Vietoris-Rips Complexes also Provide Topologically Correct Reconstructions of Sampled Shapes

[Extended Abstract]

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ABSTRACT

We associate with each compact set $X$ of $\mathbb{R}^n$ two real-valued functions $e_X$ and $h_X$ defined on $\mathbb{R}^+$ which provide two measures of how much the set $X$ fails to be convex at a given scale. First, we show that, when $P$ is a finite point set, an upper bound on $e_P(t)$ entails that the Rips complex of $P$ at scale $r$ collapses to the Cech complex of $P$ at scale $r$ for some suitable values of the parameters $t$ and $r$. Second, we prove that, when $P$ samples a compact set $X$, an upper bound on $h_X$ over some interval guarantees a topologically correct reconstruction of the shape $X$ either with a Cech complex of $P$ or with a Rips complex of $P$. Regarding the reconstruction with Cech complexes, our work compares well with previous approaches when $X$ is a smooth set and surprisingly enough, even improves constants when $X$ has a positive $\mu$-reach. Most importantly, our work shows that Rips complexes can also be used to provide topologically correct reconstruction of shapes. This may be of some computational interest in high dimensions.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

F.2.2 [Analysis of Algorithms and Problem Complexity]: Non-numerical Algorithms and Problems—Geometrical problems and computations, Computations on discrete structures; I.3.5 [Computer Graphics]: Computational Geometry and Object Modeling

General Terms

Theory, Algorithms

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper, we formulate conditions under which Rips complexes reconstruct shapes using measures of how far the shape is from being convex.

Motivation.

The problem of reconstructing shapes from point clouds arises in many fields, including computer graphics and machine learning [3, 21]. Maybe one of the simplest reconstruction method is to output an $\alpha$-offset of the sample points, that is, the union of balls centered at the sample with radius $\alpha$. Assuming the shape is a smooth manifold [2][17] or more generally has a positive $\mu$-reach [15], it has been proved that this method provides indeed an approximation with the correct homotopy type for a sufficiently dense sample and a suitable value of the offset parameter $\alpha$. Topologically, this is equivalent to computing the $\alpha$-shape [23][24] of the sample points, which can be obtained by first building the Delaunay triangulation and then keeping simplices that fit in an empty ball of radius $\alpha$ or less.

This approach works well for point clouds in three-dimensional space which have Delaunay triangulations of affordable size [5,6]. But, as the dimension of the ambient space increases, the size of the Delaunay triangulation explodes [1] and other strategies must be found. If the data points lie on a low-dimensional submanifold, it seems reasonable to ask that the building of the reconstruction depends only upon the intrinsic dimension of the data. This motivated de Silva [19] to introduce witness complexes and Boissonnat and Ghosh [14] to define tangential Delaunay complexes. For medium dimensions, Boissonnat and al. [12] have modified the data structure representing the Delaunay complex and are able to manage complexes of reasonable size up to dimension six in practice. In particular, they avoid the explicit representation of all Delaunay simplices by storing only edges in what they call the Delaunay graph, an idea close to that of using Vietoris-Rips complexes developed in this paper.

Vietoris-Rips complexes.

Given a point set $P$ and a scale parameter $\alpha$, the Vietoris-Rips complex is the simplicial complex whose simplices are subsets of points in $P$ with diameter at most $2\alpha$. Rips complexes are examples of flag complexes, and as such enjoy the property that a subset of $P$ belongs to the complex if and only if all its edges belong to the complex. In other words, Rips complexes are completely determined by the graph of their edges. This compressed form of storage makes Rips complexes very appealing for computations, at least in high dimensions. Recent results study their simplification through
homotopy-preserving edge collapses \cite{chazal2017stable, chazal2019topological} and edge contractions \cite{chazal2014stable}. However, the strategy of using Rips complexes makes sense only if they are able to reflect the topology of the shape that their vertices sample. A closely related family of simplicial complexes are Čech complexes. Specifically, the Čech complex of $P$ at scale $\alpha$ consists of all simplices spanned by points in $P$ that fit in a ball of radius $\alpha$. The Čech complex of $P$ at scale $\alpha$ is homotopy equivalent to the $\alpha$-offset of $P$ and therefore also possesses the ability to reproduce the topology of the shape sampled by $P$. This property was used by Chazal and Oudot \cite{chazal2012stable} to extract topological information on the shape from the Rips complex filtration, by interleaving it with the Čech complex filtration and using persistence topology.

The main contribution of this paper is to unveil a more direct relationship between the respective topologies of the Rips complex and the sampled shape. Specifically, we give conditions under which Rips complexes capture the topology of the shape. In a different setting, it has been proved in \cite{chazal2012simple} that the Rips complex of a point set close enough to a Riemannian manifold for the Gromov-Hausdorff distance shares the homotopy type of the manifold. However, these results focus on smooth manifolds, consider the intrinsic Riemannian metric instead of the Euclidean ambient metric and are not effective since they do not give explicit constants. Nevertheless, they suggest that Rips complexes could be used in practice to produce topologically correct approximations of shapes.

Partially related to our work, we should mention \cite{chazal2014stable} which relates the fundamental group of a Rips complex and its shadow (see below) in dimension 2 and give counterexamples in higher dimensions.

**Sampling conditions.**

In any case, it is necessary for a point cloud to be accurate and dense enough to reflect the topology of the shape it samples. The quality of the sample is typically expressed in terms of Hausdorff distance to the shape. Guaranteed reconstruction methods are generally accompanied by results of the following form: if the Hausdorff distance is smaller than some notion of topological feature size of the shape, then the output is topologically correct.

First sampling conditions were expressed in terms of the reach, which is the infimum of distances between points in the shape and points in its medial axis \cite{chazal2015reachability,chazal2016reachability, chazal2015jpd,chazal2015characterization}. Unfortunately, the reach vanishes on sharp concave edges and therefore is not suitable for expressing sampling conditions for non-smooth manifolds or stratified objects. To deal with this problem, authors in \cite{chazal2016reachability} introduce a new characterization of the feature size, the $\mu$-reach, which allows them to formulate sampling conditions for a large class of non-smooth compact subsets of Euclidean space.

In this work, we introduce two new measures of feature size, both called convexity defects. Roughly speaking, they measure how far an object is from being locally convex, in the same manner as curvature measures how far an object is from being locally flat. In Section 4, we use these measures to express sampling conditions first for the Čech complex and second for the Rips complex. Regarding the reconstruction with Čech complexes, our work compares well with previous approaches when $X$ is a smooth set and surprisingly enough, even improve constants when $X$ has a positive $\mu$-reach. Most importantly, this new framework allows us to prove that Rips complexes also provide topologically correct reconstruction, assuming shapes have a positive $\mu$-reach, for $\mu$ sufficiently large. For this, we first find conditions under which Rips complexes collapse to Čech complexes in Section 3.

2. **PRELIMINARIES**

In this section, we introduce the definitions and tools we need to state and prove our results.

2.1 **Metric space and distances**

Throughout this paper, we shall consider subsets of the Euclidean $n$-space $\mathbb{R}^n$ for $n \geq 1$. The Euclidean distance between two points $x$ and $y$ of $\mathbb{R}^n$ is denoted $\|x - y\|$. Given two subsets $X$ and $Y$ of $\mathbb{R}^n$, we write $d_H(Y \mid X) = \sup_{y \in Y} d(y, X)$ for the one-sided Hausdorff distance of $Y$ from $X$, where $d(y, X)$ is the infimum of the Euclidean distances between $y$ and points $x$ in $X$. Observe that $d_H(Y \mid X) \leq \epsilon$ if and only if $Y$ is contained in the $\epsilon$-offset $X^\epsilon = \{y \in \mathbb{R}^n \mid d(y, X) \leq \epsilon\}$. The Hausdorff distance between $X$ and $Y$ is $d_H(X, Y) = \max\{d_H(X \mid Y), d_H(Y \mid X)\}$. The closed ball with center $z$ and radius $r$ is denoted $B(z, r)$. Balls will always be assumed to be closed, unless stated otherwise.

2.2 **Smallest enclosing ball**

Recall that the diameter of a subset $\sigma$ of $\mathbb{R}^n$ is the supremum of distances between pairs of points in $\sigma$, which we denote as $\operatorname{Diam}(\sigma) = \sup_{p,q \in \sigma} \|p - q\|$. A subset $\sigma$ is said to be bounded if its diameter is finite. It is well known that the smallest ball enclosing a non-empty bounded set $\sigma$ of $\mathbb{R}^n$ is well-defined (see the appendix for a proof). We denote its center by $\operatorname{Center}(\sigma)$ and its radius by $\operatorname{Rad}(\sigma)$. Writing $\operatorname{Hull}(X)$ for the convex hull of $X$ and $\overline{X}$ for the closure of $X$, it is not hard to check (by contradiction) that $\operatorname{Center}(\sigma) \in \overline{\operatorname{Hull}(\sigma)}$. We now give a key property of the smallest enclosing ball. Stabilities of its radius and center are established in the appendix.

**Lemma 1.** For any non-empty bounded subset $\sigma \subset \mathbb{R}^n$, any point $x \in \mathbb{R}^n$ and any point $y \in \overline{\operatorname{Hull(\sigma)}}$, we have that $d(x, \sigma)^2 \leq \|x - y\|^2 + \operatorname{Rad}(\sigma)^2 - \|y - \operatorname{Center}(\sigma)\|^2$.

**Figure 1: Notations for the proof of Lemma 1**

**Proof.** Suppose $d(x, \sigma) > \|x - y\|$ for otherwise the result is clear. Let $B_0$ be the smallest ball enclosing $\sigma$ and let $B_1$ be the largest ball centered at $x$ whose interior does not intersect $\sigma$; see Figure 1. By construction, $\sigma \subset B_0 \setminus B_1$. Recall that the power distance of a point $y$ from a ball $B$ is $\pi_B(y) = \|y - z\|^2 - r^2$, where $z$ is the center of $B$ and $r$ its radius. Let $H$ be the set of points whose power distance to $B_0$ is at most as large as the power distance to $B_1$. $H$ is a closed half-space which contains the set difference $B_0 \setminus B_1$. In particular, it contains $\sigma$ and any point $y \in \overline{\operatorname{Hull}(\sigma)}$. Thus, $\pi_{B_0}(y) \leq \pi_{B_1}(y)$ and the result follows. \qed
2.3 Abstract simplicial complexes

Let $P$ be a finite set of points in $\mathbb{R}^n$. We call any non-empty subset $\sigma \subseteq P$ an abstract simplex. Its dimension is one less than its cardinality. A $i$-simplex is an abstract simplex of dimension $i$. If $\tau \subset \sigma$ is a non-empty subset, we call $\tau$ a face of $\sigma$ and $\sigma$ a coface of $\tau$. An abstract simplicial complex $K$ is a collection of non-empty abstract simplices that contains, with every simplex, the faces of that simplex. The vertex set of the abstract simplicial complex $K$ is the union of its elements, $\text{Vert}(K) = \bigcup_{\sigma \in K} \sigma$. A subcomplex of $K$ is a simplicial complex $L \subseteq K$. A particular subcomplex is the $i$-skeleton consisting of all simplices of dimension $i$ or less, which we denote by $K^{(i)}$. The shadow of $K$ is the subset of $\mathbb{R}^n$ covered by the convex hull of simplices in $K$, $\text{Shd}(K) = \bigcup_{\sigma \in K} \text{Hull}(\sigma)$, not to be confused with $|K|$, the underlying space of a geometric realization of $K$; see $[31]$. If $N$ is the cardinal of the vertex set $\text{Vert}(K)$ of $K$ and if $f : \text{Vert}(K) \to \mathbb{R}^N$ sends $\text{Vert}(K)$ to an affinely independent set $f(\text{Vert}(K))$, then $|K| = \bigcup_{\sigma \in K} \text{Hull}(f(\sigma))$ (up to a homeomorphism). Generally, $|K|$ and $\text{Shd}(K)$ are not homeomorphic since the relative interiors of the convex hulls of two different simplices of $K$ may overlap.

We now review two natural ways of constructing an abstract simplicial complex, given as input a finite set of points in $\mathbb{R}^n$ and a feature scale parameter $t \geq 0$. The definitions given below may change from one author to another.

The Čech complex $C(P,t)$ is the abstract simplicial complex whose $k$-simplices correspond to subsets of $k + 1$ points that can be enclosed in a ball of radius $t$. $C(P,t) = \{ \sigma \mid \emptyset \neq \sigma \subseteq P, \text{Rad}(\sigma) \leq t \}$. Equivalently, a $k$-simplex $\{p_0, \ldots, p_k\}$ belongs to the Čech complex if and only if the $k + 1$ closed Euclidean balls $B(p_i, t)$ have non-empty common intersection. Let $\text{Nrv}_G F = \{ G \subseteq F \mid \bigcap G \neq \emptyset \}$ denote the nerve of the collection $F$. The Čech complex is the nerve of the collection of balls $\{ B(p_i, t) \mid p_i \in P \}$. Since balls are convex, the Nerve Lemma $[10, 25]$ implies that the Čech complex $C(P,t)$ is homotopy equivalent to the union of these balls, that is, $|C(P,t)| \simeq P^t$.

The Vietoris-Rips complex is a variant of the Čech complex which is easier to compute. The Vietoris-Rips complex, $R(P,t)$, is the abstract simplicial complex whose $k$-simplices correspond to subsets of $k + 1$ points in $P$ with diameter at most $2t$, $R(P,t) = \{ \sigma \mid \emptyset \neq \sigma \subseteq P, \text{Diam}(\sigma) \leq 2t \}$. For simplicity, we refer to $R(P,t)$ as the Rips complex. Recall that the flag complex of a graph $G$, denoted $\text{Flag} G$, is the maximal simplicial complex whose 1-skeleton is $G$. The Rips complex is an example of a flag complex. More precisely, this is the largest simplicial complex sharing with the Čech complex the same 1-skeleton, $\text{Flag} C(P,t)^{(1)} = R(P,t)$. Generally, $R(P,t)$ and $C(P,t)$ do not share the same topology. It follows that the Rips complex $R(P,t)$ is generally not homotopy equivalent to the $t$-offset $P^t$. Our goal in the next section is to find a condition on the point set $P$ which guarantees that $|R(P,t)| \simeq |C(P,t)|$ and $|R(P,t)| \simeq P^t$. Along the way, we will need a result in $[20]$ which is a consequence of Jung’s Theorem and which says that there is chain of inclusion

$$C(P,t) \subset R(P,t) \subset C(P,\delta_n t) \quad \text{where} \quad \delta_n = \sqrt{\frac{2n}{n+1}}. \quad (1)$$

3. FROM RIPS TO ČECH COMPLEXES

In this section, we introduce two functions that one can associate with any non-empty bounded subset $X \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$ and that provide two different ways of measuring convexity defects of $X$. Based on these functions, we will be able to formulate a condition which suffices to guarantee that Rips complexes of a finite set of points $P$ deformation retract to Čech complexes of $P$ using a new kind of collapses described in Section $3.2$.

3.1 Convexity defects measures

To avoid lengthy sentences, we adopt the convention that $X$ is always assumed to be non-empty and bounded in this section. In particular, any non-empty subset $\sigma \subseteq X$ is also bounded and thus has a well-defined smallest enclosing ball. Recalling that $\text{Hull}(X)$ denotes the convex hull of $X$, we first extend the notion of convex hull to $X$ at scale $t$ as the subset (see Figure $2$)

$$\text{Hull}(X,t) = \bigcup_{\emptyset \neq \sigma \subseteq X} \text{Hull}(\sigma).$$

Note that if $P$ is a finite set of points, then $\text{Hull}(P,t)$ is the shadow of the Čech complex $C(P,t)$. Similarly, we define the set of centers of $X$ at scale $t$ as the subset:

$$\text{Centers}(X,t) = \bigcup_{\emptyset \neq \sigma \subseteq X} \{ \text{Center}(\sigma) \}.$$
the following three conditions are equivalent: (1) $h_x(t) \leq \alpha$; (2) $\text{Hull}(X,t) \subset X^n$; (3) $\text{Rad}(\sigma) \leq t$ $\implies$ $\text{Hull}(\sigma) \subset X^n$ for all $\sigma \in X$. In particular, we get that $h_x(t) \leq t$ for all $t \geq 0$ since $\text{Rad}(\sigma) \leq t \implies \text{Hull}(\sigma) \subset \sigma'$ by Lemma [1].

3.2 Collapses

This section describes collapses that will be useful to deformation retract Rips complexes to Čech complexes in the next section.

First, we need some definitions. Let $\sigma$ be a simplex of the simplicial complex $K$. The $\text{star}$ of $\sigma$ in $K$, denoted $\text{St}_K(\sigma)$, is the collection of simplices of $K$ having $\sigma$ as a face. The closure of $\text{St}_K(\sigma)$ is denoted $\overline{\text{St}_K(\sigma)}$; it is the smallest simplicial complex containing $\text{St}_K(\sigma)$. The link of $\sigma$ in $K$ is denoted $\text{lk}_K(\sigma)$, and is the collection of simplices of $K$ lying in $\overline{\text{St}_K(\sigma)}$ that are disjoint from $\sigma$. Given two non-empty simplicial complexes $K$ and $L$, the smallest simplicial complex containing all the simplices of the form $\kappa \cup \lambda$ where $\kappa \in K$ and $\lambda \in L$ is called the $\text{join}$ of $K$ and $L$ and is denoted by $K * L$. We adopt the convention that if $L$ is empty, then $K * L = K$. A simplicial complex $K$ is said to be a $\text{cone}$ if it contains a vertex $o$ such that the following implication holds: $\sigma \in K \implies \sigma \cup \{o\} \in K$. Equivalently, a cone is the join of $o * L$ of (possibly empty) simplicial complex $L$ and a vertex $o \not\in L$. The vertex $o$ is called the apex of the cone. By definition a cone can never be empty since it always contains at least its apex.

![Figure 3: Left: In a classical collapse, the link of $\sigma$ has a unique inclusion-maximal simplex $\tau$. Right: In an extended collapse, the link of $\sigma$ is a cone with apex $o$.](image)

Given a simplicial complex $K$, we are interested in the operation that removes the entire star of a simplex $\sigma \in K$ (see Figure [3]). Provided that there is a unique inclusion-maximal simplex $\tau \neq \sigma$ in the star of $\sigma$, it is well-known that $|K|$ deformation retracts to $|K| \setminus \text{St}_K(\sigma)$ and the operation that removes $\text{St}_K(\sigma)$ is then called a collapse [22]. Following and extending what was done in [9], we still call a collapse the operation that removes $\text{St}_K(\sigma)$ assuming the weaker condition that the link of $\sigma$ is a cone. Our terminology finds its justification in the following lemma.

**Lemma 2.** Let $K$ be a simplicial complex and let $\sigma$ be a simplex of $K$. If the link of $\sigma$ is a cone, then $|K|$ deformation retracts to $|K| \setminus \text{St}_K(\sigma)$.

**Proof.** Suppose first that $K$ contains a vertex $v$ whose link is a cone with apex $o$. Slightly adapting the proof of Proposition 2.9 in [9], we prove that $|K|$ deformation retracts to $|K| \setminus \text{St}_K(v)$. Define a vertex map $\pi : \text{Vert}(K) \to \text{Vert}(K)$ which is the identity on $\text{Vert}(K) \setminus \{v\}$ and such that $\pi(v) = o$. If $o$ is a proper coface of $v$, then $\pi \setminus \{v\}$ belongs to the link of $v$ and because the link is a cone with apex $o$, it also contains $\pi(\sigma) = (\sigma \setminus \{v\}) \cup \{o\}$. Moreover, $\pi(\sigma) \cup o = \pi \cup o$ belongs to $K$. It follows that $\pi$ can be extended to a simplicial map which is contiguous (see [34]) for a definition) to the identity of $K$. Furthermore, $\pi(K) = K \setminus \text{St}_K(v)$ and the restriction of $\pi$ to $K \setminus \text{St}_K(v)$ is the identity. Thus, the map $H : |K| \times [0,1] \to |K|$ defined by $H(x,t) = (1-t)x + t\pi(x)$ is a deformation retraction of $|K|$ onto $|K| \setminus \text{St}_K(v)$.

Suppose now $\sigma$ is a simplex in $K$ whose link is a cone with apex $o$. We reduce this case to the previous one by subdividing simplices in the star of $\sigma$ as follows. Let $\hat{\sigma}$ be the barycenter of $\sigma$ and let $\text{Bd} \sigma$ designate the set of proper faces of $\sigma$. We build a simplicial complex $K'$ from $K$, replacing the closed star $\overline{\text{St}_K(\sigma)}$ by the join $\{\hat{\sigma}\} * \text{Bd} \sigma * \text{lk}_K(\sigma)$. Note that if $\sigma$ is a vertex, then the join coincides with the closed star of $\sigma$ and $K' = K$. By construction, the simplicial complex $K$ and its subdivision $K'$ have in common the set of simplices $K \setminus \text{St}_K(\sigma) = K' \setminus \text{St}_{K'}(\hat{\sigma})$. Let us show that the link of $\sigma$ in $K'$ is a cone with apex $o$. By construction, $\text{lk}_{K'}(\hat{\sigma}) = \text{Bd} \sigma * \text{lk}_K(\sigma)$. Using the existence of a subcomplex $L \subset K$ such that $\text{lk}_K(\sigma) = \{o\} * L$, we get that $\text{lk}_{K'}(\hat{\sigma}) = \{o\} * \text{Bd} \sigma * L$ is a cone. The first part of the proof implies that $|K| = |K'|$ deformation retracts to $|K \setminus \text{St}_K(\sigma)| = |K' \setminus \text{St}_{K'}(\hat{\sigma})|$. □

3.3 Almost Rips complexes

In this section, we introduce a 2-parameter family of Rips complexes and give the precise condition on a finite point set for which we can prove that a Rips complex in this family deformation retracts to a Čech complex. As a consequence, we also state conditions under which a Čech complex deformation retracts to another one. Let us first define a 2-parameter family that contains prior Rips complexes as a subfamily:

**Definition 2.** For any point set $P \subset \mathbb{R}^n$ and any real numbers $\alpha, \beta \geq 0$ with $\alpha \leq \beta$, we call the flag complex of any graph $G$ satisfying $\mathcal{R}(P, \alpha) \subset \text{Flag} G \subset \mathcal{R}(P, \beta)$ an $(\alpha, \beta)$-almost Rips complex of $P$.

In other words, the simplicial complex $\text{Flag} G$ is an $(\alpha, \beta)$-almost Rips complex of $P$ if and only if every pair of points of $P$ within distance $2\alpha$ are connected by an edge in $G$ and no edge of $G$ has length larger than $2\beta$. Equivalently, for every pairs $(p, q) \in P^2$, $|p - q| \leq 2\alpha$ implies $pq \in G$ and $|p - q| > 2\beta$ implies $pq \notin G$. In particular, $K$ is an $(\alpha, \alpha)$-almost Rips complex of $P$ if and only if $K = \mathcal{R}(P, \alpha)$. To state our main theorem, it is convenient to define $\alpha$ to be an $\text{inert value of } P$ if $\text{Rad}(\sigma) \neq \alpha$ for all non-empty subsets $\sigma \subset P$. The finiteness of $P$ implies that $\alpha$ has only finitely many non-inert values. Thus, assuming $\alpha$ to be inert is not a too restrictive hypothesis.

**Theorem 1.** Let $P \subset \mathbb{R}^n$ be a finite set of points. For any real numbers $\beta \geq \alpha \geq 0$ such that $\alpha$ is an inert value of $P$ and $c_P(\theta_0, \beta) < 2\alpha - \theta_0 \beta$, there exists a sequence of collapses from any $(\alpha, \beta)$-almost Rips complex of $P$ to the Čech complex $\mathcal{C}(P, \alpha)$.

**Proof.** Let $G$ be a graph whose flag complex is an $(\alpha, \beta)$-almost Rips complex of $P$. For $t \geq 0$, consider the simplicial complex $\mathcal{F}(t) = \mathcal{C}(P, t) \cap \text{Flag} G$. Clearly, we have the chain of inclusions:

$$\mathcal{C}(P, \alpha) \subset \mathcal{R}(P, \alpha) \subset \text{Flag} G \subset \mathcal{R}(P, \beta) \subset \mathcal{C}(P, \theta_0 \beta)$$

and therefore $\mathcal{F}(\alpha) = \mathcal{C}(P, \alpha)$ and $\mathcal{F}(\theta_0 \beta) = \text{Flag} G$. As we continuously increase the feature parameter $t$ from $\alpha$ to $\theta_0 \beta$, we get a finite family of nested Čech complexes:

$$\mathcal{C}(P, \alpha) = \mathcal{C}_0 \subset \mathcal{C}_1 \subset \cdots \subset \mathcal{C}_k = \mathcal{C}(P, \theta_0 \beta)$$

For $0 < i < k$, let $t_i$ be the smallest value of $t$ such that $\mathcal{C}_i = \mathcal{C}(P, t_i)$ and set $\mathcal{F}_i = \mathcal{F}(t_i)$. Correspondingly, we get a 1-parameter family of simplicial complexes:

$$\mathcal{C}(P, \alpha) = \mathcal{F}_0 \subset \mathcal{F}_1 \subset \cdots \subset \mathcal{F}_k = \text{Flag} G$$

Let us first assume that $P$ satisfies the two generic conditions $(\ast)$ and $(\ast\ast)$ instead of the condition that $\text{Rad}(\sigma) \neq \alpha$ for all non-empty subsets $\sigma \subset P$.
is either equal or collapses to $F$.

Figure 4: Notations for the proof of Theorem 1. Left: $\tau$ is the simplex whose vertices are points of $P$ in $B(z_i, t_i)$. $\sigma$ is the face obtained by keeping vertices on the boundary of $B(z_i, t_i)$. Right: Schematic representation of simplices in $C_i \setminus C_{i-1}$.

Let us now turn our attention to $F_i$ and $F_{i-1}$. If $\sigma \notin F_i$, then $F_i = F_{i-1}$. If $\sigma \in F_i$, the star of $\sigma$ in $F_i$ is equal to the star of $\sigma_i$ in $C_i$ by Proposition 1.8 (see Figure 4 right). Let us prove that the link of $\sigma_i$ in $F_i$ is a cone with apex $a$, which guarantees that $F_i$ collapses to $F_{i-1}$. Suppose $\eta$ is a coface of $\sigma_i$ in $F_i$ and let us show that $\eta \cup \{a\}$ is also a coface. Clearly, $\eta \cup \{a\}$ belongs to the Čech complex $C_i$ since for all points $p \in \eta \cup \{a\}$, $|z_i - p| \leq t_i$. Let us prove that $\eta \cup \{a\}$ also belongs to Flag $G$. Since $\eta$ belongs to Flag $G$, it suffices to prove that all edges connecting $a$ to a vertex $p$ of $\eta$ have length $2\alpha$ or less. Indeed, for all points $p \in \eta$, we have

$$\|p - a\| \leq |z_i - p| + |z_i - a| \leq t_i + c_P(t_i) \leq 2\alpha$$

showing that $\eta \cup \{a\}$ belongs to Flag $G$. Hence, $\eta \cup \{a\}$ belongs to $F_i$. Setting $\eta = \sigma_i$, we get that $\sigma_i \cup \{a\}$ is a coface of $\sigma_i$ and since $a \notin \sigma_i$, it follows that $\{a\}$ belongs to the link of $\sigma_i$ in $F_i$. Hence, the link of $\sigma_i$ in $F_i$ is a cone, completing the proof of Theorem 1.

assuming generic conditions ($\ast$) and ($\ast \ast$) instead of the condition $\overline{\partial}(\sigma) \neq \alpha$ for all non-empty subsets $\sigma \subset P$.

If $P$ does not satisfy the generic conditions ($\ast$) and ($\ast \ast$), we use Lemma 10 to find a perturbation $f$ of the points such that $f(P)$ satisfies ($\ast$) and ($\ast \ast$) and conditions (i), (ii) and (iii) of Lemma 10 for some $\beta' > \beta$. Applying Theorem 1 to $f(P)$ with the values $\alpha$ and $\beta'$, we get that there exists a sequence of collapses from the $(\alpha, \beta')$-almost Rips complex $\Flag(f(G)) = f(\Flag(G))$ to the Čech complex $C(f(P), \alpha) = f(C(P, \alpha))$. Hence, the theorem also holds in the non-generic case.

Choosing $\beta = \alpha$ in the theorem gives conditions under which $|R(P, \alpha)| \approx |C(P, \alpha)| \approx P^n$. Figure 5 provides a graphical representation of the hypothesis of the theorem. Slightly adapting the first part of the proof we get the following result:

**Theorem 2.** Let $\beta \geq 0$ and let $P$ be a finite set of points of $\mathbb{R}^n$. If $\alpha$ is an inert value of $P$ and $cp(t) < t$ for all $t \in [\alpha, \beta]$, then there exists a sequence of collapses from $C(P, \beta)$ to $C(P, \alpha)$.

### 4. SHAPE RECONSTRUCTION

In this section, we are interested in reconstructing a compact set $X \subset \mathbb{R}^n$ only known through a finite set of possibly noisy points $P \subset \mathbb{R}^n$. Using the convexity defect function $h_X$, we formulate two sampling conditions which guarantee respectively that the Čech complex and the Rips complex of $P$ are homotopy equivalent to any arbitrarily small offset of $X$ (Section 4.2). This requires us to study in more details convexity defects functions, establishing connections with the distance function to $X$ in Section 4.3 and the stability of $h_X$. Finally, we construct a bridge between shapes with an upper bounded convexity defects function and shapes with a positive $\mu$-reach in Section 4.4. We then compute in Section 4.4 the lowest density of points authorized by our theorems for a correct reconstruction.

#### 4.1 Characterizing critical values of the distance function

We begin by giving two characterizations of the critical values of the distance function to a compact set $X \subset \mathbb{R}^n$, based respectively on the two convexity defects functions $c_X$ and $h_X$. For this, we need some definitions. The distance function $d(\cdot, X)$ to the compact set $X \subset \mathbb{R}^n$ maps every point $y \in \mathbb{R}^n$ to its Euclidean distance to $X$, $d(x, y) = \min_{x \in X} \|x - y\|$. Although the distance function is not differentiable, it is possible to define a notion of critical points analogue to the classical one for differentiable functions. Specifically, Grove defines in [27, page 360] critical points for the distance function to a closed subset of a Riemannian manifold. Using Equation (1.1)' in [27, page 360], we recast this definition in our context as follows. Let $\Gamma_X(y) = \{x \in X \mid d(y, X) = \|x - y\|\}$ be the set of points in $X$ closest to $y$.

**Definition 3.** We say that $y \in \mathbb{R}^n$ is a critical point of the distance function $d(\cdot, X)$ if $y \in \Hull(\Gamma_X(y))$. The critical values of $d(\cdot, X)$ are the images by $d(\cdot, X)$ of its critical points.

Slightly recasting Proposition 1.8 in [27, page 362], we have:

**Theorem 3 (Isotopy Theorem [27]).** Let $X \subset \mathbb{R}^n$ be a compact set and let $\beta \geq \alpha > 0$ be two real numbers. If the distance function $d(\cdot, X)$ has no critical value in the interval $[\alpha, \beta]$, then $X^\beta$ deformation retracts to $X^\alpha$.

In section [3.1], we noted that $c_X(t) \leq h_X(t) \leq t$ for all $t$. Next lemma establishes that equality is attained if and only if $t$ is a critical value of the distance function to $X$ (see Figure 5).
Lemma 3. For any compact set $X \subset \mathbb{R}^n$ and any real number $t > 0$, the following three conditions are equivalent: (1) $t$ is a critical value of $d(\cdot, X)$; (2) $c_X(t) = t$; (3) $h_X(t) = t$.

Proof. Making $x = y$ in Lemma 1 we observe that if $y \in \text{Hull}(\sigma)$ satisfies $d(y, \sigma) \geq t$ and $\text{Rad}(\sigma) \leq t$, then $y = \text{Center}(\sigma)$.

Let us prove that (1) $\implies$ (2). Consider a critical point $y$, whose distance to $X$ is $t$. Setting $\sigma = \Gamma_X(y)$, we have $y \in \text{Hull}(\sigma)$, $d(y, \sigma) = t$ and $\text{Rad}(\sigma) \leq t$. Thanks to our observation, it follows that $y = \text{Center}(\sigma)$ and consequently $c_X(t) = t$. Because $c_X(t) \leq h_X(t) \leq t$, we have (2) $\implies$ (3). Let us prove that (3) $\implies$ (1). In other words, suppose $h_X(t) = t$ and let us prove that $t$ is a critical value of $d(\cdot, X)$. Since $X$ is compact, $h_X(t) = t$ means that we can find a compact set $\emptyset \neq \sigma \subset X$ with $\text{Rad}(\sigma) \leq t$ and $y \in \text{Hull}(\sigma)$ such that $t = d(y, X) \leq d(y, \sigma)$. Our observation then implies that $y = \text{Center}(\sigma)$, $t = \text{Rad}(\sigma)$ and $\sigma$ represents a set of points in $X$ with minimum distance to $y$. Since $y \in \text{Hull}(\sigma) \subset \text{Hull}(\Gamma_X(y))$, it follows that $y$ is a critical point of the distance function to $X$, which concludes the proof.

---

Lemma 4. For every pair of subsets $X$ and $P$ of $\mathbb{R}^n$ such that $d_H(X, P) \leq \varepsilon$ and for every $t \geq 0$, we have

$$h_P(t) \leq h_X(t + \varepsilon) + 2\varepsilon.$$ 

Proof. Consider a non-empty subset $\sigma \subset P$ with $\text{Rad}(\sigma) \leq t$ and set $\xi = X \cap \sigma^c$. By construction, $\xi$ is non-empty and $d_H(\xi, \sigma) \leq \varepsilon$. Hence, Lemma 3 implies that $h_P(t) \leq t + \varepsilon$. Using $\text{Hull}(\xi) = \text{Hull}(\xi)^e$, we get that $h_P(\sigma) \subset \text{Hull}(\xi)^e \subset X^h(x(t + \varepsilon) + 2\varepsilon)$, yielding the result.

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Reconstruction with the Čech complex.

The assumption that $d_H(X, P) \leq \varepsilon$ implies the following chain of inclusions: $P^n \subset X^{n+\varepsilon} \subset P^{n+2\varepsilon} \subset X^{n+3\varepsilon}$. From [1], we know that whenever we consider four nested spaces $P_0 \subset P_1 \subset P_2 \subset P_3$, deformation retracts to $X_0$ and deformation retracts to $P_0$, then $X_0$ deformation retracts to $P_0$. Applying this result to our context combined with the Isotopy Theorem and the characterization of critical points given in Lemma 3, we deduce immediately that $X^{n+\varepsilon}$ deformation retracts to $P^n$ whenever the following two conditions are fulfilled:

$$h_X(t) < t, \quad \forall t \in [\alpha + \varepsilon, \alpha + 3\varepsilon],$$

$$h_P(t) < t, \quad \forall t \in [\alpha, \alpha + 2\varepsilon].$$

Since $d_H(X, P) \leq \varepsilon$, Lemma 4 implies that $h_P(t) \leq h_X(t + \varepsilon) + 2\varepsilon$ and therefore the above two conditions are fulfilled as soon as the following stronger condition holds: $h_X(t) < t - 3\varepsilon$, $\forall t \in [\alpha + \varepsilon, \alpha + 3\varepsilon]$. Because $h_X$ is non-negative, this condition implies that $2\varepsilon < \alpha$. Because $h_X$ is increasing, it also implies that $h_X(t) < t$ for all $t \in [\alpha - 2\varepsilon, \alpha + 3\varepsilon]$, showing that $t$-offsets of $X$ in the interval $[\alpha - 2\varepsilon, \alpha + 3\varepsilon]$ are all homotopy equivalent. We summarize our findings in the following theorem:

**Theorem 4.** Let $\varepsilon, \alpha > 0$ such that $2\varepsilon < \alpha$. Let $P$ be a finite set of points whose Hausdorff distance to a compact subset $X$ is $\varepsilon$ or less. The Čech complex $C(P, \alpha)$ is homotopy equivalent to the $(\alpha - 2\varepsilon)$-offset of $X$ whenever $h_X(t) < t - 3\varepsilon$ for all $t \in [\alpha + \varepsilon, \alpha + 3\varepsilon]$.

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Reconstruction with the Rips complex.

If furthermore we suppose that $cp(\vartheta_\beta) < 2\alpha - \vartheta_\beta$, we can apply Theorem 1 and deduce that $(\alpha, \beta)$-almost Rips complexes of $P$ deformation retracts to the Čech complex $C(P, \alpha)$. Using Lemma 4, we get that $cp(\vartheta_\beta) \leq h_P(\vartheta_\beta) \leq h_X(\vartheta_\beta) + 2\varepsilon$ and the hypothesis of Theorem 1 is fulfilled whenever $h_X(\vartheta_\beta) + \varepsilon < 2\alpha - \vartheta_\beta - 2\varepsilon$. Because $h_X$ is increasing, it also implies that $h_X(t) < t - 3\varepsilon$, $\forall t \in [\alpha + \varepsilon, \alpha + 3\varepsilon]$ and the hypothesis of Theorem 4 is also fulfilled. We deduce the following theorem:

**Theorem 5.** Let $\varepsilon, \alpha$ and $\beta$ be three non-negative real numbers such that $\alpha \leq \beta$ and $\eta = 2\alpha - \vartheta_\beta - 2\varepsilon > 0$. Let $P$ be a finite set of points whose Hausdorff distance to a compact subset $X$ is $\varepsilon$ or less. Then, any $(\alpha, \beta)$-almost Rips complex of $P$ is homotopy equivalent to the $\eta$-offset of $X$ whenever $\alpha$ is an invert value of $P$ and $h_X(\vartheta_\beta + \varepsilon) < 2\alpha - \vartheta_\beta - 2\varepsilon$.

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4.3 Connections with the critical function

In this section, we show that the class of shapes with an upper bounded convexity defect function are equivalent to the class of shapes with a lower bounded critical function. To make this idea...
For $i \in \{1, 2, 3\}$, the hypotheses of Theorem 1 are depicted as regions $Z_i$ avoided by the graph of a convexity defects function. Specifically, if $c_P \cap Z_i = \emptyset$, Theorem 4 implies $R(P, \alpha) \simeq P^\sigma$. If $h_X \cap Z_4 = \emptyset$, Theorem 3 implies $C(P, \alpha) \simeq X^3 - t^2$. If $h_X \cap Z_5 = \emptyset$, Theorem 5 implies $R(P, \alpha) \simeq X^2 - t^2$.

precise, we need to recall the definition of critical functions instrumental in expressing sampling conditions for a larger class of objects than shapes with a positive reach in [15]. Even though the distance function to $X$ is not differentiable, it is possible to define a generalized gradient function $\nabla_X : \mathbb{R}^n \setminus X \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ that coincides with the usual gradient at points where $d(\cdot, X)$ is differentiable and that vanishes precisely at points that are critical [15]. Specifically,

$$\nabla_X(y) = \frac{y - \text{Center}(\Gamma_X(y))}{d(y, X)}.$$ 

The critical function $\chi_X : \mathbb{R}^n_+ \rightarrow \mathbb{R}_+$ is defined by

$$\chi_X(t) = \inf_{d(y, X) = t} \|\nabla_X(y)\|.$$ 

For $0 < \mu \leq 1$, authors in [15] define the $\mu$-reach of $X$ as $r_\mu(X) = \inf \{t > 0, \chi_X(t) < \mu\}$. The terminology comes from the fact that $r_1(X)$ coincides with the usual reach of $X$. Observe that $r_\mu(X) \geq R$ is equivalent to $\chi_X(t) \geq \mu$ for all $t \in (0, R)$. Our first lemma provides a lower bound on $\chi_X$ at $t$, assuming an upper bound on $c_X$ at $t$.

**Lemma 5.** For all compact set $X \subset \mathbb{R}^n$, all $0 \leq \mu \leq 1$ and all $t \geq 0$, the following implication holds:

$$c_X(t) < (1 - \mu)t \implies \chi_X(t) > \mu.$$ 

**Proof.** Consider $y \in \mathbb{R}^n$ whose distance to $X$ is $t$ and let us prove that $\|\nabla_X(y)\| > \mu$. Let $\sigma = \Gamma_X(y)$ be the set of points in $X$ with minimum distance to $y$. Suppose the smallest ball enclosing $\sigma$ has center $z$ and radius $s$. Since $s \leq t$, we get $c_X(s) \leq c_X(t) < (1 - \mu)t$ and therefore $t - \|y - z\| \leq d(z, X) \leq c_X(s) < (1 - \mu)t$. It follows that $\|\nabla_X(y)\| = \frac{\|y - z\|}{t} > \mu$. 

Next lemma can be thought of as a converse of the previous lemma, since it provides an upper bound on $h_X$ over the interval $[0, R]$, assuming a lower bound on the critical function $\chi_X$ over the interval $(0, R)$. It extends a result in [7] and says intuitively that the convex hull of point set $\sigma \subset X$ cannot be too far away from a shape $X$, assuming $\sigma$ can be enclosed in a ball of small radius $t$ and $X$ has a positive $\mu$-reach.

**Lemma 6.** Consider two real numbers $\mu \in (0, 1]$ and $R \geq 0$. Let $X \subset \mathbb{R}^n$ be a compact set such that $\chi_X(t) \geq \mu$ for all $t \in (0, R)$. Then, for all $0 \leq t \leq R$, one has:

$$h_X(t) \leq \frac{1 + \mu(1 - \mu) - \sqrt{1 - \mu(2 - \mu)} \left(\frac{t}{R}\right)^2}{\mu(2 - \mu)} R.$$ 

**Proof.** Given $\sigma \subset X$ with $\text{Rad}(\sigma) \leq R$ and $y_0 \in \text{Hull}(\sigma)$, we establish an upper bound on $d(y_0, X)$ expressed as a function of $\text{Rad}(\sigma)$. Consider an integral line $C_{y_0}$ of the flow associated to the distance function to $X$ starting at point $y_0$ [30, 16]. Suppose this integral line is parameterized by arc length and set $y_t = C_{y_0}(s)$. For $s < R - d(y_0, X)$, one has $d(y_t, X) < s < R$ and therefore $\chi_X(d(y_t, X)) \geq \mu$ which implies $\|\nabla_X(y_t)\| \geq \mu$. In particular, the integral line $C_{y_0}$ does not reach any critical point as long as $s < R - d(y_0, X)$ and $C_{y_0}$ can at least be parameterized on the interval $[0, R - d(y_0, X)]$. Since the norm of the gradient $\|\nabla_X(y_t)\| \geq \mu$ is equal to the right derivative of $s \mapsto d(y_t, X)$ (see [30, 16]), we obtain that

$$\frac{d(y_t, X) - d(y_0, X)}{s} \geq \mu.$$ 

Applying Lemma 1 with $x = y_s$ and $y = y_0$ gives $d(y_t, X)^2 \leq d(y_s, \sigma)^2 \leq s^2 + \text{Rad}(\sigma)^2$ from which we deduce the inequality

$$d(y_t, X) \leq s + \text{Rad}(\sigma)^2.$$ 

Plugging $s = R - d(y_0, X)$, setting $\delta = \frac{d(y_0, X)}{R}$, $\rho = \frac{\text{Rad}(\sigma)}{R}$, and rearranging this inequality gives us

$$\mu(2 - \mu)\delta^2 - 2(1 + \mu - \mu^2)\delta + 1 - \mu^2 + \rho^2 \geq 0.$$ 

Since $\delta \leq 1$ we get $\delta \leq \frac{1 + \mu(1 - \mu) - \sqrt{1 - \mu(2 - \mu)}}{\mu(2 - \mu)}$, yielding the result. 

The upper bound on $h_X$ is an arc of ellipse which tends to an arc of parabola as $\mu \to 0$; see Figure 7. Note that since $h_X(t) \leq t$ for all $t$, this upper bound is only relevant when under the diagonal. For $\mu = 1$, we get $h_X(t) \leq R - \sqrt{R^2 - t^2}$ as in [7]. Equivalently, the graph of $h_X$ is below the circle with radius $R$ and center $(0, R)$.

**Figure 7:** Upper bound on $h_X$ for $\mu \in \{0, \frac{1}{2}, \frac{3}{2}, 1\}$ provided by Lemma 6

### 4.4 Reconstructing shapes with a positive $\mu$-reach

Given a shape $X$ whose $\mu$-reach $R$ is positive and a finite point set $P$ such that $d(h(P), X) \leq \varepsilon$, we compute the largest value of the ratio $\varepsilon$ for which the Čech complex $C(P, \alpha)$ or the Rips complex $R(P, \alpha)$ provide a topologically correct reconstruction of $X$ for
a suitable value of the parameter $\alpha$. Computations were realized using a computer algebra system and details are skipped.

Reconstruction with the Čech complex.
Combining Theorem 1 and Lemma 6, we obtain that the Čech complex $C(P, \alpha)$ is homotopy equivalent to $X^{\alpha-\varepsilon}$ for all $\alpha \in (2\varepsilon, R-3\varepsilon]$ whenever the following inequality holds for all $t \in [\alpha + \varepsilon, \alpha + 3\varepsilon]$:

$$1 + \mu(1 - \mu) - \sqrt{1 - \mu(2 - \mu)} \left(\frac{\mu}{2 - \mu}\right)^2 R < t - 3\varepsilon.$$  

Eliminating the square root, we can replace the above inequality by $H < 0$ where $H$ is a polynomial of degree 2 in $t$. It follows that the above condition holds whenever the absolute difference between the two roots $\lambda_1, \lambda_2$ of $H$ is greater than $2\varepsilon$. The condition $|\lambda_2 - \lambda_1| > 2\varepsilon$ can be rewritten as the positivity of a polynomial of degree 2 in $\varepsilon$ and holds whenever $\varepsilon$ is smaller than the greatest root $\varepsilon_{\text{cech}}(\mu)$ whose value divided by $R$ is:

$$-3\mu + 3\mu^2 - 3 + \sqrt{-8\mu^2 + 4\mu^3 + 18\mu + 2\mu^4 + 9 + \mu^6 - 4\mu^5}.$$  

Interestingly, $\varepsilon_{\text{cech}}(\mu)$ does not depend on the ambient dimension $n$. Plotting the ratio $\frac{\varepsilon_{\text{cech}}(\mu)}{\varepsilon_{\text{rips}}(\mu)}$ as a function of $\mu$ (see Figure 3 left), we observe that the ratio is positive for all $\mu \in (0, 1]$ and improves on the upper bound $\frac{\mu^2}{5\mu^2 + 12}$ established in [15]. Still, for $\mu = 1$, we get $\frac{\varepsilon_{\text{cech}}(1)}{\varepsilon_{\text{rips}}(1)} = \frac{3\sqrt{3}}{13} \approx 0.13$ which is not as good as the value $3 - \sqrt{8} \approx 0.17$ obtained in [22].

Reconstruction with the Rips complex.

Combining Theorem 1 with $\beta = \alpha$ and Lemma 6, we get that the Rips complex $R(P, \alpha)$ is homotopy equivalent to $X^{\alpha-\varepsilon}$ for all $\alpha \in \left(2\varepsilon, R - \varepsilon - 2\varepsilon\right]$ whenever

$$1 + \mu(1 - \mu) - \sqrt{1 - \mu(2 - \mu)} \left(\frac{\varepsilon_{\alpha + \varepsilon}}{R}\right)^2 R \leq 2\alpha - \varepsilon_\alpha - 2\varepsilon.$$  

As before, we can eliminate the square root, replacing the above inequality by $H < 0$ where $H$ is a polynomial of degree 2 in $\varepsilon$ and $\alpha$. Since we are looking for the greatest value of $\varepsilon$ for which $H < 0$, we may assume that $\frac{\partial H}{\partial \varepsilon} = 0$. Plugging the value of $\alpha$ for which $\frac{\partial H}{\partial \alpha} = 0$ in $H$, we get a polynomial of degree 2 in $\varepsilon$ whose greatest root $\varepsilon_{\text{rips}}(\mu)$ gives the supremum of $\varepsilon$ for which the above inequality holds. Plotting the ratio $\frac{\varepsilon_{\text{cech}}(\mu)}{\varepsilon_{\text{rips}}(\mu)}$ as a function of $\mu$, we observe that the ratio is only positive on a subinterval $\left[\mu_n^*, 1\right]$ of $(0, 1]$; see Figure 8 left. Hence, we can only guarantee that Rips complexes provide a correct reconstruction for shapes with a positive $\mu$-reach whenever $\mu > \mu_n^*$. In Figure 8 middle, we plotted $\mu_n^*$ as a function of $n$. $\mu_n^*$ increases with $n$ and we were able to prove using a computer algebra system that $\mu_n^*$ tends to $\sqrt{2\sqrt{2} - 2} \approx 0.91$ as $n \rightarrow +\infty$. In Figure 8 right, we plotted $\frac{\varepsilon_{\text{rips}}(\mu)}{R}$ as a function of $n$. For a fixed $R$, $\varepsilon_{\text{rips}}(\mu)$ decreases with $n$ and similarly, we proved that $\lim_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \varepsilon_{\text{rips}}(1) = \frac{2\sqrt{2} - \sqrt{2\sqrt{2} - 2}}{2 + \sqrt{2}} R \approx 0.034R$.

5. CONCLUSION

A glance at the proof of our main result (Theorem 1) reveals the centrality of Jung’s Theorem that relates the diameter and radius of any subset of an Euclidean space. Observe that in $L^\infty$ spaces the diameter of a set is always twice its radius. Thus, Čech and Rips complexes coincide and Theorem 1 degenerates into a trivial form. The definition of our function $\varepsilon_{\text{rips}}$ is purely metric. The definition of $h_{\beta}$ only requires, beside a metric, a notion of (local) convex hull which can be defined from geodesics for a large class of metric spaces (see the definition of complete length spaces in [26]). A natural question for future work is whether our results extend to more general metric spaces such as Riemannian manifolds, $L^p$ spaces or abstract metric spaces for which an analog of Jung’s Theorem would be replaced by an axiom.

Lemma 6 says that the hypotheses of Theorem 1 are stable under small metric perturbations. In particular, our relaxed definition of almost Rips complexes (unlike the usual notion of Rips complexes) should allow us to apply Theorem 1 in the context of Gromov-Hausdorff distances.

Another natural extension would be to consider local measures of convexity defects and define sampling densities adapted to the local geometry of the sampled set in the spirit of [2].

6. REFERENCES

APPENDIX

In this appendix, we review useful results on smallest enclosing balls and establish the stability of hypotheses of Theorem 1 under small perturbations of the point set P.

**Lemma 7.** The smallest ball enclosing a non-empty bounded set of \( \mathbb{R}^n \) exists and is unique.

**Proof.** Let \( \sigma \) be a non-empty bounded set of \( \mathbb{R}^n \). We first es-
establish the existence of a smallest ball enclosing $\sigma$. Given a point $y \in \mathbb{R}^n$ and a real number $s \geq 0$, we first prove that the set $\mathcal{B}(y, s)$ of closed balls passing through $y$ and with radius $s$ or less is compact. Indeed, representing a closed ball with center $z$ and radius $r$ by point $(z, r)$ in $\mathbb{R}^{n+1}$, we can write

$$\mathcal{B}(y, s) = \{ (z, r) \in \mathbb{R}^{n+1} | \|z - y\| \leq r \leq s \},$$

which is closed by definition and bounded since for all balls $(z_0, r_0)$ and $(z_1, r_1)$ in $\mathcal{B}(y, s)$, we have $\|z_0 - z_1\| + |r_0 - r_1| \leq 3s$. The set of closed balls containing $\sigma$ and whose radii are smaller than or equal to the diameter of $\sigma$ is

$$\mathcal{B}(\sigma) = \bigcap_{y \in \sigma} \mathcal{B}(y, \text{Diam}(\sigma)).$$

This set is non-empty and compact and therefore, the continuous map $(z, r) \mapsto r$ on $\mathcal{B}(\sigma)$ is bounded below and attains its infimum. The uniqueness is easy to establish by contradiction, as explained in [33]. 

Next lemma states that the radius and center of the smallest enclosing ball are stable.

**Lemma 8.** For every non-empty bounded subsets $\sigma$ and $\sigma'$ of $\mathbb{R}^n$ such that $d_H(\sigma, \sigma') \leq \varepsilon$, we have $|\text{Rad}(\sigma) - \text{Rad}(\sigma')| \leq \varepsilon$ and $\|\text{Center}(\sigma) - \text{Center}(\sigma')\| \leq \sqrt{2\varepsilon} \text{Rad}(\sigma) + \varepsilon^2$.

**Proof.** Writing $B$ for the smallest ball enclosing $\sigma$, we have $\sigma' \subset \sigma \subset B$, showing that $\text{Rad}(\sigma') \leq \text{Rad}(\sigma) + \varepsilon$.

For the second part of the lemma, the set $z = \text{Center}(\sigma)$, $z' = \text{Center}(\sigma')$, $r = \text{Rad}(\sigma)$ and $r' = \text{Rad}(\sigma')$. Suppose $z \neq z'$ for otherwise the result is clear and consider the hyperplane $H$ passing through $z$ and orthogonal to the segment $zz'$. Let $\xi = \pi \cap \partial B$. By construction, $\xi$ is closed and has the same smallest enclosing ball as $\sigma$. Thus, $z \in \text{Hull}(\xi)$ and the closed half-space $H^+$ that $H$ bounds and which avoids $z'$ intersects $\xi$. Let $p$ be a point in this intersection. By choice of $p$ in $H^+$, the triangle $pzz'$ is obtuse at vertex $z$ and $\|z - p\| \geq \|z - p\| + \|z' - z\|^2$. Using $\|z - p\| = r$ and $\|z' - p\| \leq r' + \varepsilon$ we obtain $\|z' - z\|^2 \leq (r' + \varepsilon)^2 - r^2$. Interchanging the roles of $\sigma$ and $\sigma'$ yields:

$$\|z' - z\|^2 \leq \min\{(r' + \varepsilon)^2 - r^2, (r + \varepsilon)^2 - r'^2\}.$$ 

Note that $(r' + \varepsilon)^2 - r'^2 \leq (r + \varepsilon)^2 - r'^2$ if and only if $r \geq r'$. Considering in turn each of the two cases $r \leq r'$ and $r' \leq r$, we get the desired inequality. 

Next lemma states the stability of $c_X$ under perturbations of $X$. The stability of $h_X$ is established in Lemma [4].

**Lemma 9.** For every pair of subsets $X$ and $Y$ of $\mathbb{R}^n$ such that $d_H(X, Y) \leq \varepsilon$ and for every $t \geq 0$, we have

$$c_X(t) \leq c_Y(t + \varepsilon) + \sqrt{2t\varepsilon + \varepsilon^2} + \varepsilon.$$

**Proof.** Consider a non-empty subset $\sigma \subset Y$ with $\text{Rad}(\sigma) \leq t$ and set $\xi = X \cap \sigma^\circ$. By construction, $\xi$ is non-empty and $d_H(\xi, \sigma) \leq \varepsilon$. Hence, setting $\delta = \sqrt{2t\varepsilon + \varepsilon^2}$, Lemma [5] implies that $\|\text{Center}(\sigma) - \text{Center}(\xi)\| \leq \delta$, we get

$$\text{Center}(\sigma) \subset \text{Center}(\xi)^\delta \subset X^{h_X(t + \varepsilon) + \delta} \subset Y^{h_X(t + \varepsilon) + \delta + \varepsilon},$$

yielding to the result. 

Given a point set $P \subset \mathbb{R}^n$, we say that a map $f: P \to \mathbb{R}^n$ is an $\varepsilon$-small perturbation of $P$ if $f$ is injective and $\|p - f(p)\| \leq \varepsilon$ for all points $p \in P$. Given a simplicial complex $K$, we define the simplicial complex $f(K) = \{ f(\sigma) \mid \sigma \in K \}$.

**Lemma 10.** Let $P \subset \mathbb{R}^n$ be a finite set of points. Consider two real numbers $\beta \geq \alpha \geq 0$ such that $c_P(\partial_\beta \beta) < 2\alpha - \partial_\alpha \beta$ and suppose moreover that $\alpha$ is an inert value of $P$. Then, there exist $\varepsilon > 0$ and $\beta' > \beta$ such that for all $\varepsilon$-small perturbations $f$ of $P$, we have:

(i) $c_f(P)(\partial_\alpha \beta') < 2\alpha - \partial_\alpha \beta'$;

(ii) $c_f(P, \alpha) = f(c(P, \alpha))$;

(iii) if $\text{Flag} G$ is an $(\alpha, \beta')$-almost Rips complex of $P$, then $\text{Flag} f(G)$ is an $(\alpha, \beta')$-almost Rips complex of $f(P)$.

**Proof.** Let us establish (i). For this, set $t = \partial_\alpha \beta$ and define $\ell = \min\{\text{Rad}(\sigma) \mid \emptyset \neq \sigma \subset P \text{ and } \text{Rad}(\sigma) > t\}$. By construction, $\ell > t$. Lemma [4] ensures that for all subsets $P' \subset P$ within Hausdorff distance $\varepsilon$ from $P$ and for all $t' > 0$, the following implication holds:

$$c_P(t') < c_P(t' + \varepsilon) + \sqrt{2t'\varepsilon + \varepsilon^2} + \varepsilon.$$

By assumption, we have $2\alpha - t - c_P(t) > 0$. By choosing $\varepsilon > 0$ small enough, we can always find $t' > t$ such that $(1) t' + \varepsilon < t$,

$(2) 2\alpha - t' - c_P(t) > 0$ and $(3) \sqrt{2t'\varepsilon + \varepsilon^2} + \varepsilon \leq \frac{2\alpha - t - c_P(t)}{2}$.

Since $c_P(t' + \varepsilon) = c_P(t)$, it follows that

$$c_P(t') < c_P(t) + \frac{2\alpha - t' - c_P(t)}{2} < 2\alpha - t'$$

and (i) is proved with $\beta' = t' / \partial_\alpha$. By choosing $\varepsilon > 0$ small enough, we can always assume that in addition to conditions (1), (2) and (3), we have (4) $\varepsilon \leq \beta' - \beta$ and (5) $\text{Rad}(\sigma) \notin [\alpha - \varepsilon, \alpha + \varepsilon]$ for all $\emptyset \neq \sigma \subset P$. Let $f$ be an $\varepsilon$-small perturbation of $P$. Using Lemma [7] and condition (5), we get

$$\sigma \in C(P, \alpha) \Leftrightarrow \text{Rad}(\sigma) \leq \alpha \Leftrightarrow \text{Rad}(\sigma) \leq \alpha - \varepsilon \Rightarrow \text{Rad}(f(\sigma)) \leq \alpha \Leftrightarrow f(\sigma) \in C(f(P), \alpha)$$

and

$$f(\sigma) \in C(f(P), \alpha) \Leftrightarrow \text{Rad}(f(\sigma)) \leq \alpha \Rightarrow \text{Rad}(\sigma) \leq \alpha + \varepsilon \Leftrightarrow \sigma \in C(P, \alpha),$$

yielding (ii). Consider a graph $G$ whose flag complex is an $(\alpha, \beta)$-almost complex and let $P$ and $q$ be two points of $P$ such that $\|f(p) - f(q)\| \leq 2\alpha$. We have $\|p - q\| \leq 2\alpha + 2\varepsilon$ and therefore using condition (5) $\|p - q\| \leq 2\alpha$. It follows that the edge $(p, q)$ belongs to $G$ and consequently the edge $(f(p), f(q))$ belongs to $f(G)$. Similarly, suppose $\|f(p) - f(q)\| > 2\beta'$. This implies that $\|p - q\| > 2\beta' + 2\varepsilon > 3\beta$ by condition (4) and therefore the edge $(p, q)$ does not belong to $G$. Hence, the edge $(f(p), f(q))$ does not belong to $f(G)$, showing (iii). 