

# Efficient Renaming in Sequence CRDTs

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**Abstract**—To achieve high availability, large-scale distributed systems have to replicate data and to minimise coordination between nodes. For these purposes, literature and industry increasingly adopt Conflict-free Replicated Data Types (CRDTs) to design such systems. CRDTs are new specifications of existing data types, e.g. Set or Sequence. While CRDTs have the same behaviour as previous specifications in sequential executions, they actually shine in distributed settings as they natively support concurrent updates. To this end, CRDTs embed in their specification conflict resolution mechanisms. These mechanisms usually rely on identifiers attached to elements of the data structure to resolve conflicts in a deterministic and coordination-free manner. Identifiers have to comply with several constraints, such as being unique or belonging to a dense total order. These constraints may hinder the identifier size from being bounded. As a result, identifiers tend to grow as the system progresses, which deepens the overhead of CRDTs over time and leads to performance issues. To address this issue in the context of real-time collaborative editing, we propose a novel Sequence CRDT which embeds a renaming mechanism. It enables nodes to reassign shorter identifiers to elements in an uncoordinated manner. Experimental results demonstrate that this mechanism decreases the overhead of the replicated data structure and eventually minimises it.

**Index Terms**—CRDTs, replication, real-time collaborative editing, eventual consistency, memory-wise optimisation, performance.



## 1 INTRODUCTION

WHEN creating distributed systems, designers have to make a tradeoff between *consistency* and *latency* [1]. Many systems choose to favour latency and thus adopt *optimistic replication* techniques [2]. This approach ensures the high *availability* of the system, even in case of network partitions. To this end, it relaxes consistency constraints and minimises coordination between nodes. In this approach, every node owns a copy of the data, can modify it and then propagate updates to others. Replicas are thus allowed to temporarily diverge. To ensure that they eventually reach equivalent states despite concurrently generated updates, a conflict resolution mechanism is required.

Several approaches were introduced to design efficient conflict resolution mechanisms. We propose to use Conflict-free Replicated Data Types (CRDTs) [3]. CRDTs are new specifications of abstract data types, e.g. Set or Sequence. From users' perspective, CRDTs share the same semantics and interfaces as non-replicated specifications. However, the particularity of CRDTs is that they are designed to natively support concurrent modifications. CRDTs thus have the same behavior as previous specifications in sequential executions, but also define additional semantics for scenarios that may occur in distributed executions.

CRDTs embed a conflict resolution mechanism directly in their specification. It enables them to respect the Strong Eventual Consistency (SEC) model [3]. This consistency model defines that replicas reach equivalent states as soon as they observe the same set of updates, without any further communications required and in spite of possible different reception orders. This property makes CRDTs particularly suitable for the design of highly-available large-scale distributed systems.

CRDTs have been widely adopted by literature and industry since their conceptualisation. CRDTs corresponding to more powerful data types were designed and made available as libraries to developers [4], [5], [6], [7]; distributed data stores relying on CRDTs were released [8], [9], [10], [11]; and a new paradigm of applications using CRDTs as their keystone technology has been specified: Local-First Softwares [12], [13].

Additionally, CRDTs have become an important research topic in the domain of real-time collaborative editing. Real-time collaborative editors allow users to share and edit text documents, often represented as Sequences. The design of such applications faces many challenges. It requires the definition of correct and efficient conflict resolution mechanisms that preserve users' intention [14]. Collaborative systems must guarantee privacy and be resilient to censorship. Recent work [15], [16], [17] has demonstrated the relevance of Sequence CRDTs to address these issues, notably thanks to their compatibility with peer-to-peer approaches.

Still, Sequence CRDTs exhibits some limitations. In particular, Sequence CRDTs suffer from the accumulation of large amount of metadata over time due to their internal conflict resolution mechanisms. While the ever-growing metadata decreases the memory efficiency of these data structures, it also increases their bandwidth consumption and computational overhead. Some previous work proposed renaming mechanisms [18], [19] to reduce punctually this overhead. However, these mechanisms require synchronous coordination.

In this work, we propose a new Sequence CRDT: RenamableLogootSplit (RLS). This data structure allows nodes to insert or remove elements into a replicated sequence. It embeds a renaming mechanism to minimise the memory overhead induced by metadata punctually. To avoid costly and blocking consensus algorithms, we instead adopt an optimistic approach : nodes perform renaming without any coordination. This new feature is designed

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as an additional type of operation: the *rename* one. Since this operation is not intrinsically commutative with others, conflicts may arise. Therefore, we use *Operational Transformations* (OT) [14], [20], [21] to enable nodes to resolve them deterministically. In this paper, we present experimental results that assess that metadata overhead in Renamable-LogootSplit is significantly lower than other state-of-the-art Sequence CRDTs.

This paper is organised as follows: Section 2 introduces in more details Sequence CRDTs and the elements leading to their ever-growing overhead. Section 3 provides an overview of the renaming mechanism and of the properties it must respect. Section 4 presents the inner working of the renaming mechanism and how it interacts with concurrent *insert* and *remove* updates. Then Section 5 describes how RenamableLogootSplit handles concurrent executions of the renaming mechanism. Section 7 presents the experimental evaluation of RenamableLogootSplit. Section 8 discusses several tradeoffs that RenamableLogootSplit implementations offer. Section 9 compares our approach to related work. Finally Section 10 summarises our work and introduces future work.

## 2 BACKGROUND

To deterministically solve conflicts and ensure convergence of all nodes, CRDTs rely on metadata. In the context of Sequence CRDTs, two different approaches were proposed, both trying to minimise the overhead introduced. The first one [15], [22], [23], [24], [25] attaches fixed size identifiers to each element in the sequence and uses them to represent the sequence as a linked list. The downside of this approach is an ever-growing overhead, as it needs to keep removed elements to deal with potential concurrent updates, effectively turning them into tombstones. The second one [26], [27], [28], [29], [30], [31] avoids the need of tombstones by attaching identifiers from a dense total order to elements. Elements are ordered into the sequence by comparing their respective identifiers. New element can always be inserted in between with a proper identifier according to the dense order. However this approach suffers from an ever-increasing overhead, as the size of such identifiers is unbounded and grows over time. In the context of this paper, we focus on the later approach.

### 2.1 LogootSplit

LogootSplit (LS) [29] is the state of the art of the variable-size identifiers approach of Sequence CRDT. As explained previously, it uses identifiers from a dense total order to position elements into the replicated sequence.

To this end, LogootSplit assigns identifiers made of a list of tuples to elements. These tuples have four components: 1) a *position*, which embodies the intended position of the element 2) a *node identifier*, 3) a *node sequence number* and 4) an *offset*, which are combined to make identifiers unique. By comparing identifiers using the lexicographical order, LogootSplit is able to determine the position of the element relatively to others. In this paper, we represent identifiers using the following notation:  $position_{offset}^{node\_id\ node\_seq}$  where *position* is a lowercase letter, *node\_id* an uppercase one and both *node\_seq* and *offset* integers.

Instead of storing an identifier for each element of the sequence, the main insight of LogootSplit is to aggregate dynamically elements into blocks. Grouping elements into blocks enables LogootSplit to assign logically an identifier to each element, using intervals of identifiers, while effectively storing only the block length and the identifier of its first element. LogootSplit gathers elements with *contiguous* identifiers into a block. We call *contiguous* two identifiers that are identical except for their last offset, and with both offsets being consecutive. We denote the interval of identifiers corresponding to a block using the following notation:  $position_{begin..end}^{node\_id\ node\_seq}$  where *begin* is the offset of the first identifier of the block and *end* the offset of its last identifier.

Figure 1 illustrates such a case: in Figure 1a, the element identifiers  $i_0^{B0}$ ,  $i_1^{B0}$ ,  $i_2^{B0}$  form a chain of contiguous identifiers. LogootSplit is then able to group them into one block  $i_{0..2}^{B0}$  to minimise the metadata stored, as shown in Figure 1b.



(a) Elements with their corresponding identifiers (b) Elements grouped into a block

Fig. 1. Representation of a LogootSplit sequence containing the elements "HLO"

This feature reduces the number of identifiers stored in the data structure, since identifiers are kept at the level of blocks rather than on every individual element. It enables to reduce significantly the memory overhead of the data structure.

### 2.2 Limits

As stated previously, the size of identifiers from a dense total order is variable. When nodes insert new elements between two others with the same *position* value, LogootSplit has no other option but to increase the size of the resulting identifiers. Figure 2 illustrates such cases. In this example, since node A inserts a new element between the contiguous identifiers  $i_0^{B0}$  and  $i_1^{B0}$ , LogootSplit can not generate a proper identifier of the same size. To comply with the intended order, LogootSplit generates a new identifier by appending a new tuple to the identifier of the predecessor:  $i_0^{B0} f_0^{A0}$ .

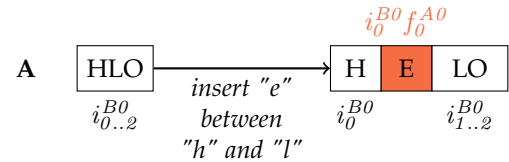


Fig. 2. Insertion leading to longer identifiers

As a result, the size of identifiers tends to grow as the system progresses. This growth impacts negatively the performance of the data structure on several aspects. Since identifiers attached to values become longer, the memory overhead of the data structure increases accordingly. This also increases the bandwidth consumption as nodes have to broadcast identifiers to others.

Additionally, during the lifetime of the replicated sequence, the number of blocks increases. Indeed, several constraints on identifier generation prevent nodes from adding new elements to existing blocks. For example, only the node that generated the block can append or prepend elements to it. These limitations cause the generation of new blocks. The sequence ends up fragmented into many blocks of only few characters each. However no mechanism to merge blocks a posteriori is provided. The efficiency of the data structure hence decreases as each block introduces its own overhead.

As shown later in Section 7, we measured that content eventually represents less than 1% of the whole data structure size. Remaining 99% of the data structure hence correspond to metadata. It is thus necessary to address the previously highlighted issues.

### 3 OVERVIEW

We propose a new Sequence CRDT belonging to the variable-size identifiers approach: RenamableLogootSplit [32], [33]. This data structure allows nodes to insert or remove elements into a replicated sequence. We introduce a *rename* operation to reassign shorter identifiers to elements and to group them into blocks to minimise the memory overhead of the whole sequence.

#### 3.1 System Model

The system is composed of a dynamic set of nodes, as nodes join and leave dynamically the collaboration during its lifetime. Nodes collaborate to build and maintain a sequence using RenamableLogootSplit. Each node owns a copy of the sequence and edits it without any coordination. Nodes' updates take the form of operations that are immediately applied to nodes' replicas. Operations are then broadcast asynchronously to other nodes so that they also integrate updates.

Nodes communicate through a Peer-to-Peer (P2P) network, which is unreliable. Messages can be lost, re-ordered or delivered multiple times. The network is also vulnerable to partitions, which split nodes into disjoint subgroups. To overcome failures of the network, nodes rely on a message-passing layer. As RenamableLogootSplit is built on top of LogootSplit, it shares the same requirements for the operation delivery. This layer is thus used to deliver messages to the application exactly-once. The layer also ensures that *remove* operations are delivered after corresponding *insert* operations. No other constraints exist on the delivery order of operations. Nodes use an anti-entropy mechanism [34] to synchronise in a pairwise manner, by detecting and re-exchanging lost operations.

#### 3.2 Definition of the *rename* operation

The purpose of the *rename* operation is to reassign new identifiers to elements of the replicated sequence without altering its content. Since identifiers are metadata used by the data structure solely for conflict resolution, users are unaware of their existence. *Rename* operations are thus system operations: they are issued and applied by nodes behind the scenes, without any user initiative.

In order to ensure the SEC property of the replicated sequence, we define several safety properties that the *rename* operation must respect. These properties are mainly inspired by those presented in [19].

**Property 1.** (Determinism) *Rename* operations are applied by each node without any coordination. To ensure that each node reaches eventually the same state, a given *rename* operation must always output the same new identifier from the current identifier.

**Property 2.** (User-intention Preservation) Although the *rename* operations itself has no user intention attached, it must not conflict with users actions. Notably, *rename* operations must not cancel or alter the outcome, from users' points of view, of *insert* and *remove* operations.

**Property 3.** (Well-formed Sequence) The replicated sequence must be well-formed. Applying a *rename* operation to a well-formed sequence must then output a well-formed sequence. A well-formed sequence ensures the following properties:

**Property 3.1.** (Unicity Preservation) Each identifier must be unique. Thus, for a given *rename* operation, each identifier should be mapped to a distinct new identifier.

**Property 3.2.** (Order Preservation) The elements of the sequence must be sorted according to their identifiers. Therefore, the existing order between initial identifiers must be preserved by the *rename* operation.

**Property 4.** (Commutativity with Concurrent Operations) Concurrent operations may be delivered in different orders to each node. To ensure convergence of replicas, the order of application of a set of concurrent operations should not have any impact on the resulting state. The *rename* operation must then be commutative with any other concurrent operation.

Property 4 is particularly difficult to achieve. This is due to the fact that *rename* operations modify identifiers assigned to elements. However, other operations such as *insert* and *remove* ones rely on these identifiers to specify where to insert elements or which ones to remove. *Rename* operations are thus intrinsically incompatible with concurrent *insert* and *remove* ones. Likewise, concurrent *rename* operations may reassign different identifiers to given elements. Concurrent *rename* operations are hence not commutative. Therefore, it is required to design and use conflict resolution strategies to achieve Property 4.

For the sake of simplicity, the presentation of the *rename* operation is divided into two parts. In Section 4, we present the proposed *rename* operation under the assumption that no concurrent *rename* operations may be issued. This assumption enables us to focus on the inner working of the *rename* operation and on how to deal with concurrent *insert* and *remove* operations. Then, in Section 5, we remove this assumption and present our approach to handle scenarios with concurrent *rename* operations.

## 4 RENAMABLELOGOOTSPILT WITHOUT CONCURRENT *rename* OPERATIONS

### 4.1 Proposed *rename* operation

Our *rename* operation enables RenamableLogootSplit to reduce the overhead of nodes replica. To do so, it reassigns arbitrary identifiers to elements. Its behaviour is illustrated in Figure 3.

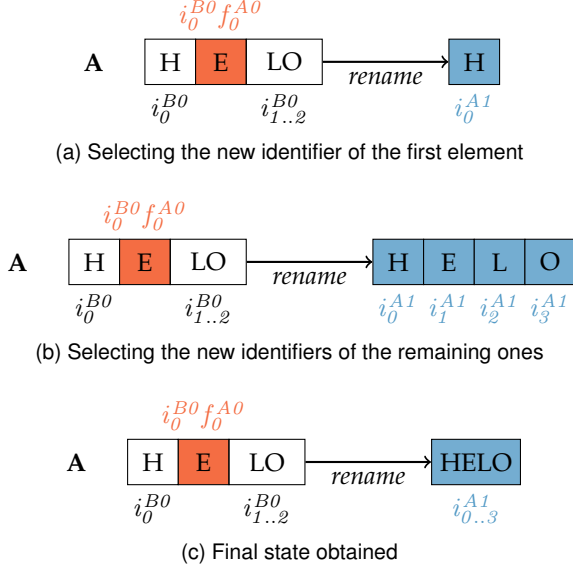


Fig. 3. Renaming the sequence on node A

In this example, node A initiates a *rename* operation on its local state. First, node A reuses the id of the first element of the sequence ( $i_0^{B0}$ ) but modifies it with its own node id (A) and current sequence number (1). Also the offset is set to 0. Node A reassigns the resulting id ( $i_0^{A1}$ ) to the first element of the sequence as described in Figure 3a. Then, node A derives contiguous identifiers for all remaining elements by successively incrementing the offset ( $i_1^{A1}$ ,  $i_2^{A1}$  and  $i_3^{A1}$ ), as shown in Figure 3b. As we assign contiguous identifiers to all elements of the sequence, we eventually group them into one block as illustrated in Figure 3c. It allows nodes to benefit the most from the block feature and to minimise the overhead of the resulting state.

To converge, other nodes have to rename their state identically. However, they can not simply replace their current state with the new renamed one. Indeed, they may have performed concurrent updates on their states. In order not to discard these updates, nodes have to process the *rename* operation themselves. To this end, the node issuing the *rename* operation broadcasts its *former state* to others. Using this state, other nodes compute the new identifier of each renamed identifier. As for concurrently inserted identifiers, we explain in Section 4.2 how nodes rename them in a deterministic way.

### 4.2 Dealing with concurrent updates

After applying *rename* operations on their local state, nodes may receive concurrent updates. Figure 4 illustrates such cases. In this example node B inserts the new element "L", assigns the id  $i_0^{B0} m_0^{B1}$  to it and broadcasts its update, concurrently to the *rename* operation described in Figure 3.

Upon reception of the *insert* operation, node A adds the inserted element into its sequence, using the element id to determine its position. However, since identifiers were modified by the concurrent *rename* operation, node A inserts the new element at the end of its sequence (since  $i_3^{A1} < i_0^{B0} m_0^{B1}$ ) instead of at the intended position. As described by this example, applying naively concurrent updates would result in inconsistencies. It is thus necessary to handle concurrent operations to *rename* operations in a particular manner.

First, nodes have to detect concurrent operations to *rename* ones. To this end, we use an *epoch-based* system. Initially, the replicated sequence starts at the *origin* epoch noted  $\varepsilon_0$ . Each *rename* operation introduces a new epoch and enables nodes to advance their states to it from the previous epoch. The generated epoch is characterised using the node id and its current sequence number upon the generation of the *rename* operation. For example, the *rename* operation described in Figure 4 enables nodes to advance their states from  $\varepsilon_0$  to  $\varepsilon_{A1}$ .

As they receive *rename* operations, nodes build and maintain the *epoch chain*, a data structure ordering epochs according to their *parent-child* relation. Additionally, nodes tag every operation with their current epoch at the time the operation is generated. Upon the reception of an operation, nodes compare the operation epoch to their current one. If they differ, nodes have to transform the operation before applying it. Nodes determine against which *rename* operations to transform the received operation by computing the path between the operation epoch and their current one using the *epoch chain*. For this purpose, it is required to add the following rule to existing constraints upon the delivery of operations: operations must now be delivered after the *rename* operation which introduced their epoch.

Nodes use the function `RENAMEID`, described in Algorithm 1, to transform *insert* or *remove* operations against *rename* ones. This algorithm maps identifiers from a *parent* epoch to corresponding ones in the *child* epoch. The main idea of this algorithm is to rename unknown identifiers at the time of the *rename* operation generation using their predecessor. An example is provided in Figure 5. This figure depicts the same scenario as in Figure 4, except that node A uses `RENAMEID` to rename the concurrently generated id before inserting it in its state.

The algorithm proceeds as follows. First, node A retrieves the predecessor of the given id  $i_0^{B0} m_0^{B1}$  in the former state:  $i_0^{B0} f_0^{A0}$ . Then it computes the counterpart of  $i_0^{B0} f_0^{A0}$  in the renamed state:  $i_1^{A1}$ . Finally, node A prepends it to the given id to generate the renamed id:  $i_1^{A1} i_0^{B0} m_0^{B1}$ . By reassigning this id to the concurrently added element, node A is able to insert it in its state while preserving the intended order.

`RENAMEID` also enables nodes to handle the opposite case : to integrate remote *rename* operations on their local state while they have previously applied concurrent updates. This case corresponds to node B's one in Figure 5. Upon the delivery of node A's *rename* operation, applying `RENAMEID` to every identifiers of its state would enable node B to reach an equivalent state to node A's one.

Algorithm 1 features only the main case of `RENAMEID`, i.e. when the identifier to rename is in the range of renamed identifiers ( $firstId \leq id \leq lastId$ ). Functions to deal with



Fig. 4. Concurrent update leading to inconsistency

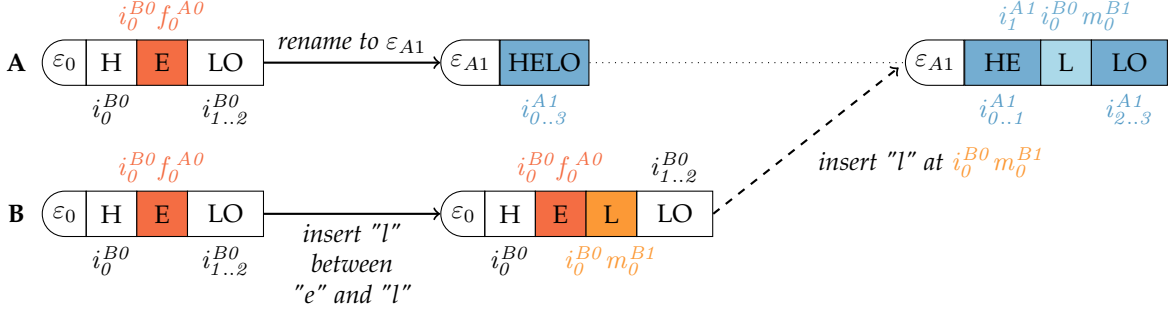


Fig. 5. Renaming concurrent update using RENAMEID before applying it to maintain intended order

```

function RENAMEID(id, renamedIds, nId, nSeq)
  length ← renamedIds.length
  firstId ← renamedIds[0]
  lastId ← renamedIds[length - 1]
  pos ← position(firstId)

  if id < firstId then
    newFirstId ← new Id(pos, nId, nSeq, 0)
    return renIdLessThanFirstId(id, newFirstId)
  else if id ∈ renamedIds then
    index ← findIndex(id, renamedIds)
    return new Id(pos, nId, nSeq, index)
  else if lastId < id then
    newLastId ← new Id(pos, nId, nSeq, length - 1)
    return renIdGreaterThanLastId(id, newLastId)
  else
    return renIdFromPredId(id, renamedIds, pos, nId,
nSeq)
  end if
end function

function RENIDFROMPREDID(id, renamedIds, pos, nId,
nSeq)
  index ← findIndexOfPred(id, renamedIds)
  newPredId ← new Id(pos, nId, nSeq, index)

  return concat(newPredId, id)
end function

```

Alg 1. Rename concurrently generated identifier

other cases, i.e. when the identifier to rename is out of the range of renamed identifiers ( $id < firstId$  or  $lastId < id$ ),

are presented in Appendix A.

## 5 RENAMABLELOGOOTSPILT WITH CONCURRENT *rename* OPERATIONS

### 5.1 Concurrent *rename* operations

We now consider scenarios with concurrent *rename* operations. Figure 6 expands the scenario previously described in Figure 5.

After broadcasting its *insert* operation, node B performs a *rename* operation on its state. This operation reassigns new identifiers to every element based on the id of the first element of the sequence ( $i_0^{B0}$ ), its node id (B) and current sequence number (2). This operation also introduces a new epoch:  $\varepsilon_{B2}$ . Since node A's *rename* operation was not yet delivered to node B at that moment, both *rename* operations are concurrent.

As concurrent epochs are generated, epochs now form the *epoch tree*. We represent in Figure 7 the *epoch tree* that nodes obtain once they eventually synchronise. Epochs are displayed as nodes of the tree and the *parent-child* relation between them displayed as black arrows.

At the end of the scenario described in Figure 6, nodes A and B are respectively at epochs  $\varepsilon_{A1}$  and  $\varepsilon_{B2}$ . In order to converge, every node should eventually reach the same epoch. However, the function RENAMEID described in Algorithm 1 only enables nodes to move from a *parent* epoch to one of its *children* epoch. Nodes A (resp. B) is then unable to progress towards the epoch of node B (resp. A). It is therefore necessary to extend our renaming mechanism to break this deadlock.

First, nodes have to agree on a common epoch from the *epoch tree* as the target epoch. In order to avoid performance



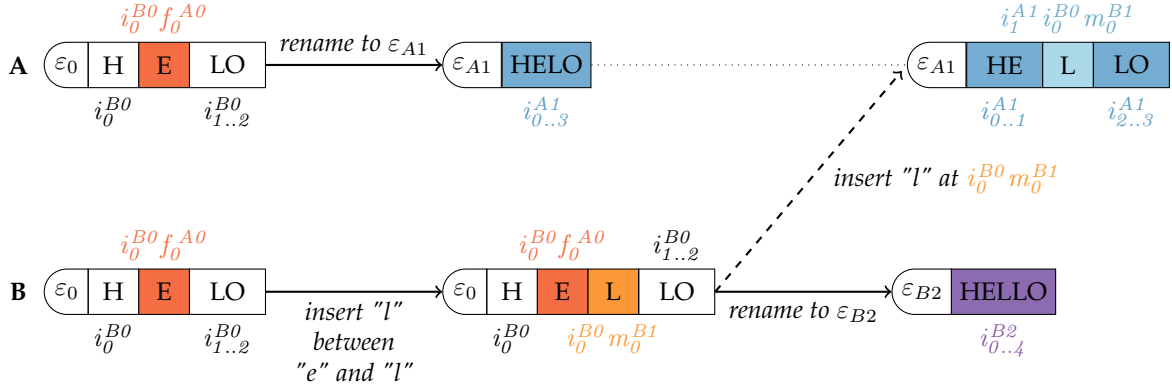


Fig. 6. Concurrent *rename* operations leading to divergent states



Fig. 7. The *epoch tree* corresponding to the scenario of Figure 6

issues due to coordination, nodes should select this epoch in a coordination-free manner, i.e. solely using data from the *epoch tree*. We propose such a mechanism in Section 5.2.

Second, nodes have to move through the *epoch tree* to reach the target epoch. The function `RENAMEID` already enables nodes to move down the tree. Remaining cases to be handled are the ones in which nodes are currently at *sibling* or *cousin* epochs of the target one. In these cases, nodes have to be able to move up the *epoch tree* to return to the Lowest Common Ancestor (LCA) of the current epoch and the target one. This move is actually akin to reverting the effect of previously applied *rename* operations. We propose an algorithm that fulfills this purpose in Section 5.3.

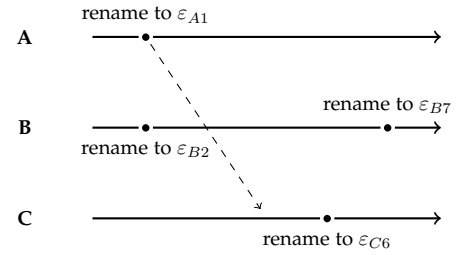
## 5.2 Breaking tie between concurrent *rename* operations

To enable every nodes to select in a coordination-free manner the same target epoch, we define *priority*, a strict total order relation on epochs. Nodes then select the maximum epoch according to this relation as the target epoch.

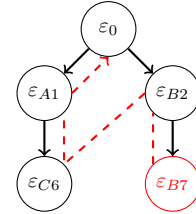
To define the *priority* relation, we may actually select different strategies. In this work, we use the lexicographical order on the path of epochs in the *epoch tree*. Figure 8 provides an example.

Figure 8a describes an execution in which the three nodes A, B and C issue several operations before eventually synchronising. As solely *rename* operations are relevant to the problem at hand, only them are represented in this figure. Initially, node A issues a *rename* operation introducing the epoch  $\varepsilon_{A1}$ . This operation is delivered to node C, which later issues its own *rename* operation creating  $\varepsilon_{C6}$ . Concurrently to these operations, node B issues two *rename* operations, generating  $\varepsilon_{B2}$  then  $\varepsilon_{B7}$ .

Once nodes synchronised, they obtain the *epoch tree* represented in Figure 8b. In this figure, the red dashed



(a) Example of execution with concurrent *rename* operations



(b) Corresponding *epoch tree* with *priority* relation shown

Fig. 8. Selecting target epoch from execution with concurrent *rename* operations

arrow represents the order between epochs according to the *priority* relation while the selected target epoch is displayed as a red node.

To determine the target epoch, nodes rely on the *priority* relation. According to the lexicographical order on the path of epochs in the *epoch tree*,  $\varepsilon_0 < \varepsilon_0 \varepsilon_{A1} < \varepsilon_0 \varepsilon_{A1} \varepsilon_{C6} < \varepsilon_0 \varepsilon_{B2} < \varepsilon_0 \varepsilon_{B2} \varepsilon_{B7}$ . Therefore every node selects  $\varepsilon_{B7}$  as the target epoch in a coordination-free manner.

Other strategies could be proposed to define the *priority* relation. For example, *priority* could rely on metrics embedded in *rename* operations representing the accumulated work on the document.

## 5.3 Reverting *rename* operations

We now introduce the function `REVERTRENAMEID`. Described in Algorithm 2, this function enables nodes to revert a previously applied *rename* operation. To this end, `REVERTRENAMEID` maps identifiers from the *child* epoch to equivalent ones in its *parent* epoch.

The goals of `REVERTRENAMEID` are the following: (i) To revert identifiers generated causally before or concurrently

```

function REVERTRENAMEID(id, renamedIds, nId, nSeq)
  length ← renamedIds.length
  firstId ← renamedIds[0]
  lastId ← renamedIds[length - 1]
  pos ← getPosition(firstId)

  predOfNewFirstId ← new Id(pos, nId, nSeq, -1)
  newFirstId ← new Id(pos, nId, nSeq, 0)
  newLastId ← new Id(pos, nId, nSeq, length - 1)

  if id < newFirstId then
    return revRenIdLessThanNewFirstId(id, firstId,
    newFirstId)
  else if isRenamedId(id, pos, nId, nSeq, length) then
    index ← getFirstOffset(id)
    return renamedIds[index]
  else if newLastId < id then
    return revRenIdGreaterThanNewLastId(id, lastId)
  else
    index ← getFirstOffset(id)
    return revRenIdFromPredId(id, renamedIds, index)
  end if
end function

function REVRENIDFROMPREDID(id, renamedIds, index)
  predId ← renamedIds[index]
  succId ← renamedIds[index + 1]
  tail ← getTail(id, 1)

  if tail < predId then
    ▷ id has been inserted causally after the rename op
    return concat(predId, MIN_TUPLE, tail)
  else if succId < tail then
    ▷ id has been inserted causally after the rename op
    offset ← getLastOffset(succId) - 1
    predOfSuccId ← createIdFromBase(succId, offset)
    return concat(predOfSuccId, MAX_TUPLE, tail)
  else
    return tail
  end if
end function

```

Alg 2. Revert rename identifier

to the reverted *rename* operation to their former value (ii) To assign new identifiers complying with the intended order to elements inserted causally after the reverted *rename* operation. We illustrate its behaviour with the help of Figure 9.

This figure resumes the scenario from Figure 6. Node A receives node B's *rename* operation, which is concurrent to the *rename* operation node A previously applied. According to the proposed *priority* relation, node A determines the introduced epoch  $\varepsilon_{B2}$  as the target one. It thus proceeds to revert its state to an equivalent one at  $\varepsilon_0$ , the LCA of its current epoch  $\varepsilon_{A1}$  and the target epoch  $\varepsilon_{B2}$ . To this end, it applies REVERTRENAMEID to every identifiers of its current state.

REVERTRENAMEID determines which strategy to apply to revert the given identifier using patterns. For example,

identifiers of the form  $pos_{offset}^{nId\ nSeq}$  ( $i_{offset}^{A1}$  in the current example) corresponds to the new values of the identifiers which compose the *former state*. To retrieve the original identifiers, REVERTRENAMEID simply uses their offset since it is their index in the *former state*.

For other identifiers such as  $i_1^{A1} i_0^{B0} m_0^{B1}$ , REVERTRENAMEID removes the prefix ( $i_1^{A1}$ ) to isolate the tail ( $i_0^{B0} m_0^{B1}$ ). The algorithm then compare the tail to the identifiers of its predecessor and successor at the *parent* epoch. In this example, we have  $i_0^{B0} f_0^{A0} < i_0^{B0} m_0^{B1} < i_1^{B0}$ . The algorithm can thus return the tail as the resulting identifier while preserving the intended order, since its value is between the identifiers of its predecessor and successor. *TODO: Indiquer que retirer le préfixe permet d'inverser la transformation appliquée à l'identifiant par renIdFromPredId dans le cas où celui-ci a été inséré en concurrence du renommage – Matthieu*

Otherwise, it would mean that the given identifier has been inserted causally after the *rename* operation. As no corresponding identifier exists yet at the *parent* epoch, REVERTRENAMEID can return any identifier as long as it preserves the intended order. To this end, REVERTRENAMEID generates the resulting identifier from the identifier of the predecessor or by derivating the successor one, and exclusive tuples of the renaming mechanism, *MIN\_TUPLE* and *MAX\_TUPLE*.

Once node A mapped its state to the equivalent one at  $\varepsilon_0$  using REVERTRENAMEID, it can now apply RENAMEID to compute the corresponding state at  $\varepsilon_{B2}$ .

As with Algorithm 1, Algorithm 2 only features the main case of REVERTRENAMEID. It corresponds to the case where the identifier to revert is in the range of renamed identifiers ( $newFirstId \leq id \leq newLastId$ ). Functions to handle remaining cases are featured in Appendix B.

Note that RENAMEID and REVERTRENAMEID are not inverse functions. REVERTRENAMEID reverts to their original value identifiers inserted causally before or concurrently to the *rename* operation. On the other hand, RENAMEID does not do the same for identifiers inserted causally after the *rename* operation. Thus redoing a previously undone *rename* operation alter these identifiers. This modification may cause a divergence between nodes, as the same element will be referred to using different identifiers.

This issue is however prevented in our system by the proposed *priority* relation. Since the *priority* relation is defined using the lexicographical order on the path of epochs in the *epoch tree*, nodes only move towards the rightmost epoch of the *epoch tree* when switching epochs. Nodes thus avoid going back and forth between different epochs and undoing then redoing corresponding *rename* operations.

## 6 GARBAGE COLLECTION OF *former states*

Nodes store epochs and corresponding *former states* to transform identifiers through different epochs. But as the system progresses, some epochs and associated metadata become unnecessary since no more operations are issued from these epochs. Nodes can then garbage collect these epochs. In this section, we present a mechanism enabling nodes to identify obsolete epochs.

To propose such a mechanism, we rely on the notion of *causal stability of operations* [35]. An operation is causally





is thus required.

Causal stability may take some time to be achieved. Meanwhile, nodes can actually offload former states onto the disk since they are only required to handle concurrent operations to *rename* ones. We discuss this topic further in Section 8.2.

## 7 EVALUATION

### 7.1 Simulations and benchmarks

In order to validate the proposed approach, we proceed to an experimental evaluation. The aims of this evaluation are to measure (i) the memory overhead of the replicated sequence (ii) the computational overhead added to *insert* and *remove* operations by the renaming mechanism (iii) the cost of integrating *rename* operations.

By means of simulations, we generated the dataset used to run our benchmarks. These simulations mimic the following scenario.

Several authors collaboratively write an article in real-time. First of all, the authors mainly specify the content of the article. Few *remove* operations are issued in order to simulate spelling mistakes. Once the document reaches an arbitrary given critical length, collaborators move on to the second phase of the simulation. During this phase, authors stop adding new content but instead focus on revamping existing parts. This is simulated by balancing the ratio between *insert* and *remove* operations. Every author has to issue a given number of *insert* and *remove* operations. The simulation ends once every collaborators received all operations. During the simulation, we take snapshots of the replicas' state at given steps to follow their evolution.

We ran simulations with the following experimental settings: we deployed 10 bots as separate Docker containers on a single workstation. Each container corresponds to a single mono-threaded Node.js process simulating an author. Bots share and edit collaboratively the document using either LogootSplit or RenamableLogootSplit according to the session. In both cases, each bot performs an *insert* or a *remove* operation locally every  $200 \pm 50$ ms and broadcasts it immediately to other nodes using a P2P full mesh network. During the first phase, the probability of issuing *insert* (resp. *remove*) operations is of 80% (resp. 20%). Once the document reaches 60k characters (around 15 pages), bots switch to the second phase and set both probabilities to 50%. After each local operation, the bot may move its cursor to another random position in the document with a probability of 5%. Every bot generates 15k *insert* or *remove* operations and stops once it observed 150k operations. Snapshots of the state of bot are taken periodically every 10k observed operations.

Additionally, in the case of RenamableLogootSplit, 1 to 4 bots are arbitrarily designated as *renaming bots* according to the session. *Renaming bots* issue *rename* operations every time they observe 30k operations overall. These *rename* operations are generated in a way ensuring that they are concurrent.

For the purpose of reproducibility, we make the code, benchmarks and results available at: <https://github.com/coast-team/mute-bot-random/>.

## 7.2 Results

Using generated snapshots, we performed several benchmarks. These benchmarks evaluate RenamableLogootSplit's performances and compare them to LogootSplit's ones. Results are presented and analysed below.

**Convergence** We first proceeded to verify the convergence of nodes states at the end of simulations. For each simulation, we compared the final state of every nodes using their respective snapshots. We were able to confirm that nodes converged without any communication other than operations, thus satisfying the SEC consistency model.

This result sets a first milestone in the validation of the correctness of RenamableLogootSplit. It is however only empirical. Further work to formally prove its correctness should be undertaken.

**Memory overhead** We then proceeded to measure the evolution of the document's memory consumption throughout the simulations, according to the CRDT used and the number of *renaming bots*. We present the obtained results in Figure 11.

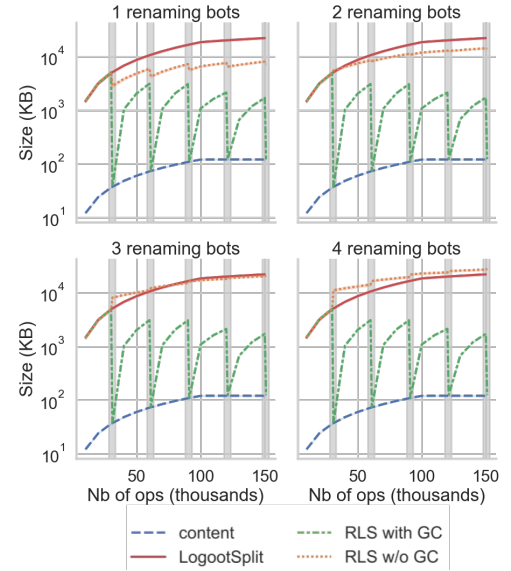


Fig. 11. Evolution of the size of the document

For each plot displayed in Figure 11, we represent 4 different data. The blue dashed line illustrates the size of the actual content of the document, i.e. the text, while the red solid line corresponds to the size of the whole LogootSplit document.

The green dashed-dotted line represents the size of the RenamableLogootSplit document in the best case scenario. In this scenario, nodes assume that *rename* operations are garbage-collectable as soon as they receive them. Nodes are thus able to benefit the effects of the renaming mechanism while removing its own metadata, such as *former states* and *epochs*. In doing so, nodes are able to minimise periodically the metadata overhead of the data structure, independently of the number of *renaming bots* and concurrent *rename* operations issued.

On the other hand, the orange dotted line represents the size of the RenamableLogootSplit document in the worst case scenario. In this scenario, nodes assume that

*rename* operations never become causally stable and can thus never be garbage-collected. Nodes have to permanently store the metadata introduced by the renaming mechanism. The performances of RenamableLogootSplit thus decrease as the number of *renaming bots* and *rename* operations issued increases. Nonetheless, we observe that RenamableLogootSplit can outperform LogootSplit even in this worst case scenario while the number of *renaming bots* remains low (1 or 2). This result is explained by the fact that the renaming mechanism enables nodes to scrap the overhead of the internal data structure used to represent the document.

To summarise the results presented, the renaming mechanism introduces a temporary metadata overhead which increases with each *rename* operations. But the overhead will eventually subside once the system becomes quiescent and *rename* operations become causally stable. In Section 8.2, we discuss that *former states* may be offloaded until causal stability is achieved to address the temporary memory overhead.

**Integration times of standard operations** Next, we compared the evolution of integration times of standard operations, i.e. *insert* and *remove* operations, on LogootSplit and RenamableLogootSplit documents. Since both types of operation share the same time complexity, we used solely *insert* ones in our benchmarks. We do however distinguish *local* and *remote* updates. Conceptually, local updates can be decomposed as presented in [38] in the two following steps: (i) the generation of the corresponding operation (ii) the application of the resulting operation on the local replica. However, for performance reasons, we merged these two steps in our implementation. We thus make a distinction between *local* and *remote* updates in our benchmarks. Figure 12 displays the results.

In these figures, orange boxplots correspond to integration times on LogootSplit documents while blue ones correspond to times on RenamableLogootSplit documents. While both are initially equivalent, integration times on RenamableLogootSplit documents are then reduced when compared to LogootSplit ones once *rename* operations have been applied. This improvement is explained by the fact that *rename* operations optimise the internal representation of the sequence.

Additionally, in the case of remote operations, we measured specific integration times for RenamableLogootSplit: integration times of remote operations from previous epochs and from concurrent epochs, respectively displayed as white and red boxplots in Figure 12b. Operations from previous epochs are operations generated concurrently to the *rename* operation but applied after it. Since the operation has to be transformed beforehand using `RENAMEID`, we observe a computational overhead compared to other operations. But this overhead is actually compensated by the optimisation of the internal representation of the sequence performed by *rename* operations.

Regarding operations from concurrent epochs, we observe an additional overhead as nodes have first to reverse the effect of the concurrent *rename* operation using `REVERTRENAMEID`. Because of this overhead, RenamableLogootSplit's performances for these operations are comparable to LogootSplit ones.

To summarise, transformation functions introduce an

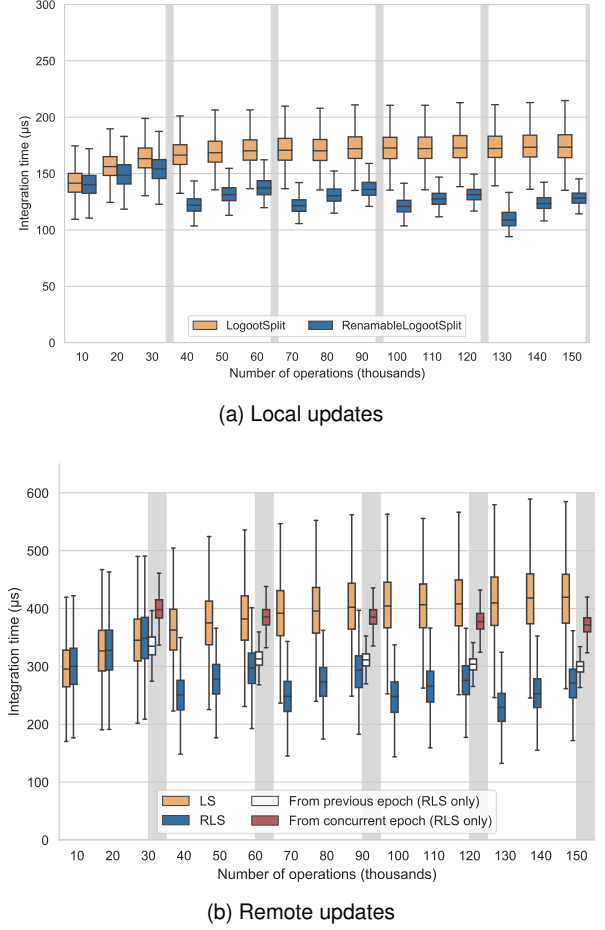


Fig. 12. Integration time of standard operations

overhead with regard to integration times of concurrent operations to *rename* ones. Despite this overhead, RenamableLogootSplit achieves better performances than LogootSplit as long as the distance between the epoch of generation of the operation and the current epoch of the node remains limited. As the distance between both epochs increases, it leads to cases presenting worse performances than LogootSplit ones since the overhead is multiplied. Nonetheless, the renaming mechanism reduces the integration times of the majority of operations, i.e. the operations issued between two rounds of *rename* operations.

**Integration time of rename operation** Finally, we measured the evolution of integration times of *rename* operation according to the number of operations since the last *rename* one. As before, we distinguish performances of *local* and *remote* updates. The case of *remote rename* operations is subdivided into three categories. *Direct remote* denotes a remote *rename* operation that introduces a new epoch child of the current node epoch. *Concurrent introducing greater* (resp. *lesser*) *epoch* designates a remote *rename* operation that introduces a new epoch sibling of the current node epoch. According to the *priority* relation, the introduced epoch is greater (resp. lesser) than the current node epoch. The results are displayed in Table 1.

The main outcome of these measures shows that *rename* operations are generally expensive when compared to others, since nodes have to browse and rename their whole

TABLE 1  
Integration time of rename operations

Parameters		Integration Time (ms)				
Type	Nb Ops (k)	Mean	Median	99 <sup>th</sup> Quant.	Std	
Local	30	41.75	38.74	71.68	6.84	
	60	78.32	78.16	81.42	1.24	
	90	119.19	118.87	124.22	2.49	
	120	143.75	143.57	148.59	2.16	
	150	158.04	157.95	164.38	2.49	
Direct remote	30	481.32	477.13	537.30	17.11	
	60	981.62	978.24	1072.83	31.54	
	90	1491.28	1481.83	1657.58	51.10	
	120	1670.00	1663.85	1814.38	50.29	
	150	1694.17	1675.95	1852.55	59.94	
Cc. int. greater epoch	30	643.53	643.57	682.80	13.42	
	60	1317.66	1316.39	1399.55	28.67	
	90	1998.23	1994.08	2111.98	45.37	
	120	2239.71	2233.22	2368.45	50.06	
	150	2241.92	2233.61	2351.02	52.20	
Cc. int. lesser epoch	30	1.36	1.30	3.53	0.37	
	60	2.82	2.69	4.85	0.45	
	90	4.45	4.23	5.81	0.71	
	120	5.33	5.10	8.78	0.90	
	150	5.53	5.26	8.70	0.79	

current state. Local *rename* operations take hundreds of milliseconds while *direct remote* ones and *concurrent introducing greater epoch* ones may last seconds if delayed for too long. It is thus necessary to take this result into account when designing strategies to trigger *rename* operations to prevent them from impacting negatively user experiences.

Another interesting result from this benchmark is that *concurrent introducing lesser epoch* operations are cheap to apply. Since these operations introduce epochs that are not selected as the new target epoch, nodes do not actually proceed to rename their state. The application of *concurrent introducing lesser epoch* operations hence solely consists of adding the introduced epoch and the corresponding *former state* into the epoch tree. Thus nodes can significantly reduce the overall computations of a set of concurrent *rename* operations by applying them in the most suitable order given the context.

## 8 DISCUSSION

### 8.1 Issuing *rename* operations

As stated in Section 3.2, *rename* operations are system operations. It is thus up to the designers of the system to determine when nodes should issue *rename* operations and to define a corresponding strategy. However, there is no silver bullet since each system has its own constraints.

Several aspects should be taken into account to define the strategy. The first one is the size of the data structure. As displayed in Figure 11, metadata progressively increases to represent 99% of the data structure. Using *rename* operations, nodes can discard metadata and reduce the size of the data structure to an acceptable amount. To determine when to issue *rename* operations, nodes may monitor the number of operations performed since the last *rename* one, the number of blocks composing the sequence or the length of identifiers.

A second aspect to take into account is the integration time of *rename* operations. As reported in Table 1, integrating remote *rename* operations takes up to seconds if delayed for too long. Although *rename* operations work behind the

scenes, they can still impact negatively the user experience. Indeed, nodes can not integrate operations from others while they are processing *rename* operations. From users' points of view, *rename* operations can thus be perceived as latency peaks. In the domain of real-time collaborative editing, user experiments have shown that delay degrades the quality of collaborations [39], [40]. It is thus important to issue *rename* operations frequently to keep their integration times below the perceptible limit.

Finally, the last aspect to consider is the amount of concurrent *rename* operations. Figure 11 shows that concurrent *rename* operations decrease RenamableLogootSplit's performances. The proposed strategy must then aim to minimise the number of concurrent *rename* operations issued. However, it should avoid to rely on synchronous coordination between nodes to do so. To reduce the likelihood of issuing concurrent *rename* operations, several techniques can be proposed. For example, nodes can monitor to which other nodes they are currently connected and delegate to the one with the highest *node identifier* the duty to issue *rename* operations.

### 8.2 Offloading on disk unused *former states*

Nodes have to store *former states* corresponding to *rename* operations to transform operations from previous or concurrent epochs. Nodes may receive such operations given 2 different cases: (i) nodes have recently issued *rename* operations (ii) nodes logged back in the collaboration. Between these specific events, *former states* are actually not needed to handle operations.

We can thus propose the following trade-off: to offload *former states* on the disk until their next use or until they can be garbage collected. It would enable nodes to mitigate the temporary memory overhead introduced by the renaming mechanism but increases integration times of operations requiring one of these *former states*. Nodes could adopt various strategies to deem *former states* offloadable and to retrieve them preemptively according to their constraints. The design of these strategies could be based on several heuristics: epochs of currently online nodes, number of nodes still able to issue concurrent operations, time elapsed since last use of the *former state*...

### 8.3 Compression technique for *rename* operations

To limit bandwidth consumption of *rename* operations, we propose the following compression technique. Node may broadcast only necessary components to uniquely identify blocks instead of whole identifiers. Indeed, an identifier can be uniquely identified from the *node identifier*, *node sequence number* and *offset* of its last tuple. A block can therefore be uniquely identified from these components and its length. This reduces the data to send to a fixed amount per block.

To decompress the received operation, nodes browse their current state and log of concurrent *remove* operations. This allows them to retrieve whole identifiers and to reconstruct the original *rename* operation. Additionally, we can set an upper-bound to the size of *rename* operations by issuing them as soon as the state reaches a given number of blocks.

## 9 RELATED WORK

Several works were proposed to address our problem of growth of identifiers in variable-size identifiers Sequence CRDTs. We present in this section the most relevant ones.

### 9.1 The core-nebula approach

The *core-nebula* approach [18], [19] was proposed to reduce the size of identifiers in Treedoc [26], another variable-size identifiers Sequence CRDT.

In this work, authors introduce a *rebalance* operation enabling nodes to reassign shorter identifiers to elements of the document. However, this *rebalance* operation is not commutative with *insert* and *remove* operations nor with itself. To achieve Eventual Consistency (EC) [41], the *core-nebula* approach prevents concurrent *rebalance* operations by regulating them using a consensus protocol. Operations such as *insert* and *remove* can still be issued without coordination and can thus be concurrent to *rebalance* ones. To deal with this issue, authors propose a *catch-up* protocol to transform these concurrent operations against the effects of *rebalance* ones.

Since consensus protocols do not scale well, the *core-nebula* approach proposes to split nodes among two groups: the *core* and the *nebula*. The *core* is a small set of stable and highly connected nodes while the *nebula* is an unbounded set of dynamic nodes. Only nodes from the *core* participate in the execution of the consensus protocol. Nodes from the *nebula* can still contribute to the document by issuing *insert* and *remove* operations.

Our work can be seen as an extension of this work. It adapts the *rebalance* mechanism and the *catch-up* protocol to LogootSplit and takes advantage of its block feature. Furthermore, it integrates a mechanism to deal with concurrent *rename* operations, hence removing the requirement of a consensus protocol. It makes this approach usable in systems without existing authorities providing nodes to the *core*.

However, systems can actually adopt the *core-nebula* approach to simplify the implementation of RenamableLogootSplit. The use of a consensus protocol to regulate *rename* operations enables systems to discard all parts dedicated to the handling of concurrent *rename* operations, i.e. the design of a *priority* relation and the implementation of REVERTRENAMEID. It also simplifies the implementation of the garbage collection mechanism of epochs and *former states*.

### 9.2 The LSEQ approach

The LSEQ approach [30], [31] is another approach proposed to address the growth of identifiers in variable-size identifiers Sequence CRDT. Instead of reducing periodically the identifier metadata using an expensive renaming mechanism, the authors define new identifier allocation strategies to reduce their growth rate.

In this work, authors observe that the identifier allocation strategy proposed in Logoot [27] is suited to a single editing pattern: from left to right, top to bottom. If insertions are made according to other patterns, generated identifiers quickly saturate the space of possible identifiers for a given

size. Following insertions therefore trigger an increase of the identifier size. As a result, Logoot identifiers grow linearly with the number of insertions instead of the expected logarithmic progression.

LSEQ thus defines several identifier allocation strategy fitted to different editing pattern. Nodes pick randomly one of these strategies for each identifier size. Additionally LSEQ adopts an exponential tree model for identifiers: the range of possible identifiers doubles as the identifier size increases. It enables LSEQ to fine-tune the size of identifiers according to needs. By combining the different allocation strategies to the exponential tree model, LSEQ achieves a polylogarithmic growth of identifiers according to the number of insertions.

While the LSEQ approach reduces the growth rate of identifiers in variable-size identifier Sequence CRDT, the sequence's overhead is still proportional to its number of elements. On the other hand, RenamableLogootSplit's renaming mechanism enables to reduce metadata to a fixed amount, independently of the number of elements.

These two approaches are actually orthogonal and can, as in the previous approach, be combined. The resulting system would reset the sequence's metadata periodically using *rename* operations while LSEQ's identifier allocation strategies would reduce their growth in-between. This would also enable to reduce the frequency of *rename* operations, decreasing the system computations overall.

## 10 CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORK

In this paper, we introduced a novel Sequence CRDT belonging to the variable-size identifiers approach: RenamableLogootSplit. This new data structure embeds a renaming mechanism in its specification. This mechanism enables nodes to reassign shorter identifiers to elements and to group them into one block to minimise metadata. The renaming mechanism takes the form of *rename* operations, system operations that are triggered automatically by nodes when deemed necessary. However, the proposed *rename* operation is not commutative with *insert* and *remove* operations, nor with itself. Conflicts hence occur when operations are issued concurrently to *rename* ones. We thus described how RenamableLogootSplit adopts and uses Operational Transformation (OT) techniques to solve resulting conflicts.

Experiments show that the renaming mechanism itself may temporary increase the metadata of the data structure, notably in case of concurrent *rename* operations. However the renaming mechanism enables nodes to garbage collect its own metadata eventually. Nodes are thus able to reduce the size of their data structure by several hundred times compared to previous work eventually.

As future work, we will now focus on the design of strategies to manage the generation of *rename* operations. These strategies have to meet two different goals. First, they have to minimise the impact of *rename* operations on the user experience. User behaviour studies, inspired by [39], [40], could be led in the context of real-time collaborative writing to set an acceptable upper-bound to their integration times. Strategies should then issue *rename* operations accordingly to keep integration times below the defined threshold. Secondly, strategies have to minimise the

likelihood of issuing concurrent *rename* operations without relying on consensus protocols. Strategies should then use nodes' local knowledge to determine whether a node should issue a *rename* operation or trust another node to do so.

Additionally, we would like to present a formal proof of the correctness of RenamableLogootSplit's algorithms. Another research trail to explore is to study data types to determine which ones could benefit from a combination of OT techniques and CRDT ones for the design or improvement of their replicated counterpart.

## APPENDIX A

### ALGORITHMS FOR CENTRALISED SETTINGS

```

function RENIDLESS THAN FIRSTID(id, newFirstId)
  if id < newFirstId then
    return id
  else
    pos ← position(newFirstId)
    nId ← nodeId(newFirstId)
    nSeq ← nodeSeq(newFirstId)
    predNewFirstId ← new Id(pos, nId, nSeq, -1)

    return concat(predNewFirstId, id)
  end if
end function

```

```

function RENIDGREATER THAN LASTID(id, newLastId)
  if id < newLastId then
    return concat(newLastId, id)
  else
    return id
  end if
end function

```

Alg 3. Remaining algorithms to rename an identifier

## APPENDIX B

### ALGORITHMS FOR DISTRIBUTED SETTINGS

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank...

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```

function REVRENIDLESS THAN NEWFIRSTID(id, firstId,
newFirstId)
  predNewFirstId ← createIdFromBase(newFirstId, -1)
  if predNewFirstId < id then
    tail ← getTail(id, 1)
    if tail < firstId then
      return tail
    else
      offset ← getLastOffset(firstId)
      predFirstId ← createIdFromBase(firstId, offset)
      return concat(predFirstId, MAX_TUPLE, tail)
    end if
  else
    return id
  end if
end function

function REVRENIDGREATER THAN NEWLASTID(id,
lastId)
  if id < lastId then
    return concat(lastId, MIN_TUPLE, id)
  else
    return id
  end if
end function

```

Alg 4. Remaining functions to revert an identifier renaming

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Michael Shell Biography text here.

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