

Perfect forms, K-theory and the cohomology of modular groups

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Abstract

For $N = 5, 6$ and 7 , using the classification of perfect quadratic forms, we compute the homology of the Voronoï cell complexes attached to the modular groups $SL_N(\mathbb{Z})$ and $GL_N(\mathbb{Z})$. From this we deduce the rational cohomology of those groups and some information about $K_m(\mathbb{Z})$, when $m = 5, 6$ and 7 .

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Contents

1. Introduction.....	588
2. Voronoï's reduction theory	589
2.1. Perfect forms	589
2.2. A cell complex	590

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3.	The Voronoi complex	590
3.1.	An explicit differential for the Voronoi complex	590
3.2.	A spectral sequence	591
3.3.	Comparison	591
3.4.	The Steinberg module	592
4.	The Voronoi complex in dimensions 5, 6 and 7	593
4.1.	Checking the equivalence of cells	593
4.2.	Finding generators of the Voronoi complex	593
4.3.	The differential	594
4.4.	The homology of the Voronoi complexes	596
4.5.	Mass formulas for the Voronoi complex	597
5.	Explicit homology classes	598
5.1.	Equivariant fundamental classes	598
5.2.	An explicit non-trivial homology class for rank $N = 5$	599
6.	Splitting off the Voronoi complex Vor_N from Vor_{N+1} for small N	600
6.1.	Inflating well-rounded forms	600
6.2.	The case $N = 5$	600
6.3.	Other cases	602
7.	The cohomology of modular groups	602
7.1.	Preliminaries	602
7.2.	Borel/Serre duality	603
7.3.	The cohomology of modular groups	603
8.	Homology of modular groups with coefficients in the Steinberg module	604
9.	Application to K-theory	620
9.1.	On the Hurewicz morphism	620
9.2.	Proof	620
	Acknowledgments	623
	References	623

1. Introduction

Let $N \geq 1$ be an integer and let $SL_N(\mathbb{Z})$ be the modular group of integral matrices with determinant one. Our goal is to compute its cohomology groups with trivial coefficients, i.e. $H^q(SL_N(\mathbb{Z}), \mathbb{Z})$. The case $N = 2$ is well-known and follows from the fact that $SL_2(\mathbb{Z})$ is the amalgamated product of two finite cyclic groups ([29,7], II.7, Ex.3, p. 52). The case $N = 3$ was done in [31]: for any $q > 0$ the group $H^q(SL_3(\mathbb{Z}), \mathbb{Z})$ is killed by 12. The case $N = 4$ has been studied by Lee and Szczarba in [19]: modulo 2, 3 and 5-torsion, the cohomology group $H^q(SL_4(\mathbb{Z}), \mathbb{Z})$ is trivial whenever $q > 0$, except that $H^3(SL_4(\mathbb{Z}), \mathbb{Z}) = \mathbb{Z}$. In Theorem 7.3 below, we solve the cases $N = 5, 6$ and 7.

For these calculations we follow the method of [19], i.e. we use the perfect forms of Voronoi. Recall from [34,20] that a perfect form in N variables is a positive definite real quadratic form h on $\mathbb{R}^N$ which is uniquely determined (up to a scalar) by its set of integral minimal vectors. Voronoi proved in [34] that there are finitely many perfect forms of rank N , modulo the action of $SL_N(\mathbb{Z})$. These are known for $N \leq 8$ (see Section 2 below).

Voronoi used perfect forms to define a cell decomposition of the space X_N^* of positive real quadratic forms, the kernel of which is defined over $\mathbb{Q}$. This cell decomposition (cf. Section 2) is invariant under $SL_N(\mathbb{Z})$, hence it can be used to compute the equivariant homology of X_N^* modulo its boundary. On the other hand, this equivariant homology turns out to be isomorphic

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