

# New Techniques and Fine-Grained Hardness for Dynamic Near-Additive Spanners

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## Abstract

Maintaining and updating shortest paths information in a graph is a fundamental problem with many applications. As computations on dense graphs can be prohibitively expensive, and it is preferable to perform the computations on a sparse skeleton of the given graph that roughly preserves the shortest paths information. Spanners and emulators serve this purpose. Unfortunately, very little is known about dynamically maintaining sparse spanners and emulators as the graph is modified by a sequence of edge insertions and deletions. This paper develops fast dynamic algorithms for spanner and emulator maintenance and provides evidence from fine-grained complexity that these algorithms are tight. For unweighted undirected  $m$ -edge  $n$ -node graphs we obtain the following results.

Under the popular OMv conjecture, there can be no decremental or incremental algorithm that maintains an  $n^{1+o(1)}$  edge (purely additive)  $+n^\delta$ -emulator for any  $\delta < 1/2$  with arbitrary polynomial preprocessing time and total update time  $m^{1+o(1)}$ . Also, under the Combinatorial  $k$ -Clique hypothesis, any fully dynamic combinatorial algorithm that maintains an  $n^{1+o(1)}$  edge  $(1 + \epsilon, n^{o(1)})$ -spanner or emulator for small  $\epsilon$  must either have preprocessing time  $mn^{1-o(1)}$  or amortized update time  $m^{1-o(1)}$ . Both of our conditional lower bounds are tight.

As the above fully dynamic lower bound only applies to combinatorial algorithms, we also develop an algebraic spanner algorithm that improves over the  $m^{1-o(1)}$  update time for dense graphs. For any constant  $\epsilon \in (0, 1]$ , there is a fully dynamic algorithm with worst-case update time  $O(n^{1.529})$  that whp maintains an  $n^{1+o(1)}$  edge  $(1 + \epsilon, n^{o(1)})$ -spanner.

Our new algebraic techniques allow us to also obtain a new fully dynamic algorithm for All-Pairs Shortest Paths (APSP) that can perform both edge updates and can report shortest paths in worst-case time  $O(n^{1.9})$ , which are correct whp. This is the first *path-reporting* fully dynamic APSP algorithm with a truly subquadratic query time that beats  $O(n^{2.5})$  update time. It works

against an oblivious adversary.

Finally, we give two applications of our new dynamic spanner algorithms: (1) a fully dynamic  $(1 + \epsilon)$ -approximate APSP algorithm with update time  $O(n^{1.529})$  that can report approximate shortest paths in  $n^{1+o(1)}$  time per query; previous subquadratic update/query algorithms could only report the distance, but not obtain the paths; (2) a fully dynamic algorithm for near-2-approximate Steiner tree maintenance with both terminal and edge updates.

## 1 Introduction

Computing shortest paths in a graph is a fundamental problem with many applications. However, as on dense graphs the running time can be prohibitively expensive, it is preferable to perform the computation on a sparser representation of the given graph that approximately preserves the shortest paths distances. Such representations are called *spanners* and *emulators*. Given an undirected, unweighted graph  $G = (V, E)$ , a subgraph  $H$  of  $G$  is defined to be an  $(\alpha, \beta)$ -*spanner* if for every pair of vertices  $x, y \in V$ , we have that

$$\text{dist}_G(x, y) \leq \text{dist}_H(x, y) \leq \alpha \cdot \text{dist}_G(x, y) + \beta.$$

A graph  $H = (V, E')$  is defined to be an  $(\alpha, \beta)$ -*emulator* if it fulfills the above constraint, is possibly edge-weighted, but not necessarily a subgraph of  $G$ . Thus every spanner is also an emulator but not vice versa. When evaluating the quality of a spanner or emulator  $H$  three parameters are of interest: the *multiplicative approximation*  $\alpha$ , the *additive approximation*  $\beta$  and the *sparsity* of  $H$  that is the number of edges in  $H$ .

Spanners and emulators have a variety of applications, ranging from efficient routing to parallel and distributed algorithms to efficient distance oracles, i.e. data structures that answer shortest-path queries. Thus, there exists a large body of work on computing spanners (see below). As real-world graphs are often dynamic, it raises the question whether spanners and emulators can be maintained efficiently when the graph is modified by edge updates. Unfortunately, very little is known about this question. In this article, we are concerned with the design of efficient algorithms to *dynamically* maintain an  $(1 + \epsilon, \beta)$ -spanner on an undirected unweighted graph that is undergoing edge insertions and deletions.

If the update sequence is restricted to consist exclusively

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of insertions, we say that the graph is *incremental* and if it only consists of edge deletions we say that it is *decremental*. If the graph is either incremental or decremental, we also say it is *partially dynamic* and otherwise we say it is *fully dynamic*.

Apart from giving new decremental and fully dynamic deterministic and randomized algorithms that maintain spanners and emulators we also provide evidence from fine-grained complexity that these algorithms are tight. We then use our new algorithms and techniques to give novel fully dynamic approximate and exact all-pairs shortest paths (APSP) algorithms *that can report the corresponding shortest path*, addressing an open question raised by [80]. We further provide applications for other problems such as the maintenance of an approximate Steiner tree of a graph.

**Prior Work.** In this section, we discuss work that is directly related to the results in our paper. We use  $\tilde{O}$ -notation to suppress logarithmic factors, let  $n$  and  $m$  be the maximum number of vertices and edges respectively in any version of the graph under consideration. Unless otherwise specified, all graphs are undirected and unweighted. To ease the discussion, we assume for the rest of the section that  $\epsilon$  is a constant.

**Spanners and Emulators.** Spanners and static algorithms to construct them have been studied in great detail for *multiplicative* approximation [12, 68, 10, 36, 13, 18, 70] culminating in near-optimal algorithms to construct  $(2k-1, 0)$ -spanners of sparsity  $\tilde{O}(n^{1+1/k})$ . There has also been an extensive line of research on *purely additive* spanners [9, 8, 38, 28, 16, 30] where  $(1, 2)$ ,  $(1, 4)$  and  $(1, 6)$ -spanners are known of sparsity  $\tilde{O}(n^{3/2})$ ,  $\tilde{O}(n^{7/5})$  and  $\tilde{O}(n^{4/3})$ . While algorithms for fast constructions have been studied (e.g. [84, 61, 62]), no near-optimal algorithm for the construction of any of the above additive spanners is known. For example, the fastest algorithm for constructing a  $O(1)$ -additive spanner with  $O(n^{4/3})$  edges is  $O(n^2)$ . Further, Abboud and Bodwin [2] proved that any purely additive spanner of sparsity  $\tilde{O}(n^{4/3-\epsilon})$ , for any constant  $\epsilon > 0$ , has at least polynomial in  $n$  additive error. Constructions by Bodwin and Vasilevska Williams [26, 27] are known giving sparsity  $\tilde{O}(n)$  and additive error  $\tilde{O}(n^{3/7+\epsilon})$ . Following [2], Huang and Pettie [56] constructed a family of graphs such that any  $\tilde{O}(n)$ -sized spanner for an  $n$ -node graph in the family must have  $\Omega(n^{1/13})$  additive stretch.

Mixed-error  $(\alpha, \beta)$ -spanners were studied in [44, 16, 79, 69, 40, 19]. Most of these results focus on the setting of near-additive spanners, that is  $(\alpha, \beta)$ -spanners where  $\alpha = 1 + \epsilon$  for some arbitrarily small constant  $\epsilon > 0$ . The goal of this setting is to obtain extremely sparse spanners  $\tilde{O}(n)$ . The best results obtain  $(1 + \epsilon, n^{o(1)})$ -spanners with  $\tilde{O}(n)$  edges. Abboud et al. [3] further developed a fine-grained hierarchy to give lower bounds for trade-offs between  $\epsilon$ , additive error and the sparsity of emulators. These lower bounds also apply

to the setting of  $(\alpha, \beta)$ -emulators.

Finally, we point out that a related notion to emulators are hopsets: given a graph  $G$ , we say that a graph  $H$  is a  $(\alpha, \beta, h)$ -hopset if for every two vertices  $x, y \in V$ , there is a path  $\pi_{x,y}$  from  $x$  to  $y$  in the graph  $G \cup H$  consisting of at most  $h$  edges, such that  $\text{dist}_G(x, y) \leq w(\pi_{x,y}) \leq (1 + \epsilon)\text{dist}_G(x, y) + \beta$  where  $w(\pi_{x,y})$  denotes the weight of the path  $\pi_{x,y}$ . There is a lot of recent work on hopsets, especially  $(1 + \epsilon, \beta, h)$ -hopsets, for which there are efficient algorithms [42, 57, 41] with  $\beta = 0$  and  $h = n^{o(1)}$ . The hopset literature builds heavily on previous clustering techniques from near-additive spanners. An excellent survey that highlights this connection was recently given by Elkin and Neiman [43].

**Spanners and Emulators in Dynamic Graphs.** Spanners have also been extensively studied in the dynamic graph setting, where near-optimal algorithms for multiplicative spanners in fully dynamic graphs exist [11, 39, 17, 14, 25, 23, 47, 20]. For hopsets, the dynamic graph literature has been mainly concerned with maintaining  $(1 + \epsilon, n^{o(1)}, n^{o(1)})$ -hopsets in partially dynamic graphs [54, 21, 49] where they were used to derive fast algorithms for the partially dynamic Single-Source Shortest Paths problem. As was observed in [51] (Lemma 4.2) combining [72] with [79] leads to a  $(1 + \epsilon, 2(1 + 2/\epsilon)^{k-2})$ -approximate decremental emulator with total time  $O((1 + 2/\epsilon)^{k-2}mn^{1/k})$ . To our knowledge, additive and near-additive spanners have not been studied in the dynamic graph literature. Also, there are no known conditional lower bounds for dynamic algorithms for maintaining a spanner.

**Fully Dynamic Shortest Paths with Worst-Case Update Time.** Closely related to maintaining a spanner/emulator is the problem of maintaining shortest paths. There are three problems of focal interest:

- (1) The  $s$ - $t$  Shortest Path ( $st$ -SP) problem asks for the shortest path between two fixed vertices  $s, t \in V$ .
- (2) The Single-Source Shortest Paths (SSSP) problem asks for the shortest path tree from a fixed vertex.
- (3) The All-Pairs Shortest Paths (APSP) problem asks for the shortest path between every vertex pair.

For each of these three problems, there is the *distance reporting* and the *path reporting* variant, where the former requires to only return the length of the shortest path, while the latter needs to return the actual shortest path. There is an enormous line of research on these three problems in various settings. Since our fully dynamic algorithms have worst-case guarantees on update time, we focus this discussion on prior work on fully dynamic algorithms with worst-case update time.

For the  $st$ -SP problem and the SSSP problem the lower bounds in [4, 55] suggest that the essentially best solution to these problems is to rerun Dijkstra's algorithm after every update (even when the updates are not required to be worst-case). However, these conditional lower bounds are based

on the BMM conjecture and therefore hold only for “combinatorial” algorithms. Indeed, Sankowski [74] has shown that a worst-case update time of  $O(n^{1.932})$  and query time of  $O(n^{1.288})$  to obtain the *distance* between a pair of vertices is possible and therefore has given the first subquadratic algorithm for the distance-reporting version of the *st*-SP problem. Recently, this result was further improved to worst-case update time  $\tilde{O}(n^{1.863})$  and query time  $\tilde{O}(n^{0.45})$  in [80] where distance reporting queries are only required to return a  $(1 + \epsilon)$ -approximate distance estimate. Rebalancing their trade-off terms, the authors also obtain an algorithm that maintains  $(1 + \epsilon)$ -approximate SSSP with worst-case update time  $\tilde{O}(n^{1.823})$  and  $(1 + \epsilon)$ -approximate APSP in worst-case update time  $\tilde{O}(n^2)$ .

A *major drawback* of both approaches is that they cannot answer path reporting queries. The algorithm with fastest worst-case update time that can return *actual* (approximate) shortest-paths for *st*-SP and SSSP remains to rerun Dijkstra’s algorithm and for the APSP problem to use a combinatorial data structure where the currently best worst-case update is  $\tilde{O}(n^{2+2/3})$  for weighted graphs and  $\tilde{O}(n^{2.5})$  time for unweighted graphs (see [77, 6, 50]).

For approximate distance oracles with amortized running time, Abraham et al. [7] achieved an  $2^{O(k)}$ -approximation with  $O(\sqrt{mn}^{1/k})$  amortized update time for constant  $k$ , and Forster et al. [48] gave an  $(O(\log n))^{3k-2}$ -approximation with  $O(k \log^2 n)$  query time and  $m^{1/k+o(1)}(O(\log n))^{4i-3}$  update time for any  $k \geq 2$ , being the first to break the  $\sqrt{m}$  update time barrier.

**Partially Dynamic Shortest Paths.** The classic ES-tree data structure [46] initiated the field with a deterministic total time  $O(mn)$  algorithm for partially dynamic exact SSSP. In the setting where a  $(1 + \epsilon)$ -multiplicative approximation is allowed, Bernstein and Roditty [24] gave the first improvement over the ES-tree for an approximation algorithm with an algorithm for decremental  $(1 + \epsilon)$ -approximate SSSP with total time  $n^2 2^{O(\sqrt{\log(n)})}$ . Subsequently, Henzinger et al. gave an algorithm [54] with total update time  $m^{1+o(1)}$ . These algorithms are all randomized and against an oblivious adversary.

Bernstein and Chechik gave the first deterministic partially dynamic  $(1 + \epsilon)$ -approximate SSSP algorithm that improves upon the ES-tree data structure; it runs in total time  $\tilde{O}(n^2)$  [21] and does not report paths, only distances. Chuzhoy and Khanna [34] gave an algorithm with total time  $n^{2+o(1)}$  that works against an adaptive adversary and returns paths with  $n^{1+o(1)}$  query time. Chuzhoy and Saranurak [35] recently further improved the running time of the path query to  $|P|n^{o(1)}$  for an approximate shortest path  $P$ . Further, Bernstein and Chechik recently gave an algorithm with total update time  $\tilde{O}(mn^{3/4})$  [22], which was then improved to  $O(mn^{0.5+o(1)})$  by Probst Gutenberg and Wulff-Nilsen [49]. Neither of these data structures can answer path

queries which was recently addressed in [20].

For decremental APSP, Henzinger et al. [54] presented an approximation algorithm with stretch  $((2+\epsilon)^k - 1)$  and total update time  $m^{1+1/k+o(1)}$  for any positive integer  $k$ . They also gave an algorithm with stretch  $(2 + \epsilon)$  or  $(1 + \epsilon, 2)$  with total update time  $\tilde{O}(n^{2.5})$  in [52] which was recently derandomized by Chuzhoy and Saranurak [35]. Finally Henzinger et al. [52] presented a  $(1 + \epsilon)$ -approximate deterministic algorithm with  $\tilde{O}(mn/\epsilon)$  update time which derandomized the construction by Roditty and Zwick [72] with matching running time. Later on, Chechik [31] presented a  $(2 + \epsilon)k - 1$ -approximate algorithm with update time  $mn^{1/k+o(1)}$  for any positive integer  $k$  and constant  $\epsilon$ , whose total update time matches the preprocessing time of static distance oracles [78] with corresponding stretch. Recently, Chen et al. [32] gave an incremental  $(2k - 1)$ -approximate algorithm with  $O(m^{1/2}n^{1/k})$  worst-case time per operation. We point out that there is an extensive line of work on the decremental APSP problem [60, 15, 37, 71, 77, 24, 72, 5, 54, 52, 53, 6, 31, 45] that is beyond the scope of this overview.

From the lower bounds side, Roditty and Zwick [71] showed that any incremental or decremental algorithm for SSSP in weighted graphs with preprocessing time  $p(n)$ , query time  $q(n)$  and update time  $u(n)$  must satisfy  $p(n) + n \cdot u(n) + n^2 \cdot q(n) \geq n^{3-o(1)}$  unless APSP has a truly subcubic time algorithm. Similarly, for unweighted graphs, they showed that any *combinatorial* incremental or decremental algorithm must satisfy that equation unless Boolean matrix multiplication (BMM) has a truly subcubic time combinatorial algorithm. Abboud and Vassilevska Williams [4] extended these lower bounds to also hold for *st*-SP, where now the algorithms must satisfy  $p(n) + n \cdot (u(n) + q(n)) \geq n^{3-o(1)}$ , for weighted graphs under the APSP conjecture, and for unweighted graphs under the combinatorial BMM conjecture.

**Hypotheses for Fine-Grained Complexity** Our conditional lower bounds rely on two popular hypotheses: the Online Boolean Matrix-Vector Multiplication (OMv) conjecture and the Combinatorial  $k$ -Clique hypothesis. In the OMv problem we are given an  $n \times n$  matrix  $M$  that can be preprocessed. Then, an online sequence of vectors  $v^1, \dots, v^n$  is presented and the goal is to compute each  $Mv^i$  before seeing the next vector  $v^{i+1}$ . The OMv conjecture was first defined in [55], and has been used many times since.

**CONJECTURE 1.1. (OMv)** *For any constant  $\epsilon > 0$ , there is no  $O(n^{3-\epsilon})$ -time algorithm that solves OMv with error probability at most  $1/3$  in the word-RAM model with  $O(\log n)$  bit words.*

The Combinatorial  $k$ -Clique hypothesis is defined as follows and has been used a number of times (e.g. [66, 1, 29]).

**HYPOTHESIS 1.1. (COMBINATORIAL  $k$ -CLIQUE)** For any constant  $\epsilon > 0$ , for an  $n$ -node graph there is no  $O(n^{k-\epsilon})$  time combinatorial algorithm for  $k$ -clique detection with error probability at most  $1/3$  in the word-RAM model with  $O(\log n)$  bit words.

For the special case of  $k$ -Clique detection where  $k = 3$  (i.e. triangle detection), we also consider non-combinatorial algorithms. Triangle detection can easily be solved using matrix multiplication but it is a big open question whether triangle detection admits a  $O(m^{\omega-\epsilon})$  time algorithm, where  $\omega < 2.373$  is the matrix multiplication exponent (e.g. [82], [83] Open Problem 4.3(c), and [76] Open Problem 8.1). It is generally believed that such an algorithm does not exist, and our reductions from  $k$ -Clique also imply hardness under this hypothesis.

**Our results.** We present novel algorithms and conditional lower bounds for  $(\alpha, \beta)$ -spanners and emulators as well as faster fully dynamic APSP algorithms. We prove the following for undirected unweighted graphs.

**1. Conditional lower bounds for partially dynamic spanners/emulators.** Under the OMv conjecture, there can be no decremental or incremental algorithm that maintains a  $(1, n^{o(1)})$ -emulator (and thus spanner) with  $O(m^{1-\epsilon})$  edges for any constant  $\epsilon > 0$  with arbitrary polynomial preprocessing time and total update time  $O(mn^{1-\epsilon})$ . The same result also holds for all sparsities  $m$  for combinatorial algorithms under the Combinatorial  $k$ -Clique hypothesis.

For completeness, we also present algorithms that are tight with our conditional lower bounds. Note that mixed additive/multiplicative error is necessary for these algorithms since there can be no  $(O(1), 0)$ -spanner or emulator with  $n^{1+o(1)}$  edges (e.g. [67]). Our algorithms rely heavily on prior work. Using techniques similar to [31], for any constant  $\epsilon \in (0, 1]$ , we maintain whp against an oblivious adversary a partially dynamic  $n^{1+o(1)}$  edge  $(1 + \epsilon, n^{o(1)})$ -spanner in total update time  $m^{1+o(1)}$  time. Using techniques from [49], we also give a deterministic partially dynamic algorithm that maintains a  $(1 + \epsilon, n^{\alpha+o(1)})$ -emulator of a graph in total time  $O(mn^{1-\alpha+o(1)})$  for any  $\alpha > 0$ . Using a result in [20], we can further turn the above algorithm into a randomized algorithm that maintains a  $(1 + \epsilon, n^{\alpha+o(1)})$ -spanner in expected total time  $O(mn^{1-\alpha+o(1)})$  for any  $\alpha > 0$  and that works against an adaptive adversary.

**2. Conditional lower bounds for combinatorial fully dynamic spanners.** Under the Combinatorial  $k$ -Clique hypothesis, for a graph of any sparsity  $m$ , for any constant  $\epsilon > 0$ , there can be no fully dynamic combinatorial algorithm that maintains an  $O(m^{1-\epsilon})$ -edge  $(1 + \alpha, n^{o(1)})$ -emulator for small  $\alpha$  with preprocessing time  $mn^{1-\epsilon}$  and amortized update time  $m^{1-\epsilon}$ . This conditional lower bound also extends to incremental and decremental algorithms but only for worst-case update times.

For completeness, we also present an algorithm that is tight with our conditional lower bound. This algorithm follows from rerunning a known static algorithm after every update. For any constant  $\epsilon \in (0, 1]$ , we give a deterministic fully dynamic algorithm with preprocessing time  $m^{1+o(1)}$  and worst-case update time  $m^{1+o(1)}$  time that maintains an  $n^{1+o(1)}$  edge  $(1 + \epsilon, n^{o(1)})$ -spanner.

**3. Algebraic fully dynamic spanner algorithms.** The above fully dynamic lower bound only applies to combinatorial algorithms, and we show that this is inherent; we develop an algebraic spanner algorithm that beats our combinatorial lower bound. For any constant  $\epsilon \in (0, 1]$ , there is a fully dynamic algorithm with preprocessing time  $\tilde{O}(n^2)$  in an initially empty graph and  $O(n^{2.373})$  in an initially non-empty graph and worst-case update time  $O(n^{1.529})$  that whp maintains an  $n^{1+o(1)}$ -edge  $(1 + \epsilon, n^{o(1)})$ -spanner and works against an oblivious adversary.<sup>1</sup>

The construction from our above lower bound from the Combinatorial  $k$ -Clique hypothesis with  $k = 3$  (i.e. triangle detection) also gives a conditional lower bound for non-combinatorial algorithms. Unless there is a breakthrough in non-combinatorial algorithms for triangle detection algorithms, there can be no fully dynamic algorithm that maintains an  $O(n^{\omega-1-\epsilon})$ -edge  $(1 + \alpha, n^{o(1)})$ -emulator for constant  $\alpha < 2/3$  with preprocessing time  $O(n^{\omega-\epsilon})$  and amortized update time  $O(n^{\omega-1-\epsilon})$ , where  $\omega < 2.373$  is the matrix multiplication exponent. Thus  $O(n^{1.372})$  update time and  $O(n^{2.372})$  preprocessing time is not possible with current techniques.

We also give a conditional lower bound from the OMv conjecture that precludes algorithms for emulators with more edges and higher preprocessing time than the above lower bound from triangle detection, but at the cost of a lower update time. Under the OMv conjecture, for any constant  $\epsilon > 0$ , there can be no fully dynamic algorithm that maintains an  $O(m^{1-\epsilon})$ -edge  $(1 + \alpha, n^{o(1)})$ -emulator for constant  $\alpha < 2/3$  with arbitrary polynomial preprocessing time and amortized update time  $O(n^{1-\epsilon})$ .

Both of these conditional lower bound also extend to incremental and decremental algorithms but only for worst-case update times.

**4. Fully dynamic exact path-reporting APSP.** To achieve the above results we develop the first fully dynamic APSP data structure that supports distance queries, path reporting queries, and edge updates in *subquadratic* time per operation. It uses algebraic techniques, is randomized, and works against an oblivious adversary. Specifically we show the following result, where  $\omega(a, b, c)$  is the exponent for multiply-

<sup>1</sup>Both the bound on the time per update as well as the correctness hold with high probability. If we rebuild the data structure from scratch every polynomially many updates, we can instead achieve an *expected amortized* time bound of  $O(n^{1.529})$  per update.

ing an  $n^a \times n^b$  matrix by an  $n^b \times n^c$ , and  $\kappa_*$  is the solution to  $\omega(1, 1, \kappa) = 1 + 2\kappa$ . With the current bounds for rectangular matrix multiplication,  $\kappa_* \approx 0.529$ .

**THEOREM 1.1.** *Let  $\kappa$  be such that  $0 < \kappa \leq \kappa_*$ , and let  $D$  be a distance parameter between 1 and  $n$ . There is a randomized fully dynamic data structure that can maintain an unweighted directed graph  $G = (V, E)$  supporting the following operations with preprocessing time  $\tilde{O}(n^2)$  in an empty initial graph and  $\tilde{O}(Dn^\omega)$  in a non-empty initial graph: (a) **edge updates** in worst-case time  $\tilde{O}(Dn^{\omega(1,1,\kappa)-\kappa})$  time; (b) **[distance reporting]:** on query  $i, j \in V$ , return  $\text{dist}(i, j)$  if  $\text{dist}(i, j) \leq D$ , or answer that  $\text{dist}(i, j) > D$  otherwise, in worst-case  $\tilde{O}(Dn^\kappa)$  time, where the answer is correct whp; (c) **[path reporting]:** on query  $i, j \in V$ , if  $\text{dist}(i, j) \leq D$ , return a shortest path from  $i$  to  $j$ , in  $\tilde{O}(D^2 n^\kappa)$  time, where the answer is correct whp.*

We believe that this result is of independent interest.

Based on it we build a fully dynamic exact APSP data structure that with preprocessing time  $\tilde{O}(n^2)$  on an initially empty graph achieves worst-case time  $O(n^{1.9})$  per edge update,  $O(n^{1.529})$  per distance query and  $O(n^{1.9})$  per path reporting query. This is a significant improvement over the  $O(n^{2.5})$  worst-case update time of [6, 50] and closer to the  $O(n^2)$  time bound which is achieved by the data structure of [37] which can only support distance reporting queries, but no path reporting queries.

The algorithms in Theorem 1.1 are all Monte Carlo—they are correct with high probability and always run in the desired running time. If they could be made into Las Vegas algorithms (ones that are always correct but have expected running time), our applications of Theorem 1.1, such as our algebraic spanners, would also be Las Vegas, which is a more desirable guarantee. However, there are significant hurdles to overcome in order to make Theorem 1.1 Las Vegas. Like Sankowski’s original data structure [73], Theorem 1.1 heavily relies on the use of polynomial identity testing (PIT), namely on the fact that PIT is in co-RP and hence has a fast Monte Carlo algorithm. To obtain a Las Vegas algorithm using a similar approach, one would need a ZPP algorithm for PIT. However, obtaining such an algorithm seems extremely difficult, and in fact Impagliazzo and Kabanets [58, 59] showed that such an algorithm would imply strong circuit lower bounds. Thus although the rest of our techniques can be made Las Vegas, making Theorem 1.1 Las Vegas as well is far from possible with current techniques.

**5. Applications.** We present two applications of our above results: fully dynamic approximate path-reporting APSP, and fully dynamic Steiner tree. Using the above theorem and the above algebraic spanner, we give the first subquadratic fully dynamic  $(1 + \epsilon)$ -approximate APSP algorithm. It needs  $\tilde{O}(n^2)$  preprocessing time on an empty graph and

achieves worst-case time  $n^{1+\kappa_*+o(1)} = O(n^{1.529})$  for updates,  $n^{1+o(1)}$  for approximate distance reporting and approximate shortest path reporting, whp against an oblivious adversary. Note that all previous subquadratic update/query algorithms could only report distances, not paths.

Our second application of our above results is a fully dynamic algorithm for  $(2 + \epsilon)$ -approximate Steiner tree, which can be used, for example, for routing in dynamic networks. Specifically we give the first subquadratic algorithm that maintains a  $(2 + \epsilon)$ -approximate Steiner tree for a set  $S$  of terminals with both terminal and edge updates. Specifically, it has preprocessing time  $\tilde{O}(n^2)$  on an empty initial graph and  $n^{\omega+o(1)}$  on a non-empty initial graph, and worst-case time  $n^{1+\kappa_*+o(1)} + |S|^2 \cdot n^{1+o(1)}$  per edge update,  $|S|n^{1+o(1)}$  per node addition to  $S$ , and  $|S|n^{o(1)}$  per node removal from  $S$ , giving subquadratic update time when  $|S| \leq n^{1/2-o(1)}$  whp against an oblivious adversary. By increasing the processing time to  $O(n^{2.621})$  using the data-structure of [80], the time for edge updates can be made  $O(n^{1.843} + |S|^2 \cdot n^{0.45} + |S| \cdot n^{1+o(1)})$ , allowing for more leverage over the size of the terminal set  $S$ . The only prior work in general graphs maintains a  $(6 + \epsilon)$ -approximate Steiner Tree under changes to  $S$  only (no edge updates) and has preprocessing time  $\tilde{O}(m\sqrt{n})$  and update time  $\tilde{O}(\sqrt{n})$  [63].

**Organization** In Section 2 we give a technical overview of a selection of our results. Section 3 is the preliminaries.

In Section 4, we present our conditional lower bounds based on the OMV conjecture. Results in this articles based on the  $k$ -cycle conjecture are deferred to the full version of the article.

In Section 5, we present our algebraic spanner algorithm, which uses our data structure for dynamic APSP with path reporting data structure from Theorem 1.1. Details regarding the dynamic APSP data structure are again deferred to the full version of this paper due to space constraints. We also present our combinatorial dynamic spanner and emulator algorithms only in the full version of the paper.

In Section 6 we present two additional applications of the data structure from Theorem 1.1: our dynamic algorithm for approximate APSP with path reporting and our dynamic Steiner tree algorithm.

## 2 Technical overview

**Conditional lower bounds.** We first outline our OMv-based constructions. Instead of reducing from the OMv problem, we reduce from the related OuMv problem, which is defined as follows. We are given an  $n \times n$  matrix  $M$  that can be preprocessed. Then, an online sequence of vector pairs  $(u^1, v^1), \dots, (u^n, v^n)$  is presented and the goal is to compute each  $(u^i)^\top M v^i$  before seeing the next pair. A reduction from OMv to OuMv is known [55].

For both our fully dynamic and incremental/decremental

lower bounds from OMv we begin with the same basic gadget. Given the matrix  $M$  from the OuMv instance, we construct a bipartite graph  $A, B$  where  $A = \{a_1, \dots, a_n\}$ ,  $B = \{b_1, \dots, b_n\}$ , and the edge  $(a_i, b_j)$  is present if and only if  $M_{i,j} = 1$ .

The fully dynamic construction is shown in Figure 1. We begin by taking a number  $c$  of disjoint copies  $G_1, \dots, G_c$  of the basic gadget and an additional set of  $c + 1$  isolated vertices  $w_0, \dots, w_c$ . Each basic gadget will introduce error to the approximation, so larger  $c$  means that we are showing a lower bound for algorithms with higher approximation factors but faster running times.

After constructing this initial graph, we start  $n$  dynamic phases. In phase  $i$ , we are given the vectors  $u^i$  and  $v^i$  of the OuMv instance. For each  $1 \leq j \leq c$  and each  $k$  with  $u_k^i = 1$ , insert an edge between  $w_{j-1}$  and  $a_k \in G_j$ . Similarly, for each  $1 \leq j \leq c$  and each  $k$  with  $v_k^i = 1$ , insert an edge between  $w_j$  and  $b_k \in G_j$ . We remove these edges after the phase is over.

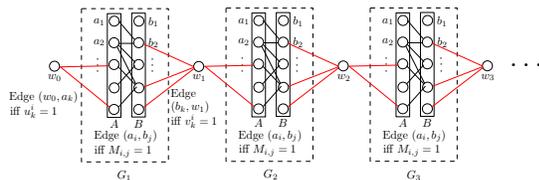


Figure 1: The construction for fully dynamic algorithms. The red edges are dynamically added in phase  $i$ .

At the end of each phase, we run Breadth-First Search (BFS) on the dynamic emulator to estimate the distance between  $w_0$  and  $w_c$ , which we claim provides the answer to this phase of the OuMv instance. In particular, note that for any  $i$  the distance between  $w_i$  and  $w_{i+1}$  is 3 if and only if  $(u^i)^T M v^i = 1$ , and otherwise this distance is at least 5. Also, since the emulator has  $O(n^{2-\epsilon})$  edges, the resulting algorithm would solve OuMv in  $O(n^{3-\epsilon})$  time.

The incremental construction is similar, however we cannot remove edges at the end of each phase. To get around this, we replace each  $w_i$  with a path and insert edges incident to a different vertex in the path at each phase. The resulting construction is shown in Figure 2.

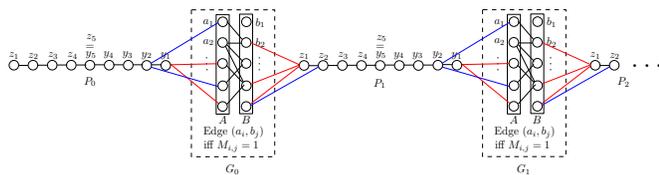


Figure 2: The construction for incremental algorithms. The red edges are dynamically added in phase 1 and the blue edges are dynamically added in phase 2.

The decremental construction is roughly the reverse of

the incremental construction.

For the  $k$ -clique-based constructions, we instead reduce from the  $k$ -cycle problem (a reduction from  $k$ -clique to  $k$ -cycle is known [66]). The  $k$ -cycle constructions for both the fully and partially dynamic settings follow a similar structure to the OuMv constructions but use a different basic gadget. The basic gadget is built by using color coding and taking a layered version of the graph where each color is a layer and only edges between vertices of adjacent colors are present.

**Algebraic Fully Dynamic Spanner Algorithm.** Let us next present an algorithm to maintain a  $(1 + \epsilon, n^{o(1)})$ -spanner on a fully dynamic graph with worst-case update time  $O(n^{1.529})$ .

Let  $k = \sqrt{\log n}$ . We sample sets  $V = A_0 \supseteq A_1, \dots \supseteq A_k \supseteq A_{k+1} = \emptyset$  where  $A_i$  for  $i \in [1, k + 1]$  is obtained by sampling each vertex in  $V$  with probability  $n^{-i/k} \log n$  (and to make the sets nesting add it to all  $A_j$  where  $j \leq i$ , we assume that  $A_{k+1}$  is empty which can be achieved by resampling a constant number of times in expectation). Given these sets, we say that each  $a \in A_\ell \setminus A_{\ell+1}$  is *active* if for no  $j > \ell$  there exists a vertex  $a' \in A_j \setminus A_{j+1}$  with  $\text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(a, a') \lesssim (\frac{1}{\epsilon})^j$ . Using this definition of activeness, we can show by a simple hitting set argument that each active vertex  $a \in A_\ell \setminus A_{\ell+1}$  has in its ball to radius  $\sim (\frac{1}{\epsilon})^{\ell+1}$  at most  $\tilde{O}(n^{(\ell+1)/k})$  vertices w.h.p.

Given this set-up, a natural way to construct a spanner  $H$ , would be to find for each level  $\ell \in [0, k]$ , the active vertices in  $A_\ell \setminus A_{\ell+1}$  and to include their shortest path trees truncated at radius  $\sim (\frac{1}{\epsilon})^{\ell+1}$ . For the number of edges of  $H$ , it is not hard to see that each for each  $\ell \in [0, k)$ , there are at most  $\tilde{O}(n^{1-\ell/k})$  vertices that are active in  $A_\ell \setminus A_{\ell+1}$ . Each of these vertices contributes a single edge for each vertex in its truncated ball (except for itself), and as discussed above we have that each ball is of size at most  $\tilde{O}(n^{(\ell+1)/k})$ . Thus, we have that  $H$  has at most  $\tilde{O}(n^{1+o(1)/k}) = n^{1+o(1)}$  edges.

For the stretch factor, observe that for any vertices  $s, t \in V$ , with shortest path  $\pi_{s,t}$ , we have that for  $s \in A_\ell \setminus A_{\ell+1}$  for some level  $\ell$ , if  $s$  is active, we can simply travel along the  $\pi_{s,t}$  to some vertex  $s'$  that is closer to  $t$  (since the truncated shortest path tree of  $s$  is included in  $H$ ) and then expose the shortest path  $\pi_{s',t}$  inductively. Or, we have that there is a vertex  $a' \in A_j \setminus A_{j+1}$  at distance  $\lesssim (\frac{1}{\epsilon})^j$  to vertex  $s$  (with  $j > \ell$ ). Choosing  $a'$  to be the vertex that is at this distance to  $a$  with the largest possible  $j$ , we will be able to argue that  $a'$  is active. Thus, we can travel from  $s$  to  $a'$  to a vertex  $s'$  on  $\pi_{s,t}$  at distance roughly  $(\frac{1}{\epsilon})^{j+1}$  along the shortest path tree at  $a'$  truncated at depth  $\sim (\frac{1}{\epsilon})^{j+1}$  that was included in  $H$ . It is not hard to see that the error induced for visiting  $a'$  can be subsumed in a multiplicative  $(1 + O(\epsilon))$ -approximation. However, this only works if  $s$  and  $t$  are at distance  $\gtrsim (\frac{1}{\epsilon})^{j+1}$ , otherwise it induces an additive error of  $n^{o(1)}$ . This explains

why we obtain a  $(1 + \epsilon, n^{o(1)})$ -approximation.

Unfortunately, while this set-up of  $H$  is sensible, consider the example of the complete graph. Then, there would be a vertex  $a \in A_k \setminus A_{k+1}$  (which is active since  $A_{k+1}$  is empty) where visiting the truncated ball at  $a$  would take time  $\tilde{O}(n^2)$ , which is by far too expensive for our algorithm.

To overcome this issue, instead of inserting truncated shortest path trees to  $H$ , we only insert for any active vertex  $a \in A_\ell \setminus A_{\ell+1}$ , the shortest paths to other vertices in  $A_\ell \setminus A_{\ell+1}$  in the truncated shortest path tree of  $a$ . We then fix a threshold  $\gamma \approx \lfloor 0.529 \cdot k \rfloor$ , and can use the algebraic data structure from Theorem 1.1 to maintain the distances of vertices in  $A_\gamma$  (and thereby  $A_{\gamma+1}, A_{\gamma+2}, \dots, A_k, A_{k+1}$ ) without explicitly maintaining the balls of the active vertices. For active vertices in some set  $A_\ell \setminus A_{\ell+1}$  for  $\ell < \gamma$ , we can compute the balls explicitly after every update. This is because each such ball only contains  $\tilde{O}(n^{(\ell+1)/k})$  vertices, and therefore the induced graph can contain at most  $\tilde{O}(n^{2(\ell+1)/k})$  edges, which implies that we overall, spend at most time  $\tilde{O}(n^{1-\ell/k}) \cdot n^{2(\ell+1)/k} = \tilde{O}(n^{1+(\ell+2)/k})$  time for computing all such balls. We refer the reader to section 5 for a proper analysis of the running time.

Finally, we point out that so far  $H$  only contains shortest paths between active vertices in the same set  $A_\ell \setminus A_{\ell+1}$  (if they are reasonably close). However, to have a path between vertices on different levels, we also add a  $O(\log n)$  spanner  $\tilde{G}$  of  $G$  to  $H$ . Such a spanner is simple to maintain, for example [47] shows how to maintain such a spanner with  $\tilde{O}(n)$  edges and  $\tilde{O}(1)$  amortized update time.

The idea of the approximation proof then becomes the following for some path  $\pi_{s,t}$ : Let  $i$  be the largest index such that an active vertex  $a \in A_i$  is at distance at most  $\sim \epsilon^{-i}$  to  $s$ . Let  $w$  be the farthest vertex from  $s$  on  $\pi_{s,t}$  such that (1) the distance from  $s$  to  $w$  is at most  $\sim \epsilon^{-(i+1)}$ , and (2)  $w$  has distance at most  $\sim \epsilon^{-i}$  to an active vertex  $a' \in A_i$ . Such a vertex  $w$  exists since we could have  $w = s$  and  $a' = a$ . It is then apparent that the distance between  $a$  and  $a'$  is  $\lesssim \epsilon^{-(i+1)}$  and since  $a'$  is active, we can ensure that the shortest path from  $a$  to  $a'$  is in  $H$ . Further, we can use the paths in the spanner  $\tilde{G}$  (which belongs to  $H$ ) to get from  $s$  to  $a$  and from  $a'$  to  $w$ ; since these two distances are small, it suffices to have an  $O(\log n)$  multiplicative error for them. Now, observe that this induces additive error along the path segment from  $s$  to  $w$  of  $\tilde{O}(\epsilon^{-i})$  (by the triangle inequality). We either have that  $a$  and  $a'$  are roughly at distance  $\sim \epsilon^{-(i+1)}$  (which suffices to subsume the additive error in the multiplicative error), or we have that for the next path segment of length  $\sim \epsilon^{-(i+1)}$ , no vertex is close to any active vertex in  $A_i$ . Thus, when we repeat the whole argument for the next path segment, we get that vertices on lower levels are active, which means that they induce less additive error. This allows us to subsume the additive error from higher levels into multiplicative error for a series of segments of lower levels.

We refer the reader to Section 5 for the full details of the algorithm.

**Fully dynamic APSP with path reporting.** Our data-structure of theorem 1.1 is an augmentation of Sankowski's [73] data structure to support fast successor queries. Essentially, Sankowski showed how to reduce the problem of maintaining the short distances in a dynamic unweighted graph to the dynamic matrix inverse problem, by representing the path lengths as degrees of the adjoint of a polynomial matrix. He then showed how to efficiently maintain the inverse of a matrix subject to entry updates, allowing for fast distance queries. We extend his techniques to maintain products of matrices and the inverse, and show how to use these products to extract successor information similarly to Seidel's path reporting algorithm for static APSP [75]. Let us begin here by sketching Sankowski's data-structure [73] and then present the high level of our augmentation.

*Short Distances to Dynamic Matrix Inverse.* [73] showed how to encode path lengths of an unweighed graph in the adjoint of a matrix, that is, given a adjacency matrix  $A_{ij}$  with a random integer entry if  $(i, j) \in E$ , then the lowest degree non-zero term of the polynomial  $\text{adj}(\mathbb{I} - uA)_{ij}$  over the variable  $u$  is the distance  $d_{ij}$  whp. In this manner maintaining  $\text{adj}(\mathbb{I} - uA)_{ij} \bmod u^{D+1}$ , for some distance parameter  $D$ , allows us to query a distance  $i \rightarrow j$  correctly whp if  $d_{ij} \leq D$ . Note that  $\text{adj}M = \det M \times M^{-1}$ , s.t. it suffices just to maintain  $\det M$  and  $M^{-1} \bmod u^{D+1}$ .

*Dynamic Matrix Inverse.* We now detail the algebraic tools developed by Sankowski [73] to maintain the inverse of a matrix  $M$  dynamically and over a ring. The main idea is to maintain explicitly (i.e. all  $n^2$  entries) two matrices  $T, N$ , s.t. we maintain the invariant

$$(2.1) \quad M^{-1} = T(\mathbb{I} + N)$$

where, initially,  $T = M^{-1}$  and  $N = 0$ , and as later shown each single entry update to  $M$  corresponds to a single row update to  $N$  (and no modifications to  $T$ !). After  $m$  updates,  $N$  has at most  $m$  non-zero rows, and we can exploit this *sparsity* of  $N$  to quickly compute its row-updates in  $O(mn)$ , and every  $m = n^\kappa$  updates we reset  $T \leftarrow T + TN$ ,  $N \leftarrow 0$ , in  $O(n^{\omega(1,1,\kappa)-\kappa})$  time on average. In this manner, we guarantee that  $N$  is always sparse, and updates take amortized time

$$(2.2) \quad O(n^{\omega(1,1,\kappa)-\kappa} + n^{1+\kappa})$$

for some parameter  $\kappa \in (0, 1)$  which we can later optimize over. Entry queries  $(i, j)$  are now straightforward, as it suffices to compute the dot product

$$(2.3) \quad M_{ij}^{-1} = e_i^T T(\mathbb{I} + N)e_j = T_{ij} + (e_i^T T) \cdot (Ne_j)$$

which can be done in  $O(n^\kappa)$  time since a given column of  $N$  has at most  $O(n^\kappa)$  non-zero entries. It is then shown that we can maintain these matrices over a ring mod  $u^{D+1}$  by introducing a multiplicative factor of  $\tilde{O}(D)$  to the runtimes described above, s.t. now if  $M = \mathbb{I} - uA$  we can query any distance  $d \leq D$  in the graph in time  $\tilde{O}(Dn^\kappa)$ .

*Successor Queries to Product Maintenance.* There are two main ingredients to our augmentation the data-structure of [73]. The first is to reduce the successor query of a pair  $(i, j)$  of an unknown number of distinct successors to that of a single successor, using a known sparsification trick used first in Seidel's algorithm for static, undirected and unweighted APSP [75]. This only introduces a  $\log^2 n$  multiplicative factor to the runtime and we defer the formal argument to the full version. The second ingredient is to show how to find a single successor by finding a witness of the product  $(A \cdot \text{adj}(\mathbb{I} - uA))_{ij}$ . The key new insight is that if the distance  $1 < d_{ij} \leq D$ , then  $\text{adj}(\mathbb{I} - uA)_{ij}$  has minimum degree  $d_{ij}$ , and thereby the product  $(A \cdot \text{adj}(\mathbb{I} - uA))_{ij}$  must have minimum degree  $d_{ij} - 1$ . This is since there must exist a *unique* witness  $s$  (the single successor!) s.t.  $A_{is}$  is non-zero, corresponding to an edge, and  $\text{adj}(\mathbb{I} - uA)_{sj}$  has minimum degree  $d_{sj} = d_{ij} - 1$ , corresponding to the length of the shortest path from  $s$  to  $j$ .

We can find this single witness by computing its bitwise description, that is, defining  $O(\log n)$  versions of the adjacency matrix  $A$ ,  $A^{(l)}$  for  $l \in [O(\log n)]$ , where we null the  $p$ th column of  $A^{(l)}$  if the  $l$ th bit of  $p$  is 0. As there is only a single witness  $s$ , the minimum degree of the product  $(A^{(l)} \cdot \text{adj}(\mathbb{I} - uA))_{ij}$  is  $d_{sj} = d_{ij} - 1$  only if the column of  $s$  is selected, that is, the  $l$ th bit  $s_l = 1$ . In this manner, if we query the  $O(\log n)$  products  $(A^{(l)} \cdot \text{adj}(\mathbb{I} - uA))_{ij}$ , the 1-bits  $s_l = 1$  are exactly the products  $l$  s.t. the minimum degree is correct. This allows us to extract the successor description in a polylog number of queries to products  $(E \cdot \text{adj}(\mathbb{I} - uA))_{ij}$  for given matrices  $E$ .

*Product Maintenance.* The last detail in our successor query augmentation is to show how to maintain products  $(E \cdot \text{adj}(\mathbb{I} - uA))$ , where we can modify entries of  $E$  and  $A$ , and query entries  $i, j$  of the result. Note again that it suffices to maintain  $(E \cdot (\mathbb{I} - uA)^{-1})$ , as opposed to the adjoint, just by multiplying by the determinant. We do so by following the inverse maintenance algorithm and explicitly maintaining the matrices  $T, N$  and  $V \equiv ET$ , s.t. we maintain the invariant

$$(2.4) \quad EM^{-1} = ET(\mathbb{I} + N) = V(\mathbb{I} + N)$$

We address updates to  $E$  and to  $A$  completely differently. Updates to  $A$  follow the original lazy construction, where we simply perform a row-update to  $N$ , and every  $n^\kappa$  updates we "reset"  $V \leftarrow V(\mathbb{I} + N), T \leftarrow T(\mathbb{I} + N), N \leftarrow$

$0$ . We note that correctness follows by associativity, s.t. although matrices  $V$  and  $T$  are dense we can still exploit the sparsity of  $N$  to compute their updates independently in time  $O(Dn^{1+\kappa} + Dn^{\omega(1,1,\kappa)-\kappa})$  on average. Entry-Updates to  $E, E \leftarrow E + e_{ij}$ , are much simpler. We once again use associativity to compute the row update  $V \leftarrow V + e_{ij}T$  in  $\tilde{O}(Dn)$  time. Finally, to query an entry of the product  $(EM^{-1})_{ij}$ , we follow analogously to [73] and compute the dot product

$$(2.5) \quad (EM^{-1})_{ij} = e_i^T V(\mathbb{I} + N)e_j = V_{ij} + (e_i^T V) \cdot (Ne_j)$$

and since  $V$  and  $N$  are maintained explicitly, this takes time  $\tilde{O}(Dn^\kappa)$ , the exact same as the distance queries. Overall, this allows for  $\tilde{O}(Dn^\kappa)$  time successor queries, and by iterating, short path queries of length  $\leq D$  in time  $\tilde{O}(D^2 n^\kappa)$ .

### 3 Preliminaries

We let  $G = (V, E)$  denote an undirected unweighted dynamic input graph, where  $n = |V|$  and  $m = |E|$ . For any graph  $H$ , and two vertices  $a, b \in V(H)$ , we denote by  $\text{dist}_H(a, b)$  the distance between the two vertices in  $G$  and let  $\pi_{a,b,H}$  denote a corresponding shortest path between  $a$  and  $b$ . If the graph  $H$ , especially when we use the input graph  $G$ , is clear from the context, we simply use  $\pi_{a,b}$ . We define  $B_H(s, r)$  in the graph  $H$ , to be the ball rooted at  $s$  with radius  $r$ , i.e. the set of vertices  $B_H(s, r) = \{w \in V(H) \mid \text{dist}_H(s, w) \leq r\}$ . Throughout the article, we often use the data structure stated below that is sometimes referred to as the Even-Shiloach (ES) tree.

LEMMA 3.1. (C.F. [46]) *For any vertex  $s \in V$ , radius  $r$ , there is a deterministic data structure on a partially dynamic graph  $G$  that reports for every  $w \in B(s, r)$ , the distance  $\text{dist}(s, w)$ . In fact, the data structure maintains explicitly the shortest path tree in  $G[B(s, r)]$ . The total update time of the data structure is  $O(mr)$  time where  $m$  is the maximum number of edges ever in  $G[B(s, r)]$ .*

Let  $\omega$  be the infimum over all reals such that  $n \times n$  matrices can be multiplied in  $O(n^{\omega+\epsilon})$  time for all  $\epsilon > 0$ . It is known that  $\omega \in [2, 2.373]$  [81, 64]. More generally, let  $\omega(a, b, c)$  be the infimum over all reals such that an  $n^a \times n^b$  matrix can be multiplied by an  $n^b \times n^c$  matrix in  $O(n^{\omega(a,b,c)+\epsilon})$  time for all  $\epsilon > 0$ . A notable result is that for  $b \leq 0.313$ ,  $\omega(1, b, 1) = 2$  [65].

### 4 Conditional lower bounds

We present conditional lower bounds for amortized algorithms in the fully dynamic, incremental, and decremental settings. Our constructions for amortized algorithms in the fully dynamic setting also imply lower bounds for the incremental and decremental settings, but only for worst-case up-

date times. We present separate constructions for the *amortized* incremental and decremental settings.

We first describe why our fully dynamic conditional lower bounds also apply to the incremental and decremental settings for worst-case update times. This is due to the nature of our reductions: all of our reductions produce an initial graph on which we perform update stages that only insert or only delete (we can choose which) a batch of edges, ask a query and undo the changes just made, returning to the initial graph. An incremental (resp. decremental) algorithm can be used for this type of dynamic graph by performing the insertions (resp. deletions) and then rolling back the data structure to the initial graph and repeating.

#### 4.1 Conditional lower bounds from the OMv conjecture

**4.1.1 Statement of results** We prove conditional lower bounds from the OMv conjecture for dynamic emulator maintenance in the fully dynamic, incremental, and decremental settings. We prove the following theorem for the fully dynamic setting, which also extends to the incremental and decremental settings but only for worst-case update times.

**THEOREM 4.1.** *Under the OMv conjecture, for an  $n$ -vertex fully dynamic graph with at most  $m$  edges at all times, for every constant  $\epsilon > 0$ , there is no algorithm for maintaining a  $(1 + \alpha, \beta)$ -emulator for any  $\alpha \in [0, 2/3)$  and integer  $\beta \geq 0$ , with  $O(m^{1-\epsilon}(\frac{2-3\alpha}{\beta}))$  edges, polynomial preprocessing time, and amortized update time  $O(n^{1-\epsilon}(\frac{2-3\alpha}{\beta})^2)$  such that over a polynomial number of edge updates the error probability is at most  $1/3$  in the word-RAM model with  $O(\log n)$  bit words.*

*The same result holds for incremental and decremental algorithms, but for worst-case update time.*

In particular, for the natural setting where  $\alpha$  is constant and  $\beta = n^{o(1)}$  we have the following corollary:

**COROLLARY 4.1.** *Under the OMv conjecture, for an  $n$ -vertex fully dynamic graph with at most  $m$  edges at all times, for every constant  $\epsilon > 0$ , there is no algorithm for maintaining a  $(1 + \alpha, n^{o(1)})$ -emulator for any constant  $\alpha \in [0, 2/3)$  with  $O(m^{1-\epsilon})$  edges, polynomial preprocessing time, and amortized update time  $O(n^{1-\epsilon})$  such that over a polynomial number of edge updates the error probability is at most  $1/3$  in the word-RAM model with  $O(\log n)$  bit words.*

*The same result holds for incremental and decremental algorithms, but for worst-case update time.*

For the incremental and decremental settings, we prove the following theorem.

**THEOREM 4.2.** *Under the OMv conjecture, for an  $n$ -vertex incremental or decremental graph with  $m$  edge insertions or deletions, for every constant  $\epsilon > 0$ , there is no algorithm for*

*maintaining a  $\beta$ -additive emulator for any integer  $\beta \geq 0$ , with  $O(m^{1-\epsilon}/\beta)$  edges, polynomial preprocessing time, and total update time  $O(mn^{1-\epsilon}/\beta^2)$  with error probability at most  $1/3$  in the word-RAM model with  $O(\log n)$  bit words.*

In particular, for the natural setting where  $\beta = n^{o(1)}$  we have the following corollary:

**COROLLARY 4.2.** *Under the OMv conjecture, for an  $n$ -vertex incremental or decremental graph with  $m$  edge insertions or deletions, for every constant  $\epsilon > 0$ , there is no algorithm for maintaining a  $n^{o(1)}$ -additive emulator with  $O(m^{1-\epsilon})$  edges, polynomial preprocessing time, and total update time  $O(mn^{1-\epsilon})$  with error probability at most  $1/3$  in the word-RAM model with  $O(\log n)$  bit words.*

**4.1.2 Preliminaries** Our reductions are from the Online Vector-Matrix-Vector Multiplication problem (OuMv). A reduction from OMv to OuMv is known:

**THEOREM 4.3.** (OUMV: THEOREM 2.7 FROM [55]) *The OMv conjecture implies that for any constant  $\epsilon > 0$ , there is no algorithm for OuMv with polynomial preprocessing time and computation time  $O(n^{3-\epsilon})$  with error probability at most  $1/3$  in the word-RAM model with  $O(\log n)$  bit words.*

Given an instance of OuMv, we introduce a basic gadget that we will use in all of our constructions.

**The basic gadget** Let  $M$  be the  $n \times n$  input matrix for the OuMv instance. We construct a gadget as shown in Figure 3. The gadget consists of a bipartite graph  $A, B$  where  $A = \{a_1, \dots, a_n\}$ ,  $B = \{b_1, \dots, b_n\}$ , and the edge  $(a_i, b_j)$  is present if and only if  $M_{i,j} = 1$ .

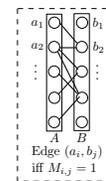


Figure 3: The basic gadget for reductions from OMv.

**4.1.3 Reduction for fully dynamic algorithms** In this section we prove Theorem 4.1.

**Construction** Let  $c = \lceil \frac{\beta}{2-3\alpha} \rceil + 1$  and take  $c$  disjoint copies  $G_1, \dots, G_c$  of the basic gadget (from Figure 3). Let  $w_0, \dots, w_c$  be an additional set of  $c + 1$  isolated vertices.

Now, we start  $n$  dynamic phases. In phase  $i$ , we are given the vectors  $u^i$  and  $v^i$  of the OuMv instance. For each  $1 \leq j \leq c$  and each  $k$  with  $u_k^i = 1$ , insert an edge between  $w_{j-1}$  and  $a_k \in G_j$ . Similarly, for each  $1 \leq j \leq c$  and each  $k$  with  $v_k^i = 1$ , insert an edge between  $w_j$  and  $b_k \in G_j$ . See Figure 4.

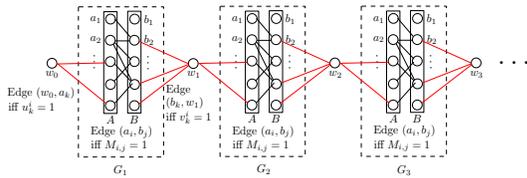


Figure 4: The construction for fully dynamic algorithms. The red edges are dynamically added in phase  $i$ .

Throughout all of the edge updates, we maintain our dynamic emulator. At the end of each phase, we run a single source shortest paths computation via Breadth-First Search (BFS) on the emulator to estimate the distance between  $w_0$  and  $w_c$ .

If the estimated distance between  $w_0$  and  $w_c$  is less than  $5c$ , we return 1 for this phase of the OuMv instance, and otherwise we return 0.

Following the end of each phase, we remove all of the edges added during that phase.

**Correctness** First we will show that if  $u^i M v^i = 1$  then our algorithm returns 1 for the  $i^{\text{th}}$  phase. If  $u^i M v^i = 1$  then there exists  $j, k$  such that  $u_j^i = M_{j,k} = v_k^i = 1$ . Thus, the basic gadget contains the edge  $(a_j, b_k)$ . Also, for all  $1 \leq \ell \leq c$ , in the  $i^{\text{th}}$  phase we add an edge between  $w_{\ell-1}$  and  $a_j \in G_\ell$  and an edge between  $w_\ell$  and  $b_k \in G_\ell$ . Thus, there is a path of length 3 from  $w_{\ell-1}$  to  $w_\ell$  through  $a_j$  and  $b_k$ . Therefore,  $\text{dist}(w_0, w_c) \leq 3c$ . Thus, the estimate of  $\text{dist}(w_0, w_c)$  returned by our  $(\alpha + 1, \beta)$ -emulator is at most  $3c(\alpha + 1) + \beta$ , which is less than  $5c$  since  $c > \frac{\beta}{2-3\alpha}$ . Thus, our algorithm returns 1 for the  $i^{\text{th}}$  phase.

Now we will show that if our algorithm returns 1 in the  $i^{\text{th}}$  phase then  $u^i M v^i = 1$ . If our algorithm returns 1, then the estimate of  $\text{dist}(w_0, w_c)$  returned by our  $(1 + \alpha, \beta)$ -emulator is less than  $5c$ , so the true distance  $\text{dist}(w_0, w_c)$  is also less than  $5c$ .

First, we observe that the layered structure of the graph ensures that every path between  $w_0$  and  $w_c$  must contain every  $w_\ell$  in chronological order. That is, every shortest path between  $w_0$  and  $w_c$  must contain as a subpath a shortest path from  $w_{\ell-1}$  to  $w_\ell$  for all  $1 \leq \ell \leq c$ . Then since the graph is  $c$  identical copies of a gadget, we have that  $\text{dist}(w_0, w_c) = c \cdot \text{dist}(w_0, w_1)$ .

Since  $\text{dist}(w_0, w_c) < 5c$ , we know that  $\text{dist}(w_0, w_1) < 5$ . Furthermore, since the graph is bipartite and  $w_0$  and  $w_1$  are on opposite sides of the bipartition,  $\text{dist}(w_0, w_1)$  must be odd so  $\text{dist}(w_0, w_1) \leq 3$ . Observe that the only possible paths of length 3 between  $w_{\ell-1}$  and  $w_\ell$  contain a vertex  $a_j \in G_\ell$  followed by a vertex  $b_k \in G_\ell$ . If such a path exists in the  $i^{\text{th}}$  phase, then the basic construction ensures that  $M_{j,k} = 1$  and the dynamic phase ensures that  $u_j^i = 1$  and  $v_k^i = 1$ . Thus,  $u^i M v^i = 1$ .

**Running time** Let  $n'$  be the number of vertices in the dynamic graph and let  $m'$  be the maximum number of edges ever in the dynamic graph. We first calculate  $n'$  and  $m'$ . Each basic gadget contains  $2n$  vertices and at most  $n^2$  edges. Thus,  $c$  copies of the basic gadget contain  $2cn$  vertices and  $cn^2$  edges. There are also an additional  $c + 1$  vertices  $w_\ell$ . During each of the  $n$  phases we add at most  $2nc$  edges. Thus, the total number of vertices is  $n' = O(nc)$  and the total number of edge updates over the entire sequence is  $O(cn^2)$ , so  $m' = O(cn^2)$ .

Suppose that the emulator has  $O(m'^{1-\epsilon}(2 - 3\alpha)/\beta)$  edges for  $\epsilon > 0$  and has polynomial preprocessing time and amortized update time  $O(n'^{1-\epsilon}((2 - 3\alpha)/\beta)^2)$ .

Then, our dynamic emulator algorithm has amortized update time  $O(n'^{1-\epsilon}(\frac{2-3\alpha}{\beta})^2) = O((nc)^{1-\epsilon}(\frac{2-3\alpha}{\beta})^2)$ . Since there are  $O(cn^2)$  edge updates, the total update time of the dynamic emulator algorithm is  $O(n^{3-\epsilon})$  since  $c = \lceil \frac{\beta}{2-3\alpha} \rceil + 1$ .

Additionally,  $n$  times during the algorithm, we run a single call of BFS on the emulator. The number of edges in the emulator is  $O(m'^{1-\epsilon}(\frac{2-3\alpha}{\beta})) = O((cn^2)^{1-\epsilon}(\frac{2-3\alpha}{\beta})) = O(n^{2-\epsilon})$  since  $c = \lceil \frac{\beta}{2-3\alpha} \rceil + 1$ . Thus, running BFS takes total time  $O(n^{3-\epsilon})$ .

Putting everything together, our dynamic emulator algorithm implies an algorithm for OuMv with polynomial preprocessing time and computation time  $O(n^{3-\epsilon})$  for  $\epsilon > 0$ , contradicting the OMv conjecture.

#### 4.1.4 Reduction for incremental and decremental algorithms.

In this section we prove Theorem 4.2. **Construction** The construction will be similar to the fully dynamic construction, but with different interactions between consecutive copies of the basic gadget. We first describe the incremental construction.

Starting with an empty graph, we perform edge insertions to construct the following graph. Take  $\beta + 1$  disjoint copies  $G_1, \dots, G_{\beta+1}$  of the basic gadget (from Figure 3). Then, add  $\beta + 2$  paths  $P_0, \dots, P_{\beta+1}$  each on  $2n - 1$  new vertices. Call the vertices of each path  $z_1, z_2, \dots, z_n = y_n, y_{n-1}, \dots, y_1$ . In other words, the middle node of each path has two names,  $z_n$  and  $y_n$ .

Now, we start  $n$  phases. In phase  $i$ , we are given the vectors  $u^i$  and  $v^i$  of the OuMv instance. For each  $1 \leq j \leq \beta + 1$  and each  $k$  with  $u_k^i = 1$ , insert an edge between  $y_i \in P_{j-1}$  and  $a_k \in G_j$ . Similarly, for each  $1 \leq j \leq \beta + 1$  and each  $k$  with  $v_k^i = 1$ , insert an edge between  $z_i \in P_j$  and  $b_k \in G_j$ . See Figure 5.

Throughout all of the edge updates, we maintain our incremental emulator. At the end of each phase, we run a single call of BFS on the emulator to estimate the distance between  $z_1 \in P_0$  and  $y_1 \in P_{\beta+1}$ .

If the estimated distance between  $z_1 \in P_0$  and  $y_1 \in$

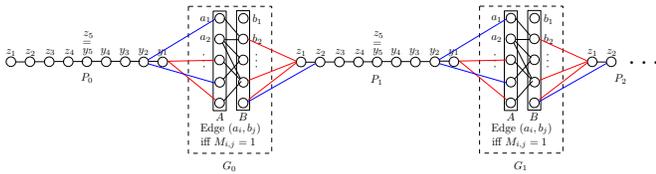


Figure 5: The construction for incremental algorithms. The red edges are dynamically added in phase 1 and the blue edges are dynamically added in phase 2.

$P_{\beta+1}$  at the end of phase  $i$  is less than  $4(\beta + 1) + (\beta + 2)(2n - 2i) + 2(i - 1)$ , we return 1 for phase  $i$  of the OuMv instance, and otherwise we return 0.

Now, we describe the decremental construction, which is similar to the incremental construction. The initial graph consists of  $G_1, \dots, G_{\beta+1}$  and  $P_0, \dots, P_{\beta+1}$  from the incremental construction, as well as an edge for all  $1 \leq \ell \leq \beta + 1$  from  $z_i \in P_\ell$  to every vertex in  $B \subseteq G_\ell$ , and an edge for all  $1 \leq \ell \leq \beta + 1$  from  $y_i \in P_{\ell-1}$  to every vertex in  $A \subseteq G_\ell$ .

Now, we start  $n$  dynamic phases. In phase  $i$ , we are given the vectors  $u^i$  and  $v^i$  of the OuMv instance. For each  $1 \leq j \leq \beta + 1$ , and each  $k$  with  $u_k^i = 0$ , delete the edge between  $y_{n-i+1} \in P_{j-1}$  and  $a_k \in G_j$ . Similarly, for each  $1 \leq j \leq \beta + 1$  and each  $k$  with  $v_k^i = 0$ , delete the edge between  $z_{n-i+1} \in P_j$  and  $b_k \in G_j$ .

Throughout all of the edge updates, we maintain our decremental emulator. At the end of each phase, we run a single call to BFS on the emulator to estimate the distance between  $z_1 \in P_0$  and  $y_1 \in P_{\beta+1}$ .

Following the end of each phase  $i$ , for each  $1 \leq j \leq \beta + 1$ , we delete all edges between  $y_{n-i+1} \in P_{j-1}$  and  $A \subseteq G_j$  and all edges between  $z_{n-i+1} \in P_j$  and  $B \subseteq G_j$ .

If the estimated distance between  $z_1 \in P_0$  and  $y_1 \in P_{\beta+1}$  at the end of phase  $i$  is less than  $4(\beta + 1) + (\beta + 2)(2n - 2(n - i + 1)) + 2((n - i + 1) - 1)$ , we return 1 for phase  $i$  of the OuMv instance, and otherwise we return 0. Note that this threshold is exactly the threshold from the incremental algorithm but with  $i$  replaced with  $n - i + 1$ .

**Correctness** The following argument is written for the incremental setting but the same argument applies for the decremental setting.

First we will show that if  $u^i M v^i = 1$  then our algorithm returns 1 for the  $i^{\text{th}}$  phase. If  $u^i M v^i = 1$  then there exists  $j, k$  such that  $u_j^i = M_{j,k} = v_k^i = 1$ . Thus, the basic gadget contains the edge  $(a_j, b_k)$ . Also, for all  $1 \leq \ell \leq \beta + 1$ , in the  $i^{\text{th}}$  phase we add an edge between  $y_i \in P_{\ell-1}$  and  $a_j \in G_\ell$  and an edge between  $z_i \in P_\ell$  and  $b_k \in G_\ell$ .

Thus, for all  $1 \leq \ell \leq \beta + 1$ , there is a path of length 3 from  $y_i \in P_{\ell-1}$  to  $z_i \in P_\ell$  through  $a_j \in G_\ell$  and  $b_k \in G_\ell$ . Also, for each  $0 \leq \ell \leq \beta + 2$ , there is a path along  $P_\ell$  from  $z_i \in P_\ell$  to  $y_i \in P_\ell$  of length

$(2n - 2) - 2(i - 1) = 2n - 2i$ . Finally, there is a path of length  $i - 1$  from  $z_1 \in P_0$  to  $z_i \in P_0$  and a path of length  $i - 1$  from  $y_i \in P_{\beta+2}$  to  $y_1 \in P_{\beta+2}$ . Concatenating all of these paths, we have that  $\text{dist}(z_1 \in P_0, y_1 \in P_{\beta+1}) \leq 3(\beta + 1) + (\beta + 2)(2n - 2i) + 2(i - 1)$ . Thus, the estimate of  $\text{dist}(z_1 \in P_0, y_1 \in P_{\beta+1})$  returned by our  $\beta$ -additive emulator is at most  $4(\beta + 1) - 1 + (\beta + 2)(2n - 2i) + 2(i - 1)$ . Thus, our algorithm returns 1 for the  $i^{\text{th}}$  phase.

Now we will show that if our algorithm returns 1 in the  $i^{\text{th}}$  phase then  $u^i M v^i = 1$ . If our algorithm returns 1, then the estimate of  $\text{dist}(z_1 \in P_0, y_1 \in P_{\beta+1})$  returned by our  $\beta$ -additive emulator is less than  $4(\beta + 1) + (\beta + 2)(2n - 2i) + 2(i - 1)$ , so the true distance  $\text{dist}(z_1 \in P_0, y_1 \in P_{\beta+1})$  is also less than  $4(\beta + 1) + (\beta + 2)(2n - 2i) + 2(i - 1)$ .

First, we observe that the layered structure of the graph ensures that every path between  $z_1 \in P_0$  and  $y_1 \in P_{\beta+1}$  contains each  $z_i$  and  $y_i$  in order from  $P_0$  to  $P_{\beta+1}$ . That is, every shortest path between  $z_1 \in P_0$  and  $y_1 \in P_{\beta+1}$  is composed of precisely following subpaths:

- A shortest path from  $z_1 \in P_0$  to  $z_i \in P_0$ . The only simple path connecting these vertices is of length  $i - 1$ .
- A shortest path from  $y_i \in P_{\beta+1}$  to  $y_1 \in P_{\beta+1}$ . The only simple path connecting these vertices is of length  $i - 1$ .
- A shortest path from  $z_i \in P_\ell$  to  $y_i \in P_\ell$  for all  $1 \leq \ell \leq \beta + 2$ . The only simple path connecting these vertices is of length  $(2n - 2) - 2(i - 1) = 2n - 2i$ .
- A shortest path from  $y_i \in P_{\ell-1}$  to  $z_i \in P_\ell$  for all  $1 \leq \ell \leq \beta + 1$ . Since the graph is a series of identical copies of a gadget, we know that  $\text{dist}(y_i \in P_{\ell-1}, z_i \in P_\ell)$  is the same for all  $\ell$ . Furthermore, we know the length of each of the previous three types of subpaths and we know that  $\text{dist}(z_1 \in P_0, y_1 \in P_{\beta+1}) < 4(\beta + 1) + (\beta + 2)(2n - 2i) + 2(i - 1)$ , so we conclude that each  $\text{dist}(y_i \in P_{\ell-1}, z_i \in P_\ell) < 4$ .

Due to the layering of the graph, for all  $1 \leq \ell \leq \beta + 1$  the shortest path between  $y_i \in P_{\ell-1}$  and  $z_i \in P_\ell$  must contain vertices  $a_j \in G_\ell$  and  $b_k \in G_\ell$  for some  $j, k$ . Since  $\text{dist}(y_i \in P_{\ell-1}, z_i \in P_\ell) < 4$ , there are no other vertices on this shortest path. The basic construction ensures that since the edge  $(a_j, b_k)$  exists, we have  $M_{j,k} = 1$ , and the dynamic phase ensures that since the edge  $(y_i \in P_{\ell-1}, a_j \in G_\ell)$  exists, we have  $u_j^i = 1$  and since the edge  $(b_k \in G_\ell, z_i \in P_\ell)$  exists, we have  $v_k^i = 1$ . Thus,  $u^i M v^i = 1$ .

**Running time** Let  $n'$  be the number of vertices in the dynamic graph and let  $m'$  be number of edge insertions or deletions. We first calculate  $n'$  and  $m'$ . Each basic gadget contains  $2n$  vertices and at most  $n^2$  edges. Thus,  $\beta + 1$  copies of the basic gadget contain  $2(\beta + 1)n$  vertices and  $(\beta + 1)n^2$  edges. Additionally, we have  $(\beta + 2)$  paths on

$(2n-1)$  vertices each, for a total of  $(2n-1)(\beta+2)$  additional vertices. During each of the  $n$  phases there are at most  $2n(\beta+1)$  edge updates. Thus, the total number of vertices is  $n' = O(\beta n)$  and the total number of edges updates is  $m' = O(\beta n^2)$ .

Now assume that our incremental or decremental emulator has  $O(m'^{1-\epsilon}/\beta)$  edges, polynomial preprocessing time and total update time  $O(m'n'^{1-\epsilon}/\beta^2)$ .

Then the total update time of the emulator is  $O(m'n'^{1-\epsilon}/\beta^2) = O(\beta n^2(\beta n)^{1-\epsilon}/\beta^2) = O(n^{3-\epsilon})$ .

Additionally,  $n$  times during the algorithm, we run BFS on the emulator. The number of edges in the emulator is  $O(m'^{1-\epsilon}/\beta) = O((\beta n^2)^{1-\epsilon}/\beta) = O(n^{2-\epsilon})$ . Thus, running the BFS calls takes total time  $O(n^{3-\epsilon})$ .

Putting everything together, our incremental or decremental emulator algorithm implies an algorithm for OuMv with polynomial preprocessing time and computation time  $O(n^{3-\epsilon})$  for  $\epsilon > 0$ , contradicting the OMv conjecture.

### 5 Algebraic fully dynamic spanner algorithm

The goal of this section is to prove the following theorem.

**THEOREM 5.1.** *For any constant  $0 < \epsilon \leq 1$ , given an undirected, unweighted fully dynamic graph, there is an algorithm to maintain a  $(1+\epsilon, n^{o(1)})$ -spanner of size  $n^{1+o(1)}$  with preprocessing time  $\tilde{O}(n^\omega)$  (or  $\tilde{O}(n^2)$  if the input graph is empty) and worst update time  $n^{1+\kappa^*+o(1)} = O(n^{1.529})$  with high probability against an oblivious adversary.*

**Internal Data Structures.** In order to obtain this result, we use two internal data structures. We first use a data structure  $\mathcal{A}$  that maintains the distance matrix and corresponding shortest paths in a graph  $G$ , restricted to a set of sources  $S$ , as stated below.

**THEOREM 5.2. (SUCCESSOR QUERIES AND SHORT PATHS)** *For any parameters  $\kappa \in (0, 1), D < n$ , and an unweighted graph  $G = (V, E)$  subject to edge insertions and deletions, there is a dynamic, randomized data-structure  $\mathcal{P}_\kappa^D$  that supports the following operations:*

- *Ins/Delete( $e$ ) Inserts/Deletes edge  $e \in E$  in worst case time  $O(Dn^{\omega(1,1,\kappa)-\kappa} + Dn^{1+\kappa})$ .*
- *Short Distance/Successor Query( $i, j$ ) Returns the distance  $d \leq D$  and a successor on any short, shortest  $i \rightarrow j$  path in worst case time  $O(Dn^\kappa)$  and is correct whp.*
- *Short Path Queries( $i, j$ ) Returns a shortest  $i \rightarrow j$  path of length  $d \leq D$  by repeatedly finding successors in worst case  $O(dDn^\kappa)$  time, and is correct whp.*

*with pre-processing time  $O(Dn^2)$  on empty graphs and  $O(Dn^\omega)$  otherwise.*

The algorithm is randomized and uses fast matrix multiplication internally. It is an augmented version of Theorem 1.1 where we defer the proof to the full version of the paper. We intend to use this data structure simply by querying the data structure of Theorem 5.2 for every pairwise distance in  $S$ .

**COROLLARY 5.1.** *Let  $\kappa$  be such that  $0 < \kappa \leq \kappa_* < 0.529$  and let  $D$  be a distance parameter in  $[1, n^\kappa]$ . Suppose we are given a set of vertices  $S$ . Then the data structure from Theorem 5.2 can maintain for any arbitrarily small  $\delta > 0$ , for all pairs of nodes  $s, t \in S$ , a shortest path between  $s$  and  $t$  as long as  $\text{dist}(s, t) \leq D$  (and can check if  $\text{dist}(s, t) > D$ ), with high probability against an oblivious adversary, with initialization time  $\tilde{O}(Dn^\omega)$  (for a nonempty initial graph) or  $\tilde{O}(n^2)$  (for an empty initial graph) and worst-case update time  $\tilde{O}(Dn^{\omega(1,1,\kappa)-\kappa} + |S|^2 D^2 n^\kappa)$ .*

*If the depth threshold  $D = n^{o(1)}$ , the size of the subset  $|S| = O(\sqrt{n})$  and we pick the parameter  $\kappa = \kappa_* \approx .529$  to minimize the update time, which becomes  $n^{1+\kappa_*+o(1)} = O(n^{1.529})$ .*

Further, we use an algorithm  $\mathcal{B}$  to maintain a spanner of  $G$  with high multiplicative error efficiently.

**THEOREM 5.3. (SEE [47], THEOREM 1.4)** *Given an unweighted, undirected fully dynamic graph, there exists an algorithm  $\mathcal{B}$  that maintains a spanner with multiplicative stretch  $\log n$  and expected size  $O(n \log n)$  that has expected update time  $O(\log^3 n)$  against an oblivious adversary.*

**The Algorithm.** Equipped with these two powerful data structures, let us state the algorithm that gives Theorem 5.1. Let  $k = \sqrt{\log n}$ , let  $\epsilon' = \frac{\epsilon}{20(k+1)}$ , and let  $b = \left(\frac{\log n}{\epsilon'}\right)$ . We sample sets  $V = A_0 \supseteq A_1, \dots \supseteq A_k \supseteq A_{k+1} = \emptyset$  where  $A_i$  for  $i \in [1, k]$  is obtained by sampling each vertex in  $V$  with probability  $n^{-i/k} \log n$  (and to make the sets nesting add it to all  $A_j$  where  $j \leq i$ ). We maintain two data structures dynamically during the sequence of edge insertions and deletions:

1. For  $\gamma = \lfloor \kappa \cdot k \rfloor$ , we run  $\mathcal{A}$  on graph  $G$  with fixed source set  $A_\gamma$  and depth threshold  $\frac{1}{8 \log n} b^{k+1}$ .
2. Further, we run  $\mathcal{B}$  on  $G$  and let  $\tilde{G}$  be the  $\log n$ -approximate spanner.

Let  $c_{i,j} = \sum_{y=i+1}^j b^y$ . Initially, and after an edge update we construct the spanner  $H$  from scratch as follows: We say that  $a \in A_\ell \setminus A_{\ell+1}$  is active if for no  $j > \ell$  there exists a vertex  $a' \in A_j \setminus A_{j+1}$  with  $\text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(a, a') \leq c_{\ell,j}/4$ . Note that we are using distances in  $\tilde{G}$  and not in  $G$  for this definition. Note that all vertices in  $A_k$  are active at all times. In order to determine which vertices are active, we run the following

process. We begin by labeling all vertices as active. We then run for each  $i$  from  $k$  down to  $0$ , a BFS algorithm on the spanner  $\tilde{G}$  to depth  $b^i$  from every vertex in  $A_i \setminus A_{i+1}$  that is still labelled active. We then deactivate each vertex  $v$  in  $V \setminus A_i$  for which we found a vertex  $a \in A_i \setminus A_{i+1}$  that is close enough to establish that  $v$  cannot be active. We then construct our spanner  $H$  which is initially empty by adding edges from two sources:

1. We add all edges from  $\tilde{G}$  to  $H$ .
2. For any two vertices  $a, a' \in A_i \setminus A_{i+1}$  that are active, we add the shortest path  $\pi_{a,a',G}$  to  $H$  if  $\text{dist}_G(a, a') \leq \frac{1}{8 \log n} b^{i+1}$ , that is, if their distance in  $G$  is small. To compute these paths  $\pi_{a,a',G}$ , we distinguish two cases. If  $i \geq \gamma$ , then we pose a path reporting query to  $\mathcal{A}$ . For  $i < \gamma$ , we run from every such active vertex a BFS on  $G$  to depth  $\frac{1}{8 \log n} b^{i+1}$ .

As we will show, the approximation factor of the spanner always holds and the sparsity holds with high probability. If the spanner becomes too dense, we reinitialize the algorithm.

**Spanner Approximation.** In the following, we prove that  $H$  indeed forms a  $(1 + \epsilon, n^{o(1)})$  spanner. The basic idea behind the proof is the following: let  $s$  and  $t$  be two vertices and we want to analyze  $\text{dist}_H(s, t)$  in comparison to  $\text{dist}_G(s, t)$ . There are basically two cases: If  $s$  is “close” to an active vertex  $a$  in  $A_i \setminus A_{i+1}$ , i.e. at distance at most  $d_i$  for some  $d_i$ , and there is a vertex  $v$  that is at distance  $\sim 4d_i \log n / \epsilon$  from  $s$  on the path from  $s$  to  $t$ , such that  $v$  is “close” to an active vertex  $a'$  in  $A_i \setminus A_{i+1}$ , then we can use the spanner  $\tilde{G}$  to get from  $s$  to  $a$  and from  $a'$  to  $t$  and have that the shortest path between  $a$  and  $a'$  is in  $H$  by part (2) of its construction. It is not hard to see that this detour only implies a  $(1 + \epsilon)$ -multiplicative error. Otherwise, we do not have a vertex within distance  $\sim 4d_i \log n / \epsilon$  that is close to any active vertex in  $A_i \setminus A_{i+1}$ . We can then repeat the same argument for level  $i - 1$  along the path segment from  $s$  of length  $\sim 4d_i \log n / \epsilon$  and we are ensured that we eventually reach a level where vertices are active and where we get a good approximation. This allows us to subsume the additive error from higher levels into multiplicative error for a series of segments of lower levels.

To formalize this concept, fix a value  $i \in [1, k]$  and let us say a vertex  $a$  is  $\geq i$ -far if (1)  $a \in A_\ell \setminus A_{\ell+1}$  for some  $\ell \in [0, i - 1]$  and (2) for no  $j \geq i$  there is a vertex  $a' \in A_j \setminus A_{j+1}$  with  $\text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(a, a') \leq b^j - \frac{1}{2}c_{\ell,i}$ . Observe that the distance requirement is formulated with regard to the multiplicative spanner  $\tilde{G}$ . Note that as  $A_{k+1} = \emptyset$ , every vertex is trivially  $\geq (k + 1)$ -far.

**LEMMA 5.1.** *For any  $\ell \in [0, k - 1]$  every vertex  $a \in A_\ell \setminus A_{\ell+1}$  that is  $\geq (\ell + 1)$ -far is active.*

*Proof.* Let  $a$  be  $\geq (\ell + 1)$ -far. It follows that for no  $j \geq \ell + 1$  there exists a vertex  $a' \in A_j \setminus A_{j+1}$  with  $\text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(a, a') \leq b^j - \frac{1}{2}c_{\ell,\ell+1}$ . Note that  $b^j - \frac{1}{2}c_{\ell,\ell+1} = b^j - \frac{1}{2}b^{\ell+1} \geq \frac{1}{2}b^j \geq \frac{1}{4}(b^{j+1} - 1)/(b - 1) \geq \frac{1}{4}c_{\ell,j}$ , where the second inequality holds since  $b - 1 \geq b/2$ . Thus, for no  $j > i$ , there exists an vertex  $a' \in A_j \setminus A_{j+1}$  with  $\text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(a, a') \leq \frac{1}{4}c_{\ell,j}$ , so  $a$  is active.  $\square$

Equipped with this notion, we can prove the following lemma. It immediately implies that  $H$  is a  $(1 + \epsilon, n^{o(1)})$ -spanner since every vertex is  $\geq (k + 1)$ -far.

**LEMMA 5.2.** *For any shortest  $s$ - $t$  path  $\pi_{s,t}$  in  $G$  where every vertex  $v \in \pi_{s,t} \setminus \{s, t\}$  is  $\geq i$ -far for some  $0 < i \leq k + 1$ , we have*

$$\begin{aligned} \text{dist}_H(s, t) &\leq (1 + 20i\epsilon') \text{dist}_G(s, t) + b^i \\ &\leq (1 + \epsilon) \text{dist}_G(s, t) + n^{o(1)}. \end{aligned}$$

*Proof.* As  $\epsilon \leq 1$  it follows that  $\epsilon' \leq 1/20$ . Let us prove the claim by induction on  $i$ .

**Base case  $i = 1$ :** Let  $v_1$  be the vertex right after  $s$  and let  $v_2$  be the vertex right before  $t$  on  $\pi_{s,t,G}$ . As every vertex  $v$  on  $\pi_{s,t,G} \setminus \{s, t\}$  is  $\geq 1$ -far, it follows by the definition of  $\geq 1$ -far that  $v$  belongs to  $A_0 \setminus A_1$ . That is, all vertices on  $\pi_{v_1, v_2, G}$  belong to  $A_0 \setminus A_1$ . Furthermore, by Lemma 5.1 it follows that each such vertex  $v$  is active. Thus the shortest path from  $v$  to all vertices in  $A_0 \setminus A_1$  at distance at most  $\frac{1}{8 \log n} b \geq 1$  are included in  $H$  and, in particular, all edges of  $\pi_G(v_1, v_2)$  belong to  $H$ . As  $H$  contains  $\tilde{G}$ ,  $\text{dist}_H(s, v_1) \leq \log n$  and  $\text{dist}_H(v_2, t) \leq \log n$ . Finally,  $\text{dist}_G(v_1, v_2) \leq \text{dist}_G(s, t) + 2$ . Thus it follows that  $\text{dist}_H(s, t) \leq \text{dist}_G(v_1, v_2) + 2 \log n \leq \text{dist}_G(s, t) + 2 \log n + 2 \leq \text{dist}_G(s, t) + (\log n)/\epsilon'$ , where the last inequality holds since  $\epsilon' \leq 1/20$ .

**Inductive step  $i \mapsto i + 1$ , for  $i \geq 1$ :** As every vertex  $v$  in  $\pi_{s,t,G} \setminus \{s, t\}$  is  $\geq (i + 1)$ -far, every such vertex must belong to  $A_\ell \setminus A_{\ell+1}$  for some  $\ell \leq i$ .

Let the set  $\mathcal{C}$  consist of the vertices on  $\pi_{s,t}$  that are  $\geq (i + 1)$ -far but not  $\geq i$ -far. In other words, a vertex  $v \in \pi_{s,t}$  is in  $\mathcal{C}$  if and only if there is a vertex  $a \in A_i \setminus A_{i+1}$ , with  $\text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(v, a) \leq b^i - \frac{1}{2}c_{\ell,i}$  (possibly  $a = v$ ). (Note that  $\mathcal{C}$  might be empty.) We prove the following claim for vertices in  $\mathcal{C}$ .

**CLAIM 5.1.** *For any vertex  $v \in \mathcal{C}$ , there exists a vertex  $a \in A_i \setminus A_{i+1}$  at distance at most  $\frac{1}{4}b^i$  in  $\tilde{G}$ , such that  $a$  is active.*

*Proof.* Let  $\ell$  be such that  $v \in A_\ell \setminus A_{\ell+1}$ . If  $\ell = i$ , then  $v$  is active by Lemma 5.1 and, thus, the claim follows. If  $\ell < i$ , then let  $a \in A_i \setminus A_{i+1}$  be the vertex closest to  $v$  among all vertices in  $A_i \setminus A_{i+1}$ . As  $v$  is  $\geq (i + 1)$ -far, we know that

1.  $\text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(v, a) \leq b^i - \frac{1}{2}c_{\ell,i}$ , and

2. for no  $j \geq i + 1$  there exists a vertex  $a' \in A_j \setminus A_{j+1}$  with  $\text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(v, a') \leq b^j - \frac{1}{2}c_{\ell, i+1}$ .

Recall that  $b \geq 5$ , which implies that  $b - 1 \geq 2b/3$ . Suppose for contradiction that  $a$  is not active. If  $a$  is not active there must exist a vertex  $a' \in A_p \setminus A_{p+1}$  with  $p > i$  such that  $\text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(a, a') \leq c_{i,p}/4$ . But this implies that

$$\begin{aligned} \text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(v, a') &\leq \text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(v, a) + \text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(a, a') \\ &\leq b^i - \frac{1}{2}c_{\ell, i} + \frac{1}{4}c_{i,p} \\ &= b^i + \frac{1}{2}b^{i+1} + \frac{1}{4} \frac{b^{p+1} - b^{i+1}}{b-1} - \frac{1}{2}c_{\ell, i+1} \\ &\leq b^i + \frac{1}{2}b^{i+1} + \frac{3}{8} \frac{b^{p+1} - b^{i+1}}{b} - \frac{1}{2}c_{\ell, i+1} \\ &\leq \frac{5}{8}b^i + \frac{7}{8}b^p - \frac{1}{2}c_{\ell, i+1} \leq b^p - \frac{1}{2}c_{\ell, i+1}. \end{aligned}$$

This gives a contradiction to the assumption that  $v$  is  $\geq (i + 1)$ -far.  $\square$

To prove the lemma we partition  $\pi_{s,t}$  by constructing a sequence of vertices  $t_0 = s, s_1, t_1, s_2, t_2, \dots, s_{h-1}, t_{h-1}, s_h = t$  iteratively as follows: for each  $s_g$  with  $g \geq 1$ , let  $s_g$  be the first vertex on the path  $\pi_{s,t}(t_{g-1}, t]$  that is in  $\mathcal{C}$  or if there is no such vertex, we set  $s_g = t$  and  $h = g$  and end the sequence. If the sequence does not end with  $s_g$ , let  $t_g$  with  $g \geq 1$  be the farthest vertex from  $s_g$  on  $\pi[s_g, t] \cap B_G(s_g, \frac{1}{10 \log n} b^{i+1})$  that is in  $\mathcal{C}$ . Note that such a vertex always exists since  $s_g \in \pi[s_g, t] \cap B_G(s_g, \frac{1}{10 \log n} b^{i+1}) \cap \mathcal{C}$ . (If  $s_g$  is the only such vertex then  $t_g = s_g$ .)

Clearly, the path  $\pi_{s,t}$  is partitioned by the path segments  $\pi_{s,t}[t_{g-1}, s_g]$  for  $1 \leq g \leq h$  and the segments  $\pi_{s,t}[s_g, t_g]$  for  $1 \leq g < h$ . Observe that for the former kind of segments, we have that the internal path vertices of a piece  $\pi_{s,t}[t_{g-1}, s_g]$ , i.e. the vertices in  $\pi_{s,t}(t_{g-1}, s_g)$ , are not in  $\mathcal{C}$  by definition. Thus, we have that all such vertices are  $\geq i$ -far (since by assumption every vertex on  $\pi_{s,t}$  is  $\geq i + 1$ -far and every vertex in  $\mathcal{C}$  is not  $\geq i$ -far but none of the vertices on  $\pi_{s,t}(t_{g-1}, s_g)$  are in  $\mathcal{C}$ ). By the sub-path property of shortest paths it holds that  $\pi_{s,t}(t_{g-1}, s_g)$  is a shortest path between  $t_{g-1}$  and  $s_g$ . Hence, we can invoke the induction hypothesis on  $\pi_{s,t}(t_{g-1}, s_g)$ , with leads to the following statement

$$(5.6) \quad \text{dist}_H(t_{g-1}, s_g) \leq (1 + 20i\epsilon') \text{dist}_G(t_{g-1}, s_g) + b^i.$$

For the path segments of the form  $\pi_{s,t}[s_g, t_g]$ , Claim 5.1 shows that there exist vertices  $a$  and  $a'$  at distance at most  $\frac{1}{4}b^i$  in  $\tilde{G}$  from  $s_g$  and  $t_g$  respectively that are in  $A_i \setminus A_{i+1}$  as required.  $\square$

and are active. Then since

$$\begin{aligned} \text{dist}_G(a, a') &\leq \text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(a, s_g) + \text{dist}_G(s_g, t_g) + \text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(t_g, a') \\ &\leq \frac{1}{4}b^i + \frac{1}{10 \log n} b^{i+1} + \frac{1}{4}b^i \\ &\leq \frac{1}{8 \log n} \cdot b^{i+1}, \end{aligned}$$

we have that the shortest path  $\pi_{a,a'}$  from  $a$  to  $a'$  is in  $H$ , i.e., that  $\text{dist}_H(a, a') = \text{dist}_G(a, a')$ . By applying the triangle inequality to  $G$  and the fact that  $\text{dist}_G(x, y) \leq \text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(x, y)$  (which follows from the fact that  $\tilde{G}$  is a spanner of  $G$ ) it follows that

$$\begin{aligned} \text{dist}_H(a, a') &= \text{dist}_G(a, a') \leq \text{dist}_G(a, s_g) \\ &\quad + \text{dist}_G(s_g, t_g) + \text{dist}_G(t_g, a') \\ &\leq \frac{1}{2}b^i + \text{dist}_G(s_g, t_g). \end{aligned}$$

Since  $\tilde{G} \subseteq H$ , it holds that  $\text{dist}_H(s_g, a) \leq \text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(s_g, a) \leq \frac{1}{4}b^i$ . The same holds for  $\text{dist}_H(a', t_g)$ . We, thus, have that

$$\begin{aligned} \text{dist}_H(s_g, t_g) &\leq \text{dist}_H(s_g, a) + \text{dist}_H(a, a') \\ &\quad + \text{dist}_H(a', t_g) \leq b^i + \text{dist}_G(s_g, t_g). \end{aligned}$$

Finally, let us prove that we did not partition the path into many segments: we claim that

$$h \leq \left\lceil \frac{10 \log n \cdot \text{dist}_G(s, t)}{b^{i+1}} \right\rceil$$

which can be seen from carefully studying the requirements to pick given  $s_g$  the next  $t_g$  and  $s_{g+1}$ , which stipulate that each  $s_g$  and  $s_{g+1}$  are at distance at least  $\frac{1}{10 \log n} b^{i+1}$ .

We now combine our insights and the fact that  $\epsilon' \leq 1/20$ , and take the sum over the path segments. This gives

$$\begin{aligned} \text{dist}_H(s, t) &= \sum_{g=1}^h \text{dist}_H(t_{g-1}, s_g) + \sum_{g=1}^{h-1} \text{dist}_H(s_g, t_g) \\ &\leq \sum_{g=1}^h ((1 + 20i\epsilon') \text{dist}_G(t_{g-1}, s_g) + b^i) \\ &\quad + \sum_{g=1}^{h-1} (b^i + \text{dist}_G(s_g, t_g)) \\ &\leq \sum_{g=1}^h (1 + 20i\epsilon') \text{dist}_G(t_{g-1}, s_g) \\ &\quad + \sum_{g=1}^{h-1} \text{dist}_G(s_g, t_g) + h(b^i + b^i) \\ &\leq (1 + \epsilon) \text{dist}_G(s, t) + n^{o(1)} \end{aligned}$$

**Sparsity.** In order to prove sparsity, let us establish the following key claim. The claim is in fact slightly more powerful than necessary, however, this power will be exploited when bounding the running time.

CLAIM 5.2. *For any vertex  $v$ , and for any  $i \leq k$  there are at most  $O(n^{1/k} \log n)$  active vertices in  $A_i \setminus A_{i+1}$  in*

$$B_{\tilde{G}}\left(v, \frac{1}{8}b^{i+1}\right)$$

with high probability. Further, if a vertex  $v \in A_i \setminus A_{i+1}$  is active, we have  $|B_{\tilde{G}}(v, \frac{1}{8}b^{i+1})| \leq n^{(i+1)/k}$  with high probability.

*Proof.* Let us observe that for any vertex  $v \in V$ , if  $|B_{\tilde{G}}(v, \frac{1}{8}b^{i+1})| \geq n^{(i+1)/k}$  there exists at least one vertex  $a$  in  $A_{i+1}$  that hits  $B_{\tilde{G}}(v, \frac{1}{8}b^{i+1})$  with high probability.

We now claim that if there is such a vertex  $a$ , no vertex  $a'$  in  $B_{\tilde{G}}(v, \frac{1}{8}b^{i+1}) \cap A_j$  is active for any  $j \leq i$ . To see this let us assume for the sake of contradiction that there exists such a vertex  $a'$ . Now, let us first consider the case that the vertex  $a$  is active. Then, the distance between  $a$  and vertex  $a'$  is  $\text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(a, v) + \text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(v, a') \leq \frac{1}{8}b^{i+1} + \frac{1}{8}b^{i+1} = \frac{1}{4}b^{i+1} \leq \frac{1}{4}c_{j,i+1}$  which implies that  $a$  must have deactivated  $a'$  and therefore leads to a contradiction.

Now, let us consider the case, where  $a$  is not active. Then, there exists a vertex  $a'' \in A_\ell \setminus A_{\ell+1}$  that is active and with  $\ell > i + 1$  such that  $\text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(a, a'') \leq \frac{1}{4}c_{i+1,\ell}$ . Such a vertex exists by definition if  $a$  is not active so we have that  $a''$  is well-defined.

But then we have by the triangle inequality that

$$\begin{aligned} \text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(a', a'') &\leq \text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(a', v) + \text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(v, a) + \text{dist}_{\tilde{G}}(a, a'') \\ &\leq \frac{1}{8}b^{j+1} + \frac{1}{8}b^{i+1} + \frac{1}{4}c_{i+1,\ell} \leq \frac{1}{4}c_{j,\ell} \end{aligned}$$

where we use in the last inequality that  $c_{j,\ell} = \sum_{y=j+1}^{\ell} b^y = \sum_{y=j+1}^{i+1} b^y + \sum_{y=i+2}^{\ell} b^y = \sum_{y=j+1}^{i+1} b^y + c_{i+1,\ell}$  and since  $i \geq j$  we have that  $\sum_{y=j+1}^{i+1} b^y \geq b^{i+1}$ . This implies that  $a'$  cannot be active since  $a''$  is close enough to  $a'$  to deactivate it during the algorithm. This again leads to a contradiction and thereby completes the proof of our claim that  $a'$  is not active.

Finally, we conclude that we have for any vertex  $v$  and level  $i$ , that either  $|B_{\tilde{G}}(v, \frac{1}{8}b^{i+1})| < n^{(i+1)/k}$  in which case we have by a straightforward application of a Chernoff bound that with high probability at most  $O(n^{1/k} \log n)$  of these vertices are sampled into  $A_i$ . Thus, there can also be only  $O(n^{1/k} \log n)$  active vertices from  $A_i$  in the ball.

Otherwise  $|B_{\tilde{G}}(v, \frac{1}{8}b^{i+1})| \geq n^{(i+1)/k}$ , so by the above claim we have that some vertex  $a$  in  $A_{i+1}$  hits the ball  $B_{\tilde{G}}(v, \frac{1}{8}b^{i+1})$  which results in all vertices in the ball that are in  $A_j \setminus A_{j+1}$  to be deactivated for any  $j \leq i$ , and in particular for  $i$ . This proves the first part of the claim.

For the second part of the claim, observe that the contrapositive of the above claim with  $a' = v$  implies that there exists no active vertex  $a''$  in  $A_{i+1}$  in the ball  $B_{\tilde{G}}(v, \frac{1}{4}c_{i,i+1}) \subseteq B_{\tilde{G}}(v, \frac{1}{8}b^{i+1})$ , since  $c_{i,i+1} = b^{i+1}$ . Further, by the contrapositive of our initial observation, we have that then  $|B(v, \frac{1}{8}b^{i+1})| < n^{(i+1)/k}$ .  $\square$

A special case of the claim is that each vertex  $a \in A_i \setminus A_{i+1}$  has  $\tilde{O}(n^{1/k})$  active vertices in its ball  $B(a, \frac{1}{8}b^{i+1})$  that are in  $A_i \setminus A_{i+1}$ . Thus, if  $a$  is active itself this gives an upper bound on the number of paths that are included in  $H$  due to  $a$  (if  $a$  is not active no paths are added). Since the maximum such path length at any level is  $\frac{1}{8}b^{k+1}$ , we have that there are only  $\tilde{O}(n^{1+1/k}b^{k+1}) = n^{1+o(1)}$  edges in  $H$  due to paths. The spanner  $\tilde{G}$  that is additionally added to  $H$  contains only  $\tilde{O}(n)$  edges which is subsumed in the previous bound.

**Running Time.** To bound the running time, observe that in order to determine which vertices are active, we run for each  $i \leq k$ , a BFS to depth  $\frac{1}{8}b^{i+1}$  from every active vertex in  $A_i \setminus A_{i+1}$  on  $\tilde{G}$ . By Claim 5.2, each vertex  $v \in V$  is only explored by  $\tilde{O}(n^{1/k})$  active vertices on each level. There are only  $\sqrt{\log n}$  levels, so each vertex  $v \in V$  is only explored by  $\tilde{O}(n^{1/k})$  active vertices in total. Thus, every edge incident to each vertex  $v$  in  $\tilde{G}$  is only explored  $\tilde{O}(n^{1/k})$  times. Since  $\tilde{G}$  has only  $\tilde{O}(n)$  edges, and since each BFS runs linearly in the number of edges explored, we can bound the total running time by  $\tilde{O}(n^{1+1/k})$ , for each  $i$ , and thus also for all values  $i$ .

After determining which vertices are active, it remains to bound the time to compute the paths between any two active vertices  $a, a' \in A_i \setminus A_{i+1}$  for some  $i$ . For  $i \geq \gamma$ , we can simply check the distances between any pair of such vertices (even the ones that are non-active) by looking up their shortest paths in  $\mathcal{A}$  and inserting them into  $H$  if the criterion is satisfied. We will calculate the running time of  $\mathcal{A}$  at the end. For any active vertex  $a \in A_i \setminus A_{i+1}$ , where  $i < \gamma$ , we further run a BFS on  $G$  to depth  $\frac{1}{8 \log n}b^{i+1}$ . We observe that since  $\tilde{G}$  is a  $\log n$ -spanner of  $G$ , we have for every  $v \in V$  that

$$B_{\tilde{G}}(v, \frac{1}{8 \log n}b^{i+1}) \subseteq B_G(v, \frac{1}{8}b^{i+1}).$$

By Claim 5.2 we have again that each vertex  $v$  is only explored  $\tilde{O}(n^{1/k})$  times during these executions of BFS. Using the second fact of Claim 5.2, we further have that each BFS from an active vertex  $a \in A_i \setminus A_{i+1}$  only explores at most  $n^{(i+1)/k}$  vertices. But this in turn implies that each vertex  $v$  that is strictly contained in such a ball  $B_G(a, \frac{1}{8 \log n}b^{i+1})$  has degree bounded by  $n^{(i+1)/k}$ . Since we explore only for  $i < \gamma$ , we therefore have that each explored vertex has degree at most  $n^{\gamma/k} \leq n^\kappa$ . Putting everything together, during all BFS explorations, we scan

every vertex at most  $\tilde{O}(n^{1/k})$  times while the number of edges present at the vertex is at most  $n^\kappa$  and since we have  $n$  vertices, the total time required for all explorations can be bounded by  $O(n \cdot n^{1/k} \cdot n^\kappa) = n^{1+\kappa+o(1)}$ .

Finally, we have to account for the data structures used. While the running time of  $\mathcal{B}$  is subsumed in our previous bound, we have that  $\mathcal{A}$  has worst-case update time  $\tilde{O}(n^\delta(n^{\omega(1,1,\kappa)-\kappa} + (n^{1-\gamma/k})^2 n^\kappa))$  for any constant  $\kappa \leq \kappa^*$  and  $\delta > 0$  by Corollary 5.1 since  $|S| = n^{1-\gamma/k} = n^{1-\kappa+o(1)}$ . Setting  $\kappa = \kappa^*$  and  $\delta = 0.01$ , the size  $|S| = o(\sqrt{n})$  and thus we obtain worst-case update time  $O(n^{1+\kappa^*+o(1)}) = O(n^{1.529})$ .

## 6 Applications

Let  $\epsilon > 0$  be an arbitrarily small constant. In this section we give two applications of the data structures developed in the previous sections, namely fully dynamic  $(1+\epsilon)$ -approximate all-pairs shortest paths with path reporting and  $(2+\epsilon)$ -approximate fully dynamic Steiner tree. Both algorithms are the first algorithms that take sub-quadratic worst-case time for these problems.

**6.1 Fully dynamic approximate all-pairs shortest paths with path reporting** In this subsection we give a fully dynamic data structure that reports  $(1+\epsilon)$ -approximate all-pairs shortest paths in sub-quadratic worst-case time. Note that all previous such data structure were only able to report the *distance*, i.e. the *length* of the paths, but not the actual paths.

**THEOREM 6.1.** *Let  $\epsilon > 0$  be an arbitrarily small constant. There exists an algorithm that maintains  $(1+\epsilon)$ -approximate all-pairs shortest-path in worst-case time  $n^{1+\kappa^*+o(1)} = O(n^{1.529})$  per edge update, in worst-case time  $n^{1+o(1)}$  per path reporting query and per distance reporting query with high probability against an oblivious adversary. The preprocessing time is  $n^{\omega+o(1)}$  if the initial graph is non-empty and  $\tilde{O}(n^2)$  if the initial graph is empty.*

*Proof.* We maintain the following data structure:

(1) We maintain the fully dynamic path reporting data structure given in the statement of Theorem 5.2 on  $G$  with  $D = 2n^{o(1)}/\epsilon$  and  $\kappa = \kappa^* < 0.529$ .

(2) We maintain for  $G$  the fully dynamic  $(1+\epsilon/2, n^{o(1)})$ -spanner from Theorem 5.1.

To answer a distance reporting query we first ask a distance query with parameter  $D$  in (1). This gives us the exact answer if the distance is less than  $D$ . Otherwise we run a static shortest path algorithm on the spanner that we maintain in (2). As the spanner has at most  $n^{1+o(1)}$  edges this takes time  $n^{1+o(1)}$ . Note that, by the choice of  $D$ , the shortest path on the spanner gives a  $(1+\epsilon)$ -approximation of the shortest path in  $G$  as  $(1+\epsilon/2)\text{dist}(s,t) + n^{o(1)} \leq (1+\epsilon)\text{dist}(s,t)$  for  $\text{dist}(s,t) \geq D = 2n^{o(1)}/\epsilon$ . Thus

a distance query returns a  $(1+\epsilon)$ -approximate answer and takes time  $n^{\kappa+o(1)}/\epsilon + n^{1+o(1)} = n^{1+o(1)}$ .

To answer a path reporting query between two nodes  $s$  and  $t$  we first ask a distance query with parameter  $D$  in (1). If the distance is less than  $D$ , we ask a path reporting query in (1) in time  $O(D^2 n^{\kappa^*}) = o(n)$ . Otherwise, we execute a static shortest path algorithm on the spanner that we maintain in (2). Thus a path reporting query returns a  $(1+\epsilon)$ -approximate shortest path and takes time  $n^{1+o(1)}$  time.  $\square$

If we increase the preprocessing time to  $O(n^{2.621})$ , and the update time to  $O(n^{1.843})$ , we can reduce the cost of a distance reporting query even further.

**COROLLARY 6.1.** *Let  $\epsilon > 0$  be an arbitrarily small constant. There exists an algorithm that maintains  $(1+\epsilon)$ -approximate all-pairs shortest-path in worst-case time  $O(n^{1.843+o(1)})$  per edge update, in worst-case time  $O(n^{1+o(1)})$  per path reporting query, and in worst-case time  $O(n^{.45})$  per distance reporting query with high probability against an oblivious adversary. The preprocessing time is  $n^{\omega+o(1)}$  if the initial graph is non-empty and  $\tilde{O}(n^2)$  if the initial graph is empty.*

*Proof.* Additionally maintain a fully dynamic  $(1+\epsilon)$ -approximate APSP data structure from [80], which takes worst-case time  $O(n^{1.843})$  per edge update and worst-case time  $O(n^{0.45})$  per distance query. It speeds up the distance reporting queries and, in combination with theorem 6.1, leads to the result.  $\square$

## 6.2 Steiner trees with terminal vertex and edge updates

In this section we give a further application of the data structure of the previous section. Assume we are given an (unweighted) graph  $G = (V, E)$  with a dynamically changing edge set and a dynamically changing terminal set  $S \subseteq V$ . A *Steiner tree*  $T_S$  for a vertex set  $S$  is a tree that (1) is a subgraph of  $G$ , (2) spans  $S$ , and (3) has the minimum number of edges. A  $\beta$ -approximate *Steiner tree* is a tree which fulfills conditions (1) and (2), and the weight of the tree is at most a factor  $\beta$  larger than the weight of the edges of a minimum Steiner tree.

A 2-approximate Steiner tree can be found as follows: Construct a weighted graph  $\tilde{G}$  that consists of a clique on the vertices of  $S$  such that each edge  $(u, v)$  has length  $\text{dist}_G(u, v)$ , i.e., the length of the shortest path between  $u$  and  $v$  in  $G$ . Find an MST  $\tilde{T}_S$  in  $\tilde{G}$ . Its weight  $w(\tilde{T}_S)$  gives a 2-approximation of the value  $OPT$  of the optimal Steiner tree, i.e.  $OPT \leq w(\tilde{T}_S) \leq 2OPT$ . The reason is as follows: Consider an Eulerian tour  $\mathcal{E}(\tilde{T}_S)$  of the optimal Steiner tree  $T_S$  in  $G$ . It traverses every edge twice and, thus, has length  $2OPT$ . Now replace the subpath between two consecutive terminal vertices  $u$  and  $v$  of  $\mathcal{E}(\tilde{T}_S)$  by an edge. Note that the

length of this subpath is at least  $\text{dist}_G(u, v)$  and that there is an edge  $(u, v)$  in  $\tilde{G}$  with length  $\text{dist}_G(u, v)$ . Thus  $\mathcal{E}(T_S)$  induces a cycle in  $\tilde{G}$  whose length is at most  $2OPT$ . As the minimum spanning tree  $\tilde{T}_S$  in  $\tilde{G}$  has a weight that is at most the length of this cycle, its weight is at most  $2OPT$ . Note that if the weights in  $\tilde{G}$  are between  $\text{dist}_G(u, v)$  and  $(1 + \epsilon/2)\text{dist}_G(u, v)$  for some arbitrarily small  $\epsilon > 0$ , then the weight of  $\tilde{T}_S$  is at most  $(2 + \epsilon)OPT$ . To construct the corresponding approximate Steiner tree replace each edge in  $\tilde{T}_S$  by a shortest path in  $G$  between its endpoints and compute a tree  $\tilde{T}'_S$  in the resulting graph. The weight of  $\tilde{T}'_S$  is at most the weight of  $\tilde{T}_S$ .

We consider the following dynamic changes to the input: (i) edge insertions and deletions and (ii) additions and removals from  $S$ . In the *fully dynamic unweighted Steiner tree problem* the goal is to maintain a Steiner tree after each modification to the input. In the  $\beta$ -*approximate fully dynamic unweighted Steiner tree problem* the goal is to maintain an  $\beta$ -approximate Steiner tree after each modification of the input. Note that we want to maintain an actual tree, *not just the value* of the  $\beta$ -approximate Steiner tree. We show the following result.

**THEOREM 6.2.** *Let  $\epsilon > 0$  be an arbitrarily small constant. There exists an algorithm that solves the  $(2 + \epsilon)$ -approximate fully dynamic unweighted Steiner tree problem with high probability against an oblivious adversary, in worst-case time  $O(n^{1.529} + s^2 \cdot n^{1+o(1)})$  per edge update and in worst-case time  $sn^{1+o(1)}$  per vertex addition to or removal from  $S$ , where  $s$  is the current size of  $S$ . The preprocessing time is  $n^{\omega+o(1)}$  if the initial graph is non-empty and  $\tilde{O}(n^2)$  if the initial graph is empty.*

*Proof.* By our discussion before the theorem it suffices to maintain the graph  $\tilde{G}$  whose edge weights are a  $(1 + \epsilon/2)$ -approximation of the length of their endpoints in  $G$  and a minimum spanning tree in  $\tilde{G}$ . To build the actual Steiner tree, we need to replace then each edge in this spanning tree into the corresponding shortest path in  $G$ .

For convenience, we denote by  $A(\epsilon, n)$ , the additive error of a  $(1 + \epsilon, n^{o(1)})$ -spanner as maintained in Theorem 5.1, i.e. Theorem 5.1 maintains a  $(1 + \epsilon, A(\epsilon, n))$ -spanner. From this, it is also easy to see that  $A(\epsilon, n) = n^{o(1)}$  for any constant  $\epsilon > 0$ .

Now, we describe the data structures to maintain the necessary information for updating our Steiner tree approximation:

(1) We maintain the fully dynamic path reporting data structure given in the statement of Theorem 5.2 on  $G$  with  $D = 4A(\epsilon/4, n)/\epsilon$  and  $\kappa = \kappa^* < 0.529$ .

(2) We maintain the fully dynamic  $(1 + \epsilon/4, A(\epsilon/4, n))$ -spanner from theorem 5.1.

(3) We maintain a  $|S| \times |S|$  array that contain the  $(1 + \epsilon/4)$ - approximate all-pairs shortest path lengths between

any pair of terminals.

(4) We maintain the graph  $\tilde{G}$  and a fully dynamic minimum spanning tree data structure from  $\tilde{G}$  that takes  $n^{o(1)}$  deterministic worst-case update time [33].

To answer a distance query we first ask a distance query with parameter  $D$  in (1). This gives us the exact answer if the distance is less than  $D$ . Otherwise we run a static shortest path algorithm on the spanner that we maintain in (2). As the spanner has at most  $n^{1+o(1)}$  edges this takes time  $n^{1+o(1)}$ . Note that, by the choice of  $D$ , the shortest path on the spanner gives a  $(1 + \epsilon/2)$ -approximation of the shortest path in  $G$  as  $(1 + \epsilon/4)\text{dist}(s, t) + A(\epsilon/4, n) \leq (1 + \epsilon/2)\text{dist}(s, t)$  for  $\text{dist}(s, t) \geq D = 4A(\epsilon/4, n)/\epsilon$ . Thus a distance query returns a  $(1 + \epsilon/2)$ -approximate answer and takes time  $n^{\kappa^*+o(1)}/\epsilon + n^{1+o(1)} = n^{1+o(1)}$ .

To answer a path reporting query between two nodes  $s$  and  $t$  we first ask a distance query with parameter  $D$  in (1). If the distance is less than  $D$ , we ask a path reporting query in (1). Otherwise, we execute a static shortest path algorithm on the spanner that we maintain in (2). Thus a path reporting query returns a  $(1 + \epsilon/2)$ -approximate shortest path and takes time  $n^{1+o(1)} + n^{\kappa^*+o(1)}/\epsilon = n^{1+o(1)}$  time.

After each update to either  $E$  or  $S$  we update data structures (1) - (4) as described below. Then we build the approximate Steiner Tree  $\tilde{T}'_S$  (in  $G$ ) from  $\tilde{T}_S$  as described above, executing  $s - 1$  path reporting queries. This takes time  $s \cdot n^{1+o(1)}$ , which as we will see is subsumed by the runtime of updating (4).

We are left with describing how we update (1) - (4). Each edge update leads to the corresponding update in (1) and (2). Then we recompute  $\tilde{G}$  from scratch using  $O(s^2)$  distance queries and compute its minimum spanning tree as well as the dynamic MST data structure from scratch. Afterwards we build  $\tilde{T}'_S$  as described above. This takes total time  $n^{1+\kappa^*+o(1)} + s^2 \cdot n^{1+o(1)}$ .

If a vertex  $v$  is added to  $S$ , we compute the distance in the spanner from  $v$  to all nodes in  $S$ , add an edge from  $v$  to every vertex in  $S$  with the corresponding length to  $\tilde{G}$ , and update its dynamic MST data structure. This takes time  $sn^{1+o(1)}$ . Afterwards we build  $\tilde{T}'_S$  as described above.

If a vertex is removed from  $S$ , we remove its incident edges from  $\tilde{G}$  and its dynamic MST data structure. This takes time  $sn^{1+o(1)}$ . Afterwards we build  $\tilde{T}'_S$  as described above.  $\square$

At the cost of increasing the preprocessing time to  $O(n^{2.621})$  we can additionally maintain a fully dynamic  $(1 + \epsilon/2)$ -approximate APSP data structure from [80], which takes worst-case time  $O(n^{1.843})$  per edge update and worst-case time  $O(n^{0.45})$  per distance query. It speeds up the distance query and leads to the following result.

**THEOREM 6.3.** *Let  $\epsilon > 0$  be an arbitrarily small constant. There exists an algorithm that solves the  $(2 + \epsilon)$ -approximate*

fully dynamic unweighted Steiner tree problem with high probability against an oblivious adversary in worst-case time  $O(n^{1.843+o(1)} + s^2 \cdot n^{0.45} + s \cdot n^{1+o(1)})$  per edge update, in worst-case time  $sn^{1+o(1)}$  per vertex addition to or removal from  $S$ , where  $s$  is the current size of  $S$ . The preprocessing time is  $O(n^{2.621})$ .

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