

Hybrid work stealing of locality-flexible and cancelable tasks for the APGAS library

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Abstract Since large parallel machines are typically clusters of multicore nodes, parallel programs should be able to deal with both shared memory and distributed memory. This paper proposes a hybrid work stealing scheme, which combines the lifeline-based variant of distributed task pools with the node-internal load balancing of Java's Fork/Join framework. We implemented our scheme by extending the APGAS library for Java, which is a branch of the X10 project. APGAS programmers can now spawn locality-flexible tasks with a new asyncAny construct. These tasks are transparently mapped to any resource in the overall system, so that the load is balanced over both nodes and cores. Unprocessed asyncAny-tasks can also be cancelled. In performance measurements with up to 144 workers on up to 12 nodes, we observed near linear speedups for four benchmarks and a low overhead for cancellation-related bookkeeping.

Keywords Task pool · Work stealing · Task cancellation · APGAS · Java

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1 Introduction

Clusters of multicore nodes are the prevalent architecture in high-performance computing today. To efficiently use them, parallel programs should simultaneously exploit both node-internal shared-memory parallelism and inter-node distributed-memory parallelism.

Hybrid programming is often based on the Partitioned Global Address Space (PGAS) model. It divides the machine into disjointed *places*, such that each place comprises a partition of the global address space and a subset of the computational resources. Every place can access every remote memory partition, but accesses to the local partition are faster. In the Asynchronous PGAS variant of the model, tasks can be created dynamically.

The Asynchronous PGAS model is the basis of the language X10 [7] and the related APGAS library for Java [20]. These systems define an async construct to spawn a task on the current place and an asyncAt construct to spawn a task on a user-defined remote place.

Various applications deploy locality-flexible tasks that may run on any resource of the overall system. For such tasks, programmers do not want to specify a placement. Instead, it is preferable that the system places them dynamically so as to balance the load. Placement can follow the task pool pattern, in which a large number of tasks are processed by a fixed number of computing resources, called *workers*. The load can be balanced by work stealing, in which an idle worker (called *thief*) takes away tasks from another worker (called *victim*).

The HabaneroUPC++ programming library adopts this concept. It introduces an asyncAny construct for spawning locality-flexible tasks and implements it in the runtime system [11]. Unfortunately, the cited publication does not report speedup values and we were not able to obtain speedups with the code provided by the authors [18].

Other Asynchronous PGAS systems do not yet support locality-flexible tasks, but some run-time systems implement intra-place work stealing only. For support of irregular applications, X10 provides a separate Global Load Balancing (GLB) framework in its standard library [24]. A multithreaded variant of GLB for APGAS has been developed in own previous work [17]. Unfortunately, both GLB implementations are restricted to a single worker per place. A multicore system can only be exploited by starting multiple places per node, which causes unnecessary communication and increases the memory load.

This paper introduces a hybrid work stealing scheme, which supports multiple workers per place. For that, we adopted the concept of asyncAny-tasks from HabaneroUPC++. However, our scheme is implemented in the APGAS library and internally uses a fundamentally different algorithm: It combines the intra-place load balancing of Java's ForkJoinPool [14] with the GLB lifeline scheme for interplace load balancing. HabaneroUPC++, in contrast, uses the SLAW scheduler [6] for intra-place load balancing and, in inter-place load balancing, selects a suitable victim with the help of network Remote Direct Memory Access (RDMA). Moreover, the HabaneroUPC++ scheme contacts an unlimited number of remote victims, whereas our scheme contacts a fixed number of random victims and lifeline buddies according to the lifeline scheme.



In addition to asyncAny, we introduce several related constructs. They include a finish block to wait for the termination of all recursively spawned asyncAny-tasks and support for calculating an overall result by reduction from task results. Another new functionality enables the cancellation of asyncAny-tasks. Cancellation dequeues all unprocessed tasks that were spawn in the current block. Cancellation is useful for search problems.

We selected the APGAS library for our work, since it is based on the popular Java language, which also gains more and more attention in HPC [2]. Our implementation extends the source code of this library [8], such that APGAS programmers get immediate access to the new constructs. Overall, this paper makes the following contributions:

- It introduces a hybrid work stealing scheme that combines Java's ForkJoinPool with GLB's lifeline scheme and allows for task cancellation.
- It describes the implementation of this scheme in the APGAS library for Java.
- It presents experimental results for four benchmarks (Unbalanced Tree Search, Betweenness Centrality, NQueens, and TSP) with up to 144 workers on up to 12 places. Speedups over sequential execution are close to linear in most cases.
- It evaluates variants of NQueens and TSP that cancel the computation after a user-defined solution was found.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 starts with background information about APGAS and GLB. Thereafter, Sect. 3 introduces the novel constructs, and demonstrates their usage with examples. The hybrid work stealing scheme and its implementation are described in Sect. 4. Experimental results are presented and discussed in Sect. 5. The paper finishes with related work and conclusions in Sects. 6 and 7, respectively.

2 Background

2.1 APGAS library

The APGAS library brings the parallel programming concepts of X10 to Java [20]. Each place is represented by a single Java Virtual Machine (JVM).

APGAS programmers can spawn lightweight asynchronous tasks that encapsulate computations. At task creation, they explicitly specify an executing place, where the APGAS run-time processes the different tasks with multiple threads. Internally, each place maintains a task pool, which is an instance of the Java class ForkJoinPool [14], i.e. workers correspond to Java threads. APGAS users can set the number of workers via APGAS_THREADS; default is the number of CPU cores.

In the simplest way, a task is spawned with the async construct. This call does not block and always returns immediately. An async-task is executed on the current place when a worker becomes available. Java's ForkJoinPool assigns tasks in arbitrary order. More generally, a task can be created with the asyncAt construct. This construct inserts the task in the ForkJoinPool of a remote place, which must be specified as parameter. Like async, the asyncAt construct returns immediately. Similar to asyncAt, the at construct sends a task to a specified remote place, where



it is inserted into the local ForkJoinPool. Unlike asyncAt, this construct blocks until the transferred task has been executed. Finally, the immediateAsyncAt construct transfers a task to a specified remote place and then starts a new Java thread there, which immediately executes the transferred task. Such a thread runs concurrently to the local ForkJoinPool.

Task creation can be enclosed in a finish block. This block's execution ends only when all submitted async- and asyncAt-tasks, including recursively spawned ones, have been processed.

2.2 Lifeline-based global load balancing

GLB deploys a lifeline scheme, in which each worker runs on a separate place. Each worker maintains its own local task pool, from which it takes tasks to be processed, and into which it inserts any newly generated tasks. GLB uses the following task model:

- Tasks are free of side effects.
- Processing a task generates a task result and possibly new tasks.
- All task results must have the same type and must be reducible with a commutative and associative operator.
- Each worker maintains a partial result and accumulates task results therein.
- The final result is computed from the partial results by reduction.

If a worker runs out of tasks, it tries to steal tasks from another worker. First, the thief contacts up to w random victims and, if not successful, afterwards up to z so-called lifeline buddies. If a victim has no tasks, it responds with a reject message; otherwise, it sends tasks, called *loot*. When all w + z steal attempts have returned unsuccessfully, the thief goes *inactive*. An inactive thief is restarted when a lifeline buddy sends loot in reaction to an earlier recorded steal request. When all workers have become inactive, the final result is computed.

3 Programming with asyncAny-tasks

We incorporated the following novel constructs into the APGAS library and thus made them available to APGAS programmers:

- asyncAny: Submits a locality-flexible task. The task is initially placed in the local pool and can later be stolen away to other places.
- finishAsyncAny: Suspends until all asyncAny-tasks that have been directly or recursively spawned in an associated block have been processed.
- staticInit: Creates a copy of static data (e.g. constants) on each place.
- staticAsyncAny: Resembles asyncAny, but allows to specify an initial placement and expects a list of tasks as parameter.
- mergeAsyncAny: Merges its parameter, which is a task result, into the partial result of the local worker.
- reduceAsyncAny: Computes the current global result by reduction over the partial results of all workers and returns it.



- cancelableAsyncAny: Resembles asyncAny, but the submitted task can be cancelled.
- cancelableStaticAsyncAny: Combines cancelableAsyncAny and staticAsyncAny.
- cancelAllCancelableAsyncAny: Cancels all unprocessed cancelable AsyncAny and cancelableStaticAsyncAny-tasks and prohibits spawning new ones.

Listing 1 shows a Hello World example with asyncAny. The finishAsyncAny-call detects when all asyncAny-tasks that are spawn in the loop have been processed. The asyncAny-tasks just print "Hello Word" and their place number.

The following Listings 2 and 3 illustrate the use of asyncAny-tasks with a complete, compilable code. The example calculates π from integrals. Listing 2 depicts the algorithm, and Listing 3 shows the result class.

For simplicity, all tasks are submitted from place 0. Actually, they are already known at program start, and thus, it would be more efficient to distribute them statically at the beginning. This could be accomplished with staticAsyncAny.

In Listing 2, we use a loop (lines 4–11) to start N asyncAny-tasks (line 6). Each task produces a task result, which is merged into the partial result of the local worker with mergeAsyncAny (line 9). The parameter must be of type ResultAsyncAny<T>, which is an abstract APGAS class that contains a member variable result of type T. Therefore, APGAS programmers must provide an own result class that extends ResultAsyncAny<T>. Listing 3 depicts such a class

```
1 finishAsyncAny(() -> {
2    for (int i = 0; i < N; i++) {
3        asyncAny(() -> {
4             System.out.println("Hello from " + here());
5        });
6    }
7 });
```

Listing 1 Submitting N asyncAny-tasks in an finishAsyncAny block

```
1 final int N = 10000;
2 finishAsyncAny(() -> {
3
    final double deltaX = 1.0 / N;
    for (int i = 0; i < N; i++) {</pre>
4
5
      final int _i = i;
      asyncAny(() -> {
6
7
        double x = (_i + 0.5) * deltaX ;
        double r = (4.0 / (1 + x * x)) * deltaX;
8
        mergeAsyncAny(new PiResult(r));
9
10
11
    }
12 });
13 System.out.println("Pi=" +
     reduceAsyncAny().getResult());
```

Listing 2 Calculating π with asyncAny



```
I public class PiResult extends ResultAsyncAny < Double > {
    public PiResult(double r) { this.result = r; }
2
3
 4
    @Override
 5
    public void mergeAsyncAny(ResultAsyncAny < Double > r) {
 6
         this.result += r.result();
7
 8
9
    @Override
     public PiResult clone() { return new
10
        PiResult(this.result()); }
11 }
Listing 3 Result class for \pi
 1 finishAsyncAny(() -> {
3
       cancelableAsyncAny(() -> {
 4
 5
         if (((PiResult)reduceAsyncAny()).getResult() > 3)
 6
            cancelAllCancelableAsyncAny();
7
         }
 8
       });
9
     }
10 });
```

Listing 4 Calculating π with cancelableAsyncAny

for our example. As shown, the user must override methods mergeAsyncAny() (line 5) and clone() (line 10).

When the finishAsyncAny call from line 2 of Listing 2 ends in line 12, all asyncAny-tasks have been processed and merged their results. Therefore, the final result can be calculated by calling reduceAsyncAny (line 13).

Listing 4 extends the π example to demonstrate our novel task cancellation feature. The extension stops the computation as soon as the current sum of task results exceeds a threshold that we artificially set to 3. In Listing 4, tasks are submitted with cancelableAsyncAny instead of asyncAny (line 3). After each task calculation, reduceAsyncAny is called to obtain the current value of the global result (line 5). If this value exceeds the threshold, all unprocessed tasks are cancelled by calling cancelAllCancelableAsyncAny (line 6). Obviously, frequent calls to reduceAsyncAny slow down the program, and thus, an APGAS programmer needs to control these calls. For instance, the calls can be performed every second or by a single worker only.

4 Design and implementation

We implemented our extensions by modifying the open source code of the APGAS library [8]. The extended code will be published on the first authors homepage.



As mentioned in Sect. 2, APGAS realizes the place internal pools with the Java class ForkJoinPool. Consequently, all workers of a place share a single task pool. For the partial results, in contrast, each worker maintains a separate variable. A call to asyncAny initially inserts the new task into the local ForkJoinPool, just like a call to async. However, asyncAny-tasks can later be stolen away to other places. For that, we combined the intra-place work stealing scheme of the ForkJoinPool class with the lifeline-based global load balancing scheme for inter-place work stealing. The latter is performed by one dedicated management worker per place.

4.1 Management worker

When finishAsyncAny is called, one management worker is started on each place. This worker runs in a dedicated Java thread, which is not part of the thread group that executes the ForkJoinPool. Listing 5 shows the pseudocode of the management worker's main loop. The worker carries out one loop iteration per second (line 10), except when it is inactive. This approach roughly corresponds to that of GLB, where a main loop iteration is carried out after processing n tasks.

If the number of unprocessed tasks in the local pool falls below the number of local workers (line 3), the management worker starts with work stealing (line 4). Ahead-of-time stealing differs from GLB, where stealing is started only when a worker has no tasks left. On the victim place, steal operations are quick. To avoid that they need to wait, they are performed with immediateAsyncAt.

The original lifeline scheme is cooperative, i.e. the thief sends a message to the victim and the victim responds [17]. Our scheme, in contrast, is coordinated, i.e. the thief tries to pull half of the unprocessed tasks out of the victim's internal pool itself. For that, we modified Java's ForkJoinPool class to enable pulling out multiple tasks at once. Since the ForkJoinPool class deploys internal synchronization, tasks can be removed from the pool concurrently to the running computation of the victim.

If the victim is out of work, the immediateAsyncAt-task invokes another immediateAsyncAt to notify the thief about the result. If the steal request was a lifeline request, the thief is additionally added to a ConcurrentLinkedQueue.

```
1 while (tasks available) {
   send loot to recorded lifeline thieves;
    if (not enough local tasks left) {
3
4
     try to steal from up to w+z victims;
5
    if (all local tasks have been executed &&
6
       all potential victims were contacted) {
7
      notify place 0;
8
      go inactive;
9
    }
10
    sleep one second;
```

Listing 5 Main loop of management worker



This queue needs to be thread-safe, because multiple steal requests can be received and executed concurrently. If the victim has work, the loot is sent to the thief with (cancelable) staticAsyncAny. This construct directly inserts the tasks from the loot into the thief's local ForkJoinPool.

When w+z steal attempts have returned unsuccessfully, the management worker notifies place 0 (lines 6–9) and changes into inactive state (lines 6–9). Further details are provided in Sect. 4.2. An inactive management worker is reactivated when at least one asyncAny-task is inserted into the local ForkJoinPool. This may happen through a call to (cancelable) asyncAny or (cancelable) staticAsyncAny.

4.2 FinishAsyncAny

The existing finish implementation performs bookkeeping for every task. This induces a high overhead when the number of tasks is large. Therefore, we implemented a new finishAsyncAny construct, which observes only the loot. A call to finishAsyncAny starts a new Java thread on place 0, which regularly checks whether (1) the internal pool contains unprocessed tasks, or (2) there are unprocessed tasks in remote pools.

The first condition is checked with standard ForkJoinPool methods. For checking the second condition, each place maintains an int array stealCounts with one entry per place. It is initialized with 0. Before a victim sends loot, it increments its local stealCounts[thief]. When a thief receives loot, it decrements its local stealCounts[thief]. Just before a management worker goes inactive, it sends its stealCounts array to place 0, see line 7 in Listing 5. On place 0, the stealCounts arrays are added. If all entries in the sum array are 0, the second condition from above must be met, and all management workers have become inactive. Thus, the finishAsyncAny-thread on place 0 terminates all management workers, as well as itself.

4.3 Task cancellation

If tasks are submitted with asyncAnyCancelable, they can be cancelled later by calling cancelAllCancelableAsyncAny. This call dequeues all unprocessed tasks and prevents new submissions. Since tasks are independent, a cancellation of all unprocessed tasks cannot leave the program in an inconsistent state.

To locate all cancelable tasks, each place maintains a map of type Concurrent HashMap<Long, Task>. The first parameter is a system-wide unique task id. A call of asyncAnyCancelable inserts the task into the local ForkJoinPool and additionally stores it in the map. Tasks remove themselves from the map as their last operation. When tasks are stolen, they are removed from the victim's map and added to the thief's map.

A call to cancelAllCancelableAsyncAny starts an immediateAsyncAt on each place. It iterates through all map entries and calls the Java method cancel() (from class ForkJoinTask) for each task. To prevent new task submissions, each place maintains a boolean flag, which is checked before each task submission by



asyncAnyCancelable. The flag is set by the immediateAsyncAt and reset at the end of the finishAsyncAny block.

5 Experiments

Experiments were conducted on a cluster with 12 homogeneous nodes. Each node has two six-core Intel Xeon E5-2643-v4E5 CPUs and 256 GB of main memory [22]. In a first group of experiments, we measured intra-place speedup by starting a single place on one node and varying the number of workers from 1 to 12. Then, we measured inter-place speedup by varying the number of places from 1 to 12. Here, each place was mapped to a separate node with 12 workers. Java was used in version 9.0.1.

As benchmarks, we adopted Unbalanced Tree Search (UTS) [12], NQueens [5], Betweenness Centrality (BC) [3], and the Travel Salesman Problem (TSP) [1]. UTS counts the number of nodes in a highly irregular tree that is dynamically generated from node descriptors. NQueens calculates the number of placements of N queens on an $N \times N$ chessboard, so that no two queens threaten each other. BC calculates a centrality score for each node of a given graph. TSP determines the shortest roundtrip through a given number of cities.

As baseline for the implementations of UTS, BC and NQueens, we used the code of X10's GLB samples (for UTS and BC) [7] and of HabaneroUPC++'s samples (for TSP) [18], respectively. We ported these codes to Java and therefore used our novel APGAS constructs. The actual calculation logic remained unchanged. For TSP, we wrote an own code, which deploys a parallel branch-and-bound algorithm with heuristics [4]. Each place holds a local optimum, and additionally, there is a global optimum. Whenever a worker discovers a new local optimum, it updates the global optimum and propagates any changes to the other workers.

Moreover, we implemented cancelable variants of NQueens and TSP. Here, the user specifies a limit on the number of NQueens placements and a desired maximal length of the roundtrip, respectively. The programs check once per second if the limit is reached. If so, a call to cancelallCancelableAsyncAny destroys all unprocessed tasks. These variants solve search problems for a sufficiently good solution within a shorter period of time.

UTS, NQueens, and TSP start with a single task, which is submitted with asyncAny (or asyncAnyCancelable), while the other tasks are spawned dynamically. BC, in contrast, statically initializes all tasks and evenly distributes them over all places with staticAsyncAny. The result is a single long value for UTS, NQueens, and TSP, and a long array with one entry per graph node for BC.

Parameters were set as follow:

- UTS: geometric tree shape, branching factor b = 4, random seed s = 19, and tree depth d = 17. Like in GLB [7], the initial task processes up to 511 tree nodes and afterwards submits a new asyncAny-task for half of the remaining tree nodes. Any subsequent task does the same.
- NQueens: number of queens and chessboard size N = 17. New (cancelable) asyncAny-tasks are spawned only until 11 queens are unplaced, as in the HabaneroUPC++ implementation [18].



- BC: random seed s=2, number of graph nodes $N=2^{15}$ for intra-place experiments, and $N=2^{17}$ for inter-place experiments. Since the BC implementation from [7] deploys fine-grained tasks, we combine up to 32 tasks into one asyncAny-task, which we observed to perform best.
- TSP: number of *cities* = 25. New (cancelable) asyncAny-tasks are only spawned until 15 cities are left for the current path, which we observed to perform best.

Figures 1 and 2 depict the measured speedups for the four benchmarks. In the intraplace case (Fig. 1), all benchmarks achieve near linear speedups. The deviation from linear speedup is up to 13.99% for NQueens, up to 22.78% for UTS (both with 11

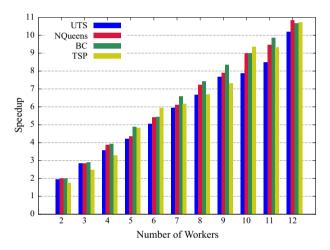


Fig. 1 Intra-place speedups over sequential execution time

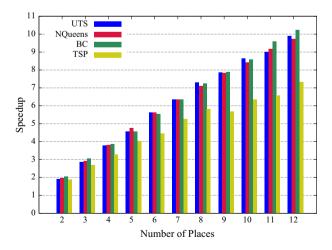


Fig. 2 Inter-place speedups over one place execution time with 12 places



workers), up to 11.12% for BC (with 12 workers), and up to 18.71% for TSP (with 9 workers).

In the inter-place case (Fig. 2), the deviation is a somewhat higher with 14.78% for BC and 18.95% for NQueens (both on 12 places). UTS, on the other hand, has a smaller deviation of 18.27% (on 11 places). The highest deviation was measured for TSP with 40.22% (on 11 places). We expect it to be due to the latency of propagating a new global optimum to an increasing number of workers. The more workers are processing tasks, the more tasks are unnecessarily computed before the new bound becomes effective in the branch-and-bound scheme.

The overall slightly lower performance of inter-place work stealing is probably caused by communication costs. Comparing the hybrid variants with 144 workers to the sequential base variants, UTS achieves a speedup of 100, NQueens of 105, and TSP of 83.

In an additional group of experiments, we started 11 workers per place instead of 12, reserving one CPU core for the management worker. These experiments were run on up to 4 places. We still measured a nearly linear increase in speedup from 11 to 12 workers per place, from which we conclude that the management workers need almost no computational resources. Consequently, it does not pay off to reserve a core for it.

In a final group of experiments, we evaluated our new cancellation functionality. First, we tested the cancelable program variants to make sure that cancellation works properly. As expected, it takes less time to compute a given number of NQueens placements as compared to the total number of placements, and it takes less time to compute an approximate TSP solution as compared to the optimum one.

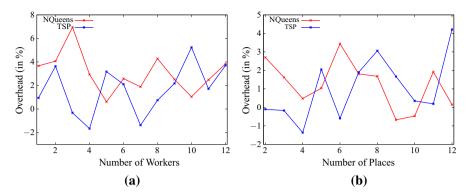
Second, we estimated the overhead for cancellation management, which includes the internal asyncAnyCancelable management of APGAS and the periodic user calls of reduceAsyncAny. For these experiments, we configured the cancelable program variants so that they compute all NQueens placements, and the optimum TSP path, respectively. That is, we let them solve the same problem as the non-cancelable variants and compared the respective running times. The overheads of the cancelable variants compared to the non-cancelable variants are depicted in Fig. 3.

As shown in Fig. 3a, the intra-place overhead was at most 6.95% for NQueens and 5.24% for TSP. The inter-place overhead was at most 3.44% for NQueens and 4.21% for TSP. Variations may be due to differences in the task processing order.

6 Related work

As mentioned in Sect. 1, we adopted the concept of locality-flexible asyncAny-tasks from HabaneroUPC++ [11]. However, our implementation of hybrid work stealing is fundamentally different. The HabaneroUPC++ scheme does not limit the number of random remote victims, but evaluates them with the help of network Remote Direct Memory Access (RDMA). In contrast, we deploy GLB's lifeline scheme [24] and thus steal from up to w + z remote victims, which are selected without RDMA. Like HabaneroUPC++, we utilize a dedicated management worker for the inter-place work stealing. However, HabaneroUPC++ runs the management worker on a dedicated CPU core that does not participate in the actual computation, whereas we use as many





 $\label{Fig. 3} \ \ \text{Intra-place (a) and inter-place (b) performance overhead of asyncAnyCancelable compared to asyncAny}$

computation workers as cores. Finally, HabaneroUPC++ binds to C++, and APGAS to Java.

Yamashita et al. [23] present multistage execution and multithreading for GLB in X10. Each worker maintains an own queue, and each place holds two shared queues for intra- and inter-place work stealing, respectively. However, the overall scheme is quite complicated, and the implementation has problems with network message scheduling.

Paudel et al. [15,16] investigate hybrid task placement in X10 with work stealing and work dealing, respectively. Both papers deploy a dedicated thread for inter-place communication. Programmers use annotations to distinguish tasks into location-sensitive and location-flexible ones. Hybrid work stealing for nested fork/join programs is handled in [9].

A classification and evaluation of task cancellation techniques are given in [10]. Most task-based programming environments do not support task cancellation [21]. An exception is OpenMP [13], where users can cancel parallel regions, sections, loops, and taskgroups. Moreover, HPX [19] supports cancelling individual tasks that have not yet been started or are currently blocked. To the best of our knowledge, our work is the first that provides a cancellation feature for locality-flexible tasks.

7 Conclusions

In this paper, we have presented a combined intra- and inter-place work stealing scheme for the APGAS library. APGAS programmers can submit locality-flexible tasks via asyncAny and asyncAnyCancelable. These tasks are automatically scheduled by the APGAS run time over all places and their computational resources. Moreover, APGAS programmers can cancel all unprocessed asyncAnyCancelable-tasks of a finishAsyncAny block.

The paper has described the usage and implementation of the extended APGAS library. Moreover, we ported four benchmarks to this library and observed near linear speedups with up 12 workers on 1 place and a slightly worse speedup with up to 144



workers on up to 12 places. We have also implemented cancelable variants of two benchmarks and observed a management overhead for the cancellation below 7%.

Future work may consider use of RDMA in APGAS, which may further improve the performance of asyncAny-tasks. Moreover, cancellation may be extended to running tasks.

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