TOWARDS LOWER BOUNDS FOR
COMPLEXITY OF 3-MANIFOLDS: A PROGRAM

S. Anisov

Abstract. For a 3-dimensional manifold $M^3$, its complexity $c(M^3)$, introduced by
S. Matveev, is the minimal number of vertices of an almost simple spine of $M^3$; in
many cases it is equal to the minimal number of tetrahedra in a singular triangulation
of $M^3$. An approach to estimating $c(M^3)$ from below for total spaces of torus bundles
over $S^1$, based on the study of $\theta$-curves in the fibers, is developed, and pseudominimal
special spines for these manifolds are constructed, which we conjecture to be their
minimal spines. We also show how to apply some of these ideas to other 3-manifolds.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Brief outlook.

The notion of complexity of three-dimensional manifolds was introduced by S. Matveev in 1990, see [15]. This complexity is a natural “filtration” on the set of compact 3-manifolds. It is additive with respect to taking the connected sum of manifolds, and for any \( k \in \mathbb{Z} \) there are only finitely many compact prime 3-manifolds of complexity at most \( k \); they can be enumerated by a simple algorithm (however, most of them appear many times in the list obtained, for example, in the list in [14, §5.2]). For any compact prime 3-manifold \( M \) different from \( S^3, \mathbb{R}P^3, L_{3,1}, \text{ and } S^2 \times S^1 \), the complexity \( c(M) \) is nothing but the minimal possible number of tetrahedra in a singular triangulation of \( M \). On the other hand, these four manifolds are the only closed prime manifolds of complexity 0.

The problem of evaluating the complexity of 3-manifolds is unresolved and appears to be very difficult. The only manifolds of known complexity are those with complexity less than or equal to 7. Their lists in [14] and [19] are obtained by enumeration of all special spines of closed orientable 3-manifolds of small complexity (by the algorithm mentioned above), followed by determining which of the spines obtained are equivalent (that is, are spines of the same manifold). This “equivalence problem” is difficult.

Obviously, any almost simple spine (or singular triangulation) of a manifold \( M \) provides an upper bound for \( c(M) \). There is an algorithm for simplification of a given spine, see [13]; for all manifolds from [14] and [19], this algorithm is efficient, that is, stops at a minimal spine of a manifold. There is no proof of efficiency of this algorithm in the general case, although one can, of course, use it to find quite reasonable upper bounds for \( c(M) \).

Much less is known about lower bounds. Clearly, \( c(M) > 7 \) whenever \( M \) is not homeomorphic to any manifold from tables in [14, 19]. Also, one can easily show that \( c(M) \geq b_1(M, G) - 1 \) for any commutative group \( G \); here \( b_1 \) is the first Betti number. However, in most cases these estimates are very inadequate. Up to now, the only known way to prove that \( c(M) = k \) for some \( k > 0 \), where \( M \) is a closed prime three-manifold, is to construct a special spine of \( M \) with \( k \) vertices (or a singular triangulation of \( M \) with \( k \) tetrahedra) and verify that \( M \) is not homeomorphic to any manifold of lower complexity.

Here we study 3-manifolds that can be fibered over the circle with torus fiber. We present “reasonable” special spines of these manifolds and discuss different ways of obtaining lower bounds for their complexity. The conjecture that arised is very similar to S. Matveev’s conjecture about the complexity of the lens spaces.

The paper is organized as follows: in the rest of §1, we give necessary definitions (following mainly [14]) and discuss Matveev’s conjecture on the complexity of lens spaces, which implies, by the way, an unexpected theorem on the running time of the Euclid algorithm (Theorem 3 in §1.3). In §2.3, we construct pseudominimal spines with small number of vertices for the total spaces of torus bundles over the circle; as a byproduct, in §2.4 we obtain another description of pseudominimal spines of lens spaces. Both constructions are based on the study of \( \theta \)-curves in tori, \( \text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z}) \)-action on the set \( \Sigma \) of their isotopy classes, flips, and the distance \( d \) on \( \Sigma \) defined by flips, see §2.1 and §2.2; another point of view on the flip-distance is presented in §4.2.

We conjecture that the spines constructed in §2.3 and §2.4 are minimal, that is,
the complexity of the corresponding manifolds is equal to the number of vertices in those spines, and the rest of the paper is devoted to this conjecture. In §3 we restrict ourselves to the spines of these spaces that are transversal to the fibers and prove that the number of vertices of any special spine with this property is at least one fifth of its conjectured value, see Theorem 12 (which holds for all Stallings manifolds, not for torus bundles only, see §4.3.2). Till the end of §3, everything relies heavily on the study of \( \theta \)-curves, which form a metric space \(( \Sigma, d )\). A generalization of this construction is presented in §4; potentially, it can give a good estimate or even the exact value of \( c(M) \), but requires to solve a problem about 2-chains similar to the problem discussed in [26, §4]; also see [10]. Finally, in §4.3 we discuss 3-manifolds different from the total spaces of torus bundles.

Apart from study of \( \theta \)-curves, another approach deserves to be mentioned. For a 3-manifold \( M \), consider its Turaev–Viro invariants, see [28]. The examples of these invariants constructed in [28] involve a root of unity \( q, q^n = 1 \), of arbitrary degree \( n \). By construction, \( TV_q(M) \) is a certain sum of products over all vertices of \( P \) of some polynomial expressions in \( q \) assigned to the vertices of \( P \), where \( P \) is a special spine of \( M^3 \). Obviously, the degree of \( TV_q(M) \) in \( q \) (or in \( \sigma = q + q^{-1} \)) does not exceed the maximal degree \( d(q) \) (which depends on \( q \) only) of an expression corresponding to a vertex of \( P \) times the number of vertices of \( P \), where a spine \( P \) can be assumed to have the minimal possible number of vertices. So it is possible, in principle, to estimate the complexity of \( M \) by dividing the degree of \( TV_q(M) \) (in \( q \) or in \( \sigma \)) over \( d(q) \); since \( q \) is an \( n \)th root of unity, it makes sense to consider the limit of that ratio as \( n \) tends to infinity. We do not elaborate this idea in the present paper; note that evaluating the invariants \( TV_q(M) \) is a problem difficult enough by itself, and spines constructed in §2.3 can be used in the calculations.

**Acknowledgements.** The idea to relate \( \theta \)-curves and their flips (studied in [2]) to spines of fibered spaces and their complexity is due to V. Turaev (see Fig. 10). R. Fernandes suggested a simplification of the original proof of Theorem 3. The author would also like to thank Yu. Baryshnikov, Yu. Burman, V. Nikulin, M. Polyak, V. Vassiliev, and especially S. Matveev for many useful discussions. The author thanks Instituto Superior Técnico (Lisbon, Portugal), Isaac Newton Institute (Cambridge, U.K.), and IHES (Bures-sur-Yvette, France) for their kind hospitality, and the former Institute for the support of S. Matveev’s visit, which was very important for this work.

1.2. Definitions.

In this section we follow [14, 15]. By \( K \) denote the 1-dimensional skeleton of the tetrahedron, which is nothing but the clique (that is, the total graph) with 4 vertices. Note that \( K \) is homeomorphic to a circle with three radii.

**Definition 1.** A compact 2-dimensional polyhedron is called *almost simple* if the link of each of its points can be embedded in \( K \). An almost simple polyhedron \( P \) is said to be *simple* if the link of each point of \( P \) is homeomorphic to either a circle or a circle with a diameter or the whole graph \( K \). A point of an almost simple polyhedron is *non-singular* if its link is homeomorphic to a circle, it is said to be a *triple point* if its link is homeomorphic to a circle with a diameter, and it is called a *vertex* if its link is homeomorphic to \( K \). The set of singular points of a simple polyhedron \( P \) (i.e., the union of the vertices and the triple lines) is called its *singular graph* and is denoted by \( SP \).

It is easy to see that any compact subpolyhedron of an almost simple polyhedron
is almost simple as well. Neighborhoods of non-singular and triple points of a simple polyhedron are shown in Fig. 1 a, b; Fig. 1 c–f represent four equivalent ways of looking at vertices.

![Figure 1](image)

**Figure 1.** Nonsingular (a) and triple (b) points; ways of looking at vertices (c–f)

**Definition 2.** A simple polyhedron $P$ with at least one vertex is said to be special if it contains no closed triple lines (without vertices) and every connected component of $P \setminus SP$ is a 2-dimensional cell.

**Definition 3.** A polyhedron $P \subset \text{Int} M$ is called a spine of a compact 3-dimensional manifold $M$ if $M \setminus P$ is homeomorphic to $\partial M \times (0, 1]$ if $\partial M \neq 0$ or to an open 3-cell if $\partial M = 0$. In the other words, $P$ is a spine of $M$ if a manifold $M$ with boundary (or punctured at one point closed manifold $M$) can be collapsed onto $P$. A spine $P$ of a 3-manifold $M$ is said to be almost simple, simple, or special if it is an almost simple, simple, or special polyhedron, respectively.

**Definition 4.** The complexity $c(M)$ of a compact 3-manifold $M$ is the minimal possible number of vertices of an almost simple spine of $M$. An almost simple spine with the minimal possible number of vertices is said to be a minimal spine.

**Theorem 1** [7]. Any compact 3-manifold has a special spine.

**Theorem 2** [15]. Let $M$ be a compact orientable prime 3-manifold with incompressible (or empty) boundary and without essential annuli. If $c(M) > 0$ (that is, if $M$ is different from (possibly punctured) $S^3$, $\mathbb{R}P^3$, $L_{3,1}$, and $S^2 \times S^1$), then any minimal almost simple spine of $M$ is special.

Recall that a 3-manifold $M$ is called prime if it cannot be represented as a connected sum $M = M_1 \# M_2$ with $M_1, M_2$ both different from $S^3$.

**Remark 1.** In this paper, we consider lens spaces $L_{p,q}$, $q > 3$, and the total spaces of torus bundles over the circle. All these manifolds satisfy the assumptions of Theorem 2.
Remark 2. Starting from a special spine $P$ of a manifold $M$, one can triangulate $M$ into $n$ tetrahedra, where $n$ is the number of vertices of $P$. This singular triangulation has the only vertex somewhere inside $M \setminus P$, its edges are dual to the 2-cells of $P$, and triangles are dual to the edges of $P$. On the other hand, given a singular triangulation of $M$ containing $n$ tetrahedra, one can easily obtain a special spine of the manifold $M$ punctured at all vertices of the triangulation. It was shown in [15] that puncturing does not affect the complexity. Thus for a manifold $M$ satisfying assumptions of Theorem 2 (in particular, for any prime manifold without boundary), its complexity $c(M)$ is equal to the minimal possible number of tetrahedra in a singular triangulation of $M$, provided that $c(M) > 0$.

Remark 3. Let a special spine $P$ of a manifold $M$ without boundary have $n$ vertices. Since each vertex of the graph $SP$ has degree 4, $P$ contains $2n$ edges. Since the Euler characteristic of any $3$-manifold equals zero and $M \setminus P$ is a 3-cell, we have the equality $n - 2n + f - 1 = 0$, which implies $f = n + 1$, where $f$ stands for the number of 2-dimensional “faces” of $P$. It follows from the construction of Remark 2 that the groups $\pi_1(M)$ and $H_1(M)$ have at most $f$ generators. Therefore, $f - 1 = c(M) \geq b_1(M) - 1$.

1.3. Example: lens spaces.

Definition 5. Let $p, q$ be coprime positive integers. The Euclid complexity $E(p, q)$ is the number of subtractions (not divisions!) that the Euclid algorithm takes to convert the pair $(p, q)$ into the pair $(0, 1)$. It is easy to see that $E(p, q)$ equals the sum of the denominators of the continued fraction representing any of the rational numbers $p/q$ and $q/p$.

A good exposition of the Euclid algorithm and continued fraction theory can be found in [7, 29].

Conjecture 1 [14, 15]. The complexity of the lens space $L_{p, q}$ is equal to $c(L_{p, q}) = E(p, q) - 3$.

Pseudominimal special spines of the spaces $L_{p, q}$ with $E(p, q) - 3$ vertices were constructed in [13, 14]. Pseudominimality of a spine means that no simplification move can be applied to it; for exact definitions, see [14]. In the end of §2 we present another construction of these spines. Note that the manifolds $L_{p, q}$ and $L_{p, p - q}$ are homeomorphic, and so are the manifolds $L_{p, q}$ and $L_{p, r}$, where $0 < q, r < p$ and $qr \equiv 1 \mod p$. So Conjecture 1 implies that $E(p, q) = E(p, p - q)$ and $E(p, q) = E(p, r)$ for $p, q, r$ as above; if these corollaries did not hold, Conjecture 1 would fail automatically. However, they are true. Indeed, $E(p, q) = E(q, p - q) + 1$ and $E(p, p - q) = E(p - q, q) + 1$, which implies $E(p, q) = E(p, p - q)$. The second corollary is a true statement, too, but this is far less obvious.

Theorem 3. Let $0 < q, r < p$ and $qr \equiv \pm 1 \mod p$. Then $E(p, q) = E(p, r)$.

Proof. We can suppose that $p \geq 3$. Let us introduce two row transformation matrices
\[
R_1 = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \quad \text{and} \quad R_2 = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix}.
\]

Obviously, we have
\[
R_1^{\pm 1} \begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ c & d \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} a \pm c & b \pm d \\ c & d \end{pmatrix} \quad \text{and} \quad R_2^{\pm 1} \begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ c & d \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ a \pm c & b \pm d \end{pmatrix}.
\]
Consider the expansion of \( \frac{p}{q} \) in a continued fraction

\[
\frac{p}{q} = n_1 + \frac{1}{n_2 + \frac{1}{\ddots + \frac{1}{n_k}}}.
\]

Set \( U = R_2^{-1}R_\varepsilon^{-n_{k+1}} \cdots R_1^{-n_3}R_2^{-n_2}R_1^{-n_1} \), where \( \varepsilon = 1 \) for \( k \) odd and \( \varepsilon = 2 \) for \( k \) even; note that \( n_1 \geq 1 \) and \( n_k \geq 2 \). It is easy to see that \( U \) takes vector \((p, q)^T\) to \( (1, 0)^T \) (where \( T \) stands for transposing): \( R_1^{-n_1} \) takes \((p, q)^T\) to \((p - n_1q, q)^T\) and so forth, according to the Euclid algorithm, the only exception being that at the last step we apply \( R_2^{-1} \) to \((1, 1)^T\), not \( R_1^{-1} \), in order to convert \((1, 1)^T\) to \((1, 0)^T\), not to \((0, 1)^T\).

First suppose that \( qr \equiv -1 \mod p \), thus \( qr = sp - 1 \) for some positive integer \( s \). Since \( 1 \leq q < p \) and \( 1 \leq r < p \), we have \( s \leq q \) and \( s \leq r \). Let us consider the inverse matrix

\[
U^{-1} = R_1^{n_1}R_2^{n_2}R_3^{n_3} \cdots R_k^{n_k-1}R_2.
\]  

We proclaim that

\[
U^{-1} = \begin{pmatrix} p & r \\ q & s \end{pmatrix}.
\]

Indeed, equation (1) implies that \( U^{-1} \) has the following properties:

1) the first column of \( U^{-1} \) is \((p, q)^T\);
2) the determinant of \( U^{-1} \) equals 1;
3) the second column entries of \( U^{-1} \) are positive, and
4) they do not exceed the corresponding first column entries.

Property 1 follows from the construction of the sequence involved in (1), and property 2 is obvious. It is clear that both second column entries of \( U^{-1} \) are nonnegative; they are both positive, because the right hand side of (1) contains both \( R_1 \) and \( R_2 \). The last property holds for \( R_2 \) and survives under left multiplications by \( R_1 \) and \( R_2 \). The first two properties imply that the second column of \( U^{-1} \) is \((r + mp, s + mq)^T\) for some \( s \in \mathbb{Z} \), and the last two properties show that in fact \( m = 0 \).

Note that \( E(p, q) = n_1 + n_2 + \ldots + n_k \) equals the sum of the exponents in (1). Since \( R_1^T = R_2 \) and \( R_2^T = R_1 \), for the transposed inverse matrix \((U^{-1})^T\) we have

\[
\begin{pmatrix} p & q \\ r & s \end{pmatrix} = (U^{-1})^T = R_1 R_2^{n_k-1} \cdots R_2^{n_3} R_1^{n_2} R_2^{n_1},
\]  

where \( n_k \geq 2 \) and \( n_1 \geq 1 \). This yields the sequence of \( n_1 + n_2 + \ldots + n_k = E(p, q) \) subtractions that converts the pair \((p, r)\) into the pair \((1, 0)\). Such a sequence is unique up to a possible application of several subtractions \( R_1 \) to the column \((1, 0)^T\) (clearly, \( R_1 \) does not change it); it is nothing but the Euclid algorithm provided that there are no those “fake” subtractions. This condition is satisfied, because the last subtraction (the inversed rightmost one in (2), or the leftmost one in a similar expression for \( U^T \)) is \( R_2 \), not \( R_1 \). Therefore \( E(p, q) = E(p, r) \) for \( qr \equiv -1 \mod p \).

In the case \( qr \equiv 1 \mod p \), note that \( q(p - r) \equiv -1 \mod p \) and \( 0 < p - r < p \). Consequently, \( E(p, q) = E(p, p - r) = E(p, r) \). \( \Box \)

Theorem 3 means that Conjecture 1 passes a nontrivial “sanity test”.
§2. Upper bound

2.1. $\theta$-curves.

Let us recall some definitions and results from [2] 1.

**Definition 6.** A $\theta$-curve $L \subset T^2$ is a graph with two vertices and three edges (not loops) connecting these vertices, embedded in $T^2$ in such a way that the edges are pairwise non-homotopic; this is equivalent to the condition that the complement $T^2 \setminus L$ is a 2-dimensional cell.

![Figure 2. A $\theta$-curve](image)

Up to an isotopy, any two $\theta$-curves can be taken to one another by a linear automorphism of the torus, see [2]. Another way to change the isotopy class of a $\theta$-curve is to apply a sequence of flips.

**Definition 7.** A flip along an edge of a trivalent graph (in particular, of a $\theta$-curve) is an invertible restructuring of the graph that acts on a neighborhood of this edge as shown on Fig. 3. A flip does not change the graph outside of this neighborhood.

![Figure 3. A flip](image)

For any two $\theta$-curves $L_1$, $L_2$, there exists a sequence of flips (and isotopies) that takes $L_1$ to $L_2$, see [1, 2]. Now let us recall how one can find the minimal number of flips required for such a sequence.

For a $\theta$-curve $L$, there are three unoriented (or six oriented) cycles in $\pi_1(T^2)$ formed by pairs of edges of $L$. These cycles also can be represented by the three 1-cells of the singular triangulation of $T^2$ dual to the cell decomposition defined by $L$. The six points in the lattice $\mathbb{Z}^2 = \pi_1(T^2) = H_1(T^2, \mathbb{Z})$ corresponding to these cycles are the vertices of some convex centrally symmetric hexagon $W(L)$.

**Definition 8.** The hexagon $W(L)$ is said to be associated to a $\theta$-curve $L$. A hexagon $W$ with the vertices in $\mathbb{Z}^2$ is called admissible if it is associated to some $\theta$-curve. The standard hexagon is the hexagon $W_0$ with the vertices $\pm(1,0)$, $\pm(0,1)$, and $\pm(1,-1)$, see Fig. 4. It is associated to the $\theta$-curve shown on Fig. 2 (under a natural choice of a parallel and a meridian of $T^2$ as a basis of $H_1(T^2) = \mathbb{Z}^2$).

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1We do not follow the notation of [2] here.
Theorem 4 [2].

1) A hexagon $W$ (with vertices at lattice points), centrally symmetric with respect to the origin $O$, is admissible if and only if it has the following properties:
   
   a) if $X$ and $Y$ are nonopposite vertices of $W$, then the area of the triangle $OXY$ equals $1/2$;
   
   b) if $X, Y$, and $Z$ are three consecutive vertices of $W$, then $\overrightarrow{OY} = -\overrightarrow{OX} + \overrightarrow{OZ}$.

Properties a) and b) are equivalent. The origin is the only interior lattice point of an admissible hexagon $W$. The vertices of $W$ are the only lattice points on its boundary.

2) Two $\theta$-curves $L$ and $L'$ are isotopic if and only if $W(L) = W(L')$. For any two $\theta$-curves $L$ and $L'$ there exists an operator $A \in \text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z})$ such that $AL$ is isotopic to $L'$ and $A(W(L)) = W(L')$.

3) Let $\theta$-curves $L$ and $L'$ differ by the flip along an edge $e$. Then associated hexagons $W$ and $W'$ have in common two pairs of opposite vertices that correspond to cycles $\sigma$ and $\mu$ dual to two other edges. The remaining pair of the vertices is $\pm(\sigma + \mu)$ for one of the hexagons $W$, $W'$ and $\pm(\sigma - \mu)$ for the other one.

Since a $\theta$-curve has three edges, three different flips can be applied. Fig. 4 shows how they change the standard hexagon $W_0$. The result of a flip transformation of an arbitrary admissible hexagon can be represented by the same picture with another coordinate system, because any admissible hexagon is $\text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z})$-equivalent to $W_0$.

![Figure 4. Action of three flips on the standard hexagon](image)

According to the second part of Theorem 4, we can study sequences of flips that convert an admissible hexagon $W_1$ into another admissible hexagon $W_2$ rather than sequences of flips that take a $\theta$-curve $L_1$ into another $\theta$-curve $L_2$. So it is natural to introduce a graph $\Gamma$ that has the admissible hexagons as its vertices and flips as its edges; the number of flips required to convert $W_1$ into $W_2$ equals the distance between the corresponding vertices of $\Gamma$. Clearly, $\Gamma$ is a trivalent graph. It turns out that $\Gamma$ is a tree, see [2]. More information about $\Gamma$ can be found at [25, Ch. II, §1].

Definition 9. A leading vertex of an admissible hexagon $W$ is its vertex that is the most distant from the origin with respect to the quadratic form $Q(x, y) = x^2 + xy + y^2$.

The standard hexagon $W_0$ is a unit regular hexagon with respect to $Q(x, y)$. Any other admissible hexagon has only one pair of opposite leading vertices.

Theorem 5 [2]. Let $(p, q)$ be a leading vertex of an admissible hexagon $W \neq W_0$. Suppose that $p > 0$ and $q > 0$. Then $d(W, W_0) = E(p, q)$, where $d(W, W_0)$ stands for the distance between $W$ and $W_0$ in $\Gamma$ and $E(p, q)$ is the Euclid complexity, see Definition 5 above.
In fact, the steps (flips) of the only way from (the vertex of \( \Gamma \) corresponding to) \( W_0 \) to (the vertex corresponding to) \( W \) in \( \Gamma \) are in a natural one-to-one correspondence with the steps (subtractions) of the Euclid algorithm applied to the pair \((p, q)\). There is an algorithm that constructs the path from \( W \) to \( W_0 \): start at \( W \) and apply the flip that decreases the length of a hexagon; such a flip is unique unless the hexagon is \( W_0 \). The numbers \( p, q \) are coprime by virtue of the first part of Theorem 4, and for any pair of coprime numbers \((p, q)\), there exists exactly one admissible hexagon with a leading vertex at \((p, q)\), cf. [2]. For the detailed proof of Theorem 5, see [2].

If the coordinates \((p, q)\) of a leading vertex of \( W \) are both negative, one should consider the opposite vertex, or rotate the coordinate system by \( \pi \). If \( pq < 0 \), one should rotate the coordinate system by \( \pm \pi/3 \) (we consider “triangular” coordinates shown on Fig. 4 rather than rectangular coordinates), that is, to apply the coordinate change \( \begin{pmatrix} 0 & -1 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \) or its inverse, to make both coordinates of one of the leading vertices positive. Then Theorem 5 may be applied. This gives the following simple answer: \( d(W, W_0) = E(|p|, |q|) - 1 \) whenever \( pq < 0 \), where \((p, q)\) is a leading vertex of \( W \). The \(-1\) summand can be explained as follows: if, for example, \( p < 0 \) and \( q > 0 \), the process of converting \( W \) into \( W_0 \) by flips corresponds to the converting of the unordered pair \((-p, q)\) to the pair \((1, 1)\), not to \((0, 1)\), by subtractions according to the Euclid algorithm (since we can consider \((-1, 1)\) as a leading vertex of \( W_0 \)); of course, this takes one subtraction less. Also see §4.2.

**Definition 10.** For a matrix \( A \in SL(2, \mathbb{Z}) \) we define its **complexity** \( c(A) \) by putting \( c(A) = d(W_0, AW_0) \).

To calculate the number \( c(A) \), find a leading vertex \((p, q)\) of the hexagon \( AW_0 \). Then we get \( c(A) = E(|p|, |q|) \) if \( pq > 0 \) or \( c(A) = E(|p|, |q|) - 1 \) if \( pq < 0 \). In particular, if \( AW_0 = W_0 \) (there are six matrices \( A \) with this property), we get \( c(A) = 0 \).

**2.2. On \( SL(2, \mathbb{Z}) \), \( c(A) \), and \( c(\mathcal{A}) \).**

Since all admissible hexagons are \( SL(2, \mathbb{Z}) \)-equivalent and the action of this group preserves the existence of a flip connecting two given hexagons (thus, there is an action of \( SL(2, \mathbb{Z}) \) on the graph \( \Gamma \)), we have \( d(W_1, W_2) = d(BW_1, BW_2) \) for \( B \in SL(2, \mathbb{Z}) \). In particular,

\[
\begin{align*}
c(A^{-1}) &= d(W_0, A^{-1}W_0) = d(AW_0, AA^{-1}W_0) = d(W_0, AW_0) = c(A) \\
c(A) &= d(W_0, AW_0) = d(BW_0, BA_W_0), \text{ which may be different from } d(BW_0, ABW_0) = d(W, AW).
\end{align*}
\]

Thus we have \( c(A) = d(W, BAB^{-1}W) \) for any admissible hexagon \( W = BW_0 \).

It is not true that \( c(A) = d(W, AW) \) for any admissible hexagon \( W \). This means that the number \( c(A) \) is not a conjugacy class invariant, contrary to a statement contained implicitly in [2].

**Example.** Let \( A = \begin{pmatrix} 171 & 100 \\ -289 & -169 \end{pmatrix} \) and \( B = \begin{pmatrix} 10 & -17 \\ -17 & 29 \end{pmatrix} \). Note that \( A, B \in SL(2, \mathbb{Z}) \). By a straightforward calculation, we obtain \( c(A) = 13 \), while for a conjugate matrix \( A' = B^{-1}AB = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \) we have \( c(A') = 1 \).

The following problem arises: find the minimal value of \( c(A) \) over the whole conjugacy class of \( A \) in \( SL(2, \mathbb{Z}) \).
Definition 11. The complexity of an operator $A \in \text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z})$ is the minimal possible complexity of matrices that represent $A$ in all possible bases of the lattice $\mathbb{Z}^2$:

$$c(A) = \min_{A \sim A_0} \min_{B \in \text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z})} c(B^{-1}A_0B),$$

where $A_0$ is any matrix representing $A$ and $\sim$ denotes conjugacy in $\text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z})$. In other words, $c(A) = \min d(W, AW)$ over all admissible hexagons $W$. A matrix $A$ of an operator $A$ in some basis is said to be a minimal matrix of $A$ if $c(A) = c(A)$, that is, if $c(A) \leq c(A')$ for any matrix $A'$ conjugated to $A$. An admissible hexagon $W$ is called minimal for $A$ if $d(W, AW) = c(A)$.

In §3, we will be interested in the sequence $\{c(A^k)\}$. Properties of this sequence depend on the trace of $A$. Recall (see [6, §0]) that the operator $A$ is called elliptic if $|\text{tr} A| < 2$. In this case $\text{tr} A = 0$ or $\text{tr} A = \pm 1$, and the equation $A^2 - (\text{tr} A)A + (\det A)I = 0$ implies either $A^2 = -I$ or $A^3 \pm I = 0$, because $\det A = 1$. Thus elliptic operators are periodic of period 3, 4 or 6, and so are the sequences $\{c(A^k)\}$; both eigenvalues of an elliptic operator are roots of unity. If $\text{tr} A = \pm 2$, we say that $A$ is a parabolic operator. In this case $(A \pm I)^2 = 0$ and $A$ is $\text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z})$ conjugated to either $\begin{pmatrix} 1 & n \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$ or $\begin{pmatrix} -1 & n \\ 0 & -1 \end{pmatrix}$, where $n \in \mathbb{Z}$. So $A$ is either a periodic operator (if $n = 0$) or, up to a sign, a power of the Jordan block $\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$; both eigenvalues of a parabolic operator equal $\pm 1$. Finally, $A$ is hyperbolic if $|\text{tr} A| > 2$. In this case the eigenvalues of $A$ are different real numbers, and $A$ is a hyperbolic rotation. Also see [22, §5].

Lemma 1. $c(AB) \leq c(A) + c(B)$. Moreover, $c(AB) \equiv c(A) + c(B) \mod 2$.

Proof. By definition, $c(A) = d(W_0, AW_0)$, $c(AB) = d(W_0, ABW_0)$, and $c(B) = d(W_0, BW_0) = d(AW_0, ABW_0)$. Since $d$ is a metric on $\Gamma$, the triangle inequality $d(W_0, ABW_0) \leq d(W_0, AW_0) + d(AW_0, ABW_0)$ holds. Since the graph $\Gamma$ is a tree, we have $d(W_0, ABW_0) = d(W_0, AW_0) + d(AW_0, ABW_0) - 2k$, where $k \in \mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0}$, see Fig. 5. \hfill \square

![Figure 5. Additivity of tree distance parities](image)

Theorem 6. Reduction of $c(A)$ modulo 2 coincides with the unique epimorphism of the modular group $\text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z})/\{\pm I\}$ to $\mathbb{Z}_2$.

Proof. Lemma 1 implies that this reduction is a homomorphism of $\text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z})$ to $\mathbb{Z}_2$. It is an epimorphism since it takes $\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$ to 1 mod 2. It is an epimorphism of the modular group $G = \text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z})/\{\pm I\}$, because $c(A) = c(-A)$: the hexagon $AW_0$ is centrally symmetric, whence $AW_0 = -AW_0$. Such an epimorphism $\varphi$ is unique.
Indeed, it is defined by its values \( \varphi(S) \) and \( \varphi(T) \) on the elements \( S = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & -1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \) and \( T = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \), which generate the modular group, see [24, Ch. VII, §1]. The relation \((ST)^3 = 1\) in \( G \) implies that \( \varphi(S) = \varphi(T) \) in \( Z_2 \). Since \( \varphi \) is not identically zero, we have \( \varphi(S) = \varphi(T) = 1 \). \( \Box \)

Let us explain how to find a minimal matrix of an operator \( A \). Let \( A \) be its matrix in some basis, \( W_0 \) be the standard hexagon in this basis, \( W = AW_0 \), and \( W_0, W_1, \ldots, W_{c(A)} = W \) be the shortest path from \( W_0 \) to \( W \) in \( \Gamma \). Then \( W = AW_0, AW_1, \ldots, AW_{c(A)} = AW = A^2W_0 \) is the shortest path from \( W \) to \( AW \) in \( \Gamma \). Both \( W_{c(A)} - 1 \) and \( AW_1 \) are neighbors of a trivalent vertex \( W \) of \( \Gamma \). Compare them.

**Theorem 7.** Any matrix \( A \) with \( c(A) \leq 1 \) is minimal. A matrix \( A \) with \( c(A) > 1 \) is minimal if and only if \( W_{c(A)} - 1 \neq AW_1 \).

**Proof.** If \( c(A) = 0 \), the matrix \( A \) is minimal. Let \( c(A) = 1 \), whence \( c(A) \leq 1 \). It follows from eq. (3) and Lemma 1 that \( c(B^{-1}AB) \equiv c(A) + 2c(B) \equiv c(A) = 1 \) (mod 2). So \( c(A) \) is odd, thus \( c(A) \neq 0 \) and \( A \) is minimal.

Suppose that \( W_{c(A)} - 1 = AW_1 \). The operator \( A \) takes \( W_1 \) to \( AW_1 = W_{c(A)} - 1 \). We have \( c(A) \leq d(W_1, AW_1) = d(W_1, W_{c(A)} - 1) = c(A) - 2 \) (unless \( c(A) \leq 1 \)), i.e., the matrix \( A \) is not minimal. This proves the “only if” part of the Theorem.

Suppose that the matrix \( A \) is not minimal. This implies that the standard hexagon \( W_0 \) is not minimal. Let \( V \) be a minimal hexagon for the operator \( A \). By \( \gamma_0 \) denote the path from \( V \) to \( AV \) in \( \Gamma \) of length \( c(A) \). For any \( k \in \mathbb{Z} \) let \( \gamma_k = A^k\gamma \) be the path from \( A^kV \) to \( A^{k+1}V \) in \( \Gamma \) (recall that \( \Gamma \) carries an action of \( SL(2, \mathbb{Z}) \)).

Put \( \gamma = \bigcup_{k \in \mathbb{Z}} \gamma_k \). Note that any vertex of \( \Gamma \) on \( \gamma \) represents a minimal hexagon, so \( W_0 \in \Gamma \setminus \gamma \). We have to consider three cases.

**Case 1:** \( c(A) > 1 \). Then two vertices of \( \gamma \) neighboring with \( A^kV \), \( k \in \mathbb{Z} \), are different because of the “only if” statement proven above. So \( \gamma \) is homeomorphic to a line, because two neighbors of any interior vertex of any \( \gamma_k \) are different, too (since \( \gamma_k \) is the shortest path from \( A^kV \) to \( A^{k+1}V \)), and the graph \( \Gamma \) is a tree.

By \( W_0U_0 \) denote the shortest path from \( W_0 \) to \( \gamma \) (that is, \( U_0 \) is the first point of \( \gamma \) belonging to any path from \( W_0 \) to a point of \( \gamma \)). Then \( WU \) and \( AW \) are the shortest paths from \( W \) and \( AW \) to \( \gamma \), where \( W = AW_0 \) and \( U = AU_0 \). Obviously, these paths end at different points of \( \gamma \): if \( U_0 \in \gamma_k \), then \( U \in \gamma_{k+1} \) and \( AU \in \gamma_{k+2} \). Since \( \Gamma \) is a tree, the paths \( W_0U_0, WU, \) and \( AW \) are mutually disjoint. This means that \( W_0U_0UW \) is the shortest path from \( W_0 \) to \( W \) and \( WU \) is the shortest path from \( W \) to \( AW \), see Fig. 6. The leg \( WU = A(W_0U_0) \) of this path is not empty. Consequently, the penultimate vertex of the path \( W_0W \) coincides with the first (different from \( W \)) vertex of the path \( W \) \( AW \), which proves the statement of the “if” part of the Theorem.

**Case 2:** \( c(A) = 1 \). Let \( V \) be a minimal hexagon for \( A \). If \( A^2V \neq V \), then \( A^kV \neq A^kV \) for any \( k \in \mathbb{Z} \), all the \( \gamma_k \) are different, \( \gamma \) is homeomorphic to a line, and we can repeat the argument of Case 1. If \( A^2V = V \), we have \( A^kV = V \) for \( k \) even and \( A^kV = AV \) for \( k \) odd. Without loss of generality, it can be assumed that the path from \( W_0 \) to \( V \) does not pass through \( AV \). The transformation \( A \) takes this path to the path from \( W = AW_0 \) to \( AV \), which does not pass through \( V \). So the shortest path from \( W_0 \) to \( W \) is \( W_0V \) \( AV \), and thus it contains the edge \( V \) \( AV \).
Similarly, the path from $W$ to $AW$ also contains that edge. Therefore, these two paths overlap, which proves the Theorem in the case $c(A) = 1$.

Case 3: $c(A) = 0$. There exists an admissible hexagon $V$ such that $AV = V$, but $AW_0 \neq W_0$ because $A$ is not a minimal matrix. Consider paths $W_0V$ and $WV$ in $\Gamma$, where $W = AW_0$. Let $U$ be the first (most distant from $V$) common point of this paths. Recall that $A$ acts on $\Gamma$ and takes the path $W_0V$ to $WV$. Thus $AU = U$, $W_0 \neq U$, and $A$ takes the path $W_0U$ to $WU$ and the path $WU$ to $AWU$. So the paths $W_0W = W_0UW$ and $AW = WU AW$ overlap over the leg $WU$. 

Now we can present an algorithm that finds the number $c(A)$ and a minimal matrix $A$ of an operator $A$. Start with any matrix $A$ representing this operator. Apply the criterion of Theorem 7. If either $c(A) \leq 1$ or $W_{c(A) - 1} \neq AW_1$, the matrix $A$ is minimal. Otherwise, let $V$ be the last common vertex of the paths $W_0W$ and $WAW$. Then $V$ lies on $\gamma$ and is a minimal hexagon for $A$. Choose a basis so that $V$ is the standard hexagon. The matrix of $A$ in this basis is minimal, and $c(A)$ is equal to complexity of this matrix.

**Corollary.** The subgraph $\gamma \subset \Gamma$ constructed in the proof of Theorem 7 is a line if and only if the operator $A$ is not periodic.

This condition holds if and only if either $c(A) \geq 2$ or $c(A) = 1$ and $A^2 \neq -I$.

The line $\gamma$ is the “mainstream” of the action of $A$ on $\Gamma$. Minimal hexagons for $A$ are exactly those corresponding to the vertices of the subgraph $\gamma \subset \Gamma$. If $\gamma$ is a line, there are at most $3c(A)$ different minimal matrices for $A$, because any minimal hexagon yields 6 different bases $(OX_1X_2, OX_2X_3, \ldots, OX_6X_1$, where $X_1, \ldots, X_6$ are the vertices of a hexagon and $O$ is the origin), bases that differ by a central symmetry give the same matrix expression of $A$, and hexagons $V$ and $AV$ lead to the same set of matrices of $A$.

If $c(A) = 1$, then the minimal matrix for $A$ is either one of Jordan blocks $\begin{pmatrix} +1 & 1 \\ 0 & +1 \end{pmatrix}$, $\begin{pmatrix} +1 & -1 \\ 0 & +1 \end{pmatrix}$ or the $\pm \pi/2$ rotation matrix $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & \mp 1 \\ \pm 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$. These six matrices belong to six different conjugacy classes in $SL(2, \mathbb{Z})$. In the case of a Jordan block, there are three minimal matrices for $A$ and an infinite number of minimal hexagons (which lie on the line $\gamma$). For a rotation, there are three different minimal matrices (namely, $\begin{pmatrix} -1 & -2 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$, $\begin{pmatrix} -1 & -1 \\ 2 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$, and $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & -1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$ in the case of counterclockwise rotation) and only two minimal hexagons, which have in common the four lattice points where a positively definite integer quadratic form $Q_A(v^\gamma) = \det(v^\gamma, A v^\gamma)$ (for the clockwise rotation, we set $Q_A(v^\gamma) = -\det(v^\gamma, A v^\gamma)$) attains its minimal positive value 1.

If $c(A) = 0$ and $A \neq \pm I$, the minimal hexagon is unique; its six vertices are the six lattice points where a positively definite integer quadratic form $Q_A(v^\gamma) = \det(v^\gamma, A v^\gamma)$ attains its minimal positive value 1.

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\[ \pm \det(\mathbf{v}, \mathbf{A} \mathbf{v}) \]  attains value 1. The minimal matrix for \( \mathbf{A} \) is also unique. Finally, for \( \mathbf{A} = \pm \mathbf{I} \), any admissible hexagon is minimal, while the only minimal matrix is, of course, \( \pm \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \). We omit the proofs of the statements of this paragraph and two preceding ones; most of them are straightforward.

**Theorem 8.** Let \( \mathbf{A} \) be a non-periodic operator. Then:

1) for any integer \( k \neq 0 \), \( \mathbf{A}^k \) is a minimal matrix for \( \mathbf{A}^k \) if and only if \( \mathbf{A} \) is a minimal matrix for \( \mathbf{A} \);

2) \( c(\mathbf{A}^k) = |k|c(\mathbf{A}) \) for any \( k \in \mathbb{Z} \);

3) for any integer \( k \neq 0 \), we have \( c(A^k) = |k|c(A) + b \), where \( b = c(A) - c(A) \) is a nonnegative even number.

**Proof.** It follows from the proof of Theorem 7 and Corollary that the path from \( W_0 \) to \( \mathbf{A}^k W_0 \) consists of three legs \( W_0 U_0, U_0 \mathbf{A}^k U_0 \), and \( \mathbf{A}^k U_0 \mathbf{A}^k W_0 = \mathbf{A}^k (U_0 W_0) \).

If the first leg (and, simultaneously, the last one) is empty (contains no edges), matrices \( \mathbf{A} \) and \( \mathbf{A}^k \) are both minimal. Otherwise, neither \( \mathbf{A} \) nor \( \mathbf{A}^k \) is minimal. This proves the first statement and shows that the mainstreams of \( \mathbf{A} \) and \( \mathbf{A}^k \) coincide: \( \gamma(\mathbf{A}^k) = \gamma(\mathbf{A}) \). The second statement of the Theorem follows from the first one whenever \( k \neq 0 \); the case \( k = 0 \) is trivial. The third statement follows from the description of the path from \( W_0 \) to \( \mathbf{A}^k W_0 \) in \( \Gamma \), see above. \( \square \)

We conclude the section on \( \text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z}) \), \( c(\mathbf{A}) \), and \( c(\mathbf{A}) \) with one more way of looking at the mainstream \( \gamma(\mathbf{A}) \). Let \( \mathbf{A} \in \text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z}) \) be a hyperbolic rotation, so \( |\text{tr} \mathbf{A}| > 2 \) and eigenvalues of \( \mathbf{A} \) are different real numbers. Since admissible hexagons are centrally symmetric, we may assume that the eigenvalues of \( \mathbf{A} \) are positive. The eigenvalues and the slopes of eigenvectors are quadratic irrationals, because the discriminant of the characteristic equation \( \lambda^2 - (\text{tr} \mathbf{A}) \lambda + \det \mathbf{A} = 0 \) equals \( (\text{tr} \mathbf{A})^2 - 4 \) and is not equal to a square of an integer whenever \( |\text{tr} \mathbf{A}| > 2 \). Draw through the origin two lines \( l_1, l_2 \) parallel to eigenvectors. They divide the plane into four parts. For each of these parts, consider the convex hull of the lattice points inside it. Since \( \mathbf{A} \) preserves \( l_i \), it preserves the convex hulls \( h_1, \ldots, h_4 \), as well as their boundaries, which are infinite sequences of segments. The group of the integers acts on \( \partial h_i \) by taking \( x \in \partial h_i \) to \( \mathbf{A}^k x \in \partial h_i \) for \( k \in \mathbb{Z} \). An admissible hexagon is minimal for \( \mathbf{A} \) (i.e., belongs to \( \gamma(\mathbf{A}) \)) if and only if its leading vertex (and hence all its other vertices) lies on some \( \partial h_i \). The path from a minimal hexagon \( W \in \gamma \) to its image \( \mathbf{A} W \) corresponds to the period of the continued fraction expansion of the slope \( \alpha \) of \( l_i \), which is a quadratic irrational number. An \( \text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z}) \) coordinate change does not affect this period: it takes \( \alpha \) to \( \frac{a \alpha + b}{c \alpha + d} \), where \( \begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ c & d \end{pmatrix} \in \text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z}) \), changing the beginning of the continued fraction expansion of a quadratic irrational number without affecting its periodic part. We leave the proofs of these statements to the reader.

**Example.** Let \( \mathbf{A} = \begin{pmatrix} 2 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \). This is a minimal matrix of a hyperbolic operator of complexity 2. The boundaries of the convex hulls \( h_i \) are represented on Fig. 7 by dotted lines. The coordinates of their corners in this case are, up to signs, the pairs of consecutive Fibonacci numbers. The standard hexagon \( W_0 \), drawn in a bold line, is a minimal hexagon for \( \mathbf{A} \). The hexagons \( \mathbf{A}^{-1} W_0 \) and \( \mathbf{A} W_0 \) also belong to the mainstream \( \gamma(\mathbf{A}) \). Since \( c(\mathbf{A}) = 2 \), there are two orbits of the action of the
Figure 7. The mainstream for a hyperbolic rotation

group $\mathbb{Z}$ on $\gamma(\mathcal{A})$ defined by the rule $k(W) = A^kW$ for $k \in \mathbb{Z}$ and $W \in \gamma(\mathcal{A})$. All three hexagons on Fig. 7 belong to one of the orbits. Hexagons of the other orbit can be obtained from them by the $\pi/2$ rotation around the origin (the eigenvectors of $A$, which direct $l_1$ and $l_2$, are orthogonal, because $A^T = A$). As $k \to -\infty$, the hexagon $A^kW$ looks more and more like the line $l_1$; as $k \to \infty$, it looks more and more like $l_2$. Directions of these lines are points of the projective line $\mathbb{R}P^1 = S^1$, which is the absolute in the Poincaré circle model of the Lobachevskii plane. We encourage the reader to find the relation between $A$, $\gamma(\mathcal{A})$, and the geodesic line that connects these two absolute points. Hint: see [18, §17] and §4.2 below.

2.3. Spines of torus bundles.

From now on, $M$ denotes the total space of an orientable $T^2$-bundle over the circle and $\mathcal{A} \in SL(2, \mathbb{Z})$ is the monodromy operator (acting on the one-dimensional homology group of the fiber containing the base point of $M$) of the bundle. By $M(\mathcal{A})$ denote the manifold $M$ corresponding to the monodromy operator $\mathcal{A}$.

In this section, we construct a pseudominimal (see Definition 12 below) special spine of $M(\mathcal{A})$ with $\max(6, c(\mathcal{A}) + 5)$ vertices. First, let us note that the number $c(\mathcal{A})$ is well defined by the manifold $M^3$ because of the following statement.

**Theorem 9** [27]. Suppose that 3-manifolds $M(A)$ and $M(B)$, where $A, B \in SL(2, \mathbb{Z})$, are homeomorphic. Then $B$ is $GL(2, \mathbb{Z})$-conjugate to either $A$ or $A^{-1}$.

If $A$ and $B$ are $SL(2, \mathbb{Z})$-conjugate, they yield the same number $c(A)$. If $B \sim A^{-1}$, then $c(B) = c(A)$ by virtue of eq. (3). Since the group $GL(2, \mathbb{Z})$ is generated by its subgroup $SL(2, \mathbb{Z})$ and the element $C = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$, it now suffices to check that conjugation by $C$ does not affect the complexity $c(A)$; however, this is clear from Definition 10.

**Definition 12** [14]. A 2-dimensional component $\alpha$ of a special polyhedron has a **counterpass** if its boundary $\partial \alpha$ passes along some edge of $SP$ in both directions; it is called a **component with short boundary** if $\partial \alpha$ passes through at most 3 vertices and visits any of them only once. A special spine of a 3-dimensional manifold is said to be **pseudominimal** if it contains neither components with counterpasses nor components with short boundaries.
If a special spine $P$ is not pseudominimal, it is not minimal, because one can apply simplification moves (see [14]) to $P$ and get an almost simple spine with a smaller number of vertices. For example, Figure 8 shows the effect of a simplification move applied to a special spine with a triangular component (the middle horizontal triangle in the left part of Fig. 8); it is easy to see that the neighborhood of a 2-cell with short boundary of length 3 in a special polyhedron $P$ looks like the left hand side of Fig. 8. This move does not change the spine outside of the fragment shown on Fig. 8. Note that the spine obtained is special again: the move produces neither closed triple lines nor non-cellular 2-dimensional components.

**Remark.** Consider the singular triangulation dual to a special spine with a triangular component. Then the simplification move shown on Fig. 8 corresponds to the three-dimensional $(3,2)$ Pachner move [20], which replaces three tetrahedra by two tetrahedra. In the two-dimensional case, a flip (see Fig. 3) corresponds to the $(2,2)$ Pachner move, which switches the diagonal in a quadrilateral formed by two neighboring triangles. Recall that the move shown on Fig. 8 and its inverse are sufficient to convert any two special spines of the same compact three-dimensional manifold to one another, see [12]; this fact is crucial for the construction of the Turaev–Viro invariants [28].

Figure 9 represents another simplification move, which is applicable to spines containing a component with short boundary of length 2; clearly, the neighborhood of this component looks like the left hand side of Fig. 9. This simplification move yields a simple, but not necessarily special, spine of the same manifold (provided that the move had been applied to a simple spine).

To construct a spine of $M(A)$, consider a fiber $T^2 \times \{0\}$ and choose a $\theta$-curve $L_0$ in it; by doing so, we also fix a $\theta$-curve $L_1$ in $T^2 \times \{1\}$; note that $W(L_1) = AW(L_0)$. This choice is equivalent to the choice of some basis in the lattice $H_1(T^2, \mathbb{Z})$; by $A$
denote the matrix of $A$ in this basis. Construct a continuous family $L_t$ transforming $L_0$ into $L_1$ by isotopy and $c(A)$ flips. Set $P_0 = \bigcup_{t \in [0,1]} L_t$; we assume that each $L_t$ is embedded in $T^2 \times \{t\}$. Note that $P_0$ is a simple polyhedron, which is a spine of some punctured torus bundle. Two-dimensional components of $P_0$ come from edges of $L_t$ as $t$ varies; similarly, one-dimensional components of $P_0$ come from vertices of $L_t$. The $c(A)$ flips correspond to the vertices of $P_0$, see Fig. 10.

![Figure 10. Vertices correspond to flips](image)

To minimize the number of vertices, it is natural to choose a basis in $H_1(T^2, \mathbb{Z})$ so that the operator $A$ is minimal for $A$. If the operator $A$ is not minimal, Theorem 7 guarantees that the last flip of the first round along the base circle of the fibering and the first flip of the second round are mutually inverse. This means that the second simplification move (see Fig. 9) is applicable. Apply it until it is no longer possible. This process is nothing but the construction of a minimal hexagon for $A$ by the algorithm described below the proof of Theorem 7. In the following, we suppose that $A$ is a minimal matrix.

**Examples.**

1. The only periodic operators $A$ with $c(A) > 0$ have the minimal matrices $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & \mp 1 \\ \pm 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$. This is a very interesting case. The polyhedron $P_0$ constructed above has one vertex. Consider the two-sheeted covering of the base $S^1$ of the fibering. It induces the two-sheeted covering of the total space by the manifold $M(A^2) = M(-I)$. The preimage of $P_0$ under the covering is a polyhedron in $M(-I)$ with two vertices, which can be cancelled by the second simplification move in two different ways. This is the only (up to a sign and conjugacy) operator such that $c(A^k) < |k|c(A)$ for $k \in \mathbb{Z}$, $|k| \geq 2$, see Theorem 8; the other periodic operators are of complexity 0.

2. If $c(A) = 0$, there are no flips at all. In this case $P_0$ contains no vertices and consists of three orientable annuli and three edges if $A = I$, of three nonorientable annuli and one edge if $A = -I$, of one nonorientable annulus and one edge if $A$ is equal to the standard hexagon rotation matrix $R_{\pi/3} = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & -1 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$ or its inverse (note that $R_{\pi/3}^6 = I$), and of one orientable annulus and two edges if $A$ equals $R_{\pi/3}^2$ or $R_{\pi/3}^4$. This exhausts the case $c(A) = 0$.

The polyhedron $P_0$ is not a spine of $M(A)$, because the fibered space $M(A)$ admits a section that does not intersect $P_0$. This section represents a nontrivial element of the group $\pi_1(M(A))$, while the complement to a spine of a closed
manifold is a cell and hence cannot contain nontrivial loops. Let us put \( P_1 = P_0 \cup (T^2 \times \{0\}) \).

**Lemma 2.** \( P_1 \) is a spine of \( M(A) \).

**Proof.** It is sufficient to show that \( M(A) \setminus P_1 \) is a 3-dimensional cell. We have \( M(A) \setminus P_1 = T^2 \times (0,1) \setminus \bigcup_{t \in (0,1)} L_t = \bigcup_{t \in (0,1)} (T^2 \times \{t\} \setminus L_t) \), and Lemma follows. \( \square \)

Note that \( P_1 \) is not a simple polyhedron. Indeed, its part \( T^2 \times \{0\} \) contains a singular subset \( L_0 \), which is more complicated than a triple line: three edges of \( L_0 \) yield three lines of transversal intersection of two surfaces, and any of two vertices of \( L_0 \) gives rise to a transversal intersection of a triple line with one extra surface.

Let us modify the previous construction by gluing \( T^2 \times \{0\} \) with \( T^2 \times \{1\} \) along a homeomorphism \( A + \delta \), where \( \delta \) is a small shift of the torus in a direction transversal to the edges of \( L_0 \), see Fig. 11. Put \( P_2 = \bigcup_{t \in [0,1]} L_t \cup (T^2 \times \{0\}) \). Again, \( P_2 \) is a spine of \( M(A) \).

![Figure 11](image-url)

**Figure 11.** \( \theta \)-curve \( L_0 \) and its \( \delta \)-shift \( L_1 \) (dashed line) in the fiber \( T^2 \times \{0\} \) of \( M(A) \)

**Lemma 3.** \( P_2 \) is a special spine of \( M(A) \) with \( c(A) + 6 \) vertices.

**Proof.** It is clear from the construction that \( P_2 \) is a simple polyhedron. Its triple lines are the “trajectories” (as \( t \) varies) of the vertices of \( L_t \) and the ten segments of \( L_0 \) and \( L_1 \) shown on Fig. 11, where the torus is represented by a square with the opposite sides to be identified. There are \( c(A) \) vertices of \( P_2 \) that correspond to \( c(A) \) flips between \( L_0 \) at \( t = 0 \) and \( L_1 \) at \( t = 1 \), and six other vertices that are drawn on Fig. 11. Two of them arise from \( T^2 \times \{0\} \) and \( L_t \), \( 0 \leq t < \varepsilon \), and their neighborhoods in \( P_2 \) look like Fig. 1.d. Two other vertices on Fig. 11 arise from \( T^2 \times \{0\} = T^2 \times \{1\} \) and \( L_t \), \( 1 - \varepsilon < t \leq 1 \); their neighborhoods look like the horizontal mirror reflection of Fig. 1.d. The last two vertices on Fig. 11 correspond to two intersection points of \( L_0 \) and \( L_1 \), and their neighborhoods look like Fig. 1.c. Thus \( P_2 \) is a simple spine of \( M(A) \) with \( c(A) + 6 \) vertices.

It remains to prove that \( SP_2 \) contains no closed triple lines and all connected components of \( P_2 \setminus SP_2 \) are 2-dimensional cells, cf. Definition 2. First group of triple lines of \( SP_2 \) is formed by ten arcs in \( T^2 \times \{0\} \) shown on Fig. 11. Obviously, they are not closed. The rest \( 2c(A) + 2 \) triple lines are swept by the vertices of the \( \theta \)-curves \( L_t \subset T^2 \times \{t\} \), \( 0 < t < 1 \). They end at vertices of \( P_2 \), too, and thus are not closed.
Connected components of $P_2 \setminus SP_2$ also belong to two groups. Four of them, two hexagonal and two quadrilateral, lie in the fiber $T^2 \times \{0\}$, see Fig. 11. They are cells. Any other connected component of $P_2 \setminus SP_2$ intersects any fiber $T^2 \times \{t\}$, $a < t < b$ (where $a$ is equal to either 0 or one of the flip moments, and $b$ is either one of the flip moments or is equal to 1), along one edge of $L_t$, and does not intersect other fibers; this implies that this component is a cell. We have proved that the polyhedron $P_2$ is special. □

**Corollary.** $c(M(A)) \leq c(A) + 6$. □

**Example.** Three-dimensional torus can be represented as $M(I)$, $I = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$. Since $c(I) = 0$, the construction above gives a special spine of $T^3$ with six vertices. The manifold $T^3 = M(I)$ is contained in Table 7 of the preprint [14] under the name 671. It is shown in [14] that all manifolds of complexity at most 5 are different from $T^3$. So we have $c(T^3) = 6$. The spine that we constructed here does not differ from the spine 671 from [14, §5.2], while our way of presenting spines differs significantly from the one used in [14].

**Figure 12.** The complement $T^3 \setminus P_2$ of the minimal spine $P_1$ of $T^3$

The torus $T^3$ can be obtained from the cube by gluing its opposite faces. This yields a natural cell decomposition of $T^3$ with one vertex, three edges, three “square” 2-dimensional cells and one 3-dimensional cell. The 2-dimensional skeleton $sk_2(T^3)$ has singular points more complicated than triple lines and vertices of simple polyhedra. However, the minimal spine of $T^3$ can be obtained as a small perturbation of $sk_2(T^3)$.

Let the $\theta$-curves $L_t$, $t \in [0,1]$, be very close to the bouquet of a parallel and a meridian of $T^2 \times \{t\}$, and let the shift $\delta$ involved in the construction of $P_2$ be very small. Then the 3-dimensional cell $T^3 \setminus P_2$ is very close to the 3-dimensional cube. Figure 12 represents this cell. If we identify opposite faces of this polyhedron by parallel transports (or, equivalently, tessellate $\mathbb{R}^3$ into parallel copies of this polyhedron and consider a quotient over the appropriate lattice $\mathbb{Z}^3$), we get the torus $T^3$; the image of the boundary of the polyhedron under this gluing is the minimal spine of $T^3$ close to $sk_2(T^3)$.

The same construction gives special spines with six vertices for the manifolds $M(-I) = 6_{70}$,

$$M \begin{pmatrix} -1 & -1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix} = M \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ -1 & -1 \end{pmatrix} = 6_{67},$$
and
\[ M \left( \begin{pmatrix} 0 & -1 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \right) = M \left( \begin{pmatrix} -1 & 0 \\ -1 & -1 \end{pmatrix} \right) = 6_{65}. \]

The spines constructed in this way are minimal spines of these manifolds, because all of them are of complexity 6; in fact, all manifolds of complexity up to 5 are quotient spaces of the sphere \( S^3 \), see [14].

However, in all other cases (that is, if \( c(A) > 0 \)) the spines with \( c(A) + 6 \) vertices are not minimal spines of the manifolds \( M(A) \). For example, the spaces
\[ 6_{66} = M \left( \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ -1 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \right), \quad 6_{68} = M \left( \begin{pmatrix} -1 & 0 \\ -1 & -1 \end{pmatrix} \right), \quad \text{and} \quad 6_{69} = M \left( \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \right) \]
are manifolds of complexity 6, while
\[ c \left( \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ -1 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \right) = c \left( \begin{pmatrix} -1 & 0 \\ -1 & -1 \end{pmatrix} \right) = c \left( \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \right) = 1, \]
and our construction gives their spines with 7 vertices.

This happens because some of the spines with \( c(A) + 6 \) vertices constructed above are not pseudominimal whenever \( c(A) > 0 \). Namely, they have a triangular component, and the first simplification move (see Fig. 8) can be applied.

Let us return to Fig. 11. Assume that the first flip in the sequence taking \( L_0 \) to \( L_1 \) involves the short edge of \( L_0 \), that is, the edge that does not intersect dashed lines on Fig. 11. This condition can be satisfied by an appropriate choice of the shift \( \delta \) involved in the construction of \( P_2 \). Then the 2-dimensional cell of \( P_2 \) adjacent to this edge and not contained in \( T^2 \times \{0\} \) is a triangle, and we can apply the first simplification move, which gives a spine of \( M(A) \) with a smaller number of vertices. This spine can be described in other words as follows. Let \( L' \) be the \( \theta \)-curve obtained after the first of \( c(A) \) flips converting \( L_0 \) into \( L_1 \). Glue the square from Fig. 13 into the torus \( T^2 \times \{0\} \in M(A) \) and embed \( L_t \) in \( T^2 \times \{t\} \) for all \( t \in (0, 1) \), where the family \( L_t \) contains \( c(A) - 1 \) flips and connects \( L' \) with \( L_1 \). Note that the first of \( c(A) - 1 \) flips converting \( L' \) into \( L_1 \) is performed along a long edge of \( L' \), because a flip along the short edge would annihilate with the flip converting \( L_0 \) to \( L' \). The new spine \( P_3 \) has \( 6 + c(A) - 1 = c(A) + 5 \) vertices. So we have \( c(M(A)) \leq c(A) + 5 \) whenever \( c(A) > 0 \).

![Figure 13. \( \theta \)-curves \( L' \) and \( L_1 \) (dashed) in \( T^2 \times \{0\} \)](image)

The proof that the spine \( P_3 \) is special repeats the proof of Lemma 3.
Theorem 10.

1) $c(M(A)) \leq \max(6, c(A) + 5)$.

2) The spine $P_3$ constructed above is pseudominimal.

Compare the first statement with Corollary of Lemma 3.

Proof. If $c(A) = 0$, then $c(M(A)) = 6$. So we may suppose that $c(A) > 0$. Since $P_3$ is an almost simple (and even special) spine of $M(A)$ with $c(A) + 5$ vertices, the first statement is obvious. The argument similar to the proof of Lemma 3 shows that two-dimensional cells of $P_3$ have no counterpasses. So we only have to show that $P_3$ has no components with short boundaries. The four cells contained in $T^2 \times \{0\}$ are pentagons, see Fig. 13. The cells that have no boundary edges in $T^2 \times \{0\}$ have even numbers of edges, namely, $2k - 2$, where $k$ is the number of flips from the vertex where the cell appears to the vertex where the cell disappears (including both the first flip and the last one). The matrix $A$ involved in the construction of $P_3$ is a minimal matrix of $A$. This implies that any two consecutive flips in the sequence involved in the construction are not inverse to one another, that is, $k > 2$ for any cell considered above.

It remains to consider at most 6 two-dimensional cells that have an edge in $T^2 \times \{0\} = T^2 \times \{1\}$ (if $A$ is, up to a sign, a power of a Jordan block, there are only 5 cells of this type; otherwise, no 2-cell touches both $T^2 \times \{0\}$ along an edge of $L'$ and $T^2 \times \{1\}$ along an edge of $L_1$, so three edges of $L'$ and three edges of $L_1$ belong to six different cells of $P_3 \setminus T^2 \times \{0\}$). Two cells of $P_3 \setminus T^2 \times \{0\}$ are adjacent to the long edges of $L'$ (the edges that intersect dashed lines on Fig. 13).

Each of these cells has at least 4 boundary edges: two segments of a long edge of $L'$ and two edges (transversal to fibers) that arise from the vertices of $L'$. The same argument works for two cells of $P_3 \setminus T^2 \times \{0\}$ adjacent to the long edges of $L_1$. Consider the cell of $P_3 \setminus T^2 \times \{0\}$ adjacent to the short edge of $L'$. Of course, it has at least 3 edges: the short edge of $L'$ and two edges that are trajectories of the vertices of $L'$ as $t$ varies. It has at least one more edge: otherwise, the first flip in the sequence of flips converting $L'$ to $L_1$ is performed along the short edge of $L'$, which is impossible by the construction of $P_3$, see above. For the same reason, the last flip (which results in $L_1$) cannot be performed along the short edge of $L_1$: by the minimality of the matrix $A$, it cannot be cancelled with the flip connecting $L_0$ with $L'$, see Theorem 7. This means that the 2-dimensional cell of $P_3 \setminus T^2 \times \{1\}$ adjacent to the short edge of $L_1$ also has more than 3 edges, and $P_3$ contains no components with short boundaries. The Theorem is proved.

Conjecture 2. The pseudominimal spines of the manifolds $M(A)$ constructed above are in fact their minimal spines, and the upper bound for complexity given in Theorem 10 is in fact its exact value: $c(M(A)) = \max(6, c(A) + 5)$ for any monodromy operator $A \in \text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z})$. In other words, any singular triangulation of $M(A)$ involves at least $c(A) + 5$ tetrahedra if $c(A) > 0$ and 6 tetrahedra if $c(A) = 0$.

2.4. Digression: spines of lens spaces.

Pseudominimal special spines of the lens spaces $L_{p,q}$, $p > 3$, with exactly $E(p,q) - 3$ vertices were constructed in [14]. In that paper, spines are presented by drawing the neighborhood of the singular graph of a spine. This allows to draw spines on the plane; however, it remains unclear how the spines are embedded into corresponding manifolds.
In this section, we construct pseudominimal special spines of $L_{p,q}$, $p > 3$, with $E(p,q) - 3$ vertices, making use of the techniques developed in §2. We omit some details and proofs.

Consider two solid tori. The meridians of their boundary tori are well defined, while the parallels are defined modulo meridians only. Let $\mu_0, \mu_1$ be the meridians of the tori and $\sigma_0, \sigma_1$ be their parallels such that the pair of the oriented cycles $(\sigma_0, \mu_0)$ defines the positive orientation of the boundary of the first torus and the pair $(\sigma_1, \mu_1)$ defines the negative orientation of the boundary of the second torus. There is a unique pair of positive integer numbers $(r, s)$ such that $r < p$, $s < p$, and $qs - pr = 1$. Put $A = \begin{pmatrix} s & p \\ r & q \end{pmatrix}$ and attach the solid tori to one another so that the induced homomorphism of the one-dimensional homology groups of their boundary tori has the matrix $A$ (in the bases $(\sigma_0, \mu_0)$ and $(\sigma_1, \mu_1)$). We get a closed orientable 3-manifold that is nothing but $L_{p,q}$.

Note that $A \in \text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z})$, $c(A) = E(p,q)$, and the parallels $\sigma_0$ and $\sigma_1$ represent nontrivial elements of $\pi_1(L_{p,q}) = \mathbb{Z}_p$. This implies that any spine of $L_{p,q}$ intersects these loops. Let us shift $\sigma_0$ in the interior of the first solid torus and consider the tubular neighborhood $U_0$ of the shifted curve. Obviously, $U_0$ is a solid torus. Similarly, construct $U_1$ as a tubular neighborhood of $\sigma_1$ shifted inside of the interior of the second torus. We may assume $U_0$ and $U_1$ to be disjoint. Then $L_{p,q} = U_0 \cup (T^2 \times [0,1]) \cup U_1$. Let $L_i$, $i = 0, 1$, be standard (with respect to the bases $(\sigma_i, \mu_i)$) $\theta$-curves in the tori $T^2_i = \partial U_i$; they are defined up to isotopy. Following the construction of §2.3, consider a continuous family $L_t \subset T^2 \times \{t\}$ connecting $L_0$ to $L_1$ with $c(A)$ flips. Put $P_0 = \bigcup_{t \in [0,1]} L_t$. Let $D_i$, $i = 0, 1$, be meridional disks of the $U_i$ intersecting $L_i$ transversally at one point. Put $P_1 = D_0 \cup T^2_0 \cup P_0 \cup T^2_1 \cup D_1$.

**Lemma 4.** The polyhedron $P_1$ is a special spine of $L_{p,q}$ with three punctures. It has $E(p,q) + 6$ vertices.

**Proof.** The complement $L_{p,q} \setminus P_1$ consists of three cells $U_0 \setminus D_0$, $(T^2 \times [0,1]) \setminus P_0$, and $U_1 \setminus D_1$. There are $c(A) = E(p,q)$ vertices in the interior part of $P_0$. Further, there are 3 vertices on $T^2_0$, which correspond to two vertices of $L_0$ and the intersection point of $L_0$ and $\partial D_0$. Similarly, there are 3 vertices of $P_1$ on $T^2_1$. It remains to show that $P_1$ is a special polyhedron. This can be proven by analogy with Lemma 3. □

Below we show that one can decrease the number of vertices “inside of $P_0$” by one and the number of vertices “near each $U_i$” by four. This gives a spine with $E(p,q) + 6 - 1 - 4 - 4 = E(p,q) - 3$ vertices.

Recall that the parallels $\sigma_i$ are defined only modulo meridians $\mu_i$. Thus, the $\theta$-curves $L_i$ are defined only up to powers of the Dehn twists along the meridians, that is, up to transformations $\sigma_i \mapsto \sigma_i + n_i \mu_i$, $n_i \in \mathbb{Z}$. By varying $n_0$ and $n_1$, one can decrease the distance in $\Gamma$ between $B^{n_0}W_0$ and $C^{n_1}AW_0$ and thus decrease the number of the vertices inside of $P_0$; here $W_0$ is the standard hexagon, $B = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$ is the matrix representing the Dehn twist along $\mu_0$, and $C = ABA^{-1}$ is the matrix corresponding to the Dehn twist along $\mu_1$.

**Lemma 5.** $\min_{n_0, n_1 \in \mathbb{Z}} d(B^{n_0}W_0, C^{n_1}AW_0) = E(p,q) - 1$.

**Proof.** Note that the graph $\Gamma$ contains edges $B^uW_0B^{u+1}W_0$ and $C^vAW_0C^{v+1}AW_0$ for all $u, v \in \mathbb{Z}$. Since $\Gamma$ is a tree, there are $m_0, m_1 \in \mathbb{Z}$ such that the path
from $B^{n_0}W_0$ to $C^{n_1}AW_0$ for all $n_0, n_1 \in \mathbb{Z}$ consists of the following three legs: $B^{n_0}W_0 B^{n_0}W_0$, $B^{n_0}W_0 C^{n_1}AW_0$, and $C^{n_1}AW_0 C^{n_1}AW_0$. Now it is obvious that
$$\min_{n_0, n_1 \in \mathbb{Z}} d(B^{n_0}W_0, C^{n_1}AW_0) = d(B^{n_0}W_0, C^{n_1}AW_0).$$
By considering the three legs of the path from $W_0$ to $AW_0$, one can see that $m_0 = 1$ (because $p > q > 0$), $m_1 = 0$ (because both positive and negative Dehn twists along $\mu_1$ do not affect the leading vertex $(p, q)$ of $AW_0$ and thus increase the distance to $W_0$), and the length of the middle leg of this path is $d(BW_0, AW_0) = d(W_0, AW_0) - |m_0| - |m_1| = E(p, q) - 1$. Also see Theorem 17 in §4.3. □

![Figure 14. Simplification of $P_0$ near $T^2_i$](image)

By virtue of Lemma 5, we can decrease by one the number of the vertices inside of $P_0$ by another choice of a $\theta$-curve $L_0$. Now we have a special spine of $L_{p,q}$ with three punctures having $E(p, q) + 3$ vertices. The disks $D_0$ and $D_1$ are components with short boundaries. By $\tau_i$ denote the edge of $L_i$ that intersects $\partial D_i$. Note that two other edges of $L_i$ form the meridian of $T_i$, the first flip in the sequence connecting $L_0$ with $L_1$ is performed along $\tau_0$ while the last flip in this sequence is performed along $\tau_1$ (flips along other edges are equivalent to meridional Dehn twists and thus do not lead out of the mainstreams $\gamma(B) = \{B^{n_0}W_0 \mid n_0 \in \mathbb{Z}\}$ and $\gamma(C) = \{C^{n_1}AW_0 \mid n_1 \in \mathbb{Z}\}$, while the path between $L_0$ and $L_1$ is the shortest path that connects these mainstreams). We can apply the following simplification move in the neighborhood of $D_i$. First, add a parallel copy $D_i'$ of $D_1$. Second, delete the lateral surface of the cylinder bounded by $D_i$, $D_i'$, and a thin strip of $T^2_i$. Finally, delete the cell of $P_i$ adjacent to $\tau_i$; this cell is triangular, because $\tau_i$ is the edge involved in the flip in $P_0$ closest to $T^2_i$, see Fig. 14. So, the first step adds one vertex on each $T^2_i$, the second step kills two vertices on each $T^2_i$, and the last step kills three vertices near each of $T^2_i$. By $P_1$ denote the polyhedron obtained by the construction above. Obviously, it has $E(p, q) - 3$ vertices. Further, one can see that the remaining edges of $L_i$ (which differ from $\tau_i$) form a closed triple line $S_i^1$ and the complement $L_{p,q} \setminus P_1$ still consists of three cells, two of which are bounded by the spheres $S_i^2$ obtained from the torus $T^2_i$ and their meridional disks $D_i$, $D_i'$ by deleting the thin strip bounded by $\partial D_i$ and $\partial D_i'$ from $T^2_i$. The circles $S_i^1$ divide the spheres $S_i^2$ into two disks each; one of the disks contains $D_i$, the other contains $D_i'$. Delete from $P_1$ the disks of the $S_i^2$ that contain $D_i'$. This yields a polyhedron $P$ with $E(p, q) - 3$ vertices such that $L_{p,q} \setminus P$ is a cell.

**Theorem 11.** The polyhedron $P$ is a pseudominimal special spine of $L_{p,q}$ with $E(p, q) - 3$ vertices. It coincides with the spine of $L_{p,q}$ presented in [14]. □
It was shown in [14] that the spines constructed in that paper are pseudominimal. So it is sufficient to prove only the second statement; we leave it to the reader.

§3. LOWER BOUND FOR $C^1$-SMOOTH SPINES TRANVERSAL TO FIBERS

In this section, we prove the following statement.

**Theorem 12.** Let $\mathcal{A}$ be a non-periodic operator. Then for any $C^1$-smooth spine $P$ of $M(\mathcal{A})$ transversal to the fibers, we have $c(P) \geq \frac{1}{5} c(\mathcal{A}) + 2$, where $c(P)$ stands for the number of the vertices of $P$.

Recall that $M(\mathcal{A})$ is the total space of the fibering $p: M^3 \xrightarrow{T^2} S^1$ with monodromy operator $\mathcal{A}$.

3.1. Morse transformations in simple polyhedra.

Projection $p: M(\mathcal{A}) \to S^1$ defines an $S^1$-valued function on $M(\mathcal{A})$. Let us explore its restriction $p|_P$ to a simple spine $P$ of $M(\mathcal{A})$. The polyhedron $P$ is a stratified space; its strata are the vertices, the edges, and the two-dimensional components of $P$. We may assume that $p|_\sigma$ has an everywhere continuous derivative for any edge or 2-component $\sigma$: a $C^0$-small deformation of the embedding mapping $i: P \hookrightarrow M^3$ is sufficient. Since the space of Morse functions on a manifold is $C^1$-dense in the set of all $C^1$-smooth functions on it [16], we may assume that $p|_\sigma$ is a Morse function for any edge or 2-component $\sigma$ of $P$. In this case $p$ is called a Morse function on $P$.

Consider a fiber $F_t = p^{-1}(t)$ of the fibering $p: M(\mathcal{A}) \to S^1$, where $t$ is a local coordinate on $S^1$. If $t$ is a nonsingular value of $p$ (that is, $F_t$ contains neither vertices of $P$ nor critical points of the restrictions of $p$ to the edges and 2-components of $P$), then $F_t$ is transversal to all strata of $P$ and the intersection $K_t = F_t \cap P$ is a trivalent graph, possibly disconnected. We will explore how $K_t$ changes as $t$ varies. For much more comprehensive exposition of Morse transformations in stratified spaces, see [9].

Without loss of generality, it can be assumed that any singular fiber (that is, a singular level of $p$) contains only one singular point of $p|_P$ (including vertices), and there are only finite number of singular fibers. Also, we may assume that the restrictions $p|_\sigma$ to the closures of triple lines and two-dimensional components of $P$ have no boundary critical points. Let two nonsingular fibers $F_-$ and $F_+$ be the preimages of two close points $t_-, t_+ \in S^1$. If the interval $(t_-, t_+)$ contains no singular values of $p$, then the graphs $K_-$ and $K_+$ are isotopic, that is, there is a continuous family of embeddings $i_t: K \leftarrow F_t$, $t \in [t_-, t_+]$, of the same graph $K$ to the tori $F_t$ such that $K_- = i_{t_-}(K)$ and $K_+ = i_{t_+}(K)$.

![Figure 15. Minimax (left) and saddle (right) Morse transformations](image-url)

Now suppose that there is exactly one singular fiber $F_0$ between $F_-$ and $F_+$; by $t_0$ denote the corresponding critical value. Thus $F_0$ contains either a singular point of the restriction of $p$ to a two-dimensional component of $P$ or a singular
point of the restriction of $p$ to a triple line of $P$, or a vertex of $P$. In the first case, the difference between $K_-$ and $K_+$ is nothing but the Morse transformation of the level set $Q = t - t_0$ of a real quadratic form $Q(x, y) = \pm x^2 \pm y^2$, see Fig. 15.

To explore the second case, suppose that the critical point of the restriction of $p$ to a triple line of $P$ is a minimum point of $p$; denote this point by $O$. By $v_i$, $i = 1, 2, 3$, denote the unit vector tangent to the $i$th two-dimensional component $\sigma_i$ at $O$ and orthogonal to the triple line. Since $O$ is not a critical point of $p|_{\sigma_i}$, we have $p_* v_i \neq 0$. Here the $\sigma_i$ are the components of $(P \setminus SP) \cap U(O)$ of the two-dimensional strata of $P$ in the neighborhood $U(O)$ of $O$; it does not matter whether the $\sigma_i$ actually belong to different components of $P \setminus SP$. Let us say that the component $\sigma_i$ is ascending at $O$ if the vector $p_* v_i \in T_{t_0} S^1$ induces a positive orientation of $S^1$ and descending if this orientation is negative. There may be 0, 1, 2 or 3 descending components. Their number defines the transformation between $K_-$ and $K_+$ up to isotopy. The graphs $K_-$ and $K_+$ differ only inside of the dotted circle, see Fig. 16. If $O$ is a maximum point of $p$ restricted to a triple line, one has to revert all arrows and signs in the lower indices on Fig. 16.

The last case (where the fiber $F_0$ contains a vertex $V \in P$) is more complicated. We will return to it later.

Remark. The double of a disk is $S^2$. Draw the fragment $K_- \cap U(O)$ of the graph $K_-$ (that is, the picture inside of the left dotted circle, see Figs. 15, 16) on the lower hemisphere of $S^2$ and the fragment $K_+ \cap U(O)$ of the graph $K_+$ (that is, the picture inside of the right dotted circle) on the upper hemisphere. In all four cases, we get an embedding of the link of $O$ in $P$ to the sphere with the equator drawn on it by a dotted line. The number of intersection points of the equator and the link of $O$ is twice the number of descending components at $O$.

This is not a mere coincidence but a general recipe for describing the difference between $K_-$ and $K_+$. Suppose that there is exactly one singular point $O$ between $F_-$ and $F_+$. Consider an $\varepsilon$-neighborhood $U(O)$ of $O$, where $\varepsilon < t_0 - t_-$ and $\varepsilon < t_+ - t_0$. The intersection $P \cap U(O)$ is the cone over the graph $\text{lk} O$, which is the circle with none, two or three radii, see the definition of a simple polyhedron (Definition 1 in §1). By $D_-$, $D_0$, and $D_+$ denote the intersections of $U(O)$ with
$F_-, F_0,$ and $F_+, respectively. Obviously, $K_+ \setminus D_+$ is isotopic to $K_- \setminus D_-$. Thus, the difference between $K_+$ and $K_-$ is “hidden inside of $U(O)$”. The singular fiber $F_0$ cuts the sphere $S^2 = \partial U(O)$ into two hemispheres $S^2_-$ and $S^2_+$. Put $K'_+ = (K_0 \setminus U(O)) \cup (P \cap S^2_+)$ and $K'_- = (K_0 \setminus U(O)) \cup (P \cap S^2_-)$. These graphs are embedded into tori $(F_0 \setminus U(O)) \cap S^2_-$ and $(F_0 \setminus U(O)) \cap S^2_+$. 

**Lemma 6.** The graph $K_-$, respectively, $K_+$, is isotopic to the graph $K'_-$, respectively, $K'_+$. 

**Proof.** Let us define a surface $G_s$ as the union of $F_{t_0+s(t_0-t_-)} \setminus U(O)$ and $\{x \in S^2 \mid p(x) < t_0 + s(t_0 - t_-)\}$, where $-1 \leq s \leq 0$, and put $K'_s = P \cap G_s$. In $U(O) \setminus O$, the edges and 2-components of $P$ are transversal to all fibers and to the spheres centered at $O$. So all $G_s$, $-1 \leq s \leq 0$, are transversal to $P$, and the family $K'_s$ provides an isotopy between $K'_{s-1} \subset G_{s-1}$ and $K'_s \subset G_s$. It remains to note that $G_{-1} = F_-, K'_{-1} = K_-$, and $K'_0 = K'_+$. An isotopy between $K_+$ and $K'_+$ can be constructed in a similar way. 

\[ \text{minimum} \quad \text{saddle point} \quad \text{all ascending} \quad \text{1 descending} \quad \text{2 descending} \quad \text{3 descending} \]

**Figure 17. Mutual position of $\text{lk}_{F_0}(O)$ (dotted line) and $\text{lk}_{P}(O)$ in $S^2$**

So to describe a “surgery” in the graph $K$ near a singular point $O$, it is sufficient to draw the links of $O$ in $F_0$ and in $P$ on the sphere $S^2 = \partial U(O)$ and cut $S^2$ into two disks $S^2_-$ and $S^2_+$ along the former link (the equator). The mutual position of $\text{lk}_{F_0}(O)$ and $\text{lk}_{P}(O)$ may be considered as a real analogue for the Milnor fiber of an isolated singularity on a complex hypersurface, see [17]. Figure 17 represents the mutual position of these links on $S^2$ for minimax and saddle points on a two-dimensional component of $P$ and for the four cases of Fig. 16, where $O$ is a minimax point of the restriction of $p$ to an edge of $P$. Note that there are, up to isotopy and symmetries, exactly four different embeddings of a circle with a diameter into a sphere with an equator, provided that any edge of the graph intersects the equator at most twice and both vertices lie in the same hemisphere.

The same argument works if a singular point is a vertex $V$ of a simple polyhedron $P$. In this case, $\text{lk}_{P}(V)$ is a circle with three radii; denote this graph by $\Delta$. Any edge of $\Delta$ is the link of $V$ in one of the six two-dimensional components of $(P \setminus SP) \cap U(V)$, and we assumed that $V$ is not a critical point of the restriction of $p$ to the closures of these components. This implies that any edge of $\Delta$ intersects the equator at most twice, because it is close to an arc of a great circle obtained as the intersection of $S^2 = \partial U(V)$ and the tangent plane to a component $\sigma$ at $V$. Since the differential $dp|_e$ does not vanish at $V$ for any edge $e$ of $P$, the vertices of $\Delta$ lie in either $S^2_-$ or $S^2_+$ but not at the equator $\text{lk}_{F_0}(V)$.

Without loss of generality, we can assume that $P \cap U(V)$ consists of plane pieces. Now it follows that any edge of $\Delta$ connecting vertices in different hemispheres intersects the equator exactly once. An edge with both endpoints in the same
hemisphere can have either none or two intersection points with the equator; in the
latter case, these two points are opposite. An edge is said to be long if it intersects
the equator twice. We have to consider three cases.

![Diagrams showing cases a) to g)](image)

**Figure 18.** Transformation of $K$ near a vertex $V$

Case 1. All four vertices of $\Delta$ lie in one hemisphere. Then any long edge contains
a diameter of the other hemisphere. Since any two diameters intersect one another,
there is at most one long edge. Thus in Case 1 there are, up to isotopy, only two
possibilities to draw $\Delta$ on a sphere with the equator, see Fig. 18 a,b.

Figure 18 also shows the difference between $K_-$ and $K_+$.

Case 2. Three vertices of $\Delta$ lie in one hemisphere and the last one in the other.
Again, there is at most one long edge and thus only two nonisotopic embeddings
of $\Delta$, see Fig. 18 c,d.

Case 3. There are two vertices in upper hemisphere and two other in the lower
one. The maximal number of long edges is two: at most one in each hemisphere.
If there are no long edges, we have the situation of Fig. 18 e; if there is one long
edge, the picture is like Fig. 18 f; finally, if there are two long edges, we obtain the
situation of Fig. 18 g.

Note that all results of Section 3.1 apply to the level sets of Morse functions on
arbitrary simple polyhedra, not only to simple spines of $M(A)$.

### 3.2. $\theta$-curves in the fibers.

Recall that a spine $P$ of a closed 3-manifold $M$ intersects any loop that is
nontrivial in $\pi_1(M)$.

**Lemma 7.** For any $t$, the graph $K_t = P \cap F_t$ intersects any loop representing a
nonzero element of $\pi_1(F_t) = \mathbb{Z}^2$.

**Proof.** Consider the exact sequence

$$\ldots \to \pi_2(S^1) \to \pi_1(T^2) \xrightarrow{i^*} \pi_1(M^3) \to \ldots$$
of the fibering $p: M^3 \xrightarrow{T^2} S^1$. Since $\pi_2(S^1) = 0$, it follows that $i_*$ is a monomorphism, that is, any nontrivial loop in $T^2$ is nontrivial in $M^3$, too. Hence any spine of $M$ intersects this loop, and the Lemma follows. \hfill \Box

We assumed that $p$ is an $S^1$-valued Morse function on $P$. In this case, all critical points of $p$ are isolated, and all but finite number of values of $p$ are regular. Let $F$ be a fiber corresponding to a regular value of $p$. Then the intersection $F \cap P$ is a trivalent graph $K \subset F$.

**Lemma 8.** Suppose that a trivalent graph $K \subset T^2$ intersects any nontrivial loop in $T^2$. Then $K$ contains a subgraph that is a $\theta$-curve.

**Proof.** Let $K_1, \ldots, K_n$ be connected components of $K$. If a component $K_i$ contains no cycles nontrivial in $T^2$, then there is a disk $D_i^2 \subset T^2$ such that $K \cap D_i^2 = K_i$. If there are several components $K_i$ without nontrivial cycles, then there exists a disjoint union of disks $U$ such that $K \cap U$ coincides with the set of all connected components of $K$ containing no nontrivial cycles. Put $K' = K \setminus U$. All connected components of $K'$ (if any) contain nontrivial cycles.

Any cycle in $\pi_1(T^2)$ is homotopic to a cycle contained in $T^2 \setminus U$. This means that any nontrivial cycle intersects $K'$, and thus $K' \neq \emptyset$. Since any component $K_i'$ of $K'$ contains nontrivial cycles, we can choose some cycles $\gamma_i \subset K_i'$ represented by simple closed curves. If there are several connected components of $K'$, the cycles $\gamma_i$ do not intersect one another and thus are homotopic. In this case, among connected components of $T^2 \setminus K_1'$ there is an annulus containing other components of $K'$. It contains a cycle $\gamma$ (homotopic to all the $\gamma_i$) going along a boundary circle of the annulus. The cycle $\gamma$ is nontrivial and does not intersect $K$. Since this is impossible, the graph $K'$ is connected.

Let $U_1, \ldots, U_k$ be the connected components of $T^2 \setminus K'$. Every $U_i$ is an orientable surface with boundary. It contains no closed curves nontrivial in $U_i$. Otherwise, such a curve would be either trivial or nontrivial in $T^2$. In the former case, it would split the torus into two disjoint parts that contain different connected components of $K'$, which is impossible since the graph $K'$ is connected. The latter case is impossible, too, because any cycle nontrivial in $T^2$ intersects $K'$. A surface with boundary containing no nontrivial cycles is a disk. Thus $T^2 \setminus K'$ is a collection of $s$ 2-dimensional cells, and $K'$ defines a cell decomposition of $T^2$.

Let $v$, respectively, $e$, be the number of vertices, respectively, edges of $K'$. Note that $e = \frac{3}{2}v$, because $K'$ is a trivalent graph. Also, we have $v - e + s = \chi(T^2) = 0$, which implies that $v = 2s$ and $e = 3s$. If the number $s$ is greater than 1, it can be decreased by deleting an edge separating two different cells. When $s = 1$, the graph $K'$ is a $\theta$-curve. \hfill \Box

**Theorem 13.** Let $F$ be a nonsingular fiber of the fibering $p: M^3 \xrightarrow{T^2} S^1$, and $K = P \cap F$. Then $K$ contains a subgraph $L$ that is a $\theta$-curve. The number of pairwise nonisotopic $\theta$-curves contained in $K$ is finite.

**Proof.** Combine Lemmas 7 and 8 and note that the number of all subgraphs of $K$ is finite. \hfill \Box

Let $F_-$ and $F_+$ be two close nonsingular fibers and $L_- \subset K_-$ be a $\theta$-curve in $F_-$. If the interval $(t_-, t_+)$ contains no singular values of $p|_P$, then the graphs $K_-$ and $K_+$ are isotopic, and $K_+$ contains a $\theta$-curve $L_+$ isotopic to $L_-$. If there is a
singular value \( t_0 \in (t_-, t_+) \), then \( K_+ \) may not contain a \( \theta \)-curve isotopic to \( L_- \), see, for example, Fig. 19, where a saddle Morse transformation occurs in a 2-component of \( P \) as \( t = t_0 \). By Theorem 13, \( K_+ \) still contains \( \theta \)-curves. It is important that some of them are not too distant from \( L_- \) in the graph \( \Gamma \), that is, can be obtained from \( L_- \) by a small number of flips.

For a graph \( K \), we can consider the set \( w(K) \subset \Gamma \) of the hexagons in \( \mathbb{Z}^2 \) that correspond to all \( \theta \)-curves contained in \( K \). Theorem 14 proclaims that \( d(w(K_-)), w(K_+) \leq 5 \), where \( d(X, Y) \) is the distance from a subspace \( X \) to a subspace \( Y \) of a metric space \( \Gamma \) defined by the formula \( d(X, Y) = \max_{x \in X} \min_{y \in Y} d(x, y) \); note that \( d(X, Y) \) need not be symmetric.

**Proof.** First, suppose that the whole graph \( \text{lk}_P V \) lies in one hemisphere, where \( V \in F_0 \) is a singular point of \( p|_P \) or a vertex. This happens in the situations of Fig. 18a and of the leftmost pictures of Figs. 15 and 16. Then \( U(V) \) contains only an isolated connected component of \( K_+ \) (or \( K_- \)), which has nothing to do with \( \theta \)-curves in \( K_\pm \). So the transformation of \( K \) arising from a singularity at \( V \) does not affect \( L_- \), and the graph \( K_+ \) contains a \( \theta \)-curve \( L_+ \) isotopic to \( L_- \). Of course, in this case \( d(W_+, W_-) = 0 \).

In the cases represented by Fig. 18b and by the second picture of Fig. 16, it is easy to see that the part of any \( \theta \)-curve lying inside of any dotted circle is a part of an edge of the \( \theta \)-curve (if nonempty), and the part of the \( \theta \)-curve \( L_- \) lying outside of the dotted circle can be augmented with a path in \( K_+ \) lying inside of the dotted circle and homotopic to the path in \( K_- \) involved in the \( \theta \)-curve \( L_- \). Similar argument works for the case of Fig. 18c, where the part of \( L_- \) lying inside of the dotted circle may be a tripod (a neighborhood of a trivalent vertex) or a part of an edge of \( L_- \) or the empty set. So, \( d(W_+, W_-) = 0 \) in all the cases where \( \text{lk}_P V \) intersects the equator in less than four points.

The following Lemma is necessary to deal with the seven remaining cases (Fig. 18d–g, two last pictures of Fig. 16, and the saddle transformation shown on Fig. 15, right).

**Lemma 9.** Let \( K_-, K_+ \subset T^2 \) be trivalent graphs and \( L_- \subset K_- \) be a \( \theta \)-curve. Suppose that \( K_- \) differs from \( K_+ \) by one edge only and \( K_+ \) contains a \( \theta \)-curve, too.

1) If \( K_+ \) is obtained from \( K_- \) by adding one extra edge, then it contains a \( \theta \)-curve \( L_+ \) such that \( d(W_+, W_-) = 0 \).
2) If $K_+$ is obtained from $K_-$ by deleting an edge $e$, then it contains a $\theta$-curve $L_+$ such that $d(W_+, W_-) \leq 1$.

Proof. The first statement is obvious, since we can put $L_+ = L_-$. In the second case, we also can put $L_+ = L_-$ unless $e \subset L_-$. Suppose that the edge $e$ is a part of an edge $l$ of $L_-$. Cut the torus $T^2$ along $L_-$ into a hexagonal 2-cell $H$. The boundary $\partial H$ contains two arcs $e_1 \subset l_1, e_2 \subset l_2$ arising from $e$, and two arcs $f_1 = FAB, f_2 = CDE$ complementary to the arcs $l_1 = FE, l_2 = BC$ that arise from $l$, see Fig. 20.

![Figure 20](image)

There is the following alternative: either there exists a path $\gamma_1$ in $H \setminus K_+$ from the midpoint of $e_1$ to the midpoint of $e_2$, or there exists a path $\gamma_2$ in $K_+$ from a point in $f_1$ to a point in $f_2$; this path $\gamma_2$ may include edges of $K_+$ belonging to $l \setminus e$. The first case is impossible, because the path $\gamma_1$ yields a nontrivial cycle in $T^2 \setminus K_+$; so we have the second case.

Put $L_+ = (L_- \setminus l) \cup \gamma_2$. Obviously, $L_+$ is a trivalent subgraph of $K_+$ with two vertices at the endpoints of $\gamma_2$. It contains two edges of $L_-$ different from $l$, which form a nontrivial cycle $\sigma$ homotopic to $\gamma_1$. Thus $L_+$ intersects any cycle $m\sigma + n\mu \in \pi_1(T^2)$ with $n \neq 0$, where $\mu$ is any cycle such that $\sigma$ and $\mu$ generate $\pi_1(T^2)$. By construction, $L_+$ intersects any cycle homotopic to $\sigma$, too. Thus, $L_+$ is a $\theta$-curve.

The path $\gamma_2$ considered above divides $\partial H$ in two arcs. If the vertices $A, D$ of $H$, which correspond to two different vertices of $L_-$ (see Fig. 20), belong to the same arc, then $L_+$ is isotopic to $L_-$ and $W_+ = W_-$. If they belong to different arcs, then $d(W_+, W_-) = 1$. □

Let us return to the proof of Theorem 14. Consider the case of Fig. 18 e. Realize the graph $K_-$ as the union of solid and dotted lines on the middle picture of Fig. 21. First, add the dashed edge to $K_-$. Then delete the dotted edge from the resulting graph. This results in $K_+$. By Lemma 9, the first step does not affect any $\theta$-curve in $K_-$, and the graph obtained after the second step contains a $\theta$-curve $L_+$ such that $d(W_+, W_-) \leq 1$.

![Figure 21](image)
The same reasoning applies in all other cases. For instance, for the saddle transformation (see Fig. 15, right) we need first to add two extra edges that will be included in $K_+$, and then delete two edges of $K_+ \setminus K_-$ from the graph obtained. Lemma 9 is applicable at each step, because any auxiliary graph contains either $K_-$ (whenever an edge is added at the previous step) or $K_+$ (whenever an edge is deleted at the next step) and thus contains $\theta$-curves. So for the saddle transformation we can guarantee that $d(W_+, W_-) \leq 2$ for some $\theta$-curve $L_+ \subset K_+$. Figure 19 shows that this estimate is exact.

It is easy to see that in all remaining cases the graphs $K_-$ and $K_+$ can be related by a sequence of $m$ operations of adding an edge followed by $n$ operations of deleting an edge, where $m, n \leq 5$. In fact, there are sequences giving the pairs $(m, n)$ equal to $(2, 1)$ and $(4, 3)$ for the last two pictures of Fig. 16, $(2, 1)$ for the case of Fig. 18d, (3, 3) and (5, 5) for the cases of Fig. 18f and Fig. 18g. By Lemma 9, there exists a $\theta$-curve $L_+ \subset K_+$ such that $d(W_+, W_-)$ does not exceed the number of deletion steps, which is $n$ for “left to right” (or “bottom to top”) transformations shown on Figs. 15, 16, and 18, and $m$ for reverse transformations. In any case, this number is at most 5, which proves the Theorem. □

Remarks. Theorem 14 gives an upper bound for $d(w(K_+), w(K_-))$. As we already saw (Fig. 19), this estimate is exact in the case of the saddle transformation. In fact, there are examples showing that the upper bound obtained in Theorem 14 is attainable for the third picture of Fig. 16, for the cases shown on Fig. 18d,e, and for the “top to bottom” transformation of Fig. 18f. In particular, the distance $d(w(K_+), w(K_-))$ is not symmetric for some graphs $K_+$ and $K_-$ related by a transformation shown on Fig. 18d or on the third picture of Fig. 16.

The estimate for $d(w(K_+), w(K_-))$ given in Theorem 14 exceeds 3 only in the case of Fig. 18g and for the “right to left” transformation from the rightmost picture of Fig. 16. Even in these cases, no examples are known where $d(w(K_+), w(K_-)) > 3$. We believe that such examples do not exist. This would imply that the upper bound 5 in Theorem 14 can be replaced by 3; the existing examples show that it cannot be replaced by a number smaller than 3.

3.3. Proof of Theorem 12.

Let $t \in \mathbb{R}/\mathbb{Z}$ be a parameter on the circle $S^1 = \mathbb{R}/\mathbb{Z}$. Without loss of generality, it can be assumed that the fiber $F_0 = p^{-1}(0)$ contains no singular points of $p$.

The transversality hypothesis in Theorem 12 means that $p$ has singular points neither inside of 2-components nor inside of edges of $P$. Thus the only singularities of $p|_P$ are the vertices of $P$; we can assume that the vertices lie in pairwise different fibers. Let $t_1 < t_2 < \ldots < t_n$ be their projections on $S^1$ (that is, the singular values of $p$); note that $n = c(P)$. For any $i = 1, \ldots, n - 1$ consider a nonsingular fiber $F_i = F_{(t_i + t_{i+1})/2}$. Also put $F_n = F_0$.

By virtue of Theorem 13, the graph $K_0 = P \cap F_0$ contains a finite number $N > 0$ of $\theta$-curves. Let $L_0$ be one of them. By Theorem 14, we can construct step by step a sequence $L_i \subset K_i = P \cap F_i$, $i = 1, \ldots, n$, of $\theta$-curves such that $d(W_i, W_{i-1}) \leq 5$. This implies the inequality $d(W_n, W_0) \leq 5n$.

Recall that $L_n$ is one of the $N \theta$-curves contained in $K_0$. First suppose that $L_n$ coincides with $L_0$. For the corresponding hexagons $W_0$ and $W_n$ this means that $W_n = AW_0$; here $A$ is the matrix of the monodromy operator $\mathcal{A}$ in the basis where $W_0$ is the standard hexagon. Consequently, $d(W_0, W_n) = c(A) \geq c(A)$. Combining
this with the inequality \( d(W_n, W_0) \leq 5n \), we get \( c(A) \leq 5n \) or, equivalently, \( c(P) \geq c(A)/5 \).

Note that there are at least two loose vertices of \( P \), that is, vertices where the graph \( K \) undergoes the transformation shown on Fig. 18c. One of them corresponds to the minimum point of \( \tilde{p}[\mathcal{T}] \) and another to the maximum point, where \( \tilde{p}: \tilde{M}(A) \to \mathbb{R} \) is the function that covers \( p \) under the universal covering \( \tilde{M}(A) \to M(A) \) and \( D \) is one of the preimages of the 3-cell \( M(A) \setminus P \) under this covering. Since loose vertices do not affect \( \theta \)-curves and corresponding hexagons, we have \( d(W_n, W_0) \leq 5(n-k) \), where \( k \geq 2 \) is the number of the loose vertices of \( P \). This proves the inequality \( c(P) \geq \frac{1}{5}c(A) + k \geq \frac{1}{5}c(A) + 2 \) in the case \( L_n = L_0 \).

Now suppose that \( L_n \) does not coincide with \( L_0 \). Consider a sequence \( L_{n+1}, L_{n+2}, \ldots, L_{Nn} \), where \( L_i \subset K' = P \cap F_i \) with \( i' \equiv i \mod n \), and \( d(W_i, W_{i-1}) \leq 5 \) for all \( i = 1, \ldots, Nn \); we also assume that \( W_i = W_{i+1} \) whenever the vertex lying between \( F_i \) and \( F_{i+1} \) is a loose vertex. Since the graph \( K_0 \) contains only \( N \) different \( \theta \)-curves, we have \( L_{sn} = L_{tn} \) for some \( s, t \) such that \( 0 \leq s < t \leq N \). Then, as above, we have \( c(A^{t-s}) \leq d(W_{sn}, W_{tn}) \leq 5(t-s)(n-k) \), because \( W_{tn} = A^{t-s}W_{sn} \) and there are \( k \geq 2 \) loose vertices. By Theorem 8, we have \( c(A^{t-s}) = (t-s)c(A) \) whenever monodromy operator \( A \) is non-periodic. Thus \( 5(t-s)(c(P) - k) \geq (t-s)c(A) \), i.e., \( c(P) \geq \frac{1}{5}c(A) + k \geq \frac{1}{5}c(A) + 2 \). The proof of Theorem 12 is complete. \( \square \)

**Remark.** It was shown in [21] that a spine \( P \) can be deformed so that the only transformations of the level sets are two Morse transformations (see Fig. 15), the transformations shown on the second picture on Fig. 16, and flips, see Fig. 18d. (In fact, this statement is proved in [21] for functions with values in the interval \([0, 1]\), but the proof applies to \( S^1 \)-valued functions, too.) Note that a flip in \( K \) induces at most one flip in \( L \) and a saddle transformation induces at most two flips, while two other transformations do not require flips at all. This yields the estimate \( c(P) \geq c(A) + 2 - 2s \) (where \( s \) is the number of saddle points of \( p \)), which holds for arbitrary spine of \( M(A) \), implying \( c(M(A)) \geq c(A) + 2 - 2s \). However, it is unlikely that there exists any lower bound for \( s \).

§4. **MAIN CONJECTURES**

4.1. **Triangulations of \( T^2 \) coming from spines.**

Let us recall the idea of the proof of Theorem 12. Given a spine \( P \) of \( M^3 = M^3(A) \), suppose that we can assign some object \( \sigma_t \) to each fiber \( F_t \) containing no vertices of \( P \) in such a way that

1) \( \sigma_t \) is an element of some metric space \((\Sigma, d)\);
2) there is an action of the group \( \text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z}) \) on the set \( \Sigma \), and monodromy \( A \) takes \( \sigma_t \) to \( \sigma_{t+2\pi} = A\sigma_t \);
3) \( d(\sigma_t, A\sigma_t) \geq c(A) \);
4) as \( t \) varies, \( \sigma_t \) remains unchanged until \( F_t \) encounters a vertex \( V \in P \);
5) if there is exactly one vertex of \( P \) between \( F_{t_{\pm}} \) and \( F_{t_{\mp}} \) (we can assume that vertices of \( P \) lie in pairwise different fibers), then \( d(\sigma_{t_{\pm}}, \sigma_{t_{\mp}}) \leq 1 \).

Then the number of vertices of \( P \) is at least \( c(A) \). This can be followed by an argument that shows that this number is in fact at least \( c(A) + k \), where \( k \) is some positive integer smaller than 6.

In the proof of Theorem 12, \( \sigma_t \) is an isotopy class of \( \theta \)-curves in \( F_t \), \( \Sigma \) is the vertex set of the trivalent graph \( \Gamma \) described in Section 2.1, \( d \) is the distance in \( \Gamma \),
and $k = 2$. To preserve property 4, we had to restrict ourselves to spines transversal to the fibers. Still, we got $d(\sigma_{t+}, \sigma_{t-}) \leq 5$ instead of property 5; this leads to an annoying factor of $1/5$ in Theorem 12.

In this section we present another construction for $\sigma_t$; namely, it will be some class of 2-chains representing the fundamental class $[F_t]$. This approach applies to all special spines $P$ of $M(\mathcal{A})$ (recall that, by Theorem 2, any minimal spine of $M(\mathcal{A})$ is a special one), not only to those transversal to the fibers, and properties 1, 2, 4, and 5 hold, while property 3 remains unproved.

Given a special spine $P$ of $M^3$, by $P'$ denote a triangulation of $M^3$ dual to $P$. Its tetrahedra correspond to the vertices of $P$ (see Fig. 1f), triangles correspond to the edges of the singular graph $SP$ (that is to the triple lines) of the spine $P$, edges of $P'$ are dual to the 2-cells of $P$, and the only vertex of $P'$ is located somewhere inside of the 3-cell $M \setminus P$. Here and below we abuse the word “triangulation”: the intersection of two simplices (if nonempty) is a subset of the sets of their faces of smaller dimensions, but the cardinality of this subset may exceed 1.

Let $f : \mathbb{R}^1 \to S^1$ be the standard covering defined by the rule $f(t) = t \mod 2\pi$. By $\tilde{f} : \tilde{M}^3 \to M^3$ denote the covering such that $\tilde{f}_*(\pi_1(\tilde{M}^3)) = i_*(\pi_1(F))$, where $i : F \to M^3$ is the embedding map of some fiber $F$ into $M^3$. Then a projection $\tilde{p} : \tilde{M} \to \mathbb{R}^1$ can be defined by the relation $f \circ \tilde{p} = p \circ \tilde{f}$. By $F_t \subset \tilde{M}$ denote the fiber $\tilde{p}^{-1}(t)$, where $t \in \mathbb{R}^1$. Put $\tilde{P} = \tilde{f}^{-1}(P)$ and $\tilde{P}' = \tilde{f}^{-1}(P')$. Note that $\tilde{P}$ is a spine of $\tilde{M}$ punctured infinitely many times (at all preimages of the vertex $V'$ of $P'$) and $\tilde{P}'$ is a triangulation of $\tilde{M}$. Furthermore, $\tilde{M}$ is nothing but $T^2 \times \mathbb{R}^1$ equipped with the deck transformation $(x, t) \mapsto (A x, t + 2\pi)$, where $x \in T^2$ and $t \in \mathbb{R}^1$, and both $\tilde{P}$ and $\tilde{P}'$ are invariant under the deck transformation. Fix a cartesian product structure on $\tilde{M}$ and define the forgetting projection $j : \tilde{M} \to T^2$ by $j(x, t) = x$.

By $M_0$, respectively, $\tilde{M}_0$, denote the complement to the vertices of $P$ in $\tilde{M}$, respectively, to the vertices of $\tilde{P}$ in $\tilde{M}$. It is easy to see that there is a strict deformation retraction $r : M_0 \to sk_2 P'$, which is covered by a strict deformation retraction $\tilde{r} : \tilde{M}_0 \to sk_2 \tilde{P}'$. If a fiber $F_t$ contains no vertices of $\tilde{P}$, the image $\tilde{r}(F_t) \subset sk_2 \tilde{P}'$ defines a 2-cycle $c_t^2 \in Z_2(\tilde{P}')$. The group $Z_2(\tilde{P}')$ is generated by the 2-cells of $\tilde{P}'$, so we have $c_t^2 = \sum \alpha_k(t) \tau_k^2$, where $\{\tau_k^2\}$ is the set of the 2-cells of $\tilde{P}'$.

The coefficients $\alpha_k(t)$ are equal to the intersection indices of $F_t$ with the oriented edges $e_k$ of $\tilde{P}$ corresponding to the oriented 2-cells $\tau_k^2$. Let $A_k$ and $B_k$ be the endpoints of an edge $e_k$ oriented from $A_k$ to $B_k$. If $A_k$ and $B_k$ lie both below or both above $F_t$ (that is, if $(\tilde{p}(A_k) - t)(\tilde{p}(B_k) - t) > 0$), then $\alpha_k(t) = 0$; otherwise, $\alpha_k(t) = \text{sign}(\tilde{p}(B_k) - \tilde{p}(A_k)) = \pm 1$. Obviously, only finite number of the coefficients can be nonzero, and property 4 holds for all $\alpha_k(t)$, whence for $c_t^2$ as well.

Let us consider a 2-chain $j_*(c_t^2)$. By construction, it is a cycle and its homology class is $[T^2]$ (because $j_*(c_t^2) = j_*(F_t)$). All triangles that constitute $j_*(c_t^2)$ have all their vertices mapped to $j(V')$ (where $V'$ is the vertex of $P'$). Let $\sigma_t$ be the linearization of $j_*(c_t^2)$, that is, the 2-chain obtained from $j_*(c_t^2)$ by replacing the characteristic mappings of all triangles by homotopic (with fixed vertices) linear mappings; a mapping of a triangle to the torus is linear if it is a linear mapping to the plane followed by the projection $\mathbb{R}^2 \to T^2$. Roughly speaking, we define $\Sigma$ as the set of all linear 2-cycles in $T^2$ that are homological to $[T^2]$ and have the only vertex, which is placed at $j(V')$. Accurately speaking, any element of $\Sigma$ is a cycle $\sum \beta_k \Delta_k$, where the coefficients $\beta_k$ are integers, all but finite number of them are zero, and $\{\Delta_k\}$ is the set of projections (from $\mathbb{R}^2$.
to $T^2$) of all different oriented triangles with vertices in $\mathbb{Z}^2$; the triangles are equal if they come from the same edge $e_k$ of $\tilde{P}'$, so even geometrically coinciding triangles may be different in this sense. This difference will be expounded later, but unless otherwise stated, we identify all coinciding triangles. Degenerated triangles (those with three vertices along a line) are allowed, and their orientation is, as usually, a cyclic ordering of their vertices. The metric on $\Sigma$ will be constructed later.

Obviously, we have $\sigma_t \in \Sigma$. Further, the group $\text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z})$ acts on $\Sigma$ in a natural way, and $\sigma_{t+2\pi} = A\sigma_t$, where $A$ is the monodromy of the fibration $p: M^3 \to S^1$. Thus properties 2 and 4, see above, are satisfied; further, property 1 is satisfied for any choice of metric $d$.

To find the difference between $\sigma_{t+}$ and $\sigma_{t-}$ (where the interval $(t-, t+)$ contains the projection $\tilde{p}(V)$ of exactly one vertex $V$ of $\tilde{P}$), consider the difference between $F_{t+}$ and $F_{t-}$. It is easy to see that $F_{t+}$ can be obtained as a connected sum of $F_{t-}$ and a small two-dimensional sphere $S^2(V)$ centered at $V$. Thus $\sigma_{t+}$ is obtained from $\sigma_{t-}$ by adding $j_*(\tilde{r}(S^2(V)))$, that is, by one of the two-dimensional Pachner moves, see [20] and §2.3 above. Indeed, there are four edges of $\tilde{P}$ emanating from $V$. Suppose that they are all different, that is, they are not loops. Then $\tilde{r}(S^2(V))$ is the boundary of a tetrahedron triangulated into four triangles $\tau_k^2$, from which 0 to 4 can annihilate with triangles that constitute $\tilde{r}(F_{t-})$. So $\sigma_{t+}$ is obtained from $\sigma_{t-}$ in one of the following five ways:

0) by adding the projection of the boundary of some tetrahedron, that is, by adding triangles $BCD$, $CAD$, $ABD$, and $BAC$ (mind the orientations!), or
1) by replacing a triangle $ABC$ of $\sigma_{t-}$ by three triangles $ABD$, $BCD$, and $CAD$, or
2) by replacing two triangles $ABC$ and $ACD$ of $\sigma_{t-}$ (the segment $AC$ contributes to both their boundaries, but with opposite signs) by the triangles $ABD$ and $BDC$, or
3) by replacing three triangles $ABD$, $BCD$, and $CAD$ by a single triangle $ABC$, or
4) by erasing four triangles $BCD$, $CAD$, $ABD$, and $BAC$.

Of course, moves 3 and 4 may not be applicable to arbitrary $\sigma_t \in \Sigma$.

If one of the edges of $\tilde{P}$ incident to $V$ is a loop, then two of the triangles that form $\tilde{r}(S^2(V))$ annihilate with one another, and it is easy to see that $\sigma_{t+} = \sigma_{t-}$.

Consider a graph with vertices at the elements of $\Sigma$ and edges corresponding to the moves described above. Let $d$ be the distance function on this graph. This completes the construction of the metric space $(\Sigma, d)$. Property 5 now holds by construction. Recall that properties 1, 2, and 4 hold as well. Property 3 is a conjecture. If it holds, then the inequality $c(M(A)) \geq c(A)$ follows immediately.

This conjecture is supported by the following observation. For any triangle of $\sigma_t$, draw three segments connecting its baricenter with the midpoints of its sides. All the tripods obtained in this way form a graph $K$. In some simple cases (for example, for spines constructed in Section 2.3), $K$ is a trivalent graph embedded into $T^2$. The Pachner moves 0 and 4 affect $K$ according to Fig. 18 a ("left to right" transformation of Fig. 18 a for move 0 and "right to left" for move 4); moves 1 and 3 affect $K$ according to Fig. 18 c; finally, moves 2 correspond to flips, see Fig. 18 e. It is possible now to choose a $\theta$-curve in $K$ and apply the argument of §3, taking into account that moves of Figs. 18 a and 18 c do not affect the isotopy classes of $\theta$-curves and any flip in the graph $K$ implies at most one flip of any $\theta$-curve in it.
However, in the general case the graph $K$ neither is embedded into the torus nor is trivalent, because there may be 4, 6 etc. triangles having the same edge in common, even for spines transversal to the fibers.

There is a more geometrical reformulation of this conjecture. For a chain $c = \sum_i r_i \tau_i$, where the sum is finite, $r_i \in \mathbb{Z}$, and the $\tau_i$ are singular simplices, put $\|c\| = \sum_i |r_i|$, and consider the minimum value $l^1(A)$ of $\|c\|$ over all 3-chains in $T^2 \times I$, $I = [0, 2\pi]$, representing the fundamental class $[T^2 \times I]$ and satisfying the condition $\sigma_{2\pi} = A\sigma_0$, where 2-chains $\sigma_{2\pi}$ and $\sigma_0$ are the intersections of the chain $c$ with $T^2 \times \{2\pi\}$ and $T^2 \times \{0\}$, and $A(x,0) = (Ax, 2\pi)$ for $(x,0) \in T^2 \times \{0\}$. It is easy to see that $l^1(A) = c(A)$. The conjecture can be formulated as follows: $l^1(A) = c(A)$. The definition of $l^1(A)$ is similar to Gromov’s definition of the simplicial $l^1$-norm (with some boundary conditions imposed), see [10]. However, with the original definition by Gromov, we have $\|M^2(A)\|_{l^1} = 0$. Also see the concluding remarks in [26].

In fact, the estimate $c(M(A)) \geq c(A)$ can be deduced from Conjecture 3 (see below), which is weaker than the conjecture above. Recall that the triangles of $\sigma_t$ are “marked” by the corresponding edges of $\tilde{P}$. It may happen that two different edges contribute two equal but oppositely oriented triangles to $\sigma_t$. Let us prohibit cancellation of the triangles in these cases. Then we get the set $\Sigma'$ of 2-cycles homological to $[T^2]$ such that any triangle is marked by two nonnegative integers, say, $(m, n)$, which means that $\sigma'$ contains $m$ positively oriented copies of this triangle and $n$ negatively oriented copies of it. A natural mapping $s: \Sigma' \to \Sigma$ is defined by replacing a mark $(m, n)$ by the coefficient $m - n$. To define a distance $d'$ on $\Sigma'$, we follow the construction of the distance function $d$; however, we prohibit moves 0 and 4; only moves 1, 2, and 3 are allowed. Obviously, the inequality $d'(\sigma_1, \sigma_2) \geq d(s(\sigma_1), s(\sigma_2))$ holds. Note also that $s(A\sigma) = As(\sigma)$, where $\sigma \in \Sigma'$ and $A \in SL(2,\mathbb{Z})$. So the following statement is weaker than the conjecture above (which states that property 3 holds).

**Conjecture 3.** For all $\sigma \in \Sigma'$ and $A \in SL(2,\mathbb{Z})$, the inequality $d'(A\sigma, \sigma) \geq c(A)$ holds.

However, this weaker conjecture still implies the inequality $c(M(A)) \geq c(A)$.

**Theorem 15.** Conjecture 3 implies the estimate $c(M(A)) \geq c(A)$.

**Proof.** Let us say that a vertex $V$ of $\tilde{P}$ is maximal, respectively, minimal, if the endpoints of all four edges going from $V$ are not above, respectively, not below $V$ (for $A, B \in \tilde{M}$, we say that $A$ lies above $B$ if $\tilde{p}(A) > \tilde{p}(B)$; further, we assume that $\tilde{p}(A) \neq \tilde{p}(B)$ whenever vertices $A$ and $B$ are different). Maximal and minimal vertices are also called critical. If a vertex $V \in \tilde{P}$ is maximal (respectively, minimal, critical), then its projection $\tilde{f}(V) \in P$ is said to be a maximal (respectively, minimal, critical) vertex of $P$. Obviously, maximal (minimal, critical) vertices of $P$ are well-defined, because for any vertex $V \in P$ all its preimages $\tilde{f}^{-1}(V)$ are or are not critical (maximal, minimal) vertices of $\tilde{P}$ simultaneously.

First, suppose that there are no critical vertices. Then any vertex of $\tilde{P}$ induces a change of $\sigma_t \in \Sigma'$ by one of the moves 1, 2, 3. (However, it can happen that the chain $s(\sigma_t) \in \Sigma$ undergoes the move 0 or 4. That is why we had to introduce $\Sigma'$ instead of $\Sigma$.) It follows that in this case $d(s(\sigma_t), s(\sigma_{t+2\pi})) = d'(\sigma_t, \sigma_{t+2\pi})$, so Conjecture 3 implies property 3 (see the beginning of §4), and the spine $P$ contains at least $c(A)$ vertices.
Suppose that \( \tilde{P} \) contains critical vertices, but there is an isotopy of the embedding of \( P \) in \( M^3 \) such that the deformed spine \( P_1 \) yields the deformed covering spine \( \tilde{P}_1 \) with neither minimal nor maximal vertices. Then the number of the vertices of \( P_1 \) is at least \( c(\mathcal{A}) \) (provided that Conjecture 3 is true); obviously, \( P \) and \( P_1 \) have the same number of vertices.

The notion of peripheric edge is necessary for the case of arbitrary spines.

**Definition 13.** An edge \( e \) of the singular graph \( SP \) of a spine \( P \) is said to be **peripheric** if there exists a vertex \( V \) of \( P \) with the following property: if a cycle \( \gamma \subset SP \) contains \( e \) and \( p_*(\gamma) \neq 0 \) (here \( p \) is the projection \( M^3 \to S^1 \)), then every connected component of \( \gamma \setminus V \) containing \( e \) is a loop \( \gamma' \) (with endpoints at \( V \)) such that \( p_*(\gamma') = 0 \); in the other words, the map \( p_* \) restricted to the closure of the connected component of \( SP \setminus V \) containing \( e \) is trivial. Edges that are not peripheric are called **regular**.

For example, a loop \( e \) is peripheric if and only if \( p_*(e) = 0 \). Unlike the property of a vertex to be critical, the property of an edge to be peripheric is an isotopy invariant.

**Lemma 10.** If \( P \) contains no peripheric edges, then it is isotopic to a spine with no critical vertices.

**Proof.** Take any edge \( e_1 \in P \). Since \( e_1 \) is a regular edge, there exists a cycle \( \gamma_1 \subset SP \) such that \( e_1 \subset \gamma_1 \), \( p_*(\gamma_1) \neq 0 \), and \( \gamma_1 \) does not pass twice through any vertex. Then there exists a spine \( P_1 \) isotopic to \( P \) such that the projection \( \tilde{P} : \tilde{M} \to \mathbb{R}^1 \) restricted to a connected component \( \tilde{\gamma}_1' \) of \( \tilde{f}^{-1}(\gamma_1') \), where \( \gamma_1' \subset P_1 \), takes the sequence of the vertices of \( \tilde{\gamma}_1' \) to a strictly monotone sequence \( \{a_i \mid i \in \mathbb{Z} \} \) of real numbers; here \( \gamma_1' \) is obtained from \( \gamma_1 \) under an isotopy that takes \( P \) to \( P_1 \). To construct \( P_1 \), fix a monotone sequence \( \{a_i\} \) satisfying the condition \( a_{i+m} = a_i + 2\pi k \), where \( m \) is the length of \( \gamma_1 \) and \( k \in \mathbb{Z} = \pi_1(S^1) \) is equal to \( p_*(\gamma_1) \). Let \( \{b_i \mid i \in \mathbb{Z} \} \) be the sequence of the projections \( \tilde{p}(V_i) \), where \( V_i \) are consecutive vertices of \( \tilde{\gamma}_1 \). The differences \( c_k = a_k - b_k \) form an \( m \)-periodic sequence. Let \( \{\delta_i \mid i = 1, \ldots, m \} \), be a family of arcs in \( \tilde{M} \) such that the endpoints of \( \delta_i \) are \( V_i \) and \( V'_i \), where \( \tilde{p}(V'_i) = a_i \) and the \( \delta_i \) do not intersect \( \tilde{SP} \); suppose also that the projections \( \tilde{f}(\delta_i) \) do not intersect one another. It is easy to see that such a family exists, and that it is possible to get a spine \( P_1 \) with the properties described above by an isotopy of the mapping \( \text{id} : M^3 \to M^3 \), fixed outside of a small collar neighborhood of \( \bigcup_{i=1}^m s(\delta_i) \).

Now any vertex \( V \in \gamma_1 \) is not critical. If there remain critical vertices, take an edge \( e_2 \in P_1 \) incident to one of them and a cycle \( \gamma_2 \subset SP_1 \) containing \( e_2 \) such that \( p_*(\gamma_2) \neq 0 \) and \( \gamma_2 \) does not pass twice through any vertex. If \( \gamma_2 \cap \gamma_1 = \emptyset \), repeat the construction above. Otherwise, take the connected component \( \gamma_2^0 \) of \( \gamma_2 \setminus \gamma_1 \) that contains \( e_2 \), and move the inner vertices of this component as above, but do not move its endpoints. In the spine \( P_2 \) obtained after this step, any vertex \( V \in \gamma_1 \cup \gamma_2^0 \) is not critical. Indeed, any vertex of \( \gamma_2^0 \) is a noncritical vertex of \( P_2 \) by construction, and any vertex \( V \in \gamma_1 \) has neighboring (in \( \gamma_1 \)) vertices above and below \( V \) in \( P_1 \); \( P_2 \) inherits this property from \( P_1 \), because the isotopy converting \( P_1 \) into \( P_2 \) does not affect \( \gamma_1 \).

If there still remain critical vertices, repeat the construction described above. Then we get a spine \( P_3 \) isotopic to \( P_2 \). The set of the vertices of \( \gamma_1 \cup \gamma_2^0 \cup \gamma_3^0 \), which certainly are not critical in \( P_3 \), is larger than the similar set \( \gamma_1 \cup \gamma_2^0 \) in \( P_2 \). Hence,
in a finite number of steps we obtain a spine \( P_k \) isotopic to \( P \) and having no critical vertices. \( \square \)

According to Lemma 10, it follows from Conjecture 3 that any spine of \( M(A) \) without peripheric edges contains at least \( c(A) \) vertices.

The degree of any vertex \( V \in SP \) equals four. Suppose that there are \( k \) peripheric and \( 4 - k \) regular half-edges incident to \( V \) (we consider half-edges, because the graph \( SP \) may contain loops). Note that the number \( k \) is even, thence is equal to 0, 2 or 4. Indeed, if there is a regular edge \( e \) incident to \( V \) (that is, if \( k < 4 \)), then there is a cycle \( \gamma \) consisting of regular edges and passing through \( V \), so in this case the number of regular half-edges incident to \( V \) is at least 2, and we have \( k \leq 2 \). On the other hand, if \( k = 1 \), consider the connected component of \( SP \setminus V \) containing the peripheric edge \( e \) incident to \( V \). Let it contain \( m \) edges and \( n \) vertices different from \( V \). Then the number of half-edges in this component is equal to \( 2m \) and to \( 4n + 1 \) simultaneously, which is impossible.

Let \( P \) be an arbitrary spine of \( M(A) \). Let us say that a vertex is regular if it is incident to regular edges only, semiregular if it is incident to two peripheric and two regular half-edges, and peripheric if it is incident to peripheric edges only. Following the proof of Lemma 10, replace \( P \) by an isotopic spine \( P_1 \) such that all regular and semiregular vertices of \( P_1 \) are not critical. For any semiregular vertex \( V \) of \( P_1 \), by \( b(V) \) denote the connected component of \( SP \setminus V \) that consists of peripheric edges only (i.e., lies “behind \( V \”)}. Following the proof of Lemma 10, replace \( P_1 \) by a spine \( P_2 \) such that \( P_2 \) is isotopic to \( P_1 \), the isotopy between \( P_1 \) and \( P_2 \) does not affect regular edges, \( p(V_i) = p(V) \) for all semiregular vertices \( V \in P_2 \) and all peripheric vertices \( V_i \in b(V) \), and \( p(e) \) is a zero-homotopic loop in \( S^1 \) for any peripheric edge \( e \).

Consider 2-cycles \( \sigma_t \in \Sigma' \) constructed from the spine \( P_2 \). If there is exactly one regular vertex between \( F_{t+} \) and \( F_{t-} \), then \( \sigma_{t+} \) is obtained from \( \sigma_{t-} \) by one of the moves \( 1, 2, 3 \), so \( d'(\sigma_{t+}, \sigma_{t-}) = 1 \).

Suppose that there is exactly one semiregular vertex \( V \in \tilde{P}_2 \) (together with all peripheric vertices of \( b(V) \)) between \( F_{t+} \) and \( F_{t-} \). Compare \( \sigma_{t-} \) and \( \sigma_{t+} \). The former cycle consists of the triangle corresponding to the regular edge \( e_- \) of \( \tilde{P}_2 \) incident to \( V \) such that the other endpoint of \( e_- \) lies below \( V \), and of some other triangles. The latter cycle includes the triangle that corresponds to the other regular edge \( e_+ \) of \( \tilde{P}_2 \) incident to \( V \); other triangles that constitute \( \sigma_{t+} \) are the same as in \( \sigma_{t-} \). Note that all triangles but one of a 2-cycle \( \sigma \in \Sigma' \) determine the remaining triangle \( \Delta \) uniquely; directions of its sides are those of the boundary of the 2-chain formed by the remaining triangles and thus denote \( \Delta \) up to dilatation with the coefficient \( \pm 1 \), and this coefficient is uniquely determined by the condition that \( \sigma \) is homological to \( [T^2] \); informally, \( \Delta \) is the difference between \( [T^2] \) and the 2-chain formed by the other triangles of \( \sigma \). So in this case we have \( \sigma_{t+} = \sigma_{t-} \).

We have shown that regular vertices of \( P_2 \) shift \( \sigma_t \) by distance 1, while semiregular and peripheric vertices do not affect \( \sigma_t \) at all. Recall that regularity, semiregularity, and periphericity are preserved under isotopy. Consequently, Conjecture 3 implies that the number of regular vertices of an arbitrary spine \( P \) of \( M(A) \) is at least \( c(A) \), so the number of all vertices of \( P \) is greater than or equal to \( c(A) \), too. This completes the proof of Theorem 15. \( \square \)

Finally, let us provide a sketchy explanation (or, maybe, rather motivation) for the “+5” summand in Conjecture 2. Suppose that there is an edge \( e \in P' \) of
the triangulation $P'$ dual to a given spine $P$ such that $p_*(e) = \pm 1$ in the group $\pi_1(S^1) = \mathbb{Z}$. Note that the cartesian product structure on $\hat{M}$ and the corresponding projection $\tilde{M} \to T^2$ are not uniquely defined; in our case we can choose any element of $\mathbb{Z}^2 = \pi_1(T^2)$ to be the image $j_*(e)$. Choose $j$ so that $j_*(e) = 0$. Cycles $\sigma_t$ can include degenerated triangles with an edge $j_*(e)$, which are projections of the triangles of $\hat{P}'$ incident to $e$. However, if vertices $A$ and $B$ of a triangle $ABC$ coincide, the triangle $ABC$ cannot be distinguished from $BAC$, which is equal, on the other hand, to $ABC$ with the opposite orientation, so such triangles can be ignored in $\sigma_t$. It can be easily shown that Pachner moves 1, 2, and 3 involving vertices of this type do not affect $\sigma_t$ and thus require $k$ “additional” vertices of $P$, where $k$ is the number of triangles of $\hat{P}'$ incident to $e$, that is, the number of sides of the 2-cell of $\hat{P}$ dual to $e \subset \hat{P}'$. We can assume $P$ to be a minimal spine of $M(A)$. In this case $P$ is a special spine, and, according to §1.2, it contains $n + 1$ 2-cells, where $n = c(M^3)$ is the number of its vertices. The total number of the vertices of 2-cells equals $6n$, so the average number of sides for a 2-cell of $P$ is $\frac{6n}{n+1} > 5$ (because $n \geq 6$). Thus it is reasonable to expect at least 5 “spare” vertices, in addition to $c(A)$ vertices that do change $\sigma_t$.

Of course, it can happen that there are no edges $e$ such that $p_*(e) = \pm 1$. However, there always exists an edge $e$ such that $p_*(e) = m > 0$. Then the argument above can be applied to an $m$-fold covering $\hat{M}_m = M(A^m)$ of $M(A)$. A special spine $P$ of $M(A)$ (punctured once) is covered by a special spine $\hat{P}_m$ of $\hat{M}_m$ with $m$ punctures, and we can destroy $m - 1$ 2-cells of $\hat{P}_m$ in order to get a special spine of $\hat{M}_m$ punctured only once. Apart from this, we destroy an $m$th 2-cell of $\hat{P}_m$ by the process described in the previous paragraph. Consequently, we obtain vertices of $m$ 2-cells of $\hat{P}_m$ as additional, spare vertices, and $c(A^m) = mc(A)$ (see Theorem 8) vertices of $\hat{P}_m$ affecting $\sigma_t$; obviously, the number of vertices of $\hat{P}_m$ is equal to $m$ times the number of the vertices of $P$. Unfortunately, the “averaging argument” provides no proof for the claim that, by destroying $m$ 2-cells during the above-described process, we can destroy at least $5m$ vertices (in fact, $4m + 1$ would already suffice), even though there is an essential ambiguity in the choice of 2-cells to be discarded. Because of pseudominimality of $P$, all boundary curves of 2-cells are not short, see [14] and the beginning of §2.3 above, but this does not readily yield $4m$ of $4m + 1$ spare vertices required, since à priori the boundary curve of a 2-cell can visit some vertices more than once. It is only possible to prove with this approach that $2m$ vertices are destroyed when $m$ 2-cells are discarded, and this results in 2 “additional” vertices of $P$, compare with Theorem 12.

4.2. Can hyperbolic geometry help?

Hyperbolic plane $H^2$ can be a natural receptacle for various metric spaces $\Sigma$ introduced in §4.1, because $H^2$ is the Teichmüller space of $T^2$. Being a subgroup of $\text{SL}(2, \mathbb{R})$, the group $\text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z})$ acts on $H^2$ (modelled on the upper half-plane) by the rule

$$A(z) = \frac{az + b}{cz + d}, \quad \text{where} \quad A = \begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ c & d \end{pmatrix} \in \text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z}) \quad \text{and} \quad \text{Im } z > 0; \quad (4)$$

the kernel of this action is $\{ \pm I \}$, so formula (4) defines an action of the modular group $\text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z})/\{ \pm I \}$ on $H^2$. 

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Consider the ideal triangle in $H^2$ with vertices at 0, 1, and $\infty$. Take its mirror images in its sides. This gives the triangles $(-1, 0, \infty)$, $(0, 1/2, 1)$, and $(1, 2, \infty)$, where $(a, b, c)$ denotes the ideal triangle with vertices $a$, $b$, and $c$. On the next step, construct the images of the triangles obtained in the previous step under reflections in their sides that are not sides of triangles obtained earlier. Continuing this way, we get a tesselation of $H^2$ into equal ideal triangles. It is called the Farey tesselation. Note that the modular group action (4) preserves it.

Consider a black-and-white coloring of triangles of the Farey tesselation such that neighboring triangles are of different colors. The only epimorphism of the modular group to $\mathbb{Z}_2$ discussed in Theorem 6 can be defined as follows: $\varphi(g) = 0$ if $g$ preserves the coloring and $\varphi(g) = 1$ if $g$ reverses it.

The following lemma (which certainly is well known though I did not find a reference) reveals the connection between the Farey tesselation and the Farey series.

**Lemma 11.** Let $r/s$ be the third vertex of a triangle $\Delta_1$ obtained by the reflection in the side $(m/n, p/q)$ of a triangle $\Delta$ obtained on the previous step. Then $r/s = \frac{m+p}{n+q}$

**Proof.** The proof is by induction over the number of reflections, counting from the “root” triangle $\Delta_r = (0, 1, \infty)$. By the induction hypothesis, the third vertex of $\Delta$ is $\frac{m-n}{n-q}$. A direct calculation of the cross-ratio of the quadruple $\left(\frac{m}{n}, \frac{m+p}{n+q}, \frac{p}{q}, \frac{m-n}{n-q}\right)$ shows that the points $\frac{m-n}{n-q}$ and $\frac{m+p}{n+q}$ are symmetric in the line $(\frac{m}{n}, \frac{q}{p})$. □

A line $(m/n, p/q)$, where $m, n, p, q \in \mathbb{Z}$, occurs in the Farey tesselation if and only if $mq - np = \pm 1$ (we express $\infty$ as 1/0). The “only if” statement is proved by induction on the number of reflections, as above. To prove the “if” statement, read Chapter III of [11] or note that $m/n$ and $p/q$ either are both nonnegative or both nonpositive, since otherwise $|mq - np| > 1$. Hence, the line $(m/n, p/q)$ does not intersect the line $(0, \infty)$. Any other line $l$ of the Farey tesselation can be taken to $(0, \infty)$ by a sequence of reflections in its neighboring lines followed by a rotation of the triangle $(0, 1, \infty)$. Let this isometry of $H^2$ take the line $(m/n, p/q)$ to $(m'/n', p'/q')$, then $|m'q' - n'p'| = |mq - np| \neq 1$, so the line $(m/n, p/q)$ does not intersect $l$ as well. Then it cannot pass through an interior point of any triangle of the tesselation, and the only chance for it to be contained somewhere in $H^2$ is to be one of the lines of the tesselation. For a constructive proof of the “if” statement, the Euclid algorithm should be applied to one of the pairs $(m+p, n+q)$ and $(m-p, n-q)$, compare with the proof of Theorem 2 in [2].

![Figure 22. Farey tesselation of hyperbolic plane](image)
Figure 22 represents the Farey tesselation of $H^2$ for the circle and half-plane models of hyperbolic plane. For more information on the Farey tesselation see [23].

Recall that isotopy classes of $\theta$-curves correspond to admissible hexagons, see [2] or §2.1 above. There is a natural correspondence between admissible hexagons and triangles of the Farey tesselation: a hexagon $W$ with vertices $\pm (m, n)$, $\pm (p, q)$, and $\pm (r, s)$ corresponds to an ideal triangle $\Delta = (m/n, p/q, r/s)$. For example, the standard hexagon $W_0$ corresponds to $\Delta_0 = (\infty, -1, 0)$. It is easy to check that a centrally symmetric hexagon $W$ is admissible if and only if $\Delta$ is one of the triangles that form the Farey tesselation: both conditions are equivalent to the equations $|mq - np| = |ps - qr| = |rn - sm| = 1$. Moreover, flips of admissible hexagons correspond to reflections in sides of the corresponding triangles. Consequently, the graph $\Gamma$ introduced in §2.1 is nothing but the dual graph of the tesselation; by the way, now it is obvious that $\Gamma$ is a tree.

To embed $\Gamma$ in $H^2$ in the most symmetric way, let its vertices be the centers of incircles\(^2\) of corresponding ideal triangles. The incircles of two triangles having a common side touch this side at the same point, because the whole picture is invariant under reflection in this side. By a straightforward calculation, we obtain that the radius of the incircle of an ideal triangle equals $\frac{\ln 3}{2}$. So the hyperbolic length of any edge of $\Gamma \subset H^2$ is equal to $\ln 3$. Angles between edges at any vertex are equal to $2\pi/3$ because of symmetry. This metric information completely defines the embedding of $\Gamma$ in $H^2$.

The embedding $\Gamma \hookrightarrow H^2$ described above (and represented on Fig. 22 by dotted lines) makes the Farey tesselation coincide with the Voronoi partition of $H^2$ with respect to the vertices of $\Gamma$: each ideal triangle $\Delta(w)$ containing a vertex $w \in \Gamma$ coincides with the set of points $x \in H^2$ such that the vertex of $\Gamma$ closest to $x$ is $w$. Moreover, for any point $x \in \Delta(w)$ the point $y \in \Gamma$ closest to $x$ lies in $\Delta(w)$, too. The graph $\Gamma$ is the one-dimensional skeleton of the Delaunay decomposition of $H^2$ dual to the Farey tesselation (considered as a Voronoi partition).

There are two different distance functions on $\Gamma$: the hyperbolic distance $d_H$ between its vertices and the “counting” distance $d_c$, which is equal to the number of edges in the shortest path between vertices. The distance $d_c$ also can be defined as the number of the Farey tesselation lines that intersect the geodesic line between two given vertices; here vertices can be replaced by arbitrary points in the corresponding triangles. This implies the following statement.

**Theorem 16.** For any point $z \in H^2$ not belonging to the Farey tesselation lines, we have $d_c(\mathcal{A}z, z) = c(\mathcal{A})$. □

**Conjecture 4.** There exists some natural construction of a metric space $(\Sigma, d)$, where its elements $\sigma_t \in \Sigma$ are closely related to triangles in the Farey tesselation, $d$ is closely related to $d_c$, and properties 1–5 (see the beginning of §4.1) are satisfied.

Unimodular quadratic forms also are natural candidates for the role of $\sigma_t \in \Sigma$. For example, given a $\theta$-curve, consider a quadratic form $Q_W$ on the lattice $\pi_1(T^2)$ (or rather on $H^1(T^2, \mathbb{Z})$, which is the same) that takes the vertices of the corresponding admissible hexagon $W$ to 1. Then $Q_W$ is a unimodular form with integer coefficients. Let us assign to $z \in H^2$ an ellipse $E_z$ with semiaxes $e^t$ and $e^{-t}$, where $t = d_H(z, i)$, such that the oriented angle between the $Ox$ axis and the large axis of $E_z$ is half the oriented angle between the geodesic lines going from $i$\(^2\)note that the center of a circle in $H^2$ usually does not coincide with its Euclidean center
to zero and to \( z \). Let \( Q_z \) be a quadratic form defined by the condition \( Q_z(\alpha) = 1 \) if and only if \( \alpha \in E_z \). Then \( Q_W = Q_z(W) \), where \( z(W) \) is the vertex of \( \Gamma \) that lies in the triangle \( \Delta \) corresponding to an admissible hexagon \( W \); this can be verified by a straightforward calculation.

### 4.3. Other 3-dimensional manifolds.

**4.3.1. Lens spaces.** We have already discussed lens spaces in §1.3 and §2.4. Here we show that the distance function \( d_c \) coming from the Farey tesselation leads to an elegant reformulation of Conjecture 1. Note that \( d_c \) is well-defined for pairs of rational points on the absolute of \( H^2 \) and for pairs where one point belongs to \( H^2 \) and the other is a rational absolute point.

**Lemma 12.** Let \( p, q \) be coprime positive integers. Then the Euclid complexity \( E(p, q) \) defined in §1.2 is equal to \( d_c(e^{2\pi i/3}, p/q) \).

The point \( e^{2\pi i/3} \in H^2 \) can be replaced by any other inner point of the triangle \( \Delta_0 = (\infty, -1, 0) \).

**Proof.** By Theorem 5, we have \( d(W, W_0) = E(p, q) \), where the admissible hexagon \( W \) is uniquely defined by its leading vertex \((p, q)\) (see [2] or §2.1 for definitions). Since \( e^{2\pi i/3} \in \Delta_0 \), we have \( d_c(e^{2\pi i/3}, p/q) = d(W, W_0) \). □

Recall that any lens space \( L_{p,q} \) is obtained by gluing together two solid tori along their boundary torus \( T^2 \). Denote by \( \mu_1, \mu_2 \in \pi_1(T^2) \) the meridians (that is, contractible boundary cycles) of two solid tori. Fix some basis in \( \pi_1(T^2) = \mathbb{Z}^2 \). Then the slopes \( r_1 = r(\mu_1), r_2 = r(\mu_2) \in \mathbb{Q} \) of the cycles \( \mu_1 \) and \( \mu_2 \) are defined.

**Theorem 17.** We have \( d_c(r_1, r_2) = E(p, q) - 1 \).

Compare this with Lemma 5 in §2.4.

**Proof.** The number \( d_c(r(\mu_1), r(\mu_2)) \) is independent of the choice of a basis in \( \mathbb{Z}^2 \), because the action (4) of \( \text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z}) \) on \( H^2 \) preserves the Farey tesselation and, consequently, the function \( d_c \). For \( L_{p,q} \), there exists a basis of \( \mathbb{Z}^2 \) such that \( r_1 = 0 \) and \( r_2 = p/q \). Since \( p > q > 0 \), we have \( p/q \in (1, \infty) \). Hence, the distance \( d_c \) of \( p/q \) to 0 is one less than its distance to an inner point of the triangle \((\infty, -1, 0)\), see Fig. 22. Now the statement of the theorem follows from Lemma 12. □

Thus Conjecture 1 is equivalent to the relation \( c(L_{p,q}) = d_c(r_1, r_2) - 2 \).

**Remark.** For any two (and even three) absolute points \( a, b \in \mathbb{R} \cup \infty \) there exists an isometry \( A \in \text{SL}(2, \mathbb{R}) \) of \( H^2 \) taking them, say, to 0 and 1. This is no longer the case for the \( \text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z}) \)-action: obviously, only rational points (including \( \infty \)) can be mapped to rationals, but even a pair of rational numbers \((r_1, r_2)\) cannot be mapped to the pair \((0, 1)\) whenever \( d_c(r_1, r_2) > 0 \). Exercises: 1) Given two pairs of rational numbers, determine whether they are \( \text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z}) \)-equivalent. (Hint: see [23]; the condition \( d_c(r_1, r_2) = d_c(s_1, s_2) \) is necessary but not sufficient.) 2) Fix a basis in \( \pi_1(T^2) \) and attach two solid tori along \( T^2 \) so that their meridians have slopes \( r_1 \) and \( r_2 \). We get a manifold \( M(r_1, r_2) \), which is a lens space. Show that \( M(r_1, r_2) \) and \( M(s_1, s_2) \) are homeomorphic if and only if unordered pairs \((r_1, r_2)\) and \((s_1, s_2)\) are \( \text{SL}(2, \mathbb{Z}) \)-equivalent. 3) Prove (once again) Theorem 3, see §1.3.

**4.3.2. Stallings manifolds.** Consider a fibration \( p: M^3 \rightarrow S^1 \), where \( F_q \) is an orientable surface (of genus \( g \)) and \( M^3 \) is an orientable 3-manifold. It may happen
that a manifold $M$ can be fibered over a circle in several different ways, and the genus of the fiber need not be defined uniquely by $M^3$. Choose any of the fibering structures and denote by $\mathcal{A}$ the monodromy, which is an isotopy class of self-diffeomorphisms $\mathcal{A}: F_g \rightarrow F_g$.

The ideas of Section 3 can be applied to this situation as well. Nothing changes in §3.1. Further, Lemma 7 remains true. Obviously, the set of isotopy classes of $\theta$-curves should be replaced by the set of isotopy classes of trivalent graphs $L \subset F_g$ such that $F_g \setminus L$ is a 2-cell. With this correction, analogues of Lemma 8 and Theorem 13 hold, while the proof of Lemma 8 requires slight modification in the second paragraph. However, the difference between 1-skeleta such that $F_g \setminus L$ is a 2-cell. With this correction, analogues of Lemma 8 and Theorem 13 hold, while the proof of Lemma 8 requires slight modification in the second paragraph. However, the difference between 1-skeleta $L_-$ and $L_+$ of $F_g$ in an analogue of Lemma 9 is measured by at most one Dehn twist (rather than at most one flip), which may require up to $4g - 3$ flips. So in Theorem 14 we only get the estimate $d(W_+, W_-) \leq 5(4g - 3)$, where $W_+$, $W_-$ are isotopy classes of trivalent graphs embedded in $F_g$ so that their complements are 2-cells, and $d$ is the “flip-distance”. The remaining part of the reasoning of §3 goes smoothly, and we get an analogue of Theorem 12 with $1/5(4g - 3)$ instead of $1/5$. The approach discussed in §4.1 can be applied to this situation, too.

Another difference from the case of $g = 1$ is that we no longer know how to find $c(\mathcal{A})$, that is, the minimal number of flips required to convert a trivalent graph $L$ such that $F_g \setminus L$ is a 2-cell into its monodromy image $\mathcal{A}L$. Recall that $c(\mathcal{A})$ can be computed by the methods of §2.2 or §4.2 whenever $g = 1$. The former approach is obstructed by the fact that the graph $\Gamma$ is not a tree if $g > 1$. Probably, some estimates for $c(\mathcal{A})$ are easier to obtain than its exact value. In order to do it using the latter approach, one should replace the Farey tesselation of $H^2$ by the cell decomposition of the Teichmüller space of $F_g$ described in [4].

The construction of a spine with small number of vertices presented in §2.3 gives a spine of $M^3$ with $c(\mathcal{A}) + 4g + 2$ vertices, and at least one of them may be cancelled by simplification moves provided that $c(\mathcal{A}) > 0$. It is not immediately clear how many vertices can be cancelled out of $4g + 2$. Anyway, it is plausible that any spine of $M^3$ contains more than $c(\mathcal{A})$ vertices, where $\mathcal{A}$ is the monodromy of any possible fibering of $M^3$ over the circle.

4.3.3. Topological economy principle. If Conjecture 2 holds, a minimal spine of a torus bundle space $M(\mathcal{A})$ can be constructed as follows (see §2.3): fix a fiber $F = p^{-1}(0) \subset M^3$, then choose a $\theta$-curve $L \subset F$ that requires $c(\mathcal{A})$ flips only to be converted to $\mathcal{A}L$, construct a simple polyhedron $P_0$ from the evolution of $L$, and, finally, add to $P_0$ an extra face that cuts any path connecting two boundary components of $M^3 \setminus F$ in the complement of $P_0$.

According to Thurston’s geometrisation conjecture, any prime orientable compact 3-manifold $M^3$ can be cut into geometric pieces $M_i$, $i = 1, \ldots, m$, along incompressible tori $T_j^2$, $j = 1, \ldots, n$, see, for example, the last section of [22]. For nontrivial cycles in the $T_j^2$ remain nontrivial in $M^3$ (by incompressibility), any spine $P$ of $M$ intersects all nontrivial cycles in any $T_j^2$; assuming general position, the intersections $P \cap T_j^2$ contain $\theta$-curves for all $j$ by virtue of Lemma 8.

Given a family of $\theta$-curves $L_j \subset T_j^2$, consider simple polyhedra $P_i \subset M_i$ such that $P_i \cap T_j^2 = L_j$ for any boundary torus $T_j^2$ of $M_i$. Then add extra faces to $P_i$ as necessary to get spines of the $M_i$. The union $P$ of obtained polyhedra is a spine of $M^3$ (maybe, with several punctures). Minimize the total number of vertices of $P$ over all possible choices of the $P_i$ and the extra faces and over all “boundary
conditions”, that is, all families \( L_j \subset T^2_j \). Needless to say, it is not clear yet how to implement this program in the general case.

**Conjecture 5.** A minimal spine of any 3-manifold (that can be cut into geometric pieces) can be obtained by the procedure described in the paragraph above.

In other words, there exists a minimal spine of \( M^3 \) that intersects any torus \( T^2_j \) along one \( \theta \)-curve only. Similar conjecture can be formulated about graph-manifolds [8, 30], which can be cut along incompressible tori into several copies of \( D^2 \times S^1 \) and \( N^2 \times S^1 \), where \( N^2 \) stands for \( D^2 \) with two holes. Conjecture 5 is yet another facet of the “topological economy principle” expressed and illustrated in [3].

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Institute for System Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences
Current address: IHES, Le Bois-Marie, 35, Route de Chartres, F-91440 Bures-sur-Yvette, France
E-mail address: anisov@mccme.ru