AN ALGORITHMIC CHARACTERIZATION OF P-MATRICITY*

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Abstract. It is shown that a nondegenerate square real matrix M is a **P**-matrix if and only if, whatever is the real vector q, the Newton-min algorithm does not cycle between two points when it is used to solve the linear complementarity problem $0 \leqslant x \perp (Mx + q) \geqslant 0$.

Key words. linear complementarity problem, semismooth Newton method, Newton-min algorithm, **NM**-matrix, **P**-matricity characterization, **P**-matrix

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1. Introduction. Being given a positive integer n, a matrix $M \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times n}$, and a vector $q \in \mathbb{R}^n$, the *linear complementarity problem* consists in determining a vector $x \in \mathbb{R}^n$ such that

$$x \geqslant 0, \qquad Mx + q \geqslant 0, \qquad \text{and} \qquad x^\mathsf{T}(Mx + q) = 0.$$

Inequalities have to be understood componentwise; for example, $x \geqslant 0$ means $x_i \geqslant 0$ for all indices $i \in [\![1, n]\!] := \{1, \ldots, n\}$. The Euclidean scalar product of two vectors u and v has been denoted by $u^\mathsf{T} v = \sum_i u_i v_i$. This problem is sometimes written in compact form as follows:

$$\mathrm{LCP}(M, q): \qquad 0 \leqslant x \perp (Mx + q) \geqslant 0,$$

where the sign $\perp$ is used to denote the perpendicularity with respect to the Euclidean scalar product.

Let M_{IJ} denote the submatrix of a matrix M formed of its rows with indices in I and its columns with indices in J. An $n \times n$ real matrix M is a **P**-*matrix* if its principal minors are positive: for all $I \subseteq [\![1, n]\!]$, $\det M_{II} > 0$ (by convention $\det M_{\varnothing\varnothing} = 1$). The class of **P**-matrices is denoted by **P** (the order n of the matrices is implicit and assumed fixed in that notation). These matrices have an eminent role in linear complementarity problems since it can be shown that $M \in \mathbf{P}$ if and only if $\mathrm{LCP}(M, q)$ has one and only one solution, whatever is q [25, 7]. Another characterization of **P**-matricity, which will be useful below, is the following [9, 7]:

$$(1.1) \qquad M \in \mathbf{P} \qquad \Longleftrightarrow \qquad \text{any } x \text{ verifying } x \cdot (Mx) \leqslant 0 \text{ vanishes,}$$

where we have denoted by $u \cdot v$ the *Hadamard product* of the vectors u and v, which is a vector whose ith component is $u_i v_i$.

There are many other equivalent conditions for a matrix to be in **P** than the three given above [1, 14, 24, 7, 23]. This paper gives still another characterization of **P**-matricity, expressed in terms of a property of the algorithm for solving $\mathrm{LCP}(M, q)$

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that is described in section 2, the Newton-min algorithm. It is shown that $M \in \mathbf{P}$ if and only if the Newton-min algorithm does not cycle between two distinct points, whatever is q, when it is used to solve LCP(M, q).

2. The Newton-min algorithm. Let I be a subset of $[\![1, n]\!]$. We denote by $I^c := [\![1, n]\!] \setminus I$ the complementary set of I in $[\![1, n]\!]$ and by $|I|$ the cardinality of I. For a vector $v \in \mathbb{R}^n$, v_I is the vector in $\mathbb{R}^{|I|}$ whose components are the components v_i's of v with index $i \in I$.

The *Newton-min algorithm* is a short name for the semismooth Newton method [21, 22, 15, 27] for solving the nonsmooth piecewise linear equation

$$\min(x, Mx + q) = 0 \in \mathbb{R}^n,$$

which is equivalent to LCP(M, q) [18, 20]. Above, the "min" operator acts componentwise. More specifically, at the current iterate $x \in \mathbb{R}^n$, the algorithm determines a set of indices

$$(2.1) \qquad I \equiv I(x) := \{i \in [\![1, n]\!] : x_i > (Mx + q)_i\}$$

and computes the next iterate x^+ as the unique solution to the system

$$(2.2) \qquad x_{I^c}^+ = 0 \qquad \text{and} \qquad (Mx^+ + q)_I = 0.$$

The uniqueness of the solution to the system (2.2) is certainly ensured if M is *nondegenerate*, meaning that the principal minors of M do not vanish (we denote by $\mathbf{D^c}$ the set of nondegenerate matrices), so that this well-posedness condition of the algorithm will always be assumed. In that case,

$$x_I^+ = -M_{II}^{-1}q_I,$$

where M_{II}^{-1} is a compact notation for $(M_{II})^{-1}$. The Newton-min algorithm can be traced back at least to Aganagić in [1]; see paragraph 7 of the introduction of [3] for more details on its origin and a discussion on the contributions from [6, 17, 10, 5, 4, 13, 16]; see also [12].

A more general form of the algorithm allows the iteration to put in I any of the indices in

$$E \equiv E(x) := \{i \in [\![1, n]\!] : x_i = (Mx + q)_i\}$$

(see section 2 in [3], for instance). We do not consider such a general version of the algorithm below. The choice of the present version of the Newton-min algorithm, which imposes $I \cap E = \varnothing$, is motivated by the following considerations. First, it would certainly be more difficult to analyze the cycles of the Newton-min algorithm, which is what we do below, if this one was not a *Markov process* in x, i.e., if the next iterate x^+ would not only depend on the current iterate x, as this would be the case if the indices in E going in I were not determined by a rule depending only on x. Next, with the rule (2.1), the linear system to solve at each iteration has a smaller size $|I|$, which makes this rule numerically natural.

By definition (see (2.2)), except possibly for the initial iterate, the Newton-min algorithm only visits points x satisfying $x \cdot (Mx + q) = 0$ or, equivalently,

$$(2.3) \qquad x_{I^c} = 0 \qquad \text{and} \qquad (Mx + q)_I = 0,$$

for some (possibly empty) index set $I \subseteq [\![1, n]\!]$. The unique point x, related to some index set I, satisfying (2.3) is denoted by

$$x^{(I)}$$

and is called a *node*. Clearly, there holds $x^{(\varnothing)} = 0$. Since there are 2^n different index sets I, there are *at most* 2^n nodes (two different index sets may yield the same node; for example, there is a single node, zero, if and only if $q = 0$).

Since the Newton-min algorithm (2.1)–(2.2) is a Markov process in x and only visits nodes and since the number of nodes is finite, either the algorithm converges or it cycles by visiting a finite number of distinct nodes repetitively. The identification of the conditions of convergence of the Newton-min algorithm may, therefore, go through the analysis of the conditions that prevent cycles from occurring. The case of the 2-cycles is considered in the next section (for $k \geqslant 2$, a *k-cycle* is a cycle made of k distinct nodes). Let us formalize this a bit more.

For $k \geqslant 2$, we denote by $\mathbf{NM}_k$ the set of nondegenerate matrices $M \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times n}$ such that the Newton-min algorithm does not produce k-cycles when it is used to solve $\mathrm{LCP}(M, q)$, whatever is q. Therefore, for the reasons given at the beginning of the previous paragraph,

$$(2.4) \qquad \mathbf{NM} := \bigcap_{k \geqslant 2} \mathbf{NM}_k$$

is the class of nondegenerate matrices $M \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times n}$ such that the Newton-min algorithm converges, whatever are q and the initial point. In this paper, we prove that

$$\mathbf{NM}_2 = \mathbf{P}.$$

Since $\mathbf{NM}$ is included in $\mathbf{NM}_2$, this identity implies, in particular, that

$$(2.5) \qquad\qquad\qquad \mathbf{NM} \subseteq \mathbf{P},$$

i.e., the set of matrices ensuring the convergence of the Newton-min algorithm, whatever are q and the initial point, is contained in $\mathbf{P}$. It has been shown in [2, 3] that $\mathbf{P} \subseteq \mathbf{NM}$ if $n = 1$ or $n = 2$ (hence $\mathbf{P} = \mathbf{NM}$ in that case) and that $\mathbf{P} \not\subseteq \mathbf{NM}$ if $n \geqslant 3$ (hence the inclusion (2.5) is strict in that case).

We recall that an $\mathbf{M}$-*matrix* is a $\mathbf{P}$-matrix with nonpositive off-diagonal elements ($M_{ij} \leqslant 0$ when $i \neq j$). According to [1, Theorem 6.2],

$$\mathbf{M} \subseteq \mathbf{NM}.$$

It is also known that $M \in \mathbf{NM}$ if M is sufficiently close to an $\mathbf{M}$-matrix [13].

3. A dual characterization of the absence of 2-cycle. The Newton-min algorithm makes a 2-*cycle* if it generates successively the iterates

$$x^{(I)} \to x^{(J)} \to x^{(I)} \to x^{(J)} \to \cdots$$

for distinct nodes $x^{(I)} \neq x^{(J)}$ associated with index sets I and $J \subseteq [\![1, n]\!]$. The dual characterization of the absence of 2-cycle of the Newton-min algorithm given in this section is a first step in the derivation of our main result (Theorem 4.2).

We start by recalling Motzkin's theorem of the alternative (see [11, Theorem 3.15 or 7.17], for instance), on which the dual characterization of Proposition 3.2 rests.

LEMMA 3.1 (Motzkin). *Let $A \in \mathbb{R}^{m_A \times n}$ and $B \in \mathbb{R}^{m_B \times n}$ be two matrices with the same number of columns. Then, there is a vector $x \in \mathbb{R}^n$ satisfying*

$$(3.1) \qquad\qquad Ax < 0 \qquad and \qquad Bx \leqslant 0$$

if and only if there is no vector $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}_+^{m_A} \setminus \{0\}$ and $\beta \in \mathbb{R}_+^{m_B}$ such that

$$(3.2) \qquad\qquad A^{\mathsf{T}}\alpha + B^{\mathsf{T}}\beta = 0.$$

Strict inequalities on vectors must also be understood componentwise: $Ax < 0$ in (3.1) means $(Ax)_i < 0$ for all $i \in [\![1, m_A]\!]$. The (components of the) vectors α and β in Lemma 3.1 will be called *Motzkin multipliers* below. There is one such scalar multiplier for each inequality in (3.1).

The next proposition gives a dual condition on the matrix M such that the Newton-min algorithm does not cycle between two given nodes when it is used to solve $\mathrm{LCP}(M, q)$, whatever is the vector q. The dual aspect of condition (3.3) comes from Lemma 3.1 and therefore involves, like in (3.2), the transpose of (modified) submatrices of M. The *symmetric difference* of two index sets I and $J \subseteq [\![1, n]\!]$ is denoted by

$$I \triangle J := (I \cap J^c) \cup (I^c \cap J) = (I \cup J) \setminus (I \cap J).$$

For a subset $K \subseteq [\![1, n]\!]$, we also note $M_{KK}^{-\mathsf{T}} := ((M_{KK})^{-1})^{\mathsf{T}}$.

PROPOSITION 3.2 (no cycle $x^{(I)} \to x^{(J)} \to x^{(I)}$). *Suppose that $M \in \mathbf{D^c}$ and let us give two different subsets I and $J \subseteq [\![1, n]\!]$. Then the following conditions are equivalent:*

(i) *there is an $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}_+^{|I \triangle J|} \setminus \{0\}$ such that*

$$\begin{pmatrix} M_{(I \cap J^c)(I \cap J^c)} & -M_{(I \cap J^c)(I^c \cap J)} \\ -M_{(I^c \cap J)(I \cap J^c)} & M_{(I^c \cap J)(I^c \cap J)} \end{pmatrix}^{\mathsf{T}} \alpha$$

$$(3.3) \quad \geqslant \begin{pmatrix} -M_{(I \cap J)(I \cap J^c)} & M_{(I \cap J)(I^c \cap J)} \end{pmatrix}^{\mathsf{T}} M_{(I \cap J)(I \cap J)}^{-\mathsf{T}} \begin{pmatrix} -M_{(I \cap J^c)(I \cap J)} \\ M_{(I^c \cap J)(I \cap J)} \end{pmatrix}^{\mathsf{T}} \alpha,$$

where the right-hand side is zero when $I \cap J = \varnothing$;

(ii) *whatever is q, the Newton-min algorithm does not make the cycle $x^{(I)} \to x^{(J)} \to x^{(I)}$ when it is used to solve $\mathrm{LCP}(M, q)$.*

Proof. (1) *Preliminaries.* Let us first specify the conditions on q such that the Newton-min algorithm makes the cycle $x^{(I)} \to x^{(J)} \to x^{(I)}$ when it is used to solve $\mathrm{LCP}(M, q)$. Let $x^1 = x^{(I)}$, so that by (2.3),

$$\begin{cases} x_I^1 = -M_{II}^{-1} q_I, \\ x_{I^c}^1 = 0 \end{cases} \qquad \text{and} \qquad \begin{cases} (Mx^1 + q)_I = 0, \\ (Mx^1 + q)_{I^c} = q_{I^c} - M_{I^c I} M_{II}^{-1} q_I. \end{cases}$$

We have used the nonsingularity of M_{II}, which comes from the nondegeneracy of M. By definition of the Newton-min algorithm (2.1)–(2.2), the next iterate x^2 is $x^{(J)}$ if and only if

$$(3.4) \quad \underbrace{-(M_{II}^{-1} q_I)_{J^c} \leqslant 0}_{\beta_{I \cap J^c}}, \qquad \underbrace{(M_{II}^{-1} q_I)_J < 0}_{\alpha'_{I \cap J}},$$

$$\underbrace{q_{I^c \cap J} < M_{(I^c \cap J) I} M_{II}^{-1} q_I}_{\alpha_{I^c \cap J}}, \qquad \text{and} \qquad M_{(I \cup J)^c I} M_{II}^{-1} q_I \leqslant q_{(I \cup J)^c}.$$

The vectors under the braces are Motzkin multipliers, which will be used below. In that case

$$\begin{cases} x_J^2 = -M_{JJ}^{-1}q_J, \\ x_{J^c}^2 = 0 \end{cases} \quad \text{and} \quad \begin{cases} (Mx^2 + q)_J = 0, \\ (Mx^2 + q)_{J^c} = q_{J^c} - M_{J^cJ}M_{JJ}^{-1}q_J. \end{cases}$$

We have used the nonsingularity of M_{JJ}, which comes from the nondegeneracy of M. Now, the next iterate is $x^{(I)}$ if and only if

$$(3.5) \quad \underbrace{-(M_{JJ}^{-1}q_J)_{I^c} \leqslant 0}_{\beta_{I^c \cap J}}, \qquad \underbrace{(M_{JJ}^{-1}q_J)_I < 0}_{\alpha''_{I \cap J}},$$

$$\underbrace{q_{I \cap J^c} < M_{(I \cap J^c)J}M_{JJ}^{-1}q_J}_{\alpha_{I \cap J^c}}, \qquad \text{and} \qquad M_{(I \cup J)^cJ}M_{JJ}^{-1}q_J \leqslant q_{(I \cup J)^c}.$$

The vectors under the braces are Motzkin multipliers, which will be used below. We have shown that the Newton-min algorithm makes the cycle $x^{(I)} \to x^{(J)} \to x^{(I)}$ if and only if q satisfies the linear inequalities in (3.4)–(3.5).

Observe now that the components of q with indices in $(I \cup J)^c$ intervene only in the last inequalities in (3.4)–(3.5) and that these inequalities can be satisfied by taking these components of q sufficiently large. Therefore, below, we do not have to consider the satisfiability of these last inequalities. This is the reason why we have not assigned Motzkin multipliers to these inequalities.

By Motzkin's theorem of the alternative (Lemma 3.1), there is a q satisfying the linear inequalities in (3.4)–(3.5) if and only if one cannot find

$$(\alpha, \alpha', \alpha'', \beta) \in \mathbb{R}_+^{|I \triangle J|} \times \mathbb{R}_+^{|I \cap J|} \times \mathbb{R}_+^{|I \cap J|} \times \mathbb{R}_+^{|I \triangle J|}$$

(these are the vectors under the braces in (3.4)–(3.5)) such that $(\alpha, \alpha', \alpha'') \neq 0$ and

(3.6a)

$$\bullet \ (M_{II}^{-\mathsf{T}})_{I \cap J^c}\begin{pmatrix} -\beta_{I \cap J^c} \\ \alpha'_{I \cap J} \end{pmatrix} - (M_{II}^{-\mathsf{T}})_{I \cap J^c}M_{(I^c \cap J)I}^{\mathsf{T}}\alpha_{I^c \cap J} + \alpha_{I \cap J^c} = 0,$$

$$\bullet \ (M_{II}^{-\mathsf{T}})_{I \cap J}\begin{pmatrix} -\beta_{I \cap J^c} \\ \alpha'_{I \cap J} \end{pmatrix} - (M_{II}^{-\mathsf{T}})_{I \cap J}M_{(I^c \cap J)I}^{\mathsf{T}}\alpha_{I^c \cap J} + (M_{JJ}^{-\mathsf{T}})_{I \cap J}\begin{pmatrix} \alpha''_{I \cap J} \\ -\beta_{I^c \cap J} \end{pmatrix}$$

(3.6b)

$$- (M_{JJ}^{-\mathsf{T}})_{I \cap J}M_{(I \cap J^c)J}^{\mathsf{T}}\alpha_{I \cap J^c} = 0,$$

$$(3.6c) \quad \bullet \ \alpha_{I^c \cap J} + (M_{JJ}^{-\mathsf{T}})_{I^c \cap J}\begin{pmatrix} \alpha''_{I \cap J} \\ -\beta_{I^c \cap J} \end{pmatrix} - (M_{JJ}^{-\mathsf{T}})_{I^c \cap J}M_{(I \cap J^c)J}^{\mathsf{T}}\alpha_{I \cap J^c} = 0,$$

where A_R denotes the submatrix of a matrix A formed of its rows with indices in R.

(2) *The case $I \cap J = \varnothing$.* Then (3.6b) is not present, there are no Motzkin multipliers α' and α'', $I \cap J^c = I$, $I^c \cap J = J$, $I \triangle J = I \cup J$, and the above claim simplifies as follows: there is a q satisfying the linear inequalities (3.4)–(3.5) if and only if one cannot find

$$(\alpha, \beta) \in \mathbb{R}_+^{|I \cup J|} \times \mathbb{R}_+^{|I \cup J|}$$

such that $\alpha \neq 0$ and

$$\begin{pmatrix} M_{II} & -M_{IJ} \\ -M_{JI} & M_{JJ} \end{pmatrix}^{\mathsf{T}}\begin{pmatrix} \alpha_I \\ \alpha_J \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} \beta_I \\ \beta_J \end{pmatrix} \geqslant 0.$$

After discarding β, the contrapositive of the claim becomes the equivalence (i) $\Leftrightarrow$ (ii) with zero in the right-hand side of (3.3).

(3) *The general case.* With the notation

$$(3.7) \quad u := \begin{pmatrix} -\beta_{I \cap J^c} \\ \alpha'_{I \cap J} \end{pmatrix} - M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I^c \cap J)I} \alpha_{I^c \cap J} \quad \text{and} \quad v := \begin{pmatrix} \alpha''_{I \cap J} \\ -\beta_{I^c \cap J} \end{pmatrix} - M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I \cap J^c)J} \alpha_{I \cap J^c}$$

the system (3.6) reads, equivalently,

$$(3.8) \qquad \begin{pmatrix} (M_{II}^{-\mathsf{T}})_{I \cap J^c} u \\ (M_{II}^{-\mathsf{T}})_{I \cap J} u \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} + \begin{pmatrix} \alpha_{I \cap J^c} \\ 0 \\ \alpha_{I^c \cap J} \end{pmatrix} + \begin{pmatrix} 0 \\ (M_{JJ}^{-\mathsf{T}})_{I \cap J} v \\ (M_{JJ}^{-\mathsf{T}})_{I^c \cap J} v \end{pmatrix} = 0.$$

If we multiply the first two equations to the left by M_{II}^{T}, if we multiply the last two equations to the left by M_{JJ}^{T}, and if we use the second equation, we obtain the equivalent system

$$(3.9a) \qquad u + M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I \cap J^c)I} \alpha_{I \cap J^c} - M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I \cap J)I}(M_{II}^{-\mathsf{T}})_{I \cap J} u = 0,$$

$$(3.9b) \qquad v + M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I^c \cap J)J} \alpha_{I^c \cap J} + M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I \cap J)J}(M_{II}^{-\mathsf{T}})_{I \cap J} u = 0.$$

Now the rows with indices in $I \cap J$ of these last two equations read

$$\alpha'_{I \cap J} - M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I^c \cap J)(I \cap J)} \alpha_{I^c \cap J} + M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I \cap J^c)(I \cap J)} \alpha_{I \cap J^c} - M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I \cap J)(I \cap J)}(M_{II}^{-\mathsf{T}})_{I \cap J} u = 0,$$

$$\alpha''_{I \cap J} - M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I \cap J^c)(I \cap J)} \alpha_{I \cap J^c} + M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I^c \cap J)(I \cap J)} \alpha_{I^c \cap J} + M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I \cap J)(I \cap J)}(M_{II}^{-\mathsf{T}})_{I \cap J} u = 0.$$

By adding these equations, we obtain $\alpha'_{I \cap J} + \alpha''_{I \cap J} = 0$, which implies that $\alpha'_{I \cap J} = \alpha''_{I \cap J} = 0$ since the components of these two vectors are nonnegative. One then deduces from any of these last equations that

$$(3.10) \qquad (M_{II}^{-\mathsf{T}})_{I \cap J} u = M^{-\mathsf{T}}_{(I \cap J)(I \cap J)} \left(M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I \cap J^c)(I \cap J)} \alpha_{I \cap J^c} - M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I^c \cap J)(I \cap J)} \alpha_{I^c \cap J} \right).$$

Now the $I \cap J^c$ component of (3.9a) and the $I^c \cap J$ component of (3.9b) read

$$- M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I^c \cap J)(I \cap J^c)} \alpha_{I^c \cap J} + M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I \cap J^c)(I \cap J^c)} \alpha_{I \cap J^c}$$
$$\quad - M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I \cap J)(I \cap J^c)} M^{-\mathsf{T}}_{(I \cap J)(I \cap J)} \left(M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I \cap J^c)(I \cap J)} \alpha_{I \cap J^c} - M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I^c \cap J)(I \cap J)} \alpha_{I^c \cap J} \right)$$

$$(3.11a)$$
$$\qquad = \beta_{I \cap J^c},$$

$$- M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I \cap J^c)(I^c \cap J)} \alpha_{I \cap J^c} + M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I^c \cap J)(I^c \cap J)} \alpha_{I^c \cap J}$$
$$\quad + M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I \cap J)(I^c \cap J)} M^{-\mathsf{T}}_{(I \cap J)(I \cap J)} \left(M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I \cap J^c)(I \cap J)} \alpha_{I \cap J^c} - M^{\mathsf{T}}_{(I^c \cap J)(I \cap J)} \alpha_{I^c \cap J} \right)$$

$$(3.11b)$$
$$\qquad = \beta_{I^c \cap J}.$$

We have deduced the system (3.11) and $\alpha'_{I \cap J} = \alpha''_{I \cap J} = 0$ from (3.9). Reciprocally, to show that there has been no loss of information in that operation, let us show that one can recover the system (3.9) from (3.11) and $\alpha'_{I \cap J} = \alpha''_{I \cap J} = 0$, provided we define u and v by (3.7). Indeed, let us denote by w the right-hand side of (3.10) and

let us first show that the identity (3.10) is verified:

$$(M_{II}^{-\mathsf{T}})_{I \cap J} u$$

$$= (M_{II}^{-\mathsf{T}})_{I \cap J} \begin{pmatrix} -\beta_{I \cap J^c} - M_{(I^c \cap J)(I \cap J^c)}^{\mathsf{T}} \alpha_{I^c \cap J} \\ -M_{(I^c \cap J)(I \cap J)}^{\mathsf{T}} \alpha_{I^c \cap J} \end{pmatrix} \quad [(3.7),\ \alpha'_{I \cap J} = 0]$$

$$= (M_{II}^{-\mathsf{T}})_{I \cap J} \begin{pmatrix} -M_{(I \cap J^c)(I \cap J^c)}^{\mathsf{T}} \alpha_{I \cap J^c} + M_{(I \cap J)(I \cap J^c)}^{\mathsf{T}} w \\ -M_{(I \cap J^c)(I \cap J)}^{\mathsf{T}} \alpha_{I \cap J^c} + M_{(I \cap J)(I \cap J)}^{\mathsf{T}} w \end{pmatrix} \quad \begin{bmatrix} (3.11a)\ \text{and} \\ \text{definition of } w \end{bmatrix}$$

$$= (M_{II}^{-\mathsf{T}})_{I \cap J} M_{II}^{\mathsf{T}} \begin{pmatrix} -\alpha_{I \cap J^c} \\ w \end{pmatrix}$$

$$= w.$$

Now the $I \cap J^c$ component of (3.9a) is a consequence of (3.11a); the $I \cap J$ components of (3.9a) and (3.9b) are consequences of $\alpha'_{I \cap J} = \alpha''_{I \cap J} = 0$ and (3.10); and the $I^c \cap J$ component of (3.9b) is a consequence of (3.11b).

Therefore, getting rid of the vector $\beta \in \mathbb{R}_+^{|I \triangle J|}$ in (3.11), we see that there is a q such that the Newton-min algorithm makes the cycle $x^{(I)} \to x^{(J)} \to x^{(I)}$ when it is used to solve LCP(M, q) if and only if one cannot find an $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}_+^{|I \triangle J|} \setminus \{0\}$ such that

$$\begin{pmatrix} M_{(I \cap J^c)(I \cap J^c)} & -M_{(I \cap J^c)(I^c \cap J)} \\ -M_{(I^c \cap J)(I \cap J^c)} & M_{(I^c \cap J)(I^c \cap J)} \end{pmatrix}^{\mathsf{T}} \alpha$$

$$\geqslant \begin{pmatrix} -M_{(I \cap J)(I \cap J^c)} & M_{(I \cap J)(I^c \cap J)} \end{pmatrix}^{\mathsf{T}} M_{(I \cap J)(I \cap J)}^{-\mathsf{T}} \begin{pmatrix} -M_{(I \cap J^c)(I \cap J)} \\ M_{(I^c \cap J)(I \cap J)} \end{pmatrix}^{\mathsf{T}} \alpha.$$

The equivalence (i) $\Leftrightarrow$ (ii) follows. □

Observe that, as expected, condition (3.3) is symmetric in I and J, in the sense that the permutation $I \leftrightarrow J$ does not modify the condition.

Proposition 3.2 is apparently difficult to use if the goal is to characterize the class $\mathbf{NM_2}$ of matrices. It indeed requires considering all of the possible pairs of distinct subsets I and $J \subseteq [\![1, n]\!]$. In addition, for each of these pairs, each choice of $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}_+^{|I \triangle J|} \setminus \{0\}$ in (3.3) may yield different conditions on M that make the Newton-min algorithm avoid the 2-cycle $x^{(I)} \to x^{(J)} \to x^{(I)}$. This looks like a long-term and hazardous task. We show in Theorem 4.2, however, that it is equivalent to avoid all the 2-cycles or to avoid the small subset of 2-cycles $x^{(I)} \to x^{(J)} \to x^{(I)}$, in which $I = J \cup \{i\}$ with $i \notin J$. In other words, this small subset of 2-cycles contains all the information on M that is needed to prevent the Newton-min algorithm from making 2-cycles. A precious interest of the choice $I = J \cup \{i\}$ is that α is then a positive *scalar*, which can be eliminated from the inequality (3.3). The task of characterizing the matrices M in $\mathbf{NM_2}$ is then much easier. It is shown in the next section that these matrices are the $\mathbf{P}$-matrices.

4. A characterization of P-matricity.
Let us start by an elementary lemma.

LEMMA 4.1. *Suppose that I and J are two index sets included in $[\![1, n]\!]$ such that $J \setminus I \neq \varnothing$ and that $x^{(I)} = x^{(J)}$ for some matrix $M \in \mathbf{D^c}$ and some vector q. Then the Newton-min algorithm (2.1)–(2.2) does not make the null displacement $x^{(I)} \to x^{(J)}$ when it is used to solve LCP(M, q).*

Proof. We argue by contradiction, assuming that the Newton-min algorithm goes from $x^{(I)}$ to $x^{(J)}$. Then, $(Mx^{(I)} + q)_{I^c \cap J} < x_{I^c \cap J}^{(I)}$ (by the algorithm rule (2.1)) and

$x^{(I)}_{I^c \cap J} = 0$ (by the definition of $x^{(I)}$, see $(2.3)_1$), so that

$$(Mx^{(I)} + q)_{I^c \cap J} < 0.$$

On the other hand,

$$(Mx^{(J)} + q)_{I^c \cap J} = 0,$$

by the definition of $x^{(J)}$; see $(2.3)_2$. Therefore $(Mx^{(I)} + q)_{I^c \cap J} \neq (Mx^{(J)} + q)_{I^c \cap J}$, contradicting the fact that $x^{(I)} = x^{(J)}$ for the given q. □

Here is a comment on this lemma. It is known that if $x^{(I)}$ is a solution to LCP(M, q) and if M is nondegenerate, then $x^{(J)} = x^{(I)}$, where $x^{(J)}$ is the iterate following $x^{(I)}$ (see Lemma 4.1 in [2] and the references therein). It is not difficult to see, however, that then J is included in I, so that $J \setminus I = \emptyset$ and Lemma 4.1 does not apply.

We denote by $\mathrm{cof}(M)$ the *cofactor matrix* of a matrix $M \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times n}$, whose element $[\mathrm{cof}(M)]_{ij}$ is the *cofactor* $\mathrm{cof}(M_{ij})$ of the element M_{ij} of M, that is,

$$(4.1) \qquad \mathrm{cof}(M_{ij}) := (-1)^{i+j} \det M_{(\llbracket 1,n \rrbracket \setminus \{i\})(\llbracket 1,n \rrbracket \setminus \{j\})}.$$

We use the notation $\mathrm{cof}_{II}(M_{ij})$ for the cofactor of the element M_{ij} in M_{II}. Recall [19, Chapter VI] that for any index i and j,

$$(4.2) \qquad \det M = \sum_{i'} M_{i'j} \, \mathrm{cof}(M_{i'j}) = \sum_{j'} M_{ij'} \, \mathrm{cof}(M_{ij'})$$

and that

$$(4.3) \qquad M^{-1} = (\det M)^{-1} \mathrm{cof}(M^{\mathsf{T}}).$$

Our main result is given in Theorem 4.2 below. The implication (i) $\Rightarrow$ (ii) of the theorem was already proven in [2, Lemma 4.3], but that part of the paper was not selected by the referees to appear in the published version of the paper [3].

THEOREM 4.2 (a characterization of **P**-matricity). *Suppose that $M \in \mathbf{D^c}$. Then the following conditions are equivalent:*

(i) *$M \in \mathbf{P}$;*

(ii) *for any q, the Newton-min algorithm does not cycle between two different nodes when it is used to solve LCP(M, q);*

(iii) *for any q, for any subset $J \subseteq \llbracket 1, n \rrbracket$, and for any index $i \in \llbracket 1, n \rrbracket \setminus J$, the Newton-min algorithm does not cycle between the nodes $x^{(J)}$ and $x^{(J \cup \{i\})}$ when it is used to solve LCP(M, q);*

(iv) *for any subset $J \subseteq \llbracket 1, n \rrbracket$ and any index $i \in \llbracket 1, n \rrbracket \setminus J$, there holds*

$$(4.4) \qquad M_{ii} \geqslant M_{\{i\}J} M_{JJ}^{-1} M_{J\{i\}},$$

where the right-hand side is zero when $J = \emptyset$.

Proof. [(i) $\Rightarrow$ (ii)] We prove the contrapositive, assuming that the algorithm visits in order the following nodes $x^{(I)} \to x^{(J)} \to x^{(I)}$, for some I and $J \subseteq \llbracket 1, n \rrbracket$ and some $q \in \mathbb{R}^n$ such that $x^{(I)} \neq x^{(J)}$. We simplify the notation by setting $x^1 := x^{(I)}$ and $x^2 := x^{(J)}$. Since the Newton-min algorithm goes from x^1 to x^2 and from x^2 to x^1, the very definition (2.1)–(2.2) of the algorithm implies that

$$(4.5) \qquad x^1_{J^c} \leqslant (Mx^1 + q)_{J^c} \quad \text{and} \quad x^1_J > (Mx^1 + q)_J,$$

$$(4.6) \qquad x^2_{I^c} \leqslant (Mx^2 + q)_{I^c} \quad \text{and} \quad x^2_I > (Mx^2 + q)_I.$$

After a possible rearrangement of the component order, we get

$$x^2 - x^1 = \begin{pmatrix} 0_{I \cap J^c} \\ x^2_{I \cap J} \\ x^2_{I^c \cap J} \\ 0_{I^c \cap J^c} \end{pmatrix} - \begin{pmatrix} x^1_{I \cap J^c} \\ x^1_{I \cap J} \\ 0_{I^c \cap J} \\ 0_{I^c \cap J^c} \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} -x^1_{I \cap J^c} \\ (x^2 - x^1)_{I \cap J} \\ x^2_{I^c \cap J} \\ 0_{I^c \cap J^c} \end{pmatrix} \cdot \begin{matrix} [+] \\ [?] \\ [-] \\ [0] \end{matrix}$$

The extra column on the right gives the sign of each component, when appropriate: the components of $x^2 - x^1$ with indices in $I \cap J^c$ are nonnegative since $-x^1_{I \cap J^c} \geqslant -(Mx^1 + q)_{I \cap J^c}$ [by $(4.5)_1$] $= 0$ [by $(2.2)_2$] and the components of $x^2 - x^1$ with indices in $I^c \cap J$ are nonpositive since $x^2_{I^c \cap J} \leqslant (Mx^2 + q)_{I^c \cap J}$ [by $(4.6)_1$] $= 0$ [by $(2.2)_2$]. On the other hand, by $(2.2)_2$, there holds

$$M(x^2 - x^1) = \begin{pmatrix} (Mx^2)_{I \cap J^c} \\ -q_{I \cap J} \\ -q_{I^c \cap J} \\ (Mx^2)_{I^c \cap J^c} \end{pmatrix} - \begin{pmatrix} -q_{I \cap J^c} \\ -q_{I \cap J} \\ (Mx^1)_{I^c \cap J} \\ (Mx^1)_{I^c \cap J^c} \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} (Mx^2 + q)_{I \cap J^c} \\ 0 \\ -(Mx^1 + q)_{I^c \cap J} \\ (M(x^2 - x^1))_{I^c \cap J^c} \end{pmatrix} \cdot \begin{matrix} [-] \\ [0] \\ [+] \\ [?] \end{matrix}$$

The extra column on the right gives the sign of each component, when appropriate: the components of $M(x^2 - x^1)$ with indices in $I \cap J^c$ are nonpositive since $(Mx^2 + q)_{I \cap J^c} \leqslant x^2_{I \cap J^c}$ [by $(4.6)_2$] $= 0$ [by $(2.2)_1$] and the components of $M(x^2 - x^1)$ with indices in $I^c \cap J$ are nonnegative since $-(Mx^1 + q)_{I^c \cap J} \geqslant -x^1_{I^c \cap J}$ [by $(4.5)_2$] $= 0$ [by $(2.2)_1$]. Therefore

$$(x^2 - x^1) \cdot M(x^2 - x^1) \leqslant 0.$$

Since $x^1 \neq x^2$, M cannot be a **P**-matrix (see (1.1)).

[(ii) $\Rightarrow$ (iii)] Let $q \in \mathbb{R}^n$, $J \subseteq [\![1, n]\!]$, and $i \in [\![1, n]\!] \setminus J$. Set $I := J \cup \{i\}$. If $x^{(I)} \neq x^{(J)}$, then (iii) is a clear consequence of (ii). If $x^{(I)} = x^{(J)}$, then (iii) is a consequence of Lemma 4.1, according to which the Newton-min algorithm does not go from $x^{(J)}$ to $x^{(I)}$ because $I \setminus J \neq \varnothing$.

[(iii) $\Rightarrow$ (iv)] Let J and i be like in (iv), and set $I = J \cup \{i\}$. By (iii), whatever is q, the Newton-min algorithm does not cycle between the nodes $x^{(I)}$ and $x^{(J)}$ when it is used to solve LCP(M, q). Then, the implication (ii) $\Rightarrow$ (i) of Proposition 3.2 shows that there is a scalar $\alpha > 0$ such that (3.3) holds. Since $I \cap J^c = \{i\}$, $I^c \cap J = \varnothing$, $I \cap J = J$, $I \triangle J = \{i\}$, and α is a positive scalar that can be eliminated from (3.3), this inequality simplifies in (4.4) (also use the fact that $M_{\{i\}J} M_{JJ}^{-1} M_{J\{i\}}$ is a scalar, hence equal to its transpose). In case $J = \varnothing$, the condition (i) of Proposition 3.2 indicates that the inequality (4.4) becomes $M_{ii} \geqslant 0$.

[(iv) $\Rightarrow$ (i)] We prove by induction that $\det M_{II} > 0$ for any $I \subseteq [\![1, n]\!]$, which is equivalent to $M \in \mathbf{P}$. By applying (iv) with $J = \varnothing$, we obtain $M_{ii} > 0$ for a nondegenerate matrix, so that $\det M_{II} > 0$ when $|I| = 1$. Now, assume that J and i are chosen like in (iv), that $I = J \cup \{i\}$, that $\det M_{JJ} > 0$ (induction assumption), and let us show that $\det M_{II} > 0$, which will conclude the proof of (iv) $\Rightarrow$ (i).

Let us denote the indices in J by j_k, $k \in [\![1, |J|]\!]$. Using the cofactor matrix of M_{JJ} in (4.4) and the induction assumption $\det M_{JJ} > 0$, one gets

$$0 \leqslant M_{ii} \det M_{JJ} - M_{\{i\}J} \operatorname{cof}(M_{JJ}^{\mathsf{T}}) M_{J\{i\}} \qquad [(4.4), (4.3), \det M_{JJ} > 0]$$

$$= M_{ii} \det M_{JJ} - \sum_{k=1}^{|J|} \sum_{l=1}^{|J|} M_{ij_k} \operatorname{cof}_{JJ}([M_{JJ}]_{lk}) M_{j_l i}$$

$$
= M_{ii} \det M_{JJ} - \sum_{k=1}^{|J|} \sum_{l=1}^{|J|} M_{ij_k}(-1)^{l+k} \det M_{(J \setminus \{j_l\})(J \setminus \{j_k\})} \, M_{j_l i} \qquad [(4.1)]
$$

$$
= M_{ii} \det M_{JJ} + \sum_{k=1}^{|J|} (-1)^{k+|J|+1} M_{ij_k} \sum_{l=1}^{|J|} M_{j_l i} \, (-1)^{l+|J|} \det M_{(J \setminus \{j_l\})(J \setminus \{j_k\})}
$$

$$
= M_{ii} \det M_{JJ} + \sum_{k=1}^{|J|} (-1)^{k+|J|+1} M_{ij_k} \det \big(M_{J(J \setminus \{j_k\})}, \, M_{J\{i\}} \big) \qquad [(4.2)]
$$

$$
= \det M_{II} \qquad [(4.2)].
$$

Therefore $\det M_{II} > 0$ by the nondegeneracy of M.   ☐

Even though the following consequence of Theorem 4.2 is clear and was already summarized by formula (2.5) in the introduction, we quote it in Corollary 4.3 to make easier a possible future citation.

It is clear that **NM** is included in the set $\mathbf{D^c} \cap \mathbf{Q}$ of nondegenerate matrices ensuring that $\mathrm{LCP}(M, q)$ has a solution, whatever is q; indeed, if $M \in \mathbf{D^c} \setminus \mathbf{Q}$, one can find a vector q such that $\mathrm{LCP}(M, q)$ has no solution, in which case, the Newton-min algorithm has no other choice than cycling (we recall from Lemma 4.1 in [2] that, when $M \in \mathbf{D^c}$, the sequence generated by the Newton-min algorithm can be stationary only at a solution). The stronger inclusion (4.7), however, was not clear to us, before Theorem 4.2 was established.

COROLLARY 4.3 (**NM** is included in **P**). *The set of matrices $M \in \mathbf{D^c}$ ensuring the convergence of the Newton-min algorithm when it is used to solve $\mathrm{LCP}(M, q)$, whatever are the vector q and the initial point, is included in **P**. More compactly,*

$$
(4.7) \qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad \mathbf{NM} \subseteq \mathbf{P}.
$$

Proof. Observe first that **NM** is indeed the set of matrices $M \in \mathbf{D^c}$ ensuring the convergence of the Newton-min algorithm when it is used to solve $\mathrm{LCP}(M, q)$, whatever is the vector q (see the discussion before formula (2.4)). Next, $\mathbf{NM} \subseteq \mathbf{NM_2}$ by the definition (2.4) of **NM** and $\mathbf{NM_2} = \mathbf{P}$ by Theorem 4.2.   ☐

The implication (ii) $\Rightarrow$ (i) of Theorem 4.2, according to which only the **P**-matrices in $\mathbf{D^c}$ prevent the Newton-min algorithm from cycling between two nodes, is ultimately based on Motzkin's theorem of the alternative, which supports the implication (iii) $\Rightarrow$ (iv) of Theorem 4.2, while the implication (ii) $\Rightarrow$ (iii) is straightforward and the implication (iv) $\Rightarrow$ (i) has an algebraic nature. Motzkin's theorem is not constructive whereas, for $M \in \mathbf{D^c} \setminus \mathbf{P}$, it would certainly be interesting (and reassuring) to be able to construct a q and to select two nodes such that the Newton-min algorithm cycles between these nodes when it is used to solve $\mathrm{LCP}(M, q)$. This is the goal of the next proposition, which takes inspiration from the contrapositive of the implications (iii) $\Rightarrow$ (iv) $\Rightarrow$ (i) of Theorem 4.2: if $M \in \mathbf{D^c} \setminus \mathbf{P}$, there are a vector $q \in \mathbb{R}^n$, a subset $J \subseteq [\![1, n]\!]$, and an index $i \in [\![1, n]\!] \setminus J$ such that the Newton-min algorithm cycles between the nodes $x^{(J)}$ and $x^{(J \cup \{i\})}$. According to the contrapositive of the implication (iv) $\Rightarrow$ (i), when $M \in \mathbf{D^c} \setminus \mathbf{P}$, there are index sets J and $I := J \cup \{i\}$ such that $\det M_{JJ} > 0$ and $\det M_{II} < 0$; this provides a means to select the index sets. One still has to find the vector q, and this is precisely what the next proposition brings by exhibiting a whole family of vectors q such that the cycle $x^{(J)} \to x^{(I)} \to x^{(J)}$, with the above J and I, occurs.

We adopt the notation $t^+ := \max(0, t)$ for $t \in \mathbb{R}$. The "max" operator is supposed to act componentwise on vectors.

PROPOSITION 4.4 (2-cycle for $\mathbf{M} \notin \mathbf{P}$). *Suppose that* $M \in \mathbf{D^c} \setminus \mathbf{P}$. *Then*

(1) *there are two index sets* I *and* $J \subseteq [\![1, n]\!]$ *and an index* $i \in [\![1, n]\!]$ *such that* $I = J \cup \{i\}$, $\det M_{II} < 0$, *and* $\det M_{JJ} > 0$,

(2) *for any two index sets* I *and* $J \subseteq [\![1, n]\!]$ *and an index* $i \in [\![1, n]\!]$ *having the properties given in point* 1, *the Newton-min algorithm cycles between* $x^{(I)}$ *and* $x^{(J)}$ *when the components of* q *are determined in order as follows:*

$$(4.8) \qquad\qquad\qquad q_J = -M_{JJ}e^J,$$

$$(4.9) \qquad q_i = -M_{iJ}e^J - \varepsilon, \quad \text{with } 0 < \varepsilon < \frac{|\det M_{II}|}{\max_{j \in J}[\mathrm{cof}_{II}(M_{ij})]^+},$$

$$(4.10) \qquad\qquad q_{I^c} \geqslant \max\left(M_{I^cJ}M_{JJ}^{-1}q_J, M_{I^cI}M_{II}^{-1}q_I\right),$$

where e^J *is the vector of all ones in* $\mathbb{R}^{|J|}$.

Proof. (1) Since $M \notin \mathbf{P}$, some principal minor of M is negative. Then one can choose an index set I with the smallest cardinal number $|I|$ such that $\det M_{II} < 0$. Since $|I| \geqslant 1$, one can choose an index $i \in I$ and set $J := I \setminus \{i\}$ (J may be empty). The properties in point (1) are verified for the selected sets I and J, and the index i (recall that $\det M_{\varnothing\varnothing} = 1$ by convention).

(2) Let the index sets I and J and index i be such that $I = J \cup \{i\}$, $\det M_{II} < 0$, and $\det M_{JJ} > 0$. Suppose that q satisfies (4.8)–(4.10). Let $x^1 := x^{(J)}$, so that

$$\begin{cases} x_J^1 = -M_{JJ}^{-1}q_J, \\ x_{J^c}^1 = 0 \end{cases} \qquad \text{and} \qquad \begin{cases} (Mx^1 + q)_J = 0, \\ (Mx^1 + q)_{J^c} = q_{J^c} - M_{J^cJ}M_{JJ}^{-1}q_J. \end{cases}$$

For a q satisfying the assumption, there hold

$$-M_{JJ}^{-1}q_J = e^J > 0 \qquad [(4.8)],$$

$$q_i - M_{iJ}M_{JJ}^{-1}q_J = -\varepsilon < 0 \qquad [(4.8) \text{ and } (4.9)],$$

$$q_{I^c} - M_{I^cJ}M_{JJ}^{-1}q_J \geqslant 0 \qquad [(4.10)].$$

These inequalities imply that the next iterate visited by the Newton-min algorithm (2.1)–(2.2) is $x^2 := x^{(I)}$, so that

$$\begin{cases} x_I^2 = -M_{II}^{-1}q_I, \\ x_{I^c}^2 = 0 \end{cases} \qquad \text{and} \qquad \begin{cases} (Mx^2 + q)_I = 0, \\ (Mx^2 + q)_{I^c} = q_{I^c} - M_{I^cI}M_{II}^{-1}q_I. \end{cases}$$

We now want to show that appropriate inequalities on q are verified that ensure that the iterate following x^2 is x^1. Observe that by (4.8), (4.9), and (4.3),

$$M_{II}^{-1}q_I = -M_{II}^{-1}M_{IJ}e^J - \varepsilon M_{II}^{-1}e^{I,i} = -(e^I - e^{I,i}) - \varepsilon(\det M_{II})^{-1}\mathrm{cof}_{II}(M_{iI})^\mathsf{T},$$

where $e^{I,i} \in \mathbb{R}^{|I|}$ is a vector whose components are all zero, except the one at the position of i in I whose value is 1. Therefore

$$(4.11) \qquad \forall j \in J: \qquad (-M_{II}^{-1}q_I)_j = 1 + \varepsilon(\det M_{II})^{-1}\mathrm{cof}_{II}(M_{ij}) > 0,$$

since $-\varepsilon(\det M_{II})^{-1}\mathrm{cof}_{II}(M_{ij}) \leqslant \varepsilon|\det M_{II}|^{-1}\max_{j \in J}[\mathrm{cof}_{II}(M_{ij})]^+ < 1$, by the choice of ε in (4.9). On the other hand,

$$(4.12) \qquad (-M_{II}^{-1}q_I)_i = \varepsilon(\det M_{II})^{-1}\mathrm{cof}_{II}(M_{ii}) = \varepsilon(\det M_{II})^{-1}(\det M_{JJ}) < 0,$$

since $(\det M_{II}) < 0$ and $(\det M_{JJ}) > 0$ by assumption. Finally, by (4.10), there holds

$$(4.13) \qquad\qquad q_{I^c} - M_{I^cI}M_{II}^{-1}q_I \geqslant 0.$$

The inequalities (4.11), (4.12), and (4.13) imply that the iterate following x^2 is indeed x^1. Hence the Newton-min algorithm cycles between the nodes $x^{(J)}$ and $x^{(I)}$.   □

Thanks to Proposition 4.4, the equivalence (i) ⇔ (ii) of Theorem 4.2 can now be proven without Proposition 3.2 and Motzkin's theorem of the alternative, so that one can wonder whether section 3 is still useful. We have maintained it in the paper for two reasons. First, Proposition 3.2 has brought a clear indication on the way of choosing the index sets I and J in Proposition 4.4, whose origin could be obscure otherwise. Next, the dual characterization of the absence of 2-cycle that it provides may be useful in the extension of this work.

5. Discussion and perspectives. A natural extension of the present work would consist in looking at the possibility of giving a *simple* algebraic description of the classes $\mathbf{NM}_k$, for $k \geqslant 3$, and $\mathbf{NM}$. A puzzling feature of the approach followed in this paper to characterize $\mathbf{NM}_2$ is its intrinsic conjunctive-disjunctive nature. It is conjunctive in the sense that it provides conditions to satisfy for each possible 2-cycle that the matrix must prevent. Its disjunctive aspect comes from the use of Motzkin's theorem of the alternative (Lemma 3.1), which provides the possibility of avoiding a given cycle for each acceptable choice of multipliers α in Proposition 3.2, and there may be many. For example, when $M \in \mathbf{P}$, the same approach shows that the Newton-min algorithm does not make the 3-cycle $x^{(\{i\})} \to x^{(\{j\})} \to x^{(\{k\})} \to x^{(\{i\})}$, for three different indices i, j, and $k \in [\![1, n]\!]$, when it is used to solve LCP(M, q), whatever is $q \in \mathbb{R}^n$, if and only if *one* of the following eight conditions holds:

$$\begin{aligned}
&M_{ik}M_{jj} \leqslant M_{ij}^+M_{jk}, \quad M_{ji}M_{kk} \leqslant M_{jk}^+M_{ki}, \quad M_{kj}M_{ii} \leqslant M_{ki}^+M_{ij}, \\
&M_{ji}^+M_{ik} \leqslant M_{jk}M_{ii}, \quad M_{kj}^+M_{ji} \leqslant M_{ki}M_{jj}, \quad M_{ik}^+M_{kj} \leqslant M_{ij}M_{kk}, \\
&M_{ik}^+M_{kj}^+M_{ji}^+ \leqslant M_{ii}M_{jj}M_{kk}, \quad \text{or} \quad M_{ij}^+M_{jk}^+M_{ki}^+ > M_{ii}M_{jj}M_{kk}.
\end{aligned}$$

Note that conditions 1, 2, 3, and 7 are satisfied by an **M**-matrix. We don't know whether this disjunctive form of the conditions disappears for the whole classes $\mathbf{NM}_k$ and $\mathbf{NM}$, i.e., when all the possible cycles must be avoided, as it does for $\mathbf{NM}_2 = \mathbf{P}$.

Another natural question is whether the membership to $\mathbf{NM}$ can be determined in polynomial time; we recall that the membership to $\mathbf{P}$ is a co-NP-complete problem [8, 26]. It would also be important to know whether the Newton-min algorithm solves the linear complementarity problem LCP(M, q) in polynomial time when $M \in \mathbf{NM}$; recall that it does when $M \in \mathbf{M}$ [16].

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