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and  $f^*(\underline{y}') = \underline{y}$ . We denote by  $\mathfrak{J}^{\text{PL}(C^\infty)}(b, b')$  the set of isomorphy classes of piecewise linear (smooth) based E-manifolds  $(X, \underline{x}, \underline{y})$  of dimension eight with vanishing second Stiefel-Whitney class,  $b_2(X) = b$ , and  $b_4(X) = b'$ .

### 2.1 THE CLASSICAL INVARIANTS

In the terminology of [24], the classical invariants of an E-manifold consist of its cohomology ring, the Stiefel-Whitney classes, the Wu classes, the Pontrjagin classes, the Euler class, the Steenrod squares, the reduced Steenrod powers, and the Pontrjagin powers. For an eight-dimensional E-manifold  $X$  with vanishing second Stiefel-Whitney class, the main result of [24] states that the classical invariants are fully determined by the following invariants:

1. The cup product map

$$\begin{aligned} \delta_X: S^2 H^2(X, \mathbf{Z}) &\longrightarrow H^4(X, \mathbf{Z}) \\ x \otimes x' &\longmapsto x \cup x'. \end{aligned}$$

2. The intersection form

$$\begin{aligned} \gamma_X: S^2 H^4(X, \mathbf{Z}) &\longrightarrow \mathbf{Z} \\ y \otimes y' &\longmapsto (y \cup y')[X]. \end{aligned}$$

Here,  $[X] \in H_8(X, \mathbf{Z})$  is the fundamental class determined by the orientation.

3. The first Pontrjagin class  $p_1(X) \in H^4(X, \mathbf{Q})$ .

REMARK 2.1. The above invariants are not independent. By associativity of the cohomology ring, the following relation holds

$$(1) \quad \delta_X^*(\gamma_X) \in S^4 H^2(X, \mathbf{Z})^\vee,$$

i.e.,

$$\gamma_X(\delta_X(x_1 \otimes x_2) \otimes \delta_X(x_3 \otimes x_4)) = \gamma_X(\delta_X(x_1 \otimes x_3) \otimes \delta_X(x_2 \otimes x_4)),$$

for all  $x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4 \in H^2(X, \mathbf{Z})$ . Furthermore,

PROPOSITION ([24], Prop. A.7 or Cor. 3.14 below). *For every element  $y \in H^4(X, \mathbf{Z})$  we have*

$$(2) \quad p_1(X)y \equiv 2y^2 \pmod{4}.$$

Note that this implies  $p_1(X) \in H^4(X, \mathbf{Z})$ . If, in addition,  $X$  is differentiable then for every integral lift  $W \in H^2(X, \mathbf{Z})$  of  $w_2(X)$  one has

$$(3) \quad 3p_1(X)^2 - 14p_1(X)W^2 + 7W^4 \equiv 12 \operatorname{Sign}(\gamma_X) \pmod{2688}.$$

Müller has also shown [24] that these relations imply all the other relations among the classical invariants of  $X$ . Conversely, a piecewise linear manifold  $X$  whose invariants obey relation (3) admits a differentiable structure [18], [24].

We are led to the following algebraic concept: A *system of invariants of type  $(b, b')$*  is a triple  $(\delta, \gamma, p)$ , consisting of

- a homomorphism  $\delta: S^2\mathbf{Z}^{\oplus b} \rightarrow \mathbf{Z}^{\oplus b'}$ ,
- a unimodular symmetric bilinear form  $\gamma: S^2\mathbf{Z}^{\oplus b'} \rightarrow \mathbf{Z}$ , and
- an element  $p \in \mathbf{Z}^{\oplus b'}$ .

We denote by  $Z(b, b')$  the set of systems of invariants of type  $(b, b')$ .

Now, let  $(X, \underline{x}, \underline{y})$  be a based eight-dimensional E-manifold. This defines a set of invariants  $Z_{(X, \underline{x}, \underline{y})} := (\delta_X, \gamma_X, p_1(X))$  of type  $(b_2(X), b_4(X))$ . Thus, we have natural maps

$$\begin{aligned} Z^{\text{PL}(C^\infty)}(b, b') &: \mathfrak{J}^{\text{PL}(C^\infty)}(b, b') \longrightarrow Z(b, b') \\ [X, \underline{x}, \underline{y}] &\longmapsto Z_{(X, \underline{x}, \underline{y})}. \end{aligned}$$

It will be the concern of our paper to understand the maps  $Z^{\text{PL}(C^\infty)}$  as well as possible. The first result can be easily derived from Wall's work [36] and deals with the case  $b = 0$ . It will be proved in detail in Section 4.1.

THEOREM 2.2. i) *The map  $Z^{\text{PL}}(0, b')$  is injective. Its image consists precisely of those elements which satisfy the relations (1) and (2).*

ii) *Given two smooth based E-manifolds  $(X, \underline{y})$  and  $(X', \underline{y}')$  with  $b_2(X) = 0 = b_2(X')$  and  $Z_{(X, \underline{y})} = Z_{(X', \underline{y}')}$ , there exists an exotic 8-sphere  $\Sigma$  such that  $(X \# \Sigma, \underline{y})$  and  $(X', \underline{y}')$  are smoothly isomorphic. In particular, the fibres of  $Z^{C^\infty}$  have cardinality at most two. The image of  $Z^{C^\infty}$  consists exactly of those elements which satisfy the relations (1), (2), and (3).*