Melding priority queues

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Abstract. We show that any priority queue data structure that supports *insert*, *delete*, and *find-min* operations in $pq(n)$ time, when there are up to n elements in the priority queue, can be converted into a priority queue data structure that also supports *meld* operations at essentially no extra cost, at least in the amortized sense. More specifically, the new data structure supports *insert*, *meld* and *find-min* operations in $O(1)$ amortized time, and *delete* operations in $O(pq(n)\,\alpha(n, n/pq(n)))$ amortized time, where $\alpha(m, n)$ is a functional inverse of the Ackermann function. For all conceivable values of $pq(n)$, the term $\alpha(n, n/pq(n))$ is constant. This holds, for example, if $pq(n) = \Omega(\log^* n)$. In such cases, adding the meld operation does not increase the amortized asymptotic cost of the priority queue operations. The result is obtained by an improved analysis of a construction suggested recently by three of the authors in [14]. The construction places a non-meldable priority queue at each node of a union-find data structure. We also show that when all keys are integers in $[1, N]$, we can replace n in all the bounds stated above by N.

1 Introduction

Priority queues are basic data structures used by many algorithms. The most basic operations, supported by all priority queues, are *insert*, which inserts an element with an associated key into the priority queue, and *extract-min*, which returns the element with the smallest key currently in the queue, and deletes it. These two operations can be used, for example, to sort n elements by performing n *insert* operations followed by n *extract-min* operations. Most priority queues also support a *delete* operation, that deletes a given element from the queue, and *find-min*, which finds, but does not delete, an element with minimum key.

Using the *insert* and *delete* operations we can easily implement a *decrease-key* operation, or more generally a *change-key* operation, that decreases, or arbitrarily changes, the key of a queue element. (We simply delete the element from the queue and re-insert it with its new key.) As the *decrease-key* operation is the bottleneck operation in efficient implementations of Dijkstra's single-source shortest paths algorithm [3], and Prim's algorithm [15] for finding a minimum spanning tree, many priority queues support this operation directly, sometimes in constant time. The efficient implementation of several algorithms, such as the

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algorithm of Edmonds [4] for computing optimum branching and minimum directed spanning trees, require the maintenance of a collection of priority queues. In addition to the standard operations performed on individual priority queues, we also need, quite often, to *meld*, or unite, two priority queues from this collection. This provides a strong motivation for studying *meldable* priority queues.

Fibonacci heaps, developed by Fredman and Tarjan [5], are very elegant and efficient meldable priority queues. They support *delete* operations in $O(\log n)$ *amortized* time, and all other operations, including meld operations, in $O(1)$ amortized time, where n is the size of the priority queue from which an element is deleted. (For a general discussion or amortized time bounds, see [17].) Brodal [2] obtained a much more complicated data structure that supports *delete* operations in $O(\log n)$ *worst-case* time, and all other operations in $O(1)$ worst-case time. Both these data structures are comparison-based and can handle elements with arbitrary real keys. In this setting they are asymptotically optimal.

While $O(\log n)$ is the best delete time possible in the comparison model, much better time bounds can be obtained in the word RAM model of computation, as was first demonstrated by Fredman and Willard [6, 7]). In this model each key is assumed to be an integer that fits into a single word of memory. Each word of memory is assumed to contain $w \geq \log n$ bits. The model allows random access to memory, as in the standard RAM model of computation. The set of basic word operations that can be performed in constant time are the standard word operations available in typical programming languages (e.g., C): addition, multiplication, bit-wise and/or operations, shifts, and their like.

Thorup [18, 19] obtained a general equivalence between priority queues and sorting. More specifically, he showed that if n elements can be sorted in $O(nf(n))$ time, where $f(n)$ is a non-decreasing function, then the basic priority queue operations can be implemented in $O(f(n))$ time. Using a recent $O(n \log\log n)$ sorting algorithm of Han [9], this gives priority queues that support all operations in $O(\log\log n)$ time. Thorup [20] extends this result by presenting a priority queue data structure that supports *insert*, *find-min* and *decrease-key* operations in $O(1)$ time and *delete* operations in $O(\log\log n)$ time. (This result is not implied directly by the equivalence to sorting.) Han and Thorup [10] obtained recently a randomized $O(n\sqrt{\log\log n})$ time sorting algorithm. This translates into priority queues with $O(\sqrt{\log\log n})$ expected time per operation.

Adding a meld operation

The priority queues mentioned in the previous paragraph do *not* support meld operations. Our main result is a general transformation that takes these priority queues, or any other priority queue data structure, and produces new priority queue data structures that do support the *meld* operation with essentially no increase in the amortized cost of the operations! We show that any priority queue data structure that supports *insert*, *delete*, and *find-min* operations in $pq(n)$ time, where n is the number of elements in the priority queue, can be converted into a priority queue data structure that also supports *meld* operations at essentially no extra cost, at least in the amortized sense. More specifically, the new data structure supports *insert*, *meld* and *find-min* operations in $O(1)$

amortized time, and *delete* operations in $O(pq(n)\,\alpha(n, n/pq(n)))$ amortized time, where $\alpha(m, n)$ is a functional inverse of the Ackermann function (see [16]). For all conceivable values of $pq(n)$, the factor $\alpha(n, n/pq(n))$ is constant. This holds, for example, if $pq(n) = \Omega(\log^* n)$. In such cases, adding the meld operation does not increase the amortized asymptotic cost of the priority queue operations. If the original priority queue is deterministic, so is the new one.

The result is obtained by an improved analysis of a construction suggested recently by three of the authors (see [14]). This construction places a non-meldable priority queue at each node of a union-find data structure. The simple analysis given in [14] gave an upper bound of $O(pq(n)\,\alpha(n, n))$ on the cost of all priority queue operations. Here we reduce the amortized cost of *insert*, *meld* and *find-min* operations to $O(1)$, and more importantly, reduce the amortized cost of *delete* operations to $O(pq(n)\,\alpha(n, n/pq(n)))$. In other words, we replace the factor $\alpha(n, n)$ by $\alpha(n, n/pq(n))$. This is significant as $\alpha(n, n/pq(n))$ is *constant* for all conceivable values of $pq(n)$, e.g., if $pq(n) = \Omega(\log^* n)$.

Applying this result to non-meldable priority queue data structures obtained recently by Thorup [19], and by Han and Thorup [10], we obtain meldable RAM priority queues with $O(\log\log n)$ amortized cost per operation, or $O(\sqrt{\log\log n})$ expected amortized cost per operation, respectively. Furthermore, Thorup's equivalence between priority queues and sorting and the transformation presented here imply that any sorting algorithm that can sort n elements in $O(nf(n))$ time, where $f(n)$ is a non-decreasing function, can be used to construct *meldable* priority queues with $O(1)$ amortized cost for *insert*, *find-min* and *meld* operations, and $O(f(n)\,\alpha(n, n/f(n)))$ amortized cost for *delete* operations.

As a by-product of the improved meldable priority queues mentioned above, we obtain improved algorithms for the minimum directed spanning tree problem in graphs with integer edge weights: A deterministic $O(m \log\log n)$ time algorithm and a randomized $O(m\sqrt{\log\log n})$ time algorithm. These bounds improve, for sparse enough graphs, on the $O(m + n\log n)$ running time of an algorithm by Gabow *et al.* [8] that works for arbitrary edge weights. For more details (and references) on directed spanning tree algorithms, see [14].

Although the most interesting results are obtained by applying our transformation to RAM priority queues, the transformation itself only uses the capabilities of a pointer machine.

Improvement for smaller integer keys

We also show, using an independent transformation, that when all keys are integers in the range $[1, N]$, all occurrences of n in the bounds above can be replaced by N, or more generally, by $\min\{n, N\}$. This, in conjunction with the previous transformation, allows us, for example, to add a meld operation, with constant amortized cost, to the priority queue of van Emde Boas [22, 23] which has $pq(n) = O(\log\log N)$. The amortized cost of a delete operation is then:

$$\begin{aligned} & O(\log\log N \cdot \alpha(\min\{n, N\}, \min\{n, N\}/\log\log N) \\ &= O(\log\log N \cdot \alpha(N, N/\log\log N)) = O(\log\log N)\;. \end{aligned}$$

(The original data structure of van Emde Boas requires randomized hashing to run in linear space [13]. A deterministic version is presented in [19].)

```
make-set(x) :
$p[x] \leftarrow x$
$rank[x] \leftarrow 0$

union(x, y) :
$link(find(x), find(y))$

link(x, y) :
if $rank[x] > rank[y]$
  then $p[y] \leftarrow x$
  else $p[x] \leftarrow y$
       if $rank[x] = rank[y]$
         then $rank[y] \leftarrow rank[y] + 1$

find(x) :
if $p[x] \neq x$
  then $p[x] \leftarrow find(p[x])$
return $p[x]$
```

Fig. 1. The classical union-find data structure

2 The Union-find data structure

A union-find data structure supports the following operations:

make-set(x)	–	Create a set that contains the single element x.
union(x, y)	–	Unite the sets containing the elements x and y.
find(x)	–	Return a representative of the set containing the element x.

A classical, simple, and extremely efficient implementation of a union-find data structure is given in Figure 1. Each element x has a parent pointer $p[x]$ and a rank *rank*$[x]$ associated with it. The parent pointers define trees that correspond to the sets maintained by the data structure. The representative element of each set is taken to be the root of the tree containing the elements of the set. To find the representative element of a set, we simply follow the parent pointers until we get to a root. To speed-up future *find* operations, we employ the *path compression* heuristic that makes all the vertices encountered on the way to the root direct children of the root. Unions are implemented using the *union by rank* heuristic. The rank *rank*$[x]$ associated with each element x is an upper bound on the depth of its subtree. In a seminal paper, Tarjan [16] showed that the time taken by the algorithm of Figure 1 to process an intermixed sequence of m *make-set*, *union* and *find* operations, out of which n are *make-set* operations, is $O(m\alpha(m, n))$, where $\alpha(m, n)$ is the extremely slowly growing inverse of Ackermann's function. The analysis of the next section relies on the following lemma:

Lemma 1. *Suppose that an intermixed sequence of n make-set operations, at most n link operations, and at most f find operations are performed on the standard union-find data structure. Then, the number of times the parent pointers of elements of rank k or more are changed is at most* $O((f + \frac{n}{2^k}) \cdot \alpha(f + \frac{n}{2^k}, \frac{n}{2^k}))$.

Proof. (Sketch) A node x is said to be *high* if *rank*$[x] \geq k$. There are at most $n/2^k$ high elements. The changes made to the pointers of the high elements may be seen as resulting from a sequence of at most $n/2^k$ *make-set* operations, $n/2^k$ *link* operations and f find operations performed on these elements. By the standard analysis of the union-find data structure, the total cost of at most $f + n/2^{k-1}$ union-find operations on $n/2^k$ elements is at most $O((f + \frac{n}{2^{k-1}}) \cdot \alpha(f + \frac{n}{2^{k-1}}, \frac{n}{2^k})) = O((f + \frac{n}{2^k}) \cdot \alpha(f + \frac{n}{2^k}, \frac{n}{2^k}))$, as required. □

3 The transformation

In this section we describe a transformation that combines a non-meldable priority queue data structure with the classical union-find data structure to produce a *meldable* priority queue data structure with essentially no increase in the amortized operation cost. This transformation is essentially the transformation described in [14] with some minor modifications. An improved analysis of this transformation appears in the next section.

This transformation $\mathcal{T}$ receives a non-meldable priority queue data structure $\mathcal{P}$ and produces a meldable priority queue data structure $\mathcal{T}(\mathcal{P})$. We assume that the non-meldable data structure $\mathcal{P}$ supports the following operations:

make-pq(x)	–	Create a priority queue that contains the single element x.
insert(PQ, x)	–	Insert the element x into the priority queue PQ.
delete(PQ, x)	–	Delete the element x from the priority queue PQ.
find-min(PQ)	–	Find an element with the smallest key contained in PQ.

It is assumed, of course, that each element x has a key $key[x]$ associated with it. We can easily add the following operation to the repertoire of the operations supported by this priority queue:

change-key(PQ, x, k) – Change the key of element x in PQ to k.

This is done by deleting the element x from the priority queue PQ, changing its key by setting $key[x] \leftarrow k$, and then reinserting it into the priority queue. (Some priority queues directly support operations like *decrease-key*. We shall not assume such capabilities in this section.)

We combine this non-meldable priority queue with the union-find data structure to obtain a meldable priority queue that supports the following operations:

MAKE-PQ(x)	–	Create a priority queue containing the single element x.
INSERT(x, y)	–	Insert element y into the priority queue whose root is x.
DELETE(x)	–	Delete element x from the priority queue containing it.
FIND-MIN(x)	–	Find element with smallest key in queue with root x.
MELD(x, y)	–	Meld the queues whose root elements are x and y.
CHNG-KEY(x, k)	–	Change the key associated with element x to k.

As in the union-find data structure, each priority queue will have a representative, or root, element. The operations *INSERT*(x, y) and *FIND-MIN*(x) assume that x is the root element of its priority queue. Similarly, *MELD*(x, y) assumes that x and y are root elements. It is possible to extend the data structure with an additional union-find data structure that supports a *find*(x) operation that returns the root element of the priority queue containing x. (As explained in [11], a meldable priority queue data structure that supports a *MELD*(x, y) operation that melds the priority queues containing the elements x and y, where x and y are not necessarily representative elements must include, at least implicitly, an implementation of a union-find data structure.)

A collection of meldable priority queues is now maintained as follows. Each priority queue of the collection is maintained as a tree of a union-find data structure. Each element x contained in such a tree thus has a parent pointer $p[x]$ assigned to it by the union-find data structure and a rank *rank*$[x]$. In addition to that, each element x has a 'local' priority queue $PQ[x]$ associated with it.

```
MAKE-PQ(x):
  $p[x] \leftarrow x$
  $rank[x] \leftarrow 0$
  $PQ[x] \leftarrow make\text{-}pq(x)$

INSERT(x, y):
  MAKE-PQ(y)
  MELD(x, y)

DELETE(x):
  CHNG-KEY(x, +∞)

FIND-MIN(x):
  find-min(PQ[x])

CHNG-KEY(x, k):
  change-key(PQ[x], x, k)
  FIND(x)

MELD(x, y):
  if $rank[x] > rank[y]$
    then
      HANG(y, x)
    else
      HANG(x, y)
      if $rank[x] = rank[y]$
      then
        $rank[y] \leftarrow rank[y]+1$

FIND(x):
  CUT-PATH(x)
  COMPRESS-PATH(x)
  return p[x]

CUT-PATH(x):
  if $p[x] \neq x$ then
    CUT-PATH(p[x])
    UNHANG(x, p[x])

COMPRESS-PATH(x):
  if $p[x] \neq x$ then
    COMPRESS-PATH(p[x])
    HANG(x, p[p[x]])

HANG(x, y):
  insert(PQ[y], find-min(PQ[x]))
  $p[x] \leftarrow y$

UNHANG(x, y):
  delete(PQ[y], find-min(PQ[x]))
```

Fig. 2. A meldable priority queue obtained by planting a non-meldable priority queue at each node of the union-find data structure.

This priority queue contains the element x itself, and the minimal element of each subtree of x. (Thus if x has d children, $PQ[x]$ contains $d + 1$ elements.) If x is at the root of a union-find tree, then to find the minimal element in the priority queue of x, a *FIND-MIN*(x) operation, we simply need to find the minimal element is the priority queue $PQ[x]$, a *find-min*($PQ[x]$) operation.

When an element x is first inserted into a priority queue, by a *MAKE-PQ*(x) operation, we initialize the priority queue $PQ[x]$ of x to contain x, and no other element. We also set $p[x]$ to x, to signify that x is a root, and set *rank*[x] to 0.

If x and y are root elements of the union-find trees containing them, then a *MELD*(x, y) operation is performed as follows. As in the union-find data structure, we compare the ranks of x and y and hang the element with the smaller rank on the element with the larger rank. If the ranks are equal we decide, arbitrarily, to hang x on y and we increment *rank*[y]. Finally, if x is hung on y, then to maintain the invariant condition stated above, we insert the minimal element in $PQ[x]$ into $PQ[y]$, an *insert*($PQ[y]$, *find-min*($PQ[x]$)) operation. (If y is hung on x we perform an *insert*($PQ[x]$, *find-min*($PQ[y]$)) operation.)

A *DELETE*(x) operation, which deletes x from the priority queue containing it is implemented in the following indirect way. We change the key associated with x to $+\infty$, using a *CHNG-KEY*($x, +\infty$) operation, to signify that x was deleted, and we make the necessary changes to the data structure, as described below. Each priority queue in our collection keeps track of the total number of elements contained in it, and the number of deleted elements contained in it. When the fraction of deleted elements exceeds a half, we simply rebuild this priority queue. This affects the amortized cost of all the operations by only a constant factor. (For more details see Kaplan *et al.* [12].)

How do we implement a *CHNG-KEY*(x, k) operation then? If x is a root element, we simply change the key of x in $PQ[x]$ using a *change-key*$(PQ[x], x, k)$ operation. If x is not a root, then before changing the key of x we perform a *FIND*(x) operation. A *FIND*(x) operation compresses the path connecting x to the root by cutting all the edges along the path and hanging all the elements encountered directly on the root. Let $x = x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_k$ be the sequence of elements on the path from x to the root of its tree. For $i = k-1, k-2, \ldots, 1$ we *unhang* x_i from x_{i+1}. This is done by removing *find-min*$(PQ[x_i])$ from $PQ[x_{i+1}]$. After that, we hang all the elements $x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_{k-1}$ on x_k. This is done by setting $p[x_i]$ to x_k and by adding *find-min*$(PQ[x_i])$ to $PQ[x_k]$. (Note that we also unhang x_{k-1} from x_k and then hang it back.)

If x is not a root element then after a *FIND*(x) operation, x is a child of the root. Changing the key of x is now relatively simple. We again unhang x from $p[x]$, change the key of x and then hang x again on $p[x]$. A moment's reflection shows that it is, in fact, enough just to change the key of x in $PQ[x]$, and then perform a *FIND*(x) operation. The element x may temporarily be contained in some priority queues with a wrong key, but this will immediately be corrected.

A simple implementation of all these operations is given in Figure 2. The important thing to note is that the operation of a meldable priority queue mimics the operation of a union-find data structure and that changing a pointer $p[x]$ from y to y' is accompanied by calls to *UNHANG*(x, y) and *HANG*(x, y').

Since the union-find data structure makes only an amortized number of $O(\alpha(n, n))$ hanging and unhangings per union or find operation, we immediately get that each meldable priority queue operation takes only $O(pq(n)\,\alpha(n, n))$ amortized time. This was the result obtained in [14]. Here, we tighten the analysis so as to get *no* asymptotic overhead with current priority queues.

4 The improved analysis

In this section we present an improved analysis of the data structure presented in the previous section. We assume that the non-meldable priority queue $\mathcal{P}$ supports *insert*, *delete* and *find-min* operations in $O(pq(n))$ (randomized) amortized time. By applying a simple transformation described in [1] we can actually assume that the amortized cost of *insert* and *find-min* operations is $O(1)$ and that only the amortized cost of *delete* operations is $O(pq(n))$. We now claim:

Theorem 1. *If $\mathcal{P}$ is a priority queue data structure that supports insert and find-min operations in $O(1)$ (expected) amortized time and delete operations in $O(pq(n))$ (expected) amortized time, then $\mathcal{T}(\mathcal{P})$ is a priority queue data structure that supports insert, find-min and meld operations in $O(1)$ (expected) amortized time and delete operations in $O(pq(n)\,\alpha(n, n/pq(n)))$ (expected) amortized time, where $\alpha(m, n)$ is the inverse Ackermann function appearing in the analysis of the union-find data structure, and n here is the maximum number of elements contained in the priority queue.*

Proof. Consider a sequence of n operations on the data structure, of which $f \leq n$ are *DELETE* or *CHNG-KEY* operations. (Each such operation results in a *FIND* operation being performed, hence the choice of the letter f.) Our aim is to show that the cost of carrying out all these operations is $O(n + f\,pq(n)\,\alpha(n, n/pq(n)))$. This bounds the amortized cost of each operation in terms of the maximum number of elements contained in the priority queues. In the full version of the paper we will give a slightly more complicated analysis that bounds the amortized complexity of each operation in terms of the actual number of elements contained in the priority queue at the time of the operation.

All the operations on the data structure are associated with changes made to the parent pointers $p[x]$ of the elements contained in the priority queues. To change the value of $p[x]$ from y to y', we first call $UNHANG(x, y)$ which performs a delete operation on $PQ[y]$, and then call $HANG(x, y')$ which performs an insert operation on $PQ[y']$ and sets $p[x]$ to y'. As insert operations are assumed to take constant time, we can concentrate our attention on the delete, or *UNHANG*, operations. As the total number of pointer changes made in the union-find data structure is at most $O(n\,\alpha(n, n))$, and as each priority queue acted upon is of size at most n, we get immediately an upper bound of $O(n\,pq(n)\,\alpha(n, n))$ on the total number of operations performed. This is essentially the analysis presented in [14]. We want to do better than that.

If element x is a root of one of the union-find trees, we let $size(x)$ be the number of elements contained in its tree. If x is no longer a root, we let $size(x)$ be the number of descendants it had just before it was hanged on another element. It is easy to see that we always have $size(x) \geq 2^{rank(x)}$.

Let $p = pq(n) + n/f$, $S = p^2$ and $L = \log S$. We say that an element x is *big* if $size(x) \geq S$. Otherwise, it is said to be *small*. We say that an element x is *high* if $rank(x) \geq L$. Otherwise, it is said to be *low*. Note that if an element is big (or high), so are all its ancestors. We also note that all high elements are big, but big elements are not necessarily high. We let *SMALL*, *BIG*, *LOW* and *HIGH* be the sets of small/big/low and high vertices, respectively. As noted above, we have $SMALL \subseteq LOW$ and $HIGH \subseteq BIG$ but $LOW \cap BIG$ may be non-empty.

Below we bound the total cost of all the $UNHANG(x, p[x])$ operations. All other operations take only $O(n)$ time. We separate the analysis into four cases:

Case 1: $x, p[x] \in SMALL$

We are doing at most f path compressions. Each path in the union-find forest contains at most L small elements. (This follows from the invariant $rank[p[x]] > rank[x]$ and from the fact that high elements are big.) Thus, each path compression involves at most L unhang operations in which $x, p[x] \in SMALL$. As each priority queue involved is of size at most S, the total cost is $O(f \cdot L \cdot pq(S)) = O(f \cdot p) = O(n + f \cdot pq(n))$. (Note that $L = \log S = O(\log p)$ and that $pq(S) = O(\log S) = O(\log p)$. (We assume that $pq(n) = O(\log n)$.) Hence $L \cdot pq(S) = O(\log^2 p) = O(p)$.)

Case 2: $x \in SMALL$ **and** $p[x] \in BIG$**.**

In each one of the f path compressions performed there is at most one unhang operation of this form. (As ancestors of big elements are also big.) Hence, the total cost here is $O(f\,pq(n))$.

Case 3: $x, p[x] \in \mathit{BIG} \cap \mathit{LOW}$.

To bound the total cost of these operations we bound the number of elements that are contained at some stage in $\mathit{BIG} \cap \mathit{LOW}$. An element is said to be a *minimally-big* element if it is big but all its descendants are small. As each element can have at most one minimally-big ancestor, and each minimally-big element has at least S descendants, it follows that there are at most n/S minimally-big elements. As each big element is an ancestor of a minimally-big element, it follows that there are at most Ln/S elements in $\mathit{BIG} \cap \mathit{LOW}$.

An element $x \in \mathit{BIG} \cap \mathit{LOW}$ can be unhanged from at most L other elements of $\mathit{BIG} \cap \mathit{LOW}$. (After each such operation $\mathit{rank}[p[x]]$ increases, so after at most L such operations $p[x]$ must be high.) The total number of operations of this form is at most $L^2 n/S < n/p$. Thus, the total cost of all these operations is $O(n\,pq(n)/p) = O(n)$.

Case 4: $x, p[x] \in \mathit{HIGH}$.

To bound the number of $\mathit{UNHANG}(x, p[x])$ operations in which $x, p[x] \in \mathit{HIGH}$, we rely on Lemma 1. As each $\mathit{UNHANG}(x, p[x])$ operation, where $x \in \mathit{HIGH}$ is associated with a parent pointer change of a high vertex, it follows that the total number of such operations is at most $O((f + \frac{n}{S}) \cdot \alpha(f + \frac{n}{S}, \frac{n}{S})) = O(f \cdot \alpha(f, \frac{n}{S}))$. (This follows as $n/S \leq f$.) Now

$$\alpha(f, \tfrac{n}{S}) \;\leq\; \alpha(\tfrac{n}{p}, \tfrac{n}{p^2}) \;\leq\; \alpha(n, \tfrac{n}{p}) \;\leq\; \alpha(n, \tfrac{n}{pq(n)}) \;.$$

This chain of inequalities follows from the fact that $f \geq n/p$ and from simple properties of the $\alpha(m,n)$ function. (The $\alpha(m,n)$ function is decreasing in its first argument, increasing in the second, and $\alpha(m,n) \leq \alpha(cm, cn)$, for $c \geq 1$.)

As the cost of each *delete* operation is $O(pq(n))$, the cost of all unhang operations with $x, p[x] \in \mathit{HIGH}$ is at most $O(f \cdot pq(n) \cdot \alpha(n, n/pq(n)))$, as required. $\square$

5 Bounds in terms of the maximal key value

In this section we describe a simple transformation, independent of the transformation of Section 3, that speeds up the operation of a meldable priority queue data structure when the keys of the elements are integers taken from the range $[1, N]$, where N is small relative to n, the number of elements. More specifically, we show that if $\mathcal{P}$ is a meldable priority queue data structure that supports *delete* operations in $O(pq(n))$ amortized time, and all other operations in $O(1)$ amortized time, where n is the number of elements in the priority queue, then it is possible to transform it into a meldable priority queue data structure $\mathcal{T}'(\mathcal{P})$ that supports *delete* operations in $O(pq(\min\{n, N\}))$ amortized time, and all other operations in $O(1)$ time. To implement this transformation we need random access capabilities, so it cannot be implemented on a pointer machine.

To simplify the presentation of the transformation, we assume here that a *delete* operation receives a reference to the element x to be deleted *and* to the priority queue containing it. This is a fairly standard assumption.[5] Note, how-

[5] A reference to the appropriate priority queue can be obtained using a separate union-find data structure. The amortized cost of finding a reference is then $O(\alpha(n,n))$. This is *not* good enough for us here as we are after bounds that are independent of n.

ever, that the *delete* operation obtained by our first transformation is stronger as it only requires a reference to the element, and not to the priority queue. In the full version of the paper we show that this assumption is not really necessary, so the *delete* operations obtained using the transformation $\mathcal{T}'$ again require only a reference to the element to be deleted.

The new data structure $\mathcal{T}'(\mathcal{P})$ uses two different representations of priority queues. The first representation, called the *original*, or *non-compressed* representation is simply the representation used by $\mathcal{P}$. The second representation, called the *compressed* representation, is composed of an array of size N containing for each integer $k \in [1, N]$ a pointer to a doubly linked list of the elements with key k contained in the priority queue. (Some of the lists may, of course, be empty.) In addition to that, the compressed representation uses an original representation of a priority queue that holds the up to N distinct keys belonging to the elements of the priority queue.

Initially, all priority queues are held using the original representation. When, as a result of an *insert* or a *meld* operation, a priority queue contains more than N elements, we convert it to compressed representation. This can be easily carried out in $O(N)$ time. When, as a result of a *delete* operation, the size of a priority queue drops below $N/2$, we revert back to the original representation. This again takes $O(N)$ time. The original representation is therefore used to maintain *small* priority queues, i.e., priority queues containing up to N elements. The compressed representation is used to represent *large* priority queues, i.e., priority queues containing at least $N/2$ elements. (Priority queues containing between $N/2$ and N elements are both small and large.)

By definition, we can insert elements to non-compressed priority queues in $O(1)$ amortized time, and delete elements from then in $O(pq(n)) = O(pq(N))$ amortized time. We can also insert an element into a compressed priority queue in $O(1)$ amortized time. We simply add the element into the appropriate linked list, and if the added element is the first element of the list, we also add the key of the element to the priority queue. Similarly, we can delete an element from a compressed priority queue in $O(pq(N))$ amortized time. We delete the element from the corresponding linked list. If that list is now empty, we delete the key from the non-compressed priority queue. As the compressed priority queue contained at most N keys, that can be done in $O(pq(N))$ amortized time. Since *insert* and *delete* operations are supplied with a reference to the priority queue to which an element should be inserted, or from which it should be deleted, we can keep a count of the number of elements contained in the priority queue. This can be done for both representations. (Here is where we use the assumption made earlier. As mentioned, we will explain later why this assumption is not really necessary.) These counts tell us when the representation of a priority queue should be changed.

A small priority queue and a large priority queue can be melded simply be inserting each element of the small priority queue into the large one. Even though this takes $O(n)$ time, where n is the number of elements in the small priority queue, we show below that the amortized cost of this operation is only $O(1)$.

Two large priority queues can be easily melded in $O(N)$ time. We simply concatenate the corresponding linked lists and add the keys that are found, say, in the second priority queue, but not in the first, into the priority queue that holds the keys of the first priority queue. The second priority queue is then destroyed. We also update the size of the obtained queue. Again, we show below that the amortized cost of this is only $O(1)$.

Theorem 2. *If $\mathcal{P}$ is a priority queue data structure that supports insert, find-min and meld operations in $O(1)$ (expected) amortized time and delete operations in $O(pq(n))$ (expected) amortized time, then $\mathcal{T}'(\mathcal{P})$ is a priority queue data structure that supports insert, find-min and meld operations in $O(1)$ (expected) amortized time and delete operations in $O(pq(\min\{n, N\}))$ (expected) amortized time.*

Proof. We use a simple potential based argument. The potential of a priority queue held in original, non-compressed, representation is defined to be $1.5n$, where n the number of elements contained in it. The potential of a compressed priority queue is N, no matter how many elements it contain. The potential of the whole data structure is the sum of the potentials of all the priority queues.

The operations *insert*, *delete* and *find-min* have a constant actual cost and they change the potential of the data structure by at most an additive constant. Thus, their amortized cost is constant.

Compressing a priority queue containing $N \le n \le 2N$ elements requires $O(N)$ operations but it reduces the potential of the priority queue from $1.5n$ to N, a drop of at least $N/2$, so with proper scaling the amortized cost of this operation may be taken to be 0. Similarly, when a compressed priority queue containing $n \le N/2$ elements is converted to original representation, the potential of the priority queue drops from N to $1.5n$, a drop of at least $N/4$, so the amortized cost of this operation is again 0.

Melding two original priority queues has a constant actual cost. As the potential of the data structure does not change, the amortized cost is also constant. Melding two compressed priority queues has an actual cost of $O(N)$, but the potential of the data structure is decreased by N, so the amortized cost of such meld operations is 0. Finally, merging a small priority queue of size $n \le N$, in original representation, and a compressed priority queue has an actual cost of $O(n)$ but the potential decreases by $1.5n$, giving again an amortized cost of 0. This completes the proof. □

6 Further work

By combining the transformation of Section 3 with the *atomic heaps* of Fredman and Willard [7], we can obtain a transformation $\mathcal{T}^A$ that converts a non-meldable priority queue date structure $\mathcal{P}$ with operation time $O(pq(n))$ into a meldable priority queue date structure $\mathcal{T}^A(\mathcal{P})$ that supports *insert*, *meld* and *find-min* operations in $O(1)$ amortized time, and *delete* operations in $O(pq(n) + \alpha(n, n))$ amortized time. This is done by using an atomic heap, instead of a $\mathcal{P}$ priority queue, in nodes of the union-find data structure whose size is at most $\log n$. The details will be given in the full version of the paper. This transformation uses, however, a stronger model in which atomic heaps can be realized (see [21]).

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