UNIQUENESS OF OPTIMAL SOLUTIONS FOR SEMI-DISCRETE TRANSPORT WITH $p$-NORM COST FUNCTIONS

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Abstract. Semi-discrete transport can be characterized in terms of real-valued shifts. Often, but not always, the solution to the shift-characterized problem partitions the continuous region. This paper gives examples of when partitioning fails, and offers a large class of semi-discrete transport problems where the shift-characterized solution is always a partition.

1. Introduction

Optimal transport offers a way to measure the distance between two probability spaces, $X$ and $Y$. In the class of transport problems known as semi-discrete optimal transport, the probability distribution on $X$ is almost-everywhere continuous and the probability distribution on $Y$ is discrete, with $N$ points of positive measure. Given minimal assumptions, described below, the semi-discrete problem always has at least one solution that partitions $X$ into $N$ regions based on transport destination.

Rüschendorf and Uckelmann developed a way to characterize semi-discrete transport in terms of a set of real-valued shifts. This shift characterization often results in a solution that partitions $X$ into $N$ regions. Unfortunately, the shift characterization does not always partition $X$. This important fact has not always been recognized or clearly expressed in the literature; see [5, 6, 7]. To remedy that ambiguity, this paper gives clear, specific examples where shift-characterized partitioning fails, and it offers a large class of problems where the shift characterization is guaranteed to partition $X$.

2. Background

2.1. General optimal transport: the Monge-Kantorovich and Monge problems. Though this paper focuses on the semi-discrete problem, it is worth describing it in terms of the more general, Monge-Kantorovich transport problem.

Definition 2.1 (Monge-Kantorovich problem). Let $X, Y \subseteq \mathbb{R}^d$, let $\mu$ and $\nu$ be probability densities defined on $X$ and $Y$, and let $c(x, y) : X \times Y \to \mathbb{R}$ be a continuous measurable ground cost function. Define the set of transport plans

$$\Pi(\mu, \nu) := \left\{ \pi \in \mathcal{P}(X \times Y) \left| \begin{array}{c} \pi[A \times Y] = \mu[A], \pi[X \times B] = \nu[B], \\ \forall \text{ meas. } A \subseteq X, B \subseteq Y \end{array} \right. \right\},$$

(2.1)

where $\mathcal{P}(X \times Y)$ is the set of probability measures on the product space, and define the primal cost function $P : \Pi(\mu, \nu) \to \mathbb{R}$ as

$$P(\pi) := \int_{X \times Y} c(x, y) \, d\pi(x, y).$$

(2.2)

The Monge-Kantorovich problem is to find the optimal primal cost

$$P^* := \inf_{\pi \in \Pi(\mu, \nu)} P(\pi),$$

(2.3)

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and an associated optimal transport plan

$$\pi^* := \arg \inf_{\pi \in \Pi(\mu, \nu)} P(\pi).$$  \hfill (2.4)

Under the conditions given, an optimal transport plan, $\pi^*$, is guaranteed to exist. However, $\pi^*$ may not be unique, or even a.e.-unique. Furthermore, the existence of $\pi^*$, an optimal plan, does not ensure that $\pi^*$ is a map, or that an optimal map exists. Nonetheless, consider the form such an optimal map would take.

**Definition 2.2** (Monge problem). In certain cases, there exists at least one solution to the semi-discrete Monge-Kantorovich problem that does not split transported masses. In other words, there exists some $\pi^*$ such that

$$\pi^*(x, y) = \pi^*_T(x, y) := \mu(x) \chi[y = T^*(x)],$$  \hfill (2.5)

where $T^* : X \to Y$ is a measurable map called the optimal transport map. When such a $\pi^*$ exists, we say the solution also solves the Monge problem.

If the Monge problem has a solution, we can assume without loss of generality that every $\pi \in \Pi(\mu, \nu)$ satisfies

$$\pi(x, y) = \pi_T(x, y) := \mu(x) \chi[y = T(x)],$$  \hfill (2.6)

for some measurable transport map $T : X \to Y$, and that the primal cost can be written

$$P(\pi) := \int_X c(x, T(x)) \, d\mu(x).$$  \hfill (2.7)

### 2.2. Semi-discrete optimal transport and the shift characterization

The semi-discrete optimal transport problem is the Monge-Kantorovich problem of Theorem 2.1, with restrictions on $\mu$ and $\nu$:

1. Assume that $\mu$ satisfies the following:
   (a) $\mu$ is bounded.
   (b) $\mu$ is nonatomic.
   (c) $\mu$ is continuous except on a set of Lebesgue measure zero.
   (d) The support of $\mu$ is contained in the convex compact region $A \subseteq X$.

Because $c$ is continuous and $\mu$ is nonatomic, at least one solution to the semi-discrete Monge-Kantorovich problem also satisfies the Monge problem, described in Theorem 2.2; see [4]. Thus, by applying Equation (2.6), we can assume without loss of generality that any transport plan $\pi$ has an associated map $T$, and that $T$ partitions $A$ into $n$ sets $A_i$, where $A_i$ is the set of points in $A$ that are transported by $T$ to $y_i$. Using this partitioning scheme in combination with Equation (2.7) allows us to rewrite the primal cost function for the semi-discrete problem as

$$P(\pi) := \sum_{i=1}^{n} \int_{A_i} c(x, y_i) \, d\mu(x).$$  \hfill (2.8)

This idea of sets $A_i$ is central to describing the shift characterization of the semi-discrete optimal transport problem. The following definition is based on one given by Rüschendorf and Uckelmann in [5, 7].

**Definition 2.3** (Shift characterization). Let $\{a_i\}_{i=1}^{n}$ be a set of $n$ finite values, referred to as shifts. Define

$$F(x) := \max_{1 \leq i \leq n} \{a_i - c(x, y_i)\}.$$  \hfill (2.9)

For $i \in \mathbb{N}_n$, where $\mathbb{N}_n = \{1, \ldots, n\}$, let

$$A_i := \{x \in A \mid F(x) = a_i - c(x, y_i)\}.$$  \hfill (2.10)

Note that $\bigcup_{i=1}^{n} A_i = A$. The problem of determining an optimal transport plan $\pi^*$ is equivalent to determining shifts $\{a_i\}_{i=1}^{n}$ such that for all $i \in \mathbb{N}_n$, the total mass transported from $A_i$ to $y_i$ equals $\nu(y_i)$. 
2.3. Formalizing the shift-characterized partition. “Partitioning” $A$ is described in [7, 5] as $\mu(A_i) = \nu(y_i)$. However, it is beneficial to describe the shift-characterized partition in more detail. Doing so requires a few additional definitions.

**Definition 2.4** (Boundaries and boundary sets). For all $i, j \in \mathbb{N}_n$ such that $i \neq j$, let

$$A_{ij} := A_i \cap A_j.$$  

(2.11)

The *boundary set* is defined as

$$B := \bigcup_{1 \leq i < n} \bigcup_{i < j \leq n} A_{ij}.$$  

(2.12)

For all $i, j \in \mathbb{N}_n$ such that $i \neq j$, define $g_{ij} : X \to \mathbb{R}$ as

$$g_{ij}(x) := c(x, y_i) - c(x, y_j).$$  

(2.13)

**Definition 2.5** ($F \mu$-partitions $A$). Let $F$ be as defined in Equation (2.9), and the sets $A_i$ as defined in Equation (2.10) for $i \in \mathbb{N}_n$. Then one says $F \mu$-partitions the set $A$, or $F$ is called a $\mu$-partition, if

1. $\mu(A) < \infty$,
2. for all $i, j \in \mathbb{N}_n$, $i \neq j$, $\mu(A_{ij}) = 0$,
3. $\sum_{i=1}^n \mu(A_i) = \mu(A)$, and
4. for all $i \in \mathbb{N}_n$, $\mu(A_i) = \nu(y_i) > 0$.

**Definition 2.6** (Monge under the shift characterization). We say a transport plan $\pi$ is *Monge under the shift characterization* if $\pi$ has an associated transport map $T$, a function $F$, as described in Equation (2.9), and sets $\{A_i\}_{i=1}^n$, as described in Equation (2.10), such that for all $x \in A$,

$$x \in A_i \text{ for some } i \in \mathbb{N}_n \implies T(x) = y_i.$$  

(2.14)

In other words, $F \mu$-partitions $A$ and $T$ agrees with $F$ on $A \setminus B$.

If $\mu(B) > 0$ for the shifts $\{a_i\}_{i=1}^n$, no such transport plan $\pi$ can exist, and the transport problem itself can be said to be *not Monge under the shift characterization*. Conversely, if $\mu(B) = 0$, then such a transport plan exists, and so the transport problem itself is said to be Monge under the shift characterization. In other words, $F \mu$-partitions $A$ if and only if the transport problem is Monge under the shift characterization.

The following result, from [3], allows us to go further:

**Theorem 2.7.** Suppose one has a semi-discrete transport problem, as described in Section 2.2. Let $F$ be as defined in Equation (2.9), and the sets $A_i$ as defined in Equation (2.10) for $i \in \mathbb{N}_n$. Then $F \mu$-partitions $A$ if and only if $\mu(B) = 0$.

Taken together, these statements provide a formal definition and condition for what it means for the shift-characterized solution to partition $A$:

| The shift-characterized semi-discrete transport problem partitions $A$ — that is, $F \mu$-partitions $A$ — if and only if the semi-discrete transport problem is Monge under the shift characterization, which is true if and only if $\mu(B) = 0$. |

2.4. Uniqueness of semi-discrete transport solutions. Given the semi-discrete transport problem described in Section 2.2, Corollary 4 of [2] provides a sufficient condition for the existence of a Monge solution that is unique $\mu$-a.e.:

$$\mu \left( \{ x \in A \mid c(x, y_i) - c(x, y_j) = k \} \right) = 0 \quad \forall i, j \in \mathbb{N}_n, i \neq j, \forall k \in \mathbb{R}. \quad (2.15)$$

If Equation (2.15) is satisfied, $\mu(B) = 0$. Therefore, if Equation (2.15), then the transport problem is Monge under the shift characterization and the transport solution is unique $\mu$-a.e.

However, if a transport problem is Monge under the shift characterization, then it has a unique $\mu$-a.e. shift-characterized solution, whether or not Equation (2.15) is satisfied. This statement is formalized and proved in [3] as the following theorem:

**Theorem 2.8** (The optimal transport map is unique $\mu$-a.e.). *Given a semi-discrete transport problem, let $\pi^*$ and $\tilde{\pi}^*$ be optimal transport plans that are both Monge under the shift characterization. If $T$ is a transport map associated with $\pi^*$, and $\tilde{T}$ a transport map associated with $\tilde{\pi}^*$, then $T = \tilde{T}$ except on a set of $\mu$-measure zero.*
3. Mathematical support

While Equation (2.15) implies \( \mu(B) = 0 \), the converse is not true, as Section 3.1 shows. Next, Section 3.2 identifies a large class of problems where both conditions hold and the solution is always unique \( \mu \)-a.e.

3.1. Partitioning with the 1-norm and \( \infty \)-norm. Let \( X = [0, 1]^2 \), \( Y = \{ y_1, y_2 \} \), and let \( \mu \) be the continuous uniform distribution. This simple setup can be used to demonstrate failure to partition for both the uniform norm (\( \infty \)-norm) and the Manhattan norm (1-norm).

3.1.1. The uniform norm. Let \( y_1 = (1/4, 1/2) \) and \( y_2 = (3/4, 1/2) \), and let \( c : \mathbb{R}^2 \times \mathbb{R}^2 \to \mathbb{R} \) be the uniform norm (\( \infty \)-norm): \( c(x, y) = \max_{i \in \{1, 2\}} |x_i - y_i| \) for all \( x = (x_1, x_2) \in X \), \( y = (y_1, y_2) \in Y \). Consider two examples:

1. If \( \nu(y_1) = 1/32 \), then \( \nu(y_2) = 31/32 \). In this case, \( \mu(B) = 1/16 \), and the shift-characterized solution fails to partition \( A \). See Figure 1(a).

2. However, if \( \nu(y_1) = 1/8 \), then \( \nu(y_2) = 7/8 \), \( \mu(B) = 0 \) and the shift-characterized solution does partition \( A \). See Figure 1(b).

Even though one of the problems illustrated in Figure 1 results in a partition, Equation (2.15) fails in both cases:
\[
\mu( \{ x \in A \mid c(x, y_2) - c(x, y_1) = k \} ) = \frac{1}{16} \quad \text{if} \quad k \in \left\{ -\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2} \right\}.
\]

In general, for this choice of \( X \), \( Y \), \( \mu \), and \( c \), the shift-characterized solution partitions \( A \) if and only if
\[
\nu(y_1) \in \left( \frac{1}{16}, \frac{15}{16} \right).
\]

Thus, when \( c \) is the uniform norm, one can have \( \mu(B) = 0 \), giving a shift-characterized partition of \( A \) that is unique \( \mu \)-a.e., whether or not Equation (2.15) is satisfied.

3.1.2. The Manhattan norm. Now let \( y_1 = (1/4, 1/4) \) and \( y_2 = (3/4, 3/4) \). Let \( c : \mathbb{R}^2 \times \mathbb{R}^2 \to \mathbb{R} \) be the Manhattan norm (1-norm): \( c(x, y) = |x_1 - y_1| + |x_2 - y_2| \) for all \( x = (x_1, x_2) \in X \), \( y = (y_1, y_2) \in Y \). Consider three examples:

1. If \( \nu(y_1) = 1/2 \), then \( \nu(y_2) = 1/2 \). In this case, \( \mu(B) = 1/8 \), and the shift-characterized solution fails to partition \( A \). See Figure 2(a) for an illustration.

2. If \( \nu(y_1) = 1/32 \), then \( \nu(y_2) = 31/32 \) and \( \mu(B) = 1/8 \), so the shift-characterized solution again fails to partition \( A \). This is shown in Figure 2(b).

3. However, if \( \nu(y_1) = 1/4 \), then \( \nu(y_2) = 3/4 \). In this case \( \mu(B) = 0 \) and the shift-characterized solution does partition \( A \). See Figure 2(c).

Once again, Equation (2.15) fails in all the Figure 2 cases:
\[
\mu( \{ x \in A \mid c(x, y_2) - c(x, y_1) = k \} ) = \frac{1}{8} \quad \text{if} \quad k \in \left\{ -\frac{\sqrt{2}}{2}, 0, \frac{\sqrt{2}}{2} \right\}.
\]
In fact, for this choice of $X$, $Y$, $\mu$, and $c$, the shift-characterized solution partitions $A$ if and only if
\[ \nu(y_1) \in \left( \frac{1}{16}, \frac{7}{16} \right) \cup \left( \frac{9}{16}, \frac{15}{16} \right). \]

Thus, as Figure 2 illustrates, when $c$ is the 1-norm, one can have $\mu(B) = 0$, giving a shift-characterized partition of $A$ that is unique $\mu$-a.e., whether or not Equation (2.15) is satisfied.

Figure 2(a) is worth special consideration, because it is not simply a non-partitioning shift-characterized transport solution: it also constitutes a failed Voronoi diagram. One can see a similar example in Figure 37 of [1], offered as part of a discussion on methods for resolving lack of partitioning and uniqueness for certain Voronoi diagrams.

![Figure 2. 1-norm partitioning example](image)

### 3.2. Partitioning with $p$-norms when $p \in (1, \infty)$-norm

Given the semi-discrete transport assumptions already stated, let $c : \mathbb{R}^d \times \mathbb{R}^d \to \mathbb{R}$ be a $p$-norm with $p \in (1, \infty)$:
\[ c(x, y) := \left[ \sum_{i=1}^{d} |x_i - y_i|^p \right]^{1/p}, \quad \forall x = (x_1, \ldots, x_d) \in X, \quad \forall y = (y_1, \ldots, y_d) \in Y. \quad (3.1) \]

Then the semi-discrete transport problem is always Monge under the shift characterization.

This assertion will be shown in two steps:

1. If $g_{ij}$, defined in Equation (2.13), is equal to the constant value $a_i - a_j$ in some neighborhood of $x_0 \in A_{ij}$, then $|a_i - a_j| = c(y_i, y_j)$. [Theorem 3.1]

2. It follows from Step (1) that $\mu(B) > 0$ implies the existence of a ball of positive radius whose points are all collinear with both $y_i$ and $y_j$. [Theorem 3.2]

Because of the contradiction inherent in Step (2), $\mu(B) = 0$, and so Theorem 3.2 concludes that the problem must be Monge under the shift characterization.

**Theorem 3.1.** Let $c$ be a $p$-norm with $p \in (1, \infty)$, and $x_0 \in A_{ij}$ for some $i, j \in \mathbb{N}_n$, $i \neq j$. If $g_{ij}(x) = a_i - a_j$ for all $x$ in a neighborhood of $x_0$, then $|a_i - a_j| = c(y_i, y_j)$.

**Proof.** Let $c$ be a $p$-norm with $p \in (1, \infty)$, $x_0 \in A_{ij}$, and $g_{ij}(x) = a_i - a_j$ for all $x$ in some neighborhood of $x_0$. Suppose to the contrary, however, that $|a_i - a_j| \neq c(y_i, y_j)$.

Say $|a_i - a_j| > c(y_i, y_j)$, and assume without loss of generality that $|a_i - a_j| = a_i - a_j$. Then
\[ g_{ij}(x_0) = c(x_0 y_i) - c(x_0 y_j) = a_i - a_j > c(y_i, y_j), \]
which implies $c(x_0 y_i) > c(x_0 y_j) + c(y_i, y_j)$. This is a violation of the triangle inequality. Therefore, it must be the case that $|a_i - a_j| < c(y_i, y_j)$.

For all $k \in \mathbb{N}_n$, define $c_k(x) := c(x, y_k)$. Because $|a_i - a_j| < c(y_i, y_j)$, $x_0 \neq y_i$ and $x_0 \neq y_j$. Hence, $c_i(x_0) > 0$ and $c_j(x_0) > 0$.

Because $g_{ij}$ is constant in a neighborhood of $x_0$, $\nabla g_{ij}(x_0) = \nabla c_i(x_0) - \nabla c_j(x_0) = 0$, which implies $\nabla c_i(x_0) = \nabla c_j(x_0)$. Hence, each of the first-order partial derivatives of $c_i$ and $c_j$ are equal at $x_0$. 

Assume $x_0 = (x_1, \ldots, x_d)$, $y_i = (y^1_i, \ldots, y^d_i)$, and $y_j = (y^1_j, \ldots, y^d_j)$. Then the equality of the $k$-th partial derivatives, $\nabla_k c_i(x_0) = \nabla_k c_j(x_0)$, gives

\[
(x_k - y^k_i)x_k - y^j_k p-2 (c_i(x_0))^{1-p} = (x_k - y^j_k)|x_k - y^j_k| p-2 (c_j(x_0))^{1-p}.
\]

Thus, $x_k - y^k_i$ and $x_k - y^j_k$ have the same sign or are both zero. Because $p > 1$, $p - 1 > 0$. Hence, taking the $(p - 1)$-th root of both sides,

\[
\frac{x_k - y^k_i}{c_i(x_0)} = \frac{x_k - y^j_k}{c_j(x_0)} \quad \forall k \in \mathbb{N}_d.
\]

(3.2)

As a consequence of Equation (3.2), $x_k - y^j_k = 0$ if and only if $x_k - y^j_k = 0$. Hence, $x_k = y^j_k$ if and only if $x_k - y^j_k = 0$.

Let $K$ be the total number of $k$-th directional components satisfying $x_k \neq y^j_k$. Consider three cases:

**$K = 0$:** Then $x_k = y^j_k$ for all $k \in \mathbb{N}_d$, in which case $y_i = y_j$. Since the semi-discrete transport problem requires distinct non-zero points in $Y$, it must be the case that $i = j$, contradicting the initial assumption that $i \neq j$. Hence, $K > 1$.

**$K = 1$:** There exists exactly one $k$ such that the components are not equal. Since $x_k - y^j_k$ and $x_k - y^k_i$ have the same sign,

\[
|g_{ij}(x_0)| = |(x_k - y^j_k) - (x_k - y^k_i)| = |y^j_k - y^k_i| = c(y_i, y_j).
\]

This contradicts the assumption that $|a_i - a_j| < c(y_i, y_j)$, and hence $K > 1$.

**$K > 1$:** Because $g_{ij}$ is constant in some neighborhood of $x_0$, it must also be the case that $\nabla^2 g_{ij}(x_0) = 0$. Hence, $\nabla^2 c_i(x_0) = \nabla^2 c_j(x_0)$, so each of the second-order partial derivatives of $c_i$ and $c_j$ are equal at $x_0$. The equality of the second-order partial derivatives taken with respect to $x_k$ gives

\[
\frac{(p - 1)|x_k - y^j_k|^{p-2}}{(c_i(x_0))^{2p-1}} |(c_j(x_0))^{p} - |x_k - y^j_k|^{p} = \frac{(p - 1)|x_k - y^j_k|^{p-2}}{(c_j(x_0))^{2p-1}} |(c_j(x_0))^{p} - |x_k - y^j_k|^{p} ,
\]

(3.3)

which can be rewritten as

\[
\frac{p - 1}{c_i(x_0)} \left( \frac{|x_k - y^j_k|}{c_i(x_0)} \right)^{p-2} \left[ 1 - \left( \frac{|x_k - y^j_k|}{c_i(x_0)} \right)^{p} \right] = \frac{p - 1}{c_j(x_0)} \left( \frac{|x_k - y^j_k|}{c_j(x_0)} \right)^{p-2} \left[ 1 - \left( \frac{|x_k - y^j_k|}{c_j(x_0)} \right)^{p} \right] .
\]

(3.4)

Applying Equation (3.2), define

\[
\sigma_k = \frac{|x_k - y^j_k|}{c_i(x_0)} = \frac{|x_k - y^j_k|}{c_j(x_0)} .
\]

Then Equation (3.4) can be rewritten as

\[
\frac{p - 1}{c_i(x_0)} \sigma_k^{p-2} (1 - \sigma_k^p) = \frac{p - 1}{c_j(x_0)} \sigma_k^{p-2} (1 - \sigma_k^p) .
\]

(3.5)

By assumption, for all $k \in \mathbb{N}_d$, $x_k - y^j_k \neq 0$ and $x_k - y^k_i \neq 0$. Hence, $\sigma_k > 0$.

Since $d > 1$, and $|x_k - y^j_k| > 0$ for all $k \in \mathbb{N}_d$, it must be that $|x_k - y^j_k| < c_i(x_0)$ for all $k \in \mathbb{N}_d$. Therefore,

\[
\sigma_k = \frac{|x_k - y^j_k|}{c_i(x_0)} < 1,
\]

which implies $1 - \sigma_k^p > 0$. Therefore, $(p - 1) \sigma_k^{p-2} (1 - \sigma_k^p) > 0$, and Equation (3.5) simplifies to

\[
\frac{1}{c_i(x_0)} = \frac{1}{c_j(x_0)} .
\]

Thus, $c_i(x_0) = c_j(x_0)$. Combining this with Equation (3.2) implies $y^j_k = y^j_i$ for all $k \in \mathbb{N}_d$, and so $y_i = y_j$. Since $y_i = y_j$, and the semi-discrete transport problem requires distinct non-zero points in $Y$, it must be the case that $i = j$, contradicting the initial assumption that $i \neq j$. Thus, $K \neq 1$.

All choices of $K$ lead to contradictions. Hence, if $c$ is a $p$-norm for some $p \in (1, \infty)$, $x_0 \in A_{ij}$, $i \neq j$, and $g_{ij}(x) = a_i - a_j$ for all $x$ in some neighborhood of $x_0 \in A_{ij}$, then it must be the case that $|a_i - a_j| = c(y_i, y_j)$.

\[\square\]
Theorem 3.2. If $c$ is a $p$-norm for some $p \in (1, \infty)$, then the semi-discrete transport problem is Monge under the shift characterization.

Proof. Assume the contrary is true. Then $\mu(B) > 0$, so $\mu(A_{ij}) > 0$ for some $i, j \in \mathbb{N}_n$, $i \neq j$. Because $\mu$ is nonatomic, there exist $x_0 \in A_{ij}$ and $\epsilon > 0$ such that the ball $B_{\epsilon}(x_0)$, defined with respect to the Euclidean space $\mathbb{R}^d$, satisfies $\mu(B_{\epsilon}(x_0)) > 0$ and $\mu(B_{\epsilon}(x_0)) > 0$. By Theorem 3.1, $|a_i - a_j| = c(y_i, y_j)$. Assume without loss of generality that $|a_i - a_j| = a_i - a_j$.

Let $x \in B_{\epsilon}(x_0)$. Since $x \in A_{ij}$,

$$g_{ij}(x) = a_i - a_j \iff c(x, y_i) - c(x, y_j) = c(y_i, y_j) \iff c(x, y_i) = c(x, y_j) + c(y_i, y_j).$$

Because $c$ is a $p$-norm and $p \in (1, \infty)$, Minkowski's inequality implies that $x, y_i,$ and $y_j$ are all collinear. The choice of $x$ was nonspecific, and therefore every point in the ball $B_{\epsilon}(x_0)$ must be collinear with the points $y_i$ and $y_j$. Of course, this is impossible, and so $\mu(A_{ij}) = 0$ for all $i, j \in \mathbb{N}_n$, $i \neq j$. Therefore, $\mu(B) = 0$. From this final contradiction, it is clear that the semi-discrete transport problem must be Monge under the shift characterization.

Corollary 3.3. If the semi-discrete transport problem is defined as given in Section 2.2, and $c$ is a $p$-norm for some $p \in (1, \infty)$, then Equation (2.15) is satisfied, and the optimal transport solution is unique $\mu$-a.e. 

Proof. Suppose $c$ is a $p$-norm for some $p \in (1, \infty)$, and assume the semi-discrete transport problem is characterized by shifts as given in Theorem 2.3. By the triangle inequality, for all $x \in X$, $i, j \in \mathbb{N}_n$, $i \neq j$, $c(x, y_i) \leq c(x, y_j) + c(y_i, y_j)$. Hence, one consequence of the triangle inequality is that $g_{ij}(x) \leq c(y_i, y_j)$ for all $x \in A$, $i, j \in \mathbb{N}_n$ such that $i \neq j$. Therefore, $\mu\left(\{x \in A \mid g_{ij}(x) = k\}\right) = 0$ if $k < -c(y_i, y_j)$ or $k > -c(y_i, y_j)$. This implies

$$\mu\left(\{x \in A \mid g_{ij}(x) = k\}\right) = 0 \quad \forall i, j \in \mathbb{N}_n, i \neq j \quad \forall k \in (-\infty, -c(y_i, y_j)) \cup (c(y_i, y_j), \infty).$$

By Theorem 3.2, $\mu(B) = 0$. Thus, for any $i, j \in \mathbb{N}_n$, $i \neq j$, $\mu(A_{ij}) = 0$. Since the problem assumes nothing about the probability density $\nu$, it must be the case that

$$\mu\left(\{x \in A \mid g_{ij}(x) = k\}\right) = 0 \quad \forall i, j \in \mathbb{N}_n, i \neq j \quad \forall k \in [-c(y_i, y_j), c(y_i, y_j)].$$

Therefore, $\mu\left(\{x \in A \mid g_{ij}(x) = k\}\right) = 0$ for all $i, j \in \mathbb{N}_n$, $i \neq j$, and for all $k \in \mathbb{R}$, and uniqueness follows from Corollary 4 of [2].

4. Conclusions

This paper resolves issues of partitioning and uniqueness for semi-discrete transport problems using a large class of ground cost functions: the $p$-norms. If the cost function is a $p$-norm with $p \in (1, \infty)$, the above arguments ensure that $\mu$-a.e. unique solutions exist for semi-discrete transport problems. As the examples show, if the cost function is a $p$-norm with $p = 1$ or $p = \infty$, the solution may or may not constitute a $\mu$-a.e. unique partition of the continuous space.

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