On the Most Likely Voronoi Diagram and Nearest Neighbor Searching*

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Abstract. We consider the problem of nearest-neighbor searching among a set of stochastic sites, where a stochastic site is a tuple (s_i, π_i) consisting of a point s_i in a d-dimensional space and a probability π_i determining its existence. The problem is interesting and non-trivial even in 1-dimension, where the *Most Likely Voronoi Diagram* (LVD) is shown to have worst-case complexity $\Omega(n^2)$. We then show that under more natural and less adversarial conditions, the size of the 1-dimensional LVD is significantly smaller: (1) $\Theta(kn)$ if the input has only k distinct probability values, (2) $O(n \log n)$ on average, and (3) $O(n\sqrt{n})$ under smoothed analysis. We also present an alternative approach to the most likely nearest neighbor (LNN) search using *Pareto sets*, which gives a linear-space data structure and sub-linear query time in 1D for average and smoothed analysis models, as well as worst-case with a bounded number of distinct probabilities. Using the Pareto-set approach, we can also reduce the multi-dimensional LNN search to a sequence of nearest neighbor and spherical range queries.

1 Introduction

There is a growing interest in algorithms and data structures that deal with data uncertainty, driven in part by the rapid growth of unstructured databases where many attributes are missing or difficult to quantify [5, 6, 10]. Furthermore, an increasing amount of analytics today happens on data generated by machine learning systems, which is inherently probabilistic unlike the data produced by traditional methods. In computational geometry, the data uncertainty has typically been thought of as imprecision in the *positions* of objects—this viewpoint is quite useful for data produced by noisy sensors (e.g. LiDAR or MRI scanners) or associated with mobile entities, and many classical geometric problems including nearest-neighbors, convex hull, range searching and geometric optimization have been investigated in recent years [2–4, 14, 16–18].

Our focus, in this paper, is on a different form of uncertainty: each object's location is known precisely but its *presence*, or activation, is subject to uncertainty. For instance, a company planning to open stores may know all the residents' locations but has only a probabilistic knowledge about their interest in its products. Similarly, many phenomena where *influence* is transmitted through *physical proximity* involve entities whose positions are known but their ability to influence others is best modeled probabilistically: opinions, diseases, political views, etc. With this underlying motivation, we investigate one of the most basic *proximity* search problems for stochastic input.

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Let a *stochastic site* be a tuple (s_i, π_i), where s_i is a point in d-dimensional Euclidean space and π_i is the probability of its existence (namely, activation). Let $\mathcal{S} = \{(s_1, \pi_1), (s_2, \pi_2), \ldots, (s_n, \pi_n)\}$ be a set of stochastic sites, where we assume that the points s_i's are distinct, and that the individual probabilities π_i are independent. Whenever convenient, we will simply use s_i to refer to the site (s_i, π_i). We want to preprocess $\mathcal{S}$ for answering *most likely nearest neighbor* (LNN) queries: a site s_i is the LNN of a query point q if s_i is present *and* all other sites closer than s_i to q are not present. More formally, let $\overline{\pi_i} = 1 - \pi_i$, and let $B(q, s_i)$ be the set of sites s_j for which $\|q - s_j\| < \|q - s_i\|$. Then the probability that s_i is the LNN of q is $\pi_i \times \prod_{s_j \in B(q,s_i)} \overline{\pi_j}$. For ease of reference, we call this probability the *likeliness* of s_i with respect to q, and denote it as

$$\ell(s_i, q) = \pi_i \times \prod_{s_j \in B(q,s_i)} \overline{\pi_j} \tag{1}$$

The LNN of a query point q is the site s for which $\ell(s, q)$ is maximized.

An important concept related to nearest neighbors is the Voronoi Diagram: it partitions the space into regions with the same nearest neighbor. In our stochastic setting, we seek the *most likely Voronoi Diagram* (LVD) of S: a partition of the space into regions so that all query points in a region have the same LNN. In addition to serving the role of a convenient *data structure* for LNN of query points, the structure of LVD also provides a compact representation of each stochastic site's region of *likely influence*.

Related Work. The topic of uncertain data has received a great deal of attention in recent years in the research communities of databases, machine learning, AI, algorithms and computational geometry. Due to limited space, we mention just a small number of papers that are directly relevant to our work. A number of researchers have explored nearest-neighbors and Voronoi diagrams for uncertain data [2, 4, 14], however, these papers focus on the *locational* uncertainty, with the goal of finding a neighbor minimizing the *expected* distance. In [19], Kamousi-Chan-Suri consider the stochastic (existence uncertainty) model but they also focus on the expected distance. Unfortunately, nearest neighbors under the expected measure can give non-sensical answers—a very low probability neighbor gets a large weight simply by being near the query point. Instead, the most likely nearest neighbor gives a more intuitive answer.

Over the past decade, smoothed analysis has emerged as a useful approach for analyzing problems in which the complexity of typical cases deviates significantly from the worst-case. A classical example is the Simplex algorithm whose worst-case complexity is exponential and yet it runs remarkably well on most practical instances of linear programming. The smoothed analysis framework proposed [22] offers a more insightful analysis than simple average case. Smoothed analysis is also quite appropriate for many geometric problems [7, 8, 11, 12], because data is often the result of physical measurements that are inherently noisy.

Our Results. We first show that the most likely Voronoi diagram (LVD) has worst-case complexity $\Omega(n^2)$ even in 1D, which is easily seen to be tight. We then show that under more natural, and less pathological, conditions the LVD has significantly better behavior. Specifically, (1) if the input has only k distinct probability values, then the LVD has size $\Theta(nk)$; (2) if the probability values are randomly chosen (*average-case analysis*),

then the LVD has expected size $O(n \log n)$; (3) if the probability values (or the site positions) are worst-case but can be perturbed by some small value (*smoothed analysis*), then the LVD has size $O(n\sqrt{n})$. Of course, the LVD immediately gives an $O(\log n)$ time data structure for LNN queries. Next, we propose an alternative data structure for LNN queries using Pareto sets. In 1-dimension, this data structure has linear size and answers LNN queries in worst-case $O(k \log n)$ time when the input has only k distinct probability values, and in $O(\log^2 n)$ and $O(\sqrt{n} \log n)$ time under the average case and smoothed analysis models, respectively. Finally, the Pareto-set approach can be generalized to higher dimensions by reducing the problem to a sequence of nearest neighbor and spherical range queries. We give a concrete example of this generalization to finding the LNN in two dimensions.

2 The LVD can have Quadratic Complexity in 1D

The most likely nearest neighbor problem has non-trivial complexity even in the simplest of all settings: points on a line. Indeed, the LNN even violates a basic property often used in data structure design: *decomposability*. With deterministic data, one can split the input into a number of subsets, compute the nearest neighbor in each subset, and then choose the closest of those neighbors. As the following simple example shows, this basic property does not hold for the LNN.

Let the input have 3 sites $\{(-2, \frac{1}{4}), (1, \frac{1}{3}), (3, \frac{3}{5})\}$, and consider the query point $q = 0$ (see Figure 1). Suppose we decompose the input into two subsets, sites to the left, and sites to the right of the query point. Then, it is easy to check that s_1 is the LNN on the left, and s_3 is the LNN for the right subset. However, the overall LNN of q turns out to be s_2, as is easily verified by the likeliness probabilities: $\ell(s_1, q) = \frac{2}{3} \cdot \frac{1}{4} = \frac{1}{6}$, $\ell(s_2, q) = \frac{1}{3}$, and $\ell(s_3, q) = \frac{2}{3} \cdot \frac{3}{4} \cdot \frac{3}{5} = \frac{3}{10}$.

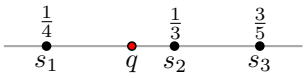

Fig. 1. The LNN of q is s_2.

The likeliness region for a site is also not necessarily connected: in fact, the following theorem shows that the LVD on a line can have quadratic complexity.

Theorem 1. *The most likely Voronoi diagram (LVD) of n stochastic sites on a line can have complexity $\Omega(n^2)$.*

Proof. Due to limited space, we sketch the main idea, deferring some of the technical details to the full version of the paper. The input for the lower bound consists of two groups of n sites each, for a total of $2n$. In the first group, called S, the ith site has position $s_i = i/n$, and probability $\pi_i = 1/i$, for $i = 1, 2, \ldots, n$. In the second group, called T, the ith site has position $t_i = i + 1$, and probability ϵ, for a choice of ϵ specified later (see Figure 2). We will focus on the n^2 *midpoints* m_{ij}, namely the bisectors, of pairs of sites $s_i \in S$ and $t_j \in T$, and argue that the LNN changes in the neighborhood of each of these midpoints, proving the lower bound.

By construction, the midpoints m_{ij} are ordered lexicographically on the line, first by j and then by i. We will show that the LNN in the interval immediately to the left of the midpoint m_{ij} is s_i, which implies that the LVD has size $\Omega(n^2)$. In this proof sketch we assume that if two sites have the same likeliness then the site with the lower index

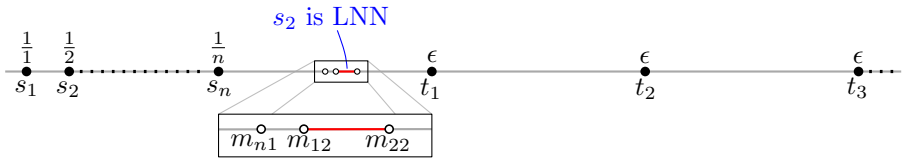

Fig. 2. The lower bound example of Theorem 1 with $\Omega(n^2)$ complexity.

is chosen as the LNN. Without this assumption the same bound can be obtained with a slightly altered construction, but the analysis becomes more complicated.

Let us consider a query point q that lies immediately to the left of the first midpoint m_{11}. It is easy to verify that $\ell(s_i, q) = \frac{1}{n}$, for all $1 \leq i \leq n$, and therefore s_1 is q's LNN. As the query point moves past m_{11}, only the likeliness of s_1 changes to $\frac{1-\epsilon}{n}$, making s_2 the LNN. The same argument holds as q moves past other midpoints towards the right, with the likeliness of corresponding sites changing to $\frac{1-\epsilon}{n}$ in order, resulting in s_i becoming the new LNN when q lies just to the left of m_{i1}. After q passes m_{n1}, all sites of S have the same likeliness again, and the pattern is repeated for the remaining midpoints. To ensure that no site in T can ever be the LNN, we require that $\frac{(1-\epsilon)^n}{n} > \epsilon$, which holds for $\epsilon = n^{-2}$. □

3 Upper Bounds for the LVD in 1D

A matching upper bound of $O(n^2)$ for the 1-dimensional LVD is easy: only the midpoints of pairs of sites can determine the boundary points of the LVD. In this section, we prove a number of stronger upper bounds, which may be more reflective of practical data sets. In particular, we show that if the number of distinct probability values among the stochastic sites is k, then the LVD has size $\Theta(kn)$, where clearly $k \leq n$. Thus, the LVD has size only $O(n)$ if the input probabilities come from a fixed, constant size universe, not an unrealistic assumption in practice. Second, the lower bound construction of Theorem 1 requires a highly pathological arrangement of sites and their probabilities, unlikely to arise in practice. We therefore analyze the LVD complexity using average-case and smoothed analysis, and prove upper bounds of $O(n \log n)$ and $O(n\sqrt{n})$, respectively.

3.1 Structure of the LVD

We first establish some structural properties of the LVD; in particular, which midpoints (bisectors) form the boundaries between adjacent cells of the LVD. For ease of reference, let us call these midpoints *critical*. Given a query point q, let $\mathcal{L}(q)$ denote the sorted list of sites in $\mathcal{S}$ by their (increasing) distance to q. Clearly, as long as the list $\mathcal{L}(q)$ does not change by moving q along the line, its LNN remains unchanged. The order only changes at a midpoint m_{ij}, in which case s_i and s_j swap their positions in the list. The following lemmas provide a simple rule for determining critical midpoints.

Lemma 1. *Suppose that the midpoint m_{ij} of two sites s_i and s_j (s_i<s_j) is critical, and consider the points q' immediately to the left of m_{ij}, and q'' immediately to the right of m_{ij}. Then, either s_i is the LNN of q', or s_j is the LNN of q''.*

Proof. Suppose, for the sake of contradiction, that the LNN of q' is not s_i, but instead some other site s_z. Consider the list $\mathcal{L}(q')$ of sites ordered by their distance to the query, and consider the change to this list as the query point shifts from q' to q''. The only change is swapping of s_i and s_j. Then the likeliness of s_i and s_j satisfy $\ell(s_i, q'') < \ell(s_i, q')$ and $\ell(s_j, q'') > \ell(s_j, q')$, while for all other sites s, we have $\ell(s, q') = \ell(s, q'')$. Therefore, the LNN of q'' is either s_j or s_z. If s_z is the LNN of q'', then m_{ij} is not critical (a contradiction). So s_j must be the LNN of q'' satisfying the condition of the lemma. □

Lemma 2. *If the midpoint m_{ij} of sites s_i and s_j, for $s_i < s_j$, is critical, then there cannot be a site s_z with $s_z \in [s_i, s_j]$ and $\pi_z \geq \max(\pi_i, \pi_j)$.*

Proof. Suppose, for the sake of contradiction, that such a site s_z exists. By the position of s_z, we must have $\|s_z - m_{ij}\| < \min\{\|s_i - m_{ij}\|, \|s_j - m_{ij}\|\}$, and the same also holds for any query point q arbitrary close to m_{ij}. Because $\pi_z \geq \max(\pi_i, \pi_j)$, we have $\ell(s_z, q) > \ell(s_i, q)$ and $\ell(s_z, q) > \ell(s_j, q)$, implying that s_z is more likely than both s_i and s_j to be the nearest neighbor of any q arbitrary close to m_{ij}. By Lemma 1, however, if m_{ij} is critical, then there exists a q close to m_{ij} for which the LNN is either s_i or s_j. Hence s_z cannot exist. □

3.2 Refined Upper Bounds

Our first result shows that if the stochastic input has only k distinct probabilities, then the LVD has size $O(kn)$. Let $\{S_1, \ldots, S_k\}$ be the partition of the input so that each group has sites of the same probability, ordered by increasing probability; that is, any site in S_j has higher probability than a site in S_i, for $j > i$. We write $n_i = |S_i|$, where $\sum_{i=1}^{k} n_i = n$.

Lemma 3. *The LVD of n stochastic sites on a line, with at most k distinct probabilities, has complexity $\Theta(kn)$.*

Proof. The lower bound on the size follows from an easy modification of the construction in Theorem 1: we use only $k - 1$ points for the left side of the construction. We now analyze the upper bound. Suppose the midpoint m_{ij} defined by two sites $s_i \in S_a$ and $s_j \in S_b$ is critical, where $1 \leq a < b \leq k$, and without loss of generality, assume that s_i lies to the left of s_j. The sites in S_b have higher probability than those in S_a, because of our assumption that $a < b$. Hence, by Lemma 2, there cannot be a site $s \in S_b$ such that $s \in [s_i, s_j]$. By the same reasoning, the midpoint of s_i and a site $s \in S_b$ with $s > s_j$ also cannot be critical. Therefore, s_i can form critical midpoints with at most two sites in S_b: one on each side. Altogether, s_i can form critical midpoints with at most $2k$ other sites s_j with $\pi_j \geq \pi_i$. Thus, $|LVD| \leq 2k \sum_{i=1}^{k} n_i = 2kn$. □

3.3 Average-case and Smoothed Analysis of the LVD

We now show that even with n distinct probability values among the stochastic sites, the LVD has significantly smaller complexity as long as those probabilities are either assigned randomly to the points, or they can be perturbed slightly to get rid of the highly

unstable pathological cases. More formally, for the average-case analysis we assume that we have a fixed set of n probabilities, and we randomly assign these probabilities to the sites. That is, we consider the average over all possible assignments of probabilities to sites. The smoothed analysis fixes a *noise* parameter $a > 0$, and draws a noise value $\delta_i \in [-a, a]$ uniformly at random for each site (s_i, π_i). This noise is used to perturb the input, either the location of a site or its probability. The location perturbation changes each site's position to $s'_i = s_i + \delta_i$, resulting in the randomly perturbed input $\mathcal{S}' = \{(s'_1, \pi_1), \ldots, (s'_n, \pi_n)\}$, which is a random variable. The smoothed complexity of the LVD is the expected complexity of the LVD of $\mathcal{S}'$, where we take the worst case over all inputs $\mathcal{S}$. The smoothed complexity naturally depends on the noise parameter a, which for the sake of simplicity we assume to be a constant—more detailed bounds involving a can easily be obtained. Of course, for this model we need to restrict the positions of sites to $[0, 1]$. The smoothed model perturbing the probabilities instead of the positions is defined analogously.

Our analysis uses a *partition tree* $\mathcal{T}$ defined on the sites as follows. The tree is rooted at the site s_i with the highest probability. The remaining sites are split into a set S_1, containing the sites on the left of s_i, and a set S_2 containing the rest (excluding s_i, see Figure 3 right). We then recursively construct the partition trees for S_1 and S_2, whose roots become the children of s_i. (In case of ties, choose s_i to make the partition as balanced as possible.) The partition tree has the following useful property.

Lemma 4. *Let s_i and s_j be two sites with $\pi_i \leq \pi_j$. If the midpoint m_{ij} is critical, then s_j is an ancestor of s_i in $\mathcal{T}$.*

Proof. Let s_z be the lowest common ancestor of s_i and s_j in $\mathcal{T}$, assuming $s_z \neq s_j$. By construction, $s_z \in [s_i, s_j]$ and $\pi_z \geq \pi_j$. Hence, by Lemma 2, m_{ij} cannot be critical. □

Corollary 1. *If the depth of $\mathcal{T}$ is d, then the size of the LVD is $O(dn)$.*

Thus, we can bound the average and smoothed complexity of the LVD by analyzing the average and smoothed depth of the partition tree $\mathcal{T}$. In the average case, $\mathcal{T}$ is essentially a *random binary search tree*. It is well known that the depth of such a tree is $O(\log n)$ (see e.g. [21]). In the smoothed model, if the perturbation is on the *position* of the sites, then a result by Manthey and Tantau [20, Lemma 10] shows that the smoothed depth of $\mathcal{T}$ is $O(\sqrt{n})$.[1] We can easily extend that analysis to the perturbation on the probability values, instead of the positions of the sites. In a nutshell, the proof by Manthey and Tantau relies on the fact that the input elements can be partitioned into $O(\sqrt{n}/\log n)$ groups such that the binary search tree of a single group is essentially random, and in this random tree, we can simply swap the roles of probabilities and positions. Thus, the smoothed depth of $\mathcal{T}$ is also $O(\sqrt{n})$ if the probabilities are perturbed. (If a perturbed probability falls outside $[0, 1]$, it is truncated, but the analysis holds due to our tie-breaking rule.)

Theorem 2. *Given a set of n stochastic sites on the line, its most likely Voronoi Diagram (LVD) has average-case complexity $O(n \log n)$, and smoothed complexity $O(n\sqrt{n})$.*

[1] In [20] a binary search tree is constructed from a sequence of real numbers. We obtain this sequence from our input by ordering the stochastic sites by decreasing probabilities. The construction of binary search trees in [20] then matches our construction of $\mathcal{T}$.

4 Algorithms for Constructing the LVD

Our main tool for constructing the LVD is the *likeliness curve* $\ell(s_i)\colon \mathbb{R} \to \mathbb{R}$ of a site s_i, which is simply the function $\ell(s_i, q)$ with q ranging over the entire real line $\mathbb{R}$. A likeliness curve $\ell(s_i)$ has $O(n)$ complexity and it is a bimodal step function, achieving its maximum value at $q = s_i$ (see Figure 4). By presorting all the sites in the left-to-right order, we can easily compute each $\ell(s_i)$ in $O(n)$ time, as follows. Start at $q = s_i$ and walk to the left updating the value $\ell(s_i, q)$ at every midpoint of the form m_{ij} with $1 \leq j < i$. We do the same for the right portion of $\ell(s_i)$, walking to the right instead (and $i < j \leq n$). In the same way we can compute a restriction of $\ell(s_i)$ to some interval I: assuming $s_i \in I$, it is easy to see that this restriction can be computed in time proportional to its complexity.

We can now compute the LVD by constructing the upper envelope $\mathcal{U}$ of all $\ell(s_i)$, for $i = 1, \ldots, n$. A naive construction, however, still takes $O(n^2)$ time since the total complexity of all likeliness curves is quadratic. Instead, we restrict the likeliness curve of every site to a critical subpart such that the upper envelope of these partial curves gives the correct $\mathcal{U}$. In particular, for each site s_i, define the *influence interval* I_i as follows. Let s_j be the first site encountered on the left of s_i for which $\pi_j \geq \pi_i$, and let s_z be such a site on the right side of s_i. Then we define $I_i = [m_{ji}, m_{iz}]$. (If s_j and/or s_z does not exist, we replace m_{ji} with $-\infty$ and/or m_{iz} with ∞, respectively.) Observe that, for any $q \notin I_i$, either $\ell(s_i, q) < \ell(s_j, q)$ or $\ell(s_i, q) < \ell(s_z, q)$, since either s_j or s_z is closer to q and $\pi_j, \pi_z \geq \pi_i$. We define $\ell'(s_i)$ as the restriction of $\ell(s_i)$ to the interval I_i (see Figure 4). Clearly, $\mathcal{U}$ can be constructed by computing the upper envelope of just these restrictions $\ell'(s_i)$, and the complexity of each $\ell'(s_i)$ is exactly the number of midpoints involving s_i that lie in I_i. Thus, given the defining sites s_j and s_z of I_i, the complexity of $\ell'(s_i)$ is the number of sites in the interval $[s_j, s_z]$ minus one (excluding s_i).

Lemma 5. *The complexity of the union of all $\ell'(s_i)$, for $i = 1, 2, \ldots, n$, is $O(nd)$, where d is the depth of the partition tree $\mathcal{T}$ of the input sites. Furthermore, the union of $\ell'(s_i)$ can be represented by d curves of $O(n)$ complexity each.*

Proof. Let $\sigma_1, \ldots, \sigma_r$ be the set of sites at a fixed depth in the partition tree $\mathcal{T}$ in order, and let τ_i, for $1 \leq i < r$, be the lowest common ancestor of σ_i and σ_{i+1} in the tree. It is easy to see that the influence interval of a site σ_i is defined by a site in $[\tau_{i-1}, \sigma_i]$ (possibly τ_{i-1}) and a site in $[\sigma_i, \tau_i]$ (possibly τ_i), assuming $1 < i < r$ (otherwise the influence interval may extend to $-\infty$ or $+\infty$, see Figure 3). Hence the complexity

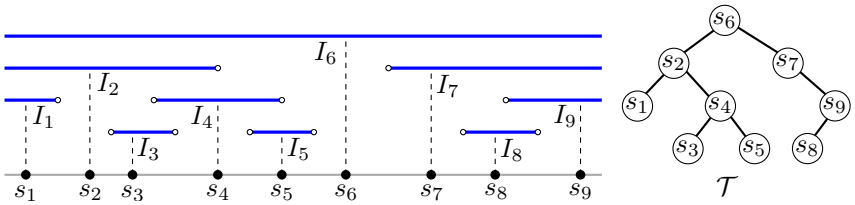

Fig. 3. The influence intervals (left) and the partition tree (right).

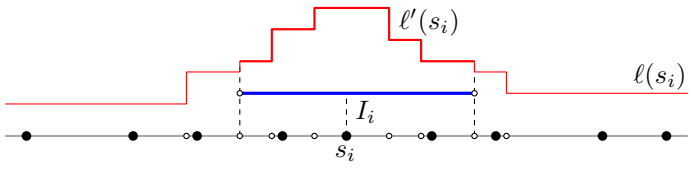

Fig. 4. The likeliness curve $\ell(s_i)$ of s_i and its restriction $\ell'(s_i)$ to I_i.

of $\ell'(\sigma_i)$ is bounded by the number of sites in the interval $[\tau_{i-1}, \tau_i]$. Furthermore, all influence intervals of the sites $\sigma_1, \ldots, \sigma_r$ are disjoint, and so we can combine all $\ell'(\sigma_i)$ into a single curve with $O(n)$ complexity. The result follows by constructing such a curve for each level of the partition tree. □

We can use Lemma 5 to efficiently compute the upper envelope $\mathcal{U}$. First, we compute the d curves $f_1, \ldots, f_d$ mentioned in Lemma 5, one for each level of $\mathcal{T}$. As we construct $\mathcal{T}$, we simultaneously compute $\ell'(s_i)$ for each site s_i, in time $O(|\ell'(s_i)|)$ time. This takes $O(n)$ time per level of $\mathcal{T}$. We can then easily combine the individual parts $\ell'(s_i)$ to obtain the curves $f_1, \ldots, f_d$. The total running time of computing the curves $f_1, \ldots, f_d$ is $O(n \log n + dn)$.

Finally we can construct $\mathcal{U}$ by computing the upper envelope of the curves $f_1, \ldots, f_d$. We scan through the curves from left to right, maintaining two priority queues: (1) a priority queue for the events at which the curves change, and (2) a priority queue for maintaining the curve with the highest likeliness. Both priority queues have size d, which means that each event can be handled in $O(\log d)$ time.

Lemma 6. *If d is the depth of $\mathcal{T}$, then the LVD can be constructed in $O(n \log n + dn \log d)$ time.*

The algorithm is easily adapted for the case of k distinct probabilities. Consider the sites $\sigma_1, \ldots, \sigma_r$ (in order) for a single probability value. Since they all have the same probability, they bound each other's influence intervals, and hence all influence intervals are interior disjoint. Now assume that a site s_j is contained in the interval $[\sigma_i, \sigma_{i+1}]$. Then s_j can add to the complexity of only $\ell'(\sigma_i)$ and $\ell'(\sigma_{i+1})$, and no other $\ell'(\sigma_z)$ with $z \neq i, i+1$. Thus, we can combine the partial likeliness curves $\ell'(\sigma_i)$ into a single curve of $O(n)$ complexity. In total we obtain k curves of $O(n)$ complexity each, from which we can construct the LVD.

Theorem 3. *The LVD of n stochastic sites in 1D can be computed in worst-case time $O(n \log n + nk \log k)$ if the sites involve k distinct probabilities. Without the assumption on distinct probabilities, the construction takes $O(n \log n \log \log n)$ time in the average case,[2] and $O(n\sqrt{n} \log n)$ time in the smoothed analysis model.*

[2] In general, $E[d \log d] \neq E[d] \log E[d]$, but using the results of [13], we can easily show that $E[d \log d] = O(\log n \log \log n)$ in our setting.

5 Time-Space Tradeoffs for LNN Searching

The worst-case complexity of the LVD is $\Omega(n^2)$ even in 1 dimension and the Voronoi region of a single site can have $\Omega(n)$ disjoint intervals. This raises a natural question: can the 1-dimensional LNN search be solved by a data structure of *subquadratic* size and *sub-linear* query time? While we cannot answer that question definitively, we offer an argument suggesting its hardness below.

5.1 A 3SUM Hard Problem

Consider the following problem, which we call the NEXT MIDPOINT PROBLEM: *given a set of n sites on a line, preprocess them so that for a query q we can efficiently compute the midpoint (for some pair of sites) that is immediately to the right of q.* The problem is inspired by the fact that an LNN query essentially needs to decide the location of the query point among the (potentially $\Omega(n^2)$ critical) midpoints of the input. The following lemma proves 3SUM-hardness of this problem. (Recall that the 3SUM problem asks, given a set of numbers $a_1, \ldots, a_n$, does there exist a triple (a_i, a_j, a_z) satisfying $a_i + a_j + a_z = 0$.)

Lemma 7. *Building the data structure plus answering $2n$ queries of the* NEXT MIDPOINT PROBLEM *is 3SUM-hard.*

Proof. Consider an instance of the 3SUM problem consisting of numbers $a_1, \ldots, a_n$. We use these numbers directly as sites for the NEXT MIDPOINT PROBLEM. If there exists a triple for which $a_i + a_j + a_z = 0$, then the midpoint m_{ij} is at $-a_z/2$. Thus, for every input number a_z, we query the NEXT MIDPOINT data structure just to the left and just to the right of $-a_z/2$ (all numbers are integers, so this is easy). If the next midpoint is different for the two queries, then there exists a triple for which $a_i + a_j + a_z = 0$. Otherwise, such a triple does not exist. □

Remark. Thus, unless 3SUM can be solved in significantly faster than $O(n^2)$ time, either the preprocessing time for the Next Midpoint problem is $\Omega(n^2)$, or that the query time is $\Omega(n)$. However, our reduction does not imply a hardness for the LNN problem in general: the order of the midpoints in the example of Theorem 1 follows a very simple pattern, which can be encoded efficiently.

5.2 LNN Search Using Pareto Sets

We now propose an alternative approach to LNN search using Pareto sets, which trades query time for space. Consider a query point q, and suppose that its LNN is the site s_i. Then, *s_i must be Pareto optimal with respect to q*, that is, there cannot be a site s_j closer to q with $\pi_j \geq \pi_i$. In fact, recalling the influence intervals I_i from the previous section, it is easy to check that s_i is Pareto optimal for q if and only if $q \in I_i$. This observation suggests the following algorithm for LNN: (1) compute the set S of sites s_i with $q \in I_i$, (2) compute $\ell(s, q)$ for each $s \in S$, and (3) return $s \in S$ with the maximum likeliness.

Step (1) requires computing the influence intervals for all sites, which is easily done as follows. Sort the sites in descending order of probability, and suppose they

are numbered in this order. We incrementally add the sites to a balanced binary search tree, using the position of a site as its key. When we add a site s_i to the tree, all the sites with a higher probability are already in the tree. The interval I_i is defined by the two consecutive sites s_j and s_z in the tree such that $s_i \in [s_j, s_z]$. Thus, we can find s_j and s_z in $O(\log n)$ time when adding s_i to the tree, and compute all the influence intervals in $O(n \log n)$ total time.[3] To find the intervals containing the query point, we organize the influence intervals in an interval tree, which takes $O(n \log n)$ time and $O(n)$ space, and solves the query in $O(\log n + r)$ time, where r is the output size. By the results in previous sections, we have $r \leq \min\{k, d\}$, where k is the number of distinct probabilities and d is the depth of $\mathcal{T}$.

Step (2) requires computing the likeliness of each site efficiently, and we do this by rewriting the likeliness function as follows:

$$\ell(s_i, q) = \pi_i \times \prod_{s_j \in (q-a, q+a)} \overline{\pi_j} \qquad \text{where } a = |q - s_i| \tag{2}$$

With Equation (2), we can compute the likeliness of a site by a single range search query: an augmented balanced binary search tree, requiring $O(n)$ space and $O(n \log n)$ construction time, solves this query in $O(\log n)$ time.

Theorem 4. *There is a data structure for 1D LNN search that needs $O(n)$ space and $O(n \log n)$ construction time and answers queries in (1) worst-case $O(k \log n)$ time if the sites involve k distinct probabilities, (2) expected time $O(\log^2 n)$ in the average case, and (3) expected time $O(\sqrt{n} \log n)$ in the smoothed analysis model.*

Remark. The query bounds of Theorem 4 for the average and smoothed analysis model are strong in the sense that they hold for *all* query points simultaneously, and not just for a fixed query point. That is, the bounds are for the expected worst case query time, rather than the expected query time.

6 The Pareto-Set Approach in Higher Dimensions

Our Pareto-set approach essentially requires the following two operations: (1) find the Pareto set for a query point q, and (2) compute the likeliness of a site w.r.t. q. In higher dimensions, the second operation can be performed with a spherical range query data structure, for which nearly optimal data structures exist [1]. The first operation can be reduced to a sequence of nearest neighbor queries, as follows: (1) find the nearest neighbor of q, say s_i, among all sites and add s_i to the Pareto set, (2) remove all sites with probability at most π_i, and (3) repeat steps (1) and (2) until no sites are left. We, therefore, need a data structure supporting the following query: *given a query point q and a probability π, find the closest site to q with probability higher than π.* A dynamic nearest neighbor data structure can be adapted to answer this query as follows: incrementally add sites in decreasing order of probability, and make the data structure

[3] If there are sites with the same probability, we must first determine their influence intervals among sites with the same probability, before adding them to the tree. This can easily be achieved by first sorting the sites on position.

partially persistent. In this way, the data structure can answer the query we need, and partially persistent data structures often require only little extra space.

The required number of nearest neighbor and spherical range queries is precisely the number of elements in the Pareto set. For a query point q, consider the sequence of the sites' probabilities ordered by their increasing distance to q. Observe that the size of the Pareto set is precisely the number of left-to-right maxima in this sequence (see [20]). Therefore, the size of the Pareto set is (1) at most k when the input has at most k distinct probabilities, (2) $O(\log n)$ in the average case model, and (3) $O(\sqrt{n})$ in the smoothed analysis model. (Unlike the bound of Section 5.2, however, this result holds for any arbitrary query but not for all queries simultaneously.) A concrete realization of this abstract approach is discussed below for LNN search in 2D.

2D Euclidean LNN Search. For the sake of illustration, we consider only the average case of LNN queries. In this case, an incremental construction ordered by decreasing probabilities is simply a randomized incremental construction. We can then use the algorithm by Guibas *et al.* [15, Section 5] to incrementally construct the Voronoi diagram including a planar point location data structure, which uses $O(n)$ space on average. Although not explicitly mentioned in [15], this data structure is partially persistent. Using this data structure we can answer a nearest neighbor query in $O(\log^2 n)$ time. For the circular range queries, we use the data structure by Chazelle and Welzl [9, Theorem 6.1], which uses $O(n \log n)$ space and can answer queries in $O(\sqrt{n} \log^2 n)$ time. The final result is a data structure that uses, on average, $O(n \log n)$ space and can answer LNN queries in $O(\log^2 n \cdot \log n + \sqrt{n} \log^2 n \cdot \log n) = O(\sqrt{n} \log^3 n)$ time.

7 Concluding Remarks

The introduction of uncertainty seems to make even simple geometric problems quite hard, at least in the worst case. At the same time, uncertain data problems and algorithms may be particularly well-suited for average-case and smoothed analyses: after all, probabilities associated with uncertain data are inherently fuzzy measures, and problem instances whose answer changes dramatically with minor perturbations of input may suggest fragility of those probabilistic assumptions.

Our research suggests a number of open problems and research questions. In the 1-dimensional setting, we are able to settle the complexity of the LVD under all three analyses (average, smoothed, and worst-case), and it will be interesting to extend the results to higher dimensions. In particular, we believe the worst-case complexity of the d-dimensional LVD is $\Omega(n^{2d})$, but that is work in progress. Settling that complexity in the average or smoothed analysis case, as well as in the case of k distinct probabilities, is entirely open.

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