

# Easy and hard instances of arc ranking in directed graphs

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**Abstract:** In this paper we deal with the arc ranking problem of directed graphs. We give some classes of graphs for which the arc ranking problem is polynomially solvable. We prove that deciding whether  $\chi'_r(G) \leq 6$ , where  $G$  is an acyclic orientation of a 3-partite graph is an NP-complete problem. In this way we answer an open question stated by Kratochvil and Tuza in 1999.

**Keywords:** graph ranking, digraph, computational complexity, caterpillar

## 1 Introduction

An *edge  $k$ -ranking* of a simple graph is a coloring of its edges with  $k$  colors such that each path connecting two edges with the same color contains an edge with a bigger color. Parallel assembly of multi-part products from their components is an example of a potential application of the edge ranking problem [2, 3]. In the case of the edge ranking of trees the first result was given in [4] where an  $O(n \log n)$  time approximation algorithm with a worst case performance ratio of 2 was described. Now, a linear time algorithm is known for optimal edge ranking of trees [8]. On the other hand, this problem remains NP-hard in the case of general graphs [7] of multitrees [2].

A function  $c$  mapping the set of vertices of a digraph  $G = (V(G), E(G))$  into the set of integers  $\{1, \dots, k\}$  is a *vertex  $k$ -ranking* of  $G$  if each directed path between two vertices with the same color contains a vertex with a greater color, where a *directed path* connecting vertices  $u$  and  $v$  is a set of arcs  $(uv_1), (v_1v_2), \dots, (v_{i-1}v_i), (v_iv)$ . The symbol  $\chi_r(G)$  denotes the smallest number  $k$  such that there exists a vertex  $k$ -ranking of  $G$ . The vertex ranking problem of directed graphs was introduced in [6], where it was shown that it can be solved in polynomial time in the case of oriented trees. On the other hand, deciding whether  $\chi_r(G) \leq 3$ , where  $G$  is an acyclic orientation of a planar bipartite graph is an NP-complete problem [6].

In this paper we consider the arc ranking problem of directed graphs. A *directed path* between arcs  $(uv)$  and  $(u'v')$  is any set of arcs  $(v_1v_2), \dots, (v_{i-1}v_i)$  such that  $v_1 \in \{u, v\}$  and  $v_i \in \{u', v'\}$ , or  $v_1 \in \{u', v'\}$  and  $v_i \in \{u, v\}$ . Then, function  $c : E(G) \rightarrow \{1, \dots, k\}$  is an *arc  $k$ -ranking* of a digraph  $G$  if each directed path connecting arcs with the same color  $i$  contains

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an arc with a color  $j > i$ . The smallest integer  $k$  such that  $G$  has an arc  $k$ -ranking is denoted by  $\chi'_r(G)$ .

Section 2 gives an example of a family of graphs for which the arc ranking problem can be solved efficiently. In particular, a linear time algorithm for optimal coloring of caterpillars is described. This implies that some well known classes of directed graphs like oriented paths or comets can be colored efficiently. An interesting question is whether the arc ranking problem can be solved in polynomial time for directed trees and we leave it as an open problem. In Section 3 we consider the complexity of the arc ranking problem. For an undirected graph deciding whether there exists an optimal edge ranking using a fixed number of colors can be done in constant time [1]. However, we prove in this paper that the decision problem

- input:  $G$  – an acyclic orientation of a 3-partite simple graph,
- question:  $\chi'_r(G) \leq 6$  ?

is NP-complete. In this way we answer an open question stated in [6]. Moreover, this result gives a motivation for designing efficient algorithms for some special classes of acyclic digraphs — a nontrivial example is given in the next section.

## 2 A polynomial time algorithm for caterpillars

A color  $i$  is *visible* for  $e \in E(G)$  (resp.  $v \in V(G)$ ) if there exists a directed path between  $e$  (resp.  $v$ ) and some arc with color  $i$  such that all arcs of this path have smaller colors than  $i$ . We say that arc  $e$  (vertex  $v$ ) is *incident* to color  $i$  if  $e$  (resp.  $v$ ) is adjacent (resp. incident) to some arc with color  $i$ . A *caterpillar*  $T$  is a tree containing subgraph  $P$  which is a path such that each vertex of  $T$  belongs to  $P$  or is adjacent to some vertex of  $P$ . The vertices of  $T$  which belong to  $P$  are denoted by  $v_0, v_1, \dots, v_{|V(P)|-1}$  and arcs by  $e_1, \dots, e_{|E(P)|}$ , where  $e_i = (v_i v_{i-1})$  or  $e_i = (v_{i-1} v_i)$  and the arcs  $e_i, e_{i+1}$  are adjacent,  $i = 1, \dots, |E(P)| - 1$ . The set of arcs in  $E(T) \setminus E(P)$  incident to vertex  $v_i \in V(P)$  is denoted by  $E_i = \{e_i^1, \dots, e_i^{k_i}\}$ . The symbol  $\deg_G(v)$  denotes the number of arcs (incoming and outgoing) adjacent to node  $v$  in digraph  $G$ .

We split  $P$  into the set of subpaths  $P^1, \dots, P^l$  such that each  $P^i$  is a directed subpath and  $P^i$  is not a proper subgraph of any other directed subpath in  $P$ . We say that arc  $e_i$  is the *first* arc of  $P^j$  if  $e_i \in E(P^j)$  and  $e_{i-1} \notin E(P^j)$ . Similarly,  $e_i$  is the *last* arc of  $P^j$  if  $e_i \in E(P^j)$  and  $e_{i+1} \notin E(P^j)$ . A path  $P^i$  is said to be *short* if it contains at most two arcs. Otherwise the subpath is *long*. Fig. 1 depicts an example of a caterpillar.

If  $G$  is a digraph and  $S \subseteq V(G)$  then the subgraph of  $G$  *induced* by  $S$  is defined as  $G[S] = (S, \{(uv) \in E(G) : u, v \in S\})$ . Let  $N(v)$  denote the set of neighbors of node  $v$  in  $T$ . We define

$$T_i = T[\{v_0\} \cup N(v_0) \cup \dots \cup N(v_{i-1}) \cup (N(v_i) \setminus \{v_{i+1}\})], \quad 0 \leq i \leq |V(P)|,$$

$$T_{i,j} = T[V(T_j) \setminus V(T_{i-1})], \quad 0 \leq i \leq j \leq |V(P)|,$$

where  $V(T_{-1}) = \emptyset$ . Assume that we have an arc ranking  $c$  of  $T_i$ , where  $e_i$  is the last arc of some subpath. Define two sets  $A_i(c), B_i(c)$  so that  $A_i(c)$  contains all colors of arcs which are incident to  $v_i$  and  $B_i(c)$  contains all colors visible for  $e_{i+1}$  which do not belong to  $A_i(c)$ . In

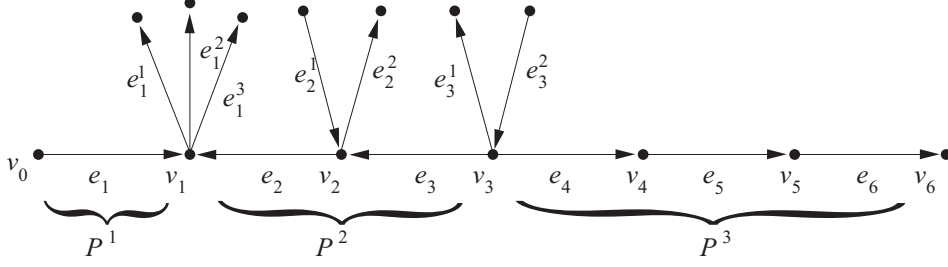


Figure 1: A caterpillar containing two short subpaths  $P^1, P^2$  and one long subpath  $P^3$

other words, the set  $B_i(c)$  contains colors which are forbidden for the arc  $e_{i+1}$  and each color  $s$  in  $A_i(c)$  is forbidden for each arc  $e$  of  $T_{i, |V(P)|}$  such that  $e$  is connected to  $e_i$  by a directed path in  $T$  and all arcs of this directed path get smaller colors than  $s$ . We say that an arc ranking  $c'$  of  $T_j$  *extends* an arc ranking  $c$  of  $T_i, j > i$  if  $c'$  is valid and  $c'|_{E(T_i)} = c|_{E(T_i)}$ , i.e.  $c'(e) = c(e)$  for each  $e \in E(T_i)$ . Observe that an arc ranking of a directed graph  $G$  does not depend on the orientation of an arc  $(uv)$ , such that  $\deg_G(u) = 1$  or  $\deg_G(v) = 1$  so we do not have to take into consideration the orientations of  $e_i^j, i = 1, \dots, |E(P)|, j = 1, \dots, k_i$ .

In the following we describe an efficient algorithm for arc ranking of caterpillars. First, we give three lemmas showing how to assign colors to the arcs of a long path. For the purposes of the next three lemmas define for an arc ranking  $c$  of  $T_i$  the set  $F_i(c), i = 0, \dots, |V(P)| - 1$ , which contains all the colors assigned to the arcs in  $E(T_i)$ , which are visible for  $v_i$ . In particular, if  $e_i$  is the last arc of a path then  $F_i(c) = A_i(c) \cup B_i(c)$ . For two sets  $X, Y$ , containing integers, we say that  $X$  is *lexicographically smaller* than  $Y$  ( $Y$  is *lexicographically bigger* than  $X$ ) if there exists  $x \notin X$  such that  $x \in Y$  and for each  $x' > x$  we have  $x' \in X$  if and only if  $x' \in Y$ . In that case we write  $X <_l Y$ . Moreover  $X \leq_l Y$  if  $X <_l Y$  or  $X = Y$ .

**Lemma 1** *Let the arcs  $e_i, \dots, e_j$  form a long subpath of  $P$ . Assume that  $\tilde{c}$  is an optimal arc ranking of  $T$  and  $c$  is an arc ranking of  $T_l, i \leq l \leq j - 2$ , using at most  $\chi'_r(T)$  colors. If  $F_l(c) \leq_l F_l(\tilde{c})$  then  $c$  can be extended to an optimal arc ranking of  $T$ .*

**Proof:** We extend  $c$  to  $T$  in such a way that

$$c(e_{l+1}) = \max \left( (\{\tilde{c}(e_{l+1})\} \cup F_l(\tilde{c}) \setminus F_l(c)) \right) \quad (1)$$

and  $c(e) = \tilde{c}(e)$  for each  $e \in E(T) \setminus (E(T_l) \cup \{e_{l+1}\})$ .

Observe that for two sets  $X, Y$  we have that  $X \subseteq Y, X \neq Y$  imply  $X <_l Y$ . So  $\{\tilde{c}(e_{l+1})\} \cup F_l(\tilde{c}) \subseteq F_l(c)$  would imply that  $F_l(\tilde{c}) \subseteq F_l(c)$  and  $F_l(\tilde{c}) \neq F_l(c)$ , because  $\tilde{c}(e_{l+1}) \notin F_l(\tilde{c})$ . By assumption this is not possible. So  $(\{\tilde{c}(e_{l+1})\} \cup F_l(\tilde{c})) \setminus F_l(c) \neq \emptyset$ , which means that the definition of  $c(e_{l+1})$  given in (1) is correct.

We have that

$$F_l(\tilde{c}) \cap \{c(e_{l+1}) + 1, \dots, \chi'_r(T)\} = F_l(c) \cap \{c(e_{l+1}) + 1, \dots, \chi'_r(T)\}, \quad (2)$$

because  $(F_l(\tilde{c}) \setminus F_l(c)) \cap \{c(e_{l+1}) + 1, \dots, \chi'_r(T)\} \neq \emptyset$  contradicts (1), while  $(F_l(c) \setminus F_l(\tilde{c})) \cap \{c(e_{l+1}) + 1, \dots, \chi'_r(T)\} \neq \emptyset$  gives a contradiction with (1) and the inequality  $F_l(c) \leq_l F_l(\tilde{c})$ .

Moreover,  $c(e_{l+1}) \geq \tilde{c}(e_{l+1})$  which follows directly from (1) in the case when  $\tilde{c}(e_{l+1}) \notin F_l(c)$  and if  $\tilde{c}(e_{l+1}) \in F_l(c)$  then assuming  $c(e_{l+1}) < \tilde{c}(e_{l+1})$  we have by (2) that  $\tilde{c}(e_{l+1}) \in F_l(\tilde{c})$  which violates the definition of arc ranking in the case of  $\tilde{c}$ .

We have that  $c$  uses at most  $\chi_r'(T)$  colors, so it remains to show that  $c$  is a valid arc ranking of  $T$ . Assume for a contradiction that two arcs  $e'$  and  $e''$  have the same color  $d$  and there exists a directed path  $P'$  between them, such that all arcs of this path have colors smaller than  $d$ . Clearly, it is not possible that  $e', e'' \in E(T_l)$  or  $e', e'' \in E(T) \setminus (E(T_l) \cup \{e_{l+1}\})$ . The first case to consider is when one arc, say  $e''$ , equals  $e_{l+1}$ . It is not possible that  $e' \in E(T_l)$  because by (1)  $c(e_{l+1}) \notin F_l(c)$ . Thus,  $e' \in E(T) \setminus (E(T_l) \cup \{e_{l+1}\})$ . Clearly  $c(e_{l+1}) \neq \tilde{c}(e_{l+1})$  because otherwise we have a contradiction with the fact that  $\tilde{c}$  is a valid arc ranking of  $T$ . So, by (1) we have that  $c(e_{l+1}) \in F_l(\tilde{c})$  – a contradiction. Now assume that  $e' \in E(T_l)$  and  $e'' \in E(T) \setminus (E(T_l) \cup \{e_{l+1}\})$ . Since  $e_{l+1} \in E(P')$  we have that  $d > c(e_{l+1})$ . By (2)  $d \in F_l(c)$  if and only if  $d \in F_l(\tilde{c})$  which leads to a contradiction with the assumption that  $\tilde{c}$  is an arc ranking of  $T$ .  $\square$

In the next lemma  $\overline{S} = \{l : l \notin S\}$ .

**Lemma 2** *Let the arcs  $e_i, \dots, e_j$  form a long subpath of  $P$  and assume that an arc ranking  $c$  of  $T_{i-1}$  can be extended to an optimal solution for  $T$ . Define an arc ranking  $c'$  of  $T_{j-2}$  in such a way that  $c'|_{E(T_{i-1})} = c|_{E(T_{i-1})}$ ,*

$$c'(e_i) = \begin{cases} \min(X \cap \overline{F_{i-1}(c')}) & \text{if } X \cap \overline{F_{i-1}(c')} \neq \emptyset, \\ \min(\overline{F_{i-1}(c')}) & \text{if } X \cap \overline{F_{i-1}(c')} = \emptyset, \end{cases} \quad (3)$$

where  $X = \{c'(e_{i-1}), \dots, k_i + 2\}$ ,

$$c'(e_t) = \min\{l : l \notin F_{t-1}(c') \cup \{1, \dots, k_t\}\} \text{ for } t = i + 1, \dots, j - 2 \quad (4)$$

and the arcs in  $E_t$ ,  $t = i, \dots, j - 2$ , get the smallest and pairwise different colors which do not belong to  $(F_{t-1}(c') \setminus \{1, \dots, c'(e_t) - 1\}) \cup \{c'(e_t)\}$ . Then,  $c'$  can be extended to an optimal solution for  $T$ .

**Proof:** We prove by induction on  $t = i, \dots, j - 2$  that  $F_t(c')$  is lexicographically minimal among all arc rankings  $c''$  such that  $c''|_{E(T_{i-1})} = c|_{E(T_{i-1})}$ . By Lemma 1,  $c'$  can be extended to an optimal solution for  $T$ .

Let  $t = i$ . Observe that we may w.l.o.g. assume that if there exists a color  $d \notin F_{i-1}(c)$  then no arc  $e \in E_{i-1}$  gets a color bigger than  $d$ . This follows from the fact that if  $c(e_i) > d$  then  $c(e)$  can be redefined to  $d$ , and if  $c(e_i) \leq d$  then we can exchange the colors of  $e$  and  $e_i$  because  $e_i$  is the first arc of a long path. This in particular implies that no color in  $F_{i-1}(c')$  except  $c'(e_{i-1})$  can be visible for the arcs in  $E_i$ . Following (3) we consider two cases.

*Case 1:*  $\{c'(e_{i-1}), \dots, k_i + 2\} \cap \overline{F_{i-1}(c')} \neq \emptyset$ . Clearly  $c'(e_i) > c'(e_{i-1})$ . If  $c'(e_i) \leq k_i + 1$  then  $F_i(c') = \{1, \dots, k_i + 1\}$  and this set is lexicographically minimal, because  $F_i(c')$  must contain at least  $k_i + 1$  elements since all arcs in  $E_i \cup \{e_i\}$  get pairwise different colors in each proper arc ranking. If  $c'(e_i) = k_i + 2$  then

$$F_i(c') = \{1, \dots, k_i, k_i + 2\}. \quad (5)$$

If we assign to  $e_i$  a color bigger than  $k_i + 2$  then we clearly obtain a lexicographically bigger set than in (5). If  $e_i$  gets in  $c'$  a color smaller than  $k_i + 2$  then by (3)  $c'(e_i) < c'(e_{i-1})$  and  $F_i(c')$  must contain  $k_i + 2$  elements (since each arc  $e \in E_i$  get a different color than  $c'(e_i)$  and  $c'(e_{i-1})$ ), which means that  $F_i(c')$  is lexicographically bigger than in (5).

*Case 2:*  $\{c'(e_{i-1}), \dots, k_i + 2\} \cap \overline{F_{i-1}(c')} = \emptyset$ . If  $c'(e_i) > c'(e_{i-1})$  then  $F_i(c') = \{1, \dots, k_i, c'(e_i)\}$  and  $F_i(c')$  is lexicographically minimal, because by (3) all colors smaller than  $c'(e_i)$  belong to  $F_{i-1}(c')$ . If  $c'(e_i) < c'(e_{i-1})$  then no arc in  $E_i$  gets a color bigger than  $k_i + 2$ , because all colors different than  $c'(e_i)$  and  $c'(e_{i-1})$  are available for the arcs in  $E_i$ . The only way to remove  $c'(e_{i-1})$  from  $F_i(c')$  is to assign to  $e_i$  a color  $d$  bigger than  $c'(e_{i-1})$ , and by (3) we have that  $d > k_i + 2$ . Thus,  $F_i$  is lexicographically minimal.

Let  $i < t \leq j - 2$ . By the induction hypothesis we have that the set  $F_{t-1}(c')$  is lexicographically minimal. According to (4) we assign to  $e_t$  a color bigger than  $k_t$ . Thus,

$$F_t(c') = \{1, \dots, k_t\} \cup \{c'(e_t)\} \cup \{l \in F_{t-1}(c') : l > c'(e_t)\}.$$

Assume that  $c''$  is an arc ranking of  $T_t$ , such that  $c''|_{E(T_{i-1})} = c|_{E(T_{i-1})}$ . If  $c'(e_t) = c''(e_t)$  then by assumption  $F_{t-1}(c') \setminus \{1, \dots, c'(e_t)\} \leq_l F_{t-1}(c'') \setminus \{1, \dots, c'(e_t)\}$  which proves the thesis.

If  $c''(e_t) > c'(e_t)$  then there are two possibilities: (i)  $c''(e_t) \in F_{t-1}(c')$  implies that  $F_{t-1}(c') \setminus \{1, \dots, c''(e_t)\} \neq F_{t-1}(c'') \setminus \{1, \dots, c''(e_t)\}$ , because  $c''(e_t) \notin F_{t-1}(c'')$ . By the minimality of  $F_{t-1}(c')$ ,  $F_{t-1}(c') \setminus \{1, \dots, c''(e_t)\} <_l F_{t-1}(c'') \setminus \{1, \dots, c''(e_t)\}$ . Since the arcs in  $E_t \cup \{e_t\}$  get colors smaller than  $c''(e_t)$  in arc ranking  $c'$ , we have that  $F_{t-1}(c') \setminus \{1, \dots, c''(e_t)\} = F_t(c') \setminus \{1, \dots, c''(e_t)\}$ , which proves that  $F_t(c') <_l F_t(c'')$  – a contradiction; (ii)  $c''(e_t) \notin F_{t-1}(c')$ . By the minimality of  $F_{t-1}(c')$  we have that  $F_{t-1}(c') \setminus \{1, \dots, c''(e_t)\} \leq_l F_{t-1}(c'') \setminus \{1, \dots, c''(e_t)\}$ , which means that  $F_t(c') \setminus \{1, \dots, c''(e_t) - 1\} <_l F_t(c'') \setminus \{1, \dots, c''(e_t) - 1\}$ , because  $c''(e_t) \notin F_t(c')$  since  $k_t < c'(e_t) < c''(e_t)$ . So,  $F_t(c') <_l F_t(c'')$  – a contradiction.

If  $k_t < c''(e_t) < c'(e_t)$  then by (4)  $\{k_t, \dots, c'(e_t) - 1\} \subseteq F_{t-1}(c')$  which together with the minimality of  $F_{t-1}(c')$  implies that  $F_t(c') \setminus \{1, \dots, c'(e_t) - 1\} <_l F_t(c'') \setminus \{1, \dots, c'(e_t) - 1\}$ . So,  $F_t(c') <_l F_t(c'')$ .

Finally we consider the case  $c''(e_t) \leq k_t$ . Observe that  $k_t + 1 - c''(e_t)$  arcs in  $E_t$  require bigger than  $c''(e_t)$  and pairwise different colors which do not belong to  $F_{t-1}(c'')$ . Let  $e \in E_t$  be such an arc that  $c''(e) = \max(c''(E_t))$ . Since  $i < t \leq j - 2$  we may exchange the colors of  $e$  and  $e_t$  in  $c''$ . The new set  $F_t(c'')$  is not lexicographically bigger than the previous one and clearly  $c''(e_t)$  is now bigger than  $k_t$ , so we have reduced this situation to one of the cases described above.  $\square$

**Lemma 3** *Let  $e_i, \dots, e_j$  form a long subpath of  $P$  and let  $c$  be an optimal arc ranking of  $T_{i-1}$  such that  $A_{i-1}(c) = \{1, \dots, k_{i-1} + 1\}$  and  $k_{i-1} + 2 \notin B_{i-1}(c)$ . Then  $c$  can be extended to an optimal arc ranking of  $T$ .*

**Proof:** We assign color  $k_{i-1} + 2$  to the arc  $e_i$  and the arcs in  $E_i$  get the smallest and pairwise different colors which do not belong to  $(F_{i-1}(c) \cup \{k_{i-1} + 2\}) \setminus \{1, \dots, k_{i-1} + 1\} = \{k_{i-1} + 2\}$ , which results in an arc ranking  $c$  with lexicographically the smallest set  $F_i(c)$ . By Lemma 1,  $c$  can be extended to an optimal solution for  $T$ .  $\square$

Below we describe a procedure for optimal arc ranking of a sequence of short paths. Lemma 4 gives a bound for the number of colors required to label such a subgraph.

**Lemma 4** *Let  $P^r, \dots, P^t$  be a sequence of short paths containing arcs  $e_i, \dots, e_j$  and let  $d = \max\{k_{i-1}, \dots, k_j\}$ . Then*

$$d + 1 \leq \chi'_r(T_{i-1,j}) \leq d + 3. \quad (6)$$

**Proof:** The first inequality follows from the fact that for each digraph  $G$ ,  $\chi'_r(G) \geq \max\{\deg_G(v) : v \in V(G)\}$ . Now we define an arc  $(d + 3)$ -ranking of  $T_{i-1,j}$ . Let  $e_q^p$  get color  $p$  for each  $p = 1, \dots, k_q$  and  $q = i - 1, \dots, j$ . We label the arcs  $e_i, \dots, e_j$  such that for  $r = 0, \dots, j - i$  the arc  $e_{i+r}$  gets color

$$\begin{aligned} d + 1 & \text{ if } r \bmod 4 \in \{0, 2\}, \\ d + 2 & \text{ if } r \bmod 4 = 1, \\ d + 3 & \text{ if } r \bmod 4 = 3. \end{aligned}$$

The length of each path  $P^q, q = r, \dots, t$  is bounded by 2 therefore this is a correct arc  $(d + 3)$ -ranking.  $\square$

**Lemma 5** *If  $e_i, \dots, e_j$  form a sequence of short paths then there exists an optimal arc ranking  $c$  of  $T_{i-1,j}$  such that  $c(e_p) \geq \chi'_r(T_{i-1,j}) - 14$  for each  $p = i, \dots, j$ .*

**Proof:** Denote for brevity  $\chi'_r = \chi'_r(T_{i-1,j})$ . Assume that  $c$  is such an arc  $\chi'_r$ -ranking of  $T_{i-1,j}$  that as many arcs in  $\{e_i, \dots, e_j\}$  as possible get color  $\chi'_r$ . Consider a sequence of arcs  $e_p, \dots, e_q$  such that  $p \geq i, q \leq j, q - p > 12$  and none of these arcs is labeled with  $\chi'_r$  by  $c$ . Find the smallest index  $p' \in \{p - 1, \dots, q\}$  such that  $e \in E_{p'}$  and  $c(e) = \chi'_r$ . If no such an arc  $e$  exists then for each arc  $e \in \{e_{p+3}, \dots, e_{q-3}\} \neq \emptyset$  there is no directed path connecting  $e$  to an arc labeled with  $\chi'_r$ . So, we can modify  $c$  in such a way that one arc in  $\{e_{p+3}, \dots, e_{q-3}\}$  gets color  $\chi'_r$  — a contradiction. If  $p' > p + 3$  then we can exchange the colors of  $e$  and  $e_{p'}$  which gives a proper arc ranking, because  $e_{p+3}$  is not connected by a directed path to  $v_{p-1}$  (since each path is short) and the sets of visible colors for the arcs of  $T_{p',q}$  do not change — a contradiction. Thus,  $p' \leq p + 3$  and  $\chi'_r \in c(E_{p'})$ . Clearly  $\chi'_r \notin c(E_{p'+1})$ . If  $\chi'_r \notin c(E_{p'+2})$  then there are four cases to consider, shown in Fig 2. In each case we can modify  $c$  so that some arc colored with  $x$  or  $y$ , where  $x, y < \chi'_r$  gets color  $\chi'_r$ , which leads to a contradiction. Note that we assumed that  $e_{p'+1} = (v_{p'}v_{p'+1})$ . The cases where  $e_{p'+1} = (v_{p'+1}v_{p'})$  are analogous. As we have already mentioned, we do not have to take into consideration the orientations of the arcs not in  $E(P)$ . Since  $q - p > 12$ , we can similarly prove that  $\chi'_r \in c(E_{p'+4})$  and  $\chi'_r \in c(E_{p'+6})$ .

Now we show that  $c$  can be modified so that some arc in  $\{e_p, \dots, e_q\}$  gets color  $\chi'_r$ . Let the colors  $x, w, z, y$  be assigned to  $e_{p'+1}, e_{p'+2}, e_{p'+3}$  and  $e_{p'+4}$ , respectively. We have two cases to consider:  $y \notin c(E_{p'+1})$  and  $y \in c(E_{p'+1})$  shown in Fig. 3(a) and Fig. 3(b), respectively. In both cases we have a contradiction, assuming that  $z < y$  (this implies that  $w \neq y$  and  $y \notin c(E_{p'+2})$ , which is required to obtain a proper arc ranking). Note that if  $\chi'_r \in c(E_s)$ ,

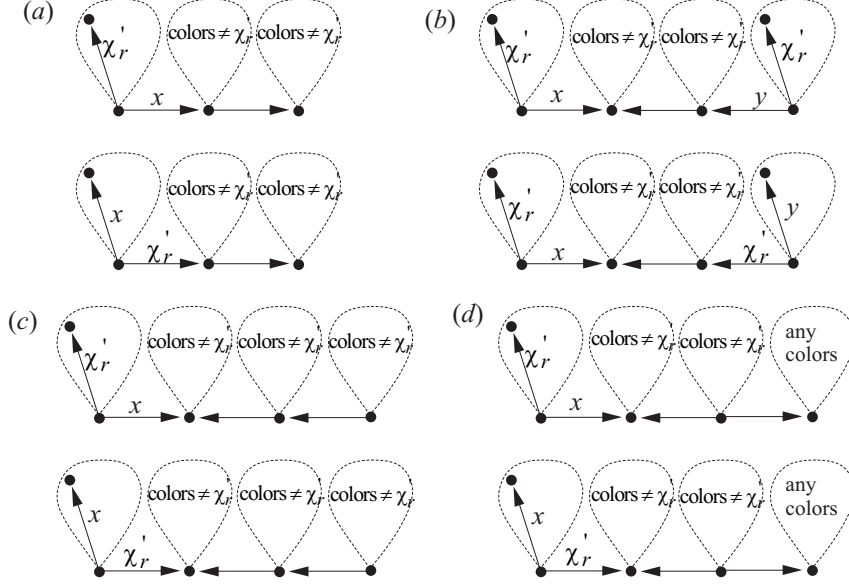


Figure 2: Transformations of  $c$  when  $\chi'_r \notin E_{p'+2}$

$s = p', p' + 2, p' + 4, p' + 6$  then by the definition of ranking  $c(e_{p'+3}) < c(e_{p'+4})$  or  $c(e_{p'+3}) > c(e_{p'+4})$  and the corresponding subgraph in Fig. 3 is  $T_{p', p'+4}$  or  $T_{p'+2, p'+6}$ , respectively. Note, that if the arcs  $e_{p'+2}, e_{p'+3}$  have the same orientation then  $y \notin c(E_{p'+1} \cup \{e_{p'+1}\})$  or  $y \in c(E_{p'+1} \cup \{e_{p'+1}\}) \wedge w > y$ . In both cases let  $e_{p'+4}$  get color  $\chi'_r$  and the arc in  $E_{p'+2}$  colored by  $\chi'_r$  can be labeled with  $y$ . Observe that the arcs colored with  $x$  and  $w$  (respectively  $z$  and  $y$ ) cannot have the same orientation. So, the situations described above and shown in Figs. 3(a) and 3(b) cover all possible cases obtained by changing the orientations of  $e_{p'+1}, \dots, e_{p'+4}$ .

So, we have proved that w.l.o.g. we may assume that if there is a sequence of arcs  $e_p, \dots, e_q$  such that  $\chi'_r \notin c(\{e_p, \dots, e_q\})$  then  $q - p \leq 12$ . Let  $S = \{e_{p'}, \dots, e_{q'}\} \subseteq \{e_p, \dots, e_q\}$ , where  $p = i$  or  $c(e_{p-1}) = \chi'_r$  and  $q = j$  or  $c(e_{q+1}) = \chi'_r$ , (possibly  $p' = q'$ ) be a set of arcs such that

$$\min\{c(e_{p'-1}), c(e_{q'+1}), \chi'_r\} > \max(c(S)) + 1 \quad (7)$$

and  $c(S)$  is a consecutive set of colors. If  $p' = i$  (respectively  $q' = j$ ) in (7) then let  $c(e_{p'-1}) = +\infty$  ( $c(e_{q'+1}) = +\infty$ , resp.). We modify  $c$  in such a way that if  $c(e) < \min\{c(e_{p'-1}), c(e_{q'+1}), \chi'_r\} - 1$  then  $c(e) := c(e) + 1$ , and if  $c(e) = \min\{c(e_{p'-1}), c(e_{q'+1}), \chi'_r\} - 1$  then  $c(e) := 1$  for each  $e \in E(T_{p'-1, q'})$ . Note that  $c$  does not use more than  $\chi'_r$  colors after the above modification. The function  $c$  is a valid arc ranking because no two arcs  $e \in E(T_{p'-1, q'})$  and  $e' \notin E(T_{p'-1, q'})$  violate the definition of ranking, while the coloring of  $T_{p'-1, q'}$  remains valid, because an arc colored with label 1 does not belong to a directed path connecting any two arcs of  $T$ . We repeat the above step as long as there exists a subset  $S$  of  $\{e_p, \dots, e_q\}$  satisfying (7). This gives an arc ranking  $c$  such that

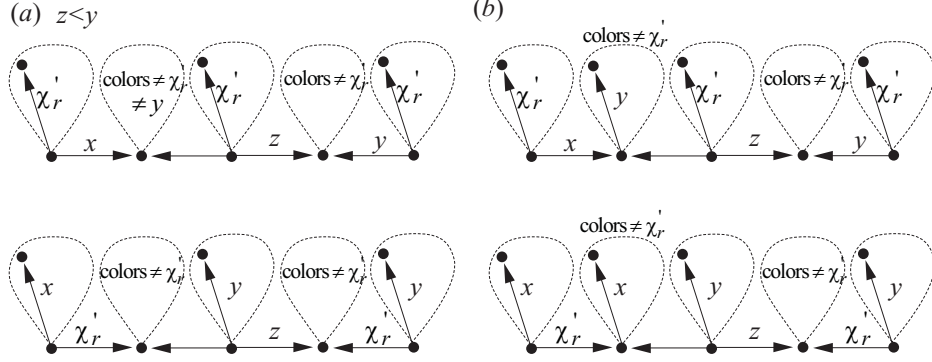


Figure 3: Transformation of  $c$  which increases the number of arcs in  $E(P)$  labeled with  $\chi'_r$

$\min\{c(e_p), \dots, c(e_q)\} \geq \chi'_r - 14$ , because by assumption  $|\{e_p, \dots, e_q\}| \leq 14$  and  $c(\{e_p, \dots, e_q\})$  is a consecutive set of colors.  $\square$

Now we describe a procedure for optimal arc ranking of a sequence of short paths containing arcs  $e_i, \dots, e_j$ . For each index  $p = i - 1, \dots, j$  define set  $C_p$  containing the arc rankings of  $T_{i-1,p}$ . Initially,  $C_{i-2}$  contains an empty coloring. Given a set  $C_p$ , the algorithm computes  $C_{p+1}$ . We extend each function  $c_p \in C_p$  to an arc ranking of  $T_{i-1,p+1}$  in such a way that  $c_p(e_{p+1}^s) = s$  for each  $s = 1, \dots, \min\{k_{p+1}, \chi'_r(T_{i-1,j}) - 15\}$ . Then,  $e_{p+1}$  gets colors from  $\{\chi'_r(T_{i-1,j}) - 14, \dots, \chi'_r(T_{i-1,j})\}$  and for each choice of color the remaining arcs (if there are any) in  $E_{p+1}$  are labeled with all possible subsets of  $\{\chi'_r(T_{i-1,j}) - 14, \dots, \chi'_r(T_{i-1,j})\} \setminus \{c(e_{p+1})\}$ . We insert into  $C_{p+1}$  all the valid arc rankings of  $T_{i-1,p+1}$  obtained in this way. If  $C_{p+1}$  contains two functions  $c_1, c_2$  such that the sets of visible colors for  $e_{p+2}, e_{p+3}$  are identical then we remove  $c_2$  from  $C_{p+1}$ . In this way the size of each set  $C_p$ ,  $p = i - 1, \dots, j$ , is bounded by a constant. Lemma 5 implies that  $C_j$  contains an arc  $\chi'_r(T_{i-1,j})$ -ranking. We do not know the value of  $\chi'_r(T_{i-1,j})$  but by Lemma 4 we can compute it by running the above procedure at most three times, substituting  $\chi'_r(T_{i-1,j}) = d + 1, d + 2, d + 3$ .

**Lemma 6** *There exists a linear time algorithm for optimal arc ranking of a sequence of short paths  $P^r, \dots, P^t$ .*  $\square$

We used the sets  $C_p$  in the context of arc ranking of a sequence of short paths. In the following we will also use such sets in the case of long paths. If  $e_{j+1}$  is the first arc of a long path then it is possible that the set  $C_j$  does not contain an arc ranking of  $T_j$  which can be extended to an optimal solution for  $T$ . We add to the set  $C_j$  an additional arc ranking satisfying the assumptions of Lemma 3, which may be not optimal for  $T_j$  but may be extended to an optimal solution for  $T$ . We consider three cases.

*Case 1:*  $k_j < \chi'_r(T_{i-1,j}) - 16$ . For each ranking  $c \in C_j$  color  $k_j + 1$  is not incident to  $v_j$  and we can relabel  $e_j$  in such a way that  $c(e_j) = k_j + 1$ . If there is an arc in  $E_{j-1}$  labeled with  $k_j + 1$  then we label this arc with the color previously assigned to  $e_j$ . Color  $k_j + 2$

is now not visible for  $v_j$  under  $c$ , which implies that after the above modification, the partial arc ranking  $c$  has the property from Lemma 3.

*Case 2:*  $k_j > \chi'_r(T_{i-1,j}) - 16$ . If  $c^\circ$  is an optimal arc ranking of  $T$  then we may assume that  $\{1, \dots, \chi'_r(T_{i-1,j}) - 15\} \subseteq A_j(c^\circ)$ . The same property holds for each arc ranking stored in  $C_j$ . If  $c^\circ$  is optimal for the sequence of short paths  $P^r, \dots, P^t$  then the set  $C_j$  contains an arc ranking  $c_j$  such that  $A_j(c_j) \subseteq A_j(c^\circ)$  and  $B_j(c_j) \subseteq B_j(c^\circ)$ . Otherwise for  $c \in C_j$  define function  $c'$  as follows

$$\begin{aligned} c'|_{E(T_{j-2})} &= c|_{E(T_{j-2})}, \\ c'(\{e_j^1, \dots, e_j^{k_j}\}) &= \{1, \dots, k_j\}, \\ c'(e_j) &= k_j + 1, \end{aligned}$$

and  $c'(e_{j-1}) = \chi'_r(T_{i-1,j}) + 1$ . It remains to assign the colors to the arcs of  $E_{j-1}$  in such a way that  $k_j + 2 \notin B_j(c')$ . Thus,  $c'(E_{j-1}) \subseteq X$ , where  $X = \{1, \dots, \chi'_r(T_{i-1,j})\} \setminus \{k_j + 1, k_j + 2\}$ . If  $\chi'_r(T_{i-1,j}) \geq d + 2$  then such an assignment is possible because  $|X| \geq d \geq |E_{j-1}|$ . If  $\chi'_r(T_{i-1,j}) = d + 1$  then  $k_j = d$  or  $k_{i-1} = d$ . If  $k_j = d$  then  $k_j + 2 = d + 2 \notin B_j(c)$  for each  $c \in C_j$ . If  $k_j < d$  then  $|E_{j-1}| \leq d - 1 \leq |X|$ .

*Case 3:*  $k_j = \chi'_r(T_{i-1,j}) - 16$ . First, for each ranking  $c \in C_j$  we perform the same operation as in *Case 1*, i.e. we change the color of  $e_j$  to  $k_j + 1$ . Then, if no function in  $C_j$  satisfies the assumptions of Lemma 3 we add an appropriate arc ranking in a similar way as in *Case 2*.

Assume now that we have a partial arc ranking  $c$  of  $T_{i-3}$ , where  $e_{i-1}$  is the last arc of a long path, and a set of arc rankings of short paths  $P^r, \dots, P^t$  (containing arcs  $e_i, \dots, e_j$ ). Observe that this situation is similar to the one described above. If we rename the vertices  $v_0, \dots, v_j$  to  $v_j, \dots, v_0$ , respectively then we have to compute the set  $C_{j-i}$ . The algorithm for arc ranking of a sequence of short paths  $e_i, \dots, e_j$  can be easily modified so that all arc rankings of  $T_{i-1,j}$  with different sets of visible colors for the arcs of  $T_{i-2} + e_{i-1}$  and  $T_{j+1, |V(P)|} + e_{j+1}$  have been computed. Then for each arc ranking of a sequence of short paths we color arcs adjacent to  $v_{j-i+1}, v_{j-i+2}$  as in Lemma 2.

Let  $P^i, P^{i+1}$  be two long path, and  $P^i$  contains arcs  $e_l, \dots, e_p$ . It is sufficient if the set  $C_p$  contains at most two arc rankings. The first element of  $C_p$  is an optimal coloring  $c$  (with lexicographically smallest set of visible colors for  $e_{p+1}$ ) obtained by means of a greedy coloring as shown in Lemma 2. If  $c$  does not satisfy the assumptions of Lemma 3 then we insert to  $C_p$  an arc ranking  $c'$  obtained from  $c$  in such a way that  $e_{p-1}$  gets the smallest available color but bigger than  $k_p + 2$ . Then,  $c'$  satisfies the assumptions of Lemma 3 but it may not be optimal in the case of  $T_p$ . In this way we can label a sequence of long paths.

**Theorem 1** *There exists a linear time algorithm for finding an optimal arc ranking of a caterpillar.*

**Proof:** From Lemmas 2 and 3 we know how to color arcs of a long path. Rankings of long paths do not differ for simple and oriented subgraphs, so this step can be done in linear time [8]. We have also described the procedure for coloring a sequence of short paths, and we showed that this procedure creates a set of arc rankings such that at least one of them can

be extended to an optimal solution for  $T$ . We have proved that for each  $i = 1, \dots, |V(P)|$   $|C_i| = \Theta(1)$ . Thus, the algorithm has linear running time.  $\square$

Since paths and comets are special cases of caterpillars, we have

**Corollary 1** *The arc ranking problem for oriented paths and comets can be solved in linear time.*  $\square$

### 3 Arc 6-ranking of acyclic orientations of 3-partite graphs is hard

We say that a digraph  $G$  is an *orientation* of a simple graph  $G'$  if  $V(G) = V(G')$  and  $\{u, v\} \in E(G')$  if and only if  $(uv) \in E(G)$  or  $(vu) \in E(G)$ . The orientation is *acyclic* if digraph  $G$  does not contain a directed cycle  $(v_1v_2), \dots, (v_{k-1}v_k), (v_kv_1)$ . In order to prove that arc 6-ranking of acyclic orientations of 3-partite graphs is an NP-complete problem we will show a polynomial-time reduction from the 3-satisfiability problem (3-SAT). First we define subgraphs  $H_1$  and  $H_2$ , which will be used to create the digraph corresponding to the Boolean formula. Let  $P_n$  be the directed path:

$$P_n = (\{p_1, \dots, p_n\}, \{(p_i p_{i+1}) : i = 1, \dots, n-1\}).$$

Since the arc ranking problem of directed paths  $P_n$  is identical to the edge ranking problem of undirected paths we obtain that  $\chi'_r(P_n) = \lceil \log n \rceil$  [5]. In particular,  $\chi'_r(P_{2^5+1}) = 6$  and each arc of  $P_{2^5+1}$  can be colored with 6. Similarly,  $\chi'_r(P_{2^5+2^4+2}) = 6$ .

Digraphs  $H_1$  and  $H_2$  are defined as follows:

$$V(H_1) = \{v_0, \dots, v_5\} \cup V(P_{2^5+2^4+2}), \quad (8)$$

$$E(H_1) = E(P_{2^5+2^4+2}) \cup \{(v_2v_0), (v_2v_1), (p_nv_2), (v_4v_2), (v_3v_4), (v_5v_4)\},$$

$$V(H_2) = V(H_1) \cup V(P_{2^5+2^4+2}) \cup \{v_6, v_7, v_8\}, \quad (9)$$

$$E(H_2) = E(H_1) \cup E(P_{2^5+2^4+2}) \cup \{(v_6v_5), (v_7v_6), (v_8v_6), (v_6p_1)\}.$$

The paths  $P_{2^5+2^4+2}$  in (8) and (9) are different subgraphs (see Fig. 4). Figures 4(a) and 4(b) present digraphs  $H_1$  and  $H_2$ , respectively. Fig. 4(c) shows an optimal arc ranking of  $H_2$ .

**Lemma 7**  $\chi'_r(H_2) = 6$ . *If  $c$  is an optimal arc ranking of  $H_2$  then  $c((v_5v_4)) \in \{5, 6\}$ .*

**Proof:** Note that  $\chi'_r(P_{2^5+2^4+2}) = 6$  and  $P_{2^5+2^4+2}$  is a subgraph of  $H_2$ , which means that  $\chi'_r(H_2) \geq 6$ . Fig. 4(c) shows a proper arc 6-ranking of  $H_2$ . Thus  $\chi'_r(H_2) \leq 6$ , which completes the proof of the first part of the lemma.

Colors 5 and 6 assigned to some arcs of  $P_{2^5+2^4+2}$  are visible for all arcs incident to  $v_6$ , which means that the arcs incident to node  $v_6$  get colors from the set  $\{1, 2, 3, 4\}$  in an optimal arc ranking  $c$ . Vertex  $v_2$  and arcs adjacent to it have the same property. Thus,  $c((v_5v_4)) > 4$  because otherwise there would exist a directed path connecting arc incident to  $v_6$  with color

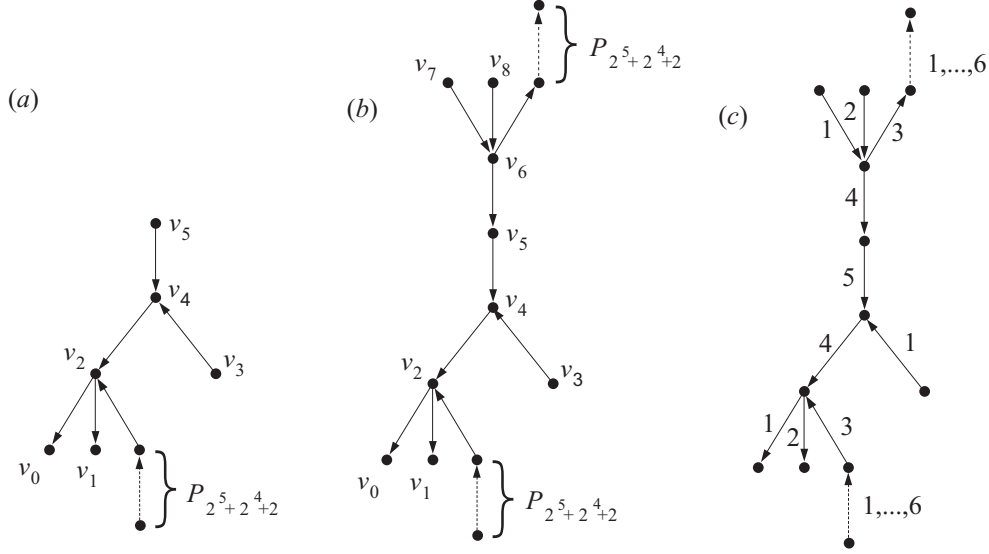


Figure 4: Digraphs (a)  $H_1$  and (b)  $H_2$ ; (c) an arc 6-ranking of  $H_2$

4 and arc incident to  $v_2$  also with color 4, such that all arcs of this path have colors smaller than 4.  $\square$

For each variable of the Boolean formula we create a digraph  $G_k$ , where  $k \geq 0$ , which contains  $k + 1$  copies of  $H_2$  denoted by  $H_2^0, \dots, H_2^k$  and  $k$  copies of subgraph  $H_1$  denoted by  $H_1^0, \dots, H_1^{k-1}$ . The subgraphs  $H_j^i$  are connected in such a way that

$$(v_5^{i,2} v_5^{i,1}), (v_5^{i+1,2} v_5^{i,1}) \in E(G_k), \quad i = 0, \dots, k-1,$$

where the symbols  $v_5^{i,1}, v_5^{i,2}$  are used to denote vertices  $v_5$  from subgraphs  $H_1^i$  and  $H_2^i$ , respectively. Fig. 5 presents digraph  $G_2$ .

**Lemma 8** *For each  $k \geq 0$  we have  $\chi_r'(G_k) = 6$ . If  $c$  is an optimal arc ranking of  $G_k$  then*

$$\forall_{i=0, \dots, k, j=0, \dots, k-1} \quad c((v_5^{j,1} v_4^{j,1})) = 5 \wedge c((v_5^{i,2} v_4^{i,2})) = 6$$

or

$$\forall_{i=0, \dots, k, j=0, \dots, k-1} \quad c((v_5^{j,1} v_4^{j,1})) = 6 \wedge c((v_5^{i,2} v_4^{i,2})) = 5.$$

**Proof:** The arcs of the path containing vertices  $v_5^{0,2}, v_5^{0,1}, \dots, v_5^{k-1,1}, v_5^{k,2}$  can be labeled with colors 1, 2, 3. If for each  $i$ ,  $c((v_5^{i,2} v_4^{i,2})) = 5$  and  $c((v_5^{i,1} v_4^{i,1})) = 6$ , then  $c$  is a valid 6-ranking of arcs of  $G_k$ , where all other arcs are colored according to the pattern shown in Fig. 4(c). This means that  $\chi_r'(G_k) \leq 6$ . From Lemma 7 and the fact that  $H_2$  is a subgraph of  $G_k$  it

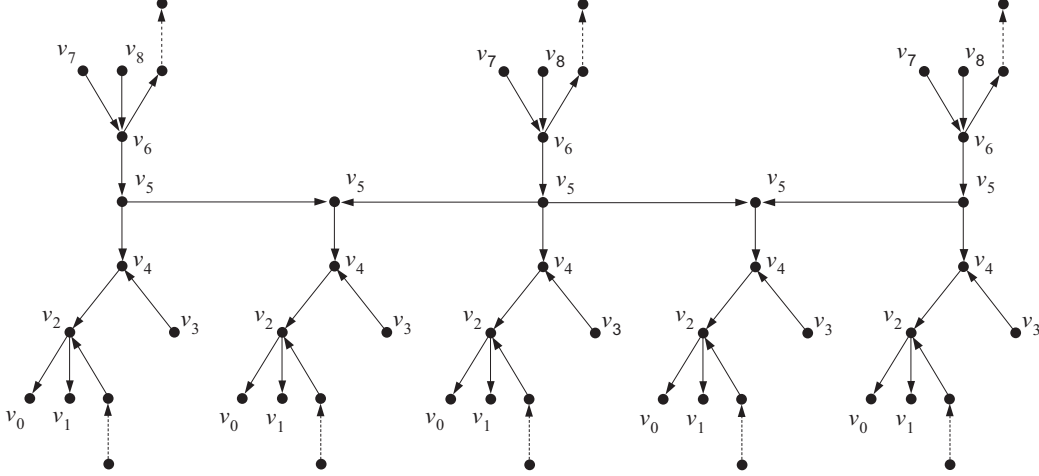


Figure 5: Digraph  $G_2$

follows that  $\chi'_r(G_k) \geq 6$ .

In order to prove the second part of the lemma we assume that  $c$  is an optimal arc ranking of  $G_k$ . By Lemma 7 we have that  $c((v_5^{i,2}v_4^{i,2})) \geq 5$  for  $i = 0, \dots, k$ . If  $c((v_5^{i,1}v_4^{i,1})) < 5$  for some  $i \in \{0, \dots, k-1\}$  then the following two inequalities hold:

$$a = c((v_5^{i,2}v_5^{i,1})) > 4, \quad b = c((v_5^{i+1,2}v_5^{i,1})) > 4,$$

because  $v_6^{i,2}, v_2^{i,1}$  are connected by a directed path in  $G_k$  and  $v_6^{i+1,2}, v_2^{i,1}$  are connected by a directed path in  $G_k$  (as we have argued in the proof of Lemma 7, each of these vertices is adjacent to an arc labeled with 4). We consider the case when  $a = 5$  and  $b = 6$  (the case when  $a = 6$  and  $b = 5$  is similar). Since  $c$  is valid,  $c((v_5^{i,2}v_4^{i,2})) \neq 5$  and  $c((v_5^{i,2}v_4^{i,2})) \neq 6$  because colors  $a$  and  $b$  are visible for the arc  $(v_5^{i,2}v_4^{i,2})$ . This implies that  $c((v_5^{i,2}v_4^{i,2})) > 6$  — a contradiction with optimality of  $c$ . Thus, we have  $c((v_5^{i,1}v_4^{i,1})) \in \{5, 6\}$ . It is possible that

$$c((v_5^{i,1}v_4^{i,1})) = c((v_5^{j,1}v_4^{j,1})), \quad c((v_5^{i,2}v_4^{i,2})) = c((v_5^{j,2}v_4^{j,2}))$$

for each  $i = 0, \dots, k, j = 0, \dots, k-1$  and we have proved that the following inequality

$$c((v_5^{i,2}v_4^{i,2})) \neq c((v_5^{i,1}v_4^{i,1})), \quad i = 0, \dots, k-1$$

holds for any valid ranking which completes the proof.  $\square$

Let the Boolean formula  $F = (l_{1,1} + l_{2,1} + l_{3,1}) \cdots (l_{1,q} + l_{2,q} + l_{3,q})$  contain variables  $x_1, \dots, x_r$ . For each variable  $x_i$  of the formula  $F$  define numbers  $f(x_i)$  and  $\bar{f}(x_i)$  such that  $f(x_i) = j$  ( $\bar{f}(x_i) = j$ ) if variable  $x_i$  ( $\bar{x}_i$ , resp.) appears  $j$  times in  $F$ . Digraph  $G_k$  corresponding to the variable  $x_i$  of  $F$  will be denoted by  $G_k^i$ , where

$$k = \max\{f(x_i) - 1, \bar{f}(x_i)\}.$$

Digraph  $G$  corresponding to  $F$  contains subgraphs  $G_{k_1}^1, \dots, G_{k_r}^r$  and for each  $i = 1, \dots, q$  we add a directed path  $P_{2^5+1}$ , and for  $j = 1, 2, 3$  we add an arc joining  $v_3^{s,2} \in V(G_{k_d}^d)$  ( $v_3^{s,1} \in V(G_{k_d}^d)$ ),  $s \in \{0, \dots, k_d\}$  with the vertex  $p_1$  of this path if  $l_{j,i} = x_d$ , i.e. we add the arc  $(v_3^{s,2} p_1)$  ( $l_{j,i} = \bar{x}_d$ , i.e. we add the arc  $(v_3^{s,1} p_1)$ , respectively). We add arcs between subgraphs  $G_{k_i}^i$  and paths  $P_{2^5+1}$  in such a way that the following condition is true for each  $i = 1, \dots, r$ :

$$\forall_{s=1, \dots, k_i} \deg(v_3^{s,1}), \deg(v_3^{s,2}) \leq 2.$$

Fig. 6 depicts an example of a digraph  $G$  corresponding to a formula  $F = (x_1 + \bar{x}_2 + x_3)(\bar{x}_1 + x_2 + x_3)(x_2 + \bar{x}_2 + \bar{x}_3)$ .

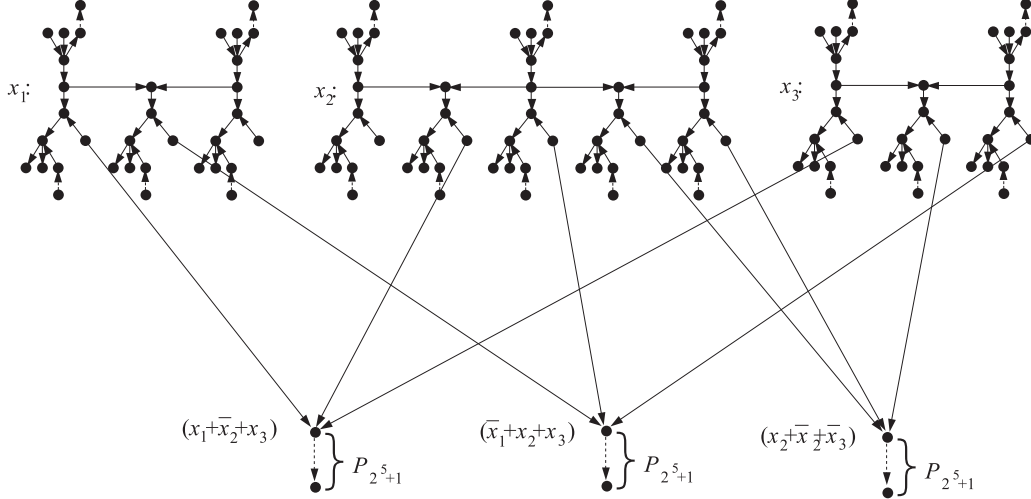


Figure 6: Digraph  $G$  for a formula  $(x_1 + \bar{x}_2 + x_3)(\bar{x}_1 + x_2 + x_3)(x_2 + \bar{x}_2 + \bar{x}_3)$

**Lemma 9**  $\chi'_r(G) \leq 6$  if and only if formula  $F$  is satisfiable.

**Proof:** We will find the lexicographically minimal set  $S$  of forbidden colors for an arc  $(v_3^{s,z} u_i)$ , assuming that no arc connecting  $u_i$  (symbol  $u_i$  is used to denote the vertex  $p_1$  of the  $i$ th path  $P_{2^5+1}$ ) with digraphs  $G_{k_j}^j$  has been labeled. Arc  $(v_3^{s,z} u_i)$  is incident to a path with  $2^5 + 1$  vertices, so  $6 \in S$ . For each valid arc 6-ranking of this path, color 6 is visible for  $(v_3^{s,z} v_4^{s,z})$ , which means that  $c((v_3^{s,z} v_4^{s,z})) < 6$ . Thus, we have  $c((v_5^{s,z} v_4^{s,z})) \in S$ . Clearly,  $c((v_3^{s,z} v_4^{s,z})) \in S$ . According to Lemma 8 we need to consider two cases:  $c((v_5^{s,z} v_4^{s,z})) = 5$  and  $c((v_5^{s,z} v_4^{s,z})) = 6$ . If  $c((v_5^{s,z} v_4^{s,z})) = 5$  then  $c((v_3^{s,z} v_4^{s,z})) \notin \{4, 5\}$ , which implies that color 4, which is incident to  $v_2^{s,z}$ , belongs to  $S$ . In this case  $S = \{c((v_3^{s,z} v_4^{s,z})), 4, 5, 6\}$ . If  $c((v_5^{s,z} v_4^{s,z})) = 6$  then  $S = \{c((v_3^{s,z} v_4^{s,z})), 4, 6\}$  (or  $S = \{5, 6\}$ , when  $c((v_3^{s,z} v_4^{s,z})) = 5$ ).

Now we are ready to prove the theorem. Assume that  $\chi'_r(G) \leq 6$ . Let the vertices which belong to subgraph  $G_{k_j}^j$  and are adjacent to  $u_i$  be denoted by  $v_3^{s_1, z_1}, v_3^{s_2, z_2}, v_3^{s_3, z_3}$ . Some arc  $(v_5^{s_j, z_j} v_4^{s_j, z_j})$ ,  $j \in \{1, 2, 3\}$  has been labeled with color 6, because otherwise each arc

$(v_3^{s_j, z_j} u_i)$ ,  $j = 1, 2, 3$  has the following set of visible colors:  $S_i = \{c((v_3^{s_j, z_j} v_4^{s_j, z_j})), 4, 5, 6\}$ . This means that some arc incident to  $u_i$  requires a color greater than 6, a contradiction. If  $c((v_5^{s_j, z_j} v_4^{s_j, z_j})) = 6$  for some  $j \in \{1, 2, 3\}$ , where  $(v_5^{s_j, z_j} v_4^{s_j, z_j}) \in E(G_{k_t}^t)$  for  $t \in \{1, \dots, r\}$ , then we define

$$x_t = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } z_j = 2, \\ 0 & \text{if } z_j = 1. \end{cases}$$

All the other variables  $x_j$  can get any Boolean value. In this way we have obtained the values of variables in  $F$  such that  $F = 1$ .

Let us assume that  $F = 1$ . Then for each  $i = 1, \dots, q$  we choose one variable  $x_j$  such that  $x_j = 1$  and  $x_j \in \{l_{1,i}, l_{2,i}, l_{3,i}\}$  or  $x_j = 0$  and  $\overline{x_j} \in \{l_{1,i}, l_{2,i}, l_{3,i}\}$ . Then if  $x_j$  is a variable corresponding to the subgraph  $G_{k_j}^j$ , such that vertex  $v_3^{s_j, x_j+1}$  of this subgraph is adjacent to  $u_i$ , then we define an arc ranking  $c$ :  $c((v_5^{s_j, x_j+1} v_4^{s_j, x_j+1})) = 6$  and the remaining arcs of  $G_{k_j}^j$  are colored as in the proof of Lemma 8. Under such an arc ranking  $c$ ,  $(v_3^{s_j, x_j+1} u_i)$  has the following set of forbidden colors:  $S = \{c((v_3^{s_j, x_j+1} v_4^{s_j, x_j+1})), 4, 6\}$ . Each of two other arcs connecting subgraphs  $G_{k_j}^j$  with vertex  $u_i$  has set  $S$  such that  $|S| \leq 4$ , which means that each arc incident to  $u_i$  can be labeled with a color smaller than 7, not belonging to the set of forbidden colors of this arc. Thus,  $c$  is a valid arc 6-ranking of  $G$ .  $\square$

**Theorem 2** *The problem of arc 6-ranking of digraphs is NP-complete.*

**Proof:** The problem is clearly in NP. For a given instance  $F$  of the 3-SAT problem we create the digraph  $G$ . Lemma 9 implies that formula  $F$  is satisfiable if and only if  $G$  has an arc 6-ranking. Clearly, this is a polynomial-time reduction, and the thesis follows.  $\square$

**Lemma 10** *Digraph  $G$  is an acyclic orientation of a 3-partite graph.*

**Proof:** Each subgraph  $G_{k_i}^i$ ,  $i = 1, \dots, r$  is a tree, which means that if  $G$  has a cycle then this cycle contains arcs between vertices  $u_p$  and subgraphs  $G_{k_i}^i$ . All arcs connecting digraphs  $G_{k_i}^i$  with  $u_p$ ,  $p = 1, \dots, q$ , have the following orientation:  $(v_3^{s_j, x_j} u_p)$ . Thus,  $G$  does not contain an oriented cycle. Subgraphs  $G_{k_i}^i$  are bipartite and vertices  $\{u_1, \dots, u_q\}$  form an independent set which means that  $G$  is 3-partite.  $\square$

From Theorem 2 and Lemma 10 we obtain the following result.

**Theorem 3** *The problem of arc 6-ranking for acyclic orientations of 3-partite graphs is NP-complete.*  $\square$

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