

# Min-Max Tours for Task Allocation to Heterogeneous Agents

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## Introduction

The paper tackles task allocation in heterogeneous multi-agent systems, aiming to minimize the maximum tour cost for any agent returning to the depot. Framed as the NP-hard Heterogeneous Task Allocation Problem (HTAP), the authors propose a three-phase approximation algorithm that delivers a constant-factor solution.

## Problem Statement

HTAP involves assigning tasks to a set of agents that belong to different types, where each type has a specific capability to execute certain tasks. The objective is to partition the tasks among the agents while ensuring:

- Type-specific tasks are performed by compatible agents.
- Generic tasks can be performed by any agent.
- The maximum tour cost (i.e., the longest route among all agents) is minimized.

The problem is modeled using a complete graph where nodes represent tasks and the depot, and edges represent travel costs that satisfy the triangle inequality.

## Proposed Solution

The authors introduce a three-phase algorithm to approximate the optimal task allocation:

1. **CycleSplit Algorithm:** A heuristic-based allocation that first partitions tasks into tours using a Christofides' algorithm-based approach and then splits them among agents.
2. **HeteroMinMaxSplit Algorithm:** An improved algorithm that considers the workload imbalance among agents, aiming for a more balanced task allocation while minimizing the worst-case tour cost.
3. **Rebalancing Phase:** A final adjustment step to ensure better load balancing among agents of the same type.

The proposed algorithms provide a 5-factor approximation guarantee, which is reduced to 4 in special cases where each agent is unique in its type.

## Implementation Details

To implement the methods described in the paper, our approach will include the following steps:

1. **Graph Representation:** We will represent the task environment as a weighted graph where nodes correspond to tasks and edges represent the travel cost between tasks, ensuring that the weights satisfy the triangle inequality.
2. **Christofides' Algorithm Implementation:** Since the proposed algorithms use Christofides' heuristic for tour construction, we will implement this algorithm to generate initial tours efficiently.
3. **CycleSplit Algorithm Development:** We will develop the CycleSplit algorithm by partitioning task tours and assigning them to agents while maintaining a balanced workload distribution.
4. **HeteroMinMaxSplit Algorithm Development:** To improve upon the CycleSplit method, we will implement HeteroMinMaxSplit, incorporating a load-balancing mechanism to optimize task assignment.
5. **Optimization and Fine-tuning:** We will experiment with different heuristics for task splitting and rebalancing to achieve better performance.
6. **Testing and Validation:** We will create synthetic datasets and real-world scenarios to evaluate the performance of our implementation, comparing results with the theoretical guarantees provided in the paper.
7. **Scalability Analysis:** We will assess how the implemented algorithms perform with increasing numbers of agents and tasks to ensure practical applicability.

## Conclusion

The Min-Max Tours for Task Allocation to Heterogeneous Agents problem presents a significant challenge in optimizing task distribution among multi-agent systems. The proposed CycleSplit and HeteroMinMaxSplit algorithms offer efficient approximations with bounded performance guarantees. Our implementation will leverage *Python* and *NetworkX* to develop and evaluate these algorithms, ensuring practical applicability and scalability in real-world task allocation scenarios.