LOCAL QUADRATIC APPROXIMATION IN VERTICES OF PLANAR TRIANGULATIONS

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Abstract. For every strongly regular triangulation $T_h$ in 2D, we describe a class of local sets of vertices in which the least-squares approximations of smooth functions by quadratic polynomials are of optimal order. As an application of this result, we prove that for any inner vertex $a$ with ane neighbourhood $b^1, \ldots, b^6$, the least-squares quadratic approximation $Q$ of any smooth function $u$ in the points $b^1, \ldots, b^6, a$ has the following relation to the globally continuous and piecewise linear projection $Hu$ of $u$. The gradient $\text{grad} Q(a)$ is equal to the arithmetic mean of constant gradients $\text{grad} u/T$ on the triangles $T \in T_h$ meeting $a$.

Key words. plane triangulations, poised sets of vertices, quadratic least-squares approximation

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1. Introduction and basic notions. This paper concerns the classical topic of discrete approximation of smooth functions in two variables by polynomials, see Beresin, Shidkov [1], whose dynamical recent development can be illustrated by the papers Sauer, Xu [2] and Gasca, Sauer [3]. We study the least-squares approximation by quadratic polynomials under the condition that points of approximation are vertices of a given triangulation. In this section, we describe a class of six-tuples of vertices of a given strongly regular triangulation $T_h$ in which, due to Dalík [7], the problem of interpolation by quadratic polynomials does always have a unique solution. In Section 2, we prove a theorem saying that quadratic discrete least-squares approximations in vertices from specified sets are of optimal order. In Section 3, we prove the following statement for any ane neighbourhood $b^1, \ldots, b^6$ of an inner vertex $a$ with triangles $T_1 = ab^1b^2$, $T_2 = ab^2b^3$, $T_6 = ab^5b^6$ in $T_h$. For any function $u \in C(T_1 \cup \ldots \cup T_6)$, its projection $Hu \in C(T_1 \cup \ldots \cup T_6)$ linear on $T_1, \ldots, T_6$, and for the quadratic least-squares approximation $Q$ of $u$ in $b^1, \ldots, b^6, a$, we have

$$\text{grad} Q(a) = \frac{1}{6} (\text{grad} Hu/T_1 + \ldots + \text{grad} Hu/T_6).$$

We denote by $(x_1, x_2)$ the cartesian coordinates of a point $x \in \mathbb{R}^2$ and put

$$D(abc) = \begin{vmatrix} a_1 - c_1 & a_2 - c_2 \\ b_1 - c_1 & b_2 - c_2 \end{vmatrix}$$

for arbitrary points $a, b, c \in \mathbb{R}^2$. It is known that $D(abc) > 0$ if and only if the ordered triple $(a, b, c)$ is oriented positively and $A(abc) = |D(abc)|$ is the area of triangle $abc$. We denote by $P^2$ the space of polynomials in the variables $x_1, x_2$ of total degree less than or equal to two.

Definition 1.1. Points $b^1, \ldots, b^6 \in \mathbb{R}^2$ are said to be poised if there exists a unique $P \in P^2$ such that

$$(1.1) \quad P(b^i) = f_i \quad \text{for} \quad i = 1, \ldots, 6$$

for arbitrary given $f_1, \ldots, f_6 \in \mathbb{R}$.

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**Definition 1.2.** For arbitrary points \( b^1, \ldots, b^6 \in \mathbb{R}^2 \), we put
\[
I(b^1, \ldots, b^6) = D(b^1b^2b^6)D(b^1b^2b^3)D(b^4b^5b^3)D(b^4b^5b^2) + D(b^1b^2b^5)D(b^1b^2b^2)D(b^4b^5b^3)D(b^4b^5b^2).
\]

The following statement gives us the basic tool for the decision whether a six-tuple of points is poised.

**Theorem 1.3.** Points \( b^1, \ldots, b^6 \in \mathbb{R}^2 \) are poised if and only if \( I(b^1, \ldots, b^6) \neq 0 \).

Proof. See [5]. \( \square \)

**Definition 1.4.** We say that a finite nonempty set \( \mathcal{T} \) of triangles is a triangulation if the intersection of any two different triangles \( T_1, T_2 \) is either a common side of \( T_1, T_2 \) or a common vertex of \( T_1, T_2 \) or an empty set.

The symbol \( \mathcal{T}_h \) denotes a triangulation with the largest length of sides of triangles equal to \( h \). Further, we denote by \( \Omega_h \) the union \( \bigcup_{T \in \mathcal{T}_h} T \) and by \( \mathcal{V}_h \) the set of vertices of triangles from \( \mathcal{T}_h \). We put
\[
\mathcal{N}_h(a) = \{ b \in \mathcal{V}_h; \overline{ab} \text{ is a side of a triangle from } \mathcal{T}_h \}
\]
for every \( a \in \mathcal{V}_h \).

**Definition 1.5.** Let \( \Omega \) be an open and bounded set in \( \mathbb{R}^2 \) (a domain in \( \mathbb{R}^2 \)) and \( \mathcal{T}_h \) be a triangulation. We denote by \( \partial \Omega \) the boundary of \( \Omega \) and call \( \mathcal{T}_h \) a triangulation of \( \Omega \) if \( \mathcal{V}_h \subseteq \overline{\Omega} \) and \( \mathcal{V}_h \cap \partial \Omega_h = \mathcal{V}_h \cap \partial \Omega \).

**Definition 1.6.** A system \( \mathbf{F} = (\mathcal{T}_h)_{h \in I} \) of triangulations of a domain \( \Omega \) in \( \mathbb{R}^2 \) is called strongly regular if

- \( I \) is a set of positive real numbers satisfying \( 0 \in I \) and
- there exists \( \kappa > 0 \) such that all triangles \( T \in \mathcal{T}_h \in \mathbf{F} \) contain a disc with radius \( \kappa h \).

It can be shown that for every strongly regular system \( \mathbf{F} \) there exist \( \kappa_0 > 0 \), \( \alpha_0 > 0 \) such that each triangle from \( \mathcal{T}_h \) has all sides longer than \( \kappa_0 h \) and all inner angles greater than \( \alpha_0 \).

**Notations.** We denote by \( \mathbf{F} \) a strongly regular system of triangulations of a fixed domain \( \Omega \) characterized by the parameters \( \kappa, \kappa_0, \alpha_0 \) and reserve the symbols \( C, C_1, \ldots \) for generic constants independent of the parameter \( h \).

We describe two basic types of local poised sets of vertices of a triangulation.

**Definition 1.7.** We call mutually different vertices \( b^1, \ldots, b^6 \) of a triangulation \( \mathcal{T}_h \in \mathbf{F} \) a neighbourhood of a triangle \( T_1 \in \mathcal{T}_h \) if \( T_1 = \overline{b^1b^2b^3} \) and triangles
\[
T_2 = \overline{b^1b^2b^4}, \quad T_3 = \overline{b^6b^5b^3}, \quad T_4 = \overline{b^6b^5b^4}
\]
belong to \( \mathcal{T}_h \).

The following theorem says that neighbourhoods of triangles are poised.

**Theorem 1.8.** There exists a constant \( C > 0 \) satisfying
\[
I(b^1, \ldots, b^6) > C A(T_h) A(T_2) A(T_3) A(T_4) \text{ for some } k \in \{1, \ldots, 4\}
\]
for all \( \mathcal{T}_h \in \mathbf{F} \) and all \( T_1 \in \mathcal{T}_h \) with a neighbourhood \( b^1, \ldots, b^6 \) such that \( T_1, \ldots, T_4 \) have no inner angles obtuse.

Proof. This is the content of Dalk [6]. \( \square \)

Now we relate poised sets to vertices of triangulations from \( \mathbf{F} \).

**Agreement.** For arbitrary points \( x^1, \ldots, x^n \in \mathbb{R}^2 \), the operations + and − are addition and subtraction modulo \( n \) on the set \( \{1, \ldots, n\} \) of indices.
**Definition 1.9.** Let \( a \in V_h \) and \( b^1, \ldots, b^k \in N_h(a) \). We put \( T_i = ab^i b^j \), \( \alpha_i = \angle b^i a b^j, \beta_i = \angle b^j a b^i \), \( \gamma_i = \angle ab^i b^j \) for \( i = 1, \ldots, k \) and call \( b^1, \ldots, b^k \) an oriented neighbourhood of \( a \) whenever \( D(ab^i b^j) > 0 \) for \( i = 1, \ldots, k \) and \( \alpha_1 + \ldots + \alpha_k = 2\pi \). See Fig. 1.

![Figure 1](image)

**Theorem 1.10.** There exists a constant \( C > 0 \) such that

\[
l(b^1, \ldots, b^k) > C h^8
\]

for all \( T_h \in \mathcal{F} \), \( b^0 = a \in V_h \) and oriented neighbourhoods \( b^1, \ldots, b^k \) of \( a \) with the following properties

- \( \max(\alpha_1, \ldots, \alpha_5, \pi/2) \leq \alpha_i + \alpha_{i+1} \) for \( i = 1, \ldots, 5 \),
- \( \alpha_i \leq \frac{2\pi}{3} \) for \( i = 1, \ldots, 5 \),
- \( \pi < \alpha_i + \alpha_{i+1} \) for at most one index \( i \),
- \( \beta_i \leq \pi/2, \gamma_i \leq \pi/2 \) for \( i = 1, \ldots, 5 \).

**Proof.** See Dalík [7].

In [7], a simple reduction procedure is described which selects an oriented neighbourhood with the properties a) – d) from the set \( N_h(a) \) of any inner vertex \( a \) of a triangulation \( T_h \in \mathcal{F} \) such that \( |N_h(a)| \geq 5 \) and the inner angles of all triangles from \( T_h \) meeting \( a \) are less than or equal to \( \pi/2 \).

**Definition 1.11.** Let us assume that \( T_h \in \mathcal{F} \) and either

- \( b^1, \ldots, b^6 \) is a neighbourhood of a triangle from \( T_h \) satisfying the assumptions of Theorem 1.8 or
- \( b^1, \ldots, b^5 \) is an oriented neighbourhood of a vertex \( a = b^6 \) of \( T_h \) satisfying the assumptions a) – d) of Theorem 1.10.

Then we call \( \{b^1, \ldots, b^6\} \) a local poised set (in \( T_h \)).

**2. Quadratic least squares approximation.** In this section we describe certain supersets of local poised sets and prove that discrete quadratic least-squares approximations in points from these supersets are of optimal order.

**Definition 2.1.** Let \( b^1, \ldots, b^k \) be a local poised set in \( T_h \in \mathcal{F} \). We put \( B = \{b^1, \ldots, b^k\} \) in the case a), \( B = \{a\} \cup N_h(a) \) in the case b) from 1.11 and call the set

\[
E(b^1, \ldots, b^k) = \{x \in V_h | \exists y, z \in B \text{ for some } y, z \in B \}
\]

an extension of \( \{b^1, \ldots, b^k\} \).

For every nonempty set \( E \subseteq V_h \), we denote by \( CE \) the convex closure of \( E \). Instead of \( CE(b^1, \ldots, b^k) \), we briefly write \( CE \).

If \( \{b^1, \ldots, b^k\} \) is a local poised set in a triangulation \( T_h \in \mathcal{F} \) and we put

\[
l_1(x) = l(x, b^2, \ldots, b^k)
\]
then \( l_1(b^1) \neq 0 \) by Theorems 1.8, 1.10 and it is easy to see that \( l_1(b^j) = 0 \) for \( j = 2, \ldots, 6 \). By symmetry, analogous properties share the following quadratic polynomials \( l_2, \ldots, l_6 \). See [5] for more details.

**Definition 2.2.** Let be \( \{b^1, \ldots, b^6\} \) a local poised set in \( T_h \) and \( K \) a closed convex set such that \( \mathcal{C}\{b^1, \ldots, b^6\} \subseteq K \subseteq \mathcal{C}E \). We put

\[
l_i(x) = l(x, b^{i+1}, \ldots, b^{i+5}) \quad \text{and} \quad L_i(x) = \frac{l_i(x)}{l_i(b)} \quad \text{for} \quad i = 1, \ldots, 6.
\]

We have \( \Delta_i(b^j) = \delta_{ij} \) for \( i, j = 1, \ldots, 6 \), so that \( L_1, \ldots, L_6 \) is a Lagrange basis in \( P^2 \) related to the points \( b^1, \ldots, b^6 \) and

\[
L(x) = \sum_{i=1}^{6} u(b^i) L_i(x)
\]

is the Lagrange interpolation polynomial of any function \( u \in \mathcal{C}(K) \) in \( b^1, \ldots, b^6 \).

**Lemma 2.3.** There exists a constant \( \nu_1 > 0 \) such that

\[
|L_i(x)| \leq \nu_1, \quad \left| \frac{\partial L_i}{\partial x_i}(x) \right| \leq \nu_1 h^{-1}
\]

for all triangulations \( T_h \in \mathbf{F} \), all local poised sets \( \{b^1, \ldots, b^6\} \) in \( T_h \), all \( x \in \mathcal{C}E \), \( i = 1, \ldots, 6 \) and \( \nu_1 h^3 \).

**Proof.** Due to Theorems 1.8, 1.10 and to the strong regularity of \( \mathbf{F} \), there exist positive constants \( C, C_1, C_2 \) such that \( C h^3 < |l_i(b)|, |l_i(x)| < C_1 h^3 \) and \( |\partial l_i(x)/\partial x_i| < C_2 h^3 \) for all local poised sets \( \{b^1, \ldots, b^6\} \), all \( x \in \mathcal{C}E \), \( i = 1, \ldots, 6 \) and \( \nu_1 h^3 \). The statements follow immediately. \( \square \)

As a direct consequence, we obtain the following result.

**Lemma 2.4.** Assume that \( \{b^1, \ldots, b^6\} \) is a local poised set in \( T_h \in \mathbf{F} \) and \( P \in P^2 \) satisfies

\[
|P(b^i)| \leq c h^3 \quad \text{for} \quad i = 1, \ldots, 6
\]

for some \( c \geq 0 \). Then

\[
|P(x)| \leq 6 \nu_1 c h^3 \forall x \in \mathcal{C}E.
\]

In [7], we have proved the following two statements.

**Theorem 2.5.** Assume that \( \{b^1, \ldots, b^6\} \) is a local poised set in \( T_h \in \mathbf{F} \), \( K \) is a closed convex set with \( \mathcal{C}\{b^1, \ldots, b^6\} \subseteq K \subseteq \mathcal{C}E \) and functions \( u \in \mathcal{C}^3(K) \), \( P \in P^2 \) satisfy \( |(u - P)(x)| < C_1 h^3 \) for all \( x \in K \). Then there exists a constant \( C > 0 \) such that

\[
\left| \frac{\partial^{|m|}(u - P)}{\partial x^m}(x) \right| \leq C h^{3-|m|} \forall x \in K
\]

for all multiindices \( m \), \(|m| \leq 2 \).

**Theorem 2.6.** Let \( T_h \in \mathbf{F} \), \( \{b^1, \ldots, b^6\} \) be a local poised set in \( T_h \) and \( u \in \mathcal{C}^3(CE) \). Then there exist a unique interpolation polynomial \( L \in P^2 \) of \( u \) in \( b^1, \ldots, b^6 \) and a constant \( C > 0 \) such that

\[
\left| \frac{\partial^{|m|}(u - L)}{\partial x^m}(x) \right| \leq C h^{3-|m|} \forall x \in \mathcal{C}E
\]
for all multiindices $m$, $|m| \leq 2$.

Now, we prove our result concerning the local discrete least-squares approximation.

**Theorem 2.7.** Let us assume that \{\(b^1, \ldots, b^6\)\} is a local poised set in \(T_h \in \mathbb{F}, \{b^1, \ldots, b^6\} \subseteq B \subseteq \mathcal{E}(b^1, \ldots, b^6)\) and \(u \in C^3(CE)\). Then there exist a unique discrete least-squares approximation \(Q \in \mathcal{P}^2\) of \(u\) in the vertices from \(B\) and a constant \(C > 0\) such that

\[
\left| \frac{\partial^{\mid m\mid}(u - Q)}{\partial x^m}(x) \right| \leq Ch^{3-|m|} \forall x \in CE
\]

for all multiindices \(m\), \(|m| \leq 2\).

**Proof.** Consider the Lagrange basis functions \(L_1, \ldots, L_6\) related to \(b^1, \ldots, b^6\) and denote \(B = \{b^1, \ldots, b^6, \ldots, b^k\}\). Then

\[
Q(x) = \sum_{i=1}^{6} q_i L_i(x)
\]

is a discrete least-squares approximation of \(u\) in \(b^1, \ldots, b^k\) if and only if

\[
M^T M q = M^T b
\]

for \(M = (L_j(b^i))^te_{1,...,k} = (q_1, \ldots, q_6)^T, b = (u(b^1), \ldots, u(b^k))^T\). Because \(L_j(b^i) = \delta_{ij}\) for \(i, j = 1, \ldots, 6\), the columns of \(M\) are linearly independent. This guarantees existence and unicity of \(Q\) by Björck [4], Theorem 1.1.3.

The interpolant \(L(x) = \sum_{j=1}^{6} u(b^j) L_j(x)\) satisfies

\[
|(u - L)(b^i)| \leq C h^3 \text{ for } i = 1, \ldots, k
\]

by Theorem 2.6. Then

\[
\sum_{i=1}^{k} (u - Q)(b^i)^2 \leq \sum_{i=1}^{k} (u - L)(b^i)^2 \leq C h^6
\]

and we have

\[
|(u - Q)(b^i)| \leq C h^3 \text{ for } i = 1, \ldots, k.
\]

Of course

\[
|(L - Q)(b^j)| \leq C h^3 \text{ for } j = 1, \ldots, 6,
\]

so that \(|(L - Q)(x)| \leq C h^3 \forall x \in CE\) by Lemma 2.4. This result and Theorem 2.6 give us

\[
|(u - Q)(x)| \leq C h^3 \forall x \in CE
\]

and we finish the proof by an application of Theorem 2.5. \(\blacksquare\)
3. Approximation of $\nabla u$. Now, we prove a special property of $\nabla Q(a)$ for any vertex $a$ with an affine neighbourhood $b^1, \ldots, b^6 \in T_k \in F$, any smooth function $u$ and for the least-squares approximation $Q$ of $u$ in the points $b^1, \ldots, b^6, a$.

**Definition 3.1.** We call $\Pi$ a piecewise linear projection related to triangles $T_1, \ldots, T_k$ whenever for every $u \in C(T_1 \cup \ldots \cup T_k)$, $\Pi u(b) = u(b)$ in all vertices $b$ of triangles $T_1, \ldots, T_k$ and $\Pi u$ is linear on each of the triangles $T_1, \ldots, T_k$.

**Definition 3.2.** Let us put $b^1 = (-1,1), b^2 = (1,0), b^3 = (0,1), b^4 = (1,-1), b^5 = (1,0), b^6 = (0,1), T_i = \partial b^i \setminus b^i$ for $i = 1, \ldots, 6$ and $\hat{\Theta} = T_1 \cup \ldots \cup T_6$. See Fig. 2.

We denote by $\hat{\Pi}$ the piecewise linear projection related to $T_1, \ldots, T_6$.

**Lemma 3.3.** Let $\hat{u} \in C(\hat{\Theta})$ and $\hat{Q} \in \mathcal{P}^2$ be a discrete least-squares approximation of $\hat{u}$ in $\hat{b}^1, \ldots, \hat{b}^7$. Then

$$\nabla \hat{Q}(\hat{u}) = \frac{1}{6} \sum_{i=1}^{6} \nabla \hat{\Pi} \hat{u}/\hat{T}_i.$$  

**Proof.** The polynomial $\hat{Q}(\hat{x}) = c_1 \hat{x}_1^2 + c_2 \hat{x}_1 \hat{x}_2 + c_3 \hat{x}_2^2 + c_4 \hat{x}_1 + c_5 \hat{x}_2 + c_6$ is a discrete least-squares approximation of $\hat{u}$ in $\hat{b}^1, \ldots, \hat{b}^7$ if and only if the sum

$$\sum_{i=1}^{7} (\hat{u}_i - \hat{Q}(\hat{b}^i))^2$$

is minimal for $\hat{u}_i = \hat{u}(\hat{b}^i)$. This is equivalent to the system $M \vec{c} = N\vec{u}$ of normal equations, where $\vec{c} = (c_1, \ldots, c_6)\top$, $\vec{u} = (\hat{u}_1, \ldots, \hat{u}_7)\top$ and

$$M = \begin{pmatrix} 4 & -2 & 2 & 4 \\ -2 & 2 & -2 & -2 \\ 2 & -2 & 4 & 4 \\ 4 & -2 & 2 & 7 \end{pmatrix}, \quad N = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 \\ -1 & -1 & 1 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 \\ -1 & -1 & 1 & 1 \\ 1 & -1 & -1 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix}.$$  

This system has a unique solution

$$c_1 = (\hat{u}_1 + \hat{u}_2 + \hat{u}_3 - \hat{u}_4 + \hat{u}_5 + \hat{u}_6 - 2\hat{u}_7)/2,$$

$$c_2 = (\hat{u}_1 + \hat{u}_2 + \hat{u}_3 + \hat{u}_4 - \hat{u}_5 + \hat{u}_6 - 2\hat{u}_7)/2,$$

$$c_3 = (\hat{u}_1 + \hat{u}_2 + \hat{u}_3 - \hat{u}_4 + \hat{u}_5 + \hat{u}_6 - 2\hat{u}_7)/2,$$

$$c_4 = (\hat{u}_1 - 2\hat{u}_2 - \hat{u}_3 + \hat{u}_4 + 2\hat{u}_5 + \hat{u}_6)/6,$$

$$c_5 = (\hat{u}_1 - \hat{u}_2 - 2\hat{u}_3 + \hat{u}_4 + \hat{u}_5 + 2\hat{u}_6)/6,$$

$$c_6 = (\hat{u}_7).$$
so that \( \nabla \hat{Q}(\hat{u}) = \begin{pmatrix} c_4 \\ c_5 \end{pmatrix} \) = \( \frac{1}{6} \begin{pmatrix} -\hat{u}_1 - 2\hat{u}_2 - \hat{u}_3 + \hat{u}_4 + 2\hat{u}_5 + \hat{u}_6 \\ \hat{u}_1 - \hat{u}_2 - 2\hat{u}_3 - \hat{u}_4 + \hat{u}_5 + 2\hat{u}_6 \end{pmatrix} \). On the other hand, we have

\[
\begin{align*}
\nabla \hat{U}/_{T_1} &= \begin{pmatrix} \hat{u}_6 - \hat{u}_1 \\ \hat{u}_6 - \hat{u}_7 \end{pmatrix}, & \nabla \hat{U}/_{T_2} &= \begin{pmatrix} \hat{u}_7 - \hat{u}_2 \\ \hat{u}_7 - \hat{u}_3 \end{pmatrix}, \\
\nabla \hat{U}/_{T_3} &= \begin{pmatrix} \hat{u}_5 - \hat{u}_7 \\ \hat{u}_5 - \hat{u}_4 \end{pmatrix}, & \nabla \hat{U}/_{T_4} &= \begin{pmatrix} \hat{u}_5 - \hat{u}_7 \\ \hat{u}_5 - \hat{u}_4 \end{pmatrix}, \\
\nabla \hat{U}/_{T_5} &= \begin{pmatrix} \hat{u}_5 - \hat{u}_7 \\ \hat{u}_5 - \hat{u}_4 \end{pmatrix}, & \nabla \hat{U}/_{T_6} &= \begin{pmatrix} \hat{u}_5 - \hat{u}_7 \\ \hat{u}_5 - \hat{u}_4 \end{pmatrix},
\end{align*}
\]

and \( \frac{1}{6} \sum_{i=1}^{6} \nabla \hat{U}/_{T_i} = \nabla \hat{Q}(\hat{u}) \) follows immediately. \( \square \)

Now, we extend this statement to all inner vertices with an affine neighbourhood.

**Definition 3.4.** Let \( T_h \in F \), \( a = b^7 \) be an inner vertex of \( T_h \) and \( b^1, \ldots, b^6 \) be an orientation of \( N_b(a) \). If there exist a regular matrix \( B \) and a point \( c \) such that the affine map

\[ F : \hat{\Theta} \longrightarrow \Omega_h, \quad F(\hat{x}) = B \hat{x} + c \]

satisfies \( F(\hat{b}^i) = b^i \) for \( i = 1, \ldots, 7 \), then we call \( b^1, \ldots, b^6 \) an affine neighbourhood of \( a = b^7 \), put \( T_i = F(T_i) \) for \( i = 1, \ldots, 6 \), \( \Theta = F(\hat{\Theta}) \) and relate a function \( u \) to every \( \hat{u} \in C(\Theta) \) by

\[ u(F(\hat{x})) = \hat{u}(\hat{x}) \quad \forall \hat{x} \in \hat{\Theta}. \]

We denote by \( \Pi \) the piecewise linear projection related to \( T_1, \ldots, T_6 \).

Because

\[ \sum_{i=1}^{7} \left( P(b^i) - u(b^i) \right)^2 = \sum_{i=1}^{7} \left( \hat{P}(\hat{b}^i) - \hat{u}(\hat{b}^i) \right)^2 \]

for all \( P \in \mathcal{P}^2 \), \( \hat{u} \in C(\hat{\Theta}) \), a polynomial \( Q \in \mathcal{P}^2 \) is a discrete least–squares approximation of \( u \) in \( b^1, \ldots, b^7 \) if and only if \( \hat{Q} \in \mathcal{P}^2 \) is a discrete least–squares approximation of \( \hat{u} \) in \( \hat{b}^1, \ldots, \hat{b}^7 \).

**Theorem 3.5.** Let \( T_h \in F \), \( b^1, \ldots, b^6 \) be an affine neighbourhood of a vertex \( a = b^7 \) and \( Q \in \mathcal{P}^2 \) be a discrete least–squares approximation of \( u \in C(CE) \) in \( b^1, \ldots, b^7 \). Then

\[ \nabla Q(a) = \frac{1}{6} \sum_{i=1}^{6} \nabla \Pi u/T_i. \]

**Proof.** If \( F \) is an affine map sending \( \hat{b}^i \) to \( b^i \) for \( i = 1, \ldots, 7 \), then

\[
\nabla Q(a) = \nabla \hat{Q}(F^{-1}(a)) = J F^{-1}(a)^T \nabla \hat{Q}(\hat{a})
\]

\[ = \frac{1}{6} \sum_{i=1}^{6} J F^{-1}(a)^T \nabla \hat{U}/_{T_i} = \frac{1}{6} \sum_{i=1}^{6} \nabla \Pi u/T_i, \]

according to Lemma 3.3 and to the fact that \( \hat{Q} \) is the discrete least squares approximation of \( \hat{u} \) in \( \hat{b}^1, \ldots, \hat{b}^7 \). Here \( J F^{-1}(a) \) is the Jacobi matrix of the vector–function \( F^{-1} \) in the point \( a \). \( \square \)

Due to Dalík [7], \( \nabla P(a) = \frac{1}{6} \sum_{i=1}^{6} \nabla \Pi P/T_i \) is valid for all \( P \in \mathcal{P}^2 \), but Theorem 3.5 is a special property of the discrete least–squares approximation \( \hat{Q} \).
COROLLARY 3.6. For all triangulations $T_h \in \mathbf{F}$, all affine neighbourhoods $b^1, \ldots, b^n$ of a vertex $a \in \mathcal{V}_h$, and all $u \in C^3(CE)$, there exists $C > 0$ such that

$$\| \text{grad} u(a) - \frac{1}{6} \sum_{i=1}^{6} \text{grad} P_i u / T_i \| < Ch^2$$

for any vector-norm $\| \cdot \|$.

Proof. This statement follows by Theorem 3.5 and by $\| \text{grad} u(a) - \text{grad} Q(a)\| < C h^2$, valid due to Theorem 2.7.

As $\text{grad} P_i u / T_i$ is an approximation of $\text{grad} u(a)$ of order 1 for $i = 1, \ldots, n$, Corollary 3.6 presents a superapproximation of $\text{grad} u(a)$. This classical superapproximation formula, used by engineers routinely, has been analysed in Krížek, Neittaanmäki [8] theoretically for the first time.

REFERENCES