

Operator Theory: Advances and Applications

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Contents

Preface	xi
Introduction	1
I Analysis of Nonlocal Elliptic Operators	3
1 Nonlocal Functions and Bundles	5
1.1 Group Algebras and Crossed Products	5
1.1.1 Group Algebras	5
1.1.2 C^* -Crossed Products	7
1.1.3 Isomorphism Theorem	11
1.1.4 Smooth Crossed Products	13
Motivation	13
Sufficient Condition for Locality	14
Groups of Polynomial Growth	15
Tempered Actions	16
Schweitzer theorem	17
1.2 Nonlocal Functions	18
1.2.1 Assumptions about the Group Γ	18
1.2.2 Continuous Nonlocal Functions	18
Nonlocal Functions as Operators in L^2	19
Changes of Variables and Substitutions	19
1.2.3 Smooth Nonlocal Functions	20
1.3 Nonlocal Bundles	22
1.4 Case of Noncompact Spaces	22
1.4.1 Nonlocal Functions	23
1.4.2 Special Noncompact Manifolds	24
2 Nonlocal Elliptic Operators	27
2.1 Scalar Operators	27
2.1.1 Symbol Algebras	27

2.1.2	Quantization of Symbols and Operators of Order Zero . . .	27
	Quantization of Continuous Symbols	28
	Quantization of Smooth Symbols	29
2.1.3	Operators of Arbitrary Order	30
2.2	Operators in Spaces of Sections of Bundles	32
2.2.1	Operators of Order Zero	32
2.2.2	Operators of Arbitrary Order	34
2.2.3	Operators on Noncompact Manifolds	35
2.3	Symbols as Nonlocal Functions on T^*M	36
3	Elliptic Operators over C^*-Algebras	37
3.1	Hilbert Modules and Λ -Index	38
3.1.1	Hilbert Modules	38
3.1.2	Operators in Hilbert Modules	41
3.1.3	Fredholm Property and Index	42
3.2	Pseudodifferential Operators over Λ	44
3.2.1	Λ -bundles and Section Spaces	44
	Λ -bundles	44
	Space of Smooth Sections	45
	Space L^2	46
	Sobolev Spaces	46
3.2.2	Symbols and Pseudodifferential Operators	47
3.2.3	Ellipticity and the Λ -Fredholm property	50
3.3	Nonlocal Pseudodifferential Operators over Λ	51
3.3.1	Operators in Trivial Λ -Bundles	51
3.3.2	Operators in General Λ -Bundles	52
3.3.3	Symbols in Trivial Bundles	52
3.3.4	Symbols in Nontrivial Bundles	54
3.3.5	Ellipticity and the Λ -Fredholm Property	54
II	Homotopy Invariants of Nonlocal Elliptic Operators	57
4	Homotopy Classification	59
4.1	Ell-Group	59
4.2	Difference Construction	60
4.3	Isomorphism of Ell- and K -Groups	61
5	Analytic Invariants	63
5.1	Fredholm Index	63
5.2	$C^*(\Gamma)$ -Index and Its Connection with the Fredholm Index	63

6	Bott Periodicity	67
6.1	Preliminary Remarks	67
6.2	Exterior Product of Operators	68
6.3	Euler Operator and the Bott Element	69
6.4	Bott Mapping and the Periodicity Theorem	70
6.5	Proof of the Periodicity Theorem	71
7	Direct Image and Index Formulas in K-Theory	75
7.1	Direct Image Mapping in K -Theory for Embeddings	75
7.1.1	Exterior Products	75
7.1.2	Normal Bundle	76
7.1.3	Definition of the Direct Image Mapping	77
7.1.4	Λ -Index Is Preserved by the Direct Image Mapping	78
7.2	Index Formulas in K -Theory	79
7.2.1	Direct Image in K -Theory for the Projection into a Point	79
7.2.2	Index Formulas	79
7.3	Proof of Theorem 7.7	79
7.3.1	Exterior Products of Operators	80
7.3.2	Homotopy	82
7.3.3	Completion of the Proof	86
8	Chern Character	89
8.1	Differential Forms and Graded Traces	89
8.1.1	Noncommutative Differential Forms	89
8.1.2	Graded Trace on the Algebra of Noncommutative Differential Forms	90
8.2	Chern Character of Projections	92
8.3	Chern Character of Symbols	94
8.4	How to Compute the Chern Character	95
8.4.1	Computation in Terms of the Symbol	95
8.4.2	Computation in Terms of Connections	96
	Graded Trace	96
	Chern Character of Projections	96
	Chern Character of Symbols	97
9	Cohomological Index Formula	99
9.1	Todd Class	99
9.2	Index Theorem	101
9.2.1	Topological Index	101
9.2.2	Chern Character on the Group $K_0(\Lambda)$	102
9.2.3	Statement of the Theorem	102
9.3	Vanishing Theorem	103
9.4	Proof of the Index Theorem	105

9.5	Proofs of Auxiliary Statements	108
9.5.1	Multiplicativity of the Chern Character	108
	Case 1. Compact Manifold	108
	Case 2. Noncompact Manifold	110
9.5.2	Chern Character of the Symbol of the Euler Operator	114
10	Cohomological Formula for the Λ-Index	115
10.1	Noncommutative Differential Forms	116
10.2	Graded Traces over Λ^∞	117
10.2.1	Cohomology of Groups	118
10.2.2	Construction of Traces	119
10.2.3	Examples	119
	Traces of Degree 0	119
	Trace of Degree 1 for the Group \mathbb{Z}	120
	Trace of Degree 2 for the Group \mathbb{Z}^2	120
10.3	Graded Traces over $C^\infty(X) \rtimes \Gamma$	120
10.4	Chern Character and the Index Formula	122
10.4.1	Chern Character	122
10.4.2	Index Formula	123
10.4.3	Proofs of Auxiliary Statements	123
11	Index of Nonlocal Operators over C^*-Algebras	127
11.1	Classification of Nonlocal Elliptic Operators	128
11.1.1	Ell-Group	128
11.1.2	Difference Construction	128
11.1.3	Isomorphism of the Groups Ell and K	128
11.1.4	Künneth Formula and Classification Modulo Torsion	129
11.2	Chern Character and the Index Theorem	130
11.2.1	Chern Character	130
11.2.2	Index Theorem	131
	Case 1. Product of Elements of Even K -Groups	131
	Case 2. Product of Elements of Odd K -Groups	132
III	Examples	137
12	Index Formula on the Noncommutative Torus	139
12.1	Operators on the Noncommutative Torus	139
12.2	Index Computation	140
12.2.1	Reduction to the Two-Dimensional Torus	140
12.2.2	Index of Operators on the 2-Torus	141
12.3	Special Cases	142

13 An Application of Higher Traces	145
13.1 Index with Values in Odd K -Groups	145
13.2 Odd Index Formula	146
13.2.1 Suspension	147
13.2.2 Index Theorem	147
Step 1. Reduction to the Cosphere Bundle and the Chern– Simons Character	148
Step 2. Desuspension and Integration over S^1	148
13.3 Example of Λ -Index Computation	149
14 Index Formula for a Finite Group Γ	153
14.1 Trajectory Symbol	153
14.2 Index Formula	154
IV Appendices	157
A C^*-Algebras	161
A.1 Basic Notions	161
A.1.1 Definitions and Examples	161
A.1.2 Unital Algebras and Units	162
A.1.3 Homomorphisms, Ideals, Quotient Algebras, and Extensions	163
A.1.4 Commutative C^* -Algebras	165
A.1.5 Spectrum and Functional Calculus	165
A.1.6 Local C^* -Algebras	167
A.1.7 Positive Elements	167
A.1.8 Projections in C^* -Algebras	168
A.2 Representations of C^* -Algebras	169
A.2.1 Basic Definitions	169
A.2.2 Existence of Representations	172
A.2.3 Representations of Ideals and Quotient Algebras	173
A.2.4 Primitive Ideals	174
A.2.5 Algebras of Type I	175
A.3 Tensor Products and Nuclear Algebras	176
A.3.1 Minimal and Maximal Tensor Products	176
A.3.2 Nuclear Algebras	177
A.3.3 Primitive Ideals in the Tensor Product	178
B K-Theory of Operator Algebras	179
B.1 Covariant K -Theory	179
B.1.1 Topological K -Theory	179
B.1.2 Group $K_0(A)$	182
B.1.3 Group $K_1(A)$	184
B.1.4 Bott Periodicity	186

B.1.5	Long Exact Sequence in K -Theory	187
	Homomorphism ∂_1	187
	Homomorphism ∂_0	188
B.1.6	Stability of K -Groups	188
B.1.7	K -groups of Local C^* -Algebras	189
B.2	K -Homology	189
B.2.1	K -Homology of a Topological Space	189
	Even Groups	191
	Odd Groups	191
B.2.2	K -Homology of Operator Algebras: Definitions	192
	Fredholm Modules	192
	Dual Algebras	193
	Extensions of C^* -Algebras	195
	Equivalence of Different Definitions	196
B.2.3	Suspension and Bott Periodicity	197
B.2.4	Long Exact Sequence in K -Homology	198
B.2.5	Stability	199
B.2.6	Duality between K -Homology and K -Theory of Operator Algebras	199
	Even Groups	199
	Odd Groups	199
C	Cyclic Homology and Cohomology	201
C.1	Cyclic Cohomology	201
C.1.1	Enveloping Differential Algebra	201
C.1.2	Graded Traces and Cyclic Functionals	203
C.1.3	Cochains, Cyclic Cochains, and the Hochschild Differential	204
C.1.4	Cyclic Cohomology and Hochschild Cohomology	204
C.1.5	Example	205
C.1.6	Cup Product in Cyclic Cohomology	206
C.1.7	Periodicity in Cyclic Cohomology	207
C.1.8	Example	209
C.2	Cyclic Homology	209
C.2.1	Definition of Cyclic Homology	209
C.2.2	Periodicity	210
C.2.3	Pairing between Cyclic Homology and Cohomology	211
C.2.4	Morita Invariance	211
C.2.5	Chern Characters in Homology	211
	Concise Bibliographical Remarks	213
	Bibliography	217
	Index	222

Preface

Noncommutative geometry, which can rightfully claim the role of a philosophy in mathematical studies, undertakes to replace good old notions of classical geometry (such as manifolds, vector bundles, metrics, differentiable structures, etc.) by their abstract operator-algebraic analogs and then to study the latter by methods of the theory of operator algebras. At first sight, this pursuit of maximum possible generality harbors the danger of completely forgetting the classical beginnings, so that not only the answers but also the questions would defy stating in traditional terms. Noncommutative geometry itself would become not only a method but also the main subject of investigation according to the capacious but not too practical formula: “Know thyself.” Fortunately, this is not completely true (or even is completely untrue) in reality: there are numerous problems that are quite classical in their statement (or at least admit an equivalent classical statement) but can be solved only in the framework of noncommutative geometry. One of such problems is the subject of the present book.

The classical elliptic theory developed in the well-known work of Atiyah and Singer on the index problem relates an analytic invariant of an elliptic pseudodifferential operator on a smooth compact manifold, namely, its index, to topological invariants of the manifold itself. The index problem for *nonlocal* (and hence nonpseudodifferential) elliptic operators is much more complicated and requires the use of substantially more powerful methods than those used in the classical case. It should be noted that although elliptic theory (more precisely, its analytic branch) for nonlocal operators has been studied sufficiently well, meaningful results concerning the index problem for nonlocal elliptic operators have until recently been rather sparse. It is only very recently that several important results (some of which are due to the authors) have appeared, suggesting that the solution of this problem is eventually within reach. Therefore, there is a need to gather together the facts already known on the topic.

That is why the present book has been written. Methods of K -theory of operator algebras and noncommutative geometry are used here to solve the index problem for nonlocal elliptic operators associated with a countable group of diffeomorphisms of a manifold.

Furthermore, to make the presentation self-contained and hence the book understandable for readers with standard university education in mathematics,

we have decided to include the Appendix, which contains some material used in noncommutative elliptic theory, namely, C^* -algebras and their K -theory as well as basics of the theory of cyclic homology and cohomology.

The main results contained in the book were obtained during the authors' stay as guests researchers at Institut für Analysis, Leibniz Universität Hannover (Hannover, Germany).

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