

On Regularizable Birational Maps

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Abstract. Bedford asked if there exists a birational self map f of the complex projective plane such that for any automorphism A of the complex projective plane $A \circ f$ is not conjugate to an automorphism. In this article we give such an f of degree 5.

1. Introduction

Let us consider $\text{Bir}(\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^k)$ the group of all birational self maps of $\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^k$, also called the k -dimensional Cremona group. A birational map $f \in \text{Bir}(\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^k)$ is *regularizable* if there exist a smooth projective variety V and a birational map $g: V \dashrightarrow \mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^k$ such that $g^{-1} \circ f \circ g$ is an automorphism of V . For instance any $f \in \text{Aut}(\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^k) = \text{PGL}(k+1, \mathbb{C})$ is regularizable but any $f \in \text{Bir}(\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^2)$ such that $(\deg f^n)_n$ grows linearly is not regularizable ([6]). To any element f of $\text{Bir}(\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^k)$ we associate the set $\text{Reg}(f)$ defined by

$$\text{Reg}(f) := \{A \in \text{Aut}(\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^k) \mid A \circ f \text{ is regularizable}\}.$$

On the one hand Dolgachev asked¹ whether there exists a birational self map of $\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^k$ of degree > 1 such that $\text{Reg}(f) = \text{Aut}(\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^k)$. In [4] we give a negative answer to this question; more precisely we prove:

THEOREM 1.1 ([4]). *Let \mathbb{k} be an uncountable, algebraically closed field. Let f be a birational self map of $\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{k}}^m$ of degree $d \geq 2$. The set of automorphisms A of $\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{k}}^m$ such that $\deg((A \circ f)^n) \neq (\deg(A \circ f))^n$ for some $n > 0$ is a countable union of proper Zariski closed subsets of $\text{PGL}(m+1, \mathbb{k})$.*

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Let \mathbb{k} be a field of characteristic zero. Let f be a birational transformation of \mathbb{P}^m which is defined over the field \mathbb{k} , i.e. the formulas defining f have coefficients in \mathbb{k} . Then, there exists an element A of $\mathrm{PGL}(m+1, \mathbb{k})$ such that $\deg((A \circ f)^n) = \deg(f)^n$ for all $n \geq 1$.

On the other hand Bedford asked²: does there exist a birational map f of $\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^k$ such that $\mathrm{Reg}(f) = \emptyset$? We will focus on the case $k = 2$. According to [1, 5] if $f \in \mathrm{Bir}(\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^2)$ and $\deg f = 2$, then $\mathrm{Reg}(f) \neq \emptyset$. Furthermore Blanc proves that the set

$$\{f \in \mathrm{Bir}(\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^2) \mid \deg f = 3, \mathrm{Reg}(f) \neq \emptyset, \lim_{n \rightarrow +\infty} (\deg(f^n))^{1/n} > 1\}$$

is dense in $\{f \in \mathrm{Bir}(\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^2) \mid \deg f = 3\}$ and that its complement has codimension 1 (see [2]). Blanc also gives a positive answer to Bedford question in dimension 2: if $\chi \in \mathrm{Bir}(\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^2)$ is given by

$$\chi: (x : y : z) \dashrightarrow (xz^5 + (yz^2 + x^3)^2 : yz^5 + x^3z^3 : z^6)$$

then $\mathrm{Reg}(\chi) = \emptyset$. Note that $\chi = (x + y^2, y) \circ (x, y + x^3)$ in the affine chart $z = 1$. Indeed Blanc example can be generalized as follows: the birational map of degree np given in the affine chart $z = 1$ by

$$\chi_{n,p} = (x + y^n, y) \circ (x, y + x^p) = (x + (y + x^p)^n, y + x^p)$$

satisfies $\mathrm{Reg}(\chi_{n,p}) = \emptyset$. Finally Blanc asked ([2, Question 1.6]): does there exists $f \in \mathrm{Bir}(\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^2)$ such that $\deg f < 6$ and $\mathrm{Reg}(f) = \emptyset$? In this article we give a positive answer:

THEOREM A. *If ψ is the birational self map of $\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ given by*

$$\psi: (x : y : z) \dashrightarrow (x^2yz^2 - z^5 + x^5 : x^2(x^2y - z^3) : xz(x^2y - z^3)),$$

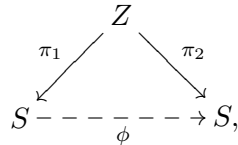
then $\mathrm{Reg}(\psi) = \emptyset$.

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²Private communication, 2010.

2. Proof of Theorem A

Let S be a smooth projective surface. Let $\phi: S \dashrightarrow S$ be a birational map. This map admits a resolution



where $\pi_1: Z \rightarrow S$ and $\pi_2: Z \rightarrow S$ are finite sequences of blow-ups. The resolution is *minimal* if and only if no (-1) -curve of Z is contracted by both π_1 and π_2 . Assume ϕ is minimal; the *base-points* $\text{Base}(\phi)$ of ϕ are the points blown-up by π_1 , which can be points of S or infinitely near points. Finally we denote by $\text{Exc}(\phi)$ the set of curves contracted by ϕ .

Denote by $\mathbf{b}(\phi)$ the number of base-points of ϕ ; note that $\mathbf{b}(\phi)$ is equal to the difference of the ranks of $\text{Pic}(Z)$ and $\text{Pic}(S)$ and thus equal to $\mathbf{b}(\phi^{-1})$. Let us introduce the *dynamical number of the base-points of ϕ*

$$\mu(\phi) = \lim_{k \rightarrow +\infty} \frac{\mathbf{b}(\phi^k)}{k}.$$

Since $\mathbf{b}(\phi \circ \varphi) \leq \mathbf{b}(\phi) + \mathbf{b}(\varphi)$ for any birational self map φ of S , $\mu(\phi)$ is a non-negative real number. As $\mathbf{b}(\phi) = \mathbf{b}(\phi^{-1})$ one gets $\mu(\phi^k) = |k \mu(\phi)|$ for any $k \in \mathbb{Z}$. Furthermore if Z is a smooth projective surface and $\varphi: S \dashrightarrow Z$ a birational map, then for all $n \in \mathbb{Z}$

$$-2\mathbf{b}(\varphi) + \mathbf{b}(\phi^n) \leq \mathbf{b}(\varphi \circ \phi^n \circ \varphi^{-1}) \leq 2\mathbf{b}(\varphi) + \mathbf{b}(\phi^n);$$

hence $\mu(\phi) = \mu(\varphi \circ \phi \circ \varphi^{-1})$. One can thus state the following result:

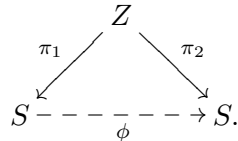
LEMMA 2.1 ([3]). *The dynamical number of base-points is an invariant of conjugation. In particular if ϕ is a regularizable birational self map of a smooth projective surface, then $\mu(\phi) = 0$.*

A base-point p of ϕ is a *persistent base-point* if there exists an integer N such that for any $k \geq N$

$$\diamond p \in \text{Base}(\phi^k)$$

◊ and $p \notin \text{Base}(\phi^{-k})$.

Let p be a point of S or a point infinitely near S such that $p \notin \text{Base}(\phi)$. Consider a minimal resolution of ϕ



Because p is not a base-point of ϕ it corresponds via π_1 to a point of Z or infinitely near; using π_2 we view this point on S again maybe infinitely near and denote it $\phi^\bullet(p)$. For instance if $S = \mathbb{P}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$, $p = (1 : 0 : 0)$ and f is the birational self map of $\mathbb{P}^2_{\mathbb{C}}$ given by

$$(z_0 : z_1 : z_2) \dashrightarrow (z_1 z_2 + z_0^2 : z_0 z_2 : z_2^2)$$

the point $f^\bullet(p)$ is not equal to $p = f(p)$ but is infinitely near to it. Note that if φ is a birational self map of S and p is a point of S such that $p \notin \text{Base}(\phi)$, $\phi(p) \notin \text{Base}(\varphi)$, then $(\varphi \circ \phi)^\bullet(p) = \varphi^\bullet(\phi^\bullet(p))$. One can put an equivalence relation on the set of points of S or infinitely near S : the point p is *equivalent* to the point q if there exists an integer k such that $(\phi^k)^\bullet(p) = q$; in particular $p \notin \text{Base}(\phi^k)$ and $q \notin \text{Base}(\phi^{-k})$. Remark that the equivalence class is the generalization of set of orbits for birational maps.

Let us give the relationship between the dynamical number of base-points and the equivalence classes of persistent base-points:

PROPOSITION 2.2 ([3]). *Let S be a smooth projective surface. Let ϕ be a birational self map of S .*

Then $\mu(\phi)$ coincides with the number of equivalence classes of persistent base-points of ϕ . In particular $\mu(\phi)$ is an integer.

This interpretation of the dynamical number of base-points allows to prove the following result that gives a characterization of regularizable birational maps:

THEOREM 2.3 ([3]). *Let ϕ be a birational self map of a smooth projective surface. Then ϕ is regularizable if and only if $\mu(\phi) = 0$.*

2.1. Base-points of ψ

The birational map

$$\psi : (x : y : z) \dashrightarrow (x^2yz^2 - z^5 + x^5 : x^2(x^2y - z^3) : xz(x^2y - z^3))$$

has only one base-point in $\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^2$, namely $p_1 = (0 : 1 : 0)$, and all its base-points are in tower that is: the nine base-points of ψ that we denote p_1, p_2, \dots, p_9 are such that p_i is infinitely near to p_{i-1} for $2 \leq i \leq 9$. We denote by $\pi : S \rightarrow \mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ the blow up of the 9 base-points, and still write L_x (resp. \mathcal{C}) the strict transform of the line $L_x \subset \mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ of equation $x = 0$ (resp. the curve of equation $x^2y - z^3 = 0$) which is contracted by ψ . We denote by $E_i \subset S$ the strict transform of the curve obtained by blowing up p_i . The configuration of the curves $E_1, E_2, \dots, E_9, L_x$ and \mathcal{C} is

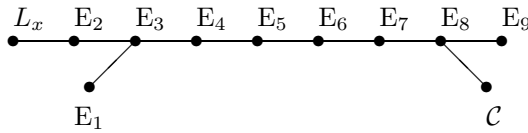
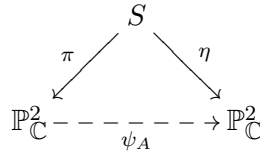


Fig. 1.

Two curves are connected by an edge if their intersection is positive. Let us write $\psi_A = A \circ \psi$ where A is an automorphism of $\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^2$. Because π is the blow-up of the base-points of ψ , which are also the base-points of ψ_A , the map $\eta = \psi_A \circ \pi$ is a birational morphism $S \rightarrow \mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ which is the blow-up of the base-points of ψ_A^{-1} . In fact this diagram



is the minimal resolution of ψ_A .

The morphism η contracts L_x and \mathcal{C} as well as the union of seven other irreducible curves which are among the curves E_1, E_2, \dots, E_9 . The configuration of Figure 1 shows that η contracts the curves $L_x, E_2, E_3, E_4, E_5, E_6, E_7, E_8, \mathcal{C}$ following this order.

We can see $\eta: S \rightarrow \mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ as a sequence of nine blow-ups in the same way as we did for π . We denote by q_1, q_2, \dots, q_9 the base-points of ψ_A^{-1} (or equivalently the points blown up by η) so that $q_1 \in \mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ and q_i is infinitely near to q_{i-1} for $2 \leq i \leq 9$. We denote by $D \subset \mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ (resp. $C' \subset \mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^2$) the line contracted by ψ_A^{-1} which is the image by A of the line $y = 0$ (resp. of the conic $z^2 - xy = 0$). We denote by $F_i \subset S$ the strict transform of the curve obtained by blowing up q_i . Because of the order of the curves contracted by η we get equalities between $L_x, C, E_1, E_2, \dots, E_9$ and $D, C', F_1, F_2, \dots, F_9$ as follows

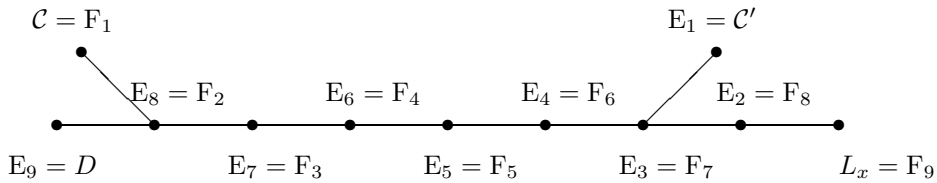


Fig. 2.

In particular we see that the configuration of the points q_1, q_2, \dots, q_9 is not the same as that of the points p_1, p_2, \dots, p_9 . Saying that a point m is proximate to a point m' if m is infinitely near to m' and that it belongs to the strict transform of the curve obtained by blowing up m' the configurations of the points p_i and q_i are

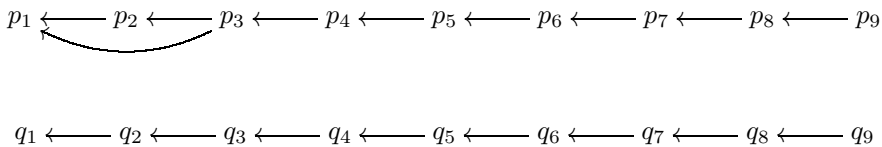


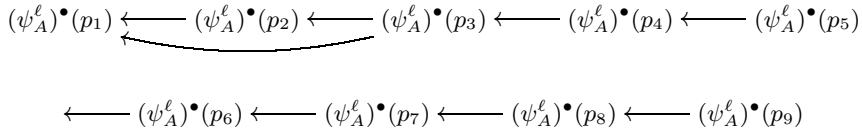
Fig. 3. An arrow corresponds to the relation "is proximate to".

We will prove that for any integer $i > 0$ the point p_3 belongs to $\text{Base}(\psi_A^i)$ and does not belong to $\text{Base}(\psi_A^{-i})$. It implies that $\mu(\psi_A) > 0$ and that ψ_A

is not regularizable.

Denote by k the lowest positive integer such that p_1 belongs to $\text{Base}(\psi_A^{-k})$. If no such integer exists we write $k = \infty$. For any $1 \leq i < k$ the point p_1 does not belong to $\text{Base}(\psi_A^{-i})$ so ψ_A and ψ_A^{-1} have no common base-point. As a consequence the set of base-points of the map $\psi_A^{i+1} = \psi_A \circ \psi_A^i$ is the union of the base-points of ψ_A^i and of the points $(\psi_A^{-i})^\bullet(p_j)$ for $1 \leq j \leq 9$. Since the map ψ_A^{-i} is defined at p_1 the point $(\psi_A^{-i})^\bullet(p_j)$ is proximate to the point $(\psi_A^{-i})^\bullet(p_k)$ if and only if p_j is proximate to p_k . Proceeding by induction on i we get the following assertions:

- ◊ $\text{Base}(\psi_A^i) = \{(\psi_A^{-m})^\bullet(p_j) \mid 1 \leq j \leq 9, 0 \leq m \leq i-1\}$ for any $1 \leq i \leq k$;
- ◊ for any $0 \leq -\ell \leq k$ the configuration of the points $\{(\psi_A^\ell)^\bullet(p_j) \mid 1 \leq j \leq 9\}$ is given by



Hence the point p_3 belongs to $\text{Base}(\psi_A^i)$ for any $1 \leq i \leq k$.

If $k = \infty$, then p_3 belongs to $\text{Base}(\psi_A^i)$ for any $i > 0$ and by definition of k the point p_1 does not belong to $\text{Base}(\psi_A^{-i})$ for any $i > 0$, and so neither p_3 . We can thus assume that k is a positive integer.

Assume that q_1 belongs to $\text{Base}(\psi_A^i)$ for some $1 \leq i \leq k-1$. Then q_1 is equal to $(\psi_A^{-m})^\bullet(p_j)$ for some $0 \leq m \leq k-2$ and $1 \leq j \leq 9$. This implies that p_j belongs to $\text{Base}(\psi_A^{m+1})$ which is impossible because $m+1 \leq k-1$. Hence q_1 does not belong to $\text{Base}(\psi_A^i)$ for any $1 \leq i \leq k-1$.

We thus see that ψ_A^{-1} has no common base-point with ψ_A^i for $1 \leq i \leq k-1$. In particular if B denotes $\text{Base}(\psi_A^{-1}) \cap \text{Base}(\psi_A^k)$, then

$$B = \{(\psi_A^{-(k-1)})^\bullet(p_j) \mid 1 \leq j \leq 9\} \cap \{q_j \mid 1 \leq j \leq 9\}.$$

Let us remark that p_1 belongs to $\text{Base}(\psi_A^{-k})$ and p_1 does not belong to $\text{Base}(\psi_A^{-(k-1)})$; as a result $(\psi_A^{-(k-1)})^\bullet(p_1)$, which is a base-point of ψ_A^k , is also a base-point of ψ_A^{-1} . The set B is thus not empty.

The configurations of the two sets of points $\{(\psi_A^{-(k-1)})^\bullet(p_j) \mid 1 \leq j \leq 9\}$ and $\{q_j \mid 1 \leq j \leq 9\}$ imply that $q_1 = (\psi_A^{-(k-1)})^\bullet(p_1)$.

Moreover either $B = \{q_1\}$, or $B = \{q_1, q_2\}$. Indeed $(\psi_A^{-(k-1)})^\bullet(p_3)$ is proximate to $(\psi_A^{-(k-1)})^\bullet(p_2)$ and $(\psi_A^{-(k-1)})^\bullet(p_1)$ whereas q_3 is proximate to q_2 but not to q_1 .

The point $(\psi_A^{-(k-1)})^\bullet(p_3)$ is thus a point infinitely near to q_1 in the second neighborhood which is maybe infinitely near to q_2 but not equal to q_3 . Recalling that η is the blow up of q_1, q_2, \dots, q_9 the point $(\eta^{-1} \circ \psi_A^{-(k-1)})^\bullet(p_3)$ corresponds to a point that belongs, as a proper or infinitely near point, to one of the curves $F_1, F_2 \subset S$. So $(\pi \circ \eta^{-1} \circ \psi_A^{-(k-1)})^\bullet(p_3)$ is a point infinitely near to p_3 . For any $1 \leq i \leq k$ the point p_3 does not belong to $\text{Base}(\psi_A^{-i})$; therefore there is no base-point of ψ_A^{-i} which is infinitely near to p_3 . As a result $(\psi_A^{-k})^\bullet(p_3)$ does not belong to $\text{Base}(\psi_A^{-i})$ and p_3 does not belong to $\text{Base}(\psi_1^{-(k+i)})$. Moreover $(\psi_A^{-(k+i)})^\bullet(p_3)$ is infinitely near to $(\psi_A^{-i})^\bullet(p_3)$. Choosing $i = k$ we see that $(\psi_A^{-2k})^\bullet(p_3)$ is infinitely near to $(\psi_A^{-k})^\bullet(p_3)$ which is infinitely near to p_3 . Continuing like this we get

$$\forall i \geq 1 \quad p_3 \notin \text{Base}(\psi_A^{-i}).$$

To get the result it remains to show that p_3 belongs to $\text{Base}(\psi_A^i)$ for any $i \geq 1$. Reversing the order of ψ_A and ψ_A^{-1} we prove as previously that

$$\forall i \geq 1 \quad q_3 \notin \text{Base}(\psi_A^i).$$

Let us now see that

$$(\forall i \geq 1 \quad q_3 \notin \text{Base}(\psi_A^i)) \Rightarrow (\forall i \geq 1 \quad p_3 \in \text{Base}(\psi_A^i)).$$

For $i = 1$ it is obvious. Assume $i > 1$; let us decompose

- ◊ ψ_A^i into $\psi_A^{i-1} \circ \psi_A$,
- ◊ $\pi: S \rightarrow \mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ into $\pi_{12} \circ \pi_{39}$ where $\pi_{12}: Y \rightarrow \mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ is the blow up of p_1, p_2 and $\pi_{39}: S \rightarrow Y$ is the blow up of p_3, p_4, \dots, p_9 ,
- ◊ $\eta: S \rightarrow \mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ into $\eta_{12} \circ \eta_{39}$ where $\eta_{12}: Z \rightarrow \mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ is the blow up of q_1, q_2 and $\eta_{39}: S \rightarrow Z$ is the blow up of q_3, q_4, \dots, q_9 .

Note that η_{39} contracts F_9, F_8, \dots, F_3 onto the point $Z \ni q_3 \notin \text{Base}(\psi_A^{i-1} \circ \eta_{12})$. Consider the system of conics of $\mathbb{P}_{\mathbb{C}}^2$ passing through p_1, p_2 and p_3 . Denote by Λ its lift on Y ; it is a system of smooth curves passing through

q_3 with movable tangents and $\dim \Lambda = 2$. The strict transform of Λ on S is a system of curves intersecting E_3 at a general movable point. The map η_{39} contracts the curves $L_x, E_2, E_3, E_4, E_5, E_6, E_7$. As the curve E_3 is contracted and is not the last one, the image of the system by η_{39} passes through q_3 with a fixed tangent corresponding to the point q_4 . Since $q_3 \notin \text{Base}(\psi_A^{i-1} \circ \eta_{12})$ the image of $\Lambda \subset Y$ by $\psi_A^{i-1} \circ \eta \circ (\pi_{39})^{-1}$ has a fixed tangent at the point $(\psi_A^{i-1} \circ \eta_{12})(q_3)$. As a consequence p_3 belongs to $\text{Base}(\psi_A^{i-1} \circ \eta \circ (\pi_{39})^{-1})$ and thus to $\text{Base}(\underbrace{\psi_A^{i-1} \circ \eta \circ (\pi_{39})^{-1} \circ (\pi_{12})^{-1}}_{\psi_A^i})$.

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