



algebraic K -theory of orbispaces

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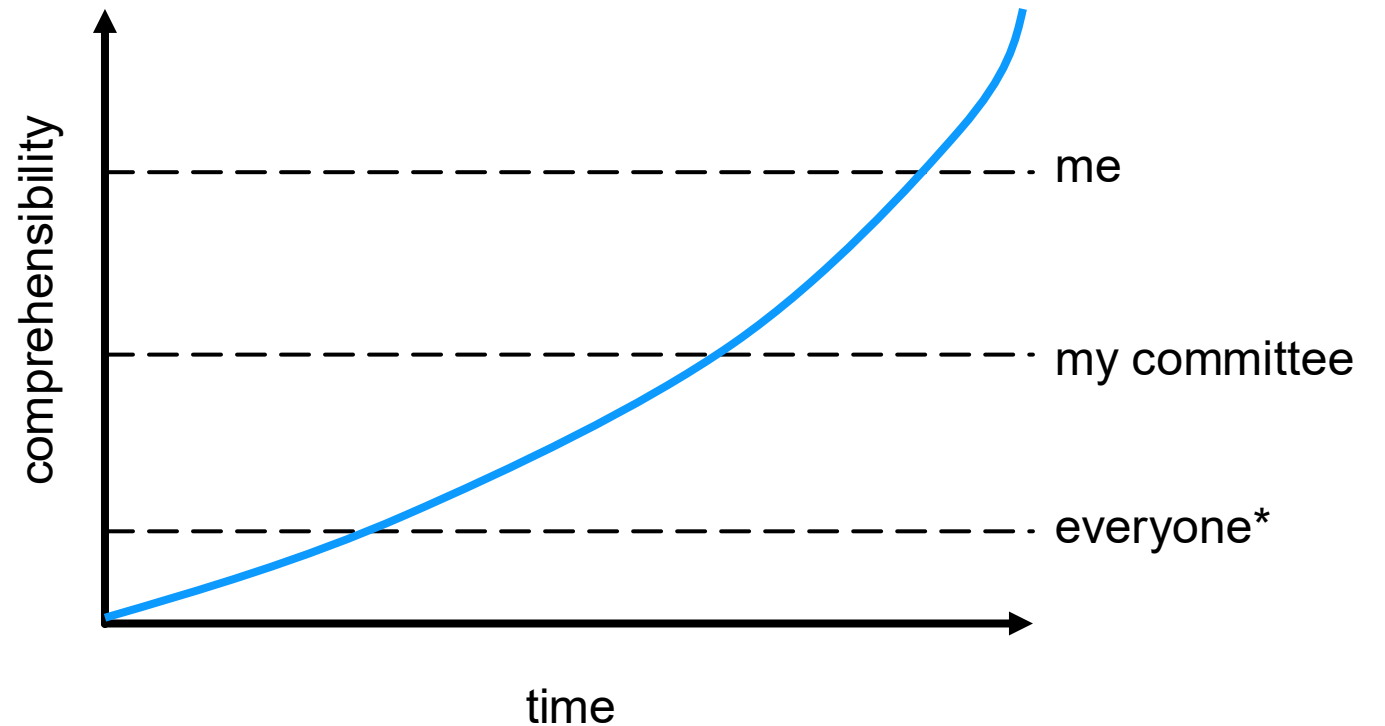
April 16th, 2026

overarching goal

develop and study **homotopy invariants** of **orbifolds** that arise via Waldhausen's **higher algebraic K -theory**

talk outline

- **Part I: Introduction**
 - What are these three things?
 - What is known about them?
- **Part II: Main results**
 - What did I do with them?
 - What's next?

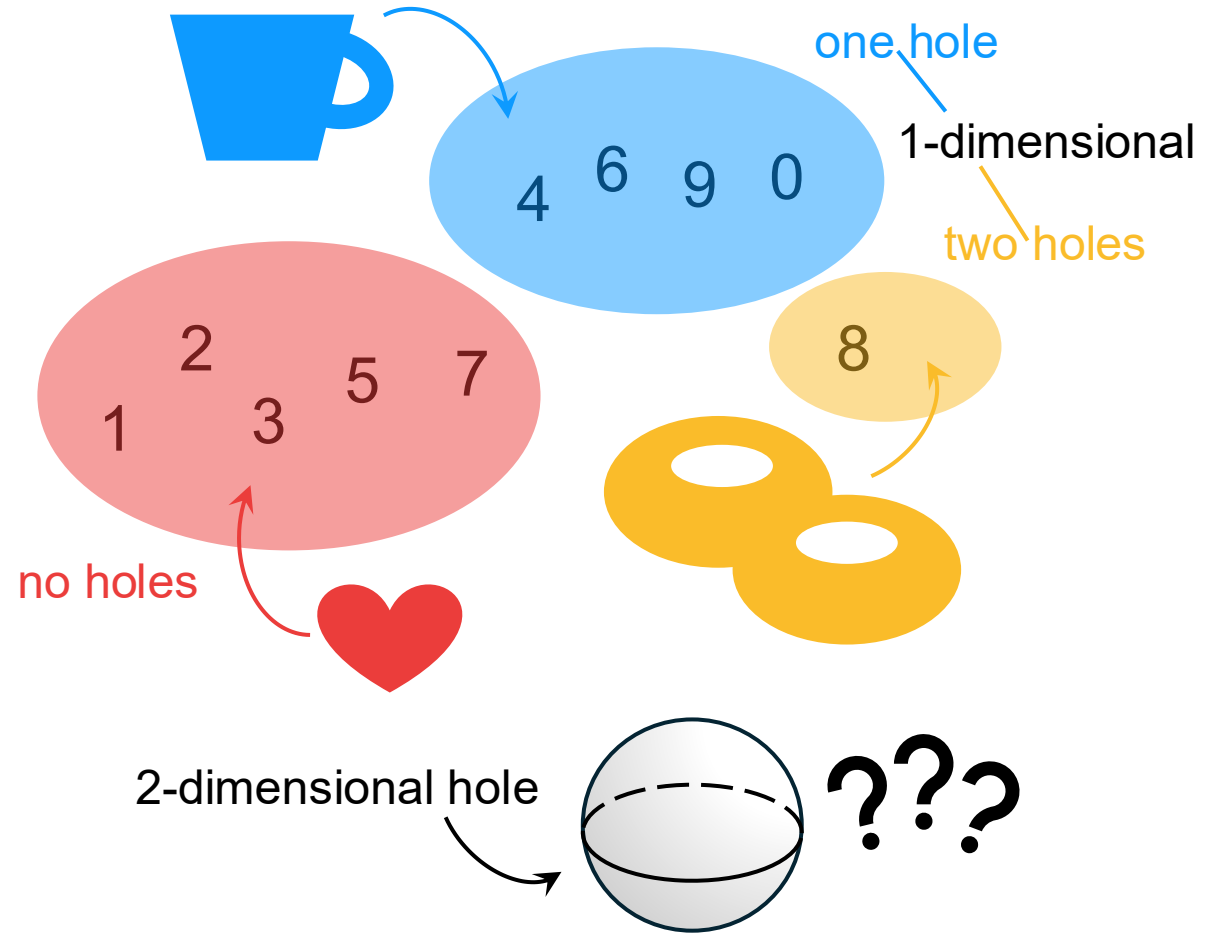


overarching goal

develop and study **homotopy invariants** of orbifolds that arise via Waldhausen's higher algebraic K -theory

idea

homotopy invariants detect the "essential structure" of a shape



overarching goal

develop and study **homotopy invariants** of orbifolds that arise via Waldhausen's higher algebraic K -theory

key example

the *Euler characteristic* is the alternating sum

$$\chi = b_0 - b_1 + b_2 - \dots$$

where b_n is the number of " n -dimensional holes"

$$\chi \heartsuit = 1 - 0 + 0 = 1$$

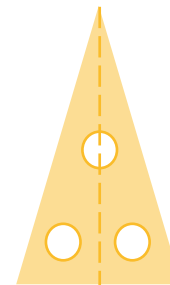
$$\chi \cup = 1 - 1 + 0 = 0$$

$$\chi \text{🍩} = 1 - 2 + 0 = -1$$

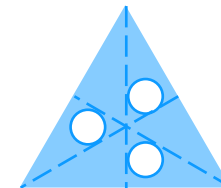
$$\chi \text{😄} = 1 - 0 + 1 = 2$$

motivating idea

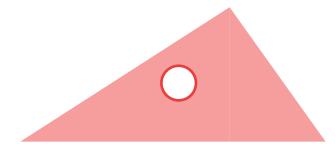
develop refined "equivariant" invariants that see symmetries



reflectional symmetry
(C_2 -symmetry)



reflectional + rotational symmetry
(D_6 -symmetry)



no symmetry
(e-symmetry)

specifically: invariants that see "orbispace" structure

e.g. count "symmetric" holes

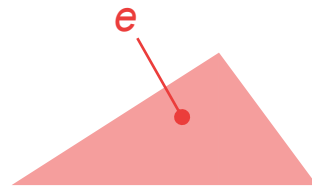
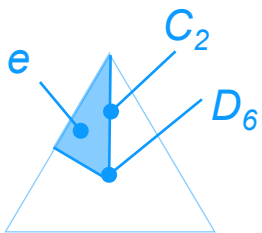
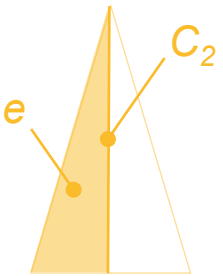
overarching goal

develop and study homotopy invariants of orbifolds that arise via Waldhausen's higher algebraic K -theory

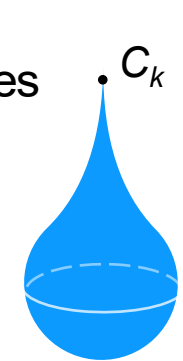
orbifolds

examples

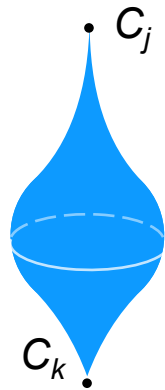
spaces X with G -action give global quotient orbispaces $X//G$



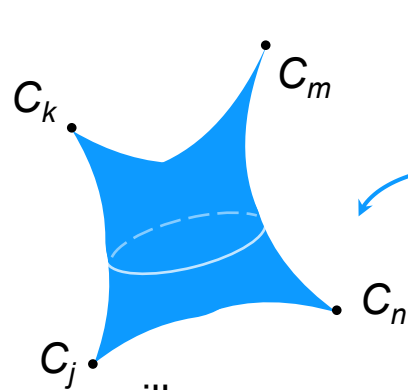
examples



teardrop



spindle



pillowcase

definition (Gusein-Zade, Luengo, Melle-Hernandez)

the universal Euler characteristic is

$$\chi(X) = \sum_{[G]} \chi(X^{(G)}) [G] \in \mathcal{A}$$

??

(global Burnside ring)

$$\chi(\text{teardrop}) = [e] + [C_k]$$

$$\chi(\text{spindle}) = [C_k] + [C_j]$$

$$\chi(\text{pillowcase}) = -2[e] + [C_k] + [C_j] + [C_n] + [C_m]$$

$$(2 - \#\text{singularities})[e] + \sum [C_{k_i}]$$

overarching goal

develop and study homotopy invariants of orbifolds that arise via Waldhausen's **higher algebraic K-theory**

recall



if $f: CW_*^{\text{fin}} \rightarrow R$ is:

1. homotopy invariant
2. reduced $f(*) = 0$
3. additive $f(X) = f(A) + f(X/A)$

then f factors through the (reduced) Euler characteristic

observation (Waldhausen)

the Euler characteristic gives an isomorphism $K_0(CW_*^{\text{fin}}) \cong \mathbb{Z}$

definition (Gusein-Zade, Luengo, Melle-Hernandez)

the *universal Euler characteristic* is

$$\chi(X) = \sum_{[G]} \chi(X^{(G)}) [G] \in \mathcal{A}$$

theorem (Gusein-Zade, Luengo, Melle-Hernandez)

the universal Euler characteristic has an analogous characterization

analogous observation

the (reduced) universal Euler characteristic gives an isomorphism $K_0(\text{orbi}CW_*^{\text{fin}}) \cong \mathcal{A}$

overarching goal

develop and study **homotopy invariants** of **orbifolds** that arise via Waldhausen's **higher algebraic K -theory**

observation (Waldhausen)

the Euler characteristic gives an isomorphism $K_0(\mathrm{CW}_*^{\mathrm{fin}}) \cong \mathbb{Z}$

Waldhausen's algebraic K -theory of spaces

every space X determines a spectrum $A(X)$ that contains homotopical & geometric information

stable parametrized h -cobordism theorem
(Waldhausen, Jahren, Rognes)

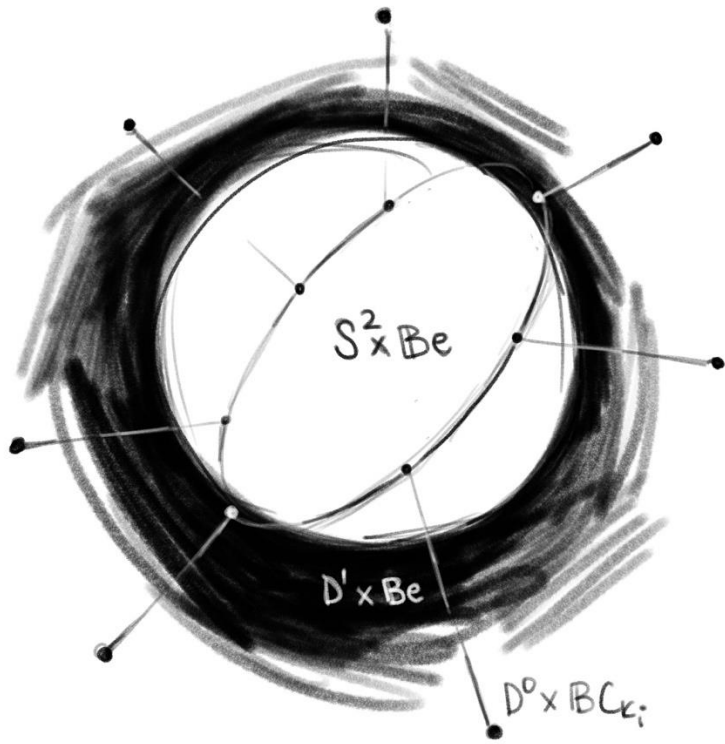
when X is a smooth manifold, $A(X)$ is related to a space of h -cobordisms

analogous observation

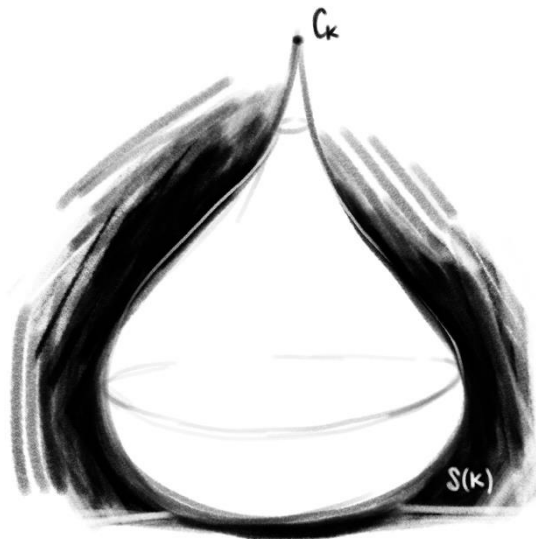
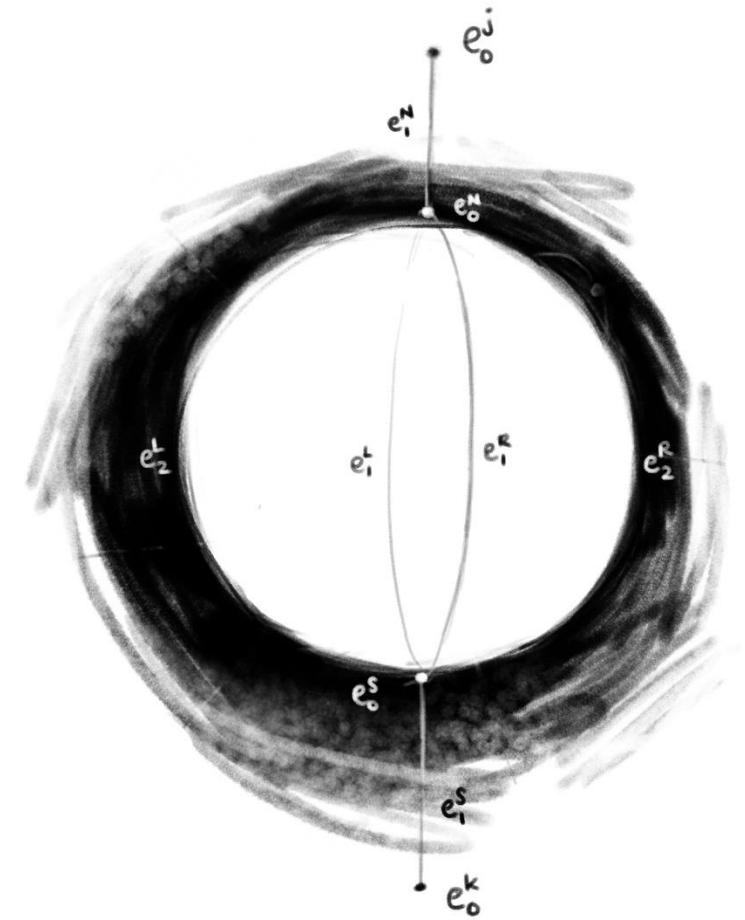
the (reduced) universal Euler characteristic gives an isomorphism $K_0(\mathrm{orbiCW}_*^{\mathrm{fin}}) \cong \mathcal{A}$

motivating questions for my work

1. if X is an orbispace, what structure does $A(X)$ have?
2. what kind of geometric & homotopical invariants does it contain?
3. connection to orbifold h -cobordisms?



overview +
summary of main
results



a table of analogies

motivating question #1

if X is an orbispace, what structure does $A(X)$ have?

theorem

if X is an orbispace, then $A(X)$ refines to an *orbispectrum*

theorem

orbispectra are “globally defined” spectral Mackey functors

corollary

the homotopy groups of an orbispectrum form a globally defined Mackey functor

(aka *biset* functor)

non-equivariant	G-equivariant	orbivariant
space $X \in \mathcal{S}$	G-space $X \in \mathcal{S}_G$ $\mathcal{S}_G = \text{Fun}(O_G^{op}, \mathcal{S})$ (Elmendorf)	orbispace $X \in \mathcal{S}_O$ $\mathcal{S}_O = \text{Fun}(O^{op}, \mathcal{S})$ (Gepner--Henriques)
spectrum $E \in \mathcal{S}p$ infinite loop space $E \simeq \Omega^n X_n$	G-spectrum $E_G \in \mathcal{S}p_G$ G-infinite loop space $E_G \simeq \Omega^V X_V$ spectral G-Mackey functors $E_G \in \text{Mack}_G(\mathcal{S}p)$ (Guillou—May, Barwick)	orbispectrum $\underline{E} \in \mathcal{S}p_O$ G-infinite loop space for every G $\text{res}_G \underline{E} \simeq \Omega^V X_V$ (Schwede, Cnossen) spectral globally-defined Mackey functors $\underline{E} \in \text{Mack}_O(\mathcal{S}p)$
homotopy groups $\pi_k(E) \in \text{Ab}$	homotopy Mackey functors $\pi_k(E) \in \text{Mack}_G(\text{Ab})$	homotopy biset functors $\pi_k(E) \in \text{Mack}_O(\text{Ab})$

theorem

orbispectra are “globally defined” spectral Mackey functors

corollary

the homotopy groups of an orbispectrum form a globally defined Mackey functor

(aka biset functor)

theorem

$\text{Mack}_{\text{orb}}(\text{Ab}) \simeq \text{Bouc/Webb's globally-defined Mackey functors}$

definition (Bouc, Webb)

a globally-defined Mackey functor \underline{A} is specified by:

- an Abelian group $\underline{A}(G)$ for each finite group G
(e.g. representation ring, group cohomology, ...)
- for each $H \hookrightarrow G$, restrictions and transfers

$$\underline{A}(H) \begin{array}{c} \xleftarrow{T} \\ \xrightarrow{R} \end{array} \underline{A}(G)$$

definition

let \mathcal{C} be an (infinity) category with products and define

$$\text{Mack}_0(\mathcal{C}) := \text{Fun}^\times(\text{Span}(\mathcal{F})^{op}, \mathcal{C})$$

↙ coproducts-to-products

finite groupoids + faithful functors

idea

$$BG \mapsto \underline{A}(G)$$

$$(BG \leftarrow BH = BH) \mapsto T$$

$$(BH = BH \rightarrow BG) \mapsto R$$

remark: $\text{Span}(\mathcal{F})$ is like the “un-group completed” version of Bouc/Webb’s biset category

theorem

orbispectra are “globally defined”
spectral Mackey functors

corollary

the homotopy groups of an
orbispectrum form a globally defined
Mackey functor

(aka *biset* functor)

theorem

$\text{Mack}_{\text{orb}}(\text{Ab}) \simeq$ Bouc/Webb’s
globally-defined Mackey functors

definition (Bouc, Webb)

a

sp

side quest

- every globally-defined Mackey functor \underline{A} gives an *Eilenberg—MacLane orbispectrum* \underline{HA}
-

theorem

these orbispectra represent ordinary
cohomology theories for orbispaces

$$\tilde{H}_* \left(\left(\text{blue drop with } C_k \text{ label} \right), \underline{A} \right) \cong \begin{cases} \underline{A}(C_k) & *= 0, \\ 0 & *= 1, * \geq 3, \\ \underline{A}(e) & *= 2 \end{cases}$$

(Bouc, Webb) ...
(BH = BH → BG) ↦ R

group completed” version of
Bouc/Webb’s biset category

theorem

orbispectra are “globally defined” spectral Mackey functors


theorem

every connective orbispectrum is the algebraic K -theory of some “globally defined” categorical Mackey functor

definition/theorem

if X is an orbispace, then $A(X)$ refines to an orbispectrum $\underline{A}(X)$

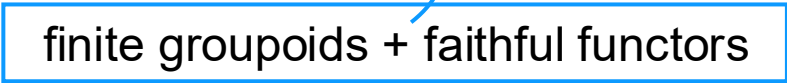
$$\underline{A}(X) \rightsquigarrow \{A_G(\text{res}_G(X))\}_G$$

 G -equivariant K -theory of Malkiewich--Merling

definition

let \mathcal{C} be an (infinity) category with products and define

$$\text{Mack}_o(\mathcal{C}) := \text{Fun}^\times(\text{Span}(\mathcal{F})^{op}, \mathcal{C})$$

 finite groupoids + faithful functors

idea (Bohmann--Osorno, Barwick, Malkiewich--Merling, ...)

let $K: \mathcal{C} \rightarrow \text{Sp}$ be an algebraic K -theory functor ($\mathcal{C} = \text{Sym}, \text{Wald}, \text{Pr}_{\text{st}}^L, \dots$) and define

$$K_o: \text{Mack}_o(\mathcal{C}) \rightarrow \text{Mack}_o(\text{Sp})$$

examples

- $\mathbb{S}_o \simeq K_o(\text{finite groupoids})$
- suspension orbispectrum of $X \simeq K_o(\text{finite groupoids over } X)$
- $\underline{HA} \simeq K_o(\underline{A})$

motivating question #1

if X is an orbispace, what structure does $A(X)$ have?

definition/theorem

if X is an orbispace, then $A(X)$ refines to an orbispectrum $\underline{A}(X)$

$$\underline{A}(X) \rightsquigarrow \{A_G(\text{res}_G(X))\}_G$$

motivating question #2

what kind of geometric & homotopical invariants does $A_{orb}(X)$ contain?

corollary (Lück, C.—Chan—Mejia)

the G -fixed points of $\underline{A}(X)$ house G -equivariant invariants

example: $X=*$

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 & & \chi_G \in \pi_0 \underline{A}(*)^G \cong K_0(GCW_*^{\text{fin}}) \\
 & \nearrow & \downarrow \\
 \pi_0 A_{orb}(X) \cong & & \\
 \chi_{orb} \in K_0(\text{orbi-CW}_*^{\text{fin}}) \cong \mathcal{A} & & \\
 & \searrow & \\
 & & \chi \in \pi_0 \underline{A}(*)^e \cong K_0(CW_*^{\text{fin}})
 \end{array}$$

theorem

there is a complementary spectrum $A_{orb}(X)$ which contains genuine orbispace invariants, and a map

$$A_{orb}(X) \rightarrow \lim_G \underline{A}(X)^G$$

motivating question #2

what kind of geometric & homotopical invariants does $A_{orb}(X)$ contain?

answer

versions of the Euler characteristic and Wall's finiteness obstruction which can be understood via a family of non-equivariant invariants

conjecture

$\pi_1 A_{orb}(X)$ contains a version of Whitehead torsion that sees "simple" equivalences

motivating question #3

what connection do these constructions have to orbifold h -cobordisms?

theorem

there is a complementary spectrum $A_{orb}(X)$ which contains genuine orbispace invariants, and a map

$$A_{orb}(X) \rightarrow \lim_G \underline{A}(X)^G$$

theorem (using jt. work with Chan—Chedalavada—Mejia)

there is a splitting $A_{orb}(X) \simeq V_{[G]} A(X_{h\Gamma(G)}^G)$

example: $X = *$

$$A_{orb}(*) \simeq V_{[G]} A(B\text{Out}(G) \times B^2Z(G))$$

built from "G-part" of X

conjecture

$\pi_1 A_{orb}(X)$ contains a version of Whitehead torsion that sees “simple” equivalences

motivating question #3

what connection do these constructions have to orbifold h -cobordisms?

conjecture

under suitable dimension hypotheses, Whitehead torsion classifies orbifold h -cobordisms

conjecture

$A_{orb}(X)$ fits into a stable parametrized orbifold h -cobordism theorem

theorem

there is a complementary spectrum $A_{orb}(X)$ which contains genuine orbispaces invariants, and a map

$$A_{orb}(X) \rightarrow \lim_G \underline{A}(X)^G$$

theorem (using jt. work with Chan—Chedalavada—Mejia)

there is a splitting $A_{orb}(X) \simeq V_{[G]} A(X_{h\Gamma(G)}^G)$

stable parametrized h -cobordism theorem

if M is a manifold, then there is a (split) fiber sequence

$$\Sigma_+^\infty M \rightarrow A(M) \rightarrow \text{Wh}(M)$$

where $\Omega^{\infty+1} \text{Wh}(M) \simeq \mathcal{H}^\infty(M)$ is a space of stable h -cobordisms

thank you all 