

FIXED POINT PROPERTIES OF NILPOTENT GROUP ACTIONS ON 1-ARCWISE CONNECTED CONTINUA

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(Communicated by Alexander N. Dranishnikov)

ABSTRACT. We show that every continuous action of a nilpotent group on a 1-arcwise connected continuum has at least one fixed point.

1. INTRODUCTION

Let X be a topological space, G a topological group, and $\phi : G \times X \rightarrow X$ a continuous action of G on X . We call $x \in X$ a *fixed point* of G if

$$\phi(g, x) = x, \quad \text{for all } g \in G.$$

Denote by $\text{Fix}_X(G)$ (or simply $\text{Fix}(G)$) all fixed points of G , which is a closed subset of X . The following question has wide interest.

Under which conditions on G and X is the set $\text{Fix}_X(G)$ nonempty regardless of ϕ ?

By a *continuum*, we mean a nonempty, connected, compact and metrizable topological space. A continuum is said to be *1-arcwise connected* (or *uniquely arcwise connected*) if for any two different points x, y of it, there is a unique arc in it with endpoints x and y . This is equivalent to saying that the continuum is arcwise connected and contains no circle.

In 1957, Isbell proved in [3] that $\text{Fix}_X(G)$ is nonempty if G is commutative, and X is a *dendrite*, i.e., a locally connected, 1-arcwise connected continuum. In 1975, Mohler answered a question raised by Bing in [1], by proving in [6] that $\text{Fix}_X(G)$ is nonempty if G is the discrete cyclic group \mathbb{Z} , and X is a 1-arcwise connected continuum. For further studies of fixed point theory of 1-arcwise connected spaces, one may consult [2, 4, 5].

The purpose of this paper is to prove the following common generalization of the above results of Isbell and Mohler.

Theorem 1.1. *If X is a 1-arcwise connected continuum and G is nilpotent as an abstract group, then $\text{Fix}_X(G)$ is nonempty.*

Received by the editors September 4, 2007, and, in revised form, February 5, 2008.

2000 *Mathematics Subject Classification.* Primary 54F50; Secondary 54H25.

The first author is supported by the Natural Sciences Fund for Colleges and Universities in Jiangsu Province (No. 08KJB110010).

The second author is supported by the Knowledge Innovation Program of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

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If X is an arc and G is the solvable group $(\mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z}) \times \mathbb{Z}$, then there is a continuous action of G on X such that $\text{Fix}_X(G)$ is empty (See Remark 2.5). Therefore nilpotency of G is also necessary. Young constructed a 1-arcwise connected continuum and a continuous self map of it without fixed points (see [8]). Therefore in Theorem 1.1, we cannot replace G by the semigroup $\mathbb{N} = \{0, 1, 2, \dots\}$.

2. THE PROOF

Let G be a group. Recall that the *commutator* of two elements a, b of G is by definition

$$[a, b] = a^{-1}b^{-1}ab.$$

For any two subsets A and B of G , define $[A, B]$ to be the subgroup generated by the set $\{[a, b] : a \in A, b \in B\}$. Set $G_0 = G$ and $G_{i+1} = [G_i, G]$, for $i = 0, 1, 2, \dots$. Then we get a sequence

$$G_0 = G \triangleright G_1 \triangleright G_2 \triangleright \dots$$

of normal subgroups of G . If there is some $n \in \mathbb{N}$ such that $G_n = \{e\}$, then G is called *nilpotent* and

$$G_0 = G \triangleright G_1 \triangleright G_2 \triangleright \dots \triangleright G_n = \{e\}$$

is called the *lower center sequence* of G , where e is the identity of G .

When X is a 1-arcwise connected continuum and $x, y \in X$, we use the symbol $[x, y]$ to denote the unique arc in X from x to y (if $x = y$, then $[x, y]$ is defined to be the point set $\{x\}$).

We should note that, though the symbol $[,]$ has two different meanings as above, it is easy to distinguish them in context. For simplicity, we write

$$gx = \phi(g, x), \quad \text{for all } g \in G, x \in X.$$

Lemma 2.1. *Let G be a nilpotent group, X the unit closed interval $[0, 1]$ and let $\phi : G \times X \rightarrow X$ be a continuous action. Then $\text{Fix}_X(G)$ is nonempty.*

Proof. If for every $g \in G$ we have $g(0) = 0$ and $g(1) = 1$, then 0 and 1 are both fixed points of G . Otherwise there is some $g_0 \in G$ such that $g_0(0) = 1$ and $g_0(1) = 0$. Then g_0 has a unique fixed point $x_0 \in I$, and clearly g_0 is not the identity e . In the following, we will show that x_0 is also a fixed point of G .

Define inductively a sequence of subsets $N_i \subset G$ as follows. Let $N_0 = \{e\}$, where e is the identity of G . Suppose that N_i has been defined; then define $N_{i+1} = \{g \in G : [g, g_0] = g^{-1}g_0^{-1}gg_0 \in N_i\}$. Since G is a nilpotent group, there is a natural number m such that $N_m = G$. Thus we get a sequence of subsets: $\{e\} = N_0 \subset N_1 \subset \dots \subset N_m = G$. If $g(x_0) = x_0$ for all $g \in N_i$, then for $g \in N_{i+1}$ we have

$$g_0^{-1}gx_0 = g(g^{-1}g_0^{-1}gg_0)x_0 = g[g, g_0]x_0 = gx_0.$$

So gx_0 is also a fixed point of g_0 . But x_0 is the unique fixed point of g_0 , so $gx_0 = x_0$. Thus x_0 is also a common fixed point of elements in N_{i+1} . Inductively, we get at last that for any $g \in G = N_m$, $gx_0 = x_0$. That is, x_0 is a fixed point of G . \square

Lemma 2.2. *Let G be a nilpotent group, H a normal subgroup of G and suppose that G/H is a cyclic group. Let X be a 1-arcwise connected space, and let $\phi : G \times X \rightarrow X$ be a group action. If $\text{Fix}(H) \neq \emptyset$, then $\text{Fix}(G) \neq \emptyset$.*

Proof. Let $G/H = \langle \bar{g}_0 \rangle$, where $g_0 \in G$ and \bar{g}_0 denotes the coset class of g_0 in G/H . Let $Y = \text{Fix}(H)$. For each $y \in Y$ and $h \in H$, since $g_0^{-1}hg_0 \in H$, we have that $hg_0y = g_0(g_0^{-1}hg_0)y = g_0y$. Thus $g_0(Y) \subseteq Y$. Replacing g_0 by g_0^{-1} , we get $g_0^{-1}(Y) \subseteq Y$ similarly. Hence $g_0(Y) = Y$. Let $\mathcal{A} = \{[x, g_0(x)] : x \in Y\}$. Define a partial order “ \prec ” in \mathcal{A} : $[x, g_0(x)] \prec [x', g_0(x')]$ if and only if $[x, g_0(x)] \supseteq [x', g_0(x')]$. It is easy to see that if $\mathcal{B} = \{[x_\lambda, g_0(x_\lambda)] : \lambda \in \Lambda\}$ is a totally ordered subset of \mathcal{A} , then $\bigcap_{\lambda \in \Lambda} [x_\lambda, g_0(x_\lambda)]$ is an upper bound of \mathcal{B} . So, by Zorn’s Lemma, there is a maximal element $[y_0, g_0(y_0)] \in \mathcal{A}$. Now we discuss this in three cases.

Case 1. $g_0(y_0) = y_0$. Then y_0 is a fixed point of g_0 , and thus is a fixed point of G .

Case 2. $g_0^2(y_0) = y_0$. Then by the uniquely arcwise connected property we see that $g_0([y_0, g_0y_0]) = [y_0, g_0y_0]$, and then $[y_0, g_0y_0]$ is a G -invariant interval. From Lemma 2.1, there is a fixed point of G in $[y_0, g_0y_0]$.

Case 3. $g_0(y_0) \neq y_0$ and $g_0^2(y_0) \neq y_0$. We will show that $[y_0, g_0y_0] \cap [g_0y_0, g_0^2y_0] = \{g_0y_0\}$. First by the uniquely arcwise connected property, $[y_0, g_0y_0] \cap [g_0y_0, g_0^2y_0] = [x, g_0y_0]$ for some $x \in X$. Then for each $h \in H$, we have $[h(x), g_0y_0] = h([x, g_0y_0]) = h([y_0, g_0y_0]) \cap h([g_0y_0, g_0^2y_0]) = [x, g_0y_0]$. Thus $h(x) = x$, and hence $x \in \text{Fix}(H)$. Since $x \in [g_0y_0, g_0^2y_0]$, there exists some $x' \in [y_0, g_0y_0]$ such that $g_0(x') = x$. Then $[x', x] = [x', g_0(x')] \in \mathcal{A}$. On the other hand, since $[x', x] \subseteq [y_0, g_0y_0]$ and $[y_0, g_0y_0]$ is maximal in \mathcal{A} , it can only be that $[x', x] = [y_0, g_0y_0]$. This implies that $x' = y_0, x = g_0y_0$ (Since $g_0^2(y_0) \neq y_0$, the case $x' = g_0(y_0)$ and $x = y_0$ will not occur.) This completes the proof of the claim. It follows that

$$(2.1) \quad [g_0^{n-1}y_0, g_0^n y_0] \cap [g_0^n y_0, g_0^{n+1} y_0] = \{g_0^n y_0\}, \text{ for all } n \in \mathbb{Z}.$$

Denote $L = \bigcup_{n=-\infty}^{+\infty} [g_0^n y_0, g_0^{n+1} y_0]$, $L^+ = \bigcup_{n=0}^{+\infty} [g_0^n y_0, g_0^{n+1} y_0]$, and $L^- = \bigcup_{n=-\infty}^{-1} [g_0^n y_0, g_0^{n+1} y_0]$. Then $L = L^+ \cup L^-$. Noting that there is no circle in X , from (2.1) we see that L is an image of an injective continuous map defined over the real line \mathbb{R} . Now we discuss this in three cases.

Case 3.1. If there exists an arc $[a, b] \subseteq X$ such that $L^+ \subseteq [a, b]$, then $y = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} g_0^{n+1} y_0 \in Y$ exists. Clearly, y is a fixed point of g_0 , and moreover is a fixed point of G .

Case 3.2. If there exists an arc $[a, b] \subseteq X$ such that $L^- \subseteq [a, b]$, then similar to Case 3.1, we can also get a fixed point of G in Y .

Case 3.3. For any arc $[a, b] \subseteq X$, neither $L^+ \subseteq [a, b]$ nor $L^- \subseteq [a, b]$. This implies that for each $x \in X$, there exists a unique $p(x) \in L$ such that $[x, y_0] \cap L = [y_0, p(x)]$. For each $n \in \mathbb{Z}$, set $X_n = \{x \in X : p(x) \in [g_0^n(y_0), g_0^{n+1}(y_0)]\}$. Then $\{X_n : n \in \mathbb{Z}\}$ becomes a partition of X . From [6] we know that each X_n is a Borel measurable set. Let μ be a g_0 -invariant Borel probability measure. (For the existence of such a measure, one may consult [7], Corollary 6.9.1). Since $g_0(X_n) = X_{n+1}$ for all $n \in \mathbb{Z}$, we have $\mu(X_n) = \mu(X_m)$ for all $m, n \in \mathbb{Z}$. This contradicts $\mu(X) = 1$. So this case will not happen. \square

Lemma 2.3. *Let X be a 1-arcwise connected continuum and let $\phi : G \times X \rightarrow X$ be an action of G on X . Suppose H is a normal subgroup of G and G/H is a finitely generated abelian group. If $\text{Fix}(H) \neq \emptyset$, then $\text{Fix}(G) \neq \emptyset$.*

Proof. Since G/H is a finitely generated abelian group, $G/H \cong \mathbb{Z}_{k_1} \oplus \cdots \oplus \mathbb{Z}_{k_n}$, where $\mathbb{Z}_{k_i} = \mathbb{Z}/\langle k_i \rangle$, for $1 \leq i \leq n$ (k_i may be 0). Let \overline{H}_i be a subgroup of G/H defined by $\overline{H}_i = \mathbb{Z}_{k_1} \oplus \cdots \oplus \mathbb{Z}_{k_i}$. Let $\phi : G \rightarrow G/H$ be the quotient homomorphism, and let $H_i = \phi^{-1}(\overline{H}_i)$. Then $H = H_0 \triangleleft H_1 \triangleleft \cdots \triangleleft H_n = G$ is a sequence of normal subgroups of G and

$$H_{i+1}/H_i \cong (H_{i+1}/H_0)/(H_i/H_0) = (\mathbb{Z}_{k_1} \oplus \cdots \oplus \mathbb{Z}_{k_{i+1}})/(\mathbb{Z}_{k_1} \oplus \cdots \oplus \mathbb{Z}_{k_i}) \cong \mathbb{Z}_{k_{i+1}}.$$

So H_{i+1}/H_i is a cyclic group. Since $\text{Fix}(H_0) = \text{Fix}(H) \neq \emptyset$, using Lemma 2.2 repeatedly we obtain that $\text{Fix}(G) \neq \emptyset$. \square

Lemma 2.4. *Let X be a 1-arcwise connected continuum and let $\phi : G \times X \rightarrow X$ be an action of G on X . Suppose that H is a normal subgroup of G and G/H is abelian. If $\text{Fix}(H) \neq \emptyset$, then $\text{Fix}(G) \neq \emptyset$.*

Proof. For any finite subset S of G , we define A_S to be the group generated by H and S , that is, $A_S = \langle H, S \rangle$. Since A_S/H is a finitely generated abelian group, it follows from Lemma 2.3 that $\text{Fix}(A_S) \neq \emptyset$. As $\text{Fix}(A_S) \cap \text{Fix}(A_{S'}) = \text{Fix}(A_{S \cup S'})$, we know $\mathcal{K} = \{\text{Fix}(A_S) : S \text{ is a finite subset of } G\}$ has the finite intersection property. Since X is compact, we have $Y = \bigcap_{K \in \mathcal{K}} K \neq \emptyset$. Obviously $Y \subseteq \text{Fix}(G)$, so $\text{Fix}(G) \neq \emptyset$. \square

Proof of Theorem 1.1. Consider the lower central sequence $G = G_0 \triangleright G_1 \triangleright \cdots \triangleright G_n = \{e\}$ of G . Since $G_{i+1} = [G, G_i]$, we know G_i/G_{i+1} is an Abelian group, for $0 \leq i \leq n-1$. Also, because $\text{Fix}(G_n) = \text{Fix}(\{e\}) = X \neq \emptyset$, it follows inductively from Lemma 2.4 that $\text{Fix}(G) \neq \emptyset$. \square

Remark 2.5. If the action group G is solvable, then Theorem 1.1 does not hold. For example, let f and g be the maps on the real line \mathbb{R} defined by $f(x) = x+1$, $g(x) = -x$, for all $x \in \mathbb{R}$. It is well known that the group $\langle f, g \rangle$ generated by f and g is solvable. Let $h : (-\frac{\pi}{2}, \frac{\pi}{2}) \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ be defined by $x \mapsto \tan x$. Now we define two homeomorphisms \tilde{f} and \tilde{g} on the closed interval $[-\frac{\pi}{2}, \frac{\pi}{2}]$ by

$$\begin{aligned} \tilde{f}(-\frac{\pi}{2}) &= -\frac{\pi}{2}, \quad \tilde{f}(\frac{\pi}{2}) = \frac{\pi}{2}, \quad \text{and } \tilde{f}(x) = h^{-1} \circ f \circ h(x), \text{ for } x \in (-\frac{\pi}{2}, \frac{\pi}{2}), \\ \tilde{g}(-\frac{\pi}{2}) &= \frac{\pi}{2}, \quad \tilde{g}(\frac{\pi}{2}) = -\frac{\pi}{2}, \quad \text{and } \tilde{g}(x) = h^{-1} \circ g \circ h(x), \text{ for } x \in (-\frac{\pi}{2}, \frac{\pi}{2}). \end{aligned}$$

Then the group $\langle \tilde{f}, \tilde{g} \rangle$ generated by \tilde{f} and \tilde{g} is isomorphic to the group $\langle f, g \rangle$. So $\langle \tilde{f}, \tilde{g} \rangle$ is a solvable group acting on $[-\frac{\pi}{2}, \frac{\pi}{2}]$. It is obvious that there is no fixed point for this action.

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