

Dirichlet Energy in Different Spaces

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1 Relevant Definitions

Definition 1 (Gradient Flow). Given an energy (functional) $\mathcal{E}(f)$, *gradient flow* is:

$$\frac{d}{dt}f = -\text{grad } \mathcal{E}(f) \quad (1)$$

Definition 2 (Differential). *Differential* $d\mathcal{E}$ describes change in \mathcal{E} due to¹ u :

$$d\mathcal{E}|_f(u) = \lim_{\epsilon \rightarrow 0} \frac{1}{\epsilon} (\mathcal{E}(f + \epsilon u) - \mathcal{E}(f)) \quad (2)$$

Definition 3 (Gradient). *Gradient* of \mathcal{E} is the unique function $\text{grad } \mathcal{E}$ such that,

$$\langle \langle \text{grad } \mathcal{E}, u \rangle \rangle_V = d\mathcal{E}(u) \quad (3)$$

2 Dirichlet Energy Example

Definition 4 (Dirichlet Energy). Dirichlet Energy is defined as:

$$\mathcal{E}_D(f) := \frac{1}{2} \int_{\Omega} |\text{grad } f(x)|^2 dx = \frac{1}{2} \langle \langle \nabla f, \nabla f \rangle \rangle_{L^2} = -\frac{1}{2} \langle \langle \Delta f, f \rangle \rangle_{L^2} \quad (4)$$

Computing the differential $d\mathcal{E}_D|_f(u)$ of Dirichlet energy using (2),

$$d\mathcal{E}_D|_f(u) = -\frac{1}{2} \lim_{\epsilon \rightarrow 0} \frac{1}{\epsilon} (\langle \langle \Delta(f + \epsilon u), f + \epsilon u \rangle \rangle_{L^2} - \langle \langle \Delta f, f \rangle \rangle_{L^2}) \quad (5)$$

$$= -\frac{1}{2} \lim_{\epsilon \rightarrow 0} \frac{1}{\epsilon} (\epsilon \langle \langle \Delta f, u \rangle \rangle_{L^2} + \epsilon \langle \langle \Delta u, f \rangle \rangle_{L^2} + \epsilon^2 \langle \langle u, u \rangle \rangle_{L^2}) \quad (6)$$

$$= -\frac{1}{2} (\langle \langle \Delta f, u \rangle \rangle_{L^2} + \langle \langle \Delta u, f \rangle \rangle_{L^2}) \quad (7)$$

$$= -\frac{1}{2} (\langle \langle \Delta f, u \rangle \rangle_{L^2} + \langle \langle \Delta f, u \rangle \rangle_{L^2}) \quad (8)$$

$$= -\langle \langle \Delta f, u \rangle \rangle_{L^2} \quad (9)$$

where the last step is by integration by parts (twice)².

¹analogous in traditional vector space would be “in the direction of” u

²This trick will be used all over the place when constructing gradients. See 4.1 in the Appendix

2.1 Gradient Flow in L^2

By (3), we may spot from (9) that the gradient can be written as

$$\text{grad } \mathcal{E}_{L^2} = -\Delta f \quad (10)$$

Hence, the gradient flow equation (1) can be written as:

$$\frac{d}{dt}f = \Delta f \quad (11)$$

which is the heat equation.

2.2 Gradient Flow in H^1

We may express the differential (9) as

$$d\mathcal{E}_D|_f(u) = -\langle\langle\Delta f, u\rangle\rangle_{L^2} \quad (12)$$

$$= \langle\langle\nabla f, \nabla u\rangle\rangle_{L^2} \quad (13)$$

$$= \langle\langle f, u\rangle\rangle_{H^1} \quad (14)$$

So by (3), the gradient in H^1 can be written as

$$\text{grad } \mathcal{E}_{H^1} = f \quad (15)$$

The gradient flow equation (1) can be written as

$$\frac{d}{dt}f = -f \quad (16)$$

which describes exponential decay.

2.3 Gradient Flow in H^{-1}

We may express the differential (9) as

$$d\mathcal{E}_D|_f(u) = -\langle\langle\Delta f, u\rangle\rangle_{L^2} \quad (17)$$

$$= \langle\langle\nabla f, \nabla u\rangle\rangle_{L^2} \quad (18)$$

$$= \langle\langle\nabla^3 f, \nabla^{-1}u\rangle\rangle_{L^2} \quad (19)$$

$$= \langle\langle\Delta f, \Delta^{-1}u\rangle\rangle_{H^1} \quad (20)$$

$$= \langle\langle\Delta^2 f, u\rangle\rangle_{H^{-1}} \quad (21)$$

So by (3), the gradient in H^{-1} can be written as

$$\text{grad } \mathcal{E}_{H^{-1}} = \Delta^2 f \quad (22)$$

The gradient flow equation (1) can be written as

$$\frac{d}{dt}f = -\Delta^2 f \quad (23)$$

2.4 Gradient Flow in H^2

We may express the differential (9) as

$$d\mathcal{E}_D|_f(u) = -\langle\langle\Delta f, u\rangle\rangle_{L^2} \quad (24)$$

$$= -\langle\langle f, \Delta u\rangle\rangle_{L^2} \quad (25)$$

$$= -\langle\langle\Delta^{-1}f, u\rangle\rangle_{H^2} \quad (26)$$

So by (3), the gradient in H^2 can be written as

$$\text{grad } \mathcal{E}_{H^2} = -\Delta^{-1}f \quad (27)$$

The gradient flow equation (1) can be written as

$$\frac{d}{dt}f = \Delta^{-1}f \quad (28)$$

3 Numerically Solving Gradient Flow Equations

3.1 Gradient Flow in L^2 , H^1

For L^2 , given the gradient flow equation (11), we may write down explicit Euler scheme:

$$\frac{f_j^{m+1} - f_j^m}{\Delta t} = \frac{f_{j+1}^m - 2f_j^m + f_{j-1}^m}{(\Delta x)^2} \quad (29)$$

which can be rewritten as

$$f_j^{m+1} = f_j^m + \mu (f_{j+1}^m - 2f_j^m + f_{j-1}^m) \quad (30)$$

where $\mu := \frac{\Delta t}{(\Delta x)^2}$ is called the *CFL number*.

Similar construction can be done for H^1 .

This method is known to have consistency error

$$T_j^m = \mathcal{O}\left((\Delta x)^2 + \Delta t\right) \quad (31)$$

3.2 Gradient Flow in H^1

Given the gradient flow equation (16), we may write down explicit Euler scheme:

$$\frac{f_j^{m+1} - f_j^m}{\Delta t} = -f_j^m \quad (32)$$

which can be rewritten as

$$f_j^{m+1} = f_j^m - (\Delta t)f_j^m \quad (33)$$

3.3 Gradient Flow in H^{-1}

Given the gradient flow equation (23), it can be rewritten as

$$\frac{d}{dt}\Delta f = f \quad (34)$$

we may write down explicit Euler scheme:

$$\frac{1}{\Delta t} \left(\frac{f_{j+1}^{m+1} - 2f_j^{m+1} + f_{j-1}^{m+1}}{(\Delta x)^2} - \frac{f_{j+1}^m - 2f_j^m + f_{j-1}^m}{(\Delta x)^2} \right) = f_j^m \quad (35)$$

This method has consistency error

$$T_j^m = \mathcal{O} \left((\Delta x)^2 + (\Delta t)^2 \right) \quad (36)$$

4 Appendix

4.1 A (Somewhat) Careful Justification for IBP

Suppose we are concerned with the integral $I := \langle \langle \Delta u, f \rangle \rangle_{L^2} = \int_R (\Delta u) f \, d\mathbf{x}$, where R is a bounded region with boundary ∂R .

4.1.1 IBP (on Gradient Operator)

One could show that

$$\langle \langle \Delta u, f \rangle \rangle_{L^2} = -\langle \langle \nabla u, \nabla f \rangle \rangle_{L^2} = -\int_R \nabla u \cdot \nabla f \, d\mathbf{x} \quad (37)$$

using the identity³:

$$\nabla \cdot (\phi \nabla \psi) = \phi \nabla^2 \psi + \nabla \phi \cdot \nabla \psi \quad (38)$$

Note that

$$\langle \langle \Delta u, f \rangle \rangle_{L^2} = -\int_R \nabla u \cdot \nabla f \, d\mathbf{x} \quad (39)$$

$$= \int_R \nabla \cdot (f \nabla u) \, d\mathbf{x} - \int_R \nabla u \cdot \nabla f \, d\mathbf{x} \quad (40)$$

$$= \oint_{\partial R} f \frac{du}{dn} \, ds - \int_R \nabla u \cdot \nabla f \, d\mathbf{x} \quad (41)$$

(Need the first term of last line to be zero...)

³This is also known as Green's Identity in some literature