Continued fractions as induction process on a family of dynamical system : three examples

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Uniform distribution of sequences Erwin Schrödinger Institute, Wien

Joint work with

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- Continued fractions : a way to approximate numbers (or vectors) by a particular type of fractions;
- But also a way to zoom on a family of recurrent dynamical systems stable by induction,
- associated with a scenery flow and an explicit symbolic coding.
- Two classical examples : the geodesic flow on the modular surface and the Teichmüller geodesic flow
- A new example: Brun's continued fraction

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The traditional (projective) viewpoint



• Hence
$$a_0 = [x]$$
, $x_0 = x - [x] = \{x\}$

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$$a_n = \left[\frac{1}{x_{n-1}}\right]$$
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$$T(x) = \{\frac{1}{x}\}$$
 Gauss map

And lots of classical formulas

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The linear viewpoint

• Consider two lengths (or quantities) u, v, with u > v

- We want to find a common measure m (if possible)
- ▶ Use Euclid's algorithm and measure *u* by *v*:

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- Exchange the role of u and v and iterate

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$$\begin{pmatrix} u \\ v \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & a_0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ a_1 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & a_2 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ a_3 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} u_4 \\ v_4 \end{pmatrix}$$

- and so on
- projectivising these equalities, we recover the previous formula.
- Euclid's algorithm extended to the incommensurable case.
- We get the best approximations of the direction u
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A rotation on the circle can be seen as an exchange of two intervals

- ►
- ▶ The first return map to the largest interval is again a rotation!
- We can zoom in the dynamics of the rotation
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The dynamical viewpoint

Two very different dynamics:

- The rotation (one-to-one, invertible, entropy zero)
- The Gauss map, zooming in on the rotation
- many-to-one, not invertible, chaotic, unstable, positive entropy

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Natural extension and suspension (1)

We want to zoom out

- Add a second dimension, as suspension of the rotation
- and get a linear flow on a flat torus with a cutting and stacking dynamics
- We get a model of the natural extension of the Gauss map.
- Explicit formula : $(x, y) \mapsto (\{\frac{1}{x}\}, x x^2 y)$
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Natural extension and suspension (2)

We build a suspension of this natural extension

- ▶ Domain of the flow turns out to be $SL(2,\mathbb{Z}) \setminus SL(2,\mathbb{R})$
- Unit tangent bundle of the modular surface
- The link between continued fraction and the modular surface has been known for at least one century:
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Symbolic dynamics : sturmian sequences

• One can build a completely symbolic model :

- coding by the two intervals = sturmian sequences
- sequences of minimal complexity, rotation sequences, square billiard sequences ...
- Any sturmian sequence has an isolated letter
- it can be recoded to a shorter sequence by removing the letter following the isolated letter

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Symbolic dynamics : adic systems

• Denote $\sigma_0: 0 \mapsto 0 \quad 1 \mapsto 10$ and $\sigma_1: 0 \mapsto 01 \quad 1 \mapsto 1$

- Any sturmian sequence u can be (up to the first letter) written $u = \sigma_i v$, with i = 0 or i = 1.
- We can recode v, and so on, and get a sequence $\sigma_0^{a_0} \sigma_1^{a_1} \sigma_0^{a_2} \dots$
- A discrete version of the usual continued fraction
- Here, we only recover all known classical results

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Some images

Three views of the geodesic flow on the modular surface, by Edmund Harriss

- As a cutting and stacking construction
- As a geodesic flow on the hyperbolic plane
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- Instead of permuting 2 intervals (rotations), why not permute 3,4,...,k,... intervals?
- ▶ We get interval exchanges on k intervals, (k-IET) studied since at least the 60s, first in Russia
- as an interesting generalisation of rotations AND first return map of the flow of a closed 1-form (already known to Poincaré)
- ▶ This is linked to the conformal structures on Riemann surface
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- ► A fundamental observation is that the first return map on a suitable intervals of a k-IET is again a k-IET.
- ► This gives a continued fraction, linear in dimension k (or projective in dimension k 1)
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We can suspend the IET to obtain Zippered Rectangles and flat surfaces

- In this way, we obtain any conformal structure on an orientable surface, and any closed 1-form.
- acting by the diagonal flow, we can zoom in the IET
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Brun continued fraction: the linear version

- Brun continued fraction in dimension 3 acts on triple of positive numbers (x, y, z)
- It substracts the second largest from the largest; if x > y > z, then

$$T(x, y, z) = (x - y, y, z)$$

- ▶ and similar formula in the 5 other cases.
- one can define an associated projective map on the simplex x + y + z = 1 by

$$\blacktriangleright (x, y, z) \mapsto \left(\frac{x-y}{1-y}, \frac{y}{1-y}, \frac{z}{1-y}\right)$$

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- ► To any initial triple P₀ = (x₀, y₀, z₀), one can associate a sequence of points P_n = (x_n, y_n, z_n) = Tⁿ(P₀)
- and a sequence of matrices M_1, \ldots, M_n such that $P_n = M_n P_{n+1}$ (subject to a Markov condition)
- ► The M_n are positive elementary matrices, hence the products $M_{j,n} = M_j M_{j+1} \dots M_{n-1}$ are growing for fixed j
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- The simplest idea would be to consider the rotations of the 2-torus
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- To any elementary matrice M, associate the unique substitution σ_M which fixes the first letter
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Sequences of matrices (4) : irrationality

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S-adic sequences: covering property

• Let Δ the diagonal subgroup of \mathbb{Z}^3

- Let L be the stepped line associated to a fixed point
- The stepped lines $L + \delta$, for $\delta \in \Delta$, form a partition of \mathbb{Z}^3
- ► Hence the closure of the projection R = π(L) has a nonempty interior,
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Induction of rotation

This rotation is given with a specific coding partition in 3 components,

- whose measure is the vector (x, y, z)
- Induction on a subset gives the next rotation
- We can build a natural extension of the system
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