

On a Topological Erdős Similarity Problem

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CERTIFICATION OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *On a Topological Erdős Similarity Problem* by John P Gallagher and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree: Master of Arts in Mathematics at San Francisco State University.

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Often in data work, one may ask which patterns are possible to find, given a certain data set, or hypothetical relationship. Mathematically a similar problem can be proposed. Which patterns, finite or infinite, exist within another collection of sets? A set is called universal in another set, when every subset of the larger set contains some scaled and translated copy of original. Paul Erdos proposed a conjecture that no infinite set, is universal in the the collection of sets with positive measure. This poster explores an analogous problem in a topological setting. Instead of sets with positive measure we investigate the collection of dense G-delta sets. Any finite or countable set is found to be topologically universal. Any set containing an interval cannot be topologically universal. We also have the new result that any Cantor sets is not topologically universal. Cantor sets, which contains no interval and are uncountably infinite, are not topologically universal in the collection of dense G-delta sets.

I certify that the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis.

Chair, Thesis Committee

Date

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Often in data work, one may ask, "Which patterns are possible to find, given a certain data set, or hypothetical relationship?" Mathematically a similar problem can be proposed. Which patterns, finite or infinite, exist within another collection of sets?

If we more deeply consider patterns which infinitely repeat scaled copies of itself, this turns out to be a self-similar set. This is very closely related to the concept of fractals as well as a core area of study within dynamical systems. Some fractals can be generated using recursive functions. In dynamical systems some iterated functions may have sets of invariant points. These collections of invariant points may themselves be self-similar. In this respect it is valuable to explore which patterns are found everywhere because they give insight into some key facets within dynamical systems as well as the nature of patterns.

Given a specific set of points, we can formalize this notion of a scaled copy of a

pattern as an *affine transformation* or *affine copy*. We will formally define this in the next section

Exploring this notion a little more deeply, we can begin to investigate which patterns appear everywhere. Informally, a set is called *universal* in another collection, when every subset of the collection contains some scaled and translated copy of original pattern.

Paul Erdős proposed a conjecture that no infinite set, is measure-universal in the collection of sets with positive measure. We will explore an analogous problem in a topological setting. This also answers a question posed by Svetic[7], "Is it true that for every uncountably infinite set, E , of real numbers, there exists $S \subset [0, 1]$? Additionally this result can be used to prove some results in higher dimensions.

1.1 Affine Copies and the Self Similarity Property

One of the more popularly known results from math is the the Mandelbrot set fractal. In some senses fractals can be very general objects that are considered to have fractional dimensions. This definition can be very general but by that same token, may not always capture some of the inherent geometry of some fractal type objects. Some objects with fractional dimensions have a self-similar property, and some self-similar objects have fractional dimension. For the scope of this paper, we will not be discussing dimension. However we will investigate the notion of self-similarity.

We can now start by defining *affine transformations* or *affine copies*.

Definition 1.1 (Affine copy). An affine copy of a set $A \subset \mathbb{R}$ is a scaled and translated set A' such that for some $\lambda \neq 0, \lambda \in \mathbb{R}$ and $t \in \mathbb{R}$,

$$A' = \{\lambda a + t : a \in A\}.$$

Even one dimensional objects can have this self-similar property. Take for example the middle Third Cantor set. The middle third Cantor set is defined by recursively removing the open middle third interval of the previous remaining closed intervals. Explicitly this can be constructed using countable intersection.

Example 1.1 (The Middle Third Cantor Set).

$$\mathcal{C} = [0, 1] \setminus \bigcup_{n=0}^{\infty} \bigcup_{k=0}^{3^n-1} \left(\frac{3k+1}{3^{n+1}}, \frac{3k+2}{3^{n+1}} \right)$$

This set in particular exhibits this self-similar property because each level is a scaled copy of the entire object. The following figure shows the first seven intervals removed.



Figure 1.1: The first seven iterations of the middle third Cantor Set.

In a general sense, we can take a set, then dilate and translate a copy of it.

Definition 1.2 (Dilation). [1] Let $r > 0$ and $a \in \mathbb{R}$. The dilation on \mathbb{R} with ratio r and center a is the function $f : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ given by

$$f(x) = rx + (1 - r)a.$$

Now we consider the following two dilation functions each with the contraction ratio $1/3$:

$$f_1(x) = \frac{1}{3}x \quad \text{and} \quad f_2(x) = \frac{x + 2}{3}.$$

We will use these two to demonstrate that the Cantor set is self-similar. This is an example of the definition of self similar, the collection of invariant points under iterated function systems. In this case the two functions are the iterated function system and the set of invariant points is the Cantor set. Admittedly this is an abstract definition so here is a proposition to work through the specific mechanics.

Proposition 1.1. *The Cantor set is self-similar. That is to say the Cantor set satisfies the self-referential equations*

$$\mathcal{C} = f_1[\mathcal{C}] \cup f_2[\mathcal{C}].$$

Proof. Recall the definition of the Cantor set, as the iterated removal of the middle

third.

$$\mathcal{C} = [0, 1] \setminus \bigcup_{n=0}^{\infty} \bigcup_{k=0}^{3^n-1} \left(\frac{3k+1}{3^{n+1}}, \frac{3k+2}{3^{n+1}} \right)$$

Here we notice that for the first removal, $n = 0$, we are left with the left and right portion of the Cantor set. Specifically the left side is a translated copy of the right side:

$$\begin{aligned} \left[\frac{2}{3}, 1 \right] \setminus \bigcup_{n=1}^{\infty} \bigcup_{k=0}^{3^n-1} \left(\frac{3k+1}{3^{n+1}}, \frac{3k+2}{3^{n+1}} \right) &= \underbrace{\left\{ \left[0, \frac{1}{3} \right] \setminus \bigcup_{n=1}^{\infty} \bigcup_{k=0}^{3^n-1} \left(\frac{3k+1}{3^{n+1}}, \frac{3k+2}{3^{n+1}} \right) \right\}}_{\text{the left side of the cantor set}} + \frac{2}{3} \\ &= \frac{1}{3} \underbrace{\left\{ [0, 1] \setminus \bigcup_{n=0}^{\infty} \bigcup_{k=0}^{3^n-1} \left(\frac{3k+1}{3^{n+1}}, \frac{3k+2}{3^{n+1}} \right) \right\}}_{\text{the left side of the cantor set}} + \frac{2}{3} \\ &= \frac{1}{3} \left\{ \underbrace{[0, 1] \setminus \bigcup_{n=0}^{\infty} \bigcup_{k=0}^{3^n-1} \left(\frac{3k+1}{3^{n+1}}, \frac{3k+2}{3^{n+1}} \right)}_{\text{the original Cantor set}} \right\} + \frac{2}{3} \\ &= f_2[\mathcal{C}] \end{aligned}$$

We note that this happens at every level of the cantor set. In otherwords by induction:

$$\mathcal{C}_{n+1} = f_1[\mathcal{C}_n] \cup f_2[\mathcal{C}_n].$$

Notice that by using the above two equations, the Cantor set satisfies the self-

referential equations:

$$\mathcal{C} = f_1\mathcal{C} \cup f_2\mathcal{C}.$$

■

Definition 1.3 (Iterated Function System). An iterated function system is a finite set of contraction mappings on a complete metric space. Symbolically, we write this as, for some $N \in \mathbb{N}$,

$$\{f_i : X \rightarrow X | i = 1, 2, \dots, N\},$$

Definition 1.4 (Self-Similar Set). A set A is self-similar if it is the invariant set of an iterated function system.

The invariant set under this iterated function system is a self similar set.

1.2 An Erdős Self-Similarity Conjecture in Measure Space

There is a long standing conjecture from Paul Erdős on universal sets. Informally the conjecture states that there is no infinite set that is universal in the real number line. This is a conjecture about which types of patterns can exist within another sets of numbers.

Definition 1.5 (Measure Universal). A set E is called measure universal in X if for every subset $S \subseteq X$, with positive measure, $\mu(S) > 0$, there exist an affine copy of E such that $t + \lambda E \subseteq S$, for some $\lambda \neq 0$ and $t \in \mathbb{R}$.

Now we can formally, state Erdős' conjecture as follows.

Conjecture 1.1 (The Erdős Self-Similarity Conjecture). *Let $E \subseteq \mathbb{R}$ be an infinite set of real numbers. Prove that there is a set of real numbers S of positive measure which does not contain an affine copy of E .*

Paul Erdős originally posed this question back in 1974 by building off of the work of Steinhaus. Steinhaus[5] first posed that finite sets are universal in sets with positive measure. After Erdős build on this with his conjecture, there has been some progress.

Later Falconer [2] made substatioal progress by showing slowly decaying sequences are not universal. Bourgain [6] expanded on this by showing some faster decaying sequences are also not universal. In particular he demonstrated that the sumset of any three sets, cannot be universal. Most recently Kolountzakis [3] demonstrated using probabilistic arguments to demonstrate that certain set with large gaps cannot be universal.

Currently it is still an open question whether or not sequences that decay at the rate of 2^{-n} are measure universal.

In this paper we take this idea of measure universality and put it into a topological context. We show in theorem 3.2 no cantor set with positive Newhouse thickness is universal in the set of dense G_δ sets.

1.3 An Analogous Theorem in a Topological Setting

In a non-rigorous exploration of the real numberline, one might assume that patterns which appear everywhere should have positive measure. However density and measure are not intrinsically linked. Indeed it is possible to have uncountable dense sets with measure zero and to have sets with full measure that are nowhere dense.

Borrowing the concept of G_δ sets from topology, we can explore an extension of the Erdős similarity problem. Instead of exploring sets with positive measure we can explore dense G_δ sets. This is the countable intersection of open sets that are also dense. We will use these dense G_δ sets to define topological-universal.

Definition 1.6 (Topological-Universal). A set E is called Topological-universal in \mathbb{R} if for every dense G_δ subset $S \subseteq \mathbb{R}$, there exist an affine copy of E such that $t + \lambda E \subseteq S$, for some $\lambda \neq 0$ and $t \in \mathbb{R}$.

As stated above, a dense G_δ set can have measure zero. This also means that there is not a direct relationship between topological universal and measure universal. We make two observations on this fact: a set with an interior cannot have be topologically universal, by the Baire Category Theorem all countable sets are topologically universal.

This motivates the question, Is a nowhere dense set, with an empty interior topologically universal?

Definition 1.7 (Perfect).

Definition 1.8 (Cantor Set). *Cantor sets* are compact, perfect sets, and totally disconnected sets.

We also have the new result that any Cantor sets with positive Newhouse thickness is not topologically universal. We also conjecture that all cantor sets are not topologically universal. In chapter 2 we review background measure and topology definitions and theorems. We also give several examples to demonstrate some of the nuances of these facts. In chapter 3 we define Newhouse Thickness and prove our main result. Finally in chapter 4 we conclude with some open questions and remarks.

Chapter 2

Measure & Topology

2.1 Some Measure Theory

First we want to begin with background definitions and theorems. Erdős' problem specifically deals with infinite set, and affine copies found in measurable set of sets. In our problem, rather than dealing with measurable sets, we will instead use the set of dense G_δ sets.

Underpinning the nuances of this problem, measure theoretic size, and topological size, are not the same. From an intuitive sense of the number line one might think when you are scattered throughout an interval, you would have measure, except in special cases. Similarly one might think that if you have measure, then you would be scattered everywhere. However both of these instances fail when you add in rigorous arguments. Indeed it is possible to construct a set that is no-where dense and have positive measure. It is also possible to construct an uncountable set that

is be dense and has zero measure. In other words topological size (density) is not the same thing as measure theoretic size.

First we will review some measure theory. In order to define *measure* and *measurable sets* we first need to define σ -Algebra.

Definition 2.1 (σ -Algebra). Let X be some set and 2^X be the set of subsets of X . Let $\Sigma \subseteq 2^X$. We call Σ a σ -algebra over X if it satisfies the following three conditions:

1. $\emptyset \in \Sigma$
2. If $E \in \Sigma$, then $X \setminus E \in \Sigma$.
3. If $E_1, E_2, \dots \in \Sigma$ is a sequence of subsets, then $\bigcup_{k=1}^{\infty} E_k \in \Sigma$.

In this instance we describe set of sets in terms of intersection and union. This allows us to generate an algebraically closed collection of sets. Now if we have a base definition of measure, we are also able to construct our collection of sets, on which measure is defined.

Definition 2.2 (Measure). Let X be a set and Σ be a σ -algebra over X . A function $\mu : \Sigma \rightarrow \{\mathbb{R} \cup \infty\}$ is called a measure if it satisfies the following properties:

1. **Non-negativity**: for all $E \in \Sigma$, $\mu(E) \geq 0$.
2. **Null empty set**: $\mu(\emptyset) = 0$.

3. Countable Additivity (σ -additivity): For all countable collections $\{E_k\}_{k=1}^{\infty}$ of pairwise disjoint sets in Σ ,

$$\mu\left(\bigcup_{k=1}^{\infty} E_k\right) = \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \mu(E_k).$$

In this instance, a measurable set

Definition 2.3 (Measurable Set). Let (X, Σ) be a measurable space. A set $S \subseteq X$ is a *measurable set* if and only if $S \in \Sigma$.

Note that a non-measurable set is a set that is not in the σ -algebra. That is to say not all sets are necessarily measurable. Nonmeasurable sets fall outside of our work.

We will also need to define *uncountable* and *dense*. First we start with *countable*.

Definition 2.4 (Countable). A set X is called *countable* if for some subset $N \subset \mathbb{N}$, that is not necessarily finite, there exists a bijection $f : X \rightarrow N$.

Definition 2.5 (Uncountable). A set X is called *uncountable*, if it is not *countable*.

We also need to define *dense*. There are many equivalent definitions of dense. We will use the following definition so that we can continue to develop the intuition around intervals and interiors.

Definition 2.6 (Dense). A set S is called dense in X if for every $x \in X$, every neighborhood U of x intersects S .

In a similar fashion to the definitions of *countable* and *uncountable*, the oppsite of *dense* is *nowhere dense*.

Definition 2.7 (Nowhere Dense). Let X be a topological space. A subset $B \subseteq X$ of a topological space is called *nowhere dense* in X if its closure has an empty interior. That is to say, B is *nowhere dense* in X if for each open set $U \subseteq X$, $B \cap U$ is not dense in U .

This allows us to now explore the differences between density and measure. As stated earlier, topological size and measure theoretic size are not necessarily related. What do we mean by topologically Large? Uncountable and dense. Similarly what do we mean by measure theoretically large? Non-zero measure. After reviewing t It is helpful to define the opposite of topologically large, namely meager sets.

Definition 2.8 (Meager). A subset $C \subseteq X$ of a topological space is called *meager* in X if it is the countable union of nowhere-dense subsets of X .

Now we look at our example.

Example 2.1. A measure theoretically large set is not necessarily topologically large.

Consider the interval $[0, 1]$ and for all positive integers $a, n \in \mathbb{N}$ remove the intervals $(\frac{a}{2^n} - \frac{1}{2^{n+1}}, \frac{a}{2^n} + \frac{1}{2^{n+1}})$. Notice that the intervals are a geometric series and

for each n add up to at most $\frac{1}{2^{n+1}}$. Therefore the set

$$[0, 1] \setminus \bigcup_{a, n \in \mathbb{N}} \left(\frac{a}{2^n} - \frac{1}{2^{n+1}}, \frac{a}{2^n} + \frac{1}{2^{n+1}} \right),$$

is closed, has an empty interior, and is of positive measure.

Next we will define dense G_δ sets, as well as some useful examples.

Definition 2.9 (G-Delta Set). A G_δ set is the countable intersection of open sets. Namely, let $O_i \subset X$ for $i \in \mathbb{N}$ be a collection of open sets of X . Then $\bigcap_{n=1}^{\infty} O_i$, is a G_δ set.

Example 2.2. The irrational numbers are a G_δ set. Consider the following construction of the set of irrational numbers:

$$\mathbb{R} \setminus \mathbb{Q} = \bigcap_{q \in \mathbb{Q}} \mathbb{R} \setminus \{q\}.$$

Notice that each $\mathbb{R} \setminus \{q\} = (-\infty, q) \cup (q, \infty)$ is an open subset of \mathbb{R} . Furthermore, rational numbers are countable. Therefore the intersection of these sets are a G_δ set. Moreover, in this instance it is a dense G_δ set. We will study these objects further.

Lastly we remark that there is an analogous set which is the countable union of closed sets.

Definition 2.10 (F_σ Set). An F_σ set is the countable union of closed sets. This is

equivalent to the complement of a G-delta is an F-sigma set.

2.2 Topological and The Baire Category Theorem

A key theorem that links analysis to set theory is the Baire Category Theorem. This also establishes a link to understanding certain types of topological sets.

Theorem 2.1 (Baire Category Theorem). *The countable intersection of open dense sets is dense.*

Within the study of measure theory it can sometimes be unclear if a set is dense in another set. For example consider the following set:

$$\mathbb{R}^2 \setminus \{(x, y) : y = mx + b, \text{ where } m, b \in \mathbb{Q}\}$$

Notice that this can also be written as

$$\bigcap_{m, b \in \mathbb{Q}} \mathbb{R}^2 \setminus \{(x, y) : y = mx + b\},$$

which is the plane, but removing all lines with rational coefficients, and rational intercepts.

2.3 Cantor Sets and Other Measure Theoretic and Topological Examples

We begin this section with a special F_σ set. The Cantor set is defined by taking the interval $[0, 1]$ and then iteratively removing the open interval containing the middle third, from the previous level. As such it is the countable intersection of closed sets. Formally this can be written as follows.

Definition 2.11 (Cantor Set). The Cantor set \mathcal{C} , written as the successive removal of each middle third removed from the previous level is

$$\mathcal{C} = [0, 1] \setminus \bigcup_{n=0}^{\infty} \bigcup_{k=0}^{3^n-1} \left(\frac{3k+1}{3^{n+1}}, \frac{3k+2}{3^{n+1}} \right)$$

An equivalent formulation of the Cantor set, is the decimal expansion of all numbers in $[0, 1]$ in base 3, omitting any representation with a 1. This can be a useful tool for thinking through some examples and counter-examples.

Example 2.3 (Decimal Expansion Cantor Set).

$$\mathcal{C} = \{x \in [0, 1] : x \text{ has a ternary expansion containing no 1's.}\}$$

Here we notice that although $1/3 \in \mathcal{C}$ can be written as 0.1 using the trinary expansion, it also has another representation as $1/3 = 0.0\bar{2}$. This would be the included representation in the Cantor set. We take a moment to acknowledge that

numbers may not have unique representations, where one may be excluded but the other included.

Earlier we defined nowhere dense. Here we see that the Cantor set is an example of a nowhere dense set.

Claim 2.1. The Cantor set is *nowhere dense*.

Proof. Let \mathcal{C} be the middle third Cantor set. Notice that $[0, 1] \setminus \mathcal{C}$ is a set of open intervals:

$$[0, 1] \setminus \mathcal{C} = \bigcup_{n=0}^{\infty} \bigcup_{k=0}^{3^n-1} \left(\frac{3k+1}{3^{n+1}}, \frac{3k+2}{3^{n+1}} \right).$$

Therefore \mathcal{C} is the countable intersection of closed intervals, and itself is closed.

Notice given some radius r , there exists some number t , such that $0 < t < r$ and t has a 1 in its ternary expansion. So if we consider any point $c \in \mathcal{C}$, then an open ball of radius r centered at c then $B_r(c)$ is $(c-r, c+r)$ in ternary, necessarily contains a number containing a 1. Therefore $B_r(c) \not\subseteq \mathcal{C}$, and \mathcal{C} has an empty interior. Finally we conclude because \mathcal{C} is closed and has an empty interior, \mathcal{C} is nowhere dense. ■

Beyond the middle third Cantor set, we can generalize these in a few different ways. Changing the middle interval, having a few different interval widths, series of interval widths.

Chapter 3

An Erdős Similarity Problem in a Topological Setting

3.1 Positive Newhouse Thickness

Cantor sets contain important invariant structures such as Hausdorff dimension, thickness, and denseness. We will investigate thickness and denseness. First we will define the gaps and bounded gaps of Cantor sets in order to construct and define Newhouse thickness.

Definition 3.1 (Gap). Let K be some Cantor set. A gap of K is a connected components of $\mathbb{R} \setminus K$.

Informally, the gaps are the intervals surrounding the points of the Cantor set. Some of the lengths of these intervals are bounded some are not. In the example of the middle third Cantor set, the unbounded gaps would be $(-\infty, 0)$ and $(1, \infty)$.

Definition 3.2 (Bounded Gap). Let K be a Cantor set. A bounded gap is a bounded connected component of $\mathbb{R} \setminus K$.

Using these two notions we will define the bridge of C of Cantor set K .

Definition 3.3 (bridge). [4] Let U be any bounded gap and u be a boundary point of U . Note that $u \in K$. The bridge

Definition 3.4 (Newhouse Thickness). [4] Let K be some set

3.2 The Gap Lemma

Lemma 3.1. *The Gap Lemma[4] Let $K_1, K_2 \subset \mathbb{R}$ be Cantor sets with thickness τ_1 and τ_2 . If $\tau_1 \cdot \tau_2 > 1$, then one of the following three alternatives occurs: K_1 is contained the gap of K_2 ; K_2 is contained in the gap of K_1 ; $K_1 \cap K_2 \neq \emptyset$.*

First we will assume for the sake of contradiction that the opposite is true. These assumptions lead to claim, which under these assumptions must be true. Then that claim leads to a contradiction which means our original assumption must be false.

Proof. Let K_1, K_2 be two Cantor sets with thickness τ_1, τ_2 respectively and assume that K_1 is not contained in the gap of K_2 and K_2 is not contained in the gap of K_1 .

Assume for the sake of contradiction that $K_1 \cap K_2 = \emptyset$. Consider the bounded gaps $U_1 \subset K_1^c$ and $U_2 \subset K_2^c$. We call (U_1, U_2) a gap-pair if U_1 contains exactly one boundary point of U_2 and U_2 contains exactly one point of U_1 .

By assumption we know that K_1, K_2 are not contained in the other's gaps. Therefore there exists some gap-pair (U_1, U_2) .

Claim 3.1. If $\tau_1\tau_2 > 1$ then from the interval U_1 (or for that matter U_2) we can construct another sub-interval U'_1 such that $l(U'_1) < l(U_1)$ (or similarly U'_2 such that $l(U'_2) < l(U_2)$).

Notice that (U'_1, U_2) is still a gap-pair, as is (U_1, U'_2) .

Using this construction we can create a sequence of gap-pairs $(U_1^{(i)}, U_2^{(j)})$. Notice that because it is a summable compact cantor set, the $U_1^{(i)}$ and $U_2^{(j)}$ are compact. Moreover the sums of the lengths

$$\sum_i l(U_1^{(i)}) < \infty,$$

and therefore $l(U_1^{(i)}) \rightarrow 0$ as $i \rightarrow \infty$. From this construction we have a sequence of gap-pairs such that as $i \rightarrow \infty$, $l(U_1^{(i)}) \rightarrow 0$ and similarly as $j \rightarrow \infty$, $l(U_2^{(j)}) \rightarrow 0$.

Without loss of generality, we can just use the same indexing the gap pairs, $(U_1^{(i)}, U_2^{(i)})$. If we pick a sequence of points, $q_i \in U_1^{(i)}$ then by the Bolzano Weierstrass theorem, there is a convergent subsequence $q_{i_k} \rightarrow q$. Notice that $U_1^{(i)} = (a_i, b_i)$ is not fully contained in the gap of K_2 . Moreover because these intervals are compact and nested, we know that $a_{i_k} - b_{i_k} \rightarrow 0$ which implies that $q \in K_2$.

Because this construction is symmetric, the same argument applies to $q_i \in U_2^{(i)}$ and so $q_{i_k} \rightarrow q$ implies that $q \in K_1 \cap K_2$.

We want to use this technique to demonstrate that $K_1 \cap K_2 \neq \emptyset$. Let C_j^l, C_j^r denote the bridges of K_j for $j = 1, 2$. Returning to our original assumptions, $\tau_1 \cdot \tau_2 > 1$ and therefore

$$\frac{l(C_1)}{l(U_2)} \cdot \frac{l(C_2)}{l(U_1)} > 1.$$

From our construction, the right endpoint of U_2 is in C_1^r or the left endpoint of U_1 is in C_2^l or both. In the case that $q \in U_2$ is the right endpoint, then $q \in K_1$ and $q \in K_2$ and we are done. If $q \notin K_1$, then $q \in U_1'$, the gap of K_1 where $l(U_1') < l(U_1)$ and (U_1', U_2) is the gap pair we need.

■

3.3 A Cantor set with positive Newhouse Thickness is not Topologically Universal

Recall the definition, We say that a set E is *topologically universal* in the collection of dense G_δ sets if for all G_δ set, we can always find some affine copies of E inside the set. By an affine copy, we mean sets of the form $t + \lambda E$ for some $t \in \mathbb{R}$ and $\lambda \neq 0$. A natural question we have is that is there a nowhere dense Cantor Set that is universal in the collection of dense G_δ sets? This is an exploration of an Erdős conjecture in a topological setting.

Theorem 3.2. *Let J be a cantor set with positive Newhouse thickness. Then J is not topologically universal in the collection of dense G_δ sets.*

Proof. Suppose we have some Cantor set J with Newhouse thickness $\tau(J) > 0$. Without loss of generality, we can assume the convex hull of J $[0, 1]$. Consider Cantor sets K defined by contraction ratio $1/N$ and digits $\{0, 1, \dots, N-1\} \setminus \{(N-1)/2\}$ and N is odd. By a simple calculation, $\tau(K) = \frac{N-1}{2}$. Therefore, we can find a sufficiently large N so that $\tau(J)\tau(K) > 1$.

Using the Cantor set K Define X such that

$$X = \bigcup_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} \bigcup_{\ell \in \mathbb{Z}} N^n(K + \ell),$$

creating a dense F_σ set. Now consider X^c . Because K^c is open and dense and so is its translated and dilated copies, by the Baire Category Theorem, X^c is a dense G_δ . We now show that X^c contains no affine copy of J .

Suppose we have some affine copy, $t + \lambda J$ where $t \in \mathbb{R}$ and $\lambda \neq 0$. There exists a unique n such that

$$|\lambda| \in (N^{n-1}, N^n]. \quad (3.1)$$

Similarly there exists a unique ℓ such that

$$t \in (\ell N^n, (\ell + 1)N^n]. \quad (3.2)$$

Let

$$C_1 = N^n(K + \ell) \text{ and } C_2 = t + \lambda J.$$

The convex hull of C_1 , is $[\ell N^n, (\ell + 1)N^n]$. So By our choice of t , we know that C_2 is not in the unbounded gap of C_1 and vice versa.

Now we will check the construction of our Cantor sets such that each is not contained in the bounded gaps of the other. For C_1 its largest corresponding open gap interval is $|O_1| = N^{n-1}$ and its largest corresponding closed interval is $|I_1| = N^n$. For C_2 and its corresponding intervals, we find that $|O_2| = |\lambda| \cdot |O_J| \leq |\lambda|$ and $|I_2| = |\lambda|$ where O_J is the largest open gap interval in J . Therefore by our construction in (1) the following two inequalities hold:

$$|O_1| \leq |I_2| \text{ and } |O_2| \leq |I_1|.$$

Therefore C_1 is not in the gaps of C_2 and C_2 is not fully contained in the gaps of C_1 . By our choice of K , the Newhouse thickness of our sets, $\tau(C_1)\tau(C_2) \geq 1$, because Newhouse thickness is scale invariant. Therefore the Gap Lemma implies $C_1 \cap C_2$ is non-empty and C_2 cannot be in the constructed G_δ set. Therefore we conclude J is not topologically universal in the collection of dense G_δ sets.

■

3.4 Generalizing into Higher Dimensions

Consider a compact set J in \mathbb{R}^d . An affine copy of J in \mathbb{R}^d is the set

$$t + \delta O(J)$$

where $t \in \mathbb{R}^d$, $\delta \neq 0$ and O is an orthogonal transformation. We say that J is universal if the collection of dense G_δ sets if any dense G_δ set contains an affine copy of J .

Theorem 3.3. *If $X \subset \mathbb{R}^d$ contains a path connected component, then X is not universal in the set of dense G_δ sets of \mathbb{R}^d .*

Proof. Remove the plane

$$\mathbb{R}^d \setminus \bigcup_{i=1}^d \bigcup_{r \in \mathbb{Q}} \{X_i = r\}.$$

Consider some affine copy of X with a path L . Then X' will contain an affine copy of the path L' . The projection of L' onto the coordinate axes will be non-degenerate on some interval for at least one of the axes. Call this the i -th axis. This interval will contain a rational number r . Therefore L' will intersect with the coordinate plane, $X_i = r$. In other words this dense G_δ set omits at least one point and cannot contain affine copy of X . ■

We can still consider sets that contain no connected component. Cantor dust contains no connected component. We introduce the notion of *projective Newhouse*

Thickness, and use it to generalize our one-dimensional results into \mathbb{R}^d .

Definition 3.5 (Positive Projective Newhouse Thickness). We say a J set has *positive projective Newhouse thickness* if for all $O \in O(d)$

$$\tau(P_x O(J)) > 0$$

where P_x is the orthogonal projection to the x -axis and $O(d)$ is the orthogonal group consisting of all orthogonal transformations in \mathbb{R}^d .

We note that the projection some Cantor dust set maybe an interval. If that is the case we say the Newhouse Thickness of the projection is equal to infinity.

Using our one dimensional result, we can generalize

Theorem 3.4. *Let $J \subset \mathbb{R}^d$ be a compact set such that it has a positive projective Newhouse thickness. Then J is not topologically-universal in \mathbb{R}^d .*

Proof. Suppose we have a compact set J in \mathbb{R}^d such that it has a positive projective Newhouse thickness. By Theorem 3.2, there exists a dense G_δ set G_1 in \mathbb{R}^1 such that G_1 does not contain any affine copy of $P_x O(J)$. Now, we consider

$$G = G_1 \underbrace{\times \cdots \times}_{d\text{-times}} G_1.$$

Then G is a dense G_δ set in \mathbb{R}^d . We claim that there is no affine copy of J in G . To justify the claim. Suppose G contains an affine copy of J such that $t + \delta J \subset G$.

Then we take projection and we obtain that

$$P_x(t) + \delta P_x(J) \subset G_1$$

which is a contradiction. Hence, the claim is true and the proof is complete.



Chapter 4

Remarks and Open Questions

4.1 Current Research Questions: Zero Newhouse Thickness

This section is devoted to study if Cantor sets with zero Newhouse thickness can be universal. We first provide an example for which two Cantor sets with zero Newhouse thickness can still have arithmetic sum equal to an interval, showing that the converse of the Newhouse thickness theorem is not true.

Example 4.1. Let $N_1, N_2, \dots \in \mathbb{N}_{\geq 2}$. Consider the following construction of a Cantor set using a decomposition of the unit intervals.

$$\begin{aligned}
[0, 1] &= \frac{1}{N_1} \{0, 1, \dots, N_1 - 1\} + \left[0, \frac{1}{N_1}\right] \\
&= \frac{1}{N_1} \{0, 1, \dots, N_1 - 1\} + \frac{1}{N_1 N_2} \{0, 1, \dots, N_2 - 1\} + \left[0, \frac{1}{N_1 N_2}\right] \\
&= \dots \\
&= \frac{1}{N_1} \{0, 1, \dots, N_1 - 1\} + \frac{1}{N_1 N_2} \{0, 1, \dots, N_2 - 1\} + \dots + \frac{1}{N_1 \dots N_n} \{0, \dots, N_n\} + \dots
\end{aligned}$$

From here we can define the two cantor sets K_1, K_2 where K_1 constitutes the odd indices sets in the above summands and K_2 has the even one. This gives the following constructions for the two Cantor sets:

$$\begin{aligned}
K_1 &= \frac{1}{N_1} \{0, 1, \dots, N_1 - 1\} + \dots + \frac{1}{N_1 \dots N_{2n+1}} \{0, \dots, N_{2n+1} - 1\} + \dots \\
K_2 &= \frac{1}{N_1 N_2} \{0, 1, \dots, N_2 - 1\} + \dots + \frac{1}{N_1 \dots N_{2n}} \{0, \dots, N_{2n} - 1\} + \dots
\end{aligned}$$

From this construction we see that $K_1 + K_2 = [0, 1]$ is the interval but from the definition of Newhouse thickness,

$$\begin{aligned}
\tau(K_1) &= \inf \left\{ \frac{1}{N_1 - 1}, \frac{1}{N_3 - 1}, \dots \right\} = 0 \\
\tau(K_2) &= \inf \left\{ \frac{1}{N_2 - 1}, \frac{1}{N_4 - 1}, \dots \right\} = 0.
\end{aligned}$$

Therefore we have created an interval from two sets with Newhouse thickness 0 if we have $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} N_n = \infty$.

We will conclude by ask the following questions. Recall I_J denotes the smallest closed interval containing the Cantor set J and O_J denotes the largest open interval in $I_J \setminus J$.

1. Given a Cantor set J , does there exist some K such that $J + K = I_J + I_K$?
2. If we assume that there exists K such that $J + K = I_J + I_K$, can we prove that J is not universal?
3. (rescaling condition) If we assume that $|\lambda_1 I_J| \geq |\lambda_2 O_K|$, $|\lambda_2 I_K| \geq |\lambda_1 O_J|$ and $J + K = I_J + I_K$, then $\lambda_1 J + \lambda_2 K = \lambda_1 I_J + \lambda_2 I_K$.

We also notice that to solve the second question, we notice that $J + K = I_J + I_K$ implies that

$$(J + a) + (K + b) = (I_J + a) + (I_K + b) \text{ and } bJ + bK = bI_J + bI_K.$$

We can always translate and rescale J, K so that $I_J = [0, a]$ and $I_K = [0, 1]$. Moreover, the following lemma is important.

Lemma 4.1. *Suppose that the Cantor sets J and K satisfies $J + K = I_J + I_K$. Then $|I_J| \geq |O_K|$ and $|I_K| \geq |O_J|$.*

The lemma also said that the condition $|\lambda_1 I_J| \geq |\lambda_2 O_k|, |\lambda_2 I_k| \geq |\lambda_1 O_J|$ is necessary in the rescaling condition.

Proposition 4.2. *Let J be a Cantor set such that $J + K = I_J + I_K$ where $I_J = [0, a]$ and $I_K = [0, 1]$. Suppose that the rescaling condition (3) holds. Then J is not universal in the collection of dense G_δ .*

Proof. The proof is similar to the proof in Theorem 3.2. With K given in the assumption. We can assume that $|I_J| > |O_K|$. Suppose that $|I_J| = |O_K|$. Since $|O_J| < 1$, we can choose ϵ such that $(1 - \epsilon) > |O_J|$. Then we consider $K' = (1 - \epsilon)K$ and we will have $|I_J| > (1 - \epsilon)|O_K|$. In this case, by the rescaling condition, $J + K' = I_J + I_{K'}$ and we have another K' such that $|I_J| > |O_{K'}|$.

As now we have $|I_J| > |O_K|$, we can find $0 < \rho < 1$ such that $\rho|I_J| > |O_K|$. We now define

$$X = \bigcup_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} \bigcup_{\ell \in \mathbb{Z}} \rho^n(K + \ell).$$

Then X^c is a dense G_δ set. Suppose that we have an affine copy $t + \lambda J$, we would like to claim that $t + \lambda J$ intersects non-trivially with $\rho^n(K + \ell)$ for some $n, \ell \in \mathbb{Z}$, which will complete the proof of the theorem.

To justify the claim, we let $0 < \rho < 1$ take the unique n such that

$$|\lambda| \in [\rho^{n+1}, \rho^n) \tag{4.1}$$

and the unique $\ell \in \mathbb{Z}$ such that

$$t \in (\ell\rho^n, (\ell+1)\rho^n]. \quad (4.2)$$

Then we consider the arithmetic sum $\rho^n K - \lambda J$. We now check the assumption in the rescaling condition with $\lambda_1 = \rho^n$ and $\lambda_2 = -\lambda$. Indeed,

$$|\lambda_2 I_J| \geq \rho^{n+1} |I_J| = |\lambda_1|(\rho |I_J|) \geq |\lambda_1 O_K|$$

by our choice of ρ . On the other hand,

$$|\lambda_1 I_K| \geq |\lambda| \geq |\lambda_2 O_J|$$

since $|I_K| \geq |O_J|$ by Lemma 4.1. Hence, using the rescaling condition,

$$\rho^n K - \lambda J = \rho^n I_K - \lambda I_J.$$

If $\lambda > 0$, then we have

$$\rho^n(K + \ell) - \lambda J = [\rho^n \ell - \lambda a, \rho^n(1 + \ell)]$$

which contains t by (4.2). Similarly, if $\lambda < 0$, then

$$\rho^n(K + \ell) - \lambda J = [\rho^n \ell, \rho^n(\ell + 1) - \lambda a].$$

It also contains t by (4.2). The proof is now complete. ■

We now conclude with several open questions.

No Cantor set is topologically universal.

For any cantor set, does there exist another such that $C_1 + C_2$ adds up to an interval?

Rescaling condition?

If these two are true then we can settle this in one dimension.

Finally we ask, Do all self-similar sets have positive projective newhouse thickness?

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