

MINIMAL SKEW PRODUCTS

BY

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ABSTRACT. Let (σ, Z) be a metric minimal flow. Let Y be a compact metric space and let \mathcal{G} be a pathwise connected group of homeomorphisms of Y . We consider a family of skew product flows on $Z \times Y = X$ and show that when (\mathcal{G}, Y) is minimal most members of this family have the property of being disjoint from every minimal flow which is disjoint from (σ, Z) . From this and some further results about skew product flows we deduce the existence of a minimal metric flow which is disjoint from every weakly mixing minimal flow but is not PI.

0. In this paper we use the term “flow” to describe a compact Hausdorff space X together with a homeomorphism T of X onto itself. Let \mathcal{E} be the family of equicontinuous minimal flows, let \mathcal{W} be the family of weakly mixing minimal flows and let $\mathcal{P}\mathcal{I}$ be the family of Proximal Isometric (PI) flows. For a class of flows \mathcal{K} we let \mathcal{K}^\perp be the class of minimal flows which are disjoint from every member of \mathcal{K} . It is well known that $\mathcal{E}^\perp = \mathcal{W}$ and that $\mathcal{P}\mathcal{I} \subset \mathcal{W}^\perp = \mathcal{E}^{\perp\perp}$. The main result of this paper is that $\mathcal{P}\mathcal{I} \neq \mathcal{W}^\perp$.

In §1 we construct a family, $\bar{\mathcal{S}}_{\mathcal{G}}(\sigma)$, of skew product flows on $X = Z \times Y$ where (σ, Z) is a metric minimal flow and \mathcal{G} is a pathwise connected subgroup of homeomorphisms of the compact metric space Y . Using the methods of [6] we show that when (\mathcal{G}, Y) is minimal most members of $\bar{\mathcal{S}}_{\mathcal{G}}(\sigma)$ are disjoint from every minimal flow which is disjoint from (σ, Z) .

In §2 we show that if in addition \mathcal{G} is abelian then every member of $\bar{\mathcal{S}}_{\mathcal{G}}(\sigma)$ is an RIC extension of (σ, Z) . (See following definitions or see [3].) Combining this result with the results of §1 and the fact that when (\mathcal{G}, Y) is weakly mixing most members of $\bar{\mathcal{S}}_{\mathcal{G}}(\sigma)$ are weakly mixing extensions of (σ, Z) [6, Theorem 4], we deduce the existence of a metric minimal flow which is disjoint from every element of \mathcal{W} but is not PI.

1. For a compact metric space Y we let $\mathcal{K}(Y)$ be the space of all homeomorphisms of Y with the metric

$$d(g, h) = \sup_{y \in Y} d(g(y), h(y)) + \sup_{y \in Y} d(g^{-1}(y), h^{-1}(y)).$$

With this metric $\mathcal{K}(Y)$ is a complete topological group. Let \mathcal{G} be a subgroup of $\mathcal{K}(Y)$ and let (σ, Z) be a minimal metric flow (i.e. σ is a homeomorphism of the compact metric space Z and $\sigma A \subset A$ for a closed subset A of Z implies $A = \emptyset$ or $A = Z$). With every continuous map $z \rightarrow g_z$ of Z into \mathcal{G} we associate a homeomor-

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phism G of $X = Z \times Y$ defined by $G(z, y) = (z, g_z(y))$. Identify σ with $\sigma \times e$ where e is the identity map on Y , and then for $(z, y) \in X$

$$G^{-1} \circ \sigma \circ G(z, y) = (\sigma z, g_{\sigma^{-1}z} g_z(y)).$$

Let $\bar{\mathcal{S}}_{\mathcal{G}}(\sigma)$ be the closure of the subset of $\mathcal{H}(X)$ whose elements are the maps of the form $G^{-1} \circ \sigma \circ G$ as above. Notice that every element $T \in \bar{\mathcal{S}}_{\mathcal{G}}(\sigma)$ has the form $T(z, y) = (\sigma z, h_z(y))$, where $z \rightarrow h_z$ is a continuous map of Z into the closure of \mathcal{G} in $\mathcal{H}(Y)$. We write $\pi_Z = \pi$ for the projection map $X \rightarrow Z$ and π_Y for the projection $X \rightarrow Y$.

With every minimal flow (T, X) we associate a flow $(T, 2^X)$ on the compact space of closed subsets of X equipped with the Hausdorff topology. A minimal subflow of $(T, 2^X)$ is called a *quasifactor* of (T, X) .

The minimal flows (T, X_1) and (T, X_2) are *disjoint* if the product flow $(T, X_1 \times X_2)$ is minimal. By [4, Theorem 2.4], *the minimal metric flows (T, X_1) and (T, X_2) are not disjoint iff there exist an almost one-to-one extension (T, X'_1) of (T, X_1) and a nontrivial quasifactor of (T, X_2) which is a factor of (T, X'_1) .*

A closed subset A of X is called an *almost periodic set* if A is an element of some quasifactor of (T, X) .

1.1 PROPOSITION. *Assume \mathcal{G} is pathwise connected and (\mathcal{G}, Y) is minimal. Then there exists a dense G_{δ} subset \mathcal{R} of $\bar{\mathcal{S}}_{\mathcal{G}}(\sigma)$ such that every $T \in \mathcal{R}$ has the following property. Let A be a closed subset of $X = Z \times Y$ with $\pi(A) = Z$. Then there exist a point $z \in Z$ and a sequence $\{n_i\}$ such that $\lim T^{n_i} A \supset \pi^{-1}(z)$. (Notice that this implies the minimality of (T, X) .)*

PROOF. We split the proof into five steps.

1. For every $\varepsilon > 0$ let

$$E_{\varepsilon} = \left\{ T \in \bar{\mathcal{S}}_{\mathcal{G}}(\sigma) : \exists l_1, \dots, l_L; \exists z_1, \dots, z_N \in Z \text{ such that} \right.$$

$$\text{diam}\left(\left\{ \sigma^{l_j z_i} \right\}_{i=1}^N\right) < \varepsilon \text{ for } 1 \leq j \leq L \text{ and } \forall y_1, \dots, y_N \in Y \exists j$$

$$\text{with } \pi_Y\left(\left\{ T^{l_j}(z_i, y_i) \right\}_{i=1}^N\right) \varepsilon\text{-dense in } Y \left. \right\}.$$

E_{ε} is an open subset of $\bar{\mathcal{S}}_{\mathcal{G}}(\sigma)$. Put $\mathcal{R} = \bigcap E_{1/n}$ then it is clear that every $T \in \mathcal{R}$ has the desired property. Thus it is enough to show that E_{ε} is dense in $\bar{\mathcal{S}}_{\mathcal{G}}(\sigma)$ for every $\varepsilon > 0$.

2. It is enough to show that $G \circ \sigma \circ G^{-1} \in \bar{E}_{\varepsilon}$ for every G . Since $\mathcal{H}(X)$ is a topological group this is the same as showing that $\sigma \in G^{-1} E_{\varepsilon} G$. Now

$$G^{-1} E_{\varepsilon} G = \left\{ T \in \bar{\mathcal{S}}_{\mathcal{G}}(\sigma) : \exists l_1, \dots, l_L; z_1, \dots, z_N \in Z \text{ such that} \right.$$

$$\text{diam}\left(\left\{ \sigma^{l_j z_i} \right\}_{i=1}^N\right) \text{ for } 1 \leq j \leq L \text{ and } \forall y_1, \dots, y_N \in Y \exists j$$

$$\text{with } \pi_Y\left(G\left\{ T^{l_j}(z_i, g_{z_i}^{-1}(y_i)) \right\}_{i=1}^N\right) \varepsilon\text{-dense in } Y \left. \right\}.$$

But the latter set contains E_δ where $\delta > 0$ is such that G sends δ -dense sets into ε -dense sets. Therefore $\overline{E_\delta} \subset G^{-1}E_\varepsilon$ and it is enough to show that $\sigma \in \overline{E_\varepsilon}$ for every $\varepsilon > 0$.

3. Fix $\varepsilon > 0$ and let $Y = \bigcup_{j=1}^N V_j$ where the V_j 's are open sets with $\text{diam}(V_j) < \varepsilon, j = 1, \dots, N$. Since (\mathcal{G}^N, Y^N) is minimal there are $g_{i,j} \in \mathcal{G}, i = 1, \dots, N; j = 1, \dots, L$; with

$$\bigcup_{j=1}^L g_{i,j}^{-1}(V_1) \times \dots \times g_{N,j}^{-1}(V_N) = \underbrace{Y \times \dots \times Y}_N.$$

Thus for every vector $(y_1, \dots, y_N) \in Y^N$ there exists a j with

$$(g_{1,j}(y_1), \dots, g_{N,j}(y_N)) \in V_1 \times \dots \times V_N,$$

i.e. $\{g_{i,j}(y_i)\}_{i=1}^N$ is ε -dense in Y .

4. Let $\delta > 0$. We construct a continuous map $z \rightarrow g_z, Z \rightarrow \mathcal{G}$, define $G \in \mathcal{C}(X)$ by $G(z, y) = (z, g_z(y))$ and show that for this G we have

- (i) $d(\sigma, G^{-1} \circ \sigma \circ G) < \delta,$
- (ii) $G^{-1} \circ \sigma \circ G \in E_\varepsilon,$

thereby proving that $\sigma \in \overline{E_\varepsilon}$.

Let $M = N \times L$ and put

$$h_0 = e, \quad h_{((j-1)N+i)/M} = g_{i,j}^{-1}, \quad i = 1, \dots, N; j = 1, \dots, L.$$

Since \mathcal{G} is pathwise connected the map $t \rightarrow h_t$ on the finite set

$$\{((j-1)N+i)/M\}_{i,j} \cup \{0\}$$

can be extended to a continuous map $t \rightarrow h_t$ on $I = [0, 1]$ into \mathcal{G} . Let $\eta > 0$ have the property: $|t_1 - t_2| < \eta$ implies $d(h_{t_1}^{-1}h_{t_2}, e) < \delta$. Choose n with $2/n < \eta$. Let $W \subset Z$ be an open set such that for some $l_1 < l_2 < \dots < l_L$, with $i > j \Rightarrow l_i - l_j > n$, for all j , $\text{diam}\{\sigma^l W\} < \varepsilon$ and $\sigma^{l+s}W \cap \sigma^{l+t}W = \emptyset$ whenever $(j, s) \neq (i, t), i, j = 1, \dots, L, s, t = 0, 1, \dots, n-1$. Let $K \subset W$ be a Cantor set, let $l_0 = 0$ and let $\tilde{\theta}: \bigcup_{j=0}^L \sigma^j K \rightarrow I$ be a continuous map such that $\tilde{\theta}(K) = 0, \tilde{\theta}$ maps $\sigma^l K$ onto $[0, N/M]$ and for $j > 1$ and $z \in \sigma^j K, \tilde{\theta}(z) = \tilde{\theta}(\sigma^{l_1-l_2}z) + N(j-1)/M$. For $0 \leq j \leq L, 0 \leq i \leq n-1$ and $z \in \sigma^{l_i+i}K$ let $\tilde{\theta}(z) = \tilde{\theta}(\sigma^{-l_i}z)$. Now extend $\tilde{\theta}$ to a continuous map $\tilde{\theta}: Z \rightarrow I$. Put $\theta(z) = \sum_{i=0}^{n-1} \tilde{\theta}(\sigma^i z)/n$ ($z \in Z$), and define $z \rightarrow g_z; Z \rightarrow \mathcal{G}$ by $g_z = h_{\theta(z)}$. Finally let $G \in \mathcal{C}(X)$ be defined by $G(z, y) = (z, g_z(y))$ ($(z, y) \in X$).

5. For $(z, y) \in X,$

$$G^{-1} \circ \sigma \circ G(z, y) = (\sigma z, g_{\sigma z}^{-1}g_z(y)) = (\sigma z, h_{\theta(\sigma z)}^{-1}h_{\theta(z)}(y)).$$

But

$$\begin{aligned} |\theta(\sigma z) - \theta(z)| &= \frac{1}{n} \left| \sum_{i=0}^{n-1} \tilde{\theta}(\sigma^{i+1}z) - \tilde{\theta}(\sigma^i z) \right| \\ &= \frac{1}{n} |\tilde{\theta}(\sigma^n z) - \tilde{\theta}(z)| \leq \frac{2}{n} < \eta. \end{aligned}$$

Thus $d(h_{\theta(\sigma z)}^{-1}h_{\theta(z)}, e) < \delta$ and (i) is proved.

Let $z_1, \dots, z_N \in K$ be chosen so that

$$\tilde{\theta}(\sigma^{l_i} z_i) = i/M, \quad i = 1, 2, \dots, N.$$

Then for $1 \leq j \leq L$, $\theta(\sigma^{l_j} z_i) = ((j - 1)N + i)/M$ and $\theta(z_i) = 0, i = 1, \dots, N$. Now given $y_1, \dots, y_N \in Y$ there exists a $j, 1 \leq j \leq L$, with $\{g_{i,j}(y_i)\}_{i=1}^N$ ϵ -dense in Y , thus for that j

$$\begin{aligned} \pi_Y\{((G^{-1} \circ \sigma \circ G)^{l_j}(z_i, y_i): i = 1, \dots, N)\} \\ &= \pi_Y\{(\sigma^{l_j} z_i, g_{\sigma^{l_j} z_i}^{-1} g_{z_i}(y_i)): i = 1, \dots, N\} \\ &= \{g_{\sigma^{l_j} z_i}^{-1}(y_i)\}_{i=1}^N = \{h_{((j-1)N+i)/M}^{-1}(y_i)\}_{i=1}^N \\ &= \{g_{i,j}(y_i)\}_{i=1}^N. \end{aligned}$$

The latter is ϵ -dense in Y and (ii) is proved. The proof of the proposition is now complete.

1.2 COROLLARY. For $T \in \mathcal{R}$, (T, X) has no nontrivial quasifactors which are disjoint from (σ, Z) .

PROOF. Let $\mathcal{X} \subset 2^X$ be a quasifactor of (T, X) which is disjoint from (σ, Z) , i.e., $(\sigma \times T, Z \times \mathcal{X})$ is minimal. Then $\pi(\mathcal{X}) = \{\pi(A) : A \in \mathcal{X}\} \subset 2^Z$ is a quasifactor of (σ, Z) . Since \mathcal{X} is disjoint from (σ, Z) , $\pi(\mathcal{X}) = \{Z\}$. Thus $\pi(A) = Z$ for every $A \in \mathcal{X}$ and for every pair $(z, A), z \in Z, A \in \mathcal{X}$ the set $A_z = \pi^{-1}(z) \cap A$ is nonempty. Clearly the map $(z, A) \rightarrow A_z, Z \times \mathcal{X} \rightarrow 2^X$ is upper-semicontinuous. Moreover

$$(\sigma, T)(z, A) = (\sigma z, TA) \rightarrow TA \cap \pi^{-1}(\sigma z) = T(A \cap \pi^{-1}(z)),$$

and therefore $(TA)_{\sigma z} = T(A_z)$.

Fix $A \in \mathcal{X}$ for which there exists $z_0 \in Z$ with $\pi^{-1}(z_0) \subset A$. Let $z \in Z$. Then since $Z \times \mathcal{X}$ is minimal, there exists a sequence $\{n_i\}$ such that

$$\lim(\sigma, T)^{n_i}(z_0, A) = (z, A).$$

By upper-semicontinuity

$$\lim T^{n_i}(\pi^{-1}(z_0)) = \lim T^{n_i}(A_{z_0}) = \lim(T^{n_i}A)_{\sigma^{n_i} z_0} \subset A_z.$$

On the other hand, since π is an open map,

$$\lim T^{n_i}(\pi^{-1}(z_0)) = \pi^{-1}(z).$$

Thus $A \supset \pi^{-1}(z)$ for every $z \in Z$ and $A = X$, i.e., \mathcal{X} is trivial.

1.3 THEOREM. Let (σ, Z) be a metric minimal flow. Let Y be a compact metric space and \mathcal{G} a pathwise connected subgroup of $\mathcal{K}(Y)$, such that (\mathcal{G}, Y) is minimal. Then there exists a dense G_δ subset \mathcal{R} of $\overline{\mathcal{S}}_{\mathcal{G}}(\sigma)$ such that for every $T \in \mathcal{R}$ the corresponding flow (T, X) is minimal and disjoint from every minimal flow which is disjoint from (σ, Z) .

PROOF. Let \mathfrak{R} be as in Proposition 1.1. Then our theorem follows for $T \in \mathfrak{R}$ by Corollary 1.2, the fact that disjointness is preserved under almost one-to-one extensions and by [4, Theorem 2.4].

Let $\mathbf{T} = \mathbf{R}/\mathbf{Z}$ be the 1-torus, let α be an irrational number and let $(\sigma, \mathbf{Z}) = (R_\alpha, \mathbf{T})$ where $R_\alpha z = z + \alpha$. Define $T: \mathbf{T}^2 \rightarrow \mathbf{T}^2$ by $T(z, y) = (z + \alpha, y + \phi(z))$, where $\phi: \mathbf{T} \rightarrow \mathbf{T}$ is a continuous function. When $\phi(z) \equiv \beta$ for some $\beta \in \mathbf{T}$, (T, \mathbf{T}^2) is a product flow and while (R_α, \mathbf{T}) is disjoint from (R_β, \mathbf{T}) , for β independent of α , (T, \mathbf{T}^2) admits (R_β, \mathbf{T}) as a factor. However, under the assumption that (T, \mathbf{T}^2) is not an equicontinuous flow (for ϕ this means that for every complex number λ and integer $k \neq 0$ the functional equation $f(z + \alpha)e^{2\pi i k \phi(z)} = \lambda f(z)$ has no nonzero continuous solution; in particular this implies that (T, \mathbf{T}^2) is minimal) it is shown in [5, Theorem 4.2] that if A is an almost periodic closed subset of \mathbf{T}^2 with $\pi(A)$ second category at $z \in \mathbf{T}$ then $\{z\} \times \mathbf{T} \subset A$. As in the proof of Theorem 1.3 we deduce the following theorem.

1.4 THEOREM. *Let α be an irrational and let $\phi: \mathbf{T} \rightarrow \mathbf{T}$ be a continuous function. Let $T: \mathbf{T}^2 \rightarrow \mathbf{T}^2$ be defined by $T(z, y) = (z + \alpha, y + \phi(z))$. If (T, \mathbf{T}^2) is not equicontinuous then the minimal flow (T, \mathbf{T}^2) is disjoint from every minimal flow which is disjoint from (R_α, \mathbf{T}) .*

2. Let \mathcal{G} be a topological group, we denote by $\beta\mathcal{G}_d$ the Stone-Ćech compactification of the discrete underlying group \mathcal{G}_d . If (\mathcal{G}, X) is a \mathcal{G} -flow there is an action of $\beta\mathcal{G}_d$ on X , written $(p, x) \rightarrow px$ ($p \in \beta\mathcal{G}_d, x \in X$), which extends the action of \mathcal{G} on X . When both \mathcal{G} -flows, (\mathcal{G}, X) and $(\mathcal{G}, 2^X)$, are considered we let $(p, A) \rightarrow p \circ A$ denote the action of $\beta\mathcal{G}_d$ on 2^X , rather than $(p, A) \rightarrow pA$. The latter will denote the set $pA = \{px: x \in A\}$.

$\beta\mathcal{G}_d$ has a semigroup structure and the minimal left ideals in $\beta\mathcal{G}_d$ coincide with the minimal sets of the \mathcal{G} -flow $(\mathcal{G}, \beta\mathcal{G}_d)$. All these minimal sets are isomorphic. Fix a minimal ideal M in $\beta\mathcal{G}_d$ and let u be an idempotent in M . If (\mathcal{G}, X_1) and (\mathcal{G}, X_2) are two minimal \mathcal{G} -flows and $X_1 \xrightarrow{\pi} X_2$ is a homomorphism (or an extension), we say that π is an RIC-extension if for some $x \in X_2$ and every $p \in M, p \circ u\pi^{-1}(x) = \pi^{-1}(px)$. This definition does not depend on the choice of M or u . (For more details we refer the reader to [1], [2], [3].) When (T, X) is a flow the acting group is the group of integers \mathbf{Z} .

As in §1, let (σ, \mathbf{Z}) be a metric minimal flow, let Y be a compact metric space and \mathcal{G} a subgroup of $\mathcal{H}(Y)$. Let $z \rightarrow g_z$ be a continuous map of \mathbf{Z} into \mathcal{G} and define a homeomorphism T of $X = \mathbf{Z} \times Y$ by $T(z, y) = (\sigma z, g_z(y))$.

2.1 PROPOSITION. *If (T, X) is minimal, \mathcal{G} abelian and (\mathcal{G}, Y) is minimal, then the extension $(T, X) \xrightarrow{\pi} (\sigma, \mathbf{Z})$ is RIC.*

PROOF. Let M be a minimal ideal in $\beta\mathbf{Z}$ and let u be a minimal idempotent in M . Let $\{n_i\}$ be a net in \mathbf{Z} converging to u . Pick $x_0 = (z_0, y_0) \in X$ with $ux_0 = x_0$; then $uz_0 = z_0$ and $u\pi^{-1}(z_0) = \{z_0\} \times K$ where $K \subset Y$. For each $y \in Y$ we have

$$u(z_0, y) = \lim T^{n_i}(z_0, y) = \lim(\sigma^{n_i}z_0, g_{\sigma^{n_i}z_0} g_{\sigma^{n_i-1}z_0} g_{\sigma^{n_i-2}z_0} \cdots g_{z_0}(y)) = (x_0, y')$$

where $y' \in K$. Let $u' = \lim g_{\sigma^n} \circ \dots \circ g_{z_0}$ be an element of $\beta \mathcal{G}_d$, then

$$u \circ u\pi^{-1}(z_0) = u \circ (\{z_0\} \times K) = \{z_0\} \times (u' \circ K) = \{z_0\} \times (u' \circ u'Y).$$

Since \mathcal{G} is abelian $u'Y$ is dense in Y . Hence $u' \circ u'Y = Y$ and $u \circ u\pi^{-1}(z_0) = \pi^{-1}(z_0)$. If $p \in M$ then, since π is an open map, we have

$$\begin{aligned} p \circ u\pi^{-1}(z_0) &= p \circ u \circ (\{z_0\} \times K) = p \circ (\{z_0\} \times Y) \\ &= p \circ \pi^{-1}(z_0) = \pi^{-1}(pz_0), \end{aligned}$$

and π is RIC.

2.2 THEOREM. *There exists a metric minimal flow which is disjoint from every minimal weakly mixing flow and is not PI.*

PROOF. Let (σ, Z) be an equicontinuous metric minimal flow. Let (\mathbf{R}, Y) be a weakly mixing metric minimal real-flow. We let $\mathcal{R} \subset \overline{\mathcal{S}}_{\mathbf{R}}(\sigma)$ be as in Proposition 1.1. By [6, Theorems 1 and 4] there is a dense G_δ subset \mathcal{R}' of $\overline{\mathcal{S}}_{\mathbf{R}}(\sigma)$ which consists of elements T for which (T, X) is a weakly mixing extension of (σ, Z) . Let $T \in \mathcal{R} \cap \mathcal{R}'$. Then (T, X) is a minimal flow, the extension $(T, X) \xrightarrow{\pi} (\sigma, Z)$ is weakly mixing and, by Theorem 1.3, every minimal flow which is disjoint from (σ, Z) is also disjoint from (T, X) . In particular (T, X) is disjoint from every weakly mixing minimal flow.

Let $\overline{\mathbf{R}}$ be the uniform closure of \mathbf{R} in $\mathcal{K}(Y)$, then $\overline{\mathbf{R}}$ is abelian. As was remarked in §1, every element of $\overline{\mathcal{S}}_{\mathbf{R}}(\sigma)$, and in particular T , has the form $T(z, y) = (\sigma z, g_z(y))$ for some continuous map $z \rightarrow g_z$ of Z into $\overline{\mathbf{R}}$. Thus Proposition 2.1 applies and the extension $(T, X) \xrightarrow{\pi} (\sigma, Z)$ is RIC.

Now (σ, Z) is the maximal equicontinuous factor of (T, X) , i.e., (σ, Z) is the first step of the canonical PI-tower of (T, X) . Since $(T, X) \xrightarrow{\pi} (\sigma, Y)$ is RIC and weakly mixing, (σ, Z) is also the last step [3, Theorem X.2.1.]. Thus in the notations of [3], $X = X_\infty \neq Y_\infty = Z$ and by [3, Theorem X.4.2.], X is not PI.

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