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Grid Minors of Graphs on the Torus

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Abstract. We show that any graph $G$ embedded on the torus with face-width $r \geq 5$ contains the toroidal $\lceil \frac{3}{2}r \rceil$-grid as a minor. (The face-width of $G$ is the minimum value of $|C \cap G|$ where $C$ ranges over all homotopically nontrivial closed curves on the torus. The toroidal $k$-grid is the product $C_k \times C_k$ of two copies of a $k$-circuit $C_k$.) For each fixed $r \geq 5$, the value $|\lceil \frac{3}{2}r \rceil|$ is largest possible. This applies to a theorem of Robertson and Seymour showing, for each graph $H$ embedded on any compact surface $S$, the existence of a number $\rho_H$ such that every graph $G$ embedded on $S$ with face-width at least $\rho_H$ contains $H$ as a minor. Our result implies that for $H = C_k \times C_k$ embedded on the torus, $\rho_H := \lceil \frac{3}{2}k \rceil$ is the smallest possible value.

Our proof is based on deriving a result in the geometry of numbers. It implies that for any symmetric convex body $K$ in $\mathbb{R}^2$ one has $\lambda_2(K) \cdot \lambda_2(K^*) \leq \frac{3}{2}$, and that this bound is smallest possible. (Here $\lambda_2(K)$ denotes the minimum value of $\lambda$ such that $\lambda \cdot K$ contains $i$ linearly independent integer vectors. $K^*$ is the polar convex body.)

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1. Introduction

For any graph $G$ embedded on a surface $S$, the face-width (or representativity) $\rho(G)$ of $G$ is the minimum of $|C \cap G|$, where $C$ ranges over all homotopically nontrivial closed curves on $S$. Robertson and Seymour [1] showed:

(1) for each graph $H$ embedded on a compact surface $S$ there exists an integer $\rho_H$ so that each graph $G$ embedded on $S$ with $\rho(G) \geq \rho_H$ contains $H$ as a minor.

In this paper we determine the smallest value of $\rho_H$ for a certain class of graphs $H$ embedded on the torus, viz. the toroidal grids. For each $k \geq 3$, the toroidal $k$-grid is the product $C_k \times C_k$ of two $k$-circuits $C_i$. (By definition, $C_i \times C_k$ has vertices $(i,j)$ for $0 \leq i,j \leq k-1$, where $(i,j)$ and $(i',j')$ are adjacent if either $i = i'$ and $j = j \pm 1 \mod k$, or $j = j'$ and $i = i' \pm 1 \mod k$.)

Clearly, each toroidal $k$-grid can be embedded on the torus. In fact, there is a unique embedding, up to homeomorphisms (of the torus and of the grid). (If $i \geq 5$, this follows easily from the fact that each face of the embedded graph should be a quadrangle. For $k = 3$ and 4 this takes some elaboration.)
We show:

**Theorem 1.** For the toroidal $k$-grid $H = C_k \times C_k$ embedded on the torus, $\rho_H := [\frac{3}{k}]$ is the smallest integer value one can take for $\rho_H$ in (1).

We derive this from:

**Theorem 2.** Any graph $G$ embedded on the torus contains the toroidal $[\frac{2}{3}r(G)]$-grid as a minor (if $r(G) \geq 5$). For each integer $r \geq 3$ there exists a graph $G$ embedded on the torus with $r(G) = r$ and not containing the toroidal $[\frac{3}{r}] + 1$-grid as a minor.

**Proof of the implication Theorem 2 $\Rightarrow$ Theorem 1.** Choose $k \geq 3$. Let $G$ be a graph with $r(G) \geq [\frac{3}{k}]$. Since $k = [\frac{3}{[\frac{3}{k}]}] \leq [\frac{3}{3}r(G)]$, Theorem 2 implies that $G$ contains the toroidal $k$-grid as a minor.

Let $r := [\frac{3}{k}] - 1$. By Theorem 2 there exists a graph $G$ on the torus with $r(G) = r$ and not containing the toroidal $[\frac{2}{3}r] + 1$-grid as a minor. Since $k = [\frac{3}{r}] + 1$, Theorem 1 follows.

To prove Theorem 2, we use some results from [2] and [3]. Represent the torus as the product $S^1 \times S^1$ of two copies of the unit circle $S^1$ in the complex plane. For $(m, n) \in \mathbb{Z}^2$, let $C_{m,n} : S^1 \rightarrow S^1 \times S^1$ be the closed curve on the torus given by:

\[(2) \quad C_{m,n}(z) := (z^m, z^n)\]

for $z \in S^1$.

Let $G$ be a graph embedded on the torus. Define $\varphi_G : \mathbb{Z}^2 \rightarrow \mathbb{Z}$ by:

\[(3) \quad \varphi_G(m, n) := \min_{C \sim C_{m,n}} \text{cr}(C, G),\]

where $C \sim C'$ means that $C$ is a closed curve freely homotopic to closed curve $C'$ and where $\text{cr}(C, G)$ denotes the number of intersections of $C$ and $G$, counting multiplicities. So $r(G)$ is equal to the minimum value of $\varphi_G(m, n)$ over all vectors $(m, n) \neq (0, 0)$ in $\mathbb{Z}^2$.

Let $P(G)$ be the following set in $\mathbb{R}^2$:

\[(4) \quad P(G) := \{(x, y) \in \mathbb{R}^2 \mid mx + ny \leq \varphi_G(m, n) \text{ for all } (m, n) \in \mathbb{Z}^2\}.

Then $P(G)$ is a symmetric integer polygon (i.e., $P(G) = -P(G)$ and it is a polygon with all vertices having integer coordinates only). Define the height $\text{height}(K)$ of a polygon $K$ by:

\[(5) \quad \text{height}(K) := \min_{(m, n) \in \mathbb{Z}^2, (m, n) \neq (0, 0)} \max\{mx + ny \mid (x, y) \in K\}.

As $\varphi_G(m, n) = \max\{mx + ny \mid (x, y) \in P(G)\}$ (cf. [2]), we have:

\[(6) \quad r(G) = \text{height}(P(G)).\]

The following was shown in [3]:

\[2\]
(7) let \( k \geq 3 \); a graph \( G \) embedded on the torus contains a toroidal \( k \)-grid as a minor, if and only if \( \frac{1}{k} P(G) \) contains two linearly independent integer vectors.

Assertions (6) and (7) imply that to prove Theorem 2, it suffices to show:

**Theorem 3.** Let \( r \geq 3 \). Then for each symmetric integer polygon \( K \) of height \( r \), the polygon \( \left[ \frac{3}{2} r \right]^{-1} K \) contains two linearly independent integer vectors. Here \( \left[ \frac{3}{2} r \right] \) cannot be replaced by any larger integer.

We show Theorem 3 in Section 2. We first note that it implies the following bound in the geometry of numbers. Let \( K \) be a symmetric convex body in \( \mathbb{R}^2 \) (i.e., \( K \) is a compact full-dimensional convex set with \( K = -K \)). Let \( \lambda_1(K) \) denote the minimum value of \( \lambda \) so that \( \lambda \cdot K \) contains a nonzero integer vector. Let \( \lambda_2(K) \) denote the minimum value of \( \lambda \) so that \( \lambda \cdot K \) contains two linearly independent integer vectors. Let \( K^* \) denote the polar convex body:

\[
(8) \quad K^* := \{ y \in \mathbb{R}^2 | z^T y \leq 1 \text{ for all } z \in K \}.
\]

Then:

**Corollary 3a.** For each symmetric convex body \( K \) in \( \mathbb{R}^2 \) one has \( \lambda_2(K) \cdot \lambda_1(K^*) \leq \frac{3}{2} \). The bound \( \frac{3}{2} \) is smallest possible.

**Proof.** It suffices to show the corollary for symmetric integer polygons \( K \) with \( r := \text{height}(K) \) being a multiple of 3. Now \( r := \lambda_1(K^*) \), while by Theorem 3, \( \lambda_2(K) \leq \left( \frac{3}{2} r \right)^{-1} \). So \( \lambda_2(K) \cdot \lambda_1(K^*) \leq \frac{3}{2} \).

Similarly, any better value in the corollary would imply a better factor in Theorem 3. \( \square \)

2. Proof of Theorem 3

Call a symmetric integer polygon \( K \) \( r \)-minimal, if \( \text{height}(K) \geq r \) while \( \text{height}(K') < r \) for each symmetric integer polygon \( K' \neq K \) contained in \( K \). So Theorem 3 follows from:

\[
(9) \quad \text{let } r \geq 2; \text{ then for each } r \text{-minimal symmetric integer polygon } K, \text{ the polygon } \left[ \frac{3}{2} \right]^{-1} K \text{ contains two linearly independent integer vectors; moreover, there exists an } r \text{-minimal symmetric integer polygon } K \text{ so that } \left( \frac{3}{2} r \right)^{-1} \text{ does not contain two linearly independent integer vectors.}
\]

In order to prove (9), we use the classification of \( r \)-minimal symmetric integer polygons given in [3]. Each of these polygons is a quadrangle or a hexagon. The quadrangles arise as follows. Choose integer values \( 0 \leq \alpha < r \) and \( 0 \leq \beta < r \). Let \( Q_{\alpha,\beta} \) be the convex hull of the points \( \pm(r, \alpha), \pm(-\beta, r) \). Then \( Q_{\alpha,\beta} \) is \( r \)-minimal, and all \( r \)-minimal integer polygons that are quadrangles arise in this way, up to unimodular transformations (= linear transformations of \( \mathbb{R}^2 \) fixing \( \mathbb{Z}^2 \)).

The hexagons arise as follows. Choose integer values \( 0 < \alpha < r, 0 < \beta < r \) and \( 0 < \gamma < r \). Let \( H_{\alpha,\beta,\gamma} \) be the convex hull of the points \( \pm(r, \alpha), \pm(r - \beta, r), \pm(-\gamma, r - \gamma) \). Again, \( H_{\alpha,\beta,\gamma} \) is \( r \)-minimal, and all \( r \)-minimal integer polygons that are hexagons arise in this way, up to unimodular transformations.
So it suffices to show the following two lemmas.

**Lemma 1.** For each choice of integers \(0 \leq \alpha < r\) and \(0 \leq \beta < r\), \(\lambda_3(Q_{\alpha,\beta}) \leq \frac{3}{2r}\). For fixed \(r\), we cannot replace \(\frac{3}{2r}\) by \(k^{-1}\) for any integer \(k > \frac{2r}{3}\).

**Proof.** One easily finds that \(Q_{\alpha,\beta}\) is determined by the following inequalities:

\[
\begin{align*}
\left| \frac{r - \alpha}{r^2 + \alpha \beta} x + \frac{r + \beta}{r^2 + \alpha \beta} y \right| & \leq 1, \\
\left| \frac{r + \alpha}{r^2 + \alpha \beta} x + \frac{\beta - r}{r^2 + \alpha \beta} y \right| & \leq 1
\end{align*}
\]

For each vector \((x, y)\), let the norm \(||(x, y)||\) be the minimum \(\lambda\) for which \((x, y)\) belongs to \(\lambda \cdot Q_{\alpha,\beta}\). Note that \((x, y)\) can be easily calculated from (10):

\[
||(x, y)|| = \max\{||(r - \alpha) x + (r + \beta) y||, ||(r + \alpha) x + (\beta - r) y||\}
\]

\[
\frac{r^2 + \alpha \beta}{r^2 + \alpha \beta}
\]

To show the first statement in the lemma, we have to find two linearly independent integer vectors each with norm at most \(\lambda(r)\). We may assume \(\alpha \leq \beta\).

Then

\[
||(1, 0)|| = \frac{r + \alpha}{r^2 + \alpha \beta} \leq \frac{r + \alpha}{r^2 + \alpha \beta} \leq \frac{3}{2r}.
\]

(The first inequality follows from \(\alpha \leq \beta\). The second inequality follows from the fact that \((1 + x) \leq \frac{3}{2}(1 + z^2)\) for all \(z \in \mathbb{R}\).)

If \(\beta < r/3\), then:

\[
||(0, 1)|| = \frac{r + \beta}{r^2 + \alpha \beta} < \frac{r + r/3}{r^2 + \alpha \beta} < \frac{3}{2r}.
\]

If \(\beta \geq r/3\), then:

\[
||(0, 1)|| + ||(1, -1)|| = \frac{r + \beta}{r^2 + \alpha \beta} + \frac{2r + \alpha - \beta}{r^2 + \alpha \beta} = \frac{3r + \alpha}{r^2 + \alpha \beta} \leq \frac{3r + 3\alpha \beta}{r^2 + \alpha \beta} = \frac{3}{r},
\]

implying that at least one of \((0, 1), (1, -1)\) has norm at most \(3/2r\). This shows the first statement of the lemma.

To show the second statement, choose \(r \geq 3\). Let \(k := \lfloor \frac{r}{3} \rfloor + 1\). Let \(\alpha := 0\) and \(\beta := |r/2|\). We define a norm as in (11). Let \((x, y)\) be any integer vector with norm at most \(1/k\). We show that \(y = 0\), implying that there do not exist two linearly independent integer vectors each with norm at most \(1/k\). We may assume \(x \geq 0\).

First let \(r\) be even. Then \(||(x, y)|| = \max\{|z + \frac{3}{2}y|, |z - \frac{1}{2}y|\}/r \leq 1/k\). If \(z = 0\) then \(\frac{3}{2}y \leq r/k < \frac{3}{2}\), and hence \(y = 0\). If \(x \geq 1, y \geq 1\), then \(r/k \geq |x + \frac{3}{2}y| \geq \frac{5}{2} > r/k\). If \(x \geq 1, y \leq -1\), then \(r/k \geq |x - \frac{1}{2}y| \geq \frac{5}{2} > r/k\).

Next let \(r\) be odd. Then \(||(x, y)|| = \max\{|x + (\frac{3}{2} - \frac{1}{2}r)y|, |x - (\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2}r)y|\}/r \leq 1/k\). Note that \(k \geq \frac{3}{2}r + \frac{3}{2}\), implying \(k(\frac{3}{2} - \frac{1}{2}r) \geq (\frac{3}{2} + \frac{3}{2})(\frac{3}{2} - \frac{1}{2}r) = r + \frac{3}{2} - \frac{3}{2}r > r\). If \(z = 0\) then \(||(\frac{3}{2} - \frac{1}{2}r)y|| \leq r/k < (\frac{3}{2} - \frac{1}{2}r)/2\), yielding \(y = 0\). If \(x \geq 1, y \geq 1\), then \(r/k \geq |x + (\frac{3}{2} - \frac{1}{2}r)y| \geq \frac{5}{2} > r/k\). If \(x \geq 1, y \leq -1\) then \(r/k \geq |x - (\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2}r)y| \geq \frac{5}{2} > r/k\). So also if \(x \geq 1\) then \(y = 0\).
Lemma 2. For each choice of integers $0 < \alpha < r$, $0 < \beta < r$ and $0 < \gamma < r$, $\lambda_2(H_{\alpha, \beta, \gamma}) < \frac{2}{2r}$.

Proof. One easily finds that $H_{\alpha, \beta, \gamma}$ is determined by the following inequalities:

\begin{align}
\frac{r - \alpha}{r^2 + \alpha\beta - \alpha r} + \frac{\beta}{r^2 + \alpha\beta - \alpha r} & \leq 1, \\
\frac{\gamma}{r^2 + \beta\gamma - \beta r} + \frac{\beta - r - \gamma}{r^2 + \beta\gamma - \beta r} & \leq 1, \\
\frac{\gamma - r - \alpha}{r^2 + \gamma\alpha - \gamma r} + \frac{r - \gamma}{r^2 + \gamma\alpha - \gamma r} & \leq 1.
\end{align}

For each vector $(x, y)$, let the norm $\|(x, y)\|$ be the minimum $\lambda$ for which $(x, y)$ belongs to $\lambda \cdot H_{\alpha, \beta, \gamma}$. Again, $(x, y)$ can be easily calculated from (15). It follows that:

\begin{align}
\|(1, 0)\| &= \frac{r + \alpha - \gamma}{r^2 + \gamma\alpha - \gamma r}, \\
\|(0, 1)\| &= \frac{r + \gamma - \beta}{r^2 + \beta\gamma - \beta r}, \\
\|(1, 1)\| &= \frac{r + \beta - \alpha}{r^2 + \alpha\beta - \alpha r}.
\end{align}

We show that at least two of these norms are less than $\frac{3}{2r}$. Suppose not. By symmetry we may assume that $\|(1, 0)\| \geq \frac{3}{2r}$ and $\|(0, 1)\| \geq \frac{3}{2r}$. As $0 < \gamma < r$, the first norm in (16) is monotonically increasing in $\alpha$, while the second norm is monotonically decreasing in $\beta$. So:

\begin{align}
&\frac{r + \alpha - \gamma}{r^2 + \gamma\alpha - \gamma r} < \frac{2r - \gamma}{r^2} \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{r + \gamma - \beta}{r^2 + \beta\gamma - \beta r} < \frac{r + \gamma}{r^2}.
\end{align}

Since $2r - \gamma \leq \frac{3}{2} r$ or $r + \gamma \leq \frac{3}{2} r$ (as $(2r - \gamma) + (r + \gamma) = 3r$), this contradicts our assumption.

References

