

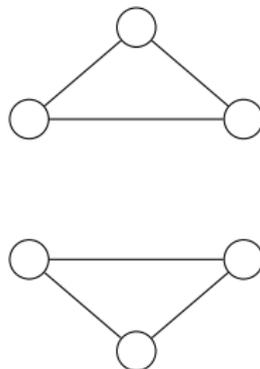
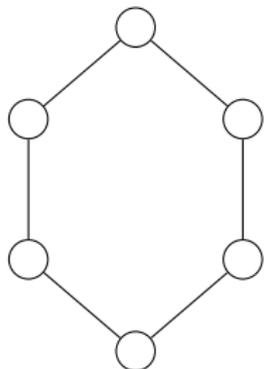
Robust Graph Isomorphism, Quadratic Assignment, and VC dimension

Anatole Dahan¹ Martin Grohe² Daniel Neuen³ **Tomáš Novotný²**

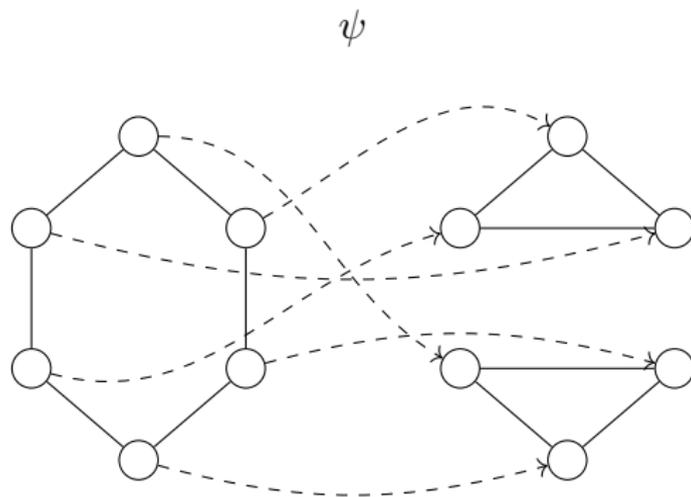
¹University of Cambridge
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March 2nd, 2026

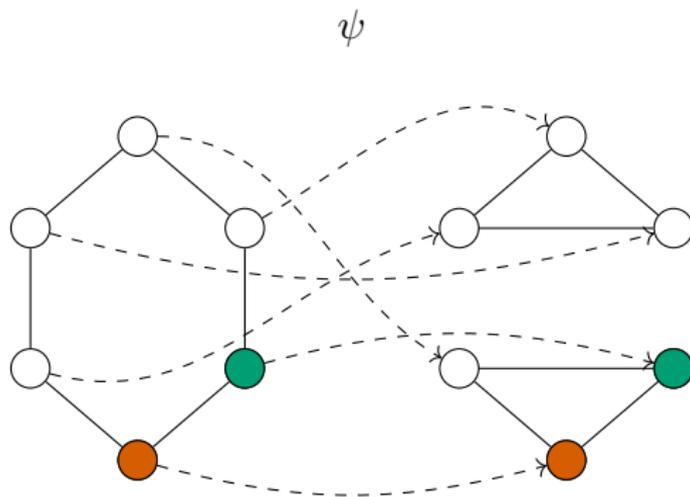
Graph edit distance



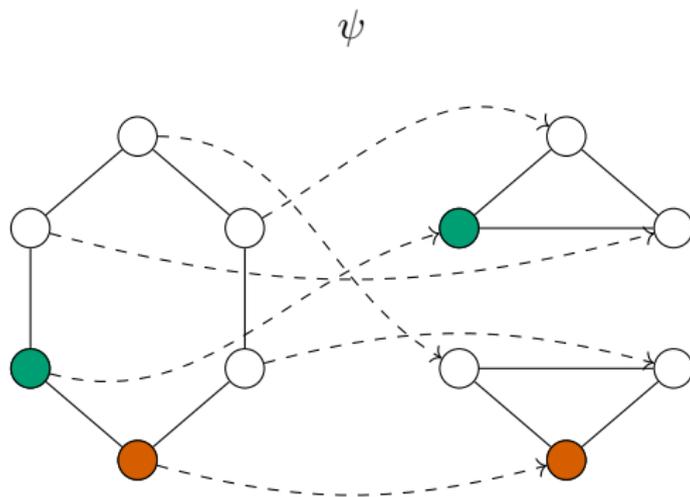
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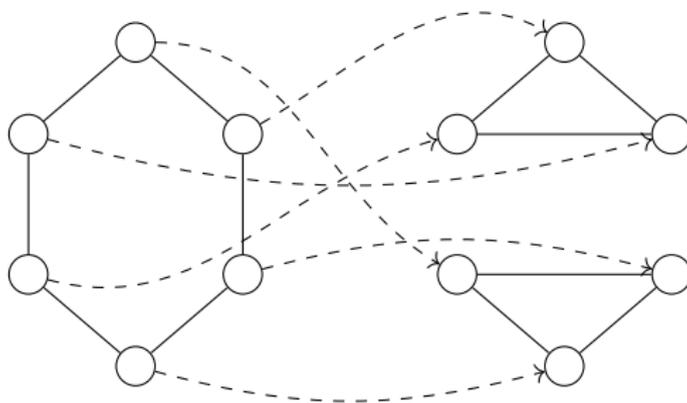


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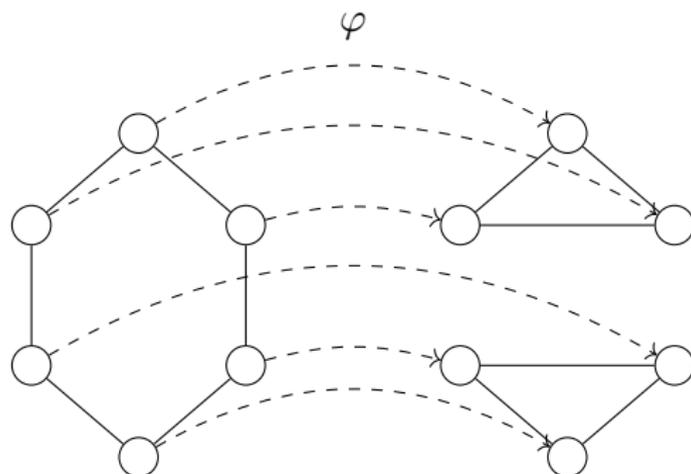
Graph edit distance

ψ



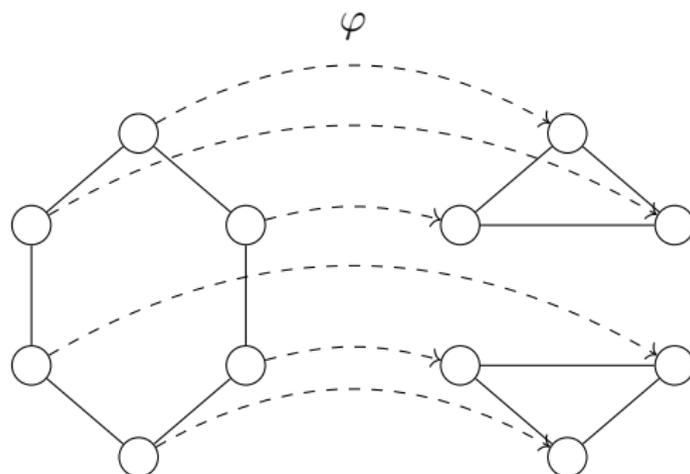
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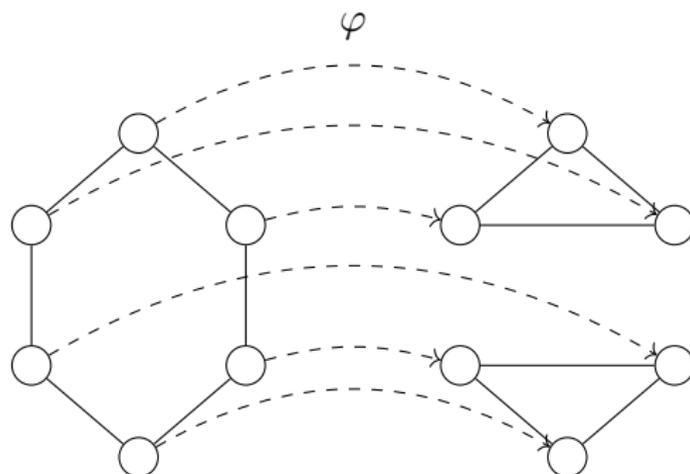
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Graph edit distance



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$$\delta_{\text{edit}}(G, H) = \min_{\pi} \text{cost}(\pi) = 4$$

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Graph edit distance

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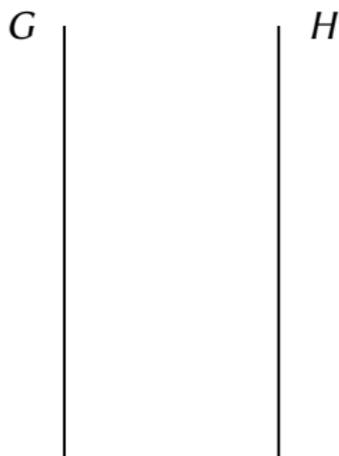
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Theorem (Arora, Frieze, Kaplan, 2002)

Given G, H, ϵ , finding a bijection $\varphi : V(G) \rightarrow V(H)$ with $\text{cost}(\varphi) \leq \delta_{\text{edit}}(G, H) + \epsilon n^2$ can be carried out in time $n^{O(\log n/\epsilon^2)}$.

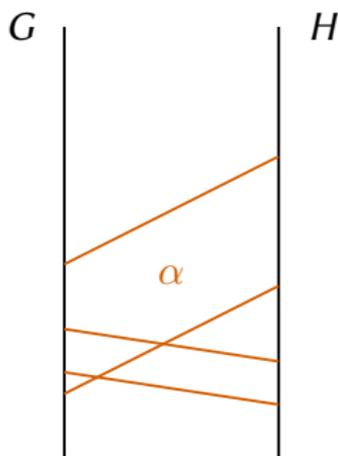
GED using Arora-Frieze-Kaplan rounding procedure



Define *mixed associations*

$$M_\alpha(v, v') := \{(w, \alpha(w)) \mid E(v, w) \iff \neg E(v', \alpha(w))\}$$

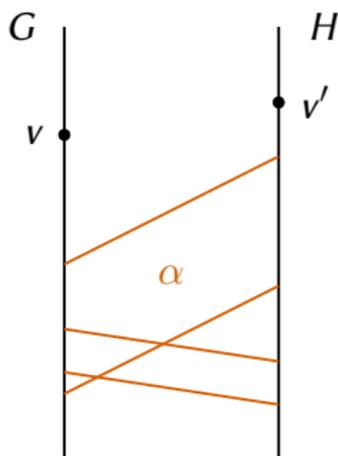
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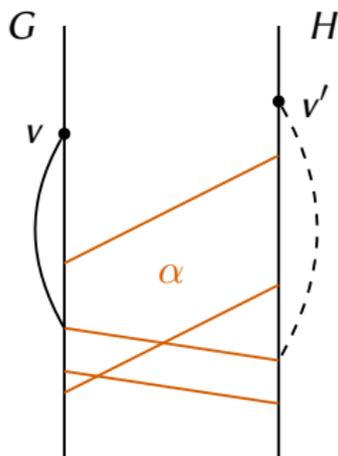
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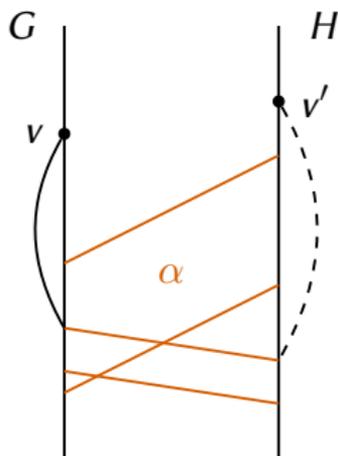
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$$\frac{n}{|\alpha^*|} |M_{\alpha^*}(v, v')| \approx |M_{\varphi^*}(v, v')| \pm \epsilon n$$

- Iterate through all α of such size and **find a φ_α s.t.**
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Then one can show that

$$\text{cost}(\varphi_{\alpha^*}) \leq \delta_{\text{edit}}(G, H) + \epsilon n^2.$$

ϵ -approximation

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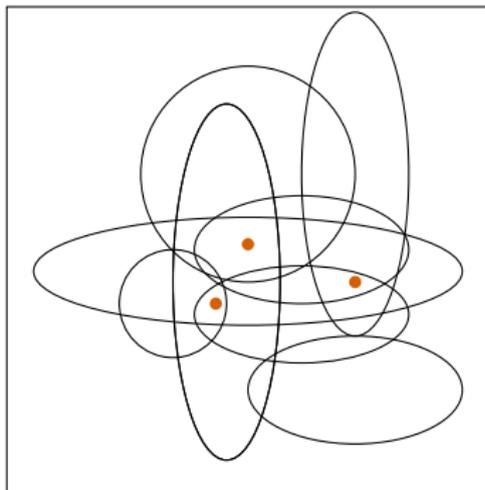
Lemma (Chazelle, 2000)

Let $\mathcal{H} \subseteq 2^V$ be any set system. For any $\varepsilon > 0$, there is an ε -approximation for \mathcal{H} of size $O(\log n/\varepsilon^2)$.

VC dimension

Suppose a set system $\mathcal{H} \subseteq 2^V$. We call $X \subseteq V$ *shattered*, if for any subset $Y \subseteq X$ there is $H \in \mathcal{H}$ such that $X \cap H = Y$.

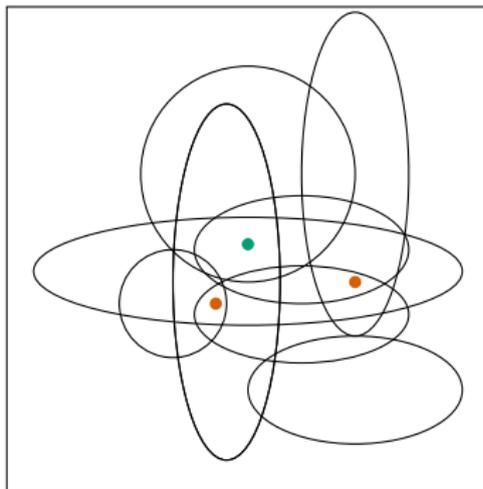
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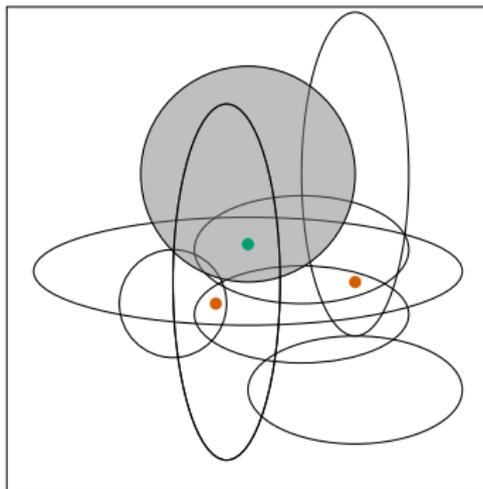
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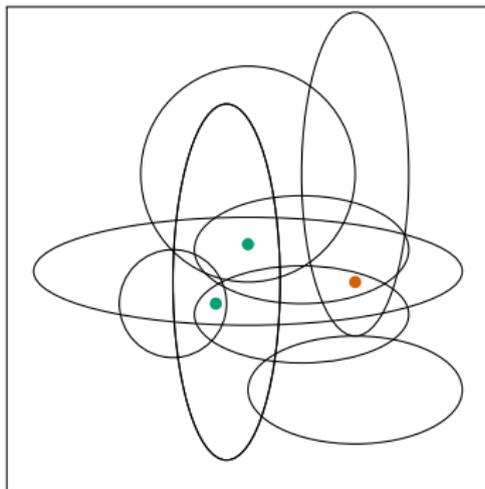
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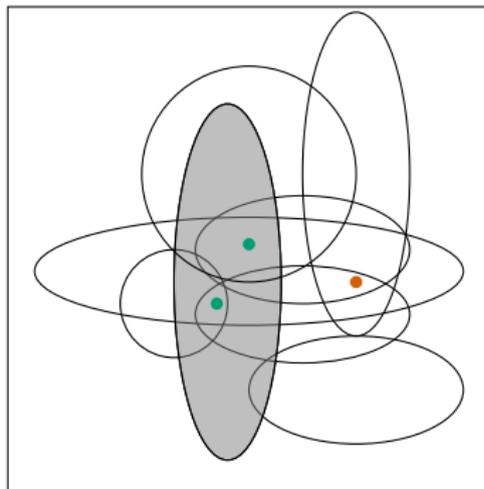
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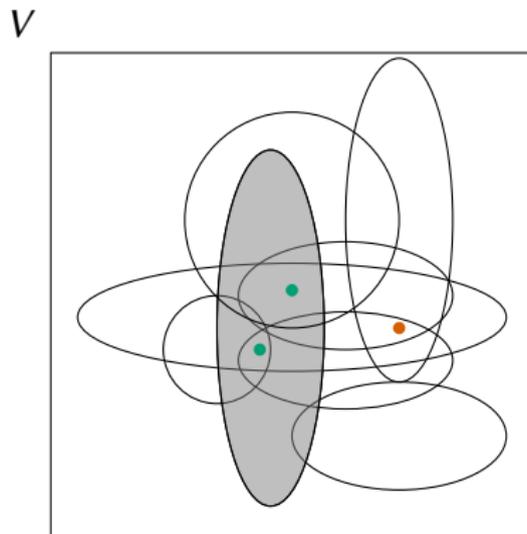
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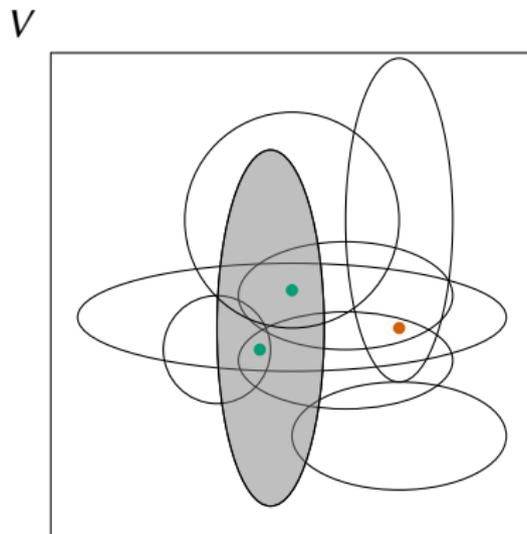
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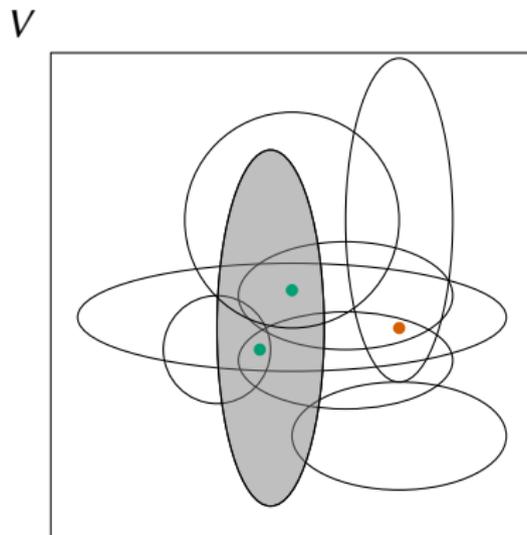
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$$d \leq \log n$$

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Lemma

If G, H have VC-dim at most d , then \mathcal{M}_{φ^} has VC-dim at most $10d$.*

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Lemma

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Lemma (Li, Long, Srinivasan, 2001)

If a set system \mathcal{H} has VC-dim at most d , then for any $\epsilon > 0$, there is an ϵ -approximation for \mathcal{H} of size $O(d/\epsilon^2)$.

First result

Hence, if G, H , have VC-dim at most d , then we can do the following:

- Show that there is an α^* of size $O(\log n / \epsilon^2)$ so that for all v, v' ,

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First result

Hence, if G, H , have VC-dim at most d , then we can do the following:

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VC-dim $\leq d$

Weighted graphs

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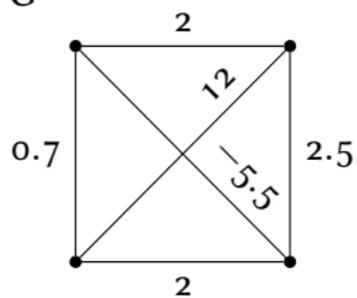
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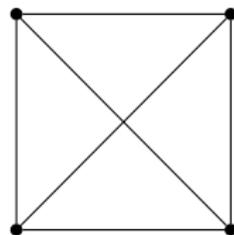
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G



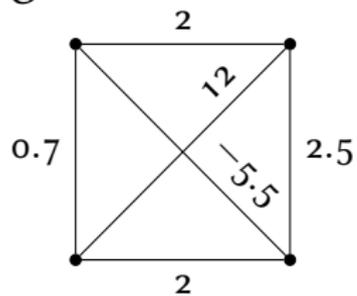
$G^{>t}$



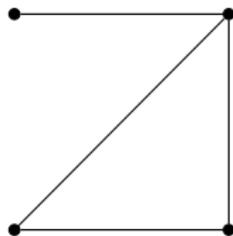
$\leftarrow t = -10$

Weighted graphs

G



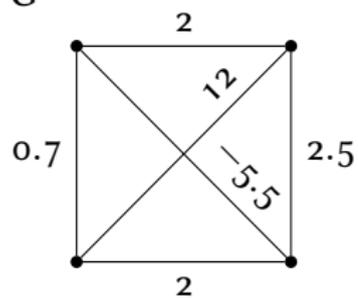
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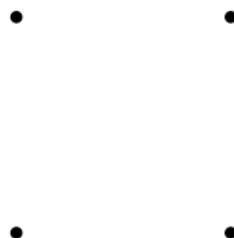
$\leftarrow t = 1.5$

Weighted graphs

G



$G^{>t}$



$\leftarrow t = 42$

- Show that there is an α^* of size $O\left(\frac{1}{\epsilon^2} (d + \log \frac{1}{\epsilon})\right)$ so that for all v, v' ,

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Quadratic Assignment Problems of bounded VC dimension

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Find a bijection $\varphi : [n] \rightarrow [n]$ that minimises

$$\sum_{v,w} c(v, \varphi(v), w, \varphi(w))$$

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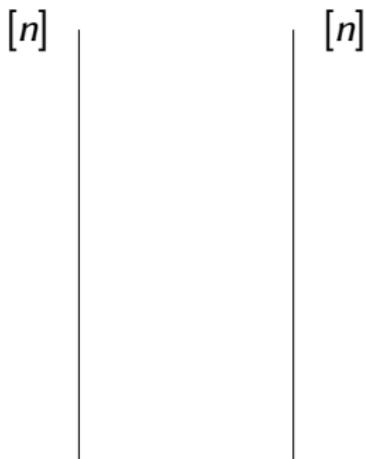


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- Graph Edit Distance

Quadratic Assignment Problems of bounded VC dimension



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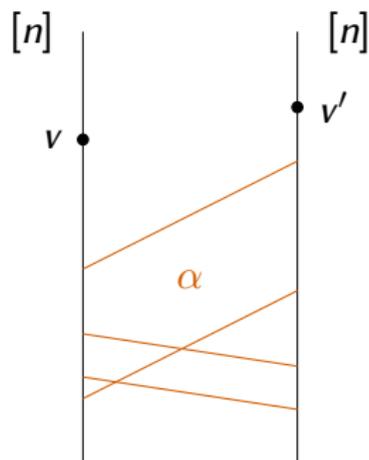


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$$M_{\alpha}^t(v, v') := \{(w, \alpha(w)) \mid c(v, v', w, \alpha(w)) > t \}$$

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- $n^{O(\log n/\epsilon^2)}$
- $n^{O(d/\epsilon^2)}$ on graphs of
VC-dim $\leq d$
- $n^{O_\epsilon(d)}$ on arbitrary QAPs of
VC-dim $\leq d$

Robust Graph Isomorphism

- Input: graphs G, H of size n such that either $G \cong H$ or $\delta_{\text{edit}}(G, H) > \epsilon n^2$.
- Question: Is $G \cong H$?

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Robust Graph Isomorphism

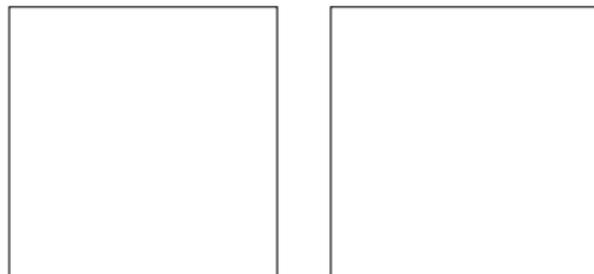
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Question. Can we solve this problem only using combinatorial techniques?

Weisfeiler-Leman algorithm

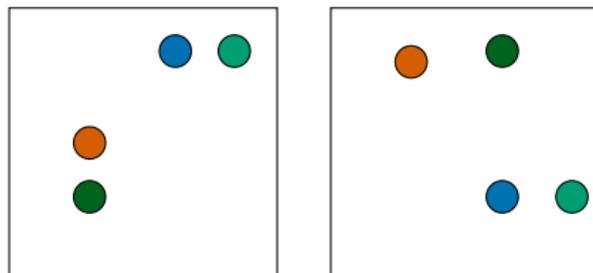
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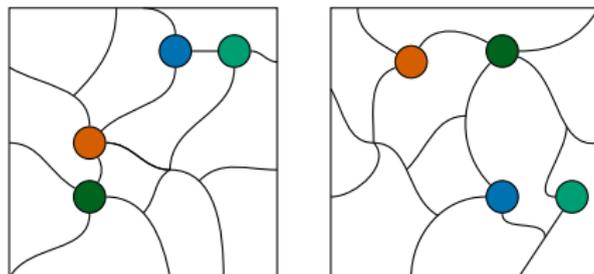
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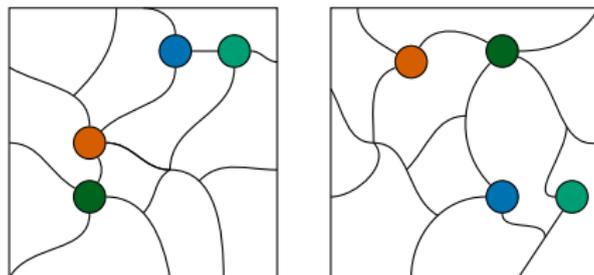


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leaves us with same colour partition on both sides.



Second main result

Theorem

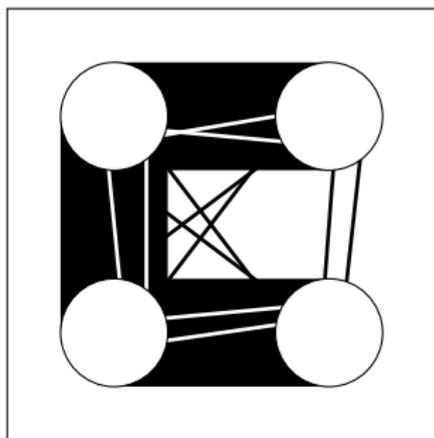
Suppose $\text{VC-dim}(G) \leq d$. If G and H are $O(d/\epsilon^2 \log 1/\epsilon)$ -WL equivalent, then $\delta_{\text{edit}}(G, H) \leq \epsilon n^2$.

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We can show that there is a tuple in G of such size, such that individualising it and running colour refinement:

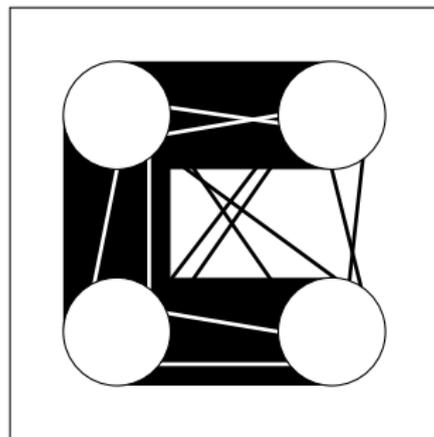
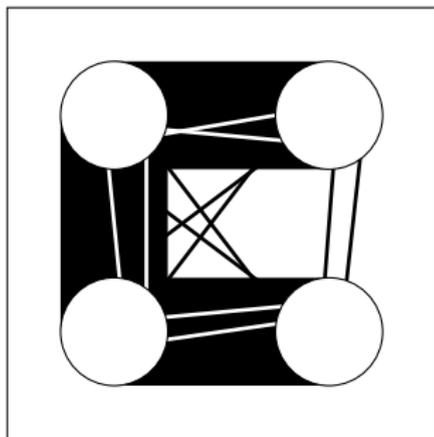


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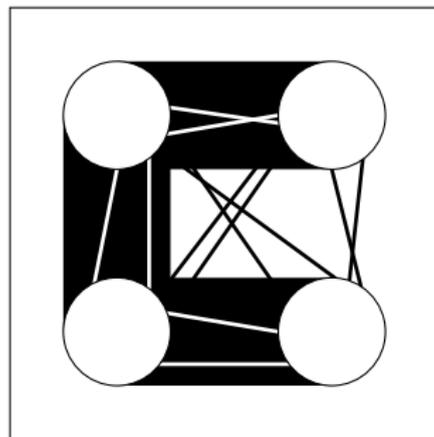
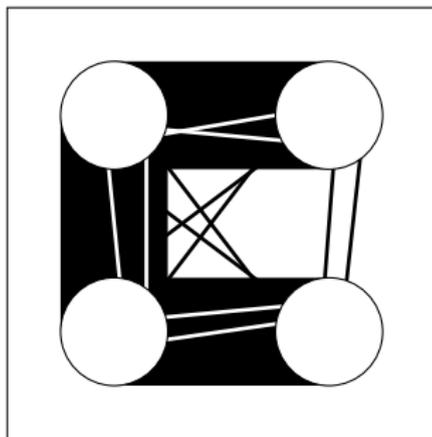
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Results

Approximating edit distance

- $n^{O(\log n/\epsilon^2)}$
- $n^{O(d/\epsilon^2)}$ on graphs of
VC-dim $\leq d$
- $n^{O_\epsilon(d)}$ on arbitrary QAPs of
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- $O(d/\epsilon^2 \cdot \log(1/\epsilon))$ -WL on graphs of VC-dim $\leq d$

Robust GI lower bounds

From known constructions (CFI graphs), we can conclude the following lower bounds.

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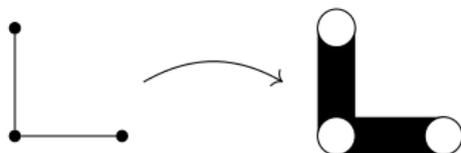
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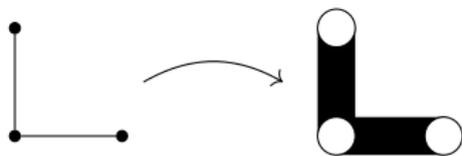
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Edit distance grows quadratically. [Pikhurko]

Results

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- $n^{O(\log n/\epsilon^2)}$
- $n^{O(d/\epsilon^2)}$ on graphs of VC-dim $\leq d$
- $n^{O_\epsilon(d)}$ on arbitrary QAPs of VC-dim $\leq d$

Robust GI using WL

- $O(\log n/\epsilon^2)$ -WL
- $O(d/\epsilon^2 \cdot \log(1/\epsilon))$ -WL on graphs of VC-dim $\leq d$

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- $n^{O(d/\epsilon^2)}$ on graphs of VC-dim $\leq d$
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Robust GI using WL

- $O(\log n/\epsilon^2)$ -WL
- $O(d/\epsilon^2 \cdot \log(1/\epsilon))$ -WL on graphs of VC-dim $\leq d$
- $\Theta(\text{poly}(\epsilon))$ -WL on graphs bounded VC-dim / bounded colour class size