

Multiple tilings by cubes with no shared faces

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I. We consider a family of translates of a unit n -dimensional closed cube and assume that any point lies in only a finite number of the cubes. If every point which is not on the boundary of any cube lies in exactly k cubes, then we say that the given family of cubes furnishes a k -fold tiling of n -dimensional space. The number k is the multiplicity of the tiling. If the translations of the cubes form a lattice, then the tiling is called a lattice tiling.

Lattice cube tilings arise in connection with a famous conjecture of Minkowski. In a 1-fold lattice cube tiling of n -dimensional space, two of the cubes must share a complete $(n - 1)$ -dimensional face. Hajós confirmed Minkowski's conjecture [3].

There were two different generalizations of Minkowski's conjecture: Furtwängler's and Keller's conjectures.

Furtwängler conjectured that in a k -fold lattice cube tiling of n -dimensional space, two of the cubes must share a complete $(n - 1)$ -dimensional face. Furtwängler proved this statement for $n \leq 3$ [1], while Hajós proved that it was false for $n > 3$ [2].

Consider the following question: For which k does there exist a k -fold lattice cube tiling of n -dimensional space such that no two cubes have a common face?

Robinson proved the following [9]:

If $n = 4$, then $p^2 \mid k$, where p is an odd prime; if $n = 5$, then $k = 3$ or $k \geq 5$; if $n \geq 6$, then $k \geq 2$.

Keller conjectured that in a 1-fold cube tiling of n -dimensional space two cubes must share a complete $(n - 1)$ -dimensional face. Perron proved this statement for $n \leq 6$ [7], [8].

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Consider the following question: For which k does there exist a k -fold cube tiling of n -dimensional space in which no two cubes have a common face?

Robinson proved that this is not possible for any k for $n \leq 2$ but $k = 25, 49, 50, 74, 75, 81, 98, 100$ and every $k > 313$ is possible for $n = 3$ [9]. He wrote [9]: “But the most interesting question is whether 25 is the smallest possible multiplicity”.

The main result of this paper is that every $k > 1$ is possible for $n > 2$. Thus $k = 2$ is the smallest possible multiplicity for $n = 3, 4, 5, 6$.

II. Let $\mathcal{E}^n, \mathbb{R}, \mathbb{Z}$ be n -dimensional Euclidean space, the real number field, and the integer number ring, respectively. The translations of \mathcal{E}^n belong to the n -dimensional vector space E^n over \mathbb{R} . Let e_1, \dots, e_n be an orthonormal basis in E^n and O a fixed point in \mathcal{E}^n . The set

$$\mathcal{C}_O := \{P : \overrightarrow{OP} = c_1 e_1 + \dots + c_n e_n ; 0 \leq c_1 \leq 1, \dots, 0 \leq c_n \leq 1\}$$

is called a cube with preferential vertex O . Denote the interior of \mathcal{C}_O by $\text{int } \mathcal{C}_O$. The linear transformation $\alpha : E^n \rightarrow E^n$ is defined by $(x_1 e_1 + \dots + x_n e_n)\alpha = (x_1/q_1)e_1 + \dots + (x_n/q_n)e_n ; x_1, \dots, x_n \in \mathbb{Z}$, where q_1, \dots, q_n are fixed positive integers. The mapping $\alpha : \mathcal{E}^n \rightarrow \mathcal{E}^n$ belongs to the linear transformation α . Let X be a free abelian group with generators e_1, \dots, e_n . If L is a subgroup of $X\alpha$, then we say that L is a lattice. We shall use the following notation $(\mathcal{C}_O, L) = \{\mathcal{C}_P : \overrightarrow{OP} \in L\}$. The set $\mathcal{C}_O\alpha$ will be called a cell. Obviously $(\mathcal{C}_O, L)\alpha = (\mathcal{C}_O\alpha, L\alpha)$.

Let \mathfrak{A} be a finite abelian group, which is written multiplicatively. We shall use the group ring $\mathbb{Z}[\mathfrak{A}]$ with integer coefficients over \mathbb{Z} . The sum in the group ring of the elements of \mathfrak{A} is denoted by $\Sigma[\mathfrak{A}]$. If A is an element of \mathfrak{A} and q is a positive integer, then $S = 1 + A + A^2 + \dots + A^{q-1}$ is called a series.

III. THEOREM 1 ([2], [4]). *If there is a finite abelian group \mathfrak{A} and series S_1, \dots, S_n such that*

$$S_1 \cdots S_n = k\Sigma[\mathfrak{A}], \tag{1}$$

then there exists a k -fold lattice tiling (\mathcal{C}_O, L) of n -dimensional space. The lattice L is the kernel of the homomorphism $\psi : X\alpha \rightarrow \mathfrak{A}$, which is defined as

$$\left(\frac{x_1}{q_1} e_1 + \dots + \frac{x_n}{q_n} e_n\right) \psi = A_1^{x_1} \cdots A_n^{x_n}; \quad x_1, \dots, x_n \in \mathbb{Z}.$$

Robinson [9] gave some solutions of (1) and we shall use two of them.

The first example of a solution of equation (1) is the following [9, p. 253]: If \mathfrak{A} is defined by $U^6 = V^4 = 1$ and $A_1 = U, A_2 = V, A_3 = UV^2, A_4 = U^3V, A_5 = U^2V^2$; $q_1 = 3, q_2 = 2, q_3 = 3, q_4 = 2, q_5 = 2$, then the series $S_1 = 1 + U + U^2, S_2 = 1 + V, S_3 = 1 + UV^2 + (UV^2)^2, S_4 = 1 + U^3V, S_5 = 1 + U^2V^2$ and $S_1S_2S_3S_4S_5 = 3\Sigma[\mathfrak{A}]$. According to Theorem 1, there is a 3-fold lattice tiling (\mathcal{C}_O, L) of 5-dimensional space. For later use, construct the lattice L by exhibiting a basis for it.

The linear transformation $\alpha : E^5 \rightarrow E^5$ and the homomorphism $\psi : X\alpha \rightarrow \mathfrak{A}$ are defined by $e_1\alpha = \frac{1}{3}e_1, e_2\alpha = \frac{1}{2}e_2, e_3\alpha = \frac{1}{3}e_3, e_4\alpha = \frac{1}{2}e_4, e_5\alpha = \frac{1}{2}e_5; \frac{1}{3}e_1\psi = U, \frac{1}{2}e_2\psi = V, \frac{1}{3}e_3\psi = UV^2, \frac{1}{2}e_4\psi = U^3V, \frac{1}{2}e_5\psi = U^2V^2$. The vectors $l_1 = 2e_1, l_2 = 2e_2, l_3 = \frac{1}{3}e_1 + e_2 - \frac{1}{3}e_3, l_4 = e_1 + \frac{1}{2}e_2 - \frac{1}{2}e_4, l_5 = \frac{2}{3}e_1 + e_2 - \frac{1}{2}e_5$ span the lattice $L = \text{Ker } \psi$. Indeed, $l_1\psi = 2e_1\psi = 6\frac{1}{3}e_1\psi = U^6 = 1, l_2\psi = 2e_2\psi = 4\frac{1}{2}e_2\psi = V^4 = 1, l_3\psi = (\frac{1}{3}e_1 + e_2 - \frac{1}{3}e_3)\psi = UV^2(UV^2)^{-1} = 1, l_4\psi = (e_1 + \frac{1}{2}e_2 - \frac{1}{2}e_4)\psi = U^3V(U^3V)^{-1} = 1, l_5\psi = (\frac{2}{3}e_1 + e_2 - \frac{1}{2}e_5)\psi = U^2V^2(U^2V^2)^{-1} = 1$ and $\det(l_1, \dots, l_5) = -\frac{1}{3}$.

The second example of a solution of (1) is the following [9, p. 255]: Let \mathfrak{A}^* be defined by $U^6 = V^6 = W^3 = 1$ and $A_1 = U, A_2 = V, A_3 = U^2V^3, A_4 = U^3V^2, A_5 = UV^3W, A_6 = U^4V^3W$; $q_1 = 3, q_2 = 3, q_3 = 2, q_4 = 2, q_5 = 3, q_6 = 2$. Then the series $S_1 = 1 + U + U^2, S_2 = 1 + V + V^2, S_3 = 1 + U^2V^3, S_4 = 1 + U^3V^2, S_5 = 1 + UV^3W + (UV^3W)^2, S_6 = 1 + U^4V^3W$ satisfy $S_1 \cdots S_6 = 2\Sigma[\mathfrak{A}^*]$. According to Theorem 1 there is a 2-fold tiling (\mathcal{C}_O, L^*) of 6-dimensional space. We shall construct the lattice L^* .

The linear transformation $\alpha^* : E^6 \rightarrow E^6$ and the homomorphism $\psi^* : X\alpha^* \rightarrow \mathfrak{A}^*$ are defined by $e_1\alpha^* = \frac{1}{3}e_1, e_2\alpha^* = \frac{1}{3}e_2, e_3\alpha^* = \frac{1}{2}e_3, e_4\alpha^* = \frac{1}{2}e_4, e_5\alpha^* = \frac{1}{3}e_5, e_6\alpha^* = \frac{1}{2}e_6; \frac{1}{3}e_1\psi^* = U, \frac{1}{3}e_2\psi^* = V, \frac{1}{2}e_3\psi^* = U^2V^3, \frac{1}{2}e_4\psi^* = U^3V^2, \frac{1}{3}e_5\psi^* = UV^3W, \frac{1}{2}e_6\psi^* = U^4V^3W$. The vectors $l_1^* = 2e_1, l_2^* = 2e_2, l_3^* = \frac{2}{3}e_1 + e_2 - \frac{1}{2}e_3, l_4^* = e_1 + \frac{2}{3}e_2 - \frac{1}{2}e_4, l_5^* = e_1 + 3e_2 - e_5, l_6^* = e_1 + \frac{1}{3}e_5 - \frac{1}{2}e_6$ span the lattice $L = \text{Ker } \psi^*$. Indeed, $l_1^*\psi^* = 2e_1\psi^* = 6\frac{1}{3}e_1\psi^* = U^6 = 1, l_2^*\psi^* = 2e_2\psi^* = 6\frac{1}{3}e_2\psi^* = V^6 = 1, l_3^*\psi^* = (\frac{2}{3}e_1 + e_2 - \frac{1}{2}e_3)\psi^* = U^2V^3(U^2V^3)^{-1} = 1, l_4^*\psi^* = (e_1 + \frac{2}{3}e_2 - \frac{1}{2}e_4)\psi^* = U^3V^2(U^3V^2)^{-1} = 1, l_5^*\psi^* = (e_1 + 3e_2 - e_5)\psi^* = U^3V^3(UV^3W)^{-3} = 1, l_6^*\psi^* = (e_1 + \frac{1}{3}e_5 - \frac{1}{2}e_6)\psi^* = U^3UV^3W(U^4V^3W)^{-1} = 1$ and $\det(l_1^*, \dots, l_6^*) = \frac{1}{2}$.

IV. THEOREM 2. *If $n, k \in \mathbf{Z}; n > 2, k > 1$, then there exists a k -fold cube tiling of n -dimensional space in which no two cubes have a common face.*

Proof. First we prove a lemma that will enable us to construct a 3-fold tiling of \mathcal{E}^3 and a 2-fold tiling of \mathcal{E}^3 in which no cubes share a common face. This will be accomplished by taking a 3-dimensional cross section of tilings of higher dimensional spaces, in particular, the tilings of Robinson discussed in Section III.

Once that is done, Theorem 2 follows almost immediately. First of all, any integer $k \geq 2$ can be expressed as a sum of 2's and 3's. So, by superposing 2-fold tilings and 3-fold tilings of \mathcal{E}^3 , none of which have cubes sharing a common face, we can build a k -fold tiling of \mathcal{E}^3 with the same property. Then, to construct a k -fold tiling of \mathcal{E}^4 , take the product of a k -fold tiling of \mathcal{E}^3 with the unit interval. This produces a tiling of layer of \mathcal{E}^4 without cubes sharing a common face. By taking copies of this tiling, translated to avoid cubes with common faces, we produce a tiling of \mathcal{E}^4 . By induction on n , there is a k -fold tiling of \mathcal{E}^n , $k \geq 2$, $n \geq 3$, where no cubes share a common face.

Let I be a subset of $\{1, \dots, n\}$, $r \in E^n$ and

$$\mathcal{P}_I^{(r)} := \{P : \vec{OP} = r + \sum \lambda_i e_i, \lambda_i \in \mathbb{R}, i \in I\}.$$

This is an $|I|$ -dimensional plane in \mathcal{E}^n . We consider the n -dimensional cubes $\mathcal{C}_P, \mathcal{C}_Q$, where $\vec{PQ} = x_1 e_1 + \dots + x_n e_n$, $\mathcal{C}_P \cap \mathcal{P}_I^{(r)} = \mathcal{C}'_P$, $\mathcal{C}_Q \cap \mathcal{P}_I^{(r)} = \mathcal{C}'_Q$. Assume that

$$(\text{int } \mathcal{C}_P) \cap \mathcal{P}_I^{(r)} \neq \emptyset \quad \text{and} \quad (\text{int } \mathcal{C}_Q) \cap \mathcal{P}_I^{(r)} \neq \emptyset. \tag{2}$$

LEMMA 1. *If the $|I|$ -dimensional cubes $\mathcal{C}'_P, \mathcal{C}'_Q$ have a common $(|I|-1)$ -dimensional face (i.e., there is a $t \in I$ such that $P'Q' = \pm e_t$), then there exists a $t \in I$ such that $|x_t| = 1$ and $|x_j| < 1$ for $j \in \{1, \dots, n\} \setminus I$ and $|x_i| = 0$ for $i \in I \setminus \{t\}$.*

Proof. Indeed, $\vec{PQ} = \vec{PP}' + \vec{P'Q}' + \vec{Q'Q}$ and $\vec{PP}' = \sum \mu_j e_j$, $\vec{Q'Q} = \sum \nu_j e_j$, $j \in \{1, \dots, n\} \setminus I$. Thus $\vec{PQ} = \pm e_t + \sum (\mu_j - \nu_j) e_j$ so $|x_t| = 1$ and $|x_i| = 0$ for $i \in I \setminus \{t\}$. By virtue of (2), $|x_j| < 1$ for $j \in \{1, \dots, n\} \setminus I$.

LEMMA 2. *For $k = 2$ and 3 there is a k -fold tiling of \mathcal{E}^3 in which no two cubes share a common face.*

Proof. Case $k = 3$. Let $I = \{1, 2, 3\}$ and $r = \frac{1}{2}e_4 + \frac{1}{4}e_5$, whereby $(\text{int } \mathcal{C}) \cap \mathcal{P}_I^{(r)} \neq \emptyset$ for $\mathcal{C} \in (\mathcal{C}_O, \mathbf{L})$, where $(\mathcal{C}_O, \mathbf{L})$ is the first example considered in Section III. Consider the system

$$(\mathcal{C}_O, \mathbf{L}) \cap \mathcal{P}_I^{(r)} := \{\mathcal{C}_P \cap \mathcal{P}_I^{(r)} : \mathcal{C}_P \in (\mathcal{C}_O, \mathbf{L})\}.$$

Obviously this system is a 3-fold cube tiling of \mathcal{E}^3 . We prove that there are no two cubes with a common face in this system. Assume that $\mathcal{C}_P, \mathcal{C}_Q \in (\mathcal{C}_O, \mathbf{L})$; $\mathcal{C}_P \cap \mathcal{P}_I^{(r)} = \mathcal{C}'_P$, $\mathcal{C}_Q \cap \mathcal{P}_I^{(r)} = \mathcal{C}'_Q$ and $\mathcal{C}'_P, \mathcal{C}'_Q$ have a common 2-dimensional face.

Since $\vec{PQ} = t_1\vec{l}_1 + \dots + t_5\vec{l}_5$; $t_1, \dots, t_5 \in \mathbb{Z}$; $(t_1, \dots, t_5) \neq (0, \dots, 0)$, one of the following systems has a solution which differs from $(0, \dots, 0)$:

$$\left. \begin{aligned} |6t_1 + t_3 + 3t_4 + 2t_5| &= 3, \\ |4t_2 + 2t_3 + t_4 + 2t_5| &= 0, \\ |t_3| &= 0, \\ |t_4| &< 2, \\ |t_5| &< 2; \end{aligned} \right\} \tag{3}$$

$$\left. \begin{aligned} |6t_1 + t_3 + 3t_4 + 2t_5| &= 0, \\ |4t_2 + 2t_3 + t_4 + 2t_5| &= 2, \\ |t_3| &= 0, \\ |t_4| &< 2, \\ |t_5| &< 2; \end{aligned} \right\} \tag{4}$$

$$\left. \begin{aligned} |6t_1 + t_3 + 3t_4 + 2t_5| &= 0, \\ |4t_2 + 2t_3 + t_4 + 2t_5| &= 0, \\ |t_3| &= 3, \\ |t_4| &< 2, \\ |t_5| &< 2. \end{aligned} \right\} \tag{5}$$

System (3) is not possible: $4t_2 + t_4 + 2t_5 = 0$ and $|6t_1 + 3t_4 + 2t_5| = 3$ so $|6t_1 + 3(-4t_2 - 2t_5) + 2t_5| = 3$, so the left-hand side is even and the right-hand side is odd.

System (4) is not possible either: $6t_1 + 3t_4 + 2t_5 = 0$, so $3 \mid t_5$. But $|t_5| < 2$; thus $t_5 = 0$ and $6t_1 = -3t_4$, that is, $-2t_1 = t_4$. Since $|t_4| < 2$, we have $|2t_1| < 2$, that is, $|t_1| < 1$, hence $t_1 = 0$. Thus $(t_1, \dots, t_5) = (0, \dots, 0)$.

Finally, system (5) is not possible: $6t_1 \pm 3 + 3t_4 + 2t_5 = 0$, so $3 \mid t_5$ and $4t_2 \pm 6 + t_4 + 2t_5 = 0$, so $2 \mid t_4$. From $3 \mid t_5$ and $|t_5| < 2$, it follows that $t_5 = 0$. From $2 \mid t_4$ and $|t_4| < 2$, it follows that $t_4 = 0$, and $6t_1 = \pm 3$. However, ± 3 is not a multiple of 6.

Case $k = 2$. Let $I = \{1, 2, 5\}$, $r = \frac{1}{4}e_3 + \frac{1}{4}e_4 + \frac{1}{4}e_6$, whereby $(\text{int } \mathcal{C}) \cap \mathcal{P}_I^{(r)} \neq \emptyset$ for $\mathcal{C} \in (\mathcal{C}_O, L^*)$, where (\mathcal{C}_O, L^*) is the second example considered in Section III. Consider the system

$$(\mathcal{C}_O, L^*) \cap \mathcal{P}_I^{(r)} := \{\mathcal{C}_p \cap \mathcal{P}_I^{(r)} : \mathcal{C}_p \in (\mathcal{C}_O, L^*)\}.$$

Obviously this system is a 2-fold cube tiling of \mathcal{E}^3 . We prove that there are no two cubes with a common face in this system. Assume that $\mathcal{C}_P, \mathcal{C}_Q \in (\mathcal{C}_O, \mathbf{L}^*)$; $\mathcal{C}_P \cap \mathcal{P}_1^{(r)} = \mathcal{C}'_P, \mathcal{C}_Q \cap \mathcal{P}_1^{(r)} = \mathcal{C}'_Q$ and $\mathcal{C}'_P, \mathcal{C}'_Q$ have a common 2-dimensional face. Since $PQ = t_1 l_1^* + \dots + t_6 l_6^*$; $t_1, \dots, t_6 \in \mathbf{Z}$; $(t_1, \dots, t_6) \neq (0, \dots, 0)$, one of the following systems has a solution which differs from $(0, \dots, 0)$:

$$\left. \begin{aligned} |6t_1 + 2t_3 + 3t_4 + 3t_5 + 3t_6| &= 3, \\ |6t_2 + 3t_3 + 2t_4 + 9t_5| &= 0, \\ |t_3| &< 2, \\ |t_4| &< 2, \\ |-3t_5 + t_6| &= 0, \\ |t_6| &< 2; \end{aligned} \right\} \tag{6}$$

$$\left. \begin{aligned} |6t_1 + 2t_3 + 3t_4 + 3t_5 + 3t_6| &= 0, \\ |6t_2 + 3t_3 + 2t_4 + 9t_5| &= 3, \\ |t_3| &< 2, \\ |t_4| &< 2, \\ |-3t_5 + t_6| &= 0, \\ |t_6| &< 2; \end{aligned} \right\} \tag{7}$$

$$\left. \begin{aligned} |6t_1 + 2t_3 + 3t_4 + 3t_5 + 3t_6| &= 0, \\ |6t_2 + 3t_3 + 2t_4 + 9t_5| &= 0, \\ |t_3| &< 2, \\ |t_4| &< 2, \\ |-3t_5 + t_6| &= 3, \\ |t_6| &< 2. \end{aligned} \right\} \tag{8}$$

Obviously $3 \mid t_3, 3 \mid t_4, 3 \mid t_6, |t_3| < 2, |t_4| < 2, |t_6| < 2$, so $t_3 = t_4 = t_6 = 0$.

System (6) is not possible: $-3t_5 + t_6 = 0$ and $t_6 = 0$ imply that $t_5 = 0$, so $|6t_1| = 3$, a contradiction.

System (7) is not possible because $-3t_5 + t_6 = 0$ and $t_6 = 0$ imply $t_5 = 0$, so $|6t_2| = 3$, a contradiction.

System (8) is not possible as $6t_2 + 9t_5 = 0$, so $2 \mid t_5$ and $|-3t_5| = 3$. The left-hand side is even and the right-hand side is odd.

This completes the proof of Theorem 2.

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