

Higher Whitehead products in moment-angle complexes

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Polyhedral products and moment-angle complexes

$(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A}) = \{(X_1, A_1), \dots, (X_m, A_m)\}$ a sequence of pairs of pointed cell complexes, $pt \in A_i \subset X_i$.

\mathcal{K} a simplicial complex on $[m] = \{1, 2, \dots, m\}$, $\emptyset \in \mathcal{K}$.

Given $I = \{i_1, \dots, i_k\} \subset [m]$, set

$$(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^I = Y_1 \times \cdots \times Y_m \quad \text{where } Y_i = \begin{cases} X_i & \text{if } i \in I, \\ A_i & \text{if } i \notin I. \end{cases}$$

The \mathcal{K} -polyhedral product of (\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A}) is

$$(\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^{\mathcal{K}} = \bigcup_{I \in \mathcal{K}} (\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^I = \bigcup_{I \in \mathcal{K}} \left(\prod_{i \in I} X_i \times \prod_{j \notin I} A_j \right) \subset X_1 \times \cdots \times X_m.$$

Notation: $(X, A)^{\mathcal{K}} = (\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{A})^{\mathcal{K}}$ when all $(X_i, A_i) = (X, A)$;
 $\mathbf{X}^{\mathcal{K}} = (\mathbf{X}, pt)^{\mathcal{K}}$, $X^{\mathcal{K}} = (X, pt)^{\mathcal{K}}$.

The **moment-angle complex**

$$\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}} = (D^2, S^1)^{\mathcal{K}} = \bigcup_{I \in \mathcal{K}} \left(\prod_{i \in I} D^2 \times \prod_{j \notin I} S^1 \right)$$

$\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}$ is an $(m+n)$ -dimensional manifold when $|\mathcal{K}| \cong S^{n-1}$.

$$(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}} = \bigcup_{I \in \mathcal{K}} (\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^I \subset (\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^m = BT^m$$

is sometimes called the **Davis–Januszkiewicz space**.

Have a homotopy fibration

$$\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}} \longrightarrow (\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^m$$

Example

$$\mathcal{K} = \bullet \bullet \quad \mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}} = (D^2 \times S^1) \cup (S^1 \times D^2) \cong S^3,$$

$$S^3 = \text{hofibre}(\mathbb{C}P^\infty \vee \mathbb{C}P^\infty \rightarrow \mathbb{C}P^\infty \times \mathbb{C}P^\infty)$$

There exists a homotopy fibration

$$\begin{array}{ccccc} \mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}} & \longrightarrow & (\mathbb{C}P^{\infty})^{\mathcal{K}} & \longrightarrow & (\mathbb{C}P^{\infty})^m \\ \parallel & & \parallel & & \parallel \\ (D^2, S^1)^{\mathcal{K}} & & (\mathbb{C}P^{\infty}, pt)^{\mathcal{K}} & & (\mathbb{C}P^{\infty}, \mathbb{C}P^{\infty})^{\mathcal{K}} \end{array}$$

which splits after looping:

$$\Omega(\mathbb{C}P^{\infty})^{\mathcal{K}} \simeq \Omega\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}} \times T^m$$

Warning: this is not an H -space splitting!

Proposition

There exists an exact sequence of Hopf algebras (over a base ring \mathbf{k})

$$\mathbf{k} \longrightarrow H_*(\Omega\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}) \longrightarrow H_*(\Omega(\mathbb{C}P^{\infty})^{\mathcal{K}}) \xrightarrow{\text{Ab}} \Lambda[u_1, \dots, u_m] \longrightarrow 0$$

where $\Lambda[u_1, \dots, u_m]$ denotes the exterior algebra and $\deg u_i = 1$.

The **face ring** (the **Stanley–Reisner ring**) of \mathcal{K} is given by

$$\mathbf{k}[\mathcal{K}] = \mathbf{k}[v_1, \dots, v_m] / (v_{i_1} \cdots v_{i_k} = 0 \quad \text{if } \{i_1, \dots, i_k\} \notin \mathcal{K})$$

where $\deg v_i = 2$.

Theorem (Buchstaber-P)

$$H^*((\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}) \cong \mathbf{k}[\mathcal{K}]$$

$$H_*(\Omega(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}) \cong \text{Ext}_{\mathbf{k}[\mathcal{K}]}(\mathbf{k}, \mathbf{k}) \quad \mathbf{k} \text{ is a field}$$

$$\begin{aligned} H^*(\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}) &\cong \text{Tor}_{\mathbf{k}[v_1, \dots, v_m]}(\mathbf{k}[\mathcal{K}], \mathbf{k}) \\ &\cong H(\Lambda[u_1, \dots, u_m] \otimes \mathbf{k}[\mathcal{K}], d), \quad du_j = v_j, dv_j = 0 \\ &\cong \bigoplus_{I \subset [m]} \tilde{H}^{*-|I|-1}(\mathcal{K}_I) \quad \mathcal{K}_I = \mathcal{K}|_I \end{aligned}$$

- identifying the homotopy type of the moment-angle complex $\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}$;
- describing the multiplication and higher Massey products in the Tor-algebra $H^*(\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}) = \text{Tor}_{\mathbf{k}[v_1, \dots, v_m]}(\mathbf{k}[\mathcal{K}], \mathbf{k})$ of the face ring $\mathbf{k}[\mathcal{K}]$;
- describing the Yoneda algebra $\text{Ext}_{\mathbf{k}[\mathcal{K}]}(\mathbf{k}, \mathbf{k})$ in terms of generators and relations;
- describing the structure of the Pontryagin algebra $H_*(\Omega(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}})$ and its commutator subalgebra $H_*(\Omega\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}})$ via iterated and higher Whitehead (Samelson) products;
- identifying the homotopy type of the loop spaces $\Omega(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}$ and $\Omega\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}$.

The case of a flag complex

A **missing face** of \mathcal{K} is a subset $I \subset [m]$ such that $I \notin \mathcal{K}$, but every proper subset of I is a simplex of \mathcal{K} .

\mathcal{K} is a **flag complex** if one of the following equivalent conditions holds:

- each missing face has two vertices;
- any set of vertices of \mathcal{K} which are pairwise connected by edges spans a simplex;
- $\mathbf{k}[\mathcal{K}]$ is a quadratic algebra (a quotient of a tensor algebra by an ideal generated by quadratic monomials).

$$\begin{array}{ccc} \{\text{flag complexes on } [m]\} & \xleftrightarrow{1-1} & \{\text{simple graphs on } [m]\} \\ \mathcal{K} & \rightarrow & \mathcal{K}^1 \quad (\text{one-skeleton}) \\ \mathcal{K}(\Gamma) & \leftarrow & \Gamma \end{array}$$

where $\mathcal{K}(\Gamma)$ is the **clique complex** of Γ .

Theorem

For any flag complex \mathcal{K} , there is an isomorphism

$$H_*(\Omega(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}) \cong T\langle \lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_m \rangle / (\lambda_i^2 = 0, \lambda_i \lambda_j + \lambda_j \lambda_i = 0 \text{ for } \{i, j\} \in \mathcal{K})$$

where $T\langle \lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_m \rangle$ is the free algebra on m generators of degree 1.

Proof. By Adams, $H_*(\Omega(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}) \cong \text{Ext}_{\mathbf{k}[\mathcal{K}]}(\mathbf{k}, \mathbf{k})$. By Fröberg, $\mathbf{k}[\mathcal{K}]$ is Koszul, so $\text{Ext}_{\mathbf{k}[\mathcal{K}]}(\mathbf{k}, \mathbf{k})$ is its quadratic dual, written above. \square

Remember the exact sequence of Hopf algebras

$$\mathbf{k} \longrightarrow H_*(\Omega \mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}) \longrightarrow H_*(\Omega(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}) \xrightarrow{\text{Ab}} \Lambda[u_1, \dots, u_m] \longrightarrow 0$$

Proposition

For any flag complex \mathcal{K} , the Poincaré series of $H_*(\Omega \mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}})$ is given by

$$P(H_*(\Omega \mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}); t) = \frac{1}{(1+t)^{m-n}(1-h_1 t + \dots + (-1)^n h_n t^n)},$$

where $\mathbf{h}(\mathcal{K}) = (h_0, h_1, \dots, h_n)$ is the h -vector of \mathcal{K} .

Whitehead products

The i th coordinate map

$$\mu_i: (D^2, S^1) \rightarrow S^2 \cong \mathbb{C}P^1 \hookrightarrow (\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\vee m} \hookrightarrow (\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}.$$

Here the second map is the inclusion of the i -th summand in the wedge. The third map is induced by the embedding of m disjoint points into \mathcal{K} .

The **Whitehead product** $[\mu_i, \mu_j]$ of μ_i and μ_j is the homotopy class of

$$S^3 \cong \partial D^4 \cong \partial(D^2 \times D^2) \cong (D^2 \times S^1) \cup (S^1 \times D^2) \xrightarrow{[\mu_i, \mu_j]} (\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}$$

where

$$[\mu_i, \mu_j](x, y) = \begin{cases} \mu_i(x) & \text{for } (x, y) \in D^2 \times S^1; \\ \mu_j(y) & \text{for } (x, y) \in S^1 \times D^2. \end{cases}$$

Every Whitehead product $[\mu_i, \mu_j]$ becomes trivial after composing with the embedding $(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^\mathcal{K} \hookrightarrow (\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^m \simeq K(\mathbb{Z}^m, 2)$. This implies that $[\mu_i, \mu_j]: S^3 \rightarrow (\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^\mathcal{K}$ lifts to the fibre $\mathcal{Z}_\mathcal{K}$, as shown next:

$$\begin{array}{ccccc}
 \mathcal{Z}_\mathcal{K} & \longrightarrow & (\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^\mathcal{K} & \longrightarrow & (\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^m \\
 & & \uparrow [\mu_i, \mu_j] & & \\
 & \swarrow & S^3 & &
 \end{array}$$

We use the same notation $[\mu_i, \mu_j]$ for a lifted map $S^3 \rightarrow \mathcal{Z}_\mathcal{K}$. Such a lift can be chosen canonically as the inclusion of a subcomplex

$$[\mu_i, \mu_j]: S^3 \cong (D^2 \times S^1) \cup (S^1 \times D^2) \hookrightarrow \mathcal{Z}_\mathcal{K}.$$

The Whitehead product $[\mu_i, \mu_j]$ is trivial if and only if the map $[\mu_i, \mu_j]: S^3 \rightarrow \mathcal{Z}_\mathcal{K}$ can be extended to a map $D^4 \cong D_i^2 \times D_j^2 \hookrightarrow \mathcal{Z}_\mathcal{K}$. This is equivalent to the condition that $\Delta(i, j) = \{i, j\}$ is a 1-simplex of \mathcal{K} .

Higher Whitehead products are defined inductively as follows. Assume that the $(n - 1)$ -fold product

$$[\mu_{i_1}, \dots, \widehat{\mu_{i_k}}, \dots, \mu_{i_n}]: S^{2(n-1)-1} \rightarrow (\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}$$

is trivial for any k . Then there exists a **canonical** extension

$$\overline{[\mu_{i_1}, \dots, \widehat{\mu_{i_k}}, \dots, \mu_{i_n}]}: D_{i_1}^2 \times \dots \times D_{i_{k-1}}^2 \times D_{i_{k+1}}^2 \times \dots \times D_{i_n}^2 \hookrightarrow \mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}} \rightarrow (\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}.$$

The **n -fold product** $[\mu_{i_1}, \dots, \mu_{i_n}]$ the homotopy class of the map

$$S^{2n-1} \cong \partial(D_{i_1}^2 \times \dots \times D_{i_n}^2) \cong \bigcup_{k=1}^n (D_{i_1}^2 \times \dots \times S_{i_k}^1 \times \dots \times D_{i_n}^2) \rightarrow (\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}$$

given by

$$\begin{aligned} & [\mu_{i_1}, \dots, \mu_{i_n}](x_1, \dots, x_n) \\ &= \overline{[\mu_{i_1}, \dots, \widehat{\mu_{i_k}}, \dots, \mu_{i_n}]}(x_1, \dots, \widehat{x_k}, \dots, x_n) \quad \text{if } x_k \in S_{i_k}^1. \end{aligned}$$

Example

$[\mu_{i_1}, \dots, \mu_{i_p}]$ is defined in $\pi_{2p-1}((\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}})$ iff $\partial\Delta(i_1, \dots, i_p) \subset \mathcal{K}$, and $[\mu_{i_1}, \dots, \mu_{i_p}]$ is trivial iff $\Delta(i_1, \dots, i_p) \subset \mathcal{K}$.

We consider **general iterated** higher Whitehead products. For example,

$$[\mu_1, \mu_2, [\mu_3, \mu_4, \mu_5], [\mu_6, \mu_{13}, [\mu_7, \mu_8, \mu_9], \mu_{10}], [\mu_{11}, \mu_{12}]].$$

Nested products have the form

$$w = [\dots [[\mu_{i_{11}}, \dots, \mu_{i_{1p_1}}], \mu_{i_{21}}, \dots, \mu_{i_{2p_2}}] \dots, \mu_{i_{np_n}}] : S^{d(w)} \rightarrow (\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}$$

Any iterated higher Whitehead product lifts to a map $S^{d(w)} \rightarrow \mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}$.

We say that a simplicial complex \mathcal{K} **realises** a higher iterated Whitehead product w if w is a nontrivial element of $\pi_*(\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}})$.

For example, the complex $\partial\Delta(i_1, \dots, i_p)$ realises the single (non-iterated) higher Whitehead product $[\mu_{i_1}, \dots, \mu_{i_p}]$.

Have adjoints of the coordinate maps

$$\bar{\mu}_i: S^1 \rightarrow \Omega(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}$$

and Samelson products

$$[\bar{\mu}_i, \bar{\mu}_j]: S^2 \rightarrow \Omega(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}.$$

Theorem

For any simplicial complex \mathcal{K} , there is an injective homomorphism

$$T\langle \lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_m \rangle / (\lambda_i^2 = 0, \lambda_i \lambda_j + \lambda_j \lambda_i = 0 \text{ for } \{i, j\} \in \mathcal{K}) \hookrightarrow H_*(\Omega(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}})$$

which becomes an isomorphism when \mathcal{K} is a flag complex.

Here $\lambda_i \in H_1(\Omega(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}})$ is the Hurewicz image of $\bar{\mu}_i \in \pi_1(\Omega(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}})$, and the graded commutator $\lambda_i \lambda_j + \lambda_j \lambda_i$ is the Hurewicz image of the Samelson product $[\bar{\mu}_i, \bar{\mu}_j] \in \pi_2(\Omega(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}})$.

When \mathcal{K} is not a flag complex, **higher** Whitehead (Samelson) products appear in $\pi_*((\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}})$ (resp. in $\pi_*(\Omega(\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}})$) and lift to $\pi_*(\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}})$ (resp. to $\pi_*(\Omega\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}})$).

Lifts $S^p \rightarrow \mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}$ of higher iterated Whitehead products of the μ_i provide an important family of spherical classes in $H_*(\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}})$. We may ask the following question:

Question

Assume that $\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}$ is homotopy equivalent to a wedge of spheres. Is it true that all wedge summands are represented by lifts $S^p \rightarrow \mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}$ of higher iterated Whitehead products of the canonical maps $\mu_i: S^2 \rightarrow (\mathbb{C}P^\infty)^{\mathcal{K}}$?

This is the case for many important classes of simplicial complexes: flag, shifted, shellable, totally fillable. However, in general the answer is negative. A counterexample was found by [S. Abramsyan](#) in 2018.

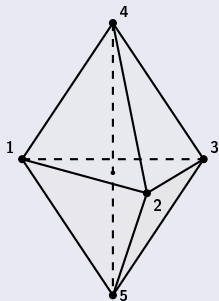
Substitution of simplicial complexes

Let \mathcal{K} be a simplicial complex on the set $[m]$, and let $\mathcal{K}_1, \dots, \mathcal{K}_m$ be a set of m simplicial complexes. We refer to the simplicial complex

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{K}(\mathcal{K}_1, \dots, \mathcal{K}_m) \\ = \{I_{j_1} \sqcup \dots \sqcup I_{j_k} \mid I_{j_l} \in \mathcal{K}_{j_l}, l = 1, \dots, k \text{ and } \{j_1, \dots, j_k\} \in \mathcal{K}\} \end{aligned}$$

as the **substitution** of $\mathcal{K}_1, \dots, \mathcal{K}_m$ into \mathcal{K} .

Substitution complex $\partial\Delta(\partial\Delta(1, 2, 3), 4, 5)$



Next we describe inductively the canonical simplicial complex $\partial\Delta_w$ associated with a general iterated higher Whitehead product w .

Start with the boundary of simplex $\partial\Delta(i_1, \dots, i_m)$, corresponding to a single higher Whitehead product $[\mu_{i_1}, \dots, \mu_{i_m}]$.

Now write a general iterated higher Whitehead product recursively as

$$w = [w_1, \dots, w_q, \mu_{i_1}, \dots, \mu_{i_p}] \in \pi_*(\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}),$$

where w_1, \dots, w_q are nontrivial general iterated higher Whitehead products, $q \geq 0$.

Assign to w the substitution complex

$$\partial\Delta_w \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \partial\Delta(\partial\Delta_{w_1}, \dots, \partial\Delta_{w_q}, i_1, \dots, i_p).$$

Proposition

The complex $\partial\Delta_w$ is homotopy equivalent to a wedge of spheres.

Realisation of higher Whitehead products

Recall that a simplicial complex \mathcal{K} **realises** a higher iterated Whitehead product w if w is a nontrivial element of $\pi_*(\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}})$.

For example, the complex $\mathcal{K} = \partial\Delta(i_1, \dots, i_p)$ realises the single (non-iterated) higher Whitehead product $[\mu_{i_1}, \dots, \mu_{i_p}] \in \pi_{2p+1}(\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}}) = \pi_{2p+1}(S^{2p+1})$.

Theorem (Abramyan–P)

Let w_1, \dots, w_q be nontrivial iterated higher Whitehead products. The substitution complex $\partial\Delta_w$ realises the iterated higher Whitehead product

$$w = [w_1, \dots, w_q, \mu_{i_1}, \dots, \mu_{i_p}].$$

For a particular configuration of brackets, a more precise statement holds.

Theorem (Abramyan–P)

Let $w_j = [\mu_{j_1}, \dots, \mu_{j_{p_j}}]$, $j = 1, \dots, q$, be nontrivial single higher Whitehead products. Consider an iterated higher Whitehead product

$$w = [w_1, \dots, w_q, \mu_{i_1}, \dots, \mu_{i_p}].$$

Then the product w is

(a) defined in $\pi_*(\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}})$ if and only if \mathcal{K} contains

$\partial\Delta_w = \partial\Delta(\partial\Delta_{w_1}, \dots, \partial\Delta_{w_q}, i_1, \dots, i_p)$ as a subcomplex, where
 $\partial\Delta_{w_j} = \partial\Delta(j_1, \dots, j_{p_j})$, $j = 1, \dots, q$;

(b) trivial in $\pi_*(\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}})$ if and only if \mathcal{K} contains a subcomplex

$$\Delta(\partial\Delta_{w_1}, \dots, \partial\Delta_{w_q}, i_1, \dots, i_p) = \partial\Delta_{w_1} * \dots * \partial\Delta_{w_q} * \Delta(i_1, \dots, i_p).$$

Note that assertion (a) implies that $\partial\Delta_w$ is the smallest simplicial complex realising the Whitehead product w .

Example

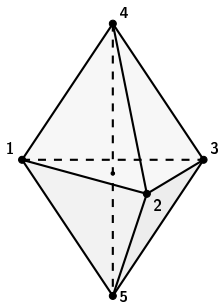
Take $w = [[\mu_1, \mu_2, \mu_3], \mu_4, \mu_5]$.

For the existence of w it is necessary that the brackets $[[\mu_1, \mu_2, \mu_3], \mu_4]$, $[[\mu_1, \mu_2, \mu_3], \mu_5]$ and $[\mu_4, \mu_5]$ vanish.

This implies that \mathcal{K} contains subcomplexes $\partial\Delta(1, 2, 3) * \Delta(4)$, $\partial\Delta(1, 2, 3) * \Delta(5)$ and $\Delta(4, 5)$.

Hence, \mathcal{K} contains the complex $\partial\Delta(\partial\Delta(1, 2, 3), 4, 5)$ shown right.

Therefore, the latter is the smallest complex realising the Whitehead bracket $w = [[\mu_1, \mu_2, \mu_3], \mu_4, \mu_5]$.



For $\mathcal{K} = \partial\Delta(\partial\Delta(1, 2, 3), 4, 5)$, we have $\mathcal{Z}_{\mathcal{K}} \simeq (S^5)^{\vee 4} \vee (S^6)^{\vee 3} \vee S^7 \vee S^8$, and each sphere is a Whitehead product.

For example, S^7 corresponds to $w = [[[\mu_3, \mu_4, \mu_5], \mu_1], \mu_2]$, and S^8 corresponds to $w = [[\mu_1, \mu_2, \mu_3], \mu_4, \mu_5]$.

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