

Graph Rigidity in L1 and Kusner's Conjecture

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Purpose of the Experiment: The maximum number of points that can be embedded in a metric space, such that the distance between any two points is equal, is known as its equilateral dimension. The 30-year old Kusner conjecture states that the equilateral dimension of R^n under the L1 metric (the "Manhattan", or "taxicab" metric) is $2n$. While it is easily seen that $2n$ is a lower bound on the equilateral dimension, there is currently only a loose upper bound of $n \cdot \log n$, and the conjecture is not known to hold in dimensions bigger than 4. In my work I present a new approach to this problem. **Procedures Used:** I generalize the notion of rigid graphs to non-Euclidean metrics and investigate different properties of this generalization. Using these new tools I investigated Kusner's conjecture from an original approach. **Observation/Data/Results:** I proved a lemma that holds in all dimensions and reduces the number of embeddings one needs to eliminate in order to prove that $2n$ is the equilateral dimension. I also proved the known case $n=3$ using the lemma. **Conclusions/Applications:** In my work I present a new approach to Kusner's conjecture by extending the notion of graph rigidity to non-Euclidean metrics. While previous proofs for $n=3$, $n=4$ used unscalable methods, my approach relies on a lemma that holds for all n , lending support to the idea that it could be extended to a general proof. I thus demonstrate the usefulness of generalizing graph rigidity for improving upon an open problem, and suggest that the emerging insights could be applied in the future to a variety of other problems.

Awards Won: