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A note on the fractal dimension of attractors of dissipative dynamical systems

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1. Introduction

Let X be a compact set in a Hilbert space H : $X \in H$. We recall the definitions of the Hausdorff and fractal dimensions of X (see, for instance, [8]).

Definition 1.1. The Hausdorff dimension of X in H is the number

$$\dim_H X = \inf \{d \mid \mu(X, d) = 0\},$$

where $\mu(X, d) = \lim_{\varepsilon \rightarrow 0^+} \mu(X, d, \varepsilon)$ and $\mu(X, d, \varepsilon) = \inf \sum r_i^d$, the infimum being taken over all coverings of X by balls $B(x_i, r_i)$ centred at x_i with radii $r_i \leq \varepsilon$.

Definition 1.2. The fractal dimension of X in H is the number

$$\dim_F X = \limsup_{\varepsilon \rightarrow 0^+} \frac{\log_2(N_X(\varepsilon))}{\log_2(1/\varepsilon)},$$

where $N_X(\varepsilon)$ is the minimum number of balls of radius ε which is necessary to cover X .

It is well known that $\dim_H(X) \leq \dim_F(X)$, where the inequality can be strict.

In our work we shall be dealing with estimates of the fractal dimension of the invariant sets (attractors) of the semigroups generated by infinite-dimensional dynamical

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systems. It was shown in [8] that if the sums of the first m global Lyapunov exponents of the invariant set X have a majorant $f(m)$, then $\dim_H X \leq d_0$, where $f(d_0)=0$. For the fractal dimension it was shown there that $\dim_F X \leq \text{const } d_0$, where $\text{const} > 1$. In our work we show (see Theorem 2.1) that if $f(d)$ is concave, then $\dim_F X \leq d_0$. In other words, the Hausdorff and fractal dimensions have the same upper bound.

Turning to the applications we first note that in all the examples of partial differential equations considered in [8] the function $f(d)$ is concave. Secondly, in the two particular examples (a reaction–diffusion system and two-dimensional Navier–Stokes system) we obtain $f(d)$ explicitly and, consequently, we obtain explicit upper bounds of the fractal dimension of the attractor in terms of the physical parameters.

Finally, we observe that Theorem 2.1 can be obtained by a careful analysis of the corresponding results in [8]. However, we prove Theorem 2.1 generalizing to the infinite-dimensional case the method of [2], where the Kaplan–Yorke estimate for the fractal dimension of the Lorenz attractor has been obtained.

2. Main estimate

Suppose that a semigroup S_t of continuous operators acts in a Hilbert space H and let X be a compact strictly invariant set of S_t : $S_t X = X$, $X \in H$. We suppose that the semigroup S_t is uniformly quasidifferentiable on X for each t , that is, for $u, v \in X$ there exists a linear operator $DS_t(u)$ such that

$$\|S_t(u) - S_t(v) - DS_t(u)(u - v)\| \leq h(r)\|u - v\|, \tag{2.1}$$

where $\|u - v\| \leq r$, $h(r) = o(1)$, and $\sup_{t \in [0,1]} \sup_{u \in X} \|DS_t(u)\|_{\mathcal{L}(H,H)} < \infty$.

We further suppose that the operator $L = DS_t(u)$ is compact. This involves no loss of generality (see [8], Proposition V.1.1) and we are doing so for the sake of simplicity only. Then the image of the unit ball $B(0, 1)$ of H centred at the origin is the ellipsoid $\mathcal{E} = LB(0, 1)$ with semiaxes $\alpha_1(t, u) \geq \alpha_2(t, u) \geq \dots$, that are the eigenvalues of the self-adjoint operator $(L^*L)^{1/2}$.

Following [8] we set for integer k

$$\begin{aligned} \omega_0(t, u) &= 1, \\ \omega_k(t, u) &= \alpha_1(t, u)\alpha_2(t, u) \cdots \alpha_k(t, u), \\ \bar{\omega}_k(t) &= \sup_{u \in X} \omega_k(t, u). \end{aligned}$$

Then $\lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} t^{-1} \log \bar{\omega}_k(t) = q(k)$ and hence for any $\varepsilon > 0$

$$\bar{\omega}_k(t) \leq c_k e^{(q(k)+\varepsilon)t} \tag{2.2}$$

for some positive constants $c_k = c_k(\varepsilon)$, where $q(k)$ is the sum of the first k global Lyapunov exponents (see [8], Section V.2.3).

The above definitions can be generalized for an arbitrary real $d = k + s$, $0 \leq s < 1$ by setting

$$\omega_d(t, u) = \omega_k(t, u)^{1-s} \omega_{k+1}(t, u)^s.$$

Using (2.2) we obtain the similar bound for $\bar{\omega}_d(t)$

$$\bar{\omega}_d(t) = \sup_{u \in X} \omega_k(t, u)^{1-s} \omega_{k+1}(t, u)^s \leq c_d e^{(q(d)+\varepsilon)t}, \tag{2.3}$$

where $c_d = c_d(\varepsilon) = c_k(\varepsilon)^{1-s} c_{k+1}(\varepsilon)^s$ and $q(d) = q(k + s) = (1 - s)q(k) + sq(k + 1)$.

Lemma 2.1. *Let \mathcal{E} be an ellipsoid with semiaxes $\alpha_1 \geq \alpha_2 \geq \dots$. If $r \geq \alpha_{n+1}$, then the minimum number of balls of radius $r\sqrt{n + 1}$ which is necessary to cover \mathcal{E} is*

$$N_{\mathcal{E}}(r\sqrt{n + 1}) \leq 2^n \frac{\omega_k(\mathcal{E})}{r^k}, \tag{2.4}$$

where $\alpha_{k+1} \leq r \leq \alpha_k$ and $\omega_k(\mathcal{E}) = \alpha_1 \cdots \alpha_k$. (If $r > \alpha_1(\mathcal{E})$, then $N_{\mathcal{E}}(r\sqrt{n + 1}) = 1$.)

In addition, for any $\eta > 0$

$$N_{\mathcal{E}+B(0, \eta)}(\eta + r\sqrt{n + 1}) \leq N_{\mathcal{E}}(r\sqrt{n + 1}) \leq 2^n \frac{\omega_k(\mathcal{E})}{r^k}. \tag{2.5}$$

Proof. Estimate (2.4) is the well-known covering lemma [3,8]. Estimate (2.5) follows from the observation that if N balls of radius ε cover \mathcal{E} , then N balls centred at the same points with radius $\varepsilon + \eta$ cover $\mathcal{E} + B(0, \eta)$. The proof is complete. \square

We first assume that $q(d)$ is majorized by a linear function; the role of concavity will become clear in Corollaries 2.1 and 2.2.

Theorem 2.1. *Suppose that for $d \geq 0$, $q(d) \leq f(d) = -ad + b$, where $a, b > 0$. Then*

$$\dim_F X \leq d_0 = b/a. \tag{2.6}$$

Proof. We fix a real p , $0 < p < a$, and an integer $n > d_0$ so that $np + f(n) < 0$. Then there exists an $\varepsilon > 0$ (from (2.2)) such that

$$e^{-npt} > c_n e^{(f(n)+\varepsilon)t} \tag{2.7}$$

for $t \geq t(n, \varepsilon)$. We fix p , n , $t(n, \varepsilon)$, and also an arbitrary real $D > 0$ satisfying

$$D > \max_{0 \leq d \leq n} (d + f(d)/p) = b/p.$$

Then $-p(D - d) + f(d) < 0$ for $d \in [0, n]$ and hence $\bar{\omega}_d(t) e^{-tp(D-d)} \rightarrow 0$ as $t \rightarrow \infty$. Using this we can choose $t^* \geq t(n, \varepsilon)$ so large that for $\sigma = e^{-pt^*}$

$$2^{n+D} (n + 1)^{D/2} \max_{0 \leq d \leq n} \bar{\omega}_d(t^*) \sigma^{D-d} < 1. \tag{2.8}$$

We now set $t = t^*$ in (2.1) and let r be so small that $h = \sigma\sqrt{n + 1} = e^{-pt^*} \sqrt{n + 1}$. Then $N_X(r)$ balls cover X and by the invariance property

$$X = \bigcup_{j=1}^{N_X(r)} B(u_j, r) \cap X = \bigcup_{j=1}^{N_X(r)} S_{t^*}(B(u_j, r) \cap X). \tag{2.9}$$

We denote by \mathcal{E}_j the ellipsoids $DS_{t^*}(u_j)B(0, 1)$ with semiaxes $\alpha_1(t^*, u_j) \geq \dots$ and observe that $\sigma \geq \alpha_n(t^*, u_j)$ (and more so $\sigma\sqrt{n+1} \geq \alpha_n(t^*, u_j)$). In fact, if we assume the contrary: $\sigma < \alpha_n(t^*, u_j)$, then

$$e^{-npt^*} = \sigma^n < (\alpha_n(t^*, u_j))^n \leq \omega_n(t^*, u_j) \leq \bar{\omega}_n(t^*) \leq c_n e^{(f(n)+\varepsilon)t^*},$$

which contradicts (2.7).

By the differentiability of S_t we have the following inclusion for the right-hand side of (2.9):

$$S_{t^*}(B(u_j, r) \cap X) \subset S_{t^*}(u_j) + r(\mathcal{E}_j + B(0, h)). \tag{2.10}$$

We consider the covering of the set $r(\mathcal{E}_j + B(0, h)) = r(\mathcal{E}_j + B(0, \sigma\sqrt{n+1}))$ by balls of radius $2r\sigma\sqrt{n+1}$. Then, in view of (2.5) and (2.4), the minimum number of these balls satisfies the estimate

$$\begin{aligned} N_{r(\mathcal{E}_j+B(0,\sigma\sqrt{n+1}))}(2r\sigma\sqrt{n+1}) &= N_{(\mathcal{E}_j+B(0,\sigma\sqrt{n+1}))}(2\sigma\sqrt{n+1}) \\ &\leq N_{\mathcal{E}_j}(\sigma\sqrt{n+1}) \leq 2^n \omega_i(t^*, u_j) \sigma^{-i} \\ &\leq 2^n \bar{\omega}_i(t^*) \sigma^{-i} \end{aligned} \tag{2.11}$$

for some $i, 0 \leq i \leq n$.

We set $s = 2\sigma\sqrt{n+1}$. Then, in view of (2.9), (2.11), and (2.8),

$$\begin{aligned} N_X(sr) &\leq N_X(r) \max_{1 \leq j \leq N_X(r)} N_{r(\mathcal{E}_j+B(0,\sigma\sqrt{n+1}))}(2r\sigma\sqrt{n+1}) \\ &= N_X(r) \max_{1 \leq j \leq N_X(r)} N_{(\mathcal{E}_j+B(0,\sigma\sqrt{n+1}))}(2\sigma\sqrt{n+1}) \\ &\leq N_X(r) \max_{1 \leq k \leq n} (\bar{\omega}_k(t^*) 2^n \sigma^{-k}) \\ &= 2^{n+D} (n+1)^{D/2} \max_{1 \leq d \leq n} (\bar{\omega}_d(t^*) \sigma^{D-k}) s^{-D} N_X(r) \\ &\leq s^{-D} N_X(r). \end{aligned}$$

Since $s \leq \text{const} < 1$, it follows that $N_X(s^k r) \leq s^{-kD} N_X(r)$ for each integer k . For an arbitrary $\varepsilon > 0$ let k be such that $s^{k+1} r < \varepsilon \leq s^k r$. Then $N_X(\varepsilon) \leq (1/\varepsilon)^D ((r/s)^D N_X(r))$. From Definition 1.2 we see that $\dim_F X \leq D$ and hence $\dim_F X \leq b/p$, which gives (2.6) by letting $p \rightarrow a$. The proof is complete. \square

Corollary 2.1. *Suppose that $q(n) \geq 0$ and $q(n+1) < 0$ and the piecewise linear function $q(d)$ (see (2.2) and (2.3)) is concave (or, more generally, lies below the straight line joining the points $(n, q(n))$ and $(n+1, q(n+1))$). Then*

$$\dim_F X \leq d_0 = n + \frac{q(n)}{q(n) - q(n+1)}. \tag{2.13}$$

Proof. We denote by $f(d)$ the linear function whose graph is the straight line described in the corollary. Then, by concavity, $q(d) \leq f(d)$ and $q(d_0) = f(d_0) = 0$. Estimate (2.13) now follows from Theorem 2.1. \square

The next result will be used in applications most often.

Corollary 2.2. *If $q(m) \leq f(m)$, for $m = 1, \dots$, where $f(d)$ is a concave function of the continuous variable d and $f(d_*) = 0$, then*

$$\dim_F X \leq d_*.$$

3. Applications to evolution equations

The examples below are given as an illustration of the main theorem. We did not try to improve the physical results published in the literature.

We first briefly recall the formal scheme from [8] for estimating the sums of the first m global Lyapunov exponents, that is, the numbers $q(m)$.

If the semigroup S_t generated by the equation

$$\partial_t u = F(u), \quad u(0) = u_0 \tag{3.1}$$

has an invariant set X , then

$$q(m) \leq \limsup_{t \rightarrow \infty} \sup_{u_0 \in X} \sup_{\substack{\xi_i \in H \\ i=1, \dots, m}} \left(\frac{1}{t} \int_0^t \text{Tr } F'_u(S_\tau u_0) \circ Q_m(\tau) \, d\tau \right). \tag{3.2}$$

Here $Q_m(\tau)$ is the orthogonal projection in H onto $\text{Span}(U_1(\tau), \dots, U_m(\tau))$, where the U_i are the solutions of the first variation equation

$$\partial_t U_i = F'_u(S_t(u_0)) \cdot U_i(t), \quad U_i(0) = \xi_i. \tag{3.3}$$

3.1. Reaction–diffusion system

We consider the following system:

$$\partial_t u = \nu \Delta u - f(u) + g, \quad u|_{\partial\Omega} = 0, \tag{3.4}$$

where $x \in \Omega \in \mathbb{R}^n$, $a = \{a_{ij}\}$ is a constant $N \times N$ -matrix with positive symmetric part $(a + a^*)/2 \geq I$, $\nu > 0$, and u, f, g are N -dimensional vector functions. We set $H = (L_2(\Omega))^N$ and suppose that $g \in H$. We suppose that $f(v)$ and $f'_v(v)$ are of class $C(\mathbb{R}^N, \mathbb{R}^N)$ and the following conditions hold for all $v, z \in \mathbb{R}^N$:

$$-C \leq f(v) \cdot v, \quad -Dz \cdot z \leq f'_v(v)z \cdot z, \quad |f'_v(v)| \leq C(|v|^{p-2} + 1) \tag{3.5}$$

for some positive C and D . The exponent p satisfies the inequality $p \leq 2n/(n-2)$ for $n \geq 3$ and $p < \infty$ for $n \leq 2$.

The system (3.4) with initial condition $u(0) = u_0 \in H_1 = (H_0^1(\Omega))^N$ has a unique solution and thereby generates the semigroup $S_t : H_1 \rightarrow H_1$. The semigroup S_t has a compact attractor $\mathcal{A} \in H$ which is bounded in $H_2 = (H^2(\Omega) \cap H_0^1(\Omega))^N$ (see [1], Theorem I.5.2).

If the following condition holds:

$$|f(v+z) - f(v) - f'_v(v)z| \leq C(1 + |v|^{p_1} + |z|^{p_1})|z|^{1+\gamma},$$

where $p_1 < 4/(n-2)$, $(n > 2)$ and $\gamma > 0$ is sufficiently small, then the operators of the semigroup S_t are differentiable on \mathcal{A} in H in the sense of (2.1).

Theorem 3.1. *The fractal dimension of \mathcal{A} in H satisfies the estimate*

$$\dim_F \mathcal{A} \leq N \left(\frac{n+2}{4\pi n} \right)^{n/2} \frac{1}{\Gamma(1+n/2)} |\Omega| \left(\frac{D}{v} \right)^{n/2}, \tag{3.6}$$

where $|\Omega|$ denotes the n -dimensional measure of Ω .

Proof. The first variation equation (3.3) corresponding to (3.4) has the form

$$\partial_t U = va\Delta U - f'_u(u(t))U.$$

Therefore, in this case

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Tr } F'_u(u(t)) \circ \mathcal{Q}_m(t) &= \sum_{i=1}^m (va\Delta\varphi_i, \varphi_i) - \sum_{i=1}^m (f'_u(u(t))\varphi_i, \varphi_i) \\ &\leq -v \sum_{i=1}^m \|\nabla\varphi_i\|^2 + D \sum_{i=1}^m \|\varphi_i\|^2 \leq -v \sum_{i=1}^m \lambda_i + Dm, \end{aligned}$$

where the vector-functions $\varphi_i = \varphi_i(t) \in H \cap (H_0^1)^N$ are an orthonormal basis in $\text{Span}(U_1(t), \dots, U_m(t))$ (see (3.1)–(3.3)), and where we have taken into account (3.5), the property of a that $(a + a^*)/2 \geq I$ and the variational principle (see [8], Lemma VI.2.1): $\sum_{i=1}^m \|\nabla\varphi_i\|^2 \geq \sum_{i=1}^m \lambda_i$, the λ_i being the eigenvalues of the Dirichlet problem for the operator $-I\Delta$ in Ω . Clearly $\{\lambda_i\}_{i=1}^\infty = \{\Lambda_n, \dots, \Lambda_n\}_{n=1}^\infty$, where the Λ_n are the eigenvalues of the scalar Dirichlet problem for $-\Delta$ in Ω and each Λ_n is repeated N times. This gives that

$$\sum_{i=1}^m \lambda_i = N \sum_{i=1}^k \Lambda_i + p\Lambda_{k+1} = p \sum_{i=1}^{k+1} \Lambda_i + (N - p) \sum_{i=1}^k \Lambda_i,$$

where $m = Nk + p$, $0 \leq p < N$. Using the estimate

$$\sum_{i=1}^m \Lambda_i \geq c_0 |\Omega|^{-2/n} m^{1+2/n}, \quad c_0 = \frac{4\pi n}{n+2} (\Gamma(1+n/2))^{2/n}$$

from [6] we see that

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{i=1}^m \lambda_i &\geq c_0 |\Omega|^{-2/n} (p(k+1)^{1+2/n} + (N-p)k^{1+2/n}) \\ &= c_0 |\Omega|^{-2/n} N((p/N)(k+1)^{1+2/n} + ((N-p)/N)k^{1+2/n}) \\ &\geq c_0 |\Omega|^{-2/n} N(k + p/N)^{1+2/n} = c_0 |\Omega|^{-2/n} N^{-2/n} m^{1+2/n}, \end{aligned}$$

where we used the inequality $\theta(k+1)^{1+2/n} + (1-\theta)k^{1+2/n} \geq (k+\theta)^{1+2/n}$, $\theta = p/N$, which follows from the convexity of the function $k \rightarrow k^{1+2/n}$.

Therefore

$$q(m) \leq f(m) = -vc_0 |\Omega|^{-2/n} N^{-2/n} m^{1+2/n} + Dm.$$

The function f is concave. The root of the equation $f(d) = 0$ is $d^* = N|\Omega|(D/c_0v)^{n/2}$, and we see from Corollary 2.2 that (3.6) holds. \square

Remark 3.1. The semigroup S_t is Lipschitz on \mathcal{A} from H to H_1 . Therefore, estimate (3.6) holds for the fractal dimension of \mathcal{A} in H_1 .

3.2. Navier–Stokes equations

We now consider the two-dimensional Navier–Stokes system

$$\partial_t u + \sum_{i=1}^2 u^i \partial_i u = \nu \Delta u - \nabla p + f, \tag{3.7}$$

$$\operatorname{div} u = 0, \quad u|_{\partial\Omega} = 0, \quad u(0) = u_0,$$

where Ω is an arbitrary bounded domain $\Omega \in \mathbb{R}^2$.

We denote by P the orthogonal projection in $(L_2(\Omega))^2$ onto the Hilbert space H which is the completion in $(L_2(\Omega))^2$ of the space of smooth solenoidal vector functions with compact supports in Ω . Applying P we write (3.7) as an abstract evolution equation in H :

$$\partial_t u + \nu Au + B(u, u) = f, \quad u(0) = u_0, \tag{3.8}$$

where $A = -P\Delta$ and $B(u, v) = P(\sum_{i=1}^2 u^i \partial_i v)$. We denote by λ_1 the first eigenvalue of A .

Eq. (3.8) generates the semigroup $S_t : H \rightarrow H$ which is differentiable in H and has a compact attractor $\mathcal{A} \in H$ (see [1,8] for the case of a smooth $\partial\Omega$ and [5] for the case of a non-smooth $\partial\Omega$).

Theorem 3.2. *The fractal dimension of \mathcal{A} satisfies the following estimate in terms of the Grashof number $G = \|f\|/(\lambda_1 \nu^2)$:*

$$\dim_F \mathcal{A} \leq \left(\frac{2}{\pi}\right)^{1/2} (\lambda_1 |\Omega|)^{1/2} \frac{\|f\|}{\lambda_1 \nu^2}, \tag{3.9}$$

where $|\Omega|$ is the area of Ω . If, in addition,

$$\frac{\|f\|}{\lambda_1 \nu^2} < \frac{1}{4} 3^{3/2} \pi^{1/2}, \tag{3.10}$$

then $\mathcal{A} = \bar{u}$, where \bar{u} is the unique globally asymptotically stable stationary solution.

Proof. We have the following estimate for $q(m)$ (see [4], inequality (2.11)):

$$q(m) \leq f(m) = -\frac{\nu \pi m^2}{2|\Omega|} + \frac{\|f\|^2}{\lambda_1 \nu^3}.$$

Now (3.9) follows from Corollary 2.2.

It was shown in [4] that $\mathcal{A} = \bar{u}$ if

$$\frac{\|f\|}{\lambda_1 \nu^2} < \frac{1}{c_0^2}, \tag{3.11}$$

where c_0 is the best constant in the inequality

$$\|\psi\|_{L_4(\Omega)} \leq c_0 \|\psi\|^{1/2} \|\nabla \psi\|^{1/2}, \quad \psi \in H_0^1(\Omega).$$

Therefore to get (3.10) we merely substitute in (3.11) the best (to date) closed form estimate of c_0 from [7]: $c_0 < 2 \times 3^{-3/4} \pi^{-1/4}$, which is only about 2.5% greater than the sharp value of c_0 obtained numerically. The proof is complete.

Remark 3.2. The estimates of the Hausdorff and fractal dimension of the attractor

$$\dim_H \mathcal{A} \leq c(\Omega) \frac{\|f\|}{\lambda_1 \nu^2}, \quad \dim_F \mathcal{A} \leq 2c(\Omega) \frac{\|f\|}{\lambda_1 \nu^2},$$

where the dimensionless constant $c(\Omega)$ depends only on the shape of Ω , were obtained by Temam [8]. It follows from Theorem 3.2 that

$$\dim_F \mathcal{A} \leq c(\Omega) \frac{\|f\|}{\lambda_1 \nu^2}, \quad \text{where } c(\Omega) \leq \left(\frac{2}{\pi}\right)^{1/2} (\lambda_1 |\Omega|)^{1/2}.$$

By using the inequality

$$\lambda_1 \geq \frac{2\pi}{|\Omega|}$$

(see [4], inequality (1.6)), we get from (3.9) and (3.10) the following result.

Corollary 3.1. *The fractal dimension of \mathcal{A} satisfies the following estimate:*

$$\dim_F \mathcal{A} \leq c_1(\Omega) \frac{\|f\| |\Omega|}{\nu^2}, \quad (3.12)$$

where the constant $c_1(\Omega)$, in general, depends on the shape of Ω and admits the following absolute upper bound:

$$c_1(\Omega) \leq \frac{1}{\pi}. \quad (3.13)$$

If, in addition,

$$\frac{\|f\| |\Omega|}{\nu^2} < \frac{1}{2} (3\pi)^{3/2}, \quad (3.14)$$

then $\mathcal{A} = \bar{u}$ and $\dim \mathcal{A} = 0$.

Remark 3.3. One can see, as in [4], that Theorem 3.2 and Corollary 3.1 hold if $\Omega \subset \mathbb{R}^2$ is an arbitrary domain with finite area.

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