

Lecture 4

Algebraic K-theory of perfect complexes

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4.1 Perfect complexes

A : ring. M_\bullet : (unbounded) chain complex of A -modules

Def: M_\bullet is a perfect complex

$\Leftrightarrow \exists P_\bullet$ bounded complex ($P_i = 0 \forall i \gg 0, i \ll 0$)
with P_i f.g. projectives
and $P_\bullet \xrightarrow{q_i} M_\bullet$ a quasi-iso

Example: $M \in \text{Mod}_A^{\text{fg}}$ is perfect (§2.1)

$\Leftrightarrow M[0]$ is a perfect complex

Notation: $\text{Ch} A =$ category of chain complexes of A -modules.

morphisms: $M_\bullet \rightarrow N_\bullet$

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \cdots & \rightarrow & M_1 & \xrightarrow{d_1} & M_0 & \xrightarrow{d_0} & M_{-1} & \rightarrow & \cdots \\ & & \downarrow \varphi_1 & \circ & \downarrow \varphi_0 & \circ & \downarrow \varphi_{-1} & & \\ \cdots & \rightarrow & N_1 & \xrightarrow{d_1} & N_0 & \xrightarrow{d_0} & N_{-1} & \rightarrow & \cdots \end{array} \quad (\circ = \text{commutative square})$$

Construction:

$M_\bullet \in (\text{Ch}/\text{Mod}_A) \rightsquigarrow M_\bullet[n]$ shift by $n \in \mathbb{Z}$

$$(M_\bullet[n])_k = M_{k-n}, \quad d_k^{M_\bullet[n]} = (-1)^n \cdot d_{k-n}^M$$

Example: $M \in \text{Mod } A$.

We denote $M[0] = (0 \rightarrow M \rightarrow 0) \in \text{Ch}(\text{Mod } A)$
degree 0

We have $(M[0])[u] = (0 \rightarrow M \rightarrow 0)$
degree u

(Set $M[u] := (M[0])[u]$.)

Remark: $H_u(M_\bullet[u]) = H_0(M_\bullet) \quad \forall u \in \mathbb{Z}$.

Constr (Mapping cone): $\varphi: M_\bullet \rightarrow N_\bullet$ morphism
in $\text{Ch}(\text{Mod } A)$

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \rightarrow & M_n & \xrightarrow{d_n^M} & M_{n-1} & \xrightarrow{d_{n-1}^M} & \dots & \\ & \varphi_n \downarrow & \circ & \downarrow \varphi_{n-1} & \circ & & \\ \rightarrow & N_n & \xrightarrow{d_n^N} & N_{n-1} & \xrightarrow{d_{n-1}^N} & \dots & \end{array} \quad \left(\circ = \text{Commutative Squares} \right)$$

$\text{Cone}(\varphi)_\bullet \in \text{Ch}(\text{Mod } A)$ mapping cone

$\text{Cone}(\varphi)_n = N_n \oplus M_{n-1} \quad \forall n \in \mathbb{Z}$

differentials:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} N_{n+1} & \xrightarrow{d_{n+1}^N} & N_n \\ \oplus & \searrow d_n & \oplus \\ M_n & \xrightarrow{d_n^M} & M_{n-1} \end{array}$$

(in other words: $\begin{bmatrix} N & \\ d_{n+1} & \varphi_n \\ 0 & -d_n^M \end{bmatrix} = d_{n+1}^{\text{Cone}(\varphi)}$)

Exercise: $\text{Cone}(\varphi)_\bullet$ is in fact a chain complex, i.e., $d_n \circ d_{n+1} = 0 \quad \forall n \in \mathbb{Z}$.

Example: $M \xrightarrow{\varphi} N$ morphism in $\text{Mod} A$
 $\Rightarrow M[0] \xrightarrow{\varphi} N[0]$ morphism in $\text{Ch}(\text{Mod} A)$

$$\Rightarrow \text{Cone}(\varphi)_\bullet = \left(0 \rightarrow M \xrightarrow[\text{deg } 1]{\varphi} N \rightarrow 0 \right)_{\text{deg } 0}$$

Example: $M_\bullet \xrightarrow{0} N_\bullet$ zero morphism
 $\Rightarrow \text{Cone}(0)_\bullet = M_\bullet[1] \oplus N_\bullet$

Remark: For every $\varphi: M_\bullet \rightarrow N_\bullet$, we have a diagram:

$$M_\bullet \xrightarrow{\varphi} N_\bullet \xrightarrow{\text{can}} \text{Cone}(\varphi)_\bullet \xrightarrow{\text{can}} M_\bullet[1]$$

(can = canonical morphism)

Def: An exact triangle of chain complexes of A -modules is a diagram

$$M' \rightarrow M \rightarrow M'' \rightarrow M'[1]$$

in Ch_A , whose image in $\mathcal{D}(A)$

is isomorphic to a diagram of the form

$$A \xrightarrow{\varphi} B \xrightarrow{\text{can}} \text{Cone}(\varphi) \xrightarrow{\text{can}} A[1].$$

That is:

$$M' \rightarrow M \rightarrow M'' \rightarrow M'[1]$$

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} \Downarrow & & \Downarrow & & \Downarrow & & \Downarrow \\ A & \xrightarrow{\varphi} & B & \rightarrow & \text{Cone}(\varphi) & \rightarrow & A[1] \end{array}$$

in the derived category $\mathcal{D}(A)$.



The vertical arrows are isomorphisms in $\mathcal{D}(A)$, not necessarily represented by morphisms in Ch_A (only zig-zags).

Notation: We often write an exact triangle

$$M'_0 \rightarrow M_0 \rightarrow M''_0 \rightarrow M'_0[1]$$

simply as

$$M'_0 \rightarrow M_0 \rightarrow M''_0.$$

Prop: $M_0 \rightarrow N_0 \rightarrow K_0 \rightarrow M_0[1]$ exact triangle
 \Rightarrow long exact sequence of homology

$$\cdots \xrightarrow{\partial} H_n(M_0) \rightarrow H_n(N_0) \rightarrow H_n(K_0) \xrightarrow{\partial} \cdots$$

$$\xrightarrow{\partial} H_{n-1}(M_0) \rightarrow H_{n-1}(N_0) \rightarrow H_{n-1}(K_0) \xrightarrow{\partial} \cdots$$

Corollary: $M_0 \xrightarrow{\varphi} N_0$ is a quasi-iso

$$\Leftrightarrow \text{Cone}(\varphi)_0 \text{ is acyclic } (H_i(\text{Cone}(\varphi)_0) = 0 \forall i)$$

$$\Leftrightarrow M_0 \xrightarrow{\varphi} N_0 \rightarrow 0 \text{ exact triangle}$$

Lemma: $M_0 \xrightarrow{\varphi} N_0 \xrightarrow{\psi} K_0 \xrightarrow{\partial} M_0[1]$ exact

$$\Leftrightarrow N_0 \xrightarrow{\psi} K_0 \xrightarrow{\partial} M_0[1] \xrightarrow{\varphi[1]} N_0[1] \text{ exact}$$

Remark: In the proofs, can assume $K_0 = \text{Cone}(\varphi)_0$
 since $H_*(\text{Cone}(\varphi)_0) \xrightarrow{\cong} H_*(K_0)$ are isos.

4.2 K-theory of perfect complexes

Construction: A : ring.

$K_0(\text{Perf}_A) :=$ free abelian group

on generators: quasi-iso. classes $[M_\bullet]$
of perfect complexes M_\bullet .

modulo relations: $[M_\bullet] = [M'_\bullet] + [M''_\bullet]$

for all exact triangles $M'_\bullet \rightarrow M_\bullet \rightarrow M''_\bullet$

Example: $M_\bullet \in \text{Perf}_A$ perfect complex, $n \in \mathbb{Z}$
 $\Rightarrow [M_\bullet[n]] = (-1)^n \cdot [M_\bullet] \in K_0(\text{Perf}_A)$

Proof: $M_\bullet \rightarrow 0 \rightarrow M_\bullet[1]$ is an exact triangle

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} M_\bullet & \xrightarrow{0} & 0 & \rightarrow & M_\bullet[1] & \xrightarrow{\text{id}} & M_\bullet[1] \\ & & & & \searrow & \nearrow & \\ & & & & \text{iso} & & \\ & & & & \text{cone}(0) & & \end{array}$$

by an example we already saw

$\Rightarrow [M_\bullet[1]] = -[M_\bullet]$. Taking $M_\bullet = M_\bullet[-1]$, also get
 $[M_\bullet[-1]] = -[M_\bullet]$, since $M_\bullet = M_\bullet[-1][1]$.

\Rightarrow Claim follows by induction. \blacksquare

Theorem: There is a canonical iso. of ab. groups:

$$\begin{aligned} K_0(A) &\xrightarrow{\sim} K_0(\text{Perf}_A) \\ [M] &\longmapsto [M[0]]. \end{aligned}$$

Well-definedness: Let $M, N \in \text{Mod}_A^{\text{fgproj}}$.

$$\Rightarrow M[-1] \xrightarrow{0} N[0] \longrightarrow M \oplus N[0] \longrightarrow M[0]$$

is an exact triangle.

$$\Rightarrow [M \oplus N[0]] = [N[0]] - [M[-1]] = [N[0]] + [M[0]]$$

in $K_0(\text{Perf}_A)$. ■

Remark: We can factor the map:

$$\begin{aligned} K_0(A) &\xrightarrow{(1)} K_0(\text{Proj}_A^b) \xrightarrow{(2)} K_0(\text{Perf}_A) \\ [M] &\longmapsto [M[0]] \\ &\quad [M_\bullet] \longmapsto [M_\bullet] \end{aligned}$$

where $K_0(\text{Proj}_A^b)$ is a variant of $K_0(\text{Perf}_A)$, where the generators are quasi-iso. classes of objects of

$$\text{Proj}_A^b = \left\{ \text{bounded complexes } P_\bullet \text{ with } P_i \text{ f.g. projective } \forall i \in \mathbb{Z} \right\}. \quad (\text{questionable notation})$$

The relations are the same.

(Note: $\text{Proj}_A^b \subsetneq \text{Perf}_A$ strict inclusion.)

Proof that (1) is an iso:

Consider $\chi: K_0(\text{Proj}_A^b) \rightarrow K_0(A)$

$$[P_\bullet] \mapsto \sum_{i \in \mathbb{Z}} (-1)^i [P_i]$$

Exercise: $\chi(\text{Cone}(\varphi)_\bullet) = \chi(Q_\bullet) - \chi(P_\bullet)$ for any $P_\bullet \xrightarrow{\varphi} Q_\bullet$.

$P_\bullet \xrightarrow{\varphi} Q_\bullet$ qis $\Rightarrow K_\bullet = \text{Cone}(\varphi)_\bullet$ acyclic

$$\Rightarrow 0 \rightarrow K_n \xrightarrow{d_n} \dots \xrightarrow{d_2} K_1 \xrightarrow{d_1} K_0 \rightarrow 0 \text{ exact}$$

$$0 \rightarrow \underset{\text{Im}(d_2)}{\text{Ker}(d_n)} \rightarrow K_1 \rightarrow K_0 \rightarrow 0$$

$$0 \rightarrow \underset{\text{Im}(d_3)}{\text{Ker}(d_2)} \rightarrow K_2 \rightarrow \text{Im}(d_2) \rightarrow 0$$

$$\vdots$$

$$0 \rightarrow \underset{\text{Im}(d_n)}{\text{Ker}(d_1)} \rightarrow K_n \xrightarrow{\sim} \text{Im}(d_n) \rightarrow 0$$

} short exact seqs.

$$\begin{aligned} \Rightarrow \chi(K_\bullet) &= [K_0] - [K_1] + \dots + (-1)^n [K_n] \\ &= [K_0] - ([K_0] + [\text{Im}(d_2)]) + \dots + (-1)^n [K_n] \\ &= \dots = 0 \end{aligned}$$

$$\Rightarrow \chi(P_\bullet) = \chi(Q_\bullet)$$

$\Rightarrow \chi$ only depends on qis. class.

$$P. \xrightarrow{\varphi} Q. \rightarrow K. \text{ exact triangle in } \text{Proj}_A^b$$

$$\Rightarrow P. \xrightarrow{\varphi} Q. \rightarrow K. \rightarrow P.[1]$$

$$\begin{array}{c} \swarrow \text{gib } \uparrow \\ \searrow \text{cone}(\varphi). \end{array}$$

$$\Rightarrow \chi(K.) = \chi(\text{cone}(\varphi).) = \chi(Q.) - \chi(P.)$$

$$\Rightarrow \chi \text{ well-defined.}$$

► check: $K_0(A) \rightarrow K_0(\text{Proj}_A^b) \xrightarrow{\chi} K_0(A)$ identity.

$$[M] \mapsto [M[0]] \mapsto \chi(M[0])$$

$$\chi(M[0]) = [M] \text{ by def.}$$

► check: $K_0(\text{Proj}_A^b) \xrightarrow{\chi} K_0(A) \rightarrow K_0(\text{Proj}_A^b)$ identity.

$$\Leftrightarrow [P.] = \sum_{i \in \mathbb{Z}} (-1)^i [P_i] \text{ in } K_0(\text{Proj}_A^b)$$

for every $P. \in \text{Proj}_A^b$.

Induction on the length of $P.$

If $P.$ concentrated in degree n

$$\Rightarrow P. = P_n[n] \Rightarrow [P.] = [P_n[n]] = (-1)^n \cdot [P_n].$$

Induction step:

$$P. = (0 \rightarrow P_b \rightarrow \dots \rightarrow P_a \rightarrow 0) \quad (a < b)$$

$$\begin{array}{c} \uparrow \\ \uparrow \text{id} \end{array}$$

$$Q. = (0 \rightarrow P_a \rightarrow 0)$$

Exercise: There is an exact triangle

$$Q_0 \rightarrow P_0 \rightarrow K_0$$

$$\text{where } K_0 = (0 \rightarrow P_b \rightarrow \dots \rightarrow P_{a+1} \rightarrow 0 \rightarrow 0)$$

$$P_0 = (0 \rightarrow P_b \rightarrow \dots \rightarrow P_{a+1} \rightarrow P_a \rightarrow 0)$$

K_0 has length less than that of P_0 .

$$\Rightarrow \chi(K_0) = \sum_{a+1 \leq i \leq b} (-1)^i \cdot [P_i] \quad \text{by induction}$$

$$\Rightarrow \chi(P_0) = \chi(Q_0) + \chi(K_0) \quad \text{by exact triangle}$$

$$= \chi(P_a[a]) + \chi(K_0)$$

$$= (-1)^a \cdot [P_a] + \sum_{a+1 \leq i \leq b} (-1)^i \cdot [P_i]$$

$$= \sum_{a \leq i \leq b} (-1)^i \cdot [P_i]. \quad \blacksquare$$

This concludes the proof that (1) is an iso.

Proof that (2) is an iso:

$$K_0(\text{Proj}_A^b) \rightarrow K_0(\text{Perf}_A)$$

$$[P_\bullet] \mapsto [P_\bullet]$$

Proj_A^b
 \cup

Note: M_\bullet perfect $\Rightarrow \exists q_i$'s $P_\bullet \xrightarrow{\varphi} M_\bullet$
 $\Rightarrow P_\bullet \xrightarrow{\varphi} M_\bullet \rightarrow 0$ exact triangle
 $\Rightarrow [M_\bullet] = [P_\bullet]$

So the sets of generators are the same.

Relations:

$$\begin{array}{ccccc}
 M_\bullet & \xrightarrow{\varphi} & N_\bullet & \rightarrow & K_\bullet & \text{exact} \\
 \uparrow q_i & \textcircled{h} & \uparrow q_i & \searrow & \uparrow q_i & \\
 P_\bullet & \xrightarrow{\psi} & Q_\bullet & \dashrightarrow & \text{Cone}(\varphi)_\bullet & \\
 & & & & \uparrow q_i & \\
 & & & & \text{Cone}(\psi)_\bullet & \in \text{Ch}_A^b
 \end{array}$$

(\textcircled{h}) = commutes up to homotopy

Given exact triangle of perfect complexes (above row),
 Choose $P_\bullet, Q_\bullet \in \text{Proj}_A^b$ resolutions of M_\bullet, N_\bullet .

Since P_i projective, can lift to a map $P_\bullet \xrightarrow{\psi} Q_\bullet$
 making the square commute up to homotopy \textcircled{h} .

\Rightarrow induced q_i 's $\text{Cone}(\psi)_\bullet \rightarrow \text{Cone}(\varphi)_\bullet$.

$\Rightarrow [P_\bullet] + [\text{Cone}(\psi)_\bullet] = [Q_\bullet] \in K_0(\text{Proj}_A^b)$. \blacksquare

\star See [Ro], Thm. 3.1.7 for a proof.

4.3 G-theory of coherent complexes

It is also useful to have a version of $G_0(A)$ built out of chain complexes.

Definition: A : noetherian ring,
 M_\bullet : complex of A -modules.

M_\bullet is coherent $\Leftrightarrow M_\bullet$ homologically bounded
 $H_i(M_\bullet) = 0 \quad \forall i \gg 0, i \leq 0$
and $H_i(M_\bullet) \in \text{Mod}_A^{\text{fg}} \quad \forall i \in \mathbb{Z}$

Construction:

$K_0(\text{Coh}_A) :=$ free abelian group
on generators $[M_\bullet] =$ quasi-iso. classes of
coherent complexes M_\bullet .

modulo relations $[M'_\bullet] + [M''_\bullet] = [M_\bullet]$

for all exact triangles $M'_\bullet \rightarrow M_\bullet \rightarrow M''_\bullet$

Example: Every perfect complex is coherent.

\Rightarrow canonical map $K_0(\text{Perf}_A) \rightarrow K_0(\text{Coh}_A)$.

Example: If $M \in \text{Mod}_A^{\text{fg}}$, then $M[0]$ is coherent.

$$0 \rightarrow M' \rightarrow M \rightarrow M'' \rightarrow 0 \quad \text{s.e.s. in } \text{Mod}_A^{\text{fg}}$$

$$\Rightarrow M'[0] \xrightarrow{\varphi} M[0] \rightarrow M''[0] \quad \text{exact triangle}$$

$$(0 \rightarrow M' \rightarrow M \rightarrow 0) = \text{Cone}(\varphi).$$

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \downarrow 0 & \downarrow & \downarrow \varphi \\ (0 \rightarrow M'' \rightarrow 0) & = & M''[0] \end{array}$$

$$\Rightarrow [M[0]] = [M'[0]] + [M''[0]] \quad \text{in } K_0(\text{Coh } A)$$

$$\Rightarrow \text{canonical map } G_0(A) \rightarrow K_0(\text{Coh } A).$$

Theorem: A theorem. $G_0(A) \xrightarrow{\cong} K_0(\text{Coh } A)$ iso.

Key point: For any M , coherent,

$$[M_0] = \sum_{i \in \mathbb{Z}} (-1)^i \cdot [H_i(M)[0]] \quad \text{in } K_0(\text{Coh } A).$$

And $[H_i(M)] \in G_0(A)$ since $H_i(M) \in \text{Mod}_A^{\text{fg}}$.

4.A. Appendix: the derived category

Remark: A quasi-isomorphism $M_\bullet \rightarrow N_\bullet$ does not necessarily admit a section $N_\bullet \rightarrow M_\bullet$, even up to homotopy.

Example: Let $f \in A \setminus \{0\}$ be a non-zero-divisor. Then $M_\bullet = \text{Kosz}(f)$ is a free resolution of $N_\bullet = A/\langle f \rangle$, so we have a quasi-iso.
$$M_\bullet \xrightarrow{qis} N_\bullet.$$

Let's try to construct a section $N_\bullet \rightarrow M_\bullet$.

$$N_\bullet = (0 \rightarrow A/\langle f \rangle \rightarrow 0)$$

$$\begin{array}{c} \vdots \\ \downarrow \\ M_\bullet = (0 \rightarrow A \xrightarrow{f} A \rightarrow 0) \end{array}$$

A -linear map $A/\langle f \rangle \rightarrow A$
 $\Leftrightarrow A$ -linear map $A \rightarrow A$ killing $\langle f \rangle$
 \Leftrightarrow an element $a \in A$ s.t. $af = 0$.

If A is a domain, then $a = 0$ necessarily.

So the only morphism $N_0 \rightarrow M_0$ is the zero map.

Definition: $M_0, N_0 \in \text{Ch}_A$ are quasi-isomorphic

\Leftrightarrow There exists a zigzag

$$M_0 \xleftarrow{q_1 \text{ is}} L_1 \xrightarrow{q_2 \text{ is}} L_2 \xleftarrow{q_3 \text{ is}} \dots \xleftarrow{q_k \text{ is}} L_k \xrightarrow{q_{k+1} \text{ is}} N_0.$$

Notation: $M_0 \stackrel{\sim}{\underset{q \text{ is}}{=} } N_0$

Construction: There exists a universal functor

$$\text{Ch}_A \rightarrow D(A)$$

inverting quasi-isomorphisms.

Universality:

$\forall F: \text{Ch}_A \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$ s.t.h.

$F(s)$ iso. $\forall q \text{ is } s$,

$\exists! \tilde{F}: D(A) \rightarrow \mathcal{C}$

extending F .

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \text{Ch}_A & \xrightarrow{F} & \mathcal{C} \\ \downarrow & \circ & \nearrow \\ D(A) & \xrightarrow{\exists! \tilde{F}} & \mathcal{C} \end{array}$$

commutes up to natural iso.

Sketch: Define a directed graph:

- For every object $M_0 \in \text{Ch}_A$, add a vertex $[M_0]$ to the graph.
- For every morphism $M_0 \xrightarrow{\varphi} N_0$ in Ch_A , add a corresponding edge $[\varphi]$ from $[M_0]$ to $[N_0]$.
- For every quasi-isomorphism $M_0 \xrightarrow{\varphi} N_0$, add an edge $[\varphi]^{-1}$ from $[N_0]$ to $[M_0]$.

This graph freely generates a category, whose objects are the vertices, and morphisms are finite sequences of edges.

The identity morphisms are given by empty sequences of edges, and composition is concatenation.

Finally, we impose these relations on the morphisms:

- $[\text{id}_{M_0}] = \text{id}_{[M_0]} \quad \forall M_0$
- $[\psi] \circ [\varphi] = [\psi \circ \varphi] \quad \forall \varphi, \psi \text{ morphisms}$
- $[\varphi]^{-1} \circ [\varphi] = \text{id}_{[M_0]} \quad \forall M_0 \xrightarrow{\varphi} N_0 \text{ q.i.s.}$
- $[\varphi] \circ [\varphi]^{-1} = \text{id}_{[N_0]}.$

This satisfies the universal property of $D(A)$.

Reference: [Gelfand-Maclean, III, §2]