

ON THE ARG MIN MULTIFUNCTION FOR LOWER SEMICONTINUOUS FUNCTIONS

GERALD BEER AND PETAR KENDEROV

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ABSTRACT. The epi-topology on the lower semicontinuous functions $L(X)$ on a Hausdorff space X is the restriction of the Fell topology on the closed subsets of $X \times R$ to $L(X)$, identifying lower semicontinuous functions with their epigraphs. For each $f \in L(X)$, let $\text{arg min } f$ be the set of minimizers of f . With respect to the epi-topology, the graph of arg min is a closed subset of $L(X) \times X$ if and only if X is locally compact. Moreover, if X is locally compact, then the epi-topology is the weakest topology on $L(X)$ for which the arg min multifunction has closed graph, and the operators $f \rightarrow f \vee g$ and $f \rightarrow f \wedge g$ are continuous for each continuous real function g on X .

1. Introduction. An extended real valued function on a topological space X is called *lower semicontinuous* (l.s.c.) if for each real α , $\{x: f(x) > \alpha\}$ is an open subset of X . Equivalently [11], f is lower semicontinuous if its *epigraph* $\text{epi } f = \{(x, \alpha): \alpha \in R \text{ and } \alpha \geq f(x)\}$ is a closed subset of $X \times R$. In the sequel, we denote the lower semicontinuous functions on X by $L(X)$, and the real valued continuous functions on X by $C(X)$. The fundamental notion of convergence for lower semicontinuous functions proceeds from the identification of such a function with its epigraph [11].

DEFINITION. A net $\langle f_\lambda \rangle$ of lower semicontinuous functions on X is said to be *epiconvergent* to a lower semicontinuous function f if $\text{epi } f = \text{Lsepi } f = \text{Li epi } f$, where $\text{Lsepi } f$ (resp. $\text{Li epi } f$) consists of all points (x, α) in $X \times R$ such that each neighborhood of (x, α) meets $\text{epi } f_\lambda$ frequently (resp. eventually).

Epiconvergence may be characterized locally as follows: at each x in X , both of the following conditions must hold:

(i) whenever $\alpha < f(x)$, there exists a neighborhood U of x such that $f_\lambda^{-1}((\alpha, \infty])$ contains U eventually;

(ii) whenever $\alpha > f(x)$ and U is a neighborhood of x , then $f_\lambda^{-1}([-\infty, \alpha])$ meets U eventually.

When X is first countable and $\langle f_\lambda \rangle$ is a *sequence* of l.s.c. functions, then by virtue of Proposition 1.14 and Theorem 1.39 of [1], epiconvergence may be characterized by the conjunction of these very tangible local conditions: at each x in X ,

(i) whenever $\langle x_\lambda \rangle \rightarrow x$, then $\underline{\lim} f_\lambda(x_\lambda) \geq f(x)$;

(ii) there exists a sequence $\langle x_\lambda \rangle$ convergent to x for which $\lim f_\lambda(x_\lambda) = f(x)$.

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It is a straightforward exercise to modify the standard example [12] of a sequence of step functions convergent nowhere pointwise on $[0, 1]$, yet convergent in measure to the zero function, to obtain an epi-convergent sequence in $C([0, 1])$ convergent nowhere pointwise.

Epi-convergence for convex functions in finite dimensions was first considered by Wijnsman [17], who proved that if $\langle f_n \rangle$ is a sequence of l.s.c. convex functions epi-convergent to f , then epi-convergence of their Young-Fenchel transforms to that of f also occurs. Subsequently, epi-convergence has been applied to nonlinear optimization problems in a variety of settings [1, 2, 4, 13, 16, 18].

It is well known ([5], or more generally, [7] or §4.5 of [10]) that epi-convergence is topological in the sense of Kelley [9], provided X is a locally compact Hausdorff space. The topology of epi-convergence, which we call the *epi-topology* τ_e , turns out to be the restriction of the *Fell topology* [8] on the closed subsets of $X \times R$ to the lower semicontinuous functions, as identified with their epigraphs. A subbase for the epi-topology on $L(X)$ consists of all sets of the form

$$W^- = \{f \in L(X) : \text{epi } f \cap W \neq \emptyset\}$$

and

$$(K^c)^+ = \{f \in L(X) : \text{epi } f \subset K^c\}$$

where W runs over the open subsets of $X \times R$, and K runs over the compact subsets of $X \times R$. Now if K_1 and K_2 are compact subsets of $X \times R$, we have $([K_1 \cup K_2]^c)^+ = (K_1^c)^+ \cap (K_2^c)^+$. As a result, a base for the topology τ_e consists of all sets of the form $(\bigcap_{i=1}^n W_i^-) \cap (K^c)^+$ where $\{W_1, \dots, W_n\}$ is a family of open subsets of $X \times R$, and K is a compact subset of $X \times R$ disjoint from $\bigcup W_i$. If X is locally compact, $\langle L(X), \tau_e \rangle$ is a compact Hausdorff space, and if X is also second countable, then $\langle L(X), \tau_e \rangle$ is metrizable [1]. It should be noted that if X is first countable but not necessarily locally compact, then epi-convergence of *sequences* is still convergence with respect to this topology.

If $f \in L(X)$ we denote by $\arg \min f$ the (possibly empty) closed subset of X consisting of the minimizers of f ; that is,

$$\arg \min f = \{x \in X : f(x) = \inf f(X)\}.$$

$\arg \min$ may be considered as a *set valued function*, or *multifunction*, from $L(X)$ to X [11]; from this point of view, its *graph* [10] as a subset of $L(X) \times X$ consists of the set of all (f, x) such that x is a minimizer of f . Now any reasonable topology τ on $L(X)$ should have the property that the graph of $\arg \min$ is closed, i.e., if $\langle f_\lambda \rangle$ is τ -convergent to f and $x_\lambda \in \arg \min f_\lambda$ for each λ , then the convergence of $\langle x_\lambda \rangle$ to x implies $x \in \arg \min f$. It is well known (see, e.g., formula 3.38 of [11]) that this is the case if $X = R^n$ when τ is the epi-topology. We show here that closedness of the graph of $\arg \min$ with respect to the epi-topology actually *characterizes* local compactness for the domain space X . Moreover, we show in this context that the epi-topology is, essentially, the weakest topology on $L(X)$ such that the graph of $\arg \min$ is closed.

2. Results.

THEOREM 1. *Let X be a Hausdorff space. The following are equivalent:*

- (1) X is locally compact;
- (2) $\arg \min : \langle L(X), \tau_e \rangle \rightarrow X$ has a closed graph.

PROOF. (1) \rightarrow (2). We show that if (f, x_0) does not lie in the graph of arg min, there exists a neighborhood of (f, x_0) in $L(X) \times X$ which fails to meet the graph. Since x_0 is not a minimizer of f , there exists $x_1 \in X$ with $f(x_1) < f(x_0)$. Let α lie strictly between $f(x_1)$ and $f(x_0)$; since $\{x: f(x) > \alpha\}$ is open and X is a locally compact Hausdorff space, there exists a compact neighborhood C of x_0 not containing x_1 such that $C \subset \{x: f(x) > \alpha\}$. Set $K = C \times \{\alpha\}$ and $W = C^c \times (-\infty, \alpha)$. Clearly, $(f, x_0) \in (W^- \cap (K^c)^+) \times C$. We claim that if $(g, x) \in (W^- \cap (K^c)^+) \times C$, then (g, x) fails to lie in the graph of arg min. First, $x \in C$ and $g \in (K^c)^+$ jointly imply that $g(x) > \alpha$; on the other hand, $g \in W^-$ says that for some $z \in C^c$, we have $g(z) < \alpha$. Thus, x is not a minimizer of g .

(2) \rightarrow (1). Suppose (1) fails, i.e., at some point x_0 of X , the topology fails to have a local base of compact neighborhoods. It is easy to verify [6] that x_0 can have no compact neighborhood whatsoever. Choose $p \neq x_0$, and let f be the indicator function of $\{p\}$; that is

$$f(x) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } x = p, \\ \infty & \text{if } x \neq p. \end{cases}$$

Clearly, $x_0 \notin \text{arg min } f$. We claim that each neighborhood of (f, x_0) meets the graph of arg min. To this end, let $(\bigcap_{i=1}^n W_i^-) \cap (K^c)^+$ be a neighborhood of f and let U be a neighborhood of x_0 . Now $\pi_X(K)$ is compact, and since U is noncompact, $U \setminus (\pi_X(K) \cup \{p\})$ must be an infinite set. Select u_0 in this difference, and define $g \in L(X)$ by

$$g(x) = \begin{cases} -1 & \text{if } x = u_0, \\ 0 & \text{if } x = p, \\ \infty & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Note that

$$\begin{aligned} \text{epi } g &= (\{u_0\} \times [-1, \infty)) \cup (\{p\} \times [0, \infty)) \\ &\supset \{p\} \times [0, \infty) = \text{epi } f \end{aligned}$$

and since epi f meets W_i for each $i \in \{1, \dots, n\}$, so must epi g . Also, by the choice of u_0 , epi $g \subset K^c$. It is obvious that $u_0 \in \text{arg min } g$. Thus,

$$\left[\left(\bigcap_{i=1}^n W_i \right) \cap (K^c)^+ \right] \times U$$

contains a point of the graph of arg min, namely, (g, u_0) . As a result, (2) fails.

We intend to show that when X is a locally compact Hausdorff space, τ_e is the smallest topology on $L(X)$ such that arg min has a closed graph, and the lattice operations on $L(X)$ are moderately well behaved. Of course, $L(X)$ forms a lattice with respect to ordinary function supremum and infimum, but it does not form a topological lattice. In particular, \vee need not be continuous on $C(X) \times C(X)$, nor need it be continuous in each variable separately on $L(X) \times L(X)$. Continuity of the lattice operations has been considered by Dal Maso [3]; we include a self-contained treatment.

EXAMPLE 1. Let $X = [0, 1]$, and for each $n \in Z^+$, let $f_n: X \rightarrow R$ be the continuous function whose graph is the polygonal path connecting these points in

succession:

$$(0, 0), \left(\frac{1}{2n}, 1\right), \left(\frac{2}{2n}, 1\right), \left(\frac{3}{2n}, 1\right), \dots, \left(\frac{2n-1}{2n}, 1\right), (1, 0).$$

Let $g_n = 1 - f_n$; evidently, both $\langle f_n \rangle$ and $\langle g_n \rangle$ epiconverge to the zero function. Now for each x , $(f_n \vee g_n)(x) \geq 1/2$, and $\{x: (f_n \vee g_n)(x) = 1/2\}$ is $1/2n$ -dense in $[0, 1]$. As a result, $\langle f_n \vee g_n \rangle$ epiconverges to the function assigning the value $1/2$ to each x , and not to $(\tau_e\text{-lim } f_n) \vee (\tau_e\text{-lim } g_n)$.

EXAMPLE 2. Let $X = [0, 1]$, let f be the indicator function of $\{0\}$, and let f_n be the indicator function of $\{1/n\}$. Then for each n , $f \vee f_n$ assigns infinity to each point of $[0, 1]$. Since $\langle f_n \rangle$ epiconverges to f , we have $f = f \vee (\tau_e\text{-lim } f_n) \neq \tau_e\text{-lim}(f \vee f_n)$.

LEMMA A. *Let X be a Hausdorff space and let $L(X)$ be the lower semicontinuous functions on X , equipped with τ_e . Then $\wedge: L(X) \times L(X) \rightarrow L(X)$ is continuous.*

PROOF. We show that the inverse image of each subbasic open set is open. First, let K be a compact subset of $X \times R$, and suppose that $f \wedge g \in (K^c)^+$. This means $\text{epi } f \cup \text{epi } g \subset K^c$, whence both $f \in (K^c)^+$ and $g \in (K^c)^+$. In $L(X) \times L(X)$, $(K^c)^+ \times (K^c)^+$ is a neighborhood of (f, g) , and it is obvious that $(K^c)^+ \wedge (K^c)^+ \subset (K^c)^+$.

Now suppose that W is an open in $X \times R$ and $f \wedge g \in W^-$. This means either $\text{epi } f \cap W \neq \emptyset$ or $\text{epi } g \cap W \neq \emptyset$. By symmetry, it suffices to look at the first case. If $\text{epi } g \neq \emptyset$, then $f \wedge g \in W^- \wedge (X \times R)^- \subset W^-$, whereas if $\text{epi } g = \emptyset$ and $x_0 \in X$, then $f \wedge g \in W^- \wedge (\{(x_0, 0)\}^c)^+ \subset W^-$.

LEMMA B. *Let X be a Hausdorff space and let $L(X)$ be the lower semicontinuous functions on X , equipped with τ_e . Then for each $g \in C(X)$, $\phi_g: L(X) \rightarrow L(X)$ defined by $\phi_g(f) = f \vee g$ is continuous.*

PROOF. Let K be a compact subset of $X \times R$, and suppose that f is a lower semicontinuous function satisfying $\phi_g(f) \in (K^c)^+$. Let $C = \pi_X(K)$ and define $h: C \rightarrow R$ by $h(x) = \sup\{\alpha: (x, \alpha) \in K\}$. Note that a lower semicontinuous function lies in $(K^c)^+$ if and only if it exceeds h on C . It is easy to check that $-h$ is l.s.c., and since $L(C)$ forms a cone, $g - h \in L(C)$. As a result,

$$F = \{x \in C: g(x) - h(x) \leq 0\}$$

is compact, so that $K_1 = K \cap (F \times R)$ is compact. We claim that $(K_1^c)^+$ is a neighborhood of f mapped by ϕ_g into $(K^c)^+$. To see that $f \in (K_1^c)^+$ we verify that f exceeds h on F : if $x \in F$, then $g(x) \leq h(x)$, but since $F \subset C$, we have $f(x) \vee g(x) > h(x)$. As a result, $f(x) > h(x)$. To show $\phi_g((K_1^c)^+) \subset (K^c)^+$, fix $f^* \in (K_1^c)^+$. As remarked above, we need to show $f^* \vee g$ exceeds h on C . Now f^* exceeds h on F ; so, if $x \in F$, then

$$(f^* \vee g)(x) \geq f^*(x) > h(x).$$

On the other hand, if $x \in C - F$, then $g(x) > h(x)$ and

$$(f^* \vee g)(x) \geq g(x) > h(x).$$

It remains to show that for each open subset W of $X \times R$, $\phi_g^{-1}(W^-)$ is open in $L(X)$. Suppose $f \vee g \in W^-$, i.e., $\text{epi } f \cap \text{epi } g \cap W \neq \emptyset$. Since W is open and g is continuous, there exists an open subset W_1 of $X \times R$ with $W_1 \subset \text{epi } g \cap W$ and $\text{epi } f \cap W_1 \neq \emptyset$. It easily follows that $f \in W_1^-$ and $\phi_g(W_1^-) \subset W^-$.

LEMMA C. Let X be a completely regular Hausdorff space with at least two points, and let τ be a topology on $L(X)$ with the properties:

- (1) $\arg \min: \langle L(X), \tau \rangle \rightarrow X$ has closed graph;
- (2) for each $g \in C(X)$, both $f \rightarrow f \wedge g$ and $f \rightarrow f \vee g$ are continuous operators on $\langle L(X), \tau \rangle$.

Then τ contains the epi-topology τ_e .

PROOF. Suppose for some open set W in $X \times R$, τ fails to contain W^- . Then there exists a net $\langle f_\lambda \rangle$ in $L(X)$ τ -convergent to some f in $L(X)$ such that for each index λ , $f_\lambda \notin W^-$, but $f \in W^-$. We may assume without loss of generality that $W = U \times (\alpha, \beta)$ where U is a nonempty proper open subset of X . The condition $f_\lambda \notin W^-$ says that $f_\lambda(u) \geq \beta$ for each $u \in U$. Since $\text{epi } f \cap W \neq \emptyset$, there exists $x_0 \in U$ with $f(x_0) < \beta$. By complete regularity, there exists a continuous function $g: X \rightarrow [\alpha, \beta]$ with $g(x_0) = \alpha$ and $g(U^c) = \beta$. Letting β denote the function on X constantly equal to β , write $f_\lambda^* = \beta \wedge (f_\lambda \vee g)$ and $f^* = \beta \wedge (f \vee g)$. By (2), $\langle f_\lambda^* \rangle$ is τ -convergent to f^* . Let $z \in U^c$ be arbitrary. Then (f^*, z) is not in the graph of $\arg \min$ because

$$f^*(z) = \beta \wedge (f(z) \vee g(z)) \geq \beta \wedge g(z) = \beta,$$

whereas

$$f^*(x_0) = \beta \wedge (f(x_0) \vee g(x_0)) = \beta \wedge (f(x_0) \vee \alpha) < \beta.$$

On the other hand, f_λ^* is just the constant function β for each index λ . As a result, $\arg \min f_\lambda^* = X$ so that (f_λ^*, z) lies in the graph of $\arg \min$. We have shown that (1) fails, a contradiction. Thus, for each open subset W of $X \times R$, we must have $W^- \in \tau$.

To show that τ contains the other kind of τ_e -subbasic open set is only a little harder. Suppose K is a compact subset of $X \times R$ such that $(K^c)^+$ is not τ -open. Then we can find a net $\langle f_\lambda \rangle$ in $L(X)$ τ -convergent to some $f \in L(X)$ such that for each λ , $\text{epi } f_\lambda \cap K \neq \emptyset$, but $\text{epi } f \cap K = \emptyset$. Since K is compact, we can find $(x_0, \theta) \in K$ each neighborhood of which meets the net $\langle \text{epi } f_\lambda \cap K \rangle$ frequently. Let W be an arbitrary neighborhood of (x_0, θ) . Since $\text{epi } f$ is closed and X is regular, there exists a closed neighborhood F of x_0 with $F \neq X$ and real numbers α and β with $\alpha < \theta < \beta$ such that $F \times [\alpha, \beta] \subset W$ and $(F \times [\alpha, \beta]) \cap \text{epi } f = \emptyset$. Let $C = F \cap \pi_X(K)$. Since C is compact and f is lower semicontinuous, there exists $\gamma > \beta$ such that $\inf\{f(x) : x \in C\} > \gamma$. Let $w \in C^c$ be arbitrary; by complete regularity, there exists a continuous function $h: X \rightarrow [\gamma, \gamma + 1]$ such that $h(w) = \gamma$ and $h(C) = \gamma + 1$. Proceeding as in the first part of the proof, for each index λ , let $f_\lambda^* = (f_\lambda \vee \beta) \wedge h$ and let $f^* = (f \vee \beta) \wedge h$. By condition (2), $\langle f_\lambda^* \rangle$ τ -converges to f^* . Now for each λ we have

$$\inf\{f_\lambda^*(x) : x \in X\} \geq \inf\{\beta \wedge h(x) : x \in X\} = \beta.$$

Hence, if $f_\lambda^*(x) = \beta$, then x will be a minimizer of f_λ^* .

We claim that (i) (f^*, x_0) lies in the closure of the graph of the $\arg \min$ multifunction, but (ii) $x_0 \notin \arg \min f^*$. To prove (i), it suffices to show that the closed neighborhood F of x_0 mentioned above meets $\arg \min f_\lambda^*$ frequently. To this end, fix an index λ_0 in the underlying directed set for the net. The point (x_0, θ) was chosen so that each neighborhood of it meets $\langle \text{epi } f_\lambda \cap K \rangle$ frequently; so, there exists $\lambda > \lambda_0$ for which

$$(F \times [\alpha, \beta]) \cap (\text{epi } f_\lambda \cap K) \neq \emptyset.$$

Let z_λ be in the X -projection of this set; then $z_\lambda \in C = \pi_X(K) \cap F$ and $f_\lambda(z_\lambda) \leq \beta$. As a result,

$$f_\lambda^*(z_\lambda) = (f_\lambda(z_\lambda) \vee \beta) \wedge h(z_\lambda) = \beta \wedge (\gamma + 1) = \beta.$$

Thus, $z_\lambda \in \arg \min f_\lambda^*$, establishing (i).

For (ii), we must show that $f^*(x_0)$ is not the minimal value of f^* . Since x_0 lies in C , we have $f(x_0) > \gamma$ and $h(x_0) = \gamma + 1$; so,

$$f^*(x_0) = (f(x_0) \vee \beta) \wedge h(x_0) > (\gamma \vee \beta) \wedge (\gamma + 1) = \gamma.$$

On the other hand, $f^*(w) = (f(w) \vee \beta) \wedge \gamma \leq \gamma$; so, $f^*(x_0)$ is not the minimal value of f^* .

Putting together Theorem 1 and the lemmas, we have our main result.

THEOREM 2. *Let $L(X)$ be the lower semicontinuous functions on a locally compact Hausdorff space X with at least two points. Then the epi-topology on $L(X)$ is the weakest topology on the function space such that $\arg \min: L(X) \rightarrow X$ has closed graph, and the operators $f \rightarrow f \wedge g$ and $f \rightarrow f \vee g$ are continuous for each continuous real valued function g .*

We mention in closing that there is another characterization of the epi-topology, due to Vervaat [14], whose interest in the topology arises from the role it plays in the theory of random semicontinuous functions [15]. Vervaat has shown that it is the weakest topology on $L(X)$ for which a certain class of extended real valued functions on $L(X)$ are lower semicontinuous. Specifically, it is the weakest topology such that for each compact subset K of X and each open subset U of X , both

$$f \rightarrow \inf\{f(x): x \in K\} \quad \text{and} \quad f \rightarrow -\inf\{f(x): x \in U\}$$

are in $L(L(X))$.

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DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS, CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LOS ANGELES,
CALIFORNIA 90032

INSTITUTE OF MATHEMATICS, BULGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES, 1113, SOFIA, BUL-
GARIA