PL Functions and Reeb Graphs

Lecture 16 - CMSE 890

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Tues, Nov 4, 2025

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Check-in

Goals for today:

- 3.1 Filtrations on spaces, PL Functions
- 3.5 Persistence for PL Functions

7.1 Reeb graphs



2/30

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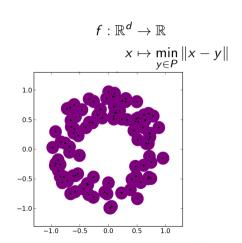
Section 1

Persistence on functions

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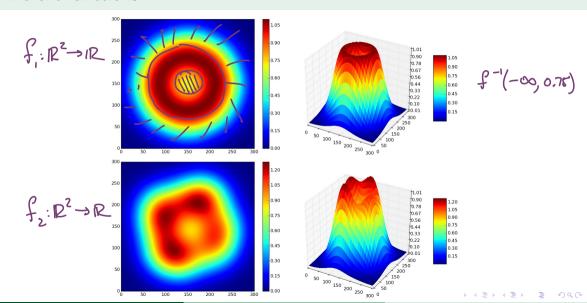
A different viewpoint for point cloud persistence

Given point cloud $P \subset \mathbb{R}^d$.



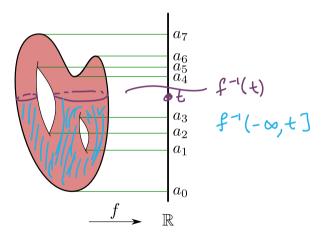
$$f^{-1}(-\infty,r]=\bigcup_{y\in P}B_r(y)$$

Different functions



5/30

Another example: "Height functions"



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Persistence for functions

Let
$$\mathbb{X}$$
 be a topological space with function $f: \mathbb{X} \to \mathbb{R}$.

Let
$$\mathbb{X}_a = f^{-1}(-\infty, a]$$
.

Then for $a_0 \leq a_1 \leq a_2 \leq \cdots \leq a_k$

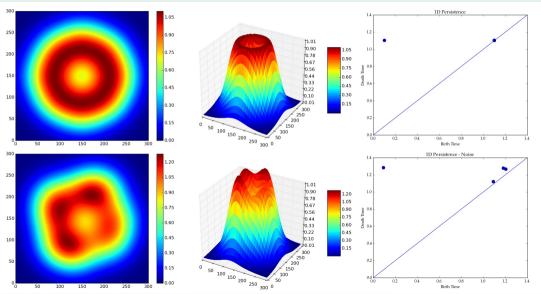
$$\mathbb{X}_{a_0} \subseteq \mathbb{X}_{a_1} \subseteq \cdots \subseteq \mathbb{X}_{a_k}$$

gives

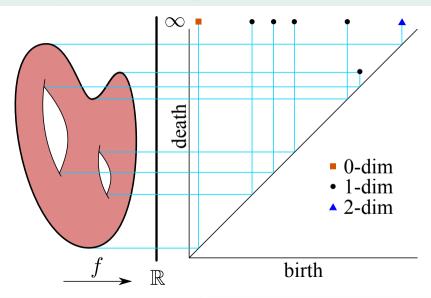
$$H_p(\mathbb{X}_{a_0}) \to H_p(\mathbb{X}_{a_1}) \to \cdots \to H_p(\mathbb{X}_{a_k}).$$

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Example with matrix function



Example with torus height function



Section 2

Piecewise Linear functions

10/30

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PL Functions

Given simplicial complex K. A function

$$f:V(K)\to\mathbb{R}$$

gives a piecewise linear (PL) function

$$f: |K| \to \mathbb{R}$$

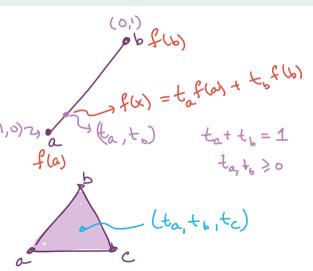
$$x \mapsto \sum_{v \in V(K)} (b_i(x)f(v)).$$
 (1,0)

The function is generic if

$$f(u) \neq f(v) \ \forall u \neq v \in V(K).$$

Sort the vertices so that

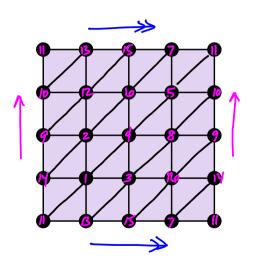
$$f(u_1) < f(u_2) < \cdots < f(u_n).$$

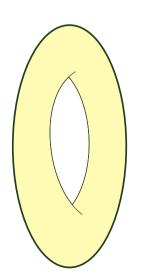


11/30

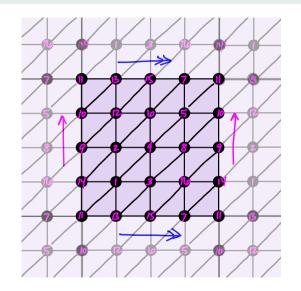
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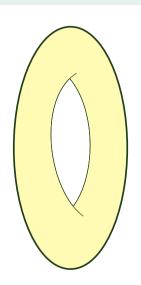
Square representation of a torus





Square representation of a torus





Level set

Given (PL) $f: |K| \to \mathbb{R}$. A sublevel set:

$$f^{-1}(-\infty,a]$$

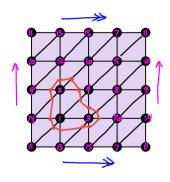
A superlevel set:

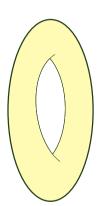
$$f^{-1}[a,\infty)$$

A level set:

$$f^{-1}(a)$$

f-1(3.3)





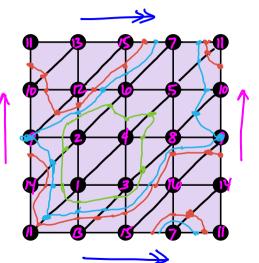
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Try it:

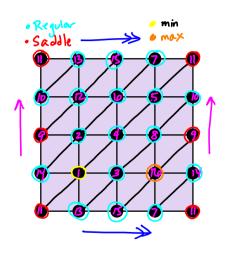
Draw the following levelsets:

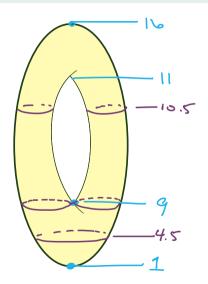
- $f^{-1}(4.5)$ $f^{-1}(10.5)$
 - $f^{-1}(9)$





Matching this example with the height function





Section 3

Reeb graphs

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Recall: Connected Components

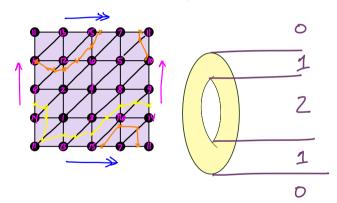
A space X is disconnected if there are disjoint open sets U and V with $X = U \cup V$. A space is connected otherwise.

A connected component is a maximal subset that is connected.



Contours vs level sets

A contour is a connected component of a level set.

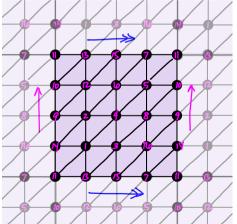


How do the number of contours change as the level set function value changes?

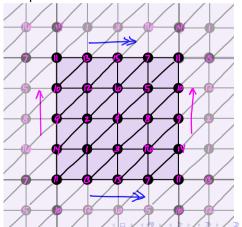
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Try it

Sketch the level set $f^{-1}(8)$. What shape is it? How many connected components does it have?



Sketch the level set $f^{-1}(9)$. What shape is it? How many connected components does it have?



19/30

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Equivalence relation

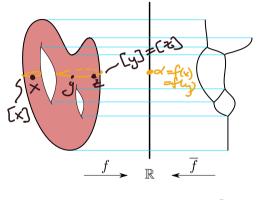
A binary relation \sim on a set \mathbb{T} is an equivalence relation if for every $a,b,c\in\mathbb{T}$:

- $a \sim a$ (reflexivity)
- $a \sim b$ iff $b \sim a$ (symmetry)
- If $a \sim b$ and $b \sim c$ then $a \sim c$

The equivalence class of a under \sim is $[a] = \{x \in \mathbb{T} \mid x \sim a\}$.

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Reeb graph equivalence relation

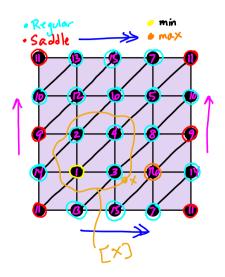


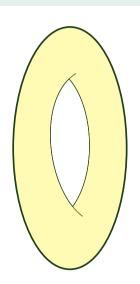
xxyy mz y~z Given a function $f:X\to\mathbb{R}$. Define an equivalence relation \sim by $X \subseteq \sim Y$ iff

- $f(x) = f(y) = \alpha$
- x and y are in the same connected component of the level set $f^{-1}(\alpha)$.

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Equivalence relation example





Quotient space

Given a topological space (\mathbb{T}, T) and an equivalence relation \sim defined on the set \mathbb{T} , the quotient space (\mathbb{S}, S) consists of

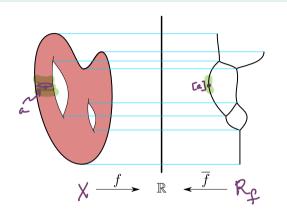
- points $\mathbb{S} = \mathbb{T}/\sim = \{[a] \mid a \in \mathbb{T}\}$
- open sets $S = \{U \subseteq \mathbb{S} \mid \{a \mid [a] \in U\} \in T\}$

V.2:

- Get a map $q: \mathbb{T} \to \mathbb{S}$, $a \mapsto [a]$
- $U \subseteq \mathbb{S}$ open iff $q^{-1}(U)$ is open

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Reeb graph

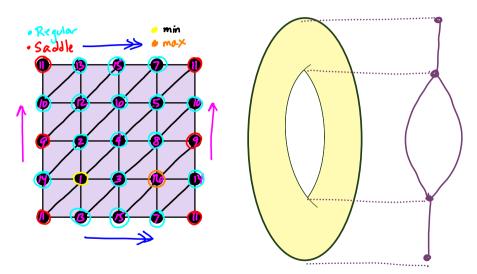


- Let [x] denote the equivalence class of x ∈ X.
- The Reeb graph R_f of $f:X\to\mathbb{R}$ is the quotient space X/\sim .
- Let $\Phi: X \to R_f$, $x \to [x]$ be the quotient map.

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Computing the Reeb graph



Nice enough assumptions

If the input is nice enough, then R_f is a graph.....

- Morse function on a compact manifold.
- PL function on a compact polyhedron
- Others.....

geometric graph

1-demensional Stranslied

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Their assumptions

Require that $f: X \to \mathbb{R}$ is levelset tame:

- each level set $f^{-1}(a)$ has a finite number of components
- each component is path connected
- f is of Morse type (Defn 4.14: each levelset has finitely generated homology groups, finitely many critical vluaes, each interval between critical values is regular)

27 / 30

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Reeb graph as a topological summary

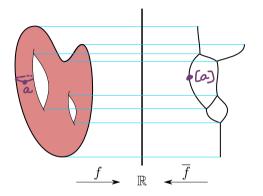
With a bit of a lie



Figure: Pascucci et al



Induced map $ilde{f}:R_f o\mathbb{R}$





29 / 30

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Another example

Compute the Reeb graph of the following example:

