On three soft rectangle packing problems with guillotine constraints

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Abstract. We investigate how to partition a rectangular region of length L_1 and height L_2 into n rectangles of given areas (a_1, \ldots, a_n) using two-stage guillotine cuts, so as to minimize either (i) the sum of the perimeters, (ii) the largest perimeter, or (iii) the maximum aspect ratio of the rectangles. These problems play an important role in the ongoing Vietnamese land-allocation reform, as well as in the optimization of matrix multiplication algorithms. We show that the first problem can be solved to optimality in $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$, while the two others are NP-hard. We propose mixed integer programming (MIP) formulations and a binary search-based approach for solving the NP-hard problems. Experimental analyses are conducted to compare the solution approaches in terms of computational efficiency and solution quality, for different objectives.

Keywords. Soft rectangle packing, guillotine constraints, complexity analysis, integer programming.

1 Introduction

We consider a family of soft rectangle packing problems in which a rectangular region of length L_1 and height L_2 must be partitioned into n rectangles of positive areas (a_1, \ldots, a_n) , where $\sum_{i=1}^n a_i = L_1 \times L_2$. The areas of the rectangles are fixed, and their position, length

and height constitute the decision variables of the problem. Three different objectives are considered: minimizing the sum of the rectangle's perimeters, the largest perimeter, or the largest aspect ratio, leading to three problems called Col-Peri-Sum, Col-Peri-Max, and Col-Aspect-Ratio respectively. Finally, the layout of the rectangles is subject to strict rules. As illustrated in Figure 1, the rectangles should be delimited by two-stage guillotine cuts: first cutting the rectangular area horizontally to produce several layers (three on the figure), and then cutting each layer vertically to obtain the rectangles (ten on the figure).

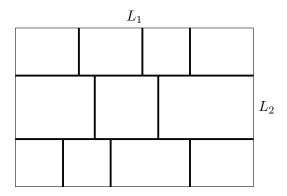


Figure 1: Partitioning the rectangular area by two-stage guillotine cuts – example solution.

Any solution of these problems can be described as a partition $\{S_1, \ldots, S_m\}$ of the rectangle set $S = \{1, \ldots, n\}$ into m layers. Since the length of each layer is fixed to L_1 , the height $w(S_k)$ of a layer S_k (and therefore of all its contained rectangles) takes value

$$w(S_k) = \frac{\sum_{i \in S_k} a_i}{L_1},\tag{1}$$

and the length of each rectangle $i \in S_k$ is $a_i/w(S_k)$. Based on this observation, the objective of these problems is to find $\{S_1, \ldots, S_m\}$ so as to minimize:

Col-Peri-Sum:
$$\Phi_1 = 2 \times \sum_{k=1}^m \sum_{i \in S_k} \left(w(S_k) + \frac{a_i}{w(S_k)} \right)$$
$$= 2 \times \sum_{k=1}^m \left(|S_k| w(S_k) + L_1 \right)$$
(2)

Col-Peri-Max:
$$\Phi_2 = 2 \times \max_k \max_{i \in S_k} \left(w(S_k) + \frac{a_i}{w(S_k)} \right)$$
 (3)

Col-Aspect-Ratio:
$$\Phi_3 = \max_k \max_{i \in S_k} \max \left(\frac{a_i}{w(S_k)^2}, \frac{w(S_k)^2}{a_i} \right)$$
. (4)

The main contribution of this paper is to characterize the computational complexity of these problems, proposing an efficient $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$ algorithm for Col-Peri-Sum, and demonstrating that the two other problems are NP-hard. Moreover, we introduce mixed integer programming (MIP) formulations for the NP-hard problems. Finally, we conduct experimental analyzes to determine the limit-size of the instances which can be efficiently solved, and compare the solutions obtained with different objectives.

2 Applications and related work

Land reform in Vietnam. Historically, the agricultural land of Vietnam has been classified into several categories, and each household has been given one plot for each land category, such that even a small agricultural field can be distributed to many households. These division rules have been applied in most provinces of Vietnam to ensure equality among households. However, this has led to a large fragmentation of the land in most provinces of Vietnam (Sundqvist and Anderson 2006, Pham et al. 2007). In these provinces, each household owns many small and scattered plots, located in different fields. The province of Vinh Phuc is a striking example: some households have up to 47 plots, and each plot has an average area of only ten square meters (Journal of Rural Economy 2008).

The land fragmentation turned out to be detrimental in the industrialized era. First, households cannot use machines to cultivate small plots, leading to a high production cost. Second, fragmented plots are costly to visit and maintain. Third, the excessive number of tracks separating the plots causes a waste of agricultural land (Heltberg 1998, Lam 2001, General Statistical Office 2004, March and MacAulay 2006, Sundqvist and Anderson 2006). Therefore, the Vietnamese government considers land fragmentation to be "a significant barrier to achieving further productivity gains in agriculture", and initiated a land reform to deal with the situation. This reform aims to reduce the number of land categories, to merge small plots into large fields and finally to repartition these fields into larger plots for households. It has led to successful results in some provinces, as characterized by a significant increase in rice yield attaining 25% in Quang Nam province (Sundqvist and Anderson 2006, Bui et al. 2013).

The land reform involves two critical tasks: merging small plots into larger fields, and repartitioning these fields equitably while respecting the predefined quantity of land attributed to each household. In this study, we consider the case of rectangular fields, as this is the most

common in practice. The fields should be first split by parallel edge-to-edge tracks to facilitate the use of machines, and the resulting sections should then be separated into plots, leading to the two-stage guillotine constraints discussed in the introduction of this paper.

Finally, farmers and local authorities may have distinct objectives and motivations. The local authorities aim to minimize the amount of wasted land due to the creation of tracks, a goal which is captured by the Col-Peri-Sum objective. In contrast, the farmers wish to have their plots as square as possible to facilitate cultivation. To obtain equitable solutions, this goal can be expressed as a worse-case optimization, leading to the Col-Peri-Max and Col-Aspect-Ratio objectives. These objectives are not strongly conflicting, but they often lead to different land allocation decisions.

Land-consolidation strategies have been implemented in various other countries, e.g., in Germany (Borgwardt et al. 2014, Brieden and Gritzmann 2004, Borgwardt et al. 2011), Turkey (Cay et al. 2006, 2010, Cay and Uyan 2013, Hakli and Uuz 2017), Japan (Arimoto 2010), Cyprus (Demetriou et al. 2013), China (Huang et al. 2011), and Brazil (Gliesch et al. 2017). However, each country, depending on its own topology, culture, and practice has converged towards a different problem setting. In particular, the two-stage guillotine-cut restrictions and the objective functions relevant to the Vietnamese case have not yet been encountered in other land-consolidation applications. Still, some related problems can be found in the operations research and computer science literature, as discussed in the following.

Soft rectangle packing problems. Partitioning an area into polygons of fixed shape or area is a class of problems which has been regularly studied in the operations research and computational geometry literature. Beaumont et al. (2001, 2002) defined two optimization problems that seek to partition the unit square into a number of rectangles with given areas, so as to optimize parallel matrix-multiplication algorithms in heterogeneous parallel computing platforms. The first problem aims to minimize the sum of all rectangle perimeters, whereas the second problem aims to minimize the largest perimeter. These problems are special cases of PERI-SUM and PERI-MAX where the general rectangular region is a square. The authors introduced an $^{7/4}$ -approximate algorithm and an $^{2/\sqrt{3}}$ -approximate algorithm for these problems, respectively. Later on, Nagamochi and Abe (2007) considered the general PERI-SUM, PERI-MAX and

ASPECT-RATIO problems without guillotine constraints. They introduced an $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$ -time al-

gorithm which produces a 1.25-approximate solution for Peri-Sum, a $2/\sqrt{3}$ -approximate solution for Peri-Max, and finds a solution with aspect ratio smaller than $\max\{R,3,1+\max_{i\in\{1,\dots,n-1\}}\frac{a_{i+1}}{a_i}\}$ for Aspect-Ratio where R denotes the aspect ratio of the original rectangular area. Fügenschuh et al. (2014) also designed an $2/\sqrt{3}$ -approximate algorithm and a branch-and-cut algorithm for Peri-Sum.

Other close variants of Peri-Sum have been studied. Kong et al. (1987, 1988) considered the problem of decomposing a square or a rectangle into a number of rectangles of equal area so as to minimize the maximum rectangle perimeter. VLSI floorplan design and facility location applications also led to a number of related studies (Young et al. 2001, Ji et al. 2017, Paes et al. 2017). Ibaraki and Nakamura (2006) proposed a local search and mathematical programming algorithm to solve rectangular packing problems where the shapes of the rectangles are adjustable within given perimeter and area constraints.

Finally, Beaumont et al. (2002) considered Col-Peri-Sum and Col-Peri-Max as a building block to design approximation algorithms for Peri-Sum and Peri-Max when the general rectangular region is a square. The authors introduced an exact $\mathcal{O}(n^2 \log n)$ algorithm for Col-Peri-Sum and two approximation algorithms for Col-Peri-Max. The complexity status of Col-Peri-Max remained open. Moreover, Col-Aspect-Ratio has not been studied to this date. These methodological gaps along with the relevance of these problems for the Vietnamese land reform are a strong motivation for additional research.

3 COL-PERI-SUM can be solved in $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$

A polynomial-time algorithm in $\mathcal{O}(n^2 \log n)$ for Col-Peri-Sum was proposed in Beaumont et al. (2002). In this section, we introduce a simple algorithm in $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$ for this problem. To that extent, we show that after ordering the rectangles' indices by non-decreasing area, the Col-Peri-Sum problem can be reduced in $\mathcal{O}(n)$ to the concave least-weight subsequence problem (CLWS), solvable to optimality in $\mathcal{O}(n)$ time (Wilber 1988).

Definition 1 (Concave real-value weight function). A real-value weight function w(i,j) defined for integers $0 \le i < j \le n$ is concave if and only if, for $0 \le i_0 < i_1 < j_0 < j_1 \le n$, $w(i_0, j_0) + w(i_1, j_1) \le w(i_0, j_1) + w(i_1, j_0)$.

Definition 2 (Concave least-weight subsequence problem). Let w(i, j) be a concave real-value weight function defined for integers $0 \le i < j \le n$. Find an integer $k \ge 1$ and a sequence of integers $0 = l_0 < l_1 < \dots < l_{k-1} < l_k = n$ such that $\sum_{i=0}^{k-1} w(l_i, l_{i+1})$ is minimized.

To do this reduction, we first assume that the indices of the rectangles have been ordered in $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$ by non-decreasing area: $a_1 \leq \cdots \leq a_n$. We now highlight a property of Col-Perisum which allows to focus the search on a smaller subset of solutions.

Theorem 1. Consider a solution \mathbf{s} of Col-Peri-Sum with cost $\Phi_1(\mathbf{s})$, represented as a partition $\{S_1, \ldots, S_m\}$ of the rectangle set. Let $i \in S_k$ and $j \in S_l$ be two rectangles from different subsets such that $a_i > a_j$. Any solution \mathbf{s}' obtained by swapping these two rectangles within their respective subsets is such that:

$$\begin{cases} \Phi_1(\mathbf{s}') < \Phi_1(\mathbf{s}) & \text{if } |S_k| > |S_l| \\ \Phi_1(\mathbf{s}') = \Phi_1(\mathbf{s}) & \text{if } |S_k| = |S_l| \\ \Phi_1(\mathbf{s}') > \Phi_1(\mathbf{s}) & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

Proof. Simply evaluate the cost difference using Equation (2):

$$\Delta = \Phi_1(\mathbf{s}') - \Phi_1(\mathbf{s})$$

$$= \frac{2}{L_1} \left(|S_k| \left(a_j - a_i + \sum_{x \in S_k} a_x \right) + |S_l| \left(a_i - a_j + \sum_{x \in S_l} a_x \right) - |S_k| \sum_{x \in S_k} a_x - |S_l| \sum_{x \in S_l} a_x \right)$$

$$= \frac{2}{L_1} \left(|S_k| - |S_l| \right) (a_j - a_i). \quad \Box$$

This theorem defines some important features of the optimal solutions of Col-Peri-Sum:

- First, without loss of generality, any solution of Col-Peri-Sum can be presented in such a way that $|S_1| \ge \cdots \ge |S_m|$ (re-ordering the subsets according to their cardinality).
- With this representation, if k < l and $|S_k| = |S_l|$, there exists an optimal solution such that $a_i \le a_j$ for all $i \in |S_k|$ and $j \in |S_l|$.
- Finally, if k < l and $|S_k| > |S_l|$, all optimal solutions satisfy $a_i \le a_j$ for all $i \in |S_k|$ and $j \in |S_l|$. Following from these observations, there exists an optimal solution $\mathbf{s}^* = \{S_1, \ldots, S_m\}$ of Colpering Such that each S_k for $k \in \{1, \ldots, m\}$ is a subsequence (of consecutive indices) of the sequence $\langle a_1, a_2, \ldots, a_n \rangle$. Therefore, we can find an optimal solution of Colpering Sum by solving a least weight subsequence problem instance over the set of integers $0 \le i < j \le n$ with

the weight function:

$$w_{\rm P}(i,j) = 2\left(L_1 + \frac{(j-i)}{L_1} \sum_{k=i+1}^{j} a_k\right),$$

where $w_P(i,j)$ represents the sum of the perimeters of the rectangles of indices $(i+1,\ldots,j)$ when positioned in a single layer. Finally, Theorem 2 proves that this weight function is concave, leading to an instance of CLWS.

Theorem 2. The weight function $w_{\rm P}(i,j)$ is concave.

Proof. For $0 \le i_0 < i_1 < j_0 < j_1 \le n$, one can directly verify that:

$$\Delta' = w(i_0, j_1) + w(i_1, j_0) - w(i_0, j_0) - w(i_1, j_1)$$

$$= \frac{2}{L_1} \left((j_1 - i_0) \sum_{x=i_0+1}^{j_1} a_x + (j_0 - i_1) \sum_{x=i_1+1}^{j_0} a_x - (j_0 - i_0) \sum_{x=i_0+1}^{j_0} a_x - (j_1 - i_1) \sum_{x=i_1+1}^{j_1} a_x \right)$$

$$= \frac{2}{L_1} \left((i_1 - i_0) \sum_{x=j_0+1}^{j_1} a_x + (j_1 - j_0) \sum_{x=i_0+1}^{i_1} a_x \right) > 0. \quad \Box$$

As a consequence, after prior ordering of the rectangles in $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$, an optimal solution of Col-Peri-Sum can be found by solving an instance of CLWS, e.g., using the $\mathcal{O}(n)$ algorithm of (Wilber 1988). Col-Peri-Sum can thus be solved in $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$ in the general case, and in $\mathcal{O}(n)$ if the rectangles are ordered by non-decreasing (or non-increasing) area in the input.

4 NP-hardness results

In the previous section, we have seen that an efficient $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$ algorithm can be designed for Col-Peri-Sum. In contrast, we will show in the following that the "min-max" version of this problem, Col-Peri-Max, as well as the Col-Aspect-Ratio problems are more difficult.

Let Col-Peri-Max- Φ and Col-Aspect-Ratio- Φ be the decision problems in which one must determine whether there exists a solution of value at most Φ for Col-Peri-Max, and Col-Aspect-Ratio, respectively. We will show that these two problems are NP-complete, by reduction from 2-Partition (Garey and Johnson 1990), hence establishing the NP-hardness of Col-Peri-Max and Col-Aspect-Ratio.

Theorem 3. Col-Peri-Max- Φ is NP-complete.

Proof. In 2-Partition, we are given n positive integers c_1, \ldots, c_n , and should determine whether there is a partition $S_1 \cup S_2 = \{1, \ldots, n\}$, $S_1 \cap S_2 = \emptyset$ such that $\sum_{x \in S_1} c_x = \sum_{x \in S_2} c_x$. Let $c_{\text{MAX}} = \max_{i \in \{1, \ldots, n\}} c_i$, and consider the following Col-Peri-Max- Φ instance:

- a rectangular area of length $L_1 = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^n c_i$ and height $L_2 = 2c_{\text{MAX}}$;
- for $i \in \{1, ..., n\}$, rectangle i has an area $a_i = c_i \times c_{\text{MAX}}$; and
- $-\Phi = 4 \times c_{\text{MAX}}.$

Assume that 2-Partition is True: there exists a partition (S_1, S_2) such that $\sum_{x \in S_1} c_x = \sum_{x \in S_2} c_x$. Consider a solution of Col-Peri-Max- Φ in which the set of rectangles has been partitioned with (S_1, S_2) into two layers. Each layer has the same total area, forming a solution in which all rectangles have one side of height $\frac{L_2}{2} = c_{\text{MAX}}$. With this configuration, the rectangle of largest area has the largest perimeter, equal to $4 \times c_{\text{MAX}} = \Phi$, and thus Col-Peri-Max- Φ is True.

Assume that the 2-Partition instance is False. Consider a solution of Col-Peri-Max, and let S_k be the layer which contains the largest rectangle with area c_{MAX}^2 . The sum of areas in S_k is different from $\frac{L_1 \times L_2}{2}$, and thus the height of this layer is different from c_{MAX} . Hence, the soft rectangle of area c_{MAX}^2 is not arranged as a square, its perimeter exceeds $4 \times c_{\text{MAX}}$, and Col-Peri-Max- Φ is False.

Theorem 4. Col-Aspect-Ratio- Φ is NP-complete.

Proof. As previously, consider an instance of 2-Partition with n positive integers c_1, \ldots, c_n . Let $C = \sum_{i=1}^n c_i$ and $M = \frac{2(C+1)^2}{\min_{i \in \{1,\ldots,n\}} c_i}$. Define an instance of Col-Aspect-Ratio- Φ as follows:

- a rectangular area of length $L_1 = M + \frac{1}{M} + \frac{C}{2}$ and height $L_2 = 2$;
- n soft rectangles with areas c_1, \ldots, c_n as well as two soft rectangles of area M and two soft rectangles of area $\frac{1}{M}$; and
- $-\Phi=M.$

If 2-Partition is True, there exists a partition (S_1, S_2) such that $\sum_{x \in S_1} c_x = \sum_{x \in S_2} c_x = \frac{C}{2}$. We build a solution of Col-Aspect-Ratio with two layers containing the rectangles of S_1 and S_2 , respectively, as well as one pair of rectangles of area M and $\frac{1}{M}$ each. Each layer has length $M + \frac{1}{M} + \frac{C}{2}$ and height 1. In this configuration, a maximum aspect ratio of M, is jointly

attained by the largest and smallest rectangles in each layer, and thus Col-Aspect-Ratio- Φ is True.

Now, assume that 2-Partition is False, and discern three possible classes of solutions:

- Consider a solution of Col-Aspect-Ratio with one layer. The rectangle of size $\frac{1}{M}$ has an aspect ratio of 4M, which exceeds Φ .
- Consider a solution of Col-Aspect-Ratio with two or more layers, where at least one layer does not contain a rectangle of size M. Let c be the area of the largest element in this layer. Two cases should be discerned:
 - If $c=\frac{1}{M}$, then the layer contains one or two small rectangles of area $\frac{1}{M}$, and no other rectangle. The aspect ratio of one such rectangle can be computed as the ratio of its length $l_1 \geq \frac{1}{2}(M+\frac{1}{M}+\frac{C}{2})$ over its height $l_2 \leq 2 \times \frac{\frac{2}{M}}{2M+\frac{2}{M}+C}$. As such, $\Phi \geq M \times \frac{(M+\frac{1}{M}+\frac{C}{2})^2}{M} > M$.
 - Otherwise, there exists at least one rectangle c_i in the layer, and the total area of the layer does not exceed $C + \frac{2}{M}$. The length l_1 and height l_2 of the rectangle of area c_i satisfy $l_1 \geq \frac{c_i}{C + \frac{2}{M}} \times (M + \frac{1}{M} + \frac{C}{2})$ and $l_2 \leq 2 \times \frac{C + \frac{2}{M}}{2M + \frac{2}{M} + C}$. As such,

$$\Phi \ge \frac{c_i(M + \frac{1}{M} + \frac{C}{2})^2}{(C + \frac{2}{M})^2} > \frac{\min_{i=1}^n c_i \times M^2}{(C+1)^2} = M.$$

• Finally, consider a solution of Col-Aspect-Ratio with two layers, where each layer contains exactly one rectangle of size M. Since there is no feasible solution of 2-Partition, the total areas of the layers are different (the smaller rectangles cannot re-balance the sum due to their small area 1/M). In the layer of smallest area, the rectangle of area M has a length $l_1 > M$ and height $l_2 < 1$, and thus an aspect ratio $\Phi = \frac{x}{y} > M$.

In all cases, there is no solution with an aspect ratio smaller or equal to Φ , and thus Col-Aspect-Ratio- Φ is False.

5 Mixed integer programming models

Since Col-Peri-Max and Col-Aspect-Ratio are NP-hard, this section proposes mixed integer programming formulations of these problems, which can be solved to produce optimal solutions for small and medium scale instances. These models describe a solution with n layers in which some of the layers can be empty. We associate one binary variable x_{ik} and one continuous variable w_{ik} for each rectangle i and layer k. Variable x_{ik} takes value 1 if and only if rectangle i belongs to layer k, and variable w_{ik} represents the length of the soft rectangle i when placed in layer k, and 0 otherwise. Finally, each binary variable y_k takes value 1 if layer k is non-empty, and 0 otherwise.

5.1 Formulation of COL-PERI-MAX

 $\Phi_2 \ge 0$

The mathematical formulation of Col-Peri-Max is given in Equations (5)–(17):

minimize
$$\Phi_2$$
 (5)
s.t. $2(L_1 + L_2)(x_{ik} - 1) + 2\left(w_{ik} + \sum_{j=1}^{n} \frac{a_j x_{jk}}{L_1}\right) \le \Phi_2$ $i, k \in \{1, \dots, n\}$ (6)

$$\sum_{k=1}^{n} x_{ik} = 1$$
 $i \in \{1, \dots, n\}$ (7)

$$\sum_{i=1}^{n} x_{ik} \ge y_k$$
 $k \in \{1, \dots, n\}$ (8)

$$x_{ik} \le y_k$$
 $i, k \in \{1, \dots, n\}$ (9)

$$\sum_{i=1}^{n} w_{ik} = L_1 y_k$$
 $k \in \{1, \dots, n\}$ (10)

$$w_{ik} \le L_1 x_{ik}$$
 $i, k \in \{1, \dots, n\}$ (11)

$$a_i x_{ik} \le L_2 w_{ik}$$
 $i, k \in \{1, \dots, n\}$ (12)

$$a_j w_{ik} - a_i w_{jk} \le a_j L_1 (2 - x_{ik} - x_{jk})$$
 $i, j, k \in \{1, \dots, n\}, i \ne j$ (13)

$$a_i w_{jk} - a_j w_{ik} \le a_i L_1 (2 - x_{ik} - x_{jk})$$
 $i, j, k \in \{1, \dots, n\}, i \ne j$ (14)

$$x_{ji} \in \{0, 1\}$$
 $i, j \in \{1, \dots, n\}$ (15)

$$w_{ik} \ge 0$$
 $i, k \in \{1, \dots, n\}$ (16)

$$y_k \in \{0, 1\}$$

Constraints (7)–(9) ensure that every rectangle is included in a layer and that y_k takes value 1 when at least one rectangle is included in layer k. Constraints (10) state that the sum of the length of the rectangles of each layer k equals L_1 if this layer is used $(y_k = 1)$, and 0

(18)

otherwise. Constraints (11) and (12) impose that $(w_{ik} = 0) \Leftrightarrow (x_{ik} = 0)$. Finally, Constraints (13) and (14) ensure that if two rectangles i and j are in the same layer k, then $a_i/w_{ik} = a_j/w_{jk}$.

This formulation can be strengthened with the addition of some simple optimality cuts which eliminate symmetrical solutions:

$$y_k \ge y_{k+1}$$
 $k \in \{1, \dots, n-1\}$ (19)

$$x_{ik} = 0$$
 $i \in \{1, \dots, n\}, k \in \{i+1, \dots, n\}$ (20)

The first set of constraints forces the use of layers according to the order of their indices, while the second set of constraints forces any rectangle i to belong to a layer of index $k \in \{1, ..., i\}$.

5.2 Formulation of COL-ASPECT-RATIO

The objective function Φ_3 is nonlinear, and we did not find a direct mixed integer programming formulation of Col-Aspect-Ratio. Instead, we propose two alternative approaches to generate optimal solutions for this problem. The first approach relies on a change of objective which leads to a linear formulation returning the same optimal solutions as Col-Aspect-Ratio. The second approach exploits the fact that the decision problem Col-Aspect-Ratio- Φ can be formulated as a MIP. Solving this subproblem in a binary search allows to solve the original optimization problem.

5.2.1 First approach – Change of objective function

We introduce an alternative objective function Φ_4 for Col-Aspect-Ratio which can be modeled in a linear formulation. This objective function can be computed as:

$$\Phi_4 = \max_k \max_{i \in S_k} \frac{|w(S_k) - \frac{a_i}{w(S_k)}|}{\sqrt{a_i}}.$$
(21)

The following lemma will be used to prove the equivalence between the two objectives:

Lemma 1. Given two soft rectangles i and j with side lengths (l_i, h_i) and (l_j, h_j) , we have

$$\frac{\max(l_i,h_i)}{\min(l_i,h_i)} \geq \frac{\max(l_j,h_j)}{\min(l_j,h_j)} \iff \frac{|l_i-h_i|}{\sqrt{l_ih_i}} \geq \frac{|l_j-h_j|}{\sqrt{l_jh_j}}.$$

Proof. Without loss of generality, we can assume that $l_i \geq h_i$ and $l_j \geq h_j$. Then,

$$\frac{\max(l_i, h_i)}{\min(l_i, h_i)} \ge \frac{\max(l_j, h_j)}{\min(l_j, h_j)}$$

$$\iff \frac{l_i}{h_i} \ge \frac{l_j}{h_j}$$

$$\iff \sqrt{\frac{l_i}{h_i}} \ge \sqrt{\frac{l_j}{h_j}}$$

$$\iff \left(\sqrt{\frac{l_i}{h_i}} - \sqrt{\frac{l_j}{h_j}}\right) \left(1 + \frac{1}{\sqrt{\frac{l_i}{h_i} \frac{l_j}{h_j}}}\right) \ge 0$$

$$\iff \sqrt{\frac{l_i}{h_i}} - \sqrt{\frac{h_i}{l_i}} \ge \sqrt{\frac{l_j}{h_j}} - \sqrt{\frac{h_j}{l_j}}$$

$$\iff \frac{l_i - h_i}{\sqrt{l_i h_i}} \ge \frac{l_j - h_j}{\sqrt{l_j h_j}}$$

$$\iff \frac{|l_i - h_i|}{\sqrt{l_i h_i}} \ge \frac{|l_j - h_j|}{\sqrt{l_j h_j}}$$

Theorem 5. Let s_3 and s_4 be two optimal solutions obtained with objectives Φ_3 and Φ_4 , respectively. Then, $\Phi_3(s_3) = \Phi_3(s_4)$, $\Phi_4(s_3) = \Phi_4(s_4)$, and s_3 and s_4 are optimal for the objectives Φ_4 and Φ_3 , respectively.

Proof. For any solution s, as a consequence of Lemma 1, if $\Phi_4(s)$ attains its minimum for a rectangle $i \in \{1, ..., n\}$ of length l_i and height h_i , then $\Phi_3(s)$ attains its minimum for the same rectangle, and vice-versa. Therefore $\Phi_4(s) = \frac{|l_i - h_i|}{\sqrt{l_i h_i}}$ and $\Phi_3(s) = \frac{\max(l_i, h_i)}{\min(l_i, h_i)}$.

Now, assume that $\Phi_4(s_4)$ and $\Phi_3(s_3)$ attain their minimum for rectangles x and y, respectively. Therefore,

$$\Phi_4(s_4) = \frac{|l_x - h_x|}{\sqrt{l_x h_x}}, \Phi_3(s_4) = \frac{\max(l_x, h_x)}{\min(l_x, h_x)},$$

$$\Phi_4(s_3) = \frac{|l_y - h_y|}{\sqrt{l_x h_x}}, \Phi_3(s_3) = \frac{\max(l_y, h_y)}{\min(l_y, h_y)}.$$

Since s_4 is an optimal solution for objective Φ_4 , $\Phi_4(s_4) \leq \Phi_4(s_3)$ and:

$$\frac{|l_x - h_x|}{\sqrt{l_x h_x}} \le \frac{|l_y - h_y|}{\sqrt{l_y h_y}}$$

Therefore, as a consequence of Lemma 1, we have

$$\frac{\max(l_x, h_x)}{\min(l_x, h_x)} \le \frac{\max(l_y, h_y)}{\min(l_y, h_y)}$$

Similarly, since s_3 is an optimal solution for objective Φ_3 , $\Phi_3(s_3) \leq \Phi_3(s_4)$ and:

$$\frac{\max(l_y, h_y)}{\min(l_y, h_y)} \le \frac{\max(l_x, h_x)}{\min(l_x, h_x)}$$

Overall,

$$\Phi_3(s_3) = \frac{\max(l_y, h_y)}{\min(l_y, h_y)} = \frac{\max(l_x, h_x)}{\min(l_x, h_x)} = \Phi_3(s_4),$$

and s_4 is an optimal solution for objective Φ_3 . A similar proof shows that s_3 is an optimal solution for objective Φ_4 .

Based on this change of objective function, Col-Aspect-Ratio can be formulated as:

 $\min \Phi$

s.t. Constraints (7)–(15)

$$\delta_{ik} + L_1(1 - x_{ik}) \ge w_{ik} - \sum_{j=1}^n \frac{a_j x_{jk}}{L_1} \qquad i, k \in \{1, \dots, n\}$$
 (22)

$$\delta_{ik} + L_2(1 - x_{ik}) \ge -w_{ik} + \sum_{j=1}^n \frac{a_j x_{jk}}{L_1} \qquad i, k \in \{1, \dots, n\}$$
 (23)

$$\Phi \ge \frac{\delta_{ik}}{\sqrt{a_i}} \qquad i, k \in \{1, \dots, n\}$$
 (24)

$$\delta_i^k \ge 0 \qquad i, k \in \{1, \dots, n\}. \tag{25}$$

Solving this formulation to optimality generates an optimal solution of Col-Aspect-Ratio. The value of this solution must be recomputed a-posteriori according to the original objective. The model uses n^2 additional continuous variables δ_{ik} , as well as a continuous variable Φ representing the value of the alternative objective function. According to Constraints (22) and (23), if a rectangle i is in layer S_k , then $\delta_{ik} = |l_i - h_i|$ where l_i and h_i represent the length and height of the rectangle in the current solution, otherwise $\delta_{ik} = 0$.

5.2.2 Second approach – Binary search

Another solution approach consists in modeling the decision problem Col-Aspect-Ratio- Φ as a MIP. In this case, a maximum aspect ratio Φ is set as a constraint, and the goal is to find a feasible solution. The feasibility model can be written as follows:

Constraints (7)–(15)

$$L_1 h_k = \sum_{i=1}^n a_i x_{ik} \qquad k \in \{1, \dots, n\}$$
 (26)

$$w_{ik} \le \Phi h_k \qquad i, k \in \{1, \dots, n\} \tag{27}$$

$$h_k \le \Phi w_{ik} \qquad i, k \in \{1, \dots, n\} \tag{28}$$

$$h_k \in \mathbb{R} \tag{29}$$

In this model, each variable h_k for $k \in \{1, ..., n\}$ stores the height of layer S_k , and Constraints (27)–(28) force the aspect ratio to be no higher than Φ . To solve the original optimization problem, we do a binary search over Φ and solve Col-Aspect-Ratio- Φ at each step. The starting interval is set to $[\Phi^{\text{LOW}}, \Phi^{\text{UP}}]$ where $\Phi^{\text{LOW}} = 1$ and $\Phi^{\text{UP}} = \Phi_3(s_1)$, where s_1 is an optimal solution of Col-Peri-Sum found in $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$ time. The binary search stops as soon as $\Phi^{\text{UP}} - \Phi^{\text{LOW}} < 0.01$.

6 Computational Experiments

To complete the theoretical results of this article, we conducted computational experiments to evaluate the efficiency of the solution methods for the three problems and compare their solutions. All algorithms were implemented in C++ and the mathematical models were solved with CPLEX version 12.4. The experiments were performed on a single thread of an Intel i7-3615QM 2.3 GHz CPU with 10GB RAM, running Mac OS Sierra version 10.12.6, and subject to a CPU time limit of one hour for each run.

We randomly generated benchmark instances with $n \in \{10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40\}$ soft rectangles. These instances are subdivided into three classes, and three instances were generated for each class and size for a total of 63 instances.

• Class U – The area of each item is sampled in a uniform distribution: $X \sim \mathcal{U}(1,200)$.

- Class MU The area of each item is sampled in a mixture of three uniform distributions: $X \sim \frac{1}{3} [\mathcal{U}(1,10) + \mathcal{U}(11,50) + \mathcal{U}(51,150)].$
- Class MN The area of each item is sampled in a mixture of three normal distributions: $X \sim \frac{1}{3} [\mathcal{N}(5,2) + \mathcal{N}(25,10) + \mathcal{N}(125,50)]$, but another sample is taken whenever the area is larger than 200.

Finally, the dimensions of the hard rectangle are generated as follows for each instance. Let A be the sum of the areas of the soft rectangles. Length L_1 is randomly generated with uniform probability in $\{\lceil \sqrt{A/3} \rceil, \ldots, \lfloor \sqrt{3A} \rfloor \}$. The length of the other side is set to $L_2 = \lfloor A/L_1 \rfloor$. Then, $A - L_1L_2$ soft rectangles are randomly selected, and the area of each rectangle is reduced by one unit in such a way that, after reduction, the area of the hard rectangle coincides with the sum of the areas of the soft rectangles. All benchmark instances are available at https://w1.cirrelt.ca/~vidalt/en/research-data.html.

6.1 Performance analysis

This section compares the CPU time needed to solve Col-Peri-Sum, Col-Peri-Max, and Col-Aspect-Ratio. As expected, the solution of Col-Peri-Sum in $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$ is extremely fast, with a measured CPU time of the order of a few milliseconds for all considered instances, such that we concentrate our analyzes on the mathematical programming algorithm for Col-Peri-Max as well as the reformulation and binary search approaches for Col-Aspect-Ratio. To speed up the solution methods, we always generate the optimal solution of Col-Peri-Sum and use it as an initial feasible solution.

Tables 1 to 3 report, for each instance class and algorithm, the number of nodes in the search tree (Nodes), the CPU time in seconds (Time), as well as the best found lower bound (LB) and upper bound (UB). For the reformulation-based approach for Col-Aspect-Ratio, columns LB₄ and UB₄ correspond to objective Φ_4 , and the value of the primal solution for objective Φ_3 is indicated in column UB₃. The incolumn Time means that the CPU time limit of 3600 seconds has been attained. Finally, for the binary search approach for Col-Aspect-Ratio, we indicate the number of completed iterations in column It_{BS}.

As observed in these experiments, the proposed MIP models can be solved to optimality for all benchmark instances with 10 soft rectangles, as well as a few instances with up to 30 rectangles for Col-Peri-Max and 40 rectangles for Col-Aspect-Ratio. Yet, the number of

Table 1: Class U – Performance comparisons

D	Data Col-Peri-Max			Col-Aspect-Ratio – Reformulation					Col-Aspect-Ratio – B. Search					
#	\mathbf{Size}	Nodes	${\bf Time}$	LB	$\mathbf{U}\mathbf{B}$	Nodes	${\bf Time}$	\mathbf{LB}_4	\mathbf{UB}_4	\mathbf{UB}_3	$\mathbf{It_{BS}}$	\mathbf{Time}	LB	UB
p01	10	547	0.53	52.53	52.53	176	0.39	0.95	0.95	2.51	8	1.21	2.51	2.51
p02	10	27	0.20	55.17	55.17	68	0.22	1.72	1.72	4.75	10	1.38	4.75	4.75
p03	10	101	0.20	55.54	55.54	1	0.08	1.05	1.05	2.73	8	0.93	2.72	2.73
p04	15	5139k	TL	52.27	55.14	69	0.74	0.82	0.82	2.22	8	4.91	2.22	2.22
p05	15	38k	92.46	51.38	51.38	193	1.85	0.99	0.99	2.59	9	4.27	2.59	2.60
p06	15	8054k	TL	48.63	52.46	640k	479.41	1.98	1.98	5.76	10	560.23	5.75	5.76
p07	20	351k	TL	43.27	56.57	308	3.38	2.60	2.60	8.64	12	29.04	8.63	8.64
p08	20	2993k	TL	34.76	56.14	79k	202.12	0.47	0.47	1.59	7	174.54	1.59	1.59
p09	20	92	3.37	53.71	53.71	3k	12.31	1.46	1.46	3.86	9	35.94	3.85	3.86
p10	25	479k	TL	49.00	55.86	80k	851.98	0.74	0.74	2.07	8	679.89	2.06	2.07
p11	25	935k	TL	45.82	55.14	116	12.37	1.60	1.60	4.33	7	TL	4.29	4.37
p12	25	601k	TL	33.01	53.96	393k	TL	0.81	1.01	2.65	2	TL	2.62	4.25
p13	30	335k	TL	25.86	54.70	293k	TL	0.00	0.86	2.30	2	TL	2.20	3.41
p14	30	318k	TL	40.41	54.11	179k	TL	0.22	1.79	5.01	3	TL	1.00	7.22
p15	30	182k	TL	33.64	53.37	328k	TL	1.71	2.59	8.57	3	TL	1.00	17.06
p16	35	389k	TL	40.00	56.43	714k	TL	0.00	1.79	5.00	2	TL	1.00	5.34
p17	35	247k	TL	36.01	56.43	150k	TL	0.00	1.47	3.92	0	TL	1.00	8.34
p18	35	109k	TL	41.35	55.71	149k	TL	0.34	2.59	8.58	1	TL	1.00	28.70
p19	40	74k	TL	19.30	56.43	108k	TL	0.64	1.42	3.76	1	TL	1.00	5.86
p20	40	101k	TL	44.48	54.79	54k	TL	0.12	1.09	2.83	1	TL	1.93	2.86
p21	40	53k	TL	44.12	56.14	68k	TL	0.05	2.73	9.35	2	TL	1.00	21.33

Table 2: Class MU – Performance comparisons

D	Data Col-Peri-Max				Col-Aspect-Ratio – Reformulation					Col-Aspect-Ratio – B. Search				
#	\mathbf{Size}	Nodes	${\bf Time}$	LB	$\mathbf{U}\mathbf{B}$	Nodes	\mathbf{Time}	\mathbf{LB}_4	\mathbf{UB}_4	\mathbf{UB}_3	$\mathbf{It_{BS}}$	\mathbf{Time}	LB	$\mathbf{U}\mathbf{B}$
p01	10	179	0.31	55.29	55.29	17	0.24	1.39	1.39	3.65	9	1.03	3.64	3.65
p02	10	44	0.07	55.78	55.78	214	0.18	1.36	1.36	3.57	9	1.38	3.56	3.57
p03	10	4k	1.22	52.76	52.76	64	0.18	1.97	1.97	5.71	9	0.72	5.70	5.71
p04	15	1	0.49	56.17	56.17	720	1.67	2.20	2.20	6.67	11	12.05	6.66	6.67
p05	15	6938k	TL	43.43	51.23	294k	280.22	1.36	1.36	3.57	9	451.13	3.56	3.57
p06	15	185k	111.49	54.70	54.70	314	1.87	2.13	2.13	6.39	10	8.82	6.39	6.39
p07	20	1943k	TL	40.10	55.86	475k	1885.98	2.09	2.09	6.19	10	1450.33	6.19	6.19
p08	20	2223k	TL	28.26	53.81	1787k	TL	0.95	1.05	2.74	2	TL	2.69	4.38
p09	20	66k	285.98	55.86	55.86	142k	550.19	2.18	2.18	6.61	12	2355.92	6.61	6.61
p10	25	688k	TL	40.79	55.71	281k	TL	0.76	1.33	3.48	3	TL	2.98	3.96
p11	25	169k	TL	51.08	54.85	220k	TL	1.47	2.24	6.86	2	TL	1.00	12.49
p12	25	331k	TL	47.41	56.17	225k	TL	1.77	2.13	6.39	5	TL	5.72	6.66
p13	30	325k	TL	21.43	53.07	318k	TL	0.61	1.40	3.68	1	TL	1.00	7.02
p14	30	196k	TL	42.46	55.43	176k	TL	1.28	1.96	5.67	2	TL	3.69	6.38
p15	30	267k	TL	32.40	55.43	150k	TL	0.91	1.86	5.27	2	TL	1.00	7.10
p16	35	115k	TL	41.47	55.86	62k	TL	0.27	2.06	6.09	1	TL	4.94	8.89
p17	35	250k	TL	23.28	44.36	5k	297.25	1.39	1.39	3.67	9	471.57	3.67	3.67
p18	35	226k	TL	32.23	55.28	143k	TL	0.04	1.96	5.68	1	TL	1.00	7.20
p19	40	204k	TL	21.41	54.70	7k	181.11	1.48	1.48	3.92	4	TL	3.87	4.08
p20	40	290k	TL	29.09	56.00	72k	TL	0.11	1.53	4.11	3	TL	3.88	5.32
p21	40	154k	TL	15.76	52.76	75k	TL	0.00	1.30	3.39	0	TL	1.00	4.60

Table 3: Class MN – Performance comparisons

D	Data Col-Peri-Max			Col-Aspect-Ratio – Reformulation					Col-Aspect-Ratio – B. Search					
#	\mathbf{Size}	Nodes	${\bf Time}$	LB	$\mathbf{U}\mathbf{B}$	Nodes	${\bf Time}$	\mathbf{LB}_4	\mathbf{UB}_4	\mathbf{UB}_3	${ m It_{BS}}$	${\bf Time}$	LB	UB
p01	10	386	0.31	50.83	50.83	10	0.27	1.05	1.05	2.75	9	0.87	2.74	2.75
p02	10	62	0.10	51.50	51.50	1	0.06	0.82	0.82	2.22	7	0.41	2.21	2.22
p03	10	267	0.27	51.00	51.00	33	0.28	1.94	1.94	5.60	9	0.75	5.59	5.60
p04	15	38k	20.37	39.80	39.80	13k	18.08	1.55	1.55	4.17	9	147.71	4.17	4.17
p05	15	130k	94.84	40.99	40.99	2k	5.06	1.03	1.03	2.68	8	20.51	2.67	2.68
p06	15	4971k	TL	44.67	45.96	27	0.86	1.65	1.65	4.49	9	5.18	4.49	4.50
p07	20	364	9.13	53.17	53.17	23k	200.99	2.82	2.82	9.83	11	2866.39	9.83	9.83
p08	20	6k	35.00	53.38	53.38	31k	484.53	2.06	2.06	6.09	10	259.48	6.08	6.09
p09	20	1427k	TL	36.61	54.55	59k	290.84	1.05	1.05	2.73	8	554.92	2.73	2.73
p10	25	2188k	TL	29.04	43.08	987k	TL	0.56	0.67	1.94	4	TL	1.76	1.95
p11	25	233k	TL	40.91	54.55	156	11.20	2.49	2.49	8.09	10	76.60	8.08	8.09
p12	25	1341k	1699.02	53.67	53.67	429k	TL	0.55	0.93	2.45	8	661.27	2.44	2.45
p13	30	7k	139.13	54.12	54.12	285k	TL	1.39	2.08	6.18	5	TL	5.47	6.21
p14	30	843k	TL	35.00	54.41	316k	TL	0.80	1.18	3.06	2	TL	2.28	3.55
p15	30	3k	42.77	51.23	51.23	105k	TL	1.85	2.81	9.81	2	TL	6.85	12.69
p16	35	113k	TL	39.18	55.43	87k	TL	0.14	1.82	5.12	1	TL	1.00	14.14
p17	35	1526k	TL	40.41	53.33	272k	TL	0.14	0.56	1.73	2	TL	1.55	1.74
p18	35	169k	TL	44.24	52.57	80k	TL	0.55	1.91	5.48	1	TL	1.00	9.88
p19	40	137k	TL	34.26	56.43	49k	TL	0.59	1.93	5.53	0	TL	1.00	6.92
p20	40	294k	TL	30.57	55.28	251k	TL	0.84	1.00	2.62	3	TL	2.31	2.64
p21	40	141k	TL	9.94	54.55	137k	TL	1.09	1.71	4.70	0	TL	1.00	5.09

search nodes and CPU time grow very quickly with the number of soft rectangles n. Despite the symmetry-breaking inequalities, some instances with 15 rectangles lead to over a million search nodes. The reformulation approach and the binary search approach for COL-ASPECT-RATIO find 31/63 and 30/63 optimal solutions, respectively. The reformulation approach is generally faster than the binary search algorithm for small instances. Yet, a drawback of this algorithm is that it searches for an optimal solution according to objective Φ_4 . When optimality is attained, this solution is optimal for Φ_3 due to Theorem 5. When an optimality gap remains, the primal solution obtained from the algorithm gives a valid upper bound for objective Φ_3 , but the dual information (and performance guarantee) is lost. Finally, we did not observe a significant difference of performance when comparing the results of the three instance classes (U,MU and MN). We noted that two larger instances with 35 and 40 rectangles were solved to optimality for class MU, a phenomenon which did not happen for U and MN.

In general, the difficulties encountered when solving instances with 10 to 40 rectangles already show the limitations of available mathematical programming algorithms for Col-Perimax and Col-Aspect-Ratio. Future progress on exact approaches for NP-hard problems

may allow to solve larger instances in the future, but years of research may be needed before handling more realistic instances with over a hundred rectangles. Alternatively, heuristics and metaheuristics could be used to solve larger problems. As we noted a complexity gap between Col-Peri-Sum and the other two problems, in spite of the relations between the three objectives, we are interested to see if the solution of Col-Peri-Sum can constitute a viable heuristic for the two more difficult objectives. This is the focus of the next section.

6.2 Solution evaluations in relation to other objectives

The objective functions of the three considered problems are different but not strongly conflicting. Yet, Col-Peri-Sum can be solved in $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$, while Col-Peri-Max and Col-Aspect-Ratio are NP-hard. In this last analysis, we investigate how *close* these problems are from each other in practice. This is achieved by evaluating the optimal solution of one problem according to the objective function of each other. In particular, we are interested to see if the solution of Col-Peri-Sum can be used as a simple heuristic for Col-Peri-Max and Col-Aspect-Ratio.

For this analysis, we gathered all instances that are solved to optimality for all three problems: all instances with n=10; instances U-p05, MU-p04, MU-p06, MN-p04, and MN-p05 with n=15; and instances U-p09, MU-p09, MN-p07, and MN-p08 with n=20. For each objective Φ_x , we evaluated the quality $\Phi_y(s_x^*)$ of its optimal solution s_x^* relatively to each other objective $y \in \{1, 2, 3\}$, and report the results as the performance ratio $\Phi_y(s_x^*)/\Phi_y(s_y^*)$ in Table 4.

These experiments first confirm the fact that the three objectives produce significantly different solutions. For these instances, the optimal solutions of Col-Peri-Sum are within an average factor of 1.05 of the optimal solutions of Col-Peri-Max when evaluated according to objective Φ_2 , and are better than the optimal solutions of Col-Aspect-Ratio with a factor of 1.11. Similarly, the optimal solutions of Col-Peri-Sum give a better approximation of the optimal solutions of Col-Aspect-Ratio than the optimal solutions of Col-Peri-Max (with a factor of 1.50 compared to 14.01).

One likely explanation of these observations is that the objective of Col-Peri-Max mainly concentrates the optimization on rectangles of large area, so as to minimize their perimeter. In Col-Peri-Max, small rectangles almost never play a role as they are unlikely to realize the maximum. In Col-Aspect-Ratio, in contrast, small and large rectangles are equally

Table 4: Optimal solutions for one objective evaluated according to the other objectives

Evaluated as	Col-F	PERI-SUM	$\mathbf{\Phi_1}$	Col-F	PERI-MAX	$\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{\Phi_2}$	Col-A	SPECT-RA	$ au_{10} - \Phi_3$
Solved as	Φ_1	$\boldsymbol{\Phi_2}$	Φ_3	Φ_1	$\boldsymbol{\Phi_2}$	Φ_3	Φ_1	Φ_2	Φ_3
MN-p01	1.00	1.30	1.00	1.12	1.00	1.07	1.60	13.09	1.00
MN-p02	1.00	1.11	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	22.02	1.00
MN-p03	1.00	1.55	1.00	1.04	1.00	1.04	1.00	12.86	1.00
U-p01	1.00	1.06	1.00	1.08	1.00	1.09	1.01	4.27	1.00
U-p02	1.00	1.00	1.13	1.00	1.00	1.31	1.60	1.60	1.00
U-p03	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
MU-p01	1.00	1.23	1.05	1.05	1.00	1.13	1.07	5.97	1.00
MU-p02	1.00	1.06	1.01	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	22.69	1.00
MU-p03	1.00	1.19	1.00	1.05	1.00	1.05	1.00	7.09	1.00
MN-p04	1.00	1.41	1.08	1.00	1.00	1.09	1.08	38.85	1.00
MN-p05	1.00	1.24	1.02	1.00	1.00	1.04	1.00	9.76	1.00
U-p05	1.00	1.04	1.02	1.01	1.00	1.03	1.67	2.31	1.00
MU-p04	1.00	1.11	1.02	1.13	1.00	1.06	2.24	21.59	1.00
MU-p06	1.00	1.27	1.01	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.24	29.31	1.00
MN-p07	1.00	1.15	1.25	1.24	1.00	1.55	1.16	14.65	1.00
MN-p08	1.00	1.23	1.14	1.15	1.00	1.33	1.22	9.31	1.00
U-p09	1.00	1.06	1.00	1.06	1.00	1.10	1.37	6.35	1.00
MU-p09	1.00	1.24	1.04	1.00	1.00	1.07	5.74	29.47	1.00
Average	1.00	1.18	1.04	1.05	1.00	1.11	1.50	14.01	1.00

important, since the maximum aspect ratio can be attained regardless of the rectangle area. Finally, Col-Peri-Sum must optimize the perimeter of all rectangles, regardless of their area, so as to minimize the total sum. This objective leads to optimal solutions which tend to have good overall aspect ratios, regardless of rectangle size.

Finally, a precise analysis of the solutions shows that Col-Peri-Sum produced five optimal solutions for Col-Peri-Max and six optimal solutions for Col-Aspect-Ratio over 18 instances. In one exceptional case (instance p03 of class U), the three methods converged towards the same optimal solution. This situation happened because the optimal solution contained a single layer, but other situations can lead to this behavior: e.g., if a feasible solution exists in which all soft rectangles take the shape of a square, then this solution is indeed optimal for the three objectives.

7 Conclusions

In this paper, we investigated three soft rectangle packing problems: Col-Peri-Sum, Col-Peri-Max and Col-Aspect-Ratio. The effective resolution of these problems is of foremost

importance for the ongoing land-allocation reform in Vietnam. The objectives considered in these problems model different aspects of fairness and wasted-land minimization. We introduced an $\mathcal{O}(n\log n)$ exact algorithm for Col-Peri-Sum. Then, we demonstrated that the two others problems are NP-hard, and proposed compact MIP formulations to solve them. In the case of Col-Aspect-Ratio, an objective reformulation and a binary search scheme were proposed to overcome non-linearities. Through a set of experimental analyzes on 63 benchmark instances, we observed that the resolution of the MIP formulations is currently practicable for problem instances involving 10 to 40 soft rectangles. To solve larger instances of Col-Peri-Max and Col-Aspect-Ratio, we may use the $\mathcal{O}(n\log n)$ -time algorithm for Col-Peri-Sum as a simple heuristic.

The research perspectives are numerous. The proposed MIP formulations can possibly be improved with additional valid inequalities or optimality cuts, and the set-partitioning formulation of the problem can certainly be exploited to develop efficient branch-and-price algorithms. Metaheuristics could also be developed to provide solutions for larger instances or integrate additional restrictions or objectives. Finally, whether Col-Peri-Max and Col-Aspect-Ratio are *strongly* NP-hard remains an interesting open question.

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