



ELSEVIER

Journal of Pure and Applied Algebra 95 (1994) 121–129

**JOURNAL OF
PURE AND
APPLIED ALGEBRA**

Finiteness conditions on groups and quasi-isometries

Juan M. Alonso¹*Department of Mathematics, University of Stockholm, S-106 91 Stockholm, Sweden*

Communicated by K. W. Gruenberg; received 29 June 1993

Abstract

We use *quasi-retractions* to show that the finiteness conditions F_n and FP_n are invariant under quasi-isometries, and give an application to group extensions

1. Introduction

Recall that a group G is said to be of type F_n ($n \geq 1$) if there exists an Eilenberg–Mac Lane complex $K(G, 1)$ with *finite* n -skeleton. Conditions F_1 , F_2 are equivalent, respectively, to G being finitely generated, finitely presented.

There is a corresponding homological version of this condition, defined as follows. A group G is said to be of type FP_n ($n \geq 1$) if the G -module \mathbb{Z} admits a projective resolution which is finitely generated in all dimensions $\leq n$. It is easy to see that G is of type FP_1 if and only if it is finitely generated. Every finitely presented group is of type FP_2 , but the converse is not known. Clearly F_n implies FP_n and, for $n \geq 3$, G is of type F_n if and only if it is finitely presented and of type FP_n .

In this paper we show that F_n and FP_n are preserved by *quasi-retractions*. This implies they are invariant under quasi-isometries. We use this together with a result from [3] (whose proof is included in an appendix) to give an application to group extensions.

2. Quasi-retractions

Given metric spaces (X, d) and (X', d') , recall that a (not necessarily continuous) function $f: X \rightarrow X'$ is called (C, D) -Lipschitz if there are constants $C \geq 1$ and $D \geq 0$

¹This research is partially supported by NFR, the Swedish Natural Science Research Council. Email: alonso@matematik.su.se. The final version of this paper was written while I was a visitor at Centre de Recerca Matemàtica (Bellaterra, Spain); I would like to thank C.R.M. for its hospitality.

such that for all $x, y \in X$, $d'(f(x), f(y)) \leq Cd(x, y) + D$. Note that the composition of Lipschitz functions is again Lipschitz.

Two metric spaces (X, d) and (X', d') are said to be *quasi-isometric* (abbreviated $X \sim_{\text{qi}} X'$) if there exist (not necessarily continuous) functions $f: X \rightarrow X'$ and $f': X' \rightarrow X$ and constants $C \geq 1$ and $D \geq 0$ such that f and f' are (C, D) -Lipschitz, and the following two conditions are satisfied:

$$d(f'f(x), x) \leq D \text{ for all } x \in X, \quad \text{and} \quad d'(ff'(x'), x') \leq D \text{ for all } x' \in X'.$$

Definition. We say that X is a *quasi-retract* of X' (and write $X \leq X'$) if there exist (C, D) -Lipschitz functions $X \xrightarrow{i} X' \xrightarrow{r} X$ such that for all $x \in X$, $d(ri(x), x) \leq D$. The pair (i, r) will be called a *quasi-retraction* of X' to X .

Remarks. (1) This notion is implicit in [1], where it is shown that if X and Y are Dehn complexes and X is a quasi-retract of Y , then $\delta_X < \delta_Y$, where δ_X is the Dehn or isoperimetric function of X (see [1] for details). Roughly speaking, $\delta_X < \delta_Y$ means that δ_X cannot grow faster than δ_Y . For instance, if $\delta_Y(n)$ ($n \in \mathbb{N}$) is bounded by a linear function of n , then so is δ_X .

(2) Our interest in quasi-retractions stems from the fact that if X and X' are quasi-isometric then $X \leq X'$ and $X' \leq X$.

Lemma 1. *Given metric spaces X , X' and X'' , if $X \leq X'$ and $X' \leq X''$ then $X \leq X''$.*

Proof. Let (i, r) be a quasi-retraction of X' to X and (i', r') a quasi-retraction of X'' to X' . Define $i'' = i' \circ i$ and $r'' = r \circ r'$. Then i'' and r'' are Lipschitz, and for all $x \in X$,

$$\begin{aligned} d_X(r''i''(x), x) &= d_X(rr'i'i(x), x) \\ &\leq d_X(rr'i'i(x), ri(x)) + d_X(ri(x), x) \\ &\leq Cd_X(r'i'(i(x)), i(x)) + 2D \leq (C + 2)D, \end{aligned}$$

as desired. \square

Corollary 2. *Quasi-retraction is a geometric property, i.e., it is preserved by quasi-isometries.*

Proof. Suppose that $X \leq X'$, $X \sim_{\text{qi}} Y$ and $X' \sim_{\text{qi}} Y'$. Then $Y \leq X \leq X' \leq Y'$ and Lemma 1 implies that $Y \leq Y'$, as was to be proved. \square

For a metric space (X, d) and an integer $p \geq 1$, the *Rips' complex* $P_p(X)$ of X is the simplicial complex whose simplices are all the finite subsets of X of diameter $\leq p$. For each pair (p, p') with $p \leq p'$, there are obvious (simplicial) inclusions $l_{(p, p')}: P_p(X) \hookrightarrow P_{p'}(X)$.

Suppose that $f: X \rightarrow X'$ is (C, D) -Lipschitz. Then f induces simplicial maps

$$f_{(p,q)}: P_p(X) \rightarrow P_q(X')$$

for all (p, q) with $q \geq Cp + D$. Indeed, if $\sigma = \{x_0, \dots, x_n\}$ is an n -simplex of $P_p(X)$, we set

$$f_{(p,q)}(\sigma) = \{f(x_0), \dots, f(x_n)\},$$

which is an m -simplex (for some $m \leq n$) of $P_q(X')$, since $d'(f(x_i), f(x_j)) \leq Cd(x_i, x_j) + D \leq Cp + D \leq q$. Moreover, if $X \xrightarrow{f} X' \xrightarrow{g} X''$ are (C, D) -Lipschitz functions, and (p, q) and (q, t) satisfy $q \geq Cp + D$ and $t \geq Cq + D$, then the maps $gf_{(p,t)}$, $g_{(q,t)}$ and $f_{(p,q)}$ are simplicial, and $gf_{(p,t)} = g_{(q,t)} \circ f_{(p,q)}$. We have thus proven the following lemma.

Lemma 3. *Let $f: X \rightarrow X'$ be a (C, D) -Lipschitz function. Then for every pair (p, q) with $q \geq Cp + D$, there is an induced simplicial map $f_{(p,q)}: P_p(X) \rightarrow P_q(X')$. Moreover, the diagram of simplicial maps*

$$\begin{array}{ccc} P_p(X) & \xrightarrow{l_{(p,p')}} & P_{p'}(X) \\ f_{(p,q)} \downarrow & & \downarrow f_{(p',q')} \\ P_q(X') & \xrightarrow{l_{(q,q')}} & P_{q'}(X') \end{array}$$

is commutative, whenever $p' \geq p$, $q' \geq q$, and $q \geq Cp + D$, $q' \geq Cp' + D$. \square

Lemma 4. *Suppose that $g, f: X \rightarrow X'$ are (C, D) -Lipschitz, and that for all $x \in X$, $d'(f(x), g(x)) \leq M$. Then for all (p, q) with $q \geq Cp + D + M$, the maps $f_{(p,q)}$, $g_{(p,q)}: P_p(X) \rightarrow P_q(X')$ are simplicially homotopic.*

Proof. We need to prove that for all simplices $\sigma \in P_p(X)$, $f_{(p,q)}(\sigma) \cup g_{(p,q)}(\sigma)$ is contained in a simplex of $P_q(X')$. But if $\sigma = \{x_0, \dots, x_n\}$, then

$$f_{(p,q)}(\sigma) \cup g_{(p,q)}(\sigma) = \{f(x_0), \dots, f(x_n), g(x_0), \dots, g(x_n)\}$$

is itself a simplex of $P_q(X')$, since the distance between any two of its vertices is bounded by at most $Cp + D + M$, and this is $\leq q$. \square

Combining the previous two lemmas we obtain:

Corollary 5. *Suppose that (i, r) is a quasi-retraction of X' to X . Then for all pairs (p, q) and (q, t) with $q \geq Cp + D$ and $t \geq Cq + 2D$, the simplicial maps*

$$l_{(p,t)}, r_{(q,t)} \circ i_{(p,q)}: P_p(X) \rightarrow P_t(X)$$

are simplicially homotopic. \square

3. The case of groups

Let G be a group and A a finite set of semigroup generators not containing the identity. We use A to turn G into a metric space by setting $d(g, h) = |g^{-1}h|_A$, where $|\cdot|_A$ is the word length in G relative to A . Then (G, d_A) is a metric space on which G acts by isometries (by left translation). Different choices of A produce very different metric spaces. However, they are all quasi-isometric (see Example (2) below). Metric properties that are invariant under quasi-isometries are important in group theory because whether or not they hold on (G, d_A) is independent of the particular A chosen. Thus they define genuinely group theoretical properties of G .

Examples. (1) Suppose that $f: G \rightarrow G'$ is a group homomorphism, and let $A \subset G$ and $A' \subset G'$ be finite generating sets as above. Then $f: (G, d_A) \rightarrow (G', d_{A'})$ is $(C, 0)$ -Lipschitz for $C = \max\{|f(a)|_{A'} | a \in A\}$.

(2) In particular, given two different generating sets $A, B \subset G$, the identity on G gives $(G, d_A) \sim_{\text{qi}} (G, d_B)$.

(3) If a subgroup H of G is a retract, then $H \preceq G$. This follows from (1) since by hypothesis there are group homomorphisms $H \xrightarrow{i} G \xrightarrow{r} H$ which satisfy $ri = \text{id}_H$.

Definition. Given finitely generated groups G and G' , we say that G is a *quasi-retract* of G' , and write $G \preceq G'$, if $(G, d_A) \preceq (G', d_{A'})$ for some choice of finite generating sets $A \subset G$ and $A' \subset G'$.

In view of Corollary 2 and the above examples, we have the following lemma.

Lemma 6. *Quasi-retraction of groups is a geometric property. In particular, the above definition is independent of the chosen generating sets. \square*

4. The Rips' filtration

We start by formulating two very useful criteria of Brown's [4]. Suppose that X is a G -CW-complex. X is called *n-good* for G if (a) X is acyclic in dimensions $< n$ (i.e. the reduced homology $\tilde{H}_k(X) = 0$ for $k < n$), and (b) for $0 \leq p \leq n$, the stabilizer G_σ of any p -cell σ of X is of type FP_{n-p} . A *filtration* of X is a family $\{X_\alpha\}_{\alpha \in D}$ of G -invariant subcomplexes such that D is a directed set, $X_\alpha \subseteq X_\beta$ when $\alpha \leq \beta$, and $X = \bigcup_\alpha X_\alpha$. When the X_α have a finite n -skeleton mod G , the filtration will be said to be of finite *n-type*. Following Brown [4] we say that $\{X_\alpha\}$ is \tilde{H}_k -essentially trivial (resp. π_k -essentially trivial) if for each α there is $\beta \geq \alpha$ such that $\tilde{H}_k(l_{\alpha, \beta})$ (resp. $\pi_k(l_{\alpha, \beta})$) is trivial, where $l_{\alpha, \beta}: X_\alpha \hookrightarrow X_\beta$ is the inclusion. We can now formulate the following theorems.

Theorem (Brown). *Let X be an n -good G -complex with a filtration $\{X_\alpha\}$ of finite n -type. Then G is of type FP_n if and only if the directed system $\{X_\alpha\}$ is \tilde{H}_k -essentially trivial for each $k < n$. \square*

Theorem (Brown). *Let X be a 1-connected G -complex such that the vertex stabilizers are finitely presented and the edge stabilizers are finitely generated. Let $\{X_\alpha\}$ be a filtration of X such that each X_α has a finite 2-skeleton mod G , and let $v \in \bigcap X_\alpha$ be a basepoint. If G is finitely generated, then G is finitely presented if and only if $\{(X_\alpha, v)\}$ is π_1 -essentially trivial. \square*

Let G be a finitely generated group, with some generating set A as before. Consider G as a metric space with $d = d_A$. Since we want to apply Brown’s theorems, rather than being interested in some specific Rips’ complex, we focus attention on the whole sequence $\{P_p(G)\}_{p \in \mathbb{N}}$ which filters the “infinite simplex” $P_\infty(G)$. Note that $P_\infty(G)$ is contractible.

In the case of groups, the Rips’ complexes have some important special features. Indeed, G acts simplicially and with finite stabilizers on each $P_p(G)$. For $p \leq p'$, $P_p(G)$ is G -invariant in $P_{p'}(G)$, and we let $l_{(p,p')}$ denote the inclusion $P_p(G) \subset P_{p'}(G)$. Also, $P_\infty(G) = \bigcup_p P_p(G)$. The fact that the balls in G (of any radius and centered, say, at the identity of G) are finite, implies that $P_p(G)$ is finite-dimensional and locally finite (so that, in particular, $P_p(G)$ is finite mod G). In conclusion, we have the following lemma (cf. [2]).

Lemma 7. *Let G be a group. Then the complex $P_\infty(G)$ is an n -good G -complex for all $n \geq 1$. If G is finitely generated, then $\{P_p(G)\}_{p \in \mathbb{N}}$ is a filtration of $P_\infty(G)$ which is of finite n -type for all $n \geq 1$.*

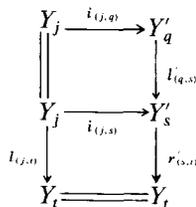
We are now ready to prove the following.

Theorem 8. *Suppose that G is a quasi-retract of G' , and let $n \geq 2$. Then*

- (i) *if G' is of type FP_n , then so is G ,*
- (ii) *if G' is of type F_n , then so is G .*

Proof. We prove (i) first. For $0 \leq j \leq \infty$, set $Y_j = P_j(G)$, $Y'_j = P_j(G')$. By Brown’s theorem and Lemma 7, it suffices to show that $\{Y_j\}_{j \geq 0}$ is \tilde{H}_k -essentially trivial for $k < n$.

Suppose that (i, r) is a quasi-retraction (with Lipschitz constants C and D) of G' to G , and that $q \geq Cj + D$. Consider the diagram:



By hypothesis, G' is of type FP_n . This is equivalent, by Brown's theorem and Lemma 7, to the existence of $s \geq q$ such that $l'_{(q,s)}$ induces the trivial homomorphism on $\tilde{H}_k(Y'_q)$ for $k < n$. Choose $t \geq Cs + D$. Then the square on top commutes by Lemma 3, and $r_{(s,t)} \circ i_{(j,s)} \simeq l_{(j,t)}$ by Corollary 5. Thus $\tilde{H}_k(l_{(j,t)}) = \tilde{H}_k(r_{(s,t)} \circ i_{(j,s)}) = \tilde{H}_k(r_{(s,t)} \circ l'_{(q,s)} \circ i_{(j,q)}) = \tilde{H}_k(r_{(s,t)}) \circ \tilde{H}_k(l'_{(q,s)}) \circ \tilde{H}_k(i_{(j,q)}) = 0$ for $k < n$. This concludes the proof of (i).

As remarked in the Introduction, F_n is equivalent to F_2 together with FP_n . To prove (ii) for all $n \geq 2$ it is sufficient, in view of (i), to consider only the case $n = 2$. For this purpose, one repeats the above argument but using instead the second of Brown's theorems quoted above. We leave the details to the reader. This completes the proof. \square

Corollary 9. *For $n \geq 2$, the following finiteness conditions:*

- (1) type FP_n ,
- (2) type F_n ,

are geometric properties, i.e. they are invariant under quasi-isometries. \square

Remark. Condition F_2 is well-known to be geometric and can be proved directly, avoiding Brown's theorem (see [5]). That FP_n and F_{n+1} are geometric for $n \geq 2$ seems to be new.

5. Group extensions

Suppose given an extension of groups

$$H \rightarrow G \xrightarrow{\pi} Q$$

and let $\mu: Q \rightarrow G$ be a set-theoretic cross-section of π . Recall that this determines a cocycle $f: Q \times Q \rightarrow H$ (which measures the failure of μ to be a homomorphism), and a function $\varphi: Q \rightarrow \text{Aut}(H)$ given by $\varphi(x)[a] = \mu(x)a\mu(x)^{-1}$, which is usually *not* a homomorphism. However, the composition of φ with $\text{Aut}(H) \rightarrow \text{Out}(H)$ is always a homomorphism $Q \rightarrow \text{Out}(H)$. The section μ also allows us to view G as the set $H \times Q$. In fact, given φ and f as above, we can recover the original extension by describing G as the set $H \times Q$ with the product:

$$(a, x) \bullet (b, y) = (a\varphi(x)[b]f(x, y), xy).$$

In this situation, we say that the extension $H \rightarrow G \xrightarrow{\pi} Q$ is "defined" by f and φ . With this terminology we have the following

Theorem 10. *Let $H \rightarrow G \rightarrow Q$ be an extension defined by a homomorphism $\varphi: Q \rightarrow \text{Out}(H)$ and a cocycle $f: Q \times Q \rightarrow H$, where H and Q are finitely generated groups. Suppose that $(\text{im } \varphi)$ and $(\text{im } f)$ are finite. Then for all $n \geq 2$ we have:*

- (i) G is of type FP_n if and only if H and Q are of type FP_n ,
- (ii) G is of type F_n if and only if H and Q are of type F_n .

Proof. The hypothesis on f and φ imply that G is quasi-isometric to $H \times Q$ (see the Appendix). By Corollary 9, G is of type FP_n (resp. of type F_n) if and only if the same is true for $H \times Q$. Using Theorem 8 we conclude that both H and Q must then be of type FP_n (resp. of type F_n). The converse is clear. This concludes the proof. \square

Appendix

For the convenience of the reader and to complete the proof of Theorem 10, we reproduce here a proof of a result of [3]. But first some preliminaries.

Lemma A.1. *Let A be a finite set of generators of a group G , and let $|-|$ denote the corresponding word length. Suppose that Γ is a finite subset of automorphisms of G . Then there exists a positive constant M such that*

$$\frac{1}{M}|x| \leq |\gamma(x)| \leq M|x|,$$

for all $\gamma \in \Gamma \cup \Gamma^{-1}$ and all $x \in G$.

Proof. Let $\Gamma' = \Gamma \cup \Gamma^{-1}$, and suppose that $A = \{a_1, \dots, a_n\}$. Set $M = \max\{|\gamma(a)| : \gamma \in \Gamma', a \in A\}$. We suppose that $x \in G$ has length k , so $x = a_{i_1} \cdots a_{i_k}$ for some $a_{i_j} \in A$. Then, for any $\gamma \in \Gamma'$, $|\gamma(x)| = |\gamma(a_{i_1}) \cdots \gamma(a_{i_k})| \leq |\gamma(a_{i_1})| + \cdots + |\gamma(a_{i_k})| \leq Mk = M|x|$. Similarly, $|x| = |\gamma^{-1}(\gamma(x))| \leq M|\gamma(x)|$. This completes the proof. \square

The conventions we use in the formulation and proof of the following proposition are explained in Section 5.

Proposition A.2. *Let $H \twoheadrightarrow G \twoheadrightarrow Q$ be an extension defined by a homomorphism $\varphi: Q \rightarrow \text{Out}(H)$ and a cocycle $f: Q \times Q \rightarrow H$, where H and Q are finitely generated groups. Suppose that $(\text{im } \varphi)$ and $(\text{im } f)$ are finite. Then G is quasi-isometric to $H \times Q$.*

Proof. We shall denote the direct product of the groups H and Q by $H \times Q$, and we reserve G to denote the set $H \times Q$ with the operation \bullet defined before the statement of Theorem 10. Let S be a set of generators for both G and $H \times Q$, chosen as follows. Let $S_H \subset H$ (resp. $S_Q \subset Q$) be a symmetric set of generators of H (resp. Q), and set $S = S_H \times \{1\} \cup \{1\} \times S_Q$. The metrics induced by S on G (resp. on $H \times Q$) will be denoted d_G (resp. $d_{H \times Q}$). Similarly, $|-|_G$ and $|-|_{H \times Q}$ will denote the corresponding length functions on G and $H \times Q$. Note that $|(a, x)|_{H \times Q} = |a|_H + |x|_Q$, and consequently $d_{H \times Q}((a, x), (b, y)) = d_H(a, b) + d_Q(x, y)$. Note also that it follows from our choice of S that

$$|(a, 1)|_G \leq |a|_H \quad \text{and} \quad |x|_Q \leq |(a, x)|_G,$$

for all $a \in H$ and $x \in Q$. We prove first that there exists a constant C such that for all (a, x) ,

$$\frac{1}{C} |(a, x)|_{H \times Q} \leq |(a, x)|_G \leq C |(a, x)|_{H \times Q}. \tag{A.1}$$

Let M_1 be the constant of Lemma A.1 for $\Gamma = \text{im } \varphi$, and $M_2 = \max \{|b|_H \mid b^{\pm 1} \in \text{im } f\}$. We set $M = \max \{M_1, M_2\}$.

Suppose now that $|(a, x)|_G = n$, and let $(a, x) = (a_1, x_1) \bullet \cdots \bullet (a_n, x_n)$ with $(a_i, x_i) \in S$. Then

$$(a, x) = (a_1 \varphi(x_1)[a_2] f(x_1, x_2) \cdots \varphi(x_1 \cdots x_{n-1})[a_n] f(x_1 \cdots x_{n-1}, x_n), x_1 \cdots x_n),$$

and hence

$$\begin{aligned} |(a, x)|_{H \times Q} &\leq |a_1|_H + |\varphi(x_1)[a_2]|_H \\ &\quad + |f(x_1, x_2)|_H + \cdots + |f(x_1 \cdots x_{n-1}, x_n)|_H + |x|_Q \\ &\leq nM + (n - 1)M + n \leq (2M + 1)|(a, x)|_G. \end{aligned}$$

To prove the other inequality, suppose that $|(a, x)|_{H \times Q} = n$, and let $(a, x) = (a_1, x_1) \cdots (a_n, x_n) = (a_1 \cdots a_n, x_1 \cdots x_n)$, where $(a_i, x_i) \in S$. From

$$(a, 1) = (a_1, 1) \bullet \cdots \bullet (a_n, 1) \quad \text{and}$$

$$(1, x_1) \bullet \cdots \bullet (1, x_n) = (f(x_1, x_2) \cdots f(x_1 \cdots x_{n-1}, x_n), x) = (e, x),$$

where $e = f(x_1, x_2) \cdots f(x_1 \cdots x_{n-1}, x_n)$, it follows that $|(a, 1)|_G \leq n$ and $|(e, x)|_G \leq n$. Since $(a, x) = (a, 1) \bullet (e^{-1}, 1) \bullet (e, x)$, we have

$$\begin{aligned} |(a, x)|_G &\leq 2n + |(e^{-1}, 1)|_G \leq 2n + |e|_H \\ &\leq 2n + (n - 1)M \leq (M + 2)|(a, x)|_{H \times Q}. \end{aligned}$$

This concludes the proof of (A.1). It is now easy to establish the proposition. Indeed,

$$\begin{aligned} d_G((a, x), (b, y)) &= |([f(x^{-1}, x)]^{-1} \varphi(x^{-1})[a^{-1}b] f(x^{-1}, x), x^{-1}y)|_G \\ &\leq |([f(x^{-1}, x)]^{-1}, 1)|_G + |(\varphi(x^{-1})[a^{-1}b], 1)|_G \\ &\quad + |(f(x^{-1}, x), 1)|_G + |(1, x^{-1}y)|_G \\ &\leq 2|f(x^{-1}, x)|_H + |\varphi(x^{-1})[a^{-1}b]|_H + |(1, x^{-1}y)|_{H \times Q} \\ &\leq 2M + M|a^{-1}b|_H + C|x^{-1}y|_Q \quad (\text{by Lemma A.1}) \\ &\leq 2M + C'd_{H \times Q}((a, x), (b, y)), \end{aligned} \tag{A.2}$$

for $C' = \max\{M, C\}$. On the other hand,

$$\begin{aligned}
 d_{H \times Q}((a, x), (b, y)) &= |a^{-1}b|_H + |x^{-1}y|_Q \\
 &\leq M|\varphi(x^{-1})[a^{-1}b]|_H + |x^{-1}y|_Q \quad (\text{by Lemma 7}) \\
 &\leq M\{|f(x^{-1}, x)|^{-1} \varphi(x^{-1})[a^{-1}b]f(x^{-1}, x)|_H + 2M\} + |x^{-1}y|_Q \\
 &\leq M\{|([f(x^{-1}, x)]^{-1} \varphi(x^{-1})[a^{-1}b]f(x^{-1}, x), x^{-1}y)|_{H \times Q} + 2M\} \\
 &\quad + |([f(x^{-1}, x)]^{-1} \varphi(x^{-1})[a^{-1}b]f(x^{-1}, x), x^{-1}y)|_G \\
 &\leq (MC + 1)|([f(x^{-1}, x)]^{-1} \varphi(x^{-1})[a^{-1}b]f(x^{-1}, x), x^{-1}y)|_G + 2M^2 \\
 &= (MC + 1)d_G((a, x), (b, y)) + 2M^2. \tag{A.3}
 \end{aligned}$$

This completes the proof, since (A.2) and (A.3) show that the identity function on $H \times Q$ induces a quasi-isometry.

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