

# Distributed Suffix Sorting

## Fast and Lightweight Suffix Array Construction

Master Thesis · April 2, 2025  
Manuel Haag



# Suffix Sorting

input text: banana\$

0	banana\$
1	anana\$
2	nana\$
3	ana\$
4	na\$
5	a\$
6	\$

# Suffix Sorting

input text: banana\$

0	banana\$
1	anana\$
2	nana\$
3	ana\$
4	na\$
5	a\$
6	\$

suffix sorting

6	\$
5	a\$
3	ana\$
1	anana\$
0	banana\$
4	na\$
2	nana\$

# Suffix Sorting

input text: banana\$

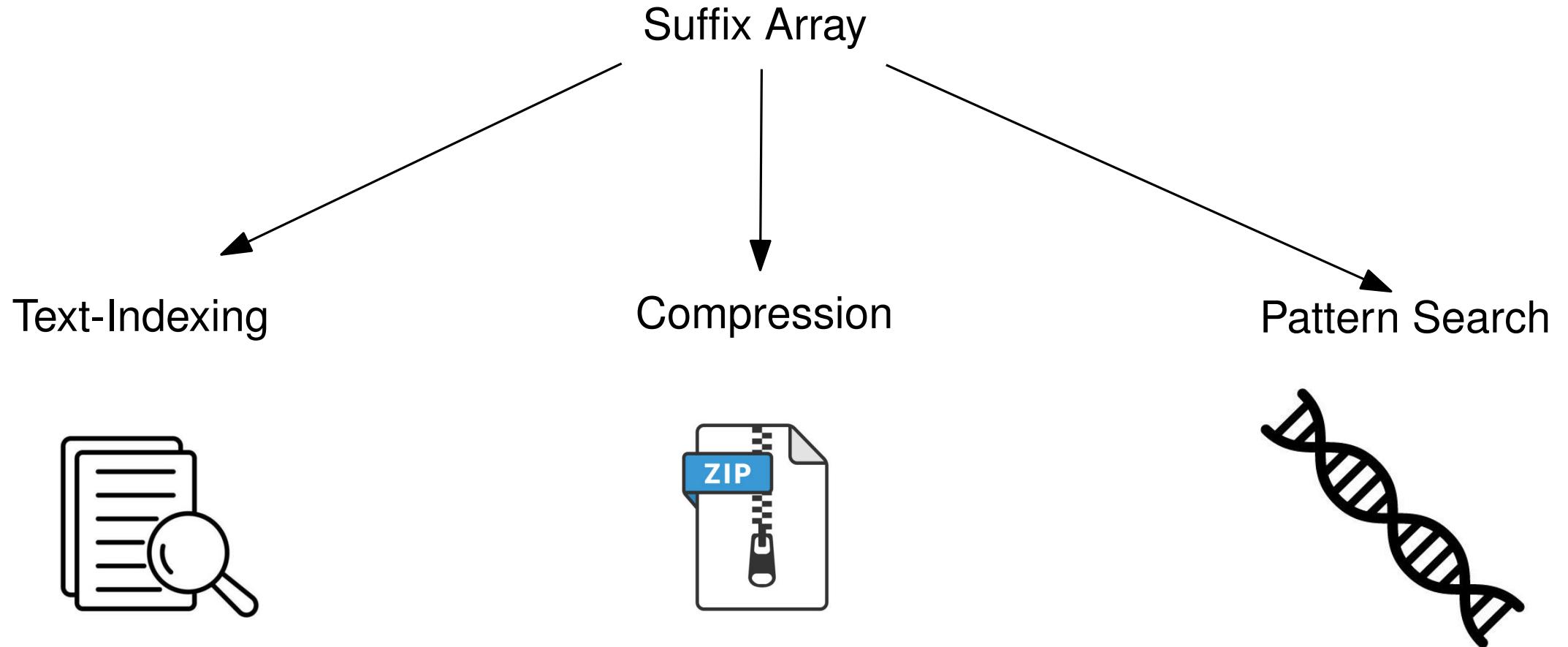
0	banana\$
1	anana\$
2	nana\$
3	ana\$
4	na\$
5	a\$
6	\$

Suffix Array (SA)

suffix sorting

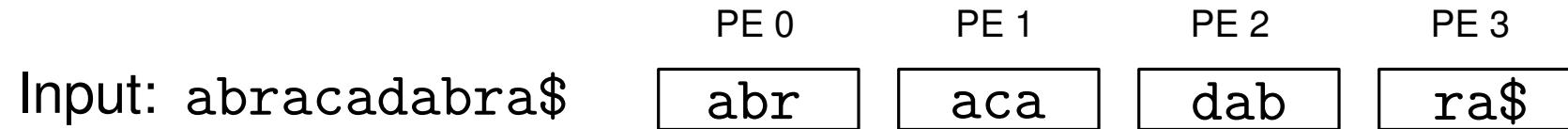
6	\$
5	a\$
3	ana\$
1	anana\$
0	banana\$
4	na\$
2	nana\$

# Applications of the Suffix Array



# Distributed Memory Model

- input is distributed over  $p$  processing elements (PEs):



- PEs communicate via message passing over network:

# Related Work - Distributed Suffix Sorting

**prefix doubling** [Manber & Myers 1990]

**inducing** [Itoh & Tanaka 1999]

**recursion** [Kärkkäinen and Sanders 2003]

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$SA_1 \longrightarrow SA_2 \longrightarrow SA_4 \dots$

$\mathcal{O}(n \log n)$

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$T \xrightarrow{\text{classify}} C_1, C_2 \xrightarrow{\text{sort}} SA_1 \xrightarrow{\text{infer}} SA$

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$\mathcal{O}(n)$

**recursion** [Kärkkäinen and Sanders 2003]

$$T \xrightarrow{\text{classify}} T_1, T_2 \xrightarrow{\text{recursion}} SA_1 \xrightarrow{\text{infer}} SA_2 \xrightarrow{\text{merge}} SA$$

$\mathcal{O}(n)$

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- pDC3 [Kulla & Sanders 2007]

basis for our algorithm

# Constribution

- space-efficient implementation of DCX [Kärkkäinen et al 2006] with MPI + KaMPIng
- new load-balancing scheme [chunking](#) for overlapping strings
- speedups of up to  $3.2\times$  (6144 PEs)
- $3\times$  more memory-efficient than competitor



# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (DC3) - Basic Idea

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$

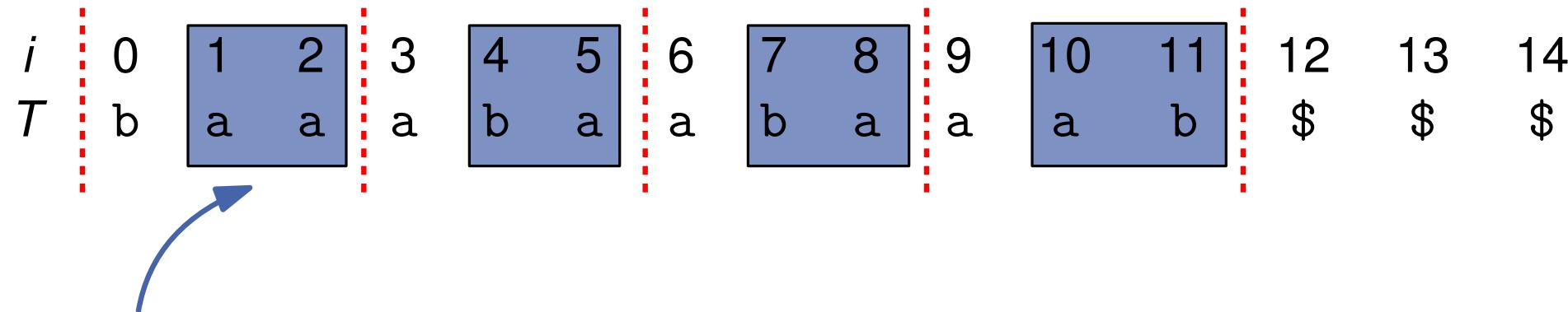
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## Definition

A set  $D_X$  is a difference cover modulo  $X$  if  $\{(i - j) \bmod X \mid i, j \in D_X\} = [0, X]$ .

# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (DC3) - Basic Idea



periodic difference cover sample  $D_3 = \{1, 2\}$

## Definition

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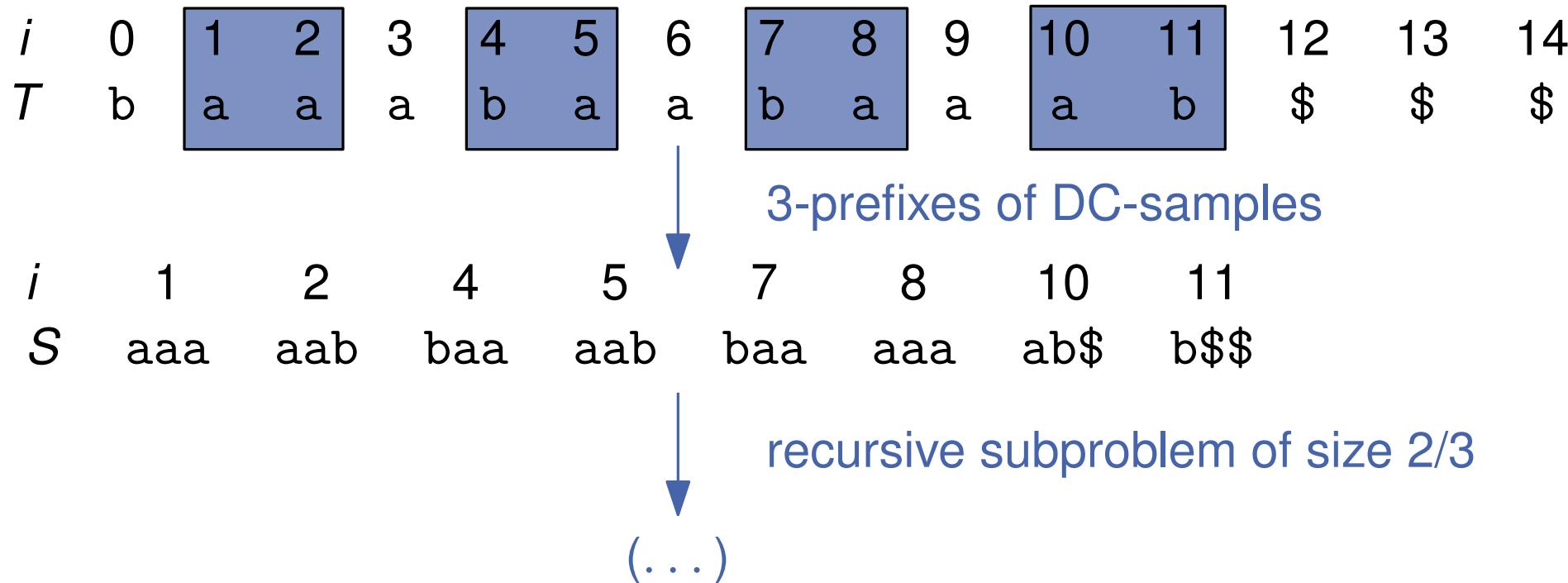
# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (DC3) - Basic Idea

$i$	0	1 2	3	4 5	6	7 8	9	10 11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a a	a	b a	a	b a	a	a b	\$	\$	\$

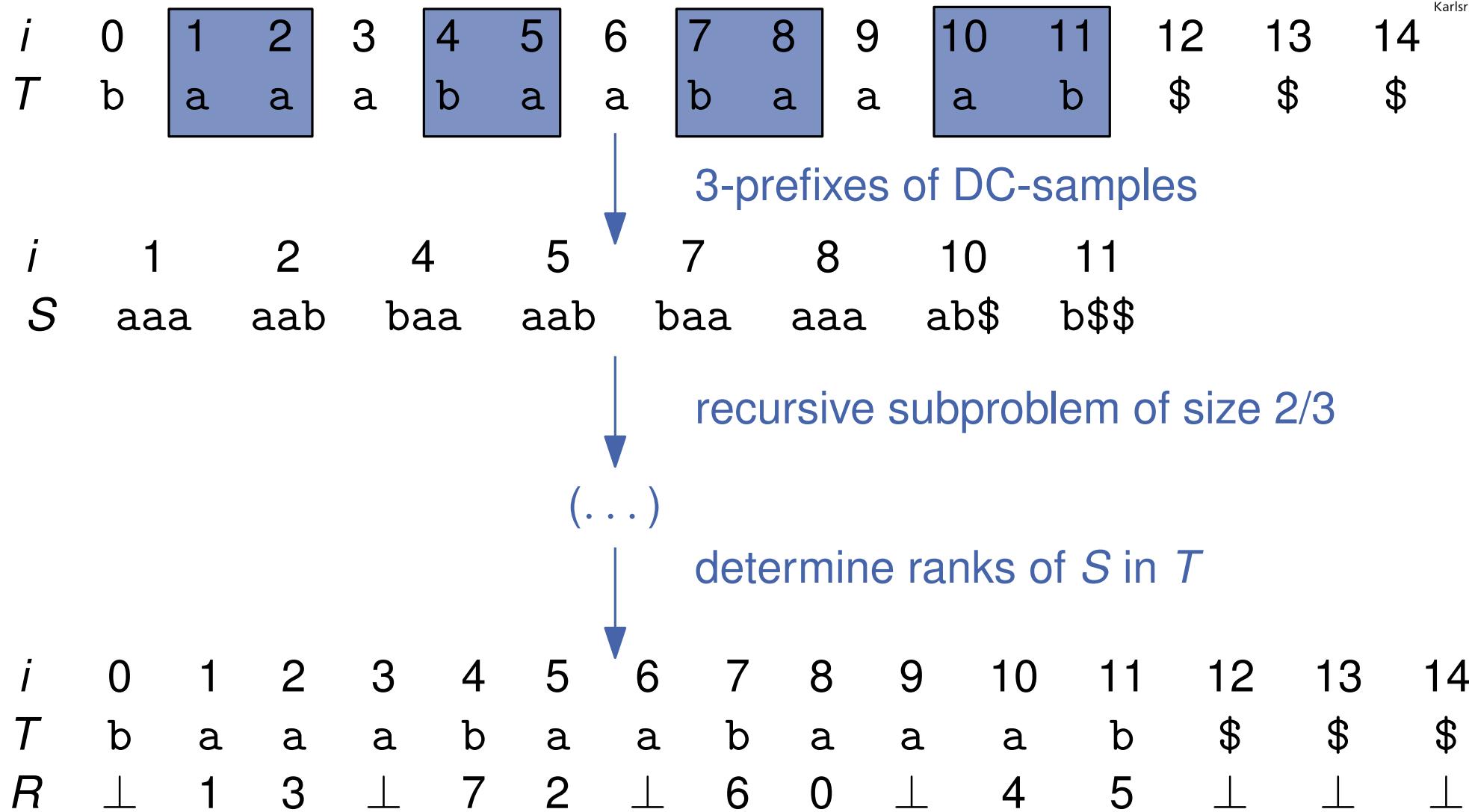
3-prefixes of DC-samples

$i$	1	2	4	5	7	8	10	11			
$S$	aaa	aab	baa	aab	baa	aaa	ab\$	b\$\$			

# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (DC3) - Basic Idea



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DC-samples ranks are now determined.

**Globally sort all suffixes:** Compare characters until both positions are samples.

comparison:

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$
$R$	$\perp$	1	3	$\perp$	7	2	$\perp$	6	0	$\perp$	4	5	$\perp$	$\perp$	$\perp$

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comparison:  $S_3 > S_6$

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$
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DC-samples ranks are now determined.

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$\leq 3$  comparisons

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$
$R$	$\perp$	1	3	$\perp$	7	$\perp$	$\perp$	6	0	$\perp$	4	5	$\perp$	$\perp$	$\perp$

# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (DC3) - Basic Idea

## Distributed Memory

- distributed sorting routines
- shifts characters/ranks between adjacent PEs
- materialize chars and prefixes to send non-local data

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$
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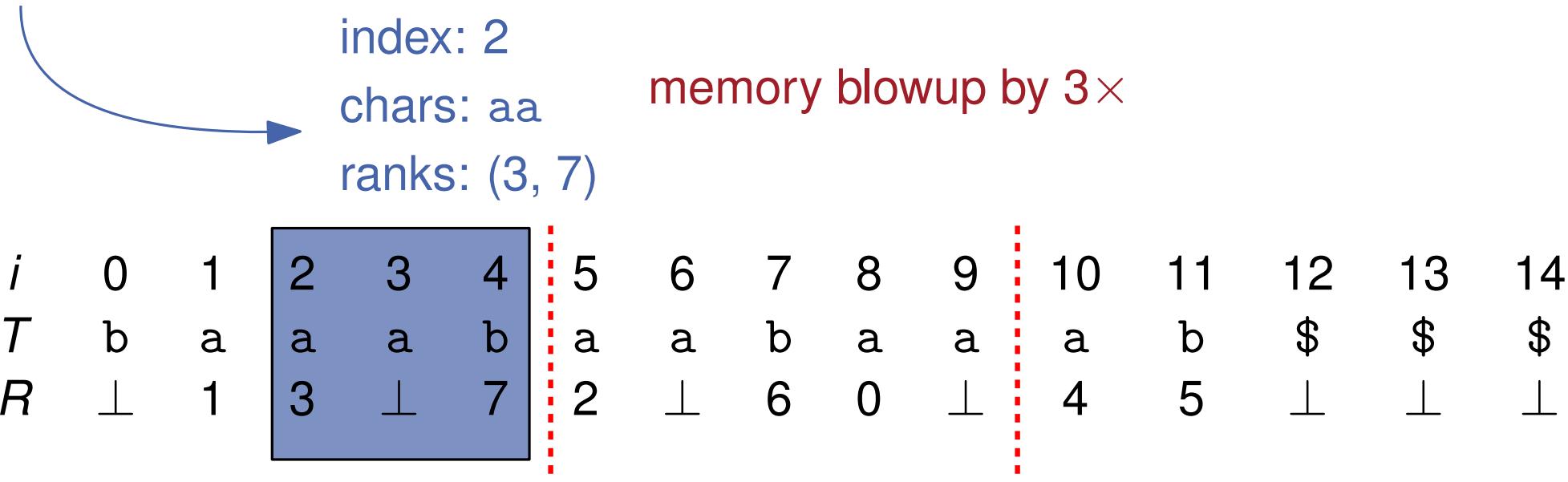
index: 2  
chars: aa  
ranks: (3, 7)

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
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$R$	$\perp$	1	3	$\perp$	7	2	$\perp$	6	0	$\perp$	4	5	$\perp$	$\perp$	$\perp$

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index: 2  
chars: aa  
ranks: (3, 7)

memory blowup by 3×

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$
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## Distributed DCX

- $D_3 \rightarrow D_X$ , e.g.  $D_7 = \{1, 2, 4\}$
- 3-prefixes  $\rightarrow X$ -prefixes
- size of recursive subproblem:

$$|D_X|/X \in \mathcal{O}(1/\sqrt{X})$$

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$
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 $|D_X|/X \in \mathcal{O}(1/\sqrt{X})$   smaller subproblem

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memory blowup by  $X \times$

- size of recursive subproblem:

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smaller subproblem

need for space-efficient implementation

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$
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## Sorting 3-prefixes with 3 buckets

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$

**splitters:** ab\$, b\$

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$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$

**splitters:** ab\$, b\$

Bucket 0: (1, aaa), (2, aab), (5, aab), (8, aaa), (9, aab)  $< ab\$$

## Sorting 3-prefixes with 3 buckets

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$

**splitters:** ab\$, b\$

Bucket 0: (1, aaa), (2, aab), (5, aab), (8, aaa), (9, aab) < ab\$

**sorted order:** 1, 8, 2, 5, 9  
Bucket 0

# Space-Efficient Sorting Using Bucketing [Mehnert 2024]

## Sorting 3-prefixes with 3 buckets

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$

**splitters:** ab\$, b\$\$

Bucket 0: (1, aaa), (2, aab), (5, aab), (8, aaa), (9, aab)  $< ab\$$

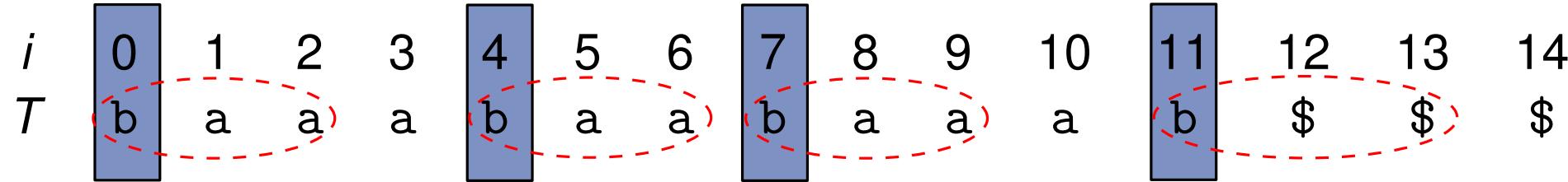
Bucket 1: (3, aba), (6, aba), (10, ab\$)  $< b\$\$$

**sorted order:** 1, 8, 2, 5, 9  
Bucket 0

10, 3, 6  
Bucket 1

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## Sorting 3-prefixes with 3 buckets



**splitters:** ab\$, b\$\$

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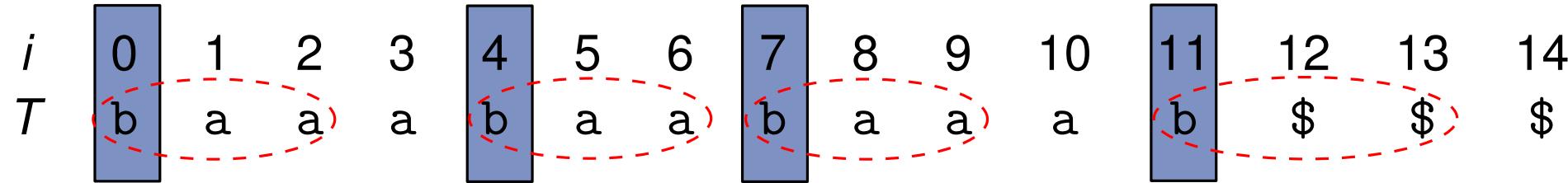
Bucket 1: (3, aba), (6, aba), (10, ab\$)  $< \text{b\$\$}$

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**sorted order:** 1, 8, 2, 5, 9      10, 3, 6      11, 0, 4, 7  
Bucket 0              Bucket 1              Bucket 2

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**splitters:** ab\$, b\$\$

Bucket 0: (1, aaa), (2, aab), (5, aab), (8, aaa), (9, aab)  $< \text{ab\$}$

Bucket 1: (3, aba), (6, aba), (10, ab\$)  $< \text{b\$\$}$

Bucket 2: (0, baa), (4, baa), (7, baa), (11, b\$\$)  $\geq \text{b\$\$}$

**sorted order:** 1, 8, 2, 5, 9      10, 3, 6      11, 0, 4, 7       $\approx 1/3$  memory consumption

Bucket 0	Bucket 1	Bucket 2
----------	----------	----------

**Problem:** imbalances within a bucket

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	PE 0					PE 1					PE 2				
$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o

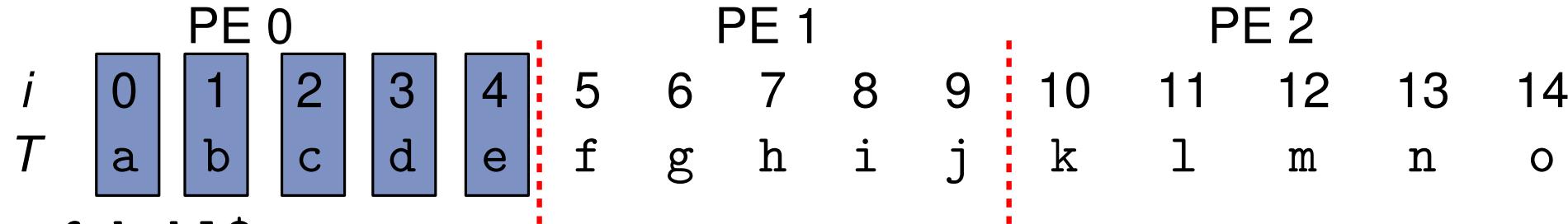
**Problem:** imbalances within a bucket

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**splitters:** fgh, kl\$

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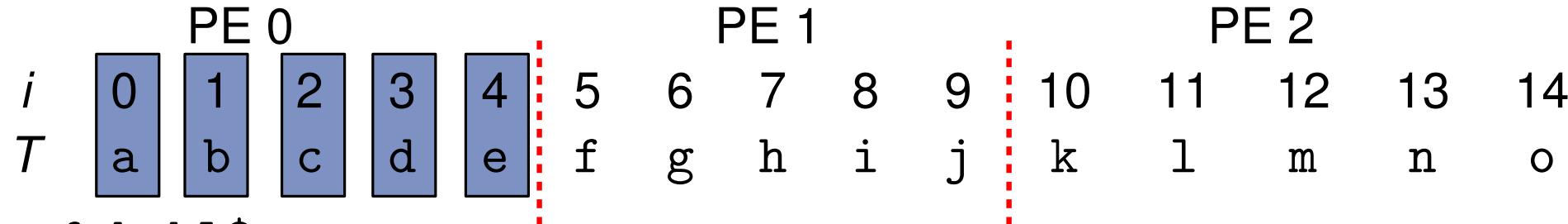
**Problem:** imbalances within a bucket



**splitters:** fgh, kl\$

Bucket 0: (0, abc), (1, bcd), (2, cde), (3, def), (4, efg),

**Problem:** imbalances within a bucket



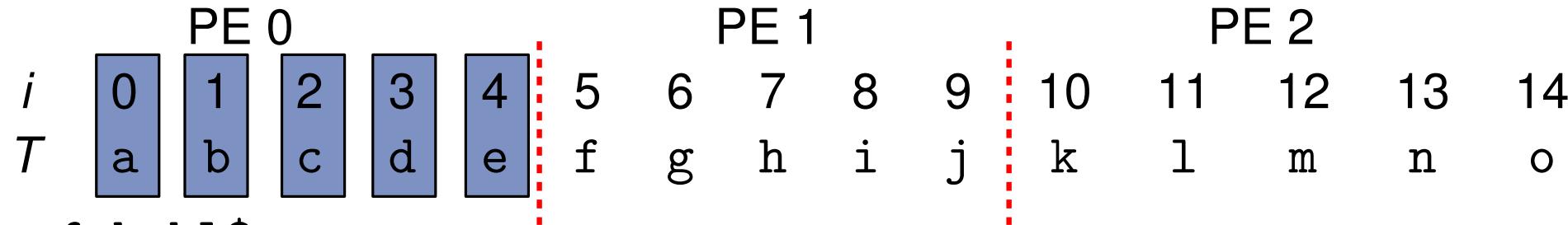
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completely on PE 0  
PE 1 and PE 2 are empty

**Problem:** imbalances within a bucket



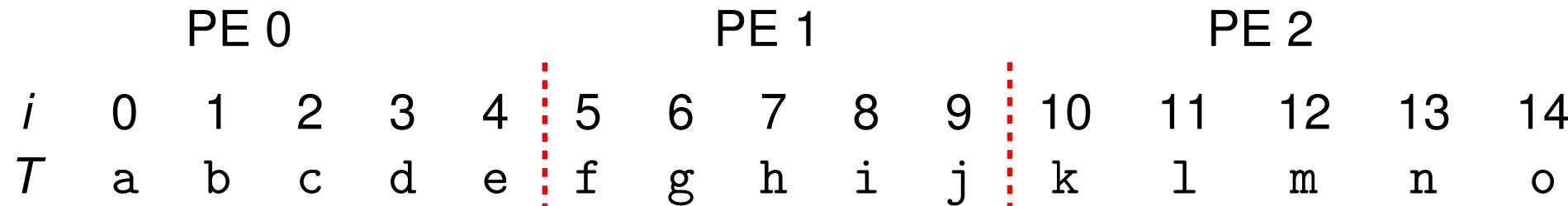
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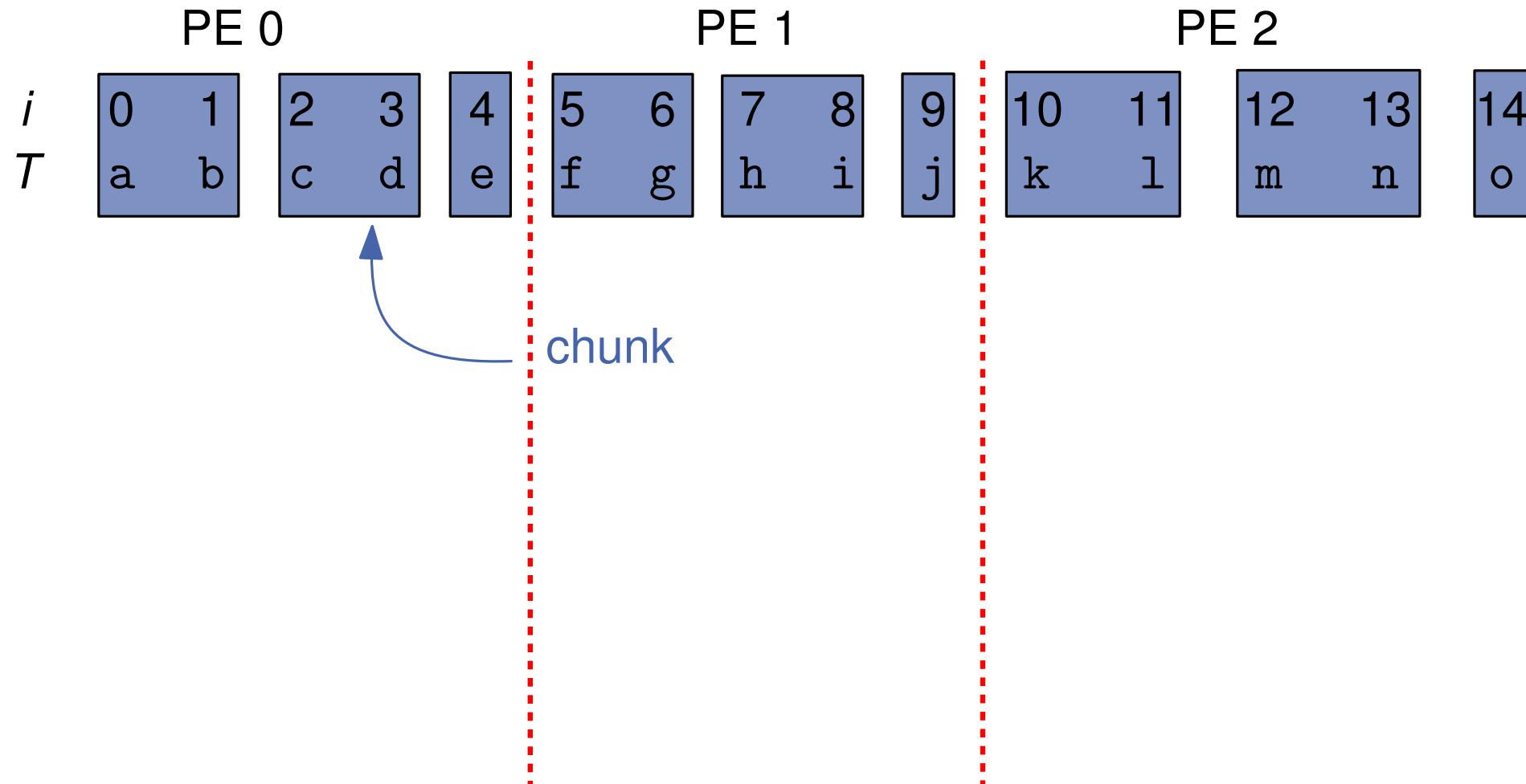
completely on PE 0  
PE 1 and PE 2 are empty

**Solution:** random redistribution of chunks

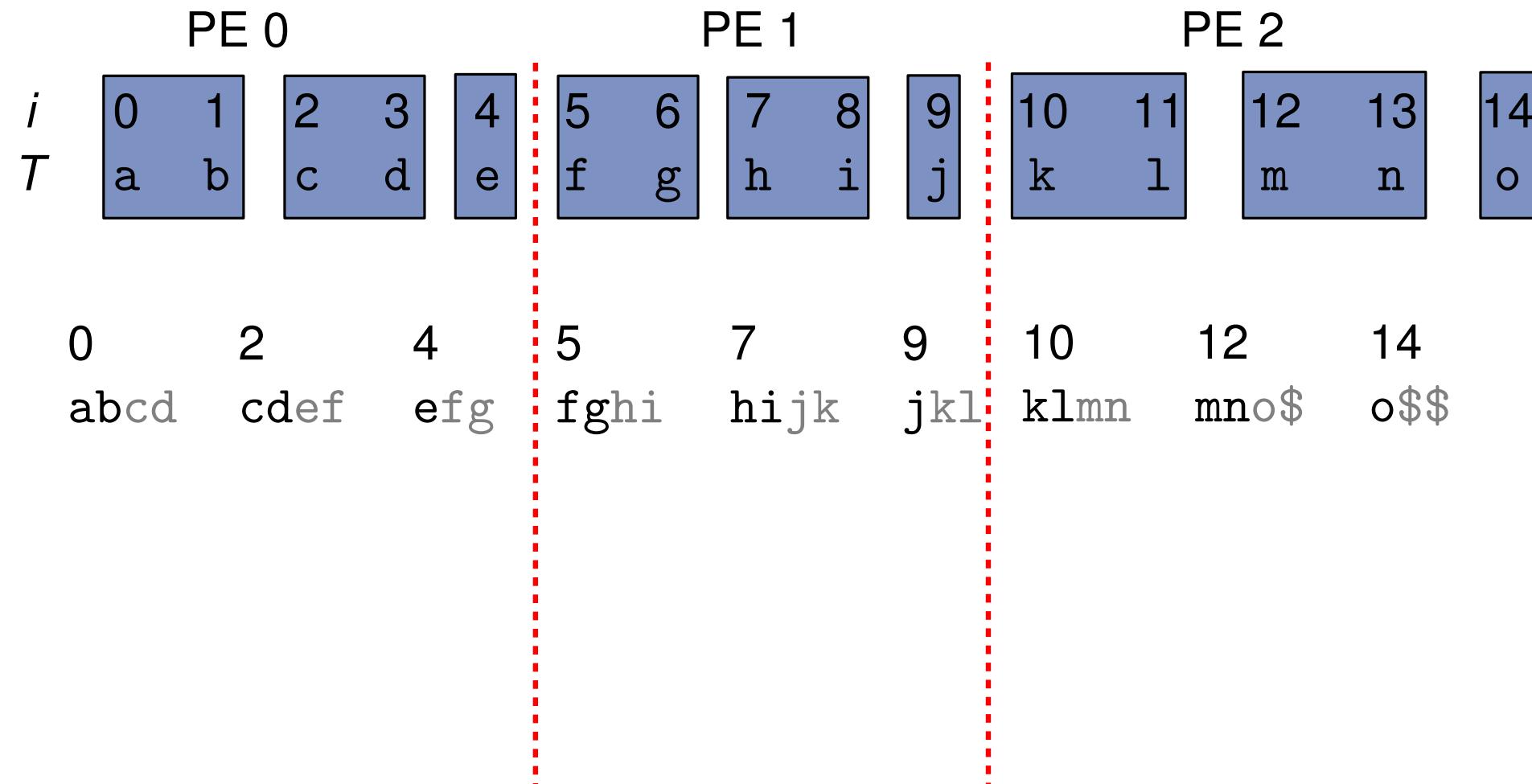
# Random Redistribution Using Chunking



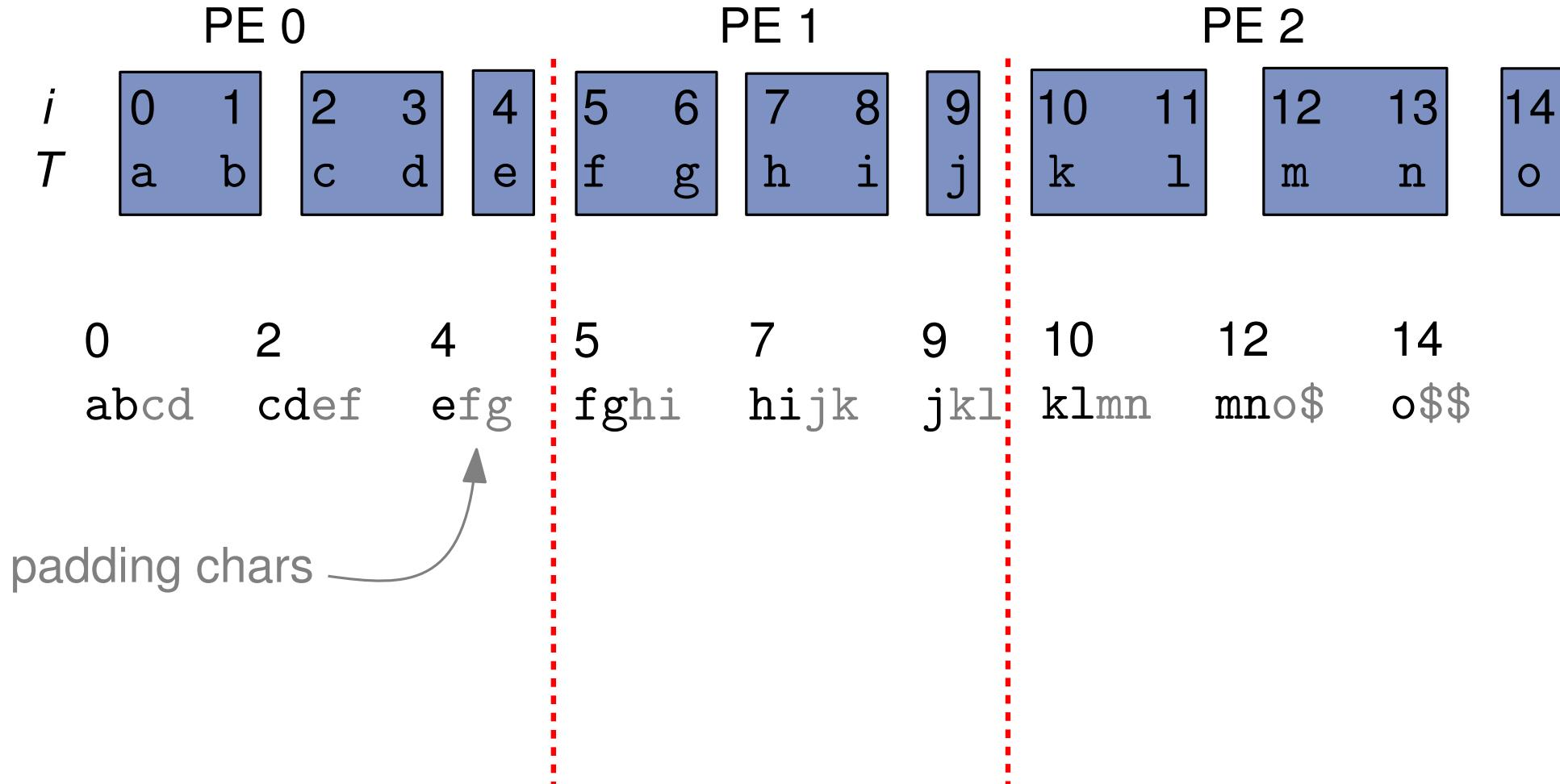
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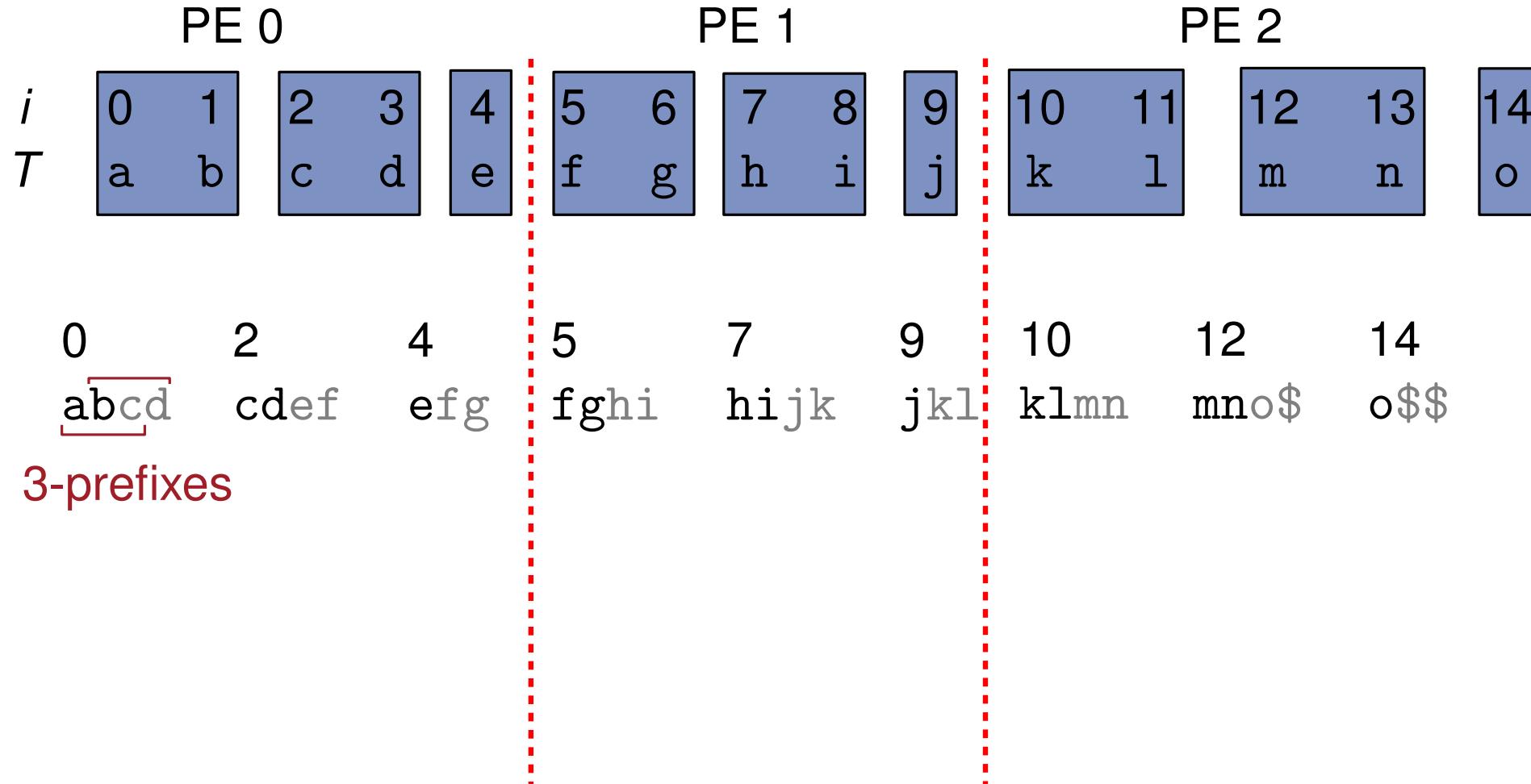
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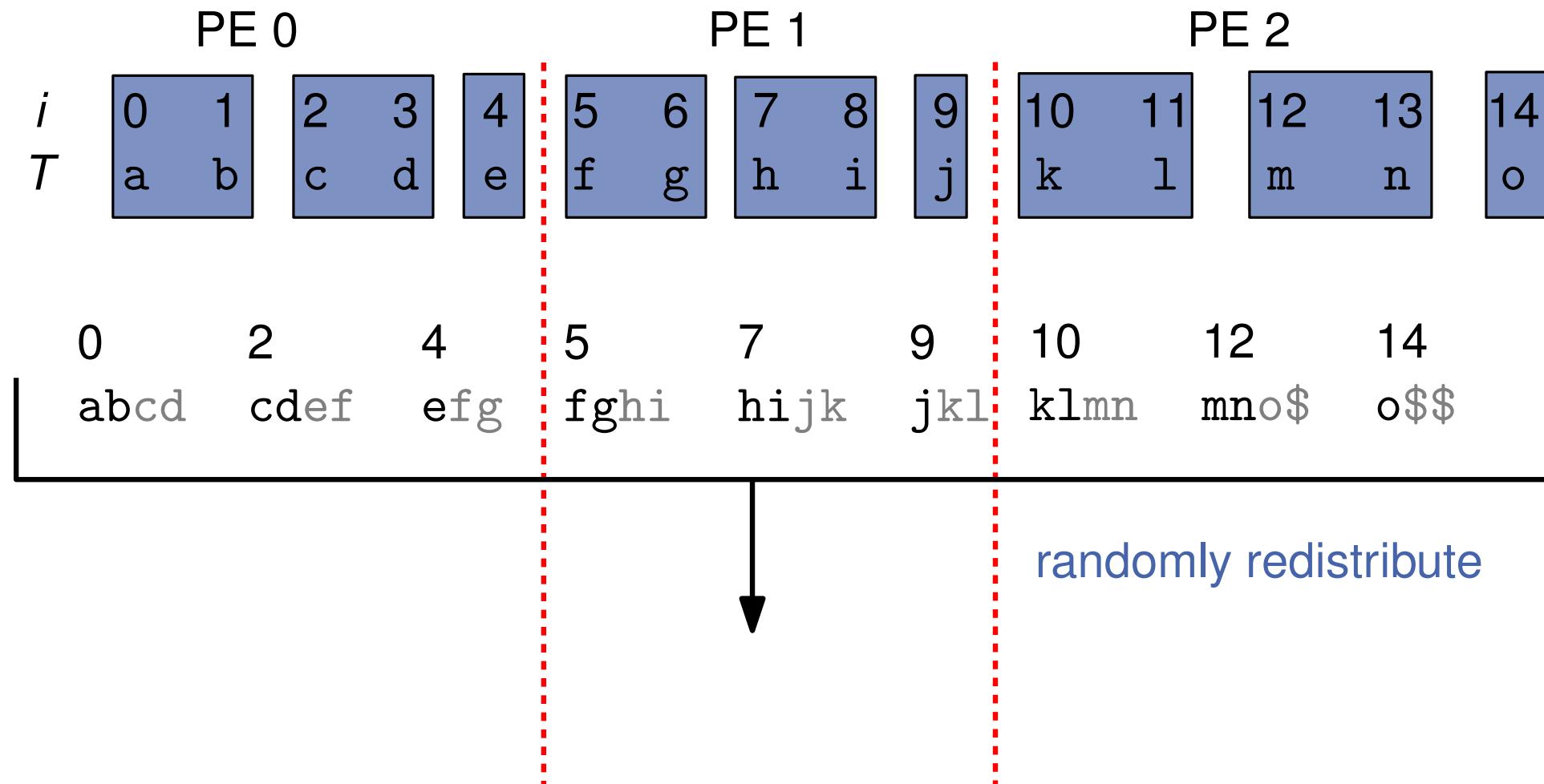
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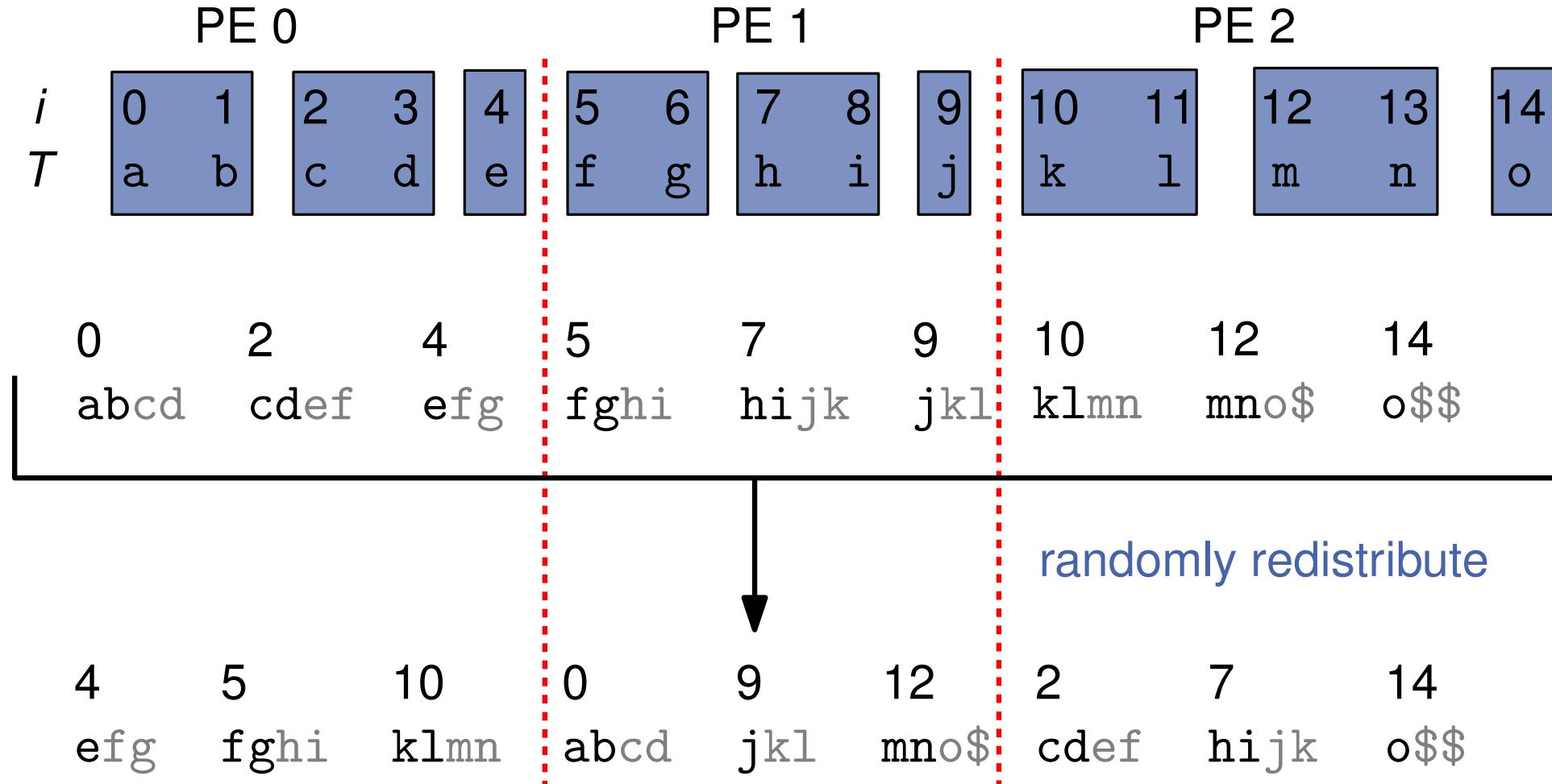
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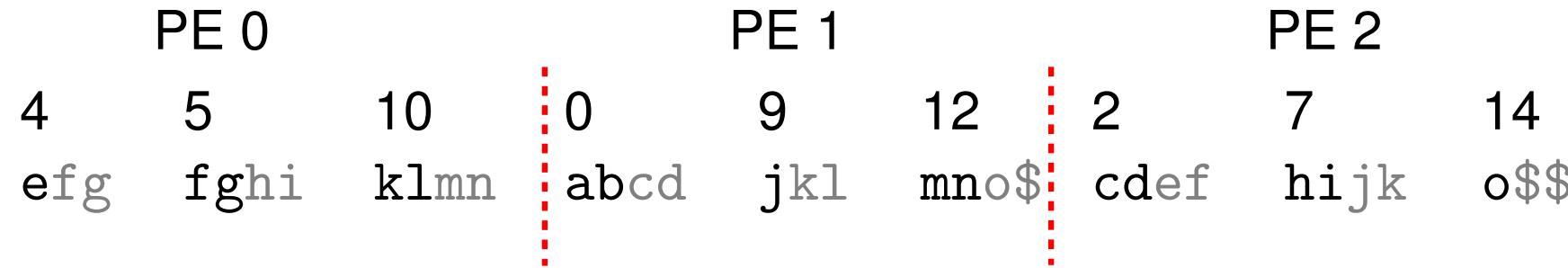
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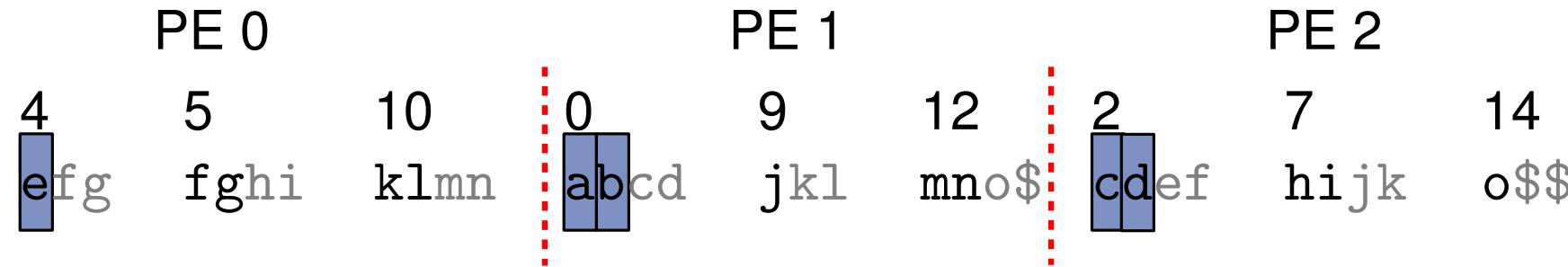


# Random Redistribution Using Chunking

PE 0			PE 1			PE 2		
4	5	10	0	9	12	2	7	14
efg	fghi	klmn	abcd	jkl	mno\$	cdef	hijk	o\$\$

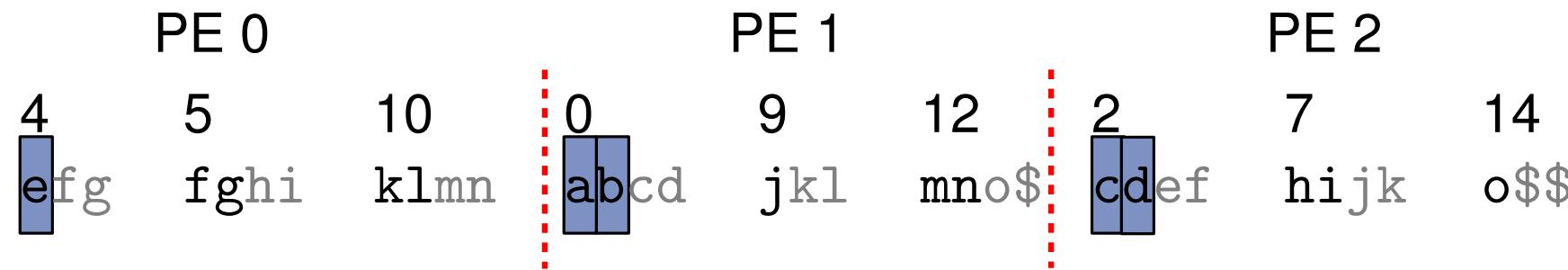
**splitters:** fgh, k1\$

# Random Redistribution Using Chunking



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# Random Redistribution Using Chunking



**splitters:** fgh, k1\$

→ good load-balancing with high probability in theory and practice

# Further Optimizations

- **discard** suffixes not needed in recursive subproblem [Dementiev et al. 2008]
- **packing** chars into 64-bit words [Flick & Aluru 2015]
- **string sample sort** for  $X$ -prefixes
- **5-byte integer** for ranks and indices

# Experimental Setup

## Input Texts

Name	Mean LCP	Alphabet Size
DNA	25.17	4
Proteins	179.31	26
Wiki	396.07	213
CC	10396.42	243

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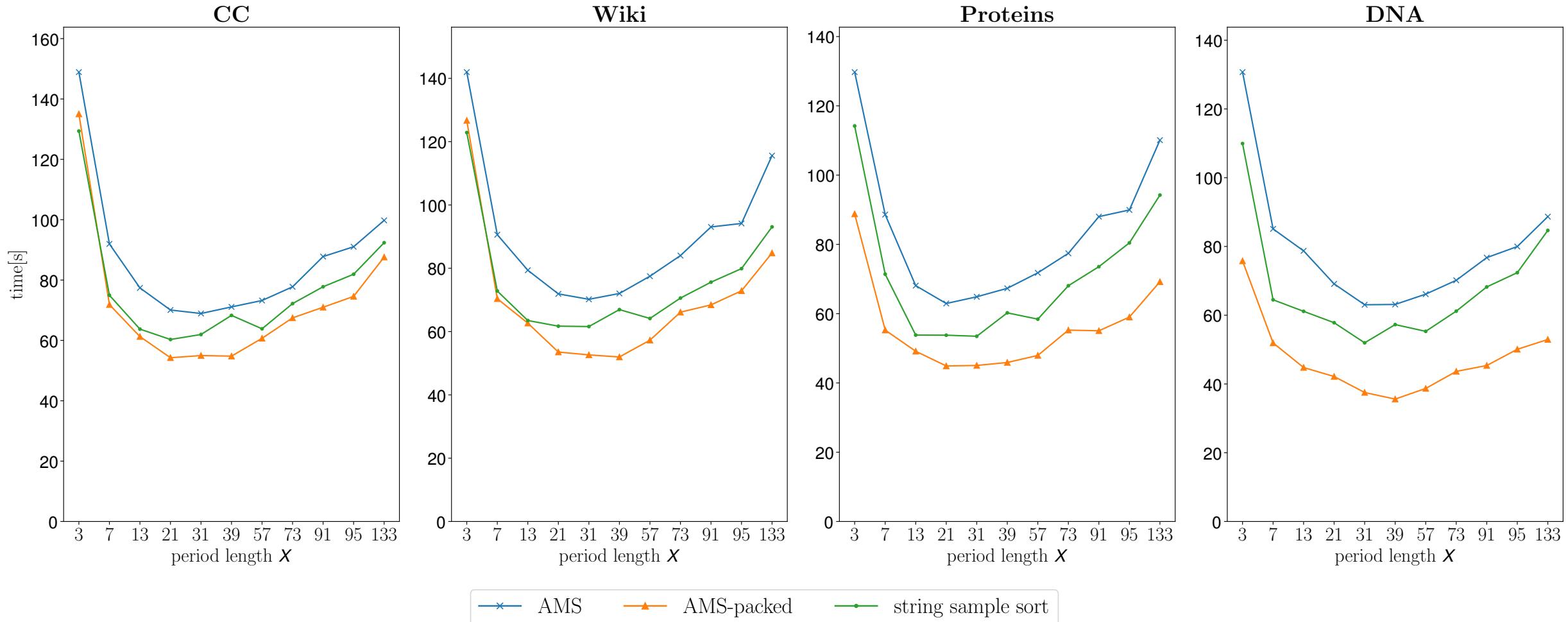
## Setup

- c++20 and MPI with configuration for lower memory footprint
- experiments on up to 6144 cores of SuperMUC-NG



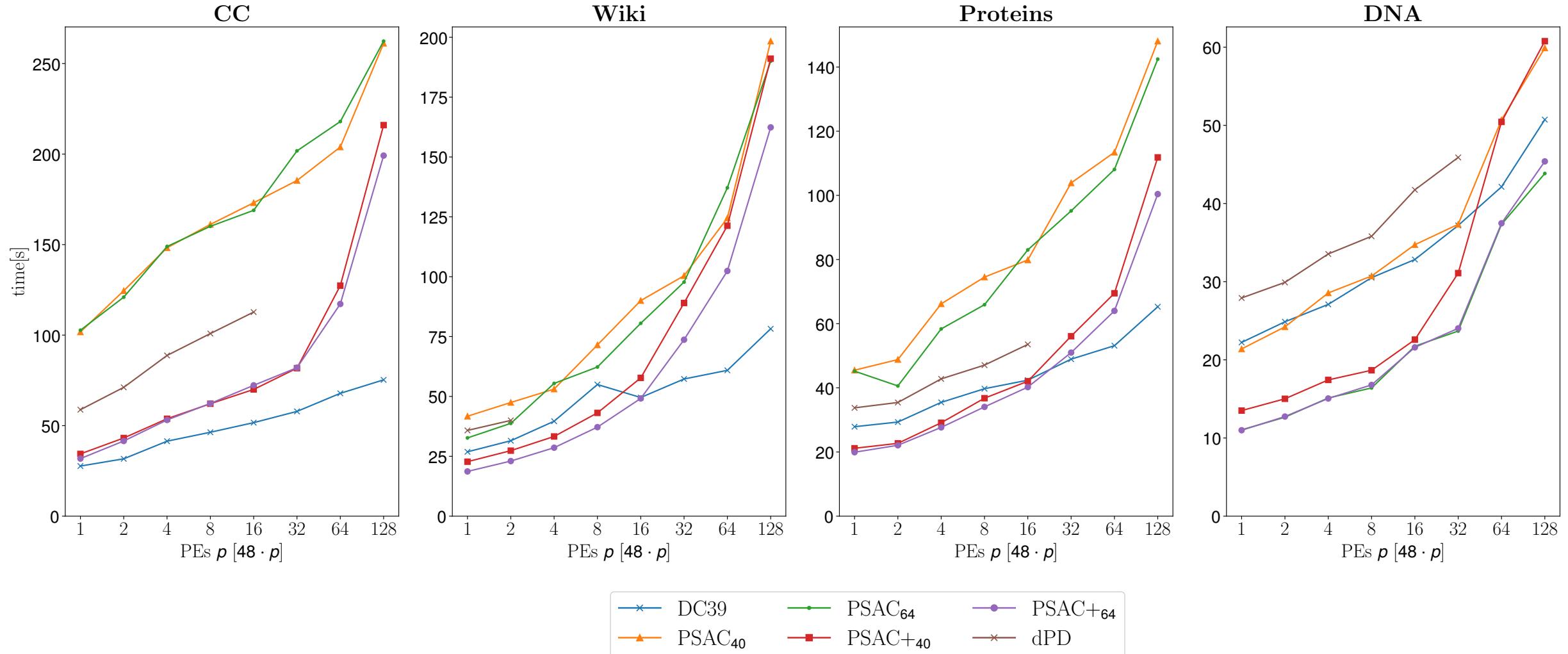
# Results - Sorting Variants

768 PEs, 20 MB input per PE



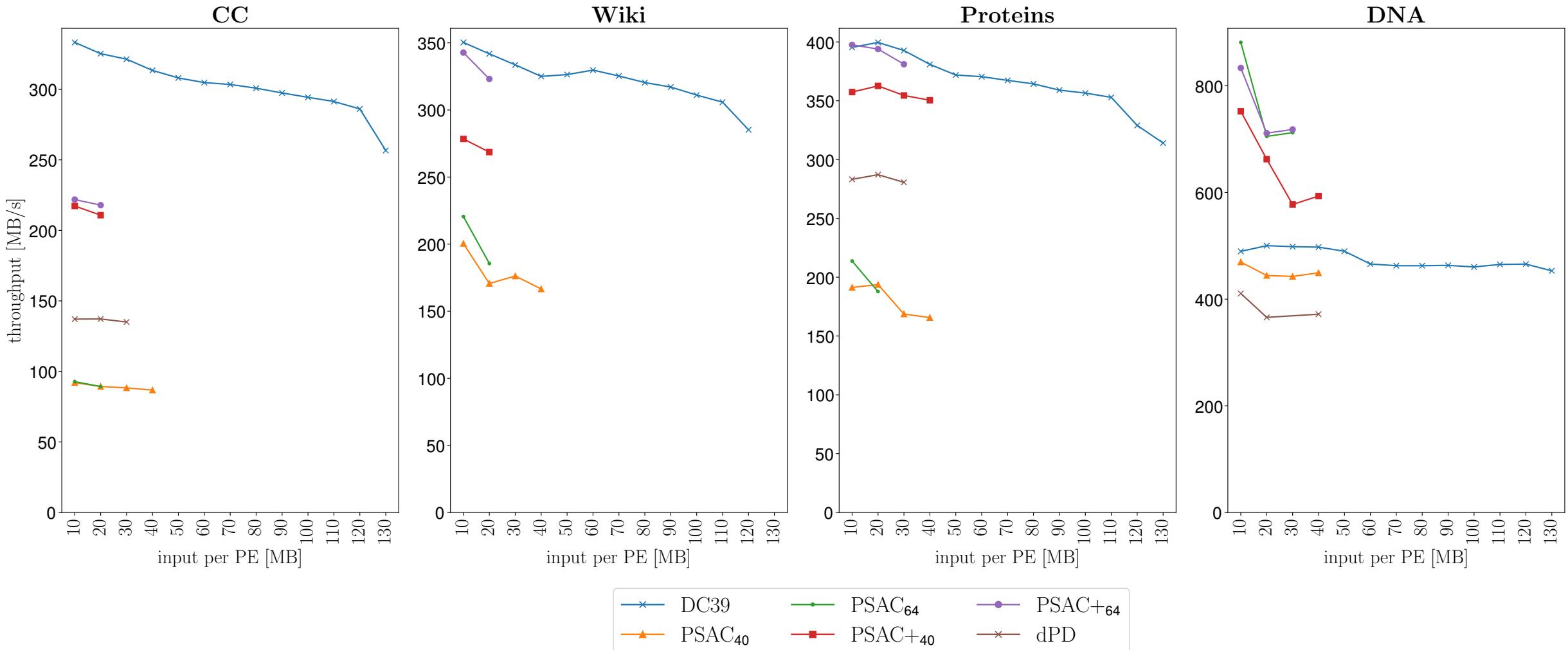
# Results - Weak Scaling Experiment

20 MB input per PE



# Results - Breakdown Test

768 PEs



# Conclusion

- DCX can process inputs  $3\times$  as large as competitors
- fastest on 3 out of 4 inputs (speedups up to  $3.2\times$ )
- good time-space trade-off on DNA

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- DCX can process inputs  $3\times$  as large as competitors
- fastest on 3 out of 4 inputs (speedups up to  $3.2\times$ )
- good time-space trade-off on DNA

## Future Work

- semi-external DCX
- hybrid between DCX and prefix doubling / inducing
- DCX on the GPU
- comparison with dDivSuffSort

# Bibliography

[Manber & Myers 1990] Suffix arrays: A new method for on-line string searches.

[Itoh & Tanaka 1999] An efficient method for in memory construction

[Kärkkäinen & Sanders 2003] Simple Linear Work Suffix Array

[Kärkkäinen et al. 2006] Linear work suffix array construction.

[Kulla & Sanders 2007]. Scalable parallel suffix array construction of suffix arrays.

[Dementiev et al. 2008] Better external memory suffix array construction.

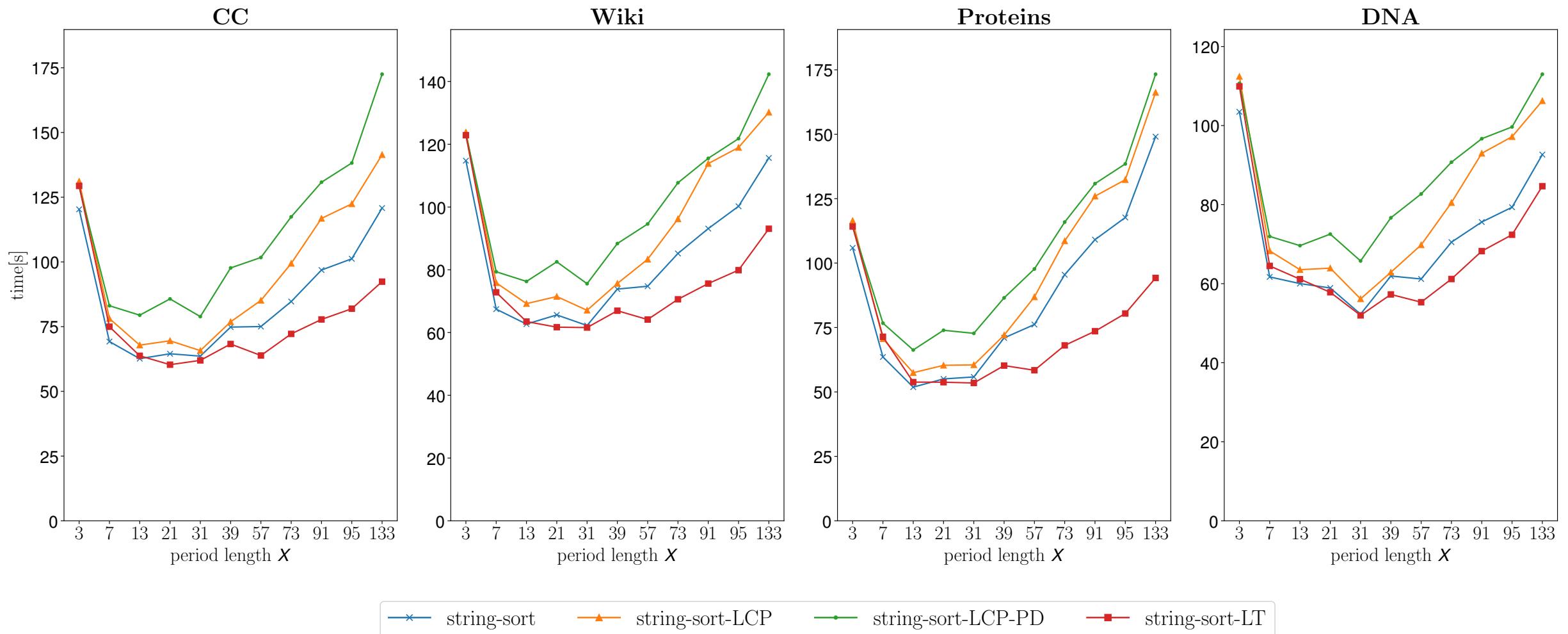
[Flick & Aluru 2015]. Parallel distributed memory construction of suffix and longest common prefix arrays.

[Fischer & Kurpicz 2019] Lightweight distributed suffix array construction.

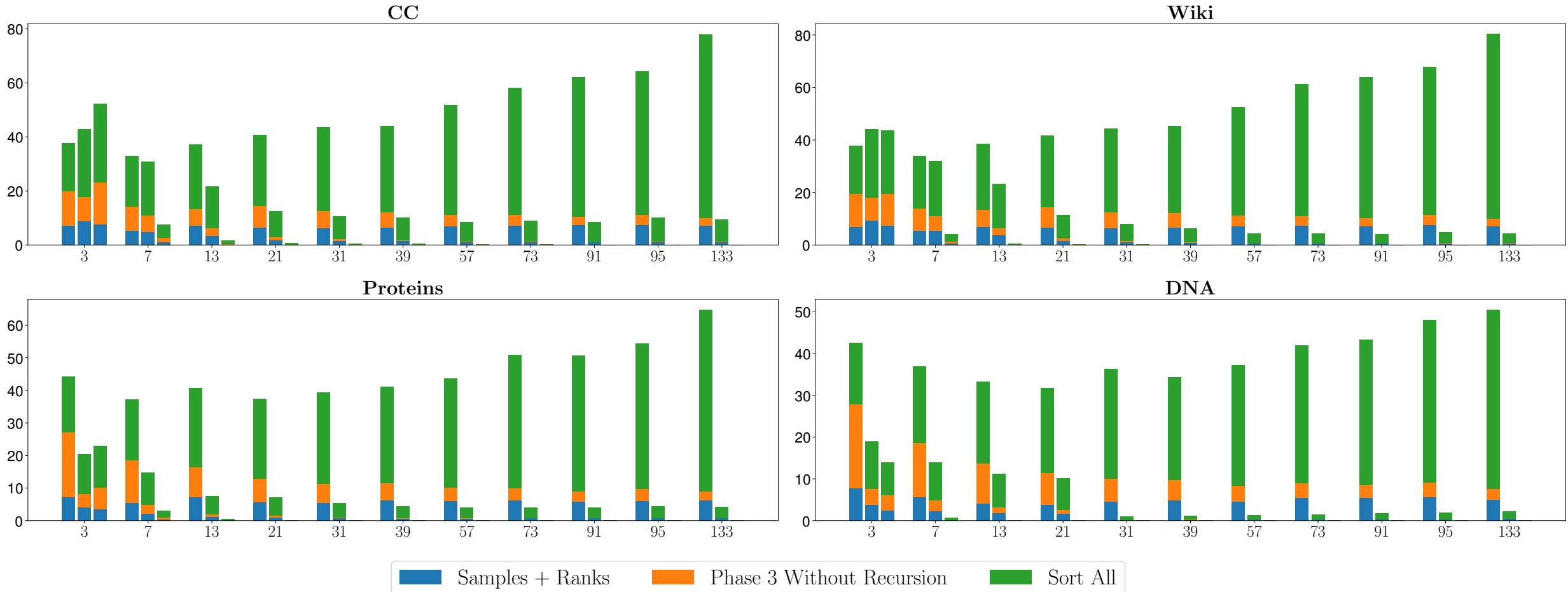
[Mehnert 2024] Scalable distributed string sorting algorithms. Master's thesis.

# Backup Slides

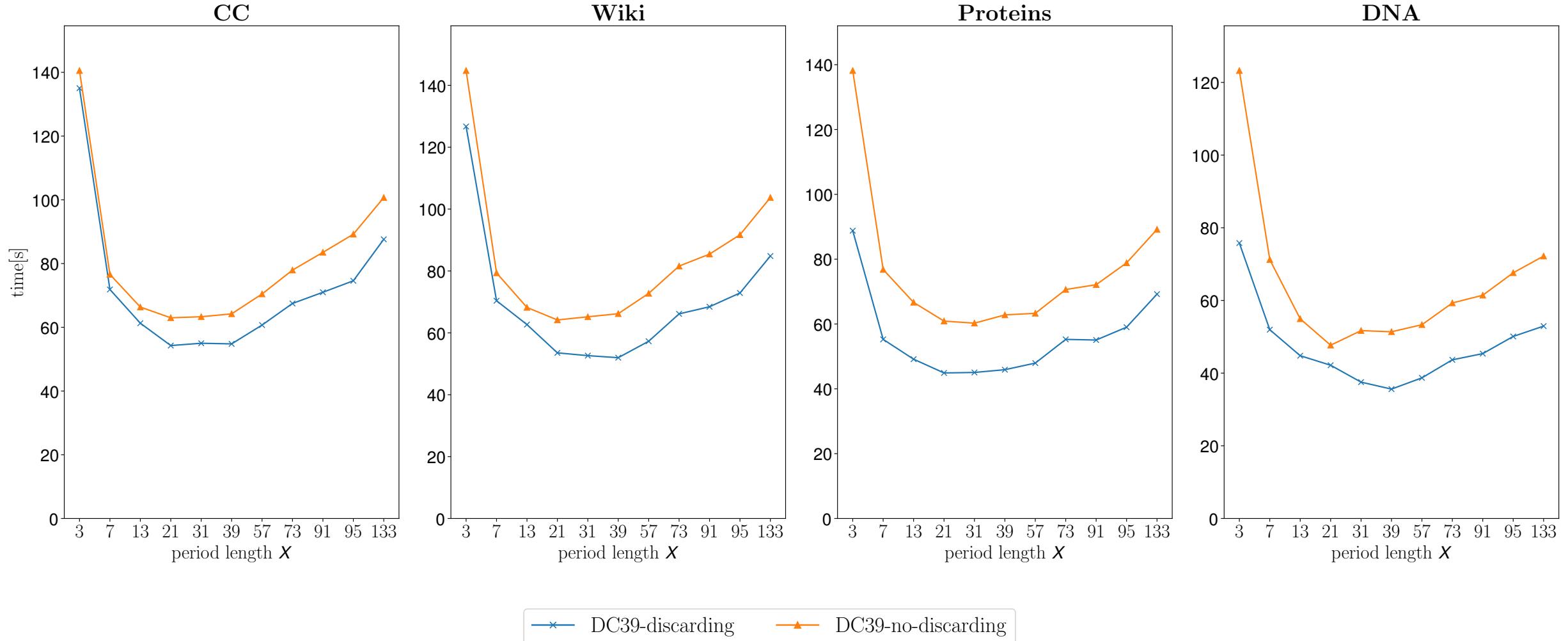
# Plots - String Sorting Variants



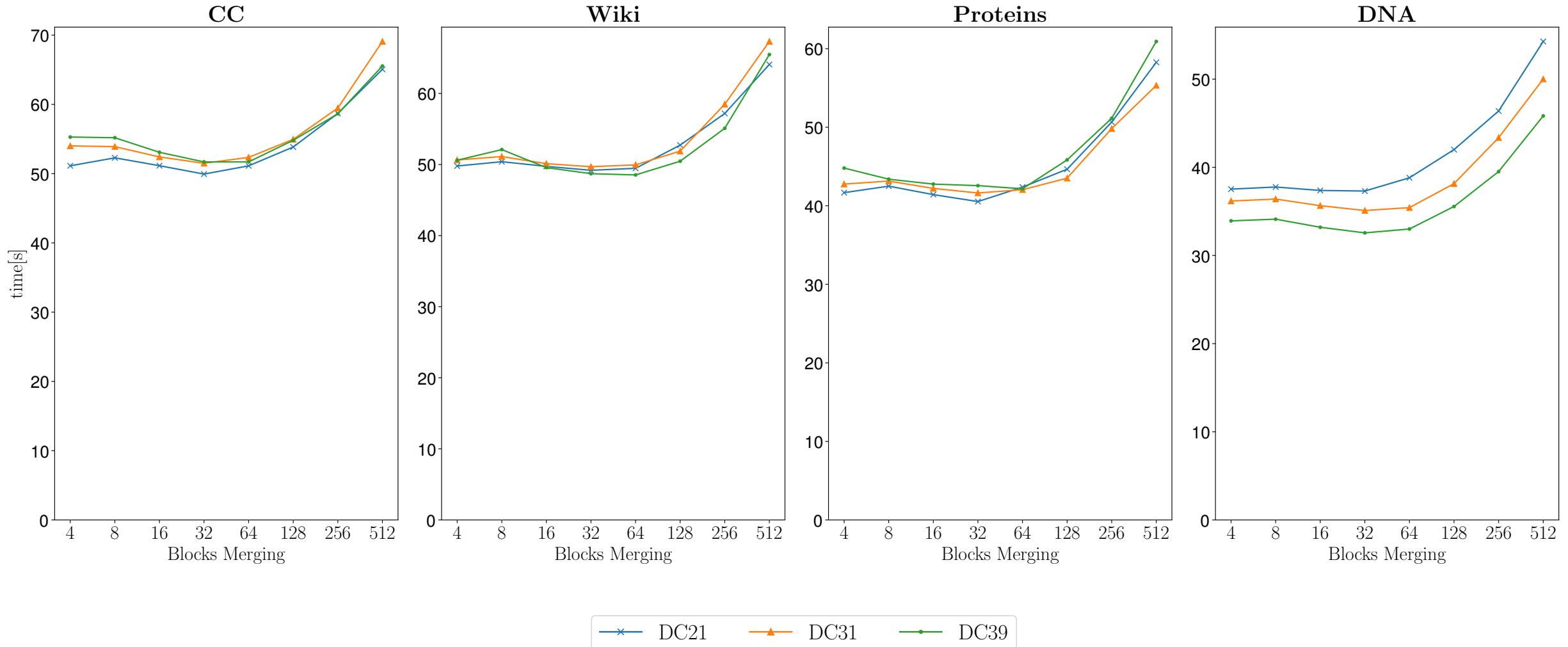
# Plots - Phase Times AMS-packed



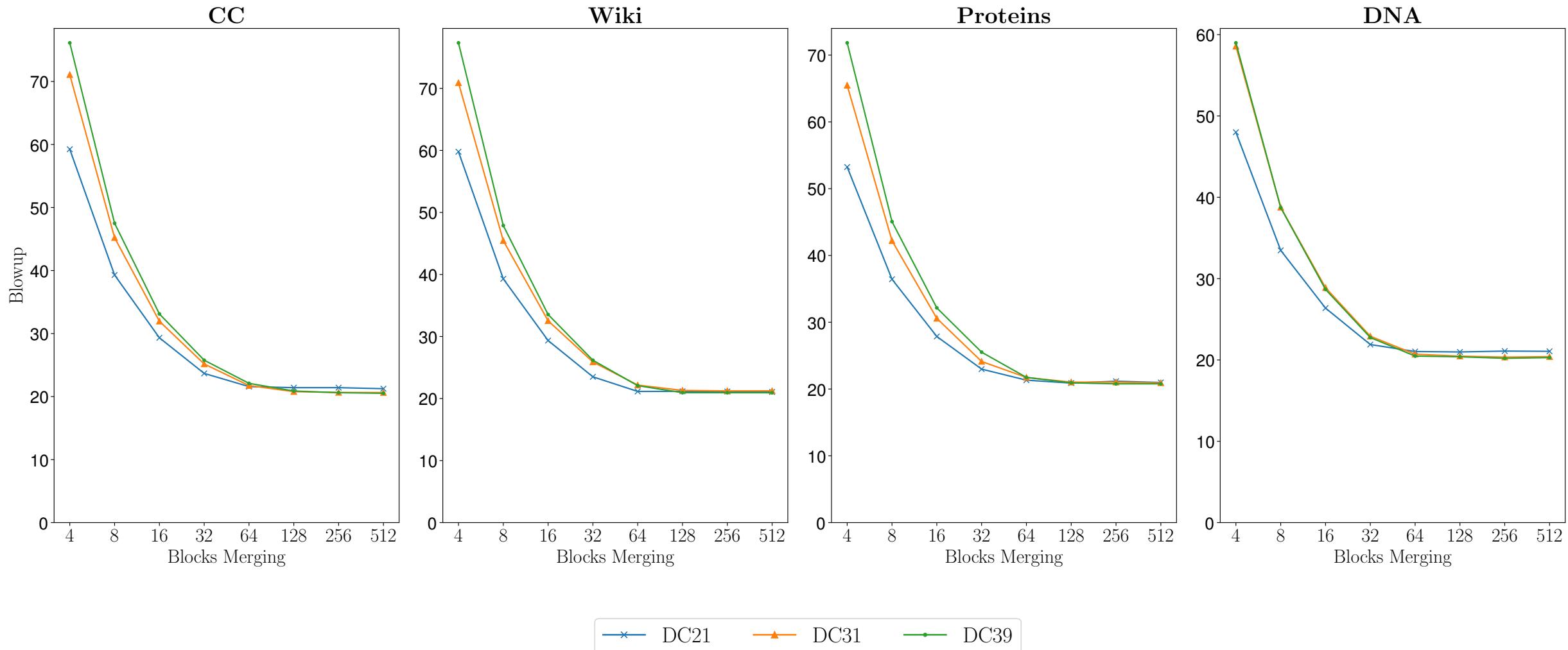
# Plots - AMS-packed - Discarding vs No-Discarding



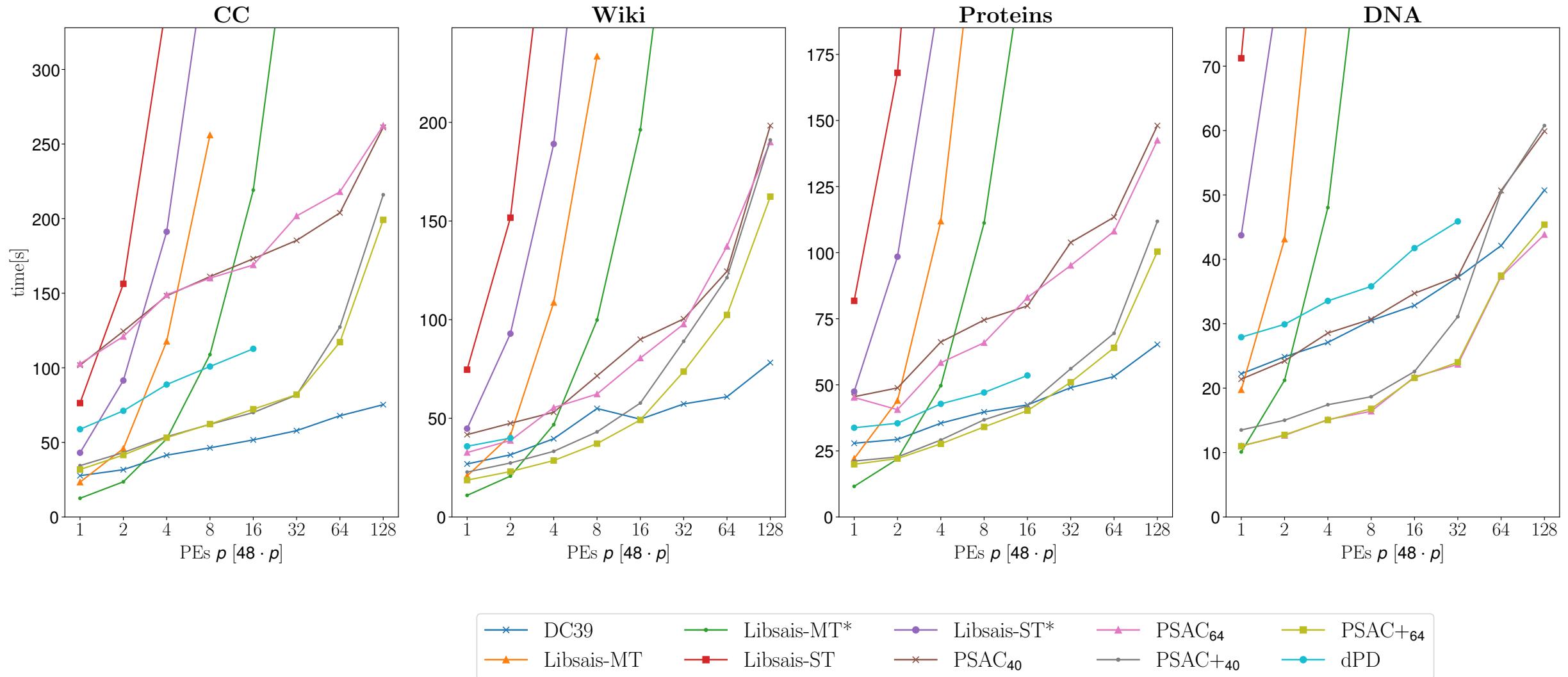
# Plots - AMS-packed - Blocks Sizes Time



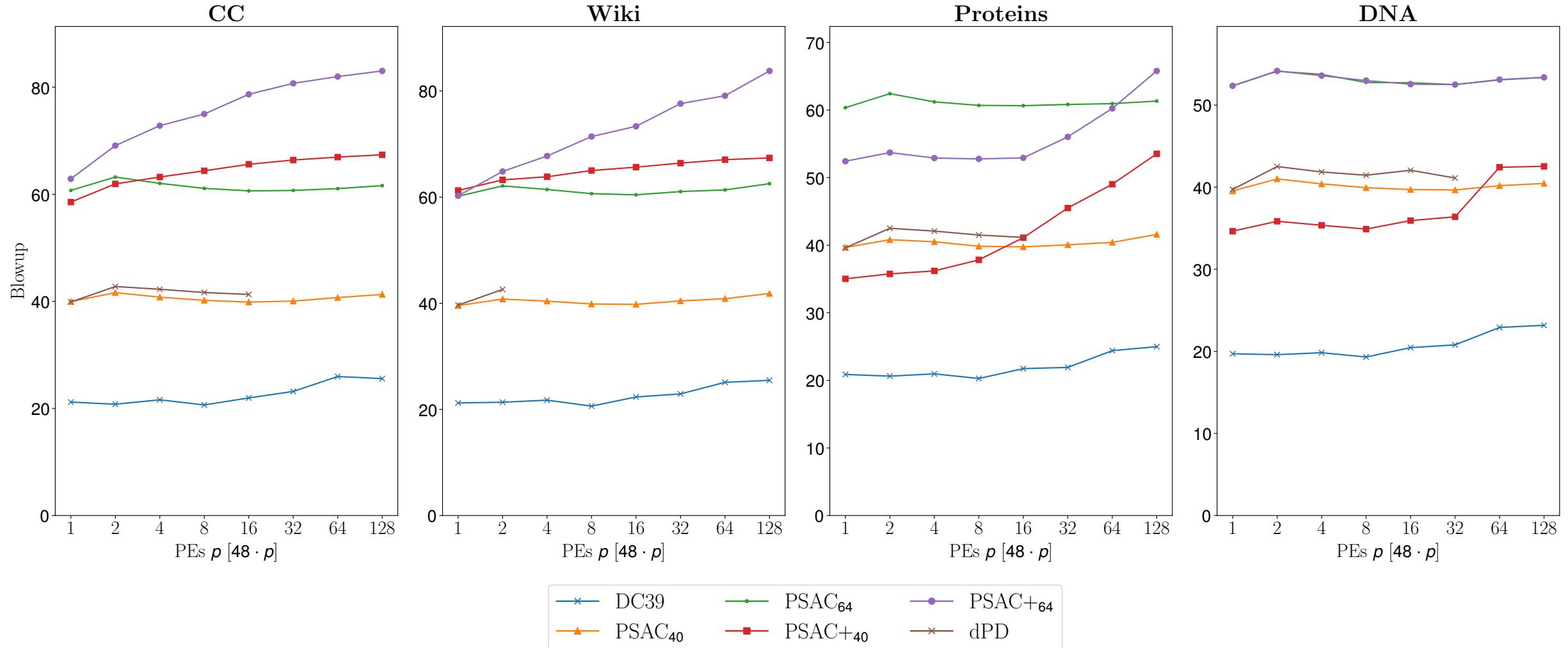
# Plots - AMS-packed - Blocks Sizes Memory



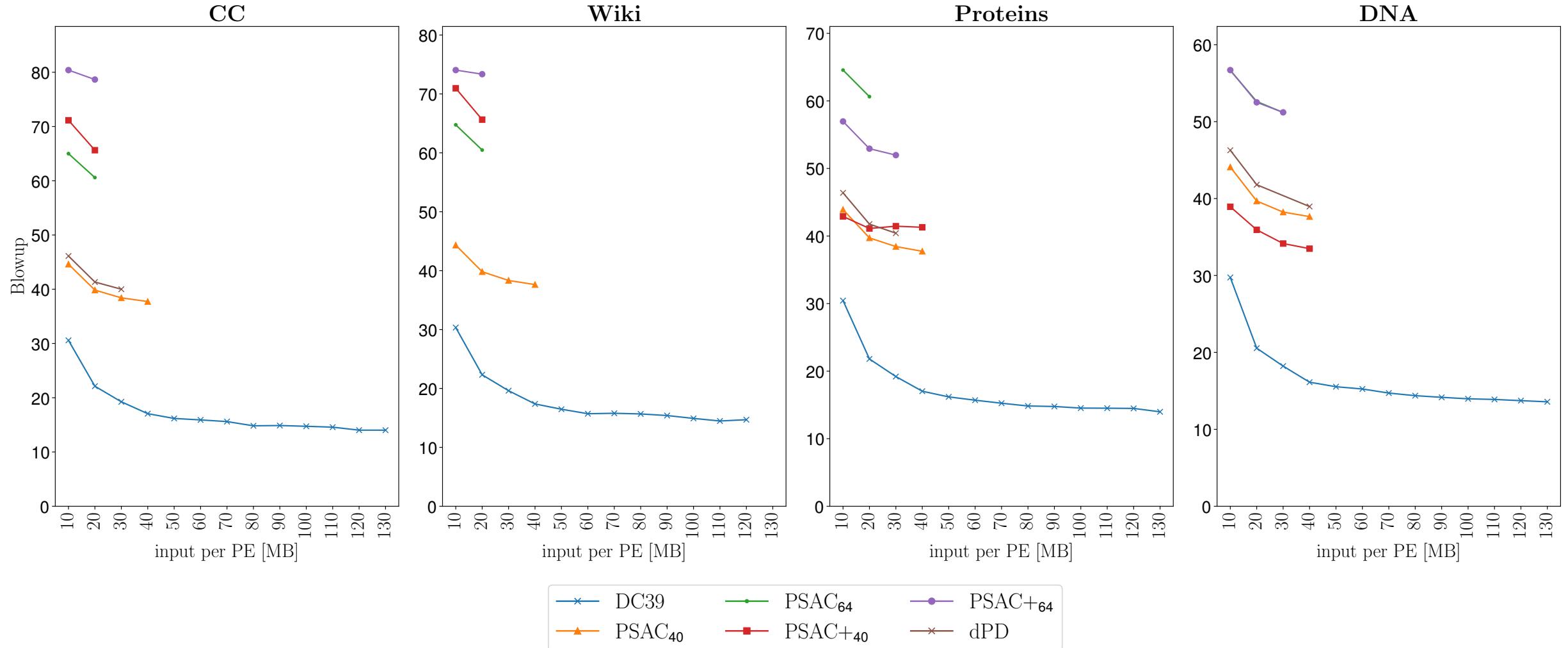
# Plots - Scaling Experiment Time Libsais



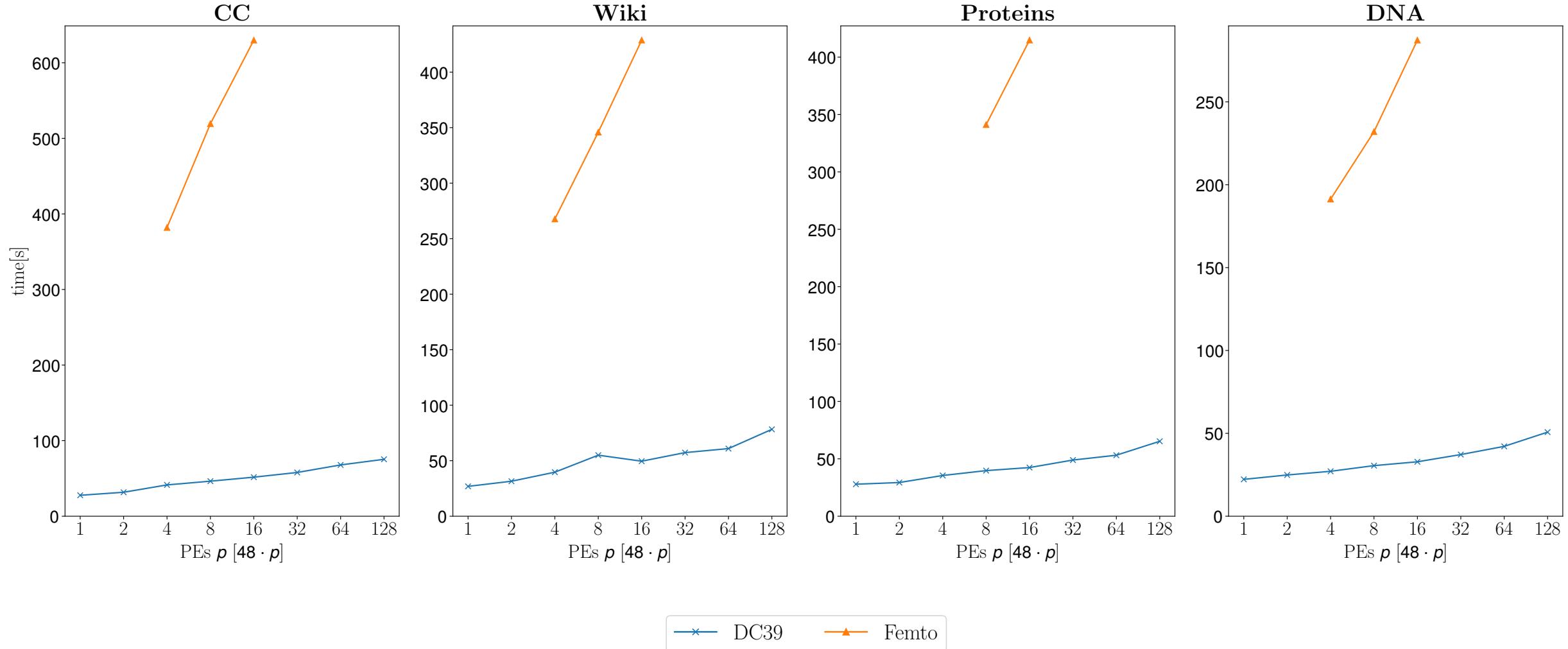
# Plots - Scaling Experiment Memory



# Plots - Breakdown Test Memory



# Plots - AMS-packed vs. Femto



# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (pDC3)

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$

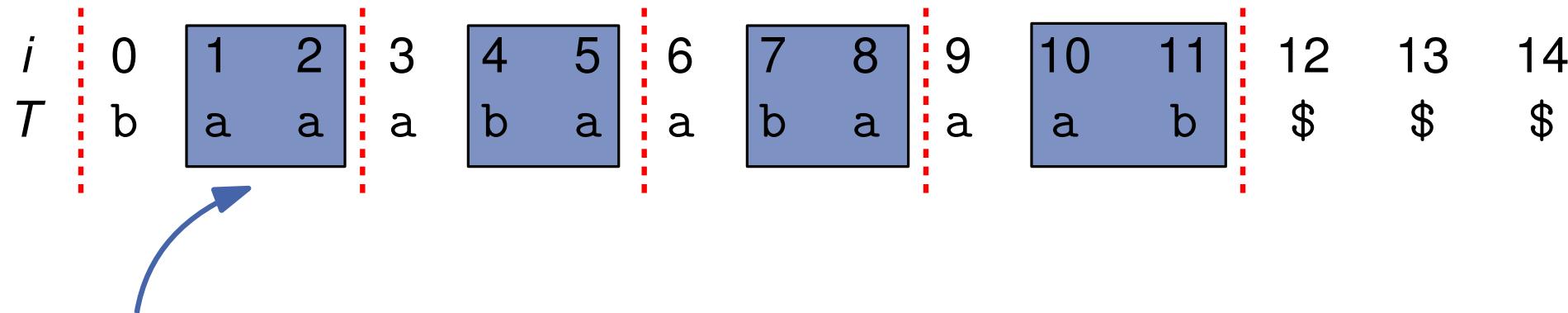
# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (pDC3)

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$

## Definition

A set  $D_X$  is a difference cover modulo  $X$  if  $\{(i - j) \bmod X \mid i, j \in D_X\} = [0, X]$ .

# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (pDC3)



periodic difference cover sample  $D_3 = \{1, 2\}$

## Definition

A set  $D_X$  is a **difference cover modulo  $X$**  if  $\{(i - j) \bmod X \mid i, j \in D_X\} = [0, X]$ .

# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (pDC3)

$i$	0	1 2	3	4 5	6	7 8	9	10 11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a a	a	b a	a	b a	a	a b	\$	\$	\$
↓ sample 3-prefixes											
$i$	1	2	4	5	7	8	10	11			
$S$	aaa	aab	baa	aab	baa	aaa	ab\$	b\$\$			

# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (pDC3)

$i$	0	1 2	3	4 5	6	7 8	9	10 11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a a	a	b a	a	b a	a	a b	\$	\$	\$

$i$	1	2	4	5	7	8	10	11
$S$	aaa	aab	baa	aab	baa	aaa	ab\$	b\$\$

sort lexicographically

# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (pDC3)

$i$	0	1 2	3	4 5	6	7 8	9	10 11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a a	a	b a	a	b a	a	a b	\$	\$	\$

$i$	1	8	2	5	10	11	4	7
$S$	aaa	aaa	aab	aab	ab\$	b\$\$	baa	baa
rank	0	0	1	1	2	3	4	4

sort lexicographically

# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (pDC3)

$i$	0	1 2	3	4 5	6	7 8	9	10 11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a a	a	b a	a	b a	a	a b	\$	\$	\$

$i$	1	8	2	5	10	11	4	7
$S$	aaa	aaa	aab	aab	ab\$	b\$\$	baa	baa
rank	0	0	1	1	2	3	4	4

sort by ( $i \bmod 3, i \div 3$ )

$i$	1	4	7	10	2	5	8	11
$P$	0	4	4	2	1	1	0	3

# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (pDC3)

$i$	0	1 2	3	4 5	6	7 8	9	10 11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a a	a	b a	a	b a	a	a b	\$	\$	\$

$i$	1	8	2	5	10	11	4	7
$S$	aaa	aaa	aab	aab	ab\$	b\$\$	baa	baa
rank	0	0	1	1	2	3	4	4

$i$	1	4	7	10	2	5	8	11
$P$	0	4	4	2	1	1	0	3

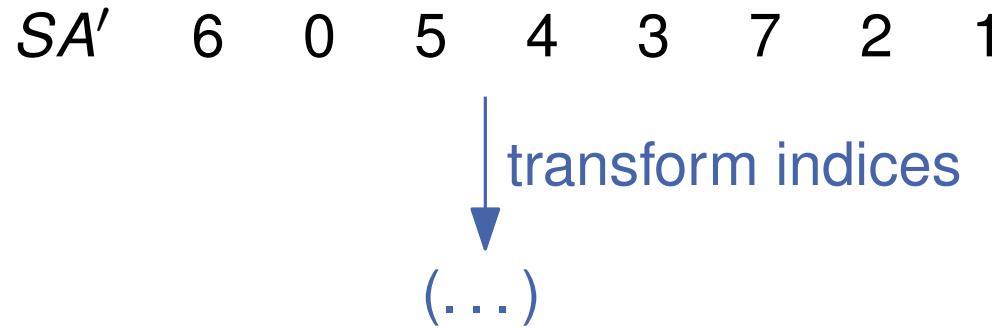
↓ recursion on  $P$

$SA'$	6	0	5	4	3	7	2	1
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# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (pDC3)

$SA'$  6 0 5 4 3 7 2 1

# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (pDC3)



# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (pDC3)

	$SA'$	6	0	5	4	3	7	2	1				
$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$
$R$	$\perp$	1	3	$\perp$	7	2	$\perp$	6	0	$\perp$	4	5	$\perp$

↓ transform indices  
(...)  
↓ determine sample ranks

# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (pDC3)

**Globally sort all suffixes:** Compare characters until both positions are samples.

comparison:

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$
$R$	$\perp$	1	3	$\perp$	7	2	$\perp$	6	0	$\perp$	4	5	$\perp$	$\perp$	$\perp$

# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (pDC3)

**Globally sort all suffixes:** Compare characters until both positions are samples.

comparison:

## Lemma 1

If  $D_X$  is a difference cover modulo  $X$ , and  $i$  and  $j$  are integers, there exists  $l \in [0, X)$  such that  $(i + l) \bmod X$  and  $(j + l) \bmod X$  are in  $D_X$ .

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$
$R$	$\perp$	1	3	$\perp$	7	2	$\perp$	6	0	$\perp$	4	5	$\perp$	$\perp$	$\perp$

# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (pDC3)

**Globally sort all suffixes:** Compare characters until both positions are samples.

comparison:  $S_1 > S_8$

## Lemma 1

If  $D_X$  is a difference cover modulo  $X$ , and  $i$  and  $j$  are integers, there exists  $l \in [0, X)$  such that  $(i + l) \bmod X$  and  $(j + l) \bmod X$  are in  $D_X$ .

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$
$R$	$\perp$	1	3	$\perp$	7	2	$\perp$	6	0	$\perp$	4	5	$\perp$	$\perp$	$\perp$

# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (pDC3)

**Globally sort all suffixes:** Compare characters until both positions are samples.

comparison:  $S_3 > S_6$

## Lemma 1

If  $D_X$  is a difference cover modulo  $X$ , and  $i$  and  $j$  are integers, there exists  $l \in [0, X)$  such that  $(i + l) \bmod X$  and  $(j + l) \bmod X$  are in  $D_X$ .

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$
$R$	$\perp$	1	3	$\perp$	7	2	$\perp$	6	0	$\perp$	4	5	$\perp$	$\perp$	$\perp$

# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (pDC3)

**Globally sort all suffixes:** Compare characters until both positions are samples.

comparison:  $S_2 < S_6$

## Lemma 1

If  $D_X$  is a difference cover modulo  $X$ , and  $i$  and  $j$  are integers, there exists  $l \in [0, X)$  such that  $(i + l) \bmod X$  and  $(j + l) \bmod X$  are in  $D_X$ .

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$
$R$	$\perp$	1	3	$\perp$	7	2	$\perp$	6	0	$\perp$	4	5	$\perp$	$\perp$	$\perp$

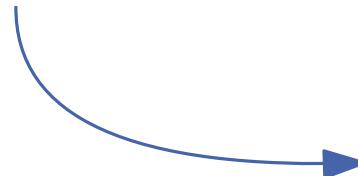
## Distributed Memory

- distributed sorting routines
- shifts characters/ranks between adjacent PEs
- materialize chars and prefixes to send non-local data

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$
$R$	$\perp$	1	3	$\perp$	7	2	$\perp$	6	0	$\perp$	4	5	$\perp$	$\perp$	$\perp$

## Distributed Memory

- distributed sorting routines
- shifts characters/ranks between adjacent PEs
- materialize chars and prefixes to send non-local data



index: 2

chars: aa

ranks: (3, 7)

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$
$R$	$\perp$	1	3	$\perp$	7	2	$\perp$	6	0	$\perp$	4	5	$\perp$	$\perp$	$\perp$

## Distributed Memory

- distributed sorting routines
- shifts characters/ranks between adjacent PEs
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index: 2  
chars: aa  
ranks: (3, 7)

memory blowup by 3×

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$
$R$	$\perp$	1	3	$\perp$	7	2	$\perp$	6	0	$\perp$	4	5	$\perp$	$\perp$	$\perp$

## Distributed DCX

- $D_3 \rightarrow D_X$ , e.g.  $D_7 = \{1, 2, 4\}$
- 3-prefixes  $\rightarrow X$ -prefixes
- size of recursive subproblem:

$$|D_X|/X \in \mathcal{O}(1/\sqrt{X})$$

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$
$R$	$\perp$	1	3	$\perp$	7	2	$\perp$	6	0	$\perp$	4	5	$\perp$	$\perp$	$\perp$

## Distributed DCX

- $D_3 \rightarrow D_X$ , e.g.  $D_7 = \{1, 2, 4\}$
- 3-prefixes  $\rightarrow X$ -prefixes  memory blowup by  $X \times$
- size of recursive subproblem:  
 $|D_X|/X \in \mathcal{O}(1/\sqrt{X})$

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$
$R$	$\perp$	1	3	$\perp$	7	2	$\perp$	6	0	$\perp$	4	5	$\perp$	$\perp$	$\perp$

## Distributed DCX

- $D_3 \rightarrow D_X$ , e.g.  $D_7 = \{1, 2, 4\}$
- 3-prefixes  $\rightarrow X$ -prefixes  memory blowup by  $X \times$
- size of recursive subproblem:  
 $|D_X|/X \in \mathcal{O}(1/\sqrt{X})$   higher reduction

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$
$R$	$\perp$	1	3	$\perp$	7	2	$\perp$	6	0	$\perp$	4	5	$\perp$	$\perp$	$\perp$

# Difference Cover Modulo 3 (pDC3)

## Distributed DCX

- $D_3 \rightarrow D_X$ , e.g.  $D_7 = \{1, 2, 4\}$

- 3-prefixes  $\rightarrow X$ -prefixes



memory blowup by  $X \times$

- size of recursive subproblem:

$$|D_X|/X \in \mathcal{O}(1/\sqrt{X})$$



higher reduction

need for space-efficient implementation

$i$	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
$T$	b	a	a	a	b	a	a	b	a	a	a	b	\$	\$	\$
$R$	$\perp$	1	3	$\perp$	7	2	$\perp$	6	0	$\perp$	4	5	$\perp$	$\perp$	$\perp$