

Integer distance sets

Rachel Greenfeld

Northwestern University

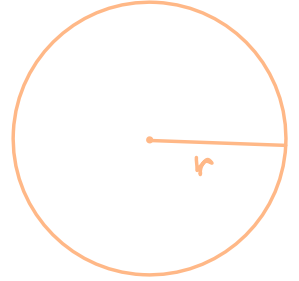
Joint work with

Marina Iliopoulou and Sarah Peluse

Oxford Discrete Maths and Probability Seminar

February 2025

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



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

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difference
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radial

distance
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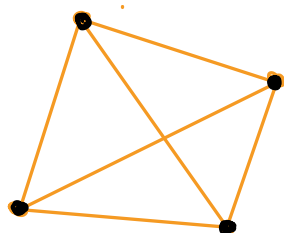
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Bessel function



distances are algebraically related

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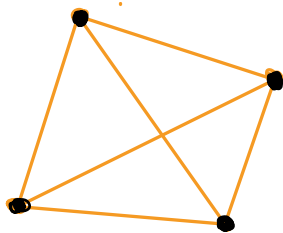
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Determinant method (Bombieri-Pila)

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

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

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

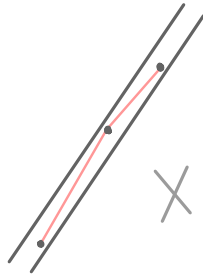
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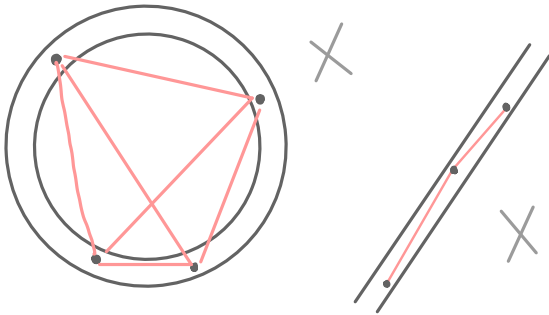
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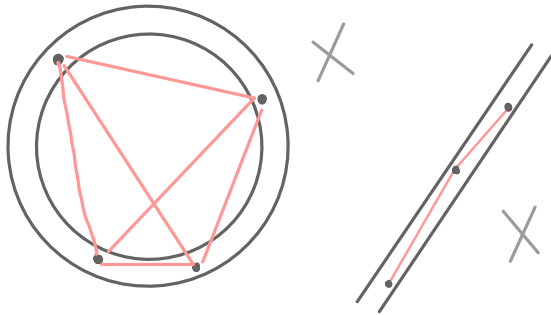
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no 4 points in a thin annulus.

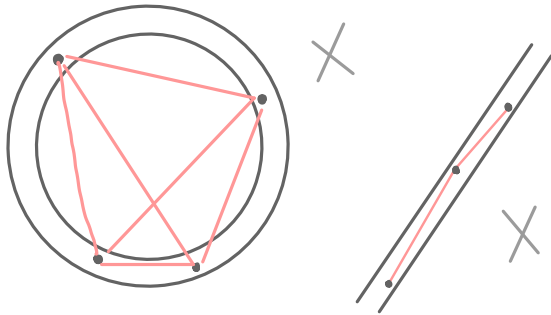
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This links to another famous problem:

The size and structure of integer distance sets.

Integer distance sets

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1) $\mathbb{Z} \times \{0\} \longrightarrow$ infinite, collinear.

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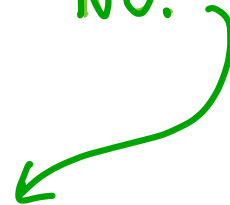
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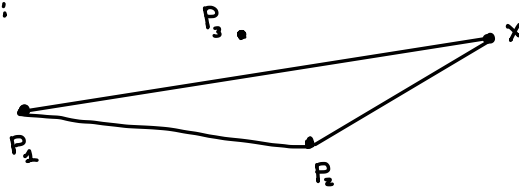
P_1

P_2

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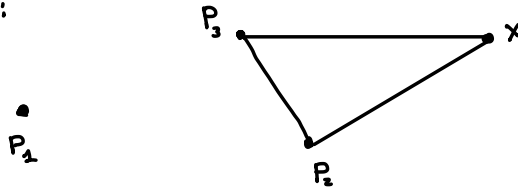
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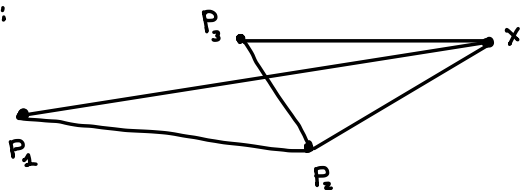
$$\left| \|x - P_1\| - \|x - P_2\| \right| \in \{0, \dots, \|P_1 - P_2\|\}$$

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

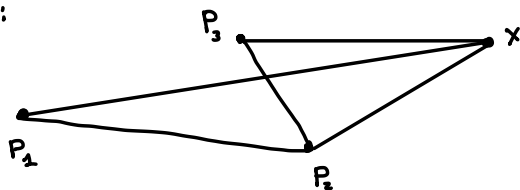
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$$|H_1 \cap H_2| \leq 4(\|P_1 - P_2\| + 1)(\|P_2 - P_3\| + 1) < \infty.$$

Bézout's theorem 



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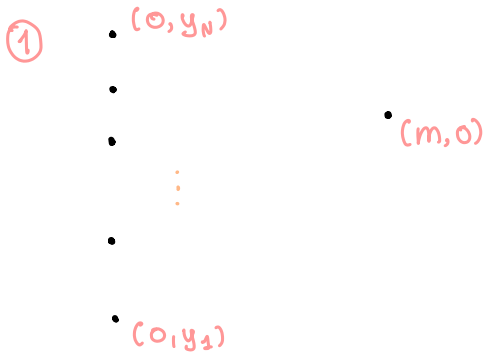
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$$m^2 = (x_j - y_j)(x_j + y_j) \quad x_j, y_j \in \mathbb{Z}$$
$$m^2 + y_j^2 = x_j^2 \quad 1 \leq j \leq N$$

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①

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•

•

•

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- $(m, 0)$

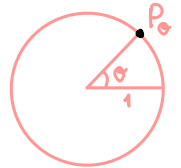
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② concyclic :

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

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



$\{P_0\}$ is dense in the unit circle;

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

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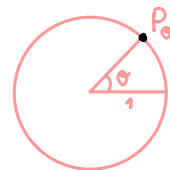
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Question (Erdős): How large can an integer distance set S be if it has no 3 points on a line and no 4 points on a circle?

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

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distance set

S

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

Λ

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

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

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finite [Anning-Erdős, 45]

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$$|S| \leq C$$

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$$|S| \leq C$$

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$$7 \leq C$$

[Kreisel-Kurz, 2008]

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$$|S| \leq C$$

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In $[N, N]^2$:

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Integer
distance set

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

Λ

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

No 3 points in a thin tube
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$$|S| = O((\log N)^c)$$

[Ghiopoulou-Peluse, 2024]

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Theorem (Gilliopoulou-Peluse, 2024):

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

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

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

In particular, we obtain:

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

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

All so-far-known integer distance sets have all but up to 4 of their points on a single line / circle.

Theorem (Gallipoulou-Peluse, 2024):

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In particular, we obtain:

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

then:

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

Our method:

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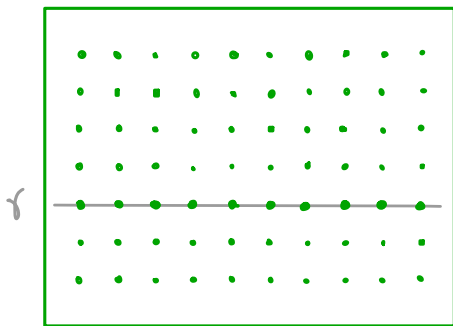
We encode the points of S as rational points of small height on a small number of irreducible curves defined over \mathbb{Q} .

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

The height of $\frac{m}{n} \in \mathbb{Q}$ with $(m,n)=1$ is $\max\{|m|, |n|\}$.

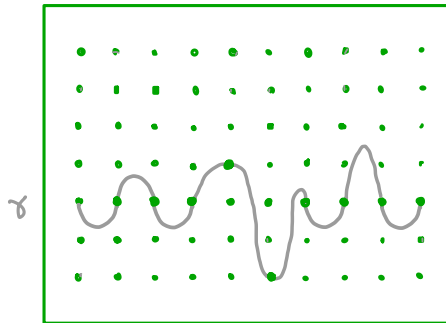
The height of $(q_1, \dots, q_k) \in \mathbb{Q}^k$ is the maximal height of q_1, \dots, q_k .

Rational points of height $\leq H$



σ has too low degree \rightarrow

many points

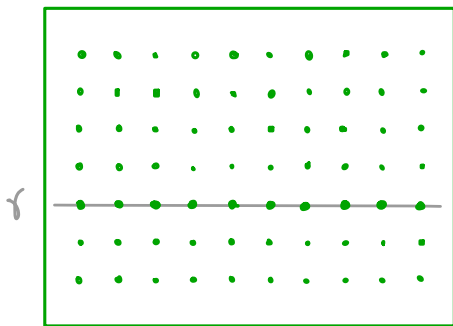


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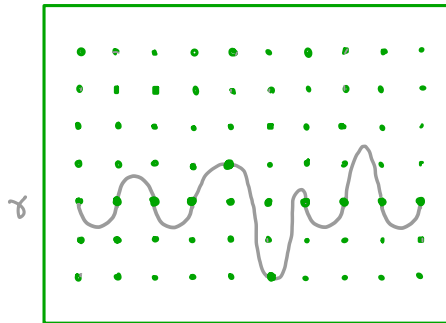
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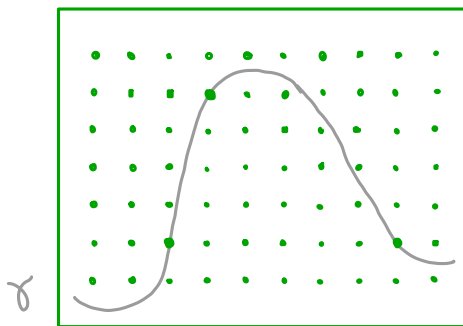


γ has too low degree \rightarrow

many points



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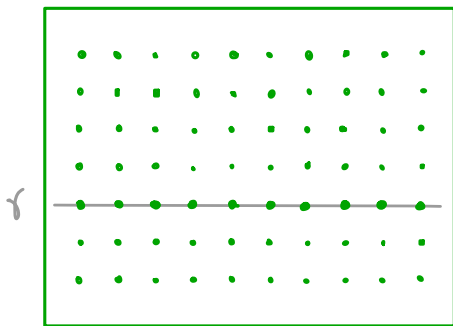


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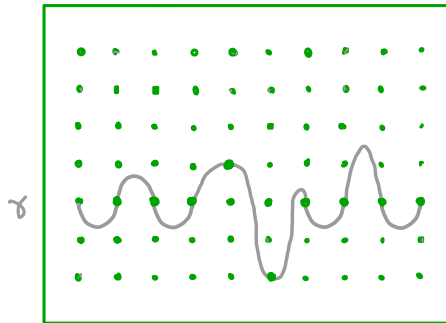
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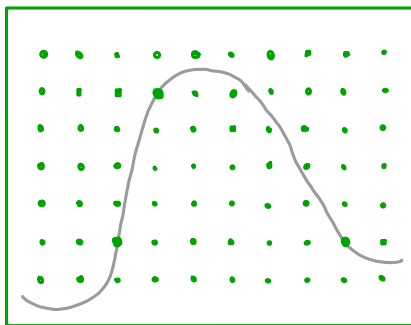


ϕ has too low degree \rightarrow

many points



$\leftarrow \phi$ has too high degree



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

ϕ

\rightarrow intermediate degree
 \rightarrow a small number of points

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

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

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

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We define the affine variety:

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

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

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

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

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

$$p_4 = (a_4, b_4 \sqrt{m})$$



$$p_k = (a_k, b_k \sqrt{m})$$

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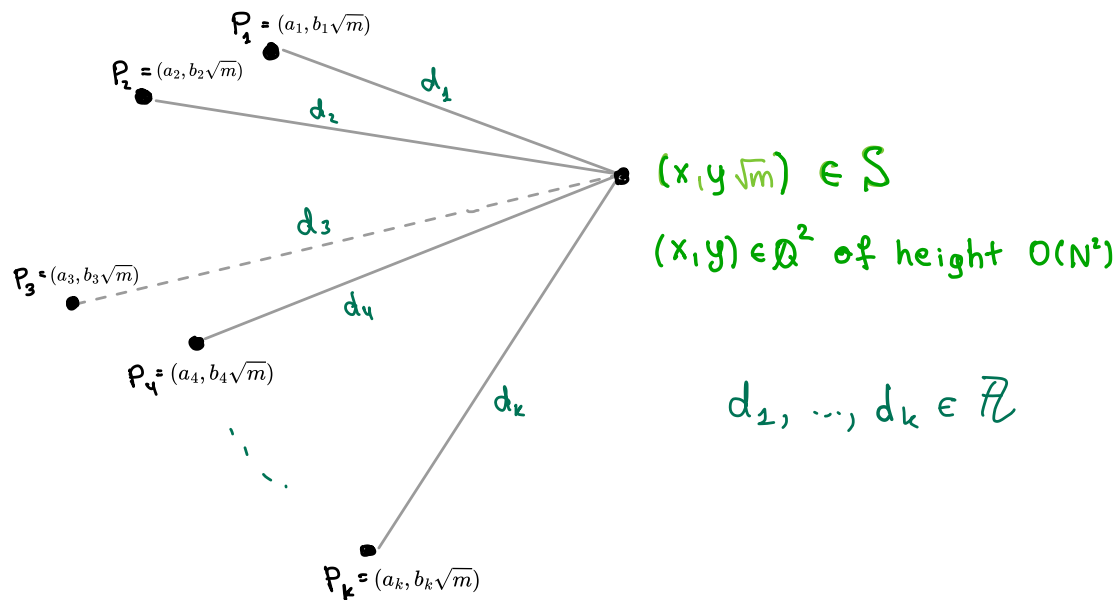
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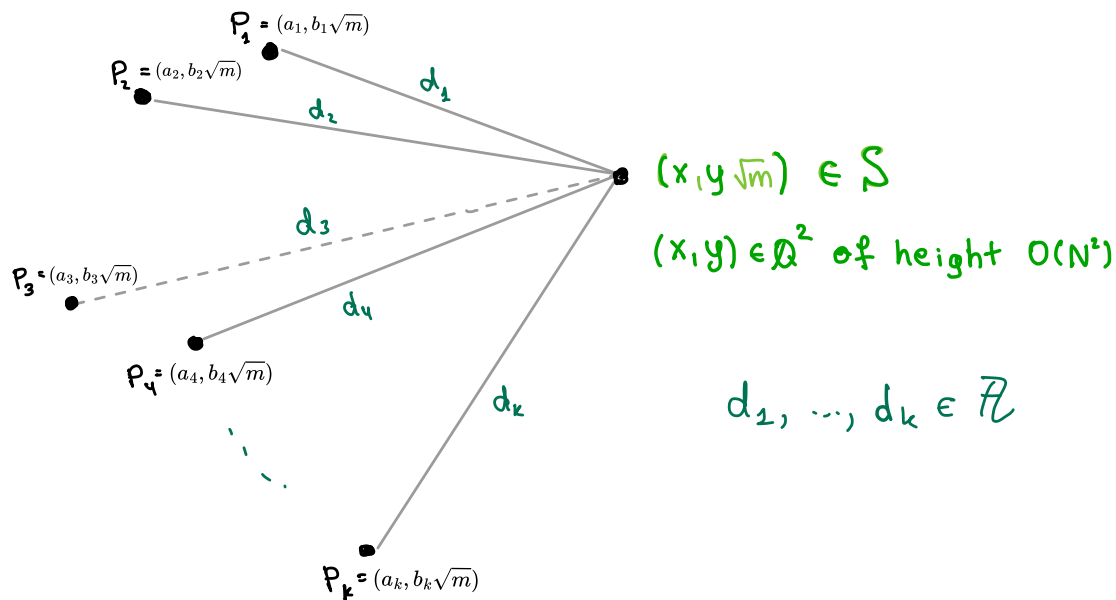
$$(x, y \sqrt{m}) \in S$$

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

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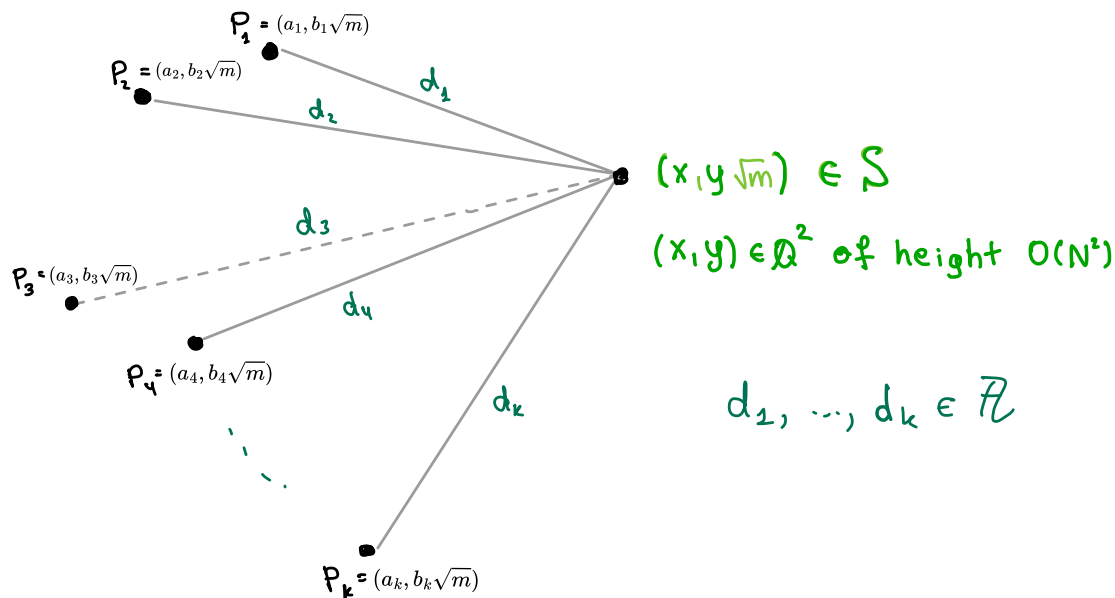


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$$(x, y, d_1, \dots, d_k) : (x - a_j)^2 + (y - b_j)^2 m = d_j^2 ; \quad j = 1, \dots, k$$

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\nearrow a point of height $O(N^2)$ on X_k

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

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

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

↖ $\dim \bar{X}_k = 2$



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

[Heath-Brown, 2002]

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\tilde{S} can be covered by a curve defined over \mathbb{Q}

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\rightsquigarrow

[Castryk, Cluckers, Dittmann, Nguyen, 2020]

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choose $k \asymp \log \log N$

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$$\downarrow \pi(\tilde{S}) : (x, y, d_1, \dots, d_k) \mapsto (x, \sqrt{m}y)$$

$S \subseteq \mathbb{R}^2$ can be covered by $t = O((\log N)^{O(1)})$ irreducible
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might be too low ☹️

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

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

δ_j is NOT
a line/circle

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

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

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

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



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Use Bombieri-Pila's-type result



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

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[Castryk, Cluckers, Dittmann, Nguyen, 2020]

\Downarrow

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

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$$|\tilde{S}_j| = O(e^{o(k)} N^{O(a^{-k})}) = O((\log N)^{o(1)})$$

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[Castryk, Cluckers, Dittmann, Nguyen, 2020]

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$$|\sigma_j \cap S| \leq |\tilde{S}_j| = O(e^{o(k)} N^{O(2^{-k})}) = O((\log N)^{o(1)})$$

choose $k \asymp \log \log N$

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

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choose $k \asymp \log \log N$

as long as :

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

or

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

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

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

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

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



Theorem (Gilliopoulou-Peluse, 2024):

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

Theorem (Gilliopoulou-Peluse, 2024):

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

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

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

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

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

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

then:

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

What's next?

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Does there exist a dense rational distance set in \mathbb{R}^2 ?

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

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

Thank You!

