Computing Geodesic Properties Inside a Simple Polygon

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ABSTRACT

Let P be a simple polygon of n vertices and let S be a set of n points called sites lying in the interior of P. The geodesic-distance between two sites x and y in P is defined as the length of the shortest polygonal path connecting x and y constrained to lie in P. It is a useful notion in graphics problems concerning visibility between objects, computer vision problems concerned with the description of shape, wire-layout problems in VLSI, and robotics problems concerning path planning and facility location. In this paper we propose efficient algorithms for solving a variety of geodesic-distance problems. The key result and tool used in the design of these algorithms is an O(n log n)-time algorithm for computing the geodesic convex-hull of S with respect to P, i.e., the shortest polygonal circuit containing S constrained to lie in P. We illustrate the use of this structure in computing the geodesic-diameter, the geodesic-center, and the geodesic-median of S in P, as well as the maximum geodesic distance between two sets S_1 *and* S_2 *in P.*

1. Introduction

This paper is concerned with the calculation of shortest internal distances and paths between points in the interior of a simple polygon. Figure 1 illustrates the shortest internal path between two points inside a simple polygon. Such distances and paths are also often qualified as *geodesic* and represent a special case of the problem of computing the shortest path between two points on a surface of an object such as a sphere, polyhedron, or more general surface[SGB83]. However, in general the terms *geodesic* and *shortest* path are not equivalent. The term *shortest* is intuitively quite clear but *geodesic* warrants a definition

The first paper on the shortest path between two points on a general surface was published by Leonhard Euler in 1728 [Eu]. Euler reduced the problem to the solution of a differential equation equivalent to the following geometric theorem derived earlier by Johann Bernoulli in 1698.

Theorem: (Bernoulli, 1698) The *shortest* path between two points on a surface is a *geodesic* path.

Definition: Let C be a path on a surface Σ. Let *a* be a point on C and let *b* and *c* be any two other points on C close to and on each side of *a*. In general the three points *a,b,c* will determine a plane dependent on *b* and *c*. The limiting position of this plane as *b* and *c* both move on C toward *a* is

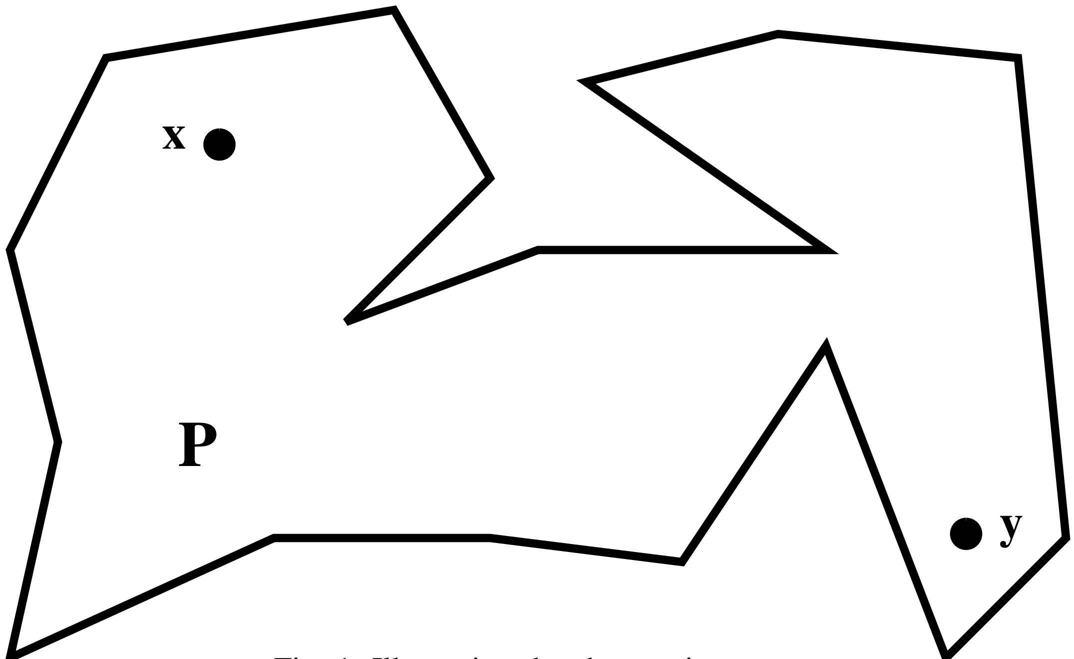

Fig. 1: Illustrating the shortest internal path between two points x and y in a simple polygon P.

called the *osculating plane* to C at point *a*.

Definition: Let C be a path on a surface Σ. If at each point *a* of C the *osculating plane* to C and the *tangent plane* to Σ are *perpendicular* to each other, then C is a *geodesic* path.

Clearly, the converse of Bernoulli's theorem is not true in general. Consider two non-diametral points on the surface of a sphere. These two points partition the great circle passing through them into two arcs of different lengths. Both arcs are *geodesic* paths between the pair of points but obviously only one of them is a *shortest* path. More interesting examples on cones and cylinders may be constructed by the reader.

Recently there has been considerable interest in the complexity of computing the shortest path between two points lying on the surface of a convex polyhedron. Mount [Mo84] presents an algorithm for computing the shortest path in $O(n^2 \log n)$ time, where n is the number of faces of the polyhedron (see also Sharir and Schorr [SS84] for an algorithm that solves the same problem in $O(n^3 \log n)$ time). Finally, Franklin and Akman [FA84] consider the situation in which the convex polyhedron is preprocessed in order that shortest-path queries between pairs of query points may be answered efficiently.

In this paper we restrict ourselves to the simpler case in which our surface of interest is a simple planar polygon. In this case a *geodesic* path is defined to be the *shortest* internal path connecting two points in the polygon and it is *unique*. For any integer $n \geq 3$, we define a *polygon* or *n-gon* in the Euclidean plane E^2 as the figure $P = [p_1,p_2,...,p_n]$ formed by n points $p_1,p_2,...,p_n$ in E^2 and n line segments $[p_i,p_{i+1}]$, i=1,2,...,n-1, and $[p_n,p_1]$. The points p_i are called the *vertices* of the *polygon* and the line segments are termed its *edges*. We assume the vertices of P are in *general position*, i.e., no three vertices are collinear.

Definition: A polygon P is called a *simple* polygon provided that no point of the plane belongs to more than two edges of P and the only points of the plane that belong to precisely two edges are the vertices of P. A simple polygon has a well defined interior and exterior denoted respectively by *int*(P) and *ext*(P). We will follow the convention of including the interior of a polygon when referring to P.

The vertices of P are either *convex* or *reflex*. For a given vertex x_j let $y = \lambda x_{j-1} + (1-\lambda)x_j$ and $z = \mu x_{j+1} + (1-\mu)x_j$. For all sufficiently small positive values of μ and λ we have that *int*[y,z] lies either totally in *int*(P) or wholly in *ext*(P); in the former case x_j is a *convex* vertex whereas in the latter case it is a *reflex* vertex.

A *polygonal path* is a simple path consisting of a sequence of line segments. If p is a polygonal path, then the *length* of p is the sum of the Euclidean lengths of all the line segments comprising p. Given two points x and x' in P the geodesic path between x and x' denoted by GP(x,x'/P) is the minimum-length polygonal path $(x=x_1,x_2,...,x_k=x')$. It is convenient to consider the geodesic path as having a direction and GP(x,x'/P) will imply that the direction is from x to x'. The length of the geodesic path is called the *geodesic distance* and is denoted by $d_G(x, x')$. Two fundamental properties of the geodesic path GP(x,x'/P) are that the path is unique and its vertices x_i, i=2,3,...,k-1 are a subset of the reflex vertices of P [Ch82],[LP84]. Chazelle [Ch82] and Lee and Preparata [LP84] independently obtained an elegant algorithm for computing GP(x,x'/P) in linear time provided that P has already been triangulated.

Definition: A chord of a simple polygon P is a closed line segment [x,y] that intersects P only at x and y. If the chord is such that its interior *int*[x,y] is contained in *int*(P) then it is called an internal-chord; if *int*[x,y] is contained in *ext*(P) it is an external-chord. A chord [x,y] of a simple polygon P is a *diagonal* if x and y are two vertices of P. An *internal* and *external* diagonal are defined in a similar manner.

Definition: A *triangulation* of a simple polygon P containing n vertices, denoted by T(P), is the union of P with a set of n-3 carefully chosen internal diagonals that partition P into n-2 triangles such that the diagonals intersect each other only at their endpoints.

It is well known that the dual graph of a polygon triangulation is a tree and both the algorithms of Chazelle and Lee and Preparata makes use of this tree. See Fig. 2 for an illustration. A *sleeve* is a triangulated polygon the dual tree of which is a chain. The first key result which they use is a linear-time algorithm for finding the shortest path between two points in a sleeve. The second is a lemma which states that the shortest path between two points x and y in a simple polygon P must lie in the sleeve determined by the triangles in T(P) that correspond to the nodes in the dual tree of T(P) that determine the graph-theoretic shortest path between the nodes x', y' in the dual tree of T(P), where x' and y' are the duals of the triangles that contain x and y, respectively. Since the dual tree of a polygon triangulation and the graph-theoretic shortest path in a tree can both be easily computed in linear time it follows that their algorithm performs in linear time on a triangulated polygon. Furthermore, since a polygon can be triangulated in O(n log log n) time [TV87] it follows that the shortest path can be computed within the same time bound. A caveat should be added, however, concerning the use of the algorithm of Tarjan and Van Wyk in a graphics environment where a polygon may not have a large number of vertices. Their algorithm involves rather complicated data structures resulting in a large overhead which may render the algorithm very slow. In practice an algorithm such as that in [To88c] may be preferred. This very simple algorithm requires neither height balanced trees nor sorting and runs in time $O(n(1+t_0))$ where t_0 is the number of nodes of degree three in the dual tree of the output triangulation delivered. Although this algorithm may run in $O(n^2)$ time for some classes of polygons, for others it runs in O(n) time [ST88a],[To88e].

Some work has also been done concerning geodesic distance and path *queries.* In particular, Guibas and Hershberger [GH87] show how to preprocess a triangulated polygon in linear time so that, given two query points x and y in P, $d_G(x,y)$ can be computed in time O(log n). Furthermore the geodesic path itself, GP(x,y/P) can be generated in an additional time proportional to the number of turns it makes.

Geodesic paths find application in a variety of areas. In *image processing* they are used for representing, approximating, and smoothing digitized shapes[SCH72]. In *robotics* they are used for motion planning, grasping, and collision avoidance [PSS88], [PeSa], [To88d], [To88f]. In *graphics* applications concerned with *visibility* and *strong hidden line* elimination they yield elegant and efficient algorithms to solve a variety of related problems [GHLST], [To86a], [To86b]. In *pattern recognition* and *mathematical morphology* they provide new descriptors of shape [LM84], [To88a]. In *computational geometry* they are useful for solving a variety of problems as well as characterizing large families of polygons that admit linear-time triangulation algorithms [ET88], [ET89]. Finally, in *mathematics* geodesic paths can be used to obtain a new proof of Krasnoselskii's theorem concerning star-shaped sets [ST88b], [To88b].

2. Geodesic Properties of Polygons

2.1 Introduction

Before considering the problem of computing the geodesic properties of sets of points inside a polygon we turn to the simpler case of geodesic properties of the polygon itself since these results will be heavily used in what follows.

2.2 The geodesic diameter of a polygon

The diameter of a set is the maximal Euclidean distance between any two elements of the set. The problem of computing the Euclidean diameter of a set efficiently is more difficult than appears at first glance and has received considerable attention in the computational geometry literature. Several published algorithms have been found to be incorrect [ATB82], [BT82], [BT85]. The diameter of a set of n points can be computed in O(n log n) time. However, for a convex polygon O(n) time suffices. Since the diameter of a set is determined by a pair of vertices of the convex hull

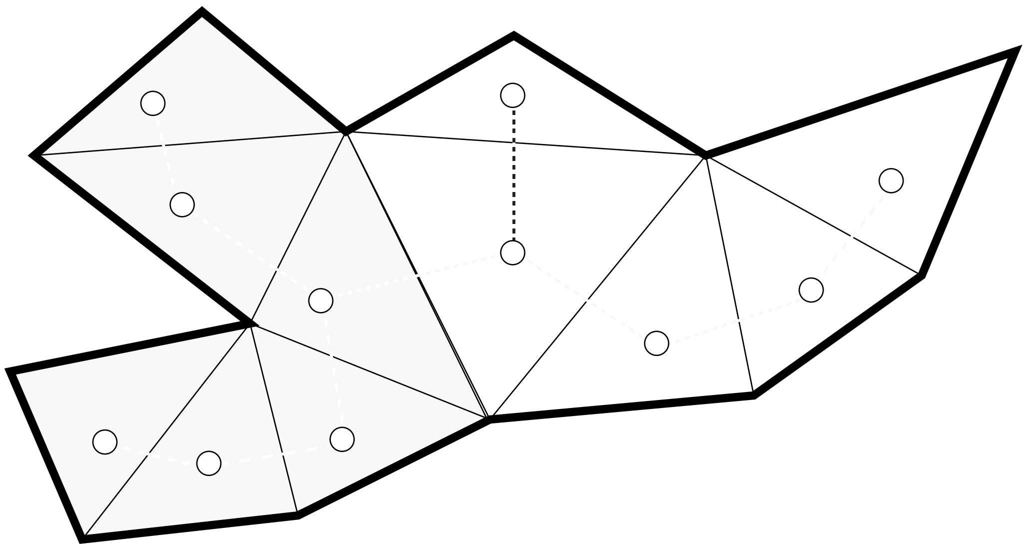

Fig. 2: A triangulation T(P) (thin solid lines) of a simple polygon P (in bold lines) and the dual tree of T(P) shown in broken lines. The shaded area illustrates a *sleeve*.

of the set and since the convex hull of a simple polygon P can be found in O(n) time [MA79], it follows that the diameter of P can be found in O(n) time also. The *geodesic* diameter considered here is a generalization of the Euclidean diameter.

Definition: The *geodesic diameter* of a simple polygon P, denoted by D_G(P), is the maximal geodesic distance between any pair of points in P, i.e.,

$$D_G(P) = \max_{x,y} \{d_G(x,y)\},$$

where x and y vary over all points of P.

Chazelle [Ch82] as well as Reif and Storer [RS85] give O(n^2) time algorithms for computing the geodesic diameter of a simple n-gon. It is known that a geodesic furthest neighbor of a point in a polygon is always a convex vertex of P (see Asano and Toussaint [AT85]). This immediately leads to an algorithm with complexity O(c^2n + T(n)) where c is the number of convex vertices of P and T(n) is the time required to triangulate P. Suri [Su87] on the other hand has shown that O(n log n) time is sufficient to compute the geodesic furthest neighbors of all the vertices of P and, hence, to compute the geodesic diameter of P.

2.3 The geodesic center of a polygon

The geodesic center of a polygon is a generalization of the Euclidean facility location problem. Given a set of points in the plane called *sites* that represent customers, the Euclidean facility location problem asks for the location of a facility to be used by the customers such that the maximum Euclidean distance that any customer has to travel to get to the facility is minimized. The center of the *minimal spanning circle* of the sites, i.e., the smallest circle enclosing the sites, is the solution to this problem.

Definition: The *geodesic center* of a simple polygon P, denoted by $C_G(P)$, is a point in P which minimizes the maximum geodesic distance to any point in P. Such a distance is called the *geodesic radius* of P and denoted by $R_G(P)$. More precisely, for any point x in P define the *covering radius* of P from x as:

$$C_r(P/x) = \max_{y} \{d_G(x,y)\},$$

where y varies over all points in P. Then the geodesic center of P is the point in P for which

$$R_G(P) = \min_{x} \{C_r(P/x)\},$$

where x varies over all points in P.

It is now well known that the standard Euclidean facility problem can be solved in linear time [Me83], [Dy86], but its generalization to the geodesic metric appears to be more difficult. The problem of computing the geodesic center of a simple polygon was first investigated by Asano and Toussaint [AT85] who showed that it was unique and could be computed in $O(n^4 \log n)$ time. This result was later improved to $O(n^3 \log \log n)$ time in [AT86], to $O(n \log^2 n)$ time in [PS86], and finally to $O(n \log n)$ time in [PSR89].

3. The Geodesic Convex Hull

3.1 Introduction

In this section we introduce the notion of the *geodesic* (also known in the literature as *relative) convex hull* of a set of points $S = \{s_1, s_2, ..., s_n\}$ called *sites* lying in a simple n-gon P. Note that the cardinalities of S and P need not be equal but this assumption will simplify the complexity formulas. The geodesic convex hull of S given P, denoted by $CH_G(S/P)$, turns out to be a fundamental tool for computing many geodesic properties efficiently as will be demonstrated in section 4.

3.2 Geometric preliminaries

Definition: Let C_1 and C_2 be two oriented, possibly self-intersecting curves. We say that C_1 and C_2 have a *proper crossing* provided that, as we traverse C_1 from its starting point to its finishing point we encounter a neighbourhood of C_1 where C_2 intersects C_1 and actually *switches* from one side of C_1 to the other. See Fig. 3.

Definition: A closed polygonal path *C* is called a *weakly-simple* polygon provided that (1) every pair of distinct points of *C* partitions *C* into two polygonal chains that have no *proper crossings* and (2) the sum of all the angles turned when *C* is completely traversed starting and ending from any point on *C* is equal to 360 degrees.

Weakly-simple polygons are a useful generalization of simple polygons because in many situations concerned with geodesic paths the regions of interest are not simple but are nevertheless weakly-simple. Furthermore, like their simple counterparts, weakly-simple polygons do have a well defined interior and exterior. Unlike their simple counterparts, however, weakly simple polygons may have both their interior and exterior consisting of several disconnected components (see Fig. 4). As usual, we will include the interior regions when we refer to a weakly simple polygon. The important fact to note from the computational complexity point of view is that the data structures and algorithms designed to work for simple polygons will in most cases also work for weakly simple polygons with only minor, if not trivial, modifications that do not affect the order of either the time or space complexity bounds involved.

Definition: Let Q be a subset of P. Q is called *geodesically convex* provided that for every pair of points $x,y \in Q$, the geodesic path between x and y constrained to lie in P also lies in Q, i.e., GP(x,y/P) = GP(x,y/Q). Refer to Fig. 5 for an illustration.

Definition: Let S be a set of sites in P. The *geodesic convex hull,* CH_G(S/P), is the intersection of all *geodesically-convex* sets containing S. Refer to Fig. 6 for an illustration. Alternately we may view the *geodesic convex hull* as the *minimum-perimeter weakly-simple* polygon that contains S and is constrained to lie in P. The proof that these two notions are equivalent is left as an exercise for the reader.

We are now ready to present an algorithm for computing CH_G(S/P). The algorithm converts the problem to an instance of computing the relative convex hull of one polygon inside another. Therefore we first turn our attention to this easier version of the problem.

3.3 Computing the geodesic convex hull of one polygon inside another

Let $P=[p_1,p_2,...,p_n]$ and $Q=[q_1,q_2,...,q_n]$ be two simple polygons such that Q is contained in P. The problem of computing CH_G(Q/P) was first explored in the context of image processing where the terminology *minimum perimeter polygon* was used to refer to CH_G(Q/P) [SCH72],[SK76]. Sklansky and Kibler [SK76] presented an algorithm for computing CH_G(Q/P) for the special case in which $Q \subset int(P)$ and the region $A(P\text{-}Q) = P \cap (int(Q))^c$, where $(.)^c$ denotes complement, is given as a partition into convex sub-polygons with the additional property that each pair of adjacent sub-polygons is also convex. While no complexity analysis of their algorithm was given by them it is easy to show [To86c] that the algorithm runs in $O(n^2)$ time in the worst case. We now demonstrate that this problem [SK76] can be solved in linear time. Note that a convex polygon can be triangulated trivially in linear time by simply joining any vertex of the polygon to all other non-adjacent vertices. Therefore the region A(P-Q) can be triangulated in O(n) time in the version of the problem considered in [SK76] and it remains to show that CH_G(Q/P) can be com-

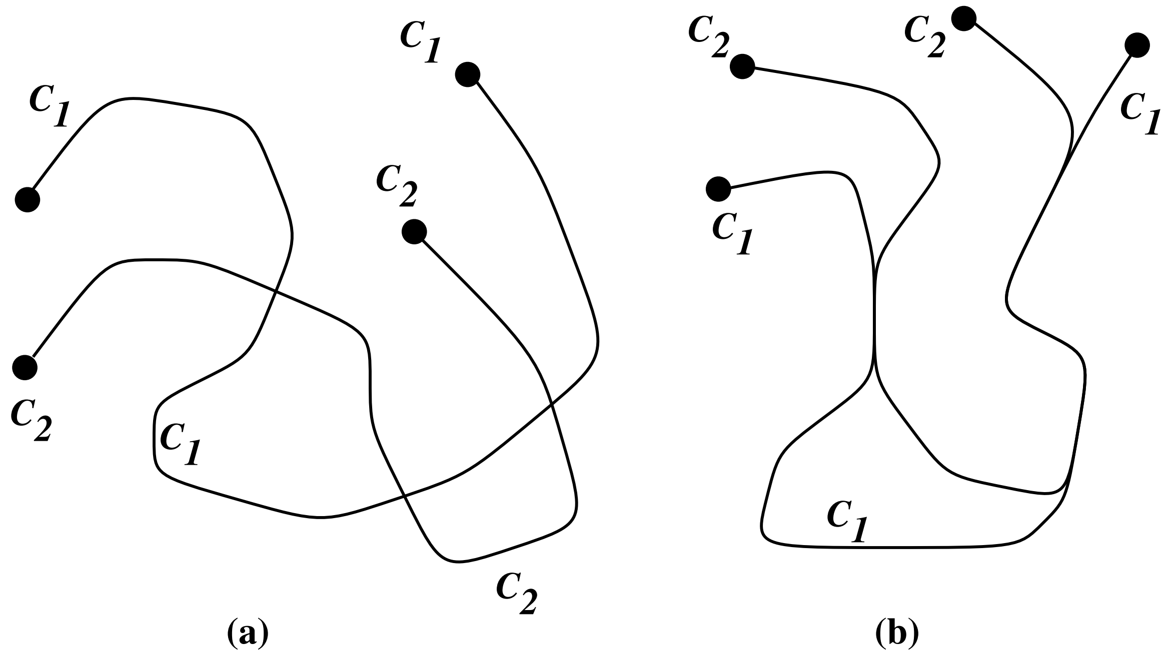

Fig. 3: Illustrating intersecting curves (a) with *proper crossings* and (b) without *proper crossings*.

puted in linear time given that the region A(P-Q) is triangulated. We will show the more general result instead that given Q contained in P, CH_G(Q/P) can be computed in O(n) time given that an algorithm is available to triangulate a simple polygon. First we state two elementary lemmas without proof.

Lemma 3.3.1: Let q* be a vertex of *CH*(Q), the ordinary convex hull of Q. Then q* must be a vertex of CH_G(Q/P).

Lemma 3.3.2: A vertex p* of P such that *int*[p*,q*] lies in *int*(P) $\cap$ *ext*(Q) can be found in O(n) time.

The above lemmas suggest the following approach. First we determine in linear time a vertex q* of *CH*(Q). This can be done by choosing any extreme vertex of Q in some arbitrarily specified direction. Without loss of generality let q* be the vertex with maximum y-coordinate and refer to Fig. 7. Then by lemma 3.3.2 we find a vertex p* of P visible from q* also in linear time. The line segment [p*,q*] partitions the non-simple region A(P-Q) into a simple region and by inserting two copies of [p*,q*] into the descriptions of the boundaries of P and Q we convert the non-simple region A(P-Q) into a weakly simple polygon P*. This polygon P* can now be triangulated in O(n log log n) time [TV87] thus affording the computation of the geodesic path between two points x,y in P* in linear time [Ch82], [LP84]. From lemma 3.3.1 it follows that CH_G(Q/P) is the shortest path in P* between q* and q**, a copy of q* lying on the other side of [p*,q*]. Furthermore q* and q** are two points in the triangulated weakly simple polygon P*. Therefore we have established the

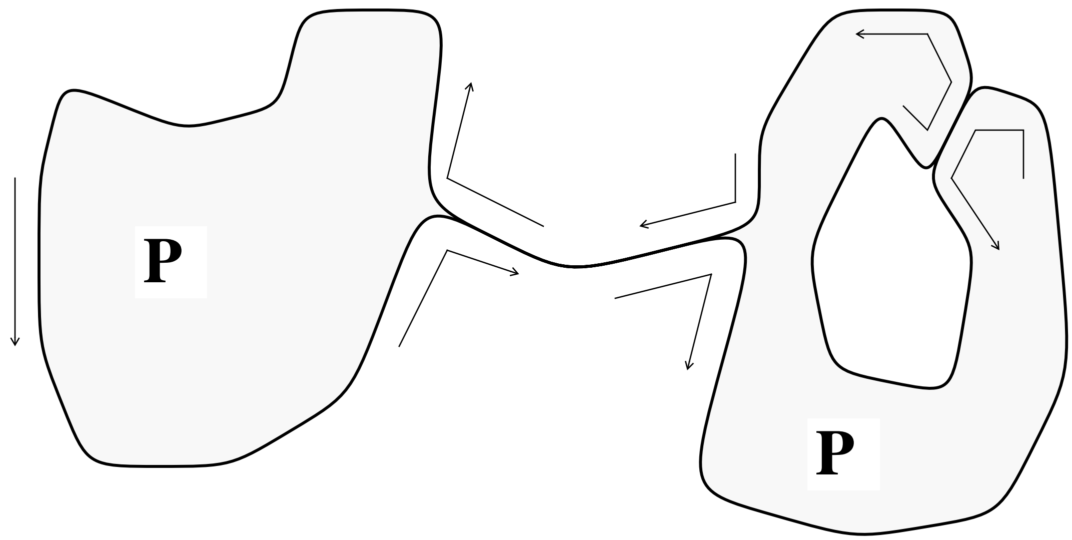

Fig. 4: Illustrating a *weakly-simple* polygon P. The interior of P is shaded. The arrows indicate a counterclockwise traversal of the boundary of P. Here some vertices and edges of P are used twice.

following theorem.

Theorem 3.3.1: Given two simple polygons P = $[p_1,p_2,...,p_n]$ and Q=$[q_1,q_2,...,q_n]$ such that Q is contained in P, CH_G(Q/P) can be computed using a polygon triangulation algorithm and O(n) additional time.

3.4 Computing the geodesic convex hull of a set of points in a polygon

In this section we present Algorithm *GEODESIC-HULL* for computing CH_G(S/P) in O(n log n) time which is optimal to within a constant factor. The essential idea used to solve this problem is to convert the problem, in O(n log n) time, to an instance of the CH_G(Q/P) problem. In other words, we first find a weakly simple polygon Q* that has the properties that: (1) Q* lies in P, (2) Q* contains S, and (3) CH_G(Q*/P) = CH_G(S/P). Before presenting the algorithm we provide a suitable definition of the polygon Q* and establish that it possesses the desired properties.

A triangulation T(P) of P contains n-2 triangles denoted by T_i, i=1,2,...,n-2. Let the dual tree of T(P) be denoted by τ(T(P)). Let the subset of sites in S that fall in triangle T_i be denoted by S_i and let *CH*(S_i) denote the ordinary convex hull of S_i. The weakly simple polygon Q* is composed of the union of the *CH*(S_i), i=1,2,...,n-2, with certain geodesic paths connecting them. Two convex hulls *CH*(S_i) and *CH*(S_j) are connected by specifying *connecting* vertices of *CH*(S_i) and

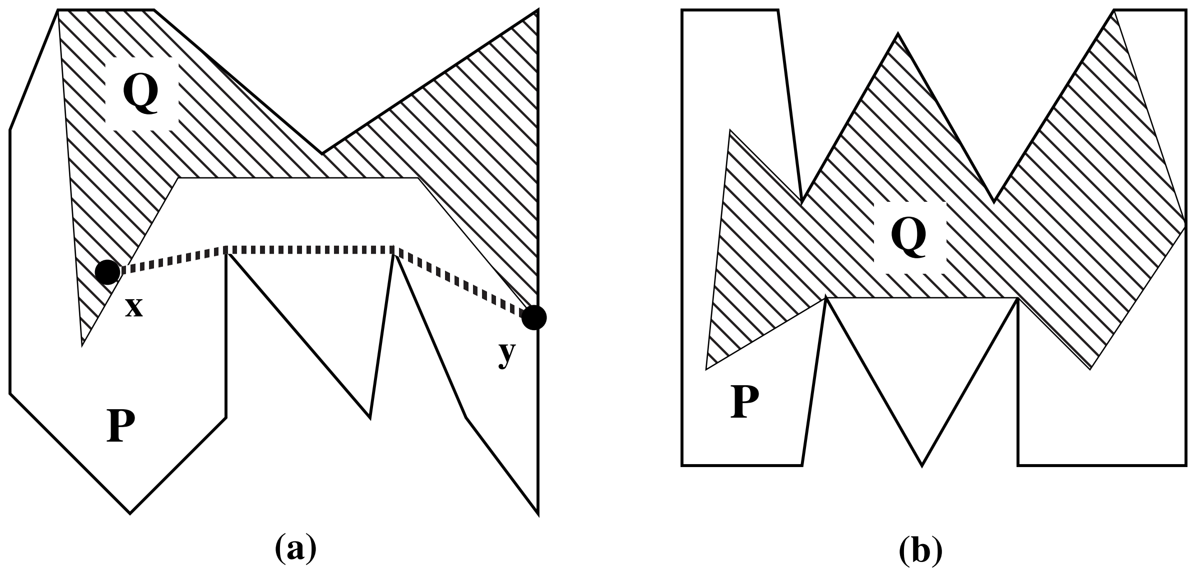

Fig 5: (a) The shaded subset of P is not *geodesically convex* because even though x,y $\in$ Q, we have that GP(x,y/P) $\neq$ GP(x,y/Q). (b) The shaded subset of P is *geodesically convex.*

CH(S_j) and appending the geodesic paths between appropriate *connecting* vertices computed within an appropriate *sleeve* of P. Consider *CH*(S_i) lying in T_i and refer to Fig. 8. A triangle T_i contains either one, two, or three diagonals of T(P) depending on whether it shares two, one, or zero edges of P, respectively. Each diagonal of T_i is associated with a *connecting* vertex of *CH*(S_i). The *connecting* vertex of *CH*(S_i) corresponding to diagonal d_{ik} of T_i is that vertex, say v(i,k), of *CH*(S_i) which is closest, in the perpendicular distance sense, to the line collinear with d_{ik}. Note that a single vertex of *CH*(S_i) may be a connecting vertex for more than one diagonal of T_i. Let T_i and T_j be two triangles in T(P) such that each contains points S_i and S_j, respectively. Let t_i and t_j denote the nodes in τ(T(P)) corresponding to T_i and T_j, respectively. The shortest path (in the graph-theoretic sense) between t_i and t_j in τ(T(P)) corresponds to a *sleeve* in T(P) denoted by *Sl*(T_i,...,T_j). This sleeve *Sl*(T_i,...,T_j) specifies a sequence of ordered diagonals d_{ik},...,d_{jm} that must be intersected sequentially by the geodesic path between any point x $\in$ *int*(T_i) and any point y $\in$ *int*(T_j). Let v(i,k) and v(j,m) denote the *connecting* vertices of *CH*(S_i) and *CH*(S_j), respectively, corresponding to diagonals d_{ij} and d_{km} in T_i and T_j. The *connecting* vertices v(i,k) and v(j,m) are joined by the geodesic path between them provided that no points of S lie in any triangle of *Sl*(T_i,...,T_j) other than T_i and T_j. By applying this rule to all pairs of triangles in T(P) that contain points of S and

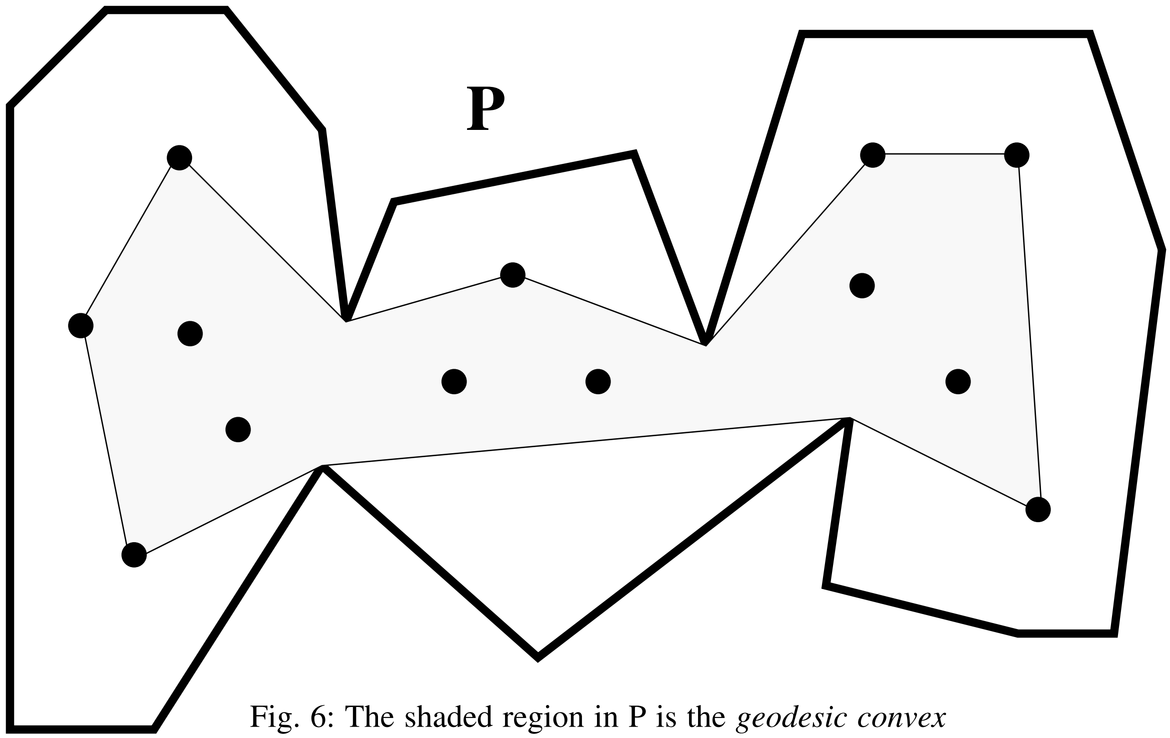

Fig. 6: The shaded region in P is the *geodesic convex hull* of the set of points in P.

using two copies of each such geodesic path in a judicious manner, we obtain a polygon Q*. By a judicious manner it is meant that in constructing a description of the boundary of Q* the directions of the geodesic paths and portions of the boundaries of the $CH(S_i)$, for all i, must be properly chosen. To do this we begin by doubling each edge of τ(T(P)), thereby obtaining a graph ω(T(P)), each vertex of which has even degree and which therefore is a connected Euler graph, i.e., its edges can be numbered so that the resulting sequence is a weakly-simple polygon oriented in a counterclockwise manner (see Fig. 9). A geodesic path between two *connecting* vertices in T(P) is contained in those triangles determined by the portion of ω(T(P)) corresponding to the relevant portion of the dual tree. The relative position and direction of the portion of ω(T(P)) determines the relative position and direction of its corresponding geodesic path. Finally we need to append correctly the portions of the boundaries of the $CH(S_i)$ between *connecting* vertices. A *connecting* vertex, say v(i,k), in a triangle T_i is connected to the first *connecting* vertex encountered (possibly v(i,k) itself) in traversing the boundary of $CH(S_i)$ in a counter-clockwise manner. Furthermore, the connection is made by appending precisely the polygonal chain traversed during this search with a direction identical to the direction in which the search is made. We will now show that Q* does indeed possess the desired properties mentioned above.

Lemma 3.4.1: The polygon Q* has the following properties: (a) Q* is *weakly-simple*, (b) Q* contains S, (c) Q* is contained in CH_G(S/P).

Proof: (a) Since the sets S_i are contained in disjoint triangles it follows that the boundaries of the

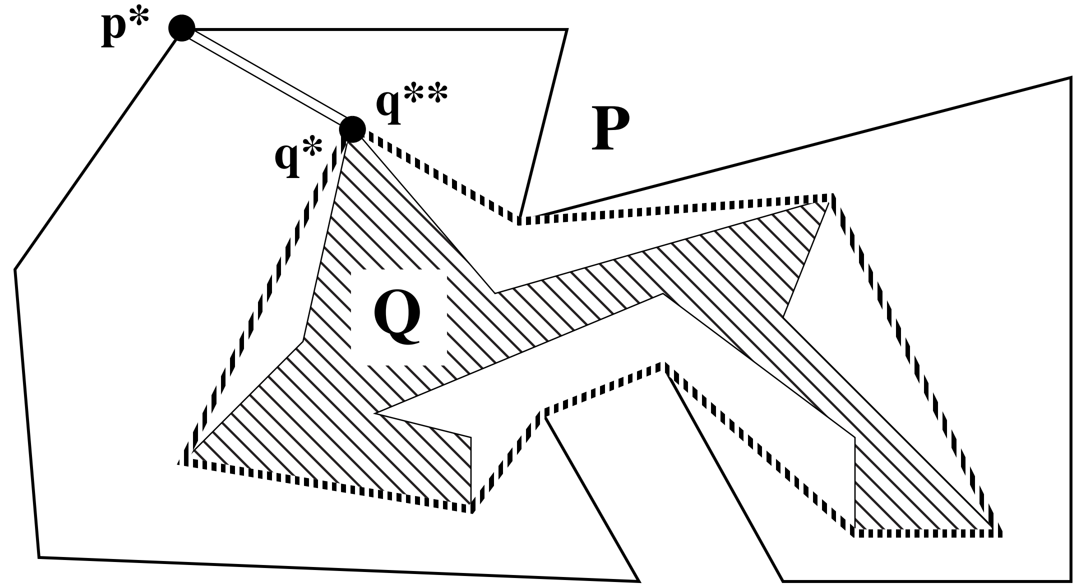

Fig. 7: Illustrating the algorithm for computing CH_G(Q/P) using a polygon triangulation algorithm plus an additional linear amount of time.

$CH(S_i)$ do not properly cross each other. Consider therefore the geodesic paths between pairs of *connecting* vertices. These paths traverse two types of triangles in T(P): those containing points of S and those that are empty. Consider first the triangles containing points of S and refer to Fig. 10. Let $T_i = \Delta(a,b,c)$ contain S_i. In general T_i will be composed of up to three diagonals of T(P) and thus $CH(S_i)$ will contain up to three *connecting* vertices. We must show that the geodesic paths emanating from these *connecting* vertices do not properly cross each other. Let v_1 and v_2 be any two connecting vertices of $CH(S_i)$ and let d_{i1}=[a,b] and d_{i2}=[b, c] be the diagonals of T_i corresponding to v_1 and v_2, respectively. Let P_1 be the portion of P cut from P by d_{i1} that excludes *int*(T_i). Similarly, let P_2 be the portion of P cut from P by d_{i2} that excludes *int*(T_i). By the definition of Q* we have that the geodesic paths GP(v_1,x/P) and GP(v_2,y/P) of Q* must be such that $x \in P_1$ and $y \in P_2$. Let L_1 be a line parallel to [a,b] and tangent to $CH(S_i)$ at v_1, and let L_1 intersect [a,c] at a' and [b, c] at b'. Similarly, let L_2 be a line parallel to [b, c] and tangent to $CH(S_i)$ at v_2, and let L_2 intersect [a,b] at b" and [a,c] at c". By construction, quadrilaterals Q_1=[a,b,b',a'] and Q_2=[c,b,b",c"] do not contain points of $CH(S_i)$ in their interiors. Therefore the portion of GP(v_1,x/P) in T_i must be a straight line segment from v_1 to some point x' on [a,b]. Similarly, the portion of GP(v_2,y/P) in T_i must be a straight line segment from v_2 to some point y' on [b, c]. Let [a',b'] and

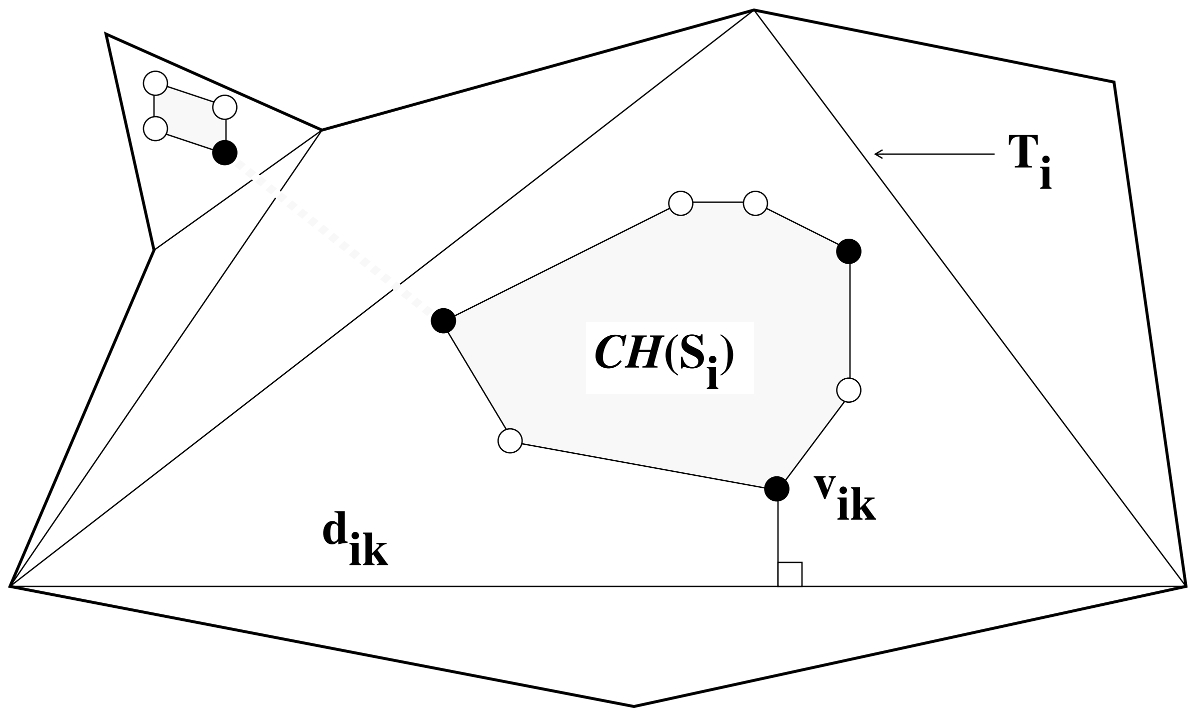

Fig. 8: Illustrating the *connecting* vertices (marked solid black) of the convex hull of the subset of S lying in triangle T_i.

[b",c"] intersect at z and let the ray emanating at b through z intersect *bd(CH*(S_i)) at z'. By construction z' must lie after v_2 and before v_1 in clockwise order. Therefore [v_1,x'] must lie in quadrilateral [a,a',z,b] and [v_2,y'] must lie in quadrilateral [c,b,z,c"]. Since the interiors of these two quadrilaterals do not intersect it implies that GP(v_1,x/P) and GP(v_2,y/P) do not properly cross each other in T_i.

Consider now any triangle T_k that is empty of points in S. Two cases arise: (i) T_k contains two diagonals of T(P) which are not edges of P and (ii) T_k contains three diagonals of T(P) which are not edges of P. Note that if T_k contains only one diagonal of T(P) not an edge in P and T_k does not contain any points of S then no geodesic paths traverse T_k. *Case* (i): T_k cuts off two sub-polygons of P, P_1 and P_2. If P_1 or P_2 contain no points of S then the geodesic paths do not traverse T_k. If both P_1 and P_2 contain points of S then the geodesic paths correspond to both sides of a chain in τ(T(P)) and therefore they do not properly cross each other. *Case* (ii): T_k cuts off three sub-polygons of P, P_1, P_2 and P_3. If only one of these contains points of S then the geodesic paths do not traverse T_k. If two sub-polygons contain points of S then we have a situation identical to case (i). If all three contain subsets of S then three geodesic paths will traverse T_k between every pair of

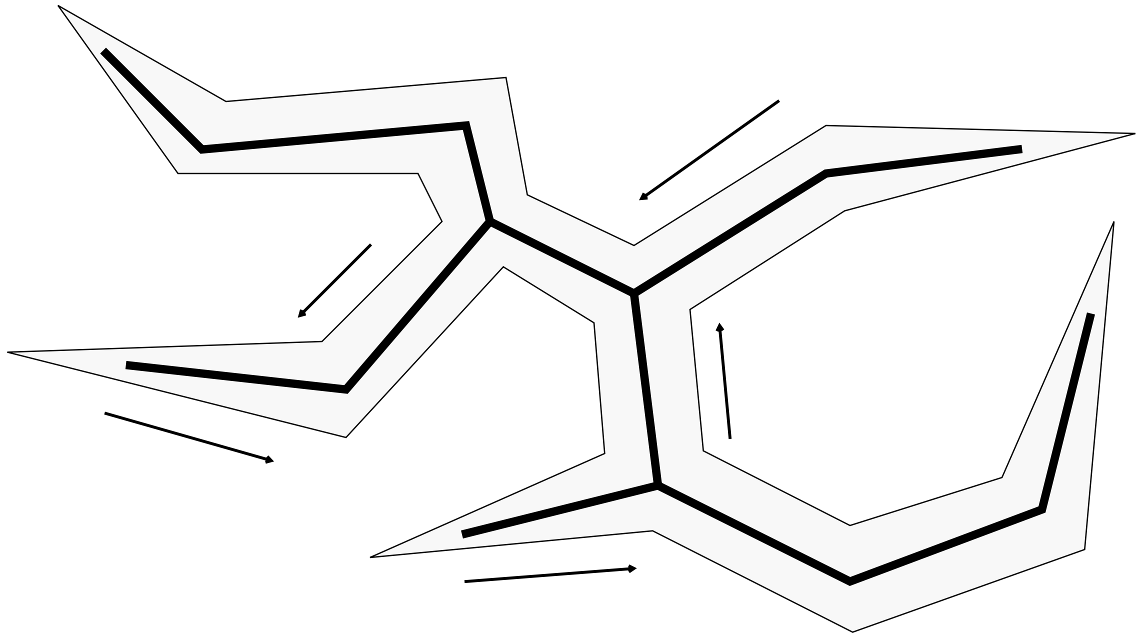

Fig. 9: Illustrating the dual tree $\tau(T(P))$ and the corresponding weakly simple polygonal Eulerian tour $\omega(T(P))$ connecting all the vertices of $\tau(T(P))$ in a counterclockwise manner.

sub-polygons. These three paths correspond to the three sides of a node of degree three in $\tau(T(P))$, and the structure of $\omega(T(P))$ at such a node implies the three paths will not properly cross each other. Finally we note that in "gluing" these paths to the portions of the boundaries of $CH(S_i)$ we ensure that Q* is a weakly simple polygon by always traversing the boundaries of the $CH(S_i)$ in a consistent counterclockwise manner.

(b) That Q* contains S follows from the fact that Q* is a weakly simple polygon that contains the $CH(S_i)$ for all i.

(c) That Q* is contained in $CH_G(S/P)$ follows from the fact that the geodesic path in P between every pair of points in S lies in $CH_G(S/P)$ and Q* is composed entirely of geodesic paths between points of S (the *connecting* vertices) and the convex hulls of the S_i, which are obviously contained

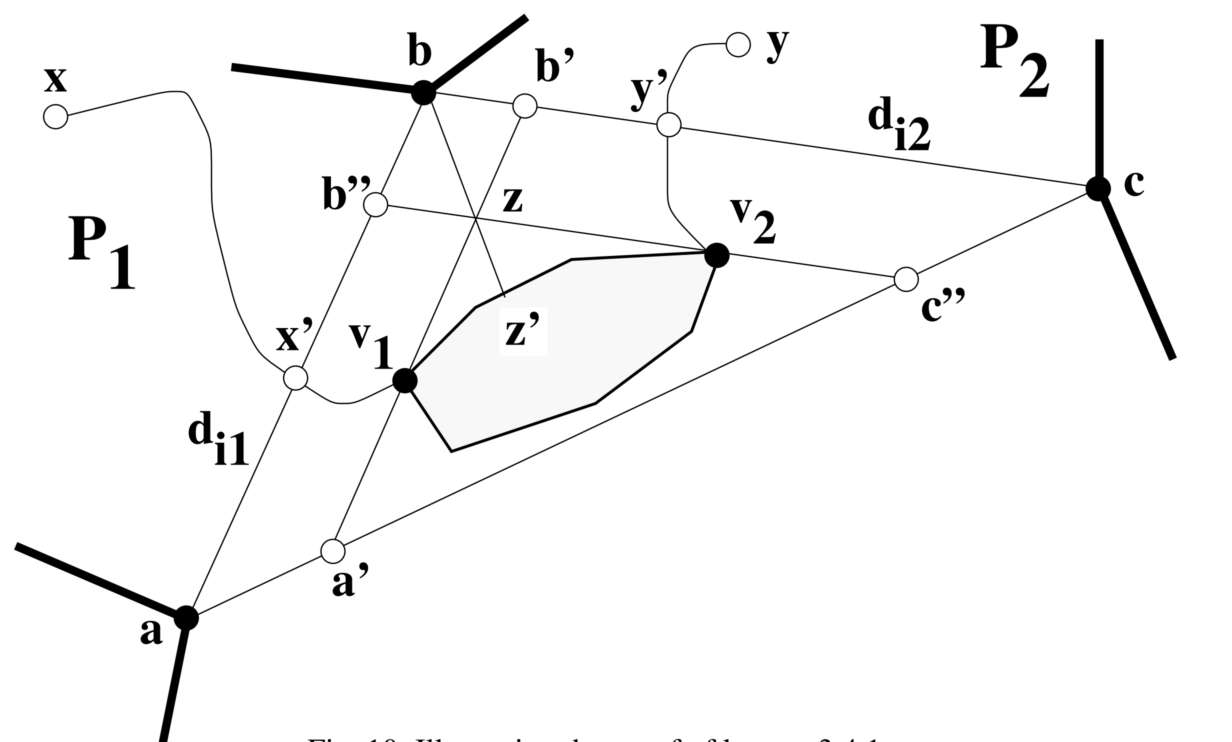

Fig. 10: Illustrating the proof of lemma 3.4.1.

in CH_G(S/P). Q.E.D.

This lemma suggests the following algorithm for computing CH_G(S/P).

Algorithm GEODESIC-HULL

Input: A simple polygon P and a set of points S lying in P.

Output: The geodesic convex hull of S, CH_G(S/P).

begin

Step 1: Triangulate P to obtain T(P).

Step 2: Compute the dual tree, τ(T(P)), of T(P) and its corresponding connected Eulerian tour ω(T(P)).

Step 3: Preprocess T(P) using O(n) space and O(n log n) time to support O(log n)- time point-location queries.

Step 4: Determine for each triangle in T(P) which points of S it contains.

Step 5: For each triangle T_i of T(P) containing a subset S_i of S, compute the ordinary convex hull $CH(S_i)$.

Step 6: For each set S_i lying in T_i compute all the *connecting* vertices.

Step 7: Perform a counterclockwise scan of $\omega(T(P))$ and compute the geodesic paths between consecutive *connecting* vertices in the order in which they are encountered.

Step 8: Concatenate the geodesic paths computed in *Step 7* with the appropriate sub-chains of the $CH(S_i)$, for all i, to yield the weakly-simple polygon Q*.

Step 9: Triangulate A(P-Q*).

Step 10: Compute $CH_G(S/P) = CH_G(A(P\text{-}Q^*)/P)$.

end

Theorem 3.4.1: Algorithm *GEODESIC-HULL* computes the *geodesic convex hull* of a set of n points in a simple polygon of n sides in O(n log n) time using O(n) space.

Proof: The correctness follows from the previous lemmas and the correctness of the algorithms used. We turn thus to the complexity. Step 1 can be done in O(n log log n) time [TV88]. Step 2 can be done in linear time [PS85]. Steps 3 and 4 can be accomplished using the algorithm of Kirkpatrick [Ki83]. In step 5 the convex hulls in all triangles of T(P) containing points of S can be computed with a variety of existing algorithms [To85] in a total time of O(n log n). Step 6 can be done in $O(n_i)$ time for each triangle T_i containing points of S, where n_i is the number of vertices of $CH(S_i)$, by a simple scan of $bd(CH(S_i))$ while keeping track of the minimum perpendicular distance to the relevant diagonal encountered. Since there are at most a constant number of connecting vertices for each triangle in T(P) and since $\Sigma\, n_i$ over all i is O(n) it follows that the total time for step 6 is O(n). Step 7 consists of computing a sequence of geodesic paths corresponding to a sequence of sleeves the total length of which is at most 2n. This is a direct consequence of the fact that the length of $\omega(T(P))$ is at most twice the length of $\tau(T(P))$. Since in each such sleeve of size n* the geodesic path required can be computed in time O(n*) using the algorithms in [Ch82] and [LP84] it follows that step 7 can be performed in a total time of O(n). Step 8 consists of a mere traversal of all the boundaries of the $CH(S_i)$ and therefore runs in O(n) time in the worst case. In step 9 A(P-Q*) can be converted to a weakly simple polygon in O(n) time and then triangulated in O(n log log n) time as in step 1. Step 10 is an instance of the problem discussed in the previous section and can be accomplished in O(n) time. All the steps require no more than linear storage space. We therefore conclude that the space requirement for the algorithm is linear and the time is dominated by steps 3 and 4 and is thus O(n log n). Finally we remark that Ω(n log n) is a lower bound on the time complexity of this problem. This follows from the fact that if P is convex then $CH_G(S/P) = CH(S)$ and it is well known that Ω(n log n) is a lower bound for computing $CH(S)$

[Av]. Q.E.D.

4. Computing Geodesic Properties of Sets of Points in a Polygon

4.1 Introduction

In this section we consider several geodesic problems defined over a set S = ($s_1,s_2,...,s_n$) of n points called *sites* in a simple polygon P = [$p_1,p_2,...,p_n$] of n sides.

4.2 The geodesic diameter of S in P

Definition: The *geodesic diameter* of S in a simple polygon P, denoted by D_G(S/P), is the maximal geodesic distance between any pair of sites in S, i.e.,

$$D_G(S/P) = \max \{d_G(s_i,s_j)\},$$

where maximization is carried out over all values of i and j.

The naive semi-brute-force approach to solving this problem is to preprocess P by triangulating it, in say O(n log n) time [Ch82], so that the geodesic distance between a pair of sites can be computed in O(n) time [Ch82], [LP84]. Since there are $O(n^2)$ pairs of sites to be considered this approach yields an algorithm with a complexity of $O(n^3)$. However this result can be improved by using the preprocessing algorithm of Guibas and Hershberger [GH87]. With this algorithm, linear-time preprocessing of a triangulated polygon allows geodesic *distance* queries between a pair of query sites to be answered in O(log n) time. Therefore D_G(S/P) and a geodesic path realizing this value can be computed in $O(n^2 \log n)$ time. However, we are able to obtain a much more dramatic improvement by using the following lemma which has a well known counterpart in the Euclidean case.

Lemma 4.2.1: The geodesic diameter of S is equal to the geodesic diameter of the geodesic convex hull of S, i.e., D_G(S/P) = D_G(CH_G(S/P)). Furthermore, D_G(S/P) is determined by a pair of convex vertices of CH_G(S/P).

Proof: First we show that D_G(CH_G(S/P)) is determined by two convex vertices of CH_G(S/P). Assume that GP(x,y/CH_G(S/P)), for some pair x,y ∈ CH_G(S/P), realizes the geodesic diameter of CH_G(S/P) and let x and y be such that one or both are not convex vertices of CH_G(S/P). If y ∈ *int*(CH_G(S/P)) extend the last segment of GP(x,y/CH_G(S/P)) until it intersects some edge [b', c'] of CH_G(S/P) at point y'. Otherwise let y be y'. Clearly GP(x,y') ≥ GP(x,y). Let b denote the first convex vertex of CH_G(S/P) encountered (possibly b' itself) as one traverses *bd*(CH_G(S/P)) in the direction from y' to b'. Similarly, Let c denote the first convex vertex of CH_G(S/P) encountered (possibly c' itself) as one traverses *bd*(CH_G(S/P)) in the direction from y' to c'. Note that b≠c. It follows that y' must lie in GP(b,c). It has been shown recently in [PRS89], and earlier in the more general context of simply connected compact sets [LB81], [ML84], that for any y' in GP(b,c), we have that GP(x,y') < max{GP(x,b), GP(x,c)}. Therefore there must exist a convex vertex of CH_G(S/P), say c, such that GP(x,y) < GP(x,c) which is a contradiction. The same argument can then be used to show that GP(c,x) is at most as long as GP(c,e) where e is also a convex vertex of CH_G(S/P) and the first result follows. Next we show that D_G(S/P) = D_G(CH_G(S/P)). From the first result it follows that D_G(CH_G(S/P)) is determined by two sites s_i and s_j in S. Furthermore, by definition the geodesic path in P between every pair of sites in S must lie in CH_G(S/P). Therefore the path realizing D_G(S/P) must also be the path realizing D_G(CH_G(S/P)). Q.E.D.

This result then immediately suggests an adaptive version of the previous algorithm. Let h denote the number of convex vertices of CH_G(S/P). First compute CH_G(S/P) and identify its convex vertices in O(n log n) time with the algorithm described in the previous section. Then preprocess P with the algorithm of Guibas and Hershberger [GH87] to admit O(log n) time computation of geodesic distance queries between pairs of query sites. Finally answer the queries for all pairs of sites which are convex vertices of CH_G(S/P) and select the maximum geodesic distance encountered. The time complexity of this algorithm is O(n log n + h^2 log n). However, the most dramatic application of lemma 4.2.1 is obtained by using the fact that the geodesic diameter of a simple polygon can be computed in O(n log n) time [Su86a] as in the following algorithm.

Algorithm GEODESIC-DIAMETER

Input: A simple polygon P and a set of points S lying in P.

Output: The geodesic diameter of S, D_G(S/P).

begin

Step 1: Compute CH_G(S/P) using the algorithm discussed in the previous section.

Step 2: Compute D_G(CH_G(S/P)) using Suri's algorithm [Su86a].

end

We have thus established the following theorem.

Theorem 4.2.1: Algorithm *GEODESIC-DIAMETER* computes the geodesic diameter of a set S in a simple polygon P in O(n log n) time.

4.3 The geodesic center of S in P

Definition: The *geodesic center* of a set of sites S in a simple polygon P, denoted by C_G(S/P), is a point in P which minimizes the maximum geodesic distance to any site in S. Such a distance is called the *geodesic radius* of S and denoted by R_G(S/P). More precisely, for any point x in P define the *covering radius* of S from x as:

$$C_r(S/x) = \max_{y} \{d_G(x,y)\},$$

where y varies over all sites in S. Then the geodesic center of S is the point in P for which

$$R_G(S/P) = \min_{x} \{C_r(S/x)\},$$

where x varies over all points in P.

The following lemmas and theorem allow us to solve this problem efficiently.

Lemma 4.3.1: Let x' and y' be two points on a geodesic path GP(x,y/P) such that x' is the closer to x on GP(x,y/P). Then GP(x',y'/P) is contained in GP(x,y/P).

Proof: Assume the contrary and let *p*(x',y') denote the portion of GP(x,y/P) between x' and y'. Since geodesic paths are unique it follows that the length of GP(x',y'/P) is less than the length of *p*(x',y'). Therefore we may construct a path GP(x,x'/P) $\cup$ GP(x',y'/P) $\cup$ GP(y',y/P) which is shorter than GP(x,y/P), a contradiction. Q.E.D.

Given m points $p_1,p_2,...,p_m$ in P we may connect p_i to p_{i+1} for i=1,2,...,m (modulo m) with GP(p_i, p_{i+1}/P) to obtain a polygonal circuit. If this polygonal circuit is a *weakly-simple* polygon then we say it is a *geodesic* m-gon or polygon and denote it by $P_G[p_1,p_2,...,p_m]$ or P_G for short when the context is clear. The m vertices $p_1,p_2,...,p_m$ of P_G form its *essential* vertices. The remaining vertices of P_G coincide with *reflex* vertices of P. If m=3 we obtain a *geodesic triangle*, and so on. Fig. 11 illustrates a *geodesic quadrilateral* P_G[a,b,c,d]. For a geodesic polygon $P_G[p_1,p_2,...,p_m]$ there exist vertices $p'_1,p'_2,...,p'_m$ (p_i and p'_i need not be distinct for any value of i) such that the paths GP(p_i, p_{i+1}/P) and GP(p_i, p_{i-1}/P) intersect in GP(p_i, p'_i/P) for all values of i. If the boundary of P_G intersects the boundary of P then these intersection points decompose the boundary of P into polygonal chains that do not intersect the boundary of P_G other that at their end-points. The regions bounded by these chains and the corresponding portions of *bd*(P) are called *pockets* (see Fig. 11) and the chains are referred to as *pocket chains*. It is useful to distinguish between three types of *pockets*. If a pocket chain has both its end-points in GP(p'_i, p'_{i+1}/P) for some value of i then the pocket, the interior of which does not contain the interior of P_G, is a *central pocket*. If a pocket contains at least one *essential* vertex of P_G it is an *end pocket*. All other pockets are called *side pockets*.

Lemma 4.3.2: Let $P_G[p_1,p_2,...,p_m]$ be a geodesic polygon in P and assume that there exists an *essential* vertex of P_G, say p_i=d, with corresponding p'_i=d', such that GP(p_i, p_{i+1}/P) and GP(p_i, p_{i-1}/P) intersect in GP(p_i, p'_i/P). Let x be any point in P_G. Then GP(x,d/P) must intersect d'.

Proof: (Refer to Fig. 11) Assume GP(x,d/P) does not intersect d'. Then GP(x,d/P) must traverse the interior of either a *central pocket*, a *side pocket*, or an *end pocket* of P_G. In the first case it implies GP(x,d/P) traverses the exterior of P, a contradiction. Therefore let GP(x,d/P) traverse a *side pocket* of P_G. It follows that GP(x,d/P) must properly intersect the interior of some edge of P_G that bounds the *side pocket* in question. Let y be such a point at which GP(x,d/P) enters the *side pocket.* Let z be the point on another edge of P_G where GP(x,d/P) leaves the pocket. If GP(x,d/P) does not leave the pocket then we have that z=d which is an instance of case three. In either situation, let p(y,z) denote the portion of P_G from y to z and let q(y,z) denote the portion of GP(x,d/P) from y to z. From lemma 4.3.1 it follows that both p(y,z) and q(y,z) are geodesic paths between y and z, which contradicts the uniqueness property of geodesics. The argument for the case when GP(x,d/P) enters an *end pocket* is similar. Q.E.D.

Theorem 4.3.1: The geodesic center of S in P is equal to the geodesic center of the geodesic convex hull of S, i.e., $C_G(S/P) = C_G(CH_G(S/P))$.

Proof: The geodesic center of a finite set is determined by either two or three points of the set [AT85]. From lemma 4.2.1 it follows that given a set S in P, the geodesic furthest site in S from any point x in P must be a convex vertex of CH_G(S/P). Therefore C_G(S/P) is determined by either two or three convex vertices of CH_G(S/P). On the other hand the geodesic center of a polygon Q is determined by two or three convex vertices of Q. Therefore $C_G(CH_G(S/P))$ is determined by either two or three convex vertices of CH_G(S/P). This establishes that we need only consider those sites in S that are convex vertices of CH_G(S/P) in computing C_G(S/P). Next we prove that C_G(S/P) lies in CH_G(S/P) and that the regions of P that lie in the exterior of CH_G(S/P) can be totally disregarded in computing C_G(S/P).

Case 1: The geodesic center is determined by *two* sites in *S*. In this case the geodesic center is the mid-point of the geodesic diameter of *S* [AT85]. By lemma 4.2.1 the geodesic path realizing the geodesic diameter of S must lie in CH_G(S/P) and therefore so must the geodesic center of S.

Case 2: The geodesic center is determined by *three* sites in S. Let a,b,c $\in$ S be the three sites that determine the geodesic center of S and consider the geodesic triangle P_G[a,b,c]. Since P_G[a,b,c] is also the geodesic convex hull of a,b,c it follows, by definition, that $P_G[a,b,c] \subseteq CH_G(S/P)$. We will show that the geodesic center of S must lie in P_G[a,b,c]. Therefore let us assume the contrary. Three cases arise depending on whether C_G(S/P) lies in a *central pocket*, a *side pocket*, or an *end pocket*. We assume that at least one of these pockets exists. If it does not it implies that S is "far" from the boundary of P and the shortest paths between the *essential* vertices of P_G are actually single line segments and P_G is a Euclidean triangle. In this special case the geodesic center is equivalent to the ordinary center in the classical Euclidean facility location problem and it is well known that this center must lie in such a triangle [CR47].

Case 2.1: C_G(S/P) lies in a *central pocket*. Let d denote the location of C_G(S/P) in a *central pocket* determined, without loss of generality, by endpoints lying in GP(a',c'/P). Construct GP(d,a/P) and GP(d,c/P) and let d' be the point such that GP(d,a/P) $\cap$ GP(d,c/P) = GP(d,d'/P). Two sub-cases

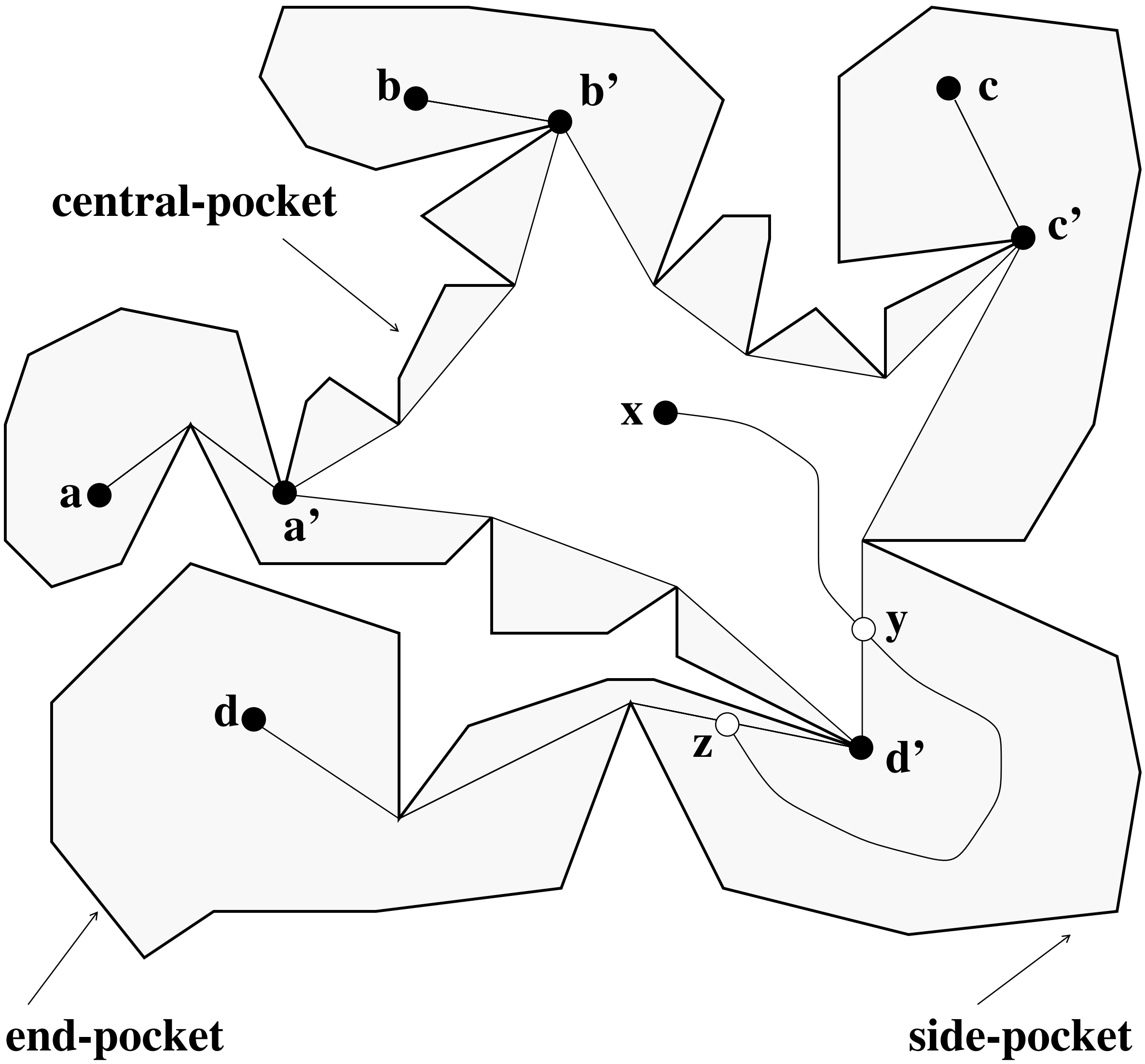

Fig. 11: Illustrating *geodesic polygons*, *essential vertices* (a,b,c,d), types of *pockets*, and the proof of lemma 4.3.2.

arise depending on whether or not d equals d’.

Case 2.1.1: d $\neq$ d’. We will show that d’ is a better location for the geodesic center than d is. From lemma 4.3.1 it follows that d_G(d’, a) < d_G(d, a) and d_G(d’, c) < d_G(d, c). From lemmas 4.3.2 and 4.3.1 it follows that d_G(d’, b) < d_G(d, b). Therefore a,b and c are each closer to d’ than to d, a contradiction.

Case 2.1.2: d = d’. Let e be the vertex of GP(d,a/P) adjacent to d and let f be the vertex of GP(d,c/P) adjacent to d, and refer to Fig. 12. Draw a directed line L through e and f (where the direction is from e to f) and let h denote the intersection of L with GP(d,b/P). Since a,b,c are the essential vertices of a geodesic triangle and b is the vertex opposite GP(a,c/P) it follows that h must lie ahead of e and behind f on L. Draw a perpendicular from d to L and let it intersect L at g. Three sub-cases arise depending on whether (i) g lies behind e, (ii) g lies between e and f, or (iii) g lies ahead of f, on L. Consider first sub-case (ii). From Pythagoras' theorem we may conclude that (1) GP(d,a/P) is longer than GP(g,e/P) $\cup$ GP(e,a/P), (2) GP(d,c/P) is longer than GP(g,f/P) $\cup$ GP(f,c/P), and (3) GP(d,b/P) is longer than GP(g,h/P) $\cup$ GP(h,b/P). Therefore in this sub-case g is a better location for the geodesic center than is d, a contradiction. Similar arguments establish that in sub-case (i) vertex e is a better location for the geodesic center whereas vertex f is better for sub-case (iii).

Cases 2.2 and 2.3: C_G(S/P) lies in a *side* or an *end pocket*. The proof for these two cases is similar to that for the previous case. However, it may not be possible in this case to traverse vertices e and f (see Fig. 12) by a line L that does not intersect the interior of the geodesic triangle P_G[a,b,c]. However if P_G[a,b,c] intersects the interior of Δdef we can construct a new triangle Δde'f' such that e'f' is parallel to ef and P_G[a,b,c] does not intersect the interior of Δde'f', by constructing e'f' through that vertex of P_G[a,b,c] lying in Δdef that maximizes the perpendicular distance to L in the direction of d. The arguments of *Case 2.1.2* can then be applied to Δde'f' to complete the proof.

We have therefore proved that C_G(S/P) lies in CH_G(S/P). It follows that all paths from C_G(S/P) to the convex vertices of CH_G(S/P) also lie in CH_G(S/P) and those regions in P exterior to CH_G(S/P) may be disregarded. Q.E.D.

Theorem 4.3.1 suggests the following algorithm for computing the geodesic center of S.

<u>*Algorithm GEODESIC-CENTER*</u>

Input: A simple polygon P and a set of points S lying in P.

Output: The geodesic center of S, C_G(S/P).

begin

Step 1: Compute CH_G(S/P) in O(n log n) time using the algorithm of section 3.

Step 2: Compute C_G(CH_G(S/P)) in O(n log n) time using the algorithm of Pollack, Sharir, and Rote [PSR88].

end

We have thus established the following theorem.

Theorem 4.3.2: Algorithm *GEODESIC-CENTER* computes the geodesic center of a set S in a polygon P in O(n log n) time.

4.4 The geodesic median of S in P

Definition: The *geodesic median* of S in P, denoted by M_G(S/P), is the site in S, not necessarily unique, whose maximal geodesic distance to any other site is the smallest possible. Such a distance

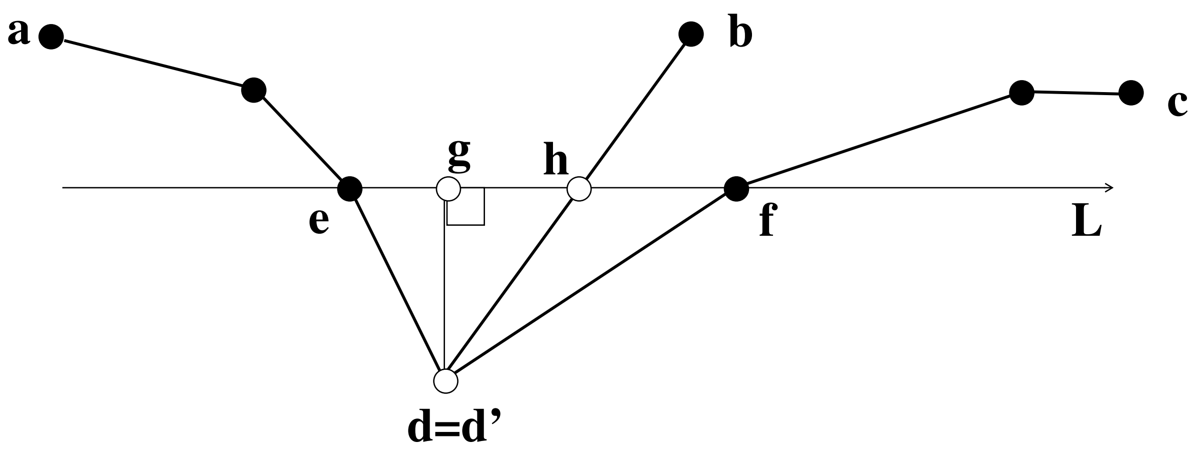

Fig. 12: Illustrating the proof of theorem 4.3.1.

is denoted by $R_G(S/S)$. More precisely, for any site s_i in P define the *covering radius* of S from s_i as:

$$C_r(S/s_i) = \max_{y} \{d_G(s_i,y)\},$$

where y varies over all sites in S. Then the geodesic median of S is a site in S for which

$$R_G(S/S) = \min_{s_i} \{C_r(S/s_i)\},$$

where s_i varies over all sites in S.

It is clear that we can compute the geodesic median in $O(n^3)$ time using sheer brute force if P is triangulated first. Before we present two more efficient algorithms for computing $M_G(S/P)$ we introduce some more notation, a definition and a lemma.

Definition: The *shortest path tree* of a polygon P (with respect to a point x), denoted by SPT(x,P), is the union of GP(x,v/P) over all vertices v of P.

It is easily shown that SPT(x,P) is a planar tree rooted at x. This tree has n nodes, namely the vertices of P, and its edges are straight segments connecting these nodes. It has been shown by ElGindy [El85], and later independently in [GHLST] for a more restricted case, that given a monotone subdivision of P this tree can be computed in linear time. It follows from the fact that the furthest geodesic point in P from x must be a vertex of P that it can be computed in linear time if SPT(x,P) is given. The following lemma, which follows directly from the previous results, allows us to improve on the brute-force algorithm in two different ways.

Lemma 4.4.1: The geodesic median of S in P is determined by a pair of sites in S one of which must be a convex vertex of CH_G(S/P).

Algorithm GEODESIC-MEDIAN-1

Input: A simple polygon P and a set of points S lying in P.

Output: The geodesic median of S, M_G(S/P).

begin

Step 1: Compute CH_G(S/P).

Step 2: Triangulate CH_G(S/P) to obtain T(CH_G(S/P)).

Step 3: Preprocess T(CH_G(S/P)) using O(n) space and O(n log n) time to support O(log n)-time point-location queries.

Step 4: Determine for each triangle in T(CH_G(S/P)) which points of S it contains.

Step 5: For each site s_i in S compute SPT(s_i,CH_G(S/P)), record the furthest neighbor of s_i encountered and the accompanying distance, and identify the sites that minimize this distance over all the sites s_i.

end

Each of the first four steps can be done in O(n log n) time with the procedures discussed earlier in the paper. In step 5, we have a triangulation of P available and thus we can compute SPT(s_i,CH_G(S/P)) in O(n) time for each site using the algorithms in [El85] and [GHLST]. We have thus established the following theorem.

Theorem 4.4.1: Algorithm *GEODESIC-MEDIAN-1* computes the geodesic median of a set S in a polygon P in $O(n^2)$ time.

We may also follow a different route to obtain an adaptive algorithm as follows.

Algorithm GEODESIC-MEDIAN-2

begin

Step 1: Compute CH_G(S/P) and identify its *h* convex vertices.

Step 2: Preprocess P so that given two query points x,y in P the geodesic path between them can be computed in O(log n) time.

Step 3: For each site s_i in S compute h query geodesic distances $D_G(s_i,y/P)$ where y varies over all convex vertices of $CH_G(S/P)$, for each s_i maximizing over y and finally minimizing over i.

end

Using the algorithm of Guibas and Hershberger [GH87] in step 2 it is clear that the complexity of this algorithm is dominated by step 3. Therefore we have the following result.

Theorem 4.4.2: Algorithm *GEODESIC-MEDIAN-2* computes the geodesic median of a set S in a polygon P in O(nh log n) time.

4.5 The maximum geodesic distance between two sets in P

In this section we consider the problem of computing the maximum geodesic distance between two sets of sites in P. Accordingly, let $S = \{s_1, s_2,...,s_n\}$ and $R = \{r_1, r_2,...,r_n\}$ be the two sets, each of cardinality n. Note that it is not important that $|S| = |R|$ but this simplifies the complexity expressions.

Definition: The *maximum geodesic distance* between S and R in P, denoted by $GD_{max}(S,R)$, is the maximal geodesic distance between an element of S and an element of R, i.e.,

$$GD_{max}(S,R) = \max_i \max_j \{D_G(s_i,r_j/P)\}$$

where i,j = 1,2,...,n.

Lemma 4.5.1: $GD_{max}(S,R)$ is determined by a pair of elements s_i, r_j such that s_i is a *convex* vertex of $CH_G(S/P)$ and r_j is a *convex* vertex of $CH_G(R/P)$.

This lemma immediately suggests the following algorithm for computing $GD_{max}(S,R)$.

<u>*Algorithm GEODESIC-MAX-DIST*</u>

Input: A simple polygon P and two sets of sites S and R lying in P.

Output: The geodesic maximum distance between S and R, $GD_{max}(S,R)$.

begin

Step 1: Compute the *geodesic hulls* $CH_G(S/P)$ and $CH_G(R/P)$.

Step 2: Preprocess P so that given two query points x,y in P the geodesic path between them can be computed in O(log n) time.

Step 3: For every pair of sites s_i in S and r_j in R such that they are convex vertices of their respective geodesic hulls compute $h_1 h_2$ geodesic distance queries of the form

$D_G(s_i,r_j/P)$ and select the maximum such distance encountered.

end

Theorem 4.5.1: Algorithm *GEODESIC-MAX-DIST* computes $GD_{max}(S,R)$ in O(n log n + $h_1 h_2$ log n) time.

Proof: The correctness follows from lemma 4.5.1 and the complexity is a straight forward consequence of using the algorithms discussed previously in each of the three steps. Q.E.D.

Corollary 4.5.1: If S and R are two simple n-vertex polygons instead of sets of points then $GD_{max}(S,R)$ can be computed in time O(n log log n + $h_1 h_2$ log n).

Proof: If S and R are simple polygons then the *geodesic hulls* $CH_G(S/P)$ and $CH_G(R/P)$ can be computed in linear time plus T(n), the time taken to triangulate a simple polygon, by theorem 3.3.1. Since T(n) = O(n log log n) [TV87], the result is immediate. Q.E.D.

5. Conclusion

We have presented an algorithm for computing the geodesic convex hull of a set of sites (points) S inside a simple polygon P in O(n log n) time and illustrated how it can be applied to obtain efficient algorithms for computing a variety of geodesic distance properties of sets inside P. We should add that a recent result of Aronov, Fortune, and Wilfong [AFW88] may provide a different approach to solving these problems. They demonstrate an algorithm for computing the *furthest-site geodesic Voronoi diagram* of a set of n sites in an n-gon in time O(n log n). The use of this Voronoi diagram in conjunction with point location algorithms may yield alternate algorithms with time complexity O(n log n). On the other hand, such an approach seems more complicated in practice than the geodesic convex hull approach proposed in this paper. Another open problem concerns the complexity of computing *CH*(Q/P) where Q is a simple polygon. We showed here that *CH*(Q/P) can be computed in linear time if a polygon triangulation algorithm is available to triangulate the region between P and Q. Is it possible to compute *CH*(Q/P) in linear time?

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