

Seifert – Van Kampen Theorem, Applications

Yahya Tamur

March 7, 2022

Groups; generators and relations

- A group is a set of elements G , with a $\cdot : G \times G \rightarrow G$ such that:

$$(a.b).c = a.(b.c)$$

There's an identity element 1 such that for all a ,

$$1.a = a.1 = a$$

For all a , there's an inverse element a^{-1} such that:

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- ▶ Then, if you have any group that's generated by that set, there's a surjective homomorphism from the free group onto the group, defined as

$$\sigma((x)) = x$$

and extended to other elements using properties of homomorphisms:

$$\sigma((a, b, c, a^{-1})) = \sigma((a)).\sigma((b)).\sigma((c)).\sigma((a^{-1})) = a.b.c.a^{-1}$$

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- ▶ If G is any group generated by a and b , with $a^5 = b^3 = 1$, we can try to define a homomorphism

$$\sigma((a)) = a, \sigma((b)) = b$$

And, this is well-defined, even though some sequences might be equivalent in $\langle a, b : a^5, b^3 \rangle$ without being equal, because whenever terms cancel out in $\langle a, b : a^5, b^3 \rangle$, they cancel out in G :

$$(a, a, a, b, b, b, a, a) = (a, a, a, a, a) = 1$$

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- ▶ Since there's a surjective homomorphism from the free group of a set of generators to any group, we can express any group as a set of generators and relations (choose the whole kernel of the homomorphism for example).

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- ▶ Since there's a surjective homomorphism from the free group of a set of generators to any group, we can express any group as a set of generators and relations (choose the whole kernel of the homomorphism for example).
- ▶ Note: Some relations might be simplified by adding an equal sign:

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- ▶ So, for any group generated by the generators and satisfying the relations, there's a surjective homomorphism from the presentation onto the group.

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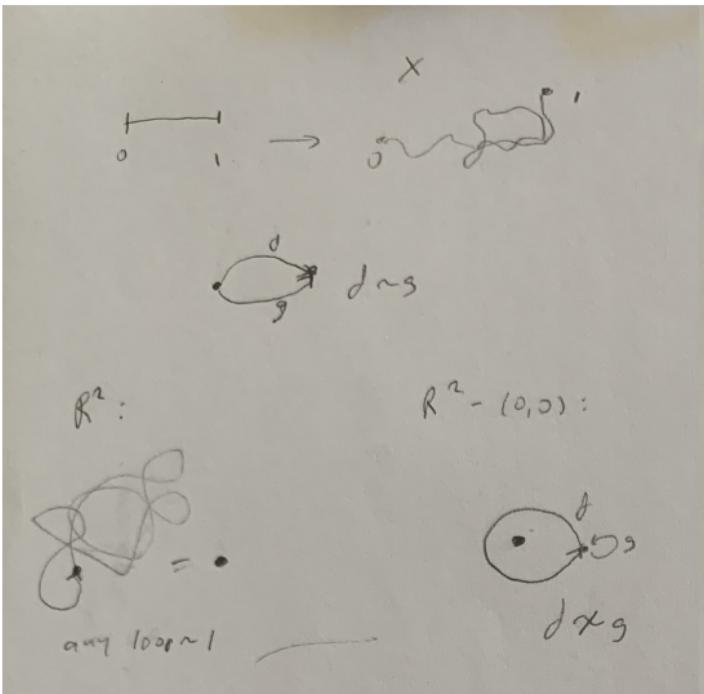
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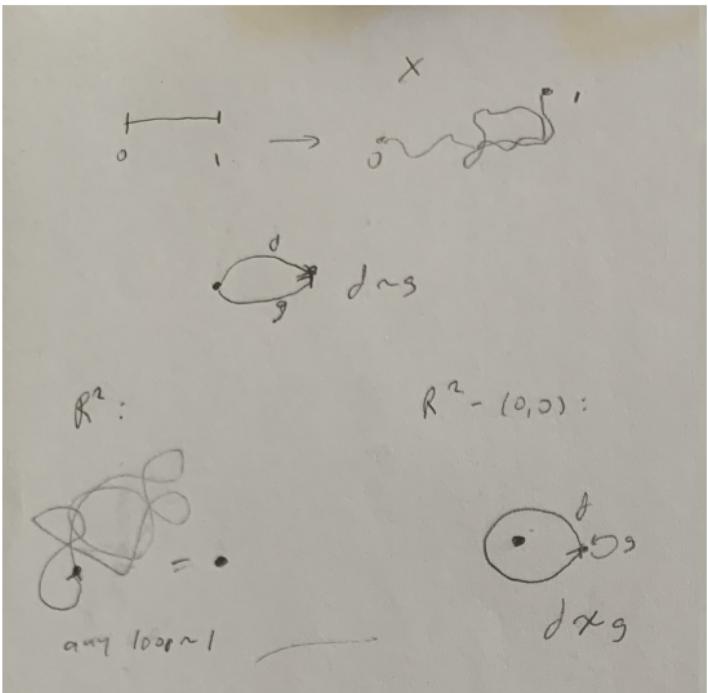
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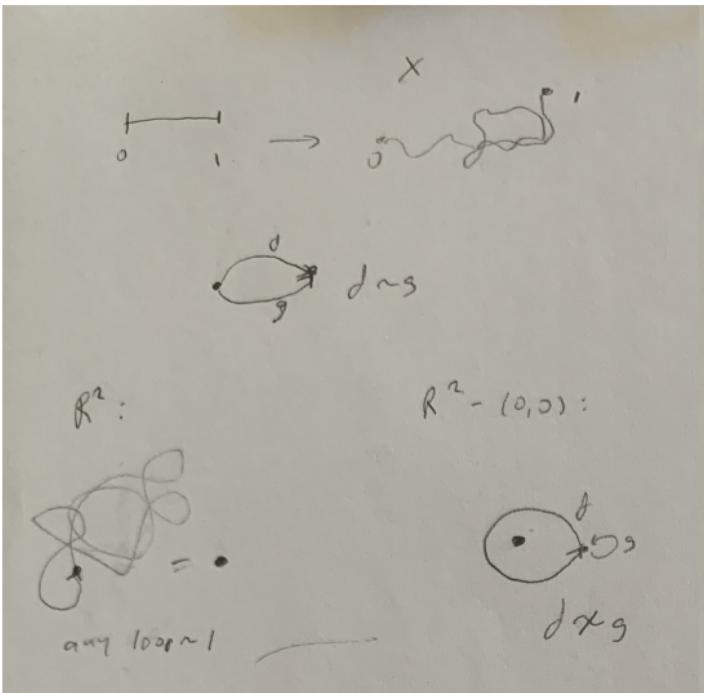
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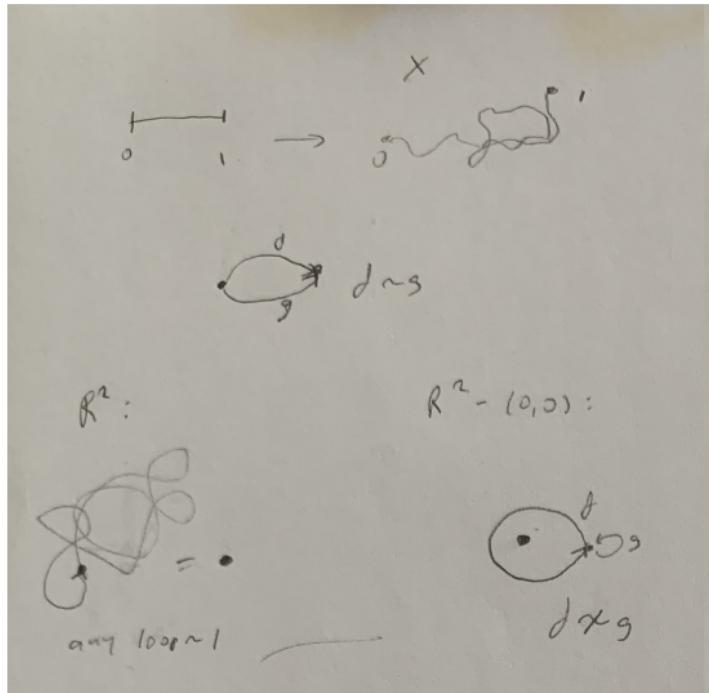
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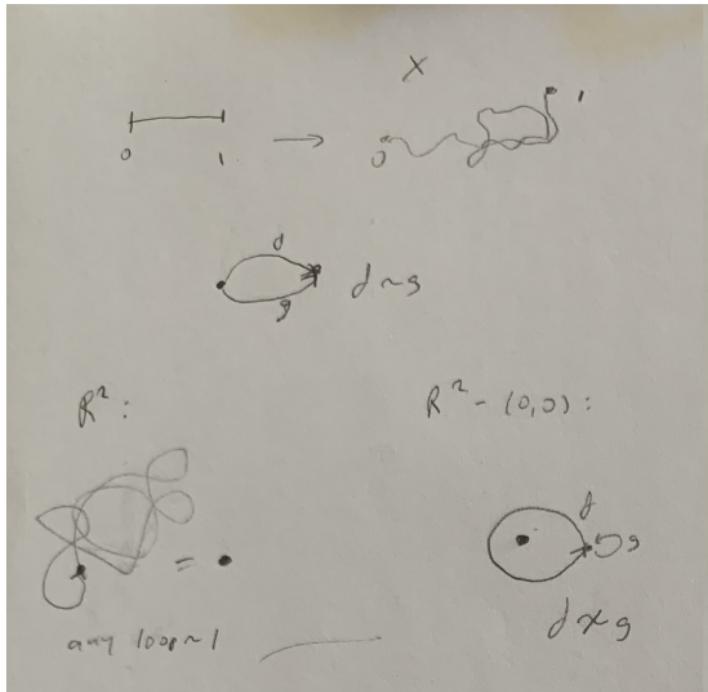


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$$f \cdot g(t) = \begin{cases} f(2t) & 0 \leq t \leq \frac{1}{2} \\ g(2t-1) & \frac{1}{2} \leq t \leq 1 \end{cases}$$

Then, $(f \cdot g) \cdot h \neq f \cdot (g \cdot h)$, but $(f \cdot g) \cdot h \sim f \cdot (g \cdot h)$. Also, if $f \sim g$, $f \cdot h \sim g \cdot h$ for any h .



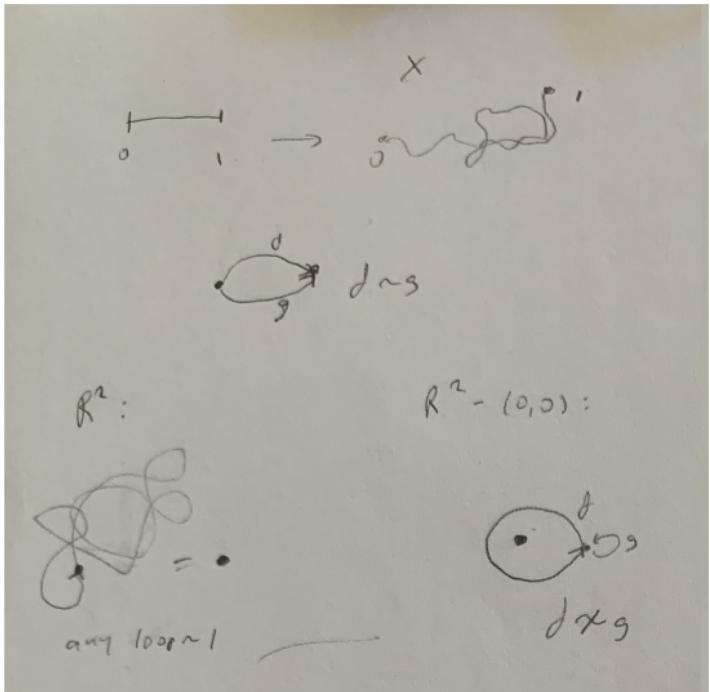
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- We can define an identity element as $i(t) = x_0$ and inverse element as $f^{-1}(t) = f(1-t)$. (Again, $f \cdot f^{-1} \neq 1$ as loops but $[f] \cdot [f^{-1}] = [f^{-1}] \cdot [f] = 1$).



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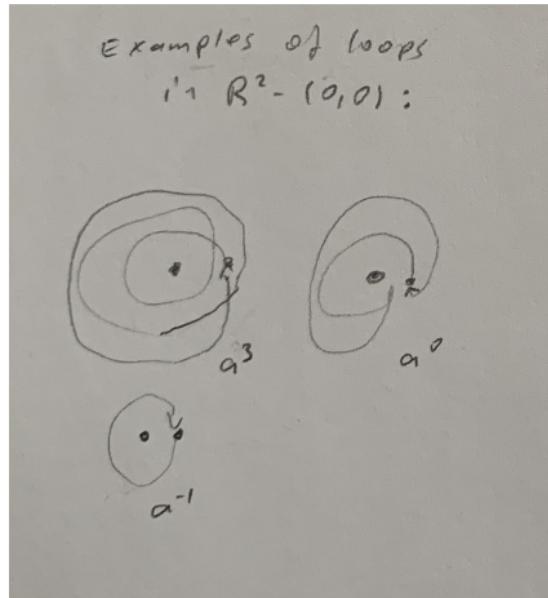
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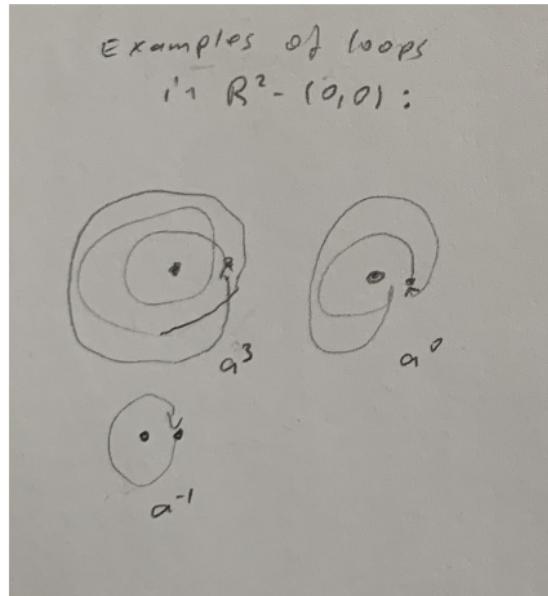
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- ▶ Here, a^{-n} signifies going around counterclockwise n times and a^0 signifies not going around the point. Then,

$$a^w \cdot a^z = a^{w+z}$$



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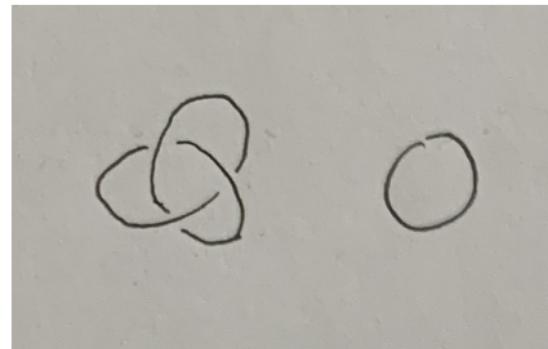
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- ▶ Note: This means the fundamental group is a functor between the category of (pointed) topological spaces with (pointed) continuous functions and the category of groups and group homomorphisms.

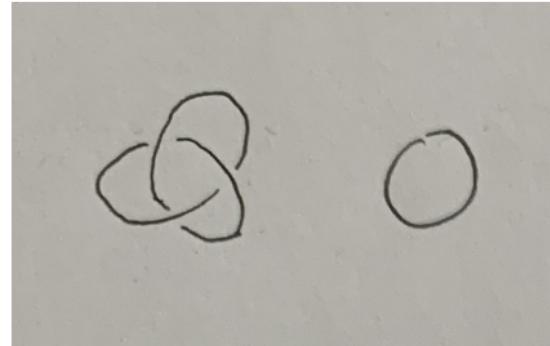
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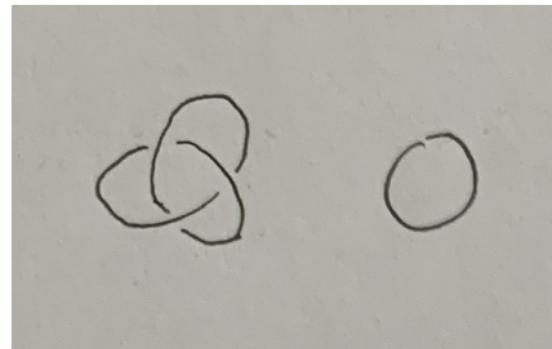
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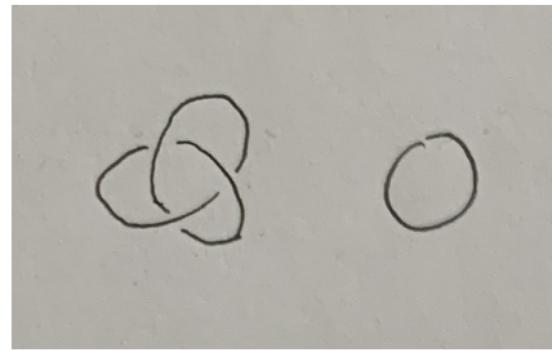
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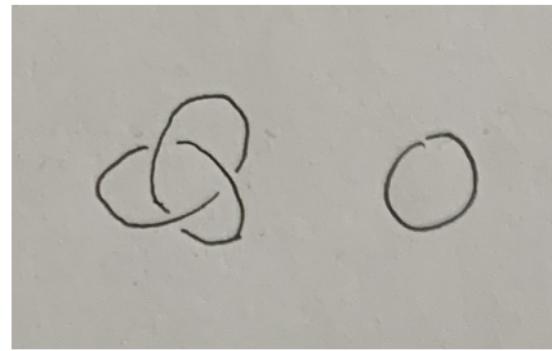
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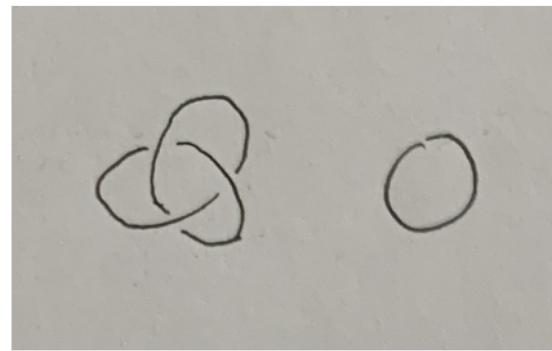
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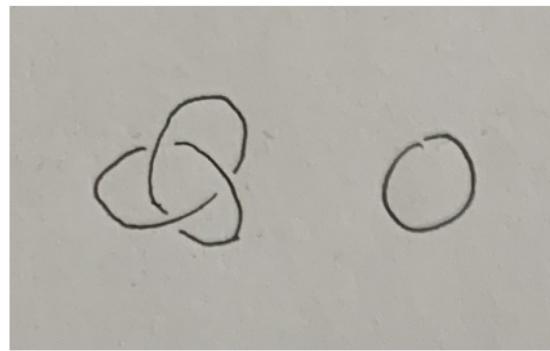
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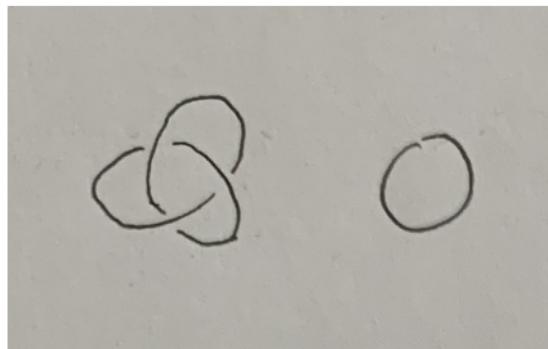
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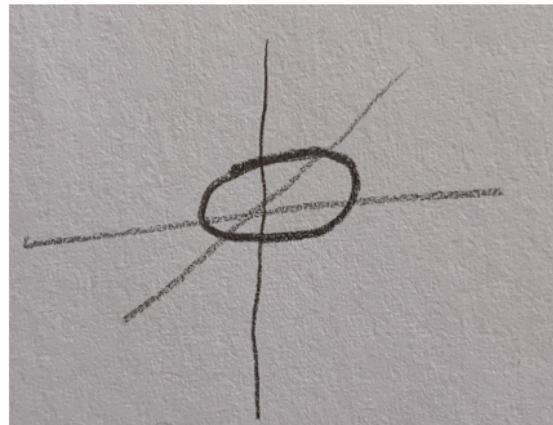
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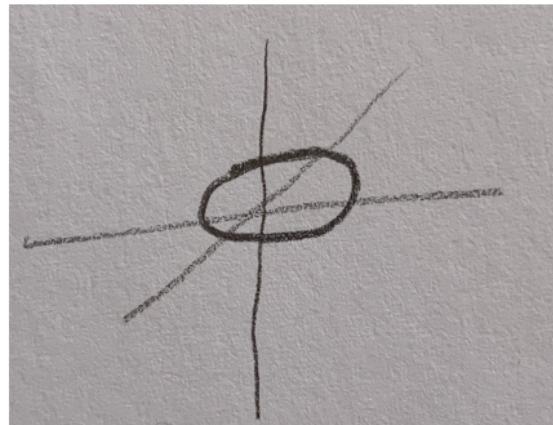
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- ▶ In this presentation, we'll be looking at the statement and proof of this theorem, and applying it to find the fundamental groups of a few knots.

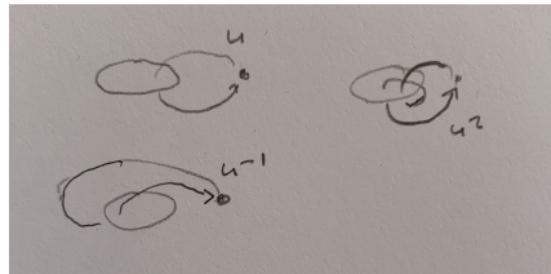
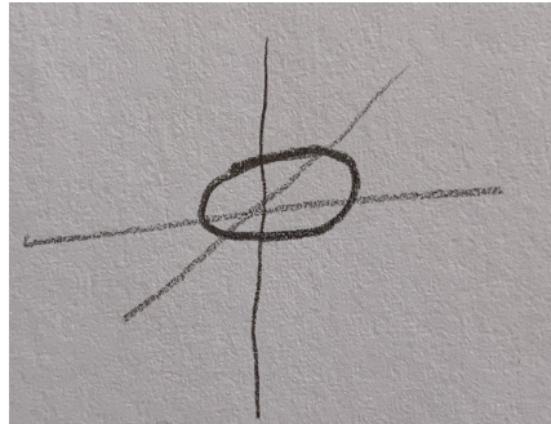
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- ▶ One nontrivial path is wrapping around the circle as shown. Similar to $\mathbb{R}^2 - (0, 0)$, it can be proved that any loops that wrap around the same number of times are equivalent (and loops that don't are not). So, the fundamental group is $\langle u \rangle$.



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We also need to prove this.

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- We'll also look at when two elements of $\pi_1(X)$ are equal and when they're different.
- But hopefully it makes sense how this theorem determines $\pi_1(X)$!

Seifert – Van Kampen Theorem Proof – Part 1

- To Prove: Every element of $\pi_1(X)$ can be expressed as

$$a = \psi_{\lambda_1}(\alpha_1)\psi_{\lambda_2}(\alpha_2)\dots\psi_{\lambda_n}(\alpha_n)$$

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- We will use:

Lebesgue's Number Lemma: Every open cover of a compact metric space has a δ so that any subset of the metric space with diameter less than δ is contained in a single element of the cover. δ is called the Lebesgue number of the cover.

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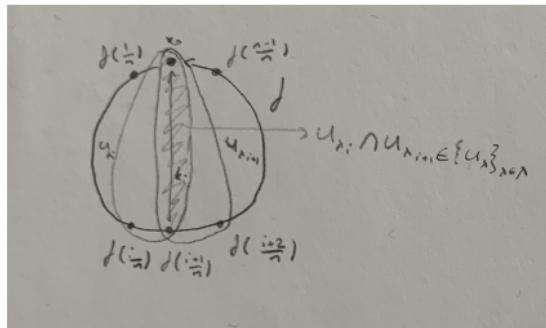
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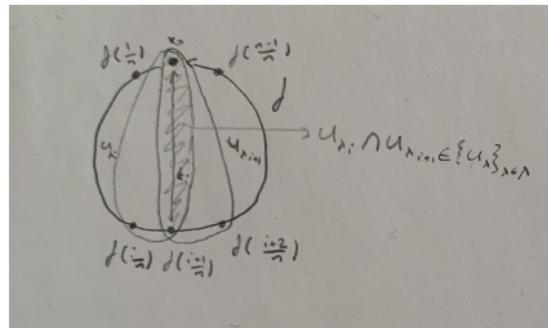
- We will use:

Lebesgue's Number Lemma: Every open cover of a compact metric space has a δ so that any subset of the metric space with diameter less than δ is contained in a single element of the cover. δ is called the Lebesgue number of the cover.

- For any $a \in \pi_1(X)$, find a path $f : [0, 1] \rightarrow X$ so that $a = [f]_{\pi_1(X)}$.
- $\{f^{-1}(U_\lambda)\}_{\lambda \in \Lambda}$ is a cover of the compact metric space $[0, 1]$. It has a Lebesgue number δ .
- Find n so $\frac{1}{n} < \delta$, divide $[0, 1]$ into subintervals $[0, \frac{1}{n}], [\frac{1}{n}, \frac{2}{n}], \dots, [\frac{n-1}{n}, 1]$. Each has diameter less than δ , so $[\frac{i}{n}, \frac{i+1}{n}] \in f^{-1}(U_{\lambda_i})$ for some λ_i , and $f([\frac{i}{n}, \frac{i+1}{n}]) \in U_{\lambda_i}$.
- Let f_i be f from $f(\frac{i-1}{n})$ to $f(\frac{i}{n})$. So,

$$f \sim f_1 f_2 f_3 \dots f_n$$

- $f(\frac{i}{n}) \in U_{\lambda_i}, U_{\lambda_{i+1}}$. Since $U_{\lambda_i} \cap U_{\lambda_{i+1}} \in \{U_\lambda\}_{\lambda \in \Lambda}$, and all elements of $\{U_\lambda\}_{\lambda \in \Lambda}$ are path connected and include x_0 , there's a path k_i from $f(\frac{i}{n})$ to x_0 contained in $U_{\lambda_i} \cap U_{\lambda_{i+1}}$.



- We add the k_i to put each small piece starts and ends at x_0 , and so is in a fundamental group:

$$f \sim f_1 k_1 \cdot k_1^{-1} f_2 k_2 \cdot k_2^{-1} f_3 k_3 \cdot \dots \cdot k_{n-1}^{-1} f_n$$

$$a = [f]_{\pi_1(X)} = [f_1 k_1]_{\pi_1(X)} [k_1^{-1} f_2 k_2]_{\pi_1(X)} \dots [k_{n-1}^{-1} f_n]_{\pi_1(X)}$$

Now, $k_{i-1} f_i k_i \subseteq U_{\lambda_i}$, since $k_i \subseteq U_{\lambda_i}, U_{\lambda_{i+1}}$. Since ψ_{λ_i} is the homomorphism induced by an inclusion map,

$$a = \psi_{\lambda_1}([f_1 k_1]_{\pi_1(U_{\lambda_1})}) \dots \psi_{\lambda_n}([k_{n-1} f_n]_{\pi_1(U_{\lambda_n})})$$

Seifert – Van Kampen Theorem Proof – Part 2

- We'd like to show that

$$\psi_{\lambda_1}(\alpha_1) \dots \psi_{\lambda_n}(\alpha_n) = \psi_{\mu_1}(\beta_1) \dots \psi_{\mu_m}(\beta_m)$$

Implies

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Since paths are invertible, and everything involved is a homomorphism, we can put everything on one side:

$$\psi_{\lambda_1}(\alpha_1) \dots \psi_{\lambda_n}(\alpha_n) \psi_{\mu_m}(\beta_m^{-1}) \dots \psi_{\mu_1}(\beta_1^{-1}) = 1$$

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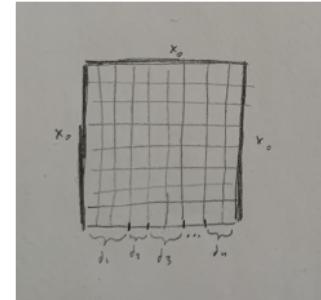
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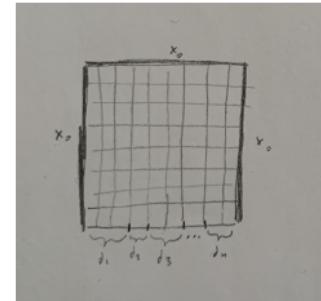
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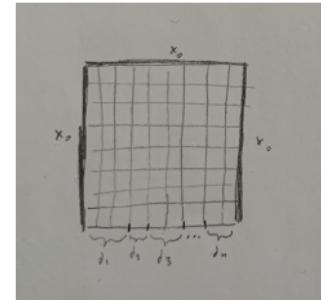
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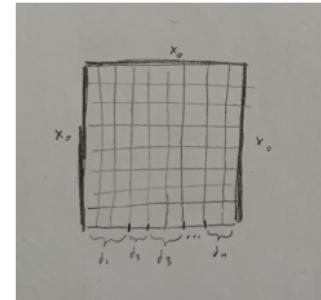
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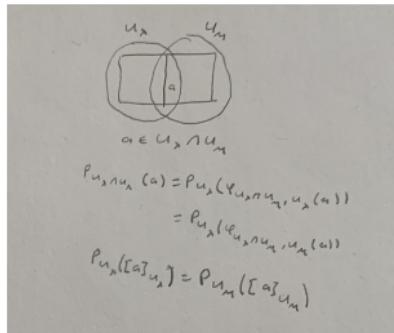
$$\begin{array}{l} \xrightarrow{b_2} \xleftarrow{a_1} \xrightarrow{a_2} \xleftarrow{b_1} \\ \text{a}_1, b_2 \sim \text{b}_1, \text{a}_2 \quad \vdash \Sigma \text{d}_1, \text{b}_2 \times \Sigma \text{d}_1, \text{a}_2 \\ p_\lambda([\text{a}_1, \text{b}_2]) = p_\lambda([\text{b}_1, \text{a}_2]) \\ p_\lambda[\text{a}_1] p_\lambda[\text{b}_2] = p_\lambda[\text{b}_1] p_\lambda[\text{a}_2] \end{array}$$

- ▶ Now, remember that

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \pi_1(U_\lambda) & \xrightarrow{\phi_{\lambda\mu}} & \pi_1(U_\mu) \\ & \searrow p_\lambda & \downarrow p_\mu \\ & & H \end{array}$$

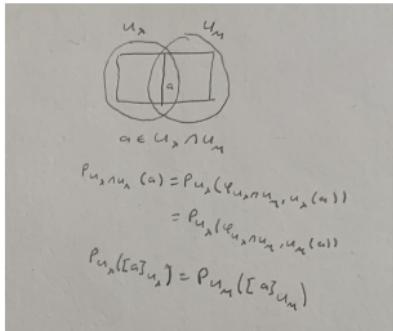
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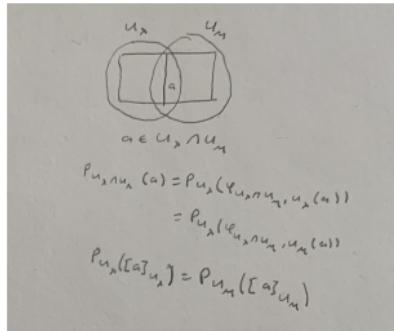
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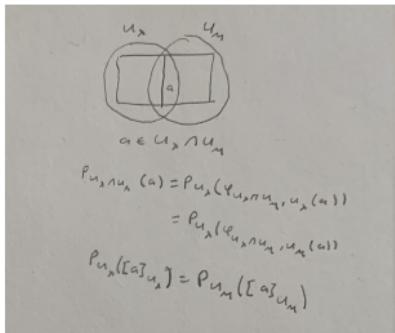
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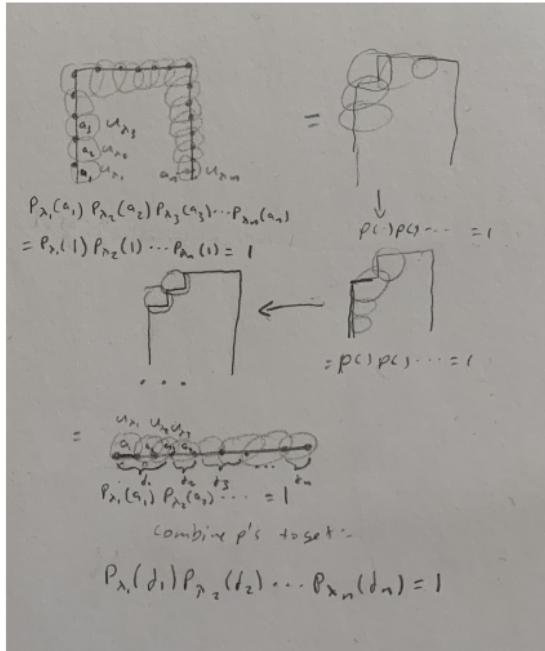
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- ▶ And that concludes the proof of Seifert-Van Kampen theorem: We proved that σ is well-defined, so it exists, and we know that it's unique.

Seifert – Van Kampen Theorem, corollary

- We will prove: If $X = U \cup V$, $\pi(X) = \frac{\pi(U)*\pi(V)}{N}$ where N is the smallest subgroup containing $\phi_{U \cap V, U}(x)\phi_{U \cap V, V}(x)^{-1}$ for all x in $U \cap V$.

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- Elements of the free product $\pi(U) * \pi(V)$ are strings like $u_1 v_1 u_2 \dots v_n$, where each u_i is in $\pi(U)$ and each v_i is in $\pi(V)$. If two adjacent elements are in the same group, you can apply that group's operation:

$$u_1 u_2 v_1 = (u_1 \cdot_{\pi_U} u_2) v_3$$

In terms of generators and relations, if

$\pi(U) = \langle u_1, u_2, \dots : r_1, r_2, \dots \rangle$, $\pi(V) = \langle v_1, v_2, \dots : r'_1, r'_2, \dots \rangle$,
and $\pi(U \cap V) = \langle w_1, w_2, \dots : r''_1, r''_2, \dots \rangle$, then

$$\pi(U) * \pi(V) = \langle u_1, u_2, \dots, v_1, v_2, \dots : r_1, r_2, \dots, r'_1, r'_2, \dots \rangle$$

$$\frac{\pi(U) * \pi(V)}{N} = \langle u_1, \dots, v_1, \dots : r_1, \dots, r'_1, \dots, i_U(w_1)i_V(w_1)^{-1}, \dots \rangle$$

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- Proof: We can define a function $F : \pi(U) * \pi(V) \rightarrow \pi(X)$, by

$$F(u_1 v_1 u_2 \dots v_n) = \psi_U(u_1)\psi_V(v_1)\psi_U(u_2)\dots\psi_V(v_n)$$

If $i_U(x)i_V(x)^{-1} \in N$,

$$F(i_U(x)i_V(x)^{-1}) = \psi_U(i_U(x))\psi_V(i_V(x))^{-1} = 1$$

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- Elements of the free product $\pi(U) * \pi(V)$ are strings like $u_1 v_1 u_2 \dots v_n$, where each u_i is in $\pi(U)$ and each v_i is in $\pi(V)$. If two adjacent elements are in the same group, you can apply that group's operation:

$$u_1 u_2 v_1 = (u_1 \cdot_{\pi_U} u_2) v_1$$

In terms of generators and relations, if

$\pi(U) = \langle u_1, u_2, \dots : r_1, r_2, \dots \rangle$, $\pi(V) = \langle v_1, v_2, \dots : r'_1, r'_2, \dots \rangle$, and $\pi(U \cap V) = \langle w_1, w_2, \dots : r''_1, r''_2, \dots \rangle$, then

$$\pi(U) * \pi(V) = \langle u_1, u_2, \dots, v_1, v_2, \dots : r_1, r_2, \dots, r'_1, r'_2, \dots \rangle$$

$$\frac{\pi(U) * \pi(V)}{N} = \langle u_1, \dots, v_1, \dots : r_1, \dots, r'_1, \dots, i_U(w_1)i_V(w_1)^{-1}, \dots \rangle$$

- Proof: We can define a function $F : \pi(U) * \pi(V) \rightarrow \pi(X)$, by

$$F(u_1 v_1 u_2 \dots v_n) = \psi_U(u_1)\psi_V(v_1)\psi_U(u_2)\dots\psi_V(v_n)$$

If $i_U(x)i_V(x)^{-1} \in N$,

$$F(i_U(x)i_V(x)^{-1}) = \psi_U(i_U(x))\psi_V(i_V(x))^{-1} = 1$$

- So, N is in the kernel of F and the function F is well defined $\frac{\pi(U)*\pi(V)}{N} \rightarrow \pi(X)$. By the proof of Seifert - Van Kampen's theorem, part 1, we know that elements $\psi_U(u_1)\psi_V(v_1)\psi_U(u_2)\dots\psi_V(v_n)$ generate $\pi(X)$, so F is surjective onto $\pi(X)$. We also have:

$$i_1 : \pi(U) \rightarrow \frac{\pi(U) * \pi(V)}{N}, i_1(u) = u$$

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$$i_3 : \pi(U \cap V) \rightarrow \frac{\pi(U) * \pi(V)}{N}, i_3(x) = i_U(x) = i_V(x)$$

where the last two elements are equal in the quotient group since $i_U(x)i_V(x)^{-1} \in N$.

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- Then, we can apply Seifert - Van Kampen's theorem and get $\sigma : \pi(X) \rightarrow \frac{\pi(U)*\pi(V)}{N}$. The following commutes:

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- To conclude,

$$\begin{aligned} \pi(X) &= \langle u_1, \dots, v_1, \dots : r_1, \dots, r'_1, \dots, i_U(w_1)i_V(w_1)^{-1}, \dots \rangle \\ &= \langle u_1, \dots, v_1, \dots : r_1, \dots, r'_1, \dots, i_U(w_1) = i_V(w_1), \dots \rangle \end{aligned}$$

where

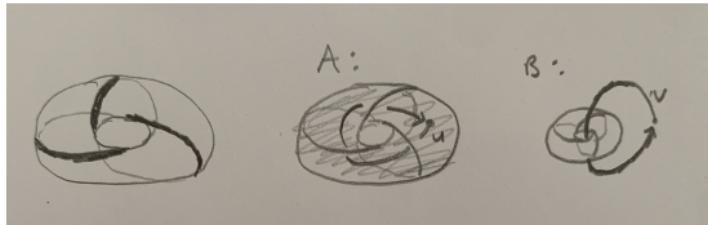
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Calculating the group of the trefoil knot

- We'll consider the trefoil knot we saw in the introduction.

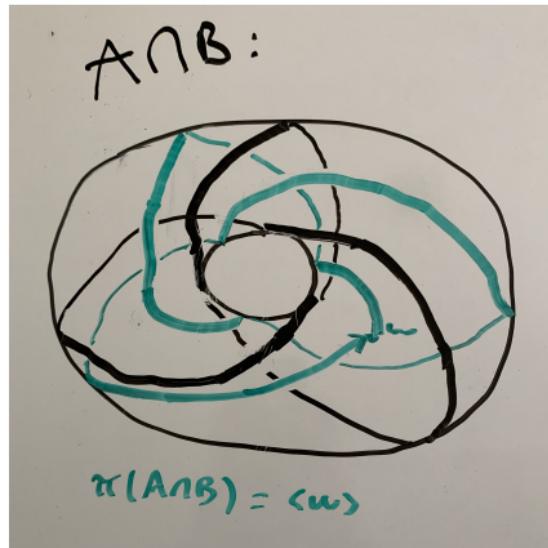
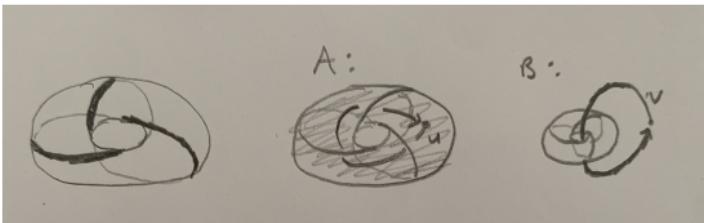
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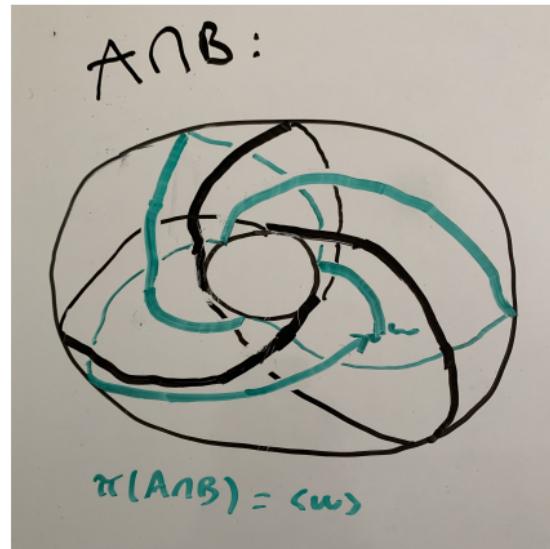
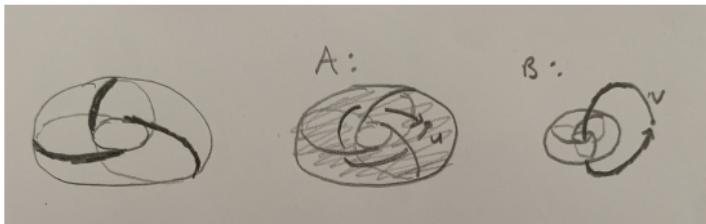
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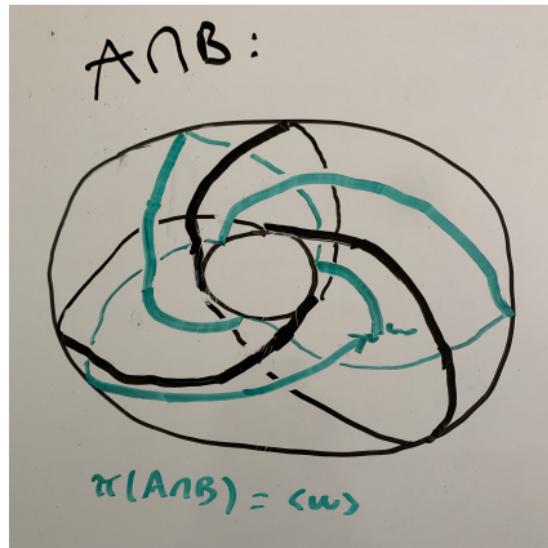
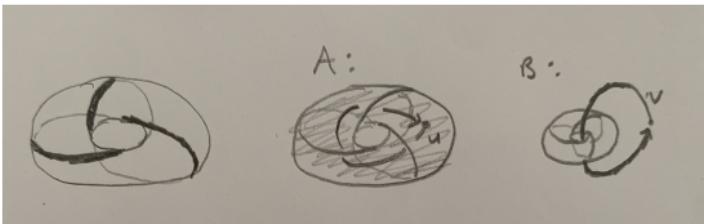
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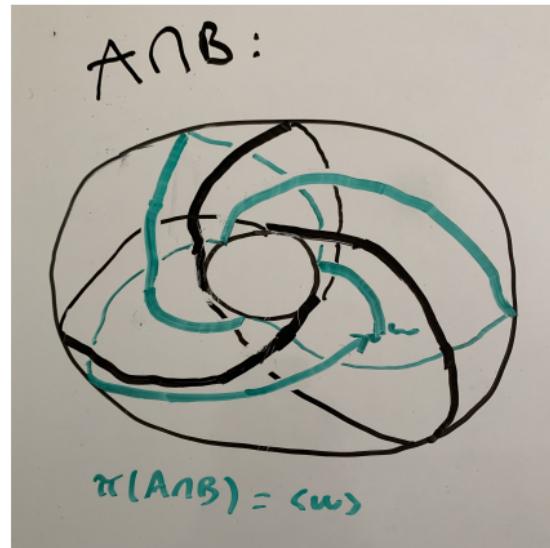
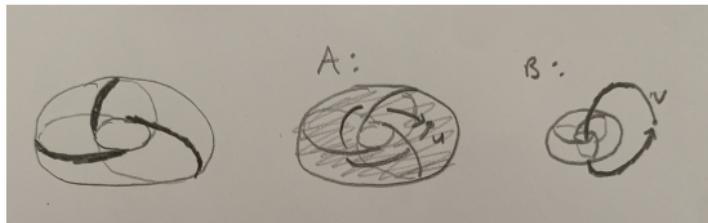
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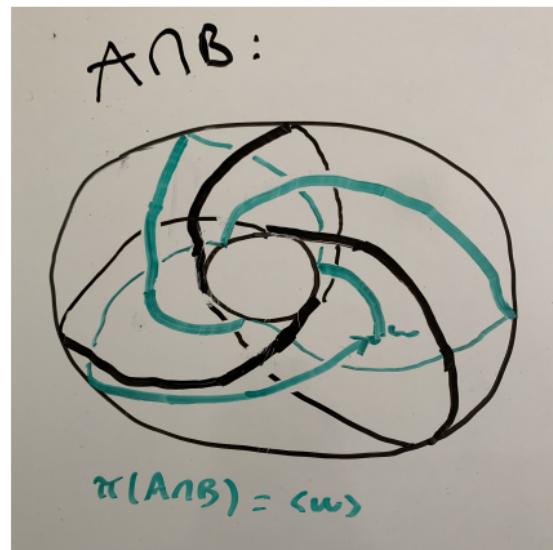
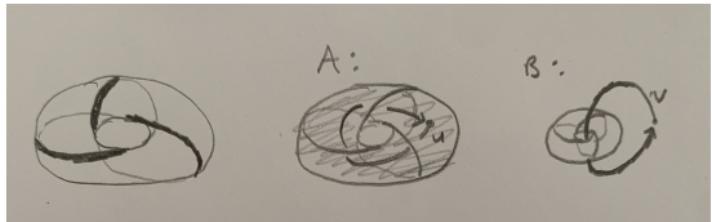
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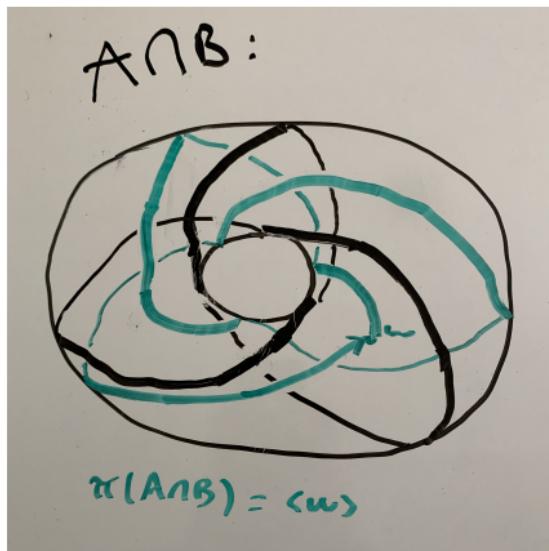
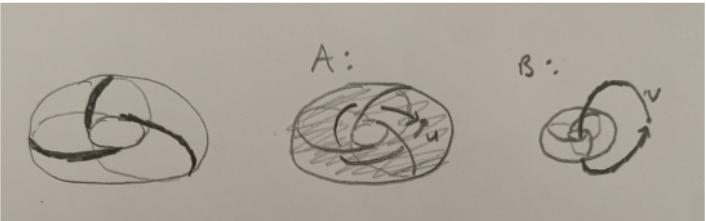
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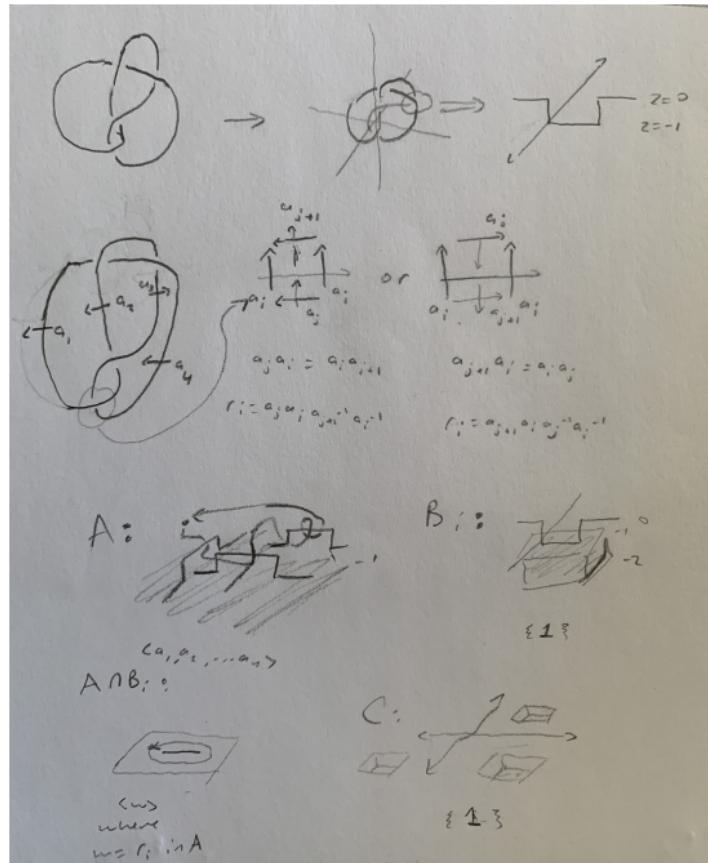
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- ▶ By Seifert – Van Kampen's theorem,
 $\pi(R^3 - K) = \langle u, v, u^2 = v^3 \rangle$



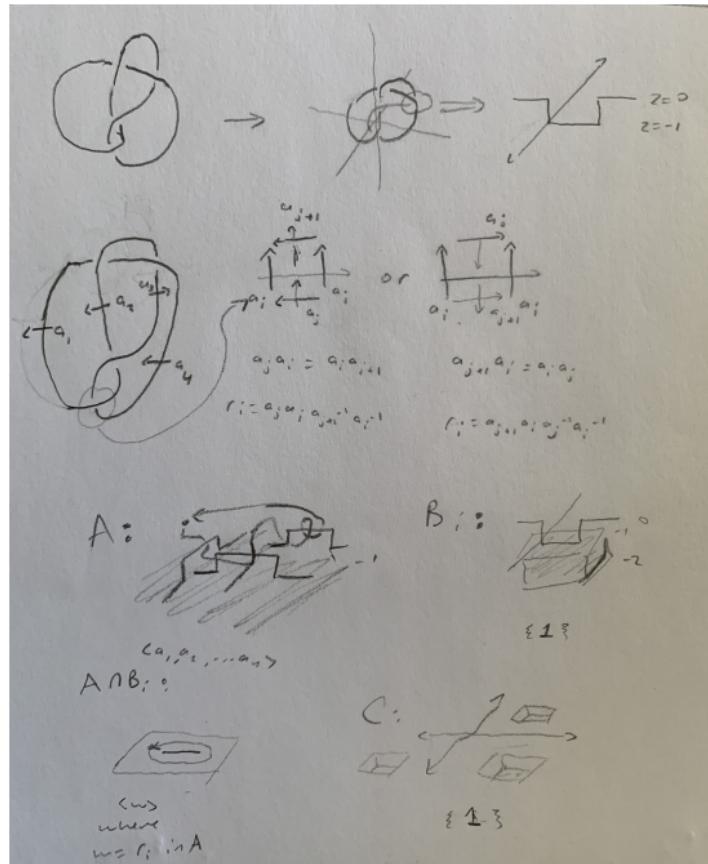
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- ▶ Take any 'drawing' of a knot as curves and put it in \mathbb{R}^3 as shown. Draw lines a_i going across every section of the knot.



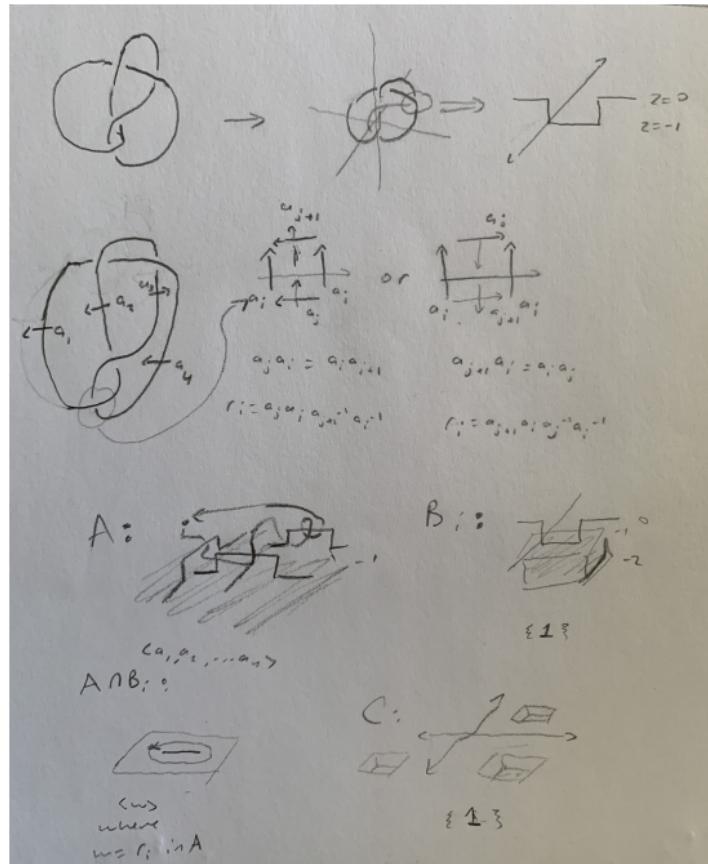
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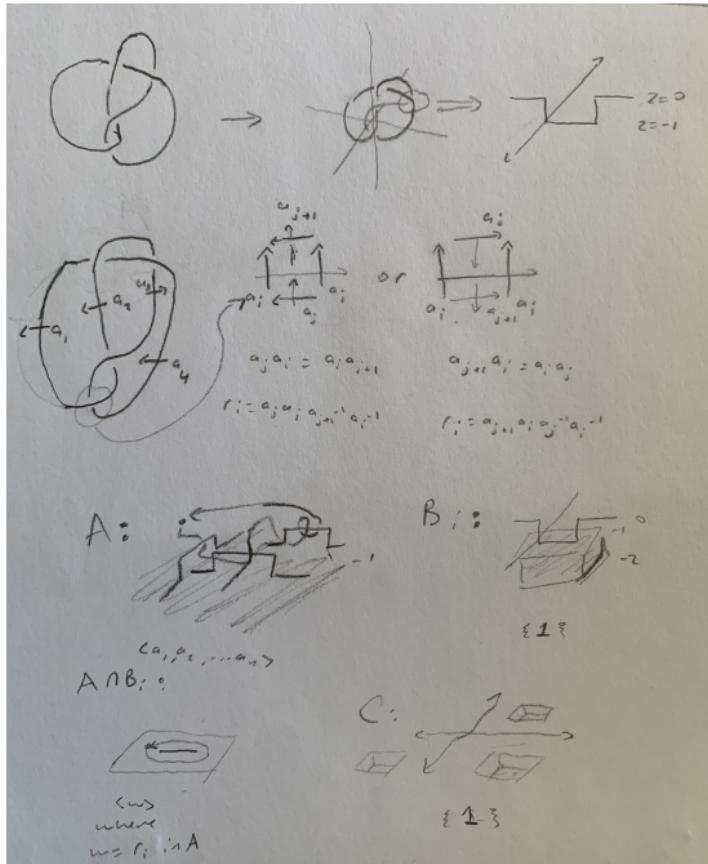
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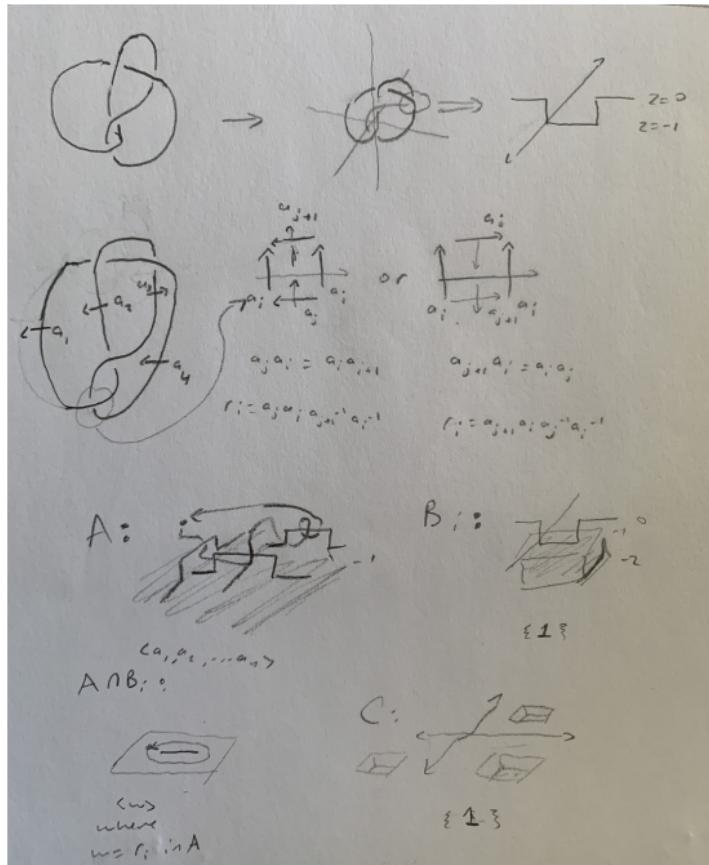
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- B_i : rectangular box under every intersection, with its top at $z = -1$. Any path in the rectangular box is trivial, so its fundamental group is 1.
- C : Anything below A and all the B_i 's. Its fundamental group is 1 as well.

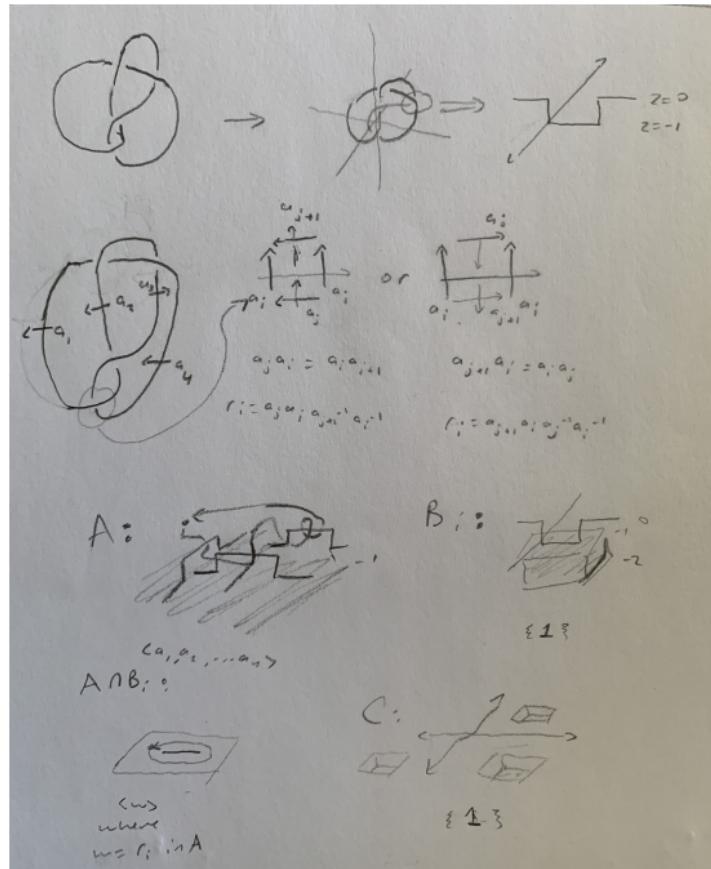
We'll take A and add the B_i 's one by one. $A \cap B_1$ is a rectangle with a line segment in the middle cut out. So, its fundamental group is generated by going around that line segment once, which, included in A is exactly r_i . So, the fundamental group is $\langle a_1, \dots, a_n : r_i \rangle$.

Adding the other B_i 's one by one, the fundamental group becomes

$$\langle a_1, a_2, \dots, a_n : r_1, r_2, \dots, r_n \rangle$$

The intersection of $A \cup B_1 \cup \dots \cup B_n$ and C also has a trivial fundamental group. So the fundamental group of the union of all the parts, $\mathbb{R}^3 - K$ is:

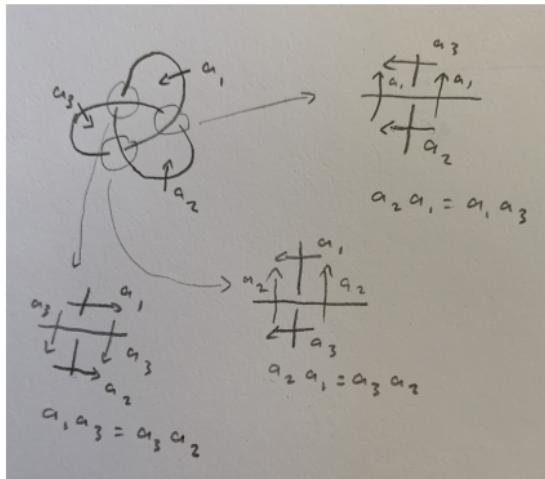
$$\pi(\mathbb{R}^3 - K) = \langle a_1, a_2, \dots, a_n : r_1, r_2, \dots, r_n \rangle$$



Do we get the same group with the Wirtinger Presentation?

- For the trefoil, we get three line segments and three relations as shown.

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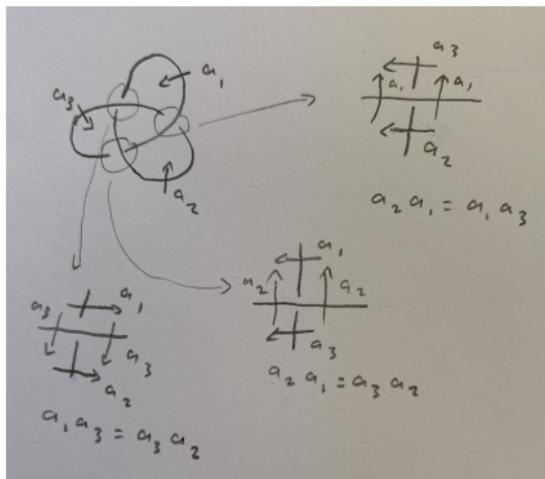
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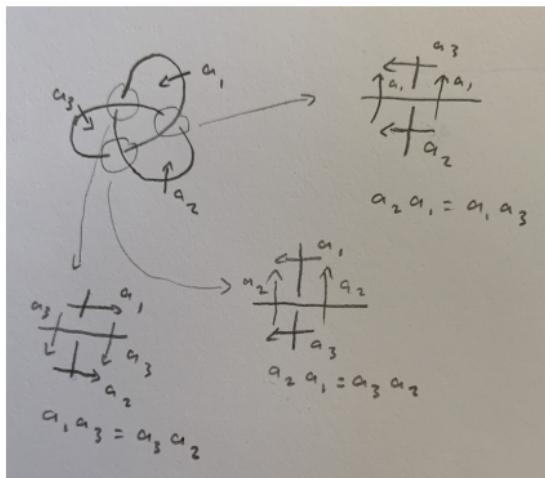
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- We can solve the first relation for a_1 to get $a_1 = a_3 a_2 a_3^{-1}$. So, any string of a_1, a_2, a_3 is also generated by a_2 and a_3 with a_1 as this expression. So, we get:

$$\langle a_2, a_3 : a_2(a_3 a_2 a_3^{-1}) = (a_3 a_2 a_3^{-1})a_3 = a_3 a_2 \rangle$$

$$\langle u, v : uvu = vu * vu \rangle$$

$$uvu * uvu = vu * vu * vu$$



Do we get the same group with the Wirtinger Presentation?

- For the trefoil, we get three line segments and three relations as shown.

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- Clearly, the first two relations imply the third, so this group is equivalent to

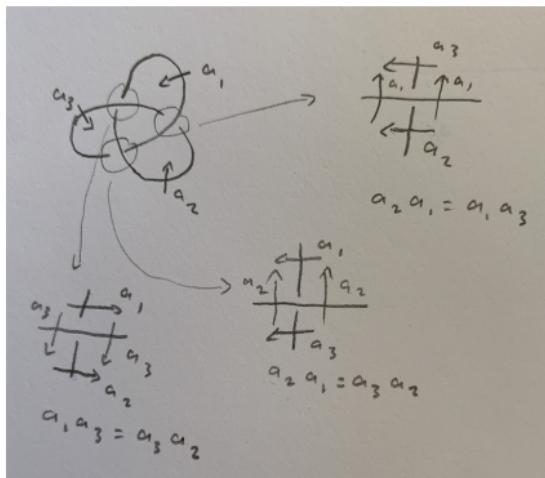
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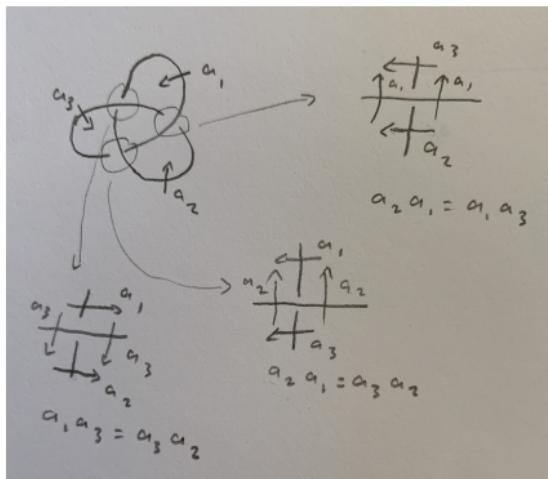
- Let $w = uvu$, $z = vu$. Then,

$$u = wz^{-1}, v = zu^{-1} = z(wz^{-1})^{-1} = z^2w^{-1}$$

So, we can express any string of u 's and v 's as a string of w 's and z 's, so the group is also generated by w and z . Then, the relation we have becomes $w^2 = z^3$.

$$\langle w, z : w^2 = z^3 \rangle$$

And this is the same group we got before.



Is the group we got actually different than the group of the unknot?

- The group of the unknot, $\langle a \rangle$, is commutative – for any $n, m \in \mathbb{Z}$,

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- Therefore, the trefoil is a different knot than the unknot.

Sources

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You can find the source code for this presentation at:

<https://github.com/yahya-tamur/seifert-van-kampen-presentation>