

AN ALTERNATIVE METHOD FOR CHARACTERIZATION AND COMPARISON OF PLANT ROOT SHAPES

A thesis submitted to the
College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Science
in the Department of School of Environment and Sustainability
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon

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EXISTING MORPHOLOGICAL DESCRIPTORS FOR ROOT SYSTEMS

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Importance of Roots

- Mechanical and functional abilities of plant roots
- Plant root plasticity in the resource-limited environment

1.1.2 Importance of Research

1.1.2.1 Demand in crop breeding programs

1.1.2.2 Environment and Sustainability

- reduce the negative impacts of fertilization
- high crop productivity to feed the increasing global population

1.1.3 Promising application in other branching structures

- Trees
- River networks in geography
- Blood vessels in medicine
- Leaf vein networks

1.2 Summary of Existed Descriptors

1.2.1 Metric

1.2.1.1 Basic Geometric Descriptors

- maximum depth
- maximum width
- etc.

1.2.1.2 Compound Descriptors (Computed From the Basic Descriptors)

- Density
- aspect ratio
- etc.

1.2.1.3 Weaknesses

- Rely on the resolution of the images [3]
- Only provide a general view of root morphology [3]
- Difficult to assess the spatial configuration of roots
- Fail to describe the full complexity of root systems

1.2.2 Non-metric

1.2.2.1 Topological Analysis

- Persistent homology [28]
 - Persistence barcode shows the number of branches.
 - Persistence barcode indicates how branched roots connect along the scale of the function (e.g. geodesic distance).
 - Compare the similarity of branching structures by a pair-wise distance matrix using the bottleneck distance method.
- Horton-Strahler index [36]
 - Categorize the topological complexity of the whole branching structure.
 - Provide a numerical measure of connectedness and complexity of the branching at each vertex by a dimensionless ratio: bifurcation ratio.
 - The range of index and the length ratio indicate the size of the branching structure.
- Fractal Analysis [35]
 - Measure the complexity of branching structures.
 - Measure self-similarity of branching structures by fractal dimension of the root systems.

1.2.2.2 Strengths

- Highly complementary to geometric descriptors to characterize how individual roots are connected through branching [7].
- Describe branching structures independent of transformation and deformation.

1.2.2.3 Problems and Weaknesses

- Only analyze the connectedness of branching structures, which is a portion of the complexity of plant root systems.
- Fail to characterize spatial distribution.
- Some biologically topological indices analyze the root growth qualitatively based on line-linked systems [13], but not characterize the mathematical topological properties.
- The fractal analysis aims to describe self-similar structures, which grow by continually repeating simple growth rules [14].

1.3 Problem Statements

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AN ALTERNATIVE MATHEMATICAL METHOD FOR SHAPE DE- SCRIPTION



Figure 2.1: From the left subfigure, some people may only see a symmetrical vase. However, if we look at the vase’s right or left edge and consider the innermost indent as the tip of the nose outline, the indent above as the eye outline, and the double indent below as the mouth outline, people will see two opposite faces as shown in the right black-and-white subfigure.

2.1 Research Inspiration

2.1.1 Vase or Face?

Rubin, a Danish psychologist and philosopher, generated a well-known ambiguous image, as shown in Fig. 2.1, and first introduced it in his doctoral thesis in 1915 [31]. Rubin’s vase is an example of the cognitive optical illusion, which presents the viewer with a mental choice of two valid shape interpretations. One interpretation is two opposite black faces in the foreground with a white background. The other one is a white vase in the foreground with a black background. Generally, only one interpretation can be maintained at a given moment, and the viewer will realize the second one after some time or prompting. Thus, it is impossible to perceive both interpretations simultaneously since one occludes the other.

Rubin has explained the illusion, which demonstrated how the brain makes the figure-ground distinction

during visual perception. In a picture, if one object surrounds another, the surrounded object can be considered as a figure, and the other object can be regarded as the ground, and vice versa. If the figure and ground have a common border, the ambiguity begins to creep in, and the brain can interpret the black area as a figure or ground. Rubin’s figure-ground distinction has a profound impact on the psychologists to discover more similar illusions [29] and intrigue some artists to construct objects in a reversion fashion [5].

From Rubin’s vase ambiguous image, we can detect two quite distinct shapes, i.e. vase and faces, by having the perspectival switch and paying attention to the figure and ground, respectively. Therefore, the meaning and information of an image are stored in both foreground and background. However, people are only concentrated on the figure (i.e. plant roots with white pixels) and not the ground (i.e. unoccupied space with black pixels) since all existing descriptors are designed to characterize the plant roots in 2dimensional images. In this case, unlike the application of Rubin’s vase in neural analysis, psychology, art, and so on, we aim to explore the unoccupied space for understanding plant root images.

2.1.2 Kac's Idea: Can One Hear the Shape of a Drum? [22]

2.1.2.1 Interpretations of Kac's Problem

- When the drum vibrates, one can hear the sound, which is composed of tones of various frequencies. How much can shape features be inferred from hearing a discrete spectrum of pure tones produced by a drum?
- If a complete sequence of eigenvalues of the Dirichlet problem for the Laplacian can be obtained precisely, will people determine the shape of a planar?

2.1.2.2 Problem Statement

- Consider a simply connected membrane Ω in the Euclidean space bounded by a smooth convex curve $\partial\Omega$ (e.g. a drum without any holes)
- Find function ϕ on the closure of Ω , which vanishes at the boundary $\partial\Omega$, and a number λ satisfying $-\Delta\phi = \lambda\phi$.
 - Δ is the Laplace operator. e.g. $\Delta = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{\partial^2}{\partial x_i^2}$ in Cartesian coordinate system.
 - If there exists a solution $\phi \neq 0$, the corresponding λ is defined as a Dirichlet eigenvalue.
 - For each domain Ω , there has a sequence of eigenvalues $\lambda_1, \lambda_2, \lambda_3, \dots$ corresponding to a set of eigenfunction $\phi_1, \phi_2, \phi_3, \dots$
 - ϕ_k form an orthonormal basis of $L^2(\Omega)$ of real valued eigenfunctions; the corresponding discrete Dirichlet eigenvalues are positive ($\lambda_k \in \mathbb{R}^+$).
- An important function [18]:

$$h(t) = \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} e^{-\lambda_k t} \tag{2.1}$$

- It is a Dirichlet series.
- It is called the spectral function or the heat trace.
- It is smooth and converges for every $t > 0$.

2.1.2.3 Summarize the Results of Kac's Idea

$$h(t) = \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} e^{-\lambda_k t} \sim \frac{|\Omega|}{2\pi t} - \frac{L}{4} \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi t}} + \frac{1}{6} \quad (2.2)$$

- As $t \rightarrow 0^+$, the leading terms of the asymptotic expansion of $h(t)$ imply the geometrical attributes of Ω
 - the total area
 - the perimeter
 - the curvature
- If the domain Ω has the polygonal boundary, the third term shows in the information about the interior angles of the polygon [18].

2.1.2.4 Conclusion

2.1.2.4.1 Advantages

- Kac proposed a novel analytical mathematical method for the shape description without using measuring tools, e.g. rulers.
- Other mathematicians extended Kac's idea in exploring the geometrical information of more complex domains with various boundary conditions [26][16][15] [42][34].

2.1.2.4.2 Limitations

- It is only available for the convex domain, which has a smooth or piecewise smooth boundary.
- Except in very few cases (i.e. rectangular, disk, certain triangles), the complete sequence of eigenvalues λ_k can not be calculated [18].
- Only the first few terms in the asymptotic expansion of $h(t)$ are explicitly available.

2.1.3 Extended Work of Kac's Idea: Heat Content $Q(\tau)$ [37]

2.1.3.1 Fourier's Heat Equation [4]

- Mathematical Formula

$$\frac{\partial u(\mathbf{s}, t)}{\partial t} = \Delta u(\mathbf{s}, t) \quad (2.3)$$

- Interpretation

It is a deterministic model used to characterize the evolution of quantities over the space and time.
(e.g. the flow of heat)

2.1.3.2 Summarize the Idea

- Initial-Boundary Value Problem (IBVP)

$u(\mathbf{s}, t)$ indicates the value of the temperature at $\mathbf{s} \in \Omega$ at time t satisfying Eq. 2.3 and

- Initial condition: $u(\mathbf{s}, t) = f(\mathbf{s})$ as $t \rightarrow 0$.
- Dirichlet boundary condition: $u(\mathbf{s}, t) = 0$ for $\mathbf{s} \in \partial\Omega$

It is also called the absorbing boundary condition; i.e. any molecule will be instantly absorbed when it touches the boundary $\partial\Omega$;

- A Basic Integration

$$\beta_\Omega(f, g)(t) = \int_\Omega \int_\Omega H_\Omega(\mathbf{s}, t | \mathbf{s}_0) f(\mathbf{s}_0) g(\mathbf{s}) d\mathbf{s}_0 d\mathbf{s} \quad (2.4)$$

$$= \int_\Omega u(\mathbf{s}, t) g(\mathbf{s}) d\mathbf{s} \quad (2.5)$$

- $H_\Omega(\mathbf{s}, t | \mathbf{s}_0)$ is called the heat kernel of Ω describing the density of the heat at \mathbf{s} after time t when initially there is only one single hot source at \mathbf{s}_0 .
- $u(\mathbf{s}, t)$ is the general solution to Eq. 2.3, which can be expressed as the convolution of the initial condition with the heat kernel of the domain.
- $g(\mathbf{s})$ is an auxiliary test function for studying the distributional nature of the temperature function $u(\mathbf{s}, t)$ near $\partial\Omega$.

- Heat Content Calculation

Given

$$g(\mathbf{s}) = 1 \quad (2.6)$$

$$Q_\Omega(t) = \int_\Omega \int_\Omega H_\Omega(\mathbf{s}, t | \mathbf{s}_0) f(\mathbf{s}_0) d\mathbf{s}_0 d\mathbf{s} \quad (2.7)$$

$$= \int_\Omega u(\mathbf{s}, t) d\mathbf{s} \quad (2.8)$$

- Shape Characterization

- As $t \rightarrow 0^+$,

$$Q_\Omega(t) \simeq \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \beta_n(\Omega) t^{\frac{n}{2}} \quad (2.9)$$

- Obtain geometrical information of Ω from β_n

- * area
- * length
- * scalar curvature
- * mass

2.1.3.3 Conclusion

- Strengthness
 - Instead of calculating a complete sequence of the Dirichlet eigenvalues for exploring the shape attributes of geometry, the asymptotic expansion of the heat content, defined as integrating the solution to the heat equation over the space-dimension, also implies the geometrical characteristics.
- - Only the infinitely differentiable boundary $\partial\Omega$ is considered.
 - Only the first few terms in the asymptotic expansion are explicitly known.
 - Either irregular geometries or discontinuities lead to the complexities, so the explicit solutions $u(\mathbf{s}, t)$ are close to non-existed.
 - The numerical evaluation of the analytical $u(\mathbf{s}, t)$ and $Q_\Omega(t)$ is usually by no means trivial because they are in the form of infinite series.
 - Similiarly, only the first few coefficients β_n in the asymptotic expansion of $Q_\Omega(t)$ can be expressed as the complicated explicit forms.

In this section, we have a perceptual shift and begin understanding the plant root images from a reversing view, that is, to explore and distinguish the unoccupied space in the image, i.e. the region without roots, to reveal and compare both geometric and spatial attributes of plant roots. Also, we are intrigued by Kac's idea about using analytical mathematical tools for shape characterization to overcome the limitations of conventional ruler-based measurements. The heat content calculation is an extension of Kac's idea, which presents a relatively practicable mathematical method to describe an irregular compact region with a smooth boundary. However, it is still challenging and time-consuming to solve the initial-boundary value problem by either analytical or numerical methods.

2.2 Mathematical Methodologies

...

2.2.1 Point Process

...

2.2.1.1 Introduction

...

2.2.1.2 Survival Function $S(r)$

...

2.2.2 Monte Carlo Simulation for Stochastic Process

...

2.2.2.1 Heat Content $Q(\tau)$ and Survival Function $S_{\Omega}(\tau)$

...

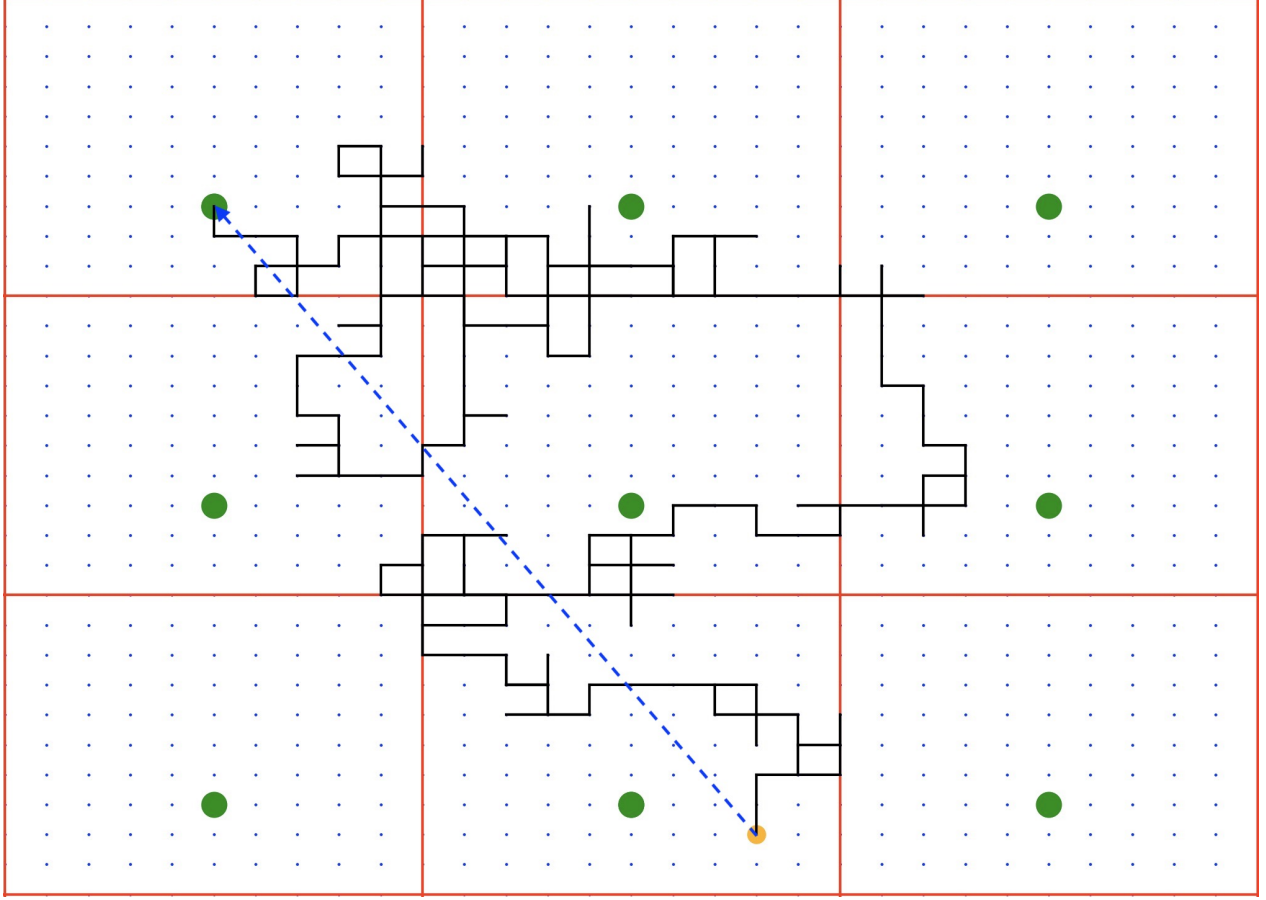


Figure 2.2: This plane is constructed by choosing a primitive cell with four red sides and a green point and replicating it infinitely to tile the whole 2– dimensional space. Moreover, there has no overlaps and voids between copies of the cell. A particle initially started LRWs from the orange site and be absorbed by any of the green points. To ensure smoothness and consistency, if the particle leaves the cell through one edge, it will appear in the adjacent cell with the same velocity. The black line segments show the particle’s random trajectories, and the length of the blue dotted arrow is defined as its displacement.

2.2.2.2 Design LRWs in the 2– dimensional image

- Initial condition: uniform distribution within Ω , which is bounded by the border of the image and the edge of the target object.
- Boundary condition

- Periodic boundary condition the edges of the image.

In this thesis, periodic boundary conditions (PBCs) are employed to minimize the influence of images’ edges. Fig. 2.2 is a simplest example of implementing PBCs in the Euclidean plane E^2 and tracks the trajectory of a particle undergoing LRWs.

- Absorbing boundary condition on the boundary of the target shape.

2.2.2.3 Survival Function $S_{\Omega}(d)$

2.3 Sample Size Determination - Dvoretzky–Kiefer–Wolfowitz (DKW) inequality [10]

- Mathematical formula and interpretation
- Strengths
 - Distribution-free
 - Sample size calculation does not depend on
 - * Domain shape and size
 - * Target geometry
 - * B.C.s

2.4 Output Analysis

2.4.1 Survival Analysis

- Kaplan-Meier Estimator [24] [1][?]
- Confidence Interval [17] [21] [23][32]
- Two-Sample Statistical Tests (weighted logrank tests) [6] [2] [25] [27] [11] [20]
 - Wilcoxon
 - Tarone-Ware
 - Peto
 - Fleming-Harrington

2.4.2 Functional Data Analysis [39]

LRWS IN ARTIFICIAL IMAGES

Some commonly used descriptors for plant root morphology in 2– dimensional black-and-white images and their limitations are summarized in chapter 1. Overall, some of them only extract and characterize a set of representative geometric features of plant roots from images, and some can only describe the connectedness of branches. However, none of them provide information about the spatial distribution of roots.

In chapter 2, we have a perceptual shift and begin understanding the plant root images from a reversing view, that is, to explore and distinguish the unoccupied space in the image, i.e. a region without roots. Also, we are intrigued by Kac’s idea [22] about using analytical mathematical tools for shape characterization to overcome the limitations of conventional ruler-based measurements. Based on the research inspiration, two mathematical processes, point process and stochastic process (i.e. LRWs), are proposed to explore and characterize the unoccupied space and summarize the geometric attributes and spatial arrangements of object in the image without rulers.

From the point process [41] view, for a 2–dimensional image, we can map the object or figure consisting of white pixels as a fixed set of points and regard the uniform distributed points in the unoccupied space as a 2–dimensional random point pattern. The survival function of radius or shortest distance, R , from the fixed set to random points of a point process can be estimated by Kaplan-Meier estimator [24] [1] [?]. Therefore, one of the primary purposes of this chapter is to interpret the survival function of radius, $S(R)$, and to demonstrate the underlying spatial information about an image.

The heat content calculation [8] [37] is an extension of Kac’s idea [22], which presents a relatively practicable mathematical technique to describe an irregular compact region with a smooth boundary. Eq.2.9 indicates that the geometric features of a region with a smooth boundary in \mathbb{R}^2 can be deduced from the asymptotic properties of the heat content, which is the integration of the solution to the heat equation over the predefined domain. However, the implementation in practice is by no means trivial. First of all, the analytical methods and solutions are restricted to simple geometries and constant diffusion properties, but the image unoccupied region is usually extremely complicated. Additionally, the numerical evaluation of the solution, heat content, and asymptotic expansion is complex or sometimes inaccessible because they are in the form of infinite series. Last but not least, more spatial information might be hidden in the long-term behaviours of heat content. Therefore, a stochastic process [33], i.e. lattice random walks (LRWs), is proposed, and the fixed-time step Monte Carlo simulation is designed to approximate the heat content.

The fixed-time step Monte Carlo simulation, LRWs, has been validated in the annulus in Appendix B by comparing the analytical heat content and numerical survival function. In a word, the estimated survival function of N particles undergoing LRWs in the annulus converges to the analytical heat content, where N is determined by DKW inequality in section 2.3. Eq.2.9 gives a clue on how to carry out the further validation of LRWs. The coefficient of the first term is only associated with the total area of the region, and the second one can only be affected by the total length of the boundary. Hence, theoretically, for the equal-area shapes, the larger perimeter causes a faster decay rate of the short-term survival function because of a minus sign in front of the second term in the asymptotic series in Eq.2.9.

The fundamental motivation behind equal-area branching structures devised in this chapter is the predictable short-term survival function behaviours in Eq.2.9. Without calculating the asymptotic expansion, we are interested in knowing whether short-term behaviours of survival functions coincide with analytical results, testing whether survival curves for distinct shapes are statistically distinguishable, and understanding the survival curve to unveil the geometric and spatial information about the image.

Thus, this chapter is outlined as follows. In section 3.1, two simple regular shapes with the identical area, i.e. the circle and rectangle, are generated in black-and-white images with the same dimensions as shown in Fig. C.1. Commonly applied two-sample statistical tests assess the distinctions between the survival functions of the circle and the rectangle, which is a preliminary examination of LRWs to know whether we can differentiate geometries by comparing survival curves. In section 3.2, the motivation, layout, and algorithm of producing the branching structures shown in Fig. C.2 and Fig. C.3 are construed in detail. And then, the survival functions of the radius (i.e. R), the number of steps (i.e. n), and the distance (i.e. d) are interpreted and analyzed by exploring the underlying static and dynamic random processes, which reveal both geometric and spatial attributes of branching structures. Except for studying why survival functions for branching structures are distinct, it is also essential to investigate how they differ by statistical tests and dissimilarities calculation to validate LRWs further. Finally, section 3.3 summarizes the demonstration and verification of LRWs in the artificial images.

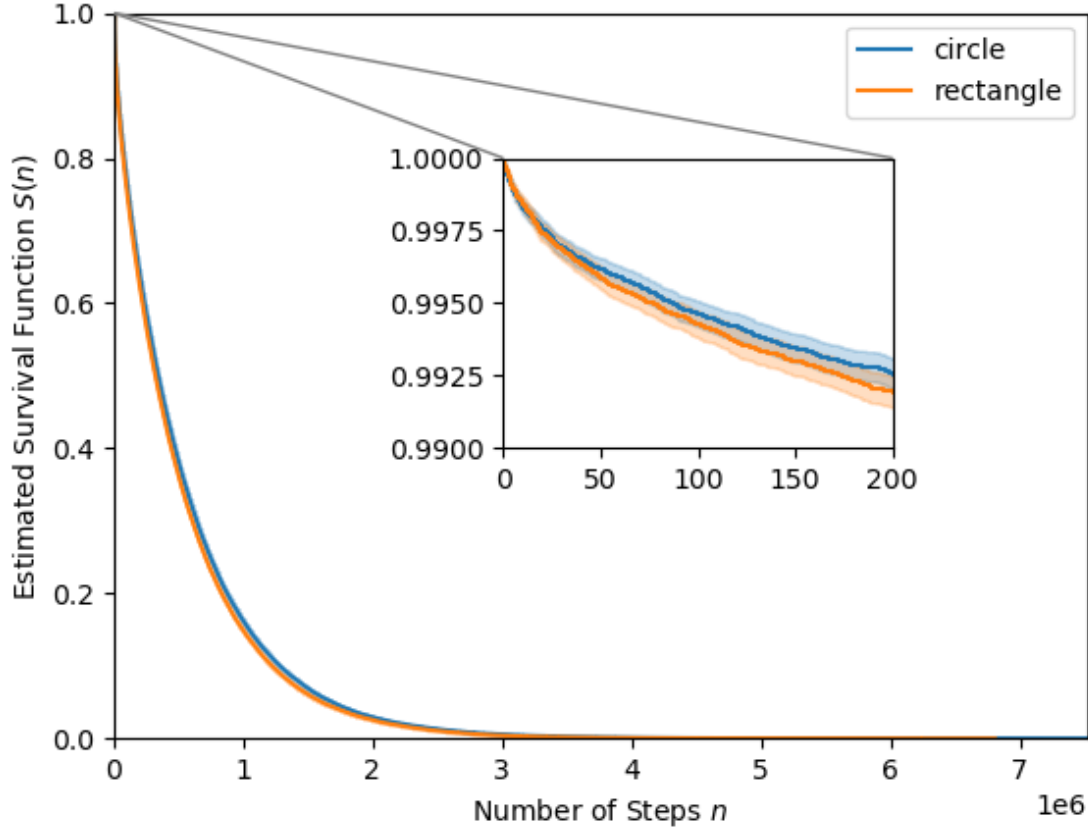


Figure 3.1: Since the survival curves for circle and rectangle overlap and cross, it is hard to detect the difference between them by eyes. However, the inset figure shows the greater details about the survival probabilities within the small number of steps. The area around the survival curve with the pale colour represents 95% confidence interval.

3.1 Comparison of Survival Functions for Circle and Rectangle Yuge

For simplicity, the centroid of shape in Fig. C.1 is located at the center of the image, although periodic boundary conditions can eliminate the boundary and translation effects. Circle and rectangle are regular convex shapes without sophisticated geometric features. Moreover, it is well-known that the rectangle perimeter is longer than the circle circumference when their areas are identical. Therefore, in theory, survival probabilities at short times, i.e. number of steps n , of particles in the image with a rectangle are smaller than a circle.

Fig. 3.1 shows the Kaplan-Meier estimates and the 95% confidence intervals for the survival functions, $S(n)$, of circle and rectangle. The approximated 95% confidence intervals of the survival functions overlay results from the sampling errors. The survival function decays monotonically from 1 to 0. In LRWs, particles' initial positions are distributed uniformly in the unoccupied space in the image, so none of them can be absorbed by the boundary of the target shape. Also, all the particles will finally stop the random walk and

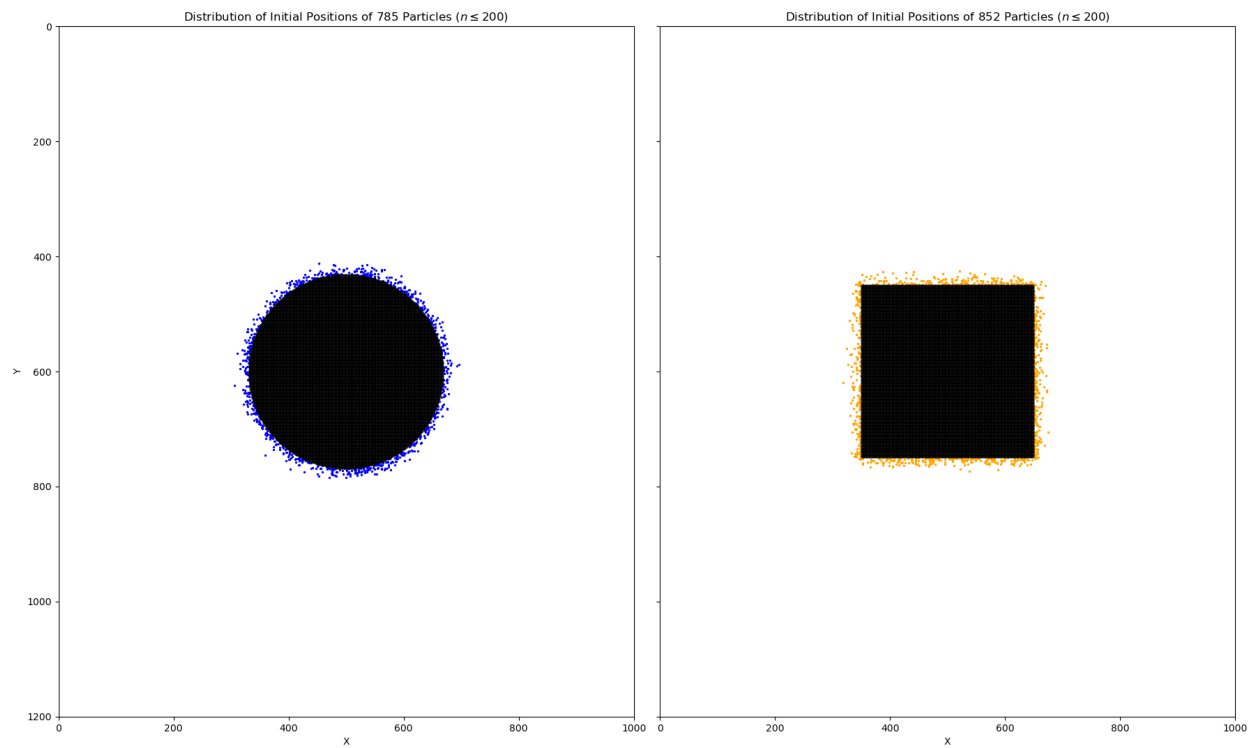


Figure 3.2: The coloured points in the left and right subfigure represent the initial positions of particles in LRWs, whose number of steps less than or equal to 200.

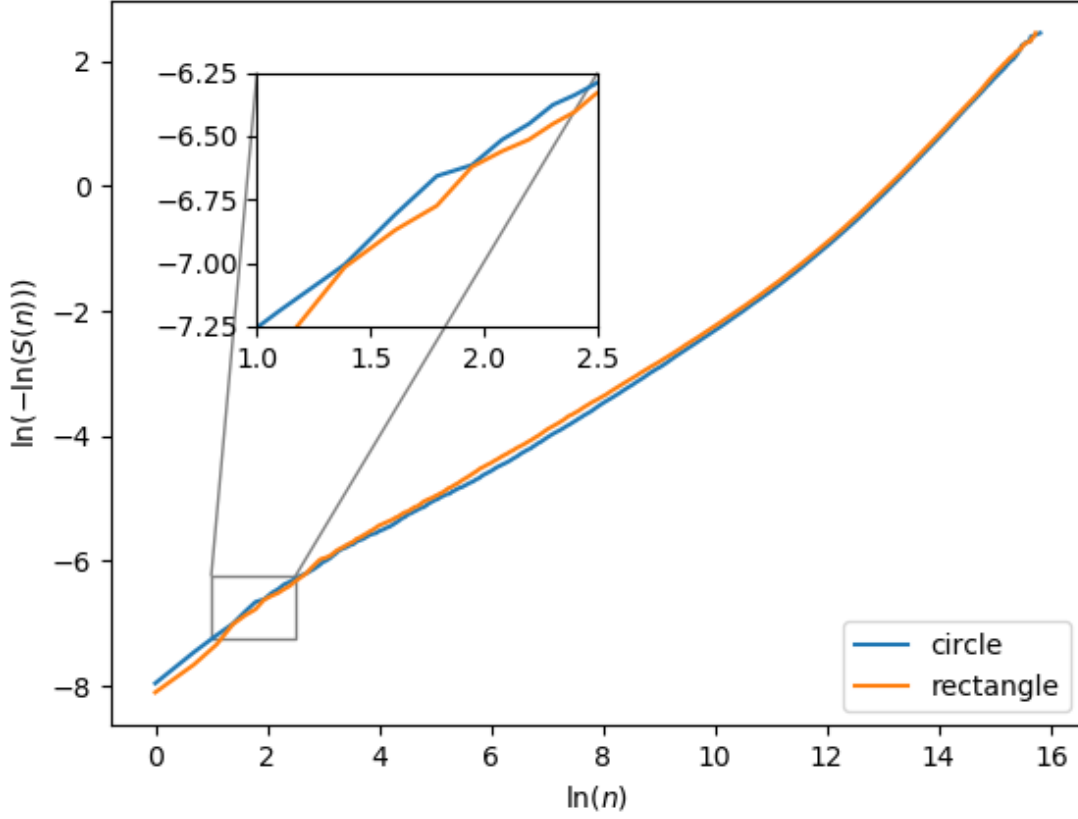


Figure 3.3: It is a graphical method for checking proportionality by looking for parallelism. The lines for circle and rectangle are not parallel since they cross at some points as shown in the inset, and the difference between them changes with logarithmically transformed n .

can not survive because of the absorbing boundary condition.

Overall, the differences between survival functions for the circle and rectangle are not visible. Nevertheless, an inset in Fig. 3.1 helps visually identify distinct short-term behaviours of survival functions for circle and rectangle, which are consistent with the theoretical results. From the concentrated spatial distribution of points illustrated in Fig. 3.2, we can find that if particles start LRWs close to the target object in the image, they will hit the absorbing boundary within a few steps. Alternatively, the short-term survival function describes a region in the shape of an approximate belt next to the target object. Furthermore, the point cloud around the rectangle comprises more particles than the circle resulting from the longer perimeter.

After the short-term study, the entire survival curves of circle and rectangle needed to be compared to validate LRWs further. As introduced in section ??, some conventional nonparametric tests in survival analysis assess the null hypothesis that there is no difference in survival probabilities at all number of steps n . Among those tests, the log-rank test results are reliable if the assumption of proportional hazards is satisfied, which can be inspected by looking at the graph Fig. 3.3 showing $\ln(-\ln S(n))$ against $\ln(n)$.

	test_statistic	p
log-rank	137.23	0.0
Tarone-Ware	134.31	0.0
Gehan-Breslow	123.83	0.0
Fleming-Harrington	123.83	0.0

Table 3.1: Survival functions for circle and rectangle are statistically different since p values equal zeros.

The crossing lines with varying shapes in Fig. 3.3 suggest the rejection of the proportional hazards assumption, and the log-rank test may loss power. However, in Tab. 3.1, log-rank, Tarone-Ware, Gehan-Breslow, and Fleming-Harrington tests demonstrate the rejection of the null hypothesis. In other words, there is a statistically significant difference between the survival functions for circle and rectangle. In conclusion, LRWs is an alternative methodology to quantify and distinguish the regular simply connected regions in the 2– dimensional image by developing and comparing the corresponding survival functions.

3.2 Complicated Branching Structures

In the preceding section, LRWs are simulated in the 2-dimensional images of equal-area simply connected domains (i.e. without holes in them) with smooth or piecewise smooth boundary. Both short and long-term behaviours of survival functions for the circle and rectangle are analyzed and compared to verify LRWs in the application of shape comparison. However, the plant root shape is an extremely complicated branching structure, consisting of the primary roots, taproots, secondary roots, etc.

Hence, this section is outlined as follows. First of all, some branching structures, as shown in Fig. C.2 and Fig. C.3, are designed and generated in equal size 2-dimensional images. Secondly, without the simulation of LRWs, the spatial pattern and structural features of the branching structures are discussed by the interpretation of the survival function $S(R)$, where R is the nearest distance from an arbitrary point in the space to the fixed boundary of the target object. Thirdly, the other two survival functions, $S(n)$ and $S(d)$, of the branching structures are estimated and compared, where n and d are the numbers of steps taken by the particle from the initial to the stop position and its corresponding displacement in the tiling space, respectively. However, three types of survival functions and their interpretation of the underlying stochastic process in this section are intimately related.

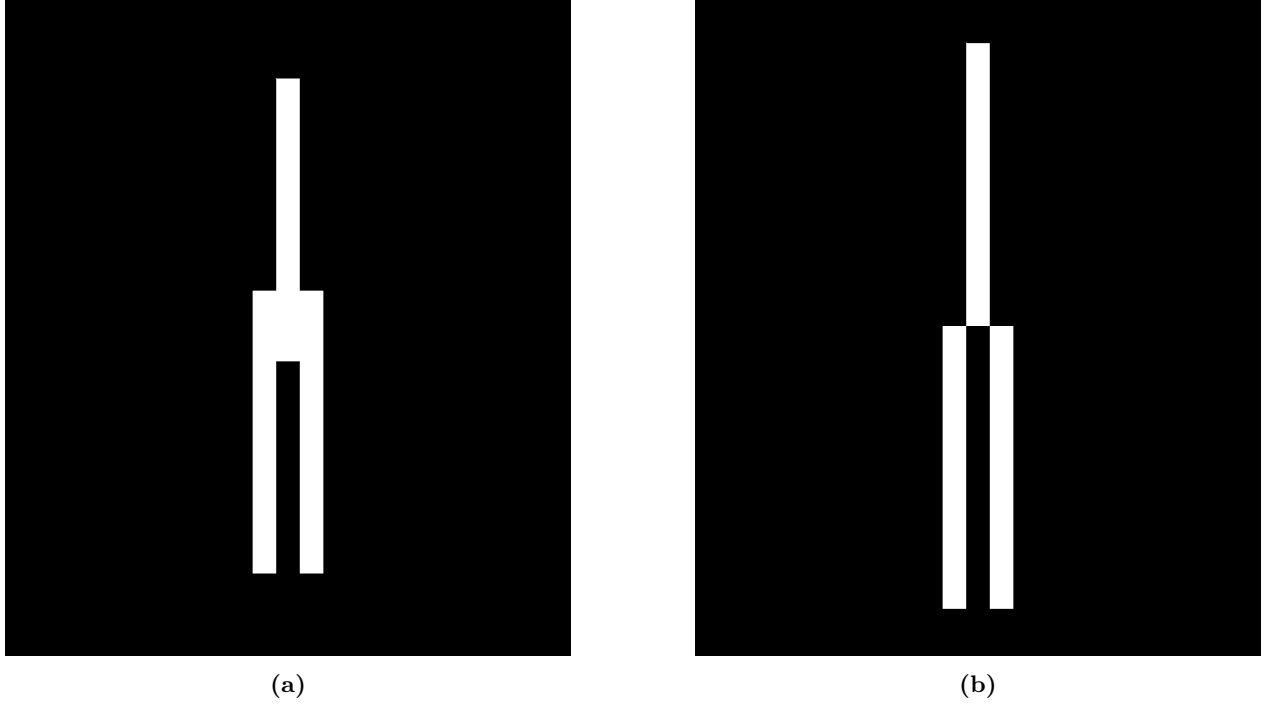


Figure 3.4: (a) and (b) are branch templates with identical area for generating artificial branching structures in G_1 and G_2 , respectively. Templates in (a) and (b) have same maximum width (i.e. 150), but different maximum depth (i.e. 1050 and 1200, respectively).

3.2.1 Artificial Branching Structure Construction

The plant root shape can be represented as a spatial structural system consisting of separate branches, and each of them forks out at a specific point, or knot, into at least two branches. Moreover, such branching structure can constantly subjected to tension, compression, flexion, bending, and torsion. In this section, as shown in Fig. C.2 and Fig. C.3, the design of two groups of artificial images builds upon and extends the definition of the perfect binary tree structure [30] in graph theory [40]. A binary tree is a data structure consisting of nodes, each of which has up to two childer named left and right child nodes. It starts with a single topmost node called the root. A perfect binary tree is a specific type of binary tree in which all the interval nodes are connected with two child nodes, and all leaves are at the same level. The root is at level 0, its child nodes are at level 1, and so on.

As shown in Fig. 3.4, the branch templates for G_1 and G_2 are slightly distinct in shapes, connection, the thickness of the left and right child branches, and aspect ratio. According to the concept of perfect binary tree structures, the template can be decomposed into three branches, one main or parent branch and two child branches. The main branch is connected with a left and right child branch equidistantly and symmetrically without voids and overlays. The equal-area artificial branching structures in Fig. C.2 and Fig. C.3 are generated based on the principle of fractal geometry [12] by repeating the branch template at an increasingly smaller scale from top to bottom. The following algorithm summarizes how to construct a

binary branching structure:

Algorithm 1: Generate Artificial Branching Structure

Result: 2-dimensional Artificial Branching Image with Area A

Set number of levels of the branching structure j ;

Given a branch template \hat{T} with a predefined surface area A ;

Generate an all-black image Img ;

for $l = 0$; $l < j$; $l = l + 1$ **do**

 define l -th level branch template as $\hat{T}_{j,l}$ by multiplying \hat{T} with a scaling factor $s_{j,l}$;

if $l == 0$ **then**

 draw a branch template $\hat{T}_{j,l}$ in Img ;

 find the bottom left and right convex corners of $\hat{T}_{j,l}$;

else

 draw and put 2^l branch templates, $\hat{T}_{j,l}$, at every convex corner;

 find the bottom left and right convex corners of all $\hat{T}_{j,l}$;

 take a union of previous Img with the collection of smaller-scale branches and redefine Img ;

end

end

if *number of white pixels* $N \neq A$ **then**

 add $A - N$ white pixels around branch templates in Img

else

end

Those artificial structures in Fig. C.2 and Fig. C.3 are iteratively-defined geometries as described in the algorithm ??, and their complexities grow with the number of hierarchical branching or levels j , where $j = 3, 4, 5, 6$. The large-scale or low-level branches mimic thick roots near the soil surface. In contrast, the smaller-scale branches at the higher level represent the fine roots that gradually become vertical in deeper horizons because of the positive response of gravity in soil.

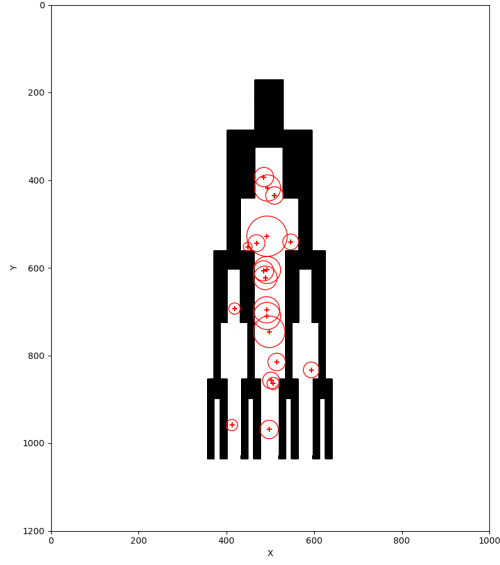
From the perspective of mathematics, in each image, the region occupied by white pixels and bounded by a piecewise smooth curve is a 2-dimensional simply connected domain. As similar to the methodology validation in the last section, we will compare the short-term survival function behaviours and assess their discrepancy by statistical results. However, the primary purpose is to interpret the survival curves and reveal the spatial pattern information.

3.2.2 Output Analysis of $S(R)$

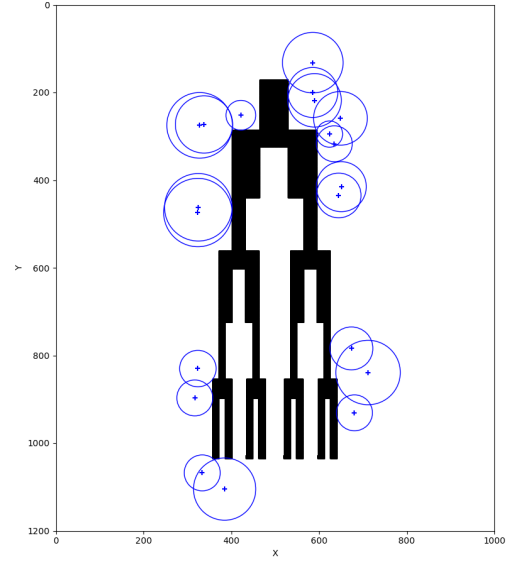
From the marked point process view, for a 2-dimensional plant root image, we map root locations, i.e. white pixels, as a fixed set of points and regard the uniform distributed initial sites of particles in the unoccupied space as a 2-dimensional random point pattern. Each point in point process is labelled and marked by a number, i.e. the number of steps, n , taken by a particle in LRWs (lattice random walks) from the initial position to absorbing boundary, or its displacement, d .

As introduced in Fig. 2.2, periodic boundary conditions construct the infinite two-dimensional tiling domain by filling all of R^2 by copies of the primitive cell without overlapping or leaving any gaps. In other words, eight identical obstacles with absorbing boundary in other copies of the image are neighbouring and impose a restriction on particles' movement and finally absorb them in LRWs.

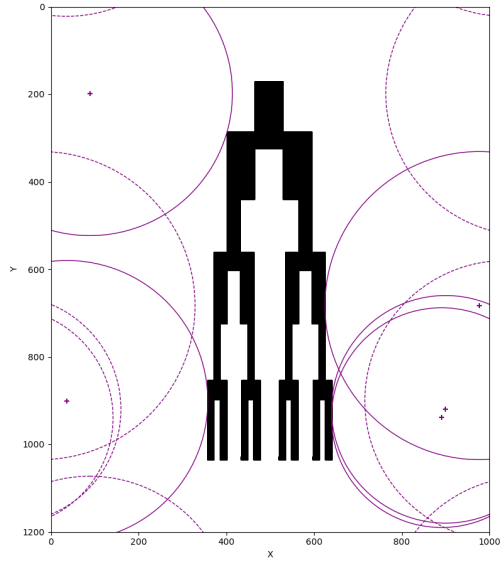
In other words, there has an infinite number of obstacles with absorbing boundary conditions building a confining domain.



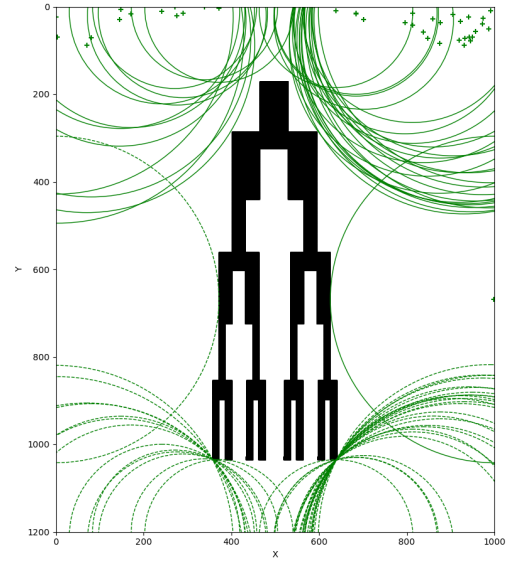
(a)



(b)

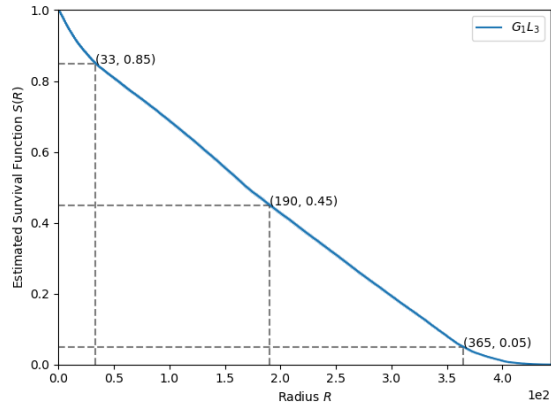


(c)

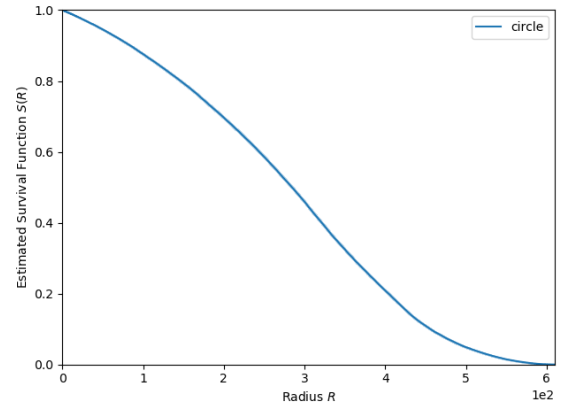


(d)

Figure 3.5: This figure shows four types of the largest discs centred at some colourful plus symbols, +, which are initial positions of particles in LRWs. The radius of a disk is the shortest distance from the initial site to the absorbing boundary. As shown in (a) and (b), if particles are close to the target object, the completed discs can be drawn with the solid line. Specifically, the red discs between or inscribed in branches imply the spacing information of branching structure. The blue discs closely near the target object characterize a portion of empty space, where particles can wander around and are nearly impossible to escape from the image. As explained in Fig. 2.2, periodic boundary conditions can eliminate the edge effect and produce an infinite system. Suppose the initial locations are slightly



(a)



(b)

Figure 3.6

		p			
		Logrank	TW	GB	FH
$G_1 L_3$	$G_1 L_4$	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	$G_1 L_5$	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	$G_1 L_6$	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
$G_1 L_4$	$G_1 L_5$	0.1773	0.0	0.0	0.0
	$G_1 L_6$	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
$G_1 L_5$	$G_1 L_6$	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

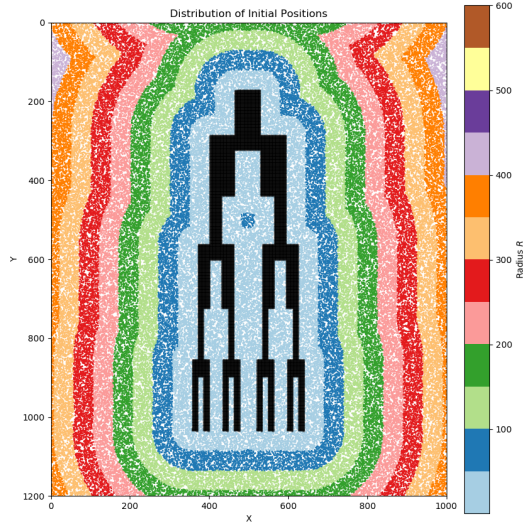
Table 3.2

3.2.2.1 Interpretation of Survival Curves

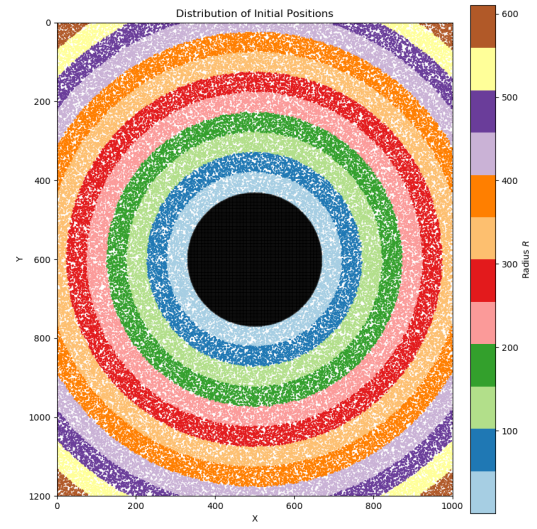
3.2.2.2 Comparison of Survival Curves

3.2.2.2.1 Distance Matrices

3.2.2.2.2 Multidimensional Scaling

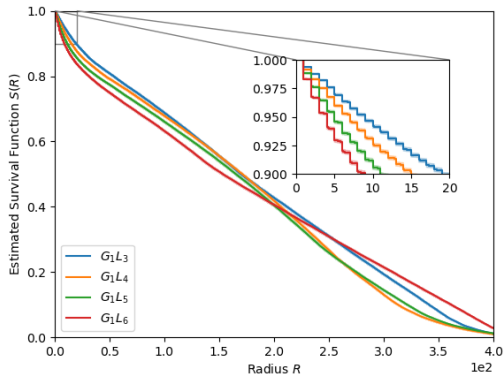


(a)

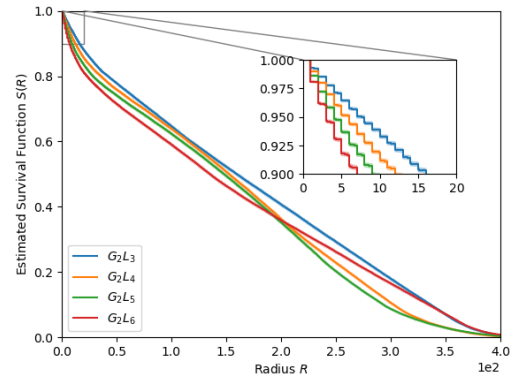


(b)

Figure 3.7

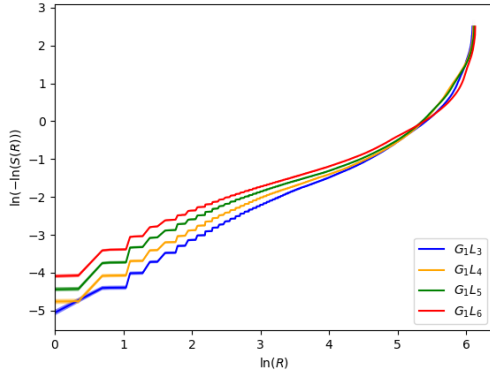


(a)

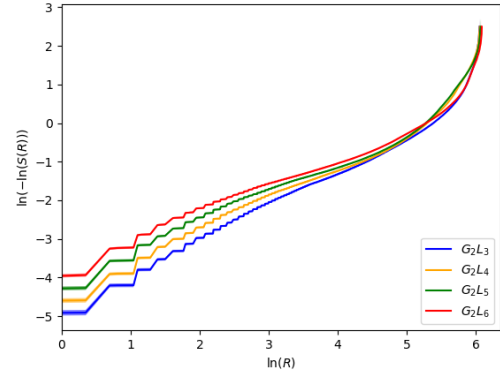


(b)

Figure 3.8



(a)



(b)

Figure 3.9

		p			
		Logrank	TW	GB	FH
$G_2 L_3$	$G_2 L_4$	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	$G_2 L_5$	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	$G_2 L_6$	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
$G_2 L_4$	$G_2 L_5$	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	$G_2 L_6$	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
$G_2 L_5$	$G_2 L_6$	0.0	0.0	0.0253	0.0253

Table 3.3

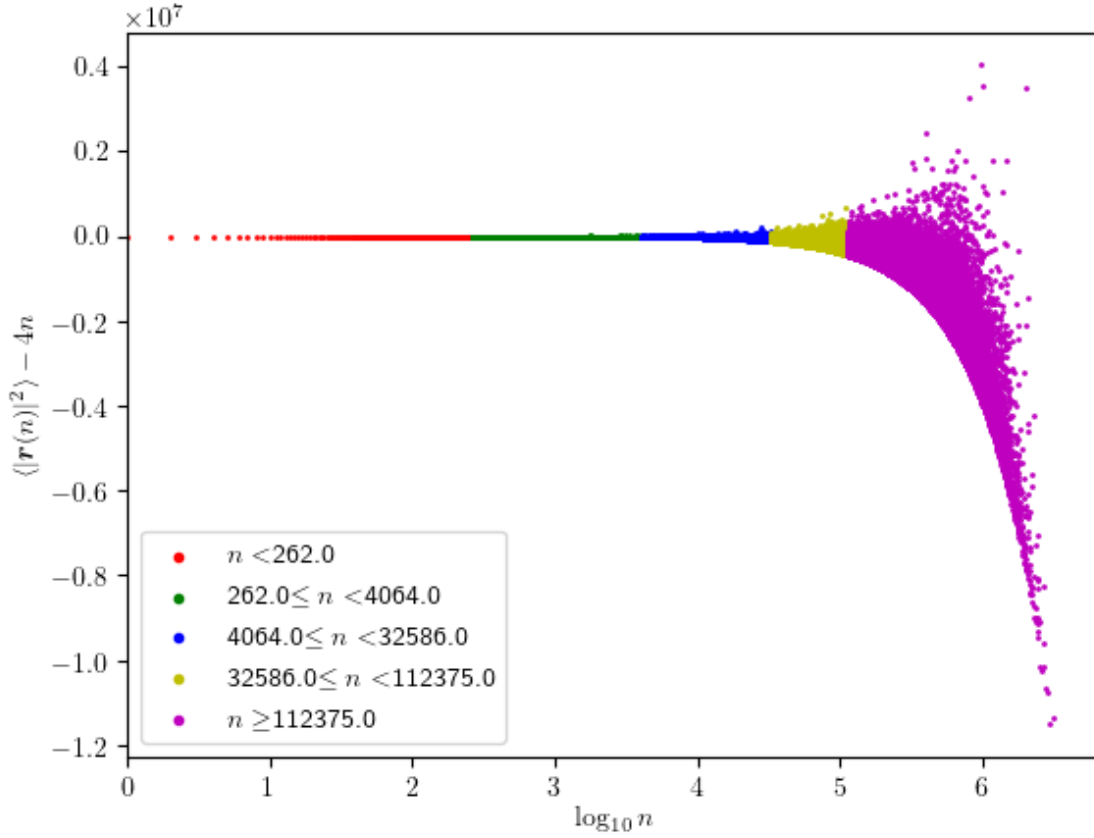


Figure 3.10: Particles in G_1L_3 are divided into several subgroups based on various intervals of steps, and their colours are as identical as the segments in Fig. 3.12a.

3.2.3 Output Analysis of $S(n)$ and $S(d)$

3.2.3.1 Relationship Between n and d

In this section, the displacement of a particle, d , is the shortest distance from the initial to the stop position in the infinite tiling plane. In theory, the mean square displacement (MSD) of N Brownian particles at n -th step in 2-dimensional space is defined as

$$MSD = \langle |\mathbf{r}(n)|^2 \rangle = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N (\mathbf{s}_i(n) - \mathbf{s}_i(0))^2 = 4Dn \quad (3.1)$$

where the subscript, i , refers to each particle for which the MSD is calculated. $\mathbf{s}_i(n)$ and $\mathbf{s}_i(0)$ are the i -th particle positions at n -th step and at the initial time, respectively. D is diffusion coefficient which is related to the variance of the independent displacements of the particle. In the simulation, D equals 1.

Eq. 3.1 indicates a linear relationship between the mean square displacement of the particle and the number of steps. It is a feature of the normal diffusive behavior. Fig. 3.10 shows how the difference between

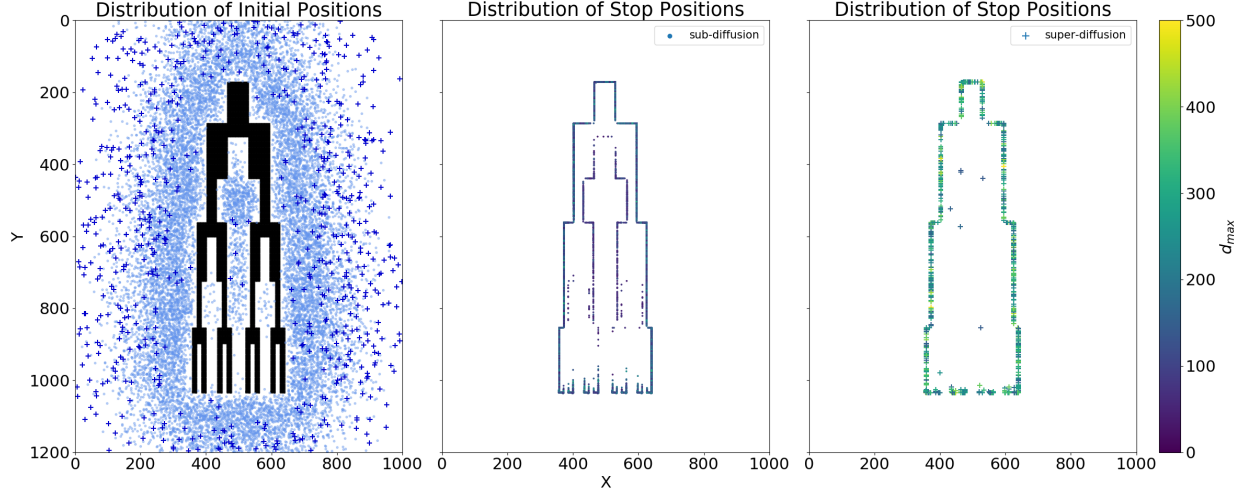


Figure 3.11: In the left figure, 696 dark blue pluses refer to super-diffusion particles, which are distributed closer and more concentrated to the fringe of the branching structure. 15198 pale blue points represent sub-diffusion particles and scatter mainly around the edges of the image. In-between the branches, there has only six super-diffusion particles and an enormous amount of sub-diffusion ones. The middle and right depict the stop positions for super and sub-diffusion particles, respectively, coloured by a perceptually uniform sequential colormap based on their maximum displacement in the tiling space.

MSD of the particle and $4n$ varying over $\log_{10} n$ in LRWs. When $n \leq 4064.0$, the variation is not equal to 0 with larger fluctuation, which implies that blue, yellow, and pink particles undergo anomalous diffusion process. In other words,

$$\langle |\mathbf{r}(n)|^2 \rangle \propto n^\gamma \quad (3.2)$$

where $\gamma \neq 1$. In Fig. 3.12a, negative variation implies $\gamma < 1$ called sub-diffusion process, while positive value denotes $\gamma > 1$ named super-diffusion.

To understand the underlying mechanism of the anomalous-type diffusion process, initial and stop positions of particles in Fig. ??, whose steps ranged from 4064 to 32586, are illustrated in Fig. 3.11. Suppose particles are trapped in the narrow space in-between the branches or initially start LRWs near the branching structure. In that case, their movements will be restricted because of the nearby absorbing boundary condition, causing the sub-diffusion phenomenon. As shown in the middle subplot of Fig. 3.11, the maximum displacement of sub-diffusion particles is less than 200. There also have exceptional circumstances that 6 particles, in-between the limbs, undergo super-diffusion since they can explore a large portion of space within a predefined range of steps, as shown in the right subfigure of Fig. 3.11. Generally, particles around the edges of the image will be more likely to pass through the periodic boundary, reappear in the adjacent cell, and continue LRWs with the same velocity until hitting the absorbing boundary, which results in large displacement and the super-diffusion process.

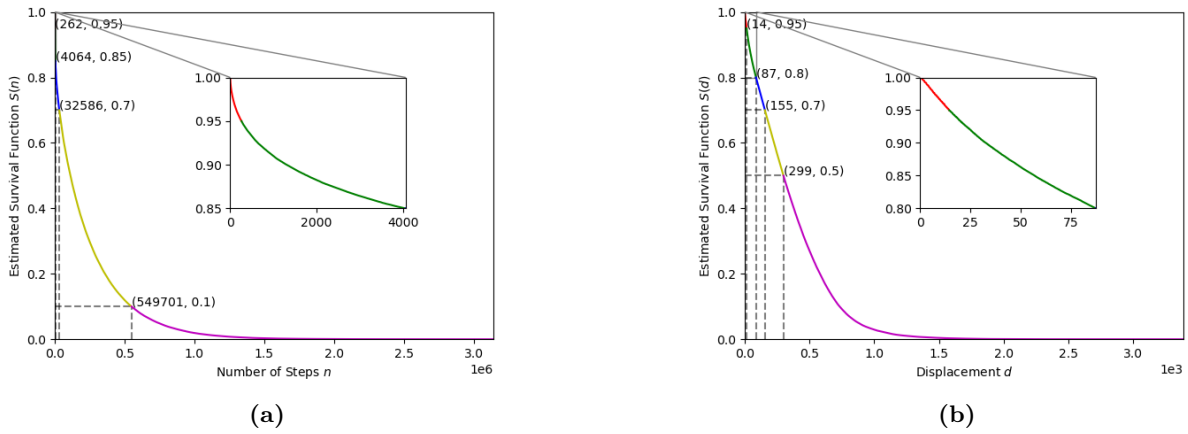


Figure 3.12

		P					
		Log-rank	TW	GB	FH		
G_1	L_3	G_1	L_4	0.4393	0.0285	0.0005	0.0005
		G_1	L_5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		G_1	L_6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
G_1	L_4	G_1	L_5	0.0007	0.0	0.0	0.0
		G_1	L_6	0.0002	0.0	0.0	0.0
G_1	L_5	G_1	L_6	0.7223	0.0	0.0	0.0

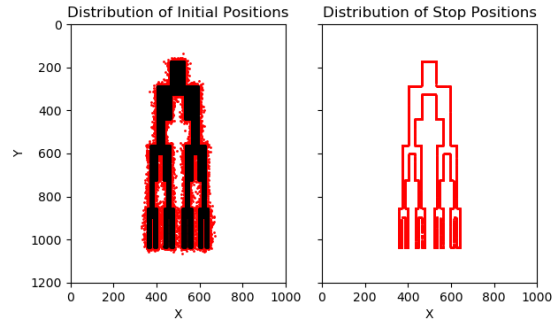
Table 3.4: Two Sample Statistical Tests for $S(n)$ of G_1

3.2.3.2 Interpretation of Survival Curves

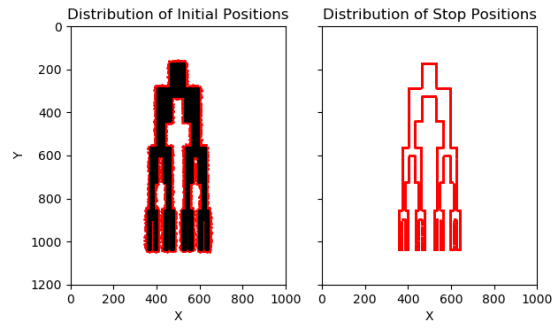
3.2.3.3 Comparison of Survival Curves

3.2.3.3.1 Distance Matrices

3.2.3.3.2 Multidimensional Scaling



(a)

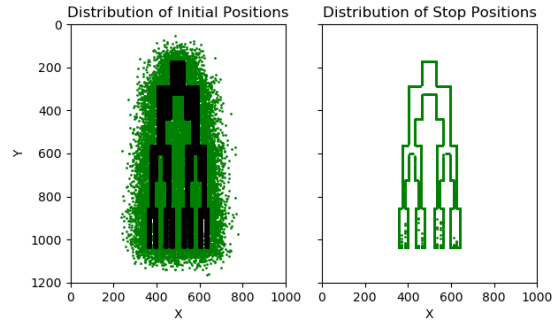


(b)

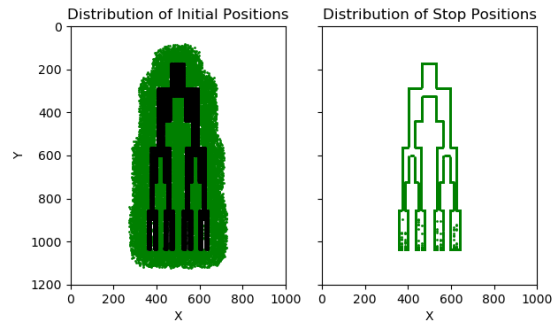
Figure 3.13

		p					
		Log-rank	TW	GB	FH		
G_2	L_3	G_2	L_4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		G_2	L_5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
		G_2	L_6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
G_2	L_4	G_2	L_5	0.0016	0.0	0.0	0.0
		G_2	L_6	0.0004	0.0	0.0	0.0
G_2	L_5	G_2	L_6	0.7199	0.0	0.0	0.0

Table 3.5: Two Sample Statistical Tests for $S(n)$ of G_2



(a)

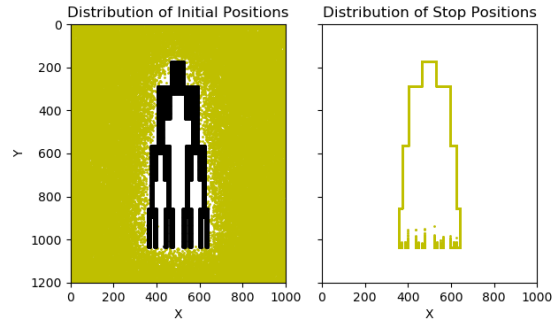


(b)

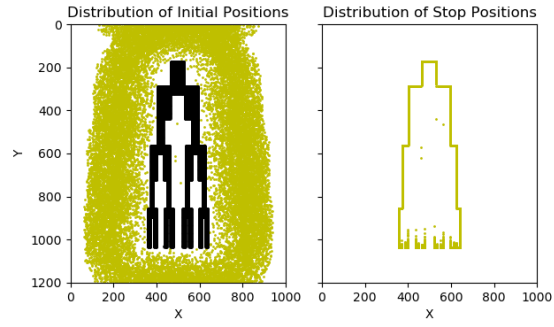
Figure 3.14

		p			
		Logrank	TW	GB	FH
$G_1 \ L_3$	$G_1 \ L_4$	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	$G_1 \ L_5$	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	$G_1 \ L_6$	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
$G_1 \ L_4$	$G_1 \ L_5$	0.0072	0.0	0.0	0.0
	$G_1 \ L_6$	0.0003	0.0	0.0	0.0
$G_1 \ L_5$	$G_1 \ L_6$	0.2883	0.0	0.0	0.0

Table 3.6: Two Sample Statistical Tests for $S(d)$ of G_1



(a)

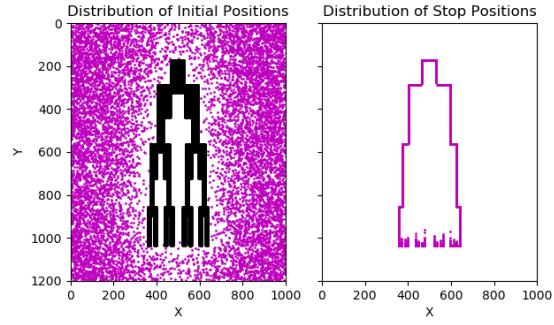


(b)

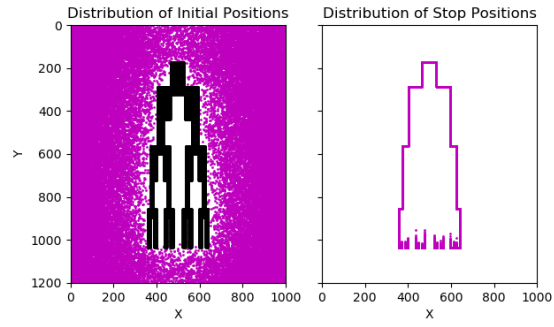
Figure 3.15

		p			
		Logrank	TW	GB	FH
$G_2 L_3$	$G_2 L_4$	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	$G_2 L_5$	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	$G_2 L_6$	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
$G_2 L_4$	$G_2 L_5$	0.0001	0.0	0.0	0.0
	$G_2 L_6$	0.0015	0.0	0.0	0.0
$G_2 L_5$	$G_2 L_6$	0.7019	0.0	0.0	0.0

Table 3.7: Two Sample Statistical Tests for $S(d)$ of G_2

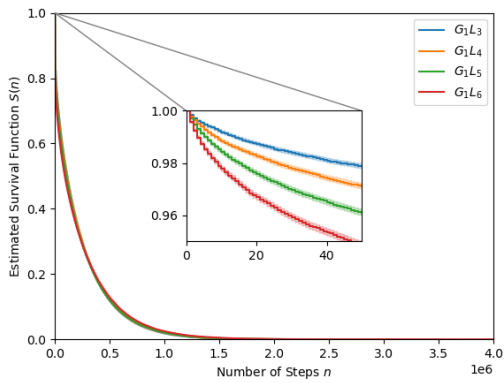


(a)

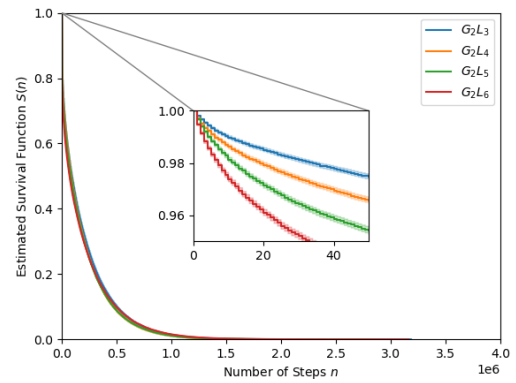


(b)

Figure 3.16

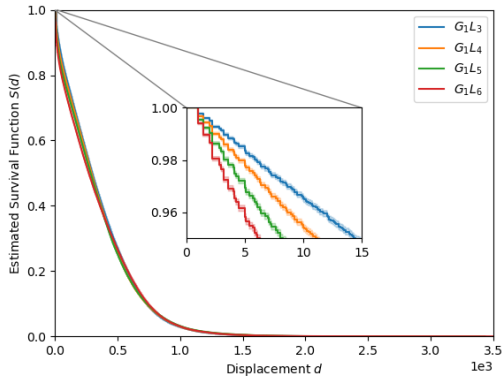


(a)

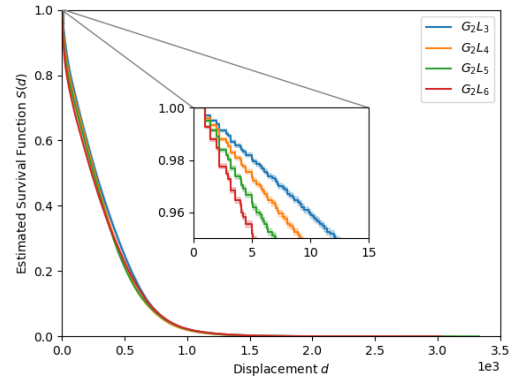


(b)

Figure 3.17: (a) and (b) are survival functions for branching structures in G_1 and G_2 , respectively. n is the number of steps taken by the particle from the initial to the stop pixel in LRWs.

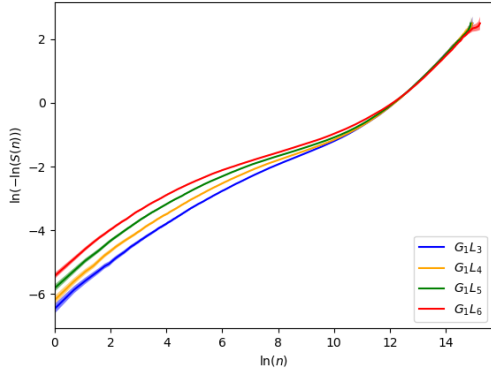


(a)

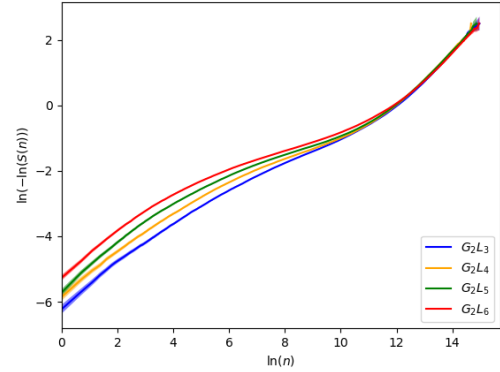


(b)

Figure 3.18: (a) and (b) are the estimated survival functions associated with particles' displacement in LRWs in G_1 and G_2 , respectively.

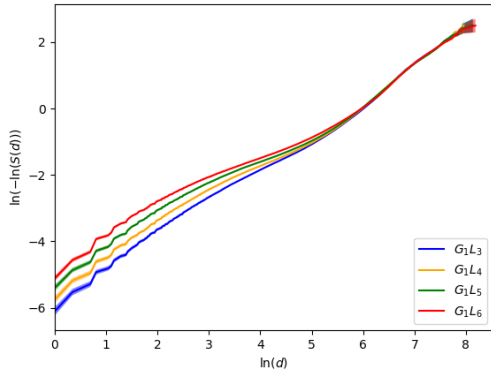


(a)

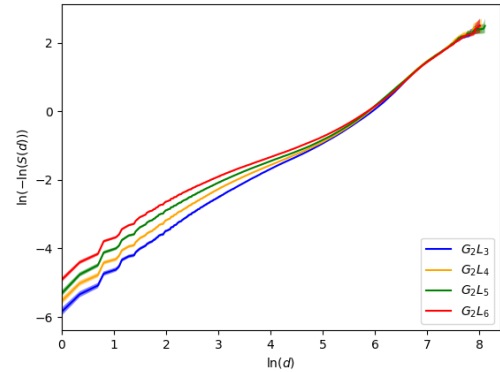


(b)

Figure 3.19: (a) and (b) are commonly used graphical techniques to check the proportional hazards (PH) assumption of survival data by finding the parallelism. The survival distributions do not support the PH assumption since the hazard ratio in both G_1 and G_2 is not always constant.



(a)



(b)

Figure 3.20

3.3 Conclusion

...

LRWS IN REAL ROOT IMAGES

CONCLUSION

FUTURE WORK

APPENDIX A

NUMERICAL METHODS FOR SOLVING PARABOLIC PARTIAL
DIFFERENTIAL EQUATIONS

A.1 Introduction

- Parabolic PDEs: to characterize time-dependent phenomena
- The intrinsically similar features of the traditional computational techniques are mesh discretization in time and space.

A.2 Summary of Commonly Used Numerical Techniques

A.2.1 Finite Difference Method (FDM) [19]

A.2.2 Finite Element Method (FEM) [43]

A.2.3 Other Traditional Computational Methods

A.3 Limitation in Practice

APPENDIX B

METHOD VALIDATION IN ANNULUS

B.1 Analytical Results

B.1.1 Shape Description

- Problem domain Ω : the region bounded by two concentric circles
- Radius of the larger circle: b
- Radius of the smaller circle: a

B.1.2 Solving Initial-Boundary Value Problem (IBVP)

B.1.2.1 Methods

- Dimensional Analysis: non-dimensional variables
 - $\mu = \frac{b}{a}$
 - $\tau = \frac{t}{a^2}$
 - $\hat{r} = \frac{r}{a}$
- Method of separation of variables

B.1.2.2 Mathematical Equations

- Diffusion equation

$$u_\tau = (u_{\hat{r}\hat{r}} + \frac{1}{\hat{r}}u_{\hat{r}} + \frac{1}{\hat{r}^2}u_{\theta\theta}) \quad (\text{B.1})$$

- Uniform initial condition

$$u(\hat{r}, \theta, 0) = \frac{1}{|\Omega|} \quad (\text{B.2})$$

- Homogenous Dirichlet B.C.

$$u(1, \theta, \tau) = 0 \quad (\text{B.3})$$

- Homogenous Neumann B.C.

$$\hat{r}u'(\mu, \theta, \tau) = 0 \quad (\text{B.4})$$

B.1.2.3 Heat Content Calculation

$$S(\tau) = \int_0^{2\pi} d\theta \int_1^\mu \hat{r} d\hat{r} u(\hat{r}, \theta, \tau) \quad (\text{B.5})$$

B.2 Numerical Approximation

B.2.1 Eigenvalues $\lambda_{0,n}$

- Properties
 - $\lambda_{0,n} \in \mathbb{R}^+, (n \in \mathbb{N}_+)$
 - Monotonicity and Periodicity
- Estimation
 - $\lambda_{0,n} \in ((n-1)\pi, (n+1)\pi)$ [9]
 - Bisection method [38]

B.2.2 Approximation of $u(\hat{r}, \theta, \tau)$ and $S(\tau)$

- Direct summation
- Series acceleration methods

B.3 Comparison of Numerical and Analytical Results

B.3.1 Sample Size Evaluation

B.3.2 Comparison of $S(\tau)$ and $S(n)$

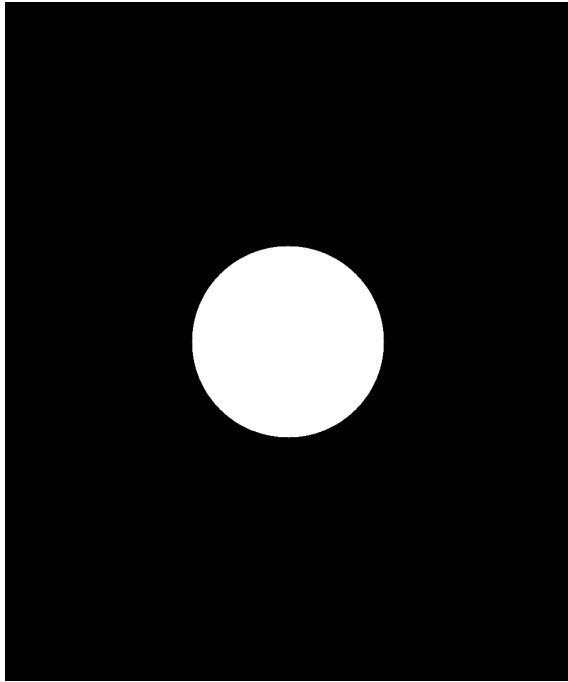
B.4 Conclusion

- The estimated survival function of LRWs is consistent with the analytical result.
- The number of particles in LRWs determined by DKW inequality is large enough to generate reproducible statistical results.

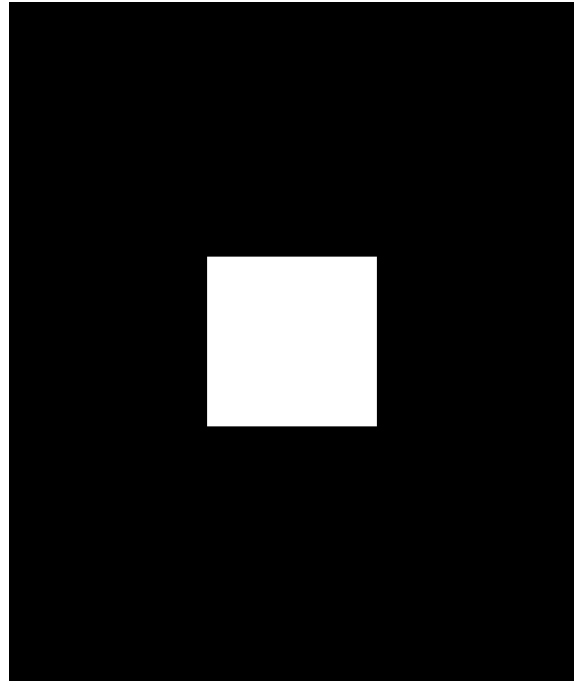
APPENDIX C

ARTIFICIAL IMAGES

C.1 Simple Shapes



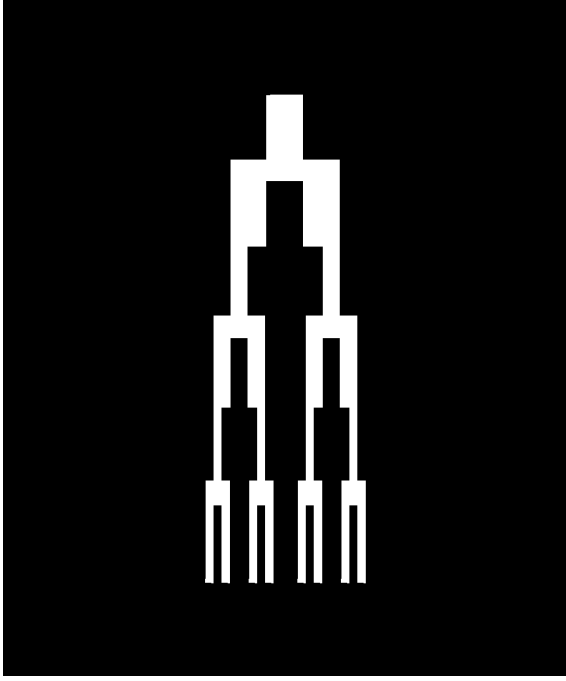
(a) Circle



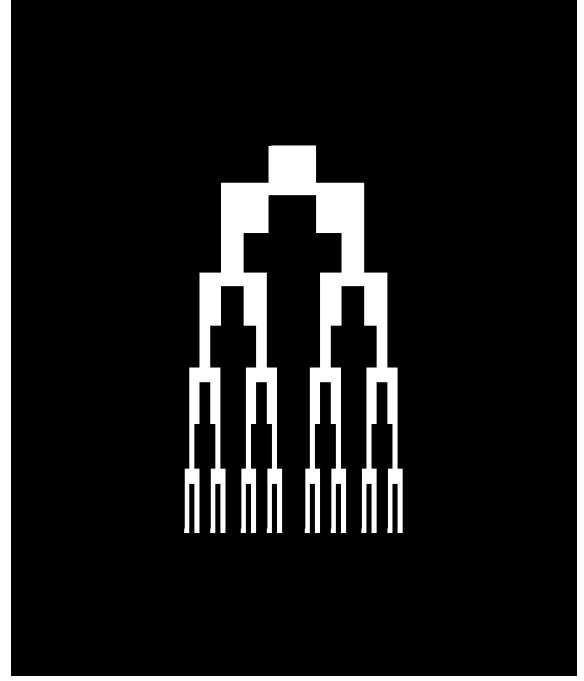
(b) Rectangle

Figure C.1: Each image size is 1200 by 1000 pixels with 90000 white pixels.

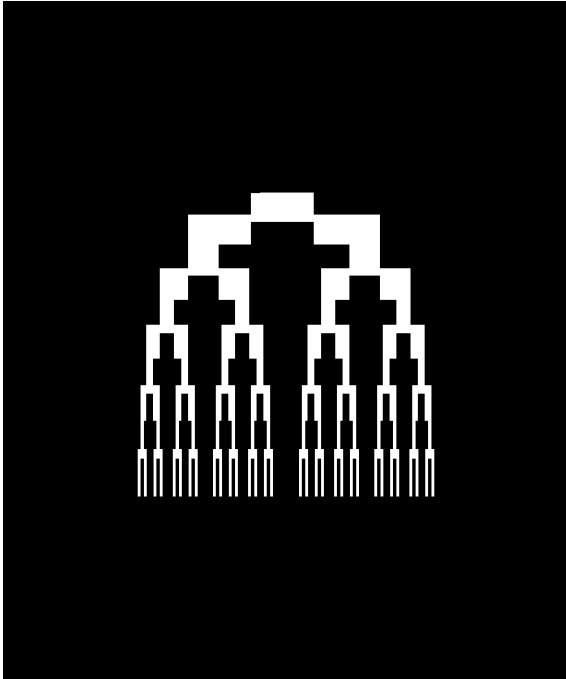
C.2 Complicated Branching Structures



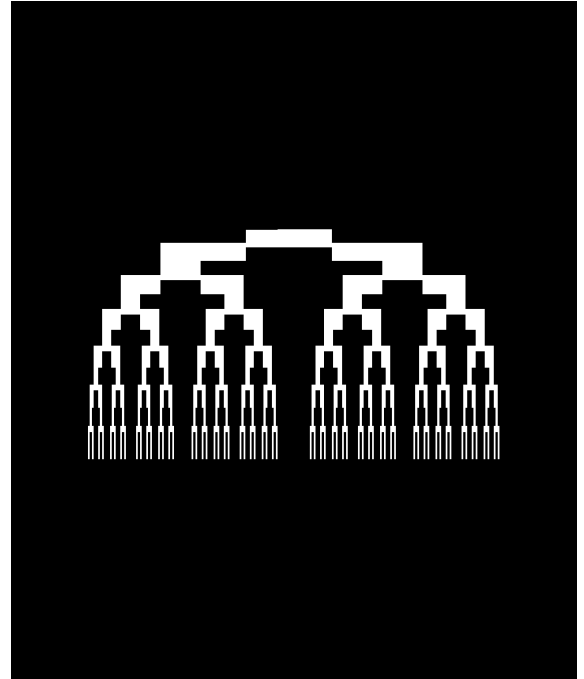
(a) G_1L_3



(b) G_1L_4

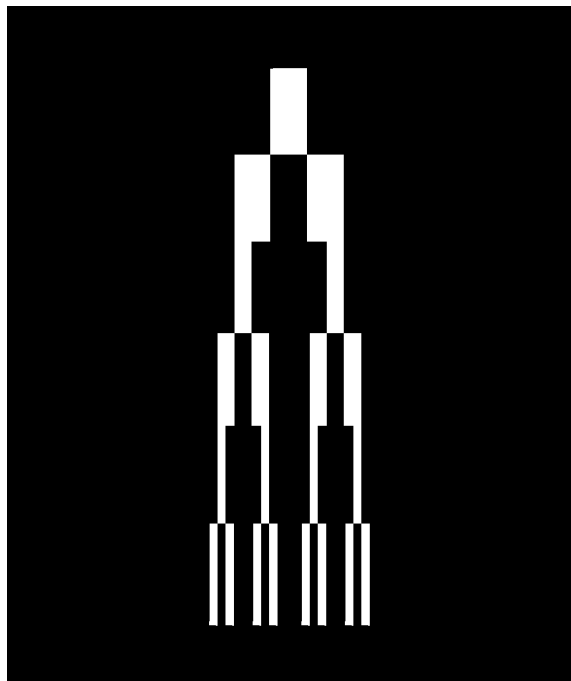


(c) G_1L_5

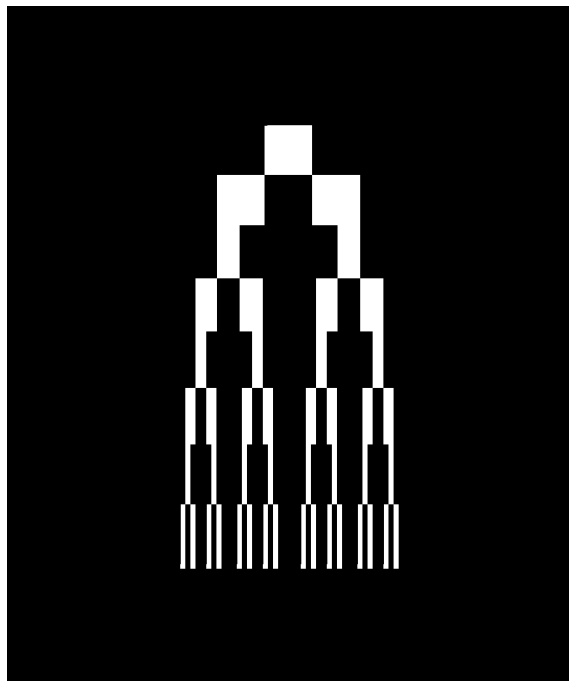


(d) G_1L_6

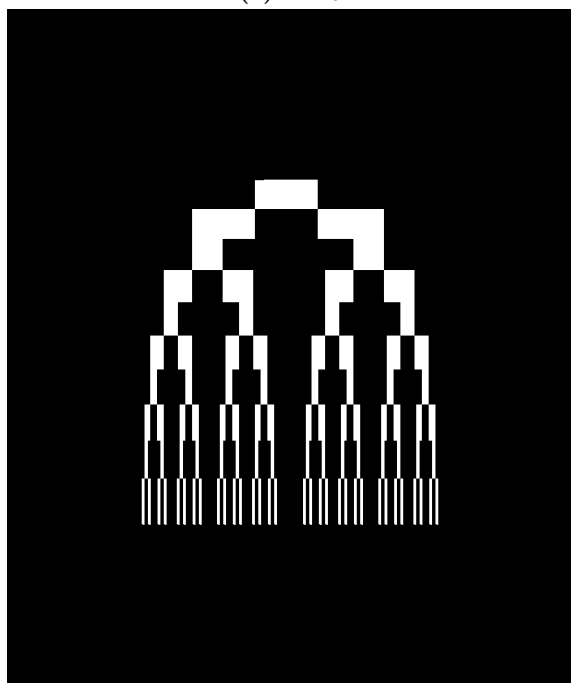
Figure C.2: In the group one, each image size is 1200 by 1000 pixels with 90000 white pixels.



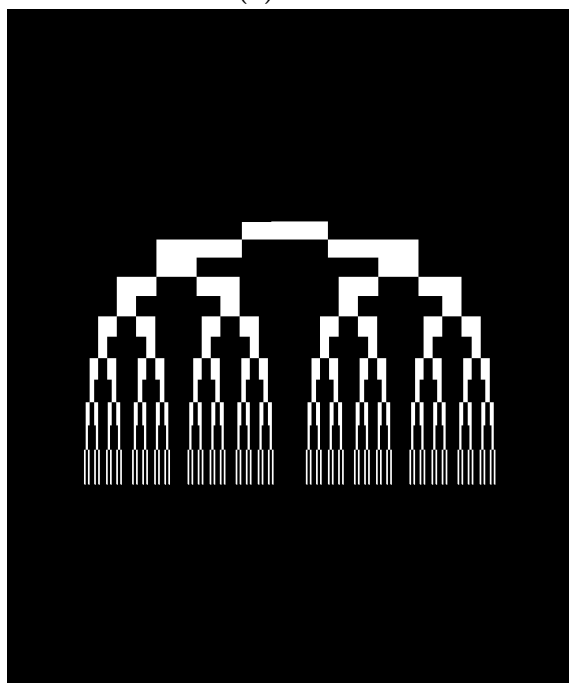
(a) G_2L_3



(b) G_2L_4



(c) G_2L_5



(d) G_2L_6

Figure C.3: In the group two, each image size is 1200 by 1000 pixels with 90000 white pixels.

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