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Vector fields on manifolds play a major role in mathematics and other sciences. In particular, the Poincaré-Hopf index theorem gives rise to the theory of Chern classes, key manifold-invariants in geometry and topology.

It is natural to ask what is the 'good' notion of the index of a vector field, and of Chern classes, if the underlying space becomes singular. The question has been explored by several authors resulting in various answers, starting with the pioneering work of M.-H. Schwartz and R. MacPherson.

We present these notions in the framework of the obstruction theory and the Chern-Weil theory. The interplay between these two methods is one of the main features of the monograph.