Let $X$ be a topological space and $G$ a group of homeomorphisms of $X$ onto itself. Then $G$ is said to be distal if given any three points $x, y, z$ in $X$ and any filter $\mathcal{F}$ on $G$, then $x, \mathcal{F} \to z$ and $y, \mathcal{F} \to z$ implies that $x = y$. The above definition of distal is a topological variant of the one given in [2]; the two notions coincide when the underlying space $X$ is compact.

This paper deals with two topics in the study of distal transformation groups. First, a recursive characterization of these groups is given in a general setting, and second it is shown that under suitable restrictions on $X$ and $G$, distal is a property strong enough to imply equicontinuity of $G$. In order to make this statement precise a few definitions are needed. For a complete discussion of the following notions, the reader is referred to [2].

Let $a, b$ be functions of $X$ into $X$ and let $x \in X$. Then $xa$ will denote the image of $x$ under $a$, and $ab$ the composite function first $a$ then $b$. Under the operation of composition $X^X$ is a semigroup such that the maps $b \mapsto ab (b \in X^X)$ are continuous for all $a \in X^X$, and the maps $b \mapsto ba (b \in X^X)$ are continuous for all continuous functions $a$ of $X$ into $X$. The group $G$ may be regarded as a subset of $X^X$ and its closure $T$ formed. One may also consider $S$ the closure of $G$ in the topology of uniform convergence on $X$. When $X$ is compact, $S$ is a topological group of homeomorphisms of $X$ onto $X$ but is in general not compact, whereas $T$ is compact but is in general not a group. Hence in studying $T$ instead of $S$ the emphasis is on the algebraic rather than the topological structure.

A subset $A$ of $G$ is said to be syndetic if there exists a compact subset $K$ of $G$ such that $AK = G$. (If no topology is specified for $G$, then it is assumed to be provided with the discrete topology.) A point $x \in X$ is an almost periodic point with respect to $G$ if given any neighborhood $U$ of $x$, there exists a syndetic subset $A$ of $G$ such that $xA = \{xa | a \in A\} \subseteq U$. If every point of $X$ is an almost periodic point with respect to $G$, then $G$ is said to be pointwise almost periodic.

Let $I$ be a set with cardinal number $\alpha > 0$. Then each $g \in G$ induces a homeomorphism $(x_i | i \in I) \mapsto (x_ig | i \in I)$ of $X^\alpha$ onto $X^\alpha$ which will also be referred to as $g$. Under this identification $G$ becomes a group of...
homeomorphisms of $X^\alpha$ onto $X^\alpha$.

The characterization mentioned in the second paragraph is that if $xG$ is compact for all $x \in X$ and $X$ is Hausdorff, then $G$ is distal if and only if $G$ is pointwise almost periodic on $X^\alpha$ for all cardinals $\alpha > 0$.

The following lemma is probably well-known but the proof is included for the sake of completeness. For references to the literature see [3].

**Lemma 1.** Let $S$ be a compact Hausdorff space with a semigroup structure such that the maps $s \to ts$ ($s \in S$) are continuous for all $t \in S$. Then there exists an idempotent $u \in S$.

**Proof.** Let $\mathcal{E}$ denote the class of non-null compact subsets $E$ of $S$ such that $E^\alpha \subseteq E$. Then $\mathcal{E} \neq \emptyset$ since $S \in \mathcal{E}$. If $\mathcal{E}$ is ordered by inclusion, an application of Zorn’s lemma shows that there is a minimal element $A$ in $\mathcal{E}$. If $r \in A$, then $rA$ is a non-null compact subset of $S$ such that $rA \in \mathcal{E}$ and $rA \subseteq A$. Hence $rA = A$ since $A$ is minimal. Thus there exists $p \in A$ with $rp = r$. Define $L = \{a | a \in A$ and $ra = r\}$. Then $p \in L$, and $L$ is a compact subset of $A$. Moreover $k, 1 \in L$ imply that $rk1 = r1 = r$; that is $L^2 \subseteq L$. Thus $L \in \mathcal{E}$ and so $L = A$. Hence $r \in L$; that is $r^2 = r$. The proof is completed.

**Theorem 1.** Let $X$ be a Hausdorff space and $G$ a group of homeomorphisms of $X$ onto $X$ such that $xG$ is compact for all $x \in X$. Then the following statements are pairwise equivalent.

1. The closure $T$ of $G$ in $X^x$ is a compact group.
2. For every cardinal $\alpha > 0$, $G$ is pointwise almost periodic on $X^\alpha$.
3. There exists a cardinal $\alpha > 1$ such that $G$ is pointwise almost periodic on $X^\alpha$.
4. The group $G$ is distal.

**Proof.** (1) implies (2). Let $\alpha$ be a cardinal $\alpha > 0$, and let $I$ be a set of cardinal $\alpha$. Let $x = (x_i | i \in I) \in X^I$ and $U$ a neighborhood of $x$. Then there exists a finite subset $J$ of $I$ and open subsets $V_i (i \in J)$ of $X$ such that $x \in W = \times(W_i | i \in I) \subseteq U$ where $W_i = V_i (i \in J)$ and $W_i = X (i \in I - J)$. Let $N = \{t | t \in T$ and $x_i t \in V_i (i \in J)\}$. Then $N$ is an open neighborhood of the identity $e$ of $T$. Let $t \in T$. Since the map $r \to rs (r \in T$) of $T$ onto $T$ is a homeomorphism for all $s \in T$, $t^{-1}N$ is a non-null open subset of $T$. Hence there exists $g \in G$ such that $g \in t^{-1}N$; that is $t \in Ng^{-1} \subseteq NG$. Thus $T \subseteq NG$, and so $T \subseteq NK$ for some finite subset $K$ of $G$. Since $G$ is a subgroup of $T$ and $K \subseteq G$, $G \subseteq (N \cap G)K$. Thus $A = N \cap G$ is a syndetic subset of $G$ with $xA \subseteq U$.

That (2) implies (3) is clear.

(3) implies (4). Let $x, y, z \in X$ and let $\mathcal{F}$ be a filter on $G$ such
that $x, \mathcal{F} \to z$ and $y, \mathcal{F} \to z$. Let $\alpha$ be a cardinal $> 1$, $I$ a set of cardinality $\alpha$, and $i$ and $j$ two distinct elements of $I$. Let $w = (w_k | k \in I) \in X^\alpha$ such that $w_k = x$, $k \neq j$ and $w_j = y$. Then $w, \mathcal{F} \to u = (u_k | k \in I)$ where $u_k = z(k \in I)$. Hence $u \in wG \subset \times (w_k G | k \in I)$. Thus $u \in \overline{wG}$ which is a compact set on which $G$ is pointwise almost periodic. Therefore by [2; 4.07] $w \in uG$. Consequently there exists a filter $\mathcal{G}$ on $G$ such that $u \mathcal{G} \to w$; that is $z \mathcal{G} \to x$ and $z \mathcal{G} \to y$. Thus $x = y$.

(4) implies (1). Since $T \subset \times (xG | x \in X)$, $T$ is a compact subset of $X^x$. That $T^x \subset T$ follows directly from the definition of $T$ and the fact that the maps $t \to st (t \in T)$ and $t \to tg (t \in T)$ of $T$ into $T$ are continuous for all $s \in T$ and $g \in G$. It remains to be shown that given $t \in T$ then it is invertible and that $t^{-1} \in T$.

To this end let $t \in T$. Then $tT$ is a compact subset of $T$ such that $(tT)(tT) \subset tTT \subset tT$. Hence by Lemma 1 there exists $u \in tT$ such that $u^2 = u$. Let $x \in X$ and $\mathcal{F}$ a filter on $G$ such that $\mathcal{F} \to u$. Let $y = xu$. Then $x, \mathcal{F} \to xu = y$, and $y, \mathcal{F} \to yu = xu^2 = xu = y$. Hence $x = y$ since $G$ is assumed distal. Thus $xu = x(x \in X)$; that is $u = e$ the identity of $T$.

Since $e \in tT$, there exists $s \in T$ such that $ts = e$. A similar argument applied to $s$ instead of $t$ produces $r \in T$ with $sr = e$. Hence $t = te = tsr = r$; in other words $ts = st = e$. The proof is completed.

**Remark.** Let $X$ be a Hausdorff space, and let $G$ be a distal group of homeomorphisms of $X$ onto $X$ such that $xG$ is compact for all $x \in X$. Then $G$ is pointwise almost periodic on $X$.

A topological group $G$ is said to be **generative** provided that $G$ is abelian and is generated by some compact neighborhood of the identity. The remainder of this paper will be concerned with the transformation group $(X, G, \pi)$ where $X$ is a Hausdorff space and the group $G$ is generative.

**Theorem 2.** Let $X$ be locally compact zero-dimensional, let $G$ be distal, and let $xG$ be compact for all $x \in X$. Then $G$ is equicontinuous.

**Proof.** By Theorem 1. $G$ is pointwise almost periodic on $X \times X$. Hence $G$ is locally weakly almost periodic on $X \times X$ [2; 7.07], and so $[(x, y)G | x, y \in X]$ is a star closed decomposition of $X \times X$[2; 4.16]. Let $x \in X$ and $\alpha$ an index on $X$. Then $\alpha$ is a neighborhood of $(x, x)G$, and therefore there exists a neighborhood $V$ of $x$ such that $(V \times V)G \subset \alpha$; that is $G$ is equicontinuous at $x$. The proof is completed.

The group $G$ is said to be **regularly almost periodic at the point** $x \in X$ if given any neighborhood $U$ of $x$ there exists a syndetic subgroup $H$ of $G$ with $xH \subset U$. If $G$ is regularly almost periodic at $x$ for all
$x \in X$, then $G$ is called pointwise regularly almost periodic on $X$.

**Theorem 3.** Let $G$ be distal and let $xG$ be compact zero-dimensional for all $x \in X$. Then $G$ is pointwise regularly almost periodic on $X$.

**Proof.** Let $x \in X$, $U$ a neighborhood of $x$, and consider the action of $G$ on the invariant subset $Y = xG$ of $X$. Let $G_x = \{ g \mid g \in G$ and $xg = x \}$. Then $xhg = xgh = xh(h \in G, g \in G_x)$. Hence by continuity $yg = y(y \in Y, g \in G_x)$. For $k \in K = G|_{G_x}$ and $y \in Y$ set $yk = yg$ where $k = gG_x$. Then $K$ may be regarded as a group of homeomorphisms of $Y$ onto $Y$ such that $xK = Y$. By Theorem 2, $K$ is equicontinuous, therefore $T = \text{closure of } K$ in $Y^x$ is a group of homeomorphisms of $Y$ onto $Y$. Hence $T$ is a topological group.

Let $t, s \in T$ such that $xt = xs$. Then since all the maps involved are continuous and $K$ is commutative, $xkt = xtk = xsk = xks$ ($k \in K$), hence $yt = ys(y \in Y)$, i.e. $t = s$. Consequently, the map $t \rightarrow xt (t \in T)$ of $T$ onto $Y$ is continuous and one-to-one, hence a homeomorphism. Thus $T$ is compact zero-dimensional.

Now let $V = U \cap Y$. Then $N = \{ t \mid t \in T$ and $xt \in V \}$ is a neighborhood of the identity of $T$. Hence there is an open closed invariant subgroup $L$ of $T$ with $L \subset N$. Since $L$ is open, there exists a finite subset $F$ of $K$ with $T = LF$. Set $M = K \cap L$. Then $K = MF$ and $M$ is a syndetic subgroup of $K$, such that $xM \subset V$. Consequently $H$, the inverse image of $M$ under the projection of $K$ onto $G/G_x$ is the required syndetic subgroup of $G$. The proof if completed.

**Theorem 4.** Let $X$ be locally compact metric, let $G$ be distal, let $xG$ be compact zero-dimensional for all $x \in X$, and suppose $G$ contains only countably many subgroups. Then the set of points $R$ at which $G$ is equicontinuous is a residual subset of $X$.

As an example of the type of group being considered in Theorem 4, let $f$ be a homeomorphism of $X$ onto $X$ and set $G = \{ f^n \mid n = 0, \pm 1, \cdots \}$.

**Proof.** Let $[H_n \mid n = 1, 2, \cdots]$ be the set of syndetic subgroups of $G$, and let $\alpha$ be a metric on $X$. For $m, n$ positive integers set $E(n, m) = \{ x \mid xH_n \subset S(x, 1/m) \}$ where $S(x, 1/m) = \{ y \mid \alpha(x, y) \leq 1/m \}$. Then $E(n, m)$ is a closed subset of $X$ for all positive integers $n, m$, and $\bigcup \{ E(n, m) \mid n = 1, \cdots \} = X$ by Theorem 3. Hence $E(m) = \bigcup \{ \text{int } E(n, m) \mid n = 1, \cdots \}$ is an everywhere dense open subset of $X$. Let $E = \cap \{ E(m) \mid m = 1, \cdots \}$. Then $E$ is a residual subset of $X$. Moreover, from the definition of $E$, it follows that given any neighborhood $U$ of $x \in E$ there exist a neighborhood $V$ of $x$ and a syndetic subgroup $A$ of $G$ such that $VA \subset U$. Assume $U$ compact and let $K$ be a compact subset of $G$ such that $AK = G$. Then
\((V \times V)G = (V \times V)AK \subset (U \times U)K \subset (U \times U)G\) shows that \((V \times V)G\) is compact and that

\[ \bigcap [(V \times V)G \mid V \text{ a neighborhood of } x \text{ contained in } U] = \bigcap [(V \times V)G \mid V \text{ a neighborhood of } x \text{ contained in } U]. \]

The proof that \(G\) is equicontinuous at \(x\) is now completed as in Lemma 1 [1]. Thus \(E \subset R\).

The theorems in the second part of the paper suggest the following problems:

(1) Can the assumption that \(G\) is generative be dropped in any of these theorems?

(2) To what extent can the condition of zero-dimensionality be relaxed in Theorem 2?

The example [1] of a ring of concentric circles rotating at different rates about their common center shows that zero-dimensionality must be replaced by some other condition i.e. cannot be dispensed with entirely even if \(X\) is compact. It is conjectured that a sufficient condition would be that \(X\) be minimal under \(G\); that is that \(xG = X\) for all \(x \in X\). If this were true then in the general case where all that is assumed is that \(xG\) is compact for all \(x \in X\), the group \(G\) would be distal if and only if \(G\) is an equicontinuous family of maps of \(xG\) onto \(xG\) for all \(x \in X\).

The notion of distal was considered by Hilbert see [4] in an attempt to give a topological characterization of the concept of a rigid group of motions. According to the above conjecture and Theorem 1 this would be adequate if \(X\) were compact and there existed a point \(x \in X\) with \(xG = X\).

**References**


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Michael Israel Aissen, *A set function defined for convex plane domaines* . . . 383
Robert Ellis, *Distal transformation groups* .......................... 401
Ciprian Foias, *On a commutative extension of a commutative Banach algebra* .......................................................... 407
Jerry William Gaddum, *Linear inequalities and quadratic forms* ........ 411
Allen A. Goldstein and Elliott Ward Cheney, Jr., *A finite algorithm for the solution of consistent linear equations and inequalities and for the Tchebycheff approximation of inconsistent linear equations* ............. 415
Henry Berge Helson, *Conjugate series and a theorem of Paley* .......... 437
Wu-Chung Hsiang, *Abelian groups characterized by their independent subsets* .......................................................... 447
John W. Lamperti, *On the isometries of certain function-spaces* .......... 459
Karel DeLeeuw and Walter Rudin, *Extreme points and extremum problems in H1* .......................................................... 467
Eugene Lukacs, *Some extensions of a theorem of Marcinkiewicz* ........ 487
George W. Mackey, *Multiplicity free representations of finite groups* .... 503
Eben Matlis, *Injective modules over Noetherian rings* .................... 511
John William Neuberger, *Continuous products and nonlinear integral equations* .......................................................... 529
William T. Reid, *A Prüfer transformation for differential systems* ...... 575
Howard L. Rolf, *The free lattice generated by a set of chains* .......... 585
K. M. Saksena, *Inversion and representation theorems for a generalized Laplace integral* .......................................................... 597
Daniel Shanks, *Two theorems of Gauss* .................................. 609
Paul Slepian, *On the Lebesgue area of a doubled map* .................... 613
Otto Szász and Nelson Paul Yeardley, Jr., *The representation of an analytic function by general Laguerre series* ................................. 621
Alan C. Woods, *On two-dimensional convex bodies* ....................... 635