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Autor: Ahlfors, Lars V.

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is the normalized and symmetrized Jacobian; it carries the quasiconformal data of the mapping.

The Riemannian metric $ds^2 = {}^t dx\,(MF)\,dx$ is conformally flat, a condition expressed by the vanishing of the conformal curvature tensor. For $n = 3$ this tensor is identically zero, but there is instead an integrability condition.

Let $F(x, t)$ be a one-parameter family of homeomorphisms such that $F(x, 0) = x$, $\dot{F}(x, 0) = f(x)$. Under suitable regularity conditions $(DF)^{\cdot}_0 = Df$, $(XF)^{\cdot}_0 = Df - \frac{1}{n}\, tr\, Df \cdot 1_n$, and $(MF)^{\cdot}_0 = Df + {}^t Df - \frac{2}{n}\, tr\, Df \cdot 1_n$. This motivates introducing the differential operator S defined by

$$(Sf)_{ij} = \frac{1}{2}(D_i f_j + D_j f_i) - \frac{1}{n}\,\delta_{ij} D_k f_k\ .$$

(The summation convention is in force in this paper). Note that Sf has values in SM_n.

There is a formal adjoint S^* which maps SM_n-valued functions on $\mathbf{R}^n$-valued functions. It is defined by

$$(S^*\varphi)_i = D_j \varphi_{ij}\,,$$

and it satisfies

$$\int_\Omega Sf \cdot \varphi dx = - \int_\Omega f \cdot S^*\varphi\, dx \tag{1}$$

when either f or φ has compact support. ($Sf.\ \varphi$ and $f \cdot S^*\,\varphi$ are the dot products $Sf_{ij}\,\varphi_{ij}$ and $f_i\,(S^*\,\varphi)_i$, respectively; dx is the euclidean volume element.)

Equation (1) defines Sf and $S^*\,\varphi$ as *distributions* even if f and φ are not differentiable. We are always assuming that f is continuous and φ locally integrable.

3. INVARIANCE PROPERTIES

In (1) we prefer to regard $\varphi\, dx$ as a matrix-valued measure, so that the pairing

$$< Sf, \varphi dx > = \int_\Omega Sf \cdot \varphi\, dx$$

is between a function and a measure. Similarly, $S^*\,(\varphi dx) = (S^*\varphi)\, dx$ is a vector-valued measure.

Let A be a Möbius transformation. We define the *pull-backs* of vector- and SM_n-valued functions by

$$\begin{aligned}(A^*f)(x) &= (DA)^{-1}f(Ax)\\(A^*\varphi)(x) &= (DA)^{-1}\,\varphi(Ax)\,DA\end{aligned}$$

and for the corresponding measures by

$$\begin{aligned}A^*(f\,dx) &= |\det A\,|\,{}^tDA\,f(Ax)\,dx\\A^*(\varphi\,dx) &= |\det A\,|\,(DA)^{-1}\,\varphi(Ax)\,DA\,.\end{aligned}$$

These definitions are chosen so that the pairings are invariant:

$$\begin{aligned}< A^*f, A^*g dx > &= < f, g dx >\\< A^*v, A^*\varphi\,dx > &= < v, \varphi\,dx >\,.\end{aligned}$$

There is a basic identity

$$S(A^*f)(x) = (DA)^{-1}\,Sf(Ax)\,DA \tag{2}$$

which may be expressed as a commutativity relation $SA^* = A^*S$, applicable to functions, but not to measures. It implies the relation $S^*A^* = A^*S^*$, which is valid for measures in the sense that

$$S^*(A^*\varphi\,dx) = A^*(S^*\varphi\,dx)\,, \tag{3}$$

but not for functions. It should be noted that (2) and (3) are true only because A is conformal.

A function is transformed into a measure by multiplication with a fixed invariant measure $\rho\,dx$. The invariance means that $A^*(\rho\,dx) = \rho\,dx$, or $\rho(Ax)\,|\det DA\,| = \rho(x)$; we assume also that A leaves Ω invariant. In these circumstances it makes sense to consider the operator $S^*\rho\,S$ which takes f to $S^*[\rho(Sf)dx]$ and commutes with $A^*: (S^*\rho\,S)A^* = A^*(S^*\rho\,S)$.

There are three classical cases in which Ω is invariant under a transitive group $G(\Omega)$ of Möbius transformations:

(i) $\Omega = \mathbf{R}^n$. $G(\Omega)$ is the group of euclidean motions, and $\rho = 1$.

(ii) $\Omega = \mathrm{B}(1) = \{x : |x| < 1\}$. $G = G(B)$ is the group of non-euclidean motions, and $\rho = (1-|x|^2)^{-n}$.

(iii) Ω is the one-point compactification of $\mathbf{R}^n$, identified with S^n in $\mathbf{R}^{n+1}$. The group is formed by the rotations of the sphere, and $\rho = (1+|x|^2)^{-n}$.