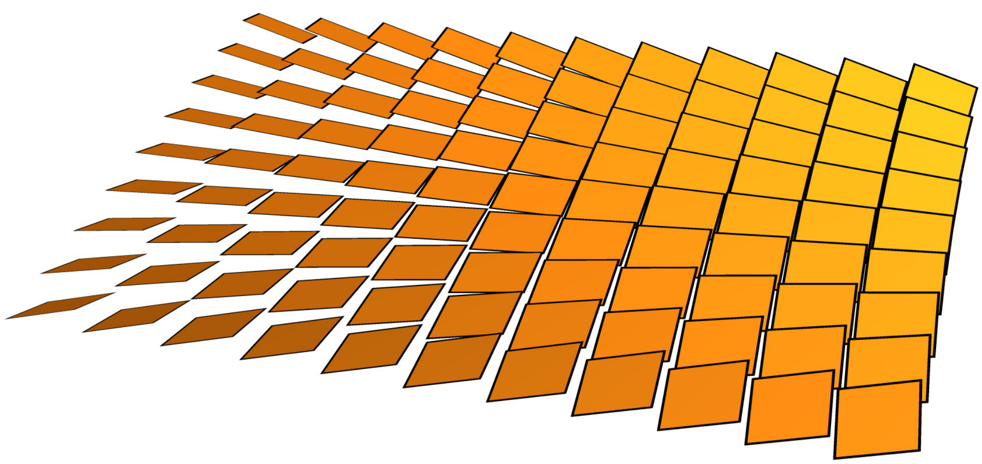
Lecture notes on

sub-Riemannian geometry

from the Lie group viewpoint



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Contents

Chapter 0

A brief introduction*

The asterisk * will denote incompleteness of the chapter or section.

0.1 About these lecture notes

This manuscript is mostly based on the following books and papers: [Pon66, War83, CG90, Bel96, Gro99, AFP00, BBI01, Hel01, Mon02, AKL09, Kna02, HN12, BL13, LD15]. It has been written initially for a course entitled ‘Sub-Riemannian Geometry’ which was taught first at ETH in Zürich (Switzerland) during Fall 2009 and then at the University of Jyväskylä (Finland) in Spring 2014. Consequently, some parts were added after the author thought a course entitled ‘Carnot groups’ at a summer school in Levico Terme (Trento, Italy) in 2015 and a course entitled ‘Riemannian and subRiemannian geometry on Lie groups’ at the summer school in Neurogeometry in 2017 in Cortona (Italy). These lecture notes were then expanded for the course ‘Sub-Riemannian Geometry’, which was taught at the University of Fribourg (Switzerland) in Spring 2021.

0.2 What sub-Riemannian geometry is

Sub-Riemannian geometry is a generalization of Riemannian geometry. Roughly speaking, a sub-Riemannian manifold is a Riemannian manifold together with a constrain on admissible directions of movements. In Riemannian geometry every smoothly embedded curve has locally finite length. In sub-Riemannian geometry, if a curve fails to satisfy the obligation of the constrain, then it has infinite length.

One classical example one should carry in mind is coming from mechanics. Indeed, the stati of a moving object are enclosed by its position in space and the speeds of its parts: the momenta. Thus

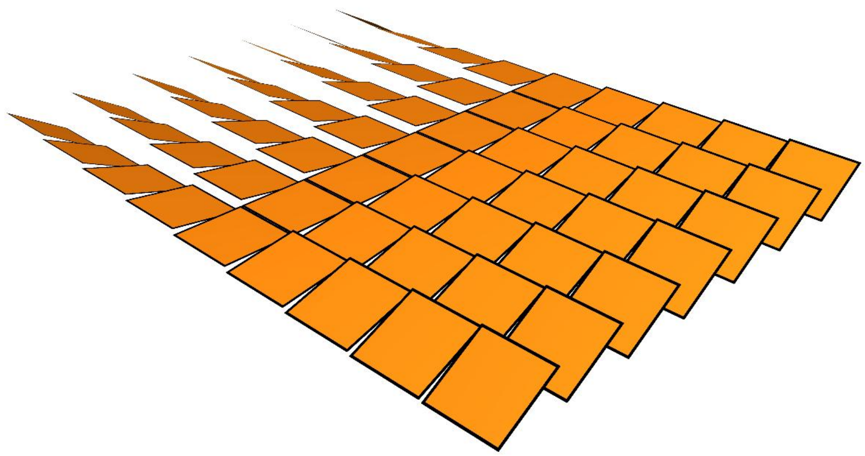


Figure 1: A contact distribution on $\mathbb{R}^3$

in the manifold 'positions times speeds' the possible evolutions of the object should satisfy the fact that the derivatives of the first coordinates are equal the second coordinates. In particular, some trajectories are not allowed. As trivial examples, you cannot vary your speed without changing your position or, similarly, you cannot move into another place at speed zero!

The 3D Heisenberg group is the most important sub-Riemannian geometry that is not in fact a Riemannian one. It is also not difficult to visualize some of its features. Topologically it is $\mathbb{R}^3$. The constrain on curves is given by what is called a 'distribution of planes'. Similarly as a smooth vector field smoothly assigns a tangent vector at each point of the manifold, a distribution of planes smoothly assigns to each point a plane inside the 3D tangent space at that point. The curves that we will called 'admissible' will be those curves that are tangent to one such a distribution.

The great feature of the Heisenberg group is that its distribution is curly enough in a way that each pair of point can be connected by at least one admissible curve. From this fact one can define a finite-valued distance similarly to the Riemannian case: the distance between two points p and q is given by the infimum of the length of all those admissible curves from p to q,

$$d(p,q) = \inf\{\text{Length}(\gamma) \ : \ \gamma \text{ admissible, from } p \text{ to } q\}. \tag{0.2.1}$$

0.3 Structure of these lecture notes

In the first part of these lecture notes we will focus on the plane distribution on the 3D Heisenberg group. We will consider the induces distance (0.2.1). In the specific we will discuss the following facts:

1) Such a distance d turns the space $\mathbb{R}^3$ into a metric space with the same standard topology. Namely, nearby points can be connected with short admissible curves.

2) Between every two points there is in fact a geodesic curve. Namely, the distance of each two points equals the length of some curve between them. Up to a multiplicative factor, the reader could think that the length of such a curve is its Euclidean length if the curve is admissible. Non admissible curves have infinite length.

3) This metric space is really new: it is not Riemannian. It is not even biLipschitz equivalent to a Riemannian distance. In fact, the Heisenberg geometry resemble fractal geometry. Indeed, such a metric on this topologically 3-dimensional object will have metric dimension (that is, Hausdorff dimension) equal to 4.

polarization
bracket generating
subRiemannian manifold
admissible
horizontal
subRiemannian distance
Carnot-Carath“'eodo
metric

The general definition of sub-Riemannian manifold follows as soon as we formalize the notion for a distribution to be ‘curly enough’. We need that this notion would imply that each pair of points are connected by an admissible curve.

By a *distribution* on M we mean a sub-bundle of the tangent bundle TM of M. Distributions are also called *polarizations*. A distribution $\Delta \subseteq TM$ is called *bracket generating* if, for every $p \in M$, the evaluation at p of the Lie algebra generated by sections of Δ is the whole of T_pM. In other words, Δ is bracket generating if every tangent vector $v \in TM$ can be presented as a linear combination of vectors of the following types

$$X_1, [X_2, X_3], [[X_4, [X_5, X_6]]], \ldots,$$

where all vector fields $X_1, X_2, X_3, \ldots$ are tangent to Δ.

A *subRiemannian manifold* is a triple (M, Δ, g), where M is a differentiable manifold, Δ is a bracket generating distribution and g is a smooth section of positive-definite quadratic forms on Δ. In fact, g can be considered as the restriction to Δ of a Riemannian metric tensor on the manifold M. A curve γ on M is called *admissible*, or *horizontal*, if it is absolutely continuous and $\dot\gamma(t) \in \Delta_{\gamma(t)}$ for any t. Then the *sub-Riemannian distance* (also known as *Carnot-Carathéodory metric*) is defined by (0.2.1). Most of the previously mentioned results on the Heisenberg group will be valid for every general sub-Riemannian distance.

The understanding of many of Riemannian geometric properties come from the fact that the 'metric' tangents of a Riemannian manifold are Euclidean spaces, and the Euclidean geometry is enough understood. Such a notion of tangent is precisely defined in terms of limits of metric spaces, and we call them the *tangent cones* or the *metric tangents*. What are the metric tangents in sub-Riemannian geometry? The answer is not immediate. For 3-dimensional sub-Riemannian manifolds we only have the Heisenberg group (another reason for it to be important). In general, alas, fixed a topological dimension greater or equal than 7, the possible tangents are infinitely many. It may not be the same one even for a given fixed sub-Riemannian manifold. The good news is that, analogously as the Heisenberg structure has a group structure, the metric tangent of a sub-Riemannian manifold has a Lie group structure at most points, and at every other point it is still a quotient of some Lie group. The metric tangent at 'regular' points has even more structure: it has a dilation property. Such metric Lie groups are those called Carnot groups.

The idea is that we should first understand the geometry of Carnot groups which are particular examples of sub-Riemannian manifolds. After this, we will consider the general case of sub-Riemannian manifolds. There is hope to understand Carnot groups exactly because using the translations by elements and the dilation property it is possible to extend the theory of calculus in such a setting. The reader should notice how in the classical definition of derivative of a real function, we make use of addition, multiplications, and limits:

$$f'(x) = \lim_{h \to 0} \frac{f(x+h) - f(x)}{h}.$$

All this operations are present on Carnot groups. Thus we have a metric definition of derivative, which is called nowadays *Pansu derivative*, in honor to the work that Pierre Pansu did on the subject, [Pan89].

Let us enunciate one of the most celebrated theorem of Pansu, which afterwards has been expressed in its generality in [MM95].

Theorem 0.3.1 (Pansu's Rademacher Theorem [Pan89, MM95])**.** *Given a Lipschitz map between sub-Riemannian manifolds, at almost all points its blow up differential exists, is a group homomorphism of the tangent cones, and is equivariant with respect to their dilations.*

In fact the theorem holds also for quasi-conformal maps. The theory of quasi-conformal mappings has been used to prove rigidity theorems on hyperbolic spaces over the division algebras of real, complex, or quaternionic numbers. Indeed, as we shall see in these lecture notes the 'parabolic visual boundaries' of rank-one symmetric spaces are Carnot groups. More generally, all negatively curved homogenous Riemannian manifolds have graded groups as boundaries. This last fact is mostly based on the work of Heintze. In harmonic analysis Carnot groups, and more generally graded groups and Carnot-Carathéodory spaces, also appear in the study of hypoelliptic differential operators. In complex analysis, they appear as boundaries of strictly pseudo-convex complex domains, see the books [Ste93, CDPT07] as initial references.

Carnot groups, with Carnot-Carathéodory distances, appear in geometric group theory as asymptotic cones of nilpotent finitely generated groups, see [Gro96, Pan89]. Part of these notes are devoted to the study of the coarse geometry of nilpotent groups. We will see how a geometric notion as the polynomial growth of balls in the Cayley graph of a discrete group relates with the geometry of the tangent cone at infinity of this graph, which in this case turns out to be a Carnot group endowed with a Finsler-Carnot-Carathéodory metric, and eventually gives an algebraic consequence: the group is (virtually) nilpotent.

The next part of the course will be focused on some topics of Geometric Measure Theory in the setting of Carnot groups. Most of the presented results are valid in the case of nilpotent Lie groups endowed with their Carnot-Carathéodory metric. In particular we focus on the following problems:

- Are sets that have finite perimeter rectifiable?
- How the theory of minimal surfaces differs from the Euclidean case?
- What is the regularity of geodesics?

The above questions have not complete answers yet. In fact they are leading most of the recent research in sub-Riemannian geometry.

0.4 Sub-Riemannian geometries as models

Sub-Riemannian geometry (also known as Carnot geometry in France, and non-holonomic Riemannian geometry in Russia) has been a full research domain from the 80's, with motivations and ramifications in several parts of pure and applied mathematics. However, historically it was not clear that such theories were heading into the same notions. Thus each source provided its own jargon to the field. The non-expert reader will soon realize that some concepts have multiple terminology:

a contact structure is a particular distribution of hyper-plane in an odd-dimensional manifold and the concept of Carnot-Carathéodory metric is a generalization of a sub-Riemannian distance.

0.4.1 Many examples from Mathematics

Control theory

Control theory is an interdisciplinary branch of engineering and mathematics that deals with the behavior of dynamical systems. The usual objective is to control a system, in the sense of finding, if possible, the trajectories to reach a desired state and do it in an optimal way. Sub-Riemannian geometry follows the same setting of considering systems that are controllable with optimal trajectories and study this spaces as metric spaces. Many of the theorems in sub-Riemannian geometry can be formulated and prove in the more general settings of control theory. For example, the sub-Riemannian theorems by Chow, Pontryagin, and Goh have more general statement in geometric control theory. The reader interested in this view point should consult the book [AS04].

Classical mechanics

Symplectic and contact geometry

Riemannian geometry

Riemannian geometry (of which sub-Riemannian geometry constitutes a natural generalization, and where sub-Riemannian metrics may appear as limit cases)

Diffusion on manifolds

Analysis of hypoelliptic operators

[Fol73, RS76, Cap97]

Geometric Group Theory

Cauchy-Riemann (or CR) geometry

Univalent Function Theory

There is a very remarkable application of sub-Riemmanian geometry to univalent function theory. The application is very recent and so not still well known, it is why we prefered to expose this instead of other beautiful application of sub-Riemmanian geometry to another branch of pure mathematics.

The following quick summary is based on the paper [MPV07] and on kind conversations with Jeremy Tyson.

Classical univalent function theory considers the class S of analytic univalent functions f defined in the unit disc normalized by $f(0) = 0$ and $f'(0) = 1$.

Basic (unsolved) problems are to describe the coefficient body

$$M = \{(a_k) : (a_k) \text{ are the power series coefficients at } z = 0 \text{ for a function in } S\}$$

or its finite-dimensional slices

$$M_n = \{(a_2, a_3, \ldots, a_{n+1}) \quad : \quad (a_k) \text{ are the first } n \text{ (undetermined) power series coefficients at } z = 0 \text{ for a function in} S\}.$$

The Bieberbach Conjecture (proved by de Branges in 1984) says $|a_n| \leq n$ for all n. This gives information on the size of M_n and M. There is no explicit description of M_n except for the cases $n = 2$ (trivial) and $n = 3$ (Schaeffer-Spencer, 1950).

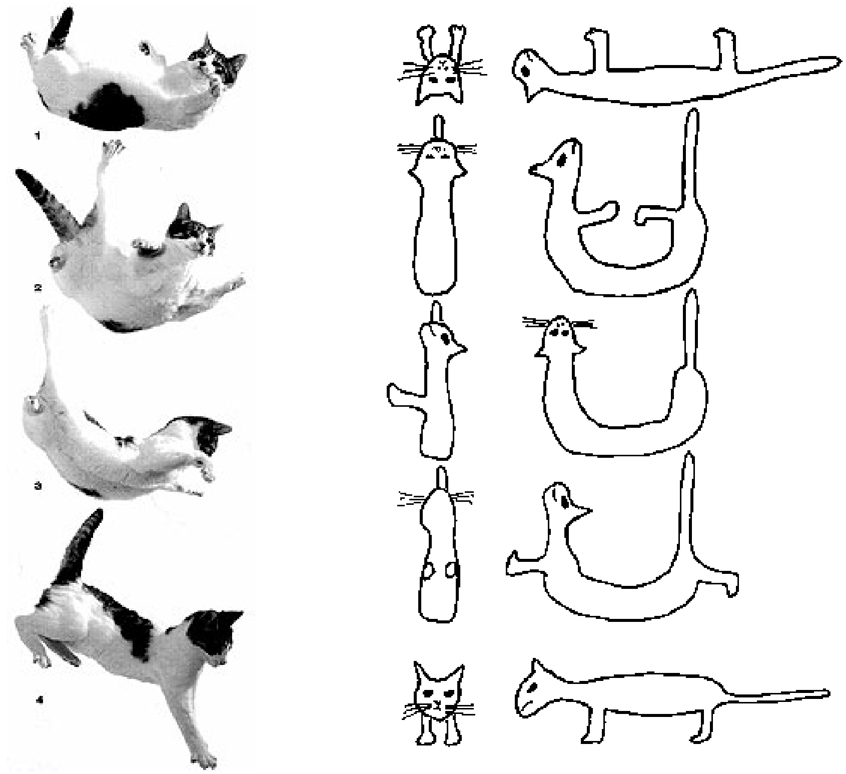
One of the basic tools in the subject is the Loewner (or Loewner-Kufarev) parametric representation, which embeds any function $f \in S$ into an ODE flow within the class S. Loewner parametrizations were used by de Branges in his proof. Nowadays there is a stochastic version of the Loewner flow (SLE) which is a very hot topic at the intersection of probability, complex analysis, stochastic PDE, math physics, etc.

Anyways, what Markina-Prokhorov-Vasilev show is that one can use the Loewner flow on S to define a natural (partially integrable) Hamiltonian system on the coefficient bodies M_n. They find certain first integrals of the flow and calculate all the relevant commutators. From there they construct a *complex* sub-Riemannian structure on M_n which is naturally adapted to the underlying univalent function theory. In fact, the Loewner parametrices become horizontal curves with restect to this sub-Riemannian structure.

An interesting problem in the field is to extend Markina-Prokhorov-Vasilev's setup to cover SLE as well as the classical (deterministic) Loewner equation.

0.4.2 Many examples from Physics

Sub-Riemannian geometry models various structures, from finance to mechanics, from bio-medicine to quantum phases, from robots to falling cats! We don't want to enter in the details first because of lack of time, second because of lack of competence. We will address the interested reader to other papers.



(a) A photo. (b) A sketch.

Figure 2: The cat spins itself around and right itself.

The geometry of principal bundles with connections

Theoretical physics defines most mechanical systems by a kinetic energy and a potential energy. Gauge theory also know as the geometry of principal bundles with connections studies systems with physical symmetries, i.e., when there is a group acting on the configuration space by isometries. Most of the times it will be easier to understand the dynamics up to isometries, successively one has to study the 'lift' of the dynamics into the initial configuration space. Such lifts will be subject to a sub-Riemannian restriction.

Falling cats

The formalism of principal bundles with connections is well presented by the example of the fall of a cat. A cat, dropped from upside down, will land on its self. The reason of this ability is the good flexibility of the cat in changing its shape.

Let us fix some formalism. Let M be the set of all the possible configurations in the 3D space of a given cat. Let S be the set of all the shapes that a cat can assume. Both M and S are manifolds of dimension quite huge. A position of a cat is just its shape plus its orientation in space. Otherwise said, the group of isometries $G := \mathrm{Isom}(\mathbb{R}^3)$ of the Euclidean 3D space acts on M and the shape space is just the quotient of the action:

$$\pi : M \to M/G = S.$$

In fancy words, M is a principal G-bundle.

The key fact is that the cat has complete freedom in deciding its shape $\sigma(t) \in S$ at each time t. However, during the fall, each strategy $\sigma(t)$ of changing shapes will give as a result a change in configurations $\tilde{\sigma}(t) \in M$. The curve $\tilde{\sigma}(t)$ satisfies

$$\pi(\tilde{\sigma}) = \sigma.$$

Moreover the lifted curve is unique: it has to satisfy the constrain given by the 'natural mechanical connection'. What the cat is proving is that such connection has non-trivial holonomy. In other words, the cat can choose to vary its shape from the standard normal shape into the same shape giving as a result a change in configuration: the legs were initially toward the sky, then they are toward the floor.

From mechanics: parking cars, rolling balls, moving robots, and satellites

Parking a car or riding a bike. The configuration space is 3-dimensional: the position in the 2-dimensional street plus the angle with respect to a fixed line. However, the driver has only two degree of freedom: turning and pushing. Using again non-trivial holonomy we can move the car to any position we like.

Rolling a ball on the plane. A position of a ball lying on a plane requires five coordinates: two reals to characterize the point in the plane where the ball is touching it, another two coordinates to characterize the point of the ball which touches the plane, and the last one for spinning the ball around its vertical axis. When one rolls the ball without sliding, there are only three admissible control directions: two to choose a direction and then roll the ball and the third one for spinning it. Still, one can get to any position regardless of the initial position.

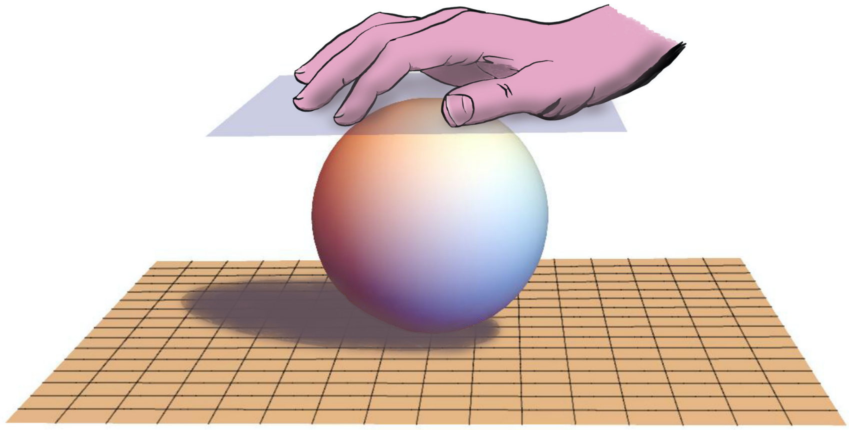


Figure 3: A ball rolling on the plane without sliding.

In *robotics* the mechanisms, as for example the arm of a robot, are subjected to constrain of movements but do not decrease the manifold of positions. Similar is the situation of *satellites*. One should really think about a satellite as a falling cat: it should choose properly its strategy of modifying the shape to have the necessary change in configuration. Another similar example is the case of an astronaut in outer space.

Vision

I became aware of the following application from conversations with S. Pauls and G. Citti. A suggested-to-curious-readers paper is [SCP08].

Neuro-biologic research over the past few decades has greatly clarified the functional mechanisms of the first layer (V1) of the visual cortex. Such layer contains a variety of types of cells, including the so-called 'simple cells'. Researchers found that simple cells are sensitive to orientation specific brightness gradients.

Recently, this structure of the cortex has been modeled using a sub-Riemannian manifold. The space is $\mathbb{R}^2 \times \mathbb{S}^1$ where each point (x, y, θ) represents a column of cells associated to a point of retinal data $(x, y) \in \mathbb{R}^2$, all of which are attuned to the orientation given by the angle $\theta \in \mathbb{S}^1$. In other words, the vector $(\cos\theta, \sin\theta)$ is the direction of maximal rate of change of brightness at point (x, y) of the picture seen by the eye, such vector can be seen as the normal to the boundary of the picture.

The moral is that when the cortex cells are stimulated by an image, the border of the image gives a curve inside this 3D space. Such curves are restricted to be tangent to the distribution spanned by the vector fields

$$X_1 = \cos(\theta)\partial_x + \sin(\theta)\partial_y \quad \text{and} \quad X_2 = \partial_\theta.$$

Researchers think that, if a piece of the contour of a picture is missing to the eye vision (or maybe it is covered by an object), then the brain tends to 'complete' the curve by minimizing some kind of energy, in other words, there is some sub-Riemannian structure on the space of visual cells and the brain consider a sub-Riemannian geodesic between the endpoints of the missing data.

Quantum mechanical systems

I became aware of the following application from a discussion with Ugo Boscain and reading his 'Habilitation à diriger des recherches'.

Let $\mathcal{H}$ be a complex separable Hilbert space. Let us denote by $\mathbb{S}$ the unit sphere in $\mathcal{H}$.

The time evolution of quantum mechanical system (e.g., an atom, a molecule, or a system of particles with spin) is described by a map $\psi : \mathbb{R} \to \mathbb{S}$, called wave function. The vector $\psi(t)$ is called the state of the system at time t.

The equation of evolution of the state is the so-called Schrödinger equation. If the system is isolated, the equation has the form:

$$i\frac{d\psi}{dt}(t) = H_0\psi(t),$$

where H_0 is a self-adjoint operator acting on $\mathcal{H}$ called free Hamiltonian.

Let us assume for simplicity of notation that the spectrum of H_0 is discrete and non-degenerate, with eigenvalues $E_1, E_2, \ldots$ (called energy-levels) and eigenvectors $\psi_1, \psi_2, \ldots \in \mathbb{S}$.

Assume now to act on the system with some external fields (e.g an electromagnetic field) whose amplitude is represented by some functions $u_1, \ldots, u_m \in L^\infty(\mathbb{R}, \mathbb{R})$. In this case the Schrödinger equation becomes

$$i\frac{d\psi}{dt}(t) = H(t)\psi(t), \qquad \text{where } H(t) = H_0 + \sum_{j=1}^{m} u_j(t)H_j,$$

and H_j are self-adjoint operators representing the coupling between the system and the external fields. The time dependent operators $H(t)$ and $\sum_{j=1}^{m} u_j(t)H_j$ are called respectively the Hamiltonian and the control-Hamiltonian. The typical problem of quantum control is the so called population transfer problem:

Assume that at time zero the system is in an eigenstate ϕ_j of the free Hamiltonian H_0. Design controls $u_1, \ldots, u_m$ such that at a fixed time T the system is in another prescribed eigenstate ϕ_l of

H_0.

Nowadays quantum control has many applications in chemical physics, in nuclear magnetic resonance (also in medicine) and it is central in the implementation of the so-called quantum gates (the basic blocks of a quantum computer).

For a finite dimensional quantum mechanical system, if n is the number of energy levels we have $\mathcal{H} = \mathbb{C}^n$ and the state space $\mathbb{S}$ is the unit sphere $\mathbb{S}^{2n-1} \subset \mathbb{C}^n$. In this setting, problems of quantum mechanics (being multilinear) can be formulated with matrices. The solution is of the form

$$\psi(t) = g(t)\psi(0), \quad \text{with } g(t) \in SU(n).$$

The Schrödinger equation becomes $\frac{d}{dt}g(t) = -iH(t)g(t)$, and now $-iH(t)$ is a skew trace-zero Hermitian matrix, i.e., belongs to the Lie algebra $\mathfrak{su}(n)$.

The controllability problem (i.e., proving that for every couple of points in $SU(n)$ one can find controls steering the system from one point to the other) is nowadays well understood. Indeed, the system is controllable if and only if the Hörmander's condition holds:

$$\text{Lie}\{iH_0, iH_1, \ldots, iH_m\} = \mathfrak{su}(n).$$

Once that controllability is proved one would like to steer the system, between two fixed points in the state space, in the most efficient way. Typical costs that are interesting to minimize in the applications are:

- Energy transferred by the controls to the system (minimizing time with unbounded controls is today well understood);
- Time of transfer (minimizing time with bounded controls or energy is very difficult in general).

Even more examples

In finance... I don't know how! Talk with ETH professor Josef Teichmann.

Quantum Berry's phases... I don't know how! See references in the introduction in [Mon02].

Chapter 1

The main example: the Heisenberg group

The sub-Riemannian Heisenberg group is the main example of sub-Riemannian geometry that is actually not Riemannian. Such a geometry is connected to the solution of the isoperimetric problem on the plane and has a formulation in terms of contact geometry.

In this chapter we present the geometric models of the sub-Riemannian Heisenberg group and identify some of the properties that will be later studied in general Carnot groups.

Since the topological dimension of the Heisenberg group is 3, we shall easily visualize its sub-Riemannian geodesics and spheres.

1.1 An isoperimetric problem on the plane

The isoperimetric problem is the problem in which, given a length, one has to look for the maximal area among those domains with that fixed length as perimeter. We will be interested in a variant of the standard isoperimetric problem: the Dido's problem.

Dido was, according to ancient Greek and Roman sources, the founder and first queen of Carthage (in modern-day Tunisia). She is best known from the account given by the Roman poet Virgil in his Aeneid. Indeed, in this epic poem it is narrated that King Jarbas was persuaded by Dido to give her a piece of land on the African coast to settle. This land would have been as much as Queen Dido would have encaptured with a leather string, using also the coastline. The solution is easy to find: a half-circle.

Let us give a mathematical model of such problem. On $\mathbb{R}^2$ the area form is $\mathrm{vol} = dx \wedge dy$, which

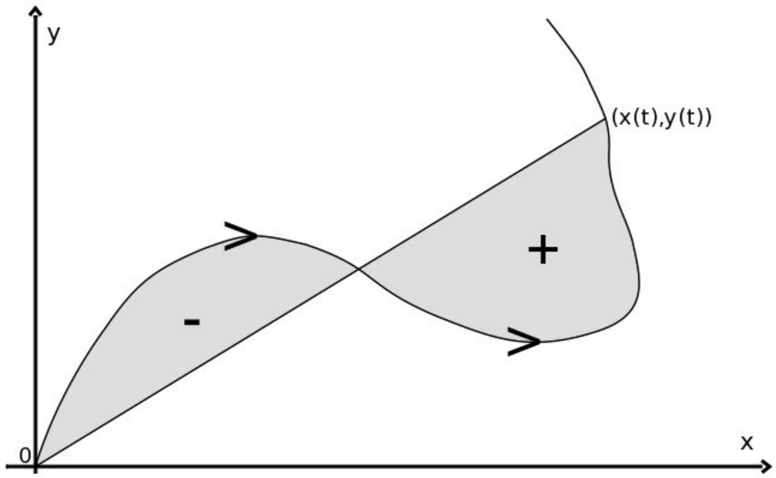


Figure 1.1: The lift of the curve is performed defining the third coordinate $z(t)$ as the oriented area of the region between the arc of the curve up to the point $(x(t), y(t))$ and the straight segment from $(0, 0)$ to $(x(t), y(t))$.

is the differential of the one-form

$$\alpha := \frac{1}{2}(xdy - ydx) = \frac{1}{2}r^2 d\theta.$$

Applying Stoke's Theorem we get that, if a closed smooth counterclockwise-oriented curve γ in $\mathbb{R}^2$ encloses a domain D_γ, then the area of D_γ is just the integral of α along γ:

$$\text{Area}(D_\gamma) := \iint_{D_\gamma} \text{vol} = \int_\gamma \alpha.$$

Observe that at each point $(x, y) \in \mathbb{R}^2$, the vector (x, y) is in the kernel of α, thus, if L is a line through the origin, we have that $\int_L \alpha = 0$. This observation lets us conclude that, if γ is a smooth curve starting from the origin that is not necessarily closed, then $\int_\gamma \alpha$ expresses the signed area enclosed by γ and the segment connecting the origin to the final point of γ, see Figure 1.2.

Therefore, Dido's problem rephrases as the problem of maximize the integral $\int_\gamma \alpha$ having fixed the integral $\int_\gamma \mathrm{d}s$, which expresses the length of the curve as integration of it with respect to the element of arc length ds.

1.2 The contact-geometry formulation of the problem

One of the models of the Heisenberg geometry is constructed as follows and it has the property that the projection $\pi : \mathbb{R}^3 \to \mathbb{R}^2$ on the first two coordinates sends geodesics into those solutions of the Dido's isoperimetric problem.

If we start from a curve $\sigma(t) = (x(t), y(t))$ in $\mathbb{R}^2$, with $x(0) = y(0) = 0$, we can lift it into a curve in the 3D space where the third coordinate $z(t)$ is the signed area encaptured by the arc $\sigma_{[0,t]}$ and the segment from 0 to $(x(t), y(t))$, see Figure 1.2.

Therefore

$$z(t) := \int_{\sigma_{[0,t]}} \alpha = \int_{\sigma_{[0,t]}} \frac{1}{2}(xdy - ydx) = \int_0^t \frac{1}{2}\left(x(s)\dot{y}(s) - y(s)\dot{x}(s)\right) \mathrm{d}s. \tag{1.2.1}$$

Differentiating in t we get

$$\dot{z} = \frac{1}{2}(x\dot{y} - y\dot{x}). \tag{1.2.2}$$

Set $\xi = dz - \frac{1}{2}(xdy - ydx)$. Consider a curve $\gamma = (\gamma_1, \gamma_2, \gamma_3) : [0,1] \to \mathbb{R}^3$ starting at 0. Then we have that such lifted curves are exactly those satisfying $\dot{\gamma} \in \ker(\xi)$, i.e., $\xi((\dot{\gamma}_1, \dot{\gamma}_2, \dot{\gamma}_3)) \equiv 0$.

The differential one-form ξ can be written in cylindrical coordinates (r, θ, z) as $dz - \frac{1}{2}r^2 d\theta$

Definition 1.2.3. We call the differential one-form

$$\xi := dz - \frac{1}{2}(xdy - ydx) = dz - \frac{1}{2}r^2 d\theta \tag{1.2.4}$$

the 'standard contact' form[1].

As any never-vanishing differential one-form on $\mathbb{R}^3$, the standard contact form gives at any point $(x, y, z) \in \mathbb{R}^3$ a 2D kernel inside the tangent space $T_{(x,y,z)}\mathbb{R}^3 \cong \mathbb{R}^3$ at (x, y, z):

$$\Delta_{(x,y,z)} := \ker(\xi_{(x,y,z)}) = \left\{ (v_1, v_2, v_3) \in \mathbb{R}^3 \ : \ v_3 = \frac{1}{2}(xv_2 - yv_1) \right\}.$$

Geometrically, Δ is a field of 2D planes in the 3D space, also know as distribution. Now, given vectors $v = (v_1, v_2, v_3)$ and $w = (w_1, w_2, w_3)$, consider the linear product given by

$$\langle v, w \rangle := v_1 w_1 + v_2 w_2. \tag{1.2.5}$$

Notice that, since the planes $\Delta_{(x,y,z)}$ never includes the z-axis, then the restriction of $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ on $\Delta_{(x,y,z)}$ is a positive-defined inner product. If one prefers, such restriction could be thought as a

[1] A contact form on a $(2n+1)$-dimensional differentiable manifold M is a 1-form α, with the property that

$$\alpha \wedge (d\alpha)^n \neq 0,$$

with

$$(d\alpha)^n = \underbrace{d\alpha \wedge \cdots \wedge d\alpha}_{n}.$$

Sometimes the contact forms $dz - xdy + ydx = dz - r^2 d\theta$ and $dz + xdy$ are also called standard.

Legendrian

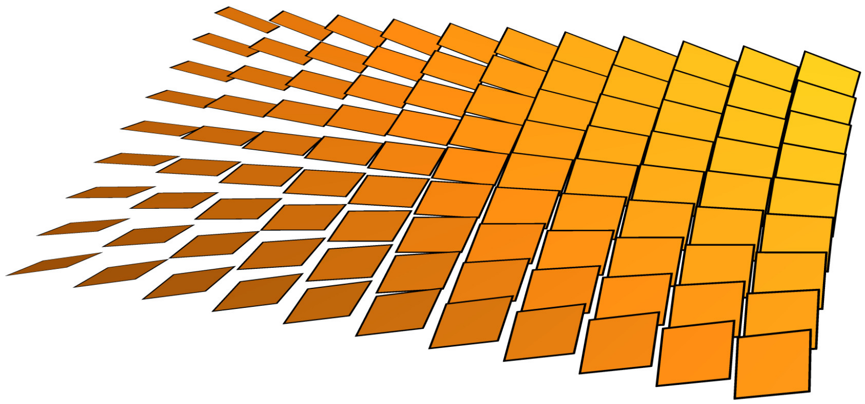


Figure 1.2: Standard contact distribution on $\mathbb{R}^3$.

restriction of a Riemannian tensor on $\mathbb{R}^3$, i.e., a positive-defined inner product on the whole of the tangent bundle of $\mathbb{R}^3$. Indeed, we can fix the following frame[2] of $\mathbb{R}^3$:

$$\begin{cases} X &:= \frac{\partial}{\partial x} - \frac{1}{2} y \frac{\partial}{\partial z}, \\ Y &:= \frac{\partial}{\partial y} + \frac{1}{2} x \frac{\partial}{\partial z}, \\ Z &:= \frac{\partial}{\partial z}, \end{cases} \tag{1.2.6}$$

and declare it orthonormal. Let us check that such Riemannian metric gives the linear product (1.2.5) when restricted to the plane $\Delta_{(x,y,z)}$. Since $\frac{\partial}{\partial x} = X + \frac{1}{2} y Z$ and $\frac{\partial}{\partial y} = Y - \frac{1}{2} x Z$, then

$$v = v_1 X + v_2 Y + (\frac{v_1}{2} y - \frac{v_2}{2} x + v_3) Z.$$

So, if $v \in \Delta_{(x,y,z)}$, we have $v = v_1 X + v_2 Y$ and thus (1.2.5) holds.

In contact geometry a curve γ is called *Legendrian* with respect to ξ if $\xi(\dot{\gamma}) \equiv 0$. In other words, if the tangent vector $\dot{\gamma}(t)$ lies in the plane $\Delta_{\gamma(t)}$. Given a Legendrian curve γ, we define its length $L(\gamma)$ as the integral of the norm of $\dot{\gamma}$ with respect to the scalar product (1.2.5). In other words, $L(\gamma)$ is exactly the Euclidean length of the projection of γ onto the first two components of $\mathbb{R}^3$.

At this point we introduce a new distance on $\mathbb{R}^3$ which we refer to it as the *contact distance*. For any p and q in $\mathbb{R}^3$, define

$$d_c(p, q) := \inf\{L(\gamma) \ : \ \gamma \text{ Legendrian between } p \text{ and } q\}. \tag{1.2.7}$$

The fact that ξ was obtained from the Dido's problem tells us that for any pair of points in $\mathbb{R}^3$ there are several Legendrian curves joining it:

[2] A frame is a set of vector fields on a differentiable manifold M that at each point $p \in M$ gives a basis of $T_p M$.

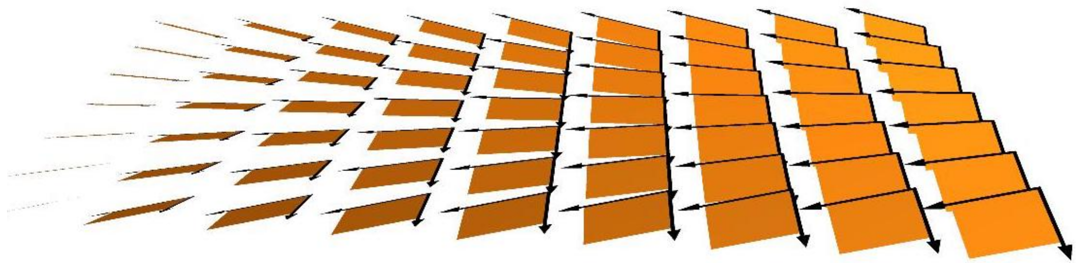


Figure 1.3: The horizontal bundle spanned by the vector fields X and Y.

A crucial fact: Every pair of points in $\mathbb{R}^3$ is connected by a curve that is Legendrian with respect to ξ.

Indeed, to connect say $(0,0,0)$ to (x,y,z), it is enough to take a curve σ on $\mathbb{R}^2$ from $(0,0)$ to (x,y) with the property that the signed area enclosed by σ and the segment from $(0,0)$ to (x,y) is exactly z. Then the lifted curve $\tilde{\sigma}$ will connected $(0,0,0)$ to (x,y,z).

Moreover we also know that the length of $\tilde{\sigma}$ equals the planar Euclidean length of σ. Therefore, there is a correspondence between geodesics with respect to the metric d_c and solutions of the 'dual' Dido's isoperimetric problem: fixed a value for the area, minimize the perimeter. Since it is easy to find solutions of Dido's problem we will be able to write explicitly the geodesics of the metric space $(\mathbb{R}^3, d_c)$. We will do this later in Section 1.4.1.

1.3 The Heisenberg group

1.3.1 The Heisenberg group structure and the invariance of the standard contact structure

At this point we have introduced a geometry, which we will call *contact geometry*. Namely, we are considering the plane distribution given by

$$\begin{aligned} X(x,y,z) &:= \frac{\partial}{\partial x} - \frac{y}{2}\frac{\partial}{\partial z} = (1,0,-\frac{y}{2}), \\ Y(x,y,z) &:= \frac{\partial}{\partial y} + \frac{x}{2}\frac{\partial}{\partial z} = (0,1,\frac{x}{2}); \end{aligned} \tag{1.3.1}$$

at each point (x,y,z) we are considering $X(x,y,z)$ and $Y(x,y,z)$ to be an orthonormal basis on their span $\Delta(z,y,z)$; for each smooth curve $\gamma : [a,b] \to \mathbb{R}^3$ for which $\dot{\gamma}(t)$ is in $\Delta(z,y,z)$ we define its length. Namely, if $u_1(t), u_2(t)$ are such that $\dot{\gamma}(t) = u_1(t)X_{\gamma(t)} + u_2(t)Y_{\gamma(t)}$, then the length of γ is defined as $\int_a^b \sqrt{u_1(t)^2 + u_2(t)^2}\,\mathrm{d}t$. Such a length structure defined the contact distance (1.2.7).

A crucial property of the contact geometry is that the space is isometrically homogeneous. In fact, the space $\mathbb{R}^3$ can be endowed with a group structure (different from the Euclidean one) in such a way that all of the above constructions are preserved by the action of the group onto itself.

Such a group structure is named after Heisenberg. Its the group law is

$$(x, y, z) \cdot (x', y', z') := \left(x + x', y + y', z + z' + \frac{1}{2}(xy' - yx') \right). \tag{1.3.2}$$

One can easily check that (1.3.2) gives a group structure and it turns $\mathbb{R}^3$ into a Lie group, i.e., multiplication and inversion are smooth maps. We will go back to the general theory of Lie groups in Section **??**. We shall refer to the group $\mathbb{R}^3$ equipped with group law (1.3.2) as the *Heisenberg group*.

We claim that the left translations preserve the distribution Δ and in fact preserve the orthonormal frame X, Y, Z defined by (1.2.6). Let's verify this claim for X. Call f a fixed left translation

$$f(x, y, z) := L_{(s,t,u)}(x, y, z) = (s, t, u) \cdot (x, y, z) = \left(x + s, y + t, z + u + \frac{1}{2}(sy - tx) \right). \tag{1.3.3}$$

The differential is

$$df = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ -t/2 & s/2 & 1 \end{pmatrix}. \tag{1.3.4}$$

So $df X = \frac{\partial}{\partial x} + \left(-\frac{t}{2} - \frac{y}{2}\right) \frac{\partial}{\partial z}$. On the other hand, $X \circ f = \frac{\partial}{\partial x} - \frac{1}{2}(t + y) \frac{\partial}{\partial z}$. Therefore $f_* X = X \circ f$, i.e., X is left-invariant. Analogously, $f_* Y = \frac{\partial}{\partial y} + \frac{1}{2}(s + x) \frac{\partial}{\partial z} = Y \circ f$ and $f_* Z = \frac{\partial}{\partial z} = Z \circ f$.

As a consequence of the fact that each left translation by the product (1.3.2) preserves the orthonormal frame X, Y we deduce that each such a translation preserves the length of Legendrian curves and, consequently, preserves the contact distance as defined in (1.2.7).

The next proposition summarizes the above discussion.

Proposition 1.3.5. *The Heisenberg geometry is isometrically homogeneous: the space has a Lie group structure so that each left translation is an isometry with respect to the contact distance d_c.*

The above model of the Heisenberg group has the advantage that it is easy to compute and visualize its 1-dimensional subgroups. Indeed, one-parameter subgroups for this group structure are the standard Euclidean lines:

$$\gamma_v(t) = \exp\left(t(v_1, v_2, v_3)\right) = (tv_1, tv_2, tv_3).$$

In addition, we remark that all the lines through 0 in the xy-plane are curves that minimize the contact distance (Exercise).

1.3.2 The 3D nilpotent non-Abelian matrix group

The Heisenberg group has also a matrix model. It can be seen as a subgroup of the group of invertible matrices. The Heisenberg group is the group of 3×3 upper triangular matrices equipped with the usual matrix product:

$$\mathbb{G} = \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} 1 & a & c \\ 0 & 1 & b \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \; : \; a, b, c \in \mathbb{R} \right\} < GL(3, \mathbb{R}).$$

Such a model is useful because (first, it is easy to remember the group structure! then) the Lie algebra can be also seen as a matrix group and the exponential of the Lie group is the classical exponential of matrices. Indeed, the Lie algebra is

$$\mathfrak{g} = \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} 0 & a & c \\ 0 & 0 & b \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \; : \; a, b, c \in \mathbb{R} \right\}.$$

A basis of the Lie algebra is

$$X = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}, \qquad Y = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}, \qquad Z = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}. \tag{1.3.6}$$

One parameter subgroups are of the form:

$$\begin{aligned} \gamma_{(a,b,c)}(t) &= \exp\left(t \begin{pmatrix} 0 & a & c \\ 0 & 0 & b \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \right) \\ &= I + t \begin{pmatrix} 0 & a & c \\ 0 & 0 & b \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix} + \frac{t^2}{2!} \begin{pmatrix} 0 & a & c \\ 0 & 0 & b \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}^2 + \dots \\ &= I + t \begin{pmatrix} 0 & a & c \\ 0 & 0 & b \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix} + \frac{t^2}{2} \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & ab \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix} + 0 \\ &= \begin{pmatrix} 1 & at & ct + abt^2/2 \\ 0 & 1 & bt \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}. \end{aligned}$$

We claim that the map

$$\varphi : (x, y, z) \mapsto \begin{pmatrix} 1 & x & z + \frac{1}{2}xy \\ 0 & 1 & y \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

is a Lie group isomorphism from the Lie group $\mathbb{R}^3$ with the product (1.3.2) to the Lie group of 3×3 upper triangular matrices with the usual matrix product. Indeed, the map φ is a group homomorphism (straightforward calculation) and its differential at the identity send the left-invariant vector fields X, Y, Z from (1.2.6) to X, Y, Z from (1.3.6), respectively. In fact, in the next section we will see that more is true.

1.3.3 The uniqueness of the Heisenberg algebra

The Lie algebra of the Heisenberg group has the property that it is spanned by three vectors X, Y, Z whose only non-trivial Lie bracket relation is $[X, Y] = Z$. In particular, the Lie bracket of any three vectors X_1, X_2, X_3 in this Lie algebra have the property that $[X_1, [X_2, X_3]] = 0$. In other words, the Heisenberg group is a group of nilpotency step 2. Recall that a Lie algebra is nilpotent and its nilpotency step is s if, for all choice of more than s vectors in it, the iterated bracket of them is 0.

We claim that there are only two 3D simply-connected nilpotent Lie groups: the Euclidean 3-space and the Heisenberg group. Indeed, consider the Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$ of the group. Since $\mathfrak{g}$ is nilpotent, one can take Z in the center of $\mathfrak{g}$ which is non-trivial. Complete Z to a basis X, Y, Z of $\mathfrak{g}$. Now, either X and Y commute, and so the algebra is commutative, or $W := [X, Y] \neq 0$. write $W = aX + bY + cZ$. Then $[W, Y] = aW$ and so, since $\mathfrak{g}$ is nilpotent, we have $a = 0$. Analogously $b = 0$. Thus $c \neq 0$, and, replacing Z with cZ, we have that the algebra of $\mathfrak{g}$ is defined by the relations:

$$[X, Y] = Z \quad \text{and} \quad [X, Z] = [Y, Z] = 0.$$

We can conclude the proof recalling that there exists a unique simply-connected Lie group with a fixed Lie algebra (see Section 6.0.6)

1.4 The subRiemannian Heisenberg group

Our preferred model for the Heisenberg group is $\mathbb{R}^3$ with the product law (1.3.2), which we saw makes left invariant the following vector fields: $\partial_x - \frac{y}{2}\partial_z$, $\partial_y + \frac{x}{2}\partial_z$, ∂_z. The reason why this is a good model is because it canonically identifies the group with its Lie algebra (in other words, we are working on exponential coordinates – this view point will be clarified in Section **??**). However, because of the uniqueness of the Heisenberg structure all the following models are equivalent via a smooth group morphism.

Consider three linearly independent vector fields X, Y, Z on $\mathbb{R}^3$ such that

$$[X, Y] = Z \quad \text{and} \quad [X, Z] = [Y, Z] = 0.$$

Then, (it is fact that) there is a group law that makes them left invariant.

We consider the subbundle $\Delta \subset T(\mathbb{R}^3)$ such that for all $p \in \mathbb{R}^3$

$$\Delta_p = \operatorname{span}\{X_p, Y_p\}.$$

A curve γ such that $\dot\gamma \in \Delta$ is called *horizontal* and, if $\dot\gamma(t) = u_1(t)X_{\gamma(t)} + u_2(t)Y_{\gamma(t)}$, then its length is defined as

horizontal!–curve

Carnot-Carath“'eodory distance

subRiemannian Heisenberg group

$$L(\gamma) := \int \sqrt{u_1(t)^2 + u_2(t)^2}\, \mathrm{d}t.$$

We define the *Carnot-Carathéodory distance* between two points $p, q \in \mathbb{R}^3$ as

$$d_{CC}(p,q) := \inf \{L(\gamma) : \gamma \text{ horizontal from } p \text{ to } q\}.$$

Hence, we have generalized the term Legandrian as horizontal and the notion of contact distance as Carnot-Carathéodory distance. The reason is that since subRiemannian geometry came from different mathematical areas the jargon is multiple.

We say that $(\mathbb{R}^3, d_{CC})$ is *(a model for) the subRiemannian Heisenberg group*. In the rest of this section we will work in our favorite model: $\mathbb{R}^3$ with the product law (1.3.2) and orthonormal frame (1.3.1).

1.4.1 The geodesics and the spheres in the Heisenberg group

From Section 1.2 and Section 1.3, we have that for a curve $\gamma(t) = (x(t), y(t), z(t))$ has the following properties.

- γ is horizontal (i.e., $\dot\gamma \in \Delta$) if and only if

$$\dot z = \frac{1}{2}(x\dot y - y\dot x),$$

  and this is equivalent to say that $z(t)$ is the area spanned by the curve $(x(\cdot), y(\cdot))$ until t.

- $\dot\gamma \in \Delta$ if and only if $\dot\gamma = u_1 X + u_2 Y$ where $u_1 = \dot x$ and $u_2 = \dot y$. Indeed, if $\dot\gamma = (\dot x, \dot y, \dot z)$, then $\pi(\dot\gamma) = (\dot x, \dot y)$ and

$$\pi(\dot\gamma) = \pi(u_1 X + u_2 Y) = u_1 \partial_x + u_2 \partial_y = (u_1, u_2).$$

- If $\dot\gamma \in \Delta$, then

$$L(\gamma) = \int \sqrt{\dot x^2 + \dot y^2} = L_{Eucl}(\pi \circ \gamma).$$

Because of this previous discussion, we will obtain explicit formulae for the geodesics in the subRiemannian Heisenberg group by using the fact that we know the solutions of the isoperimetric problem (for which see Appendix A). In fact, we now know that for how the geometry in the Heisenberg group has been constructed, the shortest curves with respect to the length structure are the lifts of the solutions of a variant of the isoperimetric problem. Namely, we search for those shortest curves on the plane that enclose a fixed area and join two given points. We shall see that such curves are arc of circles or pieces of lined. Therefore, the geodesics in the Heisenberg group are lifts of circles.

Fact 1.4.1. *Fixed $(x(1), y(1), z(1))$, the curve $(x(t), y(t))$ that encloses area $z(1)$ and such that $(x(0), y(0)) = (0, 0)$ and minimizes $L_{Eucl}(x(\cdot), y(\cdot))$ is a piece of a circle or of a line.*

Thus length-minimizing curves (from $(0, 0, 0)$) are lifts of circles if $z(1) \neq 0$ and straight lines if $z(1) = 0$.

We want to parametrize the curves that are solutions of Dido's problem. A circle of length $\frac{2\pi}{|k|}$, with $k \neq 0$, passing through $(0, 0)$ at time 0 is

$$(x_0(t), y_0(t)) = \left(\frac{\cos(kt) - 1}{k}, \frac{\sin(kt)}{k} \right)$$

for $0 \leq t \leq \frac{2\pi}{|k|}$. Such a circle is parametrization by arc length and has center on the x-axis, on the negative axis if $k > 0$ in the positive axis if $k < 0$.

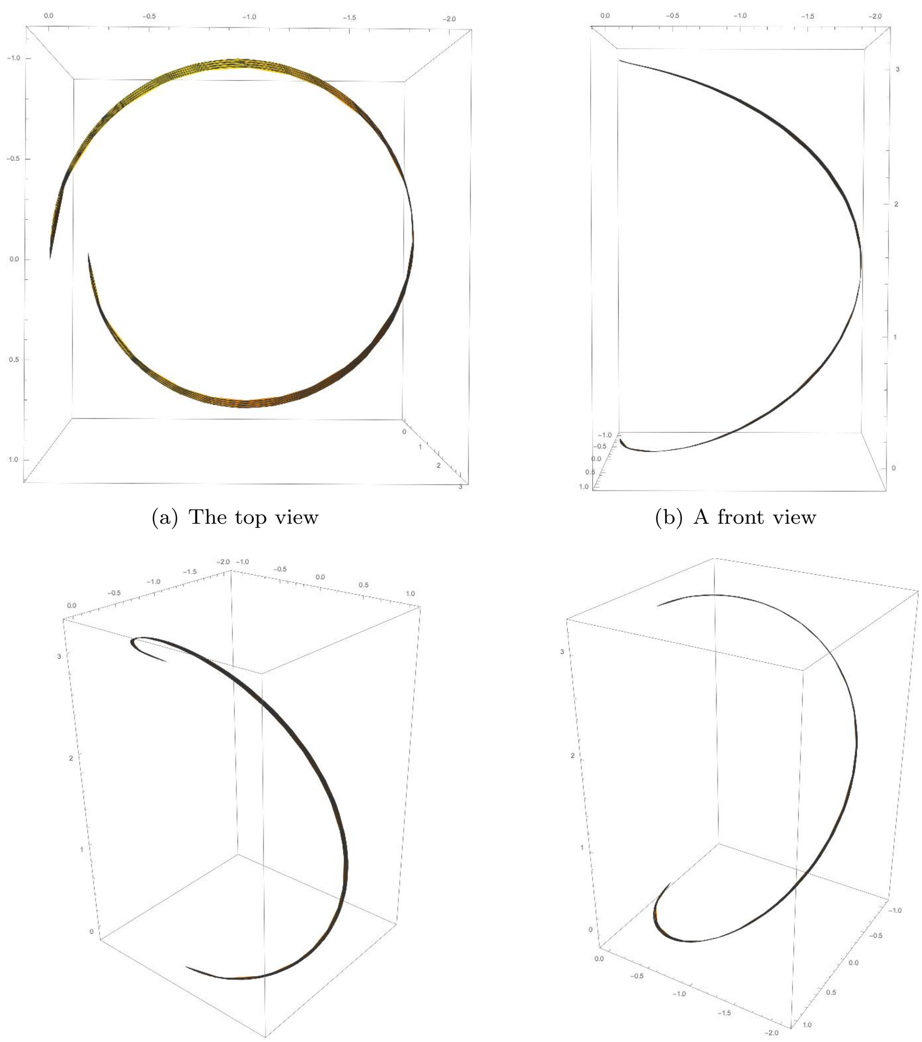
Notice that if $k > 0$, then the circle (x_0, y_0) encloses positive area, if $k < 0$ it encloses negative area. For $k = 0$, we can still consider the formula in the limit sense: the circles degenerate to the line $(0, t)$, defined for all $t \in \mathbb{R}$.

We obtain any other circle by rotating by an angle $\theta \in \mathbb{R}/2\pi\mathbb{Z}$:

$$R_\theta(x_0(t), y_0(t)) := \begin{pmatrix} \cos\theta & -\sin\theta \\ \sin\theta & \cos\theta \end{pmatrix} \cdot \begin{pmatrix} \frac{\cos(kt)-1}{k} \\ \frac{\sin(kt)}{k} \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} \cos\theta \frac{\cos(kt)-1}{k} - \sin\theta \frac{\sin(kt)}{k} \\ \sin\theta \frac{\cos(kt)-1}{k} + \cos\theta \frac{\sin(kt)}{k} \end{pmatrix}$$

We can calculate the third coordinate as in (1.2.1).

$$\begin{aligned} z(T) &= \int_0^T \frac{1}{2}(xdy - ydx) = \frac{1}{2} \int_0^T x\dot{y} - y\dot{x} \\ &= \frac{1}{2} \int_0^T \left(\cos\theta \frac{\cos(kt) - 1}{k} - \sin\theta \frac{\sin(kt)}{k} \right) (-\sin\theta \sin(kt) + \cos\theta \cos(kt)) + \\ &\qquad - \left(\sin\theta \frac{\cos(kt) - 1}{k} + \cos\theta \frac{\sin(kt)}{k} \right) (-\cos\theta \sin(kt) - \sin\theta \cos(kt))\, dt \\ &= \frac{1}{2k} \int_0^T - \cos\theta(\cos(kt) - 1) \sin\theta \sin(kt) + (\cos\theta)^2 (\cos(kt) - 1) \cos(kt) + \\ &\qquad + (\sin\theta)^2 (\sin(kt))^2 - \sin\theta \sin(kt) \cos\theta \cos(kt) + \\ &\qquad + \sin\theta(\cos(kt) - 1) \cos\theta \sin(kt) + (\sin\theta)^2 (\cos(kt) - 1) \cos(kt) + \\ &\qquad + (\cos\theta)^2 (\sin(kt))^2 + \cos\theta \sin(kt) \sin\theta \cos(kt) dt \\ &= \frac{1}{2k} \int_0^T (\cos(kt) - 1) \cos(kt) + (\sin(kt))^2\, dt \\ &= \frac{1}{2k} \int_0^T 1 - \cos(kt) dt = \frac{1}{2k^2}(Tk - \sin(kT)). \end{aligned}$$



(a) The top view (b) A front view

(c) A side view (d) A side view

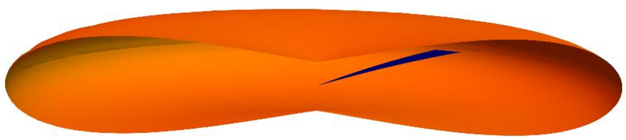
Figure 1.4: A geodesic with non-zero curvature in the subRiemannian Heisenberg geometry

We conclude that length-minimizing curves starting from the origin $0 \in \mathbb{R}^3$ are smooth curves $\gamma = (\gamma_1, \gamma_2, \gamma_3)$ of the form

$$\begin{cases} \gamma_1(t) = \cos\theta \frac{\cos(kt)-1}{k} - \sin\theta \frac{\sin(kt)}{k} \\ \gamma_2(t) = \sin\theta \frac{\cos(kt)-1}{k} + \cos\theta \frac{\sin(kt)}{k} \\ \gamma_3(t) = \frac{kt-\sin(kt)}{2k^2} \end{cases} \tag{1.4.2}$$

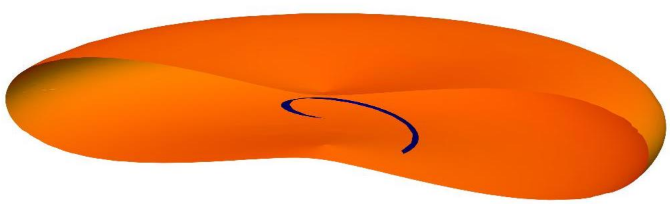
for some $\theta \in \mathbb{R}/2\pi\mathbb{Z}$ and $k \in \mathbb{R}$.

Such curves are defined for $t \in [0, \frac{2\pi}{|} k|]$ and have length $\frac{2\pi}{|k|}$. When $k = 0$, these curve degenerate

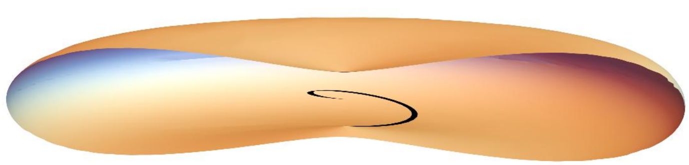


(a) A geodesic with zero curvature

(b) A geodesic with small curvature



(c) A geodesic with some curvature less than $\frac{1}{2\pi}$.



(d) A geodesic with some curvature equal to $\frac{1}{2\pi}$. It joins points that can be connected with infinitely many geodesics.

Figure 1.5: Geodesics within the unit sphere in the subRiemannian Heisenberg geometry

to lines:

$$\begin{cases} \gamma_1(t) = -t\sin\theta \\ \gamma_2(t) = t\cos\theta \\ \gamma_3(t) = 0, \end{cases}$$

Indeed, lines through the origin in the xy-plane are geodesics.

We found *all* length-minimizing curves in the subRiemannian Heisenberg group. Some consequences of the above characterization of the geodesics are the following facts.

1. If a point $(x, y, z) \in \mathbb{R}^3$ is such that $(x, y) = (0, 0)$, i.e., on the z-axis, then there are infinitely many length-minimizing curves between it and the origin. In fact, such curves form a one-parameter family.

2. If $(x, y) \neq (0, 0)$, then there is a unique length-minimizing curve from (x, y, z) to $(0, 0, 0)$.

Since d_{CC} is left-invariant and $Z = \partial_z$ is also left-invariant, we get that for all $p, q \in \mathbb{R}^3$ there exist infinitely many length-minimizing curves between p and q if $\pi(p) = \pi(q)$, i.e., p and q belong to the same vertical line. On the other hand, if $\pi(p) \neq \pi(q)$, then there is only one such a curve.

We deduce that this subRiemannian geometry is not a Riemannian geometry. However, we still have that all the metric balls and metric spheres in the Heisenberg group are topological balls and spheres, respectively, see Excercise 1.5.2.

1.4.2 Dilations on the Heisenberg group

For all $\lambda \in \mathbb{R}$ we define the map

$$\begin{array}{cccc} \delta_\lambda : & \mathbb{R}^3 & \to & \mathbb{R}^3 \\ & (x, y, z) & \mapsto & (\lambda x, \lambda y, \lambda^2 z). \end{array} \tag{1.4.3}$$

Notice the squared λ in the third component. For $\lambda = 0$ such a map is constantly equal to the origin $\mathbf{0} := (0, 0, 0)$, which is the identity element for the group law.

Lemma 1.4.4. *For all $\lambda, \mu \in \mathbb{R}$ and $p, q \in \mathbb{R}^3$*

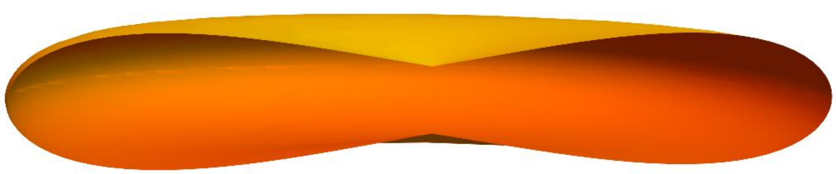
1. $\delta_\lambda(p \cdot q) = \delta_\lambda(p) \cdot \delta_\lambda(q)$*;*

2. $\delta_\lambda \circ \delta_\mu = \delta_{\lambda\mu}$

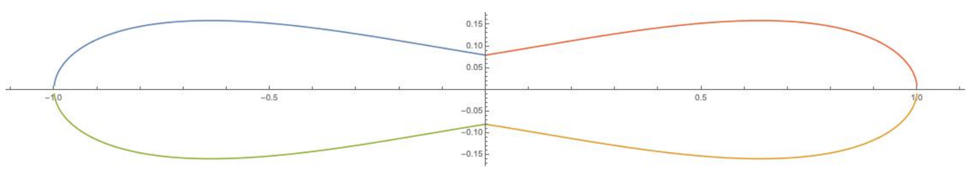
3. δ_λ *is a Lie group isomorphism, if* $\lambda \neq 0$*;*

4. $d_{CC}(\delta_\lambda(p), \delta_\lambda(q)) = |\lambda| d_{CC}(p, q)$.

(a) The unit sphere has a singularity at the intersection with the z-axis.



(b) The portion of the unit sphere in the half-space $\{y > 0\}$.



(c) A section of the sphere as intersection with the xz-plane.

Figure 1.6: Balls in the subRiemannian Heisenberg group are not smooth surfaces. At the two "poles" the sphere is not C^1, there is no cusp, there is a corner. For a parametrization, see Excercise 1.5.2.

Proof. 1. From the group law 1.3.2, we get

$$\delta_\lambda(p\cdot q) = \delta_\lambda\left(p_1+q_1, p_2+q_2, p_3+q_3+\frac{1}{2}(p_1q_2-p_2q_1)\right) =$$
$$= \left(\lambda p_1+\lambda q_1, \lambda p_2+\lambda q_2, \lambda^2 p_3+\lambda^2 q_3+\frac{1}{2}(\lambda p_1\lambda q_2-\lambda p_2\lambda q_1)\right) =$$
$$= (\lambda p_1, \lambda p_2, \lambda^2 p_3)\cdot(\lambda q_1, \lambda q_2, \lambda^2 q_3) = \delta_\lambda(p)\cdot\delta_\lambda(q).$$

2. This is obvious from the definition (1.4.3).

3. From the previous points we get that each δ_λ is a group homomorphism and $(\delta_\lambda)^{-1} = \delta_{\frac{1}{\lambda}}$, if $\lambda \neq 0$.

4. Regarding the last point, we shall give three methods of proof, for educational reasons.

Method 1 We claim that the map δ_λ is such that $(\delta_\lambda)_*X = \lambda X$ and $(\delta_\lambda)_*Y = \lambda Y$, where X, Y are the vector fields defining the subbundle Δ. (Check it!) Hence δ_λ preserves horizontal curves and multiplies their length by λ.

Method 2 By (ii) and invariance of d_{CC}, we have

$$d_{CC}(\delta_\lambda(p), \delta_\lambda(q)) = d_{CC}((\delta_\lambda(p))^{-1}\cdot\delta_\lambda(q), \mathbf{0}) = d_{CC}(\delta_\lambda(p^{-1}q), \mathbf{0}).$$

Hence it is enough to show that

$$d_{CC}(\delta_\lambda(p), \mathbf{0}) = \lambda d_{CC}(p, \mathbf{0}). \tag{1.4.5}$$

Let γ be a length minimizing curve from $\mathbf{0}$ to an arbitrary p. Recall that we have an explicit formula for such curves. An easy calculation shows that $\delta_\lambda\circ\gamma$ is still of the same form [3] (up to a linear reparametrization by λ). Hence, its length got multiplied by λ.

Method 3 Reasoning as at the beginning of Method 2, proving (1.4.5) is enough. Take any horizontal curve $\gamma = (x, y, z)$ from $\mathbf{0}$ to p. Notice that the linear map of $\mathbb{R}^2$ represented by the matrix $\begin{pmatrix}\lambda & 0\\ 0 & \lambda\end{pmatrix}$ multiplies length by λ and area by λ^2. Therefore, the curve $(\lambda x, \lambda y)$ spans areas that are λ^2 times the areas of (x, y) and has length λ times the length of (x, y). Thus $(\lambda x, \lambda y, \lambda^2 z)$ is horizontal and has length $\lambda L(\gamma)$. Hence $d_{CC}(\delta_\lambda(p), \mathbf{0}) \leq \lambda d_{CC}(p, \mathbf{0})$.

[3]Indeed, if $(\gamma_1, \gamma_2, \gamma_3)$ is a geodesic arc of length 1 starting from the origin, then it is of the form (1.4.2) for some $k \in \mathbb{R}$ with $2\pi/|k| \geq 1$, and the time of the parametrization of (1.4.2) is $t \in [0, 1]$. Now the curve $(r\gamma_1, r\gamma_2, r^2\gamma_3)$ is

$$\left(\frac{\cos\theta(\cos(kt)-1)-\sin\theta\sin(kt)}{k/r}, \frac{\sin\theta(\cos(kt)-1)+\cos\theta\sin(kt)}{k/r}, \frac{kt-\sin(kt)}{2(k/r)^2}\right), \quad \text{for } t\in[0,1],$$

which is a geodesic that is not parametrized by arc length, but by a multiple of it, namely r. Thus its length is r.

We conclude by arguing similarly with any curve σ joining $\delta_\lambda(p)$ to $\mathbf{0}$ and considering the curve $\delta_{\frac{1}{\lambda}} \circ \sigma$.

$\square$

Corollary 1.4.6. *In the subRiemannian Heisenberg group we have*

1. $B_{d_{CC}}(\boldsymbol{0}, r) = \delta_r(B_{d_{CC}}(\boldsymbol{0}, 1))$;
2. $B_{d_{CC}}(p, r) = L_p(\delta_r(B_{d_{CC}}(\boldsymbol{0}, 1)))$,

where $\boldsymbol{0}$ *is the identity of the group.*

Proof. ... $\square$

In other words, we deduce that that if $B_{d_{CC}}((\mathbf{0}, r)$ is the ball of center $\mathbf{0}$ and radius r, then

$$(x, y, z) \in B_{d_{CC}}((\mathbf{0}, 1) \Longleftrightarrow (rx, ry, r^2 z) \in B_{d_{CC}}(\mathbf{0}, r). \tag{1.4.7}$$

Notice that we did not use the homogeneous dilation $\mathbf{v} \mapsto r\mathbf{v}$; the third coordinate has been multiplied by r^2. Thus, such map $(x, y, z) \mapsto (rx, ry, r^2 z)$ multiplies the volume by a factor of r^4, and not r^3 as the usual Euclidean dilations do!

We can now deduce how is the growth of the balls in the Heisenberg geometry.

Corollary 1.4.8. *Let* Vol *be the 3D Lebesgue volume in* $\mathbb{R}^3$*. The Heisenberg subRiemannian distance* d_{CC} *satisfies*

$$\operatorname{vol}(B_{d_{CC}}(p, r)) = r^4 \operatorname{vol}(B_{d_{CC}}(\boldsymbol{0}, 1)) \qquad \forall p \in \mathbb{R}^3 \ \forall r > 0. \tag{1.4.9}$$

Proof. From (1.4.7) we know that $\operatorname{Vol}(B(\mathbf{0}, r)) = r^4 \operatorname{Vol}(B(\mathbf{0}, 1))$. Now we can conclude the proof using both the fact that left translations (1.3.3) in the Heisenberg group are isometries together with the fact that they preserve the volume. This last fact can be checked noticing that the determinant of the differential of a left translations is 1, see (1.3.4). Namely, any left translation L_p is such that $\mathrm{d}L_p = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ * & 1 & 0 \\ * & * & 1 \end{pmatrix}$ then $\mathtt{Jac}(L_p) = \det(\mathrm{d}L_p) = 1$. Notice that $\mathtt{Jac}(\delta_\lambda) = \det(\mathrm{d}\delta_\lambda) = \det \begin{pmatrix} \lambda & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & \lambda & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & \lambda^2 \end{pmatrix} = \lambda^4$. Then

$$\operatorname{vol}(B(p, r)) = \operatorname{vol}(L_p(B(e, r))) = \operatorname{vol}(B(e, r)) = \operatorname{vol}(\delta_r(B(e, 1))) = r^4 \operatorname{vol}(B(e, 1).$$

$\square$

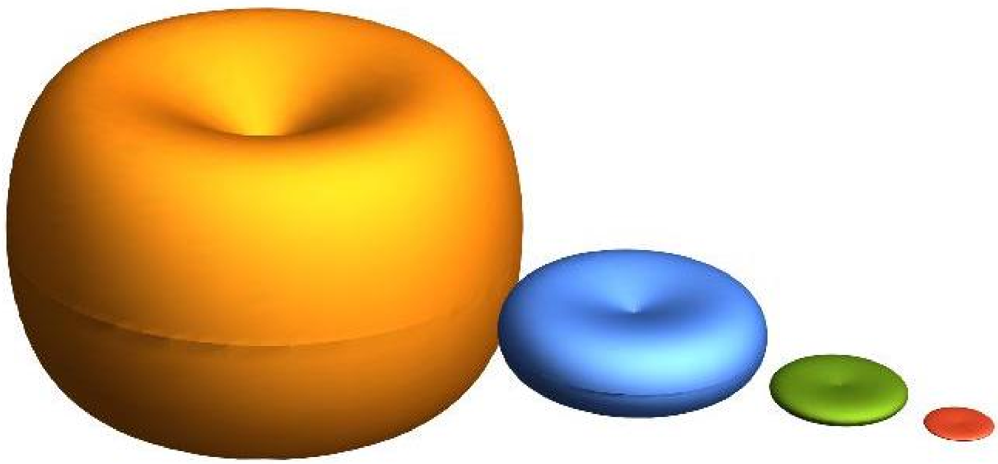


Figure 1.7: Balls of different sizes in the Heisenberg geometry. All the balls are with the origin as center. From the left, there are the balls of radius 2, 1, 1/, 1/4.

The dimension of the Heisenberg group

Corollary 1.4.10. *The Heisenberg group endowed with the standard Carnot-Carathéodory distance has Hausdorff dimension equal to* 4.

Proof. It is enough to prove that there are positive constants k_1 and k_2 such that the minimal number N_ϵ of balls of radius ϵ, with $\epsilon \in (0,1)$, needed to cover the unit ball satisfies

$$k_1\epsilon^{-4} < N_\epsilon < k_2\epsilon^{-4}.$$

For the lower bound, let $B_1, \ldots, B_{N_\epsilon}$ be such balls. Then, using (1.4.9)

$$\mathrm{Vol}(B(0,1)) \le \sum_{j=1}^{N_\epsilon} \mathrm{Vol}(B_j) = N_\epsilon \epsilon^4 \,\mathrm{Vol}(B(0,1)).$$

For the upper bound, let $x_1, \ldots, x_N$ be a maximal set (which exists by Zorn's Lemma) of points in the unit ball such that the distance between each pair is at least $\epsilon/2$. Hence, the balls $B(x_1, \epsilon/2), \ldots, B(x_N, \epsilon/2)$ are disjoint balls of radius $\epsilon/2$ contained in the ball of radius $1 + \epsilon/2$. Then from (1.4.9) we infer that

$$(1+\epsilon/2)^4 \,\mathrm{Vol}(B(0,1)) = \mathrm{Vol}(B(0, 1+\epsilon/2)) \ge \sum_{j=1}^{N} \mathrm{Vol}(B(x_j, \epsilon/2) = N \left(\frac{\epsilon}{2}\right)^4 \mathrm{Vol}(B(0,1)).$$

Therefore, using that $\epsilon < 1$, we get that

$$6 > (1+\epsilon/2)^4 \ge N\frac{\epsilon^4}{16}.$$

Now, since the set $\{x_j\}_j$ is maximal, the balls $B(x_j, \epsilon)$, with have same centers but radius ϵ, make up a cover of the unit ball. Thus

$$N_\epsilon \leq N \leq 96\epsilon^{-4}.$$

□

A ball-box theorem

In this section we give an elementary explanation of why the balls in the subRiemannian Heisenberg geometry behave as boxes with inhomogeneous sides. Namely, let

$$\mathtt{Box}(r) := [-r, r] \times [-r, r] \times [-r^2, r^2] \subseteq \mathbb{R}^3. \tag{1.4.11}$$

Proposition 1.4.12. *In the subRiemannian Heisenberg group (in the standard coordinates as above) the balls at the origin satisfy*

$$\mathtt{Box}(c_1 r)) \subset B_{cc}(1, r) \subset \mathtt{Box}(c_2 r)), \tag{1.4.13}$$

for come universal constants $c_1, c_2 > 0$ and for all $r > 0$.

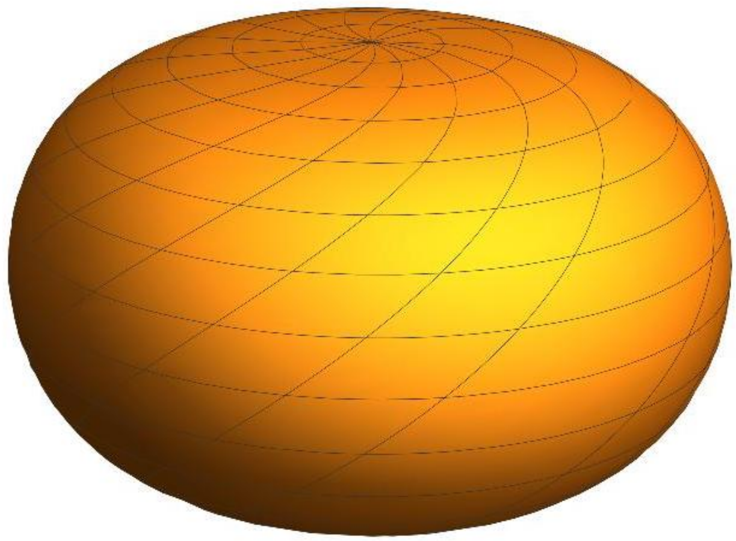
Proof. In the following argument, we don't aim at the best possible choices for c_1, c_2. Moreover, using the dilations δ_r from the previous section, one can just prove the result for the unit ball and then dilate. The existence of the two boxes (inside and outside) come from the fact that the unit ball is an open bounded set. Nonetheless, we give next a direct proof without any use of the solution of the isoperimetric problem.

First, observe that for all $(x, y, z) \in\in B_{cc}(1, r)$ we have $|x|, |y| < r$ since the length of a horizontal curve is equal to its projection on the xy-plane, so actually $\|(x, y)\| < r$; and also we claim that we have a bound on z as a function of r. Indeed, we should bound the oriented area enclosed by a curve of length r. Now, we stress that the curve is not closed and the area is a signed area. In other words, the coordinate $z(t)$ satisfies (1.2.2). Hence, for the curve that we are considering (which we might think it is parametrized on the interval $[0, r]$ at unit speed, so that $\dot{y}, \dot{x} \leq 1$) we bound

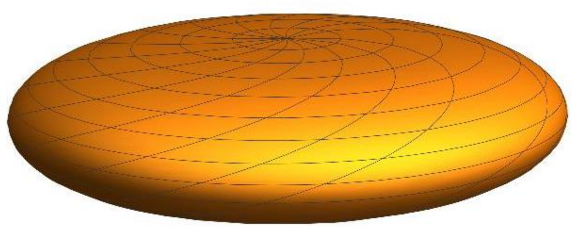
$$|z(r)| = \left| \int_0^r \frac{1}{2}(x\dot{y} - y\dot{x}) \right| \leq \int_0^r \frac{1}{2}(|x|\,|\dot{y}| + |y|\,|\dot{x}|) \leq \int_0^r \frac{1}{2}(r1 + r1) = r^2.$$

We then get

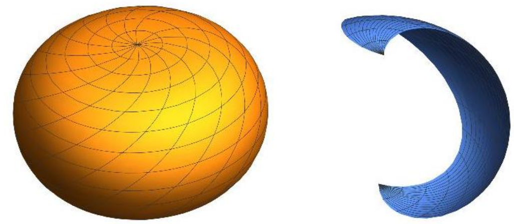
$$B_{cc}(1, r) \subset [-r, r] \times [-r, r] \times [-r^2, r^2], \qquad \forall r > 0.$$



(a) The so-called Pansu sphere is C^∞ outside of the poles, and C^2 around them. In the above picture the z-axis has been rescaled for aesthetics



(b) Another picture of the Pansu sphere with true axis.



(c) The Pansu sphere is obtained rotating a complete geodesic around the z-axis.

Figure 1.8: The (conjectured) isoperimetric sphere in the subRiemannian Heisenberg geometry

Second, we want to show that the r-ball contains some box. We claim that

$$\left[-\frac{r}{3},\frac{r}{3}\right]\times\left[-\frac{r}{3},\frac{r}{3}\right]\times\left[-\frac{r^2}{100},\frac{r^2}{100}\right]\subset B_{cc}(1,r),\qquad \forall r>0. \tag{1.4.14}$$

Indeed, take a point (x,y,z) such that $|x|,|y|\le r/3$ and $|z|\le r^2/100$. Then consider the following planar curve: starting from $(0,0)$ follow a square of area z (clockwise if $z<0$, counterclockwise otherwise) then follow the segment from $(0,0)$ to (x,y). This curve encloses area z hence its lift is an admissible curve reaching (x,y,z). The length of the curve is 4 times the side length of the square plus the length of the segment. The square has area at most $r^2/100$ so its side length is at most $r/10$. The segment has length at most $\sqrt{2}r/3$. From these bounds we have $4\frac{r}{10}+\frac{\sqrt{2}r}{3}<r$. Therefore the point (x,y,z) is in the r-ball, so (1.4.14) is verified. □

1.5 Exercises

1. Prove dido's solution: the maximal area enclosed by a curve of length l on the plane together with a fixed line is $\frac{l^2}{2\pi}$ and it is only obtained as an half disk.

2. Let $\mathrm{vol} = dx \wedge dy$ and $\alpha = \frac{1}{2}(xdy - ydx)$. Prove

   (a) $d(\alpha) = \mathrm{vol}$;

   (b) in polar coordinate, we have $\alpha = \frac{1}{2}r^2 d\theta$;

   (c) if L is a line through the origin, then $\int_L \alpha = 0$.

3. Let σ be a Lipschitz curve on the plane. Let $\sigma_{[0,t]} = (x(t), y(t))$ be the arc up to time t. Let $f : \mathbb{R}^2 \to \mathbb{R}$ be a smooth function. Show that

$$\frac{d}{dt}\left(\int_{\sigma_{[0,t]}} f(x,y)dx\right) = f(x(t), y(t))\frac{dx}{dt}(t), \qquad \text{almost everywhere.}$$

4. Show the relations

$$[X, Y] = Z \quad \text{ and } \quad [X, Z] = [Y, Z] = 0.$$

   in the following cases:

   (a) for the vector fields in (1.2.6),

   (b) for the matrices (1.3.6).

5. Calculate the inverse of an element (x, y, z) with respect to the group structure given by (1.3.2).

6. Consider the group structure on $\mathbb{R}^3$ given by (1.3.2). Prove that the lines

$$\gamma_v(t) = (tv_1, tv_2, tv_3)\,.$$

   are one-parameter subgroups.

7. Let L be a line through 0 in the xy-plane of $\mathbb{R}^3$. Prove that L is a geodesic with respect to the contact distance distance d_c defined in (1.2.7).

8. Consider the map

$$\varphi : (x, y, z) \mapsto \begin{pmatrix} 1 & x & z + \frac{1}{2}xy \\ 0 & 1 & y \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

   from $\mathbb{R}^3$ with the product (1.3.2) to the space of 3×3 upper triangular matrices with the usual matrix product. Prove that

(a) the map is a Lie group isomorphism,

(b) the map sends the standard basis X, Y, and Z (defined in (1.2.6)) of the first Lie algebra to the standard basis X, Y, and Z (defined in (1.3.6)) of the second Lie algebra.

9. Prove that on the vertical z-axis the distance d_c defined in (1.2.7) is a multiple of the square root of the Euclidean one. Find this multiple.

Exercise 1.5.1. Denote by $C \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ the z-axis. The map

$$\Phi : \left\{ (\theta, k, t) \ : \ \theta \in \mathbb{R}/2\pi\mathbb{Z}, \ k \in \mathbb{R}, \ t \in \left(0, \frac{2\pi}{|k|}\right) \right\} \to \mathbb{R}^3 \setminus C$$

given by

$$\Phi(\theta, k, t) = \left(\frac{\cos\theta(\cos(kt) - 1) - \sin\theta\sin(kt)}{k}, \frac{\sin\theta(\cos(kt) - 1) + \cos\theta\sin(kt)}{k}, \frac{kt - \sin(kt)}{2k^2} \right)$$

is a homeomorphism.

Exercise 1.5.2. (i) Let Φ be the map defined in Exercise 1.5.1. Prove that the unit ball in the Heisenberg geometry is given by

$$\begin{aligned} B(0,1) &= \{\Phi(\theta, k, t) | \theta \in \mathbb{R}/2\pi\mathbb{Z}, k \in \mathbb{R}, t \in (0,1)\} \\ &= \{\Phi(\theta, k, t) | \theta \in \mathbb{R}/2\pi\mathbb{Z}, k \in [-2\pi, 2\pi], t \in (0,1)\}, \end{aligned}$$

and the unit sphere is

$$S(0,1) = \{\Phi(\theta, k, 1) | \theta \in \mathbb{R}/2\pi\mathbb{Z}, k \in [-2\pi, 2\pi]\}.$$

(ii) Deduce that all the metric balls and metric spheres in the subRiemannian Heisenberg group are topological balls and spheres, respectively.

distance function
distance—see distance function
metric—see distance function
metric space
balls!–open

Chapter 2

A review of metric and differential geometry

2.1 Metric geometry: lengths, geodesics spaces, and Hausdorff measures

An overview of the main notions is necessary to clarify the setting and the terminology. There are several excellent books [Fed69, Gro99, AFP00, Hei01, BBI01, AT04] giving a clear and detailed exposition of the material. The purpose here is to comment some facts for non-experts.

2.1.1 Metric Spaces

Let M be a set. A function

$$d : M \times M \to [0, +\infty]$$

is called a *distance function* (or just a *distance*, or a *metric*) on M if, for all $x, y, z \in M$, it satisfies

(i) positiveness: $d(x, y) = 0 \iff x = y$,

(ii) symmetry: $d(x, y) = d(y, x)$,

(iii) triangle inequality: $d(x, y) \leq d(x, z) + d(z, y)$.

The pair (M, d) is called *metric space*. If it is clear what metric we are considering or if we do not want to specify the name for the distance, we shall write just M as an abbreviation for (M, d). We will use the term 'metric' as a synonym of distance function, and never as a shortening of 'Riemannian metric', which will be revised in Section 2.2.3.

A metric space has a natural topology which is generated by the *open balls*

$$B(p, r) := \{q \in M : d(p, q) < r\},$$

curve
path
trajectory
length of a curve
rectifiable curve
curve!–rectifiable
parametrization by arc length
partition
convergence!–pointwise
convergence!–uniform

for $p \in M$ and $r > 0$.

In general, we also consider distance functions that may have value ∞. However, on each connected component of the metric space the distance is finite (see Exercise 2.4.1).

A *curve* (or *path*, or *trajectory*) in a metric space M is a continuous map $\gamma : I \to M$, where $I \subset \mathbb{R}$ is an interval. The interval I may be open, close, half open, bounded or unbounded. When γ is injective, the map might be conflated with its image $\gamma(I)$. We will say that the curve $\gamma : [a, b] \to M$, with $a, b \in \mathbb{R}$, is a curve from p to q (or that joins p to q) if $\gamma(a) = p$ and $\gamma(b) = q$.

2.1.2 Length of curves in metric spaces

Definition 2.1.1 (Length of a curve). Let M be a metric space with distance function d. The *length (with respect to d) of a curve* $\gamma : [a, b] \to M$ is

$$L(\gamma) := \text{Length}_d(\gamma) := \sup\left\{\sum_{i=1}^{k} d(\gamma(t_{i-1}), \gamma(t_i)) \ : \ k \in \mathbb{N}, a = t_0 < t_1 < \cdots < t_k = b\right\}. \quad (2.1.2)$$

A *rectifiable curve* is a curve with finite length. One might easily check that the length does not depend on the parametrization, see Exercise 2.4.4. A curve $\gamma : [a, b] \to M$ is said to be *parametrized by arc length* if

$$\text{Length}(\gamma|_{[t_1,t_2]}) = |t_2 - t_1|, \qquad \forall t_1, t_2 \in [a, b].$$

Every rectifiable curve admits a reparametrization by arc length, see Exercise 2.4.5.

A *partition* $\mathcal{P}$ of an interval $[a, b]$ is a k-tuple $(t_1, t_2, \cdots, t_k) \in [a, b]^k$ with $k \in \mathbb{N}$ such that $a = t_1 < t_2 < \cdots < t_k = b$. We set

$$L(\gamma, \mathcal{P}) := \sum_{i=1}^{k-1} d(\gamma(t_{i+1}), \gamma(t_i)).$$

Hence, we have

$$L(\gamma) = \sup\{L(\gamma, \mathcal{P}) \ : \ \mathcal{P} \text{ partition of } [a, b]\}.$$

We recall the lower semicontinuity of length for sequences of curves that are converging pointwise. Recall that a sequence of curves $\gamma_j : [a, b] \to M$ in a metric space M *converges pointwise* to a curve $\gamma : [a, b] \to M$ in the same metric space (note that all such curves have the same interval of definition), if, for all $t \in [a, b]$, we have $\gamma_j(t) \to \gamma(t)$. Furthermore, we say that γ_j *converges uniformly* to γ if $\sup_{t\in[a,b]} d(\gamma_j(t), \gamma(t)) \to 0$, as $j \to \infty$.

Theorem 2.1.3 (Semicontinuity of length)**.** *If $\gamma_j \to \gamma$ pointwise, then $L(\gamma) \le \liminf_{j\to\infty} L(\gamma_j)$.*

Proof. The result would follow from the fact that for each $\mathcal{P}$ the function $L(\gamma, \mathcal{P})$ is sequentially continuous in γ (see Exercise 2.4.7) and the general fact that the supremum of sequentially continuous functions is a sequentially lower semicontinuous function (see Exercise 2.4.8). The argument for the proof of the latter fact is the straightforward adaptation of the following argument.

We first assume that $L(\gamma) < \infty$. Let $\epsilon > 0$. Let $\mathcal{P} \in [a, b]^k$ be a partition such that

$$L(\gamma) - L(\gamma, \mathcal{P}) < \epsilon.$$

Say $\mathcal{P} = (t_1, t_2, \cdots, t_k)$. Since the length k of $\mathcal{P}$ is finite, there exists $N \in \mathbb{N}$ such that, for all $j > N$, $d(\gamma_j(t_i), \gamma(t_i)) < \epsilon/k$, for all $i \in \{1, \ldots, k\}$. So

$$d(\gamma(t_{i+1}), \gamma(t_i)) \le d(\gamma_j(t_{i+1}), \gamma_j(t_i)) + 2\epsilon/k.$$

Thus, for all $j > N$, we have

$$L(\gamma) < \epsilon + L(\gamma, \mathcal{P}) \le \epsilon + L(\gamma_j, \mathcal{P}) + 2(\epsilon/k) \cdot k \le 3\epsilon + L(\gamma_j).$$

The proof in the case that $L(\gamma) = \infty$ is very similar and is left to the reader (see Exercise 2.4.9). □

For the purpose of showing the existence of length minimizing curves, we recall now Ascoli-Arzelà Compactness Theorem.

Theorem 2.1.4 (Ascoli-Arzelà)**.** *In a compact metric space every sequence of curves with uniformly bounded lengths contains a subsequence that, up to reparameterization, converges uniformly.*

Proof. Let (M, d) be the compact metric space. If a sequence of curves γ_n in M has uniformly bounded length, then the curves can be reparametrized with uniformly bounded constant speed to be curves $\gamma_n : [0, 1] \to M$ that are uniformly Lipschitz, say L-Lipschitz, see Exercise (2.4.5) and Exercise (2.4.6). Notice that now the family $\mathcal{F} = \{\gamma_n : n \in \mathbb{N}\}$ is equi-uniformly continuous. Moreover, it is equi-uniformly bounded, since M is bounded, being compact.

We shall show that $\mathcal{F}$ is precompact. It is an exercise in topology [Mun75] to show that in a complete space a subset is precompact if and only if it is totally bounded. Namely, we need to show that for all $\epsilon > 0$ there exists a finite set of indices λ and, for all $\lambda \in \Lambda$, there exists $\mathcal{F}_\lambda \subset \mathcal{F}$ such that $\mathcal{F} = \cup_\lambda \mathcal{F}_\lambda$ and $\operatorname{diam} \mathcal{F}_\lambda \le \epsilon$, for all $\lambda \in \Lambda$. Here, the space $\mathcal{F}$ is considered with the sup-distance, see Exercise 2.1.5.

Since $\mathcal{F}$ s is equi-uniformly continuous, there is $\delta > 0$ such that if $|s-t| < \delta$ then $d(\gamma(t), \gamma(s)) < \varepsilon$ for all $\gamma \in \mathcal{F}$. Cover $[0,1]$ with k_ε balls of radius δ and center x_i. Hence, $[0,1] \subset \bigcup_{i=1}^{k_\varepsilon} B(x_i, \delta)$. In addition, since M is compact, there exists $h_\varepsilon \in \mathbb{N}$ and points $p_1, \dots, p_{h_\varepsilon} \in M$ such that

$$M \subset \bigcup_{i=1}^{h_\varepsilon} B(p_i, \varepsilon).$$

Next define

$$\Lambda := \{\lambda \colon \{1, \dots, k_\varepsilon\} \to \{1, \dots, h_\varepsilon\}\}$$

This set is finite, having $h_\varepsilon^{k_\varepsilon}$ elements. We will use it as index-set. Define

$$\mathcal{F}_\lambda := \{\gamma \in \mathcal{F} \,:\, |\gamma(x_i) - p_{\lambda(i)}| < \varepsilon \quad \forall i \in \{1, \dots, k_\varepsilon\}\},$$

which is the set of those curves for which the centers of the intervals get mapped into the balls according to λ. Clearly, $\mathcal{F} = \bigcup_{\lambda \in \Lambda} \mathcal{F}_\lambda$, for how we choosed the points p_j. We just need to bound the diameter of $\mathcal{F}_\lambda$ Pick $\alpha, \beta \in \mathcal{F}_\lambda$ and consider their distance, given by the sup-norm. For any $t \in [0,1]$ take i so that $t \in B(x_i, \delta)$. Then

$$\begin{aligned} d_M(\alpha(t), \beta(t)) &\leq d_M(\alpha(t), \alpha(x_i)) + d_M(\alpha(x_i), p_{\lambda(i)}) + d_M(p_{\lambda(i)}, \beta(x_i)) + d_M(\beta(x_i), \beta(t)) \\ &< 4\varepsilon, \end{aligned}$$

where we used the equi-uniform continuity of α, β and that $\alpha, \beta \in \mathcal{F}_\lambda$. □

Exercise 2.1.5. Let (M, d) be a complete metric space and let $\mathcal{F}$ be the family of all curves from a fixed interval I into M. Endow $\mathcal{F}$ with the metric

$$d_{\sup}(\sigma, \gamma) = \sup_{t \in I} \{d_M(\sigma(t), \gamma(t))\}, \qquad \forall \sigma, \gamma \in \mathcal{F}.$$

Prove that $(\mathcal{F}, d_{\sup})$ is a complete metric space.

Proposition 2.1.6 (Existence of shortest paths)**.** *Let M be a compact metric space. For all $p, q \in M$ there exists a curve γ from p to q such that*

$$L(\gamma) = \inf\{L(\sigma) \,:\, \sigma \text{ curve from } p \text{ to } q\}, \tag{2.1.7}$$

provided that the right-hand side of (2.1.7) *is finite.*

Proof. Set L to be the right-hand side of (2.1.7). We are assuming that $L < \infty$. Let γ_j curves from p to q with $L(\gamma_j) \to L$. By Ascoli-Arzelà Theorem 2.1.4, up to passing to a subsequence, we may assume that γ_j converges (uniformly and, hence, pointwise) to a curve γ joining p to q. By semicontinuity of length (Theorem 2.1.3), we get $L(\gamma) \leq \liminf_{j\to\infty} L(\gamma_j) = L$. Hence, we conclude that $L(\gamma) = L$. □

2.1.3 Length Space, Intrinsic Metrics, and Geodesic Spaces

If a metric space (M, d) has the property that, for all $p, q \in M$, $d(p, q)$ is finite and

$$d(p,q) = \inf\{\mathrm{Length}_d(\gamma) \ : \ \gamma \text{ curve from } p \text{ to } q\},$$

then (M, d) is called *length space* (or *path metric space*) and d is called an *intrinsic metric*. Notice that we made the choice of requiring intrinsic metrics to be finite, this decision might not be supported by other authors.

If a metric space (M, d) is such that, for all $p, q \in M$, there exists a curve γ from p to q with the property that $d(p, q) = \mathrm{Length}_d(\gamma)$, then (M, d) is called *geodesic space*, d is called a *geodesic metric*, and every such a γ is called a *length minimizing curve* joining p to q. Length minimizing curves are also called *length minimizers* or *geodesics*. Some authors use the term 'geodesic' to denote locally length minimizing curves, in agreement with Riemannian geometry.

Every geodesic space is a length space (Exercise 2.4.11). Not all length spaces are geodesic spaces, one reason can be lack of completeness. As we will recall shortly, for locally compact spaces this is the only obstruction.

A metric space is said to be *boundedly compact* (or *proper*) if its bounded subsets are precompact. Equivalently, a space is boundedly compact if its *closed balls*

$$\overline{B}(p,r) := \{q \in M : d(p,q) \leq r\}$$

are compact for all $p \in M$ and $r > 0$.

Proposition 2.1.8. *Assume that (M, d) is a boundedly compact length space. Then (M, d) is a geodesic space.*

Proof. Fix $p, q \in M$. Since the distance is intrinsic, we can take a curve γ from p and q with $L(\gamma) < d(p, q) + 1$. Notice that any other curve σ from p and q with $L(\sigma) \leq L(\gamma)$ is inside $\overline{B}(p, d(p, q) + 1)$, which is compact. By Proposition 2.1.6, we have the existence of a shortest path and hence of a geodesic joining p to q, since the distance is intrinsic. □

length space
path metric space
intrinsic metric
metric!–intrinsic
geodesic!–space
space!–geodesic
geodesic!–metric
metric!–geodesic
curve!–length minimizing
length minimizer
geodesic
boundedly compact
proper (metric space)—see boundedly compact
balls!–closed

With a little bit more of topological arguments, one can actually prove the following stronger result. An explicit proof can be found in [BBI01, Theorem 2.5.23].

Theorem 2.1.9 (Hopf-Rinow-Cohn-Vossen)**.** *If a length space (M, d) is complete and locally compact then every two points in X can be joined by a geodesic.*

2.1.4 Length as integral of metric derivative

Definition 2.1.10 (Metric derivative)**.** Given a curve $\gamma\colon [a,b] \to X$ on a metric space X, we define the *metric derivative* of γ at the point $t \in (a,b)$ as the limit

$$\lim_{h \to 0} \frac{d(\gamma(t+h), \gamma(t))}{|h|}$$

whenever it exists and, in this case, we denote it by $|\dot{\gamma}|(t)$.

The following is the main result in this chapter:

Theorem 2.1.11. *For each Lipschitz curve $\gamma\colon [a,b] \to X$ on a metric space X, we have*

(i) *the metric derivative $|\dot{\gamma}|$ exists almost everywhere*

(ii) $\mathrm{Length}(\gamma) = \int_a^b |\dot{\gamma}|(t)\, \mathrm{d}t$.

Proof. For part (i), we start by noticing that by the triangle inequality

$$|d(\gamma(s), y) - d(\gamma(t), y)| \leq d(\gamma(s), \gamma(t)), \qquad \forall s, t \in [a,b],\ \forall y \in X, \tag{2.1.12}$$

with equality if $y = \gamma(t)$. Fix a countable dense set $\{x_n\}_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ in $\gamma([a,b])$ and define

$$\varphi_n(t) := d(\gamma(t), x_n).$$

Consequently, from (2.1.12), we have

$$\sup_{n \in \mathbb{N}} |\varphi_n(s) - \varphi_n(t)| = d(\gamma(s), \gamma(t)). \tag{2.1.13}$$

Notice that each $\varphi_n : [a,b] \to \mathbb{R}$ is Lipschitz with same Lipschitz constant as γ, and therefore differentiable almost everywhere and absolutely continuous, by (the one-dimensional version of) Rademacher Theorem. Let

$$m(t) := \sup_n |\dot{\varphi}_n(t)|.$$

We claim that

$$|\dot{\gamma}|(t) = m(t), \qquad \text{for almost all } t. \tag{2.1.14}$$

For a first inequality, note that for each point t of differentiability for φ_n, we have from (2.1.13) that

$$|\dot{\varphi}_n|(t) \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \lim_{h\to 0} \frac{|\varphi_n(t+h) - \varphi_n(t)|}{|h|} \stackrel{(2.1.13)}{\leq} \liminf_{h\to 0} \frac{d(\gamma(t+h),\gamma(t))}{|h|}.$$

Hence

$$m(t) \leq \liminf_{h\to 0} \frac{d(\gamma(t+h),\gamma(t))}{|h|}.$$

Regarding the other inequality, using the Fundamental Theorem of Calculus, we have for $s \leq t$ that

$$\begin{aligned} d(\gamma(t),\gamma(s)) &\stackrel{(2.1.13)}{=} \sup_n |\varphi_n(t) - \varphi_n(s)| \\ &= \sup_n \left| \int_s^t \dot{\varphi}_n(\tau)\ \mathrm{d}\tau \right| \\ &\leq \sup_n \int_s^t |\dot{\varphi}_n(\tau)|\ \mathrm{d}\tau \\ &\leq \int_s^t m(\tau)\ \mathrm{d}\tau. \end{aligned} \tag{2.1.15}$$

Let us argue why the integral of m is finite. It is because the derivative of each φ_n is bounded from above by the Lipschitz constant of φ_n, which in turn is bounded from above by the one of γ. From Lebesgue's Differentiation Theorem, at each Lebesgue point t for m we have that

$$\limsup_{h\to 0} \frac{d(\gamma(t+h),\gamma(t))}{|h|} \stackrel{(2.1.15)}{\leq} \limsup_{h\to 0} \left| \frac{1}{h} \int_t^{t+h} m(\tau)\ \mathrm{d}\tau \right| = m(t).$$

So (2.1.14) holds, and in particular $|\dot{\gamma}|$ exists almost everywhere. The first part is proven.

Regarding the second claim of the theorem, we first prove one inequality. We have

$$\sum_{i=1}^{n-1} d(\gamma(t_{i+1}),\gamma(t_i)) \stackrel{(2.1.15)}{\leq} \sum_{i=1}^{n-1} \int_{t_i}^{t_{i+1}} m(\tau)\ \mathrm{d}\tau \stackrel{(2.1.14)}{=} \sum_{i=1}^{n-1} \int_{t_i}^{t_{i+1}} |\dot{\gamma}|(\tau)\ \mathrm{d}\tau.$$

Taking the supremum over all partitions gives $\mathrm{Length}(\gamma) \leq \int_a^b |\dot{\gamma}(t)|\ \mathrm{d}t$.

Regarding the other inequality, let $\varepsilon > 0$ and $n \geq 2$ such that $h := (b-a)/n \leq \varepsilon$. We set $t_i := a + ih$, so that $t_n = b$ and $b - \epsilon < t_{n-1}$. Then

$$\begin{aligned} \int_a^{b-\varepsilon} d(\gamma(t),\gamma(t+h))\ \mathrm{d}t &\leq \sum_{i=1}^{n-1} \int_{t_{i-1}}^{t_i} d(\gamma(t),\gamma(t+h))\ \mathrm{d}t \\ &= \int_0^h \sum_{i=1}^{n-1} d(\gamma(\tau+t_{i-1}),\gamma(\tau+t_i))\ \mathrm{d}\tau \\ &\leq \int_0^h \mathrm{Length}(\gamma)\ \mathrm{d}\tau = h\,\mathrm{Length}(\gamma). \end{aligned} \tag{2.1.16}$$

Using Fatou's lemma:

$$\begin{aligned} \int_a^{b-\varepsilon} |\dot{\gamma}|(t)\ \mathrm{d}t &\stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \int_a^{b-\varepsilon} \liminf_{h\to 0} \frac{d(\gamma(t+h),\gamma(t))}{h}\ \mathrm{d}t \\ &\stackrel{\text{Fatou}}{\leq} \liminf_{h\to\infty} \frac{1}{h} \int_a^{b-\varepsilon} d(\gamma(t+h),\gamma(t))\ \mathrm{d}t \stackrel{(2.1.16)}{\leq} \mathrm{Length}(\gamma). \end{aligned}$$

Lipschitz!–map Lipschitz!–constant

Letting $\varepsilon \to 0^+$ gives the missing inequality. □

Example 2.1.17. A first interesting example is given when $(V, \|\cdot\|)$ is a normed space with the metric d induced by $\|\cdot\|$. Let γ be an absolutely continuous curve. Up to reparametring, we can assume that γ is a Lipschitz curve (either with respect to the distance d or with respect to any other Euclidean distance). Hence, by Rademacher theorem, the curve γ is differentiable almost everywhere. For every point of differentiability t_0 for γ, we have

$$|\dot{\gamma}|(t_0) \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \lim_{h\to 0} \frac{\|\gamma(t_0+h)-\gamma(t_0)\|}{|h|} = \lim_{h\to 0} \frac{\|\gamma'(t_0)(h)+o(h)\|}{|h|} = \|\gamma'(t_0)\|,$$

where $|\dot{\gamma}|(t_0)$ is the metric derivative and $\gamma'(t_0)$ denotes the (classical) derivative. By Rademacher's theorem almost every point is of differentiability. Consequently, from Theorem 2.1.11 we infer

$$\text{Length}_d(\gamma) = \int_a^b \|\gamma'(t_0)\|. \tag{2.1.18}$$

We deduce that for every two points $p, q \in V$ and every rectifiable curve γ between p and q we have

$$\|p-q\| \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} d(p,q) \leq \text{Length}_d(\gamma) = \int_a^b \|\gamma'(t_0)\|. \tag{2.1.19}$$

Infimizing over γ we get

$$d \leq d_{\|\cdot\|}.$$

Using the curve $t \in [0,1] \mapsto tp + (1-t)q$, we get equality in (2.1.19). In conclusion, we have

$$d = d_{\|\cdot\|}.$$

2.1.5 Isometries and Lipschitz maps

Given two metric spaces (X, d_X) and (Y, d_Y), a map $f : X \to Y$ is called *Lipschitz* if there exists a real constant $K \geq 0$ such that, for all x_1 and x_2 in X,

$$d_Y(f(x_1), f(x_2)) \leq K d_X(x_1, x_2).$$

The value K (or many times the smallest value of such K's) is called the *Lipschitz constant* of the function f. A function is called *locally Lipschitz* if for every $x \in X$ there exists a neighborhood U of x such that f restricted to U is Lipschitz.

If there exists a $K \geq 1$ with

$$\frac{1}{K} d_X(x_1, x_2) \leq d_Y(f(x_1), f(x_2)) \leq K d_X(x_1, x_2), \qquad \forall x_1, x_2 \in X,$$

then f is called *biLipschitz embedding* (also written bi-Lipschitz or bilipschitz). Surjective biLipschitz embeddings are called *biLipschitz homeomorphisms* (or biLipschitz maps). BiLipschitz homeomorphisms are the isomorphisms in the category of Lipschitz maps. To be more explicit on the value of the constant K we would say that f is K-biLipschitz. BiLipschitz embeddings are injective and in fact embeddings, i.e., they are homeomorphisms onto their image. We call 1-biLipschitz maps *isometries*.

biLipschitz embedding
biLipschitz map
biLipschitz homeomorph
isometry
biLipschitz!–equivalent functions
biLipschitz!–equivalent distances
algebra!–$“sigma$-algebra
Borel!–$“sigma$-algebra
measure
countably subadditive

Two functions α, β defined on the same set X are *biLipschitz equivalent* if there exists $K > 1$ such that

$$\frac{1}{K}\alpha(x) \leq \beta(x) \leq K\alpha(x), \qquad \forall x \in X.$$

Two important examples of functions for which we will consider biLipschitz equivalence will be distances and measures. Notice that in particular, two distances d_1, d_2 on the same set M are *biLipschitz equivalent* if and only if the identity map (M, d_1) to (M, d_2) is biLipschitz.

2.1.6 Hausdorff Measures and Dimension

Recall that a collection $\mathscr{F}$ of subset of an arbitrary set X is called *σ-algebra* for X if

(i) $\emptyset, X \in \mathscr{F}$;

(ii) $A, B \in \mathscr{F} \Rightarrow A \setminus B \in \mathscr{F}$;

(iii) $\{A_n\}_{n\in\mathbb{N}} \subset \mathscr{F} \Rightarrow \bigcup_{n\in\mathbb{N}} A_n \in \mathscr{F}$.

If X is a topological space, the smallest σ-algebra containing the open sets is called *Borel σ-algebra*.

Definition 2.1.20 (Measure)**.** A *measure* on a σ-algebra $\mathscr{F}$ is a function $\mu : \mathscr{F} \to [0, +\infty]$ such that

(i) $\mu(\emptyset) = 0$;

(ii) $\{A_n\}_{n\in\mathbb{N}} \subset \mathscr{F}$, pairwise disjoint $\Rightarrow \mu(\bigcup_{n\in\mathbb{N}} A_n) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \mu(A_n)$.

This last condition is called σ-additivity.

A measure is *countably subadditive* on arbitrary sets, i.e., if $\{A_n\}_{n\in\mathbb{N}} \subset \mathscr{F}$ then (see Exercise 2.4.13)

$$\mu\left(\bigcup_{n\in\mathbb{N}} A_n\right) \leq \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \mu(A_n).$$

Borel!–measure Hausdorff!–content Hausdorff!–measure Hausdorff!–dimension

A measure on a topological space is called a *Borel measure* if μ is defined on the Borel σ-algebra. Hence, if μ is a Borel measure on a metric space M, then $\mu(B_M(p,r))$ is defined for all $p \in M$ and all $r > 0$.

Definition 2.1.21 (Hausdorff measures)**.** Let M be a metric space. Let $S \subset M$ be a subset, $Q \in [0, \infty)$ and $\delta > 0$. The *Q-dimensional Hausdorff δ-content* is defined as

$$\mathcal{H}^Q_\delta(S) = \inf\left\{\sum_{i=1}^\infty (\operatorname{diam}(E_i))^Q : S \subset \bigcup_{i=1}^\infty E_i,\ \operatorname{diam} E_i < \delta\right\}.$$

Notice that the function $\delta \mapsto \mathcal{H}^Q_\delta(S)$ is non-increasing. The *Q-dimensional Hausdorff measure* of S is defined as

$$\mathcal{H}^Q(S) := \sup_{\delta > 0} \mathcal{H}^Q_\delta(S) = \lim_{\delta \to 0^+} \mathcal{H}^Q_\delta(S).$$

Each measure $\mathcal{H}^Q$ is an outer measure that restricted to the Borel σ-algebra gives a measure.

Exercise 2.1.22. If $F : M_1 \to M_2$ is an L-Lipschitz map, $Q \geq 0$ and $S \subset M_1$, then

$$\mathcal{H}^Q(F(S)) \leq L^Q \mathcal{H}^Q(S).$$

Proposition 2.1.23. *Let M be a metric space. Then there exists $Q_0 \in [0, +\infty]$ such that*

$$\mathcal{H}^Q(M) = 0 \quad \forall Q > Q_0 \quad \text{and} \quad \mathcal{H}^Q(M) = \infty \quad \forall Q < Q_0.$$

Proof. Set

$$Q_0 := \inf\{Q \geq 0 : \mathcal{H}^Q(M) \neq \infty\}.$$

Hence $\mathcal{H}^Q(M) = \infty$ for all $Q < Q_0$.

If $Q_0 = \infty$, then there is nothing else to prove. If $Q_0 < \infty$, then take $Q > Q_0$. Then there is $Q' \in [Q_0, Q)$ with $\mathcal{H}^{Q'}(M) = K < \infty$. Hence for all $\delta \in (0,1)$ we have $\mathcal{H}^{Q'}_\delta(M) \leq K$, i.e., there are $E_i \subset M$ with $M = \bigcup_i E_i$, $\operatorname{diam}(E_i) < \delta$ and $\sum_i \operatorname{diam}(E_i)^{Q'} < K + 1$. Notice that

$$\sum \operatorname{diam}(E_i)^Q \leq \delta^{Q-Q'} \sum_i \operatorname{diam}(E_i)^{Q'} < (K+1)\delta^{Q-Q'}.$$

Thus $\mathcal{H}^Q_\delta(M) \leq (K+1)\delta^{Q-Q'}$. Since $\delta^{Q-Q'} \to 0$ as $\delta \to 0^+$, we get $\mathcal{H}^Q(M) = 0$. □

Definition 2.1.24 (Hausdorff dimension)**.** The *Hausdorff dimension* of a metric space M is denoted by $\dim_H(M)$ and is defined as

$$\begin{aligned}\dim_H(M) &= \inf\{Q \geq 0 : \mathcal{H}^Q(M) = 0\} \\ &= \inf\{Q \geq 0 : \mathcal{H}^Q(M) \neq \infty\} \\ &= \sup(\{Q \geq 0 : \mathcal{H}^Q(M) = \infty\} \cup \{0\}).\end{aligned}$$

Exercise 2.1.25. If $F : M_1 \to M_2$ is biLipschitz, then $\dim_H M_1 = \dim_H M_2$.

Theorem 2.1.26. *Let M be a metric space and μ a Borel measure on M. Assume that there are $Q > 0$, $C > 1$ and $R > 0$ such that*

$$\forall p \in M,\ \forall r \in (0, R] \qquad \frac{1}{C} r^Q \leq \mu(B(p, r)) \leq C r^Q. \tag{2.1.27}$$

Then for all $p \in M$

(i) $\mathcal{H}^Q(B(p, R)) \in (0, \infty)$,

(ii) $\dim_H B(p, R) = Q$,

and, if in addition M admits a countable cover of balls of radius R, then $\dim_H M = Q$.

Proof. Fix $p \in M$. We first show that $\mathcal{H}^Q(B(p, R)) < \infty$. Fix $r \in (0, R)$ and let $0 < \delta < R - r$. Take a maximal family of points $p_1, \ldots, p_N \in B(p, r)$ such that $d(p_i, p_j) > \delta$ for all $i \neq j$. Note that such a finite set of points exists, indeed if $p_1, \ldots, p_k \in B(p, r)$ are such that $d(p_i, p_j) > \delta$, then the balls $B(p_i, \frac{\delta}{2})$ are disjoint and contained in $B(p, R)$, hence

$$k \frac{\delta^Q}{2^Q C} \ = \ \frac{1}{C} \sum_{i=1}^{k} \left(\frac{\delta}{2} \right)^Q \ \leq \ \sum_{i=1}^{k} \mu \left(B(p_i, \frac{\delta}{2}) \right) \ = \ \mu \left(\bigcup_{i=1}^{k} B(p_i, \frac{\delta}{2}) \right) \ \leq \ \mu(B(p, R)) \ \leq \ C R^Q.$$

Therefore the integer k has to be bounded and there is a finite maximal set of points as stated above.

Maximality implies that $B(p_1, \delta), \ldots, B(p_N, \delta)$ cover $B(p, r)$. Hence

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{H}^Q_{2\delta}(B(p, r)) &\leq \sum_{j=1}^{N} (\operatorname{diam}(B(p_j, \delta)))^Q \\ &\leq N(2\delta)^Q = 4^Q C N \frac{1}{C} \left(\frac{\delta}{2} \right)^Q \\ &\leq 4^Q C \sum_{j=1}^{N} \mu \left(B(p_j, \frac{\delta}{2}) \right) \\ &\leq 4^Q C \mu(B(p, R)), \end{aligned}$$

where the last term is finite and independent on δ. Finally, for the ball of radius R we have $\mathcal{H}^Q(B(p, R)) = \mathcal{H}^Q(\bigcup_{r<R} B(p, r)) \leq 4^Q C \mu(B(p, R)) < \infty$, where we have used that the measure is continues with respect to the increasing union of sets.

We then show that $\mathcal{H}^Q(B(p,R)) > 0$. Let $\delta \in (0,R)$. To bound from below the δ-Hausdorff content take $\epsilon > 0$ and sets $E_i \subset M$ such that $\operatorname{diam}(E_i) < \delta$, $B(p,R) \subset \bigcup_i E_i$ and

$$\mathcal{H}^Q_\delta(B(p,R)) \geq \sum_i (\operatorname{diam} E_i)^Q - \epsilon.$$

Such a cover exists because $\mathcal{H}^Q(B(p,R)) < \infty$. Take any $p_i \in E_i$, so $E_i \subset B(p_i, \operatorname{diam}(E_i))$ and

$$\mu(B(p_i, \operatorname{diam}(E_i))) \leq C \operatorname{diam}(E_i)^Q.$$

Thus, by the countably subadditivity of μ, we have, since $\bigcup_i B(p_i, \operatorname{diam}(E_i)) \supset \bigcup_i E_i \supset B(p,R)$,

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{H}^Q_\delta(B(p,R)) &\geq \frac{1}{C} \sum_i \mu(B(p_i, \operatorname{diam} E_i)) - \epsilon \\ &\geq \frac{1}{C} \mu\left(\bigcup_i B(p_i, \operatorname{diam}(E_i)) \right) - \epsilon \\ &\geq \frac{1}{C} \mu(B(p,R)) - \epsilon \\ &\geq \frac{1}{C^2} R^Q - \epsilon \end{aligned}$$

Since ϵ was arbitrary, we get that $\mathcal{H}^Q_\delta(B(p,R))$ is greater than a positive constant independent of δ.

So (i) is proved and (ii) is an immediate consequence. By countable subadditivity of the Hausdorff measure, also the last statement of the theorem follows. □

Remark 2.1.28. The above proof actually shows that the Q-dimensional Hausdorff measure $\mathcal{H}^Q$ is biLipschitz equivalent to the measure μ. In particular, the measure $\mathcal{H}^Q$ satisfies equation (2.1.27), with possibly some other choice for the constant C. We shall rephrase the last theorem using the following definition.

Definition 2.1.29 (Ahlfors regularity for measures)**.** A Borel measure μ a on a metric space for which there are $Q \in (0,\infty)$, $C > 1$ and $R > 0$ such that

$$\frac{1}{C} r^Q \leq \mu(B(p,r)) \leq C r^Q, \qquad \forall p \in M,\ \forall r \in (0,R], \tag{2.1.30}$$

is said to be *Ahlfors Q-regular up to scale R.*

Corollary 2.1.31. *If a metric space supports an Ahlfors Q-regular measure up to scale R than the Q-dimensional Hausdorff measure $\mathcal{H}^Q$ of the metric space is Ahlfors Q-regular up to scale R, and the R-balls have Hausdorff dimension Q.*

Here is an equivalent formulation of the notion of length for injective curves.

Proposition 2.1.32. *If $\gamma : I \to M$ is an injective curve on a metric space M, we have*

$$\mathcal{H}^1(\gamma(I)) = \text{Length}(\gamma). \tag{2.1.33}$$

Proof. If $\text{Length}(\gamma) = \infty$, use Exercise 2.1.34, to say that also $\mathcal{H}^1(\gamma(I)) = \infty$.

If $\text{Length}(\gamma) < \infty$, then we reparametrize $\gamma : [0, \ell] \to M$ by arc length. For proving (2.1.33), we shall consider one inequality at a time.

For the inequality $\leq$, for each $\delta > 0$ divide the interval $[0, \ell]$ into n disjoint intervals $J_1, \ldots, J_n$ of diameter at less than δ. Since γ is parametrized by arc length, then it is 1-Lipschitz and therefore we have $\operatorname{diam} \gamma(J_j) < \delta$, for $j = 1, \ldots, n$. Hence

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{H}^1_\delta(\gamma([0, \ell])) &\leq \sum_{j=1}^{n} \operatorname{diam} \gamma(J_j) \\ &\leq \sum_{j=1}^{n} \operatorname{diam} J_j = \ell, \end{aligned}$$

where we have used in the first inequality that $(\gamma(J_j))_i$ is a admissible cover and in the second inequality that γ is 1-Lipschitz. Taking the limit for $\delta \to 0$, we infer the desired inequality in (2.1.33).

For the inequality $\geq$, we shall used Exercise (2.1.34). In fact, Take a partition $t_0 < t_1 <\leq< t_k$ of the interval I. Then we bound

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{i=1}^{k} d(\gamma(t_{i-1}), \gamma(t_i)) &\leq \sum_{i=1}^{k} \mathcal{H}^1(\gamma([t_{i-1}, t_i])) \\ &\leq \mathcal{H}^1(\gamma(I)), \end{aligned}$$

where in the last inequality we have used that $\mathcal{H}^1$ is additive and that γ is injective. □

Exercise 2.1.34 (to be generalized in Exercise 2.1.35)**.** For every continuous curve $\gamma : [a, b] \to M$ on a metric space M, we have

$$\mathcal{H}^1(\gamma([a, b])) \geq d(\gamma(a), \gamma(b)).$$

[Solution. Consider $\phi(x) := d(x, \gamma(a)$, which is 1-Lipschitz. Then, using that on $\mathbb{R}$ the measure $\mathcal{H}^1$ coincides with Lebesque one, bound $\mathcal{H}^1(\gamma([a, b])) \geq \mathcal{H}^1(\phi(\gamma([a, b]))) \geq \operatorname{diam}(\phi(\gamma([a, b]))) \geq d(\gamma(a), \gamma(b))$.]

Exercise 2.1.35. For every connected subset X of a metric space, we have

$$\mathcal{H}^1(X) \geq \operatorname{diam}(X).$$

2.2 Differential geometry

2.2.1 Vector fields and Lie brackets

We will denote by M a smooth differentiable manifold with topological dimension n.

For $x \in M$, an element of the fiber T_xM of the tangent bundle TM is a derivation of germs of C^∞ functions at x (i.e., an $\mathbb{R}$-linear application from $C^\infty(x)$ to $\mathbb{R}$ that satisfies the Leibnitz rule). If $F : M \to N$ is smooth and $x \in M$, we shall denote by $dF_x : T_xM \to T_{F(x)}N$ its differential, defined as follows. The pull back operator $u \mapsto F_x^*(u) := u \circ F$ maps $C^\infty(F(x))$ into $C^\infty(x)$; thus, for $v \in T_xM$ we have that

$$dF_x(v)(u) := v(F_x^*(u)) = v(u \circ F), \qquad u \in C^\infty(F(x))$$

defines an element of $T_{F(x)}N$.

Any smooth curve $\sigma : I \to M$ gives a derivation at $\sigma(t)$ for all $t \in I$ by

$$\sigma'(t)(u) = \lim_{h \to 0} \frac{u(\sigma(t+h)) - u(\sigma(t))}{h}, \qquad \forall u \in C^\infty(\sigma(t)).$$

We denote by $\Gamma(TM)$ the linear space of smooth vector fields, i.e., smooth sections of the tangent bundle TM; we will typically use the notation X, Y, Z to denote them. We use the notation $[X,Y]f := X(Yf) - Y(Xf)$ for the Lie bracket, that induces on $\Gamma(TM)$ an infinite-dimensional Lie algebra structure.

If $F : M \to N$ is a diffeomorphism and $X \in \Gamma(TM)$, the push forward vector field $F_*X \in \Gamma(TN)$ is defined by the identity $(F_*X)_{F(x)} = dF_x(X_x)$. Equivalently,

$$(F_*X)u := [X(u \circ F)] \circ F^{-1} \qquad \forall u \in C^\infty(M). \tag{2.2.1}$$

The push-forward commutes with the Lie bracket, namely

$$[F_*X, F_*Y] = F_*[X,Y] \qquad \forall X,\, Y \in \Gamma(TM). \tag{2.2.2}$$

If $F : M \to N$ is smooth and σ is a smooth curve on M, then

$$dF_{\sigma(t)}(\sigma'(t)) = (F \circ \sigma)'(t), \tag{2.2.3}$$

where $\sigma'(t) \in T_{\sigma(t)}M$ and $(F \circ \sigma)'(t) \in T_{F(\sigma(t))}N$ are the tangent vector fields along the two curves, in M and N. If $u \in C^\infty(M)$, identifying $T_{u(p)}\mathbb{R}$ with $\mathbb{R}$ itself, given $X \in \Gamma(TM)$, we have

$$du_p(X_p) = X_p(u).$$

Let $X \in \Gamma(TM)$ be a vector field and let $\sigma : (a, b) \to M$ be a smooth curve. The curve σ is an *integral curve*, or a *flow line, of* X if

integral curve
flow line
flow
vector bundle
rank!– of a vector bundle
total space of a bundle
base of a bundle
fiber of a bundle
local trivialization of a bundle
section

$$\sigma'(t) = X_{\sigma(t)}, \qquad \forall t \in (a, b).$$

For all $X \in \Gamma(TM)$ and all $p \in M$ there are $\epsilon > 0$ and $\sigma : (-\epsilon, \epsilon) \to M$ such that σ is an integral curve of X and $\sigma(0) = p$. Moreover such σ is unique and has a unique maximal extension.

Let $t \mapsto \Phi^t_X(p)$ be the integral curve of X starting at p. We call $\Phi^t_X(p)$ the *flow at* p *at time* t *with respect to* X. Namely, we have $\Phi^0_X(p) = 0$ and

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t}(\Phi^t_X(p)) = X_{\Phi^t_X(p)}.$$

2.2.2 Vector bundles

A simple example of vector bundle of rank r over a manifold M is the product space $M \times \mathbb{R}^r$ with the projection on the first component $\pi_1 : M \times \mathbb{R}^r \to M$.

Definition 2.2.4 (Vector bundle)**.** A *vector bundle of rank* r on a manifold M is a manifold E together with a smooth surjective map $\pi : E \to M$ such that, for all $p \in M$, the following properties hold:

1. The fiber $E_p := \pi^{-1}(p)$ has the structure of vector space of dimension r.
2. There is a neighborhood U of p in M and a diffeomorphism $\chi : \pi^{-1}(U) \to U \times \mathbb{R}^r$ such that
   (a) $\pi_1 \circ \chi = \pi$
   (b) $\forall q \in U$, $\chi|_{E_q} : E_q \to \{q\} \times \mathbb{R}^r$ is an isomorphism of vector spaces.

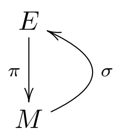
The space E is called *total space*, the manifold M is the *base*, the vector space E_p is the *fiber over* p and the map χ is called a *local trivialization*.

Exercise 2.2.5. Show that $\dim(E) = \dim(M) + r$.

Exercise 2.2.6. Show that if $\pi : E \to M$ is a vector bundle and $U \subset M$ is an open set, then $\pi|_{\pi^{-1}(U)} : \pi^{-1}(U) \to U$ is a vector bundle.

Definition 2.2.7 (Section)**.** A *section* of a vector bundle $\pi : E \to M$ is a smooth map $\sigma : M \to E$ such that $\pi \circ \sigma = \mathrm{Id}_M$. We will denote by $\Gamma(E)$ the set of all sections of E.

frame
local frame
Riemannian!–metric
Metric tensor
Riemannian!–manifold



Definition 2.2.8 (Frames and local frames)**.** A *frame* of a bundle $\pi : E \to M$ is a set $\{X_1, \ldots, X_n\} \subset \Gamma(E)$ of sections on M such that, for all $p \in M$, $(X_1(p), \ldots, X_n(p))$ is a basis of the fiber E_p. A *local frame* for $\pi : E \to M$ at a point $p \in M$ is a frame for the bundle $\pi|_{\pi^{-1}(U)} : \pi^{-1}(U) \to U$ where U is some open neighborhood of p.

2.2.3 Riemannian and Finsler geometry

Let M be a differentiable manifold of dimension n. A *Riemannian metric* on M is a family of (positive definite) inner products

$$\rho_p : T_pM \times T_pM \longrightarrow \mathbb{R}, \qquad p \in M,$$

such that, for all differentiable vector fields X, Y on M,

$$p \mapsto \rho_p(X_p, Y_p)$$

defines a differentiable function $M \to \mathbb{R}$. This smooth assignment of an inner product ρ_p to each tangent space T_pM is called a *metric tensor*. A metric tensor will also be denoted by $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$.

In a system of local coordinates on the manifold M given by n real-valued functions $x_1, \ldots, x_n$, the vector fields

$$\left\{ \frac{\partial}{\partial x_1}, \ldots, \frac{\partial}{\partial x_n} \right\}$$

give a basis of tangent vectors at each point of M. Relative to this coordinate system, the components of the metric tensor are, at each point p,

$$\rho_{ij}(p) := \rho_p\left(\left.\frac{\partial}{\partial x_i}\right|_p, \left.\frac{\partial}{\partial x_j}\right|_p \right).$$

Endowed with this metric tensor, the pair $(M, \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle)$ is called a *Riemannian manifold.*

Finsler manifolds generalize Riemannian manifolds by no longer assuming that they are infinitesimally Euclidean in the sense that the norm on each tangent space is necessarily induced by an inner product. Two good references on Finsler geometry are [BCS00] and [AP94].

Classically a Finsler structure on a differentiable manifold M is given by a function $\|\cdot\| : TM \to \mathbb{R}$ that is smooth on the complement of the zero section of TM and such that the restriction of $\|\cdot\|$ to any tangent space T_pM is a (symmetric) norm[1]. We will consider a more general definition for Finsler structures allowing only the continuity as regularity.

norm!–continuously varying
continuously varying norm
Finsler!–manifold
Finsler!–structure
absolutely continuous

Every Riemannian manifold $(M, \langle\cdot,\cdot\rangle)$ has an associated function $TM \to [0,\infty)$, $X \mapsto \|X\| := \sqrt{\langle X, X\rangle}$. This is an example of a continuously varying norm.

Definition 2.2.9. A *continuously varying norm* on a differentiable manifold M is a continuous function from TM to $[0,\infty)$ usually denoted by $\|\cdot\|$ with the property that for all $p \in M$ the restriction of $\|\cdot\|$ to T_pM is a symmetric norm, i.e.,

1. $\|\lambda X\| = |\lambda|\|X\|$, $\forall X \in TM$, $\forall \lambda \in \mathbb{R}$;
2. $\|X+Y\| \leq \|X\| + \|Y\|$, $\forall p \in M$ and $\forall X, Y \in T_pM$;
3. $\|X\| = 0 \Rightarrow X = 0$.

Definition 2.2.10. In this lecture notes, we say that a *Finsler manifold* is a pair $(M, \|\cdot\|)$ where M is a differentiable manifold and $\|\cdot\|$ is a continuously varying norm on M. In this case, $\|\cdot\|$ is also called *Finsler structure*.

Remark 2.2.11. A Riemannian manifold $(M, \langle\cdot,\cdot\rangle)$ has a natural structure of Finsler manifold.

2.3 Length structures for Finsler manifolds

Connected Riemannian and Finsler manifolds carry the structure of length metric spaces. Let us recall the notion of absolutely continuous curve and its length with respect to a Finsler structure.

Definition 2.3.1. A curve $\gamma : [a,b] \to \mathbb{R}^n$ is *absolutely continuous* if there exists a Lebesgue integrable $\mathbb{R}^n$-valued function $g : [a,b] \to \mathbb{R}^n$ such that

$$\gamma(t) - \gamma(a) = \int_a^t g(s)\,\mathrm{d}s \qquad \forall t \in [a,b].$$

The function g is sometimes denoted by $\dot\gamma$, however it is only defined almost everywhere with respect to the Lebesgue measure on $[a,b]$.

[1] The classical definition of Finsler structure is occasionally generalized allowing, for example, asymmetric norms or not assuming linearity. Some authors also assume that a Finsler structure has strongly convex unit spheres, we do not.

parametrization by arc length

A curve $\gamma : [a, b] \to M$ into a differentiable manifold is said *absolutely continuous* if it is so when read in local coordinates, i.e., for all local coordinate map $\phi : U \to \mathbb{R}^n$ and for all $a', b' \in [a, b]$ such that $\gamma([a', b']) \subset U$, then $\phi \circ \gamma|_{[a',b']}$ is absolutely continuous.

For any absolutely continuous curve $\gamma : [a, b] \to M$ one can also define a derivative $\dot{\gamma} : [a, b] \to M$ using local coordinates, which is defined almost everywhere as a measurable map (see Exercise 2.4.16).

As usual in Differential Geometry, to check that a curve $\gamma : [a, b] \to M$ is absolutely continuous it is sufficient that the image of the curve admits a covering of coordinate systems for M on which γ is absolutely continuous (see Exercise 2.4.15).

Definition 2.3.2 (Length of a curve in a Finsler manifold)**.** Let $(M, \|\cdot\|)$ be a Finsler manifold. Let $\gamma : [a, b] \to M$ be an absolutely continuous curve. We set

$$\mathrm{Length}_{\|\cdot\|}(\gamma) := \int_a^b \|\dot{\gamma}(t)\| \, \mathrm{d}t. \tag{2.3.3}$$

We remark that the Finsler-length (2.3.3) of an absolutely continuous curve is finite.

By change-of-variables formula, the arc-length is independent of the chosen parametrization. In particular, a curve $\gamma : [a, b] \to M$ can be parametrized by its arc length, i.e., in such a way that

$$\mathrm{Length}_{\|\cdot\|}(\gamma|_{[t_1,t_2]}) = |t_2 - t_1|, \qquad \forall t_1, t_2.$$

A curve is parametrized by arc-length if and only if $\|\dot{\gamma}(t)\| = 1$, for all $t \in [a, b]$.

The *distance function* $d_{\|\cdot\|} : M \times M \to [0, +\infty)$ is defined by

$$d_{\|\cdot\|}(p, q) = \inf \mathrm{Length}_{\|\cdot\|}(\gamma), \tag{2.3.4}$$

where the infimum extends over all absolutely continuous curves γ in M joining p to q.

The function $d_{\|\cdot\|}$ satisfies the properties of a distance function for a metric space. The only property which is not completely straightforward is that $d_{\|\cdot\|}(p, q) = 0$ implies $p = q$. For proving this property, we claim that locally in a coordinate system every Finsler structure (as every Riemannian structure) is biLipschitz equivalent to the Euclidean structure, i.e., for some $c > 0$, we have

$$c^{-1}\|\cdot\| \le \|\cdot\|_{\mathbb{E}} \le c\|\cdot\|, \tag{2.3.5}$$

where $\|\cdot\|_{\mathbb{E}}$ is the Euclidean norm. Indeed, let $U \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$ be an open set parametrizing the manifold and fix a compact set $K \subseteq U$, which we think having nonempty interior. Consider $T^1K := \{(x, v) :$

$x \in K, v \in T_xU, \|v\|_{\mathbb{E}} = 1\}$ the bundle of unit vectors on K. Notice that T^1K is compact. Hence, the continuous function $\|\cdot\|$ on T^1K admits maximum and minimum, moreover the minimum cannot be 0 since otherwise we would have a non zero vector with norm 0. We deduce that there exists a constant $c > 0$ such that if $x \in K$ and v is such that $\|v\|_{\mathbb{E}} = 1$ then $c^{-1} \leq \|v\| \leq c$. By homogeneity we have (2.3.5) on the interior of K.

Consequently, from (2.3.5) we get that the distance function $d_{\|\cdot\|}$ is biLipschitz equivalent to the Euclidean distance function. In particular, we have that $d_{\|\cdot\|}$ induces the same the topology as the manifold topology on M. Similarly, one realizes that every Finsler structure on a compact set is biLipschitz equivalent to every other Riemannian structure.

On each Finsler manifold to every continuously varying norm, as defined in Definition 2.2.9, we associated a length structure and a distance function as in (2.3.3) and Definition (2.3.4), respecively. The distance function then induces a length structure, as in Definition (2.1.2). We show next that the two lengths structures coincide.

Proposition 2.3.6. *Assume M is a differentiable manifold equipped with a continuously varying norm $\|\cdot\| : TM \to \mathbb{R}$ and induced length structure $\mathrm{Length}_{\|\cdot\|}$ and distance function $d_{\|\cdot\|}$. If $\gamma\colon [a,b] \to M$ is an absolutely continuous curve, then*

$$\mathrm{Length}_{d_{\|\cdot\|}}(\gamma) = \mathrm{Length}_{\|\cdot\|}(\gamma). \tag{2.3.7}$$

Proof. To prove the $\leq$ inequality in (2.3.7), notice that for all $t, s \in [a,b]$ we have

$$d_{\|\cdot\|}(\gamma(s), \gamma(t)) \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \inf_{\sigma} \int_s^t \|\dot\sigma(t)\| \ \mathrm{d}t \leq \int_s^t \|\dot\gamma(t)\| \ \mathrm{d}t \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \mathrm{Length}_{\|\cdot\|}(\gamma|_{[s,t]}),$$

where the infimum is taken over all AC curves σ from $\gamma(s)$ to $\gamma(t)$. Using the definition of length we deduce that $\mathrm{Length}_{d_{\|\cdot\|}} \leq \mathrm{Length}_{\|\cdot\|}$.

Regarding the other inequality, we shall use that the norm changes continuously. It is convenient to work in coordinates, and it is enough to prove our claim locally. Parametrizing M with an open subset U of $\mathbb{R}^n$ we write the norm as $\|v\|_x =: F(x,v)$, for $x \in U$ and $v \in T_xU \simeq \mathbb{R}^n$. Fix some $K > 1$. Since F is continuous then at each point $p \in U$ there exists a neighborhood U_p of p such that

$$\frac{1}{K} F(q,v) \leq F(p,v) \leq K F(q,v), \qquad \forall q \in U_p, \forall v \in \mathbb{R}^n. \tag{2.3.8}$$

We find a partition $a = a_0 < a_1 < \cdots < a_n = b$ such that the restricted curve $\gamma|_{[a_{i-1},a_i]}$ is valued into $U_{\gamma(a_i)}$. Let us denote by d_i the distance induced by the (constant) norm $F(\gamma(a_i), \cdot)$. Since then we are in the case of a normed vector space (see Example 2.1.17) we have

$$\mathrm{Length}_{F(\gamma(a_i),\cdot)} = \mathrm{Length}_{d_i}\,. \tag{2.3.9}$$

Moreover, as a consequence of (2.3.8), we have

$$d_i \leq Kd. \tag{2.3.10}$$

Thus, using (2.3.8),(2.3.9), and (2.3.10), we obtain that

$$\begin{aligned}
\mathrm{Length}_{\|\cdot\|}(\gamma) &:= \int_a^b F(\gamma(t),\dot\gamma(t)) \\
&= \sum_{i=1}^n \int_{a_{i-1}}^{a_i} F(\gamma(t),\dot\gamma(t)) \\
&\overset{(2.3.8)}{\leq} K\sum_{i=1}^n \int_{a_{i-1}}^{a_i} F(\gamma(a_i),\dot\gamma(t)) \\
&\overset{(2.3.9)}{=} K\sum_{i=1}^n \mathrm{Length}_{d_i}(\gamma|_{[a_{i-1},a_i]}) \\
&\overset{(2.3.10)}{\leq} K^2\sum_{i=1}^n \mathrm{Length}(\gamma|_{[a_{i-1},a_i]}) = K^2\,\mathrm{Length}(\gamma).
\end{aligned}$$

As K can be chosen arbitrarily close to 1, we also deduce that $\mathrm{Length}_{\|\cdot\|} \leq \mathrm{Length}_{d_{\|\cdot\|}}$. □

Remark 2.3.11. Let $\gamma : [a,b] \to M$ be a curve on a manifold equipped with a continuously varying norm $\|\cdot\|$. With the following points, we shall clarify the relationship between absolute continuity and having of finite length:

(i) In Proposition 2.3.6, we have shown that if γ is AC, then $\mathrm{Length}_{\|\cdot\|}(\gamma) = \mathrm{Length}_{d_{\|\cdot\|}}(\gamma)$ and both this quantities are finite.

(ii) If γ is not AC, then $\mathrm{Length}_{\|\cdot\|}(\gamma)$ is not defined.

(iii) If $\mathrm{Length}_{d_{\|\cdot\|}}(\gamma)$ is finite, then up to reparametrization γ is Lipschitz with respect to $d_{\|\cdot\|}$, and thus with respect to any euclidean distance, in coordinates. Therefore, by Rademacher's Theorem γ is AC.

2.4 Exercises

Exercise 2.4.1. Let (M,d) be a metric space equipped with its natural topology.

(i) Show that if M is connected, then d is finite.

(ii) Show that in general d is finite on each connected component of M.

Exercise 2.4.2. The *mesh* of a partition $\mathcal{P} = (t_1, \dots, t_k)$ is defined as Mesh of a partition

$$\|\mathcal{P}\| := \max_{j=1,\dots,k-1} |t_{i+1} - t_i|.$$

Show that, if $\mathcal{P}_j$ are such that $\|\mathcal{P}_j\| \to 0$ as $j \to \infty$, then

$$L(\gamma) = \lim_{j\to\infty} L(\gamma, \mathcal{P}_j).$$

Exercise 2.4.3. Show that, if $\mathcal{P}_1$ and $\mathcal{P}_2$ are partition of the same interval with $\mathcal{P}_1 \subset \mathcal{P}_2$, then $L(\gamma, \mathcal{P}_1) \leq L(\gamma, \mathcal{P}_2)$.

Exercise 2.4.4. Show that the length of a curve is independent on its parameterization. Namely, If $\gamma : I \to M$ is a curve in a metric space and $h : J \to I$ is a homeomorphism between intervals, then $L(\gamma) = L(\gamma \circ h)$.

Exercise 2.4.5. If $\gamma : [a, b] \to (M, d)$ is rectifiable, then can be reparametrized by arc length. [Hint: consider the change of parametrization given by $s \to \text{Length}(\gamma|_{[a,s]})$.]

Exercise 2.4.6. If $\gamma : [a, b] \to (M, d)$ is *parametrized with constant speed* s, with $s \in [0, \infty)$, i.e.,

$$\text{Length}(\gamma|_{[t_1,t_2]}) = s|t_2 - t_1|, \qquad \forall t_1, t_2 \in [a, b],$$

then $L(\gamma) = s|a - b|$ and γ is s-Lipschitz.

Exercise 2.4.7. Prove that for each $\mathcal{P}$, if a sequence $(\gamma_n)_{n\in\mathbb{N}}$ of curves pointwise converges to γ then $L(\gamma_n, \mathcal{P})$ converges to $L(\gamma, \mathcal{P})$.

Exercise 2.4.8. Let $f_n : X \to \mathbb{R}$ be a sequence of continuous functions on a topological space. Prove that the function $\sup_n f_n$ is lower semicontinuous. [Hint: adapt the proof of Theorem (2.1.3).]

Exercise 2.4.9. Following the proof of Theorem 2.1.3 that was done in case that $L(\gamma) < \infty$, give a proof of the same theorem when $L(\gamma) = \infty$.
Hint: The proof starts as "for all $M > 0$, there exists a partition $\mathcal{P}$ such that $L(\gamma, \mathcal{P}) > M$..." and follows the same strategy.

Exercise 2.4.10. Let $F : M_1 \to M_2$ a maps between two metric spaces that is K-Lipschitz. Show that if γ is a curve in M_1 then $L(F \circ \gamma) \leq K \cdot L(\gamma)$.

Exercise 2.4.11. Show that a geodesic space is a length space – what is not automatic is that the distance is finite.

Exercise 2.4.12. Find an homeomorphism $F : M_1 \to M_2$ between two metric spaces with the property that $L(F \circ \gamma) = L(\gamma)$, for all γ is a curve in M_1, but F is not an isometry.

Exercise 2.4.13. Show that each measure is countably subadditive.

Hint: Given arbitrary $\{A_n\}_{n\in\mathbb{N}} \subset \mathscr{F}$ split them into disjoint sets in order to use property 2 of the definition of measure.

Exercise 2.4.14. Let $\gamma : [a, b] \to \mathbb{R}^n$ be absolutely continuous. Show that $\dot{\gamma}$ is unique up to measure zero.

Exercise 2.4.15. Let $\gamma : I \to M$ be a curve. Show that $\dot{\gamma}$ is absolutely continuous if for all $t \in I$ there exist $\epsilon > 0$ and a local coordinate map $\phi : U \to \mathbb{R}^n$ with $\gamma([t-\epsilon, t+\epsilon]) \subset U$ and such that $\phi \circ \gamma|_{[t-\epsilon,t+\epsilon]}$ is absolutely continuous.

Exercise 2.4.16. Let $\gamma : I \to M$ be an absolutely continuous curve. Let $\phi_1, \phi_2 : U \to \mathbb{R}^n$ be two coordinate maps. Show that the derivative of $\phi_1 \circ \gamma$ is related to the derivative of $\phi_2 \circ \gamma$ by the differential of $\phi_1 \circ \phi_2^{-1}$ and hence one can define the derivative $\dot{\gamma}$ up to measure zero.

Exercise 2.4.17. Prove that any absolutely continuous curve in $\mathbb{R}^n$ can be re-parametrized to be a Lipschitz curve with respect to the Euclidean distance.

Chapter 3

The general theory of Carnot-Carathéodory spaces

We are at the point where we are ready to define our main object of study: namely, subRiemannian manifolds, or more generally subFinsler manifolds, also called Carnot-Carathéodory spaces. We will equip them with Carnot-Carathéodory distances. The first fundamental result that we will prove will be Chow-Rashevsky's theorem, which says that in each subFinsler manifold Carnot-Carathéodory distances gives the same topology as the manifold structure. We stress that this fact will be a consequence of the important assumption on the sub bundle to be bracket generating.

3.1 The definition of Carnot-Carathéodory spaces

In this chapter, we shall denote by M a differentiable manifold, whose dimension will mostly be denoted by n. Thus the tangent bundle of M is TM and is a $2n$-dimensional manifold with the following local parametrization: if $\phi : U \subset \mathbb{R}^n \to M$ is a local parametrization for M, then it induces vector fields $\partial_{x_1}, \dots, \partial_{x_n}$ and the map $U \times \mathbb{R}^n \to TM$, $(x, v) \mapsto v_1\partial_{x_1} + \cdots + v_n\partial_{x_n}$ is a local parametrization for TM. In other words, $\partial_{x_1}, \dots, \partial_{x_n}$ form a local frame for TM.

3.1.1 Bracket-generating distributions

Definition 3.1.1 (Polarization, aka distributions or tangent bundle)**.** A *field of distributions* on a manifold M is a subset $\Delta \subseteq TM$ such that for all $p \in M$ there exists smooth vector fields $X_1, \dots, X_m$ on some neighborhood U of p such that

$$\Delta_p := \Delta \cap T_pM = \operatorname{span}\{X_1(p), \dots, X_m(p)\}. \tag{3.1.2}$$

field of distributions
tangent subbundle
distribution
polarization—see distribution
subbundle
$“Gamma(“Delta)$
tangent to a distribution
vector filed
$“scr F˙p$
$“Lie(“scr F)$

If moreover there exists $r \in \mathbb{N}$ such that $r = \dim \Delta_p$, for all $p \in M$, then we say that Δ has *constant rank* with *rank* equal to r. Fields of distributions are also simply called *distributions*. Constant rank distributions are also called *polarizations* or *tangent subbundles*. Distributions of rank r are also called *distributions of r-planes* or *r-plane fields*. The pair (M, Δ) is called *polarized manifold*.

Notice that each tangent subbundle is indeed a subbundle of the tangent bundle: A subbundle E of a vector bundle F on a topological space M is a collection of linear subspaces E_p of the fibers F_p of F at p in M, that make up a vector bundle in their own right. Moreover, a tangent subbundle of rank r on an n-manifold has dimension $n + r$.

Here is a simple example of a polarization on the 3-dimensional manifold $\mathbb{R}^3$, with coordinates x, y, z. Let $f, g : \mathbb{R} \to \mathbb{R}$ be smooth functions. Then the two smooth vector fields

$$X_1(x,y,z) := \partial_x + f(x,y,z)\partial_z, \tag{3.1.3}$$

$$X_2(x,y,z) := \partial_y + g(x,y,z)\partial_z \tag{3.1.4}$$

are linearly independent at every point and define a rank-2 tangent subbundle Δ on $\mathbb{R}^3$ as

$$\Delta_{(x,y,z)} := \{aX_1(x,y,z) + bX_2(x,y,z) : a, b \in \mathbb{R}^2\} \tag{3.1.5}$$

$$= \{(a, b, af(x,y,z) + bg(x,y,z)) : a, b \in \mathbb{R}^2\}. \tag{3.1.6}$$

Definition 3.1.7. Here is some notation and terminology that is used for distributions and family of vector fields:

- The set of smooth vector fields on a manifold M is denoted with $\mathrm{Vec}(M)$ or $\Gamma(TM)$. Hence, an element of $\Gamma(TM)$ is a smooth section $X : M \to TM$ of the bundle $TM \to M$.
- A vector filed $X : M \to TM$ is said to be *tangent* to a distribution $\Delta \subseteq$ at a point $p \in M$ if $X(p) \in \Delta$.
- Given a distribution $\Delta \subset TM$, we denote by $\Gamma(\Delta)$ the set of smooth vector fields of M tangent to Δ at every point of M.
- Given a family $\mathscr{F} \subset \Gamma(TM)$ of vector fields on M and $p \in M$, we set $\mathscr{F}_p := \{X_p : X \in \mathscr{F}\}$.
- Given a family $\mathscr{F} \subset \Gamma(TM)$ of vector fields on M, we denote by $\mathrm{Lie}(\mathscr{F})$ the Lie algebra generated by $\mathscr{F}$ with respect to the Lie bracket of vector fields within $\Gamma(TM)$.

We spell out that the set $\mathrm{Lie}(\mathscr{F})$ is the smallest subset of $\Gamma(TM)$ with $\mathscr{F} \subset \mathrm{Lie}(\mathscr{F})$ and the property

$$X, Y \in \mathrm{Lie}(\mathscr{F}), a, b \in \mathbb{R} \implies [X, Y], aX + bY \in \mathrm{Lie}(\mathscr{F}).$$

We are ready to introduce the condition that will make us join points with curves tangent to a polarization Δ. This following condition (3.1.9) has may names. It is also called *Hörmander's condition* or *Chow's condition*.

Definition 3.1.8 (Bracket generating)**.** A distribution Δ on a manifold M is *bracket generating* if

$$(\mathrm{Lie}(\Gamma(\Delta)))_p = T_pM, \qquad \forall p \in M. \tag{3.1.9}$$

Let us clarify what is the meaning of a curve tangent to a polarization:

Definition 3.1.10 (Horizontal curve)**.** Given a polarized manifold (M, Δ) a curve $\gamma : [a, b] \to M$ is said to be Δ-*horizontal* if γ is absolutely continuous and $\dot{\gamma}(t) \in \Delta_{\gamma(t)}$ for almost every $t \in [a, b]$. Curves that are Δ-horizontal are also said to be horizontal with respect to Δ, or, simply, *horizontal* or *Legendrian*. The terms *admissible curve* and *controlled path* are also used to refer to such a curve.

Remark 3.1.11. If $X_1, \ldots, X_m$ are generating a distribution Δ on M, in the sense that (3.1.2) holds for all $p \in M$, then Δ is bracket generating if and only if

$$(\mathrm{Lie}(\{X_1, \ldots, X_m\}))_p = T_pM, \qquad \forall p \in M. \tag{3.1.12}$$

3.1.2 SubFinsler structures

Definition 3.1.13 (SubFinsler , subRiemannian manifold)**.** A *subFinsler manifold* is a triple $(M, \Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ where M is a connected manifold, $\|\cdot\|$ is a continuously varying norm (recall Definition 2.2.9), and Δ is a bracket-generating distribution on M. The pair $(\Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ is said to be a *subFinsler structure* on M. If the norm $\|\cdot\|$ is given by a Riemannian scalar product $\langle\cdot,\cdot\rangle$, then $(M, \Delta, \langle\cdot,\cdot\rangle)$ is called *subRiemannian manifold*.

We consider Riemannian and Finsler manifolds as particular cases of subRiemannian and subFinsler manifolds, respectively, which is the case when Δ is the whole tangent bundle.

Since in what follows only the values of $\|\cdot\|$ restricted to Δ will be important, we sometime say that $(M, \Delta, \|\cdot\||_\Delta)$ is a subFinsler manifold with subFinsler structure $(\Delta, \|\cdot\||_\Delta)$.

Chow's condition
H“”ormander's condition
bracket generating
horizontal!–curve
curve!–horizontal
admissible path
controlled path
subFinsler!–manifold
manifold!–subFinsler
subFinsler!–structure
subRiemannian manifold
manifold!–subRiemannian—see subRiemannian manifold
Riemannian!–manifold
manifold!–Riemannian—see Riemannian manifold
Finsler!–manifold
manifold!–Finsler—see Finsler manifold

Carnot-Carath"'eodory!–distance
CC-distance—see Carnot-Carath"'eodory distance
distance!Carnot-Carath"'eodory–

Definition 3.1.14 (CC-distance)**.** Given a subFinsler manifold $(M, \Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ the *Carnot-Carathéodory distance* between two points $p, q \in M$ is

$$d_{CC}(p,q) = \inf\left\{\mathrm{Length}_{\|\cdot\|}(\gamma) : \gamma \text{ is } \Delta\text{-horizontal curve from } p \text{ to } q\right\}. \tag{3.1.15}$$

If the infimum is realized by a curve γ, then γ is length minimizing among the horizontal curves joining the two points p, q, and in this case $d_{CC}(p,q) = \mathrm{Length}_{\|\cdot\|}(\gamma)$.

Chow Theorem
Carnot-Carath"'eodory!–space
distance!–subFinsler
subFinsler!–distance
subRiemannian!–manifold
subRiemannian!–structure
distance!–subRiemannian
subRiemannian!–distance
Finsler-Carnot-Carath"'eodory distance
singular Riemannian metric
non-holonomic Riemannian metric

For us a subFinsler manifold $(M, \Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ is also equipped with a Finsler distance. If d_F is the Finsler distance associated to $(M, \|\cdot\|)$, then we obviously have

$$d_{CC}(p,q) \geq d_F(p,q), \qquad \forall p, q \in M. \tag{3.1.16}$$

We anticipate that the above d_{CC} is indeed a finite distance. In fact, as a consequence of the fact that Δ is assumed bracket generating and that M is assumed connected, we will show the following result.

Theorem 3.1.17 (Chow, see Section 3.2.2)**.** *If $(M, \Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ is a subFinsler manifold, then d_{CC} is finite and the metric space (M, d_{CC}) is homeomorphic to the manifold M.*

Remark 3.1.18 (Terminology)**.** The Carnot-Carathéodory distance is sometimes called CC-distance or subFinsler distance. A subFinsler manifold equipped with its Carnot-Carathéodory distance is called *Carnot-Carathéodory space*. If $\|\cdot\|$ is the norm coming from a Riemannian metric, then $(M, \Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ is called *subRiemannian manifold*, $(\Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ is a *subRiemannian structure* and d_{CC} is called *subRiemannian distance*.

Some authors call d_{CC} a *Finsler-Carnot-Carathéodory distance* to emphasize that in their context d_{CC} might not necessarily be subRiemannian. Sub-Riemannian metrics appeared in the literature under a variety of names: 'singular Riemannian metric', 'non-holonomic Riemannian metric'. They were also used in the theory of hypo-elliptic PDE, but without a name.

3.1.3 The generalization of Control Theory

In Control Theory one is interested in systems of differential equations of the form

$$\dot{u} = \sum_{i=1}^{m} c_j(t) X_{(u)}, \tag{3.1.19}$$

where $X_1, \ldots, X_m$ are given vector fields on M, and the $c_1, \ldots, c_m$ are variable L^1 functions on some bounded interval. These functions are called *control functions* or *controls*. Any path obtained integrating (3.1.19) is called a controlled path.

When the rank of the system of vector fields $X_1, \dots, X_m$ is constant, controlled paths coincide with the absolutely continuous paths tangent to the distribution

$$\Delta = \mathbb{R}\text{- span}\langle X_1, \dots, X_m \rangle$$

generated by $X_1, \dots, X_m$. Conversely, any rank m distribution Δ can, locally, be written as $\Delta = \langle X_1, \dots, X_m \rangle$. Observe that in the previous sentence, the adverb 'locally' is needed, for global topological reasons, as for example for $\Delta = T(S^2)$.

However, for many systems of interest in Control Theory, the rank of $X_1, \dots, X_m$ is not constant, but one can still define a related distance: for $p \in M$ and $v \in T_pM$, set

$$g_p(v) := \inf\{u_1^2 + \cdots + u_m^2 \mid u_1X_1 + \cdots + u_mX_m = v\}.$$

We are using the notation that $\inf \emptyset = +\infty$. We then have that g_p is a positive definite quadratic form on the subspace

$$\Delta_p := \mathbb{R}\text{- span}\langle X_1(p), \dots, X_m(p) \rangle.$$

The *control distance associated to the system* $X_1, \dots, X_m$ is defined as, for any p and q in M,

$$d(p,q) = \inf \left\{ \int_0^1 g_p(\dot\gamma(t))^{1/2} dt \;\middle|\; \gamma \text{ absolutely continuous path } \gamma(0) = p, \gamma(1) = q \right\}. \tag{3.1.20}$$

3.1.4 The general definition

Definition 3.1.21. A (smooth) sub-Finsler structure on a manifold M is a function $g : TM \to [0, \infty]$ obtained by the following construction: Let E be a vector bundle over M endowed with a norm $|\cdot|$ and let

$$\sigma : E \to TM$$

be a morphism of vector bundles. For each $p \in M$ and $v \in T_pM$, set

$$g_p(v) := \inf\{|u| : u \in E_p, \sigma(u) = v\}.$$

Analogously as before, one define the *sub-Finsler distance associated to the bundle* E, for any p and q in M, as

$$d(p,q) = \inf \left\{ \int_0^1 g_p(\dot\gamma(t))^{1/2} dt \;\middle|\; \gamma \text{ absolutely continuous path } \gamma(0) = p, \gamma(1) = q \right\}.$$

One can check that, for the inclusion $\sigma : \Delta \hookrightarrow TM$ of a sub-bundle of the tangent bundle, one recovers the Finsler-Carnot-Carathéodory distance (3.1.15). For $E = M \times \mathbb{R}^m$ and $\sigma(p, v) := u_1X_1 + \cdots + u_mX_m$, one recovers the control distance (3.1.20).

3.2 Chow's Theorem and existence of geodesics

We want to motivate now the fact that since in a subFinsler manifold the distribution is bracket generating, then the Carnot-Carathéodory distance is finite. The bracket-generating condition can be considered as an infinitesimal transitivity. Chow's theorem implies local transitivity:

Theorem 3.2.1 (Chow). *If a subbundle Δ of the tangent bundle of a manifold is bracket generating at some point p (i.e.,* (3.1.9) *holds at p), then any point q that is sufficiently close to p can be joined to p by an absolutely continuous curve almost everywhere tangent to Δ.*

In fact, close points in a subFinsler manifold can be joined by horizontal curves that are short with respect to the Finsler length, i.e., Theorem 3.1.17 holds.

We first explain the validity of Theorem 3.2.1 taking for grant a theorem by Sussmann. We are omitting the proof of Sussmann's Theorem which is in fact the core of Theorem 3.2.1, but it is well presented in [Bel96]. The reader can write a complete proof of the above Theorem 3.2.1 by following the hits in Exercise 3.2.4. Later in the notes we will give a detailed proof of the result that for us is of more interest: Theorem 3.1.17. Also, in the easier case of Carnot groups Theorem 3.1.17 is an elementary fact.

Theorem 3.2.2 (Sussmann [Sus73, Ste74, Bel96]). *Let M be a manifold, $\Delta \subseteq TM$ a subbundle, and $p \in M$. Let $\Sigma \subset M$ be the set of points that can be joined to p with an absolutely continuous curve almost everywhere tangent to Δ. Then Σ is an immersed sub-manifold of M.*

Given a vector field $X \in \Gamma(\Delta)$ and a point $q \in \Sigma$, the flow line $t \mapsto \Phi_X^t(q)$ is tangent to Δ, lies in Σ, and hence the vector X_q is tangent to the submanifold Σ. Therefore

$$\Gamma(\Delta) \subseteq \mathcal{F} := \{X \in \Gamma(TM) : X_q \in T\Sigma, \forall q \in \Sigma\}.$$

Being Σ a submanifold, $\mathcal{F}$ is involutive, i.e., $\text{Lie}(\mathcal{F}) = \mathcal{F}$. Then $\text{Lie}(\Gamma(\Delta)) \subseteq \mathcal{F}$. By the bracket-generating condition at p, we get

$$T_pM = \text{Lie}(\Gamma(\Delta))_p \subseteq \mathcal{F}_p \subseteq T_p\Sigma.$$

From this we have $\dim M = \dim \Sigma$, and thus Σ is a neighborhood of p.

3.2.1 Reachable sets of bracket-generating distributions

reachable set

Let $\mathscr{F} \subset \mathrm{Vec}(M)$ be a family of smooth vector fields on a manifold M. Define the *reachable set for $\mathscr{F}$ from p at time less than T* as

$$\Phi_{\mathscr{F}}^{<T}(p) := \left\{ \Phi_{X_k}^{t_k} \circ \cdots \circ \Phi_{X_1}^{t_1}(p) : k \in \mathbb{N}, t_j > 0, \sum_{j=1}^{k} t_j < T, X_j \in \mathscr{F} \right\}.$$

Theorem 3.2.3. *Let $\mathscr{F} \subset \mathrm{Vec}(M)$ such that $-\mathscr{F} = \mathscr{F}$. If for all $p \in M$ $(\mathrm{Lie}(\mathscr{F}))_p = T_pM$, then for all $T > 0$ and for all $p \in M$, the set $\Phi_{\mathscr{F}}^{<T}(p)$ contains p in its interior.*

Proof. Unless $M = \{p\}$, there is $X_1 \in \mathscr{F}$ with $X_1(p) \neq 0$. Hence there is $\epsilon_1 \in (0, T)$ such that

$$M_1 := \{\Phi_{X_1}^{t}(p) : t \in (0, \epsilon_1)\}$$

is a 1-dimensional submanifold of M.

If M is 1-dimentional, the proof is concluded. If $\dim M > 1$, then there is $X_2 \in \mathscr{F}$ that is not tangent to M_1 (Otherwise $\mathrm{Lie}(\mathscr{F})$ would be tangent to M_1 and not bracket-generating on points of M_1). Let $\hat{t}_1 \in (0, \epsilon_1)$ such that

$$X_2(\Phi_{X_1}^{\hat{t}_1}(p)) \notin TM_1.$$

The map $(t_1, t_2) \mapsto \Phi_{X_2}^{t_2} \circ \Phi_{X_1}^{t_1}(p)$ has maximal rank (i.e., rank 2) at every point of the form $(\hat{t}_1, t_2)$ with t_2 sufficiently small. We can also take $\hat{t}_1 + t_2 < T$.

Proceeding in this way, for all k, we obtain vector fields $X_1, \ldots, X_k \in \mathscr{F}$ such that

$$F_k : (t_1, \ldots, t_k) \mapsto \Phi_{X_k}^{t_k} \circ \cdots \circ \Phi_{X_1}^{t_1}(p)$$

has maximal rank k at a point $(\hat{t}_1, \ldots, \hat{t}_k)$ with $\hat{t}_j > 0$, $\sum_j \hat{t}_j < T$. By the Constant-Rank Theorem, there is a neighborhood U_k of $(\hat{t}_1, \ldots, \hat{t}_k)$ such that $M_k := F_k(U_k)$ is an embedded submanifold.

This procedure stops precisely when each element of $\mathscr{F}$ is tangent to M_k, i.e., when M_k is an open subset of M. Take $X_1, \ldots, X_k \in \mathscr{F}$ such that the above defined $F_k(t_1, \ldots, t_k)$ covers a neighborhood of a point $q \in M$ when $t_j > 0$, $\sum_j t_j < T$. Notice that if q is of the form $F_k(\bar{t}_1, \ldots, \bar{t}_k)$, with $\bar{t}_j > 0$, $\sum_j \bar{t}_j < T$, then the map

$$q' \mapsto \Phi_{-X_1}^{\bar{t}_1} \circ \cdots \circ \Phi_{-X_k}^{\bar{t}_k}(q')$$

is a diffeomorphism between any neighborhood of q and its image, which is a neighborhood of p. Notice that $-X_j \in -\mathscr{F} = \mathscr{F}$ by assumbtion. Therefore

$$(t_1, \ldots, t_k) \mapsto \Phi_{-X_1}^{\bar{t}_1} \circ \cdots \circ \Phi_{-X_k}^{\bar{t}_k} \circ \Phi_{X_k}^{t_k} \circ \cdots \circ \Phi_{X_1}^{t_1}(p)$$

covers a neighborhood of p when $t_j > 0$ and $\sum_j t_j < T$. Thus $\Phi_{\mathscr{F}}^{<2T}(p)$ is a neighborhood of p. $\square$

Exercise 3.2.4. Use Theorem 3.2.3 and the fact that the points where (3.1.9) holds is open to give a proof of Theorem 3.2.1.

3.2.2 The metric version of Chow's theorem

We are now ready to prove Theorem 3.1.17. Namely we show that Carnot-Carathéodory distances induce the manifold topology.

Proof of Theorem 3.1.17. Let τ_M be the manifold topology and τ_{CC} the topology induced by d_{CC}.

Regarding the containment $\tau_{CC} \subset \tau_M$, let $U \in \tau_{CC}$ and $p \in U$. Then there is $T > 0$ such that $B_{d_{CC}}(p, T) \subset U$. Set

$$\mathscr{F} := \{X \in \Gamma(\Delta) : \|X(p)\| \leq 1 \ \forall p \in M\} \subset \mathrm{Vec}(M).$$

With the notation of Section 3.2.1, notice that

$$\Phi_{\mathscr{F}}^{<T}(p) \subset B_{d_{CC}}(p, T).$$

By Theorem 3.2.3, the point p is in the τ_M-interior of $\Phi_{\mathscr{F}}^{<T}(p)$. We deduce that p is in the τ_M-interior of U as well.

Regarding the containment $\tau_M \subset \tau_{CC}$, let $U \in \tau_M$. Together with the distance d_{CC} we have a Finsler distance d_F for which we have (3.1.16). Let $p \in U$. Then there is r such that $B_{d_F}(p, r) \subset U$. Since $d_F \leq d_{CC}$, then $B_{d_{CC}}(p, r) \subset B_{d_F}(p, r)$. Therefore p is in the τ_{CC}-interior of U as well. $\square$

3.2.3 Comparison of length structures

Proposition 3.2.5. *Let $(M, \Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ be a subFinsler manifold equipped with its Carnot-Carathéodory distance d_{CC}. Let $\gamma : [a, b] \to M$ be a curve.*

1. *If* $\mathrm{Length}_{d_{CC}}(\gamma) < \infty$*, then the reparametrizion by arc length of γ is horizontal with respect to Δ.*

2. *If γ is horizontal with respect to Δ, then* $\mathrm{Length}_{d_{CC}}(\gamma) = \mathrm{Length}_{\|\cdot\|}(\gamma)$*; and γ is parametrized by arc length if and only if $\|\dot{\gamma}\| = 1$.*

Proof. For part 2 recall that in every metric space every curve of finite length, can be reparametrized by arc-length. (see Exercise 2.4.5).

Let d_F be the Finsler distance for which we have (3.1.16), recall that d_F is locally biLipschitz equivalent to any other Riemannian distance. Since $d_F \leq d_{CC}$, we have

$$d_F(\gamma(s), \gamma(t)) \leq d_{CC}(\gamma(s), \gamma(t)) \leq \text{Length}_{d_{CC}}(\gamma|_{[s,t]}) = |t-s|. \tag{3.2.6}$$

Thus $\gamma : [a,b] \to (M, d_F)$ is 1-Lipschitz, so in coordinates γ is (Euclidean) Lipschitz. By Rademacher Theorem, the curve γ is absolutely continuous and hence differentiable almost everywhere. Let $t_0 \in I$ be a point of differentiability for γ. We shall prove that $\dot{\gamma}(t_0) \in \Delta_{\gamma(t_0)}$.

Assume by contradiction that $\dot{\gamma}(t_0) \notin \Delta_{\gamma(t_0)}$. For simplicity we work in coordinates and assume $t_0 = 0$, $\gamma(t_0) = 0 \in \mathbb{R}^n$, $\Delta_0 = \mathbb{R}^k \times \{0\}^{n-k}$, $\dot{\gamma}(t_0) = e_n = (0, \dots, 0, 1)$. We then have

$$\gamma_n(t) > t/2, \qquad \text{for } t \text{ small enough}, \tag{3.2.7}$$

where $\gamma_n(t)$ is the n-th component of γ.

We claim that for all $\epsilon > 0$ there exists $r_\epsilon > 0$ such that

$$p \in B_{d_F}(0, 2r_\epsilon),\ X \in \Delta_p,\ \|X\| \leq 1 \implies |\langle \partial_n, X \rangle| < \epsilon, \tag{3.2.8}$$

where we use the Euclidean scalar product making ∂_i ortonormal. Indeed, by contradiction, there would exist $\epsilon > 0$ and sequences $(p_j)_j \in M$ and $(X_j) \in \Delta_{p_j}$ such that $p_j \to 0$, $\|X_j\| \leq 1$, and $|\langle \partial_n, X_j \rangle| \geq \epsilon$. Let $c > 0$ be a constant for which we have (2.3.5) in some neighbourhood of 0. Hence, eventually we have $\|X_j\|_{\mathbb{E}} \leq c$. Therefore, being the sequence X_j in a compact set, up to subsequence, it converges to some Y. Since Δ is a submanifold of TM and therefore it is closed, and since $p_j \to 0$ we have that $Y \in \Delta_0$ so

$$0 = |\langle \partial_n, X_j \rangle| = \lim_j |\langle \partial_n, X_j \rangle| \geq \epsilon > 0.$$

We inferred a contradiction which gives the claim (3.2.8).

We then fix $\epsilon > 0$ and r_ϵ with the above property (3.2.8). By definition of d_{CC}, we shall take a horizontal curve that almost realizes $d_{CC}(0, \gamma(r_\epsilon))$, which is not zero because of (3.2.7). In fact, there is a horizontal curve $\sigma : [0, b_\epsilon] \to M$ from 0 to $\gamma(r_\epsilon)$ such that $\|\dot{\sigma}\| = 1$ almost everywhere and $b_\epsilon = \text{Length}_{\|\cdot\|}(\sigma) \leq 2d_{CC}(0, \gamma(r_\epsilon)) \leq 2r_\epsilon$, where in the last inequality we used (3.2.6). Hence, first we have

$$\frac{b_\epsilon}{r_\epsilon} \leq 2, \tag{3.2.9}$$

second, we have that the image of σ is in $B_{d_F}(0, 2r_\epsilon)$. Consequently, because σ^ϵ is horizontal and $\|\dot{\sigma}\| = 1$ almost everywhere, from (3.2.8) we have that $|\dot{\sigma}_n| < \epsilon$, where σ_n is the n-th component of

σ, so $\dot\sigma_n = \langle \partial_n, \dot\sigma\rangle$. We then infer that

$$0 < \frac{r_\epsilon}{2} \overset{(3.2.7)}{<} \gamma_n(r_\epsilon) = \sigma_n(b_\epsilon) = \int_0^{b_\epsilon} \dot\sigma_n(s)\,\mathrm{d}\,s \le \int_0^{b_\epsilon} |\dot\sigma_n(s)|\,\mathrm{d}\,s \le \epsilon b_\epsilon.$$

Thus

$$\frac{b_\epsilon}{r_\epsilon} \ge \frac{1}{2\epsilon} \to \infty \quad \text{as } \epsilon \to 0,$$

which is in contradiction with (3.2.9). We deduce that γ is horizontal.

Regarding part 2, let γ be a horizontal curve. On the one hand, since $d_F \le d_{CC}$ and since $\mathrm{Length}_{\|\cdot\|} = \mathrm{Length}_{d_F}$ by Theorem 2.3.6, then $\mathrm{Length}_{\|\cdot\|} \le \mathrm{Length}_{d_{CC}}$. On the other hand, since γ is horizontal,

$$\begin{aligned}\mathrm{Length}_{d_{CC}}(\gamma) &= \sup_{\mathscr{P}=(t_1,\dots,t_n)} \sum_{i=1}^{k} d_{CC}(\gamma(t_{i+1}),\gamma(t_i)) \\ &\le \sup_{\mathscr{P}=(t_1,\dots,t_n)} \sum_{i=1}^{k} \mathrm{Length}_{\|\cdot\|}(\gamma|_{[t_i,t_{i+1}]}) \\ &= \mathrm{Length}_{\|\cdot\|}(\gamma)\end{aligned}$$

□

Corollary 3.2.10. *A Carnot-Carathéodory space is a length space.*

3.2.4 Existence of geodesics in CC spaces

Theorem 3.2.11 (Hopf-Rinow Theorem for CC spaces)**.** *Let M be a CC space.*

1. *Every point in M has a neighborhood in which every two points can be joined with a curve that is length minimizing with respect to the CC distance.*

2. *If M is boundedly compact, then it is a geodesic space.*

Proof. By Chow's theorem, since M is connected and Δ bracket-generating, d_{CC} is finite and (M, d_{CC}) is locally compact and is a length space, by Corollary 3.2.10. By Proposition 2.1.6, there exists a shortest path between any two points sufficiently close.

If in addition (M, d_{CC}) is boundedly compact, we can conclude by Proposition 2.1.8 □

3.3 Equiregular Distributions

$“Delta^[k]$

Let $\Delta \subset TM$ be a subbundle. For all $p \in M$ define

$$\begin{aligned}
\Delta^{[0]}(p) &:= \{0\} \subset T_pM \\
\Delta^{[1]}(p) &:= \Delta_p \\
\Delta^{[2]}(p) &:= \Delta^{[1]}(p) + \operatorname{span}\{[X,Y]_p : X, Y \in \Gamma(\Delta)\},
\end{aligned}$$

Then $\Delta^{[2]} = \bigcup_{p\in M} \Delta^{[2]}(p)$ is a subset of TM. In general $\Delta^{[2]}$ may not be a subbundle since its rank may vary, i.e., the function $p \mapsto \dim \Delta^{[2]}(p)$ may not be constant.

Example 3.3.1 (Non-equiregular distribution)**.** In $\mathbb{R}^3$ the *Martinet distribution* is the subbundle $\Delta \subset T\mathbb{R}^3$ spanned by

$$\begin{aligned}
X_1 &= \partial_x + \frac{y^2}{2}\partial_z \\
X_2 &= \partial_y.
\end{aligned}$$

Notice that

$$X_3 := [X_2, X_1] = y\partial_z \qquad \text{and} \qquad X_4 := [X_2, X_3] = \partial_z.$$

Then

$$\Delta^{[2]}(p) = \begin{cases} T_p\mathbb{R}^3 & \text{if } p_2 \neq 0 \\ \Delta^{[1]}(p) & \text{if } p_2 = 0. \end{cases}$$

Remark 3.3.2. If $X_1, \dots, X_r$ is a frame for Δ, then

$$\{X_1, \dots, X_r\} \cup \{[X_i, X_j] : i, j = 1, \dots, r\}$$

span $\Delta^{[2]}$ at every point. Indeed, if $X, Y \in \Gamma(\Delta)$, then $X = \sum_i a^i X_i$, $Y = \sum_j b^j X_j$ for some smooth functions a^i, b^j. We have

$$[X, Y] = [a^i X_i, b^j X_j] = a^i b^j [X_i, X_j] + a^i (X_i b^j) X_j - b^j (X_j a^i) X_i.$$

Definition 3.3.3. Given a distribution Δ, inductively define $\Delta^{[1]} = \Delta$ and, for all $k \geq 2$,

$$\Delta^{[k+1]}(p) := \Delta^{[k]}(p) + \operatorname{span}\{[X_1, [X_2, \dots, [X_k, X_{k+1}] \dots]](p) : X_1, \dots, X_{k+1} \in \Gamma(\Delta)\}. \tag{3.3.4}$$

Definition 3.3.5 (Regular point for Δ)**.** If Δ is a distribution on M and $p \in M$, we say that p is *regular* for Δ if for all $k \in \mathbb{N}$ the function

$$q \mapsto \dim \Delta^{[k]}(q) \tag{3.3.6}$$

is constant in a neighborhood of p.

equiregular!–frame adapted!–frame degree!– of a vector field exponential coordinate map

Notice that the functions (3.3.6) is $\mathbb{N}$-valued. Hence, if it is locally constant, then it is constant on connected components.

Definition 3.3.7 (Equiregular distributions)**.** Let M be a connected manifold and $\Delta \subset TM$ a distribution on M. Δ is said to be *equiregular* if every $p \in M$ is regular for Δ.

Remark 3.3.8. $\Delta \subset TM$ is equiregular if and only if, for all $k \in \mathbb{N}$, $\Delta^{[k]}$ is a subbundle (Exercise).

Notice that if Δ is bracket generating and equiregular, then there is $s \in \mathbb{N}$ such that $\Delta^{[s]} = TM$. The minimal such s is called *step* of Δ.

Definition 3.3.9 (Equiregular subFinsler manifolds)**.** A subFinsler manifold $(M, \Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ is called *equiregular* if Δ is equiregular.

3.4 Ball-Box Theorem and Hausdorff dimension

3.4.1 Ball-Box Theorem

Let $(M, \Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ be an equiregular subFinsler manifold. Let

$$\Delta = \Delta^{[1]} \subset \Delta^{[2]} \subset \cdots \subset \Delta^{[s]} = TM$$

be the flag of subbundles. Since next considerations will be of local nature, we assume that there exists a frame $X_1, \dots, X_n$ for TM and there are $m_1, \dots, m_s$ such that $X_1, \dots, X_{m_k}$ is a frame for $\Delta^{[k]}$. In this case we say that $X_1, \dots, X_n$ is an *equiregular frame*. Equiregular frames are also called *adapted frames*.

Notice that, for all $p \in M$,

$$m_j = \dim \Delta^{[j]}(p).$$

We also say that X_j has *degree* d_j if, for all $p \in M$,

$$X_j(p) \in \Delta^{[d_j]} \setminus \Delta^{[d_j - 1]},$$

i.e., $j \in \{m_{d_{j-1}} + 1, \dots, m_{d_j}\}$.

The plan is to parametrize the manifold M using the flow of linear sums of $X_1, \dots, X_n$. To such vector fields we associate an *exponential coordinate map* from a point $p \in M$ as

$$\Phi_p : \mathbb{R}^n \to M(t_1, \dots, t_n) \mapsto \Phi_p^1(t_1 X_1 + \cdots + t_n X_n)$$

where $\Phi^1_p(X)$ is the flow of X at time 1 starting from p. Such map might be defined only on a neighborhood of $0 \in \mathbb{R}^n$. However, for the sake of simplicity and for the fact that this is the case for groups, we assume that Φ_p is globally defined. Box Theorem!Ball-Box

We define the *box* with respect to $d_1, \ldots, d_n$ as

$$\texttt{Box}(r) := \left\{(t_1, \ldots, t_n) \in \mathbb{R}^n : |t_j| \leq r^{d_j}\right\}$$

The following comparison theorem is due to many people (Mitchell, Gershkovich, Nagel-Stein-Wainger, cf. [Gro99]) and is called ball-box theorem since compare the boxes Box(r) in $\mathbb{R}^n$ with the balls $B(p, r)$ with respect to the d_{CC} distance.

Theorem 3.4.1 (Ball-Box Theorem)**.** *Let $(M, \Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ a subFinsler manifold. Assume Δ is equiregular. Fix $\bar{p} \in M$ and an equiregular frame $X_1, \ldots, X_n$ in a neighborhood of $\bar{p}$ with degree $d_1, \ldots, d_n$ and related boxes $\texttt{Box}(\cdot)$. Then there is a neighborhood U of $\bar{p}$ in M and there is $C > 1$ and $\rho > 0$ such that for all $p \in U$ and all $r \in (0, \rho)$*

$$B_{d_{CC}}(p, \frac{r}{C}) \subset \Phi_p(\texttt{Box}(r)) \subset B_{d_{CC}}(p, Cr).$$

The Ball-Box theorem will not be proved here in this generality. It will be proved later in the easier case of Carnot groups, see Theorem 6.3.10.

Remark 3.4.2. The Ball-Box Theorem 3.4.1 gives a quantitative version of Chow's Theorems 3.2.1 and 3.1.17.

As far as we know, nothing is known regarding the following natural question, except for contact 3-manifolds.

Question 3.4.3 (Open!)**.** *Are all sufficiently small sub-Finsler balls and spheres homeomorphic to the usual Euclidean balls and spheres?*

Here is a first consequence of the Ball-Box Theorem 3.4.1.

Corollary 3.4.4 (Hölder equivalence of CC and Euclidean metrics)**.** *Locally, each sub-Finsler manifold is Hölder equivalent to a Riemannian manifold.*

Proof. Let $(M, \Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ be the sub-Finsler manifold. Let g be a Riemannian tensor whose norm is smaller than $\|\cdot\|$ and denote by d_{Riem} the induced Riemannian distance.

Homogeneous!– dimension

Consider the identity map id : $M \to M$. Obviously the map

$$\mathrm{id} : (M, d_{CC}) \to (M, d_{\mathrm{Riem}})$$

is 1-Lipschitz, and so Hölder.

For the other direction, let $s := \max_j d_j$ the maximum of the degree d_j of the vector fields of some equiregular basis $\{X_j\}$, i.e, s is the step of Δ. Notice that, for $r \in (0,1)$, one has that

$$B_E(0, r^s) \subset \prod_{j=1}^{n} [-r^s, r^s] \subset \mathrm{Box}(r),$$

where B_E denotes the Euclidean ball in $\mathbb{R}^n$. Therefore, using the second inclusion of the Ball-Box Theorem 3.4.1 and the fact that the exponential maps Φ_p are biLipschitz (locally uniformly in p), we get that

$$B_{d_{CC}}(p, Cr) \supseteq \Phi_p(\mathrm{Box}(r)) \supseteq \Phi_p(B_E(0, r^s)) \supseteq B_{d_{\mathrm{Riem}}}(p, C' r^s).$$

Hence, the map

$$\mathrm{id} : (M, d_{Riem}) \to (M, d_{CC})$$

is $1/s$-Hölder. □

3.4.2 Dimensions of CC spaces

Definition 3.4.5 (Homogeneous dimension)**.** If Δ is equiregular, we define its *homogeneous dimension* as the natural number

$$Q := Q_\Delta = \sum_{j=1}^{n} j \left(\dim \Delta^{[j]}(p) - \dim \Delta^{[j-1]}(p) \right), \tag{3.4.6}$$

which is independent on p.

In other words,

$$Q = m_1 + 2(m_2 - m_1) + 3(m_3 - m_2) + \cdots + s(m_s - m_{s-1}) \tag{3.4.7}$$

and

$$\mathcal{L}^n(\mathtt{Box}(r)) = r^Q.$$

In terms of the degrees of the vector fields, we also have

$$Q = \sum_{j=1}^{n} d_j. \tag{3.4.8}$$

Corollary 3.4.9. *If a sub-Finsler manifold* $(M, \Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ *has an equiregular distribution then the Hausdorff dimension of* (M, d_{CC}) *equals the homogeneous dimension* Q*. Moreover, the* Q*-dimensional Hausdorff measure of* (M, d_{CC}) *is locally biLipschitz equivalent to the Finsler volume form.*

In particular, if $TM \neq \Delta$*, the Hausdorff dimension is strictly greater than the topological dimension.*

Proof. Using notation of the Ball-Box Theorem 3.4.1, let k be the (locally uniform) biLipschitz constant of the exponential map Φ_p with respect to the Finsler distance on the n-manifold M and the Euclidean distance on $\mathbb{R}^n$. Since the Finsler volume form vol (resp., the Lebesgue measure $\mathcal{L}^n$) is the n-dimensional Hausdorff measure of the Finsler manifold M (resp., of the Euclidean space $\mathbb{R}^n$), we have, for small r,

$$\frac{1}{k^n}\mathcal{L}^n(\mathtt{Box}(r)) \leq \mathrm{vol}(\Phi_p(\mathtt{Box}(r))) \leq k^n \mathcal{L}^n(\mathtt{Box}(r))$$

If Q is the homogeneous dimension, by the Ball-Box theorem then we get, for small r,

$$\frac{1}{k^n C^Q} r^Q \leq \mathrm{vol}(B_{d_{CC}}(p, r)) \leq k^n C^Q r^Q.$$

By Theorem 2.1.26 and Remark 2.1.28, we conclude. □

3.4.3 The problem of dimensions of submanifolds in CC spaces

Computing the Hausdorff dimension and Hausdorff measure of submanifolds in sub-Finsler manifolds with respect to the Carnot-Carathéodory distance is a rather natural question.

In 0.6 B of [Gro99], Gromov has given a general formula for the Hausdorff dimension of smooth submanifolds in equiregular Carnot-Carathéodory spaces and in [Mag08a] it is shown that this formula coincides with the degree of the submanifold, recently introduced in [MV08].

Theorem 3.4.10 ([Gro99, page104])**.** *Let* $(M, \Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ *be a sub-Finsler manifold with an equiregular distribution* Δ *and Carnot-Carathéodory distance* d_{CC}*. Let* $\Sigma \subset M$ *a smooth sub-manifold. Then the Hausdorff dimension of* (Σ, d_{CC}) *is*

$$\dim_H(\Sigma, d_{CC}) = \max\left\{ \sum_{j=1}^{n} j \cdot \mathrm{rank}(T_pM \cap \Delta^{[j]}(p))/(T_pM \cap \Delta^{[j-1]}(p)) \ : \ p \in \Sigma \right\}.$$

Nevertheless, the question regarding Hausdorff measures of smooth submanifolds has not yet an answer. In [MV08] Magnani and Vittone found an integral formula for the spherical Hausdorff measure of submanifolds in Carnot groups under a suitable 'negligibility condition'. This negligibility condition has been recently obtained in all two step groups, [Mag08a] using standard covering arguments, and in the Engel group, using blow-up arguments [LM10]. However it is still open in higher step groups and in general sub-Riemannian manifolds. We address the reader to the work of Magnani [MV08, Mag08b, Mag08a] for more information on this problem and its connections with the literature.

3.5 Exercises

Exercise 3.5.1. Show that a Finsler distance is a distance that induced the manifold topology.

Exercise 3.5.2. Show that two Finsler distances on a compact set are biLipschitz equivalent.

Exercise 3.5.3. Prove that Finsler-Carnot-Carathéodory distances, and in particular Riemannian and Finsler distances, are length distances.

Exercise 3.5.4. The Hausdorff dimension of a Riemannian n-manifold is n.

Exercise 3.5.5. If $\gamma : I \to (M, d_{CC})$ is parametrized by arc-length, then $\|\dot{\gamma}\| = 1$ a.e.

Exercise 3.5.6. Let $(M, \Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ be a sub-Finsler manifold. We denote by $\mathrm{Length}_{d_{CC}}$ and $\mathrm{Length}_{\|\cdot\|}$ respectively the length with respect to the metric d_{CC} and the length with respect to the Finsler norm $\|\cdot\|$. Let γ be a horizontal curve. Show that

$$\mathrm{Length}_{\|\cdot\|}(\gamma) = \mathrm{Length}_{d_{CC}}(\gamma).$$

Exercise 3.5.7. Let γ be any absolutely continuous curve in a sub-Finsler manifold. Prove that

$$\gamma \text{ is horizontal } \iff \mathrm{Length}_{d_{CC}}(\gamma) < +\infty.$$

Exercise 3.5.8. Denote by $\Phi^{t_i}_{X_i}$ the flow at time i with respect to a vector field X_i. Calculate the differential of

$$(t_1, \ldots, t_k) \mapsto \Phi^{t_k}_{X_k} \circ \cdots \circ \Phi^{t_1}_{X_1}(p).$$

Exercise 3.5.9. Let $\Delta^{[j]}(p)$ the vector space defined in (3.3.4). Prove that $\Delta^{[j]}(p)$ can be equivalently be defined as the subspace of T_pM spanned by all commutators of the X_i's of order $\leq j$ (including, of course, the X_i's). Namely, $X_i(p)$ has order 1; $[X_i, X_j](p)$ has order 2; $[X_i, [X_j, X_k]](p)$ has order 3; but those of order 4 are those in one of the two forms:

$$[X_i, [X_j, [X_k, X_l]]](p) \qquad \text{or} \qquad [[X_i, X_j], [X_k, X_l]](p).$$

Exercise 3.5.10. Let $\Delta^{[j]}(p)$ the vector space defined in (3.3.4).

1. Show that $\Delta^{[j]}$ might not be a sub-bundle of TM. [Hint: Try the distribution given by the frame $X_1 = \partial_1$, $X_2 = \partial_2 + x_1^2\partial_3$.]

2. Prove that, if $\Delta^{[j]}$ is a sub-bundle and so make sense to consider smooth sections $\Gamma(\Delta^{[j]})$ of the bundle $\Delta^{[j]}$, then

$$\Delta^{[j+1]}(p) = \Delta^{[j]}(p) + \mathbb{R}\text{- span}\left\{[X,Y](p) \ : \ X \in \Gamma(\Delta), Y \in \Gamma(\Delta^{[j]})\right\}.$$

Exercise 3.5.11. Recall that $\Gamma(\Delta)$ denotes the smooth sections of the bundle Δ. Define $\text{span}(\Delta) := \text{Lie-span}\{\Gamma(\Delta)\}$. Show that the Hörmander's condition is equivalent to $\text{span}(\Delta) = TM$. (What is not immediately obvious is that elements of the form $[[X_1, X_2], [X_3, X_4]]$, with $X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4 \in \Gamma(\Delta)$, are contained in some $\Delta^{[j]}(p)$.)

Exercise 3.5.12. Show, without using Theorem 3.4.10, that each smooth surface in the Heisenberg group has Haudorff dimension equal to 3.

Exercise 3.5.13. Give a proof of Theorem 3.4.10.

Chapter 4

A review of Lie groups

group
group!–product
product!group–
associativity
identity!–element
inversion
left!–translation
translation!left–
right translation
translation!righ–

In the following chapter we will revise the theory of Lie groups. The purpose for this revision is twofold: First, subriemannian structures on Lie groups are very interesting: they appear in several situations, even in mechanics, and they are in some sense easier to study than general manifolds. Second, for arbitrary subriemannian manifolds we shall see that we have the property that these metric spaces admit tangent spaces that are themselves special subRiemannian Lie groups.

The prerequisites regarding Lie groups and Lie algebras are mostly classical and are based on [War83] and [CG90].

4.1 Lie groups and their Lie algebras

For completeness we recall that a *group* is a set G equipped with a binary operation, which we shall call it *product* or *group product*, and denote it with the dot symbol $\cdot$, that is a function $(a, b) \in G \times G \mapsto a \cdot b \in G$ that is associative, has an identity element and, an inversion map. The inverse map is denoted as $a \mapsto a^{-1}$. The identity of a group G will be denoted by 1, or 1_G, or e, or e_G.

Let G be a group and $g \in G$. The *left translation* by g is the bijection

$$\begin{array}{rccc} L_g : & G & \longrightarrow & G \\ & h & \mapsto & gh. \end{array}$$

The *right translation* by g is the bijection

$$\begin{array}{rccc} R_g : & G & \longrightarrow & G \\ & h & \mapsto & hg. \end{array}$$

conjugation Topological group Lie group group!Lie – Lie algebra bracket anti-commutativity Jacobi identity

The *conjugation* by g is the bijection

$$C_g : \quad G \longrightarrow G$$
$$h \mapsto ghg^{-1}.$$

We shall focus on Lie group, which are differentiables manifolds with a smooth group operation. However, some of the remarks we will make hold in the general setting of topological groups: A *topological group* is a group together with a Hausdorff topology for which the group product and the inversion map are continuous. Lie groups are special topological groups:

Definition 4.1.1 (Lie group)**.** A Lie group is a differentiable manifold (second countable, but not necessarily connected) together with a group structure such both

$$\text{the product} \quad \begin{array}{ccc} G \times G & \to & G \\ (x,y) & \mapsto & x \cdot y \end{array} \qquad \text{and the inverse} \quad \begin{array}{ccc} G & \to & G \\ g & \mapsto & g^{-1} \end{array} \tag{4.1.2}$$

are C^∞ maps.

As in any manifold, the set $\Gamma(TG)$ of vector fields on G forms a Lie algebra. The general notion of Lie algebra is the following:

Definition 4.1.3 (Lie algebra)**.** A *Lie algebra* $\mathfrak{g}$ *(over* $\mathbb{R}$*)* is a vector space (over $\mathbb{R}$) together with a bilinear operation $[\cdot,\cdot] : \mathfrak{g} \times \mathfrak{g} \to \mathfrak{g}$ called *bracket*, such that for all $X, Y, Z \in \mathfrak{g}$ the following two properties hold:

$[X, Y] = -[Y, X]$ (called *anti-commutativity*),

$[[X, Y], Z] + [[Y, Z], X] + [[Z, X], Y] = 0$ (called *Jacobi identity*).

Lie algebras are usually denoted by gothic letters. The gothic letters for g, h, n, o, l, p, s are $\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{h}, \mathfrak{n}, \mathfrak{o}, \mathfrak{l}, \mathfrak{p}, \mathfrak{s}$. Lie algebras can also be considered on other fields. However, in this text we shall only consider those over the real numbers.

The importance of the concept of Lie algebras is that there is a special finite dimensional Lie algebra intimately associated with each Lie group, and that properties of the Lie group are reflected in properties of its Lie algebra. We shall recall, for example, that simply connected Lie groups are completely determined (up to isomorphism) by their Lie algebras.

The Lie algebra associated to a group is, as a vector space, the tangent T_eG at the identity. To identify T_eG as a subset of $\Gamma(TG)$, we have to extend each vector to a vector field. Forced to make a choice, we follow the majority of the literature focusing on the *left* invariant vector fields, i.e., the vector fields $X \in \Gamma(TG)$ such that $(L_g)_* X = X$, so that $(dL_g)_x X = X_{L_g(x)}$ for all $x \in G$. Thanks to (2.2.2) with $F = L_g$, the class of left-invariant vector fields is easily seen to be closed under the Lie bracket. In other words, the set of left-invariant vector fields form a Lie algebra.

Lie
algebra!–
of a Lie
group!$“g$,
$“LIE(G)$
induced
Lie
algebra
homomorphis

Note that, after fixing a vector $v \in T_eG$, we can construct a left-invariant vector field X defining $X_g := (L_g)_*v$ for any $g \in G$. This construction is an isomorphism between the set of all left-invariant vector fields and T_eG, and proves that left-invariant vector fields form an n-dimensional subspace of $\Gamma(TG)$. We denote by $\mathfrak{g}$ the set T_eG equipped with the Lie bracket coming from the identification with the left-invariant vector fields. Such a $\mathfrak{g}$ is called the *Lie algebra* of G and it is occasionally denoted by $\mathrm{Lie}(G)$. We summarise next this definition:

Definition 4.1.4 (Lie algebra of a Lie group)**.** Let G be a Lie group. The *Lie algebra* of G, denoted by Lie(G), has two realizations:

Interpretation 1: Lie(G) is the linear space $\mathrm{LIVF}(G)$ of left-invariant vector fields on G endowed with the bracket of vector fields.

Interpretation 2: Lie(G) is the tangent space $T_{1_G}G$ equipped with the bracket

$$[X, Y] := [\tilde{X}, \tilde{Y}]_{1_G}, \quad \forall X, Y \in T_{1_G}G,$$

where $\tilde{X}, \tilde{Y}$ are the left-invariant vector fields such that $\tilde{X}_{1_G} = X$ and $\tilde{Y}_{1_G} = Y$. We shall use alternatively both points of view.

A map $F : G \to H$ between Lie groups is said a *Lie group homomorphism* is it is both C^∞ and a group homomorphism. A map $\phi : \mathfrak{g} \to \mathfrak{h}$ between Lie algebras is said a Lie algebra homomorphism is it is both linear and preserves brackets

$$\phi([X, Y]) = [\phi(X), \phi(Y)], \qquad \forall X, Y \in \mathfrak{g}.$$

The first connection between Lie groups and their Lie algebras is that each Lie group homomorphism induces a Lie algebra homomorphism: if $\varphi : G \to H$ is a Lie group homomorphism, note that $\varphi(1_G) = 1_H$, and one can easily show that the differential at the identity

$$\varphi_* := d\varphi_{1_G} : T_{1_g}G \to T_{1_H}H \tag{4.1.5}$$

preserves the bracket operation, see Exercise 4.4.13. Namely, $\varphi_* : \mathrm{Lie}(G) \to \mathrm{Lie}(H)$ is a Lie algebra homomorphism, called the *Lie algebra homomorphism induced* by φ.

Viceversa, in the case when G is a Lie group that as a topological space is simply connected, then each Lie algebra homomorphism come from a Lie group homomorphism. Recall that a topological space X is called *simply connected* if it is path-connected and every loop in X is homotopic to a constant.

Theorem 4.1.6 ([War83, Theorem 3.27]). *Let G and H two Lie groups with Lie algebras $\mathfrak{g}$ and $\mathfrak{h}$, respectively. Assume G simply connected. Let $\phi : \mathfrak{g} \to \mathfrak{h}$ be a Lie algebra homomorphism. Then there exists a unique Lie group homomorphism $F : G \to H$ such that $dF = \phi$.*

Corollary 4.1.7. *If simply connected Lie groups G and H have isomorphic Lie algebras, then G and H are isomorphic.*

There is a theorem [Jac79, page 199] due to Ado that states that every Lie algebra has a faithful representation in $\mathfrak{gl}(n, \mathbb{R})$ for some n. As a consequence, if $\mathfrak{g}$ is a Lie algebra, then there exists a simply connected Lie group G with Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$. We then have the following correspondence.

Theorem 4.1.8. *There is a one-to-one correspondence between isomorphism classes of Lie algebras and isomorphism classes of simply connected Lie groups.*

4.2 Exponential map

Let M be any differentiable manifold. Let $X \in \Gamma(M)$ be a vector field. Fix a point $p \in M$ of the manifold. Then there is a unique curve $\gamma(t)$ satisfying $\gamma(0) = p$ with tangent $\dot{\gamma}(t) = X_{\gamma(t)}$. The corresponding exponential map is defined by $\exp_p(X) = \gamma(1)$. In general, the exponential map is only locally defined, that is, it only takes a small neighborhood of the zero section of TM, to a neighborhood of p in the manifold. This is because it relies on the theorem on existence and uniqueness of ordinary differential equation which is local in nature.

In the theory of Lie groups the exponential map is a map from the Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$ to the group G,

$$\exp\colon \mathfrak{g} \to G.$$

Elements of the Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$ are identified with left-invariant vector fields. Thus $\mathfrak{g} \subset \Gamma(TG)$ and so the previous definition make sense with $p = e$. Moreover, one can show that, for all $X \in \mathfrak{g}$, the ODE $\dot{\gamma}(t) = X_{\gamma(t)}$ has global solutions. Indeed, the curves $\gamma(t)$ are in this case homomorphisms from $\mathbb{R}$ to the group. Such homomorphisms from $\mathbb{R}$ to G are called one-parameter subgroups. Let $X \in \mathfrak{g}$ define the Lie algebra homomorphism

$$\varphi : T_0\mathbb{R} \to T_eG$$

$$t\partial_t \to tX.$$

Since $\mathbb{R}$ is simply connected, Theorem 4.1.6 asserts that there exists a one-parameter subgroup $\gamma : \mathbb{R} \to G$ with $d\gamma = \varphi$. This last condition just mean that $\dot{\gamma}(t) = X_{\gamma(t)}$. Indeed,

$$\begin{aligned}
\dot{\gamma}(t) &= \frac{d}{dh}\gamma(t+h)\Big|_{h=0} \\
&= \frac{d}{dh}\gamma(t)\gamma(h)\Big|_{h=0} \\
&= \frac{d}{dh}L_{\gamma(t)}(\gamma(h))\Big|_{h=0} \\
&= (L_{\gamma(t)})_*\dot{\gamma}(0) \\
&= (L_{\gamma(t)})_*(d\gamma)_0(\partial_t) \\
&= (L_{\gamma(t)})_*\varphi(\partial_t) \\
&= (L_{\gamma(t)})_*X \\
&= X_{\gamma(t)}.
\end{aligned}$$

We just proved the first part of point (iv) in the following theorem. In fact, the only non-trivial part of the theorem is point (iii) and the proof of it can be found in [War83, Theorem 3.31].

Theorem 4.2.1 ([War83, Theorem 3.31])**.** *Let $X \in \mathfrak{g}$ an element of the Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$ of a Lie group G.*

(i) $\exp((s+t)X) = \exp(sX) \cdot \exp(tX)$, *for $s, t \in \mathbb{R}$;*

(ii) $\exp(-X) = (\exp(X))^{-1}$;

(iii) $\exp : \mathfrak{g} \to G$ *is smooth and* $(d\exp)_0$ *is the identity map,*

$$(d\exp)_0 = \mathrm{id}_{\mathfrak{g}} : \mathfrak{g} \to \mathfrak{g},$$

so exp *gives a diffeomorphism of a neighborhood of* 0 *in* $\mathfrak{g}$ *onto a neighborhood of e in G;*

(iv) *The curve $\gamma(t) := \exp(tX)$ is the flow of X at time t starting from e, more generally, the curve $g\exp(tX) = L_g(\gamma(t))$ is the flow starting at g. As a particular consequence left-invariant vector fields are always complete.*

(v) *The flow of X at time t is the right translation $R_{\exp(tX)}$.*

induced Lie algebra homomorphism

Proposition 4.2.2. *Let $F : G \to H$ be a Lie group homomorphism. If $F_* : \mathrm{Lie(G)} \to \mathrm{Lie(H)}$ is the induced Lie algebra homomorphism, see* (4.1.5)*, then*

$$\exp \circ F_* = F \circ \exp,$$

i.e., the following diagram commutes.

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathrm{Lie(G)} & \xrightarrow{F_*} & \mathrm{Lie(H)} \\ {\scriptstyle \exp}\downarrow & & \downarrow{\scriptstyle \exp} \\ G & \xrightarrow[F]{} & H \end{array}$$

Proof. We need to show that for every left-invariant vector field X

$$F(\exp(X)) = \exp(\widetilde{(\,\mathrm{d}F)_e X_e}).$$

We plan to show that for all left-invariant vector field X and for all $t \in \mathbb{R}$

$$\sigma(t) := F(\exp(tX)) = \exp(t\widetilde{(\,\mathrm{d}F)_e X_e}).$$

Namely, we claim that the curve $t \mapsto \sigma(t)$ is the one-parameter subgroup in H generated by $(\,\mathrm{d}F)_e X_e$.

First, we check that σ is a one-parameter subgroup:

$$\begin{aligned} \sigma(s)\sigma(t) &= F(\exp(sX))F(\exp(tX)) \\ &= F\left(\exp(sX)\exp(tX)\right) \\ &= F\left(\exp((s+t)X)\right) \\ &= \sigma(s+t), \end{aligned}$$

where we used that F is a homomorphism and that $t \mapsto \exp(tX)$ is a one-parameter subgroup.

Second, the derivative at 0 of σ is

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t}\sigma(t)\Big|_{t=0} &= \frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t}F(\exp(tX))\Big|_{t=0} \\ &= (\,\mathrm{d}F)_{\exp(0\cdot X)}\ \frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t}\exp(tX)\Big|_{t=0} \\ &= (\,\mathrm{d}F)_e X_e. \end{aligned}$$

□

The exponential map is in general different from the exponential map of Riemannian geometry. However, if G is compact, it has a Riemannian metric invariant under left and right translations, and the (Lie group) exponential map is the (Riemannian) exponential map of this Riemannian metric.

4.3 The General Linear Group, its Lie algebra, and its exponential map

general linear group, $“GL$
$“GL(n,“R)$
group!general linear –, $“GL$
Lie algebra!$“gl(
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Lie algebra!– of the general linear group
general linear group!Lie algebra of the –
general linear group, $“GL$
$“GL(n,“R)$
group!general linear –, $“GL$

The *general linear groups*

$$\mathrm{GL}(n,\mathbb{R}) = \{A\ n\times n \text{ matrix with } \det A \neq 0\}.$$

This is a Lie group when equipped with the row-column product of matrices.

Define

$$\mathfrak{gl}(n,\mathbb{R}) = \mathrm{Mat}_{\mathrm{n\times n}}(\mathbb{R}) = \{\text{all } n\times n \text{ matrices with real entries}\}.$$

For $A, B \in \mathfrak{gl}(n,\mathbb{R})$, set

$$[A,B] = AB - BA.$$

Such an operation is a bracket that makes $\mathfrak{gl}(n,\mathbb{R})$ into a Lie algebra. And, as our choice of name suggests, this Lie algebra is the Lie algebra of the general linear group:

Proposition 4.3.1. *The Lie algebra of* $\mathrm{GL}(n,\mathbb{R})$ *is isomorphic to the Lie algebra* $\mathfrak{gl}(n,\mathbb{R})$*.*

Proof. There are natural identifications (i.e., linear isomorphisms) between

$$\mathfrak{gl}(n,\mathbb{R}) = \mathrm{Mat}_{\mathrm{n\times n}}(\mathbb{R}),$$

$$T_e(\mathfrak{gl}(n,\mathbb{R})),$$

$$T_e(\mathrm{GL}(n,\mathbb{R})),$$

$$\mathrm{Lie}(\mathrm{GL(n,\mathbb{R})}) = \{\text{LIVFs on } \mathrm{GL}(n,\mathbb{R})\}.$$

We shall prove that such identifications preserve brackets. Regarding the identifications, $\mathfrak{gl}(n,\mathbb{R})$ is a vector space (isomorphic to $\mathbb{R}^{n^2}$), so it is canonically identified with its tangent via the map $\mathfrak{gl}(n,\mathbb{R}) \to T_e(\mathfrak{gl}(n,\mathbb{R}))$,

$$A = (A_{ij})_{ij} \mapsto \sum_{i,j} A_{ij}\ \frac{\delta}{\delta x_{ij}}\bigg|_e,$$

with inverse $T_e(\mathfrak{gl}(n,\mathbb{R})) \to \mathfrak{gl}(n,\mathbb{R})$,

$$X \mapsto (X(x_{ij}))_{i,j},$$

where $x_{ij} : \mathfrak{gl}(n,\mathbb{R}) \to \mathbb{R}$ is the coordinate function giving the entry of the matrix in the i-th row and j-th column.

Moreover, note that as manifolds $\mathrm{GL}(n,\mathbb{R})$ is an open set of $\mathfrak{gl}(n,\mathbb{R})$, since it is where $\det \neq 0$. Hence $T_e(\mathrm{GL}(n,\mathbb{R})) = T_e(\mathfrak{gl}(n,\mathbb{R}))$.

Given a matrix $M \in \mathrm{GL}(n,\mathbb{R})$, the left translation by M in coordinates is

$$L_M(N) = M \cdot N = \left(\sum_{k=1}^{n} M_{ik}N_{kj}\right)_{i,j}.$$

So L_M is linear; hence, identifying the vector space $\mathfrak{gl}(n,\mathbb{R})$ with its tangent $T_e(\mathfrak{gl}(n,\mathbb{R}))$, we identify the differential $(\mathrm{d}L_M)_e$ with the map L_M. Every $A \in \mathfrak{gl}(n,\mathbb{R})$, which in coordinates we write as $A = (A_{ij})_{i,j}$, is identified with $\sum_{i,j} A_{ij}\delta_{ij}|_e$ as an element in $T_e(\mathfrak{gl}(n,\mathbb{R})) = T_e(\mathrm{GL}(n,\mathbb{R}))$, which in turn is identified with the left-invariant vector field $\tilde{A}$ such that $\tilde{A}_e = \sum_{i,j} A_{ij}\delta_{ij}|_e$.

Thus for all $M \in \mathrm{GL}(n,\mathbb{R})$

$$\begin{aligned}
\tilde{A}_M &= (\mathrm{d}L_M)_e\tilde{A}_e \\
&= (\mathrm{d}L_M)_e(\sum_{i,j} A_{ij}\delta_{ij}|_e) \\
&= L_M(A) \\
&= M \cdot A \\
&= \left(\sum_k M_{ik}A_{kj}\right)_{i,j} \\
&= \sum_{i,j}\sum_k M_{ik}A_{kj}\delta_{ij}|_M.
\end{aligned}$$

Hence, in coordinates x_{ij}:

$$\tilde{A} = \sum_{i,j,k} x_{ik}A_{kj}\delta_{ij}.$$

We claim now that this identification preserves the Lie brackets. Namely, for all $A, B \in \mathfrak{gl}(n,\mathbb{R})$,

$$\begin{aligned}
[\tilde{A},\tilde{B}] &= [\sum_{i,j,k} x_{ik}A_{kj}\delta_{ij}, \sum_{i',j',k'} x_{i'k'}B_{k'j'}\delta_{i'j'}] \\
&= \sum_{i,j,k} x_{ik}A_{kj}\delta_{ij}(x_{i'k'}B_{k'j'})\delta_{i'j'} - \sum_{i',j',k'} x_{i'k'}B_{k'j'}\delta_{i'j'}(x_{ik}A_{kj})\delta_{ij} \\
&\overset{l=j',j}{=} \sum_{i,j,k,l} x_{ik}A_{kj}B_{jl}\delta_{il} - \sum_{i',j',k',l} x_{i'k'}B_{k'j'}A_{j'l}\delta_{i'l} \\
&= \sum_{i,j,k,l} x_{ik}(A_{kj}B_{jl} - B_{kj}A_{jl})\delta_{il} \\
&= \sum_{i,k,l} x_{ik}((A\cdot B)_{kl} - (B\cdot A)_{kl})\delta_{il} \\
&= \sum_{i,k,l} x_{ik}([A,B])_{kl}\delta_{il} \\
&= \widetilde{[A,B]}.
\end{aligned}$$

□

We recall the matrix exponential: For each matrix $A \in \mathrm{Mat_{n\times n}}(\mathbb{R})$, define

$$e^A = I + A + \frac{1}{2}A^2 + \frac{1}{3!}A^3 + \cdots = \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{k!}A^k.$$

matrix!exponen of a –
exponential!– of a matrix
trace
derivative of £e^tA£
Special linear group $“SL(n,“R)$
$“SL(n,“R)$
$“mathfraksl(n.

We recall that e^A is given by an absolutely convergent series, see Exercise 4.4.15. Consequently $A \mapsto e^A$ is a smooth map (in fact, analytic). Moreover, each matrix e^A is invertible with inverse e^{-A}, see Exercise 4.4.16. Hence the map $A \mapsto e^A$ maps $\mathrm{Mat_{n\times n}}(\mathbb{R}) = \mathfrak{gl}(\mathrm{n}\mathbb{R})$ smoothly to $\mathrm{GL}(n, \mathbb{R})$.

Exercise 4.3.2. Show that the determinant function $\det : \mathrm{GL}(n, \mathbb{R}) \to (\mathbb{R}^*, \cdot)$ is a Lie group morphism, that the trace function $\mathrm{tr} : \mathfrak{gl}(n, \mathbb{R}) \to (\mathbb{R}, +)$ is a Lie algebra morphism, and that

$$\det(e^A) = e^{\mathrm{tr(A)}}.$$

Proposition 4.3.3 (Derivative of e^{tA})**.** *Let* $A \in \mathrm{Mat_{n\times n}}(\mathbb{R})$. *The curve* $t \mapsto e^{tA}$ *is a one-parameter subgroup of* $\mathrm{GL}(n, \mathbb{R})$ *such that*

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t} e^{tA} = Ae^{tA}$$

and

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t}(e^{tA})\bigg|_{t=0} = A.$$

Proof. It is easy to verify that $A \mapsto e^A$ is smooth and that $e^{sA} \cdot e^{tA} = e^{(s+t)A}$. Therefore $t \mapsto e^{tA}$ is a one-parameter subgroup of $\mathrm{GL}(n, \mathbb{R})$.

For the last two claims, we have

$$\begin{aligned}
\frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t}(e^{tA}) &= \frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t}\left(\sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{k!}(tA)^k\right) \\
&= \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{k!}\frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t}(t^k A^k) \\
&= \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{k!} k t^{k-1} A^k \\
&= A\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{(k-1)!} t^{k-1} A^{k-1} \\
&= Ae^{tA}.
\end{aligned}$$

□

Exercise 4.3.4. Define the following spaces

$$\mathrm{SL}(n, \mathbb{R}) := \{g \in GL(n, \mathbb{R}) \ : \ \det g = 1\}$$

subgroup! smallest
smallest subgroup
generating subgroup

$$\mathfrak{sl}(n,\mathbb{R}) := \{x \in \mathfrak{gl}(n,\mathbb{R}) \ : \ \mathrm{Tr}X = 0\}$$

Show that

(i) the exponential map goes from $\mathfrak{sl}(n,\mathbb{R})$ to $\mathrm{SL}(n,\mathbb{R})$;

(ii) $\mathfrak{sl}(n,\mathbb{R})$ is the Lie algebra of the Lie group $\mathrm{SL}(n,\mathbb{R})$.

4.4 Exercises

Here are some more or less easy exercise on Lie groups, with some of their solutions.

Exercise 4.4.1. For all elements g, h in a group G we have

(i). $L_h \circ L_g = L_{hg}$,

(ii). $R_h \circ R_g = R_{gh}$,

(iii). $L_h \circ R_g = R_g \circ L_h$,

(iv). $(L_g)^{-1} = L_{g^{-1}}$,

(v). $(R_g)^{-1} = R_{g^{-1}}$,

(vi). $C_{gh} = C_g \circ C_h$.

For the next two exercises, for a subset U of a group and an integer $n \in \mathbb{N}$, set

$$U^n := \{g_1 \cdot \dots \cdot g_n : g_1, \dots, g_n \in U\}.$$

Exercise 4.4.2. Let G be a Lie group (or more generally a topological group). If $U \subset G$ is open, then U^2 is open.

Exercise 4.4.3. Connected groups are generated by neighborhoods of the identity: Let G be a connected Lie group (or more generally a topological group) and $U \subset G$ an open subset with $1 \in U$. Then $G = \bigcup_{n=0}^{\infty} U^n$. In other words, G is the smallest group containing U.

Proof. Let $U^{-1} := \{g^{-1} : g \in U\}$ and $V := U \cap U^{-1}$. Then V is open, $V^{-1} = V$, $e \in V$. Let $H := \bigcup_{n=1}^{\infty} V^n \subset \bigcup_{n=1} U^n$. Observe that H contains V and is a union of the open sets V^n (see the Exercise 4.4.2). Moreover, H is closed under multiplication and inversion, since $V^n \cdot V^m \subset V^{n+m}$ and $V^{-n} \subset V^n$. In other words, H is an open subgroup of G.

Note that gH is open for all $g \in G$, so $\bigcup_{g \notin H} gH$ is an open set.

Since G is connected, $G = H \sqcup \bigcup_{g \notin H} gH$ and $H \neq \emptyset$, we conclude that $G = H$. □

Exercise 4.4.4. Let G be a Lie group. Show that

(i) if H is a subgroup of G that is (topologically) open, then it is closed;

(ii) any neighborhood $U \subseteq G$ of the identity element generates G°, i.e., any element in the identity component G° is the product of finitely many elements in U;

(iii) if H is a subgroup of G that has nonempty interior, then it is open and closed.

Exercise 4.4.5. Argue that on a topological groups right translations and left translations are homeomorphisms. While in a Lie group, they are smooth diffeomorphisms.

Exercise 4.4.6. The space of LIVFs is closed under Lie bracket. In other words, the Lie bracket of two left-invariant vector fields is left invariant.

Proof. Let X, Y be left-invariant vector fields on a Lie group G and let $g \in G$. Then

$$(L_g)_*[X,Y] = [(L_g)_*X, (L_g)_*Y] = [X,Y]. \qquad \square$$

Exercise 4.4.7 (Right translation of LIVF)**.** Let X be a left invariant vector field on a Lie group G. Let R_g be the right translation by an element $g \in G$. Prove that $(R_g)_*X$ is a left-invariant vector field.

Solution. Let $h \in G$. Then, using Exercise 4.4.1.iii and that X is left invariant, we have

$$\begin{aligned}
\mathrm{d}L_h \circ ((R_g)_*X) &= \mathrm{d}L_h \circ \mathrm{d}R_g \circ X \circ R_g^{-1} \\
&= \mathrm{d}(L_h \circ R_g) \circ X \circ R_g^{-1} \\
&= \mathrm{d}(R_g \circ L_h) \circ X \circ R_g^{-1} \\
&= \mathrm{d}R_g \circ \mathrm{d}L_h \circ X \circ R_g^{-1} \\
&= \mathrm{d}R_g \circ X \circ L_h \circ R_g^{-1} \\
&= \mathrm{d}R_g \circ X \circ R_g^{-1} \circ L_h \\
&= (R_g)_*X \circ L_h.
\end{aligned}$$

Exercise 4.4.8 (Derivative of product of curves)**.** Let G be a Lie group. Let $\gamma : \mathbb{R} \to G$ and $\sigma : \mathbb{R} \to G$ be two smooth curves into G. Consider the product of the two curves, i.e., the curve

$$t \mapsto \gamma(t)\sigma(t)$$

and calculate the derivative of such a curve in terms of γ, σ, and their derivatives. In fact, the formula is

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t}\gamma(t)\sigma(t) = (\,\mathrm{d}R_{\sigma(t)})_{\gamma(t)}\gamma'(t) + (\,\mathrm{d}L_{\gamma(t)})_{\sigma(t)}\sigma'(t). \tag{4.4.9}$$

Solution.

Derivating one variable at a time, we get

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t}\gamma(t)\sigma(t)\Big|_{t=t_0} &= \frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t}\gamma(t)\sigma(t_0)\Big|_{t=t_0} + \frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t}\gamma(t_0)\sigma(t)\Big|_{t=t_0}\\ &= \frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t}(R_{\sigma(t_0)}\gamma(t))\Big|_{t=t_0} + \frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t}(L_{\gamma(t_0)}\sigma(t))\Big|_{t=t_0}\\ &= (\mathrm{d}R_{\sigma(t_0)})_{\gamma(t_0)}\gamma'(t_0) + (\mathrm{d}L_{\gamma(t_0)})_{\sigma(t_0)}\sigma'(t_0).\end{aligned}$$

Exercise 4.4.10. Let G be a Lie group. Let $\gamma : \mathbb{R} \to G$ be a smooth curve into G. Consider the curve

$$t \mapsto \gamma(t)^{-1}$$

and calculate the derivative at an arbitrary t of such a curve in terms of γ and γ'.

Solution. From the fact that $e = \gamma(t)\gamma(t)^{-1}$, for all t, and formula (4.4.9), we have

$$0 = (\mathrm{d}R_{\gamma(t)^{-1}})_{\gamma(t)}\gamma'(t) + (\mathrm{d}L_{\gamma(t)})_{\gamma(t)^{-1}}\frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t}(\gamma(t)^{-1}).$$

Thus

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t}(\gamma(t)^{-1}) &= -\left((\mathrm{d}L_{\gamma(t)})_{\gamma(t)^{-1}}\right)^{-1}(\mathrm{d}R_{\gamma(t)^{-1}})_{\gamma(t)}\gamma'(t)\\ &= -(\mathrm{d}L_{\gamma(t)^{-1}})_e(\mathrm{d}R_{\gamma(t)^{-1}})_{\gamma(t)}\gamma'(t). \qquad (4.4.11)\end{aligned}$$

Exercise 4.4.12. Let $\varphi : G \to H$ be a group homomorphism, then

(i) $\varphi \circ L_g = L_{\varphi(g)} \circ \varphi$, for all $g \in G$;

(ii) $\varphi \circ R_g = R_{\varphi(g)} \circ \varphi$, for all $g \in G$.

Exercise 4.4.13. Let $\varphi : G \to H$ be a Lie group homomorphism. Given a left-invariant vector field X on G, let $\varphi_* X$ be the left-invariant vector field on H for which $(\varphi_* X)_{1_H} = (\mathrm{d}\varphi)_{1_G}(X_{1_G})$.

(i) The vector fields X and $\varphi_* X$ are φ-related, i.e., $(\mathrm{d}\varphi)_g X_g = (\varphi_* X)_{\varphi(g)}$.

(ii) If $g, g' \in G$ are such that $\varphi(g) = \varphi(g')$ and X is a left-invariant vector field on G, then $(\mathrm{d}\varphi)_g X_g = (\mathrm{d}\varphi)_{g'} X_{g'}$.

(iii) For all $g \in G$, we have $(\mathrm{d}\varphi)_g(X_g) = (\mathrm{d}L_{\varphi(g)})_e(\mathrm{d}\varphi)_e X_e$. Hence, $\varphi_* X$ is the left-invariant extension of the (a-priori-not-well-defined) vector field on H given as the push forward of X via φ.

(iv) $\varphi_* : \mathrm{Lie(G)} \to \mathrm{Lie(H)}$ is a Lie algebra homomorphism.

(v) $(\mathrm{d}\varphi)_e : (T_eG, [\cdot,\cdot]) \to (T_eH, [\cdot,\cdot])$ is a Lie algebra homomorphism.

Hints. From Exercise 4.4.12.(i), we have

$$\begin{aligned}(\varphi_* X)_{\varphi(g)} &= (\mathrm{d}L_{\varphi(g)})_e(\mathrm{d}\varphi)_e X_e \\ &= (\mathrm{d}(L_{\varphi(g)} \circ \varphi))_e X_e \\ &= (\mathrm{d}(\varphi \circ L_g))_e X_e \\ &= (\mathrm{d}\varphi)_g(\mathrm{d}L_g)_e X_e \\ &= (\mathrm{d}\varphi)_g X_g.\end{aligned}$$

For $X, Y \in \mathrm{Lie(G)}$, on the one hand $[X, Y] \in \mathrm{Lie(G)}$, on the other hand $[X, Y]$ and $[\varphi_* X, \varphi_* Y]$ are φ-related. Thus $\varphi_*[X, Y] = [\varphi_* X, \varphi_* Y]$.

Exercise 4.4.14. Show that if γ is a curve into a Lie group, then

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}s}\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(s)} = \mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(s)}\,\mathrm{ad}\big((\mathrm{d}L^{-1}_{\gamma(s)})_{\gamma(s)}(\frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}s}\gamma(s))\big)$$

Solution. Use twice that $\mathrm{Ad}_p \circ \mathrm{Ad}_q = \mathrm{Ad}_{pq}$ to obtain

$$\begin{aligned}\partial_s \mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(s)} &= \partial_\epsilon \mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(s+\epsilon)}|_{\epsilon=0} \\ &= \partial_\epsilon \mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(s)}\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(s)^{-1}}\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(s+\epsilon)}|_{\epsilon=0} \\ &= \mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(s)}\,\partial_\epsilon \mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(s)^{-1}\gamma(s+\epsilon)}|_{\epsilon=0} \\ &= \mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(s)}\,\mathrm{ad}(\partial_\epsilon(\gamma(s)^{-1}\gamma(s+\epsilon))|_{\epsilon=0}) \\ &= \mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(s)}\,\mathrm{ad}\big((\mathrm{d}L^{-1}_{\gamma(s)})_{\gamma(s)}(\partial_s\gamma(s))\big).\end{aligned}$$

Exercise 4.4.15. For all $A \in \mathrm{Mat_{n\times n}}(\mathbb{R})$, entry by entry the matrix exponential e^A is an absolutely convergent series.

Solution. Indeed, for each $M \in \mathrm{Mat_{n\times n}}(\mathbb{R})$ set

$$\|M\| = \sup\{|Mv| : |v| \le 1\},$$

where $|\cdot|$ is the Euclidean norm in $\mathbb{R}^n$. Then

$$\left\|\sum_{k=N_1}^{N_2}\frac{1}{k!}A^k\right\| \le \sum_{k=N_1}^{N_2}\frac{1}{k!}\|A^k\| \le \sum_{k=N_1}^{N_2}\frac{1}{k!}\|A\|^k \overset{N_1,N_2\to\infty}{\longrightarrow} 0.$$

Exercise 4.4.16. Let $A, B \in \mathfrak{gl}(n\mathbb{R})$. Show that if $AB = BA$, then $e^{A+B} = e^A e^B = e^B e^A$.

Solution.

$$\begin{aligned} e^A \cdot e^B &= \left(\sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{k!} A^k\right) \cdot \left(\sum_{l=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{l!} B^l\right) \\ &= \sum_{k,l} \frac{1}{k!} \frac{1}{l!} A^k B^l \\ &= \sum_{m=0}^{\infty} \sum_{j=0}^{m} \frac{1}{j!(m-j)!} A^j B^{m-j} \\ &= \sum_{m=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{m!} \sum_{j=0}^{m} \binom{m}{j} A^j B^{m-j} \overset{(AB=BA)}{=} \sum_{m=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{m!} (A+B)^m \\ &= e^{A+B}. \end{aligned}$$

Exercise 4.4.17. Given a matrix A and an invertible matrix B, show that

$$e^{BAB^{-1}} = Be^A B^{-1}.$$

Hint: Notice that $(BAB^{-1})^k = BA^k B^{-1}$, for all $k \in \mathbb{N}$.

Exercise 4.4.18. Show that for all $X, Y \in \mathfrak{gl}(n, \mathbb{R})$ the derivative of e^X in the direction Y has the formula:

$$\lim_{t \to 0} \frac{e^{X+tY} - e^X}{t} = \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{k!} \sum_{i=1}^{k} X^{i-1} Y X^{k-i}.$$

Chapter 5

SubFinsler Lie groups

5.1 Left-invariant polarizations on Lie groups

Let G a Lie group with Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g} = \mathrm{Lie}(G)$, seen setwise as the tangent space $T_1 G$ at the identity element $1 = 1_G$. There is a one-to-one correspondence between vector subspaces $V \subseteq \mathfrak{g}$ of $\mathfrak{g}$ and left-invariant polarizations Δ, that is, $V = \Delta_{1_G}$ and

$$\Delta_p = \left\{ v \in T_p G : (dL_p)^{-1} v \in V \right\}.$$

In the following, given two subspaces U, V of $\mathfrak{g}$, we denote by

$$[U, V] := \mathrm{span} \left\{ [u, v] : u \in U, v \in V \right\}.$$

For Lie groups with a polarization we define

$$\Delta^{(1)} := \Delta, \qquad \Delta^{(k)} := \Delta^{(k-1)} + [\Delta, \Delta^{(k-1)}]$$

Observe that the vector subspace of $\mathfrak{g}$ defined by $\Delta^{(2)} = \Delta + [\Delta, \Delta]$, induces a polarization. In manifolds the analogue is not true since it may happen that the rank of $\Delta^{(2)}$ is not constant.

A standing assumption on geometry of Lie groups is, for example, that polarizations and sub-Finsler structures are assumed left-invariant.

Theorem 5.1.1. *If (G, Δ) is a polarized Lie group of dimension n, then we have the following dichotomy:*

(a) either $\Delta^{(n-1)} \neq \mathfrak{g}$;

(b) or Δ is bracket generating.

Proof. Note that the function $k \in \mathbb{N} \mapsto \dim(\Delta^{(k)})$ is non-decreasing and it takes values in $\{1, 2, \ldots, n\}$. Thus, if Δ is not bracket generating then there exists $k < n$ such that $\Delta^{(k)} = \Delta^{(l)}$ for every $l \geq k$. □

Proposition 5.1.2. *If Δ ia a bracket-generating polarization on a Lie group G, then every two CC distances induced by left-invariant norms on Δ are globally bi-Lipschitz.*

Proof. Notice first that the notion of length of a horizontal curve γ (and hence the notion of the associated CC distance) depends on the norm in the following way:

$$l(\gamma) = \int_0^1 \left\| \sum_{i=1}^m X_i(\gamma(t)) \right\|_{\gamma(t)} dt = \int_0^1 \left\| (dL)^{-1}_{\gamma(t)}(\dot\gamma(t)) \right\|_e dt.$$

Since G is finite dimensional every choice of $\| \cdot \|_e$ is equivalent to the others. This produces a bi-Lipschitz equivalence for CC distances. □

Theorem 5.1.3. *The following facts hold.*

(1) Every subRiemannian Lie group is complete.

(2) Every subRiemannian Lie group M is a geodesic space i.e. for every $p, q \in M$ there exists $\gamma : [0, a] \to$ horizontal such that $d(p, q) = l(\gamma)$.

5.1.1 Energy VS Length

The energy of a parametrized curve $\gamma : [0, 1] \to M$ with respect to sub-Finsler norm $\|\cdot\|$ is

$$E(\gamma) := \text{Energy}_{\|\cdot\|}(\gamma) := \frac{1}{2}\int_0^1 \|\dot\gamma(t)\|^2 \, dt.$$

One has the equality:

$$d_{CC}(x, y) := \inf\{\sqrt{2 \cdot \text{Energy}_{\|\cdot\|}(\gamma)} \mid \gamma \text{ horizontal, from } x \text{ to } y\}. \tag{5.1.4}$$

On the contrary of length, energy depends on the parametrization of the curve. However, by Jensen's inequality, we alway have

$$L(\gamma) \leq \sqrt{2 \cdot E(\gamma)},$$

and equality in the case that the curve is parametrized by a multiple of the arc length.

5.2 SubRiemannian extrema on subRiemannian groups

5.2.1 First order necessary conditions for length minimizers on subRiemannian groups

Let G be a Lie group, let $V \subseteq \mathfrak{g}$ and let $(e_1, \dots, e_r)$ be an orthonormal basis for V. Define $\Omega := L^2([0,1]; V) \cong L^2([0,1]; \mathbb{R}^r)$ and equip it with the usual L^2-norm

$$\|u\| := \left(\int_0^1 \sum_{i=1}^r u_i(t)^2 \, \mathrm{d}t \right)^{\frac{1}{2}}.$$

We refer to Ω as the *space of controls*.

For every $u \in \Omega$, let $\gamma_u : [0,1] \to G$ be the solution of the ODE

$$\begin{cases} \gamma(0) = 1_G \\ \dot{\gamma}_u(t) = \big(dL_{\gamma(t)}\big)\, u(t) \quad \text{for a.e. } t \in [0,1]. \end{cases} \tag{5.2.1}$$

By Carathéodory Theorem on ODEs, the equation is well posed and in this way each $u \in \gamma$ induces a V-horizontal curve γ_u on G. Every V-horizontal curve is of the form γ_u for some u. We call u the *control* of γ_u.

Define now the *end-point map*

$$\begin{aligned} \mathrm{End} : \Omega &\longrightarrow G \\ u &\longmapsto \gamma_u(1); \end{aligned}$$

and the *energy function*

$$\begin{aligned} E : \Omega &\longrightarrow \mathbb{R} \\ u &\longmapsto \frac{1}{2}\|u\|^2. \end{aligned}$$

The *extended end-point map* is then

$$\begin{aligned} \widetilde{\mathrm{End}} : \Omega &\longrightarrow G \times \mathbb{R} \\ u &\longmapsto \big(\mathrm{End}(u), E(u)\big). \end{aligned}$$

Given a point $p \in G$ minimizing the energy between e and p rephrase as minimizing $E(u)$ among all u for which $\gamma_u(1) = p$. We shall say that γ_u is a *minimizer for the energy*, or for short that u is a *minimizer*, if for all $v \in \Omega$ we have

$$\mathrm{End}(v) = \mathrm{End}(u) \implies E(v) \geq E(v).$$

Remark 5.2.2. Minimizing the length or the energy is the same. Indeed, by Cauchy-Schwartz inequality we easily get $L(\gamma_u) \leq 2E(u)$. On the other hand, if γ_u is parametrized by arclength we get $2E(u) = L(\gamma_u)$. Actually, the infimum is the same even if u are taken to be in L^p with $p \in]1, \infty[$.

Remark 5.2.3. If u_0 is a minimizer for the energy then $\widetilde{\text{End}}$ cannot be open at any neighborhood of u_0 and therefore u_0 must be a singular point for $\widetilde{\text{End}}$. Indeed, if there were a subset $U \subseteq \Omega$ for which $\widetilde{\text{End}}(U)$ is a neighborhood of $\widetilde{\text{End}}(u_0)$ within $G \times \mathbb{R}$, then we can find $\widetilde{u} \in U$ such that $\text{End}(\widetilde{u}) = \text{End}(u_0)$ and $E(\widetilde{u}) < E(u_0)$. This contradicts the minimality of u_0. Moreover, if the differential of $d\widetilde{\text{End}} : \Omega \to T_{\widetilde{\text{End}}(u)}(G \times \mathbb{R})$ at u_0 were surjective, then we can take a vector subspace $W \subset \Omega$ for which $d\widetilde{\text{End}}|_W : W \to T_{\widetilde{\text{End}}(u)}(G \times \mathbb{R})$ is an isomorphism. From the implicit function theorem, we conclude that the map $\widetilde{\text{End}}|_W : W \to G \times \mathbb{R}$ gives a diffeomorphism between a neighborhood of u_0 within W and a neighborhood of $\widetilde{\text{End}}(u_0)$ within $G \times \mathbb{R}$. Such a fact contradicts the property that $\widetilde{\text{End}}$ cannot be open at u_0.

Because of this last remark, it's useful if we calculate the differential of the extended endpoint map $\widetilde{\text{End}}$.

Proposition 5.2.4. *For every $u \in \Omega$ the differential of $\widetilde{\text{End}}$ at u is*

$$\begin{aligned} d\widetilde{\text{End}}_u : \Omega &\longrightarrow T_{\widetilde{\text{End}}(u)}(G \times \mathbb{R}) = T_{\text{End}(u)}G \times \mathbb{R} \\ v &\longmapsto \left(\left(dR_{\gamma_u(1)}\right)_e \int_0^1 \text{Ad}_{\gamma_u(t)}(v(t))dt, \langle u, v\rangle \right), \end{aligned}$$

where $\text{Ad}_g : \mathfrak{g} \to \mathfrak{g}$ is defined by $\text{Ad}_g = (C_g)_*$ where $C_g h = ghg^{-1}$.

Sketch of the proof. We sketch the proof for $G \subset GL_n(\mathbb{R})$, where we can interpret the Lie product as a matrix product and work in the matrix coordinates. Let $\gamma_{u+\epsilon v}$ be the curve with the control $u+\epsilon v$ and $\sigma(t)$ be the derivative of $\gamma_{u+\epsilon v}(t)$ with respect to ϵ at $\epsilon = 0$. Then σ satisfies the following ODE (which is the derivation with respect to ϵ of (5.2.1) for $\gamma_{u+\epsilon v}$)

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}\sigma}{\mathrm{d}t} = \gamma(t) \cdot v(t) + \sigma \cdot u(t).$$

Now it is easy to see that $\int_0^t \text{Ad}_{\gamma(s)}(v(s))\,\mathrm{d}s \cdot \gamma(t)$ satisfies the above equation with the same initial condition as σ, hence is equal to σ. □

Assume now that γ_u is length minimizing for some $u \in \Omega$ that is energy minimizing. By Remark 5.2.3, we deduce that u is a critical point for $\widetilde{\text{End}}$, that is $d\widetilde{\text{End}}_u : \Omega \to T_{\text{End}(u)}G \times \mathbb{R}$ is not surjective. Since then $d\widetilde{\text{End}}_u(\Omega)$ is a strict subspace of $T_{\text{End}(u)}G \times \mathbb{R}$, there exists $(\xi, \xi_0) \in \left(T_{\text{End}(u)}G\right)^* \times \mathbb{R} = \left(T_{\text{End}(u)}G \times \mathbb{R}\right)^*$ such that $(\xi, \xi_0) \neq (0, 0)$ and

$$\langle (\xi, \xi_0), d\widetilde{\text{End}}_u(v)\rangle = 0, \quad \forall v \in \Omega.$$

By Proposition 5.2.4, this is equivalent to say that

$$\xi\left(dR_{\gamma_u(1)}\int_0^1 \mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma_u(t)}\, v(t)\,\mathrm{d}t\right)+\xi_0\langle u,v\rangle=0 \quad \forall v\in\Omega. \tag{5.2.5}$$

Since right translations are automorphisms, Equation (5.2.5) is true if and only if there exist $\lambda\in\mathfrak{g}^*$ and $\xi_0\in\mathbb{R}$ such that $(\lambda,\xi_0)\neq(0,0)$ and

$$\lambda\left(\int_0^1 \mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma_u(t)}\, v(t)\,\mathrm{d}t\right)=\xi_0\langle u,v\rangle, \quad \forall v\in\Omega. \tag{5.2.6}$$

We now consider two cases: either $\xi_0\neq 0$ or $\xi_0=0$. The first case is called normal, the second one is called abnormal. We stress that in the case the codimension of $\widetilde{d\mathrm{End}}_u(\Omega)$ within $T_{\mathrm{End}(u)}G\times\mathbb{R}$ is strictly larger than 1, then there would be other choices for (λ,ξ_0). Hence, some particular u may have an normal pair (λ,ξ_0) and a (different) abnormal pair (λ',ξ_0').

Firstly, we suppose that (λ,ξ_0) as in (5.2.6) is such that $\xi_0\neq 0$. Up to multiply the equation by a constant we can assume that $\xi_0=1$. Formally, for every Lebesgue point of u we have

$$\begin{aligned}\dot\gamma_u(t)&=dL_{\gamma_u(t)}u(t)=dL_{\gamma_u(t)}\sum_{i=1}^r\langle u,\delta_t e_i\rangle e_i\\&=dL_{\gamma_u(t)}\sum_{i=1}^r\left(\lambda\int_0^1\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma_u(s)}(\delta_t e_i)ds\right)e_i\\&=\sum_{i=1}^r\lambda\left(\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma_u(t)}(e_i)\right)X_i(\gamma_u(t)),\end{aligned}$$

where in the last equality we have used the identity $X_i(g)=(dL_g)\,e_i$. We therefore say that a curve γ satisfies the *normal equation* (or the *sub-Riemannian geodesic equation*) if there exists $\lambda\in\mathfrak{g}^*$ such that

$$\dot\gamma(t)=\sum_{i=1}^r\lambda\left(\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma_u(t)}(e_i)\right)X_i(\gamma_u(t)), \qquad \text{for almost every } t\in[0,1]. \tag{5.2.7}$$

A solution to (5.2.7) is called *normal curve*. By bootstrapping using (5.2.7) we deduce that the horizontal curve γ and its control u are C^∞.

Recall that the curve γ_u is the solution of (5.2.1). Therefore, if we write $u=\sum_{i=1}^r u_i(t)e_i$, another version of the normal equation is

$$u_i=\lambda\left(\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma_u}(e_i)\right), \qquad \text{for almost every } t\in[0,1] \text{ and for every } i=1,\dots,r. \tag{5.2.8}$$

In particular, since in our case $\gamma(0)=1_G$, the last equation implies

$$u_i(0)=\lambda(e_i), \qquad i=1,\dots,r. \tag{5.2.9}$$

Fact: every normal curve is locally length minimizing. The converse is not true.

Exercise 5.2.10. Prove that every solution of (5.2.7) is analytic and is parametrized by arclength.

Secondly, we suppose that (λ, ξ_0) as in (5.2.6) is such that $\xi_0 = 0$. The equations rephrases as follows: There exists $\lambda \neq 0$ such that

$$\lambda \left(\int_0^1 \mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma_u(t)} v(t) dt \right) = 0 \quad \forall v \in \Omega. \tag{5.2.11}$$

Choosing formally $v(t) = \delta_t$ we obtain that

$$\lambda \left(\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma_u(t)} V \right) = \{0\}. \tag{5.2.12}$$

If $e_1, \ldots, e_r$ is a basis of V, then 5.2.12 rephrases as a linear system of equations: A horizontal curve is abnormal if and only if there exists $\lambda \in \mathfrak{g}$ such that $\lambda \neq 0$ and

$$\lambda \left(\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t)}(e_i) \right) = 0, \qquad i = 1, \ldots, r. \tag{5.2.13}$$

In particular, since in our case $\gamma(0) = 1_G$, the last equation implies

$$\lambda(e_i) = 0, \qquad i = 1, \ldots, r. \tag{5.2.14}$$

Notice that, after we fix i and λ, the function $g \mapsto \lambda \left(\mathrm{Ad}_g(e_i) \right)$ is smooth and (5.2.13) says that $\gamma_u(t)$ lies in the zero level set of such a function. Moreover, notice that in a nilpotent Lie group we have that, in exponential coordinates, Ad is polinomial, hence these functions are polynomials.

In Riemannian geometry V is everything and so such a nonzero λ cannot exists. Namely, all minimizers are normal.

In subRiemannian structures it is possible to find length-minimizing curves that are not normal, and so are abnormal.

Theorem 5.2.15. *In contact structures, as for example $SE(2)$, every abnormal curve is constant.*

In every subRiemannian manifold of step 2 every length minimizer is normal.

5.2.2 A distinguished class of polynomials

For $\lambda \in \mathfrak{g}$ and $Y \in \mathfrak{g}$ define $P_Y^\lambda : G \to \mathbb{R}$ as

$$P_Y^\lambda(g) := \lambda \left(\mathrm{Ad}_g(Y) \right), \qquad \forall g \in G. \tag{5.2.16}$$

A useful formula that these polynomials satisfy is the following:

$$X P_Y^\lambda = P_{[X,Y]}^\lambda, \qquad \forall X, Y \in \mathfrak{g}, \forall \lambda \in \mathfrak{g}^*. \tag{5.2.17}$$

Indeed, [see notes at page 6 in file attached_image.0377_001.pdf]...

From (5.2.17), it is easy to deduce that normal equations are parametrized with constant speed. Indeed, [see notes at page 5 in file attached_image.0377_001.pdf]...

5.2.3 First derivative of the extremal equations

Both in (5.2.8) and in (5.2.13), the function $t \mapsto \lambda\left(\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t)}(e_i)\right)$ is considered. Let us differentiate such a function from $[0,1]$ into $\mathbb{R}$.

$$\begin{aligned}
\frac{d}{dt}\left(\lambda \,\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t)}(e_i)\right) &= \left.\frac{d}{ds}\left(\lambda \,\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t+s)}(e_i)\right)\right|_{s=0} \\
&= \left.\frac{d}{ds}\left(\lambda \,\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t)} \,\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t)^{-1}\gamma(t+s)}(e_i)\right)\right|_{s=0} \\
&= \lambda \,\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t)} \,\mathrm{ad}_{\left(dL_{\gamma(t)}\right)^{-1}\gamma(t)^{-1}\dot\gamma_u(t)}(e_i) \\
&= \lambda \,\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t)}[u(t), e_i], \qquad (5.2.18)
\end{aligned}$$

where we used that $\mathrm{Ad}_{gh} = \mathrm{Ad}_g \mathrm{Ad}_h$, that λ and Ad_g are linear, and finally we used 5.2.1. From this last calculation we draw two conclusions: If γ_u is a normal curve with covector $\lambda \in \mathfrak{g}^*$, then

$$\dot u_i = \lambda \,\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t)}[u(t), e_i], \qquad i = 1, \dots, r. \qquad (5.2.19)$$

If γ_u is an abnormal normal curve with covector $\lambda \in \mathfrak{g}^*$, with $\lambda \neq 0$, then

$$0 = \lambda \,\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t)}[u(t), e_i], \qquad i = 1, \dots, r. \qquad (5.2.20)$$

5.2.4 Extremals in rank-2 Carnot groups

Consider a horizontal curve $\gamma : [0,1] \to G$, where G is a Carnot groups of rank-2. Say that the horizontal layer is spanned by e_1 and e_2. We use the notation $e_{12} = [e_1, e_2]$.

Then $u(t) = u_1(t)e_1 + u_2(t)e_2$ and we have

$$[u(t), e_1] = -u_2 e_{12} \qquad \text{and } [u(t), e_i] = u_1 e_{12}. \qquad (5.2.21)$$

From (5.2.20), we have that if γ_u is an abnormal normal curve with covector $\lambda \in \mathfrak{g}^*$, with $\lambda \neq 0$, then

$$u_2 \lambda(\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t)}(e_{12})) = u_1 \lambda(\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t)}(e_{12})) = 0. \qquad (5.2.22)$$

In addition, notice that we may assume that γ_u is parametrized by arc length, so u has constant nonzero norm, almost everywhere. In particular $(u_1, u_2) \neq (0,0)$ almost surely. Therefore we con conclude that for such an abnormal curve we have

$$\lambda(\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t)}(e_{12})) = 0. \tag{5.2.23}$$

Viceversa, assume γ is a horizontal curve in a rank-2 Carnot group and that γ satisfies (5.2.23) for some $\lambda \in \mathfrak{g}^*$ with $\lambda \neq 0$. Then it clearly satisfies (5.2.22) and, since we have $r = 2$ and we have (5.2.21), we also have (5.2.20). Then look at each function $\lambda \, \mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t)}(e_i)$, for $i = 1$ and 2. On the one hand, because of (5.2.18) we have that its derivative is 0. On the other hand, if $\gamma(0) = 1_G$ and if λ satisfies (5.2.14), we have that the initial condition at time $t = 0$ for (5.2.13) is satisfied. Hence such a curve is abnormal. Hence, (5.2.23) is equivalent to the abnormal equations, in rank 2. We summarize this last proof in the following statement.

Proposition 5.2.24. *In every Carnot group G whose horizontal layer is spanned by e_1, e_2, a horizontal curve $\gamma : [0,1] \to G$ with $\gamma(0) = 1_G$ is abnormal if and only if for some $\lambda \in \mathfrak{g}^*$ with $\lambda \neq 0$ and $\lambda(e_1) = \lambda(e_2) = 0$ it satisfies*

$$\lambda(\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t)}([e_1, e_2])) = 0. \tag{5.2.25}$$

Whereas, from (5.2.19) we have that if γ_u is a normal curve with covector $\lambda \in \mathfrak{g}^*$, then

$$\begin{cases} \dot u_1 &= -u_2 \lambda(\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t)}(e_{12})), \\ \dot u_2 &= u_1 \lambda(\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t)}(e_{12})). \end{cases} \tag{5.2.26}$$

We shall rephrase such condition in terms of a curvature. Let $\sigma : [0,1] \to \mathbb{R}^2$ the planar curve such that $\dot\sigma = u$. Then its oriented curvature, see [**?**, Equation (1.11)], is $\kappa(t) = \frac{1}{\|\sigma'(t)\|^3} \det(\sigma'(t), \sigma''(t))$. Hence, from (5.2.26), if γ_u is a normal curve with covector $\lambda \in \mathfrak{g}^*$, then its curvature satisfies

$$\kappa = \frac{\sigma_1' \sigma_2'' - \sigma_2' \sigma_1''}{\|\sigma'\|^3} = \frac{u_1 \dot u_2 - u_2 \dot u_1}{\|u\|^3} \overset{(5.2.26)}{=} \frac{u_1^2 \lambda(\mathrm{Ad}_\gamma(e_{12})) + u_2^2 \lambda(\mathrm{Ad}_\gamma(e_{12}))}{\|u\|^3} = \frac{1}{\|u\|} \lambda(\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t)}(e_{12})).$$

We observe that the element $\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t)}(e_{12})$ is in $[\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}]$, hence in the last equation we lost the information of the value of λ on V_1. Still, normal curves need to satisfy (5.2.14). Viceversa, let's assume γ is a horizontal curve in a rank-2 Carnot group and that for some $\lambda \in [\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}]^*$ we have that γ satisfies

$$\kappa = \frac{1}{\|u\|} \lambda(\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t)}(e_{12})). \tag{5.2.27}$$

First we observe that by bootstrapping (5.2.27) we have that γ and its control u are smooth. Then we can extend λ as an element of $\mathfrak{g}^*$ so that we also have (5.2.14). Now that we have $\lambda \in \mathfrak{g}^*$ we consider the normal curve (which is unique) associated to λ with $\gamma(0) = 1_G$, which we denote by γ^λ. We shall show that $\gamma = \gamma^\lambda$. The reason is that both curves satisfy the ODE (5.2.27) with same initial data. [EXPLAIN MORE]

5.3 Regular abnormal extremals

We fix a (rank-2) Carnot group G whose horizontal layer is spanned by e_1, e_2.

Definition *to be verified*: A horizontal curve $\gamma : [0,1] \to G$, parameterized by arc length and with $\gamma(0) = 1_G$, is called a regular abnormal extremal if for some $\lambda \in \mathfrak{g}^*$ with $\lambda \neq 0$, $\lambda(e_1) = \lambda(e_2) = 0$, and

$$\lambda|_{V_3} \neq 0 \tag{5.3.1}$$

it satisfies

$$\lambda(\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t)}([e_1, e_2])) = 0. \tag{5.3.2}$$

Dubbio: è la stessa cosa se invece di (5.3.1) chiediamo che

$$\lambda(\mathrm{Ad}_{\gamma(t)} V_3) \neq \{0\}, \qquad \forall t \in [0,1]$$

Liu and Sussmann [**?**, Theorem5] showed that regular abnormal extremals are length minimizers, in rank-2 Carnot groups (in rank-2 subRiem manifolds?).

nilpotent!–Lie algebra
step—see nilpotency step
nilpotency step
nilpotent!–Lie group

Chapter 6

Nilpotent Lie groups and Carnot groups

Tangent spaces of a sub-Riemannian manifold are themselves sub-Riemannian manifolds. They can be defined as metric spaces, using Gromov's definition of tangent spaces to a metric space, and they turn out to be sub-Riemannian manifolds. Moreover, they come with an algebraic structure: nilpotent Lie groups with dilations. In the classical, Riemannian case, they are indeed vector spaces, that is, Abelian groups with dilations. Actually, the above is true only for regular points. At singular points, instead of nilpotent Lie groups one gets quotient spaces G/H of such groups G. Most of the exposition on tangent spaces is taken from [Bel96].

6.0.1 Nilpotent Lie groups and nilpotent Lie algebras

This material is taken from the book [CG90]. The exposition does not pretend to be a better one. We just extract for the book all those parts of importance for the following.

Let $\mathfrak{g}$ be a Lie algebra over $\mathbb{R}$. The *lower* (or *descending*) *central series* of $\mathfrak{g}$ is defined inductively by

$$\mathfrak{g}^{(1)} = \mathfrak{g};$$

$$\mathfrak{g}^{(i+1)} := [\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}^{(i)}] = \mathbb{R}\text{-span}\{[X,Y] : X \in \mathfrak{g}, Y \in \mathfrak{g}^{(i)}\}.$$

Definition 6.0.1. (Nilpotent Lie algebra and Lie group). A Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$ is *nilpotent* if there is an integer s such that the $(s+1)$-element $\mathfrak{g}^{(s+1)}$ of its lower central series is $\{0\}$. In this case, if s is the minimal integer such that $\mathfrak{g}^{(s+1)} = \{0\}$, then $\mathfrak{g}$ is said to be *s-step nilpotent* and s is called the *nilpotency step* of $\mathfrak{g}$. A connected Lie group is said to be *nilpotent* if its Lie algebra is nilpotent.

For arbitrary group there is a general definition of nilpotency. For connected Lie groups this is equivalent to saying that G itself is a nilpotent group, see [Hoc65, Thm. XII.3.1].

A Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$ is s-step nilpotent if and only if all brackets of at least $s+1$ elements of $\mathfrak{g}$ are 0 but not all brackets of order s are.

Remark 6.0.2. A nilpotent Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$ has always non-trivial center; in fact, if $\mathfrak{g}$ is s-step nilpotent, $\mathfrak{g}^{(s)}$ is central, i.e., it is contained in the center of $\mathfrak{g}$.

Recall that the *center* of a Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$ is

$$\text{Center}(\mathfrak{g}) := \{X \in \mathfrak{g} \; : \; [X, Y] = 0 \text{ for all } Y \in \mathfrak{g}\},$$

and the *center* of a (Lie) group G is

$$\text{Center}(G) := \{g \in G \; : \; gh = hg \text{ for all } h \in G\}.$$

The two centers are related since the center of a connected Lie group is a closed sub-group with Lie algebra the center of $\mathfrak{g}$, see [War83, page 116].

Be aware that the center might be strictly larger than $\mathfrak{g}^{(s)}$, see Exercise 6.4.9.

6.0.2 Examples

One common convention in describing nilpotent Lie algebras - and one that we shall often use - is the following. Suppose that $\mathfrak{g} = \mathbb{R}\text{-span}\{X_1, \dots, X_n\}$. To describe the Lie algebra structure of $\mathfrak{g}$, it suffices to give $[X_i, X_j]$ for all $i < j$. We can shorten this description considerably by giving only the non-zero brackets; all others are assumed to be zero.

Heisenberg algebras

The $(2n+1)$-dimensional Heisenberg algebra is the Lie algebra with basis $\{X_1, , \dots, X_n, Y_1, , \dots, Y_n, Z\}$, whose pairwise brackets are equal to zero expect for

$$[X_j, Y_j] = Z, \qquad \text{for } j = 1, \dots, n.$$

It is a two-step nilpotent Lie algebra. One way to realize it as a matrix algebra is to consider $(n+2) \times (n+2)$ upper triangular matrices of the form

$$\begin{pmatrix} 0 & x_1 & \dots & x_n & z \\ \cdot & 0 & \cdot & 0 & y_1 \\ \cdot & & \cdot & \cdot & \vdots \\ \cdot & & & 0 & y_n \\ 0 & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & 0 \end{pmatrix}.$$

The Lie group associated is called the n'th Heisenberg group and as matrix group it is

$$G = \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} 1 & x_1 & \dots & x_n & z \\ \cdot & 1 & \cdot & 0 & y_1 \\ . & & \ddots & . & \vdots \\ \cdot & & & 1 & y_n \\ 0 & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & 1 \end{pmatrix} : x_1, , \dots, x_n, y_1, , \dots, y_n, z \in \mathbb{R} \right\} \subset GL(n+2, \mathbb{R}).$$

Filiform algebras of the first kind

The $(n+1)$-dimensional filiform algebra of the first kind is the algebra spanned by $X, Y_1, Y_2, \dots, Y_n$, with only non-trivial relations

$$[X, Y_j] = Y_{j+1}, \qquad \text{for } j = 1, \dots, n-1.$$

It is an n-step nilpotent Lie algebra and can be realized as a matrix algebra considering the matrices of the form:

$$\begin{pmatrix} 0 & x & 0 & \cdot & 0 & y_n \\ & \cdot & \ddots & & & \vdots \\ & & \cdot & \ddots & & \vdots \\ & & & \cdot & x & y_2 \\ & & & & \cdot & y_1 \\ 0 & & & & & 0 \end{pmatrix}.$$

Strictly upper triangular matrix algebras

The algebra of strictly upper triangular $n \times n$ matrices is an $(n-1)$-step nilpotent Lie algebra of dimension $n(n-1)/2$, and its center is one-dimensional. Namely, let

$$\mathfrak{g} = \mathfrak{n}_n := \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} 0 & * & * \\ 0 & \ddots & * \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \right\} \subset \mathfrak{gl}(n, \mathbb{R})$$

and

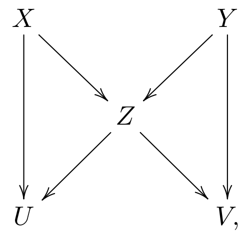
$$G = N_n := \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} 1 & * & * \\ 0 & \ddots & * \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \right\} \subset \mathrm{GL}(n, \mathbb{R})$$

So $\mathfrak{n}_n$ is the Lie algebra of N_n and is nilpotent of step $(n-1)$.

Free-nilpotent algebras

The free nilpotent Lie algebra of step k and rank n (or on n generators) is defined to be the quotient algebra $\mathfrak{f}_n/\mathfrak{f}^{(k+1)}$, where $\mathfrak{f}_n$ is the free Lie algebra on n generators. It is not hard to see that it is finite-dimensional.

For example the Lie algebra of rank 2 and step 3 is given by the diagram



which has to be read as $[X,Y]=Z$, $[X,Z]=U$, and $[Z,Y]=V$.

6.0.3 The BCH formula

The Baker-Campbell-Hausdorff formula allows us to reconstruct any Lie group G locally, with its multiplication law, knowing only the structure of its Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$. The Baker-Campbell-Hausdorff formula links Lie groups to Lie algebras, by expressing the logarithm $\log(e^X e^Y)$ of the product of two Lie group elements as a Lie algebra element. The logarithm is by definition the inverse of the exponential, in general it is only locally defined in a neighborhood of the identity, thanks to Theorem 4.2.1(iii). However, for simply connected nilpotent Lie groups logarithm will be global by Theorem 6.0.6.

The general *Baker-Campbell-Hausdorff formula* (BCH formula, for short) is given by:

$$\log(\exp X \exp Y) = \sum_{n>0} \frac{(-1)^{n-1}}{n} \sum_{\substack{r_i+s_i>0 \\ 1\le i\le n}} \frac{\left(\mathrm{ad}_X^{r_1}\circ \mathrm{ad}_Y^{s_1}\circ \mathrm{ad}_X^{r_2}\circ \mathrm{ad}_Y^{s_2}\ldots\circ \mathrm{ad}_X^{r_n}\circ \mathrm{ad}_Y^{s_n-1}\right)(Y)}{r_1!s_1!\cdots r_n!s_n!\ \sum_{i=1}^n (r_i+s_i)},$$

where $\mathrm{ad}_X Y=[X,Y]$, see (6.0.4). Thus

$$\left(\mathrm{ad}_X^{r_1}\circ \mathrm{ad}_Y^{s_1}\circ \mathrm{ad}_X^{r_2}\circ \mathrm{ad}_Y^{s_2}\ldots\circ \mathrm{ad}_X^{r_n}\circ \mathrm{ad}_Y^{s_n-1}\right)(Y)$$

$$= [\underbrace{X,[X,\ldots[X,}_{r_1}[\underbrace{Y,[Y,\ldots[Y,}_{s_1}\ \ldots\ [\underbrace{X,[X,\ldots[X,}_{r_n}[\underbrace{Y,[Y,\ldots Y}_{s_n}]]\ldots]].$$

The first terms of the series should[1] be

$$\begin{aligned}\log(\exp X\exp Y) \quad = \quad & X+Y+\frac{1}{2}[X,Y]+\frac{1}{12}[X,[X,Y]]-\frac{1}{12}[Y,[X,Y]] \\ & -\frac{1}{24}[Y,[X,[X,Y]]] \\ & -\frac{1}{720}([[[[X,Y],Y],Y],Y]+[[[[Y,X],X],X],X]) \\ & +\frac{1}{360}([[[[X,Y],Y],Y],X]+[[[[Y,X],X],X],Y]) \\ & +\frac{1}{120}([[[[Y,X],Y],X],Y]+[[[[X,Y],X],Y],X])+\cdots\end{aligned}$$

[1]This calculations should be double checked!

6.0.4 Matrix groups

For matrix Lie groups $G \subseteq GL(n, \mathbb{R})$, the Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g} \subseteq \mathfrak{gl}(n, \mathbb{R})$ is simply the tangent space at the identity I with Lie bracket given by

$$[A, B] = AB - BA, \qquad \forall A, B \in \mathfrak{gl}(n, \mathbb{R}).$$

Moreover, the exponential map coincides with the exponential of matrices and is given by the ordinary series expansion:

$$\exp(A) = \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{j!} A^j = I + A + \frac{1}{2} A^2 + \frac{1}{3!} A^3 + \cdots, \qquad \forall A \in \mathfrak{gl}(n, \mathbb{R}). \tag{6.0.3}$$

(here I is the identity matrix). In this situation the Baker-Campbell-Hausdorff formula is obtained by formally solving for Z in $e^Z = e^X e^Y$, using that

$$\log(I + A) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{(-1)^{n+1}}{n} A^n.$$

Indeed,

$$\begin{aligned} Z &= \log(I + (e^X e^Y - I)) \\ &= \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{(-1)^{n+1}}{n} (e^X e^Y - I)^n \\ &= \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{(-1)^{n+1}}{n} \left(\sum_{p_i + q_i > 0, p_i, q_i \geq 0} \frac{X^{p_i} Y^{q_i}}{p_i! q_i!} \right)^n \\ &= \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{(-1)^{n+1}}{n} \sum_{p_i + q_i > 0, p_i, q_i \geq 0} \frac{X^{p_1} Y^{q_1} \cdots X^{p_n} Y^{q_n}}{p_1! q_2! \cdots p_n! q_n!}. \end{aligned}$$

One will get the BCH formula using that $\operatorname{ad}_A B = AB - BA$. Please, let me know if you find a clear and simple calculation of this ending.

6.0.5 Adjoint operators

Each Lie group acts on itself by conjugation: for $g \in G$, the map

$$C_g : h \mapsto g h g^{-1}$$

is an inner automorphism of G. Its differential at the unit element is called the *adjoin operator*:

$$\operatorname{Ad}_g = d(C_g)_e : \mathfrak{g} \to \mathfrak{g}.$$

The map Ad_g is a Lie algebra automorphism. For matrix groups we have the explicit formula:

$$\mathrm{Ad}_A(X) = AXA^{-1}, \qquad \text{for } A \in GL(n,\mathbb{R}) \text{ and } X \in \mathfrak{gl}(n,\mathbb{R}).$$

The action

$$\begin{array}{ccc} G \times \mathfrak{g} & \to & \mathfrak{g} \\ (g, X) & \mapsto & (\mathrm{Ad}_g)X \end{array}$$

is called the *adjoint action* of G. The map

$$\mathrm{Ad}_{(\cdot)} : G \to \mathrm{Aut}(\mathfrak{g})$$

is called the *adjoint representation* of G. Its differential $\mathrm{ad} := d(\mathrm{Ad})$is the adjoint map on $\mathfrak{g}$. One has that the following commutative diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathfrak{g} & \xrightarrow{\mathrm{ad}} & \mathrm{End}(\mathfrak{g}) \\ \downarrow{\scriptstyle \exp} & & \downarrow{\scriptstyle \exp} \\ G & \xrightarrow{\mathrm{Ad}} & \mathrm{Aut}(\mathfrak{g}) \end{array}$$

and the validity of the formula

$$\mathrm{ad}_X Y = [X, Y]. \tag{6.0.4}$$

Such maps satisfies the following formulae:

$$\exp((\mathrm{Ad}_g)Y) = C_g(\exp(Y)), \qquad \forall g \in G, Y \in \mathfrak{g},$$

$$C_{\exp(X)}(\exp(Y)) = \exp(\mathrm{Ad}_{\exp X}(Y)), \qquad \forall X, Y \in \mathfrak{g},$$

$$\mathrm{Ad}_{\exp X}(Y) = e^{\mathrm{ad}_X}(Y), \qquad \forall X, Y \in \mathfrak{g},$$

where

$$e^{\mathrm{ad}_X} := \sum_{j=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{j!}(\mathrm{ad}_X)^j. \tag{6.0.5}$$

When G is a simply connected nilpotent Lie group the series 6.0.3 and 6.0.5 are finite, giving polynomial laws for the group multiplication and conjugation.

6.0.6 Simply connected nilpotent Lie groups

Simply connected Lie groups are uniquely determined by their Lie algebras. Indeed, recall from Corollary 4.1.7 that if two simply connected Lie groups have isomorphic Lie algebras, then they are isomorphic. For nilpotent groups, the exponential map and the BCH formula provide a concrete identification. We will see how one can completely work on the Lie algebra using such coordinates.

Theorem 6.0.6 ([CG90, Theorem 1.2.1])**.** *Let G be a connected, simply connected nilpotent Lie group.*

a *The exponential map* $\exp : \mathrm{Lie}(G) \to G$ *is an analytic diffeomorphism.*

b *The Baker-Campbell-Hausdorff Formula holds globally.*

Proof for the case of nilpotent matrix groups. If G is a matrix group of nilpotency step s, then for all $A \in G$

$$\exp(A) = e^A = \sum_{j=0}^{s} \frac{1}{j!} A^j.$$

So exp is a polynomial map.

Its (global) inverse is

$$\log(B) = \sum_{k=1}^{s} \frac{(-1)^{k+1}}{k} (B - I)^k.$$

Also the BCH series is finite and hence analytic.

Since it coincide on an open neighborhood of 0 with the analytic function $\log(\exp(X)\exp(Y))$, it coincide globally. □

The following facts are consequences of Theorem 6.0.6 and its proof.

Fact 6.0.7. *Every Lie sub-group H of a connected, simply connected nilpotent Lie group G is closed and simply connected.*

Let N_n be the group whose Lie algebra are the strictly upper triangular matrices. Namely, N_n is the group of matrices that are upper triangular and have 1's in the diagonal.

Fact 6.0.8. *Every connected, simply connected nilpotent Lie group has a faithful embedding as a closed subgroup of N_n for some n.*

One important application of Theorem 6.0.6 involves coordinates on G. Since exp is a diffeomorphism of $\mathfrak{g}$ onto G, we can use it to transfer coordinates from $\mathfrak{g}$ to G. Some authors use exp to identify $\mathfrak{g}$ with G. Then the group multiplication can be calculated by the Baker-Campbell-Hausdorff formula.

Definition 6.0.9 (Exponential coordinates: canonical coordinates of 1^{st} kind)**.** Let $\{X_1, \ldots, X_n\}$ be a basis for a nilpotent Lie algebra of a simply connected nilpotent group G. The coordinates given by the map

$$\Phi : \mathbb{R}^n \longrightarrow G$$

$$\Phi(t_1, \ldots, t_n) := \exp(t_1 X_1 + \ldots + t_n X_n)$$

are called *exponential coordinates*. Exponential coordinates are also known as *canonical coordinates of the first kind*.

With exp we are identifying $\mathbb{R}^n$ with Lie(G) and G. Moreover, the group law can be obtained through the BCH formula

$$(s_1, \ldots, s_n) * (t_1, \ldots, t_n) = \log \left(\exp \left(\sum_{j=1}^{n} s_j X_j \right) \exp \left(\sum_{j=1}^{n} t_j X_j \right) \right)$$

Definition 6.0.10. Let $\mathfrak{g}$ be a nilpotent Lie algebra. An ordered basis $\{X_1, \ldots, X_n\}$ for $\mathfrak{g}$ is called (strong) Malcev basis if, for each $k \in \{1, \ldots, n\}$, the space

$$\text{span}\{X_1, \ldots, X_k\}$$

is an ideal of $\mathfrak{g}$, i.e.

$$[\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}_k] \subset \mathfrak{g}_k.$$

In general, a subspace I of a Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$ is called an *ideal* of $\mathfrak{g}$ if $[\mathfrak{g}, I] \subseteq I$. By anticommutativity, there is no need of distinction between left and right ideals.

Fact 6.0.11. *In the special class of Carnot groups, see next chapter, the existence of Malcev basis will be a triviality. However, any nilpotent algebra has Malcev basis, see Theorem 1.1.13 in [CG90] and the notes following it.*

Lemma 6.0.12. *If $\{X_1, \ldots, X_n\}$ is a Malcev basis for a nilpotent Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$, then its ideals $\mathfrak{g}_k := \text{span}\{X_1, \ldots, X_k\}$ are such that*

$$[\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}_k] \subseteq \mathfrak{g}_{k-1}. \tag{6.0.13}$$

Proof. By definition of Malcev basis, we have $[\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}_k] \subseteq \mathfrak{g}_k$ and also $[\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}_{k-1}] \subseteq \mathfrak{g}_{k-1}$. If the conclusion of the lemma were not true, then there would be some $j \in \{1, \dots, n\}$ and $a_1, \dots, a_k$ with $a_k \neq 0$ such that

$$[X_j, X_k] = a_k X_k + \sum_{i=1}^{k-1} a_i X_i.$$

Now we iterate bracketing by X_j, i.e., we iterate the map $\mathrm{ad}_{X_i} = [X_i, \cdot]$. Thus, we get, for some $a_1^{(l)}, \dots, a_{k-1}^{(l)}$,

$$(\mathrm{ad}_{X_j}^l)(X_k) = a^l X_k + \sum_{i=1}^{k-1} a_i^{(l)} X_i,$$

which is never zero and so contradicts the nilpotency of $\mathfrak{g}$. □

Definition 6.0.14 (Malcev coordinates: canonical coordinates of the 2^{nd} kind)**.** Let $\{X_1, \dots, X_n\}$ be a (strong) Malcev basis for a nilpotent Lie algebra. Define the map

$$\Psi : \mathbb{R}^n \to G$$

$$\Psi(s) := \exp(s_1 X_1) \cdots \exp(s_n X_n).$$

The coordinate system defined is called *strong Malcev coordinates* or also *canonical coordinates of the second kind.*

If $\{X_1, \dots, X_n\}$ is a Malcev basis for a nilpotent Lie algebra, we can consider both canonical coordinates; we have that the Malcev coordinates are related to the exponential coordinates by a polynomial diffeomorphism whose Jacobian determinant is constantly equal to 1.

Proposition 6.0.15 ([CG90, Proposition 1.2.7])**.** *Let $\{X_1, \dots, X_n\}$ be a Malcev basis for a nilpotent Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$. Let $\Psi : \mathbb{R}^n \to G$ the Malcev coordinate system and $\Phi : \mathbb{R}^n \longrightarrow M$ the exponential coordinate system associated to the basis. Then*

(i) $\Psi(s) = \Phi(P(s))$ *where $P : \mathbb{R}^n \to \mathbb{R}^n$ is a polynomial diffeomorphism with polynomial inverse.*

(ii) *writing $P = (P_1, \dots, P, n)$, then $P_j(s) = s_j + \hat{P}(s_{j+1}, \dots, s_n)$.*

In other words, we have the relation:

$$\exp(s_1 X_1) \cdots \exp(s_n X_n) = \exp(P_1(s) X_1 + \ldots + P_n(s) X_n).$$

Proposition 6.0.16 ([CG90, Proposition 1.2.9])**.** *Assume that G is equipped with either exponential or Malcev coordinates with respect to some basis. For any $g \in G$, left translation L_g and right translation R_g are maps whose Jacobian determinants are identically equal to 1.*

Proof. We prove the statement for exponential coordinates and left translations. The case of right translations is similar. For Malcev coordinates it will be true because of they differs from exponential coordinates by a polynomial diffeomorphism whose Jacobian determinant is constantly equal to 1, Proposition 6.0.15.

The proof is based on the BCH formula and (6.0.13). Indeed, we can assume that the basis $\{X_1, \ldots, X_n\}$ is a Malcev basis, since linear changes of basis preserve Jacobians. So, let Φ the exponential coordinate system, and L_g the left translation by g. We need to calculate the Jacobian of $\Phi^{-1} \circ L_g \circ \Phi$. Thus we consider the diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \mathbb{R}^n & \xrightarrow{\quad\Phi\quad} & G \\ (t_1, \ldots, t_n) & \longmapsto & \exp(\sum_j t_j X_j) \\ & & \downarrow L_g \\ (s_1, \ldots, s_n) & \longmapsto & g\exp(\sum_j t_j X_j) \\ \mathbb{R}^n & \xrightarrow{\quad\Phi\quad} & G, \end{array}$$

and we solve the dependence of the s_i's from the t_j's. Since the Malcev coordinates are surjective we can find $u_1, \ldots, u_n$ and write

$$g = \exp(u_1 X_1) \ldots \exp(u_n X_n).$$

It is enough to consider the case $g = \exp(u_k X_k)$ and then conclude considering compositions. Thus we need to consider the system

$$\exp(\sum_j s_i X_i) = \exp(u_k X_k) \exp(\sum_j t_j X_j).$$

By the BCH formula,

$$\sum_j s_i X_i = u_k X_k + \sum_j t_j X_j + \frac{1}{2}[u_k X_k, \sum_j t_j X_j] + \ldots.$$

Since we have chosen a Malcev basis we have the property (6.0.13). Thus a bracket as $[X_k, X_j]$ is only a combination of $\{X_1, \ldots, X_{j-1}\}$. In other words, the function s_j is of the form t_j plus a polynomial that does not depend on the variables $t_1, \ldots, t_j$. In coordinates, the map $\Phi^{-1} \circ L_g \circ \Phi$

is of the form

$$\Phi^{-1} \circ L_g \circ \Phi = \begin{pmatrix} t_1 & * & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & * \\ 0 & \ddots & \ddots & * & \dots & * & \vdots \\ \cdot & \cdot & t_{k-1} & * & \ddots & \vdots & \vdots \\ \cdot & \cdot & 0 & t_k + u_k & * & * & \vdots \\ \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & 0 & t_{k-1} & \ddots & \vdots \\ \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \ddots & * \\ 0 & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & 0 & t_n \end{pmatrix}.$$

Thus the differential is of the form

$$d(\Phi^{-1} \circ L_g \circ \Phi) = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & * & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & * \\ 0 & \ddots & \ddots & * & \dots & * & \vdots \\ \cdot & \cdot & 1 & * & \ddots & \vdots & \vdots \\ \cdot & \cdot & 0 & 1 & * & * & \vdots \\ \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & 0 & 1 & \ddots & \vdots \\ \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \ddots & * \\ 0 & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & \cdot & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}.$$

Thus the Jacobian of a left translation in exponential coordinates with respect to a Malcev basis is 1 at every point. □

Definition 6.0.17. If $P : \mathbb{R}^n \to \mathbb{R}^n$ is a diffeomorphism such that P and P^{-1} have polynomial components, then

$$(s_1, \dots, s_n) \mapsto \exp(P_1(s)X_1 + \cdots + P_n(s)X_n)$$

is called *polynomial coordinate map.*

Examples of polynomial coordinate maps are, obviously, exponential and, by Proposition 6.0.15, Malcev coordinate maps.

Exercise 6.0.18. Show that Malcev coordinates are polynomial coordinates.

The key observation is that the Jacobian of any polynomial diffeomorphism with polynomial inverse is a polynomial that is invertible inside the polynomial ring, so it is a constant. Thus, changing of coordinates by a polynomial diffeomorphism with polynomial inverse preserves Lebesgue measure preserving maps.

Corollary 6.0.19. *In polynomial coordinates, left translations have Jacobian 1.*

Proof. If P is a polynomial map, then $\mathtt{Jac}(P)$ is a polynomial. If P and P^{-1} are polynomial diffeomorphisms, then $1 = \mathtt{Jac}(\mathrm{Id}) = \mathtt{Jac}(P \circ P^1) = (\mathtt{Jac}(P) \circ P^{-1}) \cdot \mathtt{Jac}(P^{-1})$.

Hence, $\mathtt{Jac}(P)$ and $\mathtt{Jac}(P^{-1})$ are two polynomial whose product is constant. Thus they are constant.

If Φ is an exponential coordinate map, then

$$\mathtt{Jac}(P^{-1} \circ \Phi^{-1} \circ L_g \Phi \circ P)_x =$$
$$= \mathtt{Jac}(P^{-1})_{(\Phi^{-1} \circ L_g \circ P)(x)} \cdot \mathtt{Jac}(\Phi^{-1} \circ L_g \circ \Phi)_{\Phi(x)} \cdot \mathtt{Jac}(\Phi)_x = 1.$$

□

Remark 6.0.20. If a map $F : \mathbb{R}^n \to \mathbb{R}^n$ has Jacobian 1, then it preserves the Lebesgue n-measure (because of change of variables formula).

Any Lie group, as any locally compact group, has a natural class of measures: the *Haar measures*. A Borel measure μ is called a left-Haar measure if it is left-invariant, i.e., if, for any left translation L_g,

$$((L_g)_\# \mu)(B) := \mu\left(L_g^{-1}(B)\right) = \mu(B), \qquad \text{for all Borel set } B.$$

Similarly, a *right-Haar measure* is a Borel measure that is right invariant. A Borel measure is called *Haar measure* if it is both right and left invariant.

Left-Haar measures, as right-Haar measures, are unique in the following sense.

Fact 6.0.21. *Left-Haar measures and right-Haar measures that are finite and not zero on compact sets with nonempty interior are unique up to multiplication by a constant.*

A consequence of the previous proposition and the last observation above is the following theorem.

Theorem 6.0.22 ([CG90, Theorem 1.2.10])**.** *Let G be an n-dimensional connected, simply connected, and nilpotent Lie group. Any polynomial coordinate map pushes forward the Lebesgue measure on $\mathbb{R}^n$ to a Haar measure on G.*

It is not always true that left-Haar measures are also right-Haar measures, groups with such property are called *unimodular*. However in any nilpotent Lie group Haar measure are both left and right-invariant. Theorem 6.0.22 shows such uniqueness for simply connected nilpotent Lie groups and it is suffices for our cases of interest.

6.0.7 Homogeneous manifolds

This part will probably will omitted in class.

Theorem 6.0.23 ([War83, Theorem 3.58]). *Let [...]*

Theorem 6.0.24 ([CG90, Theorem 1.2.12]). *Let [...]*

Theorem 6.0.25 ([CG90, Theorem 1.2.13]). *Let [...]*

read page 23 [CG90] remark 1 and 3.

6.1 Stratified Lie algebras

Let $\mathfrak{g}$ be a Lie algebra. A *stratification of* $\mathfrak{g}$ with step s is a direct sum decomposition

$$\mathfrak{g} = V_1 \oplus V_2 \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s$$

of $\mathfrak{g}$ with the property that $V_s \neq \{0\}$ and $[V_1, V_j] = V_{j+1}$, for all $j = 1, \dots, s$, where we set $V_{s+1} = \{0\}$. Here

$$[V, W] := \mathrm{span}\{[X, Y] : X \in V,\ Y \in W\}.$$

Example 6.1.1. An Abelian Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$ admits a 1-step stratification with $V_1 = \mathfrak{g}$.

Example 6.1.2. Let $\mathfrak{g}$ be the Heisenberg Lie algebra spanned by X, Y, Z with relation $[X, Y] = Z$. Then $V_1 := \mathrm{span}\{X, Y\}$ and $V_2 := \mathrm{span}\{Z\}$ form a 2-step stratification.

Exercise 6.1.3. Show that a stratification is completely determined by V_1.

Definition 6.1.4. We say that a Lie algebra is *stratifiable* if it admits a stratification. When we fix a stratification of a Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$ we say that $\mathfrak{g}$ is *stratified*.

Not all Lie algebras are stratifiable: there are 6-dimensional Lie algebras that are nilpotent but don't admit any stratification, see [Goo76] and Exercise **??**. Furthermore, a Lie algebra can have at most one stratification up to isomorphism (see Exercise 6.1.12).

Remark 6.1.5. A stratifiable Lie algebra is nilpotent. In fact, if $\mathfrak{g}$ admits an s-step stratification, then $\mathfrak{g}$ is s-step nilpotent, see Lemma **??**.

graded algebra

Example 6.1.6.

$$[V_2, V_2] = [[V_1, V_1], [V_1, V_1]] = \operatorname{span}\{[[X_1, X_2], [X_3, X_4]] : X_i \in V_1\} \subset$$
$$\overset{\text{(Jacobi)}}{\subset} \operatorname{span}\{[X_1, [X_2, [X_3, X_4]]] : X_i \in V_1\} = [V_1, [V_1, [V_1, V_1]]] = V_4$$

Remark 6.1.7. There exist nilpotent Lie algebras that are not stratifiable.

Exercise 6.1.8. Prove that every 2-step nilpotent Lie algebra is stratifiable.

Lemma 6.1.9. *Any stratified Lie algebra admits a Malcev basis.*

Proof. Let $\mathfrak{g} = V_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s$ be a stratification of a Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$. Let $X_1, \ldots, X_n$ be a basis of $\mathfrak{g}$ such that $X_n, \ldots, X_1$ is adapted to the direct sum, i.e., there exist $n_1 > \cdots > n_s = 1$ such that $X_n, \ldots, X_{n_1}$ is a basis of V_1, $X_{n_{j-1}-1}, \ldots, X_{n_j}$ is a basis of V_j, for all $j = 2, \ldots, s$.

We claim that $X_1, \ldots, X_n$ is a Malcev bais. Indeed, set $\mathfrak{g}_k := \{X_1, \ldots, X_k\}$. Thus $X_k \in V_j$, then

$$V_{j+1} \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s \subset \mathfrak{g}_k \subset V_j \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s$$

and

$$\begin{aligned}
[\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}_k] &\subset [V_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s, V_j \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s] \\
&\subset V_{j+1} \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s \\
&\subset \mathfrak{g}_k
\end{aligned}$$

□

Definition 6.1.10 (Graded algebra)**.** Let $\mathfrak{g}$ be a Lie algebra that is nilpotent of step s. Let $\mathfrak{g}^{(i+1)} := [\mathfrak{g}; \mathfrak{g}^{(i)}]$ be the descending central series of $\mathfrak{g}$. The *graded algebra* of $\mathfrak{g}$ is the Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}_\infty$ given by the direct sum decomposition

$$\mathfrak{g}_\infty := \bigoplus_{i=1}^{s} \mathfrak{g}^{(i)}/\mathfrak{g}^{(i+1)},$$

endowed with the unique Lie bracket $[\cdot,\cdot]_\infty$ that has the property that, if $x \in \mathfrak{g}^{(i)}$ and $y \in \mathfrak{g}^{(j)}$, the bracket is defined, modulo $\mathfrak{g}^{(i+j)}$, as

$$[\bar{x}, \bar{y}]_\infty = \overline{[x, y]}.$$

Exercise 6.1.11. Show that a stratifiable algebra is isomorphic to its graded algebra (as definite in Definition 6.1.10)

Exercise 6.1.12. Show that if $V_1, \dots, V_s$ and $W_1, \dots, W_t$ are two stratification of $\mathfrak{g}$, then $s = t$ and there exists an automorphism of Ψ of $\mathfrak{g}$ such that $V_i = \Psi(W_i)$, for all i. [Hint: Use Exercise 6.1.11]

6.1.1 Some elementary facts about stratifications

For a Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$ define by iteration

$$\mathfrak{g}^{(1)} = \mathfrak{g}, \qquad \mathfrak{g}^{(k+1)} = [\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}^{(k)}].$$

A Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$ is nilpotent of step s if $\mathfrak{g}^{(s)} \neq 0$ and $\mathfrak{g}^{(s+1)} = 0$.

Lemma 6.1.13. *Let $\mathfrak{g} = V_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s$ be a stratified Lie algebra of step s. Then*

$$[V_i, V_j] \subset V_{i+j},$$

for all $i, j = 1, \dots, s$, where we set $V_k = \{0\}$ for $k > s$.

Proof. The proof is by induction on i. If $i = 1$ we already know that $[V_1, V_j] \subset V_{j+1}$ for all j. Now suppose that $[V_i, V_j] \subset V_{i+j}$ for all j and a fixed i. We shall show that this implies $[V_{i+1}, V_j] \subset V_{i+1+j}$ for all j. Indeed, V_{i+1} is generated by the elements $[v_1, v_i]$ where $v_1 \in V_1$ and $v_i \in V_i$, and for these elements we have for all $v_j \in V_j$ by the Jacobi identity

$$[[v_1, v_i], v_j] = -[[v_i, v_j], v_1] - [[v_j, v_1], v_i],$$

where $[v_i, v_j] \in V_{i+j}$ by the inductive hypothesis and so $-[[v_i, v_j], v_1] = [v_1, [v_i, v_j]] \in [V_1, V_{i+j}] = V_{i+1+j}$, and $-[[v_j, v_1], v_i] = [v_i, [v_j, v_1]] \in [V_i, V_{j+1}] \subset V_{i+1+j}$ by the inductive hypothesis again.

All in all, $[[v_1, v_i], v_j] \in V_{i+1+j}$ and therefore $[V_{i+1}, V_j] \subset V_{i+1+j}$. □

Lemma 6.1.14. *If $\mathfrak{g} = V_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s$ is a stratified Lie algebra, then*

$$\mathfrak{g}^{(k)} = V_k \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s.$$

In particular, $\mathfrak{g}$ is nilpotent of step s.

Proof. The proof is by induction. For $k = 1$ is trivial. Suppose it is true for k, then

$$\begin{aligned}\mathfrak{g}^{(k+1)} = [\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}^{(k)}] = [V_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s, V_k \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s] = \\ = \sum_{i=1}^{s} \sum_{j=k}^{s} [V_i, V_j] = \sum_{j=k}^{s} [V_1, V_j] + \sum_{i=2}^{s} \sum_{j=k}^{s} [V_i, V_j] = \\ = V_{k+1} \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s + \sum_{i=2}^{s} \sum_{j=k}^{s} [V_i, V_j] = V_{k+1} \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s\end{aligned}$$

where $\sum_{i=2}^{s} \sum_{j=k}^{s} [V_i, V_j] \subset \sum_{i=2}^{s} \sum_{j=k}^{s} V_{i+j} \subset V_{k+1} \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s$. □

Lemma 6.1.15. *Let $\mathfrak{g}$ be a stratifiable Lie algebra with two stratifications,*

$$V_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s = \mathfrak{g} = W_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus W_t.$$

Then:

1. $s = t$,
2. $V_k \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s = W_k \oplus \cdots \oplus W_s$ *for all* k
3. *there is a Lie algebra automorphism* $A : \mathfrak{g} \to \mathfrak{g}$ *such that* $A(V_i) = W_i$ *for all* i.

Proof. The first two points are directly implied by lemma 6.1.14.

We have $\mathfrak{g}^{(k)} = V_k \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s = W_k \oplus \cdots \oplus W_s$. Then the quotient mappings $\pi_k : \mathfrak{g}^{(k)} \to \mathfrak{g}^{(k)}/\mathfrak{g}^{(k+1)}$ induces linear isomorphisms $\pi_k|_{V_k} : V_k \to \mathfrak{g}^{(k)}/\mathfrak{g}^{(k+1)}$ and $\pi_k|_{W_k} : W_k \to \mathfrak{g}^{(k)}/\mathfrak{g}^{(k+1)}$, by a dimension argument.

For $v \in V_k$ define $A(v) := (\pi_k|_{W_k})^{-1} \circ \pi_k|_{V_k}(v)$. Notice that for $v \in V_k$ and $w \in W_k$ we have

$$A(v) = w \qquad \Longleftrightarrow \qquad v - w \in \mathfrak{g}^{(k+1)}.$$

Extend A to a linear map $A : \mathfrak{g} \to \mathfrak{g}$. This is clearly a linear isomorphism. We need now to show that A is a Lie algebra morphism, i.e., $[Aa, Ab] = A([a, b])$ for all $a, b \in \mathfrak{g}$.

Let $a = \sum_{i=1}^s a_i$ and $b = \sum_{i=1}^s b_i$ with $a_i, b_i \in V_i$. Then

$$A([a, b]) = \sum_{i=1}^s \sum_{j=1}^s A([a_i, b_j])$$
$$[Aa, Ab] = \sum_{i=1}^s \sum_{j=1}^s [Aa_i, Ab_j],$$

therefore we can just prove $A([a_i, b_j]) = [Aa_i, Ab_j]$ for $a_i \in V_i$ and $b_j \in W_j$.

Notice that $A([a_i, b_j])$ and $[Aa_i, Ab_j]$ both belong to W_{i+j}. Therefore we have $A([a_i, b_j]) = [Aa_i, Ab_j]$ if and only if $[a_i, b_j] - [Aa_i, Ab_j] \in \mathfrak{g}^{(i+j+1)}$. And in fact

$$[a_i, b_j] - [Aa_i, Ab_j] = [a_i - Aa_i, b_j] - [Aa_i, Ab_j - b_j] \in \mathfrak{g}^{(i+j+1)}$$

because, on one hand, $a_i - Aa_i \in \mathfrak{g}^{(i+1)}$ and $b_j \in W_j$, so $[a_i - Aa_i, b_j] \in \mathfrak{g}^{(i+j+1)}$, on the other hand, $Aa_i \in W_i$ and $Ab_j - b_j \in \mathfrak{g}^{(j+1)}$, so $[Aa_i, Ab_j - b_j] \in \mathfrak{g}^{(i+j+1)}$. This concludes the proof. $\square$

6.1.2 Dilation Structures

dilation!– in stratified algebra

Definition 6.1.16 (Dilations on stratified algebras)**.** Let $\mathfrak{g} = V_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s$ be a stratified Lie algebra and $\lambda > 0$. The *(inhomogeneous) dilation on* $\mathfrak{g}$ *(relative to the stratification* $V_1, \dots, V_s$*) of factor* λ is the linear map $\delta_\lambda : \mathfrak{g} \to \mathfrak{g}$ such that

$$\delta_\lambda v = \lambda^j v, \qquad \forall v \in V_j.$$

Lemma 6.1.17. *The dilation* $\delta_\lambda : \mathfrak{g} \to \mathfrak{g}$ *is a Lie algebra automorphism, i.e.,*

$$\delta_\lambda([X,Y]) = [\delta_\lambda X, \delta_\lambda Y], \qquad \forall X, Y \in \mathfrak{g}.$$

Proof. Take $X, Y \in \mathfrak{g}$ and decompose them as $X = \sum_{i=1}^s X_i$, $Y = \sum_{i=1}^s Y_i$, with $X_i, Y_i \in V_i$. Since $[X_i, Y_i] \in [V_i, V_j] \subset V_{i+j}$, we get

$$[\delta_\lambda X, \delta_\lambda Y] = \sum_{i,j} [\lambda^i X_i, \lambda^j Y_j] = \sum_{i,j} \lambda^{i+j} [X_i, Y_j] = \sum_{i,j} \delta_\lambda([X_i, Y_j]) = \delta_\lambda \left(\sum_{i,j} [X_i, Y_j] \right) = \delta_\lambda([X,Y]).$$

Moreover, δ_λ is invertible with inverse $\delta_{1/\lambda}$. □

Lemma 6.1.18. *The dilation* $\delta_\lambda : \mathfrak{g} \to \mathfrak{g}$ *has determinant equal to* λ^Q *with*

$$Q = \sum_{j=1}^s j \cdot \dim(V_j).$$

Proof. Fix a basis $X_1, \dots, X_n$ adapted to the stratification. Then in this basis δ_λ is represented by the diagonal matrix with diagonal

$$(\underbrace{\lambda, \dots, \lambda}_{\dim V_1}, \underbrace{\lambda^2, \dots, \lambda^2}_{\dim V_2}, \dots, \underbrace{\lambda^s, \dots, \lambda^s}_{\dim V_s}).$$

Hence the determinant is $\lambda^{\dim V^1} \cdot (\lambda^2)^{\dim V_2} \cdot \dots \cdot (\lambda^s)^{\dim V_s} = \lambda^Q$. □

6.2 Carnot groups

Let G be a simply connected Lie group. Assume $\mathrm{Lie}(G) = V_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s$ is a stratification. Fix a norm $\|\cdot\|$ on the vector space V_1. The vector space V_1 seen as a subset of $T_e G$ induces a left-invariant subbundle Δ of the tangent bundle TG:

$$\Delta_g := (L_g)_* V_1, \qquad \forall g \in G. \tag{6.2.1}$$

The norm on V_1 induces a norm on any Δ_g as

$$\|v\| := \|(L_g)^* v\|, \qquad \forall v \in \Delta_g, \quad \forall g \in G. \tag{6.2.2}$$

stratified!–Lie group
Carnot group
homogeneous dimension

Remark 6.2.3. The triple $(G, \Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ is a subFinsler manifold. Indeed, to see that Δ is bracket generating, take $X \in V_j$ for an arbitrary j. Write X as $\sum_i [X_{i,1}, [X_{i,2}, \dots, X_{i,j}]]$ with $X_{i,k} \in V_1$. If $\tilde{X}_{i,k}$ are left-invariant vector fields extending $X_{i,k}$, then $\tilde{X}_{i,k} \in \Gamma(\Delta)$ and

$$\left(\sum_i [\tilde{X}_{i,1}, [\tilde{X}_{i,2}, \dots, \tilde{X}_{i,j}]] \right)_e = X.$$

Definition 6.2.4 (Stratified Lie group)**.** We say that a Lie group is *stratified* if it is simply connected and its Lie algebra is stratified.

Definition 6.2.5 (Carnot group)**.** Let G be a stratified group. Let V_1 be the first stratum of the stratification of Lie(G). Let Δ and $\|\cdot\|$ be defined by (6.2.1) and (6.2.2), respectively. Let d_{CC} be the Carnot-Carathéodory distance associated to Δ and $\|\cdot\|$. Both the subFinsler manifold $(G, \Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ and the metric space (G, d_{CC}) are called *Carnot groups.*

If Lie$(G) = V_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s$ is the stratification of the Lie algebra of a Carnot group G, then the topological dimension of G. is $n = \sum_i \dim V_i$ and the homogeneous dimension of the subFinsler manifold $(G, \Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ can be expressed as the value

$$Q := \sum_{i=1}^{s} i \dim V_i. \tag{6.2.6}$$

A Carnot group $(G, \Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ is indeed an equiregular Carnot-Carathéodory space. Indeed, one has that, for each j, $\Delta^{[j]}$ is the left-invariant subbundle for which

$$\Delta^{[j]}(e) = V_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus V_j.$$

One should observe that another choice of the norm would not change the biLipschitz equivalence class of the sub-Finsler manifold. Namely, if $\|\cdot\|_2$ is another left-invariant Finsler norm on G, then

$$\mathrm{id} : (\mathbb{G}, d_{CC,\|\cdot\|}) \to (\mathbb{G}, d_{CC,\|\cdot\|_2})$$

is globally biLipschitz. So as a consequence of our interest to metric spaces up to biLipschitz equivalence, we may assume that the norm $\|\cdot\|$ is coming from a scalar product $\langle\cdot|\cdot\rangle$.

In the definition of the Carnot-Carathéodory distance only the value of the scalar product on V_1, and not on all $\mathfrak{g}$, is important. Defining a scalar product on V_1 is equivalent to specifying an orthonormal basis of it. So, denoting by m the dimension of V_1, we fix an inner product in V_1 by fixing an orthonormal basis $X_1, \dots, X_m$ of V_1. This basis of V_1 induces the Carnot-Carathéodory left-invariant distance d in $\mathbb{G}$, which we recall can be defined as follows: dilation!– in stratified group intrinsic dilations

$$d(x,y) := \inf\left\{ \int_0^1 \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^m |a_i(t)|^2}\, dt : \ \gamma(0)=x,\ \ \gamma(1)=y \right\},$$

where the infimum is among all absolute continuous curves $\gamma : [0,1] \to \mathbb{G}$ such that $\dot\gamma(t) = \sum_1^m a_i(t)(X_i)_{\gamma(t)}$ for a.e. $t \in [0,1]$ (the so-called horizontal curves).

Definition 6.2.7 (Dilations on stratified groups)**.** Let G be a stratified group. Let $\delta_\lambda : \mathrm{Lie}(G) \to \mathrm{Lie}(G)$ be the dilation of factor λ associated to the stratification. Then the *dilation* $\delta_\lambda : G \to G$ of the group of factor λ is the only group automorphism such that $(\delta_\lambda)_* = \delta_\lambda$.

Such maps are also called the *intrinsic dilations* of the stratified group.

We have kept the same notation δ_λ for both dilations (in $\mathfrak{g}$ and in $\mathbb{G}$) because no ambiguity will arise since the two maps have different domains.

Remark 6.2.8. From Theorem 4.1.6 the above map is well defined since by assumption a stratified group is simply connected. Moreover, from Theorem 4.2.2 we have

$$\delta_\lambda \circ \exp = \exp \circ \delta_\lambda.$$

In fact, since strtified groups have nilpotent Lie algebras, the map $\exp : \mathfrak{g} \to \mathbb{G}$ is a diffeomorphism by Theorem 6.0.6, so any element $g \in \mathbb{G}$ can represented as $\exp(X)$ for some unique $X \in \mathfrak{g}$, and therefore uniquely written in the form

$$\exp\left(\sum_{i=1}^s v_i\right), \qquad v_i \in V_i,\ 1 \le i \le s. \tag{6.2.9}$$

This representation allows to have the formula:

$$\delta_\lambda\left(\exp\left(\sum_{i=1}^s v_i\right)\right) = \exp\left(\sum_{i=1}^s \lambda^i v_i\right).$$

We have the formula

$$\delta_\lambda \circ \delta_\eta = \delta_{\lambda\eta}. \tag{6.2.10}$$

We remark that the fact that one can use Baker-Campbell-Hausdorff formula to show that if one defines $\delta_\lambda : \mathbb{G} \to \mathbb{G}$ by (6.2.10), then such maps are group homomorphisms, i.e.,

$$\delta_\lambda(xy) = \delta_\lambda(x)\delta_\lambda(y) \qquad \forall x,\, y \in \mathbb{G}. \tag{6.2.11}$$

The fact that by definition we have $\delta_\lambda X = (\delta_\lambda)_* X$, for all $X \in \mathrm{Lie}(G)$, says that, for all functions $u \in C^\infty(G)$, we have

$$X(u \circ \delta_\lambda)(g) = (\delta_\lambda X)u(\delta_\lambda g) \qquad \forall g \in \mathbb{G},\ \lambda \geq 0. \tag{6.2.12}$$

Such relation (6.2.12) between dilations in $\mathbb{G}$ and dilations in $\mathfrak{g}$ can also be directly shown using (6.2.10) as definition for the group dilation:

$$\begin{aligned} X(u \circ \delta_\lambda)(g) &= \frac{d}{dt} u \circ \delta_\lambda (g \exp(tX))\Big|_{t=0} = \frac{d}{dt} u(\delta_\lambda g \delta_\lambda \exp(tX))\Big|_{t=0} \\ &= \frac{d}{dt} u(\delta_\lambda g \exp(t\delta_\lambda X))\Big|_{t=0} = (\delta_\lambda X)u(\delta_\lambda g). \end{aligned}$$

6.2.1 Dilations and CC distances

The Carnot-Carathéodory distance is well-behaved under the intrinsic dilations, in the sense that such dilations multiply distances of a constant factor.

Proposition 6.2.13. *If (G, d_{CC}) is a Carnot group with dilations δ_λ, $\lambda > 0$. Then*

$$d_{CC}(\delta_\lambda p, \delta_\lambda q) = \lambda d_{CC}(p, q), \qquad \forall p,\, q \in \mathbb{G}. \tag{6.2.14}$$

for all $p, q \in G$.

Proof. Since $\delta_\lambda|_{V_1}$ is the multiplication by λ, we have that $\|\delta_\lambda v\| = \lambda \|v\|$, for all $v \in \Delta$. If γ in a horizontal curve from x to y, then $\delta_\lambda \circ \gamma$ is a curve going from $\delta_\lambda x$ to $\delta_\lambda y$ whose tangent vectors are, for almost all t,

$$(\delta_\lambda)_* \dot\gamma(t) = \delta_\lambda(\dot\gamma(t)) = \lambda \dot\gamma(t), \tag{6.2.15}$$

which are horizontal since $\dot\gamma(t)$ is horizontal. Moreover, from (6.2.15), the length of $\delta_\lambda \circ \gamma$ is λ times the length of γ, i.e., for all horizontal curve γ,

$$L_{\|\cdot\|}(\delta_\lambda \circ \gamma) = \lambda L_{\|\cdot\|}(\gamma).$$

Thus 6.2.14 has been shown.

□

Exercise 6.2.16. Show that for all $p \in G$, for all $r > 0$

$$B_{d_{CC}}(p, r) = L_p(\delta_r(B_{d_{CC}}(e, 1))).$$

6.3 A deeper study of Carnot groups

6.3.1 A good basis for a Carnot group

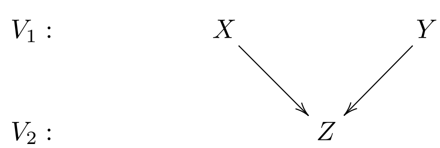
Let $\mathbb{G}$ be a Carnot group with stratification $\mathfrak{g} = V_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s$. We want to construct a basis for $\mathfrak{g}$ that is structured with respect to the stratification, is a Malcev basis, and each element of the basis that is not in V_1, is the bracket of two vectors of such a basis.

Start by picking a basis $X_1, \ldots, X_m$ of V_1. Then consider all brackets $[X_i, X_j]$, for $i, j = 1, \ldots, m$. Since $[V_1, V_1] = V_2$, we can find among such brackets a basis for V_2, cf. Exercise 9.7.1. Pick some such basis and call the elements $X_{m+1}, \ldots, X_{m_2}$. Iterate the method: extract a basis $X_{m_2+1}, \ldots, X_{m_3}$ of V_3 from the set $[X_i, X_j]$, for $i = 1, \ldots, m, j = m+1, \ldots, m_2$. And so on. In such a way we constructed a basis $X_1, \ldots, X_n$ of $\mathfrak{g}$ such that

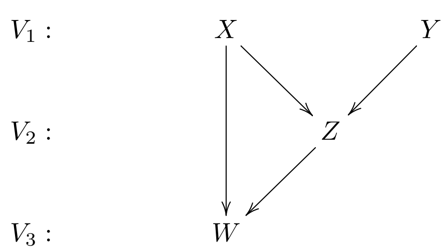
1. $X_{m_{j-1}+1}, \ldots, X_{m_j}$ is a basis of V_j,
2. For any $i = m+1, \ldots, n$, there exist d_i, l_i, and k_i such that $X_i \in V_{d_i}$, $X_{l_i} \in V_1$, $X_{k_i} \in V_{d_i - 1}$, and
$$X_i = [X_{l_i}, X_{k_i}]. \tag{6.3.1}$$
3. The order-reversed basis $X_n, \ldots, X_1$ is a (strong) Malcev basis; in other words,
$$[\mathfrak{g}, \operatorname{span}\{X_k, \ldots, X_n\}] \subseteq \operatorname{span}\{X_{k+1}, \ldots, X_n\}.$$

We would suggest the terminology '*Carnot basis*' for such basis satisfying the above three conditions. The reader should notice that the above property 1 implies the property 3. See Exercise 9.7.2.

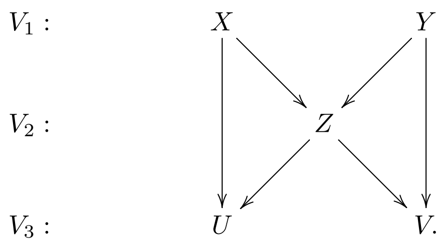
To describe a Carnot algebra we prefer to give a Carnot basis as a hierarchical diagram as



for the 3D Heisenberg algebra,



for the Engel algebra,



for the rank 2 and step 3 algebra.

The j-th line in the diagram list the vectors that span V_j. The black lines express the non-trivial brackets. However, one should notice that in the algebra structure might be more relations than just those in (6.3.1). (Give an example!)

6.3.2 Local-to-global using dilations, and canonical coordinates

Since any Carnot group is nilpotent and simply connected, the map $\exp \mathfrak{g} \to \mathbb{G}$ is a global diffeomorphism, cf. Theorem 6.0.6. Therefore the exponential coordinates are global (and one-to-one) coordinates. As a consequence, the dilations $\delta_\lambda : \mathbb{G} \to \mathbb{G}$ are well-defined. From them one has that such self-similar homomorphisms extend properties that hold in a neighborhood of the identity to the whole of $\mathbb{G}$. As an example, let us show the fact that Malcev coordinates maps are injective and surjective.

Proposition 6.3.2. *On every Carnot group, Malcev coordinates exist.*

Proof. The fact that a Malcev basis $X_1, \ldots, X_n$ exist was shown in the previous subsection. Now consider the coordinate map

$$\Psi : (s_1 \ldots, s_n) \to \exp(s_1 X_1) \cdots \exp(s_n X_n).$$

Obviously

$$(d\Psi)_0 \partial_j = \frac{d}{ds_j} \exp(s_j X_j) \Big|_{s_j=0} X_j,$$

so $(d\Psi)_0$ is an invertible $n \times n$ matrix. Thus Ψ is open at zero, i.e., $\Psi(\mathbb{R}^n)$ is a neighborhood of the identity e. Let us show that $\Psi(\mathbb{R}^n) = \mathbb{G}$. Take $p \in \mathbb{G}$. Then there exists some $\lambda \in \mathbb{R}$ and some $\mathbf{s} \in \mathbb{R}^n$ such that

$$\delta_\lambda^{-1}(p) = \Psi(\mathbf{s}).$$

Let $\tilde{\mathbf{s}} = \delta_\lambda(\mathbf{s})$. Then, since δ_λ on $\mathbb{G}$ is a group homomorphism, we have

$$\begin{aligned}
\Psi(\tilde{\mathbf{s}}) &= \exp(\delta_\lambda(s_1X_1))\cdots\exp(\delta_\lambda(s_nX_n)) \\
&= \delta_\lambda(\exp(s_1X_1))\cdots\delta_\lambda(\exp(s_nX_n)) \\
&= \delta_\lambda(\exp(s_1X_1)\cdots\exp(s_nX_n)) \\
&= \delta_\lambda\Psi(\mathbf{s}) \\
&= p.
\end{aligned}$$

Let us show injectivity. Since $(d\Psi)_0$ is an invertible $n \times n$ matrix, then by the Inverse Function Theorem there is a neighborhood U on which Ψ is injective. Assume now that there are $\mathbf{s}_1, \mathbf{s}_2 \in \mathbb{R}^n$ such that

$$\Psi(\mathbf{s}_1) = \Psi(\mathbf{s}_2).$$

Then, for $\lambda \in \mathbb{R}$ small enough, we have $\delta_\lambda(\mathbf{s}_1), \delta_\lambda(\mathbf{s}_2) \in U$. By the above calculation, we have that

$$\Psi(\delta_\lambda(\mathbf{s}_1)) = \Psi(\delta_\lambda(\mathbf{s}_2)).$$

But, since Ψ is injective on U, we have $\delta_\lambda(\mathbf{s}_1) = \delta_\lambda(\mathbf{s}_2)$, and therefore $\mathbf{s}_1 = \mathbf{s}_2$. □

6.3.3 A direct, effective proof of Chow's Theorem

We will give now an explicit construction of an horizontal path connecting an arbitrary point p in a Carnot group to the origin e. The reader should remind the elementary fact, cf. Theorem 4.2.1, that the curve pe^{tX} is the integral curve of X starting at p.

The brackets as products of exponentials

The philosophy behind the following discussion is that to go in a direction given as a bracket of two vector fields one can go along a quadrilateral constructed using the flows of the two vector fields. We will give a generalization of the following formula with which the reader should be already familiar:

$$[X,Y] = \frac{\mathrm{d}^2}{2\mathrm{d}^2 t} e^{-tY} \circ e^{-tX} \circ e^{tY} \circ e^{tX}\Big|_{t=0} = \frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t} e^{-\sqrt{t}Y} \circ e^{-\sqrt{t}X} \circ e^{\sqrt{t}Y} \circ e^{\sqrt{t}X}\Big|_{t=0}.$$

In the above formula, e^{tX} denotes the flow map of a general vector field on a manifold. So for left-invariant vector fields in a Lie group we have

$$e^{tX}(p) = pe^{tX}.$$

Thus the order might seems reversed.

For $X, Y \in \mathfrak{g}$ and $t \in \mathbb{R}$ define

$$P_t(X,Y) := e^{tX} e^{tY} e^{-tX} e^{-tY}.$$

Using twice the BCH formula one has that, for $t \to 0$,

$$P_t(X,Y) = e^{t^2[X,Y]+o(t^2)}.$$

Suppose we have defined by induction the function $P_t(X_1,\dots,X_k)$, for $k \geq 2$, define then

$$P_t(X_1,\dots,X_{k+1}) := P_t(X_1,\dots,X_k) e^{tX_{k+1}} (P_t(X_1,\dots,X_k))^{-1} e^{-tX_{k+1}}.$$

By induction we shall show that, as $t \to 0$,

$$P_t(X_1,\dots,X_k) = e^{t^k[\dots[[X_1,X_2],X_3],\dots,X_k]+o(t^k)}. \tag{6.3.3}$$

The case $k = 2$ has been already mentioned above, and its proof is similar to the induction step. Assume it true for an arbitrary k. Call $\omega(t)$ the $o(t^k)$ function such that $P_t(X_1,\dots,X_k) = e^{t^k[\dots[[X_1,X_2],X_3],\dots,X_k]+\omega(t)}$. Then we have, by the BCH formula,

$$\begin{aligned}
P_t(X_1,\dots,X_{k+1}) &= P_t(X_1,\dots,X_k) e^{tX_{k+1}} \left(P_t(X_1,\dots,X_k)\right)^{-1} e^{-tX_{k+1}} \\
&= e^{t^k[\dots[X_1,X_2],\dots,X_k]+\omega(t)} e^{tX_{k+1}} \left(e^{t^k[\dots[X_2,X_1],\dots,X_k]+\omega(t)}\right)^{-1} e^{-tX_{k+1}} \\
&= e^{t^k[\dots[X_1,X_2],\dots,X_k]+\omega(t)} e^{tX_{k+1}} e^{-t^k[\dots[X_2,X_1],\dots,X_k]-\omega(t)} e^{-tX_{k+1}} \\
&= e^{\left(tX_{k+1}+t^k[\dots[X_1,X_2],\dots,X_k]+\omega(t)+\frac{1}{2}t^{k+1}[\dots[X_1,X_2],\dots,X_{k+1}]+o(t^{k+1})\right)} \cdot \\
&\qquad e^{\left(-tX_{k+1}-t^k[\dots[X_1,X_2],\dots,X_k]-\omega(t)+\frac{1}{2}t^{k+1}[\dots[X_1,X_2],\dots,X_{k+1}]+o(t^{k+1})\right)} \\
&= e^{t^k[\dots[[X_1,X_2],X_3],\dots,X_{k+1}]+o(t^{k+1})}.
\end{aligned}$$

One should note that each P_t is in fact a product of element of the form $e^{\pm tX_i}$. Thus the following properties are immediate:

$$P_{\lambda t}(X_1,\dots,X_k) = P_t(\lambda X_1,\dots,\lambda X_k), \tag{6.3.4}$$

$$\delta_\lambda P_t(X_1,\dots,X_k) = P_t(\delta_\lambda X_1,\dots,\delta_\lambda X_k). \tag{6.3.5}$$

We construct now a map that will help in constructing horizontal paths. Consider a Carnot basis $X_1,\dots,X_n$, so in particular property (6.3.1) holds. Iterating such property, we have that each element X_j of the basis is such that

$$X_j = [\dots[[X_{j,1},X_{j,2}],X_{j,3}],\dots,X_{j,d_j}],$$

where the basis elements $X_{j,1},\dots,X_{j,d_j}$ are in V_1, and d_j is such that $X_j \in V_{d_j}$, in other words, it is the degree of X_j.

For each j, we consider the expression

$$P^{(j)}(t) := P_t(X_{j,1},\dots,X_{j,d_j}).$$

In the following we will use the notation $t^\alpha = \operatorname{sgn}(t)|t|^\alpha$, so for example we have $\sqrt{-4} = -2$. We finally define the map

$$E(\mathbf{t}) := P^{(1)}(\sqrt[d_1]{t_1})\cdots P^{(n)}(\sqrt[d_n]{t_n}).$$

E.g., for the standard basis in the Heisenberg group we get:

$$E(\mathbf{t}) = e^{t_1 X} e^{t_2 Y} e^{\sqrt{t_3} X} e^{\sqrt{t_3} Y} e^{-\sqrt{t_3} X} e^{-\sqrt{t_3} Y}.$$

For the standard basis in the Engel group we get:

$$\begin{aligned} E(\mathbf{t}) \;=\;& e^{t_2 X}\, e^{t_2 Y}\, e^{\sqrt{t_3} X} e^{\sqrt{t_3} Y} e^{-\sqrt{t_3} X} e^{-\sqrt{t_3} Y} \\ & e^{\sqrt[3]{t_4} X}\, e^{\sqrt[3]{t_4} Y} e^{-\sqrt[3]{t_4} X} e^{-\sqrt[3]{t_4} Y} e^{\sqrt[3]{t_4} X} e^{\sqrt[3]{t_4} Y} e^{\sqrt[3]{t_4} X} e^{-\sqrt[3]{t_4} Y} e^{-\sqrt[3]{t_4} X}\, e^{-\sqrt[3]{t_4} X}. \end{aligned}$$

We will show in order that such a map E satisfies the following three properties.

Proposition 6.3.6. *Let E be the map defined above.*

1. *$E : \mathbb{R}^n \to \mathbb{G}$ is open at $\mathbf{0}$.*

2. *E is surjective.*

3. *E gives a natural horizontal path from $\mathbf{0}$ to $E(\mathbf{t})$.*

The second property follows easily from the first one using dilations. The third is also very elementary since flows of left-invariant vector fields are right multiplications by exponentials. The first is a consequence of the interpretation of the bracket as product of exponential.

Proof of Property 1 of Proposition 6.3.6. We just need to show that $(dE)_0$ is a non-singular matrix.

From how E has been defined and from (6.3.3), we have

$$\begin{aligned}(dE)_0\partial_j &= \frac{d}{dt_j}E(\mathbf{t})\Big|_{\mathbf{t}=0}\\ &= \frac{d}{dt_j}P^{(j)}(\sqrt[d_j]{t_j})\Big|_{t_j=0}\\ &= \frac{d}{dt}P_{\sqrt[d_j]{t}}(X_{j,1},\ldots,X_{j,d_j})\Big|_{t=0}\\ &= \frac{d}{dt}e^{t[\ldots[[X_{j,1},X_{j,2}],X_{j,3}],\ldots,X_{j,d_j}]+o(t)}\Big|_{t=0}\\ &= \frac{d}{dt}e^{tX_j+o(t)}\Big|_{t=0}\\ &= X_j.\end{aligned}$$

In other words, $(dE)_0$ sends the basis $\partial_1,\ldots,\partial_n$ to the basis $X_1,\ldots,X_n$. Property 1 follows from the Inverse Function Theorem.

Proof of Property 2 of Proposition 6.3.6. By Property 1, the set $E(\mathbb{R}^n)$ is a neighborhood of e. On the other hand for each fixed point $q\in\mathbb{G}$, the dilations δ_λ of the Carnot group have the property that $\lim_{\lambda\to 0}\delta_\lambda(q)=e$. From these two facts we have that, for each $p\in\mathbb{G}$, there are $\lambda\in\mathbb{R}$ and $\mathbf{t}\in\mathbb{R}^n$ such that

$$\delta_\lambda(E(\mathbf{t}))=p.$$

Now, let $\tilde{\mathbf{t}}=\delta_\lambda(\mathbf{t})$, i.e., $\tilde{t}_j=\lambda^{d_j}t_j$. First by the properties (6.3.4) and (6.3.5) on P_t, and the fact that $X_{j,1},\ldots,X_{j,d_j}$ are in V_1, one has

$$\begin{aligned}P^{(j)}(\sqrt[d_j]{\tilde{t}_j}) &= P^{(j)}(\sqrt[d_j]{\lambda^{d_j}t_j})\\ &= P^{(j)}(\lambda\sqrt[d_j]{t_j})\\ &= P_{\lambda\sqrt[d_j]{t_j}}(X_{j,1},\ldots,X_{j,d_j})\\ &= P_{\sqrt[d_j]{t_j}}(\lambda X_{j,1},\ldots,\lambda X_{j,d_j})\\ &= P_{\sqrt[d_j]{t_j}}(\delta_\lambda(X_{j,1}),\ldots,\delta_\lambda(X_{j,d_j}))\\ &= \delta_\lambda\left(P_{\sqrt[d_j]{t_j}}(X_{j,1},\ldots,X_{j,d_j})\right)\\ &= \delta_\lambda P^{(j)}(\sqrt[d_j]{t_j}).\end{aligned}$$

Then, since δ_λ on $\mathbb{G}$ is a group homomorphism, one get

$$\begin{aligned} E(\tilde{\mathbf{t}}) &= P^{(1)}(\sqrt[d_1]{\tilde{t}_1})\cdots P^{(n)}(\sqrt[d_n]{\tilde{t}_n}) \\ &= \delta_\lambda(P^{(1)}(\sqrt[d_1]{t_1}))\cdots\delta_\lambda(P^{(n)}(\sqrt[d_n]{t_n})) \\ &= \delta_\lambda\left(P^{(1)}(\sqrt[d_1]{t_1})\cdots P^{(n)}(\sqrt[d_n]{t_n})\right) \\ &= \delta_\lambda E(\mathbf{t}) \\ &= p. \end{aligned}$$

Thus $E(\mathbb{R}^n)$ is in fact the whole of $\mathbb{G}$, i.e., E is surjective.

Proof of Property 3 of Proposition 6.3.6. Recall, cf. Theorem 4.2.1, that the flow lines of a left-invariant vector field X are the curves ge^{tX}, fixed $g \in \mathbb{G}$ and varying $t \in \mathbb{R}$. Now, since P_t is a product of exponentials, then E is too. More explicitly, fixed $\mathbf{t} \in \mathbb{R}^n$, we have

$$E(\mathbf{t}) = \exp(\xi_1 t_{\gamma_1}^{\alpha_1} X_{\beta_1})\cdots\exp(\xi_N t_{\gamma_N}^{\alpha_N} X_{\beta_N}),$$

for $\xi_i \in \{1,-1\}$, $\alpha_i^{-1} \in \mathbb{N}$, $\beta_i \in \{1,\ldots,m\}$, $\gamma_i \in \{1,\ldots n\}$, and $N \in \mathbb{N}$. Now it is enough to observe that, fixed K, the point

$$g := \exp(\xi_1 t_{\gamma_1}^{\alpha_1} X_{\beta_1})\cdots\exp(\xi_K t_{\gamma_K}^{\alpha_K} X_{\beta_K})$$

can be connected to the point

$$\exp(\xi_1 t_{\gamma_1}^{\alpha_1} X_{\beta_1})\cdots\exp(\xi_K t_{\gamma_K}^{\alpha_K} X_{\beta_K})\exp(\xi_{K+1} t_{\gamma_{K+1}}^{\alpha_{K+1}} X_{\beta_{K+1}})$$

by the path

$$g\exp(\xi_{K+1} s X_{\beta_{K+1}}), \qquad \text{for } s \in [0, |t_{\gamma_{K+1}}^{\alpha_{K+1}}|],$$

which is tangent to $\pm X_{\beta_{K+1}}$, thus horizontal. □

Corollary 6.3.7 (Chow's Theorem for Carnot groups)**.** *Any point $p \in \mathbb{G}$ in a Carnot group can be joined to the identity e by a horizontal path. Moreover, the CC-distance induces the manifold topology.*

Proof. Property 2 and 3 of Proposition 6.3.6 give the existence of a path from e to any given point p. Thus $d_{CC}(e,p) < \infty$, for all $p \in \mathbb{G}$. By left invariance of d_{CC} we have $d_{CC}(p,q) < \infty$, for all $p, q \in \mathbb{G}$.

Since E is in fact open at $\mathbf{0}$, by Property 1 of Proposition 6.3.6, then points close to the origin can be connected to the origin by short horizontal curves. □

6.3.4 A proof of the Ball-Box Theorem for Carnot groups

Let (G, d_{CC}) be a Carnot group and let $V_1, \dots, V_s$ be a stratification of Lie(G),. Let $X_1, \dots, X_n$ be a basis of Lie(G) adapted to the stratification i.e., for all j there exists d_j such that $X_j \in V_{d_j}$.

The the number d_j is called *degree* of X_j and it may be denoted by $\deg(X_j)$. The *box* with respect to the fixed basis $X_1, \dots, X_n$ is defined as

$$\mathtt{Box}(r) := \{(t_1, \dots, t_n) \in \mathbb{R}^n \ : \ |t_j| < r^{d_j}\}$$

Let $\delta_\lambda : \mathbb{R}^n \to \mathbb{R}^n$ be the map

$$\delta_\lambda(t_1, \dots, t_n) = (\lambda t_1, \dots, \lambda^{d_j} t_j, \dots, \lambda^s t_n).$$

Exercise 6.3.8. Show that for all $r, \lambda > 0$

$$\delta_\lambda(\mathtt{Box}(r)) = \mathtt{Box}(\lambda r).$$

Let $\Phi : \mathbb{R}^n \to G$ be the exponential coordinate map with respect to the basis $X_1, \dots, X_n$, i.e., $\Phi(\mathbf{t}) = \exp(\sum_j t_j X_j)$. Then we have that $\Phi(\mathtt{Box}(1))$ is a bounded neighborhood of e in G. (Notice that this last fact holds since Φ is a diffeomorphism, however it is just a consequence of the fact that the differential at 0 of Φ is the identity and hence Φ is a local diffeomorphism in a neighborhood of the identity)

Let d_{CC} be the Carnot-Carathéodory distance of the Carnot group G. Since V_1 bracket generates Lie(G), by Chow Theorem 6.3.7 the distance d_{CC} induces the manifold topology. Hence, there is $C > 1$ such that

$$B(e, \frac{1}{C}) \subset \Phi(\mathtt{Box}(1)) \subset B(e, C),$$

where $B(e, r)$ is the CC-ball of center the origin e and radius r. Recalling that that $\delta_\lambda(B(e, r)) = B(e, \lambda r)$ and applying δ_λ, we get

$$B(e, \frac{\lambda}{C}) \subset \delta_\lambda \Phi(\mathtt{Box}(1)) \subset B(e, \lambda C),$$

where

$$\begin{aligned}\delta_\lambda\left(\Phi(\texttt{Box}(1))\right) &= \delta_\lambda\left(\Phi\left\{(t_1,\dots,t_n) : |t_j|<1\right\}\right)\\ &= \delta_\lambda\left\{\exp\left(\sum_j t_j X_j\right) : |t_j|<1\right\}\\ &= \left\{\exp\left(\delta_\lambda \sum_j t_j X_j\right) : |t_j|<1\right\}\\ &= \left\{\exp\left(\sum_j \lambda^{d_j} t_j X_j\right) : |t_j|<1\right\}\\ &= \left\{\exp\left(\sum_j s_j X_j\right) : |s_j|<\lambda^{d_j}\right\}\\ &= \Phi(\texttt{Box}(\lambda)).\end{aligned}$$

Therefore, we conclude that

$$B(e, \frac{\lambda}{C}) \subset \Phi(\texttt{Box}(\lambda)) \subset B(e, \lambda C), \qquad \forall \lambda > 0. \tag{6.3.9}$$

Theorem 6.3.10 (Ball-Box for Carnot groups)**.** *Let G be a Carnot froup. Fix a basis adapted to the stratification $V_1, \dots, V_s$. Then there is $C > 1$ such that for all $p \in G$ and all $r > 0$*

$$B(p, \frac{\lambda}{C}) \subset \Phi_p(\texttt{Box}(\lambda)) \subset B(p, \lambda C), \tag{6.3.11}$$

where Φ_p is the exponential coordinate map from p with respect to the fixed basis.

Proof. By the definition of Φ_p we have

$$\Phi_p(\mathbf{t}) = p\exp(\sum t_j X_j) = L_p \Phi(\mathbf{t}).$$

Since d_{CC} is left-invariant, applying L_p to (6.3.9), we obtain (6.3.11) for all $p \in G$ and all $\lambda > 0$. $\square$

6.3.5 Haar, Hausdorff and Lebesgue measures

Carnot groups are nilpotent and so unimodular, therefore right- and left-Haar measures coincide, up to constant multiples. We fix one of them and denote it by $\mathrm{vol}_{\mathbb{G}}$.

For every $k > 0$, the k-dimensional Hausdorff measure $\mathscr{H}^k$ and the k-dimensional spherical Hausdorff measure $\mathscr{S}^k$ are left-invariant.

We shall see that for $k = Q$ these measures are Radon measures, and therefore are Hausdorff measures, so a multiple of $\mathrm{vol}_{\mathbb{G}}$. We shall actually show that in exponential coordinates, all these measures are a constant multiple of the Lebesgue measure, which in $\mathbb{R}^n$ is denoted by $\mathcal{L}^n$.

Definition 6.3.12 (Homogeneous dimension for a Carnot group)**.** If G is a stratified group and $V_1, \dots, V_s$ is the stratification of its Lie algebra, we call

$$Q := \sum_{j=1}^{s} j \cdot \dim V_j$$

the *homogeneous dimension* of G.

Exercise 6.3.13. Show that this notion of homogeneous dimension agrees with the one on subFinsler manifolds.

Proposition 6.3.14. *Let G be a Carnot group of homogeneous dimension Q.*

1. *If* vol *is a Haar measure of G, then*

$$\mathrm{vol}(B(p,r)) = r^Q \,\mathrm{vol}(B(e)).$$

2. *The Hausdorff dimension of G is Q.*

3. *In exponential coordinates, the Lebesgue measure is the Hausdorff Q-measure up to a multiplication by a constant.*

Proof. In exponential coordinates, the Lebesgue measure $\mathcal{L}^n$ is both left and right-invariant, so any other Haar measure is a multiple of it. In exponential coordinate, the inhomogeneous dilations δ_λ have Jacobian λ^Q, i.e., $\lambda^Q \cdot \mathcal{L}^n(\mathtt{Box}(1)) = \mathcal{L}^n(\mathtt{Box}(\lambda))$. Hence

$$\mathcal{L}^n(B(p,\lambda)) = \mathcal{L}^n(B(1_G,\lambda)) = \mathcal{L}^n(\delta_\lambda(B(1_G,1))) = \lambda^Q \mathcal{L}^n(B(1_G,1))$$

By an early proposition, the Hausdorff dimension is Q. The last part follows since both $\mathcal{L}^n$ and the Hausdorff Q-measure are both Haar measures. □

Exercise 6.3.15. Show that, if X_i is a Carnot basis, then for some constant c we have

$$\mathrm{vol}_G\big(\{\exp(\sum_{i=1}^{n} x_i X_i) : \ (x_1,\dots,x_n) \in A\}\big) = c\mathcal{L}^n(A) \qquad \text{for all Borel sets } A \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n.$$

Exercise 6.3.16. Prove that

$$\mathrm{vol}_{\mathbb{G}}(\delta_\lambda(A)) = \lambda^Q \,\mathrm{vol}_{\mathbb{G}}(A) \tag{6.3.17}$$

for all Borel sets $A \subseteq \mathbb{G}$.

6.4 Exercises

Exercise 6.4.1. Show that, if $\mathfrak{g}^{(i)} = \mathfrak{g}^{(i+1)}$ for some i, then for all $j > i$ $\mathfrak{g}^{(j)} = \mathfrak{g}^{(i)}$.

Exercise 6.4.2. Show that $\mathfrak{g}^{(i+1)} \subset \mathfrak{g}^{(i)}$ for all i.

Exercise 6.4.3. Show that N_3 is the Heisenberg group.

Exercise 6.4.4. Let $\mathfrak{g}$ be a Lie algebra with a step s stratification $\mathfrak{g} = V_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s$. Denote by $\mathfrak{g}^{(k)}$ the k-th element in the lower central series. Show that

$$\mathfrak{g}^{(k)} = V_k \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s.$$

Exercise 6.4.5. Show that if a Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$ has a step s stratification, then $\mathfrak{g}$ is nilpotent of step s, thus the assumption of a Carnot group being nilpotent is superfluous.

Exercise 6.4.6. Let δ_λ be the dilation of factor λ as defined either at the group level in Definition 6.2.7 or at the algebra level in Definition 6.1.16. Show that $(\delta_\lambda)^{-1} = \delta_{1/\lambda}$.

Exercise 6.4.7. Let $\mathfrak{g} = V_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s$ be a stratified algebra. For all $\lambda \geq 0$, let δ_λ be the dilation of factor λ as defined in Definition 6.1.16. Show that

$$\delta_\lambda \left(\sum_{i=1}^{s} v_i \right) := \sum_{i=1}^{s} \lambda^i v_i,$$

where $X = \sum_{i=1}^{s} v_i$ with $v_i \in V_i$, $1 \leq i \leq s$.

Exercise 6.4.8. Let $\mathfrak{h}$ be the Heisenberg Lie algebra generated by the vectors X, Y, and Z with only non-trivial relation $[X, Y] = Z$. Show that the decomposition

$$\mathfrak{h} = \operatorname{span}\{X, Y\} \oplus \operatorname{span}\{Z\}$$

is a step 2 stratification.

Exercise 6.4.9. Let $g := \mathbb{R} \times \mathfrak{h}$ be the (commutative) product of $\mathbb{R}$ with the (above) Heisenberg Lie algebra $\mathfrak{h}$. Show that

$$g = (\mathbb{R} \times \operatorname{span}\{X, Y\}) \oplus (\{0\} \times \operatorname{span}\{Z\})$$

is a step 2 stratification with center $\mathbb{R} \times \operatorname{span}\{Z\}$ which is stricly bigger than V_2.

Exercise 6.4.10. Show that if a Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$ has a step s stratification $\mathfrak{g} = V_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s$, then

1. V_s is contained in the center of $\mathfrak{g}$;

2. $V_k \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s$ is normal in $\mathfrak{g}$; $(V_k \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s)/(V_{k+1} \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s)$ is contained in the center of $(V_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s)/(V_{k+1} \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s)$.

Exercise 6.4.11. Show that if G is a Carnot group and Δ is the left-invariant distribution with $\Delta_e = V_1$, then $(\Delta^{[j]})_e = V_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus V_j$.

Exercise 6.4.12. Show that if G is a Carnot group and Δ is the left-invariant distribution with $\Delta_e = V_1$, then the three definitions (3.4.6), (3.4.7), (3.4.8), and (6.2.6) of Q coincide.

Exercise 6.4.13. Use the BCH formula to show (6.2.11).

Exercise 6.4.14. Use the definitions to prove (6.2.14).

Exercise 6.4.15. Show that is any Carnot groups there is a (strong) Malcev basis

Exercise 6.4.16. Prove that, if M is a Riemannian manifold, then the Carnot group structure that any T_pM inherits is Abelian.

Exercise 6.4.17. Prove that, if M is a contact 3-manifold, then the Carnot group structure that any T_pM inherits is the Heisenberg algebra.

Exercise 6.4.18. Prove that, if G is a Carnot group, then the Carnot group structure that any T_pG inherits is the Lie algebra Lie(G) itself.

Exercise 6.4.19. Give an example of Lie group G with a left-invariant bracket-generating distribution such that Carnot group structure that T_eG inherits is NOT isomorphic to the Lie algebra Lie(G).

Exercise 6.4.20. [A nilpotent nonstratifiable algebra] Consider the 7-dimensional Lie algebra $\mathfrak{h}$ generated by $X_1, \ldots, X_7$ with only nontrivial brackets

$$\begin{gathered}
[X_1, X_2] = X_3 \\
[X_1, X_3] = 2X_4 \\
[X_1, X_4] = 3X_5 \\
[X_2, X_3] = X_5 \\
[X_1, X_5] = 4X_6 \\
[X_2, X_4] = 2X_6 \\
[X_1, X_6] = 5X_7 \\
[X_2, X_5] = 3X_7 \\
[X_3, X_4] = X_7
\end{gathered}$$

Show the following facts:

1) it is a Lie algebra

2) it is nilpotent

3) it does not admit any stratification.

Exercise 6.4.21. Fix a positive integer $n \geq 7$, and consider the n-dimensional Lie algebra $\mathfrak{h}$ generated by $X_1, \ldots, X_n$ with

$$[X_i, X_j] = \begin{cases} (j-i)X_{i+j}, & \text{if } i+j \leq n, \\ 0, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Show the following facts:

1) it is a Lie algebra

2) it is nilpotent

3) it does not admit any stratification.

Exercise 6.4.22 (Definition of grading of an algebra)**.** A Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$ is said to *admit a grading* if there exists subspaces $V_1, \ldots, V_s \subset \mathfrak{g}$ such that $\mathfrak{g} = V_1 \oplus \ldots \oplus V_s$ with the property that $[V_i, V_j] \subseteq V_{i+j}$, for all $i, j > 0$, where $V_j := \{0\}$ for $j > s$. Here, the elements in V_j are said to *have degree* j. Prove that an algebra that admits a grading is nilpotent.

Exercise 6.4.23 (Suggested by E. Breuillard)**.** Let $\mathfrak{g}$ be a Lie algebra that admits a grading. Assume that the elements of degree 1, namely V_1, generate $\mathfrak{g}$, as a Lie algebra, then $\mathfrak{g}$ is stratified by $V_1, \ldots, V_s$.

Hint: If the bracket of V_1 with itself were smaller than V_2, then V_1 would not generate, because the Lie subalgebra it generates will not contain all of V_2...

Exercise 6.4.24 (A graded nonstratifiable algebra)**.** Let $\mathfrak{g}$ be the algebra from Example 6.4.20. Show that

1) $\mathfrak{g}$ admits a grading. Hint: $V_i = \mathbb{R}X_i$.

2) For a given grading, the elements of degree 1, V_1, do not generate $\mathfrak{g}$.

3) $\mathfrak{g}$ does not admit any stratification.

Exercise 6.4.25 (A nontrivial filiform algebra)**.** Consider the 6-dimensional Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$ given by span$\{y_0, y_1, y_2, y_3, y_4, y_5\}$ with only non-zero brackets

$$\begin{aligned}
[y_0, y_1] &= y_2, \\
[y_0, y_2] &= y_3, \\
[y_0, y_3] &= y_4, \\
[y_0, y_4] &= y_5 \\
[y_1, y_4] &= -y_5, \\
[y_2, y_3] &= y_5.
\end{aligned}$$

Show the following facts:

1) it is a Lie algebra, i.e., Jacobi identity is satisfied.

2) it admits a stratification.

3) it is a filiform algebra (i.e., the dimensions of the subspaces of the stratification are the smallest possible, namely $2, 1, \ldots, 1$).

Exercise 6.4.26 (Suggested by E. Breuillard)**.** Let $\mathfrak{g}$ be the 3-step Lie algebra generated by e_1, e_2, e_3 and with the relation $[e_2, e_3] = 0$.

Show that $\mathfrak{g}$ is of dimension 10 and that the following is a stratification of $\mathfrak{g}$.

$$V_1 :=< e_1 > + < e_2 > + < e_3 >$$

$$V_2 :=< [e_1, e_2] > + < [e_1, e_3] >$$

$$V_3 :=< [e_1, [e_1, e_2]] > + < [e_2, [e_1, e_2]] > + < [e_3, [e_1, e_2]] > + < [e_3, [e_3, e_1]] > + < [e_1, [e_1, e_3]] >$$

Check that this satisfies the Jacobi identity and is thus a legitimate Lie algebra.

Now let $V_1' :=< e_1 > + < e_2 + [e_1, e_2] > + < e_3 >$. Clearly V_1' projects onto V_1 modulo $V_2 + V_3$ and has dimension 3, so it is in direct sum with $[\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}] = V_2 + V_3$. However $[V_1', V_1']$ is not in direct sum with $[g, [g, g]]$, because it contains $[e_3, e_2 + [e_1, e_2]] = [e_3, [e_1, e_2]]$, and in fact $V_2' := [V_1', V_1']$ has dimension 3, not 2.

Chapter 7

Limits of Riemannian and subRiemannian manifolds

7.1 Limits of metric spaces

SubRiemannian Carnot groups appear as limiting metric spaces both as distinguished asymptotic spaces and as tangent spaces. Mostly one can limit the study to distances that converge uniformly on compact sets. However, it may be useful in consider such convergence as a particular case of Gromov-Hausdoff convergence.

7.1.1 A topology on the space of metric spaces

Let X and Y be metric spaces, $L > 1$ and $C > 0$.

A map $\phi : X \to Y$ is an (L, C)-*quasi-isometric embedding* if for all $x, x' \in X$

$$\frac{1}{L} d(x, x') - C \leq d(\phi(x), \phi(x')) \leq L d(x, x') + C.$$

If $A, B \subset Y$ are subsets of a metric space Y and $\epsilon > 0$, we say that A is an ϵ-*net* for B if

$$B \subset \mathrm{Nbhd}_\epsilon^Y(A) := \{y \in Y : d(x, A) < \epsilon\}.$$

Definition 7.1.1 (Hausdorff approximating sequence)**.** Let $(X_j, x_j), (Y_j, y_j)$ be two sequences of pointed metric spaces. A sequence of maps $\phi_j : (X_j, x_j) \to (Y_j, y_j)$ is said to be *Hausdorff approximating* if for all $R > 0$ and all $\delta > 0$ there exists ϵ_j such that

1. $\epsilon_j \to 0$ as $j \to \infty$;
2. $\phi_j|_{B(x_i,R)}$ is a $(1, \epsilon_j)$-quasi isometric embedding;
3. $\phi_j(B(x_j, R))$ is an ϵ_j-net for $B(y_j, R - \delta)$.

Definition 7.1.2. We say that a sequence of pointed metric spaces (X_j, x_j) converges to a pointed metric space (Y, y) if there exists an Hausdorff approximating sequence $\phi_j : (X_j, x_j) \to (Y, y)$.

This notion of convergence was introduced by M. Gromov and it is also called *Gromov-Hausdorff convergence*.

Proposition 7.1.3. *Let d_j be a sequence of distances on a set X that converge to a distance d_∞ uniformly on bounded sets with respect to d_∞. Let $x_0 \in X$.*

If

$$\operatorname{diam}_{d_\infty}\Big(\bigcup_{j\in\mathbb{N}} B_{d_j}(x_0, R)\Big) < \infty, \quad \forall R > 0, \tag{7.1.4}$$

then $\mathrm{id} : (X, d_j, x_0) \to (X, d_\infty, x_0)$ *is a Hausdorff approximating sequence and* (X, d_∞, x_0) *is the limit of* (X, d_j, x_0).

Proof. Exercise. □

Example 7.1.5. The following example shows that condition (7.1.4) is necessary in the last Proposition.

For $n \in \mathbb{N}$ define $\gamma_n : \mathbb{R} \to \mathbb{R}^2$ by

$$\gamma_n(t) := \begin{cases} (t, 0) & t \le n \\ (n, t-n) & n \le t \le n+1 \\ (n-(t-n-1), 1) & n+1 \le t \end{cases}$$

These mappings induce metrics d_n on $\mathbb{R}$ by

$$d_n(x, y) := |\gamma_n(x) - \gamma_n(y)| \quad \forall x, y \in \mathbb{R}.$$

Define also $d_\infty(x, y) := |x - y|$ for $x, y \in \mathbb{R}$.

7.1.2 Asymptotic cones and tangent spaces

If $X = (X, d)$ is a metric space and $\lambda > 0$, we set $\lambda X = (X, \lambda d)$.

Definition 7.1.6. X, Y metric spaces, $x \in X$ and $y \in Y$. We say that (Y, y) is the asymptotic cone of X if for all $\lambda_j \to 0$ $(\lambda_j X, x) \to (Y, y)$.

we say that (Y, y) is the tangent space of X at x if for all $\lambda_j \to \infty$, $(\lambda_j X, x) \to (Y, y)$.

Remark 7.1.7. The notion of asymptotic cone is independent from x.

Remark 7.1.8. In general, asymptotic cones and tangent spaces may not exists.

Remark 7.1.9. In the space of boundedly compact metric spaces, limits are unique up to isometries.

Theorem 7.1.10. *Let G be a nilpotent Lie group equipped with a left-invariant subFinsler distance. Then the asymptotic cone of G exists and is a Carnot group.*

Theorem 7.1.11. *Let M be an equiregular subFinsler manifold and $p \in M$. Then the tangent space of M at p exists and is a Carnot group.*

7.2 Limits of Carnot-Carathéodory distances

7.2.1 Carnot-Carathéodory bundle structures

Let M be a smooth manifold. Let

$$f : M \times \mathbb{R}^m \to TM$$

be a smooth M-bundle morphism. Let

$$N : M \times \mathbb{R}^m \to [0, +\infty)$$

be a continuous function such that $N(p, \cdot)$ is a norm for every $p \in M$.

The couple (f, N) induces a CC-structure as follows. For a fixed $o \in M$ and $u \in L^\infty([0, 1]; \mathbb{R}^m)$ we consider the following Cauchy problem

$$\begin{cases} \gamma'(t) & = f(\gamma(t), u(t)), \\ \gamma(0) & = o. \end{cases}$$

The solution of the previous problem will be denoted by $\gamma_{(o,f,u)}$. Hence one can define

$$d_{(f,N)}(p, q) := \inf \left\{ \int_0^1 N(\gamma(s), u(s))\, \mathrm{d}s : \gamma = \gamma_{(p,f,u)}, \gamma(1) = q \right\}.$$

Notice that the set in the infimum above could be empty. In that case $d_{(f,N)}(p, q) = +\infty$. Any couple (f, N) as above will be called a *CC-bundle structure*.

7.2.2 Continuously varying CC bundle structures.

Definition 7.2.1 (Continuosuly varying CC-bundle structure)**.** Let $\Lambda \subseteq \mathbb{R}$ be a topological space. Let M be a smooth manifold endowed with a Riemannian metric ρ. Endow TM with the bundle metric induced by ρ.

Let $f : \Lambda \times M \times \mathbb{R}^m \to TM$ and $N : \Lambda \times M \times \mathbb{R}^m \to [0, +\infty)$ be maps such that for every $\lambda \in \Lambda$ we have that (f_λ, N_λ) is a CC-bundle structure, where $f_\lambda := f(\lambda, \cdot, \cdot)$ and $N_\lambda := N(\lambda, \cdot, \cdot)$. We say that the family $\{(f_\lambda, N_\lambda)\}_{\lambda \in \Lambda}$ is a *continuously varying CC-bundle structure* if

- $f \in C^0(\Lambda \times M \times \mathbb{R}^m)$;
- $N \in C^0(\Lambda \times M \times \mathbb{R}^m)$;
- For every compact $K_1 \subseteq M$, and every compact $K_2 \subseteq \Lambda \times \mathbb{R}^m$ there exists L such that for every $(\lambda, v) \in K_2$ the vector field

$$K_1 \ni p \mapsto f(\lambda, p, v) \in TM$$

is L-Lipschitz with respect to the Riemannian distances.

We shall prove the following theorem.

Theorem 7.2.2. *Let $\Lambda \subseteq \mathbb{R}$ be compact, and let $\{(f_\lambda, N_\lambda)\}_{\lambda\in\Lambda}$ be a continuously varying CC-bundle structure on a smooth manifold M. Let $d_\lambda := d_{(f_\lambda, N_\lambda)}$ for every $\lambda \in \Lambda$. Let $\lambda_0 \in \Lambda$ be such that $f(\lambda_0, M, \mathbb{R}^m)$ is a bracket-generating distribution and the metric space (M, d_{λ_0}) is boundedly compact.*[1] *Then $d_\lambda \to d_{\lambda_0}$ uniformly on compact sets of M as $\lambda \to \lambda_0$.*

We give the proof of the previous theorem using the following crucial lemma.

Lemma 7.2.3 (Equicontinuity of the distances)**.** *In the same assumptions of Theorem 7.2.2, let $K \subseteq M$ be compact set and ρ Riemannian metric on M. Then there exists a neighborhood $I_{\lambda_0} \subseteq \Lambda$ of λ_0, and β homeomorphism of $[0, +\infty)$ such that*

$$d_\lambda(p, q) \le \beta(\rho(p, q)), \qquad \textit{for all } p, q \in K \textit{ and } \lambda \in I_{\lambda_0}.$$

Proof. Let us fix a Riemannian metric ρ on M^n, where n denotes the dimension of the manifold. Let us denote, for $\lambda \in \Lambda$ and $p \in M$,

$$X_i^\lambda(p) := f(\lambda, p, e_i),$$

where $\{e_1, \dots, e_m\}$ is a standard basis of $\mathbb{R}^m$. Let us fix some $x \in M$ from now on. We know that $\{X_i^{\lambda_0}\}_{i=1}^m$ is a bracket-generating set of vector fields. Hence, for every $\eta > 0$, there exist $X_{i_1}^{\lambda_0}, \dots, X_{i_n}^{\lambda_0}$, where $\{i_1, \dots, i_n\} \subseteq \{1, \dots, m\}$ may depend on η, such that the following holds.

There exists $\hat{t} := (\hat{t}_1, \dots, \hat{t}_n)$ with $|\hat{t}| < \eta$ such that the map

$$(t_1, \dots, t_n) \mapsto \Phi^{t_n}_{X_{i_n}^{\lambda_0}} \circ \dots \circ \Phi^{t_1}_{X_{i_1}^{\lambda_0}}(x),$$

[1] These assumption is probably not necessary.

has a regular point at $\hat{t}$. Notice now that, since the map f is continuous, then the map

$$\Psi_{(i_1,\dots,i_n)} : (\lambda, s_1, \dots, s_n, t_1, \dots, t_n) \mapsto \Phi^{s_1}_{X^\lambda_{i_1}} \circ \dots \Phi^{s_n}_{X^\lambda_{i_n}} \circ \Phi^{t_n}_{X^\lambda_{i_n}} \circ \dots \circ \Phi^{t_1}_{X^\lambda_{i_1}}(x) \tag{7.2.4}$$

is continuous and well defined on $I_{(i_1,\dots,i_n)} \times \overline{B}(0, \xi_{(i_1,\dots,i_n)})$, where $\overline{B}(0, \xi_{(i_1,\dots,i_n)})$ is a sufficiently small neighborhood of 0 in $\mathbb{R}^{2n}$, and $I_{(i_1,\dots,i_n)}$ is a sufficiently small compact neighborhood of λ_0. [2] Let $I_{\lambda_0,x}$ be the intersection of $I_{(i_1,\dots,i_n)}$ over all the possible choices of $\{i_1, \dots, i_n\} \subseteq \{1, \dots, m\}$, and let $\overline{B}(0, \xi)$ be the intersection of $\overline{B}(0, \xi_{(i_1,\dots,i_n)})$ over all the possible choices of $\{i_1, \dots, i_n\} \subseteq \{1, \dots, m\}$. Let K be the union of $\Psi_{(i_1,\dots,i_n)}(I_{\lambda_0,x} \times \overline{B}(0, \xi))$, over all the possible choices of $\{i_1, \dots, i_n\} \subseteq \{1, \dots, m\}$. Hence, by continuity of N, there exists $L > 0$ such that

$$N(\lambda, p, v) \leq L|v|, \quad \text{for all } \lambda \in I_{\lambda_0,x} \text{ and } p \in K. \tag{7.2.5}$$

Let us prove the following claim. We recall that $x \in M$ is fixed.

Claim. For every $\varepsilon > 0$ there exists δ such that

$$B_\rho(x, \delta) \subseteq B_{d_\lambda}(x, \varepsilon), \quad \text{for all } \lambda \in I_{\lambda_0,x},$$

where $I_{\lambda_0,x}$ is defined above.

To prove the claim, take $\nu := \min\{\xi/4, \varepsilon/(4nL)\}$, where ξ is defined above. Hence there exists $\hat{t}$ with $|\hat{t}| < \nu$ and $\{i_1, \dots, i_n\} \subseteq \{1, \dots, m\}$ such that the map $\Psi_{(i_1,\dots,i_n)}(\lambda_0, -\hat{t}_1, \dots, -\hat{t}_n, t_1, \dots, t_n)$ is a diffeomorhpsim between a neighborhood $\hat{U}$ of $\hat{t}$ (that can be taken contained in $\overline{B}(0, 2\nu) \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$) and a neighborhood of $x \in M$. By the continuity of the map $\Psi_{(i_1,\dots,i_n)}$ we get that the convergence

$$\Psi_{(i_1,\dots,i_n)}(\lambda, -\hat{t}, t_1, \dots, t_n) \to \Psi_{(i_1,\dots,i_n)}(\lambda_0, -\hat{t}, t_1, \dots, t_n), \quad \text{for } \lambda \to \lambda_0,$$

is uniform on $(t_1, \dots, t_n) \in \hat{U}$. Hence, applying **??** and **??**, we have that there exists $\delta > 0$ such that

$$B_\rho(x, \delta) \subseteq \Psi_{(i_1,\dots,i_n)}(\lambda, \hat{t}, \hat{U}), \quad \text{for all } \lambda \in I_{\lambda_0,x}.$$

Since $\hat{U} \subseteq \overline{B}(0, \xi/(2nL))$ we get that for every $(s_1, \dots, s_n) \in \hat{U}$ we have

$$|s_1| + \dots + |s_n| \leq \varepsilon/(2L).$$

Moreover, also $|\hat{t}_1| + \dots |\hat{t}_n| \leq \varepsilon/(2L)$, and then from the explicit expression (7.2.4) and the estimate (7.2.5), we get that the endpoint of the concatenation of the curves associated to $\Psi_{(i_1,\dots,i_n)}(\lambda, \hat{t}, s_1, \dots, s_n)$ for any $(s_1, \dots, s_n) \in \hat{U}$ has length $\leq \varepsilon$ for every $\lambda \in I_{\lambda_0,x}$. Hence

$$B_\rho(x, \delta) \subseteq B_{d_\lambda}(x, \varepsilon), \quad \text{for all } \lambda \in I_{\lambda_0,x},$$

[2] GA:Magari spendere due parole in più su questo, conseguenza di Gronwall.

which is the sought claim.

Now a routine compactness argument based on Claim 1. shows that, given a compact $K \subseteq M$, there exists a compact interval $I_{\lambda_0,K} \subseteq \Lambda$ of λ_0 such that for every $\varepsilon > 0$ there exists δ such that

$$B_\rho(x,\delta) \subseteq B_{d_\lambda}(x,\varepsilon), \quad \text{for all } \lambda \in I_{\lambda_0,K}, \text{ for all } x \in K.$$

From the previous conclusion, the proof of the lemma follows. □

Proof of Theorem 7.2.2. We embed M isometrically into some $\mathbb{R}^N$, on which we denote with $|\cdot|$ the standard norm. Let us fix a compact set K and a Riemannian metric ρ on M. Notice that on every compact set of M, ρ and $|\cdot|$ are biLipschitz equivalent. Let us fix $0 < \varepsilon < 1$.

By continuity, there exists a constant $C > 0$ such that $d_{\lambda_0}(p,q) \leq C$ for every $p,q \in K$. Let $K' := \overline{B}_{\lambda_0}(K, C+1)$ the closed tubular neighborhood of K of radius $C+1$. Since (M, d_{λ_0}) is boundedly compact, we deduce that K' is compact.

Let β be the functions, and I_{λ_0} be the compact neighborhood of λ_0, associated to K' given from Lemma 7.2.3. Notice that for every $p,q \in K$ and for every $\lambda \in I_{\lambda_0}$ we have that

$$d_\lambda(p,q) \leq \beta(|p-q|) \leq \beta(\operatorname{diam}_{|\cdot|} K).$$

Since $N(\lambda, p, \cdot)$ is a norm for every $\lambda \in I_{\lambda_0}$ and every $p \in M$, and since N is continuous, we get that there exists a compact set $K'' \subseteq \mathbb{R}^m$ such that

$$\text{if } N(\lambda,x,v) \leq \beta(\operatorname{diam}_{|\cdot|} K) + 1 \text{ for some } \lambda \in I_{\lambda_0} \text{ and } x \in K', \text{ then } v \in K''. \tag{7.2.6}$$

Moreover, by definition of continuously varying CC-structures, we have that there exists $L > 0$ such that for every $\lambda \in I_{\lambda_0}$ and $v \in K''$ the map

$$K' \ni p \mapsto f(\lambda, p, v),$$

is L-lipschitz.

Because of continuity of the functions N and f we get that there exist $0 < \delta_2 < \delta_1 < \varepsilon$ such that $\overline{B}(\lambda_0, \delta_2) \subseteq I_{\lambda_0}$ and

$$|N(\lambda_0,x,v) - N(\lambda,y,v)| < \varepsilon, \quad \text{for all } \lambda \in \overline{B}(\lambda_0,\delta_2),\ x \in K',\ v \in K'',\ y \in \overline{B}_{|\cdot|}(x,\delta_1), \tag{7.2.7}$$

and

$$|f(\lambda_0,x,v) - f(\lambda,x,v)| < a, \quad \text{for all } \lambda \in \overline{B}(\lambda_0,\delta_2),\ x \in K',\ v \in K'', \tag{7.2.8}$$

where a is chosen such that $a\frac{e^L-1}{L} < \delta_1$.

We claim that for every $\lambda \in \overline{B}(\lambda_0, \delta_2)$ and every $p, q \in K$, we have

$$d_{\lambda_0}(p,q) \le d_\lambda(p,q) + 2\varepsilon + \beta(\varepsilon). \tag{7.2.9}$$

Indeed, fix p, q, λ as in the claim. Up to reparametrization, we can take a curve γ_λ connecting p and q such that $\gamma_\lambda' = f(\lambda, \gamma_\lambda, u_\lambda)$ and

$$N(\lambda, \gamma_\lambda(t), u_\lambda(t)) \le d_\lambda(p,q) + \epsilon, \quad \text{for a.e. } t \in [0,1]. \tag{7.2.10}$$

Let $B := \overline{B}_{\lambda_0}(p, d_{\lambda_0}(p,q))$. Notice that $B \subseteq K'$. Define

$$\bar{t} := \max\{t \in [0,1] : \gamma_\lambda(s) \in B \ \forall s \in [0,t]\}.$$

Denote $q_\lambda' := \gamma_\lambda(\bar{t})$ and notice that $d_{\lambda_0}(p, q_\lambda') = d_{\lambda_0}(p,q)$. Moreover notice that $(\gamma_\lambda)|_{[p,q_\lambda']} \subseteq K'$. Take now $\gamma_{\lambda,0}$ such that $\gamma_{\lambda,0}' = f(\lambda_0, \gamma_{\lambda,0}, u_\lambda)$ and $\gamma_{\lambda,0}(0) = p$. Call $\overline{q}_\lambda := \gamma_{\lambda,0}(\bar{t})$.[3]

We shall estimate $|\overline{q}_\lambda - q_\lambda'|$. From (7.2.10), (7.2.6), and the fact that $\gamma_\lambda([0,\bar{t}]) \in K'$ we get that $u_\lambda(t) \in K''$ for a.e. $t \in [0,\bar{t}]$. Hence we estimate, for every $x, y \in K'$ and a.e. $t \in [0,\bar{t}]$,

$$\begin{aligned} |f(\lambda, x, u_\lambda(t)) - f(\lambda_0, y, u_\lambda(t))| &\le |f(\lambda, x, u_\lambda(t)) - f(\lambda_0, x, u_\lambda(t))| \\ &\quad + |f(\lambda_0, x, u_\lambda(t)) - f(\lambda_0, y, u_\lambda(t))| \\ &\le a + L|x-y|. \end{aligned} \tag{7.2.11}$$

Hence Gronwall Lemma in **??** applied on K' directly implies that[4]

$$|\gamma_\lambda(t) - \gamma_{\lambda,0}(t)| \le a\frac{e^{Lt}-1}{L} < \delta_1 < \varepsilon, \quad \text{for a.e. } t \in [0,\bar{t}], \tag{7.2.12}$$

and morevoer that $(\gamma_{\lambda,0})|_{[0,\bar{t}]} \subseteq K'$. Now let us conclude the estimate of the Claim 1. We have

$$\begin{aligned} d_{\lambda_0}(p,q) = d_{\lambda_0}(p,q_\lambda') &\le d_{\lambda_0}(p,\overline{q}_\lambda) + d_{\lambda_0}(\overline{q}_\lambda, q_\lambda') \\ &\le \int_0^{\bar{t}} N(\lambda_0, \gamma_{\lambda,0}(s), u_\lambda(s))\,\mathrm{d}s + \beta(|\overline{q}_\lambda - q_\lambda'|) \\ &\le \int_0^{\bar{t}} N(\lambda, \gamma_\lambda(s), u_\lambda(s))\,\mathrm{d}s + \varepsilon + \beta(\varepsilon) \\ &\le \int_0^1 N(\lambda, \gamma_\lambda(s), u_\lambda(s))\,\mathrm{d}s + \varepsilon + \beta(\varepsilon) \\ &\le d_\lambda(p,q) + \varepsilon + \beta(\varepsilon) + \epsilon, \end{aligned} \tag{7.2.13}$$

[3] GA:Questa frase richiede un minimo di giustificazione, precisamente nella parte in cui sostanzialmente usiamo che la curva $\gamma_{\lambda,0}$ vive anche essa fino a tempo $\bar{t}$. Basta usare una variante degli argomenti di **??**, **??** e prendere δ_2 sufficientemente piccolo.

[4] GA:Piccolo accorgimento. Dire due parole in più sul fatto che stiamo usando Gronwall per dire che la curva $\gamma_{\lambda,0}$ continua sempre a stare in K'.

where we are using (7.2.12), (7.2.7), and (7.2.10).

We claim that for every $\lambda \in \overline{B}(\lambda_0, \delta_2)$ and every $p, q \in K$, we have

$$d_\lambda(p,q) \leq d_{\lambda_0}(p,q) + 2\varepsilon + \beta(\varepsilon). \tag{7.2.14}$$

Indeed, fix p, q, λ as in the claim. Up to reparametrization, we can take a curve γ connecting p and q such that $\gamma' = f(\lambda_0, \gamma, u)$ and

$$N(\lambda_0, \gamma(t), u(t)) \leq d_{\lambda_0}(p,q) + \epsilon, \quad \text{for a.e. } t \in [0,1]. \tag{7.2.15}$$

Notice that $\gamma \subseteq K'$. Take now γ_λ such that $\gamma_\lambda' = f(\lambda, \gamma_\lambda, u)$ and $\gamma_\lambda(0) = p$. Call $\overline{q}_\lambda := \gamma_\lambda(1)$.[5]

We now want to estimate $|\overline{q}_\lambda - q|$. Arguing verbatim as before we obtain

$$|\gamma_\lambda(t) - \gamma(t)| \leq a\frac{e^{Lt} - 1}{L} < \delta_1 < \varepsilon, \quad \text{for a.e. } t \in [0,1], \tag{7.2.16}$$

and moreover $\gamma_\lambda \subseteq K'$. Now let us conclude the estimate of the Claim 2. We have

$$\begin{aligned} d_\lambda(p,q) &\leq d_\lambda(p, \overline{q}_\lambda) + d_\lambda(\overline{q}_\lambda, q) \\ &\leq \int_0^1 N(\lambda, \gamma_\lambda(s), u(s))\,\mathrm{d}s + \beta(|\overline{q}_\lambda - q|) \\ &\leq \int_0^1 N(\lambda_0, \gamma(s), u(s))\,\mathrm{d}s + \varepsilon + \beta(\varepsilon) \\ &\leq d_\lambda(p,q) + \varepsilon + \beta(\varepsilon) + \epsilon, \end{aligned} \tag{7.2.17}$$

where we are using (7.2.16), (7.2.7), and (7.2.15).

From (7.2.9) and (7.2.14) jointly with the fact that $\beta(\varepsilon) \to 0$ as $\varepsilon \to 0$ we get the proof of the theorem. □

7.3 Asymptotic cones

7.3.1 SubRiemannian Carnot group as Riemannian limits

We start with a simple observation that shows to the inexpert reader how a subRiemannian Carnot group can appear as limit of Riemannian metrics on the same Lie group.

Lemma 7.3.1. *Let G be a stratified group, with Lie algebra stratification* $\mathrm{Lie}(G) = V_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s$. *Let $X_1, \ldots, X_n$ be a basis adapted to the stratification. For all $\lambda > 0$ let d_λ be the Riemannian distance associated to the Riemannian metric that makes*

$$X_1, \ldots, \frac{\lambda^{deg(X_j)}}{\lambda} X_j, \ldots \lambda^{s-1} X_n$$

orthonormal. Then the metric space $(G, \lambda d_1)$ is isometric to (G, d_λ) via the map δ_λ.

[5] GA:Stessa osservazione di prima.

Proof. The distance λd_1 associated to the Riemannian metric g_λ that makes $\frac{1}{\lambda}X_1, \ldots, \frac{1}{\lambda}X_n$ orthonormal. The map $\delta_\lambda : (G, \lambda d_1) \to (G, d_\lambda)$ is a Riemannian isometry since it sends the orthonormal vector $\frac{1}{\lambda}X_j$ to the orthonormal vectors $(\delta_\lambda)_*(\frac{1}{\lambda}X_j) = \frac{1}{\lambda}\lambda^{deg(X_j)}X_j$. □

7.3.2 More general limits of Riemannian manifolds

SubRiemannian manifolds appear as limiting objects of Riemannian manifolds.

Proposition 7.3.2. *Let M be a manifold, $\Delta \subset TM$ a bracket-generating subbundle. Let $(g_n)_{n\in\mathbb{N}}$ be a sequence of Riemannian metrics on M. Assume that*

$$g_n|_\Delta = g_1|_\Delta \quad \forall n \in \mathbb{N}$$

and for all $X \notin \Delta$

$$g_n(X, X) \to +\infty \quad \text{as} \quad n \to \infty.$$

Then for all $p, q \in M$

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} d_{g_n}(p, q) = d_{CC}(p, q)$$

where d_{CC} is the subRiemannian distance associated to Δ and $g_1|_\Delta$.

7.3.3 Preparatory example: The Riemannian Heisenberg group

Theorem 7.3.3. *Let X, Y, Z be a basis of the Lie algebra of the Heisenberg group G with only relation $[X, Y] = Z$. For all $n \in \mathbb{N}$, let d_n be the Riemannian distance for which $X, Y, \frac{1}{n}Z$ are orthonormal. Let d_{CC} be the subRiemannian distance for which X, Y are orthonormal.*

Then for all $R > 0$ there is a sequence $\epsilon_n \to 0$ as $n \to 0$ such that for all $p, q \in B_{CC}(e, R)$,

$$d_n(p, q) \le d_{CC}(p, q) \le d_n(p, q) + \epsilon_n.$$

In other words, $d_n \to d_\infty$ and the limit is uniform on compact sets.

Hence if d is the Riemannian distance for which X, Y, Z are orthonormal, then $(G, \frac{1}{n}d)$, which is isometric to (G, d_n) converge to (G, d_{CC}). In other words, the asymptotic cone of the Riemannian Heisenberg group is the subRiemannian Heisenberg group.

Exercise 7.3.4. Show that $(G, \frac{1}{n}d)$ and (G, d_n) are isometric.

Proof of the Theorem. The fact that $d_n \le d_{CC}$ is clear, since every horizontal curve for d_{CC} has exactly the length with respect to d_n.

For the other inequality, take $p, q \in B_{CC}(e, R)$. Let $\gamma_n : [0,1] \to G$ be a curve from p to q that minimizes the length with respect to d_n. Decompose $\dot\gamma$ as

$$\dot\gamma(t) = a_1(t)X + a_2(t)Y + a_3(t)Z$$

with $a_3(t)$ not necessarily 0. Let $\sigma : [0,1] \to G$ be the curve such that $\sigma(0) = p$ and $\dot\sigma(t) = a_1(t)X + a_2(t)Y$. Let $\bar q := \sigma(1)$. Let $\eta : [0,1] \to G$ be the curve such that $\eta(0) = \bar q$ and $\dot\eta(t) = a_3(t)Z$.

We claim that

$$\eta(t) = (L_{\bar q} \circ L^{-1}_{\sigma(t)})(\gamma(t)), \qquad \forall t \in [0,1]. \tag{7.3.5}$$

Since

$$(L_{\bar q} \circ L^{-1}_{\sigma(0)})(\gamma(0)) = L_{\bar q} \circ L^{-1}_{p}(p) = \bar q = \eta(0),$$

it is enough to show that

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t}\left(L_{\bar q} \circ L^{-1}_{\sigma(t)} \circ \gamma(t))\right) = \dot\eta(t).$$

For doing this, lets consider exponential coordinate so

$$\dot\gamma = a_1X + a_2Y + a_3Z = \left(a_1, a_2, a_3 - \frac{\gamma_2}{2}a_1 + \frac{\gamma_1}{2}a_2\right)$$

and

$$\dot\sigma = \left(a_1, a_2, -\frac{\sigma_2}{2}a_1 + \frac{\sigma_1}{2}a_2\right).$$

Thus $\gamma_1 = \sigma_1 = p_1 + \int_0^t a_1$ and $\gamma_2 = \sigma_2 = p_2 + \int_0^t a_2$.

$$\begin{aligned}\sigma(t)^{-1}\gamma(t) &= (\gamma_1 - \sigma_1, \gamma_2 - \sigma_2, \gamma_3 - \sigma_3 - \frac{1}{2}(\sigma_1\gamma_2 - \sigma_2\gamma_1) = \\ &= (0, 0, \gamma_3 - \sigma_3)\end{aligned}$$

Thus

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t}\sigma(t)^{-1}\gamma(t) = (0, 0, \dot\gamma_3 - \dot\sigma_3) = a_3Z.$$

The claim (7.3.5) is proved and, in particular, we have that

$$\eta(1) = \bar q \bar q^{-1} q = q.$$

We need to bound the length $L_{d_1}(\eta)$. Since X, Y, Z are orthogonal and $\|\frac{1}{n}Z\|_n = 1$, we have

$$\int_0^1 n \cdot |a_3| = \int_0^1 \|a_3Z\|_n \leq \int_0^1 \|a_1X + a_2Y + a_3Z\|_n = L_{d_n}(\gamma) = d_n(p,q) \leq d_{CC}(p,q) \leq 2R$$

Then

$$L_{d_1}(\eta) = \int_0^1 \|a_3 Z\|_1 = \int_0^1 |a_3| \leq \frac{2R}{n}$$

Thus, as $n \to \infty$, $d_1(\bar{q}, q)$ goes to 0 uniformly on $p, q \in B_{CC}(e, R)$. In fact, using the ball-box theorem,

$$d_{CC}(\bar{q}, q) \quad \leq \quad K d_1(\bar{q}, q)^{1/2} \quad \leq \quad (L_{d_1}(\eta))^{1/2} \quad \leq \quad K\left(\frac{2R}{n}\right)^{1/2} \quad = \quad O(\frac{1}{\sqrt{n}}).$$

Since $d_{CC}(p, \bar{q}) \leq L_{CC}(\sigma) \leq L_{d_n}(\gamma) = d_n(p, q)$, we conclude that

$$d_{CC}(p, q) \leq d_{CC}(p, \bar{q}) + d_{CC}(\bar{q}, q) \leq d_n(p, q) + O(\frac{1}{\sqrt{n}}).$$

□

7.3.4 Toward the general setting: Gronwall Lemma

For a general stratified group, the proof of the analogue result is slightly more involved since it may not be true that the analogue of the curve η ends at q.

However, we still have the property that, since γ and σ have very similar tangents, then their endpoints are close. The precise statement is the following, for which we use the notation that if ξ is a curve on a Lie group G and $\dot{\xi}(t)$ is it tangent vector at time t, which is a vector at $\xi(t)$, we denote by $\xi'(t) := (L_{\xi(t)})^* \dot{\xi}(t)$ its representative in the Lie algebra.

Lemma 7.3.6 (Gronwall Lemma). *Let G be a Lie group, $\|\cdot\|$ a norm on T_eG, d a Riemannian distance on G, $\nu > 0$. Then there is C such that for all $\epsilon > 0$, for all $\gamma, \sigma : [0, 1] \to G$ absolutely continous curves such that $\gamma(0) = \sigma(0)$, $\|\gamma'\|, \|\sigma'\| \leq \nu$ a.e., and $\|\gamma' - \sigma'\| < \epsilon$ a.e., then*

$$d(\gamma(1), \sigma(1)) \leq C\epsilon.$$

Proof. Notice that the image of γ and σ are in a bounded set determined by d and ν. For simplicity, we assume that we are in exponential coordinates and that the distance d is given by the norm $\|\cdot\|$. Since the map $(g, v) \mapsto (L_g)_* v$ is smooth, then it is Lipschitz on bounded sets. Hence there is $K > 0$ such that

$$\begin{aligned} \|\dot{\gamma} - \dot{\sigma}\| = \|(L_\gamma)_*\gamma' - (L_\sigma)_*\sigma'\| \leq \\ \leq \|(L_\gamma)_*\gamma' - (L_\gamma)_*\sigma'\| + \|(L_\gamma)_*\sigma' - (L_\sigma)_*\sigma'\| \leq \\ \leq K \cdot \|\gamma' - \sigma'\| + K \cdot \|\gamma - \sigma\|. \end{aligned}$$

Set $f(t) := \|\gamma(t) - \sigma(t)\|^2$. Then, using that $2ab \leq a^2 + b^2$, we get

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t} f = 2\langle \gamma - \sigma, \dot{\gamma} - \dot{\sigma} \rangle \leq 2\|\gamma - \sigma\| \cdot \|\dot{\gamma} - \dot{\sigma}\| \leq$$
$$\leq 2K\|\gamma - \sigma\| \cdot \|\gamma' - \sigma'\| + 2K\|\gamma - \sigma\|^2 \leq$$
$$\leq K(\|\gamma - \sigma\|^2 + \|\gamma' - \sigma'\|^2) + 2K\|\gamma - \sigma\|^2 = 3Kf + K\epsilon^2$$

Then

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t}(e^{-3Kt} f(t)) = -3Ke^{-3Kt} f'(t) = e^{-3kt}(f'(t) - 3Kf(t)) \leq e^{-3Kt} K\epsilon^2$$

Therefore

$$e^{-3K} f(1) = e^{-3Kt} f(t)|_{t=0}^{1} = \int_0^1 \frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}t}(e^{-3Kt} f(t)) \,\mathrm{d}t \leq$$
$$\leq \int_0^1 e^{-3Kt} K\epsilon^2 \,\mathrm{d}t = \left.\frac{e^{-3Kt} K\epsilon^2}{-3K}\right|_{t=0}^{1} = \frac{e^{-3K} K\epsilon^2}{-3K} - \frac{K\epsilon^2}{-3K}$$

Thus

$$f(1) \leq e^{3K}(\frac{1}{3} - \frac{e^{-3K}}{3})\epsilon^2$$

and

$$\|\gamma(1) - \sigma(1)\| \leq \sqrt{\frac{e^{3K/2} - 1}{3}}\epsilon.$$

□

Exercise 7.3.7. Let d_1, d_2 be two left-invariant boundedly compact distances on a Lie group G inducing the manifold topology. Then the increasing function $\xi : (0, \infty) \to (0, \infty)$ defined by

$$\xi(r) = \operatorname{diam}_{d_1}\left(\overline{B}_{d_2}(e, r)\right)$$

is such that $\xi(r) \to 0$, as $r \to 0$, and $d_1(p, q) \leq \xi(d_2(p, q))$.

7.3.5 Asymptotic cones of Riemannian stratified groups

Theorem 7.3.8. *Let G be a Lie group and let $\Delta \subset TG$ be a bracket generating left-invariant distribution. Let $\Delta^\perp$ be a left-invariant distribution complementary to Δ, i.e., for all $p \in G$,*

$$\Delta_p \oplus \Delta_p^\perp = T_pG.$$

Let $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_n$ be a sequence of left-invariant Riemannian metrics on G such that

1. *all* $p \in G$ Δ_p *is orthogonal to* $\Delta_p^\perp$ *with respect to* $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_n$*,*

2. $\| \cdot \|_n$ *coincide with* $\| \cdot \|_1$ *on* Δ_p*,*

3. *for all* $X \in \Delta_p^\perp$*,* $\|X\|_n \geq n \cdot \|X\|_1$ *for all* $n \in \mathbb{N}$*.*

Let d_{CC} *be the subRiemannian distance associated to* Δ *and* $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_1$*, and* d_n *the Riemannian distance associated to* $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_n$*. Then for all* $R > 0$ *there exists a sequence* $\epsilon_n \to 0$ *as* $n \to \infty$ *such that for all* $p, q \in B_{CC}(e, R)$ *one has*

$$d_n(p, q) \leq d_{CC}(p, q) \leq d_n(p, q) + \epsilon_n.$$

Proof. Obviously, $d_n \leq d_{CC}$.

Take $p, q \in B_{CC}(e, R)$, so $p, q \in B_{d_n}(e, R)$. Let $\gamma = \gamma_n : [0, 1] \to G$ be a curve from p to q such that $L_{d_n}(\gamma) = d_n(p, q)$ and $\|\dot\gamma\|_n \leq 2R$.

Decompose $\gamma' = (L_\gamma)^* \dot\gamma$ as $\gamma'(t) = X(t) + Z(t)$ with $X(t) \in \Delta_e$ and $Z(t) \in \Delta_e^\perp$ for all $t \in [0, 1]$.

Let $\sigma : [0, 1] \to G$ be such that $\sigma(0) = p$ and $\sigma'(t) = X(t)$. Then

$$n \cdot \|Z\|_1 \leq \|Z\|_n \leq \|X + Z\|_n \overset{\Delta \perp \Delta^\perp}{=} \|\dot\gamma\|_n < 2R.$$

Let $\xi(t) := \mathrm{diam}_{d_{CC}}(\overline{B}_{d_1}(e, r))$ as in Exercise 7.3.7. Then we are going to use Lemma 7.3.6 since $\|\gamma'\|_1, \|\sigma'\|_1 \leq \|\gamma'\|_n < 2R$ and $\|\gamma' - \sigma'\|_1 = \|Z\|_1 < \frac{2R}{n}$ and get

$$\begin{aligned} d_{CC}(p, q) &\leq d_{CC}(p, \sigma(1)) + d_{CC}(\sigma(1), \gamma(1)) \\ &\leq L_{CC}(\sigma) + \xi(d_1(\sigma(1), \gamma(1))) \\ &\leq L_{d_n}(\gamma) + \xi\left(C \cdot \frac{2R}{n}\right) \\ &= d_n(p, q) + o(1) \quad \text{as } n \to \infty. \end{aligned}$$

□

Corollary 7.3.9. *Let* G *be a stratified group equipped with a Riemannian structure for which the stratification is orthogonal. Then the asymptotic cone of* G *is a Carnot group. In fact, if* d *is the Riemannian distance, then there exist Riemannian distances* d_λ *on* G *such that* $d_\lambda \to d_{CC}$ *uniformly on compact sets and* $(G, \frac{1}{\lambda} d)$ *is isometric to* (G, d_λ)*, and* (G, d_{CC}) *is a Carnot group.*

7.4 Tangent spaces

Carnot groups are the tangents of subRiemannian manifolds at regular points. Such as result, originally attributed to Mitchell, is quite technical and involved, see [?, Jea14]. We shall give a complete proof in a specific example, in which the reader can already observe the strategy. Later we shall give the proof of the general result, but without enter too much in the details of the argument.

7.4.1 Preparatory example: The subRiemannian rototranslation group

From the neurogeometry point of view, the most important subRiemannian manifold that is not a Carnot group is the rototranslation group. We begin by proving Mitchell's theorem for such a space.

Theorem 7.4.1. *The tangent space of the subRiemannian rototranslation group is the subRiemannian Heisenberg group.*

Quantitative Chow's theorem

The following proposition gives an explicit proof of Chow's theorem and Ball-Box theorem. Moreover, it gives a uniform estimate for sequences of structures. We denote by $p\exp(X) = \Phi^1_X(p)$ the flow at time 1 from p along X, and, for $t < 0$, we denote by $\sqrt{t}$ the value $-\sqrt{-t}$.

Proposition 7.4.2. *Let X_λ, Y_λ be a pair of vector fields in $\mathbb{R}^3$ that depend smoothly on $\lambda \in [0,1]$. Assume $X_\lambda, Y_\lambda, [X_\lambda, Y_\lambda]$ is a frame of $\mathbb{R}^3$ for all λ. Consider the map (composition of flows)*

$$\Phi^p_\lambda(t_1,t_2,t_3) := p\exp(t_1X_\lambda)\exp(t_2Y_\lambda)\exp(\sqrt{t_3}X_\lambda)\exp(\sqrt{t_3}Y_\lambda)\exp(-\sqrt{t_3}X_\lambda)\exp(-\sqrt{t_3}Y_\lambda)$$

Then

1. *Φ^p_λ is smooth and $(\mathrm{d}\Phi^p_\lambda)_0$ has maximal rank.*
2. *The biLipschitz constant of $(\mathrm{d}\Phi^p_\lambda)_0$ is bounded when $\lambda \in [0,1]$ and p is in a compact set.*
3. *There exist $C > 0$ and $R > 0$ such that for all $\lambda \in [0,1]$ and for all $r \in (0,R)$, for all $p \in B_E(0,R)$*
$$\Phi^p_\lambda(B_E(0,Cr)) \supset B_E(p,r).$$
4. *If d_λ is the subRiemannian distance for which X_λ, Y_λ are orthonormal, then there are $C > 0$ and $R > 0$ such that for all $p,q \in B_E(0,R)$ and all $\lambda \in [0,1]$*
$$d_\lambda(p,q) \le C\sqrt{d_E(p,q)}.$$

Proof. One has that $(\partial_{t_1}\Phi^p_\lambda)(0) = X_\lambda(p)$, $(\partial_{t_2}\Phi^p_\lambda)(0) = Y_\lambda(p)$, and $(\partial_{t_3}\Phi^p_\lambda)(0) = [X_\lambda, Y_\lambda](p)$.

Hence, $(\,\mathrm{d}\Phi^p_\lambda)(0)$ has rank 3. Moreover, there is $C > 0$ such that any nonzero vector $v \in \mathbb{R}^3$ is such that

$$\|(\,\mathrm{d}\Phi^p_\lambda)(x)(v)\| \geq C\|v\|$$

for x in a compact set.

By continuity in λ, we can take C uniform when $\lambda \in [0,1]$. In other words, $(\Phi^p_\lambda)^{-1}$ is C^{-1}-Lipschitz in a neighborhood of p for all $\lambda \in [0,1]$.

Part (*iii*) follows from the Inverse Mapping Theorem.

Regarding (*iv*), notice that

$$\begin{aligned} d_\lambda(p, \Phi^p_\lambda(t_1,t_2,t_3)) &\leq |t_1| + |t_2| + 4\sqrt{|t_3|} \\ &\leq K\sqrt{\|(t_1,t_2,t_3)\|_E} \end{aligned}$$

for some $K > 0$ and for all $t_1, t_2, t_3 \in (0,1)$.

Let R as in (*iii*), take $p, q \in B_E(0, \frac{R}{2})$ so for $r = d_E(p,q)$

$$q \in \overline{B}_E(p,r) \subset \Phi^p_\lambda(\overline{B}_E(0,Cr))$$

i.e., there are t_1, t_2, t_3 with $\|(t_1,t_2,t_3)\|_E < Cr$ such that $q = \Phi^p_\lambda(t_1,t_2,t_3)$. Hence,

$$d_\lambda(p,q) \leq K\sqrt{\|(t_1,t_2,t_3)\|_E} \leq K\sqrt{Cr} = K\sqrt{C}\sqrt{d_E(p,q)}$$

□

Proof of Theorem 7.4.1

An explicit restatement of Theorem 7.4.1 is the following.

Theorem 7.4.3. *In $\mathbb{R}^3$ with coordinates x, y, θ let*

$$\begin{aligned} X &= \cos\theta\partial_x + \sin\theta\partial_y & Y &= \partial_\theta \\ X_\infty &= \partial_x + \theta\partial_y & Y_\infty &= \partial_\theta \\ X_n &= \cos\frac{\theta}{n}\partial_x + n\sin\frac{\theta}{n}\partial_y & Y_n &= \partial_\theta \qquad \forall n \in \mathbb{N} \end{aligned}$$

Let d (resp. d_n, resp d_∞) be the subRiemannian distance for which X, Y (resp. X_n, Y_n, resp. X_∞, Y_∞) are orthonormal. Then

1. *$(\mathbb{R}^3, nd)$ is isometric to $(\mathbb{R}^3, d_n)$.*

2. For all $R > 0$ there exists $\epsilon_n \to 0$ such that for all $p, q \in B_{d_\infty}(0, R)$

$$|d_n(p,q) - d_\infty(p,q)| < \epsilon_n,$$

i.e., $d_n \to d_\infty$ uniformly on compact sets.

Proof. The distance nd is the subRiemannian distance associated to the orthonormal frame $\frac{1}{n}X, \frac{1}{n}Y$. Let

$$\delta_n : (x, y, \theta) \mapsto (nx, n^2 y, x\theta).$$

Then

$$d\delta_n(\frac{1}{n}X) = \cos\theta\partial_x + n\sin\theta\partial_y = X_n \circ \delta_n$$
$$d\delta_n(\frac{1}{n}Y) = \cdots = Y_n \circ \delta_n.$$

So δ_n is an isometry between $(\mathbb{R}^3, nd)$ and $(\mathbb{R}^3, d_n)$.

Take $p, q \in B_{d_\infty}(0, R)$. Let σ be a d_∞-geodesic from p to q, $\sigma : [0,1] \to \mathbb{R}^3$, $\|\dot\sigma\|_\infty < 2R$.

$$\dot\sigma = aX_\infty + bY_\infty$$

with $|a|, |b| < 2R$.

Let γ such that $\dot\gamma = aX_n + bY_n$. Then

$$\begin{aligned}|\dot\sigma - \dot\gamma| &\le |a||X_\infty \circ \sigma - X_n \circ \gamma| + |b||Y_\infty \circ \sigma - Y_n \circ \gamma| \\ &\le 2R(K|\sigma - \gamma| + \|X_\infty - X_n\|_{L^\infty(B_{d_\infty}(0,R))}) \\ &\le 2RK|\sigma - \gamma| + 2RK\bar\epsilon_n\end{aligned}$$

where $\bar\epsilon_n = \sup_{B_{d_\infty}(0,R)} |X_n - X_\infty|$. Notice that $\bar\epsilon_n \to 0$, because $X_n \to X_\infty$ uniformly on compact sets.

From Gronwall Lemma (see TakeHome exam), we get

$$|\gamma(1) - \sigma(1)| = o(1)$$

Then, by Proposition 7.4.2

$$\begin{aligned}d_n(p,q) &\le d_n(p, \gamma(1)) + d_n(\gamma(1), \sigma(1)) \\ &\le L_{d_n}(\gamma) + C\sqrt{\gamma(1) - \sigma(1)} \\ &\le L_{d_\infty}(\sigma) + o(1) \\ &= d_\infty(p,q) + o(1).\end{aligned}$$

In particular, $d_n(p,1) \leq 3R$ for n large enough.

Let γ be a d_n-geodesic from p to q, $\gamma : [0,1] \to \mathbb{R}^3$ with $\|\dot\gamma\|_n < 3R$.

$$\dot\gamma = aX_n + +bY_n,$$

with $|a|, |b| < 3R$. Let σ be such that $\dot\sigma = aX_\infty + bY_\infty$, then as before $|\gamma(1) - \sigma(1)| = o(1)$.

$$\begin{aligned} d_\infty(p,q) &\leq d_\infty(p,\gamma(1)) + d_\infty(\gamma(1),\sigma(1)) \\ &\leq L_{d_\infty}(\gamma) + C\sqrt{\gamma(1) - \sigma(1)} \\ &\leq L_{d_n}(\sigma) + o(1) \\ &= d_n(p,q) + o(1). \end{aligned}$$

□

7.4.2 Nilpotization

We explain now what is the Carnot group which appear as tangent to a given equi-regular distribution. Let Δ be a bracket-generating and equi-regular distribution in a manifold M, i.e.,

$$\Delta = \Delta^{[1]} \subset \Delta^{[2]} \subset \ldots \subset \Delta^{[s]} = TM$$

is a flag of sub-bundles of TM, where $\Delta^{[j+1]} = \Delta^{[j]} + [\Delta, \Delta^{[j]}]$. Note that in the last sum is not necessarily a direct sum. The simple but crucial fact is that

$$[\Delta^{[k]}, \Delta^{[l]}] \subseteq \Delta^{[k+l]}. \tag{7.4.4}$$

Equation (7.4.4) is obvious for $k = 1$ and can be proved by induction using Jacobi identity:

$$\begin{aligned} [\Delta^{[k+1]}, \Delta^{[l]}] &= \Big[\Delta^{[k]} + [\Delta, \Delta^{[k]}], \Delta^{[l]}\Big] \\ &= [\Delta^{[k]}, \Delta^{[l]}] + \Big[[\Delta, \Delta^{[k]}], \Delta^{[l]}\Big] \\ &\subseteq \Delta^{[k+l]} + \Big[[\Delta^{[k]}, \Delta^{[l]}], \Delta\Big] + \Big[[\Delta^{[l]}, \Delta], \Delta^{[k]}\Big] \\ &\subseteq \Delta^{[k+l]} + [\Delta^{[k+l]}, \Delta] + [\Delta^{[l+1]}, \Delta^{[k]}] \\ &\subseteq \Delta^{[k+l]} + \Delta^{[k+l+1]} + \Delta^{[k+l+1]} \\ &\subseteq \Delta^{[k+l+1]} \end{aligned}$$

Define $H_1 := \Delta$ and $H_j := \Delta^{[j]}/\Delta^{[j-1]}$, for $j = 2, \ldots, n$. Still H_j is a bundle over M, but not a sub-bundle of the tangent bundle TM. We obviously have the following isomorphism

$$TM \simeq H_1 \oplus H_2 \oplus \ldots \oplus H_s.$$

In this notes we also assume that the equi-regular distributions have the further property of having a global framing $X_1, \dots, X_n$ of M such that, for some $m_1, \dots, m_s$,

$$\Delta^{[j]}(p) = \mathbb{R}\text{- span}\{X_1(p), \dots, X_{m_j}(p)\}, \qquad \forall p \in M.$$

Fact 7.4.5. *For each point $p \in M$, the vector space T_pM inherits the structure of a Carnot group, with respect the stratification $H_j(p)$. Such Carnot group is sometimes called the* nilpotization *of T_pM with respect to Δ.*

The following proof is incomplete - a new proof will be given in the future - for now see [Bul02]. Let $V_j := H_j(p)$. Obviously T_pM and $V_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s$ are isomorphic vector spaces. We need to define a Lie algebra product and then show that $[V_j, V_1] = V_{j+1}$. Take $x, y \in T_pM$, with $x \in V_j$ and $y \in V_l$. Since $V_j = H_j(p) = \Delta^{[j]}(p)/\Delta^{[j-1]}(p)$, we have that there exist $X \in \Delta^{[j]}$ and $Y \in \Delta^{[l]}$, such that

$$x = X(p) + \Delta^{[j-1]}(p) \qquad \text{and} \qquad y = Y(p) + \Delta^{[l-1]}(p).$$

We define, naturally,

$$[x, y] := [X, Y](p) + \Delta^{[j+l-1]}(p).$$

The definition is well posed because of (7.4.4): if $u \in \Delta^{[j-1]}$, then $[X + u, Y] = [X, Y] + [u, Y]$, with $[u, Y] \in [\Delta^{[j-1]}, \Delta^{[l]}] \subseteq \Delta^{[j+l-1]}$. Thus $[X + u, Y](p)$ and $[X, Y](p)$ are equal mod $\Delta^{[j+l-1]}(p)$. NEED TO SHOW INDEPENDENCE FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE X.

Again, if $y \in V_1$, from (7.4.4) we immediately have that $[x, y] \in \Delta^{[j+1]}(p)/\Delta^{[j]}(p) = V_{j+1}$. Thus $[V_j, V_1] \subseteq V_{j+1}$. To show the reverse inclusion, let $z \in V_{j+1}$. Consider a representative $Z \in \Delta^{[j+1]}$ such that $z = Z(p) + \Delta^{[j]}(p)$. By definition $\Delta^{[j+1]} = \Delta^{[j]} + [\Delta^{[j]}, \Delta]$, so there are $W \in \Delta^{[j]}$, $X_l \in \Delta^{[j]}$, and $Y_l \in \Delta$ such that $Z = W + \sum_l [X_l, Y_l]$. Take $x_l = X_l(p)$ (mod $\Delta^{[j-1]}$) and $y_l = Y_l(p)$. We have then

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_l [x_l, y_l] &= \sum_l [X_l, Y_l](p) \qquad (\text{mod } \Delta^{[j]}(p)) \\ &= (Z - W)(p) \qquad (\text{mod } \Delta^{[j]}(p)) \\ &= Z(p) \qquad (\text{mod } \Delta^{[j]}(p)). \end{aligned}$$

Therefore we have shown that $[V_j, V_1] = V_{j+1}$. □

7.4.3 Mitchell's Theorem on tangent cones

Given a metric space (X, d), one defines the dilated metric space $(X, \lambda d)$ dilated by a factor of $\lambda \in \mathbb{R}$ as the same set X endowed with the dilated distance $(\lambda d)(p, q) := \lambda d(p, q)$. Gromov has defined the notion of tangent space to a metric space as limit of such objects.

We say that a metric space (Z, ρ) is *a* tangent of (X, d) at the point $p \in X$ if there exists $\bar{p} \in Z$ and a sequence $\lambda_j \to \infty$ such that

$$\lim_j (X, p, \lambda_j d) = (Z, \bar{p}, \rho).$$

It signifies [6] that for each $r > 0$, there is a sequence of $\epsilon_j \to 0$ such that the ball of radius $r + \epsilon_j$ in $(X, \lambda_j d)$ about the base point p converges to the ball of radius r about $\bar{p}$. Namely, the infimum of the Gromov-Hausdorff distance between these compact abstract metric spaces approach 0 as $\lambda_j \to \infty$.

The Gromov-Hausdorff distance $\mathrm{GH}(B_1, B_2)$ between two compact metric spaces B_1 and B_2 is infimum $\inf_{\psi_1,\psi_2} \mathrm{H}(\psi_1 B_1, \psi_2 B_2)$ over all isometric embeddings ψ_1, ψ_2 of B_1 and B_2 into the same metric space C of the Hausdorff distance $\mathrm{H}(\psi_1 B_1, \psi_2 B_2)$ of the images as subset of C.

A distribution is said to be generic if, for each j, $\dim \Delta^{[j]}(p)$ is independent of the point p in M.

Theorem 7.4.6 (Mitchell)**.** *For a generic distribution Δ on M, the tangent cone of a sub-Riemannian manifold (M, d_{CC}) at $p \in M$ is isometric to (G, d_∞) where G is a Carnot group with a left-invariant Carnot-Carathéodory metric. In fact, the group G is the nilpotization of T_pM with respect to Δ.*

Remark 7.4.7. The simple fact that we would like the reader to observe is that the tangent cone of a Carnot group $\mathbb{G}$ is $\mathbb{G}$ itself. Indeed, dilations δ_λ provide isometries between (G, d_{CC}) and $(G, \lambda d_{CC})$.

Remark 7.4.8. Differently from the Riemannian case, it is NOT true that a sub-Riemannian manifold is locally biLipschitz equivalent to its tangent cone. It is however true for contact manifolds because of Darboux Theorem.

7.5 A metric characterization of Carnot groups

The purpose of this section is to give a more axiomatic presentation of Carnot groups from the view point of Metric Geometry. In fact, we shall see that Carnot groups are the only locally compact and

[6] In the case when the metric space (X, d) is geodesic, the limit should be easier to understand. Look at [BBI01, page 272].

geodesic metric spaces that are isometrically homogeneous and self-similar. Such a result follows the spirit of Gromov's approach of 'seeing Carnot-Carathéodory spaces from within', [Gro96].

Let us recall and make explicit the above definitions. A topological space X is called *locally compact* if every point of the space has a compact neighborhood. A metric space is *geodesic* if, for all $p, q \in X$, there exists an isometric embedding $\iota : [0,T] \to X$ with $T \geq 0$ such that $\iota(0) = p$ and $\iota(T) = q$. We say that a metric space X is *isometrically homogeneous* if its group of isometries acts on the space transitively. Explicitly, this means that, for all $p, q \in X$, there exists a distance-preserving homeomorphism $f : X \to X$ such that $f(p) = q$. In this section, we say that a metric space X is *self-similar* if it admits a *dilation*, i.e., there exists $\lambda > 1$ and a homeomorphism $f : X \to X$ such that $d(f(p), f(q)) = \lambda d(p,q),$ for all $p, q \in X$.

Theorem 7.5.1. *The subFinsler Carnot groups are the only metric spaces that are*

1. *locally compact,*
2. *geodesic,*
3. *isometrically homogeneous, and*
4. *self-similar (i.e., admitting a dilation).*

Theorem 7.5.1 provides a new equivalent definition of Carnot groups. Obviously, (1) can be slightly strengthened assuming that the space is *boundedly compact* (the term *proper* is also used), i.e., closed balls are compact.

We point out that each of the four conditions in Theorem 7.5.1 is necessary for the validity of the result. Indeed, let us mention examples of spaces that satisfy three out of the four conditions but are not Carnot groups: any infinite dimensional Banach space; any snowflake of a Carnot group, e.g., $(\mathbb{R}, \sqrt{\|\cdot\|})$; many cones such as the usual Euclidean cone of cone angle in $(0, 2\pi)$ or the union of two spaces such as $\{(x,y) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : xy \geq 0\}$; any compact homogeneous space such as $\mathbb{S}^1$.

Other papers focusing on metric characterizations of Carnot groups are [LD11b], [Bul11], [Fre12] (which is based on [LD11a]), and [BS14].

7.5.1 Proof of the characterization

The proof of Theorem 7.5.1 is an easy consequence of three hard theorems. We present now these theorems, before giving the proof.

The first theorem is well-known in the theory of locally compact groups. It is a consequence of a deep result of Dean Montgomery and Leo Zippin, [MZ52, Corollary on page 243, Section 6.3], together with the work [Gle52] of Andrew Gleason. An explicit proof can be found in Cornelia Drutu and Michael Kapovich's lecture notes, [DK11, Chapter 14].

Theorem 7.5.2 (Gleason-Montgomery-Zippin)**.** *Let X be a metric space that is connected, locally connected, locally compact and has finite topological dimension. Assume that the isometry group Isom(X) of X acts transitively on X. Then Isom(X) has the structure of a Lie group with finitely many connected components, and X has the structure of an analytic manifold.*

Notice that an isometrically homogeneous space that is locally compact is complete.

Successively, Berestovskii's work [Ber88, Theorem 2] clarified what are the possible isometrically homogeneous distances on manifolds that are also geodesic. They are subFinsler metrics.

Theorem 7.5.3 (Berestovskii)**.** *Under the same assumptions of Theorem 7.5.2, if in addition the distance is geodesic, then the distance is a subFinsler metric, i.e., the metric space X is a homogeneous Lie space G/H and there is a G-invariant subbundle Δ on the manifold G/H and a G-invariant norm on Δ, such that the distance is given by the same formula* (3.1.15)*.*

Tangents, in the Gromov-Hausdorff sense, of subFinsler manifolds have been studied.

Theorem 7.5.4 (Mitchell)**.** *The metric tangents of an equiregular subFinsler manifold are subFinsler Carnot groups.*

Proof of Theorem 7.5.1. Let us verify that we can use Theorem 7.5.2. A geodesic metric space is obviously connected and locally connected. Regarding finite dimensionality, we claim that a locally compact, self-similar, isometrically homogeneous space X is doubling. Namely, there exists a constant $C > 0$ such that any ball of radius $r > 0$ in X can be covered with less than C balls of radius $r/2$. Since X is locally compact, there exists a ball $B(x_0, r_0)$ that is compact. Let $\lambda > 1$ be the factor of the dilation. Hence, the balls $B(x_0, sr_0)$ with $s \in [1, \lambda]$ form a compact family of compact balls. Hence, there exists a constant $C > 1$ such that each ball $B(x_0, sr_0)$ can be covered with less than C balls of radius $sr_0/2$. By self-similarity and homogeneity, any other ball can be covered with less than C balls of half radius. Doubling metric spaces have finite Hausdorff dimension and hence finite topological dimension. Therefore, by Theorem 7.5.2 the isometry group G is a Lie group.

Since the distance is geodesic, Theorem 7.5.3 implies that our metric space is a subFinsler homogeneous manifold G/H. Since the subFinsler structure is G invariant, in particular it is equiregular. Hence, on the one hand, because of Theorem 7.5.4 the tangents of our metric space are subFinsler Carnot groups. On the other hand, the space admits a dilation, hence, iterating the dilation, we have that there exists a metric tangent of the metric space that is isometric to our original space. Then the space is a subFinsler Carnot group. □

Chapter 8

Visual boundaries of hyperbolic spaces*

In this chapter we show that to every Riemannian symmetric space one can associate a ‘visual boundary’ that has a structure of Carnot group. Visual boundaries are associated to spaces with negative curvature. We have that every homogeneous negatively curved manifold has the structure of semidirect product of the for $N \rtimes \mathbb{R}$ with a graded nilpotent group N that canonically represent the visual boundary.

A *Riemannian symmetric space* is a connected Riemannian manifold M where for each point $p \in M$ there exists an isometry σ_p of M such that $\sigma_p(p) = p$ and the differential of σ_p at p is the multiplication by -1. Simple examples of symmetric spaces are round spheres, Euclidean spaces and real hyperbolic. The *rank* of a symmetric space is the largest dimension of a flat subspace of M, where a *flat of dimension* n in M is a local isometry $\gamma : \mathbb{R}^n \to M$. For example, spheres and hyperbolic spaces have rank 1, whereas Euclidean n-space has rank n. A symmetric space is of *non-compact type* if it is not the product of two symmetric spaces one of which is either compact or Euclidean. Symmetric spaces were first introduced by Élie Cartan in 1926, see [Car26], [Car27]. In particular, he gave a complete description of these spaces by means of the classification of simple Lie algebras.

In this chapter we first prove that every rank-one symmetric space of non-compact type admits a group structure of a semidirect product with a precise formula for a left-invariant distance. The fact that such spaces admit semidirect-product structures has been known at least since Ernst Heintze’s work in the 1970’s, see [Hei74]. However, the formula for the left-invariant distances cannot be easily traced in literature. To study these spaces we will need the following result: Let M be a rank-one symmetric space of non-compact type, then M is one of the following spaces, which we call $\mathbb{K}$-*hyperbolic spaces* $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$, with $n \in \mathbb{N}$: real hyperbolic n-space $\mathbb{R}\mathbf{H}^n$, complex hyperbolic n-space $\mathbb{C}\mathbf{H}^n$, quaternionic hyperbolic n-space $\mathbb{H}\mathbf{H}^n$ or the octonionic plane $\mathbb{O}\mathbf{H}^2$. The proof of such last fact was indicated by Cartan, but completely established in this form in the 1950's, see Arthur Besse's 1978 book [Bes78, Section 3.G] and see Heintze's 1974 paper [Hei74, Section 5] for a geometric proof.

We shall introduce $\mathbb{K}$-hyperbolic spaces as metric spaces. Initially, we restrict to the real, complex, and quaternionic case, which share a similar approach and we shall give a treatment as unified as possible. Following Felix Klein's construction, we shall describe the $\mathbb{K}$-*hyperbolic space* $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$ *of dimension* n as an open subset of the projectivization of the space $\mathbb{K}^{n+1}$ equipped with a Hermitian form of type $(n, 1)$. We shall recall the distance function on $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$, referring to Martin Bridson and André Häfliger's 1999 book [BH99, Part II, Chapter 10].

To recall the Lie group structure on each $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$, we revise the continuous n-th Heisenberg group $G_{n,\mathbb{K}}$ modelled on $\mathbb{K}$ and its intrinsic dilations, see [Ste93, Chapter XII, Section 1] . We shall prove that the semidirect product of $G_{n,\mathbb{K}}$ with $\mathbb{R}$ acts simply transitively and by isometries on $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$. We will double check that, after the identification of $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$ with $G_{n,\mathbb{K}} \rtimes \mathbb{R}$, the hyperbolic distance is invariant under left translations on $G_{n,\mathbb{K}} \rtimes \mathbb{R}$. We shall write explicitly the distance on the $\mathbb{K}$-hyperbolic n-space modelled as $G_{n,\mathbb{K}} \rtimes \mathbb{R}$ in terms of elementary functions of the coordinates.

Theorem 8.0.1. *For every $\mathbb{K} \in \{\mathbb{R}, \mathbb{C}, \mathbb{H}\}$ and every $n \in \mathbb{N} \setminus \{0\}$, the $\mathbb{K}$-hyperbolic n-space $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$ is isometric to the manifold $\mathbb{K}^{n-1} \times \operatorname{Im}(\mathbb{K}) \times \mathbb{R}$ equipped with the multiplication law given by*

$$(u, s; a) \cdot (v, t; b) = (u + e^a v, s + e^{2a} t + \operatorname{Im}(u e^a \overline{v}); a + b)$$

and the left-invariant distance d such that

$$4\cosh^2 d(\mathbf{0}, (v, t; b)) = 4\cosh^2(b) + 2e^{-b}\cosh(b)|v|^2 + e^{-2b}\left(\frac{|v|^4}{4} + |t|^2\right).$$

There is a remaining case: the octonionic hyperbolic plane. It cannot be treated as described above due to the non-associativity of the octonions, and therefore the impossibility to define a notion of a vector space over the octonions. However, in the last section, we will give some basic ideas on how to deal with this case and build the octonionic hyperbolic plane.

8.1 CAT(-1) spaces and visual boundary*

[...] As we shall see, the $\mathbb{K}$-hyperbolic n-space $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$ has sectional curvature less or equal than -1. From the pure metric view point one says that it is a CAT(-1) metric space. The definition of

$CAT(-1)$, together with an explicit proof of this last statement, can be found in [BH99, Part II, Chapter 10].

...

Definition 8.1.1. Let $\xi_\infty, \eta_\infty \in \partial_\infty \mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$, the *Gromov product* of ξ_∞, η_∞ with respect to ω and o is defined as follows:

$$(\xi_\infty, \eta_\infty)_{(\omega,o)} := \frac{1}{2} \lim_{t \to +\infty} (2t - d(\xi_t, \eta_t)) .$$

The *visual distance* on $\partial_\infty \mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n \setminus \{\omega\}$ can be defined as

$$d_{vis}(\xi_\infty, \eta_\infty) := e^{-(\xi_\infty, \eta_\infty)_{(\omega,o)}}. \tag{8.1.2}$$

The proof that the visual distance as defined in (8.1.2) is a distance won't be discuss here. However, this fact follows from a more general theorem by Bourdon [Bou95] about the conditions in which the visual distance is a distance. This theorem can be applied on CAT(−1) spaces, and therefore can be applied to $\mathbb{K}$-hyperbolic n-space.

8.2 Preliminary notions for rank-one symmetric spaces

8.2.1 Quaternionic numbers

In this section we define some notations that will be used in this work. We denote by $\mathbb{R}, \mathbb{C}, \mathbb{H}$ the Real, Complex and Quaternion number sets, respectively. Throughout all the work $\mathbb{K}$ will denote one of the above number sets. We shall only recall the quaternions. The quaternions are a 4-dimensional algebra over $\mathbb{R}$ with basis $\{1, i, j, k\}$, where 1 is central, and i, j, k follow the rules:

$$ij = k, \ jk = i, \ ki = j$$

and

$$i^2 = j^2 = k^2 = -1.$$

If $x \in \mathbb{K}$ we write $\overline{x}$ to denote the $\mathbb{K}$-conjugate of x. Conjugation on $\mathbb{R}$ is trivial. For quaternions, one defines the conjugate of $u = a+bi+cj+dk$ as $\overline{u} = a-bi-cj-dk$. We also recall how conjugation works with multiplication, that is, given $u, v \in \mathbb{K}$ it is true that $\overline{uv} = \overline{v}\,\overline{u}$. The *real part* of x is the number $\Re(u) = \frac{u+\overline{u}}{2}$. The *norm* of $|u|$ of $u \in \mathbb{K}$ is the non-negative real number $\sqrt{u\overline{u}}$. Observe that if $u \in \mathbb{H}$ the product $u\overline{u}$ is equal to $\overline{u}u$. This is a simple fact to prove. Let $u \in \mathbb{H}$ then $u = x + y$ where $x \in \mathbb{R}$ and $y \in \mathbb{H}$ such that $\Re(y) = 0$. We compute $u\overline{u}$ that is

$$(x + y)(x - y) = x^2 - xy + yx - y^2 = x^2 - y^2$$

and $\overline{u}u$ that is

$$(x-y)(x+y) = x^2 + xy - yx - y^2 = x^2 - y^2,$$

because $x \in \mathbb{R}$ therefore it can commute with every element of $\mathbb{H}$.

We now recall the *imaginary part* of $u \in \mathbb{K}$ written as $\mathrm{Im}(u)$. If $u \in \mathbb{H}$ is written as $u = a + bi + cj + dk$, then

$$\mathrm{Im}(u) = \begin{pmatrix} b \\ c \\ d \end{pmatrix} \in \mathbb{R}^3$$

and $\mathrm{Im}_i(u)$ denotes the i-component of $\mathrm{Im}(u)$. The product on the quaternions is non commutative, so one must be careful while defining a vector space structure. We define the *left multiplication* and the *right multiplication* to be respectively λu and $u\lambda$ where $u \in \mathbb{K}^n$ and $\lambda \in \mathbb{K}$. For our purpose we say that $x, y \in \mathbb{K}^n$ are *linearly dependent* if there exists $\lambda \in \mathbb{K}$ such that $x = y\lambda$. Note that if $\mathbb{K} = \mathbb{R}$ or $\mathbb{C}$ then the definitions above are equivalent.

8.2.2 Hermitian forms

Let $\mathfrak{M}(\mathbb{K}, k, l)$ be the group of the $k \times l$ matrices over the number set $\mathbb{K}$. Let $A \in \mathfrak{M}(\mathbb{K}, k, l)$ be in the form $A = (a_{ij})$, the *Hermitian transpose* of A is $A^* \in \mathfrak{M}(\mathbb{K}, l, k)$ that satisfies $A^* = (\overline{a}_{ji})$. As with ordinary transpose operation for $\mathbb{C}$, the Hermitian transpose of a product is the product of the Hermitian transposes in the reverse order, that is $(AB)^* = B^*A^*$. A matrix $H \in \mathfrak{M}(\mathbb{K}, n) := \mathfrak{M}(\mathbb{K}, n, n)$ is said to be *Hermitian* if it equals its own Hermitian transpose, i.e., $H = H^*$. We claim that if H is Hermitian and μ is an eigenvalue of H with eigenvector $x \in \mathbb{K}^n$ then μ is real. In order to see this, observe that

$$x^*\mu x = x^*Hx = x^*H^*x = (Hx)^*x = (\mu x)^*x = x^*\overline{\mu}x.$$

Next by multiplying the RHS (Right-Hand Side) and the LHS (Left-Hand Side) on the left by x and on the right by x^* we obtain

$$xx^*\mu xx^* = xx^*\overline{\mu}xx^*.$$

Then we observe that xx^* is a row vector with real elements, therefore it commutes with μ and $\overline{\mu}$. We therefore infer that

$$\mu xx^*xx^* = \overline{\mu}xx^*xx^*$$

that is

$$\mu|x|^4 = \overline{\mu}|x|^4.$$

By the definition of eigenvector we know that x is not the zero vector and therefore $|x|^4 \neq 0$ leading to $\mu = \overline{\mu}$, that is, $\mu \in \mathbb{R}$.

To each Hermitian matrix $H \in \mathfrak{M}(\mathbb{K}, n)$ we associate a *Hermitian form* $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_H : \mathbb{K}^n \times \mathbb{K}^n \to \mathbb{K}$ given by $\langle z, w \rangle_H = z^* H w$. Hermitian forms are sesquilinear, that is they are conjugate linear in the first factor and linear in the second factor. In other words, for $z, z_1, z_2, w \in \mathbb{K}^n$ and $\lambda \in \mathbb{K}$, we have

$$\langle z_1 + z_2, w \rangle_H = (z_1 + z_2)^* H w = z_1^* H w + z_2^* H w = \langle z_1, w \rangle_H + \langle z_2, w \rangle_H, \tag{8.2.1}$$

$$\langle z\lambda, w \rangle_H = (z\lambda)^* H w = \overline{\lambda} z^* H w = \overline{\lambda} \langle z, w \rangle_H, \tag{8.2.2}$$

$$\langle z, w\lambda \rangle_H = z^* H w \lambda = \langle z, w \rangle_H \lambda, \tag{8.2.3}$$

$$\langle z, w \rangle_H = z^* H w = z^* H^* w = (w^* H z)^* = \overline{\langle w, z \rangle}_H. \tag{8.2.4}$$

The latter property leads to another observation: for every $z \in \mathbb{K}^n$ we have $\langle z, z \rangle_H \in \mathbb{R}$.

Let $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_H$ be a Hermitian form associated to some Hermitian matrix H. Recalling that the eigenvalues of H are real, we say that

- $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_H$ is *non-degenerate* if all the eigenvalues of H are non-zero;
- $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_H$ is *positive definite* if all the eigenvalues of H are strictly positive;
- $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_H$ is *negative definite* if all the eigenvalues of H are strictly negative;
- $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_H$ is *indefinite* if some eigenvalues of H are positive and some negative.

We say that $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_H$ has *signature* (p, q), if H has p strictly positive eigenvalues and q strictly negative eigenvalues, counted with multiplicity. We write $\mathbb{K}^{p,q}$ for $\mathbb{K}^{p+q}$ equipped with a non-degenerate Hermitian form of signature (p, q).

8.2.3 Hermitian forms of signature $(n, 1)$

There are a lot of models for the $\mathbb{K}$-hyperbolic space $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$. In this work we will focus on one particular models. Let $\langle x, y \rangle$ be the Hermitian form of signature $(n, 1)$ on the space $\mathbb{K}^{n+1}$, given by

$$\langle x, y \rangle := -\overline{x}_1 y_{n+1} - \overline{x}_{n+1} y_1 + \sum_{\lambda=2}^{n} \overline{x}_\lambda y_\lambda, \tag{8.2.5}$$

where $x = (x_1, \dots, x_{n+1})$ and $y = (y_1, \dots, y_{n+1})$. We observe that this form is associated to the matrix

$$K := \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & -1 \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & 0 \\ -1 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}. \tag{8.2.6}$$

The matrix K is a Hermitian matrix that has n positive eigenvalues, and 1 negative eigenvalue. There are many more Hermitian forms that one could consider, which all lead to the construction of what is the same space up to isometries. The reason why we chose K as in (8.2.6) is to express some isometries of the hyperbolic space in a way that suits our needs.

Note that, thanks to the property (8.2.4) we have $\langle x, x\rangle = \overline{\langle x, x\rangle}$, i.e, $\langle x, x\rangle \in \mathbb{R}$. The *orthogonal complement* of $x \in \mathbb{K}^{n,1}$, denote by $x^\perp$, is $\{u \in \mathbb{K}^{n+1} | \langle x, u\rangle = 0\}$.

Lemma 8.2.7 (Reverse Schwartz Inequality)**.** *If $\langle x, x\rangle < 0$ and $\langle y, y\rangle < 0$, then*

$$\langle x, y\rangle\langle y, x\rangle \geq \langle x, x\rangle\langle y, y\rangle$$

with equality if and only if x and y are linearly dependent over $\mathbb{K}$.

Proof. If x and y are linearly dependent then there exist $\lambda \in \mathbb{K}$ such that $x = y\lambda$. We rewrite the inequality as follow

$$\langle y\lambda, y\rangle\langle y, y\lambda\rangle \geq \langle y\lambda, y\lambda\rangle\langle y, y\rangle.$$

The LHS, thanks to the properties (8.2.2) and (8.2.3) of the Hermitian forms, is equivalent to

$$\overline{\lambda}\langle y, y\rangle\langle y, y\rangle\lambda = |\lambda|^2\langle y, y\rangle^2.$$

The RHS of the inequality consist of, thanks to the same properties,

$$\langle y\lambda, y\lambda\rangle\langle y, y\rangle = |\lambda|^2\langle y, y\rangle^2,$$

where λ commute with $\langle y, y\rangle$ due the fact that $\langle y, y\rangle$ is real. This prove the linearly dependent case.

Suppose now that x and y are linearly independent. The restriction of $\langle \cdot, \cdot\rangle$ to $x^\perp$ is positive definite and since $\langle y, y\rangle < 0$ we have $\langle x, y\rangle \neq 0$. Let $\lambda = -\langle x, x\rangle\langle x, y\rangle^{-1}$, then $x + y\lambda \in x^\perp$. Due the fact that x and y are linearly independent we have $x + y\lambda \neq 0$, therefore $\langle x + y\lambda, x + y\lambda\rangle = \langle x + y\lambda, y\lambda\rangle > 0$. By expanding this inequality we get

$$-\langle x, x\rangle + \langle x, x\rangle^2\langle y, y\rangle\langle y, x\rangle^{-1}\langle x, y\rangle^{-1} > 0.$$

After diving by $\langle x,x\rangle < 0$, this can be rearrange to give the inequality

$$\langle x,y\rangle\langle y,x\rangle \geq \langle x,x\rangle\langle y,y\rangle,$$

thus completing the proof. □

8.3 The $\mathbb{K}$-hyperbolic n-space $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$

8.3.1 Definition and properties

Let $\mathbb{K}^{n,1}$ be equipped with the Hermitian form $\langle\cdot,\cdot\rangle$ defined in (8.2.5). We defined the *n-dimensional $\mathbb{K}$-projective space* $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{P}^n$, as the quotient of $\mathbb{K}^{n+1}\setminus\{0\}$ by the equivalence relation that identifies $x = (x_1,\dots,x_{n+1})$ with $x\lambda = (x_1\lambda,\dots,x_{n+1}\lambda)$ for all $\lambda \in \mathbb{K}\setminus\{0\}$. The class of x is denoted by $[x]$ and $[x_1,\dots,x_{n+1}]$ are called *homogeneous coordinates* for $[x]$. We finally give the definition of $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$.

Definition 8.3.1. We define the $\mathbb{K}$-*hyperbolic n-space* as the set

$$\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n := \{[x] \in \mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n : \langle x,x\rangle < 0\}$$

equipped with the distance d such that

$$\cosh^2 d([x],[y]) = \frac{\langle x,y\rangle\langle y,x\rangle}{\langle x,x\rangle\langle y,y\rangle}. \tag{8.3.2}$$

For the formula of the distance we give as reference [BH99, Part II, Chapter 10].

Namely, a point $[x]$ of the n-dimensional $\mathbb{K}$-projective space is in $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$ if and only if

$$-\overline{x}_1 x_{n+1} - \overline{x}_{n+1}x_1 + \sum_{\lambda=2}^{n} |x_\lambda|^2 < 0.$$

First of all we want to check that $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$ is well defined, and that the distance formula does not depend on the representative chosen.

Proposition 8.3.3. *Let $x \in \mathbb{K}^{n,1}$, if $\langle x,x\rangle < 0$ then $\langle x\lambda, x\lambda\rangle < 0$ for every $\lambda \in \mathbb{K}\setminus\{0\}$. Furthermore, for every $[x],[y] \in \mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$ the right hand side of (8.3.2) is bigger than 1 and for every $\lambda_1,\lambda_2 \in \mathbb{K}\setminus\{0\}$ is true that*

$$\frac{\langle x,y\rangle\langle y,x\rangle}{\langle x,x\rangle\langle y,y\rangle} = \frac{\langle x\lambda_1, y\lambda_2\rangle\langle y\lambda_2, x\lambda_1\rangle}{\langle x\lambda_1, x\lambda_1\rangle\langle y\lambda_2, y\lambda_2\rangle}.$$

Proof. Thanks to the properties (8.2.2) and (8.2.3) of Hermitian forms, we can write

$$\langle x\lambda, x\lambda\rangle = \overline{\lambda}\langle x,x\rangle\lambda = |\lambda|^2\langle x,x\rangle < 0.$$

For the second point, thanks to Lemma 8.2.7 we know that

$$\frac{\langle x,y\rangle\langle y,x\rangle}{\langle x,x\rangle\langle y,y\rangle} \geq 1.$$

Recalling the properties (8.2.4), (8.2.3) and (8.2.2) of the Hermitian form we obtain that

$$\langle x\lambda_1, y\lambda_2\rangle\langle y\lambda_2, x\lambda_1\rangle = |\langle x\lambda_1, y\lambda_2\rangle|^2 = |\lambda_1|^2|\langle x,y\rangle|^2|\lambda_2|^2,$$

and

$$\langle x\lambda_1, x\lambda_1\rangle\langle y\lambda_2, y\lambda_2\rangle = |\lambda_1|^2\langle x,x\rangle\langle y,y\rangle|\lambda_2|^2.$$

Therefore

$$\frac{\langle x\lambda_1, y\lambda_2\rangle\langle y\lambda_2, x\lambda_1\rangle}{\langle x\lambda_1, x\lambda_1\rangle\langle y\lambda_2, y\lambda_2\rangle} = \frac{|\lambda_1|^2|\langle x,y\rangle|^2|\lambda_2|^2}{|\lambda_1|^2\langle x,x\rangle\langle y,y\rangle|\lambda_2|^2} = \frac{\langle x,y\rangle\langle y,x\rangle}{\langle x,x\rangle\langle y,y\rangle}.$$ □

The last proposition ensures the well definition of $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$ and the independence of the distance from the chosen representative.

8.4 The $\mathbb{K}$-Heisenberg groups

Let $\mathbb{K} \in \{\mathbb{R}, \mathbb{C}, \mathbb{H}\}$. We recall the definition of imaginary part given in Chapter 1: if $u \in \mathbb{R}$ or $u \in \mathbb{C}$ then $\mathrm{Im}(u) = \frac{u-\overline{u}}{2}$, while if $u \in \mathbb{H}$ then $u = a + bi + cj + dk$, with suitable $a, b, c, d \in \mathbb{R}$, and $\mathrm{Im}(u) = \begin{pmatrix} b \\ c \\ d \end{pmatrix} \in \mathbb{R}^3$.

Definition 8.4.1. The *n-th* $\mathbb{K}$*-Heisenberg group* $\mathbb{K}\mathcal{H}^n$, with $n \geq 1$, is the set

$$\mathbb{K}^{n-1} \times \mathrm{Im}(\mathbb{K}) = \{(u,s) | u \in \mathbb{K}^{n-1}, s \in \mathrm{Im}(\mathbb{K})\}$$

endowed with the multiplication law

$$(u,s)(v,t) = (u + v, s + t + \mathrm{Im}(u^t\overline{v})). \tag{8.4.2}$$

Proposition 8.4.3. *The set* $\mathbb{K}^{n-1} \times \mathrm{Im}(\mathbb{K})$ *is a group with the multiplication law given by* (8.4.2).

Proof. The set is clearly closed under such an operation. The identity element is given by $(0,0)$, as a matter of fact, for all $u \in \mathbb{K}^{n-1}$ and all $s \in \mathrm{Im}(\mathbb{K})$

$$(0,0)(u,s) = (0 + u, 0 + s + \mathrm{Im}(0\overline{u})) = (u,s),$$

$$(u,s)(0,0) = (u + 0, s + 0 + \mathrm{Im}(u0)) = (u,s).$$

The inverse element $(u,s)^{-1}$ is given by $(-u,-s)$:

$$\begin{aligned}(u,s)(-u,-s) &= (u-u, s-s+\mathrm{Im}(-|u|^2)) = (0,0),\\ (-u,-s)(u,s) &= (-u+u, -s+s+\mathrm{Im}(-|u|^2)) = (0,0).\end{aligned}$$

And finally the associativity is given by

$$\begin{aligned}((u,s)(v,t))(w,r) &= (u+v, s+t+\mathrm{Im}(u^t\overline{v}))(w,r)\\ &= (u+v+w, s+t+\mathrm{Im}(u^t\overline{v})+r+\mathrm{Im}((u+v)^t\overline{w}))\\ &= (u+v+w, s+t+r+\mathrm{Im}(u^t\overline{v}+u^t\overline{w}+v^t\overline{w}))\\ &= (u+v+w, s+t+r+\mathrm{Im}(z^t(\overline{v+w}))+\mathrm{Im}(v^t\overline{w}))\\ &= (u,s)(v+w, t+r+\mathrm{Im}(v^t\overline{w})))\\ &= (u,s)((v,t)(w,r)).\end{aligned}$$

□

We define an *Heisenberg homothety of ratio a* on the group $\mathbb{K}\mathcal{H}^n$, by

$$\delta_a(u,s) = (au, a^2 s) \qquad \forall a \in \mathbb{R}\setminus\{0\}. \tag{8.4.4}$$

Proposition 8.4.5. *The Heisenberg homothety satisfies the following properties:*

1. $\delta_a((u,s)(v,t)) = (\delta_a(u,s))(\delta_a(v,t))$ *for all* $a \in \mathbb{R}\setminus\{0\}$*;*
2. $\delta_a^{-1} = \delta_{a^{-1}}$ *for all* $a \in \mathbb{R}\setminus\{0\}$*.*

Proof. All the equalities are simple application of the definition of δ_a or the multiplication law defined in (8.4.2). Regarding the first claim, we have:

$$\begin{aligned}\delta_a((u,s)(v,t)) &= \delta_a(u+v, s+t+\mathrm{Im}(u^t\overline{v}))\\ &= (au+av, a^2s+a^2t+a^2\mathrm{Im}(u^t\overline{v}))\\ &= (au+av, a^2s+a^2t+\mathrm{Im}(au^t\overline{av}))\\ &= (au, a^2s)(av, a^2t)\\ &= (\delta_a(u,s))(\delta_a(v,t)).\end{aligned}$$

Regarding the second claim, we have:

$$\begin{aligned}\delta_a\delta_{a^{-1}}(u,s) = \delta_a(a^{-1}u, a^{-2}s) = (u,s),\\ \delta_{a^{-1}}\delta_a(u,s) = \delta_{a^{-1}}(au, a^2s) = (u,s).\end{aligned}$$

□

We point out that if $\mathbb{K} = \mathbb{R}$ then $\mathbb{R}\mathcal{H}^n \cong \mathbb{R}^{n-1}$ as group, where $\mathbb{R}^{n-1}$ has the standard abelian group structure. As a matter of fact, following Definition 8.4.1, the n-th $\mathbb{R}$-Heisenberg group is the set $\mathbb{R}^{n-1} \times \{0\}$ endowed with the multiplication law $(u, 0)(v, 0) = (u + v, 0)$ for all $u, v \in \mathbb{R}^{n-1}$. Eliminating the last coordinate, which is always 0, we obtain the group isomorphism.

8.5 Isometries of hyperbolic spaces

We start by recalling how we defined the Hermitian form $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ in $\mathbb{K}^{n+1}$. This Hermitian form is the form associated to the Hermitian matrix K, given by

$$K := \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & -1 \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & 0 \\ -1 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}, \tag{8.5.1}$$

so

$$\langle x, y \rangle := \langle x, y \rangle_K = x^* K y.$$

Consider the group $GL(n+1, \mathbb{K})$ that is the group of invertible $(n+1, n+1)$ matrices with coefficients in $\mathbb{K}$. There is a natural left action of $GL(n+1, \mathbb{K})$ on $\mathbb{K}^{n,1}$ by $\mathbb{K}$-linear automorphism: the matrix $A = (a_{ij})$ sends $x = (x_1, \dots, x_{n+1}) \in \mathbb{K}^{n,1}$ to

$$Ax := \begin{pmatrix} \sum_{j=1}^{n+1} a_{1j} x_j \\ \vdots \\ \sum_{j=1}^{n+1} a_{n+1j} x_j \end{pmatrix}. \tag{8.5.2}$$

Definition 8.5.3. Let $O_{\mathbb{K}}(n, 1)$ denote the subgroup of $GL(n+1, \mathbb{K})$ that preserves the form $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ induced by *(8.5.1)*, that is

$$O_{\mathbb{K}}(n, 1) := \{A \in GL(n+1, \mathbb{K}) | \langle Ax, Ay \rangle = \langle x, y \rangle \ \forall x, y \in \mathbb{K}^{n,1}\}.$$

We start by characterizing the element of $O_{\mathbb{K}}(n, 1)$.

Proposition 8.5.4. *$A \in O_{\mathbb{K}}(n, 1) \Leftrightarrow A^* K A = K$.*

Proof. We firstly prove the left implication. Let $A \in O_{\mathbb{K}}(n, 1)$. For every $x, y \in \mathbb{K}^{n,1}$ we have $\langle Ax, Ay \rangle = \langle x, y \rangle$. Therefore $\langle Ax, Ax \rangle = \langle x, x \rangle$ for all $x \in \mathbb{K}^{n,1}$, which can be written as

$$(Ax)^* K A x = x^* K x \qquad \forall x \in \mathbb{K}^{n,1}.$$

This is equivalent to

$$x^* A^* K A x = x^* K x \qquad \forall x \in \mathbb{K}^{n,1}.$$

By choosing x as the elements of the canonical base we can conclude that $A^* K A = K$.

To prove the other implication, let $A \in GL(n+1, \mathbb{K})$ such that $A^* K A = K$ then

$$\langle Ax, Ay \rangle = (Ax)^* K A y = x^* A^* K A y = x^* K y = \langle x, y \rangle. \qquad \square$$

Proposition 8.5.5. *The set $O_{\mathbb{K}}(n, 1)$ with the matrix multiplication is a group.*

Proof. Let $A, B \in O_{\mathbb{K}}(n, 1)$ then

$$(AB)^* K A B = B^* A^* K A B = B^* K B = K,$$

and

$$(A^{-1})^* K A^{-1} = (A^{-1})^* A^* K A A^{-1} = (A A^{-1})^* K A A^{-1} = K,$$

so $AB, A^{-1} \in O_{\mathbb{K}}(n, 1)$ thanks to Proposition 8.5.4. The identity matrix obviously belong to $O_{\mathbb{K}}(n, 1)$. The properties of the multiplication follow from the properties of the classic row-column multiplication between matrices. $\square$

We now note that there is an induced action of $GL(n+1, \mathbb{K})$ on $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{P}^n$, and this is the action we shall focus on.

Lemma 8.5.6. *The induced action of $GL(n+1, \mathbb{K})$ on $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{P}^n$ given by $A[x] = [Ax]$, for all $A \in GL(n+1, \mathbb{K})$ is well defined.*

Proof. We need to prove that the induced action does not depend on a representative, that is $[A(x\lambda)] = [Ax]$ for every $A \in GL(n+1, \mathbb{K})$, for every $[x] \in \mathbb{K}\mathbf{P}^n$ and for every $\lambda \in \mathbb{K} \setminus \{0\}$. Let $[x] = [x_1, \cdots, x_{n+1}]^t$ and let $A = (a_{ij})$ with $a_{ij} \in \mathbb{K}$ for all $i, j \in \{1, \cdots, n+1\}$. The fact follows from:

$$\begin{aligned}
[A(x\lambda)] &= \left[A \begin{pmatrix} x_1 \lambda \\ \vdots \\ x_{n+1} \lambda \end{pmatrix} \right] \\
&= \left[\begin{pmatrix} \sum_{j=1}^{n+1} a_{1j} x_j \lambda \\ \vdots \\ \sum_{j=1}^{n+1} a_{n+1j} x_j \lambda \end{pmatrix} \right] \\
&= \left[\begin{pmatrix} \sum_{j=1}^{n+1} a_{1j} x_j \\ \vdots \\ \sum_{j=1}^{n+1} a_{n+1j} x_j \end{pmatrix} \lambda \right] = [(Ax)\lambda] = [Ax],
\end{aligned}$$

where the first equality follows from the hypothesis on $[x]$; the second, the third and the forth one follows from (8.5.2); and the last one holds thanks to the definition of $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{P}^{n+1}$. □

Proposition 8.5.7. *The induced action of $O_{\mathbb{K}}(n,1)$ on $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{P}^n$ preserves the subset $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$ and act by isometries on $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$*

Proof. Let $[x] \in \mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$ and $A \in O_{\mathbb{K}}(n,1)$, by definition A preserves the form $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ and therefore $\langle Ax, Ax \rangle = \langle x, x \rangle < 0$ so $[Ax] \in \mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$. The fact that this action is by isometries follows directly by the definition (8.3.1) of the distance. □

We shall focus on two particular subgroups of $O_{\mathbb{K}}(n,1)$:

Definition 8.5.8. We denote by A and N the following subsets of the group $O_{\mathbb{K}}(n,1)$:

- A denotes the 1-parameter set, formed by the elements

$$A(a) := \begin{pmatrix} e^a & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & e^{-a} \end{pmatrix}, \quad a \in \mathbb{R};$$

- N denotes the set of matrices of the form

$$\nu(M, M_{13}) := \begin{pmatrix} 1 & M & M_{13} \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & M^* \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}, \tag{8.5.9}$$

  where M is a $(1, n-1)$-matrix with elements in $\mathbb{K}$ and M_{13} is in $\mathbb{K}$ and satisfies

$$|M|^2 = M_{13} + \overline{M}_{13}.$$

The following is a simple lemma that characterizes how the product works between elements of A and N.

Lemma 8.5.10. *For all $t \in \mathbb{R}$ and all $\nu(M, M_{13}) \in N$, we have*

$$\nu(M, M_{13})A(t) = A(t)\nu(e^{-t}M, e^{-2t}M_{13}),$$

and

$$A(t)\nu(M, M_{13}) = \nu(e^t M, e^{2t}M_{13})A(t).$$

Proof. Let $A(t) \in A$ and $\nu(M, M_{13}) \in N$, we compute the matrix product $\nu(M, M_{13})A(t)$.

$$\begin{aligned}
\nu(M, M_{13})A(t) &= \begin{pmatrix} 1 & M & M_{13} \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & M^* \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} e^t & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & e^{-t} \end{pmatrix} \\
&= \begin{pmatrix} e^t & M & e^{-t}M_{13} \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & e^{-t}M^* \\ 0 & 0 & e^{-t} \end{pmatrix} \\
&= \begin{pmatrix} e^t & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & e^{-t} \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & e^{-t}M & e^{-2t}M_{13} \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & e^{-t}M^* \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \\
&= A(t)\nu(e^{-t}M, e^{-2t}M_{13}).
\end{aligned}$$

The other case follows from a change of variables: $N = e^{-t}M$ $N_{13} = e^{-2t}M_{13}$. Noting that both $\nu(e^{-t}M, e^{-2t}M_{13})$ and $\nu(e^{t}M, e^{2t}M_{13})$ satisfies the condition of being in N ends the proof. □

Theorem 8.5.11.

1. *A and N are subgroups of $O_{\mathbb{K}}(n, 1)$;*
2. *NA is a subgroup of $O_{\mathbb{K}}(n, 1)$;*
3. *N is normal in NA;*
4. *The group A is isomorphic to $\mathbb{R}$.*

Proof.

1. Firstly we prove that A and N are subset of $O_{\mathbb{K}}(n, 1)$. Thanks to Proposition 8.5.4 we only have to prove that given $\nu(M, M_{13}) \in N$ and $t \in \mathbb{R}$ is true that $A(t)^*KA(t) = K$ and $\nu(M, M_{13})^*K\nu(M, M_{13}) = K$. For the first case we have:

$$\begin{aligned}
A(t)^*KA(t) &= \begin{pmatrix} e^t & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & e^{-t} \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & -1 \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & 0 \\ -1 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} e^t & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & e^{-t} \end{pmatrix} \\
&= \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & -e^t \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & 0 \\ -e^{-t} & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} e^t & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & e^{-t} \end{pmatrix} \\
&= \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & -1 \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & 0 \\ -1 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix} = K.
\end{aligned}$$

For the second case we have:

$$\begin{aligned}
&\nu(M, M_{13})^* K \nu(M, M_{13}) \\
&\quad = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ M^* & I_{n-1} & 0 \\ \overline{M}_{13} & M^* & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & -1 \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & 0 \\ -1 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & M & M_{13} \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & M^* \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \\
&\quad = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & -1 \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & -M_{12}^* \\ -1 & M_{23}^* & -\overline{M}_{13} \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & M & M_{13} \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & M^* \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \\
&\quad = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & -1 \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & M_{23} - M_{12}^* \\ -1 & -M_{12} + M_{23}^* & -M_{13} + |M_{23}|^2 - \overline{M}_{13} \end{pmatrix}.
\end{aligned}$$

Thanks to the definition of N, it's true that

$$M_{23} = M_{12}^*,$$

and

$$|M_{23}|^2 = \overline{M}_{13} + M_{13},$$

so the last matrix is equal to K.

Now let $A(t), A(s) \in A$, a simple check shows that $A(t)A(s) = A(s+t)$ and $A(t)^{-1} = A(-t)$. To prove A is a subgroup of $O_{\mathbb{K}}(n, 1)$ we only need to show that $A(t)A(s)^{-1} \in A$ for all $t, s \in \mathbb{R}$:

$$A(t)A(s)^{-1} = A(t)A(-s) = A(t-s) \in A.$$

In a similar way let $\nu(M, M_{13}), \nu(N, N_{13}) \in N$, a simple check shows that

$$\nu(M, M_{13})\nu(N, N_{13}) = \nu(M + N, N_{13} + MN^* + M_{13})$$

and

$$\nu(M, M_{13})^{-1} = \nu(-M, \overline{M}_{13}).$$

As above we next prove that given $\nu(M, M_{13}), \nu(N, N_{13}) \in N$ the product $\nu(M, M_{13})\nu(N, N_{13})^{-1}$ belongs to N:

$$\begin{aligned}
\nu(M, M_{13})\nu(N, N_{12})^{-1} &= \nu(M, M_{13})\nu(-N, \overline{N}_{13}) \\
&= \begin{pmatrix} 1 & M & M_{13} \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & M^* \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & -N & \overline{N}_{13} \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & -N^* \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \\
&= \begin{pmatrix} 1 & M - N & \overline{N}_{13} - MN^* + M_{13} \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & M^* - N^* \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \\
&= \nu(M - N, \overline{N}_{13} - MN^* + M_{13}).
\end{aligned}$$

The fact that $M-N$ and $\overline{N}_{13}-MN^*+M_{13}$ satisfy the needed condition ends the proof that both A and N are subgroups of $O_{\mathbb{K}}$.

2. Let $\nu(M,M_{13})A(t),\nu(N,N_{13})A(s)\in NA$. Thanks to Lemma 8.5.10

$$\begin{aligned}\nu(M,M_{13})A(t)\nu(N,N_{13})A(s) &= \nu(M,M_{13})\nu(e^tN,e^{2t}N_{13})A(-t)A(s) \\ &= \nu(M+e^tN,e^{2t}\overline{N}_{13}+e^tMN^*+M_{13})A(s-t).\end{aligned} \tag{8.5.12}$$

We observe that $A(s-t)\in A$ and $\nu(M+e^tN,e^{2t}\overline{N}_{13}+e^tMN^*+M_{13})\in N$ thus proving the closure of NA. The identity matrix $I=A(0)\nu(0,0)$, where the zeros refers accordingly, is the neutral element. Given $\nu(M,M_{13})A(t)\in NA$, the calculation (8.5.12) shows also that the inverse element $(\nu(M,M_{13})A(t))^{-1}$ is $\nu(-e^{-t}M,-e^{2t}M_{13})A(-t)$.

3. Lemma 8.5.10 also let us prove this point, as a matter of fact

$$\begin{aligned}\nu(M,M_{13})A(t)\nu(N,N_{13})(\nu(M,M_{13})A(t))^{-1} &= \nu(M,M_{13})A(t)\nu(N,N_{13})\nu(M_{-1},(M_{-1})_{13})A(-t) \\ &= \nu(M,M_{13})\nu(P,P_{13})A(t)A(-t) \\ &= \nu(M,M_{13})\nu(P,P_{13})\in N.\end{aligned}$$

where $\nu(M_{-1},(M_{-1})_{13})$ denotes the inverse of $\nu(M,M_{13})$ and $\nu(P,P_{13})$ is obtain from Lemma 8.5.10.

4. Let $\phi_A:A\to\mathbb{R}$ defined as follow

$$\begin{aligned}\phi_A &: A\to\mathbb{R} \\ \phi_A(A(a)) &\mapsto a.\end{aligned}$$

Obviously $\phi_A(I)=0$ and

$$\phi_A(A(a)A(b))=\phi_A(A(ab))=ab=\phi_A(A(a))\phi_A(A(b)).$$

The definition of A ensures that the homomorphism is bijective. The inverse homomorphism is given by

$$\begin{aligned}\phi_A^{-1} &: \mathbb{R}\to A \\ a &\mapsto A(a)\end{aligned}$$

□

8.6 Hyperbolic spaces as semidirect products

In this section we prove the following result:

Theorem 8.6.1. *For every $\mathbb{K} \in \{\mathbb{R}, \mathbb{C}, \mathbb{H}\}$ and every $n \in \mathbb{N} \setminus \{0\}$, the $\mathbb{K}$-hyperbolic n-space $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$ is isometric to the manifold $\mathbb{K}^{n-1} \times \mathrm{Im}(\mathbb{K}) \times \mathbb{R}$ equipped with the multiplication law given by*

$$(u, s; a) \cdot (v, t; b) = (u + e^a v, s + e^{2a} t + \mathrm{Im}(u^t e^a \overline{v}); a + b) \tag{8.6.2}$$

and the left-invariant distance d such that

$$4 \cosh^2 d(\mathbf{0}, (v, t; b)) = 4 \cosh^2(b) + 2e^{-b} \cosh(b)|v|^2 + e^{-2b} \left(\frac{|v|^4}{4} + |t|^2 \right).$$

In order to prove this theorem we will discuss the real, complex and quaternion case separately. All three case follows the same structure of proof. First we characterize the groups N and A, previously discussed in Chapter 5. Then we prove that NA acts simply transitively on $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$ thus obtaining the wanted identification. Then we express the distance on the group NA and check that it is left-invariant. While in the case of the Real Hyperbolic space, the proofs undergo some simplification, in the complex case and the quaternionic case the proofs are essentially the same. So in this work we will only deal with the real case and the quaternionic case, in which one must be a little more careful, and the complex case follows along.

8.6.1 The real case

Our aim is to prove that $\mathbb{R}\mathbf{H}^n$, with $n \geq 1$, admits a group structure for which the distance is left-invariant and such structure is $\mathbb{R}^{n-1} \rtimes \mathbb{R}$, where $\mathbb{R}$ acts on $\mathbb{R}^{n-1}$ by standard dilations. In this section we work with the group A and N as in Definition 8.5.8. We already know that A is isomorphic to $\mathbb{R}$ as proved in Lemma 8.5.11. Next we better characterize the group structure of $N = \{\nu(M, M_{13}) : M \in \mathfrak{M}(1, n-1, \mathbb{K}), M_{13} \in \mathbb{K}, |M|^2 = M_{13} + \overline{M}_{13}\}$, where ν is defined in (8.5.9).

Lemma 8.6.3. *When $\mathbb{K} = \mathbb{R}$ the group N is isomorphic to $\mathbb{R}^{n-1}$.*

Proof. Let $u \in \mathbb{R}^{n-1}$ and let $u := M^t$. From the relations in the definition of N, recalled above, follows that $M_{13} = \frac{|u|^2}{2}$, therefore we can write

$$N = \{h(u) : u \in \mathbb{R}^{n-1}\},$$

where

$$h(u) := \nu\left(u^t, \frac{|u|^2}{2}\right) = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & u^t & \frac{|u|^2}{2} \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & \overline{u} \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}. \tag{8.6.4}$$

We claim that the mapping $h : \mathbb{R}^{n-1} \to N$ is a group isomorphism. The injectivity follows from the fact that, if $u, v \in \mathbb{R}^{n-1}$ and $u \neq v$, then the first row of $h(u)$ differs from the first row of $h(v)$. The surjectivity follows from the observation at the beginning of the proof. The only thing left is prove is that $h(u)h(v) = h(u+v)$, which follows from the simple observation that $|u+v|^2 = |u|^2 + |v|^2 + 2u^t\overline{v}$. □

For the sequel we shall need the following identities.

Lemma 8.6.5. *Let $u, v \in \mathbb{R}^{n-1}$ and let $a, b \in \mathbb{R}$ then*

$$A(a)h(v) = h(e^a v)A(a),$$

$$h(u)A(a)h(v)A(b) = h(u + e^a v)A(a+b),$$

and

$$(h(u)A(a))^{-1} = h(-e^{-a}u)A(-a).$$

Proof. The first equality follows from Lemma 8.5.10 and Lemma 8.6.3. The second one follows from the calculation

$$h(u)A(a)h(v)A(b) = h(u)h(e^a v)A(a)A(b) = h(u + e^a v)A(a+b).$$

The last one follows from the properties of the matrix inverse and the first equality proved in this lemma. □

Theorem 8.6.6. *The group NA acts simply transitively on $\mathbb{R}\mathbf{H}^n$, that is, for every $x, y \in \mathbb{R}\mathbf{H}^n$ there exists a unique $g \in NA$ such that $g \cdot x = y$.*

Proof. We consider the point $o := [1, 0, \ldots, 0, 1]^t \in \mathbb{R}\mathbf{H}^n$ and we want to show that given an arbitrary point $x \in \mathbb{R}\mathbf{H}^n$ with homogeneous coordinates $[x_1, \ldots, x_n, 1]$, there exists a unique $(u; a) \in \mathbb{R}^{n-1} \times \mathbb{R}$ such that x is the image under $h(u)A(a)$ of the point o, where h is defined in (8.6.4) and A in Definition 8.5.8. We first compute $h(u)A(a)$

$$h(u)A(a) = \begin{pmatrix} e^a & u^t & e^{-a}\frac{|u|^2}{2} \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & e^{-a}\overline{u} \\ 0 & 0 & e^{-a} \end{pmatrix}.$$

Therefore

$$h(u)A(a)\cdot o = \begin{bmatrix} e^a + e^{-a}\frac{|u|^2}{2} \\ e^{-a}\overline{u} \\ e^{-a} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} e^{2a} + \frac{|u|^2}{2} \\ \overline{u} \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}.$$

So $h(u)A(a)\cdot o = x$ becomes the system of equations:

$$\begin{cases} x_1 = e^{2a} + \frac{|u|^2}{2} \\ X_2 = \overline{u} \end{cases},$$

where $X_2^t = (x_2, \ldots, x_n)$. Thus X_2 uniquely determines $\overline{u}$ hence u. We know that if $[x] \in \mathbb{R}\mathbf{H}^n$ x must satisfies $\langle x, x\rangle < 0$, that is

$$-\overline{x}_1 x_{n+1} - \overline{x}_{n+1} x_1 + \sum_{i=2}^{n} \overline{x}_i x_i < 0,$$

which, in our case, is equivalent to

$$-x_1 - x_1 + \sum_{i=2}^{n} |x_i|^2 = |X_2|^2 - 2x_1 < 0 \Leftrightarrow |X_2|^2 < 2x_1.$$

We can conclude that

$$x_1 > \frac{|X_2|^2}{2} = \frac{|u|^2}{2}.$$

There therefore exists a unique $a \in \mathbb{R}$ such that $x_1 = e^{2a} + \frac{|u|^2}{2}$. Thus the above system of equation has a unique solution $(u; a) \in \mathbb{R}^{n-1} \times \mathbb{R}$.

Let now $x \in \mathbb{R}\mathbf{H}^n$ be an arbitrary element, we want to prove that given $y \in \mathbb{R}\mathbf{H}^n$ there exists a unique $(u; a) \in \mathbb{R}^{n-1} \times \mathbb{R}$ such that $h(u)A(a)x = y$. We now know that there exists a unique g_y and a unique $g_x \in NA$ such that $x = g_x \cdot o$ and $y = g_y \cdot o$. We claim that the wanted element is $g_y g_x^{-1}$. As a matter of fact

$$g_y g_x^{-1} \cdot x = g_y g_x^{-1} g_x \cdot o = g_y \cdot o = y.$$

Let $g_x = h(v)A(b)$ and $g_y = h(w)A(c)$. Then

$$\begin{aligned} g_y g_x^{-1} &= h(w)A(c)(h(v)A(b))^{-1} \\ &= h(w)A(c)h(-e^{-b}v)A(-b) \\ &= h(w - e^{c-b}v)A(c-b), \end{aligned}$$

where the equalities hold thanks to Lemma 8.6.5. From this calculation follow that $u = w - e^{c-b}v$ and $a = c - b$, thus the proof is completed. □

From Theorem 8.6.6 we get the following consequence.

Corollary 8.6.7. *The mapping $(u, a) \mapsto h(u)A(a) \cdot o$ gives a smooth identification between $\mathbb{R}^{n-1} \times \mathbb{R}$ and $\mathbb{R}\mathbf{H}^n$, as manifolds.*

We have therefore obtained an identification between $\mathbb{R}\mathbf{H}^n$ and $\mathbb{R}^{n-1} \rtimes \mathbb{R}$ with the multiplication given by, thanks to Lemma 8.6.5,

$$(u; a)(v; b) = (u + e^a v; a + b). \tag{8.6.8}$$

We are left to find the distance on the group and prove the left-invariance.

Given the identifications $(u; a), (v; b) \in \mathbb{R}^{n-1} \times \mathbb{R}$ of $x, y \in \mathbb{R}\mathbf{H}^n$, respectively, we want to write the distance between x and y as a function of u, v, a, b. The hyperbolic distance $d(\cdot, \cdot)$, as in Definition 8.3.1, is written as a function of $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ so we need to express the Hermitian form in these new coordinates. The Hermitian form can be applied only on elements of $\mathbb{R}^{n+1}$, so we define $\hat{x} \in x$ such that $\hat{x} := h(u)A(a)\hat{o}$ where $\hat{o} = (1, 0, \dots, 0, 1)^t \in \mathbb{R}^{n+1}$. We observe that we can make this calculation with a representative because, while the Hermitian form depends on the chosen representative, the distance does not, as proved in Proposition 8.3.3.

Lemma 8.6.9. *Given $x \in \mathbb{R}\mathbf{H}^n$, we have $\langle \hat{x}, \hat{x} \rangle = -2$.*

Proof. Thanks to the identification we know that there exists $(u, a) \in \mathbb{R}^{n-1} \times \mathbb{R}$ such that $x = h(u)A(a) \cdot o$. The lemma follows from the calculation

$$\langle \hat{x}, \hat{x} \rangle = \langle h(u)A(a)\hat{o}, h(u)A(a)\hat{o} \rangle = \langle \hat{o}, \hat{o} \rangle = -2.$$

Note that the second equality holds because $NA \subset O_{\mathbb{K}}(n, 1)$, as proved in Theorem 8.5.11. □

To deal with the general case $|\langle \hat{x}, \hat{y} \rangle|^2$, we first look at the case when $\hat{x} = \hat{o}$:

Lemma 8.6.10. *Let $y \in \mathbb{R}\mathbf{H}^n$ be identified with $(v; b) \in \mathbb{R}^{n-1} \times \mathbb{R}$, we have*

$$|\langle \hat{o}, \hat{y} \rangle|^2 = 4\cosh^2(b) + 2e^{-b}\cosh(b)|v|^2 + e^{-2b}\frac{|v|^4}{4}.$$

Proof. The proof consists in a simple computation of $\langle o, y\rangle$: We have

$$\begin{aligned}
\langle \hat{o}, \hat{y}\rangle &= \langle \hat{o}, h(v)A(b)\hat{o}\rangle \\
&= \hat{o}^* K h(v) A(b)\hat{o} \\
&= \hat{o}^* K \begin{pmatrix} 1 & v^t & \frac{|v|^2}{2} \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & \overline{v} \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} e^b & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & e^{-b} \end{pmatrix} \hat{o} \\
&= \hat{o}^* K \begin{pmatrix} e^b + e^{-b}\frac{|v|^2}{2} \\ e^{-b}\overline{v} \\ e^{-b} \end{pmatrix} \\
&= \hat{o}^* \begin{pmatrix} -e^{-b} \\ e^{-b}\overline{v} \\ -e^b - e^{-b}\frac{|v|^2}{2} \end{pmatrix} = -e^{-b} - e^b - e^{-b}\frac{|v|^2}{2} \\
&= -2\cosh(b) - e^{-b}\frac{|v|^2}{2},
\end{aligned}$$

where by definition $\cosh b = \frac{e^b + e^{-b}}{2}$. Thus we conclude

$$|\langle \hat{o}, \hat{y}\rangle|^2 = 4\cosh^2(b) + 2\cosh(b)e^{-b}|v|^2 + e^{-2b}\frac{|v|^4}{4}. \qquad \square$$

Thanks to the previous lemma we can now deal with the general case:

Proposition 8.6.11. *Let $x, y \in \mathbb{R}\mathbf{H}^n$ be identified with $(u; a), (v; b) \in \mathbb{R}^{n-1} \times \mathbb{R}$ respectively, then*

$$|\langle \hat{x}, \hat{y}\rangle|^2 = 4\cosh^2(b-a) + 2e^{-a-b}\cosh(b-a)|v-u|^2 + e^{-2(a+b)}\frac{|v-u|^4}{4}.$$

Proof. We recall that $\langle \hat{x}, \hat{y}\rangle$ is the Hermitian form associated to the Hermitian matrix K defined in (8.2.6). That is $\langle \hat{x}, \hat{y}\rangle = \hat{x}^* K \hat{y}$. We compute

$$\begin{aligned}
\langle \hat{x}, \hat{y}\rangle &= \langle h(u)A(a)\hat{o}, h(v)A(b)\hat{o}\rangle \\
&= \hat{o}^t A(a) h(u)^* K h(v) A(b)\hat{o} \\
&= \hat{o}^t K A(-a) h(-u) h(v) A(b)\hat{o} \\
&= \hat{o}^t K A(-a) h(v-u) A(b)\hat{o} \\
&= \hat{o}^t K h(e^{-a}(v-u)) A(b-a)\hat{o} \\
&= \langle \hat{o}, h(e^{-a}(v-u)) A(b-a)\hat{o}\rangle,
\end{aligned}$$

where the equalities are obtained by the following reasoning: the first equality follows from the definition of Hermitian form. The second one is a consequence of the fact that $NA \subset O_{\mathbb{K}}(n,1)$ as proved in Theorem 8.5.11. The third one holds thanks to the isomorphism, proved in Theorem 8.6.3, between N and $\mathbb{R}^{n-1}$. The fourth one follows from Lemma 8.6.5 and the last one is simply the definition. Now using Lemma 8.6.10 we continue:

$$\begin{aligned} |\langle \hat{x}, \hat{y}\rangle|^2 &= |\langle \hat{o}, h(e^{-a}(v-u))A(b-a)\hat{o}\rangle|^2 \\ &= 4\cosh^2(b-a) + 2e^{a-b}\cosh(b-a)|e^{-a}(v-u)|^2 + e^{-2(b-a)}\frac{|e^{-a}(v-u)|^4}{4} \\ &= 4\cosh^2(b-a) + 2e^{-a-b}\cosh(b-a)|v-u|^2 + e^{-2(a+b)}\frac{|v-u|^4}{4}. \qquad \square \end{aligned}$$

We are now ready to write the function of the distance in these new coordinates:

Corollary 8.6.12. *After the identification of $\mathbb{R}\mathbf{H}^n$ with $\mathbb{R}^{n-1} \rtimes \mathbb{R}$ as done in Corollary 8.6.7, the distance on $\mathbb{R}^{n-1} \rtimes \mathbb{R}$ reads as*

$$\cosh^2 d((u;a),(v;b)) = \frac{4\cosh^2(b-a) + 2e^{-a-b}\cosh(b-a)|v-u|^2 + e^{-2(a+b)}\frac{|v-u|^4}{4}}{4}.$$

Such a distance is left-invariant with respect to the product structure of $\mathbb{R}^{n-1} \rtimes \mathbb{R}$, as in (8.6.2).

Proof. The distance function follows from the definition of $d(\cdot,\cdot)$ on $\mathbb{R}\mathbf{H}^n$, given in Definition 8.3.1, Lemma 8.6.10, and Proposition 8.6.11. We know that the distance is left-invariant because the multiplication in $\mathbb{R}^{n-1} \rtimes \mathbb{R}$ acts by isometries. A simple calculation can check this fact: let $(w;c) \in \mathbb{R}^{n-1} \rtimes \mathbb{R}$ then

$$(w;c)(u;a) = (w + e^c u; c + a)$$

and

$$(w;c)(v;b) = (w + e^c v; c + b).$$

Then we have the left-invariance:

$$\begin{aligned} &\cosh^2(d((w;c)(u;a),(w;c)(v;b))) \\ &= \frac{4\cosh^2(b-a) + 2e^{-a-b-2c}\cosh(b-a)e^{2c}|v-u|^2 + e^{-2(a+b+2c)}\frac{e^{4c}|v-u|^4}{4}}{4} \\ &= \frac{4\cosh^2(b-a) + 2e^{-a-b}\cosh(b-a)|v-u|^2 + e^{-2(a+b)}\frac{|v-u|^4}{4}}{4} \\ &= \cosh^2 d((u;a),(v;b)). \qquad \square \end{aligned}$$

8.6.2 The quaternionic case

Our aim is to prove that the quaternionic n- hyperbolic space $\mathbb{H}\mathbf{H}^n$ admits a group structure for which the distance is left-invariant and such a structure is $\mathbb{H}\mathcal{H}^n \rtimes \mathbb{R}$, where $\mathbb{H}\mathcal{H}^n$ is the n-th $\mathbb{K}$-Heisenberg groups defined in Definition 8.4.1, and the action of $\mathbb{R}$ on $\mathbb{H}\mathcal{H}^n$ is by standard dilations.

In this section we work with the group A and N as in Definition 8.5.8. We already know that A is isomorphic to $\mathbb{R}$ as proved in Lemma 8.5.11. Next we better characterize the group structure of $N = \{\nu(M, M_{13}) : M \in GL(1, n-1, \mathbb{K}), M_{13} \in \mathbb{K}, |M|^2 = M_{13} + \overline{M}_{13}\}$, where ν is defined in (8.5.9).

Lemma 8.6.13. *When $\mathbb{K} = \mathbb{H}$ the group N is isomorphic to $\mathbb{H}\mathcal{H}^n$.*

Proof. To prove this isomorphism we need to write explicitly what form the matrices in the group N have. As we have recalled, the set N consists of the matrices of the form

$$\nu(M, M_{13}) = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & M & M_{13} \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & M^* \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix},$$

where $M \in \mathcal{M}(1, n-1, \mathbb{H})$ and $M_{13} \in \mathbb{H}$ satisfy $|M|^2 = M_{13} + \overline{M}_{13}$. Let $u := M^t$. We note that

$$M_{13} + \overline{M}_{13} = 2\Re(M_{13}),$$

therefore

$$\Re(M_{13}) = \frac{|u|^2}{2}.$$

The matrices in N can be written in the form

$$h(u, s) := \begin{pmatrix} 1 & u^t & \frac{|u|^2}{2} + s_1 i + s_2 j + s_3 k \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & \overline{u} \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}. \tag{8.6.14}$$

So if $\mathbb{K} = \mathbb{H}$ the group N can be defined as follows:

$$N = \{h(u, s) : u \in \mathbb{H}^{n-1}, s \in \mathbb{R}^3\}.$$

We claim that the mapping $h : \mathbb{H}\mathcal{H}^n \to N$ defined as

$$h : \mathbb{H}\mathcal{H}^n \to N$$

$$(u, s) \mapsto h(u, s),$$

is a group isomorphism. It follows directly that $h(0, 0) = I$. We observe that for all $x, y \in \mathbb{H}^{n-1}$

$$|x + y|^2 = |x|^2 + |y|^2 + 2\Re(x^t \overline{y}). \tag{8.6.15}$$

By computing the product and using the relation (8.6.15) we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} h(u,s)h(v,r) &= \begin{pmatrix} 1 & u^t & \frac{|u|^2}{2} + s_1 i + s_2 j + s_3 k \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & \overline{u} \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & v^t & \frac{|v|^2}{2} + r_1 i + r_2 j + r_3 k \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & \overline{v} \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \\ &= \begin{pmatrix} 1 & u^t + v^t & \frac{|v|^2}{2} + u^t\overline{v} + \frac{|u|^2}{2} + (r_1+s_1)i + (r_2+s_2)j + (r_3+s_3)k \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & \overline{u} + \overline{v} \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \\ &= \begin{pmatrix} 1 & u^t + v^t & \frac{|u+v|^2}{2} + \mathfrak{I}_1 i + \mathfrak{I}_2 j + \mathfrak{I}_3 k \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & u+v \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \\ &= h(u+v, s+r+\mathrm{Im}(u^t\overline{v})), \end{aligned}$$

where $\mathfrak{I}_\lambda := r_\lambda + s_\lambda + \mathrm{Im}_\lambda(u^t\overline{v})$ for $\lambda \in \{1,2,3\}$. This let us to prove that

$$h(u,s)h(v,r) = h(u+v, s+r+\mathrm{Im}(u^t\overline{v})) = h((u,s)(v,t)).$$

The bijectivity follows from the definition and the inverse of h is given by

$$\begin{aligned} h^{-1} : N &\to \mathbb{H}\mathcal{H}^n \\ h(u,s) &\mapsto (u,s). \end{aligned}$$

□

For the sequel we shall need the following identities.

Lemma 8.6.16. *Let $u, v \in \mathbb{H}^{n-1}$, $s, t \in \mathbb{R}^3$ and $a, b \in \mathbb{R}$ then*

$$A(a)h(v,t) = h(e^a v, e^{2a} t)A(a),$$

$$h(u,s)A(a)h(v,t)A(b) = h(u + e^a v, s + e^{2a}t + \mathrm{Im}(u^t e^a \overline{v}))A(a+b),$$

and

$$(h(u,s)A(a))^{-1} = h(-e^{-a}u, -e^{-2a}s)A(-a).$$

Proof. Thanks to Lemma 8.5.10 and Lemma 8.6.13 we know that

$$A(a)h(v,t) = h(e^a v, e^{2a} t)A(a).$$

Therefore

$$\begin{aligned} h(u,s)A(a)h(v,t)A(b) &= h(u,s)h(e^a v, e^{2a}t)A(a)A(b) \\ &= h(u + e^a v, s + e^{2a}t + \mathrm{Im}(u^t e^a \overline{v}))A(a+b), \end{aligned}$$

where the last equality follows from Lemma 8.6.13. The formula for the inverse element follows from the properties of the matrix inverse and the first equality proved in this lemma. □

We next prove that NA acts simply transitively on $\mathbb{H}\mathbf{H}^n$.

Theorem 8.6.17. *The group NA acts simply transitively on $\mathbb{H}\mathbf{H}^n$, that is, for every $x, y \in \mathbb{H}\mathbf{H}^n$ there exists a unique $g \in NA$ such that $g \cdot x = y$*

Proof. We consider the point $o := [1, 0, \dots, 0, 1]^t \in \mathbb{H}\mathbf{H}^n$ and we want to show that given an arbitrary point $x \in \mathbb{H}\mathbf{H}^n$ with homogeneous coordinates $[x_1, \dots, x_n, 1]$, there exists a unique $(u, s; a) \in \mathbb{H}^{n-1} \times \mathbb{R}^3 \times \mathbb{R}$ such that x is the image under $h(u, s)A(a)$ of the point o, where h is defined in (8.6.14) and A in Definition 8.5.8. Since

$$h(u,s)A(a) = \begin{pmatrix} e^a & u^t & e^{-a}\left(\frac{|u|^2}{2} + s_1 i + s_2 j + s_3 k\right) \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & e^{-a}\overline{u} \\ 0 & 0 & e^{-a} \end{pmatrix},$$

we have

$$\begin{aligned} h(u,s)A(a) \cdot o &= \begin{bmatrix} e^a + e^{-a}\left(\frac{|u|^2}{2} + s_1 i + s_2 j + s_3 k\right) \\ e^{-a}\overline{u} \\ e^{-a} \end{bmatrix} \\ &= \begin{bmatrix} e^{2a} + \frac{|u|^2}{2} + s_1 i + s_2 j + s_3 k \\ \overline{u} \\ 1 \end{bmatrix}. \end{aligned}$$

So $h(u, s)A(a) \cdot o = x$ becomes the system of equations:

$$\begin{cases} x_1 = e^{2a} + \frac{|u|^2}{2} + s_1 i + s_2 j + s_3 k \\ X_2 = \overline{u} \end{cases},$$

where $X_2^t = (x_2, \dots, x_n)$. Thus X_2 uniquely determines $\overline{u}$, and hence u. We now observe that the number $x_1 \in \mathbb{H}$ is equal to $a_x + b_x i + c_x j + d_x k$ for suitable $a_x, b_x, c_x, d_x \in \mathbb{R}$. Noting that $e^{2a} + \frac{|u|^2}{2} \in \mathbb{R}$ leads the conclusion that $s_1 = b_x$, $s_2 = c_x$, $s_3 = d_x$. The fact that $[x] \in \mathbb{H}\mathbf{H}^n$ means x must satisfies $\langle x, x\rangle < 0$. We recall that $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle = \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle_K$, where K is the matrix as in (8.2.6), so

$$-\overline{x}_1 x_{n+1} - \overline{x}_{n+1} x_1 + \sum_{i=2}^{n} \overline{x}_i x_i < 0$$

which, in our case, is equivalent to

$$-\overline{x}_1 - x_1 + \sum_{i=2}^{n} |x_i|^2 = |X_2|^2 - \overline{x}_1 - x_1 < 0 \Leftrightarrow |X_2|^2 < x_1 + \overline{x}_1 = 2\Re(x_1).$$

We now conclude that, if $B := \frac{|u|^2}{2} + s_1 i + s_2 j + s_3 k$, then

$$\Re(x_1) > \frac{|X_2|^2}{2} = \frac{1}{2}\left(B + \overline{B}\right) = \Re(B) = \frac{|u|^2}{2}.$$

Therefore, there exists a unique $a \in \mathbb{R}$ such that $\Re(x_1) = e^{2a} + \frac{|u|^2}{2}$. Thus the above system of equation has a unique solution $(u, s; a) \in \mathbb{H}^n \times \mathbb{R}^3 \times \mathbb{R}$.

Let now $x \in \mathbb{H}\mathbf{H}^n$ be an arbitrary element, we want to prove that given $y \in \mathbb{H}\mathbf{H}^n$ there exists a unique $(u, s; a) \in \mathbb{H}^{n-1} \times \mathbb{R}^3 \times \mathbb{R}$ such that $h(u, s)A(a)x = y$. We now know that there exist a unique g_y and a unique $g_x \in NA$ such that $x = g_x \cdot o$ and $y = g_y \cdot o$. We claim that the wanted element is $g_y g_x^{-1}$. As a matter of fact

$$g_y g_x^{-1} \cdot x = g_y g_x^{-1} g_x \cdot o = g_y \cdot o = y.$$

Let $g_x = h(v, t)A(b)$ and $g_y = h(w, r)A(c)$. Then

$$\begin{aligned} g_y g_x^{-1} &= h(w, r)A(c)(h(v, t)A(b))^{-1} \\ &= h(w, r)A(c)h(-e^{-b}v, -e^{-2b}t)A(-b) \\ &= h(w - e^{c-b}v, r - e^{2c-2b}t - \operatorname{Im}((we^{c-b} - e^{2c-2b}v)^t\overline{v}))A(c - b), \end{aligned}$$

where the equalities hold thanks to Lemma 8.6.16. From this calculation follow that $u = w - e^{c-b}v$, $s = r - e^{2c-2b}t - \operatorname{Im}((we^{c-b} - e^{2c-2b}v)^t\overline{v})$ and $a = c - b$, thus the proof is completed. □

From Theorem 8.6.17 we get the following consequence.

Corollary 8.6.18. *The mapping $(u, s; a) \mapsto h(u, s)A(a) \cdot o$ gives a smooth identification between $\mathbb{H}\mathcal{H}^n \times \mathbb{R}$ and $\mathbb{H}\mathbf{H}^n$, as manifolds.*

We have therefore obtain an identification between $\mathbb{H}\mathbf{H}^n$ and $\mathbb{H}\mathcal{H}^n \rtimes \mathbb{R}$ with the multiplication given by Lemma 8.6.16

$$(u, s; a)(v, t; b) = (u + e^a v, s + e^{2a}t + \operatorname{Im}(u^t e^a \overline{v}); a + b). \tag{8.6.19}$$

We are left to find the distance on the group and prove the left-invariance.

Given the identifications $(u, s; a), (v, t; b) \in \mathbb{H}\mathcal{H}^n \times \mathbb{R}$ of $x, y \in \mathbb{H}\mathbf{H}^n$, respectively, we want to write the distance between x and y as a function of u, v, s, t, a, b. The hyperbolic distance $d(\cdot, \cdot)$, as in Definition 8.3.1, is written as a function of $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ so we need to express the Hermitian form in these new coordinates. The Hermitian form can be applied only on elements of $\mathbb{H}^{n+1}$, so we define

$\hat{x} \in x$ such that $\hat{x} := h(u,s)A(a)\hat{o}$ where $\hat{o} = (1,0,\dots,0,1)^t \in \mathbb{H}^{n+1}$. We observe that we can make these calculations with a representative because, while the Hermitian form depends on the chosen representative, the distance does not, as proved in Proposition 8.3.3.

Lemma 8.6.20. *Given $x \in \mathbb{H}\mathbf{H}^n$ we have $\langle \hat{x}, \hat{x} \rangle = -2$.*

Proof. Given $x \in \mathbb{H}\mathbf{H}^n$ identified with $(u,s;a) \in \mathbb{H}\mathcal{H}^n \times \mathbb{R}$ we have

$$\langle \hat{x}, \hat{x} \rangle = \langle h(u,s)A(a)\hat{o}, h(u,s)A(a)\hat{o} \rangle = \langle \hat{o}, \hat{o} \rangle = -2. \qquad \square$$

To deal with the general case $|\langle \hat{x}, \hat{y} \rangle|^2$, we first look at the case when $\hat{x} = \hat{o}$:

Lemma 8.6.21. *Let $y \in \mathbb{H}\mathbf{H}^n$ identified with $(v,t;b) \in \mathbb{H}\mathcal{H}^n \times \mathbb{R}$ then*

$$|\langle \hat{o}, \hat{y} \rangle|^2 = 4\cosh^2(b) + 2e^{-b}\cosh(b)|v|^2 + e^{-2b}\left(\frac{|v|^4}{4} + |t|^2\right).$$

Proof. The proof consist in a simple computation of $\langle \hat{o}, \hat{y} \rangle$. We have

$$\begin{aligned}
\langle \hat{o}, \hat{y} \rangle = (\hat{o}, h(v,t)A(b)\hat{o}) &= \hat{o}^t K h(v,t)A(b)\hat{o} \\
&= \hat{o}^t K \begin{pmatrix} e^b + e^{-b}\left(\frac{|v|^2}{2} + t_1 i + t_2 j + t_3 k\right) \\ e^{-b}\overline{v} \\ e^{-b} \end{pmatrix} \\
&= \hat{o}^t \begin{pmatrix} -e^{-b} \\ e^{-b}\overline{v} \\ -\left(e^b + e^{-b}\left(\frac{|v|^2}{2} + t_1 i + t_2 j + t_3 k\right)\right) \end{pmatrix} \\
&= -e^{-b} - e^{b} - e^{-b}\left(\frac{|v|^2}{2} + t_1 i + t_2 j + t_3 k\right) \\
&= -2\cosh(b) - e^{-b}\left(\frac{|v|^2}{2} + t_1 i + t_2 j + t_3 k\right),
\end{aligned}$$

where by definition $\cosh b = \frac{e^b - e^{-b}}{2}$. By taking the squared norm of the number we conclude

$$|\langle \hat{o}, \hat{y} \rangle|^2 = 4\cosh^2(b) + 2e^{-b}\cosh(b)|v|^2 + e^{-2b}\left(\frac{|v|^4}{4} + |t|^2\right). \qquad \square$$

Thanks to the previous lemma we can now deal with the general case.

Proposition 8.6.22. *Let $x, y \in \mathbb{H}\mathbf{H}^n$ identified with $(u,s;a), (v,t;b) \in \mathbb{H}\mathcal{H}^n \times \mathbb{R}$, respectively, then*

$$|\langle \hat{x}, \hat{y} \rangle|^2 = 4\cosh^2(b-a) + 2e^{-a-b}\cosh(b-a)|v-u|^2 + e^{-2(a+b)}\left(\frac{|v-u|^4}{4} + |t - s - \mathrm{Im}(u\overline{v})|^2\right).$$

Proof. We recall that $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ is the Hermitian form associated to the Hermitian matrix K as defined in (8.2.6). That is $\langle \hat{x}, \hat{y} \rangle = \langle \hat{x}, \hat{y} \rangle_K$. We have the following calculations, which we will subsequently explain:

$$\begin{aligned}
\langle \hat{x}, \hat{y} \rangle &= \langle h(u,s)A(a)\hat{o}, h(v,t)A(b)\hat{o} \rangle \\
&= \hat{o}^t A(a) h(u,s)^* K h(v,t) A(b) \hat{o} \\
&= \hat{o}^t K A(a)^{-1} h(-u,-s) h(v,t) A(b) \hat{o} \\
&= \hat{o}^t K A(-a) h(w,r) A(b) \hat{o} \\
&= \hat{o}^t K h(\varepsilon_a^{-1}(w,r)) A(b-a) \hat{o} \\
&= \langle \hat{o}, h(\varepsilon_a^{-1}(w,r)) A(b-a) \hat{o} \rangle,
\end{aligned}$$

where $\mathbb{H}\mathcal{H}^n \ni (w,r) = (-u,-s)(v,t)$ and $\varepsilon_a^{-1} := \delta_{e^a}^{-1}$ is the Heisenberg homothety of ratio e^{-a}, as in (8.4.4). The equalities are obtained by the following reasoning: the first one follows from the identification in the hypothesis of the proposition. The second equality follows from the definition of the Hermitian form. The third one is a consequence of the fact that $NA \subset O_{\mathbb{H}}$, as proved in Theorem 8.5.11, and the characterization of the elements of $O_{\mathbb{H}}$, proved in Lemma 8.5.4. The fourth one holds thanks to the isomorphism between A and $\mathbb{R}$, Lemma 8.5.11, and the isomorphism between N and $\mathbb{H}\mathcal{H}^n$, proved in Lemma 8.6.13. The fifth one follows from Lemma 8.6.16 and the last one is simply the definition. Computing $\varepsilon_a^{-1}(w,r)$ we obtain

$$\varepsilon_a^{-1}(w,r) = \delta_{e^a}^{-1}(w,r) = \delta_{e^{-a}}(v-u, t-s+\mathrm{Im}(-u^t\overline{v})) = (e^{-a}(v-u), e^{-2a}(t-s-\mathrm{Im}(u^t\overline{v}))).$$

Now using Lemma 8.6.21, we continue.

$$\begin{aligned}
|\langle \hat{x}, \hat{y} \rangle|^2 &= |\langle \hat{o}, h(\varepsilon_a^{-1}(w,r)) A(b-a) \hat{o} \rangle|^2 \\
&= 4\cosh^2(b-a) + 2e^{a-b}\cosh(b-a)|e^{-a}(v-u)|^2 + \\
&\qquad + e^{-2(b-a)} \left(\frac{|e^{-a}(v-u)|^4}{4} + |e^{-2a}(t-s-\mathrm{Im}(u^t\overline{v}))|^2 \right) \\
&= 4\cosh^2(b-a) + 2e^{-a-b}\cosh(b-a)|v-u|^2 + \\
&\qquad + e^{-2(a+b)} \left(\frac{|v-u|^4}{4} + |t-s-\mathrm{Im}(u^t\overline{v})|^2 \right) . \square
\end{aligned}$$

We are now ready to write the function of the distance in these new coordinates:

Corollary 8.6.23. *After the identification of* $\mathbb{H}\mathbf{H}^n$ *with* $\mathbb{H}\mathcal{H}^n \rtimes \mathbb{R}^3$ *as done in Corollary 8.6.18, the* *distance on* $\mathbb{H}\mathcal{H}^n \rtimes \mathbb{R}^3$ *reads as*

$$\begin{aligned}&\cosh^2 d((u,s;a),(v,t;b))\\ &= \quad 4\cosh^2(b-a) + 2e^{-a-b}\cosh(b-a)|v-u|^2 + e^{-2(a+b)}\left(\frac{|v-u|^4}{4} + |t-s-\mathrm{Im}(u^t\overline{v})|^2\right).\end{aligned}$$

This distance is left-invariant with respect to the product structure of $\mathbb{H}\mathcal{H}^n \rtimes \mathbb{R}^3$*, as in* (8.6.2).

Proof. The formula of the distance follows from the definition of $d(\cdot,\cdot)$ on $\mathbb{H}\mathbf{H}^n$, Lemma 8.6.21, and Proposition 8.6.22. We know that the distance is left-invariant because the operation in $\mathbb{H}\mathcal{H}^n \rtimes \mathbb{R}$ acts by isometries. A simple check can prove this fact: let $(w,r;c) \in \mathbb{H}\mathcal{H}^n \rtimes \mathbb{R}$ then

$$(w,r;c)(u,s;a) = (w + e^c u, r + e^{2c}s + e^c\mathrm{Im}(w^t\overline{u}); c+a)$$

and

$$(w,r;c)(v,t;b) = (w + e^c v, r + e^{2c}t + e^c\mathrm{Im}(w^t\overline{v}); c+b).$$

Then we get the left-invariance:

$$\begin{aligned}&4\cosh^2(d((w,r;c)(u,s;a),(w,r;c)(v,t;b)))\\ &= 4\cosh^2(b-a) + 2e^{-a-b-2c}\cosh(b-a)e^{2c}|v-u|^2 +\\ &\quad + e^{-2(a+b+2c)}\left(\frac{e^{4c}|v-u|^4}{4} + |e^{2c}(t-s) + e^c(\mathrm{Im}(w^t\overline{v}) - \mathrm{Im}(w^t\overline{u})) -\right.\\ &\qquad \left. -\mathrm{Im}(|w|^2 + e^c w^t\overline{v} + e^c u^t\overline{w} + e^{2c}u^t\overline{v})|^2\right)\\ &= 4\cosh^2(b-a) + 2e^{-a-b}\cosh(b-a)|v-u|^2 4 +\\ &\quad + e^{-2(a+b+2c)}\left(\frac{e^{4c}|v-u|^4}{4} + |e^{2c}(t-s) - e^c\mathrm{Im}(u^t\overline{w} + w^t\overline{u}) -\right.\\ &\qquad \left. -\mathrm{Im}(e^{2c}u^t\overline{v})|^2\right)\\ &= 4\cosh^2(b-a) + 2e^{-a-b}\cosh(b-a)|v-u|^2 +\\ &\quad + e^{-2(a+b+2c)}\left(\frac{e^{4c}|v-u|^4}{4} + |e^{2c}(t-s) - \mathrm{Im}(e^{2c}u^t\overline{v})|^2\right)\\ &= 4\cosh^2(b-a) + 2e^{-a-b}\cosh(b-a)|v-u|^2 +\\ &\quad + e^{-2(a+b)}\left(\frac{|v-u|^4}{4} + |t-s-\mathrm{Im}(u^t\overline{v})|^2\right)\\ &= \cosh^2 d((u,s;a),(v,t;b)).\end{aligned}$$

Most of the equalities are simple calculation, the only thing to note is that for all $w,u \in \mathbb{H}^n$ is true that $w^t\overline{u} + u^t\overline{w} \in \mathbb{R}$. As a matter of fact $\overline{w^t\overline{u} + u^t\overline{w}} = u^t\overline{w} + w^t\overline{u}$, thanks to the properties of the conjugation described in the first chapter. □

8.6.3 The complex case

Out for completeness we write the theorem for the complex case, that we remember follows the same exact reasoning of the quaternionic case.

Theorem 8.6.24. *The complex hyperbolic space* $\mathbb{C}\mathbf{H}^n$ *admits a group structure with a left invariant distance and such structure is* $\mathbb{C}\mathcal{H}^n \rtimes \mathbb{R}$ *with the operation given by*

$$(u, s; a)(v, t; b) = (u + e^a v, s + e^{2a} t + \mathrm{Im}(u^t e^a \overline{v}); a + b).$$

The distance on $\mathbb{C}\mathcal{H}^n \rtimes \mathbb{R}$ *reads as*

$$\begin{aligned} &4\cosh^2 d((u, s; a), (v, t; b)) \\ &\qquad = 4\cosh^2(b-a) + 2e^{-a-b}\cosh(b-a)|v-u|^2 + e^{-2(a+b)}\left(\frac{|v-u|^4}{4} + |t - s - \mathrm{Im}(u^t\overline{v})|^2\right). \end{aligned}$$

This distance is left-invariant with respect to the product structure of $\mathbb{C}\mathcal{H}^n \rtimes \mathbb{R}$.

Another way to prove Theorem 8.6.24 is to observe that $\mathbb{C}\mathbf{H}^n$ embeds isometrically into $\mathbb{H}\mathbf{H}^n$ by embedding a copy of $\mathbb{C}^{n+1}$ in $\mathbb{H}^{n+1}$.

8.7 The visual distance for $\mathbb{K}$-hyperbolic spaces

Thanks to the way we defined the $\mathbb{K}$-hyperbolic n-space $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$, in Definition 8.3.1, there is a natural way to realize its boundary. We recall that setwise

$$\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n = \{[x] \in \mathbb{K}\mathbf{P}^n | \langle x, x\rangle < 0\},$$

where $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{P}^n$ is the n-dimensional $\mathbb{K}$-projective space and $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$ is the Hermitian form associated to the Hermitian matrix K given by (8.2.6).

Definition 8.7.1. We define the *boundary at infinity of* $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$ as the set

$$\partial_\infty \mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n := \{[x] \in \mathbb{K}\mathbf{P}^n | \langle x, x\rangle = 0\}.$$

Let $\omega, o \in \mathbb{K}\mathbf{P}^n$ where $\omega := [1, 0, \ldots, 0]^t$ and $o := [1, 0, \ldots, 0, 1]^t$. A simple calculation checks that $\omega \in \partial_\infty \mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$ while $o \in \mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$. We recall the subgroups A and N of $O_{\mathbb{K}}(n, 1)$, that is, the group of isometries that preserve the Hermitian form $\langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle$, which were defined in Definition 8.5.8. The set A is the group of matrices in the form

$$A(a) = \begin{pmatrix} e^a & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & e^{-a} \end{pmatrix},$$

while N is the group of matrices in the form

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & M & M_{13} \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & M^* \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix},$$

where $M \in \mathbb{K}^{n-1}$ and $M_{13} \in \mathbb{R}$ satisfy $M_{13} + \overline{M}_{13} = |M|^2$. We also remind that N was proved to be isomorphic to the n-th $\mathbb{K}$-Heisenberg group $\mathbb{K}\mathcal{H}^n$, Theorem 8.6.3 and Theorem 8.6.13, so we write $h(u, s)$ with $u \in \mathbb{K}^{n-1}$ and $s \in \operatorname{Im}(\mathbb{K})$ to denote the elements of N, as in (8.6.14).

For every $\xi_0 \in N \cdot o$ we consider the map

$$\begin{aligned} \xi : \mathbb{R} &\to \mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n \\ t &\mapsto \xi_t = h(u, s)A(-t) \cdot o, \end{aligned} \tag{8.7.2}$$

where $u \in \mathbb{K}^{n-1}$ and $s \in \operatorname{Im}(\mathbb{K})$ such that $h(u, s)$ is the unique element of N that satisfies $\xi_0 = h(u, s) \cdot o$. The following lemma allows to extend ξ to $\mathbb{R} \cup \{-\infty, +\infty\}$.

Lemma 8.7.3. *For all $\xi_0 \in N \cdot o$ the following facts are true for the curve* (8.7.2)*:*

1. *ξ is a geodesic;*
2. *$\lim_{t \to -\infty} \xi_t = \omega$;*
3. *$\xi_\infty := \lim_{t \to +\infty} \xi_t \in \partial_\infty \mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n \setminus \{\omega\}$.*

Before starting the proof we want to point out that these are limits taken with respect to the topology on $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{P}^n$, which is the quotient topology from $\mathbb{K}^{n+1}$.

Proof. To prove that ξ is a geodesic we need to prove that $d(\xi_{t_1}, \xi_{t_2}) = |t_1 - t_2|$ for all $t_1, t_2 \in \mathbb{R}$, where d is the distance in Definition 8.3.1. By definition $\xi_{t_1} = h(u, s)A(-t_1) \cdot o$ and $\xi_{t_2} = h(u, s)A(-t_2) \cdot o$. Let $\hat{o} = (1, 0, \dots, 0, 1)^t \in \mathbb{K}^{n+1}$ then, thanks to Theorem 8.6.1, we get

$$\begin{aligned} \cosh^2(d(\xi_{t_1}, \xi_{t_2})) &= \cosh^2(d((u, s; -t_1)\hat{o}, (u, s; -t_2)\hat{o})) \\ &= \cosh^2(d((0, 0; -t_1)\hat{o}, (0, 0; -t_2)\hat{o})) \\ &= \cosh^2(t_1 - t_2), \end{aligned}$$

where, in particular, the first equality follows from the identification between $\mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$ and $\mathbb{K}\mathcal{H}^n \rtimes \mathbb{R}$; the second equality from the left-invariance of d and the last one follows from the explicit formula of d on $\mathbb{K}\mathcal{H}^n \rtimes \mathbb{R}$. We obtain, thanks to the injectivity of cosh on the nonnegative real numbers, that $d(\xi_{t_1}, \xi_{t_2}) = |t_2 - t_1|$.

To prove the second and the third point we suppose $\mathbb{K} = \mathbb{H}$ so

$$h(u,s) = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & u^t & \frac{|u|^2}{2} + s_1 i + s_2 j + s_3 k \\ 0 & I_{n-1} & \overline{u} \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}.$$

If $\mathbb{K} = \mathbb{R}$ or $\mathbb{K} = \mathbb{C}$ one can simply consider $s_1 = s_2 = s_3 = 0$ or $s_2 = s_3 = 0$, respectively. A simple calculation proves that

$$\xi_t = h(u,s)A(-t) \cdot o = \begin{bmatrix} e^{-t} + e^t(\frac{|u|^2}{2} + s_1 i + s_2 j + s_3 k) \\ e^t \overline{u} \\ e^t \end{bmatrix}.$$

So, on one side, we get

$$\begin{aligned} \lim_{t \to -\infty} \xi_t &= \lim_{t \to -\infty} \begin{bmatrix} e^{-t} + e^t(\frac{|u|^2}{2} + s_1 i + s_2 j + s_3 k) \\ e^t \overline{u} \\ e^t \end{bmatrix} \\ &= \lim_{t \to -\infty} \begin{bmatrix} 1 + e^{2t}(\frac{|u|^2}{2} + s_1 i + s_2 j + s_3 k) \\ e^{2t} \overline{u} \\ e^{2t} \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \\ \vdots \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} = \omega. \end{aligned}$$

On the other side, we get

$$\begin{aligned} \lim_{t \to +\infty} \xi_t &= \lim_{t \to +\infty} \begin{bmatrix} e^{-t} + e^t(\frac{|u|^2}{2} + s_1 i + s_2 j + s_3 k) \\ e^t \overline{u} \\ e^t \end{bmatrix} \\ &= \lim_{t \to +\infty} \begin{bmatrix} e^{-2t} + \frac{|u|^2}{2} + s_1 i + s_2 j + s_3 k \\ \overline{u} \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} \\ &= \begin{bmatrix} \frac{|u|^2}{2} + s_1 i + s_2 j + s_3 k \\ \overline{u} \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = \xi_\infty. \end{aligned}$$

It follows that $\xi_\infty \neq \omega$ for all ξ, and simple calculations can prove that $\xi_\infty \in \partial_\infty \mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$ thus concluding the proof. □

Theorem 8.7.4. *The set $N \cdot o$ can be identified with $\partial_\infty \mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n \setminus \{\omega\}$.*

Proof. Let $\phi : N \cdot o \to \partial_\infty \mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n \setminus \{\omega\}$ such that $\phi(\xi_0) = \xi_\infty$ for all $\xi_0 \in N \cdot o$, where ξ_∞ is defined as in Lemma 8.7.3. The injectivity of ϕ follows from the proof of Lemma 8.7.3, while the surjetivity follows from simple calculations. □

We now know that $\partial_\infty \mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n \setminus \{\omega\}$ can be identified with $\mathbb{K}^{n-1} \times \mathrm{Im}(\mathbb{K}) \times \{0\}$ endowed with the product

$$(u_1, s_1; 0)(u_2, s_2; 0) = (u_1 + u_2, s_1 + s_2 + \mathrm{Im}(u_1^t \overline{u}_2); 0).$$

Our next aim is to explicitly write the visual distance for the $\mathbb{K}$-hyperbolic n-space in the new coordinates given by Theorem 8.7.4.

Lemma 8.7.5. *The visual distance defined as in* (8.1.2) *is left-invariant, when $\partial_\infty \mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$ is identified with $\mathbb{K} \times \mathrm{Im}(\mathbb{K}) \times \{0\}$.*

Proof. Let $(u_1, s_1; 0), (u_2, s_2; 0), (u_3, s_3; 0) \in \mathbb{K}^{n-1} \times \mathrm{Im}(\mathbb{K}) \times \{0\}$ the identification of $\xi_\infty, \eta_\infty, \mu_\infty \in \partial_\infty \mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n \setminus \{\omega\}$, respectively. We can therefore identify, thanks to Theorem 8.6.1, the points $\xi_t, \eta_t, \mu_t \in \mathbb{K}\mathbf{H}^n$, respectively, with $(u_1, s_1; -t), (u_2, s_2; -t), (u_3, s_3; -t) \in \mathbb{K}^{n-1} \times \mathrm{Im}(\mathbb{K}) \times \mathbb{R}$. Thanks to Theorem 8.6.1 we also know that d is left-invariant so

$$
\begin{aligned}
&((u_3, s_3; 0)(u_1, s_1; 0), (u_3, s_3; 0)(u_2, s_2; 0))_{(\omega,o)} \\
&\qquad = \frac{1}{2} \lim_{t \to +\infty} (2t - d((u_3, s_3; 0)(u_1, s_1; -t), (u_3, s_3; 0)(u_2, s_2; -t))) \\
&\qquad = \frac{1}{2} \lim_{t \to +\infty} (2t - d((u_1, s_1; -t), (u_2, s_2; -t))) \\
&\qquad = ((u_1, s_1; 0), (u_2, s_2; 0))_{(\omega,o)},
\end{aligned}
$$

where the first and last equalities are definitions and the last one follows from the fact that d is left-invariant. We have therefore obtained

$$
d_{vis}((u_3, s_3; 0)(u_1, s_1; 0), (u_3, s_3; 0)(u_2, s_2; 0)) = d_{vis}((u_1, s_1; 0), (u_2, s_2; 0)). \qquad \square
$$

Theorem 8.7.6. *The visual distance on $\mathbb{K}^{n-1} \times \mathrm{Im}(\mathbb{K}) \times \{0\}$ reads as*

$$
d_{vis}(\mathbf{0}, (u, s; 0)) = \sqrt[4]{\frac{|u|^4}{4} + |s|^2}.
$$

Proof. We need to calculate $(\mathbf{0}, (u, s; 0))_{(\omega,o)}$. By definition

$$
(\mathbf{0}, (u, s; 0))_{(\omega,o)} = \frac{1}{2} \lim_{t \to +\infty} (2t - d((0, 0; -t), (u, s; -t)))\,.
$$

Thanks to Theorem 8.6.1 we know that

$$
\begin{aligned}
d((0, 0; -t), (u, s; -t)) &= \operatorname{arccosh} \sqrt{e^{2t} \frac{|u|^2}{2} + e^{4t} \left(\frac{|u|^4}{16} + \frac{|s|^2}{4} \right)} \\
&= \operatorname{arccosh} \left(e^{2t} \sqrt{\beta(u, s, t)} \right),
\end{aligned}
$$

where

$$
\beta(u, s, t) := \sqrt{e^{-2t} \frac{|u|^2}{2} + \left(\frac{|u|^4}{16} + \frac{|s|^2}{4} \right)}.
$$

We recall that

$$x \geq 1 \implies \operatorname{arccosh} x = \ln\left(x^2 + \sqrt{x^2 - 1}\right),$$

so

$$\begin{aligned} d((0,0;-t),(u,s;-t)) &= \operatorname{arccosh}\left(e^{2t}\sqrt{\beta(u,s,t)}\right) \\ &= \ln\left(e^{2t}\beta(u,s,t) + \sqrt{\left(e^{2t}\sqrt{\beta(u,s,t)}\right)^2 - 1}\right) \\ &= \ln\left(e^{2t}\beta(u,s,t) + \sqrt{e^{4t}\beta(u,s,t)^2 - 1}\right) \\ &= \ln\left(e^{2t}\left(\beta(u,s,t) + \sqrt{\beta(u,s,t)^2 - \frac{1}{e^{4t}}}\right)\right) \\ &= 2t + \ln\left(\beta(u,s,t) + \sqrt{\beta(u,s,t)^2 - \frac{1}{e^{4t}}}\right), \end{aligned}$$

where the second equality follows from the definition of arccosh, the last one follows from the properties of logarithms, and the other ones are simple calculations. We can now write the Gromov product as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} (\mathbf{0},(u,s;0))_{(\omega,o)} &= \frac{1}{2}\lim_{t\to+\infty}\left(2t - d((0,0;-t),(u,s;-t))\right) \\ &= \frac{1}{2}\lim_{t\to+\infty}\left(2t - 2t - \ln\left(\beta(u,s,t) + \sqrt{\beta(u,s,t)^2 - \frac{1}{e^{4t}}}\right)\right) \\ &= \frac{1}{2}\lim_{t\to+\infty}\left(-\ln\left(\beta(u,s,t) + \sqrt{\beta(u,s,t)^2 - \frac{1}{e^{4t}}}\right)\right). \end{aligned}$$

By observing that

$$\lim_{t\to+\infty}\beta(u,s,t) = \sqrt{\frac{|u|^4}{16} + \frac{|s|^2}{4}},$$

we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} (\mathbf{0},(u,s;0))_{(\omega,o)} &= \frac{1}{2}\lim_{t\to+\infty}\left(-\ln\left(\beta(u,s,t) + \sqrt{\beta(u,s,t)^2 - \frac{1}{e^{4t}}}\right)\right) \\ &= -\frac{1}{2}\ln\left(2\sqrt{\frac{|u|^4}{16} + \frac{|s|^2}{4}}\right) = -\ln\left(\sqrt[4]{\frac{|u|^4}{4} + |s|^2}\right). \end{aligned}$$

Thanks to the definition (8.1.2) of d_{vis} we can conclude

$$d_{vis}(\mathbf{0},(u,s;0) = e^{-(\mathbf{0},(u,s;0))_{(\omega,o)}} = \sqrt[4]{\frac{|u|^4}{4} + |s|^2}. \qquad \square$$

8.8 The octonionic hyperbolic plane

One case still remains: the octonionic hyperbolic plane. In this chapter we explain why it can not be treated like the other cases, and provide some ideas on how to deal with it. We first start by introducing the Octonions.

The octonion number set $\mathbb{O}$ are the 8-dimensional algebra over $\mathbb{R}$ with base $\{i_j : j = 1, \ldots, 7\}$, where

$$1i_j = i_j 1 = i_j, \quad i_j^2 = -1, \quad i_j i_k = -i_k i_j \quad \forall j, k \in \{1, \ldots, 7\},$$

and

$$i_j i_k = i_l$$

precisely when (j, k, l) is a cyclic permutation of one of the triples:

$$(1,2,4),\ (1,3,7),\ (1,5,6)\ (2,3,5),\ (2,6,7),\ (3,4,6),\ (4,5,7).$$

An octonion z has the form $z = z_0 + \sum_{j=1}^{7} z_j i_j$. The *conjugate* $\overline{z}$ of z is defined to be $z = z_0 - \sum_{j=1}^{7} z_j i_j$. Conjugation has the property that $\overline{zw} = \overline{w}\,\overline{z}$ for all $z, w \in \mathbb{O}$. In a similar way to the complex and quaternionic case one define the *real part* and the *imaginary part* as $\Re(z) = \frac{1}{2}(z + \overline{z})$ and $\mathrm{Im}(z) = \frac{1}{2}(z - \overline{z})$. The *norm* $|z|$ of an octonion is the non-negative real number defined by $|z| = \overline{z}z = z\overline{z} = \sum_{j=0}^{7} z_j^2$. It's easy to see that the product in $\mathbb{O}$ is not associative, for example

$$i_1((1 + i_4)i_3) = i_1(i_3 - i_6) = i_7 + i_5,$$

while

$$(i_1(1 + i_4))i_3 = (i_1 - i_2)i_3 = i_7 - i_5.$$

The lack of associativity make $\mathbb{O}$ lose the notion of a vector space. This is the point that does not let us to work with the Octonion as with the other numbers. While for the Quaternion we simply have to consider right and left multiplication as different things, there is no way to build a vector space on $\mathbb{O}$. The idea here is to use the fact that two generators subalgebras of $\mathbb{O}$ are associative, this result is due to Artin, see [Sch95, Section III.1].

Proposition 8.8.1. *For any octonions x and y the subalgebra with unit generated by x and y is associative. In particular, any product of octonions that may be written in terms of just two octonions is associative.*

Consider $z = (z_1, z_2)$ where $z_1, z_2 \in \mathbb{O}$, we define the *standard lift* of z as

$$\mathbf{z} = \begin{pmatrix} z_1 \\ z_2 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix}.$$

Suppose that λ is an octonion in the same associative subalgebra of $\mathbb{O}$ as z_1 and z_2, then we can let λ act on $\mathbf{z}$ by right multiplication:

$$\mathbf{z}\lambda = \begin{pmatrix} z_1\lambda \\ z_2\lambda \\ \lambda \end{pmatrix}.$$

We therefore define

$$\mathbb{O}_0^3 = \left\{ \mathbf{z} = \begin{pmatrix} z_1 \\ z_2 \\ z_3 \end{pmatrix} : z_1, z_2, z_3 \text{ all lie in some associative subalgebra of } \mathbb{O} \right\}.$$

We now work on $\mathbb{O}_0^3$ in a similar way we have done on $\mathbb{K}^{n+1}$.

Definition 8.8.2. We define an equivalence relation on $\mathbb{O}_0^3$ by $\mathbf{z} \sim \mathbf{w}$ if $\mathbf{w} = \mathbf{z}\lambda$ for some λ in an associative subalgebra of $\mathbb{O}$ containing the entries of $\mathbf{z}$. We denote the set of equivalence classes as $\mathbb{O}\mathbf{P}_0^2$.

Let H be a Hermitian matrix of signature $(2,1)$, for example in the form of K, as (8.2.6). Given $\mathbf{z} \in \mathbb{O}_\mathbf{0}^\mathbf{3}$, we define $Z := \mathbf{z}\mathbf{z}^* H$. This is a 3×3 matrix whose entries lie in an associative subalgebra of $\mathbb{O}$.

Lemma 8.8.3. *Right multiplication of* $\mathbf{z}$ *by* λ *lying in the same associative subalgebra as the entries of* $\mathbf{z}$*, leads to multiplication of* Z *by* $|\lambda|^2$.

Proof. The proof is a simple calculation:

$$(\mathbf{z}\lambda)(\mathbf{z}\lambda)^* H = \mathbf{z}\lambda\lambda^*\mathbf{z}^* = |\lambda|^2 \mathbf{z}\mathbf{z}^* H.$$ □

We consider $M(\mathbb{O}, 3)$ to be the real vector space of 3×3 octonionic matrices. Let X^* the conjugate transpose of a matrix X in $M(\mathbb{O}, 3)$. We define

$$J = \big\{ X \in M(\mathbb{O}, 3) : HX = X^* H \big\}.$$

Then J is closed under *Jordan multiplication*, that is

$$X * Y := \frac{1}{2}\left(XY + YX\right). \tag{8.8.4}$$

We call J the *Jordan algebra associated to* H. Real numbers act on $M(\mathbb{O}, 3)$ by multiplication of each entry of X. So we define an equivalence relation on J by $X \sim Y$ if and only if $Y = kX$ for some non-zero real number k. Then $\mathbb{J}\mathbf{P}$ is defined to be the set these of equivalence classes.

Let $\mathfrak{Z} : \mathbb{O}_0^3 \to M(\mathbb{O}, 3)$ such that $\mathfrak{Z}(\mathbf{z}) = Z$, then $\mathfrak{Z}(\mathbf{z}) \in J$ for all $\mathbf{z} \in \mathbb{O}_0^3$, as a matter of fact

$$H\mathfrak{Z}(\mathbf{z}) = HZ = H\mathbf{z}\mathbf{z}^* H = (\mathbf{z}\mathbf{z}^* H)^* H = Z^* H = \mathfrak{Z}(\mathbf{z})^* H.$$

Hence the map $\mathfrak{Z}$ defines an embedding $\mathbb{O}_0^3 \to J$. Moreover, the two projection maps are compatible and so there is a well defined map $\mathbb{O}\mathbf{P}_0^3 \to \mathbb{J}\mathbf{P}$, thanks to Lemma 8.8.3. The Hermitian form in this case is provided by $tr(Z) = tr(\mathbf{z}\mathbf{z}^* H)$, which is real thanks to the fact that

$$\overline{tr(Z)} = tr(\overline{Z}) = tr(\overline{\mathbf{z}\mathbf{z}^* H}) = tr(\mathbf{z}\mathbf{z}^* H^*) = tr(\mathbf{z}\mathbf{z}^* H) = tr(Z).$$

On $M(3, \mathbb{O})$ we define a bilinear form by

$$\langle X, Y \rangle := \Re(tr(X * Y)) = \frac{1}{2}\Re(tr(XY + YX)),$$

where $X * Y$ is defined in (8.8.4).

We can finally give the definition of the octonionic hyperbolic plane:

Definition 8.8.5. Let $V_- := \{\mathbf{z} \in \mathbb{O}_0^3 : tr(\mathbf{z}\mathbf{z}^* H) < 0\}$ and let $V_-\mathbf{P}$ be its projectivization as in Definition 8.8.2. We define the *octonionic hyperbolic plane* $\mathbb{O}\mathbf{H}^2$ to be the set $V_-\mathbf{P}$ endowed with the distance

$$\cosh^2\left(\frac{d([\mathbf{z}], [\mathbf{w}])}{2}\right) = \frac{\langle Z, W \rangle}{tr(Z)tr(W)}.$$

The octonionic hyperbolic plane $\mathbb{O}\mathbf{H}^2$ and its distance are well defined thanks to Lemma 8.8.3.

We leave the study of the group structure of $\mathbb{O}\mathbf{H}^2$ for the reader.

8.9 Heintze groups*

Chapter 9

Analysis on nilpotent groups

9.1 Rademacher Theorem

We would like to observe that the classical Rademacher Theorem states not only the existence almost everywhere of a tangent map (called the differential), but also its realizability as a linear map, in other word, as a group homomorphism which is compatible with the respective groups of dilations. Stated in this terms, the theorem holds for general equiregular sub-Finsler manifolds as well. The aim of this section is to explain the content of such a differentiability result and to give a complete proof of it in the case of Carnot groups

9.1.1 Margulis-Mostow's theorem

The Rademacher-type theorem for manifolds is attributed to Margulis and Mostow [MM95], who however, extended the proof by Pansu for the case of Carnot groups [Pan89].

Theorem 9.1.1 (SubRiemannian Rademacher Theorem)**.** *At almost all points, the tangent map of a Lipschitz map between sub-Finsler equiregular manifolds exists, is unique, and is a group homomorphism of the tangent cones equivariant with respect to their dilations.*

Let us clarify what is the meaning of tangent map. Each map $f : (X, d) \to (X', d')$ induces a map $f_\lambda : (X, \lambda d) \to (X', \lambda d')$, for each $\lambda > 0$, which set-wise is the same map $f(x) = f_\lambda(x)$. Fix a point $x \in X$ and assume that (Z, ρ) and (Z', ρ') are tangent spaces respectively to (X, d) at x and to (X', d') at $f(x)$. One says that $\hat{f} : (Z, \rho) \to (Z', \rho')$ is a *tangent map* of f at x if, for some sequence $\lambda_j \to \infty$, f_{λ_j} converges to $\hat{f}$ in what sense?

Let us warn the reader about a possible confusion. Each sub-Riemannian manifold is in particular a differentiable manifold. However, the notion of the differential of a smooth map does not coincide with the tangent map which is defined in geometric terms. However, there is a link between the two tangent maps, see Exercise **??**.

9.1.2 Pansu's theorem

We shall prove Pansu's version of Rademacher Theorem.

Definition 9.1.2 (Pansu differentiability)**.** Let $\mathbb{G}_1$ and $\mathbb{G}_2$ be Carnot groups. We denote by δ_h the dilations of factor h in both of the groups. If $f : \mathbb{G}_1 \to \mathbb{G}_2$ is a map, then its *Pansu differential* at a point $x \in \mathbb{G}_1$ is the limit

$$Df_x := \lim_{h\to 0^+} \delta_{1/h} \circ L_{f(x)}^{-1} \circ f \circ L_x \circ \delta_h,$$

where the limit is with respect to the convergence on compact sets. Moreover, we say that f is *Pansu differentiable* if Df_x exists and is a homogeneous group homomorphism.

The value $Df_x(v)$ may be called *partial Pansu derivative* of f at x along v. Notice that Df_x is a map from $\mathbb{G}_1$ to $\mathbb{G}_2$, which may not be continuous, even if it exists. Notice that if $Df(x; v)$ exists, then $Df(x; \delta_\lambda v)$ exists for all $\lambda > 0$ and $Df(x; \delta_\lambda v) = \delta_\lambda Df(x; v)$.

Theorem 9.1.3 (Pansu's generalization of Rademacher Theorem)**.** *Let $f : \mathbb{G} \to \bar{\mathbb{G}}$ be a Lipschitz map between sub-Finsler Carnot groups. Then for almost every $x \in \mathbb{G}$ the map f is Pansu differentiable at x.*

Preliminaries to the proof of Pansu's theorem

In the proof of the above theorem, we will only take for granted few classical results to which we give hints to the proofs and references in the exercise section.

Theorem 9.1.4 (Rademacher Theorem in 1D)**.** *If $\gamma : [0, 1] \to \mathbb{R}^n$ is Lipschitz with respect to the Euclidean distance on $\mathbb{R}^n$, then the derivative $\dot\gamma(t)$ exists for almost every t and*

$$\gamma(t) = \gamma(0) + \int_0^t \dot\gamma(s)\,\mathrm{d}\,s, \qquad \textit{for all } t \in [0, 1].$$

Theorem 9.1.5 (Egorov Theorem for metric spaces, see Exercise 9.7.5)**.** *Let (X, μ) be a measure space with $\mu(X) < \infty$ and let Y be a separable metric space. Let $(f_t)_{t>0}$ be a family of measurable functions from X to Y depending on a real parameter $t \in (0, \infty)$. Suppose that $(f_t)_t$ converges almost everywhere to some f, as $t \to 0$. Then for every $\eta > 0$, there exists a measurable subset $K \subset X$ such that the $\mu(\Omega \setminus K) < \eta$ and $(f_t)_t$ converges to f uniformly on K.*

Theorem 9.1.6 (Consequence of Lebesgue Differentiation Theorem for doubling metric spaces, see Exercise 9.7.6)**.** *If (X, d, μ) is a doubling measure metric space and K is a measurable set in X then μ-almost every point of K has density 1.*

A proof of Pansu's theorem

As in Pansu's original proof, we first deal with the case of curves. We shall prove that every Lipschitz curve into a Carnot group is Pansu differentiable almost everywhere.

Proposition 9.1.7 (Case of curves)**.** *Let $\gamma : [0,1] \to \mathbb{G}$ be a Lipschitz curve. Then γ is Pansu differentiable almost everywhere and for almost every $x \in [0,1]$ we have that for all $v \in \mathbb{R}$*

$$D\gamma(x;v) := \lim_{t\to 0} \delta_{1/t}\left(\gamma(x)^{-1}\gamma(x+tv)\right) = \exp\left(v(L_{\gamma(x)})^{*}\dot{\gamma}(x)\right).$$

Here are few remarks before the proof. First we notice that the above curve γ is in particular Euclidean Lipschitz, so the tangent vector $\dot{\gamma}(x)$ exists for almost every x by Theorem 9.1.4. We also stress that Pansu differentiability for curves is stronger than Euclidean differentiability. Namely, if we consider the curve in coordinates $\gamma(t) = (\gamma_1(t), \dots, \gamma_n(t))$ and x is a point of Euclidean differentiability (we may assume $x = 0$ and $\gamma(x) = 0$), then $\dot{\gamma}(0) = \lim \gamma(t)/t = (\gamma_1(t)/t, \dots, \gamma_n(t)/t) \to (h_1, \dots, h_r, 0, \dots, 0)$. However, we have to consider

$$\delta_{1/t}\gamma(t) = (\gamma_1(t)/t, \dots, \gamma_n(t)/t^s)$$

and we need to prove that each coordinate $\gamma_j(t)$, with j greater than the rank, in fact vanishes not just faster than t but faster than t to the power of the degree of the coordinate.

Proof of Proposition 9.1.7. For simplicity, we take $v = 1$. We take $X_1, \dots, X_r$ a basis of the first layer of the stratification of Lie(G). Let $h_1, \dots, h_r \in L^\infty([0,1];\mathbb{R})$ be such that

$$\dot{\gamma}(t) = \sum_{j=1}^{r} h_j(t) X_j(\gamma(t)), \qquad \text{for almost all } t \in [0,1]. \tag{9.1.8}$$

Since γ is L-Lipschitz, we may take $|h_j(t)| \le L$, for all t. Let $x \in [0,1]$ be both a point of Euclidean differentiability for γ and a Lebesgue point for all h_j, i.e.,

$$\frac{1}{|t-x|}\int_x^t |h_j(s) - h_j(t)|\,\mathrm{d}s \to 0, \qquad \text{as } t \to x.$$

Up to replacing γ with the curve $t \mapsto \gamma(x)^{-1}\gamma(t+x)$ we may assume that $x = 0$ and $\gamma(x) = 0$.

We identify the group $\mathbb{G}$ with its Lie algebra via the exponential map. Our aim is now to show that

$$\lim_{t\to 0} \delta_{1/t}\gamma(t) = \dot\gamma(0),$$

where the latter equals $\sum_{j=1}^r h_j(0)X_j(0)$ since 0 is a Lebesgue point for all h_j.

Set $\eta_t(s) := \delta_{1/t}\gamma(t\,s)$, so each $\eta_t : [0,1] \to \mathbb{G}$ is a curve starting at 0 that is L-Lipschitz:

$$d(\eta_t(s), \eta_t(s')) = d(\delta_{1/t}\gamma(t\,s), \delta_{1/t}\gamma(t\,s')) \le \frac{L}{t}|ts - ts'| = L|s-s'|.$$

Consequently, every sequence $(\eta_{t_k})_k$ has a uniformly converging subsequence. Moreover, we claim we have the equality

$$\dot\eta_t(s) = \sum_{j=1}^r h_j(ts)X_j(\eta_t(s)). \tag{9.1.9}$$

Indeed,

$$\dot\eta_t(s) = \frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}s}\delta_{1/t}\gamma(t\,s) = (\delta_{1/t})_*(t\dot\gamma(t\,s)) = \dot\gamma(t\,s),$$

which gives (9.1.9) from (9.1.8).

We claim that η_t uniformly converges to η_0, as $t \to 0$, where $\eta_0(t) := t\dot\gamma(0)$. This claim will complete the proof since in particular, $\eta_t(1) = \delta_{1/t}\gamma(t) \to \dot\gamma(0)$. For proving the claim we shall show that for all sequences $t_k \to 0$ there exists a subsequence t_{k_i} such that $\eta_{t_{k_i}} \to \dot\gamma(0)$. Indeed, by Ascoli-Arzela, there exists a subsequence t_{k_i} and there exists $\xi : [0,1] \to \mathbb{G}$ such that $\eta_{t_{k_i}} \to \xi$ uniformly. We want to show that

$$\dot\xi(s) = \sum_{j=1}^r h_j(0)X_j(\xi(s)), \qquad \text{for almost every } s \in [0,1].$$

Let σ be the curve such that $\sigma(0) = 0$ and $\dot\sigma(s) = \sum_{j=1}^r h_j(0)X_j(\xi(s))$. Let us integrate from 0 to an arbitrary $v \in (0,1)$:

$$\begin{aligned}
\sigma(v) - \eta_{t_{k_i}}(v) &= \int_0^v \sum_{j=1}^r h_j(0)X_j(\xi(s))\,\mathrm{d}s - \int_0^v \dot\eta_{t_{k_i}}(s)\,\mathrm{d}s \\
&= \int_0^v \sum_{j=1}^r h_j(0)X_j(\xi(s))\,\mathrm{d}s - \int_0^v \sum_{j=1}^r h_j(t_{k_i}s)X_j(\eta_{t_{k_i}}(s))\,\mathrm{d}s \\
&\le \int_0^v \sum_{j=1}^r |h_j(0) - h_j(t_{k_i}s)|X_j(\xi(s))\,\mathrm{d}s + \\
&\qquad + \int_0^v \sum_{j=1}^r |h_j(t_{k_i}s)||X_j(\xi(s)) - X_j(\eta_{t_{k_i}}(s))\,\mathrm{d}s,
\end{aligned}$$

where we used (9.1.9). As $i \to \infty$, by continuity of X_i we have that the last summand goes to 0. Regarding the one before the last, we observe that

$$\begin{aligned}\int_0^v \sum_{j=1}^r |h_j(0) - h_j(t_{k_i} s)| \, \mathrm{d}s &\leq \int_0^1 \sum_{j=1}^r |h_j(0) - h_j(t_{k_i} s)| \, \mathrm{d}s \\ &= \frac{1}{t} \int_0^t |h_j(0) - h_j(u)| \, \mathrm{d}u \to 0,\end{aligned}$$

since 0 was a Lebesgue point. □

Proof of Theorem 9.1.3. Let $F : G \to H$ be a Lipschitz map. Define

$$F_{p,\epsilon}(x) := \delta_{1/\epsilon}(F(p)^{-1} F(p\delta_\epsilon x)), \qquad \text{for } p, x \in G \text{ and } \epsilon > 0.$$

Fix $X_1, \dots X_m$ a basis of V_1. For the entire proof, $j \in \{1, \dots, m\}$ and $R_j := \exp(\mathbb{R} X_j)$.

Let $\tilde{F}^j_{p,\epsilon}$ be the restriction $F_{p,\epsilon}|_{R_j} : R_j \to H$. By Proposition 9.1.7, for every $p \in G$ the maps $F \circ L_p|_{R_j}$ are almost everywhere differentable on R_j. By Fubini's theorem, there is a subset $E \subset G$ of full measure such that, for all $p \in E$, the limit $\tilde{F}^j_{p,0} = \lim_{\epsilon \to 0^+} \tilde{F}^j_{p,\epsilon}$ exists and is a Lipschitz group morphism $R_j \to H$. The limit is uniform on compact subsets of R_j.

Let L is a Lipschitz constant of F. We shall consider the space $\mathrm{Lip}^L(R_j; H)$ of L-Lipschitz functions from R_j to H, with a separable distances that metrizes the uniform convergence on compact sets, see Exercise 9.2.1 .

We have $\tilde{F}^j_{p,\epsilon} \in \mathrm{Lip}^L(R_j; H)$ for every $p \in G$ and $\epsilon \geq 0$. We can apply Egorov's Theorem 9.1.5 to the functions $p \in G \mapsto \tilde{F}^j_{p,\epsilon} \in \mathrm{Lip}^L(R_j; H)$. Therefore, for every $\tau, r > 0$ there exists a set $E_{\tau,r} \subset E \cap B(1_G, r)$ such that $|B(1_G, r) \setminus E_{\tau,r}| < \tau$ and

$$\begin{array}{l}\{p_\epsilon\}_\epsilon \subset E_{\tau,r} \\ \lim_{\epsilon \to 0} p_\epsilon = p \in E_{\tau,r}\end{array} \quad \Rightarrow \quad \begin{array}{l}\tilde{F}^j_{p_\epsilon,\epsilon} \to \tilde{F}^j_{p,0} \\ \text{uniformly on compact sets of } R_j.\end{array} \tag{9.1.10}$$

Finally, let $E^\circ_{\tau,r} \subset E_{\tau,r}$ be the set of density points of $E_{\tau,r}$. Since we are in a doubling metric space, $E^\circ_{\tau,r}$ has full measure within $E_{\tau,r}$.

For the next few paragraphs we fix $p \in E^\circ_{\tau,r}$. We notice that for all $v \in G$, since p is a point of density of $E^\circ_{\tau,r}$ there exists $q_\epsilon \in E^\circ_{\tau,r}$ such that $\lim_{\epsilon \to 0} \delta_{1/\epsilon}(p^{-1} q_\epsilon) = v$.

Then define

$$\mathscr{D}_p := \left\{ v \in G : \forall q_\epsilon \in E^\circ_{\tau,r} \quad \begin{array}{l}\text{if } \delta_{1/\epsilon}(p^{-1} q_\epsilon) \overset{\epsilon \to 0}{\to} v \\ \text{then } \delta_{1/\epsilon}(F(p)^{-1} F(q_\epsilon)) \text{ converges}\end{array} \right\}.$$

Therefore, for all $v \in \mathscr{D}_p$ there exists an element in H, which we denote by $F_{p,0}(v)$, such that if $q_\epsilon \in E^\circ_{\tau,r}$ are such that $\lim_{\epsilon \to 0} \delta_{1/\epsilon}(p^{-1} q_\epsilon) = v$, then

$$F_{p,0}(v) := \lim_{\epsilon \to 0} \delta_{1/\epsilon}(F(p)^{-1} F(q_\epsilon).$$

Notice that if $v \in \mathscr{D}_p$, then for every sequence $\epsilon_m \searrow 0$ such that F_{p,ϵ_m} converges uniformly, as $m \to \infty$, we have

$$F_{p,0}(v) = \lim_{m\to\infty} F_{p,\epsilon_m}(v). \tag{9.1.11}$$

We claim that for all $v \in R_j$, and $p_\epsilon, q_\epsilon \in E^\circ_{\tau,r}$

$$\begin{array}{l} \lim_{\epsilon\to 0} \delta_{1/\epsilon}(p_\epsilon^{-1} q_\epsilon) = v \\ \lim_{\epsilon\to 0} p_\epsilon = p \end{array} \quad \Rightarrow \quad \lim_{\epsilon\to 0} \delta_{1/\epsilon}(F(p_\epsilon)^{-1}F(q_\epsilon)) = \tilde{F}^j_{p,0}(v). \tag{9.1.12}$$

Indeed, (9.1.12) is a consequence of $p_\epsilon \to p$ in $E_{\tau,r}$:

$$\begin{aligned} d(\delta_{1/\epsilon}(F(p_\epsilon)^{-1}F(q_\epsilon)), \tilde{F}^j_{p,0}(v)) &= d(F_{p_\epsilon,\epsilon}(\delta_{1/\epsilon}(p_\epsilon^{-1}q_\epsilon)), \tilde{F}^j_{p,0}(v)) \\ &\le d(F_{p_\epsilon,\epsilon}(\delta_{1/\epsilon}(p_\epsilon^{-1}q_\epsilon)), F_{p_\epsilon,\epsilon}(v)) + d(F_{p_\epsilon,\epsilon}(v), \tilde{F}^j_{p,0}(v)) \\ &\le L d(\delta_{1/\epsilon}(p_\epsilon^{-1}q_\epsilon), v) + d(\tilde{F}^j_{p_\epsilon,\epsilon}(v), \tilde{F}^j_{p,0}(v)) \to 0, \end{aligned}$$

where at the end we used the first assumption of (9.1.12) and (9.1.10).

Our next claim about $\mathscr{D}_p$ is

$$g \in \mathscr{D}_p,\ v \in R_j \Rightarrow gv \in \mathscr{D}_p, \tag{9.1.13}$$

and in fact

$$F_{p,0}(gv) = F_{p,0}(g)\tilde{F}^j_{p,0}(v). \tag{9.1.14}$$

To show these last two claims, let $\{q_\epsilon\}_\epsilon \subset E^\circ_{\tau,r}$ be such that $\lim_{\epsilon\to 0} \delta_{1/\epsilon}(p^{-1}q_\epsilon) = gv$. Since $p \in E^\circ_{\tau,r}$ then there is $\{p_\epsilon\}_\epsilon \subset E^\circ_{\tau,r}$ such that $\lim_{\epsilon\to 0} \delta_{1/\epsilon}(p_\epsilon^{-1}q_\epsilon) = v$. So,

$$\begin{aligned} \lim_{\epsilon\to 0} \delta_{1/\epsilon}(F(p)^{-1}F(q_\epsilon)) &= \lim_{\epsilon\to 0} \delta_{1/\epsilon}(F(p)^{-1}F(p_\epsilon))\delta_{1/\epsilon}(F(p_\epsilon)^{-1}F(q_\epsilon)) \\ &\overset{(9.1.12)}{=} F_{p,0}(g)\tilde{F}^j_{p,0}(v). \end{aligned}$$

Next we observe the easy fact $1_G \in \mathscr{D}_p$, and therefore from (9.1.13) we infer

$$R_1, \dots, R_m \subset \mathscr{D}_p. \tag{9.1.15}$$

From (9.1.15) and (9.1.13), together with the assumption that $R_1 \cup \ldots \cup R_m$ finitely generates G we get that $\mathscr{D}_p = G$. From (9.1.11) and (9.1.14), we conclude that every blowup of F at p, which exists by Ascoli-Arzelá, coincides with the map $F_{0,p} : G \to H$ and moreover it is a group morphism.

Since $\bigcup_{\tau,r>0} E^\circ_{\tau,r}$ has full measure in G, the map F is differentiable almost every-where on G. $\square$

Original proof of Pansu's theorem

We mostly shall follow the original proof by Pansu together with some extra explanation from Monti's thesis. For the proof, we introduce the *difference quotients*:

$$R(x; v, t) := \bar{\delta}_{1/t}\left(f(x)^{-1} f(x\delta_t v)\right),$$

so that $Df(x; v) := \lim_{t\to 0} R(x; v, t)$.

We start with a preliminary result. It said that if almost everywhere we have partial derivatives in two directions, then we also have it at the product of the directions.

Proposition 9.1.16. *Let $f : \mathbb{G} \to \bar{\mathbb{G}}$ be a Lipschitz map between sub-Finsler Carnot groups. If $Df(x; v)$ and $Df(x; w)$ exists for almost every $x \in \mathbb{G}$, then $Df(x; vw)$ exists for almost every $x \in \mathbb{G}$ and $Df(x; vw) = Df(x; v)Df(x; w)$.*

Proof of Proposition 9.1.16. Let $\Omega \subset \mathbb{G}$ open with finite measure. Let $\eta > 0$. By Egorov's theorem for metric spaces (see Theorem 9.1.5) there exists a measurable subset $K \subset \Omega$ such that the measure of $\Omega \setminus K$ is less than η and $R(x; w, t) \to Df(x; w)$, as $t \to 0$, uniformly on K. Moreover, since the measure is regular, we may assume that K is compact.

We claim that to conclude the proof it is enough to show

$$R(x\delta_t v; w, t) \to Df(x; w), \qquad \text{for almost every } x \in K. \tag{9.1.17}$$

Indeed, in this case, for $x \in K$, we have

$$\begin{aligned} R(x; vw, t) &= \bar{\delta}_{1/t}\left(f(x)^{-1} f(x\delta_t(vw))\right) \\ &= \bar{\delta}_{1/t}\left(f(x)^{-1} f(x\delta_t v)\right) \bar{\delta}_{1/t}\left(f(x\delta_t v)^{-1} f(x\delta_t v\delta_t w)\right) \\ &= R(x; v, t) R(x\delta_t v; w, t) \to Df(x; v)Df(x; w). \end{aligned}$$

Then on concludes taking the union of the sets $K = K(\eta)$ when η varies in $\mathbb{N}$, which form a full measure set.

For showing (9.1.17) take as x a point of density for K, recall that from Theorem 9.1.6 these points are of full measure in K. For $t > 0$, let $x_t \in K$ be one projection of $x\delta_t v$ on K, i.e., such that $d(x\delta_t v, x_t) = d(x\delta_t v, K) =: r_t$. Then $r_t \le d(x\delta_t v, x) = td(v, 0)$. We claim that $r_t/t \to 0$. Indeed,

$$\frac{r_t^Q}{(2td(v,0))^Q} = \frac{|B_d(x\delta_t v, r_t)|}{|B_d(x, 2d(x, x\delta_t v))|} \le \frac{|B_d(x, 2d(x, x\delta_t v)) \setminus K|}{|B_d(x, 2d(x, x\delta_t v))|} \to 0.$$

We now calculate

$$\begin{aligned} R(x\delta_t v, w, t) &= \bar{\delta}_{1/t}\left(f(x\delta_t v)^{-1} f(x\delta_t v\delta_t w)\right) \\ &= \underbrace{\bar{\delta}_{1/t}\left(f(x\delta_t(v))^{-1} f(x_t)\right)}_{A_t} \underbrace{\bar{\delta}_{1/t}\left(f(x_t)^{-1} f(x_t\delta_t w)\right)}_{B_t} \underbrace{\bar{\delta}_{1/t}\left(f(x_t\delta_t w)^{-1} f(x\delta_t v\delta_t w)\right)}_{C_t}. \end{aligned}$$

We claim that $A_t \to 0$ as $t \to 0$. Indeed,

$$\bar{d}(0, A_t) = \frac{1}{t}\bar{d}(f(x_t), f(x\delta_t v)) \leq \frac{L}{t} d(x_t, x\delta_t v) = Lr_t/t \to 0.$$

We then notice that, since $x_t \in K$, $x_t \to x$, and on K the convergence is uniform, we have that $B_t = R(x_t; w, t) \to Df(x; w)$ as $t \to 0$. We then claim that $C_t \to 0$ as $t \to 0$. Indeed,

$$\begin{aligned} \bar{d}(0, C_t) &= \frac{1}{t}\bar{d}(f(x_t\delta_t w), f(x\delta_t v\delta_t w)) \\ &\leq \frac{L}{t} d(x_t\delta_t w, x\delta_t v\delta_t w) \\ &= Ld(\delta_{1/t}(x_t)w, \delta_{1/t}(x\delta_t v)w) \to 0, \end{aligned}$$

where we used that that $d(\delta_{1/t}(x_t), \delta_{1/t}(x\delta_t v)) = \dfrac{d(x_t, x\delta_t v)}{t} \to 0$. □

Another Proof of Theorem 9.1.3. Let $X_1, \dots, X_r$ be a basis of the first layer of the stratification of $\mathrm{Lie}(G)$.

We first claim that the set $E := \{p \in \mathbb{G} : Df(p; \exp(X_i))$ and $Df(p; \exp(-X_i))$ exists for all $i\}$ has full measure. Indeed, complete to a basis $X_1, \dots, X_n$ of $\mathrm{Lie}(G)$. For $j \in \{1, \dots, r\}$, define $\phi_j : \mathbb{R}^n \to \mathbb{G}$ as $\phi_j(x_1, \dots, x_n) = \exp(\sum_{i \neq j} x_i X_i)\exp(x_j X_j)$. Then ϕ_j is a diffeo and for all $x \in \mathbb{R}$ the curve $t \mapsto \phi_j(x + te_j)$ is the flowline of X_j starting at $\phi_j(x)$. Set

$$\tilde{E}_j := \{x \in \mathbb{R}^n : t \mapsto f(\phi_j(x_1, \dots, x_{j-1}, t, x_{j+1}, \dots, x_n)) \text{ is P-diff in } t = x_j\}.$$

By Fubini's theorem for Lebesgue measure and by Proposition 9.1.7, $\tilde{E}_j$ has full measure. Then $E = \cap_{j=1}^r \phi_j(\tilde{E}_j)$ has full measure.

Then let $S = \{v \in \mathbb{G} : d(0, v) = 1\}$ be the unit sphere in $\mathbb{G}$. For all $m \in \mathbb{N}$ there exists $v_1^m, \dots, v_{j_m}^m$ such that $S \subseteq \cup_{i=1}^{j_m} B_d(v_i^m, 1/m)$. We then claim that each set

$$E_m := \{p \in E : Df(p; v_i^m) \text{ exists for all } i = 1, \dots, j_m\}$$

has full measure. Indeed, since $\mathcal{G} := \{\exp(\lambda X_i) : \lambda \in \mathbb{R}, i = 1, \dots, r\}$ generates $\mathbb{G}$, then for all i and all m there exists $w_1, \dots, w_k \in \mathcal{G}$ such that $v_i^m = w_1 \dots w_k$. Hence, from Proposition 9.1.16 for almost every $p \in \mathbb{G}$ we have that $Df(p; v_i^m)$ exists. Thus E_m has full measure.

We finally claim that if $p \in \cap_{m\in\mathbb{N}} E_m$, then $R(p; v, t)$ converges uniformly in $v \in S$, as $t \to 0$. Indeed, we want to show that for all $m \in \mathbb{N}$ there exists $\delta > 0$ such that for all $s, t \in (0, \delta)$ and all $v \in S$

$$\bar{d}(R(p; v, t), R(p; v, s)) \leq \frac{1 + 2L}{m}.$$

Let $m \in \mathbb{N}$. Then there exists $\delta > 0$ such that for all $i \in \{1, \dots, i_m\}$ and all $s, t \in (0, \delta)$

$$\bar{d}(R(p; v_i^m, t), R(p; v_i^m, s)) \leq \frac{1}{m}.$$

Let $v \in S$. Then there exists i such that $d(v, v_i^m) \leq \dfrac{1}{m}$. Then for all $s, t \in (0, \delta)$

$$\begin{aligned} \bar{d}(R(p; v, t), R(p; v, s)) &\leq \bar{d}(R(p; v, s), R(p; v_i^m, s),) + d(R(p; v_i^m, s), R(p; v_i^m, t)) + \bar{d}(R(p; v_i^m, t), R(p; v, t)) \\ &\leq \frac{1}{s}\bar{d}(f(p\delta_s v_i^m), f(p\delta_s v)) + \frac{1}{m} + \frac{1}{t}\bar{d}(f(p\delta_t v_i^m), f(p\delta_t v)) \\ &\leq \frac{L}{s} s d(v_i^m, v) + \frac{1}{m} + \frac{L}{t} t d(v_i^m, v) \leq \frac{L + 1 + L}{m}. \end{aligned}$$

□

9.1.3 Applications to non-embeddability

It was observed by Semmes, [Sem96, Theorem 7.1], that Pansu's differentiation Theorem 9.1.1 implies that a Lipschitz embedding of the Heisenberg group with its CC distance into an Euclidean space, cannot be bi-Lipschitz.

Theorem 9.1.18. *There is no bi-Lipschitz embedding from an open set in a Heisenberg group to an Euclidean space* $\mathbb{R}^n$.

Proof. Suppose that such an embedding f exists. The Pansu Rademacher Theorem 9.1.1 would imply that there exists at least one point at which f is differentiable and whose tangent map is a group homomorphism. The blowing-up procedure used to define the tangent map scales in the natural way, i.e., if f is L-bi-Lipschitz, then each rescaled f_λ is L-bi-Lipschitz and so the tangent map is bilipschitz too. In particular, the tangent map is injective. We now get a contradiction, because we considered a tangent map which is a group homomorphism between tangents spaces which are the 3-dimensional Heisenberg group and the Abelian $\mathbb{R}^n$. However, any homomorphism from the Heisenberg group into $\mathbb{R}^n$ must have a kernel which is at least 1-dimensional (all commutators in the Heisenberg group must be mapped to 0 by the homomorphism) and hence cannot be injective. □

Corollary 9.1.19. *Let M_1 an M_2 be sub-Riemannian manifolds with tangents the Carnot groups $\mathbb{G}_1$, respectively $\mathbb{G}_2$. If no subgroup of $\mathbb{G}_2$ is isomorphic to $\mathbb{G}_1$ then there is no bi-Lipschitz embedding of M_1 in M_2.*

Corollary 9.1.20. *The Heisenberg group, or any other non-commutative Carnot group, is purely unrectifiable.*

A consequence of the proof of Theorem 9.1.18 is that each Lipschitz map from the Heisenberg group to an Euclidean space has to compress points in the direction of the center of the group.

Proposition 9.1.21 (Center collapse)**.** *If $U \subset H$ is an open subset, and $f : U \to \mathbb{R}^n$ is a Lipschitz map, then for almost every point $x \in H$, the map collapses in the direction of the center of H, i.e.,*

$$\lim_{g \to e} \frac{\|f(xg) - f(x)\|}{d(xg, x)} = 0\,, \qquad g \in \mathrm{Center}(H)\,. \tag{9.1.22}$$

This last theorem has been generalized by J. Cheeger and B. Kleiner to maps with values in the Banach space L^1. Such a result gave a proof of the following theorem which has been conjectured by J. Lee and A. Naor.

Theorem 9.1.23 (Lee-Naor-Cheeger-Kleiner)**.** *The Heisenberg group equipped with its CC metric does not admit a bi-Lipschitz embedding into L^1.*

This conjecture arose from the work of J. Lee and A. Naor, in which it is shown that the nonexistence of such an embedding provides a natural counter-example to the Goemans-Linial conjecture of theoretical computer science; S. Khot and N. Vishnoi gave a first such counterexample. Very roughly, the point is that in some instances, questions in algorithm design, such as the sparsest cut problem, could be solved if it were possible to embed a certain class of finite metric spaces (those with metrics of negative type) into ℓ^1 with universally bounded bi-Lipschitz distortion, i.e., distortion independent of the particular metric and the cardinality.

9.2 Exercises

Exercise 9.2.1 (The space of L-Lipschitz functions)**.** Let G and H be Carnot groups. Let $\mathtt{Lip}^L(G; H)$ be the set of Lipschitz functions $G \to H$ of Lipschitz constant at most L. Consider the function

$$d_L(f, g) := \sup\left\{ \frac{d_H(f(x), g(x))}{n^2} \,:\, n \in \mathbb{N},\ x \in B(1_G, n) \right\}.$$

Show that

(i). The function d_L is a distance function on $\mathtt{Lip}^L(G;H)$.

(ii). Convergence with respect to d_L is equivalent to uniform convergence on compact sets.

(iii). The space $(\mathtt{Lip}^L(G;H), d_L)$ is separable.

Solution. (i). The axioms to check that d_L is a distance function are easy to verify.

(ii). Let $\{f_k\}_k \subset \mathtt{Lip}^L(G;H)$ and $f \in \mathtt{Lip}^L(G;H)$.

Suppose that $\lim_{k\to\infty} d_L(f_k, f) = 0$. If $E \subset G$ is compact, then there is $N \in \mathbb{N}$ such that $E \subset B(e_G, N)$. Since

$$\sup\{d_H(f_k(x), f(x)) : x \in B(e_G, N)\} \le N^2 d_L(f_k, f) \to 0,$$

then $f_k \to f$ uniformly on E. Since E is an arbitrary compact set, $f_k \to f$ uniformly on compact sets.

Suppose now that $f_k \to f$ uniformly on compact sets and let $\epsilon > 0$. Since $\{e_G\}$ is compact, there is $C > 0$ such that $d_H(f_k(e), f(e)) \le C$ for all $k \in \mathbb{N}$. Notice that, for all $n \in \mathbb{N}_{\ge 1}$ and $x \in B(e_G, n)$, we have

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{d_H(f_k(x), f(x))}{n^2} &\le \frac{d_H(f_k(x), f_k(e_G)) + d_H(f_k(e_G), f(e_G)) + d_H(f(e_G), f(x))}{n^2} \\ &\le \frac{2L}{n} + \frac{C}{n^2}.\end{aligned}$$

Therefore, there is $N \in \mathbb{N}$ such that $\frac{d_H(f_k(x), f(x))}{n^2} < \epsilon$ for all $n \ge N$ and $x \in B(e_G, n)$. Let $K \in \mathbb{N}$ be such that

$$\sup\{d_H(f_k(x), f(x)) : x \in B(e_G, N)\} \le \epsilon$$

for all $k > K$. Then, for $k > K$, we have $d_L(f_k, f) \le \epsilon$. We conclude that $\lim_{k\to\infty} d_L(f_k, f) = 0$.

(ii). The topology of uniform convergence on compact sets is equivalent to the compact-open topology. Moreover, by Ascoli-Arzelà, for every $n \in \mathbb{N}$ the set

$$\mathscr{K}(n) := \{f \in \mathtt{Lip}^L(G;H) : f(e_G) \in \bar{B}(e_H, n)\}$$

is compact, hence separable. Since $\mathtt{Lip}^L(G;H) = \bigcup_{n\in\mathbb{N}} \mathscr{K}(n)$ is a countable union of separable sets, then it is also separable. ☐

9.3 Regularity problems

We will discuss the following issues:

- smoothness of geodesic curves;
- smoothness of metric spheres;
- smoothness (and existence) of minimal surfaces;
- smoothness (and existence) of solution of the isoperimetric problem.

Comments regarding geodesics

1. The existence is ensured by Ascoli-Arzelà Theorem, as a priori just Lipschitz curves, so differentiable almost everywhere.
2. People expect that when $(M, \Delta, \langle\cdot,\cdot\rangle)$ is a sub-Riemannian manifold, then any geodesic is C^1, or, in fact, C^∞. The question is still open.
3. People expect that when $\|\cdot\|$ is a norm coming from a polytope, i.e., the unit ball of $\|\cdot\|$ is the convex hull of finitely many points, then there exists a constant $N \in \mathbb{N}$ such that each pair of points can be connected with a geodesic made of N smooth pieces. The question is still open.
4. The query cannot be solved using the standard arguments from geometric analysis (e.g., Calculus of Variation or differential geometry) as in Riemannian geometry.

Comments regarding metric spheres

1. In Carnot groups, metric spheres are topological spheres. (In general, the conjecture is that small metric spheres are topological spheres.)
2. In the Heisenberg geometry, spheres are not smooth at the pole. See the picture of the section of the ball.
3. The expectation is that small metric spheres (at least in Carnot groups) should be piecewise smooth.
4. The regularity of geodesics is linked (at least philosophically) to the regularity of metric spheres.

Comments regarding minimal surfaces and isoperimetric solutions

1. They do exists in an extended sense.
2. Regularity is a tricky issue.

9.3.1 Common general philosophical strategy for regularity

Step 1 Consider the geometric objects as special elements inside a wider class of analytical objects.

Step 2 Prove that such analytical objects are in fact 'rectifiable', e.g., 'piece-wise Lipschitz'. (Here there will be an issue since Carnot groups are purely unrectifiable.)

Step 3 Rectifiability should be first improved as low (e.g., C^1) regularity, for example in the case of minimal objects.

Step 4 Minimal C^1 (or C^2) objects are in fact C^∞, or even analytic.

9.4 Generalized hyper-surfaces: sets with finite perimeter

Both metric spheres and $(n-1)$-dimensional minimal surfaces inside an n-dimensional Carnot group have codimension 1. We can see them as boundary of an n-dimensional domain Ω. We then think about studying Ω instead $\partial\Omega$. The idea is to consider the characteristic function χ_Ω of Ω:

$$\chi_\Omega(x) = 1 \text{ if } x \in \Omega, \chi_\Omega(x) = 0 \text{ if } x \notin \Omega.$$

We consider the wide class of all measurable sets Ω, in other words, we have $\chi_\Omega \in L^1_{loc}$.

Which are the good χ_Ω? Clearly, even a request of continuity is too strong. The feeling is that if Ω is a hyper-space, then χ_Ω should be good. As an toy example, let us consider the I-don't-remember-the-name function, i.e., $\chi_{\mathbb{R}_{>0}}$. A nice property of such a function is that its derivative exists in the generalized sense, it is the delta measure δ_0.

We arrive at the conclusion that "our good sets are those whose characteristic functions have measures as generalized derivatives." We should explain in the following what is this generalized derivative.

9.4.1 A review of divergence and distributions

Let M be any smooth differentiable manifold with topological dimension n, endowed with an n-differential volume form vol_M. For example, vol_M could be a Riemannian volume form; however, eventually, M will be a Lie group $\mathbb{G}$, and vol_M a right Haar measure.

We use the volume form to define the divergence as follows:

Definition 9.4.1. For any vector field $X \in \Gamma(M)$ define the function $\operatorname{div} X : M \to \mathbb{R}$ implicitly as

$$\int_M Xu \, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M = -\int_M u \operatorname{div} X \, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M \qquad \forall u \in C_c^\infty(M). \tag{9.4.2}$$

We say that X is divergence-free if $\operatorname{div} X \equiv 0$.

For example the vector fields $\dfrac{\partial}{\partial_j}$ in $\mathbb{R}^n$ are divergence-free, because of the Fundamental Theorem of Calculus and the fact that the test functions have compact support.

When (M, g) is a Riemannian manifold and vol_M is the volume form induced by g, then an explicit expression of this differential operator can be obtained in terms of the components of X, and (9.4.2) corresponds to the divergence theorem on manifolds. We won't need either a Riemannian structure or an explicit expression of $\operatorname{div} X$ in the sequel, and for this reason we have chosen a definition based on (9.4.2): this emphasizes the dependence of $\operatorname{div} X$ on vol_M only.

Note that by Leibniz rule $X(uv) = uXv + vXu$, integrating over the manifold when X is a divergence-free vector field, one obtains

$$\int_M uXv\, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M = -\int_M vXu\, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M \qquad \forall u,\, v \in C_c^\infty(M). \tag{9.4.3}$$

This last identity motivates the following classical definition.

Definition 9.4.4 (X-distributional derivative)**.** Let $u \in L^1_{\mathrm{loc}}(M)$ and let $X \in \Gamma(TM)$ be divergence-free. The generalized derivative of u in the direction of X is the operator $Xu \in (C_c^\infty(M))^*$ defined as

$$\langle Xu, v\rangle := -\int_M uXv\, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M, \qquad v \in C_c^\infty(M).$$

If $f \in L^1_{\mathrm{loc}}(M)$, we write $Xu = f$ if $\langle Xu, v\rangle = \int_M vf\, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M$ for all $v \in C_c^\infty(M)$. Analogously, if μ is a Radon measure in M, we write $Xu = \mu$ if $\langle Xu, v\rangle = \int_M v\, d\mu$ for all $v \in C_c^\infty(M)$.

Since X is divergence-free and so (9.4.3) holds (it is still valid when $u \in C^1(M)$), the distributional definition of Xu is equivalent to the classical one whenever $u \in C^1(M)$.

Proposition 9.4.5. **(i)** *Let $\mathbb{G}$ be a nilpotent Lie group, and let $\mathrm{vol}_{\mathbb{G}}$ be a right Haar measure. Then each left invariant vector field is divergence-free.*

(ii) *More generally, for any manifold M, any volume form vol_M), and any $X \in \Gamma(M)$, one has that if the flows of X are vol_M-preserving, then $\operatorname{div} X \equiv 0$.*

Proof. The first assertion is consequence of the second one, since, as we saw, flows of left invariant vector fields are right translations, $g \mapsto ge^{tX}$. Regarding (ii), let $\Phi_X^t(\cdot)$ be the flow of X at time t. Thus we know that, for any t, we have

$$\left(\Phi_X^t\right)_\# \mathrm{vol}_M = \mathrm{vol}_M\,.$$

Therefore, for any test function u, $\int_M u \circ \Phi_X^t \, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M = \int_M u \, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M$. Such independence of t implies that

$$\begin{aligned} -\int_M u \operatorname{div} X \, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M &= \int_M X u \, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M \\ &= \int_M (Xu) \circ \Phi_X^t \, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M \\ &= \int_M \frac{d}{dt} \left(u \circ \Phi_X^t \right) \, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M \\ &= \frac{d}{dt} \int_M u \circ \Phi_X^t \, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M \\ &= 0. \end{aligned}$$

Therefore $\int_M u \operatorname{div} X \, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M = 0$ for all $u \in C_c^1(M)$, and X is divergence-free. □

One can prove the inverse implication: the flows are vol_M-measure preserving if $\operatorname{div} X$ is equal to 0, cf. the proof of Theorem 2.12 in [AKL09].

9.4.2 Caccioppoli sets: sets of locally finite perimeter

Definition 9.4.6 (Sets of locally finite perimeter)**.** A Borel set E in a Carnot group, with stratification $\mathfrak{g} = V_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s$, is said a *Caccioppoli set* or to have *locally finite perimeter* if, for any left invariant horizontal vector field $X \in V_1$, the distribution $X\chi_E$ is a Radon measure.

Now that we generalized the object of study, we should first understand how to obtain back our hyper-surfaces.

Pick $X_1, \dots, X_m$ a basis of V_1. We form the $\mathbb{R}^m$-valued Radon measure

$$D\chi_E := (X_1\chi_E, \dots, X_m\chi_E), \tag{9.4.7}$$

and call it the *perimeter vector measure.* One can write

$$D\chi_E = \nu_E |D\chi_E|,$$

where $|D\chi_E|$ is the (positive) measure given by the variation of $D\chi_E$: if A is any Borel set, then

$$|D\chi_E|(A) = \sup_\pi \sum_{B \in \pi} \|D\chi_E(B)\|,$$

where the supremum is taken over all partitions π of A into a finite number of disjoint measurable subsets. And ν_E is the vector measurable function obtained as

$$\nu_E(x) := \lim_{r \downarrow 0} \frac{D\chi_E(B_r(x))}{|D\chi_E|(B_r(x))},$$

which exists $|D\chi_E|$-almost everywhere.

The terminology is that $|D\chi_E|$ is the *perimeter measure*, and ν_E is the *normal* of the set. Finally,

$$\mathrm{Per}(E) := |D\chi_E|(\mathbb{G}) \tag{9.4.8}$$

is the *perimeter* of E. More generally, if Ω is a Borel set, then $\mathrm{Per}(E,\Omega) := |D\chi_E|(\Omega)$ is the perimeter of E inside Ω.

All such objects depend on the choice of $X_1,\dots,X_m$. The choice of such a basis is in correspondence to the choice of a sub-Riemannian metric on the Carnot group $\mathbb{G}$, for which $X_1,\dots,X_m$ is an orthonormal basis.

Definition 9.4.9 (De Giorgi's reduced boundary)**.** Let $E \subseteq \mathbb{G}$ be a set of locally finite perimeter. Define the reduced boundary $\mathscr{F}E$ as the set of points $x \in \operatorname{supp}|D\chi_E|$ where:

(i) the limit defining ν_E exists and

(ii) $|\nu_E(x)| = 1$.

E.g., the reduced boundary of a square on the (Euclidean) plane is formed by its four edges with the four vertices removed.

Why it is better to consider such sets? Because in such class minima always exist.

Theorem 9.4.10 (Compactness [GN96] + Lower semicontinuity for BV functions [FSS96])**.** *Let $\mathbb{G}$ be a Carnot group and let E_j be a sequence of locally finite perimeter sets such that their perimeters in some Borel set Ω converge to a value $c \in \mathbb{R}$, i.e.,*

$$|D\chi_{E_j}|(\Omega) \to c.$$

Then there exists a locally finite perimeter set F such that, up to passing to a subsequence,

1. $\chi_{E_j} \to \chi_F$ *in* $L^1_{loc}(\Omega)$ *and*

2. $|D\chi_F|(\Omega) \le c$.

9.4.3 Notions of rectificability

In general metric spaces the classical definition of 'good' surfaces goes back at least to Federer (see [Fed69, 3.2.14]). The 'good' surfaces are those that are images of open subsets in Euclidean spaces via Lipschitz maps.

However, there is a problematic fact: in the Heisenberg group there are no Lipschitz embedding of an open set $U \subset \mathbb{R}^2$ into the group. Indeed, differentiability theorems implies that the Heisenberg group is 2-purely unrectifiable, cf. [AK00, Theorem 7.2]. This means that each Lipschitz map $f : U \subset \mathbb{R}^2 \to \mathbb{G}$ is such that $\mathcal{H}^2(f(U)) = 0$. Roughly speaking, since the 3D Heisenberg group has Hausdorff dimension equal to 4, then the metric dimension of a hyper-surface is espected to be $4 - 1 = 3$. But the image by a Lipschitz map of a 2-dimensional Euclidean set has Hausdorff dimension no greater than 2.

There is a second notion (cf. [FSS03, FSS01]) of good surfaces which is only valid for hyper-surfaces: being (locally) the zero set of a 'intrinsically' C^1 real-valued function with non-vanishing gradient:

Definition 9.4.11 ($\mathbb{G}$-regular functions and hyper-surfaces)**.** Let $\mathbb{G}$ be a Carnot group with V_1 as horizontal layer. Let U be an open subset of $\mathbb{G}$ and $f : U \to \mathbb{R}$. We say that f belongs to $C^1_{\mathbb{G}}(U)$ if f and X_f are continuous functions in U, for all $X \in V_1$. We say that $S \subset \mathbb{G}$ is a $\mathbb{G}$-*regular hyper-surface* if for any $p \in S$ there is an neighborhood U of p in $\mathbb{G}$ and there is $f \in C^1_{\mathbb{G}}(U)$ with $(Xf)(q) \neq 0$, for all $q \in U$ and all $X \in V_1 \setminus \{0\}$, such that

$$S \cap U = f^{-1}(0).$$

Notice that if f is in C^1 then it is clearly in $C^1_{\mathbb{G}}$. However, the hyper-surface $f^{-1}(0)$ is $\mathbb{G}$-regular only if ∇f is never orthogonal to V_1.

Definition 9.4.12 ($\mathbb{G}$-rectifiable hyper-surface)**.** Let $\mathbb{G}$ be a Carnot group of Hausdorff dimension Q. A set $\Sigma \subset \mathbb{G}$ is said ($(Q-1)$-dimensional) $\mathbb{G}$-*rectifiable* if there exist a countable collection of $\mathbb{G}$-regular hyper-surfaces S_j such that

$$\mathcal{H}^{Q-1}_{cc}(\Sigma \setminus \cup_j S_j) = 0.$$

The following theorem is due to De Giorgi in the Euclidean setting and to Franchi, Serapioni, and Serra Cassano in Carnot groups of step 2, cf. [DG54, DG55, FSS03, FSS01].

Theorem 9.4.13 (Structure of finite perimeter sets)**.** *Let $\mathbb{G}$ be either the Euclidean space or a step-2 Carnot group. If E has locally finite perimeter, then its reduced boundary $\mathscr{F}E$ is $\mathbb{G}$-rectifiable.*

Question 9.4.14. *Is the above theorem true in Carnot groups of arbitrarily step?*

A partial answer to the above question has been obtained in [AKL09].

9.4.4 Notions of surface measures

We reach the conclusion that the problem of studying hyper-surfaces can be rephrased as the study of characteristic functions χ_E, focusing on their perimeter measures $|D\chi_E|$ and their reduce boundaries $\mathscr{F}E$. The reason for doing so is that perimeters have properties of compactness and lower semicontinuity, cf. Theorem 9.4.10.

For hyper-surfaces then we have that there are two natural notions of measures: $\mathcal{H}^{Q-1}_{cc}$ restricted to the hyper-surface or the perimeter of one of the side domains determined by the hyper-surface. People expect that the two notions should be related. For doing so, one should first prove rectifiability of reduced boundaries, cf. Question 9.4.14.

However, if $S = f^{-1}(0)$ is given as level set of a C^1 function f, the two measures are equal. Indeed, let $E = f^{-1}((-\infty, 0))$, so $\partial E = S$. Then

$$\begin{aligned} \mathrm{Per}(E) &= \\ &= ... \\ &= \mathcal{H}^{Q-1}_{cc} \llcorner \partial E \end{aligned}$$

9.5 Partial regularity results and open questions

9.5.1 Results on geodesics

The following theorem can be found in [Str86], however, in that paper the claim was wrongly stated in more generality. In fact, the proof was valid only for step-2 distributions. The paper has been corrected in [Str89].

Theorem 9.5.1 (Strichartz [Str89]). *If $(M, \Delta, \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle)$ is a sub-Riemannian manifold of step-2, then each geodesic for the CC-distance is C^∞.*

The following theorem is proved more generally in [LM08], however the assumptions of step ≤ 4 and rank 2 are deeply used.

Theorem 9.5.2 (Leonardi-Monti). *[LM08] If $\mathbb{G}$ is a Carnot group of step ≤ 4 and with 2-dimensional horizontal layer V_1, then each geodesic for the CC-distance is C^∞.*

The next result is proved in these notes.

Proposition 9.5.3. *Let G be a connected, simply connected, and nilpotent Lie group. Let $\Delta \subset \mathfrak{g}$ be a left-invariant sub-bundle such that*

$$\Delta \oplus [\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}] = \mathfrak{g}.$$

E.g., G could be a Carnot group. Then, if X is a left-invariant vector field in Δ, then $t \mapsto e^{tX}$ is a (smooth) geodesic with respect to any CC-distance of $(G, \Delta, \|\cdot\|)$, for any left-invariant norm $\|\cdot\|$.

The following theorem should be found in [Bre14].

Theorem 9.5.4 (Breuillard 2007)**.** *Let $\mathbb{G}$ be the 3D Heisenberg group. Let $\|\cdot\|_1$ be the ℓ^1 norm on V_1. Then the geodesics with respect to the CC-distance of $(G, V_1, \|\cdot\|_1)$ are made of at most 4 pieces of horizontal lines, i.e., each geodesic is the concatenation of at most 4 curves of the form $t \mapsto ge^{tX}$, with $g \in \mathbb{G}$ and $X \in V_1$.*

Conjecture 9.5.5 (Regularity conjecture for sub-Reimannian manifolds)**.** *If $(M, \Delta, \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle)$ is a sub-Riemannian manifold, then each geodesic for the CC-distance is C^∞.*

Conjecture 9.5.6 (Weak regularity conjecture for sub-Reimannian Carnot groups)**.** *If $\mathbb{G}$ is a Carnot group, then each pair of points can be connected by a C^1 geodesic.*

Conjecture 9.5.7 (Regularity Conjecture for sub-Finsler Carnot groups)**.** *If $(\mathbb{G}, V_1, \|\cdot\|_1)$ is a Carnot group where $\|\cdot\|_1$ is the ℓ^1 norm, then there exists a constant K such that each pair of points can be connected by a geodesic that is the concatenation of at most K horizontal lines.*

There are several statements that are true but for possibly a measure-zero collection of distributions. Compare the following result with Theorem 9.5.12.

Theorem 9.5.8 (Chitour-Jean-Trélat [CJT06])**.** *For generic sub-Riemannian structures $(M, \Delta, \langle \cdot, \cdot \rangle)$ of rank greater than or equal to 3, i.e., $\dim \Delta_p \geq 3$, for all $p \in M$, all geodesics for the CC-distance are C^∞.*

9.5.2 Results on metric spheres

Proposition 9.5.9. *If $\mathbb{G}$ is the 3D Heisenberg group, then each metric sphere $\partial B(e, r)$, $r > 0$, is an (Euclidean) Lipschitz manifolds, and there are two points p_N and p_S (the two poles) such that $\partial B(e, r) \setminus \{p_N, p_S\}$ is a C^∞ manifold.*

In the Carnot group setting, one can uses the dilations and the standard proof of the fact that open sets that are star-shaped are topological balls, to prove that metric balls in Carnot groups are topological balls. Moreover, the spheres can be written as graphs using 'inhomogeneous' spherical coordinates with respect to the dilations. Since metric spheres in CC-metrics are closed, one get the following result.

Proposition 9.5.10. *If $\mathbb{G}$ is a Carnot group, then each metric sphere $\partial B(e,r)$, $r > 0$, is topologically a sphere.*

The following theorem should be found in [Bre14].

Theorem 9.5.11 (Breuillard 2007)**.** *Let $\mathbb{G}$ be the 3D Heisenberg group. Let $\|\cdot\|_1$ be the ℓ^1 norm on V_1. Then the metric spheres of the sub-Finsler geometry of $(G, V_1, \|\cdot\|_1)$ are piece-wise analytical sub-variety.*

The work of Agracev and Gauthier [AG01] gives an piece-wise analytic answer in generic cases:

Theorem 9.5.12 (Agrachev-Gauthier)**.** *Generically, small balls in a sub-Riemannian manifold $(M, \Delta, \langle\cdot,\cdot\rangle)$ are sub-analytic if the rank of the distribution is ≥ 3.*

Conjecture 9.5.13. *If $(M, \Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ is any sub-Finsler manifold, then small metric spheres are piece-wise smooth.*

Proposition 9.5.14. *Metric balls in Carnot groups are sets of finite perimeter and metric spheres are $\mathbb{G}$-rectifiable hyper-surfaces.*

9.5.3 Results on the isoperimetric problem

In studying minimal problems for hyper-surfaces inside a Carnot group $\mathbb{G}$ of Hausdorff dimension Q, it is more convenient to minimize the intrinsic perimeter of a class of sets $E \subset \mathbb{G}$ than the $(Q-1)$-dimensional Hausdorff measure of their boundaries.

Theorem 9.5.15 (Existence of isoperimetric sets)**.** *In any Carnot group, there exist solutions of the isoperimetric problem, i.e., sets minimizing the intrinsic perimeter among all measurable sets with prescribed volume measure.*

The above theorem is due, in the Carnot group setting to Leonardi and Rigot in [LR03], and it has been then generalized by Danielli, Garofalo, and Nhieu.

Proposition 9.5.16. *Metric spheres $\partial B(e,r)$, $r>0$, in the Heisenberg group are not solutions of the isoperimetric problem.*

In [Pan82, Pan83b], Pierre Pansu draw attention on a class of sets which are called today *Pansu spheres*. Denote by $\mathbb{S}_\lambda$ the compact embedded surface of revolution, which is homeomorphic to a sphere, obtained considering a geodesic between two points in the center of the group at distance π/λ and rotating such a curve around the center. Any left traslation of an $\mathbb{S}_\lambda$ is called a Pansu sphere.

Ritoré and Rosales arrived at a characterization of complete, oriented, connected C^2 immersed volume preserving area-stationary surfaces in the 3D Heisenberg group [RR08, Theorems 6.1, 6.8, 6.11], which led to a proof of the Pansu conjecture (cf. [Pan83b, page 172]) for the isoperimetric profile of the Heisenberg group in the C^2-smooth category [RR08, Theorem 7.2].

Theorem 9.5.17 (Ritoré and Rosales [RR08])**.** *In the 3D Heisenberg group, C^2 isoperimetric sets are Pansu spheres.*

Theorem 9.5.18 (Monti-Rickly [MR09])**.** *(Euclidean) convex isoperimetric sets are Pansu spheres.*

9.5.4 Results on minimal surfaces

Let S be a hyper-surface inside a Carnot group $\mathbb{G}$ of Hausdorff dimension Q. The first two natural surface measures on S are the $(Q-1)$-Hausdorff measure $\mathcal{H}^{Q-1}_{cc} \llcorner_S$ or the perimeter measure of one of the side regions determined by S, i.e., $\mathrm{Per}(E)$ with $\partial E = S$, where the perimeter has been defined in (9.4.8). The perimeter measure $\mathrm{Per}(E)$ has a better behavior and, at least when ∂E is a C^2 hyper-surface, it coincides with $\mathcal{H}^{Q-1}_{cc} \llcorner_{\partial E}$

Let us clearify now the terminology of 'minimal surface'.

Definition 9.5.19. If $\Sigma \subset \mathbb{G}$ is such that for all Σ' such that there exists $R>0$ such that

[...] then we say that Σ is *globally area-minimizing*

Definition 9.5.20 (...)**.** then we say that Σ is *(locally) area-minimizing*

Definition 9.5.21 (...)**.**

$$-\nabla_{\mathbb{G}} \cdot \frac{\nabla_{\mathbb{G}} F}{|\nabla_{\mathbb{G}} F|} \equiv 0, \qquad \text{where } \nabla_{\mathbb{G}} f = (X_1 f, \dots, X_m f), \tag{9.5.22}$$

then we say that Σ has *zero mean curvature* or that it is a *solution of the minimal surface equation.*

Definition 9.5.23 (...)**.** then we say that Σ is *area-stationary.*

With the term 'minimal surface' authors can reefer to any of the 4 above definitions.

Theorem 9.5.24 (Existence of area-minimizing sets [GN96])**.** *In sub-Riemannian manifolds, area-minimizing sets exist.*

Explicitly, let Ω be a bounded open set in a Carnot group $\mathbb{G}$. Let L be a locally finite perimeter set. Then the above theorem guarantees the existence of a locally finite perimeter set E such that

i) $(E \Delta L) \setminus \Omega = \emptyset$, and

ii) $(F \Delta L) \setminus \Omega = \emptyset \implies Per(E \cap \Omega) \leq Per(F \cap \Omega)$.

In other words, the (reduced) boundary of E is the area minimizing (generalized) hyper-surface inside Ω with boundary data L outside Ω.

Cheng, Hwang and Yang [CHY07] have studied the weak solutions of the minimal surface equation for intrinsic graphs in the Heisenberg group and have proven existence and uniqueness results.

Fact: The minimal surface equation is a sub-elliptic PDE: a priori, neither existence, not uniqueness, nor regularity can be deduced.

Theorem 9.5.25 (Non-uniqueness of minimal surfaces [Pau04])**.** *There are loops in the Heisenberg group that admit more than one filling by zero-mean curvature disks.*

N.B. This happens in the Euclidean case too.

The main difference between Euclidean and sub-Riemannian geometry is the existence of low-regular minimal surfaces.

Theorem 9.5.26 (Existence of low-regular area minimizing surfaces [Rit09, CHY07, Pau04])**.** *There are area-minimizing surfaces in the 3D Heisenberg group that are not C^2.*

This is due to the fact that not all area-minimizing surfaces have zero-mean curvature. On the other hand, there are examples of zero-mean curvature surfaces that are not area-minimizing, cf. [DGN08]. Does this happen in Euclidean geometry?

Moreover, the condition of having zero mean curvature is not enough to guarantee that a given surface of class C^2 is area-stationary [RR08].

Theorem 9.5.27 (Regularity of zero mean curvature surfaces [Pau06, CHY09, CCM08])**.** *Let S be a surface in the Heisenberg group that is either C^1 or a Lipschitz intrinsic graphs. If S have zero mean curvature (in an extended sense), then it is smooth.*

Theorem 9.5.28 (Bernstein problem)**.** *In the Euclidean 3D space, any entire minimizing graph $\{(x, y, f(x, y) : x, y \in \mathbb{R}\}$ is a plane.*

One would expect that such a fact would be true for any n-dimensional graph in $\mathbb{R}^{n+1}$, but Bombieri, De Giorgi and Giusti established the surprising result that the Bernstein property fails if $n \leq 8$.

Theorem 9.5.29 (Counterexample in $\mathbb{R}^9$, [BDGG69])**.** *If $n \leq 8$ there exist complete minimal graphs in $\mathbb{R}^{n+1}$ that are not hyper-planes: For $m \geq 4$, a Simons cone, i.e., the set $E \subset \mathbf{R}^4$ defined by ${x_1}^2 + {x_2}^2 + \cdots + {x_m}^2 = x_{m+1}^2 + x_{m+2}^2 + \cdots + {x_{2m}}^2$ is a minimal surface.*

Theorem 9.5.30 (Counterexample in Heisenberg-Garofalo and Pauls)**.** *Let $G \sim \mathbb{R}^3$ be the Heisenberg group. The real analytic surface*

$$S = \{(x, y, t) \in G | y = -x \tan(\tanh(t))\},$$

is an entire graph with zero mean curvature.

9.5.5 More results on regularity

The work of Agracev and Gauthier [AG01] gives an analytic answer in generic cases:

Theorem 9.5.31 (Agrachev-Gauthier)**.** *Generically, the germ at a point q_0 of the function $q \mapsto \rho(q) \stackrel{\text{def}}{\to}= \operatorname{dist}(q, q_0)$ is subanalytic if the dimension n of the manifold and the dimension k of the distribution satisfy $n \leq (k-1)k + 1$.*

Theorem 9.5.32 (Agrachev-Gauthier)**.** *Generically (and, in fact, on the complement of a set of distributions of infinite codimension), small balls $\{q \colon \rho(q) \leq r\}$ are subanalytic if $k \geq 3$.*

Theorem 9.5.33 (Agrachev-Gauthier)**.** *Generically, the germ of ρ at q_0 is not subanalytic if $n \geq (k-1)\left(\frac{k^2}{3} + \frac{5k}{6} + 1\right)$.*

(Monti, 2000, 2003), (Leonardi-Masnou, 2005): There is no direct counterpart of the Brunn-Minkowski inequality in Euclidean space

(Ritor´ -Rosales, 2005), (Danielli-Garofalo-Nhieu, 2006): The sets bounded by S_λ are isoperimetric regions in restricted classes of sets (C^2 rotationally symmetric and C^1 unions of two graphs over a ball in the xy-plane $t=0$ divided by $t=0$ into two regions of equal volumes)

Bonk-Capogna: flow by mean curvature of a C^2 convex surface which is the union of two radial graphs, converges to S_λ

9.6 Translations and flows

Given $X \in \Gamma(TM)$ we can consider the associated flow, i.e., the solution $\Phi_X : M \times \mathbb{R} \to M$ of the following ODE

$$\begin{cases} \dfrac{d}{dt}\Phi_X(p,t) &= X_{\Phi_X(p,t)} \\ \Phi_X(p,0) &= p. \end{cases} \tag{9.6.1}$$

Notice that the smoothness of X ensures uniqueness, and therefore the semigroup property

$$\Phi_X(x,t+s) = \Phi_X(\Phi_X(x,t),s) \qquad \forall t,\ s \in \mathbb{R},\ \forall x \in M \tag{9.6.2}$$

but not global existence; it is guaranteed, however, for left-invariant vector fields in Lie groups. We obviously have

$$\frac{d}{dt}(u \circ \Phi_X)(p,t) = (Xu)(\Phi_X(p,t)) \qquad \forall u \in C^1(M). \tag{9.6.3}$$

An obvious consequence of this identity is that, for a C^1 function u, $Xu = 0$ implies that u is constant along the flow, i.e., $u \circ \Phi_X(\cdot,t) = u$ for all $t \in \mathbb{R}$. A similar statement holds even for distributional derivatives along vector fields: for simplicity let us state and prove this result for divergence-free vector fields only.

Theorem 9.6.4. *Let $u \in L^1_{\rm loc}(M)$ be satisfying $Xu = 0$ in the sense of distributions. Then, for all $t \in \mathbb{R}$, $u = u \circ \Phi_X(\cdot,t)$ vol_M-a.e. in M.*

Proof. Let $g \in C^1_c(M)$; we need to show that the map $t \mapsto \int_M gu \circ \Phi_X(\cdot,t)\, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M$ is independent of t. Indeed, the semigroup property (9.6.2), and the fact that X is divergence-free yield

$$\begin{aligned} & \int_M gu \circ \Phi_X(\cdot,t+s)\, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M - \int_M gu \circ \Phi_X(\cdot,t)\, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M \\ = & \int_M ug \circ \Phi_X(\cdot,-t-s)\, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M - \int_M ug \circ \Phi_X(\cdot,-t)\, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M \\ = & \int_M ug \circ \Phi_X(\Phi_X(\cdot,-s),-t)\, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M - \int_M ug \circ \Phi_X(\cdot,-t)\, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M \\ = & -s\int_M uX(g \circ \Phi_X(\cdot,-t))\, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M + o(s) = o(s). \end{aligned}$$

□

Remark 9.6.5. We notice also that the flow is vol_M-measure preserving (i.e. $\mathrm{vol}_M(\Phi_X(\cdot,t)^{-1}(A)) = \mathrm{vol}_M(A)$ for all Borel sets $A \subseteq M$ and $t \in \mathbb{R}$) if and only if $\operatorname{div} X$ is equal to 0. Indeed, if $f \in C^1_c(M)$, the measure preserving property gives that $\int_M f(\Phi_X(x,t))\,d\,\mathrm{vol}_M(x)$ is independent of t. A time differentiation and (9.6.3) then give

$$0 = \int_M \frac{d}{dt} f(\Phi_X(x,t))\,d\,\mathrm{vol}_M(x) = \int_M Xf(\Phi_X(x,t))\,d\,\mathrm{vol}_M(x) = \int_M Xf(y)\,d\,\mathrm{vol}_M(y).$$

Therefore $\int_M f \operatorname{div} X\, d\,\mathrm{vol}_M = 0$ for all $f \in C^1_c(M)$, and X is divergence-free. The proof of the converse implication is similar, and analogous to the one of Theorem 9.6.4.

Let $\mathbb{G}$ be a Lie group with Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$. We shall also consider as volume form $\mathrm{vol}_{\mathbb{G}}$ a right-invariant Haar measure.

Let $X \in \mathfrak{g}$ and let us denote, as usual in the theory, by $\exp(tX)$ the flow of X at time t starting from e (that is, $\exp(tX) := \Phi_X(e,t) = \Phi_{tX}(e,1)$); then, the curve $g\exp(tX)$ is the flow starting at g: indeed, since X is left-invariant, setting for simplicity $\gamma(t) := \exp(tX)$ and $\gamma_g(t) := g\gamma(t)$, we have

$$\frac{d}{dt}\gamma_g(t) = \frac{d}{dt}(L_g(\gamma(t))) = (dL_g)_{\gamma(t)}\frac{d}{dt}\gamma(t) = (dL_g)_{\gamma(t)}X = X_{\gamma_g(t)}.$$

This implies that $\Phi_X(\cdot,t) = R_{\exp(tX)}$ and so the flow preserves the right Haar measure, and the left translation preserves the flow lines. By Remark 9.6.5 it follows that all $X \in \mathfrak{g}$ are divergence-free, and Theorem 9.6.4 gives

$$f \circ R_{\exp(tX)} = f \quad \forall t \in \mathbb{R} \qquad \Longleftrightarrow \qquad Xf = 0 \tag{9.6.6}$$

whenever $f \in L^1_{\mathrm{loc}}(\mathbb{G})$.

9.6.1 X-derivative of nice functions and domains

If u is a C^1 function in $\mathbb{R}^n$, then Xu can be calculated as the scalar product between X and the gradient of u:

$$Xu = \langle X, \nabla u\rangle. \tag{9.6.7}$$

Assume that $E \subset \mathbb{R}^n$ is locally the sub-level set of the C^1 function f and that $X \in \Gamma(T\mathbb{R}^n)$ is divergence-free. Then, for any $v \in C^\infty_c(\mathbb{R}^n)$ we can apply the Gauss–Green formula to the vector field vX, whose divergence is Xv, to obtain

$$\int_E Xv\,dx = \int_{\partial E} \langle vX, \nu_E^{eu}\rangle\, d\mathscr{H}^{n-1},$$

where ν_E^{eu} is the unit (Euclidean) outer normal to E. This proves that

$$X\chi_E = -\langle X, \nu_E^{eu}\rangle \mathscr{H}^{n-1} \llcorner_{\partial E}.$$

However, we have an explicit formula for the unit (Euclidean) outer normal to E, it is $\nu_E^{eu}(x) = \nabla f(x)/|\nabla f(x)|$, so, by (9.6.7),

$$\begin{aligned} \langle X, \nu_E^{eu}\rangle &= \langle X, \frac{\nabla f}{|\nabla f|}\rangle \\ &= \frac{\langle X, \nabla f\rangle}{|\nabla f|} = \frac{Xf}{|\nabla f|}. \end{aligned}$$

Thus

$$X\chi_E = -\frac{Xf}{|\nabla f|}\mathscr{H}^{n-1} \llcorner_{\partial E}. \tag{9.6.8}$$

9.7 Exercises

Exercise 9.7.1. Let V and $W \subset \mathfrak{g}$ be two sub-vector spaces with $X_1, \ldots, X_l$ and $Y_1, \ldots, Y_m$ basis of V and W respectively. Then show that the vectors $[X_i, Y_j]$, for $i = 1, \ldots, l, j = 1, \ldots, m$ span $[V, W]$, thus one can extract a basis among such brackets.

Exercise 9.7.2. Let $\mathfrak{g} = V_1 \oplus \cdots \oplus V_s$ be a stratification of a Lie algebra. Assume that $X_{m_j+1}, \ldots, X_{m_j}$ is a basis of V_j, then show that the order-reversed basis $X_n, \ldots, X_1$ is a (strong) Malcev basis.

Exercise 9.7.3. Considering the horizontal path constructed in the proof of Property 3 in Proposition 6.3.6, give a lower bound on $d_{CC}(e, E(\mathbf{t}))$.

Exercise 9.7.4. Let G be a simply connected nilpotent Lie group and let V_1 be a sub-space such that

$$\mathfrak{g} = V_1 \oplus [\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}].$$

Denote by $\mathfrak{g}^{(i)}$ the i-th term in the lower (or descending) central series of $\mathfrak{g}$, Show first that

$$\mathfrak{g}^{(2)} = [V_1, V_1] + \mathfrak{g}^{(3)}.$$

Then, by induction, show

$$\mathfrak{g}^{(i)} = [V_1, [V_1, [\ldots, [V_1, V_1]\ldots]] + \mathfrak{g}^{(i+1)},$$

where in the above bracket there are i many V_1's. Finally deduce that such a V_1 generates the whole Lie algebra.

Exercise 9.7.5. Fill in the details in the following argument to prove Theorem 9.1.5. Without loss of generality we may assume that $f_t \to f$ everywhere on X. For $k \in \mathbb{N}$ and $t \in (0, \infty)$, let

$$E_t(k) := \cup_{s\in(t,\infty)}\{x : |f_s(x) - f(x)| > k^{-1}\}.$$

Then, for fixed k, $E_t(k)$ decreases as t decreases, and $\cap_{t\in(0,\infty)}E_t(k) = 0$, so since $\mu(X) < \infty$ we conclude that $\mu(E_t(k)) \to 0$ as $t \to 0$. Given $\eta > 0$ and $k \in \mathbb{N}$, choose t_k so large that $\mu(E_{t_k}(k)) < \eta 2^{-k}$ and let $E = \cap_{k\in\mathbb{N}}E_{t_k}(k)$. Then $\mu(E) < \eta$, and we have $|f_t(x) - f(x)| < k^{-1}$ for $t \in (0, t_k)$ and $x \notin E$. Thus $(f_t)_t$ converges to f uniformly on $X \setminus E$.

Exercise 9.7.6 (Lebesgue Differentiation Theorem for doubling metric spaces)**.** If (X, d, μ) is a doubling measure metric space and $f \in L^1(X, \mu)$, then for μ-almost every $x \in X$ we have

$$\frac{1}{\mu(B(x,r))}\int_{B(x,r)} |f(y) - f(x)| \,\mathrm{d}\,\mu(y) \to 0, \qquad \text{as } r \to 0.$$

In particular, if $K \subseteq X$ is measurable, then μ-almost every point of K has density 1.

Chapter 10

Large-scale geometry of nilpotent groups

10.1 Elements of Geometric Group Theory

A *discrete* group Γ is a topological group that as topological space is discrete.

A set S inside a group Γ is said to be *generating* if there is no proper subgroup of Γ containing S. In other words, every element in the group Γ can be written as a finite product of elements in S. If one interprets the elements in S as words of an alphabet, then one can use the expression: 'each element in Γ is represented by a word with letters in S'.

A group is said to be *finitely generated* if it admits a finite generating set.

After having fixed such a set S, one can construct a geometric graph related to the group Γ.

Definition 10.1.1 (Cayley graph)**.** Let Γ be a discrete group and let S be a generating set. The *(colored and directed) Cayley graph* $\mathcal{G} = \mathcal{G}(\Gamma, S)$ is the colored directed graph constructed as follows: The vertex set $\text{Vertex}(\mathcal{G})$ of $\mathcal{G}$ is identified with Γ. Each generator s of S determines a color c_s and the directed edges of color c_s consists of the pairs of the form (g, gs), with $g \in \Gamma$.

Geometric Group Theory mostly studies finitely generated groups considering the large scale geometry (or coarse geometry) of the Cayley graph. In such case, the set S is usually assumed to be finite, symmetric, i.e., $S = S^{-1}$, and not containing the identity element of the group. In this case, the (uncolored) Cayley graph is an ordinary graph: its edges are not oriented and it does not contain loops.

Definition 10.1.2 (Word metric)**.** Let Γ be a discrete group and let S be a generating set. For any two elements g and $h \in \Gamma$, their *word distance* with respect to S, is denoted by $d_S(g, h)$ and is defined as the minimum number of elements (=letters) in S whose product (=word) equals $g^{-1}h$. Analogously, the *word metric* d_S on the whole Cayley graph $\mathcal{G}(\Gamma, S)$ is the length metric that gives length 1 to each edge of $\mathcal{G}(\Gamma, S)$. We have then an isometry between (Γ, d_S) and the vertex set of the graph $(\text{Vertex}\,(\mathcal{G}(\Gamma, S)), d_S)$

The group Γ acts naturally on its Cayley graph $\mathcal{G}(\Gamma, S)$ sending the vertex h to the vertex gh, for each fixed $g \in \Gamma$. One can easily check that such left translations preserve the graph structure of $\mathcal{G}$.

Proposition 10.1.3 (Isometry of the left action)**.** *The left translation of a group Γ are isometries with respect to the word metric. Analogously, the left translations induce an isometric action of the group Γ on the metric space $(\mathcal{G}(\Gamma, S), d_S)$, and such action is transitive on the vertex set.*

The word metric on a group Γ is not unique, because different symmetric generating sets give different word metrics. However, finitely generated word metrics are unique up to biLipschitz equivalence.

Proposition 10.1.4 (Bilipschitz invariants of a group)**.** *If S and S' are two symmetric, finite generating sets for Γ with corresponding word metrics d_S and $d_{S'}$, then there is a constant K such that the identity map from (Γ, d_S) to $(\Gamma, d_{S'})$ is a K-biLipschitz map. In fact, K is just the maximum of the d_S word norms of elements of S' and the $d_{S'}$ word norms of elements of S.*

Definition 10.1.5 (Quasi-isometry)**.** Suppose (M_1, d_1) and (M_2, d_2) are metric spaces, and $f : M_1 \to M_2$ is a function (not necessarily continuous). Then f is called a (A, L)- *quasi-isometric embedding*, with $L \geq 1$ and $A \geq 0$, if

$$\frac{1}{L}\, d_2(f(x), f(y)) - A \leq d_1(x, y) \leq L\, d_2(f(x), f(y)) + A \quad \text{for all} \quad x, y \in M_1.$$

Moreover, a quasi-isometric embedding is called a *quasi-isometry* if there exists a constant $C \geq 0$ such that to every $u \in M_2$ there exists $x \in M_1$ with

$$d_2(u, f(x)) \leq C.$$

The spaces M_2 and M_2 are called *quasi-isometric* if there exists a quasi-isometry between them.

Theorem 10.1.6 (Fundamental observation of Geometric Group Theory)**.** *Let X be a metric space which is geodesic and proper, let Γ be a group acting on X by isometries. Assume that the action is proper and the quotient space X/Γ is compact.*

Then the group Γ is finitely generated and quasi-isometric to X.

More precisely, for any $x_0 \in X$, the orbit mapping

$$\Gamma \to X$$

$$\gamma \mapsto \gamma(x_0)$$

is a quasi-isometry.

Such fact was known in the 50's. A proof can be essentially re-contructed from [Lemma 2]Milnor. A detailed proof is in [Theorem 23]delaharpe.

From the above fundamental observation we deduce that Geometric Group Theory links the study of fundamental groups of compact manifolds and their Riemannian universal covers. Namely, let M be a compact differentiable manifold. Let $\pi_1(M)$ the fundamental group of M. By the above observation, such discrete group is finitely generated. We endow the group with a word metric. Fix now a Riemannian metric g on M. Then there is a unique Riemannian metric $\tilde{g}$ on the universal cover $\tilde{M}$ of M such that the universal projection

$$(\tilde{M}, \tilde{g}) \twoheadrightarrow (M, g)$$

is a local isometry. We refer to such $\tilde{g}$ as the lifted Riemannian metric. The crucial result is that the coarse geometry of $\tilde{M}$ is the same that the coarse geometry of $\pi_1(M)$. A prove of the following proposition can be found in the lecture notes of M. Kapovich on GGT, use his Lemma 1.31.

Proposition 10.1.7. *Assume M is a Riemannian manifold that is compact.*

(i) *The fundamental group $\pi_1(M)$ is finitely generated.*

(ii) *The universal cover $\tilde{M}$, endowed with the lifted Riemannian distance, is quasi-isometric to $\pi_1(M)$, endowed with any word metric.*

Proposition 10.1.8. *Assume G is a finitely generated group and $H < G$ a subgroup.*

(i) *If H has finite index in G, then G and H are quasi-isometric.*

(ii) *If H is a finite group and it is normal in G, then G and G/H are quasi-isometric.*

Definition 10.1.9. We say that a group G is *virtually nilpotent* if there exists a sub-group $H < G$ of finite index in G that is nilpotent.

10.2 The growth rate of balls

The bilipschitz equivalence of word metrics implies in turn that the growth rate of a finitely generated group is a well-defined isomorphism invariant of the group Γ, independent of the choice of a finite generating set S. This implies in turn that various properties of growth, such as polynomial growth, the degree of polynomial growth, and exponential growth, are isomorphism invariants of groups.

Given a finitely generated group Γ, we fix a finite symmetric generating set S. For each $R > 0$, let $B_S(e, R)$ be the metric ball in Γ with respect the distance d_S with center the origin e and radius R. We then denote by $\#(B_S(e, R))$ the cardinality of the finite set $B_S(e, R)$.

Definition 10.2.1. The *growth rate* of a finitely generated group Γ is the growth rate of the function $R \mapsto \#(B_S(e, R))$.

10.2.1 Invariance of the growth rate

Proposition 10.2.2. *If two metric spaces are quasi isometric, then they have the same growth rate.*

Corollary 10.2.3. *Assume M is a Riemannian manifold that is compact. Then the grow rate of the group $\pi_1(M)$ is the same as the grow rate of the volume function on the universal cover of M.*

Namely, consider the Riemmanian structure on $\tilde{M}$ lifted from the structure on M. Let $\tilde{B}(p, r)$ be the metric ball in $\tilde{M}$. Let $\mathrm{vol}_{\tilde{M}}$ be the Riemmanian volume form on $\tilde{M}$. Then the above corollary states that there exist constants k, c such that, for all $R > 1$, one has the bounds

$$k^{-1}\,\#(B_S(e, c^{-1}R)) \leq \mathrm{vol}_{\tilde{M}}(\tilde{B}(p, R)) \leq k\,\#(B_S(e, cR)).$$

Now, if a group Γ is virtually nilpotent, then by definition it has a nilpotent sub-group Γ' of finite index. Then Γ and Γ' are quasi-isometric and thus have the same growth rate. We will describe the fact that the groups that are virtually nilpotent are exactly those that have a polynomial growth rate.

10.2.2 Polynomial growth and virtual nilpotency

Definition 10.2.4 (Polynomial growth)**.** A discrete group Γ is said to have *polynomial growth* if, for some (and thus for any) generating set S, there exist $C > 0$ and $k > 0$ such that for any integer $R \geq 1$

$$\#(B_S(e, R)) \leq C \cdot R^k.$$

Another choice for S would only change the constant C, but not the polynomial nature of the bound, because of Proposition 10.2.2. Actually one only requires that the growth of the balls are bounded by a polynomial function. However, a result of Pansu states that, in fact, the above equation can be improved saying that there exists $c(S) > 0$ and an integer $d(\Gamma) \geq 0$ depending on Γ only such that the following holds:

$$\#(B_S(e,R)) = c(\Gamma)R^{d(\Gamma)} + o(R^{d(\Gamma)}), \qquad \text{as } R \to \infty.$$

The condition of polynomial growth can be further weakened, cf. [vdDW84, Kle10].

A result of J. Wolf is that a group has polynomial growth if it is nilpotent. A deep result of Gromov is the equivalence of polynomial growth and virtual nilpotency.

Theorem 10.2.5 (Gromov's polynomial growth)**.** *A finitely generated group has polynomial growth rate if and only if it is virtually nilpotent.*

The original proof in [Gro81] is based on Gleason-Montgomery-Zippin-Zippin-Yamabe structure theory of locally compact groups. A new short proof has been given by Kleiner in [Kle10].

A non trivial consequence of Gromov's Theorem is that if a group has polynomial growth then the exponent of the growth rate is an integer. The plan of this chapter is to give an exposition of how sub-Riemannian geometry plays a role in the polynomial growth theorem and observe that such integer exponent is in fact the Hausdorff dimension of a Carnot group associated to the finitely generated group.

10.3 Asymptotic cone

Theorem 10.3.1 (Wolf-Bass-Gromov-Pansu)**.** *The degree of growth of a finitely generated group* Γ *of polynomial growth is an integer and equals the Hausdorff dimension of the Carnot group that is the asymptotic cone of* Γ*.*

The asymptotic cone, also known as the tangent cone at infinity, is similar to the tangent cone (at a point), except that instead of performing a blow-up procedure, we 'blow down'.

Definition 10.3.2 (Asymptotic cone)**.** An asymptotic cone of a metric space (X, d) is a metric space (Z, ρ) with the property that there is $\bar{x} \in Z$ and, for each $j \in \mathbb{N}$, there are $x_j \in X$ and $\epsilon_j > 0$, with $\epsilon_j \to 0$ as $j \to \infty$, such that for each $R > 0$ there are $\delta_j \geq 0$, with $\delta_j \to 0$ as $j \to \infty$, with the property that

$$\mathrm{GH}\lim_{j\to\infty} B^{(X,\epsilon_j d)}(x_j, R+\delta_j) = B^{(Z,\rho)}(\bar{x}, R),$$

i.e., the sequence of balls in X with respect to the 'compressed' metric $\epsilon_j d$ with centers x_j and radii $R+\delta_j$ converges, in the Gromov Hausdorff sense, to the ball in (Z,ρ) with center $\bar{x}$ and radius R.

Proposition 10.3.3. *Two quasi-isometric spaces have the same class of asymptotic cones.*

Theorem 10.3.4 (Pansu [Pan83a])**.** *The asymptotic cone of a nilpotent Lie group G, endowed with a left-invariant geodesic distance, is a Carnot group G_∞ endowed with a left-invariant sub-Finsler structure. The Hausdorff dimension of G_∞ is the exponent of the growth rate of Γ.*

10.4 The Malcev closure

We shall explain now the connection between polynomial growth and sub-Riemannian geometry. We shall see how a nilpotent finitely generated discrete group is coarsely equivalent to a sub-Finsler Lie group. First we need to understand how such a discrete group is coarsely seen as a Lie group. Malcev Theorem 10.4.4 is the core of the argument.

Briefly, a lattice is a discrete subgroup with finite covolume. Here is the formal definition:

Definition 10.4.1 (Lattice)**.** Let G be a locally compact topological group. A subgroup $\Gamma < G$ is a *lattice* if it is discrete (as topological subspace) and has the property that on the quotient space G/Γ there is a finite G-invariant[1] measure.

Proposition 10.4.2. *Let G be a Lie group endowed with a left-invariant Riemannian metric. Let Γ be a lattice in G. Then the quotient G/Γ is in fact compact and thus Γ is quasi-isometric to G.*

Theorem 10.4.3 ([Rag72, Theorem 2.18])**.** *A group Γ is isomorphic to a lattice in a simply connected nilpotent Lie group if and only if*

1. *Γ is finitely generated,*

2. *Γ is nilpotent, and*

3. *Γ has no torsion.*

[1] Recall that the quotient on G/Γ is on the right, so G acts naturally on the left.

Corollary 10.4.4 (Malcev Theorem [Mal51])**.** *If Γ is a finitely generated group which is nilpotent and has no torsion then it is isomorphic to a discrete cocompact subgroup of a simply connected nilpotent Lie group G.*

Some useful facts:

1. Every subgroup of a nilpotent group is nilpotent. (easy!)

2. Every subgroup of a finitely generated nilpotent group is finitely generated, cf. [Theorem 9.16]Macdonalds-theory of groups or [Rag72, Theorem 2.7].

3. Every nilpotent group generated by finitely many elements of finite order is finite, cf. [Theorem 9.17]Macdonalds.

These facts implies the following:

Lemma 10.4.5 (on torsion of finitely generated nilpotent groups)**.** *The elements of finite order in a nilpotent group G form a normal sub-group $Tor(G)$, called the torsion sub-group of G. If G is finitely generated, $Tor(G)$ is finite. The quotient $G/\mathrm{Tor}(G)$ is torsion-free, that is, its only element of finite order is the identity.*

Proposition 10.4.6. *Let Γ be a finitely generated discrete group Γ of polynomial growth, then Γ is quasi-isometric to a connected, simply connected, and nilpotent Lie group G.*

If a group Γ has polynomial growth, then, by Gromov Theorem 10.2.5, there is a subgroup $\Gamma_1 < \Gamma$ that is nilpotent and $[\Gamma, \Gamma_1] < \infty$. Let $\mathrm{Tor}(\Gamma_1)$ be the torsion of Γ_1, which is a finite and normal subgroup, by Lemma 10.4.5. Define $\Gamma_2 := \Gamma_1/\mathrm{Tor}(\Gamma_1)$. Then Γ_2 is nilpotent and has no torsion, thus, by Malcev Theorem 10.4.4, there is a connected, simply connected, and nilpotent Lie group G and a discrete cocompact subgroup $\Gamma' < G$, such that Γ_2 is isomorphic to Γ'.

The groups Γ, Γ_1, Γ_2, Γ', and G are quasi-isometric.

10.5 The limit CC metric

Let Γ' be a discrete cocompact sub-group in a connected, simply connected, and nilpotent Lie group G. Let G_∞ be the unique connected, simply connected Lie group whose Lie algebra is the graded algebra $\mathfrak{g}_\infty$ of $\mathfrak{g}$.

Let $\|\cdot\| := d_S(e, \cdot)$ be a 'norm' on Γ' induced by a finite generating set S. We shall describe the CC metric induced on the Carnot group G_∞.

Consider the two sets:

$$A := \Gamma'/[\Gamma', \Gamma'] \qquad \text{and} \qquad B := G/[G, G].$$

Both A and B are Abelian groups. Moreover, B is a (finite dimensional) vector space.

A is a subgroup of B. (?!?)

$\|\cdot\|$ induces a norm on A. (?!?)

One defines

$$\|a\|_\infty := \lim_{k\to\infty} \frac{1}{k} \|ka\|.$$

Such norm extends to B. (?!?)

Recall that, as in any Carnot group, $V_1 \simeq \mathfrak{g}/[\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}]$. Thus we consider the projection

$$\pi : G_\infty \twoheadrightarrow G_\infty/[G_\infty, G_\infty].$$

Therefore we can transport the norm on V_1, using the isomorphism between V_1 and $B := G/[G, G]$. (?!?)

Appendix A

Dido's problem

For a better understanding of how in Section 1.4.1 we obtained formulas for the geodesics in the subRiemannian Heisenberg group, we discuss in this section the solutions of the isoperimetric problem. We then solve Dido's problem. The proof will be done under the nontrivial assumption that the minimizers of the problems are curves that are smooth enough. For the general case, we refer the reader to [].

A.1 A proof of the isoperimetric problem

We shall use the formalism of Calculus of Variations for proving that any of the shortest closed curves in the plane that encloses a fix amount of area is a circle. We will not need to show any preliminary on the curve such as the fact that it is locally a graph or that the enclosed domain is convex. We prove that the only critical points of the variational integral functional

$$\mathcal{L}(\sigma) := \mathrm{Length}(\sigma),$$

subjected to the bond

$$\mathcal{A}(\sigma) := \text{Area enclosed by } \sigma = A_0, \text{ for some } A_0,$$

are circles. However, we shall assume that such a σ is a C^1 curve with Lipschitz derivative.

A.1.1 The variation of length

A necessary condition for σ being a critical point, is the vanishing of the first variation of $\mathcal{L}$.

Let $\sigma : [0, l] \to \mathbb{R}^2$ be any Lipschitz curve with coordinates (σ_1, σ_2). Its length is given by

$$\mathcal{L}(\sigma) = \int_0^l \sqrt{\dot\sigma_1^2(t) + \dot\sigma_2^2(t)}\,\mathrm{d}\,t.$$

The fact that σ is a critical point with respect to a variation h is expressed in Calculus of Variations by the equation

$$\delta\mathcal{L}(\sigma, h) = 0.$$

More explicitly, h is a curve $h : [0, l] \to \mathbb{R}^2$ with $h(0) = h(l) = 0$ and

$$\delta\mathcal{L}(\sigma, h) := \frac{d}{d\epsilon}\mathcal{L}(\sigma + \epsilon h)\Big|_{\epsilon=0} = 0.$$

Let us calculate such variation $\delta\mathcal{L}$ in the case when σ is parametrized by arc length. So $|\dot{\sigma}| = 1$ and $l = \text{Length}(\sigma)$. The variation in this case is

$$\begin{aligned}
\delta\mathcal{L}(\sigma, h) &:= \frac{d}{d\epsilon}\mathcal{L}(\sigma + \epsilon h)\Big|_{\epsilon=0} \\
&= \frac{d}{d\epsilon}\int_0^l \sqrt{\left(\dot{\sigma}_1(t) + \epsilon\dot{h}_1(t)\right)^2 + \left(\dot{\sigma}_2(t) + \epsilon\dot{h}_2(t)\right)^2}\,\mathrm{d}\,t\Big|_{\epsilon=0} \\
&= \int_0^l \frac{d}{d\epsilon}\sqrt{\dot{\sigma}_1(t)^2 + 2\epsilon\dot{\sigma}_1(t)\dot{h}_1(t) + \epsilon^2\dot{h}_1(t)^2 + \dot{\sigma}_2(t)^2 + 2\epsilon\dot{\sigma}_2(t)\dot{h}_2(t) + \epsilon^2\dot{h}_2(t)^2}\Big|_{\epsilon=0}\,\mathrm{d}\,t \\
&= \int_0^l \frac{2\dot{\sigma}_1(t)\dot{h}_1(t) + 2\epsilon\dot{h}_1(t)^2 + 2\dot{\sigma}_2(t)\dot{h}_2(t) + 2\epsilon\dot{h}_2(t)^2}{2\sqrt{\dot{\sigma}_1(t)^2 + 2\epsilon\dot{\sigma}_1(t)\dot{h}_1(t) + \epsilon^2\dot{h}_1(t)^2 + \dot{\sigma}_2(t)^2 + 2\epsilon\dot{\sigma}_2(t)\dot{h}_2(t) + \epsilon^2\dot{h}_2(t)^2}}\Big|_{\epsilon=0}\,\mathrm{d}\,t \\
&= \int_0^l \frac{\dot{\sigma}_1(t)\dot{h}_1(t) + \dot{\sigma}_2(t)\dot{h}_2(t)}{\sqrt{\dot{\sigma}_1(t)^2 + \dot{\sigma}_2(t)^2}}\,\mathrm{d}\,t \\
&= \int_0^l \frac{\langle\dot{\sigma}(t), \dot{h}(t)\rangle}{|\dot{\sigma}(t)|}\,\mathrm{d}\,t \\
&= \int_0^l \langle\dot{\sigma}(t), \dot{h}(t)\rangle\,\mathrm{d}\,t.
\end{aligned}$$

We conclude the following:

Lemma A.1.1. *A planar curve σ, parametrized by unit speed, is a critical point of the length functional with respect to a variation h if and only if*

$$\int_0^l \langle\dot{\sigma}, \dot{h}\rangle\,\mathrm{d}\,t = 0.$$

A.1.2 The area functional and its variation

The area enclosed by a Lipschitz curve σ can be computed (because of Stokes' Theorem) by the formula

$$\mathcal{A}(\sigma) = \frac{1}{2}\int_0^l \sigma_1(t)\dot{\sigma}_2(t) - \sigma_2(t)\dot{\sigma}_1(t)\,\mathrm{d}\,t.$$

For convenience of notation let us define the 'cross product' on $\mathbb{R}^2$ as the real number

$$v \times w := v_1 w_2 - w_1 v_2 = \left\langle \begin{pmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix}, \begin{pmatrix} v_1 \\ v_2 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} \times \begin{pmatrix} w_1 \\ w_2 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} \right\rangle, \text{ for } v = (v_1, v_2), w = (w_1, w_2) \in \mathbb{R}^2.$$

Obviously we have linearity in v and w and $w \times v = -v \times w$. Thus the area enclosed by σ is

$$\mathcal{A}(\sigma) = \frac{1}{2} \int_0^l \sigma \times \dot{\sigma} \, \mathrm{d}\, t.$$

Let h be a variation. The new area would be

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{A}(\sigma + h) &= \frac{1}{2} \int_0^l (\sigma + h) \times (\dot{\sigma} + \dot{h}) \, \mathrm{d}\, t \\ &= \frac{1}{2} \int_0^l \sigma \times \dot{\sigma} + \sigma \times \dot{h} + h \times \dot{\sigma} + h \times \dot{h} \, \mathrm{d}\, t \\ &= \mathcal{A}(\sigma) + \frac{1}{2} \, h \times \sigma\big|_0^l + \frac{1}{2} \int_0^l -\dot{\sigma} \times h + h \times \dot{\sigma} + h \times \dot{h} \, \mathrm{d}\, t \\ &= \mathcal{A}(\sigma) + \int_0^l h \times \dot{\sigma} \, \mathrm{d}\, t + \frac{1}{2} \int_0^l h \times \dot{h} \, \mathrm{d}\, t. \end{aligned}$$

We conclude the following:

Lemma A.1.2. *A variation h of a curve σ is area-preserving if and only if*

$$\int_0^l h \times \dot{\sigma} + \frac{h \times \dot{h}}{2} \, \mathrm{d}\, t = 0.$$

Definition A.1.3. We say that a variation h of a curve σ *tangentially preserves* the area if

$$\mathcal{A}(\sigma + \epsilon h) = \mathcal{A}(\sigma) + o(\epsilon).$$

In other words, h tangentially preserves the area if

$$\frac{d}{d\epsilon} \mathcal{A}(\sigma + \epsilon h) \bigg|_{\epsilon = 0} = 0.$$

Thus, by the above calculation, such h satisfies

$$0 = \frac{d}{d\epsilon} \int_0^l \epsilon h \times \dot{\sigma} + \frac{\epsilon h \times \epsilon \dot{h}}{2} \, \mathrm{d}\, t \bigg|_{\epsilon = 0} = \int_0^l h \times \dot{\sigma} \, \mathrm{d}\, t.$$

Proposition A.1.4. *Let $\sigma : [0, l] \to \mathbb{R}^2$ be a curve parametrized by arc length. If σ is a critical curve for the length functional under an area constrain, then σ has zero first variation of length with respect to all tangentially area-preserving variations. In particular,*

$$\int_0^l \langle \dot{\sigma} | \dot{h} \rangle \, \mathrm{d}\, t = 0,$$

for all $h : [0, l] \to \mathbb{R}^2$ with $h(0) = h(l) = 0$ and

$$\int_0^l h \times \dot{\sigma} \, \mathrm{d}\, t = 0.$$

Proof. Set $a_\epsilon := \mathcal{A}(\sigma + \epsilon h)$, hence $\left.\frac{d}{d\epsilon} a_\epsilon\right|_{\epsilon=0} = 0$. Consider the curves

$$\sigma_\epsilon := \sqrt{\frac{a_0}{a_\epsilon}}(\sigma + \epsilon h).$$

Then $\sigma_0 = \sigma$ and the area enclosed by σ_ϵ is independent on ϵ. Since σ is critical for the length functional under the area constraint, we have that $\left.\frac{d}{d\epsilon}\mathcal{L}(\sigma_\epsilon)\right|_{\epsilon=0} = 0$. Therefore,

$$\begin{aligned} 0 &= \left.\frac{d}{d\epsilon}\mathcal{L}(\sigma_\epsilon)\right|_{\epsilon=0} \\ &= \left.\frac{d}{d\epsilon}\sqrt{\frac{a_0}{a_\epsilon}}\mathcal{L}(\sigma + \epsilon h)\right|_{\epsilon=0} \\ &= \left.\frac{d}{d\epsilon}\sqrt{\frac{a_0}{a_\epsilon}}\right|_{\epsilon=0}\mathcal{L}(\sigma) + \sqrt{\frac{a_0}{a_0}}\left.\frac{d}{d\epsilon}\mathcal{L}(\sigma + \epsilon h)\right|_{\epsilon=0} \\ &= -\frac{1}{2}\sqrt{a_0}a_\epsilon^{-3/2}\left.\frac{d}{d\epsilon}a_\epsilon\right|_{\epsilon=0}\mathcal{L}(\sigma) + 1 \cdot \delta\mathcal{L}(\sigma, h) \\ &= 0 + \int_0^l \langle\dot\sigma, \dot h\rangle \,\mathrm{d}\,t, \end{aligned}$$

where we used the calculation to get to Lemma A.1.1. □

A.1.3 The conclusion

Proposition A.1.5. *If σ is a $C^{1,1}$ closed curve in the plane that is one of the shortest among all Lipschitz curves that enclose a fixed amount of area, then σ is a circle.*

Proof. Assume, without loss of generality that σ has unit speed. Let $\phi : [0, l] \to \mathbb{R}$ be any C^∞ function with $\phi(0) = \phi(1) = 0$ and $\int_0^l \phi(t)\,\mathrm{d}\,t = 0$. Take $h(t) = \phi(t)(\dot\sigma_2(t), -\dot\sigma_1(t))$, which, since σ is $C^{1,1}$, is Lipschitz. Such h is an admissible variation since clearly $h(0) = h(l) = 0$ and also

$$\begin{aligned} \int_0^l h \times \dot\sigma \,\mathrm{d}\,t &= \int_0^l \phi(t)\,(\dot\sigma_2(t), -\dot\sigma_1(t)) \times (\dot\sigma_1(t), \dot\sigma_2(t))\,\mathrm{d}\,t \\ &= \int_0^l \phi(t)(\dot\sigma_2(t)^2 + \dot\sigma_1(t)^2)\,\mathrm{d}\,t \\ &= \int_0^l \phi(t)|\dot\sigma|^2\,\mathrm{d}\,t \\ &= \int_0^l \phi(t)\cdot 1\,\mathrm{d}\,t \\ &= \int_0^l \phi(t)\,\mathrm{d}\,t = 0. \end{aligned}$$

Then, since $\dot h(t) = \dot\phi(t)(\dot\sigma_2(t), -\dot\sigma_1(t)) + \phi(t)(\ddot\sigma_2(t), -\ddot\sigma_1(t))$, the vanishing of the first variation of length becomes

$$\begin{aligned}
0 &= \int_0^l \langle \dot\sigma, \dot h\rangle \,\mathrm{d}\,t \\
&= \int_0^l \Big\langle (\dot\sigma_1,\dot\sigma_2), \dot\phi(t)(\dot\sigma_2(t), -\dot\sigma_1(t)) + \phi(t)(\ddot\sigma_2(t), -\ddot\sigma_1(t))\Big\rangle \,\mathrm{d}\,t \\
&= \int_0^l \dot\phi(t)\,\langle (\dot\sigma_1,\dot\sigma_2), (\dot\sigma_2(t), -\dot\sigma_1(t))\rangle + \phi(t)\,\langle (\dot\sigma_1,\dot\sigma_2), (\ddot\sigma_2(t), -\ddot\sigma_1(t))\rangle \,\mathrm{d}\,t \\
&= \int_0^l \dot\phi(t)(\dot\sigma_1(t)\dot\sigma_2(t) - \dot\sigma_2(t)\dot\sigma_1(t)) + \phi(t)(\dot\sigma_1(t)\ddot\sigma_2(t) - \dot\sigma_2(t)\ddot\sigma_1(t)) \,\mathrm{d}\,t \\
&= \int_0^l \phi(t)(\dot\sigma_1(t)\ddot\sigma_2(t) - \dot\sigma_2(t)\ddot\sigma_1(t)) \,\mathrm{d}\,t.
\end{aligned}$$

the conclusion is that the function $\kappa(t) := \dot\sigma_1(t)\ddot\sigma_2(t) - \dot\sigma_2(t)\ddot\sigma_1(t)$, which is in fact the curvature of the curve σ, is such that

$$\int_0^l \phi(t)\kappa(t)\,\mathrm{d}\,t = 0 \text{ for all } \phi \in C^\infty([0,l]) \text{ such that } \phi(0) = \phi(1) \text{ and } \int_0^l \phi(t)\,\mathrm{d}\,t = 0.$$

By the (second) Fundamental Lemma of Calculus of Variations (due to DuBois and Reymond) we deduce that κ is constant. The only planar curves of constant curvature are circles (and lines). □

The assumption that the curve is $C^{1,1}$ can be dropped, but the proof of the result would not be as brief. We refer to other texts for the more general result. For examples, a complete proof, based on Poincare-Wirtinger inequality, can be found in [**?**, pp. 1183-1185]. The following general statement of the isoperimetric solution is for curves that are absolutely continuous.

Theorem A.1.6 (Isoperimetric solution)**.** *If σ is a closed absolutely continuous curve in the plane that is one of the shortest among all absolutely continuous curves that enclose a fixed amount of area, then σ is a parametrization of a circle.*

From the solution of the isoperimetric problem, Dido's problem has an immediate solution.

Theorem A.1.7 (Dido's solution)**.** *Given two points p and q on the plane and a number $A \in \mathbb{R}$, the shortest curve from p to q that, together with the segment from p to q encloses area A is an arc of a circle.*

Proof. Assume by contradiction that there is a shortest curve σ that is not as arc of a circle. Let γ be the arc of circle enclosing area A. (Notice that such an arc is unique). Let $\hat\gamma$ be the circle of which γ is an arc. Let $\tilde\gamma$ be the complementary arc of γ, i.e., γ followed by $\tilde\gamma$ is $\hat\gamma$. Observe that the curve $\hat\sigma$ obtained following $\tilde\gamma$ after σ is such that

$$\mathcal{A}(\hat\sigma) = \mathcal{A}(\hat\gamma) \qquad \text{and} \qquad \mathcal{L}(\hat\sigma) < \mathcal{L}(\hat\gamma).$$

Hence we get a contradiction with Theorem A.1.6. □

Appendix B

Curves in sub-Finsler nilpotent groups

B.0.1 A special sub-Finsler geometry on nilpotent groups

Let G be a simply connected nilpotent Lie group. Let $V_1 \subseteq T_e G$ be a sub-vector space. Let Δ be the left-invariant distribution with $\Delta_e = V_1$. Considering V_1 as a sub-space of the Lie algebra $\mathfrak{g}$ of G, assume that the algebra generated by V_1 is the whole of $\mathfrak{g}$. In other words, assume that Δ is bracket generating. Thus we have the flag of left-invariant bundles

$$\Delta = \Delta^{[1]} \subseteq \Delta^{[2]} = \Delta + [\Delta, \Delta] \subseteq \ldots \subseteq \Delta^{[s]} = TG.$$

There is a one-to-one correspondence between vectors in V_1 and vector fields in the intersection $\mathfrak{g} \cap \Gamma(\Delta)$ of the Lie algebra of G and the sections of Δ. We will confuse the two notions without problems.

Fix a norm $\|\cdot\|$ on V_1. It extends to a left-invariant norm on Δ. The triple $(G, \Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ is a sub-Finsler manifold.

In the sequel, whenever we speak of the FCC metric on the simply connected nilpotent Lie group G, we mean one that is associated to a norm $\|\cdot\|$ on a sub-space V_1 such that $\mathfrak{g} = V_1 \oplus [\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}]$ where $\mathfrak{g} = Lie(G)$.

One can easily check that any such V_1 generates the Lie algebra, cf. Exercise 9.7.4.

Assume that G is a simply connected nilpotent Lie group with a left-invariant distribution Δ such that

$$\mathfrak{g} = \Delta_e \oplus [\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}], \tag{B.0.1}$$

as, for example, a Carnot group.

Question B.0.2. *If G is a simply connected nilpotent Lie group and V_1 and W_1 are sub-spaces such that*

$$\mathfrak{g} = V_1 \oplus [\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}] = W_1 \oplus [\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}],$$

then, does exist a Lie algebra isomorphism $\phi : \mathfrak{g} \to \mathfrak{g}$ such that $\phi(V_1) = W_1$? The aswer should be no, however, see Exercise 9.7.4.

Definition B.0.3 (The projection π_1)**.** Let $\mathrm{proj} : T_eG \to V_1 = \Delta_e$ be the projection onto V_1 with kernel $[\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}]$. Define

$$\begin{aligned} \pi_1 : \quad G &\to \quad V_1 \\ p &\mapsto \quad \pi_1(p) := \mathrm{proj}(\exp^{-1}(p)). \end{aligned} \tag{B.0.4}$$

Lemma B.0.5. *The following properties hold:*

(i) *The map $\pi_1 : (G, \cdot) \to (V_1, +)$ is a group homomorphism.*

(ii) *The differential of π_1 is the identity when restricted to V_1:*

$$d\pi_1|_{V_1} = \mathrm{id}_{V_1}.$$

Proof of (i). By Theorem 6.0.6, since G is a simply connected and nilpotent, for all p and $q \in G$, exist X and $Y \in \mathfrak{g}$ such that $\exp(X) = p$ and $\exp(Y) = q$. Then, by BCH formula and assumption (B.0.1)

$$\pi_1(p \cdot q) = \mathrm{proj}(\exp^{-1}(pq)) = \mathrm{proj}\left(\exp^{-1}(\exp(X)\exp(Y))\right)$$
$$= \mathrm{proj}\left(X + Y + \frac{1}{2}[X, Y] + \dots\right) = \mathrm{proj}(X + Y).$$

On the other hand,

$$\pi_1(p) + \pi_1(q) = \mathrm{proj}(\exp^{-1}(p)) + \mathrm{proj}(\exp^{-1}(q)) = \mathrm{proj}(\exp^{-1}(p) + \exp^{-1}(q)) = \mathrm{proj}(X + Y).$$

Proof of (ii). Since Theorem 4.2.1(iii), $d\pi_1|_{V_1} = d(\mathrm{proj}|_{V_1}) = d(\mathrm{id}\,|_{V_1}) = \mathrm{id}_{V_1}$. □

The "development" of a curve

The map π_1 is useful since it gives a second link between the tangents of an horizontal curves and vector at the identity. Let $\gamma(t)$ be an absolute continuous curve with $\dot{\gamma}(t)$ horizontal, i.e.,

$\dot{\gamma}(t) \in \Delta_{\gamma(t)} \subseteq T_{\gamma(t)}G$ for almost every t. The vector $\dot{\gamma}(t)$ can be identified with a vector in V_1, so as a tangent vector at the identity. We define $\gamma'(t) \in V_1 \subseteq T_eG$ as

$$\gamma'(t) := (L_{\gamma(t)})_*^{-1}\dot{\gamma}(t).$$

We then have the following formula

$$\gamma'(t) = \frac{d}{dt}\left(\pi_1 \circ \gamma\right)(t) \tag{B.0.6}$$

Proof of Formula (B.0.6). Using Lemma B.0.5, and that $\pi_1(e) = 0$, we get

$$\begin{aligned}
\frac{d}{dt}\left(\pi_1 \circ \gamma\right)(t) &= \lim_{h\to 0} \frac{\pi_1(\gamma(t+h)) - \pi_1(\gamma(t))}{h} \\
&= \lim_{h\to 0} \frac{\pi_1(\gamma(t)^{-1}) + \pi_1(\gamma(t+h))}{h} \\
&= \lim_{h\to 0} \frac{\pi_1(\gamma(t)^{-1}\gamma(t+h))}{h} \\
&= \lim_{h\to 0} \frac{\pi_1(L^{-1}_{\gamma(t)}\gamma(t+h))}{h} \\
&= \lim_{h\to 0} \frac{\pi_1(L^{-1}_{\gamma(t)}\gamma(t+h)) - \pi_1(L^{-1}_{\gamma(t)}\gamma(t))}{h} \\
&= \frac{d}{dh}\left(\left(\pi_1 \circ L^{-1}_{\gamma(t)} \circ \gamma\right)(t+h)\right|_{h=0} \\
&= (\pi_1)_* \circ (L^{-1}_{\gamma(t)})_*\dot{\gamma}(t) \\
&= \mathrm{id}(\gamma'(t)) = \gamma'(t)
\end{aligned}$$

□

B.0.2 Horizontal lines as geodesics

Definition B.0.7. Let $X \in V_1$. The curve $\gamma(t) := \exp(tX)$ is the one-parameter sub-group of the horizontal vector X, and it is called the horizontal line in the direction of X.

The curve $\gamma(t)$ is obviously horizontal with respect to Δ, since

$$\dot{\gamma}(t) = X_{\gamma(t)} \in \Delta_{\gamma(t)}.$$

The length of $\gamma(t)$, for $t \in [0,T]$, with respect to the CC metric of $(M, \Delta, \|\cdot\|)$ is $T\|X\|$. Indeed,

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Length}(\gamma) &= \int_0^T \|\dot{\gamma}(t)\|\, dt \\ &= \int_0^T \left\|X_{\gamma(t)}\right\| dt \\ &= \int_0^T \left\|\left(L_{\gamma(t)}\right)_* X_e\right\| dt \\ &= \int_0^T \|X\|\, dt \\ &= T\|X\|, \end{aligned}$$

where we used that both X and the norm are left-invariant. Thus we get the formula

$$\text{Length}\left(\exp(tX)|_{t\in[0,T]}\right) = T\|X\|. \tag{B.0.8}$$

In a Lie group endowed with a left-invariant Riemannian metric, the one-parameter subgroups are NOT always geodesics.

For instance in $SL(2,\mathbb{R})$ the upper triangular unipotent one parameter subgroup

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & t \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

is not a geodesic, because it's distance to Id is roughly $\log(t)$, not t.

In a non-compact simple Lie group only the one-parameter groups coming from the p part of the Cartan decomposition will be geodesics.

Also in the Heisenberg group, if you consider the vertical line, then it is a one-parameter group, but not a geodesic in Riemannian left-invariant metrics.

Proposition B.0.9. *Let G be any Lie group endowed with a left-invariant Riemannian metric. Then the one-parameter subgroups in the direction of X is geodesic if and only if X is orthogonal to $[X, \mathfrak{g}]$.*

Proposition B.0.10. *Consider a nilpotent Lie group G endowed with a left-invariant sub-Finsler distance with respect to some distribution Δ such that*

$$\Delta \oplus [\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}] = \mathfrak{g}.$$

Then one-parameter subgroups of horizontal vectors are geodesics.

Proof. What we need to show is that

$$\|\pi_1(g)\| \leq d_{CC}(e,g), \tag{B.0.11}$$

where d_{CC} is the Finsler-Carnot-Carathéodory distance and π_1 is the projection defined in (B.0.4).

Restricting (B.0.11) to g belonging to $\exp(V_1)$ will finish the proof because of calculation (B.0.8). Indeed, if now $X \in V_1$ then the curve $t \mapsto \exp(tX)$ is a geodesic since

$$d_{CC}(e, \exp(TX)) \leq \text{Length}\left(\exp(tX)|_{t\in[0,T]}\right) = T\,\|X\| = \|TX\| \leq d_{CC}(e, \exp(TX)).$$

Now inequality (B.0.11) is true because, by definition of the metric on G, there is a sequence of piece-wise linear (or piece-wise smooth) horizontal curves joining e and g whose length tends to $d_{CC}(e,g)$. But if $\gamma(t) : [0,1] \to G$ is such a curve, then, by Formula (B.0.6),

$$\begin{aligned}
\|\pi_1(g)\| &= \|\pi_1(\gamma(1)) - \pi_1(\gamma(0))\| \\
&= \left\|\int_0^1 \frac{d}{dt}\left(\pi_1 \circ \gamma\right)(t)dt\right\| \\
&\leq \int_0^1 \left\|\frac{d}{dt}\left(\pi_1 \circ \gamma\right)(t)\right\| dt \\
&= \int_0^1 \|\gamma'(t)\|\, dt \\
&= \int_0^1 \left\|(L_{\gamma(t)})_*^{-1}\dot\gamma(t)\right\| dt \\
&= \int_0^1 \|\dot\gamma(t)\|\, dt \\
&= \text{Length}(\gamma).
\end{aligned}$$

□

B.0.3 Lifts of curves

Lemma B.0.12. *Let $\phi : \mathfrak{g} \to \mathfrak{h}$ a Lie algebra homomorphism.*

(i) *If ϕ has the property that $\phi(V_1^{(G)}) \subseteq V_1^{(H)}$, then*

$$\text{proj}^H \circ \phi = \phi \circ \text{proj}^G,$$

where $\text{proj}^G : \mathfrak{g} \to \mathfrak{g}$ and $\text{proj}^H : \mathfrak{h} \to \mathfrak{h}$ are the projections onto V_1^G and V_1^H respectively with kernels $[\mathfrak{g},\mathfrak{g}]$ and $[\mathfrak{h},\mathfrak{h}]$ respectively.

(ii) *If ϕ has the property that $\phi(V_1^{(G)}) \supseteq V_1^{(H)}$, then ϕ is surjective.*

(iii) *If*

$$\varphi_*|_{V_1^{(G)}} : V_1^{(G)} \to V_1^{(H)}$$

is an isometry of normed spaces, then $\varphi : G \to H$ is a 1-Lipschitz, with respect to the respective FCC metrics.

Proof of (i). If $X \in V_1^{(G)}$, then $(\phi \circ \mathrm{proj})(X) = \phi(X)$. Since by assumption we also have $\phi(X) \in V_1^{(H)}$, then $(\mathrm{proj} \circ \phi)(X) = \phi(X)$. So $\mathrm{proj} \circ \phi$ and $\phi \circ \mathrm{proj}$ are two homomorphisms that coincide on $V_1^{(G)}$. Since $V_1^{(G)}$ generates the algebra $\mathfrak{g}$, then the two homomorphisms are equal.

Proof of (ii). It is obvious since $\phi(\mathfrak{g})$ is a Lie algebra that contains the generating sub-space $V_1^{(H)}$.

Proof of (iii). It is enough to observe that if $\gamma : [0, 1] \to G$ is a geodesic, then

$$\begin{aligned} d(\gamma(0), \gamma(1)) &= \mathrm{Length}(\gamma) \\ &= \int_0^1 \|\dot{\gamma}(t)\| \, dt \\ &= \int_0^1 \|\gamma'(t)\|_{V_1(G)} \, dt \\ &= \int_0^1 \|\varphi_*(\gamma'(t))\|_{V_1(H)} \, dt \\ &= \int_0^1 \left\| \frac{d}{dt} (\varphi(\gamma(t))) \right\|_{V_1(H)} dt \\ &= \mathrm{Length}(\varphi \circ \gamma) \\ &\geq d(\varphi(\gamma(0)), \varphi(\gamma(1))). \end{aligned}$$

□

Lemma B.0.13. *The projection map $\pi_1 : G \to V_1$ has the following properties.*

(i) *For any Lipschitz curve σ in V_1 with $\sigma(0) = 0$, there exists a unique Lipschitz horizontal curve γ with $\pi_1(\gamma) = \sigma$ and $\gamma(0) = e$, and such a curve is the solution of the ODE*

$$\begin{cases} \dot{\gamma}(t) &= (L_{\gamma(t)})_* \dot{\sigma}(t) \\ \gamma(0) &= e. \end{cases} \tag{B.0.14}$$

(ii) *The length of the horizontal curves equals the length of their projections:*

$$\mathrm{Length}(\gamma) = \mathrm{Length}(\pi_1 \circ \gamma),$$

for all horizontal curves γ, with $\gamma(0) = e$, where the first length is with respect to the FCC metric and the second one is in the normed space $(V_1, \|\cdot\|)$.

(iii) *If $\varphi : G \to H$ is a Lie group homomorphism with $\varphi_*(V_1^{(G)}) \subseteq V_1^{(H)}$, then*

$$\pi_1^{(H)} \circ \varphi \circ \gamma = \varphi_* \circ \pi_1^{(G)} \circ \gamma,$$

for all horizontal curves γ, with $\gamma(0) = e$.

Proof of (i). The existence of a solution of the ODE is a consequence of the general Carathéodory's theorem, cf. cite[page 43]Coddington-Levinson (1955). The uniquesess can be shown proving that, if $\gamma_1(t)$ and $\gamma_2(t)$ are two solutions, then

$$\frac{d}{dt}\left(\gamma_1(t)\gamma_2(t)^{-1}\right) \equiv 0.$$

Let $\gamma(t)$ be the solution of the ODE. Then

$$\gamma'(t) = (L_{\gamma(t)})^* \dot{\gamma}(t) = \frac{d}{dt}(\sigma(t)).$$

Since Formula (B.0.6), we have that $\pi_1 \circ \gamma$ and σ are two curves in V_1 with same starting point $\pi_1(\gamma(0)) = 0 = \sigma(0)$ and same derivative

$$\frac{d}{dt}(\pi_1 \circ \gamma) = \frac{d}{dt}\sigma.$$

Therefore $\pi_1 \circ \gamma = \sigma$.

Proof of (ii). By Formula (B.0.6), one has

$$\begin{aligned}
\text{Length}(\pi_\circ\gamma) &= \int_0^1 \left\| \frac{d}{dt}\left(\pi_1 \circ \gamma\right)(t) \right\| dt \\
&= \int_0^1 \|\gamma'(t)\| \, dt \\
&= \int_0^1 \left\|(L_{\gamma(t)})_*^{-1} \dot{\gamma}(t)\right\| dt \\
&= \int_0^1 \|\dot{\gamma}(t)\| \, dt \\
&= \text{Length}(\gamma).
\end{aligned}$$

Proof of (iii). By Theorem 4.2.2 and Lemma B.0.12(i), one has

$$\begin{aligned}
\pi_1^{(H)} \circ \varphi \circ \gamma &= \operatorname{proj} \circ \exp^{-1} \circ \varphi \circ \gamma \\
&= \operatorname{proj} \circ \varphi_* \circ \exp^{-1} \circ \gamma \\
&= \varphi_* \circ \operatorname{proj} \circ \exp^{-1} \circ \gamma \\
&= \varphi_* \circ \pi_1^{(G)} \circ \gamma.
\end{aligned}$$

□

We have the following formula combining (i) and (iii):

$$(d\varphi)_{\gamma(t)}\dot{\gamma}(t) = \left((L_{\varphi(\gamma(t))})_* \circ \varphi_*\right)\left(\frac{d}{dt}(\pi \circ \gamma)(t)\right).$$

B.0.4 Curves in free nilpotent Lie groups

Proposition B.0.15. *Assume that each pair of points in G can be joined by a smooth geodesic. If there is a homomorphism $\varphi : G \to H$ such that*

$$\varphi_*|_{V_1^{(G)}} : V_1^{(G)} \to V_1^{(H)}$$

is an isometry of normed spaces, then each pair of points in H can be joined by a smooth geodesic.

In the proposition, the word smooth can be replaced by C^k, C^ω, or piece-wise linear, since the good geodesics in H will be images under φ of good geodesics in G.

Proof. Now pick a point $p \in H$ and a geodesic $\xi : [0,1] \to H$ connecting the identity.to p. Then Push the curve on $V_1^{(H)}$ and then back to $V_1^{(G)}$, i.e., consider the curve

$$(\varphi_*)^{-1} \circ \pi_1 \circ \xi.$$

By Lemma B.0.13(i) consider a/the curve $\tilde{\xi}$ such that

$$\pi_1^{(G)} \circ \tilde{\xi} = (\varphi_*)^{-1} \circ \pi_1^{(H)} \circ \xi.$$

Note that $\varphi(\tilde{\xi}(1)) = p$. In fact $\varphi \circ \tilde{\xi} = \xi$. Indeed, $\varphi \circ \tilde{\xi}$ and ξ are the unique lift of $\pi_1^{(H)} \circ \xi$ under $\pi_1^{(H)}$, since

$$\pi_1^{(H)} \circ \varphi \circ \tilde{\xi} = \varphi_* \circ \pi_1^{(G)} \circ \tilde{\xi} = \varphi_* \circ (\varphi_*)^{-1} \circ \pi_1^{(H)} \circ \xi = \pi_1^{(H)} \circ \xi,$$

where we initially used Lemma B.0.13(iii). Let $\tilde{\gamma}$ be a smooth geodesic joining e to $\tilde{\xi}(1)$. We claim that $\varphi\circ\tilde{\gamma}$ is the desired geodesic. Indeed, using, in order, that φ is 1-Lipschitz (cf. Lemma B.0.12(iii)), Lemma B.0.13(ii), the assumption $\varphi_*|_{V_1^{(G)}}$ isometry, and Lemma B.0.13(ii) again, we get

$$\begin{aligned} L(\varphi \circ \tilde{\gamma}) &\leq L(\tilde{\gamma}) \\ &\leq L(\tilde{\xi}) \\ &= L(\pi_1^{(G)} \circ \tilde{\xi}) \\ &= L((\varphi_*)^{-1} \circ \pi_1^{(H)} \circ \xi) \\ &= L(\pi_1^{(H)} \circ \xi) \\ &= L(\xi) \\ &= d(e,p). \end{aligned}$$

□

Let G and H two nilpotent Lie groups, with horizontal layers $V_1^{(G)}$ and $V_1^{(H)}$, respectively. Consider a homomorphism

$$\varphi : G \to H,$$

such that

$$\varphi_*|_{V_1^{(G)}} : V_1^{(G)} \to V_1^{(H)}$$

and it is an isomorphism. Notice that such φ is surjective.

Endow just H with a (left-invariant) FCC-metric with $V_1^{(H)}$ as horizontal bundle. In other words, we have fixed a norm $\|\cdot\|_H$ on $V_1^{(H)}$.

Considering that $\varphi_*|_{V_1^{(G)}}$ is an isomorphism, we might consider the following norm $\|\cdot\|_G$ on $V_1^{(G)}$:

$$\|v\|_G := \|\varphi_*(v)\|_H, \qquad \text{for } v \in V_1^{(G)}.$$

Such a norm induces a (left-invariant) FCC-metric with $V_1^{(G)}$ as horizontal bundle.

Then our surjective homomorphism $\varphi : G \to H$ becomes 1-Lipschitz (cf. Lemma B.0.12(iii)).

Now suppose we know that the problem has a positive answer for G, i.e., that any point in G can be joined to the identity by a piece-wise linear geodesic.

Now pick a point in H and a geodesic connecting this point to the identity. This geodesic lifts to a rectifiable path in G with the same length (because of the choice of lifted FCC on G). Of course here I'm using the fact that since the homomorphism is surjective, the dimension of the abelianisation of M is at least that of N.

Now observe that this new path on G is a geodesic, because otherwise there would be another path joining the endpoints of strictly smaller length ; however its projection to H will also be of strictly smaller length, because we said out projection map was 1-Lipschitz, thus contradicting that we had started with a geodesic in H.

Ok, so now we have this lifted path in G and we know it's a geodesic. By assumption we may now find another geodesic, piece-wise linear this time, joining the two points. Then its projection will also be piece-wise linear of course and it will again be a geodesic because once again the projection is 1-Lipschitz.

B.0.5 Open questions

Question B.0.16. *If ρ is a FCC metric w.r.t. a polyhedral unit ball on G, then does there exist a constant K such that for any p and q there exists a geodesic for ρ joining p and q that has less than K breack points?*

Question B.0.17. *Let G be a free nilpotent Lie group. If ρ is a FCC metric w.r.t. a stricly convex unit ball on G, then, for any p and q, does there exist a smooth geodesic for ρ joining p and q?*

Question B.0.18. *Let G be a connected simply connected nilpotent Lie group. If ρ is a G-invariant metric which is coarsely geodesic, i.e.,*

$$d(x,y) \geq L(\gamma_{x,y}) + C.$$

Is ρ at bounded distance from a FCC metric.

Appendix C

Parking motorbikes and cars*

In coordinates $(x, y, \theta_1, \theta_2)$ on $\mathbb{R}^2 \times \mathbb{S}^1 \times \mathbb{S}^1$.

Rotational movement: $\dot{\theta}_1 = 1$ and $\dot{x} = \dot{y} = \dot{\theta}_2 = 0$, therefore

$$X = \partial_{\theta_1} = (0, 0, 1, 0).$$

Forward movement: $(\dot{x}, \dot{y}) = (\cos\theta_1, \sin\theta_1)$, $\dot{\theta}_1 = 0$, $\dot{\theta}_2 = \sin(\theta_1 - \theta_2)$, therefore

$$Y = \cos\theta_1 \partial_x + \sin\theta_1 \partial_y + \sin(\theta_1 - \theta_2)\partial_{\theta_2}$$

We want to show that the system of the car is controllable, i.e., the subbundle spanned by X and Y s bracket generating.

$$[X, Y] = ... = (-\sin\theta_1, \cos\theta_1, 0, \cos(\theta_1 - \theta_2)).$$

$$[[X, Y], Y] = \cdots = (0, 0, 0, -1).$$

The vector fields $X, Y, [X, Y], [[X, Y], Y]$ span the tangent space at every point since ...[1]

[1] to be finished

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Index