

## On continuous and discrete Hardy inequalities

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*Dedicatory?*

**Abstract.** We obtain a number of Hardy type inequalities for continuous and discrete operators.

**Mathematics Subject Classification (2010).** Primary: 35P15; Secondary: 81Q10.

**Keywords.** Hardy’s inequalities, discrete Schrödinger operators.

Do you want  
maybe to add a  
dedicatory in  
memory of Prof.  
Safarov?

### 1. Introduction

The original Hardy inequalities appeared first in Hardy’s proof of Hilbert’s theorem (related to discrete Hilbert transformation), [4]. After a few improvements (see [6] for historical details), the inequalities read as follows ([5], Theorems 326 and 327).

DISCRETE CASE. If  $p > 1$  and  $v_k > 0$ , then

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \left( \frac{1}{n} \sum_{k=1}^n v_k \right)^p < \left( \frac{p}{p-1} \right)^p \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} v_n^p. \quad (1.1)$$

CONTINUOUS CASE. If  $p > 1$  and  $v(x) \geq 0$ ,  $x \geq 0$ , then

$$\int_0^{\infty} \left( \frac{1}{x} \int_0^x v(t) dt \right)^p dx < \left( \frac{p}{p-1} \right)^p \int_0^{\infty} v(x)^p dx, \quad (1.2)$$

unless  $v \equiv 0$ . The constant  $(p/(p-1))^p$  is sharp.

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<sup>1</sup>This work started during the term “Hamiltonians in Magnetic Fields” at Institut Mittag-Leffler.

<sup>2</sup>L. Kapitanski thanks the organisers and the Institute for kind support and hospitality.

<sup>3</sup>A. Laptev was supported by the grant of the Russian Federation Government to support scientific research under the supervision of leading scientist at Siberian Federal University, No. 14.Y26.31.0006.

Rewritten in a slightly different form, inequalities (1.1) and (1.2) are

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{|u_n|^p}{n^p} < \left(\frac{p}{p-1}\right)^p \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} |u_n - u_{n-1}|^p \quad (1.3)$$

and

$$\int_0^{\infty} \frac{|u(x)|^p}{x^p} dx < \left(\frac{p}{p-1}\right)^p \int_0^{\infty} |u'(x)|^p dx.$$

It is assumed that  $u_0 = 0$  and  $u(0) = 0$ .

There are many other inequalities which are also called Hardy inequalities, see for instance a survey paper by E. B. Davies [2], the books of V. G. Maz'ya [8] and Kufner and Opic [7], and a recent book by A. A. Balinsky, W. D. Evans, and R. T. Lewis [1]. The number of research papers in this area is enormous. We just mention [9], [12], [10], [11], and [3] as more closely related to our text.

Fixed reference  
(Maz'ya was  
linking to  
Mitidieri)

In this short note we consider both discrete and continuous Hardy inequalities with  $p = 2$  in dimensions  $d \geq 2$ . The first part deals with the standard Hardy type inequalities in  $\mathbb{R}^d$ . Here we present an approach allowing us to obtain inequalities with multiple singularities. It is based on the fact that the multi-dimensional Hardy inequality is intimately related to the fundamental solution of the Laplace equation (we explain the connection below). Inequalities with multiple singularities obtained in Section 2 are sometimes better and sometimes worse than the inequalities that one can derive by simply adding together standard Hardy inequalities at different points.

To our surprise Hardy inequalities for discrete operators seem to be a lot more complicated. It is still not clear what the sharp constants are. In Sections 3 and 4 we consider Hardy type inequalities for discrete operators in dimensions  $d \geq 3$  and  $d = 2$  respectively. We would like to mention the papers [10] and [11], where a very different method is used to obtain a discrete Hardy type inequality when  $d \geq 3$ .

## 2. Continuous case, multiple singularities

For the sake of completeness we revise here Hardy's inequality in the continuous case. One possible way of proving Hardy type inequality is as follows.

Let  $A_j(x)$ ,  $j = 1, \dots, d$ , be the components of a vector-field  $A(x)$  in  $\mathbb{R}^d$  to be chosen later, and let  $\lambda$  be a real parameter. The vector field  $A(x)$  will determine the type of the inequality, and  $\lambda$  will be chosen to optimise it. Assuming

$u(x)$  is sufficiently smooth and decaying where it should, perform the following computation:

$$\begin{aligned} & \int \sum_{j=1}^d (|\partial_j u(x) - \lambda A_j(x) u(x)|^2) dx \\ &= \int (|\nabla u|^2 - 2\lambda \sum A_j u \partial_j u + \lambda^2 \sum_{j=1}^d |A_j|^2 |u|^2) dx \\ &= \int (|\nabla u|^2 + (\lambda \operatorname{div} A + \lambda^2 \sum_{j=1}^d |A_j|^2) |u|^2) dx. \end{aligned}$$

Thence the primeval form of the Hardy inequality is

$$\sup_{\lambda} \left[ - \int (\lambda \operatorname{div} A + \lambda^2 \sum_{j=1}^d |A_j|^2) |u|^2 dx \right] \leq \int |\nabla u|^2 dx.$$

Maximizing the left hand side with respect to  $\lambda$  we differentiate the integral

$$- \int (\lambda \operatorname{div} A + \lambda^2 \sum_{j=1}^d |A_j|^2) |u|^2 dx$$

with respect to  $\lambda$  and find when the result is zero regardless of the choice of  $u(x)$ . This leads to the requirement

$$2\lambda |A|^2 + \operatorname{div} A = 0, \quad \text{for all } x \in \mathbb{R}^d.$$

This is a serious restriction on  $A(x)$  implying

$$\frac{\operatorname{div} A(x)}{|A(x)|^2} = \text{const.}$$

Rescaling  $A$ , we arrive at

$$\operatorname{div} A(x) = -|A(x)|^2. \quad (2.1)$$

With this rescaling, the critical  $\lambda$  is

$$\lambda_* = \frac{1}{2}$$

and the corresponding Hardy inequality is

$$\frac{1}{4} \int \sum_{j=1}^d |A_j(x)|^2 |u|^2 dx \leq \int |\nabla u|^2 dx. \quad (2.2)$$

If we assume that the field  $A$  is potential, i.e.,  $A = \nabla\psi$ , for some function  $\psi$ , then (2.1) becomes

$$\Delta\psi + |\nabla\psi|^2 = 0,$$

which in turn implies that the function

$$w = e^\psi \geq 0$$

is harmonic and positive valued. Then  $w$  is a constant  $> 0$  or has a singularity.

In the 1D case,  $w(x) = |x|$  (up to a translation and a scalar factor) and  $\psi(x) = \ln|x|$ . Then  $A(x) = 1/x$  and we obtain

$$\frac{1}{4} \int \frac{|u(x)|^2}{|x|^2} dx \leq \int |u'(x)|^2 dx, \quad (2.3)$$

where we assume that  $u(0) = 0$ .

If  $d = 2$  we take  $w(x) = \ln|x|$  assuming that  $|x| \geq 1$ . Then  $\psi(x) = \ln(\ln|x|)$  and

$$A(x) = \frac{x}{\ln|x||x|^2}.$$

Then the corresponding Hardy inequality is

$$\frac{1}{4} \int_{\{|x| \geq 1\}} \frac{|u(x)|^2}{|x|^2 \ln^2|x|} dx \leq \int_{\{|x| \geq 1\}} |\nabla u(x)|^2 dx,$$

where we assume that  $u(x) = 0$  for  $|x| = 1$ .

For  $d \geq 3$ , the choice is

$$w(x) = \frac{1}{|x|^{d-2}}.$$

Then

$$\psi(x) = -(d-2) \ln|x|$$

and  $A = \nabla\psi$ ,

$$A_i(x) = -(d-2) \frac{x_i}{|x|^2}.$$

This leads to the familiar Hardy inequality

$$\left(\frac{d-2}{2}\right)^2 \int_{\mathbb{R}^d} \frac{|u(x)|^2}{|x|^2} dx \leq \int_{\mathbb{R}^d} |\nabla u(x)|^2 dx.$$

This approach can be extended to Hardy inequalities with several singularities.

Let  $d \geq 3$  and let  $a_k = (a_{k1}, a_{k2}, \dots, a_{kd}) \in \mathbb{R}^d$ ,  $k = 1, \dots, n$ . Introduce

$$w = \sum_{k=1}^n \frac{1}{|x - a_k|^{d-2}}.$$

Then

$$\psi(x) = \ln(w).$$

Therefore

$$A(x) = \nabla(\ln w) = \frac{-(d-2)}{w} \left( \sum_{k=1}^n \frac{x - a_k}{|x - a_k|^d} \right)$$

and

$$|A(x)|^2 = \sum_{j=1}^d |A_j(x)|^2 = \left( \frac{d-2}{w} \right)^2 \sum_{j=1}^d \left( \sum_{k=1}^n \frac{x_j - a_{kj}}{|x - a_k|^d} \right)^2.$$

The inequality (2.2) implies

**Theorem 2.1.** *Let  $d \geq 3$  and let  $a_k = (a_{k1}, a_{k2}, \dots, a_{kd}) \in \mathbb{R}^d$ ,  $k = 1, \dots, n$ . Then we obtain the following generalised Hardy inequality with multiple singularities*

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^d} |\nabla u(x)|^2 dx \geq \left( \frac{d-2}{2} \right)^2 \int_{\mathbb{R}^d} \frac{\sum_{j=1}^d \left( \sum_{k=1}^n \frac{x_j - a_{kj}}{|x - a_k|^d} \right)^2}{w^2} |u(x)|^2 dx. \quad (2.4)$$

Note that if we add together the standard Hardy inequalities with singularities at different points we obtain

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^d} |\nabla u(x)|^2 dx \geq \frac{1}{n} \left( \frac{d-2}{2} \right)^2 \int_{\mathbb{R}^d} \sum_{k=1}^n \left( \frac{1}{|x - a_k|^2} \right) |u(x)|^2 dx. \quad (2.5)$$

Therefore the Hardy weight in (2.5) asymptotically behaves as

$$\frac{1}{n} \left( \frac{d-2}{2} \right)^2 \frac{1}{|x|^2}, \quad \text{as } x \rightarrow \infty,$$

and

$$\frac{1}{n} \left( \frac{d-2}{2} \right)^2 \frac{1}{|x - a_k|^2}, \quad \text{as } x \rightarrow a_k.$$

The inequality (2.4) is better asymptotically, namely

$$|A(x)|^2 \sim \left( \frac{d-2}{2} \right)^2 \frac{1}{|x|^2} \quad \text{as } x \rightarrow \infty$$

and

$$|A(x)|^2 \sim \left( \frac{d-2}{2} \right)^2 \frac{1}{|x - a_k|^2} \quad \text{as } x \rightarrow a_k.$$

However, the inequality (2.4) is not sharper than (2.5) in the sense that there is no inequality for the weight functions. Indeed, let us consider a simple example  $d = 3, n = 2, a_1 = (1, 0, 0)$  and  $a_2 = (-1, 0, 0)$ . Then obviously at  $x = 0$  we have

$$\sum_{k=1}^2 \frac{x_j - a_{kj}}{|x - a_k|^3} = 0, \quad j = 1, 2, 3.$$

Let now  $d = 2$ . Then by analogy with the case  $d \geq 3$  we introduce

$$w(x) = \ln \left( \prod_{k=1}^n |x - a_k| \right),$$

defined for  $\prod_{k=1}^n |x - a_k| \geq 1$ , where  $a_k = (a_{k1}, a_{k2}) \in \mathbb{R}^2$ .

Then  $\psi(x) = \ln \ln \left( \prod_{k=1}^n |x - a_k| \right)$  and

$$A(x) = \nabla \psi(x) = \frac{1}{\ln \left( \prod_{k=1}^n |x - a_k| \right)} \left( \sum_{k=1}^n \frac{x - a_k}{|x - a_k|^2} \right).$$

Denote by  $S_n = \{x \in \mathbb{R}^2: \prod_{k=1}^n |x - a_k| \leq 1\}$ . We immediately obtain the following statement:

**Theorem 2.2.** *Let us assume that  $u(x) = 0$  for  $x \in \partial S_n$ . Then*

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^2 \setminus S_n} |\nabla u(x)| dx \geq \frac{1}{4} \int_{\mathbb{R}^2 \setminus S_n} \frac{\sum_{j=1}^2 \left( \sum_{k=1}^n \frac{x_j - a_{kj}}{|x - a_k|^2} \right)^2}{w^2} |u(x)|^2 dx. \quad (2.6)$$

If we add the standard 2D-Hardy inequalities with different singularities we obtain

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^2} |\nabla u(x)|^2 dx \geq \frac{1}{4n} \int_{\mathbb{R}^2} \left( \sum_{k=1}^n \frac{1}{|x - a_k|^2 \ln^2 |x - a_k|} \right) |u(x)|^2 dx, \quad (2.7)$$

where it is assumed that  $u(x) = 0$  for  $x \in \bigcup_{k=1}^n \{x \in \mathbb{R}^2: |x - a_k| \leq 1\}$ .

Similarly to the case  $d \geq 3$  the inequality (2.7) is not as good as (2.6) near singularities and at infinity because (2.7) contains an extra term  $1/n$ . Moreover Theorem 2.2 requires functions to be zero only in  $S_n$  rather than in  $\bigcup_{k=1}^n \{x \in \mathbb{R}^2: |x - a_k| \leq 1\}$  which is a lot less restrictive.

Note in the end that 1D case with multiple singularities is not interesting since the conditions  $u(x) = 0$  at  $x = a_k$  split the problem into one dimensional problems on intervals  $(a_k, a_{k+1}), k = 1, \dots, n-1$  with zero boundary conditions.

**Remark 2.3.** It would be interesting to study the shape of the subset of  $\mathbb{R}^d$  where the Hardy weights in (2.4) and (2.5) (and respectively (2.6) and (2.7)) are equal. It might be also interesting to look at this problem with weighted singularities

$$\frac{b_k^2}{|x - a_k|^2}, \quad \text{where } b_k \in \mathbb{R}.$$

### 3. Discrete multi-dimensional Hardy's inequalities, $d \geq 3$

Denote by  $\mathbf{1}_j \in \mathbb{R}^d$  the unit vector in the direction  $j$ . Then the discrete partial derivative in the direction  $j$  of a function  $f$  defined on  $\mathbb{Z}^d$  equals  $f(n) - f(n - \mathbf{1}_j)$ ,  $n = (n^1, \dots, n^d) \in \mathbb{Z}^d$ .

In this section we shall prove the following result.

**Theorem 3.1.** *Let  $d \geq 3$ . For a function  $f$  defined on  $\mathbb{Z}^d$  we have*

$$\sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}^d} \frac{|f(n)|^2}{|n|^2} \leq C \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}^d} \sum_{j=1}^d |f(n) - f(n - \mathbf{1}_j)|^2,$$

where

$$C \leq \frac{\pi^2}{4} \left( \frac{2}{d-2} + \frac{\sqrt{2}(d-4)^2}{(d-2)(\sqrt{2}d - 4\sqrt{d-2})\pi} \right).$$

In order to prove this theorem we introduce a Fourier transform

$$\hat{f}(\theta) = \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}^d} f(n) e^{-in\theta},$$

where  $\theta = (\theta_1, \dots, \theta_d) \in \mathbb{T}^d = [-\pi, \pi]^d$ . The inverse transform is

$$f(n) = \int_{\mathbb{T}^d} \hat{f}(\theta) e^{in\theta} d\theta,$$

where  $d\theta = (2\pi)^{-d} d\theta$ . Given  $f(n)$ , define

$$f_j(n) = \begin{cases} \frac{n^j}{|n|^2} f(n), & n \neq 0, \\ 0, & n = 0. \end{cases}$$

Then,

$$\sum_j |f_j(n)|^2 = \frac{|f(n)|^2}{|n|^2}$$

and

$$\sum_j n^j f_j(n) = f(n), \quad n^k f_j(n) = n^j f_k(n), \quad j \neq k.$$

Since

$$f(n) - f(n - \mathbf{1}_j) = \int_{\mathbb{T}^d} \hat{f}(\theta) (e^{i\mathbf{n}\theta} - e^{i\mathbf{n}\theta - i\theta_j}) d\theta$$

and

$$e^{i\mathbf{n}\theta} - e^{i\mathbf{n}\theta - i\theta_j} = 2i e^{-i\theta_j/2} \sin(\theta_j/2) e^{i\mathbf{n}\theta},$$

we obtain using the Parseval identity

$$\sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}^d} \sum_{j=1}^d |f(n) - f(n - \mathbf{1}_j)|^2 = 4 \int_{\mathbb{T}^d} |\hat{f}(\theta)|^2 \sum_j \sin^2(\theta_j/2) d\theta.$$

Let  $\hat{f}_j(\theta)$  be the Fourier transform of the sequence  $\{f_j(n)\}$ . Then

$$f_j(n) = \int_{\mathbb{T}^d} \hat{f}_j(\theta) e^{i\mathbf{n}\theta} d\theta,$$

and

$$n^k f_j(n) = \int_{\mathbb{T}^d} \hat{f}_j(\theta) n^k e^{i\mathbf{n}\theta} d\theta = \int_{\mathbb{T}^d} i \partial_k \hat{f}_j(\theta) e^{i\mathbf{n}\theta} d\theta,$$

where  $\partial_k = \partial/\partial\theta_k$ . Thus, we have

$$\partial_k \hat{f}_j(\theta) - \partial_j \hat{f}_k(\theta) \equiv 0, \quad \text{when } j \neq k, \quad (3.1)$$

and also,

$$\hat{f}(\theta) = i \sum_j \partial_j \hat{f}_j(\theta).$$

Taking all this into account we arrive at

$$\sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}^d} \frac{|f(n)|^2}{|n|^2} = \int_{\mathbb{T}^d} \sum_j |\hat{f}_j(\theta)|^2 d\theta,$$

and

$$\sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}^d} \sum_{j=1}^d |f(n) - f(n - \mathbf{1}_j)|^2 = 4 \int_{\mathbb{T}^d} \left| \sum_k \partial_k \hat{f}_k(\theta) \right|^2 \sum_j \sin^2(\theta_j/2) d\theta.$$



Thus, the inequality we want to prove is reduced to

$$\int_{\mathbb{T}^d} \sum_j |\hat{f}_j(\theta)|^2 d\theta \leq 4C \int_{\mathbb{T}^d} \left| \sum_k \partial_k \hat{f}_k(\theta) \right|^2 \sum_j \sin^2(\theta_j/2) d\theta, \quad (3.2)$$

for any  $\hat{f}_j$  satisfying (3.1) and, since  $f_j(0) = 0$ ,

$$\int_{\mathbb{T}^d} \hat{f}_j(\theta) d\theta = 0. \quad (3.3)$$

Vector-valued functions  $\hat{f}_j$  satisfying (3.1) and (3.3) are gradients. In other words, there exists a periodic function  $\psi(\theta)$  such that (normalization)

$$\int_{\mathbb{T}^d} \psi(\theta) d\theta = 0$$

and

$$\hat{f}_j(\theta) = \partial_j \psi(\theta).$$

In terms of  $\psi$ , the inequality (3.2) reads (we can replace  $d\theta$  with  $d\theta$  now)

$$\int_{\mathbb{T}^d} |\nabla \psi(\theta)|^2 d\theta \leq 4C \int_{\mathbb{T}^d} |\Delta \psi(\theta)|^2 \sum_j \sin^2(\theta_j/2) d\theta. \quad (3.4)$$

This reminds us of the Poincaré–Friedrichs inequality, but here we have a stronger inequality because of  $\sum_j \sin^2(\theta_j/2)$  in the right hand side.

Let us prove (3.4). Denote

$$w(\theta) = \left( \sum_j \sin^2(\theta_j/2) \right)^{1/2}.$$

Then

$$\int_{\mathbb{T}^d} |\nabla \psi(\theta)|^2 d\theta = - \int_{\mathbb{T}^d} \psi \cdot \overline{\Delta \psi} d\theta \leq \|\Delta \psi\|_{L^2(\mathbb{T}^d)} \left\| \frac{\psi}{w} \right\|_{L^2(\mathbb{T}^d)}.$$

Since

$$w^2(\theta) = \sum_j \sin^2(\theta_j/2) = \left[ 4 \frac{\sum_j \sin^2(\theta_j/2)}{|\theta|^2} \right] \frac{|\theta|^2}{4} \geq \frac{|\theta|^2}{\pi^2},$$

we obtain

$$\int_{\mathbb{T}^d} \frac{|\psi(\theta)|^2}{w^2(\theta)} d\theta \leq \pi^2 \int_{\mathbb{T}^d} \frac{|\psi(\theta)|^2}{|\theta|^2} d\theta.$$

It remains to prove a Hardy inequality on the torus.

**Lemma 3.2.** *Let  $d \geq 3$ . Then there exists a constant  $C(d) > 0$  such that*

$$\int_{\mathbb{T}^d} \frac{|\psi(\theta)|^2}{|\theta|^2} d\theta \leq C(d) \int_{\mathbb{T}^d} |\nabla \psi(\theta)|^2 d\theta, \quad (3.5)$$

for all smooth  $\psi$  with zero average:

$$\int_{\mathbb{T}^d} \psi(\theta) d\theta = 0. \quad (3.6)$$

In fact, we can take

$$C(d) = \frac{2}{d-2} + \frac{\sqrt{2}(d-4)^2}{(d-2)(\sqrt{2}d - 4\sqrt{d-2})\pi}.$$

*Proof.* We will use our assumption (3.6) to have the Poincaré–Friedrichs inequality:

$$\|\psi\|^2 = (2\pi)^{-d} \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}^d \setminus \{0\}} |\hat{\psi}(n)|^2 \leq (2\pi)^{-d} \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}^d \setminus \{0\}} |n|^2 |\hat{\psi}(n)|^2 = \|\nabla \psi\|^2. \quad (3.7)$$

Here  $\|\cdot\|$  is the  $L^2$  norm over  $\mathbb{T}^d$  and  $\{\hat{\psi}(n)\}$  are the Fourier coefficients of  $\psi$ ,

$$\psi(\theta) = (2\pi)^{-d} \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}^d} \hat{\psi}(n) e^{in\theta}.$$

Sometimes it will be useful to think of  $\psi$  as a function on  $\mathbb{R}^d$ , which is  $2\pi$ -periodic in each variable. Let  $\zeta(\theta)$  be a product of one-dimensional cut-off functions,  $\zeta(\theta) = \prod_{j=1}^d \tilde{\zeta}(\theta_j)$ , where each  $\tilde{\zeta}(t)$  is piece-wise linear,  $0 \leq \tilde{\zeta}(t) \leq 1$  for all  $t$ ,  $\tilde{\zeta}(t) = 1$ , when  $|t| \leq r$ , and  $\tilde{\zeta}(t) = 0$ , when  $|t| \geq r + \epsilon$  (where  $r$  and  $\epsilon$  are positive numbers, and  $r + \epsilon < \pi$ ). We have

$$\left\| \frac{\psi}{|\theta|} \right\| \leq \left\| \frac{\zeta \psi}{|\theta|} \right\| + \left\| \frac{(1-\zeta) \psi}{|\theta|} \right\| \quad (3.8)$$

Viewing  $\zeta \psi$  as a compactly supported function on  $\mathbb{R}^d$ , apply the standard Hardy inequality in  $\mathbb{R}^d$ :

$$\left\| \frac{\zeta \psi}{|\theta|} \right\| = \left\| \frac{\zeta \psi}{|\theta|} \right\|_{L^2(\mathbb{R}^d)} \leq \frac{2}{d-2} \|\nabla(\zeta \psi)\|_{L^2(\mathbb{R}^d)} = \frac{2}{d-2} \|\nabla(\zeta \psi)\|. \quad (3.9)$$

Since

$$\|\nabla(\zeta \psi)\| \leq \|\zeta \nabla \psi\| + \|\psi \nabla \zeta\| \leq \|\nabla \psi\| + \frac{1}{\epsilon} \|\psi\|,$$

we invoke (3.7) to obtain

$$\|\nabla(\zeta \psi)\| \leq \left(1 + \frac{1}{\epsilon}\right) \|\nabla \psi\|. \quad (3.10)$$

The second term in (3.8) is even simpler, since  $|\theta| \geq r$  on the support of  $1 - \zeta$ . Thus, applying again (3.7),

$$\left\| \frac{(1 - \zeta) \psi}{|\theta|} \right\| \leq \frac{1}{r} \|\psi\| \leq \frac{1}{r} \|\nabla \psi\|.$$

Combining this with (3.9) and (3.10), we estimate the right hand side in (3.8) as follows

$$\leq \left[ \frac{2}{d-2} \left(1 + \frac{1}{\epsilon}\right) + \frac{1}{r} \right] \|\nabla \psi\|.$$

In order to minimize the quantity

$$\frac{2}{d-2} \frac{1}{\epsilon} + \frac{1}{r},$$

take  $r = \pi - \epsilon$ . The minimum of

$$\frac{2}{d-2} \frac{1}{\epsilon} + \frac{1}{\pi - \epsilon} \quad (3.11)$$

is attained at

$$\epsilon = \frac{\sqrt{2d-4} - 2}{d-4} \pi$$

(with  $\epsilon = \pi/2$  for  $d = 4$ ), and the corresponding value of (3.11) is

$$\frac{\sqrt{2}(d-4)^2}{(d-2)(\sqrt{2}d-4\sqrt{d-2})\pi}.$$

This proves (3.5) □

#### 4. Hardy's inequality on $\mathbb{Z}^2$

The main result of this section is the following theorem.

**Theorem 4.1.** *There exists a constant  $C > 0$  such that*

$$\sum_{x \in \mathbb{Z}^2, |x| \geq 2} \frac{|f(x)|^2}{|x|^2 (\ln |x|)^2} \leq C \sum_{x, y \in \mathbb{Z}^2, x \sim y} |f(x) - f(y)|^2, \quad (4.1)$$

for all compactly supported  $f(x)$  with  $f(x) = 0$  for  $|x| \leq 1$ .

In fact instead of (4.1) we shall prove an equivalent inequality

$$\sum_{x \in \mathbb{Z}^2, \|x\| \geq 2} \frac{|f(x)|^2}{\|x\|^2 (\ln \|x\|)^2} \leq C \sum_{x \in \mathbb{Z}^2} \sum_{j=1,2} |f(x) - f(x - \mathbf{1}_j)|^2, \quad (4.2)$$

where as before  $\mathbf{1}_j$  is the unit vector in the direction  $j$ . In this section we denote by  $\|x\|$  the  $\ell^\infty$ -norm of  $x$

$$\|x\| = \max\{|x_1|, |x_2|\}.$$

Let us introduce the *discrete polar coordinates* on  $\mathbb{Z}^2$  based on this norm. Denote by  $D_R$  the closed disk  $\{x \in \mathbb{Z}^2: \|x\| \leq R\}$  and by  $\partial D_R$  denote its boundary. Thus, if  $n > 0$  is an integer,

$$\partial D_n = \{x \in \mathbb{Z}^2: |x_1| = n, -n \leq x_2 \leq n \text{ or } |x_2| = n, -n \leq x_1 \leq n\}.$$

Define a non-linear operation,  $U$ , of turning one step counterclockwise along the circle:

$$U \begin{bmatrix} x_1 \\ x_2 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{cases} \begin{bmatrix} x_1 \\ x_2 + 1 \end{bmatrix} = x + \mathbf{1}_2, & \text{if } x_1 > 0 \text{ and } -|x_1| \leq x_2 < |x_1|, \\ \begin{bmatrix} x_1 - 1 \\ x_2 \end{bmatrix} = x - \mathbf{1}_1, & \text{if } x_2 > 0 \text{ and } -|x_2| < x_1 \leq |x_2|, \\ \begin{bmatrix} x_1 \\ x_2 - 1 \end{bmatrix} = x - \mathbf{1}_2, & \text{if } x_1 < 0 \text{ and } -|x_1| < x_2 \leq |x_1|, \\ \begin{bmatrix} x_1 + 1 \\ x_2 \end{bmatrix} = x + \mathbf{1}_1, & \text{if } x_2 < 0 \text{ and } -|x_2| \leq x_1 < |x_2|. \end{cases}$$

For  $x = 0$  set  $U0 = 0$ . Note that  $U$  is invertible on  $\partial D_n$  for  $n > 0$ . Also,  $U^{8n} = \text{Id}$ . If

$$x = U^m \langle n \rangle, \quad \text{where } \langle n \rangle = n \mathbf{1}_1 + n \mathbf{1}_2,$$

we call  $\langle n, m \rangle$  the (*discrete*) *polar coordinates* of  $x$ . Each circle  $\partial D_n$  has four corners:

$$U^0 \langle n \rangle, \quad U^{2n} \langle n \rangle, \quad U^{4n} \langle n \rangle, \quad U^{6n} \langle n \rangle.$$

To describe other points  $U^m \langle n \rangle = \langle n, m \rangle$  on  $\partial D_n$ , we sometimes decompose  $m$  as follows

$$m = 2sn + t, \quad s = 0, 1, 2, 3, \quad 0 < t < 2n$$

(but sometimes, for convenience,  $t$  will be equal to 0 or  $n$ ). For a function  $f$  on  $\mathbb{Z}^2$ , we write its value at  $x$  as  $f(x)$  or, when using polar coordinates,  $f \langle n, m \rangle$ . We say that  $x \sim y$  if  $x$  and  $y$  are neighbours in the sense that  $y = x \pm \mathbf{1}_j$  for  $j = 1$  or  $j = 2$ .

Let us begin with an useful observation that allows one to take care of *finite* sums of  $|f(x)|^2$ . This is a discrete analog of the Poincaré–Friedrichs lemma.

**Lemma 4.2.** *For any integer  $N \geq 1$ ,*

$$\sum_{\|x\| \leq N} |f(x)|^2 \leq \frac{4}{3} N(N+1)(2N+1) \sum_{x, y \in D_N, x \sim y} |f(x) - f(y)|^2 \quad (4.3)$$

for any function  $f$  such that  $f(0) = 0$ .

*Proof.* We have

$$\sum_{\|x\| \leq N} |f(x)|^2 = \sum_{n=1}^N \sum_{x \in \partial D_n} |f(x)|^2.$$

For any point  $x_0 \in \partial D_n$ , there is a path  $x_0 \sim x_1 \sim \dots \sim x_k \sim 0$  from  $x_0$  to the origin. The smallest  $k$  is at most  $2n - 1$ . We have

$$|f(x_0)| \leq |f(x_0) - f(x_1)| + \dots + |f(x_k) - f(0)|$$

and therefore,

$$|f(x_0)|^2 \leq 4n (|f(x_0) - f(x_1)|^2 + \dots + |f(x_k) - f(0)|^2).$$

When  $x_0$  runs over  $\partial D_n$ , the corresponding paths can be chosen so that the maximum number of times an edge is repeated in different paths is  $2n$ . A very rough estimate is thus

$$\sum_{x_0 \in \partial D_n} |f(x_0)|^2 \leq 8n^2 \sum_{x, y \in D_n, x \sim y} |f(x) - f(y)|^2.$$

Summing it from  $n = 1$  to  $n = N$  results in (4.3). □

**Plan of the proof of (4.2).** In polar coordinates, the sum we are going to estimate is

$$A_0 := \sum_{n=2}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2(\ln n)^2} \sum_{m=0}^{8n-1} |f\langle n, m \rangle|^2.$$

Subtract from  $f\langle n, m \rangle$  and add back the average of  $f\langle n, m \rangle$  over the circle  $\partial D_n$ ,

$$\underline{f}(n) = \frac{1}{8n} \sum_{m=0}^{8n-1} f\langle n, m \rangle.$$

Then

$$\begin{aligned} A_0 &\leq 2 \sum_{n=2}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2(\ln n)^2} \sum_{m=0}^{8n-1} |f\langle n, m \rangle - \underline{f}(n)|^2 + 2 \sum_{n=2}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2(\ln n)^2} \sum_{m=0}^{8n-1} |\underline{f}(n)|^2 \\ &\leq 2 \sum_{n=2}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2(\ln n)^2} \sum_{m=0}^{8n-1} |f\langle n, m \rangle - \underline{f}(n)|^2 + 16 \sum_{n=2}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n(\ln n)^2} |\underline{f}(n)|^2. \end{aligned}$$

Since we are not going to find sharp constants, it is convenient to use the notation  $\lesssim$  and write simply  $a \lesssim b$  when there is an absolute constant  $C > 0$  such that  $a \leq Cb$ . Thus, the above inequality can be written as

$$A_0 \lesssim A_1 + A_2,$$

where

$$A_1 := \sum_{n=2}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2(\ln n)^2} \sum_{m=0}^{8n-1} |f\langle n, m \rangle - \underline{f}(n)|^2,$$

and

$$A_2 := \sum_{n=2}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n(\ln n)^2} |\underline{f}(n)|^2. \quad (4.4)$$

The sum  $A_1$  is estimated with the help of Lemma 4.3, which implies that even without  $\ln$  in the denominator, we have

$$\sum_{n=2}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2} \sum_{m=0}^{8n-1} |f\langle n, m \rangle - \underline{f}(n)|^2 \lesssim \sum_{n=2}^{\infty} \sum_{m=0}^{8n-1} |f\langle n, m+1 \rangle - f\langle n, m \rangle|^2. \quad (4.5)$$

(This is because the average of  $f\langle n, m \rangle - \underline{f}(n)$  over  $\partial D_n$  is zero.) The sum on the right is (a part of) the angular part of the sum

$$B_0 := \sum_{x, y \in \mathbb{Z}^2, x \sim y} |f(x) - f(y)|^2. \quad (4.6)$$

The sum  $A_2$  is harder to estimate. We will show that, for any sufficiently small  $\epsilon_0 > 0$ ,

$$A_2 \leq C(\epsilon_0) B_0 + \epsilon_0 A_0, \quad (4.7)$$

where the constant  $C(\epsilon_0)$  goes to  $\infty$  as  $\epsilon_0 \searrow 0$ . A choice of  $\epsilon_0$  then will conclude the proof of  $A_0 \lesssim B_0$ , which is (4.2).

Let us start with the proof of (4.5).

**Lemma 4.3.** *For functions  $g\langle n, m \rangle$  whose averages over the circles  $\partial D_n$  vanish,*

$$\sum_{n=2}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2} \sum_{m=0}^{8n-1} |g\langle n, m \rangle|^2 \lesssim \sum_{x, y \in \mathbb{Z}^2 \setminus D_1, x \sim y} |g(x) - g(y)|^2.$$

This result is a consequence of the following discrete Poincaré–Friedrichs type inequality on the circle.

**Lemma 4.4.** *For any function  $\phi$  on the finite set  $\{0, 1, \dots, N-1\}$  such that  $\sum_{m=0}^{N-1} \phi(m) = 0$ ,*

$$4 \sin^2(\pi/N) \sum_{m=0}^{N-1} |\phi(m)|^2 \leq \sum_{m=0}^{N-1} |\phi(m+1) - \phi(m)|^2, \quad (4.8)$$

where we set  $\phi(N) = \phi(0)$ .

*Proof.* Use the discrete Fourier transform:

$$\hat{\phi}(k) = \sum_{m=0}^{N-1} \phi(m) e^{-2\pi i m k / N}.$$

Then

$$\phi(m) = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{k=0}^{N-1} \hat{\phi}(k) e^{2\pi i m k / N},$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} \phi(m+1) - \phi(m) &= \frac{1}{N} \sum_{k=0}^{N-1} \hat{\phi}(k) [e^{2\pi i k / N} - 1] e^{2\pi i m k / N} \\ &= \frac{1}{N} \sum_{k=0}^{N-1} 2i e^{\pi i k / N} \sin(\pi k / N) \hat{\phi}(k) e^{2\pi i m k / N}. \end{aligned}$$

By Plancherel,

$$\sum_{m=0}^{N-1} |\phi(m+1) - \phi(m)|^2 = \frac{4}{N} \sum_{k=0}^{N-1} \sin^2(\pi k/N) |\hat{\phi}(k)|^2$$

Since  $\hat{\phi}(0) = 0$  due to our assumption on the average of  $\phi$ ,

$$\sum_{k=0}^{N-1} \sin^2(\pi k/N) |\hat{\phi}(k)|^2 \geq \sin^2(\pi/N) \sum_{k=0}^{N-1} |\hat{\phi}(k)|^2,$$

and inequality (4.8) follows.  $\square$

Next we prove (4.2) in the case of radial functions on  $\mathbb{Z}^2$ . A function  $f$  is radial if  $f\langle n, m \rangle$  does not depend on the angular variable  $m$ . If  $f$  is radial, and if we write  $f\langle n, m \rangle = g(n)$ , then

$$\sum_{x \in \mathbb{Z}^2, \|x\| \geq 2} \frac{|f(x)|^2}{\|x\|^2 (\ln \|x\|)^2} = 8 \sum_{n=2}^{\infty} \frac{|g(n)|^2}{n (\ln n)^2}.$$

**Lemma 4.5.** *We have*

$$\sum_{n=2}^{\infty} \frac{|g(n)|^2}{n (\ln n)^2} \leq C \sum_{n=2}^{\infty} n |g(n+1) - g(n)|^2. \quad (4.9)$$

*Proof.* Using an elementary inequality

$$\frac{1}{n (\ln n)^2} < \frac{1}{\ln(n-1)} - \frac{1}{\ln n}, \quad (4.10)$$

we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{n=3}^{\infty} \frac{|g(n)|^2}{n (\ln n)^2} &< \sum_{n=3}^{\infty} \frac{|g(n)|^2}{\ln(n-1)} - \sum_{n=3}^{\infty} \frac{|g(n)|^2}{\ln n} \\ &= \sum_{k=2}^{\infty} \frac{|g(k+1)|^2}{\ln k} - \sum_{k=3}^{\infty} \frac{|g(k)|^2}{\ln k} \\ &= \frac{|g(3)|^2}{\ln 2} + \sum_{k=3}^{\infty} \frac{|g(k+1)|^2 - |g(k)|^2}{\ln k} \end{aligned}$$



and continue, using Cauchy–Schwarz followed by Young’s inequality,

$$\begin{aligned} &\leq \frac{|g(3)|^2}{\ln 2} + \left( \sum_{n=3}^{\infty} n |g(n+1) - g(n)|^2 \right)^{1/2} \left( \sum_{k=3}^{\infty} \frac{(|g(k+1)| + |g(k)|)^2}{k (\ln k)^2} \right)^{1/2} \\ &\leq \frac{|g(3)|^2}{\ln 2} + \frac{1}{4\epsilon} \sum_{n=3}^{\infty} n |g(n+1) - g(n)|^2 + \epsilon \sum_{k=3}^{\infty} \frac{(|g(k+1)| + |g(k)|)^2}{k (\ln k)^2} \end{aligned}$$

Choose the right  $\epsilon$  and apply Lemma 4.2 to obtain (4.9).  $\square$

Let us now estimate  $A_2$ . Since  $\underline{f}(n)$  is the average of  $f$  we have

$$64A_2 = A_3 := \sum_{n=2}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^3 (\ln n)^2} \left| \sum_{m=0}^{8n-1} f(n, m) \right|^2,$$

(see (4.4)). Use (4.10) to proceed as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} &\sum_{n=2}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^3 (\ln n)^2} \left| \sum_{m=0}^{8n-1} f(n, m) \right|^2 \\ &< \frac{1}{2^3 (\ln 2)^2} \left| \sum_{m=0}^{8 \cdot 2 - 1} f(2, m) \right|^2 + \sum_{n=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2} \left( \frac{1}{\ln(n-1)} - \frac{1}{\ln n} \right) \left| \sum_{m=0}^{8n-1} f(n, m) \right|^2 \\ &= \frac{1}{2^3 (\ln 2)^2} \left| \sum_{m=0}^{8 \cdot 2 - 1} f(2, m) \right|^2 + \sum_{n=2}^{\infty} \frac{1}{(n+1)^2 \ln n} \left| \sum_{m=0}^{8(n+1)-1} f(n+1, m) \right|^2 \\ &\quad - \sum_{n=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2 \ln n} \left| \sum_{m=0}^{8n-1} f(n, m) \right|^2. \end{aligned}$$

Splitting the term with  $n = 2$  from the second sum we continue

$$\begin{aligned} &= \frac{1}{2^3 (\ln 2)^2} \left| \sum_{m=0}^{8 \cdot 2 - 1} f(2, m) \right|^2 + \frac{1}{3^2 \ln 2} \left| \sum_{m=0}^{8 \cdot 3 - 1} f(3, m) \right|^2 \\ &\quad + \sum_{n=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{(n+1)^2 \ln n} \left| \sum_{m=0}^{8(n+1)-1} f(n+1, m) \right|^2 - \sum_{n=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2 \ln n} \left| \sum_{m=0}^{8n-1} f(n, m) \right|^2 \\ &\leq \frac{1}{2^3 (\ln 2)^2} \left| \sum_{m=0}^{8 \cdot 2 - 1} f(2, m) \right|^2 + \frac{1}{3^2 \ln 2} \left| \sum_{m=0}^{8 \cdot 3 - 1} f(3, m) \right|^2 \\ &\quad + \sum_{n=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2 \ln n} \left| \sum_{m=0}^{8(n+1)-1} f(n+1, m) \right|^2 - \sum_{n=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2 \ln n} \left| \sum_{k=0}^{8n-1} f(n, k) \right|^2. \end{aligned}$$

By Lemma 4.2, we can take care of the first two terms and write

$$A_3 \lesssim B_0 + \sum_{n=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2 \ln n} \left| \sum_{m=0}^{8(n+1)-1} f\langle n+1, m \rangle \right|^2 - \sum_{n=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2 \ln n} \left| \sum_{k=0}^{8n-1} f\langle n, k \rangle \right|^2.$$

In the sum

$$\left| \sum_{m=0}^{8(n+1)-1} f\langle n+1, m \rangle \right|^2,$$

separate eight terms corresponding to the following values of  $m$ :

$$m = 2s(n+1) + t, \quad s = 0, 1, 2, 3, \quad t = 2n+1, 2n+2.$$

The remaining  $8n$  terms will be paired with the corresponding terms in the sum

$$\left| \sum_{k=0}^{8n-1} f\langle n, k \rangle \right|^2.$$

Figure 1 shows (thick lines) the sample edges pairing  $f\langle 3, 1 \rangle$  with  $f\langle 2, 0 \rangle$ ,  $f\langle 3, 2 \rangle$  with  $f\langle 2, 1 \rangle$ ,  $f\langle 3, 3 \rangle$  with  $f\langle 2, 2 \rangle$ ,  $f\langle 3, 4 \rangle$  with  $f\langle 2, 3 \rangle$ , and  $f\langle 3, 8 \rangle$  with  $f\langle 2, 5 \rangle$ . The excluded nodes on  $\partial D_3$  are circled.

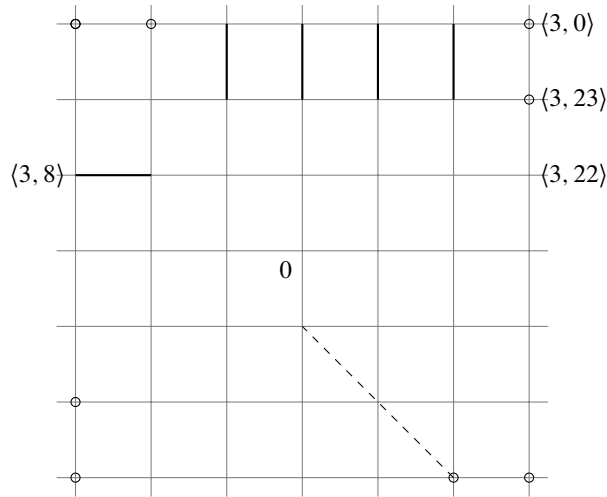


Figure 1. Paths.

Since

$$\begin{aligned} \left| \sum_{m=0}^{8(n+1)-1} f\langle n+1, m \rangle \right|^2 &\lesssim \sum_{s=0}^3 |f\langle n+1, 2s(n+1) + 2n+1 \rangle|^2 \\ &\quad + \sum_{s=0}^3 |f\langle n+1, 2s(n+1) + 2n+2 \rangle|^2 \\ &\quad + \left| \dot{\sum}_{m=0, \dots, 8(n+1)-1} f\langle n+1, m \rangle \right|^2, \end{aligned}$$

where  $\dot{\sum}$  stands for the sum without eight terms, we have

$$A_3 \lesssim B_0 + A_4 + A_5,$$

where

$$\begin{aligned} A_4 &:= \sum_{n=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2 \ln n} \sum_{s=0}^3 |f\langle n+1, 2s(n+1) + 2n+1 \rangle|^2 \\ &\quad + \sum_{n=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2 \ln n} \sum_{s=0}^3 |f\langle n+1, 2s(n+1) + 2n+2 \rangle|^2 \end{aligned}$$

and

$$A_5 := \sum_{n=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2 \ln n} \left( \left| \dot{\sum}_{m=0, \dots, 8(n+1)-1} f\langle n+1, m \rangle \right|^2 - \left| \sum_{k=0}^{8n-1} f\langle n, k \rangle \right|^2 \right).$$

The sum  $A_5$  can be estimated as follows. Since

$$\begin{aligned} \left( \sum_1^N a_j \right)^2 - \left( \sum_1^N b_j \right)^2 &= \left( \sum_{j=1}^N (a_j - b_j) \right) \left( \sum_{k=1}^N (a_k + b_k) \right) \\ &\leq N \frac{1}{4\epsilon_N} \sum_{j=1}^N (a_j - b_j)^2 + N \epsilon_N \sum_{j=1}^N (a_j + b_j)^2, \end{aligned}$$

we have

$$\begin{aligned} &\left| \dot{\sum}_{m=0, \dots, 8(n+1)-1} f\langle n+1, m \rangle \right|^2 - \left| \sum_{k=0}^{8n-1} f\langle n, k \rangle \right|^2 \\ &\leq 8n \frac{1}{4\epsilon_n} \sum_{\sim} (f\langle n+1, m \rangle - f\langle n, k \rangle)^2 \\ &\quad + 8n \epsilon_n \sum_{\sim} (f\langle n+1, m \rangle + f\langle n, k \rangle)^2 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} &\leq 8n \frac{1}{4\epsilon_n} \sum_{\sim} (f\langle n+1, m \rangle - f\langle n, k \rangle)^2 \\ &\quad + 16n \epsilon_n \sum_{\sim} |f\langle n+1, m \rangle|^2 + |f\langle n, k \rangle|^2. \end{aligned}$$

Choose  $\epsilon_n$  so that  $16n \epsilon_n = \epsilon_0 / \ln n$ , i.e.,

$$\epsilon_n = \frac{\epsilon_0}{16n \ln n},$$

with some small  $\epsilon_0$  to be chosen later. Then,

$$\begin{aligned} &\left| \sum_{m=0, \dots, 8(n+1)-1}^{\bullet} f\langle n+1, m \rangle \right|^2 - \left| \sum_{k=0}^{8n-1} f\langle n, k \rangle \right|^2 \\ &\leq 32n^2 \ln n \frac{1}{\epsilon_0} \sum_{\sim} (f\langle n+1, m \rangle - f\langle n, k \rangle)^2 \cdot \\ &\quad + \frac{\epsilon_0}{\ln n} \sum_{\sim} |f\langle n+1, m \rangle|^2 + |f\langle n, k \rangle|^2. \end{aligned}$$

This leads to the following estimate

$$\begin{aligned} A_5 &\leq \frac{32}{\epsilon_0} \sum_{n=3}^{\infty} \sum_{\sim} (f\langle n+1, m \rangle - f\langle n, k \rangle)^2 \\ &\quad + \epsilon_0 \sum_{n=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2 (\ln n)^2} \sum_{\sim} |f\langle n+1, m \rangle|^2 + |f\langle n, k \rangle|^2, \end{aligned}$$

which implies

$$A_5 \lesssim \frac{32}{\epsilon_0} B_0 + \epsilon_0 A_0.$$

Now look at the excluded eight terms comprising  $A_4$ . To each of them we can apply the one-dimensional Hardy inequality (1.3). Consider, for example,

$$\sum_{n=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2 \ln n} |f\langle n+1, 2s(n+1) + 2n+1 \rangle|^2.$$

Define temporarily  $u(n) = f\langle n+1, 2s(n+1) + 2n+1 \rangle$  for  $n \geq 3$  and  $u(n) = 0$  for  $n = 0, 1, 2$ . Then,

$$\sum_{n=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2 \ln n} |f\langle n+1, 2s(n+1) + 2n+1 \rangle|^2 \leq 4 \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} |u(n) - u(n-1)|^2.$$

In the case  $s = 3$ , the discrete function  $u(n)$  picks up the values of  $f(x)$  from the lattice points on the dashed line on Fig. 1. Although each difference  $u(n) - u(n-1)$

is not between the values at the neighboring lattice points, it can be modified by adding and subtracting a value at one of the two lattice points on either side of the dashed line segment. In addition, we must remember that the sum is from  $n = 3$ . Hence,

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} |u(n) - u(n-1)|^2 \leq 2B_0 + |f(3+1, 2s(3+1) + 2 \cdot 3 + 1)|^2.$$

The last term is bounded by  $B_0$  in view of Lemma 4.2. Thus,

$$A_4 \lesssim B_0.$$

Putting all the estimates together, we complete the proof of Theorem 4.1.

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Received February 7, 2016

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