

Piet Mondrian "Tree," 1913.

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Tree Lattices

with Appendices by
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Dedicated to our roots and branches

in memory of my grandmother

טובה בליזובסקי

A.L.

with love to my children,

Anne, Ivan and Gabriella

H.B.

and in admiring tribute to

J.-P. Serre,

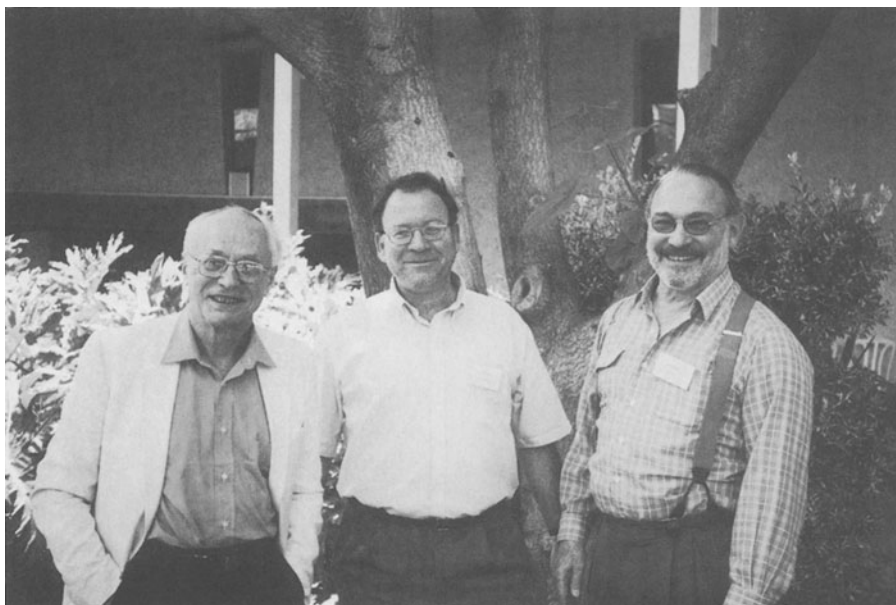


Photo by Lisa Carbone, Jerusalem, Israel, May 2000

Contents

Preface	xi
0 Introduction	1
0.1 Tree lattices	1
0.2 X -lattices and H -lattices	2
0.3 Near simplicity	3
0.4 The structure of tree lattices	4
0.5 Existence of lattices	4
0.6 The structure of $A = \Gamma \backslash X$	6
0.7 Volumes	7
0.8 Centralizers, normalizers, commensurators	8
1 Lattices and Volumes	13
1.1 Haar measure	13
1.2 Lattices and unimodularity	13
1.3 Compact open subgroups	13
1.5 Discrete group covolumes	14
2 Graphs of Groups and Edge-Indexed Graphs	17
2.1 Graphs	17
2.2 Morphisms and actions	18
2.3 Graphs of groups	18
2.4 Quotient graphs of groups	19
2.5 Edge-indexed graphs and their groupings	19
2.6 Unimodularity, volumes, bounded denominators	20
3 Tree Lattices	25
3.1 Topology on $G = \text{Aut}X$	25
3.2 Tree lattices	25
3.3 The group G_H of deck transformations	26
3.5 Discreteness Criterion; Rigidity of (A, i)	27

3.6	Unimodularity and volume	29
3.8	Existence of tree lattices	30
3.12	The structure of tree lattices	31
3.14	Non-arithmetic uniform commensurators	33
4	Arbitrary Real Volumes, Cusps, and Homology	35
4.0	Introduction	35
4.1	Grafting	36
4.2	Volumes	38
4.8	Cusps	43
4.9	Geometric parabolic ends	44
4.10	Γ -parabolic ends and Γ -cusps	49
4.11	Unidirectional examples	51
4.12	A planar example	54
5	Length Functions, Minimality	67
5.1	Hyperbolic length (cf. [B3], II, §6)	67
5.4	Minimality	68
5.14	Abelian actions	71
5.15	Non-abelian actions	71
5.16	Abelian discrete actions	71
6	Centralizers, Normalizers, and Commensurators	73
6.0	Introduction	73
6.1	Notation	74
6.6	Non-minimal centralizers	77
6.9	N/Γ , for minimal non-abelian actions	80
6.10	Some normal subgroups	81
6.11	The Tits Independence Condition	82
6.13	Remarks	85
6.16	Automorphism groups of rooted trees	86
6.17	Automorphism groups of ended trees	88
6.21	Remarks	90
7	Existence of Tree Lattices	91
7.1	Introduction	91
7.2	Open fanning	93
7.5	Multiple open fanning	98

8	Non-Uniform Lattices on Uniform Trees	103
8.1	Carbone's Theorem	103
8.6	Proof of Theorem (8.2)	110
8.7	Remarks	110
8.8	Examples. Loops and cages	111
8.9	Two vertex graphs	116
9	Parabolic Actions, Lattices, and Trees	119
9.0	Introduction	119
9.1	$Ends(X)$	120
9.2	Horospheres and horoballs	121
9.3	End stabilizers	122
9.4	Parabolic actions	123
9.5	Parabolic trees	125
9.6	Parabolic lattices	125
9.8	Restriction to horoballs	126
9.9	Parabolic lattices with linear quotient	127
9.10	Parabolic ray lattices	131
9.13	Parabolic lattices with all horospheres infinite	139
9.14	A bounded degree example	143
9.15	Tree lattices that are simple groups must be parabolic	148
9.16	Lattices on a product of two trees	149
10	Lattices of Nagao Type	151
10.1	Nagao rays	151
10.2	Nagao's Theorem: $\Gamma = PGL_2(F_q[t])$	157
10.3	A divisible $(q + 1)$ -regular grouping	160
10.4	The PNeumann groupings	161
10.5	The symmetric groupings	163
10.6	Product groupings	164
Appendix [BCR]: The Existence Theorem for Tree Lattices		
<i>Hyman Bass, Lisa Carbone, and Gabriel Rosenberg</i>		167
Appendix [BT]: Discreteness Criteria for Tree Automorphism Groups		
<i>Hyman Bass and Jacques Tits</i>		185
Appendix [PN]: The PNeumann Groups		
<i>Hyman Bass and Alexander Lubotzky</i>		213
References		223
Index of Notation		229
Index		231

Preface

Let H be a non compact simple Lie group. In most cases H can be realized as essentially the full isometry group of some geometry X , where X is a contractible metric space. This geometric action is the natural tool for studying H and its discrete subgroups, in particular its lattices.

In the case of real or complex Lie groups, X is the symmetric space, a Riemannian manifold. In case H is a Lie group over a non archimedean (for example a p -adic) field, X is the Bruhat–Tits building, a contractible simplicial complex of dimension equal to the rank of H .

There is one notable exception to the above picture, namely when H is non archimedean of rank one, in which case X is a bi-regular tree. In this case the full isometry group $G = \text{Aut}(X)$ is vastly larger than its subgroup H . Nonetheless Tits has shown that G itself is a virtually simple locally compact group, and one can naturally study its discrete subgroups and lattices. That is one purpose of the present work.

More generally we study the automorphism group $G = \text{Aut}(X)$ of any locally finite tree X , and its discrete subgroups Γ . We call Γ an X -lattice if the volume of $X/\text{mod}\Gamma$, suitably defined, is finite. These are the tree lattices of the book's title. We present a fairly systematic investigation of the existence, structure, and properties of tree lattices, drawing parallels and contrasts, whenever possible with the situation for lattices in Lie groups. We give much attention to the construction of diverse examples. The methods used are based on the notion of graphs of groups, as first developed in the book *Trees* of Serre.

While the theory of lattices in Lie groups motivates many of the questions investigated here, we do not rely on that theory for the present work, which is essentially elementary and self contained.

Many of the results of the book appear here for the first time in print. This work has evolved slowly over about a decade. Some of the main results presented or cited appeared first in early drafts as conjectures. There are three appendices. One describes a group theoretic construction provided by Peter Neumann which we use here for producing certain self normalizing non uniform tree lattices. A second appendix, by one of us with J. Tits, presents a criterion for the full automorphism group of a tree

to be discrete. The third, by one of us with L. Carbone and G. Rosenberg, presents the proof that, whenever G is unimodular and $G \backslash X$ has finite volume, there exist X -lattices. Initially this was only conjectured, and proved in special cases. We are grateful to the other authors for permission to publish these results here.

Finally, we owe a great debt to Ann Kostant and Elizabeth Loew for generous and skillful editorial and production assistance in bringing this manuscript to final completion.

Hyman Bass
Alexander Lubotzky
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