

5 | Some Computations

5.1 Proposition. *If X is a contractible space then $\pi_n(X) = 0$ for all $n \geq 0$.*

Proof. Since $X \simeq *$ thus $\pi_n(X) \cong \pi_n(*) = 0$. □

5.2 Proposition. *If X is a relative CW-complex, $X^{(n)}$ is the n -skeleton of X , and $x_0 \in X^{(n)}$, then the homomorphism $i_*: \pi_k(X^{(n)}, x_0) \rightarrow \pi_k(X, x_0)$ induced by the inclusion map $i: X^{(n)} \hookrightarrow X$ is an isomorphism for $k < n$ and an epimorphism for $k = n$.*

Proof. We can assume that $x_0 \in X^{(0)}$. Consider S^k as a CW complex with a 0-cell $s_0 \in S^k$. By the Cellular Approximation Theorem 2.11 any map $\omega: (S^k, s_0) \rightarrow (X, x_0)$ is homotopic (relative to the basepoint) to cellular map $\omega': (S^k, s_0) \rightarrow (X, x_0)$. If $k \leq n$ then $\omega'(S^k) \subseteq X^{(n)}$, so ω' represents an element of $\pi_k(X^{(n)}, x_0)$ such that $i_*([\omega']) = [\omega]$. This shows that i_* is an epimorphism for $k \leq n$.

Next, take $[\omega_0], [\omega_1] \in \pi_k(X^{(n)}, x_0)$. We can assume that the maps $\omega_0, \omega_1: (S^k, s_0) \rightarrow (X^{(n)}, x_0)$ are cellular. If $i_*([\omega_0]) = i_*([\omega_1])$ then there is a homotopy $h: S^k \times [0, 1] \rightarrow X$. Using the Cellular Approximation Theorem 2.11 again, we can assume that this homotopy is a cellular map. Since $\dim S^k \times [0, 1] = k + 1$, we obtain that if $k < n$ then $h(S^k \times [0, 1]) \rightarrow X^{(n)}$. Thus h gives a homotopy between ω_0 and ω_1 in $X^{(n)}$. Therefore $[\omega_0] = [\omega_1] \in \pi_k(X^{(n)}, x_0)$. This shows that i_* is a monomorphism for $k < n$. □

5.3 Corollary. *If $k < n$ then $\pi_k(S^n) = 0$*

Proof. A sphere S^n can be given a CW-complex structure with one 0-cell and one n -cell. Then by Proposition 5.2 for $k < n$ we have an epimorphism

$$\pi_k((S^n)^{(k)}) \rightarrow \pi_k(S^n)$$

Since $(S^n)^{(k)} = *$, thus $\pi_k((S^n)^{(k)}) = 0$ and so $\pi_k(S^n) = 0$. □

5.4 Definition. A space X is n -connected if $\pi_k(X) = 0$ for all $k \leq n$.

Corollary 5.3 can be restated by saying that the sphere S^n is $(n - 1)$ -connected.

5.5 Proposition. *For any space X and $n \geq 0$ the following conditions are equivalent:*

- 1) X is n -connected.
- 2) For any $k \leq n$ and any map $\varphi: S^k \rightarrow X$ there exists a map $\bar{\varphi}: D^{k+1} \rightarrow X$ such that $\bar{\varphi}|_{S^k} = \varphi$.

Proof. Follows from Proposition 3.7. □

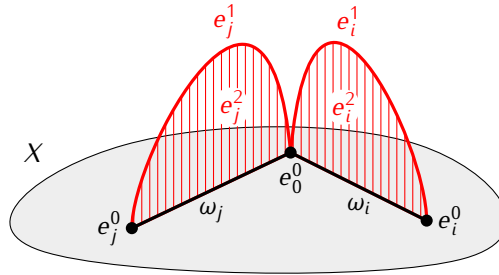
By Proposition 5.2 if X is a CW complex that has only one 0-cell and no k -cells for $k \leq n$ (i.e. $X^{(n)} = *$) then X is n -connected. One can show that the opposite is also true, up to a homotopy equivalence:

5.6 Proposition. *If X is an n -connected CW complex, then there exists a CW complex Y such that $X \simeq Y$ and $Y^{(n)} = *$.*

Proof. We will show inductively that for any $k = 0, \dots, n$ there exists a CW complex Y_k such that $X \simeq Y_k$ and $Y_k^{(k)} = *$.

Choose a 0-cell $e_0^0 \in X$. Since $\pi_0(X) = 0$, the space X is path connected. Thus for any 0-cell e_i^0 we can select a path $\omega_i: [0, 1] \rightarrow X$ such that $\omega(0) = e_0^0$ and $\omega(1) = e_i^0$. By the Cellular Approximation Theorem 2.11, we can assume that ω_i is a path in $X^{(1)}$. We construct a new CW complex Y_0'' by attaching cells to X as follows.

- 1) First, for each 0-cell e_i^0 we attach to X a 1-cell e_i^1 using the attaching map $\varphi_i: S^0 = \{-1, 1\} \rightarrow X$ such that $\varphi_i(-1) = e_0^0$ and $\varphi_i(1) = e_i^0$. Let $Y_0' = X \cup \bigcup_i e_i^1$ be the CW complex obtained in this way.
- 2) In Y_0' each 0-cell e_i^0 is connected to e_0^0 by two different paths: ω_i , and a path τ_i that traverses the new cell e_i^1 . For each i we attach a 2-cell e_i^2 using an attaching map $\psi_i: S^1 \rightarrow Y_0'$ that send the lower half circle to ω_i and the upper half circle to τ_i . Let $Y_0'' = Y_0' \cup \bigcup_i e_i^2$.



Notice that X is a deformation retract of Y_0'' , so the inclusion map $j: X \hookrightarrow Y_0''$ is a homotopy equivalence. Also $A = X^{(0)} \cup \bigcup_i e_i^1$ is a contractible subcomplex of Y_0'' . By Proposition 2.15, the quotient map

$q: Y_0'' \rightarrow Y_0''/A$ is a homotopy equivalence. Since Y_0''/A has a CW complex structure with only one 0-cell we can take $Y_0 = Y_0''/A$.

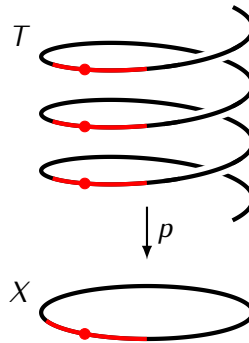
Next, assume that for some $k \leq n$ we have already constructed a CW complex Y_{k-1} such that $X \simeq Y_{k-1}$ and $Y_{k-1}^{(k-1)} = *$. This means that the k -skeleton of Y_{k-1} is given by $Y_{k-1}^{(k)} = \bigvee_i S^k$, with one copy of S^k for each k -cell e_i^k in Y_{k-1} . Let $\varphi_j: S^k \hookrightarrow \bigvee_i S^k \subseteq Y_{k-1}$ be the inclusion of the j -th copy of S^k . Since $\pi_k(Y_{k-1}) \cong \pi_k(X) = 0$, each map φ_i extends to a map $\omega_i: D^{k+1} \rightarrow Y_{k-1}$. We construct a new CW complex Y_k'' by attaching cells to Y_{k-1} as follows.

- 1) First, for each i we attach a $(k+1)$ -cell e_i^{k+1} using $\varphi_i: S^k \rightarrow Y_{k-1}$ as the attaching map. Let $Y_k' = Y_{k-1} \cup \bigcup_i e_i^{k+1}$ be the CW complex obtained in this way.
- 2) For each i we have now two maps $D^{k+1} \rightarrow Y_k'$: the map ω_i , and the characteristic map τ_i of the cell e_i^{k+1} . Using these maps we attach, for each i , a $(k+2)$ -cell e_i^{k+2} , using an attaching map $\psi_i: S^{k+1} \rightarrow Y_k'$ that sends the lower hemisphere of S^{k+1} to ω_i and the upper hemisphere to τ_i . Let $Y_k'' = Y_k' \cup \bigcup_i e_i^{k+2}$.

As before, we observe that Y_{k-1} is a deformation retract of Y_k'' , and that $A = Y_{k-1}^{(k)} \cup \bigcup_i e_i^k$ is a contractible subcomplex of Y_k'' . Therefore we obtain a $X \simeq Y_{k-1} \simeq Y_k'' \simeq Y_k''/A$. It remains to notice that the space $Y_k = Y_k''/A$ has a CW-complex structure such that $Y_k^{(k)} = *$.

□

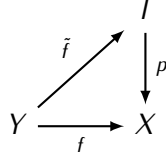
5.7 Homotopy groups and coverings. Recall that covering of a space X is a map $p: T \rightarrow X$ which is locally homeomorphic to the projection map $\text{pr}_1: U \times D \rightarrow U$ for some discrete space D .



Recall also, that one of the main properties of coverings is the following fact:

5.8 Theorem (Lifting Criterion). Let $p: T \rightarrow X$ be a covering, let $x_0 \in X$ and let $\tilde{x}_0 \in p^{-1}(x_0)$. Assume that T is a connected and locally path connected space and let $y_0 \in T$. A map $f: (Y, y_0) \rightarrow (X, x_0)$

has a lift $\tilde{f}: (Y, y_0) \rightarrow (T, \tilde{x}_0)$ if and only if $f_*(\pi_1(Y, y_0)) \subseteq p_*(\pi_1(T, \tilde{x}_0))$.



Moreover, if a lift \tilde{f} exists, then it is unique.

Recall that for any covering $p: (T, \tilde{x}_0) \rightarrow (X, x_0)$ the induced homomorphism $p_*: \pi_1(T, \tilde{x}_0) \rightarrow \pi_1(X, x_0)$ is a monomorphism. Using Theorem 5.8 we can generalize this as follows:

5.9 Proposition. *If $p: T \rightarrow X$ is a covering, $x_0 \in X$ and $\tilde{x}_0 \in p^{-1}(x_0)$, then the induced homomorphism*

$$p_*: \pi_n(T, \tilde{x}_0) \rightarrow \pi_n(X, x_0)$$

is an isomorphism for all $n > 1$.

Proof. Let $n > 1$ and $\omega: (S^n, s_0) \rightarrow (X, x_0)$ represents an element of $\pi_n(X, x_0)$. Since $\pi_1(S^n) = 0$, by Theorem 5.8 there exists a map $\tilde{\omega}: (S^n, s_0) \rightarrow (T, \tilde{x}_0)$ such that $p\tilde{\omega} = \omega$. This shows that $p_*: \pi_n(T, \tilde{x}_0) \rightarrow \pi_n(X, x_0)$ is onto.

Next, assume that $\omega_0, \omega_1: (S^n, s_0) \rightarrow (T, \tilde{x}_0)$ are maps such that $p_*([\omega_0]) = p_*([\omega_1])$. This means that there exists a basepoint preserving homotopy $h: S^n \times [0, 1] \rightarrow X$, such that $h_0 = p\omega_0$, $h_1 = p\omega_1$. Since $S^n \times [0, 1] \simeq S^n$ we have $\pi_1(S^n \times [0, 1]) \cong \pi_1(S^n) = 0$. Thus by Theorem 5.8, there exists a homotopy $\tilde{h}: S^n \times [0, 1] \rightarrow T$ such that $p\tilde{h} = h$ and $\tilde{h}(s_0, 0) = \tilde{x}_0$. Using the uniqueness of lifts, one can check that $\tilde{h}_0 = \omega_0$ and $\tilde{h}_1 = \omega_1$, and that the homotopy \tilde{h} preserves the basepoint (exercise). It follows that $[\omega_0] = [\omega_1]$ in $\pi_1(T, \tilde{x}_0)$. Therefore p_* is a monomorphism.

□

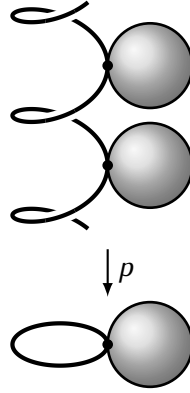
5.10 Example. $\pi_n(S^1) = 0$ for all $n > 1$.

Indeed, universal covering of S^1 is given by a map $p: \mathbb{R} \rightarrow S^1$. Since \mathbb{R} is a contractible space, by Proposition 5.9 for $n > 1$ we obtain

$$\pi_n(S^1) \cong \pi_n(\mathbb{R}) = 0$$

5.11 Example. If $m > 1$ then $\pi_n(S^1 \vee S^m) \cong \pi_n(\bigvee_{i \in \mathbb{Z}} S^m)$ for all $n > 1$.

To see this, notice that the universal covering of $S^1 \vee S^m$ is the space \tilde{X} obtained by attaching copies of S^m at all integer points of the real line:



The space \tilde{X} can be given the structure of a CW complex, such that the real line \mathbb{R} is its subcomplex. Since $\mathbb{R} \simeq \{*\}$, by Theorem 2.14 we have $\tilde{X} \simeq \tilde{X}/\mathbb{R} \cong \bigvee_{i \in \mathbb{Z}} S^m$. Therefore for $n > 1$ we obtain

$$\pi_n(S^1 \vee S^m) \cong \pi_n(\tilde{X}) \cong \pi_n(\bigvee_{i \in \mathbb{Z}} S^m)$$

5.12 Note. Example 5.11 can be used to show that if X, Y are spaces such that $\pi_n(X) \cong \pi_n(Y)$ for all $n \geq 0$, then this does not imply that $X \simeq Y$.

Take, for example, $X = S^1 \vee S^m$ for some $m > 1$, and let $Y = S^1 \vee S^m \vee S^m$. These spaces are not homotopy equivalent, since they have different homology groups: $H_m(X; \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z}$ and $H_m(Y; \mathbb{Z}) \cong \mathbb{Z} \oplus \mathbb{Z}$.

On the other hand, since both these spaces are path connected, we have $\pi_0(X) \cong \pi_0(Y) \cong \{*\}$. Also, since $\pi_1(S^m) = 0$, thus by van Kampen's theorem we get $\pi_1(X) \cong \pi_1(S^1) \cong \pi_1(Y)$.

The universal covering space \tilde{Y} of Y is the space obtained by attaching $S^m \vee S^m$ at all integer points of \mathbb{R} . Using the same argument as in Example 5.11, we obtain $\tilde{Y} \simeq \bigvee_{i \in \mathbb{Z}} (S^m \vee S^m) \cong \bigvee_{i \in \mathbb{Z}} S^m$. Therefore for $n \geq 2$ we have

$$\pi_n(X) \cong \pi_n(\bigvee_{i \in \mathbb{Z}} S^m) \cong \pi_n(Y)$$

5.13 Theorem. For a family $(X_i, \bar{x}_i)_{i \in I}$ be a family of pointed spaces there is an isomorphism

$$\pi_n \left(\prod_{i \in I} X_i, (\bar{x}_i)_{i \in I} \right) \cong \prod_{i \in I} \pi_n(X_i, \bar{x}_i)$$

Proof. For $j \in I$ let $p_j: \prod_{i \in I} X_i \rightarrow X_j$ denote the projection onto the j -th factor. The induced homomorphisms p_{j*} define a homomorphism:

$$\prod_{i \in I} p_{i*}: \pi_n \left(\prod_{i \in I} X_i, (\bar{x}_i)_{i \in I} \right) \rightarrow \prod_{i \in I} \pi_n(X_i, \bar{x}_i)$$

To obtain a homomorphism going in the opposite direction, let $([\omega_i])_{i \in I}$ be an element of $\prod_{i \in I} \pi_n(X_i, \bar{x}_i)$. Then each ω_i is a map $\omega_i: (S^n, s_0) \rightarrow (X_i, \bar{x}_i)$. Take the product map

$$\prod_{i \in I} \omega_i: (S^n, s_0) \rightarrow \left(\prod_i X_i, \bar{x}_i \right)$$

One can check that the assignment $([\omega_i])_{i \in I} \mapsto [\prod_{i \in I} \omega_i]$ gives a well-defined homomorphism

$$g: \prod_{i \in I} \pi_n(X_i, \bar{x}_i) \rightarrow \pi_n \left(\prod_{i \in I} X_i, (\bar{x}_i)_{i \in I} \right)$$

and that the compositions $g \circ \prod_{i \in I} p_{i*}$ and $\prod_{i \in I} p_{i*} \circ g$ are identity homomorphisms (exercise). \square

5.14 Example. Since $\pi_1(S^1) \cong \mathbb{Z}$ and $\pi_n(S^1) = 0$ for $n > 1$, thus for any set I we have

$$\pi_n \left(\prod_{i \in I} S^1 \right) \cong \begin{cases} \prod_{i \in I} \mathbb{Z} & \text{for } n = 1 \\ 0 & \text{for } n > 1 \end{cases}$$