### Recent results and open problems on unitals

### Gábor Korchmáros

Università degli Studi della Basilicata, Italy

## Graphs, groups, and more: celebrating Brian Alspach's 80th and Dragan Marušič's 65th birthdays

28 May - 1 Jun 2018 UP FHS Koper

æ

<> E ► < E</p>

Abstract unital of order q:=pointset  $\mathcal{U}$  of size  $q^3 + 1$  with a family  $\mathcal{F}$  of subsets (called blocks), where  $|\mathcal{F}| = q^2(q^2 - q + 1)$  s.t.

Abstract unital of order q:=pointset  $\mathcal{U}$  of size  $q^3 + 1$  with a family  $\mathcal{F}$  of subsets (called blocks), where  $|\mathcal{F}| = q^2(q^2 - q + 1)$  s.t. (i) |f| = q + 1 for  $\forall f \in \mathcal{F}$ ;

Abstract unital of order q:=pointset  $\mathcal{U}$  of size  $q^3 + 1$  with a family  $\mathcal{F}$  of subsets (called blocks), where  $|\mathcal{F}| = q^2(q^2 - q + 1)$  s.t. (i) |f| = q + 1 for  $\forall f \in \mathcal{F}$ ; (ii) for  $\forall P, Q \in \mathcal{U} \exists$  a unique  $f \in \mathcal{F}$  with  $P, Q \in f$ .

Abstract unital of order q:=pointset  $\mathcal{U}$  of size  $q^3 + 1$  with a family  $\mathcal{F}$  of subsets (called blocks), where  $|\mathcal{F}| = q^2(q^2 - q + 1)$  s.t. (i) |f| = q + 1 for  $\forall f \in \mathcal{F}$ ; (ii) for  $\forall P, Q \in \mathcal{U} \exists$  a unique  $f \in \mathcal{F}$  with  $P, Q \in f$ .

#### Remark

Abstract unital of order q = block-designs  $2 - (q^3 + 1, q + 1, 1)$ .

Abstract unital of order q:=pointset  $\mathcal{U}$  of size  $q^3 + 1$  with a family  $\mathcal{F}$  of subsets (called blocks), where  $|\mathcal{F}| = q^2(q^2 - q + 1)$  s.t. (i) |f| = q + 1 for  $\forall f \in \mathcal{F}$ ; (ii) for  $\forall P, Q \in \mathcal{U} \exists$  a unique  $f \in \mathcal{F}$  with  $P, Q \in f$ .

### Remark

Abstract unital of order q = block-designs  $2 - (q^3 + 1, q + 1, 1)$ .

Embedding of an abstract unital  $\mathcal{U}$  of order q in a projective plane  $\Pi$  of order  $q^2$ := incidence preserving injective map  $\mathcal{U} \mapsto \Pi$ , i.e.

Abstract unital of order q:=pointset  $\mathcal{U}$  of size  $q^3 + 1$  with a family  $\mathcal{F}$  of subsets (called blocks), where  $|\mathcal{F}| = q^2(q^2 - q + 1)$  s.t. (i) |f| = q + 1 for  $\forall f \in \mathcal{F}$ ; (ii) for  $\forall P, Q \in \mathcal{U} \exists$  a unique  $f \in \mathcal{F}$  with  $P, Q \in f$ .

### Remark

Abstract unital of order q = block-designs  $2 - (q^3 + 1, q + 1, 1)$ .

Embedding of an abstract unital  $\mathcal{U}$  of order q in a projective plane  $\Pi$  of order  $q^2$ := incidence preserving injective map  $\mathcal{U} \mapsto \Pi$ , i.e.

 three points of U are in the same block if and only if they are mapped to three collinear points in Π.

Abstract unital of order q:=pointset  $\mathcal{U}$  of size  $q^3 + 1$  with a family  $\mathcal{F}$  of subsets (called blocks), where  $|\mathcal{F}| = q^2(q^2 - q + 1)$  s.t. (i) |f| = q + 1 for  $\forall f \in \mathcal{F}$ ; (ii) for  $\forall P, Q \in \mathcal{U} \exists$  a unique  $f \in \mathcal{F}$  with  $P, Q \in f$ .

### Remark

Abstract unital of order q = block-designs  $2 - (q^3 + 1, q + 1, 1)$ .

Embedding of an abstract unital  $\mathcal{U}$  of order q in a projective plane  $\Pi$  of order  $q^2$ := incidence preserving injective map  $\mathcal{U} \mapsto \Pi$ , i.e.

• three points of  $\mathcal{U}$  are in the same block if and only if they are mapped to three collinear points in  $\Pi$ .

Non-exhaustive computer search  $\Rightarrow$  over 900 (mutually nonisomorphic) unitals of order n = 3, only 17 embeddadble in  $\Pi$ .

伺 ト イヨト イヨト

Abstract unital of order q:=pointset  $\mathcal{U}$  of size  $q^3 + 1$  with a family  $\mathcal{F}$  of subsets (called blocks), where  $|\mathcal{F}| = q^2(q^2 - q + 1)$  s.t. (i) |f| = q + 1 for  $\forall f \in \mathcal{F}$ ; (ii) for  $\forall P, Q \in \mathcal{U} \exists$  a unique  $f \in \mathcal{F}$  with  $P, Q \in f$ .

### Remark

Abstract unital of order q = block-designs  $2 - (q^3 + 1, q + 1, 1)$ .

Embedding of an abstract unital  $\mathcal{U}$  of order q in a projective plane  $\Pi$  of order  $q^2$ := incidence preserving injective map  $\mathcal{U} \mapsto \Pi$ , i.e.

• three points of  $\mathcal{U}$  are in the same block if and only if they are mapped to three collinear points in  $\Pi$ .

Non-exhaustive computer search  $\Rightarrow$  over 900 (mutually nonisomorphic) unitals of order n = 3, only 17 embeddadble in  $\Pi$ .

### Remark

It seems that there are many abstract unitals, but only a few embeddable in projective planes.

∃ >

æ

Unital in a Projective Plane  $\Pi$  of order  $q^2$ := pointset  $\mathcal{U}$  of size  $q^3 + 1$  s.t. for lines  $\ell$  of  $\Pi$ 

Unital in a Projective Plane  $\Pi$  of order  $q^2$ := pointset  $\mathcal{U}$  of size  $q^3 + 1$  s.t. for lines  $\ell$  of  $\Pi$ 

$$|\ell \cap \mathcal{U}| = \begin{cases} q+1, \ \ell \text{ is a chord of } \mathcal{U}, \\ 1, \ \ell \text{ is a tangent to } \mathcal{U}. \end{cases}$$

Unital in a Projective Plane  $\Pi$  of order  $q^2$ := pointset  $\mathcal{U}$  of size  $q^3 + 1$  s.t. for lines  $\ell$  of  $\Pi$ 

$$|\ell \cap \mathcal{U}| = egin{cases} q+1, \ \ell \ ext{is a } \textit{chord of } \mathcal{U}, \ 1, \ \ell \ ext{is a } \textit{tangent to } \mathcal{U}. \end{cases}$$

At each point of  $\mathcal{U}$  there  $\exists$  unique tangent to  $\mathcal{U}$ ,

Unital in a Projective Plane  $\Pi$  of order  $q^2$ := pointset  $\mathcal{U}$  of size  $q^3 + 1$  s.t. for lines  $\ell$  of  $\Pi$ 

$$|\ell \cap \mathcal{U}| = egin{cases} q+1, \ \ell \ ext{is a } chord \ ext{of} \ \mathcal{U}, \ 1, \ \ell \ ext{is a } tangent \ ext{to} \ \mathcal{U}. \end{cases}$$

At each point of  $\mathcal{U}$  there  $\exists$  unique tangent to  $\mathcal{U}$ ,

### Definition

Set of all isotropic points of a unitary polarity of  $\Pi = PG(2, q^2)$  is a unital, called the *classical unital*.

Unital in a Projective Plane  $\Pi$  of order  $q^2$ := pointset  $\mathcal{U}$  of size  $q^3 + 1$  s.t. for lines  $\ell$  of  $\Pi$ 

$$|\ell \cap \mathcal{U}| = egin{cases} q+1, \ \ell \ ext{is a } chord \ ext{of} \ \mathcal{U}, \ 1, \ \ell \ ext{is a } tangent \ ext{to} \ \mathcal{U}. \end{cases}$$

At each point of  $\mathcal{U}$  there  $\exists$  unique tangent to  $\mathcal{U}$ ,

### Definition

Set of all isotropic points of a unitary polarity of  $\Pi = PG(2, q^2)$  is a unital, called the *classical unital*.

#### Remark

If  $\Pi$  admits a unitary polarity then the set of all isotropic points is a unital.

4 3 b

Unital in a Projective Plane  $\Pi$  of order  $q^2$ := pointset  $\mathcal{U}$  of size  $q^3 + 1$  s.t. for lines  $\ell$  of  $\Pi$ 

$$|\ell \cap \mathcal{U}| = egin{cases} q+1, \ \ell \ ext{is a } chord \ ext{of} \ \mathcal{U}, \ 1, \ \ell \ ext{is a } tangent \ ext{to} \ \mathcal{U}. \end{cases}$$

At each point of  $\mathcal{U}$  there  $\exists$  unique tangent to  $\mathcal{U}$ ,

### Definition

Set of all isotropic points of a unitary polarity of  $\Pi = PG(2, q^2)$  is a unital, called the *classical unital*.

#### Remark

If  $\Pi$  admits a unitary polarity then the set of all isotropic points is a unital.

There are known several examples.

< A >

- A - B - M

# Unitals in $PG(2, q^2)$

æ

< ≝ ► < ≣

P.

## Unitals in $PG(2, q^2)$

### Remark

Canonical Equation of classical unital:

→ 3 → < 3</p>

э

## Unitals in $PG(2, q^2)$

### Remark

Canonical Equation of classical unital:  $\mathcal{U} = \{P(x, y) | y^q + y = x^{q+1}; x, y \in GF(q^2)\} \cup \{Y_{\infty}\}.$ 

伺 ト く ヨ ト く ヨ ト

э

### Remark

Canonical Equation of classical unital:  $\mathcal{U} = \{ P(x, y) | y^q + y = x^{q+1}; x, y \in GF(q^2) \} \cup \{ Y_{\infty} \}.$ 

### Definition

BM-unitals in  $PG(2, q^2)$ :=Unitals in  $PG(2, q^2)$  which were constructed by Buekenhout (1974) using the four-dimensional Bruck-Barlotti representation of  $AG(2, q^2)$ .

#### Remark

Canonical Equation of classical unital:  $\mathcal{U} = \{P(x, y) | y^q + y = x^{q+1}; x, y \in GF(q^2)\} \cup \{Y_{\infty}\}.$ 

### Definition

BM-unitals in  $PG(2, q^2)$ :=Unitals in  $PG(2, q^2)$  which were constructed by Buekenhout (1974) using the four-dimensional Bruck-Barlotti representation of  $AG(2, q^2)$ .

### Remark

Equations of BM-unitals are more complicated.

同 ト イ ヨ ト イ ヨ ト

### Remark

Canonical Equation of classical unital:  $\mathcal{U} = \{ P(x, y) | y^q + y = x^{q+1}; x, y \in GF(q^2) \} \cup \{ Y_{\infty} \}.$ 

### Definition

BM-unitals in  $PG(2, q^2)$ :=Unitals in  $PG(2, q^2)$  which were constructed by Buekenhout (1974) using the four-dimensional Bruck-Barlotti representation of  $AG(2, q^2)$ .

#### Remark

Equations of BM-unitals are more complicated.

**Open question**: Are there other unitals in  $PG(2, q^2)$ ?

伺 ト く ヨ ト く ヨ ト

э

By definition, the classical abstract unital, as well as the BM-unitals, are embedded in  $PG(2, q^2)$ 

By definition, the classical abstract unital, as well as the BM-unitals, are embedded in  $PG(2, q^2) \Rightarrow$  in a natural way.

By definition, the classical abstract unital, as well as the BM-unitals, are embedded in  $PG(2, q^2) \Rightarrow$  in a natural way. Problem: Is the "natural" one the unique embedding of these unitals of order q in  $PG(2, q^2)$ ?

By definition, the classical abstract unital, as well as the BM-unitals, are embedded in  $PG(2, q^2) \Rightarrow$  in a natural way. Problem: Is the "natural" one the unique embedding of these unitals of order q in  $PG(2, q^2)$ ?

### Definition

Two embeddings of an abstract unital  $\mathcal{U}$  of order q into  $PG(2, q^2)$ , say  $\Phi$  and  $\Psi$ , are considered equivalent when  $\Phi(\mathcal{U})$  can be transformed in  $\Psi(\mathcal{U})$  by a collineation of  $PG(2, q^2)$ . By definition, the classical abstract unital, as well as the BM-unitals, are embedded in  $PG(2, q^2) \Rightarrow$  in a natural way. Problem: Is the "natural" one the unique embedding of these unitals of order q in  $PG(2, q^2)$ ?

### Definition

Two embeddings of an abstract unital  $\mathcal{U}$  of order q into  $PG(2, q^2)$ , say  $\Phi$  and  $\Psi$ , are considered equivalent when  $\Phi(\mathcal{U})$  can be transformed in  $\Psi(\mathcal{U})$  by a collineation of  $PG(2, q^2)$ .

#### Theorem

(G.K., A. Siciliano, T. Szőnyi, J. Comb. Theory, A 2018) For the classical unital, the answer to the above Problem is yes.

By definition, the classical abstract unital, as well as the BM-unitals, are embedded in  $PG(2, q^2) \Rightarrow$  in a natural way. Problem: Is the "natural" one the unique embedding of these unitals of order q in  $PG(2, q^2)$ ?

### Definition

Two embeddings of an abstract unital  $\mathcal{U}$  of order q into  $PG(2, q^2)$ , say  $\Phi$  and  $\Psi$ , are considered equivalent when  $\Phi(\mathcal{U})$  can be transformed in  $\Psi(\mathcal{U})$  by a collineation of  $PG(2, q^2)$ .

#### Theorem

(G.K., A. Siciliano, T. Szőnyi, J. Comb. Theory, A 2018) For the classical unital, the answer to the above Problem is yes.

Conjecture: This holds true for BM-unitals

 $\mathcal{U}$ :=unital in a projective plane  $\Pi$  of order  $q^2 > 4$ ;

U:=unital in a projective plane  $\Pi$  of order  $q^2 > 4$ ; G:= collineation group  $\Pi$  preserving U;

 $\mathcal{U}:=$ unital in a projective plane  $\Pi$  of order  $q^2 > 4$ ;  $\mathcal{G}:=$  collineation group  $\Pi$  preserving  $\mathcal{U}$ ;

Theorem

(M. Biliotti, G.K., J. Lond. Math. Soc. 1986)

 $\mathcal{U}:=$ unital in a projective plane  $\Pi$  of order  $q^2 > 4$ ;  $\mathcal{G}:=$  collineation group  $\Pi$  preserving  $\mathcal{U}$ ;

Theorem

(M. Biliotti, G.K., J. Lond. Math. Soc. 1986) Let q odd.

U:=unital in a projective plane  $\Pi$  of order  $q^2 > 4$ ; G:= collineation group  $\Pi$  preserving U;

### Theorem

(M. Biliotti, G.K., J. Lond. Math. Soc. 1986) Let q odd.

(i) If G is (non-abelian) simple

U:=unital in a projective plane  $\Pi$  of order  $q^2 > 4$ ; G:= collineation group  $\Pi$  preserving U;

#### Theorem

(M. Biliotti, G.K., J. Lond. Math. Soc. 1986) Let q odd.

(i) If G is (non-abelian) simple

 $\Rightarrow G \cong PSU(3, n), PSL(2, n), n \geq 5, Sz(2^r), Alt_7, PSL(2, 8).$ 

U:=unital in a projective plane  $\Pi$  of order  $q^2 > 4$ ; G:= collineation group  $\Pi$  preserving U;

#### Theorem

(M. Biliotti, G.K., J. Lond. Math. Soc. 1986) Let q odd.

(i) If G is (non-abelian) simple

 $\Rightarrow G \cong PSU(3, n), PSL(2, n), n \ge 5, Sz(2^r), Alt_7, PSL(2, 8).$ 

(ii) If G is transitive on U and Soc(G) has even order,

U:=unital in a projective plane  $\Pi$  of order  $q^2 > 4$ ; G:= collineation group  $\Pi$  preserving U;

#### Theorem

(M. Biliotti, G.K., J. Lond. Math. Soc. 1986) Let q odd.

(i) If G is (non-abelian) simple  $\Rightarrow G \cong PSU(3, n), PSL(2, n), n \ge 5, Sz(2^r), Alt_7, PSL(2, 8).$ 

(ii) If G is transitive on U and Soc(G) has even order,  $\Rightarrow \Pi = PG(2, q^2)$  and U a classical unital,

U:=unital in a projective plane  $\Pi$  of order  $q^2 > 4$ ; G:= collineation group  $\Pi$  preserving U;

#### Theorem

(M. Biliotti, G.K., J. Lond. Math. Soc. 1986) Let q odd.

(i) If G is (non-abelian) simple  

$$\Rightarrow G \cong PSU(3, n), PSL(2, n), n \ge 5, Sz(2^r), Alt_7, PSL(2, 8).$$

- (ii) If G is transitive on U and Soc(G) has even order,  $\Rightarrow \Pi = PG(2, q^2)$  and U a classical unital,
- (iii) and, either  $Soc(G) \cong PSU(3, q^2)$ , or q = 5 and  $Soc(G) \cong Alt_7$ , or q = 3 and  $Soc(G) \cong PSL(2,7)$ .

U:=unital in a projective plane  $\Pi$  of order  $q^2 > 4$ ; G:= collineation group  $\Pi$  preserving U;

#### Theorem

(M. Biliotti, G.K., J. Lond. Math. Soc. 1986) Let q odd.

(i) If G is (non-abelian) simple  

$$\Rightarrow G \cong PSU(3, n), PSL(2, n), n \ge 5, Sz(2^r), Alt_7, PSL(2, 8).$$

(ii) If G is transitive on U and Soc(G) has even order,  $\Rightarrow \Pi = PG(2, q^2)$  and U a classical unital,

(iii) and, either 
$$Soc(G) \cong PSU(3, q^2)$$
, or  $q = 5$  and  $Soc(G) \cong Alt_7$ , or  $q = 3$  and  $Soc(G) \cong PSL(2,7)$ .

#### Remark

(ii) holds true for  $q \ge 4$  even. (M. Biliotti, G.K., Geom. Dedicata 1989, W.M. Kantor Can. J. Math 1971).

U:=unital in a projective plane  $\Pi$  of order  $q^2 > 4$ ; G:= collineation group  $\Pi$  preserving U;

#### Theorem

(M. Biliotti, G.K., J. Lond. Math. Soc. 1986) Let q odd.

(i) If G is (non-abelian) simple  

$$\Rightarrow G \cong PSU(3, n), PSL(2, n), n \ge 5, Sz(2^r), Alt_7, PSL(2, 8).$$

(ii) If G is transitive on U and Soc(G) has even order,  $\Rightarrow \Pi = PG(2, q^2)$  and U a classical unital,

(iii) and, either 
$$Soc(G) \cong PSU(3, q^2)$$
, or  $q = 5$  and  $Soc(G) \cong Alt_7$ , or  $q = 3$  and  $Soc(G) \cong PSL(2,7)$ .

#### Remark

(ii) holds true for  $q \ge 4$  even. (M. Biliotti, G.K., Geom. Dedicata 1989, W.M. Kantor Can. J. Math 1971).

Open Problem: Condition on Soc(G) is necessary?

э

 $\mathcal{U}:=$ abstract unital of order q;

э

 $\mathcal{U}$ :=abstract unital of order *q*; G:=group of automorphisms of  $\mathcal{U}$ ;

 $\begin{array}{l} \mathcal{U}:=& \text{abstract unital of order } q; \\ \mathcal{G}:=& \text{group of automorphisms of } \mathcal{U}; \\ \hline \textit{Translation } \tau:=& \text{automorphism of } \mathcal{U} \text{ such that} \end{array}$ 

 $\mathcal{U}$ :=abstract unital of order q;

G:=group of automorphisms of  $\mathcal{U}$ ;

Translation  $\tau$ :=automorphism of  $\mathcal{U}$  such that

•  $\tau$  fixes a unique point T, called the center of  $\tau$ ;

- $\mathcal{U}$ :=abstract unital of order q;
- G:=group of automorphisms of U;
- *Translation*  $\tau$ :=automorphism of  $\mathcal{U}$  such that
  - $\tau$  fixes a unique point T, called the center of  $\tau$ ;
  - $\tau$  preserves each block through T;

- $\mathcal{U}$ :=abstract unital of order q;
- G:=group of automorphisms of  $\mathcal{U}$ ;
- *Translation*  $\tau$ :=automorphism of  $\mathcal{U}$  such that
  - $\tau$  fixes a unique point T, called the center of  $\tau$ ;
  - $\tau$  preserves each block through T;

Translation group  $T_P$  with center P:=subgroup of all translations with center P;

 $\mathcal{U}$ :=abstract unital of order q;

G:=group of automorphisms of  $\mathcal{U}$ ;

*Translation*  $\tau$ :=automorphism of  $\mathcal{U}$  such that

- $\tau$  fixes a unique point T, called the center of  $\tau$ ;
- $\tau$  preserves each block through T;

Translation group  $T_P$  with center P:=subgroup of all translations with center P;

*Translation point* P of  $U:=T_P$  acts (faithfully) as a sharply

transitive permutation group on each block through P (minus the point P);

 $\mathcal{U}$ :=abstract unital of order q;

G:=group of automorphisms of  $\mathcal{U}$ ;

*Translation*  $\tau$ :=automorphism of  $\mathcal{U}$  such that

- $\tau$  fixes a unique point T, called the center of  $\tau$ ;
- $\tau$  preserves each block through T;

Translation group  $T_P$  with center P:=subgroup of all translations with center P;

*Translation point* P of  $U:=T_P$  acts (faithfully) as a sharply

transitive permutation group on each block through P (minus the point P);

*P* is translation point  $\Leftrightarrow$  *T*<sub>*P*</sub> of *U* has (maximal) order *q*.

 $\mathcal{U}$ :=abstract unital of order q;

G:=group of automorphisms of  $\mathcal{U}$ ;

*Translation*  $\tau$ :=automorphism of  $\mathcal{U}$  such that

- $\tau$  fixes a unique point T, called the center of  $\tau$ ;
- $\tau$  preserves each block through T;

Translation group  $T_P$  with center P:=subgroup of all translations with center P;

*Translation point* P of  $U:=T_P$  acts (faithfully) as a sharply

transitive permutation group on each block through P (minus the point P);

*P* is translation point  $\Leftrightarrow$  *T*<sub>*P*</sub> of *U* has (maximal) order *q*.

### Remark

 $\mathcal{U}$ :=abstract unital of order q;

G:=group of automorphisms of  $\mathcal{U}$ ;

*Translation*  $\tau$ :=automorphism of  $\mathcal{U}$  such that

- $\tau$  fixes a unique point T, called the center of  $\tau$ ;
- $\tau$  preserves each block through T;

Translation group  $T_P$  with center P:=subgroup of all translations with center P;

*Translation point* P of  $U:=T_P$  acts (faithfully) as a sharply

transitive permutation group on each block through P (minus the point P);

*P* is translation point  $\Leftrightarrow$  *T*<sub>*P*</sub> of *U* has (maximal) order *q*.

### Remark

The set of translation points is either empty, or just one point, or one block, or  $\mathcal{U}$ .

 $\mathcal{U}$ :=abstract unital of order q;

G:=group of automorphisms of  $\mathcal{U}$ ;

*Translation*  $\tau$ :=automorphism of  $\mathcal{U}$  such that

- $\tau$  fixes a unique point T, called the center of  $\tau$ ;
- $\tau$  preserves each block through T;

Translation group  $T_P$  with center P:=subgroup of all translations with center P;

*Translation point* P of  $U:=T_P$  acts (faithfully) as a sharply

transitive permutation group on each block through P (minus the point P);

*P* is translation point  $\Leftrightarrow$  *T*<sub>*P*</sub> of *U* has (maximal) order *q*.

### Remark

The set of translation points is either empty, or just one point, or one block, or U. The Grundhoefer-Stoppel unital (Discr. Math. 2016) of order 4 is (the only known) abstract unital whose set of translation points is a single block.

 $\mathcal{U}$ :=abstract unital of order q;

G:=group of automorphisms of  $\mathcal{U}$ ;

*Translation*  $\tau$ :=automorphism of  $\mathcal{U}$  such that

- $\tau$  fixes a unique point T, called the center of  $\tau$ ;
- $\tau$  preserves each block through T;

Translation group  $T_P$  with center P:=subgroup of all translations with center P;

*Translation point* P of  $U:=T_P$  acts (faithfully) as a sharply

transitive permutation group on each block through P (minus the point P);

*P* is translation point  $\Leftrightarrow$  *T*<sub>*P*</sub> of *U* has (maximal) order *q*.

### Remark

The set of translation points is either empty, or just one point, or one block, or U. The Grundhoefer-Stoppel unital (Discr. Math. 2016) of order 4 is (the only known) abstract unital whose set of translation points is a single block.

(Grundhoefer, Stoppel, van Maldeghem, J. Comb. Desing, 2012) If  $\forall$  points are translation points  $\Rightarrow$  the classical case.

(Grundhoefer, Stoppel, van Maldeghem, J. Comb. Desing, 2012) If  $\forall$  points are translation points  $\Rightarrow$  the classical case.

### Remark

*Classification of abstract unitals whose set of translation points is a block seems to be out of reach.* 

(Grundhoefer, Stoppel, van Maldeghem, J. Comb. Desing, 2012) If  $\forall$  points are translation points  $\Rightarrow$  the classical case.

### Remark

*Classification of abstract unitals whose set of translation points is a block seems to be out of reach.* 

Work in progress: Classification of the automorphism groups G of abstract unitals generated by all translations.

(Grundhoefer, Stoppel, van Maldeghem, J. Comb. Desing, 2012) If  $\forall$  points are translation points  $\Rightarrow$  the classical case.

### Remark

*Classification of abstract unitals whose set of translation points is a block seems to be out of reach.* 

Work in progress: Classification of the automorphism groups G of abstract unitals generated by all translations. Main tool:

Hering's classification of 2-transitive permutation groups whose 1-point stabilizer contains a normal subgroup that acts sharply transitively on the remaining points

(Grundhoefer, Stoppel, van Maldeghem, J. Comb. Desing, 2012) If  $\forall$  points are translation points  $\Rightarrow$  the classical case.

### Remark

Classification of abstract unitals whose set of translation points is a block seems to be out of reach.

Work in progress: Classification of the automorphism groups G of abstract unitals generated by all translations. Main tool:

Hering's classification of 2-transitive permutation groups whose 1-point stabilizer contains a normal subgroup that acts sharply transitively on the remaining points

 $\Rightarrow$   $G \cong PSU(3, q), SU(3, q), Ree(q), PSL(2, q), SL(2, q)$ , or G is sharply 2-transitive on  $\ell$ .

## Graph $\Gamma$ arising from $\mathcal{U} \setminus \ell$

æ

□ ▶ ▲ 臣 ▶ ▲ 臣 ▶

### Let $\ell$ be a block of an abstract unital $\mathcal{U}$ ;

伺 ト く ヨ ト く ヨ ト

э

Let  $\ell$  be a block of an abstract unital  $\mathcal{U}$ ; Vertices of  $\Gamma$ :=points of  $\mathcal{U}$  not on  $\ell$ ; Let  $\ell$  be a block of an abstract unital  $\mathcal{U}$ ; *Vertices* of  $\Gamma$ :=points of  $\mathcal{U}$  not on  $\ell$ ; *Adjacency* of  $\Gamma$ := two vertices are adjacent if the block through them meets  $\ell$ . Let  $\ell$  be a block of an abstract unital  $\mathcal{U}$ ; *Vertices* of  $\Gamma$ :=points of  $\mathcal{U}$  not on  $\ell$ ; *Adjacency* of  $\Gamma$ := two vertices are adjacent if the block through them meets  $\ell$ . Open problem: Find the number of connected components of  $\Gamma$ . Let  $\ell$  be a block of an abstract unital  $\mathcal{U}$ ; *Vertices* of  $\Gamma$ :=points of  $\mathcal{U}$  not on  $\ell$ ; *Adjacency* of  $\Gamma$ := two vertices are adjacent if the block through them meets  $\ell$ . Open problem: Find the number of connected components of  $\Gamma$ . Conjecture If  $\Gamma$  is connected then  $\mathcal{U}$  is isomorphic to the classical, or to a BM-unital