

Integer distance sets

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Northwestern University

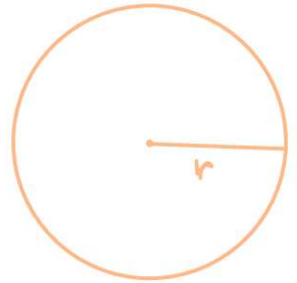
Joint work with

Marina Iliopoulou and Sarah Peluse

PAD@25, Bristol

April 2025

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why? $E(\Lambda)$ is orthogonal in $L^2(D_r)$.



$$\forall \lambda' \neq \lambda \in \Lambda: \hat{\mathbb{1}}_{D_r}(\lambda' - \lambda) = \int_D e^{2\pi i x \cdot (\lambda' - \lambda)} dx = 0$$

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$$\underline{\Lambda - \Lambda} = \{x - \lambda \mid \lambda' \neq \lambda \in \Lambda\} \subseteq \{\hat{1}_{D_r} = 0\}$$

difference
set



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$\Downarrow$

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radial

distance
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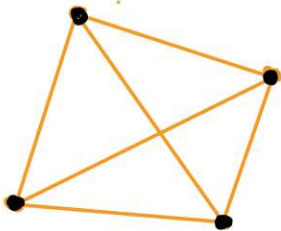
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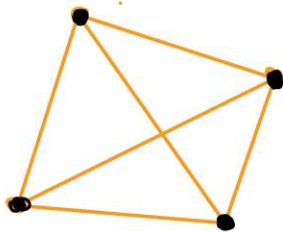
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1st attempt:

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- Encode Λ as lattice points on an analytic manifold.
- Analyse transcendentalty of the manifold
- Apply the determinant method.

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2nd attempt:

$$\|\{\hat{1}_{D_r=0}\}\| = \left\{ \frac{1}{2r} \left(n + \frac{1}{4} \right) + O\left(\frac{1}{n}\right) \mid n \in \mathbb{Z} \right\}.$$

The n^{th} zero of J_1 is $\pi \left(n + \frac{1}{4} \right) + O\left(\frac{1}{n}\right)$

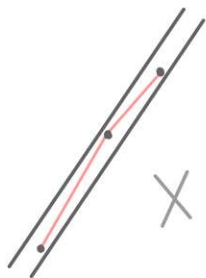
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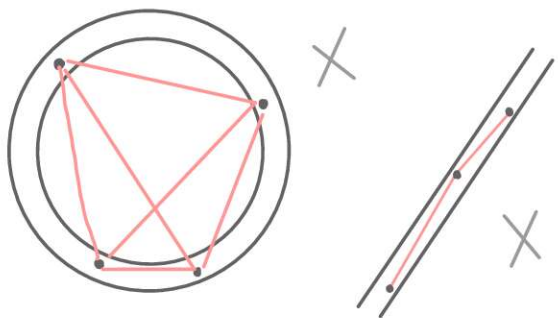
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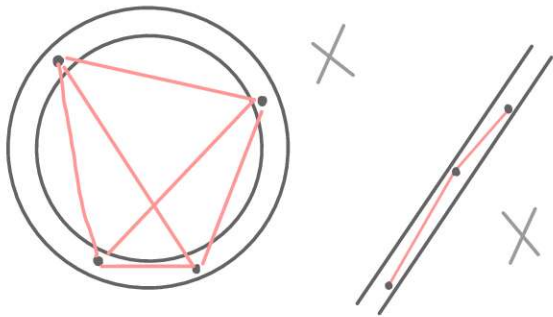
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$\Rightarrow$ no 3 points in a thin tube
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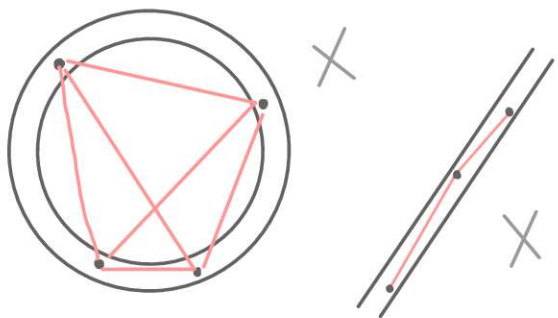
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This links to another famous problem:

The size and structure of integer distance sets.

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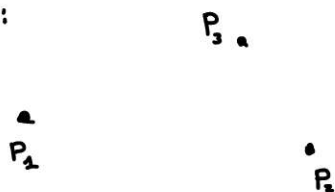
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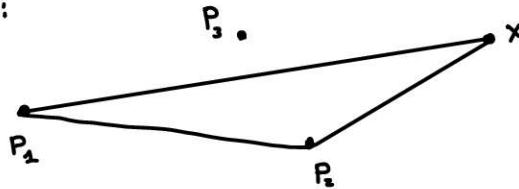
Proof (of Erdős):



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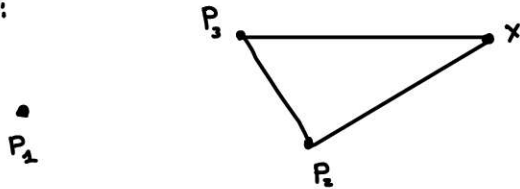
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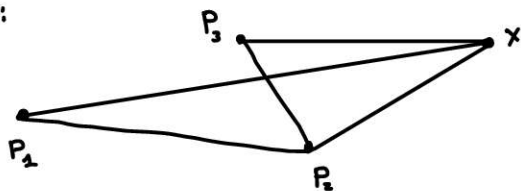
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$$| \|x - P_2\| - \|x - P_3\| | \in \{0, \dots, \|P_2 - P_3\|\}$$

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$$H_1 = \left\{ x : \left| \|x - P_1\| - \|x - P_2\| \right| \in \{0, \dots, \|P_1 - P_2\|\} \right\}$$

$\|P_1 - P_2\| \pm 1$
hyperbolas

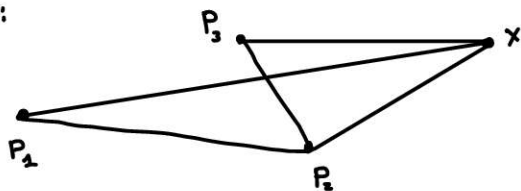
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$$|H_1 \cap H_2| \leq 4(\|P_1 - P_2\| + 1)(\|P_2 - P_3\| + 1) < \infty.$$

Bézout's theorem



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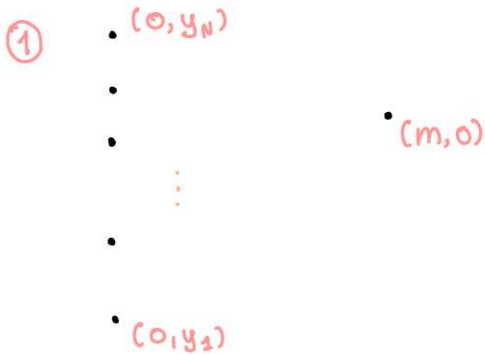
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$$m^2 = (x_j - y_j)(x_j + y_j) \quad x_j, y_j \in \mathbb{Z}$$
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①

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.
.
.
.
.
.
 $(0, y_1)$

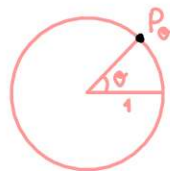
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② concyclic:

θ such that $\tan \frac{\theta}{4} \in \mathbb{Q}$

$$P_\theta = (\cos \theta, \sin \theta)$$



$\{P_\theta\}$ is dense in the unit circle;

$$\|P_\theta - P_{\theta'}\| = 2 \left| \sin \frac{\theta}{2} \cos \frac{\theta'}{2} - \sin \frac{\theta'}{2} \cos \frac{\theta}{2} \right| \in \mathbb{Q}$$

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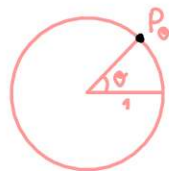
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S is concentrated on one line/circle.

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Conjecture: Yes.

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Question (Erdős): How large can an integer distance set S be if it has no 3 points on a line and no 4 points on a circle?

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Conditional on Bombieri - Lang's conjecture, under these assumptions, $|S|$ is bounded by a constant. [Ascher - Braune - Turchet, 2020]

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distance set

S

$E(\lambda)$
orthogonal
in $L^2(D)$

Λ

Integer
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S

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Exclude: 3 points on a line
4 points on a circle.

No 3 points in a thin tube
no 4 points in a thin annulus.

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finite [Anning-Erdős, 45]

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$$|S| \leq C$$

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$$|S| \leq C$$

$$|\Lambda| \leq 3$$

$$7 \leq C$$

[Kreisel-Kurz, 2008]

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Conjecture:

$$|S| \leq C$$

$$|\Lambda| \leq 3$$

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[Gilliopoulou-Peluse, 2024]

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Theorem (Gilliopoulou-Peluse, 2024):

Let $S \subset [N, N]^2$ be an integer distance set. Then there exists a line or circle $C \subseteq \mathbb{R}^2$ such that: $|S \setminus C| = O((\log N)^{o(1)})$.

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Our result confirms that ANY integer distance set has all but a very small number of points on a single line or circle.

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In particular, we obtain:

Corollary: Let $S \subseteq [N, N]^2$ be an integer distance set with no 3 of its points on a line and no 4 points on a circle. Then

$$|S| = O((\log N)^{o(1)}).$$

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Corollary: Let S be a noncollinear integer distance set. If $|S| = N$

then:

$$\text{diam } S \geq N^{c(\log \log N)}.$$

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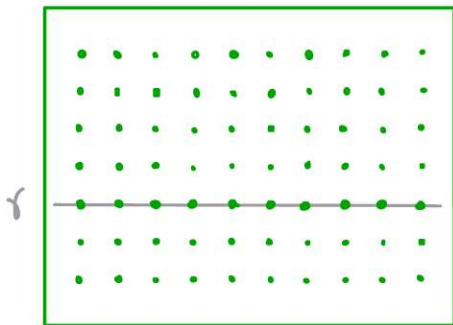
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A well-developed theory - originally due to Bombieri - Pila (1989) - provides sharp bounds on the number of lattice points on any irreducible curve V of degree d defined over $\mathbb{Q}$.

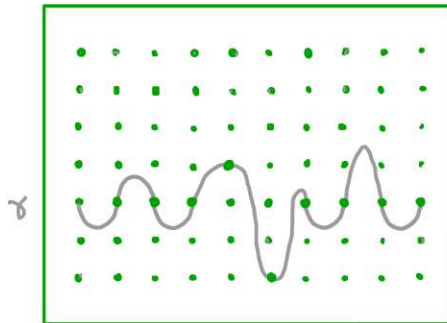
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Rational points of height $\leq H$



ϕ has too low degree $\rightarrow$



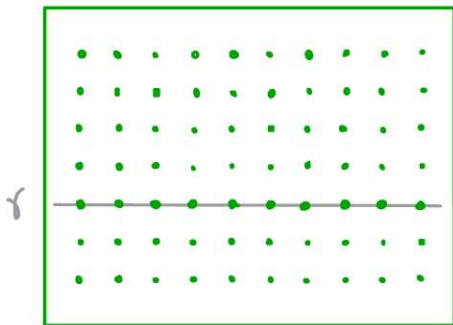
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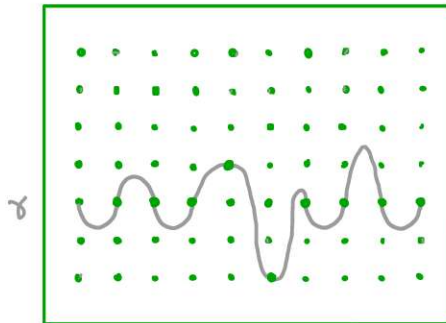
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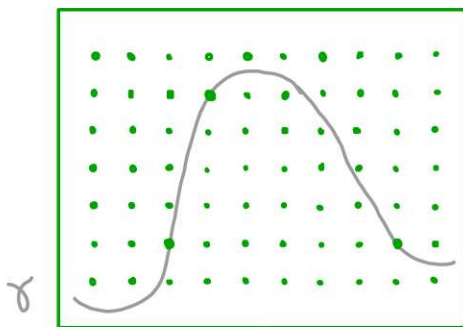


γ has too low degree $\rightarrow$

many points



$\leftarrow \gamma$ has too high degree

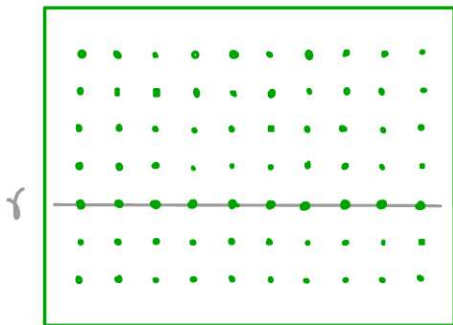


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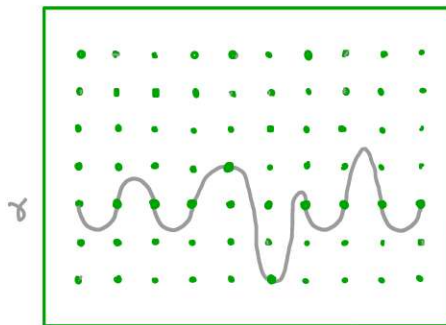
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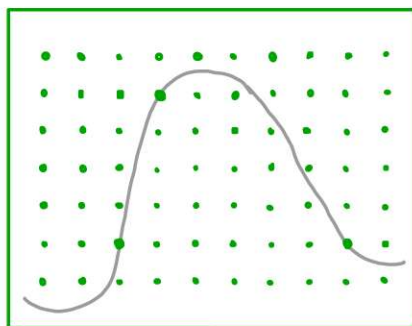


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Optimal degree:
 $(\log H)^c$

ϕ intermediate degree
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By translation and rotation, we can assume without loss of generality that:

$$0 \in S \subseteq \left\{ (x, \sqrt{m}y) \mid x, y \in \frac{1}{M}\mathbb{Z} \right\}$$

for squarefree $m = m(S)$, and integer $M = O(N)$. [Kemnitz, 88]

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We define the affine variety:

$$X_k := \left\{ (x, y, d_1, \dots, d_k) \mid (x - a_j)^2 + (y - b_j)^2 m = d_j^2; j = 1, \dots, k \right\} \subseteq \mathbb{C}^{k+2}.$$

Fix $p_1, \dots, p_k \in S$

$$p_1 = (a_1, b_1 \sqrt{m})$$

$$p_2 = (a_2, b_2 \sqrt{m})$$

$$p_3 = (a_3, b_3 \sqrt{m})$$

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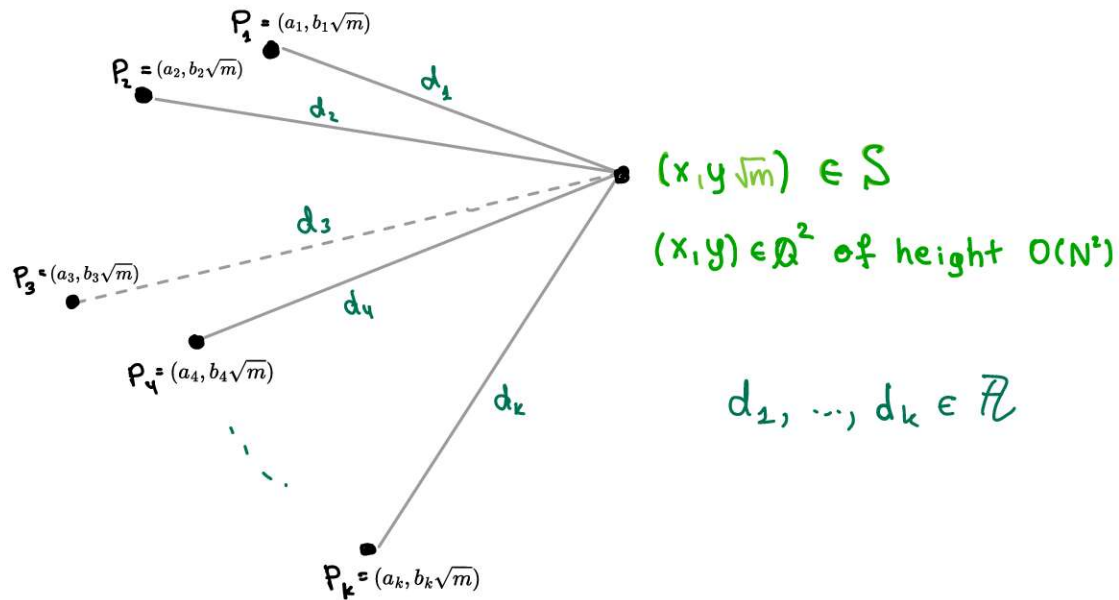
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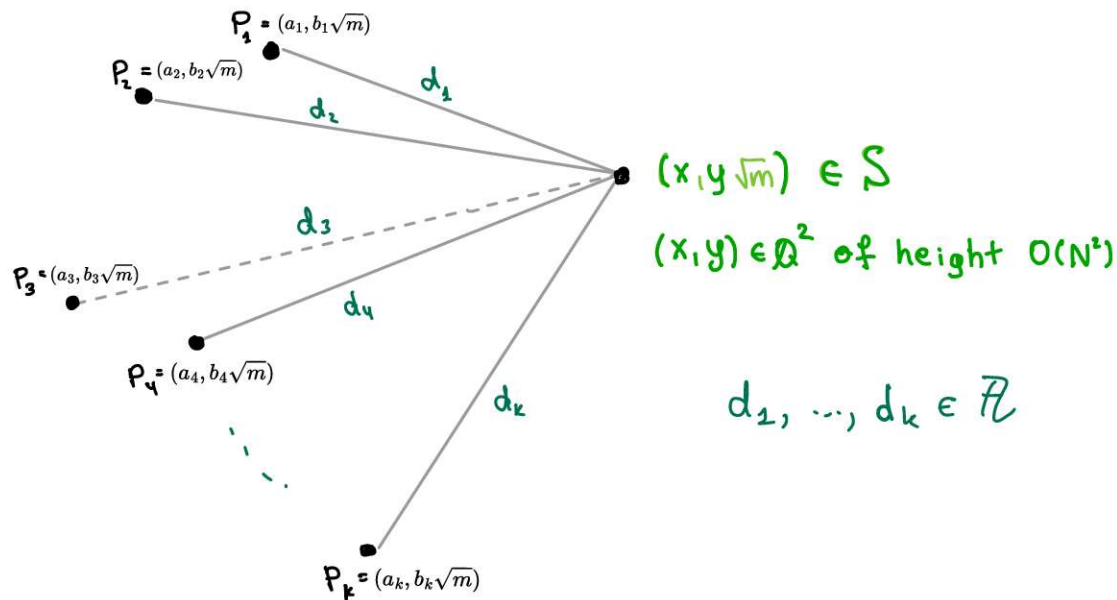
$$(x, y \sqrt{m}) \in S$$

$(x, y) \in \mathbb{Q}^2$ of height $O(N^2)$

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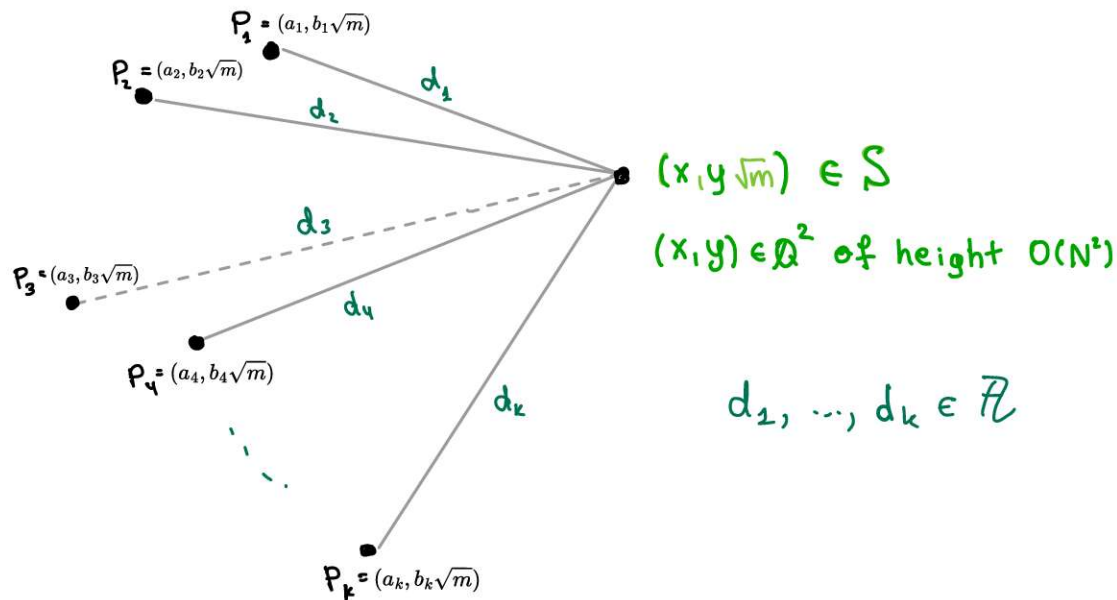


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Points of $S \xrightarrow[\text{injective}]{\pi^{-1}} \tilde{S}$: rational points of height $O(N^2)$ on $\overline{X_k} \subseteq \mathbb{P}^{k+2}$.

$\overline{X}_k \subseteq \mathbb{P}^{k+2}$ is an irreducible surface of degree 2^k defined over $\mathbb{Q}$.

$\bar{X}_k \subseteq \mathbb{P}^{k+2}$ is an irreducible surface of degree 2^k defined over $\mathbb{Q}$.

↖ $\dim \bar{X}_k = 2$



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[Heath-Brown, 2002]

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$\rightsquigarrow$

[Castryk, Cluckers, Dittmann, Nguyen, 2020]

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might be too low ☹️

For σ_j , $1 \leq j \leq t$, $|S \cap \sigma_j| < ?$

For δ_j , $1 \leq j \leq t$, $|S \cap \delta_j| < ?$

δ_j is NOT
a line/circle

Fix k points $p'_1, \dots, p'_k \in S \cap \delta_j$

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If $(P'_i)_{i=1}^k$ are in "general position", $\overline{C}_k$ is an irreducible curve of degree $\approx 2^k$ defined over $\mathbb{Q}$.

γ_j is line/circle and $|S \setminus \gamma_j| > ck^2$

γ_j isn't line/circle and $|S \cap \gamma_j| > \log N^c k^2$

↑

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Use Bombieri-Pila's-type result



$$|\tilde{S}_j| = \textcircled{?}$$

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[Castryk, Cluckers, Dittmann, Nguyen, 2020]

$\Downarrow$

$$|\tilde{S}_j| = O(e^{o(k)} N^{o(2^{-k})})$$

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[Castryk, Cluckers, Dittmann, Nguyen, 2020]

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$$|\tilde{S}_j| = O(e^{o(k)} N^{O(a^{-k})}) = O((\log N)^{o(k)})$$

choose $k \asymp \log \log N$

If $(P_i)_{i=1}^k$ are in "general position", $\overline{C}_k$ is an irreducible curve of degree $\approx 2^k$ defined over $\mathbb{Q}$.

[Castryk, Cluckers, Dittmann, Nguyen, 2020]

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as long as :

σ_j isn't line / circle and $|S \cap \sigma_j| > \log N^c k^2$

or

σ_j is line / circle and $|S \setminus \sigma_j| > ck^2$

as $k^2 \asymp (\log \log N)^2$, we have;

If γ_j is not a line/circle, then $|\gamma_j \cap S| = O((\log N)^{o(1)})$.

Otherwise, either $|S \setminus \gamma_j| = O((\log \log N)^2)$ or $|\gamma_j \cap S| = O((\log N)^{o(1)})$.

As there are $O((\log N)^{o(1)})$ curves, this concludes the proof.



Theorem (Gilliopoulou-Peluse, 2024):

Let $S \subset [-N, N]^2$ be an integer distance set. Then there exists a line or circle $C \subseteq \mathbb{R}^2$ such that: $|S \cap C| = O((\log N)^{o(1)})$.

Theorem (Gilliopoulou-Peluse, 2024):

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In fact, we have that either $|S| = O((\log N)^{o(1)})$, or there is a line/circle C s.t. $|S \setminus C| = O((\log \log N)^2)$.

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Corollary: Let $S \subseteq [N, N]^2$ be an integer distance set with no 3 of its points on a line and no 4 points on a circle. Then

$$|S| = O((\log N)^{o(1)}).$$

Corollary: Let S be a noncollinear integer distance set. If $|S| = N$

then:

$$\text{diam } S \geq N^{c(\log \log N)}.$$

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What is the size & structure of higher-dimensional integer distance sets?

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Can our method be adapted to other long-standing problems?

Thank You!

