

# Algebraic Topology

## Serre spectral sequence, characteristic classes and bordism

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# 1 Informal introduction

One of the big goals of homotopy theory is to compute

$$[X, Y]_{\bullet} = \{\text{base-point preserving cont. maps } X \rightarrow Y\} / \text{homotopy}$$

for  $X$  and  $Y$  pointed CW-complexes. CW-complexes are build out of spheres, hence the building blocks are the sets  $[S^n, S^k]_{\bullet} = \pi_n(S^k, *)$ . For  $n \geq 1$ , there are groups, abelian if  $n > 1$ . What do we know about these groups?

- $\pi_n(S^k, *) = 0$  for  $n < k$  by cellular approximation.
- $\pi_n(S^n, *) \cong \mathbb{Z}$  by the Hurewicz theorem and  $H_n(S^n, \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}$
- $X$  is  $(n-1)$ -connected CW-complex: Then  $\pi_n(X, *) \cong H_n(X, \mathbb{Z})$ .
- $\pi_k(S^1, *) = 0$  for  $k \geq 2$  by covering space theory (universal cover of  $S^1$  is  $\mathbb{R}$ , which is contractible).
- $\pi_3(S^2, *) \neq 0$ , since the attaching map of the 4-cell for  $\mathbb{CP}^2$  is a map  $\eta : S^3 \rightarrow S^2 \cong \mathbb{CP}^1$ . If this was null-homotopic, then we would have  $\mathbb{CP}^2 \sim S^2 \vee S^4$ , which contradicts the ring structure on  $H^*(\mathbb{CP}^2, \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}[x]/x^3$ .
- $\pi_k(S^n, *) \rightarrow \pi_{k+1}(S^{n+1}, *) \rightarrow \pi_{k+2}(S^{n+2}, *) \rightarrow \dots$  eventually stabilizes by the Freudenthal suspension theorem.

To go beyond this, we need a new tool, the Serre spectral sequence. To motivate its usefulness, consider the following strategy: There exists a map  $f : S^2 \rightarrow K(\mathbb{Z}, 2)$  which induces an isomorphism  $f_* : \pi_2(S^2, *) \rightarrow \pi_2(K(\mathbb{Z}, 2), *)$ . We can take its homotopy fibre  $H = \text{hofb}_x(f)$  (2-connected cover of  $S^2$ ). Then there is a fiber sequence  $H \rightarrow S^2 \xrightarrow{f} K(\mathbb{Z}, 2)$  and a long exact sequence in homotopy

$$\begin{aligned} \dots \rightarrow \pi_4(K(\mathbb{Z}, 2), *) \rightarrow \pi_3(H, *) \rightarrow \pi_3(S^2, *) \rightarrow \pi_3(K(\mathbb{Z}, 2), *) \rightarrow \pi_2(H, *) \rightarrow \pi_2(S^2, *) \rightarrow \\ \rightarrow \pi_2(K(\mathbb{Z}, 2), *) \rightarrow \pi_1(H, *) \rightarrow \pi_1(S^2, *) \rightarrow \dots \end{aligned}$$

from which we conclude  $\pi_3(H, *) \cong \pi_3(S^2, *)$  and  $\pi_1(H, *) = \pi_2(H, *) = 0$ , i.e.  $H$  is 2-connected and the higher homotopy groups agree with the ones of  $S^2$ . By the Hurewicz theorem,  $\pi_3(S^2, *) = H_3(H, \mathbb{Z})$ . Hence we want to find a way to compute  $H_*(H, *)$  from  $H_*(S^2, \mathbb{Z})$  and  $H_*(K(\mathbb{Z}, 2), \mathbb{Z})$ .

This will also help to compute  $\pi_n(S^k, *)$  in other ways (for example we will show that  $\pi_n(S^k, *)$  is finite unless  $n = k$  or  $n = 2k - 1$  and  $k$  even). Furthermore, the Serre spectral sequence will allow us to compute the (co-)homology of spaces like  $U(n)$ ,  $SU(n)$ ,  $\Omega S^n$ ,  $K(\mathbb{Z}/2, n)$  etc. and (re-)prove structural theorems like Hurewicz, Freudenthal suspension, Thom isomorphisms and more.

So, given a fiber sequence  $F \rightarrow Y \rightarrow X$ , what could the relationship between the homology groups of  $F$ ,  $Y$  and  $X$  be?

**Example 1.1.** Consider the easiest case  $F \rightarrow X \times F \xrightarrow{\text{pr}_X} X$ , the trivial filtration. Then the Alexander-Whitney map induces an isomorphism

$$H_n(X \times F, \mathbb{Z}) \cong \bigoplus_{p+q=n} H_p(X, H_q(F)).$$

This is the kind of result we want: It computes the homology of the total space in terms of the homology of  $X$  and  $F$ .

**Example 1.2** (Hopf fibration).  $S^1 \rightarrow S^3 \xrightarrow{\eta} S^2$ :

$n$	$H_n(S^3, \mathbb{Z})$	$\bigoplus_{p+q=n} H_p(S^2, H_q(S^1, \mathbb{Z}))$
0	$\mathbb{Z}$	$\mathbb{Z}$
1	0	$\mathbb{Z}$
2	0	$\mathbb{Z}$
3	$\mathbb{Z}$	$\mathbb{Z}$
4	0	0

Hence clearly the Künneth formula from the previous example is "too big" to describe the homology in this case. However, consider the "2-step"-filtration  $S^1 \subseteq S^3$  which satisfies  $\tilde{H}_n(S^3/S^1, \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}$  for  $n = 2, 3$  and 0 otherwise. Hence  $H_\bullet(S^1, \mathbb{Z}) \oplus H_\bullet(S^3/S^1, \mathbb{Z})$  agrees with the right-hand side of the table above. This does not agree with  $H_\bullet(S^3, \mathbb{Z})$ , because the long exact sequence corresponding to  $S^1 \rightarrow S^3 \rightarrow S^3/S^1$  does not split into nice short exact sequences. Concretely, the boundary map  $\tilde{H}_2(S^3/S^1, \mathbb{Z}) \rightarrow H_1(S^1, \mathbb{Z})$  is an isomorphism, hence these two terms do not contribute to  $H_\bullet(S^3, \mathbb{Z})$ .

It turns out that something similar holds for all fibre sequences  $F \rightarrow Y \rightarrow X$ : There exists a filtration

$$F_0 \subseteq F_1 \subseteq \dots \subseteq F_m \subseteq \dots \subseteq C_*(Y, \mathbb{Z})$$

on  $C_*(Y, \mathbb{Z})$  such that  $H_{p+q}(F_p/F_{p-1}) \cong C_p^{\text{cell}}(X, H_q(F, \mathbb{Z}))$ . To then understand  $H_\bullet(Y, \mathbb{Z})$ , one needs to understand the cancellations in the associated long exact sequences. This is best encoded in a spectral sequence.

## 2 The Serre Spectral Sequence

**Definition 2.1.** A (homologically, Serre-graded) *spectral sequence* is a triple  $(E^\bullet, d^\bullet, h^\bullet)$ , where

- $(E^r)_{r \geq 2}$  is a sequence of  $\mathbb{Z}$ -bigraded abelian groups. We write  $E_{p,q}^r$  for the  $(p, q)$ -graded part of  $E^r$ .  $E^r$  is called the  $r$ -th *page* of the spectral sequence.
- $(d^r : E^r \rightarrow E^r)$  is a sequence of morphisms, called *differentials*, of bidegree  $(-r, r-1)$  satisfying  $d^r \circ d^r = 0$ .
- $h^r : H_\bullet(E^r) \rightarrow E^{r+1}$  is a sequence of bigrading-preserving isomorphisms. Here  $H_\bullet(E^r)$  denotes the homology with respect to  $d^r$ , which inherits a bigrading from  $E^r$ .

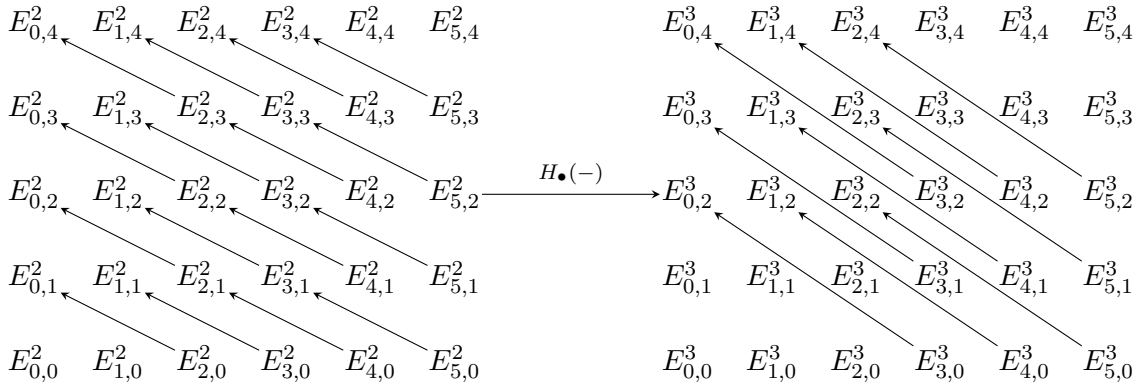


Figure 1: The second and third page of a spectral sequence

**Definition 2.2.** We say that a spectral sequence is *1st quadrant* if all abelian groups  $E_{p,q}^2$  are trivial whenever  $p < 0$  or  $q < 0$ .

**Lemma 2.3.** For a first quadrant spectral sequence  $(E^\bullet, d^\bullet, h^\bullet)$ , we have  $E_{p,q}^r = 0$  if  $p < 0$  or  $q < 0$  for all  $r \geq 2$ . Moreover, for a given  $(p, q) \in \mathbb{Z}^2$ , the map  $h$  induces an isomorphism  $E_{p,q}^r \rightarrow E_{p,q}^{r+1}$  for  $r > r_0 = \max(p, q + 1)$ , i.e. the groups  $E_{p,q}^r$  stabilize as  $r \rightarrow \infty$ .

*Proof.* The first statement follows directly from the existence of the isomorphisms  $h$  by induction on  $r$ . For the second statement, if  $r > r_0$ , then the target of the differential  $d^r : E_{p,q}^r \rightarrow E_{p-r,q+r-1}^r$  is trivial, hence every element of  $E_{p,q}^r$  is a cycle. Moreover, the domain of the incoming differential  $d^r : E_{p+r,q-r+1}^r \rightarrow E_{p,q}^r$  is trivial. Hence  $E_{p,q}^r \cong H_\bullet(E_{p,q}^r) \xrightarrow[h]{} E_{p,q}^{r+1}$   $\square$

**Definition 2.4.** For a first quadrant spectral sequence  $(E^\bullet, d^\bullet, h^\bullet)$ , we define the  $E^\infty$ -page as the bi-graded abelian group  $E_{p,q}^\infty = E_{p,q}^{r_0+1}$  with  $r_0 = \max(p, q + 1)$ . By the previous lemma,  $E_{p,q}^\infty \cong E_{p,q}^r$  whenever  $r > r_0$ .

By a filtered object in an abelian category  $\mathcal{A}$  we mean an object  $H \in \mathcal{A}$  with a sequence of inclusions

$$0 = F^{-1} \subseteq F^0 \subseteq F^1 \subseteq \dots \subseteq F^n \subseteq \dots \subseteq H.$$

We will apply this to  $\mathcal{A}$  the category of graded abelian groups and  $H = H_*(E, \mathbb{Z})$ .

**Definition 2.5.** A first quadrant spectral sequence  $(E^\bullet, d^\bullet, h^\bullet)$  is said to *converge* to a filtered object in graded abelian groups  $(H, F)$  if there is a chosen isomorphism  $E_{p,q}^\infty \cong F_{p+q}^p / F_{p+q}^{p-1}$  for all  $p, q$  and  $F_n^p = H_n$  if  $n \leq p$ . In this case we write  $E_{p,q}^2 \Rightarrow H$ .

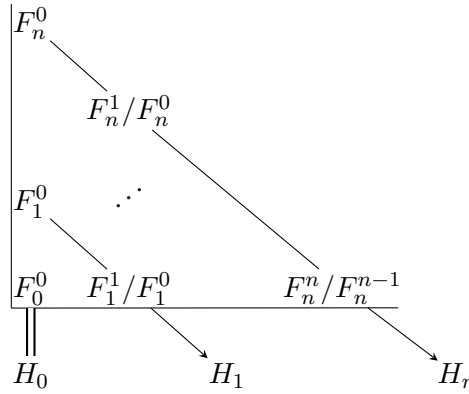


Figure 2: Visualization of  $E^\infty$  as filtrations of the  $H_i$  for a convergent spectral sequence  $E_{p,q}^2 \Rightarrow H$

**Remark.** Convergence is really a *datum* of the necessary isomorphism and not a property. Convergent spectral sequences are often simply encoded as  $E_{p,q}^2 \Rightarrow H$ , but this suppresses not only this data, but also the higher pages, the differentials, and the filtration on  $H$ .

We now want to introduce the Serre spectral sequence for the homology of fibre sequences.

**Definition 2.6.** Let  $f : Y \rightarrow X$  be a continuous map of topological spaces and  $x \in X$  a point. The *homotopy fibre*  $\text{hofb}_x(f)$  of  $f$  at  $x$  is defined to be

$$\text{hofb}_x(f) = P_x X \times_X Y$$

where  $P_x X = \{\gamma : [0, 1] \rightarrow X \mid \gamma(1) = x\}$  is the based path space of  $X$ . It comes with a map  $P_x X \rightarrow X$  given by  $\gamma \mapsto \gamma(0)$ . In words:  $\text{hofb}_x(f)$  is the space of pairs  $(\gamma, y)$  where  $y \in Y$  and  $\gamma$  is a path in  $X$  from  $f(y)$  to  $x$ . We note that  $P_x X$  is contractible by the homotopy

$$H : P_x X \times [0, 1] \rightarrow P_x X, \quad (\gamma, t) \mapsto s \mapsto \gamma((1-t)s + t)$$

**Example 2.7.** If  $f : * \rightarrow X$ , then  $\text{hofb}_x(f) = \Omega_x X$ .

**Definition 2.8.** A *fibre sequence* of topological spaces is a sequence  $F \xrightarrow{i} Y \xrightarrow{f} X$ , a basepoint  $x \in X$ , a homotopy  $h : F \rightarrow X^{[0,1]}$  from the composite  $f \circ i$  to the constant map  $c_x : F \rightarrow X$  such that the induced map  $F \rightarrow \text{hofb}_x(f)$ ,  $z \mapsto (h(z), i(z))$  is a weak homotopy equivalence.

Recall: A weak homotopy equivalence is a map inducing isomorphisms on  $\pi_n(-, x)$  for all  $n \in \mathbb{N}$  and all basepoints  $x$ .

**Example 2.9.** 1. Let  $f : Y \rightarrow X$  be any continuous map,  $x \in X$ . Then the pair  $(\text{hofb}_x f \rightarrow Y \rightarrow X, H)$ , where  $H$  is the homotopy from the definition of the homotopy fibre above, is a fibre sequence. Every fibre sequence is equivalent to this in the following sense: Given  $(F \rightarrow Y \rightarrow X, h)$ , there is a commutative diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} F & \xrightarrow{\simeq} & \text{hofb}_x(f) \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ Y & \xlongequal{\quad} & Y \\ \downarrow f & & \downarrow f \\ X & \xlongequal{\quad} & X \end{array}$$

In particular,  $\Omega_x X \rightarrow x \rightarrow X$  is a fibre sequence, where  $h : \Omega_x X \times [0, 1] \rightarrow X$  is the evaluation map. If one instead chooses the constant homotopy, one does not obtain a fibre sequence (unless the space is

contractible). This is because the induced map  $\Omega_x X \rightarrow \text{hofb}_x(f) = \Omega_x X$  is constant and hence usually not a weak homotopy equivalence. Hence, the choice of homotopy is important.

2. For every pair of spaces  $F$  and  $X$ ,  $x \in X$ , the pair  $(F \rightarrow F \times X \rightarrow X, \text{const})$  is a fibre sequence, the *trivial fibre sequence*. To see that, note that  $\text{hofb}_x(\text{pr}_X) = F \times P_x X$  with induced map

$$F \rightarrow F \times P_x X, \quad y \mapsto (y, \text{const}),$$

which is a homotopy equivalence as  $P_x X$  is contractible.

3. Let  $p : E \rightarrow B$  be a fibre bundle with fibre  $F = p^{-1}(b)$  for some  $b \in B$ . Then the sequence  $F \rightarrow E \rightarrow B$  with the constant homotopy is a fibre sequence. This is a special case of the next example.

4. Recall that  $p : E \rightarrow B$  is a Serre fibration if in every commutative diagram of the form

$$\begin{array}{ccc} D^n \times 0 & \longrightarrow & E \\ \downarrow & \nearrow & \downarrow p \\ D^n \times I & \longrightarrow & B \end{array}$$

there exists a lift  $D^n \times I \rightarrow E$  making both triangles commute. Given a Serre fibration  $p : E \rightarrow B$  and  $b \in B$ , the sequence  $F = p^{-1}(b) \rightarrow E \rightarrow B$  with the constant homotopy is a fibre sequence. (see exercises) Note: Every fibre sequence is also equivalent to one of this form.

5. As a special case of example 3, the Hopf fibration is a fibre bundle  $S^1 \rightarrow S^3 \xrightarrow{\eta} S^2$ . It arises by letting  $S^1 = U(1)$  act on  $S^2 \subseteq \mathbb{C}^2$  via  $\lambda(x_1, x_2) = (\lambda x_1, \lambda x_2)$ , with quotient space  $\mathbb{CP}^1 \cong S^2$ .

6. Example 5 generalizes to fibre bundles  $S^1 \rightarrow S^{2n+1} \rightarrow \mathbb{CP}^n$  with limit case  $S^1 \rightarrow S^\infty \rightarrow \mathbb{CP}^\infty$ , which is equivalent to  $\Omega \mathbb{CP}^\infty \rightarrow * \rightarrow \mathbb{CP}^\infty$ .

We are now ready to state the existence of the Serre spectral sequence.

**Theorem 2.10** (Serre). *For every fibre sequence  $(F \xrightarrow{\iota} Y \xrightarrow{p} X, h)$  with  $X$  simply-connected and abelian group  $A$ , there exists a spectral sequence of the following form*

$$E_{p,q}^2 = H_p(X, H_q(F, A)) \implies H_{p+q}(Y, A)$$

As noted before, this information does not include the differentials and the higher pages, as well as the filtrations on  $H_\bullet(Y, A)$  and the identifications of its subquotients with the  $E^\infty$ -page.

One edge case is easy to state: The map

$$H_n(F, A) = H_0(X, H_n(F, A)) = E_{0,n}^2 \twoheadrightarrow E_{0,n}^\infty \hookrightarrow H_n(Y, A)$$

agrees with the factorization  $H_n(F, A) \twoheadrightarrow \text{im } \iota_* \hookrightarrow H_n(Y, A)$ .

We now assume this theorem and give some sample computations.

**Example 2.11.** We revisit the Hopf fibration  $S^1 \rightarrow S^3 \xrightarrow{\eta} S^2$ .  $S^2$  is simply connected, so we get a spectral sequence. The  $E^2$ -page is  $H_p(S^2, H_q(S^1, A))$ , which looks like

$$\begin{array}{c} q \uparrow \\ \begin{array}{cccc} 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ A & 0 & A & 0 \\ & \swarrow & & \\ A & 0 & A & 0 \end{array} \\ p \rightarrow \end{array}$$

There is one potentially non-trivial  $d^2$ -differential, namely  $d^2 : E_{2,0}^2 \rightarrow E_{0,1}^2$ . All higher differentials  $d^r$ ,  $r > 2$ , are trivial for degree reasons. Hence the  $E^\infty$ -page looks as follows:

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \begin{array}{cccc}
 q \uparrow & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
 \text{coker}(d^2) & 0 & A & 0 & \\
 A & 0 & \ker(d^2) & 0 & \\
 & \xrightarrow{p} & & & 
 \end{array}
 \end{array}$$

We know that  $H_n(S^3, A) = A$  for  $n = 0, 3$  and 0 else. From the  $E^\infty$ -page we thus get  $H_0(S^3, A) = A$ ,  $H_1(S^3, A) = \text{coker}(d^2)$ ,  $H_2(S^3, A) = \ker(d^2)$ ,  $H_3(S^3, A) = A$ . Hence  $d^2$  must be an isomorphism.

**Lemma 2.12.** *There is a fibre bundle*

$$U(n-1) \xrightarrow{i} U(n) \rightarrow S^{2n-1},$$

where  $U(n)$  denotes the topological group of unitary  $n \times n$ -matrices and  $i$  is the standard inclusion which adds a trivial  $\mathbb{C}$ -summand.

*Proof.* The group  $U(n)$  acts on  $\mathbb{C}^n$  by definition. This action restricts to the unit sphere  $S^{2n-1} \subseteq \mathbb{C}^n$ . Furthermore, this action is transitive, because every vector of length 1 can be extended to an orthonormal basis. Hence  $S^{2n-1}$  is in bijection with the orbit space  $U(n)/\text{Stab}(x)$ , for any  $x \in S^{2n-1}$ . For  $x = (0, \dots, 0, 1)$ , the stabilizer equals  $i(U(n-1))$ . We obtain a continuous bijective map  $U(n)/U(n-1) \rightarrow S^{2n-1}$ ,  $[A] \mapsto A(0, \dots, 0, 1)^t$ , which is a homeomorphism since its domain is quasi-compact and its codomain is Hausdorff. Finally, we use the fact that for a smooth, free action of a compact Lie group  $G$  on a manifold  $M$ , the map  $M \rightarrow M/G$  is always a fibre bundle (in fact a  $G$ -principal bundle).  $\square$

**Example 2.13.** We consider the case  $n = 2$ , i.e. the fibre sequence  $S^1 \cong U(1) \hookrightarrow U(2) \rightarrow S^3$ . We want to compute the homology of  $U(2)$  via the Serre spectral sequence  $E_{p,q}^2 = H_p(S^3, H_q(S^1, \mathbb{Z}))$ . All differentials on all pages have to be trivial for degree reasons. (The spectral sequence "collapses".) Hence  $E^\infty = E^2$  and every antidiagonal has at most one non-trivial term, so we can read off  $H_n(U(2), \mathbb{Z}) = \mathbb{Z}$  for  $n = 0, 1, 3, 4$  and 0 else. In fact, one can show that  $U(2) \cong S^3 \times U(1)$ , so the homology could alternatively be computed with the Künneth theorem.

**Example 2.14.** Next we consider the fibre sequence  $U(2) \hookrightarrow U(3) \rightarrow S^5$  with  $E^2$ -page  $E_{p,q}^2 = H_p(S^5, H_q(U(2), \mathbb{Z}))$ , which looks like

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \begin{array}{cccccc}
 q \uparrow & \mathbb{Z} & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & \mathbb{Z} \\
 & \swarrow & & & & & \\
 \mathbb{Z} & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & \mathbb{Z} \\
 & \swarrow & & & & & \\
 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
 & \swarrow & & & & & \\
 \mathbb{Z} & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & \mathbb{Z} \\
 & \swarrow & & & & & \\
 \mathbb{Z} & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & \mathbb{Z} \\
 & \xrightarrow{p} & & & & & 
 \end{array}
 \end{array}$$

The first potentially non-trivial differential is  $d^5 : E_{0,5}^2 \rightarrow E_{0,4}^2$ . At this point we cannot decide what this differential is. All higher differentials are again trivial for degree reasons, and all filtrations collapse to

$$H_n(U(3), \mathbb{Z}) = \begin{cases} \mathbb{Z} & \text{for } n = 0, 1, 3, 5, 8, 9, \\ \text{coker}(d^5) & \text{for } n = 4, \\ \text{ker}(d^5) & \text{for } n = 5, \\ 0 & \text{else.} \end{cases}$$

**Example 2.15.** We consider  $U(3) \rightarrow U(4) \rightarrow S^7$ . The  $E_{p,q}^2 = H_p(S^7, H_q(U(3), \mathbb{Z}))$ -page is

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc}
& & & & & & q \\
& & & & & & \uparrow \\
& & & & & & \mathbb{Z} \\
& & & & & & \mathbb{Z} \\
& & & & & & 0 \\
& & & & & & \mathbb{Z} \\
& & & & & & ? \\
& & & & & \vdots & ? \\
& & & & ? & \dots & 0 & \dots & ? \\
& & & & \mathbb{Z} & & \vdots & & \mathbb{Z} \\
& & & & 0 & & & & 0 \\
& & & & \mathbb{Z} & & & & \mathbb{Z} \\
& & & & \mathbb{Z} & & & & \mathbb{Z} \\
& & & & \downarrow & & & & \downarrow \\
& & & & 0 & & & & 7 \\
& & & & \downarrow & & & & \downarrow \\
& & & & p & & & & p
\end{array}$$

In the previous examples we used the Serre spectral sequence to compute the homology of the total space of the fibre sequence. We now show that it can also be used to compute the homology of the base space or fibre.

$$\begin{array}{cc} q & \\ \uparrow & \\ 0 & 0 \\ \mathbb{Z} & ? \\ \mathbb{Z} & ? \\ \downarrow & \\ p & \end{array}$$



Since  $H_1(S^{2n+1}, \mathbb{Z}) = 0$ , there must be a surjective  $d^2$ -differential  $d^2 : E_{2,0}^2 \rightarrow E_{0,1}^2$ . But since  $H_2(S^{2n+1}, \mathbb{Z}) = 0$ , this differential must also be injective. Hence

$$\mathbb{Z} \cong E_{2,0}^2 = H_2(\mathbb{CP}^n, H_0(S^1, \mathbb{Z})) \cong H_2(\mathbb{CP}^n, \mathbb{Z}).$$

Furthermore, we see that  $E_{1,0}^2 = H_1(\mathbb{CP}^n, \mathbb{Z}) = 0$ . Using  $H_0(S^1, \mathbb{Z}) = H_1(S^1, \mathbb{Z})$ , this implies  $E_{1,1}^2 = 0$  and  $E_{2,1} = \mathbb{Z}$ . Now we see that the 2-page looks like

$$\begin{array}{c} q \uparrow \\ \begin{array}{cccc} 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ \mathbb{Z} & 0 & \mathbb{Z} & ? \\ \mathbb{Z} & 0 & \mathbb{Z} & ? \end{array} \\ p \rightarrow \end{array}$$

By the same argument, we can deduce  $d^2 : E_{4,0} \rightarrow E_{2,1}$  is an isomorphism, i.e.  $H_4(\mathbb{CP}^n, H_0(S^1, \mathbb{Z})) \cong \mathbb{Z}$ , and  $E_{3,0} = E_{3,1} = 0$  and so on. Since  $H_{2n+1}(S^{2n+1}, \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}$ , we cannot conclude that the  $\mathbb{Z}$  in bidegree  $(2n, 1)$  must be the image of a differential. There are two possibilities: If  $d^2 : E_{2n+2,0}^2 \rightarrow E_{2n+1}^2$  is the trivial map, then  $E_{2n+2,0}^2 = 0$  and then by induction  $E_{p,q}^2 = 0$  for all  $p > 2n$ . If, on the other hand,  $d^2 : E_{2n+2,0}^2 \rightarrow E_{2n+1}^2$  is non-zero, it has to be surjective: Indeed, since the cokernel is isomorphic to the lowest term of the filtration on  $H_{2n+1}(S^{2n+1}, \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}$ , and no  $\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}$  embeds into  $\mathbb{Z}$ . This then implies  $H_k(\mathbb{CP}^n, \mathbb{Z}) = \mathbb{Z}$  for all  $k > 2n$ . This case can be ruled out using that  $\mathbb{CP}^n$  is a  $2n$ -dimensional CW-complex and hence  $H_n(\mathbb{CP}^n, \mathbb{Z}) = 0$  for  $k > 2n$ . In summary, we obtain

$$H_k(\mathbb{CP}^n, \mathbb{Z}) \cong \begin{cases} \mathbb{Z} & \text{for } k = 0, 2, \dots, 2n, \\ 0 & \text{else.} \end{cases}$$

Next we turn to an example where the Serre spectral sequence can be used to compute the homology of the fibre

**Example 2.17.** We consider the fibre sequence  $\Omega S^3 \rightarrow * \rightarrow S^3$ . On the  $E^2$ -page, we have the entries  $H^p(S^3, H_q(\Omega S^3, \mathbb{Z}))$ , i.e.

$$\begin{array}{c} q \uparrow \\ \begin{array}{cccc} \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \vdots \\ ? & 0 & 0 & ? \\ \mathbb{Z} & 0 & 0 & \mathbb{Z} \end{array} \\ p \rightarrow \end{array}$$

The homology of the point is 0 in positive degrees, so we must have  $E_{p,q}^\infty = 0$  unless  $p = q = 0$ . The only non-trivial differentials are  $d^3 : E_{3,q}^3 \rightarrow E_{0,q+2}^3$ , so we conclude that these are isomorphisms. Hence  $H_q(\Omega S^3, \mathbb{Z}) \cong H_{q+2}(S^3, \mathbb{Z})$ . Note  $E_{0,1}^{0,1} = 0$  since this entry cannot be killed by any differential. This implies

$$H_k(\Omega S^3, \mathbb{Z}) = \begin{cases} \mathbb{Z} & \text{if } k \text{ is even,} \\ 0 & \text{else.} \end{cases}$$

In particular,  $\Omega S^3$  is an infinite-dimensional space.

We now discuss the cohomological version of the Serre spectral sequence and its multiplicative structure. This multiplication also helps in determining differentials, for example for the spectral sequences computing (co-)homology of unitary groups as above.

**Definition 2.18.** A cohomologically graded spectral sequence is a triple  $(E_\bullet, d_\bullet, h_\bullet)$  where  $(E_r)_r$  is a sequence of bigraded abelian groups,  $(d_r : E_r \rightarrow E_r)_r$  is a sequence of differentials ( $d_r \circ d_r = 0$ ) of bidegree  $(r, 1 - r)$ , and  $(h_r : H_\bullet(E_r) \rightarrow E_{r+1})_r$  a sequence of bigrading-preserving isomorphisms.

As before, one defines first quadrant ( $E_2^{p,q} = 0$  if  $p < 0$  or  $q < 0$ ) spectral sequences and the  $E_\infty$ -page.

Rather than the filtrations  $0 = F^{-1} \subseteq F^0 \subseteq \cdots \subseteq H$ , one now considers filtrations

$$H = F_0 \supseteq F_1 \supseteq \cdots \supseteq F_n \supseteq \cdots$$

**Definition 2.19.** A cohomological first quadrant spectral sequence is said to *converge* to a filtered object  $(H, F)$  in graded abelian groups if there are isomorphisms  $E_\infty^{p,q} \cong F_p^{p+q}/F_{p+1}^{p+q}$  for all  $p, q$ , and  $F_p^n = 0$  for all  $p > n$ . Again we write  $E_2^{p,q} \implies H$ .

**Definition 2.20.** A (commutative) multiplicative structure on a cohomologically graded spectral sequence  $(E_\bullet, d_\bullet, h_\bullet)$  is a bigraded (commutative) ring structure on  $E_r$ , i.e. there are associative maps  $E_r^{p,q} \otimes E_r^{p',q'} \rightarrow E_r^{p+p',q+q'}$ , such that  $d_r$  is a graded derivation, i.e.

$$d_r(x \cdot y) = d_r(x) \cdot y + (-1)^{p+q} x \cdot d_r(y)$$

for  $x \in E_r^{p,q}$ . Here (graded) commutative means  $xy = (-1)^{(p+q)(p'+q')}yx$ . As a result,  $H_\bullet(E_r)$  is a bigraded ring and we further require that the  $h_r$  are isomorphisms of bigraded rings. Furthermore, the  $E_\infty$ -page also inherits the structure of a (commutative) bigraded ring.

**Definition 2.21.** A filtration  $\cdots \subseteq F_n \subseteq \cdots \subseteq F_1 \subseteq F_0 = H$  on a graded ring  $H$  is said to be *multiplicative* (or compatible with the multiplicative structure) if  $F_s F_t \subseteq F_{s+t}$ . We say that  $(H, F)$  is a *filtered graded ring*.

It follows that the associated graded object  $\bigoplus F_p/F_{p+1}$  of a filtered graded (commutative) ring is a bigraded (commutative) ring.

**Definition 2.22.** A multiplicative first quadrant spectral sequence  $(E_\bullet, d_\bullet, h_\bullet)$  is said to *converge* to a filtered graded ring  $(H, F)$  if it converges additively and the chosen isomorphism  $E_\infty^{p,q} \cong F_p^{p+q}/F_{p+1}^{p+q}$  is compatible with the graded ring structure.

**Theorem 2.23** (Serre). *For every fibre sequence of spaces  $(F \rightarrow Y \rightarrow X, h)$  with  $X$  simply connected and every abelian group  $A$ , there exists a cohomological first quadrant spectral sequence of the form*

$$E_2^{p,q} = H^p(X, H^q(F, A)) \implies H^{p+q}(Y, A).$$

*If  $A$  is a (commutative) ring, then the spectral sequence is multiplicative and converges multiplicatively, where on the  $E_2$ -page the multiplication is given by  $(-1)^{p'q}$ -times the composite*

$$\begin{aligned} H^p(X, H^q(F, R)) \otimes H^{p'}(X, H^{q'}(F, R)) &\rightarrow H^{p+p'}(X, H^q(F, R) \otimes H^{q'}(F, R)) \\ &\rightarrow H^{p+p'}(X, H^{q+q'}(F, R)). \end{aligned}$$

Note: If  $H^\bullet(F, R)$  or  $H^\bullet(X, R)$  is flat over  $R$  of finite type, then the  $E_2$ -page is isomorphic to the graded tensor product of  $H^\bullet(X, R)$  and  $H^\bullet(F, R)$ .

**Example 2.24.** We reconsider the fibre sequence  $U(1) \rightarrow U(2) \rightarrow S^3$  with  $E_2^{p,q} = H^p(S^3, H^q(U(1), \mathbb{Z}))$ , i.e.

$$\begin{array}{c} \begin{array}{cccc} \mathbb{Z} & 0 & 0 & \mathbb{Z} \\ \mathbb{Z} & 0 & 0 & \mathbb{Z} \end{array} \\ \begin{array}{c} \uparrow q \\ \xrightarrow{p} \end{array} \end{array}$$

There cannot be non-trivial differentials. As a graded ring, the  $E_2$ -page (and hence also the  $E_\infty$ -page) is isomorphic to  $H^\bullet(S^3, \mathbb{Z}) \otimes H^\bullet(U(1), \mathbb{Z})$ . Let  $x_1 \in H^1(U(1), \mathbb{Z})$  and  $x_3 \in H^3(S^3, \mathbb{Z})$  be generators.

Then  $H^\bullet(U(1), \mathbb{Z}) \cong \bigwedge(x_1)$  and  $H^\bullet(S^3, \mathbb{Z}) \cong \bigwedge(x_3)$ , where  $\bigwedge(M)$  denotes the exterior algebra on a set  $M$ , i.e. the free algebra on  $x \in M$  modulo the relations  $x_i x_j = -x_j x_i$  and  $x_i^2 = 0$  for all  $x_i, x_j \in M$ . Hence, the  $E_2$ -page is isomorphic to  $\bigwedge(x_1, x_3)$ . The  $\mathbb{Z}$  in bidegree  $(3, 1)$  is spanned by  $x_1 x_3$ . The filtration collapses degreewise and hence  $H^*(U(2), \mathbb{Z})$  is exterior on classes  $x_1 \in H^1(U(2), \mathbb{Z})$  and  $x_3 \in H^3(U(2), \mathbb{Z})$  that are uniquely determined by the spectral sequence.

**Example 2.25.** We move on to the fibre sequence  $U(2) \rightarrow U(3) \rightarrow S^5$ . The  $E_2$ -page looks like the homological spectral sequence

$$\begin{array}{cccccc}
 q \uparrow & \mathbb{Z} & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & \mathbb{Z} \\
 & \mathbb{Z} & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & \mathbb{Z} \\
 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
 & \mathbb{Z} & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & \mathbb{Z} \\
 & \mathbb{Z} & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & \mathbb{Z} \\
 & & & & & & \searrow \\
 & & & & & & p
 \end{array}$$

Keeping the notation from the previous example, denote generators of the first column by  $1, x_1, x_3, x_1 x_3$ . Again, the  $E_2$ -page is given by

$$H^\bullet(S^5, \mathbb{Z}) \otimes H^\bullet(U(2), \mathbb{Z}) \cong \bigwedge(x_1, x_3, x_5),$$

where  $x_5 \in H^5(S^5, \mathbb{Z})$  is a generator. There is one possibly non-trivial differential  $d_5 : E_5^{0,4} \rightarrow E_5^{5,0}$ . However, the product rule implies

$$d_5(x_1 x_3) = d_5(x_1) x_3 + (-1)^{1+0} x_1 d_5(x_3) = 0 + 0 = 0.$$

Again, the filtration collapses and hence  $H^*(U(3), \mathbb{Z}) \cong \bigwedge(x_1, x_3, x_5)$ .

**Example 2.26.** We revisit  $U(3) \rightarrow U(4) \rightarrow S^7$ . The  $E_2$ -page now is

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc}
 q \uparrow & \mathbb{Z} & & & & & \mathbb{Z} \\
 & \mathbb{Z} & & & & & \mathbb{Z} \\
 & 0 & & & & & 0 \\
 & \mathbb{Z} & & & & & \mathbb{Z} \\
 & \mathbb{Z} & & \vdots & & & \mathbb{Z} \\
 & \mathbb{Z} & \cdots & 0 & \cdots & & \mathbb{Z} \\
 & \mathbb{Z} & & \vdots & & & \mathbb{Z} \\
 & 0 & & & & & 0 \\
 & \mathbb{Z} & & & & & \mathbb{Z} \\
 & \mathbb{Z} & & & & & \mathbb{Z} \\
 & & & & & & \searrow \\
 & & & & & & p
 \end{array}$$

As before, the product rule implies that all  $d_7$  differentials must be trivial, and  $E_2 \cong \bigwedge(x_1, x_3, x_5, x_7)$ . There is a non-trivial filtration on  $H^8(U(4), \mathbb{Z})$  of the form

$$0 \rightarrow \mathbb{Z}(x_1 x_7) \rightarrow H^8(U(4), \mathbb{Z}) \rightarrow \mathbb{Z}(x_3 x_5) \rightarrow 0$$

Additively the sequence splits, but one has to be careful with the multiplicative structure. To resolve this, we need to be precise with the differentiation between the classes  $x_i$  on the  $E_\infty$ -page and the corresponding classes  $\bar{x}_i \in H^*(U(4), \mathbb{Z})$ . Note that the choice of each  $\bar{x}_i$  is unique since the filtration collapses in degrees 0 to 7. Furthermore, we record their filtrations  $\bar{x}_1$  is in  $F_0^1$ ,  $\bar{x}_3$  is in  $F_0^3$ ,  $\bar{x}_5$  is in  $F_0^5$  and  $\bar{x}_7$  is in  $F_7^7$ . It follows that  $\bar{x}_1 \bar{x}_7$  is a generator of  $F_7^8$ , and  $\bar{x}_3 \bar{x}_5$  is a generator of  $F_0^8 / F_1^8$ . Hence,  $H^8(U(4), \mathbb{Z})$  is a free group on  $\bar{x}_1 \bar{x}_7$  and  $\bar{x}_3 \bar{x}_5$ , and it follows that  $H^\bullet(U(4), \mathbb{Z}) \cong \bigwedge(x_1, x_3, x_5, x_7)$ .

**Theorem 2.27.** *For all  $n \in \mathbb{N}$ , there is an isomorphism of graded rings*

$$H^\bullet(U(n), \mathbb{Z}) \cong \bigwedge(x_1, x_3, \dots, x_{2n-1})$$

with  $x_i$  of degree  $i$ .

*Proof.* By induction on  $n$ , the start  $n = 1$  is clear. Let  $n \geq 2$  and assume we know the statement for  $n - 1$ . We consider the Serre spectral sequence for the fibre sequence  $U(n - 1) \rightarrow U(n) \rightarrow S^{2n-1}$ . By induction, its  $E_2$ -page is isomorphic to

$$E_2 \cong H^\bullet(S^{2n-1}, \mathbb{Z}) \otimes H^\bullet(U(n - 1), \mathbb{Z}) = \bigwedge(x_{2n-1}) \otimes \bigwedge(x_1, x_3, \dots, x_{2n-3}).$$

Here,  $x_i$  is a generator of  $E_2^{0,i}$  for  $i \leq 2n - 3$  and  $x_{2n-1}$  is a generator of  $E_2^{2n-1,0}$ . The only possibly non-trivial differentials are  $d_{2n-1}$ . For degree reasons,  $d_{2n-1}$  vanishes on all generators  $x_1, x_3, \dots, x_{2n-1}$ . By the product rule, all differentials are 0. Hence the  $E_\infty$ -page is isomorphic to the  $E_2$ -page, and an exterior algebra  $\bigwedge(x_1, x_3, \dots, x_{2n-1})$ .

The filtrations on  $H^\bullet(U(n), \mathbb{Z})$  collapse in degrees  $0, \dots, 2n - 2$ , therefore we obtain unique lifts  $\bar{x}_1, \dots, \bar{x}_{2n-1} \in H^\bullet(U(n), \mathbb{Z})$ . We only know from the spectral sequence that  $x_i^2$  is of lower filtration hence a multiple of  $\bar{x}_{2n-1}$ , but not necessarily that  $\bar{x}_i^2 = 0$ . However we know from the additive structure (all subquotients are free over  $\mathbb{Z}$ ) that  $H^\bullet(U(n), \mathbb{Z})$  is torsionfree. As the multiplication is graded commutative, we hence have  $\bar{x}_i^2 = 0$ . We obtain a ring map  $f : \bigwedge(x_1, \dots, x_{2n-1}) \rightarrow H^\bullet(U(n), \mathbb{Z})$  by sending  $x_i$  to  $\bar{x}_i$ . To check that  $f$  is an isomorphism, define a grading on  $\bigwedge(x_1, \dots, x_{2n-1})$  by setting the degree of  $x_1, \dots, x_{2n-3}$  to be 0, and the degree of  $x_{2n-1}$  to be  $2n - 1$ . This induces a filtration by setting  $F_i$  to be the direct sum of the graded pieces of degree  $2i$ . Then  $f$  is filtration preserving and induces an isomorphism on associated graded pieces. The proof is finished by the following lemma.  $\square$

**Lemma 2.28.** *Let  $A$  and  $B$  be graded abelian groups equipped with filtrations*

$$\cdots F_2 \subseteq F_1 \subseteq F_0 = A \quad \text{and} \quad \cdots G_2 \subseteq G_1 \subseteq G_0 = B$$

*which are eventually 0 in every degree. If we have a graded filtration-preserving morphism  $f : A \rightarrow B$  that induces an isomorphism on all associated graded pieces  $F_i/F_{i+1} \cong G_i/G_{i+1}$ , then it is an isomorphism.*

*Proof.* This is an iterated 5-lemma argument.  $\square$

**Example 2.29.** We revisit the fibre sequence  $S^1 \rightarrow S^{2n+1} \rightarrow \mathbb{CP}^n$  and use the Serre spectral sequence to compute the ring  $H^\bullet(\mathbb{CP}^n, \mathbb{Z})$ . Arguing analogously to the homological case, the  $E_2$ -page looks as

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc}
\mathbb{Z} & 0 & \mathbb{Z} & 0 & \cdots & 0 & \mathbb{Z} \\
\searrow \scriptstyle \mathbb{R} & & \searrow \scriptstyle \mathbb{R} & & \searrow \scriptstyle \mathbb{R} & & \\
\mathbb{Z} & 0 & \mathbb{Z} & 0 & \cdots & 0 & \mathbb{Z} \\
\downarrow & & & & & & \downarrow \\
0 & & & & & & 2n
\end{array}$$

**Example 2.30.** Next we compute the ring structure on  $H^\bullet(\Omega S^2, \mathbb{Z})$ . Dual to the homological case, we obtain the following  $E_2$ -page corresponding to the fibre sequence  $\Omega S^3 \rightarrow * \rightarrow S^3$ :

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc}
& & & & & & q \\
& & & & & & \vdots \\
& & & & & & \mathbb{Z} \\
& & & 0 & 0 & & \mathbb{Z} \\
& & & \searrow & & & \\
& & & 0 & & & 0 \\
& & & \mathbb{Z} & & & \mathbb{Z} \\
& & & \searrow & & & \\
& & & 0 & & & 0 \\
& & & \mathbb{Z} & & & \mathbb{Z} \\
& & & \searrow & & & \\
& & & 0 & & & 0 \\
& & & \mathbb{Z} & 0 & 0 & \mathbb{Z} \\
& & & & & & \vdots \\
& & & & & & p
\end{array}$$

Remark: There is also a ring structure on the homology of  $H_*(\Omega S^3, \mathbb{Z})$  induced by the  $H$ -space (in fact  $A_\infty$ - or  $E_1$ -space) structure by concatenation of loops. One can show that with this ring structure,  $H_*(\Omega S^3, \mathbb{Z})$  is a polynomial ring on a generator in degree 2. More generally, if  $H_*(X, \mathbb{Z})$  is free over  $\mathbb{Z}$ , then  $H_*(\Omega \Sigma X, \mathbb{Z})$  is the tensor algebra on  $H_*(X, \mathbb{Z})$  (Bott-Samelson theorem) and the map  $H_*(X, \mathbb{Z}) \rightarrow H_*(\Omega \Sigma X, \mathbb{Z}) = T(H_*(X, \mathbb{Z}))$  is induced by the natural map  $X \rightarrow \Omega \Sigma X$ .

**Example 2.31.** We consider the map  $S^3 \rightarrow K(\mathbb{Z}, 3)$  classifying a generator of  $H^3(S^3, \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}$ . (equivalently, inducing an isomorphism on  $\pi_3(-, *)$ ). Let  $X$  denote the homotopy fibre, so that  $X \rightarrow S^3 \rightarrow$

A commutative diagram illustrating the structure of the tensor product of two free resolutions. The diagram is a grid with rows and columns indexed by integers  $q$  and  $k$ . The vertical axis is labeled  $q$  and the horizontal axis is labeled  $k$ . The grid contains elements  $\mathbb{Z}$  and  $0$ . Arrows point from  $\mathbb{Z}$  elements to  $\mathbb{Z}$  elements, specifically from  $(k, q)$  to  $(k+1, q-1)$ . The elements are arranged as follows:

$\vdots$			$\vdots$
$\mathbb{Z}$	$0$	$0$	$\mathbb{Z}$
$0$			$0$
$\mathbb{Z}$			$\mathbb{Z}$
$0$			$0$
$\mathbb{Z}$			$\mathbb{Z}$
$0$			$0$
$\mathbb{Z}$	$0$	$0$	$\mathbb{Z}$

$$\begin{array}{cccc}
q & \vdots & & \vdots \\
0 & 0 & 0 & \mathbb{Z}/4\mathbb{Z} \\
0 & & & 0 \\
0 & & & \mathbb{Z}/3\mathbb{Z} \\
0 & & & 0 \\
0 & & & \mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z} \\
0 & & & 0 \\
\mathbb{Z} & 0 & 0 & 0 \\
& p & & 
\end{array}$$
$$\tilde{H}^n(X, \mathbb{Z}) \cong \begin{cases} \mathbb{Z}/k\mathbb{Z} & \text{if } n = 2k + 1, \\ 0 & \text{else} \end{cases}$$

**Corollary 2.32.** *We have  $\pi_4(S^3, *) \cong \mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z}$  and  $\pi_4(S^2, *) \cong \mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z}$ .*

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We now know the following homotopy groups of spheres:

	$\pi_1$	$\pi_2$	$\pi_3$	$\pi_4$	$\pi_5$	$\pi_6$
$S^1$	$\mathbb{Z}$	0	0	0	0	0
$S^2$	0	$\mathbb{Z}$	$\mathbb{Z}$	$\mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z}$		
$S^3$	0	0	$\mathbb{Z}$	$\mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z}$		
$S^4$	0	0	0	$\mathbb{Z}$	$\mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z}$	
$S^5$	0	0	0	0	$\mathbb{Z}$	$\mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z}$
$S^6$	0	0	0	0	0	$\mathbb{Z}$

where  $\pi_5(S^4, *) = \pi_6(S^5, *) = \mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z}$  follows from the Freudenthal suspension theorem.

### 3 Construction of the Serre spectral sequence

We focus on the cohomological version. Roughly speaking we proceed via

double complexes  $\Rightarrow$  filtered complexes  $\Rightarrow$  exact couple  $\Rightarrow$  spectral sequence.

**Definition 3.1.** An exact couple is a pair of abelian groups  $(A, E)$  together with a triangle

$$\begin{array}{ccc} A & \xrightarrow{i} & A \\ \swarrow k & & \searrow j \\ & E & \end{array}$$

which is exact, i.e. exact at each of the three corners.

Define  $d_1 : E \rightarrow E$  via  $d_1 = j \circ k$ . We have  $d_1^2 = j \circ k \circ j \circ k = j \circ 0 \circ k = 0$ , so  $d_1$  is a differential. We can define  $H(E) = \ker(d_1) / \operatorname{im}(d_1)$ , and claim that there is a new triangle

$$\begin{array}{ccc} A_2 & \xrightarrow{i_2} & A_2 \\ \swarrow k_2 & & \searrow j_2 \\ & E_2 & \end{array} \quad (*)$$

defined via  $E_2 = H(E)$ ,  $A_2 = \operatorname{im}(i) \subseteq A$ ,  $i_2 = i|_{A_2}$ . For  $a \in A_2$  write  $a = i(b)$  for some  $b \in A$ . Then  $j_2(a) := [j(b)]$ . This is well-defined:  $d_1(j(b)) = j(k(j(b))) = 0$ , and if  $i(b) = i(b')$ , then  $b - b' \in \ker i = \operatorname{im} k$ , so  $j(b - b') \in \operatorname{im}(j \circ k) = \operatorname{im} d_1$ . Finally,  $k_2([e]) := k(e)$ : Since  $j(k(e)) = 0$ , exactness implies  $k(e) \in \operatorname{im} i$ , and if  $e \in \operatorname{im} d_1$ , then  $e \in \operatorname{im} j$  and  $k(e) = 0$ .

**Lemma 3.2.** The triangle  $(*)$  is again an exact couple.

*Proof.* Diagram chase (omitted). □

Hence we can iterate and obtain a sequence of exact couples  $(A_n, E_n)$  with maps  $i_n, j_n, k_n$ . In particular we obtain a sequence of abelian groups  $E_n$  with differentials  $d_n = j_n \circ k_n$  and isomorphisms  $H(E_n) \cong E_{n+1}$ . This is like a spectral sequence, except we are missing the bigrading.

For the Serre spectral sequence the two gradings play different roles: A filtration degree ( $x$ -axis), and the difference between the cohomological degree and the filtration degree.

**Definition 3.3.** An unrolled exact couple is a collection of pairs  $(A^s, t^s)_{s \in \mathbb{Z}}$  of abelian groups with maps

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \dots & \xrightarrow{i} & A^{s+1} & \xrightarrow{i} & A^s & \xrightarrow{i} & A^{s-1} \rightarrow \dots \\ & \searrow j & \swarrow k & \searrow j & \swarrow k & \searrow j & \\ & \dots & E^s & & E^{s-1} & & \end{array}$$

Every unrolled exact couple gives an exact couple via  $A = \bigoplus_s A^s$ ,  $E = \bigoplus_s E^s$  combined in a single triangle. We obtain a cochain complex

$$\dots \xrightarrow{j \circ k} E^{s-1} \xrightarrow{j \circ k} E^s \xrightarrow{j \circ k} E^{s+1} \rightarrow \dots$$

Hence  $H_*(E)$  inherits a grading, i.e.  $H(E) = \bigoplus_j H^j(E)$ . Generally we can write  $E_r = \bigoplus_s E_r^s \cong \bigoplus_s H^s(E_{r-1})$ . Assume  $e \in E^s$ , we can chase through its "life" in the spectral sequence: If  $d_1(e) \neq 0$ ,



then  $e$  does not define a class in  $H^\bullet(E)$ . If  $d_1(e) = 0$ , then  $[e] \in H^s(E) = E_2^s$ . In the unrolled picture,  $d_2[e] = j_2 k_2(e)$  is computed as follows: By exactness,  $k(e) \in \text{im}(i)$ , say  $k(e) = i(b)$ , and  $d_2([e]) = [j(b)]$ . If  $d_2([e]) \neq 0$ ,  $e$  does not define a class in  $H(E_2)$ . If  $d_2(e) = 0$ , we can continue in this way. In general, if  $k(e) = i^r(b)$  for some  $r \geq 0$  and  $b \in A^{s+r+1}$ , then  $e$  defines a class in  $E_{r+1}^s = H^s(E_r)$  and  $d_{r+1}([e])$  is  $j(b)$ . If  $e$  survives in every step, it is called a permanent cycle. We note: If  $e \in E_r^s$ , then  $d_r([e])$  is represented by some element of  $E_r^{s+r}$ , i.e.  $d_r$  raises the filtration degree by  $r$ .

A filtered cochain complex is a cochain complex  $C^\bullet$  together with a sequence of subcomplexes

$$\dots \subseteq F^2 C^\bullet \subseteq F^1 C^\bullet \subseteq F^0 C^\bullet = C^\bullet$$

For convenience, we extend the filtration grading to  $\mathbb{Z}$  via  $F^s C^\bullet = C^\bullet$  for  $s < 0$ . The associated graded complex is the collection of subquotients

$$\text{gr}^s C^\bullet = F^s C^\bullet / F^{s+1} C^\bullet.$$

The corresponding short exact sequences induce a long exact sequence

$$\dots \rightarrow H^t(F^{s+1} C^\bullet) \rightarrow H^t(F^s C^\bullet) \rightarrow H^t(\text{gr}^s(C^\bullet)) \rightarrow H^{t+1}(F^{s+1} C^\bullet) \rightarrow \dots$$

Taking the direct sum over all  $t$ , we obtain

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \dots & \xrightarrow{i} & H^\bullet(F^{s+1} C^\bullet) & \xrightarrow{i} & H^\bullet(F^s C^\bullet) & \xrightarrow{i} & H^\bullet(F^{s-1} C^\bullet) \rightarrow \dots \\ & \searrow j & \swarrow k & & \swarrow j & \searrow k & \\ & \dots & H^\bullet(\text{gr}^s(C^\bullet)) & & H^\bullet(\text{gr}^s(C^\bullet)) & & \end{array}$$

in which each triangle is exact. We observe that  $i$  and  $j$  preserve the cohomological degree, but  $k$  raises it by 1. We hence obtain an unrolled exact couple with an additional cohomological degree, and an exact couple with

$$A = \bigoplus_{s,t} H^t(F^s C^\bullet), \quad E = \bigoplus_{s,t} H^t(\text{gr}^s C^\bullet)$$

and an associated spectral sequence. What does it converge to? We define a filtration on  $H^\bullet(C)$  by setting  $F^s H^t(C) = \text{im}(H^t(F^s C^\bullet) \rightarrow H^t(C^\bullet))$ .

**Theorem 3.4.** *If for every  $t$ , the cohomology  $H^t(F^s C^\bullet)$  is 0 for  $s$  large enough, the spectral sequence associated to the exact couple constructed above converges to  $(H^\bullet C^\bullet, F^s H^\bullet(C^\bullet))$ , with  $E_1$ -page  $E_1^{s,t} = H^t(\text{gr}^s(C^\bullet))$ .*

The gradings of this spectral sequence are different to the one for the Serre spectral sequence:  $d_r$  raises the filtration degree by  $r$  and the cohomological degree by 1.

If  $C^\bullet$  is concentrated in nonnegative degree, we get a first quadrant spectral sequence with the cohomological degree remaining constant along rows. For the Serre spectral sequence, we use cohomological degree minus filtration degree for the vertical axis. This regrading remains in the first quadrant because all terms with filtration degree larger than cohomological degree are trivial.

*Proof.* (of 3.4) In the exact couple,  $A_r$  is the direct sum over all  $s$  of

$$A_r^s := \text{im}(i^{r-1} : H^\bullet(F^{s+r-1} C) \rightarrow H^\bullet(F^s C))$$

For  $t \in \mathbb{Z}$  we set  $n_t \in \mathbb{N}$  to be the minimum over all  $n$  such that  $H^t(F^n C) = 0$ . Then for  $r \geq n_t + 1$ , either  $s > 0$ , i.e.  $s + r - 1 > n_t$ , so  $H^t(F^{s+r-1} C) = 0$ , so  $A_r^s = 0$ , or  $s \leq 0$ , then  $H^t(F^s C) = H^t C$ , and  $A_r^s = F^{s+r-1} H^t C$ . So

$$A_r^t = \bigoplus_{s \leq 0} F^{s+r-1} H^t(C) = \bigoplus_{0 \leq p \leq n_t} F^p H^t(C).$$

This is independent of  $r$  if  $r \geq n_t + 1$ . Let  $A_\infty^t$  be this value. The map  $i_r : A_r^t \rightarrow A_\infty^t$  is the direct sum over the inclusions  $F^{p+1}H^t(C) \rightarrow F^pH^t(C)$ . In particular, it is injective, so by exactness  $k_r : E_r^{t-1} \rightarrow A_r^t$  must be zero. Thus for  $r$  large, all differentials are zero and the terms  $E_r^t$  stabilize as well. Moreover, by exactness of

$$\begin{array}{ccc} A_\infty & \xrightarrow{i_r} & A_\infty \\ & \nwarrow 0 & \nearrow j_r \\ & E_\infty & \end{array}$$

we have

$$E_\infty^t \cong \text{coker}(i_r) \cong \bigoplus_{p \leq n_t} F^p H^t(C) / F^{p+1} H^t(C).$$

□

**Example 3.5.** Let  $X$  be a CW-complex with skeleta

$$\text{sk}_0 X \subseteq \text{sk}_1 X \subseteq \dots \subseteq \text{sk}_n X \subseteq \dots$$

We can filter  $C^\bullet(X, A)$  by

$$F^s C^\bullet(X, A) = \ker(C^\bullet(X, A) \rightarrow C^\bullet(\text{sk}_s X, A)) =: C^\bullet(X, \text{sk}_s X, A)$$

Then we obtain a spectral sequence with  $E_1$ -page

$$H^\bullet(C^\bullet(X, \text{sk}_s X, A) / C^\bullet(X, \text{sk}_{s+1} X, A)) \cong H^t(\text{sk}_{s+1} X, \text{sk}_s X, A) \cong \tilde{H}^t(\text{sk}_{s+1} X / \text{sk}_s X, A)$$

It converges to  $H^\bullet(C^\bullet(X, A)) = H^\bullet(X, A)$ . Note that on the  $E_1$ -page only the entries on the main diagonal are nontrivial, and these are exactly the cellular cochain complex. For degree reasons, the spectral sequence degenerates at the  $E_2$ -page, where the entries along the main diagonals are the homology of the cellular cochain complex, i.e. the cellular cohomology. Thus, this reproves that the cellular cochain complex computes cohomology.

**Example 3.6.** Let  $p : Y \rightarrow X$  be a Serre fibration with  $X$  a CW-complex. Then we can filter  $Y$  via the preimages  $p^{-1}(\text{sk}_s X)$  and obtain a filtration on  $C^\bullet(Y, A)$ . The resulting spectral sequence "is" the Serre spectral sequence. However, some aspects (in particular, the multiplicative structure) are clearer in the construction with double complexes.

### The Spectral Sequence of a Double Complex

**Definition 3.7.** A double complex is a bigraded abelian group  $C^{\bullet, \bullet}$  equipped with two differentials

$$\delta_h : C^{p,q} \rightarrow C^{p+1,q}, \quad \text{and} \quad \delta_v : C^{p,q} \rightarrow C^{p,q+1}$$

satisfying  $\delta_h^2 = 0 = \delta_v^2$  and  $\delta_h \delta_v = \delta_v \delta_h$ , i.e. there is an infinite commutative diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} C^{p-1,q+1} & \xrightarrow{\delta_h} & C^{p,q+1} & \longrightarrow & C^{p+1,q+1} & \longrightarrow & \dots \\ \delta_v \uparrow & & \uparrow & & \uparrow & & \\ C^{p-1,q} & \longrightarrow & C^{p,q} & \longrightarrow & C^{p+1,q} & \longrightarrow & \dots \\ \uparrow & & \uparrow & & \uparrow & & \\ C^{p-1,q-1} & \longrightarrow & C^{p,q-1} & \longrightarrow & C^{p+1,q-1} & \longrightarrow & \dots \end{array}$$

with all rows and columns complexes. The "vertical cohomology groups"  $H_{\delta_v}^q(C^{p, \bullet})$  inherit a "horizontal" differential  $\delta_h : H_{\delta_v}^q(C^{p, \bullet}) \rightarrow H_{\delta_v}^q(C^{p+1, \bullet})$ . We write  $H_{\delta_h}^p H_{\delta_v}^q(C^{\bullet, \bullet})$  for the resulting cohomology groups.

**Example 3.8.**  $D_1, D_2$  cochain complexes. Then the tensor products  $D_1^p \otimes D_2^q$  form a double complex with  $\delta_h$  from  $D_1$  and  $\delta_v$  from  $D_2$ .

**Definition 3.9.** Let  $(C^{\bullet,\bullet}, \delta_h, \delta_v)$  a double complex. Its *total complex*  $\text{Tot}(C)$  is the cochain complex  $\text{Tot}(C)^n := \bigoplus_{p+q=n} C^{p,q}$  and  $\delta = \delta_h + (-1)^p \delta_v$ .

Note: The  $(-1)^p$  is needed to guarantee  $\delta^2 = 0$ .

A double complex  $C^{\bullet,\bullet}$  can be filtered by

$$F^s(C)^{p,q} = \begin{cases} C^{p,q} & \text{if } p \geq s, \\ 0 & \text{else.} \end{cases}$$

This induces a filtration on  $\text{Tot}(C)$  via  $F^s \text{Tot}(C) = \text{Tot}(F^s(C))$ . Then  $\text{gr}_s \text{Tot}(C)^t = C^{s,t-s}$  with differential  $(-1)^s \delta_v$ . The sign doesn't affect cohomology, hence  $H^t(\text{gr}_s \text{Tot}(C)) = H_{\delta_v}^{t-s}(C^{s,\bullet})$ . We hence get a spectral sequence with  $E_1$ -page  $E_1^{s,t} = H^1(\text{gr}_s \text{Tot}(C)) = H_{\delta_v}^{t-s}(C^{s,\bullet})$ . Moreover,  $d_1$  agrees with the horizontal differentials  $\delta_h$  (exercise), so  $E_2^{s,t} \cong H_{\delta_h}^s H_{\delta_v}^{t-s}(C^{\bullet,\bullet})$ . If  $C^{p,q} = 0$  if  $p < 0$  or  $q < 0$ , then the  $E_1$ -page is concentrated in degrees  $t \geq s \geq 0$  and the spectral sequence converges to the  $H^\bullet(\text{Tot}(C))$ . It is hence customary to reindex to  $(s, t-s)$  and obtain a first quadrant spectral sequence with Serre grading  $H_{\delta_h}^s H_{\delta_v}^t(C) \Rightarrow H^{s+t}(\text{Tot}(C))$ .

Remark: Swapping the horizontal and vertical direction yields a different spectral sequence also converging to  $H^\bullet(\text{Tot}(C))$ .

### Dress's construction of the Serre spectral sequence

Let  $f : E \rightarrow B$  be a Serre fibration. A singular  $(p, q)$ -simplex of  $f$  is a commutative diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \Delta^p \times \Delta^q & \longrightarrow & E \\ \downarrow \text{pr}_1 & & \downarrow f \\ \Delta^p & \longrightarrow & B \end{array}$$

Let  $C_{p,q}(f)$  be the free abelian group on all singular  $(p, q)$ -simplices. There is a differential  $\delta_h : C_{p,q}(f) \rightarrow C_{p-1,q}(f)$  by taking the alternating sum of the faces of the  $p$ -simplex, i.e. if  $d_i : \Delta^{p-1} \rightarrow \Delta^p$  is the  $i$ -th face of  $\Delta^p$ , we consider

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} \Delta^{p-1} \times \Delta^q & \xrightarrow{d_i \times \text{id}} & \Delta^p \times \Delta^q & \longrightarrow & E \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \downarrow f \\ \Delta^{p-1} & \xrightarrow{d_i} & \Delta^p & \longrightarrow & B \end{array}$$

Similarly, one obtains a vertical differential  $\delta_v : C_{p,q}(f) \rightarrow C_{p,q-1}(f)$  as the alternating sum of the faces of the  $q$ -simplex, obtained as

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} \Delta^p \times \Delta^{q-1} & \xrightarrow{\text{id} \times d_i} & \Delta^p \times \Delta^q & \longrightarrow & E \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \downarrow f \\ \Delta^p & \longrightarrow & \Delta^p & \longrightarrow & B \end{array}$$

By dualizing we obtain a double complex  $C^{\bullet,\bullet}(f, A) = \text{Hom}(C_{\bullet,\bullet}(f), A)$  for every coefficient group  $A$ . We have  $C^{p,q}(f, A) = 0$  for  $p < 0$  or  $q < 0$ , hence we obtain a Serre-graded first quadrant spectral sequence with  $E_2$ -page  $E_2^{s,t} = H_{\delta_h}^s H_{\delta_v}^t(C^{\bullet,\bullet}(f, A))$  converging to  $H^\bullet(\text{Tot}(C^{\bullet,\bullet}(f, A)))$ . This is the Serre spectral sequence. We have to show that the  $E_2$ -page and the limit agree with  $H^\bullet(B, H^\bullet(F, A))$  and  $H^\bullet(E, A)$ , respectively.

We start with  $H^\bullet(\text{Tot}(C^\bullet(f, A))) \cong H^\bullet(E, A)$ . For this we swap the horizontal and vertical directions and obtain another spectral sequence  $H_{\delta_v}^s H_{\delta_h}^t(C(f, A)) \Rightarrow H^\bullet(\text{Tot}(C(f, A)))$ . Claim: The  $E_2$ -page is 0 if  $s \neq 0$  and  $H_{\delta_v}^0 H_{\delta_h}^t(C(f, A)) \cong H^t(E, A)$ .

We fix  $s \geq 0$  and consider diagrams

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \Delta^t \times \Delta^s & \longrightarrow & E \\ \downarrow \text{pr}_1 & & \downarrow f \\ \Delta^t & \longrightarrow & B \end{array}$$

We can rewrite this to

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \Delta^t & \longrightarrow & \text{map}(\Delta^s, E) \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \text{map}(\Delta^s, f) \\ B & \xrightarrow{\text{const}} & \text{map}(\Delta^s, B) \end{array}$$

This in turn is equivalent to a single map

$$\Delta^t \rightarrow B \times_{\text{map}(\Delta^s, B)} \text{map}(\Delta^s, E) =: P,$$

i.e. a singular  $t$ -simplex of the space  $P$ . One checks that in fact  $C^{s, \bullet}(f, A)$  is isomorphic to  $C^\bullet(P, A)$ . Now,  $\Delta^s$  is contractible, hence  $B \rightarrow \text{map}(\Delta^s, B)$  is a homotopy equivalence. Since  $f$  is a Serre fibration, it follows that  $P \rightarrow \text{map}(\Delta^s, E)$  is a weak homotopy equivalence. In particular,  $H_{\delta_h}^t(C^{s, \bullet}(f, A)) \cong H^t(E, A)$  for all  $t \geq 0$ . Under these identifications, every face map of  $\Delta^s$  induces the identity on these groups. Hence the complex computing  $H_{\delta_v}^s H_{\delta_h}^t(E, A)$  equals

$$H^t(E, A) \xrightarrow{0} H^t(E, A) \xrightarrow{\text{id}} H^t(E, A) \xrightarrow{0} H^t(E, A) \xrightarrow{\text{id}} \dots$$

thus

$$H_{\delta_v}^s H_{\delta_h}^t(C(f, A)) = \begin{cases} H^t(E, A) & s = 0 \\ 0 & s > 0. \end{cases}$$

It follows that  $E_\infty = E_2$  and  $H^t(\text{Tot}(C(f, A))) \cong H^t(E, A)$ .

It remains to compute the  $E_2$ -term.

**Definition 3.10.** The *fundamental groupoid*  $\pi_1 X$  of a space  $X$  is the category with objects the points of  $X$  and morphisms  $\text{Hom}_{\pi_1 X}(x, y) = \{\text{homotopy classes of paths } \gamma \text{ from } x \text{ to } y\}$ . Composition is the concatenation of paths.

$\pi_1 X$  is a groupoid, i.e. every morphism is invertible. Furthermore,  $\text{Hom}_{\pi_1 X}(x, x) = \pi_1(X, x)$ .

**Definition 3.11.** A *local system*  $M$  on  $X$  is a functor  $M : \pi_1 X \rightarrow \text{Ab}$ . We write  $M_x$  for  $M(x)$

Note: If  $X$  is path-connected,  $\pi_1 X$  is equivalent to the groupoid with one object  $x \in X$  and automorphisms  $\pi_1(X, x)$ . Hence a local system is equivalent datum to an abelian group  $A$  with action by  $\pi_1(X, x)$ .

If  $X$  is even simply-connected, every local system is isomorphic to the constant local system for an abelian group  $A$ .

**Example 3.12.** Let  $f : E \rightarrow B$  be a Serre fibration,  $A$  an abelian group and  $q \in \mathbb{N}$ . We write  $F_x := f^{-1}(x)$  for the fibre of  $x \in X$ . We obtain a local system  $x \mapsto H_q(F_x, A)$ . On homotopy classes of paths

$[\gamma : x \rightarrow y]$ , this is defined as follows: Consider the pullback

$$\begin{array}{ccc} F_\gamma & \longrightarrow & E \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow f \\ I & \xrightarrow{\gamma} & B \end{array}$$

which comes with weak homotopy equivalences  $F_x \rightarrow F_\gamma, F_y \rightarrow F_\gamma$ . Hence on homology we obtain an induced map

$$H_p(\gamma, A) : H_q(F_x, A) \xrightarrow{\simeq} H_q(F_\gamma, A) \xleftarrow{\simeq} H_q(F_y, A).$$

To show compatability with composition and homotopy invariance, consider pullbacks of  $f$  along maps  $\Delta^2 \rightarrow B$ .

Similarly, one obtains a local system  $x \mapsto H^q(F_x, A)$ .

**Example 3.13.** Let  $M$  be a topological manifold of dimension  $n$ , then the assignment  $x \mapsto M_x = H_n(M, M \setminus \{x\}, \mathbb{Z})$  extends to a local system. For a path  $\gamma : x \rightarrow y$ , cover the path by contractible open sets  $U_i$  and use that  $H_n(M, M \setminus \{x\}, \mathbb{Z}) \cong H_n(M, M \setminus U_i, \mathbb{Z})$ . iteratively.  $M$  is orientable iff this local system is isomorphic to the constant one on  $\mathbb{Z}$ .

Next we define (co-)homology with coefficients in a local system  $M$  on  $X$ . We set  $C_n(X, M) = \bigoplus_{\sigma : \Delta^n \rightarrow X} M_{\sigma_0}$  where  $\sigma_0 \in X$  is the image of the 0th vertex of  $\Delta^n$ . There is a differential

$$d : C_n(X, M) \rightarrow C_{n-1}(X, M), \quad d(\sigma, m) = (\sigma \circ d_0, (\sigma_{0,1})_*(m)) + \sum_{i=1}^n (-1)^i (\sigma \circ d_i, m)$$

where  $\sigma_{0,1}$  is the image under  $\sigma$  of any path from the 0th vertex to the 1st vertex. Note that  $\sigma \circ d_0$  has 0th vertex equal to the first vertex of  $\sigma$ , while all the other  $\sigma \circ d_i$  have  $(\sigma \circ d_i)_0 = \sigma_0$ .

We omit the proof that this defines a chain complex.

**Definition 3.14.** For a local system  $M$ , we define  $H_\bullet(X, M)$  as the homology of this chain complex.

If  $M$  is constant, this recovers the ordinary homology. A map of local systems  $M \rightarrow N$  induces maps  $H_\bullet(X, M) \rightarrow H_\bullet(X, N)$ . A map of spaces  $f : X' \rightarrow X$  and a local system  $M$  on  $X$ , we obtain a pullback local system  $f^*M$  and a map  $H_\bullet(X', f^*M) \rightarrow H_\bullet(X, M)$ , where  $(f^*M)_x = M_{f(x)}$ .

Let  $M$  be a local system on a space  $X$ . Then  $C^\bullet(X, M)$  is defined as  $C^n(X, M) = \prod_{\sigma : \Delta^n \rightarrow X} M_{\sigma_0}$  with differential

$$df(\sigma) = M(\sigma_{01})^{-1}(f(d^0\sigma)) + \sum_{i=1}^n (-1)^i f(d^i\sigma).$$

**Definition 3.15.** Cohomology with local coordinates is defined as  $H^\bullet(X, M) = H^\bullet(C^\bullet(X, M))$ .

**Example 3.16.** One can show that using local coefficients there is a version of Poincaré duality without an orientation assumption: If  $M$  is a compact topological manifold of dimension  $n$ , there is a fundamental class  $[M] \in H_n(M, \mathbb{Z}^{or})$ , where  $\mathbb{Z}^{or}$  is the local system from example 3.13, such that there are isomorphisms  $H^\bullet(M, \mathbb{Z}) \rightarrow H_{n-\bullet}(M, \mathbb{Z}^{or})$  and  $H^\bullet(M, \mathbb{Z}^{or}) \rightarrow H_{n-\bullet}(M, \mathbb{Z})$

We now go back to the spectral sequence constructed out of the double complex  $C^{\bullet,\bullet}(p, A)$  for a Serre fibration  $p : E \rightarrow B$ . We already know that it is a first quadrant spectral sequence converging to  $H^\bullet(E, A)$ . It remains to understand the  $E_2$ -page. We fix a map  $\sigma : \Delta^p \rightarrow B$  and consider a square

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \Delta^p \times \Delta^q & \longrightarrow & E \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow p \\ \Delta^p & \xrightarrow{\sigma} & B \end{array}$$

This is equivalent to a square

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \Delta^q & \longrightarrow & E^{\Delta^p} \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ * & \xrightarrow{\sigma} & B^{\Delta^p} \end{array}$$

This in turn is equivalent to a map  $\Delta^q \rightarrow F_\sigma$ , where  $F_\sigma$  is the fibre of the fibration  $E^{\Delta^p} \rightarrow B^{\Delta^p}$  over the point  $\sigma$ . Thus the columns of the double complex are isomorphic to a product over all maps  $\sigma : \Delta^p \rightarrow X$  of the singular cochain complex of  $F_\sigma$ . Again,  $F_\sigma$  is weakly homotopy equivalent to the fibre  $F_{\sigma_0}$  of the original fibration  $p : E \rightarrow B$  over the 0th vertex  $\sigma_0$ , using that  $\Delta^p$  is contractible. Hence, the vertical cohomology of the double complex are the products

$$\prod_{\sigma : \Delta^p \rightarrow B} H^q(F_\sigma, A) \cong \prod_{\sigma : \Delta^p \rightarrow B} H^q(F_{\sigma_0}, A).$$

In this decomposition, the horizontal differentials work as follows: For  $i > 0$ , the triangle

$$\begin{array}{ccc} & H^q(F_{\sigma_0}, A) & \\ \cong \uparrow & \nwarrow \cong & \\ H^q(F_\sigma, A) & \xrightarrow{d^i} & H^q(F_{\sigma \circ d_i}, A) \end{array}$$

commutes. For  $i = 0$  we have a commuting square

$$\begin{array}{ccc} H^q(F_{\sigma_0}, A) & \xrightarrow[\cong]{H^q(\gamma, A)} & H^q(F_{(\sigma \circ d_0)_0}, A) \\ \cong \uparrow & & \cong \uparrow \\ H^q(F_\sigma, A) & \xrightarrow{d_0} & H^q(F_{\sigma \circ d_0}, A) \end{array}$$

where  $\gamma$  is the image in  $X$  of any path in  $\Delta^p$  from  $e_0$  to  $e_1$ . Hence, the vertical cohomologies equipped with the horizontal differential are isomorphic to the cochain complex  $C^\bullet(X, H^q(B, A))$ . This shows that the  $E_2$ -page is given by  $E_2^{p,q} \cong H^p(B, H^q(F_-, A))$  as claimed.

Analogously, the spectral sequence associated to the double complex  $C_{\bullet, \bullet}(p, A)$  yields the homological Serre spectral sequence, with  $E_2$ -term the local system homology  $H_p(B, H_q(F, A))$ .

It remains to discuss multiplicative properties.

**Definition 3.17.** A multiplicative structure on a double complex  $C^{\bullet, \bullet}$  is a collection of maps  $\mu : C^{p,q} \otimes C^{p',q'} \rightarrow C^{p+p', q+q'}$  that are associative and unital (with unit 1 in degree  $(0, 0)$ ). Moreover, the differential  $\delta = \delta_h + (-1)^p \delta_v$  of  $\text{Tot}(C)$  satisfies the Leibniz rule, i.e.  $\delta(xy) = \delta(x)y + (-1)^{p+q} x\delta(y)$ .

Chasing through our constructions, we find

**Proposition 3.18.** *The spectral sequence associated to a multiplicative double complex is multiplicative.*

To apply this, we define a multiplicative structure on  $C^{\bullet, \bullet}(p, R)$  where  $R$  is a ring, and  $p : E \rightarrow B$  a Serre fibration. Recall that for cochains  $\varphi \in C^p(X, R)$ ,  $\psi \in C^q(X, R)$  and  $\sigma : \Delta^{p+q} \rightarrow X$  one defines

$$(\varphi \smile \psi)(\sigma) = \varphi(d_{p\text{-front}}^* \sigma) \psi(d_{q\text{-back}}^* \sigma).$$

Similarly, if  $\varphi \in C^{p,q}(p, R)$ ,  $\psi \in C^{p',q'}(p, R)$  and a  $(p+p', q+q')$ -simplex  $\sigma$  represented by

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \Delta^{p+p'} \times \Delta^{q+q'} & \xrightarrow{d} & E \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ \Delta^{p+p'} & \xrightarrow{\sigma} & B \end{array}$$

are given, we set

$$(\varphi \smile \psi)(\sigma) := \varphi(d_{(p,q)\text{-front}}^* \sigma) \cdot \psi(d_{(p',q')\text{-back}}^* \sigma)$$

where  $d_{(p,q)\text{-front}}^* \sigma$  is the  $(p, q)$ -simplex given by

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} \Delta^p \times \Delta^q & \xrightarrow{d_{p\text{-front}} \times d_{q\text{-front}}} & \Delta^{p+p'} \times \Delta^{q+q'} & \xrightarrow{d} & E \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ \Delta^p & \xrightarrow{d_{p\text{-front}}} & \Delta^{p+p'} & \xrightarrow{\sigma} & B \end{array}$$

and similarly for  $d_{(p',q')\text{-back}}$

**Lemma 3.19.** *Both the horizontal and the vertical differential on  $C^{\bullet,\bullet}(p, R)$  satisfy the graded Leibniz rule with respect to this cup product. Hence  $C^{\bullet,\bullet}(p, R)$  becomes a multiplicative double complex.*

*Proof.* Analogous to the Leibniz rule for the ordinary cup product.  $\square$

Hence, the cohomological Serre spectral sequence becomes multiplicative, and one checks that the identification  $E_2^{p,q} \cong H^p(B, H^q(F_-, R))$  is multiplicative with respect to the multiplication on  $H^\bullet(B, H^\bullet(F_-, R))$  described earlier, and that the convergence to  $(H^\bullet(E, R), F_\bullet)$  is multiplicative.

Finally, we record the naturality of the Serre spectral sequence.

**Definition 3.20.** A morphism of cohomologically graded spectral sequences  $f : (E_r, d_r, h_r) \rightarrow (E'_r, d'_r, h'_r)$  is a collection of bigraded maps  $f_r : E^r \rightarrow E'^r$  that commute with differentials and satisfy  $h'_r \circ f_r = H^\bullet(f_r) \circ h_r$ .

Note:  $f$  is determined by  $f_2$ , but it is a condition that the higher  $f_r$  commute with the differentials. Analogously one can define morphisms of homologically graded spectral sequences.

We now consider the category  $\text{Fib}$  with objects the Serre fibrations  $p : E \rightarrow B$  and morphisms the commutative squares

$$\begin{array}{ccc} E & \xrightarrow{g^E} & E' \\ \downarrow p & & \downarrow p' \\ B & \xrightarrow{g^B} & B' \end{array}$$

(not necessarily pullback squares). Then  $C_{\bullet,\bullet}(-, A)$  becomes a functor from  $\text{Fib}$  to double complexes by postcomposition, hence the assignment sending  $p : E \rightarrow B$  to its Serre spectral sequence also becomes a functor (similarly for the cohomological version). The identification  $E_{p,q}^2 \cong H_p(B, H_q(F_-, A))$  is a natural isomorphism of functors  $\text{Fib} \rightarrow \text{Ab}$ . The maps  $H_\bullet(g^E, A)$  and  $H^\bullet(g^E, A)$  preserve the filtrations, and  $E_{p,q}^\infty \cong F^p(H_{p+q}(E, A))/F^{p-1}(H_{p+q}(E, A))$  is natural, similarly for cohomology.

We give a simple application of naturality. Let  $p : E \rightarrow B$  be a Serre fibration. We have surjections  $E_2^{p,0} \twoheadrightarrow E_3^{p,0} \cdots \twoheadrightarrow E_\infty^{p,0}$ , an inclusion  $E_\infty^{p,0} = F^p H^p(E, A) \hookrightarrow H^p(E, A)$ , and a map  $H^p(B, A) \rightarrow H^p(B, H^0(F_-, A)) \cong E_2^{p,0}$  induced by the map of local systems  $A \rightarrow H^0(F_-, A)$  from the projection  $F \rightarrow *$ . The composite  $e(p : E \rightarrow B) : H^p(B, A) \rightarrow H^p(E, A)$  is called the edge homomorphism.

**Lemma 3.21.** *The morphism  $e(p)$  agrees with  $H^p(p, A)$ .*

*Proof.* By naturality of the Serre spectral sequence, the edge homomorphism is also natural. We consider

the square of fibrations

$$\begin{array}{ccc} E & \xrightarrow{p} & B \\ \downarrow p & & \downarrow \text{id} \\ B & \xrightarrow{\text{id}} & B \end{array}$$

and obtain a commutative square

$$\begin{array}{ccc} H^\bullet(B, A) & \xrightarrow{\text{id}} & H^\bullet(B, A) \\ \downarrow e(\text{id}) & & \downarrow e(p) \\ H^\bullet(B, A) & \xrightarrow{p^*} & H^\bullet(E, A) \end{array}$$

It hence suffices to check that  $e(\text{id}) = \text{id}$ , which one easily checks directly.  $\square$

There is also an edge homomorphism of the form

$$H^q(E, A) \twoheadrightarrow F_0 H^q(E, A) / F_1 H^q(E, A) \cong E_\infty^{0,q} \hookrightarrow E_2^{0,q} \cong H^0(B, H^q(F_-, A)) \xrightarrow{(x \hookrightarrow B)^*} H^q(F_x, A)$$

which one can show similarly to agree with  $H^q(F_x \hookrightarrow E, A)$ . There are also homological versions of these two edge homomorphisms.

This finishes the construction of the Serre spectral sequence. We now turn to more structural applications. As a warm-up, we reprove the Hurewicz theorem, using only the case  $\pi_1(X, x)^{\text{ab}} \xrightarrow{\cong} H_1(X, \mathbb{Z})$  for path-connected  $X$  as input.

**Proposition 3.22.** *Let  $n > 1$  and  $X$   $(n-1)$ -connected. Then  $H_k(X, \mathbb{Z}) = 0$  for  $0 < k < n$  and the Hurewicz map  $\pi_n(X, x) \rightarrow H_n(X, \mathbb{Z})$  is an isomorphism.*

*Proof.* By induction on  $n$ . The loop space  $\Omega X$  is  $(n-2)$ -connected and satisfies the relation  $\pi_k(X, x) \cong \pi_{k-1}(\Omega X, x)$ . By the induction hypothesis,  $H_k(\Omega X, \mathbb{Z}) = 0$  for  $0 < k < n-1$ , and  $\pi_{n-1}(\Omega X, x) \cong H_{n-1}(\Omega X, \mathbb{Z})$  is an isomorphism. We apply the Serre spectral sequence for the fibre sequence  $\Omega X \rightarrow x \rightarrow X$ . The  $E^\infty$ -page must be 0 away from  $(0, 0)$  hence we see directly that  $H_k(X, \mathbb{Z}) = 0$  for  $0 < k < n$ . Moreover,  $d^n : H_n(X, \mathbb{Z}) \rightarrow H_{n-1}(\Omega X, \mathbb{Z})$  must be an isomorphism. Hence we obtain an isomorphism  $c_X : \pi_n(X, x) \xrightarrow{\cong} \pi_{n-1}(\Omega X, x) \xrightarrow{\cong} H_{n-1}(\Omega X, \mathbb{Z}) \xleftarrow{\cong} H_n(X, \mathbb{Z})$ . Why does this composite  $c_X$  agree with the Hurewicz map up to a sign? Note that  $c_X$  is natural in  $(n-1)$ -connected spaces. Reduce to the universal case  $X = S^n$ : Let  $y \in \pi_n(X, x)$ , represented by  $f : S^n \rightarrow X$ . We obtain a square

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \pi_n(S^n, *) & \xrightarrow{c_{S^n}} & H_n(S^n, \mathbb{Z}) \\ \downarrow f_* & & \downarrow H_n(f) \\ \pi_n(X, x) & \xrightarrow{c_X} & H_n(X) \end{array}$$

Note that  $c_{S^n}$  must send  $[\text{id}]$  to one of the two orientations for  $S^n$ . Further  $c_X(y) = H_n(f)(c_{S^n}([\text{id}])) = H_n(f)(\pm h([\text{id}])) = \pm h([f]) = \pm h(y)$ , where  $h$  is the Hurewicz map and the sign is determined by  $c_{S^n}$ , thus in particular the same for all  $(n-1)$ -connected  $X$  and  $y \in \pi_n(X, x)$ .  $\square$



## 4 Serre classes

**Definition 4.1.** Let  $\mathcal{C} \subseteq \mathbf{Ab}$  be a non-empty full subcategory.  $\mathcal{C}$  is called a *Serre class* if it is closed under extensions, subgroups, quotient groups and isomorphisms, i.e. given  $0 \rightarrow A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C \rightarrow 0$  short exact, then  $B \in \mathcal{C}$  if and only if  $A, C \in \mathcal{C}$ .

**Example 4.2.** Examples of Serre classes include finitely generated abelian groups  $\mathcal{C}^{f.g.}$ , torsion abelian groups  $\mathcal{C}^{tor}$ ,  $p$ -power torsion groups  $\mathcal{C}^p$ , finite abelian groups  $\mathcal{C}^{fin}$  and finite  $p$ -power torsion groups  $\mathcal{C}^{p,tor}$ .

On the other hand, torsion-free groups,  $p$ -torsion groups or rational/uniquely divisible abelian groups do not form Serre classes.

**Lemma 4.3.** *Let  $\mathcal{C}$  be a Serre class. Then*

- a) *Given an exact sequence  $0 \rightarrow A_1 \rightarrow A_2 \rightarrow \dots \rightarrow A_n \rightarrow 0$ , if all but one of the  $A_i$  are in  $\mathcal{C}$ , so is the last.*
- b) *If  $C_\bullet$  is a chain complex with  $C_n \in \mathcal{C}$  for all  $n$ , then  $H_n C_\bullet \in \mathcal{C}$  for all  $n$ .*
- c) *If  $0 = A_0 \subseteq A_1 \subseteq \dots \subseteq A_n = A$  is a finite filtration, then  $A \in \mathcal{C}$  if and only if  $A_i/A_{i-1} \in \mathcal{C}$  for all  $i$ .*

*Proof.* a) From  $A_{i-1} \xrightarrow{f} A_i \xrightarrow{g} A_{i+1}$  we get a short exact sequence  $0 \rightarrow \text{im}(f) \rightarrow A_i \rightarrow \text{im}(g) \rightarrow 0$ , where  $\text{im}(f)$  is a quotient of  $A_{i-1}$  and  $\text{im}(g)$  is a subgroup of  $A_{i+1}$ .

b) Similarly, we get  $0 \rightarrow \text{im}(d_{n+1}) \rightarrow \ker(d_n) \rightarrow H_n(C_\bullet) \rightarrow 0$  with  $\ker(d_n) \subseteq C_n$ .

c) Follows by induction on  $n$ . □

We sometimes require stronger axioms.

**Definition 4.4.** A Serre class  $\mathcal{C}$  satisfies

- the *tensor axiom* if  $A \otimes B \in \mathcal{C}$  and  $\text{Tor}(A, B) \in \mathcal{C}$  whenever  $A, B \in \mathcal{C}$ ,
- the *group homology axiom* if  $H_n(K(A, 1), \mathbb{Z}) \in \mathcal{C}$  for all  $n \geq 1$  whenever  $A \in \mathcal{C}$ .

Recall:  $\text{Tor}(A, B)$  computes as the kernel of  $P_1 \otimes B \rightarrow P_0 \otimes B$  where  $0 \rightarrow P_1 \rightarrow P_0 \rightarrow A \rightarrow 0$  is a free resolution of  $A$ , and  $A \otimes B$  is the cokernel of this map. Hence the tensor axiom is automatic if  $\mathcal{C}$  is closed under infinite direct sums (e.g.  $\mathcal{C}^{tor}$ ) or if  $\mathcal{C}$  is a subclass of finitely generated abelian groups (since then  $P_0, P_1$  can be chosen free of finite rank). Furthermore, we have:

**Lemma 4.5.** *Every Serre class  $\mathcal{C}$  of finitely generated abelian groups also satisfies the group homology axiom.*

*Proof.* We have  $\tilde{H}_n(K(\mathbb{Z}, 1), \mathbb{Z}) = H_n(S^1, \mathbb{Z}) = \mathbb{Z}$  for  $n = 1$  and 0 else, and

$$\tilde{H}_n(K(\mathbb{Z}/m, 1), \mathbb{Z}) = \begin{cases} \mathbb{Z}/m & m \text{ odd,} \\ 0 & \text{else} \end{cases}$$

This can be seen e.g. via Lens spaces, yielding  $S^\infty$  as universal cover with  $\mathbb{Z}/m$  acting by multiplication with an  $m$ -th root of unity. Alternatively, use group homology. A general finitely generated abelian group is a finite direct sum of  $\mathbb{Z}/m$ 's and  $\mathbb{Z}$ 's. The claim then follows by induction using the Künneth

short exact sequence

$$\begin{aligned} 0 \rightarrow H_\bullet(K(A, 1), \mathbb{Z}) \otimes H_\bullet(K(B, 1), \mathbb{Z}) &\rightarrow H_\bullet(K(A \times B, 1), \mathbb{Z}) \\ &\rightarrow \text{Tor}(H_\bullet(K(A, 1), \mathbb{Z}), H_\bullet(K(B, 1), \mathbb{Z}))[-1] \rightarrow 0 \end{aligned}$$

We already saw that  $\mathcal{C}$  satisfies the tensor axiom, hence  $H_\bullet(K(A \times B, 1), \mathbb{Z}) \in \mathcal{C}$ .  $\square$

Our next goal is to show the following

**Theorem 4.6.** *Let  $\mathcal{C}$  be a Serre class satisfying the tensor and group homology axioms, and  $X$  a simple space. Then the following are equivalent:*

- 1)  $H_n(X, \mathbb{Z}) \in \mathcal{C}$  for all  $n \geq 1$ ,
- 2)  $\pi_n(X, *) \in \mathcal{C}$  for all  $n \geq 1$ .

Recall:  $X$  is simple if it is path-connected,  $\pi_1(X, *)$  is abelian, and  $\pi_1(X, *)$  acts trivially on  $\pi_n(X, *)$  for all  $n > 1$ . For example, every  $H$ -space is simple.

**Corollary 4.7.**  $\pi_k(S^n, *)$  is finitely generated for all  $k, n$ .

**Corollary 4.8.** More generally,  $\pi_k(X, *)$  is finitely generated for every simple finite CW-complex.

Theorem 4.6 holds more generally for *nilpotent* spaces. On the other hand,  $X = S^1 \vee S^2$  shows that theorem 4.6 does not hold for all spaces, because  $\pi_2(X, *) \cong H_2(\tilde{X}, \mathbb{Z}) \cong \bigoplus_{\mathbb{Z}} \mathbb{Z}$  is not finitely generated.

**Lemma 4.9.** *Let  $\mathcal{C}$  be a Serre class satisfying the tensor axiom,  $F \rightarrow Y \rightarrow X$  a fibre sequence of path-connected spaces and  $\pi_1(X, *)$  acting trivially on  $H_*(F, \mathbb{Z})$ . (i.e. the local system  $H_\bullet(F, \mathbb{Z})$  is isomorphic to the trivial one.) Then, if two out of  $F, Y, X$  have homology groups in  $\mathcal{C}$ , so does the third.*

*Proof.* We abbreviate  $H_\bullet(-, \mathbb{Z})$  to  $H_\bullet$ .

Case 1:  $H_k F, H_k X \in \mathcal{C}$  for all  $k > 0$ . Then

$$E_{p,q}^2 \cong H_p(X, H_q(F)) \cong H_p X \otimes H_q F \oplus \text{Tor}(H_{p-1} X, H_q F) \in \mathcal{C}$$

for  $(p, q) \neq (0, 0)$ . Note that for  $p = 1$  we have  $\text{Tor}(H_{p-1} X, H_q F) = 0$  since  $H_0 X$  is free. Hence, Lemma 4.3 implies first  $E_{p,q}^\infty \in \mathcal{C}$  for  $(p, q) \neq 0, 0$  and then  $H_k Y \in \mathcal{C}$  for  $k > 0$ .

Case 2:  $H_k F, H_k Y \in \mathcal{C}$  for all  $k > 0$ . Then by Lemma 4.3 we have  $E_{p,q}^\infty \in \mathcal{C}$  for  $(p, q) \neq (0, 0)$ . We now show that  $H_n X \in \mathcal{C}$  by induction on  $n$ . For  $n = 1$ , we have  $H_1 X = E_{1,0}^2 = E_{1,0}^\infty$ . We now choose  $n > 1$  and assume  $H_k X \in \mathcal{C}$  for  $k = 1, \dots, n-1$ . From the hypothesis we get  $E_{p,q}^r \in \mathcal{C}$  for  $p < n, (p, q) \neq (0, 0)$  and all  $r$ , as in case 1. We have a filtration  $H_n X \supseteq E_{p,q}^3 \supseteq E_{p,q}^4 \supseteq \dots \supseteq E_{n,0}^{n+1} = E_{n,0}^\infty$  and short exact sequences  $0 \rightarrow E_{n,0}^{i+1} \rightarrow E_{n,0}^i \rightarrow \text{im}(d^i) \rightarrow 0$ . Since  $\text{im}(d^i) \subseteq E_{n-i,i-1}^i$  and  $n-i < n$ , we have  $E_{n-i,i-1}^i \in \mathcal{C}$  and  $\text{im}(d^i) \in \mathcal{C}$ . By backwards induction it follows that  $H_n X \in \mathcal{C}$ .

Case 3:  $H_k X, H_k Y \in \mathcal{C}$  for all  $k > 0$ . Similar to case 2 (exercise).  $\square$

**Corollary 4.10.** *Let  $\mathcal{C}$  be a Serre class satisfying the tensor and group homology axioms. Then, if  $A \in \mathcal{C}$ , we have  $H_k(K(A, n), \mathbb{Z}) \in \mathcal{C}$  for all  $k, n \geq 1$ .*

*Proof.* Induction on  $n$  starting with the group homology axiom and using the fibre sequences  $K(A, n-1) \simeq \Omega K(A, n) \rightarrow * \rightarrow K(A, n)$   $\square$

Recall the Postnikov tower. Let  $X$  be a space, then the Postnikov tower of  $X$  is a diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 & \vdots & \\
 & \downarrow & \\
 & \tau_{\leq 1} X & \\
 \nearrow & \downarrow & \\
 X & \longrightarrow & \tau_{\leq 0} X
 \end{array}$$

such that  $\pi_k(\tau_{\leq n} X) = 0$  for  $k > n$  and the map  $X \rightarrow \tau_{\leq n} X$  induces an isomorphism on  $\pi_k(-)$  for  $k \leq n$ . In particular,  $X \rightarrow \operatorname{holim}_n \tau_{\leq n} X$  is a weak homotopy equivalence.

For simplicity, we assume that  $X$  is path-connected. Then each  $\tau_{\leq n} X$  is also path-connected and there is a fibre sequence  $K(\pi_n X, n) \rightarrow \tau_{\leq n} X \rightarrow \tau_{\leq n-1} X$ . The key observation is that if  $X$  is simple, the action of  $\pi_1(\tau_{\leq n} X) \cong \pi_1(X)$  on  $H_\bullet(K(\pi_n X, n))$  is trivial. This follows from the fact that any self-map of  $K(A, n)$  which induces the identity on  $\pi_n$  is homotopic to the identity. (In fact,  $\pi_n$  induces a bijection  $[K(A, n), K(A, n)] \rightarrow \operatorname{Hom}(A, A)$ .)

We want to prove a more general version of theorem 4.6. For that we make the following definition.

**Definition 4.11.** Let  $\mathcal{C}$  be a Serre class. We say that a map  $f : A \rightarrow B$  of abelian groups is an isomorphism mod  $\mathcal{C}$ , if  $\ker(f), \operatorname{coker}(f) \in \mathcal{C}$ . Similarly,  $f$  is a mono- or epimorphism mod  $\mathcal{C}$  if  $\ker(f) \in \mathcal{C}$  or  $\operatorname{coker}(f) \in \mathcal{C}$ , respectively.

$f$  is an isomorphism mod  $\mathcal{C}^{tor}$  if and only if  $f \otimes \mathbb{Q}$  is an isomorphism. Multiplication by 2 is an automorphism of  $\mathbb{Z} \bmod \mathcal{C}^{fin, 2}$ .

**Theorem 4.12** (Hurewicz theorem mod  $\mathcal{C}$ ). *Let  $\mathcal{C}$  be a good (i.e. satisfying the tensor and group homology axioms) Serre class. For  $n > 0$  and a simple space  $X$ , one has  $H_k(X) \in \mathcal{C}$  for all  $0 < k < n$  iff  $\pi_k(X) \in \mathcal{C}$  for all  $0 < k < n$ . In this case, the Hurewicz map  $\pi_n(X) \rightarrow H_n(X)$  is an isomorphism mod  $\mathcal{C}$ .*

*Proof.* We first assume  $\pi_k(X) \in \mathcal{C}$  for  $0 < k < n$ . We consider the Postnikov tower of  $X$ . Since  $H_k(X) \cong H_k(\tau_{\leq k} X)$ , it suffices to show that  $H_m(\tau_{\leq k} X) \in \mathcal{C}$  for all  $k < n$  and  $m > 0$ . This follows inductively from the fibre sequences  $K(\pi_k(X, k)) \rightarrow \tau_{\leq k} X \rightarrow \tau_{\leq k-1} X$  via Lemma 4.9 and Corollary 4.10.

Next we show by induction on  $n$  that if  $H_k(X) \in \mathcal{C}$  for all  $0 < k < n$ , then  $\pi_n(X) \rightarrow H_n(X)$  is an isomorphism mod  $\mathcal{C}$ . This proves the general statement by applying it inductively for smaller  $n$ . By naturality, the Hurewicz map is equivalent to the map

$$\pi_n(X) \cong \pi_n(K(\pi_n X, n)) \xrightarrow{h, \cong} H_n(K(\pi_n X, n)) \rightarrow H_n(\tau_{\leq n} X) \cong H_n(X),$$

where  $h$  is the classic Hurewicz morphism. Now the induction hypothesis implies that  $\pi_k(X) \in \mathcal{C}$  for  $k < n$ . By the first part of the proof, we hence know that  $H_n(\tau_{\leq n-1} X) \in \mathcal{C}$ . We analyse the Serre spectral sequence for the fibre sequence  $K(\pi_n X, n) \rightarrow \tau_{\leq n} X \rightarrow \tau_{\leq n-1} X$ . The  $E^2$ -page has 0 outside the zeroth and  $n$ -th row, so the first possible differential is  $d^{n+1} : H_{n+1}(\tau_{\leq n-1} X) \rightarrow H_n(K(\pi_n X, n))$  with cokernel  $E_{0,n}^\infty$ , which sits in a short exact sequence

$$0 \rightarrow E_{0,n}^\infty \rightarrow H_n(\tau_{\leq n} X) \rightarrow H_n(\tau_{\leq n-1} X) \rightarrow 0.$$

Putting these together, we obtain an exact sequence

$$H_{n+1}(\tau_{\leq n-1} X) \xrightarrow{d} H_n(K(\pi_n X, n)) \rightarrow H_n(\tau_{\leq n} X) \rightarrow H_n(\tau_{\leq n-1} X) \rightarrow 0.$$

As the first and last term are in  $\mathcal{C}$ , this finishes the proof.  $\square$

**Corollary 4.13.** *Let  $p$  be a prime. Then the first  $p$ -prime torsion in  $\pi_*(S^3)$  is a copy of  $\mathbb{Z}/p$  in degree  $2p$ .*

*Proof.* Recall that we computed the homology of the homotopy fibre  $F$  of  $S^3 \rightarrow K(\mathbb{Z}, 3) = \tau_{\leq 3}S^3$  (called Postnikov section) as  $H_k(F) \cong \mathbb{Z}/n$  if  $k = 2n$  and 0 if  $k$  is odd. Apply the mod  $\mathcal{C}$  Hurewicz theorem for the Serre class of finite abelian groups with order coprime to  $p$ . This shows that  $\pi_k(F)$  is finite with no  $p$ -torsion for  $k < 2p$  and that the kernel and cokernel of  $\pi_{2p}(F) \rightarrow H_{2p}(F) \cong \mathbb{Z}/p$  have order coprime to  $p$ . It follows that the  $p$ -power torsion of  $\pi_{2p}(F) \cong \pi_{2p}(S^3)$  is a copy of  $\mathbb{Z}/p$ .  $\square$

**Definition 4.14.** A good Serre class  $\mathcal{C}$  is called a Serre ideal, if for every  $A \in \mathcal{C}$  and any abelian group  $B$  the tensor product  $A \otimes B$  lies in  $\mathcal{C}$ .

**Lemma 4.15.**  *$\mathcal{C}$  is a Serre ideal if and only if  $\bigotimes_X A \in \mathcal{C}$  whenever  $A \in \mathcal{C}$  for all sets  $X$ .*

*Proof.* We have  $\bigotimes_X A \cong (\bigoplus_X \mathbb{Z}) \otimes A$ . For the other direction, we use that any abelian group is a quotient of a free group, and that  $\otimes$  is right-exact.  $\square$

By the same argument,  $\text{Tor}(-, -)$  is also in  $\mathcal{C}$ .  $\mathcal{C}^p, \mathcal{C}^{tor}$  are Serre ideals, but  $\mathcal{C}^{fg}$  is not. Let  $\mathcal{C}$  be a Serre ideal, and  $f : X \rightarrow Y$  be a map of 1-connected spaces and  $n > 0$ . Then the following are equivalent:

- $\pi_k(f) : \pi_k(X) \rightarrow \pi_k(Y)$  is an isomorphism mod  $\mathcal{C}$  for  $0 < k < n$  and an epimorphism mod  $\mathcal{C}$  for  $k = n$ ,
- $H_k(f) : H_k(X) \rightarrow H_k(Y)$  is an isomorphism mod  $\mathcal{C}$  for  $0 < k < n$  and an epimorphism mod  $\mathcal{C}$  for  $k = n$ .

*Proof.* First assume the second condition. We consider the fibre sequence  $F \rightarrow X \xrightarrow{f} Y$ . By the long exact sequence on  $\pi_\bullet$  reduced mod  $\mathcal{C}$ , the first condition is equivalent to saying that  $F$  is  $(n-1)$  connected mod  $\mathcal{C}$ , that is  $\pi_k(F) \in \mathcal{C}$  for  $0 < k < n$ .

By the Hurewicz theorem, this is equivalent to saying  $H_k(F) \in \mathcal{C}$  for  $0 < k < n$ . We claim that  $H_p(Y, H_q(F)) \in \mathcal{C}$  for  $0 < q \leq n-1$  or in fact  $H_p(Y, A) \in \mathcal{C}$  for any  $A \in \mathcal{C}$ . This follows from the ideal property, which implies that  $C_m(Y, A)$  lies in  $\mathcal{C}$  for all  $m$ , and hence so does its homology group.

Hence, the region  $0 < q < n$  of the Serre  $E^2$ -page lies in  $\mathcal{C}$  and likewise for the  $E^\infty$ -page. Puttin that together,  $H_k(X)$  admits a filtration  $0 \subseteq F_0 \subseteq \dots \subseteq F_k = H_k(X)$  such that  $F_i/F_{i-1} \in \mathcal{C}$  where  $k-n+1 \leq i < k$ . Moreover, the last quotient  $F_k/F_{k-1}$  is isomorphic to  $H_k(Y) \cong E_{k,0}^2 \bmod \mathcal{C}$  for  $k \leq n$ . This implies the result via the edge homomorphism.

For the converse, assume that  $H_k(X) \rightarrow H_k(Y)$  is an isomorphism mod  $\mathcal{C}$  for  $0 < k < n$  and an epimorphism mod  $\mathcal{C}$  for  $k = n$ . We want to show that  $\pi_k(F) \in \mathcal{C}$  for  $k < n$ . Suppose otherwise, then there is a minimal  $0 < k < n$  for which  $\pi_k(F) \notin \mathcal{C}$ . Inspecting the Serre spectral sequence similarly to before, we find that  $H_k(F) \cong E_{0,k}^2 \twoheadrightarrow E_{0,k}^3 \twoheadrightarrow \dots \twoheadrightarrow E_{0,k}^{k+1}$  are all isomorphisms mod  $\mathcal{C}$ , as well as  $E_{k+1,0}^{k+1} \hookrightarrow E_{k+1,0}^k \hookrightarrow \dots \hookrightarrow E_{k+1,0}^2 \cong H_{k+1}(Y)$ . By the Hurewicz theorem,  $H_k(F) \notin \mathcal{C}$  and hence  $E_{0,k}^{k+1} \notin \mathcal{C}$ . By assumption,  $H_{k+1}(X) \rightarrow H_{k+1}(Y)$  is an epimorphism mod  $\mathcal{C}$ . By the description of the edge homomorphism,  $E_{0,k}^{k+1} \rightarrow EE_{0,k}^\infty$  must be an isomorphism mod  $\mathcal{C}$ , so  $E_{0,k}^\infty \notin \mathcal{C}$ . But this group lies in the kernel of  $H_k(X) \rightarrow H_k(Y)$ , contradicting the latter being an isomorphism mod  $\mathcal{C}$ .  $\square$

There exists a space  $\text{Sp}^\infty(X)$  and a map  $X \rightarrow \text{Sp}^\infty(X)$ , such that  $\pi_n(\text{Sp}^\infty(X)) \cong H_n(X)$ .

**Example 4.16.** The Whitehead theorem fails in general for good Serre classes which are not Serre ideals: Consider  $\mathbb{CP}^\infty \times X \rightarrow X$  be the projection where  $X$  is 1-connected and  $H_2(X)$  is not finitely generated (e.g.  $X = \bigvee_{\mathbb{N}} S^2$ ). Then  $\pi_k(\mathbb{CP}^\infty \times X) \cong \pi_k(\mathbb{CP}^\infty) \times \pi_k(X) \rightarrow \pi_k(X)$  is an isomorphism mod  $\mathcal{C}^{fg}$  for all  $k > 1$ , but  $H_4(\mathbb{CP}^\infty \times X) \cong \mathbb{Z} \oplus H_2(X) \oplus H_4(X) \rightarrow H_4(X)$  is not an isomorphism mod  $\mathcal{C}^{fg}$ , since  $H_2(X)$  is not finitely generated.

We now turn to the rational homotopy groups of spheres. We already saw that  $\pi_k(S^3)$  is finite for  $k > 3$ , hence  $\pi_k(S^3) \otimes \mathbb{Q} = 0$  for  $k > 3$ . In particular, the 3rd Postnikov section  $S^3 \rightarrow K(\mathbb{Z}, 3)$  is an isomorphism on  $\pi_\bullet(-) \otimes \mathbb{Q}$  (or equivalently an isomorphism mod  $\mathcal{C}$ ). By the Whitehead theorem,  $S^3 \rightarrow K(\mathbb{Z}, 3)$  also induces an isomorphism  $H_\bullet(-, \mathbb{Q})$ . In particular,  $H^\bullet(K(\mathbb{Z}, 3), \mathbb{Q}) = H^\bullet(S^3, \mathbb{Q}) \cong \bigwedge_{\mathbb{Q}}(x_3)$ . The idea is to build up to the rationalised sphere by knowledge of Eilenberg-MacLane spaces. That is, we study  $H^\bullet(K(\mathbb{Z}, n), \mathbb{Q})$  to compute  $\pi_\bullet(S^n) \otimes \mathbb{Q}$ .

**Lemma 4.17.** *We have*

$$H^\bullet(K(\mathbb{Z}, n), \mathbb{Q}) \cong \begin{cases} \bigwedge(x) & \text{if } n \text{ is odd,} \\ \mathbb{Q}[x] & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

for  $x \in H^n(K(\mathbb{Z}, n), \mathbb{Q})$  the image of the tautological (=fundamental) class in  $H^n(K(\mathbb{Z}, n), \mathbb{Z})$ .

*Proof.* For an induction on  $n$ , use the fibre sequence  $K(\mathbb{Z}, n-1) \cong \Omega K(\mathbb{Z}, n) \rightarrow * \rightarrow K(\mathbb{Z}, n)$ . The case  $n = 1, 2$  is clear. The step  $(n-1)$  odd to  $n$  even is entirely analogous to the previously studied  $S^1 \rightarrow * \rightarrow \mathbb{CP}^\infty$ . Now assume  $n$  is even.

The Serre spectral sequence with coefficient group  $\mathbb{Q}$  has a copy of  $\mathbb{Q}$  at position  $(p, q)$  if  $p \in \{0, n+1\}$  and  $n|q$ , with the only non-trivial differentials  $d_n : E_n^{0, kn} \rightarrow E_n^{n+1, (k-1)n}$  are isomorphisms. Let  $y \in H^n(K(\mathbb{Z}, n), \mathbb{Q})$  be the fundamental class, let  $x = d_n y$ . By the product rule,  $d_n(y^m) = mxy^{m-1}$  is a generator of  $E_n^{n+1, (m-1)n}$ , where by assumption  $y^m$  is a generator of  $H^{nm}(K(\mathbb{Z}, n), \mathbb{Q})$ . If there was a non-trivial  $H^k(K(\mathbb{Z}, n+1), \mathbb{Q})$  with  $k > n-1$ , then the corresponding class in  $E_2^{k, 0}$  could not be the image of a differential, contradicting  $E_\infty^{p, q} = 0$  for  $(p, q) \neq (0, 0)$ .  $\square$

Note that  $K(\mathbb{Z}, n) \rightarrow K(\mathbb{Q}, n)$  is a rational  $\pi_\bullet$ -isomorphism, hence by the mod  $\mathcal{C}^{tor}$  Whitehead theorem, it also induces an isomorphism on  $H_\bullet(-, \mathbb{Q})$ , and hence on  $H^\bullet(-, \mathbb{Q})$ , for  $n > 1$ . This is also true for  $n = 1$ , which one can see by noting that a model for  $K(\mathbb{Q}, 1)$  is given by the mapping telescope of  $S^1 \xrightarrow{(\cdot)^2} S^1 \xrightarrow{(\cdot)^3} S^1 \rightarrow \dots$

**Theorem 4.18.** *We have*

$$\pi_k(S^n) \otimes \mathbb{Q} = \begin{cases} \mathbb{Q} & \text{if } k = n \text{ or } n \text{ even and } k = 2n-1, \\ 0 & \text{else.} \end{cases}$$

*Proof.* We start with  $n$  odd. We can further assume  $n \geq 3$ . Then the  $n$ -th Postnikov section  $S^n \rightarrow K(\mathbb{Z}, n)$  induces an isomorphism on  $H^\bullet(-, \mathbb{C})$ . Hence by duality also on  $H_\bullet(-, \mathbb{Q})$  and by the mod  $\mathcal{C}^{tor}$  Whitehead theorem is an isomorphism on  $\pi_\bullet(-) \otimes \mathbb{Q}$ . Hence  $\pi_k(S^n) \otimes \mathbb{Q} \cong \pi_k(K(\mathbb{Z}, n)) \otimes \mathbb{Q}$  gives the desired result.

For even  $n$ , the map  $S^n \rightarrow K(\mathbb{Z}, n)$  is not an isomorphism on  $H^\bullet(-, \mathbb{Q})$ , since  $H^\bullet(K(\mathbb{Z}, n), \mathbb{Q})$  is polynomial, while  $H^\bullet(S^n, \mathbb{Q})$  is exterior. We try to build a space out of  $K(\mathbb{Z}, m)$ -spaces, whose rational cohomology is exterior: Let  $K(\mathbb{Z}, n) \rightarrow K(\mathbb{Z}, 2n)$  classify the cap-square of the fundamental class. Using that  $[K(\mathbb{Z}, n), K(\mathbb{Z}, 2n)] \cong H^2(K(\mathbb{Z}, n), \mathbb{Z})$ , we obtain a fibre sequence  $F \rightarrow K(\mathbb{Z}, n) \rightarrow K(\mathbb{Z}, 2n)$  and a map  $f : S^n \rightarrow F$ , since the composite  $S^n \rightarrow K(\mathbb{Z}, n) \rightarrow K(\mathbb{Z}, 2n)$  is nullhomotopic, as  $\pi_n(K(\mathbb{Z}, 2n)) = 0$ . We claim that  $f$  induces an isomorphism on  $H^\bullet(-, \mathbb{Q})$ . Consider the Serre spectral sequence for the fibre sequence  $\Omega K(\mathbb{Z}, 2n) \cong K(\mathbb{Z}, 2n-1) \rightarrow F \rightarrow K(\mathbb{Z}, n)$ . The differential

$d_{2n} : H^{2n-1}(K(\mathbb{Z}, 2n-1), \mathbb{Q}) \rightarrow H^{2n}(K(\mathbb{Z}, n), \mathbb{Q})$  must be onto, since we know by construction that the squaring map  $H^n(F, \mathbb{Q}) \rightarrow H^{2n}(F, \mathbb{Q})$  is zero. Being surjective for a finite dimensional vector space means it is an isomorphism. By the product rule, each  $d_{2n} : E_{2n}^{kn, 2n-1} \rightarrow E_{2n}^{(k+2)n, 0}$  with  $k \geq 0$  is an isomorphism. Hence  $H^\bullet(F, \mathbb{Q}) \cong \bigwedge(x_n)$  and  $S^n \rightarrow F$  induces an isomorphism on  $H^\bullet(-, \mathbb{Q})$  and therefore on  $\pi_*(-) \otimes \mathbb{Q}$ . Hence

$$\pi_k(S^n) \otimes \mathbb{Q} \cong \pi_k(F) \otimes \mathbb{Q} \cong \begin{cases} \mathbb{Q} & \text{if } k = n, 2n-1, \\ 0 & \text{else} \end{cases}$$

if  $n$  is even, as claimed.  $\square$

**Corollary 4.19.**

$$\pi_k(S^n) \cong \begin{cases} \mathbb{Z} \oplus \text{finite} & k = n, \text{ or } n \text{ is even and } k = 2n-1, \\ \text{finite} & \text{else.} \end{cases}$$

*Proof.* Theorem 4.18 plus the fact that  $\pi_k(S^n)$  is finitely generated.  $\square$

So what is an example of an infinite order element of  $\pi_{2n-1}(S^n)$  for  $n$  even, and how does one detect those? For  $n = 2$ , we know that  $\pi_3(S^2)$  is generated by the Hopf map  $\eta : S^3 \rightarrow S^2$ . For general  $n$ , let  $f : S^{2n-1} \rightarrow S^n$  and choose generators  $a \in H^n(S^n, \mathbb{Z}), b \in H^{2n}(S^{2n}, \mathbb{Z})$ . Then the mapping cone  $C(f)$  satisfies  $H^k(C(f), \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}$  for  $k = 0, n, 2n$  and 0 else. More precisely, we have isomorphisms  $H^n(C(f), \mathbb{Z}) \cong H^n(S^n, \mathbb{Z}), \tilde{a} \mapsto a$  and  $H^{2n}(C(f), \mathbb{Z}) \cong H^{2n}(S^{2n}, \mathbb{Z}), b \mapsto \tilde{b}$ . Then  $\tilde{a} \smile \tilde{a} = h(f)\tilde{b}$  for a unique  $h(f) \in \mathbb{Z}$ .

**Definition 4.20.** The number  $h(f)$  is called the Hopf invariant of  $f$ .

**Lemma.** •  $h(-)$  defines a group homomorphism.

- $h(f) = 0$  if  $n$  is odd.
- If  $n$  is even,  $h([\iota_n, \iota_n]) = \pm 2$ , where  $\iota_n$  is the composite of an attaching map  $S^{2n-1} \rightarrow S^n \vee S^n$  for the  $2n$ -cell in  $S^n \times S^n$  followed by the fold map  $S^n \vee S^n \rightarrow S^n$ .

*Proof.* Exercise.  $\square$

**Corollary.** If  $n$  is even, then  $h(-) : \pi_{2n-1}(S^n)/\pi_{2n-1}(S^n)^{\text{tor}} \rightarrow \mathbb{Z}$ , is injective.

For small  $n$ , we have:  $h(\eta : S^3 \rightarrow S^2) = \pm 1$ , since  $C(\eta) \cong \mathbb{CP}^2$  and  $H^\bullet(\mathbb{CP}^2, \mathbb{Z}) = \mathbb{Z}[x]/x^3$ . Similarly,  $h(S^7 \rightarrow S^4) = \pm 1 = h(S^{15} \rightarrow S^8)$ .

**Theorem** (Adams 1960, Hopf invariant 1 problem). *The numbers  $n = 2, 4, 8$  are the only dimensionas with elements of Hopf invariant 1.*

$\pi_{2n-1}(S^n)$  is the last "unstable" (in the sense of the Freudenthal suspension theorem) homotopy group of codimension  $n-1$ , and surjects onto the stable, finite group  $\pi_{2n}(S^{n+1})$ . Hence,  $\Sigma : \pi_{2n-1}(S^n) \rightarrow \pi_{2n}(S^{n+1})$  must have a nontrivial kernel. In fact,  $\Sigma[\iota_n, \iota_n] = 0$ . E.g.  $\mathbb{Z} \cong \pi_3(S^2) \rightarrow \pi_4(S^3) \cong \mathbb{Z}/2$  or  $\mathbb{Z} \oplus \mathbb{Z}/12 \cong \pi_7(S^4) \rightarrow \pi_8(S^5) \cong \mathbb{Z}/24$ .

Using our computations, we can deduce an even stronger Hurewicz theorem in the rational case:

**Theorem 4.21.** *Let  $X$  be simply-connected, and  $\pi_i(X) \otimes \mathbb{Q} \cong 0$  for  $i \leq n-1$ . Then the Hurewicz map  $\pi_i(X) \otimes \mathbb{Q} \rightarrow H_i(X, \mathbb{Q})$  is an isomorphism for  $1 \leq i \leq 2n-2$  and a surjection for  $i = 2n-1$ .*

**Corollary 4.22.** *Let  $X$  be a pointed space. For  $k \in \mathbb{N}$ , consider the colimit*

$$\pi_k^{st}(X) \otimes \mathbb{Q} = \operatorname{colim}_n \pi_{k+n}(\Sigma^n X) \otimes \mathbb{Q}$$

*along the suspension maps. We obtain a Hurewicz map  $\pi_k^{st}(X) \otimes \mathbb{Q} \rightarrow H_k(X, \mathbb{Q})$  via*

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \pi_k(X) \otimes \mathbb{Q} & \xrightarrow{h} & H_k(X, \mathbb{Q}) \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \cong \\ \pi_{k+1}(\Sigma X) \otimes \mathbb{Q} & \xrightarrow{h} & H_{k+1}(\Sigma X, \mathbb{Q}) \end{array}$$

*This Hurewicz map is an isomorphism.*

*Proof.* By the rational Hurewicz theorem, the map  $\pi_{k+1}(\Sigma^n X) \otimes \mathbb{Q} \rightarrow H_{k+n}(\Sigma^n X, \mathbb{Q})$  is an isomorphism up to degree  $k+n \leq 2n-2$ , since  $\Sigma^n X$  is  $(n-1)$ -connected. Hence for fixed  $k$ , eventually all maps in the colimit system are isomorphisms.  $\square$

In particular,  $\pi_\bullet^{st}(-) \otimes \mathbb{Q}$  is a homology theory, i.e. it has long exact sequences for cofibre sequences, even though the unstable  $\pi_\bullet$  do not. We will see in an exercise that in fact  $\pi_\bullet^{st}$  defines a homology theory, called stable homotopy. Its coefficients are the stable homotopy groups of spheres.

**Theorem 4.23.** *Let  $X$  be 1-connected,  $\pi_i(X) \otimes \mathbb{Q} = 0$  for  $i = 1, \dots, n-1$ . Then the Hurewicz map  $\pi_i(X) \otimes \mathbb{Q} \rightarrow H_i(X, \mathbb{Q})$  is an isomorphism for  $0 \leq i \leq 2n-2$  and surjective for  $i \leq 2n-1$ .*

*Proof.* Let  $\tau_{\geq i} X$  be the  $(i-1)$ -connected cover of  $X$ , i.e. the fibre of  $X \rightarrow \tau_{\leq i-1} X$ . We consider the diagram

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \pi_i(\tau_{\geq i} X) \otimes \mathbb{Q} & \xrightarrow{\cong} & H_i(\tau_{\geq i} X, \mathbb{Q}) \\ \downarrow \cong & & \downarrow \\ \pi_i(X) \otimes \mathbb{Q} & \longrightarrow & H_i(X, \mathbb{Q}) \end{array}$$

Hence,  $\pi_i(X) \otimes \mathbb{Q} \rightarrow H_i(X, \mathbb{Q})$  is an isomorphism (surjective) if and only if  $H_i(\tau_{\geq i} X, \mathbb{Q}) \rightarrow H_i(X, \mathbb{Q})$  is an isomorphism (surjective). For this, we use

**Lemma 4.24.** *Let  $X$  be 1-connected, rationally  $(n-1)$ -connected. Then  $H_i(\tau_{\geq n+1} X, \mathbb{Q}) \rightarrow H_i(X, \mathbb{Q})$  is an isomorphism for  $n < i \leq 2n-2$  and surjective for  $i = 2n-1$ .*

Iterated application of this lemma yields the result.  $\square$

*Proof.* (of the lemma). Let  $A$  be an abelian group. Then  $H_\bullet(K(A, n), \mathbb{Q})$  is concentrated in multiples of  $n$ , and  $H_n(K(A, n), \mathbb{Q}) \cong A \otimes \mathbb{Q}$ . We consider the fibre sequence  $\tau_{\geq n+1} X \rightarrow X \rightarrow \tau_{\leq n} X$  and its rotation  $\Omega \tau_{\leq n} X \rightarrow \tau_{\geq n-1} X \rightarrow X$ . There is a diagram, where the rows are fibre sequences

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} \Omega \tau_{\leq n} X & \longrightarrow & \tau_{\geq n+1} X & \longrightarrow & X \\ \parallel & & \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ \Omega \tau_{\leq n} X & \longrightarrow & * & \longrightarrow & \tau_{\leq n} X \\ \uparrow & & \uparrow & & \uparrow \\ K(\pi_n(X), n-1) & \longrightarrow & * & \longrightarrow & K(\pi_n(X), n) \end{array}$$

The arrows from the third to the second row are isomorphisms on  $\pi_*(-) \otimes \mathbb{Q}$ , hence by the Hurewicz theorem also on  $H_*(-, \mathbb{Q})$ . Up to total degree  $2n-1$ , the rational Serre spectral sequence for the top

row has potentially non-trivial entries only in degrees  $(0, 0)$ ,  $(i, 0)$  for  $n \leq i$ , in  $(0, n-1)$ ,  $(n, n-1)$  and in  $(0, 2n-2)$ . By naturality, the differential  $d_n : H_n(X, \mathbb{Q}) \rightarrow H_{n-1}(\Omega\tau_{\leq n}X, \mathbb{Q})$  must also be an isomorphism, and  $d_n : E_{n, n-1}^n \rightarrow E_{0, 2n-2}^n$  is surjective. Hence, in this range, the  $(n+1)$ -st page has entries in at most the positions  $(0, 0)$ ,  $(i, 0)$  for  $i > n$  and  $(n, n-1)$ . For degree reasons, there are no further differentials involving  $H_i(X, \mathbb{Q})$  for  $i < 2n$ . By the edge homomorphism, the claim follows.  $\square$



## 5 Cohomology Operations and the Cohomology of $K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)$

**Definition 5.1.** A *cohomology operation* is a natural transformation  $\varphi : H^k(-, A) \rightarrow H^l(-, B)$  for some abelian groups  $A, B$  and  $k, l \in \mathbb{Z}$ . A *stable cohomology operation* of degree  $n$  is a collection of cohomology operations  $\{\varphi^{(k)} : H^k(-, A) \rightarrow H^{k+n}(-, B)\}$  which commute with the suspension isomorphism :

$$\begin{array}{ccc} H^k(X, A) & \xrightarrow{\varphi^{(k)}} & H^{k+n}(X, B) \\ \downarrow \cong & & \downarrow \cong \\ H^{k+1}(\Sigma X, A) & \xrightarrow{\varphi^{(k+1)}} & H^{k+1+n}(\Sigma X, B) \end{array}$$

**Example.** Let  $R$  be a ring,  $n \in \mathbb{N}$ . Then  $x \mapsto x^{\smile n}$  is a cohomology operation. Note: This is typically not an additive operation (unless  $n = p^k$  is a power of a prime and  $\text{char}(R) = p$ ).

If  $f : A \rightarrow B$  is a group homomorphism, then  $f_*$  defines a stable cohomology operation of degree 0. If  $0 \rightarrow A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C \rightarrow 0$  is short exact, we have a short exact sequence of cochain complexes

$$0 \rightarrow C^\bullet(X, A) \rightarrow C^\bullet(X, B) \rightarrow C^\bullet(X, C) \rightarrow 0$$

and hence the boundary maps  $\delta : H^k(X, C) \rightarrow H^{k+1}(X, A)$  (called "Bockstein homomorphism") form a stable cohomology operation of degree 1.

**Lemma 5.2.** Every stable operation  $\{\varphi^{(k)}\}$  is additive.

*Proof.* Let  $Y$  be a pointed  $(m-1)$ -connected space,  $m \geq 2$ . Then  $Y \vee Y \rightarrow Y \times Y$  induces an isomorphism on  $H_k(-, \mathbb{Z})$  for  $k = 0, \dots, 2m-1$  by the Künneth theorem. We obtain a diagram (if  $k+n, k < 2m-1$ )

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} H^k(Y, A) \times H^k(Y, A) & \xrightarrow{\cong} & H^k(Y \vee Y, A) & \xleftarrow{\cong} & H^k(Y \times Y, A) & \xrightarrow{\Delta^*} & H^k(Y, A) \\ \downarrow \varphi^{(k)} \times \varphi^{(k)} & & \downarrow \varphi^{(k)} & & \downarrow \varphi^{(k)} & & \downarrow \varphi^{(k)} \\ H^{k+n}(Y, B) \times H^{k+n}(Y, B) & \xrightarrow{\cong} & H^{k+n}(Y \vee Y, B) & \xleftarrow{\cong} & H^{k+n}(Y \times Y, B) & \xrightarrow{\Delta^*} & H^{k+n}(Y, B) \end{array}$$

where the composition along the top or bottom row is just the addition of the respective cohomology groups. By naturality of  $\varphi^{(k)}$ , this diagram commutes.

Now let  $X$  be arbitrary and  $k \in \mathbb{Z}$ . Then  $\varphi^{(m+k)} : H^{m+k}(\Sigma^m X, A) \rightarrow H^{m+k+n}(\Sigma^m X, B)$  is additive whenever  $m+k < 2m$  and  $m+k+n < 2m$ , which we can achieve by choosing  $m$  large enough. By stability,  $\varphi^{(k)}$  agrees with this map up to suspension isomorphism, hence it is also additive.  $\square$

Note: For a ring  $R$  and an abelian group  $A$ , the set of cohomology operators  $H^k(-, A) \rightarrow H^*(-, B)$  form a graded ring by pointwise sum and cup-product. It is graded commutative if  $R$  is commutative.

For  $A$  an abelian group, the set of stable cohomology operations  $\{H^k(-, A) \rightarrow H^{k+n}(-, A) : k \in \mathbb{Z}\}$  form a graded ring by composition. This is generally not commutative.

**Proposition 5.3.** We have bijections

$$a) \{ \varphi : H^k(-, A) \rightarrow H^l(-, B) \mid \varphi \text{ coh. op.} \} \xrightarrow{\cong} H^l(K(A, k), B), \quad \varphi \mapsto \varphi(c_k),$$

where  $c_k$  is the fundamental class in  $H^k(K(A, k), A)$ .

$$b) \{ \text{stable operations } H^\bullet(-, A) \rightarrow H^{\bullet+n}(-, B) \} \xrightarrow{\cong} \lim_{k \in \mathbb{N}} H^{k+n}(K(A, k), B),$$

where the limit is taken along the maps

$$H^{k+1+n}(K(A, k+1), B) \rightarrow H^{k+1+n}(\Sigma K(A, k), B) \cong H^{k+n}(K(A, k), B)$$

with the map  $\Sigma K(A, k) \rightarrow K(A, k+1)$  adjoint to the weak homotopy equivalence  $K(A, k) \rightarrow \Omega K(A, k+1)$  that induces  $\text{id}_A$  on  $\pi_k$ .

**Remark:** By the Freudenthal suspension theorem, the map  $\Sigma K(A, k) \rightarrow K(A, k+1)$  is an isomorphism on  $\pi_*$  up to degree  $2k-1$ , hence by the Hurewicz theorem also on  $H^\bullet(-, B)$  in that range. Hence for fixed  $n$  the connecting maps stabilise.

*Proof.* a) This is a consequence of the natural isomorphism  $[X, K(A, k)] \rightarrow H^k(X, A)$ ,  $f \mapsto f^*(c_k)$  and the Yoneda lemma.

b) By definition, stable operations are the limit over  $k$  along the maps

$$\{\text{operations } H^{k+1}(-, A) \rightarrow H^{k+1+n}(-, B)\} \rightarrow \{\text{operations } H^k(-, A) \rightarrow H^k(-, B)\}$$

given by  $\varphi \mapsto \sigma^{-1} \circ \varphi \circ \sigma$ , where  $\sigma$  is the suspension isomorphism. Using part a), it hence suffices to observe that  $H^{k+1}(K(A, k+1), B) \rightarrow H^{k+1}(\Sigma K(A, k), A)$  maps  $c_{k+1}$  to  $\sigma(c_k)$  which follows from  $K(A, k) \rightarrow \Omega K(A, k+1)$  inducing the identity on  $\pi_k$  and the natural identifications

$$H^{k+1}(K(A, k+1), A) \cong \text{Hom}(H_{k+1}(K(A, k+1), \mathbb{Z}), A) \cong \text{Hom}(\pi_{k+1}(K(A, k+1)), A).$$

□

**Corollary 5.4.** All operations  $H^k(-, A) \rightarrow H^l(-, B)$  with  $0 < l < k$  are trivial.

*Proof.*  $K(A, k)$  is  $(k-1)$ -connected, hence  $H^l(K(A, k), B) = 0$  for  $0 < l < k$ . □

**Corollary 5.5.** a) Let  $k$  be odd,  $l > 0$ . Then

$$\{\text{operators } H^k(-, \mathbb{Q}) \rightarrow H^l(-, \mathbb{Q})\} = \begin{cases} \mathbb{Q} & \text{if } k = l, \\ 0 & \text{else.} \end{cases}$$

b) For  $k$  even,

$$\{\text{operators } H^k(-, \mathbb{Q}) \rightarrow H^l(-, \mathbb{Q})\} = \begin{cases} \mathbb{Q}\{(\cdot)^{\sim n}\} & \text{if } l = nk, \\ 0 & \text{else.} \end{cases}$$

c) The graded ring of stable operations  $H^\bullet(-, \mathbb{Q}) \rightarrow H^{\bullet+*}(-, \mathbb{Q})$  is a copy of  $\mathbb{Q}$  concentrated in degree 0.

*Proof.* This follows from proposition 5.3 and earlier computations

$$H^*(K(\mathbb{Q}, k), \mathbb{Q}) = \begin{cases} \bigwedge(x_k) & \text{if } k \text{ odd,} \\ \mathbb{Q}[x_k] & \text{if } k \text{ even.} \end{cases}$$

□

We now turn to operations on cohomology with  $\mathbb{F}_2$  coefficients.

**Theorem 5.6** (Steenrod). There are unique cohomology operations  $\text{Sq}^i : H^n(X, \mathbb{F}_2) \rightarrow H^{n+i}(X, \mathbb{F}_2)$  for every  $n, i \geq 0$ , which have the following properties:

- $\text{Sq}^0 = \text{id}$ .

- $\text{Sq}^i : H^i(X, \mathbb{F}_2) \rightarrow H^{2i}(X, \mathbb{F}_2)$  is the cup square.
- If  $i > \deg(x)$ , then  $\text{Sq}^i(x) = 0$ .
- Cartan formula  $\text{Sq}^n(xy) = \sum_{i+j=n} \text{Sq}^i(x) \text{Sq}^j(y)$

Moreover, these operations are stable,  $\text{Sq}^1$  is the Bockstein homomorphism for the exact sequence  $0 \rightarrow \mathbb{F}_2 \rightarrow \mathbb{Z}/4\mathbb{Z} \rightarrow \mathbb{F}_2 \rightarrow 0$ , and they satisfy the Adem relations  $\text{Sq}^i \text{Sq}^j = \sum_{n=0}^{\lfloor i/2 \rfloor} \binom{j-n-1}{i-2n} \text{Sq}^{i+j-n} \text{Sq}^n$  for  $0 < i < 2j$ .

This was discussed in Topology II, but we explain a way to construct the  $\text{Sq}^i$  using the Serre spectral sequence. Let  $S^\infty \cong EC_2 \rightarrow BC_2 \cong \mathbb{RP}^\infty$  be the universal cover. The group  $C_2$  acts on  $K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\times 2} = K(\mathbb{F}_2, n) \times K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)$  by permuting the factors, and likewise on  $K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\wedge 2} = K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\times 2} / K(\mathbb{F}_2, n) \vee K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)$ . We can form the quotients  $EC_2 \times_{C_2} K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\times 2}$  and  $EC_{2+} \wedge_{C_2} K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\wedge 2}$ .

**Proposition 5.7.** *We have a bijection*

$$H^{2n}(EC_{2+} \wedge_{C_2} K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\wedge 2}, \mathbb{F}_2) \rightarrow H^{2n}(K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\wedge 2}, \mathbb{F}_2) \cong \mathbb{F}_2\{\iota_n \smile \iota_n\}.$$

Conceptually, the extension of the cup square  $K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\wedge 2} \rightarrow K(\mathbb{F}_2, 2n)$  to a map  $EC_{2+} \wedge_{C_2} K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\wedge 2} \rightarrow K(\mathbb{F}_2, 2n)$  comes from the fact that the cochains  $C^\bullet(X, \mathbb{F}_2)$  (or the spectrum  $H(F_2)$ ) carries a so-called  $E_\infty$ -multiplication ("commutative up to all higher homotopies") and there are maps  $E\Sigma_{m+} \wedge_{\Sigma_m} K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\wedge m} \rightarrow K(\mathbb{F}_2, mn)$ .

We can also construct the classes in an ad hoc way using our methods. This is easiest done with a relative form of the Serre spectral sequence.

**Proposition 5.8.** *Let  $f : E \rightarrow B$  be a Serre fibration and  $E' \subseteq E$  be a subspace such that  $f' = f|_{E'} : E' \rightarrow B$  is a Serre fibration. We write  $F = f^{-1}(b)$  and  $F' = (f')^{-1}(b)$  for the fibres. Then there exists a spectral sequence of the form*

$$E_2^{p,q} = H^p(B; H^q(F, F'; A)) \Rightarrow H^{p+q}(E, E'; A).$$

As before,  $H^q(F, F'; A)$  is to be interpreted as a local system in general.

*Proof.* (Sketch) One obtains this Serre spectral sequence from the standard one via the quotient double complex  $C_{\bullet, \bullet}(f, A) / C_{\bullet, \bullet}(f', A)$ .  $\square$

We now apply this to the Serre fibration  $EC_2 \times_{C_2} K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\times 2} \rightarrow BC_2$  with fibre  $K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\times 2}$ , and its subfibration  $EC_2 \times_{C_2} (K(\mathbb{F}_2, n) \vee K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)) \rightarrow BC_2$ . By the Künneth theorem, the groups

$$H^q(K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\times 2}, K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\vee 2}, \mathbb{F}_2) \cong \tilde{H}^q(K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\wedge 2}, \mathbb{F}_2)$$

are 0 for  $q < 2n$  and isomorphic to  $\mathbb{F}_2$  spanned by  $\iota_n \smile \iota_n$  in degree  $2n$ . Note that any group action on  $\mathbb{F}_2$  is necessarily trivial, hence the local system  $H^{2n}(K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\times 2}, K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\vee 2}, \mathbb{F}_2)$  must be constant. Hence,  $E_2^{0,2n} = H^0(SC_2, H^{2n}(\dots)) \cong \mathbb{F}_2$ . By our calculation,  $E_2^{p,q} = 0$  for  $q < 2n$ . Hence there cannot be any differential out of  $E_2^{0,2n}$  and we obtain a unique class  $\alpha_n \in H^{2n}(EC_{2+} \wedge_{C_2} K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\vee 2}, \mathbb{F}_2)$  refining the cup square in  $H^{2n}(K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\vee 2}, \mathbb{F}_2)$ .

Remark: The same proof works for all  $m$ :

$$H^{nm}(E\Sigma_{m+} \wedge_{\Sigma_m} K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\wedge m}, \mathbb{F}_2) \cong H^{nm}(K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\wedge m}, \mathbb{F}_2) \cong \mathbb{F}_2\{\iota_n \smile \dots \smile \iota_n\}.$$

We proceed by pulling back  $\alpha_n$  under the map

$$\begin{aligned} H^{2n}(EC_{2+} \wedge_{C_2} K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)^{\wedge 2}, \mathbb{F}_2) &\xrightarrow{\Delta^*} H^{2n}(BC_{2+} \wedge K(\mathbb{F}_2, n), \mathbb{F}_2) \\ &\cong \bigoplus_{i=0}^n H^i(BC_2, \mathbb{F}_2) \otimes \tilde{H}^{2n-i}(K(\mathbb{F}_2, n), \mathbb{F}_2) \end{aligned}$$

Let  $u \in H^1(BC_2, \mathbb{F}_2)$  be a generator. Then  $Sq^i(\iota_n) \in H^{n+i}(K(\mathbb{F}_2, n), \mathbb{F}_2)$  is uniquely defined by the expression  $\Delta^*(\alpha_n) = \sum_{i=0}^n u^{n-i} \cdot Sq^i(\iota_n)$ . By the Yoneda lemma (Proposition 5.3a),  $Sq^i(\iota_n)$  corresponds to a cohomology operation  $Sq^i : H^n(-, \mathbb{F}_2) \rightarrow H^{n+i}(-, \mathbb{F}_2)$ . We omit the proof that these satisfy the properties from the theorem.

Let  $\mathcal{A}$  denote the Steenrod algebra, defined as the free graded algebra on the classes  $Sq^i$  (with  $|Sq^i| = i$ ) divided by the Adem relations and the relation  $Sq^0 = 1$ . We obtain a map from  $\mathcal{A}$  to the ring of stable cohomology operations on  $H^\bullet(-, \mathbb{F}_2)$ . We will later show that this is an isomorphism. Note: The cohomology ring  $H^\bullet(X, \mathcal{A})$  is naturally a module over  $\mathcal{A}$ , satisfying the Cartan formula, the condition  $Sq^i(x) = 0$  for  $i > \deg(x)$  and  $Sq^{|x|} = x^{\smile 2}$  (an "unstable module").

For now, we record some applications. We say that an element  $x \in \mathcal{A}_n$  is decomposable if it can be written as  $x = x_1 y_1 + \dots + x_k y_k$  for homogeneous  $x_i, y_i \in \mathcal{A}$  of positive degree.

**Lemma 5.9.** *The class  $Sq^m$  is decomposable if and only if  $m$  is not a power of 2.*

*Proof.* First assume that  $m$  is not a power of 2. Let  $i$  be the smallest power of 2 not appearing in the binary expansion of  $m-1$ . We consider the Adem relation  $Sq^i Sq^{m-i} = \sum_{n=0}^{\lfloor i/2 \rfloor} \binom{m-i-n-1}{i-2n} Sq^{m-n} Sq^n$ . The coefficient of  $Sq^m$ , i.e. the case  $n=0$ , is given by  $\binom{m-i-1}{i}$ . This number is odd, since  $i$  appears in the binary expansion of  $m-i-1$  (see Lucas' theorem). Hence

$$Sq^m = Sq^i Sq^{m-i} + \sum_{n=1}^{\lfloor i/2 \rfloor} \binom{m-i-n-1}{i-2n} Sq^{m-n} Sq^n.$$

is decomposable.

Now let  $n = 2^k$ . It suffices to give an  $\mathcal{A}$ -module  $V$  and a homogeneous element  $v \in V$  such that  $Sq^n v \neq 0$  and  $Sq^i v = 0$  for  $0 < i < n$ . We claim that  $V = H^\bullet(\mathbb{R}P^\infty, \mathbb{F}_2) = \mathbb{F}_2[u]$  and  $v = u^{2^k}$  works. For  $k=0$ , we have  $Sq^1(u) = u^2$  and there is no degree between 0 and 1. We proceed by induction. Hence by assumption we have  $Sq^0(u^{2^{k-1}}) = u^{2^{k-1}}$ ,  $Sq^{2^{k-1}}(u^{2^{k-1}}) = u^{2^k}$  and  $Sq^i(u^{2^{k-1}}) = 0$  otherwise. For  $l = 1, \dots, 2^k - 1$ , we have

$$Sq^l(u^{2^k}) = Sq^l(u^{2^{k-1}} u^{2^{k-1}}) = \sum_{i=0}^l Sq^i(u^{2^{k-1}}) Sq^{l-i}(u^{2^{k-1}})$$

is non-trivial only if  $i, l \in \{0, 2^{k-1}\}$ . This is the case only for  $l = 2^{k-1}$  and  $i = 0$  or  $i = 2^{k-1}$ , and these two terms cancel each other out. Hence  $Sq^l(u^{2^k}) = 0$  for  $0 < l < n$  and  $Sq^{2^k}(u^{2^k}) = (u^{2^k})^2 = u^{2^{k+1}} \neq 0$ .  $\square$

**Remark:** More conceptually: The total squaring operator  $Sq = Sq^0 + Sq^1 + \dots : H^\bullet(X, \mathbb{F}_2) \rightarrow H^\bullet(X, \mathbb{F}_2)$  is a ring homomorphism by the Cartan formula. Hence  $Sq(u^{2^k}) = Sq(u)^{2^k} = (u + u^2)^{2^k} = u^{2^k} + u^{2^{k+1}}$  since the squaring map is a ring homomorphism in characteristic 2.

**Example 5.10.**  $Sq^3 = Sq^1 Sq^2$ ,  $Sq^5 = Sq^1 Sq^4$ , in general  $Sq^{2n+1} = Sq^1 Sq^{2n}$ . Also

$$Sq^6 = Sq^2 Sq^4 + Sq^5 Sq^1 = Sq^2 Sq^4 + Sq^1 Sq^4 Sq^1.$$

**Corollary 5.11.** *If there exists an element in  $\pi_{2n-1}(S^n)$  of Hopf invariant 1, then  $n$  is a power of 2.*

*Proof.* Let  $f : S^{2n-1} \rightarrow S^n$  have Hopf invariant 1. Then, for a generator  $x \in H^n(C(f), \mathbb{Z}) = \mathbb{Z}$ , the square  $x^{\smile 2}$  generates  $H^{2n}(C(f), \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}$ . Reducing mod 2, we conclude that the cup-square of a generator  $\bar{x}$  of  $H^n(C(f), \mathbb{F}_2) \cong \mathbb{F}_2$  generates  $H^{2n}(C(f), \mathbb{F}_2) \cong \mathbb{F}_2$ . Hence  $\text{Sq}^n(\bar{x}) = \bar{x}^{\smile 2} \neq 0$ . But for  $n < k < 2n$ ,  $H^k(C(f), \mathbb{F}_2) = 0$ , hence  $\text{Sq}^1(\bar{x}), \dots, \text{Sq}^{n-1}(\bar{x})$  are trivial. By the previous lemma,  $n$  must therefore be a power of 2.  $\square$

**Example 5.10.** We use Adem relations to show that  $f = \eta \circ \Sigma\eta : S^4 \rightarrow S^2$  is non-trivial in  $\pi_4(S^2)$ . If  $f$  was trivial, we could extend  $\eta : S^3 \rightarrow S^2$  over the cone of  $\Sigma\eta$ , which is given by  $\Sigma\mathbb{CP}^2$ . Let  $g : \Sigma\mathbb{CP}^2 \rightarrow S^2$  be this extension. The mapping cone  $C(g)$  has one cell in each dimension 0, 2, 4, 6. Let  $x_2, x_4, x_6 \in H^\bullet(C(g), \mathbb{F}_2)$  denote the generators in the respective degrees. We obtain the following picture on cohomology from the maps  $\mathbb{CP}^2 = C(\eta) \hookrightarrow C(g)$  and  $C(g) \rightarrow \Sigma^2\mathbb{CP}^2$ :

$$\begin{array}{ccccc}
 \tilde{H}^\bullet(\mathbb{CP}^2, \mathbb{F}_2) & & \tilde{H}^\bullet(C(g), \mathbb{F}_2) & & \tilde{H}^\bullet(\Sigma^2\mathbb{CP}^2, \mathbb{F}_2) \\
 & & & \bullet x_6 & \longleftarrow \bullet \\
 & & \text{Sq}^2 \uparrow & & \text{Sq}^2 \uparrow \\
 \bullet & \longleftarrow & \bullet x_4 & \longleftarrow & \bullet \\
 \text{Sq}^2 \uparrow & & \text{Sq}^2 \uparrow & & \\
 \bullet & \longleftarrow & \bullet x_2 & & 
 \end{array}$$

By naturality, we have  $\text{Sq}^2 \text{Sq}^2 x_2 = x_6 \neq 0$ , but  $\text{Sq}^2 \text{Sq}^2 = \text{Sq}^3 \text{Sq}^1$  by the Adem relation, and  $\text{Sq}^1 x_2 = 0$ , contradiction. Note that this argument even shows that  $\Sigma^k(\eta \circ \Sigma\eta)$  is nontrivial for all  $k$ .

Now we turn to the computation of  $H^\bullet(K(\mathbb{F}_2, n), \mathbb{F}_2)$  for all  $n$ .

**Definition 5.11.** For  $I = (i_n, i_{n-1}, \dots, i_0)$ , denote by  $\text{Sq}^I \in \mathcal{A}$  the composite  $\text{Sq}^{i_n} \text{Sq}^{i_{n-1}} \dots \text{Sq}^{i_0}$ . We call  $I$  admissible if  $i_k \geq 2i_{k-1}$  for all  $k$ , and  $i_0 \geq 1$ . Here, the empty sequence is admissible, and  $\text{Sq}^\emptyset = 1$ . We write  $|I| = i_n + i_{n-1} + \dots + i_0 = |\text{Sq}^I|$  for the total degree and the excess  $e(I)$  of an admissible sequence  $I$  is

$$e(I) = (i_n - 2i_{n-1} + \dots + (i_1 - 2i_0) + i_0 = 2i_n - |I|.$$

**Theorem 5.12** (Cartan-Serre). *For  $n \geq 1$  we have*

$$H^\bullet(K(\mathbb{F}_2, n), \mathbb{F}_2) \cong \mathbb{F}_2[\{\text{Sq}^I \iota_n \mid I \text{ admissible}, e(I) < n\}].$$

*For  $n \geq 2$  we have*

$$H^\bullet(K(\mathbb{Z}, n), \mathbb{F}_2) \cong \mathbb{F}_2[\{\text{Sq}^I \iota_n \mid I \text{ admissible}, i_0 \geq 2, e(I) < n\}].$$

**Example.**  $H^\bullet(\mathbb{RP}^\infty, \mathbb{F}_2) \cong H^\bullet(K(\mathbb{F}_2, 1), \mathbb{F}_2) \cong \mathbb{F}_2[\iota_1]$ , since every non-empty admissible sequence  $I$  has  $e(I) \geq 1$ . Further,

$$H^\bullet(K(\mathbb{F}_2, 2), \mathbb{F}_2) \cong \mathbb{F}_2[\{\text{Sq}^{2^n} \text{Sq}^{2^{n-1}} \dots \text{Sq}^2 \text{Sq}^1 \iota_2 \mid n \geq 1\}]$$

and  $H^\bullet(K(\mathbb{Z}, 2), \mathbb{F}_2) \cong \mathbb{F}_2[\iota_2]$  since any non-empty admissible sequence with  $i_0 \geq 2$  has  $e(I) \geq 2$ .

Looking at the spectral sequence for  $K(\mathbb{F}_2, n) \rightarrow * \rightarrow K(\mathbb{F}_2, n+1)$  we have a differential  $d_{n+1}$  which sends  $\iota_n$  to  $\iota_{n+1}$ . We want to understand how these behave in relation to  $\text{Sq}^k$ .

Let  $F \rightarrow E \xrightarrow{p} B$  be a fibre sequence with  $F$  path-connected and  $B$  1-connected and  $b_0 \in B$ . The differential  $d_n : E_n^{0, n-1} \rightarrow E_n^{n, 0}$  is defined on a subgroup of  $E_2^{0, n-1} \cong H^{n-1}(F, A)$  with values in a quotient of  $E_2^{n, 0} \cong H^n(B, A)$ .

**Definition 5.13.** We call this operation the *transgression*, and  $x \in H^{n-1}(F, A)$  *transgressive*, if it lies in  $E_n^{0, n-1}$  and hence its transgression is defined. We say that  $x$  *transgresses* to  $y \in H^n(B, A)$ , if  $y$  is a representative of  $d_n(x)$  in the quotient.

**Theorem 5.14.** *In the diagram*

$$H^{n-1}(F, A) \xrightarrow{\delta} H^n(E, F, A) \xleftarrow[p^*]{} H^n(B, b_0, A)$$

$x \in H^{n-1}(F, A)$  is transgressive if and only if  $\delta(x) \in \text{im}(p^*)$ . Moreover, the kernel of  $H^n(B, A) \cong H^n(B, b_0, A) \rightarrow E_n^{n, 0}$  agrees with the kernel of  $p^*$ , and the transgression can be identified with

$$E_n^{0, n-1} \cong \delta^{-1}(\text{im}(p^*)) \xrightarrow{\delta} \text{im}(p^*) \xleftarrow[p^*]{} H^n(B, b_0, A) / \ker(p^*) \cong E_n^{n, 0}$$

*Proof.* (Sketch). Let  $C_{\bullet, \bullet}(p, \mathbb{Z})$  denote the double complex of singular  $(p, q)$ -simplices. Then applying  $\text{Hom}(-, A)$  to the quotient  $C_{\bullet, \bullet}(p, \mathbb{Z}) / C_{\bullet, \bullet}(F \rightarrow \{b_0\}, \mathbb{Z})$  gives rise to a reduced version of the cohomological Serre spectral sequence of the form

$$\tilde{E}_2^{p, q} = H^p(B, b_0, H^q(F, A)) \Rightarrow H^{p+q}(E, F, A)$$

and a map of spectral sequences  $\tilde{E}_r \rightarrow E_r$ . Note that  $\tilde{E}_2^{0, q} = 0$  and  $\tilde{E}_2^{p, q} \cong E_2^{p, q}$  for  $p > 0$ . So the 2nd pages only differ in the first column. Applying our characterization of the edge homomorphism to the reduced spectral sequence, we conclude that

$$E_n^{n, 0} \cong \tilde{E}_n^{n, 0} \cong \text{im}(p^* : H^n(B, b_0, A) \rightarrow H^n(E, F, A))$$

and that the map

$$H^n(B, b_0, A) \cong \tilde{E}_2^{n, 0} \rightarrow \tilde{E}_n^{n, 0} \cong \tilde{E}_\infty^{n, 0} \hookrightarrow H^n(E, F, A)$$

agrees with  $p^*$ . Let  $\delta : H^{n-1}(F, A) \rightarrow H^n(E, F, A)$  be the boundary map, and let  $\alpha \in H^{n-1}(F, A)$ . Then the first non-zero differential on  $\alpha$  in the absolute spectral sequence determines which filtration entry detects  $\delta\alpha \in H^n(E, F)$  in the relative spectral sequence. Hence  $\alpha$  is transgressive if and only if  $\delta\alpha$  is of filtration  $n$ , which is isomorphic to the image of  $p^*$ , and its transgression is the coset  $(p^*)^{-1}(\delta\alpha)$ .  $\square$

**Theorem 5.15** (Transgression theorem). *The subset of transgressive classes in  $H^\bullet(F, \mathbb{F}_2)$  is closed under the application of each  $\text{Sq}^i$ . If  $x \in H^{n-1}(F, \mathbb{F}_2)$  transgresses to  $y \in H^n(B, \mathbb{F}_2)$ , then  $\text{Sq}^i x$  transgresses to  $\text{Sq}^i y$ .*

*Proof.* If  $\delta(x) = p^*(y)$ , then

$$\delta(\text{Sq}^i x) = \text{Sq}^i(\delta x) = \text{Sq}^i(p^* y) = p^*(\text{Sq}^i y).$$

Note that  $\delta$  commutes with  $\text{Sq}^i$  since it can be written as  $H^{n-1}(F, \mathbb{F}_2) \cong \tilde{H}^n(\Sigma F, \mathbb{F}_2) \rightarrow \tilde{H}^n(C(i), \mathbb{F}_2) \cong H^n(E, F, \mathbb{F}_2)$ , where  $i$  is the inclusion  $F \rightarrow E$ , and the  $\text{Sq}^i$  are stable.  $\square$

**Lemma 5.16.** *Let  $X$  be a space,  $x \in H^n(X, \mathbb{F}_2)$ ,  $I$  admissible.*

a) *If  $e(I) > n$ , then  $\text{Sq}^I(x) = 0$ .*

b) *If  $e(I) = n$ , then  $\text{Sq}^I(x) = (\text{Sq}^{I'}(x))^2$  for some admissible  $I'$  with  $e(I') \leq n$ .*

*In particular, each  $\text{Sq}^I(x)$  with  $e(I) = n$  can be written as  $(\text{Sq}^J(x))^{2^k}$  with  $e(J) < n$ .*

*Proof.* a) Since  $i_n = i_{n-1} + \dots + i_0 + e(I)$ , we have

$$|\mathrm{Sq}^{i_{n-1}} \dots \mathrm{Sq}^{i_0} x| = |x| + i_{n-1} + \dots + i_0 = |x| + i_n - e(I) < i_n.$$

Hence  $\mathrm{Sq}^I(x) = \mathrm{Sq}^{i_n}(\mathrm{Sq}^{i_{n-1}} \dots \mathrm{Sq}^{i_0} x) = 0$ .

b) Similarly, if  $e(I) = n$ , then  $|\mathrm{Sq}^{i_{n-1}} \dots \mathrm{Sq}^{i_0} x| = i_n$ , hence  $\mathrm{Sq}^I(x) = \mathrm{Sq}^{i_n}(\mathrm{Sq}^{i_{n-1}} \dots \mathrm{Sq}^{i_0} x) = (\mathrm{Sq}^{i_{n-1}} \dots \mathrm{Sq}^{i_0} x)^{\smile 2}$  and  $e(I' = (i_{n-1}, \dots, i_0)) \leq e(I) = n$   $\square$

**Theorem 5.17.** *Let  $F \rightarrow E \rightarrow B$  be a fibre sequence, with  $E \simeq *$ , and  $B$  1-connected. Assume that there exist transgressive elements  $x_i \in H^\bullet(F, \mathbb{F}_2)$  such that the square-free monomials of the  $x_i$  form a basis of  $H^\bullet(F, \mathbb{F}_2)$ . Let  $y_i \in H^\bullet(B, \mathbb{F}_2)$  denote an element representing the regression of  $x_i$ . Then  $H^\bullet(B, \mathbb{F}_2)$  is a polynomial ring on the classes  $y_i$ .*

*Proof.* We define a spectral sequence  $\overline{E}_r^{p,q}$  as follows:  $\overline{E}_r^{p,q} = \bigoplus x_{i_1} \dots x_{i_k} \mathbb{F}_2[\{y_j \mid |y_j| \geq r\}]_q$ , where the direct sum runs over all square-free monomials in the  $x_i$  of degree at least  $r-1$  of total degree  $p$ , and

$$d_r((x_{i_1} \dots x_{i_k}) \cdot P) = \sum_{j=1}^k d_r(x_{i_j}) \prod_{l \neq j} x_{i_l} \cdot P$$

where  $d_r(x_i) = y_i$  if  $|x_i| = r-1$  and 0 otherwise. We note the following: We have  $d_r((x_{i_1} \dots x_{i_k})P) = 0$  if and only if  $|x_{i_l}| > r-1$  for all  $l = 1, \dots, k$ . Further,  $\mathrm{im}(d_r)$  is contained in the subgroup generated by expressions of the form  $(x_{i_1} \dots x_{i_k})Q$ , where  $Q$  is a monomial containing at least one  $y_i$  with  $|y_i| = r$ . If  $(x_{i_1} \dots x_{i_k})Q$  is such a monomial, and  $d_r((x_{i_1} \dots x_{i_k})Q) = 0$ , then  $(x_{i_1} \dots x_{i_k})Q \in \mathrm{im}(d_i)$ : By the above, we must have  $|x_{i_l}| \geq r$  for all  $l$ . We write  $Q = Q' \cdot y_i$  with  $|y_i| = r$ . Then  $i_l - i$  for all  $l$ , hence  $x_{i_1} \dots x_{i_k} x_i$  is square-free and  $d_r(x_{i_1} \dots x_{i_k} x_i Q) = x_{i_1} \dots x_{i_k} y_i Q' = x_{i_1} \dots x_{i_k} Q$ . One checks easily that  $d_r$  is a differential. Hence  $\overline{E}$  is indeed a spectral sequence.

Moreover, we obtain a map of spectral sequences  $\varphi : \overline{E} \rightarrow E$ ,  $x_{i_1} \dots x_{i_k} P \mapsto x_{i_1} \dots x_{i_k} P$ , using that the differentials  $d_r$  on  $E_r$  on elements of the form  $x_{i_1} \dots x_{i_k}$  are determined by the differentials on the  $x_i$  and the Leibniz rule. This map of spectral sequences is an isomorphism on  $E_r^{0,q}$  for all  $r$ , and on  $E_\infty$ . We now show that it is an isomorphism on  $E_2^{p,0}$  by induction on  $p$ . Assume we know it is an isomorphism on  $E_2^{p',0}$  for all  $p' < n$ . Then it is also an isomorphism on  $E_2^{p,q}$  for  $p < n$ , and on  $E_i^{n-i,i-1}$  for all  $2 \leq i \leq n$ , since all outgoing differentials don't leave that range until  $d_i : E_i^{n-i,i-1} \rightarrow E_i^{n,0}$ . Every  $\alpha \in E_2^{n,0}$  must be in the image of one of these  $d_i$  since  $E_\infty^{n,0} = 0$ . It follows that  $\overline{E}_2^{n,0} \rightarrow E_2^{n,0}$  is surjective.

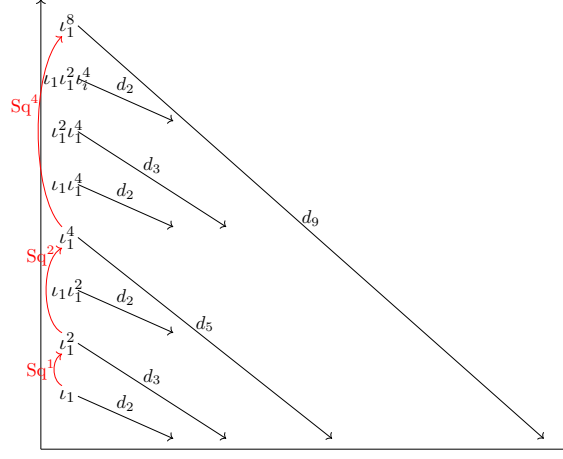
Now assume that  $\varphi : \overline{E}_2^{n,0} \rightarrow E_2^{n,0}$  was not injective, so let  $0 \neq \alpha \in \overline{E}_2^{n,0}$  be in the kernel of  $\varphi$ . Again, we can write  $[\alpha] = d_i(\beta)$  for some  $i$  and  $\beta \in \overline{E}_i^{n-i,i-1}$ , hence  $d_i(\varphi(\beta)) = \varphi(d_i(\beta)) = \varphi(\alpha) = 0$ . Hence  $\varphi(\beta) \in E_2^{n-i,i-1}$  is a permanent cycle, as  $d_i$  is the last possible non-trivial differential. But  $\varphi(\beta)$  is not in the image of  $d_i$ , since  $\beta \in \overline{E}^{n-i,i-1}$  is not and all differentials landing in  $E_i^{n-i,i-1}$  are determined by those into  $\overline{E}_i^{n-i,i-1}$  by the induction assumption. This finishes the proof.  $\square$

*Proof.* (of Theorem 5.12). For  $K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)$ , we start the induction with  $K(\mathbb{F}_2, 1) \cong \mathbb{RP}^\infty$ , for which we know the statement to hold. For  $K(\mathbb{F}_2, n)$ , we analogously start with  $K(\mathbb{Z}, 2) \cong \mathbb{CP}^\infty$ . In Theorem 5.17, applied to the induction step and the Serre spectral sequence for  $K(\mathbb{F}_2, n) \rightarrow * \rightarrow K(\mathbb{F}_2, n+1)$ , we set the  $x_i$  to be all the  $(\mathrm{Sq}^I \iota_n)^{2^k}$  with  $e(I) < n$ ,  $I$  admissible. Note that square-free monomials of these form a basis for  $H^\bullet(K(\mathbb{F}_2, n), \mathbb{F}_2)$ , as powers of the form  $(\mathrm{Sq}^I \iota_n)^m$  can be uniquely decomposed via their binary expansion. For the integral case take those with  $i_0 \geq 2$ . Note that  $\iota_n$  transgresses to  $\iota_{n+1}$ , since the  $d_{n+1}$  differential on  $\iota_n$  is the only possible non-trivial one. By Lemma 5.16,  $\mathrm{Sq}^I \iota_n$  also transgresses, to  $\mathrm{Sq}^I \iota_{n+1}$ , and  $(\mathrm{Sq}^I \iota_n)^{2^k}$  transgresses to

$$\mathrm{Sq}^{2^{k-1}(|I|+n)} \dots \mathrm{Sq}^{|I|+n}(\mathrm{Sq}^I \iota_{n+1}) = \mathrm{Sq}^J \iota_{n+1}$$

with  $J = (2^{k-1}(|I| + n))(2^{k-2}(|I| + n)) \cdots (|I| + n), I$  if  $k > 0$ . As we saw, every  $J$  with  $e(I) = n$  arises in this way from an admissible sequence of smaller excess, thus finishing the proof.  $\square$

**Example.**  $\mathbb{R}P^\infty \rightarrow * \rightarrow K(\mathbb{F}_2, 2)$ . From the transgression theorem, we can infer the first non-trivial differentials out of the 0-th column, which are determined by the smallest exponent in the binary expansion of  $\iota_1^k$ .



**Corollary 5.18.** The map  $\psi : \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \{\text{ring of stable operations on } H^*(-, \mathbb{F}_2)\}$  is an isomorphism.

*Proof.* We saw that the ring of stable operations can be described in degree  $k$  as the limit

$$\lim_{n \in \mathbb{N}} H^{k+n}(K(\mathbb{F}_2, n), \mathbb{F}_2).$$

We note that in degree  $< n$ , all  $Sq^I$  for  $I$  admissible have excess  $e(I) < n$ , since  $e(I) = 2i_n - |I| \leq 2|I| - |I| = |I|$ . Moreover, every product of the form  $Sq^I \iota_n \cdots Sq^J \iota_n$  lies in degree  $\geq 2n$  inside  $H^\bullet(K(\mathbb{F}_2, n), \mathbb{F}_2)$ . It follows that up to degree  $2n - 1$ ,  $H^\bullet(K(\mathbb{F}_2, n), \mathbb{F}_2)$  has a basis consisting of all the  $Sq^I \iota_n$  with  $I$  admissible and  $|I| < n$ . Hence, in the limit, the ring of stable operators has a basis given by all  $Sq^I$  with  $I$  admissible, since the element  $(\iota_1, \iota_2, \iota_3, \dots)$  is the image of  $1 \in \mathcal{A}$ . In particular,  $\psi$  is surjective.

For injectivity, it suffices to show that every element in  $\mathcal{A}$  can be written as a sum of elements of the form  $Sq^I$  for  $I$  admissible, since  $\psi$  is injective on their span, given that their images are linearly independent. This can be achieved inductively using Adem relations. Consider  $Sq^I = Sq^{i_1} \cdots Sq^{i_r}$ , not necessarily admissible. Define  $m(I) = \sum_{s=1}^r i_s$ . If  $I$  is not admissible, there exists  $j \in \{1, \dots, r\}$  such that  $i_j < 2i_{j+1}$ . We can perform the Adem relation

$$Sq^{i_j} Sq^{i_{j+1}} = \sum_{n=0}^{\lfloor i_j/2 \rfloor} \binom{i_{j+1} - n - 1}{i_j - 2n} Sq^{i_j + i_{j+1} - n} Sq^n$$

to replace  $Sq^I$  by a sum of terms  $Sq^{I'}$  with  $I' = (i_1, \dots, i_j - 1, i_j + i_{j+1} - n, n, i_{j+2}, \dots, i_r)$ . Furthermore,

$$m(I') = m(I) + j(i_j + i_{j+1} - n) + (j+1)n - ji_j - (j+1)i_j = m(I) + n - i_{j+1} < m(I)$$

since  $n \leq i_j/2$  and  $i_j < 2i_{j+1}$ . Since  $m(-)$  cannot go below 0, this process must terminate.  $\square$

**Exercise.** (not relevant for exam). Use our computation of  $H^\bullet(K(\mathbb{F}_2, n), \mathbb{F}_2)$  and  $H^\bullet(K(\mathbb{Z}, n), \mathbb{F}_2)$  and our understanding of transgressions to compute  $\pi_6(S^3, *)$  as follows:



- a) We know that  $\pi_6(S^3, *)$  is finite and that 3-torsion is a copy of  $\mathbb{Z}/3$  and that there is no  $p$ -torsion for  $p > 3$ .
- b) To understand the 2-torsion, proceed inductively.
- 1) First compute  $H^\bullet(\tau_{\geq 4}S^3, \mathbb{F}_2)$  up to sufficiently high degrees via the fibre sequence  $\tau_{\geq 4}S^3 \rightarrow S^3, K(\mathbb{Z}, 3)$ .
  - 2) Compute  $H^\bullet(\tau_{\geq 5}S^3, \mathbb{F}_2)$  (sufficiently high) via the fibre sequence  $\tau_{\geq 5}S^3 \rightarrow \tau_{\geq 4}S^3 \rightarrow K(\mathbb{F}_2, 2)$
  - 3) Compute  $H^\bullet(\tau_{\geq 6}S^3, \mathbb{F}_2)$  in degrees 6 and 7. Use (or prove) the following fact to understand  $H_6(\tau_{\geq 6}S^3, \mathbb{Z}) \cong \pi_6(S^6, *)$ : If  $X$  is a space, then every  $\mathbb{Z}$ -summand in  $H_n(X, \mathbb{Z})$  contributes an  $\mathbb{F}_2$ -summand in  $H^n(X, \mathbb{F}_2)$ , every  $\mathbb{Z}/2$ -summand in  $H_n(X, \mathbb{Z})$  contributes one  $\mathbb{F}_2$ -summand in  $H^n(X, \mathbb{F}_2)$  and in  $H^{n+1}(X, \mathbb{F}_2)$  related by a  $\text{Sq}^1$ , and every  $\mathbb{Z}/2^k$ -summand for  $k > 1$  in  $H_n(X, \mathbb{Z})$  contributes one  $\mathbb{F}_2$ -summand in  $H^n(X, \mathbb{F}_2)$  and one in  $H^{n+1}(X, \mathbb{F}_2)$ , with no  $\text{Sq}^1$  between them.