

# 1 Walking through Doors is Hard, even without 2 Staircases: Proving PSPACE-hardness via 3 Planar Assemblies of Door Gadgets

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## 22 — Abstract —

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23 A door gadget has two states and three tunnels that can be traversed by an agent (player, robot,  
24 etc.): the “open” and “close” tunnel sets the gadget’s state to open and closed, respectively, while  
25 the “traverse” tunnel can be traversed if and only if the door is in the open state. We prove that it  
26 is PSPACE-complete to decide whether an agent can move from one location to another through  
27 a *planar* assembly of such door gadgets, removing the traditional need for crossover gadgets and  
28 thereby simplifying past PSPACE-hardness proofs of Lemmings and Nintendo games Super Mario  
29 Bros., Legend of Zelda, and Donkey Kong Country. Our result holds in all but one of the possible  
30 local planar embeddings of the open, close, and traverse tunnels within a door gadget; in the one  
31 remaining case, we prove NP-hardness.

32 We also introduce and analyze a simpler type of door gadget, called the *self-closing* door. This  
33 gadget has two states and only two tunnels, similar to the “open” and “traverse” tunnels of doors,  
34 except that traversing the traverse tunnel also closes the door. In a variant called the *symmetric*  
35 self-closing door, the “open” tunnel can be traversed if and only if the door is closed. We prove that  
36 it is PSPACE-complete to decide whether an agent can move from one location to another through  
37 a *planar* assembly of either type of self-closing door. Then we apply this framework to prove new  
38 PSPACE-hardness results for several 3D Mario games and Sokobond.

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43 **1** Introduction

44 Puzzle video games are rife with doors that block the player’s passage when closed/locked.  
 45 To open such a door, the player often needs to collect the right key or keycard, or to press  
 46 the right combination of buttons or pressure plates, or to solve some other puzzle. Many  
 47 of these game features in sufficient generality imply that the video game is NP-hard or  
 48 PSPACE-hard, according to a series of metatheorems starting at FUN 2010 [7, 10, 11].

49 An intriguing twist is to use doors as a framework for proving hardness of video games that  
 50 do not “naturally” have doors, but have some mechanics that suffice to simulate doors via a  
 51 gadget. The first use of a local “door gadget” was by Viglietta to prove Lemmings PSPACE-  
 52 complete at FUN 2014 [12]. This door gadget is a portion of a level design containing three  
 53 directed paths that the player can traverse: a “traverse” path that can be traversed if and  
 54 only if the door is open, a “close” path that forces the door to close, and an “open” path that  
 55 allows the player to open the door if desired. Viglietta [12, Metatheorem 3] proved that such  
 56 a door gadget, together with the ability to wire together door entrance/exit ports according  
 57 to an arbitrary graph (including crossovers for a 2D game like Lemmings), where the player  
 58 has the choice of how to traverse the graph, suffice to prove PSPACE-hardness of deciding  
 59 whether an agent can move from one location to another. At the same FUN, Aloupis et  
 60 al. [1] used this door framework to prove Legend of Zelda: Link to the Past and Donkey  
 61 Kong Country 1, 2, and 3 PSPACE-complete [1]. At the next FUN, Demaine et al. [6] used  
 62 this door framework to prove Super Mario Bros. PSPACE-complete. All of these proofs  
 63 feature a crossover gadget for wiring paths between door gadgets.

64 The motion-planning-through-gadgets framework of [4, 5] (initiated at FUN 2018) for-  
 65 malizes the idea of moving one or more agents through a graph of local gadgets, where each  
 66 gadget has local state and traversal paths whose traversal affects that gadget’s state (only).  
 67 In the 1-player unbounded setting considered here, past work analyzed gadgets that are

- 68 1. *deterministic*, meaning that when an agent enters a gadget at any location, it has a  
 69 unique exit location and causes a unique state change;
- 70 2. *reversible*, meaning that every such traversal can be immediately undone, both in terms  
 71 of agent location and gadget state change; and
- 72 3. *k-tunnel*, meaning that the  $2k$  entrance/exit locations can be paired up such that, in  
 73 any state, traversal paths only connected paired locations (in some direction).

74 Restricted to deterministic reversible  $k$ -tunnel gadgets, Demaine et al. [5] characterized  
 75 which gadget sets make motion planning of an agent from one location to another PSPACE-  
 76 complete: whenever the gadget set contains a gadget with *interacting tunnels*, meaning  
 77 that traversing some traversal path changes (adds or removes) the traversability of some  
 78 other traversal path (in some direction). Furthermore, they proved the same characterization  
 79 when the gadgets are connected in a planar graph, obviating the need for a crossover gadget.

80 Door gadgets naturally fit into this motion-planning-through-gadgets framework. (Indeed,  
 81 they were one of the inspirations for the framework.) Notably, however, the door gadget  
 82 used in [1, 6, 12] is neither deterministic (the open path can open the door or not, according  
 83 to the player’s choice) nor reversible (the paths are all directed in fixed directions), so the  
 84 existing characterization and planarity result do not apply.

85 In this paper, we develop a specialized motion-planning-through-*doors* framework, com-  
 86 pleting another subspace of the motion-planning-through-gadgets framework. Our framework  
 87 applies to a variety of different door gadgets, including the door gadget of [1, 6, 12]. In all  
 88 cases, a door gadget has two states and three disjoint traversal paths: “traverse”, “close”, and  
 89 “open”. Each path may be individually *directed* (traversable in one direction) or *undirected*

(traversable in both directions). In addition, the open traversal path may have identical entrance and exit locations, meaning that its traversal changes the door’s state but does not move the agent (breaking the  $k$ -tunnel assumption). In this way, we can require that traversing the open and close traversal paths force the door’s state to open and closed, respectively, but still effectively allow the player to make a choice of whether to open the door (by skipping or including the open traversal, which leaves the agent in the same location either way).

In Section 2, we introduce two more families of door gadgets. A *self-closing door* has two states but only two traversal paths: “open” and “self-close”. The self-close traversal is possible only in the open state, and it forcibly changes the state to closed. As before, each traversal path can be either directed or undirected; and the open traversal forces the state to open, but we allow the open traversal path to have identical start and end locations, which effectively allows optional opening. A *symmetric self-closing door* has two states and two traversal paths: “self-open” and “self-close”. The self-open/close traversal is possible only in the closed/open state, respectively, and it forcibly changes the state to open/closed, respectively. (This definition is fully symmetric between “open” and “close”.) Each traversal path can be either directed or undirected, but we no longer allow optional traversal.

In Section 3, we prove that *planar* 1-player motion planning is PSPACE-complete for every door gadget, for every local combinatorial planar embedding of every type door gadget except for one (which we only prove NP-hard). Thus, all that is needed to prove a new game PSPACE-hard is to construct any single supported door gadget, and to show how to connect the door entrances/exits together in a planar graph. In particular, the crossover gadgets previously constructed for Lemmings [12, Figure 2(e)], Legend of Zelda: Link to the Past and Donkey Kong Country 1, 2, and 3 [1, Figures 28 and 20], and Super Mario Bros. [6, Figure 5] are no longer necessary for those PSPACE-hardness proofs: they can now be omitted. (See Section 4 for details.) Our result should therefore make it easier in the future to prove 2D games PSPACE-hard. Because of their reduced conceptual complexity — only two traversal paths, which behave essentially identically for symmetric self-closing doors — we have found it even easier to prove games PSPACE-hard by building self-closing door gadgets.

In the full version of the paper we prove that every door is *universal*, meaning that any one of them can simulate *all* gadgets in the motion-planning-through-gadgets framework of [4, 5]. This provides the first examples of fully universal gadgets.

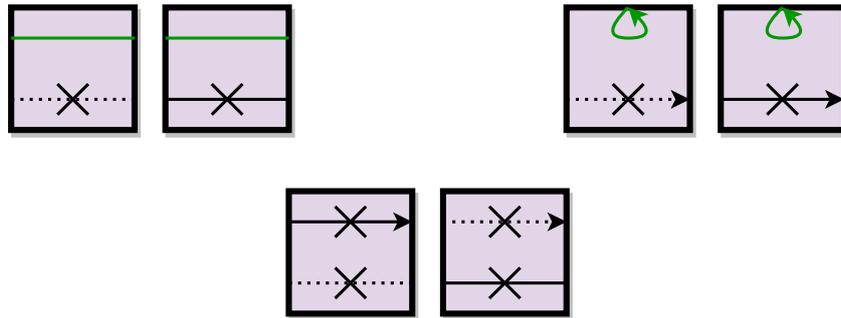
In Section 4, we illustrate this approach by proving PSPACE-hardness for one 2D game, Sokobond, and several different 3D Mario games: Super Mario 64, Super Mario 64 DS, Super Mario Sunshine, Super Mario Galaxy, and Captain Toad: Treasure Tracker (and the associated levels in Super Mario 3D World). Additional applications to Super Mario Galaxy 2 and Super Mario 3D Land/World are presented in the full version of the paper. These reductions consist of just one gadget, a symmetric self-closing door, along with easy methods for connecting these gadgets. For the 3D games, the main benefit is the simplicity of the symmetric self-closing door: crossovers are generally easy in the 3D games, though conveniently we still do not need to explicitly build them.

## 2 Self-Closing Doors

In this section, we introduce different kinds of self-closing doors and show that 1-player motion planning is PSPACE-hard for them.

134 **2.1 Terminology**

135 A *self-closing door* is a 2-state gadget that has a tunnel that closes itself when traversed  
 136 (the *self-closing* tunnel), a tunnel/port that reopens said tunnel (the *opening* tunnel/port),  
 137 and no other ports. We will talk about two major kinds of self-closing door. A *normal*  
 138 *self-closing door* is a self-closing door where the open path/tunnel is always open. A  
 139 *symmetric self-closing door* is a self-closing door where the open path/tunnel is a tunnel  
 140 and also closes itself when traversed. As with doors, these can be *directed*, *undirected*, or  
 141 *mixed*, and a normal self-closing door can also be *open-required* or *open-optional*. An  
 142 ‘X’ on a tunnel indicates that the tunnel closes itself when traversed. A dotted line indicates  
 143 a closed tunnel and a solid line indicates an open tunnel. For normal self-closing doors, the  
 144 open path/tunnel will be colored green. Figure 1 shows some self-closing doors.



■ **Figure 1** Left: An undirected open-required normal self-closing door. Right: A directed open-optional normal self-closing door. Bottom: A mixed symmetric self-closing door.

145 **2.2 PSPACE-hardness of Self-Closing Doors**

146 In this section we show PSPACE-hardness for 1-player motion planning with any of the  
 147 self-closing doors. We do so by showing undirected self-closing doors can simulate diodes,  
 148 and self-closing doors without open-optional tunnels can simulate ones with open-optional  
 149 tunnels. We then prove the main Theorem 2.3 which gives PSPACE-hardness of the directed,  
 150 open-optional, normal self-closing door by simulating a directed, open-optional door gadget.

151 ► **Lemma 2.1.** *In 1-player motion planning, any normal or symmetric self-closing door can*  
 152 *simulate an open-optional self-closing door.*

153 **Proof.** In the case of an open-optional normal self-closing door, we are done. In the case  
 154 of an open-required normal self-closing door, we do the same thing we did for the proof for  
 155 Theorem 3.6. In the case of a symmetric self-closing door, we pick a tunnel to be the opening  
 156 tunnel and do what we did for Theorem 3.6. This simulates an open-optional self-closing  
 157 door. ◀

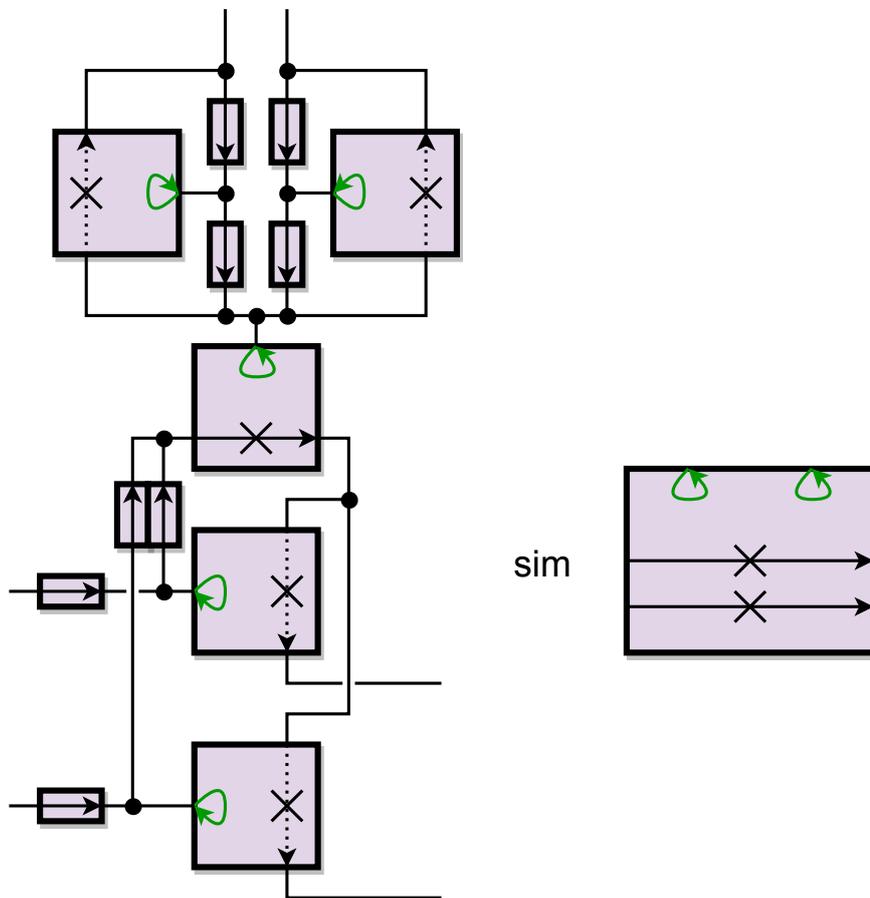
158 ► **Lemma 2.2.** *1-player motion planning with the undirected open-optional normal self-closing*  
 159 *door can simulate a directed open-optional normal self-closing door.*

160 **Proof.** We can simulate a diode by wiring 2 undirected open-optional normal self-closing  
 161 doors as shown in Figure 4. The player can enter from the left, open the left self-closing  
 162 door, traverse it, and do the same for the right self-closing door. The player cannot enter  
 163 from the right. If the player tries to open the left self-closing door and then leave, the player

164 still cannot enter from the right. If the player tries to open the right self-closing door and  
 165 then leave, they will not be able to leave. So this simulates a diode. We can wire a diode to  
 166 each side the self-closing tunnel to get a directed self-closing tunnel which can be applied to  
 167 make the undirected self-closing door directed. ◀

168 ▶ **Theorem 2.3.** *1-player motion planning with the directed open-optional normal self-closing*  
 169 *door is PSPACE-hard.*

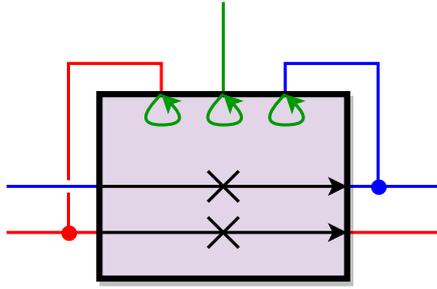
170 **Proof.** We can simulate a diode by wiring the opening port to the input end of the self-closing  
 171 tunnel. The player can open the self-closing tunnel then traverse it, but cannot go the other  
 172 way because the self-closing tunnel is directed. Then we show that we can duplicate the open  
 173 port and the self-closing tunnel as in Figure 2. We then actually triplicate the open port and  
 174 duplicate the self-closing tunnel, and wire them up to simulate the directed open-optional  
 175 door as shown in Figure 3, for which PSPACE-hardness is known. ◀



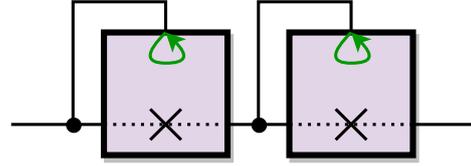
■ **Figure 2** The directed open-optional normal self-closing door can simulate a version of itself with the opening port and the self-closing tunnel duplicated. Note that the opening port duplicator is planar.

176 Chaining the simulations in Lemmas 2.1 and 2.2 with Theorem 2.3 we obtain PSPACE-  
 177 hardness for all variations.

178 ▶ **Corollary 2.4.** *1-player motion planning with any normal, symmetric, or open-optional*  
 179 *normal self-closing door is PSPACE-hard.*



■ **Figure 3** Simulation of the directed open-optional door. Green wires correspond to the opening port; blue wires correspond to the traverse tunnel; and red wires correspond to the closing tunnel. Note that the player has no reason to not open the gadget after traversing the blue wire.



■ **Figure 4** Undirected open-optional normal self-closing door simulating a diode

180 **3 Planar Doors**

181 In this section, we adapt the door framework of [1, Section 2.2] (a cleaner presentation of the  
 182 framework from [12]) into the motion-planning-through-gadgets framework. We then improve  
 183 upon those results by showing most variations on the door gadget remain PSPACE-hard  
 184 in the planar case. We also show that 1-player planar motion planning with any normal or  
 185 symmetric self-closing door is PSPACE-hard.

186 **3.1 Terminology**

187 We define a *door* to be a gadget with an *opening* port or tunnel, a *traverse* tunnel, and  
 188 a *closing* tunnel, and each of the tunnels may be directed or undirected. The opening  
 189 port/tunnel opens the traverse tunnel, and the closing tunnel closes the traverse tunnel.  
 190 Throughout this paper, the opening port/tunnel will be colored green, the traverse tunnel  
 191 will be colored blue, and the closing tunnel will be colored red. In addition, a solid traverse  
 192 tunnel represents an open door, and a dotted traverse tunnel represents a closed door. A  
 193 *directed door* is a door where all tunnels are directed. An *undirected door* is a door where  
 194 all tunnels are undirected. A door that is neither undirected nor directed is a *mixed door*.  
 195 An *open-required door* is a door with an opening tunnel, and an *open-optional door* is  
 196 one with an opening port. A directed open-required door, an undirected open-required door,  
 197 and a mixed open-optional door are shown in Figure 5.

198 In 2D, we care about the arrangement of ports in a gadget. For *planar motion planning*  
 199 problems we want a *planar* system of gadgets, where the gadgets and connections are drawn  
 200 in the plane without crossings. Planar gadgets also specify a clockwise ordering of their ports,  
 201 although we consider rotations and reflections of a gadget to be the same. A single gadget  
 202 type thus corresponds to multiple planar gadget types, depending on the choice of the order  
 203 of locations. For a planar system of gadgets, the gadgets are drawn as small diagrams with  
 204 points on their exterior coresponding to their ports and connections are drawn as paths  
 205 connecting the points corresponding to the ports without crossing gadget interiors or other  
 206 connections.

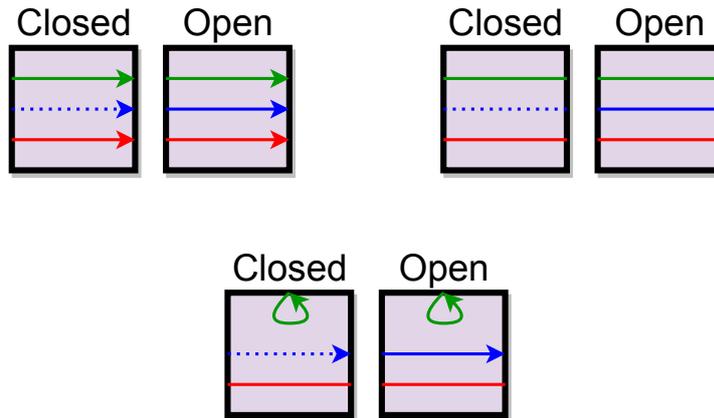


Figure 5 Left: A directed open-required door. Right: An undirected open-required door. Bottom: A mixed open-optional door.

### 3.2 PSPACE-hardness for Planar Self-Closing Doors

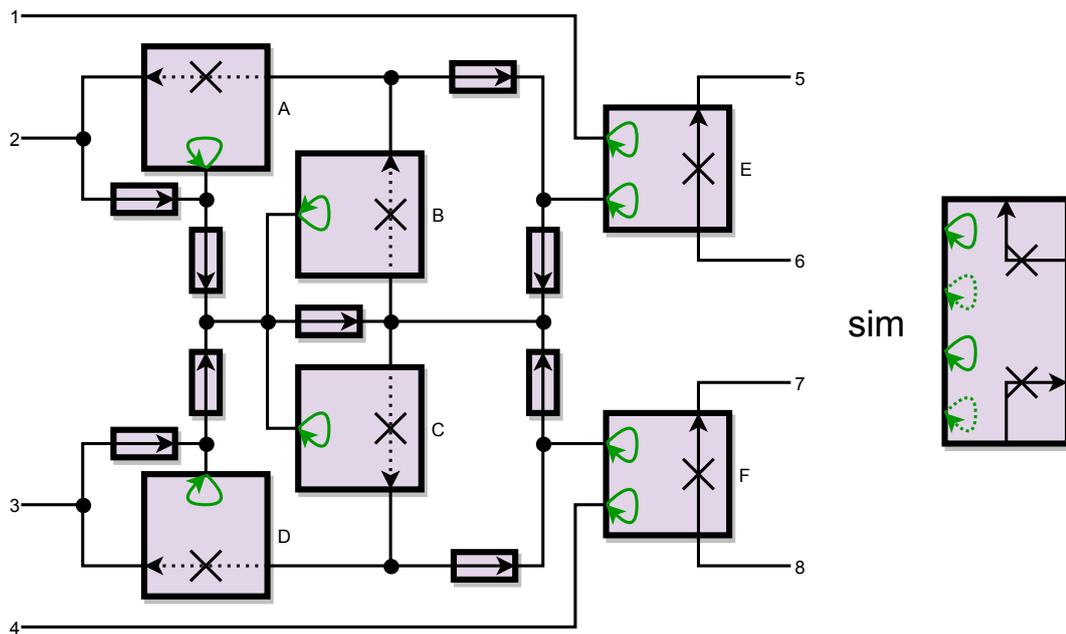
For completeness, we give a proof that the planar directed open-optional normal self-closing door is PSPACE-hard. This result was also given in [2].

**Theorem 3.1.** *1-player planar motion planning with the directed open-optional normal self-closing door is PSPACE-hard.*

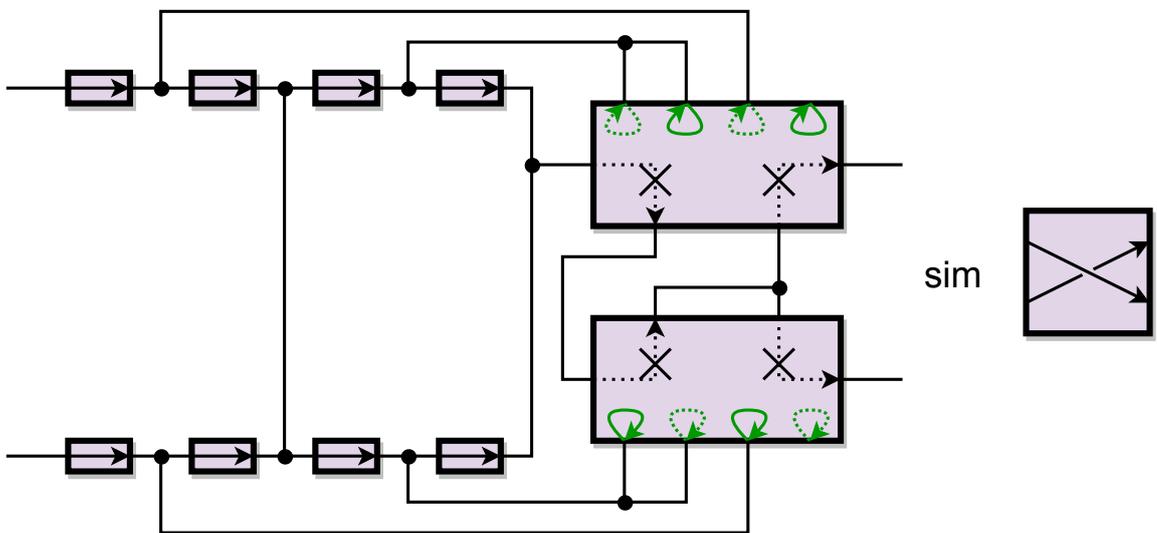
**Proof.** Since Theorem 2.3 shows PSPACE-completeness in the non-planar case, it will suffice to build a crossover gadget. First, we wish to duplicate the opening ports as in the prior proof. We show how to do so in Figure 2. Note that this time we cannot directly duplicate the self-closing tunnel as the construction from Theorem 2.3 uses crossovers. We can also simulate a diode as proven in Theorem 2.3 since the construction is planar. We use these to simulate a pair of self-closing doors where the opening ports alternate which door they open, shown in Figure 6. If the agent enters from port 1 or 4, they will open door E or F, respectively, and then leave. If the agent enters from port 2, they can open doors A, B, and C. Assume they then traverse door B. If they then open door E, they would have to traverse door C, maybe open F, and get stuck. So instead of opening door E, the agent traverses door A, ending up back at port 2 with no change except that door C is open. Entering port 2 or 3 gives the opportunity to open door C without being forced to take a different path, so leaving door C open does not help. So instead of traversing door B, the agent traverses door C. The agent is then forced to go right and can open door F. Then they are forced to traverse door B. If the agent opens door E, they will be stuck, so the agent traverses door A instead and returns to port 2, leaving door F open. Similarly, if the agent enters from port 3, the only useful thing they can do is open port E and return to port 3.

Using this, we then simulate a directed crossover as in Figure 7 which are able to simulate an undirected crossover, removing the planar restriction and reducing this problem to Theorem 2.3. In the simulation of a directed crossover, the agent must open the left tunnel of a gadget and then open both tunnels of the other one, forcing them to cross over, since the only path forward goes through the left tunnels of both gadgets. ◀

**Theorem 3.2.** *1-player planar motion planning with any normal or symmetric self-closing door is PSPACE-hard.*



■ **Figure 6** Directed open-optional normal self-closing door simulating the gadget on the right, where solid opening ports control the top self-closing tunnel and dotted opening ports control the bottom self-closing tunnel. The gadgets and external ports are labelled to help with the proof.



■ **Figure 7** Directed open-optional normal self-closing door simulating a crossover.

236 **Proof.** Any normal or symmetric self-closing door can simulate a diode as shown in Fig-  
 237 ure 8(a-f). Then we can simulate the directed open-optional normal self-closing door as  
 238 shown in Figure 9(a-d). Finally we apply Theorem 3.1 to show PSPACE-hardness. ◀

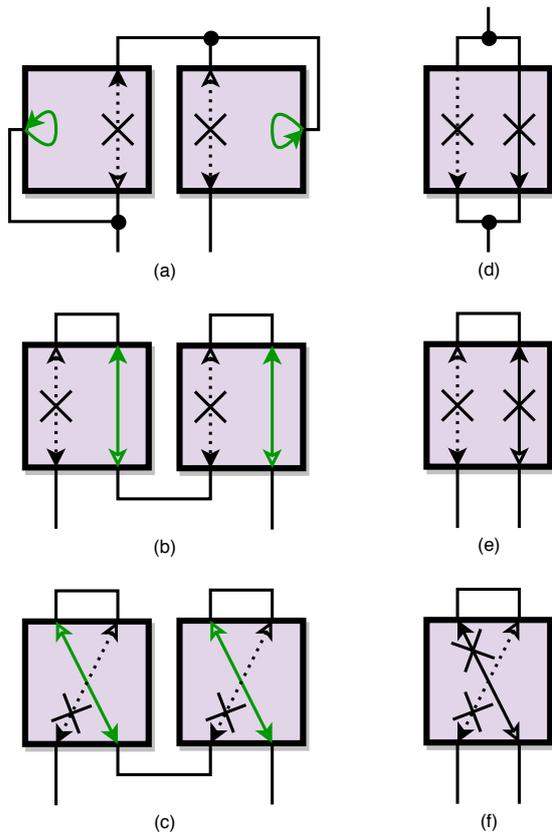


Figure 8 Six types of self-closing doors simulating diodes. Filled-in arrows indicate directions that are required to exist, and outlined arrows indicate optional directions. Case (a) is the same as Figure 4.

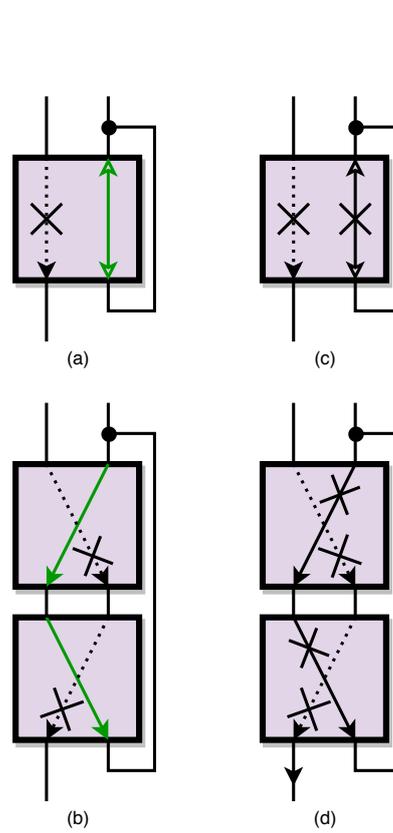


Figure 9 Four types of directed self-closing doors simulating the directed optional normal self-closing door. Filled-in arrows indicate directions that are required to exist, and exactly one of the outlined directions must exist.

239 **3.3 PSPACE-hardness for Planar Doors**

240 We will show that 1-player planar motion planning with almost any door is PSPACE-hard  
 241 by showing that 1-player planar motion planning with almost any fully directed door is  
 242 PSPACE-hard and that mixed and undirected doors can planarly simulate at least one of  
 243 the PSPACE-hard fully directed doors.

244 We first show that mixed and undirected doors can simulate fully directed doors in  
 245 Lemmas 3.3 and 3.4. Since undirected and partially directed doors can planarly simulate at  
 246 least one fully directed door, it suffices to prove hardness for all fully directed doors. Next, we  
 247 show hardness for all fully directed doors with at least one pair of crossing tunnels. We then  
 248 show we can collapse adjacent opening ports to optional opening ports in Theorem 3.6, this  
 249 leaves 12 fully directed doors with no crossing tunnels (Figure 10)s. These 12 doors are shown  
 250 and named in Figure 10. Proofs for 11 of the 12 of these cases are given in Theorem 3.8.  
 251 Finally, we show NP-hardness for the remaining Case 8: OTtocC door in Theorem 3.11.

252 ▶ **Lemma 3.3.** *Any mixed door can planarly simulate some fully directed door which is not*  
 253 *the Case 8: OTtocC door.*

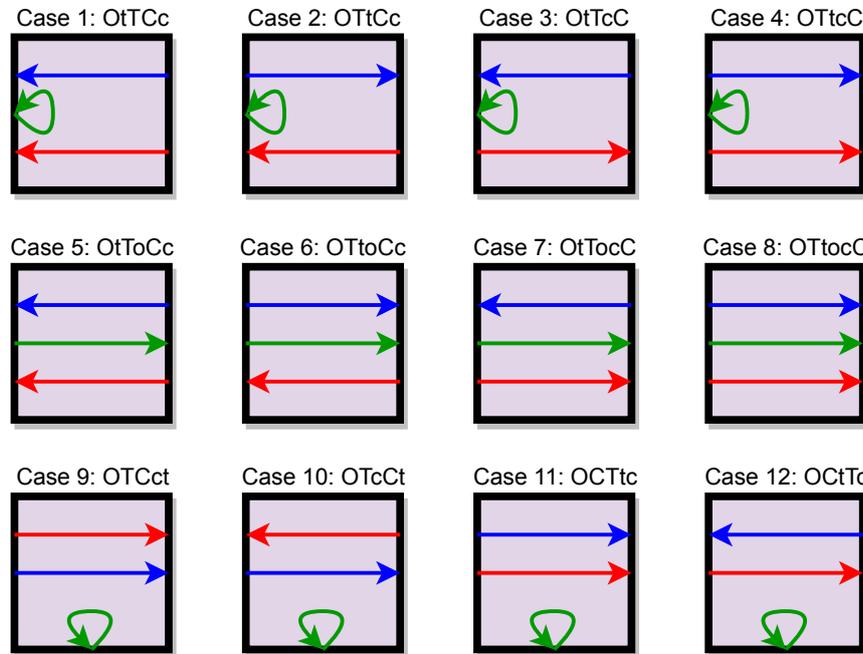
254 **Proof.** Consider an arbitrary mixed door  $M$ . Since  $M$  is mixed, it has a directed tunnel. No

### 3:10 Proving PSPACE-hardness via Planar Assemblies of Door Gadgets

255 tunnel changes its own traversability when crossed, so this tunnel simulates a diode. We wire  
 256 each undirected tunnel of  $M$  through diodes at each end pointing in the same direction. This  
 257 simulates a directed door. If  $M$  is not the door in Case 8: OTtocC, we are done. Otherwise,  
 258 flip one set of diodes wired through an undirected tunnel of  $M$ , simulating a different directed  
 259 door. ◀

260 ▶ **Lemma 3.4.** *An undirected door can planarly simulate a fully directed door which is not*  
 261 *the Case 8: OTtocC door.*

262 **Proof.** Consider an arbitrary undirected door  $U$ . We wire an external wire to a port of the  
 263 opening port/tunnel. The player can visit the port, or if it is a tunnel, cross the tunnel both  
 264 ways, to open the gadget. If the opening port/tunnel was a tunnel, this turns it into a port,  
 265 making the gadget  $U'$ . Consider the order of the ports of the opening port  $O$ , the traverse  
 266 tunnel  $\{T_0, T_1\}$ , and the closing tunnel  $\{C_0, C_1\}$  around the edge of  $U'$ , and label the ports  
 267  $p_0, p_1, p_2, p_3, p_4$ . We want to show that a traverse tunnel port is adjacent to a closing  
 268 tunnel port. Assume not. Without loss of generality, let  $p_0 = T_0$ . Then  $\{p_1, p_4\} = \{T_1, O\}$ . But  
 269 then  $\{p_2, p_3\} = \{C_0, C_1\}$ , and one of  $\{p_2, p_3\}$  must be adjacent to a traverse tunnel  
 270 port, a contradiction. Since one of the traverse tunnel ports, say  $T_1$ , is adjacent to one of the  
 271 closing tunnel ports, say  $C_0$ , we wire  $T_1$  to  $C_0$  without blocking an opening port or opening  
 272 tunnel port. This simulates a directed open-optional normal self-closing door: The player can open  
 273 the gadget by going to the opening port (or if it is a tunnel, by going through the tunnel  
 274 and back). If the gadget is open, the player can go through the traverse tunnel and then the  
 275 closing tunnel, but cannot go the other way. If the gadget is closed, the player cannot go  
 276 either way through the traverse-tunnel-closing-tunnel path. ◀

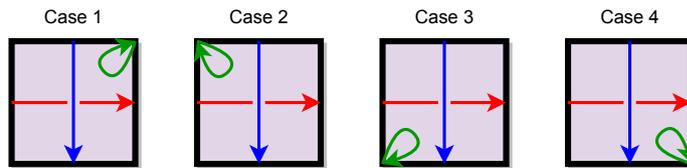


■ **Figure 10** The twelve cases of a planar directed door without internal crossings. Opening tunnels with adjacent ports are merged into opening ports.

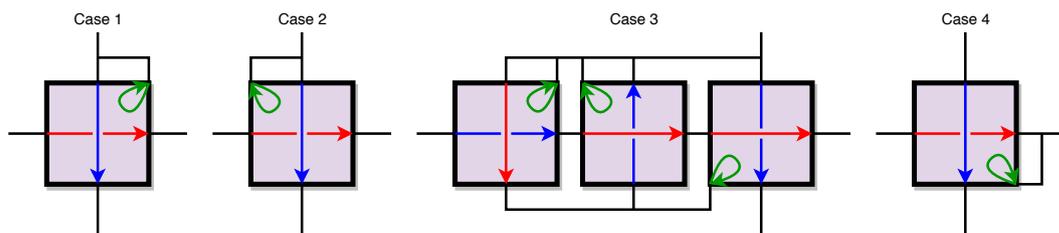
277 ► **Theorem 3.5.** *1-player planar motion planning with any directed door with an internal*  
 278 *crossing is PSPACE-hard.*

279 **Proof.** If the opening tunnel crosses the closing tunnel, then we have a crossover because  
 280 these tunnels are always open. If the opening tunnel crosses the traverse tunnel, then we  
 281 start the door open and have a crossover because neither tunnel closes itself or the other.  
 282 Otherwise, the traverse tunnel crosses the closing tunnel and the opening port/tunnel can  
 283 simulate an opening port. Then we have four cases, as shown in Figure 11. In cases 1, 2,  
 284 and 4, we can simulate a crossover by connecting the opening port to either the input of the  
 285 traverse tunnel or the output of the closing tunnel to ensure that the traverse tunnel is open  
 286 when we need to use it. (Figure 12).

287 Case 3, however, is more tricky, as both of these ports are separated from the opening  
 288 port by other ports. We use 2 copies to provide a path from the input of the traverse tunnel  
 289 to the opening port without giving access to the close tunnel. The horizontal path of the  
 290 crossover involves crossing from the left door to the right door, which is allowed as long as  
 291 the left door is open. To take the vertical path, the player opens the middle door, goes down  
 292 closing the left door, opens the right door, traverses the middle door, opens the left door (to  
 293 keep the horizontal path open), and traverses the right door. The player can leave partway  
 294 through this traversal, but this does nothing useful. So all doors with internal crossings can  
 295 simulate crossovers, removing the planarity constraint. ◀



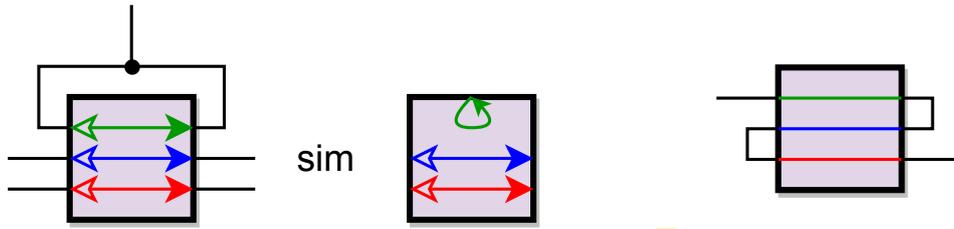
■ **Figure 11** The four cases where the traverse tunnel crosses the closing tunnel but the opening port/tunnel does not cross either and can thus simulate a port.



■ **Figure 12** All four cases of the traverse tunnel crossing the closing tunnel can each simulate a crossover.

296 ► **Theorem 3.6.** *In 1-player motion planning, any door can simulate its corresponding*  
 297 *open-optional door.*

298 **Proof.** In case of a door that is not already open-optional, we wire one end of the open  
 299 tunnel to the other end and wire some point on this loop externally as shown in Figure 13.  
 300 This turns the open tunnel into an open port. ◀



■ **Figure 13** An open-required door simulates its corresponding open-optional door. Outlined arrows indicate optionally allowed traversals.

■ **Figure 14** Simulation of a diode with an undirected door.

301 Before continuing, we prove another gadget, the directed tripwire lock, is PSPACE-  
 302 complete. Recall that a tripwire lock is a 2-state 2-tunnel gadget with an undirected tunnel  
 303 that is traversable in exactly 1 state and an undirected tunnel that toggles the state of the  
 304 gadget [4]. The *directed tripwire lock* is similar except that its tunnels are directed.

305 ► **Lemma 3.7.** *1-player planar motion planning with the parallel directed tripwire-lock is*  
 306 *PSPACE-hard.*

307 A proof can be found in the full version of the paper.

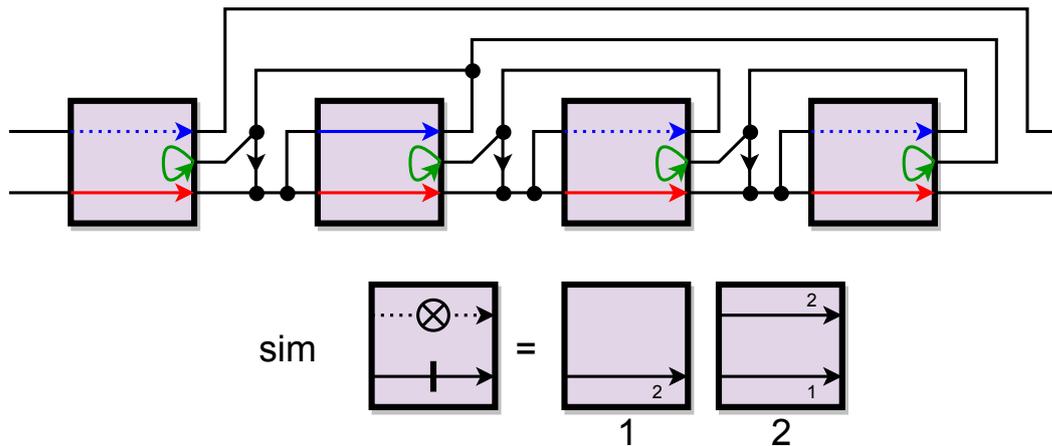
308 For directed doors, there are only the cases without internal crossings left. If the opening  
 309 port/tunnel is a tunnel and its ports are adjacent, we easily simulate an opening port,  
 310 reducing the number of cases to consider. There are twelve cases, shown in Figure 10. We  
 311 name these cases based on the cyclic order of ports, with exits-only having lowercase letters.

312 ► **Theorem 3.8.** *1-player planar motion planning with any directed door without internal*  
 313 *crossings except the Case 8: OTtoc door is PSPACE-hard.*

314 **Proof.** We divide into multiple cases. Note the cases are numbered according to Figure 10,  
 315 not in the order they are addressed in this proof.

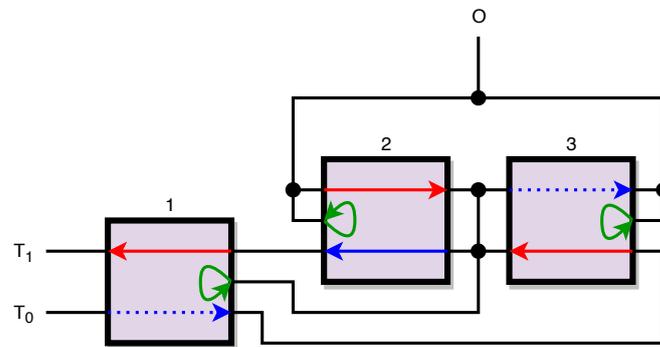
316 **Case 2: OTtCc, Case 10: OTcCt, and Case 12: OCtTc doors.** In all these doors the  
 317 opening port/tunnel is a port, and the traverse tunnel output is adjacent to the closing  
 318 tunnel input. Thus, we can simulate a directed open-optional self-closing door by wiring the  
 319 traverse tunnel output to the closing tunnel input and by attaching a wire to the open port,  
 320 and these wires do not cross each other. Then this reduces to Theorem 3.2.

321 **Case 1: OtTCc door.** can simulate the directed version of the tripwire lock, as shown  
 322 in Figure 15. We will refer to the gadgets numbered left to right. The lock is simply the  
 323 traverse tunnel on door 1. In the two simulated states we will either have doors 1 and 3 open  
 324 or door 2 open. If door 2 is open, when traversing the tripwire tunnel we can go through  
 325 the traverse tunnel allowing us to open doors 1 and 4. With door 4 now open, we can go  
 326 through its traverse tunnel opening door 3, and then closing door 4 on the way out. This  
 327 leaves us with doors 1 and 3 open. Going through the tripwire tunnel again closes door 1  
 328 but allows us to go through the traverse tunnel of door 3, allowing us to open door 2. Doors  
 329 3 and 4 are then closed on the way out. There are states where we could fail to open all  
 330 of these doors while traversing the close tunnel, but this will leave the gadget with strictly  
 331 less traversability and thus the agent will never want to take such a path. Thus the Case 1:  
 332 OtTCc door is PSPACE-complete by Lemma 3.7.



■ **Figure 15** The Case 1: OtTcC door simulates the parallel directed tripwire lock. In addition, the state diagram of the directed tripwire lock. Arrows are drawn directly on wires to represent diodes.

333 **Case 3: OtTcC door.** This door can simulate a directed open-optional normal self-closing  
 334 door (Figure 16). If the agent enters from port  $O$  (the opening port), they can open doors 2  
 335 and 3. If they then leave, they have accomplished nothing because door 2 was already open,  
 336 and door 3 can be opened from port  $O$  anyway and cannot be traversed from port  $T_0$  or  $T_1$   
 337 as we will see later. So they close door 2 instead. Then they can open door 1 and they are  
 338 forced to traverse door 3. The agent can then reopen door 2 and return to port  $O$ . Now all  
 339 the doors are open. If the agent then enters from port  $T_0$ , then they are forced to close door  
 340 3. They can then open door 1 (useless), and then they are forced to traverse door 2 and close  
 341 door 1, leading to port  $T_1$ . The agent could not have taken this path initially because door 1  
 342 was closed, and they cannot take it again without visiting port  $O$  because they just closed  
 door 1.



■ **Figure 16** Simulation of a self-closing door with the Case 3: OtTcC door. The simulation starts in the closed state. Ports and gadgets are labelled.

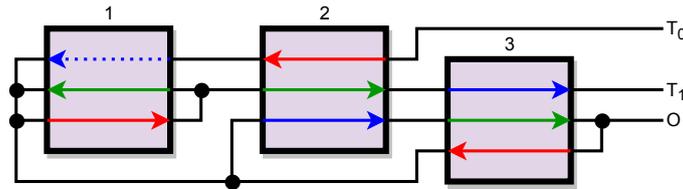
343

344 **Case 4: OTtcC door.** A proof of this case can be found in the full paper.

345 **Case 6: OTtoCc door.** This door can simulate a directed open-optional normal self-closing  
 346 door (Figure 17). If the agent enters from port  $O$ , they are forced to close door 3. If the agent  
 347 then traverses door 2, they are forced to open door 3 and return to port  $O$ , accomplishing

### 3:14 Proving PSPACE-hardness via Planar Assemblies of Door Gadgets

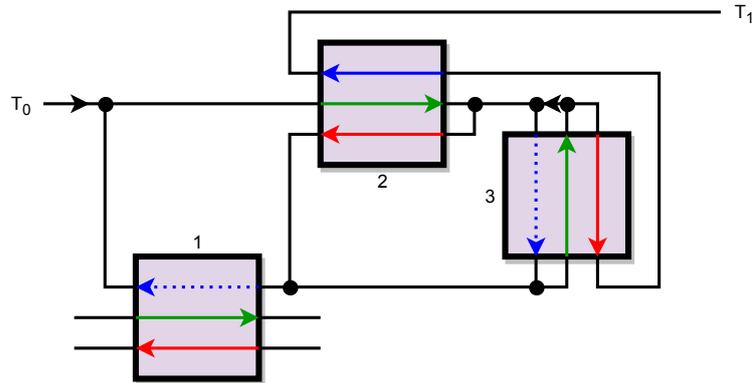
348 nothing. So the agent has no other option but to close door 1. If the agent tries to open door  
 349 2, they get stuck, so they instead open door 1. Continuing the loop involving door 1 does  
 350 nothing, so the agent then traverses door 2, opens door 3, and returns to port  $O$ . Now door  
 351 1 is open. If the agent enters from port  $T_0$ , then they are forced to close door 2, traverse  
 352 door 1, and close door 1. Reopening door 1 puts the agent back into the situation of being  
 353 forced to close door 1, so the agent instead opens door 2 and traverses door 3 to port  $T_1$ .  
 354 The agent could not have taken this path initially since door 1 was closed, and they cannot  
 take it again without visiting port  $O$  because they closed door 1.



■ **Figure 17** Simulation of a self-closing door with the Case 6: OTtoCc door. The simulation starts in the closed state. Ports and gadgets are labelled.

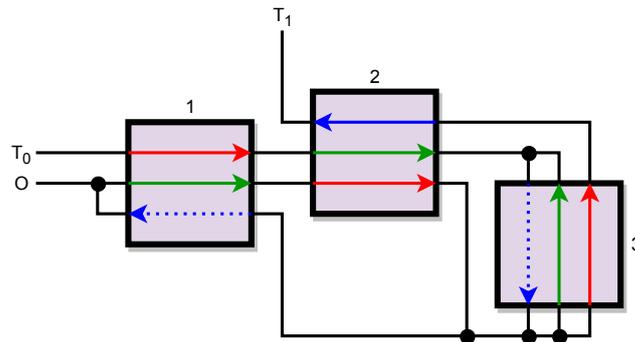
355

356 **Case 5: OtToCc door.** This door can simulate the Case 6: OTtoCc door, which has been  
 357 covered, by effectively flipping the traverse tunnel. (Figure 18). Door 1 is the gadget that  
 358 we flip the traverse tunnel of. If the agent enters from port  $T_0$ , they must open door 2, the  
 359 close door 2. If door 1 is open and the agent then traverses it, they are back to a previous  
 360 position with nothing changed. Instead, the agent opens door 3. If the agent then closes  
 361 door 3, they get stuck because door 2 is closed. So they must close door 2 (again) or traverse  
 362 door 3. These actions lead to the same situation. If the agent opens door 3 (again), they are  
 363 back to the same situation that occurred after opening door 3 the first time. If door 1 is  
 364 open, the agent then traverses door 1. Then they must open door 2. Closing door 2 leads to  
 365 a previous situation, so the agent then traverses door 3. If the agent then traverses door  
 366 1 (again), they must open door 2 (again), leading to a previous situation. So they instead  
 367 open door 3. Closing door 2 and traversing door 3 lead to different previous situations, so  
 368 the agent then closes door 3, and then is forced to traverse door 2 to port  $T_1$ , leaving all the  
 369 doors unchanged. If door 1 is not open, then the agent is unable to leave.



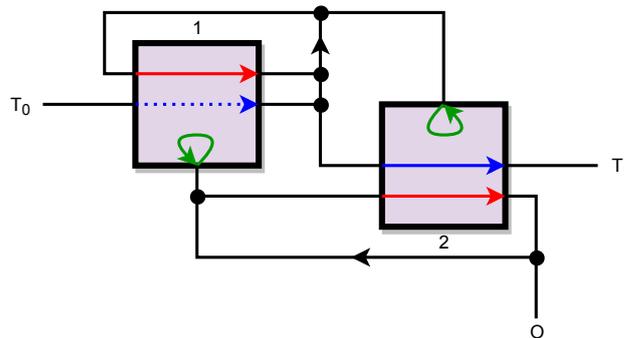
■ **Figure 18** Simulation of the Case 6: OTtoCc with the Case 5: OtToCc door. The traverse tunnel of the leftmost gadget is effectively flipped.

370 **Case 7: OtTocC door.** This door can simulate a directed open-optional normal self-closing  
 371 door (Figure 19). If the agent enters from port  $O$ , they must open door 1, then close door  
 372 2. If the agent then closes door 3, they get stuck because door 2 is closed. The agent can  
 373 traverse door 1 and leave via port  $O$ , but they can also open and then traverse door 3 and  
 374 then do the same thing, which is advantageous. So the agent opens and traverses door 3,  
 375 then traverses door 1 to port  $O$ . Now door 1 is open, door 2 is closed, and door 3 is open. If  
 376 the agent enters from port  $T_0$ , they must close door 1, then open door 2, then traverse door  
 377 3. Opening door 3 and then traversing it is a no-op, and door 1 is closed, so the agent closes  
 378 door 3 and then must traverse door 2 to port  $T_1$ . This leaves door 1 closed, door 2 open,  
 379 and door 3 closed. The agent could not have taken this path initially because door 3 was  
 380 closed, and cannot take it again without visiting port  $O$  first for the same reason.



■ **Figure 19** Simulation of a self-closing door with the Case 7: OtTocC door.

381 **Case 9: OTCct door.** This door can simulate a directed open-optional normal self-closing  
 382 door (Figure 20). If the agent enters from port  $O$ , they can open door 1 and must close door  
 383 2. If the agent later enters from port  $T_0$ , then they must traverse door 1. They then can  
 384 open door 2 (and must, since that is the only way out) and must close door 1. Then the  
 385 agent traverses door 2 to port  $T_1$ . The agent could not have taken this path initially because  
 386 door 1 was closed, and cannot take the path again without visiting port  $O$  first for the same  
 387 reason.



■ **Figure 20** Simulation of a self-closing door with the Case 9: OTCct door.

388 **Case 11: OCTtc door.** A proof of this case can be found in the full paper.

### 3:16 Proving PSPACE-hardness via Planar Assemblies of Door Gadgets

389 This covers all the planar directed doors without internal crossings except the OTtocC  
 390 door, finishing the proof. ◀

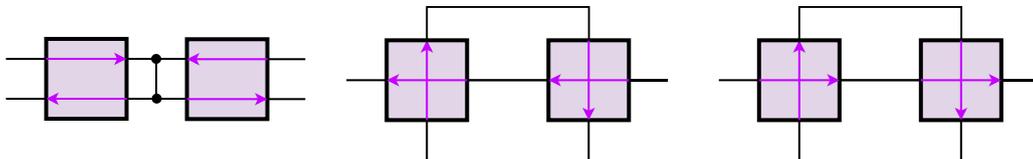
391 ▶ **Theorem 3.9.** *1-player planar motion planning with any door except the door in Case 8:*  
 392 *OTtocC is PSPACE-hard.*

393 **Proof.** This follows from Theorems 3.5, 3.8, 3.3, and 3.4, as those cover all the cases. ◀

394 To prove NP-hardness of the last case (Case 8: OTtocC), we first prove NP-hardness  
 395 of other useful gadgets. A **NAND** gadget is a directed 2-tunnel gadget where traversing  
 396 either tunnel closes both tunnels (preventing all future traversals). There are three planar  
 397 types of NAND gadgets, named by analogy with 2-toggles [4]: one **crossing** type (where the  
 398 two tunnels cross); and two noncrossing types, **parallel** (where the directions are the same)  
 399 and **antiparallel** (where the directions are opposite). The notion of NAND gadgets was  
 400 introduced in [3], which proved NP-hardness using a combination of parallel and antiparallel  
 401 NAND gadgets, “one-way” gadgets, “fork” gadgets, and “XOR” gadgets. We prove that  
 402 NAND gadgets alone suffice:

403 ▶ **Lemma 3.10.** *1-player planar motion planning is NP-hard with either antiparallel NAND*  
 404 *gadgets or crossing NAND gadgets.*

405 **Proof.** Figures 21 and 22 show that antiparallel NAND gadgets can simulate crossing NAND  
 406 gadgets and vice versa. Figure 23 shows how crossing NAND gadgets can simulate parallel  
 407 NAND gadgets. Therefore we can assume the availability of all three planar types of NAND  
 408 gadgets.



■ **Figure 21** Simulation of crossing NAND gadget by antiparallel NAND gadgets.

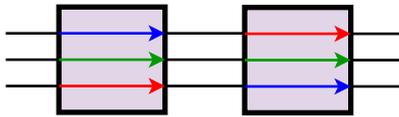
■ **Figure 22** Simulation of antiparallel NAND gadget by crossing NAND gadgets.

■ **Figure 23** Simulation of parallel NAND gadget by crossing NAND gadgets.

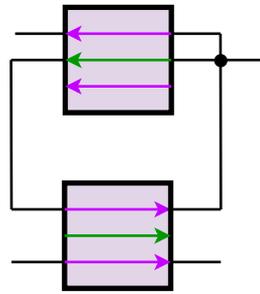
409 We follow the NP-hardness reduction from Planar 3-Coloring to Push-1-X in [3]. This  
 410 reduction requires four types of gadgets. Their “NAND gadget” is our parallel and antiparallel  
 411 (noncrossing) NAND gadgets, which we have. Their “XOR-crossing gadget” is a crossing  
 412 2-tunnel gadget that breaks down (in a particular way) if both tunnels get traversed. The  
 413 reduction guarantees that at most one tunnel in an XOR-crossing gadget will be traversed  
 414 (because they correspond to different color assignments), so we can replace this gadget with a  
 415 crossing NAND gadget (which even prevents both tunnels from being traversed). Their “fork  
 416 gadget” is a one-entrance two-exit gadget such that either traversal closes the other traversal;  
 417 we can simulate this gadget with a parallel NAND gadget by connecting together the two  
 418 entrances. Their “one-way gadget” is a gadget that prevents traversal in one direction, but  
 419 provides no constraint after being traversed in the other direction. Because this gadget is  
 420 required only to block certain traversals, and each gadget gets visited only once (in particular  
 421 because the reduction is to Push-1-X where the robot is not permitted to revisit a square), we  
 422 can replace this gadget with a NAND gadget where one tunnel is not connected to anything.  
 423 Therefore we have established NP-hardness using only NAND gadgets. ◀

424 ▶ **Theorem 3.11.** *1-player planar motion planning with the door in Case 8: OTtocC is*  
 425 *NP-hard.*

426 **Proof.** We show how to simulate antiparallel NAND gadgets, which is NP-hard by Lemma 3.10.  
 427 First, Figure 24 shows how to combine two Case 8: OTtocC doors to build a door-like  
 428 gadget with an open tunnel and two traverse–close tunnels, where traversing the open tunnel  
 429 opens both traverse–close tunnels, and traversing either traverse–close tunnel closes the other  
 430 traverse–close tunnel. Next, Figure 25 shows how to combine two of these gadgets to build  
 431 an antiparallel NAND gadget. The top tunnel in the top gadget is initially closed, forcing the  
 432 agent to open it and thus close the bottom tunnel of the bottom gadget, which is possibly  
 433 only if the bottom tunnel of the bottom gadget was not already traversed. Because the open  
 434 tunnel of the bottom gadget is not connected to anything, both tunnels of the bottom gadget  
 435 will remain closed once closed. ◀



■ **Figure 24** Simulation of parallel double-close door with the Case 8: OTtocC door.



■ **Figure 25** Simulation of an antiparallel NAND gadget with a parallel double-close door.

## 4 Applications

436  
 437 In this section we use our results about the complexity of door gadgets to prove PSPACE-  
 438 hardness for seven new video games: Sokobond, and several different 3D Mario games. More  
 439 applications are in the full paper.

440 Sokobond is a 2D block pushing game where the blocks are able to fuse into polyominoes.  
 441 The Mario games considered are all 3D platformers in which the player controls Mario in an  
 442 attempt to collect resources or reach target locations while avoiding or defeating enemies  
 443 and environmental hazards. The player’s main actions are having Mario jump and walk  
 444 in an approximately continuous environment. Mario also has health and ways of taking  
 445 damage which can cause the player to lose the game. More details on the needed additional  
 446 mechanics are given in the section for each game. Captain Toad: Treasure Tracker is a 3D  
 447 puzzle platformer and is mechanically similar to Mario except that Toad is unable to jump.

448 In addition, our planar door results simplify prior uses of a door framework. The  
 449 Lemmings door [12, Figure 4] has an internal crossing, so Theorem 3.5 applies. The  
 450 Donkey Kong Country 1, 2, and 3 doors [1, Figures 21–23] are the Case 10: OTcCt door,  
 451 Case 4: OTtcC door, and internal crossing door, respectively, so Theorems 3.8 and 3.5  
 452 applies. The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past door [1, Figure 30] has an internal  
 453 crossing, so Theorem 3.5 applies. The Super Mario Bros. door [6, Figure 6] is the Case  
 454 4: OTtcC door, so Theorem 3.8 applies. Therefore all of the crossover gadgets in these

455 reductions [12, Figure 2(e)], [1, Figure 20], [1, Figure 28], [6, Figure 5] are not in fact needed  
 456 to prove PSPACE-hardness of these games.

#### 457 4.1 Sokobond

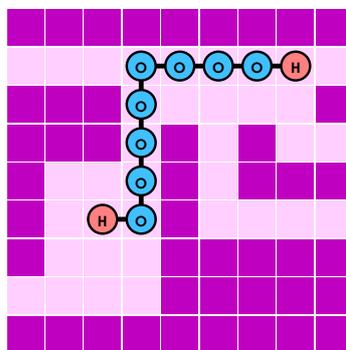
458 Sokobond [9] is a 2D block pushing game where the blocks are atoms/molecules. Movement  
 459 is discrete along a square grid. The player starts as a single atom. Each atom except He has  
 460 some number of free electrons (H has 1, O has 2, N has 3, C has 4). When two atoms that  
 461 both have free electrons are adjacent, they both lose a free electron and bond into a molecule.  
 462 Molecules are rigid, so pushing an atom in a molecule results in the entire molecule moving.  
 463 Atoms/molecules can also push each other.

464 Sokobond with He atoms is trivially NP-hard as it includes PUSH-\* [3]. We show  
 465 PSPACE-hardness even without He atoms:

466 ► **Theorem 4.1.** *Completing a level in Sokobond with H and O atoms is PSPACE-hard.*

467 **Proof.** We reduce from 1-player planar motion planning with a door that is not the Case 8:  
 468 OTtocC door and use Theorem 3.9.

469 Let the player start as an H atom trying to reach another H atom. We can simulate a  
 470 door that is not the Case 8: OTtocC door as shown in Figure 26. To open the door, the  
 471 player pulls down on the big molecule. The player can go through the traverse tunnel if and  
 472 only if the molecule is down. When going through the closing tunnel, the player is forced to  
 473 push up on the molecule, closing the traverse tunnel. The molecule used to simulate a door  
 474 has no free electrons, so the level can be completed if and only if the player can reach the  
 475 other H atom. ◀



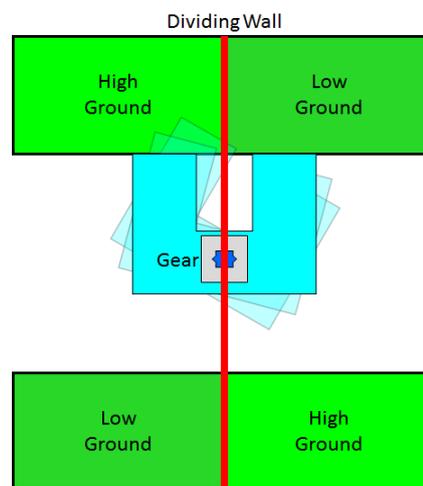
■ **Figure 26** Simulation of a door in Sokobond. The opening port is at the bottom left. The traverse tunnel is undirected and runs between the top left and the top right. The closing tunnel is undirected and runs between the middle right and the bottom right.

#### 476 4.2 Captain Toad: Treasure Tracker

477 Captain Toad: Treasure Tracker is a 3D puzzle platformer in the Mario universe, originally  
 478 appearing as a type of level in Super Mario 3D World, and then released as a stand-alone  
 479 game on the Wii U and ported to the 3DS and Switch. Notably, Toad can fall but not  
 480 jump. The game contains rotating platforms controlled by a wheel which Toad must be  
 481 adjacent to to move. The platforms move in 90° increments. We show PSPACE-hardness by  
 482 constructing an antiparallel symmetric self-closing door (Theorem 2.4).

483 ► **Theorem 4.2.** *Collecting Stars in a Captain Toad: Treasure Tracker is PSPACE-hard*  
 484 *assuming no level size limit.*

485 **Proof.** Figure 27 gives a top-down view of the construction. There is a U-shaped rotating  
 486 platform at a height slightly below the high ground and far above the low ground. The  
 487 U-shaped platform rotates counterclockwise and can be reached from the nearby high ground;  
 488 however, the gap between the back of the U and the other side is too far for Toad to jump.  
 489 Further, the dividing wall sits slightly above the rotating platform, preventing Toad from  
 490 crossing. Toad is able to go onto the U platform from the high ground, activate the gear  
 491 twice, and jump off of the U platform onto the low ground across the gap. The U platform  
 492 is now facing the other way, allowing Toad to enter from the high ground on the other side,  
 493 but preventing other traversals. ◀



■ **Figure 27** Top view of a simulation of a symmetric self-closing door.

### 494 4.3 Super Mario 64/Super Mario 64 DS

495 Super Mario 64 is a 3D Mario game for the Nintendo 64 where Mario collects Stars from  
 496 courses inside paintings to save the princess, who is trapped behind a painting. Super Mario  
 497 64 DS is a remake of Super Mario 64 for the Nintendo DS (still in 3D), featuring the same  
 498 courses as in Super Mario 64 plus new courses, as well as the ability to play as characters  
 499 other than Mario. In this reduction, we will primarily make use of quicksand, which will  
 500 defeat Mario if he lands in it, and the ghost enemy Boo.

501 The Boo is an enemy that (with normal parameters) chases Mario if he is looking away  
 502 from it and is less than a certain distance away. Once Mario gets too far, the Boo moves  
 503 back to its original position. Unlike most enemies, jumping on a Boo does not kill it, but  
 504 instead sends it a short distance forward or backward, which we will use to help Mario cross  
 505 the quicksand. Some walls stop the Boo but it can go through certain walls that normal  
 506 Mario cannot go through, we call these Boo-only walls. The Boo is also unable to go through  
 507 doors. We also make use of one-way walls which Mario and the Boo can go through in one  
 508 direction but not the other.

509 For the setup, we use one Boo in Super Mario 64 DS and two Boos in Super Mario 64.  
 510 Performing a kick while in the air sends Mario a short distance up and can normally only be



#### 533 4.4 Super Mario Sunshine

534 Super Mario Sunshine is a 3D Mario game for the GameCube where Mario is falsely accused  
535 of spreading graffiti and is forced to clean it up before he can leave. Like Super Mario 64,  
536 this game includes one-way walls. This game features a new device, F.L.U.D.D., attached to  
537 Mario's back that allows him to spray water. Lily Pads float on water; the player can ride  
538 a Lily Pad and cause it to move by spraying water in the opposite direction. Sludge is an  
539 environmental hazard which kills Mario if he touches it. The general goal of a level is to  
540 collect Shrine Sprites.

541 ► **Theorem 4.4.** *Collecting a Shine Sprite in a Super Mario Sunshine level is PSPACE-hard*  
542 *assuming no level size limits.*

543 **Proof.** We reduce from 1-player motion planning with the symmetric self-closing door  
544 (Theorem 2.4), where the target to collect is a Shine Sprite. The simulation of a symmetric  
545 self-closing door is shown in Figure 29.

546 The thin water above the sludge prevents the Lily Pad from disintegrating, while preventing  
547 Mario from crossing without using the Lily Pad. Mario goes from port 1 to port 2 and opens  
548 the port 3 to port 4 traversal by crossing the 1-way wall and riding the Lily Pad across, then  
549 moves the Lily Pad partially across the slit so it can be accessed from the other side. He  
550 cannot leak to the section between port 3 and port 4 because the slits are too thin. The  
551 sludge is too long to simply jump to the other side, so the Lily Pad is needed. Mario cannot  
552 do anything from port 2 because the 1-way wall blocks him from going to port 1. Mario goes  
553 from port 3 to port 4 in a similar manner. ◀

#### 554 4.5 Super Mario Galaxy

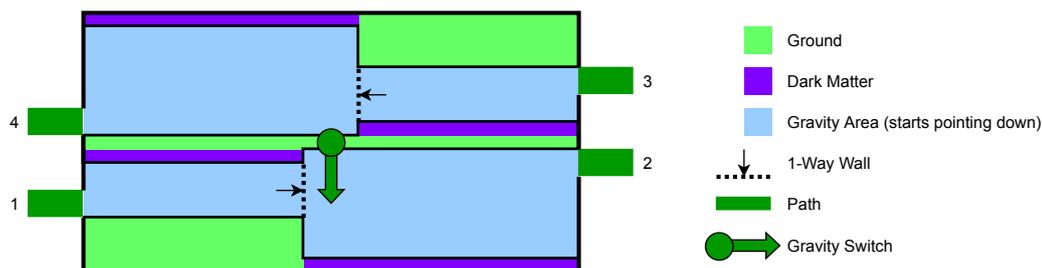
555 Super Mario Galaxy is a 3D Mario game for the Wii where Mario goes to space. He encounters  
556 alien creatures along the way and collects Power Stars to restore the power of a spaceship.  
557 The game features downward gravity, upward gravity, sideways gravity, spherical gravity,  
558 cubical gravity, tubular gravity, cylindrical gravity that allows infinite freefall, W-shaped  
559 gravity, gravity that cannot make up its mind, and most importantly, controllable gravity.

560 Dark matter disintegrates Mario when he touches it, resulting in death. The Gravity  
561 Switch changes the direction of gravity when spun and can be spun multiple times.

562 ► **Theorem 4.5.** *Collecting a Power Star in a Super Mario Galaxy galaxy is PSPACE-hard*  
563 *assuming no galaxy size limits.*

564 **Proof.** We reduce from 1-player motion planning with the symmetric self-closing door  
565 (Theorem 2.4), where the target to collect is a Star. The simulation of a symmetric self-  
566 closing door is shown in Figure 30.

567 The Gravity Switch in this construction switches gravity between down and up. Mario  
568 goes from port 1 to port 2 by crossing the 1-way wall and hitting the Gravity Switch on his  
569 way to the right. This is forced because of a pit of dark matter, and closes the port 1 to port  
570 2 traversal because when gravity points up, attempting the traversal would land Mario on  
571 dark matter. At the same time, it opens the port 3 to port 4 traversal. Mario cannot enter  
572 port 2 and do anything useful because flipping the Gravity Switch means falling in the pit of  
573 dark matter. Mario goes from port 3 to port 4 in a similar manner. ◀



■ **Figure 30** Simulation of a symmetric self-closing door in Super Mario Galaxy. This is a side view and is essentially 2-dimensional.

## 574 4.6 Super Mario Odyssey

575 Super Mario Odyssey is a 3D Mario game for the Switch where Mario travels to different  
 576 kingdoms collecting Power Moons and eventually goes to the Moon. Mario has the ability  
 577 (via his hat Cappy) to capture certain enemies and objects to use their powers, but such  
 578 objects tend to reset position after being uncaptured, so we will not be using them here.

579 We make use of a Jaxi, poison, and timed platforms. A Jaxi is a statue lion that can  
 580 be ridden safely across poison, which is a hazard that kills Mario. A timed switch makes  
 581 some event happen for a specific amount of time. In our reduction, timed switch X makes  
 582 platform X appear for just long enough for Mario to make a traversal.

583 ► **Theorem 4.6.** *Collecting a Power Moon in a Super Mario Odyssey kingdom is PSPACE-*  
 584 *hard assuming no kingdom size limit.*

585 **Proof.** We reduce from 1-player motion planning with the symmetric self-closing door  
 586 (Theorem 2.4), where the target to reach is a Power Moon. The simulation of a symmetric  
 587 self-closing door is shown in Figure 31.

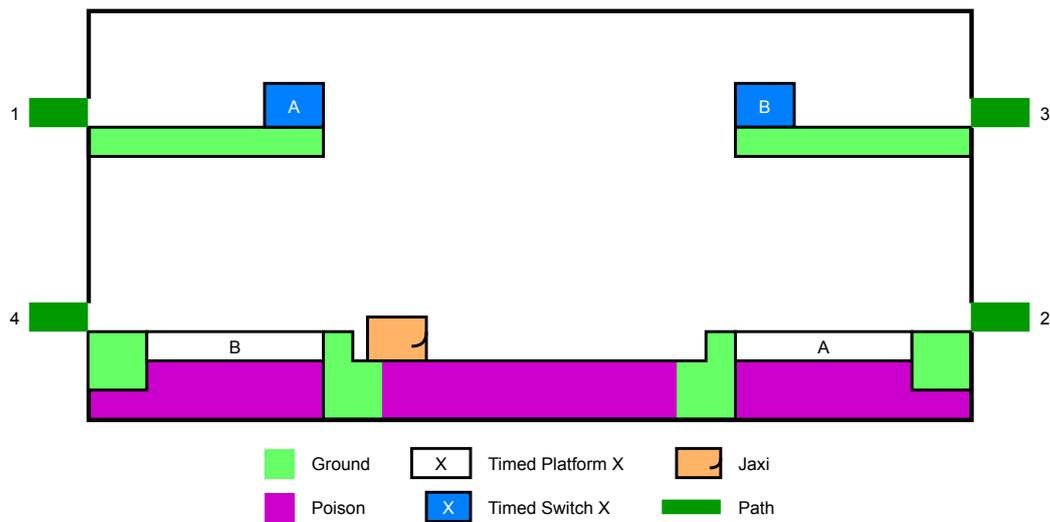
588 Mario goes from port 1 to port 2 by pressing timed switch A, riding the Jaxi to the right,  
 589 and traversing platform A. This opens the port 3 to port 4 traversal while closing the port 1  
 590 to port 2 traversal. Mario cannot go to port 3 because of the wide gap, or to port 4 because  
 591 platform B is gone. The Jaxi is required because the poison it is on is very wide. Mario  
 592 cannot do anything useful if he tries to enter from port 2 or port 4 because the platforms  
 593 would be gone. Mario goes from port 3 to port 4 in a similar manner. ◀

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■ **Figure 31** Simulation of a symmetric self-closing door in Super Mario Odyssey. This is a side view and is essentially 2-dimensional. All strips of poison are way too wide for Mario to cross with his various aerial skills, and the platforms with timed switches are too high to get to from below.

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