

**Sharp pointwise estimate for the kernels
of the semigroup generated by sums of even powers
of vector fields on homogeneous groups**

by

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Abstract. Let X_1, \dots, X_m be a generating set of the Lie algebra of a homogeneous group. Let

$$L = - \sum_{j=1}^m (-1)^{n_j} X_j^{2n_j}.$$

Suppose that L is homogeneous of degree $2n$, $n = \max_{1 \leq j \leq m} n_j$. It is known that L is the infinitesimal generator of a semigroup $T_t f = f * p_t$, where p_t is a C^∞ -function. In this paper we prove that

$$|Y^I p_t(x)| \leq C_1 t^{-(Q+|I|)(2n)} \exp(-C_1(|x|^{2n}/t)^{1/(2n-1)}),$$

where Q is the homogeneous dimension of the group, $|\cdot|$ is a homogeneous gauge and $Y^I = Y_1^{i_1} \dots Y_k^{i_k}$, where Y_j is a homogeneous element of the Lie algebra of degree $\alpha(j)$ with $|I| = \sum i_j \alpha(j)$. We do not use the Helffer-Nourrigat theory, instead we prove directly a local subelliptic estimate for L .

1. Introduction. Let \mathfrak{g} be a graded nilpotent Lie algebra. This means that \mathfrak{g} admits a vector space decomposition $\mathfrak{g} = V_1 \oplus \dots \oplus V_p$ with $[V_i, V_j] \subseteq V_{i+j}$ when $i+j \leq p$ and $[V_i, V_j] = \{0\}$ if $i+j > p$. Let G be a nilpotent, connected and simply connected Lie group that corresponds to \mathfrak{g} via the exponential map. We equip \mathfrak{g} as well as G with a one-parameter family of dilations by extending $\delta_\lambda(X) = \lambda^j X$, $X \in V_j$, $\lambda > 0$, by linearity to \mathfrak{g} and putting $\delta_\lambda(\exp X) = \exp(\delta_\lambda X)$. Then we define the *homogeneous dimension* $Q = \sum_{j=1}^p j \dim V_j$ and choose a *homogeneous norm* on G , i.e. a function $x \rightarrow |x|$ satisfying:

- (i) $x \rightarrow |x|$ is continuous on G and C^∞ on $G \setminus \{e\}$;
- (ii) $|x| \geq 0$ and $|x| = 0$ iff $x = e$;
- (iii) $|\delta_\lambda x| = \lambda |x|$, $\lambda > 0$, $x \in G$.

Suppose that elements X_1, \dots, X_m in \mathfrak{g} generate \mathfrak{g} . We consider X_1, \dots, X_m as left-invariant vector fields on G , and we define a differential operator

$$(1.1) \quad L = - \sum_{j=1}^m (-1)^{n_j} X_j^{2n_j}$$

acting on $C_c^\infty(G)$. Assume also that L is homogeneous of degree $2n$, $n = \max_{1 \leq j \leq m} n_j$.

It was observed by Folland and Stein [2] that L , being negative and symmetric on $C_c^\infty(G) \subseteq L^2(G)$, is the infinitesimal generator of a one-parameter semigroup $\{T_t\}_{t>0}$ of operators on $L^2(G)$ such that $T_t f = f * p_t$, where the kernels p_t , $t > 0$, are C^∞ -functions. Moreover, the function

$$p(t, x) = \begin{cases} p_t(x), & t > 0, \\ 0, & t \leq 0, \end{cases}$$

is C^∞ on $\mathbf{R} \times G \setminus \{(0, e)\}$ and satisfies the "heat equation"

$$(\partial_t - L)p(t, x) = \delta_{(0, e)}.$$

Recently, in the case when $n_j = 1, j = 1, \dots, m$, and $X_1, \dots, X_m \in V_1$ (then L , called a *sublaplacian*, is homogeneous of degree 2), D. S. Jerison and A. Sánchez-Calle [4] have established the following pointwise estimate of the heat kernel $p(t, x)$:

$$(1.2) \quad p(t, x) \leq C t^{-Q/2} e^{-c_1|x|^2/t}.$$

Here the positive constants C and c_1 depend only on L and the choice of homogeneous norm. Moreover, they proved that for any multiindex $I = (i_1, \dots, i_l)$ of length $|I| = l$ and any nonnegative integer s one has

$$(1.2') \quad |\partial_t^s X_I p(t, x)| \leq C_{I,s} t^{-s-|I|/2-Q/2} e^{-c_1|x|^2/t}.$$

Here c_1 is independent of I and s , and $X_I = X_{i_1} \dots X_{i_l}$.

On the other hand, J. Dziubański and A. Hulanicki [1] have recently obtained the following estimate for the decay of p_t at infinity (with arbitrary $n_j > 0$): for every δ in the enveloping algebra of G and for every $N > 0$ one has

$$(1.3) \quad |\delta p_t(x)| \leq C_{\delta,t,N} e^{-N|x|}.$$

Let Y_1, \dots, Y_ν be a basis of the Lie algebra \mathfrak{g} consisting of homogeneous elements, i.e. $Y_j \in V_{\alpha(j)}$ for some $\alpha(j) \in \{1, \dots, p\}, j = 1, \dots, \nu$. For any multiindex $I = (i_1, \dots, i_\nu)$ we write $Y^I = Y_1^{i_1} \dots Y_\nu^{i_\nu}$ and we denote by $|I|$ its homogeneous length $|I| = \sum_{j=1}^\nu i_j \alpha(j)$. Since by the homogeneity of L , one has

$$(Y^I p_t)(\delta_{s^{-1}} x) = s^{|I|+Q} Y^I p_{s^{2n_t}}(x),$$

it is easy to observe that (1.3) immediately gives

$$(1.4) \quad |Y^I p_t(x)| \leq C_I t^{-(Q+|I|)/(2n)} \exp(-|x|t^{-1/(2n)}).$$

The aim of this paper is the proof of the following

THEOREM 1. *Let $p(t, x)$ be the "heat kernel" associated to $L = -\sum_{j=1}^m (-1)^{n_j} X_j^{2n_j}$ which we assume to be homogeneous of degree $2n$, $n = \max_{1 \leq j \leq m} n_j$. For every multiindex I and every nonnegative integer s there is*

a positive constant $C_{I,s}$ such that

$$|\partial_t^s Y^I p(t, x)| \leq C_{I,s} t^{-s-Q/(2n)-|I|/(2n)} \exp(-c_1(|x|^{2n}/t)^{1/(2n-1)})$$

with a positive constant c_1 independent of I and s .

The main idea of the proof comes from [4]. The rate of decay of p_t is investigated by means of the local Gevrey regularity in the t variable. Then a standard homogeneity argument is applied. However, instead of a subelliptic estimate used in [4] (which is a quantitative form of Hörmander's hypoellipticity theorem for $\partial_t - L$, L being the sublaplacian) we apply a subelliptic estimate which we prove directly for the generator L without appeal to the Helffer-Nourrigat theory.

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2. Gevrey regularity. We identify the group G with a Euclidean space \mathbf{R}^v (thus $v = \sum_{j=1}^p \dim V_j$). Then we fix the Euclidean distance in \mathbf{R}^{v+1} : $\|(t, x)\| = (t^2 + x_1^2 + \dots + x_v^2)^{1/2}$ and set

$$B(r) = \{(t, x): \|(t, x)\| < r\}.$$

For any functions f, g on an open subset $\Omega \subseteq \mathbf{R}^{v+1}$ we write

$$\|f\|_{L^2(\Omega)} = \left(\iint_{\Omega} |f(t, x)|^2 dt dx \right)^{1/2}$$

and, when $\Omega = \mathbf{R}^{v+1}$,

$$\langle f, g \rangle = \iint_{\Omega} f(t, x) g(x, t) dt dx.$$

We will also abbreviate $\|f\|_{L^2(\mathbf{R}^{v+1})}$ by $\|f\|$.

Throughout the paper functions are supposed to be real-valued and c, c', c_1, \dots , will denote constants that may vary from line to line.

We will also use the following notation. By $\mathcal{O}(M, J), M > 0, J = 1, 2, \dots$, we denote the set of all C^∞ -functions φ on \mathbf{R}^{v+1} satisfying: $\text{supp } \varphi \subseteq B(1), 0 \leq \varphi \leq 1$, and for every multiindex $\alpha = (\alpha_1, \dots, \alpha_{v+1})$ with $|\alpha| \leq J$

$$\|\partial^\alpha \varphi\|_\infty \leq M^{|\alpha|},$$

$|\alpha| = \sum_{i=1}^{v+1} \alpha_i$ being the Euclidean length of α .

It is clear that for any $X \in \mathfrak{g}$, considered now as a left-invariant vector field on \mathbf{R}^v , one has

$$\langle Xf, g \rangle = -\langle f, Xg \rangle, \quad f, g \in C_0^\infty(\mathbf{R}^v).$$

Let L be the differential operator on \mathbf{R}^n defined by (1.1). Recall that $n = \max_{1 \leq j \leq m} n_j$. The main result of this section is the following

PROPOSITION 1. *There is a constant $R > 0$ such that for any function u satisfying $(\partial_t - L)u(t, x) = 0$ on $B(1)$ we have*

$$\|\partial_t^k u\|_{L^2(B(1/2))} \leq R^k (k!)^{2n} \|u\|_{L^2(B(1))}.$$

The proof of Proposition 1 requires several lemmas.

LEMMA 1. *Let $X \in \mathfrak{g}$ be a left-invariant vector field on \mathbf{R}^n and let k, r be positive integers. Then for every $a > 0$ there is a positive constant $C = C(X, k, r, a)$ such that for every $M > 0$, $\varphi \in \mathcal{O}(M, 1)$ and $u \in C^\infty(B(1))$*

$$(2.1) \quad \|\varphi^{r+k} X^k u\|^2 \leq \frac{a}{M^2} \|\varphi^{r+k+1} X^{k+1} u\|^2 + CM^2 \|\varphi^{r+k-1} X^{k-1} u\|^2.$$

Proof. We have

$$\begin{aligned} \|\varphi^{r+k} X^k u\|^2 &= \langle \varphi^{2(r+k)} X^k u, X^k u \rangle = -\langle X(\varphi^{2(r+k)} X^k u), X^{k-1} u \rangle \\ &= -2(r+k) \langle \varphi^{2(r+k)-1} X \varphi \cdot X^k u, X^{k-1} u \rangle - \langle \varphi^{2(r+k)} X^{k+1} u, X^{k-1} u \rangle \\ &= -2(r+k) \langle \varphi^{r+k} X \varphi \cdot X^k u, \varphi^{r+k-1} X^{k-1} u \rangle \\ &\quad - \langle \varphi^{r+k+1} X^{k+1} u, \varphi^{r+k-1} X^{k-1} u \rangle. \end{aligned}$$

Now, the Schwarz inequality implies

$$\begin{aligned} \|\varphi^{r+k} X^k u\|^2 &\leq C' M \|\varphi^{r+k} X^k u\| \cdot \|\varphi^{r+k-1} X^{k-1} u\| \\ &\quad + \|\varphi^{r+k+1} X^{k+1} u\| \cdot \|\varphi^{r+k-1} X^{k-1} u\| \\ &\leq \frac{1}{4} \|\varphi^{r+k} X^k u\|^2 + (2C' M)^2 \|\varphi^{r+k-1} X^{k-1} u\|^2 \\ &\quad + \frac{a}{M^2} \|\varphi^{r+k+1} X^{k+1} u\|^2 + \frac{M^2}{a} \|\varphi^{r+k-1} X^{k-1} u\|^2. \end{aligned}$$

This immediately gives (2.1).

LEMMA 2. *Let $X \in \mathfrak{g}$, let r, l, k, m be positive integers and $l < k < m$. For every $a > 0$ there is a constant C depending only on X, r, l, k, m and a such that for every $M > 0$, $\varphi \in \mathcal{O}(M, 1)$ and $u \in C^\infty(B(1))$*

$$(2.2) \quad \|\varphi^{r+k} X^k u\|^2 \leq \frac{a}{M^{2(m-k)}} \|\varphi^{r+m} X^m u\|^2 + CM^{2(k-l)} \|\varphi^{r+l} X^l u\|^2.$$

Proof. We prove (2.2) by induction on $m-l$. If $m-l=2$ it is just Lemma 1. Thus, suppose first that $m-k \geq 2$. Using the induction hypothesis

for $k < m-1 < m$ we get

$$(2.3) \quad \|\varphi^{r+m-1} X^{m-1} u\|^2 \leq \frac{a}{M^2} \|\varphi^{r+m} X^m u\|^2 + C' M^{2(m-1-k)} \|\varphi^{r+k} X^k u\|^2.$$

Now, take $a' = \min(1/(2C'), 1/2)$ and by induction hypothesis for $l < k < m-1$ find a constant C'' such that

$$(2.4) \quad \|\varphi^{r+k} X^k u\|^2 \leq \frac{a'}{M^{2(m-1-k)}} \|\varphi^{r+m-1} X^{m-1} u\|^2 + C'' M^{2(k-l)} \|\varphi^{r+l} X^l u\|^2.$$

Clearly, combining (2.3) and (2.4) gives (2.2). In the case when $k-l \geq 2$ we use a similar argument.

LEMMA 3. *Let $X \in \mathfrak{g}$ and let k, r, q be positive integers. Then for every $a > 0$ there is a constant C depending only on k, r, q and X such that for every $M > 0$, $\varphi \in \mathcal{O}(M, k)$ and $u, v \in C^\infty(B(1))$*

$$(2.5) \quad |\langle v, [X^k, \varphi^{k+r+q}] u \rangle| \leq \|\varphi^q v\| (a \|\varphi^{k+r} X^k u\|^2 + CM^{2k} \|\varphi^r u\|^2)^{1/2}.$$

Proof. By an easy induction

$$(2.6) \quad X^l \varphi^n = \sum_{j=1}^l \sum_v \alpha_v (X^{i_1} \varphi \dots X^{i_j} \varphi) \varphi^{n-j},$$

where the inner sum is taken over all multiindices $v = (i_1, \dots, i_j)$ such that $i_1, \dots, i_j \geq 1$, $i_1 + \dots + i_j = l$. Moreover,

$$[X^k, \varphi^{k+r+q}] u = \sum_{l=1}^k \binom{k}{l} (X^l \varphi^{k+r+q})(X^{k-l} u).$$

Using (2.6), since $|X^{i_1} \varphi \dots X^{i_j} \varphi| \leq C_1 M^l$ and $0 \leq \varphi \leq 1$, for any $l = 1, \dots, k$ we have $|X^l \varphi^{k+r+q}| \leq C_2 M^l \varphi^{k+r+q-l}$. Therefore,

$$\begin{aligned} |\langle v, X^l \varphi^{k+r+q} X^{k-l} u \rangle| &\leq \langle |v|, |X^l \varphi^{k+r+q} X^{k-l} u| \rangle \\ &\leq C_2 M^l \langle \varphi^q v, \varphi^{k+r-l} X^{k-l} u \rangle \\ &\leq C_2 M^l \|\varphi^q v\| \cdot \|\varphi^{k+r-l} X^{k-l} u\|. \end{aligned}$$

Consequently,

$$\begin{aligned} |\langle v, [X^k, \varphi^{k+r+q}] u \rangle| &\leq C_3 \|\varphi^q v\| \sum_{l=1}^k M^l \|\varphi^{k+r-l} X^{k-l} u\| \\ &\leq \|\varphi^q v\| (C_4 \sum_{l=1}^k M^{2l} \|\varphi^{k+r-l} X^{k-l} u\|^2)^{1/2}. \end{aligned}$$

Now, using Lemma 2 with a replaced by $a/(kC_4)$ we get

$$\begin{aligned} & C_4 \sum_{l=1}^k M^{2l} \|\varphi^{k+r-l} X^{k-l} u\|^2 \\ & \leq C_4 \sum_{l=1}^k M^{2l} \left(\frac{a}{kC_4 M^{2l}} \|\varphi^{r+k} X^k u\|^2 + CM^{2(k-l)} \|\varphi^r u\|^2 \right) \\ & \leq a \|\varphi^{r+k} X^k u\|^2 + C' M^{2k} \|\varphi^r u\|^2. \end{aligned}$$

This concludes the proof of Lemma 3.

LEMMA 4. (Gårding type inequality). Let

$$L = - \sum_{j=1}^m (-1)^{n_j} X_j^{2n_j},$$

$n = \max n_j$, $X_1, \dots, X_m \in \mathfrak{g}$, and let r be a positive integer. For every $a > 0$ there is a constant $C > 0$ such that for any $M \geq 1$, $\varphi \in \mathcal{O}(M, n)$ and $u \in C^\infty(B(1))$ we have

$$(2.7) \quad -\langle \varphi^{2(r+n)} Lu, u \rangle \geq (1-a) \sum_{j=1}^m \|\varphi^{r+n} X_j^{n_j} u\|^2 - CM^{2n} \|\varphi^r u\|^2.$$

Proof. The inequality (2.7) is an easy consequence of

$$(2.8) \quad (-1)^k \langle \varphi^{2(r+k)} X^{2k} u, u \rangle \geq (1-a) \|\varphi^{r+k} X^k u\|^2 - CM^{2k} \|\varphi^r u\|^2,$$

where the constant C depends on X, k, r and a only. Indeed, using (2.8) we get

$$\begin{aligned} -\langle \varphi^{2(r+n)} Lu, u \rangle &= \sum_{j=1}^m (-1)^{n_j} \langle \varphi^{2(r+n)} X_j^{2n_j} u, u \rangle \\ &\geq (1-a) \sum_{j=1}^m \|\varphi^{r+n} X_j^{n_j} u\|^2 - \sum_{j=1}^m C_j M^{2n_j} \|\varphi^{r+n-n_j} u\|^2 \\ &\geq (1-a) \sum_{j=1}^m \|\varphi^{r+n} X_j^{n_j} u\|^2 - CM^{2n} \|\varphi^r u\|^2. \end{aligned}$$

Thus it suffices to prove (2.8). We have

$$\begin{aligned} (-1)^k \langle \varphi^{2(r+k)} X^{2k} u, u \rangle &= \langle X^k u, X^k (\varphi^{2(r+k)} u) \rangle \\ &= \langle X^k u, \varphi^{2(r+k)} X^k u \rangle + \langle X^k u, [X^k, \varphi^{2(r+k)}] u \rangle \\ &\geq \|\varphi^{r+k} X^k u\|^2 - |\langle X^k u, [X^k, \varphi^{2(r+k)}] u \rangle|. \end{aligned}$$

Now using Lemma 3 we estimate

$$\begin{aligned} |\langle X^k u, [X^k, \varphi^{2(r+k)}] u \rangle| &\leq \|\varphi^{k+r} X^k u\| (a^2 \|\varphi^{k+r} X^k u\|^2 + CM^{2k} \|\varphi^r u\|^2)^{1/2} \\ &\leq (a^{1/2} \|\varphi^{k+r} X^k u\|) \left(a \|\varphi^{k+r} X^k u\|^2 + \frac{CM^{2k}}{a} \|\varphi^r u\|^2 \right)^{1/2} \\ &\leq \frac{1}{2} \left(a \|\varphi^{k+r} X^k u\|^2 + a \|\varphi^{k+r} X^k u\|^2 + \frac{CM^{2k}}{a} \|\varphi^r u\|^2 \right) \\ &\leq a \|\varphi^{k+r} X^k u\|^2 + C' M^{2k} \|\varphi^r u\|^2. \end{aligned}$$

Combining the estimates above gives (2.8).

LEMMA 5. Let L, n be as in Lemma 4 and let r be a positive integer. There exists a constant $C > 0$ such that for any u satisfying $(\partial_t - L)u = 0$ on $B(1)$, $M \geq 1$ and $\varphi \in \mathcal{O}(M, n)$ we have

$$\|\varphi^{r+n} X_j^{n_j} u\| \leq CM^n \|\varphi^r u\|.$$

Proof. Clearly $\langle \partial_t v, v \rangle = 0$ for any $v \in C_0^\infty(\mathbb{R}^{v+1})$. Therefore, since $\varphi^{r+n} \leq \varphi^{r+n-1}$, by the Schwarz inequality we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} |\langle \varphi^{r+n} Lu, u \rangle| &= |\langle \varphi^{r+n} \partial_t u, \varphi^{r+n} u \rangle| \\ &= |\langle (\partial_t \varphi^{r+n}) u, \varphi^{r+n} u \rangle| \leq M(r+n) \|\varphi^{r+n-1} u\|^2. \end{aligned}$$

Finally, using Lemma 4 we get

$$\begin{aligned} (1-a) \sum_{j=1}^m \|\varphi^{r+n} X_j^{n_j} u\|^2 &\leq |\langle \varphi^{r+n} Lu, \varphi^{r+n} u \rangle| + CM^{2n} \|\varphi^r u\|^2 \\ &\leq M(r+n) \|\varphi^{r+n-1} u\|^2 + CM^{2n} \|\varphi^r u\|^2 \\ &\leq C' M^{2n} \|\varphi^r u\|^2, \end{aligned}$$

which completes the proof of Lemma 5.

Now we are ready to prove Proposition 1.

First, we show that the lemmas above imply

$$(2.9) \quad \|\varphi^{3n} \partial_t u\| \leq CM^{2n} \|\varphi^n u\|$$

with a constant $C > 0$ that depends only on L (therefore also on n) but not on $M \geq 1$, $\varphi \in \mathcal{O}(M, n)$ and $u \in C^\infty(B(1))$ satisfying $(L - \partial_t)u = 0$. We have

$$\begin{aligned} (2.10) \quad \|\varphi^{3n} \partial_t u\|^2 &= \langle \partial_t u, \varphi^{6n} \partial_t u \rangle = \langle Lu, \varphi^{6n} \partial_t u \rangle \\ &= - \sum_{j=1}^m \langle X_j^{n_j} u, X_j^{n_j} (\varphi^{6n} \partial_t u) \rangle \\ &\leq \sum_{j=1}^m |\langle X_j^{n_j} u, [X_j^{n_j} \varphi^{6n}] \partial_t u \rangle| + \sum_{j=1}^m |\langle X_j^{n_j} u, \varphi^{6n} X_j^{n_j} \partial_t u \rangle| \\ &\leq \sum_{j=1}^m |\langle X_j^{n_j} u, [X_j^{n_j} \varphi^{6n}] \partial_t u \rangle| + \sum_{j=1}^m |\langle \varphi^{3n} X_j^{n_j} u, (\partial_t \varphi^{3n}) X_j^{n_j} u \rangle|. \end{aligned}$$

The last step is justified by the identity $\langle v, \partial_t v \rangle = 0$ with $v = \varphi^{3n} X_j^{n_j} u$. Next, applying Lemma 3 with $k = n_j$, $r = 4n - n_j$, $q = 2n$ we obtain

$$\langle X_j^{n_j} u, [X_j^{n_j} \varphi^{6n}] \partial_t u \rangle \leq \|\varphi^{2n} X_j^{n_j} u\| (\|\varphi^{4n} X_j^{n_j} \partial_t u\|^2 + C_0 M^{2n} \|\varphi^{3n} \partial_t u\|^2)^{1/2}.$$

By Lemma 5, $\|\varphi^{2n} X_j^{n_j} u\| \leq CM^n \|\varphi^n u\|$ and $\|\varphi^{4n} X_j^{n_j} \partial_t u\| \leq CM^n \|\varphi^{3n} \partial_t u\|$. In all,

$$(2.11) \quad \begin{aligned} |\langle X_j^{n_j} u, [X_j^{n_j}, \varphi^{6n}] \partial_t u \rangle| &\leq CM^n \|\varphi^n u\| (C^2 M^{2n} + C_0 M^{2n})^{1/2} \|\varphi^{3n} \partial_t u\| \\ &\leq C_1 M^{2n} \|\varphi^n u\| \cdot \|\varphi^{3n} \partial_t u\| \\ &\leq \frac{1}{2} (mC_1^2 M^{4n} \|\varphi^n u\|^2 + m^{-1} \|\varphi^{3n} \partial_t u\|^2). \end{aligned}$$

On the other hand, the Schwarz inequality and Lemma 5 imply

$$(2.12) \quad \begin{aligned} |\langle \varphi^{3n} X_j^{n_j} u, (\partial_t \varphi^{3n}) X_j^{n_j} u \rangle| &\leq 3nM \|\varphi^{3n} X_j^{n_j} u\| \cdot \|\varphi^{3n-1} X_j^{n_j} u\| \\ &\leq 3nM \|\varphi^{2n} X_j^{n_j} u\|^2 \leq C_2 M^{2n+1} \|\varphi^n u\|^2 \leq C_2 M^{4n} \|\varphi^n u\|^2. \end{aligned}$$

Combining (2.10), (2.11) and (2.12) gives

$$\|\varphi^{3n} \partial_t u\|^2 \leq \frac{1}{2} m^2 C_1^2 M^{4n} \|\varphi^n u\|^2 + \frac{1}{2} \|\varphi^{3n} \partial_t u\|^2 + mC_2 M^{4n} \|\varphi^n u\|^2.$$

This clearly implies (2.9).

Let $0 < \varepsilon < r < 1$. It is easy to choose a function $\varphi = \varphi_{r,\varepsilon} \in C_0^\infty(\mathbf{R}^{v+1})$ with the following properties: $0 \leq \varphi \leq 1$, $\varphi = 1$ on $B(r-\varepsilon)$, $\varphi = 0$ outside $B(r)$ and $|\partial^\alpha \varphi| \leq D\varepsilon^{-|\alpha|} \leq (D/\varepsilon)^{|\alpha|}$ for any multiindex $\alpha = (\alpha_1, \dots, \alpha_{v+1})$ of length $\leq n$. Here the constant $D \geq 1$ does not depend on r and ε . Indeed, fix a function $\varphi_0 \in C_0^\infty(\mathbf{R})$, $0 \leq \varphi_0 \leq 1$, $\varphi_0(y) = 1$ for $y \leq 0$ and $\varphi_0(y) = 0$ for $y \geq 1$ and put

$$\varphi_{r,\varepsilon}(t, x) = \varphi_0\left(\frac{\|(t, x)\| - r + \varepsilon}{\varepsilon}\right).$$

Thus applying (2.9) to the function $\varphi = \varphi_{r,\varepsilon}$ we obtain

$$\|\partial_t u\|_{B(r-\varepsilon)} \leq \|\varphi^{3n} \partial_t u\| \leq C(D/\varepsilon)^{2n} \|\varphi^n u\| \leq C_1 \varepsilon^{-2n} \|u\|_{B(r)}.$$

By induction on k

$$\|\partial_t^k u\|_{B(r-k\varepsilon)} \leq C_1^k \varepsilon^{-2nk} \|u\|_{B(r)}.$$

Setting $\varepsilon = 1/(2k)$, $r = 1$ and using the Stirling formula one has

$$\|\partial_t^k u\|_{B(1/2)} \leq (2^{2n} C_1)^k k^{2nk} \|u\|_{B(1)} \leq R^k (k!)^{2n} \|u\|_{B(1)},$$

with a positive constant R . This finishes the proof of Proposition 1.

3. Proof of Theorem 2. Recall that Y_1, \dots, Y_v is a basis in \mathfrak{g} and we write $Y^\alpha = Y_1^{\alpha_1} \dots Y_v^{\alpha_v}$. As in [4] we use Proposition 1 to express the Gevrey regularity of the solution to $(\partial_t - L)u = 0$ in the t variable in terms of the L^∞ -norm.

More precisely, we prove

PROPOSITION 2. *There is a constant R_1 such that for every u satisfying $(\partial_t - L)u = 0$ in $B(1)$*

$$(3.1) \quad \sup_{B(1/10)} |\partial_t^k \partial_t^s Y^\alpha u| \leq C_{s,\alpha} R_1^k (k!)^{2n} \|u\|_{L^2(B(1))},$$

where the constant $C_{s,\alpha}$ depends only on L , s and α .

Proof. Observe that (3.1) is a consequence of the following subelliptic estimate for the operator L :

$$(3.2) \quad \|Y^\alpha v\|_{L^2(K)}^2 \leq C_{K,F,\alpha} \left(\sum_{r=0}^N \|Lv\|_{L^2(F)}^2 \right),$$

where $N = N(\alpha)$ is a positive integer, $K \subseteq \text{Int } F \subseteq \mathbf{R}^v$, K is compact, F closed and the constant $C_{K,F,\alpha}$ does not depend on a smooth function v . Indeed, taking $K = \{x \in \mathbf{R}^v: \|x\| \leq 1/8\}$, $F = \{x \in \mathbf{R}^v: \|x\| \leq 1/4\}$ we have

$$\begin{aligned} \|\partial_t^{k+s} Y^\alpha u\|_{L^2(B(1/8))}^2 &\leq \int_{-1/8}^{1/8} \|Y^\alpha \partial_t^{k+s} u(t, \cdot)\|_{L^2(K)}^2 dt \\ &\leq C \sum_{r=0}^N \int_{-1/8}^{1/8} \|L^r \partial_t^{k+s} u(t, \cdot)\|_{L^2(F)}^2 dt \\ &\leq C \sum_{r=0}^N \|L^r \partial_t^{k+s} u\|_{L^2(B(1/2))}^2 \leq C \sum_{r=0}^N \|\partial_t^{k+s+r} u\|_{L^2(B(1/2))}^2 \\ &\leq C \sum_{r=0}^N (R^{k+s+r} [(k+s+r)!]^{2n} \|u\|_{B(1)})^2 \leq C_1^2 (R_1^k (k!)^{2n} \|u\|_{B(1)})^2. \end{aligned}$$

Clearly, the Sobolev lemma now gives (3.1).

So, it remains to prove (3.2). First, note that the operator $Y^\alpha (I-L)^{-N}$ for $N \geq 1 + (Q + |\alpha|)/(2n)$ is the operator of convolution with a bounded function smooth outside zero that decreases rapidly at infinity together with all its derivatives. Indeed, denoting by the same symbol an operator and the corresponding kernel, we have

$$(3.3) \quad Y^\alpha (I-L)^{-N}(x) = \frac{1}{\Gamma(N)} \int_0^\infty t^{N-1} e^{-t} Y^\alpha p_t(x) dt.$$

Now, by a recent result of Dziubański and Hulanicki [1] (cf. (1.4))

$$|Y^\alpha p_t(x)| \leq C_\alpha t^{-(Q+|\alpha|)/(2n)} e^{-|x|t^{-1/(2n)}}.$$

Therefore

$$|Y^\alpha(I-L)^{-N}(x)| \leq C_\alpha \Gamma(N)^{-1} \int_0^\infty t^{N-1-(Q+|\alpha|)/(2n)} e^{-t} e^{-|x|t^{-1/(2n)}} dt.$$

Since for $N \geq 1+(Q+|\alpha|)/(2n)$ the last integral is bounded uniformly in x , so is the kernel $Y^\alpha(I-L)^{-N}(x)$.

Further, replacing α by $\alpha + \beta$ in (3.3) and using the fact that for $|x| > \varepsilon$ and $t \leq |x|$

$$t^{N-1-(Q+|\alpha+\beta|)/(2n)} e^{-|x|t^{-1/(2n)}} \leq C_\varepsilon \exp(-\frac{1}{2}|x|t^{-1/(2n)}),$$

we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} |Y^\beta Y^\alpha(I-L)^{-N}(x)| &\leq C \int_0^{|x|} e^{-t} \exp(-\frac{1}{2}|x|t^{-1/(2n)}) dt + |x|^{N_1} \int_{|x|}^\infty e^{-t} dt \\ &\leq C(e^{-|x|^{1/2/2}} + |x|^{N_1} e^{-|x|}), \end{aligned}$$

where $N_1 = N-1-(Q+|\alpha+\beta|)/(2n)$. This proves that all derivatives of $Y^\alpha(I-L)^{-N}(x)$ rapidly decrease at infinity.

Now, take $K \subseteq \text{Int } F \subseteq \mathbb{R}^v$, K compact, F closed. Choose a symmetric relatively compact neighborhood U of zero such that $K \cdot \bar{U} \subseteq \text{Int } F$. Also choose C_c^∞ -functions φ_1, φ_2 on \mathbb{R}^v with the properties: $0 \leq \varphi_i \leq 1$, $\text{supp } \varphi_1 \subseteq U$, $\varphi_1 = 1$ in a neighborhood of zero, $\varphi_2 = 1$ on $K \cdot \bar{U}$, $\text{supp } \varphi_2 \subseteq \text{Int } F$. We define

$$\tilde{R}(x) = \varphi_1(x) Y^\alpha(I-L)^{-N}(x), \quad W(x) = (1-\varphi_1(x)) Y^\alpha(I-L)^{-N}(x).$$

Denoting, as before, by \tilde{R} and W the convolution operators with the corresponding kernels, we can say that \tilde{R} is the operator of convolution with a function supported in U and that the kernel of the operator W is smooth. Also the operator $W_1 = W(I-L)^N$ has a smooth kernel.

Considering v as a distribution on \mathbb{R}^v ($v = 0$ outside F) we have on K

$$Y^\alpha v = Y^\alpha(I-L)^{-N}(I-L)^N v = \tilde{R}(I-L)^N v + W_1 v = \tilde{R}(\varphi_2(I-L)^N v) + W_1 v.$$

The last identity follows from the symmetry of U and the fact that $\varphi_2 = 1$ on $K \cdot U$. Consequently,

$$\begin{aligned} \|Y^\alpha v\|_{L^2(K)} &\leq \|\tilde{R}(\varphi_2(I-L)^N v)\|_{L^2(K)} + \|W_1 v\|_{L^2(K)} \\ &\leq C_1 (\|(I-L)^N v\|_{L^2(F)} + \|v\|_{L^2(F)}) \leq C_2 \sum_{r=0}^N \|L^r v\|_{L^2(F)}. \end{aligned}$$

This proves (3.2) and thus concludes the proof of Proposition 2.

Remark. At the end of the paper we propose a different proof of the estimate (3.2) that does not depend on the result of Dziubański and Hulanicki.

LEMMA 6. Let $f \in C^\infty(-1, 1)$ and $f(t) = 0$ for $-1 < t \leq 0$. If, for a $\gamma > 1$, $|f^{(k)}(t)| \leq R^k(k!)^\gamma$, $0 \leq t < 1$, $k = 0, 1, 2, \dots$, then

$$|f(t)| \leq e^{\gamma-1} \exp\{-(\gamma-1)e^{-1}(Rt)^{-1/(\gamma-1)}\}.$$

Proof.

$$\begin{aligned} |f(t)| &\leq \int_0^t \frac{(t-s)^k}{k!} |f^{(k+1)}(s)| ds \leq R^{k+1} ((k+1)!)^\gamma \frac{t^{k+1}}{(k+1)!} \\ &= R^{k+1} ((k+1)!)^{\gamma-1} t^{k+1} \leq [(Rt)^{1/(\gamma-1)}(k+1)]^{(\gamma-1)(k+1)}. \end{aligned}$$

Choose k so that $k+1 \leq e^{-1}(Rt)^{-1/(\gamma-1)} < k+2$. Then $(Rt)^{1/(\gamma-1)} \leq 1/(e(k+1))$ and so

$$\begin{aligned} |f(t)| &\leq [(Rt)^{1/(\gamma-1)}(k+1)]^{(\gamma-1)(k+1)} \leq e^{-(\gamma-1)(k+1)} \\ &\leq \exp\{-(\gamma-1)(e^{-1}(Rt)^{-1/(\gamma-1)}-1)\}, \end{aligned}$$

which proves the lemma.

We are now ready to prove Theorem 1. Since $\partial_t^\beta p = L^\beta p$ it suffices to estimate only the space derivatives $Y^\alpha p(t, x)$ of $p(t, x)$, for any multiindex α .

By applying Proposition 2 to the function $p(t, x)$, for any $(t_0, x_0) \neq (0, 0)$ in some neighborhood $U_{(t_0, x_0)}$ of (t_0, x_0) we have

$$(3.4) \quad \sup_{U_{(t_0, x_0)}} |\partial_t^k Y^\alpha p(t, x)| \leq C_0 R_0^k (k!)^{2n},$$

where the constant C_0 depends on (t_0, x_0) and α , whereas R_0 depends on (t_0, x_0) only.

The set $K = \{(t, x) \in \mathbb{R} \times G : -1 \leq t \leq 1, |x| = 1\}$ is compact and does not contain $(0, 0)$ so we cover it by a finite family of neighborhoods $U_{(t_i, x_i)}$ as above, and using (3.4) we get

$$\sup_K |\partial_t^k Y^\alpha p(t, x)| \leq CR^k (k!)^{2n},$$

with an absolute constant R and a $C = C(\alpha)$.

Since $p(t, x) = 0$ for $t \leq 0$, using Lemma 6 we estimate

$$|Y^\alpha p(t, x)| \leq C_{\alpha, K} e^{-a|t|^{1/(2n-1)}}$$

uniformly in $(t, x) \in K$, with a constant $a > 0$. As we mentioned before, one has

$$(Y^\alpha p_t)(\delta_{s^{-1}} x) = s^{|\alpha|+Q} Y^\alpha p_{s^{2n} t}(x).$$

Consequently, for $|x| \geq 1$

$$\begin{aligned} |Y^\alpha p_1(x)| &= |Y^\alpha p_1(\delta_{|x|} \delta_{|x|^{-1}} x)| = |x|^{|\alpha|+Q} |Y^\alpha p_{|x|^{-2n}}(\delta_{|x|^{-1}} x)| \\ &\leq C_{\alpha, K} |x|^{|\alpha|+Q} e^{-a|x|^{2n/(2n-1)}}. \end{aligned}$$

Take an arbitrary $0 < c_1 < a$. Since $|Y^\alpha p_1(x)|$ is bounded on $|x| \leq 1$, therefore, for a sufficiently large constant C_α

$$|Y^\alpha p_1(x)| \leq C_\alpha e^{-c_1|x|^{2n/(2n-1)}}.$$

Finally, by dilation

$$\begin{aligned} |Y^\alpha p_t(x)| &= |Y^\alpha p_t(\delta_{t^{1/(2n)}} \delta_{t^{-1/(2n)}} x)| \leq t^{-(|\alpha|+Q)/(2n)} |Y^\alpha p_1(\delta_{t^{-1/(2n)}} x)| \\ &\leq C_\alpha t^{-(|\alpha|+Q)/(2n)} \exp\{-c_1(|x|^{2n}/t)^{1/(2n-1)}\}. \end{aligned}$$

This concludes the proof of Theorem 1.

4. Another proof of (3.2). The following proof of (3.2), independent of the estimate (1.4), is a modification of a proof of a theorem in Hörmander's book [3], p. 353.

As usual, by $H(s)$ we will denote the ordinary Sobolev space of order s on \mathbf{R}^v and $\|u\|_{H(s)} = (\int_{\mathbf{R}^v} |\hat{u}(\xi)|^2 (1+|\xi|^2)^s d\xi)^{1/2}$ denotes the norm of $u \in H(s)$. We also write $\|f\|$ to denote the L^2 -norm of a function f on \mathbf{R}^v .

We write (3.2) in an equivalent form

$$(4.1) \quad \|\varphi_1 u\|_{H(s)} \leq C \sum_{r=0}^N \|\varphi_2 L^r u\|,$$

where φ_1, φ_2 are compactly supported C^∞ -functions, $\varphi_2 = 1$ on a neighborhood of the support of φ_1 , $N = N(s)$, $C = C(s, \varphi_1, \varphi_2)$. When $n = 1$, (4.1) is a subelliptic estimate used in the proof of Hörmander's hypoellipticity theorem (cf. [4]). It is easy to observe that Lemmas 3 and 4 give

$$\sum_{j=1}^m \|X_j(\varphi_1 u)\| \leq C(\|\varphi_2 L u\| + \|\varphi_2 u\|).$$

Set $Q_1 = \text{lin}\{X_i; i = 1, \dots, m\} \subseteq \mathfrak{g}$, $Q_{k+1} = [Q_k, Q_1]$, $k = 1, 2, \dots$, and $l = \min\{i: \mathfrak{g} = \text{lin}\{\bigcup_{k=1}^i Q_k\}\}$.

The following lemma is due to J. J. Kohn (cf. e.g. [5]).

LEMMA 7. *If $q_k \in Q_k$ and $\varepsilon \leq 2^{1-k}$ then*

$$(4.2) \quad \|q_k(\varphi_1 u)\|_{H(\varepsilon-1)} \leq C(\|\varphi_1 u\| + \sum_{i=1}^m \|X_i(\varphi_1 u)\|),$$

with a constant C independent of u .

COROLLARY 1.

$$\|\varphi_1 u\|_{H(1/2^{l-1})} \leq C(\|\varphi_2 L u\| + \|\varphi_2 u\|).$$

In fact, if q_1, \dots, q_v generate \mathfrak{g} then for $\varepsilon \leq 1/2^{l-1}$

$$\|\varphi_1 u\|_{H(\varepsilon)} \leq C \sum_{i=1}^v \|q_i \varphi_1 u\|_{H(\varepsilon-1)} \leq C'(\|\varphi_1 u\| + \sum_{i=1}^m \|X_i(\varphi_1 u)\|).$$

In order to get (4.1) we will need operators identifying different $H(s)$ and commuting with L . To do this we use powers of a right-invariant Laplacian on G . Denote it by Δ .

LEMMA 8. *For any number of the type $s = k/2^l$, k, l being integers, $l > 0$, the operator $(I-\Delta)^{s/2}$ is continuous from $H_{m,\text{comp}}$ to $H_{m-s,\text{loc}}$, $m \in \mathbf{R}$.*

Proof. For $s = 2$ or $s = -2$ the claim is well known (Friedrichs' inequality if $s = -2$). So, by induction, it suffices to prove that continuity for s implies continuity for $s/2$. Using the induction hypothesis, we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} \|(I-\Delta)^{s/2} u\| &= \langle (I-\Delta)^s u, u \rangle \\ &\leq \|(I-\Delta)^s u\|_{H(-s)} \|u\|_{H(s)} \leq C \|u\|_{H(s)}^2. \end{aligned}$$

Next, we estimate the norm $\|(I-\Delta)^{s/2} u\|_{H(2m)}$, m being an integer:

$$\begin{aligned} \|(I-\Delta)^m (I-\Delta)^{s/2} u\| &= \|(I-\Delta)^{s/2} (I-\Delta)^m u\| \\ &\leq C \|(I-\Delta)^m u\|_{H(s)} \leq C_1 \|u\|_{H(2m+s)}. \end{aligned}$$

The result for any m is now obtained by interpolation.

LEMMA 9. *The operator $(I-\Delta)^s$, $s \in \mathbf{R}$, is the operator of convolution with a distribution smooth outside zero. In addition, all derivatives of the kernel are integrable outside any neighborhood of zero.*

Proof. Since Δ is the image of a homogeneous right-invariant sublaplacian on a free nilpotent group it suffices to prove the lemma for such an operator.

In fact, if $G = F/N$ then

$$\begin{aligned} \int_{G \setminus U} |Y^\alpha \Delta^s(aN)| d(aN) &= \int_{F/N \setminus U/N} \left| \int_N Y^\alpha \Delta_F^s(an) dn \right| d(aN) \\ &\leq \int_{F \setminus \pi^{-1}(U)} |Y^\alpha \Delta_F^s(a)| da. \end{aligned}$$

Next, the smoothness follows from the integrability of derivatives.

Now, considering a nilpotent free group, we can apply the estimate of Theorem 1 for $L = \Delta_F$ and then (3.3) gives the integrability of $Y^\alpha (I-\Delta_F)^s$ outside any neighborhood of zero. This concludes the proof of Lemma 9.

Equipped with the above lemmas we can start the proof of (4.1). First, given neighborhoods $U \subset V$ of e , choose a C^∞ -function φ supported on V with $\varphi = 1$ on U . For any $s \in \mathbf{R}$ define compactly supported distributions $A_s = \varphi(I-\Delta)^{-s/2}$, $B_s = \varphi(I-\Delta)^{s/2}$ (now $(I-\Delta)^{-s/2}$, $(I-\Delta)^{s/2}$ are considered as distributions).

From Lemma 9 it follows that $W_1 = (I-\Delta)^{s/2} - B_s$ and $W_2 = (I-\Delta)^{-s/2} - A_s$ are integrable functions and, moreover, all their deriva-

tives are also integrable. Since

$$A_s * B_s = I - A_s * W_1 - W_2 * B_s + W_2 * W_1,$$

$A_s * B_s - I$ has a smooth kernel, and similarly for $B_s * A_s - I$.

It is easy to observe that, by induction, (4.1) follows from

$$(4.3) \quad \|\varphi_1 u\|_{H(s+c)} \leq C(\|\varphi_2' Lu\|_{H(s)} + \|\varphi_2' u\|_{H(s)}),$$

where φ_1, φ_2' are compactly supported C^∞ -functions, $\varphi_2' = 1$ on a neighborhood of $\text{supp } \varphi_1$. Now, define $K_1 = \text{supp } \varphi_1$, $K_4 = \{x: \varphi_2'(x) = 1\}$ and choose V , a symmetric neighborhood of zero, and compact sets K_2, K_3 satisfying $K_i \cdot V^2 \subseteq K_{i+1}$, $i = 1, 2, 3$. Choose also distributions A_s, B_s as above and C^∞ -functions ψ_i , $i = 1, \dots, 4$, $\psi_1 = \varphi_1$, $\text{supp } \psi_i \subseteq K_i$, $\psi_i = 1$ on $K_{i-1} \cdot V$, $i = 2, 3, 4$.

Now, since $\|u\|_{H(m)} \leq C(\|B_s u\|_{H(m-s)} + \|u\|_{H(m-s)})$ and $\|B_s u\|_{H(m)} \leq C\|u\|_{H(m+s)}$, we have

$$\begin{aligned} \|\psi_1 u\|_{H(s+c)} &\leq C(\|\psi_2 B_s u\|_{H(s)} + \|\psi_2 u\|_{H(s)}) \\ &\leq C_2(\|\psi_3 L B_s u\| + \|\psi_3 B_s u\| + \|\psi_2 u\|_{H(s)}) \\ &\leq C(\|\psi_4 Lu\|_{H(s)} + \|\psi_4 u\|_{H(s)}), \end{aligned}$$

which clearly gives (4.3) and thus concludes the proof of (4.1).

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