

# Graphs and Coverings

Francis Lazarus

GIPSA-Lab, CNRS, Grenoble

# Groups...

## Definition

Definition A **group** is a set with a binary operation such that

- the order of successive operations does not matter (in time, *not* in space),
- there is a *unit*,
- every element has an inverse.

## Example

The permutation groups

# Groups...

## Definition

Definition A **group** is a set with a binary operation such that

- the order of successive operations does not matter (in time, *not* in space),
- there is a *unit*,
- every element has an inverse.

## Example

The permutation groups

# Groups and Morphisms

## Definition

A group **morphism** is a structure preserving map : it *commutes* with the operations.

## Example

$$\exp : (\mathbb{R}, +) \rightarrow (\mathbb{R}_+^*, \times)$$

Groups and morphisms constitute a **category**

# Groups and Morphisms

## Definition

A group **morphism** is a structure preserving map : it *commutes* with the operations.

## Example

$$\exp : (\mathbb{R}, +) \rightarrow (\mathbb{R}_+^*, \times)$$

Groups and morphisms constitute a **category**

# Groups and Morphisms

## Definition

A group **morphism** is a structure preserving map : it *commutes* with the operations.

## Example

$$\exp : (\mathbb{R}, +) \rightarrow (\mathbb{R}_+^*, \times)$$

Groups and morphisms constitute a **category**

# Subgroups

- The operation of a group  $G$  induces a group structure on the left cosets  $\{gH\}_{g \in G}$  of  $H < G$  iff  $H$  is a **normal** subgroup. Then,  $p : G \twoheadrightarrow G/H, g \mapsto gH$  and  $\ker p = H$ .
- Conversely, the kernel of a morphism  $f : G \rightarrow J$  is normal and  $G/\ker f \simeq \text{Im} f$ .

## Example

The (derived) subgroup  $[G, G]$  of commutators of  $G$ . It is the smallest subgroup  $D$  such that  $G/D$  is commutative.

$\forall f : G \rightarrow H$  with  $H$  commutative,  $\exists! \bar{f} :$



# Subgroups

- The operation of a group  $G$  induces a group structure on the left cosets  $\{gH\}_{g \in G}$  of  $H < G$  iff  $H$  is a **normal** subgroup. Then,  $p : G \twoheadrightarrow G/H, g \mapsto gH$  and  $\ker p = H$ .
- Conversely, the kernel of a morphism  $f : G \rightarrow J$  is normal and  $G/\ker f \simeq \text{Im} f$ .

## Example

The (derived) subgroup  $[G, G]$  of commutators of  $G$ . It is the smallest subgroup  $D$  such that  $G/D$  is commutative.

$\forall f : G \rightarrow H$  with  $H$  commutative,  $\exists! \bar{f} :$

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 G & \xrightarrow{f} & H \\
 & \searrow & \nearrow \bar{f} \\
 & G/[G, G] &
 \end{array}$$



# Categories

Eilenberg - Mac Lane, 1945

## Definition

A **category** consists of

- a class of **objects**,
- for any two objects  $a, b$ , a set **Hom**( $a, b$ ) of morphisms with an obvious associative law of composition, such that **Hom**( $a, a$ ) contains an identity element.

## Example

- **Grp**,
- any group  $G$  with a single object  $a$  and  $\text{Hom}(a, a) = G$ ,
- any preordered set with  $|\text{Hom}(a, b)| = 1 \Leftrightarrow a \leq b$ ,
- any oriented graph with  $\text{Hom}(a, b) = \{ \text{oriented } a \rightarrow b \text{ paths} \}$ .

# Categories

Eilenberg - Mac Lane, 1945

## Definition

A **category** consists of

- a class of **objects**,
- for any two objects  $a, b$ , a set **Hom**( $a, b$ ) of morphisms with an obvious associative law of composition, such that **Hom**( $a, a$ ) contains an identity element.

## Example

- **Grp**,
- any group  $G$  with a single object  $a$  and  $\text{Hom}(a, a) = G$ ,
- any preordered set with  $|\text{Hom}(a, b)| = 1 \Leftrightarrow a \leq b$ ,
- any oriented graph with  $\text{Hom}(a, b) = \{ \text{oriented } a \rightarrow b \text{ paths} \}$ .

# Functors

## Definition

A **functor**  $F$  between two categories  $C$  and  $D$  consists of

- A map  $Objects(C) \rightarrow Objects(D)$ ,
- maps  $Hom(a, b) \rightarrow Hom(F(a), F(b))$  that preserve identities and the composition laws.

## Example

- by forgetting the group structure, we get:  $\mathbf{Grp} \rightarrow \mathbf{Set}$ ,
- a group morphism  $f : G \rightarrow H$  induces a functor between the corresponding categories,
- Algebraic topology is mainly concerned with  $\mathbf{Top} \rightarrow \mathbf{Grp}$  and  $\mathbf{Top} \rightarrow \mathbf{Ab}$ .

# Functors

## Definition

A **functor**  $F$  between two categories  $C$  and  $D$  consists of

- A map  $Objects(C) \rightarrow Objects(D)$ ,
- maps  $Hom(a, b) \rightarrow Hom(F(a), F(b))$  that preserve identities and the composition laws.

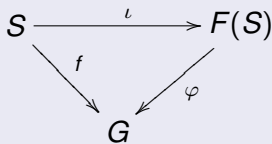
## Example

- by forgetting the group structure, we get: **Grp**  $\rightarrow$  **Set**,
- a group morphism  $f : G \rightarrow H$  induces a functor between the corresponding categories,
- Algebraic topology is mainly concerned with **Top**  $\rightarrow$  **Grp** and **Top**  $\rightarrow$  **Ab**.

# Free Groups

## Definition

The **free group**  $F(S)$  on a set  $S$  is defined by the *universal property*:  $\forall f : S \rightarrow G, \exists! \varphi$ :



$F(S)$  can be realized as the set of **freely reduced words** in  $S$ :

$$F(S) = \{s_1^{\varepsilon_1} \cdots s_n^{\varepsilon_n} \mid s_i \in S, s_{i+1}^{\varepsilon_{i+1}} \neq s_i^{-\varepsilon_i}\}.$$

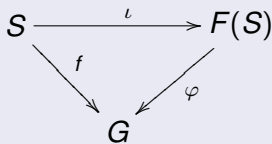
## Example

$$F(\{s\}) \simeq \mathbb{Z}$$

# Free Groups

## Definition

The **free group**  $F(S)$  on a set  $S$  is defined by the *universal property*:  $\forall f : S \rightarrow G, \exists! \varphi$ :



$F(S)$  can be realized as the set of **freely reduced words** in  $S$ :

$$F(S) = \{s_1^{\varepsilon_1} \cdots s_n^{\varepsilon_n} \mid s_i \in S, s_{i+1}^{\varepsilon_{i+1}} \neq s_i^{-\varepsilon_i}\}.$$

## Example

$$F(\{s\}) \simeq \mathbb{Z}$$

# Group Presentations

## Definition

For a set  $S$  and a set  $R \subset F(S)$  of **relators**, the groups with **presentation**  $\langle S; R \rangle$  is the quotient  $F(S)/N$  where  $N$  is the *normal closure* of  $R$  in  $F(S)$ .

$$\langle S; R \rangle = (S \cup S^{-1})^* / \sim \text{ with } uv \sim uss^{-1}v \sim urv, \forall s \in S \cup S^{-1}, \forall r \in R.$$

## Example

- $F(S) = \langle S; - \rangle$ ,
- For any group,  $G = \langle G; xyz^{-1}, z = xy \rangle$
- $\langle \{s\}; s^n \rangle \simeq \mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}$ ,
- $\langle S; \{[s, t]\}_{s, t \in S} \rangle \simeq \mathbb{Z}^n$ .

# Group Presentations

## Definition

For a set  $S$  and a set  $R \subset F(S)$  of **relators**, the groups with **presentation**  $\langle S; R \rangle$  is the quotient  $F(S)/N$  where  $N$  is the *normal closure* of  $R$  in  $F(S)$ .

$$\langle S; R \rangle = (S \cup S^{-1})^* / \sim \text{ with} \\ uv \sim uss^{-1}v \sim urv, \forall s \in S \cup S^{-1}, \forall r \in R.$$

## Example

- $F(S) = \langle S; - \rangle$ ,
- For any group,  $G = \langle G; xyz^{-1}, z = xy \rangle$
- $\langle \{s\}; s^n \rangle \simeq \mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}$ ,
- $\langle S; \{[s, t]\}_{s, t \in S} \rangle \simeq \mathbb{Z}^n$ .



# What is a Graph?

## Basic definitions and notation

Formally, a *general graph*  $\Gamma$  consists of three things: a set  $V\Gamma$ , a set  $E\Gamma$ , and an incidence relation, that is, a subset of  $V\Gamma \times E\Gamma$ . An element of  $V\Gamma$  is called a *vertex*, an element of  $E\Gamma$  is called an *edge*, and the incidence relation is required to be such that an edge is incident with either one vertex (in which case it is a *loop*) or two vertices. If every

*Algebraic Graph Theory, Biggs, 1974/1993*

## 1.1 Graphs

A *graph*  $X$  consists of a *vertex set*  $V(X)$  and an *edge set*  $E(X)$ , where an edge is an unordered pair of distinct vertices of  $X$ . We will usually use  $xy$  rather than  $\{x, y\}$  to denote an edge. If  $xy$  is an edge, then we say that

*Algebraic Graph Theory, Godsil and Royle, 2001*

# What *Really* is a Graph

## Definition

A **graph** is a quadruple  $(V, A, o, \iota^{-1})$ , with  $o : A \rightarrow V$  and  $\iota^{-1}$  is a fixed-point free involution of  $A$ .

*Trees, Serre, 1977 (translated by Stillwell)*

# Graph Morphisms

## 1.4 Homomorphisms

Let  $X$  and  $Y$  be graphs. A mapping  $f$  from  $V(X)$  to  $V(Y)$  is a *homomorphism* if  $f(x)$  and  $f(y)$  are adjacent in  $Y$  whenever  $x$  and  $y$  are adjacent in  $X$ . (When  $X$  and  $Y$  have no loops, which is our usual case, this definition implies that if  $x \sim y$ , then  $f(x) \neq f(y)$ .)

*Algebraic Graph Theory, Godsil and Royle, 2001*

“There is a evident notion of morphisms for graphs”,  
*Trees, Serre.*

### Definition I

A **morphism**  $(V, A, o, {}^{-1}) \rightarrow (W, B, o, {}^{-1})$  is given by  $f: V \rightarrow W, g: A \rightarrow B$  with  $o \circ g = f \circ o$  and  $g \circ {}^{-1} = {}^{-1} \circ o$ .

A non-loop edge contraction is not a morphism for Definition I.

### Definition II

# Graph Morphisms

## 1.4 Homomorphisms

Let  $X$  and  $Y$  be graphs. A mapping  $f$  from  $V(X)$  to  $V(Y)$  is a *homomorphism* if  $f(x)$  and  $f(y)$  are adjacent in  $Y$  whenever  $x$  and  $y$  are adjacent in  $X$ . (When  $X$  and  $Y$  have no loops, which is our usual case, this definition implies that if  $x \sim y$ , then  $f(x) \neq f(y)$ .)

*Algebraic Graph Theory, Godsil and Royle, 2001*

“There is a evident notion of morphisms for graphs”,  
*Trees, Serre.*

### Definition I

A **morphism**  $(V, A, o, {}^{-1}) \rightarrow (W, B, o, {}^{-1})$  is given by  $f: V \rightarrow W, g: A \rightarrow B$  with  $o \circ g = f \circ o$  and  $g \circ {}^{-1} = {}^{-1} \circ o$ .

A non-loop edge contraction is not a morphism for Definition I.

### Definition II

# Graph Morphisms

## Definition I

A **morphism**  $(V, A, o,^{-1}) \rightarrow (W, B, o,^{-1})$  is given by  $f : V \rightarrow W, g : A \rightarrow B$  with  $o \circ g = f \circ o$  and  $g \circ^{-1} =^{-1} \circ g$ .

A non-loop edge contraction is not a morphism for Definition I.

## Definition II

A **morphism**  $(V, A, o,^{-1}) \rightarrow (W, B, o,^{-1})$  is given by  $f : V \cup A \rightarrow W \cup B$ , with  $f(V) \subset W$  and  $f$  commutes with  $o$  and  $^{-1}$ .

# Graph Morphisms

## Definition I

A **morphism**  $(V, A, o,^{-1}) \rightarrow (W, B, o,^{-1})$  is given by  $f : V \rightarrow W, g : A \rightarrow B$  with  $o \circ g = f \circ o$  and  $g \circ^{-1} =^{-1} \circ g$ .

A non-loop edge contraction is not a morphism for Definition I.

## Definition II

A **morphism**  $(V, A, o,^{-1}) \rightarrow (W, B, o,^{-1})$  is given by  $f : V \cup A \rightarrow W \cup B$ , with  $f(V) \subset W$  and  $f$  commutes with  $o$  and  $^{-1}$ .

# Homotopy

A loop with **basepoint**  $v$  in  $G = (V, A, o,^{-1})$  is a sequence of arcs  $(a_1, \dots, a_n)$  with  $o(a_1) = o(a_n^{-1}) = v$  and  $o(a_i) = o(a_{i+1}^{-1})$ .

## Definition

We say that  $(a_1, \dots, a, a^{-1}, \dots, a_n)$  and  $(a_1, \dots, a_n)$  are **elementarily homotopic**.

**Homotopy** is the transitive closure of elementary homotopies.

## Lemma

The set of homotopy classes with basepoint  $v$  is a group for the concatenation of paths. It is denoted  $\pi_1(G, v)$ .

# Homotopy

A loop with **basepoint**  $v$  in  $G = (V, A, o,^{-1})$  is a sequence of arcs  $(a_1, \dots, a_n)$  with  $o(a_1) = o(a_n^{-1}) = v$  and  $o(a_i) = o(a_{i+1}^{-1})$ .

## Definition

We say that  $(a_1, \dots, a, a^{-1}, \dots, a_n)$  and  $(a_1, \dots, a_n)$  are **elementarily homotopic**.

**Homotopy** is the transitive closure of elementary homotopies.

## Lemma

The set of homotopy classes with basepoint  $v$  is a group for the concatenation of paths. It is denoted  $\pi_1(G, v)$ .

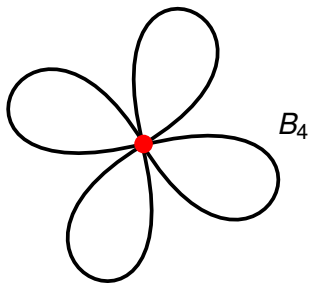


# Homotopy

## Lemma

For a bouquet  $B_n$  of  $n$  cycles:  $\pi_1(B_n) \simeq F(n)$

PROOF. Paths in  $B_n$  are words in  $A(B_n)$ . Two paths are homotopic iff they freely reduce to the same word. So,  $\pi_1(B_n) \simeq F(A_+(B_n))$ .  $\square$



# The Homotopy Functor

A morphism  $f : (G, v) \rightarrow (H, w)$  induces a group morphism  $f_* : \pi_1(G, v) \rightarrow \pi_1(H, w)$  using

$$(a_1, \dots, a_n) \mapsto (f(a_1), \dots, f(a_n))$$

## Example

A non-loop edge contraction induces a group isomorphism:  
 $\beta \sim \beta'$  with  $\beta = f(\alpha)$  and  $\beta' = f(\alpha') \implies \alpha \sim \alpha'$ .

# The Homotopy Functor

A morphism  $f : (G, v) \rightarrow (H, w)$  induces a group morphism  $f_* : \pi_1(G, v) \rightarrow \pi_1(H, w)$  using

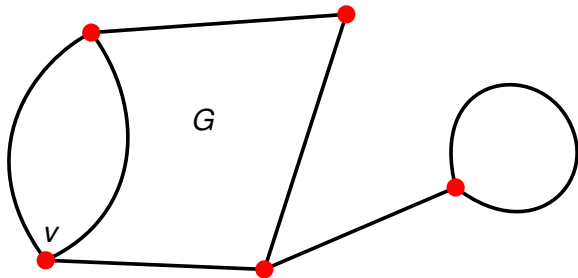
$$(a_1, \dots, a_n) \mapsto (f(a_1), \dots, f(a_n))$$

## Example

A non-loop edge contraction induces a group isomorphism:  
 $\beta \sim \beta'$  with  $\beta = f(\alpha)$  and  $\beta' = f(\alpha') \implies \alpha \sim \alpha'$ .

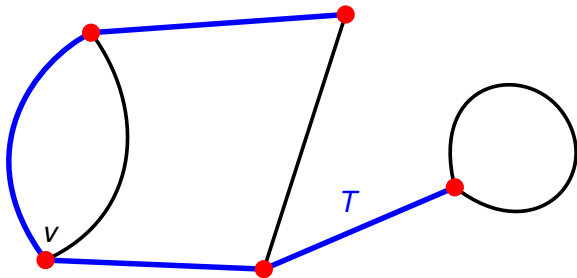
$\pi_1$  of Graphs

Let  $T$  be a spanning tree of a graph  $G$  with basepoint  $v$ .



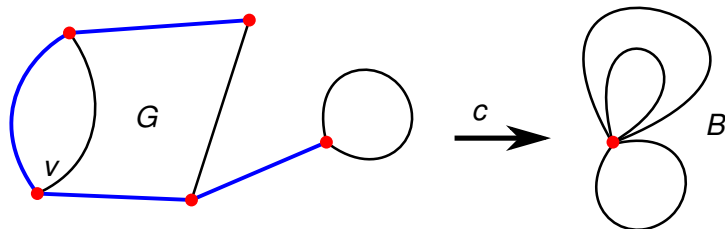
$\pi_1$  of Graphs

Let  $T$  be a spanning tree of a graph  $G$  with basepoint  $v$ .



$\pi_1$  of Graphs

The contraction  $c : G \rightarrow B$  induces an isomorphism.

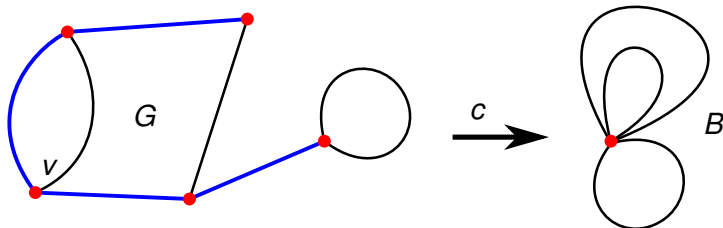


$$\implies \pi_1(G, v) \simeq F(A_+(B))$$

The edges of  $B$  are the **chords** of  $T$  in  $G$ .

$\pi_1$  of Graphs

The contraction  $c : G \rightarrow B$  induces an isomorphism.

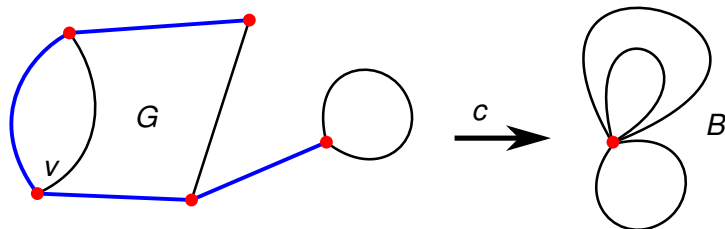


$$\implies \pi_1(G, v) \simeq F(A_+(B))$$

The edges of  $B$  are the chords of  $T$  in  $G$ .

$\pi_1$  of Graphs

The contraction  $c : G \rightarrow B$  induces an isomorphism.



$$\implies \pi_1(G, v) \simeq F(A_+(B))$$

The edges of  $B$  are the **chords** of  $T$  in  $G$ .



$\pi_1$  of Graphs

## Theorem

If  $G$  is connected,

$$\pi_1(G, v) \simeq \langle \mathbf{A}_+(G \setminus T); - \rangle$$

$$\text{rank } \pi_1(G, v) = |\mathbf{A}_+(G \setminus T)| = \frac{|A|}{2} - |V| + 1$$

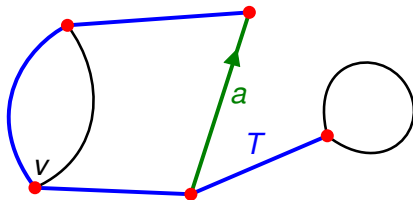
$\pi_1$  of Graphs

## Theorem

If  $G$  is connected,

$$\pi_1(G, v) \simeq \langle A_+(G \setminus T); - \rangle$$

$$\text{rank } \pi_1(G, v) = |A_+(G \setminus T)| = \frac{|A|}{2} - |V| + 1$$



$$\gamma_a = T[v, o(a)].a.T(o(a^{-1}), v]$$

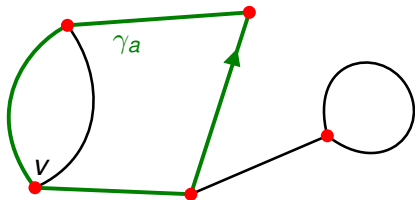
$\pi_1$  of Graphs

## Theorem

If  $G$  is connected,

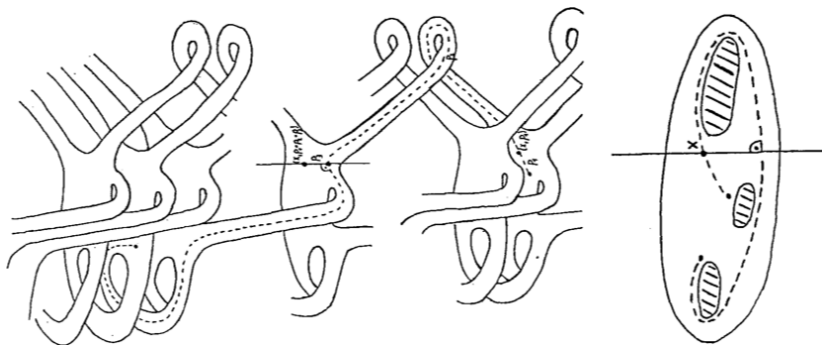
$$\pi_1(G, v) \simeq \langle A_+(G \setminus T); - \rangle$$

$$\text{rank } \pi_1(G, v) = |A_+(G \setminus T)| = \frac{|A|}{2} - |V| + 1$$



$$\pi(\gamma_a) = a \quad (\text{in } B) \implies \pi_1(G, v) = \langle \{\gamma_a\}_{a \in A_+(G \setminus T)}; - \rangle$$

# Graph Coverings



Gao et al., 1998

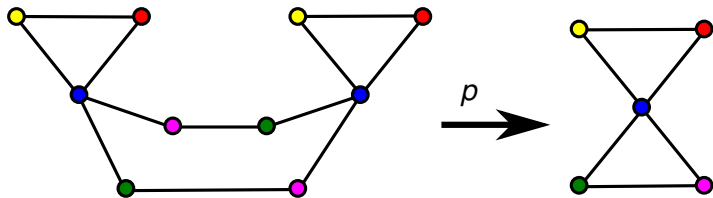
# Covering

Let  $G$  be a graph. For  $v \in V(G)$ , let

$$\text{Star}(v) := \{a \in A(G) \mid o(a) = v\}.$$

## Definition

- A graph (epi)morphism  $p : H \rightarrow G$  is a **covering** if the restriction  $p : \text{Star}(w) \rightarrow \text{Star}(p(w))$  is bijective for all  $w \in V(H)$ .
- $G$  is the **base** of  $p$ . For  $v \in V(G)$ , the set  $p^{-1}(v)$  is the **fiber** above  $v$ .



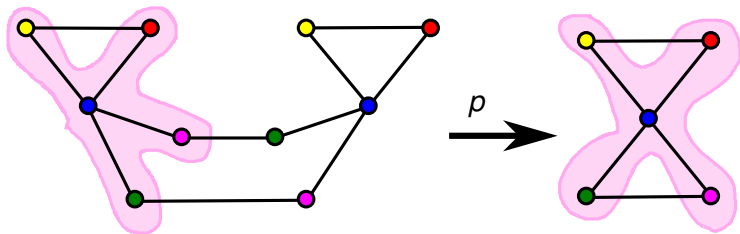
# Covering

Let  $G$  be a graph. For  $v \in V(G)$ , let

$$\text{Star}(v) := \{a \in A(G) \mid o(a) = v\}.$$

## Definition

- A graph (epi)morphism  $p : H \rightarrow G$  is a **covering** if the restriction  $p : \text{Star}(w) \rightarrow \text{Star}(p(w))$  is bijective for all  $w \in V(H)$ .
- $G$  is the **base** of  $p$ . For  $v \in V(G)$ , the set  $p^{-1}(v)$  is the **fiber** above  $v$ .



# Unique Lift Property

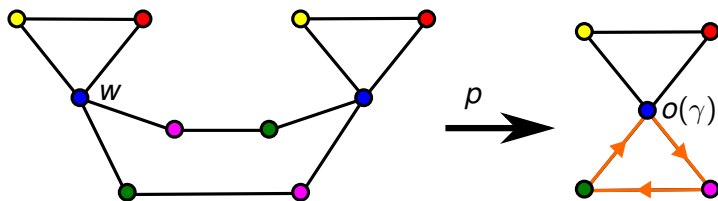
Let  $p : H \rightarrow G$  be a covering and let  $\gamma$  be a path in  $G$ .

## Definition

A path  $\delta$  in  $H$  with  $p(\delta) = \gamma$  is called a **lift** of  $\gamma$ .

## Lemma

Let  $w \in V(H)$  with  $p(w) = o(\gamma)$ . There exists a *unique* lift of  $\gamma$  with origin  $w$ .



# Unique Lift Property

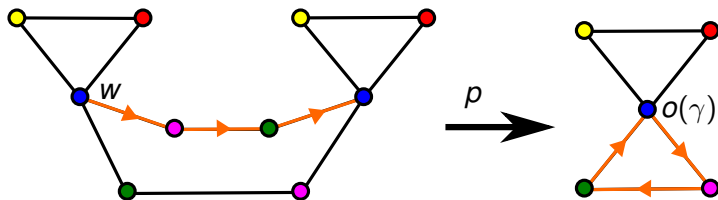
Let  $p : H \rightarrow G$  be a covering and let  $\gamma$  be a path in  $G$ .

## Definition

A path  $\delta$  in  $H$  with  $p(\delta) = \gamma$  is called a **lift** of  $\gamma$ .

## Lemma

Let  $w \in V(H)$  with  $p(w) = o(\gamma)$ . There exists a *unique* lift of  $\gamma$  with origin  $w$ .





# Unique Lift Property

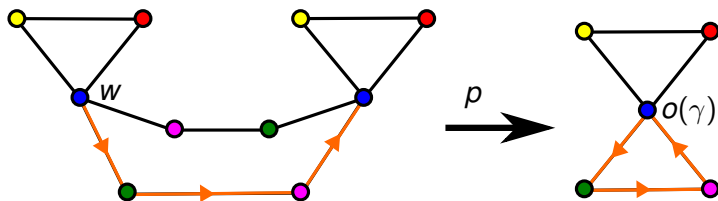
Let  $p : H \rightarrow G$  be a covering and let  $\gamma$  be a path in  $G$ .

## Definition

A path  $\delta$  in  $H$  with  $p(\delta) = \gamma$  is called a **lift** of  $\gamma$ .

## Lemma

Let  $w \in V(H)$  with  $p(w) = o(\gamma)$ . There exists a *unique* lift of  $\gamma$  with origin  $w$ .



# Lift of Homotopies

Let  $p : H \rightarrow G$  be a covering.

## Lemma

Let  $\alpha \sim \beta$  be two homotopic paths in  $G$ . Let  $\tilde{\alpha}$  and  $\tilde{\beta}$  be respective lifts with the same origin. Then  $\tilde{\alpha} \sim \tilde{\beta}$ .

PROOF. By induction on the number of elementary homotopies separating  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ .  $\square$

## Corollary

$p_*$  is injective.

PROOF.

$p_*[\alpha] = p_*[\beta] \Leftrightarrow p(\alpha) \sim p(\beta) \implies \alpha \sim \beta \implies [\alpha] = [\beta]. \quad \square$

# Lift of Homotopies: Application

## Lemma

$$F(\mathbb{N}_0) < F(n) < F(2)$$

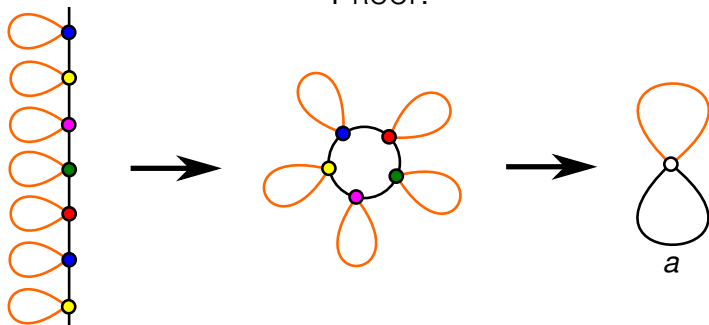
Remark:  $\gamma \in p_*\pi_1(\text{Flower}_n) \Leftrightarrow |\gamma|_a \equiv 0 \pmod n \implies p_*\pi_1(\text{Flower}_n) \triangleleft \pi_1(\text{Flower}_2)$ , i.e.,  $F(n) \triangleleft F(2)$ . What is  $F(2)/F(n)$ ?

## Lift of Homotopies: Application

## Lemma

$$F(\mathbb{N}_0) < F(n) < F(2)$$

PROOF.



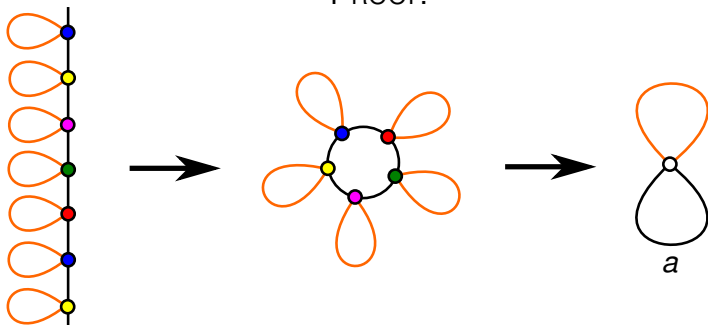
Remark:  $\gamma \in p_*\pi_1(\text{Flower}_n) \Leftrightarrow |\gamma|_a \equiv 0 \pmod n \Rightarrow$   
 $p_*\pi_1(\text{Flower}_n) \triangleleft \pi_1(\text{Flower}_2)$ , i.e.,  $F(n) \triangleleft F(2)$ . What is  $F(2)/F(n)$ ?

## Lift of Homotopies: Application

## Lemma

$$F(\mathbb{N}_0) < F(n) < F(2)$$

PROOF.



□ Remark:  $\gamma \in p_*\pi_1(\text{Flower}_n) \Leftrightarrow |\gamma|_a \equiv 0 \pmod n \implies p_*\pi_1(\text{Flower}_n) \triangleleft \pi_1(\text{Flower}_2)$ , i.e.,  $F(n) \triangleleft F(2)$ . What is  $F(2)/F(n)$ ?

# Subgroups and Coverings

## Proposition

Let  $G$  be a connected graph. For every subgroup  $U < \pi_1(G, v)$ , there exists a connected covering  $p_U : (G_U, w) \rightarrow (G, v)$  with  $p_{U*}\pi_1(G_U, w) = U$ .

Let  $T$  be spanning tree of  $G$  and  $\gamma_a = T[v, o(a)].a.T(o(a^{-1}), v]$ . Define  $G_U, p_U$  by

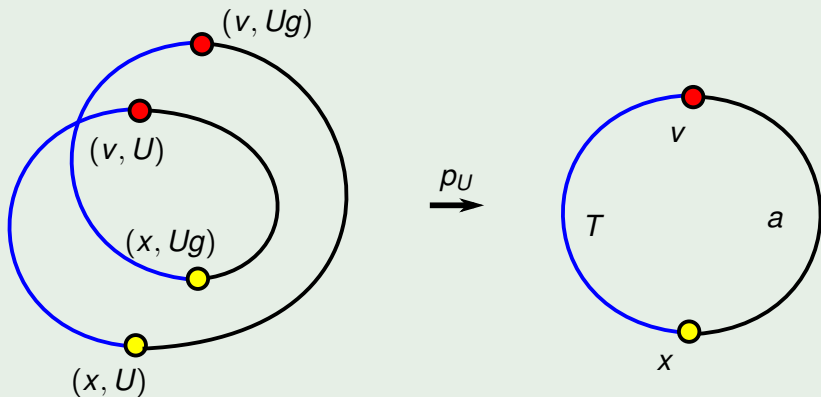
- $V(G_U) = V(G) \times \{Ug\}_{g \in \pi_1(G, x)}$ ,  
 $A(G_U) = A(G) \times \{Ug\}_{g \in \pi_1(G, x)}$
- $o(a, Ug) = o(a)$  and  $(a, Ug)^{-1} = (a^{-1}, Ug[\gamma_a])$ ,
- $p_U$  is the proj. on first component.

$$(o(a), Ug) \bullet \begin{array}{c} \xrightarrow{(a, Ug)} \\ \xleftarrow{(a^{-1}, Ug[\gamma_a])} \end{array} \bullet (o(a^{-1}), Ug[\gamma_a])$$

## Subgroups and Coverings

## Example

Put  $g := [\gamma_a]$ , so  $\pi_1(G, v) = \langle g \rangle$ . Let  $U = \langle g^2 \rangle$ .



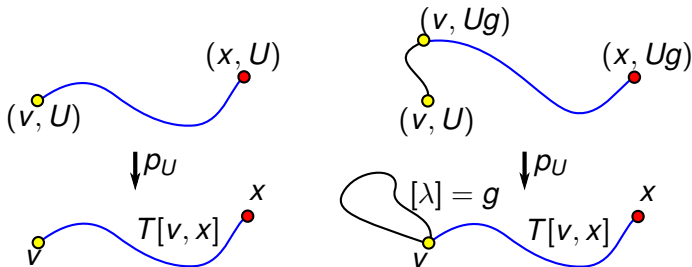
# Subgroups and Coverings

- $p_U$  is a covering:  $Star(x, Ug) = Star(x) \times \{Ug\}$
- $G_U$  is connected: For a path  $\alpha = (a_1, \dots, a_n)$ , put  $\gamma_\alpha = \gamma_{a_1} \cdots \gamma_{a_n}$ . Observe that  $(v, U).[\alpha] = (t(\alpha), U[\gamma_\alpha])$ .
- $p_{U*}\pi_1(G_U, (v, U)) = U$ :  
 $[\lambda] \in \text{Imp}_{U*} \Leftrightarrow (v, U).[\lambda] = (v, U) \Leftrightarrow U[\lambda] = U \Leftrightarrow [\lambda] \in U$



# Subgroups and Coverings

- $p_U$  is a covering:  $Star(x, Ug) = Star(x) \times \{Ug\}$
- $G_U$  is connected: For a path  $\alpha = (a_1, \dots, a_n)$ , put  $\gamma_\alpha = \gamma_{a_1} \cdots \gamma_{a_n}$ . Observe that  $(v, U) \cdot [\alpha] = (t(\alpha), U[\gamma_\alpha])$ .



- $p_{U*} \pi_1(G_U, (v, U)) = U$ :  
 $[\lambda] \in \text{Imp } p_{U*} \Leftrightarrow (v, U) \cdot [\lambda] = (v, U) \Leftrightarrow U[\lambda] = U \Leftrightarrow [\lambda] \in U$

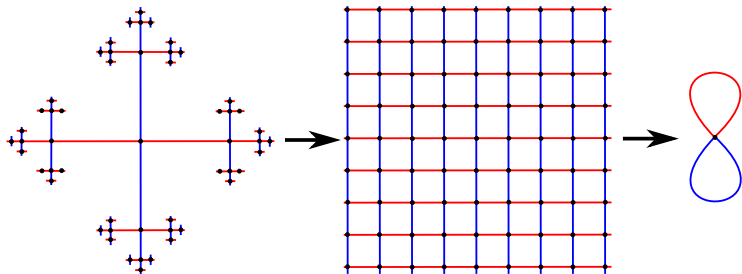
# Subgroups and Coverings

- $p_U$  is a covering:  $Star(x, Ug) = Star(x) \times \{Ug\}$
- $G_U$  is connected: For a path  $\alpha = (a_1, \dots, a_n)$ , put  $\gamma_\alpha = \gamma_{a_1} \cdots \gamma_{a_n}$ . Observe that  $(v, U).[\alpha] = (t(\alpha), U[\gamma_\alpha])$ .
- $p_{U*}\pi_1(G_U, (v, U)) = U$ :  
 $[\lambda] \in \text{Imp}p_{U*} \Leftrightarrow (v, U).[\lambda] = (v, U) \Leftrightarrow U[\lambda] = U \Leftrightarrow [\lambda] \in U$

# Subgroups and Coverings: Examples

## Definition

When  $U = \{1\}$ ,  $G_U$  is the **universal cover**.



we have

$\alpha \in p_*\pi_1(\mathbb{Z}^2 \text{Grid}) \Leftrightarrow |\alpha|_a = |\alpha|_b = 0 \Leftrightarrow \alpha \in [F(2), F(2)]$ . So, for  $G = B_2$ ,  $G_{[G,G]} = \mathbb{Z}^2 \text{Grid}$ .

# Subgroups and Coverings: Application

Nielsen-Schreier theorem, mid 1920's

Every subgroup of a free group is free.

PROOF. Realize  $F(S)$  as the  $\pi_1$  of a bouquet of  $|S|$  circles. A subgroup of  $F(S)$  is the  $\pi_1$  of a covering graph, which we know to be free.  $\square$

Note: Another proof uses the fact that a group is free iff it acts freely on a tree (Bass-Serre). Any subgroup acts obviously freely on the same tree.

# Covering Morphisms

## Definition

A **morphism**  $f$  between coverings  $p : H \rightarrow G$  and  $q : K \rightarrow G$

sends fibers to fibers. It satisfies:

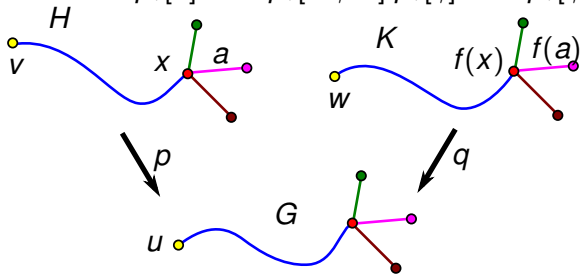
$$\begin{array}{ccc} H & \xrightarrow{f} & K \\ & \searrow p & \swarrow q \\ & & G \end{array}$$

# Covering Morphisms

## Lemma

There is a morphism  $f$  between coverings  $p : (H, v) \rightarrow (G, u)$  and  $q : (K, w) \rightarrow (G, u)$  iff  $p_*\pi_1(H, v) < q_*\pi_1(K, w)$  in  $\pi_1(G, u)$ .

PROOF. For  $x \in V(H)$ ,  $\gamma : v \rightsquigarrow x$ , set  $f(x) = w.p_*[\gamma]$ .  
 If  $\lambda : v \rightsquigarrow x$  then  $w.p_*[\lambda] = w.p_*[\lambda.\gamma^{-1}].p_*[\gamma] = w.p_*[\gamma]$



- We have  $q \circ f = p$ :  $q(f(x)) = q(w.p_*[\gamma]) = t(p(\gamma)) = p(x)$ .
- We also check that  $f$  commutes with  $o$  and  $^{-1}$ .

# Covering Morphisms

## Lemma

There is a morphism  $f$  between coverings  $p : (H, v) \rightarrow (G, u)$  and  $q : (K, w) \rightarrow (G, u)$  iff  $p_*\pi_1(H, v) < q_*\pi_1(K, w)$  in  $\pi_1(G, u)$ .

## Corollary

There is an isomorphism  $f$  between coverings  $p : H \rightarrow G$  and  $q : K \rightarrow G$  iff  $p_*\pi_1(H, v)$  and  $q_*\pi_1(K, w)$  are in the same conjugacy class in  $\pi_1(G, u)$  for  $p(v) = q(w) = u$ .

PROOF.  $\implies$  : By the lemma we must have  $p_*\pi_1(H, v) = q_*\pi_1(K, f(v))$  in  $\pi_1(G, u)$ .  
 $\impliedby$  : Suppose  $p_*\pi_1(H, v) = [\gamma]^{-1} \cdot q_*\pi_1(K, w) \cdot [\gamma]$ . But  $[\gamma]^{-1} \cdot q_*\pi_1(K, w) \cdot [\gamma] = q_*\pi_1(K, w \cdot [\gamma])$  and we can apply the lemma with  $f(v) = w \cdot [\gamma]$   $\square$

## Lemma

# Covering Morphisms

## Lemma

There is a morphism  $f$  between coverings  $p : (H, v) \rightarrow (G, u)$  and  $q : (K, w) \rightarrow (G, u)$  iff  $p_*\pi_1(H, v) < q_*\pi_1(K, w)$  in  $\pi_1(G, u)$ .

## Corollary

There is an isomorphism  $f$  between coverings  $p : H \rightarrow G$  and  $q : K \rightarrow G$  iff  $p_*\pi_1(H, v)$  and  $q_*\pi_1(K, w)$  are in the same conjugacy class in  $\pi_1(G, u)$  for  $p(v) = q(w) = u$ .

## Lemma

A morphism between coverings is a covering.

PROOF. Since restrictions of  $p$  and  $q$  to stars are one-to-one and since  $q \circ f = p$  it must be the case for  $f$ .  $\square$



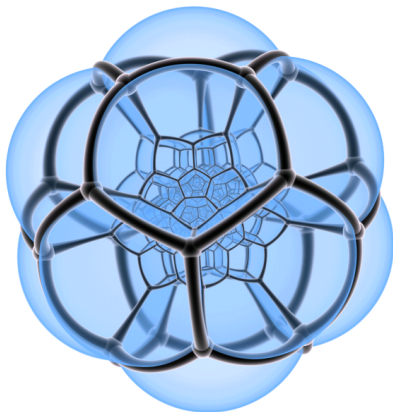
# The Set of Coverings

## Theorem

The set of coverings of a graph  $G$ , *up to isomorphism*, corresponds to the set of conjugacy classes of subgroups of  $\pi_1(G)$  with the preorder relation  $H \geq K$  if  $\exists g \in \pi_1(G)$  with  $g^{-1}Hg \subset K$ .

The universal covering is the maximal element.

# Actions and Quotient Graphs



Jenn3D, F. Obermeyer

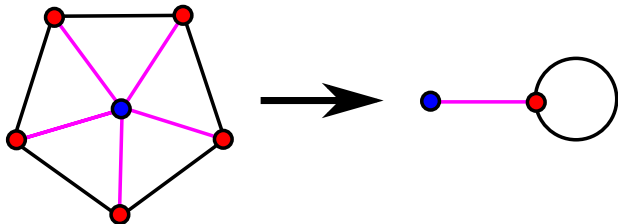
# Quotient Graphs

## Definition

Let  $\Gamma < \text{Aut}(G)$  acts without (arc) inversion. The **quotient graph**  $G/\Gamma$  is given by

- $V(G/\Gamma) = \{\Gamma \cdot v\}_{v \in V(G)}$ ,
- $A(G/\Gamma) = \{\Gamma \cdot a\}_{a \in A(G)}$ ,
- $o(\Gamma \cdot a) = \Gamma \cdot o(a)$  and  $(\Gamma \cdot a)^{-1} = \Gamma \cdot a^{-1}$

Note:  $\Gamma$  acts without inversion  $\Leftrightarrow (\Gamma \cdot a)^{-1} \neq \Gamma \cdot a$



# Free Actions

## Definition

$\Gamma < \text{Aut}(G)$  acts **freely** if it acts without inversion and  $g \in \Gamma \setminus \{1\}$  does not fix any vertex.

## Proposition

If  $\Gamma$  acts without inversion then  $p_\Gamma : G \rightarrow G/\Gamma$  is an epimorphism. It is a covering iff  $\Gamma$  acts freely on  $G$ .

PROOF.  $p_\Gamma$  restricted to Stars must be injective. Let  $g \neq \text{Id}$  fix a vertex. Then  $\exists a \in A(G) : a \neq g(a)$  and  $o(a) = o(g(a))$ .

# Free Actions

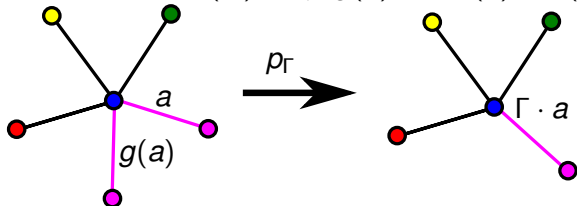
## Definition

$\Gamma < \text{Aut}(G)$  acts **freely** if it acts without inversion and  $g \in \Gamma \setminus \{1\}$  does not fix any vertex.

## Proposition

If  $\Gamma$  acts without inversion then  $p_\Gamma : G \rightarrow G/\Gamma$  is an epimorphism. It is a covering iff  $\Gamma$  acts freely on  $G$ .

PROOF.  $p_\Gamma$  restricted to Stars must be injective. Let  $g \neq \text{Id}$  fix a vertex. Then  $\exists a \in A(G) : a \neq g(a)$  and  $o(a) = o(g(a))$ .

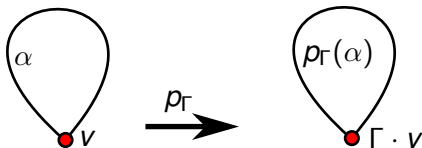


## Free Actions

## Lemma 1

If  $\Gamma$  acts freely on  $G$  then  $(p_\Gamma)_* \pi_1(G, v) \triangleleft \pi_1(G/\Gamma, \Gamma \cdot v)$

PROOF.  $p_\Gamma(v.\beta) = p_\Gamma(v) \implies \exists g \in \Gamma : g(v) = v.\beta$ . So,  
 $v.(\beta p_\Gamma(\alpha)\beta^{-1}) = g(v).(p_\Gamma(\alpha)\beta^{-1}) = (g(v).p_\Gamma(\alpha))\beta^{-1} =$   
 $g(v).\beta^{-1} = v. \quad \square$

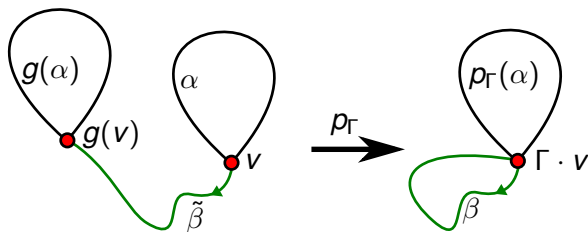


## Free Actions

## Lemma I

If  $\Gamma$  acts freely on  $G$  then  $(p_\Gamma)_* \pi_1(G, v) \triangleleft \pi_1(G/\Gamma, \Gamma \cdot v)$

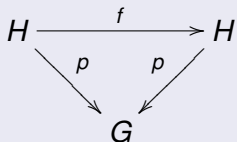
PROOF.  $p_\Gamma(v.\beta) = p_\Gamma(v) \implies \exists g \in \Gamma : g(v) = v.\beta$ . So,  
 $v.(\beta p_\Gamma(\alpha)\beta^{-1}) = g(v).(p_\Gamma(\alpha)\beta^{-1}) = (g(v).p_\Gamma(\alpha))\beta^{-1} =$   
 $g(v).\beta^{-1} = v. \quad \square$



# Action of the Covering Automorphisms

## Definition

A  $p$ -(auto)morphism of a covering  $p : H \rightarrow G$  satisfies:



$Aut(p) :=$  set of  $p$ -automorphisms.

## Lemma

$Aut(p)$  acts freely on  $H$ .

Let  $f \in Aut(p)$ .  $f(a) = a^{-1} \implies p(a) = p(a^{-1}) = p(a)^{-1}$ , contradiction.

$f(v) = v \implies \forall \alpha : v \rightsquigarrow x, f(x) = f(v).p(\alpha) = v.p(\alpha) = x$ .



# Quotients and Coverings

## Lemma II

If  $\Gamma$  acts freely on  $G$  then  $Aut(p_\Gamma) = \Gamma$ .

PROOF. Obviously,  $\Gamma \subset Aut(p_\Gamma)$  and  $\Gamma$  acts transitively on the fibers of  $p_\Gamma$ . Since  $Aut(p_\Gamma)$  acts freely,  $Aut(p_\Gamma) \subset \Gamma$ .  $\square$

## Lemma III

If  $p : (H, v) \rightarrow (G, u)$  is a covering with  $p_*\pi_1(H, v) \triangleleft \pi_1(G, u)$  then  $Aut(p)$  acts transitively on fibers.

PROOF.  $p(w) = p(v) \implies p_*\pi_1(H, w) = p_*\pi_1(H, v)$ .  
 We construct  $f \in Aut(p)$  such that  $f(v) = w$ : If  $\alpha : v \rightsquigarrow x$  set  $f(x) = w.[p(\alpha)]$ . If  $\beta : v \rightsquigarrow x$  then  $w.[p(\beta)] = w.[p(\beta\alpha^{-1})][p(\alpha)] = w.[p(\alpha)]$ .  $\square$

# Quotients and Coverings

## Lemma II

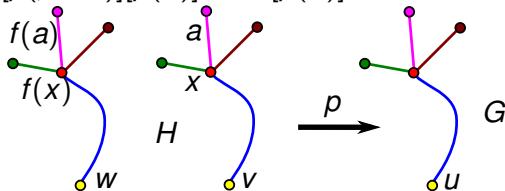
If  $\Gamma$  acts freely on  $G$  then  $Aut(p_\Gamma) = \Gamma$ .

## Lemma III

If  $p : (H, v) \rightarrow (G, u)$  is a covering with  $p_*\pi_1(H, v) \triangleleft \pi_1(G, u)$  then  $Aut(p)$  acts transitively on fibers.

PROOF.  $p(w) = p(v) \implies p_*\pi_1(H, w) = p_*\pi_1(H, v)$ .

We construct  $f \in Aut(p)$  such that  $f(v) = w$ : If  $\alpha : v \rightsquigarrow x$  set  $f(x) = w.[p(\alpha)]$ . If  $\beta : v \rightsquigarrow x$  then  $w.[p(\beta)] = w.[p(\beta\alpha^{-1})][p(\alpha)] = w.[p(\alpha)]$ .



# Quotients and Coverings

## Proposition

Let  $p : H \rightarrow G$ . If  $\Gamma < \text{Aut}(H)$  then

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 & H & \\
 p_\Gamma \swarrow & & \searrow p \\
 H/\Gamma & \xrightarrow{\simeq} & G
 \end{array}
 \text{ iff}$$

- 1  $\Gamma = \text{Aut}(p)$
- 2  $p_*\pi_1(H, v) \triangleleft \pi_1(G, p(v))$

PROOF.  $\implies$  :

- 1  $p_\Gamma$  covering  $\implies \Gamma$  acts freely  $\implies \Gamma = \text{Aut}(p_\Gamma) = \text{Aut}(p)$  by lemma II.
- 2 By lemma I, we also have  $p_{\Gamma*}\pi_1(H, v) \triangleleft \pi_1(H/\Gamma, p_\Gamma(v))$  whence  $p_*\pi_1(H, v) \triangleleft \pi_1(G, p(v))$ .

$\impliedby$ : In that case  $\text{Aut}(p)$  acts transitively by Lemma III, so  $H/\text{Aut}(p) \simeq G$ .  $\square$

# Galois Coverings

## Definition

A covering as above is said **Galois** or **regular** or **normal**.

## Theorem

If  $p : H \rightarrow G$  is a covering then

$$\text{Aut}(p) \simeq N(p_*\pi_1(H, v)) / p_*\pi_1(H, v).$$

If  $p$  is Galois  $\text{Aut}(p) \simeq \pi_1(G, p(v)) / p_*\pi_1(H, v).$

# Galois Coverings

## Definition

A covering as above is said **Galois** or **regular** or **normal**.

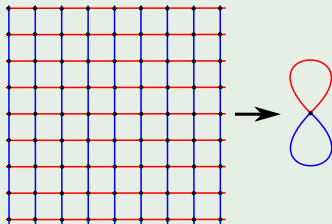
## Theorem

If  $p : H \rightarrow G$  is a covering then

$$\text{Aut}(p) \simeq N(p_*\pi_1(H, v)) / p_*\pi_1(H, v).$$

If  $p$  is Galois  $\text{Aut}(p) \simeq \pi_1(G, p(v)) / p_*\pi_1(H, v).$

## Example



# Galois Coverings

## Definition

A covering as above is said **Galois** or **regular** or **normal**.

## Theorem

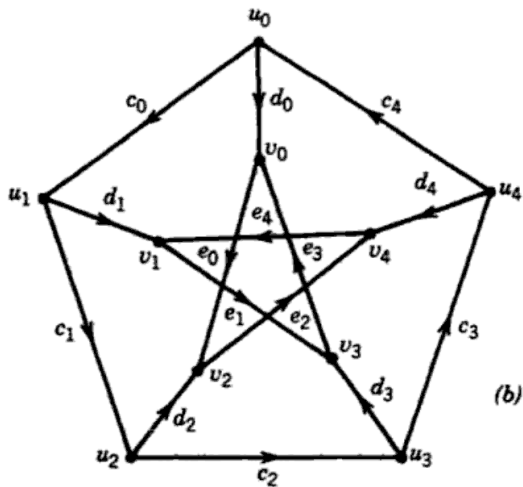
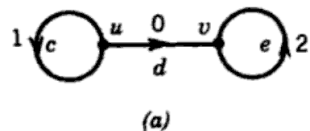
If  $p : H \rightarrow G$  is a covering then

$$\text{Aut}(p) \simeq N(p_*\pi_1(H, v)) / p_*\pi_1(H, v).$$

If  $p$  is Galois  $\text{Aut}(p) \simeq \pi_1(G, p(v)) / p_*\pi_1(H, v)$ .

PROOF.  $\text{Aut}(p) \xrightarrow{F} p^{-1}(v), f \mapsto f(v)$ . Put  $f_w := F^{-1}(w)$ , i.e.  $f_w(v) = w$ . Let  $\pi_1(G, p(v)) \xrightarrow{M} \text{Aut}(p), \alpha \mapsto f_{v,\alpha}$ .  
 $M$  is a morphism:  $M(\alpha\beta)(v) = f_{v,\alpha\beta}(v) = v.\alpha\beta = (v.\alpha).\beta = f_{v,\alpha}(v).\beta = f_{v,\alpha}(v.\beta) = f_{v,\alpha} \circ f_{v,\beta}(v)$ . So,  
 $M(\alpha\beta) = f_{v,\alpha} \circ f_{v,\beta} = M(\alpha) \circ M(\beta)$ .  
 $\ker M = \{\alpha \mid v.\alpha = v\} = p_*\pi_1(H, v)$ .  $\square$

# Voltage Graphs



Gross and Tucker, 1987

## Voltage Graphs, Gross 1974

## Definition

A **voltage** on a graph  $G$  with values in group  $B$  is a map  $\kappa : A(G) \rightarrow B$  with

$$\kappa(a^{-1}) = \kappa(a)^{-1}, \quad \forall a \in A(G)$$

If  $B$  acts on the right on the set  $S$ , the voltage induces a covering  $p_\kappa : G_\kappa \rightarrow G$  where

- $V(G_\kappa) = V(G) \times S$  and  $A(G_\kappa) = A(G) \times S$ , and
- $o(a, s) := (o(a), s)$  and  $(a, s)^{-1} := (a^{-1}, s \cdot \kappa(a))$

$$(o(a), s) \bullet \begin{array}{c} \xrightarrow{(a,s)} \\ \xleftarrow{(a^{-1}, s \cdot \kappa(a))} \end{array} \bullet (o(a^{-1}), s \cdot \kappa(a))$$



# Voltage Graphs and Coverings

## Lemma

Every covering  $p : H \rightarrow G$  is ( $\simeq$  to) the covering induced by a voltage on  $G$ .

PROOF. Let  $T$  be a spanning tree of  $(G, v)$ . Define  $\kappa : A(G) \rightarrow \pi_1(G, v)$  by  $\kappa(a) = \gamma_a = T[v, o(a)] \cdot a \cdot T[o(a^{-1}), v]$  with  $\pi_1(G, v)$  acting on the fiber  $p^{-1}(v)$ .

Check that 
$$\begin{array}{ccc} G_\kappa & \xrightarrow{\simeq} & H \\ & \searrow p_\kappa & \swarrow p \\ & G & \end{array} \quad \square$$

# Voltage Graphs and Coverings

## Proposition

A voltage  $\kappa : A(G) \rightarrow B$  with  $B$  acting on itself and  $B = \langle \text{Im} \kappa \rangle$  induces a Galois covering.

PROOF. Note that for  $\alpha \in \pi_1(G, v)$ ,  $(v, 1_B) \cdot \alpha = (v, \kappa(\alpha))$ , so that for the induced morphism  $\kappa : \pi_1(G, v) \rightarrow B$  we have  $\ker \kappa = p_{\kappa*} \pi_1(G_{\kappa}, (v, 1_B))$ .  $\square$

## Proposition

Conversely, a Galois covering  $p : H \rightarrow G$  is induced by a voltage  $\kappa : A(G) \rightarrow B$  with  $B$  acting on itself.

PROOF. Let  $T$  be a spanning tree of  $G$ . For every  $a \in A(G)$  there is a unique  $f_a \in \text{Aut}(p)$  with  $f_a(v) = v \cdot \gamma_a$ . We let  $B = \text{Aut}(p)$  and  $\kappa(a) = f_a$ .

Consider  $G \xrightarrow{\sim} H$

# Voltage Graphs and Coverings

## Proposition

A voltage  $\kappa : A(G) \rightarrow B$  with  $B$  acting on itself and  $B = \langle \text{Im}\kappa \rangle$  induces a Galois covering.

## Proposition

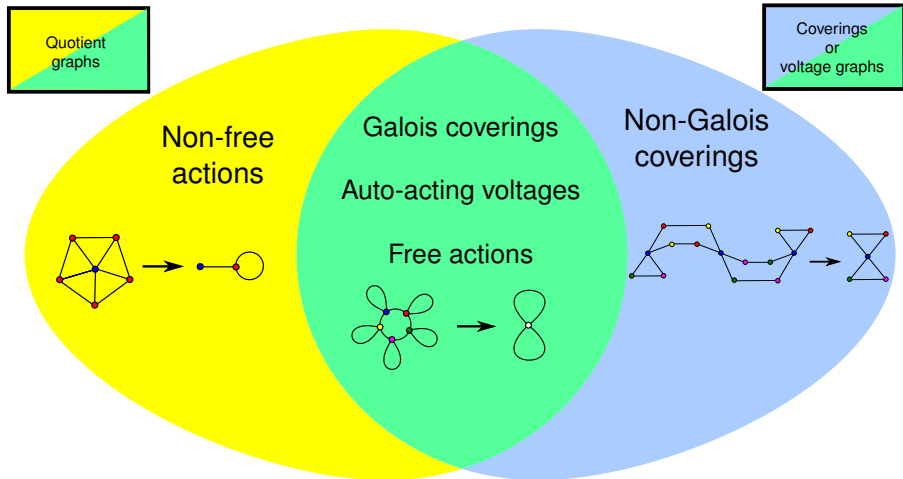
Conversely, a Galois covering  $p : H \rightarrow G$  is induced by a voltage  $\kappa : A(G) \rightarrow B$  with  $B$  acting on itself.

PROOF. Let  $T$  be a spanning tree of  $G$ . For every  $a \in A(G)$  there is a unique  $f_a \in \text{Aut}(p)$  with  $f_a(v) = v \cdot \gamma_a$ . We let  $B = \text{Aut}(p)$  and  $\kappa(a) = f_a$ .

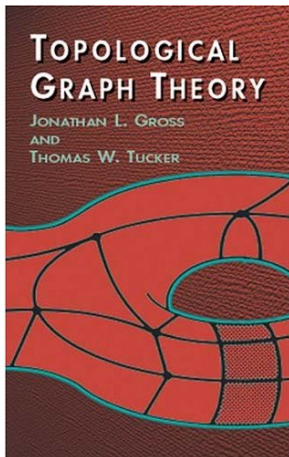
Check that

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 G_\kappa & \xrightarrow{\cong} & H \\
 \searrow p_\kappa & & \swarrow p \\
 & G &
 \end{array}
 \quad \square$$

# Summary

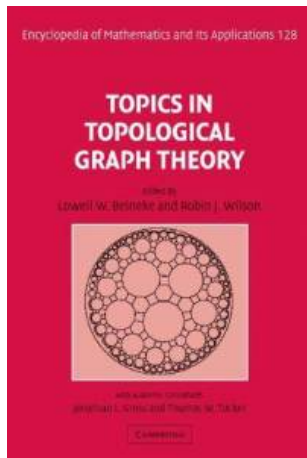


## Bibliography



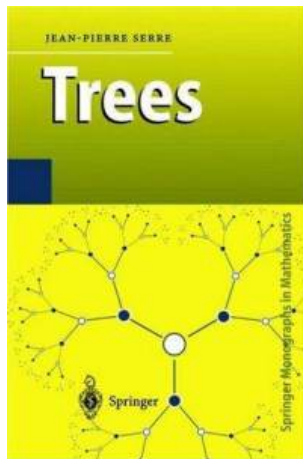
Gross and Tucker, 1987

# Bibliography



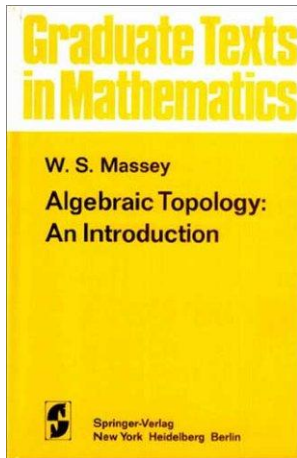
Topics in Topological Graph Theory, 2009

# Bibliography



Trees, J.P. Serre, 1977 (Translation J. Stillwell)

# Bibliography



Algebraic Topology: An Introduction, W.S. Massey, 1977  
(Translation J. Stillwell)



THANK YOU!