

§ Differential Operators on Manifolds

Examples

1. Gradient $\text{grad} v = \sum_i g^{ij} \frac{\partial v}{\partial x^i} \frac{\partial}{\partial x^j}$
2. Divergence $\text{div}(Y) = \sum_i \frac{\partial y^i}{\partial x^i} + \sum_{ij} \Gamma_{ij}^i y^j$ for $Y = \sum_i y^i \frac{\partial}{\partial x^i}$
3. The exterior derivative d
4. Connection ∇
5. $\bar{\partial} = \frac{\partial}{\partial \bar{z}} = \frac{1}{2} \left(\frac{\partial}{\partial x} + i \frac{\partial}{\partial y} \right)$ where $z = x + iy$
6. The Laplace-Beltrami operator $\Delta = -\text{div}$
7. Schrodinger 算子 $P = -\hbar^2 \Delta + V(x)$ 其主符號為 $\sigma_P(x, \xi) = -\hbar^2 |\xi|^2$

§ 主符號(Principal symbol) of a differential operator

Principal symbol 是偏微分算子在分析上的一個核心工具，特別在微局部分析、擴散現象的研究與橢圓性判斷中極為重要。

簡單來說，它抽出一個微分算子最高階導數項的系數，並用切向量（ ξ ）代替偏導數來表示其“主導行為”。

定義

給定一個光滑流形 M 上的微分算子 $P = \sum_{|\alpha| \leq m} a_\alpha D^\alpha$ ，那麼 P 的主符號是最高次項

係數對應的符號函數 $\sigma_P(x, \xi) = \sum_{|\alpha|=m} a_\alpha(x) \xi^\alpha$

$x \in \mathbb{R}^n$: Base point (position)

$\xi \in \mathbb{R}^n - \{0\}$: cotangent vector (frequency/momentum)

3. Coordinate-Invariant Definition (on Manifolds)

On a manifold M , the principal symbol is **intrinsically defined** as a function on the **cotangent bundle** T^*M :

$$\sigma_P : T^*M \rightarrow \mathbb{C}.$$

- For a coordinate chart, $\sigma_P(x, \xi)$ is constructed by replacing:
 - $\partial_{x_j} \mapsto i\xi_j$ (where $i = \sqrt{-1}$).
- **Key property:** Invariant under changes of coordinates (lower-order terms vanish in the transformation).

它把算子轉換為代數形式(a polynomial or function on the cotangent bundle)，簡化以下的分析

1. Characteristics (surfaces along which discontinuities propagate)

2. Ellipticity (smoothness of solutions)
3. Hyperbolicity (well-posedness of initial value problems)
4. Singularities of solutions (via microlocal analysis)

例

1. R^n 中的 Laplace 算子 $\Delta = \sum_{j=1}^n \frac{\partial^2}{\partial x_j^2}$ 其 principal symbol 為 $\sigma_\Delta(x, \xi) = \sum_{j=1}^n \xi_j^2 = |\xi|^2$

由此可判斷 Δ 是橢圓算子，因為當 $\xi \neq 0$ 時 $\sigma_\Delta(x, \xi) \neq 0$ 。

2. 波動方程算子 $P = \frac{\partial^2}{\partial t^2} - \Delta$

這是一個在 $(t, x) \in R \times R^n$ 上的算子 $P = \frac{\partial^2}{\partial t^2} - \sum_{j=1}^n \frac{\partial^2}{\partial x_j^2}$ ，其 principal symbol 是

$$\sigma_P(t, x, \tau, \xi) = \tau^2 - |\xi|^2$$

P 是雙曲型算子因為主符號不是處處非零，而是退化在 $\tau^2 = |\xi|^2$ 的錐上。

3. 一階傳輸方程 $P = \frac{\partial}{\partial t} + a(x) \frac{\partial}{\partial x}$

在 R^2 中的一階算子，其 principal symbol 為 $\sigma_P(t, x, \tau, \xi) = i\tau + ia(x)\xi$

這類算子不為橢圓，但其主符號可用來分析波前集(wave front set)與特徵方向。