Euclidean distortion and the Sparsest Cut

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Abstract

We prove that every n-point metric space of negative type (and, in particular, every n-point subset of L_1) embeds into a Euclidean space with distortion $O(\sqrt{\log n}\log\log n)$, a result which is tight up to the $O(\log\log n)$ factor. As a consequence, we obtain the best known polynomial-time approximation algorithm for the Sparsest Cut problem with general demands. If the demand is supported on a subset of size k, we achieve an approximation ratio of $O(\sqrt{\log k}\log\log k)$.

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1 Introduction

Geometric embeddings of finite metric spaces, a topic originally studied in geometric analysis, became an integral part of theoretical computer science following work of Linial, London, and Rabinovich [20]. They gave an algorithmic version of a result of Bourgain [6] which shows that every n-point metric space embeds into L_2 with distortion $O(\log n)$. This geometric viewpoint offers a way to understand the approximation ratios achieved by linear programming (LP) and semidefinite programming (SDP) relaxations for cut problems [20, 5]. It soon became apparent that further progress in understanding SDP relaxations would involve improving Bourgain's general bound of $O(\log n)$ for n-point metric spaces of negative type. For instance, the approximation ratio achieved by a well-known SDP relaxation for the general Sparsest Cut problem is known to coincide exactly with the best-possible distortion bound achievable for the embedding of n-point metrics of negative type into L_1—a striking connection between pure mathematics and algorithm design.

Further progress on these problems required new insights into the structure of metric spaces of negative type, and the design of more sophisticated and flexible embedding methods for finite metrics. Coincidentally, significant progress was made recently on both these fronts. Arora, Rao and Vazirani [4] proved a new structural theorem about metric spaces of negative type and used it to design an $O(\sqrt{\log n})$-approximation algorithm for *uniform case* of the Sparsest Cut Problem. Krauthgamer, Lee, Mendel and Naor [15] introduced a new embedding method called *measured descent* which unified and strengthened many existing embedding techniques, and they used it to solve a number of open problems in the field.

These breakthroughs indeed resulted in improved embeddings for negative type metrics; Chawla, Gupta, and Räcke [8] used the structural theorem of [4] (specifically, its stronger form in Lee [17]), in conjunction with measured descent to show that every n-point metric of negative type embeds into L_2 with distortion $O(\log n)^{3/4}$. In the present work, we show how one can achieve distortion $O(\sqrt{\log n} \cdot \log\log n)$. This almost matches the 35-year-old lower bound of $\sqrt{\log n}$ from Enflo [10]. Our methods use the results of [4, 17, 8] essentially as a "black box," together with a delicate enhancement of the measured descent technique.

Recall that a metric space (X, d) is said to be of *negative type* if $(X, \sqrt{d})$ is isometric to a subset of Euclidean space. In particular, it is well known that L_1 is of negative type. (We also remind the reader that L_2 is isometrically equivalent to a subset of L_1.) The parameter $c_2(X)$, known as the *Euclidean distortion* of X, is the least distortion with which X embeds into Hilbert space, i.e. it is the minimum of $\mathrm{dist}(f) = \|f\|_{\mathrm{Lip}} \cdot \|f^{-1}\|_{\mathrm{Lip}}$ over all bijections $f : X \hookrightarrow L_2$. The mathematical investigation of the problem we study dates back to the work of Enflo [10], who showed that the Euclidean distortion of the Hamming cube $\Omega_d = \{0,1\}^d$ equals $\sqrt{d} = \sqrt{\log_2 |\Omega_d|}$. The following natural question is folklore in geometric and functional analysis:

"Is the discrete d-dimensional hypercube the most non-Euclidean 2^d-point subset of L_1?"

A positive answer to this question would imply that any n-point subset of L_1 embeds in L_2 with distortion $O(\sqrt{\log n})$. In fact, motivated by F. John's theorem in convex geometry (see [23]), Johnson and Lindenstrauss [13] asked in 1983 whether every n-point metric space embeds into L_2 with distortion $O(\sqrt{\log n})$. Unfortunately, the analogy between finite dimensional normed spaces and finite metric spaces is not complete: Bourgain [6] has shown that for any n-point metric space X, $c_2(X) = O(\log n)$, and this result is existentially optimal [20, 5]. By now we understand that finite metric spaces (namely expander graphs) can exhibit an isoperimetric profile which no normed space can achieve, and this is the reason for the discrepancy with John's theorem. However, it is known (see [15]) that several natural restricted classes of metrics do adhere to the $O(\sqrt{\log n})$ Euclidean distortion suggested by John's theorem. (Additional remarks on relationships to Banach spaces can be found in Appendix C.) Arguably, for applications in theoretical computer science, the most important restricted class of metrics are those of negative type, yet improvements over Bourgain's theorem for such metrics have long resisted the attempts of mathematicians and computer scientists.

The present paper is devoted to proving that up to double logarithmic factors, the answer to the above question is positive. This yields a general tool for the rounding of certain classes of semi-definite programs. As a result, we obtain the best-known polynomial time algorithm for the approximation of the Sparsest Cut problem with general demands, improving over the previous bounds due to [8] and the preceding works [20] and [5] (which yield an $O(\log n)$ approximation). This problem is described in Appendix B. We now state our main result.

Theorem 1.1. *Let (X, d) be an n-point metric space of negative type. Then*

$$c_2(X) = O\big(\sqrt{\log n} \cdot \log\log n\big).$$

Related work. Until recently, there was no real evidence to the conjecture that any n-point subset of L_1 embeds in Hilbert space with distortion $O(\sqrt{\log n})$. In [18], Lee, Mendel and Naor show that any n-point subset of L_1 embeds into Hilbert space with *average distortion* $O(\sqrt{\log n})$. Arora, Rao, and Vazirani [4] have shown that $O(\sqrt{\log n})$ distortion is achievable using a different notion of average distortion, which turns out to be more relevant for bounding the actual distortion. As described above, combining their result with the measured descent technique of Krauthgamer, Lee, Mendel and Naor [15], Chawla, Gupta, and Räcke [8] have recently proved that for any n-point metric space X of negative type, $c_2(X) = O(\log n)^{3/4}$. It was conjectured [21, pg. 379] that n-point metrics of negative type embed into L_1 with distortion $O(1)$. Recently, Khot and Vishnoi [14] have shown a lowerbound of $\Omega(\log\log\log n)$.

Our results also suggest that the dimension reduction lower bound of Brinkman and Charikar [7] is tight in a certain quantitative sense. They show that embedding certain n-point subsets of L_1 into ℓ_1^d with distortion D requires that $d \geq n^{1/D^2}$. Theorem 1.1, together with theorems of Johnson and Lindenstrauss [13] and Figiel, Lindenstrauss, and Milman [11], yields an embedding of every n-point subset of L_1 into $\ell_1^{O(\log n)}$ with distortion $O(\sqrt{\log n}\log\log n)$.

2 Preliminaries and prior results

In this section we present Theorem 2.1, which is one of the main tools used in the proof of Theorem 1.1. It is a concatenation of the result of Arora, Rao, and Vazirani [4], its strengthening by Lee [17], and the "reweighting" method of Chawla, Gupta, and Räcke [8] (who use it in conjunction with [15] to achieve distortion $O(\log n)^{3/4}$). We sketch the proof of Theorem 2.1 in Appendix A.1. Complete details can be found in [16], where a more general result is proved; the statement actually holds for metric spaces which are quasisymmetrically equivalent to subsets of Hilbert space, and not only for those of negative type.

Theorem 2.1. *There exist constants $C \geq 1$ and $0 < p < \frac{1}{2}$ such that for every n-point metric space (X, d) of negative type and every $\Delta > 0$, the following holds. There exists a distribution μ over subsets $U \subseteq X$ such that for every $x, y \in X$ with $d(x, y) \geq \frac{\Delta}{16}$,*

$$\mu\left\{U : y \in U \text{ and } d(x, U) \geq \frac{\Delta}{C\sqrt{\log n}}\right\} \geq p.$$

2.1 Padded decomposability and random zero sets

Theorem 2.1 is the only way the negative type property will be used in what follows. It is therefore helpful to introduce it as an abstract property of metric spaces. Let (X, d) be an n-point metric space.

Definition 2.2 (Random zero-sets). *Given $\Delta, \zeta > 0$ and $p \in (0, 1)$ we say that X admits a random zero set at scale Δ which is ζ-spreading with probability p if there is a distribution μ over subsets $Z \subseteq X$ such that for every $x, y \in X$ with $d(x, y) \geq \Delta$,*

$$\mu\left\{Z \subseteq X : \ y \in Z \text{ and } d(x, Z) \geq \frac{\Delta}{\zeta}\right\} \geq p.$$

We denote by $\zeta(X; p)$ the least $\zeta > 0$ such that for every $\Delta > 0$, X admits a random zero set at scale Δ which is ζ-spreading with probability p. Finally, given $k \leq n$ we define

$$\zeta_k(X; p) = \max_{\substack{Y \subseteq X \\ |Y| \leq k}} \zeta(Y; p).$$

With this definition, Theorem 2.1 implies that there exists a universal constant $p \in (0, 1)$ such that for every n-point metric space (X, d) of negative type, $\zeta(X; p) = O(\sqrt{\log n})$.

We now recall the related notion of *padded decomposability*. Given a partition P of X and $x \in X$ we denote by $P(x) \in P$ the unique element of P to which x belongs. In what follows we sometimes refer to $P(x)$ as the *cluster* of x. Following [15] we define the *modulus of padded decomposability* of X, denoted α_X, as the least constant $\alpha > 0$ such that for every $\Delta > 0$ there is a distribution ν over partitions of X with the following properties.

1. For all $P \in \text{supp}(\nu)$ and all $C \in P$ we have that $\text{diam}(C) < \Delta$.
2. For every $x \in X$ we have that $\nu\{P : \ B(x, \Delta/\alpha) \subseteq P(x)\} \geq \frac{1}{2}$.

As observed in [15], it is always true that $\alpha_X = O(\log n)$.

The following useful fact relates the notions of padded decomposability and random zero sets. Its proof is motivated by an argument of Rao [27].

Fact 2.3. $\zeta(X; 1/8) \leq \alpha_X$.

Proof. Fix $\Delta > 0$ and let P be a partition of X into subsets of diameter less than Δ. Given $x \in X$ we denote by $\pi_P(x)$ the largest radius r for which $B(x, r) \subseteq P(x)$. Let $\{\varepsilon_C\}_{C \in P}$ be i.i.d. symmetric $\{0, 1\}$-valued Bernoulli random variables. Let Z_P be a random subset of X given by

$$Z_P = \bigcup_{C \in P: \ \varepsilon_C = 0} C \ .$$

If $x, y \in X$ satisfy $d(x, y) \geq \Delta$ then $P(x) \neq P(y)$. It follows that

$$\Pr[y \in Z_P \wedge d(x, Z_P) \geq \pi_P(x)] \geq \frac{1}{4}.$$

By the definition of α_X, there exists a distribution over partitions P of X into subsets of diameter less than Δ such that for every $x \in X$ with probability at least $1/2$, $\pi_P(x) \geq \Delta/\alpha_X$. The required result now follows by considering the random zero set Z_P. $\square$

3 Proof of Theorem 1.1

The main technical result of this paper is contained in the following lemma.

Lemma 3.1 (Enhanced descent)**.** *Let (X, d) be an n-point metric space and fix $p \le 1/8, K \ge 2$. For every $m \in \mathbb{Z}$, let*

$$S_m(K) = \left\{ x \in X : \left| B\left(x, 2^{m+5}\alpha_X\right)\right| \le \frac{K}{16} \cdot \left| B\left(x, \frac{2^{m-9}}{\zeta_K(X;p)}\right)\right| \right\}.$$

Then there exists a mapping $\phi : X \to L_2$ such that

1. *$||\phi(x) - \phi(y)||_2^2 \le O(\log n \log \alpha_X)\, d(x, y)^2$ for all $x, y \in X$,*
2. *For all $m \in \mathbb{Z}$, $x \in S_m(K)$ and $y \in X$ such that $d(x, y) \in [2^{m-1}, 2^m]$,*

$$||\phi(x) - \phi(y)||_2^2 \ge \left(\frac{p}{64}\right)^5 \cdot \frac{d(x,y)^2}{[\zeta_K(X;p)]^2} \cdot \log \frac{|B(x, 2^{m+5}\alpha_X)|}{|B(x, 2^{m+3}/\zeta_K(X;p))|} \tag{1}$$

Before proving Lemma 3.1 we show how it implies Theorem 1.1. The argument below actually yields more general results. For example if we assume that $\zeta_k(X;p) = O(\log k)^\theta$ for some $p \in (0, 1/8)$, $\theta \ge \frac{1}{2}$ and all $k \le n$ then

$$c_2(X) = O_p((\log n)^\theta \sqrt{\log \alpha_X \log\log n}) = O_p((\log n)^\theta \log\log n),$$

where $O_p(\cdot)$ may hide a constant which depends on p.

Proof of Lemma 3.1 $\Longrightarrow$ Theorem 1.1. Combining Theorem 2.1, Lemma 3.1 and the fact that $\alpha_X = O(\log n)$ we obtain the following statement. There exists a constant $A > 0$ such that for every $K \ge 2$ there is a mapping $\phi : X \to L_2$ satisfying the following conditions.

1. $\|\phi(x) - \phi(y)\|_2^2 \le A \log n \cdot \log\log n \cdot d(x, y)^2$ for all $x, y \in X$.
2. For all $m \in \mathbb{Z}$, $x \in S'_m(K)$ and $y \in X$ such that $d(x, y) \in [2^{m-1}, 2^m]$,

$$||\phi(x) - \phi(y)||_2^2 \ge \frac{d(x,y)^2}{A \log K} \cdot \log \frac{|B(x, 2^{m+5}\alpha_X)|}{|B(x, A2^m/\sqrt{\log K})|},$$

   where we define

$$S'_m(K) = \left\{ u \in X : \left| B\left(u, 2^{m+5}\alpha_X\right)\right| \le K \cdot \left| B\left(u, \frac{2^m}{A\sqrt{\log K}}\right)\right| \right\}.$$

Observe that for every $m \in \mathbb{Z}$, $S'_m(n) = X$. Hence, defining $K_0 = n$ and $K_{j+1} = K_j^{1/A^4}$, as long as $K_j \ge 2$, we obtain mappings $\phi_0, \ldots, \phi_j : X \to L_2$ satisfying

1. $||\phi_j(x) - \phi_j(y)||_2^2 \le A \log n \cdot \log\log n \cdot d(x, y)^2$ for all $x, y \in X$.

2. For all $x \in S_m(K_j) \setminus S_m(K_{j+1})$ and $y \in X$ such that $d(x,y) \in [2^{m-1}, 2^m]$:

$$\begin{aligned} ||\phi_j(x) - \phi_j(y)||_2^2 &\geq \frac{d(x,y)^2}{A \log K_j} \cdot \log \frac{|B(x, 2^{m+5}\alpha_X)|}{|B(x, A2^m/\sqrt{\log K_j})|} \\ &= \frac{d(x,y)^2}{A \log K_j} \cdot \log \frac{|B(x, 2^{m+5}\alpha_X)|}{\left|B\left(x, A2^m/\sqrt{\log K_{j+1}^{A^4}}\right)\right|} \\ &= \frac{d(x,y)^2}{A \log K_j} \cdot \log \frac{|B(x, 2^{m+5}\alpha_X)|}{|B(x, 2^m/(A\sqrt{\log K_{j+1}}))|} \\ &\geq \frac{d(x,y)^2}{A \log K_j} \cdot \log K_{j+1} = \frac{d(x,y)^2}{A^5}. \end{aligned}$$

This procedure ends after N steps, where $N \leq \frac{\log \log n}{\log A}$. Every $x \in S_m(K_N)$ satisfies

$$|B(x, 2^{m+5}\alpha_X)| \leq e^{A^4} |B(x, 2^{m+1}/A)|.$$

By the result of [15] there is a mapping $\phi_{N+1} : X \to L_2$ which is Lipschitz with constant $O(\sqrt{\log n})$ and for every $x, y \in S_m(K_N)$, $\|\phi_{N+1}(x) - \phi_{N+1}(y)\|_2 \geq \Omega(1) \cdot d(x,y)$.

Consider the map $\Phi = \bigoplus_{j=0}^{N+1} \phi_j$, which is Lipschitz with constant $O\left(\sqrt{\log n} \cdot \log \log n\right)$. For every $x, y \in X$ choose $m \in \mathbb{Z}$ such that $d(x,y) \in [2^{m-1}, 2^m]$. If $x, y \in S_m(K_N)$ then

$$\|\Phi(x) - \Phi(y)\|_2 \geq \|\phi_{N+1}(x) - \phi_{N+1}(y)\|_2 \geq \Omega\left(1\right) \cdot d(x,y).$$

Otherwise, without loss of generality there is $j \in \{0, \ldots, N-1\}$ such that $x \in S_m(K_j) \setminus S_m(K_{j+1})$, in which case

$$\|\Phi(x) - \Phi(y)\|_2 \geq \|\phi_{j+1}(x) - \phi_{j+1}(y)\|_2 \geq \Omega(1) \cdot d(x,y).$$

□

3.1 Proof of Lemma 3.1: Enhanced descent

We begin with a simple definition.

Definition 3.2. *For every $x \in X$ and $t > 0$ define*

$$\kappa(x,t) = \max\{\kappa \in \mathbb{Z} : |B(x, 2^\kappa)| < 2^t\}. \tag{2}$$

The following simple lemma says that the values of $\kappa(\cdot,\cdot)$ cannot change too rapidly when moving between nearby points. This fact will be used several times in the ensuing arguments, and played a similar role in [15]. The proof is deferred to Appendix A.2.

Lemma 3.3 (Smoothness)**.** *For $x \in X$, let $i \in \mathbb{Z}$ and $m, t \in \mathbb{Z}^+$ be such that $\left|B(x, 2^{i+m-1})\right| \leq 2^t \leq \left|B(x, 2^{i+m})\right|$. Then for $s \geq \max\{0, 2-i\}$, every $z \in B(x, 2^{m-s})$ satisfies:*

$$2^{m-3} \leq 2^{\kappa(z,t)-i} \leq 2^{m+1}.$$

We will also use the following simple lemma about random sampling.

Lemma 3.4. *Suppose that $k, n \in \mathbb{N}$, $1 \leq k \leq n$. Let X be an n-point set and let $\widetilde{X}_k$ be chosen uniformly at random from all k-point subsets of X. Then*

1. *For every* $A \subseteq X$, $\Pr[\widetilde{X}_k \cap A = \emptyset] \le e^{-k|A|/n}$.

2. *For every* $A, B \subseteq X$ *such that* $A \cap B = \emptyset$,

   (a) $\Pr[\widetilde{X}_k \cap A = \emptyset \mid \widetilde{X}_k \cap B \neq \emptyset] \le \Pr[\widetilde{X}_{k-1} \cap A = \emptyset] \le e^{(1-k)|A|/n}$

   (b) $\Pr[\widetilde{X}_k \cap A = \emptyset \mid \widetilde{X}_k \cap B = \emptyset] \le e^{-k|A|/n}$.

Proof. The proof of (1) is an easy calculation. To prove 2(a), note that choosing $\widetilde{X}_k$ uniformly subject to $\widetilde{X}_k \cap B \neq \emptyset$ is the same as first choosing $z \in B$ uniformly at random, then choosing a uniform $k-1$ point subset $S \subseteq X \setminus \{z\}$ and returning $S \cup \{z\}$. □

Notation. We introduce some notation which will be used in the forthcoming proofs. Write $\alpha = \alpha_X$, and for every $j \in \mathbb{Z}$ let P_j denote a random partition of X satisfying the following.

1. For all $C \in P_j$ we have that $\operatorname{diam}(C) \le 2^{j+4}\alpha$.

2. For every $x \in X$ we have that $\nu\{P : \ B(x, 2^{j+4}) \subseteq P_j(x)\} \ge \frac{1}{2}$.

We also fix $p \in (0, 1/8)$ and for every $k \le n$ denote $\zeta_k = \zeta_k(X; p)$. For $S \subseteq X$ let $\Psi_j(S)$ denote a random zero set of S at scale 2^{j-3} which is $\zeta_{|S|}$-spreading with probability p. For each $C \subseteq X$ let $\widetilde{C}$ be a uniformly random subset of C of size $\min\{K, |C|\}$.

The distribution on Fréchet-type embeddings. The embeddings we produce will be of Fréchet-type, i.e. every coordinate $f_i : X \to \mathbb{R}$ will be of the form $f_i(x) = d(x, U)$ for some $U \subseteq X$. Let $I = [-\log_2 \zeta_K + 3, \log_2 \alpha + 6] \cap \mathbb{Z}$ and $J = \{0, 1, \ldots, \log_2 n\}$. For each $i \in I$ and $t \in J$, we describe a distribution W_t^i on sets. Our random embedding consists of mapping x to $f(x) = (d(x, W_t^i) : i \in I, j \in J)$. Such a mapping is clearly Lipschitz with constant $\sqrt{|I| \cdot |J|} = O(\sqrt{\log n \cdot \log \alpha})$ (here we use Fact 2.3, i.e. $\zeta_K \le \alpha$).

Let $\{\sigma_m\}_{m \in \mathbb{Z}}$ be a sequence of random variables taking each of the values $\{0, 1, 2\}$ with probability $\frac{1}{3}$, which are independent of all the other random variables appearing in this proof. (In general, the reader should assume that samplings from various distributions are independent of one another.) Then the random variable W_t^i is defined as

$$\begin{aligned} W_t^i = \Big\{ x \in X \quad : \quad & \sigma_{\kappa(x,t)-i} = 0 \\ \text{or} \quad & \Big(x \in \Psi_{\kappa(x,t)-i}\Big(\widetilde{P_{\kappa(x,t)-i}(x)}\Big) \text{ and } \sigma_{\kappa(x,t)-i} = 1 \Big) \\ \text{or} \quad & \Big(x \in \widetilde{P_{\kappa(x,t)-i}}(x) \text{ and } \sigma_{\kappa(x,t)-i} = 2 \Big) \Big\}. \end{aligned}$$

For the rest of the proof, let m be any integer, fix $x, y \in X$ such that $d(x, y) \in [2^{m-1}, 2^m]$, and assume that $x \in S_m(K)$. Let $s_i = \log_2 |B(x, 2^{i+m})|$, with $s_{\min I}$ and $s_{\max I}$ corresponding to the smallest and largest $i \in I$. The next claim follows from the "smoothness" of Lemma 3.3.

Claim 3.5. *For* $i \in I$ *and all* $t \in \mathbb{Z} \cap [s_{i-1}, s_i]$, *every* $w \in B(x, 2^m/\zeta_K)$ *satisfies*

$$m - 3 \le \kappa(w, t) - i \le m + 1.$$

Now we define

$$N(x) = \#\{(i, t) : i \in I, t \in [s_{i-1}, s_i] \cap \mathbb{Z}\} = \#\{t : t \in [s_{\min I}, s_{\max I}] \cap \mathbb{Z}\}.$$

Observe that

$$N(x) \geq \log_2 \frac{|B(x, 2^{m+5}\alpha)|}{|B(x, 2^{m+3}/\zeta_K)|}.$$

We are going to get a contribution to $||f(x) - f(y)||_2^2$ from the sets $\{W_t^i\}$ where $t \in \mathbb{Z} \cap [s_{i-1}, s_i]$ for some $i \in I$. The number of such pairs is $N(x)$. Thus clearly we get the desired lower bound (1) if we can prove that for these values of i and t, we have

$$\mathbb{E}\,|d(x, W_t^i) - d(y, W_t^i)|^2 \geq \left(\frac{p}{64}\right)^5 \cdot \frac{2^{2m}}{\zeta_K}. \tag{3}$$

To prove (3) we fix $i \in I, t \in [s_{i-1}, s_i] \cap \mathbb{Z}$ and let

$$M = \{m-3, m-2, m-1, m, m+1\}.$$

3.1.1 Partitions and padding

For any $j \in M$ we have that $\mathrm{diam}(P_j(x)) \leq 2^{j+4}\alpha \leq 2^{m+5}\alpha$, so $B(x, 2^{m+5}\alpha) \supseteq P_j(x)$. Since $x \in S_m(K)$, it follows that $|P_j(x)| \leq \frac{K}{16}|B(x, 2^{m-9}/\zeta_K)|$. Recall that for $j \in M$ the random partition P_j satisfies

$$\Pr[d(x, X \setminus P_j(x)) \geq 2^{m+1}] \geq \Pr[d(x, X \setminus P_j(x) \geq 2^{j+4}] \geq \tfrac{1}{2}.$$

Define the event

$$\mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}}^j = \{d(x, X \setminus P_j(x)) \geq 2^{m+1}\},$$

and let

$$\mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}} = \bigcap_{j \in M} \mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}}^j.$$

Note that, by independence, we have $\Pr[\mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}}] \geq 2^{-5}$.

Suppose that $\mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}}^j$ occurs, then since $d(x, y) \leq 2^m$, we have $y \in P_j(x)$, implying $P_j(x) = P_y(x)$. Furthermore, since

$$B(x, 2^{m-9}\zeta_K) \subseteq P_j(x),$$

when we sample down $P_j(x)$ to $\widetilde{P_j(x)}$, a set of size at most K, Lemma 3.4, part (1), ensures that

$$\Pr[\widetilde{P_j(x)} \cap B(x, 2^{m-9}/\zeta_K) = \emptyset] \leq e^{-15}.$$

To this end, we denote

$$\mathcal{E}_{\text{hit}}^j = \left\{\widetilde{P_j(x)} \cap B(x, 2^{m-9}/\zeta_K) \neq \emptyset\right\},$$

and we define $\mathcal{E}_{\text{hit}} = \bigcap_{j \in M} \mathcal{E}_{\text{hit}}^j$. Since the events $\{\mathcal{E}_{\text{hit}}^j\}_{j \in M}$ are independent even after conditioning on $\mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}}$, the preceding discussion yields the following lemma.

Lemma 3.6. $\Pr(\mathcal{E}_{\text{hit}} \cap \mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}}) \geq 2^{-5}(1 - 5e^{-15}) > 2^{-6}$.

3.1.2 Obtaining a separation

We introduce the following events which mark different "phases" of the embedding. For $\ell \in \{1, 2\}$, let

$$\mathcal{E}_\ell^\sigma = \{\sigma_j = \ell \text{ for all } j \in M\}.$$

Note that $\Pr[\mathcal{E}_\ell^\sigma] \geq 3^{-5}$ for each $\ell \in \{1, 2\}$. Now we study the distance from x to W_t^i in phase 1.

Claim 3.7. *If $\mathcal{E}_1^\sigma \cap \mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}}$ occurs, then*

$$d(x, W_t^i) \geq \min\left\{\frac{2^m}{\zeta_K}, \min_{j \in M}\left\{d(x, \Psi_j(\widetilde{P_j(x)}))\right\}\right\}. \tag{4}$$

Proof. Fix a point $w \in B(x, 2^m/\zeta_K)$, and let $j = \kappa(w, t) - i$. By Claim 3.5, $j \in M$, hence $\mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}}$ implies that $w \in P_j(x)$. Since $\mathcal{E}_1^\sigma$ occurs, we have $w \in W_t^i$ if and only if $w \in \Psi_j(\widetilde{P_j(x)})$. ☐

If $\mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}} \cap \mathcal{E}_{\text{hit}}$ occurs, then for each $j \in M$, there exists a point $w_j \in \widetilde{P_j(x)}$ such that $d(x, w_j) \leq 2^{m-9}/\zeta_K$. So to get a lower bound on $d(x, W_t^i)$, we can restrict our attention to $\{w_j\}_{j \in M}$.

Claim 3.8. *If $\mathcal{E}_{\text{hit}} \cap \mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}} \cap \mathcal{E}_1^\sigma$ occurs and $d\left(w_j, \Psi_j\left(\widetilde{P_j(x)}\right)\right) \geq \varepsilon$ for every $j \in M$, then*

$$d(x, W_i^t) \geq \min\left\{\frac{2^m}{\zeta_K}, \varepsilon - \frac{2^{m-9}}{\zeta_K}\right\}.$$

Proof. For every $j \in M$,

$$d\left(x, \Psi_j\left(\widetilde{P_j(x)}\right)\right) \geq d\left(w_j, \Psi_j\left(\widetilde{P_j(x)}\right)\right) - d(x, w_j) \geq \varepsilon - \frac{2^{m-9}}{\zeta_K}.$$

Now apply Claim 3.7. ☐

There are two types of points $y \in X$ which occur in the argument that follows. As a warmup, we first dispense with the easy type.

Type I: There exists $z \in B(y, 2^{m-7}/\zeta_K)$ for which $\kappa(z, t) - i \notin M$.

Fix this z and let $j' = \kappa(z, t) - i$. Assume that $\mathcal{E}_{\text{hit}} \cap \mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}} \cap \mathcal{E}_1^\sigma$ occurs, as well as the independent event $\sigma_{j'} = 0$. Note that using Lemma 3.6 along with independence, the probability of this event is at least $q = 2^{-6} \cdot 3^{-5} \cdot (1/3)$.

Now, applying the definition of ζ_K to the sets $\widetilde{P_j(x)} = \widetilde{P_j(w_j)}$ for $j \in M$, we conclude that there is an event $\mathcal{E}_{\text{zero}}$ which occurs with probability at least p^5, and such that for every $j \in M$,

$$d\left(w_j, \Psi_j\left(\widetilde{P_j(x)}\right)\right) \geq \frac{2^{j-3}}{\zeta_K} \geq \frac{2^{m-6}}{\zeta_K}.$$

Applying Claim 3.8 with $\varepsilon = 2^{m-6}/\zeta_K$, we conclude that, in this case,

$$d(x, W_t^i) \geq \frac{5 \cdot 2^{m-9}}{\zeta_K}.$$

Since $\sigma_{j'} = 0$, we have $z \in W_t^i$, hence with probability at least $q \cdot p^5 \geq (p/16)^5$, we have

$$|d(x, W_t^i) - d(y, W_t^i)| \geq \frac{5 \cdot 2^{m-9}}{\zeta_K} - d(y, z) \geq \frac{2^{m-9}}{\zeta_K}.$$

This completes the analysis of Type I points.

3.1.3 A case analysis on the fate of y

We now analyze the complement of the set of Type I points.

Type II: For all $z \in B(y, 2^{m-7}/\zeta_K)$, $\kappa(z,t) - i \in M$.

First, we define the following key event.

$$\mathcal{E}_{\text{close}} = \left\{ \exists j \in M,\ \exists z \in \widetilde{P_j(y)} \text{ such that } d(y,z) \leq \frac{2^{m-7}}{\zeta_K} \text{ and } \kappa(z,t) - i = j \right\}.$$

Also, let $\mathcal{E}_{\text{far}} = \neg\mathcal{E}_{\text{close}}$.

These two events concern the distance of y to the various sample sets. Since we do not make the assumption that $y \in S_m(K)$, we cannot argue that a random sample point lands near y with non-negligible probability, thus we must handle both possibilities $\mathcal{E}_{\text{close}}$ and $\mathcal{E}_{\text{far}}$. This is the main purpose of the two phases, i.e. the events $\mathcal{E}_\ell^\sigma$ for $\ell \in \{1,2\}$. Thus the proof now breaks down into two sub-cases corresponding to the occurrences of $\mathcal{E}_{\text{close}}$ and $\mathcal{E}_{\text{far}}$, respectively.

Claim 3.9 (The close case)**.** *Conditioned on the event $\mathcal{E}_{\text{hit}} \cap \mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}} \cap \mathcal{E}_1^\sigma \cap \mathcal{E}_{\text{close}}$ occurring, with probability at least p^5,*

$$|d(x, W_t^i) - d(y, W_t^i)| \geq \frac{2^{m-9}}{\zeta_K}.$$

Proof. If the event $\mathcal{E}_{\text{close}}$ occurs, then there exists some $j_0 \in M$ and $z \in \widetilde{P_{j_0}(x)} = \widetilde{P_{j_0}(y)}$ such that $d(y,z) \leq 2^{m-7}/\zeta_K$ and $\kappa(z,t) - 1 = j_0$. Additionally, if $\mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}} \cap \mathcal{E}_{\text{hit}}$ occurs, then for every $j \in M$ there is $w_j \in \widetilde{P_j(x)}$ with $d(w_j, x) \leq 2^{m-9}/\zeta_K$. It follows that, for every $j \in M$,

$$d(w_j, z) \geq d(x,y) - d(x, w_j) - d(y,z) \geq 2^{m-1} - \frac{5 \cdot 2^{m-9}}{\zeta_K} > 2^{m-2} \geq 2^{j-3}.$$

Hence applying the definition of ζ_K to the sets $\widetilde{P_j(x)}$ for $j \in M$, we conclude that there is an event $\mathcal{E}_{\text{zero}}$ with probability at least p^5, independent of $\mathcal{E}_{\text{hit}}, \mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}}, \mathcal{E}_{\text{close}}$ and $\mathcal{E}_1^\sigma$, such that if the event $\mathcal{E}_{\text{hit}} \cap \mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}} \cap \mathcal{E}_{\text{close}} \cap \mathcal{E}_1^\sigma \cap \mathcal{E}_{\text{zero}}$ occurs then $z \in \Psi_{j_0}\left(\widetilde{P_{j_0}(y)}\right)$, and for every $j \in M$,

$$d\left(w_j, \Psi_j\left(\widetilde{P_j(x)}\right)\right) \geq \frac{2^{j-3}}{\zeta_K} \geq \frac{2^{m-6}}{\zeta_K}.$$

Applying Claim 3.8, it follows that $d(x, W_t^i) \geq \frac{5 \cdot 2^{m-9}}{\zeta_K}$. Furthermore, since $z \in \Psi_{j_0}\left(\widetilde{P_{j_0}(y)}\right)$ and $\mathcal{E}_1^\sigma$ occurs, we have $\sigma_{j_0} = 1$, hence $z \in W_t^i$. It follows that

$$|d(x, W_t^i) - d(y, W_t^i)| \geq \frac{5 \cdot 2^{m-9}}{\zeta_K} - d(y,z) \geq \frac{2^{m-9}}{\zeta_K}.$$

□

We now analyze the probability of the previous event. A proof is deferred to Appendix A.3.

Lemma 3.10. $\Pr[\mathcal{E}_{\text{hit}} \cap \mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}} \cap \mathcal{E}_1^\sigma \mid \mathcal{E}_{\text{close}}] \geq 2^{-6} \cdot 3^{-5}$.

Now we proceed to analyze the case when $\mathcal{E}_{\text{far}}$ occurs. By Claim 3.5, every $w \in B(x, 2^{m-9}/\zeta_K)$ satisfies $\kappa(w,t) - i \in M$. By the pigeonhole principle, some $j^* \in M$ must occur as the value of $\kappa(w,t) - i$ in at least a $\frac{1}{5}$th of them. Together with the growth condition implied by $x \in S_m(K)$, we conclude that

$$\left|\left\{w \in B(x, 2^{m-9}/\zeta_K) : \ \kappa(w,t) - i = j^*\right\}\right| \geq \tfrac{16}{5K}|B(x, 2^{m+5}\alpha)| \geq \tfrac{3}{K}|B(x, 2^{m+5}\alpha)|.$$

Define the event

$$\mathcal{E}^*_{\text{hit}} = \{\exists w \in \widetilde{P_{j^*}(x)} \cap B(x, 2^{m-9}/\zeta_K) \text{ with } \kappa(w,t) - i = j^*\},$$

and observe that by Lemma 3.4, part (1), $\Pr[\mathcal{E}^*_{\text{hit}}] \geq 1 - e^{-3}$.

Claim 3.11 (The far case)**.** *If $\mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}} \cap \mathcal{E}_{\text{far}} \cap \mathcal{E}^\sigma_2 \cap \mathcal{E}^*_{\text{hit}}$ occurs, then*

$$|d(x, W^i_t) - d(y, W^i_t)| \geq \frac{2^{m-9}}{\zeta_K}.$$

Proof. Assume that the event $\mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}} \cap \mathcal{E}_{\text{far}} \cap \mathcal{E}^\sigma_2 \cap \mathcal{E}^*_{\text{hit}}$ occurs, and let $w \in \widetilde{P_{j^*}(x)} \cap B(x, 2^{m-9}/\zeta_K)$ be the point guaranteed by $\mathcal{E}^*_{\text{hit}}$. Since $\sigma_j = 2$, we have $w \in W^i_t$, so that $d(x, W^i_t) \leq 2^{m-9}/\zeta_K$.

On the other hand, we claim that $d(y, W^i_t) \geq 2^{m-7}/\zeta_K$. Indeed, first note that $\mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}}$ implies that for all $j \in M$, $d(y, X \backslash P_j(y)) \geq 2^m$. Suppose that $z \in W^i_t$ and $d(y,z) \leq 2^{m-7}/\zeta_K$. Let $j' = \kappa(z,t) - i$. In this case, we have $j' \in M$, hence $\sigma_{j'} = 2$, and this implies that $z \in \widetilde{P_{j'}(z)} = \widetilde{P_{j'}(y)}$. But in this case, $\mathcal{E}_{\text{far}}$ implies that $d(y,z) > 2^{m-7}/\zeta_K$, yielding a contradiction. It follows that

$$|d(x, W^i_t) - d(y, W^i_t)| \geq \frac{2^{m-7}}{\zeta_K} - \frac{2^{m-9}}{\zeta_K} \geq \frac{2^{m-9}}{\zeta_K}.$$

□

Lemma 3.12. $\Pr[\mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}} \cap \mathcal{E}^\sigma_2 \cap \mathcal{E}^*_{\text{hit}} \,|\, \mathcal{E}_{\text{far}}] \geq 2^{-5} \cdot 3^{-5} \cdot (1 - e^{-3})$.

Proof.

$$\Pr[\mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}} \cap \mathcal{E}^\sigma_2 \cap \mathcal{E}^*_{\text{hit}} \,|\, \mathcal{E}_{\text{far}}] = 3^{-5} \cdot 2^{-5} \cdot \Pr[\mathcal{E}^*_{\text{hit}} \,|\, \mathcal{E}_{\text{far}}, \mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}}] \geq \Pr[\mathcal{E}^*_{\text{hit}} \,|\, \mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}}] \geq 3^{-5} \cdot 2^{-5} \cdot (1 - e^{-3}).$$

The penultimate inequality follows from the fact that conditioning on $\mathcal{E}_{\text{far}}$ cannot decrease the probability of $\mathcal{E}^*_{\text{hit}}$, as in Lemma 3.4, part 2(b). □

To finish with the analysis of the Type II points, we apply Claim 3.9 together with Lemma 3.10 and Claim 3.11 with Lemma 3.12 to conclude that

$$\begin{aligned}
&\mathbb{E}|d(x, W^i_t) - d(y, W^i_t)|^2 \\
&\quad\geq \left(\Pr[\mathcal{E}_{\text{good}} \cap \mathcal{E}_{\text{close}} \cap \mathcal{E}^\sigma_1 \cap \mathcal{E}_{\text{zero}}] + \Pr[\mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}} \cap \mathcal{E}_{\text{far}} \cap \mathcal{E}^\sigma_2 \cap \mathcal{E}^*_{\text{hit}}]\right) \frac{2^{2m-18}}{\zeta_K^2} \\
&\quad= \left(\Pr[\mathcal{E}_{\text{close}}] \Pr[\mathcal{E}_{\text{good}} \cap \mathcal{E}^\sigma_1 \cap \mathcal{E}_{\text{zero}} \,|\, \mathcal{E}_{\text{close}}] + \Pr[\mathcal{E}_{\text{far}}] \Pr[\mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}} \cap \mathcal{E}^\sigma_2 \cap \mathcal{E}^*_{\text{hit}} \,|\, \mathcal{E}_{\text{far}}]\right) \frac{2^{2m-18}}{\zeta_K^2} \\
&\quad\geq \tfrac{1}{2} \min\{2^{-6} \cdot 3^{-5} \cdot p^5, 2^{-5} \cdot 3^{-5} \cdot (1 - e^{-3})\} \frac{2^{2m-18}}{\zeta_K^2} \geq \left(\frac{p}{64}\right)^5 \frac{2^{2m}}{\zeta_K^2}.
\end{aligned}$$

Since we have proved that (3) holds for both Type I points and Type II points, the proof is complete. □

4 Concluding remarks

- There are two factors of $O(\sqrt{\log\log n})$ which keep our bound from being optimal up to a constant factor. One factor of $\sqrt{\log\log n}$ arises because the ratio $\frac{|B(x,2^{m+5}\alpha_X)|}{|B(x,2^{m+3}/\zeta_K(X;p))|}$ in Lemma 3.1 involves radii $R_1 = 2^{m+5}\alpha_X$ and $R_2 = 2^{m+3}/\zeta_K(X;p)$ for which $R_1/R_2 = \Omega(\log n)$. This arises out of a certain non-locality property which seems inherent to the method of proof in [4]. Note that even improving the method to $R_1 \approx 2^m$ is insufficient, as the ratio may still be quite large. The other factor arises because, in proving Theorem 1.1, we invoke Lemma 3.1 with $O(\log\log n)$ different values of the parameter K. It is likely removable by a more technical induction, but since we are unable to remove both terms, we choose to present the simpler proof.

- It is an interesting open problem to understand the exact distortion required to embed n-point negative type metrics into L_1. As mentioned, the best lowerbound (unpublished) is $\Omega(\log\log\log n)$. We also note that assuming an appropriate form of the *Unique Games Conjecture* is true, the general Sparsest Cut problem is hard to approximate within a factor of $\Omega(\log\log n)^\delta$ for some $\delta > 0$; this was recently shown independently in [14] and [9].

- For the uniform case of Sparsest Cut, it is possible to achieve a $O(\sqrt{\log n})$ approximation in quadtratic time without solving the SDP [3]. Such an algorithm may also be possible for the general case.

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A Proofs

A.1 Sketch of Theorem 2.1

Proof (sketch) of Theorem 2.1. Let $g : X \to \ell_2$ be such that $d(x,y) = ||g(x) - g(y)||_2^2$ for all $x, y \in X$. By [22], there exists a map $T : \ell_2 \to \ell_2$ such that $||T(z)||_2 = \sqrt{\Delta}$ for all $z \in \ell_2$ and

$$\tfrac{1}{2}||z - z'||_2 \leq ||T(z) - T(z')||_2 \leq \min\{\sqrt{\Delta}, ||z - z'||_2\}$$

for all $z, z' \in \ell_2$. Let $f : X \to \mathbb{R}^d$ be the map given by $f = T \circ g$.

Let $0 < \sigma < 1$ be some constant. The basic idea is to choose a random $u \in S^{d-1}$ and define

$$\begin{aligned} L_u &= \{x \in X : \langle x, u\rangle \leq \tfrac{-\sigma\sqrt{\Delta}}{\sqrt{d}}\} \\ R_u &= \{x \in X : \langle x, u\rangle \geq \tfrac{\sigma\sqrt{\Delta}}{\sqrt{d}}\}. \end{aligned}$$

One then prunes the sets by iteratively removing any pairs of nodes $x \in L_u$, $y \in R_u$ with $d(x,y) \leq \Delta/\sqrt{\log n}$. At the end one is left with two sets L'_u, R'_u. The main result of [4] (as strengthened by [17]) is that with high probability (over the choice of u) L'_u and R'_u each contain $\Omega(n)$ points.

The reweighting idea of [8] is to apply this procedure to a weighted version of the point set as follows. Let $w : X \times X \to \mathbb{Z}^+$ be an integer-valued weight function on pairs, with $w(x,y) = w(y,x)$ and $w(x,x) = 0$. This weight function can be viewed as yielding a new set of points where each point x is replaced by $\sum_{y \in X} w(x,y)$ copies, with $w(x,y)$ of them corresponding to the pair (x,y). One could think of running the above procedure on this new point set; note that the pruning procedure above may remove some or all copies of x. Then [4, 17] implies that the pruning with high probability removes at most $1/4$ of the total weight.

The distribution μ mentioned in the statement of the theorem is defined using a family of $O(\log n)$ weight functions described below. Sampling from μ consists of picking a weight function from this family and a random direction $u \in S^{d-1}$, and then forming sets L'_u, R'_u as above using the weight function. One then outputs the set U of all points x for which any copy falls into L'_u.

Now we define the family of weight functions. The first one has $w(x,y) = n^4$ for all $x \neq y$. Given any weight function, obtain another one by doing the thought experiment of picking a random u and constructing L'_u, R'_u for the point set described by this weight function. For every pair (x,y) that is left unpruned with probability $\geq \frac{1}{10}$ (i.e., is in $L'_u \times R'_u$ for $\geq 1/10$ of the u's), lower the weight of $w(x,y)$ by a factor 2. A simple argument (presented in [8]) shows that by repeating this $O(\log n)$ times we obtain $O(\log n)$ weight functions such that for every pair (x,y) the following is true. If one picks a random direction u and forms the set L'_u, R'_u for each weight function, then with constant probability over the choice of u, every pair (x,y) occurs in $\Omega(\log n)$ of the $L'_u \times R'_u$. $\square$

A.2 Smoothness lemma

Proof of Lemma 3.3. By definition, $|B(z, 2^{\kappa(z,t)})| < 2^t \leq |B(x, 2^{\kappa(z,t)+1})|$. For the upper bound, we have

$$|B(x, 2^{\kappa(z,t)} - 2^{m-s})| \leq |B(z, 2^{\kappa(z,t)})| < 2^t \leq |B(x, 2^{i+m})|,$$

implying that $2^{\kappa(z,t)} - 2^{m-s} < 2^{i+m}$, which yields $2^{\kappa(z,t)} < 2^{m+1+i}$. For the lower bound, we have

$$|B(x, 2^{\kappa(z,t)+1} + 2^{m-s})| \geq |B(z, 2^{\kappa(z,t)+1})| \geq 2^t \geq |B(x, 2^{m+i-1})|.$$

We conclude that $2^{\kappa(z,t)+1} + 2^{m-s} \geq 2^{m+i-1}$, which implies that $2^{\kappa(z,t)+1} \geq 2^{m+i-2}$. $\square$

A.3 Lemma 3.10

Proof of Lemma 3.10.

$$\Pr[\mathcal{E}_{\text{hit}} \cap \mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}} \cap \mathcal{E}_1^{\sigma} \,|\, \mathcal{E}_{\text{close}}] = 3^{-5} \cdot \Pr[\mathcal{E}_{\text{hit}} \cap \mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}} \,|\, \mathcal{E}_{\text{close}}] = 2^{-5} \cdot 3^{-5} \cdot \Pr[\mathcal{E}_{\text{hit}} \,|\, \mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}}, \mathcal{E}_{\text{close}}],$$

thus we need only argue that $\Pr[\mathcal{E}_{\text{hit}} \,|\, \mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}}, \mathcal{E}_{\text{close}}] \geq \frac{1}{2}$. But this follows by applying Lemma 3.4, part 2(a), to the sets $X = P_j(x)$, $A = B(x, 2^{m-9}/\zeta_K)$, and $B = B(y, 2^{m-7}/\zeta_K)$, and concluding that

$$\Pr[\neg\mathcal{E}_{\text{hit}}^{j} \,|\, \mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}}, \mathcal{E}_{\text{close}}] \leq e^{(1-15K)/K} \leq e^{-14}.$$

Thus $\Pr[\mathcal{E}_{\text{hit}} \,|\, \mathcal{E}_{\text{pad}}, \mathcal{E}_{\text{close}}] \geq 1 - 5e^{-14} \geq \frac{1}{2}$. $\square$

B The sparsest cut problem with non-uniform demands

B.1 Computing the Euclidean distortion

In this section, we remark that the maps used to prove Theorem 1.1 have a certain "auto-extendability" property which will be used in the next section. We also recall that it is possible to find near-optimal Euclidean embeddings using semi-definite optimization.

Theorem B.1. *Let (Y, d) be an arbitrary metric space, and fix a k-point subset $X \subseteq Y$. If the space (X, d) is a metric of negative type, then there exists a probability space (Ω, μ), and a map $f : Y \to L_2(\Omega, \mu)$ such that*

1. *For every $\omega \in \Omega$, the map $x \mapsto f(x)(\omega)$ is 1-Lipschitz.*
2. *For every $x, y \in X$,*
$$||f(x) - f(y)||_2 \geq \frac{d(x, y)}{C\sqrt{\log k}\log\log k},$$

where $C > 0$ is some universal constant.

Proof. We observe that the map used to prove Theorem 1.1 is a Fréchet embedding (note that the map from [15] employed in the proof of Theorem 1.1 for the case $x, y \in S_m(K_n)$ is also Fréchet). In other words, there is a probability space (Ω, μ) over subsets $A_\omega \subseteq X$ for $\omega \in \Omega$, and we obtain a map $g : X \to L_1(\mu)$ given by $g(x)(\omega) = d(x, A_\omega)$. We can then define the extension $f : Y \to L_1(\mu)$ by
$$f(y)(\omega) = \max_{x \in X}[g(x)(\omega) - d(x, y)].$$
This ensures that the map $x \mapsto f(x)(\omega)$ is 1-Lipschitz on Y for every $\omega \in \Omega$. □

Corollary B.2. *Let (Y, d) be an arbitrary metric space, and fix a k-point subset $X \subseteq Y$. If the space (X, d) is a metric of negative type, then there exists a 1-Lipschitz map $f : Y \to L_2$ such that the map $f|_X : X \to L_2$ has distortion $O(\sqrt{\log k}\log\log k)$.*

Now we suppose that (Y, d) is an n-point metric space and $X \subseteq Y$ is a k-point subset.

Claim B.3. *There exists a polynomial-time algorithm (in terms of n) which, given X and Y, computes a map $f : Y \to L_2$ such that $f|_X$ has minimal distortion among all 1-Lipschitz maps f.*

Proof. We give a semi-definite program computing the optimal f.

SDP (5.1)

maximize	ε	
subject to	$x_u \in \mathbb{R}^n$	$\forall u \in Y$
	$(x_u - x_v)^2 \leq d(u, v)^2$	$\forall u, v \in Y$
	$(x_u - x_v)^2 \geq \varepsilon\, d(u, v)^2$	$\forall u, v \in X$

□

B.2 The Sparsest Cut

Let V be an n-point set with two symmetric weights on pairs $w_N, w_D : V \times V \to \mathbb{R}_+$ (i.e. $w_N(x,y) = w_N(y,x)$ and $w_D(x,y) = w_D(y,x)$). For a subset $S \subseteq V$, we define the *sparsity of* S by

$$\Phi_{w_N,w_D}(S) = \frac{\sum_{u\in S, v\in \bar{S}} w_N(u,v)}{\sum_{u\in S, v\in \bar{S}} w_D(u,v)},$$

and we let $\Phi^*(V) = \min_{S\subseteq V} \Phi_{w_N,w_D}(S)$. (The set V is usually thought of as the vertex set of a graph with $w_N(u,v)$ supported only on edges (u,v), but this is unnecessary since we allow arbitrary weight functions.)

Computing the value of $\Phi^*(V)$ is NP-hard. The following semi-definite program is a relaxation of $\Phi^*(V)$.

SDP (5.2)

min	$\sum_{u,v\in V} w_N(u,v)\,(x_u - x_v)^2$	
subject to	$x_u \in \mathbb{R}^n$	$\forall u \in V$
	$\sum_{u,v\in V} w_D(u,v)\,(x_u - x_v)^2 = 1$	

Furthermore, an optimal solution to this SDP can be computed in polynomial time.

The algorithm. We now give our algorithm for rounding SDP (5.2). Suppose that the weight function w_D is supported only on pairs u,v for which $u,v \in U \subseteq V$, and let $k = |U|$. Let $M = 20\log n$.

1. Solve SDP (5.2), yielding a solution $\{x_u\}_{u\in V}$.
2. Consider the metric space (V,d) given by $d(u,v) = (x_u - x_v)^2$.
3. Applying SDP (5.1) to U and (V,d) (where $Y = V$ and $X = U$), compute the optimal map $f : V \to \mathbb{R}^n$.
4. Choose $\beta_1, \ldots, \beta_M \in \{-1,+1\}^n$ independently and uniformly at random.
5. For each $1 \le i \le M$, arrange the points of V as $v_1^i, \ldots, v_n^i$ so that
$$\langle \beta_i, f(v_j^i)\rangle \le \langle \beta_i, f(v_{j+1}^i)\rangle \text{ for each } 1 \le j \le n-1.$$
6. Output the sparsest of the Mn cuts $(\{v_1^i, \ldots, v_m^i\}, \{v_{m+1}^i, \ldots, v_n^i\})$, $1 \le m \le n-1, 1 \le i \le M$.

Claim B.4. *With constant probability over the choice of* $\beta_1, \ldots, \beta_M$*, the cut* $(S, \bar{S})$ *returned by the algorithm has*

$$\Phi(S) \le O(\sqrt{\log k}\log\log k)\,\Phi^*(V). \tag{5}$$

Proof. Let $S \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$ be the image of V under the map f. Consider the map $g : S \to \ell_1^M$ given by $g(x) = (\langle \beta_1, x\rangle, \ldots, \langle \beta_M, x\rangle)$. It is well-known (see, e.g. [1, 23]) that, with constant probability over the choice of $\{\beta_i\}_{i=1}^M \subseteq S^{n-1}$, g has distortion $O(1)$ (where S is equipped with the Euclidean metric). In this case, we claim that (5) holds.

To see this, let $S_1, S_2, \ldots, S_{Mn} \subseteq V$ be the Mn cuts which are tested in line (6). It is a standard fact that there exist constants $\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \ldots, \alpha_{Mn}$ such that for every $x, y \in V$,

$$||g(f(x)) - g(f(y))||_1 = \sum_{i=1}^{Mn} \alpha_i \rho_{S_i}(x,y),$$

where $\rho_{S_i}(x,y)=1$ if x and y are on opposite sides of the cut $(S_i,\bar{S}_i)$ and $\rho_{S_i}(x,y)=0$ otherwise.

Assume (by scaling) that $g\circ f: Y\to \ell_1^M$ is 1-Lipschitz. Let Λ be the distortion of $g\circ f$. By Corollary B.2, $\Lambda=O(\sqrt{\log k}\log\log k)$. Recalling that $w_D(u,v)>0$ only when $u,v\in U$,

$$\begin{aligned}
\Phi^*(V)\geq \frac{\sum_{u,v\in V} w_N(u,v)(x_u-x_v)^2}{\sum_{u,v\in U} w_D(u,v)(x_u-x_v)^2} &\geq \frac{1}{\Lambda}\frac{\sum_{u,v\in V} w_N(u,v)\,||g(f(u))-g(f(v))||_1}{\sum_{u,v\in U} w_D(u,v)\,||g(f(u))-g(f(v))||_1}\\
&= \frac{1}{\Lambda}\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{Mn}\alpha_i\sum_{u,v\in V} w_N(u,v)\rho_{S_i}(u,v)}{\sum_{i=1}^{Mn}\alpha_i\sum_{u,v\in U} w_D(u,v)\rho_{S_i}(u,v)}\\
&\geq \min_i \frac{\sum_{u,v\in V} w_N(u,v)\rho_{S_i}(u,v)}{\sum_{u,v\in U} w_D(u,v)\rho_{S_i}(u,v)}=\Phi(S).
\end{aligned}$$

This completes the proof. □

C Considerations in the local theory

- There is no asymptotic advantage in embedding n-point negative type metrics into L_p for some $p\in(1,\infty)$, $p\neq 2$ (observe that since L_2 is isometric to a subset of L_p for all $p\geq 1$, our embedding into Hilbert space is automatically also an embedding into L_p). Indeed, for $1<p<2$ it is shown in [19] that there are arbitrarily large n-point subsets of L_1 that require distortion $\Omega(\sqrt{(p-1)\log n})$ in any embedding into L_p. For $2<p<\infty$ it follows from [25, 24] that there are arbitrarily large n-point subsets of L_1 whose minimal distortion into L_p is $1+\Theta\left(\sqrt{\frac{\log n}{p}}\right)$ (the dependence on n follows from [25], and the optimal dependence on p follows from the results of [24]). Thus, up to multiplicative constants depending on p (and the double logarithmic factor in Theorem 1.1), our result is optimal for all $p\in(1,\infty)$.

- Let $(X,d_X),(Y,d_Y)$ be metric spaces and $\eta:[0,\infty)\to[0,\infty)$ a strictly increasing function. A one to one mapping $f:X\hookrightarrow Y$ is called a *quasisymmetric embedding with modulus* η if for every $x,a,b\in X$ such that $x\neq b$,
$$\frac{d_Y(f(x),f(a))}{d_Y(f(x),f(b))}\leq\eta\left(\frac{d_X(x,a)}{d_X(x,b)}\right).$$
We refer to [12] for an account of the theory of quasisymmetric embeddings. Observe that metrics of negative type embed quasisymmetrically into Hilbert space. It turns out that our embedding result generalizes to any n point metric space which embeds quasisymmetrically into Hilbert space. Indeed, if (X,d) embeds quasisymmetrically into L_2 with modulus η then, as shown in [17], there exists constants $p=p(\eta)$ and $C=C(\eta)$, depending only on η, such that $\zeta(X;p)\leq C\sqrt{\log n}$.

- It is worthwhile to note here that if a Banach space X embeds uniformly into Hilbert space (i.e. there exists a homeomorphism of X into Hilbert space that is uniformly continuous in both directions), then X embeds quasisymmetrically into Hilbert space (and thus our main embedding results holds for n-point subsets of X). Indeed, by a theorem of Aharoni, Maurey and Mityagin [2], X is linearly isomorphic to a subspace of L_0. By a theorem of Nikišhin [26] it follows that X is linearly isomorphic to a subset of $L_{1/2}$, i.e. there exists a linear operator $T:X\hookrightarrow L_{1/2}$ and a constant $C>0$ such that for every $x\in X$, $\|x\|\leq\|Tx\|_{1/2}\leq C\|x\|$. It is easy to check (see e.g. [22]) that the metric space $(L_{1/2},\|x-y\|_{1/2}^{1/2})$ is isometric to a subset of L_1. Thus $(X,\|x-y\|^{1/4})$ is bi-Lipschitz equivalent to a subset of Hilbert space, as required.