

# 125 years of the Schubert Calculus

F. Hirzebruch

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## Hermann Caesar Hannibal Schubert 1848-1911



Secondary school teacher at Johanneum Hamburg 1876-1908

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Die  $n$ -dimensionalen Verallgemeinerungen der fundamentalen  
Anzahlen unseres Raums.

Von

HERMANN SCHUBERT in Hamburg.

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Um durch Anwendung des Principes von der Erhaltung der Anzahl (Kalkül der abzähl. Geom., § 4) die Zahl der Strahlen zu finden, welche vier gegebene Strahlen schneiden, ertheilt man diesen die besondere Lage, dass zwei von ihnen sich schneiden, und ebenso der dritte den vierten schneidet, beachtet dann, dass die gestellte Bedingung sowohl von dem Verbindungsstrahle der beiden Schnittpunkte, wie auch von dem Schnittstrahle der beiden Schnittebenen, also von *zwei* Strahlen erfüllt wird, und schliesst hieraus, dass, wie auch die vier gegebenen Strahlen liegen mögen, die gesuchte Zahl immer gleich zwei sein muss, wenn sie überhaupt endlich bleibt. Der wesentlich algebraische Charakter des hierbei angewendeten Principes führte mich auf den Gedanken, dasselbe auch auf die Gebilde des  $n$ -dimensionalen Raums, oder, was dasselbe ist, auf Gleichungssysteme zwischen  $n$  Variabeln anzuwenden. Dadurch kann man, wenn man die diese

**Acta Mathematica 8, 97–118 (1886)****ANZAHL-BESTIMMUNGEN FÜR LINEARE RÄUME  
BELIEBIGER DIMENSION**

VON

**H. SCHUBERT**

in HAMBURG.

Die Dimension des linearen Raums, in welchem alle vorkommenden Gebilde gedacht werden sollen, heisse stets  $n$ . Es bedeute ferner jedes Symbol

 $[a]$ ,

wo  $a$  irgend eine ganze Zahl oder ein eine ganze Zahl darstellender Buchstaben-Ausdruck ist, einen  $a$ -dimensionalen linearen Raum, z. B.  $[0]$  einen Punkt,  $[1]$  einen Strahl,  $[2]$  eine Ebene, u. s. w., endlich  $[n]$  den  $n$ -dimensionalen linearen Raum, der allen Betrachtungen zu Grunde gelegt wird. Man erhält dann die sämtlichen Grundbedingungen, welche einem

## Schubert varieties I.

- ▶ **Notation**  $[a]$  : “Linear subspace”  
= projective subspace of  $P_n$  of dimension  $a$

- ▶ **Definition** Given

$$[a_0] \subset [a_1] \subset \cdots \subset [a_p], \quad 0 \leq a_0 < a_1 < \cdots < a_p \leq n$$

let

$$\{[p] \mid \dim[p] \cap [a_k] \geq k\} = \text{Schubert variety } (a_0, a_1, \dots, a_p)$$

- ▶ **Example**

$$\begin{aligned} (n-p, \dots, n-1, n) &= \text{variety of all } [p] \text{ in } P_n \\ &= \text{Grassmannian } G(p+1, n+1) \\ &= U(n+1)/(U(p+1) \times U(n-p)) \\ &= G, \quad \dim G = (p+1)(n-p). \end{aligned}$$

## Some remarks about the Grassmannian $G$

- ▶  $e_1, e_2, \dots, e_{n+1}$ , unitary base for  $\mathbb{C}^{n+1}$
- ▶  $T_{n+1} = \{e^{2\pi i\alpha_1}, \dots, e^{2\pi i\alpha_{n+1}}\}$  operates on

$$G = U(n+1)/(U(p+1) \times U(n-p))$$

- ▶ Fixpoints are the  $\binom{n+1}{p+1}$  linear subspaces spanned by  $p+1$  base elements. Poincaré-Hopf :

$$\begin{aligned} \binom{n+1}{p+1} &= \text{Euler number}(G) \\ &= \sum b_{2i} \\ &= \text{rank}(H_*(G, \mathbb{Z})) \quad (b_i = 0 \text{ for } i \text{ odd, no torsion}) . \end{aligned}$$

- ▶ There are  $\binom{n+1}{p+1}$  Schubert cycles, and they are a base for  $H_*(G, \mathbb{Z})$ .
- ▶ Ehresmann, Sur la topologie de certaines variétés algébriques réelles. J. Math. pur. appl. (1937)

## Schubert varieties II.

$$\begin{aligned} \blacktriangleright \dim(a_0, a_1, \dots, a_p) &= \sum_{i=0}^p (a_i - i) \\ &= \sum_{i=0}^p a_i - p(p+1)/2 \leq \dim G \end{aligned}$$

▶ **Examples**  $(n-p, \dots, n-1, n) = G$

$$\blacktriangleright 1. \sum_{i=0}^p (n-p+i-i) = (p+1)(n-p) = \dim G$$

▶ 2.  $(0, 1, \dots, p)$  consists only of the given  $[p]$ . The dimension is zero.

▶ 3.  $(n-p-1, n-p+1, \dots, n-1, n) = \{[p] \mid [p] \cap [n-p-1] \neq \emptyset\}$   
has dimension  $\dim G - 1$ .

This Schubert variety is the generator of  $H_{2 \dim G - 2}(G, \mathbb{Z})$ .

We denote it by  $g$ .

Let  $d$  be the dimension of  $(a_0, a_1, \dots, a_p)$

## Schubert (Acta Mathematica)

- ▶ p. 101

$$\begin{aligned} g^d(a_0, a_1, \dots, a_p) &= \text{degree}(a_0, a_1, \dots, a_p) \\ &= \frac{d! \prod_{i>j} (a_i - a_j)}{a_0! a_1! \dots a_p!} \end{aligned}$$

- ▶ p. 104

$$\begin{aligned} g(a_0, \dots, a_p) \\ &= (a_0 - 1, a_1, \dots, a_p) + (a_0, a_1 - 1, \dots, a_p) + \dots + (a_0, a_1, \dots, a_p - 1) \end{aligned}$$

- ▶ p. 106

$$\text{deg}(3, 4, 5, 6) = \frac{12! \cdot 1 \cdot 2 \cdot 3 \cdot 1 \cdot 2 \cdot 1}{3! 4! 5! 6!} = \binom{11}{5} = 462 = 11 \cdot 6 \cdot 7$$

- ▶ Dieses Resultat ergibt den Satz: In jedem sechsdimensionalen linearen Raume gibt es 462 dreidimensionale lineare Räume, von denen jeder 12 gegebene Ebenen in je einem Punkte trifft.



van der Waerden, Zur algebraischen Geometrie VIII.  
 Der Grad der Graßmannschen Mannigfaltigkeit der linearen Räume  
 $S_m$  in  $S_n$  (Math. Ann., 1936)

- ▶  $G(p + 1, n + 1) = G, \dim G = (p + 1)(n - p)$
- ▶  $\text{degree } G = \frac{(\dim G)!1!2! \dots p!}{n!(n - 1)! \dots (n - p)!} = \frac{(\dim G)!}{\prod_{\substack{1 \leq i \leq p+1 \\ 1 \leq j \leq n-p}} (i + j - 1)}$
- ▶ RRH, Borel-H, H (in the fifties)

$$\chi(G, kg) = \prod_{\substack{1 \leq i \leq p+1 \\ 1 \leq j \leq n-p}} \frac{(k + i + j - 1)}{(i + j - 1)}$$

- ▶ RRH  $\Rightarrow$  coefficient of  $k^{\dim G} = \prod \frac{1}{(i + j - 1)} = \frac{\text{degree } G}{(\dim G)!}$

**Example**  $p = 1$  Schubert (Mathematische Annalen)

$$G = U(n+1)/(U(2) \times U(n-1))$$

- ▶  $\dim G = 2n - 2$
- ▶  $\deg G = \frac{(2n-2)!}{n!(n-1)!} = C_{n-1}$
- ▶  $C_n = 1, 1, 2, 5, 14, 42, \dots$  (Catalan numbers,  $n \geq 0$ )
- ▶ In  $P_3$  there are 2 lines meeting 4 given lines.  
 In  $P_4$  there are 5 lines meeting 6 given 2-spaces.  
 In  $P_5$  there are 14 lines meeting 8 given 3-spaces.  
 In  $P_6$  there are 42 lines meeting 10 given 4-spaces ...
- ▶ We note that

$$\chi(G, g) = \binom{n+1}{p+1}$$

Plücker embedding!

## The Schubert variety $(a_0, a_1, \dots, a_p)$ in $G = G(p+1, n+1)$ I.

- ▶ If  $s_i = a_i - i$ , then

$$d = \dim(a_0, \dots, a_p) = \sum s_i \text{ and } 0 \leq s_0 \leq s_1 \leq \dots \leq s_p \leq n - p .$$

- ▶ The image of the homology class of  $(a_0, a_1, \dots, a_p)$  under the Poincaré isomorphism is a cohomology class of dimension  $2(\dim G - d)$ .
- ▶ How to calculate it?
- ▶ Let  $V$  be the tautological vector bundle (fibre  $\mathbb{C}^{p+1}$ ) over  $G$  and  $V^*$  its dual. The Chern classes  $c_i$  of  $V^*$  are regarded as elementary symmetric functions in variables  $x_0, x_1, \dots, x_p$  ( $c_i \in H^{2i}(G, \mathbb{Z})$ ,  $0 \leq i \leq p+1$ ).
- ▶ **Theorem** The image of  $(a_0, a_1, \dots, a_p)$  under the Poincaré isomorphism is

$$\frac{\sum_{\alpha \in S_{p+1}} \text{sign}(\alpha) \cdot \alpha(x_0^{n-a_0} x_1^{n-a_1} \dots x_p^{n-a_p})}{\prod_{p \geq j > i \geq 0} (x_i - x_j)}$$

This is symmetric in  $x_0, \dots, x_p$ , hence a polynomial in  $c_1, \dots, c_{p+1}$  (the Schur polynomial).

## The Schubert variety $(a_0, a_1, \dots, a_p)$ in $G = G(p+1, n+1)$ II.

- ▶ The leading term of the polynomial is

$$x_0^{t_0} x_1^{t_1} \dots x_p^{t_p}$$

with  $t_i = (n - a_i) - (p - i) = n - p - s_i$ . It checks that

$$\sum t_i = \dim G - \dim(a_0, \dots, a_p)$$

- ▶ If we put

$$x_j = e^{2\pi i \alpha_j} \quad (j = 0, \dots, p),$$

then Poincaré-iso  $(a_0, \dots, a_p) =$  character of the irreducible representation of  $U(p+1)$  with highest weight

$$t_0 \alpha_0 + t_1 \alpha_1 + \dots + t_p \alpha_p$$

restricted to the maximal torus of  $U(p+1)$ . (Hermann Weyl)

## Examples I.

- ▶ The  $r$ -th Chern class ( $0 \leq r \leq p + 1$ ) has leading term  $x_0 x_1 \dots x_{r-1}$ .  
Therefore

$$(s_0, s_1, \dots, s_p) = \underbrace{(n - p - 1, \dots, n - p - 1)}_{r \text{ times}}, \underbrace{(n - p, \dots, n - p)}_{(p+1-r)\text{-times}}$$

hence the Schubert cycle for  $c_r$  equals

$$(a_0, \dots, a_p) = (n - p - 1, \dots, n - p + r - 2, n - p + r, \dots, n)$$

which can also be defined as

$$\{ [p] \mid \dim([p] \cap [n - p + r - 2]) \geq r - 1 \}$$

- ▶ Compare Shiing-Shen Chern, *Characteristic classes of Hermitian manifolds*, Ann. of Maths. 47 (1946), p.101.
- ▶ For  $r = 1$ , we get the element  $g$  studied before.

## Examples II.

- ▶ It follows also that  $c_{p+1}$  corresponds to the Grassmann variety

$$G(p+1, n) \subset G(p+1, n+1)$$

- ▶ More generally  $c_{p+1}^k$  ( $0 \leq k \leq n-p$ ) is the Poincaré duality isomorphism of  $G(p+1, n+1-k) \subset G(p+1, n+1)$ .
- ▶  $c_{p+1}^{n-p}$  corresponds to a point, hence it is the cohomology fundamental class for  $G(p+1, n+1)$ .

## Conclusion.

- ▶ **Exercise** Prove that the  $r$ -th Chern class of the tautological bundle complementary to  $V$  corresponds under the Poincaré isomorphism to the cycle

$$\{[p] \mid [p] \cap [n - p - r] \neq \emptyset\}$$

( $[n - p - r]$  is given).

- ▶ For the cohomological part of this talk I used P. Griffiths and J. Harris, *Principles of Algebraic Geometry*, J. Wiley and Sons (1978).
- ▶ I thank Andrew Ranicki for organizing this talk as a Beamer presentation (a first for me).