CLOSED 1-FORMS AND TWISTED COHOMOLOGY

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Dedicated to Paul Gauduchon on the occasion of his 75th birthday

Abstract. We show that the first twisted cohomology group associated to closed 1-forms on differentiable manifolds is related to certain 2-dimensional representations of the fundamental group. In particular, we construct examples of nowhere-vanishing 1-forms with non-trivial twisted cohomology.

1. Introduction

If $\theta$ is a closed 1-form on a smooth manifold $M$, the twisted differential $d_\theta := d - \theta \wedge$ maps $\Omega^k(M)$ to $\Omega^{k+1}(M)$ and satisfies $d_\theta \circ d_\theta = 0$, thus defining the twisted cohomology groups

$$H^k_\theta(M) := \frac{\ker (d_\theta|_{\Omega^k(M)})}{d_\theta(\Omega^{k-1}(M))}.$$

These groups only depend on the de Rham cohomology class of $\theta$, since the corresponding twisted differential complexes associated to cohomologous 1-forms are canonically isomorphic. In particular, the twisted cohomology associated to an exact 1-form is just the de Rham cohomology.

It is well known that the twisted cohomology defined by the Lee form of Vaisman manifolds, and more generally by any non-zero 1-form $\theta$ which is parallel with respect to some Riemannian metric on a compact manifold, vanishes [2].

The twisted cohomology groups, as well as their Dolbeault and Bott-Chern counterparts, play an important role in locally conformally Kähler geometry (cf. [1] or [5], where the twisted cohomology is called Morse-Novikov cohomology).

Twisted cohomology was also used by A. Pajitnov [6], who shows that if $\theta$ is a closed 1-form with non-degenerate zeros, then for large $t$ the dimension of $H^k_\theta(M)$ gives a lower bound for the number of the zeros of $\theta$ of index $k$. This is an analog of Witten’s approach to Morse theory, in the more general situation of closed 1-forms.

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On the other hand, in [7], A. Pajitnov defined a different \textit{twisted Novikov homology} theory associated to closed 1-forms $\theta$ with integral cohomology class $[\theta] \in H^1(M, \mathbb{Z})$, and shows that the twisted Novikov homology vanishes whenever $[\theta]$ admits a nowhere-vanishing representative ([7], Theorem 1.3). We will see in Example 4.2 below that the corresponding result fails for the standard twisted cohomology theory considered here.

Our main result (Theorem 2.3) relates the non-zero elements in the first twisted cohomology group associated to a closed 1-form $\theta$ with some set of non-decomposable 2-dimensional representations of the first fundamental group of $M$ which contain a trivial subrepresentation, and whose determinant is the character of $\pi_1(M)$ canonically associated to $\theta$.

In Section 3 we derive several applications of this result, like the vanishing of the first twisted cohomology group on manifolds with nilpotent fundamental group (Corollary 3.1), the fact that if the commutator group $[\pi_1(M), \pi_1(M)]$ is finitely generated, then the set $\{[\theta] \in H^1_{\text{DR}}(M) | H^1_{\theta}(M) \neq 0\}$ is finite (Corollary 3.2), or the non-vanishing of twisted cohomology on Riemann surfaces of genus $g \geq 2$ (Corollary 3.3). In the last section we give several examples of explicit computations of the first twisted cohomology group on mapping tori or Vaisman manifolds.

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2. The Main Result

Notation: the cohomology class of a $d\theta$-closed 1-form $\alpha$ is denoted by $[\alpha]_\theta$.

Let us recall the following well-known result and present a proof for it, whose method will be useful in the sequel.

Lemma 2.1. Let $M$ be a manifold. There is a bijection between

$$H^1_{\text{DR}}(M) \leftrightarrow \{\rho: \pi_1(M) \to (\mathbb{R}_+^\ast, \times) \mid \rho \text{ is a representation}\}.$$

Proof. Let $\theta$ be a representative of a cohomology class $[\theta] \in H^1_{\text{DR}}(M)$ and denote the universal cover of $M$ by $\tilde{\pi}: \tilde{M} \to M$. Then the pull-back $\tilde{\theta} := \pi^*\theta$ of $\theta$ is an exact form, \textit{i.e.} there exists $\varphi \in C^\infty(\tilde{M})$ such that $\tilde{\theta} = d\varphi$. Any element $\gamma \in \pi_1(M)$ acts trivially on $\tilde{\theta}$, so $\gamma^*d\varphi = d\varphi$, which implies the existence of a constant $c_\gamma \in \mathbb{R}$ with $\gamma^*\varphi = \varphi + c_\gamma$. Since $\gamma_1^*\gamma_2^* = (\gamma_2\gamma_1)^*$, we see that $\gamma \mapsto c_\gamma$ is a group morphism from $\pi_1(M)$ to $(\mathbb{R}, +)$. We then associate to $[\theta] \in H^1_{\text{DR}}(M)$ the representation $\rho: \pi_1(M) \to (\mathbb{R}_+^\ast, \times)$ defined by $\rho(\gamma) := e^{c_\gamma}$. The representation $\rho$ does not depend on the choice of the representative $\theta$ in its cohomology class. Indeed, if we replace $\theta$ by $\theta + dh$, then $\varphi$ is replaced by $\varphi + \pi^*h$, and since $\pi^*h$ is invariant by $\pi_1(M)$, the constants $c_\gamma$ do not change.
Conversely, for any representation \( \rho: \pi_1(M) \to (\mathbb{R}^*_+, \times) \) we will construct a positive function \( g \) on \( \tilde{M} \) which is \( \rho \)-equivariant, i.e. \( a^* g = \rho(a) g \) for every \( a \in \pi_1(M) \). To do this, let us pick a non-negative function \( f \) on \( \tilde{M} \) satisfying the properties (i) and (ii) of Lemma 2.2 below. We introduce the function

\[
g := \sum_{\gamma \in \pi_1(M)} \rho(\gamma^{-1}) \gamma^* f
\]

which is well-defined and smooth on \( \tilde{M} \) since the sum is finite in the neighbourhood of any point of \( \tilde{M} \) by property (ii). Moreover, \( g \) is a positive function on \( \tilde{M} \) since \( f > 0 \) on \( V \) and \( \pi_1(M) \cdot V = \tilde{M} \) by property (i). For any \( a \in \pi_1(M) \), we have:

\[
a^* g = \sum_{\gamma \in \pi_1(M)} \rho(\gamma^{-1}) (\gamma a)^* f = \sum_{\delta \in \pi_1(M)} \rho(a \delta^{-1}) \delta^* f = \rho(a) g.
\]

This shows that \( \tilde{\theta} := d(\ln g) \) is an exact 1-form on \( \tilde{M} \), which is \( \pi_1(M) \)-invariant, hence \( \tilde{\theta} \) descends to a closed 1-form \( \theta \) on \( M \). We associate to \( \rho \) the cohomology class of \( \theta \) in \( H^1_{dR}(M) \).

This does not depend on the choice of \( f \). Indeed, if \( g_1 \) is any other positive function on \( \tilde{M} \) satisfying \( a^* g = \rho(a) g \) for every \( a \in \pi_1(M) \), then \( g_1 / g \) is \( \pi_1(M) \)-invariant, so it is the pull-back to \( \tilde{M} \) of some function \( h \) on \( M \). Then the closed 1-form \( \theta_1 \) on \( M \) satisfying \( \pi^* \theta_1 = d(\ln g_1) \) is \( \theta_1 = \theta + dh \), so \( [\theta_1] = [\theta] \).

One can easily check that the above defined maps are inverse to each other.

\[\square\]

**Lemma 2.2.** There exists a non-negative function \( f \in C^\infty(\tilde{M}, \mathbb{R}^+) \) satisfying the following properties:

(i) \( f \) is positive on some open set \( V \subset \tilde{M} \) with \( \pi_1(M) \cdot V = \tilde{M} \);

(ii) any point \( x \in \tilde{M} \) has an open neighborhood \( V_x \), such that the set \( \{ \gamma \in \pi_1(M) | \gamma \cdot V_x \cap \text{supp}(f) \neq \emptyset \} \) is finite.

**Proof.** Denote by \( \pi: \tilde{M} \to M \) the covering map and let \( (U_i)_{i \in I} \) be an open cover of \( M \) with contractible open sets. Since \( U_i \) are simply connected, there exist open sets \( V_i \) of \( \tilde{M} \) such that \( \pi|_{V_i}: V_i \to U_i \) is a diffeomorphism for each \( i \in I \).

Let \( (\rho_i)_{i \in I} \) be a partition of unity subordinate to the open cover \( (U_i)_{i \in I} \). By definition, we have \( \rho_i \geq 0, \text{supp}(\rho_i) \subset U_i \), and every point \( y \in M \) has an open neighbourhood \( U_y \) such that the set

\[
I_y := \{i \in I | U_y \cap \text{supp}(\rho_i) \neq \emptyset\}
\]
Theorem 2.3. Let $\gamma$ there exists for each $d \theta$ and $\pi$ such that $d \theta$ is primitive of $\pi$. Then the following assertions hold:

(1) Let $\rho \neq 0$. 

(2) Conversely, if there exists an indecomposable representation $\xi: \pi_1(M) \to \text{GL}_2(\mathbb{R})$ with $\det \xi = \rho$, which fixes the vector $\begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix}$ in $\mathbb{R}^2$.

Theorem 2.3. Let $M$ be a manifold and let $\theta$ be some non-exact closed 1-form on $M$. Let $\rho: \pi_1(M) \to (\mathbb{R}_+, \times)$ denote the representation associated to $[\theta] \in H^1_{\text{dR}}(M)$, as in Lemma 2.2. Then the following assertions hold:

(1) If $H^1_\theta(M) \neq 0$, then there exists an indecomposable representation $\xi: \pi_1(M) \to \text{GL}_2(\mathbb{R})$ with $\det \xi = \rho$, which fixes the vector $\begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix}$ in $\mathbb{R}^2$.

(2) Conversely, if there exists an indecomposable representation $\xi: \pi_1(M) \to \text{GL}_2(\mathbb{R})$ with $\det \xi = \rho$ and which fixes the vector $\begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix}$ in $\mathbb{R}^2$, then $H^1_\theta(M) \neq 0$.

Proof. (1) Let $\alpha$ be a $d\theta$-closed 1-form on $M$ whose twisted cohomology class $[\alpha]_\theta \in H^1_\theta(M)$ is non-zero: $[\alpha]_\theta \neq 0$. If $\pi: \tilde{M} \to M$ denotes as before the universal cover map and $\varphi$ is a primitive of $\pi^*\theta$ on $\tilde{M}$, then

$$\pi^*d\theta = e^\varphi d e^{-\varphi} \pi^*,$$

so that $d\theta \alpha = 0$ is equivalent to $d(e^{-\varphi} \pi^* \alpha) = 0$ on $\tilde{M}$. Hence, there exists a function $h \in C^\infty(\tilde{M})$, such that $e^{-\varphi} \pi^* \alpha = dh$, and thus $\gamma^*(dh) = e^{-\varphi} dh = \rho(\gamma^{-1}) dh$. Therefore, there exists for each $\gamma \in \pi_1(M)$ a constant $\lambda(\gamma) \in \mathbb{R}$, such that

$$\gamma^*h = \rho(\gamma^{-1})h + \lambda(\gamma),$$
which equivalently reads

\[(\gamma^{-1})^*h = \rho(\gamma)h + \lambda(\gamma^{-1}), \quad \gamma \in \pi_1(M).\]

We claim that the map \(\xi : \pi_1(M) \to \text{GL}_2(\mathbb{R})\) defined by

\[(\gamma) := \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \lambda(\gamma^{-1}) \\ 0 & \rho(\gamma) \end{pmatrix}\]

is a group morphism. Indeed, if \(\gamma_1, \gamma_2 \in \pi_1(M)\), we have by (3):

\[((\gamma_1\gamma_2)^{-1})^*h = (\gamma_1^{-1})(\gamma_2^{-1})h = (\gamma_1^{-1})(\rho(\gamma_2)h + \lambda(\gamma_2^{-1})) = \rho(\gamma_2)(\rho(\gamma_1)h + \lambda(\gamma_1^{-1})) + \lambda(\gamma_2^{-1}),\]

thus showing that \(\rho(\gamma_1\gamma_2) = \rho(\gamma_1)\rho(\gamma_2)\) and \(\lambda((\gamma_1\gamma_2)^{-1}) = \rho(\gamma_2)\lambda(\gamma_1^{-1}) + \lambda(\gamma_2^{-1})\). Consequently,

\[\xi(\gamma_1)\xi(\gamma_2) = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \lambda(\gamma_1^{-1}) \\ 0 & \rho(\gamma_1) \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \lambda(\gamma_2^{-1}) \\ 0 & \rho(\gamma_2) \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \rho(\gamma_2)\lambda(\gamma_1^{-1}) + \lambda(\gamma_2^{-1}) \\ 0 & \rho(\gamma_1)\rho(\gamma_2) \end{pmatrix} = \xi(\gamma_1\gamma_2).\]

We clearly have that \(\det(\xi) = \rho\). It remains to check that \(\xi\) is indecomposable. Assuming by contradiction that there exists a one-dimensional subrepresentation \(V \subset \mathbb{R}^2\) of \(\xi\) with \(V \neq \left\langle \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} \right\rangle\), then \(V\) is generated by some vector \(\begin{pmatrix} c \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} \in \mathbb{R}^2\). By (4), for each \(\gamma \in \pi_1(M)\) we have

\[\xi(\gamma)\begin{pmatrix} c \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} c + \lambda(\gamma^{-1}) \\ \rho(\gamma) \end{pmatrix} \]

Thus \(V\) is preserved by \(\xi\) if and only if \(\lambda(\gamma^{-1}) + c = \rho(\gamma)c\) for every \(\gamma \in \pi_1(M)\).

Together with (3) we obtain:

\[(\gamma^{-1})^*(h + c) = (\gamma^{-1})^*h + c = \rho(\gamma)h + \lambda(\gamma^{-1}) + c = \rho(\gamma)h + \rho(\gamma)c = \rho(\gamma)(h + c),\]

This shows that \(e^\varphi(h + c)\) is the pull-back through \(\pi\) of a function on \(M\), i.e. there exists \(s \in \mathcal{C}^\infty(M)\) such that \(h + c = e^{-\varphi}\pi^*s\). However, this yields:

\[e^{-\varphi}\pi^*\alpha = dh = d(h + c) = d(e^{-\varphi}\pi^*s) = e^{-\varphi}\pi^*d\theta s,\]

whence \(\alpha = d\theta s\), contradicting that \([\alpha]_\theta \neq 0\). We thus conclude that \(\xi\) is indecomposable.

(2) We denote by \(M_\gamma\) the matrix of \(\xi(\gamma)\) with respect to the standard basis \(\left\{ \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix}, \begin{pmatrix} 0 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} \right\}\), which is of the form \(M_\gamma = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \lambda(\gamma^{-1}) \\ 0 & \rho(\gamma) \end{pmatrix}\). Consider again the function \(f \in \mathcal{C}^\infty(\tilde{M}, \mathbb{R}_+)\) given by Lemma 2.2 and define the function \(g : \tilde{M} \to \mathbb{R}^2\) as follows:

\[g = \begin{pmatrix} g_1 \\ g_2 \end{pmatrix} := \sum_{\gamma \in \pi_1(M)} M_\gamma \cdot \gamma^* \begin{pmatrix} 0 \\ f \end{pmatrix}.\]
As before, the function $g$ is well-defined and smooth, since the sum is finite in the neighbourhood of any point of $\widetilde{M}$, by property (ii) in Lemma 2.2. Note that the function $g_2 = \sum_{\gamma \in \pi_1(M)} \rho(\gamma^{-1})\gamma^*f$ is positive on $\widetilde{M}$, by property (i) in Lemma 2.2. We compute for any $a \in \pi_1(M)$:

$$a^*g = \sum_{\gamma \in \pi_1(M)} M_{\gamma^{-1}} \cdot a^*\gamma^*\left(0 \atop f\right) = \sum_{\gamma \in \pi_1(M)} M_{\gamma^{-1}} \cdot (\gamma a)^*\left(0 \atop f\right)$$

$$= \sum_{\gamma \in \pi_1(M)} M_a \gamma^{-1} \cdot \gamma^*\left(0 \atop f\right) = M_a \cdot \sum_{\gamma \in \pi_1(M)} M_{\gamma^{-1}} \cdot \gamma^*\left(0 \atop f\right) = M_a \cdot g.$$ 

Thus, for any $a \in \pi_1(M)$, we have:

$$\left(\begin{array}{c} a^*g_1 \\ a^*g_2 \end{array}\right) = \left(\begin{array}{c} g_1 + \lambda(a^{-1})g_2 \\ \rho(a)g_2 \end{array}\right).$$

Since $g_2 > 0$ on $\widetilde{M}$ and satisfies $a^*g_2 = \rho(a)g_2$, for all $a \in \pi_1(M)$, we conclude as in the proof of Lemma 2.1 that $d(ln g_2)$ is the pull-back of a closed 1-form $\theta'$ on $M$ cohomologous to $\theta$. Up to changing the representative, we may assume that $\pi^*\theta = d(ln g_2)$.

We define $h: \widetilde{M} \to \mathbb{R}$, $h := \frac{g_2}{a^*g_2}$ and compute for every $a \in \pi_1(M)$:

$$a^*h = \frac{a^*g_1}{a^*g_2} = \frac{g_1 + \lambda(a^{-1})g_2}{\rho(a)g_2} = \frac{\rho(a^{-1})h + \rho(a^{-1})\lambda(a^{-1})}{\rho(a)g_2}.$$

This shows that $a^*dh = \rho(a^{-1})dh$ for all $a \in \pi_1(M)$, so the 1-form $g_2dh$ is invariant under the action of $\pi_1(M)$. Consequently, there exists $\alpha \in \Omega^1(M)$ with $\pi^*\alpha = g_2dh$. We now check that $\alpha$ defines a non-trivial twisted cohomology class in $H^1_\theta(M)$. Firstly, $\alpha$ is $d_\theta$ closed, because

$$\pi^*(d_\theta\alpha) = e^\varphi e^{-\varphi}\pi^*\alpha = g_2d\left(\frac{1}{g_2}\pi^*\alpha\right) = g_2d(dh) = 0.$$ 

We now assume that $[\alpha]_\theta = 0$ in $H^1_\theta(M)$, i.e. there exists $s \in C^\infty(M)$ such that $\alpha = d_\theta s$. Using (2), this implies

$$g_2dh = \pi^*\alpha = \pi^*d_\theta s = g_2d\left(\frac{1}{g_2}\pi^*s\right),$$

hence there exists a constant $c$ such that $h = \frac{1}{g_2}\pi^*s + c$. We claim that the one-dimensional eigenspace spanned by the vector $\left(\begin{array}{c} c \\ 1 \end{array}\right) \in \mathbb{R}^2$ is invariant under $\xi$. Namely, the following equality holds for all $a \in \pi_1(M)$, according to (3) and to the definition of $c$:

$$\rho(a^{-1})h + \rho(a^{-1})\lambda(a^{-1}) = a^*h = a^*\left(\frac{1}{g_2}\pi^*s + c\right) = \frac{\pi^*s}{\rho(a)g_2} + c = \rho(a^{-1})(h - c) + c,$$
which implies that \( c + \lambda(a^{-1}) = \rho(a)c \). Hence, for any \( a \in \pi_1(M) \), we have:

\[
\xi(a) \begin{pmatrix} c \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} = M_a \begin{pmatrix} c \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \lambda(a^{-1}) \\ 0 & \rho(a) \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} c \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} c + \lambda(a^{-1}) \\ \rho(a) \end{pmatrix} = \rho(a) \begin{pmatrix} c \\ 1 \end{pmatrix}.
\]

This contradicts the assumption that \( \xi \) is indecomposable, hence we conclude that \( [\alpha]_\theta \neq 0 \).

\( \square \)

The indecomposability hypothesis in the above result can be equivalently stated as follows:

**Lemma 2.4.** Let \( \xi : \Gamma \to \text{GL}_2(\mathbb{R}) \) be a two-dimensional representation of a group \( \Gamma \), which fixes the vector \( \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} \in \mathbb{R}^2 \) and such that \( \rho := \det(\xi) \) is non-trivial. Then \( \xi \) is decomposable if and only if \( [\Gamma, \Gamma] \subset \ker(\xi) \).

**Proof.** If \( \xi \) is decomposable, then all matrices in \( \xi(\Gamma) \) are simultaneously diagonalizable, so they commute, whence \( \xi([\Gamma, \Gamma]) = \{I_2\} \).

Assume, conversely, that \( [\Gamma, \Gamma] \subset \ker(\xi) \). By hypothesis, there exists some \( \gamma_0 \in \Gamma \) with \( \rho(\gamma_0) \neq 1 \). Then \( \xi(\gamma_0) \) has two distinct eigenvalues, 1 and \( \rho(\gamma_0) \), so it has two one-dimensional eigenspaces \( E_1 \) and \( E_2 \). For every element \( \gamma \in \Gamma \), \( \xi(\gamma) \) commutes with \( \xi(\gamma_0) \), so \( \xi(\gamma) \) preserves \( E_1 \) and \( E_2 \). Thus \( \xi \) is decomposable. \( \square \)

### 3. Applications

We now derive some consequences of Theorem 2.3.

**Corollary 3.1.** Let \( M \) be a manifold whose fundamental group \( \pi_1(M) \) is nilpotent. Then for any non-trivial cohomology class \( [\theta] \in H^1_{\text{dR}}(M) \), we have \( H^1_{\theta}(M) = 0 \).

**Proof.** Let \( [\theta] \in H^1_{\text{dR}}(M) \) with \( [\theta] \neq 0 \), and let \( \rho : \pi_1(M) \to (\mathbb{R}^*_+, \times) \) denote the representation associated to \( [\theta] \in H^1_{\text{dR}}(M) \), given by Lemma 2.1. Applying Theorem 2.3, we have to show that any representation \( \xi : \pi_1(M) \to \text{GL}_2(\mathbb{R}) \) with \( \det \xi = \rho \) and which fixes the vector \( \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} \) is decomposable. We assume by contradiction that there exists such a representation \( \xi \) which is indecomposable.

Since \( [\theta] \neq 0 \), we have \( \rho \neq 1 \), so there exists \( a \in \pi_1(M) \) such that \( \det(\xi(a)) \neq 1 \). Then \( \xi(a) \) is diagonalizable, so there exists a basis of \( \mathbb{R}^2 \), such that the matrix of \( \xi(a) \) with respect to this basis is given by \( M_a = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & \rho(a) \end{pmatrix} \). Since \( \xi \) is assumed to be indecomposable, by Lemma 2.4 there exists \( b_0 \in [\pi_1(M), \pi_1(M)] \) with \( M_{b_0} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \lambda(b_0^{-1}) \\ 0 & \rho(b_0) \end{pmatrix} \) and \( \lambda(b_0) \neq 0 \). We
then obtain for $b_1 := b_0^{-1}a^{-1}b_0a$:

$$M_{b_1} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & -\frac{\lambda(b_0^{-1})}{\rho(b_0)} \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & -\frac{\lambda(a^{-1})}{\rho(a)} \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \lambda(b_0^{-1}) \\ 0 & \rho(b_0) \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \lambda(a^{-1}) \\ 0 & \rho(a) \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \lambda(b_0^{-1})(\rho(a) - 1) \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix},$$

which shows that also $\lambda(b_i^{-1}) = \lambda(b_0^{-1})(\rho(a) - 1) \neq 0$, because $\rho(a) \neq 1$ and $\lambda(b_0) \neq 0$. If we define for $i \in \mathbb{N}$ inductively $b_{i+1} := b_i^{-1}b_0a_0$, then $\lambda(b_i) \neq 0$, for all $i$, which contradicts the hypothesis that $\pi_1(M)$ is nilpotent.

□

**Corollary 3.2.** Let $M$ be a manifold whose commutator subgroup $G := [\pi_1(M), \pi_1(M)]$ is finitely generated. Then the set

$$\{[\theta] \in H^1_{\text{dR}}(M) \mid H^1_{\theta}(M) \neq 0\}$$

is finite and has at most $\text{rank}(G)^{\text{rank}(\pi_1(M))}$ elements.

**Proof.** Let $\{a_1, \ldots, a_m\}$ be a set of generators of $\pi_1(M)$ and let $\{b_1, \ldots, b_k\}$ be a set of generators of $G$. Let $[\theta] \in H^1_{\text{dR}}(M)$ with $H^1_{\theta}(M) \neq 0$. Let $\rho : \pi_1(M) \to (\mathbb{R}^*_+, \times)$ denote the representation associated to $[\theta] \in H^1_{\text{dR}}(M)$, given by Lemma 2.1, and let $\xi : \pi_1(M) \to \text{GL}_2(\mathbb{R})$ be a representation associated to $[\theta]$, as in Theorem 2.3.

We denote by $M_i$ the matrix of $\xi(b_i)$ with respect to the standard basis of $\mathbb{R}^2$. Since $b_i \in G = [\pi_1(M), \pi_1(M)]$, we have $\rho(b_i) = 1$, so the matrix $M_i$ has the following form: $M_i = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & x_i \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$, for some $x_i \in \mathbb{R}$. Let us remark that at least one of the numbers $x_i$ does not vanish, since otherwise the restriction of $\xi$ to $G$ would be trivial and then, by Lemma 2.1, $\xi$ would be decomposable.

For any $1 \leq j \leq m$ and $1 \leq i \leq k$, the element $a_j^{-1}b_ia_j$ belongs to $G$. Therefore, there exist integers $n_{ij\ell}$, for $1 \leq \ell \leq k$, such that $a_j^{-1}b_ia_j = \prod_{\ell=1}^k b_{ij\ell}$. On the one hand, we compute:

$$\xi(a_j^{-1})\xi(b_i)\xi(a_j) = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & -\frac{\lambda(a_j^{-1})}{\rho(a_j)} \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & x_i \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \lambda(a_j^{-1}) \\ 0 & \rho(a_j) \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & x_i\rho(a_j) \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}.$$
On the other hand, we have:

\[
\xi(a_j^{-1})\xi(b_i)\xi(a_j) = \xi(a_j^{-1}b_ia_j) = \xi\left(\prod_{\ell=1}^{k} b_{\ell}^{n_{ij\ell}}\right) = \prod_{\ell=1}^{k} M_{\ell}^{n_{ij\ell}} = \left(\begin{array}{c}
1 \\
\sum_{\ell=1}^{k} n_{ij\ell} x_{\ell} \\
0 \\
n_{ij} x_{\ell} \\
1
\end{array}\right).
\]

Hence, for all \(1 \leq j \leq m\) and \(1 \leq i \leq k\), the following equality holds: \(x_i \rho(a_j) = \sum_{\ell=1}^{k} n_{ij\ell} x_{\ell}.\) If for each fixed \(j \in \{1, \ldots, m\}\), we define the \(k \times k\)-matrix with integer entries \(N_j := (n_{ij\ell})_{i,\ell}\), then the above system of equations for \(j\) fixed can be equivalently written as:

\[
(N_j - \rho(a_j)I_k) \begin{pmatrix} x_1 \\ \vdots \\ x_k \end{pmatrix} = 0.
\]

As previously noticed, at least one of the \(x_i\)'s is non-zero. Thus \(\rho(a_j)\) must be an eigenvalue of \(N_j\), so each \(\rho(a_j)\) can take at most \(k\) different values. Therefore, when \(j\) varies, there are overall at most \(k^m\) different possibilities for defining \(\rho\), or, equivalently, for defining a cohomology class \([\theta] \in H^1_{dR}(M)\) with \(H^1_{dR}(M) \neq 0\).

\[
\blacksquare
\]

**Corollary 3.3.** If \(S\) is a compact Riemann surface of genus \(g \geq 2\), then \(H^1_{\theta}(S) \neq 0\) for every closed 1-form \(\theta\) on \(S\).

**Proof.** It is well known that \(\pi_1(S)\) has \(2g\) generators \(\gamma_1, \ldots, \gamma_{2g}\) subject to the relation

\[
(6) \quad \prod_{j=1}^{g} (\gamma_{2j-1}^{-1}\gamma_{2j}\gamma_{2j-1}^{-1}\gamma_{2j}^{-1}) = 1.
\]

Any representation \(\rho : \pi_1(S) \to (\mathbb{R}^*_+, \times)\) is defined by the \(2g\) positive real numbers \(y_i := \rho(\gamma_i)\). According to Lemma 2.3 and Theorem 2.3, we need to show for every such \(\rho\), there exists a two-dimensional representation \(\xi : \pi_1(S) \to \text{GL}_2(\mathbb{R})\) with \(\det(\xi) = \rho\), which fixes the vector \(\begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} \in \mathbb{R}^2\) and whose restriction to \([\pi_1(S), \pi_1(S)]\) is non-trivial.

We look for \(\xi\) of the form \(\xi(\gamma_i) := \begin{pmatrix} 1 & x_i \\ 0 & y_i \end{pmatrix}\). The commutator of two such matrices is

\[
\begin{pmatrix} 1 & x_i \\ 0 & y_i \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & x_j \\ 0 & y_j \end{pmatrix}\begin{pmatrix} 1 & x_i^{-1} \\ 0 & y_i^{-1} \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & x_i(y_j - 1) - x_j(y_i - 1) \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}.
\]
so by (6), the condition that \( \xi \) defines a representation reads

\[
\sum_{j=1}^{g} (x_{2j-1}(y_{2j} - 1) - x_{2j}(y_{2j-1} - 1)) = 0.
\]

Moreover, such a representation is non-trivial on \([\pi_1(S), \pi_1(S)]\) provided that

\[
\exists \ i, j \in \{1, \ldots, 2g\} \text{ such that } x_i(y_j - 1) - x_j(y_i - 1) \neq 0.
\]

Since \( g \geq 2 \), for any positive real numbers \( y_i \) (\( 1 \leq i \leq 2g \)), one can choose the real numbers \( x_i \) such that (7) and (8) are satisfied.

\[\square\]

4. Examples

Let \( f_A \) be the diffeomorphism of the torus \( \mathbb{T}^2 = \mathbb{R}^2/\mathbb{Z}^2 \) induced by a matrix \( A \in \text{SL}_2(\mathbb{Z}) \) and let \( M_A \) be the mapping torus of \( f_A \). In other words, \( M_A \) is the quotient of \( \mathbb{T}^2 \times \mathbb{R} \) by the free \( \mathbb{Z} \)-action generated by the diffeomorphism \( (p, t) \mapsto (f_A(p), t + 1) \). The fundamental group of \( M_A \) is isomorphic to the semidirect product of \( \mathbb{Z} \) acting on \( \mathbb{Z}^2 \):

\[\pi_1(M_A) \cong \mathbb{Z}^2 \rtimes \mathbb{Z} \]

We pick some non-zero constant \( c \in \mathbb{R} \) and denote by \( \theta_c \) the closed form on \( M_A \) whose pull-back to \( \mathbb{T}^2 \times \mathbb{R} \) is \( c \, dt \). The associated representation \( \rho_c : \pi_1(M_A) \to (\mathbb{R}^*_+, \times) \) maps \( \mathbb{Z}^2 \) to 1 and the generator of \( \mathbb{Z} \) to \( e^c \).

**Lemma 4.1.** \( H^1_{\theta_c}(M_A) \neq 0 \) if and only if \( e^c \) is an eigenvalue of \( A \).

**Proof.** If \( H^1_{\theta_c}(M_A) \neq 0 \), Theorem 2.3 shows that there exists an indecomposable representation \( \xi : \pi_1(M_A) \to \text{GL}_2(\mathbb{R}) \) which fixes the vector \( \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} \in \mathbb{R}^2 \) and such that \( \det(\xi) = \rho_c \). This means that for every \( v \in \mathbb{Z}^2 \) there exists \( \lambda(v) \in \mathbb{R} \) such that \( \xi(v) = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \lambda(v) \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \) and if \( a \) denotes the generator of the subgroup \( \mathbb{Z} \subset \pi_1(M_A) \), there exists \( x \in \mathbb{R} \) such that \( \xi(a) = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & x \\ 0 & e^c \end{pmatrix} \).

The map \( \lambda \) is clearly a group morphism from \( \mathbb{Z}^2 \) to \( (\mathbb{R}, +) \), so

\[
\lambda(v_1, v_2) = \lambda_1 v_1 + \lambda_2 v_2, \quad \forall v = (v_1, v_2) \in \mathbb{Z}^2.
\]

Moreover, by Lemma 2.4 \( \lambda \) is not identically zero since \([\pi_1(M_A), \pi_1(M_A)] = \mathbb{Z}^2\).

Since \( ava^{-1} = Av \), we get

\[
\begin{pmatrix} 1 & \lambda(Av) \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & x \\ 0 & e^c \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \lambda(v) \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & x \\ 0 & e^c \end{pmatrix}^{-1} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & e^{-c} \lambda(v) \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix},
\]

\[\square\]
whence
\begin{equation}
\lambda(Av) = e^{-c}\lambda(v), \quad \forall v \in \mathbb{Z}^2.
\end{equation}

By (9), this is equivalent to
\begin{equation}
t_A\begin{pmatrix} \lambda_1 \\ \lambda_2 \end{pmatrix} = e^{-c}\begin{pmatrix} \lambda_1 \\ \lambda_2 \end{pmatrix}.
\end{equation}

Thus $e^{-c}$ is an eigenvalue of $t_A$, and since the spectra of $A$ and $t_A$ are the same and $\det(A) = 1$, it follows that $e^c$ is an eigenvalue of $A$.

Conversely, if $e^c$ is an eigenvalue of $A$, then there exists $(\lambda_1, \lambda_2) \in \mathbb{R}^2 \setminus \{0\}$ such that (11) holds. Then (10) also holds for $\lambda$ defined by (9).

We can then define a representation $\xi : \pi_1(M_A) \cong \mathbb{Z}^2 \rtimes_A \mathbb{Z} \to \text{GL}_2(\mathbb{R})$ by $\xi(v) := \begin{pmatrix} 1 & \lambda(v) \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$, for $v \in \mathbb{Z}^2$ and $\xi(k) := \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & e^{ck} \end{pmatrix}$, for $k \in \mathbb{Z}$. By Lemma 2.3, this representation is indecomposable, so by Theorem 2.3, we conclude that $H^1_{\theta_c}(M_A) \neq 0$.

\[\square\]

**Example 4.2.** Consider the matrix $A = \begin{pmatrix} 2 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \in \text{SL}_2(\mathbb{Z})$, inducing a diffeomorphism $f_A$ of $\mathbb{T}^2$ and let $M_A$ denote the mapping torus of $f_A$ as before. Since $\frac{3+\sqrt{5}}{2}$ is an eigenvalue of $A$, Lemma 4.1 shows that for $c := \ln \frac{3+\sqrt{5}}{2}$, the first twisted cohomology group associated to the nowhere vanishing 1-form $\theta_c := c dt$ on $M$ is non-zero: $H^1_{\theta_c}(M_A) \neq 0$.

By [2, Theorem 4.5], the twisted cohomology associated to a closed 1-form which is parallel with respect to some Riemannian metric, vanishes. The above example thus shows the existence of compact manifolds carrying nowhere vanishing closed 1-forms which are not parallel with respect to any Riemannian metric.

Our last example concerns the twisted cohomology on Vaisman manifolds. Recall that a Vaisman manifold is a locally conformally Kähler manifold with parallel Lee form [8]. The space of harmonic 1-forms on a compact Vaisman manifold $(M, g, J)$ with Lee form $\theta$ decomposes as follows:
\begin{equation}
\mathcal{H}^1(M, g) = \text{span}\{\theta\} \oplus \mathcal{H}^1_0(M, g),
\end{equation}
where $\mathcal{H}^1_0(M, g)$ is $J$-invariant and consists of harmonic 1-forms pointwise orthogonal to $\theta$ and $J\theta$ (see for instance [3, Lemma 5.2]). That means that every harmonic 1-form on $M$ can be written as $\beta = t\theta + \alpha$, with $t \in \mathbb{R}$ and $\alpha \in \mathcal{H}^1_0(M, g)$.

By [4, Lemma 3.3], every harmonic form $\beta = t\theta + \alpha$ with $t > 0$ is the Lee form of a Vaisman metric on $M$. In particular, for every non-vanishing $t$, there exists a metric on $M$ with respect to which $\beta$ is parallel. By [2, Theorem 4.5], the twisted cohomology $H^*_\beta(M)$
vanishes for all \( t \neq 0 \) and \( \alpha \in \mathcal{H}_0^1(M, g) \). It remains to understand the case where \( t = 0 \), i.e. the twisted cohomology associated to forms \( \alpha \in \mathcal{H}_0^1(M, g) \).

It turns out that there exist Vaisman manifolds \((M, g)\) with \( \mathcal{H}_0^1(M, g) \neq 0 \), for which \( H^*_T(M) \) is non-zero for every \( \alpha \in \mathcal{H}_0^1(M, g) \setminus \{0\} \).

**Example 4.3.** Let \( S \) be a compact oriented Riemann surface and let \( \pi : N \to S \) be the principal \( S^1 \)-bundle whose first Chern class is the positive generator \( e \in H^2(S, \mathbb{Z}) \). For every Riemannian metric \( g_S \) on \( S \), the 3-dimensional manifold \( N \) carries a Riemannian metric \( g_N \) making \( \pi \) a Riemannian submersion, and which is Sasakian. Consequently, the Riemannian product \((M, g) := S^1 \times (N, g_N)\) is Vaisman. Its Lee form is just the length element of \( S^1 \), denoted by \( \theta = dt \).

The Gysin exact sequence associated to the fibration \( \pi : N \to S \) reads

\[
0 \to H^1_{\text{dr}}(S) \xrightarrow{\pi^*} H^1_{\text{dr}}(N) \xrightarrow{\pi_*} H^0_{\text{dr}}(S) \xrightarrow{c_1(N)^{\wedge}} H^2_{\text{dr}}(S) \to \cdots.
\]

By the choice of \( c_1(N) = e \), the last arrow is an isomorphism, thus showing that \( \pi^* : H^1_{\text{dr}}(S) \to H^1_{\text{dr}}(N) \) is an isomorphism too. Since \( \pi : (N, g_N) \to (S, g_S) \) is a Riemannian submersion, we thus have \( \pi^*(\mathcal{H}^1(S, g_S)) = \mathcal{H}^1(N, g_N) \).

Moreover, if \( p_2 : M = S^1 \times N \to N \) denotes the projection on the second factor, we clearly have \( \mathcal{H}^1(M, g) = \text{span}\{\theta\} \oplus p_2^*(\mathcal{H}^1(N, g_N)) \).

Denoting by \( p := \pi \circ p_2 \), the decomposition \((12)\) becomes

\[
(13) \quad \mathcal{H}^1(M, g) = \text{span}\{\theta\} \oplus p^*(\mathcal{H}^1(S, g_S)).
\]

Let \( \alpha \) be a non-zero harmonic form in \( \mathcal{H}^1(S, g_S) \) and let \( \rho : \pi_1(S) \to (\mathbb{R}^*_+, \times) \) be the character of \( \pi_1(S) \) associated to \( \alpha \), given by Lemma 2.11. Clearly, the character of \( \pi_1(M) \) associated to \( p^*\alpha \) is \( \tilde{\rho} := \rho \circ p_* \), where \( p_* : \pi_1(M) \to \pi_1(S) \) is the induced morphism of the fundamental groups. Note that, since the fibers of \( p : M \to S \) are connected, the exact homotopy sequence shows that \( p_* \) is surjective.

By the proof of Corollary 3.3, there exists a two-dimensional representation \( \xi : \pi_1(S) \to \text{GL}_2(\mathbb{R}) \) with \( \det(\xi) = \rho \), which fixes the vector \( \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} \in \mathbb{R}^2 \) and whose restriction to the commutator \([\pi_1(S), \pi_1(S)]\) is non-trivial.

Composing \( \xi \) with \( p_* \) yieds a two-dimensional representation \( \tilde{\xi} := \xi \circ p_* : \pi_1(M) \to \text{GL}_2(\mathbb{R}) \) with \( \det(\tilde{\xi}) = \tilde{\rho} \), which fixes the vector \( \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} \in \mathbb{R}^2 \) and whose restriction to \([\pi_1(M), \pi_1(M)]\) is non-trivial (since \( p_* \) is surjective). By Theorem 2.3, the first twisted cohomology group \( H^1_{\rho^* \alpha}(M) \) is non-vanishing.
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