A local regularity of the complex Monge–Ampère equation

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Abstract We prove a local regularity (and a corresponding a priori estimate) for plurisubharmonic solutions of the nondegenerate complex Monge–Ampère equation assuming that their $W^{2,p}$-norm is under control for some $p > n(n-1)$. This condition is optimal. We use in particular some methods developed by Trudinger and an estimate for the complex Monge–Ampère equation due to Kołodziej.

1 Introduction

The aim of this note is to prove the following a priori estimate for the complex Monge–Ampère equation:

Theorem Assume that $p > n(n-1)$. Let $u \in W^{2,p}(\Omega)$ (that is partial derivatives of $u$ up to the second order are in $L^p(\Omega)$), where $\Omega$ is a domain in $\mathbb{C}^n$, be a plurisubharmonic solution of

$$\det (u_{z_j\bar{z}_k}) = \psi > 0. \quad (1)$$

Assume that $\psi \in C^{1,1}(\Omega)$ (that is $\psi \in C^1(\Omega)$ and the second partial derivatives of $\psi$ are Lipschitz continuous). Then for $\Omega' \subseteq \Omega$ we have

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\[ \sup_{\Omega} \Delta u \leq C, \]

where \( C \) is a constant depending only on \( n, p, \) dist\((\Omega', \partial \Omega), \) inf\( \Omega \psi, ||\psi||_{C^{1,1}(\Omega)} \) and \( ||\Delta u||_{L^p(\Omega)}. \)

By a complex version of the Evans–Krylov theory (see e.g. [5] or [11]), once one has an upper bound for the Laplacian (and thus for mixed complex second derivatives) then also a \( C^{2,\alpha} \)-estimate follows. We thus get the following local regularity of plurisubharmonic solutions of (1)

\[ u \in W^{2,p}_{\text{loc}} \text{ for some } p > n(n-1), \quad \psi \in C^\infty \implies u \in C^\infty. \]  

For \( p > 2n(n-1) \) this (and the theorem) is a consequence of a general real theory from [13] (see [4]). For \( p > n^2 \) a similar a priori estimate for \( C^3 \)-solutions (without a regularity result though) was recently shown in [7].

The main point about our result is that the condition \( p > n(n-1) \) is essentially optimal. The fact that it is false for \( p < n(n-1) \) follows from a complex counterpart of Pogorelov’s example [10] from [4]: the function

\[ u(z) = (1 + |z_1|^2)|z'|^{2-2/n}, \]

where \( z' = (z_2, \ldots, z_n) \), is in \( W^{2,p}_{\text{loc}} \) if and only if \( p < n(n-1) \), plurisubharmonic in \( \mathbb{C}^n \), and satisfies

\[ \det \left( u_{z \bar{z}_k} \right) = c_n (1 + |z_1|^2)^{n-2} \in C^\infty(\mathbb{C}^n) \]

(\( c_n \) is a constant depending only on \( n \)) in the weak sense of [2].

The corresponding estimates and regularity for the real Monge–Ampère equation can be found in [14].

The main tool in the proof of Theorem will be the following estimate of Kołodziej [8] (see also [9]): if a plurisubharmonic \( u \) with \( u \geq 0 \) on \( \partial \Omega \) solves (1) (with \( \psi \) satisfying only \( \psi \geq 0 \) ) then for \( q > 1 \) we have

\[ \sup_{\Omega} (-u) \leq C(q, n, \text{diam} \Omega) ||\psi||_{L^q(\Omega)}^{1/n}. \]  

This result for \( q = 2 \) is due to Cheng and Yau (see [1,6]).

2 Proof of Theorem

By \( C_1, C_2, \ldots \) we will denote possibly different positive constants depending only on the required quantities. Without loss of generality we may assume that \( \Omega = B \) is the unit ball in \( \mathbb{C}^n \) and that \( u \) is defined in some neighborhood of \( B \). We will use the notation \( u_j = u_{z_j}, u_{\bar{j}} = u_{z_{\bar{j}}} \), and \( \Delta u = \sum_j u_{j\bar{j}} \). As usual, by \( (u^{i\bar{j}}) \) we will denote the inverse transposed of \( (u_{i\bar{j}}) \).
We will first prove Theorem assuming that \( u \) is in \( C^4 \). Differentiating (1) w.r.t. \( z_p \) and \( \bar z_p \) we will get

\[
u^{ij} u_{ijp} = (\log \psi)_p
\]

and

\[
u^{ij} u_{ijp\bar p} = (\log \psi)_{p\bar p} + u^{ik} k^{ij} u_{k\bar ip} u_{ijp}.
\]

Therefore

\[
u^{ij} (\Delta u)_{ij} \geq \Delta (\log \psi).
\] (4)

We will now use an idea from [12]. For some \( \alpha, \beta \geq 2 \) to be determined later set

\[w := \eta(\Delta u)^{\alpha},\]

where

\[\eta(z) := (1 - |z|^2)^{\beta}\]

Then

\[w_i = \eta_i (\Delta u)^{\alpha} + \alpha \eta (\Delta u)^{\alpha - 1} (\Delta u)_i\]

and

\[
u^{ij} w_{ij} = \alpha \eta (\Delta u)^{\alpha - 1} \nu^{ij} (\Delta u)_i \bar j + \alpha (\alpha - 1) \eta (\Delta u)^{\alpha - 2} \nu^{ij} (\Delta u)_i (\Delta u)_{\bar j} + 2 \alpha (\Delta u)^{\alpha - 1} \text{Re} \left( \nu^{ij} \eta_i (\Delta u)_{\bar j} \right) + (\Delta u)^{\alpha} u^{ij} \eta_i \eta_{\bar j}.
\]

By (4) and the Schwarz inequality for \( t > 0 \)

\[
u^{ij} w_{ij} \geq \alpha \eta (\Delta u)^{\alpha - 1} \Delta (\log \psi) + \alpha (\alpha - 1) \eta (\Delta u)^{\alpha - 2} \nu^{ij} (\Delta u)_i (\Delta u)_{\bar j} - t \alpha (\Delta u)^{\alpha - 1} u^{ij} (\Delta u)_i (\Delta u)_{\bar j} - \frac{1}{t} \alpha (\Delta u)^{\alpha - 1} u^{ij} \eta_i \eta_{\bar j} + (\Delta u)^{\alpha} u^{ij} \eta_i \eta_{\bar j}.
\]

Therefore with \( t = (\alpha - 1) \eta / \Delta u \) we get

\[
u^{ij} w_{ij} \geq \alpha \eta (\Delta u)^{\alpha - 1} \Delta (\log \psi) + (\Delta u)^{\alpha} u^{ij} \left( \eta_{ij} - \frac{\alpha}{\alpha - 1} \eta_i \eta_{\bar j} \right).
\]

We now have

\[
\eta_i = -\beta z_i \eta^{1 - 1/\beta}
\]
\[
\eta_{ij} = -\beta \delta_{ij} \eta^{1 - 1/\beta} + \beta (\beta - 1) \bar z_i z_j \eta^{1 - 2/\beta}
\]
and thus
\[ |\eta_{ij}|, \quad \left| \frac{\eta_i \eta_j \eta}{\eta} \right| \leq C(\beta) \eta^{1-2/\beta}. \]

We will get
\[ u^{ij} w_{ij} \geq -C_1 (\Delta u)^{\alpha - 1} - C_2 w^{1-2/\beta} (\Delta u)^{2\alpha/\beta} \sum_{i,j} |u^{ij}|. \]

Fix \( q \) with \( 1 < q < p/(n(n-1)) \). Since \( ||\Delta u||_p \) (this way we will denote norms in \( L^p(B) \)) is under control, it follows that \( ||u^{ij}||_p \) and \( ||u^{ij}||_{p/(n-1)} \) are as well. It follows that for
\[ \alpha = 1 + \frac{p}{qn}, \quad \beta = 2 \left( 1 + \frac{qn}{p} \right) \]
we have
\[ \left\| \left( u^{ij} w_{ij} \right)_- \right\|_{qn} \leq C_3 \left( 1 + \left( \sup_B w \right)^{1-2/\beta} \right), \]
where \( f_- := -\min(f, 0) \).

By [2] we can find continuous plurisubharmonic \( v \) vanishing on \( \partial B \) and such that
\[ \det(v_{ij}) = \left( \left( u^{ij} w_{ij} \right)_- \right)^n \]
(weakly). Essentially by an inequality between arithmetic and geometric means (see [3] how to extend it to the weak case) we have
\[ u^{ij} v_{ij} \geq n \left( \det(u^{ij}) \right)^{1/n} \left( \det(v_{ij}) \right)^{1/n} = n \psi^{-1/n} \left( u^{ij} w_{ij} \right)_- \geq -\frac{1}{C_4} u^{ij} w_{ij}. \]

It follows that \( w \leq -C_4 v \) and by Kołodziej’s inequality (3)
\[ \sup_B w \leq C_5 ||\det(v_{ij})||^{1/n}_{qn} \]
\[ \leq C_5 \left( \left( u^{ij} w_{ij} \right)_- \right) ||_{qn} \]
\[ \leq C_6 \left( 1 + \left( \sup_B w \right)^{1-2/\beta} \right). \]

Therefore \( w \leq C_7 \) and the desired estimate follows if \( u \in C^4 \).
Now assume that the solution is just in $W^{2,p}$. Similarly to [2], instead of $\Delta u$ we will consider for $\varepsilon > 0$ the following approximations to the Laplacian

$$T = T_\varepsilon u = \frac{n + 1}{\varepsilon^2} (u_\varepsilon - u),$$

where

$$u_\varepsilon(z) = \frac{1}{\lambda(B(z, \varepsilon))} \int_{B(z, \varepsilon)} u \, d\lambda,$$

and $\lambda$ denotes the Lebesgue measure in $\mathbb{C}^n$. Since $T_\varepsilon u \to \Delta u$ weakly as $\varepsilon \to 0$, it is enough to show a uniform upper bound for $T$ independent of $\varepsilon$.

By [2] we have

$$u^{i\bar{j}} u_{\varepsilon,i\bar{j}} \geq n\psi^{-1/n} \left( \det(u_{\varepsilon,i\bar{j}}) \right)^{1/n} \geq n\psi^{-1/n} (\psi^{1/n})_\varepsilon$$

and thus, coupling this with $u^{i\bar{j}} u_{i\bar{j}} = n$, we obtain the following counterpart of (4)

$$u^{i\bar{j}} T_{i\bar{j}} \geq n\psi^{-1/n} T_\varepsilon (\psi^{1/n}) \geq -C_8.$$

Changing the definition of $w$ to $\eta T^\alpha$ (since $u$ is plurisubharmonic, $T$ is nonnegative, hence $T^\alpha$ is well defined) and repeating the previous computations we will get

$$u^{i\bar{j}} w_{i\bar{j}} \geq C_9 T^{\alpha-1} - C_{10} w^{1-2/\beta} T^{2\alpha/\beta} \sum_{i,j} \left| u^{i\bar{j}} \right|.$$

The rest of the proof is now the same as before.

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