

Configuration spaces and the Johnson filtration

March 11, 2024 – Moduli and friends

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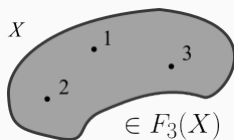
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topologised as a subset of X^n .

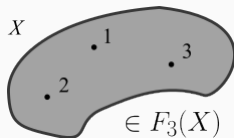


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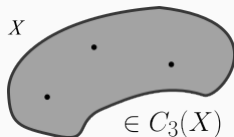
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The n^{th} **unordered configuration space** of a space X is the quotient

$$C_n(X) := F_n(X)/\mathfrak{S}_n,$$

by the permutation action of the symmetric group \mathfrak{S}_n .



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- Homotopy equivalent but not homeomorphic lens spaces can be distinguished by their configuration spaces. ($L_{7,1} \simeq L_{7,2}$ but $L_{7,1} \not\cong L_{7,2}$; $F_2(L_{7,1}) \not\cong F_2(L_{7,2})$.) (Longoni-Salvatore '04).

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Motto

The homology of a space loses information. The homology of configurations of the space retains more information.

Mapping class group actions

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- Let M be an oriented manifold, possibly with boundary. The **mapping class group** of M is the group

$$\begin{aligned} \text{MCG}(M) &= \pi_0(\text{Diff}_{\partial}^+(M)) \\ &= \text{oriented self-diffeos of } M, \text{ fixing } \partial M, \text{ up to isotopy.} \end{aligned}$$

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- There is a natural action $\text{MCG}(M) \curvearrowright H_*(M)$.
- There is also an action

$$\text{Diff}_{\partial}^+(M) \curvearrowright F_n(M), C_n(M)$$

which descends to

$$\text{MCG}(M) \curvearrowright H_*(F_n(M)), H_*(C_n(M)).$$

Surfaces

- Let $\Sigma_{g,1}$ be the compact orientable genus g surface with one boundary component.

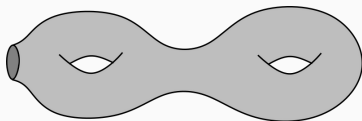


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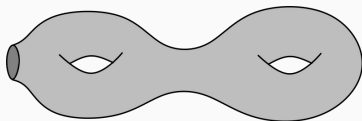


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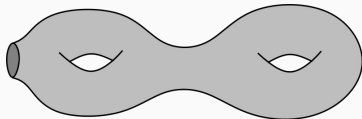


Figure 1: A $\Sigma_{2,1}$ surface.

- Write $\Gamma_{g,1} := \text{MCG}(\Sigma_{g,1})$.
- The natural action

$$\Gamma_{g,1} \curvearrowright H_1(\Sigma_{g,1}) \cong \mathbb{Z}^{2g}$$

has kernel called the **Torelli group**, denoted $I_{g,1}$. This group is large and complicated.

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Question

The homology of configuration spaces of surfaces sees more of the mapping class group than the homology of the surface. How much more?

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- What about **ordered** configurations?

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$$J(n) = \ker(\Gamma_{g,1} \curvearrowright \pi_1(\Sigma_{g,1})/\pi_1(\Sigma_{g,1})^{(n+1)}),$$

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Theorem (Bianchi–Miller–Wilson ‘21)

The n^{th} Johnson subgroup $J(n)$ acts trivially on $H_(F_n(\Sigma_{g,1}))$, for all $n \geq 1$.*

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- Pick a point $p \in \partial\Sigma_{g,1}$ and define the subspaces of $(\Sigma_{g,1})^n$

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Theorem (Moriyama 2007)

The kernel of the $\Gamma_{g,1}$ -representation $H_n((\Sigma_{g,1})^n, \Delta_n \cup A_n)$ is $J(n)$.

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- Therefore, $J(n)$ acts trivially. (But after taking homology the kernel might be bigger.)



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- The powers I^n are also two-sided ideals generated by $(\gamma_1 - 1)(\gamma_2 - 1)\dots(\gamma_n - 1)$ for $\gamma_i \in \pi$.

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Theorem (Fox)

If $\gamma \in \pi$, then $\gamma - 1 \in I^n$ if and only if $\gamma \in \pi^{(n)}$, the n^{th} commutator subgroup of π .

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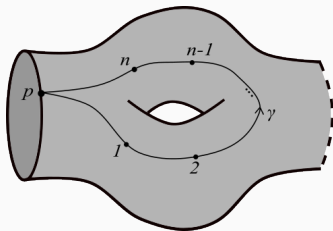
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- Get map

$$f_n : \mathbb{Z}[\pi] \rightarrow H_n((\Sigma_{g,1})^n, \Delta_n \cup A_n)$$

$$\gamma \mapsto [\gamma^n | \Delta^n].$$



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- By Fox's theorem this is the same as the kernel of $\pi/\pi^{(n+1)}$.
- This by definition is $J(n)$.

A conjecture

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Conjecture (Bianchi–Miller–Wilson '21)

The kernel

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- The “reason why” is a properly embedded submanifold $Y \subset F_n(\Sigma_{g,1})$ of half co-dimension that is disjoint from X , but intersects X transversally at finitely many points, so that the algebraic intersection number of X and Y is ± 1 .

Foggy Roller Coasters

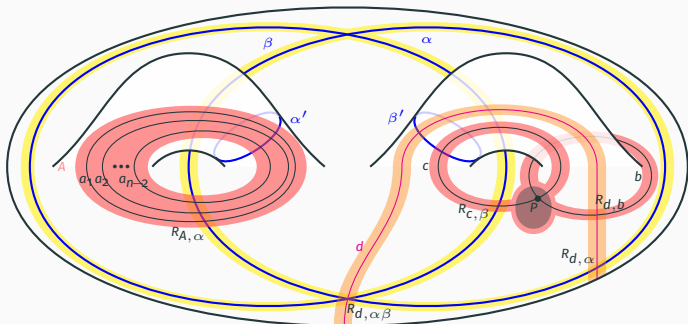


Figure 2: (A) The submanifold $X \subset (\Sigma_{g,1})^n$ is the n -torus supported in the pink region, with i^{th} configuration point orbiting on the parallel curves α_i if $i = 1, \dots, n - 2$, the $(n - 1)^{\text{th}}$ point on curve b and n^{th} point on curve c . (B) The mapping class $\phi \in J(n - 1)$ is the commutator of the Dehn twist along α repeated $(n - 2)$ times and the Dehn twist along β . (C) The submanifold $Y \subset F_n(\Sigma_{g,1})$ corresponds to points $1, \dots, n$ travelling along d in strictly increasing order. (D) The intersection of $\phi * X$ and Y takes place in the yellow neighbourhood of α and β . Ignoring what happens out of it can be thought of as *putting fog*.

- Let $\bar{\pi} = \pi_1(\Sigma_g)$. The marked mapping class group $\Gamma_{g,*}$ acts on $\bar{\pi}$ and can define a Johnson filtration $J_{g,*}(n)$ as the kernels on $\bar{\pi}/\bar{\pi}^{(n+1)}$.

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- In progress: conjecture true for $n = 2, 3$ by replicating Moriyama's work but for Σ_g .

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- Proving the conjecture of Bianchi-Miller-Wilson would be an indication that this is a good idea.

Another story: Scanning

McDuff's scanning map

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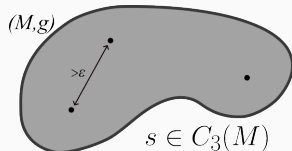
Theorem (McDuff '75, Randal-Williams '13)

The map $\sigma_n : C_n(M) \rightarrow \Gamma_n(M)$ induces an integral homology isomorphism in homological degrees $ \leq \frac{n}{2}$.*

A definition of the scanning map

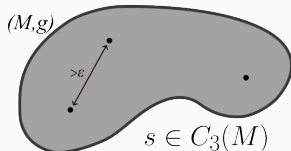
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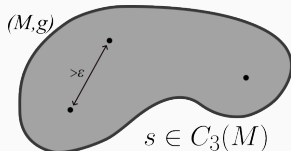


Define $\sigma_n(s)$ to be the following section of T^+M :

$$x \in M \longmapsto \begin{cases} \infty \in T_x^+M, & \text{if there is no config point within } \varepsilon \text{ of } x, \\ \exp_{x,\varepsilon}^{-1}(p) \in T_xM, & \text{if } p \text{ is a config point within } \varepsilon \text{ of } x. \end{cases}$$

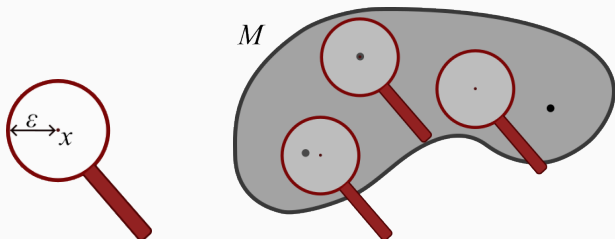
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Questions:

1. How to make the RHS more computable?
2. Both LHS and RHS have an action of $\text{MCG}(M)$. Is this isomorphism $\text{MCG}(M)$ -equivariant?
3. The RHS is a ring with the cup-product. Is this meaningful on the LHS?

Knudsen's theorem

Theorem (Knudsen '17)

There is an isomorphism of bigraded spaces

$$\bigoplus_{n \geq 0} H_*(C_n(M); \mathbb{Q}) \cong H^{\mathcal{L}}(H_c^{-*}(M; \mathcal{L}(\mathbb{Q}^W[d-1])))$$

where $d = \dim M$, $H^{\mathcal{L}}$ is Lie-algebra homology, $H_c^{-}(M; \mathcal{L}(\mathbb{Q}^W[d-1]))$ is the compactly supported cohomology of M with coefficients in the free graded Lie algebra generated by the orientation sheaf \mathbb{Q}^W of M in degree $d - 1$.*

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- Computational power: used in Drummond-Cole–Knudsen '17 to compute the Betti numbers of $C_n(\Sigma)$ for all compact surfaces Σ .

Equivariant untwisted rational scanning

Theorem (S. '21)

Let M be a compact, connected, oriented manifold of dimension d , and $k \geq 1$ an arbitrary integer. There is a $\text{MCG}(M)$ -equivariant isomorphism of graded vector spaces

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- A second bidegree can be put on the RHS using the weights of the \mathbb{Z}^\times -action of automorphisms of the sphere, which makes this a bigraded isomorphism.
- Applied to compute $H^*(C_n(\Sigma_{g,1}); \mathbb{Q})$ together with the $\Gamma_{g,1}$ action.

Superposition of configurations

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- For any compact manifold M with boundary $C_n(M) \simeq C_n(\mathring{M})$. In the **one-point compactification** $C_n(\mathring{M})^+$ you go to the “ ∞ -configuration” if either:
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- Using Poincaré-Lefschetz duality, we obtain the map $\mu_{m,n}$:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} H^i(C_n(M)) \otimes H^j(C_m(M)) & \xrightarrow{\mu_{m,n}} & H^{i+j}(C_{n+m}(M)) \\ \cong \downarrow PD & & \cong \downarrow PD \\ H_{dn-i}(C_n(\mathring{M})^+) \otimes H_{dm-j}(C_m(\mathring{M})^+) & \xrightarrow{\text{sup}_{n,m}^*} & H_{d(n+m)-(i+j)}(C_{n+m}(\mathring{M})^+) \end{array}$$

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- The proof is completely elementary!
- The superposition product is crucial in Moriyama's work.

THANK YOU

and have a good evening!

