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# Note On restricted edge-connectivity of graphs $\stackrel{\text{\tiny}}{\approx}$

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## Abstract

This paper considers the concept of restricted edge-connectivity, and relates that to the edgedegree of a connected graph. The author gives some necessary conditions for a graph whose restricted edge-connectivity is smaller than its minimum edge-degree, then uses these conditions to show some large classes of graphs, such as all connected edge-transitive graphs except a star, and all connected vertex-transitive graphs with odd order or without triangles, have equality of the restricted edge-connectivity and the minimum edge-degree. © 2002 Elsevier Science B.V. All rights reserved.

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#### 1. Introduction

We follow [2] for graph-theoretical terminology and notation not defined here. A graph G = (V, E) always means a simple graph (without loops and multiple edges), where V = V(G) is the vertex-set and E = E(G) is the edge-set. In the present paper, we consider the restricted edge-connectivity, which is a new graph-theoretical concept and introduced by Esfahanian and Hakimi [4].

In this paper, we call a disconnected graph, a triangle, or a star trivial and all other graphs non-trivial. Let G be a non-trivial graph and  $S \subseteq E(G)$ . If G - S is disconnected and contains no isolated vertices, then S is called a restricted edge-cut of G. The restricted edge-connectivity of G, denoted by  $\lambda'(G)$ , is defined as the minimum cardinality over all restricted edge-cuts of G. The restricted edge-connectivity provides a more accurate measure of fault-tolerance of networks than the classical edge-connectivity (see [3]). Thus, it has received much attention recently (see, for example, [3,4,6-9,11,13-15]).

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Let G be a graph. For  $e = xy \in E(G)$ , let  $\xi_G(e) = d_G(x) + d_G(y) - 2$  and  $\xi(G) = \min{\{\xi_G(e): e \in E(G)\}}$ . The parameter  $\xi(G)$  is called the minimum edge-degree of G. It has been shown in [4] that for any non-trivial graph G,  $\lambda'(G)$  certainly exists and satisfies the following inequality:

$$\lambda'(G) \leqslant \xi(G). \tag{1}$$

Let G be a non-trivial graph. If  $\lambda'(G) = \xi(G)$ , then G is called optimal; otherwise G is non-optimal. We are interested in finding some classes of optimal graphs. Some of them have been found in [3,6–9,11,14,15]. In this paper, we will give some necessary conditions for a non-optimal graph. From these we will obtain some large classes of optimal graphs, such as all non-trivial edge-transitive graphs, and all connected vertex-transitive graphs with odd order or without triangles. Some classes of optimal graphs given in [3,7,9,14] can easily be deduced from our results.

#### 2. Notation and preliminary results

Let G = (V, E) be a graph. For two disjoint non-empty subsets X and Y of V, let  $(X, Y) = \{e = xy \in E : x \in X \text{ and } y \in Y\}$ . For the sake of convenience, we write x for the single vertex set  $\{x\}$ . If  $Y = \overline{X} = V \setminus X$ , then we write  $\partial(X)$  for  $(X, \overline{X})$  and d(X) for  $|\partial(X)|$ . The following inequality is well known (see [10], Problem 6.48):

$$d(X \cap Y) + d(X \cup Y) \leqslant d(X) + d(Y).$$
<sup>(2)</sup>

A restricted edge-cut S of G is called a  $\lambda'$ -cut if  $|S| = \lambda'(G)$ . It is clear for any  $\lambda'$ -cut S that G - S has just two connected components. Let X be a proper subset of V. If  $\partial(X)$  is a  $\lambda'$ -cut of G, then X is called a fragment of G. It is clear that if X is a fragment of G, then so is  $\overline{X}$ . Let

 $r(G) = \min\{|X|: X \text{ is a fragment of } G\}.$ 

Obviously,  $2 \leq r(G) \leq \frac{1}{2}|V|$ . A fragment X is called an atom of G if |X| = r(G).

**Theorem 1.** A non-trivial graph G is optimal if and only if r(G) = 2.

**Proof.** Let r(G) = 2. Then there exists an atom  $X = \{x, y\}$  such that  $d(X) = \lambda'(G) = \xi_G(e)$  with  $e = xy \in E(G)$ . It follows from (1) and the definition of  $\xi(G)$  that  $\xi(G) \leq \xi_G(e) = d(X) = \lambda'(G) \leq \xi(G)$ , and hence *G* is optimal.

Conversely, if G is optimal there exists an edge e = xy of G such that

 $\lambda'(G) = \xi(G) = \xi_G(e) = d_G(x) + d_G(y) - 2.$ 

Now, let  $X = \{x, y\}$ . Then r(G) = 2 if  $G - \partial(X)$  has no isolated vertices. Suppose on the contrary that  $G - \partial(X)$  contains an isolated vertex u. Obviously,  $1 \le d_G(u) \le 2$ .

If  $d_G(u) = 1$ , then we assume, without loss of generality, that u is adjacent to y. Thus

$$d_G(x) + d_G(y) - 2 = \xi(G) \leq d_G(y) + d_G(u) - 2 = d_G(y) - 1.$$

This implies that  $d_G(x) = 1$ . It follows that

$$\lambda'(G) \leq |\{yz: d_G(z) \geq 2\}| \leq d_G(y) - 2 = (d_G(x) + d_G(y) - 2) - 1 = \xi(G) - 1,$$

a contradiction.

In the case  $d_G(u) = 2$ , the vertex u is adjacent to x and y. Then,

$$d_G(x) + d_G(y) - 2 = \xi(G) \leq d_G(y) + d_G(u) - 2 = d_G(y).$$

This yields that  $d_G(x) = 2$ , and analogously, we obtain  $d_G(y) = 2$ . Therefore, G is a triangle. This contradiction completes the proof.  $\Box$ 

#### 3. Properties of atoms of non-optimal graphs

**Lemma 2.** Let G be a non-optimal graph, F a fragment of G, U a proper subset of F, and I the set of all isolated vertices in  $G-\partial(U)$ . If  $I \subseteq U$  and  $|(I,\bar{F})| \ge |(I,F \setminus U)|$ , then  $F \setminus I$  is a fragment of G.

**Proof.** If  $I = \emptyset$ , then there is nothing to prove. Suppose  $I \neq \emptyset$  below. Let  $Y = F \setminus I$  and  $F' = F \setminus U$ . Then  $Y \neq \emptyset$  and  $F' \neq \emptyset$ , since  $I \subseteq U$  and U is a proper subset of F. Let Z be the set of all isolated vertices in  $G - \partial(Y)$ . If  $Z = \emptyset$ , then Y is a restricted edge-cut of G. By the assumption  $|(I, \overline{F})| \ge |(I, F')|$ , we have

$$\lambda'(G) \leqslant d(Y) = d(F) - |(I,\overline{F})| + |(I,F')| \leqslant d(F) = \lambda'(G).$$

This implies that Y is a fragment of G, and so the conclusion holds if  $Z = \emptyset$ .

The rest is to show  $Z = \emptyset$ . Suppose on the contrary that  $Z \neq \emptyset$ . Our aim is to deduce a contradiction.

First, we show that  $(x, \overline{F}) \neq \emptyset$  for any  $x \in I$ . At the end, we let  $I' = \{x \in I: (x, \overline{F}) = \emptyset\}$ . If  $I' \neq \emptyset$ , then  $N_G(I') \subseteq F'$ , since  $(I, U \setminus I) = \emptyset$  by the assumption. Let  $Z' = (Z \cap F') \setminus N_G(I')$ , and let  $W = (Y \cup I') \setminus Z'$ . Then it is easy to see that  $G - \partial(W)$  has no isolated vertices. Thus,  $\partial(W)$  is a restricted edge-cut of G. Noticing  $|(I \setminus I', \overline{F})| = |(I, \overline{F})| \ge |(I, F')| \ge |(I' \neq \emptyset)$ , and

$$|(I \setminus I', \bar{F})| \ge |(I, F')| \ge |(I', F' \setminus Z')| + |(I \setminus I', F' \setminus Z')| > |(I \setminus I', F' \setminus Z')|.$$

Thus we have

$$\lambda'(G) \leq d(W) = d(F) - |(Z',\bar{F})| - |(I \setminus I',\bar{F})| + |(I \setminus I',F' \setminus Z')|$$
$$< d(F) - |(Z',\bar{F})| \leq d(F) = \lambda'(G).$$

The contradiction implies  $I' = \emptyset$ , i.e.,  $(x, \overline{F}) \neq \emptyset$  for any  $x \in I$ . Thus we have

$$|(y,I'')| = |N_G(y) \cap I''| \le |(N_G(y) \cap I'',\bar{F})|, \quad \forall \ y \in Z, \ I'' \subseteq I.$$
(3)

Second, we assert that  $Z = N_G(I) \cap F'$ . The fact  $I' = \emptyset$  implies  $Z \subseteq Y$ . Since Z is the set of all isolated vertices in  $G - \partial(F \setminus I)$  and  $G - \partial(F)$  has no isolated vertices,  $Z \subseteq N_G(I)$ . But  $N_G(I) \cap U = \emptyset$  since  $I \subseteq U$  is the set of the isolated vertices in

 $G - \partial(U)$  by the assumption. Thus we have  $Z \subseteq N_G(I) \cap F'$ . On the other hand, if  $(N_G(I) \cap F') \setminus Z \neq \emptyset$ , then  $Y \setminus Z \neq \emptyset$  and  $G - \partial(Y \setminus Z)$  contains no isolated vertices, because F is a fragment of G. It is clear that  $(I, Z) \neq \emptyset$  since  $I \neq \emptyset$  and  $\emptyset \neq Z \subseteq N_G(I) \cap F'$ . Combining these with the assumption  $|(I, \overline{F})| \ge |(I, F')|$ , we have

$$\lambda'(G) \leq d(Y \setminus Z) = d(F) - |(I,\bar{F})| - |(Z,\bar{F})| + |(I,F' \setminus Z)|$$
  
$$< d(F) - (|(I,\bar{F})| - |(I,F')|) \leq d(F) = \lambda'(G).$$

The contradiction implies  $(N_G(I) \cap F') \setminus Z = \emptyset$ . Thus  $Z = N_G(I) \cap F'$ .

Third, we have that  $(z, \overline{F}) \neq \emptyset$  for any  $z \in Z$ . Otherwise z is an isolated vertex in  $G - \partial(U)$ , which implies  $z \in I$ , a contradiction. Thus we have

$$|(x, Z'')| = |N_G(x) \cap Z''| \le |(N_G(x) \cap Z'', \bar{F})|, \quad \forall \ x \in I, \ Z'' \subseteq Z.$$
(4)

Lastly, let  $y \in Z$  and let  $x \in N_G(y) \cap I$ . A contradiction can be deduced as follows:

$$\begin{split} \xi(G) &\leq d_G(x) + d_G(y) - 2 = |(x,\bar{F})| + |(x,Z \setminus \{y\})| + |(y,\bar{F})| + |(y,I \setminus \{x\})| \\ &\leq |(x,\bar{F})| + |(N_G(x) \cap (Z \setminus \{y\}),\bar{F})| + |(y,\bar{F})| + |(N_G(y) \cap (I \setminus \{x\}),\bar{F})| \\ &= (|(x,\bar{F})| + |(N_G(y) \cap (I \setminus \{x\}),\bar{F})|) \\ &+ (|(y,\bar{F})| + |(N_G(x) \cap (Z \setminus \{y\}),\bar{F})|) \\ &= |(N_G(y) \cap I),\bar{F}| + |(N_G(x) \cap Z,\bar{F})| \\ &\leq |(I,\bar{F})| + |(Z,\bar{F})| \leq |(F,\bar{F})| = d(F) = \lambda'(G) < \xi(G), \end{split}$$

where the first equality holds because of the fact  $Z = N_G(I) \cap F'$  and  $(Z, Y \setminus Z) = \emptyset$ , and the second inequality holds from (3) and (4). The proof is complete.  $\Box$ 

**Theorem 3.** Let G be a non-optimal graph. Then any two distinct atoms of G are disjoint.

**Proof.** Let X and X' be two distinct atoms of G. Then  $d(X) = d(X') = \lambda'(G) < \zeta(G)$ and  $|X| = |X'| = r(G) \ge 3$  by Theorem 1. Let

$$A = X \cap X', \quad B = X \cap \overline{X'}, \quad C = \overline{X} \cap X', \text{ and } D = \overline{X} \cap \overline{X'}.$$

Then  $|B| = |C| = r(G) - |A| \ge 1$  and  $|D| \ge |A|$ . Suppose on the contrary that  $A \ne \emptyset$ . We will derive contradictions by considering two cases, separately.

*Case* 1: If  $G - \partial(A)$  contains some isolated vertices, then let I be the set of all isolated vertices in  $G - \partial(A)$ . Then obviously,  $I \subseteq A$ ,  $(I,B) \neq \emptyset$  and  $(I,C) \neq \emptyset$ , because  $\partial(X)$  and  $\partial(X')$  are  $\lambda'$ -cuts of G. We can assume, without loss of generality, that  $|(I,C)| \ge |(I,B)|$ . Let F = X,  $U = A \subset F$ . Then  $X \setminus I (=F \setminus I)$  is a fragment of G by Lemma 2. However,  $X \setminus I$  is a proper subset of X. This contradicts the assumption that X is an atom of G.

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*Case* 2: If  $G - \partial(A)$  contains no isolated vertices, then A is a restricted edge-cut of G. This implies that  $|A| \ge 2$  and  $d(A) > \lambda'(G)$ . By (2) we have

$$d(D) = d(X \cup X') \leq d(X) + d(X') - d(X \cap X') < \lambda'(G).$$
(5)

This implies that  $G - \partial(D)$  certainly contains some isolated vertices, so let I be the set of all isolated vertices in  $G - \partial(D)$ . Obviously,  $I \subseteq D$ . If  $D' = D \setminus I \neq \emptyset$ , then  $\partial(D')$  is a restricted edge-cut of G since  $G - \partial(D')$  has no isolated vertices, and so from (5) we have

$$\lambda'(G) \leq d(D') = d(D) - \sum_{u \in I} d_G(u) < d(D) < \lambda'(G).$$

This contradiction implies I = D. Without loss of generality, we assume that  $|(D,B)| \ge |(D,C)|$ . Let  $F = \overline{X}$ ,  $I = U = D \subset F$ . Thus,  $C(=\overline{X} \setminus D = F \setminus I)$  is a fragment of *G* that is properly contained in X' by Lemma 2. This contradicts the assumption that X' is an atom of *G*. The proof is complete.  $\Box$ 

**Remark.** Any cycle of length greater than three shows that Theorem 3 is not valid if G is optimal.

**Theorem 4.** Let G be a non-optimal graph. If G is k-regular, then  $r(G) \ge k \ge 3$ .

**Proof.** By Theorem 1,  $r(G) \ge 3$ , and obviously  $k \ge 3$ . Let X be an atom of G. Then r = r(G) = |X| and  $d(X) = \lambda'(G) < \xi(G) = 2k - 2$ . Considering the sum of degrees of all vertices in X, we have

$$kr = \sum_{x \in X} d_G(x) \leq r(r-1) + d(X) < r^2 - r + 2k - 2 = kr - (k - r - 1)(r - 2).$$

This implies  $r(G) \ge k$  since  $k \ge 3$ .  $\Box$ 

**Theorem 5.** Let G be a connected vertex-transitive graph with degree  $k (\ge 3)$ , and let X be an atom of G. If G is non-optimal, then,

- (i) G[X] is a vertex-transitive subgraph of G with degree of k 1 containing a triangle;
- (ii) G has even order and there is a partition  $\{X_1, X_2, ..., X_m\}$  of V such that  $G[X_i] \cong G[X]$  for each  $i = 1, 2, ..., m, m \ge 2$ .

**Proof.** (i) Since a vertex-transitive graph is regular, we have  $|X| \ge k \ge 3$  by Theorem 4. Let x and y be two distinct vertices in X. Then there exists  $\pi \in \Gamma(G)$ , the automorphism group of G, such that  $\pi(x) = y$  because G is vertex-transitive. Hence  $\pi(X)$  is also an atom of G. Let  $X' = \pi(X)$ . Then  $X \cap X' \ne \emptyset$  since  $y \in X \cap X'$ . This implies X' = X by Theorem 3. Let

$$\Pi = \{ \pi \in \Gamma(G) \colon \pi(X) = X \}, \quad \Psi = \{ \pi \in \Pi \colon x \in X \Rightarrow \pi(x) = x \}.$$

Clearly  $\Pi$  is a subgroup of  $\Gamma(G)$ , and the constituent of  $\Pi$  on X acts transitively and  $\Psi$  is a normal subgroup of  $\Pi$ . Thus there is an injective homomorphism from the quotient group  $\Pi/\Psi$  to  $\Gamma(G[X])$  whereby each coset of  $\Psi$  is associated with the restriction to X of any representative. This shows that G[X] is vertex-transitive.

Let G[X] have degree t. Then  $t \leq k - 1$ ; from this and Theorem 4 we have

$$2(k-1) \ge d(X) + 1 = (k-t)r(G) + 1 \ge (k-t)k + 1.$$

This implies that

$$t \ge \left\lceil \frac{k^2 - 2k + 3}{k} \right\rceil = k - 1.$$

Namely G[X] has degree (k - 1). Note that G[X] certainly contains cycles since G[X] is (k - 1)-regular and  $k \ge 3$ , and has at least 2k - 2 vertices if it contains no triangles (see Exercise 1.7.4(a) in [2]). In this case, however, we see that  $2k - 2 \le |X| = \lambda'(G) \le 2k - 3$ , a contradiction. It follows that G[X] contains a triangle.

(ii) Let y be any element in  $\bar{X}$ . Since G is vertex-transitive, there exists  $\sigma \in \Gamma(G)$  such that  $\sigma(x) = y$  for a fixed x in X.  $\sigma(X)$  is an atom of G. Let  $X_y = \sigma(X)$ . Then  $X \cap X_y = \emptyset$  by Theorem 3 since  $y \notin X$ , and  $G[X] \cong G[X_y]$  since there exists an isomorphism  $\sigma$  between G[X] and  $G[X_y]$ . Thus there are at least two atoms of G. It follows that for each vertex y in G there is an atom  $X_y$  that contains y such that  $G[X_y] \cong G[X]$ , and either  $X_y = X_z$  or  $X_y \cap X_z = \emptyset$  for any two distinct vertices y and z of G. These atoms  $X_1, X_2, \ldots, X_m$  of G form a partition of V(G), and  $G[X_i] \cong G[X]$  for each  $i = 1, 2, \ldots, m, m \ge 2$ . So

$$|V| = m|X| = |V|k - m|X|(k - 1) = 2|E(G)| - 2m|E(G[X])|.$$

This implies that G has even order. The proof is complete.  $\Box$ 

## 4. Some classes of optimal graphs

**Theorem 6** (Xu, [14]). Let G be a connected vertex-transitive graph. If it either contains no triangles or has odd order, then G is optimal.

This is a direct consequence of Theorem 5.

A well-known class of vertex-transitive graphs, very frequently employed in the construction of distributed-memory parallel computing systems, is the *k*-cube  $Q_k$  ( $k \ge 2$ ). It is *k*-regular bipartite, and so contains no triangles. Thus from Theorem 6 we have the following result immediately.

**Corollary 7** (Esfahanian, [3]). The k-cube  $Q_k$  is optimal.

Let  $C_d$  be a cycle of length d. The k-dimensional toroidal mesh  $C(d_1, d_2, ..., d_k)$ , studied by Ishigami [5], can be represented as the cartesian product  $C_{d_1} \times C_{d_2} \times \cdots \times C_{d_k}$ .

It is vertex-transitive, and contains no triangles if  $d_i \ge 4$  (see, for example, [12]). Hence, from Theorem 6 we deduce the following result immediately.

**Corollary 8.** The k-dimensional toroidal mesh  $C(d_1, d_2, ..., d_k)$  is optimal if  $d_i \ge 4$  for each i = 1, 2, ..., k.

Another important class of vertex-transitive graphs used in the design of networks are the circulant graphs. A circulant graph, denoted by  $G(n; a_1, a_2, ..., a_k)$ , where  $0 < a_1 < \cdots < a_k \le n/2$ , has vertices 0, 1, 2, ..., n-1 and edge *ij* if and only if  $|j-i| \equiv a_t \pmod{n}$  for some *t*,  $1 \le t \le k$  (see, for example, [1]). If  $a_k \ne n/2$ , it is 2k-regular. Otherwise, it is (2k - 1)-regular.

**Corollary 9** (Li and Li, [7]). Any connected circulant graph  $G(n; a_1, a_2, ..., a_k)$ ,  $n \ge 4$ , is optimal if either it contains no triangles or  $a_k \ne n/2$ .

**Proof.** Let  $G = G(n; a_1, a_2, ..., a_k)$ . By Theorem 6, we need to only prove that G is optimal if  $a_k \neq n/2$ . Suppose on the contrary that G is non-optimal. Then, by Theorem 5, there is an integer  $m \ge 2$  such that for any atom X of G, n = m|X| and G[X] is (2k - 1)-regular. Thus there is a subset  $\{b_1, b_2, ..., b_t\}$  of the set  $\{a_1, a_2, ..., a_k\}$  such that g.c.d. $(n, b_1, b_2, ..., b_t) = m$  and  $G[X] \cong G(n/m; b_1/m, b_2/m, ..., b_t/m)$ , where  $b_1 < b_2 < \cdots < b_t$ . Since  $a_k \neq \frac{n}{2}$  we have  $b_t/m \neq n/2m$ . Thus G[X] is even regular, which contradicts the fact that G[X] is (2k - 1)-regular.  $\Box$ 

Theorem 10 (Li and Li, [10]). All non-trivial edge-transitive graphs are optimal.

**Proof.** Let *G* be a non-trivial edge-transitive graph. Suppose on the contrary that *G* is non-optimal. Let *X* be an atom of *G*. Then  $|X| = r(G) \ge 3$  by Theorem 1. Let e = xy be an edge in G[X] and e' = yz be an edge in  $\partial(X)$ ,  $z \in \overline{X}$ . Since *G* is edge-transitive, there is  $\sigma \in \Gamma(G)$  such that  $\sigma(\{x, y\}) = \{y, z\}$ . Hence  $\sigma(X)$  is also an atom of *G*. Let  $X' = \sigma(X)$ . Then  $X \neq X'$  since  $z \in X'$  and  $z \notin X$ . But since  $y \in X \cap X'$ , we have X = X' by Theorem 3. This is a contradiction and so *G* is optimal. This completes the proof.  $\Box$ 

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