

Polyhedral products, loop homology and right-angled Coxeter groups

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1. Preliminaries

Polyhedral product

$(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A}) = \{(X_1, A_1), \dots, (X_m, A_m)\}$ a sequence of pairs of spaces, $A_i \subset X_i$.

\mathcal{K} a simplicial complex on $[m] = \{1, 2, \dots, m\}$, $\emptyset \in \mathcal{K}$.

Given $I = \{i_1, \dots, i_k\} \subset [m]$, set

$$(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^I = Y_1 \times \dots \times Y_m \quad \text{where } Y_i = \begin{cases} X_i & \text{if } i \in I, \\ A_i & \text{if } i \notin I. \end{cases}$$

The \mathcal{K} -polyhedral product of (\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A}) is

$$(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^{\mathcal{K}} = \bigcup_{I \in \mathcal{K}} (\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^I = \bigcup_{I \in \mathcal{K}} \left(\prod_{i \in I} X_i \times \prod_{j \notin I} A_j \right) \subset \prod_{i=1}^m X_i.$$

Notation: $(X, A)^{\mathcal{K}} = (\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^{\mathcal{K}}$ when all $(X_i, A_i) = (X, A)$;

$\mathbf{X}^{\mathcal{K}} = (\mathbf{X}, pt)^{\mathcal{K}}$, $X^{\mathcal{K}} = (X, pt)^{\mathcal{K}}$.

Categorical approach

Category of faces $\text{CAT}(\mathcal{K})$.

Objects: simplices $I \in \mathcal{K}$. Morphisms: inclusions $I \subset J$.

TOP the category of topological spaces.

Define the $\text{CAT}(\mathcal{K})$ -diagram

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{D}_{\mathcal{K}}(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A}) : \text{CAT}(\mathcal{K}) &\longrightarrow \text{TOP}, \\ I &\longmapsto (\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^I, \end{aligned}$$

which maps the morphism $I \subset J$ of $\text{CAT}(\mathcal{K})$ to the inclusion of spaces $(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^I \subset (\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^J$.

Then we have

$$(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^{\mathcal{K}} = \text{colim } \mathcal{D}_{\mathcal{K}}(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A}) = \text{colim}_{I \in \mathcal{K}} (\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^I.$$

Replacing spaces by groups in the construction of the polyhedral product $\mathbf{X}^{\mathcal{K}} = \operatorname{colim}_{I \in \mathcal{K}} \mathbf{X}^I$ we arrive at the following

Graph product

$\mathbf{G} = (G_1, \dots, G_m)$ a sequence of m (topological) groups, $G_i \neq \{1\}$.

Given $I = \{i_1, \dots, i_k\} \subset [m]$, set

$$\mathbf{G}^I = \{(g_1, \dots, g_m) \in \prod_{k=1}^m G_k : g_k = 1 \text{ for } k \notin I\}.$$

Consider the following $\operatorname{CAT}(\mathcal{K})$ -diagram of groups:

$$\mathcal{D}_{\mathcal{K}}(\mathbf{G}) : \operatorname{CAT}(\mathcal{K}) \longrightarrow \operatorname{GRP}, \quad I \longmapsto \mathbf{G}^I,$$

which maps a morphism $I \subset J$ to the canonical monomorphism $\mathbf{G}^I \rightarrow \mathbf{G}^J$.

The **graph product** of the groups G_1, \dots, G_m is

$$\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}} = \operatorname{colim}^{\operatorname{GRP}} \mathcal{D}_{\mathcal{K}}(\mathbf{G}) = \operatorname{colim}_{I \in \mathcal{K}}^{\operatorname{GRP}} \mathbf{G}^I.$$

The graph product $\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}}$ depends only on the 1-skeleton (graph) of \mathcal{K} .
Namely,

Proposition

The is an isomorphism of groups

$$\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}} \cong \bigstar_{k=1}^m G_k / (g_i g_j = g_j g_i \text{ for } g_i \in G_i, g_j \in G_j, \{i, j\} \in \mathcal{K}),$$

where $\bigstar_{k=1}^m G_k$ denotes the free product of the groups G_k .

Example

Let $G_i = \mathbb{Z}$. Then $\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}}$ is the **right-angled Artin group**

$$RA_{\mathcal{K}} = F(g_1, \dots, g_m) / (g_i g_j = g_j g_i \text{ for } \{i, j\} \in \mathcal{K}),$$

where $F(g_1, \dots, g_m)$ is a free group with m generators.

When \mathcal{K} is a full simplex, we have $RA_{\mathcal{K}} = \mathbb{Z}^m$. When \mathcal{K} is m points, we obtain a free group of rank m .

Example

Let $G_i = \mathbb{Z}_2$. Then $\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}}$ is the **right-angled Coxeter group**

$$RC_{\mathcal{K}} = F(g_1, \dots, g_m) / (g_i^2 = 1, g_i g_j = g_j g_i \text{ for } \{i, j\} \in \mathcal{K}).$$

2. Classifying spaces

A natural question: when $B(\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}}) \simeq (B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}$?

Proposition

There is a homotopy fibration

$$(E\mathbf{G}, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow \prod_{k=1}^m B\mathbf{G}_k.$$

In particular, there are homotopy fibrations

$$(\mathbb{R}, \mathbb{Z})^{\mathcal{K}} = \mathcal{L}_{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (S^1)^{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (S^1)^m \quad G = \mathbb{Z}$$

$$(D^1, S^0)^{\mathcal{K}} = \mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (\mathbb{R}P^{\infty})^{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (\mathbb{R}P^{\infty})^m \quad G = \mathbb{Z}_2$$

$$(D^2, S^1)^{\mathcal{K}} = \mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (\mathbb{C}P^{\infty})^{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (\mathbb{C}P^{\infty})^m \quad G = S^1$$

A **missing face** (a **minimal non-face**) of \mathcal{K} is a subset $I \subset [m]$ such that $I \notin \mathcal{K}$, but $J \in \mathcal{K}$ for each $J \subsetneq I$.

\mathcal{K} a **flag complex** if each of its missing faces consists of two vertices. Equivalently, \mathcal{K} is flag if any set of vertices of \mathcal{K} which are pairwise connected by edges spans a simplex.

Every flag complex \mathcal{K} is determined by its 1-skeleton \mathcal{K}^1 , and is obtained from the graph \mathcal{K}^1 by filling in all complete subgraphs by simplices.

Theorem (P.–Ray–Vogt, 2002)

$B(\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}}) \simeq (B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}$ if and only if \mathcal{K} is flag.

Higher Whitehead products in $\pi_*((B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}})$ are what obstructs the homotopy equivalence $B(\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}}) \simeq (B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}$ in the general case.

This can be fixed by replacing colim by hocolim in the definition of the graph product $\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}} = \operatorname{colim}_{I \in \mathcal{K}}^{\text{GRP}} \mathbf{G}^I$.

In the case of discrete groups we obtain

Proposition

Let $\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}}$ be a graph product of discrete groups.

- 1 $\pi_1((B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}) \cong \mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}}$.
- 2 Both spaces $(B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}$ and $(E\mathbf{G}, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}$ are aspherical iff \mathcal{K} is flag.
- 3 $\pi_i((B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}) \cong \pi_i((E\mathbf{G}, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}})$ for $i \geq 2$.
- 4 $\pi_1((E\mathbf{G}, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}})$ is isomorphic to the kernel of the canonical projection $\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}} \rightarrow \prod_{k=1}^m G_k$ (the *Cartesian subgroup* of $\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}}$).

Part of proof

Assume now that \mathcal{K} is not flag. Choose a missing face

$J = \{j_1, \dots, j_k\} \subset [m]$ with $k \geq 3$ vertices. Let $\mathcal{K}_J = \{I \in \mathcal{K} : I \subset J\}$.

Then $(B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}_J}$ is the fat wedge of the spaces $\{BG_j, j \in J\}$, and it is a retract of $(B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}$.

The homotopy fibre of the inclusion $(B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}_J} \rightarrow \prod_{j \in J} BG_j$ is $\Sigma^{k-1} G_{j_1} \wedge \dots \wedge G_{j_k}$, a wedge of $(k-1)$ -dimensional spheres.

Hence, $\pi_{k-1}((B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}_J}) \neq 0$ where $k \geq 3$.

Thus, $(B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}_J}$ and $(B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}$ are non-aspherical.

The rest of the proof (the asphericity of $(E\mathbf{G}, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}$ and statements (3) and (4)) follow from the homotopy exact sequence of the fibration $(E\mathbf{G}, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}} \rightarrow (B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}} \rightarrow \prod_{k=1}^m BG_k$.

Specialising to the cases $G_k = \mathbb{Z}$ and $G_k = \mathbb{Z}_2$ respectively we obtain:

Corollary

Let $RA_{\mathcal{K}}$ be a right-angled Artin group.

- 1 $\pi_1((S^1)^{\mathcal{K}}) \cong RA_{\mathcal{K}}$.
- 2 Both $(S^1)^{\mathcal{K}}$ and $\mathcal{L}_{\mathcal{K}} = (\mathbb{R}, \mathbb{Z})^{\mathcal{K}}$ are aspherical iff \mathcal{K} is flag.
- 3 $\pi_i((S^1)^{\mathcal{K}}) \cong \pi_i(\mathcal{L}_{\mathcal{K}})$ for $i \geq 2$.
- 4 $\pi_1(\mathcal{L}_{\mathcal{K}})$ is isomorphic to the commutator subgroup $RA'_{\mathcal{K}}$.

Corollary

Let $RC_{\mathcal{K}}$ be a right-angled Coxeter group.

- 1 $\pi_1((\mathbb{R}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}) \cong RC_{\mathcal{K}}$.
- 2 Both $(\mathbb{R}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}$ and $\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}} = (D^1, S^0)^{\mathcal{K}}$ are aspherical iff \mathcal{K} is flag.
- 3 $\pi_i((\mathbb{R}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}) \cong \pi_i(\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}})$ for $i \geq 2$.
- 4 $\pi_1(\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}})$ is isomorphic to the commutator subgroup $RC'_{\mathcal{K}}$.

Example

Let \mathcal{K} be an m -cycle (the boundary of an m -gon).

A simple argument with Euler characteristic shows that $\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}} = (D^1, S^0)^{\mathcal{K}}$ is homeomorphic to a closed orientable surface of genus $(m-4)2^{m-3} + 1$.

(This observation goes back to a 1938 work of Coxeter.)

Therefore, the commutator subgroup of the corresponding right-angled Coxeter group $RC_{\mathcal{K}}$ is a surface group.

Similarly, when $|\mathcal{K}| \cong S^2$ (which is equivalent to \mathcal{K} being the boundary of a 3-dimensional simplicial polytope), $\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}}$ is a 3-dimensional manifold.

Therefore, the commutator subgroup of the corresponding $RC_{\mathcal{K}}$ is a 3-manifold group.

3. Commutator subgroups and subalgebras

First consider the case $G_i = S^1$. The homotopy fibration

$$(D^2, S^1)^{\mathcal{K}} = \mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^m$$

splits after looping:

$$\Omega(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}} \simeq \Omega\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}} \times T^m$$

Warning: this is not an H -space splitting!

Proposition

There exists an exact sequence of Hopf algebras (over a base ring k)

$$k \longrightarrow H_*(\Omega\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}) \longrightarrow H_*(\Omega(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}) \xrightarrow{\text{Ab}} \Lambda[u_1, \dots, u_m] \longrightarrow 0$$

where $\Lambda[u_1, \dots, u_m]$ denotes the exterior algebra and $\deg u_i = 1$.

Here, $H_*(\Omega\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}})$ is the commutator subalgebra of a largely non-commutative algebra $H_*(\Omega(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}})$.

Consider the **graph product Lie algebra**

$$L_{\mathcal{K}} = FL\langle u_1, \dots, u_m \rangle / ([u_i, u_j] = 0, [u_i, u_j] = 0 \text{ for } \{i, j\} \in \mathcal{K}),$$

where $FL\langle u_1, \dots, u_m \rangle$ is the free graded Lie algebra, $\deg u_i = 1$, and $[a, b] = -(-1)^{|a||b|}[b, a]$ denotes the graded Lie bracket.

We can write $L_{\mathcal{K}} = \operatorname{colim}_{I \in \mathcal{K}}^{\text{GLA}} CL\langle u_i : i \in I \rangle$, where CL denotes the trivial graded Lie algebra and the colimit taken in the category of graded Lie algebras. (Similar to $RC_{\mathcal{K}} = \operatorname{colim}_{I \in \mathcal{K}}^{\text{GRP}} (\mathbb{Z}_2)^I$.)

The universal enveloping algebra of $L_{\mathcal{K}}$ is the quotient of the free associative algebra $T\langle \lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_m \rangle$ by the same relations.

Theorem

There is an injective homomorphism of Hopf algebras

$$T\langle u_1, \dots, u_m \rangle / (u_i^2 = 0, u_i u_j + u_j u_i = 0 \text{ for } \{i, j\} \in \mathcal{K}) \hookrightarrow H_*(\Omega(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}})$$

which is an isomorphism if and only if \mathcal{K} is flag.

Now consider the case of discrete G_i (e. g., $G_i = \mathbb{Z}_2$). The homotopy fibration

$$(EG, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (B\mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow \prod_{k=1}^m BG_k.$$

gives rise to a short exact sequence of groups

$$1 \longrightarrow \pi_1((EG, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}) \longrightarrow \mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow \prod_{k=1}^m G_k \longrightarrow 1$$

so

$$\text{Ker}\left(\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}} \rightarrow \prod_{k=1}^m G_k\right) = \pi_1((EG, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}).$$

In the case of right-angled Artin or Coxeter groups (or when each G_i is abelian), the group above is the commutator subgroup $(\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}})'$.

Theorem (Grbić–P–Theriault–Wu, 2012)

Assume that \mathcal{K} is flag. The commutator subalgebra $H_*(\Omega\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}})$ is generated by $\sum_{I \subset [m]} \dim \tilde{H}^0(\mathcal{K}_I)$ iterated commutators of the form

$$[u_j, u_i], \quad [u_{k_1}, [u_j, u_i]], \quad \dots, \quad [u_{k_1}, [u_{k_2}, \dots [u_{k_{m-2}}, [u_j, u_i]] \dots]]$$

where $k_1 < k_2 < \dots < k_p < j > i$, $k_s \neq i$ for any s , and i is the smallest vertex in a connected component not containing j of the subcomplex $\mathcal{K}_{\{k_1, \dots, k_p, j, i\}}$. Furthermore, this multiplicative generating set is minimal, that is, the commutators above form a basis in the submodule of indecomposables in $H_*(\Omega\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}})$.

Theorem (P–Veryovkin, 2016)

The commutator subgroup $RC'_{\mathcal{K}} = \pi_1(\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}}) = H_*(\Omega\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}})$ has a minimal generator set consisting of $\sum_{J \subset [m]} \text{rank } H_0(\mathcal{K}_J)$ iterated commutators

$$(g_j, g_i), \quad (g_{k_1}, (g_j, g_i)), \quad \dots, \quad (g_{k_1}, (g_{k_2}, \dots (g_{k_{m-2}}, (g_j, g_i)) \dots)),$$

with the same condition on the indices as in the previous theorem.

4. When the commutator subgroup is free?

A graph Γ is called **chordal** (in other terminology, **triangulated**) if each of its cycles with ≥ 4 vertices has a chord.

By a result of Fulkerson–Gross, a graph is chordal if and only if its vertices can be ordered in such a way that, for each vertex i , the lesser neighbours of i form a complete subgraph. (A **perfect elimination order**.)

Theorem (Grbić–P–Theriault–Wu, 2012)

Let \mathcal{K} be a flag complex and k a field. The following conditions are equivalent:

- 1 $H_*(\Omega\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}; k)$ is a free associative algebra;
- 2 $\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}$ has homotopy type of a wedge of spheres;
- 3 \mathcal{K}^1 is a chordal graph.

Theorem (P–Veryovkin, 2016)

Let \mathcal{K} be a flag complex. The following conditions are equivalent:

- 1 $\text{Ker}(\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}} \rightarrow \prod_{k=1}^m G_k)$ is a free group;
- 2 $(E\mathbf{G}, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}}$ is homotopy equivalent to a wedge of circles;
- 3 \mathcal{K}^1 is a chordal graph.

Proof

(2) \Rightarrow (1) Because $\text{Ker}(\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}} \rightarrow \prod_{k=1}^m G_k) = \pi_1((E\mathbf{G}, \mathbf{G})^{\mathcal{K}})$.

(3) \Rightarrow (2) Use induction and perfect elimination order.

(1) \Rightarrow (3) Assume that \mathcal{K}^1 is not chordal. Then, for each chordless cycle of length ≥ 4 , one can find a subgroup in $\text{Ker}(\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}} \rightarrow \prod_{k=1}^m G_k)$ which is a surface group. Hence, $\text{Ker}(\mathbf{G}^{\mathcal{K}} \rightarrow \prod_{k=1}^m G_k)$ is not a free group.

Corollary

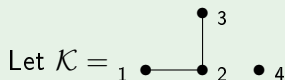
Let $RA_{\mathcal{K}}$ and $RC_{\mathcal{K}}$ be the right-angled Artin and Coxeter groups corresponding to a simplicial complex \mathcal{K} .

- (a) The commutator subgroup $RA'_{\mathcal{K}}$ is free iff \mathcal{K}^1 is a chordal graph.
- (b) The commutator subgroup $RC'_{\mathcal{K}}$ is free iff \mathcal{K}^1 is a chordal graph.

Part (a) is the result of Servatius, Droms and Servatius.

The difference between (a) and (b) is that the commutator subgroup $RA'_{\mathcal{K}}$ is infinitely generated, unless $RA_{\mathcal{K}} = \mathbb{Z}^m$, while the commutator subgroup $RC'_{\mathcal{K}}$ is finitely generated.

Example



Then the commutator subgroup $RC'_{\mathcal{K}}$ is free with the following basis:

$$\begin{aligned} & (g_3, g_1), (g_4, g_1), (g_4, g_2), (g_4, g_3), \\ & (g_2, (g_4, g_1)), (g_3, (g_4, g_1)), (g_1, (g_4, g_3)), (g_3, (g_4, g_2)), \\ & (g_2, (g_3, (g_4, g_1))). \end{aligned}$$

Example

Let \mathcal{K} be an m -cycle with $m \geq 4$ vertices.

Then \mathcal{K}^1 is not a chordal graph, so the group $RC'_{\mathcal{K}}$ is not free.

In fact, $\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}}$ is an orientable surface of genus $(m-4)2^{m-3} + 1$, so $RC'_{\mathcal{K}} \cong \pi_1(\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}})$ is a one-relator group.

5. One-relator groups

Theorem (Grbić–Ilyasova–P–Simmons, 2020)

Let \mathcal{K} be a flag complex. The following conditions are equivalent:

- 1 $\pi_1(\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}}) = RC'_{\mathcal{K}}$ is a one-relator group;
- 2 $H_2(\mathcal{R}_{\mathcal{K}}) = \mathbb{Z}$;
- 3 $\mathcal{K} = C_p$ or $\mathcal{K} = C_p * \Delta^q$ for $p \geq 4$ and $q \geq 0$, where C_p is a p -cycle, Δ^q is a q -simplex, and $*$ denotes the join of simplicial complexes.

Theorem (Grbić–Ilyasova–P–Simmons, 2020)

Let \mathcal{K} be a flag complex. The following conditions are equivalent:

- 1 $H_*(\Omega\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}})$ is a one-relator algebra;
- 2 $H_{2-j,2j}(\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}) = \begin{cases} \mathbb{Z} & \text{if } j = p \text{ for some } p, 4 \leq p \leq m \\ 0 & \text{otherwise;} \end{cases}$
- 3 $\mathcal{K} = C_p$ or $\mathcal{K} = C_p * \Delta^q$ for $p \geq 4$ and $q \geq 0$.

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