

Local generation of languages

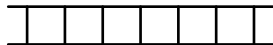
Mathieu Hoyrup

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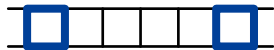
Séminaire midi-combi, 10 février 2026



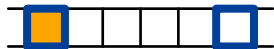
Motivating problem



Motivating problem



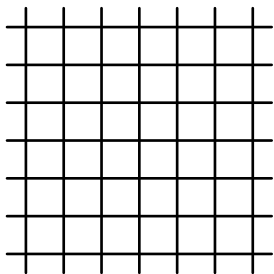
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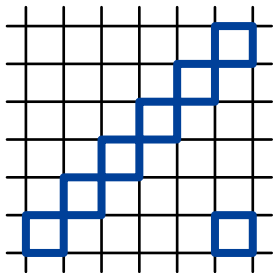
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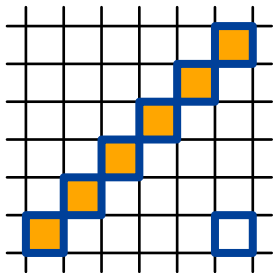
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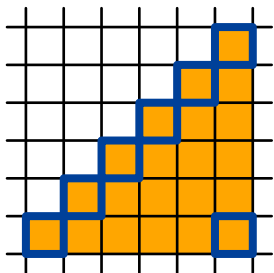
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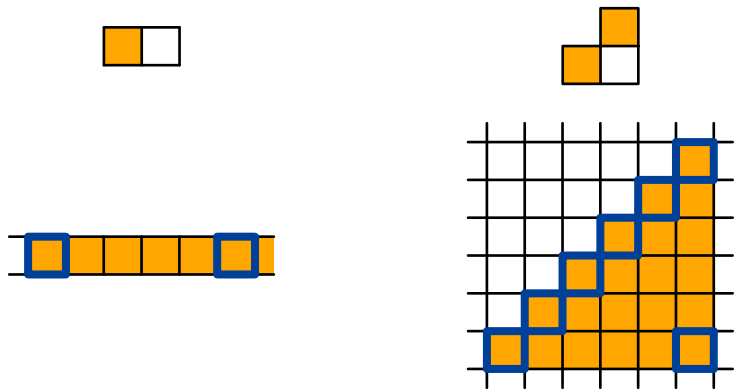
Motivating problem



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Motivating problem



How should cells coordinate?

Coordination

- We fix a language $L \subseteq \{0, 1\}^n$,
- Each position $i < n$ has to choose a value in $\{0, 1\}$, so that they collectively produce any element of L ,
- How should cells coordinate their choices?

Coordination: example

Let

$$L = \{000, 001, 100, 111\}.$$

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Generation procedure

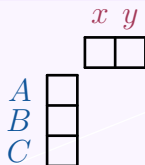


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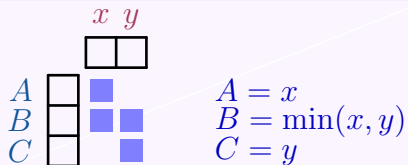
$$\begin{aligned} A &= x \\ B &= \min(x, y) \\ C &= y \end{aligned}$$

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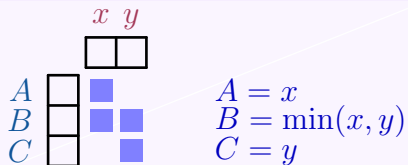


Coordination: example

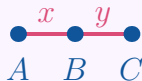
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Generation procedure



Coordination structure



Coordination: example

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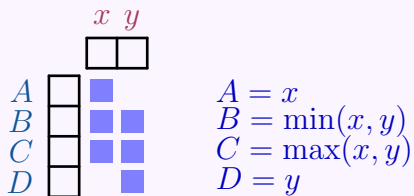
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Generation procedure

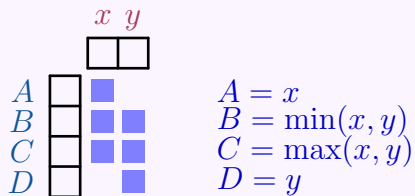


Coordination: example

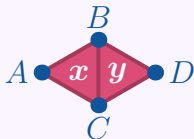
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Generation procedure



Coordination structure



Language generation

Let $f : A^m \rightarrow B^n$.

Definition

The **communication complex** K_f of f is a simplicial complex:

- Vertex set $V = [0, n - 1]$,
- A set $S \subseteq V$ belongs to K_f if the output cells in S depend on a common input.

Language generation

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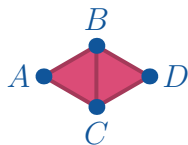
Definition

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- A set $S \subseteq V$ belongs to K_f if the output cells in S depend on a common input.



$$f_1(x, y) = (x, \min(x, y), y)$$



$$f_2(x, y) = (x, \min(x, y), \max(x, y), y)$$

Language generation

Definition

A simplicial complex K over $[0, n - 1]$ **generates** $L \subseteq B^n$ if there is a function $f : A^m \rightarrow B^n$ such that:

- $\text{im}(f) = L$,
- $K_f \subseteq K$.

Language generation

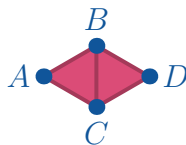
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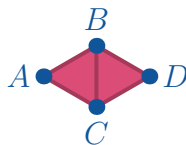
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- $K_f \subseteq K$.

General goal

Given a language L , what are the (minimal) complexes generating L ?



$$L_1 = \{000, 001, 100, 111\}$$



$$L_2 = \{0000, 0011, 1010, 1111\}$$

Language generation: simple examples

- Let $L = \{0, 1\}^n$.

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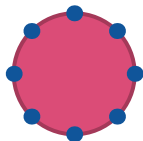
- Let $L = \{0^n, 1^n\}$.

Language generation: simple examples

- Let $L = \{0, 1\}^n$. The only minimal complex is made of vertices:



- Let $L = \{0^n, 1^n\}$. The only minimal complex is the **full complex**:



Language generation: simple examples

- Let $L = \{0^k 1^{n-k} : 0 \leq k \leq n\}$ (non-decreasing sequences).
The only complex is the **full complex**.

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The only complex is the **full complex**.

Assume otherwise: there is a function with this dependency relation:

	<i>x</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>t</i>
<i>A</i>		■	■	■
<i>B</i>	■		■	■
<i>C</i>	■	■		■
<i>D</i>	■	■	■	

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$$f(x_1, y_1, z_1, t_1) = 1111$$

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<i>A</i>	■	■	■	
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<i>C</i>	■	■		■
<i>D</i>	■	■	■	

But D can take value 0:
contradiction! \square

Simple languages

One occurrence of 1

Monotonic sequences

At most one occurrence of 1

Let $L_{\leq 1} = \{w \in \{0, 1\}^n : |w|_1 \leq 1\}$.

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- Local rule over the complete graph: unanimity vote



Answer

The only minimal complex generating $L_{\leq 1}$ is the **complete graph**.

At least one occurrence of 1

Let $L_{\geq 1} = \{w \in \{0, 1\}^n : |w|_1 \geq 1\}$.

At least one occurrence of 1

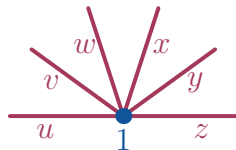
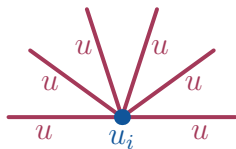
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- L is irreducible: it cannot be expressed as $L = L_1 \times L_2$.
Therefore, K is connected.

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where $u, v, \dots \in L_{\geq 1}$

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where $u, v, \dots \in L_{\geq 1}$

Answer

The minimal complexes generating $L_{\geq 1}$ are the **trees**.

At least k occurrences of 1

Let $L_{\geq k} = \{w \in \{0, 1\}^n : |w|_1 \geq k\}$.

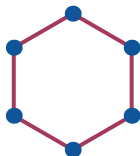
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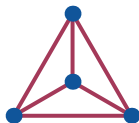
Answer

The minimal complexes generating L are the **minimal k -connected graphs**.

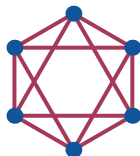
k -connected = still connected when removing $k - 1$ vertices.



(a) 2-connected



(b) 3-connected



(c) 4-connected

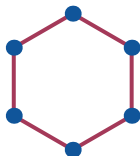
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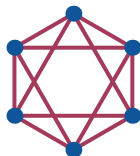
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- Erasing $k - 1$ symbols, we get $L_{\geq 1}$ (of length $n - (k - 1)$). It is irreducible, so the remaining complex is connected.
- Local rule over a k -connected graph: the same as for $k = 1$.

Upwards closed languages

Endow $\{0, 1\}^n$ with the componentwise order, and let L be upwards closed.

Answer

The minimal complexes generating L are the **minimal L -connected graphs**.

L -connected = still connected when removing the vertices $\{i : w_i = 1\}$ for any maximal string $w \notin L$.

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One occurrence of 1

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Theorem

The complex $\text{Cone}(K_{n-1})$ is minimal generating L .

One occurrence of 1

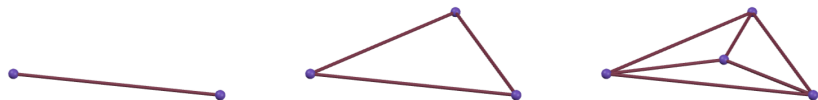
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$\text{Cone}(K_{n-1})$:

- Start from the complete graph K_{n-1} over $n - 1$ vertices,



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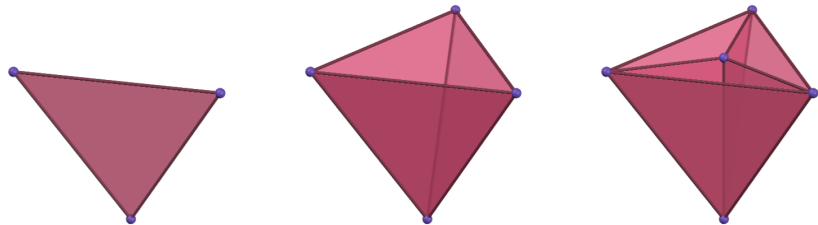
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$\text{Cone}(K_{n-1})$:

- Start from the complete graph K_{n-1} over $n - 1$ vertices,
- Add a vertex v and a triangle joining v to each edge of K_{n-1} .



One occurrence of 1

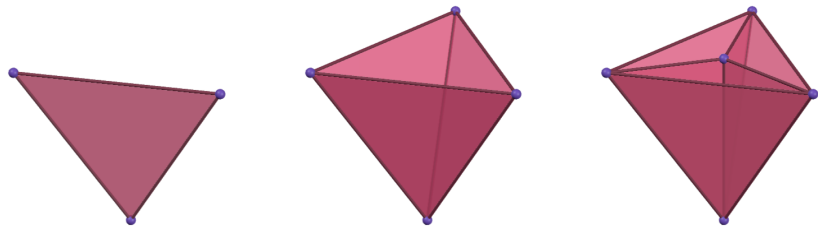
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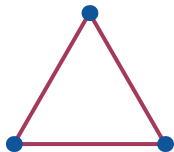
Procedure:

- The $n - 1$ vertices produce at most one occurrence of 1,
- v sees everything and chooses its value accordingly.



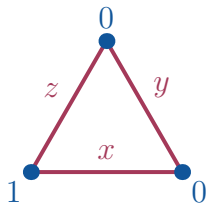
One occurrence of 1: minimality

Assume that the hollow triangle generates $L_3 = \{100, 010, 001\}$:



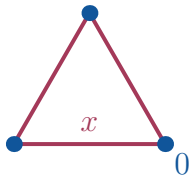
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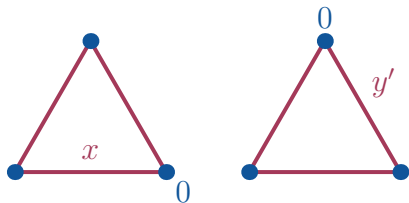
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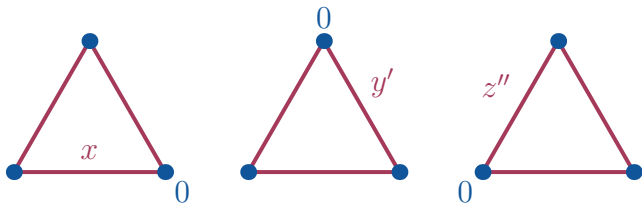
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Assume that the hollow triangle generates $L_3 = \{100, 010, 001\}$:



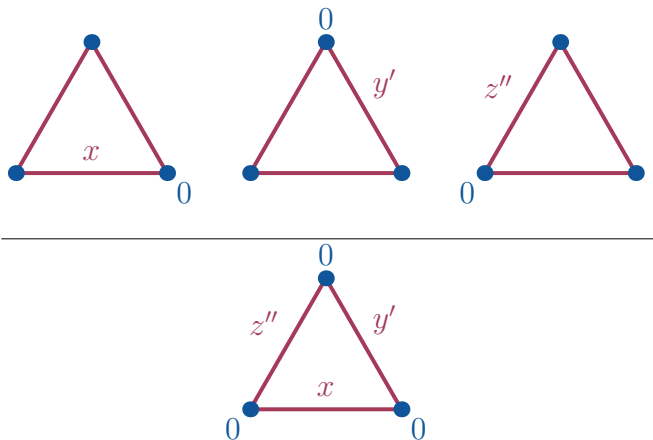
One occurrence of 1: minimality

Assume that the hollow triangle generates $L_3 = \{100, 010, 001\}$:



One occurrence of 1: minimality

Assume that the hollow triangle generates $L_3 = \{100, 010, 001\}$:



Contradiction: $000 \notin L_3$.

One occurrence of 1: minimality

Proposition

Let $n \geq 3$. Every pair $\{i, j\}$ belongs to a triangle.

One occurrence of 1: minimality

Proposition

Let $n \geq 3$. Every pair $\{i, j\}$ belongs to a triangle.

Consider the surjective function $g : \mathcal{U}_n \rightarrow \mathcal{U}_3$:

$$g(x) = abc, \text{ where } \begin{cases} a = x_i, \\ b = x_j, \\ c = \max\{x_k : k \notin \{i, j\}\}. \end{cases}$$

One occurrence of 1: minimality

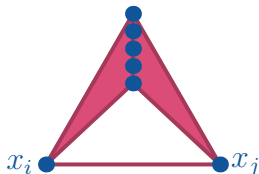
Proposition

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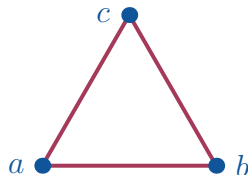
Consider the surjective function $g : U_n \rightarrow U_3$:

$$g(x) = abc, \text{ where } \begin{cases} a = x_i, \\ b = x_j, \\ c = \max\{x_k : k \notin \{i, j\}\}. \end{cases}$$

If L_n is generated by:



then L_3 is generated by:

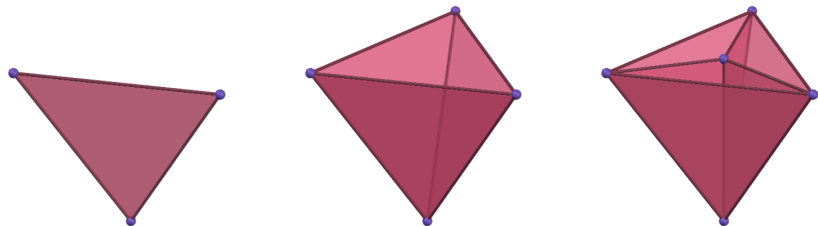


One occurrence of 1: minimality

Proposition

Let $n \geq 3$. Every pair $\{i, j\}$ belongs to a triangle.

Minimality of $\text{Cone}(K_{n-1})$:



Each edge in K_{n-1} belongs to a single triangle, which therefore cannot be removed.

One occurrence of 1

For $n = 3, 4, 5$, $\text{Cone}(K_{n-1})$ are the only minimal complexes generating L .

Open question

What about $n \geq 6$?

Simple languages

One occurrence of 1

Monotonic sequences

Monotonic sequences

Let

$$\text{Mon}_n = \{000 \dots 000, \\ 000 \dots 001, \\ 000 \dots 011, \\ \dots \\ 011 \dots 111, \\ 111 \dots 111, \\ 111 \dots 110, \\ 111 \dots 100, \\ \dots \\ 100 \dots 000\}$$

Symmetries:

Monotonic sequences

Let

$$\text{Mon}_n = \{000 \dots 000, \\ 000 \dots 001, \\ 000 \dots 011, \\ \dots \\ 011 \dots 111, \\ 111 \dots 111, \\ 111 \dots 110, \\ 111 \dots 100, \\ \dots \\ 100 \dots 000\}$$

Symmetries:

- Reflection: $x_0x_1 \dots x_{n-1} \rightarrow x_{n-1} \dots x_1x_0$,

Monotonic sequences

Let

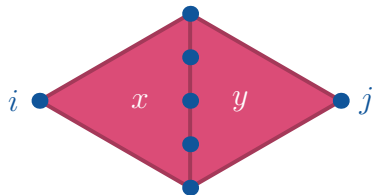
$$\begin{aligned} \text{Mon}_n = \{ & 000 \dots 000, \\ & 000 \dots 001, \\ & 000 \dots 011, \\ & \dots \\ & 011 \dots 111, \\ & 111 \dots 111, \\ & 111 \dots 110, \\ & 111 \dots 100, \\ & \dots \\ & 100 \dots 000 \} \end{aligned}$$

Symmetries:

- Reflection: $x_0x_1 \dots x_{n-1} \rightarrow x_{n-1} \dots x_1x_0$,
- Rotation: $x_0x_1 \dots x_{n-1} \rightarrow x_1 \dots x_{n-1}\overline{x_0}$.

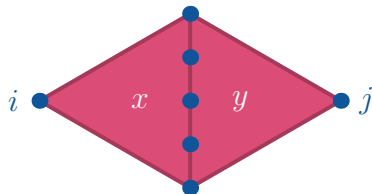
Monotonic sequences

- Two positions $i \neq j$ can be filled independently,
- So there is a generating function on this complex:



Monotonic sequences

- Two positions $i \neq j$ can be filled independently,
- So there is a generating function on this complex:



Proposition

It is minimal.

Monotonic sequences

For $n = 3, 4$, those are the only minimal complexes.

For $n = 5$, a new one appears.

Monotonic sequences

There is a correction function $f : \{0, 1\}^5 \rightarrow \{0, 1\}^5$.

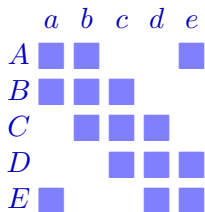
It uses the local correction function $\text{maj} : \{0, 1\}^3 \rightarrow \{0, 1\}$.

Monotonic sequences

There is a correction function $f : \{0, 1\}^5 \rightarrow \{0, 1\}^5$.

It uses the local correction function $\text{maj} : \{0, 1\}^3 \rightarrow \{0, 1\}$.

First attempt



$$A = \text{maj}(\bar{e}, a, b)$$

$$B = \text{maj}(a, b, c)$$

$$C = \text{maj}(b, c, d)$$

$$D = \text{maj}(c, d, e)$$

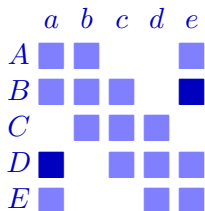
$$E = \text{maj}(d, e, \bar{a})$$

Monotonic sequences

There is a correction function $f : \{0, 1\}^5 \rightarrow \{0, 1\}^5$.

It uses the local correction function $\text{maj} : \{0, 1\}^3 \rightarrow \{0, 1\}$.

Second attempt



$$A = \text{maj}(\bar{e}, a, b)$$

$$B = \text{maj}(A, b, c)$$

$$C = \text{maj}(b, c, d)$$

$$D = \text{maj}(c, d, E)$$

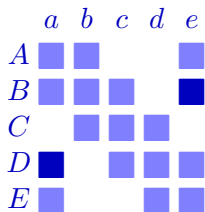
$$E = \text{maj}(d, e, \bar{a})$$

Monotonic sequences

There is a correction function $f : \{0, 1\}^5 \rightarrow \{0, 1\}^5$.

It uses the local correction function $\text{maj} : \{0, 1\}^3 \rightarrow \{0, 1\}$.

Second attempt



$$A = \text{maj}(\bar{e}, a, b)$$

$$B = \text{maj}(A, b, c)$$

$$C = \text{maj}(b, c, d)$$

$$D = \text{maj}(c, d, E)$$

$$E = \text{maj}(d, e, \bar{a})$$

This complex is minimal generating Mon_5 .

Monotonic sequences

This complex is minimal generating Mon_7 :

	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>g</i>
<i>A</i>	■	■			■
<i>B</i>	■	■	■		■
<i>C</i>	■	■	■	■	
<i>D</i>		■	■	■	
<i>E</i>		■	■	■	■
<i>F</i>	■		■	■	■
<i>G</i>	■			■	■

$$A = \text{maj}(\bar{g}, a, b)$$

$$B = \text{maj}(A, b, d)$$

$$C = \text{maj}(a, b, D)$$

$$D = \text{maj}(b, d, f)$$

$$E = \text{maj}(D, f, g)$$

$$F = \text{maj}(d, f, G)$$

$$G = \text{maj}(f, g, \bar{a})$$

Monotonic sequences

This complex is minimal generating Mon_8 :

	<i>a</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>c</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>g</i>	<i>h</i>
<i>A</i>	■	■	■	■			■	■
<i>B</i>	■	■	■	■			■	■
<i>C</i>	■	■	■	■	■	■		
<i>D</i>	■	■	■	■	■	■		
<i>E</i>			■	■	■	■	■	■
<i>F</i>			■	■	■	■	■	■
<i>G</i>	■	■			■	■	■	■
<i>H</i>	■	■			■	■	■	■

Monotonic sequences: a pattern?



$$n \geq 2$$



$$n = 5$$



$$n = 7$$



$$n = 8$$

Monotonic sequences: a pattern?



$n \geq 2$



$n = 5$



$n = 7$



$n = 8$

Theorem

Let K be a minimal complex generating Mon_n . The maximal simplices of K are intervals.

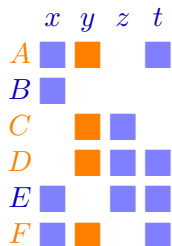
Monotonic sequences: intervals

Assume that some maximal simplex is not an interval:

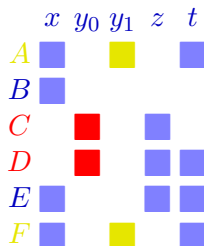
	<i>x</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>t</i>
<i>A</i>	■	■		■
<i>B</i>	■			
<i>C</i>		■	■	
<i>D</i>		■	■	■
<i>E</i>	■		■	■
<i>F</i>	■	■		■

Monotonic sequences: intervals

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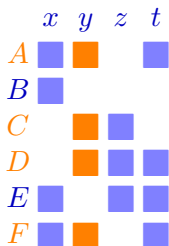


A proper subcomplex generates Mon_n :

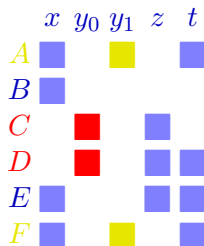


Monotonic sequences: intervals

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A proper subcomplex generates Mon_n :

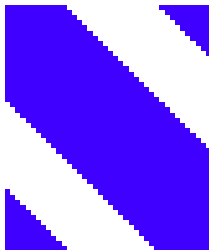


Key observation

If $w|_{\llbracket B,E \rrbracket}$ and $w|_{\llbracket E,B \rrbracket}$ are monotonic, then so is w .

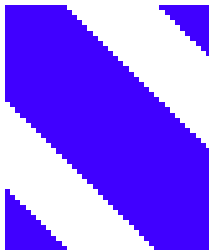
Monotonic sequences: intervals

A minimal complex generating Mon_n always looks like:



Monotonic sequences: intervals

A minimal complex generating Mon_n always looks like:



Can we say more?

Monotonic sequences: interval length

Let $\mu(n)$ be the minimal k such that Mon_n is generated by a complex whose intervals all have lengths $\leq k$.

Theorem

$$\left\lfloor \frac{3n+1}{4} \right\rfloor \leq \mu(n) \leq \left\lceil \frac{3n}{4} \right\rceil.$$

Monotonic sequences: interval length

Upper bound: $\mu(n) \leq \lceil \frac{3n}{4} \rceil$.



$$n = 8$$

Monotonic sequences: interval length

Upper bound: $\mu(n) \leq \lceil \frac{3n}{4} \rceil$.



$n = 8$



$n = 12$

Etc.

Monotonic sequences: interval length

The dark side of the proof

Lower bound: $\left\lfloor \frac{3n+1}{4} \right\rfloor \leq \mu(n)$.

Lemma 0.1. Assume that f generates Mon_n and K_f contains no k -interval. Let $b = 2(n-k)$. For $2k-n-1 \leq j \leq k-1$, there exists γ such that $f_\alpha(\gamma) = 0$ and

$$\text{dom}(\gamma) = \mathcal{W}_f([0, j]) \cup \mathcal{W}_f([j+1, b+j+1]).$$

Proof. To lighten the notations, we drop the subscript f in \mathcal{W}_f . We prove the result by induction on j . Note that by symmetry, the statement implies more generally that for any $a \in I_n$, there exists γ such that $f_\alpha(\gamma) = 0$ and $\text{dom}(\gamma) = \mathcal{W}[a, a+j] \cup \mathcal{W}[a+j+1, a+b+j+1]$. This more general statement will be used as induction hypothesis.

For $j = 2k-n-1$, the result is a direct application of Theorem ??, giving $\text{dom}(\gamma) = \mathcal{W}[0, j] \cup \mathcal{W}[j+1, n]$, and indeed $b+j+1 = n$ (and the version for any a holds by symmetry).

We assume the result for j satisfying $2k-n-1 \leq j < k-1$ and prove it for $j+1$. Let $a = n-k$ and

$$\begin{aligned} I_0 &= [0, j] & I_1 &= [j+1, b+j+1] \\ J_0 &= [a, a+j] & J_1 &= [a+j+1, a+b+j+1]. \end{aligned}$$

From the induction hypothesis, there exist partial inputs α and β such that:

- $f_\alpha(\alpha) = 0$ and $\text{dom}(\alpha) = \mathcal{W}(I_0) \cup \mathcal{W}(I_1)$,
- $f_\alpha(\beta) = 0$ on $\text{dom}(\beta) = \mathcal{W}(J_0) \cup \mathcal{W}(J_1)$.

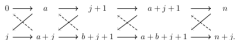
Claim 1. The domains of α and β are disjoint.

The intersection of these domains is

$$\text{dom}(\alpha) \cap \text{dom}(\beta) = \mathcal{W}(I_0 \cup J_0) \cup \mathcal{W}(I_1 \cup J_1) \cup \mathcal{W}(J_1 \cup I_0).$$

We prove that it is empty by showing that each union $I_n \cup J_n$ is an interval of length at least k .

We check that $I_0 \cup J_0 \subset I_1 \subset J_1 \subset I_0$ (illustrated in Figure ??). Indeed, each pair of consecutive intervals can be expressed as $[x, z] \cup [y, t]$ where $x \leq y \leq z \leq t < x+n$ (Lemma ??), as summarized by the following diagram (see paragraph after Lemma ??):



These inequalities all follow from:

$$\begin{aligned} k &< n, \\ 2k-n-1 &\leq j < k-1, \\ 2n+1 &\leq 3k. \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the consecutive unions of intervals are intervals:

- $I_0 \cup J_0 = [0, a+j]$ has size $a+j+1 \in [k, n]$,

- $J_0 \cup I_1 = [a, b+j+1]$ has size $b+j+2-a \in [k, n]$,
- $I_1 \cup J_1 = [j+1, a+b+j+1]$ has size $a+b+1 \in [k, n]$,
- $J_1 \cup I_0 = [a+j+1, n+j]$ has size $n-a-k \in [k, n]$.

As a result, K does not contain any $I_n \cup J_n$, which means that $\mathcal{W}(I_n \cup J_n)$ is empty. Therefore, α and β have disjoint domains and the claim is proved.

This claim implies that α and β are compatible, so we can apply Lemma ?? . Let $c = n-1 \in [a, 0]$. One has $f_\alpha(\gamma) = 0$ where

$$\gamma = \alpha|_{\mathcal{W}([c,0])} \cup \beta|_{\mathcal{W}([a,c])}.$$

The interval $[a, c]$ has size $c+1-a = n-a-k = k$ so $\mathcal{W}[a, c]$ is empty. Therefore, $\gamma = \alpha|_{\mathcal{W}([c,0])}$ has domain

$$\begin{aligned} \text{dom}(\gamma) &= \text{dom}(\alpha) \cap \mathcal{W}([c, 0]) \\ &= (\mathcal{W}[0, j]) \cup \mathcal{W}([j+1, b+j+1]) \cap \mathcal{W}([c, 0]) \\ &= \mathcal{W}[n-1, j] \cup \mathcal{W}([j+1, b+j+1]). \end{aligned}$$

By symmetry, we can apply the circular permutation $x \mapsto x+1 \pmod n$, implying that there exists a partial input δ such that $f_\alpha(\delta) = 0$ and $\text{dom}(\delta) = \mathcal{W}([0, j+1]) \cup \mathcal{W}([j+2, b+j+2])$ which proves the induction step. \square

Proof. Let

$$I = [k, 2n-k].$$

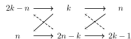
We apply Lemma 0.1 to $j = k-1$, giving γ such that $f_\alpha(\gamma) = 0$ and $\text{dom}(\gamma) = \mathcal{W}[0, k-1] \cup \mathcal{W}[k, 2n-k]$. As $[0, k-1]$ has size k , $\mathcal{W}[0, k-1]$ is empty so $\text{dom}(\gamma) = \mathcal{W}[k, 2n-k]$.

Let

$$\begin{aligned} J_0 &= [2k-n, 0] \\ J_1 &= [0, 2k-n-1] = [0, 2k-1] \end{aligned}$$

By Theorem ??, there exists α such that $f_\alpha(\alpha) = 1$ and $\text{dom}(\alpha) = \mathcal{W}[2k-n, n] \cup \mathcal{W}[0, 2k-n-1] = \mathcal{W}(J_0) \cup \mathcal{W}(J_1)$.

We show that α and γ have disjoint domains. One has $J_0 \subset I \subset J_1$, because the endpoints of these intervals satisfy the inequalities summarized by the following diagram,



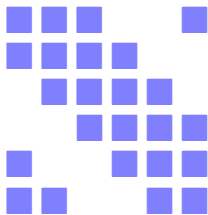
which all follow from $k \leq n$ and $3k \geq 2n+1$. Therefore,


- $J_0 \cup I = [2k-n, 2n-k]$ has size $3(n-k)+1 \in [k, n]$,
- $I \cup J_1 = [k, 2k-1]$ has size k .

As a result, α and γ have disjoint domains so they are compatible, but they give opposite values to 0, which is a contradiction. \square

Some open questions

- What are the complexes generating $\{x \in \{0, 1\}^n : |x|_1 = 1\}$?
- Does this complex generate Mon_6 ?



- What are the languages $L \subseteq A^3$ generated by  ?

Reminder

- Let $L = \{0^k 1^{n-k} : 0 \leq k \leq n\}$ (non-decreasing sequences).

The only complex is the full complex.

Assume otherwise: there is a function following this scheme:

	<i>x</i>	<i>y</i>	<i>z</i>	<i>t</i>
<i>A</i>	■	■	■	
<i>B</i>	■		■	■
<i>C</i>	■	■		■
<i>D</i>	■	■	■	

$$f(x_1, y_1, z_1, t_1) = 1111$$

$$\implies A(x_1, y_1, z_1, t_1) = 1$$

$$\implies A(_, y_1, z_1, t_1) = 1$$

$$\implies B(_, y_1, z_1, t_1) = 1$$

$$\implies B(_, _, z_1, t_1) = 1$$

$$\implies C(_, _, z_1, t_1) = 1$$

$$\implies C(_, _, _, t_1) = 1$$

$$\implies D(_, _, _, t_1) = 1$$

$$\implies D(_, _, _, _) = 1$$

But D can take value 0 : contradiction!

Inference system

Language axioms. For every $w \in L$,

$$\frac{}{f(x_w) \succeq w}$$

Language rules. If L respects the rule $q \rightarrow r$:

$$\frac{f(p) \succeq q}{f(p) \succeq r}$$

Conflict rule. If p_1, p_2 are compatible, and q_1, q_2 are incompatible:

$$\frac{f(p_1) \succeq q_1 \quad f(p_2) \succeq q_2}{\perp}$$

Restriction rule.

$$\frac{f(p) \succeq q}{f(p|_{\mathcal{W}(q)}) \succeq q}$$

Join rule. If p_1, p_2 are compatible, and q_1, q_2 are compatible:

$$\frac{f(p_1) \succeq q_1 \quad f(p_2) \succeq q_2}{f(p_1 \cup p_2) \succeq q_1 \cup q_2}$$