

Zeitschrift: Helvetica Physica Acta
Band: 71 (1998)
Heft: 6

Artikel: On p-sparse Schrödinger operators with quasiperiodic potentials
Autor: Damanik, David
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-117128>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 10.12.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

On p -sparse Schrödinger operators with quasiperiodic potentials

By David Damanik

Fachbereich Mathematik
Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität
60054 Frankfurt/Main
Germany

(12.VI.98)

Abstract. We apply a decomposition approach of Guille-Biel to p -sparse Schrödinger operators with quasiperiodic potentials. A general extension principle is presented. Applications include extensions of results for the almost Mathieu operator and Fibonacci-type operators.

1 Introduction

In a recent paper [6], Guille-Biel introduced the notion of a p -sparse Schrödinger operator, which provides a generalization of the standard one-dimensional discrete Schrödinger operator

$$(Hu)(n) = u(n+1) + u(n-1) + V(n)u(n), \quad (1.1)$$

namely, the following higher order difference operator

$$(H_p u)(n) = u(n+p) + u(n-p) + V(n)u(n), \quad (1.2)$$

where $p \in \mathbb{N}$, and V is a bounded, real-valued potential. She proposed an approach how to study spectral properties of the operator H_p and particularly studied the case where V depends on a parameter ω from a probability space Ω such that the family $\{V_\omega\}_{\omega \in \Omega}$ is ergodic

with respect to the shift operator. This approach is based on a decomposition of H_p into an orthogonal sum such that the fiber operators are standard operators corresponding to the case $p = 1$. This decomposition approach was applied to the cases where V is periodic, of Anderson type, or coming from a substitution sequence. Some of the results for these classes of potentials could be extended to suitable p -sparse versions. Furthermore, it was conjectured in [6] that this approach should also be applicable to quasiperiodic V .

Our aim is to show that this is indeed the case and, moreover, there is a general extension principle. In fact, this extension is rather straightforward once it is realized that the potentials of the fiber operators retain the quasiperiodic form. We will therefore study operators of the form

$$(H_p^{\lambda, \alpha, \omega} u)(n) = u(n+p) + u(n-p) + \lambda f(n\alpha + \omega)u(n) \quad (1.3)$$

in $l^2(\mathbf{Z})$, where f is a real-valued, bounded, measurable, 1-periodic function, $\lambda \in \mathbf{R}$, $\alpha \in (0, 1)$ irrational and $\omega \in \Omega = \mathbf{T} = \mathbf{R}/\mathbf{Z} \cong [0, 1)$.

Primary and best studied examples are the almost Mathieu operator and the Fibonacci operator, corresponding to $p = 1$ and $f(\cdot) = \cos(2\pi(\cdot))$, resp. $f(\cdot) = \chi_{[1-\alpha, 1)}(\cdot \bmod 1)$ (and, usually, $\alpha = \frac{\sqrt{5}-1}{2}$). Many results have been obtained for these operators. The very nice review articles by Last [21], Jitomirskaya [11] and Sütő [27] give an excellent overview. Without attempting to summarize the results obtained so far, let us remark that in the almost Mathieu case the spectral properties of $H_1^{\lambda, \alpha, \omega}$ depend on the modulus of the coupling constant λ . For $|\lambda| < 2$ one has absolutely continuous spectrum (possibly along with some singular continuous spectrum), whereas, for $|\lambda| > 2$ one has sometimes pure point spectrum, sometimes purely singular continuous spectrum, but always zero-dimensional spectral measures [22, 12, 13]. At the self-dual point $|\lambda| = 2$, Gordon *et al.* have proven singular continuity of the spectral measures [8] for a.e. α, ω . For the Fibonacci operator, on the other hand, the spectral properties do not depend qualitatively on the coupling constant. Sütő [25, 26], Bellissard *et al.* [2] and Kaminaga [16] have shown that, for every $\lambda \neq 0$, the spectral measures are purely singular continuous (again, for a.e. ω). Quantitatively, however, some results do depend on λ , for example the polynomial upper bound for the norms of the transfer matrices corresponding to energies from the spectrum, as proven by Iochum *et al.* [9, 10], the lower bound for the Hausdorff dimensionality of the spectral measures, as proven by Jitomirskaya and Last [12, 13] (see also [3]), or the upper bound for the Hausdorff dimension of the spectrum, as proven by Raymond [24]. Furthermore, there are results on the Lebesgue measure of the spectrum in both cases, which is $|4 - 2|\lambda||$ in the almost Mathieu case (for a.e. α) [19, 20, 14] and zero in the Fibonacci case [2, 26].

We will be able to derive results for the p -sparse versions of almost Mathieu and Fibonacci-type operators from the results mentioned above by employing Guille-Biel's decomposition approach.

The organization of this article is as follows. In Section 2, we present the relevant part of the decomposition theory and prove the general extension principle. Applications of this

principle are then given in Sections 3 and 4. Finally, Section 5 contains some concluding remarks.

2 Decomposition of the operator and the extension principle

Let p be fixed throughout this section and let H_p be a p -sparse Schrödinger operator. Define for $i \in \{0, \dots, p-1\}$ the following subspaces of $l^2(\mathbf{Z})$,

$$\mathcal{K}_i \equiv \text{lin}\{e_{mp+i} : m \in \mathbf{Z}\},$$

where $\{e_m\}_{m \in \mathbf{Z}}$ is the canonical orthonormal basis of $l^2(\mathbf{Z})$, i.e. $e_m(n) = \delta_{n,m}$. The following properties are obvious.

- The \mathcal{K}_i are mutually orthogonal.
- $l^2(\mathbf{Z})$ is their orthogonal direct sum: $l^2(\mathbf{Z}) = \bigoplus_{i=0}^{p-1} \mathcal{K}_i$.
- For every i , $l^2(\mathbf{Z})$ is isometrically isomorphic to \mathcal{K}_i .
- For every i , \mathcal{K}_i reduces H_p , and therefore, $H_p = \bigoplus_{i=0}^{p-1} \hat{H}_{p,i}$, where $\hat{H}_{p,i} \equiv H_p|_{\mathcal{K}_i}$.

Define the operators $H_{p,i}$ by

$$(H_{p,i}u)(n) = u(n+1) + u(n-1) + V_{p,i}(n)u(n), \quad (2.1)$$

where $V_{p,i}(n) \equiv V(np+i)$. It is now straightforward to show that $\hat{H}_{p,i}$ and $H_{p,i}$ are unitarily equivalent, for a proof see [6]. We have thus obtained a representation of H_p as an orthogonal sum of standard discrete one-dimensional Schrödinger operators. If the potential V is such that the fiber potentials $V_{p,i}$ yield operators $H_{p,i}$ which are well studied already, this decomposition enables us to derive results for H_p .

Let us remark that we have presented a deterministic version of Guille-Biel's decomposition. Of course, p -sparse Schrödinger operators fit into the framework of random operators, but if the $p=1$ case is studied well enough, we obtain results for the general case by point-wise extension (i.e. separately for every ω). We will illustrate this below.

Let now a quasiperiodic operator of the form (1.3) be given. We are going to state the extension principle in Theorem 1 below. This principle extends properties of H_1 which hold (at least) for a.e. ω to the higher order operators H_p , where the set of α 's for which the property holds has to be changed. Let us say that a property \mathcal{P} is called *stable under direct sums* iff for every pair of selfadjoint operators A_1, A_2 the following holds:

$$A_1 \text{ and } A_2 \text{ satisfy } \mathcal{P} \Rightarrow A_1 \oplus A_2 \text{ satisfies } \mathcal{P}.$$

Think, for example, of $\mathcal{P} = \sigma_\varepsilon(\cdot) = \emptyset$, $\varepsilon \in \{pp, sc, ac\}$.

Theorem 1 *Let \mathcal{P} be a property which is stable under direct sums. Then, for every $\lambda \in \mathbf{R}$, the following holds. Let $S_\lambda \subseteq \mathbf{R}$ be such that*

$$\alpha \in S_\lambda \Rightarrow H_1^{\lambda, \alpha, \omega} \text{ has the property } \mathcal{P} \text{ for a.e. } \omega. \quad (2.2)$$

Then,

$$p\alpha \in S_\lambda \Rightarrow H_p^{\lambda, \alpha, \omega} \text{ has the property } \mathcal{P} \text{ for a.e. } \omega. \quad (2.3)$$

If \mathcal{P} holds everywhere, rather than almost everywhere, in (2.2), then the same is true in (2.3).

Proof. Fix $\lambda \in \mathbf{R}$ and let $p\alpha \in S_\lambda$. The potentials of the fiber operators $H_{p,i}^{\lambda, \alpha, \omega}$ introduced above are given by

$$V_{p,i}^{\lambda, \alpha, \omega}(n) = \lambda f((np + i)\alpha + \omega) = \lambda f(n(p\alpha) + (i\alpha + \omega)).$$

By assumption, for every $i \in \{0, \dots, p-1\}$, $H_{p,i}^{\lambda, \alpha, \omega}$ satisfies \mathcal{P} for a.e. (resp., every) ω . Thus, for a.e. (resp., every) ω , the property \mathcal{P} is satisfied by all $H_{p,i}^{\lambda, \alpha, \omega}$, $i \in \{0, \dots, p-1\}$. Stability of \mathcal{P} now implies that for those ω

$$\bigoplus_{i=0}^{p-1} H_{p,i}^{\lambda, \alpha, \omega}$$

satisfies \mathcal{P} , concluding the proof. □

Remark. The proof is so simple because it was easily seen that the fiber operators are also quasiperiodic. The situation is less simple in the case where the potential is generated by a substitution, compare [6].

3 Extensions of Fibonacci-type results

In this section, we consider operators of the form

$$(H_p^{\lambda, \alpha, \omega} u)(n) = u(n+p) + u(n-p) + \lambda \chi_J(n\alpha + \omega \bmod 1)u(n), \quad (3.1)$$

where J is a half-open interval in $\mathbf{T} = \mathbf{R}/\mathbf{Z}$.

Some results require certain number theoretical properties of α . We refer the reader to the monographs by Lang [18] and Khintchine [15] for the necessary background.

The following series of Corollaries can be obtained.

Corollary 1 *If $\lambda \neq 0$, then, for every $p \in \mathbf{N}$, α irrational and $\omega \in \Omega$, $\sigma_{ac}(H_p^{\lambda,\alpha,\omega}) = \emptyset$.*

Proof. By Kotani [17] and Last-Simon [23], absence of absolutely continuous spectrum holds for all fiber operators. Since absence of absolutely continuous spectrum is stable under direct sums, the assertion follows from Theorem 1. \square

Corollary 2 *Let (a_n) be the coefficients in the continued fraction expansion of $p\alpha$. If $\limsup a_n \geq 4$, then, for every $\lambda \in \mathbf{R}$, $\sigma_{pp}(H_p^{\lambda,\alpha,\omega}) = \emptyset$ holds for a.e. $\omega \in \Omega$.*

Proof. By Kaminaga [16] (see also [5]), the assumptions of Theorem 1 are satisfied. \square

Remarks.

1. The last two corollaries can be generalized to the case where J is a finite union of half-open intervals. The potential can even take different values on these intervals. In the assumption of Corollary 2 the condition has to be changed to $\limsup a_n \geq 4 \times \text{the number of intervals}$, compare [5].
2. We see that, as a rule, quasiperiodic potentials taking finitely many values seem to yield purely singular continuous spectrum. No exception to this rule is known yet. That is, it is still open if there exist $p, J, \lambda, \alpha, \omega$ such that $\sigma_{pp}(H_p^{\lambda,\alpha,\omega}) \neq \emptyset$.

Corollary 3 *If $J = [1 - p\alpha, 1)$, then, for every $\lambda \in \mathbf{R}$, $\sigma_{pp}(H_p^{\lambda,\alpha,\omega}) = \emptyset$ holds for a.e. $\omega \in \Omega$.*

Proof. Again by [16], the assumptions of Theorem 1 are satisfied. \square

Corollary 4 *If $J = [1 - p\alpha, 1)$, then, for every $\lambda \neq 0, \omega \in \Omega$, $\sigma(H_p^{\lambda,\alpha,\omega})$ has Lebesgue measure zero.*

Proof. Bellissard *et al.* have shown that if the length of the interval J coincides with the (irrational) rotation number α , then, for every $\lambda \neq 0, \omega \in \Omega$, $\sigma(H_1^{\lambda,\alpha,\omega})$ has Lebesgue measure zero [2]. This is clearly a property which is stable under direct sums. By assumption, the length condition is obeyed by the fiber operators. Thus, Theorem 1 can be applied. \square

4 Extensions of almost Mathieu results

In this section, we shall apply Theorem 1 to the case $f(\cdot) = \cos(2\pi(\cdot))$. We therefore consider the operators

$$(H_p^{\lambda,\alpha,\omega}u)(n) = u(n+p) + u(n-p) + \lambda \cos(2\pi(n\alpha + \omega))u(n). \quad (4.1)$$

The following series of Corollaries can be obtained.

Corollary 5 *If $|\lambda| > 2$, then, for every $p \in \mathbf{N}$, α irrational and $\omega \in \Omega$, $\sigma_{ac}(H_p^{\lambda,\alpha,\omega}) = \emptyset$.*

Proof. An already classical result gives absence of absolutely continuous spectrum for the fiber operators almost everywhere in Ω , see, e.g., [11] for references. Again, the result by Last-Simon [23] extends this to all ω . Apply Theorem 1. \square

Corollary 6 *If $|\lambda| < 2$, then $\sigma_{pp}(H_p^{\lambda,\alpha,\omega}) = \emptyset$ for every p, α and ω .*

Proof. The assertion follows from [4] and Theorem 1. \square

Another general result on the absence of eigenvalues is given in

Corollary 7 *If $p\alpha$ is a Liouville number, then $\sigma_{pp}(H_p^{\lambda,\alpha,\omega}) = \emptyset$ for every λ, ω .*

Proof. Avron and Simon [1] proved absence of eigenvalues in the case $p = 1$ by verifying Gordon's condition [7] for Liouville frequencies. Theorem 1 then yields the result. \square

Remark. The results contained in Corollaries 5 and 7 provide explicit examples with purely singular continuous spectrum.

Corollary 8 *If $|\lambda| = 2$, then, for every p and a.e. α, ω , the spectrum of $H_p^{\lambda,\alpha,\omega}$ is purely singular continuous and has Lebesgue measure zero.*

Proof. Apply Theorem 1 together with [8, 20]. \square

5 Concluding remarks

We have seen how the extension principle stated in Theorem 1 provides a mechanism for producing results for p -sparse operators from results in the standard case which hold (at least) almost everywhere. This is particularly nice because the spectral theoretical machinery is much more developed for the classical case $p = 1$. It is far from obvious how to obtain results of the type presented in Sections 3 and 4 directly, that is, by applying higher order methods to H_p instead of considering the decomposition introduced by Guille-Biel.

The list of applications we have presented serves rather as an illustration of the usefulness and applicability of Guille-Biel's decomposition along with the extension principle and we have by no means aimed at completeness. In particular the set of almost Mathieu results in the literature provides much more possibilities to formulate further Corollaries for p -sparse versions, but this would be quite pointless.

References

- [1] Avron, J., Simon, B. : *Almost periodic Schrödinger operators. II. The integrated density of states*, Duke Math. J. **50**, 369–391 (1983)
- [2] Bellissard, J., Iochum, B., Scoppola, E., Testard, D. : *Spectral properties of one-dimensional quasi-crystals*, Commun. Math. Phys. **125**, 527–543 (1989)
- [3] Damanik, D. : *α -continuity properties of one-dimensional quasicrystals*, Commun. Math. Phys. **192**, 169–182 (1998)
- [4] Delyon, F. : *Absence of localization for the almost Mathieu equation*, J. Phys. A **20**, L21–L23 (1987)
- [5] Delyon, F., Petritis, D. : *Absence of localization in a class of Schrödinger operators with quasiperiodic potential*, Commun. Math. Phys. **103**, 441–444 (1986)
- [6] Guille-Biel, C. : *Sparse Schrödinger operators*, Rev. Math. Phys. **9**, 315–341 (1997)
- [7] Gordon, A. : *On the point spectrum of the one-dimensional Schrödinger operator*, Usp. Math. Nauk **31**, 257 (1976)
- [8] Gordon, A., Jitomirskaya, S., Last, Y., Simon, B. : *Duality and singular continuous spectrum in the almost Mathieu equation*, Acta Math. **178**, 169–183 (1997)
- [9] Iochum, B., Testard, D. : *Power law growth for the resistance in the Fibonacci model*, J. Stat. Phys. **65**, 715–723 (1991)
- [10] Iochum, B., Raymond, L., Testard, D. : *Resistance of one-dimensional quasicrystals*, Physica A **187**, 353–368 (1992)
- [11] Jitomirskaya, S. : *Almost everything about the almost Mathieu operator, II*, Proceedings of XI International Congress of Mathematical Physics, Paris 1994, Int. Press, 373–382 (1995)
- [12] Jitomirskaya, S., Last, Y. : *Dimensional Hausdorff properties of singular continuous spectra*, Phys. Rev. Lett. **76**, 1765–1769 (1996)
- [13] Jitomirskaya, S., Last, Y. : *Power law subordinacy and singular spectra, II. Line operators*, in preparation
- [14] Jitomirskaya, S., Last, Y. : *Anderson localization for the almost Mathieu equation, III. Semi-uniform localization, continuity of gaps, and measure of the spectrum*, Commun. Math. Phys. **195**, 1–14 (1998)
- [15] Khintchine, A. : *Continued Fractions*, Noordhoff, Groningen (1963)
- [16] Kaminaga, M. : *Absence of point spectrum for a class of discrete Schrödinger operators with quasiperiodic potential*, Forum Math. **8**, 63–69 (1996)

- [17] Kotani, S. : *Jacobi matrices with random potentials taking finitely many values*, Rev. Math. Phys. **1**, 129–133 (1989)
- [18] Lang, S. : *Introduction to Diophantine Approximations*, Addison-Wesley, New York (1966)
- [19] Last, Y. : *A relation between a.c. spectrum of ergodic Jacobi matrices and the spectra of periodic approximants*, Commun. Math. Phys. **151**, 183–192 (1993)
- [20] Last, Y. : *Zero measure spectrum for the almost Mathieu operator*, Commun. Math. Phys. **164**, 421–432 (1994)
- [21] Last, Y. : *Almost everything about the almost Mathieu operator, I*, Proceedings of XI International Congress of Mathematical Physics, Paris 1994, Int. Press, 366–372 (1995)
- [22] Last, Y. : *Quantum dynamics and decompositions of singular continuous spectra*, J. Funct. Anal. **142**, 406–445 (1996)
- [23] Last, Y., Simon, B. : *Eigenfunctions, transfer matrices, and absolutely continuous spectrum of one-dimensional Schrödinger operators*, Invent. Math., to appear
- [24] Raymond, L. : *A constructive gap labelling for the discrete Schrödinger operator on a quasiperiodic chain*, preprint
- [25] Sütő, A. : *The spectrum of a quasiperiodic Schrödinger operator*, Commun. Math. Phys. **111**, 409–415 (1987)
- [26] Sütő, A. : *Singular continuous spectrum on a Cantor set of zero Lebesgue measure for the Fibonacci Hamiltonian*, J. Stat. Phys. **56**, 525–531 (1989)
- [27] Sütő, A. : *Schrödinger difference equation with deterministic ergodic potentials*, in "Beyond Quasi-crystals", Les éditions de Physique, Springer Verlag; ed. by F. Axel and D. Gratias; course **17**, 481–549 (1995)