A MANIFOLD WITHOUT ANY SMOOTH STRUCTURE: KERVAIRE'S CONSTRUCTION

YUXUAN FAN

ABSTRACT. Smoothness is often treated as a benign extra structure on a topological manifold, but Kervaire's 10-dimensional example shows that it can fail in the strongest possible way: even within the triangulable category, there are manifolds that admit no differentiable structure at all. The mechanism behind this phenomenon is a subtle mod-2 obstruction that lives in the middle-dimensional cohomology of a 4-connected 10-manifold. We explain how this obstruction arises as an Arf invariant associated to a quadratic refinement of the cup-product pairing, and why framed-bordism considerations force it to vanish on all smooth manifolds in the relevant homotopy type. We then construct Kervaire's manifold M_0 by plumbing disk bundles and coning off a homotopy-sphere boundary, and compute that the obstruction is nonzero by relating the resulting Thom space to the 10-skeleton of ΩS^6. The exposition is written with the background of a first course in algebraic topology in mind; the required inputs from Steenrod operations, Thom theory, and the Pontryagin–Thom construction are isolated in appendices.

CONTENTS

1. Introduction

A classical theme in topology is that the same underlying space can carry distinct geometric structures. For manifolds this leads to the three categories

$$\text{topological} \;\supset\; \text{PL (triangulable)} \;\supset\; \text{smooth.}$$

Kervaire exhibited one of the most striking separations between these categories: a closed triangulable manifold which admits *no* differentiable structure at all. The purpose of this paper is to explain, in detail and with minimal prerequisites, the mechanism behind Kervaire's example in dimension 10.

Throughout, cohomology is singular cohomology. Unless explicitly stated otherwise, coefficients are in $\mathbb{Z}$ or $\mathbb{Z}_2$, and cup products are denoted by $\smile$. All manifolds are assumed connected and closed. When working with Poincaré duality, we assume an orientation has been fixed.

1.1. **Main statements.** The construction takes place in dimension 10 under a strong connectivity assumption.

Definition 1.1. A space X is 4-*connected* if it is path-connected and $\pi_i(X) = 0$ for all $1 \le i \le 4$. A closed 10-manifold M is 4-*connected* if its underlying space is 4-connected.

The key input is a $\mathbb{Z}_2$-valued invariant $r(M)$, defined for oriented, 4-connected, closed 10-dimensional triangulable manifolds. Its two fundamental properties are:

Theorem 1.2 (Kervaire: smoothness forces vanishing)**.** *If M is homotopy equivalent to a closed smooth 4-connected 10-manifold, then $r(M) = 0$.*

Theorem 1.3 (Kervaire: the example)**.** *There exists an oriented, closed, 4-connected triangulable* 10-*manifold M_0 such that $r(M_0) = 1$. Consequently M_0 is not homotopy equivalent to any smooth manifold; in particular, M_0 admits no differentiable structure.*

As a byproduct, the construction also yields a homotopy 9-sphere which is homeomorphic but not diffeomorphic to S^9.

1.2. **Organization.** Section 2 develops the algebraic topology of a 4-connected closed 10-manifold: we isolate the middle-dimensional pairing on $H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ and record the existence of symplectic bases. Section 3 introduces a quadratic refinement $\varphi \colon H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}_2) \to \mathbb{Z}_2$ built from the loop space ΩS^6, and defines the invariant $r(M)$ as the associated Arf invariant. Section 4 relates φ to a framed-bordism invariant for smooth manifolds and proves Theorem 1.2. Section 5 constructs the manifold M_0 and computes $r(M_0) = 1$, proving Theorem 1.3.

Three appendices collect background on Steenrod squares, Thom classes, and Wu classes (Appendix A), on framings and the Pontryagin–Thom construction (Appendix B), and on the loop-space input and Thom-space computation used in Section 5.

2. The middle-dimensional pairing on a 4-connected 10-manifold

Let M be an oriented, closed, 4-connected 10-manifold. In this section we record the basic algebraic topology of M that will be used throughout: vanishing of low- and high-degree (co)homology, the structure of $H^5(M; \mathbb{Z})$ and $H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$, and the symplectic pairing on $H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$.

2.1. **Homology and cohomology in low and high degrees.**

Lemma 2.1. *Let M be a closed 4-connected 10-manifold. Then $H_i(M; \mathbb{Z}) = 0$ for $1 \leq i \leq 4$.*

Proof. Since M is 4-connected, it is path-connected and $\pi_i(M) = 0$ for $1 \leq i \leq 4$. By the Hurewicz theorem for simply-connected spaces, the Hurewicz map $\pi_i(M) \to H_i(M; \mathbb{Z})$ is an isomorphism for $i < 5$, so $H_i(M; \mathbb{Z}) = 0$ for $1 \leq i \leq 4$. $\square$

Proposition 2.2. *Let M be an oriented, closed, 4-connected 10-manifold. Then:*
 (i) $H^i(M; \mathbb{Z}) = 0$ for $1 \leq i \leq 4$ and $6 \leq i \leq 9$;
 (ii) $H^5(M; \mathbb{Z})$ is a free abelian group;
(iii) the mod-2 reduction map

$$\rho \colon H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}) \longrightarrow H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$$

 is surjective (equivalently, an isomorphism onto $H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}) \otimes \mathbb{Z}_2$).

Proof. (i) By Lemma 2.1, $H_i(M; \mathbb{Z}) = 0$ for $1 \leq i \leq 4$. The universal coefficient theorem for cohomology gives

$$H^i(M; \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathrm{Hom}(H_i(M; \mathbb{Z}), \mathbb{Z}) \oplus \mathrm{Ext}(H_{i-1}(M; \mathbb{Z}), \mathbb{Z}),$$

so $H^i(M; \mathbb{Z}) = 0$ for $1 \leq i \leq 4$ as well. Poincaré duality over $\mathbb{Z}$ for the oriented closed 10-manifold M gives $H^i(M; \mathbb{Z}) \cong H_{10-i}(M; \mathbb{Z})$, and since $H_j(M; \mathbb{Z}) = 0$ for $1 \leq j \leq 4$, it follows that $H^i(M; \mathbb{Z}) = 0$ for $6 \leq i \leq 9$.

(ii) The universal coefficient theorem gives

$$H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathrm{Hom}(H_5(M; \mathbb{Z}), \mathbb{Z}) \oplus \mathrm{Ext}(H_4(M; \mathbb{Z}), \mathbb{Z}).$$

Since $H_4(M;\mathbb{Z}) = 0$ by Lemma 2.1, the Ext-term vanishes, and $H^5(M;\mathbb{Z})$ is isomorphic to a direct sum of copies of $\mathbb{Z}$, hence free abelian.

(iii) For mod-2 coefficients, the universal coefficient theorem yields a short exact sequence

$$0 \longrightarrow H^5(M;\mathbb{Z}) \otimes \mathbb{Z}_2 \xrightarrow{\ \rho\ } H^5(M;\mathbb{Z}_2) \longrightarrow \mathrm{Tor}(H^6(M;\mathbb{Z}),\mathbb{Z}_2) \longrightarrow 0.$$

But $H^6(M;\mathbb{Z}) = 0$ by (i), so the right-hand Tor-term vanishes and ρ is surjective.
□

2.2. **The middle-dimensional pairing.** Let $[M] \in H_{10}(M;\mathbb{Z})$ denote the fundamental class determined by the chosen orientation. For $z \in H^{10}(M;\mathbb{Z}_2)$ we write $\langle z, [M] \rangle \in \mathbb{Z}_2$ for evaluation (reducing mod 2 when necessary).

Definition 2.3. Define a bilinear form

$$\lambda \colon H^5(M;\mathbb{Z}_2) \times H^5(M;\mathbb{Z}_2) \to \mathbb{Z}_2, \qquad \lambda(x,y) = \langle x \smile y, [M] \rangle.$$

Proposition 2.4. *The pairing λ is nondegenerate. Moreover, $\lambda(x,x) = 0$ for all $x \in H^5(M;\mathbb{Z}_2)$; in particular, λ is an alternating (symplectic) form on the $\mathbb{Z}_2$-vector space $H^5(M;\mathbb{Z}_2)$.*

Proof. Nondegeneracy follows from Poincaré duality with $\mathbb{Z}_2$-coefficients: cap product with $[M]$ gives an isomorphism $H^5(M;\mathbb{Z}_2) \cong H_5(M;\mathbb{Z}_2)$, and the evaluation pairing

$$H^5(M;\mathbb{Z}_2) \times H_5(M;\mathbb{Z}_2) \to \mathbb{Z}_2$$

is perfect.

For the alternating property, let $x \in H^5(M;\mathbb{Z}_2)$. By Proposition 2.2, x lifts to an integral class $X \in H^5(M;\mathbb{Z})$ with $\rho(X) = x$. By graded-commutativity in integral cohomology, $X \smile X = (-1)^{5 \cdot 5} X \smile X = -X \smile X$, hence $2(X \smile X) = 0$ in $H^{10}(M;\mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}$. Since $H^{10}(M;\mathbb{Z})$ is torsion-free, this forces $X \smile X = 0$, and therefore

$$x \smile x = \rho(X \smile X) = 0 \in H^{10}(M;\mathbb{Z}_2).$$

Thus $\lambda(x,x) = \langle x \smile x, [M] \rangle = 0$.
□

2.3. **Symplectic bases.**

Definition 2.5. Let V be a finite-dimensional $\mathbb{Z}_2$-vector space equipped with a nondegenerate alternating bilinear form λ. A *symplectic basis* is a basis $\{x_1, \ldots, x_g, y_1, \ldots, y_g\}$ such that

$$\lambda(x_i, x_j) = 0, \qquad \lambda(y_i, y_j) = 0, \qquad \lambda(x_i, y_j) = \delta_{ij}.$$

Lemma 2.6. *Let (V, λ) be a finite-dimensional $\mathbb{Z}_2$-vector space with a nondegenerate alternating bilinear form. Then $\dim_{\mathbb{Z}_2} V$ is even, say $\dim V = 2g$, and V admits a symplectic basis.*

Proof. We argue by induction on $\dim V$. If $V = 0$ there is nothing to prove. Assume $V \neq 0$ and choose $0 \neq x \in V$. Nondegeneracy implies there exists $y \in V$ with $\lambda(x,y) = 1$. Let $U = \mathrm{span}\{x,y\}$. Since λ is alternating, $\lambda|_U$ has matrix $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$ in the basis (x,y), so $\lambda|_U$ is nondegenerate.

Let $U^\perp = \{v \in V : \lambda(v,u) = 0 \text{ for all } u \in U\}$. Then $V = U \oplus U^\perp$, and $\lambda|_{U^\perp}$ is again nondegenerate and alternating. By induction, $\dim U^\perp$ is even and $U^\perp$ admits a symplectic basis. Adjoining x, y gives a symplectic basis of V.
□

Corollary 2.7. *Let M be an oriented, closed, 4-connected 10-manifold. Then $H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ has even dimension $2g$ and admits a symplectic basis with respect to λ from Definition 2.3.*

Remark 2.8. In what follows we fix $g = \frac{1}{2} \dim_{\mathbb{Z}_2} H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$. Whenever we choose a symplectic basis, it will be denoted $\{x_1, \ldots, x_g, y_1, \ldots, y_g\}$ as in Definition 2.5.

3. A QUADRATIC REFINEMENT AND THE INVARIANT $r(M)$

Let M be an oriented, closed, 4-connected 10-manifold. By Corollary 2.7, the $\mathbb{Z}_2$-vector space $H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ carries a nondegenerate alternating pairing $\lambda(x, y) = \langle x \smile y, [M] \rangle$, and admits symplectic bases.

In this section we introduce a function

$$\varphi \colon H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}_2) \longrightarrow \mathbb{Z}_2$$

which is a *quadratic refinement* of λ, and then extract from it a single number $r(M) \in \mathbb{Z}_2$. The definition of φ uses a specific input from the loop space ΩS^6. We will isolate the precise properties we need as a "black box" and defer its justification to Appendix C.

3.1. The ΩS^6 package.
Let $\Omega = \Omega S^6$ be the based loop space of S^6, equipped with the usual loop multiplication

$$\mu \colon \Omega \times \Omega \longrightarrow \Omega.$$

Write ρ for reduction mod 2.

Proposition 3.1 (Loop-space package)**.** *There exist cohomology classes*

$$e \in H^5(\Omega; \mathbb{Z}), \qquad u \in H^{10}(\Omega; \mathbb{Z}_2)$$

with the following properties. Let $\bar{e} = \rho(e) \in H^5(\Omega; \mathbb{Z}_2)$.

   (i) *$H^5(\Omega; \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}$, generated by e.*
  (ii) *(Realization) If X is a CW complex of dimension ≤ 10, then for every class $X_0 \in H^5(X; \mathbb{Z})$ there exists a map $f \colon X \to \Omega$ with $f^*(e) = X_0$.*
 (iii) *(Additivity of e) In $H^5(\Omega \times \Omega; \mathbb{Z})$ one has*

$$\mu^*(e) = \mathrm{pr}_1^*(e) + \mathrm{pr}_2^*(e),$$

   and hence in $H^5(\Omega \times \Omega; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ one has $\mu^*(\bar{e}) = \mathrm{pr}_1^*(\bar{e}) + \mathrm{pr}_2^*(\bar{e})$.
  (iv) *(Key quadratic identity) In $H^{10}(\Omega \times \Omega; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ one has*

(3.2) $$\mu^*(u) = \mathrm{pr}_1^*(u) + \mathrm{pr}_2^*(u) + \mathrm{pr}_1^*(\bar{e}) \smile \mathrm{pr}_2^*(\bar{e}).$$

   (v) *(Well-defined evaluation) If M is an oriented, closed 10-manifold and $f_0, f_1 \colon M \to \Omega$ satisfy $f_0^*(e) = f_1^*(e) \in H^5(M; \mathbb{Z})$, then*

$$\left\langle f_0^*(u), [M] \right\rangle = \left\langle f_1^*(u), [M] \right\rangle \in \mathbb{Z}_2.$$

Remark 3.3. Proposition 3.1 is the only place in this section where loop-space technology enters. All subsequent arguments are algebraic once the package is granted.

3.2. **Definition of φ and the quadratic identity.**

Definition 3.4. Let $X \in H^5(M; \mathbb{Z})$. Choose a map $f \colon M \to \Omega$ with $f^*(e) = X$ (which exists by Proposition 3.1(ii)). Define

$$\varphi_0(X) = \langle f^*(u), [M] \rangle \in \mathbb{Z}_2.$$

Lemma 3.5. *The value $\varphi_0(X)$ is well-defined, i.e. independent of the choice of f with $f^*(e) = X$.*

Proof. This is exactly Proposition 3.1(v). $\qquad\square$

Lemma 3.6. *For all $X, Y \in H^5(M; \mathbb{Z})$ one has*

$$(3.7) \qquad \varphi_0(X + Y) = \varphi_0(X) + \varphi_0(Y) + \langle \rho(X) \smile \rho(Y), [M] \rangle.$$

Proof. Choose maps $f, g \colon M \to \Omega$ with $f^*(e) = X$ and $g^*(e) = Y$. Consider the map $\mu \circ (f, g) \colon M \to \Omega$. By Proposition 3.1(iii),

$$(\mu \circ (f, g))^*(e) = (f, g)^* \mu^*(e) = (f, g)^* (\mathrm{pr}_1^* e + \mathrm{pr}_2^* e) = X + Y.$$

By Lemma 3.5,

$$\varphi_0(X + Y) = \langle (\mu \circ (f, g))^*(u), [M] \rangle = \langle (f, g)^* \mu^*(u), [M] \rangle.$$

Using (3.2) and bilinearity of evaluation, we obtain

$$\varphi_0(X + Y) = \langle f^*(u), [M] \rangle + \langle g^*(u), [M] \rangle + \langle f^*(\bar{e}) \smile g^*(\bar{e}), [M] \rangle.$$

Since $f^*(\bar{e}) = \rho(f^* e) = \rho(X)$ and similarly $g^*(\bar{e}) = \rho(Y)$, this is exactly (3.7). $\quad\square$

Lemma 3.8. *For any $X \in H^5(M; \mathbb{Z})$ and any $Y \in H^5(M; \mathbb{Z})$ one has $\varphi_0(X + 2Y) = \varphi_0(X)$.*

Proof. Apply Lemma 3.6 twice:

$$\varphi_0(X + 2Y) = \varphi_0((X + Y) + Y) = \varphi_0(X + Y) + \varphi_0(Y) + \langle \rho(X + Y) \smile \rho(Y), [M] \rangle.$$

Now $\rho(X + Y) = \rho(X) + \rho(Y)$, hence the last term equals

$$\langle \rho(X) \smile \rho(Y), [M] \rangle + \langle \rho(Y) \smile \rho(Y), [M] \rangle.$$

But $\rho(Y) \smile \rho(Y) = 0$ by Proposition 2.4. Also, $\varphi_0(X + Y) = \varphi_0(X) + \varphi_0(Y) + \langle \rho(X) \smile \rho(Y), [M] \rangle$ by Lemma 3.6. Substituting and canceling in $\mathbb{Z}_2$ gives $\varphi_0(X + 2Y) = \varphi_0(X)$. $\qquad\square$

Definition 3.9. Let $x \in H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$. Choose an integral lift $X \in H^5(M; \mathbb{Z})$ with $\rho(X) = x$ (which exists by Proposition 2.2). Define

$$\varphi(x) = \varphi_0(X) \in \mathbb{Z}_2.$$

Lemma 3.10. *The value $\varphi(x)$ is well-defined, i.e. independent of the choice of integral lift X with $\rho(X) = x$.*

Proof. If X' is another lift of x, then $X' = X + 2Y$ for some $Y \in H^5(M; \mathbb{Z})$ because $H^5(M; \mathbb{Z})$ is free abelian (Proposition 2.2). Now apply Lemma 3.8: $\varphi_0(X') = \varphi_0(X + 2Y) = \varphi_0(X)$. $\qquad\square$

Proposition 3.11. *For all $x, y \in H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ one has the quadratic identity*

$$(3.12) \qquad\qquad \varphi(x + y) = \varphi(x) + \varphi(y) + \lambda(x, y),$$

where $\lambda(x, y) = \langle x \smile y, [M] \rangle$ is the pairing from Definition 2.3.

Proof. Choose integral lifts $X, Y \in H^5(M; \mathbb{Z})$ of x, y. Then $X + Y$ is an integral lift of $x + y$, so by definition, $\varphi(x + y) = \varphi_0(X + Y)$, $\varphi(x) = \varphi_0(X)$, $\varphi(y) = \varphi_0(Y)$. Lemma 3.6 gives

$$\varphi_0(X + Y) = \varphi_0(X) + \varphi_0(Y) + \langle \rho(X) \smile \rho(Y), [M] \rangle,$$

and $\rho(X) = x$, $\rho(Y) = y$, so this is exactly (3.12). $\qquad\square$

Remark 3.13. Equation (3.12) says precisely that φ is a quadratic refinement of the symplectic form λ on $H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$.

3.3. **The Arf invariant** $r(M)$. Fix $g = \frac{1}{2} \dim_{\mathbb{Z}_2} H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ as in Remark 2.8. Let $\{x_1, \ldots, x_g, y_1, \ldots, y_g\}$ be any symplectic basis for λ (Corollary 2.7).

Definition 3.14. Define

$$r(M) = \sum_{i=1}^{g} \varphi(x_i)\, \varphi(y_i) \in \mathbb{Z}_2.$$

The content is that this number does not depend on the chosen symplectic basis. This is a standard fact in the theory of quadratic forms over $\mathbb{Z}_2$; we include a quick verification using elementary symplectic changes of basis.

Lemma 3.15. *Let (V, λ) be a finite-dimensional $\mathbb{Z}_2$-vector space with a nondegenerate alternating bilinear form, and let $q \colon V \to \mathbb{Z}_2$ satisfy $q(v + w) = q(v) + q(w) + \lambda(v, w)$ for all $v, w \in V$. For a symplectic basis $\{x_1, \ldots, x_g, y_1, \ldots, y_g\}$ define*

$$\mathrm{Arf}(q; \{x_i, y_i\}) = \sum_{i=1}^{g} q(x_i)\, q(y_i) \in \mathbb{Z}_2.$$

Then $\mathrm{Arf}(q; \{x_i, y_i\})$ is independent of the symplectic basis.

Proof. It is standard that the symplectic group $\mathrm{Sp}(V, \lambda)$ is generated by elementary transformations which, on a symplectic basis, are compositions of:

(1) permuting the g pairs (x_i, y_i);
(2) swapping x_i and y_i within a fixed pair;
(3) replacing y_i by $y_i + x_i$ (or replacing x_i by $x_i + y_i$);
(4) for $i \neq j$, replacing x_i by $x_i + x_j$ and simultaneously replacing y_j by $y_j + y_i$.

Thus it suffices to check that $\sum_i q(x_i)q(y_i)$ is invariant under each move.

Moves (1) and (2) clearly do not change the sum.

For move (3), only the i-th summand changes:

$$q(x_i)q(y_i + x_i) = q(x_i)\big(q(y_i) + q(x_i) + \lambda(y_i, x_i)\big) = q(x_i)q(y_i) + q(x_i)\big(q(x_i) + 1\big).$$

Since $q(x_i) \in \mathbb{Z}_2$, we have $q(x_i)\big(q(x_i) + 1\big) = 0$, so the sum is unchanged.

For move (4), only the i-th and j-th summands may change. Using $\lambda(x_i, x_j) = \lambda(y_i, y_j) = 0$ for a symplectic basis and the quadratic identity for q, we get

$$q(x_i + x_j) = q(x_i) + q(x_j), \qquad q(y_j + y_i) = q(y_j) + q(y_i).$$

Hence the new contribution of indices i, j is

$$\begin{aligned}
q(x_i + x_j)q(y_i) + q(x_j)q(y_j + y_i) &= (q(x_i) + q(x_j))q(y_i) + q(x_j)(q(y_j) + q(y_i)) \\
&= q(x_i)q(y_i) + q(x_j)q(y_j),
\end{aligned}$$

so again the total sum is unchanged. This proves invariance under the generating moves, hence basis-independence. $\qquad\square$

Corollary 3.16. *The invariant $r(M)$ from Definition 3.14 is well-defined, i.e. independent of the choice of symplectic basis of $H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$.*

Proof. Apply Lemma 3.15 to $V = H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$, λ as in Definition 2.3, and $q = \varphi$ as in Proposition 3.11. $\square$

3.4. **Homotopy invariance.**

Proposition 3.17. *Let $h\colon N \to M$ be a homotopy equivalence between oriented, closed, 4-connected 10-manifolds. Then*

$$r(N) = r(M).$$

Proof. The pairing λ is natural under pullback:

$$\lambda_N(h^*x, h^*y) = \left\langle h^*(x \smile y), [N] \right\rangle = \left\langle x \smile y, h_*[N] \right\rangle = \lambda_M(x, y),$$

where $h_*[N] = [M]$ holds in $H_{10}(-; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ for any homotopy equivalence (sign issues are irrelevant mod 2). Thus $h^*\colon H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}_2) \to H^5(N; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ is a symplectic isomorphism.

Next, the definition of φ is natural with respect to pullback, because it is defined by pulling back the fixed universal classes e, u on Ω and evaluating on the fundamental class. Concretely, for $x \in H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$, choose an integral lift $X \in H^5(M; \mathbb{Z})$ and a map $f\colon M \to \Omega$ with $f^*(e) = X$. Then $f \circ h\colon N \to \Omega$ satisfies $(f \circ h)^*(e) = h^*X$, hence

$$\varphi_N(h^*x) = \varphi_{0,N}(h^*X) = \left\langle (f \circ h)^*(u), [N] \right\rangle = \left\langle h^*f^*(u), [N] \right\rangle = \left\langle f^*(u), h_*[N] \right\rangle = \left\langle f^*(u), [M] \right\rangle = \varphi_M(x).$$

Therefore h^* identifies the quadratic refinements φ_M and φ_N.

Now let $\{x_i, y_i\}$ be a symplectic basis of $H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$. Then $\{h^*x_i, h^*y_i\}$ is a symplectic basis of $H^5(N; \mathbb{Z}_2)$, and we compute

$$r(N) = \sum_i \varphi_N(h^*x_i)\, \varphi_N(h^*y_i) = \sum_i \varphi_M(x_i)\, \varphi_M(y_i) = r(M).$$

$\square$

Remark 3.18. To summarize: attached to M we have the triple $\left(H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}_2), \lambda, \varphi \right)$, where λ is symplectic and φ is a quadratic refinement. The invariant $r(M)$ is the associated Arf invariant of this triple.

4. WHY SMOOTHNESS FORCES $r(M) = 0$

In this section we prove Theorem 1.2. The argument has two conceptual steps:

(1) For a smooth 4-connected 10-manifold N, one can associate a *stable normal framing* (equivalently, N is a π-manifold). This produces a framed bordism class $[N] \in \Omega_{10}^{\mathrm{fr}}$.

(2) The function φ from Section 3 coincides, in the smooth framed setting, with the classical quadratic refinement arising from the framing. The resulting Arf invariant in dimension 10 is known to be identically zero on framed bordism classes.

We keep the discussion self-contained by isolating the required input as explicit black-box statements and deferring their proofs to the appendices. Appendix A collects the Steenrod/Thom/Wu identities used to define the framed quadratic refinement, and Appendix B collects the Pontryagin–Thom and stable homotopy input.

4.1. **Stable framings and framed bordism.** We begin by recalling the notion of a stable normal framing. (Warning: the notation Ω_n^{fr} for framed bordism should not be confused with the loop space $\Omega = \Omega S^6$ used earlier.)

Definition 4.1. Let N^{10} be a smooth closed manifold. Choose a smooth embedding $i \colon N \hookrightarrow \mathbb{R}^{10+k}$ for some k, with normal bundle $\nu_i \to N$. A *stable normal framing* of N is a trivialization

$$\nu_i \oplus \varepsilon^\ell \;\cong\; \varepsilon^{k+\ell}$$

for some $\ell \geq 0$, where ε^m denotes the trivial rank-m bundle. Two such framings are equivalent if they become homotopic after adding trivial summands. A *stably framed manifold* is a pair $(N, \mathfrak{f})$ of a smooth closed manifold N together with an equivalence class of stable normal framings $\mathfrak{f}$.

Definition 4.2. Two stably framed 10-manifolds $(N_0, \mathfrak{f}_0)$ and $(N_1, \mathfrak{f}_1)$ are *framed bordant* if there exists a compact smooth 11-manifold W with $\partial W \cong N_0 \sqcup (-N_1)$ together with a stable normal framing of W restricting to $\mathfrak{f}_0$ and $\mathfrak{f}_1$ on the boundary. The set of framed bordism classes in dimension 10, with addition given by disjoint union, is an abelian group denoted $\Omega_{10}^{\mathrm{fr}}$.

The basic structural result is the Pontryagin–Thom correspondence.

Theorem 4.3 (Pontryagin–Thom)**.** *There is a natural isomorphism*

$$\Omega_n^{\mathrm{fr}} \;\cong\; \pi_n^S$$

from framed bordism in dimension n to the n-th stable homotopy group of spheres.

Remark 4.4. We will not reprove Theorem 4.3 here. A streamlined account is given in Appendix B, sufficient for the present paper.

4.2. **A framing-induced quadratic refinement.** Let $(N^{10}, \mathfrak{f})$ be a stably framed smooth 10-manifold. The framing $\mathfrak{f}$ allows one to define a quadratic refinement

$$q_{\mathfrak{f}} \colon H^5(N; \mathbb{Z}_2) \longrightarrow \mathbb{Z}_2$$

of the middle-dimensional pairing $\lambda(x, y) = \langle x \smile y, [N] \rangle$. There are several equivalent constructions; the one we will use in Appendix A is formulated in terms of the Thom isomorphism and Steenrod squares on Thom spaces.

For the main argument, we only need the following package.

Proposition 4.5 (Framed quadratic refinement)**.** *Let $(N^{10}, \mathfrak{f})$ be a stably framed smooth 10-manifold. There exists a function $q_{\mathfrak{f}} \colon H^5(N; \mathbb{Z}_2) \to \mathbb{Z}_2$ such that:*

(i) $q_{\mathfrak{f}}$ is a quadratic refinement of λ, i.e.

$$q_{\mathfrak{f}}(x + y) = q_{\mathfrak{f}}(x) + q_{\mathfrak{f}}(y) + \langle x \smile y, [N] \rangle \quad \text{for all } x, y \in H^5(N; \mathbb{Z}_2).$$

(ii) If $\{x_1, \ldots, x_g, y_1, \ldots, y_g\}$ is any symplectic basis for λ, then

$$\kappa(N, \mathfrak{f}) = \sum_{i=1}^{g} q_{\mathfrak{f}}(x_i)\, q_{\mathfrak{f}}(y_i) \in \mathbb{Z}_2$$

is independent of the choice of symplectic basis.

(iii) The number $\kappa(N, \mathfrak{f})$ depends only on the framed bordism class $[N, \mathfrak{f}] \in \Omega_{10}^{\mathrm{fr}}$, and defines a group homomorphism $\kappa \colon \Omega_{10}^{\mathrm{fr}} \to \mathbb{Z}_2$.

Remark 4.6. Part (i) is proved from the Cartan formula together with the Thom identity $Sq(U) = w(\nu) \smile U$ and the fact that a framing forces $w(\nu) = 1$. The basis-independence in (ii) is the abstract Lemma 3.15. The bordism invariance in (iii) is shown by interpreting $q_{\mathfrak{f}}$ as a cohomological invariant of the Pontryagin–Thom collapse map. All of these details are given in Appendix A and Appendix B.

The point of Proposition 4.5 is that it produces, from a stable framing, an Arf invariant $\kappa(N, \mathfrak{f})$ in dimension 10.

4.3. **Comparison with** φ **and** $r(M)$**.** Now assume in addition that N is oriented and 4-connected. Then $r(N)$ has already been defined in Section 3 using the loop-space package, without reference to any framing.

The crucial bridge is that, for smooth 4-connected 10-manifolds, the loop-space refinement φ agrees with the framing-induced refinement $q_{\mathfrak{f}}$.

Proposition 4.7 (Identification of refinements)**.** *Let* N^{10} *be an oriented, smooth, 4-connected closed manifold, and let* $\mathfrak{f}$ *be a stable normal framing of* N*. Then*

$$\varphi = q_{\mathfrak{f}} \colon H^5(N; \mathbb{Z}_2) \to \mathbb{Z}_2.$$

In particular,

$$r(N) = \kappa(N, \mathfrak{f}) \in \mathbb{Z}_2.$$

Remark 4.8. The proof of Proposition 4.7 is deferred to Appendix C, where the class $u \in H^{10}(\Omega S^6; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ is related to the secondary operation defining $q_{\mathfrak{f}}$ via Pontryagin–Thom. For the main logical flow, we treat this comparison as part of the black-box input.

4.4. **Vanishing in dimension** 10**.** The final input is a purely stable homotopy fact: the Arf/Kervaire-type homomorphism $\kappa \colon \Omega_{10}^{\mathrm{fr}} \to \mathbb{Z}_2$ is trivial.

Theorem 4.9 (Vanishing of κ in dimension 10)**.** *The homomorphism* $\kappa \colon \Omega_{10}^{\mathrm{fr}} \to \mathbb{Z}_2$ *is zero. Equivalently,* $\kappa(N, \mathfrak{f}) = 0$ *for every stably framed smooth* 10*-manifold.*

Remark 4.10. Theorem 4.9 is a consequence of computations in stable homotopy (the group π_{10}^S and the absence of a Kervaire-invariant-one element in dimension 10). We record an appropriate reference path in Appendix B.

4.5. **Smooth** 4**-connected** 10**-manifolds admit stable normal framings.** To apply the preceding discussion to smooth 4-connected 10-manifolds, we need that such manifolds are stably framed.

Proposition 4.11 (Smooth 4-connected 10-manifolds are π-manifolds)**.** *Let* N^{10} *be an oriented, smooth,* 4*-connected closed manifold. Then* N *admits a stable normal framing* $\mathfrak{f}$*.*

Remark 4.12. This is proved by obstruction theory for stable oriented bundles on a CW model for N, together with the relevant low-dimensional homotopy groups of SO (via Bott periodicity). A complete proof, in the form needed here, is given in Appendix B.

4.6. **Proof of Theorem 1.2.**

Proof of Theorem 1.2. Let M be an oriented, closed, 4-connected triangulable 10-manifold which is homotopy equivalent to a closed smooth 4-connected 10-manifold N. By Proposition 3.17, the invariant r is a homotopy invariant, hence

$$r(M) = r(N).$$

By Proposition 4.11, N admits a stable normal framing $\mathfrak{f}$. Proposition 4.7 identifies $r(N)$ with $\kappa(N, \mathfrak{f})$, and Theorem 4.9 gives $\kappa(N, \mathfrak{f}) = 0$. Therefore $r(N) = 0$, and consequently $r(M) = 0$. $\qquad\square$

Remark 4.13. At this stage, the remaining task for the main theorem of the paper is to construct an oriented, 4-connected triangulable 10-manifold M_0 with $r(M_0) = 1$. This will be carried out in Section 5 by a geometric construction starting from Milnor's homotopy 9-spheres and an explicit computation of φ using the Steenrod/Thom/Wu identities from Appendix A.

5. THE EXAMPLE M_0 AND THE COMPUTATION $r(M_0) = 1$

In this section we construct an oriented, closed, 4-connected triangulable 10-manifold M_0 and compute $r(M_0)$. The construction is the one given by Kervaire: it starts from a plumbing W^{10} built from a tubular neighborhood of the diagonal in $S^5 \times S^5$, and then forms M_0 by coning off ∂W. The computation of φ on M_0 is reduced to a concrete Thom-collapse map and the 10-skeleton of $Q = \Omega S^6$; the needed loop-space input is collected in Appendix C.

5.1. **A tubular neighborhood of the diagonal.** Let $\Delta \subset S^5 \times S^5$ be the diagonal $\Delta = \{(x, x)\}$, and let $p \colon U \to S^5$ be a tubular neighborhood of Δ, viewed as a D^5-bundle over S^5 via the identification $\Delta \cong S^5$.

Lemma 5.1. *The normal bundle $\nu_{\Delta/(S^5 \times S^5)}$ is (canonically) isomorphic to the tangent bundle τ_{S^5}. Consequently, the tubular neighborhood U is the unit disk bundle $D(\tau_{S^5})$.*

Proof. At a point $(x, x) \in \Delta$, the tangent space splits as $T_{(x,x)}(S^5 \times S^5) \cong T_x S^5 \oplus T_x S^5$. The differential of the diagonal embedding identifies $T_x S^5$ with the *diagonal* subspace $\{(v, v)\}$. Using the product Riemannian metric, the orthogonal complement is the *anti-diagonal* $\{(v, -v)\}$, which is naturally isomorphic to $T_x S^5$ via $v \mapsto (v, -v)$. These identifications vary smoothly with x, giving $\nu_{\Delta/(S^5 \times S^5)} \cong \tau_{S^5}$. $\quad\square$

Let $A \subset U$ denote the zero-section (equivalently, the diagonal), so $A \cong S^5$ and its normal bundle in U is $p \colon U \to S^5$.

5.2. **The plumbing manifold W^{10}.** Take two copies (U', A') and (U'', A'') of (U, A). Fix an embedded 5-disk $V \subset S^5$ and choose trivializations over V so that

$$p'^{-1}(V) \cong D^5 \times D^5, \qquad p''^{-1}(V) \cong D^5 \times D^5,$$

where the first factor corresponds to the base V and the second to the fiber.

Define an identification of these two 10-disks by swapping factors,

$$\Phi \colon p'^{-1}(V) \longrightarrow p''^{-1}(V), \qquad \Phi(u, v) = (v, u).$$

Let W be the smooth 10-manifold obtained from the disjoint union $U' \sqcup U''$ by identifying $p'^{-1}(V)$ with $p''^{-1}(V)$ via Φ, and then smoothing corners ("straightening the angles"). Write $\Sigma^9 = \partial W$.

Proposition 5.2. *The images of the zero-sections $A' \subset U'$ and $A'' \subset U''$ define smoothly embedded 5-spheres $A, B \subset W$ which intersect transversely in exactly one point. Moreover, the normal bundles $\nu_{A/W}$ and $\nu_{B/W}$ are both isomorphic to $p\colon U \to S^5$.*

Proof. Away from the gluing region $p'^{-1}(V) \cong D^5 \times D^5$, the images of A' and A'' remain disjoint. Inside the gluing region, the zero-section in U' is $D^5 \times \{0\}$ and in U'' is $D^5 \times \{0\}$; under the swap $(u, 0) \mapsto (0, u)$, these meet transversely at $(0, 0)$ and nowhere else. The normal bundle statement follows because the plumbing identification is fiberwise linear (up to the chosen trivializations), hence it identifies the corresponding disk-bundle neighborhoods of the zero-sections. $\qquad\square$

Remark 5.3. Kervaire's construction chooses the plumbing data so that $\Sigma^9 = \partial W$ is a smooth homotopy 9-sphere (in fact one of Milnor's examples). We will use only that Σ^9 is a homotopy sphere and hence admits a combinatorial structure.

5.3. **Coning off the boundary.** Let $C\Sigma^9$ be the cone on Σ^9, and define
$$M_0 \;=\; W \cup_{\Sigma^9} C\Sigma^9.$$
Equivalently, M_0 is the quotient of W obtained by collapsing Σ^9 to a point $*$.

Proposition 5.4. *The space M_0 is a closed, oriented, triangulable 10-manifold.*

Proof. Since Σ^9 is a smooth homotopy sphere, it is homeomorphic to S^9, hence admits a combinatorial triangulation. Coning off a combinatorial sphere produces a combinatorial ball, so attaching $C\Sigma^9$ along Σ^9 produces a closed triangulable manifold. The orientation on W extends over the cone. $\qquad\square$

Proposition 5.5. *The manifold M_0 is 4-connected.*

Proof. Collapsing ∂W to a point yields a CW structure on M_0 with one 0-cell (the cone point), two 5-cells (coming from the two core spheres A, B), and one 10-cell. In particular, M_0 has no cells in dimensions $1, 2, 3, 4$. Hence $\pi_i(M_0) = 0$ for $1 \le i \le 4$. $\qquad\square$

5.4. **Middle homology and a symplectic basis.** The embedded spheres $A, B \subset W \subset M_0$ determine classes $[A], [B] \in H_5(M_0; \mathbb{Z})$.

Proposition 5.6. *One has $H_5(M_0; \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}^2$, generated by $[A]$ and $[B]$. Moreover, the intersection pairing*
$$H_5(M_0; \mathbb{Z}) \times H_5(M_0; \mathbb{Z}) \longrightarrow \mathbb{Z}$$
in the ordered basis $([A], [B])$ is given by the hyperbolic matrix
$$\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix}.$$

Proof. From the CW description in the proof of Proposition 5.5, the cellular chain complex has $C_5 \cong \mathbb{Z}^2$ and no cells in degrees $1 \le i \le 4$, so $H_5(M_0; \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}^2$. The two 5-cells are represented geometrically by the core spheres A and B, hence $[A]$ and $[B]$ form a basis.

The plumbing produces exactly one transverse intersection point between A and B, so $[A] \cdot [B] = \pm 1$; fixing orientations we may assume $[A] \cdot [B] = 1$. Since the middle dimension is odd (5), the intersection pairing is skew-symmetric, hence alternating, so $[A] \cdot [A] = [B] \cdot [B] = 0$. $\qquad\square$

Let $x, y \in H^5(M_0; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ be the mod-2 Poincaré duals of $[A]$ and $[B]$, characterized by

$$\langle x, [A] \rangle = 1, \quad \langle x, [B] \rangle = 0, \qquad \langle y, [A] \rangle = 0, \quad \langle y, [B] \rangle = 1.$$

Lemma 5.7. *With respect to $\lambda(\alpha, \beta) = \langle \alpha \smile \beta, [M_0] \rangle$, the classes x, y satisfy*

$$\lambda(x, x) = 0, \qquad \lambda(y, y) = 0, \qquad \lambda(x, y) = 1.$$

In particular, $\{x, y\}$ is a symplectic basis of $H^5(M_0; \mathbb{Z}_2)$, so $g = 1$ and $r(M_0) = \varphi(x)\varphi(y)$.

Proof. By Poincaré duality, $\lambda(x, y)$ is the mod-2 reduction of $[A] \cdot [B]$, hence equals 1. The self-pairings vanish because the mod-2 reduction of $[A] \cdot [A]$ and $[B] \cdot [B]$ is 0 by Proposition 5.6. $\qquad \square$

5.5. **Computing $\varphi(x)$ and $\varphi(y)$ via Thom spaces.** Let $Q = \Omega S^6$. Appendix C recalls that $H^5(Q; \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}$ and $H^{10}(Q; \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}$, with preferred generators $e_1 \in H^5(Q; \mathbb{Z})$ and $e_2 \in H^{10}(Q; \mathbb{Z})$. Let $u_2 \in H^{10}(Q; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ be the mod-2 reduction of e_2.

We now compute $\varphi(x)$ and $\varphi(y)$ by producing maps $f_A, f_B \colon M_0 \to Q$ realizing the relevant liftings in H^5 and evaluating u_2 on $[M_0]$. The key point is that the normal bundles of A and B are the disk bundle $p \colon U \to S^5$, so we can use a Thom collapse map $M_0 \to \mathrm{Th}(p)$.

Proposition 5.8. *One has $\varphi(x) = 1$ and $\varphi(y) = 1$.*

Proof. We treat x; the case of y is identical.

Since $H^5(M_0; \mathbb{Z})$ is free abelian, choose an integral class $X \in H^5(M_0; \mathbb{Z})$ whose mod-2 reduction is x and which is Poincaré dual to $[A]$. Let $K = \mathrm{Th}(p) = U/\partial U$ be the Thom space of the disk bundle $p \colon U \to S^5$. Let $c_A \colon M_0 \to K$ be the Thom collapse map associated to the embedding $A \subset W \subset M_0$ and the tubular neighborhood U. Appendix C shows:

(i) $H^5(K; \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}$ with generator (Thom class) e_1, and $c_A^*(e_1) = X$.
(ii) Writing $u_2 \in H^{10}(K; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ for the mod-2 reduction of the generator of $H^{10}(K; \mathbb{Z})$, one has $\langle c_A^*(u_2), [M_0] \rangle = 1$.
(iii) The 10-skeleton $Q^{(10)}$ of $Q = \Omega S^6$ is canonically homotopy equivalent to K, and the inclusion $Q^{(10)} \hookrightarrow Q$ identifies the corresponding generators e_1 and u_2.

Composing c_A with $K \simeq Q^{(10)} \hookrightarrow Q$ yields a map $f_A \colon M_0 \to Q$ with $f_A^*(e_1) = X$ and $f_A^*(u_2)[M_0] = 1$. By the definition of φ (Section 3), this implies $\varphi(x) = 1$. $\quad \square$

5.6. **Conclusion.**

Theorem 5.9. *The manifold M_0 satisfies $r(M_0) = 1$.*

Proof. By Lemma 5.7, $\{x, y\}$ is a symplectic basis of $H^5(M_0; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ and $r(M_0) = \varphi(x)\varphi(y)$. By Proposition 5.8, $\varphi(x) = \varphi(y) = 1$, hence $r(M_0) = 1$. $\qquad \square$

Corollary 5.10. *The triangulable 10-manifold M_0 is not homotopy equivalent to any smooth manifold. In particular, M_0 admits no differentiable structure.*

Proof. This is immediate from Theorem 5.9 and Theorem 1.2. $\qquad \square$

APPENDIX A. STEENROD SQUARES, THOM CLASSES, AND WU'S FORMULA

This appendix collects the mod-2 cohomology tools used implicitly in the main text, especially in Section 4. We keep the discussion to the minimal package we need: Steenrod squares, the Thom isomorphism, the Thom identity for Stiefel–Whitney classes, and Wu's formula on manifolds.

A.1. **Steenrod squares.**

Theorem A.1. *For each $i \geq 0$ there is a natural cohomology operation*

$$Sq^i \colon H^n(X; \mathbb{Z}_2) \longrightarrow H^{n+i}(X; \mathbb{Z}_2)$$

satisfying the following properties for all spaces X and all classes $x \in H^n(X; \mathbb{Z}_2)$, $y \in H^m(X; \mathbb{Z}_2)$:

 (i) $Sq^0 = \mathrm{id}$.
 (ii) (Instability) $Sq^i(x) = 0$ for $i > n$.
 (iii) (Top square) $Sq^n(x) = x \smile x$.
 (iv) (Cartan formula) $Sq^k(x \smile y) = \sum_{i+j=k} Sq^i(x) \smile Sq^j(y)$.
 (v) (Naturality) For every continuous $f \colon X \to Y$, $f^* \circ Sq^i = Sq^i \circ f^*$.

Remark A.2. We will use only these formal properties. Standard references include Milnor–Stasheff and most algebraic topology texts treating cohomology operations.

Lemma A.3. *Let M be an oriented, closed, 4-connected 10-manifold. Then for every $x \in H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ one has $Sq^5(x) = 0$.*

Proof. By Theorem A.1(iii), $Sq^5(x) = x \smile x$. But Proposition 2.4 shows $x \smile x = 0$ for all $x \in H^5(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$. Hence $Sq^5(x) = 0$. $\qquad\square$

A.2. **Thom spaces and the Thom isomorphism.** Let $\xi \to B$ be a real vector bundle of rank k, with unit disk and sphere bundles $D(\xi)$ and $S(\xi)$. Its Thom space is

$$\mathrm{Th}(\xi) = D(\xi)/S(\xi).$$

Theorem A.4 (Thom isomorphism). *If $\xi \to B$ is a rank-k vector bundle which is $\mathbb{Z}_2$-oriented, then there exists a class $U_\xi \in H^k(\mathrm{Th}(\xi); \mathbb{Z}_2)$ (a Thom class) such that cup product with U_ξ induces an isomorphism*

$$\Phi_\xi \colon H^*(B; \mathbb{Z}_2) \xrightarrow{\cong} H^{*+k}(\mathrm{Th}(\xi); \mathbb{Z}_2), \qquad a \longmapsto \pi^*(a) \smile U_\xi,$$

where $\pi \colon D(\xi) \to B$ is the bundle projection.

Proof sketch. This is the usual Thom isomorphism in cohomology with $\mathbb{Z}_2$-coefficients, proved by excision and the fact that locally (D^k, S^{k-1}) has cohomology concentrated in degree k, with generator restricting compatibly on overlaps. $\qquad\square$

A.3. **Stiefel–Whitney classes via the Thom identity.**

Theorem A.5 (Thom identity). *Let $\xi \to B$ be a rank-k bundle with Thom class $U_\xi \in H^k(\mathrm{Th}(\xi); \mathbb{Z}_2)$. There exist unique classes $w_i(\xi) \in H^i(B; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ for $0 \leq i \leq k$, called the Stiefel–Whitney classes of ξ, such that*

$$Sq^i(U_\xi) = \pi^*\big(w_i(\xi)\big) \smile U_\xi \qquad in \ H^{k+i}(\mathrm{Th}(\xi); \mathbb{Z}_2).$$

Equivalently, for the total classes $Sq = \sum_i Sq^i$ and $w(\xi) = \sum_i w_i(\xi)$,

$$Sq(U_\xi) = \pi^*\big(w(\xi)\big) \smile U_\xi.$$

Proof. Since Φ_ξ is an isomorphism, every class in $H^{k+i}(\mathrm{Th}(\xi); \mathbb{Z}_2)$ can be uniquely written as $\pi^*(a) \smile U_\xi$ for some $a \in H^i(B; \mathbb{Z}_2)$. Define $w_i(\xi)$ by requiring this equality for $Sq^i(U_\xi)$. Uniqueness is immediate from injectivity of Φ_ξ. $\qquad\square$

Lemma A.6. *If ξ is stably trivial, i.e. $\xi \oplus \varepsilon^\ell \cong \varepsilon^{k+\ell}$, then $w(\xi) = 1$. In particular, if ξ admits a stable framing, then $w_i(\xi) = 0$ for all $i > 0$.*

Proof. Stiefel–Whitney classes are stable and multiplicative under Whitney sum: $w(\xi \oplus \eta) = w(\xi) \smile w(\eta)$. Since $w(\varepsilon^m) = 1$, we get $w(\xi) = w(\xi \oplus \varepsilon^\ell) = w(\varepsilon^{k+\ell}) = 1$. $\qquad\square$

A.4. **Wu classes and the identity** $w = Sq(v)$**.** Let M^n be a closed $\mathbb{Z}_2$-oriented manifold with fundamental class $[M] \in H_n(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$. Poincaré duality gives a perfect pairing $H^{n-i}(M; \mathbb{Z}_2) \times H^i(M; \mathbb{Z}_2) \to \mathbb{Z}_2$, so any linear functional on $H^{n-i}(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ is represented by a unique class in $H^i(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$.

Definition A.7. For each $i \geq 0$, the *i-th Wu class* $v_i(M) \in H^i(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ is the unique class such that for all $x \in H^{n-i}(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$,

$$\big\langle Sq^i(x), [M] \big\rangle = \big\langle v_i(M) \smile x, [M] \big\rangle.$$

Write $v(M) = \sum_i v_i(M)$ for the total Wu class.

Theorem A.8 (Wu formula)**.** *For every closed $\mathbb{Z}_2$-oriented n-manifold M, the total Stiefel–Whitney class of the tangent bundle satisfies*

$$w(TM) = Sq\big(v(M)\big).$$

Proof sketch. Embed M smoothly into some $\mathbb{R}^{n+k}$ with normal bundle ν. Then

$$TM \oplus \nu \cong \varepsilon^{n+k},$$

so by multiplicativity of Stiefel–Whitney classes,

$$w(TM) \smile w(\nu) = 1 \quad \text{in } H^*(M; \mathbb{Z}_2).$$

Let $U \in H^k(\mathrm{Th}(\nu); \mathbb{Z}_2)$ be the Thom class of ν, and let $\pi \colon \mathrm{Th}(\nu) \to M$ be the projection. The Thom identity (Theorem A.5) gives

$$Sq(U) = \pi^*\big(w(\nu)\big) \smile U.$$

Using the Thom isomorphism and Poincaré duality, the definition of the Wu classes $v_i(M)$ is equivalent to the statement that for all $x \in H^{n-i}(M; \mathbb{Z}_2)$, $\langle Sq^i(x), [M] \rangle = \langle v_i(M) \smile x, [M] \rangle$. Unwinding this through the Thom isomorphism and the relation $w(TM) \smile w(\nu) = 1$ shows that the total class $w(TM)$ is equal to $Sq(v(M))$. $\qquad\square$

APPENDIX B. FRAMINGS, PONTRYAGIN–THOM, AND THE KERVAIRE INVARIANT

This appendix supplies the background used in Section 4. We review stable normal framings, the Pontryagin–Thom correspondence, explain why smooth 4-connected 10-manifolds admit stable normal framings, and record the vanishing of the Kervaire invariant in dimension 10.

B.1. **Stable normal framings and the Pontryagin–Thom construction.**

Proof of Theorem 4.3 (sketch). Let $(N^n, \mathfrak{f})$ be a stably framed manifold. Choose an embedding $i \colon N \hookrightarrow \mathbb{R}^{n+k}$ and represent $\mathfrak{f}$ by a trivialization $\nu_i \cong \varepsilon^k$ of the normal bundle. A tubular neighborhood identifies a neighborhood of N with $N \times D^k$. Collapsing the complement of this neighborhood in $S^{n+k} = \mathbb{R}^{n+k} \cup \{\infty\}$ to the basepoint and using the framing to identify each fiber D^k with the unit disk in $\mathbb{R}^k$, we obtain a continuous map

$$\mathrm{PT}(N, \mathfrak{f}) \colon S^{n+k} \longrightarrow S^k,$$

well-defined up to homotopy after stabilizing in k. This gives a map $\Omega_n^{\mathrm{fr}} \to \pi_n^S$.

If $(N, \mathfrak{f}) = \partial(W, \mathfrak{F})$ is a framed boundary, the collapse maps for N extend over the corresponding collapse for W, yielding a null-homotopy in the stable range; hence the construction factors through framed bordism.

Conversely, given a stable map $S^{n+k} \to S^k$, approximate it by a smooth map transverse to a regular value $p \in S^k$. The preimage $N = f^{-1}(p)$ is a smooth closed n-manifold, and the differential together with the chosen trivialization of $T_p S^k$ induces a framing of its normal bundle in S^{n+k}, hence a stable normal framing. These two constructions are inverse to each other up to the relevant equivalences, producing the natural isomorphism $\Omega_n^{\mathrm{fr}} \cong \pi_n^S$. $\qquad\square$

B.2. **Smooth 4-connected 10-manifolds admit stable normal framings.**

Proof of Proposition 4.11 (sketch). Let N^{10} be an oriented, smooth, 4-connected closed manifold. Since N is 4-connected, it has a CW model with one 0-cell, some 5-cells, and one 10-cell. (In the case of M_0 this was explicit; for a general N, this follows from standard cell-killing arguments.)

Consider the stable tangent bundle classifying map $\tau \colon N \to BSO$. Because $\pi_5(BSO) = \pi_4(SO) = 0$, the restriction of τ to the 5-skeleton is null-homotopic, so τ is determined by an obstruction on the 10-cell. This obstruction lies in $\pi_{10}(BSO) = \pi_9(SO) \cong \mathbb{Z}_2$.

On the other hand, Corollary **??** shows $w(TN) = 1$, so in particular $w_{10}(TN) = 0 \in H^{10}(N; \mathbb{Z}_2)$. Under the standard identification of the primary $\mathbb{Z}_2$-obstruction for stable triviality with w_{10} on a 10-complex of this form, the obstruction class vanishes. Hence τ is null-homotopic and TN is stably trivial:

$$TN \oplus \varepsilon^\ell \cong \varepsilon^{10+\ell}.$$

Choosing such a trivialization is equivalent to choosing a stable normal framing of N, since $TN \oplus \nu \cong \varepsilon^{10+k}$ for an embedding $N \hookrightarrow \mathbb{R}^{10+k}$. $\qquad\square$

Remark B.1. The preceding proof is intentionally streamlined for our special connectivity range. A more systematic treatment uses the Postnikov tower of BSO and obstruction theory; the vanishing of $H^1, \ldots, H^4, H^6, \ldots, H^9$ forces the classifying map to be null.

B.3. **The Kervaire invariant homomorphism and its vanishing in dimension 10.** For a stably framed $(4k+2)$-manifold $(N^{4k+2}, \mathfrak{f})$ there is a classical $\mathbb{Z}_2$-valued invariant, the *Kervaire invariant*, which can be defined as the Arf invariant of a quadratic refinement on the middle cohomology. In our case $4k+2 = 10$ and the middle degree is $2k+1 = 5$.

Proof of Proposition 4.5 (outline). Let $(N^{10}, \mathfrak{f})$ be stably framed. One defines a function $q_{\mathfrak{f}} \colon H^5(N; \mathbb{Z}_2) \to \mathbb{Z}_2$ as follows. Given $x \in H^5(N; \mathbb{Z}_2)$, choose an integral lift $X \in H^5(N; \mathbb{Z})$ (which exists and is unique modulo $2H^5(N; \mathbb{Z})$ since H^5 is free). Represent X by a smooth map $g \colon N \to S^5$ (possible in this connectivity range by obstruction theory). For a regular value $p \in S^5$, the preimage $V = g^{-1}(p)$ is a smooth 5-manifold whose normal bundle in N is identified with the pullback of $T_p S^5 \cong \mathbb{R}^5$. The stable framing $\mathfrak{f}$ on N induces, together with this identification, a stable framing on V. From this framed data one extracts a $\mathbb{Z}_2$-number $q_{\mathfrak{f}}(x)$, which may be described equivalently via:

(a) a Pontryagin–Thom collapse map and a universal stable cohomology class, or
(b) a secondary cohomology operation associated to the Adem relation in degree 10.

The key output is that $q_{\mathfrak{f}}$ satisfies $q_{\mathfrak{f}}(x + y) = q_{\mathfrak{f}}(x) + q_{\mathfrak{f}}(y) + \langle x \smile y, [N] \rangle$, so it is a quadratic refinement of the symplectic form λ. Then Lemma 3.15 implies that $\kappa(N, \mathfrak{f}) = \sum_i q_{\mathfrak{f}}(x_i) q_{\mathfrak{f}}(y_i)$ is basis-independent.

Finally, bordism invariance follows because the construction factors through the framed bordism class $[N, \mathfrak{f}] \in \Omega_{10}^{\mathrm{fr}}$, and additivity under disjoint union shows κ is a group homomorphism $\Omega_{10}^{\mathrm{fr}} \to \mathbb{Z}_2$. □

Proof of Theorem 4.9 (by reference). By Theorem 4.3, $\Omega_{10}^{\mathrm{fr}} \cong \pi_{10}^S$. Under this identification, κ is the classical Kervaire invariant homomorphism $\pi_{10}^S \to \mathbb{Z}_2$. It is a theorem from the computation of stable homotopy groups of spheres and the analysis of Kervaire invariant one elements that the Kervaire invariant is zero in dimension 10. Equivalently, there is no element of Kervaire invariant one in π_{10}^S, hence κ vanishes identically. □

Remark B.2. For the purposes of this exposition, the only needed consequence is the vanishing. A detailed account can be found in standard references on stable homotopy and the Kervaire invariant. In particular, one can consult treatments that compute π_{10}^S and discuss the Kervaire invariant in low dimensions.

Appendix C. The loop-space input and the computation of φ on M_0

This appendix supplies the minimal background needed for Proposition 5.8. We record low-degree cohomology of $Q = \Omega S^6$, the 10-skeleton of Q, and the Thom-collapse calculation for the core spheres $A, B \subset M_0$.

Remark C.1. In Section 3 we denoted by $e \in H^5(\Omega S^6; \mathbb{Z})$ and $u \in H^{10}(\Omega S^6; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ the classes used to define φ. In this appendix we write $Q = \Omega S^6$ and use generators $e_1 \in H^5(Q; \mathbb{Z})$, $e_2 \in H^{10}(Q; \mathbb{Z})$ with $u_2 = \rho(e_2) \in H^{10}(Q; \mathbb{Z}_2)$. Under this convention one may identify $e = e_1$ and $u = u_2$; the statements of Proposition 3.1 are exactly the low-degree properties of these generators recorded below.

C.1. **Low-degree cohomology of $Q = \Omega S^6$ and the coproduct.** Let $\mu \colon Q \times Q \to Q$ be the loop multiplication (concatenation of loops). The induced map μ^* makes $H^*(Q; R)$ into a graded Hopf algebra.

Proposition C.2. *There are canonical isomorphisms*

$$H^5(Q; \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}, \qquad H^{10}(Q; \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}.$$

Fix generators $e_1 \in H^5(Q; \mathbb{Z})$ and $e_2 \in H^{10}(Q; \mathbb{Z})$, and let $\bar{e}_1, \bar{e}_2$ be their reductions mod 2. Then, under the Künneth identification $H^*(Q \times Q) \cong H^*(Q) \otimes H^*(Q)$, one has

$$\mu^*(e_1) = e_1 \otimes 1 + 1 \otimes e_1,$$

and

$$\mu^*(\bar{e}_2) = \bar{e}_2 \otimes 1 + 1 \otimes \bar{e}_2 + \bar{e}_1 \otimes \bar{e}_1.$$

In particular, if we set $u_2 = \bar{e}_2 \in H^{10}(Q; \mathbb{Z}_2)$, then

$$\mu^*(u_2) = u_2 \otimes 1 + 1 \otimes u_2 + \bar{e}_1 \otimes \bar{e}_1.$$

Remark C.3. These identities are standard. One convenient description is via the Bott–Samelson computation of the Hopf algebra $H^*(\Omega S^{n+1}; \mathbb{Z})$ (here $n = 5$): $H^*(\Omega S^6; \mathbb{Z})$ is the divided power algebra on a class in degree 5, and the coproduct on the divided powers yields the displayed formulas. We only use the statements above, not the full structure theorem.

C.2. **The 10-skeleton of Q.** Let $\iota_5 \colon S^5 \to S^5$ denote the identity map, and $[\iota_5, \iota_5] \in \pi_9(S^5)$ its Whitehead product.

Proposition C.4. *The loop space $Q = \Omega S^6$ admits a CW decomposition with one cell in each dimension $0, 5, 10, 15, \ldots$. Its 10-skeleton is*

$$Q^{(10)} \simeq S^5 \cup_{[\iota_5, \iota_5]} e^{10}.$$

Remark C.5. The attaching map of the 10-cell represents $[\iota_5, \iota_5]$. This is the loop-space incarnation of the fact that ΩS^6 is the James construction on S^5 up to homotopy; again, we only use the 10-skeleton.

C.3. **The Thom space $K = \mathrm{Th}(p)$ and its cell structure.** Let $p \colon U \to S^5$ be the disk bundle $D(\tau_{S^5})$ from Lemma 5.1, and let

$$K = \mathrm{Th}(p) = U/\partial U$$

be its Thom space, with basepoint the collapsed boundary.

Proposition C.6. *The Thom space K has the homotopy type*

$$K \simeq S^5 \cup_{[\iota_5, \iota_5]} e^{10}.$$

Consequently $H^5(K; \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}$ and $H^{10}(K; \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}$. Moreover, under the identification $K \simeq Q^{(10)}$ from Proposition C.4, the generators in degrees 5 and 10 match the restrictions of e_1 and e_2 from Proposition C.2.

Proof sketch. Since the base S^5 has one cell in degrees 0 and 5, the Thom space of a rank-5 bundle over S^5 has (besides the basepoint) one cell in degrees 5 and 10. For the tangent bundle τ_{S^5}, the attaching map of the top cell is a representative of $[\iota_5, \iota_5]$. Comparing with Proposition C.4 yields the identification with $Q^{(10)}$. □

C.4. **Thom collapse and the evaluation $\langle u_2, [M_0] \rangle$.** Let $i \colon A \cong S^5 \hookrightarrow M_0$ be the embedded core sphere from Proposition 5.2. Choose a tubular neighborhood identified with $U = D(\tau_{S^5})$, so that the normal bundle ν_{A/M_0} is $p \colon U \to S^5$. The Thom collapse map is the quotient map

$$c_A \colon M_0 \longrightarrow M_0/(M_0 \setminus \mathrm{int}(U)) \cong U/\partial U = K.$$

Let $e_1^K \in H^5(K; \mathbb{Z})$ be the Thom class corresponding to $1 \in H^0(S^5; \mathbb{Z})$ under the Thom isomorphism, and let $e_2^K \in H^{10}(K; \mathbb{Z})$ be the image of the generator of $H^5(S^5; \mathbb{Z})$. Let $u_2^K \in H^{10}(K; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ be the mod-2 reduction of e_2^K.

Lemma C.7. *Let* $X \in H^5(M_0; \mathbb{Z})$ *be the Poincaré dual of* $[A]$*. Then* $c_A^*(e_1^K) = X$*.*

Proof. This is the standard identification of Poincaré duality with the Thom class: the Thom collapse pulls back the Thom class to the cohomology class represented by intersecting with the zero-section, i.e. the Poincaré dual of $[A]$. $\square$

Lemma C.8. *One has* $\langle c_A^*(u_2^K), [M_0] \rangle = 1 \in \mathbb{Z}_2$*.*

Proof. Let $\eta \in H^5(S^5; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ be the generator. By construction, u_2^K corresponds under the mod-2 Thom isomorphism to η. The Thom collapse realizes the umkehr (Gysin) map $i_!$ on cohomology, and evaluation on $[M_0]$ is adjoint to evaluation on the fundamental class of A:

$$\langle c_A^*(u_2^K), [M_0] \rangle \;=\; \langle i_!(\eta), [M_0] \rangle \;=\; \langle \eta, [A] \rangle \;=\; 1.$$

$\square$

C.5. **From K to Q and the computation of φ.** Using Proposition C.6, identify $K \simeq Q^{(10)}$ and let $\jmath \colon K \simeq Q^{(10)} \hookrightarrow Q$ be the inclusion. Under this identification, e_1^K and u_2^K correspond to the restrictions of e_1 and u_2 from Proposition C.2.

Proposition C.9. *Let* $X \in H^5(M_0; \mathbb{Z})$ *be Poincaré dual to* $[A]$*, and let* $x \in H^5(M_0; \mathbb{Z}_2)$ *be its mod-2 reduction. Then* $\varphi(x) = 1$*.*

Proof. Set $f_A = \jmath \circ c_A \colon M_0 \to Q$. By Lemma C.7, $f_A^*(e_1) = X$. By Lemma C.8, $f_A^*(u_2)[M_0] = 1$. By the definition of φ in Section 3 (using $Q = \Omega S^6$ and the class u_2), this implies $\varphi(x) = 1$. $\square$

Remark C.10. Applying the same construction to B yields $\varphi(y) = 1$, which is the input used in Proposition 5.8.