A NOTE ON EXPONENTIALLY HARMONIC MORPHISMS

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Abstract. We prove that exponentially harmonic morphisms are precisely the Riemannian submersions with minimal fibres.

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1. Introduction. Let \((M, g)\) and \((N, h)\) be two Riemannian manifolds, and \(\phi : M \to N\) a smooth map. For any compact domain \(\Omega \subseteq M\) define the exponential-energy of \(\phi\) (cf. [3]) by

\[ E(\phi) = \int_\Omega \exp(e(\phi)) \, v_g, \]

where \(e(\phi) = \frac{1}{2} \|d\phi\|^2\) is the energy density of \(\phi\) and \(v_g\) the Riemannian volume element. A smooth map \(\phi : (M, g) \to (N, h)\) is an exponentially harmonic map if it is an extremal of the exponential-energy \(E\) for any compact domain \(\Omega \subseteq M\).

The Euler-Lagrange equation of this problem can be written (cf. [3]) as

\[ t(\phi) = \text{div}(\exp e(\phi) \, d\phi) = \exp e(\phi)(\tau(\phi) + d\phi \, \text{grad} \, e(\phi)) = 0, \]

where \(\tau\) is the usual tension field given by \(\tau(\phi) = \text{div}(d\phi)\). We recall for further use that a map satisfying \(\tau(\phi) = 0\) is a harmonic map; i.e. a critical point of the energy \(E(\phi) = \int_M e(\phi) \, v_g\) (cf. [4]).

An exponentially harmonic morphism is a smooth map \(\phi : (M, g) \to (N, h)\) which pulls back local exponentially harmonic functions to exponentially harmonic functions.

The aim of this note is to prove the following result.

**Theorem 1.1.** A smooth map \(\phi : (M, g) \to (N, h)\) is an exponentially harmonic morphism if and only if it is a Riemannian submersion with minimal fibres.

2. Preliminaries.

2.1 Horizontal weak conformality. Let \(\phi : (M, g) \to (N, h)\) be a smooth map between two Riemannian manifolds. The tangent space at a point \(x \in M\) can be decomposed as \(T_xM = H_x \oplus V_x\), where \(V_x = \ker(d\phi_x)\) and \(H_x = V_x^\perp\). The spaces \(V_x\) and \(H_x\) are called the vertical and horizontal spaces at the point \(x \in M\) respectively.

Let \(C_\phi = \{x \in M \mid \text{rank}(d\phi_x)\) is not maximal\}\) be the set of critical points of \(d\phi\).
**Definition 2.1.** A map $\phi : (M, g) \to (N, h)$ is called *horizontally weakly conformal* if, for every $x \in M \setminus C_{\phi}$, $d\phi_x|_{H_x}$ is conformal and surjective.

If $\phi : (M, g) \to (N, h)$ is horizontally weakly conformal, then there exists a function $\lambda : M \setminus C_{\phi} \to \mathbb{R}^+$ such that $\lambda^2 g_{\phi}(X, Y) = h_{\phi}(X, \phi_\ast Y)$, for all $X, Y \in H_x$, and $x \in M \setminus C_{\phi}$. The function $\lambda$ can be extended continuously to the whole of $M$ by setting $\lambda|_{C_{\phi}} = 0$. The extended function is called the *dilation function* of $\phi$.

Note that $\lambda^2$ is smooth.

**Remark 2.2.** If $d\phi(\text{grad } e(\phi)) = 0$, then $\phi$ is exponentially harmonic if and only if it is harmonic. If $\phi$ is horizontally weakly conformal, then $e = \frac{1}{2} \lambda^2$, and the condition $d\phi(\text{grad } e(\phi)) = \frac{1}{2} d\phi(\text{grad } \lambda^2) = 0$ means that $\phi$ is horizontally homothetic; i.e. $\text{grad}(\lambda^2)$ is vertical.

A *Riemannian submersion* is a horizontally weakly conformal map with $\lambda^2 = 1$. Riemannian submersions are harmonic maps if and only if the fibres are minimal submanifolds (cf. [4]), and from Remark 2.2, they are exponentially harmonic if and only if the fibres are minimal submanifolds.

### 2.2 Existence of exponentially harmonic functions.

Throughout the rest of this article, we assume the Einstein convention on the summation of repeated indices.

**Proposition 2.3.** Let $(N^n, h)$ be a Riemannian manifold. Then, for any point $q \in N$ and any set of constants $\{C_{a\beta}\}$, $C_{a\beta} = C_{\beta a}$, $\{C_a\}$ where $a, \beta \in \{1, \ldots, n\}$, satisfying

$$\sum_\alpha C_{a\alpha} + \sum_{\beta, \delta} C_\beta C_{\delta \delta} = 0,$$

there exists an exponentially harmonic function $f$ defined on a neighbourhood $U \subseteq N$ of $q$ such that in a system of normal local coordinates $(y^\alpha)$ centred on $q$ we have

$$\frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial y^\alpha \partial y^\beta}(q) = C_{a\beta},$$

$$\frac{\partial f}{\partial y^a}(q) = C_a.$$  

**Proof.** The exponential tension field $t$ is an elliptic operator, though not uniformly (cf. [3]). Moreover $t$ is quasi-linear (as defined in [5]) since for a map $\phi$ from a manifold $(M, g)$ equipped with a system of coordinates $(x^i)_{i=1, \ldots, \dim M}$ to a manifold $(N, h)$ equipped with $(y^\alpha)_{\alpha=1, \ldots, \dim N}$, the terms of highest order, i.e. of order two, of $t(\phi)$ are

$$\exp e(\phi) \left( g^{ij} \frac{\partial^2 \phi^\alpha}{\partial x^i \partial x^j} + g^{ij} h_{\delta \gamma} \frac{\partial^2 \phi^\alpha}{\partial x^i} \frac{\partial \phi^\delta}{\partial x^j} \frac{\partial \phi^\gamma}{\partial x^j} \frac{\partial \phi^\delta}{\partial x^j} \right),$$

which are linear in the second derivatives of the map $\phi$.

Proposition 2.3 is then an application of [1, Theorem 2.4], which basically states that, for quasi-linear elliptic operators, infinitesimal solvability, i.e. Condition (2.1), implies local solvability.  

$\square$
3. Characterisation.

**Proposition 3.1. (Composition Law).** Let \( \phi : (M, g) \to (N, h) \) and \( \psi : (N, h) \to (P, k) \) be two maps between Riemannian manifolds. Then the exponential tension field of the composition \( \psi \circ \phi \) has the form

\[
\tau(\psi \circ \phi) = \exp(\psi \circ \phi)\left(d\psi(\tau(\phi)) + \text{trace}(\nabla d\psi)(d\phi, d\phi) + \frac{1}{2} \theta^2 d(\psi \circ \phi) \text{grad} \|d\phi\|^2 + \frac{1}{2} \|d\phi\|^2 d(\psi \circ \phi) \text{grad} \theta^2\right),
\]

where \( \theta = \frac{|\nabla (\psi \circ \phi)|}{|d\phi|} \).

**Proof.** This follows from the equations

\[
\text{grad}\|d(\psi \circ \phi)\|^2 = \text{grad}\left(\frac{\|d(\psi \circ \phi)\|^2}{\|d\phi\|^2}\|d\phi\|^2\right) = \|d\phi\|^2 \text{grad} \theta^2 + \theta^2 \text{grad} \|d\phi\|^2
\]

and the usual composition law of the tension field:

\[
\tau(\psi \circ \phi) = d\psi(\tau(\phi)) + \text{trace}(\nabla d\psi)(d\phi, d\phi).
\]

**Proposition 3.2.** Let \( \phi : (M, g) \to (N, h) \) be a Riemannian submersion. Then \( \phi \) is an exponentially harmonic morphism if and only if \( \phi \) is harmonic.

**Proof.** Let \( f : (N, h) \to \mathbb{R} \) be a function. From the composition law we have

\[
\tau(f \circ \phi) = \exp(f \circ \phi)\left(df(\tau(\phi)) + \text{trace}(\nabla df)(d\phi, d\phi) + \frac{1}{2} \theta^2 d(f \circ \phi) \text{grad} \|d\phi\|^2 + \frac{1}{2} \|d\phi\|^2 d(f \circ \phi) \text{grad} \theta^2\right),
\]

where \( \theta = \frac{|\nabla (f \circ \phi)|}{|df|} \).

Using the fact that \( \phi : M \to N^n \) is a Riemannian submersion we obtain

\[
\|d\phi\|^2 = 0, \quad \theta^2 = \frac{\|df\|^2}{n},
\]

\[
\frac{\|d\phi\|^2}{n} = 1, \quad \text{trace}(\nabla df)(d\phi, d\phi) = \tau(f) \circ \phi.
\]

From these equalities the composition law becomes

\[
\tau(f \circ \phi) = \exp(f \circ df(\tau(\phi)) + \tau(f) \circ \phi.
\]

If \( \phi \) is harmonic we have

\[
\tau(f \circ \phi) = \tau(f) \circ \phi.
\]
which implies that $\phi$ is an exponentially harmonic morphism. Conversely, if $\phi$ is an exponentially harmonic morphism, then for any exponentially harmonic function $f$ we have
\[ df(\tau(\phi)) = 0 \]
which implies that $\tau(\phi) = 0$.

\[ \text{Proposition 3.3.} \quad \text{Let } \phi : (M, g) \rightarrow (N, h) \text{ be a non-constant exponentially harmonic morphism. Then } \phi \text{ is a Riemannian submersion.} \]

\[ \text{Proof.} \quad \text{For a given point } x \in M^n, \text{ we equip } (M^n, g) \text{ with a system of normal coordinates } (x^\alpha)_{\alpha = 1, \ldots, n} \text{ around } x \text{ and } (N^n, h) \text{ with normal coordinates } (y^\alpha)_{\alpha = 1, \ldots, n} \text{ centred on } \phi(x). \text{ In the sequel we write } f_\alpha \text{ for } \frac{\partial f}{\partial x^\alpha} \text{ and } \phi^\alpha_i \text{ for } \frac{\partial \phi^\alpha}{\partial x^i}. \text{ In normal coordinates the exponential harmonic tension field is} \]
\[ t^\alpha(\phi) = \phi^\alpha_{ii} + \sum_{\beta} \phi^\alpha_i \phi^\beta_j \phi^\beta_{ij} \]

Let $f : N \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ be an exponentially harmonic function in a neighbourhood of $\phi(x)$. Since $\phi$ is an exponentially harmonic morphism we have
\[ t^\alpha(f \circ \phi) = f_{\alpha\beta} \phi^\beta_i \phi^\alpha_i + f_\alpha f_\beta f_{\gamma\delta} \phi^\alpha_i \phi^\beta_j \phi^\gamma_j \phi^\delta_j + f_\alpha \phi^\alpha_i + f_\alpha f_\beta f_{\gamma\delta} \phi^\alpha_i \phi^\beta_j \phi^\gamma_j = 0. \] (3.1)

Proposition 2.3 implies, for each $\gamma \in \{1, \ldots, n\}$ the existence of an exponentially harmonic function $f$ such that at $\phi(x), \frac{\partial f}{\partial y^\gamma} = 0$ and $\frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial y^\gamma} = \delta_{\gamma \gamma}$. At $x$, (3.1) implies that
\[ \phi^\gamma_i + \phi^\gamma_j \phi^j_i = 0. \] (3.2)

We apply Proposition 2.3 again, this time with $C_\alpha = 0$ and any $C_{\alpha\beta} = C_{\beta\alpha}$ such that $\sum C_{\alpha\alpha} = 0$, and we deduce from (3.1) that
\[ C_{\alpha\beta} \phi^\beta_i \phi^\alpha_i = 0. \]

This condition implies in a standard way (cf. [2, p. 42]) that $\phi$ is horizontally weakly conformal; i.e. $\phi^\beta_i \phi^\alpha_i = \lambda^2 \delta^{\alpha\beta}$. Using the horizontal conformality, (3.1) becomes
\[ \lambda^2 f_{\alpha\alpha} + \lambda^4 f_\alpha f_\beta f_{\gamma\delta} + f_\alpha \phi^\gamma_i + + f_\alpha f_\beta f_{\gamma\delta} \phi^\gamma_i \phi^\gamma_j = 0. \]

Using Proposition 2.3 again, with $C_\alpha = 0, \alpha \neq \alpha_0$. $C_{\alpha_0} = 1$ and any $C_{\alpha\beta} = C_{\beta\alpha}$ such that $\sum C_{\alpha\alpha} + C_{\alpha_0\alpha_0} = 0$, we obtain
\[ \lambda^2 f_{\alpha\alpha}(1 - \lambda^2) + \phi^\alpha_i \phi^\alpha_i = 0. \]

Also, using (3.2), we finally have
which implies $\lambda^2 = 1$ and thus $\phi$ is a Riemannian submersion. □

Combining Proposition 3.2 and Proposition 3.3 yields Theorem 1.1.

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