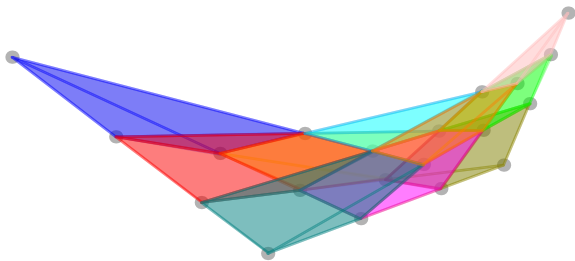


Combinatorics of the (tree) amplituhedron

Lauren K. Williams, UC Berkeley



Based on joint work with Steven Karp and Yan Zhang

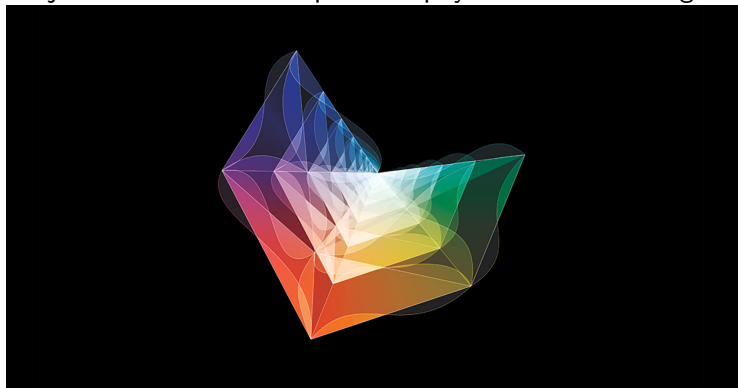
Outline:

- Background + motivation
- What does the amplituhedron look like?
- Triangulating the amplituhedron
- Conjectures on numerology of $\mathcal{A}_{n,k,m}$

Background and Motivation for the amplituhedron

- Introduced by physicists Arkani-Hamed and Trnka in 2013
- Its “volume” is supposed to compute scattering amplitudes in $\mathcal{N} = 4$ super Yang Mills theory

- A “jewel at the heart of quantum physics” – Wired Magazine.



Background and Motivation for the amplituhedron

- #10 among the top 100 top stories of 2013, Discover Magazine.



Background + Motivation on the Amplituhedron

- Despite the name, it's not a polyhedron
- But the amplituhedron does generalize:
 - polygons
 - cyclic polytopes
 - the positive Grassmannian
- Beautiful combinatorics...

The positive Grassmannian

Def: The Grassmannian $Gr_{k,n} = \{V \subset \mathbb{R}^n \mid \dim V = k\}$

Represent $V \in Gr_{k,n}$ by full rank $k \times n$ matrix $A = (A_1 | \dots | A_n)$

For $J \in \binom{[n]}{k}$, $\Delta_J(A) :=$ minor of A using columns J .
Plucker coordinate.

The totally non-negative Grassmannian is

$$Gr_{k,n}^{\geq 0} := \{A \in Gr_{k,n} \mid \Delta_J(A) \geq 0 \quad \forall J \in \binom{[n]}{k}\}$$

The totally positive Grassmannian is

$$Gr_{k,n}^{> 0} := \{A \in Gr_{k,n} \mid \Delta_J(A) > 0 \quad \forall J \in \binom{[n]}{k}\}$$

Def: Given $\mathfrak{m} \subseteq \binom{[n]}{k}$, set

$S_{\mathfrak{m}} := \{ A \in Gr_{kn}^{zo} \mid \Delta_J(A) > 0 \text{ iff } J \in \mathfrak{m} \}$.
 "positroid cell."

Thm (Postnikov): If $S_{\mathfrak{m}} \neq \emptyset$ then $S_{\mathfrak{m}}$ is open ball.

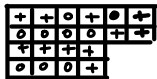
So have cell decomposition $Gr_{kn}^{zo} = \coprod S_{\mathfrak{m}}$

(Nonempty) cells in bijection with:

- decorated permutations
- (equivalence classes of) reduced plabic graphs, ie, on shell diagrams



- J-diagrams



Def: A J-diagram for Gr_{kn}^{zo} is a Young diagram $\leq k \times (n-k)$ filled with 0, + s.t. no

+
⋮
+ ... 0

Ex:

0	+	+	0
0	0	0	+
+	+	+	

Thm (Postnikov): Cells of Gr_{kn}^{zo} in bijection with J-diagrams.

From J-diagram can read off all points of the cell (as matrices or in terms of Plucker coord's)

Dim of cell = # of +'s.

Def: (Arkani-Hamed, Trnka) Let Z be a $(k+m) \times n$ real matrix w/ maximal minors positive. $k+m \leq n$

\leadsto map $\tilde{Z}: Gr_{k,n}^{z_0} \rightarrow Gr_{k,k+m}$ defined by:

If A a $k \times n$ matrix representing a point in $Gr_{k,n}^{z_0}$,

$$A \mapsto AZ^t = k \binom{\quad}{\quad}^{k+m}$$

Equiv, $\langle v_1, \dots, v_k \rangle \mapsto \langle Zv_1, \dots, Zv_k \rangle$
 \uparrow k -diml subspace of \mathbb{R}^n
 \nwarrow k -diml subspace of \mathbb{R}^{k+m}

The (tree) amplituhedron $A_{n,k,m}$ is $\tilde{Z}(Gr_{k,n}^{z_0}) \subset Gr_{k,k+m}$

$A_{n,k,m}$ generalizes many nice objects

(i) If Z a square matrix, i.e. $k+m=n$, then

$$\tilde{Z}: (Gr_{kn})_{Z0} \rightarrow Gr_{k,n}(\mathbb{R})$$

$$A \mapsto AZ^t \text{ is injective}$$

$$\text{so } A_{n,k,m}(Z) \cong (Gr_{kn})_{Z0}$$

$A_{n,k,m}$ generalizes many nice objects

(2) If $k=1, m=2, A_{n,k,m}(z) \subset Gr_{1,3} = \mathbb{P}^2$ is a polygon in \mathbb{P}^2 :

$$(a_1 : \dots : a_n) \longmapsto (a_1 \dots a_n)_n \binom{3}{z^t} \in \mathbb{P}^2$$

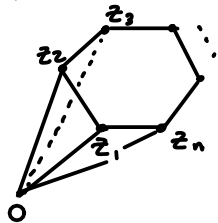
$a_i \geq 0$

Let $e_i = (0 \dots \underset{\substack{\uparrow \\ i\text{-th pos}}}{1} \dots 0)$ and write $Z = z(z_1 | z_2 | \dots | z_n)$

Then $e_i \mapsto z_i$ (a point in \mathbb{P}^2)

Max minors of Z positive $\Rightarrow z_i$'s in convex position.

So as a_i 's vary over $\mathbb{R}_{\geq 0}$,
 $(a_1 \dots a_n) \binom{3}{z^t}$ gives all points in cone spanned by z_i 's.



$A_{n,k,m}$ generalizes many nice objects

(3) If $k=1$, $A_{n,k,m}(z) \subset Gr_{1,m+1} = \mathbb{P}^m$

is combinatorially equiv. to cyclic polytope

with n vertices in \mathbb{P}^m .

(Distinguished among simplicial polytopes for maximizing # faces, given dim + # vertices)

Embarrassing open question

- To what extent does $A_{n,k,m}(Z)$ depend on the matrix Z ?
- If $Z = Z_0$ s.t. rows of Z_0 span the unique element of $Gr_{Z_0}(k+m, n)$ fixed by cyclic action, then $A_{n,k,m}(Z_0)$ is a closed ball (Galashin-Karp-Lam).
- If $m=1$ or $k=1$, $A_{n,k,m}(Z)$ always a ball ...
- Combinatorics + topology should not depend on Z , but this is unknown...

Triangulating the amplituhedron

Recall $A_{n,k,m}(z) = \tilde{Z}(Gr_{kn}^{z^0})$ where $\tilde{Z}: Gr_{kn}^{z^0} \rightarrow Gr_{k,k+m}$.

Image has full dimension km

$m=4$ most interesting for physics.

Conj (AH-T): There is a "BCFW" collection of $4k$ -dim^l cells in $Gr_{kn}^{z^0}$ whose images "triangulate" $A_{n,k,4}$ —
i.e. images are disjoint & cover a dense subset of $A_{n,k,4}$.

Note: # of cells in this collection is Narayana number

$$N_{k+1, n-3} = \frac{1}{n-3} \binom{n-3}{k+1} \binom{n-3}{k}.$$

Physical significance of conj: implies one can calculate scattering amplitudes by integrating form over amplituhedron.

(Previous method: add up multiple contributions, one for each BCFW cell)

Note: Conj. does not really depend on Z

Conjecture true for $k=1$: reduces to result of Rambau on triangulations of cyclic polytopes.

Conjecture hard for $m=4$!

Let's start by looking at $m=1 \dots$

Orthogonal point of view on $A_{n,k,m}$

- $A_{n,k,m} \in Gr_{k,k+m}$. For small m , prefer to work with $Gr_{m,k+m} \cong Gr_{k,k+m}$.

Theorem (Karp, W.): Let $Z \in Mat_{k+m,n}^{>0}$.

Let $W \subset \mathbb{R}^n$ be rowspan (Z).

Let $B_{n,k,m}(W) := \{V^\perp \cap W : V \in Gr_{k,n}^{>0}\} \in Gr_m(W)$.

Then $A_{n,k,m}(Z)$ homeomorphic to $B_{n,k,m}(Z)$.

Pf idea!

$$\underbrace{V^\perp \cap W}_{\substack{m\text{-dim'l} \\ \text{subspace} \\ \text{of } \mathbb{R}^n}} \longmapsto V + W^\perp \longmapsto \underbrace{Z(V)}_{\substack{k\text{-dim'l} \\ \text{subspace} \\ \text{of } \mathbb{R}^{k+m}}} \in Gr_{k,k+m}$$

Note: $Z(W^\perp) = \{0\}$

$$Z: \mathbb{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^{k+m}$$

Sign Variation

Def: For $v \in \mathbb{R}^n$, let $\text{var}(v) = \#$ times v changes sign,
e.g. for $v = (4, -1, 0, -2)$, $\text{var}(v) = 1$.
reading coordinates L to R

Let $\overline{\text{var}}(v) = \max \#$ sign changes after we choose
a sign for each 0 coordinate.

e.g. $\overline{\text{var}}(4, -1, 0, -2) = 3$.

Theorem (Gantmacher-Krein, 1950): Let $V \in Gr_{k,n}(\mathbb{R})$.

- (i) $V \in Gr_{kn}^{zo} \iff \forall$ vectors $x \in V, \text{var}(x) \leq k-1$
 $\iff \forall$ vectors $w \in V^\perp, \overline{\text{var}}(w) \geq k$
- (ii) $V \in Gr_{kn}^{zo} \iff \forall$ vectors $x \in V \setminus \{0\}, \overline{\text{var}}(x) \leq k-1$
 $\iff \forall$ vectors $w \in V^\perp \setminus \{0\}, \text{var}(w) \geq k$

Ex: For $a, b, c, d \geq 0$ and $bc - ad \geq 0$,

$A = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & -a & -b \\ 0 & 1 & c & d \end{pmatrix}$ represents point of Gr_{24}^{20} .

GK: $V \in Gr_{kn}^{20} \iff \forall$ vectors $x \in V$, $\text{var}(x) \leq k-1$

Check that row vectors of A (+ linear combos)
satisfy $\text{var}(x) \leq k-1 = 1$.

Simple Description of Amplituhedron

Theorem (Karp, W.): For $W \in Gr_{k+m, n}^{>0}$, we have:

$$\textcircled{1} B_{n, k, m}(W) \subseteq \{X \in Gr_m(W) \mid k \leq \overline{\text{var}}(x) \leq k+m-1 \ \forall x \in X\} \subseteq Gr_m(W)$$

Moreover, when $m=1$,

$$\textcircled{2} B_{n, k, 1}(W) = \{x \in P(W) \mid \overline{\text{var}}(x) = k\}$$

Open: In $\textcircled{1}$, is the \subseteq an $=$? True for $m=1, k+m=n$.

Questions: $\textcircled{1}$ Can we triangulate $A_{n, k, 1}$?
 $\textcircled{2}$ What does it look like?

$m=1$ Amplituhedron

Recall: $B_{n,k,1}(W) = \{x \in P(W) \mid \overline{\text{var}}(x) = k\}$

Def: Let $\overline{\text{Sign}}_{n,k,1} \subseteq \{0, +, -\}^n$ be the set of sign vectors σ s.t. $\overline{\text{var}}(\sigma) = k$.
Let $\text{Sign}_{n,k,1}$ " " s.t. $\text{var}(\sigma) = k$.

E.g. for $n=5, k=2$,

$\text{Sign}_{5,2,1} = \{+++-+, ++--+ , ++-++ , +----+, +---++ , + -++++, \dots\}$

Let $B_\sigma(W) := \{x \in B_{n,k,1}(W) \mid \text{sign}(x) = \sigma\}$

So $B_{n,k,1}(W) = \bigsqcup_{\sigma \in \overline{\text{Sign}}_{n,k,1}} B_\sigma(W)$.

Interpret $\text{Sign}_{5,2,1}$ as regions of arrangement?

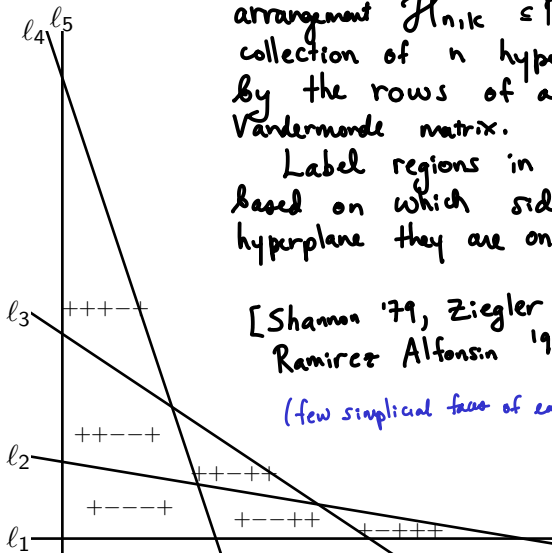
The cyclic hyperplane arrangement and $\mathcal{A}_{5,2,1}$

Def: The cyclic hyperplane arrangement $\mathcal{H}_{n,k} \subseteq \mathbb{R}^k$ is the collection of n hyperplanes given by the rows of a $n \times (k+1)$ Vandermonde matrix.

Label regions in complement based on which side of each hyperplane they are on.

[Shannon '79, Ziegler '93,
Ramirez Alfonsin '99, w/Forge '01)

(few simplicial faces of each dim)

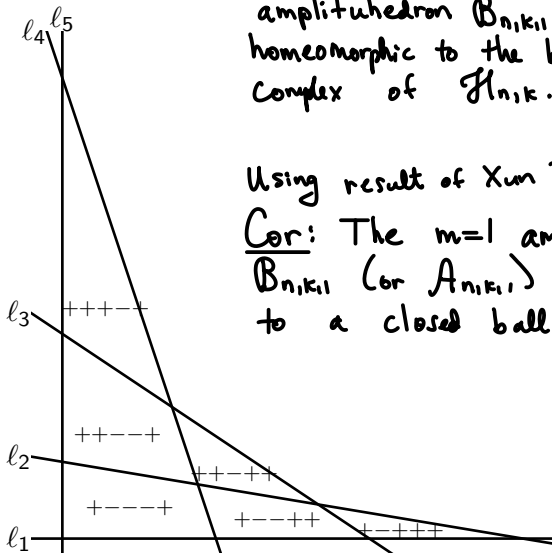


The cyclic hyperplane arrangement and $\mathcal{A}_{5,2,1}$

Thm (Karp, W): The amplituhedron $\mathcal{B}_{n,k,1}(w)$ is homeomorphic to the bounded complex of $\mathcal{H}_{n,k}$.

Using result of Xin Dong,

Cor: The $m=1$ amplituhedron $\mathcal{B}_{n,k,1}$ (or $\mathcal{A}_{n,k,1}$) is homeomorphic to a closed ball.



The cyclic hyperplane arrangement and $\mathcal{A}_{5,2,1}$

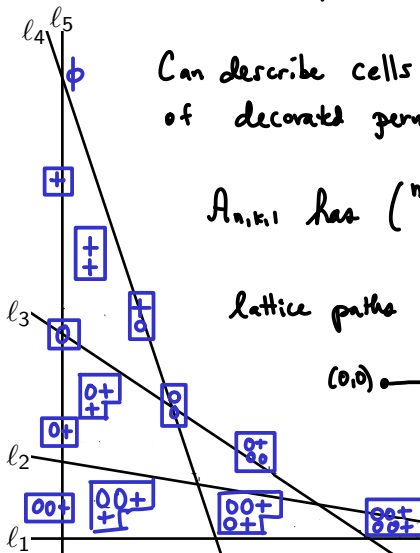
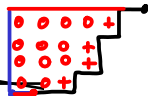
Cell decomp: $\mathcal{B}_{n,k,1}(W) = \bigsqcup_{\sigma \in \text{Sign}_{n,k,1}} \mathcal{B}_{\sigma}(W)$

Can describe cells in terms of decorated perms, or \downarrow -diagrams...

$\mathcal{A}_{n,k,1}$ has $\binom{n-k-1}{k}$ cells \leftrightarrow



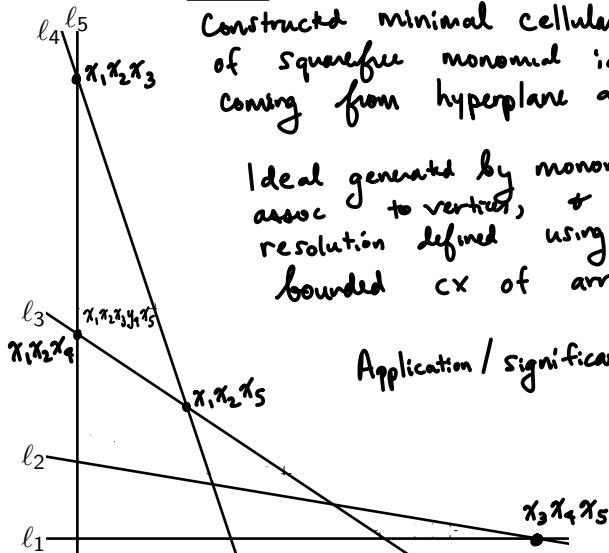
Corresponding \downarrow -diagram



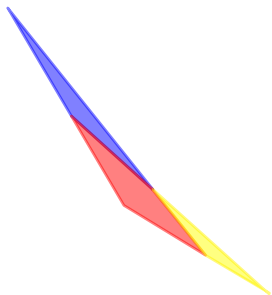
The cyclic hyperplane arrangement and $\mathcal{A}_{5,2,1}$

Aside: Novik-Postnikov-Sturmfels 2000
Constructed minimal cellular resolutions
of squarefree monomial ideals
coming from hyperplane arrangements.

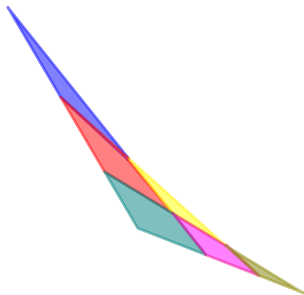
Ideal generated by monomials
assoc to vertices, &
resolution defined using the
bounded cx of arrangement.



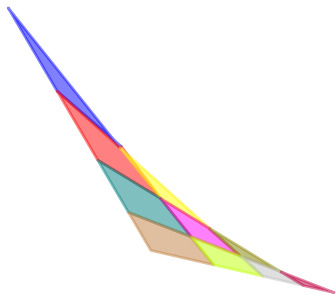
Application / significance?



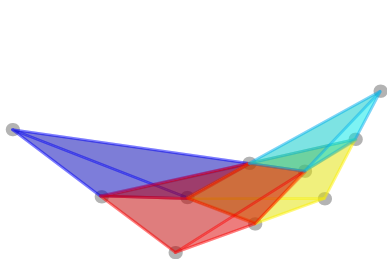
$\mathcal{A}_{4,2,1}$



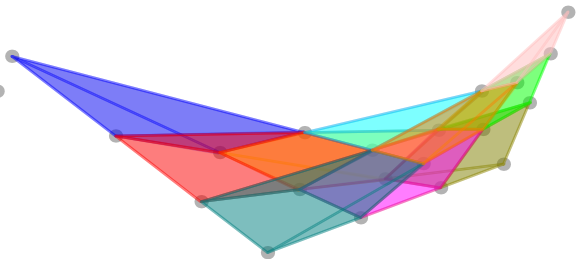
$\mathcal{A}_{5,2,1}$



$\mathcal{A}_{6,2,1}$



$\mathcal{A}_{5,3,1}$



$\mathcal{A}_{6,3,1}$

Next: $m=4$

Recall

Conj (AH-T): The BCFW cells (which have $\dim 4k$)

in Gr_{kn}^{20} give a "triangulation" of $A_{n,k,1}$: ie.

ie. their images are disjoint & cover a dense

subset of $A_{n,k,1}$.

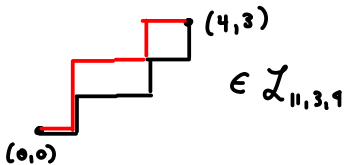
What are the BCFW cells?

Physicists described them via very complicated recurrence.
We give explicit description...

Recall: # of cells in conjectural triangulation of $A_{n,k,q}$ is Narayana number $N_{k+1,n-3} = \frac{1}{n-3} \binom{n-3}{k+1} \binom{n-3}{k}$.

Let $\mathcal{L}_{n,k,q} =$ set of all pairs of non-crossing lattice paths taking steps W and S from $(n-k-q, k)$ to $(0,0)$.

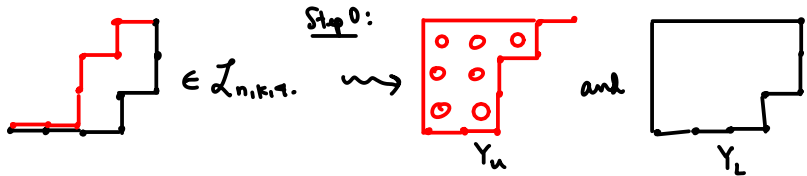
In particular, $N_{k+1,n-3} = |\mathcal{L}_{n,k,q}|$.



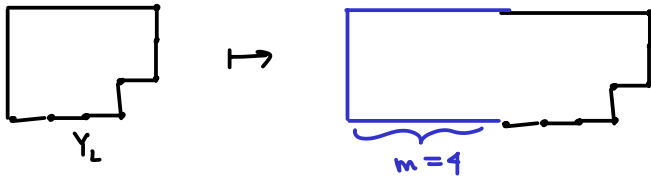
Theorem (Karp, W., Zhang): Explicit description of all BCFW cells for $A_{n, k, 1}$. Give bijection

$\mathcal{L}_{n, k, 1} \rightarrow$ J-diagrams of BCFW cells

Ex1



Step 1: Use Y_L to get shape of J-diagram

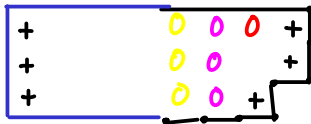
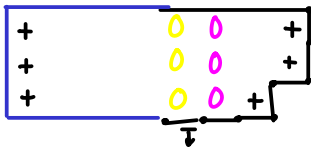
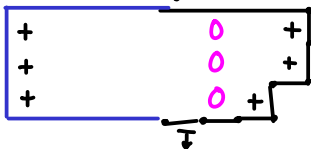
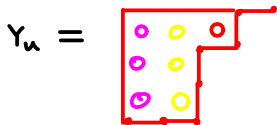


Step 2: Put + at L and R of each row

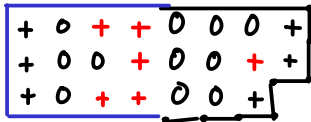
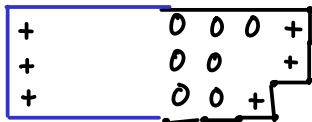


Step 3: Place columns of 0's in Y_u L to R into diagram.

Recall



Step 4: Place 2 more +'s in each row, justified to right



Step 5: Fix blocked 0's with J-move

+	+	
+	0	

 \mapsto

0	+
+	+

Alternatively, can read off perm from this diagram (simple algorithm).

Theorem (Karp, W., Zhang): Explicit description of all
BCFW cells for $A_{n,k,q}$. Give bijection

$\mathcal{L}_{n,k,q} \rightarrow$ J-diagrams of BCFW cells

Rk: Can also give bijection
Dyck paths \rightarrow BCFW cells (Karp, Thomas, W., Zhang)
(bases)

We then use sign variation techniques to prove

Theorem (KWZ): When $k=2$, the images
of the BCFW cells are disjoint in $A_{n,k,q}$.

Recall: $A_{n,k,1} = \tilde{\mathbb{Z}}(Gr_{kn}^{20})$, where

$\tilde{\mathbb{Z}}: Gr_{kn}^{20} \rightarrow Gr_{k,k+1}$ defined by $A \mapsto k \binom{n}{k} \binom{k+1}{n}$

Theorem (Karp-W.-Zhang): Let $k=2$. The images of two distinct BCFW cells in $A_{n,k,1}$ are distinct.

Idea: Suppose V_1 and $V_2 \in Gr_{kn}^{20}$ lie in 2 BCFW cells.

① $V_i \in Gr_{kn}^{20} \stackrel{G.K.}{\Rightarrow} \forall x \in V_i, \text{var}(x) \leq k-1$. Variation small.

② If $\tilde{\mathbb{Z}}(V_1) = \tilde{\mathbb{Z}}(V_2)$, i.e. $V_1 - V_2 \in \ker(\tilde{\mathbb{Z}})$, then

$Z \in Gr_{k+1,n}^{20} \stackrel{G.K.}{\Rightarrow} \forall \text{nonzero } y \in V_1 - V_2, \text{var}(y) \geq k+1$. Variation big

Next: The BCFW cells (which supposedly triangulate the amplituhedron $A_{n,k,4}$) only make sense for $m=4$.

What could we say for general m ?

Conjectures on numerology of $A_{n,k,m}$

	# max cells in decomp. of $A_{n,k,m}$	
$m=1$	$\binom{n-1}{k}$	Karp-W. (theorem)
$m=2$	$\binom{n-2}{k}$	Arkani-Hamed-Trnka-Thomas
$m=4$	$\frac{1}{n-3} \binom{n-3}{k+1} \binom{n-3}{k}$	Conj of AH-T
$k=1$	$\binom{n-1-\frac{m}{2}}{\frac{m}{2}}$	$A \stackrel{\sim}{=} \text{cyclic polytope } C(n,m)$

Is there a formula which generalizes all of these?

Conjectures on numerology of $A_{n,k,m}$

$$\text{Let } N(a,b,c) = \prod_{i=1}^a \prod_{j=1}^b \prod_{k=1}^c \frac{i+j+k-1}{i+j+k-2}$$

Note: $N(a,b,c)$ symmetric in a, b, c .

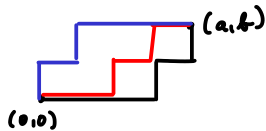
Conj: KWZ (90% confidence?) For even m , there is cell decomposition of $A_{n,k,m}$, coming from images of cells of Gr_{kn}^{20} , which has $N(k, n-m-k, \frac{m}{2})$ top-dim'l cells (of dim. km)

Conj: KWZ (50% confidence?) For odd m , " " $A_{n,k,m}$ " " which has $N(k, n-m-k, \frac{m+1}{2})$ top-dim'l cells.

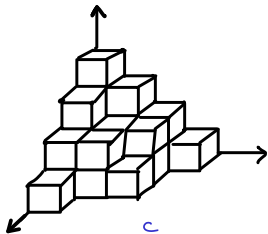
Rk: These conjectures generalize all previous results/conjectures.

$N(a,b,c)$ counts:

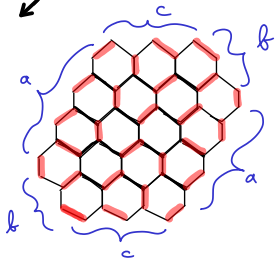
- collections of c noncrossing paths from (a,b) to $(0,0)$ taking steps W and S



- plane partitions $\subseteq a \times b \times c$ box



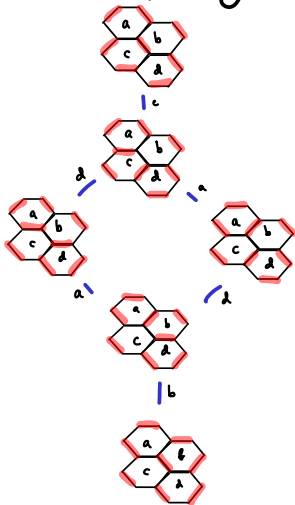
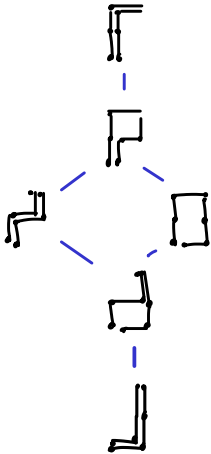
- Kekulé structures (perfect matchings) of a hexagon-shaped benzenoid w/ parameters a, b, c



So conjecturally there's a triangulation of $A_{n,k,m}$ whose top-dim'l cells are in bijection with:

- collections of $\lfloor \frac{m+1}{2} \rfloor$ noncrossing paths from $(k, n-m-k)$ to $(0,0)$ taking steps W and S
- plane partitions $\subseteq k \times (n-m-k) \times \lfloor \frac{m+1}{2} \rfloor$ box
- Kekulé structures (perfect matchings) of a hexagon-shaped benzenoid w/ parameters $k, n-m-k, \lfloor \frac{m+1}{2} \rfloor$

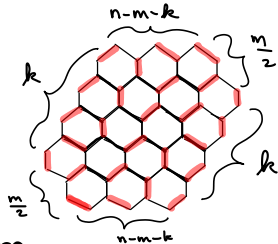
Note: These combinatorial objects all have structure of distributive lattice (= really nice kind of partially ordered set)



(Containment of plane partitions)

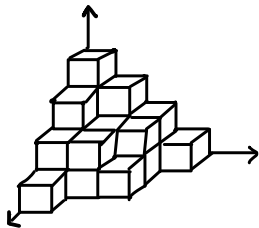
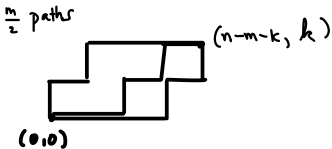
What does this mean for the amplituhedron?

Thank you!



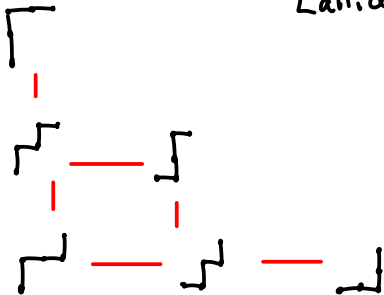
Part 1 of talk joint w/ Steven Karp,
"the $m=1$ amplituhedron + cyclic hyperplane arrangements,"
IMRN 2017

Part 2 of talk joint w/ Karp + Yan Zhang (appendix joint w/ Hugh Thomas)
"Decompositions of amplituhedra,"
arXiv:1708.09525



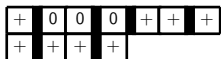
$m=1, n=5, k=2$

Adjacency of max'l
cells in $A_{n,k,m}$ \leftrightarrow
Lattice structure on paths



The 9 classes of BCFW cells for $k = 2$.

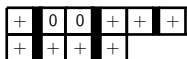
Class 1.



+	+	+	+	0	0	0	0	-
0	0	0	0	+	+	+	+	+

o

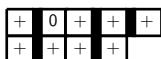
Class 2.



+	+	+	+	0	0	-
0	0	0	+	+	+	+

o

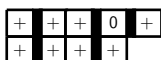
Class 3.



+	+	+	+	0	0	-
0	0	+	+	+	+	+

o

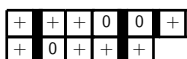
Class 4.



+	+	0	0	-	-	-
+	+	+	+	+	+	0

d

Class 5.



+	+	0	0	0	-	-	-
+	+	+	+	+	+	0	0

d

The 9 classes of BCFW cells for $k = 2$.

Class 6.

+	+	+	0	0	0	+
+	0	0	+	+	+	

+	+	0	0	0	0	-	-	-
+	+	+	+	+	+	0	0	0

d

Class 7.

+	+	+	0	0	+
+	0	0	+	+	+

+	+	0	0	0	-	-	-
+	+	+	+	+	0	0	0

d

Class 8.

+	+	+	0	+
+	0	+	+	+

+	+	0	0	-	-	-
+	+	+	+	+	0	0

d

Class 9.

+	+	+	+
+	+	+	+

+	+	0	-	-	-
+	+	+	+	+	0

d