WATTS COHOMOLOGY AND SEPARABILITY

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A cohomology theory, $H^p_K A$, for commutative $K$-algebras, $A$, is discussed for the case where $K$ is a field. This was originally introduced by C. E. Watts in connection with rings of continuous functions. N. Greenleaf computed $H^p_K A$ in the case where $A$ is an extension field of $K$. In this paper it is shown that, for any $K$-algebra $A$, the separable closure of $K$ in $A$ can be identified with $H^0_K A$. Furthermore Greenleaf's result is extended to a substantial class of local algebras.

1. Let $K$ be a field and $A$ a commutative $K$-algebra with unit element 1. In [4] Watts described a cochain complex $C_K A$, based on the additive Amitsur complex $F_K A$ [3]. He showed that in the case where $K = R$ and $A = C(X)$, the ring of continuous real valued functions on the compact Hausdorff space $X$, the cohomology of this complex is naturally isomorphic to the real Čech cohomology of $X$. At the other extreme Greenleaf in [2] proved the following result. If $L$ is an arbitrary extension field of $K$ then $C_K L$ is naturally isomorphic to $F_L L$, where $L_s$ is the separable closure of $K$ in $L$. Thus the homology of $C_K L$ is trivial, except in dimension zero where $H^0(C_K L) \cong L_s$.

In this paper we investigate further the part separability plays in this theory. Letting $A_s$ be the separable closure of $K$ in $A$ (see §2) and writing $H^p_K A$ for $H^p(C_K A)$, we prove the following results.

**THEOREM 1.** If $A$ is an arbitrary $K$-algebra then $H^p_K A = A_s$.

**THEOREM 2.** Let $A$ be a (not necessarily Noetherian) local $K$-algebra with unique maximal ideal, $m$. Suppose the image of $A_s$, under the canonical map of $A$ onto $A/m$, is separably closed in $A/m$; then $C_K A$ is naturally isomorphic to $F_{A_s} A$.

From Theorem 2 it follows that, for such an algebra, $H^p_K A = 0$ for $p > 0$.

At the end of the paper we mention some interesting classes of local algebras which satisfy the hypothesis of Theorem 2.

2. The complex $F_K A$ is the additive Amitsur complex [3, §4] with a dimension shift of 1: $F^p_K A$ is the $p + 1$-fold tensor product of $A$ over $K$, and the coboundary map $d^p: F^p_K A \to F^{p+1}_K A$ is given by $d^p(f_0 \otimes \cdots \otimes f_p) = \sum_{i=0}^{p+1} (-1)^i f_0 \otimes \cdots \otimes f_{i-1} \otimes 1 \otimes f_i \otimes \cdots \otimes f_p$. 

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PROPOSITION 1. The complex $FKA$ has zero homology, except in dimension zero where $H^0(FKA) \cong \mathbb{K}$.

Proof. See [3, Lemma 4.1].

Let $\mu_p: F_p^aA \rightarrow A$ by $\mu_p(f_0 \otimes \cdots \otimes f_n) = f_0 \cdots f_p$. The subcomplex $N^aA$ is defined as follows

$$N^aA = \{ f \in F^aA \mid \exists g \in F^aA \text{ with } \mu_p g \text{ a unit and } fg = 0 \},$$

this is easily seen to be equivalent to Watts' definition. The Watts cohomology is then the homology of the complex $C^aA = F^aA/N^aA$.

An element $f \in A$ is said to be separable over $K$ if there exists a polynomial $p \in K[X]$, such that $p(f) = 0$ and $p'(f)$ is a unit in $A$. The separable closure, $A_s$, of $f$ in $A$ is the set of elements of $A$ which are separable over $K$, it is a subalgebra of $A$ (see §3, Corollary to Theorem 1).

3. From the definition of $C^aA$ it is clear that we can consider $H^aA$ to be embedded in $A$.

PROPOSITION 2. If $A$ is an arbitrary $K$-algebra then $A_s \subseteq H^aA$.

Proof. If $f \in A_s$, let $p = a_nX^n + \cdots + a_0 \in K[X]$ be such that $p(f) = 0$ and $p'(f)$ is a unit. Define

$$h_{k-1} = \sum_{i=0}^{k} f^{k-i} \otimes f_{k-i} \in F^aA.$$ 

Then $\mu_i h_{k-1} = kf^{k-i}$. If $g = a_n h_{n-1} + \cdots + a_0 h_0$, then $(1 \otimes f - f \otimes 1)g = 0$ and $\mu_i g = p'(f)$. Thus $d_i f \in N^aA$, so $f \in H^aA$.

LEMMA. If $R$ is the Jacobson radical of $A$ then $R \cap H^aA = 0$.

Proof. If $f \in H^aR$, then there exists $g \in F^aA$ such that $\mu_i g$ is a unit and $(1 \otimes f - f \otimes 1) g = 0$. Suppose $f$ is also in $R$. It then follows that, for each maximal ideal $m$, the image of $f$ under the natural map $\varphi: A \rightarrow A/m(= L)$ is zero. Thus $(1 \otimes f)g' = 0$ in $L \otimes K A$, where $g'$ is the image of $g$ under the map $\varphi \otimes 1: A \otimes K A \rightarrow L \otimes K A$. Now $g'$ can be written $g' = \sum \lambda_i \otimes g_i$, where the elements $\lambda_i \in L$ are linearly independent over $K$. It then follows that $fg_i = 0$ for all $i$. As $\mu_i g$ is a unit a simple argument shows that, for some $i$, $\varphi g_i \neq 0$. So, for each maximal ideal $m$, there exists $g_m$ such that $g_m \in m$ and $fg_m = 0$. Therefore $\text{Ann}(f) = A$ and $f = 0$.

Proof of Theorem 1. If $f \in H^aR$ then there exists $g = \sum_{i=1}^{r} g_i \otimes h_i$
\[ \sum g_i \otimes h_i f = \sum g_i f \otimes h_i \] and \( \mu \) is a unit. In fact
\[ \sum g_i \otimes h_i f^k = \sum g_i f^k \otimes h_i \]
for \( k = 0, 1, 2, \cdots \). We can assume that \( g_1, \ldots, g_n \) are linearly independent over \( K \), in which case \( h_i f^k \) is in the \( K \)-module spanned by \( h_1, \ldots, h_n \). It follows that there exists a polynomial \( q_i \in K[X] \) such that \( h_i q_i(f) = 0 \). Hence, because \( \mu \) is a unit, \( q(f) = q_1(f) \cdots q_n(f) = 0 \). Thus \( f \) is algebraic over \( K \).

For each maximal ideal \( m \), the image of \( f \) under \( \varphi: A \to A/m(= L) \) is in \( H^*_K L \). Hence, by Greenleaf's result [2], there exists an irreducible polynomial \( p_m \in K[X] \) such that \( p_m(\varphi f) = 0 \) and \( p_m'(\varphi f) \neq 0 \). Now \( \varphi f \) satisfies \( q \), so \( p_m \) divides \( q \) and there are, therefore, only a finite number of distinct \( p_m \). Let \( p_1, \ldots, p_r \) be those distinct polynomials and let \( p = p_1 \cdots p_r \). Clearly \( p(f) \in R \cap H^*_K A \) so \( p(f) = 0 \). A simple argument shows that \( p'(f) \) is a unit. Thus \( H^*_K A \subset A \).

**Remark.** The proof shows that \( H^*_K A \), and thus \( A \), can be described as follows: \( f \in H^*_K A \) if and only if there exist distinct irreducible separable polynomials \( p_1, \ldots, p_r \in K[X] \) such that \( p_1(f) \cdots p_r(f) = 0 \).

**Corollary.** The separable closure, \( A_s \), of \( K \) in \( A \) is a \( K \)-algebra. Furthermore if \( A \) is a local algebra then \( A_s \) is a field extension of \( K \).

**Proof.** By Theorem 1 we can identify \( A_s \) with \( H^*_K A \). The first part of the result can then by proved easily once we observe the identity
\[ 1 \otimes f g - f g \otimes 1 = (1 \otimes f - f \otimes 1)(1 \otimes g) + (f \otimes 1)(1 \otimes g - g \otimes 1) \].

If \( A \) is local and \( f \) is a nonzero element of \( H^*_K A \), then the minimal polynomial of \( f \), constructed in the proof of Theorem 1, is clearly irreducible over \( K \). Thus the subalgebra \( K[f] \) of \( H^*_K A \) is a field, and so \( f^{-1} \in H^*_K A \). Therefore \( H^*_K A \) is a field.

4. The following proposition is proved in [2].

**Proposition 3.** If \( L \) is a separable (algebraic) extension field of \( K \) then \( N_K^gL = \ker \mu_p \).

Using an inductive argument based on Proposition 2, we can in fact remove the restriction that \( L \) be a field.
PROPOSITION 4. If the field $L$ is separable over $K$ and $A$ is an $L$-algebra, then the natural map $\theta: F\otimes K A \to F\otimes L A$ induces an isomorphism, $C\otimes K A \cong C\otimes L A$.

Proof. The induced map is certainly a surjection. On the other hand, by Proposition 3, the sequence

$$0 \to N\otimes K L \to F\otimes K L \to L \to 0$$

is exact. Applying the exact functor $F\otimes K A \otimes_B (\_)$, where $B = F\otimes L K$, we obtain the exact sequence

$$0 \to F\otimes K A \otimes_B N\otimes K L \to F\otimes K A \to F\otimes K A \otimes_B L \to 0 .$$

However in $F\otimes K A \otimes_B L$

$$a_0 \otimes \cdots \otimes \lambda a_i \otimes \cdots \otimes a_p \otimes 1 = a_0 \otimes \cdots \otimes a_i \otimes \cdots \otimes a_p \otimes \lambda .$$

So the map of $F\otimes K A \otimes_B L$ onto $F\otimes K A$, induced by taking $a_0 \otimes \cdots \otimes a_p \otimes \lambda$ to $a_0 \otimes \cdots \otimes \lambda a_p$, is an isomorphism. The composition of this map with $1 \otimes \mu_p$ is $\theta_p$, and the kernel of $\theta_p$ is thus the image of $F\otimes K A \otimes_B N\otimes K L$ in $F\otimes K A$. It follows therefore that $\ker \theta_p \subseteq N\otimes K A$. Suppose $f \in F\otimes K A$ with $\theta_p f \in N\otimes K A$; then there exists $g \in F\otimes K A$ such that $\mu_p g$ is a unit and $fg \in \ker \theta_p$. So there exists $h \in F\otimes K A$, such that $\mu_p h$ is a unit and $fgh = 0$. Since $\mu_p hg = (\mu_p h)(\mu_p g)$ is a unit, $f \in N\otimes K A$. This completes the proof.

A ring in which every zero divisor is nilpotent we will call a ZDN ring.

PROPOSITION 5. Let $A$ and $A'$ be $K$-algebras which are ZDN rings, and let $N$ be the ideal of nilpotents of $A$. Suppose $K$ is separably closed in the field of quotients of $A/N$, then $A \otimes_K A'$ is a ZDN ring.

Proof. If $B$ is a subring of $A$ then it is a ZDN ring, with ideal of nilpotents $N \cap B$. The domain $B/(N \cap B)$ embeds in $A/N$, so $K$ is separably closed in the quotient field of $B/(N \cap B)$. We can therefore restrict ourselves to a finitely generated subalgebra of $A$, and so assume that $A$ is Noetherian. Let $L$ be the quotient field of $A/N$, then $(A/N) \otimes_K A' \subseteq L \otimes_K A'$. So by [2, Proposition 3] $(A/N) \otimes_K A'$ is a ZDN ring and hence $N \otimes_K A'$ is primary. However (0) is a primary ideal of $A$ with associated prime $N$. Thus it follows, putting $E = A$ and $F = B = A \otimes_K A'$ in [1, Chapter IV, §2.6, Theorem 2], that the associated primes of (0) in $A \otimes_K A'$ are also the associated primes of $N \otimes_K A'$. Hence (0) is a primary in $A \otimes_K A'$ also, and so $A \otimes_K A'$ is a ZDN ring.

Note that if $A$ is a local ring ($A$ has a unique maximal ideal $m$)
and \( n \) is a positive integer, then \( A/m^n \) is a \( ZDN \) ring.

**Proposition 6.** Let \( A \) be a Noetherian local \( K \)-algebra; then the natural map of \( F^*_A \) into the projective limit (inverse limit) of the system \( \{F^*_k(A/m^n)\}_n \) is an injection.

**Proof.** As \( A \) is Noetherian, \( \bigcap_{n=1}^{\infty} m^n = 0 \), and so \( A \to \text{proj lim}_n (A/m^n) \) is an injection. The proof can be completed by induction on \( p \), using the following lemma, the demonstration of which is straightforward.

**Lemma.** If \( \{M_i, f_{ji}\} \) and \( \{N_i, g_{ji}\} \) are projective systems of \( K \)-modules (\( K \) a field) indexed over the same directed set, and if \( M \) and \( N \) are the projective limits of these systems, then the natural map of \( M \otimes_K N \) into \( \text{proj lim}_i (M_i \otimes_K N_i) \) is an injection.

**Proposition 7.** Let \( A \) be a local \( K \)-algebra and let \( K \) be separably closed in \( A/m \). If \( z \) is a zero divisor in \( F^*_A \) then \( \mu_p z \in m \), and hence \( N_k A = 0 \).

**Proof.** Suppose \( z \) is a zero divisor in \( F^*_A \); then there exists \( w \neq 0 \) such that \( zw = 0 \). Choose a finitely generated subalgebra, \( B \), of \( A \) such that \( w \) and \( z \) are in \( F^*_B \). The ideal \( B \cap m \) is prime in \( B \). So, localizing \( B \) at \( B \cap m \), we get a local Noetherian subalgebra \( B' \) of \( A \), such that \( B' \cap m \) is the maximal ideal of \( B' \), and \( z \) and \( w \) are elements of \( F^*_k(B') \). We can therefore assume that \( A \) is Noetherian. By Proposition 6, there exists \( n \) such that the image of \( w \) in \( F^*_k(A/m^n) \) is nonzero. Thus \( z' \), the image of \( z \), is a zero divisor in \( F^*_k(A/m^n) \). However \( K \) is separably closed in \( A/m \) and so, by induction from Proposition 5, we see that \( F^*_k(A/m^n) \) is a \( ZDN \) ring. The image \( z' \) is thus nilpotent and the same is true of \( \mu_p z' \in A/m^n \). As the image of \( \mu_p z \) in \( A/m^n \) is \( \mu^p z' \), it follows that \( \mu_p z \in m \).

**Proof of Theorem 2.** As \( A \) is a field we can apply Proposition 4 to get \( C_k A \cong C_{A_k} A \). However Proposition 7 shows that \( C_{A_k} A = F_{A_k} A \). This completes the proof.

The following corollary to Theorem 2 is immediate on applying Proposition 1.

**Corollary.** If \( A \) satisfies the hypotheses of Theorem 2, then \( H^*_k A = 0 \) for \( p > 0 \).

Clearly any local algebra over a separably closed field (i.e. separably closed in its algebraic closure) satisfies the hypotheses of Theorem 2.
If $A$ is a complete Noetherian local $K$-algebra, there exists [5, Chapter VIII, §12, Theorem 27] a subfield $L$ of $A$ which is mapped onto $A/m$ by the natural map. Under these circumstances $A$, is mapped isomorphically onto the separable closure of $K$ in $A/m$. Thus it follows that, for such an algebra also, the hypotheses of Theorem 2 are satisfied.

Our ultimate goal is to prove the conclusion of Theorem 2 for all local $K$-algebras; then, loosely speaking, to study this cohomology theory for an arbitrary $K$-algebra by using sheaf theoretic methods to patch the algebra together from its localizations (at prime or maximal ideals). Partial results in this direction have been obtained.

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INSTITUTO DE MATEMÁTICA
UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO RIO DE JANEIRO
CAIXA POSTAL 1835 ZC-00
20.000 RIO DE JANEIRO, GB
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