On Existing Min Area Polygonalization Algorithms And Possible Improvements

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Abstract—It was proven that Minimum Area Polygonalization (MAP) problem belongs to the NP-Hard set of problems. Therefore, different approximation algorithms were developed. In this paper, we suggest a modification to the recently proposed application of the "Divide And Conquer" technique to the MAP problem. Our algorithm computes slightly more cases and often outperforms other algorithms in terms of polygon area. The complexity of the modified algorithm is $O(n^2 \log(n))$ using O(n) memory. We also introduce postprocessing technique. It takes solutions from other algorithms and makes local points rearrangement if it minimizes polygon area. The complexity of postprocessing is $\mathbf{O}(\mathbf{n^2})$ using $\mathbf{O}(\mathbf{n})$ memory. Experimental results indicate that it is expedient to use our algorithm in combination with postprocessing under time pressure. If no time pressure it is also useful to try randomized MAP algorithms in combination with postprocessing.

Index Terms—computational geometry, minimum area polygonalization, divide and conquer, postprocessing

I. Introduction

Computational Geometry plays important role in nowadays problemsolving. It offers various solutions for both deeply theoretical research and applied software. One type of problem is constructing different shapes optimizing parameters like perimeter and area.

In this paper, we consider the problem of finding the minimal area polygon (MAP), vertices of which are all points from the given set. In practice, this problem arises in the context of geo-sensor networks [1], [2], and GIS systems [3], [4]. Like Traveling Salesman Problem, MAP is NP-hard, which was proven in [5]. It makes it almost impossible to solve the problem provably optimal for big enough data sets. Most related works focus on approximation of MAP, rather than finding the best possible polygonalization.

The simplest algorithm for finding optimal MAP is MAP_PermuteAndReject with complexity O(n!). MAP_PermuteAndReject brute-force all permutations, each corresponding unique polygon, checks if the polygon is simple and takes one with minimal area. In [9], [10] MAP was formulated as the IP problem. Such an approach works faster than MAP_PermuteAndReject without losing optimality. MAP for 24 points was computed in about 90000 seconds [10].

Algorithm MAP_Greedy proposed in [8]. The idea is to start with the convex hull of points and iteratively add feasible

points that form maximal area triangle with edges of the previously computed polygon. The complexity of the algorithm is $O(n^3)$ with $O(n^2)$ memory usage. Algorithm MAP_DAC with complexity $O(n^2)$ described in [13]. Authors on each step divide point set on 2 subsets, recursively solve the problem for smaller sets and merge found polygons with minimal area quadrilateral. If the subset of the points has less than 6 elements MAP_PermuteAndReject is used.

Randomized algorithms were proposed in [11], [12]. MAP_RS [12] consist of 6 strategies how to choose the initial triangle, next point, and next edge. We believe that complexity of MAP_RS is $O(qn^3)$, where q is the number of trials and n is the number of points. MAP_RAND [11] starts with the triangle. On each step, it chooses a random point and connects it with the edge that minimizes the polygon area. MAP_RAND is the only algorithm that processes both inside the polygon and outside the polygon types of points. In [11] MAP_RAND described with $O(qn^2log(n))$ complexity, but we believe that complexity can be improved to $O(qn^2)$ using linear time polygon visibility algorithm [14]. In [12] algorithm based on Ant Colony Optimization was proposed.

The rest of this article is organized as follows. In section II, we formulate the MAP problem, describe a modification to the MAP_DAC algorithm, and propose a simple postprocessing technique. In section III, we analyze the complexity of described algorithms and their correctness. In section IV, we present implementation details, a comparison of MAP_DAC2 with the existing approximation MAP algorithms, and results of postprocessing output of other algorithms. We present our conclusion in Section V.

II. PROPOSED ALGORITHMS

Problem MAP. A set S of n points is given on a plane. It is necessary to construct a simple polygon with the smallest possible area, which would cover a given set of points, and which vertices are all points of the set S.

A. Modification of MAP_DAC

Proposed in [13] algorithm performs next steps.

- If the number of points is less than 6, return MAP using MAP_PermuteAndReject;
- 2) Sort out all given points by X coordinate;
- 3) Split sorted points into 2 subsets S_1 and S_2 ;

- 4) Solve recursively (from step 1) for S_1 and S_2 , getting polygons P_1 and P_2 ;
- 5) Find minimal area quadrilateral Q connecting P_1 and
- 6) Merge P_1 and P_2 based on Q and return result.

In such a way we always split the point set by the vertical line. We can consider lines with different slope, but while it can be optimal for some point subsets it would not for other.

Therefore we propose to maintain 2 solutions for each point subset, one for vertical separation and other for horizontal separation. In such a way we bring more local optimality without much loss of execution time efficiency.

Our algorithm MAP_DAC2 performs the next steps.

- 1) If the number of points is less than 6, return MAP using MAP PermuteAndReject;
- 2) Sort out all given points by X coordinate and split sorted points into 2 subsets S_x^1 and S_x^2 ;
- points into 2 subsets S_x and S_x;
 3) Solve recursively (from step 1) for S_x and S_x getting polygons P_x^{1,1}, P_x^{1,2}, P_x^{2,1} and P_x^{2,2};
 4) Consider polygons PM_x¹, PM_x², PM_x³, PM_x⁴ received by merging pairs {P_x^{1,1}, P_x^{2,1}}, {P_x^{1,1}, P_x^{2,2}}, {P_x^{1,2}, P_x^{2,2}} respectively;
 5) Let P_x be one of the PM_x¹, PM_x², PM_x³, PM_x⁴ with the minimal area:
- the minimal area;
- 6) Sort out all given points by Y coordinate and split sorted points into 2 subsets S_y^1 and S_y^2 ;
- 7) Solve recursively (from step 1) for S_y¹ and S_y² getting polygons P_y^{1,1}, P_y^{1,2}, P_y^{2,1} and P_y^{2,2};
 8) Consider polygons PM_y¹, PM_y², PM_y³, PM_y⁴ received by merging pairs {P_y^{1,1}, P_y^{2,1}}, {P_y^{1,1}, P_y^{2,2}}, {P_y^{1,2}, P_y^{2,1}}, {P_y^{1,2}, P_y^{2,2}} respectively;
 9) Let P_y be one of the PM_y¹, PM_y², PM_y³, PM_y⁴ with the minimal case.
- the minimal area;
- 10) Return pair $\{P_x, P_y\}$.

All steps of MAP_DAC2 except 4 and 8 are straightforward. Step 4 is described in the original paper for MAP_DAC [13] and can be done in the next way.

- 1) Build polygon E enclosing area between polygons Aand B. It consists of 2 chains, 1 from each of given polygons, and 2 tangents that connect border points of chains;
- 2) For all points of the first chain find all visible points on the second chain [14];
- 3) For all consecutive point pairs of the first chain find all visible consecutive point pairs on the second chain that form simple quadrilateral. Choose the smallest quadrilateral.

Step 8 is almost the same as 4, but with horizontal separation. In case implementation is hardcoded for vertical separation, it is possible to interchange X and Y coordinates of points to bring step 8 to 4. 8 polygons considered on steps 4 and 8 are shown in Fig. 1.

B. Postprocessing of MAP solution

It is typical for MAP approximation algorithms to use heuristics that greedily choose point, edge, quadrilateral, etc.

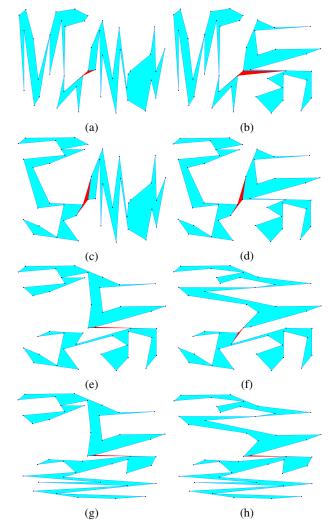


Fig. 1: 8 different polygons considered in MAP_DAC2 (blue polygons recieved recursively, red – merging quadrilateral). (a) PM_x^1 (b) PM_x^2 (c) PM_x^3 (d) PM_x^4 (e) PM_y^1 (f) PM_y^2 (g) PM_u^3 (h) PM_u^4

Such heuristics may be optimal on the current step but can be nonoptimal in the future. We propose a simple postprocessing technique that removes 1 point at a time and tries to add it in the more optimal position. Postprocessing lies in the next steps.

- 1) Consider all points P_i of polygon $P = P_1, P_2, ..., P_n$ one by one;
- 2) If we can remove P_i such that P^* $P_1, ..., P_{i-1}, P_{i+1}, ..., P_n$ is simple polygon (*) and segment (P_{i-1}, P_{i+1}) of P^* is visible from P_i (**) then remove P_i else goto step 1 and consider next point;
- 3) If P_i is inside P^* then find edge (P_{i-1}, P_i) of P^* visible from P_i that maximize area of triangle $\{(P_{i-1}, P_i, P_j)\}$. If P_i is outside P^* then find edge (P_{i-1}, P_i) of P^* visible from P_i that minimize area of triangle $\{(P_{i-1}, P_i, P_i)\};$

4) Insert P_i such that new value of polygon $P=P_1,...,P_{j-1},P_i,P_j,...,P_n$ and goto step 1 considering next point.

To check (*) we can simply check whether edge (P_{i-1}, P_{i+1}) intersect other edges of P^* . To check (**) we can use the visibility polygon algorithm proposed in [14]. To check whether 4 a point is inside or outside of the polygon we can use the windmill algorithm. To find edge (P_{j-1}, P_j) we can use visibility polygon computed when checking (**).

In practice, we ran several trials of postprocessing until no more area minimizing points rearrangements are possible. Example of postprocessing optimization is shown in Fig. 2.

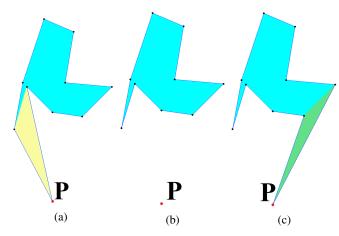


Fig. 2: Example of postprocessing (red point P is postprocessed, yellow – removed triangle, green – added triangle). (a) initial polygon (b) P removed from polygon (c) P inserted in better position

III. COMPLEXITY AND CORRECTNESS

A. Complexity

Theorem 1. Algorithm MAP_DAC2 can be implemented with complexity $O(n^2 log(n))$.

Proof. MAP_DAC2 is recursive algorithm. During the one iteration, it sorts out points twice, calls merging function 8 times, and calls itself recursively 4 times with 2 times smaller point set. Complexity of sorting is O(nlog(n)). Complexity of merging function is $O(n^2)$ [13]. That is we have recurrence $T(n) = 4 * T(n/2) + 8 * O(n^2) + 2 * O(nlog(n))$. After simplification we get $T(n) = 4 * T(n/2) + O(n^2)$. Last recurrence can be solved using Master Theorem and the solution is $O(n^2log(n))$.

Theorem 2. Postprocessing can be implemented with complexity $O(n^2)$.

Proof. We can check (*) and (**) as described above in O(n) time. The complexity of the windmill algorithm is also O(n). If while checking (**) visibility polygon already constructed then we can find edge (P_{j-1}, P_j) of step 4 with complexity O(n). Therefore, we can process one point in O(n) time. We need to process n points which lead to overall complexity $O(n^2)$.

In practice, we ran postprocessing several times until the polygon area converge. During the experimental study, maximal number of postprocessing trials was 10. We believe that running postprocessing until area converges also has $O(n^2)$ complexity.

B. Correctness of MAP_DAC2

Correctness of MAP_DAC2 consists in the existence of quadrilateral merging 2 polygons on steps 4 and 9. MAP_DAC2 tries to merge 4 pairs of polygons on both step 4 and step 9. During the experimental study, we found pairs that cannot be merged as such a quadrilateral do not exist. Despite it, at least one of 4 pairs always could be combined when running MAP_DAC2 on our data set. We don't know whether it holds in the general case. In the implementation we assign infinity area to the incorrect polygonalization, leading the algorithm to choose one with a smaller area. In case the algorithm approved to be incorrect in general we suggest running several trials with randomly rotated input points.

C. Correctness of postprocessing

Trap region of polygon P is the area of the plane from which no edges of P are completely visible (Fig. 3). Concept of trap region introduced in [11]. Therefore, for the algorithm to be correct it is necessary to not lead input points into the trap region or somehow deal with the trap region otherwise. [11] propose to ran MAP_RAND with different random seed in case of some point in the trap region. The same can be done in MAP_RS. So, we can consider randomized algorithms to be correct. During the experimental study, MAP_Greedy fell into the trap region several times. Because MAP_Greedy described in [8] is a deterministic algorithm, we claim it to be incorrect in the general case.

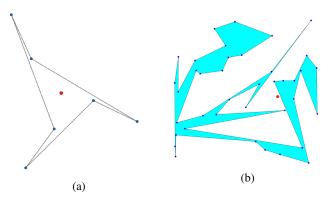


Fig. 3: Red point is inside the trap region. (a) point inside the polygon (b) point outside the polygon

Theorem 3. The postprocessing algorithm never throws removed points into the trap region of P^* . The postprocessing algorithm either improves the area of the given polygon or does not change it.

Proof. For every point there possible 3 distinct cases.

1) (+) At least one of (*) or (**) does not hold and the point is not removed;

Open File
Save File
MAP_DAC2
MAP_DAC
MAP_Greedy
MAP_RAND
MAP_RS
Postprocess
Add Inner Area

Fig. 4: The interface of the developed program.

- 2) (++) Point is removed and added such that old and new values of P are the same;
- 3) (+++) Point is removed and added such that old and new values of P are not the same.

In case (+), we do not remove points, therefore correctness is held. Otherwise (cases (++), (+++)) point is removed. In case (+++) not only correctness is held but also area is improved. If both (+) and (+++) are not met then from (+) we have guarantee of (**). That is, edge (P_{i-1}, P_{i+1}) of P^* is visible from $(P_i$. So, removed point P_i is not in the trap region but overall area remains the same as before (case (++)).

IV. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

To test described algorithms and compare them with previously proposed algorithms we have implemented MAP_DAC2, MAP_DAC, MAP_Greedy, MAP_RAND, MAP_RS, and postprocessing. We write in C++ using the SFML library for a graphical interface (Fig. 4). There are 2 ways of specifying the data – reading points from the file and adding or deleting points via clicking on the drawing panel.

To compare different algorithms 30 random point sets are generated. There are 3 types of point sets, each type consist of 10 sets of different sizes. The First 2 types are random points in rectangle and circle, named *_square.txt and *_circle.txt respectively. Points from the third type form a grid with some random shift from the exact position, named *_grid.txt. Different types are shown in Fig. 5.

We ran all 5 algorithms on described point sets (Fig. 6 (a)-(e)). For randomized algorithms MAP_RAND and MAP_RS we set q=200 trials and take the best produced polygonalization. Table I shows the results. As MAP_Greedy was

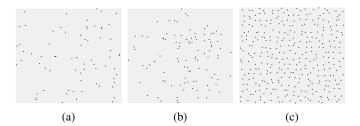


Fig. 5: (a) 1_square.txt (b) 1_circle.txt (c) 1_grid.txt

discovered to be incorrect, our implementation of this algorithm ignores points that are in the trap region. Cases with incorrect output polygonalization are noted with the asterisk. In 17 out of 30 cases the best result was computed by MAP_DAC2. In the other 13 cases, the best polygonalization was computed by MAP_RS. Regardless of MAP_RS can outperform MAP_DAC2 in terms of polygon area, MAP_RS is quite slow relative to MAP_DAC2 as their complexities are $O(qn^3)$ and $O(n^2log(n))$ respectively.

We also ran postprocessing on output from all algorithms on all point sets (Fig. 6 (f)). We emphasize that postprocessing allows decreasing the area of solutions up to 10-25%. Table II shows results after postprocessing. The result is improved by 18.7% on average. MAP_DAC2_P outputs the best result in 17 cases, MAP_RS_P in 11 cases, and MAP_RAND_P in 2 cases. We apply postprocessing only to the best output of MAP_RS and MAP_RAND. It is expected to get even better results if postprocessing is applied after every trial of randomized algorithms.

TABLE I: Comparison of results obtained from MAP_DAC2, MAP_DAC, MAP_Greedy, MAP_RAND, MAP_RS.

File name	Number of points	MAP_DAC2	MAP_DAC	MAP_Greedy	MAP_RAND	MAP_RS
0_circle.txt	50	1546.95	2205.22	2163.97	1421.74	1337.32
0_grid.txt	225	5073.6	7552.84	5893.04	6450.58	5136.01
0_square.txt	20	1649.18	2569.88	1783.53	1347.51	1275.03
1_circle.txt	100	1407.81	2478.42	1613.12	1285.63	1245.65
1_grid.txt	324	7509.8	10717.5	9285.85	9478.32	7556.45
1_square.txt	70	2029.32	2206.15	2844.91	1834.54	1613.95
2_circle.txt	150	1459.24	2173.04	2132.49	1606.34	1402.67
2_grid.txt	441	10196.1	14775.8	12771.9	12862.2	10229.6
2_square.txt	220	2022.32	3182.49	2937.25*	2242.83	1869.77
3_circle.txt	200	1565.39	2702.54	1597.23	1674.86	1398.37
3_grid.txt	576	13397.4	19157.1	18039.6	16774.6	13640.4
3_square.txt	470	1851.76	2916.31	2669.09	2294.82	1903.7
4_circle.txt	250	1534.87	2405.29	1873.09	1704.48	1466.64
4_grid.txt	729	16209.4	22362.3	20766.8*	21420.7	17387.4
4_square.txt	820	1881.42	2910.44	2708.03	2452.73	2018.38
5_circle.txt	300	1533.45	2192.7	2027.85	1805.44	1479.12
5_grid.txt	900	19876	28519.2	26701.5	26726.3	21612.8
5_square.txt	50	589.507	797.318	681.784	594.001	497.325
6_circle.txt	350	1441.19	2430.5	1901.1	1792.82	1475.15
6_grid.txt	330	6667.67	10850.5	9933.22*	8969.63	7247.62
6_square.txt	140	560.736	875.54	680.984	597.184	530.764
7_circle.txt	400	1397.47	2552.57	1923.42	1809.85	1492.82
7_grid.txt	360	7818.05	12676.4	10598.4*	9783.51	8104.49
7_square.txt	290	564.116	933.543	741.509	675.447	561.196
8_circle.txt	450	1485.48	2288.47	1966.1	1695.7	1515.07
8_grid.txt	390	7870.21	13452.7	11478.4	10362.4	8182.76
8_square.txt	500	548.995	973.862	772.515	701.326	573.593
9_circle.txt	500	1536.36	2544.76	2084.82	1819.55	1591.75
9_grid.txt	420	9318.83	13578.1	12283.1	11080.6	8967.92
9_square.txt	770	561.227	945.21	826.275*	718.896	567.384

TABLE II: Postprocessing. Comparison of results obtained from MAP_DAC2_P, MAP_DAC_P, MAP_Greedy_P, MAP_RAND_P, MAP_RS_P.

File name	DAC2_P	DAC_P	Greedy_P	RAND_P	RS_P	Result before postprocessing	Result after postprocessing
0_circle.txt	1288.43	1517.7	1620.75	1354.56	1158.99	1337.32	1158.99
0_grid.txt	3981.88	4586.55	5503.51	5400.29	4375.65	5073.6	3981.88
0_square.txt	1421.65	1462.81	1630.76	1347.51	1256.49	1275.03	1256.49
1_circle.txt	1056.05	1329.5	1493.96	962.349	1148.04	1245.65	962.349
1_grid.txt	5820	6483.09	8291.7	7519.4	5695.87	7509.8	5695.87
1_square.txt	1713.14	1792.14	2530.54	1518.5	1548.98	1613.95	1518.5
2_circle.txt	1235.84	1484.68	1768.12	1345.62	1153.44	1402.67	1153.44
2_grid.txt	7829.01	8743.24	11663.3	10438.9	8526.33	10196.1	7829.01
2_square.txt	1562.69	1924.19	2638.89	1611.04	1717.69	1869.77	1562.69
3_circle.txt	1286.39	1508.71	1504.97	1301.88	1191.66	1398.37	1191.66
3_grid.txt	10019.5	10598.7	15936.3	13455.7	11331.8	13397.4	10019.5
3_square.txt	1477.05	1725.24	2293.27	1714.95	1658.75	1851.76	1477.05
4_circle.txt	1196.67	1507.26	1725.93	1408.83	1224.46	1466.64	1196.67
4_grid.txt	13148.7	13952.4	17246.1	16474.5	14095.9	16209.4	13148.7
4_square.txt	1498.83	1724.86	2252.72	1882.68	1568.09	1881.42	1498.83
5_circle.txt	1254.46	1397.55	1715.84	1530.84	1163.76	1479.12	1163.76
5_grid.txt	15682.7	16945.4	22812.9	21520.1	17123.5	19876	15682.7
5_square.txt	486.586	562.642	634.284	509.418	412.474	497.325	412.474
6_circle.txt	1237.1	1472.61	1616.43	1398.35	1225.92	1441.19	1225.92
6_grid.txt	5148.09	7231.47	8709.21	7021.94	6185.3	6667.67	5148.09
6_square.txt	469.369	562.691	532.582	510.949	458.1	530.764	458.1
7_circle.txt	1127.37	1598.42	1594.55	1407.19	1196.89	1397.47	1127.37
7_grid.txt	5968.88	8311.64	8858.07	7898.91	6610.68	7818.05	5968.88
7_square.txt	462.974	535.192	639.955	566.304	469.448	561.196	462.974
8_circle.txt	1208.69	1449.65	1563.14	1233.62	1203.83	1485.48	1203.83
8_grid.txt	5908.43	8977.68	9966.53	8076.5	6569.76	7870.21	5908.43
8_square.txt	440.701	553.607	636.511	564.692	487.669	548.995	440.701
9_circle.txt	1191.3	1469.81	1860.37	1348.89	1319.14	1536.36	1191.3
9_grid.txt	7575.51	8744.08	9896.72	8817.38	7352.25	8967.92	7352.25
9_square.txt	432.59	585.055	671.739	538.328	465.505	561.227	432.59

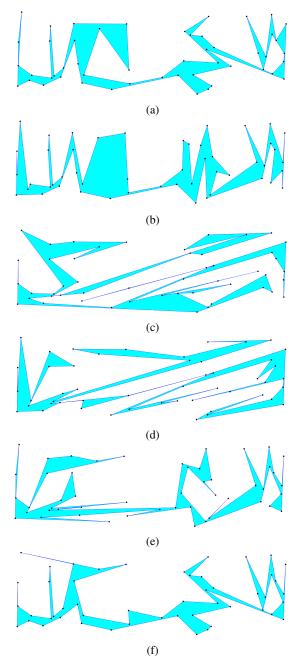


Fig. 6: Polygonalization of 5_square.txt. (a) MAP_DAC2 (b) MAP_DAC (c) MAP_Greedy (d) MAP_RAND (e) MAP_RS (f) MAP_DAC2 P

V. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we present modification (MAP_DAC2) to the Divide and Conquer based algorithm for constructing an approximate solution of the MAP problem. The algorithm computes slightly more cases compared to the unmodified version but shows significant improvement in the polygon area. The complexity of the algorithm is $O(n^2log(n))$ using O(n) memory. We also propose the algorithm for postprocessing output of other algorithms that improves local optimality

via local rearrangements point by point. The complexity of postprocessing is $O(n^2)$ using O(n) memory.

We conduct experimental study to compare existing algorithms. MAP_DAC2 turns out to be competitive in terms of polygonalization area while working much faster than the best of existing algorithms. We also compare results before and after postprocessing. Postprocessing improved best polygonalizations by 18% on average which is an outstanding result.

During the research of existing and new MAP algorithms, we considered 3 tactics – producing new polygonalization, postprocessing of polygonalization, and constructing new better polygonalizations via combining other polygonalizations. Producing new polygonalization is relatively well studied in the literature. We propose the first MAP postprocessing technique in this paper. Polygon combining is left for future research. We believe that all 3 tactics deserve further investigation.

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