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# Minimum Size Tree-Decompositions\*

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**Abstract.** *Tree-Decompositions* are the corner-stone of many dynamic programming algorithms for solving graph problems. Since the complexity of such algorithms generally depends exponentially on the *width* (size of the *bags*) of the decomposition, much work has been devoted to compute tree-decompositions with small width. However, practical algorithms computing tree-decompositions only exist for graphs with *treewidth* less than 4. In such graphs, the time-complexity of dynamic programming algorithms based on tree-decompositions is dominated by the *size* (number of bags) of the tree-decompositions. It is then interesting to try to minimize the size of the tree-decompositions.

In this extended abstract, we consider the problem of computing a tree-decomposition of a graph with width at most  $k$  and minimum size. More precisely, we focus on the following problem: given a fixed  $k \geq 1$ , what is the complexity of computing a tree-decomposition of width at most  $k$  with minimum size in the class of graphs with treewidth at most  $k$ ? We prove that the problem is NP-complete for any fixed  $k \geq 4$  and polynomial for  $k \leq 2$ . On going work also suggests it is polynomial for  $k = 3$ .

## 1 Introduction

A *tree-decomposition* of a graph  $G$  [11] is a way to represent  $G$  by a family of subsets of its vertex-set organized in a tree-like manner and satisfying some connectivity property. The *treewidth* of  $G$  measures the proximity of  $G$  with a tree. More formally, a tree decomposition of  $G = (V, E)$  is a pair  $(T, \mathcal{X})$  where  $\mathcal{X} = \{X_t | t \in V(T)\}$  is a family of subsets, called *bags*, of  $V$ , and  $T$  is a tree, such that:

- $\bigcup_{t \in V(T)} X_t = V$ ;
- for any edge  $uv \in E$ , there is a bag  $X_t$  (for some node  $t \in V(T)$ ) containing both  $u$  and  $v$ ;
- for any vertex  $v \in V$ , the set  $\{t \in V(T) | v \in X_t\}$  induces a subtree of  $T$ .

The *width* of a tree-decomposition  $(T, \mathcal{X})$  is  $\max_{t \in V(T)} |X_t| - 1$  and its *size* is order  $|V(T)|$  of  $T$ . The treewidth of  $G$ , denoted by  $tw(G)$ , is the minimum width over all possible tree-decompositions of  $G$ .

If  $T$  is constrained to be a path,  $(T, \mathcal{X})$  is called a *path-decomposition* of  $G$ . The pathwidth of  $G$ , denoted by  $pw(G)$ , is the minimum width over all possible path-decompositions of  $G$ .

Tree-Decompositions are the corner-stone of many dynamic programming algorithms for solving graph problems. As an example, the famous Courcelle’s Theorem states that any problem expressible in MSOL can be solved in linear-time in the class of bounded treewidth graphs [5]. Another framework based on graph decompositions is the *bi-dimensionality theory* that allowed the design of sub-exponential-time algorithms for many problems in the class of graphs excluding some fixed graph as a minor (e.g., [6]). Given a tree-decomposition with width  $w$  and size  $n$ , the time-complexity of most of such dynamic programming algorithms can be expressed as  $O(2^{wn})$  (or  $O(2^{w \log wn})$  in the case of *global* problems). Therefore, the problem of computing tree-decompositions with small width has drawn much attention in the last decades. It has been extensively studied and investigated from different angles: parametrized complexity, exact or approximation algorithms.

The above mentioned algorithms have mainly a theoretical interest because, on the one hand, their time-complexity exponential depends on the treewidth of graphs and, on the other hand, as far as we know, no practical algorithm exists that computes a “good” tree-decomposition for graphs with treewidth at least 5. However, in case of small ( $\leq 4$ ) treewidth graphs, efficient (i.e., practical) algorithms exist to compute

tree-decompositions with optimal width. Moreover, in such case, the time-complexity of above-mentioned dynamic programming algorithms becomes dominated by the size of the tree-decompositions and, therefore, it becomes interesting to minimize it.

In this extended abstract, we deal with the problem of computing tree-decompositions with minimum size. Obviously, if the width is not constrained, then the problem is trivial since there always exists a tree-decomposition of a graph with one bag (the full vertex-set). Hence, given a graph  $G$  and an integer  $k \geq tw(G)$ , we consider the problem of minimizing the size of a tree-decomposition of  $G$  with width at most  $k$ .

**Our results.** Let  $k$  be any positive integer and  $G$  be any graph with treewidth at most  $k$ . Let  $s_k(G)$  denote the smallest size of a tree-decomposition of  $G$  with width at most  $k$ . We first prove that, for any (fixed)  $k \geq 4$ , the problem of computing  $s_k$  is NP-hard in the class of graphs with treewidth at most  $k$ . Then, we prove that computing  $s_2$  can be solved in polynomial-time in the class of graphs with treewidth at most 2.

**Related Work.** The problem of computing “good” tree-decompositions has been extensively studied. Computing optimal tree-decomposition - i.e., with width  $tw(G)$  - is NP-complete in the class of general graphs  $G$  [1]. For any fixed  $k \geq 1$ , Bodlaender designed an algorithm that computes, in time  $O(k^{k^3} n)$ , a tree-decomposition of width  $k$  of any  $n$ -node graph with treewidth at most  $k$  [3]. Very recently, a single-exponential (in  $k$ ) algorithm has been proposed that computes a tree-decomposition with width at most  $5k$  in the class of graphs with treewidth at most  $k$  [4]. As far as we know, the only practical algorithms for computing optimal tree-decompositions hold for graphs with treewidth at most 1 (trivial since  $tw(G) = 1$  if and only if  $G$  is a tree), 2 (graphs excluding  $K_4$  as a minor) [13], 3 [2, 9, 10] and 4 [12].

We are not aware of any work dealing with the computation of tree-decompositions with minimum size. In [7], Dereniowski *et al.* consider the problem of size-constrained path-decompositions. Given any positive integer  $k$  and any graph  $G$  with pathwidth at most  $k$ . Let  $l_k(G)$  denote the smallest size (length) of a path-decomposition of  $G$  with width at most  $k$ . For any fixed  $k \geq 4$ , computing  $l_k$  is NP-complete in the class of general graphs and it is NP-complete, for any fixed  $k \geq 5$ , in the class of connected graphs [7]. Moreover, computing  $l_k$  can be solved in polynomial-time in the class of graphs with pathwidth at most  $k$  for any  $k \leq 3$ . Finally, the “dual” problem is also hard: for any fixed  $s \geq 2$ , it is NP-complete in general graphs to compute the minimum width of a tree-decomposition with size  $s$  [7]<sup>3</sup>.

## 2 NP-hardness in the class of graphs with treewidth at least 4

In this section, we prove that:

**Theorem 1.** *For any fixed integer  $k \geq 4$  (resp.,  $k \geq 5$ ), the problem of computing  $s_k$  is NP-complete in the class of graphs (resp., of connected graphs) with treewidth at most  $k$ .*

Note that the corresponding decision problem is clearly in NP, hence, we only need to prove it is NP-hard.

Our proof mainly follows the one of [7] for size-constrained path-decompositions. Hence, we recall here the two steps of the proof in [7]. First, it is proved that, if computing  $l_k$  is NP-hard for some  $k \geq 4$  in general graphs, then the computation of  $l_{k+1}$  is NP-hard in the class of connected graphs. Then, it is shown that computing  $l_4$  is NP-hard in general graphs with pathwidth at least 4, resp., computing  $l_5$  is NP-hard in the class of connected graphs with pathwidth at least 5. The second step consists of a reduction from the 3-PARTITION problem  $\square$  to the one of computing  $l_4$  (resp., of  $l_5$  in connected graphs). Precisely, for any instance  $\mathcal{I}$  of 3-PARTITION, a graph  $G_{\mathcal{I}}$  is built such that  $\mathcal{I}$  is a YES instance if and only if  $l_4(G_{\mathcal{I}})$  equals some defined value  $\ell_{\mathcal{I}}$ .

Our contribution consists first in showing that the first step of [7] directly extends to the case of tree-decompositions. That is, it directly implies that, if computing  $s_k$  is NP-hard for some  $k \geq 4$  in general graphs, then the computation of  $s_{k+1}$  is NP-hard in connected graphs. Our main contribution of this section is to show that, for the graphs  $G_{\mathcal{I}}$  built in the reduction proposed in [7], any tree-decomposition of  $G_{\mathcal{I}}$  with width at most 4 and minimum size is a path decomposition. Hence, in this class of graphs,  $l_4 = s_4$  and, therefore, for any instance  $\mathcal{I}$  of 3-PARTITION,  $\mathcal{I}$  is a YES instance if and only if  $s_4(G_{\mathcal{I}})$  equals  $\ell_{\mathcal{I}}$ . Theorem 1 follows.

<sup>3</sup> This result was proved in [7] in terms of path-decomposition but it is straightforward to extend it to tree-decomposition.

### 3 Polynomial cases

In this section, we give preliminary results on when minimum size tree-decompositions can be computed in polynomial-time. We first investigate the case of forests.

**Theorem 2.** *For any  $k \in \{1, 2, 3\}$ , a tree-decomposition with size  $s_k(F)$  and width  $k$  can be computed in polynomial-time in the class of forests  $F$ .*

Note that the computation of  $s_1$  is trivially polynomial since, in particular,  $s_1(T) = n - 1$  for any  $n$ -node tree. For  $k \in \{2, 3\}$ , we design polynomial-time algorithms for computing  $s_k$  in the class of forests. These are recursive algorithms that proceed greedily. Intuitively, in any forest  $F$ , we can identify a subgraph  $S$  of size at most  $k + 1$  such that  $S$  is a bag in a minimum-size tree-decomposition of  $F$  with width  $k$ .

Due to lack of space, we only give an example in the case  $k = 3$ . Let  $F$  be a forest and let  $v \in V(F)$  adjacent to exactly one non-leaf node. Moreover, assume that  $v$  is adjacent to at least three leaves  $a, b, c \in V(F)$ . Our algorithm first computes (recursively) a minimum-size tree-decomposition  $\mathcal{T}$  of  $F \setminus \{a, b, c\}$  with width at most 3. Let  $B$  be any bag of  $\mathcal{T}$  containing  $v$ . We prove that the tree-decomposition obtained from  $\mathcal{T}$  by adding a bag  $\{v, a, b, c\}$  adjacent to  $B$  is a minimum-size tree-decomposition of  $F$  with width 3.

The key point is that the number of cases to consider is relatively small. In particular, in the case of trees, we prove that there always exists a minimum-size tree-decomposition with width at most  $k \leq 3$  where each bag induces a (connected) subtree. That is, in case of trees, the cases to consider are all trees with at most 4 nodes. It seems that our algorithms cannot be easily extended for  $k \geq 4$  since, in particular, this connectivity property is not valid anymore for  $k > 4$  (see conclusion).

Then, we focus on graphs with treewidth 2.

**Theorem 3.** *A tree-decomposition of size  $s_2(G)$  and width 2 can be computed in polynomial-time in the class of graphs  $G$  with treewidth 2.*

The first step of the proof of the above theorem is to consider 2-connected graphs with treewidth 2. It is known that any 2-connected graph has treewidth 2 if and only if it has an *open nested ear decomposition* starting from a single edge [8]. In particular, this implies that any such a graph contains a node with degree 2. Given a 2-connected graph  $G$  with treewidth 2, let  $v$  be a node with degree 2 and  $u$  and  $w$  its neighbors. Let  $G'$  obtained from  $G$  by contracting the edge  $\{u, v\}$  (or equivalently, removing  $v$  and adding an edge between  $u$  and  $w$ ). Our algorithm first computes (recursively) a minimum-size tree-decomposition  $\mathcal{T}$  of  $G'$  with width 2. One bag  $B$  of it contains  $\{u, w\}$ . We prove that the tree-decomposition obtained from  $\mathcal{T}$  by adding a bag  $\{v, u, w\}$  adjacent to  $B$  is a minimum-size tree-decomposition of  $G$  with width 2.

Then, we consider the case of general graphs with treewidth 2. Given such a graph  $G$ , let  $G_1, \dots, G_r$  be its *blocks*, i.e., its inclusion-maximal 2-connected components and let  $G'$  be the graph obtained by removing all edges of the  $G_i$ s ( $i \leq r$ ) and removing all nodes that are not cut-vertices. By definition  $G'$  is a forest. We prove that a minimum-size tree-decomposition of  $G$  with width 2 can easily be obtained by combining minimum-size tree-decompositions with width 2 of the subgraphs  $G_i$  (computable in polynomial-time by above paragraph) and of  $F$  (using Theorem 2). More precisely, we prove that there always exists a minimum-size tree-decomposition of  $G$  with width 2 that does not contain *mixed* bags, i.e., bags containing two nodes in some  $G_i$  and one node not in  $G_i$ .

Finally, we consider the case  $k = 3$  for graphs with treewidth 2. We prove that:

**Theorem 4.** *A tree-decomposition of size  $s_3(G)$  and width at most 3 can be computed in polynomial-time in the class of 2-connected graphs  $G$  with treewidth 2.*

Unfortunately, in the case  $k = 3$ , minimum-size tree-decomposition with width 3 may always contain mixed bags. This makes the computation of  $s_3$  in the case of connected graphs with treewidth 2 more tricky. We are currently investigated this case.

## 4 Conclusion

In this extended abstract, we gave preliminary results on the complexity of minimizing the size of tree-decompositions with given width. Table 1 summarizes our results as well as the remaining open questions. We currently investigate the case of  $s_3$  in the class of graphs with treewidth 2 or 3 and we conjecture it is polynomially solvable. The problem of computing  $s_k$ , for  $k \geq 4$ , seems more intricate already in the case of trees. Indeed, our polynomial-time algorithms to compute  $s_k$ ,  $k \leq 3$ , in trees mainly rely on the fact that, for any tree  $T$ , there exists a minimum-size tree-decomposition of  $T$  with width at most 3, where each bag induces a connected subtree. This is unfortunately not true anymore in the case of tree-decomposition with width 5. As an example, consider the tree (with 10 nodes) obtained from a star with three 3 leaves by subdividing twice each edge.

	$s_1$	$s_2$	$s_3$	$s_k, k \geq 4$
$tw = 1$	$P(\text{trivial})$	$P$	$P$	?
$tw = 2$	-	$P$	?	?
$tw = 3$	-	-	?	?
$tw \geq 4$	-	-	-	NP-hard

**Table 1.** Summary of the complexity results.

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