A Polyhedral Method for Sparse Systems with many Positive Solutions

Frédéric Bihan, Francisco Santos*, and Pierre-Jean Spaenlehauer

Abstract

We investigate a version of Viro's method for constructing polynomial systems with many positive solutions, based on regular triangulations of the Newton polytope of the system. The number of positive solutions obtained with our method is governed by the size of the largest *positively decorable* subcomplex of the triangulation. Here, positive decorability is a property that we introduce and which is dual to being a subcomplex of some regular triangulation. Using this duality, we produce large positively decorable subcomplexes of the boundary complexes of cyclic polytopes. As a byproduct we get new lower bounds, some of them being the best currently known, for the maximal number of positive solutions of polynomial systems with prescribed numbers of monomials and variables. We also study the asymptotics of these numbers and observe a log-concavity property.

1 Introduction

Positive solutions of multivariate polynomial systems are central objects in many applications of mathematics, as they often contain meaningful information, e.g. in robotics, optimization, algebraic statistics, etc. In the 70s, foundational results by Kushnirenko [14], Khovanskii [13] and Bernstein [2] laid the theoretical ground for the study of the algebraic structure of polynomial systems with prescribed conditions on the set of monomials appearing with nonzero coefficients. As a particular case of more general bounds, Khovanskii [13] obtained an upper bound on the number of non-degenerate positive solutions which depends only on the dimension of the problem and on the number of monomials.

More precisely, our main object of interest in this paper is the function $\Xi_{d,k}$ defined as the maximal possible number of non-degenerate solutions in $\mathbb{R}^d_{>0}$ of a polynomial system $f_1 = \cdots = f_d = 0$, where $f_1, \ldots, f_d \in \mathbb{R}[X_1, \ldots, X_d]$ involve at most $d+k+1$ monomials with

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nonzero coefficients. Here, *non-degenerate* means that the Jacobian matrix of the system is invertible at the solution. Finding sharp bounds for $\Xi_{d,k}$ is a notably hard problem, see [20]. The current knowledge can be briefly summarized as follows: $\max((\lfloor k/d \rfloor + 1)^d, (\lfloor d/k \rfloor + 1)^k) \le \Xi_{d,k} \le (e^2+3)2^{\binom{k}{2}}d^k/4$ (see [5, 6]). Another important and recent lower bound is $\Xi_{2,2} \ge 7$ [8] (and hence $\Xi_{2d,2d} \ge 7^d$ for all $d > 0$).

In this paper we introduce a new technique to construct fewnomial systems with many positive roots, based on the notion of *positively decorable* subcomplexes in a regular triangulation of the point configuration given by the exponent vectors of the monomials. Using this method we obtain new lower bounds for $\Xi_{d,k}$. Combining it with a log-concavity property, we obtain systems which admit asymptotically more positive solutions than previous constructions for a large range of parameters.

Main results. Consider a regular full-dimensional pure simplicial complex Γ supported on a point configuration $\mathcal{A} = \{w_1, \dots, w_n\} \subset \mathbb{Z}^d$, by which we mean that Γ is a pure d-dimensional subcomplex of a regular triangulation of $\mathcal{A}$ (see Definition 4.2 and Proposition 4.3). Consider also a map $\phi : \mathcal{A} \to \mathbb{R}^d$. We call a d-simplex $\tau = \operatorname{conv}(w_{i_1}, \dots, w_{i_{d+1}})$ of Γ *positively decorated* by ϕ if $\phi(\{w_{i_1}, \dots, w_{i_{d+1}}\})$ positively spans $\mathbb{R}^d$. We are interested in sparse polynomial systems

$$f_1(X_1, \dots, X_d) = \cdots = f_d(X_1, \dots, X_d) = 0 \tag{1.1}$$

with real coefficients and support contained in $\mathcal{A}$: this means that all exponent vectors $w \in \mathbb{Z}^d$ of the monomials X^w appearing with a nonzero coefficient in at least one equation are in $\mathcal{A}$. Our starting point is the following result:

Theorem A (Theorem 3.4)**.** *There is a choice of coefficients — which can be constructed from the map ϕ — which produces a sparse system supported on $\mathcal{A}$ such that the number of non-degenerate positive solutions of* (1.1) *is bounded below by the number of maximal simplices in Γ which are positively decorated by ϕ.*

This theorem is a version of Viro's method which was used by Sturmfels [22] to construct sparse polynomial systems all solutions of which are real. Viro's method ([24], see also [3, 18, 23]) is one of the roots of tropical geometry and it has been used for constructing real algebraic varieties with interesting topological and combinatorial properties.

We then apply this theorem to the problem of constructing fewnomial systems with many positive solutions. For this we construct large simplicial complexes that are regular and *positively decorable* (that is, all their maximal simplices can be positively decorated with a certain ϕ), obtained as subcomplexes of the boundary of cyclic polytopes. Combinatorial techniques allow us to count the simplices of these complexes, which gives us new explicit lower bounds on $\Xi_{d,k}$. More precisely, for all $i, j \in \mathbb{Z}_{>0}$, set

$$F_{i,j} = D_{i,j} + D_{i-1,j-1}$$

where $D_{i,j}$ is the (i, j)-th *Delannoy number* [1], defined as

$$D_{i,j} := \sum_{\ell=0}^{\min\{i,j\}} \frac{(i+j-\ell)!}{(i-\ell)!(j-\ell)!\ell!} = \sum_{\ell=0}^{\min\{i,j\}} 2^\ell \binom{i}{\ell}\binom{j}{\ell}. \tag{1.2}$$

Theorem B (Corollary 6.9, Remark 6.10)**.** *For every $i, j \in \mathbb{Z}_{>0}$ we have*

$$\Xi_{2i-1,2j} \geq F_{i,j}, \quad \Xi_{2i-1,2j-1} \geq \frac{j}{i+j} F_{i,j}, \quad \Xi_{2i,2j} \geq \frac{i+1}{i+j+1} F_{i+1,j}, \quad \Xi_{2i,2j-1} \geq 2\, F_{i,j-1}.$$

We are then interested in the asymptotics of $\Xi_{d,k}$ for big d and k. One way to make sense of this is the following.

Theorem C (Theorem 2.4)**.** *For all $k, d \in \mathbb{Z}_{>0}$ the limit $\xi_{d,k} := \lim_{n\to\infty}(\Xi_{dn,kn})^{1/(dn+kn)} \in [1,\infty]$ exists. Moreover, this limit depends only on the ratio d/k and is bounded from below by ${\Xi_{d,k}}^{1/(d+k)}$.*

For instance, when the direction vector is $(1,1)$ (in other words, when $d = k$) the lower bounds $(\lfloor k/d \rfloor + 1)^d$ and $(\lfloor d/k \rfloor + 1)^k$) for $\Xi_{d,k}$ both coincide with 2^d, which gives $\sqrt{2}$ as a lower bound for $\xi_{1,1}$. A better lower bound $7^{1/4}$ is obtained from the fact that $\Xi_{2,2} \geq 7$, resulting from [8]. Analyzing the asymptotics of Delannoy numbers leads to the following new lower bound, which also depends only on d/k:

Theorem D (Theorem 7.2, Corollary 7.3)**.** *For all $k, d \in \mathbb{Z}_{>0}$ we have*

$$\xi_{d,k} \geq \left(\frac{\sqrt{d^2+k^2}+k}{d}\right)^{\frac{d}{2(d+k)}} \left(\frac{\sqrt{d^2+k^2}+d}{k}\right)^{\frac{k}{2(d+k)}}.$$

This statement allows us to improve the lower bounds on $\xi_{d,k}$ for $0.2434 < d/(d+k) < 0.3659$ and for $0.6342 < d/(d+k) < 0.7565$, see Figure 4. In fact, Theorem 2.4 implies that the limit $\xi_{\alpha,\beta} := \lim_{n\to\infty}(\Xi_{\alpha n,\beta n})^{1/(\alpha n+\beta n)}$ exists for any positive rational numbers α, β. It is convenient to look at ξ along the segment $\alpha + \beta = 1$. This is no loss of generality since $\xi_{d,k} = \xi_{\alpha,1-\alpha}$ for $\alpha = d/(d+k)$ and it has the nice property that the function $\alpha \mapsto \xi_{\alpha,1-\alpha}$, $\alpha \in (0,1) \cap \mathbb{Q}$, is log-concave (Proposition 2.5). Therefore, convex hulls of lower bounds for $\log \xi_{\alpha,1-\alpha}$ also produce lower bounds for this function. With this observation, the methods in this paper improve the previously known lower bounds for $\xi_{d,k}$ for all d, k with $d/(d+k) \in (0.2, 0.5) \cup (0.5, 0.8)$, see Figure 5.

Our bounds also raise some important questions about $\xi_{d,k}$. Notice that log-concavity implies that if ξ is infinite somewhere then it is infinite everywhere (Corollary 2.6). That is, ξ is either always finite or always infinite, but we do not know which of the two happens. We pose this as Question 2.7. Equivalently, we do not know whether $\Xi_{d,k}$ admits a singly exponential upper bound, since the upper bound of Eq. (2.1) is only of type $2^{O(k^2+k\log d)}$.

Another intriguing question is whether $\xi_{d,k} = \xi_{k,d}$ or, more strongly, whether $\Xi_{d,k} = \Xi_{k,d}$. This symmetry between d and k holds true for all known lower bounds and exact values, including the lower bounds for $\xi_{d,k}$ obtained with our construction where the symmetry is a consequence of a Gale-type duality between regular and positively decorable complexes (see Corollary 4.7 and Theorem 4.10). This duality is also instrumental in our proof that the complexes used for Theorem B are positively decorable.

Although not needed for the rest of the paper, we also show that positive decorability is related to two classical properties in topological combinatorics:

Theorem E (Theorem 5.5)**.** *For every pure orientable simplicial complex one has*

$$\textit{balanced} \implies \textit{positively decorable} \implies \textit{bipartite}.$$

Under certain hypotheses (e.g., for complexes that are simply connected manifolds with or without boundary) the reverse implications also hold (Corollary 5.8).

Organization of the paper. In Section 2 we present classical bounds for $\Xi_{d,k}$, introduce the quantity $\xi_{d,k}$, and prove Theorem C, plus the log-concavity property. Section 3 describes the Viro's construction used throughout the paper and proves Theorem A. In Section 4, we show the duality between positively decorable and regular complexes complexes, and Section 5 relates positive decorability to balancedness and bipartiteness. Section 6 contains our main construction, based on cyclic polytopes, and shows the lower bounds stated in Theorem B. This bound is analyzed and compared to previous ones in Section 7, where we prove Theorem D. In Section 8, we investigate the potential of the proposed method and we show that the number of positive solutions that can be produced by this method is inherently limited by the upper bound theorem for polytopes.

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2 Preliminaries on $\Xi_{d,k}$

Here we review what is known about the function $\Xi_{d,k}$, defined as the maximum possible number of positive non-degenerate solutions of d-dimensional systems with $d+k+1$ monomials. Finiteness of $\Xi_{d,k}$ follows from the work of Khovanskii [13]. The currently best known general upper bound for $\Xi_{d,k}$ for arbitrary d and k is proved by Bihan and Sottile [6]:

$$\Xi_{d,k} \leq \frac{e^2+3}{4} 2^{\binom{k}{2}} d^k, \qquad \forall k, d \in \mathbb{Z}_{>0}. \tag{2.1}$$

The following proposition summarizes what is known about lower bounds of $\Xi_{d,k}$:

Proposition 2.1.
1. *$\Xi_{d+d',k+k'} \geq \Xi_{d,k}\, \Xi_{d',k'}$ for all $d, d', k, k' \in \mathbb{Z}_{>0}$.*
2. *$\Xi_{1,k} = k+1$ for all $k \in \mathbb{Z}_{>0}$ (Descartes).*
3. *$\Xi_{d,1} = d+1$ for all $d \in \mathbb{Z}_{>0}$ (Bihan [4]).*
4. *$\Xi_{2,2} \geq 7$ (B. El Hilany [8]).*

Proof. Let $A \subset \mathbb{Z}^d$ and $A' \subset \mathbb{Z}^{d'}$ be supports of systems in d and d' variables with $d+k+1$ and $d'+k'+1$ monomials achieving the bounds $\Xi_{d,k}$ and $\Xi_{d',k'}$. Without loss of generality, assume that both A and A' contain the origin (translating the supports amounts to multiplying the whole system by a monomial, which does not affect the number of positive roots). Then $(A \times \{0\}) \cup (\{0\} \times A') \subset \mathbb{Z}^{d+d'}$ has $(d+d')+(k+k')+1$ points and supports a system (the union of the original systems) with $\Xi_{d,k}\Xi_{d',k'}$ nondegenerate positive solutions (the Cartesian product of the solutions sets of the original systems). Therefore, $\Xi_{d+d',k+k'} \geq \Xi_{d,k}\Xi_{d',k'}$.

The equality $\Xi_{k,1} = k+1$ comes from the fact that a univariate polynomial with $k+2$ monomials cannot have more than $k+1$ positive solutions by Descartes' rule of signs (and the polynomial $\prod_{i=1}^{k+1}(x-i)$ reaches this bound).

Finally, $\Xi_{1,k} = k+1$ was proved in [4, Thm. A] and $\Xi_{2,2} \geq 7$ has been recently shown by B. El Hilany [8, Thm. 1.2] using tropical geometry. □

Remark 2.2. *It is known that $\Xi_{d,0} = 1$ (see Proposition 3.3). Moreover, $\Xi_{d,k+1} \geq \Xi_{d,k}$ is obvious (adding one monomial with a very small coefficient does not decrease the number of nondegenerate positive solutions). Then, by setting $\Xi_{0,k} = 1$, Part (1) of Proposition 2.1 can be extended to allow zero values for d and k. Consequently, $\Xi_{d',k'} \geq \Xi_{d,k}$ if $d' \geq d$ and $k' \geq k$.*

The following consequences of Proposition 2.1 have been observed before. Part (1) comes from a system of univariate polynomials in different variables, and part (2) was proved by Bihan, Rojas and Sottile in [5].

Corollary 2.3. *1. If $k_1 + \cdots + k_d = k$ is an integer partition of k, then we have $\Xi_{d,k} \geq \prod_{1\leq i\leq d}(k_i+1)$. In particular,*

$$\Xi_{d,k} \geq (\lfloor k/d \rfloor + 1)^d. \tag{2.2}$$

2. If $d_1+\cdots+d_k = d$ is an integer partition of d, then $\Xi_{d,k} \geq \prod_{1\leq i\leq d}(d_i+1)$. In particular

$$\Xi_{d,k} \geq (\lfloor d/k \rfloor + 1)^k. \tag{2.3}$$

□

When $k = d$, both bounds specialize to

$$\Xi_{d,d} \geq 2^d. \tag{2.4}$$

In Section 7 we will be interested in the asymptotics of $\Xi_{d,k}$ for big d and k. One way to make sense of this is the following:

Theorem 2.4. *Let $d, k \in \mathbb{Z}_{>0}$. Then the following limit exists:*

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} (\Xi_{dn,kn})^{1/(dn+kn)} \in [1, \infty].$$

Moreover the limit depends only on the ratio d/k and it is bounded from below by $(\Xi_{d,k})^{1/(d+k)}$.

Proof. For each n, let $a_n := \log(\Xi_{dn,kn})$, so that the limit we want to compute is $\lim_{n\to\infty} e^{a_n/(d+k)n}$ and we can instead look at $\lim_{n\to\infty}(a_n/(d+k)n)$. Since $(a_n)_{n\in\mathbb{Z}_{>0}}$ is increasing (Remark 2.2) and $a_{pn_0} \geq pa_{n_0}$ for every positive integer p (Proposition 2.1), we have $a_n \geq \lfloor \frac{n}{n_0} \rfloor a_{n_0}$ for all $n, n_0 \in \mathbb{Z}_{>0}$. Thus:

$$\liminf_{n\to\infty} \frac{a_n}{n} \geq \liminf_{n\to\infty} \left\lfloor \frac{n}{n_0} \right\rfloor \frac{a_{n_0}}{n} = \frac{a_{n_0}}{n_0}, \quad \forall n_0 \in \mathbb{Z}_{>0}.$$

Consequently,

$$\liminf_{n\to\infty} \frac{a_n}{(d+k)n} = \frac{1}{d+k} \liminf_{n\to\infty} \frac{a_n}{n} \geq \frac{1}{d+k} \frac{a_{n_0}}{n_0}, \qquad \forall n_0 \in \mathbb{Z}_{>0}.$$

In particular,

$$\liminf_{n\to\infty} \frac{a_n}{(d+k)n} \geq \sup_{n\in\mathbb{Z}_{>0}} \frac{a_n}{(d+k)n} \geq \limsup_{n\to\infty} \frac{a_n}{(d+k)n},$$

which implies that the limit exists and equals the supremum. To show that the limit depends only on the ratio d/k, observe that if (d,k) and (d',k') are proportional vectors then the sequences $(a_n/(d+k)n)_{n\in\mathbb{Z}_{>0}}$ and $(a'_n/(d'+k')n)_{n\in\mathbb{Z}_{>0}}$ (where $a'_n := \log(\Xi_{d'n,k'n})$) have a common subsequence. □

Note that the statement implies the existence of the limit

$$\xi_{\alpha,\beta} = \lim_{\substack{n\to\infty \\ \alpha n, \beta n \in \mathbb{Z}}} (\Xi_{\alpha n, \beta n})^{1/(\alpha n + \beta n)} \in [1, \infty]$$

for any positive rational numbers $\alpha, \beta \in \mathbb{Q}_{>0}$ and for $\alpha = \frac{d}{d+k}$ (where $d, k \in \mathbb{Z}_{>0}$) we have $\xi_{\alpha,1-\alpha} = \lim_{n\to\infty} (\Xi_{dn,kn})^{1/(dn+kn)}$. Also, since the limit in Theorem 2.4 depends only on d/k, we only need to consider the function ξ for one point along each ray in the positive orthant. We choose the segment defined by $\alpha + \beta = 1$ because along this segment ξ is log-concave:

Proposition 2.5. *The function* $\alpha \mapsto \xi_{\alpha,1-\alpha}$ *is log-concave over* $(0,1) \cap \mathbb{Q}$.

Proof. For any integer n and any $(\alpha,\beta) \in \mathbb{Q}^2_{>0}$ with $\alpha n, \beta n \in \mathbb{Z}$, let $a_n(\alpha,\beta) = \log(\Xi_{\alpha n,\beta n})$. The statement is that for any (α,β), (α',β') in $\mathbb{Q}^2_{>0}$ and any $\theta \in [0,1] \cap \mathbb{Q}$, we have

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{1}{n} a_n(\theta(\alpha,\beta) + (1-\theta)(\alpha',\beta')) \geq \theta \lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{1}{n} a_n(\alpha,\beta) + (1-\theta) \lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{1}{n} a_n(\alpha',\beta'). \tag{2.5}$$

(Here and in what follows only values of n where $\alpha n, \theta\alpha n$, etc. are integers are considered. This is enough since they form an infinite sequence and the limit ξ is independent of the subsequence considered.)

Using Proposition 2.1, together with Remark 2.2, we get

$$\begin{aligned} a_n(\theta(\alpha,\beta) + (1-\theta)(\alpha',\beta')) &= \log(\Xi_{\theta\alpha n + (1-\theta)\alpha' n, \theta\beta n + (1-\theta)\beta' n}) \\ &\geq \log(\Xi_{\theta\alpha n, \theta\beta n}) + \log(\Xi_{(1-\theta)\alpha' n, (1-\theta)\beta' n}) \\ &= a_n(\theta\alpha, \theta\beta) + a_n((1-\theta)\alpha', (1-\theta)\beta'). \end{aligned}$$

It remains to note that $\lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{1}{n} a_n(\theta\alpha,\theta\beta) = \theta \lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{1}{n} a_n(\alpha,\beta)$ for any (α,β) in $\mathbb{Q}^2_{>0}$ and any $\theta \in [0,1] \cap \mathbb{Q}$. □

One interesting consequence of log-concavity is:

Corollary 2.6. *The function $\xi_{\alpha,\beta}$ is either finite for all $(\alpha,\beta) \in \mathbb{Q}^2_{>0}$ or infinite for all $(\alpha,\beta) \in \mathbb{Q}^2_{>0}$.*

Proof. Since $\xi_{\alpha,\beta}$ depends only on α/β, there is no loss of generality in assuming $\beta = 1-\alpha$ and $\alpha \in (0,1) \cap \mathbb{Q}$. Suppose $\xi_{\alpha,1-\alpha} = \infty$ for some $\alpha \in (0,1) \cap \mathbb{Q}$ and let us show that $\xi_{\beta,1-\beta} = \infty$ for every other $\beta \in (0,1) \cap \mathbb{Q}$. For this, let $\gamma = (1+\epsilon)\beta - \epsilon\alpha$ for a sufficiently small $\epsilon \in \mathbb{Q}_{>0}$, so that $\gamma \in (0,1) \cap \mathbb{Q}$. Then $\beta = \frac{1}{1+\epsilon}\gamma + \frac{\epsilon}{1+\epsilon}\alpha$. By log-concavity:

$$\xi_{\beta,1-\beta} \geq \xi_{\gamma,1-\gamma}{}^{\frac{1}{1+\epsilon}}\ \xi_{\alpha,1-\alpha}{}^{\frac{\epsilon}{1+\epsilon}} = \infty.$$

□

In the light of this, we pose the following question:

Question 2.7. *Is ξ finite? Equivalently, is there a global constant c such that $\Xi_{d,k} \leq c^{k+d}$ for all $k, d \in \mathbb{Z}_{>0}$?*

Compare this to Problem 2.8 in Sturmfels [22] (still open), which asks whether $\Xi_{d,k}$ is polynomial for fixed d. In a sense, Sturmfels' formulation is related to the behaviour of $\xi_{\alpha,\beta}$ when $\alpha/\beta \approx 0$, although the answer to it might be positive even if ξ is infinite. (Think, e.g., of $\Xi_{d,k}$ growing as $\min\{d^k, k^d\}$). Our formulation looks at Ξ globally and gives the same role to d and k, which is consistent with Proposition 2.1.

Remark 2.8. *Although we have defined ξ only for rational values in order to avoid technicalities, log-concavity and Proposition 2.1 easily imply that ξ admits a unique continuous extension to $\alpha, \beta \in \mathbb{R}_{>0}$ and that this extension satisfies*

$$\xi_{\alpha,\beta} = \lim_{n\to\infty} (\Xi_{\lfloor \alpha n\rfloor, \lfloor \beta n\rfloor})^{1/(\alpha n+\beta n)} = \lim_{n\to\infty} (\Xi_{\lceil \alpha n\rceil, \lceil \beta n\rceil})^{1/(\alpha n+\beta n)}.$$

3 Positively decorated simplices and Viro polynomial systems

We start by considering systems of d equations in d variables whose support $\mathcal{A} = \{w_1, \ldots, w_{d+1}\} \subset \mathbb{Z}^d$ is the set of vertices of a d-simplex. This case is a basic building block in our construction.

Definition 3.1. *A $d \times (d+1)$ matrix M with real entries is called* positively spanning *if all the values $(-1)^i \operatorname{minor}(M,i)$ are nonzero and have the same sign, where $\operatorname{minor}(M,i)$ is the determinant of the square matrix obtained by removing the i-th column.*

The terminology "positively spanning" comes from the fact that if $\mathcal{A} = \{w_1, \ldots, w_{d+1}\}$ is the set of columns of M, saying that M is positively spanning is equivalent to saying that any vector in $\mathbb{R}^d$ is a linear combination *with positive coefficients* of $w_1, \ldots, w_{d+1}$.

Proposition 3.2. *Let M be a full rank $d \times (d+1)$ matrix with real coefficients. The following statements are equivalent:*

1. *the matrix M is positively spanning;*
2. *for any $L \in \mathrm{GL}_d(\mathbb{R})$, $L \cdot M$ is a positively spanning matrix;*
3. *for any permutation matrix $P \in \mathfrak{S}_{d+1}$, $M \cdot P$ is a positively spanning matrix;*
4. *all the coordinates of any non-zero vector in the kernel of the matrix are non-zero and have the same sign;*
5. *the origin belongs to the interior of the convex hull of the column vectors of M.*
6. *every vector in $\mathbb{R}^d$ is a nonnegative linear combination of the columns of M.*
7. *there is no $w \in \mathbb{R}^d \setminus \{0\}$ s.t. $w \cdot M \geq 0$.*

Proof. The equivalence (1) $\Leftrightarrow$ (4) follows from Cramer's rule, while (2) $\Rightarrow$ (1) and (3) $\Rightarrow$ (1) are proved directly by instantiating L and P to the identity matrix. The implication (1) $\Rightarrow$ (2) follows from

$$\mathrm{sign}((-1)^i \mathrm{minor}(L \cdot M, i)) = \mathrm{sign}(\det(L)) \cdot \mathrm{sign}((-1)^i \mathrm{minor}(M, i)),$$

while (3) $\Leftrightarrow$ (4) is a consequence of the fact that permuting the columns of M is equivalent to permuting the coordinates of the kernel vectors. The equivalence between (4) and (5) follows from the definition of convex hull. The equivalence between (5) and (6) is obvious and the equivalence between (5) and (7) follows from Farkas Lemma. □

Proposition 3.3. *Assume that $\mathcal{A} = \{w_1, \ldots, w_{d+1}\}$ is the set of vertices of a d-simplex in $\mathbb{R}^d$, and consider the polynomial system with real coefficients*

$$f_i(X) = \sum_{j=1}^{d+1} C_{ij} X^{w_j}, \quad 1 \leq i \leq d.$$

The system $f_1(X) = \cdots = f_d(X) = 0$ has at most one non-degenerate positive solution and it has one non-degenerate positive solution if and only if the $d \times (d+1)$ matrix $C = (C_{ij})$ is positively spanning.

Proof. This follows from Proposition 3.2 and the fact that the system $f_1(X) = \cdots = f_d(X) = 0$ can be transformed into a linear system via the inverse of the monomial map which sends X_i to X^{w_i}. This monomial map sends the positive orthant to itself, and it is invertible since $\mathcal{A}$ is affinely independent. □

Consider now a set $\mathcal{A} = \{w_1, \ldots, w_n\} \subset \mathbb{Z}^d$ and assume that its convex hull is a full-dimensional polytope Q. Let Γ be a triangulation of Q with vertices in $\mathcal{A}$. Assume that Γ is a *regular* triangulation, which means that there exists a convex function $\nu : Q \to \mathbb{R}$ which is affine on each simplex of Γ, but not affine on the union of two different maximal simplices of Γ (such triangulations are sometimes called coherent or convex in the literature; see [7] for extensive information on regular triangulations). We say that ν *certifies* the regularity of Γ.

Let C be a $d \times n$ matrix with real entries. We say that C *positively decorates* a d-simplex $\tau = \mathrm{conv}(w_{i_1}, \ldots, w_{i_{d+1}}) \in \Gamma$ if the $d \times (d+1)$ submatrix of C given by the columns numbered by $\{i_1, \ldots, i_{d+1}\}$ is positively spanning. The associated *Viro polynomial system* is

$$f_{1,t}(X) = \cdots = f_{d,t}(X) = 0, \tag{3.1}$$

where t is a positive parameter and

$$f_{i,t}(X) = \sum_{j=1}^{n} C_{ij} t^{\nu(w_j)} X^{w_j} \in \mathbb{R}[X_1, \ldots, X_d], \quad i = 1, \ldots, d.$$

The following result is a variation of the main theorem in [22]. There, the number of *real* roots of the system (3.1) is bounded below by the number of maximal *odd* simplices in Γ (simplices with odd normalized volume). Proposition 3.3 allows us to change that to a lower bound for *positive* roots in terms of *positively decorated* simplices.

Theorem 3.4. *Let Γ be a regular triangulation of $\mathcal{A} = \{w_1, \ldots, w_n\} \subset \mathbb{Z}^d$ and let $C \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times n}$. Then, there exists $t_0 \in \mathbb{R}_+$ such that for all $0 < t < t_0$ the number of non-degenerate positive solutions of the system* (3.1) *is bounded from below by the number of maximal simplices in Γ which are positively decorated by C.*

Proof. Let $\tau_1, \ldots, \tau_m$ be the maximal simplices of Γ which are positively decorated by C. For all $\ell \in \{1, \ldots, m\}$, the function ν is affine on τ_ℓ, thus there exist $\alpha_\ell = (\alpha_{1\ell}, \ldots, \alpha_{d\ell}) \in \mathbb{R}^d$ and $\beta_\ell \in \mathbb{R}$ such that $\nu(x) = \langle \alpha_\ell, x \rangle + \beta_\ell$ for any $x = (x_1, \ldots, x_d)$ in the interior of the simplex τ_ℓ. Set $Xt^{-\alpha_\ell} = (X_1 t^{-\alpha_{1\ell}}, \ldots, X_d t^{-\alpha_{d\ell}})$. Since ν is convex and not affine on the union of two distinct maximal simplices of Γ, we get

$$\frac{f_{i,t}(Xt^{-\alpha_\ell})}{t^{\beta_\ell}} = f_i^{(\ell)}(X) + r_{i,t}(X), \quad i = 1, \ldots, d,$$

where $f_i^{(\ell)}(X) = \sum_{w_j \in \tau_\ell} C_{ij} X^{w_j}$ and $r_{i,t}(X)$ is a polynomial each of whose coefficients is equal to a positive power of t multiplied by a coefficient of C. Since τ_ℓ is positively decorated by C, the system $f_1^{(\ell)}(X) = \cdots = f_d^{(\ell)}(X) = 0$ has one non-degenerate positive solution z_ℓ by Proposition 3.3. Then, we get

$$\frac{f_{i,t}(z_\ell t^{-\alpha_\ell})}{t^{\beta_\ell}} = r_{i,t}(z_\ell), \quad i = 1, \ldots, d.$$

Notice that the right member converges to 0 as $t \to 0$. Therefore, since z_ℓ is a non-degenerate solution of $f_i^{(\ell)}(X) = 0$, $i = 1, \ldots, d$, there will be a non-degenerate solution of (3.1) close to $z_\ell t^{-\alpha_\ell}$ for $t > 0$ small enough. Now, let K be a compact set in the positive orthant which contains $z_1, \ldots, z_m$. There exists $t_0 > 0$ such that for all $0 < t < t_0$ the sets $t^{-\alpha_\ell} \cdot K = \{(X_1 t^{-\alpha_{1\ell}}, \ldots, X_d t^{-\alpha_{d\ell}}) \mid (X_1, \ldots, X_d) \in K\}$, $\ell = 1, \ldots, m$, are pairwise disjoint and each one contains at least one non-degenerate positive solution of the system (3.1). □

4 Duality between regular and positively decorable complexes

In this section, we study the two combinatorial properties on Γ that are needed in order to apply Theorem 3.4: being (part of) a regular triangulation and having (many, hopefully all) positively decorated simplices. As we will see, these properties turn out to be dual to one another. Our combinatorial framework is that of pure, abstract simplicial complexes:

Definition 4.1. *A* pure abstract simplicial complex *of dimension d on n vertices (abbreviated (n,d)-complex) is a finite set $\{\tau_1, \ldots, \tau_\ell\}$, where for any $i \in \{1, \ldots, \ell\}$, τ_i is a subset of cardinality $d+1$ of $[n] := \{1, \ldots, n\}$. The elements of Γ are called* facets *and their number (the number ℓ in our notation) is the* size *of Γ.*

Let $\mathcal{A} = \{w_1, \ldots, w_n\}$ be a configuration of n points in $\mathbb{R}^d$ (by which we mean an ordered set; that is, we implicitly have a bijection between $\mathcal{A}$ and $[n]$). An (n,d)-complex Γ is said to be *supported on $\mathcal{A}$* if the simplices with vertices in $\mathcal{A}$ indicated by Γ, together with all their faces, form a geometric simplicial complex, see [16, Definition 2.3.5]. Typical examples of (n,d)-complexes supported on point configurations are the boundary complexes of simplicial $(d+1)$-polytopes, or triangulations of point sets. The following definition and proposition relate these two notions:

Definition 4.2. *An (n,d)-pure abstract simplicial complex Γ is said to be* regular *if it is isomorphic to a (perhaps non-proper) subcomplex of a regular triangulation of some point configuration $\mathcal{A} \subset \mathbb{R}^d$.*

Proposition 4.3. *For a pure abstract simplicial d-complex Γ the following properties are equivalent: (1) Γ is regular. (2) Γ is (isomorphic to) a proper subcomplex of the boundary complex of a simplicial $(d+1)$-polytope P.*

Proof. This is a well-known fact, the proof of which appears e.g. in [9, Section 2.3]. The main tool to show the backwards statement (which is the harder direction) is as follows: let F be a facet of P that does not belong to Γ and let o be a point outside P but very close to the relative interior of F. Project Γ towards o into F to obtain (part of) a regular triangulation of a d-dimensional configuration in the hyperplane containing F. (This construction is usually called a Schlegel diagram of P in F). □

For $\tau \in \Gamma$ a d-simplex and C a coefficient matrix associated to the point configuration $\mathcal{A}$, we let C_τ denote the $d \times (d+1)$ submatrix of C whose columns correspond to the $d+1$ vertices in τ.

Definition 4.4. *A simplicial (n,d)-complex Γ is* positively decorable *if there is a $d \times n$ matrix C that positively decorates every maximal simplex of Γ. That is, such that every submatrix C_τ corresponding to a d-simplex $\tau \in \Gamma$ is positively spanning.*

In this language, Theorem 3.4 says that if there is a regular and positively decorable (n, d)-complex of size ℓ, then $\Xi_{d,n-d-1} \geq \ell$.

We now introduce a notion of complementarity for pure complexes. This notion is closely related to matroid duality and, in fact, our result that regularity and positive decorability are exchanged by complementarity is an expression of that duality, via its geometric (and oriented) version: Gale duality.

Definition 4.5. *Let Γ be an (n, d)-pure abstract simplicial complex with maximal simplices $\{\tau_1, \dots, \tau_{|\Gamma|}\}$. We call* complement complex *and denote by $\overline{\Gamma}$ the $(n, n-d-2)$-pure abstract simplicial complex with maximal simplices $\{\overline{\tau_1}, \dots, \overline{\tau_{|\Gamma|}}\}$, where $\overline{\tau_i} := [n] \setminus \tau_i$.*

Lemma 4.6. *A (n, d)-pure abstract simplicial complex Γ is positively decorable if and only if $\overline{\Gamma}$ is a subset of the boundary complex of an $(n - d - 1)$-polytope.*

Proof. Let Γ be an (n, d)-pure abstract simplicial complex and assume that $\overline{\Gamma}$ is contained in the boundary complex of an $(n-d-1)$-polytope $P \subset \mathbb{R}^{n-d-1}$ with vertices $\mathcal{A} = \{w_1, \dots, w_N\}$ (here $\mathcal{A}$ has $N \geq n$ elements). Note that if $n = d + 1$, then the result is obvious since the complex has only one facet; on the other hand, if $n > d + 1$ then we can consider the $(n - d - 1)$-polytope P' with n vertices which is the convex hull on the vertices of P which appear in $\overline{\Gamma}$. Since $\overline{\Gamma}$ is also contained in the boundary complex of P', we can assume without loss of generality that $N = n$. Let $\widetilde{A}$ denote the $(n - d) \times n$ matrix obtained by adding a first row of ones to the matrix with column vectors $w_1, \dots, w_n$. A Gale transform of $\mathcal{A}$ is the set of row vectors $\{b_1, \dots, b_n\} \subset \mathbb{R}^d$ of a full rank $n \times d$ matrix B such that $\widetilde{A} \cdot B = 0$. Consider a subset τ of $[n]$ of size $d+1$ which belongs to Γ. By [9, Thm. 19], its complement $\overline{\tau} = [n] \setminus \tau$ belongs to boundary(P) if and only if the origin belongs to the relative interior of the convex-hull of $\{b_i\,,\ i \in \tau\}$. Let C be the transpose of B. We get that if $\overline{\tau}$ belongs to boundary(P) then the origin belongs to the relative interior of the convex-hull of the column vectors of C indexed by τ, which precisely means that the corresponding submatrix of C is positively spanning. Therefore, if $\overline{\Gamma}$ is contained in the boundary complex of P then Γ is positively decorated by the matrix C. Conversely, assume that Γ is positively decorated by a $d \times n$ matrix C. This implies that C has maximal rank d. For any $\tau \in \Gamma$, choose a vector with positive coordinates in the kernel of the $d \times (d+1)$ submatrix of C corresponding to τ, and put zero coordinates for the indices in $\overline{\tau} = [n] \setminus \tau$ in order to get a vector $u_\tau \in \operatorname{Ker} C$ with nonnegative coordinates. Then $\sum_{\tau \in \Gamma} u_\tau$ belongs to the kernel of C and has only positive coordinates since every vertex of Γ belongs to at least one facet. Rescaling the columns of C by positive coefficients if necessary, we may assume that C contains the vector $(1, 1, \dots, 1)$ in its kernel. Choose any basis $(v_1, \dots, v_{n-d})$ of the kernel of C starting with $v_1 = (1, 1, \dots, 1)$ and let $\widetilde{A}$ be the $(n - d) \times n$ matrix with row vectors $v_1, \dots, v_{n-d}$. Then, the rows of the transpose of C form a Gale transform of the set $\mathcal{A}$ of column vectors of the matrix A obtained by deleting the first row of $\widetilde{A}$. It follows then from [9, Thm. 19] that $\overline{\Gamma}$ is included in the boundary complex of the convex hull of $\mathcal{A}$. □

Corollary 4.7. *Let Γ be a (n, d)-pure simplicial complex. Then:*

1. *if $\overline{\Gamma}$ is regular then Γ is positively decorable.*

2. *if Γ is positively decorable then $\overline{\Gamma}$ is either regular or the boundary complex of a simplicial polytope. If the latter happens then $\overline{\Gamma}$ minus a facet is regular.*

The following examples illustrate the need to perhaps remove a facet in part (2) of the corollary. A regular and positively decorable complex may not have a regular complement:

Example 4.8. *Let Γ be the pure simplicial d-complex formed by the boundary of a cross-polytope of dimension $d+1$. Observe that $\Gamma = \overline{\Gamma}$ which, by Lemma 4.6, implies Γ is positively decorable. Yet, $\overline{\Gamma}$ is not regular since it is not a* proper *subcomplex of the boundary of a $(d+1)$-polytope.*

Example 4.9. *The complex $\Gamma = \{\{1,2,3,4\},\{2,3,4,5\},\{3,4,5,6\}, \{1,4,5,6\},\{1,2,5,6\},\{1,2,3,6\}\}$ is a proper subcomplex of the boundary of a cyclic 4-polytope. Its complement is a cycle of length six, so Γ is regular and positively decorable but $\overline{\Gamma}$ is not regular.*

The following is the main consequence of Lemma 4.6.

Theorem 4.10. *Let Γ be an (n, d)-pure abstract simplicial complex Γ.*

1. *If Γ is regular and positively decorable, then $\Xi_{d,n-d-1} \geq |\Gamma|$ and $\Xi_{n-d-2,d+1} \geq |\Gamma| - 1$.*
2. *If both Γ and $\overline{\Gamma}$ are regular, then $\Xi_{d,n-d-1} \geq |\Gamma|$ and $\Xi_{n-d-2,d+1} \geq |\Gamma|$.*

Proof. The fact that if Γ is regular and positively decorable then $\Xi_{d,n-d-1} \geq |\Gamma|$ is merely a rephrasing of Theorem 3.4. The rest follows from Lemma 4.6. □

Example 4.11. *The inequality $\Xi_{1,k} \geq k + 1$ from Proposition 2.1 is a special case of Theorem 4.10, since a path with $k + 1$ edges is regular and positively decorable (the decorating matrix alternates 1's and -1's).*

5 Relation to bipartite and balanced complexes

In this section we relate regularity and positive decorability to the following two familiar notions for pure simplicial complexes:

Definition 5.1. *The* adjacency graph *of a pure simplicial complex Γ of dimension d is the graph whose vertices are the d-simplices of Γ, with two d-simplices adjacent if they share d vertices. We say Γ is* bipartite *it its adjacency graph is bipartite.*

Definition 5.2. *[21, Section III.4] A $(d + 1)$-coloring of an (n, d)-complex Γ is a map $\gamma : [n] \to [d + 1]$ such that $\gamma(w_1) \neq \gamma(w_2)$ for every edge $\{w_1, w_2\}$ of γ. If such a coloring exists, Γ is called* balanced.

Observe that two complement complexes Γ and $\overline{\Gamma}$ have the same adjacency graph. Thus, if one is bipartite, then so is the other. The same is not true for balancedness: A cycle of length six is balanced but its complement (the complex Γ of Example 4.9) is not. For instance, the simplices $\{1,2,3,4\}$ and $\{2,3,4,5\}$ imply that 1 and 5 should get the same color, but this does not work since $\{1,5\}$ is an edge.

Colorings are sometimes called *foldings* since they can be extended to a map from Γ to the d-dimensional standard simplex which is linear and bijective on each d-simplex of Γ. Similarly, balanced triangulations are sometimes called *foldable* triangulations, see e.g. [12].

It is easy to show that *orientable* balanced complexes are bipartite. (For non-orientable ones the same is not true, as shown by the $(9,2)$-complex $\{123, 234, 345, 456, 567, 678, 789, 189, 129\}$). We here show that being positively decorable is an intermediate property.

Recall that an *orientation* of an abstract d-simplex $\tau = \{w_1, \dots, w_{d+1}\}$ is a choice of calling "positive" one of the two classes, modulo even permutations, of orderings of its vertices and "negative" the other class. For example, every embedding $\varphi : \tau \to \mathbb{R}^d$ of τ into $d+1$ points not lying in an affine hyperplane induces a canonical orientation of τ, by calling an ordering $w_{\sigma_1}, \dots, w_{\sigma_{d+1}}$ positive or negative according to the sign of the determinant

$$\begin{vmatrix} \varphi(w_{\sigma_1}) & \dots & \varphi(w_{\sigma_{d+1}}) \\ 1 & \dots & 1 \end{vmatrix}.$$

If τ and τ' are two d-simplices with d common vertices, then respective orientations of them are called *consistent* (along their common $(d-1)$-face) if replacing in a positive ordering of τ the vertex of $\tau \setminus \tau'$ by the vertex of $\tau' \setminus \tau$ results in a negative ordering of τ'. A pure simplicial complex is called *orientable* if one can orient all facets in a manner that makes orientations of all neighboring pairs of them consistent. In particular, every geometric simplicial complex is orientable, since its embedding in $\mathbb{R}^d$ induces consistent orientations.

Observe that if we decorate a (geometric or abstract) d-complex Γ on n vertices with a $d \times n$ matrix C as we have been doing in the previous sections then each facet inherits a canonical orientation from C. When C positively decorates Γ these orientations are "as inconsistent as can be":

Proposition 5.3. *Let (Γ, C) be a positively decorated pure simplicial complex. Then, the canonical orientations given by C to the facets of Γ are inconsistent along every common face of two neighboring facets. In particular, if Γ is orientable (e.g., if Γ can be geometrically embedded in $\mathbb{R}^{\dim(\Gamma)}$) and positively decorable, then its adjacency graph is bipartite.*

Proof. We need to check that the submatrices of C corresponding to τ and τ', extended with a row of ones, have determinants of the same sign. Without loss of generality assume the matrices (without the row of ones) to be

$$M_\tau = \begin{pmatrix} c_1 & \dots & c_d & c_{d+1} \end{pmatrix} \quad \text{and} \quad M_{\tau'} = \begin{pmatrix} c_1 & \dots & c_d & c'_{d+1} \end{pmatrix}.$$

Since C positively decorates τ, and τ', and since $\operatorname{minor}(M_\tau, d+1) = \operatorname{minor}(M_{\tau'}, d+1) = \begin{vmatrix} c_1 & \dots & c_d \end{vmatrix}$, we get that all the signed minors $(-1)^i \operatorname{minor}(M_\tau, i)$ and $(-1)^i \operatorname{minor}(M_{\tau'}, i)$ have one and the same sign. In particular, the determinants

$$\begin{vmatrix} c_1 & \dots & c_d & c_{d+1} \\ 1 & \dots & 1 & 1 \end{vmatrix} \quad \text{and} \quad \begin{vmatrix} c_1 & \dots & c_d & c'_{d+1} \\ 1 & \dots & 1 & 1 \end{vmatrix}$$

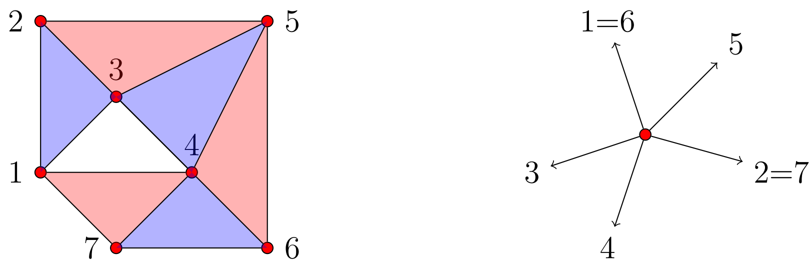

Figure 1: A two-dimensional simplicial complex whose adjacency graph is bipartite (left) and which is positively decorable (right) but not balanced. The white triangle 134 is not part of the complex.

have the same sign, so the orientations given to τ and τ' by C are inconsistent.

The last assertion is obvious: The positive decoration gives us orientations for the facets that alternate along the adjacency graph, while orientability gives us one that is preserved along the adjacency graph. This can only happen if every cycle in the graph has even length, that is, if the graph is bipartite. □

Proposition 5.4. *Let e_i be the i-th canonical basis vector of $\mathbb{R}^d$ and $e_{d+1} = (-1, \ldots, -1)$. Let Γ be a balanced (n, d)-complex with $(d+1)$-coloring $\gamma : [n] \to [d+1]$. Then the matrix C with column vectors $e_{\gamma(1)}, \ldots, e_{\gamma(n)}$ in this order positively decorates Γ.*

Proof. By construction, every $d \times (d+1)$ submatrix of C corresponding to a d-simplex of Γ is a column permutation of the $d \times (d+1)$ matrix with column vectors $e_1, \ldots, e_{d+1}$ in this order. This latter matrix is positively spanning, so the statement follows from Proposition 3.2. □

Propositions 5.3 and 5.4 imply:

Theorem 5.5. *For orientable pure complexes (in particular, for geometric d-complexes in $\mathbb{R}^d$) one has*

$$\text{balanced} \Longrightarrow \text{positively decorable} \Longrightarrow \text{bipartite.}$$

None of the reverse implications is true, as the following two examples respectively show.

Example 5.6. *The $(7, 2)$-complex of Figure 1 has a bipartite adjacency graph but is not balanced. The righthand side of the figure describes a positive decoration of the simplex. Therefore, positively decorable simplicial complexes are not necessarily balanced.*

Example 5.7. *Let Γ be a graph consisting of two disjoint cycles and let $\overline{\Gamma}$ be its complement, which is a pure $(8, 5)$-complex. The adjacency graph of Γ, hence that of $\overline{\Gamma}$, is bipartite, again consisting of two cycles of length four. On the other hand, since Γ is positively decorable but not part of the boundary of a convex polygon, Lemma 4.6 tells us that $\overline{\Gamma}$ is regular but not positively decorable (remark that $\overline{\Gamma}$ cannot be the whole boundary of a simplicial 6-polytope since for that its adjacency graph would need to have degree six at every vertex).*

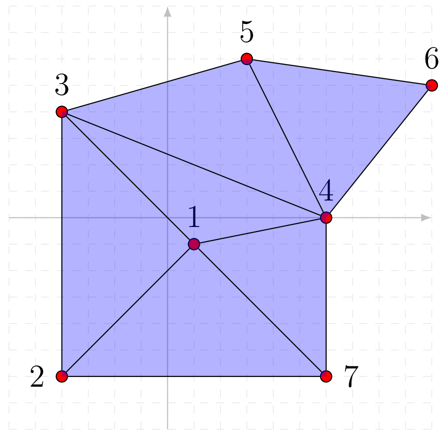

Figure 2: The balanced simplicial complex from Example 5.10.

However, the relationship between balancedness and bipartiteness can be made an equivalence under certain additional hypotheses. A pure simplicial complex Γ is called *locally strongly connected* if the adjacency graph of the star of any face is connected. Locally strongly connected complexes are sometimes called *normal* and they include, for example, all triangulated manifolds, with or without boundary. See, e.g., the paragraph after Theorem A in [15] for more information on them. By results of Joswig [11, Proposition 6] and [11, Corollary 11], a locally strongly connected and simply connected complex Γ on a finite set $\mathcal{A}$ is balanced if and only if its adjacency graph is bipartite, see also [10, Theorem 5]. In particular, we have:

Corollary 5.8. *For simply connected triangulated manifolds (in particular, for triangulations of point configurations) one has*

$$\textit{balanced} \iff \textit{positively decorable} \iff \textit{bipartite.}$$

We close this section by illustrating two concrete applications of Theorem 5.5.

Corollary 5.9. *Assume that a finite full-dimensional point configuration $\mathcal{A}$ in $\mathbb{Z}^d$ admits a regular triangulation and let Γ be a balanced simplicial subcomplex of this triangulation. Let $\nu : \mathcal{A} \to \mathbb{R}$ be a function certifying the regularity of the triangulation and let $\gamma : \mathrm{Vertices}(\Gamma) \to [d+1]$ be a $(d+1)$-coloring of Γ. Then for $t > 0$ sufficiently small, the number of positive solutions of the Viro polynomial system*

$$\sum_{w \in \mathrm{Vert}(\Gamma)} t^{\nu(w)} e_{\gamma(w)} X^w = 0 \tag{5.1}$$

is not smaller than the number of d-simplices of Γ.

Example 5.10. *Let $d = 2$, $\mathcal{A} = \{w_1, \ldots, w_7\}$ where $w_1 = (1, -1)$, $w_2 = (-4, -6)$, $w_3 = (-4, 4)$, $w_4 = (6, 0)$, $w_5 = (3, 6)$, $w_6 = (10, 5)$ and $w_7 = (6, -6)$, Choosing heights $\nu(w_1) =$*

$\nu(w_2) = \nu(w_3) = 0$, $\nu(w_4) = 3$, $\nu(w_5) = 5$, $\nu(w_6) = 10$, *and* $\nu(w_7) = 2$ *provides a regular triangulation of* $\mathcal{A}$ *which has the balanced simplicial subcomplex described in Figure 2. By Corollary 5.9, the Viro polynomial system*

$$\begin{aligned} X_1X_2^{-1} - X_1^{-4}X_2^4 + t^5X_1^3X_2^6 - t^{10}X_1^{10}X_2^5 - t^2X_1^6X_2^{-6} = 0 \\ X_1^{-4}X_2^{-6} - X_1^{-4}X_2^4 + t^3X_1^6 - t^{10}X_1^{10}X_2^5 - t^2X_1^6X_2^{-6} = 0 \end{aligned}$$

has at least six solutions in the positive orthant for $t > 0$ *sufficiently small.*

In particular we recover the following result implicit in [19, Lemma 3.9] concerning maximally positive systems.

We use the notation $\mathrm{Vol}(\,\cdot\,)$ for the *normalized volume*, that is, $d!$ times the Euclidean volume in $\mathbb{R}^d$. A triangulation Γ of $\mathcal{A}$ is called *unimodular* if for any maximal simplex $\tau \in \Gamma$ we have $\mathrm{Vol}(\Gamma) = 1$. A polynomial system with support $\mathcal{A}$ is called *maximally positive* if it has $\mathrm{Vol}(Q)$ non-degenerate positive solutions, where Q is the convex-hull of $\mathcal{A}$. By Kushnirenko Theorem [14], if a system is maximally positive then all its solutions in the complex torus $(\mathbb{C} \setminus \{0\})^d$ lie in the positive orthant $(0, \infty)^d$.

Corollary 5.11 ([19])**.** *Assume that* Γ *is a regular unimodular triangulation of a finite set* $\mathcal{A} \subset \mathbb{Z}^d$. *Assume furthermore that* Γ *is balanced, or equivalently that its adjacency graph is bipartite. Let* $\nu : \mathcal{A} \to \mathbb{R}$ *be a function certifying the regularity of* Γ *and let* $\gamma : \mathrm{Vertices}(\Gamma) \to [d+1]$ *be a* $(d+1)$*-coloring of* Γ. *Then, for* $t > 0$ *sufficiently small, the Viro polynomial system* (5.1) *is maximally positive.*

Proof. By Corollary 5.9, the system (5.1) has at least $\mathrm{Vol}(Q)$ non-degenerate solutions in the positive orthant for $t > 0$ small enough. On the other hand, it has at most $\mathrm{Vol}(Q)$ non-degenerate solutions with non-zero complex coordinates by Kushnirenko Theorem [14]. □

This result is also a variant of [22, Corollary 2.4] which, with the same hypotheses except that of Γ being balanced, concludes that the system (3.1) is "maximally real": it has $\mathrm{Vol}(Q)$ non-degenerate solutions in $(\mathbb{R} \setminus \{0\})^d$ (and no other solution in $(\mathbb{C} \setminus \{0\})^d$ by Kushnirenko Theorem).

6 A lower bound based on cyclic polytopes

This section is devoted to the construction and analysis of a family of regular and positively decorable complexes obtained as subcomplexes of cyclic polytopes.

Definition 6.1. *Let* d *and* $n > d+1$ *be two positive integers and* $a_1 < a_2 < \cdots < a_n$ *be real numbers. The cyclic polytope* $C(n, d+1)$ *associated to* $(a_1, \ldots, a_n)$ *is the convex hull in* $\mathbb{R}^{d+1}$ *of the points* $(a_i, a_i^2, \ldots, a_i^{d+1})$, $i = 1, \ldots, n$.

The cyclic polytope $C(n, d+1)$ is a simplicial $(d+1)$-polytope whose combinatorial structure does not depend on the choice of the real numbers $a_1, \ldots, a_n$. In particular, let us denote by $\mathbf{C}_{n,d}$ the d-dimensional abstract simplicial complex on the vertex set $[n]$ that forms the boundary of $C(n, d+1)$. One of the reasons why cyclic polytopes are important is that they maximize the number of simplices of every dimension among polytopes with a given dimension and number of vertices. We are specially interested in the case of d odd, in which case the complex is as follows:

Proposition 6.2 ([7]). *If d is odd, the d-simplices in the boundary of the cyclic polytope $C(n, d+1)$ are of the form*

$$\{i_1, i_1+1, i_2, i_2+1, \cdots, i_{\frac{d+1}{2}}, i_{\frac{d+1}{2}}+1\}$$

with $1 \le i_1$, $i_{\frac{d+1}{2}} \le n$ and $i_{j+1} > i_j + 1$ for all j. (If $i_{\frac{d+1}{2}} = n$ then $i_1 > 1$ is required, and vertex 1 plays the role of $i_{\frac{d+1}{2}} + 1$). The number of them equals

$$\binom{n-(d+1)/2-1}{(d+1)/2-1} \quad + \quad \binom{n-(d+1)/2}{(d+1)/2}.$$

Unfortunately, not every proper subcomplex of $\mathbf{C}_{n,d}$ can be positively decorated (except in trivial cases) since its adjacency graph is not bipartite.

Example 6.3. *In the cyclic polytope $C(6,4)$, the tetrahedra $A = \{1,2,3,4\}$, $B = \{1,2,4,5\}$, $C = \{2,3,4,5\}$ form a 3-cycle in the adjacency graph of $\mathbf{C}_{6,3}$.*

We now introduce the bipartite subcomplexes of $\mathbf{C}_{n,d}$ that we are interested in. For the time being, we assume both $d+1 = 2k$ and $n = 2m$ to be even. If we represent any d-simplex $\{i_1, i_1+1, i_2, i_2+1, \cdots, i_k, i_k+1\}$ of $\mathbf{C}_{2m,2k-1}$ by the sequence $\{i_1, \ldots, i_k\}$, we have a bijection between facets of $\mathbf{C}_{2m,2k-1}$ and stable sets of size k in a cycle of length $2m$ (recall that a stable set in a graph is a set of vertices no two of them adjacent). Consider the $2k-1$-dimensional subcomplex $\mathbf{S}_{2m,2k-1}$ of $\mathbf{C}_{2m,2k-1}$ whose maximal simplices are the $(2k-1)$-simplices $\{i_1, \ldots, i_k\}$ such that for all j, either i_j is odd, or $i_{j+1} - i_j > 2$. That is, we are allowed to take two consecutive pairs to build a simplex if both their i_j's are odd, but not if they are even. The adjacency graph of the subcomplex $\mathbf{S}_{2m,2k-1}$ is bipartite, since the parity of $i_1 + \cdots + i_k$ alternates between adjacent simplices.

Example 6.4. *For $n = 6$ and $d+1 = 4$ we have*

$$\mathbf{S}_{6,3} = \quad \{\{1,2,3,4\}, \{1,2,4,5\}, \{1,2,5,6\}, \{2,3,5,6\}, \{3,4,5,6\}, \{1,3,4,6\}\}.$$

The tetrahedra are written so as to show that the adjacency graph is a cycle: each is adjacent with the previous and next ones in the list.

In order to find out and analyze the number of facets in the simplicial complexes $\mathbf{S}_{2m,2k-1}$ we introduce the following graphs:

Definition 6.5. *The* comb graph *on $2m$ vertices is the graph consisting of a path with m vertices together with an edge attached to each vertex in the path. The* corona graph *with $2m$ vertices is the graph consisting of a cycle of length m together with an edge attached to each vertex in the cycle. Figure 3 shows the case $m = 6$ of both.*

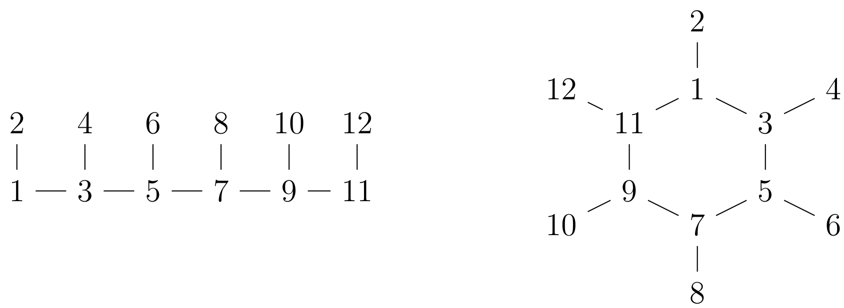

Figure 3: The comb graph (left) and the corona graph (right) on 12 vertices.

We denote by $D_{h,k}$ (respectively $F_{h,k}$) the number of matchings of size k in the comb graph (respectively, the corona graph) with $2(h+k)$ edges. They form sequences A102413 and A008288 in the Online Encyclopedia of Integer Sequences [17]. The following table shows the first terms:

	$D_{h,k}$							$F_{h,k}$						
$k=$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
$h=0:$	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
$h=1:$	1	3	5	7	9	11	13	1	4	6	8	10	12	14
$h=2:$	1	5	13	25	41	61	85	1	6	16	30	48	70	96
$h=3:$	1	7	25	63	129	231	377	1	8	30	76	154	272	438
$h=4:$	1	9	41	129	321	681	1289	1	10	48	154	384	810	1520
$h=5:$	1	11	61	231	681	1683	3653	1	12	70	272	810	2004	4334
$h=6:$	1	13	85	377	1289	3653	8989	1	14	96	438	1520	4334	10672

The numbers $D_{h,k}$ are the well-known *Delannoy numbers*, which have been thoroughly studied [1]. Besides matchings in the comb graph, $D_{h,k}$ equals the number of paths from $(0,0)$ to (h,k) with steps $(1,0)$, $(0,1)$ and $(1,1)$. The equivalence of the two definitions follows from the fact that both satisfy the following recurrence, which can also be taken as a definition of $D_{h,k}$:

$$D_{h,0} = D_{0,k} = 1, \quad \text{and} \quad D_{h,k} = D_{h,k-1} + D_{h-1,k} + D_{h-1,k-1}, \quad \forall i,j \geq 1.$$

The Delannoy numbers can also be defined by any of the formulas in Eq. (1.2).

Proposition 6.6.

$$|\mathbf{S}_{2(h+k),2k-1}| = F_{h,k} = D_{h,k} + D_{h-1,k-1}.$$

In particular, $D_{h,k} < |\mathbf{S}_{2(h+k),2k-1}| < 2D_{h,k}$.

Proof. To show that $F_{h,k} = D_{h,k} + D_{h-1,k-1}$, observe that the corona graph is obtained from the comb graph by adding an edge between the first and last vertices of the path. We call that edge the reference edge of the corona graph (the edge 1—11 in Figure 3). Matchings in the corona graph that do not use the reference edge are the same as matchings in the comb graph, and are counted by $D_{h,k}$. Matchings of size i using the reference edge are the same as matchings of size $i-1$ in the comb graph obtained from the corona by deleting the two end-points of the reference edge; this graph happens to be comb graph with $2(h+k-2)$ edges, so these matchings are counted by $D_{h-1,k-1}$.

To show $|\mathbf{S}_{2(h+k),2k-1}| = F_{h,k}$, let $m = h+k$. Observe that each simplex in $\mathbf{S}_{2m,2k-1}$ consists of k pairs (i_j, i_j+1), $j = 1, \ldots, k$, with the restriction that when i_j is even then the elements $i_j - 1$ and $i_j + 2$ cannot be used. In the corona graph, pairs with i_j odd correspond to the spikes and pairs with i_j even correspond to the cycle edge between two spikes, which "uses up" the four vertices of two spikes. This correspondence is clearly a bijection.

The last part follows from the previous two since

$$D_{h,k} < D_{h,k} + D_{h-1,k-1} < 2D_{h,k}.$$

$\square$

Example 6.7. *Proposition 6.6 says that*

$$|\mathbf{S}_{10,5}| = F_{2,3} = D_{2,3} + D_{1,2} = 25 + 5 = 30.$$

The following is the whole list of 30 *simplices in* $\mathbf{S}_{10,5}$. *Each row is a cyclic orbit, obtained from the first element of the row by even numbers of cyclic shifts. The first two rows, the next three row, and the last row, respectively, correspond to matchings using* 0, 1 *or* 2 *edges from the cycle in the pentagonal corona, respectively.*

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbf{S}_{10,5} = \ & \{\{1,2,3,4,5,6\},\{3,4,5,6,7,8\},\{5,6,7,8,9,10\},\{1,2,7,8,9,10\},\{1,2,3,4,9,10\},\\ & \{1,2,3,4,7,8\},\{3,4,5,6,9,10\},\{1,2,5,6,7,8\},\{3,4,7,8,9,10\},\{1,2,5,6,9,10\},\\ & \{1,2,3,4,6,7\},\{3,4,5,6,8,9\},\{1,5,6,7,8,10\},\{2,3,7,8,9,10\},\{1,2,4,5,9,10\},\\ & \{1,2,3,4,8,9\},\{1,3,4,5,6,10\},\{2,3,5,6,7,8\},\{4,5,7,8,9,10\},\{1,2,6,7,9,10\},\\ & \{1,2,4,5,7,8\},\{3,4,6,7,9,10\},\{1,2,5,6,8,9\},\{1,3,4,7,8,10\},\{2,3,5,6,9,10\},\\ & \{1,2,4,5,8,9\},\{1,3,4,6,7,10\},\{2,3,5,6,8,9\},\{1,4,5,7,8,10\},\{2,3,6,7,9,10\}\}.\end{aligned}$$

The symmetry $F_{h,k} = F_{k,h}$ (apparent in the table, and which follows from the symmetry in the Delannoy numbers) implies that $\mathbf{S}_{2m,2k-1}$ and $\mathbf{S}_{2m,2m-2k-1}$ have the same size. In fact, they turn out to be complementary:

Theorem 6.8. *Let* $\mathbf{S}'_{2m,2k-1}$ *denote the image of* $\mathbf{S}_{2m,2k-1}$ *under the following relabelling of vertices:* $(1,2,3,4,\ldots,2m-1,2m) \mapsto (2,1,4,3,\ldots,2m,2m-1)$. *(That is, we swap the labels of i and $i+1$ for every odd i). Then,* $\mathbf{S}'_{2m,2k-1}$ *is the complement of* $\mathbf{S}_{2m,2m-2k-1}$. *In particular,* $\mathbf{S}_{2m,2k-1}$ *is positively decorable for all k and regular for $k \geq 2$.*

Proof. Consider the following obvious involutive bijection ϕ between matchings of size k and matchings of size $m-k$ in the corona graph: For a given matching M, let $\phi(M)$ have the same edges of the cycle as M and the complementary set of (available) spikes. Remember that once a matching has been decided to use i edges of the cycle, there are $m-2i$ spikes available, of which M uses $k-i$ and M' uses the other $m-k-i$. The relabeling of the vertices makes that, for each odd i, if the facet of $\mathbf{S}_{2m,2k-1}$ corresponding to M uses the pair of vertices $i+1$ and $i+2$, then in the facet corresponding to M' we are using the complement set from the four-tuple $\{i, i+1, i+2, i+3\}$ (except they have been relabeled to $i+1$ and $i+2$ again).

Since the complex $\mathbf{S}_{2m,2k-1}$ is a subset of the boundary of the cyclic polytope, and a proper subset for $k \geq 2$, it is regular and positively decorable. □

Corollary 6.9. *For every $h, j \in \mathbb{Z}_{>0}$ one has*

$$\Xi_{2h,2k} \geq \Xi_{2h-1,2k} \geq F_{h,k} \geq D_{h,k}.$$

Proof. The first inequality follows from Remark 2.2. The middle inequality is a direct consequence of Theorem 6.8 and Theorem 4.10, since $\mathbf{S}_{2(i+j),2i-1}$ is regular and positively decorable. The last inequality follows from Proposition 6.6. □

Remark 6.10. *The above result is our tightest bound for $\Xi_{d,k}$ when d is odd and k even. For other parities we can proceed as follows:*

- *We define $\mathbf{S}_{2m-1,2k-1}$ to be the deletion of vertex $2m$ in $\mathbf{S}_{2m,2k-1}$. That is, we remove all facets that use vertex $2m$.*
- *We define $\mathbf{S}_{2m-1,2k-2}$ to be the link of vertex $2m$ in $\mathbf{S}_{2m,2k-1}$. That is, we keep facets that use vertex $2m$, but remove vertex $2m$ in them.*

Clearly, $|\mathbf{S}_{2m,2k-1}| = |\mathbf{S}_{2m-1,2k-1}| + |\mathbf{S}_{2m-1,2k-2}|$. Also, since deletion in the complement complex is the complement of the link, we still have that $\mathbf{S}_{2m-1,2k-1}$ and $\mathbf{S}_{2m-1,2m-2k-2}$ are complements to one another. Moreover, since $\mathbf{S}_{2m,2k-1}$ has a dihedral symmetry acting transitively on vertices and since each facet has a fraction of k/m of the vertices, we have that

$$|\mathbf{S}_{2m-1,2k-1}| = \frac{m-k}{m}|\mathbf{S}_{2m,2k-1}| \qquad \textit{and} \qquad |\mathbf{S}_{2m-1,2k-2}| = \frac{k}{m}|\mathbf{S}_{2m,2k-1}|.$$

This, with Corollary 6.9, implies

$$\Xi_{2i-1,2j-1} \geq \frac{j}{i+j} F_{i,j} \qquad \textit{and} \qquad \Xi_{2i,2j} \geq \frac{i+1}{i+j+1} F_{i+1,j}.$$

For $\Xi_{2i,2j-1}$ we can say

$$\Xi_{2i,2j-1} \geq \Xi_{1,1} \cdot \Xi_{2i-1,2(j-1)} \geq 2\, F_{i,j-1}.$$

For example, we have that

$$\Xi_{d,d} \geq |\mathbf{S}_{2d+1,d}| = \begin{cases} \frac{1}{2}|\mathbf{S}_{2d+2,d}| & \text{if } d \text{ is odd.} \\ \\ \frac{d/2+1}{d+1}|\mathbf{S}_{2d+2,d+1}| & \text{if } d \text{ is even.} \end{cases} \tag{6.1}$$

The following table shows the lower bounds for $\Xi_{d,d}$ obtained from this formula, which form sequence A110110 in the Online Enciclopedia of Integer Sequences [17]:

d	$\frac{1}{2}\lvert\mathbf{S}_{2d+2,d}\rvert$	$\frac{d/2+1}{d+1}\lvert\mathbf{S}_{2d+2,d+1}\rvert$	$\lvert\mathbf{S}_{2d+1,d}\rvert$
1	$\frac{1}{2}4 =$		2
2		$\frac{2}{3}6 =$	4
3	$\frac{1}{2}16 =$		8
4		$\frac{3}{5}30 =$	18
5	$\frac{1}{2}76 =$		38
6		$\frac{4}{7}154 =$	88
7	$\frac{1}{2}384 =$		192
8		$\frac{5}{9}810 =$	450
9	$\frac{1}{2}2004 =$		1002

7 Comparison of our bounds with previous ones

In order to derive asymptotic lower bounds on $\Xi_{d,k}$ we now look at the asymptotics of Delannoy numbers.

Proposition 7.1. *For every $i, j \in \mathbb{Z}_{>0}$ we have*

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} (F_{in,jn})^{1/n} = \lim_{n\to\infty} (D_{in,jn})^{1/n} = \left(\frac{\sqrt{i^2+j^2}+j}{i}\right)^i \left(\frac{\sqrt{i^2+j^2}+i}{j}\right)^j.$$

Proof. The first equality follows from Proposition 6.6. For the second one, since we have

$$D_{i,j} = \sum_{\ell=0}^{\min\{i,j\}} 2^\ell \binom{i}{\ell}\binom{j}{\ell},$$

we conclude that

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} (D_{in,jn})^{1/n} = \lim_{n\to\infty} \left(2^\ell \binom{in}{\ell}\binom{jn}{\ell}\right)^{1/n},$$

where $\ell = \ell(n) \in [0, \min\{in, jn\}]$ is the integer that maximizes $f(\ell) := 2^\ell\binom{in}{\ell}\binom{jn}{\ell}$. To find ℓ we observe that

$$\frac{f(\ell)}{f(\ell-1)} = \frac{2(in-\ell)(jn-\ell)}{\ell^2} = \frac{2(i-\alpha)(j-\alpha)}{\alpha^2},$$

where $\alpha := \ell/n$. Since this quotient is a strictly decreasing function of α and since we can think of $\alpha \in [0, \min\{i,j\}]$ as a continuous parameter (because we are interested in the limit $n \to \infty$), the maximum we are looking for is attained when this quotient equals 1. This happens when

$$\alpha^2 = 2(i-\alpha)(j-\alpha) \tag{7.1}$$

which implies

$$\alpha = i + j - \sqrt{i^2 + j^2}. \tag{7.2}$$

(We here take negative sign for the square root since $\alpha = i + j + \sqrt{i^2 + j^2} > \min\{i, j\}$ is not a valid solution). We then just need to plug $\ell = \alpha n$ in $2^\ell \binom{in}{\ell}\binom{jn}{\ell}$ and use Stirling's approximation:

$$\begin{aligned}
\left(2^{\alpha n}\binom{in}{\alpha n}\binom{jn}{\alpha n}\right)^{1/n} &\sim \left(\frac{2^{\alpha n}(in)^{in}(jn)^{jn}}{(\alpha n)^{\alpha n}((i-\alpha)n)^{(i-\alpha)n}(\alpha n)^{\alpha n}((j-\alpha)n)^{(j-\alpha)n}}\right)^{1/n} \\
&= \frac{2^\alpha i^i j^j}{\alpha^{2\alpha}(i-\alpha)^{i-\alpha}(j-\alpha)^{j-\alpha}} \\
&\overset{(*)}{=} \frac{2^\alpha i^i j^j}{(2(i-\alpha)(j-\alpha))^\alpha (i-\alpha)^{i-\alpha}(j-\alpha)^{j-\alpha}} \\
&= \left(\frac{i}{i-\alpha}\right)^i \left(\frac{j}{j-\alpha}\right)^j \\
&\overset{(**)}{=} \left(\frac{i}{\sqrt{i^2+j^2}-j}\right)^i \left(\frac{j}{\sqrt{i^2+j^2}-i}\right)^j \\
&= \left(\frac{\sqrt{i^2+j^2}+j}{i}\right)^i \left(\frac{\sqrt{i^2+j^2}+i}{j}\right)^j.
\end{aligned}$$

In equalities (*) and (**) we have used Eqs. 7.1 and 7.2, respectively. □

Theorem 7.2. *For every $d, k \in \mathbb{Z}_{>0}$:*

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} (\Xi_{dn,kn})^{1/n} \geq \left(\frac{\sqrt{d^2+k^2}+k}{d}\right)^{\frac{d}{2}} \left(\frac{\sqrt{d^2+k^2}+d}{k}\right)^{\frac{k}{2}}.$$

Proof. By Corollary 6.9 and Proposition 7.1:

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} (\Xi_{dn,kn})^{1/n} \geq \lim_{n\to\infty} \left(D_{\frac{dn}{2},\frac{kn}{2}}\right)^{1/n} \left(\frac{\sqrt{d^2+k^2}+k}{d}\right)^{\frac{d}{2}} \left(\frac{\sqrt{d^2+k^2}+d}{k}\right)^{\frac{k}{2}}.$$

□

Recall from Theorem 2.4 that for every pair (d, k) the limit $\lim_{n\to\infty} {\Xi_{dn,kn}}^{1/(dn+kn)}$ exists and depends only on the ratio d/k. Moreover this limit coincides with the value at $\frac{d}{d+k}$ of the function $\alpha \mapsto \xi_{\alpha,1-\alpha} = \lim_{n\to\infty}(\Xi_{\lfloor \alpha n\rfloor,\lfloor (1-\alpha)n\rfloor})^{1/n} \in [1, \infty]$ defined over $(0, 1)$ (see Section 2). Theorem 7.2 translates to:

Corollary 7.3. *For every $\alpha, \beta > 0$:*

$$\xi_{\alpha,\beta} \geq \left(\frac{\sqrt{\alpha^2+\beta^2}+\beta}{\alpha}\right)^{\frac{\alpha}{2(\alpha+\beta)}} \left(\frac{\sqrt{\alpha^2+\beta^2}+\alpha}{\beta}\right)^{\frac{\beta}{2(\alpha+\beta)}}.$$

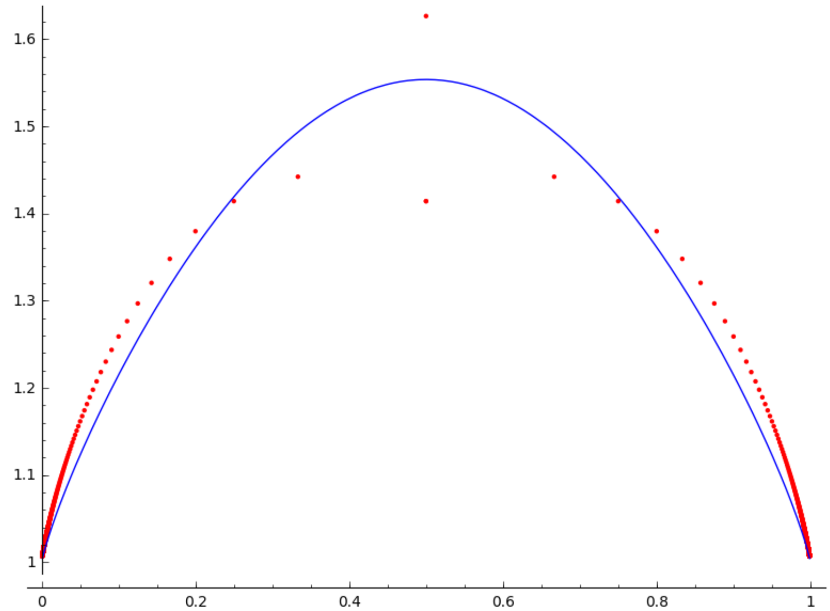

Figure 4: The lower bound for $\xi_{\alpha,1-\alpha}$ coming from Theorem 7.2 (blue curve) versus the ones coming from $\Xi_{2,2} \geq 7$ and $\Xi_{d1} = \Xi_{1,d} = d+1$ (red dots).

For example, taking $d = k$ the statement above gives

$$\xi_{1/2,1/2} = \lim_{d\to\infty} (\Xi_{d,d})^{1/2d} \geq (\sqrt{2}+1)^{1/2} \approx 1.5538\ldots.$$

This bound is worse than the one coming from $\Xi_{2,2} \geq 7$ (see Proposition 2.1), which implies that $(\Xi_{d,d})^{1/2d} \geq 7^{1/4} \approx 1.6266$. But Corollary 7.3 gives meaningful (and new) bounds for a large choice of d/k or, equivalently, of $\alpha \in (0,1)$. For example, taking $k = 2d$ the statement above gives

$$\xi_{1/3,2/3} = \lim_{d\to\infty} (\Xi_{d,2d})^{1/3d} \geq \left(\frac{\sqrt{22+10\sqrt{5}}}{2}\right)^{1/3} \approx 1.4933\ldots.$$

and the same bound is obtained for $\xi_{2/3,1/3} = \lim_{d\to\infty}(\Xi_{2d,d})^{1/3d}$.

For better comparison, Figure 4 graphs the lower bound for $\xi_{\alpha,1-\alpha}$ given by Corollary 7.3. The red dots are the lower bounds obtained from the previously known values $\Xi_{2,2} \geq 7$ and $\Xi_{d,1} = \Xi_{1,d} = d+1$.

Since the function $\alpha \mapsto \xi_{\alpha,1-\alpha}$ is log-concave (Proposition 2.5), it is a bit more convenient to plot the logarithm of $\log \xi_{\alpha,1-\alpha}$; in such a plot we can take the upper convex envelope of all known lower bounds for ξ and get a new lower bound. This is done in Figure 5 where the black dashed segments show that the use of Corollary 7.3 produces new lower bounds for $\xi_{\alpha,1-\alpha}$ whenever $\alpha \in (0.2, 0.8)$.

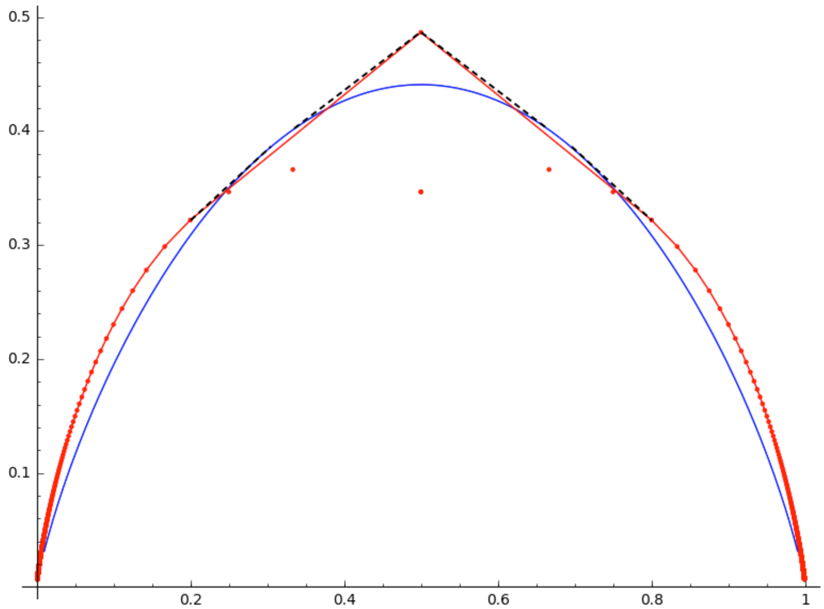

Figure 5: The different lower bounds for $\log \xi_{\alpha,1-\alpha}$, $\alpha \in (0,1)$. The red line is the best previously known lower bound, using Proposition 2.1 and log-concavity. Our lower bound (blue curve) is above the previously known ones for $\alpha \in [0.2434, 0.3659]$. This range can be extended to $\alpha \in [0.2, 0.8]$ using log-concavity (dashed lines).

8 Limitations of the polyhedral method

We finish the paper with an analysis of how far could our methods be possibly taken. For this, let us denote by $R_{d,k}$ the maximum size (i.e. the maximum number of facets) of a regular $(d-1)$-complex on $d+k$ vertices such that its complement is also regular. Part (2) of Theorem 4.10 says

$$\Xi_{d,k} \geq R_{d+1,k}$$

and our main result in Section 6 was the use of this inequality to provide new lower bounds for $\Xi_{d,k}$. Observe that either $R_{d,k}$ or $R_{d,k}-1$ equals the maximum size of a regular positively decorable complex (Corollary 4.7).

Remark 8.1. *Our shift on parameters for $R_{d,k}$ is chosen to make it symmetric in k and d: $R_{d,k} = R_{k,d}$.*

The inequality $\Xi_{d,k} \geq R_{d+1,k}$ is certainly not an equality, as the following table of small values shows:

$R_{d+1,k}$

$d \backslash k$	1	2	3	4
0	1	1	1	1
1	1	3	4	5
2	1	4	7	8
3	1	5	8	≥ 16

$\Xi_{d,k}$

$d \backslash k$	1	2	3	4
0				
1	2	3	4	5
2	3	≥ 7		
3	4			

The values of Ξ come from Proposition 2.1 and those of R come from:

- $R_{1,k} = R_{k,1} = 1$ is obvious: a regular 0-dimensional complex can only have one point.
- $R_{2,k} = R_{k,2} = k+1$ since the largest regular 1-complex with $2+k$ vertices is a path of $k+1$ edges, and its complement is regular too (Example 4.11).
- $R_{3,k} \leq 2k+1$ follows from the fact that a triangulated 2-ball with $k+3$ vertices has at most $2k+1$ triangles (with equality if and only if its boundary is a 3-cycle). On the other hand, it is easy to construct a balanced 3-polytope with $k+3$ vertices for every $k \notin \{1,2,4\}$: for odd k, consider the bipyramid over a $(k+1)$-gon; for even k, glue an octahedron into a facet of the latter. This shows that $R_{3,k} = 2k+1$ for all such k (but $R_{3,4} = 8$ instead of 9, since no balanced 3-polytope on 7 vertices exists; the best we can do is a double pyramid over a path of length four).
- $R_{4,4} \geq 16$ follows from the complex $\mathbf{S}_{8,3}$, of size $F_{2,2} = 16$.

It is easy to prove analogues of Equations (2.2) and (2.3) for R. Assume for simplicity that both d and k are even and that $d \leq k$. Then, by Proposition 6.6

$$R_{d,k} \geq |\mathbf{S}_{d+k,d-1}| = F_{d/2,k/2} \geq D_{d/2,k/2} \geq \binom{\frac{d+k}{2}}{\frac{d}{2}},$$

where the last inequality comes from taking the summand $\ell = 0$ in Eq. (1.2). For $k = d$ this recovers Eq. (2.4) (modulo a sublinear factor) since $\binom{d}{d/2} \in \Theta(2^d/\sqrt{d})$. More generally, using Stirling's approximation we get:

$$R_{d,k} \geq \binom{\frac{d+k}{2}}{\frac{d}{2}} \underset{d,k\to\infty}{\sim} \left(\frac{d+k}{k}\right)^{k/2} \left(\frac{d+k}{d}\right)^{d/2} \sqrt{\frac{d+k}{\pi k d}}.$$

For constant d and big k we can approximate $\left(\frac{d+k}{k}\right)^{k/2} \simeq e^{d/2}$ so that

$$R_{d,k} \geq \frac{e^{d/2}}{\sqrt{\pi d}} \left(\frac{k}{d}+1\right)^{d/2}.$$

This, except for the constant factor and for the exponent $d/2$ instead of d, is close to Equation (2.2). Doing the same for constant k and big d gives the analogue of Equation (2.3).

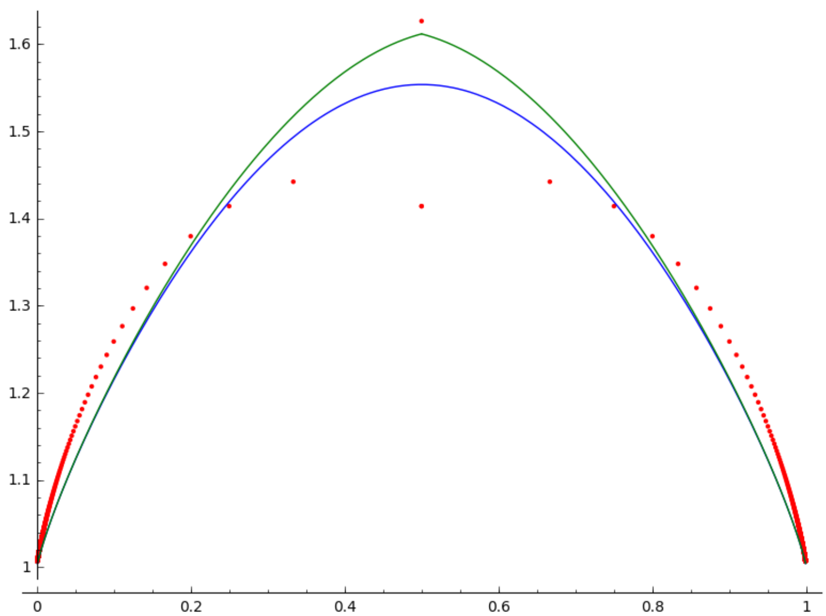

Figure 6: The lower bound for $\xi_{\alpha,1-\alpha}$ coming from Theorem 7.2 (blue curve) versus the ones coming from $\Xi_{2,2} \geq 7$ and $\Xi_{d,1} = \Xi_{1,d} = d + 1$ (red dots). The dashed green curve, coming from the upper bound theorem for polytopes, is the limit of the lower bounds that could possibly be produced with our method.

Similarly, one has

$$R_{d+d',k+k'} \geq R_{d,k} R_{d',k'}$$

(the analogue of part (1) in Proposition 2.1) since the join of regular complexes is regular and the complement of a join is the join of the complements.

Regarding upper bounds, since the number of facets of a regular complex cannot exceed that of a cyclic polytope we have that

$$R_{2d,2k} \leq |\mathbf{C}_{2d+2k,2d-1}| = \binom{2k+d}{d} + \binom{2k+d-1}{d-1},$$

so that, by using Stirling's formula, we get

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} R_{2dn,2kn}{}^{1/(2dn+2kn)} \leq \left(\frac{d+2k}{2k}\right)^{\frac{k}{d+k}} \left(\frac{d+2k}{d}\right)^{\frac{d}{2(d+k)}}.$$

Figure 6 shows this upper bound (green line) together with the lower bounds from Figure 4 (blue line and red dots). There are many red dots above the green line, meaning that the upper bound for R is smaller than the lower bound for Ξ. For example, for the case $d = k$ we have that

$$(R_{d,d})^{1/d} \leq 3\sqrt{3}/2 \approx 2.598 < 2.6458 \approx 7^{1/2} \leq (\Xi_{d,d})^{1/d}.$$

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Authors' addresses:

Frédéric Bihan, Laboratoire de Mathématiques, Université Savoie Mont Blanc, Campus Scientifique, 73376 Le Bourget-du-Lac Cedex, France, `frederic.bihan@univ-smb.fr`

Pierre-Jean Spaenlehauer, CARAMBA project, INRIA Nancy – Grand Est; Université de Lorraine; CNRS, UMR 7503; LORIA, Nancy, France, `pierre-jean.spaenlehauer@inria.fr`

Francisco Santos, Depto. de Matemáticas, Estadística y Computación, Universidad de Cantabria; 39012 Santander, Spain, `francisco.santos@unican.es`