

The PACE 2019 Parameterized Algorithms and Computational Experiments Challenge: The Fourth Iteration

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Abstract

The organizers of the 4th Parameterized Algorithms and Computational Experiments challenge (PACE 2019) report on the 4th iteration of the PACE challenge. This year, the first track featured the `MINVERTEXCOVER` problem, which asks given an undirected graph $G = (V, E)$ to output a set $S \subseteq V$ of vertices such that for every edge $vw \in E$ at least one endpoint belongs to S . The exact decision version of this problem is one of the most discussed problem if not even the prototypical problem in parameterized complexity theory. Another two tracks were dedicated to computing the hypertree width of a given hypergraph, which is a certain generalization of tree decompositions to hypergraphs that has widely been applied to problems in databases, constraint programming, and artificial intelligence. On one track we asked for submissions that compute hypertree decompositions of minimum width (`MINHYPERTREEWIDTH`) and on the other track we asked to heuristically compute hypertree decompositions of small width quickly (`HEURHYPERTREEWIDTH`). We received 28 implementations from 26 teams. This year we asked participants to submit solver descriptions in order to count as a submission for the challenge. We received those from 16 teams with overall 33 participants from 10 countries. One team submitted successful solutions to all three tracks.

2012 ACM Subject Classification Theory of computation → Parameterized complexity and exact algorithms; Theory of computation → Complexity theory and logic; Mathematics of computing → Solvers; Mathematics of computing → Graph algorithms; Mathematics of computing → Hypergraphs

Keywords and phrases Parameterized Algorithms, Vertex Cover Problem, Hypertree Decompositions, Implementation Challenge, FPT

Digital Object Identifier 10.4230/LIPIcs.IPEC.2019.25

Category Invited Paper

Funding The work has been supported by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF), Grants Y698 and P26696, and the German Science Fund (DFG), Grant HO 1294/11-1 and Erasmus+ KA107. Hecher is also affiliated with the University of Potsdam, Germany.

Acknowledgements The PACE challenge was supported by *Networks* [5], an NWO Gravitation project of the University of Amsterdam, Eindhoven University of Technology, Leiden University and the Center for Mathematics and Computer Science (CWI), by the *Centre for Information and High Performance Computing (ZIH) of TU Dresden* [3], and by *data-experts* [1]. The prize money (4,000

¹ The author contributed significantly to the realization of PACE 2019 during his internship at TU Dresden.



EUR) was given through the generosity of Networks and data experts. We are grateful to Szymon Wasik and Jan Badura for the fruitful collaboration and for hosting the challenge at `optil.io` [154]. We like to acknowledge the generous support by the High Performance Computing Center at TU Dresden, who gave us access to the HRSK-II and 80.000 CPU hours from February on to select instances and validate the results [3].

1 Introduction

The Parameterized Algorithms and Computational Experiments Challenge (PACE) was conceived in Fall 2015 to deepen the relationship between parameterized algorithms and practice. It aims to:

1. Bridge the divide between the theory of algorithm design and analysis, and the practice of algorithm engineering.
2. Inspire new theoretical developments.
3. Investigate in how far theoretical algorithms from parameterized complexity and related fields are competitive in practice.
4. Produce universally accessible libraries of implementations and repositories of benchmark instances.
5. Encourage the dissemination of these findings in scientific papers.

The first iteration of PACE was held at IPEC 2016 [40]. There programmers were asked for submissions on two tracks, namely, (a) a treewidth track allowing for exact sequential, exact parallel, heuristic sequential, and heuristic parallel submissions and (b) a feedback vertex set track. PACE 2017 [41] featured (a) a treewidth track allowing for sequential exact or heuristic submissions and (b) a minimum fill-in track. PACE 2018 [26] then asked for submissions that solve the Steiner tree problem. The line of past challenges has inspired a long list of works on the proposed problems [8, 17, 20, 57, 62, 76, 81, 90, 97, 98, 107, 123, 142, 153, 143, 144, 151, 152, 99]. Benchmarks from the PACE challenges have been used for other competitions and evaluations [47, 129, 134]. Various applications have built on top of results from PACE or were inspired by the success of solvers produced for PACE [16, 21, 22, 30, 32, 33, 58, 59, 60, 61, 64, 65, 66, 101, 103, 105, 110, 109, 111, 122, 127, 150, 158]. Finally, PACE challenges have been mentioned in research works [38, 115]. Among the various papers have also been papers that received a best paper award [16, 143].

In this article, we report on the 4th iteration of PACE. The PACE 2019 challenge was announced on November 16, 2018. Format descriptions were posted on November 20, 2018 and the public instances were released on December 5, 2019 (hypertree decompositions) January 4, 2019 (vertex cover) and updated on March 6, 2019 (vertex cover), since the initial instances were not challenging enough for the participants. The final version of the submissions was due on May 6, 2019. We informed the participants of the results on July 14. We released the private instances on July 29 [50, 56] and announced the final results to the public on September 11, during the award ceremony at the International Symposium on Parameterized and Exact Computation (IPEC 2019) in Munich. For the first time in the history of PACE, we had a poster session after the award ceremony, where 4 posters were presented, namely `WeGotYouCovered` [92], `bogdan` [156], `asc` [139] as well as `TULongo` [124, 125].

PACE 2019 consists of three tracks. The first track featured the `MINVERTEXCOVER` problem, which asks given an undirected graph $G = (V, E)$ to output a set $S \subseteq V$ of vertices such that for every edge $vw \in E$ at least one endpoint belongs to S . The exact decision version of this problem is one of the most discussed problem if not even the prototypical problem in

parameterized complexity theory. Another two tracks were dedicated to compute the hypertree width of a given hypergraph, which is a certain generalization of tree decompositions to hypergraphs that has widely been applied to problems in databases [82], constraint programming [35, 82, 87], and artificial intelligence [106, 108]. On one track we asked for submissions that compute hypertree decompositions of minimum width (MINHYPERTREEWIDTH) and on the other track we asked to heuristically compute hypertree decompositions of small width fast (HEURHYPERTREEWIDTH). This year's PACE had quite relaxed solver requirements and we even allowed solvers to use external dependencies such as ILP, SAT, and SMT solvers if the external solvers were available under an open source license. We received 28 implementations from 26 teams. This year we asked participants to hand in solver descriptions and received those from 16 teams. If we count only submissions that handed in a solver and a description according to the submission requirements, we had overall 33 participants from 10 countries. One outstanding team submitted successful solutions to all three tracks.

2 The PACE 2019 Challenge Problems

In this section, we give an overview on the PACE 2019 problems. We organized the section by problem and present the well-known vertex cover problem first and then a generalization of treewidth to hypergraphs. For each problem, we start with a quick definition, introduce the tracks and selected instances. We finish with the submission requirements. In the following, we assume that the reader is familiar with basic graph terminology and we refer to standard texts [25, 45] otherwise.

2.1 Vertex Cover (Track 1a)

Computing minimum vertex covers was among the original 21 NP-complete problems by Karp [104] and is probably one of the most famous graph problems. In fact, there are over 537,000 results (queried on 30.07.2019) on Google scholar, dealing with problems related to finding vertex covers and variants thereof. Besides, vertex covers are particularly well-studied in parameterized complexity [37], ranging from studies involving different parameters [31, 126] and related problems [121, 137], over kernelization [52, 112], and also concern concrete applications [28, 46, 51, 96, 131]. We use the following definition.

► **Definition 1** (Vertex Cover). *Given an undirected graph $G = (V, E)$. A set $S \subseteq V$ is a vertex cover for G , if for every edge $uv \in E$, we have $\{u, v\} \cap S \neq \emptyset$. A vertex cover S is a minimum vertex cover for G if there is no vertex cover S' for G such that $|S'| < |S|$.*

This definition motivates the problem of Track 1a.

<i>Problem:</i>	MINVERTEXCOVER (EXACT)
<i>Input:</i>	Undirected graph G
<i>Task:</i>	Output a minimum vertex cover for G .

Data Format

The input format for providing a graph (*.gr*) was taken from the PACE 2017 format for graphs [41]. The output format for specifying a vertex cover (*.vc*) was an adaption of the input format in the same style. More details on the format can be found at pacechallenge.org/2019/vc/vc_format. There is also a simple checker available at github.com/hmarkus/vc_validate in Python (folder: *vc_validate*) and C++ (folder: *cpp*).

■ **Table 1** Information on the origins of our graphs, including download links and relevant converters.

	Name	#	Reference (Download Link)	Converter
1	PACE 2016/Treewidth	17	pacechallenge.org:2016	
2	TransitGraphs	23	github:daajoe/transit_graphs	[53]
3	Road-graphs	5	github.com:ben-strasser	
4	SNAP	15	snap.stanford.edu	
5	frb	41	buaa.edu.cn:kexu/benchmarks	
6	ASP Horn backdoors	1,077	asparagus.cs.uni-potsdam.de	[23, 24, 78, 102, 54]
7	SAT Horn backdoors	83	marco.gario.org	[74, 55]
			tinyurl.com:countingbenchmarks	
8	SAT2VC	8,329	satlib.org	[49]
			tinyurl.com:countingbenchmarks	
			sat2018.tuwien:benchmarks	

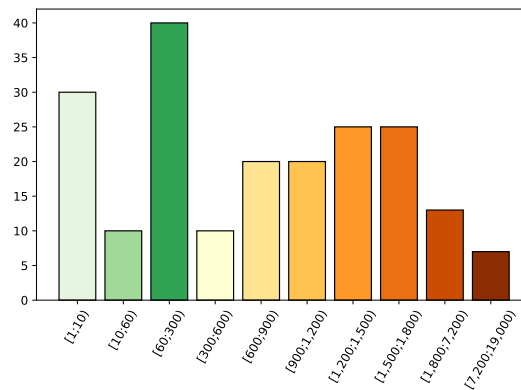
Instances for Vertex Cover

In order to establish a suitable set of benchmark instances from various areas, we considered in total 9,591 instances comprising of the following 8 origins.

- 17 graphs from PACE 2016/Treewidth [40];
- 23 graphs from TransitGraphs (Denmark, FlixBus, Israel, Luxembourg, Metro Bilbao, Mexico City, NYC Subway, Pace Bus, Praha, Translink, VBB, WienerLinien) [53];
- 5 graphs from Road-graphs [42, 141];
- 15 graphs from SNAP (Stanford Network Analysis Project) [117] including gnutella [120, 135], social circles from facebook [130], bitcoin OTC trust network [113, 114], and wiki vote [118, 119],
- 41 graphs from frb [155];
- 1,077 graphs from ASP Horn backdoors [63], where a vertex cover of the graph gives a Horn backdoor to the considered logic program (ASP) [27, 100], originating from various ASP competitions [10, 29, 43, 79], in more detail, 7 *ScoreDLP-Mutex* [128] logic programs, 282 *Score-RLP200* logic programs [157], 200 *MinimalDiagnosis* [29, 77] logic programs, and 588 *automotive* [140] logic programs;
- 83 graphs from SAT Horn backdoors [138], where a vertex cover of the graph gives a Horn backdoor to the considered SAT instance, originating from 15 *dfremont projection* formulas [71] and 68 *Gario* formula collection [73, 75];
- 8,329 graphs from SAT2VC, where we took widely used SAT instances, reduced them into 3-SAT instances [133] and then reduced them to k -vertex cover by means of the well-known reductions by Karp [104] (merge the reductions from SAT to clique and then clique to vertex cover into one). Then, a vertex cover of $k = n + 2m$ exists if and only if the given formula of n variables and m clauses is satisfiable. We took 6,956 SAT instances from the *SATlib* collection [95], 1,187 instances from a popular *#SAT* collection [66, 71], and 186 instances from the *SAT 2018 competition* [94].

We implemented a variety of converters, among those tools where the following: asp_horn_backdoors [54], HornVCBuilder [74], lp2normal [23, 24], gringo [78, 102], a SAT to vertex cover converter [49]. Table 1 gives an overview on the sources and the involved graph converters or programs that implement the reductions described above.

For PACE 2019, we were interested in challenging, large instances that are still within reach for the participants in reasonable development time, but require reasonable efforts to score one of the medals. In order to get a naive classification of the “practical hardness”



■ **Figure 1** Overview on the number of instances and runtime intervals, which were computed by means of a simple ILP encoding solved by the (M)ILP solver Gurobi, for the selected instances of Track 1a. The x-axis labels the considered intervals, i.e., $[a; b)$ indicates that runtime t was within the interval $a \leq t < b$. The y-axis indicates the number of selected instances.

of our collected benchmark instances, we encoded the MINVERTEXCOVER problem into a simple ILP encoding and ran the solver Gurobi [89] on all instances with a timeout of 6 hours. After obtaining initial runtime results, we assigned to each instance a category (easy $\{1, 2, 3\}$, medium $\{1, 2, 3, 4\}$, and hard $\{1, 2, 3\}$). From the classified instances, we picked 200 instances by sampling uniformly at random among the distribution given in Figure 1. Mainly, we dropped an instance if the runtime was below 1s, and picked 80 instances from category easy (runtime within the interval $[1; 300)$), picked 80 instances from category medium (runtime within the interval $[300; 1,500)$, and 40 instances from category hard (runtime in the interval $[1,500; 19,000)$). We dropped instances that could not be solved within 6 hours. We numbered the instances from 1 to 200 with increasing hardness, selected the odd numbered instances as public and even numbered instances as private instances. Table 2 shows statistics on the resulting instances. The 100 public instances were released at pacechallenge.org/2019/vc/vc_exact. All the selected instances are publicly available at [Zenodo:3368306](https://zenodo.org/record/3368306) [50]. We released the full collection of instances, instance selection scripts, and mapping of selected instances at [github:daajoe/pace_2019_vc_instances](https://github.com/daajoe/pace_2019_vc_instances).

2.2 Hypertree Decompositions (Tracks 2a and 2b)

Hypertree decompositions and the resulting measure hypertree width is a prominent structural restriction in the area of constraint satisfaction problems (CSP) [11, 39, 149] and databases [82], such as the commercial database system LogicBlox [12, 15, 6, 7, 132] that uses hypertree decompositions. In the beginning of the 80s, Freuder [72] showed that the CSP is tractable under structural restrictions imposed in terms of bounded treewidth of the constraint graph. The result has later been generalized by Gottlob, Leone, and Scarcello to hypertree width [82], which still renders CSP polynomial-time tractable. In fact, the polynomial-time solvability for bounded hypertree width instances still holds when one is interested in counting the number of satisfying assignments [48], which is also known as sum-of-products, weighted counting, partition function, or probability of evidence [106]. Thus, this problem is also of high interest in artificial intelligence, e.g., to solve probabilistic reasoning [108]. While there are even more general measures [86, 87], hypertree decompositions allow for computing a hypertree decomposition of width at most k (if one exists) in polynomial time for a given fixed integer k . Still hypertree width was mainly of theoretical

■ **Table 2** Basic statistics on the selected PACE 2019 instances for Track 1a (Vertex Cover/Exact). $|V_{\min}|$ and $|E_{\min}|$ refers to the minimum number of vertices and edges, respectively; max refers to the maximum; avg refers to the mean; med refers to the median; $\text{tw}_{\text{med}}^{\text{ub}}$ refers to a heuristically computed upper bound (median over the instances) on the treewidth using the library htd [8].

instances	$ V_{\min} $	$ V_{\max} $	$ V_{\text{avg}} $	$ V_{\text{med}} $	$ E_{\min} $	$ E_{\max} $	$ E_{\text{avg}} $	$ E_{\text{med}} $	$\text{tw}_{\text{med}}^{\text{ub}}$
public	198	138.14k	16.44k	14.69k	813	227.24k	30.95k	24.66k	105.0
private	153	98.13k	16.30k	13.59k	625	161.36k	30.50k	27.15k	103.5
all	153	138.14k	16.37k	13.59k	625	227.24k	30.73k	24.66k	107.0

interest due to few practical implementations and missing efficient implementations of heuristics to compute the associated decompositions. The success of PACE 2016 and 2017 and its resulting decomposers for computing tree decompositions, which facilitated lots of follow-up implementations [32, 33, 66, 61], and the hope that PACE also drives advances to the CSP, reasoning, and database community, motivated us to propose this problem for Track 2.

► **Definition 2** (Hypergraphs and Tree Decompositions). *A hypergraph is a pair $H = (V, E)$ consisting of a set V of vertices and a set E of hyperedges, where each hyperedge in E is a subset of V . Let $H = (V, E)$ be a hypergraph. A tree decomposition [136] of H is a pair $\mathcal{T} = (T, \chi)$ where $T = (N, A)$ is a rooted tree and χ is a mapping that assigns to each node $t \in N$ a set $\chi(t) \subseteq V$, called bag, such that the following conditions hold: (i) $V = \bigcup_{t \in N} \chi(t)$, (ii) $E \subseteq \{2^{\chi(t)} \mid t \in N\}$, and (iii) for each $r, s, t \in A$ where s lies on the path from r to t , we have $\chi(s) \subseteq \chi(r) \cap \chi(t)$.*

We follow the definitions of Gottlob, Leone, and Scarcello [82].

► **Definition 3** (Hypertree Decompositions [82]). *Let $H = (V, E)$ be a hypergraph and let $S \subseteq V$ be a set of vertices. An edge cover $C \subseteq E$ of S is a set of hyperedges, where for every $v \in S$, there is $e \in C$ with $v \in e$. A hypertree decomposition of H is a triple $\mathcal{H} = (T, \chi, \lambda)$, where (i) (T, χ) is a tree decomposition of H with $T = (N, A)$, (ii) λ is a mapping that assigns to each node $t \in N$ an edge cover $\lambda(t)$ of $\chi(t)$, and (iii) for every $t \in N$ and every $e \in \lambda(t)$, we have $e \cap \chi_{\leq t} \subseteq \chi(t)$. The set $\chi_{\leq t}$ refers to the set of all vertices occurring in a bag $\chi(t')$ of the subtree $T' = (N', A')$ of T where T' is rooted at t and $t' \in N'$. Then, $\text{width}(\mathcal{H})$ is the size of the largest edge cover $\lambda(t)$ over all nodes $t \in N$. The hypertree width $\text{htw}(H)$ is the smallest width over all hypertree decompositions of H .*

Based on this generalization of tree decompositions to hypergraphs, we defined the following two problems for Track 2a and 2b.

<i>Problem:</i>	MINHYPERTREEWIDTH (EXACT)
<i>Input:</i>	Hypergraph H
<i>Task:</i>	Output a hypertree decomposition of H of minimum width.

<i>Problem:</i>	HEURHYPERTREEWIDTH (HEURISTIC)
<i>Input:</i>	Hypergraph H
<i>Task:</i>	Output a hypertree decomposition of H of small width.

■ **Table 3** Basic statistics on the selected PACE 2019 instances for Track 2a (MINHYPERTREEWIDTH) and Track 2b (HEURHYPERTREEWIDTH). $|V_{\min}|$ and $|E_{\min}|$ refers to the minimum number of vertices and hyperedges, respectively; max refers to the maximum; med refers to the median.

Track	instances	$ V_{\min} $	$ V_{\max} $	$ V_{\text{med}} $	$ E_{\min} $	$ E_{\max} $	$ E_{\text{med}} $
Track 2a (Exact)	public	3	130	24.0	3	100	61.5
Track 2a (Exact)	private	10	351	25.0	5	250	60.0
Track 2a (Exact)	all	3	351	24.0	3	250	60.0
Track 2b (Heuristic)	public	12	694	40.0	5	526	84.0
Track 2b (Heuristic)	private	12	694	40.0	5	495	90.0
Track 2b (Heuristic)	all	12	694	40.0	5	526	84.0

Computation of Hypertree Decompositions

Above we mentioned that there are a variety of applications for hypertree decompositions. However, many practical sides are not very well explored. In fact, for tree decompositions both exact as well as heuristic-based decomposers are widely available due to recent PACE challenges, this is not the case for hypertree decompositions. There, only very few implementations are available and the exact implementations are highly prototypical. Fortunately, various theoretical results on computing hypertree decompositions [82, 83, 70, 69, 68] and more general measures [57] are available. Some of these approaches are simply combinatorial backtracking based algorithms, others are heuristics based on bucket elimination, and again others are based on encodings into extensions of SAT. A major obstacle for hypertree decompositions is that Condition (iii) of Definition 3 is expensive and in case of encodings into SAT-related formalisms it blows up the size computation considerably.

Data Format

We designed the input and output format by extending the PACE 2016 formats used for graphs and tree decompositions [40, 41], which are similar to the format used by DIMACS challenges [4]. The input format for hypergraphs (*.hgr*) extends the PACE 2016/2017 graph format to edges of arbitrary arity. The output format for hypertree decompositions (*.htd*) allows in addition to the treewidth format to specify a covering function, i.e., mappings for the bags that map hyperedges to 0 or 1. More details on the format can be found at https://pacechallenge.org/2019/htd/htd_format/. We provided a simple checker at https://github.com/daajoe/htd_validate in Python (folder: *htd_validate*) and C++ (folder: *cpp*). Both tools already implement reading and outputting the formats.

Instances for Hypertree Decompositions

For our benchmark selection, we considered 2,191 instances, which contain hypergraphs that originate from CSP instances and conjunctive database queries from various sources. All of these instances are part of the hyperbench collection and have been collected and published by Fischl et al. [68, 69] together with different hypergraph properties including various notions of width related measures². The selection consists of eight non-disjoint sets.

² The hypergraphs together with the properties have been published at <http://hyperbench.dbai.tuwien.ac.at> and the collection of hypergraphs is also available in a public data repository [57].

15 instances from the set `DaimlerChrysler`, 12 instances from the set `Grid2D`, 24 instances on circuits from the set `ISCAS'89` [85]. 31 instances from `MaxSAT` [19]. 1090 instances and 863 instances, respectively on `csp_application` and `csp_random` of instances from the well known XCSP benchmarks [14]. 82 instances from the set `csp_other`, which have been collected for works on hypertree decompositions³. 156 instances from the set `CQ` on various conjunctive queries [13, 18, 80, 88, 116, 145].

In order to obtain a basic classification of the instances we heuristically computed hypertree decompositions with `htdecomp` [44] and computed generalized hypertree decompositions of smallest width [57]. Generalized hypertree decompositions relax Condition (iii) in Definition 3 and allow certain techniques to find a solution faster. The widths of the thereby obtained decompositions are indeed of minimum width, which is guaranteed by comparing the widths with the matching integer lower bounds obtained by `fraSMT` [57] – a tool for computing fractional hypertree decompositions, which are more general than hypertree decompositions. After obtaining initial runtime results we assigned to each instance one category out of easy, medium, hard, or dropped the instance. An instance was classified as easy if it could be solved within 60s, as medium if it could be solved within 300 and 900s, and hard if it could not be solved within 7,200s. We dropped instances that could not be solved within 7,200s on purpose, since we were interested in many realistic instances and quite challenging instances for the solvers. From the remaining and classified instances we picked 200 by sampling 20 instances uniform at random from category easy, 60 instances from the category medium, and 120 instances from the category hard. Table 3 shows statistics on the resulting selected instances. We released the public instances at https://pacechallenge.org/2019/htd/htd_exact/ and https://pacechallenge.org/2019/htd/htd_heur/, respectively. The pages also contain a document that contains the mapping of the selected PACE 2019 instances and the original instance of hyperbench. We also published the instances in a public data repository [56].

3 Challenge Settings

In the following, we state the submission requirements for this year’s PACE and basic information on the system on which we ran the challenge.

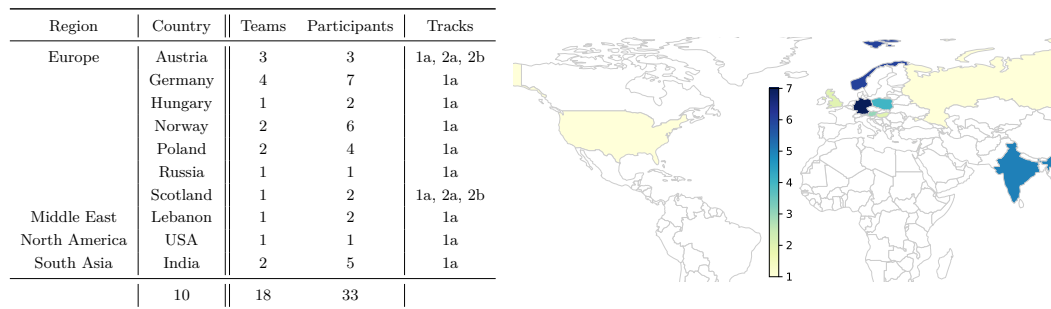
Submission Requirements

We invited people to participate in the three proposed tracks. In order to have common setting we however posted the following *submission requirements*.

1. Both submitted solver and external dependencies have to be *open source*.
2. The source code of the solver is maintained by the submitters on a *public repository*.
3. A *dedicated solver description* of at least two pages has to be submitted.

We choose Requirement 1 fairly permissive, in order to obtain valuable information on the actual efficiency of solving the problem. So we did not prescribe the algorithmic paradigm that had to be used. In that way, we also allowed in principle submissions that relied on an encoding into paradigms such as SAT or SMT. We imposed Requirement 3 to enable other researchers to analyze and compare implemented ideas, get insights into correctness of the other solvers, provide theoreticians with basics ideas on the latest implementations and in the hope to improve on the reproducibility of the submitted solver.

³ www.dbai.tuwien.ac.at/proj/hypertree/benchmarks.zip



■ **Figure 2** Participation per country based on the easychair registration and submission of both a solver and a description. Details are given by country, tracks, and team (left) and illustrated on the world map (right). Note that more teams and participants uploaded their code on optil.io

In addition, we imposed another main rule for the exact tracks.

E. We expected submissions to be based on a provably optimal algorithm.

While we did not formally check Requirement E, we picked only instances from which we knew the size of a minimum vertex cover or the hypertree width, respectively and checked whether the output was both correct and according to our expected size. If a submission halted on some instance within the allotted time, but produced a solution that was known to be non-optimal, the submission was disqualified.

Limits

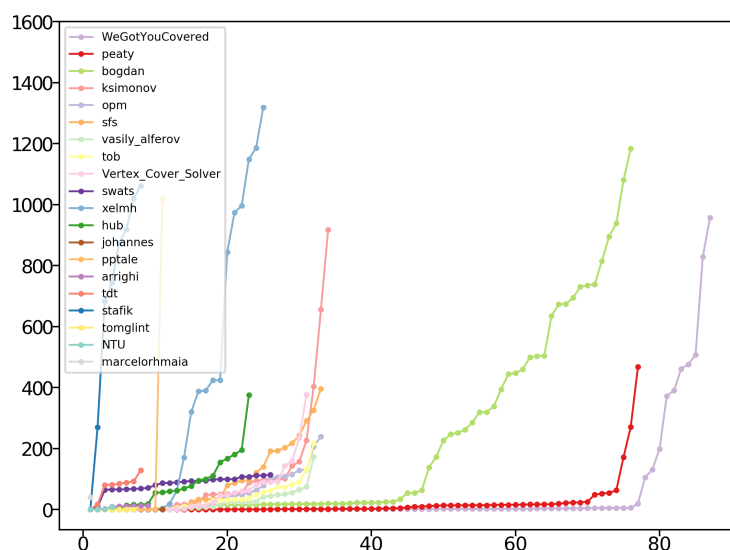
Since our evaluation resources were limited and we were interested in the solving behavior on a larger number of instance while allowing the participants to have a “training” phase on public instances, we restricted the runtime to 1,800 seconds and the available main memory to 8GB per instance. Note that in general, a solver is considered to be better than an other solver, if it solves more instances faster than the other solver. For more details about evaluation (criteria), we refer to Section 4.3.

Hardware

Our results were gathered on the cloud evaluation platform optil.io [154] running libc 5.4.0. optil.io evaluates submissions on Intel Xeon CPU E5-2695 v3, which consist of 14 cores running at 2.30GHz. Each submission had access to one core. Since the submissions ran in docker containers and the CPU has only 4 memory channels [2] we repeated the final evaluation 3 times and took the average.

4 Participants and Results

This year, we had 18 teams and 33 participants coming from 10 countries and four regions: Austria, Germany, Hungary, India, Lebanon, Norway, Poland, Russia, Scotland, and USA. Figure 2 provides an overview. The number of teams and participants were little less than half compared to PACE 2018 and at a similar number to PACE 2017. To be precise, the 2019 numbers above correspond to teams and participants who sent a final implementation and a solver description in time whereas in previous challenges registrations were carried out prior to optil.io registration. If we also count people who uploaded some code on the optil.io platform but dropped out of the challenge, the number of teams is 28, which is however also a much smaller number than in the 2018 iteration.



■ **Figure 3** Runtime illustrated as cactus plot for **Track 1a (Vertex Cover/Exact)**. The x-axis labels consecutive integers that identify instances. The y-axis depicts the runtime. The instances are ordered by running time, individually for each solver.

4.1 Track 1a (Vertex Cover/Exact)

Figure 3 illustrates runtime results for all submitted solvers as cactus plot. Table 4 gives a detailed overview on the standings and solvers. We allowed each solver 30 minutes per instance and measured the number of solved instances. If two solvers solved the same number of instances we would in addition also take into account the runtime needed to solve those instances.

Winning Team. Demian Hesse and Sebastian Lamm (both: Karlsruhe University of Technology, Germany), Christian Schulz (University of Vienna, Austria), and Darren Strash (Hamilton College, USA) won Track 1a by solving 87 private instances in overall 1.3 hours and 52.7 seconds solving time on average. Their implementation (WeGotYouCovered) [92, 93] builds on a portfolio of techniques, which include an aggressive kernelization strategy with all known reduction rules, local search, branch-and-bound, and a state-of-the-art branch-and-bound solver. Surprisingly, they also use several techniques that were not from the literature on the vertex over problem, but originally published to solve the (complementary) maximum independent set and maximum clique problems.

Runner-up. Patrick Prosser and James Trimble from the University of Glasgow, Scotland, scored second with their solver Peaty by solving 77 private instances. In fact, the results looked much closer on the public instances [148]. Interestingly, they also used intensive kernelization, local search, improved branch-and-bound, and a branch-and-bound maximum clique solver, and in addition an exact graph colouring algorithm which can quickly prove the optimality of a solution for some graphs.

Third Place. Sándor Szabó (University of Pecs, Hungary) and Bogdán Zaválnij (Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Hungary) accomplished a safe third place, which was in fact very close to the team that obtained the second place on the private instances. However, on the public

■ **Table 4** Detailed standings of the submitted solvers that solved at least 15 instances for Track 1a (Vertex Cover/Exact). POS refers to the position of the solver where DSQ refers to a disqualification due to a produced wrong answer. # refers to the number of solved private instances and #^{all} refers to the number of all instances. TLE refers to the number of instances where the runtime limit was exceeded. RTE contains the number of instances on which we observed a runtime error. Note that if the three sums do not add to 100 we observed a memory overflow on the remaining ones. $t_{\text{sum}}[h]$ states the cumulative runtime over all all solved instances in hours, $t_{\text{avg}}[s]$ contains the average runtime over all solved instances in seconds. In column source, the character H abbreviates github, character L abbreviates gitlab, and Z refers to Zenodo.

POS	Solver	#	# ^{all}	TLE	RTE	$t_{\text{sum}}[h]$	$t_{\text{avg}}[s]$	Source	Reference
1	WeGotYouCovered	87	169	13	0	1.3	52.7	H:sebalamm/pace-2019	[92, 93]
2	Peaty	77	157	23	0	0.4	20.6	H:jamestrimble/peaty	[148]
3	bogdan	76	147	24	0	4.5	215.2	H:zbogdan/pace-2019	[156]
4	ksimonov	34	73	64	2	1.0	102.1	L:seemann9/pace-2019-vc	[36]
5	opm	33	75	67	0	0.4	47.8	Z:3236867#.XW_J9S2B3x8	[67]
6	sfs	33	74	65	2	0.8	87.0	L:cg_pace2019/vertex_cover	[34]
7	vasily_alferov	32	70	68	0	0.2	23.2	H:vasalf/cheburashka	[9]
8	hub	23	54	68	9	0.5	79.5	H:hubhegnel/pace-2019	[91]
DSQ	Vertex_Cover_Solver	31	69	68	0	0.4	52.1	H:karamkantar99/Vertex-Cover-Solver	

instances they solved 9 less than the authors of Peaty. The authors used kernelization and a maximum clique solver by taking the complement graph. The maximum clique solver is based on progressive k -clique search by starting from a heuristically computed maximum clique and increasing until no clique of size k is found.

4.2 Track 2a (Hypertree Width/Exact)

Table 5a summarizes runtime results for all submitted solvers. We allowed each solver 30 minutes per instance and measured the number of solved instances. Much to our regret we received only 3 submissions. We guess that hypertree width is just yet not very popular in the parameterized complexity community.

Winning Team. André Schidler and Stefan Szeider from TU Wien, Austria, won this year’s Track 2a by solving 69 private instances in overall 1.4 hours at an average of 69.4 seconds when considering the solved instances. Their implementation (asc) [139] uses an incremental SMT-solving approach. There a first-order logic solver (handling arithmetic constraints) interacts with a SAT solver. Hypertree width and a more general parameter (generalized hypertree width) share Conditions (i) and (ii) from Definition 3. The additional Condition (iii) which is present for hypertree width (special condition), however, blows up the encoding size with a cubic number of clauses resulting in extremely large encodings for generalized hypertree decompositions and very long encoding times. For that reason, the authors implement a two-phase approach. They first use an encoding to obtain a generalized hypertree decomposition and try convert it into a hypertree decomposition satisfying the special condition without increasing the width. Only if that fails, they use the full encoding that includes the special condition.

Runner-up. Davide Mario Longo from TU Wien, Austria, scored second with his solver (TULongo/HdSolveE) by solving 31 private instances in 0.8 hours at an average runtime of 95.9 seconds over the solved instances. He used a combination of algorithms to compute lower bounds by obtaining generalized hypertree decompositions and then running a backtracking-based algorithm to determine a hypertree decomposition. Surprisingly, he solved much less public than private instances.

■ **Table 5** Detailed overview on the results of the Hypertree Width tracks. $\#$ refers to the number of solved private instances. $\#^{all}$ comprises the number of solved public and private instances. t_{avg} and t_{sum} refer to average and cumulated runtime of solved private instances, respectively. PAR1 refers to the runtime where all unsolved instances are accounted by 1,800 seconds. Δ_w refers to the sum of the width difference to the resulted output by the judge, i.e., the sum over $w_{solver} - w_{judge}$ for each instance I .

(a) Track 2a (Hypertree Width/Exact).

POS	#	$\#^{all}$	Solver	t_{avg}	t_{sum}	Source (github)	Ref.
1	69	144	asc	69.38s	1.32h	ASchidler/frasmt_pace	[139]
2	31	48	TULongo	95.96s	0.83h	TULongo/pace-2019-HD-exact	[124]
3	1	6	heidi	0.14s	0.00h	jamestrimble/heidi	[146]

(b) Track 2b (Hypertree Width/Heuristic).

POS	Score	Solver	#	PAR1	Δ_w	Source (github)	Ref.
–	na	htdecomp	100	na	na		
1	5.0	hypebeast	100	0.1h	501	jamestrimble/hypebeast	[147]
2	14.1	TULongo	98	2.3h	20	TULongo/pace-2019-HD-Heuristic	[125]
3	128.9	asc	30	27.5	11	ASchidler/frasmt_pace	[139]

Third Place. Patrick Prosser and James Trimble from the University of Glasgow, Scotland, received a surprising third place by solving one private instance correctly. They made the most of the situation that we had only three submission on this track. Their solver (heidi) implements an incomplete approach, where they heuristically compute a hypertree decomposition and used simple rules to check whether the width is equal to two.

4.3 Track 2b (Hypertree Width/Heuristic)

Table 5b summarizes runtime results for all submitted solvers. As for Track 2a, we received only 3 submissions, while we were hoping to attract more researchers from the community to this topic. We allowed each solver 30 minutes wall clock time per instance, while ensuring that not more than one core was used. Our aim for the track was to have more decomposers available to foster algorithms that employ decompositions for constraint programming and database applications in the near future. In the past, we observed at multiple occasions that heuristics are often only well applicable if there is a fairly good balance between running time of the computation of the decomposer and width of the decomposition [32, 33, 59, 61, 66]. Improving the width by one pays off if the improvement runs fast and the width is fairly large, however, on instances with small width there is no practical point in spending additional runtime to improve while it might even exceed the running time of the later algorithm that exploits the decomposition. In consequence, we decided to favor submissions that produce a result fairly quickly while still penalizing decompositions that are far from the virtual best results. Since the widths are fairly small, we decided for a very simple score (avoiding exponentially increasing penalties) and compute it per instance I by $(50,000 + t + 50 \cdot (w_{solver} - w_{judge}))/1,000,000$ where t refers to the wall clock and w_{solver} refers to the resulting width of the considered solver for I and w_{judge} consists of the width htdecomp [44, 84] produced for I , which we used as judge. The way we selected the score also depended on the situation that the runtime environment optil.io has certain technical restrictions in case of unknown optimal results.

Winning Team. Patrick Prosser and James Trimble from the University of Glasgow, Scotland, obtained the first place by obtaining a score of 5.0 by solving 100 instances in 0.1 hours with a cumulated width of 1104 and an overall difference to the judge by 501. Their solver (hypebeast) implements a very simple bucket elimination strategy by starting from a single tree node containing all hyperedges and then trying to move edges to deeper tree nodes.

Runner-up. Davide Mario Longo from TU Wien, Austria, scored second with 14.1 points by solving 98 private instances in 2.3 hours with a total width difference to the judge of 20. His solver (TULongo/HdSolveH) used a variant of det-k-decomp that prunes the search tree heuristically [85]. While the det-k-decomp algorithm performs well on yes instances, it is slow on no instances. So, Longo decided not to perform a complete search, but to prune the search space by looking only at certain separators. The results were very close to the winning team and only the running time cost him the first position. It is notable that, however, the width is much closer to the result by the judge. More precisely, TULongo outputted better results on 86 instances.

Third Place. André Schidler and Stefan Szeider from TU Wien, Austria, obtained the third position at a score of 128.9 by solving 30 instances using the same technique as above.

5 PACE organization

The composition of the steering committee and program committee during PACE 2019 was as follows.

Steering committee:	Édouard Bonnet	LIP, ENS de Lyon
	Holger Dell	IT University of Copenhagen
	Bart M. P. Jansen (chair)	Eindhoven University of Technology
	Thore Husfeldt	IT Univ. of Copenhagen & Lund Univ.
	Petteri Kaski	Aalto University
	Christian Komusiewicz	Philipps-Universität Marburg
	Frances A. Rosamond	University of Bergen
	Florian Sikora	LAMSADE, Université Paris Dauphine
Program Committee (Tracks 1a, 2a, 2b):	Johannes Fichte	TU Dresden
	Markus Hecher	TU Vienna & University of Potsdam

The Program Committee of **PACE 2020** will consist of Łukasz Kowalik (Univ. of Warsaw).

6 Conclusion and Future Editions of PACE

We thank all the participants for their enthusiasm, strong and interesting contributions. Special thanks go to the participants who also presented at IPEC 2019. We are very happy that this edition attracted many people and that also people from the SAT community showed interest in the latest standings on the vertex cover solvers. While we were hoping to attract more people to the hypertree width measure, which is related to constraint programming and to the database community. We are still happy about strong contributions and hope that this will continue for future editions by considering popular problems to the community or even by repeating previously posted problems.

This year we changed the requirements for submissions by allowing external libraries, but enforcing that these are open source. Further, we asked participants to provide a solver description and to place the source code on a public data library, which is hosted long-term

by a public body, e.g., Zenodo. In line with this, we provided the complete pool of instances from which we selected instances, the instance selection process including references to the original source, as well as the evaluation in a public data library.

We welcome anyone who is interested to add their name to the mailing list on the PACE website to receive updates and join the discussion. We look forward to the next edition. Detailed information will be posted on the website at pacechallenge.org.

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