Convexity of Balls in Gromov–Hausdorff Space

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Abstract

In this paper we study the space $M$ of all nonempty compact metric spaces considered up to isometry, equipped with the Gromov–Hausdorff distance. We show that each ball in $M$ with center at the one-point space is convex in the weak sense, i.e., every two points of such a ball can be joined by a shortest curve that belongs to this ball; however, such a ball is not convex in the strong sense: it is not true that every shortest curve joining the points of the ball belongs to this ball. We also show that a ball of sufficiently small radius with center at a space of general position is convex in the weak sense.

Introduction

The Gromov–Hausdorff distance was defined in 1975 by D. Edwards in article ”The Structure of Superspace” [1], then in 1981 it was rediscovered by M. Gromov [2].

We will investigate the geometry of the space $M$ of all nonempty compact metric spaces (considered up to isometry) with the Gromov–Hausdorff distance. It is well-known that the Gromov–Hausdorff distance is a metric on $M$ [3]. The Gromov–Hausdorff space is Polish (complete separable) and path-connected. Also A.O. Ivanov, N.K. Nikolaeva and A.A. Tuzhilin showed that the Gromov–Hausdorff metric is strictly intrinsic [4].

The present paper is devoted to the following question: are balls in the Gromov–Hausdorff space convex. There are two concepts: convexity in the weak sense (every two points of such a ball can be joined by a shortest curve that belongs to this ball) and strong sense (each shortest curve connecting any pair of points of the set, belongs to this set). We show that a ball of nonzero radius with center at the one-point space is convex in the weak sense, but not convex in the strong one. We also show that a ball of sufficiently small radius with center at a generic position space is convex in the weak sense.

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1 Preliminaries

Let $X$ be an arbitrary metric space. By $|xy|$ we denote the distance between it is two points $x$ and $y$. For any point $x ∈ X$ and a real number $r > 0$ we denote by $U_ε(x) = \{y ∈ X : |xy| < ε\}$ the open ball of radius $ε$ centered at $x$; for each nonempty $A ⊂ X$ and a real number $r > 0$ we put $U_ε(A) = \bigcup_{a ∈ A}U_ε(a)$ an call it open $r$-neighborhood of the set $A$. The closed ball of radius
Definition 1.7. Let $X$ and $Y$ be two nonempty subsets of a metric space. The Hausdorff distance between $X$ and $Y$ is 

$$d_H(X, Y) = \inf \{\varepsilon > 0 \mid (U_\varepsilon(X) \supset Y) \& (U_\varepsilon(Y) \supset X)\}.$$ 

By $\mathcal{H}(X)$ we denote the family of all nonempty closed bounded subsets of a metric space $X$.

Proposition 1.2. The function $d_H$ is a metric on $\mathcal{H}(X)$.

Proposition 1.3. For any metric space $X$, any $A \in H(X)$, and any nonnegative $r$ we have $B_r(A) \in H(X)$.

Definition 1.4. Let $W$ be any metric space, $a, b \in W$, $|ab| = r$, $s \in [0, r]$. A point $c \in W$ is in $s$-position between $a$ and $b$, if $|ac| = s$ and $|cb| = r - s$.

Proposition 1.5. Let $X$ be any metric space and $A, B \in H(X)$, $r = d_H(A, B), s \in [0, r]$. If a set $C \in \mathcal{H}(X)$ is in $s$-position between $A$ and $B$, then $C \subset B_s(A) \cap B_{r-s}(B)$.

Designation 1.6. In what follows, we denote the set $B_s(A) \cap B_{r-s}(B)$ by $C_s(A, B)$.

Definition 1.7. Let $X$ and $Y$ be metric spaces. A triple $(X', Y', Z)$ that consists of a metric space $Z$ and it is subsets $X'$ and $Y'$ isometric to $X$ and $Y$, respectively, is called a realization of the pair $(X, Y)$. The Gromov–Hausdorff distance $d_{GH}(X, Y)$ between $X$ and $Y$ is the infimum of real numbers $\rho$ such that there exists a realization $(X', Y', Z)$ of the pair $(X, Y)$ with $d_H(X', Y') \leq \rho$.

By $\mathcal{M}$ we denote the set of all compact metric spaces, considered up to an isometry, with the Gromov–Hausdorff distance. The restriction of $d_{GH}(X, Y)$ onto $\mathcal{M}$ is a metric.

A metric on a set $X$ is strictly intrinsic, if any two points $x, y \in X$ are joined by a curve whose length is equal to the distance between $x$ and $y$ (this curve is called shortest).

Theorem 1. Let $X$ be a complete locally compact space with intrinsic metric. Then for any $A, B \in H(X)$, $r = d_H(A, B), s \in [0, r]$, the set $C_s(A, B)$ belongs $H(X)$ and is in $s$-position between $A$ and $B$.

Corollary 1.8. Let $X$ be a complete locally compact space with intrinsic metric ($X$ is boundedly compact with strictly intrinsic metric). Then $\mathcal{H}(X)$ is boundedly compact, and Hausdorff metric is strictly intrinsic.

Corollary 1.9. Let $X$ be a complete locally compact space with intrinsic metric, $A, B \in H(X)$, and $r = d_H(A, B)$. Then $\gamma(s) = C_s(A, B), s \in [a, b]$ is a shortest curve connecting $A$ and $B$, where the length of curve $\gamma$ is equal to $d_H(A, B)$, and the parameter $s$ is natural.

Definition 1.10. A nonempty subset $M$ of a metric space $X$ with strictly intrinsic metric is convex in the weak sense, if for any two points from $M$, some shortest curve connecting them belongs to $M$.

Definition 1.11. A nonempty subset $M$ of a metric space $X$ with strictly intrinsic metric is convex in the strong sense, if for any two points from $M$, any shortest curve connecting them belongs to $M$. 
Let $X$ and $Y$ be arbitrary nonempty sets. Recall that a relation between the sets $X$ and $Y$ is a subset of the Cartesian product $X \times Y$. By $\mathcal{P}(X, Y)$ we denote the set of all nonempty relations between $X$ and $Y$. Let $\pi_X : (X, Y) \to X$ and $\pi_Y : (X, Y) \to Y$ be the canonical projections, i.e., $\pi_X (x, y) = x$ and $\pi_Y (x, y) = y$. In the same way we denote the restrictions of the canonical projections to each relation $\sigma \in \mathcal{P}(X, Y)$.

Let us consider each relation $\sigma \in \mathcal{P}(X, Y)$ as a multivalued mapping whose domain may be less than $X$. Then, similarly with the case of mappings, for any $x \in X$ and any $A \subset X$ their images $\sigma(x)$ and $\sigma(A)$ are defined, and for any $y \in Y$ and any $B \subset Y$ their preimages $\sigma^{-1}(y)$ and $\sigma^{-1}(B)$ are also defined.

**Definition 1.12.** A relation $R \subset X \times Y$ between $X$ and $Y$ is called a correspondence, if the restrictions of the canonical projections $\pi_X$ and $\pi_Y$ onto $R$ are surjective. By $\mathcal{R}(X, Y)$ we denote the set of all correspondences between $X$ and $Y$.

**Definition 1.13.** Let $X$ and $Y$ be arbitrary metric spaces. The distortion $\text{dis} \sigma$ of a relation $\sigma \in \mathcal{P}(X, Y)$ is the value

$$\text{dis} \sigma = \sup \left\{ ||xx'| - |yy'|| : (x, y), (x', y') \in \sigma \right\}.$$

**Proposition 1.14.** For any metric spaces $X$ and $Y$ we have

$$d_{GH}(X, Y) = \frac{1}{2} \inf \{ \text{dis} R : R \in \mathcal{R}(X, Y) \}.$$

**Definition 1.15.** A relation $R \in \mathcal{R}(X, Y)$ is called optimal, if $d_{GH}(X, Y) = \frac{1}{2} \text{dis} R$. The set of all optimal correspondences between $X$ and $Y$ is denoted by $\mathcal{R}_{opt}(X, Y)$.

**Proposition 1.16.** For any $X, Y \in \mathcal{M}$ we have $\mathcal{R}_{opt}(X, Y) \neq \emptyset$.

**Proposition 1.17.** For any $X, Y \in \mathcal{M}$ and each $R \in \mathcal{R}_{opt}(X, Y)$ the family $R_t$, $t \in [0, 1]$, of compact metric spaces such that $R_0 = X$, $R_1 = Y$, and for $t \in (0, 1)$ the space $R_t$ is equal to $(R, \rho_t)$, where $\rho_t((x, y), (x', y')) = (1-t)||xx'| + t||yy'||$, is a shortest curve in $\mathcal{M}$ connecting $X$ and $Y$.

For a metric space $X$ by $\text{diam}(X)$ we denote its diameter:

$$\text{diam}(X) = \sup_{x, x' \in X} ||xx'||.$$

Let $\Delta_1$ be a single-point space.

**Assertion 1.18.** For any metric space $X$ we have $d_{GH}(X, \Delta_1) = \text{diam}(X)/2$.

**Definition 1.19.** We say that a finite metric space $M$ is in general position, if all its nonzero distances are distinct, and all triangle inequalities are strict.

For a metric space $X$ we define the following values:

$$s(X) = \inf \{|xy| : x \neq y\}, \quad e(X) = \inf \left\{ ||xy| - |zw|| : x \neq y, z \neq w, \{x, y\} \neq \{z, w\} \right\}.$$
2. The main results

Proposition 1.20 ([7]). Let $M = \{1, \ldots, n\}$ be a metric space. Then for any $0 < \varepsilon \leq s(M)/2$ and each $X \in M$ such that $2d_{GH}(M, X) < \varepsilon$, there exists a partition $X = \sqcup_{i=1}^{n} X_i$ unique up to numeration by points of $M$, possessing the following properties:

(1) $\text{diam } X_i < \varepsilon$;

(2) for any $i, j \in M$ and any $x \in X_i$ and $x' \in X_j$ (here the indices $i$ and $j$ may be equal to each other) it holds $|xx'| - |ij| < \varepsilon$.

Proposition 1.21 ([7]). Let $M = \{1, \ldots, n\}$ be a metric space. Then for any $0 < \varepsilon \leq s(M)/2$, any $X \in M$, $2d_{GH}(M, X) < \varepsilon$, and each $R \in R_{\text{opt}}(M, X)$ the family $\{R(i)\}_{i=1}^{n}$ is a partition of the set $X$, satisfying the following properties:

(1) $\text{diam } X_i < \varepsilon$;

(2) for any $i, j \in M$, $x \in R(i), x' \in R(j)$ it holds $|xx'| - |ij| < \varepsilon$.

Moreover, if $R'$ is another optimal correspondence between $M$ and $X$, then the partitions $\{R(i)\}_{i=1}^{n}$ and $\{R'(i)\}_{i=1}^{n}$ may differ from each other only by numerations generated by the correspondences $i \mapsto R(i)$ and $i \mapsto R'(i)$.

Definition 1.22 ([7]). The family $\{X_i\}$ from Proposition 1.20 we call the canonical partition of the space $X$ with respect to $M$.

Proposition 1.23 ([7]). Let $M = \{1, \ldots, n\}$ be a metric space, $n \geq 3$, $e(M) > 0$. Choose an arbitrary $0 < \varepsilon \leq \frac{1}{4}\min\{s(M), e(M)\}$, any $X, Y \in M$, $2d_{GH}(M, X) < \varepsilon$, $2d_{GH}(M, Y) < \varepsilon$, and let $\{X_i\}$ and $\{Y_i\}$ denote the canonical partitions of $X$ and $Y$, respectively, w.r.t. $M$. Then for each $R \in R_{\text{opt}}(X, Y)$ there exist $R_i \in R(X_i, Y_i)$ such that $R = \sqcup_{i=1}^{n} R_i$.

2 The main results

Theorem 2. A ball with center at the one-point metric space is convex in the weak sense.

Proof. Let $B = B_r(\Delta_1)$ be a closed ball with center at $\Delta_1$, where $r > 0$, and $X, Y \in B$. By Proposition 1.18

$$d_{GH}(\Delta_1, X) = \text{diam}(X)/2 \leq r, \quad d_{GH}(\Delta_1, Y) = \text{diam}(Y)/2 \leq r.$$ 

We choose some correspondence $R \in R_{\text{opt}}(X, Y)$ which exists by Proposition 1.10. We construct the space $R_t = (R, \rho_t)$ with metric $\rho_t((x, y), (x', y')) = (1 - t)|xx'| + t|yy'|$, where $t \in (0, 1)$, and put $R_0 = X$, $R_1 = Y$. Then, by Proposition 1.17 the curve $R_t$, $t \in [0, 1]$, connecting $X$ and $Y$ is shortest.

We show that the curve $R_t$ lies in the ball $B$. To do that, we estimate the Gromov–Hausdorff distance between the center $\Delta_1$ and the space $R_t$. We have

$$d_{GH}(\Delta_1, R_t) = \text{diam}(R_t)/2.$$ 

For any $x, x' \in X$ and $y, y' \in Y$ it holds

$$|xx'| \leq \text{diam } X \leq \max(\text{diam } X, \text{diam } Y); \quad |yy'| \leq \text{diam } Y \leq \max(\text{diam } X, \text{diam } Y).$$
We show that this curve does not lie entirely in the ball $\gamma$ then the length of the curve
so
\[
\leq (1 - t) \max(\text{diam } X, \text{diam } Y) + t \max(\text{diam } X, \text{diam } Y) = \max(\text{diam } X, \text{diam } Y),
\]
thus, $d_{GH}(\Delta_1, R_t) \leq \frac{1}{2} \max(\text{diam } X, \text{diam } Y) = \max(d_{GH}(\Delta_1, X), d_{GH}(\Delta_1, Y)) \leq r$. \hfill \Box

**Theorem 3.** A ball with center at the one-point metric space is not convex in the strong sense.

**Proof.** To prove that, we construct a shortest curve connecting some spaces $A, B \in B_r(\Delta_1) \subset \mathcal{M}$, but not containing in $B_r(\Delta_1)$. Let $A = [0, 2r] \subset \mathbb{R}$ and $B = \{0, 2r\} \subset \mathbb{R}$. We choose some correspondence $R \in \mathcal{R}_{\text{opt}}(B, A)$ (it exists by Proposition 1.10) and estimate it:

\[
\text{dis } R = \sup \left\{ |aa'| : a, a' \in R(0); |aa'| : a, a' \in R(2r); |2r - |aa'|| : a \in R(0), a' \in R(2r) \right\} = \sup \left\{ \text{diam } R(0), \text{diam } R(2r), |2r - |aa'|| : a \in R(0), a' \in R(2r) \right\} \leq 2r.
\]

1) If $R(0) \cap R(2r) \neq \emptyset$, then choosing $a = a' \in R(0) \cap R(2r)$, we have dis $R = 2r$.
2) If $R(0) \cap R(2r) = \emptyset$, then for any $\varepsilon > 0$ there exist $a \in R(0), a' \in R(2r)$, such that $|aa'| < \varepsilon$, thus dis $R = 2r$.

Then, by Proposition 1.11 we have $d_{GH}(A, B) = r$. Since $d_H(A, B) = r$, it holds $d_{GH}(A, B) = d_H(A, B)$. For $t \in [0, r]$ we put $\gamma(t) = C_t(A, B) = B_t(A) \cap B_{r-t}(B)$. Applying the corollary 1.9 we see, that $\gamma(t)$ is a shortest curve in $\mathcal{H}(\mathbb{R})$.

For any partition $t_0 = 0 < t_1 < \cdots < t_n = r$ of the segment $[0, r]$ we have

\[
d_{GH}(A, B) \leq \sum_{i=1}^{n} d_{GH}(\gamma(t_{i-1}), \gamma(t_i)) \leq \sum_{i=1}^{n} d_H(\gamma(t_{i-1}), \gamma(t_i)) = d_H(A, B) = d_{GH}(A, B),
\]
so

\[
d_{GH}(A, B) = \sum_{i=1}^{n} d_{GH}(\gamma(t_{i-1}), \gamma(t_i)).
\]

Since the length of the curve $\gamma$ is equal to the supremum of the sums $\sum_{i=1}^{n} d_{GH}(\gamma(t_{i-1}), \gamma(t_i))$ over all possible partitions of the segment $[0, r]$, and all these sums are the same and equal $d_{GH}(A, B)$, then the length of the curve $\gamma$ is equal to $d_{GH}(A, B)$, therefore $\gamma$ is a shortest curve.

We show that this curve does not lie entirely in the ball $B_r(\Delta_1)$. To do that we calculate $d_{GH}(C_t(A, B), \Delta_1)$. By Assertion 1.15 $d_{GH}(C_t(A, B), \Delta_1) = \frac{\text{diam } C_t(A, B)}{2}$. Notice that for $t = \frac{r}{2}$ we have diam$(C_{\frac{r}{2}}(A, B)) = 3r$, so $d_{GH}(C_{\frac{r}{2}}(A, B), \Delta_1) = 3r/2 > r$, thus $\gamma(r/2) \notin B_r(\Delta_1)$. \hfill \Box

**Theorem 4.** For any space $M \in \mathcal{M}$ in general position and any $0 < r \leq \frac{1}{4} \min\{s(M), e(M)\}$ the ball with center at $M$ and radius $r$ is convex in the weak sense.

**Proof.** Let $\varepsilon = 2r$, $M = \{1, \ldots, n\}$, and $X, Y \in B_{\varepsilon/2}(M)$. By Proposition 1.20 there exist unique (up to a numeration of points of $M$) partitions $X = \bigsqcup_{i=1}^{n} X_i$ and $Y = \bigsqcup_{i=1}^{n} Y_i$, possessing the following properties: for any $x_i \in X_i, x_j \in X_j, y_i \in Y_i, y_j \in Y_j$ it holds $|x_i x_j| - |i j| < \varepsilon$ and
2. The main results

\[ |y_i y_j| - |ij| < \varepsilon. \]

By Proposition 1.23 for any \( R \in R_{\text{opt}}(X, Y) \) there are \( R_i \in R(X_i, Y_i) \), where \( R = \bigcup_{i=1}^n R_i \). We choose some correspondence \( R \in R_{\text{opt}}(X, Y) \) (it exists by Proposition 1.16 it exists).

We construct a shortest curve \( R_t \), as in Proposition 1.17. To prove convexity in the weak sense, we show that \( d_{\text{GH}}(M, R_t) \leq \varepsilon/2 \). Let us introduce a the correspondence \( R' \in R(M, R_t) \) us \( R' = \bigcup_{i=1}^n \{ i \} \times R_i \). We have

\[
d_{\text{GH}}(M, R_t) \leq \frac{1}{2} \text{dis} R' = \frac{1}{2} \sup \left\{ |ij| - |p_ip_j| : i, j \in M, (i, p_i), (j, p_j) \in R' \right\} =
\leq \frac{1}{2}(1-t)\sup \left\{ |ij| - |x_ix_j| \right\} + \frac{1}{2}t\sup \left\{ |ij| - |y_iy_j| \right\} \leq \frac{1}{2}(1-t)\varepsilon + \frac{1}{2}t\varepsilon = \varepsilon/2.
\]

\[
\leq \frac{1}{2}(1-t)\varepsilon + \frac{1}{2}t\varepsilon = \frac{\varepsilon}{2}.
\]

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