FUNDAMENTAL GROUPS OF ONE-DIMENSIONAL SPACES

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Abstract. Let \( X \) be a metrizable one-dimensional continuum. In the present paper we describe the fundamental group of \( X \) as a subgroup of its Čech homotopy group. In particular, the elements of the Čech homotopy group are represented by sequences of words. Among these sequences the elements of the fundamental group are characterized by a simple stabilization condition. This description of the fundamental group is used to give a new algebro-combinatorial proof of a result due to Eda on continuity properties of homomorphisms from the fundamental group of the Hawaiian earring to that of \( X \).

1. Introduction

In the 1950s Curtis and Fort [6, 7, 8] studied properties of fundamental groups of locally complicated spaces. Starting with the work of Cannon and Conner as well as Eda and Kawamura at the turn of the millennium (see e.g. [2, 12]) the investigation of fundamental groups of such spaces got a new impetus. Meanwhile, properties of fundamental groups of one-dimensional (cf. for instance [1, 3, 10, 11]) and planar (see [5, 13]) spaces were derived. Especially the description of such fundamental groups in terms of words turned out to be useful. Cannon and Conner gave such a description for the fundamental group of the Hawaiian Earring (see Figure 1 left side) and in Akiyama et al. [1] we gave a representation of the fundamental group \( \pi(\Delta) \) of the Sierpiński gasket \( \Delta \) (see Figure 1 right side) in terms of words. Since \( \Delta \) is a one-dimensional subset of \( \mathbb{R}^2 \) it is known from Eda and Kawamura [12] that \( \pi(\Delta) \) can be embedded in the Čech homotopy group \( \check{\pi}(\Delta) \) which is known to be a projective limit of free groups. In [1] we were able to endow the projective limit defining \( \check{\pi}(\Delta) \) with a word structure. Moreover, we could characterize the elements of the subgroup \( \pi(\Delta) \) by a simple stabilizing condition. Recently, Diestel and Sprüssel [10] provided descriptions of Freudenthal compactifications of locally finite connected graphs by similar means.

2010 Mathematics Subject Classification. Primary 14F35; Secondary 28A80.

Key words and phrases. One-dimensional space, fundamental group.
The first aim of this paper is to extend this kind of description to a large class of spaces. Indeed, we are able to describe the fundamental group of any metrizable one-dimensional continuum $X$ in terms of words. As an important technical tool we use a slight modification of a handle body construction employed by Cannon and Conner [3]. In particular, with the help of this construction we equip the space $X$ with a structure that allows us to encode loops in $X$ by words. While in the construction for the Sierpiński gasket $\triangle$ the letters correspond to (local) cut points of $\triangle$, in our setting letters represent (local) cut sets. This generalization turns out appropriate to extend the approach in [1] for the special case of the Sierpiński gasket to the class of all metrizable one-dimensional continua.

The difference of our treatment compared to other approaches to this topic is twofold: Firstly, we refrain from describing a loop by (an infinite sequence of) edges but instead we use a sequence (indexed by the approximation level) of finite words whose letters correspond to the (local) cut sets the loop crosses. Each word provides information which areas (separated by the cut set letters) the loop traverses. In combination with the handlebody construction this finer and finer approximation to the loop as well as to the space $X$ from outside turns out to do the right job. It avoids complications occurring when approximating the loop by edge-sequences and the space from inside where usually a topological closure operation is involved. The second new ingredient concerns the use of semigroups instead of groups. It is due to the fact that the word sequences describing loops carry a natural projective semigroup structure and homotopy of loops is reflected by appropriate cancelation rules applied to semigroup words. Altogether, the semigroup structure provides the crucial tool to identify those elements in $\hat{\pi}(X)$ which correspond to homotopy classes of $X$. 
In the second part of the paper our description of the fundamental group is applied in order to give a quite elementary algebro-combinatorial proof of a result due to Eda [11]. We show that each homomorphism from the fundamental group of the Hawaiian earring $E$ to the fundamental group of a metrizable one-dimensional continuum $X$ is induced by a continuous mapping $\psi : E \to X$ (Theorem 5.10). Furthermore, we obtain an “infinite homomorphism property” for such homomorphisms (Theorem 5.3).

The paper is organized as follows. In Section 2 we define the handlebodies and establish some preliminary results necessary for the proof of our first main result. As indicated above, some steps are similar to the case of the Sierpiński gasket, other parts need different ideas in order to capture the considerably more general situation. In Section 3 we state our description of the fundamental group (Theorem 3.2) and finish its proof. This result contains a simple criterion for an element of the Čech homotopy group to belong to the fundamental group of a given space. Moreover, it allows to find a canonical “shortest” representative for each element of the fundamental group. At the end of this section we indicate how our handlebody construction applies to the Sierpiński carpet (sometimes also called Menger curve) as an example. Section 4 contains cancelation rules for the words in the fundamental group. These rules are important in Section 5 where we prove Eda’s result on homomorphisms mentioned above by means of our word description of the fundamental group. At the beginning of Section 5 for the convenience of the reader we provide guidelines to our proof of Eda’s theorem which requires some technical effort.

2. Definition of the handles

Throughout this paper let $X$ be a metrizable one-dimensional continuum\(^1\). Then (see Hurewicz and Wallman [16] or Cannon and Conner [3]) $X$ can be embedded in the three dimensional Euclidean space and represented as the intersection of handle bodies $H_n$, $n \in \mathbb{N}$, such that

$$H_0 \supset H_1 \supset H_2 \supset \ldots \supset \bigcap_{n \in \mathbb{N}} H_n = X.$$

Each handle body $H_n$ consists of finitely many 0-handles joined by finitely many 1-handles. The 0-handles as well as the 1-handles are compact subsets of $\mathbb{R}^3$ homeomorphic to a closed ball. The diameter of each of these handles is bounded from above by $\frac{1}{n}$ in the maximum norm $\|\cdot\|_\infty$. Each 1-handle $h$ is attached to two adjacent 0-handles by an attaching disk. These attaching\(^1\)Note that in view of Urysohn’s metrization theorem for compact spaces metrizability is equivalent to second-countability.
disks are separated by an intermediate belt disk \( B(h) \) contained in the 1-handle. This construction shows that \( H_n \) can be realized as a CW complex in \( \mathbb{R}^3 \). W.l.o.g. we assume that each 1-handle in \( H_n \) has nonempty intersection with \( X \) and that each 0-handle is attached to at least one 1-handle (see Figure 2 for an example). Thus the connectedness of \( X \) implies that \( H_n \) is connected.

Consider a fixed 0-handle \( h \) in \( H_n \). Observe that the union \( U \) of all the belt disks of the 1-handles attached to \( h \) form a separator of \( H_n \). The star of \( h \), \( \text{St}(h) \), is the component of \( H_n \setminus U \) containing \( h \). Note that each belt disk of \( H_n \) is contained in the boundary of exactly two stars.

With \( H_n \) we associate a graph \( \langle V_n, E_n \rangle \) where the set \( V_n \) of vertices consists of the 0-handles of \( H_n \) and two vertices are connected by an edge in \( E_n \) if and only if the associated 0-handles are connected by a 1-handle. Thus the edges are in a one to one correspondence to the 1-handles of \( H_n \). Note that the graph \( \langle V_n, E_n \rangle \) can be drawn in \( \mathbb{R}^3 \) as a deformation retract of \( H_n \) in the following way.

For every 1-handle \( h \) of \( H_n \) choose a simple arc in \( h \) joining the attaching disks. By the CW structure of the handle body there is a deformation retraction of the 1-handle on the union of this simple arc and the two attaching disks. This can be done in a way that \( B(h) \) is retracted to a single point \( b_h \), which we will call the midpoint of \( B(h) \). By the Homotopy Extension Theorem for CW complexes this retraction can be performed for each 1-handle.
of $H_n$ separately. Next, for every 0-handle $h$ we choose an arbitrary point $m_h$ (called midpoint of $h$) in the interior of $h$ and arcs connecting $m_h$ with the end point of each arc contained in the attached retracted 1-handles. The 0-handle $h$ can be deformation retracted onto these arcs. Again, by the Homotopy Extension Theorem for CW complexes this retraction can be performed for each 0-handle of $H_n$ separately. The result of all these deformation retractions is the deformation retraction $r_n$ which deformation retracts $H_n$ onto the drawing of $\langle V_n, E_n \rangle$.

In the following we assume w.l.o.g. that $H_n$ is defined in a way that $\langle V_n, E_n \rangle$ does not contain cycles of length $\leq 2$. Indeed, cycles of length $\leq 2$ can easily be ruled out by splitting a 1-handle by an intermediate 0-handle at certain places.

Now we explicate how $H_{n+1}$ is embedded in $H_n$. For each $n$ the handle body $H_{n+1}$ lies in the interior of $H_n$ and if a handle $h'$ of $H_{n+1}$ intersects the belt disk $B(h)$ of a 1-handle $h$ of $H_n$ then we may assume that $h'$ is a 1-handle of $H_{n+1}$ and $h' \cap B(h) = B(h')$. In this case we call $B(h)$ a predecessor of $B(h')$.

Next we will describe loops with base point $x_0 \in X$. The base point $x_0$ is assumed to be contained in a belt disk of $H_0$ and, as $x_0 \in X$, also in a belt disk of $H_n$ for each $n \geq 0$; indeed, w.l.o.g. we assume that $x_0$ is the midpoint of each of these belt disks.

For fixed $n$ consider a loop $f_n$ in the pointed space $(H_n, x_0)$. The word $\sigma_n(f_n)$ representing $f_n$ is defined over the alphabet

$$D_n := \{ B(h) \mid B(h) \cap X \neq \emptyset, \, h \text{ a 1-handle in } H_n \}$$

in the following way. The pre-images $\{ f_n^{-1}(B) \mid B \in D_n \}$ form a finite family of disjoint compact subsets of the interval $[0, 1]$. Therefore this family is separated, i.e., there is $m \in \mathbb{N}$ such that for all $i \in \{1, 2, \ldots, m\}$ the set $f_n^{-1}(B) \cap [\frac{i-1}{m}, \frac{i}{m}]$ is nonempty for at most one $B = B_i$. We list these letters $B_i$ as $i$ increases and in the arising sequence we cancel out consecutive repetitions of letters. Thus we obtain a finite word $\sigma_n(f_n) := B_1 B_2 \ldots B_k$ over $D_n$ which is independent of the chosen $m$ and contains all belts the loop $f_n$ traverses in the right ordering.

Indeed, since $X \subseteq H_n$ for all $n \in \mathbb{N}$, for a loop $f \in (X, x_0)$ the word $\sigma_n(f)$ is defined for all $n \in \mathbb{N}$ and represents $f$ at approximation level $n$.

We define the following relation $\sim_n$ on $D_n$. We say that $B_1, B_2 \in D_n$ are in relation to each other, i.e., $B_1 \sim_n B_2$ if and only if $B_1 \neq B_2$ and there is a 0-handle $h$ in $H_n$ such that $B_1, B_2 \subseteq \text{St}(h)$. We call a word $B_1 \ldots B_k$ over $D_n$ admissible if and only if
For each loop $f$ based at $x_0$ the word $\sigma_n(f)$ is obviously admissible.

We now associate with each admissible word $\omega_n = B_1 \ldots B_k$ over $D_n$ a canonical loop $L(\omega_n)$ in $(H_n, x_0)$. It is defined as follows. Since $B_i \sim B_{i+1}$ and $\langle V_n, E_n \rangle$ has no cycles of order 2 there is a unique 0-handle attached to the 1-handles corresponding to $B_i$ and $B_{i+1}$. Let $m_i$ be the midpoint of this 0-handle. Connect $x_0$ with $m_0$ and then $m_i$ with $m_{i+1}$ ($i \in \{0, \ldots, k-1\}$) and finally $m_{k-1}$ with $x_0$ by arcs contained in the graph $\langle V_n, E_n \rangle$. The parametrization of this loop $L(\omega_n)$ will mostly be irrelevant. In places where it becomes important (e.g. in the proof of Proposition 3.1) this will be made explicit. Obviously, $\sigma_n(L(\omega_n)) = \omega_n$.

If $\omega_n = B_1 \ldots B_k$ satisfies only condition (2) a canonical path $L(\omega_n)$ is associated with $\omega_n$ in the same way. To keep the notation simple, the loop (or path, respectively) $L(\omega_n)$ will also be denoted by $\omega_n$.

**Proposition 2.1.** Let $f : [0,1] \to H_n$ be a loop based in $x_0$. Then $f$ and the canonical loop $\sigma_n(f)$ are homotopic in $H_n$.

**Proof.** First note that $f$ is homotopic to $r_n \circ f$, where $r_n$ is the deformation retraction of $H_n$ onto $\langle V_n, E_n \rangle$. Let $\sigma_n(f) = B_1 \ldots B_k$. For every $i \in \{1, \ldots, k\}$ there is a maximal interval $[s_i, t_i]$ such that $r_n \circ f(s_i) = r_n \circ f(t_i) = r_n(B_i)$, $r_n(f([s_i, t_i]) \cap \bigcup_{B \in D_n} B) = \{r_n(B_i)\}$ and $0 = s_1 \leq s_2 \leq t_2 < \ldots < s_k \leq t_k = 1$. This means that the path $r_n \circ f([s_i, t_i])$ is contained in $\text{St}(h_1) \cup B_i \cup \text{St}(h_2)$ where $h_1$ and $h_2$ are the two 0-handles with $\overline{\text{St}}(h_1) \cap \overline{\text{St}}(h_2) = B_i$. By our assumptions on the graph $\langle V_n, E_n \rangle$ associated with $H_n$ the set $\text{St}(h_1) \cup B_i \cup \text{St}(h_2)$ is simply connected and, hence, the restriction $r_n \circ f \mid [s_i, t_i]$ is homotopic to the constant path in $r_n(B_i)$.

Moreover, the conditions on $s_i$ and $t_i$ imply that $r_n \circ f([t_i, s_{i+1}])$ is a subset of $r_n(\text{St})$ where $\text{St}$ is the star of $H_n$ whose closure contains $B_i$ and $B_{i+1}$ and, hence, $r_n \circ f \mid [t_i, s_{i+1}]$ is homotopic to the canonical path between $r_n(B_i)$ and $r_n(B_{i+1})$.

Putting the pieces together we obtain the assertion. \qed

The set of all admissible words over $D_n$ is called $S_n$. If we endow $S_n$ with the operation “$\cdot$” defined by concatenation of words where the first letter of the second word is omitted, we obtain a semigroup $(S_n, \cdot)$.

For each $n \geq 1$ define a mapping $\gamma_n : S_n \to S_{n-1}$ where for $\omega_n = B_1 \ldots B_k \in S_n$ the image $\gamma_n(\omega_n)$ is defined as follows. Among the letters of $\omega_n$ we omit those which have no predecessor and replace each of
the others by its predecessor. Finally, we cancel consecutive repetitions of letters. Obviously, the resulting word is admissible and therefore belongs to $S_{n-1}$. With these mappings $\gamma_n$ ($n \geq 1$) which are easily seen to be compatible with concatenation we get a projective limit of semigroups $\lim \leftarrow S_n := \{(\omega_n)_{n \geq 0} | \gamma_k(\omega_k) = \omega_{k-1} \text{ for all } k \geq 1\}$. For $n > k$ the mapping $\gamma_{nk}: S_n \to S_k$ denotes the composition $\gamma_{k+1} \circ \ldots \circ \gamma_n$.

Let $S(X, x_0)$ be the set of all loops in $X$ based in $x_0$. The set $S(X, x_0)$ is a groupoid with respect to the concatenation of loops. Consider a loop $f \in S(X, x_0)$. Then, obviously, $\gamma_n(\sigma_n(f)) = \sigma_{n-1}(f)$. Thus each sequence $(\sigma_n(f))_{n \geq 0}$ is contained in the projective limit $\lim \leftarrow S_n$ and we may define the map $\sigma: \{S(X, x_0) \to \lim \leftarrow S_n, f \mapsto (\sigma_n(f))_{n \geq 0}\}$ which is a groupoid homomorphism.

Our next aim is to describe how the homotopy of two loops $f$ and $g$ is reflected in their word representations $\sigma_n(f)$ and $\sigma_n(g)$. To this matter we define the following equivalence relation $\equiv_n$ on $S_n$.

An elementary move on subwords of words in $S_n$ consists of substitutions of the form

$$B_1B_2B_3 \leftrightarrow B_1B_3 \quad (\text{if } B_1 \neq B_3) \quad \text{or} \quad B_1B_2B_1 \leftrightarrow B_1$$

where $B_1$, $B_2$ and $B_3$ are all contained in the closure of a star $\text{St}(h)$ for a 0-handle $h \in H_n$ (see Figure 3). We say that two words $\omega_n$ and $\omega'_n$ in $S_n$ are equivalent, $\omega_n \equiv_n \omega'_n$ for short, if $\omega'_n$ can be obtained from $\omega_n$ by finitely many elementary moves.

**Figure 3.** The left path demonstrates the elementary move $B_1B_2B_3 \leftrightarrow B_1B_3$. The path on the right hand side illustrates $B_1B_2B_1 \leftrightarrow B_1$. 
We call a word **reduced** if it does not contain three consecutive letters of the form $B_1B_2B_3$ where $B_1$, $B_2$ and $B_3$ are all contained in the closure of a star $\text{St}(h)$ for a 0-handle $h \in H_n$. Let $G_n$ be the set of reduced words in $S_n$.

**Proposition 2.2.** (1) Every $\equiv_n$ equivalence class of $S_n$ contains a unique reduced word. Thus the mapping $\text{Red}_n : S_n \to G_n$ which assigns to each $\omega_n$ the reduced word in its $\equiv_n$ class is well defined.

(2) The operation $\ast : \{G_n \times G_n \to G_n\}
\frac{\omega_n, \omega'_n}{\text{Red}_n(\omega_n \cdot \omega'_n)}$

is a group operation on $G_n$.

(3) The group $(G_n, \ast)$ is isomorphic to the fundamental group $\pi(H_n, x_0)$ with the isomorphism $\varphi_n : [f]_n \mapsto \text{Red}_n(\sigma_n(f))$ where $f : [0, 1] \to H_n$ is a loop based at $x_0$ and $[f]_n$ is the homotopy class of $f$ in $H_n$.

(4) The reduction map $\text{Red}_n : S_n \to G_n$ is a semigroup epimorphism, i.e., $(G_n, \ast)$ is isomorphic to $(S_n/\ker(\text{Red}_n), \cdot)$.

**Proof.** Note that $\pi(H_n, x_0) \cong \pi((V_n, E_n), x_0)$ since $\langle V_n, E_n \rangle$ is a deformation retract of $H_n$. Furthermore, $\pi((V_n, E_n), x_0)$ is isomorphic to a free group $F$ generated by the edges not contained in a fixed spanning tree of $\langle V_n, E_n \rangle$ (see [18, Corollary 7.35]). To each product $g_1 \ldots g_k$ of generators of $F$ we can associate a unique word by connecting the edges $g_i$ with intermediate unique paths in the spanning tree. Obviously, the obtained word is reduced. On the other hand, reversing this process two different reduced words give rise to two different products of generators of $F$ and therefore correspond to two non-homotopic paths. Thus we obtain a bijective correspondence between reduced words and homotopy classes of $(H_n, x_0)$.

To prove (1) we start with an arbitrary word in $S_n$ and apply elementary moves until we arrive at a reduced word. This shows that any $\equiv_n$ class contains at least one reduced word. However, if two different reduced words would be $\equiv_n$ equivalent they could be transformed into each other by elementary moves. Thus the loops corresponding to the reduced words would be homotopic in contrast to the above mentioned bijection between reduced words and homotopy classes.

The above arguments imply that the operation $\ast$ is compatible with the group operation in $\pi(H_n, x_0)$ which proves (2) and (3). Note that $\varphi_n$ is well defined due to Proposition 2.1. Assertion (4) follows immediately from the definition of $\ast$.

For a related proof see [1, Proposition 2.3].
Now we are going to define a projective limit on the groups \((G_n, \ast)\), \(n \in \mathbb{N}\), and relate it to the semigroup limit \(\lim \leftarrow S_n\).

**Proposition 2.3.**

1. For \(n \geq 1\) the map \(\delta_n : \begin{cases} G_n &\rightarrow G_{n-1} \\ \omega_n &\mapsto \text{Red}_{n-1}(\gamma_n(\omega_n)) \end{cases}\)

   is a group homomorphism.

2. Setting \(\lim \leftarrow G_n := \{(\omega_n)_{n \geq 0} | \delta_k(\omega_k) = \omega_k - 1 \text{ for all } k \geq 1\}\)

   we obtain that \(\text{Red} : \leftarrow \lim S_n \rightarrow \leftarrow \lim G_n\)

   is a well defined semigroup homomorphism.

**Proof.** Ad (1). Let \(\omega_n, \omega'_n \in G_n\). Direct calculation yields

\[ \delta_n(\omega_n \ast \omega'_n) = \text{Red}_{n-1}(\gamma_n(\text{Red}_n(\omega_n \cdot \omega'_n))) \]

and

\[ \delta_n(\omega_n) \ast \delta_n(\omega'_n) = \text{Red}_{n-1}(\gamma_n(\omega_n \cdot \omega'_n)). \]

Since for each \(\alpha_n \in S_n\) we have that \(\alpha_n\) and \(\gamma_n(\alpha_n)\) are homotopic in \(H_{n-1}\), and \(\alpha_n\) and \(\text{Red}_n(\alpha_n)\) are homotopic in \(H_n\) we get that \(\gamma_n(\text{Red}_n(\omega_n \cdot \omega'_n))\) and \(\gamma_n(\omega_n \cdot \omega'_n)\) are homotopic in \(H_{n-1}\). Thus Proposition 2.2 (1) implies that \(\delta_n\) is a homomorphism.

(2) is an immediate consequence of the commutativity of the diagram

\[
\begin{array}{ccc}
S_n & \xrightarrow{\gamma_n} & S_{n-1} \\
\downarrow \text{Red}_n & & \downarrow \text{Red}_{n-1} \\
G_n & \xrightarrow{\delta_n} & G_{n-1}
\end{array}
\]

which follows in a straightforward manner. \(\square\)

**Remark 2.4.** Note that contrary to the setting of the Sierpiński gasket in [1] \(G_{n-1}\) can contain loops that are no longer present in \(G_n\). Thus, in our general setting, the mappings \(\delta_n\) need not be surjective.

We now consider the Čech homotopy group \(\tilde{\pi}(X, x_0)\). For a definition we refer to Mardešić and Segal [17].

**Proposition 2.5.** The Čech homotopy group \(\tilde{\pi}(X, x_0)\) is isomorphic to \(\lim \leftarrow G_n\).

\(^2\text{Note that in } [17] \text{ the Čech homotopy group is called } \text{shape group}.\)
Proof. A proof of this proposition is in essence already contained in [3]. For the sake of completeness we briefly repeat the key arguments.

For a subset $A$ of a metric space let $(A)_\varepsilon$ denote the $\varepsilon$-neighborhood of $A$. Now we consider

$$U_n := \{(\text{St}(h))_\varepsilon | h \text{ is a 0-handle of } H_n\}$$

where $\varepsilon_n$ with $\lim_n \varepsilon_n = 0$ is chosen in a way that

$$\overline{\text{St}(h_1)} \cap \overline{\text{St}(h_2)} \neq \emptyset \iff (\text{St}(h_1))_\varepsilon \cap (\text{St}(h_2))_\varepsilon \neq \emptyset$$

for all 0-handles $h_1, h_2$ of $H_n$. The family $(U_n)_{n\geq 0}$ is cofinal in the set of all finite open coverings of $X$ since each 1-handle of $H_n$ has nonempty intersection with $X$. From this construction we conclude that the nerve of $U_n$ is a deformation retract of $H_n$ and thus by Proposition 2.2 (3) the group $G_n$ is the fundamental group of this nerve. This implies the result. \hfill \Box

Remark 2.6. Note that the projective limit of fundamental groups of handle bodies occurring in the proof of [3, Theorem 5.11] is strongly related to our construction. Indeed, this projective limit contains the Čech homotopy group of $(X, x_0)$ as a subgroup. The converse inclusion may fail in the setting of [3] since there it is not assumed that each 1-handle of $H_n$ has nonempty intersection with $X$. A special case of this construction is already contained in [8, Section 3].

From Proposition 2.5 we get the following result.

Proposition 2.7. The mapping

$$\varphi : \left\{ \begin{array}{cl} \pi(X, x_0) & \to \lim G_n \\ [f] & \mapsto \text{Red}(\sigma(f)) \end{array} \right.$$ 

is a group monomorphism.

Proof. This follows by combining Proposition 2.5 and the fact that the fundamental group of a one-dimensional continuum can be embedded in its Čech homotopy group in a canonical way (cf. [12, Theorem 1.1] and [3, Theorem 5.11]). \hfill \Box

Summing up we arrive at the following theorem.

Theorem 2.8. The fundamental group $\pi(X, x_0)$ of a metrizable one-dimensional continuum $(X, x_0)$ is isomorphic to a subgroup of the Čech homotopy

\footnote{For the definition of nerve see Hatcher [15], p. 257.}
Define \( f \) subintervals of equal length by the points \( B \) of \( \gamma \) for \( n \geq 0 \). We start with \( n = 0 \), \( \omega_0 = B_{01}B_{02}\ldots B_{0k_0} \), and divide \([0,1]\) into \( 2k_0 - 1 \) subintervals of equal length by the points

\[
0 = u_{01} < v_{01} < u_{02} < v_{02} < \ldots < u_{0k_0} < v_{0k_0} = 1.
\]

Define \( f_0(t) \) to be constant and equal to the midpoint of the belt disk \( B_{0i} \) for \( t \in [u_{0i}, v_{0i}] \), \( 1 \leq i \leq k_0 \), and \( f_0 \) to parametrize the canonical path of the word \( B_{0i}B_{0i+1} \) for \( t \in [v_{0i}, u_{0i+1}] \), \( 1 \leq i < k_0 \). Obviously \( \sigma_0(f_0) = \omega_0 \).

Suppose \( f_n \) is already defined in a way that \( f_n(t) \) is equal to the midpoint of \( B_{ni} \) for \( t \in [u_{ni}, v_{ni}] \), \( 1 \leq i \leq k_n \), \( f_n \) is the canonical path of the word \( B_{ni}B_{ni+1} \) for \( t \in [v_{ni}, u_{ni+1}] \), \( 1 \leq i < k_n \), and thus \( \sigma_k(f_n) = \gamma_{nk}(\sigma_n(f_n)) = \gamma_{nk}\omega_n = \omega_k \) for all \( k \leq n \). We now explain in detail how to define \( f_{n+1}(t) \).

Our aim is now to describe the range of \( \varphi \) which provides a description of \( \pi(X, x_0) \) as a subgroup of the projective limit \( \lim \longrightarrow G_n \) of free groups.

3. Word description of the fundamental group

We associate with a fixed element \((\omega_n)_{n \geq 0} = (B_{n1}B_{n2}\ldots B_{nk_n})_{n \geq 0} \) in \( \lim \longrightarrow S_n \) a graph \( G = (\mathcal{V}, \mathcal{E}) \) with vertices \( \mathcal{V} \) and directed edges \( \mathcal{E} \). We think of the graph \( G \) as organized in rows of horizontally ordered vertices: in the \( n \)th row, \( n \geq 0 \), we have for every letter appearing in the word \( \omega_n \) a corresponding vertex, i.e., \( \mathcal{V} = \{(n, j) \mid n \geq 0, 1 \leq j \leq k_n\} \). Edges connect certain vertices from row \( n \) to vertices in row \( n + 1 \), namely, \((n, i), (n + 1, j)\) \( \in \mathcal{E} \) if and only if \( B_{ni} \) is a predecessor of \( B_{n+1,j} \) and in the course of \( \gamma_{n+1} \) that maps \( \omega_{n+1} \) to \( \omega_n \) the belt disk \( B_{n+1,j} \) is mapped to \( B_{ni} \). Consequently any vertex \((n, i)\) in row \( n \) has at least one successor in row \( n + 1 \), and the vertex \((n, i)\) has a predecessor in row \( n - 1 \) if and only if the letter \( B_{ni} \in D_n \) has a predecessor in \( D_{n-1} \).

The graph \( G \) is used in the proof of the following proposition.

**Proposition 3.1.** For every \((\omega_n)_{n \geq 0} \in \lim \longrightarrow S_n \) there exists a loop \( f \in S(X, x_0) \) such that \( \text{Red}(\sigma(f)) = \text{Red}((\omega_n)_{n \geq 0}) \), i.e., \( \text{ran}(\text{Red} \circ \sigma) = \text{ran}(\text{Red}) \).

**Proof.** Let \((\omega_n)_{n \geq 0} = (B_{n1}B_{n2}\ldots B_{nk_n})_{n \geq 0} \) be a fixed element of \( \lim \longrightarrow S_n \). We will inductively define a sequence of functions \( f_n : [0, 1] \rightarrow H_n, n \geq 0 \), such that \( f_n \) parametrizes the canonical loop associated with \( \omega_n \).

We start with \( n = 0 \), \( \omega_0 = B_{01}B_{02}\ldots B_{0k_0} \), and divide \([0,1]\) into \( 2k_0 - 1 \) subintervals of equal length by the points
for \( t \in [u_{n1}, v_{n1}] \) and \( t \in [v_{n1}, u_{n2}] \). In the equality \( \gamma_{n+1}(\omega_{n+1}) = \omega_n \) we analyze the action of \( \gamma_{n+1} \) on the individual letters of \( \omega_{n+1} \); Figure 4 shows

\[
\begin{array}{cccccc}
\text{\( B_{n+1,1} \)} & \text{\( \cdots \)} & \text{\( B_{n+1,i_1} \)} & \text{\( \cdots \)} & \text{\( B_{n+1,1} \)} & \text{\( \cdots \)} \\
\text{\( \uparrow \)} & \text{\( \uparrow \)} & \text{\( \uparrow \)} & \text{\( \uparrow \)} & \text{\( \uparrow \)} & \text{\( \uparrow \)} \\
\text{\( B_n \)} & \text{\( \cdots \)} & \text{\( B_n \)} & \text{\( \cdots \)} & \text{\( B_n \)} & \text{\( \cdots \)} \\
\text{\( B_{n+1,i_1} \)} & \text{\( \cdots \)} & \text{\( B_{n+1,i_1+1} \)} & \text{\( \cdots \)} & \text{\( B_{n+1,i_2+1} \)} & \text{\( \cdots \)} \\
\text{\( \downarrow \)} & \text{\( \downarrow \)} & \text{\( \downarrow \)} & \text{\( \downarrow \)} & \text{\( \downarrow \)} & \text{\( \downarrow \)} \\
\text{\( B_{n+1,i_2} \)} & \text{\( \cdots \)} & \text{\( B_{n+1,i_2+1} \)} & \text{\( \cdots \)} & \text{\( B_{n+1,i_3} \)} & \text{\( \cdots \)} \\
\end{array}
\]

**Figure 4**

A part of the graph \( G \) we have associated with \( (\omega_n)_{n \geq 0} \) in the beginning of this section and has the following interpretation: \( B_{n+1,1} \) and \( B_{n+1,i_1} \) is the first and last letter in \( \omega_{n+1} \) that is mapped to the first letter \( B_{n1} \) of \( \omega_n \) by \( \gamma_{n+1} \), respectively; \( B_{n+1,i_1+1} \) up to \( B_{n+1,i_2} \) have no predecessor in \( D_n \) and disappear by applying \( \gamma_{n+1} \).

Now we define \( f_{n+1}(t) \) for \( t \in [u_{n1}, v_{n1}] \) analogously to \( f_0 \) in \([0,1]\): divide \([u_{n1}, v_{n1}]\) into \(2i_1 - 1\) subintervals of equal length and define \( f_{n+1} \) in these subintervals alternately to be constant and equal to the midpoint of \( B_{n+1,i} \) for \( 1 \leq i \leq i_1 \), and to be the canonical path of the word \( B_{n+1,i_1}B_{n+1,i_1+1} \) for \( 1 \leq i \leq i_1 - 1 \).

Next, the interval \([v_{n1}, u_{n2}]\) is divided into \(2(i_2 - i_1) + 1\) subintervals. Here \( f_{n+1} \) alternately is equal to the canonical path of the word \( B_{n+1,i}B_{n+1,i+1} \) for \( i_1 \leq i \leq i_2 \), and is constant and equal to the midpoint of \( B_{n+1,i} \) for \( i_1 + 1 \leq i \leq i_2 \).

In the same manner we proceed with the remaining intervals and obtain a loop \( f_{n+1} \) satisfying our requirements.

We compare \( f_n \) with \( f_{n+1} \). For \( 1 \leq i \leq k_n \):

\[
\begin{aligned}
& t \in [u_{ni}, v_{ni}] : \\
& \begin{cases} 
& f_n(t) \quad \cdots \quad \text{constant and equal to the midpoint of } B_{ni} \\
& f_{n+1}(t) \quad \cdots \quad \text{stays in the union of } B_{ni} \text{ and the two stars of } H_n \text{ containing } B_{ni} \text{ in their closure,}
\end{cases}
\end{aligned}
\]

and for \( 1 \leq i \leq k_n - 1 \):

\[
\begin{aligned}
& t \in [v_{ni}, u_{ni,i+1}] : \\
& \begin{cases} 
& f_n(t) \quad \cdots \quad \text{equal to the canonical path} \\
& f_{n+1}(t) \quad \cdots \quad \text{stays in the star of } H_n \text{ containing} \\
& \quad B_{ni} \text{ and } B_{ni,i+1} \text{ in its closure.}
\end{cases}
\end{aligned}
\]

Summing up we obtain \( \|f_n - f_{n+1}\|_\infty \leq \frac{2}{n} \) where \( \| \cdot \|_\infty \) denotes the maximum norm for \( t \in [0,1] \). Consequently \( f_n \) converges for \( n \to \infty \) uniformly to a continuous \( f : [0,1] \to X \).

By construction we have \( f_m(u_{ni}) \in B_{ni} \), \( 1 \leq i \leq k_n \), for all \( m \geq n \) and thus also \( f(u_{ni}) \in B_{ni} \), \( 1 \leq i \leq k_n \). This means that \( \sigma_n(f) \) contains at least all letters appearing in the word \( \omega_n \) in the proper order, but it
may happen that $\sigma_n(f)$ contains further letters from $D_n$ between the $B_{ni}$ and some of the $B_{ni}$ appear more than once. To illustrate this we consider the interval $[u_{ni}, u_{n,i+1}]$ (see also Figure 5): let $St_1$ and $St_2$ be the two stars containing $B_{ni}$ in their closures. $f_{n+1}$ and all $f_m$ with $m \geq n+1$ stay for $t \in (u_{ni}, u_{n,i+1})$ in the interior of the (simply connected) union of the closures of two stars $\text{int}(\overline{St_1} \cup \overline{St_2})$ of $H_n$ (interior as a subset of $H_n$). This implies that $f = \lim_{m \to \infty} f_m$ stays in the union of the closed stars $\overline{St_1} \cup \overline{St_2}$. Hence, $\sigma_n(f \upharpoonright [u_{ni}, u_{n,i+1}]) = B_{ni}Q_j \ldots Q_jB_{n,i+1}$, $l \geq 0$, where the $Q_j$ are contained in the set of belts $\{Q_1, \ldots, Q_L\}$ associated with the stars $St_1$ and $St_2$. However, since $f([u_{ni}, u_{n,i+1}]) \subseteq \overline{St_1} \cup \overline{St_2}$, all the possibly occurring letters $Q_j \ldots Q_j$ cancel out in the reduction process and we obtain $\text{Red}_n(\sigma_n(f \upharpoonright [u_{ni}, u_{n,i+1}])) = B_{ni}B_{n,i+1}$ and, hence, altogether $\text{Red}_n(\sigma_n(f)) = \text{Red}_n(\omega_n)$. 

Theorem 2.8 implies that $\pi(X, x_0)$ can be considered as a subgroup of $\lim \leftarrow G_n$. Now we characterize the elements of this subgroup and thus describe $\pi(X, x_0)$.

**Theorem 3.2.** An element $(\omega_n)_{n \geq 0}$ of $\lim \leftarrow G_n$ is in $\text{ran}(\varphi) = \varphi(\pi(X, x_0))$ and therefore represents an element of $\pi(X, x_0)$ if and only if for all $k \geq 0$ the sequence $(\gamma_{nk}(\omega_n))_{n \geq k}$ is eventually constant.

In what follows $n_k$ is an index for which $\gamma_{nk}(\omega_n) = \gamma_{nk}(\omega_{nk})$ for all $n \geq n_k$.

**Remark 3.3.** Since the Freudenthal compactification of a locally finite connected graph is a metrizable one-dimensional continuum this result contains the main result of [10] (see [10, Theorem 15]) as a special case.
Recall that $\gamma_{nk}$ is the composition $\gamma_{k+1} \circ \gamma_{k+2} \circ \ldots \circ \gamma_n : S_n \to S_k$. Analogously we define $\delta_{nk}$ to be the composition of the corresponding $\delta_i$’s.

The proof of Theorem 3.2 runs along the same lines as in the case of the Sierpiński gasket [1, Section 3.2]. However, in order to make the presentation self contained we recall some of the details.

Let $P_1P_2 \ldots P_m, Q_1Q_2 \ldots Q_k$ be two words over some alphabet. We write $P_1P_2 \ldots P_m \preceq Q_1Q_2 \ldots Q_k$ if and only if there exists $\alpha : \{1, \ldots, m\} \to \{1, \ldots, k\}$, $\alpha$ injective and order preserving, such that $P_i = Q_{\alpha(i)}$ for all $i \in \{1, \ldots, m\}$.

**Lemma 3.4.** Let $\omega_n, \omega'_n \in S_n$. Then

1. $\text{Red}_n(\omega_n) \preceq \omega_n$,
2. $\omega_n \preceq \omega'_n$ implies $\gamma_{nk}(\omega_n) \preceq \gamma_{nk}(\omega'_n)$ for all $k \leq n$, 
3. if $(\omega_k)_{k \geq 0} \in \lim S_n$ then $\gamma_{nk}(\omega_n) \preceq \gamma_{nk+1}(\omega_{n+1})$ for all $k \leq n$.

**Proof.** The assertions (1) and (2) follow from the definitions of $\text{Red}_n$ and $\gamma_{nk}$ by direct calculation; (3) is a consequence of (1) and (2). \qed

We want to point out that by means of Proposition 3.1 the remaining part of the proof of Theorem 3.2 can be performed purely in terms of words in $G_n$ and $S_n$ and does not have to deal with loops in $(X, x_0)$. It consists merely in collecting the facts that we have proved up to now.

**Proof of Theorem 3.2.** We start with proving the sufficiency of the given condition. Put $\bar{\omega}_k = \gamma_{nk}(\omega_n)$ which is well defined for $n \geq n_k, k \geq 0$, where $n_k$ is defined after Theorem 3.2. We show that

1. $(\bar{\omega}_k)_{k \geq 0} \in \lim S_n$ and
2. $\text{Red}(\bar{\omega}_k)_{k \geq 0} = (\omega_n)_{n \geq 0}$.

For $k \geq 1$ and $n \geq \max\{n_k, n_{k-1}\}$ we obtain $\gamma_k(\bar{\omega}_k) = \gamma_k(\gamma_{nk}(\omega_n)) = \gamma_{nk+1}(\omega_n) = \bar{\omega}_{k-1}$. This shows (i).

Next we prove for $\omega_n \in G_n$ that $\delta_{nk}(\omega_n) = \text{Red}_k \circ \gamma_{nk}(\omega_n)$: by (2.1) we get $\delta_i \circ \text{Red}_i = \text{Red}_{i-1} \circ \gamma_i$ for all $i \geq 1$. Iterated application of this identity leads immediately to the claimed relation. Using this property, for $k \geq 0$ and $n \geq n_k$, we infer $\text{Red}_k(\bar{\omega}_k) = \text{Red}_k(\gamma_{nk}(\omega_n)) = \delta_{nk}(\omega_n) = \omega_k$, which proves (ii).

Due to Proposition 3.1 we can find $f \in S(X, x_0)$ such that $\text{Red}(\sigma(f)) = \text{Red}(\bar{\omega}_k)_{k \geq 0} = (\omega_n)_{n \geq 0}$ and thus, using Theorem 2.8, we get

$$(\omega_n)_{n \geq 0} = \text{Red}(\sigma(f)) = \varphi([f]).$$

Now we prove the necessity of the condition. Suppose $(\omega_n)_{n \geq 0} \in \text{ran}(\varphi)$. Since by Theorem 2.8 $\text{ran}(\varphi) = \text{ran}(\text{Red} \circ \sigma)$ there exists $f \in S(X, x_0)$ with
Red(σ(f)) = (ω_n)_{n \geq 0}. Then for all k ≥ 0 and all n ≥ k we have
\[ σ_k(f) = γ_{nk}(σ_n(f)) ≥ γ_{nk}(Red_n(σ_n(f))) = γ_{nk}(ω_n) \]
where we used (1) and (2) of Lemma 3.4. By (3) of Lemma 3.4 we get
\[ γ_{nk}(ω_n) ≤ γ_{n+1,k}(ω_{n+1}) ≤ \ldots ≤ σ_k(f), \]
hence, \((γ_{nk}(ω_n))_{n \geq k}\) is eventually constant.

This completes the proof. □

For a word ω let |ω| denote the number of letters of ω and we call |ω| the length of ω.

In the following we want to point out that by Theorem 3.2 we do not only represent an element \([f] \in π(X,x_0)\) by the sequence Red(σ(f)) of group words. Indeed, this theorem also yields a unique representative of \([f]\) at the semigroup level which corresponds to a distinguished loop \(f^* \in [f]\) that is minimal in the sense that
\[ |σ_k(f^*)| = \min\{|σ_k(g)| : g \in [f]\} \]
for all \(k \in \mathbb{N}\). Intuitively this means that \(f^*\) hits a belt disk of level \(k\) only if this is really necessary for a loop to belong to the homotopy class \([f]\). In the proof of Proposition 3.5 we will construct this loop \(f^*\). Moreover, we will relate \(f^*\) explicitly to the stabilization condition in Theorem 3.2. For this purpose we set
\[ \sigma_k([f]) := \lim_{n \to \infty} γ_{nk}(Red_n(σ_n(f))). \]
This is well defined as this limit exists due to Theorem 3.2 and since Red_n(σ_n(f)) does not depend on the representative of the homotopy class \([f]\).

The sequence \((\bar{ω}_n)_{n \geq 0} := (γ_{nk}(ω_n))_{k \geq 0}\) with \(n_k\) as defined after the statement of Theorem 3.2 is called the stabilized sequence of \((ω_n)_{n \geq 0} \in φ(π(X,x_0))\). Let \((\bar{ω}_n)_{n \geq 0}, (\bar{ω}_n')_{n \geq 0}\) be two stabilized sequences. The stabilized product is defined by
\[ (\bar{ω}_n)_{n \geq 0} * (\bar{ω}_n')_{n \geq 0} := (Red_n(\bar{ω}_n \cdot \bar{ω}_n'))_{n \geq 0}. \]
Thus the product of two stabilized sequences is formed by concatenation and reduction at every level followed by stabilization.

We collect some properties of \(f^*\) and \(σ_k\).

**Proposition 3.5.** For an arbitrary loop \(f\) in \((X,x_0)\) we have:

1. \((σ_n([f]))_{n \geq 0}\) is an element of \(\varprojlim S_n\).
(2) There exists \( f^* \in [f] \) such that \(|\sigma_k(f^*)| = \min\{|\sigma_k(g)| : g \in [f]\} \) for all \( k \in \mathbb{N} \). Indeed, we even get that \( \sigma_k([f]) \preceq \sigma_k(f^*) \preceq \sigma_k(g) \) holds for each \( g \in [f] \).

(3) For any two loops \( f, g \in S(X, x_0) \) we have

\[
(\sigma_n([fg]))_{n \geq 0} = (\sigma_n([f]))_{n \geq 0} * (\sigma_n([g]))_{n \geq 0},
\]

where the product on the right hand side is the stabilized product.

Remark 3.6. (a) Note that the inequality \( \sigma_k([f]) \preceq \sigma_k(f^*) \) in Proposition 3.5 (2) can be strict. This is due to the fact that \( \sigma_k([f]) \) can be incomplete in a sense discussed after the proof of the proposition.

(b) By Proposition 3.5 (3) the stabilized product can be interpreted as the group operation \( \ast \) on \( \varphi(\pi(X, x_0)) \) in terms of the stabilized sequences. This justifies that we use the same symbol \( \ast \) for this operation.

Proof. (1) is property (i) in the proof of Theorem 3.2. Now we prove (2). To construct the loop \( f^* \) we proceed in the same way as in the proof of Proposition 3.1. Let \( f_k \) be the canonical loop corresponding to \( \sigma_k([f]) \) with parametrization on the intervals \([u_{ki}, v_{ki}]\) as specified in the proof of Proposition 3.1. Then \( f_k \) converges uniformly to a loop \( f^* \) in \( (X, x_0) \) and we obtain \( \sigma_k(f_k) \preceq \sigma_k(f^*) \). By construction of \( f_k \) we have \( \sigma_k(f_k) = \sigma_k([f]) \) and so we infer \( \sigma_k([f]) \preceq \sigma_k(f^*) \). Finally, we have to prove that \( \sigma_k(f^*) \preceq \sigma_k(g) \) holds for all \( g \in [f] \). For \( g \in [f], i \geq 0 \) and sufficiently large \( n \) we have

\[
\sigma_{k+i}(g) = \gamma_{n,k+i}(\sigma_n(g)) \geq \gamma_{n,k+i}(\text{Red}_n(\sigma_n(g))) = \sigma_{k+i}([f]) = \sigma_{k+i}(f_{k+i}).
\]

Let \( \sigma_k([f]) =: P_1 \ldots P_L \). For any additional letter \( Q \) that might occur between \( P_r \) and \( P_{r+1} \) in \( \sigma_k(f^*) \) there exists a sequence of letters \( Q_i \) occurring in \( \sigma_{k+i}(f_{k+i}) \) between the level \( k + i \) successors \( P_{r,i} \) and \( P_{r+1,i} \) of \( P_r \) and \( P_{r+1} \), respectively, such that the distance between \( Q_i \) and \( Q \) tends to 0 for \( i \to \infty \) (here we used again that \( f_k \to f^* \) uniformly; recall that letters are belts). Since \( \sigma_{k+i}(g) \preceq \sigma_{k+i}(f_{k+i}) \) the letter \( Q_i \) also appears in \( \sigma_{k+i}(g) \) between \( P_{r,i} \) and \( P_{r+1,i} \). Therefore, \( g \) traverses all the belts \( Q_i \) and thus also the belt \( Q \) after passing \( P_r \) and before passing \( P_{r+1} \) and we obtain

\[
P_1 \ldots P_r Q P_{r+1} \ldots P_L \preceq \sigma_k(g).
\]

In this way we can argue inductively to prove that each letter occurring in \( \sigma_k(f^*) \) also occurs in \( \sigma_k(g) \) in the respective position. This yields \( \sigma_k(f^*) \preceq \sigma_k(g) \).

(3) is a direct consequence of the definition of the stabilized product. One just has to use the fact that \( \text{Red}_n(\sigma_n([f])) = \text{Red}_n(\sigma_n(f)) \) which is item (ii) in the proof of Theorem 3.2. \( \square \)
An element \((w_n)_{n \geq 0} \in \lim S_n\) is called complete if the corresponding graph \(G\) defined at the beginning of the present section has the property that any irrational cut in the horizontally ordered set of branches converges to a point that is not contained in a belt disk. As in [1, Section 3] one can prove that the complete elements in \(\lim S_n\) are exactly the elements in the range of \(\sigma\), i.e., the complete elements can be represented in the form \((\sigma_k(g))_{k \geq 0}\) for some \(g \in S(X, x_0)\).

Note that in general \((\sigma_k(f))_{k \geq 0}\) is not complete and we only have \(\overline{\sigma}_k([f]) \leq \sigma_k(f^*)\). Indeed, \((\sigma_k(f^*))_{k \geq 0}\) is the completion of \((\overline{\sigma}_k([f]))_{k \geq 0}\) in the sense that it is the minimal (w.r.t. “\(\leq\)”) complete element of \(\lim S_n\) containing \((\overline{\sigma}_k([f]))_{k \geq 0}\).

In the following example we consider a loop \(f\) where \((\sigma_k(f))_{k \geq 0}\) is incomplete. This situation occurs if there is a sequence of “holes” in the space \(X\) that converges to a point of a given belt. This constellation cannot be avoided for certain \(X\). In particular, each handle body construction for a bad set \(X\) (in the sense of [4]) gives rise to loops \(f\) with incomplete \((\overline{\sigma}_k([f]))_{k \geq 0}\).

**Example 3.7.** Let \(X\) be the one-dimensional space depicted in Figure 6 and let \(x_0\) be the base point. Note that the “holes” in \(X\) accumulate at \(x_2\). Moreover, we choose the handle body construction at each level \(k\) in a way as indicated in Figure 6. In particular, the belt \(B_2(k)\) contains the point \(x_2\). We choose \(f\) to be the loop that traverses the triangle \(x_1x_2x_3x_1\) once.

![Figure 6. An illustration of a situation that leads to an incomplete sequence \((\overline{\sigma}_k([f]))_{k \geq 0}\).](image)
The next example is devoted to the Sierpiński carpet.

**Example 3.8.** The well-known Sierpiński carpet $M$ is depicted on the left hand side of Figure 7. On the right hand side of this figure a handle body construction for this set is visualized. This construction can be performed in an analogous way at each approximation level and can be used to give a description of the fundamental group of $M$ in terms of words (for the Sierpiński gasket such a description is detailed in [1]).

![Figure 7. The Sierpiński carpet (left) and its handle body approximation $H_2$ (right).](image)

## 4. Cancellation

As before let $X$ be a metrizable one-dimensional continuum and $x_0 \in X$. In this section we collect some properties of the multiplication of elements of $\lim G_n$ and their corresponding stabilized sequences. The results split into several lemmas, in the sequel we will mainly use Lemma 4.3.

Let $P_L \ldots P_1$ and $Q_1 \ldots Q_M$ be two elements of $G_m$. We consider the possible reductions in the product $(P_L \ldots P_1) \ast (Q_1 \ldots Q_M)$. By definition $P_1 = Q_1$ is equal to the belt containing the base point $x_0$. $P_L \ldots P_1$ as well as $Q_1 \ldots Q_M$ are already reduced. Thus reduction is only possible at the point where the two words are concatenated. The group multiplication “$\ast$” on $G_m$ can naturally be extended to subwords $w, w'$ of group words provided that the last letter of $w$ lies in the same star as the first letter of $w'$. We will make use of this extension throughout the remaining part of the paper. Also in this setting the operation “$\ast$” means concatenation followed by reduction.

We start with the following *reduction algorithm* for the group operation “$\ast$”. Note that with this extended notation for $\ast$ we may write

$$(P_L \ldots P_1) \ast (Q_1 \ldots Q_M) = (P_L \ldots P_1) \ast (Q_2 \ldots Q_M).$$

Now we have to deal with the following cases:
(i) The word \( P_1 \ldots P_1Q_2 \ldots Q_M \) is already reduced.

(ii) \( P_1, Q_2, Q_3 \) lie in the same star. This is impossible because, since \( P_1 = Q_1 \), it would imply that \( Q_1, Q_2, Q_3 \) is in the same star which contradicts the fact that \( Q_1 \ldots Q_M \) is reduced.

(iii) \( P_2, P_1, Q_2 \) lie in the same star. Then

\[
(P_L \ldots P_1) \ast (Q_1 \ldots Q_M) = (P_L \ldots P_2) \ast (Q_2 \ldots Q_M)
\]

(a) If \( P_2 \neq Q_2 \) then \( P_2, P_2, Q_2 \) and \( P_2, Q_2, Q_3 \) are not in the same star since, otherwise, \( P_1, P_2, P_3 \) or \( Q_1, Q_2, Q_3 \) would be in the same star which is false. Hence, in this case

\[
(P_L \ldots P_1) \ast (Q_1 \ldots Q_M) = P_L \ldots P_2Q_2 \ldots Q_M.
\]

(b) If \( P_2 = Q_2 \) then we have

\[
(P_L \ldots P_1) \ast (Q_1 \ldots Q_M) = (P_L \ldots P_2) \ast (Q_2 \ldots Q_M)
\]

and we may proceed iteratively in the same manner as before.

This algorithm shows that essential cancelation is only possible if a suffix of the first word is a mirror image of a prefix of the second word, i.e., if \( Q_1 = P_1, Q_2 = P_2, \) and so on.

We make this precise in the following lemma.

**Lemma 4.1.** Let \( P_L \ldots P_1, Q_1 \ldots Q_M \in G_m \) then the operation \( \ast \) is given by the following procedure: Take \( \ell \) maximal such that \( P_1 \ldots P_\ell = Q_1 \ldots Q_\ell \). Then

\[
(P_L \ldots P_1) \ast (Q_1 \ldots Q_M) = \begin{cases} 
P_L \ldots P_\ell P_\ell+1Q_\ell+1 \ldots Q_M, & \text{if } \ell = 1 \text{ and } P_2, Q_1, \\
& Q_2 \text{ do not lie in the same star,} \\
& 2 \leq \ell < \min\{L, M\}, \\
& Q_\ell \text{ lie in the same star, or} \\
P_L \ldots P_\ell Q_\ell \ldots Q_M, & \text{if } \ell = M, \\
& \text{if } \ell = L.
\end{cases}
\]

The proof of this lemma follows immediately from the above considerations.

Now we want to use the formula in Lemma 4.1 as a definition of an operation which is also defined for semigroup words. Indeed, we define a new operation \( \circlearrowright : S_m \times S_m \rightarrow S_m \) as in Lemma 4.1 with one exception: if \( 2 \leq \ell < \min\{L, M\} \) it may happen for \( P_L \ldots P_1, Q_1 \ldots Q_M \in S_m \) that \( P_{\ell+1} \)}
is not a neighbor of \( Q_{t+1} \), thus we define in this case
\[
(P_L \ldots P_\gamma) \odot (Q_1 \ldots Q_M) = \begin{cases} 
P_L \ldots P_{t+1} P_t Q_{t+1} \ldots Q_M, & \text{if } P_{t+1} \text{ is not a neighbor of } Q_{t+1}, 
P_L \ldots P_{t+1} Q_{t+1} \ldots Q_M, & \text{if } P_{t+1} \text{ a neighbor of } Q_{t+1}. 
\end{cases}
\]

Note that the operation \( \odot \) corresponds to concatenation followed by reduction on the interface. Moreover, \( \odot \) agrees with “*” on \( G_n \).

We now relate this operation to the stabilized product.

**Lemma 4.2.** Let \( (\tilde{\omega}_n')_{n \geq 0}, (\tilde{\omega}_n'')_{n \geq 0} \) be two stabilized sequences and let
\[
(\tilde{\omega}_n)_{n \geq 0} = (\tilde{\omega}_n')_{n \geq 0} * (\tilde{\omega}_n'')_{n \geq 0}
\]
be their stabilized product. Then on each level \( k \in \mathbb{N} \) we have
\[
(4.1) \quad \bar{\omega}_k \succeq \bar{\omega}_k' \odot \bar{\omega}_k''.
\]

In terms of the mapping \( \bar{\sigma}_k \) and loops \( f, g \in S(X, x_0) \) this reads as follows:
\[
\bar{\sigma}_k([fg]) \geq \bar{\sigma}_k([f]) \odot \bar{\sigma}_k([g])
\]

**Proof.** Let \( \bar{\omega}_k' = P_L \ldots P_1 \) and \( \bar{\omega}_k'' = Q_1 \ldots Q_M \), let \( n \) be a “stabilizing index” satisfying \( \gamma_{nk}(\text{Red}_n(\bar{\omega}_n')) = \omega_k, \gamma_{nk}(\text{Red}_n(\bar{\omega}_n'')) = \bar{\omega}_k' \), \( \gamma_{nk}(\text{Red}_n(\bar{\omega}_n'')) = \bar{\omega}_k'' \). Moreover, let \( p = \text{Red}_n(\bar{\omega}_n''), q = \text{Red}_n(\bar{\omega}_n'') \) be the reduced words of the sequences at level \( n \).

Therefore, to show (4.1) we have to prove that \( \gamma_{nk}(p \ast q) \succeq \gamma_{nk}(p) \odot \gamma_{nk}(q) \).

Let \( s \) be the maximal word with the property that \( p = rs \) and \( q = \bar{s}t \) (where \( \bar{s} \) is the reversed word of \( s \)). In the following we work out the case \( 1 < |s| < \min\{|p|, |q|\} \), the remaining cases can be checked easily.

According to Lemma 4.1 we have
\[
(4.2) \quad \gamma_{nk}(p \ast q) = \gamma_{nk}(rt) = \gamma_{nk}(r) \cdot \gamma_{nk}(t).
\]

Moreover,
\[
\gamma_{nk}(p) \odot \gamma_{nk}(q) = \gamma_{nk}(r) \gamma_{nk}(s) \odot \gamma_{nk}(\bar{s}) \gamma_{nk}(t) = \gamma_{nk}(r) \odot \gamma_{nk}(t).
\]

For the last equality note that by (4.2) \( \gamma_{nk}(r) \gamma_{nk}(t) \) is an admissible word, hence, in \( \gamma_{nk}(r) \gamma_{nk}(s) \odot \gamma_{nk}(\bar{s}) \gamma_{nk}(t) \) no letter from the part \( \gamma_{nk}(s) \) and its reverse remain.

Summing up this means that our assertion is equivalent to \( \gamma_{nk}(r) \cdot \gamma_{nk}(t) \succeq \gamma_{nk}(r) \odot \gamma_{nk}(t) \), which is obvious. \( \square \)

We use Lemma 4.2 to prove the following inequality for the lengths of stabilized products.
Lemma 4.3. Let \( f, g \) be loops in \((X, x_0)\). Then we have

\[
|\sigma_k([fg])| \geq |\sigma_k([f])| - |\sigma_k([g])|.
\]

Proof. Due to Lemma 4.2 and the definition of \( \ast \) we have

\[
|\sigma_k([fg])| \geq |\sigma_k([f]) \ast \sigma_k([g])| \geq |\sigma_k([f])| - |\sigma_k([g])|.
\]

\( \Box \)

5. Continuity of homomorphisms

As before let \( X \) be a metrizable one-dimensional continuum and \( x_0 \in X \). In this section we provide a new proof of a result of Eda [11, Theorem 1.1] which states that each homomorphism \( h \) from the fundamental group of the Hawaiian Earring \( E \) to \( \pi(X, x_0) \) is induced by a continuous map from \( E \) to \( X \). The methods we have developed in the previous sections enable us to give an almost purely algebro-combinatorial proof of this result (though topological intuitions are helpful to understand the idea). Before we go into details we give an outline of our strategy.

We employ the following notation. Let \( o \in E \) be the point contained in all loops of \( E \) and \( C_n \) the elements of \( \pi(E,o) \) associated with the \( n \)-th largest loop of \( E \), \( n \in \mathbb{N} \). First one has to understand better the structure of a group homomorphism \( h : \pi(E,o) \to F \) (in most cases \( F = \pi(X,x_0) \) is the fundamental group of the space \( X \)) defined on the fundamental group \( \pi(E,o) \) of \( E \).

Many auxiliary results (from Lemma 5.1 to Proposition 5.4) are devoted to the observation that the (algebraic) property of \( h \) to be a homomorphism has remarkable consequences which can be interpreted as continuity properties of \( h \). An important role is played by a theorem of Higman (Lemma 5.1) which states that \( h : \pi(E,o) \to F \) does not depend on small circles if \( F \) is free, \textit{i.e.}, all \( C_n \) with \( n \) sufficiently large and, even more, all admissible infinite compositions of such \( C_n \)’s have trivial image. As a consequence (due to Eda, cf. Lemma 5.2) each homomorphism \( h : \pi(E,o) \to \pi(X, x_0) \) is uniquely determined by its values on the loops \( C_n \). From this we derive as a byproduct Theorem 5.3, expressing that \( h \) is compatible with the involved inverse group limit. For the remaining parts Proposition 5.4 is crucial. It asserts that for elements \( a \in \pi(E,o) \) which are small in the above sense the image \( h(a) \) is also uniformly small in an appropriate sense, namely: there is a finite upper bound for the number of letters in \( \sigma_m(h(a)) \) if \( a \) is restricted to the condition \( \text{Red}_{n_0}(\sigma_{n_0}(a)) = e \) for sufficiently large \( n_0 = n_0(m) \). A main tool in the proof of Proposition 5.4 is Lemma 4.3.
The continuity interpretation from the preceding paragraph suggests that, for \( n \to \infty \), \( h(C_n) \) tends to the homotopy class of the constant loop in a specific way. Loosely speaking, the imagined picture behind is that for large \( n \) the minimal representative \( h_n \) of the homotopy class \( h(C_n) \) can be decomposed into a path \( t \) from \( x_0 \) to some point \( x^* \), followed by a small loop \( y_n \) based at \( x^* \) and then the converse path \( t^{-1} \) of \( t \), i.e., \( h_n = ty_n t^{-1} \), where the path \( t \) does not depend on \( n \). The technical effort to make this intuition rigorous is notable and requires the considerations from Proposition 5.5 to 5.9. Proposition 5.5 essentially shows that, given any approximation level, for large enough \( n \) the digital representation of \( y_n \) at this level requires not more than one letter, so, indeed, \( y_n \) is small. Proposition 5.7 takes care of the fact that for increasing \( n \) the possible variation in the combinatorial fine structure is small and completely under control. Proposition 5.8 guarantees in a combinatorial way the existence of \( t \) and, as a consequence, of \( x^* \). Proposition 5.9 shows that for \( n \to \infty \) the loops \( y_n \) based at \( x^* \) tend to the constant loop.

With these auxiliary tools it is more or less straightforward to prove Theorem 5.10. Given any homomorphism \( h : \pi(E, o) \to \pi(X, x_0) \) consider the point \( x^* \) and the loops \( y_n \) according to the above construction. Appropriate parametrizations of \( C_n \) and \( y_n \) produce a continuous mapping \( \psi : E \to X \) which induces a homomorphism \( \psi_* : \pi(E, o) \to \pi(X, x^*) \). With this homomorphism we finally obtain \( h = \chi_t \circ \psi_* \) where \( \chi_t : \pi(X, x^*) \to \pi(X, x_0) \), \([f] \mapsto [tf^{-1} t^{-1}]\).

Now we start to pursue the program outlined so far. Let \( W_n \) be the set of subwords of elements of \( S_n \) and define \( \lim_{\leftarrow} W_n \) with bonding maps defined analogous to \( \gamma_{nk} \). With no risk of confusion, these maps will again be called \( \gamma_{nk} \). Recall that \( |\omega| \) denotes the number of letters of the word \( \omega \) and \( \bar{\omega} \) its reversed word; \( \Lambda \) is the empty word. Moreover, in each group we denote the neutral element by \( e \).

In the following we will use a basic result of Higman [14, Theorem 1] (see also Eda [11, Lemma 3.1]).

**Lemma 5.1.** Let \( F \) be an arbitrary free group and \( F_n \) be the (free) subgroup of \( \pi(E, o) \) generated by the \( n \) largest loops \( C_1, \ldots, C_n \) of the Hawaiian Earring. For each homomorphism \( h : \pi(E, o) \to F \) there exist \( k_0 \in \mathbb{N} \) and a homomorphism \( \tilde{h} \) from \( F_{k_0} \) to \( F \) such that \( h = \tilde{h} \circ q_{k_0} \) where \( q_{k_0} \) is the canonical epimorphism of \( \pi(E, o) \) onto \( F_{k_0} \).
Next we mention the following result of Eda [11, Lemma 3.15]. It is an immediate consequence of Lemma 5.1 and the fact that \( \pi(X, x_0) \rightarrow \overline{\pi}(X, x_0) \) (see [12]).

**Lemma 5.2.** Let \((X, x_0)\) be a metrizable one-dimensional continuum. If two homomorphisms \(h\) and \(h'\) from \(\pi(E, o)\) to \(\pi(X, x_0)\) coincide on all \(C_n\) then they are equal. Consequently, \(\text{ran}(h)\) is finitely generated if and only if the kernel of \(h\) contains almost all \(C_n, n \in \mathbb{N}\).

Recall that any element in \(\pi(E, o)\) can be represented in the form \((C_{\alpha(i)})_{i \in I}\) where \((I, \leq)\) is a countable linearly ordered set and \(\alpha : I \rightarrow \mathbb{N}\) satisfies that \(\alpha^{-1}(n)\) is a finite subset of \(I\) for all \(n \in \mathbb{N}\) (cf. [2]).

Before we state our next result which can be interpreted as an “infinite homomorphism property” we have to define infinite products in \(\limarrow G_n\).

Let \((I, \leq)\) be a countable linearly ordered set and \(((\omega_{i\ell})_{\ell \geq 0})_{i \in I}\) be a family (indexed by \(I\)) of elements in \(\limarrow G_n\) with the property that for all \(\ell \geq 0\) there exists a finite subset \(I_\ell\) of \(I\) such that for all \(i \in I \setminus I_\ell\) we have \(\omega_{i\ell} = e\). In this case we define

\[
* \left( \omega_{i\ell} \right)_{\ell \geq 0} = \left( * \left( \omega_{i\ell} \right)_{\ell \geq 0} \right).
\]

Note that since \(\omega_{i,\ell-1} \neq e\) implies \(\omega_{i\ell} \neq e\) we have

\[
\delta_\ell \left( * \left( \omega_{i\ell} \right)_{\ell \geq 0} \right) = * \left( \omega_{i,\ell-1} \right) = * \left( \omega_{i,\ell-1} \right),
\]

hence, the product is an element of \(\limarrow G_n\).

If \((\omega_{i\ell})_{\ell \geq 0}\) lies in \(\varphi(\pi(X, x_0))\) for all \(i \in I\) and also the product \(* \left( \omega_{i\ell} \right)_{\ell \geq 0}\) is in \(\varphi(\pi(X, x_0))\) we can extend this notion of an infinite product also to the corresponding elements in \(\pi(X, x_0)\).

**Theorem 5.3.** Let \((X, x_0)\) be a metrizable one-dimensional continuum. Then for each homomorphism \(h\) from \(\pi(E, o)\) to \(\pi(X, x_0)\) and for each element \((C_{\alpha(i)})_{i \in I} \in \pi(E, o)\) the product \(\left( i \in I \right) * h(C_{\alpha(i)})\) is a well-defined element in \(\pi(X, x_0)\) and we have

\[
h((C_{\alpha(i)})_{i \in I}) = * \left( i \in I \right) h(C_{\alpha(i)}).
\]

**Proof.** We have to show that the product \((\nu_{i})_{\ell \geq 0} := * \left( i \in I \right) \varphi(h(C_{\alpha(i)}))\) is well-defined in \(\limarrow G_n\). For this purpose we set \((\omega_{n\ell})_{\ell \geq 0} = \varphi(h(C_n))\) for each \(n \in \mathbb{N}\). For \(\ell \in \mathbb{N}\) let \(p_\ell : \limarrow G_n \rightarrow G_\ell\) denote the canonical projection in the projective limit and \(h_\ell = p_\ell \circ \varphi \circ h : \pi(E, o) \rightarrow G_\ell\). Lemma 5.1 applied to \(h_\ell\) implies that there exists \(k_\ell\) with the following property: For
Proposition 5.4. Let \( J, \leq \) and \( \beta : J \to \mathbb{N} \) with \( |\beta^{-1}(k)| < \infty \) we have
\[
h_\ell((C_{\beta(j)})_{j \in J}) = h_\ell((C_{\beta(j)})_{j \in J}) = \ast h_\ell(C_{\beta(j)})
\]
where \( J_\ell := \bigcup_{k < k_\ell} \beta^{-1}(k) \). In particular, we get for all \( k \geq k_\ell \) that \( \omega_{k_\ell} = h_\ell(C_k) = h_\ell(e) = e \), and thus
\[
h_\ell((C_{\alpha(i)})_{i \in I_\ell}) = h_\ell((C_{\alpha(i)})_{i \in I_\ell}) = \ast h_\ell(C_{\alpha(i)}) = \ast \omega_{\alpha(i)}
\]
with \( I_\ell := \bigcup_{k < k_\ell} \alpha^{-1}(k) \). Now we obtain \( v_\ell = p_\ell(\ast (\omega_{\alpha(i)})^n_{i \in I_\ell}) = \ast \omega_{\alpha(i)} = h_\ell((C_{\alpha(i)})_{i \in I_\ell}) \) which shows that \( (v_\ell)_{\ell \geq 0} \) as an (infinite) product is well defined in \( \lim \downarrow G_n \) and moreover
\[
\ast \varphi(h(C_{\alpha(i)})) = (v_\ell)_{\ell \geq 0} = (h_\ell((C_{\alpha(i)})_{i \in I_\ell}))_{\ell \geq 0} = \varphi(h(C_{\alpha(i)})_{i \in I_\ell}).
\]
Transferring this equality back to \( \pi(X, x_0) \) with \( \varphi^{-1} \) we are done. \( \square \)

Let \( m \in \mathbb{N} \) be fixed. The following proposition shows that the number of level \( m \) letters in words corresponding to \( h(a) \in \pi(X, x_0) \) is uniformly bounded provided that \( a \in \pi(E, o) \) contains only loops which are sufficiently small.

**Proposition 5.4 (cf. [11, Lemma 3.11]).** Let \( h : \pi(E, o) \to \pi(X, x_0) \) be a homomorphism. Then for all \( m \in \mathbb{N} \) there exists \( n_0 = n_0(m) \) such that
\[
\sup\{|\varphi_m(h(a))| : a \in \pi(E, o) \text{ with } \text{Red}_n(\varphi_m(a)) = e\} < \infty.
\]

**Proof.** The proof is done by contradiction. Suppose there exists \( m \in \mathbb{N} \) such that for all \( n \in \mathbb{N} \)
\[
\sup\{|\varphi_m(h(a))| : a \in \pi(E, o) \text{ with } \text{Red}_n(\varphi_m(a)) = e\} = \infty.
\]
Then we may choose \( a_0, a_1, \ldots \in \pi(E, o) \) in a way that for each \( i \in \mathbb{N} \) we have
\[
(i) \text{ Red}_i(\varphi_i(a_i)) = e, \\
(ii) |\varphi_m(h(a_i))| > |\varphi_m(h(a_{i-1}))|.
\]
Note that because of (i) and Theorem 3.2 for an arbitrary sequence \( 0 \leq j_0 < j_1 < j_2 < \ldots \) the product \( a_{j_0}a_{j_1}a_{j_2} \ldots \) is an element of \( \pi(E, o) \).

Let \( i_0 = 1, \ell_0 = 1 \) and for \( r \geq 0 \) define \( i_{r+1} \) and \( \ell_{r+1} \) inductively in the following way. Suppose \( i_0, \ldots, i_r \) and \( \ell_0, \ldots, \ell_r \) are already chosen then there exists \( i_{r+1} > i_r \) such that
\[
(iii) 2|\varphi_m(h(a_{i_0} \ldots a_{i_r}))| < |\varphi_m(h(a_{i_{r+1}}))| \text{ (by (ii))}, \\
(iv) \text{ Red}_{\ell_r}(\varphi_{\ell_r}(h(a_{i_{r+1}}a_{j_0}a_{j_1} \ldots))) = e \text{ for all sequences } (j_0, j_1, \ldots) \text{ with } i_{r+1} < j_0 < j_1 < \ldots \text{ (by Lemma 5.1)}.
\]
Now choose $\ell_{r+1} > \ell_r$ such that

$$(v) \quad \sigma_m(h(a_{i_0} \ldots a_{i_{r+1}})) = \gamma_{\ell_{r+1}}(\text{Red}_{\ell_{r+1}}(h(a_{i_0} \ldots a_{i_{r+1}}))).$$

Using (4.3) assertion (iii) implies that

$$(vi) \quad |\sigma_m(h(a_{i_0} \ldots a_{i_r}))| < |\sigma_m(h(a_{i_0} \ldots a_{i_{r+1}}))|.$$ 

In the following we consider the element $a := a_{i_0}a_{i_1}a_{i_2} \ldots \in \pi(E, a)$. Since $1 = \ell_0 < \ell_1 < \ldots$ there exists $r \geq 1$ such that

$$\sigma_m(h(a)) = \gamma_{\ell_r}(\text{Red}_{\ell}(\sigma_{\ell_r}(h(a)))) = \gamma_{\ell_{r+1}}(\text{Red}_{\ell_{r+1}}(\sigma_{\ell_{r+1}}(h(a)))).$$ 

With this choice of $r$ we obtain

$$(1) \quad \sigma_m(h(a)) = |\gamma_{\ell_r}(\text{Red}_{\ell}(\sigma_{\ell_r}(h(a))))| = |\gamma_{\ell_{r+1}}(\text{Red}_{\ell_{r+1}}(\sigma_{\ell_{r+1}}(h(a))))|.$$ 

Since this is absurd we get the desired contradiction. □

In the next proposition we have to investigate the elements $h(C_n)$ in more detail.

**Proposition 5.5.** Fix $m \in \mathbb{N}$, choose $n_0 = n_0(m)$ as in Proposition 5.4 and for $n \geq n_0$ write $\sigma_m(h(C_n))$ in the form $\sigma_m(h(C_n)) = p_nq_n\tilde{p}_n$ with $p_n := P_{n_1} \ldots P_{n_J}$, $J_n \geq 0$, and $q_n := Q_{n_0}Q_{n_1} \ldots Q_{n_K}Q_{n_0}$ such that $K_n \geq -1$ is as small as possible. Furthermore, let $\omega_n = (\omega_{n\ell})_{\ell \geq 0} = \varphi(h(C_n))$, and for all $\ell$ with $\gamma_{\ell m}(\omega_{n\ell}) = p_nq_n\tilde{p}_n$ let $\omega_{n\ell}$ be the largest subword of $\omega_{n\ell}$ which is projected to (the central part) $q_n$ by $\gamma_{\ell m}$, i.e., satisfies $\gamma_{\ell m}(q_n) = q_n$.

Then there exists $\ell_0 = \ell_0(n, m)$ such that for all $\ell \geq \ell_0$ the word $\omega_{n\ell}$ can be written as

$$\omega_{n\ell} = p_nq_n\tilde{p}_n.$$

Moreover, $q_n = Q_{n_0}$, i.e., the canonical path associated with $q_n$ is contained in the union of two stars of level $m$ linked by $Q_{n_0}$.

**Remark 5.6.** Concerning the notation in Proposition 5.5 note that

(1) the word $p_n$ may be empty whereas $q_n$ always contains at least one letter,
(2) $K_n = -1$ means that $q_n = Q_{n0}$, and, due to the definition of $q_n$, the cases $K_n = 0$ ($q_n$ is not admissible) and $K_n = 1$ (the minimality condition on $K_n$ is violated) cannot occur.

Proof. The assertions are trivially true for $h(C_n) = e$. Thus we may assume that $h(C_n) \neq e$. Recall that $n_0$ is chosen as in Proposition 5.4 depending on the fixed level $m$ and let $\ell_0$ satisfy $\gamma_{\ell_0m}(\sigma_{\ell_0}) = \sigma_m(h(C_n))$. By the definition of $q_n$ the word $\sigma_{\ell_0}$ has a well defined representation of the form $\omega_{\ell_0} = p_{\ell_0}q_{\ell_0}p'_{\ell_0}$ such that $\gamma_{\ell_0m}(p_{\ell_0}) = \gamma_{\ell_0}(p'_{\ell_0}) = P_{n1} \ldots P_{nJ_n}$. We prove the proposition by showing the following two assertions for all $\ell \geq \ell_0$:

(i) $p'_{\ell_0} = \tilde{p}_{\ell_0}$.

(ii) $K_n = -1$.

Ad (i). Assume $p'_{\ell_0} \neq \tilde{p}_{\ell_0}$ for some $\ell \geq \ell_0$. (Note that this implies that at least one of the words $p_{\ell_0}, p'_{\ell_0}$ is nonempty and thus $J_n \geq 1$.) Then we have

$$\sigma_m(h(C_n^2)) = \gamma_{\ell_0m}(p_{\ell_0}q_{\ell_0}p'_{\ell_0} * p_{\ell_0}q_{\ell_0}p'_{\ell_0})$$

$$\geq P_{n1} \ldots P_{nJ_n} Q_{n0} \ldots Q_{nK_n} Q_{n0} (P_{nJ_n} Q_{n0} \ldots Q_{nK_n} Q_{n0}) P_{nJ_n} \ldots P_{n1},$$

where the inequality is due to the assumption $p'_{\ell_0} \neq \tilde{p}_{\ell_0}$ which implies that from the part $p'_{\ell_0} * \tilde{p}_{\ell_0}$ at least two successors of the letter $P_{nJ_n}$ in level $\ell$ remain and possible further cancellations with $q_{\ell_0}$ on the left or on the right (which can occur if $p'_{\ell_0}$ is a suffix of $\tilde{p}_{\ell_0}$, or vice versa) stop as soon as successors of $Q_{n0}$ in $q_{\ell_0}$ appear.

Iterating this procedure we get

$$\sigma_m(h(C_n^j)) = \gamma_{\ell_0m}(\omega_{\ell_0}^j)$$

$$\geq P_{n1} \ldots P_{nJ_n-1} (P_{nJ_n} Q_{n0} Q_{n1} \ldots Q_{nK_n} Q_{n0})^j P_{nJ_n} \ldots P_{n1}.$$ 

Since the length of the right hand side is not bounded in $j$ this contradicts Proposition 5.4. Thus $p'_{\ell_0} = \tilde{p}_{\ell_0}$ and (i) is shown for $\ell \geq \ell_0$.

Ad (ii). By (i) and Lemma 4.2 we have

$$\sigma_m(h(C_n^2)) = \gamma_{\ell_0m}(p_{\ell_0}q_{\ell_0}\tilde{p}_{\ell_0} * p_{\ell_0}q_{\ell_0}\tilde{p}_{\ell_0})$$

$$\geq (P_{n1} \ldots P_{nJ_n} Q_{n0} \ldots Q_{nK_n} Q_{n0} P_{nJ_n} \ldots P_{n1})^\circ$$

$$(P_{n1} \ldots P_{nJ_n} Q_{n0} \ldots Q_{nK_n} Q_{n0} P_{nJ_n} \ldots P_{n1}).$$

Suppose $K_n \geq 2$. Note that by the minimality of $K_n$ we have $Q_{nK_n} \neq Q_{n1}$. There occur two (slightly) different cases: $Q_{nK_n}$ can be a neighbor of $Q_{n1}$ or not. We work out in detail the first case, the latter can be treated similarly.$^4$

$^4$The only difference is that in the latter case subsequently between $Q_{nK_n}$ and $Q_{n1}$ the letter $Q_{n0}$ has to be added.
In any of the two cases we have $Q_{nK_n}Q_{n0} \neq \widehat{Q_{n0}Q_{n1}}$. Therefore, if $Q_{nK_n}$ is a neighbor of $Q_{n1}$ we obtain

$$\sigma_m(h(C_n^2)) \geq P_{n1} \ldots P_{nJ_n}Q_{n0} \ldots Q_{nK_n}Q_{n1} \ldots Q_{nK_n}Q_{n0}P_{nJ_n} \ldots P_{n1}.$$  

Iteration yields

$$\sigma_m(h(C_n^j)) = \gamma_{\ell m}(\omega_{n\ell}^j) \geq P_{n1} \ldots P_{nJ_n}Q_{n0}(Q_{n1} \ldots Q_{nK_n})^j Q_{n0}P_{nJ_n} \ldots P_{n1}.$$  

This contradicts Proposition 5.4, and thus $K_n = -1$ which yields (ii). \hfill \square

In the following proposition we will compare the tails $p_{n\ell}$ of $\omega_{n\ell}$ when $\ell$ is fixed and $n$ varies.

**Proposition 5.7.** Notation as in Proposition 5.5. Moreover, we write $q_{n\ell}$ in the form $q_{n\ell} = r_{n\ell}s_{n\ell}\tilde{r}_{n\ell}$ with $r_{n\ell}$ maximal. For all $n, n' \geq n_0 = n_0(m)$ and for all $\ell \geq \max\{\ell_0(n,m), \ell_0(n',m)\}$ with $\omega_{n\ell}, \omega_{n'\ell} \neq e$ we have:

1. $p_{n'\ell}$ is a prefix of $p_{n\ell}$ or vice versa, and, moreover, $|\gamma_{\ell m}(p_{n\ell})| - |\gamma_{\ell m}(p_{n'\ell})| \leq 1$.

2. If $p_{n'\ell}$ is a prefix of $p_{n\ell}$ and $|\gamma_{\ell m}(p_{n\ell})| - |\gamma_{\ell m}(p_{n'\ell})| = 1$, i.e., $\gamma_{\ell m}(p_{n\ell}) = P_{n1} \ldots P_{nJ_n}$ and $\gamma_{\ell m}(p_{n'\ell}) = P_{n1} \ldots P_{nJ_n-1}$ then

   a. $\gamma_{\ell m}(\omega_{n\ell}) = P_{n1} \ldots P_{nJ_n-1}P_{nJ_n}P_{nJ_n-1} \ldots P_{n1}$, i.e., $Q_{n0} = P_{nJ_n}$.

   b. $p_{n\ell}$ is a prefix of $p_{n\ell}r_{n'\ell}$ and in $\tilde{p}_{n\ell} * (p_{n'\ell}r_{n'\ell}s_{n'\ell})$ only the first letter is a successor of a letter from $D_m$.

3. If $p_{n'\ell}$ is a prefix of $p_{n\ell}$ and $|\gamma_{\ell m}(p_{n\ell})| = |\gamma_{\ell m}(p_{n'\ell})|$, i.e., $\gamma_{\ell m}(p_{n\ell}) = \gamma_{\ell m}(p_{n'\ell}) = P_{n1} \ldots P_{nJ_n}$ then $Q_{n0} = Q_{n'0}$ and $p_{n\ell} = p_{n'\ell}$.

**Proof.** Ad (1). We first deal with the case that $p_{n'\ell}$ is the empty word $\Lambda$, i.e., $J_{n'} = 0$. Then we have $\sigma_m(h(C_n')) = Q_{n'0}$ and $\omega_{n'\ell} = q_{n'\ell} = r_{n'\ell}s_{n'\ell}\tilde{r}_{n'\ell}$. Since $\omega_{n'\ell} \neq e$ we know that $s_{n'\ell}$ contains at least 3 letters.

Now assume $J_n = |\gamma_{\ell m}(p_{n\ell})| \geq 2$ and consider the element

$$(\omega_{n\ell} * \omega_{n'\ell})^2 = (p_{n\ell}q_{n'\ell}\tilde{p}_{n\ell}) * (r_{n'\ell}s_{n'\ell}\tilde{r}_{n'\ell}) * (p_{n\ell}q_{n'\ell}\tilde{p}_{n\ell}) * (r_{n'\ell}s_{n'\ell}\tilde{r}_{n'\ell}).$$

In particular, we study cancellation in the part $\tilde{p}_{n\ell} * (r_{n'\ell}s_{n'\ell}\tilde{r}_{n'\ell}) * p_{n\ell}$: This amounts to a conjugation of the nontrivial loop $r_{n'\ell}s_{n'\ell}\tilde{r}_{n'\ell}$ and due to the fact that $r_{n'\ell}s_{n'\ell}\tilde{r}_{n'\ell}$ contains only successors of a single letter from $D_m$ the reduction process stops at the latest at the last occurrence of a level $\ell$ successor of $P_{n2}$ in $\tilde{p}_{n\ell}$ and at the first occurrence of the same successor of $P_{n2}$ in $p_{n\ell}$, respectively, and in between there remain at least three letters which all lie in the two $m$-stars attached to $Q_{n'0}$. So when we apply $\gamma_{\ell m}$ we
obtain
\[
\gamma_{\ell m}\left( p_{nJ} q_{nJ} \tilde{p}_{nJ} \right) \geq P_{nJ} (Q_{n0} P_{nJn})^2.
\]

By iteration we get \(|\sigma_m(h((C_nC_n)^i)))| \geq 2i + 1\) which contradicts Proposition 5.4, hence \(J_n \leq 1\) and (1) is proved in the special case \(p_{n\ell} = \Lambda\).

Next we deal with the case \(p_{n\ell}, p_{n\ell}^\prime \neq \Lambda\), i.e., \(J_n, J_n^\prime \geq 1\), and we assume that neither \(p_{n\ell}^\prime\) is a prefix of \(p_{n\ell}\) nor vice versa. We consider \(\omega_{n\ell} \ast \omega_{n\ell}^\prime = (p_{n\ell} r_{n\ell} s_{nJn} \tilde{r}_{n\ell} \tilde{p}_{n\ell}) \ast (p_{n\ell} r_{n\ell} t_{n\ell} s_{nJn} \tilde{r}_{n\ell} \tilde{p}_{n\ell}^\prime)\). Due to our assumption at the inner part \(\tilde{p}_{n\ell} \ast p_{n\ell}^\prime\) we get \(\tilde{p}_{n\ell} \ast p_{n\ell} = P_{nJn} \sigma_{nJn}^\prime\), where \(P_{nJn}^\prime\) and \(P_{nJn}^\prime\) are level \(\ell\) successors of \(P_{nJn}\) and \(P_{nJn}^\prime\), respectively, and \(s\) is a word which can be empty if \(P_{nJn}^\prime \neq P_{nJn}^\prime\). Obeying Lemma 4.1 the cancellation stops here, and \(\tilde{r}_{n\ell}^\prime\) on the left and \(r_{n\ell}\) on the right remain unchanged. Applying \(\gamma_{\ell m}\) we obtain
\[
\gamma_{\ell m}(\omega_{n\ell} \ast \omega_{n\ell}^\prime) = \gamma_{\ell m}\left( p_{nJ} q_{nJ} \tilde{p}_{nJ} \tilde{r}_{n\ell} \tilde{r}_{n\ell}^\prime \tilde{p}_{n\ell}^\prime \tilde{p}_{n\ell} \right) \geq P_{nJ} Q_{n0} P_{nJ} \cdots P_{nJn}^\prime Q_{n0}^\prime P_{nJn}^\prime.
\]

Iterating this we end up with \(|\sigma_m(h((C_nC_n)^i)))| \geq 4i\), a contradiction to Proposition 5.4.

So now we may suppose that \(p_{n\ell}, p_{n\ell}^\prime \neq \Lambda\) and w.l.o.g. \(p_{n\ell} = 1\) is a prefix of \(p_{n\ell}^\prime\). Assume \(|\gamma_{\ell m}(p_{n\ell})| - |\gamma_{\ell m}(p_{n\ell}^\prime)| = j \geq 2\). Then \(\tilde{p}_{n\ell} \ast p_{n\ell} = \tilde{t}_{n\ell}\) where \(t_{n\ell}\) is a suffix of \(p_{n\ell}\) beginning with a level \(\ell\) successor of \(P_{nJn-j}\), and further containing successors of \(P_{nJn-k}\), \(0 \leq k < j - 1\). Using this we get
\[
(\omega_{n\ell} \ast \omega_{n\ell}^\prime)^2 = (p_{n\ell} q_{n\ell} \tilde{p}_{n\ell} \tilde{t}_{n\ell} \tilde{p}_{n\ell}^\prime)^2 = (p_{n\ell} q_{n\ell} t_{n\ell}) \ast (r_{n\ell} s_{nJn} \tilde{r}_{n\ell} \tilde{p}_{n\ell}) \ast (r_{n\ell} s_{nJn} \tilde{r}_{n\ell} \tilde{p}_{n\ell}^\prime)
\]
and we can proceed in the same way as in the first part of this proof (case \(p_{n\ell}^\prime = \Lambda\)) to show that \(|\sigma_m(h((C_nC_n)^i)))| is not bounded for \(i \to \infty\), a contradiction. Thus \(|\gamma_{\ell m}(p_{n\ell})| - |\gamma_{\ell m}(p_{n\ell}^\prime)| \leq 1\) and (1) is proved.

Ad (2)(a). Let as before \(\tilde{p}_{n\ell} \ast p_{n\ell} = \tilde{t}_{n\ell}\) and assume \(Q_{n0} \neq P_{nJn}\). Now we have
\[
\omega_{n\ell} \ast \omega_{n\ell}^\prime = (p_{n\ell} q_{n\ell} \tilde{t}_{n\ell} \tilde{r}_{n\ell} \tilde{t}_{n\ell} \tilde{p}_{n\ell}^\prime) = (p_{n\ell} q_{n\ell} \tilde{t}_{n\ell}) \ast (r_{n\ell} s_{nJn} \tilde{r}_{n\ell} \tilde{p}_{n\ell}^\prime)\]
Note that \(\tilde{t}_{n\ell}\) begins with a successor of \(P_{nJn}\) and due to our assumption this letter does not appear in \(r_{n\ell}\). On the other hand \(r_{n\ell} s_{nJn}\) contains a successor of \(Q_{n0}\) which does not appear in \(\tilde{t}_{n\ell}\). Since in the reduction process in the course of a group product only letters cancel out which appear in both
factors (cf. Lemma 4.1) we get
\[ \gamma_{\ell m}(\omega_{n\ell} \ast \omega_{n\ell}) \geq P_{n1} \ldots P_{n,J_n} Q_{n0} P_{n,J_n} Q_{n0'} P_{n,n-1} \ldots P_{n1} \]
and again we conclude that \( |\gamma(h((C, C_0)))| \) is not bounded for \( i \to \infty \), a contradiction. Thus we have proved \( Q_{n0} = P_{n,J_n} \).

Ad (2)(b). With notation as before we have \( \omega_{n\ell} = p_{n\ell} t_{n\ell} s_{n\ell} \tilde{t}_{n\ell} \tilde{p}_{n\ell} \) and \( \omega_{n\ell} = p_{n\ell} \ast (t_{n\ell} r_{n\ell} s_{n\ell} \tilde{t}_{n\ell} \tilde{p}_{n\ell}) \). Now we consider
\[ \omega_{n\ell} \ast \omega_{n\ell} = (p_{n\ell} t_{n\ell} s_{n\ell} \tilde{t}_{n\ell}) \ast (t_{n\ell} r_{n\ell} s_{n\ell} \tilde{t}_{n\ell} \tilde{p}_{n\ell}) \]
where the exponent \( i \in \mathbb{N} \) will be specified later. Concerning the cancellations in the product we quote the following properties:

(I) The word \( r_{n\ell} s_{n\ell} \tilde{t}_{n\ell} \) contains a successor of \( Q_{n0} \) and the first occurrence of such a letter is either in \( r_{n\ell} \) or \( s_{n\ell} \). Such a letter does not occur in \( r_{n\ell} t_{n\ell} s_{n\ell} \tilde{t}_{n\ell} \) since this word among successors of letters from \( D_m \) only contains successors of \( Q_{n0} = P_{n,J_n} \) and we have \( P_{n,J_n} \neq Q_{n0} \).

(II) We choose \( i = i_0 \) so large that \( |s_{n\ell}^{-1}| > |t_{n\ell} r_{n\ell} s_{n\ell}| \). This is possible since due to \( \omega_{n\ell} \neq e \) we have \( |s_{n\ell}| \geq 3 \).

(III) By Lemma 4.1 we know that in a product \( a \ast b \) of two reduced words \( a \) and \( b \) the number of letters canceling out is the same for \( a \) and \( b \) and that a letter \( P \) from \( a \) can cancel out only if \( P \) also appears in \( b \) at the corresponding position.

With regard to (I)–(III) we obtain
\[ \omega_{n\ell} \ast \omega_{n\ell} = p_{n\ell} t_{n\ell} s_{n\ell} \tilde{t}_{n\ell} \ldots s_{n\ell}^{(1)} \tilde{t}_{n\ell} \tilde{p}_{n\ell} \]
where \( s_{n\ell}^{(1)} \) is a suffix of \( s_{n\ell} \) and
\[ \gamma_{\ell m}(\omega_{n\ell} \ast \omega_{n\ell}) = \gamma_{\ell m}(p_{n\ell} t_{n\ell} s_{n\ell} \tilde{t}_{n\ell} \ldots s_{n\ell}^{(1)} \tilde{t}_{n\ell} \tilde{p}_{n\ell}) = P_{n1} \ldots P_{n,J_n} Q_{n0} P_{n,J_n} \ldots P_{n1}. \]
In view of Proposition 5.5, \( \omega_{n\ell} \ast \omega_{n\ell} \) must have the form \( \omega_{n\ell} \ast \omega_{n\ell} = p_{n\ell}^{(i)} q_{n\ell}^{(i)} \tilde{p}_{n\ell}^{(i)} \) with the corresponding properties for \( p_{n\ell}^{(i)} \) and \( q_{n\ell}^{(i)} \) for all \( i \geq i_0 \).

Next we show that \( s_{n\ell} \) does not contain a successor of \( P_{n,J_n} \). Assume the contrary then by increasing \( i \) the last occurrence of a successor of \( P_{n,J_n} \) before the first occurrence of a successor of \( Q_{n0} \) in the word \( \omega_{n\ell} \ast \omega_{n\ell} \) (up to this letter all letters belong to \( f_{n\ell}^{(i)} \) can be made in arbitrary distance from the beginning. On the other hand, the occurrence of successors of \( P_{n,J_n} \) on the rear end of \( \omega_{n\ell} \ast \omega_{n\ell} \) is not influenced by the choice of \( i \). Therefore a representation in the form \( \omega_{n\ell} \ast \omega_{n\ell} = p_{n\ell}^{(i)} q_{n\ell}^{(i)} \tilde{p}_{n\ell}^{(i)} \) with \( \gamma_{\ell m}(q_{n\ell}^{(i)}) = 1 \) is not possible. We conclude that \( s_{n\ell} \) cannot contain a successor of \( P_{n,J_n} \) and thus does not contain a successor of any letter from \( D_m \) at all.
The argument in the last part shows that $\widetilde{p}^{(i)}_{nt} = \widetilde{p}_{nt}$ for all $i \geq i_0$ and we obtain
\[
p^{(1)}_{nt} = \cdots \cdots s_{nt} \cdots \cdot r_{nt} \cdot \tilde{p}_{nt} = p_{nt} q^{(i)}_{nt} \tilde{p}_{nt}.
\]
Comparing the prefixes of the left and the right side in this equation and taking into account that $s_{nt}$ does not contain successors of $P_{nJ_n}$ we get that $p_{nt}$ is a prefix of $p_{nt} r_{nt}$ and also $\tilde{p}_{nt} * (p_{nt} r_{nt} s_{nt})$ does not (except from the first letter) contain a successor of a letter from $D_m$.

Ad (3). Assume $Q_{n0} \neq Q_{n0}$, then with the same notation and similar arguments as before we get
\[
\gamma_{\ell m} (\omega_{n't} \ast \omega_{nt}) = \gamma_{\ell m} \left( \frac{p_{nt} r_{nt} s_{nt} \cdots \cdot r_{nt} \cdot \tilde{p}_{nt}}{p_{nt} r_{nt} s_{nt} \cdots \cdot r_{nt} \cdot \tilde{p}_{nt}} \right) \geq
\]
\[
\geq P_{n1} \cdots P_{nJ_n} Q_{n0} Q_{n0} P_{nJ_n} \cdots P_{n1}.
\]
Thus $|\sigma_{m}(h((C_n C_n')^i))| \to \infty$ for $i \to \infty$ in contrast to Proposition 5.4, hence $Q_{n0} = Q_{n0}$.

In the case $p_{nt} \neq p_{nt}$ we would get
\[
\gamma_{\ell m} (\omega_{n't} \ast \omega_{nt}) = P_{n1} \cdots P_{nJ_n} Q_{n0} P_{nJ_n} Q_{n0} P_{nJ_n} \cdots P_{n1}
\]
which, once more, leads to a contradiction to Proposition 5.4.

Employing the same notation as before we can consider the following two sets:
\[
N_{m1} := \{ n \geq n_0(m) \mid \sigma_{m}(h(C_n)) = P_{n1} \cdots P_{nJ_n} Q_{n0} P_{nJ_n} \cdots P_{n1} \},
\]
\[
N_{m2} := \{ n \geq n_0(m) \mid \sigma_{m}(h(C_n)) = P_{n1} \cdots P_{nJ_n-1} P_{nJ_n} P_{nJ_n-1} \cdots P_{n1} \}.
\]
We may choose the letters $P_{n1}, \ldots, P_{nJ_n}, Q_{n0}$ in such a way that always $N_{m1} \neq \emptyset$ whereas $N_{m2}$ may be empty. Moreover, if $N_{m1}$ is finite, we enlarge $n_0(m)$ and readjust the letters such that $N_{m1}$ is infinite and $n_0(m) \in N_{m1}$.

Proceeding inductively by $m$ we may assume that $n_0(m) \leq n_0(m+1)$. According to Proposition 5.7 we have $N_{m1} \cup N_{m2} = \{ n \in \mathbb{N} \mid n \geq n_0(m) \}$.

Now the dependence on $m$ of $p_{nt}$ occurring in the statement of Proposition 5.5 becomes important. Note that $n_0, \ell_0, J_n, p_{nt}, q_{nt}$ in Proposition 5.5 and 5.7 depend on $m$ while $\omega_{nt}$ is independent of $m$. In the sequel we will indicate this dependence on $m$ by using a superscript $(m)$, e.g., $\omega_{nt} = p_{nt}^{(m)} q_{nt}^{(m)} P_{nt}^{(m)}$.

By Proposition 5.7 we have for all $n, n' \geq n_0(m)$ satisfying $\omega_{nt}, \omega_{n't} \neq e$ that $p_{nt}^{(m)} = p_{n't}^{(m)}$ if $n, n' \in N_{m1}$ and $p_{nt}^{(m)}$ is a prefix of $p_{n't}^{(m)} r_{nt}^{(m)}$ if $n \in N_{m1}$ and $n' \in N_{m2}$. Note that $n = n_0(m)$ satisfies $\omega_{nt} \neq e$ if $\sigma_{m}(h(C_k)) \neq e$ for at least one $k \geq n_0(m)$.

So for $\ell \geq \ell_0(n_0(m), m)$ we define $t_{nt}^{(m)} := p_{n_0(m)}^{(m)}$. Then for all $n \geq n_0(m)$ and $\ell \geq \ell_0(n, m)$ satisfying $\omega_{nt} \neq e$ we obtain a representation of the
form $\omega_{n\ell} = t^{(m)}_\ell y_{n\ell} (m) t^{(m)}_\ell$ with $|\gamma_{\ell m}(y^{(m)}_{n\ell})| \leq 1$, and for $n \in N_{m1}$ we have $p^{(m)}_{n\ell} = t^{(m)}_\ell$.

**Proposition 5.8.** For all $m \geq 0$ and $\ell \geq \max\{\ell_0(n_0(m), m), \ell_0(n_0(m + 1), m + 1)\}$ we have

1. $t^{(m)}_\ell$ is a prefix of $t^{(m+1)}_\ell$,
2. $\overline{t}^{(m)}_\ell t^{(m+1)}_\ell$ contains only letters which (as belts) lie in the two closed $m$-stars attached to $Q^{(m)}_{n0}$.
3. For all $\ell' > \ell \geq \ell_0(n_0(m), m)$ we have $\delta_{\ell'}(t^{(m)}_{\ell'}) = t^{(m)}_\ell$.

**Proof.** Ad (1). Since $n_0(m + 1) \geq n_0(m)$ we have representations of the form $\omega_{n_0(m+1)\ell} = p^{(m)}_{n_0(m+1)\ell} q^{(m)}_{n_0(m+1)\ell} \overline{p}^{(m)}_{n_0(m+1)\ell} = p^{(m+1)}_{n_0(m+1)\ell} q^{(m+1)}_{n_0(m+1)\ell} \overline{p}^{(m+1)}_{n_0(m+1)\ell}$.

Assuming that $p^{(m)}_{n_0(m+1)\ell}$ is not a prefix of $p^{(m+1)}_{n_0(m+1)\ell}$ immediately leads to the property that $q^{(m+1)}_{n_0(m+1)\ell}$ contains successors of more than one letter from $D_m$ and therefore also successors of more than one letter from $D_{m+1}$ which is a contradiction to Proposition 5.5. Therefore $p^{(m+1)}_{n_0(m+1)\ell}$ is always a prefix of $p^{(m+1)}_{n_0(m+1)\ell}$. By definition we have $t^{(m+1)}_\ell = p^{(m+1)}_{n_0(m+1)\ell}$. Now we show that $t^{(m)}_\ell = p^{(m)}_{n_0(m+1)\ell}$ which yields (1). By the choice of $n_0(m + 1)$ we have that $|\overline{\sigma}_{m+1}(h(C^{(m+1)}_{n_0(m+1)}))|$ is maximal among all $|\overline{\sigma}_{m+1}(h(C^{(m+1)}_n))|$ for $n \geq n_0(m + 1)$. Therefore also $|\overline{\sigma}_{m}(h(C^{(m+1)}_{n_0(m+1)}))| = |\gamma_{m+1}(\overline{\sigma}_{m+1}(h(C^{(m+1)}_{n_0(m+1)})))|$ is maximal among all $|\overline{\sigma}_{m}(h(C^n))|$ for $n \geq n_0(m + 1)$. Since $|N_{m1}| = \infty$ we know that this maximum equals $|\overline{\sigma}_{m}(h(C^{(m+1)}_{n_0(m+1)}))|$. So with Proposition 5.7 we obtain

$$\gamma_{\ell m}(\omega_{n_0(m+1)\ell}) = \overline{\sigma}_{m}(h(C^{(m+1)}_{n_0(m+1)})) = \overline{\sigma}_{m}(h(C^{(m+1)}_n)),$$

and this implies $t^{(m)}_\ell = p^{(m)}_{n_0(m+1)\ell}$.

Ad (2). From the representation we got in the proof of (1)

$$\omega_{n_0(m+1)\ell} = t^{(m)}_\ell q^{(m)}_{n_0(m+1)\ell} \overline{t}^{(m)}_\ell = t^{(m+1)}_\ell q^{(m+1)}_{n_0(m+1)\ell} \overline{t}^{(m+1)}_\ell$$

we obtain that $\overline{t}^{(m)}_\ell t^{(m+1)}_\ell = \overline{p}^{(m)}_{n\ell} p^{(m+1)}_{n\ell}$ is a word beginning with a level $\ell$ successor of $p^{(m)}_{n\ell}$ followed by a prefix of $q^{(m)}_{n\ell}$ which yields the assertion.

(3) follows immediately from

$$\delta_{\ell'}(p^{(m)}_{n\ell} q^{(m)}_{n\ell} p^{(m+1)}_{n\ell}) = \delta_{\ell'}(\omega_{n\ell}) = \omega_{n\ell} = p^{(m)}_{n\ell} q^{(m)}_{n\ell} \overline{p}^{(m)}_{n\ell}$$

and the properties of $p^{(m)}_{n\ell} = t^{(m)}_\ell$ for $n \in N_{m1}$ proved in Proposition 5.5. □

If we now define $t^{(m)}_\ell := \delta_{\ell_0(n_0(m), m)}(t^{(m)}_{\ell_0(n_0(m), m)})$ for $0 \leq \ell < \ell_0(m)$ by (3) of Proposition 5.8 we arrive at a sequence $(t^{(m)}_\ell)_{\ell \geq 0}$ satisfying $\delta_{\ell'}(t^{(m)}_{\ell'}) = t^{(m)}_\ell$ for all $\ell' > \ell \geq 0$. Thus this sequence $(t^{(m)}_\ell)_{\ell \geq 0}$ corresponds to a canonical path $t^{(m)}$ from the base point $x_0$ to some point $x^{*}_{m}$ lying in the belt $F^{(m)}_{n, J_n}$. 
Due to Proposition 5.8 (1) we obtain that the path $t^{(m)}$ is a prefix section of the path $t^{(m+1)}$, and Proposition 5.8 (2) implies that $t^{(m)}$ converges for $m \to \infty$ to a path $t$ from the base point $x_0$ to some point $x^* = \lim_{m \to \infty} x_m^*$ in $X$. (2) also implies that $x^*$ lies in one of the two closed $m$-stars attached to $Q_{n0}^{(m)}$ for all $m \geq 0$. This path $t$ has a word representation of the form $(t_\ell)_{\ell \geq 0}$ such that $t^{(m)}_\ell$ is a prefix of $t_\ell$ and $\overline{t}^{(m)}_\ell \ast t_\ell$ can contain successors of at most 3 different letters from $D_m$ which are $P^{(m)}_{nJ_n^{(m)}}$, $Q_{n0}^{(m)}$ and another neighbor $P^{(m)}$ of $Q_{n0}^{(m)}$ in $D_m$ which contains $x^*$ (cf. Proposition 5.8 (2)).

Let $h_n$ denote the minimal loop representing the homotopy class $h(C_n)$ considered in Proposition 3.5 (ii). In the next proposition we will show that the path $t$ is such that the loop $t^{-1}h_nt$ in $(X,x^*)$ is homotopic to a loop that stays arbitrarily near to $x^*$ when $n$ tends to infinity.

**Proposition 5.9.** For $n$ tending to infinity the minimal representative of the homotopy class of the loop $t^{-1}h_nt$ in $\pi(X,x^*)$ tends to the constant loop $x^*$.

**Proof.** We show that for all $m \geq 0$ and for all $n \geq n_0(m)$ the word $\overline{\sigma}_m(t^{-1}h_nt)$ contains only letters which (as belts) lie in the two $m$-stars attached to $Q_{n0}^{(m)}$. This proves the assertion.

The loop $t^{-1}h_nt$ corresponds to the sequence $(\widehat{t}_\ell \ast \omega_{nt} \ast t_\ell)_{\ell \geq 0} := (x_\ell)_{\ell \geq 0}$. For $\ell \geq \ell_0(n,m)$ we have $x_\ell = \overline{t}_\ell \ast (t^{(m)}_\ell \ast \omega_{nt} \ast \overline{t}^{(m)}_\ell) \ast t_\ell$. Employing the considerations before Proposition 5.9 we obtain

$$\overline{\sigma}_m(t^{-1}h_nt) = \gamma_{\ell_0}(x_\ell) \leq P^{(m)}_{nJ_n^{(m)}} Q_{n0}^{(m)} P^{(m)}_{nJ_n^{(m)}} Q_{n0}^{(m)} P^{(m)}$$

and we are done. \[\Box\]

In the following main result of this section we use the conjugacy map $\chi_z : \pi(X,x^*) \to \pi(X,x_0)$, $\chi_z([f]) = [zfz^{-1}]$ where $z$ is a path from $x_0$ to $x^*$.

**Theorem 5.10** (Eda [11, Theorem 1.1]). Let $(X,x_0)$ be a metrizable one-dimensional continuum. Then for each homomorphism $h$ from $\pi(E,o)$ to $\pi(X,x_0)$ there exists a point $x^* \in X$, a path $t$ from $x_0$ to $x^*$ and a continuous map $\psi : E \to X$ such that $h = \chi_t \circ \psi_*$, i.e., $h$ is conjugate to the homomorphism $\psi_* : \pi(E,o) \to \pi(X,x^*)$ induced by $\psi$.

If the range of $h$ is not finitely generated, $x^*$ is unique and $t$ is unique up to homotopy relative to the end points.

**Proof.** Let $t$ be the path corresponding to the sequence $(t_\ell)_{\ell \geq 0}$ defined before Proposition 5.9 and $h_n$ the minimal representative of the homotopy class $h(C_n)$. We fix parametrizations $h_n(x)$ and $C_n(x)$, $x \in [0,1]$, of $t^{-1}h_nt$ and...
$C_n$ respectively, where we assume that $C_n(x)$ is injective. This can be used to define the mapping $\psi : E \to X$ by $\psi(C_n(x)) = h_n(x)$.

First we consider the case where $\text{ran}(h)$ is finitely generated. By Lemma 5.2 $h(C_n) = e$ is the neutral element for all but finitely many $n \in \mathbb{N}$. Then obviously $\psi$ is continuous and $h = \psi_*$. In this case the result follows by setting $x^* = x_0$ and $t$ the constant path in $x_0$.

Now assume that $\text{ran}(h)$ is not finitely generated and w.l.o.g. $h(C_n) \neq e$ for all $n \in \mathbb{N}$. Proposition 5.9 implies that the sequence of paths $(t^{-1}h_n t)_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ converges to the constant path $x^*$. This implies that $\psi$ is continuous also in this case. Observing that

$$h(C_n) = [tt^{-1}h_n tt^{-1}] = \chi_t([t^{-1}h_n t]) = \chi_t(\psi_*(C_n))$$

proves the existence part of the assertion.

The uniqueness of $x^*$, $\psi_*$ and $t$ is easily derived in the same way as in the proof of [11, Theorem 1.1].

\[ \square \]

\textbf{Acknowledgements.} The authors thank the Austrian Science Foundation FWF for its support through Projects no. S9610 and S9612.

Furthermore, the authors like to thank the referee for very valuable suggestions improving the readability of the paper.

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