

# Path-Coloring Algorithms for Plane Graphs

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## Abstract

A path coloring of a graph  $G$  is a vertex coloring of  $G$  such that each color class induces a disjoint union of paths. We present two efficient algorithms to construct a path coloring of a plane graph.

The first algorithm, based on a proof of Poh, is given a plane graph; it produces a path coloring of the given graph using three colors.

The second algorithm, based on similar proofs by Hartman and Škrekovski, performs a list-coloring generalization of the above. The algorithm is given a plane graph and an assignment of lists of three colors to each vertex; it produces a path coloring of the given graph in which each vertex receives a color from its list.

Implementations are available for all algorithms that are described.

## 1 Introduction

All graphs will be finite, simple, and undirected. See West [10] for graph theoretic terms.

A *path coloring* of a graph  $G$  is a vertex coloring (not necessarily proper) of  $G$  such that each color class induces a disjoint union of paths. A graph  $G$  is *path  $k$ -colorable* if  $G$  admits a path coloring using  $k$  colors.

Broere & Mynhardt conjectured [2, Conj. 16] that every planar graph is path 3-colorable. This was proven independently by Poh [8, Thm. 2] and by Goddard [6, Thm. 1].

**Theorem 1.1** (Poh 1990, Goddard 1991). *If  $G$  is a planar graph, then  $G$  is path 3-colorable.*  $\square$

It is easily shown that the “3” in Theorem 1.1 is best possible. In particular, Chartrand & Kronk [5, Section 3] gave an example of a planar graph whose vertex set cannot be partitioned into two subsets, each inducing a forest.

Hartman [7, Thm. 4.1] proved a list-coloring generalization of Theorem 1.1 (see also Chappell & Hartman [4, Thm. 2.1]). A graph  $G$  is *path  $k$ -choosable* if, whenever each vertex of  $G$  is assigned a list of  $k$  colors, there exists a path coloring of  $G$  in which each vertex receives a color from its list.

**Theorem 1.2** (Hartman 1997). *If  $G$  is a planar graph, then  $G$  is path 3-choosable.*  $\square$

Essentially the same technique was used by Škrekovski [9, Thm. 2.2b] to prove a result slightly weaker than Theorem 1.2.

We discuss two efficient path-coloring algorithms based on proofs of the above theorems. We distinguish between a *planar* graph—one that can be drawn in the plane without crossing edges—and a *plane* graph—a graph with a given embedding in the plane.

In Section 2 we outline our graph representations and the basis for our computations of time complexity.

Section 3 covers an algorithm based on Poh’s proof of Theorem 1.1. The algorithm is given a plane graph; it produces a path coloring of the given graph using three colors.

Section 4 covers an algorithm based Hartman’s proof of Theorem 1.2, along with the proof of Škrekovski mentioned above. The algorithm is given a plane graph and an assignment of a list of three colors to each vertex; it produces a path coloring of the given graph in which each vertex receives a color from its list.

Section 5 provides benchmark results for implementations of each algorithm [3]. The section also discusses how each algorithm may be modified to benefit from parallelism.

## 2 Graph Representations and Time Complexity

We will represent a graph via *adjacency lists*: a list, for each vertex  $v$ , of the neighbors of  $v$ . A vertex can be represented by an integer  $0 \dots n - 1$ , where  $n = n(G)$  is the order of the graph.

A plane graph will be specified via a *rotation scheme*: a circular ordering, for each vertex  $v$ , of the edges incident with  $v$ , in the order they appear around  $v$  in the plane embedding; this completely specifies the combinatorial embedding of the graph. Rotation schemes are convenient when we represent a graph using adjacency lists; we simply order the adjacency list for each vertex  $v$  in counter-clockwise order around  $v$ ; no additional data structures are required.

A plane graph is *triangulated* if every face is a 3-cycle, and *weakly triangulated* if every face other than the outer face is a 3-cycle. A graph  $G$  is *connected* if given any  $u, v \in G$ , there exists a  $u, v$ -path in  $G$ . We say that  $G$  is  *$n$ -connected* if removing any  $n - 1$  vertices results in a connected graph. The outer face of a plane graph that is 2-connected is a path if  $n = 1$  or  $n = 2$ , and a cycle if  $n \geq 3$ .

The input for each algorithm will be a 2-connected, weakly triangulated plane graph with  $n$  vertices and  $m$  edges, represented via adjacency lists. The input size will be  $n$ , the number of vertices. Note that  $\mathcal{O}(m) = \mathcal{O}(n)$ , so it is equivalent to take the input size to be  $m$ , the number of edges. Moreover, arbitrary simple planar graphs may be plane embedded and triangulated in  $\mathcal{O}(n)$  time, see Boyer and Myrvold [1].

In Section 4, given an edge  $uv$ , we will need a constant time operation to find  $v$ 's entry in  $u$ 's adjacency list from  $u$ 's entry in  $v$ 's list. We define an *augmented adjacency list* to be an adjacency list such that for every edge  $uv$  a reference to  $v$ 's entry in  $u$ 's list is stored in  $u$ 's entry in  $v$ 's list, and vice versa. Given an adjacency list representation of a graph, an augmented adjacency list representation may be constructed in  $\mathcal{O}(m)$  time via the following procedure.

**Algorithm 2.1.**

**Input.** An adjacency list representation  $\text{Adj}$  of a graph  $G$ .

**Output.** An augmented adjacency list representation  $\text{AugAdj}$  of  $G$  with the same rotation scheme as  $\text{Adj}$ .

**Step 1.** Construct an augmented adjacency list representation  $\text{AugAdj}$  with the same rotation scheme as  $\text{Adj}$ , leaving the reference portion of each entry uninitialized.

**Step 2.** For each vertex  $v$  construct an array  $\text{Wrk}[v]$  of vertex-reference pairs with length  $\deg(v)$ . For each  $v$  from 0 to  $n - 1$  iterate through  $\text{AugAdj}[v]$ . For each neighbor  $u$  in  $\text{AugAdj}[v]$  append the pair  $(v, r_v(u))$  to  $\text{Wrk}[u]$ , where  $r_v(u)$  is a reference to  $u$ 's entry in  $\text{AugAdj}[v]$ .

**Step 3.** For each  $v$  from  $n - 1$  to 0 iterate through  $\text{Wrk}[v]$ . Upon reaching a pair  $(u, r_u(v))$  in  $\text{Wrk}[v]$  the last element of  $\text{Wrk}[u]$  will be  $(v, r_v(u))$ ; for details on why this must be the case, see the paragraph below. Use  $r_u(v)$  and  $r_v(u)$  to look up and assign references for the edge  $uv$  in  $\text{AugAdj}[u]$  and  $\text{AugAdj}[v]$ . Remove  $(v, r_v(u))$  from the back of  $\text{Wrk}[u]$ .

After completing Step 2 in Algorithm 2.1 the array  $\text{Wrk}[v]$  will contain a pair  $(u, r_u(v))$  for each neighbor  $u$  of  $v$ , sorted in increasing order by the neighbor  $u$ . Suppose that  $v$  is the current vertex at a given iteration of Step 3 in Algorithm 2.1. For each edge  $uw \in E(G)$  such that  $u < w$  and  $v < w$ , prior iterations of Step 3 will have initialized the references for  $uw$  in  $\text{AugAdj}[u]$  and  $\text{AugAdj}[w]$ , and also removed the pair  $(w, r_w(u))$  from  $\text{Wrk}[u]$ . Therefore for each  $(u, r_u(v))$  in  $\text{Wrk}[v]$ , the array  $\text{Wrk}[u]$  will contain only entries for vertices  $w$  where  $w \leq v$ . Since  $\text{Wrk}[u]$  is sorted in increasing order by the neighboring vertices, the last element of  $\text{Wrk}[u]$  must be  $(v, r_v(u))$ .

### 3 Path Coloring

In this section we describe a linear time algorithm to path 3-color plane graphs. Let's first recount Poh's path 3-coloring strategy. Given a cycle  $C$  in a plane graph  $G$  we define  $\text{Int}(C)$  to be the subgraph of  $G$  consisting of  $C$  and all vertices and edges interior to  $C$ . If  $C$  is a length 1 or 2 path, we define  $\text{Int}(C) = C$ . Equivalently,  $\text{Int}(C)$  is the maximal 2-connected subgraph of  $G$  which has outer face  $C$  with the embedding inherited from  $G$ .

**Lemma 3.1** (Poh 1990). *Let  $G$  be a 2-connected, weakly triangulated plane graph with outer face  $C$ . Let  $c : V(C) \rightarrow S \subsetneq \{1, 2, 3\}$  be a 2-coloring of  $C$  such that each color class induces a nonempty path. There exists an extension of  $c$  to a path 3-coloring  $c : V(G) \rightarrow \{1, 2, 3\}$  such that for each  $v \in G - C$ , if  $vu \in E(G)$  with  $u \in C$ , then  $c(v) \neq c(u)$ .*

*Proof.* If  $n(G) \leq 3$ , then  $G = C$  and the path 2-coloring of  $C$  is a path 3-coloring of  $G$ . We proceed by induction on the order of  $G$ .

Let  $P_1, P_2$  be the two paths induced by the 2-coloring of the outer face  $C$ . Label the vertices of the outer face  $C = v_1, v_2, \dots, v_k$  in clockwise order such that  $P_1 = v_1, v_2, \dots, v_\ell$  and  $P_2 = v_{\ell+1}, v_{\ell+2}, \dots, v_k$ .

Suppose  $C$  is an induced subgraph of  $G$ . Let  $u, w \in V(G) - V(C)$  be the vertices such that  $u, v_k, v_1$  and  $w, v_\ell, v_{\ell+1}$  are faces of  $G$ ; note that  $u$  and  $w$  are uniquely determined, but it may be that  $u = w$ . Since  $C$  is an induced cycle in  $G$  and  $G \neq C$ ,  $G - C$  is connected. Let  $P_3 = u_1, u_2, \dots, u_r$  be a  $u, w$ -path in  $G - C$  of minimal length, and note that  $P_3$  is an induced subgraph of  $G - C$ .

Color each vertex of  $P_3$  with the color in  $\{1, 2, 3\} - S$  not used in the 2-coloring of  $C$ . Let  $C_1 = v_1, v_2, \dots, v_\ell, u_r, u_{r-1}, \dots, u_1$  and  $C_2 = u_1, u_2, \dots, u_r, v_{\ell+1}, v_{\ell+2}, \dots, v_k$ . The subgraphs  $\text{Int}(C_1)$  and  $\text{Int}(C_2)$  together with the coloring  $c$  each satisfy the requirements of the lemma. By the inductive hypothesis there exist extensions of  $c$  to a path 3-coloring of  $\text{Int}(C_1)$  and a path 3-coloring of  $\text{Int}(C_2)$ . Since  $\text{Int}(C_1)$  and  $\text{Int}(C_2)$  only share the vertices in  $P_3$  on their respective outer faces, the colorings agree and form a path 3-coloring of  $G$ .

Suppose  $C$  is not an induced subgraph. Then there exists an edge  $v_i v_j \in E(G) - E(C)$  such that  $i \leq \ell < j$ . Let  $C_1 = v_1, v_2, \dots, v_i, v_j, v_{j+1}, \dots, v_k$  and  $C_2 = v_i, v_{i+1}, \dots, v_j$ . By the inductive hypothesis, there exists an extension of  $c$  to a path 3-coloring of  $\text{Int}(C_1)$  and  $\text{Int}(C_2)$ . Again the subgraphs only share vertices on their outer faces, and thus the colorings agree and combine form a path 3-coloring of  $G$ .  $\square$

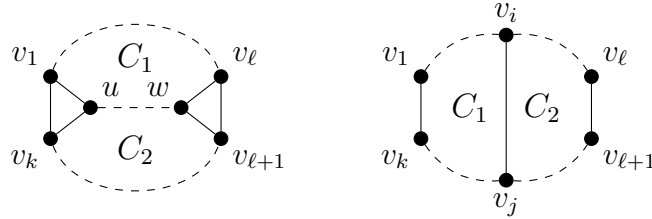


Figure 1: The proof of Lemma 3.1 if  $C$  is induced (left) or has a chord (right).

Let  $G$  be a triangulated plane graph. We may trivially path 2-color the outer triangle. Applying Lemma 3.1 extends this coloring to a path 3-coloring of  $G$ .

For an arbitrary planar graph  $G$  we may compute an embedding and add edges to produce a triangulated plane graph  $G'$ . Any path 3-coloring of  $G'$  will also be a path 3-coloring of  $G$ . Thus Theorem 1.1 follows from Lemma 3.1.

In the construction of the path  $P_3$  in Poh's proof, the induced  $u, w$ -path was picked to be a  $u, w$ -path of shortest length. Thus a natural way to implement Poh's algorithm is to locate  $u$ , and then use a breadth-first search to construct a  $u, w$ -path and/or locate a chord edge.

### Algorithm 3.2.

**Input.** Let  $C = v_1, v_2, \dots, v_k$  be a cycle in a 2-connected, weakly triangulated plane graph  $G$  with adjacency list representation  $\text{Adj}$ . Let  $c$  be an array of colors representing a 2-coloring of  $C$  such that each color class induces a path, respectively labelled  $P_1 = v_1, v_2, \dots, v_\ell$  and  $P_2 = v_\ell, v_{\ell+1}, \dots, v_k$ . Assume that  $c[v] = 0$  for each  $v \in \text{Int}(C) - C$ .

**Output.** For each vertex  $v \in \text{Int}(C) - C$ , a nonzero color will be assigned to  $c[v]$  such that  $c$  represents a path 3-coloring of  $\text{Int}(C)$  extending the original 2-coloring of  $C$ . Moreover, if  $v \in \text{Int}(C) - C$  has a neighbor  $u \in C$ , then  $c[v] \neq c[u]$ .

**Base case.** If  $k = 3$ , then  $C = \text{Int}(C)$  and  $G$  is colored.

**Recursive step.** Iterate through  $\text{Adj}[v_1]$  to locate the vertex  $u$  immediately counter-clockwise from  $v_k$ . Note that since  $G$  is triangulated,  $v_1, u, v_k$  is a face of  $G$ .

**Case 1.** Suppose that  $c[u] \neq 0$ . If  $c[u] = c[v_k]$ , then  $u \in P_2$  and thus  $u = v_{k-1}$  since  $G$  is triangulated and  $P_2$  is an induced path. Recursively apply the algorithm to the cycle  $C' = v_1, v_2, \dots, v_{k-1}$ .

Otherwise  $c[u] = c[v_1]$ , and it must be that  $u = v_2 \in P_1$ . Recursively apply the algorithm to the cycle  $C' = v_2, v_3, \dots, v_{k-1}$ .

**Case 2.** Suppose that  $c[u] = 0$  and therefore  $u \in \text{Int}(C) - C$ . Perform a breadth-first search of  $\text{Int}(C) - C$  starting from the vertex  $u$ . Terminate the search upon locating a vertex  $w$  with adjacent neighbors  $v_i \in P_1$  and  $v_j \in P_2$  such that  $i \neq 1$  or  $j \neq k$ .

Backtrack along the breadth-first search tree to construct a  $u, w$ -path of minimum length  $P_3 = u_1, u_2, \dots, u_r$ . Color the vertices in  $P_3$  with the third color not used in the 2-coloring of  $C$ . Define

$$C_1 = v_1, v_2, \dots, v_i, u_r, u_{r-1}, \dots, u_1 \text{ and } C_2 = u_1, u_2, \dots, u_r, v_j, v_{j-1}, \dots, v_k.$$

Apply the algorithm separately to  $C_1$  and  $C_2$ . If  $i = \ell$  and  $j = \ell + 1$ , then  $C$  was an induced cycle and we are done. Otherwise, also apply the algorithm to  $C_3 = v_i, v_{i+1}, \dots, v_j$ .

Unfortunately Algorithm 3.2 is not linear. Consider the sequence of graphs  $\{G_k\}_{k \in \mathbb{N}}$  depicted in Figure 2. Fix  $k \in \mathbb{N}$  and note that  $n = n(G_k) = k(k+1)/2 + 3$ . Assume that the outer triangle is path 2-colored such that the top vertex is assigned a color distinct from the bottom two. At depth  $i$  of Algorithm 3.2 the shortest path through the interior will be the path of length  $r = k - i + 1$  directly along the base of the inner triangle. A breadth-first search of this inner triangle will hit all  $r(r+1)/2$  vertices in order to find

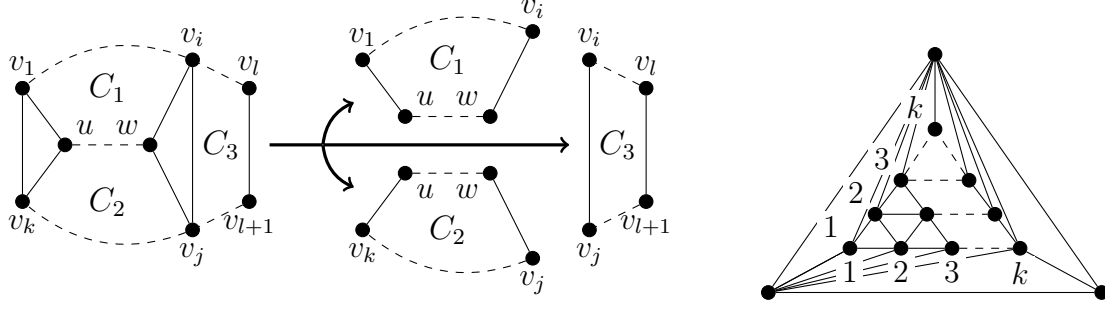


Figure 2: Algorithm 3.2, Case 2 (left), and the sequence of graphs  $\{G_k\}_{k \in \mathbb{N}}$  on which it displays  $\Omega(n^{3/2})$  time complexity (right).

this path. Therefore the total number of operations performed will be

$$\Theta\left(\sum_{r=1}^k \frac{r(r+1)}{2}\right) = \Theta(k^3) = \Theta(n^{3/2}).$$

So Poh's algorithm implemented with breadth-first search is  $\Omega(n^{3/2})$ .

However, the correctness of Poh's proof only relied on locating some induced  $u, w$ -path. We will show that there exists a linear time implementation of Poh's algorithm that does not always find the shortest  $u, w$ -path.

For any subgraph  $H$  of  $G$ , let  $N(H)$  be the set of vertices in  $V(G)$  with a neighbor in  $V(H)$ . Our strategy will be to construct an induced path  $P_3 = u_1, u_2, \dots, u_d$  consisting of vertices in  $N(P_1) - V(C)$ .

### Algorithm 3.3.

**Input.** Assume that  $C = v_1, v_2, \dots, v_k$  is an induced cycle in a 2-connected, weakly triangulated plane graph  $G$  with adjacency list representation  $\text{Adj}$ .

Let  $c$  be a length  $n$  array of colors representing a 2-coloring of  $C$  such that each color class induces a path, respectively  $P_1 = v_1, v_2, \dots, v_i$  and  $P_2 = v_{i+1}, v_{i+2}, \dots, v_k$ . Let  $c_{P_1}$  and  $c_{P_2}$  be the colors for  $P_1$  and  $P_2$ , respectively. Assume  $c[v] = 0$  for each  $v \in \text{Int}(C) - C$ .

Let  $S$  be a length  $n$  array of integer marks and let  $m_{P_1}$  be an integer such that for each  $v \in \text{Int}(C) - C$  we have  $S[v] = m_{P_1}$  if and only if  $v \in N(P_1)$ .

Let  $u \in \text{Int}(C) - C$  be the unique vertex such that  $v_1, u, v_k$  is a face. The vertex  $u$  and the entry for  $v_k$  in  $\text{Adj}[u]$ , together with  $\text{Adj}$ ,  $c$ , and  $S$ , will serve as the concrete representation of the algorithm input.

**Output.** For each vertex  $v \in \text{Int}(C) - C$ , a nonzero color will be assigned to  $c[v]$  such that  $c$  represents a path 3-coloring of  $\text{Int}(C)$  extending the original 2-coloring of  $C$ . Moreover, if  $v \in N(P_1) - C$ , then  $c[v] \neq c_{P_1}$ , and if  $v \in N(P_2) - C$ , then  $c[v] \neq c_{P_2}$ .

**Outline.** As in the proof of Lemma 3.1 we will construct a  $u, w$ -path  $P_3$  in  $\text{Int}(C) - C$ , but here  $V(P_3) \subset N(P_1)$  and  $w$  will not be known prior to constructing  $P_3$ . Each vertex of  $P_3$  will be colored with  $c_{P_3} \in \{1, 2, 3\} - \{c_{P_1}, c_{P_2}\}$ . Each  $v \in N(P_3) - C - P_3$  will be marked  $S[v] \leftarrow m_{P_3}$ .

While constructing  $P_3$  we will locate each induced cycle formed by vertices in  $P_1 + P_3$ , and each induced cycle formed by vertices in  $P_2 + P_3$ . We'll make a recursive call to path 3-color  $\text{Int}(C')$  for each such cycle  $C'$  with a non-empty interior.

**Procedure.** Store  $u_j$ , the last vertex added to  $P_3 = u_1, u_2, \dots, u_j$ , along with the entry for  $u_{j-1}$  in  $\text{Adj}[u_j]$ . Define  $u_0 = v_k$  for the purpose of identifying  $u_{j-1}$ . Track the last edge  $u_r v_s$  between  $P_3$  and  $P_2$  that was encountered, represented by  $u_r \in P_3$  and the entry for  $v_s \in P_2$  in  $\text{Adj}[u_r]$ . Initialize  $j \leftarrow 1$ ,  $u_1 \leftarrow u$ ,  $u_r v_s \leftarrow u_1 v_k$ , and color  $c[u] \leftarrow c_{P_3}$ .

**Step 1.** Iterate through  $\text{Adj}[u_j]$  in counter-clockwise order, starting with the entry counter-clockwise from  $u_{j-1}$ . At each neighbor one of the following cases will be satisfied.

While iterating through  $\text{Adj}[u_j]$ , keep track of an optional vertex  $y \leftarrow \text{NULL}$  that will be added to  $P_3$  and become  $u_{j+1}$  once all the neighbors of  $u_j$  have been handled. Store an optional edge  $u_j v_\ell \leftarrow \text{NULL}$ , represented by the entry for  $v_\ell$  in  $\text{Adj}[u_j]$ , indicating the last neighbor of  $u_j$  in  $P_1$  that was encountered.

**Case 1.1.** Suppose that  $u_j v_\ell = \text{NULL}$ , that is, no neighbor of  $u_j$  in  $P_1$  has been encountered yet. See Figure 3 for a sketch of each sub-case.

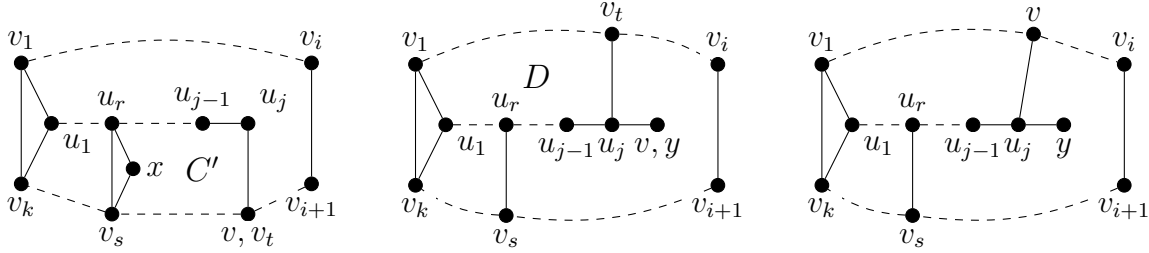


Figure 3: Algorithm 3.3, Case 1.1.2 (left), Case 1.1.3 (middle), and Case 1.1.4 (right).

**Case 1.1.1.** Suppose  $c[v] = 0$  and  $S[v] \neq m_{P_1}$ , that is,  $v \in \text{Int}(C) - C - N(P_1)$ . Assign  $S[v] \leftarrow m_{P_3}$ .

**Case 1.1.2.** Suppose that  $c[v] = c_{P_2}$ , that is,  $v = v_t \in P_2$ . Observe that  $P'_1 = u_r, u_{r+1}, \dots, u_j$  and  $P'_2 = v_s, v_{s+1}, \dots, v_t$  are colored paths that, together with the edges  $u_r v_s$  and  $u_j v_t$ , form an induced cycle  $C'$ . Each uncolored vertex in  $N(P_3) \cap V(\text{Int}(C'))$  has already been marked with  $m_{P_3}$ . Let  $x$  be the neighbor of  $u_r$  immediately counter-clockwise from  $v_s$ . If  $c[x] = 0$ , make a recursive call with  $u' \leftarrow x$  and  $u' v'_k \leftarrow x v_s$  to path 3-color  $\text{Int}(C')$ . Assign  $u_r v_s \leftarrow u_j v_t$  to track that  $u_j v_t$  is the most recent edge between  $P_3$  and  $P_2$ .

**Case 1.1.3.** Suppose that  $c[v] = 0$  and  $S[v] = m_{P_1}$ , that is,  $v \in N(P_1) - C$ . If  $y \neq \text{NULL}$ , assign  $S[v] \leftarrow m_{P_3}$ . Otherwise, assign  $y \leftarrow v$  and color  $c[y] \leftarrow c_{P_3}$ . We claim that  $u_1, u_2, \dots, u_j, y$  is an induced path. Since  $u_j \in N(P_1)$ , there exists an edge  $u_j v_t$  where  $v_t \in P_1$ . Observe that  $D = v_k, v_1, v_2, \dots, v_t, u_j, u_{j-1}, \dots, u_1$  is a cycle in  $\text{Int}(C)$  and  $y \notin \text{Int}(D)$ . Thus if an edge  $y u_e$  exists with  $u_e \in P_3 - u_j$ , then the entry for  $y$  in  $\text{Adj}[u_e]$  is between  $u_{e-1}$  and  $u_{e+1}$  counter-clockwise. But  $y$  would have been encountered before  $u_{e+1}$  when iterating through  $\text{Adj}[u_e]$ , a contradiction since  $S[y] = m_{P_1}$ .

**Case 1.1.4.** Suppose that  $c[v] = c_{P_1}$ , that is,  $v \in P_1$ . Assign  $u_j v_\ell \leftarrow u_j v$ . If

$y = \text{NULL}$ , it must be that  $v = v_i \in P_1$  is the last vertex of  $P_1$  and therefore  $u_j = w$ . To see this, note that the neighbor  $v'$  of  $u_j$  immediately clockwise from  $v$  is adjacent to  $v \in P_1$ , but  $v'$  was not assigned to  $y$ . Therefore  $c[v'] = c_{P_2}$  and it must be that  $v' = v_{i+1}$  and  $v = v_i$ . Since  $u_j, v_i, v_{i+1}$  is a face,  $u_j = w$  by definition.

**Case 1.2.** Suppose that  $u_j v_\ell \neq \text{NULL}$ . Let  $z$  be the neighbor of  $u_j$  immediately counter-clockwise from  $v_\ell$ . See Figure 4 for a sketch of each sub-case.

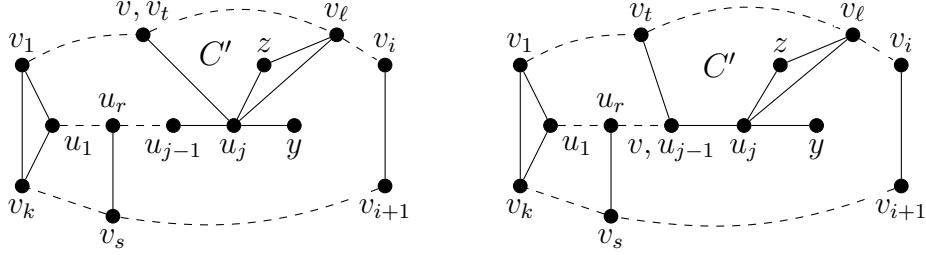


Figure 4: Algorithm 3.3, Case 1.2.2 (left) and Case 1.2.3 (right).

**Case 1.2.1.** Suppose that  $c[v] = 0$ , that is,  $v \in \text{Int}(C) - C - P_3$ . Assign  $S[v] \leftarrow m_{P_3}$ .

**Case 1.2.2.** Suppose that  $c[v] = c_{P_1}$ . Then  $v = v_t \in P_1$  and  $C' = u_j, v_t, v_{t+1}, \dots, v_\ell$  is an induced cycle and each uncolored vertex in  $N(P_3) \cap V(\text{Int}(C'))$  has been marked with  $m_{P_3}$ . If  $c[z] = 0$ , make a recursive call with  $u' \leftarrow z$  and  $u'v'_k \leftarrow zv_\ell$  to path 3-color  $\text{Int}(C')$ . Otherwise,  $z = v$  and  $\text{Int}(C') = C'$ .

**Case 1.2.3.** Suppose that  $c[v] \neq 0$  and  $c[v] \neq c_{P_1}$ . If  $c[v] = c_{P_2}$ , then  $j = 1$ ,  $v = v_k$ ,  $u_j v_\ell = uv_1$ , and there are no uncolored neighbors of  $u_j$  between  $v_\ell$  and  $v$ .

Suppose that  $c[v] = c_{P_3}$ . Let  $t$  be largest such that  $v_t \in P_1$  and  $u_{j-1}v_t$  is an edge. Observe that  $C' = u_j, u_{j-1}, v_t, v_{t+1}, \dots, v_\ell$  is an induced cycle. Moreover, each uncolored vertex in  $N(P_3) \cap V(\text{Int}(C'))$  has been marked with  $m_{P_3}$ . If  $c[z] = 0$ , make a recursive call with  $u' \leftarrow z$  and  $u'v'_k \leftarrow zv_\ell$  to color  $\text{Int}(C')$ . Otherwise,  $z = v$  and  $\text{Int}(C') = C'$ .

**Step 2.** If  $y \neq \text{NULL}$ , then assign  $j \leftarrow j + 1$ ,  $u_j \leftarrow y$ ,  $y \leftarrow \text{NULL}$ ,  $u_j v_\ell \leftarrow \text{NULL}$ , and return to Step 1. Otherwise,  $u_j = w$  and  $\text{Int}(C)$  has been path 3-colored.

While executing Algorithm 3.3 we iterate through the adjacency list of each vertex  $v \in G$  exactly twice: once to orient  $\text{Adj}[v]$  around a particular edge when  $v$  is colored, and once to examine each neighbor in  $\text{Adj}[v]$  during Step 1. Therefore the time complexity of the algorithm is  $\mathcal{O}(m) = \mathcal{O}(n)$ . See Figure 5 and Figure 6 for a concrete example of Algorithm 3.3.

Given a triangulated plane graph  $G$  with adjacency list representation  $\text{Adj}$ , we can set up the initial conditions for Algorithm 3.3 as follows. First, create length  $n$  integer arrays for  $c$  and  $S$ , initializing each entry to zero. Let  $C = v_1, v_2, v_3$  be the outer triangle of  $G$ , labeled in clockwise order. Color  $c[v_1] \leftarrow 1$ ,  $c[v_2] \leftarrow 2$ , and  $c[v_3] \leftarrow 2$ . Iterate through  $\text{Adj}[v_1]$  and mark  $S[v] \leftarrow 1$  for each neighbor  $v$  of  $v_1$ . Let  $u$  be the vertex immediately counter-clockwise from  $v_3$  in  $\text{Adj}[v_1]$ . The vertex  $u$  and the entry for  $v_3$  in  $\text{Adj}[u]$ , together with  $\text{Adj}$ ,  $c$ , and  $S$  form a valid input for Algorithm 3.3.



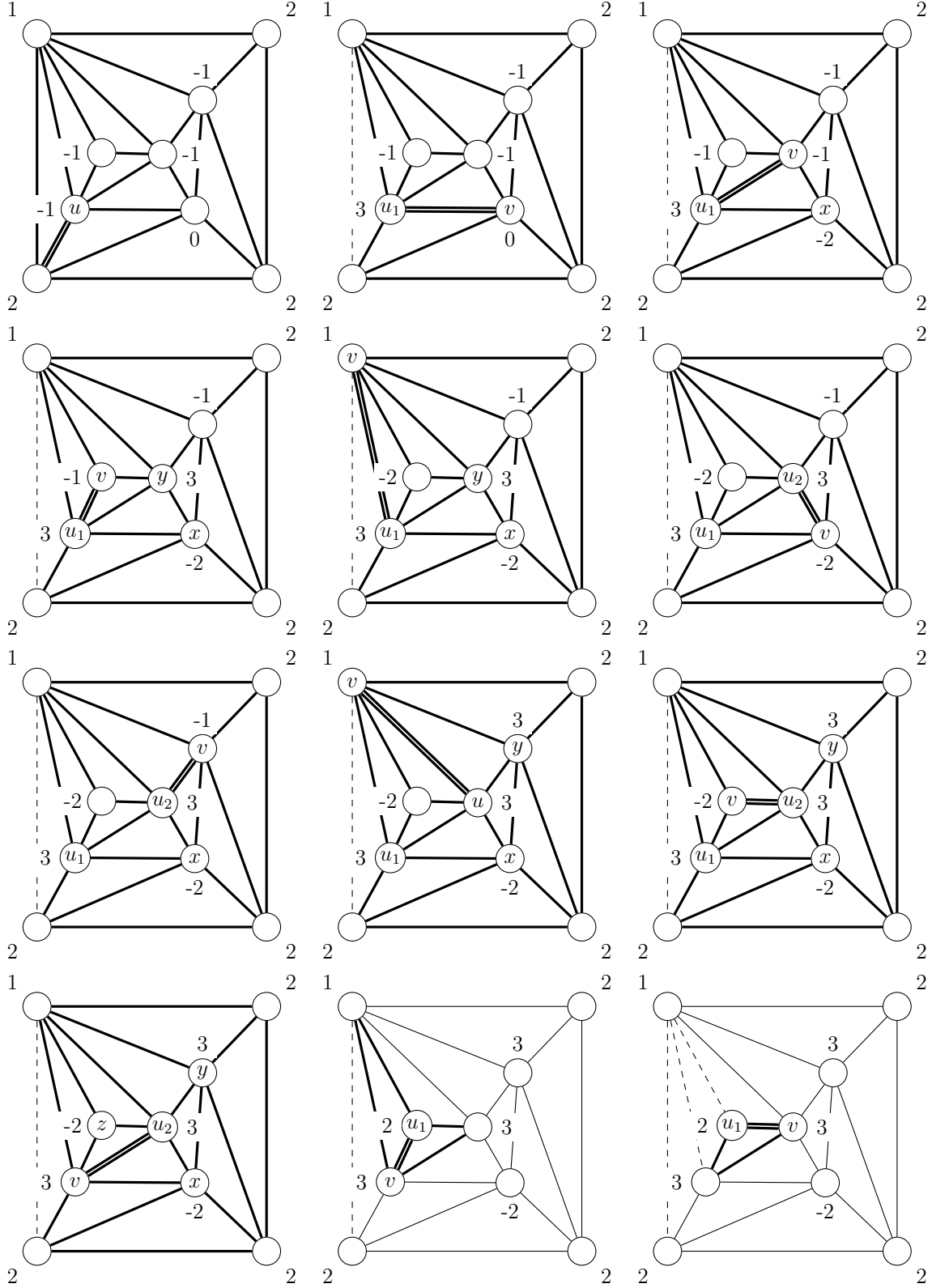


Figure 5: An example of Algorithm 3.3. Each vertex  $v \in G$  is labelled with  $c[v]$  if  $c[v] > 0$ , and labelled with  $-S[v]$  otherwise.

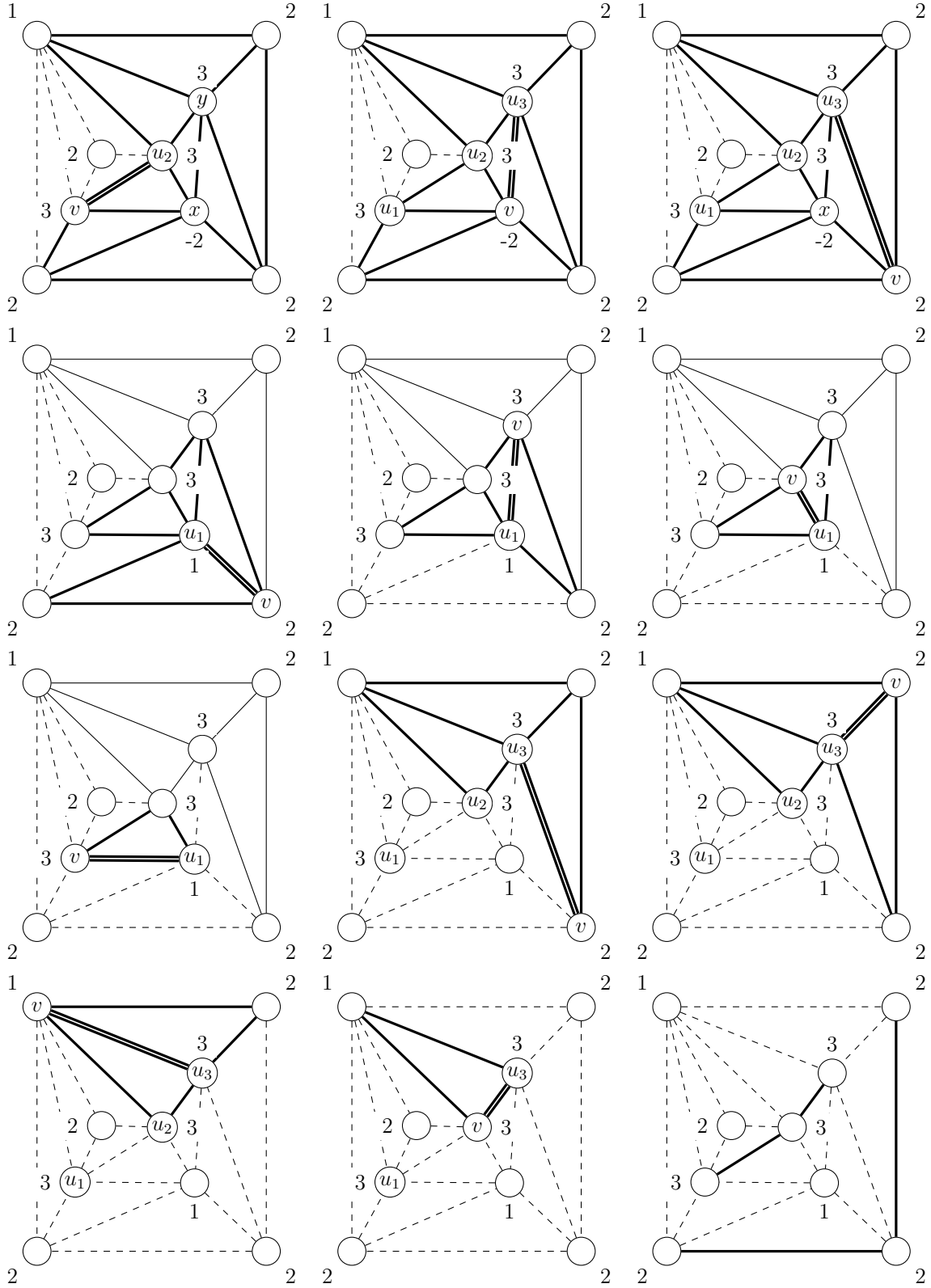


Figure 6: An Algorithm 3.3 example, continued from Figure 5.

## 4 Path List-Coloring

In this section we describe a linear time algorithm to path color plane graphs such that each vertex receives a color from a specified list. Hartman showed that this is always possible when each vertex is given a list of 3 colors [7, Thm. 4.1]. Around the same time Škrekovski proved a slightly weaker result using the same coloring strategy [9, Thm. 2.2b].

The path list-coloring procedure discussed in this section is based on the constructive proofs found in Hartman and Škrekovski's papers, but it "localizes" the logic to proceed through the graph one edge at a time. The resulting algorithm will produce different colorings in some situations.

A *list assignment* of a graph  $G$  is a function  $L : V(G) \rightarrow P_{<\aleph_0}(\mathbb{N})$  assigning a finite set of colors to each vertex. If  $L$  is a list assignment of  $G$ , an  $L$ -*coloring* of  $G$  is a coloring function  $c : V(G) \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$  such that  $c(v) \in L(v)$  for each  $v \in V(G)$ .

Given a graph  $G$  and a coloring  $c$  of  $G$ , for each  $v \in G$  we define  $\deg_c(v)$  to be the number of neighbors of  $v$  that share a color with  $v$ . Equivalently,  $\deg_c(v)$  is the degree of  $v$  in the subgraph of  $G$  induced by the color class of  $c(v)$ .

Let  $C$  be the outer face of a 2-connected, weakly triangulated plane graph  $G$  and let  $u, v \in C$  be vertices. If  $n(G) \geq 3$ , then  $C$  is a cycle and we define  $C[u, v]$  to be the clockwise  $u, v$ -path around  $C$ . If  $n(G) < 3$  then we define  $C[u, v] = C$  if  $u \neq v$ , and  $C[u, u] = u$ .

**Lemma 4.1.** *Let  $G$  be a 2-connected, weakly triangulated plane graph with outer face  $C$ . Let  $x, y, z \in C$  be vertices (not necessarily distinct) such that  $z \in C[x, y]$ . Let  $L$  be a list assignment of  $G$  such that*

$$\begin{aligned} |L(v)| &= 1 \text{ for } v \in \{x, y, z\}, \\ |L(v)| &\geq 2 \text{ for } v \in C - \{x, y, z\}, \\ |L(v)| &\geq 3 \text{ for } v \in G - C, \end{aligned}$$

*and if  $v \in C[x, z] - z$ , then  $L(v) \cap L(z) = \emptyset$ . There exists a path  $L$ -coloring of  $G$  such that  $\deg_c(x) \leq 1$ ,  $\deg_c(y) \leq 1$ , and  $\deg_c(z) \leq 1$ . Moreover, if  $z = y$  or  $C[z, y] = z, y$  and  $L(z) \cap L(y) = \emptyset$ , then  $\deg_c(z) = 0$ .*

*Proof.* Define  $c(x) \in L(x)$ ,  $c(y) \in L(y)$ , and  $c(z) \in L(z)$  to be the color in each respective list.

Suppose that  $m = |E(G)| \leq 2$  and therefore  $G = C$ . If  $m = 0$ , then  $n(G) = 1$  and  $x = y$ . If  $m = 1$ , then  $n(G) = 2$ . If  $x \neq y$ , then  $C = x, y$  and  $G$  is colored. If  $x = y$ , then the remaining vertex  $v \in G - C[x, y]$  satisfies  $|L(v)| \geq 2$ . Choose  $c(v) \in L(v) - \{c(x)\}$ .

We proceed by induction on  $m$  the number of edges. Let  $u_1, u_2, \dots, u_k$  label the neighbors of  $z$  in counter-clockwise order such that  $u_1$  is the vertex immediately counter-clockwise from  $z$  around  $C$  and  $u_k$  is the vertex clockwise from  $z$  around  $C$ .

**Case 1.** Suppose that  $u_1 = y$ . Note that  $z = x$  since  $z \in C[x, y]$ . Therefore  $V(C[z, y]) = V(C)$  and  $|V(C[z, y])| \geq 3$ . Apply the lemma with vertices re-labeled as  $x' = y$ ,  $y' = x$ , and  $z' = y$  to find a path  $L$ -coloring  $c$  of  $G$ .

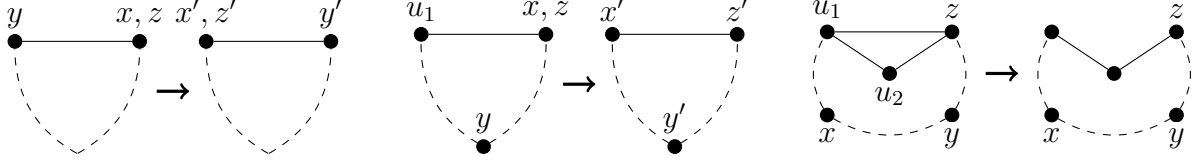


Figure 7: The proof of Lemma 4.1, Case 1 (left), Case 2 (middle), and Case 3.1 (right).

**Case 2.** Suppose that  $u_1 \neq y$  and  $z = x$ . Then  $u_1 \in C - C[x, z]$  and  $|L(u_1)| \geq 2$ . Pick  $c(u_1) \in L(u_1) - c(z)$ . Define  $L'(u_1) = \{c(u_1)\}$  and  $L'(v) = L(v)$  for each  $v \in G - u_1$ . Apply the lemma to path  $L'$ -color  $G$  with designated vertices  $x' = u_1$ ,  $y' = y$ , and  $z' = z$ .

**Case 3.** Suppose that  $u_1 \neq y$  and  $z \neq x$ . Our strategy will be to apply the inductive hypothesis to  $G - zu_1$  with the embedding inherited from  $G$ . Because  $u_1 \in C[x, z]$ , it is guaranteed that  $L(u_1) \cap L(z) = \emptyset$ . Thus any path  $L$ -coloring of  $G - zu_1$  will also be a path  $L$ -coloring of  $G$ .

**Case 3.1.** Suppose that  $u_2 \in G - C$ . Define  $L'(u_2) = L(u_2) - c(z)$  and  $L'(v) = L(v)$  for each  $v \in G - u_2$ . Note that  $|L'(u_2)| \geq |L(v)| - 1 \geq 2$ . Let  $C'$  be the outer face of  $G - zu_1$  and observe that  $C'[x, z]$  is equal to  $C[x, z]$  with the edge  $u_1z$  removed and the path  $u_1, u_2, z$  added. Since  $|L'(u_2)| \geq 2$  and  $L'(u_2) \cap L'(z) = \emptyset$ , we may apply the inductive hypothesis to find a path  $L'$ -coloring of  $G - zu_1$ .

**Case 3.2.** Suppose that  $u_2 \in C$ . Observe that  $u_2$  is a cut-vertex of  $G - zu_1$ . Define  $C_1 = C[u_2, u_1] + u_1u_2$  and  $C_2 = C[z, u_2] + zu_2$ . Define  $G_1 = \text{Int}(C_1)$  and  $G_2 = \text{Int}(C_2)$ . The subgraphs  $G_1$  and  $G_2$  are the two 2-connected components (blocks) of  $G - zu_1$ . Note that if  $k = 2$ , then  $G_1 = G - z$  and  $G_2 = z, u_2$ .

In each subsequent case we will apply the inductive hypothesis to produce a path  $L$ -coloring  $c_1$  of  $G_1$  and a path  $L$ -coloring  $c_2$  of  $G_2$  such that  $c_1(u_2) = c_2(u_2)$ . Let  $c$  be the  $L$ -coloring of  $G$  defined by  $v \mapsto c_1(v)$  for  $v \in G_1$  and  $v \mapsto c_2(v)$  for  $v \in G_2$ . Observe that  $\deg_c(v) = \deg_{c_1}(v)$  for each  $v \in G_1 - u_2$ ,  $\deg_c(v) = \deg_{c_2}(v)$  for each  $v \in G_2 - u_2$ , and  $\deg_c(u_2) = \deg_{c_1}(u_2) + \deg_{c_2}(u_2)$ . To show that  $c$  is a path  $L$ -coloring of  $G$  it suffices to show that  $\deg_c(u_2) \leq 2$ .

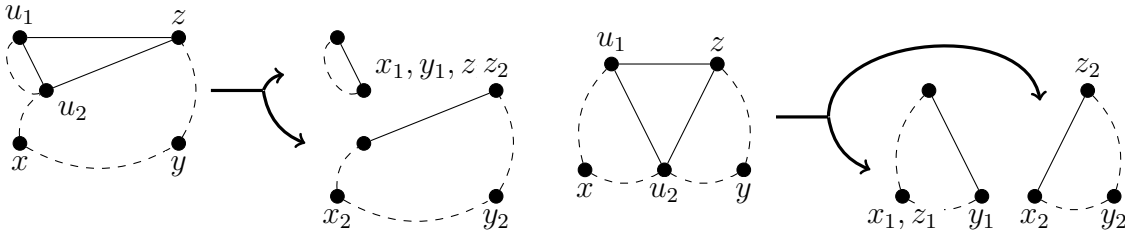


Figure 8: The proof of Lemma 4.1, Case 3.2.1 (left) and Case 3.2.2 (right).

**Case 3.2.1.** Suppose that  $u_2 \in C[x, z]$ . Observe that  $x, y, z \in C_2$ . Apply the inductive hypothesis to produce a path  $L$ -coloring  $c_2$  of  $G_2$  with designated vertices  $x_2 = x$ ,  $y_2 = y$ , and  $z_2 = z$ . Define  $L'(u_2) = \{c_2(u_2)\}$  and  $L'(v) = L(v)$  for each  $v \in G_1 - u_2$ . Apply the

inductive hypothesis to produce a path  $L'$ -coloring  $c_1$  of  $G_1$  with the single designated vertex  $x_1 = y_1 = z_1 = u_2$ . Since  $\deg_{c_1}(u_2) = 0$ , it follows that  $c$  is a path  $L$ -coloring of  $G$  satisfying the lemma.

**Case 3.2.2.** Suppose that  $u_2 \in C[y, x] - x - y$ . Pick  $c(u_2) \in L(u_2) - c(z)$ . Define  $L'(u_2) = \{c(u_2)\}$  and  $L'(v) = L(v)$  for each  $v \in G - u_2$ . Observe that  $x \in C_1$  and  $z, y \in C_2$ . Apply the inductive hypothesis to produce path  $L'$ -coloring  $c_1$  of  $G_1$  with designated vertices  $x_1 = z_1 = x$  and  $y_1 = u_2$ . Then find a path  $L'$ -coloring  $c_2$  of  $G_2$  with designated vertices  $x_2 = u_2$ ,  $y_2 = y$ , and  $z_2 = z$ . Note that  $\deg_{c_1}(u_2) \leq 1$  and  $\deg_{c_2}(u_2) \leq 1$ , and thus  $c$  is a path  $L$ -coloring of  $G$  satisfying the lemma.

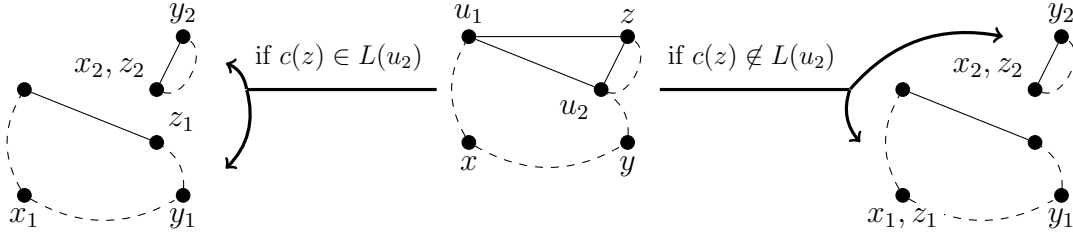


Figure 9: The proof of Lemma 4.1, Case 3.2.3.

**Case 3.2.3.** Suppose that  $u_2 \in C[z, y]$ . Note that  $z \neq y$ . There are two distinct cases to consider.

**Case 3.2.3.1.** Suppose that  $c(z) \in L(u_2)$ . Then either  $u_2 = y$  and  $L(z) \cap L(y) = \{c(z)\}$ , or  $C[z, y] \neq z, y$ . Define  $L'(u_2) = \{c(z)\}$  and  $L'(v) = L(v)$  for each  $v \in G - u_2$ . Construct a path  $L'$ -coloring  $c_1$  of  $G_1$  with designated vertices  $x_1 = x$ ,  $y_1 = y$ , and  $z_1 = u_2$ . Similarly, construct a path  $L'$ -coloring  $c_2$  of  $G_2$  with designated vertices  $x_2 = u_2$ ,  $y_2 = z$ , and  $z_2 = u_2$ . Since  $\deg_{c_1}(u_2) \leq 1$  and  $\deg_{c_2}(u_2) = 1$ , it follows that  $c$  is a path  $L$ -coloring of  $G$ .

**Case 3.2.3.2.** Suppose that  $c(z) \notin L(u_2)$ . Find a path  $L$ -coloring  $c_1$  of  $G_1$  with designated vertices  $x_1 = x$ ,  $y_1 = y$ , and  $z_1 = x$ . Define  $L'(u_2) = \{c_1(u_2)\}$  and  $L'(v) = L(v)$  for each  $v \in G_2 - u_2$ . Find a path  $L'$ -coloring  $c_2$  of  $G_2$  with designated vertices  $x_2 = u_2$ ,  $y_2 = z$ , and  $z_2 = u_2$ . Because  $C[z_2, y_2] = z_2, y_2$  and  $L'(z_2) \cap L'(y_2) = \emptyset$ , it is guaranteed that  $\deg_{c_2}(u_2) = \deg_{c_2}(z_2) = 0$ . Thus  $c$  is a path  $L$ -coloring of  $G$ .

Suppose that  $C[z, y] = z, y$ . Then it must be that  $u_2 = y$  and  $k = 2$ . Therefore  $G_2 = C_2 = z, y$  and  $\deg_c(z) = 0$  since  $c(z) \notin L(u_2)$ .  $\square$

Let  $G$  be a planar graph and  $L$  a list assignment such that  $|L(v)| \geq 3$  for each  $v \in G$ . Compute a planar embedding and add edges to produce a triangulated plane graph  $G'$ . Pick  $u \in G'$  to be a vertex on the outer face and  $c(u) \in L(u)$ . Define  $L'$  to be the list assignment such that  $L'(u) = \{c(u)\}$  and  $L'(v) = L(v)$  for  $v \in G' - u$ . By Lemma 4.1 there exists a path  $L'$ -coloring  $c$  of  $G'$ . Clearly  $c$  is also a path  $L$ -coloring of  $G$ . Therefore Theorem 1.2 follows immediately from Lemma 4.1.

The proof of Lemma 4.1 is constructive and may be implemented as a linear time algorithm for plane graphs represented by rotation scheme ordered augmented adjacency lists.

We will assume that both forward and backward iteration in augmented adjacency lists is a constant time operation. The available C implementation represents each augmented adjacency list as an array of entries, but e.g. a doubly linked list would also suffice [3].

**Algorithm 4.2.**

**Input.** Let  $C$  be a cycle or length 2 path in a 2-connected, weakly triangulated plane graph  $G$  represented by augmented adjacency lists. Let  $x, y, z \in C$  be vertices such that  $z \in C[x, y]$ .

Let  $L$  be an array of lists of colors such that for  $v \in \{x, y, z\}$  the list  $L[v]$  has length one, for  $v \in C - \{x, y, z\}$  the list  $L[v]$  has length two or three, and for  $v \in \text{Int}(C) - C$  the list  $L[v]$  has length three. Furthermore, for each  $v \in C[x, z] - z$  assume that  $L[v]$  does not contain the color in  $L[z]$ .

Let  $N$  be an array of pairs of references such that for each  $v \in C$  the pair  $N[v] = (r_1, r_2)$  contains a reference  $r_1$  to the  $\text{Adj}[v]$  entry for neighbor the immediately counter-clockwise from  $v$  around  $C$ , and a reference  $r_2$  to the entry for the neighbor immediately clockwise from  $v$  around  $C$ .

Let  $S$  be an array of integers such that if  $v \in C$ , then  $S[v] \neq 0$ , and if  $v \in \text{Int}(C) - C$ , then  $S[v] = 0$ . Also, if  $v \in C$ , then  $S[v] = S[x]$  if and only if  $v \in C[x, z] - z$ . Let  $M$  be an array of integers such that if  $v \in C$ , then  $M[S[v]] = S[y]$  if and only if  $v \in C[z, y]$ .

**Output.** For each  $v \in \text{Int}(C)$ , all but one color will be removed from the list  $L[v]$ . The remaining color in each list will represent a path  $L$ -coloring of  $\text{Int}(C)$  such that  $\deg_c(x) \leq 1$ ,  $\deg_c(y) \leq 1$ , and  $\deg_c(z) \leq 1$ . If  $z = y$ , or if  $C[z, y] = z, y$  and  $L[z]$  did not contain the color in  $L[y]$ , then  $\deg_c(z) = 0$ .

**Procedure.** Let  $N[z] = (r_1, r_2)$ . Define the vertex  $u_1$  to be the neighbor of  $z$  corresponding to  $r_1$ .

**Base Case.** If  $r_1 = r_2$ , then  $C = z, u_1$  is a length 2 path. If  $u_1 \neq x$  and  $u_1 \neq y$ , remove the color in  $L[z]$  from  $L[u_1]$ . If more than one color still remains in  $L[u_1]$ , remove arbitrary colors until a single color remains.

**Recursive Step.** Suppose that  $r_1 \neq r_2$ . Note that  $n(C) > 2$  and therefore  $C$  is a cycle. Define  $u_2$  to be the neighbor of  $z$  immediately counter-clockwise from  $u_1$ .

**Case 1.** Suppose that  $u_1 = y$ . In this case it must be that  $z = x$ . Assign  $S[x]$  and  $S[y]$  new unique marks. Assign  $M[S[x]] \leftarrow S[x]$  and  $M[S[y]] \leftarrow S[y]$ . Make a recursive call re-assigning  $x' \leftarrow y$ ,  $y' \leftarrow x$ , and  $z' \leftarrow y$ .

**Case 2.** Suppose that  $z = x$  and  $u_1 \neq y$ . Remove the color in  $L[z]$  from  $L[u_1]$ , and then remove arbitrary colors from  $L[u_1]$  until a single color remains. Assign  $x \leftarrow u_1$ , set  $S[u_1]$  to be a new unique mark, assign  $M[S[u_1]] \leftarrow S[u_1]$ , and make a recursive call.

**Case 3.** Suppose that  $z \neq x$  and  $u_1 \neq y$ . It is this case that makes use of the back references in the augmented adjacency list representation.

**Case 3.1.** Suppose that  $S[u_2] = 0$ , that is,  $u_2 \in \text{Int}(C) - C$ . Assign  $S[u_2] \leftarrow S[x]$  and initialize  $N[u_2] \leftarrow (s_1, s_2)$  where  $s_1$  is a reference to the entry for  $u_1$  in  $\text{Adj}[u_2]$ , and  $s_2$  is a reference to the entry for  $z$ . Remove the color in  $L[z]$  from  $L[u_2]$  and remove the edge  $zu_1$  by adjusting  $N[u_1]$  and  $N[z]$ . Make a recursive call with the same  $x, y$ , and  $z$ .

**Case 3.2.** Suppose that  $S[u_2] \neq 0$ , that is,  $u_2 \in C$ . Just as in Case 3.2 of the proof of Lemma 4.1, we will separately consider the two blocks  $G_1$  and  $G_2$  of  $\text{Int}(C) - zu_1$ .

It is simple to remove the edge  $zu_1$  by adjusting  $N[z]$  and  $N[u_1]$  to exclude the corresponding entries. It remains to “split” the neighborhood of  $u_2$  at the edge  $u_2z$  such that the recursive call on  $G_1$  considers only the neighbors of  $u_2$  counter-clockwise from  $z$ , and the call on  $G_2$  considers  $z$  and all neighbors clockwise from  $z$ .

Let  $N[u_2] = (s_1, s_2)$ . Let  $s_3$  be a reference to  $z$ 's entry in  $\text{Adj}[u_2]$  and  $s_3 + 1$  a reference to the next entry counter-clockwise from  $z$  in  $\text{Adj}[u_2]$ . To represent the subgraph  $G_1$ , assign  $N[u_2] \leftarrow (s_3 + 1, s_2)$ . To represent the  $G_2$ , assign  $N[u_2] \leftarrow (s_1, s_3)$ .

**Case 3.2.1.** Suppose that  $S[u_2] = S[x]$ , i.e.  $u_2 \in C[x, z]$ . Make a recursive call on  $G_2$  with  $x_2 \leftarrow x$ ,  $y_2 \leftarrow y$ ,  $z_2 \leftarrow z$ . Assign  $S[u_2]$  a new unique mark, set  $M[S[u_2]] \leftarrow S[u_2]$ , and make a recursive call on  $G_1$  with  $x_1, y_1, z_1$  all equal to  $u_2$ .

**Case 3.2.2.** Suppose that  $z \neq x$  and  $S[u_2] \neq 0$ , but  $S[u_2] \neq S[x]$  and  $M[S[u_2]] \neq S[y]$ . In other words, suppose that  $u_2 \in C[y, x] - x - y$ . First remove the color in  $L[z]$  from  $L[u_2]$ , if it exists, and then remove arbitrary colors until  $L[u_2]$  is of length one. Assign  $S[u_2] = S[x]$ . Make a recursive call on  $G_1$  with  $x_1 \leftarrow x$ ,  $y_1 \leftarrow u_2$ , and  $z_1 \leftarrow x$ . Assign  $S[u_2]$  a new unique mark and  $M[S[u_2]] \leftarrow S[u_2]$ . Make a recursive call on  $G_2$  with  $x_2 \leftarrow u_2$ ,  $y_2 \leftarrow y$ , and  $z_2 \leftarrow z$ .

**Case 3.2.3.** Suppose that  $z \neq x$  and  $M[S[u_2]] = S[y]$ , i.e.  $u_2 \in C[z, y]$ . There are two cases to consider.

**Case 3.2.3.1.** Suppose that the color in  $L[z]$  is in  $L[u_2]$ . Remove all colors from  $L[u_2]$  except for the color in  $L[z]$ . Make a recursive call on  $G_1$  with  $x_1 \leftarrow x$ ,  $y_1 \leftarrow y$ , and  $z_1 \leftarrow u_2$ . Then assign  $S[z]$  and  $S[u_2]$  the same new unique mark, and assign  $M[S[z]] \leftarrow S[z]$ . Make a recursive call on  $G_2$  with  $x_2 \leftarrow u_2$ ,  $y_2 \leftarrow z$ , and  $z_2 \leftarrow u_2$ .

**Case 3.2.3.2.** Suppose that the color in  $L[z]$  is not in  $L[u_2]$ . Assign  $M[S[x]] \leftarrow S[y]$ . Make a recursive call on  $G_1$  with  $x_1 \leftarrow x$ ,  $y_1 \leftarrow y$ , and  $z_1 \leftarrow x$ . Assign  $S[z]$  and  $S[u_2]$  the same new unique mark, and set  $M[S[z]] \leftarrow S[z]$ . Make a recursive call on  $G_2$  with  $x_2 \leftarrow u_2$ ,  $y_2 \leftarrow z$ , and  $z_2 \leftarrow u_2$ .

Let  $G$  be a triangulated plane graph with  $n$  vertices and  $m = 3n - 6$  edges, represented by augmented adjacency lists. Let  $L$  be a size  $n$  array of color lists of length 3, representing a list assignment of  $G$ . We may path  $L$ -color  $G$  using Algorithm 4.2 as follows.

Create an array of reference pairs  $N$  of size  $n$ , and initialize  $N[v]$  for each  $v \in C$  on the outer face of  $G$  to satisfy the requirements of Algorithm 4.2. Create a size  $n$  array of integers  $S$ , and initialize  $S[v] \leftarrow 1$  for each  $v \in C$  and  $S[v] \leftarrow 0$  for each  $v \in G - C$ . Pick an arbitrary  $u \in C$ , assign  $S[u] \leftarrow 2$ , and remove all but one color from  $L[u]$ . Create a size  $2m + 1$  array of integers  $M$  and initialize  $M[i] \leftarrow i$  for each  $i \in \{0, 1, 2\}$ . Finally, apply Algorithm 4.2 with  $x \leftarrow u$ ,  $y \leftarrow u$ , and  $z \leftarrow u$  to reduce each list in  $L$  to represent a path  $L$ -coloring of  $G$ .

Every recursive case in Algorithm 4.2 performs a fixed number of constant time operations. Each case removes one edge from the graph representation, except for Case 1 and Case 2. In Case 1 a single recursive call is made with an input that will not itself satisfy Case 1. In Case 2 a recursive call is made with an input that will not itself satisfy Case 1 or Case 2. Therefore the number of operations performed is  $\mathcal{O}(m) = \mathcal{O}(n)$ . See Figure 10 and Figure 11 for a concrete example of Algorithm 4.2.





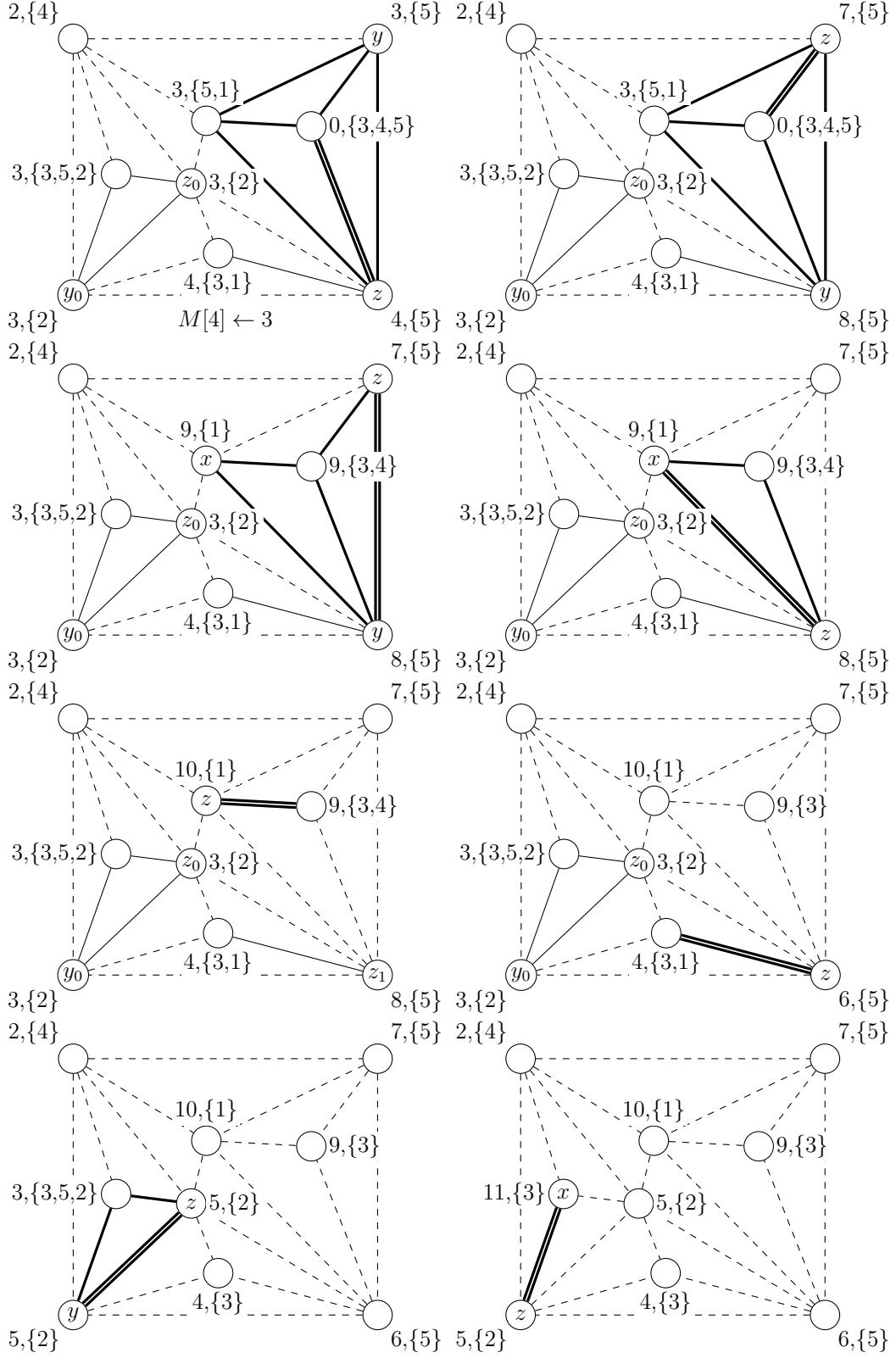


Figure 11: An Algorithm 4.2 example, continued from Figure 10.

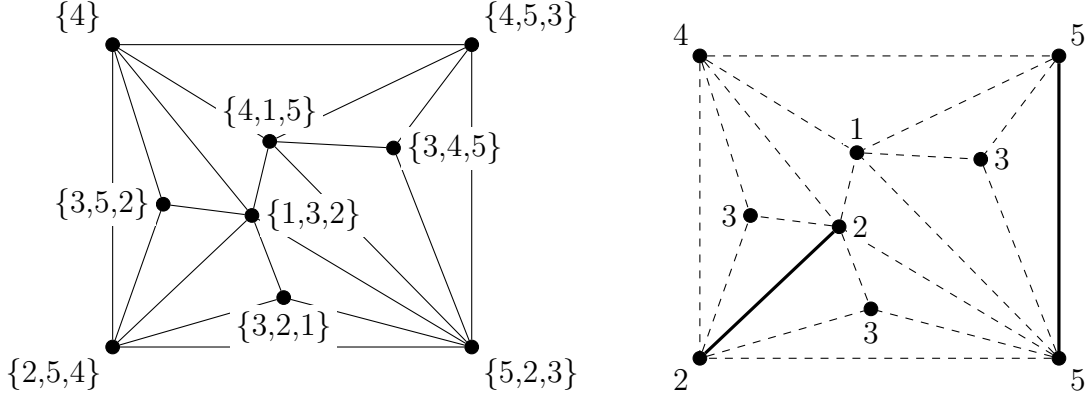


Figure 12: The initial list assignment  $L$  (left) and the induced paths of the resulting path  $L$ -coloring (right) from the Algorithm 4.2 example shown in Figure 10 and Figure 11.

## 5 Experimental performance and parallelism

A C implementation of each algorithm is available [3]. For graph orders up to  $10^7$  vertices, each algorithm was run on a set of 100 random plane triangulations; see the timings in Figure 13. Benchmark results are also shown for a label-independent breadth-first search implemented with a ring buffer queue, run on the same set of graphs, to serve as a baseline linear algorithm that hits every half-edge of the graph. All binaries were compiled with Clang 19.1.7 and run on a Linux 6.12.9 machine with an x86\_64 Intel N100 processor. The benchmark source code is included with the implementation.

The list assignments for Algorithm 4.2 were randomly drawn from a set of eight colors. Drawing from a larger color set experimentally seems to increase the performance of the algorithm, but results in boring colorings with very few long paths.

The performance of Algorithm 4.2 was surprisingly close to Algorithm 3.3, despite the fact that Algorithm 4.2 is more complex and has a larger memory footprint. However, Algorithm 4.2 requires an augmented adjacency list representation, which the benchmarks for Algorithm 2.1 show is relatively expensive to construct.

	$n = 10^3$	$n = 10^4$	$n = 10^5$	$n = 10^6$	$n = 10^7$
Breadth-first search	$1.93 \cdot 10^4$	$2.64 \cdot 10^5$	$3.73 \cdot 10^6$	$1.01 \cdot 10^8$	$1.26 \cdot 10^9$
Algorithm 2.1	$4.38 \cdot 10^4$	$6.67 \cdot 10^5$	$1.85 \cdot 10^7$	$4.15 \cdot 10^8$	$4.79 \cdot 10^9$
Algorithm 3.2	$2.30 \cdot 10^5$	$3.43 \cdot 10^6$	$5.26 \cdot 10^7$	$1.17 \cdot 10^9$	$1.82 \cdot 10^{10}$
Algorithm 3.3	$5.32 \cdot 10^4$	$6.12 \cdot 10^5$	$7.29 \cdot 10^6$	$1.31 \cdot 10^8$	$1.51 \cdot 10^9$
Algorithm 4.2	$6.05 \cdot 10^4$	$7.21 \cdot 10^5$	$1.04 \cdot 10^7$	$1.89 \cdot 10^8$	$2.15 \cdot 10^9$

Figure 13: Average time (ns) per triangulated plane graph (sample size 100).

A benchmark was also run to test the asymptotic performance of Algorithm 3.2 and Algorithm 3.3 on the collection of graphs  $\{G_k\}_{k \in \mathbb{N}}$  from Figure 2; see the timings in

Figure 14. We selected values for  $k$  such that  $n(G_k) = k(k+1)/2 + 3 \approx 10^i$  to make the timings comparable to the other benchmarks. Observe that not only did Algorithm 3.2 perform very poorly as predicted, but Algorithm 3.3 performed far better than it did on random graphs. The structured nature of each graph  $G_k$  results in a memory layout where vertices close to one another in the graph have their adjacency lists stored close together in memory. Thus the memory access pattern of Algorithm 3.3 run on  $G_k$  is almost linear.

	$n \approx 10^3$	$n \approx 10^4$	$n \approx 10^5$	$n \approx 10^6$	$n \approx 10^7$
Algorithm 3.2	$2.63 \cdot 10^5$	$8.31 \cdot 10^6$	$3.82 \cdot 10^8$	$3.11 \cdot 10^{10}$	$1.06 \cdot 10^{12}$
Algorithm 3.3	$2.36 \cdot 10^4$	$2.39 \cdot 10^5$	$2.41 \cdot 10^6$	$2.50 \cdot 10^7$	$2.49 \cdot 10^8$

Figure 14: Average time (ns) to path 3-color a graph  $G_k$  from Figure 2.

Both Algorithm 3.3 and Algorithm 4.2 perform recursive calls that operate on subgraphs that are disjoint except for select vertices on their respective outer faces. Therefore it is theoretically possible to maintain a stack of independent recursive frames and have a pool of threads operate on the frames concurrently. The amount of parallelism possible with this method is highly dependent on the structure of the graph. E.g. when Algorithm 3.3 is run on a graph  $G_k$  from Figure 2 there will never be more than one recursive frame on the stack, and thus there is no opportunity for parallel execution.

In the case of Algorithm 3.3 such parallelism can easily be organized since each frame writes only to vertices interior to the outer face of its associated subgraph. Therefore the algorithm can maintain a shared lock-guarded stack from which all threads push and pop recursive frames. If no frames are available, a thread must idle until either a new frame is pushed to the stack by another thread or until all threads are idle.

To reduce lock contention, each thread should also maintain a small local stack of frames, and only access the shared stack when this local stack is full or empty. For the implementation and hardware used for benchmarks, the most optimal setup proved to be a local stack of 16 frames for each thread. If a local stack filled up, 8 frames were pushed to the shared stack. If a local stack emptied, 8 frames were popped from the shared stack.

Threads	$n = 10^3$	$n = 10^4$	$n = 10^5$	$n = 10^6$	$n = 10^7$
1	$5.32 \cdot 10^4$	$6.12 \cdot 10^5$	$7.29 \cdot 10^6$	$1.31 \cdot 10^8$	$1.51 \cdot 10^9$
2	$5.31 \cdot 10^4$	$4.49 \cdot 10^5$	$4.36 \cdot 10^6$	$7.55 \cdot 10^7$	$8.65 \cdot 10^8$
3	$5.16 \cdot 10^4$	$3.47 \cdot 10^5$	$3.56 \cdot 10^6$	$6.12 \cdot 10^7$	$6.59 \cdot 10^8$
4	$5.33 \cdot 10^4$	$3.01 \cdot 10^5$	$3.41 \cdot 10^6$	$5.26 \cdot 10^7$	$5.56 \cdot 10^8$

Figure 15: Parallel Algorithm 3.3 average time (ns) per graph (sample size 100).

Benchmarks showed performance improvements when applying the parallel Algorithm 3.3 to plane graphs on the order of  $10^4$  vertices or more; see Figure 15.

Algorithm 4.2 is trickier to adapt to parallel execution. The first difficulty to consider is that the recursive calls made in Algorithm 4.2 cannot be re-ordered. If we store the mark

and neighbor range ( $S[v]$  and  $N[v]$ ) for  $x$ ,  $y$ , and  $z$  alongside each frame, then the recursive call order becomes independent in Case 3.2.1 with  $u_2 = x$ , Case 3.2.2, Case 3.2.3.1, and Case 3.2.3.2 with  $u_2 = y$ . Unfortunately, in Case 3.2.1 with  $u_2 \neq x$  and Case 3.2.3.2 with  $u_2 \neq y$ , the second call will always depend on the reduced color list  $L[u_2]$  produced by the first call. A smaller, but no less important detail is that the new unique face marks assigned to  $S$  must be unique across threads, or else we risk corruption and data races against the array  $M$ .

The hurdle of dependent frames can be overcome by maintaining a shared lock-guarded object pool of frames and a stack of frame references. Recursive frames are added to the pool when they appear in the usual course of the algorithm, but are only pushed to the shared stack when their subgraph is ready to be colored. For each vertex  $v \in G$ , maintain an optional reference to a frame that will become ready when  $v$  has been colored. To allow multiple frames to await the coloring of a single vertex, each frame in the object pool will store an “intrusive linked list,” that is, an optional reference to the next frame in line. When a frame is added to the pool, and it needs to await a vertex that has another frame waiting on it, the new frame is added to the linked list of the existing frame. When a vertex  $v$  is colored, i.e. has its color list reduced to length 1, walk the linked list of frames waiting on  $v$  and push a reference to each frame onto the shared stack.

We can ensure unique marks across threads by using a shared atomic mark counter. Contention can be minimized by having threads reserve marks in large chunks, rather than performing an atomic fetch-add operation for each new mark.

Technically, if we want to avoid even benign data races that don’t affect correctness, one more small modification must be made to the algorithm. In Case 3.2.1, if  $u_2 = x$ , then  $S[x]$  must be assigned a new unique mark in the recursive frame handling the  $G_2$  subgraph. This change will prevent future writes to  $M[S[x]]$  in the  $G_2$  frame from interfering with any reads to  $M[S[x]]$  that may result from the vertices on the outer face of  $G_1$  that were marked with  $S[v] = S[x]$ . In Figure 10 this would change the mark assigned to the bottom right vertex  $x$  of the graph shown in the step at the bottom right of the first page from 4 to 7 in the recursive frame handling the  $G_2$  block. The change would then ripple forward as the next unique mark assigned would have to be 8 rather than 7, and so on.

Lock contention can be reduced in a similar manner to Algorithm 3.3 by having each thread maintain a local stack of frames. Unfortunately, if a frame is created that needs to await the coloring of a vertex, then it must always be added to the shared pool since we do not know which thread will end up coloring that vertex. Moreover, if a frame colors a vertex that has another frame waiting on it, then the lock must also be acquired.

Benchmarks showed small performance benefits when applying the parallel version of Algorithm 4.2 to plane graphs on the order of  $10^4$  vertices or more, and significant benefits for graphs with  $10^6$  vertices or more; see Figure 16. The speed improvements observed were less than those achieved for the parallel Algorithm 3.3, but Algorithm 4.2 requires far more coordination between threads.

Threads	$n = 10^3$	$n = 10^4$	$n = 10^5$	$n = 10^6$	$n = 10^7$
1	$6.05 \cdot 10^4$	$7.21 \cdot 10^5$	$1.04 \cdot 10^7$	$1.89 \cdot 10^8$	$2.15 \cdot 10^9$
2	$7.81 \cdot 10^4$	$7.08 \cdot 10^5$	$9.05 \cdot 10^6$	$1.36 \cdot 10^8$	$1.51 \cdot 10^9$
3	$7.78 \cdot 10^4$	$6.50 \cdot 10^5$	$8.24 \cdot 10^6$	$1.14 \cdot 10^8$	$1.20 \cdot 10^9$
4	$8.43 \cdot 10^4$	$6.43 \cdot 10^5$	$8.05 \cdot 10^6$	$1.03 \cdot 10^8$	$1.06 \cdot 10^9$

Figure 16: Parallel Algorithm 4.2 average time (ns) per graph (sample size 100).

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