

# Pacific Journal of Mathematics

**AN  $n$ -ARC THEOREM FOR PEANO SPACES**

J. H. V. HUNT

## AN N-ARC THEOREM FOR PEANO SPACES

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**G. T. Whyburn gave an elementary inductive proof of the  $n$ -arc theorem for Peano spaces, which had originally been proved by G. Nobeling and K. Menger. In the course of doing this he gave a necessary and sufficient condition for there to be  $n$  disjoint arcs joining two disjoint closed sets  $A$  and  $B$  in a Peano space  $S$ . In this paper we split the set  $A$  into  $n$  disjoint closed subsets  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$  and give a necessary and sufficient condition for there to be  $n$  disjoint arcs joining  $A_1 \cup A_2 \cup \dots \cup A_n$  and  $B$  in  $S$ , exactly one arc meeting each  $A_i$ . Our proof uses the inductive technique that Whyburn introduced.**

In this paper we present a theorem and a conjecture that arise from [2].

We first recall some definitions from [2]. Let  $A, B$  and  $X$  be closed subsets of a topological space  $S$ . We say that  $X$  *broadly separates*  $A$  and  $B$  in  $S$  if  $S - X$  is the union of two disjoint open sets (possibly empty) one of which contains  $A - X$  and the other of which contains  $B - X$ . The space  $S$  is  *$n$ -point strongly connected between  $A$  and  $B$*  provided no set of less than  $n$  points broadly separates  $A$  and  $B$  in  $S$ . An arc  $ab$  *joins*  $A$  and  $B$  if  $ab \cap A = \{a\}$  and  $ab \cap B = \{b\}$ .

The following theorem, in which we have replaced "completeness" by "local compactness," appears in [2]. It is called the *second  $n$ -arc theorem* by Menger in [1].

**The Second N-Arc Theorem.** *Let  $A$  and  $B$  be disjoint closed subsets of a locally connected, locally compact metric space  $S$ . A necessary and sufficient condition that there be  $n$  disjoint arcs in  $S$  joining  $A$  and  $B$  is that  $S$  be  $n$ -point strongly connected between  $A$  and  $B$ .*

In § 2 we split the closed set  $A$  into  $n$  disjoint closed subsets  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$ . The theorem then gives a necessary and sufficient condition for there to be  $n$  disjoint arcs joining  $A$  and  $B$ , one meeting each  $A_i$ .

In § 3 we split  $A$  and  $B$  into disjoint closed subsets  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$  and  $B_1, B_2, \dots, B_n$ . The conjecture then gives a necessary and sufficient condition for there to be  $n$  disjoint arcs joining  $A$  and  $B$ , one meeting each  $A_i$  and one meeting each  $B_i$ . (I have given a proof of this conjecture for the case  $n = 4$ , which is the first case that offers difficulties, but it is not included here.)

It will be noticed that the space  $S$  in the theorem and in the conjecture is not actually a Peano space, as the title of the article states, but it becomes one when the property of connectedness is placed on it.

2. **The theorem.** Let  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$  and  $B$  be disjoint closed subsets of a topological space  $S$ . We shall say that a subset  $X$  of  $S$  is a *large point of  $S$*  (with respect to  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$ ) if it is a one-point set or one of the sets  $A_i$ . We shall say that  $S$  is  *$n$ -point strongly connected between  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$  and  $B$*  provided the union of less than  $n$  large points does not broadly separate  $A_1 \cup A_2 \cup \dots \cup A_n$  and  $B$  in  $S$ .

We shall say that a system of  $n$  disjoint arcs in  $S$  *joins*

$$A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$$

and  $B$  if each arc joins  $A_1 \cup A_2 \cup \dots \cup A_n$  and  $B$  and each  $A_i$  is joined to  $B$  by exactly one of the arcs.

**THEOREM.** *Let  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$  and  $B$  be disjoint closed subsets of a locally connected, locally compact metric space  $S$ . A necessary and sufficient condition that there be  $n$  disjoint arcs in  $S$  joining*

$$A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$$

to  $B$  is that  $S$  be  *$n$ -point strongly connected between  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$  and  $B$ .*

We need two more definitions for the proof of the theorem. Let  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$  be disjoint closed sets in a topological space  $S$ , and let  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_m$  be disjoint arcs in  $S$ . We shall say that  $A_i$  is a *zero*, a *single* or a *multiple* with respect to  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_m$  according as to whether it meets zero, one or more than one of the arcs  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_m$ . A subarc  $\beta$  of some  $\beta_i$  is said to be a *bridge of  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_m$  spanning  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$*  if  $\beta$  joins some  $A_j$  to some  $A_k$ , for  $j \neq k$ . Clearly there are only a finite number of bridges in  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_m$  spanning  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$ .

*Proof.* Using the terminology and notation of the theorem, it is clear that the condition is necessary for the existence of  $n$  disjoint arcs joining  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$  to  $B$  in  $S$ . So we turn to proving that it is sufficient.

By the arcwise connectivity theorem, the condition is sufficient for  $n = 1$ . So we assume its sufficiency for each positive integer  $< n$  and prove its sufficiency for  $n$  by induction.

By the second  $n$ -arc theorem there are  $n$  disjoint arcs  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_n$  in  $S$  joining  $A_1 \cup A_2 \cup \dots \cup A_n$  and  $B$ . Let  $p$  be the number of singles of  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$  with respect to  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_n$ . We shall suppose that  $p < n$  and show how to construct a second system of  $n$  disjoint arcs joining  $A_1 \cup A_2 \cup \dots \cup A_n$  and  $B$  with respect to which the number of singles is  $p + 1$ . The process can be repeated  $n - p$  times to obtain the desired system of arcs joining  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$  and  $B$ .

Let  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_p$  be the singles,  $A_{p+1}, A_{p+2}, \dots, A_q$  the zeros and  $A_{q+1}, A_{q+2}, \dots, A_n$  the multiples of  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$  with respect to  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_n$ . Since  $p < n$  there is at least one zero and at least one multiple here. We shall construct a system of  $n$  disjoint arcs joining  $A_1 \cup A_2 \cup \dots \cup A_n$  and  $B$  with respect to which  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_{p+1}$  are singles. To this end we consider the locally connected, locally compact space  $S - A_{p+2} \cup A_{p+3} \cup \dots \cup A_n$ . Since it is  $(p + 1)$ -point strongly connected between  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_{p+1}$  and  $B$  and  $p + 1 \leq q < n$ , it follows from the inductive hypothesis that it contains  $p + 1$  disjoint arcs  $\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \dots, \alpha_{p+1}$  joining  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_{p+1}$  and  $B$ . We suppose, further, that  $\alpha_r$  meets  $A_r$  for  $r \leq p + 1$ .

We now use an inductive technique that is familiar from [2]. We relabel  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \dots, \beta_n$  so that  $\beta_r$  meets  $A_r$  for  $r \leq p$ , and we start by defining  $\alpha_r = \alpha_r^1 \cap A_r$  for  $r \leq p + 1$  and  $\beta_r^0 = \beta_r$  for  $r \leq p$ . Now we suppose that we have defined systems of arcs  $\alpha_1^m, \alpha_2^m, \dots, \alpha_{p+1}^m$  (possibly degenerate) and  $\beta_1^m, \beta_2^m, \dots, \beta_p^m$  such that (a)  $\alpha_r \cap A_r \subset \alpha_r^m \subset \alpha_r$  and  $\alpha_r^m$  does not meet  $B \cup \beta_{p+1} \cup \beta_{p+2} \cup \dots \cup \beta_n$ , (b)  $\beta_s \cap B \subset \beta_s^m \subset \beta_s$ , (c) if  $A_r, \beta_s^m$  meet then  $\alpha_r^m$  is degenerate, (d) if  $\alpha_r^m, \beta_s^m$  meet then they meet in a common end point, (e) exactly one of the sets

$$\alpha_1^m \cup A_1, \alpha_2^m \cup A_2, \dots, \alpha_{p+1}^m \cup A_{p+1}$$

fails to meet  $\beta_1^m \cup \beta_2^m \cup \dots \cup \beta_p^m$ , (f) if  $b_m$  is the number of bridges of  $\beta_1^m, \beta_2^m, \dots, \beta_p^m$  that span

$$\alpha_1 \cup A_1, \alpha_2 \cup A_2, \dots, \alpha_{p+1} \cup A_{p+1},$$

then  $b_m < b_{m-1}$  for  $m \geq 1$ . We now show how the induction may be continued to the next stage and how it leads, after at most a finite number of stages, to the construction of  $n$  disjoint arcs joining

$$A_1 \cup A_2 \cup \dots \cup A_n$$

to  $B$  with respect to which  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_{p+1}$  are singles.

We proceed by denoting by  $\alpha_t^m \cup A_t$  the set, given in (e), which does not meet  $\beta_1^m \cup \beta_2^m \cup \dots \cup \beta_p^m$ . We let  $x$  be the first point of  $\alpha_t$  in the direction  $\alpha_t \cap A_t, \alpha_t \cap B$  that belongs to the union of the three sets  $\beta_1^m \cup \beta_2^m \cup \dots \cup \beta_p^m, \beta_{p+1} \cup \beta_{p+2} \cup \dots \cup \beta_n$  and

$$B - \beta_1 \cup \beta_2 \cup \dots \cup \beta_n .$$

We consider separately the three mutually exclusive cases (1)

$$x \in \beta_1^m \cup \beta_2^m \cup \dots \cup \beta_p^m ,$$

(2)  $x \in \beta_{p+1} \cup \beta_{p+2} \cup \dots \cup \beta_n$  and (3)  $x \in B - \beta_1 \cup \beta_2 \cup \dots \cup \beta_n$ .

We first consider case (1) and let  $x \in \beta_u^m$ . We define  $\alpha_r^{m+1} = \alpha_r^m$  for  $r \neq t$ ,  $r \leq p + 1$ , and  $\alpha_t^{m+1}$  as the subarc of  $\alpha_t$  whose endpoints are  $a_t \cap A_t$ ,  $x$ . We define  $\beta_s^{m+1} = \beta_s^m$  for  $s \neq u$ ,  $s \leq p$ , and  $\beta_u^{m+1}$  as the subarc of  $\beta_u^m$  whose endpoints are  $\beta_u \cap B$ ,  $x$ . It is easily seen that (a)—(d) of the inductive hypotheses are preserved. In order to verify that (e) is preserved, we notice that it follows from (a)—(d) that each  $\beta_s^m$  meets at most one  $\alpha_r^m \cup A_r$ . Thus it follows from (e) that the relation  $(\alpha_r^m \cup A_r) \cap \beta_s^m \neq \emptyset$  establishes a one-to-one correspondence between the collections  $\beta_1^m, \beta_2^m, \dots, \beta_p^m$  and

$$\alpha_1^m \cup A_1, \alpha_2^m \cup A_2, \dots, \alpha_{t-1}^m \cup A_{t-1}, \alpha_{t+1}^m \cup A_{t+1}, \dots, \alpha_{p+1}^m \cup A_{p+1} .$$

If we now let  $\alpha_v^m \cup A_v$  be the set that correspond to  $\beta_u^m$  under this relation, it is clear that by (d)  $\alpha_v^{m+1} \cup A_v$  does not meet

$$\beta_1^{m+1} \cup \beta_2^{m+1} \cup \dots \cup \beta_p^{m+1} ,$$

and that it is the only set among  $\alpha_1^{m+1} \cup A_1, \alpha_2^{m+1} \cup A_2, \dots, \alpha_{p+1}^{m+1} \cup A_{p+1}$  with this property. It is clear that (f) is also preserved, since

$$(\beta_u^m - \beta_u^{m+1}) \cup \{x\}$$

is an arc that joins  $\alpha_v^m \cup A_v$  and  $\alpha_t^m \cup A_t$ , and so it contains at least one bridge of  $\beta_1^m, \beta_2^m, \dots, \beta_p^m$  spanning  $\alpha_1 \cup A_1, \alpha_2 \cup A_2, \dots, \alpha_{p+1} \cup A_{p+1}$  that is not contained in  $\beta_1^{m+1} \cup \beta_2^{m+1} \cup \dots \cup \beta_p^{m+1}$ ; i.e.,  $b_{m+1} < b_m$ .

Thus in case (1) the inductive hypotheses are preserved. We notice that it follows from (f) that case (1) can occur for only a finite number of values of  $m$ , since  $b_0$  is finite. Thus case (2) or case (3) must eventually occur. We complete the proof of the theorem by showing that in either of these cases we can readily obtain a system of  $n$  disjoint arcs joining  $A_1 \cup A_2 \cup \dots \cup A_n$  and  $B$  with respect to which  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_{p+1}$  are singles.

We shall only deal with case (2), as case (3) is practically identical to it. Thus we let  $x \in \beta_w$ ,  $p + 1 \leq w \leq n$ . We define  $\alpha$  as the subarc of  $\alpha_t$  whose endpoints are  $a_t \cap A_t$ ,  $x$  and  $\beta$  as the subarc of  $\beta_w$  whose endpoints are  $\beta_w \cap B$ ,  $x$ . We first notice that it follows from (a)—(d) that if  $\alpha_r^m \cup A_r, \beta_s^m$  meet, then  $\alpha_r^m \cup \beta_s^m$  is an arc joining  $A_r, B$ . Since a one-to-one correspondence is established between the collections

$$\alpha_1^m \cup A_1, \alpha_2^m \cup A_2, \dots, \alpha_{t-1}^m \cup A_{t-1}, \alpha_{t+1}^m \cup A_{t+1}, \dots, \alpha_{p+1}^m \cup A_{p+1}$$

and  $\beta_1^m, \beta_2^m, \dots, \beta_p^m$  by the relation  $(\alpha_r^m \cup A_r) \cap \beta_s^m \neq \emptyset$  it follows that the union of

$$\alpha_1^m, \alpha_2^m, \dots, \alpha_{t-1}^m, \alpha_{t+1}^m, \dots, \alpha_{p+1}^m, \beta_1^m, \beta_2^m, \dots, \beta_p^m$$

may be expressed as a union of  $p$  disjoint arcs joining

$$A_1, A_2, \dots, A_{t-1}, A_{t+1}, \dots, A_{p+1}$$

and  $B$ . Furthermore, by (a), (b) these arcs are disjoint from the arcs  $\beta_{p+1}, \beta_{p+2}, \dots, \beta_{w-1}, \beta_{w+1}, \dots, \beta_n, \alpha, \beta$ . Thus the union of

$$\alpha_1^m, \alpha_2^m, \dots, \alpha_{t-1}^m, \alpha_{t+1}^m, \dots, \alpha_{p+1}^m, \beta_1^m, \beta_2^m, \dots, \beta_p^m, \\ \beta_{p+1}, \beta_{p+2}, \dots, \beta_{w-1}, \beta_{w+1}, \dots, \beta_n,$$

$\alpha, \beta$  may be expressed as a union of  $n$  disjoint arcs joining

$$A_1 \cup A_2 \cup \dots \cup A_n$$

and  $B$  with respect to which  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_{p+1}$  are singles. This completes the proof of the theorem.

3. **The conjecture.** Let  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$  and  $B_1, B_2, \dots, B_n$  be disjoint closed subsets of a topological space  $S$ . We shall say that a subset  $X$  of  $S$  is a *large point of  $S$*  (with respect to  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$  and  $B_1, B_2, \dots, B_n$ ) if it is a one-point set, a set  $A_i$ , or a set  $B_i$ . We shall say that  $S$  is  *$n$ -point strongly connected between  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$  and  $B_1, B_2, \dots, B_n$*  provided the union of less than  $n$  large points does not broadly separate  $A_1 \cup A_2 \cup \dots \cup A_n$  and  $B_1 \cup B_2 \cup \dots \cup B_n$  in  $S$ .

We shall say that a system of  $n$  disjoint arcs in  $S$  *joins*

$$A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n \text{ and } B_1, B_2, \dots, B_n$$

if each arc joins  $A_1 \cup A_2 \cup \dots \cup A_n$  and  $B_1 \cup B_2 \cup \dots \cup B_n$ , and each  $A_i$  meets just one arc, and each  $B_i$  meets just one arc.

*Conjecture.* Let  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$  and  $B_1, B_2, \dots, B_n$  be disjoint closed subsets of a locally connected, locally compact metric space  $S$ . A necessary and sufficient condition that there be  $n$  disjoint arcs in  $S$  joining  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$  and  $B_1, B_2, \dots, B_n$  is that  $S$  be  $n$ -point strongly connected between  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$  and  $B_1, B_2, \dots, B_n$ .

The necessity of the condition is again trivial, so it is the sufficiency of the condition that is interesting.

The conjecture is clearly true if the sets

$$A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n \text{ and } B_1, B_2, \dots, B_n$$

are compact. For in this case the quotient space  $Q$  obtained by identifying a pair of points if they belong to a common  $A_i$  or a common  $B_j$  is locally compact, locally connected and metrizable. If  $\pi$  is the natural projection from  $S$  onto  $Q$ , it is clear that  $Q$  is  $n$ -point strongly connected between

$$\pi(A_1) \cup \pi(A_2) \cup \cdots \cup \pi(A_n) \quad \text{and} \quad \pi(B_1) \cup \pi(B_2) \cup \cdots \cup \pi(B_n) .$$

Consequently it follows from the second  $n$ -arc theorem that there are  $n$  disjoint arcs in  $Q$  joining

$$\pi(A_1) \cup \pi(A_2) \cup \cdots \cup \pi(A_n) \quad \text{and} \quad \pi(B_1) \cup \pi(B_2) \cup \cdots \cup \pi(B_n) .$$

The  $\pi$ -inverse of each of these arcs contains a connected closed set which meets both  $A_1 \cup A_2 \cup \cdots \cup A_n$  and  $B_1 \cup B_2 \cup \cdots \cup B_n$ , from which it easily follows that there are  $n$ -disjoint arcs in  $S$  joining  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$  and  $B_1, B_2, \dots, B_n$ .

When some of the sets  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$  or  $B_1, B_2, \dots, B_n$  fail to be compact, the above argument does not suffice as the quotient space  $Q$  is not in general metrizable.

There ought to be a combinatorial proof of this conjecture along the lines of the proof in § 2, which would work equally well whether some of the sets  $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n$  or  $B_1, B_2, \dots, B_n$  fail to be compact or not. Such a proof has been given for the case  $n = 4$ , as was remarked in paragraph § 1.

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# Pacific Journal of Mathematics

Vol. 36, No. 2

December, 1971

George E. Andrews, <i>On a partition problem of H. L. Alder</i> . . . . .	279
Thomas Craig Brown, <i>An interesting combinatorial method in the theory of locally finite semigroups</i> . . . . .	285
Yuen-Kwok Chan, <i>A constructive proof of Sard's theorem</i> . . . . .	291
Charles Vernon Coffman, <i>Spectral theory of monotone Hammerstein operators</i> . . . . .	303
Edward Dewey Davis, <i>Regular sequences and minimal bases</i> . . . . .	323
Israel (Yitzchak) Nathan Herstein and Lance W. Small, <i>Regular elements in P.I.-rings</i> . . . . .	327
Marcel Herzog, <i>Intersections of nilpotent Hall subgroups</i> . . . . .	331
W. N. Hudson, <i>Volterra transformations of the Wiener measure on the space of continuous functions of two variables</i> . . . . .	335
J. H. V. Hunt, <i>An <math>n</math>-arc theorem for Peano spaces</i> . . . . .	351
Arnold Joseph Insel, <i>A decomposition theorem for topological group extensions</i> . . . . .	357
Caulton Lee Irwin, <i>Inverting operators for singular boundary value problems</i> . . . . .	379
Abraham A. Klein, <i>Matrix rings of finite degree of nilpotency</i> . . . . .	387
Wei-Eihn Kuan, <i>On the hyperplane section through a rational point of an algebraic variety</i> . . . . .	393
John Hathway Lindsey, II, <i>On a six-dimensional projective representation of <math>PSU_4(3)</math></i> . . . . .	407
Jorge Martinez, <i>Approximation by archimedean lattice cones</i> . . . . .	427
J. F. McClendon, <i>On stable fiber space obstructions</i> . . . . .	439
Mitsuru Nakai and Leo Sario, <i>Behavior of Green lines at the Kuramochi boundary of a Riemann surface</i> . . . . .	447
Donald Steven Passman, <i>Linear identities in group rings. I</i> . . . . .	457
Donald Steven Passman, <i>Linear identities in group rings. II</i> . . . . .	485
David S. Promislow, <i>The Kakutani theorem for tensor products of <math>W^*</math>-algebras</i> . . . . .	507
Richard Lewis Roth, <i>On the conjugating representation of a finite group</i> . . .	515
Bert Alan Taylor, <i>On weighted polynomial approximation of entire functions</i> . . . . .	523
William Charles Waterhouse, <i>Divisor classes in pseudo Galois extensions</i> . . . . .	541
Chi Song Wong, <i>Subadditive functions</i> . . . . .	549
Ta-Sun Wu, <i>A note on the minimality of certain bitransformation groups</i> . . . . .	553
Keith Yale, <i>Invariant subspaces and projective representations</i> . . . . .	557