POTENTIAL THEORY FOR BOUNDARY VALUE PROBLEMS ON FINITE NETWORKS

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We aim here at analyzing self-adjoint boundary value problems on finite networks associated with positive semi-definite Schrödinger operators. In addition, we study the existence and uniqueness of solutions and its variational formulation. Moreover, we will tackle a well-known problem in the framework of Potential Theory, the so-called condenser principle. Then, we generalize of the concept of effective resistance between two vertices of the network and we characterize the Green function of some BVP in terms of effective resistances.

1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper we analyze self-adjoint boundary value problems on finite networks associated with positive semi-definite Schrödinger operators. Among others, we treat general mixed boundary value problems that include the well-known Dirichlet and Neumann problems and also the Poisson equation. In the last years, these problems have deserved the attention of many researchers, see for instance [1, 3, 4, 5]. The first of that papers is concerned with the general analysis of self-adjoint boundary value problems associated with non-negative perturbations of the combinatorial Laplacian and its associated Green functions from a Potential Theory point of view. The two last ones are mainly concerned with the inverse problem of identifying the conductivity function of the network, in terms of the boundary data.

A Schrödinger operator on a finite network is a linear operator of the form \( \mathcal{L}_q = \mathcal{L} + q \), where \( \mathcal{L} \) is the combinatorial Laplacian of the network and \( q \) is a function on the vertex set. That function is usually known as ground-state since it represent that each vertex of the network is connected with a conductor medium...
with null potential. So, a Schrödinger operator can be seen as a perturbation of the combinatorial Laplacian. It is well-known that the energy associated with this operator is a Dirichlet form if and only if the ground state is non-negative, \([7]\). Some of the authors obtained in \([3]\) a generalization of this result, when the ground state takes negative values, which was applied to the study of Dirichlet problems and Poisson equations. Here we extend the above results to the energy associated with general self-adjoint BVP. In particular, we show that any BVP has a unique solution provided that its associated energy is positive definite and we characterize when this happens in terms of the ground state. Moreover, we tackle the variational treatment of the self-adjoint BVP and we obtain the general version of the celebrated Dirichlet Principle.

In addition, we are concerned with the Condenser Principle, a classic topic in the framework of the Potential Theory associated with BVP. We extend the situation treated in \([2]\), where only the case in which the ground state is null and a part of the boundary is insulated was considered. For that, we first tackle the natural extension, namely when the ground state is associated with a weight; which allows us to define the effective resistance with respect to this weight. As byproducts we obtain the Generalized Foster’s Theorem that relates the total amount of the ratios between the conductances of the network and the effective conductances, see \([9]\) for its usual formulation, and the expression of the Green function for the problem in which a single vertex is grounded in terms of the effective resistances.

In its classical statement this expression is known as the inverse resistive problem and it has been considered for several author. The problem is the following: Let \((c(x, y))_{x,y\in V}\) denote the edge conductances of an electrical network, so that there is a resistor of \(r_{xy} = 1/c(x, y)\) ohms between nodes \(x\) and \(y\). This uniquely determines the matrix \((R_{xy})_{x,y\in V}\) of effective resistances, defined such that if a potential of 1 V is applied across nodes \(x\) and \(y\), a current of \(1/R_{xy}\) A will flow. Matrix \((c(x, y))_{x,y\in V}\) is called the resistive inverse of \((R_{xy})_{x,y\in V}\). Coppersmith et al. \([6]\) gave a simple but obscure four-step algorithm for computing the resistive inverse. After Ponzio gave a self-contained combinatorial explanation of this algorithm, \([8]\). In this work we prove an analogous result when more general cases are considered. To do that we consider the effective resistances, which can be obtained from the solution of condenser problems. Next we determine the Green function for the problem in terms of the effective resistances. Therefore, to obtain the inverse resistive it will suffice to invert the Green function and to complete this inverse so that it be the Laplacian of the network.

Finally, we study the case in which the energy is positive definite and we show that the Green function for the corresponding Robin problem can be also obtained as an inverse resistive of a suitable network.

2. PRELIMINARIES

Along the paper, \(\Gamma = (V, E)\) denotes a simple, finite and connected graph without loops, with vertex set \(V\) and edge set \(E\). Two different vertices, \(x, y \in V\), are called adjacent, which will be represented by \(x \sim y\), if \(\{x, y\} \in E\). Given
for any $u \in C(F)$, we denote by $\int_F u dx$ or simply by $\int_F u(x) dx$ the value $\sum_{x \in F} u(x)$. We call weight on $F$ any function $\sigma \in C^+(F)$ such that $\text{supp}(\sigma) = F$. The set of weights on $F$ is denoted by $C^+(F)$.

We call conductance on $\Gamma$ a function $c: V \times V \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^+$ such that $c(x,y) > 0$ iff $x \sim y$. We call network any pair $(\Gamma, c)$, where $c$ is a conductance on $\Gamma$. In what follows we consider fixed the network $(\Gamma, c)$ and we refer to it simply by $\Gamma$.

The combinatorial Laplacian or simply the Laplacian of the network $\Gamma$ is the linear operator $\mathcal{L}: C(V) \rightarrow C(V)$ that assigns to each $u \in C(V)$ the function

$$\mathcal{L}(u)(x) = \int_V c(x,y) (u(x) - u(y)) dy, \quad x \in V. \quad (1)$$

If $F$ is a proper subset of $V$, for each $u \in C(\overline{F})$ we define the normal derivative of $u$ as the function in $C(\delta(F))$ given by

$$\left( \frac{\partial u}{\partial n_{\nu}} \right)(x) = \int_F c(x,y) (u(x) - u(y)) dy, \quad \text{for any } x \in \delta(F). \quad (2)$$

The relation between the values of the Laplacian on $F$ and the values of the normal derivative at $\delta(F)$ is given by the First Green Identity, proved in [1]

$$\int_F v \mathcal{L}(u) dx = \frac{1}{2} \int_F \int_F c_{\rho}(x,y)(u(x) - u(y))(v(x) - v(y)) dxdy - \int_{\delta(F)} v \frac{\partial u}{\partial n_{\nu}} dx,$$

where $u, v \in C(\overline{F})$ and $c_{\rho} = c \cdot \chi_{(F \times \overline{F}) \setminus \delta(F) \times \delta(F)}$. A direct consequence of the above identity is the so-called Second Green Identity

$$\int_F \left( v \mathcal{L}(u) - u \mathcal{L}(v) \right) dx = \int_{\delta(F)} \left( u \frac{\partial v}{\partial n_{\nu}} - v \frac{\partial u}{\partial n_{\nu}} \right) dx, \quad \text{for all } u, v \in C(\overline{F}).$$

When $F = V$ the above identity tell us that the combinatorial Laplacian is a self-adjoint operator and that $\int_V \mathcal{L}(u) dx = 0$ for any $u \in C(V)$. Moreover, since $\Gamma$ is connected $\mathcal{L}(u) = 0$ iff $u$ is a constant function.

Given $q \in C(V)$ the Schrödinger operator on $\Gamma$ with ground state $q$ is the linear operator $\mathcal{L}_q : C(V) \rightarrow C(V)$ that assigns to each $u \in C(V)$ the function $\mathcal{L}_q(u) = \mathcal{L}(u) + qu$.
3. SELF-ADJOINT BOUNDARY VALUE PROBLEMS

In this section we study different type of boundary value problems associated with the Schrödinger operator with ground state \( q \). Given a non-empty subset \( F \subset V \), \( \delta(F) = H_1 \cup H_2 \), where \( H_1 \cap H_2 = \emptyset \) and functions \( g \in C(F) \), \( g_1 \in C(H_1) \), \( g_2 \in C(H_2) \), a boundary value problem on \( F \) consists on finding \( u \in C(\overline{F}) \) such that

\[
L_q(u) = g \quad \text{on} \quad F, \quad \frac{\partial u}{\partial n_F} + qu = g_1 \quad \text{on} \quad H_1 \quad \text{and} \quad u = g_2 \quad \text{on} \quad H_2.
\]

In addition, the associated homogeneous boundary value problem consists on finding \( u \in C(\overline{F}) \) such that

\[
L_q(u) = 0 \quad \text{on} \quad F, \quad \frac{\partial u}{\partial n_F} + qu = 0 \quad \text{on} \quad H_1 \quad \text{and} \quad u = 0 \quad \text{on} \quad H_2.
\]

The Green Identity implies that the boundary value problem (3) is self-adjoint in the sense that

\[
\int_F v \, L_q(u) \, dx = \int_F u \, L_q(v) \, dx
\]

for all \( u, v \in C(F \cup H_1) \) verifying that

\[
\frac{\partial u}{\partial n_F} + qu = \frac{\partial v}{\partial n_F} +qv = 0 \quad \text{on} \quad H_1.
\]

Problem (3) is generically known as a mixed Dirichlet-Robin problem and summarizes the different boundary value problems that appear in the literature with the following proper names:

(i) Dirichlet problem: \( \emptyset \neq H_2 = \delta(F) \) and hence \( H_1 = \emptyset \).
(ii) Robin problem: \( \emptyset \neq H_1 = \delta(F) \) and \( q \neq 0 \) on \( H_1 \).
(iii) Neumann problem: \( \emptyset \neq H_1 = \delta(F) \) and \( q = 0 \) on \( H_1 \).
(iv) Mixed Dirichlet-Neumann problem: \( H_1, H_2 \neq \emptyset \) and \( q = 0 \) on \( H_1 \).
(v) Poisson equation on \( V \): \( F = V \).

The study of the boundary value problem (3) when \( q \in C^+(V) \) has been extensively treated, see for instance [1, 4, 5] where the existence and uniqueness of solutions was established, whereas the analysis for Dirichlet Problem and Poisson equation in the case in which when \( q \) can take negative value has been analyzed in [3]. In this work we extend the above results for the self-adjoint boundary value problem (3).

**Proposition 3.1.** (Fredholm Alternative) Given \( g \in C(F) \), \( g_1 \in C(H_1) \), \( g_2 \in C(H_2) \), the boundary value problem

\[
L_q(u) = g \quad \text{on} \quad F, \quad \frac{\partial u}{\partial n_F} + qu = g_1 \quad \text{on} \quad H_1 \quad \text{and} \quad u = g_2 \quad \text{on} \quad H_2
\]

has solution iff for any \( v \in C(\overline{F}) \) solution of the homogeneous problem it is verified

\[
\int_F gv \, dx + \int_{H_1} g_1 v \, dx = \int_{H_2} g_2 \frac{\partial v}{\partial n_F} \, dx.
\]

In addition, when the above condition holds, then there exists a unique \( u \in C(\overline{F}) \) solution of the boundary value problem such that \( \int_{\overline{F}} uv \, dx = 0 \), for any \( v \in C(\overline{F}) \) solution of the homogeneous problem.
Proof. First observe that problem (3) is equivalent to the boundary value problem
\[ \mathcal{L}_q(u) = g - \mathcal{L}_q(g_2) \text{ on } F, \quad \frac{\partial u}{\partial n_y} + q u = g_1 \text{ on } H_1 \text{ and } u = 0 \text{ on } H_2 \]
in the sense that \( u \) is a solution of this problem iff \( u + g_2 \) is a solution of (3).

Consider now the linear operator \( \mathcal{F} : \mathcal{C}(F \cup H_1) \rightarrow \mathcal{C}(F \cup H_1) \) defined as \( \mathcal{F}(u) = \mathcal{L}_q(u) \) on \( F \) and \( \mathcal{F}(u) = \frac{\partial u}{\partial n_y} + q u \) on \( H_1 \). If \( V \) denotes the space of solutions of the homogeneous problem, then \( \ker \mathcal{F} = V \). Moreover, from the Second Green Identity, we get that
\[ \int_{F \cup H_1} v \mathcal{F}(u) \, dx = \int_{F \cup H_1} u \mathcal{F}(v) \, dx; \]
that is, \( \mathcal{F} \) is self-adjoint and hence \( \text{Img} \mathcal{F} = V^\perp \), using the classical Fredholm Alternative. Consequently problem (3) has a solution iff the function \( \tilde{g} \in \mathcal{C}(F \cup H_1) \) given by \( \tilde{g} = g - \mathcal{L}_q(g_2) \) on \( F \) and \( \tilde{g} = g_1 \) on \( H_1 \) verifies that
\[ 0 = \int_{F \cup H_1} \tilde{g} v \, dx = \int_F g v \, dx + \int_{H_1} g_1 v \, dx - \int_F v \mathcal{L}_q(g_2) \, dx \]
for any \( v \in V \). Finally, the Fredholm Alternative also establishes that when the necessary and sufficient condition are attained there exists a unique \( v \in V^\perp \) such that \( \mathcal{F}(v) = \tilde{g} \). Therefore, \( u = w + g_2 \) is the unique solution of problem (3) such that for any \( v \in V \)
\[ \int_F uv \, d\nu = \int_{F \cup H_1} uv \, d\nu = \int_{F \cup H_1} wv \, d\nu = 0, \]

since \( v = 0 \) on \( H_2 \) and \( g_2 = 0 \) on \( F \cup H_1 \). \( \blacksquare \)

Fredholm Alternative establishes that the existence of solution of problem (3) for any data \( g, g_1 \) and \( g_2 \) is equivalent to the uniqueness of solution and hence it is equivalent to the fact that the homogeneous problem has \( v = 0 \) as its unique solution. So, applying the First Green Identity, if \( v \in V \)
\[ 0 = \int_F v \mathcal{L}_q(v) \, dx = \frac{1}{2} \int_F \int_F c_{\nu}(x, y) (v(x) - v(y))^2 \, dy \, dx + \int_F q v^2 \, dx \]
and hence uniqueness is equivalent to be \( v = 0 \) the unique solution of the above equality.

The above equality leads to define the energy associated with Problem (3) as the symmetric bilinear form \( \mathcal{E}_q^F : \mathcal{C}(\bar{F}) \times \mathcal{C}(\bar{F}) \rightarrow \mathbb{R} \) given for any \( u, v \in \mathcal{C}(\bar{F}) \) by
\[ (4) \quad \mathcal{E}_q^F (u, v) = \frac{1}{2} \int_F \int_F c_{\nu}(x, y) (u(x) - u(y)) (v(x) - v(y)) \, dy \, dx + \int_F q u v \, dx. \]

A sufficient condition so that the homogeneous problem associated with (3) have \( v = 0 \) as its unique solution is that the energy be positive definite. Next, we characterize when this property is achieved. To do this, it will be useful to
introduce for any weight \( \sigma \) on \( F \), the so-called ground state associated with \( \sigma \) as \( q_\sigma = -\frac{1}{\sigma} \mathcal{L}(\sigma) \) on \( F \), \( q_\sigma = -\frac{1}{\sigma} \frac{\partial \sigma}{\partial n_v} \) on \( \delta(F) \) and \( q_\sigma = q \) otherwise. Clearly, if \( \sigma \in \mathcal{C}^*(\hat{F}) \) then for any \( a > 0 \), \( \mu = a\sigma \in \mathcal{C}^*(\hat{F}) \) and moreover \( q_\mu = q_\sigma \).

Observe that \( q_\sigma = 0 \) iff \( \sigma = a\chi_F \), with \( a > 0 \). More generally, if \( \sigma \in \mathcal{C}^*(\hat{F}) \), then taking \( v = \chi_F \) in the Second Green Identity we obtain that \( \int_F \sigma q_\sigma = 0 \), which implies that \( q_\sigma \) must take positive and negative values, except when \( \sigma = a\chi_F \), \( a > 0 \).

Moreover, in [3] it was proved that \( -\int_F c_\sigma(x,y) dy < q_\sigma(x) \) for any \( x \in F \) and also that when \( H_2 \neq \emptyset \), then it is possible to choose \( \sigma \in \mathcal{C}^*(\hat{F}) \) such that \( q_\sigma(x) < 0 \) for any \( x \in F \cup H_1 \).

**Proposition 3.2.** The Energy \( \mathcal{E}_q^F \) is positive semi-definite iff there exists \( \sigma \in \mathcal{C}^*(\hat{F}) \) such that \( q \geq q_\sigma \). Moreover, it is not strictly definite iff \( q = q_\sigma \), in which case \( \mathcal{E}_q^F(v,v) = 0 \) iff \( v = a\sigma \), \( a \in \mathbb{R} \).

**Proof.** Consider the network \( \Gamma_F = (\hat{F}, \hat{E}, c_\sigma) \), where \( \hat{E} = \{(x,y) \in E : c_\sigma(x,y) > 0 \} \) and let \( \mathcal{L} \) its combinatorial Laplacian. Then, for any \( u \in \mathcal{C}(\hat{F}) \), \( \mathcal{L}(u) = \mathcal{L}(u) \) on \( F \) and \( \mathcal{L}(u) = \frac{\partial u}{\partial n_v} \) on \( \delta(F) \). Moreover, \( \mathcal{E}_q^F(u,u) = \int_F u\mathcal{L}(u) dx + \int_F q u^2 dx \) and hence the results follow by applying Proposition 3.3 and Corollary 3.4 of [3].

The next result establishes the fundamental result about the existence and uniqueness of solution for Problem (3) and about its variational formulation.

**Proposition 3.3.** (Dirichlet principle) Suppose that there exists \( \sigma \in \mathcal{C}^*(\hat{F}) \) such that \( q \geq q_\sigma \). Given \( g \in \mathcal{C}(F) \), \( g_1 \in \mathcal{C}(H_1) \) and \( g_2 \in \mathcal{C}(H_2) \), consider the convex set \( C_{g_2} = \{ v \in \mathcal{C}(\hat{F}) : v = g_2 \text{ on } H_2 \} \) and the quadratic functional \( \mathcal{J}_g : \mathcal{C}(\hat{F}) \to \mathbb{R} \) determined by the expression

\[
\mathcal{J}_g(u) = \frac{1}{2} \int_{\hat{F}} \int_{\hat{F}} c_\sigma(x,y) (u(x)-u(y))^2 dy dx + \int_F q u^2 dx - 2 \int_F g u dx - 2 \int_{H_1} g_1 u dx.
\]

Then \( u \in \mathcal{C}(F) \) is a solution of (3) iff \( u \) minimizes \( \mathcal{J}_g \) on \( C_{g_2} \). Moreover, if it is not simultaneously true that \( H_2 = \emptyset \) and \( q = q_\sigma \), then \( \mathcal{J}_g \) has a unique minimum on \( C_{g_2} \). Otherwise, \( \mathcal{J}_g \) has a minimum iff \( \int_F g \sigma dx + \int_{\delta(F)} g_1 \sigma dx = 0 \). In this case, there exists a unique minimum \( u \in \mathcal{C}(F) \) such that \( \int_F u \sigma dx = 0 \).

**Proof.** Observe first that \( C_{g_2} = g_2 + \mathcal{C}(F \cup H_1) \) and that for all \( v \in \mathcal{C}(F \cup H_1) \) we get \( \mathcal{J}_g(v) = \mathcal{E}_q^F(v,v) - 2 \int_F g v dx - 2 \int_{H_1} g_1 v dx \). Keeping in mind, that \( q \geq q_\sigma \), we get that \( \mathcal{J}_g \) is a convex functional on \( \mathcal{C}(F \cup H_1) \) and hence on \( C_{g_2} \). Moreover, it is a strictly convex functional iff it is not simultaneously true that \( H_2 = \emptyset \) and \( q = q_\sigma \) and then \( \mathcal{J}_g \) has a unique minimum on \( C_{g_2} \).
Proof. Consider again the network $\Gamma = (\hat{F}, \hat{E}, \epsilon_r)$. Since in this case $\mathcal{E}_q^F(u, v) = 0$ for all $u \in \mathcal{L}(\hat{F})$, necessarily $g$ and $g_1$ must satisfy that $\int_{\hat{F}} g \sigma dx + \int_{H_1} g_1 \sigma dx = 0$. Moreover, if this condition holds and $V$ denotes the vector subspace generated by $\sigma$, then $u \in V^\perp$ minimizes $\mathcal{J}_q$ on $V^\perp$ iff $u$ minimizes $\mathcal{J}_q$ on $\mathcal{L}(\hat{F})$ and the existence of minimum follows since $\mathcal{J}_q$ is strictly convex on $V^\perp$. In any case, the equations described in (3) are the Euler-Lagrange identities for the corresponding minimization problem.

The following result is an extension of the monotonicity property of the Schrödinger operator in the case $q \geq q_\sigma$ that was proved in [3].

**Proposition 3.4.** Suppose that $q \geq q_\sigma$ and that it is not simultaneously true that $H_2 = \emptyset$ and $q = q_\sigma$. If $u \in \mathcal{C}(\hat{F})$ verifies that $\mathcal{L}_q(u) \geq 0$ on $\hat{F}$, $\frac{\partial u}{\partial n_r} + qu \geq 0$ on $H_1$ and $u \geq 0$ on $H_2$, then $u \in \mathcal{C}^+(\hat{F})$.

Proof. Consider again the network $\Gamma = (\hat{F}, \hat{E}, c_r)$, where $\hat{E} = \{(x, y) \in E : c_r(x, y) > 0\}$ and let $\mathcal{L}$ its combinatorial Laplacian. Then, if $u \in \mathcal{C}(\hat{F})$ verifies the hypotheses, $\mathcal{L}(u) \geq 0$ on $\hat{F} \cup H_1$ and the conclusion follows by applying Proposition 4.1 in [3].

Suppose that there exists $\sigma \in \mathcal{C}^*(\hat{F})$ such that $q \geq q_\sigma$ and it is not simultaneously true that $H_2 = \emptyset$ and $q = q_\sigma$. The Green operator associated with Problem (3) is the linear operator $G_q^F : \mathcal{C}(\hat{F}) \rightarrow \mathcal{C}(\hat{F})$ that assigns to any $g \in \mathcal{C}(\hat{F})$ the unique solution of the boundary value problem $\mathcal{L}_q(u) = g$ on $\hat{F}$, $\frac{\partial u}{\partial n_r} + qu = 0$ on $H_1$ and $u = 0$ on $H_2$. Moreover, we define the Green function associated with Problem (3) as the function $G_q^F : \hat{F} \times \hat{F} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ that assigns to any $y \in \hat{F}$ and any $x \in \hat{F}$ the value $G_q^F(x, y) = G_q^F(\delta y)(x)$, where $\delta y$ stands for the Dirac function at $y$. So, for any $g \in \mathcal{C}(\hat{F})$ it is verified that $G_q^F(g)(x) = \int_{\hat{F}} G_q^F(x, y) g(y) dy$. Finally, let us remark that from the above proposition $G_q^F \geq 0$ and moreover $G_q^F(x, y) = G_q^F(y, x)$ for any $x, y \in \hat{F}$, since the boundary value problem (3) is self-adjoint.

4. THE CONDENSER PRINCIPLE

In this section we obtain a generalization of the well-known Condenser Principle. From no on we suppose that there exists $\sigma \in \mathcal{C}(\hat{F})$ such that $q \geq q_\sigma$. Given a non-empty subset $F \subset V$, suppose that $\delta(F) = H_1 \cup \{x\} \cup \{y\}$, where $x, y \not\in H_1$ and $x \neq y$. The generalized Condenser Problem consists in the following mixed
boundary value problem

(5) \( L_q(u) = 0 \) on \( F \), \( \frac{\partial u}{\partial n_y} + qu = 0 \) on \( H_1 \), \( u(x) = \sigma(x) \) and \( u(y) = 0 \).

**Proposition 4.1. (Condenser Principle)** If \( u \in \mathcal{C}(\bar{F}) \) is the unique solution of the Condenser Problem (5), then \( 0 \leq u \leq \sigma \) on \( V \).

Proof. The positiveness of \( u \) follows directly from Proposition 3.4. Moreover, if \( v = \sigma - u \) then \( L_q(v) = \sigma(q - q_o) \geq 0 \) on \( F \), \( \frac{\partial u}{\partial n_y} + qu = \sigma(q - q_o) \geq 0 \) on \( H_1 \), \( v(x) = 0 \) and \( v(y) = \sigma(y) \). Therefore, applying again Proposition 3.4, \( v \geq 0 \).

Under the hypotheses of the above proposition, \( \bar{F} \) is called condenser with source and sink \( x \) and \( y \), respectively when \( H_1 \) is connected with a medium of conductivity \( q \). Moreover, the above boundary value problem is called the condenser problem corresponding to \( \bar{F} \).

Next, we introduce a concept that is closely related with the condenser problem in the case \( q = q_o \), namely the effective resistance between \( x \) and \( y \) when a subset of the network, \( \mathcal{D} \), is connected with a medium of conductivity \( q_o \). Fixed a weight \( \sigma \in \mathcal{C}^*(V) \) and the set \( \mathcal{D} \subset V \), consider for any \( x, y \notin \mathcal{D} \) with \( x \neq y \), the unique solution \( u \in \mathcal{C}(V) \) of the boundary value problem

(6)

\[
L_{q_o}(u) = 0 \text{ on } \mathcal{D}^c \setminus \{x, y\}, \quad \frac{\partial u}{\partial n_{\mathcal{D}^c}} + q_o u = 0 \text{ on } \mathcal{D}, \quad u(x) = \sigma(x) \text{ and } u(y) = 0.
\]

The effective conductance between \( x, y \) relative to \( \mathcal{D} \) with respect to \( \sigma \), is defined as the value \( C^D_{\sigma}(x, y) = \mathcal{E}^{D^c}_{q_o}(u, u) \). Clearly, \( C^D_{\sigma}(x, y) > 0 \), otherwise, \( u = a \sigma \) and hence one can not verify \( u(y) = 0 \) and \( u(x) = \sigma(x) \) simultaneously. In addition, it is verified that

(7)

\[
C^D_{\sigma}(x, y) = \sigma(x)L_{q_o}(u(x)) - \sigma(y)L_{q_o}(u(y)).
\]

The effective resistance between \( x, y \) relative to \( \mathcal{D} \) with respect to \( \sigma \), is defined as the value \( R^D_{\sigma}(x, y) = C_{\sigma}^{D^c}(x, y)^{-1} \). The effective conductance, and hence the effective resistance, is a symmetric set function, that is, \( C^D_{\sigma}(x, y) = C^D_{\sigma}(y, x) \) since \( \mathcal{E}^{D^c}_{q_o}(u, u) = \mathcal{E}^{D^c}_{q_o}(\sigma - u, \sigma - u) \). So, it is irrelevant which vertex acts as the source and which one acts as the sink. On the other hand, applying the Dirichlet Principle we obtain that

\[
C^D_{\sigma}(x, y) = \min \left\{ \mathcal{E}^{D^c}_{q_o}(v, v) : v(x) = \sigma(x) \text{ and } v(y) = 0 \right\}.
\]

**Proposition 4.2.** If for any \( z \notin \mathcal{D} \), \( \nu^D_z \in \mathcal{C}(V) \) denotes the unique solution of the problem

\[
L_{q_o}(\nu^D_z) = 0 \text{ on } \mathcal{D}^c \setminus \{z\}, \quad \frac{\partial \nu^D_z}{\partial n_{\mathcal{D}^c}} + q_o \nu^D_z = 0 \text{ on } \mathcal{D} \text{ and } \nu^D_z(z) = 0,
\]

under the hypotheses of the above proposition, \( \nu^D_z \in \mathcal{C}(\mathcal{D} \cup \{z\}) \) is called condenser with source \( z \) and sink \( x \) when \( \mathcal{D} \cup \{z\} \) is connected with a medium of conductivity \( q_o \). Moreover, the above boundary value problem is called the condenser problem corresponding to \( \mathcal{D} \cup \{z\} \).
Proof. From the expression of the effective resistance, we have that for the effective resistance between two vertices in $D$ we can generalize a well-known result about the effective resistance.

Then the function

$$u = \frac{\sigma(x)}{\sigma(y)\nu_y^D(x) + \nu_x^D(y)\sigma(x)}(\sigma(y)\nu_y^D(x) - \sigma(y)\nu_x^D(y)\sigma(x))$$

is the unique solution of the boundary value problem (6). In addition,

$$R^D_{\sigma}(x, y) = \left(\int_{D^c} \sigma \, dx\right)^{-1} \left(\frac{\nu_x^D(y)}{\sigma(x)} + \frac{\nu_y^D(y)}{\sigma(y)}\right).$$

Proof. If $v = \sigma(y)\nu_y^D(x) - \sigma(y)\nu_x^D(y)\sigma(x)$, then a direct evaluation gives

$$\mathcal{L}_{\sigma}(v) = 0 \quad \text{on} \quad D^c \setminus \{x, y\}, \quad \frac{\partial v}{\partial n_{D^c}} + q_x v = 0 \quad \text{on} \quad D \quad \text{and} \quad v(y) = 0.$$ 

Moreover $v(x) = \sigma(y)\nu_y^D(x) - \sigma(y)\nu_x^D(y)\sigma(x) = \sigma(y)\nu_y^D(x) + \nu_x^D(y)\sigma(x)$, which implies that $u = \frac{\sigma(y)\nu_y^D(x) + \nu_x^D(y)\sigma(x)}{\sigma(x)\nu_x^D(y)}$. On the other hand, applying the Identity (7), we get that

$$C^D_{\sigma}(x, y) = \sigma(x)\mathcal{L}_{\sigma}(u)(x) = \frac{\sigma(x)^2\mathcal{L}_{\sigma}(v)(x)}{\sigma(y)\nu_y^D(x) + \nu_x^D(y)\sigma(x)}.$$

Finally, tacking into account that $0 = \int_{D^c} \sigma \mathcal{L}_{\sigma}(\nu_y^D) \, dx + \int_D \sigma \left(\frac{\partial \nu_y^D}{\partial n_{D^c}} + q_x \nu_y^D\right) \, dx$, we obtain that $0 = \int_{D^c} \sigma \mathcal{L}_{\sigma}(\nu_y^D) \, dx = \int_{D^c} \sigma \, dx - \sigma(x) + \sigma(x)\mathcal{L}_{\sigma}(\nu_y^D)(x)$ and hence,

$$\sigma(x)\mathcal{L}_{\sigma}(v)(x) = \sigma(x)\sigma(y)\mathcal{L}_{\sigma}(\nu_y^D)(x) - \sigma(x)\sigma(y)\mathcal{L}_{\sigma}(\nu_y^D)(x) = \sigma(y)\int_{D^c} \sigma \, dx,$$

which implies that

$$C^D_{\sigma}(x, y) = \frac{\sigma(x)\sigma(y)}{\sigma(y)\nu_y^D(x) + \nu_x^D(y)\sigma(x)} \int_{D^c} \sigma \, dx$$

and the last claim follows.

Observe that if for any $x \notin D$ we define $R^D_{\sigma}(x, x) = 0$, then the above formula for the effective resistance between two vertices in $D^c$ is still valid for $y = x$. Now we can generalize a well-known result about the effective resistance.

**Corollary 4.3 (Generalized Foster’s Theorem).** The following identity holds

$$\int_{D^c} \int_{D^c} R^D_{\sigma}(x, y)c_{\nu, \nu}(x, y) \sigma(x)\sigma(y) \, dx \, dy = 2(|V| - |D| - 1).$$

Proof. From the expression of the effective resistance, we have that

$$\sigma(x)\sigma(y)R^D_{\sigma}(x, y) = \left(\int_{D^c} \sigma \, dx\right)^{-1} (\sigma(y)\nu_y^D(x) + \sigma(x)\nu_x^D(y)).$$
On the other hand, tacking into account the symmetry of $c_{D^c}$ we get that
\[ \int_{D^c} \int_{D^c} \sigma(x) \nu^D_x(y) c_{D^c}(x, y) \, dx \, dy = \int_{D^c} \int_{D^c} \sigma(y) \nu^D_y(x) c_{D^c}(x, y) \, dx \, dy \]
which implies that
\[ \int_{D^c} \int_{D^c} R^D_{\sigma}(x, y) c_{D^c}(x, y) \sigma(x) \sigma(y) \, dx \, dy = 2 \left( \int_{D^c} \sigma \, dx \right)^{-1} \int_{D^c} \sigma(x) \int_{D^c} \nu^D_x(y) c_{D^c}(x, y) \, dy \, dx. \]
Finally, the result follows by keeping in main that for any $x \in D^c$
\[ \sigma(x) \int_{D^c} \nu^D_x(y) c_{D^c}(x, y) \, dy = \sigma(x) \mathcal{L}_{q_\sigma}(\nu^D_x)(x) = \int_{D^c} \sigma \, dx - \sigma(x). \]

Another well-known consequence of Proposition 4.2 establishes that when $q = q_\sigma$, for any $y \notin D$, the Green function for problem
\[ \mathcal{L}_{q_\sigma}(u) = f \text{ on } D^c \setminus \{y\}, \quad \frac{\partial u}{\partial \nu_{D^c}} + q_\sigma u = 0 \text{ on } D, \quad u(y) = 0 \]
can be seen as an inverse resistive; i.e. can be expressed in terms of effective resistances.

**Corollary 4.4.** Given $x, y, z \notin D$ it is verified that
\[ G^{D^c \setminus \{y\}}(z, x) = \frac{1}{2} \sigma(x) \sigma(z) \left( R^D_{\sigma}(x, y) + R^D_{\sigma}(z, y) - R^D_{\sigma}(z, x) \right). \]
In particular, the effective resistance determines a distance on $D^c$.

**Proof.** First, observe that if $u$ is the solution of Problem (6), then Identity (7) implies that $\mathcal{L}_{q_\sigma}(u) = \frac{C_{\sigma}(x, y)}{\sigma} (\varepsilon_x - \varepsilon_y)$ on $D^c$. Therefore, for any $x \notin D$ and $z \in V$ it is verified that $G^{D^c \setminus \{y\}}(z, x) = R^D_{\sigma}(x, y) \sigma(x) u(z)$; that is,
\[ G^{D^c \setminus \{y\}}(z, x) = \left( \int_{D^c} \sigma \, dx \right)^{-1} \sigma(x) \sigma(z) \left( \frac{\nu^D_y(x)}{\sigma(z)} - \frac{\nu^D_z(x)}{\sigma(z)} + \frac{\nu^D_y(z)}{\sigma(y)} \right). \]
In particular, when $x, z \notin D$, then
\[ G^{D^c \setminus \{y\}}(x, z) = \left( \int_{D^c} \sigma \, dx \right)^{-1} \sigma(x) \sigma(z) \left( \frac{\nu^D_x(x)}{\sigma(z)} - \frac{\nu^D_z(x)}{\sigma(z)} + \frac{\nu^D_y(z)}{\sigma(y)} \right) \]
and the expression of the Green function is a consequence of its symmetry on $D^c$. The last conclusion is a direct consequence of being $G^{D^c \setminus \{y\}}$ non-negative.
We finish this section by generalizing the above corollary to the case \( q \geq q_\sigma \). Specifically, we prove that the Green function of the Robin boundary value problem

\[
\mathcal{L}_q(u) = f \quad \text{on} \quad D^c, \quad \frac{\partial u}{\partial n_{D^c}} + qu = 0 \quad \text{on} \quad D,
\]

can be seen as an inverse resistive relative to a new network. To do this, consider a new vertex \( \hat{x} \notin V \), the set \( \hat{V} = V \cup \{ \hat{x} \} \) and \( \hat{\sigma} \in C^*(\hat{V}) \) the weight on \( \hat{V} \) defined as \( \hat{\sigma}(x) = \sigma(x) \) when \( x \in V \) and as \( \sigma(\hat{x}) = 1 \).

We consider the network \( \hat{\Gamma} = (\hat{\Gamma}, \hat{E}) \) where \( \hat{c}(x, y) = c(x, y) \) when \( x, y \in V \) and \( \hat{c}(\hat{x}, x) = \sigma(x)(q(x) - q_\sigma(x)) \) for any \( x \in V \). Therefore, \( E \) is a proper subset of \( \hat{E} \) and this also assures that \( \hat{\Gamma} \) is connected. In addition, we denote by \( \hat{\mathcal{L}} \) the combinatorial Laplacian of \( \hat{\Gamma} \) and by \( \hat{q}_\sigma \) the ground state associated with \( \hat{\mathcal{L}} \) and \( \hat{\sigma} \).

The following result will be the key for our purposes.

**Proposition 4.5.** For any \( u \in \mathcal{C}(\hat{V}) \), it is verified that

\[
\hat{\mathcal{L}}(u) + q_\sigma u = \mathcal{L}(u_{|_V}) + qu - (q - q_\sigma) u(\hat{x}) \quad \text{on} \quad V
\]

and

\[
\frac{\partial u}{\partial n_{V \setminus D}} + q_\sigma u = \frac{\partial u}{\partial n_{V \setminus D}} + qu - (q - q_\sigma) u(\hat{x}) \quad \text{on} \quad D.
\]

In particular, if \( u \in \mathcal{C}(V) \), then

\[
\hat{\mathcal{L}}_{q_\sigma}(u) = \mathcal{L}_q(u) \quad \text{on} \quad V \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{\partial u}{\partial n_{V \setminus D}} + q_\sigma u = \frac{\partial u}{\partial n_{V \setminus D}} + qu \quad \text{on} \quad D.
\]

**Proof.** Given \( u \in \mathcal{C}(\hat{V}) \), we get that for any \( x \in V \)

\[
\hat{\mathcal{L}}(u)(x) = \mathcal{L}(u_{|_V})(x) + \hat{c}(x, \hat{x})(u(x) - u(\hat{x})).
\]

In particular, tacking \( u = \hat{\sigma} \) it is verified that

\[
\hat{\mathcal{L}}(\hat{\sigma})(x) = \mathcal{L}(\sigma)(x) + \hat{c}(x, \hat{x})(\sigma(x) - 1),
\]

which implies that

\[
\hat{c}(x, \hat{x}) = q_\sigma(x) - q_\sigma(x) + \frac{\hat{c}(x, \hat{x})}{\sigma(x)} = q(x) - q_\sigma(x)
\]

and the result follows substituting the value of \( \hat{c}(\cdot, \hat{x}) \) in the expression of \( \hat{\mathcal{L}}(u)(x) \). The same reasoning works for the normal derivative. \( \blacksquare \)

**Corollary 4.6.** For all \( x, y \notin D \) it is verified that

\[
C_{\mathcal{Q}}^{D^c}(x, y) = \frac{1}{2} \sigma(x)\sigma(y) (R_\sigma^D(x, \hat{x}) + R_\sigma^D(y, \hat{x}) - R_\sigma^D(x, y)),
\]

where \( R_\sigma^D \) is the effective resistance relative to \( D \) with respect to \( \hat{\sigma} \) in the network \( \hat{\Gamma} \).

**Proof.** Taking into account the above proposition, we get that \( u \in \mathcal{C}(V) \) is the unique solution of the problem

\[
\mathcal{L}_q(u) = f \quad \text{on} \quad D^c, \quad \frac{\partial u}{\partial n_{D^c}} + qu = 0 \quad \text{on} \quad D
\]
iff it is the unique solution of the mixed problem
\[
\tilde{L}_{q_\sigma}(u) = f \text{ on } D^c, \quad \frac{\partial u}{\partial n_{\tilde{V}\setminus \Gamma}} + q_\sigma u = 0 \text{ on } D \text{ and } u(\tilde{x}) = 0.
\]

The result follows by applying Corollary 4.4 to \(\tilde{\Gamma}\) and taking \(y = \tilde{x}\).

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