

HOMOTOPY STABILITY IN BANACH ALGEBRAS

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INTRODUCTION.

Let A be a (real or complex) Banach algebra with identity. Several algebraic objects associated to A are considered in this paper. Their common feature is that the general linear group $GL_n(A)$ acts over them defining fibre bundle structures.

In Section 1 we study the map $t_a: GL_n(A) \rightarrow U_{k,n}(A)$ defined by multiplication at left, where $U_{k,n}(A)$ is the set of left-invertible $n \times k$ -matrices on A ($k \leq n$) and a is a fixed element of $U_{k,n}(A)$; this map is a Serre fibration and, under some Hermite conditions [2,7], it follows that $U_{k,n}(A)$ is a Banach homogeneous space. In Section 2 we study the space $P_n(A)$ of idempotent matrices in $M_n(A)$; for each $p \in P_n(A)$ the map $u \mapsto upu^{-1}$ ($u \in GL_n(A)$) is a fibration. In Section 3 we relate the definition of Grassmannian manifold for Banach algebras, studied by Porta and Recht [10] to the more classical definition $M_{k,n}(A) = GL_n(A)/GL_k(A) \times GL_{n-k}(A)$; we show that, under some connectedness conditions, these spaces are homotopically equivalent. In Section 4 we prove that the sequences $\{\pi_i(GL_n(A))\}_n$, $\{\pi_i(P_n(A))\}_n$, $\{\pi_i(\text{Grass}(M_n(A)))\}_n$ and $\{\pi_i(M_{k,n}(A))\}_n$ stabilize under some "stable range conditions" introduced by Bass [1].

These results provide another link between algebraic K-theory and Banach algebra theory. As an application we show that the Grothendieck group $K_0(A)$, which may be presented (Karoubi [8]) as a direct limit $\lim P_{2n}(A)/GL_{2n}(A)$, can be identified with $P_{2n}(A)/GL_{2n}(A)$, for n large enough. Our final result is a Banach algebra version of a theorem of Suslin [2,17]: for $n \geq 1$ and $r-1$ in the stable range of A , the neutral component of $GL_r(A_n)$ acts transitively on $U_{1,r}(A_n)$, where $A_n = A(I^n)$ in the Banach algebra of continuous maps from $[0,1]^n$ into A . We also prove the analogous of Bass-Quillen conjecture for Banach algebras ([10], p.XI) which is rela-

ted to Serre's problem. The proof, which is easier than those of Suslin and Bass for the algebraic result, suggests that several problems from algebraic K-theory can be clarified in the Banach algebra category.

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1. UNIMODULAR MATRICES.

Let A be a ring with unit. For $k \leq n$ let $U_{k,n}(A)$ be the set of left invertible $n \times k$ matrices: $U_{k,n}(A) = \{a \in A^{n \times k} ; \text{there exists } b \in A^{k \times n} \text{ with } b.a = 1 \in M_k(A)\}$.

If A is a Banach algebra $U_{k,n}(A)$ is an open subset of $A^{n \times k}$. In particular, $U_{k,n}(A)$ is arcwise connected if it is connected.

The action of $GL_n(A)$ on $U_{k,n}(A)$ defined by left multiplication gives, for each $a \in U_{k,n}(A)$, a mapping $t_a: GL_n(A) \rightarrow U_{k,n}(A)$ $t_a(\pi) = \sigma.a$. If A is a Banach algebra t_a is a Serre fibration [2], so it induces an exact homotopy sequence [7]

$$(1.1) \quad \dots \rightarrow \pi_i(S_a, 1) \rightarrow \pi_i(GL_n(A), 1) \rightarrow \pi_i(U_{k,n}(A), a) \rightarrow \pi_{i-1}(S_a, 1) \rightarrow \dots$$

where S_a is the stabilizer of a by the action of $GL_n(A)$:

$$S_a = \{\sigma \in GL_n(A) ; \sigma.a = a\}.$$

1.2. REMARK. In general t_a is not surjective. When $GL_n(A)$ acts transitively on $U_{k,n}(A)$, A is called (n,k) -Hermite. See [4] for a closer study of these Banach algebras.

The exact sequence of t_a is better understood when a is the $n \times k$ matrix e whose columns are the first k canonical vectors of A^n . In this case

$$S_e = L_{k,n}(A) = \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} 1 & x \\ 0 & \sigma \end{pmatrix} \in GL_n(A) ; x \in A^{k \times (n-k)}, \sigma \in GL_k(A) \right\}$$

which is homeomorphic to the product $GL_k(A) \times A^{k \times (n-k)}$. Now, $A^{k \times (n-k)}$ being contractible, the exact sequence becomes

$$(1.3) \quad \dots \rightarrow \pi_i(GL_k(A), 1) \xrightarrow{a} \pi_i(GL_n(A), 1) \rightarrow \pi_i(U_{k,n}(A), e) \rightarrow \pi_{i-1}(GL_k(A), 1) \rightarrow \dots$$

where a is induced by the inclusion $\sigma \rightarrow \begin{pmatrix} \sigma & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$ of $GL_k(A)$ into $GL_n(A)$.

1.4. THEOREM. If A is (n,k) -Hermite then $U_{k,n}(A)$ is homeomorphic to the Banach homogeneous space $GL_n(A)/L_{k,n}(A)$.

Proof. Given a topological group G and a closed subgroup H the projection $p: G \rightarrow G/H$ is a (locally trivial) fibre bundle if it admits a local section at H [7]. In particular, if G is a Banach-Lie group p is always a fibre bundle. Thus, if A is (n,k) -Hermite, then $t_e: GL_n(A) \rightarrow U_{k,n}(A)$ is a fibre bundle and it induces a homeomorphism $\bar{t}_e: GL_n(A)/L_{k,n}(A) \rightarrow U_{k,n}(A)$.

1.5. THE COMMUTATIVE CASE. The image of t_e is open and closed [4] so A is (n,k) -Hermite if $U_{k,n}(A)$ is connected. Now, if A is a complex commutative Banach algebra, a simple application of the Novodvorski-Taylor theory shows that $U_{k,n}(A)$ is connected if and only if all maps from the spectrum $X(A)$ of A into $U_{k,n}(C)$ (the Stieffel manifold of k -frames in C^n) are null-homotopic. Thus, if $X(A)$ is dominated by a compact space of (Lebesgue) dimension at most $2(n-k)$, $U_{k,n}(A)$ is connected [11,4].

1.6. Let X be a compact space and $A(X)$ the Banach algebra of all (continuous) maps from X into A , with the sup norm. For every x in X the evaluation morphism $\epsilon = \epsilon_x: A(X) \rightarrow A$ $\epsilon(f) = f(x)$ has an algebra section; more precisely, the morphism $s: A \rightarrow A(X)$ $s(a) =$ the constant map $x \mapsto a$, satisfies $\epsilon \circ s = 1_A$. In general, an epimorphism of Banach algebras $\phi: A \rightarrow B$ induces a Serre fibration $\phi: U_{k,n}(A) \rightarrow U_{k,n}(B)$ which is a fibre bundle when ϕ admits an algebra section. In this case, if $\phi(a_0) = b_0$ and $F = \{a \in U_{k,n}(A); \phi(a) = b_0\}$, the homotopy sequence of the fibration $F \rightarrow U_{k,n}(A) \rightarrow U_{k,n}(B)$ splits at each i and produces short exact sequences

$$0 \rightarrow \pi_i(F, a_0) \rightarrow \pi_i(U_{k,n}(A), a_0) \rightarrow \pi_i(U_{k,n}(B), b_0) \rightarrow 0.$$

Returning to the situation $\phi = \epsilon$, $a_0 = b_0 = e$, when $X = S^k$ and $i = 0$, we get

$$0 \rightarrow \pi_k(U_{k,n}(A), e) \rightarrow \pi_0(U_{k,n}(A(S^k)), e) \rightarrow \pi_0(U_{k,n}(A), e) \rightarrow 0$$

Thus, if $U_{k,n}(A)$ is connected there is a bijection between

$\pi_{\ell}(U_{k,n}(A), e)$ and the set of connected components of $U_{k,n}(A(S^{\ell}))$. This remark will be used in §4.

2. PROJECTIONS.

Let B a ring with unit and $P(B)$ the subset of idempotents of B :

$P(B) = \{b \in B; b^2 = b\}$. For each $b \in P(B)$, B^* acts on $P(B)$ by inner automorphisms, that is b defines a map $\theta_b: B^* \rightarrow P(B)$ $\theta_b(\sigma) = \sigma b \sigma^{-1}$.

If B is a Banach algebra, each θ_b is an open map and its image M_b is open and closed in $P(B)$; moreover, $P(B)$ is a Banach manifold, θ_b defines a fibre bundle over M_b and there is a homotopy sequence

$$\dots \rightarrow \pi_i(R_b, b) \rightarrow \pi_i(B^*, 1) \rightarrow \pi_i(P(B), b) \rightarrow \pi_{i-1}(R_b, b) \rightarrow \dots$$

where $R_b = \{\sigma \in B^*; \sigma b = b\sigma\}$ [13, 14].

If A is a Banach algebra and B is the algebra of all $n \times n$ -matrices on A , $B = M_n(A)$, let $P_n(A) = P(B)$. For $b=1$ (see §1)

$$R_b = R_{k,n}(A) = \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} \sigma & x \\ 0 & \tau \end{pmatrix} \in GL_n(A); \sigma \in GL_k(A), \tau \in GL_{n-k}(A), x \in A^{k \times (n-k)} \right\},$$

which is clearly homeomorphic to the product $GL_k(A) \times GL_{n-k}(A) \times A^{k \times (n-k)}$.

Thus, the exact sequence of θ_e becomes

$$\dots \rightarrow \pi_i(GL_k(A), 1) \rightarrow \pi_i(GL_{n-k}(A), 1) \xrightarrow{\beta} \pi_i(GL_n(A), 1) \rightarrow \pi_i(P_n(A), e) \rightarrow \pi_{i-1}(GL_k(A), 1) \rightarrow \pi_{i-1}(GL_{n-k}(A), 1) \rightarrow \dots$$

where β is the homomorphism induced by the inclusion

$$(\sigma, \tau) \mapsto \begin{pmatrix} \sigma & 0 \\ 0 & \tau \end{pmatrix} \text{ of } GL_k(A) \times GL_{n-k}(A) \text{ into } GL_n(A).$$

3. THE GRASSMANN MANIFOLD.

Porta and Recht [13] propose the following algebraic definition for the Grassmann manifold: given a ring A with unit, let $P(A)$ be the set of idempotent elements of A , $P(A) = \{a \in A; a^2 = a\}$ and consider the equivalence relation \sim on $P(A)$ defined by $a \sim b \iff$

$ab = b$ and $ba = a$. The Grassmannian of A is the set $\text{Grass}(A) = P(A)/\sim$. When A is a Banach algebra and $\text{Grass} A$ is given the quotient topology, then the following result holds [13, §3]:

3.1. THEOREM. Let $\beta: P(A) \rightarrow \text{Grass}(A)$ be the projection map. Then

- 3.1.1. β is an open map;
- 3.1.2. $\text{Grass}(A)$ is paracompact;
- 3.1.3. β has a continuous global section;
- 3.1.4. β is a homotopy equivalence.

In the particular case when A the algebra $M_n(\mathbb{R})$ of all $n \times n$ real matrices, $\text{Grass}(A)$ can be identified with the classical Grassmannian $\bigcup_{0 \leq k \leq n} G_{k,n}$, where $G_{k,n}$ is the set of all k -dimensional subspaces of \mathbb{R}^n . Moreover, the connected components of $\text{Grass}(A)$ are, precisely, the $G_{k,n}$.

Let us study more closely the Grassmannian of $M_n(A)$ when A is a Banach algebra. For this, we identify $A^k \times A^{n-k}$ with A^n and consider the following subgroups of $GL_n(A)$:

$$L_{k,n}(A) = \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} 1 & x \\ 0 & \sigma \end{pmatrix} \in GL_n(A) \ ; \ x \in A^{k \times (n-k)}, \ \sigma \in GL_{n-k}(A) \right\},$$

$$H_{k,n}(A) = \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} \tau & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \in GL_n(A) \ ; \ \tau \in GL_k(A) \right\}.$$

We set $M_{k,n} = M_{k,n}(A) = GL_n(A) / L_{k,n}(A) \times H_{k,n}(A)$. Observe that

$H_{k,n}(A)$ is isomorphic to $GL_k(A)$ (as topological groups) and that

$L_{k,n}(A)$ is isomorphic to the semidirect product $A^{k \times (n-k)} \times GL_{n-k}(A)$.

This remark, the general theory of Banach-Lie homogeneous spaces [9] and a well-known result of Palais [12, Th.15] yield the following

3.2. PROPOSITION. a. $M_{k,n}(A)$ is homeomorphic to $M_{n-k,n}(A)$;

b. $M_{k,n}(A)$ is homotopically equivalent to $GL_n(A) / GL_k(A) \times GL_{n-k}(A)$.

As a consequence of b., the exact sequence of the fibration

$$L_{k,n} \times H_{k,n} \rightarrow GL_n \rightarrow GL_n / GL_k \times GL_{n-k} \text{ becomes}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \dots &\rightarrow \pi_i(GL_{n-k}(A), 1) \times \pi_i(GL_k(A), 1) \rightarrow \pi_i(GL_n(A), 1) \\ (3.3) \quad &\rightarrow \pi_i(M_{k,n}(A), \bar{1}) \rightarrow \pi_{i-1}(GL_{n-k}(A), 1) \times \pi_{i-1}(GL_k(A), 1) \rightarrow \dots \end{aligned}$$

In connection with (1.1) we have

3.4. PROPOSITION. If A is $(n-k)$ -Hermitian, t_e induces a principal lo-

cally trivial fibre bundle $U_{k,n}(A) \rightarrow M_{k,n}(A)$ whose fibers are homeomorphic to $GL_k(A)$. In particular $M_{k,n}(A)$ is homeomorphic to $U_{k,n}(A)/GL_k(A)$.

3.5. REMARK. Let X be a compact space and $A(X)$ the algebra of A -valued continuous maps on X . It is easy to prove that $GL_m(A(X))$ is isomorphic to $C(X, GL_m(A))$ (as topological groups). In the same way we get a homeomorphism from $M_{k,n}(A(X))$ onto $C(X, M_{k,n}(A))$. If $M_{k,n}(A)$ is connected, from the fibration properties of the evaluation maps $M_{k,n}(A(X)) \rightarrow M_{k,n}(A)$ we can prove that $\pi_i(M_{k,n}(A))$ is in a bijective correspondence with the set $[S^i, M_{k,n}(A)]$ (cf. [4, 2.4]). This is particularly useful when A is a complex commutative algebra, for in this case

$$[S^i, M_{k,n}(A)] \leftrightarrow [S^i \times X(A), M_{k,n}(C)] .$$

3.6. PROPOSITION. For each $k \leq n$ $M_{k,n}(A)$ is homeomorphic to a union of connected components of $Grass(M_n(A))$. Moreover, if $U_{k,n}(A)$ is connected, $M_{k,n}(A)$ is (homeomorphic to) a connected component of $Grass(M_n(A))$.

Proof. Consider the composition $GL_n(A) \xrightarrow{\theta_e} P_n(A) \xrightarrow{\beta} Grass(M_n(A))$.

It is easy to see that, if σ has the form $\sigma = \begin{pmatrix} \tau & x \\ 0 & \rho \end{pmatrix}$ with

$\tau \in GL_k(A)$, $\rho \in GL_{n-k}(A)$ and $x \in A^{k \times (n-k)}$, then $\beta(\sigma e \sigma^{-1}) = \beta(e)$.

Thus we get a map $\bar{\theta}_e: M_{k,n}(A) \rightarrow Grass(M_n(A))$. But θ_e and $\beta \circ \theta_e$ both are open maps and their images are closed in $P_n(A)$ and $Grass(M_n(A))$, respectively. The result follows, then, by (3.4).

3.7. COROLLARY. If $U_k(A^n)$ is connected

$$\pi_i(M_{k,n}(A), \bar{e}) = \pi_i(Grass(M_n(A)), \beta(e)) ,$$

where \bar{e} denotes the image of $e \in U_k(A^n)$ in $M_{k,n}(A)$ by the fibre map of (3.3).

4. STABILIZATION.

Let A be a ring with unit. The stable rank of A , denoted by $sr(A)$,

is the least integer n such that, for every ${}^t a \in U_{1,n+1}(A)$ there exist elements x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n in A with ${}^t(a_1 + x_1 a_{n+1}, a_2 + x_2 a_{n+1}, \dots, a_n + x_n a_{n+1}) \in U_{1,n}(A)$.

If no such integer exists we set $\text{sr}(A) = \infty$. Some results relating $\text{sr}(A)$ to the topology of A may be found in [5], [6], [15]. We quote two of them, from which we shall deduce several consequences.

4.1. PROPOSITION. ([6]). *Let A be a Banach algebra. For every n and k such that $n \geq \text{sr}(A) + k$, $U_{k,n}(A)$ is connected.*

4.2. THEOREM. ([6, th.5.12]). *Let X be a compact space and A a Banach algebra. Then $\text{sr}(A(X)) \leq d + \text{sr}(A)$, where d is the (topological) dimension of X .*

(This result answers, partially, the questions 1.8 and 7.3 raised by Rieffel [15]).

From (1.3), (1.6), (4.1) and (4.2) we get

4.3. COROLLARY. Let A be a Banach algebra and $n \geq \text{sr}(A) + i + k$. Then

- (i) $\pi_i(U_{k,n}(A), e)$ is trivial;
- (ii) $\pi_i(\text{GL}_k(A), 1) \cong \pi_i(\text{GL}_n(A), 1) \cong \pi_i(\text{GL}(A), 1) = K_{i+1}^{\text{top}}(A)$ ([9]).

Let us consider the commutative square

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \text{GL}_n(A) & \xrightarrow{i} & \text{GL}_{n+1}(A) \\ \theta_e \downarrow & & \downarrow \theta_{e'} \\ P_n(A) & \xrightarrow{j} & P_{n+1}(A) \end{array}$$

where $i(\sigma) = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$, $j(p) = \begin{pmatrix} p & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$ and e' is the $(n+1) \times k$ matrix defined in the same way that e (§1). Comparing the homotopy sequences of θ_e and $\theta_{e'}$, (§2) and using 4.3.ii we get

4.4. COROLLARY. Let A be a Banach algebra and $k, n-k \geq \text{sr}(A) + i$. Then

$$\pi_i(P_n(A), e) \cong \pi_i(P_{n+1}(A), e').$$

(Observe that k appears implicitly in this formula, for e and e' depend on k).

Next, we use the preceding corollaries, 3.1.4 and 3.3 to obtain a similar result for the Grassmannian manifolds defined in §3:

4.5. COROLLARY. Let A be a Banach algebra. For $k, n-k \geq \text{sr}(A) + i$ it holds

- (i) $\pi_i(\text{Grass}(M_n(A)), \beta(e)) \cong \pi_i(\text{Grass}(M_{n+1}(A)), \beta(e'))$
- (ii) $\pi_i(M_{k,n}(A), \bar{e}) \cong \pi_i(M_{k,n+1}(A), \bar{e}')$.

The next result concerns the group $K_0(A)$. This is the Grothendieck group of the category of projective finitely generated left A -modules. Karoubi [8] has given an alternative description of $K_0(A)$: the action of $GL_n(A)$ on $P_n(A)$ defined in §2 allows us to consider a direct limit

$$(4.6) \quad \widehat{P_2(A)} \rightarrow \widehat{P_4(A)} \rightarrow \dots \rightarrow \widehat{P_{2n}(A)} \xrightarrow{i_n} \widehat{P_{2n+2}(A)} \dots$$

where $\widehat{P_n(A)} = P_n(A)/GL_n(A)$ and i_n is induced by the mapping

$$p \mapsto \begin{pmatrix} p & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}.$$

Karoubi shows that $K_0(A)$ is isomorphic to $\lim_{\rightarrow} \{\widehat{P_{2n}(A)}, i_n\}$. We prove now that the sequence $\{\widehat{P_{2n}(A)}, i_n\}$ stabilizes if $\text{sr}(A)$ is finite. More precisely

4.7. PROPOSITION. Let A be a Banach algebra and $n \geq \text{sr}(A)$. Then

$$\widehat{P_{2n}(A)} \cong \widehat{P_{2n+2}(A)}.$$

Let $X = P_{2n}(A)$, $Y = P_{2n+2}(A)$, $H = GL_{2n}(A)$ and $G = GL_{2n+2}(A)$. Observe that $\widehat{P_{2n}(A)} = X/H$ and $\widehat{P_{2n+2}(A)} = Y/G$ and that we have a commutative square

$$\begin{array}{ccc} X & \xrightarrow{f} & Y \\ \downarrow & & \downarrow \\ X/H & \xrightarrow{\bar{f}} & Y/G \end{array}$$

where $\bar{f}(\text{class of } p) = \text{class of } \begin{pmatrix} p & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$, for $p \in X$. By (4.2) and

(4.3) $\pi_0(f): \pi_0(X) \rightarrow \pi_0(Y)$ and $\pi_0(i): \pi_0(H) \rightarrow \pi_0(G)$ are bijections and we have observed that, for each y in X (or Y), $U = \{\sigma q \sigma^{-1}; \sigma \in H \text{ (or } G)\}$ is open and closed in X (or Y). Thus, the connected component of q is contained in U . A straightforward argument shows that \bar{f} is, then, a bijection. The proof finishes just remarking that $\bar{f} = i_n$.

Our last result is a topological version of a theorem of Suslin

[3, Th.3], [17, Th.12.4]. Let A a commutative noetherian ring with Krull dimension d , let $A_n = A[t_1, \dots, t_n]$ the A -algebra of polynomials in n indeterminates. Suslin proved that, for every $n \geq 1$ the set of elementary matrices $E_r(A_n)$ acts transitively on $U_{1,r+1}(A_n)$ if $r \geq 1 + \max \{d, (d+n)/2\}$.

(Recall that, for a ring C , $E_r(C)$ is the subgroup of $GL_r(C)$ generated by the rxr -matrices $1 + e_{ij}^c$, where $c \in C$ and $(e_{ij}^c)_{kl} = c \delta_{ik} \delta_{jl}$). In a topological setting, $A[t_1, \dots, t_n]$ is replaced by $A(I^n)$ (the notation is like in 1.6), $E_r(C)$ by the neutral component $GL_r(C)_0$ of $GL_r(C)$ and the Krull dimension by the stable rank. More precisely we have the following

4.8. THEOREM. Let A be a Banach algebra. Let $A_n = A(I^n)$ the algebra of continuous maps $I^n = [0, 1]^n \rightarrow A$. Then, for every $n \geq 1$, $GL_r(A_n)_0$ acts transitively on $U_{1,r}(A_n)$ if $r \geq sr(A) + 1$.

Proof. Recall that $t: GL_r(B)_0 \rightarrow U_{1,r}(B)$, $t(\sigma) = \sigma \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \\ \vdots \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} \sigma_{11} \\ \vdots \\ \sigma_{n1} \end{pmatrix}$ is a Serre fibration for every Banach algebra B (§1).

In particular, $GL_r(B)_0$ acts transitively on $U_{1,r}(B)$ if and only if $U_{1,r}(B)$ is connected. It is also known that the connected components of $U_{1,r}(B(X))$ are in a bijective correspondence with the set $[X, U_{1,r}(B)]$ of homotopy classes of maps $X \rightarrow U_{1,r}(B)$ [4, 2.4]. Then, for $B = A$ and $X = I^n$ we get that $U_{1,r}(A_n)$ is connected if and only if $[I^n, U_{1,r}(A)]$ is trivial and, I^n being contractible, this happens if and only if $U_{1,r}(A)$ is connected. But $U_{1,r}(A)$ is connected for $r \geq sr(A) + 1$ (see 4.1). This concludes the proof.

4.9. COROLLARY (of the proof). Let A be a Banach algebra. Then A_n is (m, k) -Hermite if and only if A is (m, k) -Hermite.

The result answers affirmatively the Banach algebra analogous of question (H) in [10] p.XI and, consequently, of Bass-Quillen conjecture. See the introduction of Lam's book for details.

REMARKS. 1. In the category of Banach algebras this result offers some advantages over that of Suslin: in fact, it holds even for non-

commutative Banach algebras and the number $\text{sr}(A)$ is smaller than $\max \{\text{sr}(A), (\text{sr}(A)+n)/2\}$ when n is large.

2. In the terminology of Rieffel [15], Theorem 4.8 says that the connected stable rank of A_n is a most $\text{sr}(A)+1$. In connection with that paper, it should be noted that left and right connected stable ranks, introduced in [15], actually coincide, for the spaces of left and right unimodular rows are homotopy equivalent [4]. This answers question 4.8 of [15].

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