the surface of the tower with a track, holes or the like for movably supporting the guiding means.

[0019] According to a further embodiment, a spacer is arranged between the guiding means and the tower.

[0020] One or more spacers may be attached to a surface of the tower and/or to the guiding means for providing clearance between the tower and the guiding means. A direct contact between the guiding means and the tower can thereby be avoided. The spacer can for example be wrapped around the guiding means. If the spacer is made of a material that does not damage the tower, such as a rubber material, foam or the like, damaging of the tower by the guiding means is avoided when using the spacer.

[0021] According to a further embodiment, the guiding means are supported by a rolling element that rolls along the tower when raising or lowering the load, the rolling element preferably forming the spacer.

[0022] A wheel, a roller or a pulley can be used as this rolling element. In general, the guiding means are directly attached or threaded through the rolling element. Generally, the rolling element is chosen such as to smoothly roll along the surface of the tower, thereby facilitating the raising of the guiding wire together with the load. If several rolling elements are used, the movement of the guiding wire along the surface of the tower is further facilitated. There should be a significant friction between the rolling element and the tower such that the guiding means are effectively supported at the tower and can efficiently exert the force on the tower.

[0023] The rolling element can be designed with a curvature that essentially matches the curvature of the tower wall (curvature around the vertical tower axis) for enhancing the contact area between the rolling element and the tower surface, thereby providing the necessary friction while still allowing for a smooth movement along the surface of the tower. Additionally, the rolling element can be constituted of a flexible material in such a way that the rolling element adapts to the changing curvature of the tower when the rolling element rolls along the tower surface, thereby optimizing the contact area between the rolling element and the tower surface. Moreover, the rolling element can act like as a spacer, and then brings about the advantages of the spacer described above.

[0024] According to a further embodiment, a weight is attached to the guiding means for increasing a gravitational force acting on the guiding means.

[0025] In addition to its own mass, the guiding means are provided with an additional weight having a defined mass. The gravitational force pulling the guiding means downwards can be

adjusted by an accurate choice of the weight to account for factors such as the mass of the load and the strength of the wind. Swinging of the load can be further decreased by using the weight.

[0026] According to the invention, a tack-line is attached to the guiding means. One or several tack-line are connected to the guiding means for additional control of the load.

[0027] For example, the tack-line can be a rope used to pull, e.g. by human force, the guiding means downwards, which has a similar effect as the weights described above.

[0028] According to a further embodiment, the guiding means comprise a guiding wire.

[0029] The guiding means are generally made of a material or covered/protected by a material that will not cause any damage to the surface of the tower, such as a steel wire enclosed in a rubber or plastic material or sheath. Usually, the wire provides some friction so as to not move around the tower and thus prevent, or at least reduce, the load from swinging during raising. Moreover, a guiding wire has the advantage of being cheap and universally available. "Wire" means any wire, rope or cable, and is preferably made of steel or nylon.

[0030] According to a further embodiment, the guiding means comprise a solid guiding ring surrounding the tower in full circumference.

[0031] The solid guiding ring might be a steel ring enclosed in a rubber or plastic material or sheath for avoiding damaging the tower. Generally, the guiding ring has a diameter to match the widest diameter of the tower. The steel ring is usually connected to the load by means of a wire.

[0032] The solid guiding ring can further be attached to a spring element connected to a rolling element that rolls along the tower when raising or lowering the load, wherein the spring element exerts a force on the rolling element so as to maintain a contact between the rolling element and the tower when raising or lowering the load. The spring element, for example a coil or leaf spring, connects the solid guiding ring and the rolling element. In this embodiment, the coil or leaf spring will be more or less compressed depending on the diameter of the tower, thereby maintaining the rolling device in close contact with the tower surface.

[0033] According to a further embodiment, a crane raises or lowers the load using the cable.

[0034] The crane supporting the cable might be an internal crane located inside the nacelle, or an external crane, standing on the ground near the base of the wind turbine, capable of reaching up to the nacelle or above the nacelle. As an alternative to the crane, a winch system placed inside the nacelle, or on the ground at the base of the tower might also be used.

[0035] According to a further embodiment, an apparatus for raising or lowering a load parallel to a wind turbine tower, comprises a cable for raising or lowering the load, and guiding means

supported at the tower for exerting a force acting on the load towards the tower.

[0036] The apparatus might be provided with the elements described above and below in association with the method for raising or lowering the load, and vice versa.

[0037] Further possible implementations or alternative solutions of the invention also encompass combinations - that are not explicitly mentioned herein - of features described above or below with regard to the embodiments. The person skilled in the art may also add individual or isolated aspects and features to the most basic form of the invention.

[0038] Further embodiments, features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the subsequent description and dependent claims, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a wind turbine according to one embodiment;

Fig. 2 is a side view of an apparatus according to a first embodiment;

Fig. 3 is a side view of the apparatus according to the first embodiment;

Fig. 4 is a view from above of the apparatus according to a second embodiment;

Fig. 5 is a side view of the apparatus according to the second embodiment;

Fig. 6 is a side view illustrating a step of detaching the guiding means when the load arrives in the nacelle; and

Fig. 7 shows an embodiment of a method for raising and lowering a load.

[0039] In the figures, like reference numerals designate like or functionally equivalent elements, unless otherwise indicated.

[0040] Fig. 1 shows a wind turbine 1 according to an embodiment.

[0041] The wind turbine 1 comprises a rotor 2 connected to a generator (not shown) arranged inside a nacelle 3. The nacelle 3 is arranged at the upper end of a tower 4 of the wind turbine 1.

[0042] The rotor 2 comprises three rotor blades 5. The rotor blades 5 are connected to a hub 6 of the wind turbine 1. Rotors 2 of this kind may have diameters ranging from, for example, 30 to 160 meters or even more. The rotor blades 5 are subjected to high wind loads. At the same time, the rotor blades 5 need to be lightweight. For these reasons, rotor blades 5 in modern wind turbines 1 are manufactured from fiber-reinforced composite materials.

[0043] Fig. 2 is a side view of an apparatus according to a first embodiment.

[0044] The apparatus 20 according to the first embodiment comprises an external crane 10 placed on a surface 24 near a base of the tower 4 or attached to the base and/or foundation of the tower 4. The crane 10 is used to raise a load 7 to the nacelle 3 by means of a cable 8. The cable 8 is attached to the load 7 by means of a hook 11. In Fig. 2, a direction of a wind force is indicated by an arrow W. The load 7 is placed downwind from the tower 4. Namely, the wind strikes the tower 4 from the left and the load 7 is placed on the right of the tower 4. A swinging of the load 7 due to the wind is prevented by the use of guiding means 9.

[0045] The guiding means 9 are, for example, constituted of a guiding wire 17, forming a loop around the tower 4. Both ends of the guiding wire 17 are attached to the hook 11. A roller 12 is attached to the guiding wire 17. To this end, the guiding wire 17 may pass through a hole in the center of the roller 12. The roller 12 acts as a spacer avoiding contact between the guiding wire 17 and the tower 4. When the crane 10 raises the load 7, the guiding wire 17 is raised together with the load 7 and moves along the surface of the tower 4 in a smooth manner, wherein the roller 12 rolls on the outer surface of the tower wall. Moreover, a weight 13 is attached to the guiding wire 17 close to the roller 12 such as to pull the guiding wire 17 downwards. Additionally, a tack-line 15 is attached to the guiding wire 17 for guiding the guiding wire 17. For example, a person (not shown) located on the surface 24 might hold, the extremity of the tack-line 15 that is not attached to the guiding wire 17, and pull or release said extremity to guide the guiding wire 17.

[0046] When the load 7 is raised or lowered, the wind puts the guiding wire 17 under tension such that the guiding wire 17 exerts a force F acting on the load 7 towards the tower 4.

[0047] Fig. 3 shows the apparatus according to the first embodiment as viewed from above. In particular, Fig. 3 shows that the roller 12 has an elongated, nearly cylindrical shape, with a concave curvature that essentially matches the curvature of the tower wall about the tower's vertical axis. A contact surface between the roller 12 and the tower 4 is thereby large.

[0048] Fig. 4 and 5 are views of the apparatus according to a second embodiment. The second embodiment of the apparatus differs from that of the first embodiment in that instead of a guiding wire 17, the guiding means 9 comprise a solid guiding ring 16 surrounding the tower 4 in full circumference, and a connection wire 19 for connecting the solid guiding ring 16 to the hook 11. The solid guiding ring 16 is provided with four spacer 14, which are evenly distributed along the circumference of the solid guiding ring 16. In detail, as shown in Fig. 5, each spacer 14 comprises a roller 12, which is in contact with the surface of the tower 4, and a coil spring 18 connecting the roller 12 and the solid guiding ring 16. When the load 7 is raised, the guiding means 9 are displaced along the tower 4, with the rollers 12 constantly contacting the surface of the tower 4 due to compression of the coil springs 18.

[0049] When the load 7 is raised or lowered, the wind puts the connection wire 19 under tension such that the guiding means 9 exert the force F acting on the load 7 towards the tower 4.

[0050] Fig. 6 shows a step of disconnecting the guiding means 9 when the load arrives in the nacelle 3. The raised load 7 enters the nacelle 3 through a hatch in a floor 22 of the nacelle 3. When the raised load 7 reaches the interior of the nacelle 3, it is protected from the wind, and the guiding means 9 can be detached from the hook 11 by means of a chainhoist 23, and placed in a park position, e.g. attached inside the nacelle 3, while the load 7 is raised further or also removed. When lowering the load 7, the guiding means 9 can easily be attached to the hook 11 again.

[0051] Fig. 7 shows an embodiment of a method for raising and lowering a load including steps S1 and S2. In step S1, the load 7 is raised or lowered using a cable 8. In step S2, a force F acting on the load 7 towards the tower 4 is exerted using guiding means 9 supported at the tower 4. The steps S1 and S2 can be executed simultaneously. Alternatively, step S1 can begin before step S2 begins, or step S2 can begin before step S1 begins. The method illustrated in Fig. 7 can be implemented using the apparatus 20 illustrated in Fig. 2.

[0052] Although the present invention has been described in accordance with preferred embodiments, it is obvious for the person skilled in the art that modifications are possible in all embodiments.

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

Cited references

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Patent documents cited in the description

- [EP2520533B1 \[0004\]](#)
- [EP2520792B1 \[0004\]](#)

PATENTKRAV

1. Fremgangsmåde til hævnning eller sænkning af en last (7) parallelt med et vindmølletårn (4) på en vindmølle (1), hvor lasten (7) er en reservedel eller serviceudstyr, der skal placeres oven på eller nedsænket fra en nacelle (3) på
5 vindmøllen (1), hvilken fremgangsmåde omfatter følgende trin:
 - hævnning eller sænkning (S1) af lasten (7) ved hjælp af et kabel (8), og
 - udøvelse (S2) af en kraft (F), der indvirker på lasten (7) hen imod tårnet (4) ved hjælp af en styreanordning (9) anbragt på tårnet (4) til at forhindre en svingning af lasten (7) som følge af en kraft forårsaget af vind (W),
10 hvor styreanordningen (9) omfatter en lukket løkke rundt om tårnet (4) og er anbragt bevægeligt på tårnet (4) og bevæger sig langs tårnet (4), når lasten (7) hæves eller sænkes,
hvor en tackline (15) er fastgjort til styreanordningen (9) til yderligere at styre lasten (7).
- 15 2. Fremgangsmåde ifølge krav 1, hvor lasten (7) er anbragt, så den vender i vindens retning fra tårnet (4).
3. Fremgangsmåde ifølge krav 2, hvor den kraft (F), der udøves på lasten (7) af styreanordningen (9), udvælges, så den næsten eller helt udligner den kraft, der udøves på lasten (7) af vinden, ved passende justering af konfigurationen af
20 styreanordningen (9).
4. Fremgangsmåde ifølge et hvilket som helst af de foregående krav, hvor et afstandsstykke (14) er anbragt mellem styreanordningen (9) og tårnet (4).
5. Fremgangsmåde ifølge et hvilket som helst af de foregående krav, hvor styreanordningen (9) understøttes af et rulleelement (12), der ruller langs tårnet
25 (4), når lasten (7) hæves eller sænkes, hvor rulleelementet (12) fortrinsvis danner afstandsstykket (14).

6. Fremgangsmåde ifølge et hvilket som helst af de foregående krav, hvor en vægt (13) med en defineret masse er fastgjort til styreanordningen (9) til øgning af en tyngdekraft, der indvirker på styreanordningen (9).

7. Fremgangsmåde ifølge krav 6, hvor en tyngdekraft for den vægt (13), der trækker styreanordningen (9) nedad, justeres via et præcist valg af vægten (13) for at tage højde for faktorer såsom lastens (7) masse og en styrke af vind (W).

8. Fremgangsmåde ifølge et hvilket som helst af de foregående krav, hvor styreanordningen (9) omfatter en styrewire (17).

9. Fremgangsmåde ifølge et hvilket som helst af krav 1 til 7, hvor styreanordningen (9) omfatter en massiv styrering (16), der omgiver tårnet (4) i dets fulde omkreds.

10. Fremgangsmåde ifølge krav 9, hvor styreanordningen (9) er fastgjort til et fjederelement (18) forbundet til et rulleelement (12), der ruller langs tårnet (4), når lasten (7) hæves eller sænkes, hvor fjederelementet (18) udøver en kraft på rulleelementet (12) på en sådan måde, at der opretholdes en kontakt mellem rulleelementet (12) og tårnet (4), når lasten (7) hæves eller sænkes.

11. Fremgangsmåde ifølge et hvilket som helst af de foregående krav, hvor en kran (10) hæver eller sænker lasten (7) ved hjælp af kablet (8).

12. Indretning (20) til hævnning eller sænkning af en last (7) parallelt med et vindmølletårn (4) på en vindmølle (1), hvor lasten (7) er en reservedel eller serviceudstyr, der skal placeres oven på eller nedsænket fra en nacelle (3) på vindmøllen (1), hvilken indretning omfatter:

et kabel (8) til hævnning eller sænkning af lasten (7), og

en styreanordning (9) anbragt på tårnet (4) til udøvelse af en kraft (F), der indvirker på lasten (7) hen imod tårnet (4) for at forhindre en svingning af lasten (7) som følge af en kraft forårsaget af vind (W),

hvor styreanordningen (9) omfatter en lukket løkke rundt om tårnet (4) og er anbragt bevægeligt på tårnet (4) og bevæger sig langs tårnet (4), når lasten (7) hæves eller sænkes,

5 hvor en tackline (15) er fastgjort til styreanordningen (9) til yderligere at styre lasten (7).

13. Indretning ifølge krav 12, hvor styreanordningen (9) er konfigureret til en vægt (13) med en defineret masse, hvilken vægt kan fastgøres til styreanordningen (9) for at øge en tyngdekraft, der indvirker på styreanordningen (9).

10 14. Indretning ifølge krav 12 eller 13, yderligere omfattende en vægt (13) med en defineret masse, hvilken vægt er fastgjort til styreanordningen (9) for at øge en tyngdekraft, der indvirker på styreanordningen (9).

DRAWINGS

Drawing

FIG 1

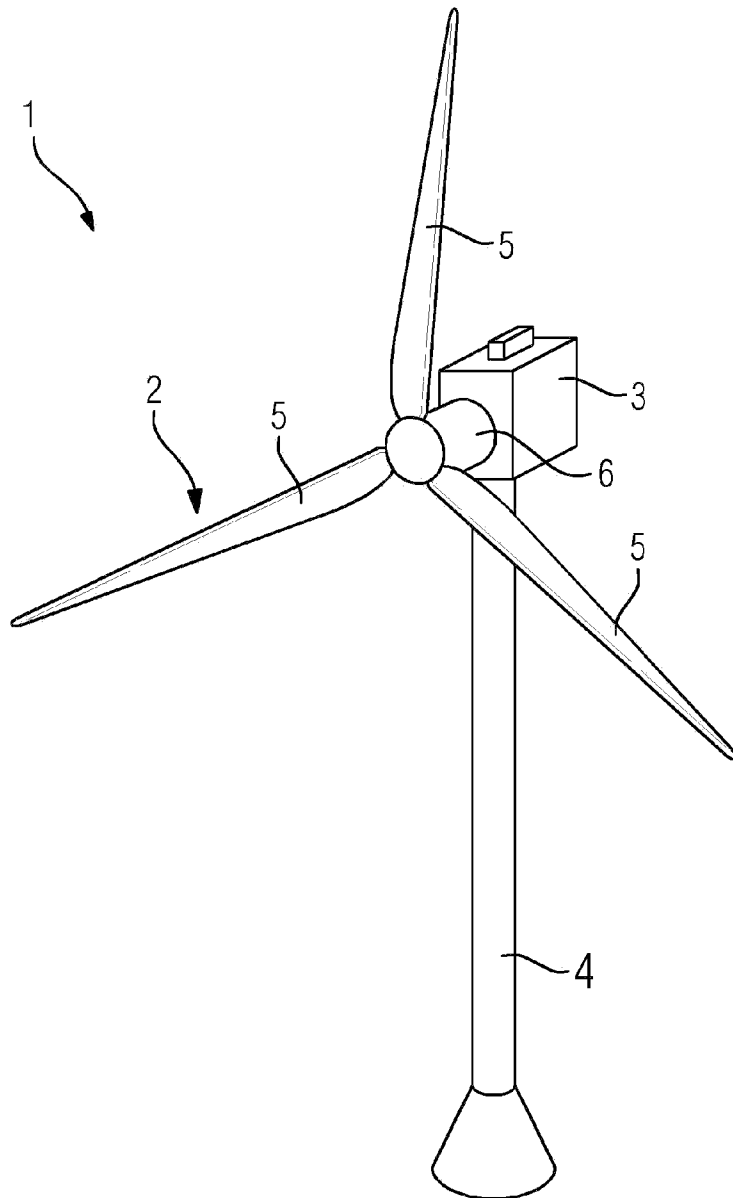


FIG 2

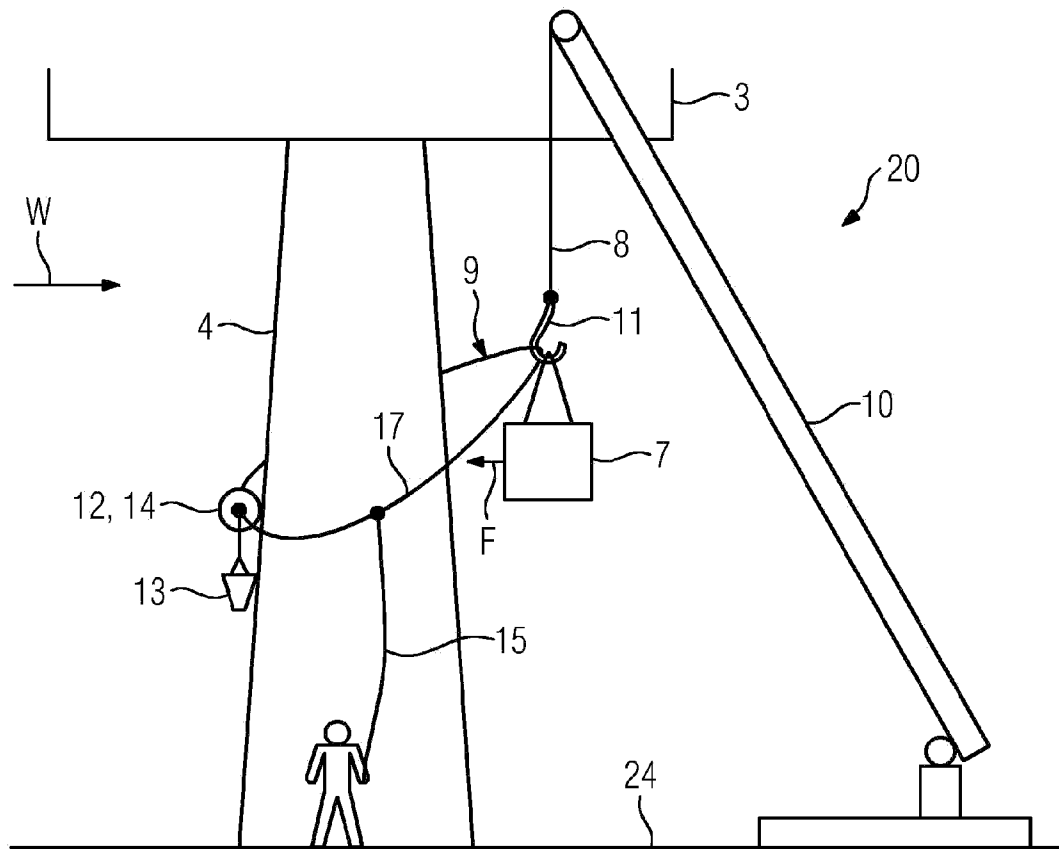


FIG 3

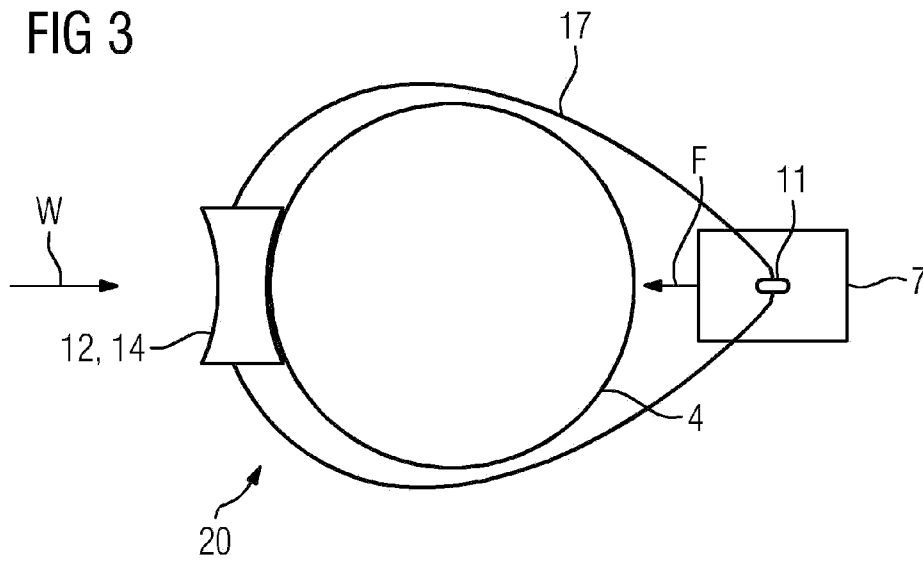


FIG 4

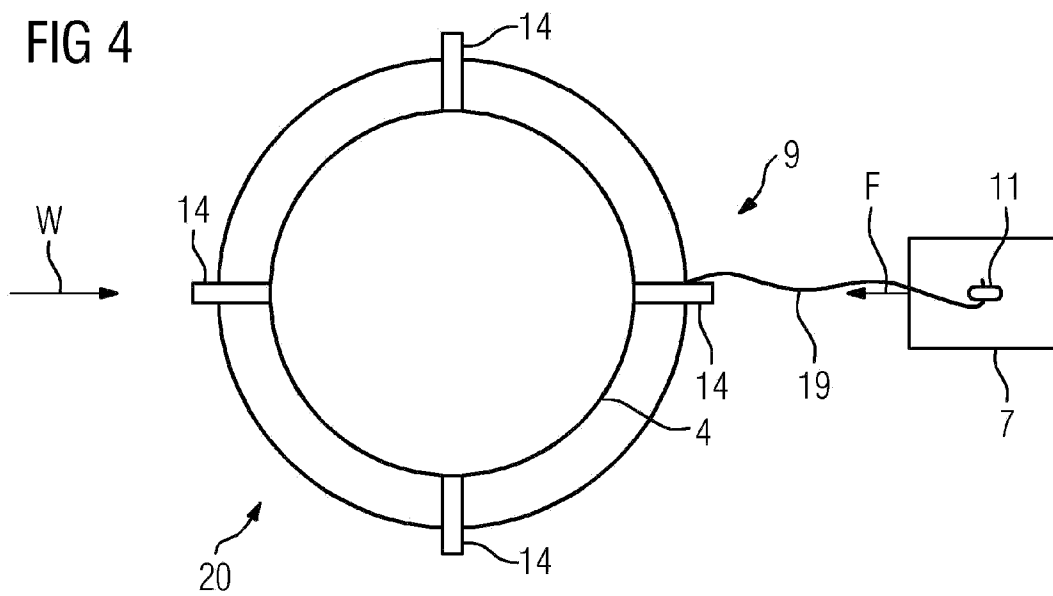


FIG 6

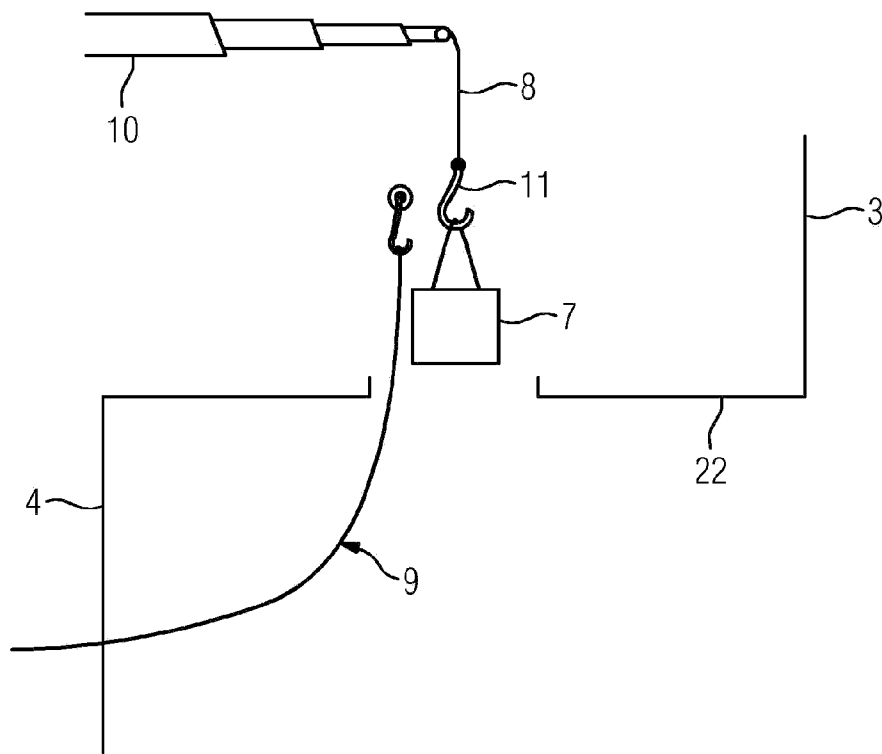


FIG 7

