Snake Graphs from Orbifolds

Esther Banaian[1] Elizabeth Kelley[1]

Snake Graphs

A snake graph is a labeled collection of square tiles, glued along their north or east edges. Snake graphs can be used to encode the Laurent expansions of cluster variables in cluster algebras of surface type [5].

Snake Graph Formula [5]

Let (S, M) be a bordered surface with triangulation T, $\mathcal{A}$ be the corresponding cluster algebra with principal coefficients, and γ be an ordinary arc on S. Then x_γ can be written as

$$x_\gamma = \frac{1}{\text{cross}(T,\gamma)} \sum_P x(P)y(P)$$

where P is a perfect matching of $G_{T,\gamma}$ and

$$\text{cross}(T,\gamma) := x_{i_1} \cdots x_{i_d} \text{ for } \tau_{i_1}, \ldots, \tau_{i_d} \text{ crossed by } \gamma$$
$$x(P) := x_{i_1} \cdots x_{i_k} \text{ for } \tau_{i_1}, \ldots, \tau_{i_k} \text{ labeling edges in } P$$
$$y(P) := \prod_{i=1}^{n} h_{\tau_i}^{m_i}$$

where m_i is the multiplicity of τ_i in $P \ominus P_-$ and $h_{\tau_i} = y_{\tau_k}$ unless τ_i is an edge of a self-folded triangle.

Generalized Cluster Algebras

Fix a semifield $(\mathbb{P}, \oplus, \cdot)$ and let $F = \mathbb{QP}[x_1, \ldots, x_n]$. A *generalized cluster seed* in F is a quadruple $(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}, B, \mathbf{Z})$ where $\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}$, and B are defined as in ordinary cluster algebras and $\mathbf{Z}$ is a collection of exchange polynomials

$$Z_i(u) = z_{i,0} + z_{i,1}u + \cdots + z_{i,d_i}u^{d_i}$$

with all $z_{i,j} \in \mathbb{P}$ and $z_{i,0} = z_{i,d_i} = 1$.

Generalized cluster algebras with all $d_i \in \{1, 2\}$ can be modeled as a triangulated orbifolds via the dictionary:

initial generalized cluster seed $\leftrightarrow$ initial triangulation
other cluster variables $\leftrightarrow$ other arcs on the orbifold
mutation $\mu_k \leftrightarrow$ "flipping" arc τ_k

The cluster variable x_i corresponds to an *ordinary arc* if $d_i = 1$ and to a *pending arc* if $d_i = 2$.

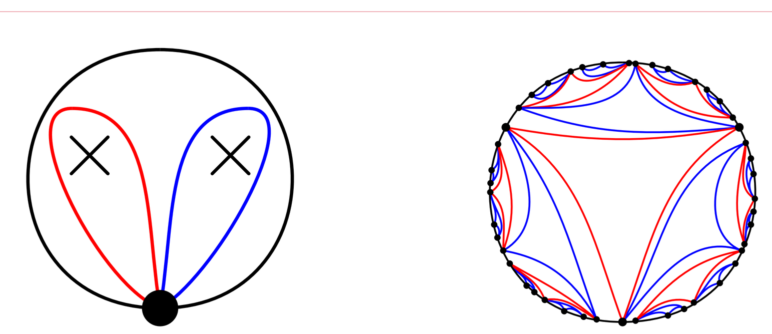


Figure: A surface with two orbifold points and a covering space when both points are order 3.

Orbifolds

An orbifold is a generalization of a manifold where the local structure is given by quotients of open subsets of $\mathbb{R}^n$ under finite group actions.
Each orbifold point, denoted as $\times$, has associated integer order p. Intuitively, an orbifold point of order p is "$1/p^{\text{th}}$" of a point. A winding arc with k self-intersections "sees" the orbifold point as a puncture if $k < p$ and as an ordinary point if $k = p$.

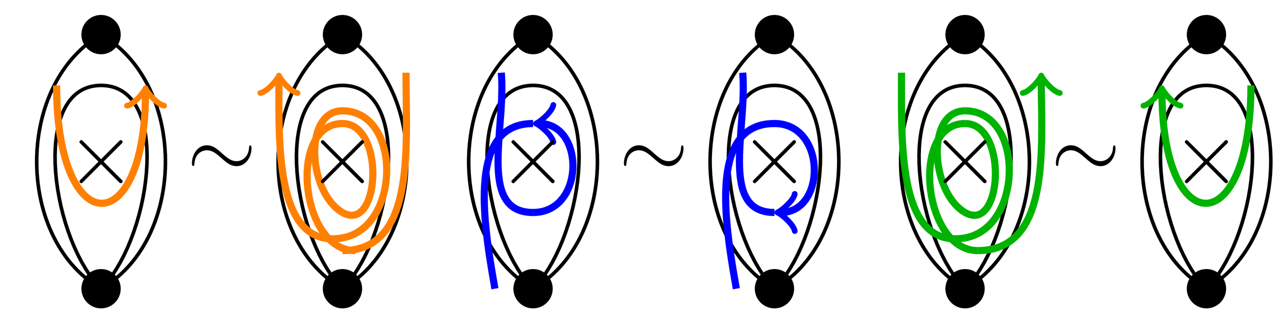
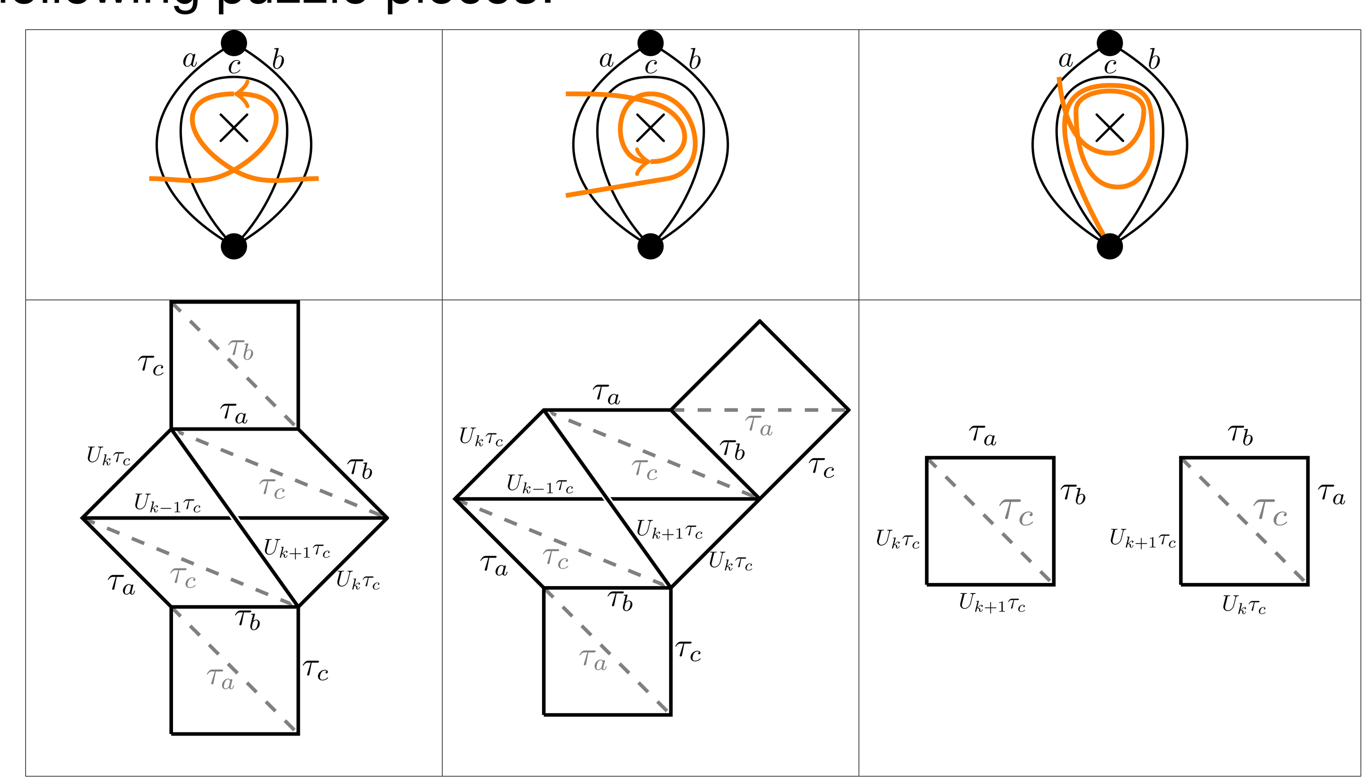


Figure: Arc winding behavior around an orbifold point of order $p = 4$.

Snake Graphs from Orbifolds

Snake graphs from triangulated orbifolds are built from the following puzzle pieces:



Remark

We let U_k denote the k-th normalized Chebyshev **evaluated at** $\lambda_p = 2\cos(\pi/p)$ where p is the order of the relevant orbifold point.
The first few values of λ_p are

$$\lambda_3 = 1, \lambda_4 = \sqrt{2}, \lambda_5 = \frac{1+\sqrt{5}}{2}, \lambda_6 = \sqrt{3}.$$

The polynomials $U_k(x)$ are defined by the following:

$$U_{-1}(x) = 0, U_0(x) = 1$$
$$U_k(x) = xU_{k-1}(x) - U_{k-2}(x)$$

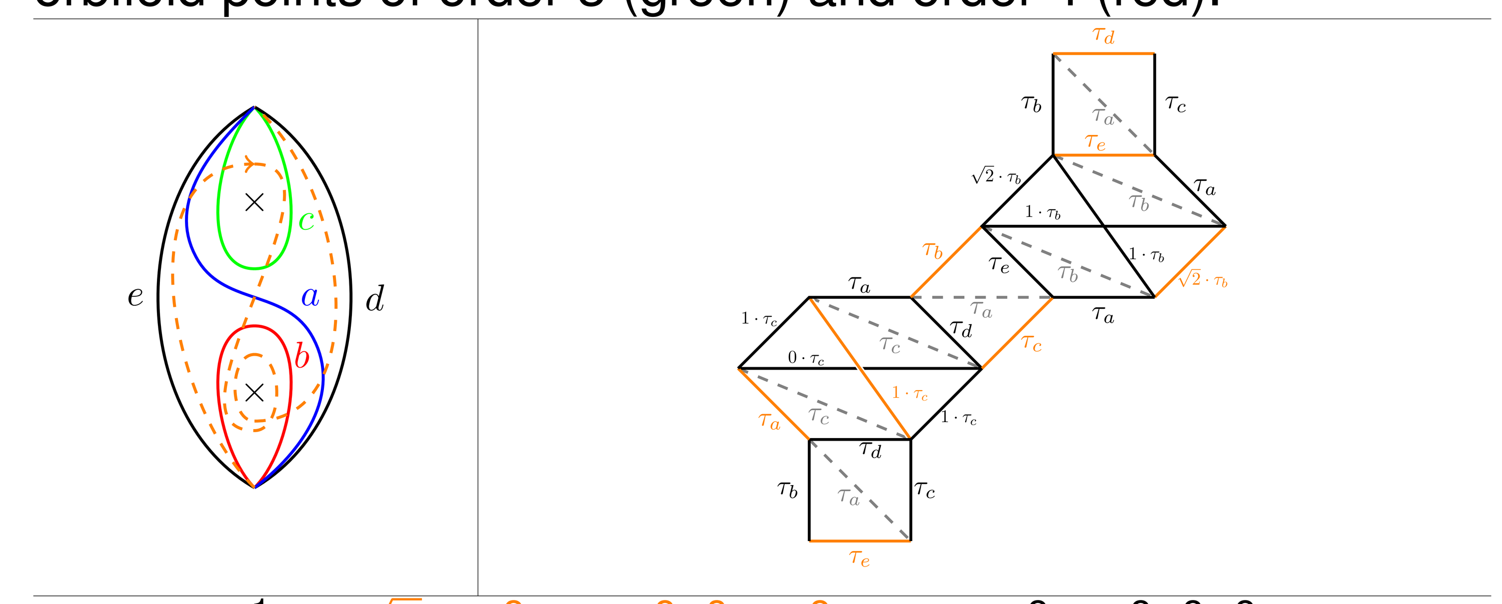
for all $k \geqslant 1$.

Extension of Snake Graph Formula

Using this construction, the MSW snake graph formula also holds for ordinary and *generalized arcs* on an orbifold surface, $\mathcal{O} = (S, M, Q)$. *Good matchings* of *band graphs* also encode Laurent expansions of closed curves.

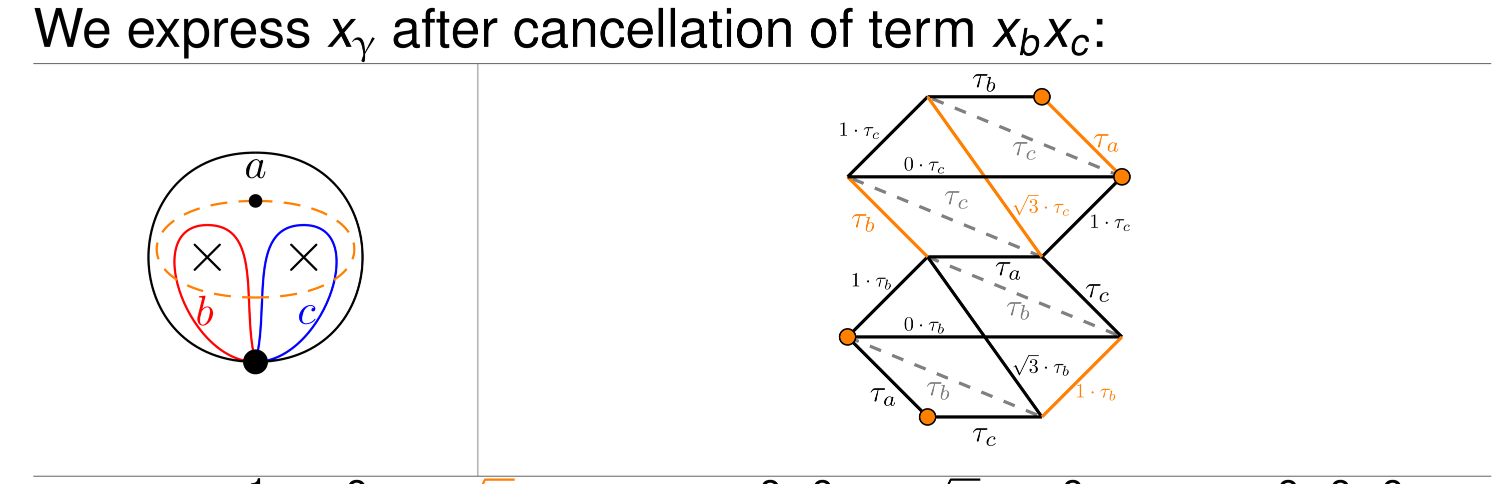
Examples

First, a generalized arc on a triangulated orbifold with orbifold points of order 3 (green) and order 4 (red).



$$x_\gamma = \frac{1}{x_a^3 x_b^2 x_c^2}(\sqrt{2}y_a y_b^2 y_c x_a x_b^2 x_c^3 x_d x_e^2 + y_a y_b y_c^2 x_a x_b^2 x_c^2 x_d^2 x_e + \cdots$$

An example of a closed curve with both points of order 6. We express x_γ after cancellation of term $x_b x_c$:



$$x_\gamma = \frac{1}{x_b x_c}(x_b^2 + \sqrt{3}y_c x_a x_b + y_c^2 x_a^2 + \sqrt{3}y_b y_c^2 x_a x_c + y_b^2 y_c^2 x_c^2)$$

Future Directions

Some of the questions we hope to further explore are:

- Can this construction be extended to generalized cluster algebras that don't correspond to triangulated orbifolds?
- Do our snake graphs help describe algebraic structure in a polygon-dissected surface?

References

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[1]University of Minnesota

This research was conducted at the University of Minnesota, supported by NSF Grant DMS- 1745638