

# TREE-LIKE GRAPHINGS OF COUNTABLE BOREL EQUIVALENCE RELATIONS

ZHAOSHEN ZHAI

ABSTRACT. We present a streamlined exposition of a construction presented recently by R. Chen, A. Poulin, R. Tao, and A. Tserunyan, where it is proven that every locally-finite Borel graph with each component a quasi-tree induces a canonical treeable equivalence relation. **Write some more details...**

## 0. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this note is to provide a streamlined proof of a particular case of a construction presented in [CPTT23], in order to better understand the general formalism developed therein. We attempt to make this note self-contained, but nevertheless urge the reader to refer to the original paper for more detailed discussions and some generalizations of the results we have selected to include here.

**0.1. Treeings of equivalence relations.** A *countable Borel equivalence relation (CBER)* on a standard Borel space  $X$  is a Borel equivalence relation  $E \subseteq X^2$  with each class countable. We are interested in special types of *graphings* on a CBER  $E \subseteq X^2$ , i.e. a Borel graph  $G \subseteq X^2$  whose connectedness relation is precisely  $E$ . For instance, a graphing of  $E$  such that each component is a tree is called a *treeing* of  $E$ , and the CBERs that admit treeings are said to be *treeable*. The main results of [CPTT23] provide new sufficient criteria for treeability of certain classes of CBERs, and in particular, they prove the following

**Theorem A** ([CPTT23, Theorem 1.1]). *If a CBER admits a locally-finite graphing whose components are quasi-trees, then it is treeable.*

Recall that metric spaces  $X$  and  $Y$  are *quasi-isometric* if they are isometric up to a bounded multiplicative and additive error, and  $X$  is a *quasi-tree* if it is quasi-isometric to a simplicial tree; see [Gro93] and [DK18].

**0.2. Outline of the proof.** Roughly speaking, the existence of a quasi-isometry  $G|_C \rightarrow T_C$  to a simplicial tree  $T_C$  for each component  $C \subseteq X$  induces a collection  $\mathcal{H}(C)$  of ‘cuts’ (subsets  $H \subseteq C$  with finite boundary such that both  $H$  and  $C \setminus H$  are connected), which are ‘tree-like’ in the sense that

1.  $\mathcal{H}(C)$  is *finitely-separating*: each pair  $x, y \in C$  is separated by finitely-many  $H \in \mathcal{H}(C)$ , and
2.  $\mathcal{H}(C)$  is *dense towards ends*: each end in  $G|_C$  has a neighborhood basis in  $\mathcal{H}(C)$ .

By Condition (1), these cuts have the structure of a profinite pocset with non-trivial points isolated, which in turn provide exactly the data to construct a ‘median graph’ whose vertices are ‘ultrafilters’<sup>1</sup> thereof. Condition (2) then ensures that this graph has finite ‘hyperplanes’, which allows us to apply a Borel ‘cycle-cutting’ algorithm and obtain a canonical spanning tree. Each step above can be done in a uniform way to each component  $C \subseteq G$ , giving us the desired treeing of the CBER.



**Write some more stuff to tie things together...**

**Remark.** We follow [CPTT23, Convention 2.7], where for a family  $\mathcal{H} \subseteq 2^X$  of subsets of a fixed set  $X$ , we write  $\mathcal{H}^* := \mathcal{H} \setminus \{\emptyset, X\}$  for the *non-trivial* elements of  $\mathcal{H}$ .

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<sup>1</sup>As in [CPTT23], we call them *orientations* instead, to avoid confusion with the more standard notion; see Definition 3.1.

## 1. GRAPHS WITH DENSE FAMILIES OF CUTS

**1.1. Ends of graphs.** Let  $(X, G)$  be a connected locally-finite graph, which, in the context of Theorem A, will stand for a single component of the locally-finite graphing of a CBER.

**Definition 1.1.** For a subset  $A \subseteq X$ , we let  $\partial_{iv}A := A \cap \text{Ball}_1(\neg A)$  be its *inner vertex boundary*,  $\partial_{ov}A := \partial_{iv}(\neg A)$  be its *outer vertex boundary*, and let  $\partial_{ie}A := G \cap (\partial_{ov}A \times \partial_{iv}A)$  and  $\partial_{oe}A := \partial_{ie}(\neg A)$  respectively be its *inner* and *outer edge boundaries*. Let  $\partial_vA := \partial_{iv}A \cup \partial_{ov}A$  be the *(total) vertex boundary* of  $A$ .

Let  $\mathcal{H}_{\partial < \infty}(X) \subseteq 2^X$  be the Boolean algebra of all  $A \subseteq X$  with finite vertex boundary, called *cuts* in  $X$ .

**Definition 1.2.** The *end compactification* of  $(X, G)$  is the Stone space  $\widehat{X}$  of  $\mathcal{H}_{\partial < \infty}(X)$ , whose non-principal ultrafilters are the *ends* of  $(X, G)$ .

We identify  $X \hookrightarrow \widehat{X}$  via principal ultrafilter map  $x \mapsto p_x$ , so  $\widehat{X} \setminus X$  is the set of ends of  $G$ . By definition,  $\widehat{X}$  admits a basis of clopen sets of the form  $\widehat{A} := \{p \in \widehat{X} : A \in p\}$  for each  $A \in \mathcal{H}_{\partial < \infty}(X)$ .

**Definition 1.3.** A family  $\mathcal{H} \subseteq \mathcal{H}_{\partial < \infty}(X)$  of cuts is *dense towards ends* of  $(X, G)$  if  $\mathcal{H}$  contains a neighborhood basis for every end in  $\widehat{X} \setminus X$ .

In other words,  $\mathcal{H}$  is dense towards ends if for every  $p \in \widehat{X} \setminus X$  and every (clopen) neighborhood  $\widehat{A} \ni p$ , where  $A \in \mathcal{H}_{\partial < \infty}(X)$ , there is some  $H \in \mathcal{H}$  with  $p \in \widehat{H} \subseteq \widehat{A}$ ; it is useful to note that  $\widehat{H} \subseteq \widehat{A}$  iff  $H \subseteq A$ .

**1.2. Dense cuts induced by quasi-trees.** If  $X$  is a quasi-tree – and thus does not have arbitrary long cycles – we expect that there is some finite bound  $R < \infty$  such that the ends in  $\widehat{X} \setminus X$  are ‘limits’ of cuts  $\mathcal{H}_{\text{diam}(\partial) \leq R}(X) \subseteq \mathcal{H}_{\partial < \infty}(X)$  with boundary diameter bounded by  $R$ . We show that this is indeed the case, in the sense that  $\mathcal{H}_{\text{diam}(\partial) \leq R}(X)$  is dense towards ends of  $(X, G)$ .

**Lemma 1.4.** *Let  $f : (X, G) \rightarrow (Y, T)$  be a coarse-equivalence between connected graphs. For a fixed  $H \in \mathcal{H}_{\partial < \infty}(Y)$ ,  $\text{diam}(\partial_v f^{-1}(H))$  is uniformly bounded in terms of  $\text{diam}(\partial_v H)$ .*

*Proof.* Since  $f$  is bornologous, let  $S < \infty$  be such that  $xGx'$  implies  $d(f(x), f(x')) \leq S$ , so that for any  $(x, x') \in \partial_{ie} f^{-1}(H)$ , there is a path of length  $\leq S$  between  $f(x) \notin H$  and  $f(x') \in H$ . Thus both  $d(f(x), \partial_v H)$  and  $d(f(x'), \partial_v H)$  are bounded by  $S$ , so  $f(\partial_v f^{-1}(H)) \subseteq \text{Ball}_S(\partial_v H)$  and hence

$$\text{diam}(f(\partial_v f^{-1}(H))) \leq \text{diam}(\partial_v H) + 2S.$$

That  $f$  is a coarse-equivalence gives us a uniform bound of  $\text{diam}(\partial_v f^{-1}(H))$  in terms of  $\text{diam}(\partial_v H)$ . ■

In particular, if  $\text{diam}(\partial_v H)$  is itself also uniformly bounded, then so is  $\text{diam}(\partial_v f^{-1}(H))$ .

**Proposition 1.5.** *The class of connected locally-finite graphs in which  $\mathcal{H}_{\text{diam}(\partial) \leq R}$  is dense towards ends for some  $R < \infty$  is invariant under coarse equivalence.*

*Proof.* Let  $(X, G), (Y, T)$  be connected locally-finite graphs,  $f : X \rightarrow Y$  be a coarse equivalence with quasi-inverse  $g : Y \rightarrow X$ , and suppose  $\mathcal{H}_{\text{diam}(\partial) \leq S}(Y)$  is dense towards ends for some  $S < \infty$ . By Lemma 1.4, pick some  $R < \infty$  so that for any  $H \in \mathcal{H}_{\text{diam}(\partial) \leq S}(Y)$ , we have  $f^{-1}(H) \in \mathcal{H}_{\text{diam}(\partial) \leq R}(X)$ .

Fix an end  $U \in \widehat{X} \setminus X$  with  $U \in \widehat{A}$  for some  $A \in \mathcal{H}_{\partial < \infty}(X)$ . We need to find some  $B \in \mathcal{H}_{\partial < \infty}(Y)$  such that  $\widehat{f}(U) \in \widehat{B}$  and  $f^{-1}(B) \subseteq A$ , for then  $\widehat{f}(U) \in \widehat{B}$  for some  $B \supseteq H \in \mathcal{H}_{\text{diam}(\partial) \leq S}(Y)$ , and hence we have

$$U \in \widehat{f^{-1}(H)} \subseteq \widehat{f^{-1}(B)} \subseteq \widehat{A}$$

with  $f^{-1}(H) \in \mathcal{H}_{\text{diam}(\partial) \leq R}(X)$ . For convenience, let  $D < \infty$  be the uniform distance  $d(1_X, g \circ f)$ .

To this end, note that  $\widehat{f}(U) \in \widehat{B}$  iff  $U \in \widehat{f^{-1}(B)}$ . Since  $U \in \widehat{A}$ , the latter can occur if  $|A \triangle f^{-1}(B)| < \infty$ , and so we need to find such a  $B \in \mathcal{H}_{\partial < \infty}(Y)$  with the additional property that  $f^{-1}(B) \subseteq A$ .

*Attempt 1.* Set  $B := g^{-1}(A) \in \mathcal{H}_{\partial < \infty}(Y)$ . Then  $f^{-1}(B) \subseteq \text{Ball}_D(A)$  since if  $(g \circ f)(x) \in A$ , then

$$d(x, A) \leq d(x, (g \circ f)(x)) \leq d(1_X, g \circ f) = D.$$

By local-finiteness of  $G$ , we see that  $A \triangle f^{-1}(B) = A \setminus f^{-1}(B)$  is finite, as desired.

However, it is *not* the case that  $f^{-1}(B) \subseteq A$ . To remedy this, we ‘shrink’  $A$  by  $D$  to  $A'$  so that  $\text{Ball}_D(A') \subseteq A$ , and take  $B := g^{-1}(A')$  instead. Indeed,  $A' := \neg \text{Ball}_D(\neg A) \subseteq A$  works, since  $f^{-1}(B) \subseteq \text{Ball}_D(A')$  as before, so  $A' \triangle f^{-1}(B) = A' \setminus f^{-1}(B)$  is finite. Also,  $A \triangle A'$  is finite since  $x \in A \triangle A'$  iff  $x \in A$  and  $d(x, \neg A) \leq D$ , so  $A \triangle f^{-1}(B)$  is finite too. It remains to show that  $\text{Ball}_D(A') \subseteq A$ , for then  $f^{-1}(B) \subseteq A$  as desired.

Indeed, if  $y \in \text{Ball}_D(A')$ , then by the (reverse) triangle-inequality we have  $d(y, \neg A) \geq d(x, \neg A) - d(x, y)$  for all  $x \in A'$ . But  $d(x, \neg A) > D$ , strictly, so  $d(y, \neg A) > D - D = 0$ , and hence  $y \in A$ . ■

**Corollary 1.6.** *If  $(X, G)$  is a locally-finite quasi-tree, then  $\mathcal{H}_{\text{diam}(\partial) \leq R}(X)$  is dense towards ends for some  $R < \infty$ .*

*Proof.* Observe that  $\mathcal{H}_{\text{diam}(\partial) \leq 2}(T)$  is dense towards ends for any tree  $T$ , and invoke Proposition 1.5. ■

## 2. POCSETS OF DENSE FAMILIES OF CUTS

**2.1. Pocsets of cuts.** The family  $\mathcal{H}_{\text{diam} \partial \leq R}(X)$  of cuts have the structure of a ‘profinite pocset’, which we first study abstractly. We then deduce some properties of the pocset induced by a *dense* family of cuts.

**Definition 2.1.** A *pocset*  $(\mathcal{H}, \leq, \neg, 0)$  is a poset  $(\mathcal{H}, \leq)$  equipped with an order-reversing involution  $\neg : \mathcal{H} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}$  and a least element  $0 \neq \neg 0$  such that  $0$  is the only lower-bound of  $H, \neg H$  for every  $H \in \mathcal{H}$ . We call the elements in  $\mathcal{H}$  *half-spaces*.

A *profinite pocset* is a pocset  $\mathcal{H}$  equipped with a compact topology making  $\neg$  continuous and is *totally order-disconnected*, in the sense that if  $H \not\leq K$ , then there is a clopen upward-closed  $U \subseteq \mathcal{H}$  with  $H \in U \not\leq K$ .

**Remark 2.2.** Such a topology is automatically Hausdorff and zero-dimensional.

We are primarily interested in subpocsets of  $(2^X, \subseteq, \neg, \emptyset)$ , which is profinite if equipped with the product topology of the discrete space  $2$ . Indeed,  $2^X$  admits a base of *cylinder sets* – which are finite intersections of sets of the form  $\pi_x^{-1}(i)$  where  $x \in X, i \in \{0, 1\}$ , and  $\pi_x : 2^X \rightarrow 2$  is the projection – making  $\neg$  continuous since cylinders are clopen. **Show that it is totally order-disconnected.**

The following proposition gives a sufficient criteria for subpocsets of  $2^X$  to be profinite. We also show in this case that every non-trivial element  $H \in \mathcal{H}^*$  is isolated, which will important in Section 3.1.

**Proposition 2.3.** *Let  $X$  be a set and  $\mathcal{H} \subseteq 2^X$  be a subpocset. If  $\mathcal{H}$  is finitely-separating, then  $\mathcal{H} \subseteq 2^X$  is closed and every non-trivial element is isolated.*

*Proof.* It suffices to show that the limit points of  $\mathcal{H}$  are trivial, so let  $A \in 2^X \setminus \{\emptyset, X\}$ . Fix  $x \in A \not\leq y$ . Since  $\mathcal{H}$  is finitely-separating, there are finitely-many  $H \in \mathcal{H}$  with  $x \in H \not\leq y$ , and for each such  $H \in \mathcal{H} \setminus \{A\}$ , we have either some  $x_H \in A \setminus H$  or  $y_H \in H \setminus A$ . Let  $U \subseteq 2^X$  be the family of all subsets  $B \subseteq X$  containing  $x$  and each  $x_H$  but not  $y$  or any  $y_H$ .

This is the desired neighborhood isolating  $A \in U$ . Indeed, it is (cl)open since it is the *finite* intersection of cylinders prescribed by the  $x_H$ ’s and  $y_H$ ’s, and it is disjoint from  $\mathcal{H} \setminus \{A\}$  by construction. ■

**Example 2.4.** For a connected graph<sup>2</sup>  $(X, G)$ , a subpocset  $\mathcal{H} \subseteq 2^X$  is finitely-separating if each  $x \in X$  is on the boundary of finitely-many half-spaces. Indeed, any  $H \in \mathcal{H}$  separating  $x, y \in X$  separates some edge on any fixed path between  $x$  and  $y$ , and there are only finitely-many such  $H$  for each edge.

In particular, the subpocset  $\mathcal{H}_{\text{diam}(\partial) \leq R}(X)$  for any fixed  $R < \infty$  (see Section 1.2) is finitely-separating.

**2.2. Finiteness conditions on  $\mathcal{H}$  induced by dense cuts.** Let  $(X, G)$  be a connected locally-finite graph and consider a family  $\mathcal{H} \subseteq \mathcal{H}_{\partial < \infty}$  of cuts that are dense towards ends of  $G$ . **TODO**

## 3. THE DUAL MEDIAN GRAPH WITH FINITE HYPERPLANES

**3.1. The dual median graph of a pocset.** Let  $\mathcal{H}$  be a profinite subpocset with every non-trivial element isolated; for instance, if  $\mathcal{H}$  is finitely-separating, and in particular the cuts  $\mathcal{H}_{\text{diam}(\partial) \leq R}(X)$  for some locally-finite connected graph  $(X, G)$ . We present a classical construction in geometric group theory (see [Dun79], [Rol98], [Sag95], and [NR03] for applications) of a ‘tree-like’ graph associated to such a pocset.

**Definition 3.1.** An *orientation* on  $\mathcal{H}$  is an upward-closed subset  $U \subseteq \mathcal{H}$  containing exactly one of  $H, \neg H$  for each  $H \in \mathcal{H}$ . We let  $\mathcal{U}(\mathcal{H})$  denote the set of all orientations on  $\mathcal{H}$  and let  $\mathcal{U}^\circ(\mathcal{H})$  denote the clopen ones.

<sup>2</sup>If  $(X, G)$  is locally-finite, then this condition is necessary, since then each  $x \in X$  is separated from each of its finitely-many neighbors by finitely-many  $H \in \mathcal{H}$ .

Intuitively, an orientation is a ‘maximally consistent’ choice of half-spaces<sup>3</sup>.

**Example 3.2.** Each  $x \in X$  induces its *principal orientation*  $\hat{x} := \{H \in \mathcal{H} : x \in H\} = \mathcal{H} \cap \pi_x^{-1}(1)$  – which is clearly clopen in  $\mathcal{H}$  – and gives us a canonical map  $X \rightarrow \mathcal{U}^\circ(\mathcal{H})$ . However, this map is *not necessarily* injective, and we call a fiber  $[x]_{\mathcal{H}} := \{y \in X : \hat{x} = \hat{y}\}$  thereof an  $\mathcal{H}$ -*block*.

The goal of this section is to canonically construct a graph whose vertices are clopen orientations on  $\mathcal{H}$ .

**Definition 3.3.** A *median graph* is a connected graph  $(X, G)$  such that for any  $x, y, z \in X$ , the intersection

$$[x, y] \cap [y, z] \cap [x, z]$$

is a singleton, whose element  $\langle x, y, z \rangle$  is called the *median* of  $x, y, z$ . Thus we have a ternary median operation  $\langle \cdot, \cdot, \cdot \rangle : X^3 \rightarrow X$ , and a *median homomorphism*  $f : (X, G) \rightarrow (Y, H)$  is a map preserving said operation.

Some basic properties of median graphs are given in Section 4.1. For more comprehensive references and their general theory, see [Rol98] and [Bow22].

**Proposition 3.4.** Let  $\mathcal{H}$  be a profinite pocset with every non-trivial element isolated. Then the graph  $\mathcal{M}(\mathcal{H})$ , whose vertices are clopen orientations  $\mathcal{U}^\circ(\mathcal{H})$  and whose edges are pairs  $\{U, V\}$  with  $V = U \triangle \{H, \neg H\}$  for some  $\subseteq$ -minimal  $H \in \mathcal{H}^*$ , is a median graph with path metric  $d(U, V) = |U \triangle V|/2$  and medians

$$\begin{aligned} \langle U, V, W \rangle &:= \{H \in \mathcal{H} : H \text{ belongs to at least two of } U, V, W\} \\ &= (U \cap V) \cup (V \cap W) \cup (U \cap W). \end{aligned}$$

*Proof.* First,  $V := U \triangle \{H, \neg H\}$  as above is clopen since  $H, \neg H \in \mathcal{H}^*$  are isolated (whence  $\{H\}, \{\neg H\}$  are clopen), and it is an orientation by  $\subseteq$ -minimality of  $H$ . That  $\mathcal{M}(\mathcal{H})$  is connected follows from the following claim by noting that  $U \triangle V \not\equiv \emptyset, X$  is clopen, so it is a compact set of isolated points, whence finite.

**Claim.** There is a path between  $U, V$  iff  $U \triangle V$  is finite, in which case  $d(U, V) = |U \triangle V|/2$ .

*Proof.* If  $(U_i)_{i < n}$  is a path from  $U := U_0$  to  $V := U_{n-1}$ , then, letting  $\{H_i, \neg H_i\} := U_i \triangle U_{i-1}$  for all  $1 \leq i < n$  gives us a sequence  $(H_i)_{i < n}$  inducing<sup>a</sup> this path, whence  $U \triangle V$  consists of  $\{H_i\}_{i < n}$  and their complements. Thus  $U \triangle V = 2n = 2d(U, V)$ , as desired.

Conversely, if  $U \triangle V = \{H_1, \dots, H_n\} \sqcup \{K_1, \dots, K_m\}$  with  $U \setminus V = \{H_i\}$  and  $V \setminus U = \{K_j\}$ , then  $\neg H_i \in V \setminus U$  and  $\neg K_j \in U \setminus V$  for all  $i < n$  and  $j < m$ , so  $n = m$  and  $V = U \cup \{\neg H_i\} \setminus \{H_i\}$ . We claim that there is a permutation  $\sigma \in S_n$  such that  $(H_{\sigma(i)})$  induces a path from  $U := U_0$ , which is the desired path from  $U$  to  $V$ . Choose a minimal  $H \in \{H_i\}$ , which is also minimal in  $U$ : if  $K \subseteq H$  for some  $K \in U$ , then  $\neg H \subseteq \neg K$ , and hence  $\neg K \in V$ , so  $K = H_i \subseteq H$  for some  $i$ , forcing  $K = H$ . Set  $U_1 := U \triangle \{H, \neg H\}$ , which is a clopen orientation. Continuing in this manner by choosing a minimal element in  $\{H_i\} \setminus \{H\}$  – and so on – gives us the desired path with  $d(U, V) = n$ .  $\square$

<sup>a</sup>In the sense that  $U_i = U_{i-1} \triangle \{H_i, \neg H_i\}$  and  $H_i \in U_i$  for each  $1 \leq i < n$ ; see [Tse20, Definition 2.20].

Finally, we show that  $\mathcal{M}(\mathcal{H})$  is a median graph. Fix  $U, V, W \in \mathcal{U}^\circ(\mathcal{H})$ , and note that for any  $M \in \mathcal{U}^\circ(\mathcal{H})$ , we have by the triangle inequality that  $M \in [U, V]$  iff  $(U \setminus M) \cup (M \setminus V) \subseteq U \setminus V$ , which clearly occurs iff  $U \cap V \subseteq M \subseteq U \cup V$ . Thus, a vertex  $M$  lies in the triple intersection  $[U, V] \cap [V, W] \cap [U, W]$  iff

$$(U \cap V) \cup (V \cap W) \cup (U \cap W) \subseteq M \subseteq (U \cup V) \cap (V \cup W) \cap (U \cup W).$$

Note that the two sides coincide, so  $M = \langle U, V, W \rangle$  – which is clopen if  $U, V, W$  are – is as claimed.  $\blacksquare$

Given such a pocset  $\mathcal{H}$ , the graph  $\mathcal{M}(\mathcal{H})$  constructed above is called the *dual*<sup>4</sup> median graph of  $\mathcal{H}$ . It is worth noting that if  $\mathcal{H}$  is *nested*, then  $\mathcal{M}(\mathcal{H})$  is in fact a tree (see Appendix A):

**Definition 3.5.** Let  $\mathcal{H} \subseteq 2^X$  be a pocset. Two half-spaces  $H, K \in \mathcal{H}$  are *nested* if  $\neg^i H \cap \neg^j K = \emptyset$  for some  $i, j \in \{0, 1\}$ , where  $\neg^0 H := H$  and  $\neg^1 H := \neg H$ . We say that  $\mathcal{H}$  is *nested* if every pair  $H, K \in \mathcal{H}$  is nested.

<sup>3</sup>This can be formalized by letting  $\sim$  be the equivalence relation on  $\mathcal{H}$  given by  $H \sim \neg H$ . Letting  $\partial : \mathcal{H} \rightarrow \mathcal{H}/\sim$  denote the quotient map, orientations  $U \subseteq \mathcal{H}$  then correspond precisely to sections  $\varphi : \mathcal{H}/\sim \rightarrow \mathcal{H}$  of  $\partial$  such that  $\varphi(\partial H) \not\subseteq \neg\varphi(\partial K)$  for every  $H, K \in \mathcal{H}$ ; the latter condition rules out ‘orientations’ of the form  $\leftarrow \vdash$ .

<sup>4</sup>The name is justified by a Stone-type duality between median graphs with median homomorphisms and profinite pocsets whose non-trivial points are isolated with continuous maps, where from a median graph one can construct a canonical pocset of ‘convex’ half-spaces (see [CPTT23, Section 2.D] for details).

Nonetheless, in the general non-nested case, there is a sufficient criteria for the existence of a *canonical* spanning tree of  $\mathcal{M}(\mathcal{H})$ , which we now explore.

### 3.2. Finiteness conditions on $\mathcal{M}(\mathcal{H})$ induced by ???

## 4. MEDIAN GRAPHS AND THEIR CANONICAL SPANNING TREES

**4.1. Convex half-spaces of median graphs.** Let  $(X, G)$  be a median graph. The presence of the median operation gives rise to a canonical finitely-separating pocset of *convex* (and co-convex) half-spaces  $\mathcal{H}_{\text{cvx}}(X) \subseteq 2^X$  with a very rigid structure, which we now explore.

To do so, we need to first understand the geometry of *projections*, which we summarize in the following

**Proposition 4.1.** *For any  $A \in 2^X \setminus \{\emptyset, X\}$  and  $x \in X$ , there is a unique point in  $\text{cvx}(A)$  between  $x$  and every point in  $A$ , called the projection of  $x$  towards  $A$ , denoted  $\text{proj}_A(x)$ , that furthermore defines a median homomorphism  $\text{proj}_A : X \rightarrow \text{cvx}(A)$  with  $\text{proj}_A \text{cvx}(B) = \text{cvx} \text{proj}_A(B)$  for all  $B \subseteq X$ .*

Since we only regard this as a technical tool, we defer its proof to Appendix B. It is only used in the sequel, which characterizes the convex half-spaces in a median graph. For each  $x, y \in X$ , the *cone* of  $y$  away from  $x$  is the set  $\text{cone}_x(y) := \{z \in X : y \in [x, z]\}$ , consisting of all  $z \in X$  closer to  $y$  than to  $x$ .

**Lemma 4.2** (Lemma B.1). *For each  $x, y \in X$ ,  $\text{cone}_x(y)$  is convex, and if  $xGy$ , then  $\text{cone}_x(y) \sqcup \text{cone}_y(x) = X$ .*

**Proposition 4.3.** *Each edge  $(x, y) \in G$  is on a unique hyperplane, namely the inward boundary of  $\text{cone}_x(y)$ , and conversely, each half-space  $H \in \mathcal{H}_{\text{cvx}}^*(X)$  is  $\text{cone}_x(y)$  for every  $(x, y) \in \partial_{\text{ie}}H$ .*

*Thus, hyperplanes are equivalence classes of edges. Furthermore, this equivalence relation is generated by parallel sides of squares (i.e., 4-cycles).*

*Proof.* We have  $\text{cone}_x(y) \in \mathcal{H}_{\text{cvx}}^*(X)$  by the above lemma, and clearly  $(x, y) \in \partial_{\text{ie}} \text{cone}_x(y)$ . Conversely, take  $H \in \mathcal{H}_{\text{cvx}}^*(X)$  and any  $(x, y) \in \partial_{\text{ie}}H$ . Then  $H = \text{cone}_x(y)$ , for if  $z \in H \cap \neg \text{cone}_x(y)$ , then  $z \in \text{cone}_y(x)$ , and hence  $x \in [y, z] \subseteq H$  by convexity of  $H$ , a contradiction; if  $z \in \text{cone}_x(y) \cap \neg H$ , then  $[x, z] \subseteq \neg H$  by convexity of  $\neg H$ , and hence  $y \notin H$ , a contradiction.

Finally, parallel edges of a strip of squares generate the same hyperplane since, for a given square, each vertex is between its neighbors and hence any hyperplane containing an edge contains its opposite edge. On the other hand, let  $(a, b), (c, d) \in \partial_{\text{ie}}H$  for some  $H \in \mathcal{H}_{\text{cvx}}^*(X)$ . Note that  $\partial_{\text{ov}}H = \text{proj}_{\neg H}(H)$  is convex since  $H$  is, and  $\text{proj}_{\neg H}$  preserves convex sets by Proposition 4.1, so any geodesic between  $a, c \in \partial_{\text{ov}}H$  lies in  $\partial_{\text{ov}}H$ . Matching this geodesic via  $\partial_{\text{ie}}H : \partial_{\text{ov}}H \rightarrow \partial_{\text{iv}}H$  gives us a geodesic between  $b, d$  in  $\partial_{\text{iv}}H$ , which together with the matching forms the desired strip of squares. ■

**Corollary 4.4.** *Two half-spaces  $H, K \in \mathcal{H}_{\text{cvx}}^*(X)$  are non-nested iff there is an embedding  $\{0, 1\}^2 \hookrightarrow X$  of the Hamming cube into the four corners  $\neg^i H \cap \neg^j K$ .*

*In particular, if  $H, K \in \mathcal{H}_{\text{cvx}}^*(X)$  are non-nested, then  $\partial_{\text{v}}H \cap \partial_{\text{v}}K \neq \emptyset$ .*

*Proof.* Let  $H, K$  be non-nested and take  $x_1 \in H \cap K$  and  $x_2 \in H \cap \neg K$ . Since  $H$  is connected, any geodesic between  $x_1, x_2$  crosses an edge  $(x'_1, x'_2) \in \partial_{\text{oe}}K$  in  $H$ . Similarly, there is an edge  $(y'_1, y'_2) \in \partial_{\text{oe}}K$  in  $\neg H$ , so we may slide both edges along  $\partial_{\text{oe}}K$  to obtain the desired square (see Proposition 4.3).

Conversely, the half-spaces cutting the square are clearly non-nested. ■

**Proposition 4.5.** *Let  $\mathcal{H} \subseteq \mathcal{H}_{\text{cvx}}(X)$  be a subpocset of convex half-spaces. Then:*

- (1)  $\mathcal{H}$  is finitely-separating, and hence  $\mathcal{M}(\mathcal{H})$  is a median graph by Propositions 2.3 and 3.4.
- (2) The principal orientations map  $X \rightarrow \mathcal{U}^\circ(\mathcal{H}) : x \mapsto \hat{x}$  is surjective, and hence induces a median graph structure on the set of  $\mathcal{H}$ -blocks  $X/\mathcal{H}$ .

Explicitly,  $([x]_{\mathcal{H}}, [y]_{\mathcal{H}})$  is an edge in  $X/\mathcal{H}$  iff  $(\hat{x}, \hat{y}) \in \mathcal{M}(\mathcal{H})$ , which occurs iff

*Proof.* That  $\mathcal{H}$  is finitely-separating follows from Example 2.4 and Proposition 4.3. ■



## 4.2. Canonical spanning trees.

**Proposition 4.6.** *Every countable median graph with finite hyperplanes admits a canonical spanning tree.*

*Proof.* Let  $(X, G)$  be a countable median graph with finite hyperplanes. By Corollary 4.4, if two half-spaces  $H, K \in \mathcal{H}_{\text{cvx}}^*(X)$  are non-nested, then  $\partial_v H \cap \partial_v K \neq \emptyset$ , so looking at the intersection graph of the boundaries furnishes a countable colouring  $\mathcal{H}_{\text{cvx}}^*(X) = \bigsqcup_{n \in \mathbb{N}} \mathcal{H}_n^*$  such that each  $H, \neg H$  receive the same color and that each  $\mathcal{H}_n := \mathcal{H}_n^* \cup \{\emptyset, X\}$  is a *nested* subpocset. For each  $n \in \mathbb{N}$ , let  $\mathcal{K}_n := \bigcup_{m \geq n} \mathcal{H}_m$ .

We shall inductively construct an increasing chain of subforests  $T_n \subseteq G$  such that the components of  $T_n$  are exactly the  $\mathcal{K}_n$ -blocks. Then, the increasing union  $T := \bigcup_n T_n$  is a spanning tree, since each  $(x, y) \in G$  lies in a  $\mathcal{K}_n$ -block for sufficiently large  $n$  (namely, the  $n$  such that  $\text{cone}_x(y) \in \mathcal{H}_{n-1}^*$ , since  $\text{cone}_x(y)$  and its complement are the only half-spaces separating  $x$  and  $y$  by Proposition 4.3).

Since each pair of distinct points is separated by a half-space, the  $\mathcal{K}_0 = \mathcal{H}_{\text{cvx}}(X)$ -blocks are singletons, so put  $T_0 := \emptyset$ . Suppose that a forest  $T_n$  is constructed as required. Note that each  $\mathcal{K}_{n+1}$ -block  $Y \in X/\mathcal{K}_{n+1}$  is not separated by any half-spaces in  $\mathcal{H}_m$  for  $m > n$ , but is separated (by Proposition 4.3) by  $\mathcal{H}_n$  into the  $\mathcal{K}_n$ -blocks contained in  $Y$ , and those correspond precisely to the  $\mathcal{H}_n$ -blocks in  $Y/\mathcal{H}_n$ . For each  $G$ -adjacent pair  $A, B \in Y/\mathcal{H}_n$ , which is separated by a unique half-space in  $H \in \mathcal{H}_n$ , we may pick an edge from the *finite* hyperplane  $\partial_{\text{ie}} H$ . Since each  $Y/\mathcal{H}_n$  is a tree by Corollary A.3, and a single edge is picked between every pair of  $G$ -adjacent blocks therein, the graph  $T_{n+1}$  obtained from  $T_n$  by adding all such edges is a forest whose components are exactly the  $\mathcal{K}_{n+1}$ -blocks. ■

**Corollary 4.7.** *If a CBER admits a graphing whose components are median graphs, then it has a subtreeing.*

### A. TREE OF ORIENTATIONS ON A NESTED POCSET OF SETS

Let  $X$  be a set and let  $\mathcal{H} \subseteq 2^X$  be a profinite pocset with non-trivial elements isolated (see Definition 2.1); say, if  $\mathcal{H}$  is finitely-separating. By Proposition 3.4, the clopen orientations  $\mathcal{U}^\circ(\mathcal{H})$  form the vertices of a median graph  $\mathcal{M}(\mathcal{H})$ , whose edges are given by ‘minimal half-space flippings’.

We show in this appendix that if  $\mathcal{H}$  is also *nested* (see Definition 3.5), then  $\mathcal{M}(\mathcal{H})$  is in fact a tree, and so we may bypass the Borel cycle-cutting algorithm in Section 4 (hence Section 3.2 too) and obtain a treeing directly. This result is motivated by a similar construction in [Tse20], and is proved with similar methods.

**Lemma A.1.** *A path in  $\mathcal{M}(\mathcal{H})$  from  $U_0$  induced by  $(H_i)_{i < n}$ ,  $n \geq 3$ , has no backtracking iff  $H_i \neq \neg H_{i-1}$  for every  $1 \leq i < n$ .*

*Proof.* Take  $2 \leq i \leq n$ . It suffices to show that  $U_{i-2} = U_i$  iff  $H_{i-1} = \neg H_{i-2}$ .

( $\Rightarrow$ ). We have by definition that  $U_i = U_{i-2} \cup \{\neg H_{i-1}, \neg H_{i-2}\} \setminus \{H_{i-1}, H_{i-2}\}$ , so since  $H_{i-2} \in U_{i-2} = U_i$ , we have  $H_{i-2} = \neg H_{i-1}$  as desired.

( $\Leftarrow$ ). Again by definition, by noting that the half-space flippings cancel out. ■

**Proposition A.2.** *If  $(H_i)_{i < n}$  induces a path in  $\mathcal{M}(\mathcal{H})$  with no backtracking, then  $(H_i)$  is strictly increasing.*

*Proof.* By Lemma A.1, we have  $H_i \neq \neg H_{i-1}$  for every  $1 \leq i < n$ . Thus, since  $H_i \in U_i = U_{i-1} \cup \{\neg H_{i-1}\} \setminus \{H_{i-1}\}$ , we see that  $H_i \in U_{i-1}$ . Clearly  $H_i \neq H_{i-1}$ . It suffices to remove the three cases when  $H_i \subseteq H_{i-1}$ ,  $H_{i-1} \subseteq \neg H_i$ , and  $\neg H_i \subseteq H_{i-1}$ , since then nestedness of  $\mathcal{H}$  gives us  $H_{i-1} \subsetneq H_i$ , as desired.

- If  $H_i \subseteq H_{i-1}$ , then  $H_{i-1} \in U_i$ , contradicting the definition of  $U_i$ .
- If  $H_{i-1} \subseteq \neg H_i$ , then  $\neg H_i \in U_{i-1}$  by upward-closure of  $U_{i-1}$ , a contradiction.
- If  $\neg H_i \subseteq H_{i-1}$ , then  $H_{i-1} \in U_{i+1}$  by upward-closure of  $U_{i+1} \ni \neg H_i$ . But since  $H_{i-1} \neq \neg H_i$ , we have by definition of  $U_{i+1}$  that  $H_{i-1} \in U_i$ , a contradiction. ■

**Corollary A.3.** *If  $\mathcal{H}$  is a nested profinite pocset with non-trivial elements isolated, then  $\mathcal{M}(\mathcal{H})$  is a tree.*

### B. GEOMETRY OF PROJECTIONS IN MEDIAN GRAPHS

**Lemma B.1.**

*Proof of Proposition 4.1.* ■

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