Square roots of minor closed graph classes

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ABSTRACT

Let $\mathcal{G}$ be a graph class. The square root of $\mathcal{G}$ contains all graphs whose squares belong in $\mathcal{G}$. We prove that if $\mathcal{G}$ is non-trivial and minor closed, then all graphs in its square root have carving-width bounded by some constant depending only on $\mathcal{G}$. As a consequence, every square root of such a graph class has a linear time recognition algorithm.

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1. Introduction

Let $\mathcal{G}$ be a graph class. The square root of $\mathcal{G}$ is defined as the graph class

$$
\sqrt{\mathcal{G}} = \{ G \mid G^2 \in \mathcal{G} \},
$$

where the square $G^2$ of a graph $G$ is the graph obtained from $G$ after adding edges between all pairs of vertices that share a common neighbor.

In [3], Harary, Karp, and Tutte provided a complete characterization of the graphs in $\sqrt{\mathcal{P}}$ where $\mathcal{P}$ is the class of all planar graphs. Notice that planar graphs are minor closed, i.e. a minor of every graph in $\mathcal{P}$ also belongs in $\mathcal{P}$. Minor closeness is a very general property that is satisfied by a great variety of graph classes; see e.g. [6].

According to the characterization of [3], all graphs in $\sqrt{\mathcal{P}}$ are outerplanar and have bounded degree. This implies that graphs in $\sqrt{\mathcal{P}}$ have a very specific "tree-like" structure and it is a natural question whether this is the case for more general minor closed graph classes. In this paper we extend this result, in the sense that the same tree-like property holds for every minor closed graph class that is non-trivial (i.e. that does not contain all graphs). In fact, we prove (in Section 3) that, in this case, the correct "tree-likeness" property is given by the parameter of carving-width, introduced by Seymour and Thomas in [11]. As a consequence, we prove in Section 4 that the square root of any non-trivial minor closed graph class has a linear time recognition algorithm. This extends the algorithmic results of [5] where a linear time algorithm was given for recognizing the square roots of planar graphs.

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2. Definitions

We next give some definitions that are necessary in order to formally define carving width. This will permit us to give the formal statement of our combinatorial result.

**Boundaries in graphs and hypergraphs.** In this paper we deal with graphs and hypergraphs. For a (hyper)graph $G$ we denote by $V(G)$ its vertex set and by $E(G)$ the set of its (hyper)edges. If $S \subseteq V(G)$ (resp. $F \subseteq E(G)$) we denote $G \setminus S = V(G) \setminus S$ (resp. $G \setminus F = E(G) \setminus F$).

Given a vertex set $S \subseteq V(G)$, let $E_C(S)$ be the set of hyperedges containing vertices in $S$. For simplicity we also denote $E_C(v) = E_C(\{v\})$. We also define $\Delta(G) = \max\{|E_C(v)| \mid v \in V(G)\}$. Given a set $S \subseteq V(G)$, we define

$$\partial_C(S) = E_C(S) \cap E_C(\overline{S}).$$

Notice that $\partial_C$ is a symmetric function, i.e. for every $S \subseteq V(G)$, it holds that $\partial_C(S) = \partial_C(\overline{S})$. Also given a set $F \subseteq E(G)$, we set

$$\partial_C^*(F) = \left( \bigcup_{e \in F} e \right) \cap \left( \bigcup_{e \in F} \overline{e} \right).$$

Given a hypergraph $G$ we define its **dual** as the hypergraph

$$G^* = (E(G), \{E_C(v) \mid v \in V(G)\}).$$

Notice that the hypergraphs $G$ and $G^*$ have the same incidence graph with the roles of their two parts reversed. Given a set $S \subseteq V(G)$ (resp. $F \subseteq E(G)$) we denote by $S^*$ (resp. $F^*$) their dual hyperedges (resp. vertices) in $G^*$.

Using duality, we also define $\Delta^*(G) = \Delta(G^*)$. Clearly, for a simple graph $G$, $\Delta^*(G) = 2$. Moreover, the above definitions imply that for every $F \subseteq E(G)$, $(\partial_C^*(F))^* = \partial_C(F^*)$.

A graph $H$ is a **minor** of a graph $G$, and we write $H \preceq G$, if $H$ can be obtained for some subgraph of $G$ after contracting edges (the contracting an edge $e = \{x, y\}$ is the operation that removes $x$ and $y$ from $G$ and introduces a new vertex $v_e$ that is made adjacent with all the neighbors of $x$ and $y$ in $G$, except from $x$ and $y$). A graph class $\mathcal{G}$ is **minor closed** if every minor of a graph in $\mathcal{G}$ is also a graph in $\mathcal{G}$.

**Carving-width.** Given a tree $T$ we denote the set of its leaves by $L(T)$ and we call it ternary if all vertices in $V(T) \setminus L(T)$ have degree 3. A **carving decomposition** of a hypergraph $G$ is a pair $(T, \rho)$, where $T$ is a ternary tree and $\rho$ is a bijection from $V(G)$ to $L(T)$. The **bridge function** $\beta : E(T) \to 2^{E(G)}$ of a carving decomposition maps every edge $e$ of $T$ to the set $\partial_C(\rho^{-1}(L(T)))$ where $T'$ is one of the two connected components of $T \setminus e$. The **width of** $(T, \rho)$ is equal to $\max_{e \in E(T)} |\beta(e)|$ and the **carving-width** of $G$, $\text{cw}(G)$, is the minimum width over all carving decompositions of $G$. The following observation is a direct consequence of the definitions.

**Observation 1.** For every hypergraph $G$, it holds that $\Delta(G) \leq \text{cw}(G)$.

The main combinatorial result of this paper is the following.

**Theorem 1.** For every non-trivial minor closed graph class $\mathcal{G}$ there is a constant $c_\mathcal{G}$ such that all graphs in $\sqrt{\mathcal{G}}$ have carving-width at most $c_\mathcal{G}$.

The proof of Theorem 1 uses the parameter of branch-width defined in [8].

**Branch-width.** A **branch decomposition** of a graph $G$ is a pair $(T, \tau)$, where $T$ is a ternary tree and $\tau$ is a bijection from $E(G)$ to $L(T)$. The **boundary function** $\omega : E(T) \to 2^{E(G)}$ of a branch decomposition maps every edge $e$ of $T$ to the set $\partial_C(\tau^{-1}(L(T)))$ where $T'$ is one of the two connected components of $T \setminus e$. The **width of** $(T, \tau)$ is equal to $\max_{e \in E(T)} |\omega(e)|$ and the **branch-width** of $G$, $\text{bw}(G)$, is the minimum width over all branch decompositions of $G$.

The following observation is a direct consequence of the duality between the functions $\partial_C$ and $\partial_C^*$.

**Observation 2.** For every hypergraph $G$ it holds that $\text{bw}(G) = \text{cw}(G^*)$.

3. Walls and squares

**Walls.** A **wall of height** $k$, $k \geq 1$, is obtained from a $(k+1) \times (2k+2)$-grid with vertices $(x, y)$, $x \in \{0, \ldots, 2k+1\}$, $y \in \{0, \ldots, k\}$, after removing the “vertical” edges $(x, y)$, $(x, y+1)$ for odd $x+y$. We denote such a wall by $W_k$. A **subdivided wall of height** $k$ is obtained by the wall $W_k$ with some edges of $W_k$ replaced by paths without common internal vertices. If, in such a subdivided wall, all edges have been subdivided at least once, then we say that it is **properly subdivided**. We also say that a graph $H$ is a **topological minor** of a graph $G$ if some subdivision of $H$ is a subgraph of $G$.

The following result follows from the results in [7,8].

**Proposition 1** ([7,8]). There is a function $g : \mathbb{N} \to \mathbb{N}$ such that every graph $G$ with branchwidth at least $g(k)$ contains the $(k \times k)$-grid as a minor.
Let $f$ be a function such that every graph $G$ with branchwidth at least $f$ contains a properly subdivided wall of height $k$ as a subgraph.

**Proof.** Let $W'_k$ be the graph obtained from a $k$-wall if we subdivide each edge once. Notice that $W'_k$ is a subgraph of the $((4k + 3) \times (4k + 3))$-grid. The lemma follows from Proposition 1 and the fact that minor relation and topological minor relation are identical when the host graph has maximum degree 3 (notice that $\Delta(W'_k) \leq 3$).

Let $H$ be a $((k + 1) \times (2k + 2))$-grid where $k$ is a positive odd integer. Let also $W_k$ be a spanning subgraph that is a $k$-wall as explained above. Let also $G$ be a subdivision of $W_k$ where the non-subdividing vertices are denoted as coordinates of $H$ (we call these vertices original). In particular, we denote the vertex of $H$ with coordinates $i, j$ by $a_{i, j}^d$ (see Fig. 1). For $i \in \{0, \ldots, k - 1\}$ and $j \in \{0, \ldots, 2k + 1\}$ where $i + j$ is even, we denote by $P_{i, j}^{(v)}$ the path that has replaced the edge $(a_{i, j}^d, a_{i + 1, j}^d)$ in $W_k$ and we call these paths vertical. For $i \in \{0, \ldots, k\}$ and $j \in \{0, \ldots, 2k\}$, we denote by $P_{i, j}^{(h)}$ the path that has replaced the edge $(a_{i, j}^d, a_{i, j + 1}^d)$ and we call these paths horizontal. We denote by $L_i$, $i \in \{0, \ldots, k\}$ the path $P_{i, 0}^{(h)} \oplus \cdots \oplus P_{i, 2k}^{(h)}$, we direct it from $a_{i, 0}^d$ to $a_{i, 2k}^d$ and call it $i$-th line of $G$. We also define, for $l \in \{0, \ldots, k\}$, the $l$-th meander of $G$ as the path $M_l = P_{i, 2l}^{(v)} \oplus P_{i, 2l + 1}^{(h)} \oplus P_{i, 2l + 2}^{(v)} \oplus \cdots \oplus P_{i, 2l - 2k - 1}^{(v)} \oplus P_{i, 2l - 2k}^{(h)} \oplus P_{i, 2l - 2k - 2}^{(v)}$.

Finally, for every original vertex $a_{i, j}^d$ where $0 \leq j \leq 2k$ (1 ≤ $j$ ≤ 2k + 1), we define $\text{right}_C(a_{i, j}^d)$ (left$_C(a_{i, j}^d)$) as the vertex of the directed path $L_i$ that appears right after (before) $a_{i, j}^d$.

We denote by $K_r$ the complete graph on $r$ vertices. Also we use the notation $K_{r,q}$ for the complete bipartite graph with parts of size $r$ and $q$.

**Lemma 2.** Let $k$ be a positive odd integer. If $G$ is a properly subdivided wall of height $k$, then $K_{k+2} \leq G^2$.

**Proof.** For each $i \in \{0, \ldots, k\}$ we define the path $P_i$ of $G^2$ as follows: If $L_i = (x_0, x_1, \ldots, x_m)$ is the $i$-th horizontal path of $G$, then $L_i = (x_0, x_2, x_4, \ldots, x_{2m})$ where $m' = m$ or $m' = m - 1$ depending on whether $m$ is even or not. We set $S = \bigcup_{i \in \{0, \ldots, k\}} V(L_i)$.

Our next step is to define the paths $Q_j$ of $G^2$. Let $M_{i}$ be the $l$-th meander of $G$. Following the definition of a meander, we denote

- $P_{i,2l+1}^{(v)} = (y_{i,2l+1}^{(v)}, \ldots, y_{i,2k+1}^{(v)})$, for even $i \in \{0, \ldots, k - 1\}$ (assuming that $y_{1,2l}^{(v)} = a_{i,2l}^{2l}$ and $y_{i,2l+1}^{(v)} = a_{i,2l+1}^{2l}$),
- $P_{i,2l+1}^{(v)} = (y_{i,2l+1}^{(v)}, \ldots, y_{i,2k+1}^{(v)})$, for odd $i \in \{0, \ldots, k - 2\}$ (assuming that $y_{1,2l}^{(v)} = a_{i,2l}^{2l}$ and $y_{i,2l+1}^{(v)} = a_{i,2l+1}^{2l+1}$),
- $P_{i,2l}^{(h)} = (z_{i,2l}^{(h)}, \ldots, z_{i,2k}^{(h)})$, $i \in \{1, \ldots, k - 1\}$ (assuming that $z_{1,2l}^{(h)} = a_{i,2l}^{2l}$ and $z_{i,2k}^{(h)} = a_{i,2k}^{2k}$).

For each even $i \in \{0, \ldots, k - 1\}$, we set $P_i^{(v)} = (y_{1,2l}^{(v)}, y_{2,2l}^{(v)}, \ldots, y_{i,2l}^{(v)}, y_{i+1,2l}^{(v)})$ where

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{left}_C(y_{1,2l}^{(v)}) &= \begin{cases} y_{1,2l}^{(v)} & \text{if } y_{1,2l}^{(v)} \notin S \\
y_{1,2l}^{(v)} & \text{if } y_{1,2l}^{(v)} \in S.
\end{cases} \\
\text{right}_C(y_{i,2l}^{(v)}) &= \begin{cases} y_{i,2l}^{(v)} & \text{if } y_{i,2l}^{(v)} \notin S \\
y_{i,2l}^{(v)} & \text{if } y_{i,2l}^{(v)} \in S.
\end{cases}
\end{align*}
\]
and for each odd $i \in \{0, \ldots, k - 1\}$, we set $\tilde{y}_1^{l+1} = (\tilde{y}_1^{l+1}, \tilde{y}_2^{l+1}, \ldots, \tilde{y}_{w_1}^{l+1})$ where

$$\tilde{y}_1^{l+1} = \begin{cases} y_1^{l+1} & \text{if } y_1^{l+1} \notin S \\ \left(f (y_1^{l+1}) \right) & \text{if } y_1^{l+1} \in S \end{cases}$$

$$\tilde{y}_i^{l+1} = \begin{cases} y_i^{l+1} & \text{if } y_i^{l+1} \notin S \\ \left(f (y_i^{l+1}) \right) & \text{if } y_i^{l+1} \in S \end{cases}$$

Observe that for each $i \in \{1, \ldots, k - 1\}$ and $l \in \{0, \ldots, k\}$ the vertices in $P_{l+1} \setminus S$ induce a path in $G^2$ which we denote by $\tilde{p}_l^{(h)}$.

Notice that, for each odd $i \in \{1, \ldots, k - 2\}$ it holds that

$$V(\tilde{p}_{i-1,2l+1}^{(h)}) \cap V(\tilde{p}_{1,2l+1}^{(h)}) = \{\tilde{y}_{i+1}^{1,2l+1}\}$$

Also, for every even $i \in \{2, \ldots, k - 1\}$ it holds that

$$V(\tilde{p}_{i-1,2l+1}^{(h)}) \cap V(\tilde{p}_{1,2l+1}^{(h)}) = \{\tilde{y}_{i+1}^{1,2l+1}\}$$

From (1)–(4) we obtain that

$$\tilde{M}_l = \tilde{p}_{0,2l}^{(h)} \oplus \tilde{p}_{1,2l+1}^{(h)} \oplus \tilde{p}_{2,2l}^{(h)} \oplus \tilde{p}_{2,2l+1}^{(h)} \oplus \cdots \oplus \tilde{p}_{k-2,2l+1}^{(h)} \oplus \tilde{p}_{k-1,2l}^{(h)}$$

is a path in $G^2$ for each $l \in \{0, \ldots, k\}$.

As paths in $M = \{M_l \mid l \in \{0, \ldots, k\}\}$ avoid all vertices of $S$, we have that for each $i, l \in \{0, \ldots, k\}$ $V(\tilde{L}_l) \cap V(\tilde{M}_l) = \emptyset$. Moreover, by construction, any two paths in $M$ are vertex disjoint. Recall that the same holds for the paths in $\tilde{L} = \{L_l \mid l \in \{0, \ldots, k - 1\}\}$. We claim that for each $i, l \in \{0, \ldots, k\}$ there is an edge $e_{i,l}$ in $G^2$ with one endpoint in $\tilde{L}_l$ and the other in $\tilde{M}_l$. Indeed it is easy to see that one can take

$$e_{i,l} = \begin{cases} \{a_l, \text{ left}(a_l)\} & \text{if } (i, l) \in \{(0, k), (k, k)\} \\ \{a_l, \text{ right}(a_l)\} & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Now we are ready to prove that $G^2$ contains $K_{k+2}$ as a minor. For this, we first remove from $G^2$ all edges that are neither edges of paths in $M \cup L$ nor edges in $E = \{e_{i,l} \mid (i, l) \in \{(0, k), (k, k)\}\}$. Then we contract all edges of the remaining graph except from those in $E$ and we end up to a graph isomorphic to $K_{k+1,k+1}$ that, in turn, can be further contracted to $K_{k+2}$. □

**Extended carving-decompositions.** Let us relax the definition of a carving decomposition in the case of graphs in the following way: Let $G$ be a graph, $T$ be a ternary tree rooted on some, say $r$, of its leaves, and a surjection $\sigma : L(T) \setminus \{r\} \rightarrow V(G)$. As $T$ is rooted each edge of $T$ can be seen as a directed edge pointing towards the root. Let $f = (x, y)$ be such an edge and let $T_x$ and $T_y$ be the two connected components of $T \setminus f$ such that $r \in V(T_y)$. Let also $V_a = \sigma (L(T_x))$ and $V_b = \sigma (L(T_y))$. We define the **bridge set of $f$** as $\beta (f) = \{(a, b) \in E(G) \mid a \in V_a \land b \in V_b \}$. We call each such pair $(T, \sigma )$ an extended carving decomposition of $G$ and we define its width as the maximum $|\beta (f)|$ over all $f \in E(T)$.

**Lemma 3.** If $G$ has an extended carving decomposition of width at most $k$, then it also has a carving decomposition of width at most $k$.

**Proof.** Let $(T, \sigma )$ be such an extended carving decomposition. We apply on $(T, \sigma )$ the following transformation until this is not possible anymore: if for some $v$, in $\sigma ^{-1}(v)$ contains at least two vertices $a$ and $b$ then replace $\sigma$ by $\sigma \setminus \{(a, v)\}$ and replace $T$ by the tree that is obtained if we remove $a$ and then we dissolve the resulting vertex of degree 2. It is easy to see that each new pair $(T, \sigma )$ has width at most $k$. Also when the above procedure finishes, $\sigma ^{-1}$ is a bijection from $V(G)$ to $L(T) \setminus \{r\}$. If now we remove $r$ from $T$ and dissolve the resulting vertex of degree 2, we have a branch decomposition $(T', \sigma ^{-1})$ of $G$ with width at most $k$. □

**Lemma 4.** For every graph $G$, $cw(G) \leq \Delta (G) \cdot bw(G)$.

**Proof.** We set $\delta = \Delta (G)$. Let $(T, r)$ be a branch decomposition of $G$ with width at most $k$. We now define an extended carving decomposition $(T', \sigma )$ of $G$ as follows: Take $T$ and for each $v \in L(T)$ we define two new vertices $v_1$ and $v_2$ and we make them adjacent to $v$. For each such $v$ where $r^{-1}(v) = \{z, w\}$, we set $\sigma (v_1) = z$ and $\sigma (v_2) = w$. In the resulting tree we pick an arbitrary edge, subdivide it and make the subdivision vertex adjacent to the new vertex $r$. In the resulting graph $T'$, $r$ will be the root. Let $f = (x, y)$ be an edge of $T'$. We set $X = \sigma (L(T_1)) \setminus \sigma (L(T_2))$, $Y = \sigma (L(T_2)) \setminus \sigma (L(T_1))$ and
Theorem 2. For every non-trivial graph class \( \mathcal{G} \) that is minor closed, there exists an algorithm deciding \( \sqrt{\mathcal{G}} \) in linear time.

Proof. Let \( c_g \) be the constant of Theorem 1 and let \( G \) be an input graph to the problem of the recognition of \( \sqrt{\mathcal{G}} \). If \( \Delta(G) > c_g \), then, from Observation 1, \( \text{cw}(G) > c_g \) and the answer to the problem is NO. Assuming that \( \Delta(G) \leq c_g \), the computation of \( G^2 \) can be done in linear time. From Lemma 6, if \( G \in \sqrt{\mathcal{G}} \), then the branchwidth of \( G^2 \) is at most \( c_g^2 = 4 \cdot c_g^2 - 2 \cdot c_g \). We now check whether \( \text{bw}(G^2) \leq c_g \), e.g., using the algorithm of [2]. If the answer is negative, then we safely return NO. Otherwise, it remains to check whether \( G \in \mathcal{G} \) for a graph of bounded branchwidth and this can be done in linear time as commented above. \( \square \)
References


