

UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA
INSTITUTE OF MATHEMATICS, PHYSICS AND MECHANICS
DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS
JADRANSKA 19, 1000 LJUBLJANA, SLOVENIA

Preprint series, Vol. 39 (2001), 734

DOMINATION, PACKING AND
EXCLUDED MINORS

Thomas Böhme Bojan Mohar

ISSN 1318-4865

January 18, 2001

Ljubljana, January 18, 2001

Domination, packing and excluded minors

Thomas Böhme^{*†}

Institut für Mathematik
Technische Universität Ilmenau
Ilmenau, Germany

Bojan Mohar^{‡§}

Department of Mathematics
University of Ljubljana
Ljubljana, Slovenia

January 16, 2001

Abstract

Let $\gamma(G)$ be the domination number of a graph G , and let $\alpha_k(G)$ be the maximum number of vertices in G , no two of which are at distance $\leq k$ in G . It is easy to see that $\gamma(G) \geq \alpha_2(G)$. In this note it is proved that $\gamma(G)$ is bounded from above by a linear function in $\alpha_2(G)$ if G has no large complete bipartite graph minors. Extensions to other parameters $\alpha_k(G)$ are also derived.

1 Introduction and main results

Let G be a finite undirected graph. A graph H is a *minor* of G if it can be obtained from a subgraph of G by contracting edges. The *distance* $\text{dist}_G(x, y)$ in G of two vertices $x, y \in V(G)$ is the length of a shortest (x, y) -path in G . The distance of a vertex x from a set $A \subseteq V(G)$ is $\min\{\text{dist}_G(x, a) \mid a \in A\}$.

For a set $A \subseteq V(G)$, $G(A)$ denotes the subgraph of G induced by A . If k is a nonnegative integer, we denote by $\overline{N}_k(A)$ the set of all vertices of G which are at distance $\leq k$ from A . The set A is a *k-dominating set* in G if $\overline{N}_k(A) = V(G)$. The cardinality of a smallest k -dominating set of G is denoted by $\gamma_k(G)$. A vertex set $X_0 \subseteq V(G)$ is an *α_k -set* if no two vertices in X_0 are at distance $\leq k$ in G . Let $\alpha_k(G)$ denote the cardinality of a largest α_k -set of G . Observe that $\gamma(G) = \gamma_1(G)$ and $\alpha(G) = \alpha_1(G)$ are the usual

^{*}Supported by SLO-German grant SVN 99/003.

[†]E-mail address: tboehme@theoinf.tu-ilmenau.de

[‡]Supported in part by SLO-German grant SVN 99/003.

[§]E-mail address: bojan.mohar@uni-lj.si

domination number and the independence (or stability) number of G . We refer to [1] for further details on domination in graphs.

It is clear that $\gamma_k(G) \geq \alpha_{2k}(G)$. On the other hand, for any r there is a graph such that $\alpha_{k+1}(G) = 1$ and $\gamma_k(G) \geq r$. In order to see this, let H_n be the Cartesian product of $k + 1$ copies of the complete graph K_n . Then any two vertices of H_n have distance at most $k + 1$ in H_n . Therefore, $\alpha_{k+1}(H_n) = 1$. Since $\deg_{H_n}(x) = (k + 1)(n - 1)$ and $|V(H_n)| = n^{k+1}$, it follows that $\gamma_k(H_n) \geq n/(k + 1)^k$.

The main result of the present note is the following theorem which gives a linear upper bound on $\gamma_k(G)$ in terms of $\alpha_m(G)$, $k \leq m < \frac{3}{2}(k + 1)$, in any set of graphs with a fixed excluded minor.

Theorem 1.1 *Let $k \geq 0$ and $m \geq 1$ be integers such that $k \leq m < \frac{3}{2}(k + 1)$. If $\gamma_k(G) \geq (2mr + (q - 1)(mr - r + 1))\alpha_m(G) - 2mr + r + 1$, then G has a $K_{q,r}$ -minor.*

Our original motivation was the case when $k = 1$ and $m = 2$.

Corollary 1.2 *If $\gamma(G) \geq (4r + (q - 1)(r + 1))\alpha_2(G) - 3r + 1$, then G has a $K_{q,r}$ -minor.*

By excluding $K_{3,3}$ -minors, we get:

Corollary 1.3 *If G is a planar graph, then $\gamma(G) \leq 20\alpha_2(G) - 9$.*

The existence of a linear bound $\gamma(G) \leq c_1\alpha_2(G) + c_2$ for planar graphs was conjectured by F. Göring (private communication) who proved such a bound for plane triangulations.

Corollary 1.3 can be generalized to graphs on any surface. Since the graph $K_{3,k}$ cannot be embedded in a surface of Euler genus $g \leq (k - 3)/2$ the following bound holds:

Corollary 1.4 *Suppose that G is a graph embedded in a surface of Euler genus g . Then $\gamma(G) \leq 4(2g + 5)\alpha_2(G) - 9$.*

The special case of Theorem 1.1 when $k = 0$ and $m = 1$ is also interesting. The proof of Theorem 1.1 in this special case yields an even stronger statement since the sets A_1, \dots, A_r in that proof are mutually at distance 1 and hence, in the constructed minor $K_{q,r}$, any two of the r vertices in the second bipartition class are adjacent. Since $\gamma_0(G) = |V(G)|$, the following result is obtained:

Corollary 1.5 *Let $K_{q,r}^+$ be the graph obtained from $K_{q,r}$ by adding the r -clique on the vertex set of the bipartition class of cardinality r . Suppose that $K_{q,r}^+$ is not a minor of G . Then*

$$\alpha(G) \geq \frac{|V(G)| + r}{2r + q - 1}.$$

Duchet and Meyniel [2] obtained a special case of Corollary 1.5 when $q \leq 1$. (Note that $K_{1,r-1}^+ = K_{0,r}^+ = K_r$.) They proved that in a graph G without K_r minor

$$\alpha(G) \geq \frac{|V(G)| + r - 1}{2r - 2}. \quad (1)$$

As it turns out, our proof of Theorem 1.1 restricted to this special case is quite similar to Duchet and Meyniel's proof.

Although Theorem 1.1 does not work for the case $k = 1$ and $m = 3$, the following result can be used to get such an extension:

Corollary 1.6 *Let $k \geq 0$ be an integer and let G be a graph. Let r be the largest integer such that K_r is a minor of G . Then*

$$\alpha_{2k}(G) \leq r(2\alpha_{2k+1}(G) - 1).$$

Proof. Let S be a maximum α_{2k} -set in G . Define a graph H with $V(H) = S$ in which two vertices x, y are adjacent if and only if $\text{dist}_G(x, y) = 2k + 1$. Suppose that K is a subgraph of H . Let K' be a subgraph of G obtained by taking vertices in $V(K)$ and, for each edge xy of K , adding a path of length $2k + 1$ in G joining x and y . Since all such paths are geodesics of odd length $2k + 1$, they cannot intersect each other. This implies that K' is a subdivision of K . In particular, if H has K_r minor, so does G .

Clearly, $\alpha(H) \leq \alpha_{2k+1}(G)$. Since $|V(H)| = \alpha_{2k}(G)$, (1) implies that H contains K_r minor, where $r \geq \alpha_{2k}(G)/(2\alpha_{2k+1}(G) - 1)$. Then also G contains a K_r minor, and this completes the proof. \square

The relation between α_{2k} and α_{2k+1} in Corollary 1.6 cannot be extended to α_{2k+1} and α_{2k+2} as shown by the following examples (which are all planar and hence $K_{3,3}$ minor free). Let T_k be the tree obtained from the star $K_{1,p}$ ($p \geq 1$) by replacing each edge by a path of length $k + 1$. Then $\gamma_k(T_k) = p$ (if $k \geq 1$), $\alpha_{2k+1}(T_k) = p$, and $\alpha_{2k+2}(T_k) = 1$. This example also shows that Theorem 1.1 cannot be extended to the value $m = 2k + 2$ if $k \geq 1$.

2 Proof of Theorem 1.1

In this section, k and m will denote fixed nonnegative integers such that $k \leq m \leq 2k + 1$. Let G be a graph, and $A \subseteq V(G)$. Let $Q = Q_k^m(A)$ be the subgraph of G which is obtained from the vertex set $U = U_k(A) := V(G) \setminus \overline{N}_k(A)$ by adding vertices and edges of all paths of length $\leq m$ in G which connect two vertices in U . Since $m \leq 2k + 1$, $V(Q) \cap A = \emptyset$. Observe that $U = \emptyset$ if and only if A is a k -dominating set of G .

An *extended α_m -pair* with respect to A and k is a pair (X, X_0) where $X_0 \subseteq X \subseteq V(G)$ such that:

- (a) $X_0 \subseteq U_k(A)$ is an α_m -set in G and every vertex in $U_k(A)$ is at distance $\leq m$ from X_0 .
- (b) Every vertex of $X \setminus X_0$ lies on an (X_0, X_0) -path in $Q = Q_k^m(A)$ which is of length $\leq 2m$.
- (c) Every component of Q contains precisely one connected component of $Q(X)$.

Observe that by (a), $X_0 \neq \emptyset$ if A is not k -dominating.

Lemma 2.1 *If $k \leq m \leq 2k + 1$ and $A \subseteq V(G)$, then there exists an extended α_m -pair (X, X_0) with respect to A and k . If $m \geq 1$ and A is not k -dominating, then $|X| \leq 2m|X_0| - 2m + 1$.*

Proof. If A is k -dominating, then $X_0 = X = \emptyset$ will do. If $m = 0$, then $X_0 = X = U_k(A)$. Suppose now that A is not k -dominating and that $m \geq 1$. Let B be a component of Q . Let $B_0 = B \cap G(U)$ and $V_0 = V(B_0)$. Let us build a set $X \subseteq V(B)$ and the corresponding α_m -set $X_0 \subseteq V_0$ as follows. Start with $X = X_0 = \{v\}$, where $v \in V_0$. If there exists a vertex of V_0 at distance in B at least $m + 1$ from the current set X_0 , let u be such a vertex which is as close as possible to X_0 in B . Observe that $\text{dist}_G(u, X_0) \geq m + 1$ although the distance in G may be smaller than the distance in B .

Let $u_0 u_1 \dots u_r$ be a shortest path in B from X_0 (so $u_0 \in X_0$) to $u = u_r \in V_0$. Then $\text{dist}_B(u_i, X_0) = i$ for $i = 0, \dots, r$. Suppose that $r > 2m$. The vertices u_{m+1}, \dots, u_{r-1} do not belong to V_0 since their distance from X_0 is $\geq m + 1$ but smaller than the distance between u and X_0 . Let $p = r - \lfloor \frac{m}{2} \rfloor - 1$. By the definition of B , the edge $u_p u_{p+1}$ lies on a path of length $\leq m$ joining two vertices of V_0 . In particular, an end u' of this edge is at distance $\leq \lceil \frac{m}{2} \rceil - 1$ from a vertex $u'' \in V_0$. If $\text{dist}_B(u'', X_0) \leq m$, then $\text{dist}_B(u, X_0) \leq \text{dist}_B(u, u') + \text{dist}_B(u', u'') + \text{dist}_B(u'', X_0) \leq (\lfloor \frac{m}{2} \rfloor + 1) +$

$(\lceil \frac{m}{2} \rceil - 1) + m < r$. This contradiction shows that $\text{dist}_B(u'', X_0) \geq m + 1$. However, $\text{dist}_B(u'', X_0) \leq \text{dist}_B(u'', u') + \text{dist}_B(u', X_0)$. If m is even, this implies that $\text{dist}_B(u'', X_0) < r$. If m is odd, then we may assume that $u' = u_p$, and then the same conclusion holds. This contradiction to the choice of u implies that $\text{dist}_B(u, X_0) = r \leq 2m$.

Let us add u into X_0 and add the vertices u_0, u_1, \dots, u_r into the set X . This procedure gives rise to an extended α_m -pair inside B . Clearly, $|X| \leq 2m|X_0| - 2m + 1$.

By taking the union of such sets constructed in all components of Q , an appropriate extended α_m -pair is obtained. \square

Proof of Theorem 1.1. By Lemma 2.1, there are pairwise disjoint vertex sets A_1, A_2, \dots, A_r such that (A_1, A_1^0) is an extended α_m -pair with respect to k and $A^{(1)} = \emptyset$, and (A_i, A_i^0) is an extended α_m -pair with respect to k and the set $A^{(i)} := A_1 \cup \dots \cup A_{i-1}$, for $i = 2, \dots, r$. Moreover, $|A_i| \leq 2m\alpha_m - 2m + 1$, where $\alpha_m = \alpha_m(G)$. Suppose that $\gamma_k(G) \geq (2mr + (q-1)(mr - r + 1))\alpha_m - 2mr + r + 1$. Then $\gamma_k(G) > (2m\alpha_m - 2m + 1)(r - 1)$, so $A^{(r)}$ is not a k -dominating set. Therefore, A_1, \dots, A_r are all nonempty.

For $i = 1, \dots, r$, let $H_i = Q_k^m(A^{(i)})$. Let H_r^1, \dots, H_r^t be the connected components of H_r . If $i \geq 2$, then $H_i \subseteq H_{i-1}$. This implies that each component of H_i is contained in some component of H_{i-1} . For $j = 1, \dots, t$, let H_i^j be the component of H_i containing H_r^j . By (c), each H_i^j contains a component C_i^j of $H_i(A_i)$. Each C_r^j contains at least one vertex from the α_m -set A_r^0 . Therefore, $t \leq \alpha_m$.

Let $B_1 = A_1 \cup \dots \cup A_r$. Since $\gamma_k(G) > r(2m\alpha_m - 2m + 1)$, B_1 is not k -dominating. Hence, there is a vertex $v_1 \in U_k(B_1)$. By (a), v_1 is at distance $\leq m$ from some component C_r^j ($1 \leq j \leq t$) of $H_r(A_r)$. Then $H_r^j, H_{r-1}^j, \dots, H_1^j$ are the components of H_r, H_{r-1}, \dots, H_1 (respectively) containing C_r^j . For any of the components H_i^j ($1 \leq i \leq r$), there is a path P_i^1 in G of length $\leq m$ connecting v_1 with $C_i^j \subseteq H_i^j$. Let B_2 be the union of B_1 with $\{v_1\}$ and the internal vertices of the paths $P_1^1, P_2^1, \dots, P_r^1$. Let us repeat the process with B_2 instead of B_1 to obtain a vertex $v_2 \in U_k(B_2)$ and linking paths $P_1^2, P_2^2, \dots, P_r^2$ of length $\leq m$ joining v_2 with A_1, A_2, \dots, A_r , respectively.

Now, repeat the process by constructing B_3 , obtaining v_3 and paths $P_1^3, P_2^3, \dots, P_r^3$, and so on, as long as possible. This way we get a sequence of vertices v_1, v_2, \dots, v_s and paths of length $\leq m$ joining these vertices with A_1, \dots, A_r . The only requirement which guarantees the existence of v_1, \dots, v_s and the corresponding paths is that $\gamma_k(G) > r(2m\alpha_m - 2m + 1) + (s-1)(1+r(m-1))$. Since $\gamma_k(G) > (2mr + (q-1)(mr - r + 1))\alpha_m - 2mr + r$,

we may take $s > (q-1)\alpha_m \geq (q-1)t$. Then q of the vertices among v_1, \dots, v_s correspond to the same component C_r^j , say to C_r^1 . Suppose that these vertices are v_1, \dots, v_q .

Let us now consider two vertices v_i, v_j ($1 \leq i < j \leq q$) and two of their paths P_a^i and P_b^j where $a \neq b$. Suppose that they intersect in a vertex v . Denote by $y = \text{dist}_G(v, A_a)$, $z = \text{dist}_G(v_j, v)$, and $w = \text{dist}_G(v, A_b)$. Then $z + y \leq m$, $z + w \leq m$, $z \geq k + 1$, and $y + w \geq \text{dist}_G(A_a, A_b) \geq k + 1$. This implies that $k \leq y + w - 1 \leq 2m - 2z - 1 \leq 2m - 2k - 3$. Consequently, P_a^i and P_b^j cannot intersect if $2m < 3(k + 1)$. In such a case it is easy to verify that vertices v_1, \dots, v_q , the connected subgraphs $C_1^1, C_2^1, \dots, C_r^1$ and the linking paths P_a^i ($1 \leq i \leq q, 1 \leq a \leq r$) give rise to a $K_{q,r}$ -minor in G . This completes the proof of Theorem 1.1. \square

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