

Deformation theory of Galois representations

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These are notes for a talk I am giving in the Kleine AG on *Modularity lifting theorems* taking place in the summer term 2023 in Bonn. The main reference for this talk is [Gee22, Section 3].

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Notation 0.1. Fix a rational prime $p \neq 2$. Let L/\mathbf{Q}_p be a finite extension contained in a fixed algebraic closure $\overline{\mathbf{Q}_p}$ of \mathbf{Q}_p with ring of integers \mathcal{O} , maximal ideal $\lambda \subseteq \mathcal{O}$ and residue field \mathbf{F} . Write

$$\mathcal{C}_{\mathcal{O}} := \left\{ \text{complete Noetherian local } \mathcal{O}\text{-algebras with residue field } \mathbf{F} \right\}.$$

The letter A always denotes an object in $\mathcal{C}_{\mathcal{O}}$. Note that A can always be presented as a quotient

$$A = \mathcal{O}[[x_1, \dots, x_n]]/(f_1, \dots, f_m)$$

for some $n, m \in \mathbf{Z}_{\geq 0}$ and power series $f_1, \dots, f_m \in \mathcal{O}[[x_1, \dots, x_n]]$.

Let G be a profinite group. We assume that for every open subgroup $H \subseteq G$ we have $|\text{Hom}(H, \mathbf{F}_p)| < \infty$ (this is called Mazur's condition Φ_p).

Also fix a (continuous) representation $\bar{\rho}: G \rightarrow \text{GL}_2(\mathbf{F})$ and a character $\chi: G \rightarrow \mathcal{O}^\times$ lifting $\det(\bar{\rho})$.

1 Generalities

Deformations and deformation rings

Definition 1.1. A *framed deformation of $\bar{\rho}$ (with determinant χ) to A* is a representation $\rho: G \rightarrow \text{GL}_2(A)$ that reduces to $\bar{\rho}$ and has determinant χ . We write

$$\text{Def}^\square = \text{Def}_{\bar{\rho}, \chi}^\square: \mathcal{C}_{\mathcal{O}} \rightarrow \text{Set}$$

for the functor sending A to the set of framed deformations of $\bar{\rho}$ to A .

Assume that $\bar{\rho}$ is absolutely irreducible. Then a *deformation of $\bar{\rho}$ to A* is a tuple (M, ρ) consisting of a free A -module M of rank 2 and a representation $\rho: G \rightarrow \text{Aut}_A(M)$ that reduces to $\bar{\rho}$ and has determinant χ . We write

$$\text{Def}: \mathcal{C}_{\mathcal{O}} \rightarrow \text{Set}$$

for the functor sending $A \in \mathcal{C}_{\mathcal{O}}$ to the set of isomorphism classes of deformations of $\bar{\rho}$ to A .

Remark 1.2. Assume that $\bar{\rho}$ is absolutely irreducible. There is a natural morphism $\text{Def}^\square \rightarrow \text{Def}$ that is heuristically given by “forgetting the basis of M ”. Let $(M, \rho) \in \text{Def}(A)$ and choose an \mathbf{F} -basis $\bar{\mathcal{B}}$ of $\mathbf{F} \otimes_A M$ such that the composition

$$G \xrightarrow{\rho} \text{Aut}_A(M) \rightarrow \text{Aut}_{\mathbf{F}}(\mathbf{F} \otimes_A M) \xrightarrow{\bar{\mathcal{B}}} \text{GL}_2(\mathbf{F})$$

agrees with $\bar{\rho}$ (such a basis is unique up to scaling because $\bar{\rho}$ is absolutely irreducible). Then there is a natural bijection

$$\{A\text{-bases } \mathcal{B} \text{ of } M \text{ reducing to } \bar{\mathcal{B}}\} / (1 + \mathfrak{m}_A) \cong \text{fib}_{(M, \rho)}(\text{Def}^\square(A) \rightarrow \text{Def}(A))$$

that is given by sending the equivalence class of an A -basis \mathcal{B} of M to the composition

$$G \xrightarrow{\rho} \text{Aut}_A(M) \xrightarrow{\mathcal{B}} \text{GL}_2(A).$$

Theorem 1.3 (Mazur). *The functor Def^\square is representable by a universal framed deformation*

$$\rho^\square: G \rightarrow \text{GL}_2(R^\square).$$

When $\bar{\rho}$ is absolutely irreducible then the functor Def is representable by (the isomorphism class of) a universal deformation

$$\rho^{\text{univ}}: G \rightarrow \text{Aut}_{R^{\text{univ}}}(M^{\text{univ}}).$$

Remark 1.4. Assume that $\bar{\rho}$ is absolutely irreducible. Then the morphism $\text{Def}^\square \rightarrow \text{Def}$ induces a morphism $R^{\text{univ}} \rightarrow R^\square$. In fact the observation in Remark 1.2 implies that R^\square is formally smooth over R^{univ} of relative dimension $3 = 2^2 - 1$.

Tangent spaces

Lemma 1.5. *There exists a natural isomorphism of \mathbf{F} -vector spaces*

$$Z^1(G, \text{ad}^0 \bar{\rho}) \cong \text{Tgt}(\text{Def}^\square)$$

given by sending a 1-cocycle $\phi: G \rightarrow \text{M}_2(\mathbf{F})^{\text{tr}=0}$ to the tangent vector $(1 + \phi\varepsilon)\bar{\rho} \in \text{Def}^\square(\mathbf{F}[\varepsilon]) = \text{Tgt}(\text{Def}^\square)$.

When $\bar{\rho}$ is absolutely irreducible then this isomorphism induces an isomorphism

$$H^1(G, \text{ad}^0 \bar{\rho}) \cong \text{Tgt}(\text{Def}).$$

Proof. Every lift of $\bar{\rho}$ to a map of sets $\rho: G \rightarrow \text{GL}_2(\mathbf{F}[\varepsilon])$ is of the form $\rho = (1 + \phi\varepsilon)\bar{\rho}$ for some map of sets $\phi: G \rightarrow \text{M}_2(\mathbf{F})$. Now we can compute (for $g, h \in G$)

$$\begin{aligned} \rho(g)\rho(h) &= (1 + \phi(g)\varepsilon)\bar{\rho}(g)(1 + \phi(h)\varepsilon)\bar{\rho}(h) \\ &= \bar{\rho}(g)\bar{\rho}(h) + \bar{\rho}(g)\phi(h)\bar{\rho}(h)\varepsilon + \phi(g)\bar{\rho}(g)\bar{\rho}(h)\varepsilon \\ &= \left(1 + (\phi(g) + \bar{\rho}(g)\phi(h)\bar{\rho}(g)^{-1})\varepsilon\right)\bar{\rho}(gh). \end{aligned}$$

Thus we see that ρ is a group homomorphism if and only if ϕ is a 1-cocycle. We now also compute (for $g \in G$)

$$\begin{aligned} \det(\rho(g)) &= \det(1 + \phi(g)\varepsilon) \det(\bar{\rho}(g)) \\ &= \left(1 + \text{tr}(\phi(g))\varepsilon\right) \chi(g). \end{aligned}$$

Thus we see that ρ has determinant χ if and only if ϕ has image inside $\text{M}_2(\mathbf{F})^{\text{tr}=0}$. This finishes the proof of the first claim (up to checking that the given map is \mathbf{F} -linear).

For proving the second claim assume that $\bar{\rho}$ is absolutely irreducible. Now observe that for $a \in \text{M}_2(\mathbf{F})^{\text{tr}=0}$ we have (for $g \in G$)

$$\begin{aligned} (1 + a\varepsilon)\bar{\rho}(g)(1 - a\varepsilon) &= \bar{\rho}(g) + a\bar{\rho}(g)\varepsilon - \bar{\rho}(g)a\varepsilon \\ &= \left(1 + (a - \bar{\rho}(g)a\bar{\rho}(g)^{-1})\varepsilon\right)\bar{\rho}(g). \end{aligned}$$

Thus we see that $\rho \in \text{Tgt}(\text{Def}^\square)$ lies in the kernel of $\text{Tgt}(\text{Def}^\square) \rightarrow \text{Tgt}(\text{Def})$ if and only if the corresponding 1-cocycle $\phi \in Z^1(G, \text{ad}^0 \bar{\rho})$ is cohomologically trivial. \square

Corollary 1.6. *We have*

$$\dim_{\mathbf{F}} \text{Tgt}(\text{Def}^\square) = 3 - h^0(G, \text{ad}^0 \bar{\rho}) + h^1(G, \text{ad}^0 \bar{\rho}).$$

When $\bar{\rho}$ is absolutely irreducible then we have

$$\dim_{\mathbf{F}} \text{Tgt}(\text{Def}) = h^1(G, \text{ad}^0 \bar{\rho}).$$

Proof. Both claims follow from Lemma 1.5, using the exact sequence of \mathbf{F} -vector spaces

$$0 \rightarrow H^0(G, \text{ad}^0 \bar{\rho}) \rightarrow \text{ad}^0 \bar{\rho} \rightarrow Z^1(G, \text{ad}^0 \bar{\rho}) \rightarrow H^1(G, \text{ad}^0 \bar{\rho}) \rightarrow 0. \quad \square$$

Remark 1.7. Assume that $\bar{\rho}$ is absolutely irreducible. Then we have $h^0(G, \text{ad}^0 \bar{\rho}) = 0$ and the dimension formula in Corollary 1.6 matches the description of R^\square as a power series algebra over R^{univ} in 3 variables given in Remark 1.4.

Proposition 1.8. *We have*

$$\text{Krull. dim } R^\square \in (4 - h^0(G, \text{ad}^0 \bar{\rho}) + h^1(G, \text{ad}^0 \bar{\rho})) + [-h^2(G, \text{ad}^0 \bar{\rho}), 0].$$

When $h^2(G, \text{ad}^0 \bar{\rho}) = 0$ then R^\square is actually formally smooth over \mathcal{O} .

Assume that $\bar{\rho}$ is absolutely irreducible. We have

$$\text{Krull. dim } R^{\text{univ}} \in (1 + h^1(G, \text{ad}^0 \bar{\rho})) + [-h^2(G, \text{ad}^0 \bar{\rho}), 0].$$

When $h^2(G, \text{ad}^0 \bar{\rho}) = 0$ then R^{univ} is in fact formally smooth over \mathcal{O} .

Proof. See [Gee22, Lemma 3.13. and Corollary 3.14.]. □

2 Local Galois deformations

Notation 2.1. Let K/\mathbf{Q}_ℓ be a finite extension, where ℓ is a rational prime (possibly equal to p). We denote by q the cardinality of the residue field of K . In this section we assume that $G = G_K$ is the absolute Galois group of K (with respect to a fixed algebraic closure \bar{K} of K).

We have the inertia subgroups $P_K \subseteq I_K \subseteq G$. We write $\sigma \in I_K/P_K$ for the topological generator induced by a compatible choice of prime-to- ℓ roots of unity in \bar{K} and $\varphi \in G/P_K$ for a choice of lift of the Frobenius $\text{Frob}_K \in G/I_K$. Note that we then have the relation $\varphi\sigma\varphi^{-1} = \sigma^q$.

We also assume that L is big enough. In the case $p = \ell$ this means that L contains the image of K under every embedding $K \rightarrow \mathbf{Q}_p$, and in the case $p \neq \ell$ we refer to [Böe13, Section 3.3.] for the precise condition.

The case $p = \ell$

Theorem 2.2. *Assume that K/\mathbf{Q}_p is unramified. For each embedding $\sigma: K \rightarrow \bar{\mathbf{Q}}_p$, let H_σ be a set of two distinct integers whose difference is $\leq p - 2$.*

Then there exists a unique reduced, p -torsionfree quotient $R_{\text{cris}, (H_\sigma)_\sigma}^\square$ of R^\square with the property that a continuous (\mathcal{O} -linear) homomorphism $R^\square \rightarrow \bar{\mathbf{Q}}_p$ factors through $R_{\text{cris}, (H_\sigma)_\sigma}^\square$ if and only if the corresponding representation $G \rightarrow \text{GL}_2(\bar{\mathbf{Q}}_p)$ is crystalline with Hodge-Tate weights $(H_\sigma)_\sigma$.

Finally, $R_{\text{cris}, (H_\sigma)_\sigma}^\square$ is formally smooth over \mathcal{O} of relative dimension $3 + [K : \mathbf{Q}_p]$.

The case $p \neq \ell$

Theorem 2.3. *The generic fiber $\text{Def}^{\square, \text{rig}}$ is reduced and the union of finitely many smooth irreducible components of dimension 3. The function*

$$\text{Def}^{\square, \text{rig}}(\bar{\mathbf{Q}}_p) \ni \rho \mapsto \left(\text{WD}(\rho)|_{I_K} \text{ (forgetting } N) \right)$$

is constant on the irreducible components of $\text{Def}^{\square, \text{rig}}$ and in fact the irreducible components of $\text{Def}^{\square, \text{rig}}$ are in bijection with the inertial Weil-Deligne types (by which we mean isomorphism classes of $\text{WD}(\rho)|_{I_K}$ where we do not forget the monodromy operator N) that come from p -adic Galois representations ρ deforming $\bar{\rho}$.

Definition 2.4. Let τ be an inertial Weil-Deligne type. Then we write R_τ^\square for the p -torsionfree quotient of R^\square corresponding to the irreducible component of $\text{Def}^{\square, \text{rig}}$ enumerated by τ . Note that R_τ^\square is a domain of Krull dimension 4.

Proposition 2.5. *Assume $m := v_p(q - 1) > 0$, that $\bar{\rho}$ and χ are unramified and that*

$$\bar{\rho}(\varphi) = \begin{pmatrix} \bar{\alpha} & \\ & \bar{\beta} \end{pmatrix}$$

with $\bar{\alpha} \neq \bar{\beta}$. Then the occurring inertial Weil-Deligne types are given by the following list.

- *We have the inertial Weil-Deligne type ur (the label ur stands for “unramified”) that is given by*

$$r(\sigma) = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \\ & 1 \end{pmatrix}, \quad N = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & \\ & 0 \end{pmatrix}.$$

- *For every non-trivial p^m -th root of unity $\zeta \in \mathcal{O}$ we have the inertial Weil-Deligne type ζ that is given by*

$$r(\sigma) = \begin{pmatrix} \zeta & \\ & \zeta^{-1} \end{pmatrix}, \quad N = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & \\ & 0 \end{pmatrix}.$$

In all cases the corresponding deformation ring R_τ^\square is formally smooth over \mathcal{O} of relative dimension 3.

In fact, after fixing a lift $\alpha \in \mathcal{O}^\times$ of $\bar{\alpha}$ we have an explicit description

$$R^\square \cong \mathcal{O}[[x, y, B, u]] / ((1+u)^{p^m} - 1)$$

under which the universal framed deformation ρ^\square is given by

$$\begin{aligned} \varphi &\mapsto \begin{pmatrix} 1 & y \\ x & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} \alpha + B & \\ & \chi(\varphi)/(\alpha + B) \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & y \\ x & 1 \end{pmatrix}^{-1}, \\ \sigma &\mapsto \begin{pmatrix} 1 & y \\ x & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1+u & \\ & (1+u)^{-1} \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & y \\ x & 1 \end{pmatrix}^{-1}. \end{aligned}$$

Proposition 2.6. Assume that $m := v_p(q-1) > 0$, that $\bar{\rho}$ is trivial and that χ is unramified. Then the occurring inertial Weil-Deligne types are given by the following list.

- We have the same inertial Weil-Deligne types ur and ζ for non-trivial p^m -th roots of unity $\zeta \in \mathcal{O}$ as in Proposition 2.5.
- We also have the inertial Weil-Deligne type m (the label m stands for “monodromy”) that is given by

$$r(\sigma) = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \\ & 1 \end{pmatrix}, \quad N = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ & 0 \end{pmatrix}.$$

We now also denote by R_1^\square the quotient of R^\square such that

$$\text{Spec}(R_1^\square) = \text{Spec}(R_{\text{ur}}^\square) \cup \text{Spec}(R_{\text{m}}^\square),$$

so that R_1^\square parametrizes framed deformations ρ of $\bar{\rho}$ such that $\rho(\sigma)$ has characteristic polynomial $(t-1)^2$.

We have the following properties.

- For a non-trivial p^m -th root of unity ζ , we have $R_1^\square / \lambda R_1^\square = R_\zeta^\square / \lambda R_\zeta^\square$.
- The decomposition

$$\text{Spec}(R_1^\square / \lambda R_1^\square) = \text{Spec}(R_{\text{ur}}^\square / \lambda R_{\text{ur}}^\square) \cup \text{Spec}(R_{\text{m}}^\square / \lambda R_{\text{m}}^\square)$$

is the decomposition of $\text{Spec}(R_1^\square / \lambda R_1^\square)$ into irreducible components.

- R_{ur}^\square is formally smooth over \mathcal{O} of relative dimension 3.

3 Global Galois deformations

Deformation problems

Definition 3.1. A deformation problem for $\bar{\rho}$ is a (non-empty) closed subfunctor $\mathcal{D} \subseteq \text{Def}^\square$ such that for $A \in \mathcal{C}_\mathcal{O}$, $\rho \in \mathcal{D}(A)$ and $a \in M_2(\mathfrak{m}_A)$ we have $(1+a)\rho(1+a)^{-1} \in \mathcal{D}(A)$.

Remark 3.2. Here are some remarks about Definition 3.1.

- Assume that $\bar{\rho}$ is absolutely irreducible. Then a closed subfunctor $\mathcal{D} \subseteq \text{Def}^\square$ is a deformation problem for $\bar{\rho}$ if and only if it is the preimage of a closed subfunctor $\mathcal{D}' \subseteq \text{Def}$.
- Let $\mathcal{D} \subseteq \text{Def}^\square$ be a deformation problem. Then the tangent space

$$\text{Tgt}(\mathcal{D}) \subseteq \text{Tgt}(\text{Def}^\square) \cong Z^1(G, \text{ad } \bar{\rho})$$

is the preimage of a (uniquely determined) \mathbf{F} -subspace of $H^1(G, \text{ad } \bar{\rho})$.

- Let $\mathcal{D} \subseteq \text{Def}^\square$ be a closed subfunctor that corresponds to some ideal $I \subseteq R^\square$ that satisfies $I = \sqrt{I}$ and $I \neq \mathfrak{m}_{R^\square}$. Then, in order to check that \mathcal{D} is a deformation problem it suffices to check the defining condition for $(A, \rho) = (R^\square / I, \rho^\square)$.

Here is an elementary example that illustrates that things can go wrong here. Suppose that

$$\bar{\rho} = \begin{pmatrix} \chi_1 & \\ & \chi_2 \end{pmatrix}$$

for distinct characters $\chi_1, \chi_2: G \rightarrow \mathbf{F}^\times$. Then $\mathcal{D} := \text{Spec}(\mathbf{F}) \subseteq \text{Def}^\square$ is not a deformation problem. Indeed we clearly have

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & \varepsilon \\ & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} \chi_1 & \\ & \chi_2 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & -\varepsilon \\ & 1 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} \chi_1 & (\chi_2 - \chi_1)\varepsilon \\ & \chi_2 \end{pmatrix} \notin \mathcal{D}(\mathbf{F}[\varepsilon]).$$

T -framed deformations of type \mathcal{S}

Notation 3.3. Let F/\mathbf{Q} be a finite extension and let S be a finite set of places of F , containing all the places above p . In this section we assume that $G = G_{F,S}$ is the Galois group of the maximal extension of F unramified outside of S (with respect to a fixed algebraic closure \overline{F} of F).

For a place $v \in S$ we denote by F_v the completion of F at v and by G_v the absolute Galois group of F_v (with respect to a fixed algebraic closure \overline{F}_v of F_v). We also fix F -linear embeddings $\overline{F} \rightarrow \overline{F}_v$ that give rise to group homomorphisms $G_v \rightarrow G$.

Now also fix deformation problems \mathcal{D}_v for $\overline{\rho}|_{G_v}$ for every $v \in S$ as well as a subset $T \subseteq S$, and set $\mathcal{S} := (S, (\mathcal{D}_v)_{v \in S})$.

Assume that $\overline{\rho}$ is absolutely irreducible.

Definition 3.4. A T -framed deformation of $\overline{\rho}$ of type \mathcal{S} to A is a tuple $(M, \rho, (\mathcal{B}_v)_{v \in T})$, where $(M, \rho) \in \text{Def}(A)$ is a deformation of $\overline{\rho}$ to A and the \mathcal{B}_v are bases of M , such that for every $v \in S$ the representation

$$G_v \xrightarrow{\rho|_{G_v}} \text{Aut}_A(M) \xrightarrow{\mathcal{B}_v} \text{GL}_2(A)$$

is contained in $\mathcal{D}_v(A)$ (for one or equivalently every basis \mathcal{B} of M). We write

$$\text{Def}_S^{\square T} : \mathcal{C}_O \rightarrow \text{Set}$$

for the functor sending A to the set of isomorphism classes of T -framed deformations of $\overline{\rho}$ of type \mathcal{S} to A .

Theorem 3.5. The functor $\text{Def}_S^{\square T}$ is representable by (the isomorphism class of) a universal T -framed deformation of type \mathcal{S}

$$\rho^{\square T} : G \rightarrow \text{Aut}_{R_S^{\square T}}(M^{\square T}), \quad (\mathcal{B}_v^{\square T})_{v \in T}.$$

When T is empty we also write R_S^{univ} for $R_S^{\square T}$.

Remark 3.6. For $v \in T$ we have a natural morphism

$$\text{Def}_S^{\square T} \rightarrow \mathcal{D}_v, \quad (M, \rho, (\mathcal{B}_v)_{v \in T}) \mapsto (G_v \xrightarrow{\rho|_{G_v}} \text{Aut}_A(M) \xrightarrow{\mathcal{B}_v} \text{GL}_2(A))$$

and thus obtain a morphism $R_{\overline{\rho}|_{G_v}}^{\square} / I(\mathcal{D}_v) \rightarrow R_S^{\square T}$. Putting these morphisms together for varying $v \in T$ we then obtain a morphism

$$R_{S,T}^{\text{loc}} := \widehat{\bigotimes_{\mathcal{O}}}_{v \in T} R_{\overline{\rho}|_{G_v}}^{\square} / I(\mathcal{D}_v) \rightarrow R_S^{\square T}.$$

References

- [Böc13] Gebhard Böckle. “Deformations of Galois Representations”. In: *Elliptic Curves, Hilbert Modular Forms and Galois Deformations*. Springer, 2013, pp. 21–115.
- [Gee22] Toby Gee. “Modularity lifting theorems”. In: *Essential Number Theory* 1.1 (2022), pp. 73–126.