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<http://www.numdam.org/item?id=AIF_1975__25_2_219_0>
A REMARK ON THURSTON'S STABILITY THEOREM

by Richard SACKSTEDER

Let $L$ be a compact leaf of a smooth transversally oriented foliation of codimension one. Thurston [4] has generalized Reeb's stability theorem by showing that if $H^1(L, R) = 0$, then all nearby leaves are diffeomorphic to $L$. His theorem answers, for oriented foliations, a question posed by Reeb [2]. If it were true, as has been erroneously asserted in the literature [3, p. 96], that $H^1(L, R) = 0$ implies that $H^1(L', R) = 0$ when $L'$ is a 2-fold cover of $L$, then Thurston's assumption of transversal orientability would be unnecessary. However the assertion is false (cf. [1, p. 410]), as has been pointed out to the author painfully often.

In fact, the example below shows that Thurston's theorem cannot be generalized to non-oriented foliations, since in the example there is a compact leaf $L$ with $H^1(L, R) = 0$, but which has a neighborhood in which all leaves are non-compact.

The universal covering of $L$ is $S^2 \times R^1$ and $\pi = \pi_1(L)$ is the semi-direct product of $Z_2 = \{-1, +1\}$ and the integers $Z$, where $Z_2$ acts on $Z$ in the obvious way. The product of elements of $\pi$ is given by

$$(w_1, n_1) \cdot (w_2, n_2) = (w_1 w_2, w_1 n_2 + n_1),$$

where $w_i$ is in $Z_2$ and $n_i$ is in $Z$. The action $\phi$ of $\pi$ on $S^2 \times R$ is given by

$$\phi((w, n); (s, r)) = (ws, wr + n), \quad \text{where } s \rightarrow -s$$

is the antipodal map of $S^2$. The quotient $L$ is an oriented manifold that is easily seen to have the properties that $H^1(L, Z) = Z_2$, hence $H_1(L, R) = 0$, and $S^2 \times S^1$ is a 2-fold cover of $L$. 

To define a foliation of a neighborhood of \( L \) it suffices to define a representation \( \psi \) of \( \pi \) by \( C^\infty \) diffeomorphisms of neighborhoods of \( 0 \in \mathbb{R} \). Let \( f \) be any \( C^\infty \) diffeomorphism of \( \mathbb{R} \) satisfying:

\[
f(0) = 0, \quad f'(0) = 1, \quad f^{(n)}(0) = 0 \quad \text{if} \quad n > 1, \quad f(x) < x
\]

for \( x \neq 0 \), and

\[
(1) \; f(x) = -f^{-1}(-x), \quad \text{hence} \quad f^n(x) = -f^{-n}(-x) \quad \text{for} \quad n = 0, \pm 1, \ldots .
\]

An \( f \) satisfying these conditions is easily defined for \( x \geq 0 \) and can be extended to \( x < 0 \) by (1). It is easy to check that the derivatives match at 0 so the extended map is \( C^\infty \). The second half of (1) shows that \( \psi(w, n)(x) = f^n(wx) \) defines a representation of \( \pi \) with the desired properties. The leaves, other than \( L \) itself, of the foliation defined by \( \psi \) are non-compact, since \( f^n(wx) = x \) can only occur if \( (w, n) = (1, 0) \), or \( x = 0 \).

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Manuscrit reçu le 11 octobre 1974
accepté par G. Reeb.

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