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# Overlaying a hypergraph with a graph with bounded maximum degree

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**Abstract:** Let  $G$  and  $H$  be respectively a graph and a hypergraph defined on a same set of vertices, and let  $F$  be a fixed graph. We say that  $G$  *F-overlays* a hyperedge  $S$  of  $H$  if  $F$  is a spanning subgraph of the subgraph of  $G$  induced by  $S$ , and that it *F-overlays*  $H$  if it *F-overlays* every hyperedge of  $H$ . Motivated by structural biology, we study the computational complexity of two problems. The first problem,  $(\Delta \leq k)$  *F-OVERLAY*, consists in deciding whether there is a graph with maximum degree at most  $k$  that *F-overlays* a given hypergraph  $H$ . It is a particular case of the second problem  $\text{MAX } (\Delta \leq k)$  *F-OVERLAY*, which takes a hypergraph  $H$  and an integer  $s$  as input, and consists in deciding whether there is a graph with maximum degree at most  $k$  that *F-overlays* at least  $s$  hyperedges of  $H$ .

We give a complete polynomial/ $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete dichotomy for the  $\text{MAX } (\Delta \leq k)$ -*F-OVERLAY* problems depending on the pairs  $(F, k)$ , and establish the complexity of  $(\Delta \leq k)$  *F-OVERLAY* for many pairs  $(F, k)$ .

**Key-words:** Hypergraph, graph, algorithm, complexity, computational structural biology

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## Couvrant d'un hypergraphe avec un graphique à degré maximal borné

**Résumé :** Soit  $G$  et  $H$  respectivement un graphe et un hypergraphe défini sur un même ensemble de sommets, et  $F$  un graphe fixé. Nous disons que  $G$   $F$ -couvre un hyperedge  $S$  de  $H$  si  $F$  est un sous-graphe couvrant du sous-graphe de  $G$  induit par  $S$ , et qu'il le  $F$ -couvre  $H$  si  $F$  recouvre chaque hyperedge de  $H$ . Motivés par la biologie structurale, nous étudions la complexité algorithmique de deux problèmes. Le premier problème,  $(\Delta \leq k)$   $F$ -OVERLAY, consiste à décider s'il existe ou non un graphe avec un degré maximum égal à  $k$  qui  $F$  couvre un hypergraphe  $H$ . C'est un cas particulier du deuxième problème MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$   $F$ -OVERLAY, qui prend en entrée un hypergraphe  $H$  et un entier  $s$ , et consiste à décider s'il y a un graphe avec degré maximum d'au plus  $k$  que  $F$ -couvre au moins  $s$  hyperges de  $H$ . Nous donnons une dichotomie complète polynomiale/ $\mathcal{NP}$ -complète pour les problèmes MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $F$ -OVERLAY en fonction des paires  $(F, k)$ , et la complexité de  $(\Delta \leq k)$   $F$ -OVERLAY pour plusieurs paires  $(F, k)$ .

**Mots-clés :** Hypergraphe, graphe, algorithme, complexité, biologie structurale computationnelle

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## 1 Introduction

A major problem in structural biology is the characterization of low resolution structures of macro-molecular assemblies [5, 21]. To attack this very difficult question, one has to determine the plausible contacts between the subunits (e.g. proteins) of an assembly, given the lists of subunits involved in all the complexes. We assume that the composition, in terms of individual subunits, of selected complexes is known. Indeed, a given assembly can be chemically split into complexes by manipulating chemical conditions. This problem can be conveniently modeled by graphs and hypergraphs. We consider the hypergraph  $H$  whose vertices represent the subunits and whose hyperedges are the complexes. We are then looking for a graph  $G$  with the same vertex set as  $H$  whose edges represent the contacts between subunits, and satisfying (i) some local properties for every complex (*i.e.*, hyperedge), and (ii) some other global properties.

We first focus on the local properties. They are usually modeled by a (possibly infinite) family  $\mathcal{F}$  of admissible graphs to which each complex must belong: to this end, we define the notion of *enforcement* of a hyperedge and a hypergraph. A graph  $G$   $\mathcal{F}$ -enforces a hyperedge  $S \in E(H)$  if the subgraph  $G[S]$  of  $G$  induced by  $S$  belongs to  $\mathcal{F}$ , and it  $\mathcal{F}$ -enforces  $H$  if it  $\mathcal{F}$ -enforces all hyperedges of  $H$ . Very often, the considered family  $\mathcal{F}$  is closed by taking edge supergraphs [1, 8]: if  $F \in \mathcal{F}$ , then every graph obtained from  $G$  by adding edges is also in  $\mathcal{F}$ . Such a family is completely defined by its set  $\mathcal{M} = \mathcal{M}(\mathcal{F})$  of minimal graphs that are the elements of  $\mathcal{F}$  which are not edge supergraph of any other. In this case, a graph  $G$   $\mathcal{F}$ -enforcing  $S$  is such that there is an element of  $\mathcal{M}$  which is a spanning subgraph of  $G[S]$ . This leads to the following notion of *overlayment* when considering minimal graph families.

**Definition 1.** A graph  $G$   $\mathcal{F}$ -overlays a hyperedge  $S$  if there exists  $F \in \mathcal{F}$  such that  $F$  is a spanning subgraph of  $G[S]$ , and it  $\mathcal{F}$ -overlays  $H$  if it  $\mathcal{F}$ -overlays every hyperedge of  $H$ .

As said previously, the graph sought will also have to satisfy some global constraints. Since in a macro-molecular assembly the number of contacts is small, the first natural idea is to look for a graph  $G$  with the minimum number of edges. This leads to the  $\text{MIN-}\mathcal{F}\text{-OVERLAY}$  problem: given a hypergraph  $H$  and an integer  $m$ , decide if there exists a graph  $G$   $\mathcal{F}$ -overlying  $H$  such that  $|E(G)| \leq m$ .

A typical example of a family  $\mathcal{F}$  is the set of all connected graphs, in which case  $\mathcal{M}(\mathcal{F})$  is the set of all trees. Agarwal et al. [1] focused on  $\text{MIN-}\mathcal{M}(\mathcal{F})\text{-OVERLAY}$  for this particular family in the aforementioned context of structural biology. However, this problem was previously studied by several communities in other domains, as pointed by Chen *et al.* [6]. Indeed, it is also known as  $\text{SUBSET INTERCONNECTION DESIGN}$ ,  $\text{MINIMUM TOPIC-CONNECTED OVERLAY}$  or  $\text{INTERCONNECTION GRAPH PROBLEM}$ , and was considered (among others) in the design of vacuum systems [10, 11], scalable overlay networks [7, 19], and reconfigurable interconnection networks [12, 13]. Some variants have also been considered in the contexts of inferring a most likely social network [2], determining winners of combinatorial auctions [9], as well as drawing hypergraphs [4, 17, 14].

Cohen et al. [8] presented a dichotomy regarding the polynomial vs.  $\mathcal{NP}$ -hard status with respect to the considered family  $\mathcal{F}$ . Roughly speaking, they showed that the easy cases one can think of (e.g. when edgeless graphs of the right sizes are in  $\mathcal{F}$ , or if  $\mathcal{F}$  contains only cliques) are the only families giving rise to a polynomial-time solvable problem: all others are  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete. They also considered the  $\text{FPT/W[1]}$ -hard dichotomy for several families  $\mathcal{F}$ .

In this paper, we consider the variant in which the additional constraint is that  $G$  must have a bounded maximum degree: this constraint is motivated by the context of structural biology, since a subunit (e.g. a protein) cannot be connected to many other subunits. This yields the following problem for any family  $\mathcal{F}$  of graphs.

$(\Delta \leq k)$ - $\mathcal{F}$ -OVERLAY

Input: A hypergraph  $H$ .

Question: Does there exist a graph  $G$   $\mathcal{F}$ -overlaying  $H$  such that  $\Delta(G) \leq k$  ?

We denote by  $\text{over}_{\mathcal{F}}(H, G)$  the number of hyperedges of  $H$  that are  $\mathcal{F}$ -overlaid by  $G$ . A natural generalization is to find  $\text{over}_{\mathcal{F}}(H, k)$ , the maximum number of hyperedges  $\mathcal{F}$ -overlaid by a graph with maximum degree at most  $k$ .

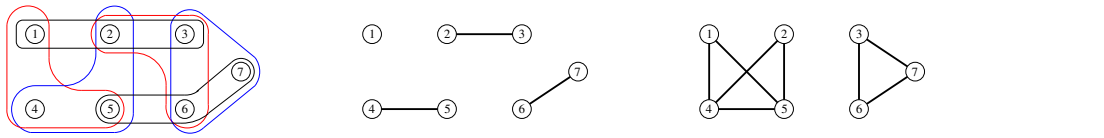
MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $\mathcal{F}$ -OVERLAY

Input: A hypergraph  $H$  and a positive integer  $s$ .

Question: Does there exist a graph  $G$  such that  $\Delta(G) \leq k$  and  $\text{over}_{\mathcal{F}}(H, G) \geq s$  ?

Observe that there is an obvious reduction from  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $\mathcal{F}$ -OVERLAY to MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $\mathcal{F}$ -OVERLAY (by setting  $s = |E(H)|$ ).

**Figure 1** Example of  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $\mathcal{F}$ -OVERLAY and MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $\mathcal{F}$ -OVERLAY. In the figure, an instance  $H$  (left), a graph  $G$  with  $\Delta(G) \leq 1$  that  $O_3$ -overlays  $H$  (with  $O_3$  the graph with three vertices and one edge) (center), and a solution to MAX  $(\Delta \leq 3)$ - $C_3$ -OVERLAY (with  $C_3$  the cycle on three vertices) (right).



In this paper, we mainly consider the case when the family  $\mathcal{F}$  contains a unique graph  $F$ . We abbreviate  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $\{F\}$ -OVERLAY and MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $\{F\}$ -OVERLAY as  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $F$ -OVERLAY and MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $F$ -OVERLAY, respectively. Note that by definition those two problems really make sense only for  $|F|$ -uniform hypergraphs ( $|F|$  denotes the number of vertices of  $F$ ), *i.e.*, hypergraphs whose hyperedges are of size  $|F|$ . Therefore, we always assume the hypergraph to be  $|F|$ -uniform.

If  $F$  is a graph with maximum degree greater than  $k$ , then solving  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $F$ -OVERLAY or MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $F$ -OVERLAY is trivial as the answer is always ‘No’. So we only study the problems when  $\Delta(F) \leq k$ .

If  $F$  is an empty graph, then MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $F$ -OVERLAY is also trivial, because for any hypergraph  $H$ , the empty graph on  $V(H)$  vertices  $F$ -overlays  $H$ . Hence the first natural interesting cases are the graphs with one edge. For every positive integer  $p \geq 2$ , we denote by  $O_p$  the graph with  $p$  vertices and one edge. In Section 3, we prove the following dichotomy theorem.

**Theorem 1.** *Let  $k \geq 0$  and  $p \geq 2$  be integers. If  $p = 2$  or if  $p = 3$  and  $k = 1$ , then MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $O_p$ -OVERLAY and  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $O_p$ -OVERLAY are polynomial-time solvable. Otherwise, they are  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete.*

Then, in Section 4, we give a complete polynomial/ $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete dichotomy for the MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $F$ -OVERLAY problems.

**Theorem 2.** *MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $F$ -OVERLAY is polynomial-time solvable if either  $\Delta(F) > k$ , or  $F$  is an empty graph, or  $F = O_2$ , or  $k = 1$  and  $F = O_3$ . Otherwise it is  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete.*

In Section 5, we investigate the complexity of  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $F$ -OVERLAY problems. We believe that each such problem is either polynomial-time solvable or  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete. However the dichotomy seems to be more complicated than the one for MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $F$ -OVERLAY. We exhibit



several pairs  $(F, k)$  such that  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $F$ -OVERLAY is polynomial-time solvable, while MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $F$ -OVERLAY is  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete. This is in particular the case when  $F$  is a complete graph (Proposition 10),  $F$  is connected  $k$ -regular (Proposition 11),  $F$  is a path and  $k = 2$  (Theorem 13), and when  $F$  is the cycle on 4 vertices and  $k \leq 3$  (Theorem 12).

## 2 Definitions

Most notations of this paper are standard. We now recall some of them, and we refer the reader to [3] for any undefined terminology. For a positive integer  $p$ , let  $[p] = \{1, \dots, p\}$ .

For a graph  $G$ , we respectively denote by  $V(G)$  and  $E(G)$  its sets of *vertices* and *edges*. By extension, for a hypergraph  $H$ , we denote by  $V(H)$  and  $E(H)$  its respective sets of *vertices* and *hyperedges*. For  $p \in \mathbb{N}$ , a  $p$ -uniform hypergraph  $H$  is a hypergraph such that  $|S| = p$  for every  $S \in E(H)$ . Given a graph  $G$ , we say that a graph  $G'$  is a *subgraph* of  $G$  if  $V(G') \subseteq V(G)$  and  $E(G') \subseteq E(G)$ . We say that  $G'$  is a *spanning subgraph* of  $G$  if it is a subgraph of  $G$  such that  $V(G') = V(G)$ . Given  $S \subseteq V(G)$ , we denote by  $G[S]$  the graph with vertex set  $S$  and edge set  $\{uv \in E(G) \mid u, v \in S\}$ . We say that a graph  $G'$  is an *induced subgraph* of  $G$  if there exists  $S \subseteq V(G)$  such that  $G' = G[S]$ . An *isolated* vertex of a graph is a vertex incident to no edge. We denote by  $E_k$  the *edgeless graph* on  $k$  vertices, that is the graph with  $k$  vertices and no edges. The *disjoint union* of two graphs  $F$  and  $G$ , denoted by  $F + G$ , is the graph with vertex set  $V(G) \cup V(H)$  and edge set  $E(G) \cup E(H)$ . The disjoint union of  $k$  copies of  $F$  is denoted by  $kF$ .

Let  $H$  be a hypergraph. Two hyperedges are *adjacent* if their intersection has size at least 2. A hypergraph is *neat* if every two hyperedges intersect in at most one vertex. In other words, a hypergraph is neat if there is no pair of adjacent hyperedges. We denote by  $K(H)$ , the graph obtained by replacing each hyperedge by a complete graph. In other words,  $V(K(H)) = V(H)$  and  $E(K(H)) = \{xy \mid \exists S \in E(H), \{x, y\} \subseteq S\}$ . The *edge-weight function induced by  $H$*  on  $K(H)$ , denoted by  $w_H$ , is defined by  $w_H(e) = |\{S \in E(H) \mid e \subseteq S\}|$ . In words,  $w_H(e)$  is the number of hyperedges of  $H$  containing  $e$ .  $H$  is *connected* if  $K(H)$  is connected, and the *connected components* of  $H$  are the connected components of  $K(H)$ . Finally, a graph  $G$   $\mathcal{F}$ -overlying  $H$  with maximum degree at most  $k$  is called an  $(\mathcal{F}, H, k)$ -graph.

## 3 The graphs with one edge

In this section, we establish Theorem 1. Let  $p \geq 2$ , and  $H$  be a  $p$ -uniform hypergraph. Consider the edge-weighted graph  $(K(H), w_H)$ . For every matching  $M$  of this graph, let  $G_M = (V(H), M)$ . Every hyperedge  $O_p$ -overlaid by  $G_M$  contains at least one edge of  $M$  and at most  $\lfloor \frac{p}{2} \rfloor$  edges of  $M$ . We thus have the following:

**Observation 3.** *For every matching  $M$  of  $K(H)$ , we have:*

$$\frac{1}{\lfloor \frac{p}{2} \rfloor} w_H(M) \leq \text{over}_{O_p}(H, G_M) \leq w_H(M), \quad (1)$$

where  $w_H(M) = \sum_{e \in M} w_H(e)$ .

Consider first the case when  $p = 2$ . Let  $H$  be a 2-uniform hypergraph. Every hyperedge is an edge, so  $K(H) = H$ . Moreover, a (hyper)edge of  $H$  is  $O_2$ -overlaid by  $G$  if and only if it is in  $E(G)$ . Hence MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $O_2$ -OVERLAY is equivalent to finding a maximum  $k$ -matching (that is a subgraph with maximum degree at most  $k$ ) in  $K(H)$ . This problem is polynomial-time solvable, see [20, Chap. 31], hence:

**Proposition 4.**  $\text{MAX } (\Delta \leq k)\text{-}O_2\text{-OVERLAY}$  is polynomial-time solvable for all positive integer  $k$ .

If  $p = 3$ , Inequalities (1) are equivalent to  $\text{over}_{O_3}(H, G_M) = w_H(M)$ . Since the edge set of a graph with maximum degree 1 is a matching,  $\text{MAX } (\Delta \leq 1)\text{-}O_3\text{-OVERLAY}$  is equivalent to finding a maximum-weight matching in the edge-weighted graph  $(K(H), w_H)$ . This can be done in polynomial-time, see [15, Chap. 14].

**Proposition 5.**  $\text{MAX } (\Delta \leq 1)\text{-}O_3\text{-OVERLAY}$  is polynomial-time solvable.

We shall now prove that if  $p \geq 4$ , or  $p = 3$  and  $k \geq 2$ , then  $\text{MAX } (\Delta \leq k)\text{-}O_p\text{-OVERLAY}$  is  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete. We prove it by a double induction on  $k$  and  $p$ . We first establish the following theorem which proves the base cases of the induction and then Lemma 7 which corresponds to the inductive steps.

**Theorem 6.**  $(\Delta \leq 1)\text{-}O_4\text{-OVERLAY}$  and  $(\Delta \leq 2)\text{-}O_3\text{-OVERLAY}$  are  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete.

*Proof.* The proof includes two subproofs where the first one shows that  $(\Delta \leq 1)\text{-}O_4\text{-OVERLAY}$  is  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete and the other proves  $(\Delta \leq 2)\text{-}O_3\text{-OVERLAY}$  is  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete.

*Subproof 1:*  $(\Delta \leq 1)\text{-}O_4\text{-OVERLAY}$  is  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete.

We reduce 3-SAT to  $(\Delta \leq 1)\text{-}O_4\text{-OVERLAY}$ .

We shall need the following gadget hypergraph  $J = J(A, B)$ .  $V(J) = A \cup B$  with  $|A| = 3$  and  $|B| = 4$  and  $E(J) = \{A \cup \{b\} \mid b \in B\}$ .

**Claim 1.** Every  $(O_4, J, 1)$ -graph contains one edge with both ends in  $A$ .

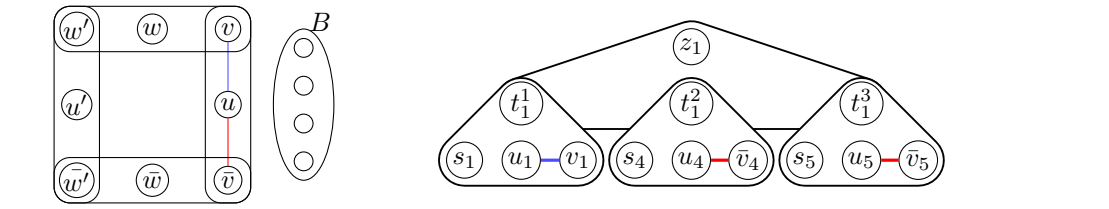
*Subproof.* Let  $G$  be an  $(O_4, J, 1)$ -graph. Each hyperedge of  $J$  contains an edge of  $G$ , which necessarily has an endvertex in  $A$ . Since  $\Delta(G) \leq 1$ ,  $G$  has at most three edges with an endvertex in  $A$ . Since  $J$  has four hyperedges, two of them contain a same edge of  $G$ . The two endvertices of this edge are in  $A$ .  $\diamond$

Let  $\Phi$  be an instance of 3-SAT with  $m$  clauses  $C_1, \dots, C_m$  on  $n$  variables  $x_1, \dots, x_n$ . Let  $H = H(\Phi)$  be the 4-uniform hypergraph constructed as follows (see Figure 2).

- For each variable  $x_i$ , we create the variable gadget  $VG_i$  as follows.

Its vertex set is  $\{u_i, v_i, \bar{v}_i, w_i, \bar{w}_i, w'_i, \bar{w}'_i, u'_i\} \cup B_i$ , with  $|B_i| = 4$ . We add the hyperedges of  $J(\{u_i, v_i, \bar{v}_i\}, B_i)$ ,  $J(\{v_i, w_i, w'_i\}, B_i)$ ,  $J(\{\bar{v}_i, \bar{w}_i, \bar{w}'_i\}, B_i)$ , and  $J(\{u'_i, w'_i, \bar{w}'_i\}, B_i)$ .

**Figure 2** The construction of a variable gadget (left) and an example of clause gadget of  $C_1 = (x_1 \vee \bar{x}_4 \vee \bar{x}_5)$  (right).



- For each clause  $C_j = \ell_1 \vee \ell_2 \vee \ell_3$ , we create the clause hypergraph  $CG_j$ . Its vertex set is  $\{z_j\} \cup \bigcup_{k=1}^3 \{s_j^k, t_j^k, u_j^k, v_j^k\}$ . Set  $Z_j = \{t_j^1, t_j^2, t_j^3, z_j\}$  and for  $k \in \{1, 2, 3\}$ , set  $T_j^k = \{s_j^k, t_j^k, u_j^k, v_j^k\}$ . The hyperedge set of  $CG_j$  is  $\{Z_j, T_j^1, T_j^2, T_j^3\}$ . Then for each  $k \in \{1, 2, 3\}$ , we identify  $u_j^k$  and  $v_j^k$  with  $u_i$  and  $v_i$  if  $\ell_k = x_i$  and with  $u_i$  and  $\bar{v}_i$  if  $\ell_k = \bar{x}_i$ .

Let us prove that there is an  $(O_4, H, 1)$ -graph of  $H$  if and only if  $\Phi$  is satisfiable.

Assume first that there is an  $(O_4, H, 1)$ -graph  $G$  of  $H$ .

**Claim 2.** *For each  $1 \leq i \leq n$ ,  $G$  contains either the edge  $u_i v_i$  or the edge  $u_i \bar{v}_i$ . Moreover, all vertices of  $\{u_i, v_i, \bar{v}_i\}$  are adjacent in  $G$  to a vertex in  $VG_i$ .*

*Subproof.* Since  $VG_i$  contains  $J(\{u'_i, w'_i, \bar{w}'_i\}, B_i)$ , by Claim 1,  $G$  contains an edge  $e''$  with both endvertices in  $\{u'_i, w'_i, \bar{w}'_i\}$ . Assume that  $e''$  is incident to  $w'_i$ . Now  $VG_i$  contains  $J(\{v_i, w_i, w'_i\}, B_i)$ . So, by Claim 1,  $G$  contains an edge  $e'$  with both endvertices in  $\{v_i, w_i, w'_i\}$ . Since  $\Delta(G) \leq 1$ ,  $e'$  is not incident to  $w'_i$ , so  $e' = v_i w_i$ . Now  $VG_i$  contains  $J(\{u_i, v_i, \bar{v}_i\}, B_i)$ . So, by Claim 1,  $G$  contains an edge  $e$  with both endvertices in  $\{u_i, v_i, \bar{v}_i\}$ . This edge is not incident to  $v_i$ , so  $e = u_i \bar{v}_i$ . Similarly, we get that  $G$  contains  $\bar{v}_i \bar{w}_i$  and  $u_i v_i$  if  $e''$  is incident to  $\bar{w}'_i$ .  $\diamond$

In view of this claim, one defines the truth assignment  $\phi$  by  $\phi(x_i) = \text{true}$  if  $u_i v_i \in E(G)$  and  $\phi(x_i) = \text{false}$  if  $u_i \bar{v}_i \in E(G)$ . Let us prove that it satisfies  $\Phi$ . Consider a clause  $C_j = \ell_1 \vee \ell_2 \vee \ell_3$  and its corresponding clause gadget  $CG_j$ . If  $u_j^k v_j^k$  is not in  $E(G)$ , since both  $u_j^k$  and  $v_j^k$  are incident to an edge in the variable gadget it belongs to,  $T_j^k$  must be  $O_4$ -overlaid by the edge  $s_j^k t_j^k$ . Now the hyperedge  $Z_j$  is  $O_4$ -overlaid by  $z_j t_j^k$  or  $t_j^k t_j^{k'}$  for some  $k, k' \in \{1, 2, 3\}$ , which implies that  $u_j^k v_j^k \in E(G)$ . Hence  $\phi(\ell_k) = \text{true}$ . Hence  $\phi$  satisfies  $\Phi$ .

Conversely, assume  $\phi$  is a truth assignment satisfying  $\Phi$ . Let  $G$  be the graph with vertex set  $V(H)$  and whose edge set is constructed as follows. For every  $1 \leq i \leq n$ , add  $\{u_i v_i, w_i w'_i, u'_i \bar{w}'_i, \bar{w}_i \bar{v}_i\}$  to  $E(G)$  if  $\phi(x_i) = \text{true}$  and  $\{u_i \bar{v}_i, \bar{w}_i \bar{w}'_i, u'_i w'_i, w_i v_i\}$  to  $E(G)$  if  $\phi(x_i) = \text{false}$ . For every clause  $C_j = \ell_1 \vee \ell_2 \vee \ell_3$ , there exists  $k \in \{1, 2, 3\}$  such that  $\phi(\ell_k) = \text{true}$ . Add the edges  $z_j t_j^k, s_j^{k+1} t_j^{k+1}$  and  $s_j^{k+2} t_j^{k+2}$  (the superscript are modulo 3) to  $E(G)$ . One easily checks that  $G$  is an  $(O_4, H, 1)$ -graph.

*Subproof 2:  $(\Delta \leq 2)$ - $O_3$ -Overlay is  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete.*

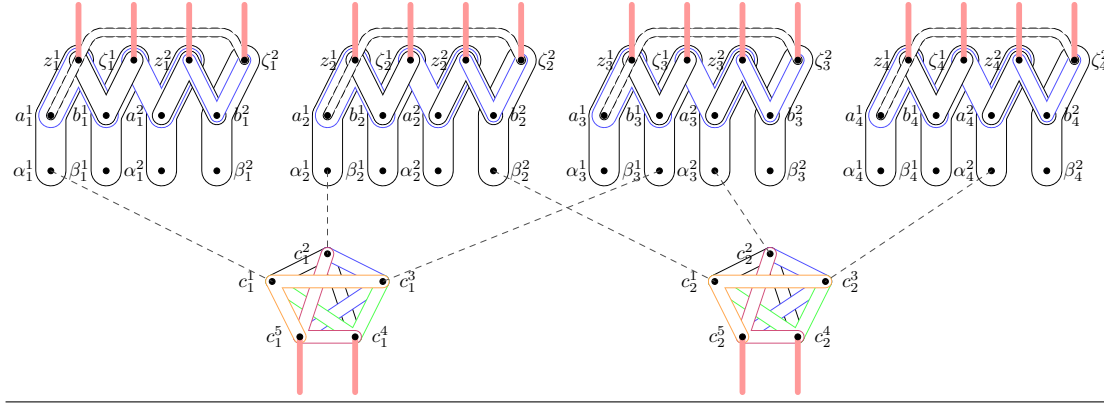
In order to simplify the proof, we will prove that the problem  $(\Delta \leq 2)$ - $O_3$ -OVERLAY WITH HANDICAP is  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete, where, in addition to a hypergraph  $H$ , we are given a subset of vertices  $A \subseteq V(H)$  (called *handicap vertices*), and we ask for a graph  $G$  that  $O_3$ -overlays  $H$  with the additional constraint that for every  $v \in A$ , the degree of  $v$  is at most 1. Observe that we can easily reduce this problem to  $(\Delta \leq 2)$ - $O_3$ -OVERLAY: for every  $v \in A$ , add six vertices  $t_v^1, \dots, t_v^6$ , and hyperedges  $\{v, t_v^1, t_v^p\}$  for every  $p \in \{2, 3, 4, 5, 6\}$ . Let  $H'$  be the obtained hypergraph. Observe that an  $(O_3, H, 2)$ -graph  $G$  in which every  $v \in A$  has degree at most 1 can be extended into an  $(O_3, H', 2)$ -graph by adding the edge  $vt_v^1$  (and all vertices of  $V(H') \setminus V(H)$ ). Conversely,  $(O_3, H', 2)$ -graph  $G'$  must contain the edge  $vt_v^1$ , and thus  $v$  is of degree at most 1 in  $G'[V(H)]$ .

We reduce 3-SAT to  $(\Delta \leq 2)$ - $O_3$ -OVERLAY WITH HANDICAP. Let  $\Phi$  be an instance of 3-SAT with  $m$  clauses  $C_1, \dots, C_m$  on  $n$  variables  $x_1, \dots, x_n$ . We construct a 3-uniform hypergraph  $H$  as follows (see Figure 3 for an example):

- for every variable  $x_i$ , we create a variable gadget  $VG_i$  composed of vertices  $a_i^1, \dots, a_i^m, \alpha_i^1, \dots, \alpha_i^m, b_i^1, \dots, b_i^m, \beta_i^1, \dots, \beta_i^m, z_i^1, \dots, z_i^m$ , and  $\zeta_i^1, \dots, \zeta_i^m$ . Then, for every  $j \in [m]$ , we create the following hyperedges (additions in superscripts are modulo  $m$ , and we write  $m$  instead of 0):  $h_{i,j}^1 = \{z_i^j, a_i^j, \alpha_i^j\}$ ,  $h_{i,j}^2 = \{z_i^j, b_i^j, \beta_i^j\}$ ,  $h_{i,j}^3 = \{a_i^j, z_i^j, b_i^j\}$ ,  $h_{i,j}^4 = \{z_i^j, b_i^j, \zeta_i^j\}$ ,  $h_{i,j}^5 = \{b_i^j, \zeta_i^j, a_i^{j+1}\}$ ,  $h_{i,j}^6 = \{\zeta_i^j, a_i^{j+1}, z_i^{j+1}\}$ . Moreover, all vertices  $z_i^1, \dots, z_i^m$ , and  $\zeta_i^1, \dots, \zeta_i^m$  are handicap vertices.
- for every clause  $C_j$ , we create a clause gadget  $CG_j$  composed of vertices  $c_j^1, \dots, c_j^5$ , and, for every  $p \in [5]$ , of the hyperedge  $\{c_j^p, c_j^{p+1}, c_j^{p+3}\}$  (additions are modulo 5, and we write 5 instead of 0). The vertices  $c_j^4$  and  $c_j^5$  are handicap vertices.

- finally, for every clause  $C_j = \ell_1 \vee \ell_2 \vee \ell_3$ , if  $\ell_p = x_i$  (resp.  $\ell_p = \bar{x}_i$ ) for some  $p \in \{1, 2, 3\}$ , then we identify the vertex  $c_j^p$  of  $CG_j$  with the vertex  $\alpha_i^j$  (resp.  $\beta_i^j$ ) of  $VG_i$ .

**Figure 3** An example of the reduction for  $\Phi = (x_1 \vee x_2 \vee \bar{x}_3) \wedge (\bar{x}_2 \vee x_3 \vee x_4)$ . The dotted lines join two vertices that are identified. The thick red lines indicate the handicap vertices.



Suppose first that  $\phi : \{x_1, \dots, x_n\} \rightarrow \{true, false\}$  is a truth assignment satisfying  $\Phi$ .

Let us first select a set of edges in the variable gadgets. For every  $i \in [n]$ , if  $\phi(x_i) = true$ , then select edges  $\{z_i^j, a_i^j\}$ ,  $\{b_i^j, \beta_i^j\}$  and  $\{\zeta_i^j, b_i^j\}$  for all  $j \in [m]$ . If  $\phi(x_i) = false$ , then select edges  $\{z_i^j, b_i^j\}$ ,  $\{a_i^j, \alpha_i^j\}$  and  $\{\zeta_i^j, a_i^{j+1}\}$  for all  $j \in [m]$  (additions are modulo  $m$ ). Let  $E_1$  be the set of selected edges, and  $G_1 = (V(H), E_1)$ . Observe that  $G_1$   $O_3$ -overlays the hyperedges of all variable gadgets: for every  $i \in [n]$  and every  $j \in [m]$ ,

- $h_{i,j}^1$  contains the edge  $\{z_i^j, a_i^j\}$  if  $\phi(x_i) = true$ , and the edge  $\{a_i^j, \alpha_i^j\}$  otherwise.
- $h_{i,j}^2$  contains the edge  $\{b_i^j, \beta_i^j\}$  if  $\phi(x_i) = true$ , and the edge  $\{z_i^j, b_i^j\}$  otherwise.
- $h_{i,j}^3$  contains the edge  $\{z_i^j, a_i^j\}$  if  $\phi(x_i) = true$ , and the edge  $\{z_i^j, b_i^j\}$  otherwise.
- $h_{i,j}^4$  contains the edge  $\{\zeta_i^j, b_i^j\}$  if  $\phi(x_i) = true$ , and the edge  $\{z_i^j, b_i^j\}$  otherwise.
- $h_{i,j}^5$  contains the edge  $\{\zeta_i^j, b_i^j\}$  if  $\phi(x_i) = true$ , and the edge  $\{\zeta_i^j, a_i^{j+1}\}$  otherwise.
- $h_{i,j}^6$  contains the edge  $\{z_i^{j+1}, a_i^{j+1}\}$  if  $\phi(x_i) = true$ , and the edge  $\{\zeta_i^j, a_i^{j+1}\}$  otherwise.

Moreover the vertices  $z_i^1, \dots, z_i^m$ , and  $\zeta_i^1, \dots, \zeta_i^m$  have degree 1 in  $G_1$  and the vertices  $\alpha_i^j$  have degree 0 in  $G_1$  if and only if  $\phi(x_i) = true$  and the vertices  $\beta_i^j$  have degree 0 in  $G_1$  if and only if  $\phi(x_i) = false$ .

We now select a set of edges in the clause gadgets. For every clause  $C_j = \ell_1 \vee \ell_2 \vee \ell_3$ . Since  $\phi$  satisfies  $\Phi$ , there exists  $p = p_j \in \{1, 2, 3\}$  such that  $\phi(\ell_p) = true$ . Select the edges  $\{c_j^p, c_j^{p+2}\}$ ,  $\{c_j^p, c_j^{p+3}\}$  and  $\{c_j^{p+1}, c_j^{p+4}\}$ . Let  $E_2$  be the set of selected edges in clause gadgets, and  $G_2 = (V(H), E_2)$ . Clearly,  $G_2$   $O_3$ -overlays all hyperedges of the clause gadgets and the vertices  $c_j^4$  and  $c_j^5$ ,  $j \in [m]$ , have degree 1 in  $G_2$ . Moreover, for all  $j \in [m]$  the vertex  $c_j^{p_j}$  is identified with the vertex  $\alpha_i^q$  or  $\beta_i^q$ , which has degree 0 in  $G_1$  since  $\phi(\ell_p) = true$ . Thus  $G_1 \cup G_2$  has maximum degree 2, which proves that it is an  $(O_3, H, 2)$ -graph.

Conversely, assume that there is an  $(O_3, H, 2)$ -graph  $G$  such that all handicap vertices have degree at most 1.

For  $i \in [n]$ , let  $T_i = \bigcup_{j=1}^m \{z_i^j a_i^j, b_i^j \beta_i^j, \beta_i^j \zeta_i^j\}$  and  $F_i = \bigcup_{j=1}^m \{a_i^j \alpha_i^j, z_i^j b_i^j, \zeta_i^j a_i^{j+1}\}$ .

**Claim 3.** Let  $i \in [n]$ . We have the following:

1.  $z_i^j \zeta_i^j \notin E(G)$  and  $\zeta_i^j z_i^{j+1} \notin E(G)$ ,  $j \in [m]$ .

2. Either  $T_i \subseteq E(G)$  or  $F_i \subseteq E(G)$ .

*Subproof.* 1. Assume for a contradiction that  $z_i^j \zeta_i^j \in E(G)$ . Since  $z_i^j$  and  $\zeta_i^j$  are handicap vertices, the hyperedges  $h_{i,j}^2, h_{i,j}^3, h_{i,j}^5$  must be  $O_3$ -overlaid by the edges  $b_i^j \beta_i^j, a_i^j b_i^j, b_i^j a_i^{j+1}$ , respectively, contradicting the fact that  $b_i^j$  has degree 2 in  $G$ .

Similarly, if  $\zeta_i^j z_i^{j+1} \in E(G)$ , then the hyperedges  $h_{i,j}^5, h_{i,j+1}^1, h_{i,j+1}^3$  must be  $O_3$ -overlaid by the edges  $b_i^j a_i^{j+1}, a_i^{j+1} \alpha_i^j, a_i^{j+1} b_i^{j+1}$ , respectively, a contradiction

2. By 1. the hyperedge  $h_{i,j}^3$  is  $O_3$ -overlaid by  $z_i^j b_i^j$  or  $\zeta_i^j b_i^j$ .

In the first case, since  $z_i^j$  is a handicap vertex, the hyperedge  $h_{i,j-1}^6$  must be  $O_3$ -overlaid by  $\zeta_i^{j-1} a_i^j$ , and so hyperedge  $h_{i,j-1}^3$  is  $O_3$ -overlaid by  $z_i^{j-1} b_{j-1}^i$ . And so on by induction, we get that  $\bigcup_{j=1}^m \{z_i^j a_i^j, \beta_i^j \zeta_i^j\} \subseteq E(G)$ . Since the  $z_i^j$  are handicap vertices, the hyperedge  $h_{i,j}^2$  is  $O_3$ -overlaid by  $b_i^j \beta_i^j$ . Hence  $T_i \subseteq E(G)$ .

In the second case, a symmetrical argument shows  $F_i \subseteq E(G)$ .  $\diamond$

We define the truth assignment  $\phi$  by  $\phi(x_i) = \text{true}$  if  $T_i \subseteq E(G)$  and  $\phi(x_i) = \text{false}$  if  $F_i \subseteq E(G)$ . This is well-defined by Claim 3 and the fact that  $E(G)$  cannot contain both  $T_i$  and  $F_i$  because it has maximum degree 2.

Now, for any  $j \in [m]$ , there exists  $p \in \{1, 2, 3\}$  such that  $c_j^p$  has degree 2 in  $G[CG_j]$  (if not, there is a vertex  $c_j^p$  of degree 0, then there is a hyperedge containing  $c_j^p$  which is not overlaid). Therefore, it has degree 0 in the variable gadget it belongs to. By our definition of  $\phi$ , we get that  $\phi(\ell_p) = \text{true}$ . Hence  $\phi$  satisfies  $\Phi$ .  $\square$

**Lemma 7.** *If  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $O_p$ -OVERLAY is  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete, then  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $O_{p+1}$ -OVERLAY and  $(\Delta \leq k+1)$ - $O_p$ -OVERLAY are  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete.*

*Proof.* Let  $k$  and  $p$  be two positive integers with  $p \geq 2$ , let  $H_{k,p}$  be the  $p$ -uniform hypergraph on  $(k+1)(p-1)$  vertices whose hyperedge set contains all possible  $p$ -subsets of vertices.

We first need the following claim in order to prove Lemma 7.

**Claim 4.** *Every  $(O_p, H_{k,p}, k)$ -graph is  $k$ -regular. Moreover, there exists an  $(O_p, H_{k,p}, k)$ -graph.*

*Subproof.* Let  $G$  be an  $(O_p, H_{k,p}, k)$ -graph. Assume for a contradiction that it has a vertex  $v$  of degree at most  $k-1$ . Then, observe that  $|V(G) \setminus N[v]| \geq (k+1)(p-2) + 1$ . Now, by removing successively the closed neighbourhood of a vertex of the graph (chosen arbitrarily) until the graph is empty, we can construct, together with  $v$ , an independent set  $S$  of  $G$  of size  $p$ . This is impossible, since  $S$  is a hyperedge of  $H_{k,p}$  which is not  $O_p$ -overlaid by  $G$ .

Finally, observe that the disjoint union of  $p-1$  cliques of size  $k+1$  is a  $k$ -regular graph which  $O_p$ -overlays  $H_{k,p}$ .  $\diamond$

*Subproof 1 of Lemma 7* We will show the  $\mathcal{NP}$ -completeness of  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $O_{p+1}$ -OVERLAY which is reduced from  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $O_p$ -OVERLAY. Let  $H$  be a  $p$ -uniform hypergraph. We construct a  $(p+1)$ -uniform hypergraph  $H^*$  from a copy of  $H$  and adding, for every hyperedge  $S$ , a new vertex  $v_S$ . We also add, for every hyperedge  $S$ , a set of  $(k+1)p-1$  new vertices  $N_S$ , and form, together with  $v_S$ , a hypergraph  $H_S$  isomorphic to  $H_{k,p+1}$ .

Let  $G$  be an  $(O_p, H, k)$ -graph. Construct  $G^*$  from  $G$  by adding, for every hyperedge  $S$  of  $H$ , a disjoint union of  $p$  cliques of size  $k+1$  on the vertices  $N_S \cup \{v_S\}$ . Clearly,  $G^*$  is an  $(O_{p+1}, H^*, k)$ -graph.

Conversely, if  $G^*$  is an  $(O_{p+1}, H^*, k)$ -graph, then, by Claim 4,  $v_S$  must have degree  $k$  in  $N_S$  for every hyperedge  $S$  of  $H$ . Thus, the restriction of  $G^*$  to the vertices of  $H$  is an  $(O_p, H, k)$ -graph.

*Subproof 2 of Lemma 7:* Now, we reduce  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $O_p$ -OVERLAY to  $(\Delta \leq k+1)$ - $O_p$ -OVERLAY.

Let  $H$  be a  $p$ -uniform hypergraph. Let  $H'$  be the  $p$ -uniform hypergraph obtained from  $H$  by doing the following for each vertex  $v \in V(H)$ :

- add the vertices  $x^v, y_1^v, \dots, y_{p-2}^v$  and the hyperedge  $S_v = \{v, x^v, y_1^v, \dots, y_{p-2}^v\}$ .
- for any  $i = \{1, \dots, p-2\}$ , add a copy  $H_i^v$  of  $H_{k+1,p}$  whose vertices are  $y_i^v$  and  $(p-1)(k+2)-1$  new vertices.

Assume that  $G'$  is an  $(O_p, H', k+1)$ -graph. By Claim 4, the graph induced by  $G$  on  $V(H_i^v)$  is  $(k+1)$ -regular, for all  $v \in V(H)$ ,  $1 \leq i \leq p-2$ . Therefore each  $y_i^v$  has  $k+1$ -neighbours outside the hyperedge  $S_v$ . Hence  $G$  must contain the edge  $vx^v$  because it  $O_p$ -overlays  $S_v$ . Thus the subgraph  $G = G'[V(H)]$  has maximum degree at most  $\Delta(G') - 1 \leq k$  and it  $O_p$ -overlays  $H$ . In other words,  $G$  is an  $(O_p, H, k)$ -graph.

Conversely, assume  $G$  is an  $(O_p, H, k)$ -graph. Let  $G'$  be the graph with vertex set  $V(H')$  and whose edge set is the union of  $E(G)$ ,  $\{vx^v \mid v \in V(H)\}$  and the edge set of an  $(O_p, H_i^v, k+1)$ -graph (which exists by Claim 4), for all  $v \in V(H)$ ,  $1 \leq i \leq p-2$ . One easily checks that  $G'$  is  $(O_p, H', k+1)$ -graph.

Therefore, there is an  $(O_p, H, k)$ -graph if and only if there is an  $(O_p, H', k+1)$ -graph.  $\square$

Propositions 4 and 5, Theorem 6, and Lemma 7 imply Theorem 1.

## 4 Complexity of MAX $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $\mathcal{F}$ -OVERLAY

The aim of this section is to establish Theorem 2 that gives the polynomial/ $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete dichotomy for the MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $\mathcal{F}$ -OVERLAY problems.

As noticed in the introduction, if  $\Delta(F) > k$  or  $F$  is an empty graph then MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $\mathcal{F}$ -OVERLAY is trivially polynomial-time solvable. Moreover, by Propositions 4 and 5, MAX  $(\Delta \leq 1)$ - $O_3$ -OVERLAY as well as MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $O_2$ -OVERLAY (for all positive integers  $k$ ) are also polynomial-time solvable.

We shall now prove that if we are not in one of the above cases, then MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $\mathcal{F}$ -OVERLAY is  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete. We first establish the  $\mathcal{NP}$ -completeness when  $F$  has no isolated vertices.

**Theorem 8.** *Let  $F$  be a graph on at least three vertices with no isolated vertices. If  $k \geq \Delta(F)$ , then MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $\mathcal{F}$ -OVERLAY is  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete on neat hypergraphs.*

*Proof.* Assume  $k \geq \Delta(F)$ . Let  $n = |F|$ ,  $a_1, \dots, a_n$  be an ordering of the vertices of  $F$  such that  $\delta(F) = d(a_1) \leq d(a_2) \leq \dots \leq d(a_n) = \Delta(F)$ . Let  $\gamma = \lfloor k/\delta(F) \rfloor - 1$ ,  $\beta = k - \gamma\delta(F)$ . Observe that  $\delta(F) \leq \beta \leq 2\delta(F) - 1$ .

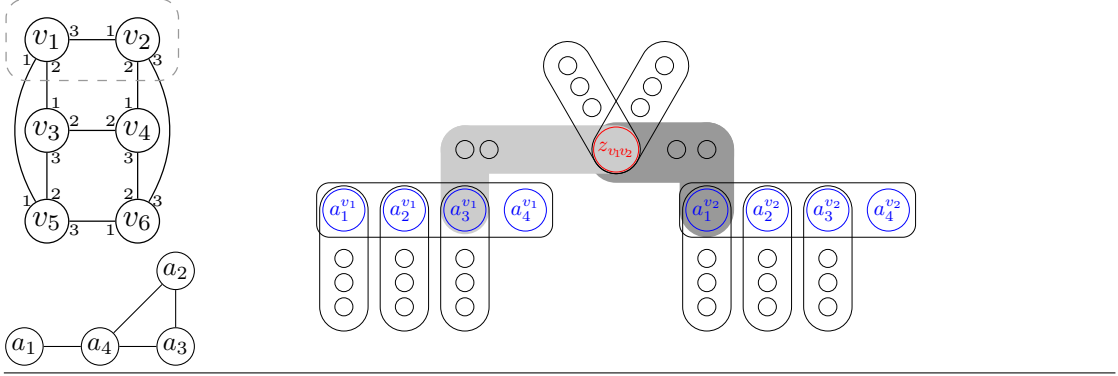
We shall give a reduction from INDEPENDENT SET which is a well-known  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete problem even for cubic graphs (see [16].) We distinguish two cases depending on whether  $d(a_2) > \beta$  or not. The two reductions are very similar.

Case 1:  $d(a_2) > \beta$ . Set  $\gamma_1 = \gamma_2 = \lfloor (k - d(a_2))/\delta(F) \rfloor$  and  $\gamma_3 = \lfloor (k - d(a_3))/\delta(F) \rfloor$ .

Let  $\Gamma$  be a cubic graph. For each vertex  $v \in V(\Gamma)$ , let  $(e_1(v), e_2(v), e_3(v))$  be an ordering of the edges incident to  $v$ . We shall construct the neat hypergraph  $H = H(\Gamma)$  as follows (see Figure 4 for an example).

- For each vertex  $v \in \Gamma$ , we create a hyperedge  $S_v = \{a_1^v, \dots, a_n^v\}$ . Then, for  $1 \leq i \leq 3$ , we add  $\gamma_i$   $a_i^v$ -leaves, that are hyperedges containing  $a_i^v$  and  $n-1$  new vertices.

**Figure 4** Illustration of the case 1 from the proof of Theorem 8, with a cubic graph  $\Gamma$  (top left, with an ordering on the neighbours of each vertex),  $F$  a graph on four vertices (bottom left), and  $k = 3$ . We have  $\delta(F) = 1, d(a_1) = 1, d(a_2) = d(a_3) = 2$ , and  $d(a_4) = 3 = \Delta(F)$ . Moreover  $\gamma = 2, \beta = 1, \gamma_1 = \gamma_2 = \gamma_3 = 1$ . To the right, a part of the hypergraph which corresponds to the subgraph of  $\Gamma$  in the dashed box: two hyperedges for  $v_1, v_2$  with blue vertices, two dashed hyperedges for edge  $v_1v_2 = e_3(v_1)e_1(v_2)$  and leaves with new vertices (unlabeled vertices).



- For each edge  $e = uv \in \Gamma$ , let  $i$  and  $j$  be the indices such that  $e = e_i(u) = e_j(v)$ . We create a new vertex  $z_e$  and hyperedges  $S_u^e$  (resp.  $S_v^e$ ) containing  $z_e, a_i^u$  (resp.  $a_j^v$ ), and  $n - 2$  new vertices, respectively. Then, we add  $\gamma$   $z_e$ -leaves, that are hyperedges containing  $z_e$  and  $n - 1$  new vertices.

We shall prove that  $\text{over}_F(H, k) = (\gamma_1 + \gamma_2 + \gamma_3)|V(\Gamma)| + (\gamma + 1)|E(\Gamma)| + \alpha(\Gamma)$ , where  $\alpha(\Gamma)$  denotes the cardinality of a maximum independent set in  $\Gamma$ .

The following claim shows that there are optimal solutions with specific structure. This leads to the inequality:

$$\text{over}_F(H, k) \leq (\gamma_1 + \gamma_2 + \gamma_3)|V(\Gamma)| + (\gamma + 1)|E(\Gamma)| + \alpha(\Gamma)$$

**Claim 5.** *There is a graph  $G$  with  $\Delta(G) \leq k$  that  $F$ -overlays  $\text{over}_F(H, k)$  hyperedges of  $H$  such that:*

- each  $x$ -leaf  $L$  is  $F$ -overlaid and  $x$  is incident to  $\delta(F)$  edges in  $L$  (with  $x = a_i^v$  or  $x = z_e$ ).*
- for each edge  $e = uv \in E(\Gamma)$ , exactly one of the two hyperedges  $S_u^e$  and  $S_v^e$  is  $F$ -overlaid. Moreover if  $S_u^e$  (resp.  $S_v^e$ ) is  $F$ -overlaid, then  $a_i^u$  (resp.  $a_j^v$ ) is incident to  $d(a_i)$  edges in  $S_u^e$ .*
- the set of vertices  $v$  such that  $S_v$  is  $F$ -overlaid is an independent set in  $\Gamma$ .*

*Subproof.* Let  $G$  be a graph with  $\Delta(G) \leq k$  that  $F$ -overlays  $\text{over}_F(H, k)$  hyperedges of  $H$ . Observe first that since  $H$  is a neat hypergraph, we may assume that, for every hyperedge  $S$  of  $H$ ,  $G[S] = F$  if  $S$  is  $F$ -overlaid and  $G[S]$  has no edge otherwise.

Therefore if an  $x$ -leaf  $L$  is  $F$ -overlaid, then replacing  $G[L]$  by a copy of  $F$  in which  $x$  has degree  $\delta(F)$ , we obtain another graph with maximum degree at most  $k$  that  $F$ -overlays  $\text{over}_F(H, k)$  hyperedges of  $H$ . Henceforth we may assume that if an  $x$ -leaf is  $F$ -overlaid then  $x$  is incident to  $\delta(F)$  edges included in it.

Now assume that the  $z_e$ -leaf  $L$ , for  $e \in E(\Gamma)$ , is not  $F$ -overlaid by  $G$ . We have  $d_G(z_e) > k - \delta(F)$  for otherwise adding on  $L$  the edges of a copy of  $F$  in which  $z_e$  has degree  $\delta(F)$ , we obtain a graph  $F$ -overlying more hyperedges than  $G$ . But since there are  $\gamma$   $z_e$ -leaves and  $z_e$  is incident to  $\delta(F)$  edges in each of them, at least one of the hyperedges  $S_u^e$  and  $S_v^e$  is  $F$ -overlaid. Now

replacing the edges of  $G$  in this hyperedge by those of a copy of  $F$  in  $L$ , in which  $z_e$  has degree  $\delta(F)$ , we obtain another graph with maximum degree at most  $k$  that  $F$ -overlays over  $F(H, k)$  hyperedges of  $H$ . Henceforth we may assume that every  $z_e$ -leaf is  $F$ -overlaid.

A similar reasoning shows that every  $a_i^v$ -leaf is  $F$ -overlaid, for all  $v \in V(\Gamma)$ ,  $i \in \{1, 2, 3\}$ . This proves (a).

Now by (a) each vertex  $z_e$  is incident to  $\gamma\delta(F) = k - \beta > k - 2\delta(F)$  edges in the  $z_e$ -leaves. Thus  $z_e$  is incident to at most  $\beta$  edges in  $S_u^e \cup S_v^e$ . Since  $\beta \leq 2\delta(F) - 1$ , at most one of  $S_u^e$  and  $S_v^e$  is  $F$ -overlaid. Moreover, since  $\beta < d(a_2)$ , if  $S_u^e$  is  $F$ -overlaid, then  $z_e$  must be the vertex corresponding to  $a_1$  in  $G[S_u^e]$ .

Assume now that none of  $S_u^e, S_v^e$  is  $F$ -overlaid, and let  $e = e_i(u)$ ,  $a_i^u$  has  $\gamma_i$   $a_i^u$ -leaves, so  $a_i^u$  is incident to  $\gamma_i\delta(F) \leq k - d(a_i)$  in these leaves, thus  $d_G(a_i^u) \leq k - d(a_2)$ . Thus, replacing the edges of  $G$  in  $S_u^e$  by those of a copy of  $F$ , in which  $z_e$  has degree  $\delta(F)$  and  $a_i^u$  has degree  $d(a_2)$ , we obtain another graph with maximum degree at most  $k$  that  $F$ -overlays over  $F(H, k)$  hyperedges of  $H$ . Henceforth, we may assume that at least one of  $S_u^e$  and  $S_v^e$  is  $F$ -overlaid. This completes the proof of (b).

Consider now a vertex  $v \in V(\Gamma)$  such that  $S_v$  is  $F$ -overlaid. By (a)  $a_1^v$  is incident to  $\gamma_1\delta(F)$  edges in the  $a_1^v$ -leaves and at least  $\delta(F) \in S_v$ . Therefore  $S_v^{e_1(v)}$  cannot be  $F$ -overlaid for otherwise, by (b),  $a_1^v$  would have degree at least  $\gamma_1\delta(F) + \delta(F) + d(a_2) > k$ . Similarly,  $S_v^{e_2(v)}$  cannot be  $F$ -overlaid.

Assume now for a contradiction that  $S_v^{e_3(v)}$  is  $F$ -overlaid. By (a) and (b),  $a_3^v$  is incident to  $\gamma_3\delta(F)$  edges in the  $a_3^v$ -leaves and at least  $d(a_2) \in S_v^{e_3(v)}$ . Since  $\gamma_3\delta(F) + d(a_2) + d(a_3) > k$ ,  $a_3^v$  is incident to less than  $d(a_3)$  edges in  $S_v$ . Thus, there is a vertex  $a \in \{a_1^v, a_2^v\}$  which is incident to at least  $d(a_3)$  edges in  $S_v$  and thus at least  $\gamma_1\delta(F) + d(a_3)$  edges in  $G$ . But  $a_3^v$  is adjacent to at least  $\delta(F)$  edges in  $S_v$ , so at least  $\gamma_3\delta(F) + d(a_2) + \delta(F)$  edges in total. Thus  $\gamma_3\delta(F) + d(a_2) + \delta(F) \leq k$ , so  $\gamma_3 \leq \gamma_1 - 1$ . Thus  $a$  is adjacent to at least  $(\gamma_3 + 1)\delta(F) + d(a_3) > k$ , a contradiction.

To summarize, if  $S_v$  is  $F$ -overlaid, then none of  $S_v^{e_1(v)}, S_v^{e_2(v)}, S_v^{e_3(v)}$  is  $F$ -overlaid. Together with (b), this implies (c).  $\diamond$

Conversely, consider  $W$  a maximum independent set of  $\Gamma$ .

Let  $G$  be the graph with vertex  $V(H)$  which is the union of the following subgraphs :

- for each  $x$ -leaf  $L$ , we add a copy of  $F$  on  $L$  in which  $x$  has degree  $\delta(F)$ ;
- for each vertex  $v \in W$ , we add a copy of  $F$  on  $S_v$  in which  $a_i^v$  has degree  $d(a_i)$  for all  $1 \leq i \leq n$ .
- for each edge  $e \in E(\Gamma)$ , we choose an endvertex  $u$  of  $e$  such that  $u \notin W$ , and add a copy of  $F$  in which  $z_e$  has degree  $d(a_1)$  and  $a_i^u$  has degree  $d(a_2)$  (with  $i$  the index such that  $e_i(u) = e$ ).

It is simple matter to check that  $\Delta(G) \leq k$  and that  $G$   $F$ -overlays  $(\gamma_1 + \gamma_2 + \gamma_3)|V(\Gamma)| + (\gamma + 1)|E(\Gamma)| + \alpha(\Gamma)$  hyperedges of  $H$ . Thus  $\text{over}_F(H, k) \geq (\gamma_1 + \gamma_2 + \gamma_3)|V(\Gamma)| + (\gamma + 1)|E(\Gamma)| + \alpha(\Gamma)$ .

Case 2:  $d(a_2) \leq \beta$ . The proof is very similar to Case 1. The main difference is the definition of the  $\gamma_i$ . In this case, we set  $\gamma_i = \lfloor (k - d(a_i)) / \delta(F) \rfloor$  for  $1 \leq i \leq 3$ .  $\square$

We then establish the following lemma, which allows to derive the  $\mathcal{NP}$ -completeness of  $\text{MAX}(\Delta \leq k)$ - $F$ -OVERLAY when  $F$  has isolated vertices.

**Lemma 9.** *Let  $k$  be a positive integer, let  $F$  be a graph with  $\Delta(F) = 1$ , and let  $q$  be a non-negative integer. If  $\text{MAX}(\Delta \leq k)$ - $(F + E_q)$ -OVERLAY is  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete, then  $\text{MAX}(\Delta \leq k)$ - $(F + E_{q+1})$ -OVERLAY is also  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete.*



*Proof.* We shall reduce  $\text{MAX } (\Delta \leq k)\text{-}(F+E_q)\text{-OVERLAY}$  to  $\text{MAX } (\Delta \leq k)\text{-}(F+E_{q+1})\text{-OVERLAY}$ . Set  $p = |V(F)|$  and  $r = \lfloor k/\delta(F) \rfloor$ . Note that  $r \geq 1$ , for otherwise  $\text{MAX } (\Delta \leq k)\text{-}(F+E_q)\text{-OVERLAY}$  would trivially be polynomial-time solvable.

Let  $H'$  be a  $(p+q)$ -uniform hypergraph. Let  $H$  be the  $(p+q+1)$ -uniform hypergraph obtained from  $H'$  as follows. Its vertex set is partitioned into  $V(H')$ ,  $P_1, \dots, P_r$ ,  $K$  and  $\{z\}$  with  $|P_i| = p-1$  for all  $1 \leq i \leq r$  and  $|K| = (m+1)(k+1) + kp$  with  $m = \max\{|E(H')|, q+1\}$ . The hyperedge set of  $H$  contains  $Q \cup P_i \cup \{z\}$  for all  $(q+1)$ -subsets  $Q$  of  $K$  and all  $1 \leq i \leq r$ , and  $S \cup z$  for all  $S \in E(H')$ .

We shall prove that  $\text{over}_{F+E_{q+1}}(H, k) = \text{over}_{F+E_q}(H', k) + r \binom{|K|}{q+1}$ .

Let  $G'_0$  be a graph with  $V(G'_0) = V(H')$  and  $\Delta(G'_0) \leq k$  that  $(F+E_q)$ -overlays  $\text{over}_{F+E_q}(H', k)$  hyperedges of  $H'$ . For  $1 \leq i \leq r$ , let  $F_i$  be a copy of  $F$  on  $P_i \cup \{z\}$  in which  $z$  has degree  $\delta(F)$ . Let  $G_0$  be the graph defined by  $V(G_0) = V(H)$  and  $E(G'_0) \cup \bigcup_{i=1}^r E(F_i)$ . Clearly,  $\Delta(G_0) \leq k$  and  $G_0$   $F$ -overlays all hyperedges of  $H$  except the  $S \cup z$  for all  $S \in E(H')$ . So  $\text{over}_{F+E_{q+1}}(H, k) \geq \text{over}_{F+E_q}(H', k) + r \binom{|K|}{q+1}$ .

Conversely, let  $G$  be a graph with  $V(G) = V(H)$  and  $\Delta(G) \leq k$  that maximizes the number of  $(F+E_{q+1})$ -overlaid hyperedges.

**Claim 6.** *In  $G$ , vertex  $z$  has at least  $\delta(F)$  neighbours in each  $P_i$ ,  $1 \leq i \leq r$ .*

*Subproof.* Suppose for a contradiction that  $z$  has less than  $\delta(F)$  neighbours in  $P_i$ . Since  $\Delta(G) \leq k$ , at most  $kp$  vertices of  $K$  are incident to an edge with an endvertex in  $P_i \cup \{z\}$ . Thus there is a subset  $R$  of  $K$  of  $(m+1)(k+1)$  vertices non-adjacent to all vertices of  $P_i \cup \{z\}$ . Now  $G[R]$  has maximum degree  $k$  and so by Brooks Theorem, it is  $(k+1)$ -colourable. Hence  $G[R]$  has an independent set  $S$  of size  $m+1$ . Observe that for each  $(q+1)$ -subset  $Q$  of  $S$ , the subgraph  $G[Q \cup P_i \cup \{z\}]$  has  $q+2$  vertices of degree less than  $\delta(F)$  (namely the ones of  $Q \cup \{z\}$ ), and so the hyperedge  $Q \cup P_i \cup \{z\}$  is not  $(F+E_{q+1})$ -overlaid. Thus there are at least  $m+1 \geq |E(H')| + 1$  hyperedges not  $(F+E_{q+1})$ -overlaid by  $G$ . This contradicts the maximality of  $G$  as  $G_0$  overlays more hyperedges of  $H$ .  $\diamond$

Now  $z$  has degree at least  $r\delta(F)$  in  $\bigcup_{i=1}^r P_i$  and so less than  $\delta(F)$  in each hyperedge  $S \cup z$  for  $S \in E(H')$ . Hence if  $G$   $(F+E_{q+1})$ -overlays  $S \cup z$ , it must also  $(F+E_q)$ -overlay  $S$ . Thus  $\text{over}_{F+E_{q+1}}(H, k) \leq \text{over}_{F+E_q}(H', k) + r \binom{|K|}{q+1}$ .  $\square$

Now we can prove Theorem 2. As explained in the beginning of the section, it suffices to prove that  $\text{MAX } (\Delta \leq k)\text{-}F\text{-OVERLAY}$  remains  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete when  $\Delta(F) \leq k$ ,  $F \neq E_{|F|}$ ,  $|F| \geq 3$  and  $(F, k) \neq (O_3, 1)$ . Assume that the above conditions are satisfied. Let  $F'$  be the graph induced by the non-isolated vertices of  $F$ . Then  $F = F' + E_q$  with  $q = |F| - |F'|$ . If  $|F'| = 2$ , then  $F = O_{|F|}$ , and we have the result by Theorem 1. If  $|F'| \geq 3$ , then the result follows from Theorem 8, Lemma 9, and an immediate induction.

## 5 Complexity of $(\Delta \leq k)\text{-}\mathcal{F}\text{-OVERLAY}$

### 5.1 Regular graphs

**Proposition 10.** *For every complete graph  $K$  and every positive integer  $k$ ,  $(\Delta \leq k)\text{-}K\text{-OVERLAY}$  is polynomial-time solvable.*

**Proposition 11.** *For every connected  $k$ -regular graph  $F$ ,  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $F$ -OVERLAY is polynomial-time solvable.*

*Proof.* One easily sees that a  $k$ -uniform hypergraph  $H$  admits an  $(F, H, k)$ -graph if and only if the hyperedges of  $H$  are pairwise non-intersecting.  $\square$

Let  $C_4$  denote the cycle on 4 vertices. Proposition 11 implies that  $(\Delta \leq 2)$ - $C_4$ -OVERLAY is polynomial-time solvable. We now show that  $(\Delta \leq 3)$ - $C_4$ -OVERLAY is also polynomial-time solvable.

**Theorem 12.**  *$(\Delta \leq 3)$ - $C_4$ -OVERLAY is polynomial-time solvable.*

*Proof.* Let  $H$  be a 4-uniform hypergraph.

Let us describe an algorithm to decide whether there is a  $(C_4, H, 3)$ -graph. It is sufficient to do it when  $G$  is connected since the disjoint union of the  $(C_4, K, 3)$ -graphs for connected components  $K$  of  $H$  is a  $(C_4, H, 3)$ -graph.

We may also assume that  $|E(H)| \geq 2$  for otherwise we return ‘Yes’.

Observe first that if two hyperedges of  $H$  intersect in exactly one vertex  $u$ , then no such graph exists, since  $u$  must have degree 2 in each of the hyperedges if they are  $C_4$ -overlaid, and thus degree 4 in total. Therefore if there are two such hyperedges, we return ‘No’. Henceforth we may assume that two hyperedges either do not intersect, or are adjacent (intersect on at least two vertices).

**Claim 7.** *If two hyperedges  $S_1$  and  $S_2$  intersect on three vertices and there is a  $(C_4, H, 3)$ -graph  $G$ , then  $|V(H)| \leq 6$ .*

*Subproof.* Assume  $S_1 = \{a_1, b, c, d\}$  and  $S_2 = \{a_2, b, c, d\}$ . Let  $G$  be a  $(C_4, H, 3)$ -graph. In  $G$ ,  $a_1$  and  $a_2$  have the same two neighbours in  $\{b, c, d\}$  and the third vertex of  $\{b, c, d\}$  is also adjacent to those two. Consider a hyperedge  $S$  intersecting  $S_1 \cup S_2$ . Since it is  $C_4$ -overlaid by  $G$ , at least two edges connect  $S \cap (S_1 \cup S_2)$  to  $S \setminus (S_1 \cup S_2)$ . The endvertices of those edges in  $S_1 \cup S_2$  must have degree 2 in  $G[S_1 \cup S_2]$ . Hence, without loss of generality, either  $S_3 = \{a_1, a_2, b, e\}$ , or  $S_3 = \{a_1, b, c, e\}$  for some vertex  $e$  not in  $S_1 \cup S_2$ . Now no hyperedge can both intersect  $S_1 \cup S_2 \cup S_3$  and contain a vertex not in  $S_1 \cup S_2 \cup S_3$ , for such a hyperedge must contain either the vertices  $c, e$  or  $a_2, e$  which are at distance 3 in  $G[S_1 \cup S_2 \cup S_3]$ . (However there can be more hyperedges contained in  $S_1 \cup S_2 \cup S_3$ .) Hence  $|V(H)| \leq 6$ .  $\diamond$

In view of Claim 7, if there are two hyperedges with three vertices in common, either we return ‘No’ if  $|V(H)| > 6$ , or we check all possibilities (or follow the proof of the above claim) to return the correct answer otherwise. Henceforth, we may assume that any two adjacent hyperedges intersect in exactly two vertices.

Let  $S_1$  and  $S_2$  be two adjacent hyperedges, say  $S_1 = \{a, b, c, d\}$  and  $S_2 = \{c, d, e, f\}$ . Note that every  $(C_4, H, 3)$ -graph contains the edges  $ab$ ,  $cd$  and  $ef$ , and that  $N(c) \cup N(d) = S_1 \cup S_2$ .

**Claim 8.** *If there are at least two hyperedges containing  $c$  or  $d$  and there is a  $(C_4, H, 3)$ -graph  $G$ , then  $|V(H)| \leq 8$ .*

*Subproof.* Without loss of generality, we may assume that  $G$  contains the cycle  $(a, b, d, f, e, c, a)$  and the edge  $cd$ . Hence the only possible hyperedges containing  $c$  or  $d$  and a vertex not in  $S_1 \cup S_2$  are  $S_3 = \{a, c, e, g\}$  for some  $g \notin S_1 \cup S_2$  and  $S_4 = \{b, d, f, h\}$  for some  $h \notin S_1 \cup S_2$ .

If  $H$  contains none of  $S_3, S_4$ , then  $|V(H)| = 6$  because  $G$  is connected.

If  $H$  contains both  $S_3$  and  $S_4$ , then  $G$  contains the edges  $ag$ ,  $eg$ ,  $bh$  and  $hf$ . If  $G$  contains also  $gh$ , then  $G[S_1 \cup S_2 \cup S_3 \cup S_4]$  is 3-regular, so  $G = G[S_1 \cup S_2 \cup S_3 \cup S_4]$ . If  $G$  does not contain

$gh$ , then the only vertices of degree 2 in  $G[S_1 \cup S_2 \cup S_3 \cup S_4]$  are  $g$  and  $h$ , and they are at distance at least 3 in this graph. Thus every hyperedge intersecting  $S_1 \cup S_2 \cup S_3 \cup S_4$  is contained in this set, so  $|V(H)| = 8$ .

Assume now that  $G$  contains only one of  $S_3, S_4$ . Without loss of generality, we may assume that this is  $S_3$ . Hence  $G$  also contains the edges  $ag$  and  $eg$ . If  $V(G) \neq S_1 \cup S_2 \cup S_3$ , then there is a hyperedge  $S$  that intersects  $S_1 \cup S_2 \cup S_3$  and that is not contained in  $S_1 \cup S_2 \cup S_3$ . It does not contain  $c$  and  $d$ . Hence it must contain one of the vertices  $a$  or  $e$ , because it intersects each  $S_i$  along an edge of  $G$  or not at all. Without loss of generality,  $a \in S$ . Hence  $S = \{a, b, i, g\}$  for some vertex  $i$  not in  $S_1 \cup S_2 \cup S_3$ , and  $G$  contains the edges  $bi$  and  $ig$ . Now, as previously, either  $i$  and  $f$  are adjacent and  $G = G[S_1 \cup S_2 \cup S_3 \cup S]$  or they are not adjacent, and every hyperedge intersecting  $S_1 \cup S_2 \cup S_3 \cup S$  is contained in this set. In both cases,  $|V(H)| = 8$ .  $\diamond$

In view of Claim 8, if there is a hyperedge distinct from  $S_1, S_2$  containing  $c$  or  $d$ , then either we return ‘No’ if  $|V(H)| > 8$ , or we check all possibilities (or follow the proof of the above claim) to return the correct answer otherwise. Henceforth, we may assume that the only hyperedges containing  $c$  or  $d$  are  $S_1$  and  $S_2$ . Hence all hyperedges intersecting  $S_1 \cup S_2$  contain either  $\{a, b\}$  or  $\{e, f\}$ .

Let  $H'$  be the hypergraph with vertex set  $V(H) \setminus \{c, d\}$  and hyperedge set  $(E(H) \cup \{\{a, b, e, f\}\}) \setminus \{S_1 \cup S_2\}$ . It is simple matter to check that there is a  $(C_4, H, 3)$ -graph if and only if there is a  $(C_4, H', 3)$ -graph. Consequently, we recursively apply the algorithm on  $H'$ .

Clearly, the above-described algorithm runs in polynomial time.  $\square$

## 5.2 Paths

Let  $\mathcal{P}$  be the set of all paths. We have the following:

**Theorem 13.**  $(\Delta \leq 2)$ - $\mathcal{P}$ -OVERLAY is linear-time solvable.

*Proof.* Clearly, if  $H$  is not connected, it suffices to solve the problem on each of the components and to return ‘No’ if the answer is negative for at least one of the components, and ‘Yes’ otherwise. Henceforth, we shall now assume that  $H$  is connected. In such a case, a  $(\mathcal{P}, H, 2)$ -graph is either a path or a cycle. However, if  $H$  is  $\mathcal{P}$ -overlaid by a path  $P$ , then it is also  $\mathcal{P}$ -overlaid by the cycle obtained from  $P$  by adding an edge between its two endvertices. Thus, we focus on the case where  $G$  is a cycle.

Let  $\mathcal{S}$  be a family of sets. The *intersection graph* of a set  $\mathcal{S}$  is the graph  $IG(\mathcal{S})$  whose vertices are the sets of  $\mathcal{S}$ , and in which two vertices are adjacent if the corresponding sets in  $\mathcal{S}$  intersect.

The *intersection graph* of a hypergraph  $H$ , denoted by  $IG(H)$ , is the intersection graph of its hyperedge set. We define two functions  $l_H$  and  $s_H$  as follows:

$$l_H(S) = |S| - 1 \quad \text{for all } S \in E(H) \quad \text{and} \quad s_H(S, S') = |S \cap S'| - 1 \quad \text{for all } S, S' \in E(H).$$

Let  $\mathbb{C}_\ell$  be the circle of circumference  $\ell$ . We identify the points of  $\mathbb{C}_\ell$  with the integer numbers (points) of the segment  $[0, \ell]$ , (with 0 identified with  $\ell$ ). A *circular-arc graph* is the intersection graph of a set of arcs on  $\mathbb{C}_\ell$ . A set  $\mathcal{A}$  of arcs such that  $IG(\mathcal{A}) = G$  is called an *arc representation* of  $G$ . We denote by  $A_v$  the arc corresponding to  $v$  in  $\mathcal{A}$ . Let  $G$  be a graph and let  $l : V(G) \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$  and  $s : E(G) \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$  be two functions. An arc representation  $\mathcal{A}$  of  $G$  is  *$l$ -respecting* if  $A_v$  has length  $l(v)$  for any  $v \in V(G)$ ,  *$s$ -respecting* if  $A_v \cap A_u$  has length  $s(u, v)$  for all  $uv \in E(G)$ , and  *$(l, s)$ -respecting* if it is both  $l$ -respecting and  $s$ -respecting. One can easily adapt the algorithm given by Köbler et al. [18] for  $(l, s)$ -respecting interval representations to decide in linear time whether a graph admits an  $(l, s)$ -respecting arc representation in  $\mathbb{C}_n$  for every integer  $n$ .

**Claim 9.** *Let  $H$  be a connected hypergraph on  $n$  vertices. There is a cycle  $\mathcal{P}$ -overlaying  $H$  if and only if  $IG(H)$  admits an  $(l_H, s_H)$ -respecting arc representation into  $\mathbb{C}_n$ .*

*Subproof.* Assume that  $H$  is  $\mathcal{P}$ -overlaid by a cycle  $C = (v_0, v_1, \dots, v_{n-1}, v_0)$ . There is a canonical embedding of  $C$  to  $\mathbb{C}_n$  in which every vertex  $v_i$  is mapped to  $i$  and every edge  $v_i v_{i+1}$  to the circular arc  $[i, i+1]$ . For every hyperedge  $S \in E(H)$ ,  $P[S]$  is a subpath, which is mapped to the circular arc  $A_S$  of  $\mathbb{C}_n$  that is the union of the circular arcs to which its edges are mapped. Clearly,  $\mathcal{A} = \{A_S \mid S \in E(H)\}$  is an  $(l_H, s_H)$ -respecting interval representation of  $IG(H)$ .

Conversely, assume that  $IG(H)$  admits an  $(l_H, s_H)$ -respecting interval representation  $\mathcal{A} = \{A_S \mid S \in E(H)\}$  into  $\mathbb{C}_n$ . Let  $S_0$  be a hyperedge of minimum size. Free to rotate all intervals, we may assume that  $A_{S_0}$  is  $[1, |S_0|]$ . Now since  $\mathcal{A}$  is  $(l_H, s_H)$ -respecting and  $H$  is connected, we deduce that the extremities of  $A_S$  are integers for all  $S \in E(H)$ . Let  $v_1$  be a vertex of  $H$  that belongs to the hyperedges whose corresponding arcs of  $\mathcal{A}$  contain 1. Then for all  $i = 2$  to  $n = |V(H)|$ , choose a vertex  $v_i$  not in  $\{v_1, \dots, v_{i-1}\}$  that belongs to the hyperedges whose corresponding arcs of  $\mathcal{A}$  contain  $i$ . Such a  $v_i$  exists because  $\mathcal{A}$  is  $(l_H, s_H)$ -respecting. Observe that such a construction yields  $S = \{v_i \mid i \in A_S\}$  for all  $S \in E(H)$ . Furthermore, the cycle  $C = (v_1, \dots, v_n, v_1)$   $\mathcal{P}$ -overlays  $H$ . Indeed, for each  $S \in E(H)$ ,  $C[S]$  is the subpath corresponding to  $A_S$ , that is  $V(C[S]) = \{v_i \mid i \in A_S\}$  and  $E(C[S]) = \{v_i v_{i+1} \mid [i, i+1] \subseteq A_S\}$ .  $\diamond$

The algorithm to solve  $(\Delta \leq 2)$ - $\mathcal{P}$ -OVERLAY for a connected hypergraph  $H$  in linear time is thus the following:

1. Construct the intersection graph  $IG(H)$  and compute the associated functions  $l_H$  and  $s_H$ .
2. Check whether graph  $IG(H)$  has an  $(l_H, s_H)$ -respecting interval representation. If it is the case, return ‘Yes’. If not return ‘No’.

□

**Remark 1.** We can also detect in polynomial time whether a connected hypergraph  $H$  is  $\mathcal{P}$ -overlaid by a path. Indeed, similarly to Claim 9, one can show that there is a path  $\mathcal{P}$ -overlaying  $H$  if and only if  $IG(H)$  admits an  $(l_H, s_H)$ -respecting interval representation.

## 6 Further research

Theorem 2 completely characterizes the complexity of MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $\mathcal{F}$ -OVERLAY when  $\mathcal{F}$  contains a unique graph. It would be nice to extend this characterization to families  $\mathcal{F}$  of arbitrary size.

**Problem 1.** Characterize the pairs  $(\mathcal{F}, k)$  for which MAX  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $\mathcal{F}$ -OVERLAY is polynomial-time solvable and those for which it is  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete.

A first step would be to consider families  $\mathcal{F}$  containing two graphs of the same order. Theorem 1 and the results obtained in Section 5 give a first view of the complexity of  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $\mathcal{F}$ -OVERLAY. A natural problem is to close the dichotomy:

**Problem 2.** Characterize the pairs  $(F, k)$  for which  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $F$ -OVERLAY is polynomial-time solvable and those for which it is  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete.

It would be interesting to consider the complexity of this problem when  $F$  is  $k$ -regular but non-connected, and when  $F$  is a cycle. In order to attack Problem 2, it would be helpful to prove the following conjecture.

**Conjecture 1.** *If  $(\Delta \leq k)$ -F-OVERLAY is  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete, then  $(\Delta \leq k + 1)$ -F-OVERLAY is also  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete.*

Furthermore, for each pair  $(\mathcal{F}, k)$  such that  $\text{MAX } (\Delta \leq k)$ - $\mathcal{F}$ -OVERLAY is  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete and  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $\mathcal{F}$ -OVERLAY is polynomial-time solvable, it is natural to consider the parameterized complexity of  $\text{MAX } (\Delta \leq k)$ - $\mathcal{F}$ -OVERLAY when parameterized by  $|E(H)| - s$ , because  $(\Delta \leq k)$ - $\mathcal{F}$ -OVERLAY is the case  $s = 0$ .

Finally, it would be interesting to obtain approximation algorithms for  $\text{MAX } (\Delta \leq k)$ - $\mathcal{F}$ -OVERLAY when this problem is  $\mathcal{NP}$ -complete.

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