

# Detecting Regular Visit Patterns

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**Abstract.** We are given a trajectory  $\mathcal{T}$  and an area  $\mathcal{A}$ .  $\mathcal{T}$  might intersect  $\mathcal{A}$  several times, and our aim is to detect whether  $\mathcal{T}$  visits  $\mathcal{A}$  with some regularity, e.g. what is the longest time span that a GPS-GSM equipped elephant visited a specific lake on a daily (weekly or yearly) basis, where the elephant has to visit the lake *most* of the days (weeks or years), but not necessarily on *every* day (week or year).

During the modelling of such applications, we encountered an elementary problem on bit-strings, that we call LDS (LONGESTDENSESUBSTRING). The bits of the bitstring correspond to a sequence of regular time points, in which a bit is set to 1 if and only if the trajectory  $\mathcal{T}$  intersects the area  $\mathcal{A}$  at the corresponding time point. For the LDS problem, we are given a string  $s$  as input and want to output a longest substring of  $s$ , such that the ratio of 1's in the substring is at least a certain threshold.

In our model, LDS is a core problem for many applications that aim at detecting regularity of  $\mathcal{T}$  intersecting  $\mathcal{A}$ . We propose an optimal algorithm to solve LDS, and also for related problems that are closer to applications, we provide efficient algorithms for detecting regularity.

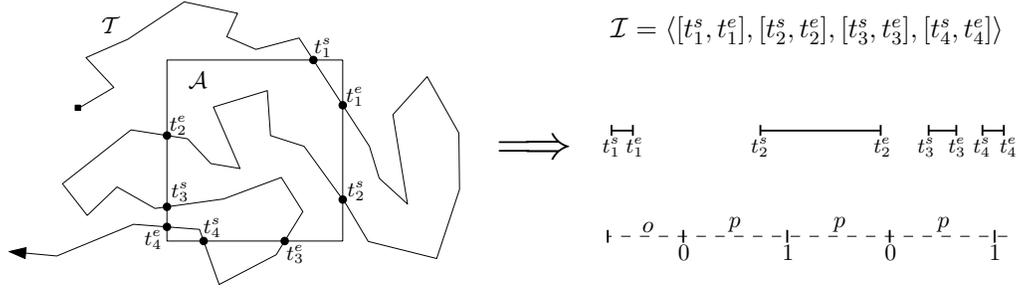
## 1 Introduction

Recent technological advances of location-aware devices and mobile phone networks provide increasing opportunities to trace moving individuals. As a result many different areas including geography, market research, database research, animal behaviour research, surveillance, security and transport analysis involve to some extent the study of movement patterns of entities [2, 12, 17]. This has triggered an increasing amount of research into developing algorithms and tools to support the analysis of trajectory data [14]. Examples are detection of flock movements [3, 6, 15], leadership patterns [5], commuting patterns [22, 25, 27] and identification of popular places [16].

In this paper, we introduce and study a problem called the *Longest Dense Substring* problem which originally stems from a problem concerning the analysis of trajectories, namely detecting regular visits to an area. Consider a trajectory obtained by tracking an elephant [1]; it is easy to detect which areas are important for the elephant, i.e. where it spends a certain amount of its time. However, ideally we would like to be able to detect if this area is visited with some regularity which might indicate that it could be used as a grazing or mating area during certain times of year. Another example occurs when tracking a person. Again, it is easy to detect which areas are important for her, such as home, work, local shopping areas and the cricket ground. But it would be interesting to find out if she goes to the cricket ground with some regularity, for example batting practice every Wednesday night. Note however, that the visits may be regular even though the cricket ground is not visited *every* Wednesday evening. It might be a regular event even though it only takes place 50% of all Wednesday evenings.

The above examples give rise to the following problem, as illustrated in Fig. 1. Given an area  $\mathcal{A}$  in some space and a trajectory  $\mathcal{T}$ , i.e. a time-stamped sequence of points in the space, one can generate a sequence of  $n$  time intervals  $\mathcal{I} = \langle I_1 = [t_1^s, t_1^e], \dots, I_n = [t_n^s, t_n^e] \rangle$  for which the entity generating the trajectory  $\mathcal{T}$  intersects the area  $\mathcal{A}$ . Some of these intervals might be important for

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**Fig. 1.** A trajectory  $\mathcal{T}$  and an area  $\mathcal{A}$  is shown. From this, we derive the sequence of intervals  $\mathcal{I}$  from which we obtain the sequence of regular time points and also  $s(o, p)$ .

our application, while others are not (e.g. a person’s visit to the cricket ground on a Sunday to watch a match is not interesting for detecting regular practice that occurs on Wednesdays). Hence, we look at whether  $\mathcal{T}$  intersects  $\mathcal{A}$  for a sequence of regular time points.

For modelling regularity among the sequence of time points, we introduce two important notions: the *period length*  $p$  models the distance between consecutive time points, and the *offset*  $o$ . For fixed period length  $p$  and offset  $o$  (with  $o < t_1^s + p$ ), we have a sequence of time points between  $t_1^s$  and  $t_n^e$  uniquely defined in the following way: All time points are equidistant with distance  $p$  and the first time point is at time  $o$  (e.g. if  $o$  is chosen to be a ‘Wednesday at 19:30’, and  $p$  equals 7 days, then all these time points correspond to all ‘Wednesday at 19:30’ for all weeks).

Having the entire sequence of regular time points, the problem is to find the longest subsequence of consecutive time points such that  $\mathcal{T}$  intersects  $\mathcal{A}$  with high density (e.g. among the last three years, find the longest time span that a person was at the cricket ground on Wednesdays at 19:30). The density allows us to model exceptional occurrences of  $\mathcal{T}$  not intersecting  $\mathcal{A}$  (we still would like to detect the regular Wednesday’s practice, even though the person called in sick on some Wednesdays). We model the density as a value  $c \in [0, 1]$  and require that  $\mathcal{T}$  intersects  $\mathcal{A}$  for at least  $(100 \cdot c)\%$  of the times.

To further formalise the above, we associate to each regular time point a value in  $\{0, 1\}$ . This value is 1 if and only if there exists an interval  $I \in \mathcal{I}$  such that the time point is inside  $I$ , i.e. if and only if  $\mathcal{T}$  intersects  $\mathcal{A}$  at this time point (this can be extended to ‘approximate’ versions where the value is set to 1 if  $\mathcal{A}$  is visited approximately at this time point). These values *generate* the bitstring  $s(o, p)$  for fixed  $p$  and  $o$  (for the example of batting practice, the bits indicate that a person has or has not been at the cricket ground on the corresponding Wednesday at 19:30). Now the aim is to compute a longest substring  $s^{opt}$  of  $s(o, p)$  with the ratio of 1’s being at least  $c$ . We refer to such an optimal substring  $s^{opt}$  as a *longest dense substring*. Hence, a longest dense substring represents a longest time span where  $\mathcal{T}$  visited  $\mathcal{A}$  with regularity and high density (defined by  $o$ ,  $p$  and  $c$ ). This leads to the following problem. Let  $length(s)$  denote the length of bitstring  $s$ , and  $ratio(s)$  is the number of 1’s in  $s$  divided by  $length(s)$ . We denote the substring relation by  $\sqsubseteq$ .

**Problem:** LDS (LONGESTDENSESUBSTRING)

**Input:** A string  $s$  and a real number  $c \in (0, 1]$ .

**Question:** What is a longest dense substring  $s^{opt} \sqsubseteq s$ , i.e. what is a longest substring  $s^{opt} \sqsubseteq s$  with  $ratio(s^{opt}) \geq c$ ?

LDS plays an important role for most of our applications for detecting regularity. This problem has been studied before in the analysis of DNA sequences. Allison [4] was the first to study this problem and showed a practical solution for finding a longest subsequence among a sequence of aminoacids. However, in worst case the running time is quadratic. Wang and Xu [28] and Chen and Chao [8] gave linear time algorithms for this problem. However, as will be discussed in Section 2, we focus on the case where the binary string is given as a compressed string.

Motivated from the analysis of trajectories, we have different variants for our applications. For an application, we may or may not be given a set of offsets and/or a set of period lengths. Thus together with the LDS-problem, we will also focus on finding the offsets and/or period lengths that generate the string that contains a longest dense substring. The perhaps given offsets and/or period lengths then generate an entire set of strings. Depending on the application and our approach, we can then compute a longest dense substring *for each string* or *over all strings* in this set of strings. The exact definitions are given in the corresponding sections.

The problem of discovering periodic patterns has been studied extensively in the data mining community [18–21, 23, 24, 26]. While we in this paper assume that the input is a set of “event intervals”, previous papers have all assumed that the input is a set of characters [19, 23, 26], or single event points [24].

A large number of studies on genome sequence mining are related to the identification of periodic patterns. Periodic patterns of many different lengths and types are found in the genomes [23], from the short periodicity in protein coding DNA [11], the medium length repetitive motifs in some proteins [9] to the very long DNA segments in the genome of some vertebrates [13].

The discovery of partial periodic patterns that do not appear in every periodic segment was first studied by Han et al. [19, 20]. Given a period  $p$ , each item in a pattern is either an element (e.g., event type) or a wildcard, which matches any element in the sequence. They developed and tested several different Apriori approaches for the problem. Zhang et al. [23] recently studied the problem of mining frequently occurring periodic patterns with a gap requirement. That is, given a character sequence  $S$  and a pattern  $P$  of length  $l$ , decide if  $P$  is a frequently occurring pattern in  $S$ , where the characters in  $P$  match to characters in  $S$  separated by gaps of similar size. In this paper we consider the problem of finding periodic patterns among a sequence of “event intervals” which is very different from finding periodic patterns in a sequence of characters, or event points.

This paper is organised as follows. First, in Section 2, we propose an optimal algorithm to solve the LDS problem for the compressed case. This algorithm is used in Section 3, where we consider the case when both a set of possible offsets and a set of possible period lengths are given as input. For example if we know the first time of the period we would have a fixed offset, or set of possible offsets. In the most common scenario, one is given a set of possible period lengths; for example, we know that an elephant migrates to the same area on a monthly, quarterly or maybe yearly basis, or that a person goes to the cricket ground on a weekly, or biweekly, basis. This variant is considered in 4 and Sections 5. Finally, in Section 6, we consider the general version where nothing is known regarding the offset and only a lower bound is given for the period length. In the same section we also argue that, in the case when the period length may vary over a great range of discrete values, it seems hard to find a solution efficiently. We conclude the paper with some final remarks in Section 7.

## 2 Optimally Solving LDS

We present an algorithm to solve LDS for a string  $s(o, p)$ , for given period length  $p$ , offset  $o$  and density ratio  $c$ . Note that the length of the string  $s(o, p)$  can be much larger than the number of intervals in  $\mathcal{I}$ . This motivates the study of a flavour of LDS that deals with compressed strings, where runs of 1s or 0s are compressed.

A compressed bit-string is easy to obtain from a normal bitstring or a set  $\mathcal{I}$  of intervals: runs of 0s or 1s are represented as pairs  $(count, value)$ ; for example, a run (of maximal length) of  $x$  bits whose value is 0 is represented by  $(x, 0)$ . A compressed bitstring  $s^{comp}$  that arises from  $\mathcal{I}$  for an offset  $o$  and a period length  $p$  is a sequence of such pairs:

$$s^{comp}(o, p) = (count_1, value_1)(count_2, value_2)(count_3, value_3)\dots(count_k, value_k)$$

The number of bits in  $s^{comp}$  is  $\sum_{i=1}^k count_i$ , where the number  $k$  of pairs depends on the intervals and on the parameters  $o$  and  $p$ . The advantage of a compressed bit-string which is derived from a set of  $n$  intervals, is that its size is linear in  $n$ , i.e.  $k = \mathcal{O}(n)$ . To benefit from this advantage, we

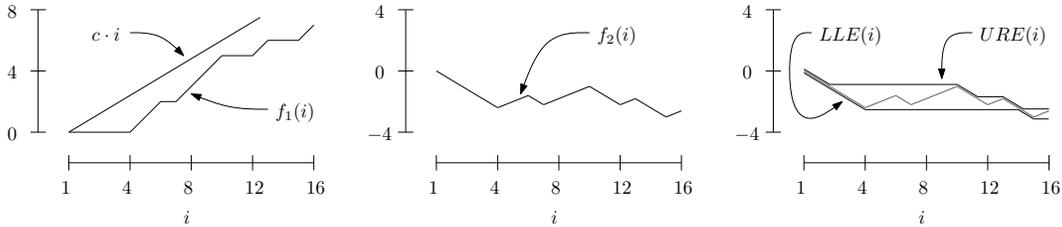
restate our problem and present an algorithm that works with compressed bitstrings. Note that the results of this section carry over to the problem with non-compressed bitstrings.

**Problem:**  $LDS^{comp}$

**Input:** A compressed string  $s^{comp}$  represented by  $k$  pairs and a real number  $c \in (0, 1]$ .

**Question:** What is a compressed longest dense substring  $s^{opt} \subseteq s^{comp}$  with  $ratio(s^{opt}) \geq c$ ?

Our general approach to solve  $LDS^{comp}$  is to transform it in the following way. First, we consider a function  $f_1(i)$  that is the number of 1's in  $s^{comp}$  from the first position to position  $i$ . See Figure 2(a). Next, we define a second function  $f_2$  that is obtained from  $f_1$  by skewing the coordinate system:  $f_2(i) := f_1(i) - c \cdot i$ . See Figure 2(b). Now we observe that a longest dense substring in  $s^{comp}$  corresponds to two indices  $i_1 \leq i_2$ , such that  $i_2 - i_1$  is as large as possible and  $f_2(i_1) \leq f_2(i_2)$ . To compute such indices efficiently, we define a *lower left envelope*  $LLE(i) := \min_{1 \leq j \leq i} f_2(j)$ . In a symmetric way, we also define an *upper right envelope*  $URE(i) := \max_{i \leq j \leq n} f_2(j)$ . These envelopes are indicated in Figure 2(c). Finding two indices  $i_1 \leq i_2$  where  $i_2 - i_1$  is as large as possible and  $f_2(i_1) \leq f_2(i_2)$  can be done by ‘walking along’ these envelopes with two pointers  $i_1$  and  $i_2$ , initially both are at bit position 1. With  $i_2$  we walk along  $URE$  as long as  $URE(i_2) \geq LLE(i_1)$ . We then walk forward with  $i_1$  on  $LLE$  and repeat the process until both pointers reached the end of the envelopes. During this process, we keep track of the largest difference between these two pointers.



**Fig. 2.** Exemplary illustrations of  $f_1(i)$ ,  $f_2(i)$ ,  $LLE(i)$  and  $URE(i)$  for  $c = 0.6$  and the compressed bit string  $(4, 0)(2, 1)(1, 0)(3, 1)(2, 0)(1, 1)(2, 0)(1, 1)$ , which equals the uncompressed bit string  $0000110111001001$ .

**Theorem 1.** Let  $s^{comp}$  be a compressed bitstring represented by  $k$  pairs. There is an  $\mathcal{O}(k)$  time algorithm to solve  $LDS^{comp}$  for  $s^{comp}$ , for a given  $c$ .

*Proof.* The proof follows the general outline of the algorithm. The function  $f_1$  is defined over the bits of  $s^{comp}$ . This function is piece-wise linear and changes from one line-segment to the next whenever the corresponding bit index changes from one pair of  $s^{comp}$  to the next.

$$f_1(i) = \sum_{j=1}^i j\text{th bit value in } s^{comp}$$

The problem  $LDS^{comp}$  can now be reformulated: we are looking for two indices  $i_1 \leq i_2$  such that  $i_2 - i_1$  is as large as possible and  $\frac{f_1(i_2) - f_1(i_1)}{i_2 - i_1} \geq c$  (see Figure 2(a)). To ease the processing, we introduced another piece-wise linear function  $f_2$  over the bits of  $s^{comp}$ . Graphically,  $f_2$  is obtained from  $f_1$  by skewing the coordinate system such that the line  $c \cdot i$  will be horizontal (see Figure 2(b)).

$$f_2(i) = f_1(i) - c \cdot i$$

Now, solving  $LDS^{comp}$  means finding two indices  $i_1 \leq i_2$  such that  $i_2 - i_1$  is as large as possible and  $f_2(i_1) \leq f_2(i_2)$ . Recall that  $LLE$  and  $URE$  are defined as follows (where  $n'$  is the number of bits in  $s$ ):

$$LLE(i) = \min_{1 \leq j \leq i} f_2(j) \quad \text{and} \quad URE(i) = \max_{i \leq j \leq n'} f_2(j)$$

LDS<sup>comp</sup> can be solved by a single pass over the two envelopes. However, storing or processing the envelopes for every bit of  $s$  would result in an algorithm with running time  $\Omega(n')$ , but we aim for  $\mathcal{O}(k)$ . That is why we compute and store the envelopes in the following way, which is sufficient for the algorithm. We only describe this for *LLE* (it is similar for *URE*).

Since *LLE* is piece-wise linear it can be stored as a sequence of line-segments, which are represented by quadruples  $(index_1, f_2(index_1), index_2, f_2(index_2))$ . Such a quadruple corresponds to the line segment between the points  $(index_1, f_2(index_1))$  and  $(index_2, f_2(index_2))$ . We compute all *LLE*-quadruples from left to right by passing over the pairs of the compressed bitstring  $s^{comp}$ . We start with the first quadruple, which is  $(1, f_2(1), 1, f_2(1))$ , i.e. it will represent just one point, and we initialise the current minimum to  $f_2(1)$ . Note that the current minimum corresponds to the current value of *LLE*. Also note that each pair  $(count, value)$  contributes  $(1 - c) \cdot count$  to  $f_2$  if  $value = 1$ , and  $-c \cdot count$  if  $value = 0$ . We keep track of that value by updating it incrementally for every pair. Now we process pairs until we encounter the pair  $(count_h, value_h)$ , such that  $h$  is the smallest index, such that  $f_2(\sum_{j=1}^h count_j)$  is smaller than the current minimum. That means that the pair  $(count_h, value_h)$  contains a bit index  $g$ , such that  $f_2(g - 1) \geq$  current minimum  $> f_2(g)$ . We compute this bit index  $g$ , which is possible in constant time. And we create and insert a new quadruple  $(g, f_2(g), \sum_{j=1}^h count_j, f_2(\sum_{j=1}^h count_j))$  to *LLE*.

(One subtlety involved here is the following. For the pass over the envelopes described next, it is desirable if for each start- or end-point  $(index, f_2(index))$  of a line segment in one envelope, there exists a line segment in the other envelope that has a start- or end-point  $(index', f_2(index'))$  with  $f_2(index) = f_2(index')$ . This can be realised by breaking up the line segments accordingly, which can be done in  $\mathcal{O}(k)$  time. Having the line segments with this property ensures that we will stop at all positions with  $LLE(i_1) = URE(i_2)$  during the pass over the envelopes.)

To solve LDS<sup>comp</sup>, we now make a single pass with two pointers  $i_1$  and  $i_2$  from left to right through the two envelopes *LLE* and *URE*. The pointer  $i_1$  refers to the point  $(i_1, LLE(i_1))$  and  $i_2$  refers to the point  $(i_2, URE(i_2))$ ; initially,  $i_1 = 1$  and  $i_2 = 1$ . We increment  $i_2$  as long as  $LLE(i_1) \leq URE(i_2)$ . Incrementing  $i_2$  means jumping from a start-point of a quadruple to the end-point of that quadruple, and then to the start-point of the next quadruple in the sequence, and so forth. When  $i_2$  cannot be incremented without obtaining  $LLE(i_1) > URE(i_2)$ , we increment  $i_1$  instead and continue the process. We keep track of and report the pointers for largest difference between  $i_1$  and  $i_2$  that was found in this way. All this can be done in time linear in the number  $k$  of pairs, because the size of the envelopes is linear in  $k$ .

For the correctness note that the algorithm will find two indices  $i_1 \leq i_2$  such that  $i_2 - i_1$  is as large as possible and  $f_2(i_1) \leq f_2(i_2)$  (this is sufficient; see the argumentation above). The inequality  $f_2(i_1) \leq f_2(i_2)$  is guaranteed by ensuring  $LLE(i_1) \leq URE(i_2)$ . Having  $i_2 - i_1$  as large as possible follows from using the envelopes.  $\square$

### 3 Given Offsets and Period Lengths

If we are given a sequence  $\mathcal{I}$  of  $n$  intervals, a set  $P$  of period lengths and a set  $O$  of offsets, we can use the results in Section 2 and run the algorithm of Theorem 1 on every string  $s(o, p)$  that is generated by any combination of  $p \in P$  and  $o \in O$ . We obtain the following lemma.

**Lemma 1.** *Let  $O$  be a set of offsets and  $P$  be a set of period lengths. In  $\mathcal{O}(|O| \cdot |P| \cdot n)$  time, we can compute the overall longest dense substring over all  $p \in P$  and  $o \in O$ . In the same time, we can also compute the longest dense substrings for all combinations of  $p \in P$  and  $o \in O$ .*

*Proof.* There are  $|O| \cdot |P|$  combinations of offsets and period lengths. For each possible combination, we compute the compressed bitstring  $s(o, p)$  from the set  $\mathcal{I}$  of  $n$  intervals. This can be done in  $\mathcal{O}(n)$  time. Since the length of the compressed bitstring is  $\mathcal{O}(n)$ , we now spend  $\mathcal{O}(n)$  time to solve LDS, as shown in Theorem 1. During this process, we can keep track of the longest substring encountered.  $\square$

Compressed bitstrings have the advantage that their representation takes as much space as the set of intervals that was given as input. In situations where using uncompressed bitstrings does not become prohibitively expensive, we can use another approach, which results in certain cases in faster running times. For example, if our data (the start/end-points of intervals in  $\mathcal{I}$ ) has a resolution of one day (i.e. disregarding the time of the day), then having period lengths and offsets as multiples of one day seems an obvious choice. Also, if the total number of days is small enough to be represented in an array, we can compute all longest dense substrings for all offsets for a fixed period length in linear time, as formalised in the following lemma.

**Lemma 2.** *Let  $O$  be a sorted sequence of offsets,  $P$  be a set of period lengths and  $q$  be a constant. If every period length  $p \in P$  is a multiple of  $q$ , and if for every offset  $o \in O$ , it holds that the distance between  $t_1^s$  and  $o$  is a multiple of  $q$ , then we can compute all longest dense substrings for all  $p \in P$  and  $o \in O$  in  $\mathcal{O}(n + |P| \cdot \text{length}(s(0, q)))$  time.*

*Proof.* As a first step, we compute the uncompressed bitstring  $s(0, q)$  and store it in an array, which can be done in  $\mathcal{O}(\text{length}(s(0, q)) + n)$  time. For each  $p \in P$  and for each possible  $o \in O$ , we compute the uncompressed bitstring  $s(o, p)$ . Since we have the string  $s(0, q)$  stored in an array, this can be done in  $\mathcal{O}(\frac{\text{length}(s(0, q))}{p})$  time for any  $o$ . The time for computing the longest dense substring in  $s(o, p)$  is linear in  $\text{length}(s(o, p))$ , hence  $\mathcal{O}(\frac{\text{length}(s(0, q))}{p})$  time. Now note that the number of offsets that are valid for period length  $p$ , is at most  $p$ . Since these offsets are sorted, the total time we spend for all offsets is  $\mathcal{O}(\text{length}(s(0, q)))$  per period length.  $\square$

## 4 Given Period Lengths (Exact)

As in the previous section we are given a set of period lengths  $P$  together with a sequence of intervals  $\mathcal{I} = \langle I_1 = [t_1^s, t_1^e], \dots, I_n = [t_n^s, t_n^e] \rangle$ . See Figure 3(a). We refer to the intervals in  $\mathcal{I}$  as *grey intervals* and to the intervals between them as *white intervals*. We give an efficient algorithm that computes a longest dense substring for each period length  $p \in P$  over all possible offsets.

The algorithm can roughly be described as a two step process. In Section 4.1 we will show how the original problem can be transformed into the problem of finding the tallest grounded rectangle (to be defined) among a set of weighted points such that the total weight of the points within the rectangle is at least zero. Then, in Section 4.2, it will be shown how this problem can be solved efficiently.

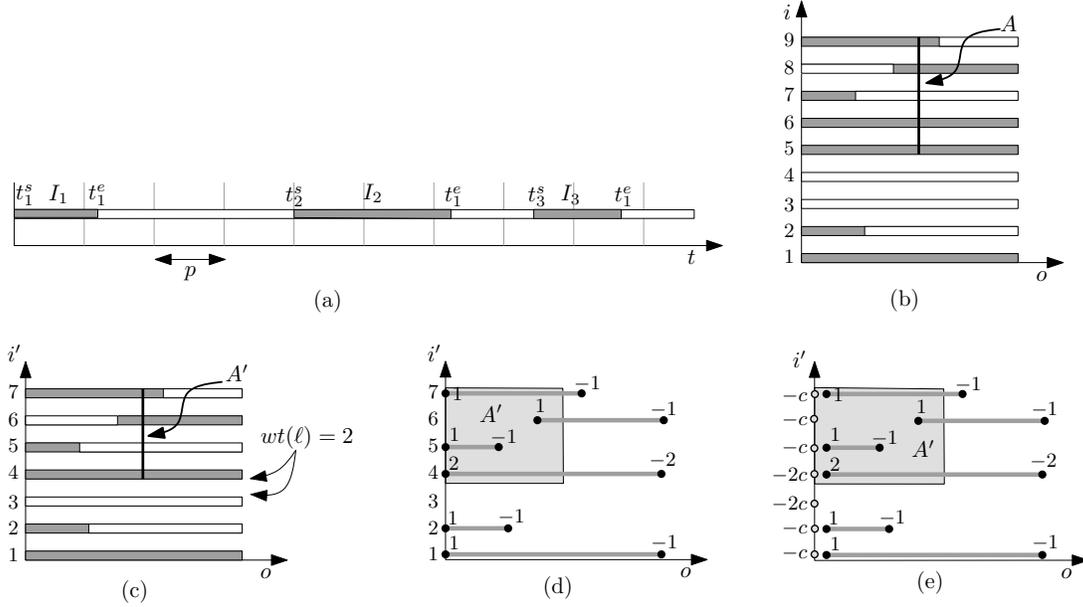
### 4.1 Transform into a weighted range query problem

The transformation is performed in four simple steps.

**Transformation step 1:** For every  $p \in P$  cut the time-line and intervals between  $t_1^s$  and  $t_n^e$  into  $\rho = \frac{t_n^e - t_1^s}{p}$  pieces of length  $p$ , denoted  $\ell_1, \dots, \ell_\rho$ . The last piece might have length less than  $p$ . We arrange all the pieces into a two dimensional structure by putting them above each other, as shown in Figure 3(b).

The part of a piece that is grey or white is called a *grey part* or *white part*, respectively. Each part has an index  $i$  that indicates the position along the vertical axis, i.e. which piece it belongs to. The problem now is to find a longest vertical segment  $A = \{o\} \times [i_1, i_2]$  that intersects at least  $c(i_2 - i_1 + 1)$  grey parts.

**Transformation step 2:** Note that a grey or white interval that is much longer than  $p$  would create a large number of adjacent pieces that each contain just one grey or white part of length  $p$ , such as pieces 3 – 4 and 5 – 6 in Fig. 3(b). To overcome this problem we compress them into a single piece with just one grey or white part. The pieces at  $i = 3$  and  $i = 4$  (respectively at  $i = 5$  and  $i = 6$ ) get compressed into the piece at  $i' = 3$  (respectively at  $i' = 4$ ) in Fig. 3(c). When



**Fig. 3.** (a) Input is a set of intervals and a period length  $p$ . (b) Cut off pieces of length  $p$  and place them above each other. (c) Compressed segments and best line. (d) Segments replaced by their endpoints, best line becomes best grounded rectangle. (e) The additional points.

pieces are compressed, all pieces on top are moved downward to fill the gap. Each compressed piece  $\ell'$  is assigned a weight  $wt(\ell')$ , equal to the number of pieces that were compressed. For each uncompressed piece  $\ell'$  we set  $wt(\ell') = 1$ . Note that this compression is valid since an optimal pattern will always contain either all or none of the grey parts in a compressed piece.<sup>1</sup> The obtained set of pieces is denoted  $\Lambda = \langle \ell'_1, \dots, \ell'_{\rho'} \rangle$ .

We further assign to each grey part  $g$  the weight  $wt(g)$ , equal to the weight  $wt(\ell')$  of the compressed piece  $\ell'$  it belongs to. When pieces with indices in the range  $[i_1, i_2]$  are compressed into a single piece at  $i'$  we lose information about the vertical position of pieces so we define two mappings  $\alpha_1(i')$  and  $\alpha_2(i')$  that return the lowest and highest index of the compressed pieces, i.e.  $\alpha_1(i')$  returns  $i_1$  and  $\alpha_2(i')$  returns  $i_2$ .

Note that we can go from the input in Fig. 3(a) to the compressed version in Fig. 3(c) directly in  $\mathcal{O}(n)$  time, rather than building the uncompressed structure in Fig. 3(b) in  $\mathcal{O}(n + \frac{t_n^e - t_1^s}{p})$  time.

We can now rewrite the original problem as follows. Find an offset  $o$  and integers  $i'_1$  and  $i'_2$  such that  $\alpha_2(i'_2) - \alpha_1(i'_1)$  is maximised and the sum of the weights over all grey parts intersected by the segment  $\{o\} \times [i'_1, i'_2]$  is at least  $c(\alpha_2(i'_2) - \alpha_1(i'_1) + 1)$ . See Fig. 3(c) for an illustration. Since there are only  $\mathcal{O}(n)$  different offsets that might give different bitstrings we can use the approach presented in Section 3 to obtain the following observation.

**Observation 1** *Given a period length and a set of  $n$  time intervals a longest pattern over all offsets can be computed in  $\mathcal{O}(n^2)$  time.*

In the rest of this section we will prove that the running time can be improved to  $\mathcal{O}(n^{3/2} \log^2 n)$ .

**Transformation step 3:** We replace each grey part  $l$  by two points  $q_{left}(l)$  and  $q_{right}(l)$ . The point  $q_{left}(l)$  has weight  $wt(l)$  and is placed at the left endpoint of  $l$  and  $q_{right}(l)$  has weight  $-wt(l)$

<sup>1</sup> A longest pattern may contain only a part of the white parts in a compressed piece at the end but this can be trivially handled in constant time.

and is placed at the right endpoint of  $l$ , as illustrated in Fig. 3(d). The set of integer weighted points is denoted  $A'$ .

We observe that the sum over all the weights of the grey parts in  $A$  intersected by a vertical segment  $A$  is equal to the sum over the points in  $A'$  in the rectilinear rectangle  $A'$  with top right corner at the top endpoint of  $A$ , bottom right corner at the bottom endpoint of  $A$  and unbounded to the left. See Fig. 3(c) and (d). The condition on  $A'$  is that  $\sum_{q \in A'} wt(q) \geq c(\alpha_2(i'_2) - \alpha_1(i'_1) + 1)$ .

**Transformation step 4:** Finally, for each piece  $\ell'$ , insert into  $A'$  a point  $(0, i')$ , where  $i'$  is the index of  $\ell'$ , as shown in Fig. 3(e) with weight  $-wt(\ell') \cdot c$ . The sum over the new points in the region  $A'$  will be equal to  $-c(\alpha_2(i'_2) - \alpha_1(i'_1) + 1)$ , so the constraint on  $A'$  becomes that the sum over all points in  $A'$  is at least zero. Note that the constraint on the sum is now independent of the height of  $A'$ , i.e.  $i'_1$  and  $i'_2$ .

A grounded rectangle is a rectilinear rectangle with its left side on  $y = 0$ . Using this notation we have now transformed the original problem into the following problem:

*Problem 1.* Given a set of weighted points in the plane find the grounded rectangle  $[0, o'] \times [i'_1, i'_2]$  of total weight at least zero that maximises  $\alpha_2(i'_2) - \alpha_1(i'_1)$ .

## 4.2 Finding a tallest grounded rectangle

In this section we show how to solve Problem 1. Partition the points in  $A'$  with respect to their  $i'$ -coordinates into  $\sqrt{n}$  sets  $A'_1, \dots, A'_{\sqrt{n}}$ , each set having at most  $2\sqrt{n}$  points, as shown in Fig. 4(a).

Consider an optimal grounded rectangle  $A$ , it will either only contain points from one set  $A'_i$ , for some  $1 \leq i \leq \sqrt{n}$ , or contain points from several consecutive sets. In the former case we can find an optimal solution by simply running the quadratic time algorithm from Observation 1 on each set  $A'_i$ , to find the longest pattern that does not cross a boundary between the sets. The time required to perform this step is  $\mathcal{O}(\sqrt{n} \cdot (\sqrt{n})^2) = \mathcal{O}(n^{3/2})$ .

It remains to handle the case when the optimal rectangle  $A$  contains points from several consecutive sets. Note that  $A$  can be partitioned into a top left quadrant  $A_B$  in  $A'_i$  and a bottom left quadrant  $A_T$  in  $A'_{i+1}, \dots, A'_{\sqrt{n}}$ , as shown in Fig. 4(b). The algorithm we suggest below finds, for each  $A'_i$ , the best rectangle with the bottom edge in  $A'_i$  and top edge in  $A'_{i+1}, \dots, A'_{\sqrt{n}}$ .

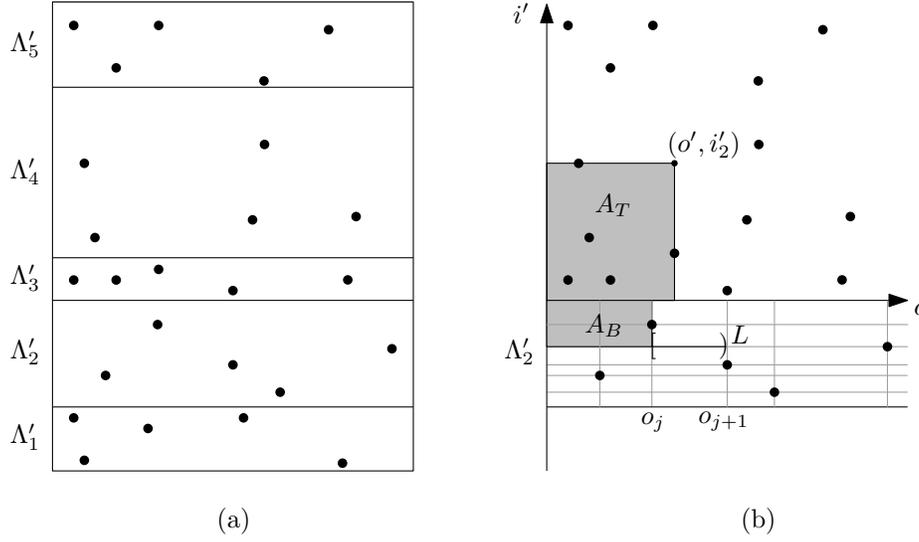
Let  $o_1 < \dots < o_m$  be the ordered set of  $o$ -coordinates of the points in  $A'_i$ , where  $m = \mathcal{O}(\sqrt{n})$ , and let  $I'$  be the set of the corresponding  $i'$ -coordinates. For a fixed  $i'_1 \in I'$  we partition the horizontal line  $i' = i'_1$  into  $\mathcal{O}(\sqrt{n})$  half-open segments  $\langle L_1 = [o_1, o_2) \times \{i'_1\}, \dots, L_{m-1} = [o_{m-1}, o_m) \times \{i'_1\}, L_m = [o_m, \infty) \times \{i'_1\} \rangle$ , such as segment  $L$  in Fig. 4(b).

For each segment  $L_j$  we want to find the tallest grounded rectangle  $A(L_j)$  of total weight at least zero with the bottom right corner on  $L_j$ . Consider the part of  $A(L_j)$  in  $A'_i$ , i.e., the top left quadrant  $A_B(L_j)$ . Note that it does not matter where on  $L_j$  the bottom right corner of  $A_B(L_j)$  is placed since the weight of  $A_B(L_j)$  in  $A'_i$  will be the same. Let  $S(L_j)$  denote the weight of the points in  $A_B(L_j)$  for  $L_j = [o_j, o_{j+1})$ . The aim is now to find the tallest bottom left quadrant  $A_T(L_j)$  in  $A'_{i+1}, \dots, A'_{\sqrt{n}}$  with its right side in the interval  $L_j = [o_j, o_{j+1})$  and whose weight is at least  $-S(L_j)$ . We call this problem the *Highest Valid Dominance Point* problem (a formal definition is given in Section 4.3).

Assume for a moment that a set of  $n$  weighted points in the plane can be preprocessed in  $P(n)$  time using  $S(n)$  space such that *Highest Valid Dominance Point* (HVDP) queries can be answered in  $Q(n)$  time (see Lemma 3 below). If this is the case then we can find the tallest grounded rectangle of non-negative weight as follows:

For each  $i$ ,  $1 \leq i \leq \sqrt{n}$ , build a data structure  $D_i$  on the points in  $A'_{i+1}, \dots, A'_{\sqrt{n}}$  that can answer HVDP queries. Recall that there are two cases; either the best rectangle with bottom side in  $A'_i$  only contains points in  $A'_i$ , or not. In the first case we can apply the naïve approach from Observation 1 which solves it in  $\mathcal{O}(n)$  time.

In the second case consider every half-open segment  $L_j$  induced by the points in  $A'_i$ . For each  $L_j$  compute the weight of the points in  $A_B(L_j)$ . Since we try all possible segments in any preferred



**Fig. 4.** (a) The points in  $A'$  are split into  $\sqrt{n}$  sets. (b) The grounded rectangle is split into two quadrants. Any point on  $L$  covers the same set of points in  $A'_i$ .

order this can be done in constant time per segment. Next perform a HVDP query on  $D_i$  with  $S(L_j)$  and  $L_j$  as parameters, where  $S(L_j)$  is the weight of the points in  $A_B(L_j)$ . The returned quadrant  $A_T(L_j)$  can then be merged with  $A_B(L_j)$  into a grounded rectangle that is guaranteed to be the tallest grounded rectangle of total weight at least zero with the bottom right corner on  $L_j$ , i.e., the right side of  $A_B(L_j)$  is moved to the right such that it aligns with the right side of  $A_T(L_j)$ .

This process is performed for each set  $A'_i$ ,  $1 \leq i \leq \sqrt{n}$ , and for each half-open segment  $L_j$  induced by the points in  $A'_i$ . Putting it together we get that the preprocessing requires  $\mathcal{O}(\sqrt{n} \cdot P(n))$  time and the queries requires  $\mathcal{O}(n \cdot Q(n))$  time and  $\mathcal{O}(n + S(n))$  space.

In the next section we will prove the following lemma:

**Lemma 3.** *We can preprocess a set of  $n$  weighted points in  $\mathcal{O}(n \log^2 n)$  time using  $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$  space such that HVDP queries can be answered in  $\mathcal{O}(\log^2 n)$  time.*

From the lemma and the above discussion the below theorem follows:

**Theorem 2.** *Let  $P$  be a set of period lengths and  $\mathcal{I}$  be a set of  $n$  intervals. For each period length in  $P$ , we can compute a longest dense substring over all possible offsets in  $\mathcal{O}(|P| \cdot n^{3/2} \log^2 n)$  time and  $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$  space.*

*Proof.* In the preprocessing step of each of the  $|P|$  iterations we use  $\mathcal{O}(n)$  time and space to build the compressed representation.

In each iteration, we only use one HVDP data structure at a time so the total space used is  $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$ . Running the quadratic algorithm on each  $A'_i$  takes  $\mathcal{O}(\sqrt{n}^2)$ , which is  $\mathcal{O}(n^{3/2})$  in total. Constructing each of the  $\mathcal{O}(\sqrt{n})$  HVDP data structures takes  $\mathcal{O}(n \log^2 n)$  time, which is  $\mathcal{O}(n^{3/2} \log^2 n)$  in total. For each  $A'_i$  we perform  $\mathcal{O}(n)$  HVDP queries which takes  $\mathcal{O}(\log^2 n)$ . In total this amounts to  $\mathcal{O}(\sqrt{n} \cdot n \cdot \log^2 n) = \mathcal{O}(n^{3/2} \log^2 n)$  time.  $\square$

### 4.3 The HVDP Problem

To finish the proof of Theorem 2 we here prove Lemma 3. A point  $q = (q_x, q_y)$  is said to dominate a point  $q' = (q'_x, q'_y)$  if and only if  $q_x \geq q'_x$  and  $q_y \geq q'_y$ . Let  $\text{dom}(q)$  be the set of points dominated by a point  $q$ . We define the dominance sum, denoted  $\sigma(q)$  to be the sum of  $wt(q')$  over all points

$q'$  dominated by  $q$ . Finally, the *Highest Valid Dominance Point*, or  $\text{HVDP}(x_1, x_2, S)$ , is the point  $q$  with the following properties:  $\sigma(q) \geq S$ ,  $q_x \in [x_1, x_2)$ , and  $q_y$  is maximised.

We first define the *horizontal segment maximum dominance*, or  $\text{HSMD}(I)$ , of a given half-open horizontal segment  $I = [x_1, x_2) \times \{y_1\}$  to be the maximum dominance sum for any point on  $I$ . Formally,

$$\begin{aligned}\sigma(p) &= \sum_{q \in \text{dom}(p)} wt(q) \\ \text{HSMD}(I) &= \max_{p \in I} \sigma(p)\end{aligned}$$

*Problem 2.* Preprocess a set  $P$  of  $n$  points so that we can efficiently find  $\text{HSMD}$  of a given half-open horizontal segment  $I = [x_1, x_2) \times \{y_1\}$ .

**Lemma 4.** *We can preprocess  $n$  points in  $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$  time using  $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$  space such that  $\text{HSMD}$  queries can be answered in  $\mathcal{O}(\log n)$  time.*

*Proof.* We build a balanced binary search tree  $T$  on the set of  $x$  values. We will then sweep the points from bottom to top and update  $T$ . After each sweep event we want  $T$  to contain the information about dominance sums for every point on the sweep line. Note that we are only interested in dominance sums for points that lie on the sweepline in its current position. We will later use persistence to make the data structure more general.

Since inserting a point would require updating  $\mathcal{O}(n)$  values, we need to store the dominance sum indirectly. At each node  $v$  we store a real value  $\delta(v)$ , initially set to zero. Dominance sum at value  $x_0$  will be represented by the sum of the  $\delta$ -values on the path from the root to the leaf for  $x_0$ . When a point  $p$  is reached by the sweep line we only need to increase by  $wt(p)$  the  $\mathcal{O}(\log n)$   $\delta$ -values for the nodes that cover the region  $[p_x, \infty)$ , i.e. we search for  $p_x$  in the tree and for every left turn at a node  $v$  we add  $wt(p)$  to the  $\delta$ -value of the right child of  $v$ .

At each node  $v$  in  $T$  we also store a real value  $M(v)$ , which is equal to  $\delta(v)$  for the leaf nodes. For other nodes it is defined recursively as  $M(v) = \delta(v) + \max\{M(v_l), M(v_r)\}$ , i.e. it is equal to the maximum sum of  $\delta$ -values on any path from  $v$  to a leaf.

When a point  $p$  is inserted, only the  $\mathcal{O}(\log n)$  nodes on the path from the root to  $p_x$  are affected and can be updated by walking from the leaf to the root.

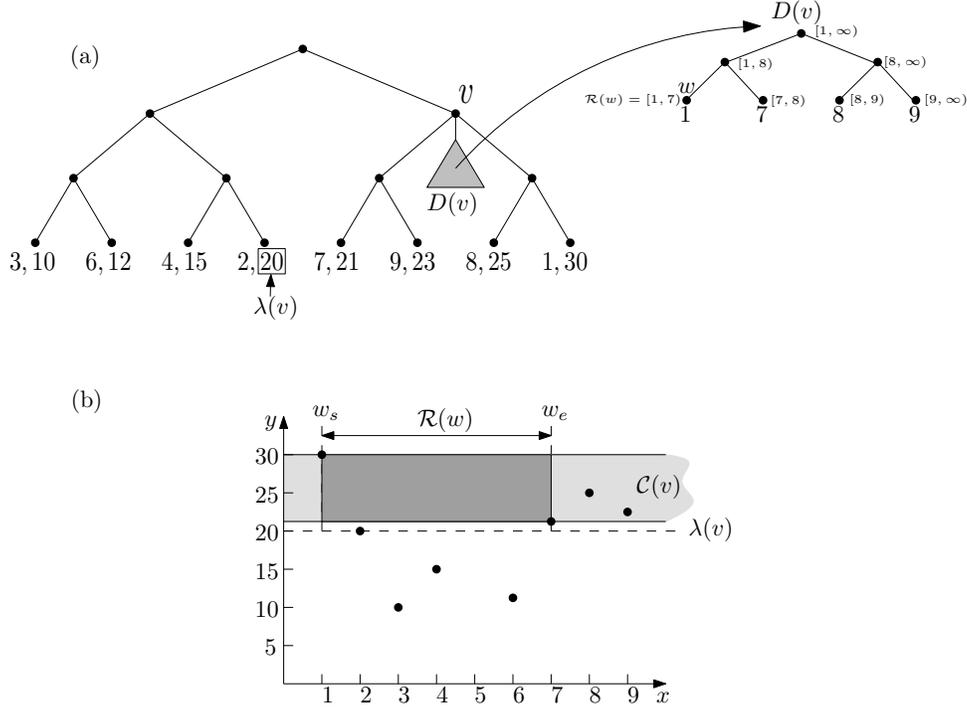
To find the maximum dominance sum in the region  $[x_1, x_2)$ , we initialise  $s$  and  $m$  to zero and search with  $x_1$  and  $x_2$  in  $T$  until we get to the split node  $v_{split}$  where the search paths split. For every node  $v$  from the root to  $v_{split}$  we add  $\delta(v)$  to  $s$ . We set  $s_{left}$  and  $s_{right}$  equal to  $s$ . From the left child of  $v_{split}$  we continue to search for  $x_1$ , and at each step we increase  $s_{left}$  in the same way as before. At each left turn we set  $m = \max\{m, s_{left} + M(v_r)\}$ . At the leaf node  $w$  for  $x_1$  we set  $m = \max\{m, s_{left} + M(w)\}$ . Similar process is repeated with the right child of  $v_{split}$  and  $s_{right}$ . The only difference is that  $m$  is updated on right turns using  $m = \max\{m, s_{right} + M(v_l)\}$ . At the leaf node for  $x_2$   $m$  is not updated.

At the moment this only allows queries for the current position of the sweep line. However, since at each event point only  $\mathcal{O}(\log n)$  values are changed, we can make  $T$  partially persistent using  $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$  space, while still keeping the  $\mathcal{O}(\log n)$  query time [10]. To find the  $\text{HSMD}$  for an interval  $I = [x_1, x_2) \times \{y_1\}$  we use  $y_1$  as the time stamp in the persistent structure and then query it using the region  $[x_1, x_2)$ . If there are multiple points with the same  $y$  value, the time stamp refers to the last point inserted.  $\square$

Recall that *Highest Valid Dominance Point*, or  $\text{HVDP}(x_1, x_2, S)$ , is the point  $(x_0, y_0)$  with maximal  $y_0$  whose dominance sum is at least  $S$  and  $x_0 \in [x_1, x_2)$ .

We build a balanced binary search tree  $T$  on the set of points  $P$  with respect to their  $y$  values. For each node  $v$ , define  $\mathcal{X}(v)$  and  $\mathcal{Y}(v)$  to be the sets of  $x$  and  $y$  values in the canonical subset  $\mathcal{C}(v)$  of  $v$ . We create an associated data structure  $D(v)$  as a balanced binary search tree on  $\mathcal{X}(v)$ , as shown in Figure 5(a).

Given a node  $v$  in  $T$ , we define the boolean function *Valid Dominance Point*, or  $\text{VDP}(v, x_1, x_2, S)$  that evaluates to true if and only if there is a real value  $y_0 \in \mathcal{Y}(v)$  and  $x_0 \in [x_1, x_2)$  such that the point  $(x_0, y_0)$  has a dominance sum of at least  $S$ .



**Fig. 5.** (a) The primary and secondary data structures.  $[w_s, w_e]$  is shown for each node in the associated data structure. (b) A graphical interpretation of  $\mathcal{C}(v)$ ,  $\lambda(v)$  and  $\mathcal{R}(w)$ .

**Lemma 5.** *We can build a tree  $T$  on  $n$  points in  $\mathcal{O}(n \log^2 n)$  time using  $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$  space such that VDP queries on  $T$  can be answered in  $\mathcal{O}(\log n)$  time.*

*Proof.* Let  $w$  be a node in  $D(v)$ . We say that  $w$  represents the half-open range  $\mathcal{R}(w) = [w_s, w_e)$ , where  $w_s$  is the minimal value in  $\mathcal{C}(w)$  and  $w_e$  is the next value to the right of  $\mathcal{C}(w)$ , as shown in Figure 5(a). Formally if  $w_m$  is the maximal value in  $\mathcal{C}(w)$  then  $w_e$  is the minimal value in  $D(v)$  that is greater than  $w_m$ , or  $\infty$  if there are no values greater than  $w_m$ . At each leaf  $w$  of  $D$  we store real values  $\text{best}(w)$  and  $\text{best-inside}(w)$ .

$\text{best}(w)$  is the maximum dominance sum of a point  $(x_0, y_0)$  with  $y_0 \in \mathcal{Y}(v)$  and  $x_0 \in [w_s, w_e)$ .  $\text{best-inside}(w)$  is the maximum dominance sum, *restricted to the set  $\mathcal{C}(v)$* , of a point  $(w_s, y_0)$  with  $y_0 \in \mathcal{Y}(v)$ . Figure 5(b) shows the relationship between the nodes  $v$  and  $w$ ,  $\text{best-inside}(w)$  and  $\text{best-pre}(w_s, w_e, \lambda(v))$ .

Formally,

$$\begin{aligned} \text{best-inside}(w) &= \max_{y_0 \in \mathcal{Y}(v)} \sum_{p \in \mathcal{C}(v) \cap \text{dom}(w_s, y_0)} p_s \\ \text{best}(w) &= \max_{y_0 \in \mathcal{Y}(v)} \max_{x_0 \in [w_s, w_e)} \sum_{p \in \text{dom}(x_0, y_0)} p_s \\ &= \text{best-pre}(w_s, w_e, \lambda(v)) + \text{best-inside}(w) \end{aligned}$$

where  $\lambda(v)$  is the  $y$  value of the highest point below all points in  $\mathcal{C}(v)$  and  $\text{best-pre}(x_1, x_2, y_1)$  is the maximum dominance sum for any point on the half-open segment  $[x_1, x_2) \times \{y_1\}$ , which is exactly the HSMD problem. The last equality follows from the fact that in  $\mathcal{C}(v)$  any  $x \in [w_s, w_e)$  gives the same dominance sum.

$\text{best-inside}(w)$  can be calculated for each leaf  $w$  in  $D$ , i.e. for every  $x \in \mathcal{X}(v)$  in total time  $\mathcal{O}(|\mathcal{C}(v)| \log |\mathcal{C}(v)|)$  using the same approach as for the HSMD problem. However here we sweep

$\mathcal{C}(v)$  from left to right and after each update we record the maximum dominance sum for the current value of  $x$ . The data structure does not need to be made persistent so we can do this in  $\mathcal{O}(|\mathcal{C}(v)|)$  space.

At each internal node  $w$  in  $D(v)$  we store  $\text{best}(w) = \max\{\text{best}(w_l), \text{best}(w_r)\}$ , where  $w_l$  and  $w_r$  are the children of  $w$ .

Note that if we partition the interval  $[x_1, x_2]$  into a set of intervals  $\mathcal{I} = \langle I_1, \dots, I_{k-1} \rangle = \langle [\tau_1, \tau_2), [\tau_2, \tau_3), \dots, [\tau_{k-1}, \tau_k) \rangle$ , then  $\text{VDP}(v, x_1, x_2, S)$  returns true if and only if  $\text{VDP}(v, \tau_i, \tau_{i+1}, S)$  returns true for some  $i \in \{1, \dots, k-1\}$ .

To answer a VDP query we search with  $x_1$  and  $x_2$  in  $D(v)$  until we get to the split node  $v_{split}$ . We then search for  $x_1$  starting from the left child of  $v_{split}$  and whenever we turn left at a node  $w'$  we check if  $\text{best}(w'_r) \geq S$ . If it is then we stop and return true.

If  $x_1$  is not present in  $D(v)$  then the search path will take us to the leaf node  $w$  with  $w_s < x_1 < w_e$ . Since  $D(v)$  does not contain any  $x$  values in the range  $(w_s, w_e)$ , the highest dominance sum in the range  $[x_1, w_e]$  will be equal to  $\text{best-inside}(w) + \text{best-pre}(x_1, w_e, \lambda(v))$ . If this sum is at least  $S$  then we stop and return true.

The search path for  $x_2$  is handled similarly. □

We can now prove the lemma stated in Section 4.

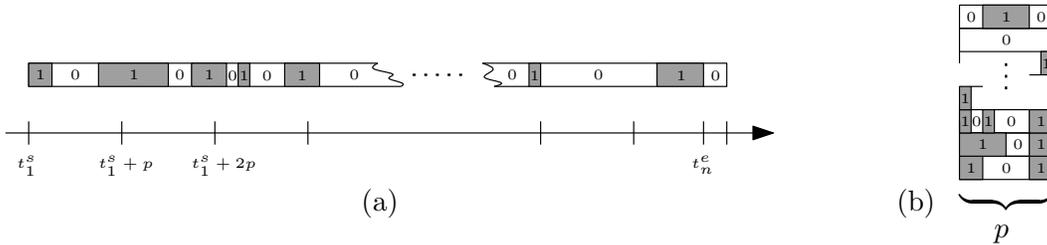
**Lemma 3.** We can preprocess a set of  $n$  weighted points in  $\mathcal{O}(n \log^2 n)$  time using  $\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$  space such that HVDP queries can be answered in  $\mathcal{O}(\log^2 n)$  time.

*Proof.* To solve the HVDP problem in Lemma 3 we build a VDP data structure  $T$ . Let  $v$  be the root of  $T$ . If  $\text{VDP}(v, x_1, x_2, S)$  returns false then we are done because there is no valid point with the desired dominance sum. Otherwise we walk from  $v$  to its right child  $v_r$  if  $\text{VDP}(v_r, x_1, x_2, S)$  returns true, and to the left child  $v_l$  otherwise. We continue the process recursively until we reach a leaf node, which will contain the highest valid point with the desired dominance sum.

Since we perform  $\mathcal{O}(\log n)$  VDP queries the total query time is  $\mathcal{O}(\log^2 n)$ . □

## 5 Given Period Lengths (Approximate)

Here, we are given a set of period lengths  $P$  together with the set of intervals  $\mathcal{I}$ . We propose an efficient algorithm that computes *for each* period length  $p \in P$  *all* approximate longest dense substrings – one for each possible offset. Note that the approach as proposed in Section 3 to solve the current problem will fail, because we do not know the offsets and even worse: at first sight, it seems we have to deal with an infinite number of offsets here. The general approach is to run an algorithm for every  $p \in P$ . For a fixed  $p$ , the algorithm is as follows: We cut the time-line and intervals between  $t_1^s$  and  $t_n^e$  into  $\frac{t_n^e - t_1^s}{p}$  pieces of length  $p$ , as illustrated in Figure 6(a). The last piece might have length less than  $p$ . We arrange all the pieces into a two dimensional structure by putting them above each other. See Figure 6(b).



**Fig. 6.** (a) the time-line with indicated intervals (grey); (b) the time-line cut into pieces that are arranged underneath each other

Now we scan this structure from left to right with a vertical scan line. The scan line stops at *events*, which are moments during the scan, where the scan line leaves or enters any interval of any piece. At each event, we perform certain computations. We can interpret inside an interval as bit 1, and outside as bit 0. Hence, each vertical position  $o$  of the scan line cutting through the pieces represents a bit-string  $s(o, p)$  of length  $\frac{t_n^e - t_1^s}{p}$ . Note that this bitstring does not change in between two events; and hence, we only have at most  $2 \cdot n$  offsets to consider. If we apply the algorithm of Section 2 onto this string  $s(o, p)$ , we can compute an exact solution to the current problem in  $\mathcal{O}(|P| \cdot (n \log n + n \cdot \frac{t_n^e - t_1^s}{p}))$  time and  $\mathcal{O}(n + \frac{t_n^e - t_1^s}{p})$  space.<sup>2</sup> However, we aim for a better running time.

Remarkable is the following observation on the scan described above. From one event to the next, exactly one bit will flip in  $s(o, p)$ . (In the case that two or more intervals have the same endpoint modulo  $p$ , we define an order on them according to their absolute time.) In the just mentioned approach, we spend  $\mathcal{O}(\frac{t_n^e - t_1^s}{p})$  time for each bitstring, even though this bitstring differs only by one bit from the previous bitstring. The ultimate goal would be an algorithm that consumes only constant time for each bit flip. It seems hard to derive such an algorithm that computes the exact solution. We will present an approximation algorithm that spends  $\mathcal{O}(\log \frac{t_n^e - t_1^s}{p})$  time per bit flip. The main idea is that the bitstring  $s(o, p)$  is represented in the leaves of a binary tree  $T$ . For a bitflip, we have to update the corresponding leaf of  $T$  and also information stored in nodes along the path from that leaf to the root of  $T$ . After that we can query the tree  $T$  to find an approximate solution for the current bitstring. Updating and querying can be done in logarithmic time, if  $T$  is balanced. In addition to  $T$ , we store in an event queue the  $\mathcal{O}(n)$  events in sorted order. We have one event for each endpoint of an interval, each of which causes a bitflip.

For our approximation algorithm, we assume that we are given a constant real  $\varepsilon$ ,  $0 < \varepsilon < 1$ . To clarify what we mean by an approximation let  $s_{opt}$  be an optimal solution to the LDS problem on a string  $s$ , i.e. let  $s_{opt}$  be a longest dense substring of  $s$ . A  $(1 - \varepsilon)$ -*approximate solution* to this problem is a string  $s' \subseteq s$  with  $ratio(s') \geq (1 - \varepsilon) \cdot c$  and  $length(s') \geq length(s_{opt})$ . Note that  $s_{opt}$  and  $s'$  can be disjoint and that  $s'$  can be much longer than  $s_{opt}$ , and  $\frac{ratio(s')}{ratio(s_{opt})}$  can be smaller than  $(1 - \varepsilon)$ .

**The Data Structure  $T$ :** The structure  $T$  is a binary tree with the leaves representing the bits of the current string  $s(o, p)$ , as shown in Figure 7. To ease the description, we assume w.l.o.g. that  $T$  is a complete binary tree.<sup>3</sup> We define leaves of  $T$  to have height-level 0 and the root of  $T$  has height-level  $\log(length(s))$ . Each node  $v_1$  of the tree represents a substring  $s_{v_1}$  of  $s$  that contains exactly those bits of  $s$  that are represented in the leaves of the subtree rooted at  $v_1$ . The length of  $s_{v_1}$  depends on the height-level  $level(v_1)$  of  $v_1$ , i.e.  $length(s_{v_1}) = 2^{level(v_1)}$ .

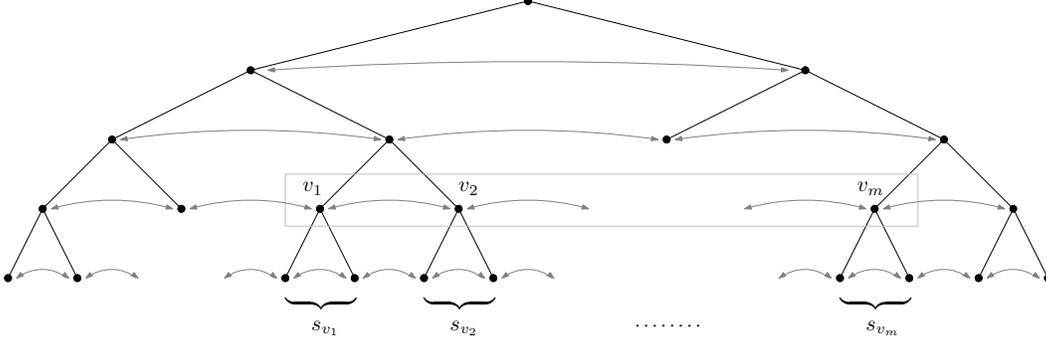
Each node in  $T$  will store four values and two links as described next. For each node  $v_1$ , we store the ratio  $ratio(s_{v_1})$  and the length  $length(s_{v_1})$  of the corresponding string  $s_{v_1}$ . We also create *level-links* (indicated in Figure 7) that connect consecutive nodes in  $T$  on the same height-level into a doubly-linked list. On top of that, we attach two other values to every node  $v_1$ . Since the tree is level-linked, we can easily access the nodes  $v_2, v_3, \dots$  on the same height-level as  $v_1$  and to the right of  $v_1$  in  $T$ , as shown in Figure 7. Hence, we can easily compute the ratio and length of the substrings obtained by concatenating (‘o’-operation) the substrings  $s_{v_1}, s_{v_2}, \dots, s_{v_i}$ . For  $1 \leq i \leq m$ , we obtain  $m$  such substrings, where  $m := \lceil \frac{4}{\varepsilon} - 4 \rceil$ . And among those we store at  $v_1$  the length  $length_{max}(v_1)$  of the longest such substring with ratio at least  $(1 - \varepsilon) \cdot c$ . Note that  $length_{max}(v_1)$  is always a multiple of  $length(s_{v_1})$ . Additionally, we store at  $v_1$  the maximum  $length_{max}^{tree}(v_1)$  of this

<sup>2</sup> Note that if we use compressed bitstrings and do not explicitly compute this two-dimensional structure, we can prove the following bounds:  $\mathcal{O}(|P| \cdot n^2)$  time and  $\mathcal{O}(n)$  space.

<sup>3</sup> We can append 0-bits to  $s(o, p)$  to obtain a bit string whose length is a power of 2. This does not influence the solution, because an approximate solution that contains appended 0-bits, indicates another approximate solution without appended 0-bits.

value over all nodes of the subtree rooted at  $v_1$ . Formally, we have:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{length}_{max}(v_1) &:= \max_{1 \leq i \leq m} \{ \text{length}(s_{v_1} \circ \dots \circ s_{v_i}) \mid \text{ratio}(s_{v_1} \circ \dots \circ s_{v_i}) \geq (1 - \varepsilon) \cdot c \}, \text{ and} \\ \text{length}_{max}^{tree}(v_1) &:= \max \{ \text{length}_{max}(v) \mid v \text{ is in the subtree rooted at } v_1 \} \end{aligned}$$



**Fig. 7.** The tree  $T$  for string  $s$  is shown (grey arrows are the level-links). Also the list of  $m$  nodes  $v_1, \dots, v_m$  on the same level as  $v_1$  and starting with  $v_1$  is indicated (grey rectangle), as well as the substrings corresponding to those nodes.

Using elementary techniques and basic results, we can conclude with the following lemma.

**Lemma 6.** *Constructing the tree  $T$  and the event queue can be done in  $\mathcal{O}(\frac{1}{\varepsilon^2} \cdot \frac{t_n^e - t_1^s}{p} + n \log n)$  time and  $\mathcal{O}(\frac{t_n^e - t_1^s}{p} + n)$  space.*

Once we have the tree  $T$  for string  $s$ , we will see that an optimal solution  $s_{opt} \subseteq s$  to the LDS problem can be approximated by concatenating at most  $m$  substrings that correspond to consecutive tree-nodes on the same height-level.

**Lemma 7.** *Let  $lvl$  be the smallest height level in  $T$  such that  $\text{length}(s_{opt}) \leq m \cdot 2^{lvl}$ . Among the nodes of  $T$  on level  $lvl$ , let  $v_1$  be the left-most node with  $s_{v_1} \cap s_{opt} \neq \emptyset$ , and let  $v_i$  be the right-most node with  $s_{v_i} \cap s_{opt} \neq \emptyset$ , as shown in Figure 8. Then  $\text{ratio}(s_{v_1} \circ \dots \circ s_{v_i}) \geq (1 - \varepsilon) \cdot c$  and  $s_{opt} \subseteq s_{v_1} \circ \dots \circ s_{v_i}$ .*

*Proof.* First, we observe the following (Figure 8):

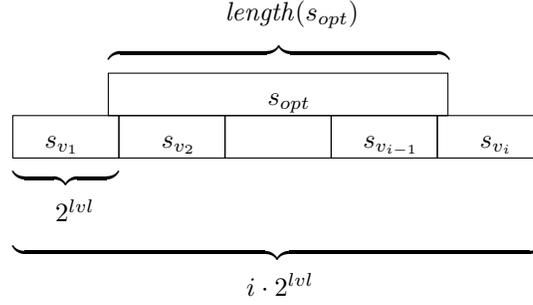
$$\text{ratio}(s) = \frac{\text{number of 1 in } s}{\text{length}(s)}, \quad \text{for any string } s \quad (1)$$

$$\text{length}(s_{v_1} \circ \dots \circ s_{v_i}) < \text{length}(s_{opt}) + 2 \cdot 2^{lvl}, \quad \text{because of the definition of } v_1 \text{ and } v_i \quad (2)$$

$$\text{length}(s_{opt}) > m \cdot 2^{lvl-1}, \quad \text{by our definition of } lvl \quad (3)$$

Now, we will prove that  $\text{ratio}(s_{v_1} \circ \dots \circ s_{v_i}) \geq (1 - \varepsilon) \cdot c$ :

$$\begin{aligned} \text{ratio}(s_{v_1} \circ \dots \circ s_{v_i}) &\geq \frac{\text{ratio}(s_{opt}) \cdot \text{length}(s_{opt})}{\text{length}(s_{v_1} \circ \dots \circ s_{v_i})}, \quad \text{using (1)} \\ &\geq \frac{\text{ratio}(s_{opt}) \cdot \text{length}(s_{opt})}{\text{length}(s_{opt}) + 2 \cdot 2^{lvl}}, \quad \text{using (2)} \\ &\geq \frac{\text{ratio}(s_{opt}) \cdot \text{length}(s_{opt})}{\text{length}(s_{opt}) + 4 \cdot \frac{\text{length}(s_{opt})}{m}}, \quad \text{using (3)} \\ &\geq \frac{\text{ratio}(s_{opt})}{1 + \frac{4}{m}} = \frac{m}{m+4} \cdot \text{ratio}(s_{opt}) \geq (1 - \varepsilon) \cdot c \end{aligned}$$



**Fig. 8.** The relations between the strings  $s_{opt}$  and  $s_{v_1} \circ \dots \circ s_{v_i}$ ,  $i \leq m$ , as well as their lengths.

By the definition of  $s_{v_1} \circ \dots \circ s_{v_i}$ , it follows that  $s_{opt} \subseteq s_{v_1} \circ \dots \circ s_{v_i}$ , which completes the proof.  $\square$

Note that the previous lemma also holds for any string with ratio at least  $c$ . Nevertheless, we formulated it with respect to an optimal solution  $s_{opt}$ , and we can conclude the existence of approximate solutions. For finding an approximate solution, recall that for each node  $v$  in  $T$ , we store the  $length_{max}(v)$  values.

**Lemma 8.** *Let  $lvl$  and  $v_1, \dots, v_i$  be defined as in Lemma 7, and let  $s'$  be the string defined by  $s' := s_{v_1} \circ s_{v_2} \circ \dots \circ s_{v_i}$  and  $length(s') = length_{max}(v_1)$ . Then  $s' \supseteq s_{v_1} \circ \dots \circ s_{v_i} \supseteq s_{opt}$ .*

*Proof.* From  $s_{opt}$  being an optimal solution and Lemma 7, we know that  $ratio(s_{v_1} \circ \dots \circ s_{v_i}) \geq (1-\varepsilon) \cdot c$  and  $s_{v_1} \circ \dots \circ s_{v_i} \supseteq s_{opt}$ . Now from the definition of  $length_{max}$ , it follows that  $length_{max}(v_1) \geq length(s_{v_1} \circ \dots \circ s_{v_i})$ . The lemma follows.  $\square$

So far, we have considered the approximate longest dense substrings only for one string for the current position of the scan line (i.e. for the current offset). Now, we will move the scan line to the right until it either leaves an interval or enters a new interval. This results in one bitflip. We have to update  $T$  accordingly, and we have to perform a query to find an approximate solution for the new position of the scanline (i.e. for the new offset).

**Lemma 9.** *For a single bitflip,  $T$  can be updated in  $\mathcal{O}(\frac{1}{\varepsilon^2} \cdot \log \frac{t_n^e - t_1^s}{p})$  time.*

*Proof.* Following the path from the leaf, where the bit flipped, to the root, we may have to update the tree on all  $\mathcal{O}(\log \frac{t_n^e - t_1^s}{p})$  levels; and on each level we have to recompute  $\mathcal{O}(m)$  max-length values corresponding to consecutive nodes on that level. Each computation of such a value requires  $m = \mathcal{O}(\frac{1}{\varepsilon})$  time. The time bound follows.  $\square$

Updating the  $length_{max}$  and  $length_{max}^{tree}$  values is important, because these values can be used for navigating in the tree. Given the tree at any time, an approximate solution to the LDS problem can be found by simply following the path from the root of the tree to children with highest  $length_{max}^{tree}$  value. From this and Lemmas 8 and 9, we derive the following theorem.

**Theorem 3.** *Let  $P$  be a set of period lengths and  $\mathcal{I}$  be a set of  $n$  intervals. We can compute approximate solutions for all longest dense substrings for all period lengths in  $P$  and all possible offsets in  $\mathcal{O}(|P| \cdot (n(\log n + \frac{1}{\varepsilon^2} \log(t_n^e - t_1^s)) + (t_n^e - t_1^s)))$  time and  $\mathcal{O}((t_n^e - t_1^s) + n)$  space.*

*Remark 1.* For a given period length and a fixed offset, the problem of reporting *all* approximate substrings with ratio  $\geq (1-\varepsilon) \cdot c$  and length at least a certain threshold can also be solved with the above approach. Whenever we query the tree, we follow all paths from the root to the children whose  $length_{max}^{tree}$  value is at least the length threshold.

*Remark 2.* If we are not interested in computing approximate solutions for all longest dense substrings for each possible offset, but rather have the overall longest dense substring over all possible offsets, the above approach can be slightly modified, and the running time can be improved by replacing the factor  $\frac{1}{\varepsilon^2}$  with  $\frac{1}{\varepsilon}$ . In this case, we can start with an initially approximate overall longest dense substring, and during all updates to the underlying bitstring and the tree  $T$ , we keep track of possible longer dense substrings. For this, we do not need the values  $length_{max}(v)$  and  $length_{max}^{tree}(v)$ , and the procedure behind Lemma 9 can be modified in the following way. Instead of computing  $\mathcal{O}(m)$  values at a node  $v$ , we only compute one value, which is the longest dense substring including  $s_v$  and having length at most  $m \cdot length(s_v)$ . This problem is similar to our basic problem introduced in Section 2, and in fact, having the *ratio* values of  $s_v$  and of  $v$ 's neighbours on the same high-level, the algorithm proposed in Section 2 can be modified to solve this in  $\mathcal{O}(\frac{1}{\varepsilon})$  linear time.

## 6 Nothing Given

Even if we are not given a set of possible offsets nor a set of possible period lengths, we still can tackle the problem of computing the *overall* longest dense substring over all period lengths and over all offsets. We also observe that in some cases it might be hard to develop efficient algorithms.

### 6.1 Solution

We propose an algorithm to solve this problem, where we make the following assumptions: the period length  $p$  can be any value in  $[0, t_n^e - t_1^s]$ , the offset can be any value between  $t_1^s$  and  $t_1^s + p$ , and the intervals are shorter than the period length  $p$ . Hence, a single visit can only contribute once to a bit-string. If no lower bound on the period length is given, then an arbitrarily good solution (w.r.t. the number of bits) can always be found by setting  $p$  to be infinitesimally small. Usually the lower bound is related to the length of the shortest interval between two visits. We believe that considering these constraints is meaningful from an application point of view.

We argue that we only have to check a polynomial (in  $n$  – the number of intervals) number of possible period lengths, which enables the use of the algorithms in Section 4 or Observation 1. Let  $s(o, p)$  be the string that contains an overall longest dense substring.

**Lemma 10.** *There exist an offset  $o'$  and a period length  $p'$  with  $s(o', p') = s(o, p)$ , and there exists two end points  $t' < t''$  of intervals in  $\mathcal{I}$  (not necessarily the same interval), such that  $t' - t_1^s \equiv t'' - t_1^s \equiv o' \pmod{p'}$ .*

*Proof.* Consider an offset  $o$  and a period length  $p$ , such that  $s(o, p)$  contains an overall longest dense substring. Let  $o'$  be the smallest offset such that  $s(o', p) = s(o, p)$ . This implies that one of the visits coincide with an end point, denoted  $x$ , of one of the intervals in  $\mathcal{I}$ . If this was not true then  $o'$  would not be minimal, or  $s(o, p)$  would not be a longest dense substring.

Fix the position of  $s(o', p)$  at  $x$  and increase the period length until the period length is  $p'$  where  $p'$  is the smallest period length greater than  $p$  for which  $s(o', p) = s(o', p')$ . Obviously at least two visits must now coincide with endpoints of intervals in  $\mathcal{I}$ , which concludes the proof of the lemma.  $\square$

We conclude the existence of  $o'$  and  $p'$  such that  $s(o', p')$  contains an overall longest dense substring, and with any infinitesimal change to  $o'$  we lose this property. Hence, we conclude the existence of a pair of interval start/end-points (namely  $t'$  and  $t''$ ) that specify  $o'$  and  $p'$ . We also conclude that  $i := \frac{t'' - t'}{p'}$  is an integer. The integer  $i - 1$  is the number of bits in  $s(o', p')$  between the bits corresponding to  $t'$  and  $t''$ . Hence, for the period length  $p'$ , it holds that  $p' = \frac{t'' - t'}{i}$ .

We do not know the values of  $t'$  and  $t''$ , and hence, we try all possible combinations of start-/end-points. For a fixed pair of start/end-points (i.e. for fixed  $t'$  and  $t''$ ), we compute the period length  $p' = \frac{t'' - t'}{i}$ . However, we do not know the integer  $i$ , but we can bound it by:  $1 \leq i \leq \frac{n}{c}$ .

The first inequality follows from  $t' < t''$ . To see the second inequality, note that any substring with ratio at least  $c$  has length at most  $\frac{n}{c}$ , because the number of 1's is at most  $n$ . Therefore, if  $i > \frac{n}{c}$  then the bits corresponding to  $t'$  and  $t''$  could not belong to the same dense substring. So for a fixed pair of start/end-points, we thus have  $\frac{n}{c}$  potential period lengths to test. Since there are  $\mathcal{O}(n^2)$  pairs of start/end-points, there are in total  $\mathcal{O}(\frac{n^3}{c})$  potential period lengths.

**Theorem 4.** *There exist  $\mathcal{O}(n)$  space,  $\mathcal{O}(\frac{n^4}{c})$  running time algorithms to compute an overall longest dense substring, assuming that the period length  $p$  can be any value in  $[0, t_n^e - t_1^s]$ , the offset can be any value between  $t_1^s$  and  $t_1^s + p$ , and that the intervals are shorter than the period length.*

*Proof.* From the discussion above, we know that there is a pair  $t', t''$  of start/end-points of intervals, such that this pair specifies a period length  $p'$  and an offset  $o'$ , such that  $s(o', p')$  contains an overall longest dense substring. Therefore, we test all pairs. For each pair, we test all potential period lengths, and for each potential period length, we apply the algorithm in Section 2 to give  $\mathcal{O}(\frac{n^4}{c})$  running time.  $\square$

## 6.2 Hardness in Some Cases

It often is the case in algorithm design and complexity that a problem becomes harder if the solution or restricting parameter are required to be integers. In this section, we argue that this might also be true for the possible period lengths  $P$ . We have seen that if  $P$  is a set of period lengths then our algorithms have a running time that is linear in  $|P|$ . On the other hand, if  $P$  is a continuous range of period lengths then our algorithm to solve the problem in some cases has a running time that is independent of  $P$ . When solving LDS for a given set  $P$  of period lengths, we argue that it is hard to develop an algorithm whose running time is independent of  $|P|$ .

**Observation 2** *Suppose we are given a set of period lengths and a fixed offset. Computing an overall longest dense substring over all period lengths is at least as hard as integer factorisation.*

To see this, let  $q$  be any integer that we aim to decompose into two integer factors. We construct an instance  $\mathcal{I}$ ,  $O$  and  $P$  of LDS in the Discrete Model. The set of intervals is  $\mathcal{I} = \{[0, 0], [q + \frac{1}{2}, q + \frac{1}{2}]\}$ , the set of offsets is  $O = \{\frac{1}{2}\}$  and the set of period lengths is  $P = \{2, \dots, q - 1\}$ . Note that the size of  $\mathcal{I}$  and  $O$  is constant, while the size of  $P$  is  $\mathcal{O}(q)$ . Hence, if all elements of  $P$  have to be given explicitly, then this construction takes  $\mathcal{O}(q)$  time, but if the elements of  $P$  can be given implicitly as ‘all integers between 2 and  $q - 1$ ’, then this construction can be done in constant time. (The latter is equivalent to setting the range of period lengths to  $P = [2, q - 1]$ , and requiring a period length to be an integer.) Now finding a period length  $p \in P$ , such that  $s(o, p)$  has a substring of ratio greater than 0 means finding a divisor of  $q$ . Note that  $o = \frac{1}{2}$ . This would solve the integer factorisation problem for which no efficient algorithm is publicly known [7].

## 7 Concluding Remarks

In our applications, we look for regularities when a trajectory  $\mathcal{T}$  visit an area  $\mathcal{A}$ . To this end, we generate a bit string from  $\mathcal{T}$  and  $\mathcal{A}$  that reflects regularity by specifying a period length and an offset. Note that the here proposed approaches are not confined to regular visit patterns, but can be used for finding regularities in anything that can be expressed as a bit string.

During the course of this application driven research, we encountered the elementary problem, called LDS, of computing a longest dense substring, which is at the core of many applications. We provided an optimal algorithm to solve this basic LDS problem (Theorem 1). To solve our more applied problems, we proposed efficient (approximation) algorithms that compute longest dense substrings, and hence, longest regular visit patterns for the cases where we are given a set of possible offsets and/or a set of possible period lengths.

It is often a topic for discussion to specify what our algorithms should produce as output. We chose to maximise the length of a substring, while the density has to be above a certain threshold. From an application point of view it might be a good choice to output all substrings of a string of which the length *and* the density are above certain thresholds. Some of our algorithms can be easily extended (with increased running time) to this *report all* version of our problems, while other algorithms require more research for such an extension.

When generating bit strings, we used a sequence of *time points* to define the bit values. It is also possible to use *time spans* instead (e.g. each bit represents an entire day and is set to 1, iff the person has been to the cricket ground on that day at *any* time). This is appropriate for many applications, and because our results also hold for this modelling, we can conclude the practical relevance of our algorithms.

Worthwhile directions for further research include the consideration of LDS and the related applications when we have streaming data. Also if we do not know the area(s)  $\mathcal{A}$ , we can consider the problem of computing the area(s)  $\mathcal{A}$  that are visited with regularity (perhaps specified by length and density thresholds).

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