SUFFICIENT CONDITIONS FOR 2-DIMENSIONAL GLOBAL RIGIDITY

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ABSTRACT. The 2-dimensional global rigidity has been shown to be equivalent to 3-connectedness and redundant rigidity by a combination of two results due to Jackson and Jordán, and Connelly, respectively. By the characterization, a theorem of Lovász and Yemini implies that every 6-connected graph is redundantly rigid, and thus globally rigid. The 6-connectedness is best possible, since there exist infinitely many 5-connected non-rigid graphs. Jackson, Servatius and Servatius used the idea of "essential connectivity" and proved that every 4-connected "essentially 6-connected" graph is redundantly rigid and thus global rigid. Since 3-connectedness is a necessary condition of global rigidity, it is interesting to study 3-connected graphs for redundant rigidity and thus globally rigidity. We utilize a different "essential connectivity", and prove that every 3-connected essentially 9-connected graph is redundantly rigid and thus globally rigid. The essential 9-connectedness is best possible. Under this essential connectivity, we also prove that every 4-connected essentially 6-connected graph is redundantly rigid and thus global rigid. Our proofs are based on discharging arguments.

Key words: Rigid graph, redundant rigidity, global rigidity, essential connectivity

1. INTRODUCTION

Undefined graph terminologies can be found in [2]. A *d*-dimensional framework is a pair (G, p), where G(V, E) is a graph and p is a map from V to \mathbb{R}^d . Roughly speaking, it is a straight line realization of G in \mathbb{R}^d . Two frameworks (G, p) and (G, q) are equivalent if ||p(u) - p(v)|| = ||q(u) - q(v)|| holds for every edge $uv \in E$, where $|| \cdot ||$ denotes the Euclidean norm in \mathbb{R}^d . Two frameworks (G, p) and (G, q) are congruent if ||p(u) - p(v)|| = ||q(u) - q(v)|| holds for every pair $u, v \in V$. A framework (G, p) is generic if the coordinates of all the points are algebraically independent. A graph G is globally rigid if every framework (G, q) which is equivalent to a generic framework (G, p) is congruent to (G, p). A graph is rigid if for every generic framework (G, p) there exists an $\varepsilon > 0$ such that if (G, q) is equivalent to (G, p) and $||p(u) - q(u)|| < \varepsilon$ for every $u \in V$, then (G, q) is congruent to (G, p). A graph G is minimally rigid if G is rigid and G - e is not

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rigid for all $e \in E$. Laman [10] provides a combinatorial characterization of minimally rigid graphs in \mathbb{R}^2 , given below.

Let G be a graph with vertex set V(G) and edge set E(G). For a subset $X \subseteq V(G)$, G[X] and E(X) denote the subgraph of G induced by X and the edge set of G[X], respectively. A graph G is **sparse** if $|E(X)| \leq 2|X| - 3$ for every $X \subseteq V(G)$ with $|X| \geq 2$. If in addition |E(G)| = 2|V(G)| - 3, then G is **minimally rigid**. In history, Pollaczek-Geiringer [12,13] was the first who made notable progress on properties of minimally rigid graphs. Laman [10] rediscovered and characterized the minimally rigid graphs in \mathbb{R}^2 using the edge count property. A minimally rigid graph is also known as a Laman graph now.

By definition, any sparse graph is simple. A graph G is **rigid** if G contains a spanning minimally rigid subgraph. It is not hard to see that every rigid graph with at least 3 vertices is 2-connected. A **cover** of a graph G is a collection $\mathcal{X} = \{X_1, X_2, ..., X_t\}$ of subsets of V(G) such that $E(G) = E(X_1) \cup E(X_2) \cup \cdots \cup E(X_t)$. Lovász and Yemini [11] obtained the following characterization of rigid graphs.

Theorem 1.1 (Lovász and Yemini [11]). Let G = (V, E) be a graph. Then G is rigid if and only if for all covers \mathcal{X} of G, we have $\sum_{X \in \mathcal{X}} (2|X| - 3) \ge 2|V| - 3$.

Note that the subgraphs induced by $X \in \mathcal{X}$ in Theorem 1.1 need not to be edge-disjoint. However, it is not hard to see the minimum of $\sum_{X \in \mathcal{X}} (2|X|-3)$ can be obtained when the subgraphs induced by $X \in \mathcal{X}$ are pairwise edge-disjoint, and thus it suffices to consider the edge-disjoint case whenever needed.

A graph G is **redundantly rigid** if G - e is rigid for all $e \in E(G)$. Hendrickson [4] showed that if a graph G is globally rigid, then G is 3-connected and redundantly rigid. He also conjectured that 3-connectedness and redundant rigidity are sufficient for global rigidity. This conjecture was solved by Connelly [3], Jackson and Jordán [5], respectively.

Theorem 1.2 (Connelly [3], Jackson and Jordán [5]). A graph G is globally rigid if and only if G is 3-connected and redundantly rigid, or G is a complete graph on at most three vertices.

By way of Theorem 1.1, Lovász and Yemini [11] showed that every 6-connected graph G is rigid. Their proof actually implies that G is redundantly rigid. Thus, every 6-connected graph is globally rigid, by Theorem 1.2. The 6-connectedness is best possible, and Lovász and Yemini [11] constructed infinitely many 5-connected non-rigid graphs.

After that, researchers tried to relax the connectivity condition. For example, Jackson and Jordán [6] proved that a simple graph G is rigid if G is 6-edge-connected, G - v is 4-edge-connected for every $v \in V(G)$ and $G - \{u, v\}$ is 2-edge-connected for every $u, v \in V(G)$. Jackson, Servatius and Servatius [7] provided another connectivity condition sufficient for global rigidity. They showed that every "essentially 6-connected" graph is redundantly rigid, and thus is global rigid, where a graph G is "essentially 6-connected" if it satisfies:

- (1) G is 4-connected,
- (2) for all pairs of subgraphs G_1, G_2 of G such that $G = G_1 \cup G_2$, $|V(G_1) V(G_2)| \ge 3$ and $|V(G_2) V(G_1)| \ge 3$, we have $|V(G_1) \cap V(G_2)| \ge 5$, and
- (3) for all pairs of subgraphs G_1, G_2 of G such that $G = G_1 \cup G_2$, $|V(G_1) V(G_2)| \ge 4$ and $|V(G_2) V(G_1)| \ge 4$, we have $|V(G_1) \cap V(G_2)| \ge 6$.

This connectivity allows cuts of size 4 or 5, which can only separate at most two or three vertices from the rest of graphs. In fact, various ideas of "essential connectivity" have been used for research.

In [8], Jackson and Wormald defined the "essentially 4-connected" graphs to study longest cycles, where a graph G is essentially 4-connected if G is 3-connected and for every 3-cut S of G, G-S has exactly two components, one of which is a single vertex. To study Hamiltonian claw-free graphs, Lai et al. [9] defined another version of "essentially k-connectivity". In their paper, a graph G with at least k + 1 vertices is **essentially** k-connected if there is no $X \subset V(G)$ with |X| < ksuch that at least two components of V - X are nontrivial, where a nontrivial component means it contains at least one edge. Using this definition, Lai et al. [9] showed that every 3-connected essentially 11-connected claw-free graph is Hamiltonian, which extends Thomassen's conjecture on line Hamiltonian graphs.

We need to point out that the definitions in [7-9] are not the same. Apparently, one main difference is that the definition of [9] requires nontrivial components for cuts of small size, i.e., components with at least one edge. This requirement allows many vertices of low degrees in graphs with high essential connectivity. For example, for 3-connected essentially 9-connected graphs, the definition allows this graph contains many vertices of degrees 3 and 4. Without this requirement, the number of low degree vertices is much more restricted. In fact, there are many graphs failing to be high connected due to vertices of low degree, and we would like to study such graphs. Thus, in this paper, we will use essentially k-connected graphs defined in [9].

The study of rigidity becomes more involved when we work on this essential connectivity. One may see that this essential connectivity is not monotone, that is, we may decrease the essential connectivity when adding edges to a graph. The proofs in [11] and [7] utilized useful facts that each X in the cover induces a clique and every vertex lies in at least two X's, which rely on the benefit that adding edges does not decrease the (essential) connectivity.

Overcome this difficulty, we first extend the result of Lovász and Yemini [11]. The following theorem is quite similar to the main result of [7], but they are not the same. For instance, the result of [7] fails for a graph containing three or more vertices of degree 4 with the same neighbors, while Theorem 1.3 allows many such vertices.

Theorem 1.3. Every 4-connected essentially 6-connected graph is redundantly rigid, and thus is globally rigid.

The 5-connected non-rigid graphs constructed by Lovász and Yemini [11] show that the essential 6-connectedness in Theorem 1.3 is also best possible.

Lovász and Yemini [11] showed that every 6-connected graph is redundantly rigid, which implies that the graph is also globally rigid. It is natural to ask, if the connectivity of a graph is less than 6, what condition can make this graph to be redundantly rigid, and in addition, global rigid? It was answered by [7] and Theorem 1.3 for 4-connected graphs. We provide an answer for 3-connected graphs by giving the optimal essential connectivity. Recall that 3-connectedness is a necessary condition for global rigidity.

Theorem 1.4. Every 3-connected essentially 9-connected graph is redundantly rigid, and thus is globally rigid.

The proofs of Theorems 1.3 and 1.4 utilize discharging arguments, which does not appear explicitly in the literature, as far as we know. Note that Theorems 1.4 and 1.3 are also true for multigraphs, since the removal of any multiple edges does not affect connectivity or essential connectivity. The paper is organized as below. We prove Theorems 1.3 and 1.4 respectively in the next two sections. In the last section, for every $3 \le t \le 8$, we present examples of 3-connected essentially *t*-connected non-rigid graphs.

For a vertex $v \in V(G)$, let d(v) and N(v) denote the degree of v and the set of vertices adjacent to v, respectively. A vertex v is called a k-vertex, k^+ -vertex and k^- -vertex, if d(v) = k, $d(v) \ge k$ and $d(v) \le k$, respectively. For $X, Y \subset V(G)$ with $X \cap Y = \emptyset$, let E[X, Y] denote the set of edges in G with one end in X and the other in Y and e(X, Y) = |E[X, Y]|.

2. The proof of Theorem 1.3

Suppose to the contrary that the statement is not true. Let G = (V, E) be a counterexample such that |V(G)| is as small as possible, and subject to this condition, |E(G)| is as large as possible. Thus G is not redundantly rigid, and there exists an edge e = uv such that T = G - e is not rigid. By Theorem 1.1, there exists a cover $\mathcal{T} = \{Y_1, Y_2, ..., Y_t\}$ such that $\sum_{i=1}^t (2|Y_i| - 3) < 2|V| - 3$. Without loss of generality, we may assume that $\mathcal{T} = \{Y_1, Y_2, ..., Y_t\}$ is a cover of T to minimize $\sum_{i=1}^t (2|Y_i| - 3)$. Let m = t + 1, $X_i = Y_i$ for $i = 1, 2, \cdots, t$ and $X_m = X_{t+1} = \{u, v\}$. Let $\mathcal{X} = \{X_1, X_2, \ldots, X_m\}$. Then \mathcal{X} is a cover of G. For each $X \in \mathcal{X}$, let $\mu(X) = 2|X| - 3$. We have

(1)
$$\sum_{i=1}^{m} \mu(X_i) = \sum_{i=1}^{m} (2|X_i| - 3) = \sum_{i=1}^{t} (2|Y_i| - 3) + (2|X_m| - 3) < 2|V| - 2$$

Let $\mathcal{X}(x) = \{X_i \in \mathcal{X} : x \in X_i\}$ for $x \in V(G)$. For $X \in \mathcal{X}(x)$, we denote by $\sigma_x(X)$ the value that x gets from X. We use the following discharging rules.

- (R1) If |X| = 2, then $\sigma_x(X) = \frac{1}{2}$ for each $x \in X$.
- (R2) If |X| = 3, then $\sigma_x(X) = 1$ for each $x \in X$.
- (R3) Suppose |X| = 4. If X contains a 4-vertex x such that $\mathcal{X}(x) = \{X_1, X_2\}$ with $|X_1| = 2, |X_2| = 4$, then $\sigma_x(X) = \frac{3}{2}$ and each of other vertices gets 1 from X. Otherwise, each vertex of X gets $\frac{5}{4}$ from X.
- (R4) Suppose $|X| \ge 5$.
 - (R4A) If $N(x) \cup \{x\} \subseteq X$, then $\sigma_x(X) = 2$. Let $V_0(X)$ be the set of all those vertices x in X, and let $|V_0(X)| = t_0(X)$.
 - (R4B) If $x \in X$ has only one neighbor $x' \notin X$ and there is an $X' = \{x, x'\} \in \mathcal{X}$, then $\sigma_x(X) = \frac{3}{2}$. Let $V_1(X)$ be the set of all those vertices x in X, and denote $|V_1(X)| = t_1(X)$. Let $V'_1(X) = \{x' \in N(x) \setminus X : x \in V_1(X)\}.$
 - (R4C) Otherwise, $\sigma_x(X) = 1$. Let $V_2(X)$ be the set of all those vertices x in X, and denote $|V_2(X)| = t_2(X)$. Let $V'_2(X) = \{x' \in N(x) \setminus X : x \in V_2(X)\}.$

For $x \in V(G)$, let $\mu(x) = \sum_{X \in \mathcal{X}(x)} \sigma_x(X)$, i.e., the total charge that x gets from all $X \in \mathcal{X}(x)$.

Claim 2.1. $\mu(x) \ge 2$, for every vertex $x \in V(G)$.

Proof. First let d(x) = 4. If $|\mathcal{X}(x)| = 4$, then x is in four sets of size at least two, thus $\mu(x) \ge \frac{1}{2} \cdot 4 = 2$ by (R1)-(R4). If $|\mathcal{X}(x)| = 3$, then x is in at least one set of size at least three, thus $\mu(x) \ge \frac{1}{2} \cdot 2 + 1 = 2$ by (R1)-(R4). If $|\mathcal{X}(x)| = 2$, then x is either in two sets of size at least three, thus by (R2)-(R4), $\mu(x) \ge 1 + 1 = 2$, or x is in a set of size two and in a set of size at least four, thus by (R1), (R3), and (R4B), $\mu(x) \ge \frac{1}{2} + \min\{2, \frac{3}{2}\} = 2$.

Let $d(x) \ge 5$. By (R4A), we may assume that $|\mathcal{X}(x)| \ge 2$. If $|\mathcal{X}(x)| \ge 4$, then x is in four sets of size at least two, thus $\mu(x) \ge \frac{1}{2} \cdot 4 = 2$ by (R1)-(R4). If x is in at least two sets of size at least

three, then $\mu(x) \ge 1 + 1 = 2$ by (R2)-(R4). So we may assume that x is either in a set of size two and a set of size at least five, or in two sets of size two and one set of size at least four. Thus, in the former case, by (R1) and (R4B), $\mu(x) = \frac{1}{2} + \frac{3}{2} = 2$. In the latter case, by (R1) and (R3), $\mu(x) = \frac{1}{2} \cdot 2 + 1 = 2$.

Now we will try to prove that for each $X \in \mathcal{X}$, the final charge $\mu'(X) \ge 0$.

Claim 2.2. For each $X \in \mathcal{X}$ with $|X| \leq 4$, $\mu'(X) \geq 0$.

Proof. If |X| = 2, then $\mu'(X) = 2 \cdot 2 - 3 - \frac{1}{2} \cdot 2 = 0$ by (R1). If |X| = 3, then $\mu'(X) = 2 \cdot 3 - 3 - 1 \cdot 3 = 0$ by (R2). If |X| = 4, then $\mu(X) = 5$. We will show that X contains at most two 4-vertices such that $\mathcal{X}(x) = \{X_1, X_2\}$ with $|X_1| = 2, |X_2| = 4$. Thus, $\mu'(X) \ge 5 - \max\{\frac{3}{2} \cdot 2 + 1 \cdot 2, \frac{5}{4} \cdot 4\} = 0$.

Suppose to the contrary that $X = \{v_i : i \in [4]\}$ contains three such vertices v_1, v_2, v_3 and let $u_i \notin X$ denote the neighbor of v_i , for i = 1, 2, 3. Note that X induces a clique. If $V(G) - X - \{u_1, u_2, u_3\}$ induces at least one edge e', then $S = \{u_1, u_2, u_3, v_4\}$ separates $\{v_1, v_2, v_3\}$ and e'. We obtain an essential 4-cut S, a contradiction. Thus we may assume that $V(G) - X - \{u_1, u_2, u_3\}$ is an independent set or an empty set. In the former case, since G is 4-connected, every vertex in $V(G) - X - \{u_1, u_2, u_3\}$ is adjacent to every vertex in $\{u_1, u_2, u_3, v_4\}$. Now $S' = \{v_1, v_4, u_2, u_3\}$ separates $\{v_2, v_3\}$ from $V(G) - X - \{u_2, u_3\}$, and is an essential 4-cut, a contradiction. In the latter case, $V(G) = X \cup \{u_1, u_2, u_3\}$ with |V(G)| = 7 and $|E(G)| \ge \frac{4\cdot7}{2} = 14$. Since X covers 6 edges and $X_i = \{v_i, u_i\}$ for $i \in [3]$ covers one edge, there are more sets in \mathcal{X} covering the other $|E(G)| - 9 \ge 5$ edges. It follows that $\sum_{X \in \mathcal{X}} \mu(X) \ge 2 \cdot 4 - 3 + (2 \cdot 2 - 3) \cdot 3 + 5 > 2|V(G)| - 2$, a contradiction. \Box

Assume for a contradiction that for some $X_0 \in \mathcal{X}$ with $|X_0| \ge 5$, $\mu'(X_0) < 0$. We will simply use V_i and t_i to denote $V_i(X_0)$ and $t_i(X_0)$ for i = 0, 1, 2, respectively. Note that $|X_0| = t_0 + t_1 + t_2$.

Claim 2.3. $t_1 + 2t_2 \le 5$.

Proof. Suppose to the contrary that $t_1 + 2t_2 \ge 6$. Then by (R1)-(R4),

$$\mu'(X_0) = 2|X_0| - 3 - 2t_0 - \frac{3}{2}t_1 - t_2 = \frac{1}{2}(t_1 + 2t_2) - 3 \ge 0,$$

a contradiction to the assumption that $\mu'(X_0) < 0$.

Note that $V(G) - X_0 \neq \emptyset$, for otherwise, if $X_0 = V(G)$, then \mathcal{X} contains at least V and X_m , which implies that $\sum_{i=1}^m \mu(X_i) \ge (2|V|-3) + (2|X_m|-3) = 2|V|-2$, contradicting (1).

Claim 2.4. $V_0 \cup V_1$ is not an independent set.

Proof. By Claim 2.3 that $t_1 + 2t_2 \leq 5$, we have $t_2 \leq 2$. Since $|X_0| \geq 5$, we have $|V_0 \cup V_1| = |X_0| - t_2 \geq 3$. For each $x \in V_0 \cup V_1$, x has at most one neighbor outside of X_0 and at most 2 neighbors in V_2 . Since $d(x) \geq 4$, x must have a neighbor in $V_0 \cup V_1$.

Claim 2.5. $V(G) - X_0$ is an independent set.

Proof. Suppose to the contrary that $V(G) - X_0$ is not an independent set.

We first claim that V_0 is an independent set if $V_0 \neq \emptyset$. For otherwise, $V_1 \cup V_2$ is a cut of size at most $t_1 + t_2 \leq 5$ such that both V_0 and $G - X_0$ are non-trivial, a contradiction.

We claim that each edge $e \in E(G - X_0)$ must be incident with a vertex in V'_1 . Otherwise, by Claim 2.4, $V_0 \cup V_1$ is not an independent set, so $V'_1 \cup V_2$ is an essentially cut and $|V'_1 \cup V_2| \le t_1 + t_2 \le 5$ since $t_1 + 2t_2 \le 5$, contrary to the fact that G is essentially 6-connected.

First let $V_0 = \emptyset$. As $5 \le |X_0| = t_1 + t_2$, and $t_1 + 2t_2 \le 5$ by Claim 2.3, $t_2 = 0$ and $t_1 = 5$. As each vertex in V_1 has degree at least 4 and has exactly one neighbor not in X_0 , each vertex in V_1 has at least three neighbors in V_1 . Observe that $|V'_1| \ge 2$, for otherwise, V'_1 is a cut of size one. Then some vertex in V'_1 has at most $\lfloor \frac{5}{|V'_1|} \rfloor$ neighbors in V_1 thus has at least $4 - \lfloor \frac{5}{|V'_1|} \rfloor$ neighbors in $G - X_0$. Note that V'_1 is a cut if $V(G) - X_0 \neq V'_1$. If $|V'_1| \leq 3$, then we should have $4 - \lfloor \frac{5}{|V'_1|} \rfloor \leq |V'_1| - 1$, which is impossible. Therefore, $|V'_1| \ge 4$, and at least three vertices in V'_1 have exactly one neighbor in V_1 . If there exists $x'_1x'_2 \in E(G)$ with $x'_1, x'_2 \in V'_1$ such that x_1, x_2 are the unique neighbors of x'_1, x'_2 in V_1 , respectively, then $V'_1 \cup \{x_1, x_2\} - \{x'_1, x'_2\}$ is an essential cut of size at most five, a contradiction. Then we must have that $x' \in V'_1$ has a unique neighbor $x \in V_1$ such that $x'w \in E(G)$ and $w \in G - X_0 - V'_1$, which implies that $V'_1 - x' + x$ is an essential cut of size at most five, a contradiction again.

Now let $V_0 \neq \emptyset$. Since V_0 is independent, the neighbors of vertices in V_0 are in $V_1 \cup V_2$. As each vertex has degree at least four, $t_1 + t_2 \ge 4$. As $t_1 + 2t_2 \le 5$, we have $t_2 = 1$ and $t_1 = 3$, or $t_2 = 0$ and $4 \leq t_1 \leq 5$. In either case, at least three vertices of V_1 are adjacent to vertices in V_0 . Let $xx' \in E(G)$ with $x \in V_1$ and $x' \in V'_1$ such that x has a neighbor in V_0 . Then $S = (V_1 \cup V_2) - x + x'_1$ is a cut of size at most five such that the component containing x is non-trivial. So $G - X_0 - x'$ must be trivial, that is, x' must be adjacent to all edges in $G - X_0$. Let $|V - X_0| = t$. Then

$$3(t-1) \le |E[X_0, V - X_0 - x']| \le t_2 \cdot (t-1) + t_1 - 1.$$

It follows that $t \leq 1 + \frac{t_1 - 1}{3 - t_2}$. So $t \leq 2$. Since $V(G) - X_0$ is not an independent set, $t \geq 2$. Therefore t = 2. Let $V(G) - X_0 = \{x', x''\}$. Then $6 \leq |E[X_0, \{x', x''\}]| \leq 2t_2 + t_1 \leq 5$, by Claim 2.3, a contradiction.

By Claim 2.5, assume that $V(G) - X_0$ consists of t isolated vertices. Since G is 4-connected, each of these t vertices has degree at least 4. Then

$$4t \le |E[X_0, V - X_0]| \le t_1 \cdot 1 + t_2 \cdot t \le (5 - 2t_2) + t \cdot t_2,$$

which implies that $t \leq \frac{5-2t_2}{4-t_2} < 2$. So let $V(G) - X_0 = \{y\}$. Since G is 4-connected, $4 \leq d(y) \leq t_1 + t_2$. Then

$$\mu'(X_0) = 2|X_0| - 3 - 2t_0 - \frac{3}{2}t_1 - t_2 = \frac{1}{2}t_1 + t_2 - 3 = \frac{1}{2}(t_1 + 2t_2) - 3 \ge 2 - 3 = -1.$$

For each $X \in \mathcal{X}(y)$ with |X| > 2, by definition of V_1 and V_0 , $X \cap (V_0 \cup V_1) = \emptyset$ and $X \cap V_2 \neq \emptyset$. So $|X| \leq 1 + t_2 \leq 3$. Therefore, $\mu'(X) \geq 0$ by our discharging rules.

Therefore, for every $X \in \mathcal{X} - X_0$, $\mu'(X) \ge 0$ and $\mu'(X_0) \ge -1$. It follows that

$$2|V| - 2 > \sum_{X \in \mathcal{X}} \mu(X) = \sum_{X \in \mathcal{X}} \mu'(X) + \sum_{x \in V(G)} \mu(x) \ge -1 + 0 + 2|V| \ge 2|V| - 1,$$

a contradiction, which completes the proof.

3. The proof of Theorem 1.4

Suppose to the contrary that the statement is not true. Let G = (V, E) be a counterexample such that |V(G)| is as small as possible, and subject to this condition, |E(G)| is as large as possible. Thus G is not redundantly rigid, and there exist an edge e = uv such that T = G - e is not rigid. By Theorem 1.1, there exists a cover $\mathcal{T} = \{Y_1, Y_2, ..., Y_t\}$ of T such that $\sum_{i=1}^t (2|Y_i| - 3) < 2|V| - 3$. Without loss of generality, we may assume that $\mathcal{T} = \{Y_1, Y_2, ..., Y_t\}$ is a cover of T to minimize $\sum_{i=1}^{t} (2|Y_i| - 3). \text{ Let } m = t + 1, X_i = Y_i \text{ for } i = 1, 2, \cdots, t \text{ and } X_m = X_{t+1} = \{u, v\}. \text{ Let } \mathcal{X} = \{X_1, X_2, \cdots, X_m\}, \text{ which is then a cover of } G. \text{ For each } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Then } X \in \mathcal{X}, \text{ let } \mu(X) = 2|X| - 3. \text{ Let } \mu(X) = 3.$

(2)
$$\sum_{i=1}^{m} \mu(X_i) = \sum_{i=1}^{m} (2|X_i| - 3) = \sum_{i=1}^{t} (2|Y_i| - 3) + (2|X_m| - 3) < 2|V| - 2.$$

For each $x \in V(G)$, let $\mathcal{X}(x) = \{X_i \in \mathcal{X} : x \in X_i\}.$

Remark (a): For any $v_1, v_2 \in X_i$, if $|N(v_1) \cup N(v_2)| \ge 9$, then $v_1v_2 \in E(G)$. Otherwise, the new graph by adding an edge v_1v_2 is still 3-connected, essentially 9-connected and not a redundantly graph, which contradicts the maximality of |E(T)|.

Remark (b): By the minimality of $\sum_{i=1}^{m-1} (2|X_i| - 3)$, we can conclude that each X_i of size at most 3 is a complete graph and if $|X_i| = 4$, then X_i induces at least 5 edges. Otherwise, we can replace X_i with a few X's of size 2, each of which induces an edge of $E(X_i)$, to reduce the value of $\sum_{i=1}^{m-1} (2|X_i| - 3)$.

Claim 3.1. In graph G, every 3-vertex is only adjacent to 6^+ -vertices.

Proof. Here we give a brief idea of the proof. The proof involves routine case analysis and is tedious, which is included in the appendix. Let $x \in V(G)$ be a 3-vertex and $N(x) = \{v_1, v_2, v_3\}$. Suppose that v_1 is a 5⁻-vertex. Let $S = \{v_2, v_3\} \cup (N(v_1) - x)$. Then $|S| \leq 6$ and one component in G - S contains edge xv_1 . As G has no essential cut of size less than 9, the other components of G - S must form an independent set, say $T = \{u_1, \ldots, u_t\}$. Note that $N(u_i) \subseteq S$. We will find a spanning minimally rigid subgraph, namely a subgraph H such that |E(H)| = 2|V(H)| - 3 and every subgraph H' of H satisfies $|E(H')| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$, in G - e for every $e \in E(G)$, which implies that G is not a counterexample.

In the rest of the proof, we will use a discharging argument to reach a contradiction. We will distribute the $\mu(X)$ value of each $X \in \mathcal{X}$ to vertices of X, and we denote by $\sigma_x(X)$ the value that x gets from X. The following are the discharging rules.

(R1) Suppose |X| = 2. Then $\mu(X) = 1$.

(R1A) If $X = \{v_1, v_2\}$ with $d(v_1) = 3$, then $\sigma_{v_1}(X) = \frac{2}{3}$ and $\sigma_{v_2}(X) = \frac{1}{3}$.

- (R1B) If X contains two 4⁺-vertices, then each vertex gets $\frac{1}{2}$ from X.
- (R2) Suppose |X| = 3. Then $\mu(X) = 3$. (R2A) If $X = \{v_1, v_2, v_3\}$ with $d(v_1) = 3$, then $\sigma_{v_1}(X) = \frac{4}{3}$ and $\sigma_{v_2}(X) = \sigma_{v_3}(X) = \frac{5}{6}$. (R2B) If X contains three 4⁺-vertices, then each vertex gets 1 from X.
- (R3) Suppose |X| = 4. Then $\mu(X) = 5$.
 - (R3A) If X contains a 3-vertex v_1 and $N(v_1) \subseteq X$, then $\sigma_{v_1}(X) = 2$ and each of other vertices gets 1 from X.
 - (R3B) If X contains a 4⁻-vertex v_1 such that $\mathcal{X}(v_1) = \{X_1, X_2\}$ with $|X_1| = 2, |X_2| = 4$, then $\sigma_{v_1}(X) = \frac{3}{2}$ and each of other vertices gets 1 from X.
 - (R3C) Otherwise, each vertex of X gets $\frac{5}{4}$ from X.
- (R4) Suppose $|X| \ge 5$. Then $\mu(X) = 2|X| 3$.
 - (R4A) If $(N(x) \cup \{x\}) \subseteq X$, then $\sigma_x(X) = 2$. Let $V_0(X)$ be the set of all those vertices x in X, and denote $|V_0(X)| = t_0(X)$.
 - (R4B) Suppose $x \in X$ has only one adjacent vertex $x' \notin X$.

- (R4B1) If d(x') = 3, and there is an $X' = \{x, x'\} \in \mathcal{X}$, then $\sigma_x(X) = \frac{5}{3}$. Let $V_1(X)$ be the set of all those vertices x in X, and let $|V_1(X)| = t_1(X)$ and $V'_1(X) = \{x' : x' \in N(x) \text{ and } x' \notin X, x \in V_1(X)\}.$
- (R4B2) If $x \notin V_1$, then $\sigma_x(X) = \frac{3}{2}$. Let $V_2(X)$ be the set of all those vertices x in X, and let $|V_2(X)| = t_2(X)$ and $V'_2(X) = \{x' : x' \in N(x) \text{ and } x' \notin X, x \in V_2(X)\}.$
- (R4C) Suppose $x \in X$ has at least two adjacent vertices outside of X.
 - (R4C1) Suppose x has exactly two neighbors x' and x" outside of X. If d(x') = d(x'') = 3and there are $X_1 = \{x, x'\}, X_2 = \{x, x''\} \in \mathcal{X}$, then $\sigma_x(X) = \frac{4}{3}$. Let $V_3(X)$ be the set of all those vertices x in X, and let $|V_3(X)| = t_3(X)$ and $V'_3(X) = \{x' : x' \in N(x) \text{ and } x' \notin X, x \in V_3(X)\}.$
 - (R4C2) Suppose x has exactly two neighbors x' and x'' outside of X. If d(x') = 3 and $x \notin V_3$, then $\sigma_x(X) = \frac{7}{6}$. Let $V_4(X)$ be the set of all those vertices x in X, and let $|V_4(X)| = t_4(X)$ and $V'_4(X) = \{x' : x' \in N(x) \text{ and } x' \notin X, x \in V_4(X)\}.$
 - (R4C3) Otherwise, $\sigma_x(X) = 1$. Let $V_5(X)$ be the set of all those vertices x in X, and let $|V_5(X)| = t_5(X)$ and $V'_5(X) = \{x' : x' \in N(x) \text{ and } x' \notin X, x \in V_5(X)\}.$

For $x \in V(G)$, let $\mu(x) = \sum_{X \in \mathcal{X}(x)} \sigma_x(X)$, i.e., the total charge that x gets from $\mathcal{X}(x)$.

Claim 3.2. $\mu(x) \ge 2$, for every $x \in V(G)$.

Proof. First let d(x) = 3. By (R3A), we may assume that $|\mathcal{X}(x)| \ge 2$. If $|\mathcal{X}(x)| = 3$, then x is in three sets of size at least two, thus by (R1A), $\mu(x) = \frac{2}{3} \cdot 3 = 2$. If $|\mathcal{X}(x)| = 2$, then x is in a set of size at least two and and in a set of size at least three, thus by (R1A), (R2A), (R3) and (R4), $\mu(x) \ge \frac{2}{3} + \frac{4}{3} = 2$.

Let $d(x) \ge 4$. By (R4A), we may assume that $|\mathcal{X}(x)| \ge 2$. We first assume that x has no neighbors of degree 3. If each $X \in \mathcal{X}(x)$ has $|X| \ge 3$, then by (R2)-(R4), x gets at least 1 from each $X \in \mathcal{X}(x)$, thus $\mu(x) \ge 2$. So we may assume that $|\mathcal{X}(x)| \ge 2$ and t sets of $\mathcal{X}(x)$ have size two. By (R1B) and (R2)-(R4), if t = d(x), then $\mu(x) \ge \frac{1}{2}t \ge 2$; if t < d(x), then x gets at least 1 from sets of size more than two, thus $\mu(x) < 2$ only if t = 1 and $|\mathcal{X}(x)| = 2$, in which case, by (R3B) and (R4B2), $\mu(x) \ge \frac{1}{2} + \frac{3}{2} = 2$.

Now we assume that x has a neighbor of degree 3. By Claim 3.1, $d(x) \ge 6$. If $\mathcal{X}(x)$ does not contain sets of size two, then by (R2)-(R4), x gets at least $\frac{5}{6}$ from each $X \in \mathcal{X}(x)$, so $\mu(x) < 2$ only if x gets a $\frac{5}{6}$ by (R2A) and a 1 by (R4C3), but these two cases cannot happen at the same time since $d(x) \ge 6$. So assume that $t \ge 1$ sets of $\mathcal{X}(x)$ have size two. If $|\mathcal{X}(x)| = 2$, then t = 1 and by (R1) and (R4B), $\mu(x) \ge \min\{\frac{1}{3} + \frac{5}{3}, \frac{1}{2} + \frac{3}{2}\} = 2$. So let $|\mathcal{X}(x)| \ge 3$. Assume that $\mathcal{X}(x)$ contains s sets of size three. If t + 2s = d(x), then by (R1A) and (R2A), $\mu(x) \ge \frac{1}{3}t + \frac{5}{6}s \ge \frac{1}{3}(t+2s) \ge 2$. So let t+2s < d(x), then by (R1A) and (R2)-(R4), $\mu(x) \ge \frac{1}{3}t + \frac{5}{6}s + 1$. Clearly, as $t \ge 1$, $\mu(x) \ge 2$ if $s \ge 1$. So let s = 0. As $|\mathcal{X}(x)| \ge 3$ and by (R2)-(R4), x gets either $\frac{1}{3}$ or at least 1 from each set in $\mathcal{X}(x)$, we have $\mu(x) < 2$ only if t = 2 and $|\mathcal{X}(x)| = 3$, in which case, by (R4C1), $\mu(x) \ge \frac{1}{3} \cdot 2 + \frac{4}{3} = 2$.

Now we prove that for each $X \in \mathcal{X}$, the final charge $\mu'(X) \ge 0$.

Claim 3.3. For each $X \in \mathcal{X}$ with $|X| \leq 4$, $\mu'(X) \geq 0$.

Proof. If |X| = 2, then $\mu'(X) = 2 \cdot 2 - 3 - \max\{\frac{2}{3} + \frac{1}{3}, \frac{1}{2} \cdot 2\} = 0$ by Claim 3.1 and (R1). If |X| = 3, then $\mu'(X) = 2 \cdot 3 - 3 - \max\{\frac{4}{3} + \frac{5}{6} \cdot 2, 1 \cdot 3\} = 0$ by Claim 3.1 and (R2). If |X| = 4, then $\mu(X) = 5$. We know that there are three 6⁺-vertices and one 3-vertex in (R3A) by Claim 3.1. We will show

that X contains at most two 4-vertices when $\mathcal{X}(x) = \{X_1, X_2\}$ with $|X_1| = 2, |X_2| = 4$ for some $x \in X$. Thus, $\mu'(X) \ge 5 - \max\{2 + 1 \times 3, \frac{3}{2} \cdot 2 + 1 \cdot 2, \frac{5}{4} \cdot 4\} = 0$.

Suppose to the contrary that $X = \{v_i : i \in [4]\}$ in which $|X_1(v_i)| = 2$ and $|X_2(v_i)| = 4$ for $i \in [3]$. Let $X_1(v_i) = \{u_i, v_i\}$. Since for $i \in [3]$, $d(v_i) = 4$ and v_i has exactly one neighbor outside of X, X induces a clique. If $V(G) - X - \{u_1, u_2, u_3\}$ induces at least one edge e', then $S = \{u_1, u_2, u_3, v_4\}$ separates $\{v_1, v_2, v_3\}$ and e'. We obtain an essentially 4-cut S, a contradiction. Thus we may assume that $V(G) - X - \{u_1, u_2, u_3\}$ is an independent set. As $|V(G)| \ge 10$, $V(G) - X - \{u_1, u_2, u_3\} \ne \emptyset$. Since G is 3-connected, every vertex in $V(G) - X - \{u_1, u_2, u_3\}$ is adjacent to at least three vertices in S. Without loss of generality, we can assume that $w \in V(G) - X - \{u_1, u_2, u_3\}$ is adjacent to u_1 . Now we choose $S' = \{v_1, v_4, u_2, u_3\}$ separating $\{v_2, v_3\}$ and $V(G) - X - \{u_2, u_3\}$. Note that $v_2v_3, wu_1 \in E(G)$, so we get that S' is an essentially 4-cut, a contradiction.

So we may only consider $X \in \mathcal{X}$ with $|X| \geq 5$. Assume for a contradiction that for some $X_0 \in \mathcal{X}$ with $|X_0| \geq 5$, $\mu'(X_0) < 0$. We will simply use V_i, V'_i , and t_i to denote $V_i(X_0), V'_i(X_0)$ and $t_i(X_0)$ for $i \in [5] \cup \{0\}$. Note that $|X_0| = \sum_{i=0}^5 t_i$.

Claim 3.4. $2t_1 + 3t_2 + 4t_3 + 5t_4 + 6t_5 \le 17$.

Proof. By (R4), $0 > \mu'(X_0) = (2|X_0|-3) - 2t_0 - \frac{5}{3}t_1 - \frac{3}{2}t_2 - \frac{4}{3}t_3 - \frac{7}{6}t_4 - t_5 = \frac{1}{3}t_1 + \frac{1}{2}t_2 + \frac{2}{3}t_3 + \frac{5}{6}t_4 + t_5 - 3$. It follows that $2t_1 + 3t_2 + 4t_3 + 5t_4 + 6t_5 < 18$, so the inequality in the claim.

Notice that $V(G) - X_0 \neq \emptyset$, for if $X_0 = V(G)$, then $\{V, X_m\} \subseteq \mathcal{X}$, which implies that $\sum_{X \in \mathcal{X}} \mu(X) \ge (2|V|-3) + (2|X_m|-3) = 2|V|-2$, contradicting (2).

Claim 3.5. $V(G) - X_0$ is an independent set.

Proof. Assume on the contrary that $V(G) - X_0$ is not an independent set. We will reach a contradiction by a series of claims.

(c0) V_0 is independent if $V_0 \neq \emptyset$.

Proof of (c0). For otherwise, $X_0 - V_0$ is an essential cut of order at most 8, by Claim 3.4.

(c1)
$$e(V_0, V_1 \cup V_3) = 0.$$

Proof of (c1). Let $e = uv \in E(G)$ with $u \in V_0$ and $v \in V_1 \cup V_3$.

Assume that $v \in V_1$ and $vw \in E(G)$ with $w \in V'_1$. By definition d(w) = 3 and by Claim 3.1, $d(v) \ge 6$. Since $X_0 - V_0 - v + w$ is a cut of order $\sum_{i=1}^5 t_i \le 8$ and is not an essential cut, all edges in $E(G - X_0)$ must be incident with w. Let $ww' \in E(G)$ with $w' \notin X_0$. By Claim 3.1, $d(w') \ge 6$. Since ww' is the only edge incident with w' that is in $E(G - X_0)$, all other neighbors of w' are in $V_2 \cup V_4 \cup V_5$. In particular, $t_2 + t_4 + t_5 \ge 5$. By Claim 3.4, $t_1 = 1, t_2 = 5$ and $t_3 = t_4 = t_5 = 0$, and the only neighbor of vertices of V_2 in $V(G) - X_0$ is w'. Therefore, w has no neighbor other than vand w', a contradiction to d(w) = 3.

Let $v \in V_3$ and $vw_1, vw_2 \in E(G)$ with $w_1, w_2 \in V'_3$. By definition $d(w_1) = d(w_2) = 3$, and by Claim 3.1, $d(v) \ge 6$. Note that $X_0 \cup \{w_1, w_2\} - V_0 - v$ is a cut, whose order is at most $(t_1 + t_2 + t_3 + t_4 + t_5) + 1 \le \frac{1}{2}(17 - 2t_3) + 1 < 9$, and is not an essential cut, all edges in $E(G - X_0)$ must be incident with w_1 or w_2 . Let $w_1w' \in E(G)$ with $w' \notin X_0$. By Claim 3.1, $d(w') \ge 6$. Since $w'w_1, w'w_2$ are the only potential edges incident with w' that are in $E(G - X_0)$, all other neighbors of w' are in $V_2 \cup V_4 \cup V_5$. In particular, $t_2 + t_4 + t_5 \ge 4$. By Claim 3.4, $t_3 = 1, t_2 = 4$ and $t_1 = t_4 = t_5 = 0$, and the only neighbor of vertices of V_2 in $V(G) - X_0$ is w'. Therefore, w_1, w_2 have no neighbor other than v and w', a contradiction to $d(w_1) = d(w_2) = 3$. (c2) $t_1 = 0$.

Proof of (c2). Let $v_1 \in V_1$. Then $d(v_1) \ge 6$ and v_1 is adjacent to a 3-vertex $u_1 \in V'_1$.

We claim that v_1 has no neighbors in V_1 . For otherwise, let $v_1v'_1 \in E(G)$ with $v'_1 \in V_1$. Let $v'_1u'_1 \in E(G)$ with $u'_1 \in V'_1$. By definition, $d(u_1) = d(u'_1) = 3$. Then $X_0 - V_0 - \{v_1, v'_1\} + \{u_1, u'_1\}$ is a cut of order at most $\sum_{i=1}^5 t_i \leq 8$ and is not an essential cut. It follows that all edges in $E(G - X_0)$ are incident with u_1 or u'_1 . Let $u_1u \in E(G)$ with $u \notin X_0$. By Claim 3.1, $d(u) \geq 6$, and $N(u) \subseteq \{u_1, u'_1\} \cup V_2 \cup V_4 \cup V_5$. It follows that $t_2 + t_4 + t_5 \geq 4$. By Claim 3.4, $t_1 = 2, t_2 = 4$ and $t_3 = t_4 = t_5 = 0$. In particular, the only neighbor of vertices of V_2 in $V(G) - X_0$ is u. Then u_1, u'_1 have no neighbors other than v_1, v'_1 and u. So $u_1 = u'_1$, but then u should have 5 neighbors in V_2 , a contradiction again.

From above and (c1), $N(v_1) \subseteq X_0 - V_0 - V_1$. As $d(v_1) \ge 6$, $t_2 + t_3 + t_4 + t_5 \ge 5$. By Claim 3.4, we have that $t_1 = 1, t_2 = 5, t_3 = t_4 = t_5 = 0$ and v_1 is adjacent to every vertex in V_2 . Let $N(u_1) = \{v_1, w_1, w_2\}$. By definition and the minimality of $\sum_{i=1}^{m-1} (2|X_i| - 3), w_1, w_2 \notin V_2$ thus $w_1, w_2 \in V(G) - X_0$. By Claim 3.1, $d(w_i) \ge 6$ for $i \in [2]$. It follows that w_1 or w_2 (say w_1) is adjacent to at most two vertices in V_2 . Let $v_2 \in V_2$ be adjacent to $u_2 \in V'_2$ and $v_2w_1 \notin E(G)$. As $d(w_1) \ge 6, w_1$ must be adjacent to a vertex in $V(G) - X_0 - \{u_1, w_1, u_2\}$. So $V_2 \cup \{u_1, u_2\} - v_2$ is an essential 6-cut, a contradiction. \Box

(c3) $t_3 = 0.$

Proof of (c3). For otherwise, let $v_1 \in V_3$ such that $u_1v_1, u_2v_1 \in E(G)$ for 3-vertices $u_1, u_2 \in V'_3$. By Claim 3.1, $d(v_1) \ge 6$. By (c1) and (c2), $4 \le e(v_1, X_0) \le t_2 + (t_3 - 1) + t_4 + t_5$. From Claim 3.4, $t_4 = t_5 = 0$, and $3t_2 + 4t_3 \le 17$. So $(t_2, t_3) \in \{(3, 2), (4, 1)\}$ and v_1 is adjacent to all vertices in $V_2 \cup V_3 - v_1$.

By definition and the minimality of $\sum_{i=1}^{m-1} (2|X_i| - 3)$, u_1 and u_2 have no neighbor in V_2 . Let $W = (N(u_1) \cup N(u_2)) \cap (V(G) - X_0)$. If $W = \{w_1\}$, then $t_2 = 3, t_3 = 2$ and the neighbors of vertices of V_3 are u_1 and u_2 . Since $d(w_1) \ge 6$, w_1 has a neighbor in $V(G) - X_0 - \{u_1, u_2\}$. Then $V_2 \cup \{u_1, u_2\}$ is an essential 5-cut, a contradiction. So we may assume that $\{w_1, w_2\} \subseteq W$. As $t_2 \le 4$, some vertex in W, say w_1 , is adjacent to at most two vertices in V_2 . Let $v_2 \in V_2$ be not adjacent to w_1 and $v_2u' \in E(G)$ for $u' \in V'_2$. As $d(w_1) \ge 6$, w_1 must have a neighbor in $V(G) - X_0 - \{u_1, u_2, u'\}$. Therefore, $V_2 \cup V_3 \cup \{u_1, u_2, u'\} - \{v_1, v_2\}$ is an essential 6-cut, a contradiction.

(c4) $t_5 < 2$.

Proof of (c4). Assume that $t_5 \geq 2$. By Claim 3.4, $t_5 = 2$ and $t_2 + t_4 \leq 1$. As $|X_0| \geq 5$, $t_0 \geq 2$ and by (c0), $t_2 + t_4 = 1$ and each vertex in V_0 is adjacent to all three vertices in $V_2 \cup V_4 \cup V_5$. Let $V_0 = \{v_1, v_2, \ldots\}, V_2 \cup V_4 = \{u_1\}, V_5 = \{u_2, u_3\}$. Now $\{u_2, u_3\} \cup (N(u_1) - V_0)$ is a 4⁻-cut and the component $V_0 \cup \{u_1\}$ contains edges, $V(G) - X_0 - N(u_1)$ must be an independent set. When $u_1 \in V_4$, let $V'_4 = N(u_1) \cap (V(G) - X_0) = \{u, u'\}$ with d(u') = 3. Note that $N(u') \subseteq V_4 \cup V_5 \cup u$, for otherwise, the vertex $w \in N(w_1) - X_0 - u$ has degree at least 6, thus w must have a neighbor in $V(G) - X_0 - N(u_1)$. It follows that $\{u, w_1, u_2, u_3\}$ is an essential cut of size 4, a contradiction. When $u_1 \in V_2$, we let $V'_2 = \{u\}$. Since $\{u, u_2, u_3\}$ is a cut and the component containing V_0 contains edges, all edges in $V(G) - X_0$ must be adjacent to u. Let $W = V(G) - X_0 - N(u_1) = \{w_1, w_2, \ldots, w_k\}$ such that $N(w_i) = \{u, u_2, u_3\}$ for $i \geq 1$. We will find a spanning minimally rigid subgraph H in G - e for every $e \in E(G)$. • $t_0 = 2$. We claim that there exists either a $K_{3,3}$ or a K_3 in G - e. Note that the subgraph induced by $\{u, u_2, u_3\} \cup W$ contains a $K_{3,k}$. If $u_1 \in V_2$, then $k \ge 4$ since $|V(G)| \ge 10$. So there exists a $K_{3,3}$ in G - e. If $u_1 \in V_4$, then $k \ge 3$. So there exists a $K_{3,3}$ in G - eunless k = 3 and $e \in E[\{u, u_2, u_3\}, W]$. Next, we consider the case that k = 3 and $e \in E[\{u, u_2, u_3\}, W]$. If $N(u') \subseteq V_4 \cup V_5$, then u' is adjacent to u_1, u_2 and u_3 . So the subgraph induced by $\{u_1, u_2, u_3\} \cup \{v_1, v_2, u'\}$ contains a $K_{3,3}$. If u' is adjacent to u, then we assume that $N(u') = \{u_1, u_2, u\}$. In G - e, there exists a triangle $u_1u'u$.

If there exists a $K_{3,3}$ in G-e, then we choose a $K_{3,3}$ from G-e. Then we can easily add each of the rest vertices one by one by joining it with two vertices in the already-formed subgraph to obtain a spanning subgraph H in G-e. It is clear that $e(H) = 3 \cdot 3 + 2(n-6) =$ 2n-3, and for any subgraph H' of H, let $H^0 = H' \cap K_{3,3}$, then

 $e(H') \le 2n(H' - H^0) + e(H^0) \le 2n(H' - H^0) + 2n(H^0) - 3 = 2n - 3.$

If there exists a K_3 in G-e, then we choose a K_3 from G-e. Then add u_2 and then easily add each of the rest vertices one by one by joining it with two vertices in the already-formed subgraph to obtain a spanning subgraph H in G-e, since u_1 is adjacent to all vertices of X_0 . It is clear that e(H) = 3 + 2(n-3) = 2n-3, and for any subgraph H' of H, let $H^0 = H' \cap K_3$, then

$$e(H') \le 2n(H' - H^0) + e(H^0) \le 2n(H' - H^0) + 2n(H^0) - 3 = 2n - 3.$$

• $t_0 \geq 3$. Note that every vertex in V_0 is adjacent to u_1, u_2 and u_3 in G. So there exists a $K_{3,3}$ in G. Now we claim that there exists either a $K_{3,3}$ or a $K_{2,3} + e'$ in G - e. Clearly, there exists a $K_{3,3}$ in G - e unless $t_0 = 3$ and $e \in E[\{u_1, u_2, u_3\}, V_0]$. Next, we consider the case that $t_0 = 3$ and $e \in E[\{u_1, u_2, u_3\}, V_0]$. If $k \geq 3$, then the subgraph induced by $\{u, u_2, u_3\} \cup \{w_1, \ldots, w_k\}$ contains a $K_{3,3}$ in G - e. If $k \leq 2$, then $u_1 \in V_4$ and k = 2 since $t_0 = 3$ and $|V(G)| \geq 10$. In this case, if $N(u') \subseteq V_4 \cup V_5$, then u' is adjacent to u_1, u_2 and u_3 . So the subgraph induced by $\{u_1, u_2, u_3\} \cup \{v_1, v_2, v_3, u'\}$ contains a $K_{3,3}$. If u' is adjacent to u, then u is adjacent to u_2 since u is a 6^+ -vertex. So the subgraph induced by $\{u, u_2, u_3\} \cup \{u_1, u_2\}$ contains a $K_{2,3} + e'$.

If there exists a $K_{3,3}$ in G - e, then we choose a $K_{3,3}$ from G - e. Then add each of the rest vertices one by one by joining it with two vertices in the already-formed subgraph to obtain a spanning subgraph H. Again, $e(H) = 3 \cdot 3 + 2(n-6) = 2n - 3$, and for any subgraph H' of H, let $H^0 = H' \cap K_{3,3}$, then

$$e(H') \le 2n(H' - H^0) + e(H^0) \le 2n(H' - H^0) + 2n(H^0) - 3 = 2n - 3.$$

If there exists a $K_{2,3} + e'$ in G - e, then we choose a $K_{2,3} + e'$ from G - e. Then add each of the rest vertices one by one by joining it with two vertices in the already-formed subgraph to obtain a spanning subgraph H. Again, $e(H) = 3 \cdot 2 + 1 + 2(n-5) = 2n - 3$, and for any subgraph H' of H, let $H^0 = H' \cap K_{2,3} + e'$, then

$$e(H') \le 2n(H' - H^0) + e(H^0) \le 2n(H' - H^0) + 2n(H^0) - 3 = 2n - 3.$$

Therefore G contains a spanning minimally rigid subgraph in all cases, a contradiction to the assumption that G is a counterexample.

(c5)
$$t_4 = 0$$
.

Proof of (c5). For otherwise, let $v_1 \in V_4$ such that $u_1v_1, u_2v_1 \in E(G)$ for vertices $u_1, u_2 \in V'_4$ such that $d(u_1) = 3$.

Let $N(u_1) = \{v_1, w_1, w_2\}$ such that $w_1 \neq u_2$. By Claim 3.1, $d(v_1), d(w_1), d(w_2) \geq 6$. Assume that $w_1 \in X_0$. Then $w_1 \in V_4 \cup V_5$ and thus $t_4 + t_5 \geq 2$. By Claim 3.4, $|X_0 - V_0| = t_2 + t_4 + t_5 \leq 4$. It follows that v_1 has a neighbor v in V_0 . Note that $(X_0 - V_0 - v_1) \cup \{u_1, u_2\}$ is a cut of order at most 5 and is not an essential cut. If $w_2 \in V(G) - X_0 - u_2$, then all but w_2u_1 edges in $E(G - X_0)$ must be incident with u_2 . If $w_2 \notin V(G) - X_0 - u_2$, then all edges in $E(G - X_0)$ must be incident with u_2 . If $w_2 \notin V(G) - X_0 - u_2$, then all edges in $E(G - X_0)$ must be incident $w_1 + u_2$. If $w_2 \notin V(G) - u_2$, then all $w_2 + u_1 + u_2 + u$

So we may assume that $w_1 \in V(G) - X_0$. As $t_4 \ge 1$, we have that $|X_0 - V_0| = t_2 + t_4 + t_5 \le 5$ by Claim 3.4. Assume that $v \in V_0$ is a neighbor of v_1 . Then $C = (X_0 - V_0 - v_1) \cup \{u_1, u_2\}$ is a cut of order at most 6 and is not an essential cut. Therefore, w_1 has no neighbor in $V(G) - X_0 - \{u_1, u_2\}$. As $d(w_1) \ge 6$, it implies that $t_2 = 4, t_4 = 1, t_5 = 0$ and w_1 is adjacent to $\{u_1, u_2\} \cup V_2$. It follows that w_2 (which may be u_2) has at least three neighbors in $V(G) - X_0 - \{u_1, u_2, w_1\}$ from $d(w_2) \ge 6$. So there must exist an edge in $E(G - X_0 - \{u_1, u_2\})$ and C is an essential cut, a contradiction. Thus, $N(v_1) \cap X_0 \subseteq X_0 - V_0$. As $d(v_1) \ge 6$, $|X_0 - V_0| = 5$ with $t_2 = 4, t_4 = 1, t_5 = 0$ by Claim 3.4 and v_1 is adjacent to all vertices in V_2 . Suppose that w_1 is not adjacent to at least two vertices in V_2 . Let $v_2 \in V_2$ be not adjacent to w_1 and $v_2 u' \in E(G)$ for $u' \in V'_2$. Then w_1 has a neighbor in $V(G) - X_0 - \{u_1, u_2, u'\}$. Thus, $(X_0 - V_0 - \{v_1, v_2\}) \cup \{u_1, u_2, u'\}$ is an essential cut of order at most 6, a contradiction. So w_1 is not adjacent to at most one vertex in V_2 . As $d(w_2) \ge 6$, w_2 has at least two neighbors z_1, z_2 in $V(G) - X_0 - \{u_1, w_2, w_1\}$ and there must be at least one vertex in $\{z_1, z_2\}$, say z_1 , such that z_1 has no neighbor in V_2 . Let $v \in V_2$ be adjacent to w_1 . Then z_1 has a neighbor in $V(G) - X_0 - \{u_1, w_2, w_1\}$ and $(X_0 - V_0 - \{v_1, v_1\}) \cup \{u_1, w_2, w_1\}$ is an essential cut of order at most 6, a contradiction.

From (c1)-(c5) and Claim 3.4, $3t_2 + 6t_5 \le 17$. So $t_2 + 2t_5 \le 5$.

Assume that $t_0 = 0$. Then $t_2 = 5$ and $t_5 = 0$, since $|X_0| \ge 5$. As each vertex in V_2 has exactly one neighbor in $V(G) - X_0$, each vertex in V_2 has degree at most 5, in particular by Claim 3.1, no vertex has degree three. Assume first that $|V'_2| \le 2$. Then $V(G) = X_0 \cup V'_2$, for otherwise, V'_2 is a cut of order at most two. As $V(G) - X_0$ is not independent, V'_2 contains two vertices that are adjacent. Then one of them must have degree 3, but then the other must have degree at least 6, which is impossible. So $|V'_2| \ge 3$. Then V'_2 contains vertices with exactly one neighbor in V_2 , say x'_1, \ldots, x'_s for some $s \ge 1$. For each $i \in [s]$, let $x_i x'_i \in E(G)$ with $x_i \in V_2$. For each x'_i , if x'_i is adjacent to a vertex in $V(G) - X_0 - V'_2$, then $V'_2 - x'_i + x_i$ is an essential 5-cut, a contradiction. Thus all neighbors of x'_i are in $V_2 \cup V'_2$, in particular $V(G) = X_0 \cup V'_2$. Since $d(x_i) \le 5$, $d(x'_i) \ge 4$, which implies that $|V'_2| \ge 4$ and thus $s \ge 4$. We may assume that $x'_1 x'_2 \in E(G)$, as $d(x'_i) \ge 4$. Then $(V'_2 - \{x_1, x'_2\}) \cup \{x_1, x_2\}$ is an essential cut of order at most 5, since $x'_1 x'_2 \in E(G)$ and x_3 has a neighbor in $V_2 - \{x_1, x_2\}$, a contradiction.

Now let $V_0 \neq \emptyset$. Then $t_2 + t_5 \geq 3$ since the neighbors of V_0 are in $V_2 \cup V_5$. By Claim 3.4 and (c4), $3 \leq t_2 \leq 5, t_5 = 0$, or $2 \leq t_2 \leq 3, t_5 = 1$. Let $v \in V_2$ with neighbor $v' \in V'_2$ such that v has a neighbor in V_0 . Then $C = V_2 \cup V_5 - v + v'$ is a set of size at most 5 such that the component containing v contains an edge. Since G is essentially 9-connected, the other components must be trivial and all edges in $V(G) - X_0$ must be adjacent to v'. We assume $|V(G) - X_0| = t$. So we have

that

$$\sum_{V(G)-X_0} d(v) \le t_2 + 2(t-1) + tt_5 = (2+t_5)t + t_2 - 2$$

for $t \ge 2$. By Claim 3.1, $\sum_{v \in V(G)-X_0} d(v) \ge \min\{3t+3,4t\}$. A simple computation gives $t_2 = 1, t_5 = 2$, a contradiction to (c4).

By Claim 3.5, assume that $V(G) - X_0$ consists of $t \ge 1$ isolated vertices. Since G is 3-connected, each of these t vertices has degree at least 3, and thus $|E[G - X_0, V_1 \cup V_2 \cup V_3 \cup V_4]| \ge (3 - t_5)t$. On the other hand, by definitions of V_i for $1 \le i \le 5$ and Claim 3.4, we have

$$(3-t_5)t \le |E[G-X_0, V_1 \cup V_2 \cup V_3 \cup V_4]| \le t_1 + t_2 + 2t_3 + 2t_4 \le t_1 + \frac{3}{2}t_2 + 2t_3 + 2t_4 \le \frac{1}{2}(17 - 6t_5).$$

Therefore, $t \leq \frac{17-6t_5}{6-2t_5} < 3$ and $V(G) - X_0$ contains at most two isolated vertices. It follows that $3t \leq |E[X_0, G - X_0]| \leq t_1 + t_2 + 2t_3 + 2t_4 + 2t_5$. Therefore, $2t_1 + 3t_2 + 4t_3 + 5t_4 + 6t_5 \geq 6t$, and $\mu'(X_0) = (2|X_0|-3) - 2t_0 - \frac{5}{3}t_1 - \frac{3}{2}t_2 - \frac{4}{3}t_3 - \frac{7}{6}t_4 - t_5 = -3 + \frac{1}{6}(2t_1 + 3t_2 + 4t_3 + 5t_4 + 6t_5) \geq -3 + t \geq -2$.

We may claim that for each $y \in G - X_0$ and $X \in \mathcal{X}(y)$, $|X| \leq 4$. Suppose otherwise that $X \in \mathcal{X}(y)$ with $|X| \geq 5$. Note that X only needs to cover all edges in $E[X \cap X_0, X \cap (G - X_0)]$. On the other hand, each edge in $E[X \cap X_0, X \cap (G - X_0)]$ may be covered with a set of order two, that is, edges in $E[X \cap X_0, X \cap (G - X_0)]$ may be covered with at most $e(X \cap X_0, X \cap (G - X_0))$ sets of order two. It follows from the minimality of $\sum_{i=1}^{m-1} (2|X_i| - 3)$ that $e(X \cap X_0, X \cap (G - X_0)) \geq 2|X| - 3 \geq 7$. As $|X| \geq 5$, $X \cap (V_1 \cup V_3) = \emptyset$. Also, $X \cap (G - X_0)$ contains at most two vertices. Therefore,

$$7 \le e(X \cap X_0, X \cap (G - X_0)) \le t_2 + 2t_4 + 2t_5.$$

From Claim 3.4, $3t_2 + 5t_4 + 6t_5 \le 17$, so $t_4 + t_5 \le 3$. Furthermore, if $t_4 + t_5 = 3$ then $t_2 = 0$, if $t_4 + t_5 = 2$ then $t_2 \le 2$, if $t_4 + t_5 = 1$ then $t_2 \le 4$, and if $t_4 + t_5 = 0$ then $t_2 \le 5$. In any case, $t_2 + 2(t_4 + t_5) \le 6$, a contradiction.

Therefore, $\mu'(X_0) \ge -2$ and by Claim 3.3 for every $X \in \mathcal{X} - X_0$, $\mu'(X) \ge 0$. It follows that

$$2|V| - 2 > \sum_{X \in \mathcal{X}} \mu(X) = \sum_{X \in \mathcal{X}} \mu'(X) + \sum_{x \in V(G)} \mu(x) \ge -2 + 0 + 2|V| \ge 2|V| - 2,$$

a contradiction, which completes the proof.

4. Non-rigid graphs that are 3-connected and essentially t-connected for $t \leq 8$.

In this section, we will construct 3-connected essentially t-connected non-rigid graphs for each $t \leq 8$. We start with a 3-connected bipartite T = (X, Y) such that each $x \in X$ is a 3-vertex and each vertex $y \in Y$ is a t-vertex. Then G is obtained from T by replacing each $y \in Y$ with K_t and making vertices in $N_T(y)$ adjacent to different vertices of the K_t . See Figure 1 for the 3-connected essentially t-connected for $t \in \{6,7\}$ graphs that are not rigid.

Let n_3 and n_t denote the number of 3-vertex and t-vertex in T, respectively. Note that $3n_3 = tn_t$, $n_3 + tn_t = n(G)$ and it follows that $2n(G) - 3 = 2 \cdot 4n_3 - 3 = 8n_3 - 3$. Let G' be a spanning subgraph of G. Then G' contains at most (2t - 3) edges from each of the t-cliques. So when $t \le 8$ and n > 96,

$$|E(G')| \le 3n_3 + n_t \cdot (2t - 3) = 9n_3 - \frac{9}{t}n_3 = \frac{9}{4}(1 - \frac{1}{t})n(G') < 2n(G') - 3.$$

Then G does not contain a spanning minimally rigid subgraph, that is, G is not rigid.



FIGURE 1. 3-connected essential t-connected non-rigid graphs for t = 6, 7

Next, we will show that the graph G is 3-connected and essentially t-connected. It is easy to see that G - u - v is connected for all $u, v \in V(G)$. Let $S \in V(G)$ with $|S| \leq t - 1$. Note that any vertex of K_t is a t-vertex and adjacent to t - 1 vertices of degree t and one 3-vertex. Thus, there must be a t-vertex u of any K_t is adjacent to a 3-vertex denoted by x in G - S. And then either u is adjacent to other 3-vertices (except x) or x is adjacent to other t-vertices (except u). We can extend this nontrivial component until there are only isolated vertices in G - S. So we have that G is 3-connected and essentially t-connected.

5. Appendix: complete of Claim 3.1

Claim 3.1: In a 3-connected essentially 9-connected graph G, every 3-vertex is only adjacent to 6^+ -vertices.

Proof. Let $x \in V(G)$ be a 3-vertex and $N(x) = \{v_1, v_2, v_3\}$. Suppose that v_1 is a 5⁻-vertex and $d(v_3), d(v_2) \ge d(v_1)$. We will simply use d_i to denote $d(v_i)$ for i = 1,2,3, respectively. Let $N'(v_1) = N(v_1) - \{x, v_2, v_3\}$. Then let $S = \{v_2, v_3\} \cup N'(v_1)$ and |S| = s. Note that $s \le 6$ and one component of G - S contains edge xv_1 . Let $U = \{x, v_1\}$. We also have $s \ge 3$, since G is 3connected. As G has no essential cut of size less than 9, the other components of G - S must form an independent set, say $T = \{u_1, \ldots, u_t\}$. Note that $N(u_i) \subseteq S$. We will find a spanning minimally rigid subgraph H^* of G - e for every $e \in E(G)$, which implies that G is not a counterexample.

First of all, we claim that $s \ge 4$. If not, then s = 3 and v_1 has at least one neighbor in $\{v_2, v_3\}$ by $d(v_1) \ge 3$. We know that all vertices in T are adjacent to S as $d(v) \ge 3$ for $v \in V(G)$. Since $|V(G)| \ge 10$, we have that $t \ge 10 - 2 - 3 = 5$. It follows that there is a $K_{3,3}$ between S and Tin G - e, for any $e \in E(G)$. We will construct H^* from this $K_{3,3}$ by adding remaining vertices one by one and joining each vertex to its (any) two neighbors in current H^* in G - e. Denote $K_{3,3} \cap T = \{u_1, u_2, u_3\}$. Then $u_4, \ldots, u_t \in V(H^*)$, since u_i has at least two neighbors in $K_{3,3}$ for $i \in \{4, \ldots, t\}$ in G - e. If e is not incident with x, then we can add x and xv_2, xv_3 to H^* ; and add v_1 and two incident edges other than e. If e is incident with x, then we can add v_1 and two edges in $E[v_1, S]$ to H^* ; and add x and two incident edges incident other than e. Thus H^* is a spanning subgraph of G - e and $|E(H^*)| = 3 \cdot 3 + 2(n - 6) = 2n - 3$. As $|E(K_{3,3})| = 9 = 2|V(K_{3,3})| - 3$, for any subgraph H' of H^* with $|H'| \ge 2$ and $H^0 = H' \cap K_{3,3}$, then

$$|E(H')| \le 2|V(H' - H^0)| + |E(H^0)| \le 2|V(H' - H^0)| + 2|V(H^0)| - 3 = 2|V(H')| - 3,$$

which implies that H^* is a spanning minimally rigid subgraph of G - e and so G is not a counterexample. This completes the proof of the claim that $s \ge 4$.

Let $T_0 = N(v_2) \cap N(v_3) \cap T$ and $|T_0| = t_0$. For $s \ge 4$, we take the spanning subgraph H of G that consists of the following types of edges.

type 1: all edges incident with v_i in G, for $i \in [3]$.

type 2: all edges between S and T in G.

We will prove several conclusions.

Conclusion 1. $|E(H)| \ge 2n - 2$.

Proof. Suppose to the contrary that $|E(H)| \le 2n - 3 = 2s + 2t + 1$. Recall that $4 \le s \le 6$. We first consider the case s = 4. As $|V(G)| \ge 10$, $t \ge 10 - 2 - 4 = 4$. Note that

$$|E_H[U,S] \cup E(U)| = d_1 + 2,$$

and

$$2s + 2t + 1 \ge |E(H)| \ge |E[S,T]| + |E_H[U,S] \cup E(U)| \ge 3t + (d_1 + 2) \ge 3t + 5$$

It implies that $d_1 = 3, t = 4$ and d(v) = 3 for any $v \in T$. It follows that $|E_H(S)| = 0$ from the simple computation. Then any $v \in T$ is not adjacent to one vertex $v' \in S$ since s = 4. If $v' \in N'(v_1)$, then consider $C = x \cup (N'(v_1) - v') \cup (T - v)$ and |C| = 5. Since $E[\{v_2, v_3\}, v'] = \emptyset$, $\{v, v_2\}$ and $\{v_1, v'\}$ belong to different nontrivial components of G - C, a contradiction. If $v' \in \{v_2, v_3\}$, then consider $C = v_1 \cup (\{v_2, v_3\} - v') \cap (T - v)$. Note that |C| = 5 and G - C contains two nontrivial components $\{x, v'\}$ and $v \cup N'(v_1)$ since $E[\{v_2, v_3\}, N'(v_1)] = \emptyset$, a contradiction.

Next, we will show three useful facts before considering $5 \le s \le 6$.

Fact 1: $t + |E_H(S)| \le s$.

Proof. Clearly, $|E_H[U, S] \cup E(U)| = d_1 + 2$ and $s \le d_1 + 1$. According to types 1 and 2, we have that $2s + 2t + 1 \ge |E(H)| \ge |E_H[U, S] \cup E(U)| + |E_H(S)| + 3|T| = (d_1 + 2) + |E_H(S)| + 3t$. A direct computation shows that $t + |E_H(S)| \le 2s + 2t + 1 - (d_1 + 2) - 2t \le s$.

Fact 2: There exists a vertex v_i with $i \in \{2, 3\}$ such that $|N(v_i) \cap N'(v_1)| \le 2$.

Proof. Assume for a contradiction that both v_2 and v_3 have at least three neighbors in $N'(v_1)$, then $|E_H(S)| \ge 6$. By Fact 1, we know that $|E_H(S)| = s = 6$ and t = 0. It implies that |V(G)| = 2 + s + t = 8, a contradiction.

Fact 3: Suppose that $|V(G)| \leq 12$. If $|N(v_i) \cap N'(v_1)| \leq 2$ and $v_iv_1 \notin E(G)$ for some $i \in \{2,3\}$, then every vertex in $N(v_i) \cap T$ must be adjacent to all vertices in $N'(v_1) - N(v_i)$.

Proof. Without loss of generality we may assume that i = 2. Suppose to the contrary that there is a vertex $u \in N(v_2) \cap T$ and a vertex $v \in N'(v_1) - N(v_2)$ such that $uv \notin E(G)$. Let $C = V(G) - \{v_1, v, u, v_2\}$. Note that $|C| \leq 12 - 4 = 8$ and $vv_1, uv_2 \in E(G)$. Clearly, $\{v, v_1\}$ and $\{u, v_2\}$ belong to different nontrivial components of G - C, which contradicts the fact that G is essentially 9-connected.

Now we are ready to deal with the case $5 \le s \le 6$.

When s = 5, we know that $4 \le d_1 \le 5$. Note that $|V(G)| = 2 + s + t \le 2 + 2s = 12$ by Fact 1. Suppose that there is a vertex in $\{v_2, v_3\}$, say v_2 , such that v_2 has no neighbors in $N'(v_1) \cup v_1$. By Fact 3, every vertex in $N(v_2) \cap T$ must be adjacent to all vertices in $N'(v_1)$. Note that $|N'(v_1)| = 3$. Thus, the neighbors of v_2 in T are 4⁺-vertices. Note that $d_2 \ge d_1 \ge 4$ and $|N(v_2) \cap S| \le 1$. So $|N(v_2) \cap T| \ge 2$. If $|N(v_2) \cap T| \ge 3$, then $|E(H)| \ge |E[U, S] \cup E(U)| + 3|T| + (4 - 3) \cdot 3 \ge (d_1 + 2) + 3t + 3 \ge 2s + 2t + 2$, a contradiction. If $|N(v_2) \cap T| = 2$, then $|N(v_2) \cap S| = 1$ as $d(v_2) \ge 4$ and $|E_H(S)| \ge 1$ by type 1. As $|V(G)| \ge 10$, $t = |V(G)| - 2 - s \ge 3$. Thus, $|E(H)| \ge |E[U,S] \cup E(U)| + |E_H(S)| + 3|T| + (4-3) \cdot 2 \ge (d_1+2) + 3t + 3 \ge 2s + 2t + 2,$ a contradiction. Therefore, each of $\{v_2, v_3\}$ must have at least one neighbor in $N'(v_1) \cup v_1$ and $|E_H(S)| + |E[U, S] \cup E(U)| \ge d_1 + 2 + |E_H(S)| \ge 8.$

Since $|E(H)| \leq 2s + 2t + 1$, $3t \leq |E[S,T]| \leq (2s + 2t + 1) - 8$. We get that $t \leq 3$ by a direct computation. Since $t \ge 3$, we have t = 3 and |E[S,T]| = 3t, that is, every vertex in T is a 3vertex. Thus, $|E_H(S)| + |E[U,S] \cup E(U)| = 8$. It follows that each of $\{v_2, v_3\}$ must have exactly one neighbor in $N'(v_1) \cup v_1$ and $v_2v_3 \notin E(G)$. Note that v_1 is adjacent to at most one vertex in $\{v_2, v_3\}$. There exists a vertex in $\{v_2, v_3\}$, say v_2 , such that every vertex in $N(v_2) \cap T$ is adjacent to all vertices in $N'(v_1) - N(v_2)$ and $|N'(v_1) - N(v_2)| \ge 2$ by Fact 3. Thus, each vertex in T_0 is a 4⁺-vertex. Since $d_3, d_2 \ge d_1 \ge 4$, we have that $t_0 = d_2 + d_3 - 4 - t \ge 1$. That is, there is at least one vertex u in T_0 of degree at least 4, a contradiction.

When s = 6, we have that $d_1 = 5$ and v_1 is not adjacent to v_2 and v_3 .

We claim that $t \ge 5$. Suppose to the contrary that $t \le 4$. Then $|V(G)| = 2 + s + t \le 12$. By Fact 2, there is a vertex $v_i, i \in \{2, 3\}$, say v_2 , such that $|N(v_2) \cap N'(v_1)| \leq 2$. According to Fact 3, every vertex in $N(v_2) \cap T$ is adjacent to all vertices in $N'(v_1) - N(v_2)$. Thus, the degree of each vertex in T_0 is at least 4. Note that

$$d_2 + d_3 - 2 = |N(v_2) \cap N'(v_1)| + |N(v_3) \cap N'(v_1)| + 2|N(v_2) \cap v_3| + |N(v_2) \cap T| + |N(v_3) \cap T|.$$

Therefore, we have that

$$\begin{aligned} 2s+2t+1 &\geq |E(H)| &= |E[U,S] \cup E(U)| + |E_H(S)| + |E[S,T]| \\ &\geq (d_1+2) + |N(v_2) \cap N'(v_1)| + |N(v_3) \cap N'(v_1)| + |N(v_2) \cap v_3| + 3|T| + |T_0| \\ &\geq (d_1+2) + (d_2+d_3-2-1) - (|N(v_2) \cap T| + |N(v_3) \cap T|) + 3|T| + |T_0| \\ &= d_1 + d_2 + d_3 + 2t - 1, \end{aligned}$$

since $t + t_0 \ge |N(v_2) \cap T| + |N(v_3) \cap T|$. As $d_i \ge 5, i \in [3]$ and s = 6, we get $13 \ge 15 - 1$ by the computation, a contradiction. This completes the proof of the claim that $t \geq 5$.

By Fact 1, we have that $5 \le t \le 6$. We claim that v_i must have at least one neighbor in $N'(v_1)$ for any $i \in \{2,3\}$. Suppose to the contrary that there is a vertex $v_i, i \in \{2,3\}$, say v_2 , such that $N(v_2) \cap N'(v_1) = \emptyset.$

Let $W(v) = \{w : w \in N'(v_1) \& vw \notin E(G), \text{ for } v \in N(v_2) \cap T\}$. We show that $|W(v)| \le t - 4$, for any $v \in N(v_2) \cap T$. If not, then there is a vertex $u \in N(v_2) \cap T$ such that $|W(u)| \ge t - 3$. Consider $C = V(G) - (\{v_1, v_2, u\} \cup W(u))$. Note that $|C| \le 2 + s + t - (3 + t - 3) = 8$. Clearly, $v_1 \cup W(u)$ and $\{u, v_2\}$ belong to different components of G - C. Both of them contain at least one edge, a contradiction to the fact that G is essentially 9-connected. Thus $|W(v)| \leq t - 4$.

Therefore, we have that the degree of each vertex v in $N(v_2) \cap T$ is at least $|N'(v_1)| - |W(v)| + 1 \ge 1$ 9-t. The degree of each vertex in T_0 is at least 10-t.

Now we show that $t_0 \ge 1$. By Fact 1, $|E_H(S)| \le s - t = 6 - t$. Since $N(v_2) \cap N'(v_1) = \emptyset$, $|N(v_3) \cap S| = |E_H(S)|$. Thus, $|N(v_3) \cap T| \ge d_3 - 1 - |N(v_3) \cap S| \ge t + d_3 - 7$. Therefore,

$$t_0 \ge |N(v_2) \cap T| + |N(v_3) \cap T| - t \ge (d_2 - 2) + (t + d_3 - 7) - t = d_2 + d_3 - 9 \ge 1.$$

Thus,

$$|E(H)| \ge |E[U,S] \cup E(U)| + 3|T| + (10 - t - 3) \cdot t_0 \ge d_1 + 2t + 9 = 2s + 2t + 2.$$

This leads to a contradiction, completing the proof of the claim that v_i has at least one neighbor in $N'(v_1)$ for any $i \in \{2, 3\}$.

It implies that $|E_H(S)| \ge 2$. So

$$|E(H)| \ge |E[U,S] \cup E(U)| + |E_H(S)| + 3|T| \ge (d_1 + 2) + 2 + 3t \ge 2s + 2t + 2,$$

a contradiction. This completes the proof of Conclusion 1.

Thus H is a spanning subgraph of G with $|E(H)| \ge 2n-2$, and we can find a spanning subgraph H_1 of H - e with $|E(H_1)| = 2n-3$ for any $e \in E(G)$. If H_1 is a spanning minimally rigid subgraph of G - e, then we are done. So we assume that H_1 is not a spanning minimally rigid subgraph of G - e, that is, there is a subgraph $Z \subseteq H_1$ of size at least 2 such that |E(Z)| > 2|V(Z)| - 3. Choose $Z \subseteq H_1$ such that Z is a minimal subgraph. That is, |E(Z)| > 2|V(Z)| - 3. But for any proper subgraph Z' of Z, $|E(Z')| \le 2|V(Z')| - 3$. Clearly, $|V(Z)| \ge 4$ and $d_Z(v) \ge 3$ for each $z \in V(Z)$.

Conclusion 2. Z must satisfy one of the following conditions.
(a) |V(Z) ∩ S| ≥ 3.
(b) V(Z) = {x, v₁, v₂, v₃} and Z is a K₄.

Proof. Suppose that $|V(Z) \cap S| \leq 2$. Then $|N(v) \cap Z| \leq 2$ for any $v \in T$, which implies that $V(Z) \cap T = \emptyset$ by the minimality of Z. As $|V(Z)| \geq 4$ and $|V(Z) \cap S| \leq 2$, $U \subseteq V(Z)$ and Z must be a K_4 . Since x is not adjacent to $N'(v_1)$, $N'(v_1) \notin V(Z)$ and $V(Z) = \{x, v_1, v_2, v_3\}$.

We pick a spanning subgraph Z_0 of Z such that $|E(Z_0)| = 2|V(Z_0)| - 3$. A Laman graph (minimally rigid graph) G is **maximal** if no Laman graph properly contains G. We will show that we can obtain a spanning minimally rigid subgraph H^* of G - e by adding the remaining vertices of G and some edges in E(G) to Z_0 . Firstly, if $x_i \in V(G) - V(Z_{i-1})$ and x_i has at least two neighbors in Z_{i-1} in G - e, then add vertex x_i and two edges (other than e) between x_i and Z_{i-1} to Z_{i-1} . Denote by Z_i the resulting graph. So $V(Z_i) = V(Z_{i-1}) \cup x_i$ and $|E(Z_i)| = |E(Z_{i-1})| + 2$. Suppose that $i \in [k]$, that is, we can add at most k vertices to Z_0 .

Clearly, $|E(Z_k)| = |E(Z_0)| + 2k = 2|V(Z_k)| - 3$. For any subgraph $H' \subseteq Z_k$ with $|H'| \ge 2$, we have that $|E(H')| \le 2|V(Z_0 \cap H')| - 3 + 2(|V(H')| - |V(Z_0)|) \le 2|V(H')| - 3$. For convenience, let $S' = V(Z_k) \cap S$ and $T' = V(Z_k) \cap T$. Let $S - S' = \{w_1, w_2, \ldots\}$ and $T - T' = \{u_1, u_2, \ldots\}$.

Conclusion 3. If $S' \nsubseteq N'(v_1)$ and $U \nsubseteq Z_k$, then the following hold. (a) $e \in E[U, S'] \cup E(U)$.

(b) Let $U = \{x_1, x_2\}$. If $x_1 \in U$ has at least two neighbors in S', then $x_2 \notin Z_k$ and x_2 has at most one neighbor in S'.

Proof. By Conclusion 2, $|S'| \ge |V(Z) \cap S| \ge 3$.

(a) If $e \notin E[U, S'] \cup E(U)$, then there is a vertex say $x_1 \in U$ that has at least two neighbors in S' and $x_1 \in Z_k$. Another vertex $x_2 \in U$ must have at least two neighbors in $S' \cup x_1$ and $x_2 \in Z_k$, a contradiction.

(b) If $x_2 \in Z_k$, then $|N(x_1) \cap (x_2 \cup S')| \ge 3$ and $x_1 \in Z_k$, a contradiction. Thus, $x_2 \notin Z_k$. If $|N(x_2) \cap S'| \ge 2$, then $e \in E[x_2, S']$, as $x_2 \notin Z_k$. So in G - e, x_1 has at least two neighbors in S' and $x_1 \in Z_k$. Since $x_2x_1 \in E(G - e)$ and $|E[x_2, S'] - e| \ge 1$, we have that $x_2 \in Z_k$, a contradiction. \Box

Next, we construct $Z_{k'}$, when $U \not\subseteq Z_k$ and $S' \not\subseteq N'(v_1)$. Note that $|S'| \ge 3$ by Conclusion 2. Let $U' = U - Z_k$. In G, there must exist a vertex, say $x_1 \in U$ that has at least two neighbors in S' and

another vertex, say $x_2 \in U$ that has at least one neighbor in S'. By Conclusion 3(b), $x_2 \in U'$. If U' = U, then add x_1, x_2 and $e_1, e_2 \in E[x_1, S'], e_3 \in E[x_2, S'], x_1x_2$ to Z_k and delete e to get $Z_{k'}$. If $U' = x_2$, then we add x_2 and $x_1x_2, e_3 \in E[x_2, S']$ and delete e to get $Z_{k'}$. Therefore, we have that $|E(Z_{k'})| = 2|V(Z_{k'})| - 4$.

Conclusion 4. Let $S_0 = \{w : w \in S - S' \& N(w) \cap (Z_k - U) = \emptyset\}$ and $S_1 = \{w : w \in S - S' \& |N(w) \cap (Z_k - U)| = 1\}$. If $S' \notin N'(v_1)$ and $U \notin Z_k$, then $|S_0| \ge 2$.

Proof. By Conclusion 3, $e \in E[U, S'] \cup E(U)$ and $S - S' \neq \emptyset$. So $|N(w) \cap (Z_k - U)| \leq 1$ for each $w \in S - S'$ and $S_0 \cup S_1 = S - S'$. Suppose to the contrary that $|S_0| \leq 1$. If $S_0 = \{w_1\}$, then we add each vertex $w \in S_1$ and its two incident edges $e_1 \in E[w, U], e_2 \in E[w, Z_k - U]$ to $Z_{k'}$. Then add the remaining vertices of T one by one by joining it with two neighbors in the existing subgraph. At last, add w_1 and three incident edges including $e' \in E[w_1, U]$. If $S_0 = \emptyset$, then choose $w_1 \in S_1$ and add each vertex $w \in S_1 - w_1$ and two incident edges $e_1 \in E[w, U], e_2 \in E[w, Z_k - U]$ to $Z_{k'}$. Then add the remaining vertices of T one by one by joining it with two neighbors in the already-formed subgraph. At last, add w_1 and three incident edges including $e' \in E[w, U], e_2 \in E[w, Z_k - U]$ to $Z_{k'}$. Then add the remaining vertices of T one by one by joining it with two neighbors in the already-formed subgraph. At last, add w_1 and three incident edges including $e' \in E[w_1, U]$. Note that $|E(Z_{k'})| = 2|V(Z_{k'})| - 4$. Thus,

$$|E(H^*)| = |E(Z_{k'})| + 2|V(G) - V(Z_k)| + 1 = 2|V(G)| - 3.$$

We will show that $|E(H')| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$ for any subgraph $H' \subseteq H^*$ with $|H'| \geq 2$, to reach a contradiction. Clearly, if $H' \subseteq Z_k$, then $|E(H')| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$. Suppose that $V(H') \subseteq V(H^*) - V(Z_k)$. If $U' \cap V(H') = \emptyset$, then

$$\begin{split} |E(H')| &\leq |V(H') \cap (S - S')| \cdot |V(H') \cap (T - T')| + |E[S - S']| \\ &\leq \max\{|V(H')| - 1, 2(|V(H')| - 2) + 1, 2(|V(H')| - 3) + 2\} \\ &\leq 2|V(H')| - 3. \end{split}$$

If $|U' \cap V(H')| = 1$, then

$$\begin{split} |E(H')| &\leq |V(H') \cap (S - S')| \cdot |V(H') \cap (T - T')| + |E[S - S']| \\ &+ |E[U' \cap V(H'), (S - S') \cap V(H')]| \\ &\leq \max\{(|V(H')| - 2) + 1, 2(|V(H')| - 3) + 1 + 2, 2(|V(H')| - 4) + 2 + 3\} \\ &\leq 2|V(H')| - 3. \end{split}$$

If $|U' \cap V(H')| = 2$, then

$$\begin{split} E(H')| &\leq |V(H') \cap (S - S')| \cdot |V(H') \cap (T - T')| + |E[S - S']| \\ &+ |E[U' \cap V(H'), (S - S') \cap V(H')]| + |E(U')| \\ &\leq \max\{(|V(H')| - 3) + 1, 2(|V(H')| - 4) + 1 + 2, 2(|V(H')| - 5) + 2 + 3\} + 1 \\ &\leq 2|V(H')| - 3. \end{split}$$

Next, we consider that $V(H') \cap V(Z_k) \neq \emptyset$ and $V(H') \cap (V(H^*) - V(Z_k)) \neq \emptyset$. Note that Z_k is the unique maximal Laman subgraph in $H^* - w_1$. Since $|N(w_1) \cap Z_k| \leq 1$, we have that $|E(H')| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$. This completes the proof of Conclusion 4.

Conclusion 5. $2 \leq |S - S'| \leq 3$.

Proof. By Conclusion 2, if $6 \ge s \ge 5$, then $|S'| \ge |V(Z) \cap S| \ge 3$ and $|S - S'| \le 3$. If s = 4, then $|S'| \ge |V(Z) \cap S| \ge 2$ and $|S - S'| \le 2$. Suppose to the contrary that $|S - S'| \le 1$. Then all but at most one vertex in T are adjacent to at least two vertices in S' in G - e, that is, $|T - T'| \le 1$.

If $T - T' = u_1$, then u_1 is adjacent to $w_1 \in S - S'$ and is incident with e in G as $d(u_1) \geq 3$. Note that $|N(w_1) \cap Z_k| \leq 1$ since $w_1 \in S - S'$ and w_1 is not incident with e. It implies that $|N(w_1) \cap (V(G) - V(Z_k))| \geq 2$ and $U \not\subseteq Z_k$. By Conclusion 3(a), $e \in E(U) \cup E[U, S']$, a contradiction to the fact that e is incident with u_1 . So we assume that T = T'. If S = S', then $U \subseteq Z_k$ and $V(Z_k) = V(G)$. Note that Z_k is a spanning minimally rigid subgraph of G - e, a contradiction. If $S - S' = w_1$, then $|N(w_1) \cap (V(G) - V(Z_k))| \geq 1$ and $U \not\subseteq Z_k$. Note that $S' \not\subseteq N'(v_1)$, we have that $e \in E(U) \cup E[U, S']$ by Conclusion 3(a). As e is not incident with w_1 , $|N(w_1) \cap (V(G) - V(Z_k))| \geq 2$. It follows that $x, v_1 \notin Z_k$ and w_1 is adjacent to x and v_1 . So $d(w_1) = 3$ and $w_1 \in \{v_2, v_3\}$. As $|S| \geq 4$ and $N(v_1) \cap \{v_2, v_3\} \neq \emptyset$, $d(v_1) \geq 4$, a contradiction to the fact that $d(v_2)$, $d(v_3) \geq d(v_1)$.

It is not hard to see that $d(v_1) \ge 4$. Otherwise if $d(v_1) = 3$, since $s \ge 4$, it follows that s = 4and v_1 is not adjacent to v_2 and v_3 . By conclusion 2, $|S'| \ge |V(Z) \cap S'| \ge 3$ and $|S - S'| \le 1$, a contradiction to Conclusion 5. It implies that 3-vertices are only adjacent to 4⁺-vertices.

To complete the proof, we now construct a spanning minimally rigid subgraph H^* by considering the following cases.

Case 1: $S' \not\subseteq N'(v_1)$.

Subcase 1.1: $S - S' \subseteq N'(v_1)$ and |S - S'| = 2.

(i) Suppose that $U \subseteq V(Z_k)$.

We claim that $|T - T'| \ge 2$. If $e \notin E[S - S', Z_k]$, then $|T - T'| \ge 2$ as $N(S - S') \subseteq v_1 \cup (T - T')$ and G is 3-connected. If $e \in E[S - S', Z_k]$, then $|N(S - S') \cap (Z_k - v_1)| \le 1$ and $|T - T'| \ge 1$ as $N(S - S') \subseteq Z_k \cup (T - T')$ and G is 3-connected. As u_1 is not incident with e, $|N(u_1) \cap S'| \le 1$ for $u_1 \in T - T'$. It follows that $d(u_1) = 3$ and u_1 is adjacent to w_1 and w_2 . Since 3-vertices are only adjacent to 4⁺-vertices, w_1 and w_2 are 4⁺-vertices. There exists a vertex in S - S', say w_1 , that is not incident with e. As $N(w_1) \subseteq \{v_1, w_2\} \cup (T - T')$, we get that $|T - T'| \ge 2$.

Let $N'(v_i) = N(v_i) \cap (T - T')$ and $N''(v_i) = N(v_i) \cap (S - S')$ for $i \in \{2,3\}$. We show that $|N'(v_i)| \ge 2$ for any $i \in \{2,3\}$. Suppose to the contrary that there is a vertex, say v_2 , such that $|N'(v_2)| \le 1$. Consider $C = v_1 \cup N'(v_2) \cup (S' - v_2) \cup N''(v_2)$. Note that $|C| \le 6$ as $|N''(v_2)| \le 1$. We have that $(S - S' - N''(v_2)) \cup (T - T' - N'(v_2))$ and $\{x, v_2\}$ lie in different components of G - C and $xv_2 \in E(G)$. As $|T - T'| \ge 2$, there is at least one edge in $(S - S' - N''(v_2)) \cup (T - T' - N'(v_2))$. So C is an essential cut, a contradiction. Since all but at most one vertex in T - T' can be only adjacent at most one vertex in S', we have that $|T - T'| \ge 3$ and there are three different vertices u_1, u_2 and u_3 in T - T' such that $u_1v_2, u_2v_3, u_3v_3 \in E(G)$ and u_i is adjacent to w_1, w_2 for $i \in [2]$. We add w_i and v_1w_i to Z_k and obtain Z_{k+2} , where $i \in \{1,2\}$. Then for $i \in \{1,2\}$, add u_i and $u_iw_1, u_iw_2, u_iv_{i+1}$ to Z_{k+2} and obtain Z_{k+4} .

If $e \notin E(Z_{k+4})$, then add remaining vertices in T - T' one by one by joining it with two vertices in the already-formed subgraph in G - e to get H^* . Thus, we have that

$$|E(H^*)| = |E(Z_{k+4})| + 2(|T - T'| - 2) = 2|V(G)| - 3$$

If $e \in E(Z_{k+4})$, then u_3 is adjacent to w_1 and w_2 . We add u_3 and u_3w_1, u_3w_2, u_3v_3 to Z_{k+4} and obtain Z_{k+5} . And then add remaining vertices in T - T' one by one by joining it with two vertices in the already-formed subgraph in G - e and get $Z_{n'}$. And delete e from $Z_{n'}$ to get H^* . Thus, we

have that

$$|E(H^*)| = |E(Z_{k+5}) - e| + 2(|T - T'| - 3) = 2|V(G)| - 3.$$

It is remaining to show that $|E(H')| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$ for any subgraph $H' \subseteq H^*$ with $|H'| \geq 2$. Clearly, if $H' \subseteq Z_k$, then $|E(H')| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$. If $V(H') \subseteq V(H^*) - V(Z_k)$, then

$$|E(H')| \le |H' \cap (S - S')| \cdot |H' \cap (T - T')|$$

$$\le \max\{|V(H')| - 1, 2(|V(H')| - 2)\}$$

$$\le 2|V(H')| - 3.$$

Next, we consider that $V(H'_1) = V(H') \cap V(Z_k) \neq \emptyset$ and $V(H'_2) = V(H') - V(H'_1) \neq \emptyset$. Let $W = \{w_1, w_2, u_1, u_2, u_3\}$. It is easy to check that for any subset $W' \subseteq W$ and any subgraph $Z' \subseteq Z_k$, $|E_{H^*}(W' \cup V(Z'))| - |E(Z')| \leq 2|W'|$. Each vertex in $V(H^*) - V(Z_k) - W$ is a 2-vertex in H^* . Thus, every time we add any subset $Y \subseteq V(H^*) - V(Z_k)$ into Z_k , we have that $|E_{H^*}(Y \cup V(Z'))| - |E(Z')| \leq 2|Y|$ for any subgraph $Z' \subseteq Z_k$. Thus, $|E(H')| \leq |E(H'_1)| + 2|V(H'_2)| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$.

(ii) Suppose that $U \not\subseteq V(Z_k)$.

As $U \notin Z_k$, $|S'| \ge 3$ by Conclusion 2. So $|S| \ge 5$. Since $|N(x) \cap S'| \ge 2$, $v_1 \notin Z_k$ and $|N(v_1) \cap S'| = 1$ by Conclusion 3(b). So |S'| = 3. As $|N(x) \cap Z_k| = 2$, $x \notin Z$. It follows that $|T \cap V(Z)| \ge 1$ from $|V(Z)| \ge 4$. Since $d_Z(v) \ge 3$ for any $v \in Z$, all vertices in $T \cap V(Z)$ are adjacent to all vertices in S'. According to Conclusion 4, $|S_0| \ge 2$ and so $S - S' = S_0$. Let $N(v_1) \cap S' = z_1$ and $S_0 = \{w_1, w_2\}$. We claim that $|T - T'| \ge 6$. Suppose to the contrary that $|T - T'| \le 5$. Then $\{x, z_1\} \cup (T - T')$ is an essential cut of size at most 7, as $\{v_1, w_1, w_2\}$ and $(S' - z_1) \cup T'$ belong to different nontrivial components, a contradiction.

Let $N'(v_i) = N(v_i) \cap (T - T')$ for $i \in \{2, 3\}$. Next, we show that $|N'(v_i)| \ge 4$ for $i \in \{2, 3\}$. Suppose to the contrary that there is a vertex, say v_2 , such that $|N'(v_2)| \le 3$. Then $C = \{x, v_1\} \cup N'(v_2) \cup (S - S_0 - v_2)$ is an essential cut of size at most 8, as $S_0 \cup (T - T' - N'(v_2))$ and $v_2 \cup T'$ belong to different nontrivial components, a contradiction. As $e \in E(U) \cup E[U, S']$, in G - e, there are three vertices u_1, u_2 and u_3 in T - T' such that $u_1v_2, u_2v_3, u_3v_2 \in E(G)$ and u_i is adjacent to w_1 and w_2 for $i \in [3]$.

Note that $|E(Z_{k'})| = 2|V(Z_{k'})| - 4$. We will construct H^* in the following steps. First, we add w_i and v_1w_i to $Z_{k'}$ and obtain $Z_{k'+2}$, where $i \in \{1, 2\}$. We then add u_i and $u_iw_1, u_iw_2, u_iv_{i+1}$ to $Z_{k'+2}$ for $i \in [2]$ and obtain $Z_{k'+4}$. In the last step, we add u_3 and u_3w_1, u_3w_2, u_3v_2 to obtain $Z_{k'+5}$, and add remaining vertices in T - T' one by one by joining it with two neighbors in $V(Z_{k'+5})$ to get H^* . Thus, we have that

$$|E(H^*)| = |E(Z_{k'})| + 2 + 3 \cdot 3 + 2(|T - T'| - 3) = 2|V(G)| - 3.$$

Let $W = U' \cup \{w_1, w_2, u_1, u_2, u_3\}$. It is easy to check that for any subset $W' \subseteq W$ and any subgraph $Z' \subseteq Z_k, |E_{H^*}(W' \cup V(Z'))| - |E(Z')| \leq 2|W'|$.

It is remaining to show that $|E(H')| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$ for any subgraph $H' \subseteq H^*$ with $|H'| \geq 2$. Clearly, if $H' \subseteq Z_k$, then $|E(H')| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$. If $V(H') \subseteq V(H^*) - V(Z_k)$, then

$$\begin{split} |E(H')| &\leq |V(H') \cap (S - S')| \cdot |V(H') \cap (T - T')| \\ &+ |E[U' \cap V(H'), (S - S') \cap V(H')]| + |E(U' \cap V(H'))| \\ &\leq \max\{|V(H')| - 1, 2(|V(H')| - 2), (|V(H')| - 2) + 1, 2(|V(H') - 3|) + 2, \\ &(|V(H')| - 3) + 1 + 1, 2(|V(H')| - 4) + 2 + 1\} \\ &\leq 2|V(H')| - 3. \end{split}$$

Next, we consider that $V(H'_1) = V(H') \cap V(Z_k) \neq \emptyset$ and $V(H'_2) = V(H') - V(H'_1) \neq \emptyset$. Each vertex in $V(H^*) - V(Z_k) - W$ is a 2-vertex in H^* . Thus, every time we add any subset $Y \subseteq V(H^*) - V(Z_k)$ into Z_k , we have that $|E_{H^*}(Y \cup V(Z'))| - |E(Z')| \leq 2|Y|$ for any subgraph $Z' \subseteq Z_k$. Thus, $|E(H')| \leq |E(H'_1)| + 2|V(H'_2)| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$, completing the proof.

Subcase 1.2: $|(S - S') \cap N'(v_1)| = 1$ and $|(S - S') \cap \{v_2, v_3\}| = 1$.

For convenience, suppose that $w_1 \in N'(v_1)$ and $w_2 = v_2$.

(i) Suppose that $U \subseteq V(Z_k)$.

We first show that $|T - T'| \ge 2$. As there is a vertex, say w_1 , in S - S' that has only one neighbor in Z_k , $|T - T'| \ge d(w_1) - 1 - (|S - S'| - 1) = 1$. If $T - T' = u_1$, then $d(w_1) = 3$ and w_1 is adjacent to w_2 . It follows that $d(w_2), d(u_1) \ge 4$ since 3-vertices are only adjacent to 4^+ -vertices. As $N(u_1) \subseteq S$, $|N(u_1) \cap S'| \ge 2$ and so $e \in E[u_1, S']$. However, in this case, w_2 only can be adjacent to at most three vertices, a contradiction. Thus, $|T - T'| \ge 2$.

If $|N(w_2) \cap V(Z_k)| = 2$, then $e \in E[w_2, V(Z_k)]$ since $w_2 \in S - S'$. As all vertices in T - T' are adjacent to at most one vertex in Z_k , each vertex $u \in T - T'$ is adjacent to w_1 and w_2 . We will construct H^* in the following steps. First add w_1, w_2 and $w_1v_1, E[w_2, V(Z_k)] - e$ to Z_k to get Z_{k+2} . For $i \in [2]$, add $u_i \in T - T'$ and three edges incident with u_i including u_1w_1, u_2w_2 to Z_{k+2} and get Z_{k+2+i} . In the last step, we add remaining vertices in T - T' one by one by joining it with two neighbors in $V(Z_{k+4})$ to get H^* . Thus, we have that

$$|E(H^*)| = |E(Z_k)| + 2 + 3 \cdot 2 + 2(|T - T'| - 2) = 2|V(G)| - 3.$$

Let $W = \{w_1, w_2, u_1, u_2\}$. It is easy to check that for any subset $W' \subseteq W$ and any subgraph $Z' \subseteq Z_k, |E_{H^*}(W' \cup V(Z'))| - |E(Z')| \leq 2|W'|$.

Next, suppose that $N(w_2) \cap V(Z_k) = x$. Let $\{z_1, z_2\} \subseteq S' \cap N'(v_1)$ and $N'(z_i) = N(z_i) \cap (T - T')$ for $i \in [2]$. Then we claim that $|N'(z_i)| \ge 2$ for any $i \in [2]$. Suppose to the contrary that there is a vertex, say z_1 , such that $|N'(z_1)| \le 1$. Consider $C = N'(z_1) \cup (S - z_1 - w_2) \cup x$ and $|C| \le 1 + 4 + 1 = 6$. Since all vertices in $w_2 \cup (T - T' - N'(z_1))$ are not adjacent to all vertices in $\{v_1, z_1\} \cup T'$. Thus, $w_2 \cup (T - T' - N'(z_1))$ and $\{v_1, z_1\} \cup T'$ belong to different components of G - C and $v_1 z_1 \in E(G)$. As $|N'(z_1)| \le 1$ and $|T - T'| \ge 2$, there is at least one edge in $w_2 \cup (T - T' - N'(z_1))$. So C is an essential cut, a contradiction. Since all but at most one vertex in T - T' can be only adjacent at most one vertex in S', we have that $|T - T'| \ge 3$ and there are three different vertices u_1, u_2 and u_3 such that $u_1 z_1, u_2 z_2, u_3 z_1 \in E(G)$ and u_i is adjacent to w_1 and w_2 for $i \in [2]$.

We will construct H^* in the following steps. First add w_1, w_2 and v_1w_1, xw_2 to Z_k and obtain Z_{k+2} . Then for $i \in [2]$, add u_i and u_iw_1, u_iw_2, u_iz_i to Z_{k+2} and obtain Z_{k+4} .

If $e \notin E(Z_{k+4})$, then add remaining vertices in T - T' one by one by joining it with two vertices in Z_{k+4} in G - e to get H^* . Thus, we have that $|E(H^*)| = |E(Z_{k+4})| + 2(|T - T'| - 2) = 2|V(G)| - 3$.

Let $W = \{w_1, w_2, u_1, u_2\}$. It is easy to check that for any subset $W' \subseteq W$ and any subgraph $Z' \subseteq Z_k, |E_{H^*}(W' \cup V(Z'))| - |E(Z')| \leq 2|W'|$.

If $e \in E(Z_{k+4})$, then u_3 is adjacent to w_1 and w_2 . We add u_3 and u_3w_1, u_3w_2, u_3z_1 to Z_{k+4} and obtain Z_{k+5} . In the last step, we add remaining vertices in T - T' one by one by joining it with two vertices in Z_{k+5} in G - e to get $Z_{n'}$, and delete e from $Z_{n'}$ to get H^* . Thus, we have that $|E(H^*)| = |E(Z_{k+5}) - e| + 2(|T - T'| - 3) = 2|V(G)| - 3$. Let $W = \{w_1, w_2, u_1, u_2, u_3\}$. It is easy to check that for any subset $W' \subseteq W$ and any subgraph $Z' \subseteq Z_k$, $|E_{H^*}(W' \cup V(Z'))| - |E(Z')| \leq 2|W'|$.

It is remaining to show that $|E(H')| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$ for any subgraph $H' \subseteq H^*$ with $|H'| \geq 2$. Clearly, if $H' \subseteq Z_k$, then $|E(H')| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$. If $V(H') \subseteq V(H^*) - V(Z_k)$, then

$$\begin{split} |E(H')| &\leq |V(H') \cap (S - S')| \cdot |V(H') \cap (T - T')| \\ &\leq \max\{|V(H')| - 1, 2(|V(H')| - 2)\} \\ &\leq 2|V(H')| - 3. \end{split}$$

Next, we consider that $V(H'_1) = V(H') \cap V(Z_k) \neq \emptyset$ and $V(H'_2) = V(H') - V(H'_1) \neq \emptyset$. Note that each vertex in $V(H^*) - V(Z_k) - W$ is a 2-vertex in H^* . Thus, every time we add any subset $Y \subseteq V(H^*) - V(Z_k)$ into Z_k , we have that $|E_{H^*}(Y \cup V(Z'))| - |E(Z')| \leq 2|Y|$ for any subgraph $Z' \subseteq Z_k$. Thus, $|E(H')| \leq |E(H'_1)| + 2|V(H'_2)| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$.

(ii) Suppose that $U \not\subseteq V(Z_k)$.

In this case, $|N(v_1) \cap S'| \ge 2$ implies that $x \notin Z_k$ and $|N(x) \cap S'| = 1$ by Conclusion 3(b). We first show that $T \cap V(Z) \ne \emptyset$. Suppose to the contrary that $T \cap V(Z) = \emptyset$. Then $V(Z) \subseteq v_1 \cup S'$. As $Z \subseteq H$, we know that every vertex in $N'(v_1) \cap V(Z)$ can only be adjacent to v_1 and v_3 in H. Since $d_Z(v) \ge 3$ for each $v \in Z$, $N'(v_1) \cap V(Z) = \emptyset$, a contradiction to the fact that $|V(Z) \cap S| \ge 3$. Thus $|T \cap V(Z)| \ge 1$ and each vertex in $T \cap V(Z)$ is adjacent to at least three vertices in S'. According Conclusion 4, $|S_0| \ge 2$ and so $S - S' = S_0$. We also have that $|T - T'| \ge 6$, for otherwise if $|T - T'| \le 5$, then $\{v_1, w_1\} \cup (T - T') \cup v_3$ is an essential cut of size at most 8, since $\{x, w_2\}$ and $(S' - v_3) \cup T'$ belong to different nontrivial components, a contradiction.

Let $N'(z) = N(z) \cap (T - T')$ for $z \in S'$. We show that there are at least two vertices $z_1, z_2 \in N'(v_1) \cap S'$ such that $|N'(z_i)| \geq 3$ for $i \in [2]$. Suppose to the contrary that there is at most one vertex, say z_1 , such that $|N'(z_1)| \geq 3$. Let $S^* = N'(v_1) \cap S' - z_1$. Then $1 \leq |S^*| \leq 2$. Thus, $|N'(S^*)| = \sum_{z \in S^*} |N'(z)| \leq 4$. Then $C = \{x, v_1\} \cup N'(S^*) \cup \{z_1, v_3\}$ is an essential cut of size at most 8, as $S_0 \cup (T - T' - N'(S^*))$ and $S^* \cup T'$ belong to different nontrivial components, a contradiction. Therefore, there are three different vertices u_1, u_2 and u_3 in T - T' such that $u_1z_1, u_2z_2, u_3z_1 \in E(G)$ and u_i is adjacent to w_1 and w_2 for $i \in [3]$.

We will construct H^* in the following steps. We first add w_1, w_2 and v_1w_1, xw_2 to $Z_{k'}$ and obtain $Z_{k'+2}$. For $i \in [2]$, add u_i and u_iw_1, u_iw_2, u_iz_i to $Z_{k'+2}$ and obtain $Z_{k'+4}$, and add u_3 and u_3w_1, u_3w_2, u_3z_1 to $Z_{k'+4}$ to obtain $Z_{k'+5}$. In the last step, we add remaining vertices in T - T'one by one by joining it with two neighbors in $V(Z_{k'+5})$ to get H^* . Thus, we have that

$$|E(H^*)| = |E(Z_{k'})| + 2 + 3 \cdot 3 + 2(|T - T'| - 3) = 2|V(G)| - 3$$

Let $W = U' \cup \{w_1, w_2, u_1, u_2, u_3\}$. It is easy to check that for any subset $W' \subseteq W$ and any subgraph $Z' \subseteq Z_k, |E_{H^*}(W' \cup V(Z'))| - |E(Z')| \leq 2|W'|$.

It is remaining to show that $|E(H')| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$ for any subgraph $H' \subseteq H^*$ with $|H'| \geq 2$. Clearly, if $H' \subseteq Z_k$, then $|E(H')| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$. If $V(H') \subseteq V(H^*) - V(Z_k)$, then

$$\begin{split} |E(H')| &\leq |V(H') \cap (S - S')| \cdot |V(H') \cap (T - T')| \\ &+ |E[U' \cap V(H'), (S - S') \cap V(H')]| + |E(U' \cap V(H'))| \\ &\leq \max\{|V(H')| - 1, 2(|V(H')| - 2), (|V(H')| - 2) + 1, 2(|V(H') - 3|) + 2, \\ &(|V(H')| - 3) + 1 + 1, 2(|V(H')| - 4) + 2 + 1\} \\ &\leq 2|V(H')| - 3. \end{split}$$

Next, we consider that $V(H'_1) = V(H') \cap V(Z_k) \neq \emptyset$ and $V(H'_2) = V(H') - V(H'_1) \neq \emptyset$. Each vertex in $V(H^*) - V(Z_k) - W$ is a 2-vertex in H^* . Thus, every time we add any subset $Y \subseteq V(H^*) - V(Z_k)$ into Z_k , we have that $|E_{H^*}(Y \cup V(Z'))| - |E(Z')| \leq 2|Y|$ for any subgraph $Z' \subseteq Z_k$. Thus, $|E(H')| \leq |E(H'_1)| + 2|V(H'_2)| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$, completing the proof.

Subcase 1.3: |S - S'| = 3.

Then s = 6 and $d(v_1) = 5$ since $|S'| \ge |V(Z) \cap S| \ge 3$ by Conclusion 2. Thus, $|S'| = |V(Z) \cap S| = 3$ and $|S' \cap \{v_2, v_3\}| = 2 \& |S' \cap N'(v_1)| = 1$ or $|S' \cap N'(v_1)| = 2 \& |S' \cap \{v_2, v_3\}| = 1$. As $|N(x) \cap Z| \le 2$ and $|N(v_1) \cap Z| \le 2$, $x, v_1 \notin V(Z)$. Note that $|V(Z)| \ge 4$, so $T \cap V(Z) \ne \emptyset$. It follows that every vertex in $T \cap V(Z)$ is adjacent to all vertices in S'.

We show that $|T - T'| \ge 4$. Suppose to the contrary that $|T - T'| \le 3$. If $U \subseteq V(Z_k)$, then at most one vertex say w in S - S' has another neighbor in $Z_k - U$. If $U \nsubseteq V(Z_k)$, then $|S_1| \le 1$ by Conclusion 4. So there must exist a vertex say $w_1 \in N'(v_1) \cap (S - S')$ such that $N(w_1) \cap (Z_k - U) = \emptyset$. Suppose that $v_2 \in S'$. Then $C = (T - T') \cup (S - w_1 - v_2) \cup x$ is an essential cut of size at most 8, as $\{v_1, w_1\}$ and $v_2 \cup T'$ belong to different nontrivial components, a contradiction.

Let $N'(z_i) = N(z_i) \cap (T - T')$ for $z_i \in S'$ and $i \in [3]$. We show that $|N'(z_i)| \ge 3$ for any $i \in [3]$. Suppose that for some $i \in [3]$, say i = 1, $|N'(z_1)| \le 2$. If $U \subseteq V(Z_k)$, then at most one vertex say w in S - S' has another neighbor in $Z_k - U$. If $U \nsubseteq V(Z_k)$, then $|S_0| \ge 2$ by Conclusion 4. So there must exist two vertices, say $w_1, w_2 \in S - S'$ such that $N(w_i) \cap (Z_k - U) = \emptyset$ for $i \in [2]$. Then $C = \{x, v_1\} \cup (S - w_1 - w_2 - z_1) \cup N'(z_1)$ is an essential cut of size at most 7, as $(T - T' - N'(z_1)) \cup \{w_1, w_2\}$ and $z_1 \cup T'$ belong to different nontrivial components, a contradiction. Since all but at most one vertex in T - T' can be only adjacent at most one vertex in S', we have that $|T - T'| \ge 8$ and there are three different vertices $u_i \in T - T'$ for $i \in [3]$ and $w_1, w_2 \in S - S'$ such that in G - e, u_i has a neighbor in S' and is adjacent to w_1, w_2 .

(i) Suppose that $U \subseteq V(Z_k)$.

We add w_i and an edge in $E[w_i, U]$ to Z_k and obtain Z_{k+2} , where $i \in [2]$. Then add u_i and three incident edges including u_iw_1, u_iw_2 and an edge in $E[u_i, S']$ to Z_{k+2} and obtain Z_{k+4} for $i \in [2]$. If $e \notin E(Z_{k+4})$, then add the rest vertices of T - T' and w_3 one by one by joining it with two neighbors in the already-formed subgraph in G - e to get H^* . If $e \in E(Z_{k+4})$, then add u_3 and three incident edges including u_3w_1, u_3w_2 and an edge in $E[u_3, S']$ to Z_{k+4} and obtain Z_{k+5} . Add the rest vertices of T - T' and w_3 one by one by joining it with two neighbors in the already-formed subgraph and delete e to get H^* . In both cases,

$$|E(H^*)| = |E(Z_k)| + 2|V(G) - V(Z_k)| = 2|V(G)| - 3$$

At last, we will check that $|E(H')| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$ for any subgraph $H' \subseteq H^*$ with $|H'| \geq 2$. Clearly, if $H' \subseteq Z_k$, then $|E(H')| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$. If $V(H') \subseteq V(H^*) - V(Z_k)$,

$$\begin{split} |E(H')| &\leq |V(H') \cap (S - S')| \cdot |V(H') \cap (T - T')| + |E(S - S')| \\ &\leq \max\{|V(H')| - 1, 2(|V(H')| - 2) + 1, 2(|V(H')| - 3) + 2\} \\ &\leq 2|V(H')| - 3. \end{split}$$

Next, we consider that $V(H'_1) = V(H') \cap V(Z_k) \neq \emptyset$ and $V(H'_2) = V(H') - V(H'_1) \neq \emptyset$. Let $W = \{w_1, w_2, u_1, u_2, u_3\}$. It is easy to check that for any subset $W' \subseteq W$ and any subgraph $Z' \subseteq Z_k$,

$$|E_{H^*}(W' \cup V(Z'))| - |E(Z')| \le 2|W'|.$$

Since we add all vertices in $V(G) - V(Z_k) - W$ one by one by joining it with two neighbors in the already-formed subgraph, we have that for any subset $Y \subseteq V(H^*) - V(Z_k)$,

$$|E_{H^*}(Y \cup V(Z'))| - |E(Z')| \le 2|Y|,$$

for any subgraph $Z' \subseteq Z_k$. Thus, $|E(H')| \le |E(H'_1)| + 2|V(H'_2)| \le 2|V(H')| - 3$.

(ii) Suppose that $U \nsubseteq V(Z_k)$.

We add w_i and an edge in $E[w_i, U]$ to $Z_{k'}$ and obtain $Z_{k'+2}$, where $i \in [2]$. Then for $i \in [3]$, add u_i and three incident edges including $u_i w_1, u_i w_2$ and an edge in $E[u_i, S']$ to $Z_{k'+2}$ and obtain $Z_{k'+5}$. Add the rest vertices of T - T' and w_3 one by one by joining it with two neighbors in the already-formed subgraph to get H^* . Clearly,

$$|E(H^*)| = |E(Z_k)| + 2|V(G) - V(Z_k)| = 2|V(G)| - 3.$$

At last, we will check that $|E(H')| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$ for any subgraph $H' \subseteq H^*$ with $|H'| \geq 2$. Clearly, if $H' \subseteq Z_k$, then $|E(H')| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$. Suppose that $V(H') \subseteq V(H^*) - V(Z_k)$. If $U' \cap V(H') = \emptyset$, then

$$\begin{split} |E(H')| &\leq |V(H') \cap (S - S')| \cdot |V(H') \cap (T - T')| + |E(S - S')| \\ &\leq \max\{|V(H')| - 1, 2(|V(H')| - 2) + 1, 2(|V(H')| - 3) + 2\} \\ &\leq 2|V(H')| - 3. \end{split}$$

If $|U' \cap V(H')| = 1$, then

$$\begin{split} |E(H')| &\leq |V(H') \cap (S - S')| \cdot |V(H') \cap (T - T')| + |E(S - S')| \\ &+ |E[U' \cap V(H'), (S - S') \cap V(H')]| \\ &\leq \max\{(|V(H')| - 2) + 1, 2(|V(H')| - 3) + 1 + 2, 2(|V(H')| - 4) + 2 + 3\} \\ &\leq 2|V(H')| - 3. \end{split}$$

If $|U' \cap V(H')| = 2$, then

$$\begin{split} |E(H')| &\leq |V(H') \cap (S - S')| \cdot |V(H') \cap (T - T')| + |E(S - S')| \\ &+ |E[U' \cap V(H'), (S - S') \cap V(H')]| + |E(U')| \\ &\leq \max\{(|V(H')| - 3) + 1, 2(|V(H')| - 4) + 1 + 2, 2(|V(H')| - 5) + 2 + 3\} + 1 \\ &\leq 2|V(H')| - 3. \end{split}$$

Next, we consider that $V(H'_1) = V(H') \cap V(Z_k) \neq \emptyset$ and $V(H'_2) = V(H') - V(H'_1) \neq \emptyset$. Let $W = U' \cup \{w_1, w_2, u_1, u_2, u_3\}$. It is easy to check that for any subset $W' \subseteq W$ and any subgraph $Z' \subseteq Z_k$,

$$|E_{H^*}(W' \cup V(Z'))| - |E(Z')| \le 2|W'|.$$

Since we add all vertices in $V(G) - V(Z_k) - W$ one by one by joining it with two neighbors in the already-formed subgraph, we have that for any subset $Y \subseteq V(H^*) - V(Z_k)$,

$$|E_{H^*}(Y \cup V(Z'))| - |E(Z')| \le 2|Y|.$$

for any subgraph $Z' \subseteq Z_k$. Thus, $|E(H')| \leq |E(H'_1)| + 2|V(H'_2)| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$. Case 2: $S' \subseteq N'(v_1)$.

In this case, we have that $|N'(v_1) \cap V(Z)| \ge 3$ by Conclusion 2. Let

$$T'' = \{ u \in T : |N_{G-e}(u) \cap V(Z)| \ge 2 \}.$$

In G - e, we add the rest vertices of $v_1 \cup T''$ to Z_0 one by one by joining it with two neighbors in Z_0 and get Z_h . Note that $V(Z_h) \subseteq V(Z_k)$ and $v_2, v_3 \notin V(Z_h)$. As x has at most one neighbor in V(Z), $x \notin V(Z)$ by the minimality of the |V(Z)|. Since $Z \subseteq H$, $S \cap V(Z)$ is independent in H. We also know that $v_1 \cup T$ is an independent set. Therefore, Z is a bipartite graph and $|V(Z)| \geq 7$. It implies that $|T''| \geq |Z \cap T| \geq 7 - 5 = 2$. Since $v_2, v_3 \notin V(Z_k)$, there is a vertex, say v_2 that is adjacent to at most one vertex in Z_k . It follows that v_2 is adjacent to at most one vertex in Z_h . Let $Y = N(v_2) \cap Z_h$. Then $|Y| \leq 1$. We will show that $|T - T''| \geq 5$. Consider $C = v_1 \cup (S - V(Z) - v_2) \cup (T - T'') \cup Y$. Note that $\{x, v_2\}$ and $(T'' \cup (V(Z) \cap S)) - Y$ belong to different components of G - C. As $|T''| \geq 2$ and $|V(Z) \cap S| \geq 3$, there must be an edge in $(T'' \cup (V(Z) \cap S)) - Y$. This implies that C is an essential cut. Since G is essentially 9-connected, $|C| \geq 9$ and $|T - T''| \geq 5$.

We add x and xv_1 to Z_h and add all vertices in S - V(Z) one by one by joining it with a neighbor in U and get $Z_{h'}$. Let $\ell = |S - V(Z)| + 1$. Note that $|T - T''| \ge 5 \ge \ell + 1$. Let

$$W = \{u_i : u_i \in T - T'' \& u_i \text{ is not incident with } e\}.$$

If $e \in Z_{h'}$, then e is not incident with any vertex in T - T'' and $|W| = |T - T''| \ge \ell + 1$. Let $W' \subseteq W$ and $W' = \{u_1, \ldots, u_{\ell+1}\}$. Then add all vertices in W' one by one by joining it with three neighbors in $Z_{h'}$ to get $Z_{h'+\ell+1}$. At last, add the rest vertices of T - T'' one by one by joining it with two neighbors in the already-formed subgraph and delete e to get H^* . If $e \notin Z_{h'}$, then $|W| \ge |T - T''| - 1 \ge \ell$. Let $W' \subseteq W$ and $W' = \{u_1, \ldots, u_\ell\}$. Then add all vertices in W' one by one by joining it with three neighbors in $Z_{h'}$ and get $Z_{h'+\ell}$. At last, add the rest vertices of T - T'' one by one by joining it with three neighbors in the already-formed subgraph in G - e and get H^* . Clearly, in both cases,

$$|E(H^*)| = |E(Z_h)| + 2|V(G) - V(Z_h)| = 2|V(G)| - 3.$$

For any subgraph $H' \subseteq H^*$, if $|E(H')| \leq 2|V(H')| - 3$, then we are done. Otherwise, there is a minimal subgraph $\overline{Z} \subseteq H^*$ such that $|E(\overline{Z})| > 2|V(\overline{Z})| - 3$. By the process of adding vertices and edges, there is some $u_{j_0} \in W'$ such that $u_{j_0} \in V(\overline{Z})$ and $N_{H^*}(u_{j_0}) \subseteq V(\overline{Z})$. As in H^* every vertex in W' has at least two neighbors in S - V(Z) and must have a neighbor in $\{v_2, v_3\}$, we have that $\{v_2, v_3\} \cap V(\overline{Z}) \neq \emptyset$. Note that $\overline{Z} \subseteq H^* \subseteq H$. Thus, we can regard \overline{Z} as a new Z. Then we get $\overline{Z_0}$ and $\overline{Z_k}$ in the same way. Let $\overline{S'} = S \cap \overline{Z}$. Note that $\overline{Z} \nsubseteq N'(v_1)$ and so $\overline{S'} \nsubseteq N'(v_1)$, which is same as Case 1.

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