Many subalgebras of $\mathcal{P}(\omega)/\mathit{fin}$

A tale of mass murder and mayhem

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Cyberspace, 8 August 2023: 09:30–09:55 (UTC)

A question on mathoverflow

Mad Hatter asks

Consider the algebra $B = P(\omega)/_{\mathrm{fin}}$ (the quotient of the power set of natural numbers modulo the ideal of finite sets).
Is there an infinite strictly descending chain $\{A_i \mid i \in I\}$ of subalgebras of B, such that there is an embedding of A_{i+1} into A_i, but there is no embedding of A_i into A_{i+1}?

There were some comments about the possible difficulties one might encounter when proving non-embeddability of A_i into A_{i+1}.

They involved the notion of invariants: things that should ‘measure’ the A_i and indicate that A_i is ‘too large’ to fit inside A_{i+1}.

A question on mathoverflow

Most of the invariants that we know are ordinal- or cardinal-valued and decreasing sequences of these tend to be finite, so that makes it hard to create infinite decreasing chains.

One could, possibly, conceive of a sequence of invariants, call them κ_i, such that, say, always $\kappa_i(A_i) = \aleph_1$ and $\kappa_i(A_{i+1}) = \aleph_0$ and hence deduce the desired non-embeddability.
But that is too much effort.

In fact, to paraphrase a famous saying ...

Invariants, we don't need no stinking invariants

There is another way: Mass Murder.

An old idea by Sierpiński, affectionally known as

"Sierpiński's technique of killing homeomorphisms"

allows us to line up potential bad maps and eliminate them.

Turning the question upside-down

We use Stone Duality and construct (much more than) a sequence $\langle K_n : n \in \omega \rangle$ of compact zero-dimensional spaces such that

1. K_0 is a continuous image of ω^*,
2. K_{n+1} is a continuous image of K_n (all n), and
3. K_n is not a continuous image of K_{n+1} (all n).

These spaces will all look the same superficially, with no discernible properties to distinguish them, or even prevent continuous onto maps between them.

We simply eliminate all undesirable maps.

The spaces

Consider Alexandroff's double arrow $\mathbb{A}$.

The underlying set of $\mathbb{A}$ is

$$D = \bigl([0,1] \times \{0,1\}\bigr) \setminus \bigl\{\langle 0,0\rangle, \langle 1,1\rangle\bigr\},$$

ordered lexicographically and endowed with the order topology.
We drop the points $\langle 0,0\rangle$ and $\langle 1,1\rangle$ because they would be (the only) isolated points of $\mathbb{A}$.

As $\mathbb{A}$ is separable it is a continuous image of ω^*; this take care of item 1 in our list: we can take $K_0 = \mathbb{A}$.

The spaces

There are many continuous images of $\mathbb{A}$.

For every subset X of $(0,1)$ take $\mathbb{A}_X = \big\{\langle x,i\rangle \in D : x \in X \to i = 0\big\}$, ordered lexicographically and given the order topology.

$\mathbb{A}_X$ is obtained from $\mathbb{A}$ by identifying $\langle x,0\rangle$ and $\langle x,1\rangle$ whenever $x \in X$.
Thus we can write, e.g., $\mathbb{A} = \mathbb{A}_\emptyset$, and $[0,1] = \mathbb{A}_{(0,1)}$.

In all our examples the complement of X will be dense in $(0,1)$ and this will ensure that $\mathbb{A}_X$ is zero-dimensional.

If $X \subseteq Y$ then there is a natural continuous surjection $s : \mathbb{A}_X \to \mathbb{A}_Y$, given by

- $s(x,i) = \langle x,i\rangle$ if $x \notin Y$;
- $s(x,i) = \langle x,0\rangle$ if $x \in Y \setminus X$; and
- $s(x,0) = \langle x,0\rangle$ if $x \in X$.

The spaces

We find a family $\{S_X : X \subseteq \mathfrak{c}\}$ of subsets of $(0,1)$ and put $K_X = \mathbb{A}_{S_X}$ for all X.

Whenever $X \subseteq Y$ we shall have $S_X \subseteq S_Y$ and so K_Y will be a continuous image of K_X.

All the work will go into ensuring that

if $X \not\subseteq Y$ then K_X is not a continuous image of K_Y

This then yields a family $\{K_X : X \subseteq \mathfrak{c}\}$ of continuous images of ω^* that is order-isomorphic to $\mathcal{P}(\mathfrak{c})$ under the relation “maps continuously onto”.

By Stone Duality we get a family $\{B_X : X \subseteq \mathfrak{c}\}$ of subalgebras of $\mathcal{P}(\omega)/\mathit{fin}$ that is order-isomorphic to $\mathcal{P}(\mathfrak{c})$ under the relation “embeds into”.

The sets

Some preparations before we construct the sets S_X.

Consider the set $\mathcal{F}$ of all maps f that satisfy:
$\operatorname{dom} f$ is a co-countable subset of $[0,1]$ and $f : \operatorname{dom} f \to [0,1]$ is continuous.

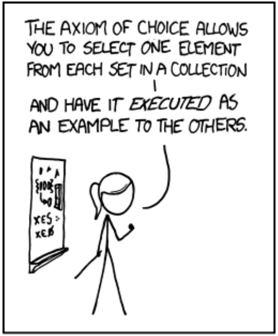
For every $f \in \mathcal{F}$ we let $S(f) = \{x \in \operatorname{dom} f : f(x) \neq x\}$ and $E(f) = \operatorname{dom} f \setminus S(f)$. We choose a subset $C(f)$ of $\operatorname{dom} f$ such that the restriction $f : C(f) \to f\big[S(f)\big]$ is a bijection.

The family $\mathcal{F}$ has cardinality $\mathfrak{c}$.
The sets $S(f)$ and $E(f)$ are countable or of cardinality $\mathfrak{c}$.
The set $f\big[S(f)\big]$ is countable or of cardinality $\mathfrak{c}$ as well, hence so is $C(f)$.

$S(f)$ and $E(f)$ are Borel, and $f\big[S(f)\big]$ is analytic;
so if they are uncountable they even contain a copy of the Cantor set.

The sets

The members of $\mathcal{F}$ represent the potential continuous onto maps between our compacta, so they will be lined up and dealt with . . .



MY MATH TEACHER WAS A BIG BELIEVER IN PROOF BY INTIMIDATION.

The sets

Proposition

There is a pairwise disjoint family $\{V\} \cup \{A_\alpha : \alpha \in \mathfrak{c}\}$ *of Bernstein sets in* $(0,1)$ *with the following properties.*
All are disjoint from $\mathbb{Q}$*, and*
for every $f \in \mathcal{F}$*: if* $f\big[S(f)\big]$*, and hence* $C(f)$*, has cardinality* $\mathfrak{c}$ *then for all* α *the intersections* $C(f) \cap A_\alpha$ *and* $f\big[C(f) \cap A_\alpha\big] \cap V$ *both have cardinality* $\mathfrak{c}$*.*

Bernstein set: intersects every uncountable closed subset of $[0,1]$.

Once this is done we let, for every $X \subseteq \mathfrak{c}$:

$$S_X = \mathbb{Q} \cup \bigcup_{\alpha \in X} A_\alpha$$

Construction

Enumerate the set of uncountable closed subsets of $[0, 1]$ as $\langle G_\beta : \beta \in \mathfrak{c}\rangle$,
and the members f of $\mathcal{F}$ for which $f\big[S(f)\big]$ has cardinality $\mathfrak{c}$ as $\langle f_\beta : \beta \in \mathfrak{c}\rangle$.
We assume each term of the sequences occurs $\mathfrak{c}$ often.

Well-order $\mathfrak{c}^2$ in order-type $\mathfrak{c}$, via $\prec$, and recursively choose points $a_{\alpha,\beta}$, $b_{\alpha,\beta}$, $u_{\alpha,\beta}$, and $v_{\alpha,\beta}$, as follows.
At stage $\langle\alpha, \beta\rangle$ collect $\mathbb{Q}$ and all previously chosen points $a_{\gamma,\delta}$, $b_{\gamma,\delta}$, $u_{\gamma,\delta}$, and $v_{\gamma,\delta}$, with $\langle\gamma, \delta\rangle \prec \langle\alpha, \beta\rangle$ in a set P.
Then $|P| < \mathfrak{c}$.

Take $a_{\alpha,\beta}$ in $C(f_\beta) \setminus P$ such that $b_{\alpha,\beta} = f_\beta(a_{\alpha,\beta})$ is not in P.

And then distinct $u_{\alpha,\beta}$ and $v_{\alpha,\beta}$ in $G_\beta \setminus \big(P \cup \{a_{\alpha,\beta}, b_{\alpha,\beta}\}\big)$

In the end let $A_\alpha = \{a_{\alpha,\beta} : \beta \in \mathfrak{c}\} \cup \{u_{\alpha,\beta} : \beta \in \mathfrak{c}\}$ for all α, and
$V = \{b_{\alpha,\beta} : \langle\alpha, \beta\rangle \in \mathfrak{c}^2\} \cup \{v_{\alpha,\beta} : \langle\alpha, \beta\rangle \in \mathfrak{c}^2\}$

Verification

For all X we have $\mathbb{Q} \subseteq S_X$ and $S_X \cap V = \emptyset$.
The former is a technical convenience, the latter shows that K_X is zero-dimensional.

We do have $S_X \subseteq S_Y$ whenever $X \subseteq Y$, so K_X does indeed map onto K_Y in that case.

If $X \not\subseteq Y$ then there is an α in $X \setminus Y$, and then $A_\alpha \subseteq S_X \setminus S_Y$.

This will ensure: if $f : K_X \to K_Y$ is continuous then $f[K_X]$ is countable.

Verification

To minimize on notational complexity we formulate this as follows.

Lemma

Let M *and* N *be subsets of* $(0,1)$ *such that* $\mathbb{Q} \subseteq M$ *and such that there is an* α *for which* $A_\alpha \subseteq M$ *and* $N \cap (A_\alpha \cup V) = \emptyset$*. Then every continuous map* $s : \mathbb{A}_M \to \mathbb{A}_N$ *has a countable range.*

And the proof of this lemma can be found in . . .

Light reading

K. P. Hart,
Many subalgebras of $\mathcal{P}(\omega)/\mathit{fin}$, arXiv:2303.08491 [math.GN]