

# Scheduling Single AGV in Blocking Flow-Shop with Identical Jobs : *a dynamic programming approach*

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# Problem description

## Data :

- $J$  identical jobs (products)
- a loading station  $s_0$  (pick-up)
- $M$  workstations  $\in \{s_1, s_2, \dots, s_M\}$
- an unloading station  $s_{M+1}$  (delivery)
- $\forall i \in \{1, 2, \dots, M\}, p_i \in \mathbb{N}^+ :$  processing time on workstation  $s_i$
- $\forall i, j \in \{0, 1, \dots, M+1\}, t_{ij} \in \mathbb{N} :$  AGV moving time from  $s_i$  to  $s_j$ 
  - moving times are symmetrical
  - moving times respect the triangle inequality
  - moving times are the same regardless of whether the AGV is carrying a product or not

## Constraints :

- initially, all the products are in the loading station  $s_0$
- the manufacturing process of each product requires it to pass through all the workstations sequentially from  $s_1$  to  $s_M$
- the products will eventually end up in the unloading station  $s_{M+1}$ 
  - $s_0$  and  $s_{M+1}$  have unlimited capacity
  - all workstations can hold a maximum of one product at a time and have no buffer
- when a product arrives at workstation  $s_i$  it must be processed for  $p_i$  time units; it cannot be moved to the next station until its processing is completed
- an AVG can take a product from  $s_i$  and move it to  $s_{i+1}$  ( $i \leq M$ ) only if  $s_{i+1}$  is an empty workstation or the unloading station
  - the AVG can hold a maximum of one product at a time
  - we assume that loading products onto the AVG and unloading products from it takes no time

## Objective :

- find the scheduling of AGV operations that minimizes the time to complete the manufacturing process of all products i.e. the time to get all products to the unloading station

## Remarks :

- since all the jobs are identical, the order in which they are picked up from  $s_0$  has no influence on the completion time
- since we are dealing with a flow-shop (all products have the same sequence of workstations) and there are no buffers, no product can overtake another product on its way through the workstations
- only the order in which the products are moved between the stations influences the completion time

# Sample instance

- $J = 4$  ,  $M = 3$

$p_1$	$p_2$	$p_3$
11	54	4

$t_{ij}$	0	1	2	3	4
0	0	25	16	15	19
1	25	0	18	18	17
2	16	18	0	16	25
3	15	18	16	0	23
4	19	17	25	23	0

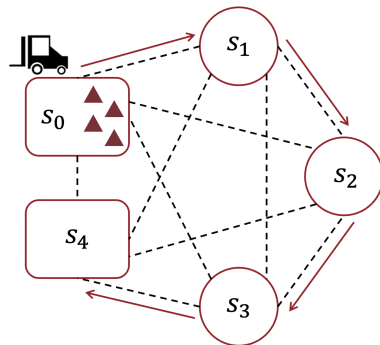


Figure:

Graphical representation of the instance. Arrows indicate the path that each product must take through the workstations

- The reference article for this problem is :  
*Scheduling Single AGV in Blocking Flow-Shop with Identical Jobs.*  
E. Boom, M. Mihalák, F. Thuijsman, M.H.M. Winands  
(February 2024)
- The authors proposed for this problem :
  - an exact ILP-based algorithm
  - an ILP-based heuristic
  - two greedy heuristics
- The use of a dynamic programming technique seems promising for tackling the problem and it is exactly what I am experimenting with in this project

# Trivial feasible solution

- Every instance of the problem has a trivial feasible solution, the cost of which is an upper bound on its optimal completion time
- This solution consists of moving one product at a time to the unloading station, thus waiting for its processing time on each workstation
- It has the following cost :

$$UB = J \cdot \left( \sum_{i=0}^M t_{i,i+1} + \sum_{i=1}^M p_i \right) + (J - 1) \cdot t_{M+1,0}$$

- The formula applied to the sample instance gives :

$$UB = 4 \cdot (69 + 82) + 3 \cdot 19 = 661$$



# DP Algorithm 1 (definitions)

## States :

- $\langle t, x, l, w_1, \dots, w_M, u \rangle$  where :

$t \in \{0 \dots UB\}$  elapsed time

$x \in \{0 \dots M + 1\}$  AGV position (station)

$l \in \{0 \dots J\}$  # products in loading station

$w_i \in \{\perp\} \cup \{0 \dots p_i\} \quad \forall i \in \{1 \dots M\}$

if  $s_i$  is empty : equal to  $\perp$

if  $s_i$  is non-empty : equal to the residual processing time of the product in workstation  $s_i$

$u \in \{0 \dots J\}$  # products in unloading station

- Given  $P = \max_{i \in \{1 \dots M\}} p_i$ , number of states is  $O(UB \cdot M \cdot J^2 \cdot P^M)$

**Initialization :**  $\langle 0, 0, J, \perp, \dots, \perp, 0 \rangle$

## Label extension (idea) :

- From each state we can make moves composed of these actions :
  - from the current station  $s_x$  we move the AGV to a station  $s_y$ , which can be :
    - a) the loading station  $s_0$  if it is non-empty and  $s_1$  is empty
    - b) a workstation  $s_{i \in \{1 \dots M-1\}}$  if it is non-empty and  $s_{i+1}$  is empty
    - c) the workstation  $s_M$  if it is non-empty(null-movement is possible)
  - if  $s_y \neq s_0$  , we wait the residual processing time of the product on  $s_y$
  - we transport the product from  $s_y$  to  $s_{y+1}$  by AGV  
(or, if  $s_y = s_0$ , any of the products in  $s_0$ )
- For each state :  $0 < \# \text{ possible extensions} \leq \lfloor M/2 \rfloor + 1$
- The cost of the optimal solution is :

$$z^* = \min \{ t \mid \langle t, M+1, 0, \perp, \dots, \perp, J \rangle \text{ is reached} \}$$

## Label extension (formalized) :

- notation :

$$w'_i(e) = \begin{cases} \perp & \text{if } w_i = \perp \\ \max \{ 0, w_i - e \} & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

- case a) movement towards the loading station  $s_0$

$$S = \langle t, x, l > 0, w_1 = \perp, w_2, \dots, w_M, u \rangle$$

- $t_{x,0}$  passes
- at  $s_0$  no processing time passes
- $t_{0,1}$  passes
- $e := t_{x,0} + t_{0,1}$

$$S_{\text{next}} = \langle t + e, 1, l - 1, w_1 = p_1, w'_2(e), \dots, w'_M(e), u \rangle$$

- case b) movement towards a workstation  $s_{i \in \{1 \dots M-1\}}$

$$S = \langle t, x, l, w_1, \dots, w_i \neq \perp, w_{i+1} = \perp, \dots, w_M, u \rangle$$

- $t_{x,i}$  passes
- at  $s_i$  passes  $t_p = \max \{ 0, w_i - t_{x,i} \}$
- $t_{i,i+1}$  passes
- $e := t_{x,i} + t_p + t_{i,i+1}$

$$S_{next} = \langle t + e, i + 1, l, w'_1(e), \dots, w_i = \perp, w_{i+1} = p_{i+1}, \dots, w'_M(e), u \rangle$$

- case c) movement towards the workstation  $s_M$

$$S = \langle t, x, l, w_1, \dots, w_{M-1}, w_M \neq \perp, u \rangle$$

- $t_{x,M}$  passes
- at  $s_M$  passes  $t_p = \max \{ 0, w_M - t_{x,M} \}$
- $t_{M,M+1}$  passes
- $e := t_{x,M} + t_p + t_{M,M+1}$

$$S_{next} = \langle t + e, M + 1, l, w'_1(e), \dots, w'_{M-1}(e), w_M = \perp, u + 1 \rangle$$

## Dominance :

- Given two states

$$S' = \langle t', x', l', w'_1, \dots, w'_M, u' \rangle$$

$$S'' = \langle t'', x'', l'', w''_1, \dots, w''_M, u'' \rangle$$

$$S' \prec S'' \quad \Leftrightarrow \quad t' < t''$$

$$x' = x''$$

$$l' = l''$$

$$w'_i = w''_i \quad \forall i \in \{1 \dots M\}$$

$$u' = u''$$

# DP Algorithm 1 (implementation details)

- label correcting
- for each state we keep track of the predecessor, so we can reconstruct the optimal AGV route at the end of the algorithm
- states with lower  $t$  are extended first
  - popping a state with minimum  $t$  from the pool is  $O(1)$
  - adding a state to the pool is  $O(1)$

## Dominance checks :

- dominance checks done with a map  $H$  (hash-table implementation)
  - when a state  $S = \langle t, x, l, w_1, \dots, w_M, u \rangle$  is visited, we consider all its components except  $t$  as key  $k$  and  $t$  as value
  - if  $k$  is not in  $H$ 
    - then we set  $H[k] = t$
  - if  $k$  is in  $H$  and  $H[k] = t'$ ,
    - if  $t < t'$ , then we set  $H[k] = t$
    - otherwise,  $S$  is dominated by a previously visited state and must not be extended

# DP Algorithm 1 (sample instance solution)

- DP algorithm 1 applied to the sample instance finds an optimal AGV route represented by this sequence of states :

$t$	$x$	$l$	$w_1$	$w_2$	$w_3$	$u$
0	0	4	$\perp$	$\perp$	$\perp$	0
25	1	3	11	$\perp$	$\perp$	0
54	2	3	$\perp$	54	$\perp$	0
95	1	2	11	13	$\perp$	0
129	3	2	0	$\perp$	4	0
156	4	2	0	$\perp$	$\perp$	1
191	2	2	$\perp$	54	$\perp$	1
232	1	1	11	13	$\perp$	1
266	3	1	0	$\perp$	4	1
293	4	1	0	$\perp$	$\perp$	2
328	2	1	$\perp$	54	$\perp$	2
369	1	0	11	13	$\perp$	2
403	3	0	0	$\perp$	4	2
439	2	0	$\perp$	54	0	2
478	4	0	$\perp$	15	$\perp$	3
519	3	0	$\perp$	$\perp$	4	3
546	4	0	$\perp$	$\perp$	$\perp$	4

- $z^* = 546$  (17.4 % improvement wrt  $UB = 661$ )

# DP Algorithm 2 (definitions)

## States :

- Given  $C_k :=$  completion time of product  $k$  on its current station ,  
we define the earliest service time of  $k$  as  $E_k := \max \{ C_k, t + t_{x, x_k} \}$   
i.e. the first instant at which  $k$  can be moved to  $x_k + 1$
- $\langle t, x, x_1, \dots, x_J, e_1, \dots, e_J \rangle$  where :
  - $t \in \{0 \dots UB\}$  elapsed time
  - $x \in \{0 \dots M + 1\}$  AGV position
  - $x_k \in \{0 \dots M + 1\}$   $\forall k \in \{1 \dots J\}$  , product position  
 $\forall k \in \{1 \dots J - 1\}$  ,  $x_k \leq x_{k+1}$
  - $e_k \in \{\perp\} \cup \{0 \dots UB\}$   $\forall k \in \{1 \dots J\}$ 
    - if  $x_k < M + 1$  : equal to  $E_k$
    - if  $x_k = M + 1$  : equal to  $\perp$
- The number of states is  $O((UB \cdot M)^{J+1})$



**Initialization** :  $\langle 0, 0, 0, \dots, 0, 0, \dots, 0 \rangle$

**Label extension** (idea) :

- From each state the possible moves and the # possible extensions are the same as in the previous algorithm
- The cost of the optimal solution is :

$$z^* = \min \{ t \mid \langle t, M+1, M+1, \dots, M+1, \perp, \dots, \perp \rangle \text{ is reached} \}$$

## Label extension (formalized) :

- $S = \langle t, x, x_k \ \forall k \in \{1 \dots J\}, e_k \ \forall k \in \{1 \dots J\} \rangle$
- we move towards  $x_\alpha$  i.e. the current station of product  $\alpha \in \{1 \dots J\}$ 
  - if  $x_\alpha = 0$  we can move  $\alpha$  forward  
only if no other product  $\alpha' > \alpha$  has  $x_{\alpha'} = 0$
  - if  $x_\alpha = M + 1$  we cannot move  $\alpha$  forward
  - if  $x_{\alpha+1} > x_\alpha + 1 \vee x_\alpha + 1 = M + 1$  we can move  $\alpha$  forward
- $S_{next} = S' = \langle t', x', x'_k \ \forall k \in \{1 \dots J\}, e'_k \ \forall k \in \{1 \dots J\} \rangle$ 
  - $t' = \max \{ t + t_{x, x_\alpha}, e_\alpha \} + t_{x_\alpha, x_\alpha+1}$
  - $x' = x_\alpha + 1$
  - $x'_k = \begin{cases} x_k + 1 & \text{if } k = \alpha \\ x_k & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$
  - $e'_k = \begin{cases} \perp & \text{if } e_k = \perp \vee (k = \alpha \wedge x'_\alpha = M + 1) \\ t' + p_{x'_\alpha} & \text{if } k = \alpha \wedge x'_\alpha \neq M + 1 \\ \max \{ e_k, t' + t_{x', x'_k} \} & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$

## Dominance :

- Given two states

$$S' = \langle t', x', x'_k \ \forall k \in \{1 \dots J\} , e'_k \ \forall k \in \{1 \dots J\} \rangle$$

$$S'' = \langle t'', x'', x''_k \ \forall k \in \{1 \dots J\} , e''_k \ \forall k \in \{1 \dots J\} \rangle$$

$$S' \prec S'' \Leftrightarrow \forall k \in \{1 \dots J\} \mid x'_k < M + 1 \\ (x'_k > x''_k \wedge t' \leq t'') \vee (x'_k = x''_k \wedge e'_k \leq e''_k)$$

- As a consequence :

$$\exists k \in \{1 \dots J\} \mid x''_k > x'_k \Rightarrow S' \not\prec S''$$

## DP Algorithm 2 (implementation details)

- Like in the previous algorithm :
  - label correcting
  - we keep track of each state's predecessors
  - states with lower  $t$  are extended first

### Dominance checks :

- States that are ready to be extended are kept in a pool  $Q$
- A state  $S$  can be added to  $Q$  only if  $\nexists S' \in Q \mid S' \prec S$
- When  $S$  is added to  $Q$  then we set  $Q = Q - \{ X \in Q \mid S \prec X \}$
- Computing all the required dominance checks every time we have to add a new state to the pool is too computationally expensive
- $\forall$  product  $k \in \{1 \dots J\}$  ,  $\forall$  station  $i \in \{0 \dots M + 1\}$  we keep :
  - a set  $ON[k][i]$  of states currently  $\in Q$  in which  $k$  is in  $i$
  - a set  $GEQ[k][i]$  of states currently  $\in Q$  in which  $k$  is in a station  $\geq i$
  - a set  $LEQ[k][i]$  of states currently  $\in Q$  in which  $k$  is in a station  $\leq i$

- We are trying to add to  $Q$  a state

$$S = \langle t, x, x_k \ \forall k \in \{1 \dots J\}, e_k \ \forall k \in \{1 \dots J\} \rangle$$

- if  $\exists S' \in \bigcap_{k=1}^J ON[k][x_k] \mid S' \prec S$ , then  $S$  cannot be added to  $Q$
- if  $\exists S' \in \bigcap_{k=1}^J GEQ[k][x_k] \mid S' \prec S$ , then  $S$  cannot be added to  $Q$
- otherwise  $S$  is added to  $Q$
- $\forall S' \in \bigcap_{k=1}^J ON[k][x_k] \mid S \prec S'$  must be removed from  $Q$
- $\forall S' \in \bigcap_{k=1}^J LEQ[k][x_k] \mid S \prec S'$  must be removed from  $Q$
- the vast majority of state non-pushes and removals are consequent to checks involving  $ON$
- IDs associated to states  $\in Q$  and use of bitsets : advantages and drawbacks

## DP Algorithm 2 (sample instance solution)

- DP algorithm 2 applied to the sample instance finds an optimal AGV route represented by this sequence of states :

$t$	$x$	$x_1$	$x_2$	$x_3$	$x_4$	$e_1$	$e_2$	$e_3$	$e_4$
0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
25	1	0	0	0	1	50	50	50	36
54	2	0	0	0	2	70	70	70	108
95	1	0	0	1	2	120	120	106	113
129	3	0	0	1	3	144	144	147	133
156	4	0	0	1	4	175	175	173	⊥
191	2	0	0	2	4	207	207	245	⊥
232	1	0	1	2	4	257	243	250	⊥
266	3	0	1	3	4	281	284	270	⊥
293	4	0	1	4	4	312	310	⊥	⊥
328	2	0	2	4	4	344	382	⊥	⊥
369	1	1	2	4	4	380	387	⊥	⊥
403	3	1	3	4	4	421	407	⊥	⊥
439	2	2	3	4	4	493	455	⊥	⊥
478	4	2	4	4	4	503	⊥	⊥	⊥
519	3	3	4	4	4	523	⊥	⊥	⊥
546	4	4	4	4	4	⊥	⊥	⊥	⊥

# Instances generation

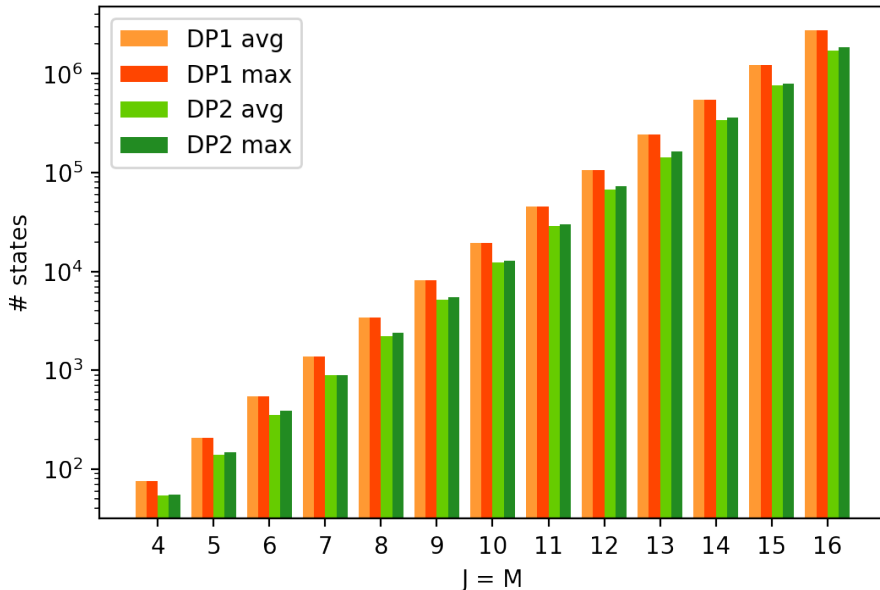
- very similar to what is explained in the reference article
- we vary  $J$  and  $M$
- moving times  $t_{ij}$  are uniformly generated in an interval  $[t_{MIN}, t_{MAX}]$
- we set  $t_{MIN} = 15$  and  $t_{MAX} = 25$ 
  - the triangular inequality automatically holds because  $2 \cdot t_{MIN} \geq t_{MAX}$
  - average moving time is therefore 20
- we vary a parameter  
 $r \in \{0.1, 0.4, 0.8, 1.1, 1.4, 1.8, 2.1, 2.5, 3.0, 3.5, 4.0\}$
- processing times  $p_i$  are uniformly generated in an interval  $[1, r \cdot 40]$ 
  - average processing time is therefore  $r \cdot 20$
- 5 instances for each combination of  $J, M, r$

# Computational results

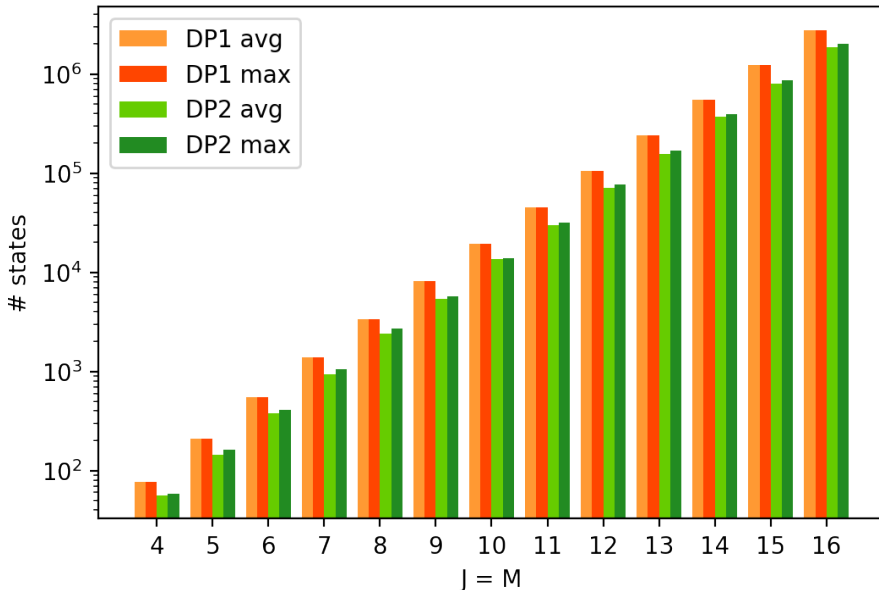
- AVG and MAX number of extended states
  - DP1 vs. DP2 for each  $r$
  - DP2 percentual improvement wrt DP1
- AVG and MAX execution time
  - DP1 vs. DP2 for each  $r$
  - DP2 percentual improvement wrt DP1
- AVG and MAX execution time
  - fixing  $M = 10$  and varying  $J \in \{4 \dots 16\}$
  - fixing  $J = 10$  and varying  $M \in \{4 \dots 16\}$
- the statistics for a given combination of  $J$ ,  $M$ ,  $r$  are only visible in the barplot if all 5 instances had an execution time  $< 15$  minutes



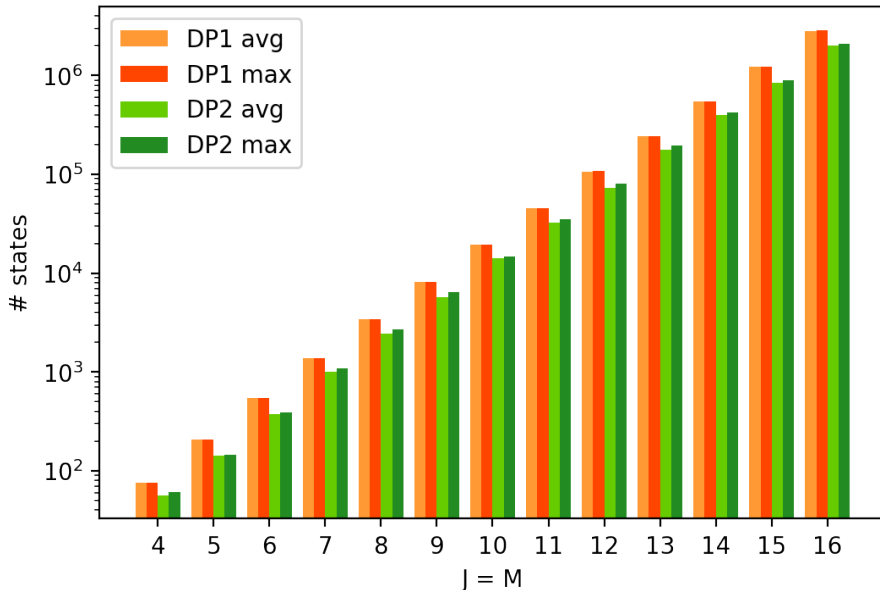
$r = 0.1$  , AVG and MAX number of extended states



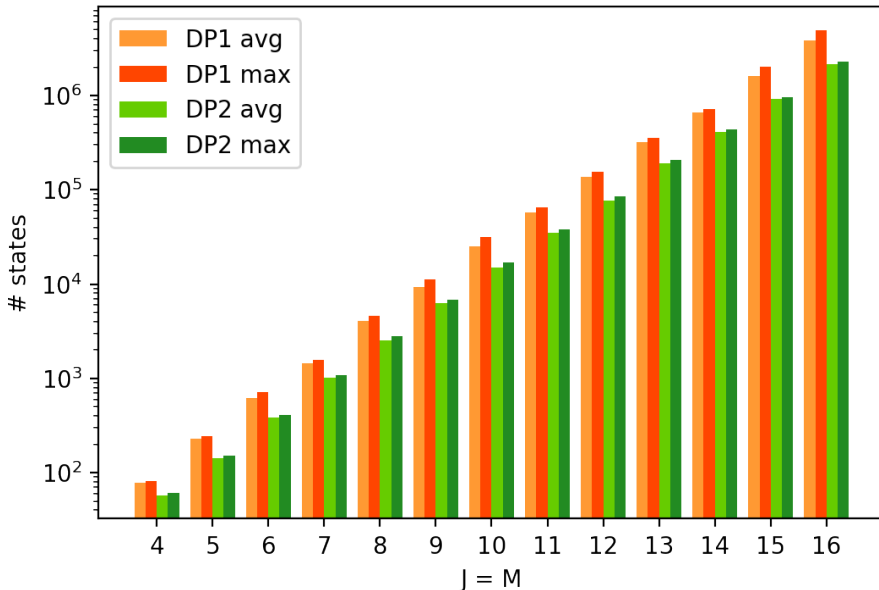
$r = 0.4$  , AVG and MAX number of extended states



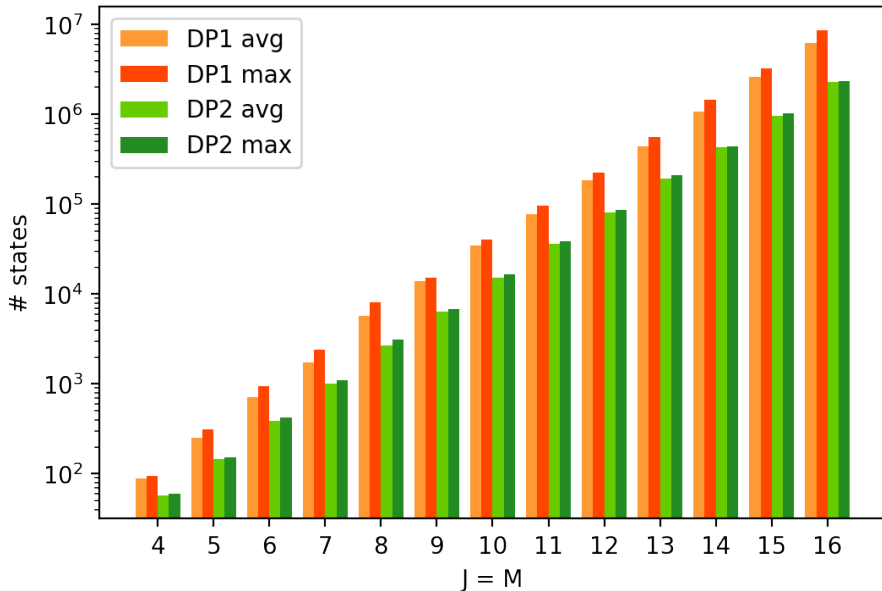
$r = 0.8$  , AVG and MAX number of extended states



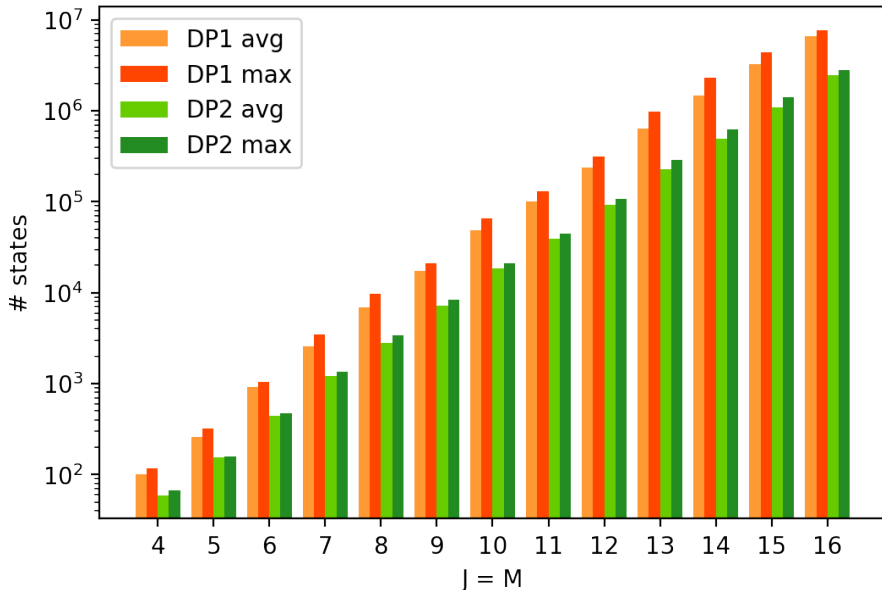
$r = 1.1$  , AVG and MAX number of extended states



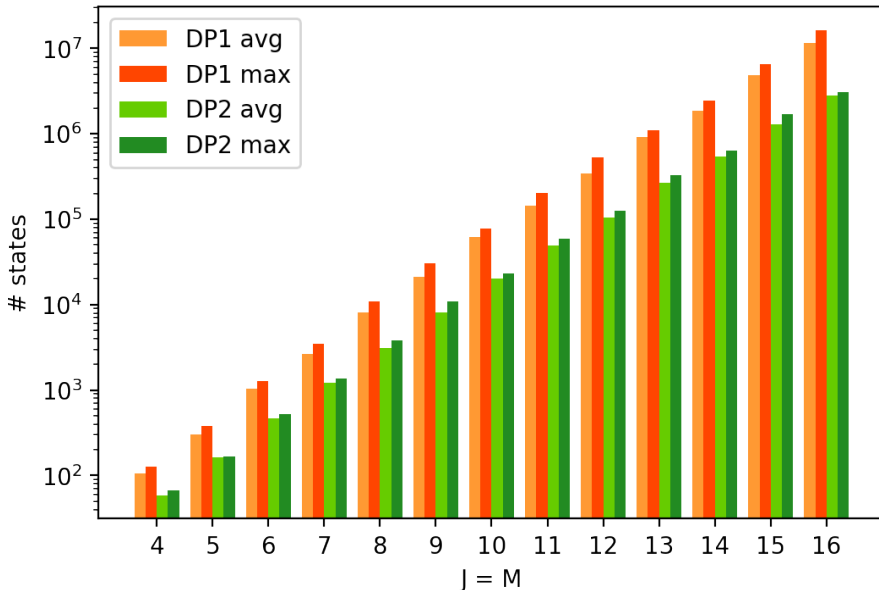
$r = 1.4$  , AVG and MAX number of extended states



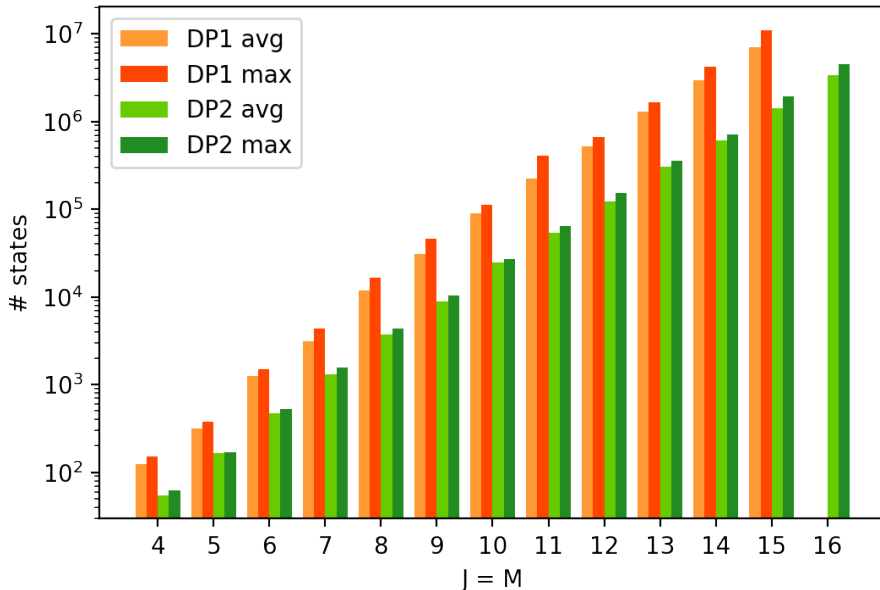
$r = 1.8$  , AVG and MAX number of extended states



$r = 2.1$  , AVG and MAX number of extended states

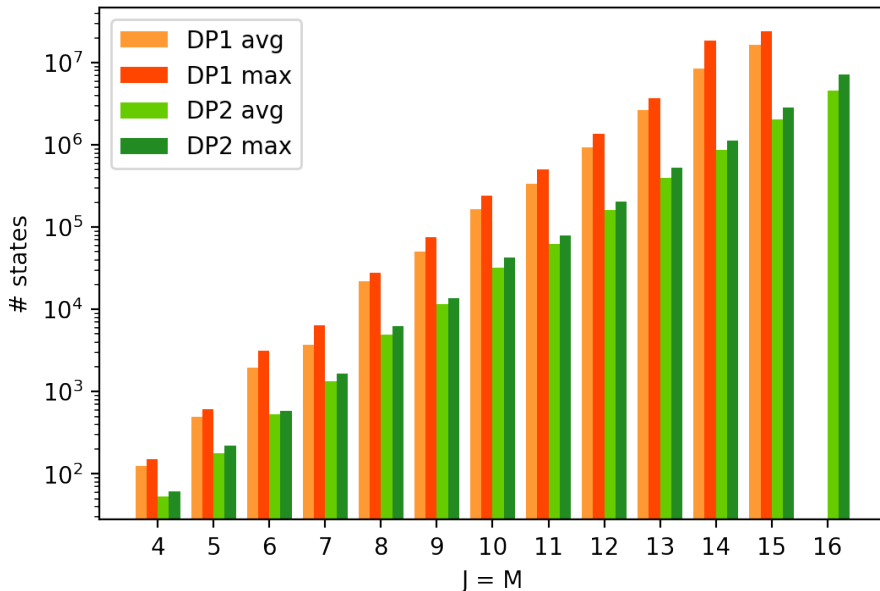


$r = 2.5$  , AVG and MAX number of extended states

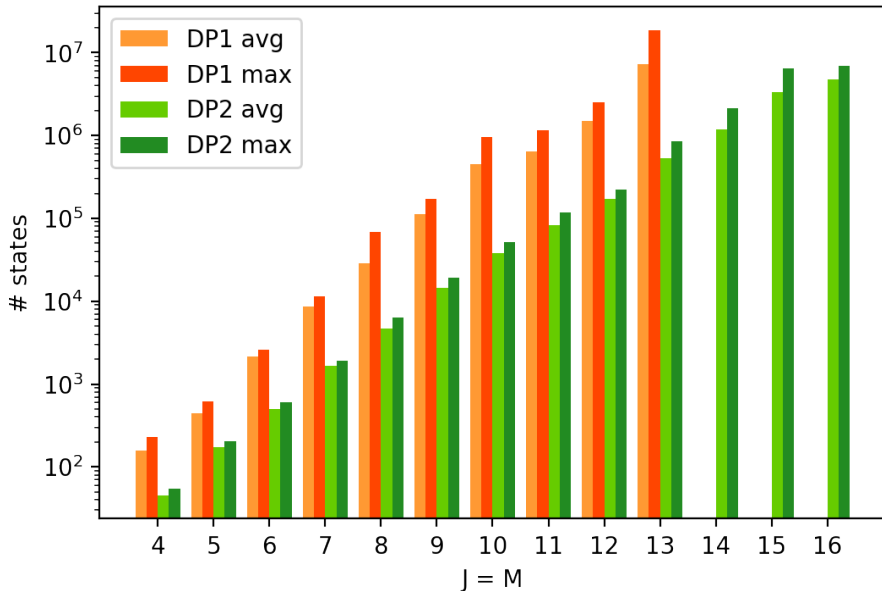




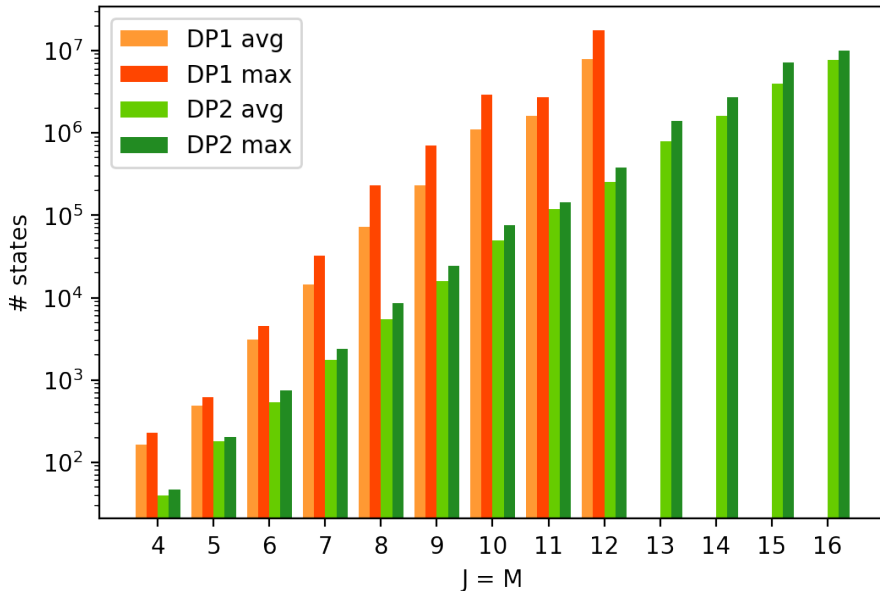
$r = 3.0$  , AVG and MAX number of extended states



$r = 3.5$  , AVG and MAX number of extended states



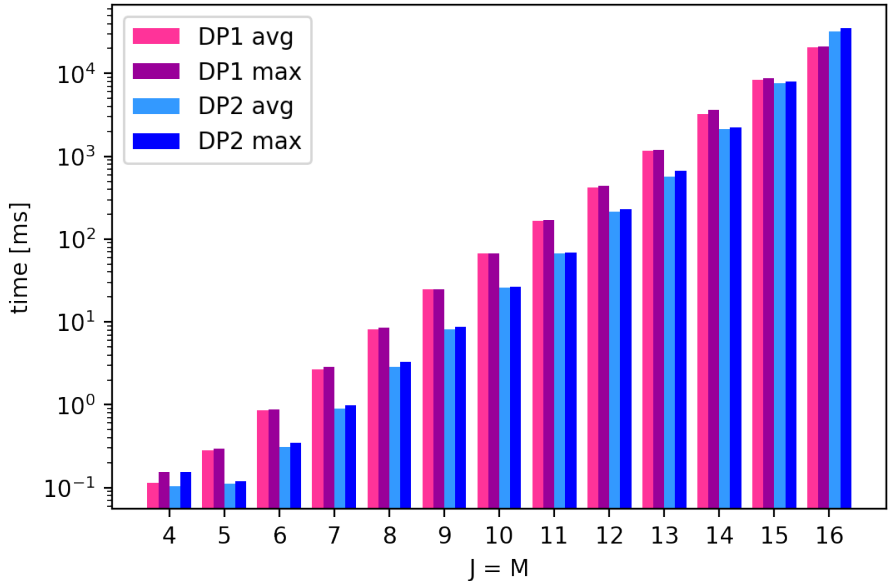
$r = 4.0$  , AVG and MAX number of extended states



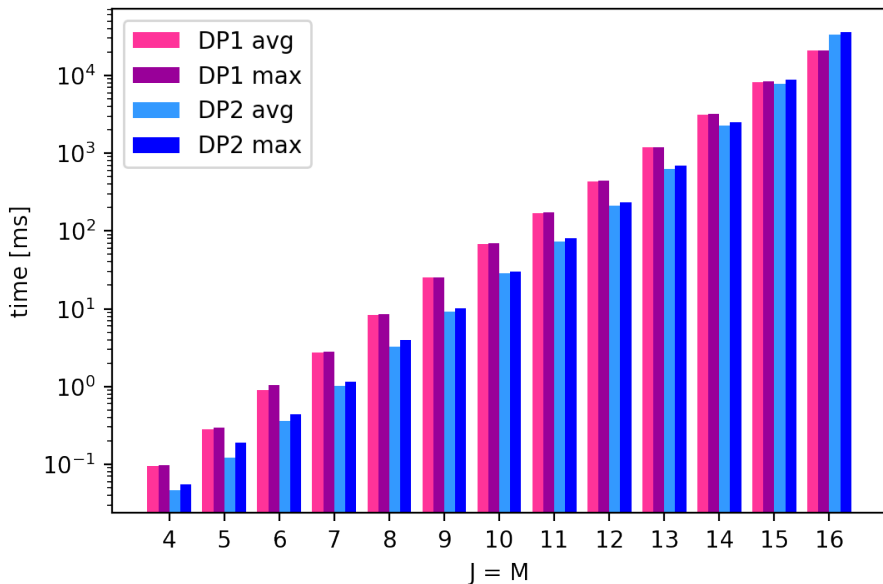
- DP2 percentual improvement wrt DP1  
in terms of MAX number of extended states

J = M	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
r = 0.1	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.35	0.29	0.33	0.35	0.34	0.31	0.32	0.34	0.36	0.33
r = 0.4	0.24	0.22	0.25	0.24	0.20	0.30	0.28	0.30	0.27	0.30	0.29	0.30	0.27
r = 0.8	0.20	0.30	0.29	0.21	0.20	0.21	0.24	0.22	0.25	0.18	0.23	0.28	0.27
r = 1.1	0.25	0.38	0.43	0.31	0.39	0.39	0.47	0.42	0.45	0.42	0.40	0.52	0.54
r = 1.4	0.37	0.50	0.55	0.54	0.62	0.55	0.59	0.60	0.61	0.62	0.70	0.68	0.73
r = 1.8	0.42	0.50	0.54	0.61	0.65	0.60	0.68	0.66	0.65	0.71	0.73	0.68	0.63
r = 2.1	0.47	0.55	0.59	0.61	0.65	0.64	0.71	0.71	0.76	0.70	0.74	0.74	0.81
r = 2.5	0.59	0.55	0.65	0.65	0.74	0.78	0.76	0.84	0.77	0.79	0.83	0.82	
r = 3.0	0.59	0.64	0.81	0.74	0.78	0.82	0.82	0.84	0.85	0.86	0.94	0.88	
r = 3.5	0.76	0.67	0.77	0.83	0.91	0.89	0.95	0.90	0.91	0.95			
r = 4.0	0.79	0.67	0.84	0.93	0.96	0.97	0.97	0.95	0.98	0.00			

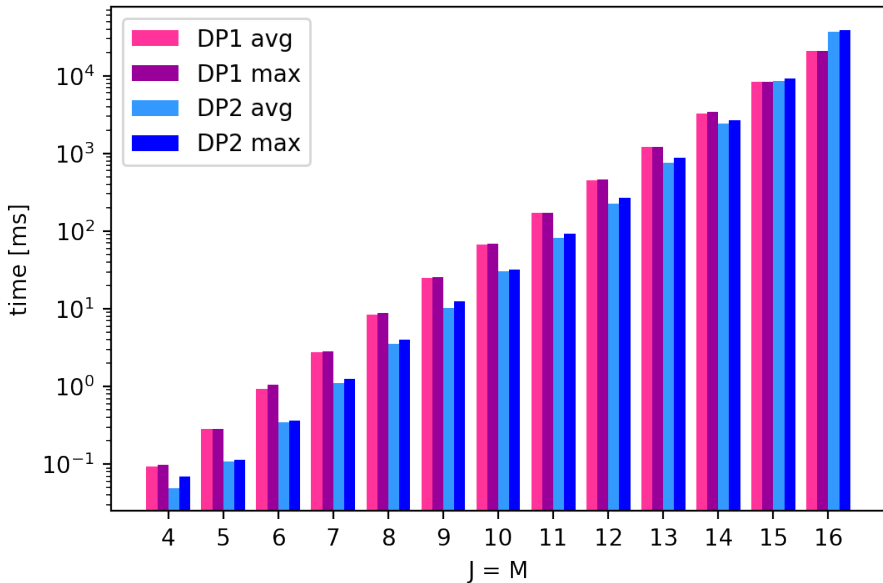
$r = 0.1$  , AVG and MAX execution time



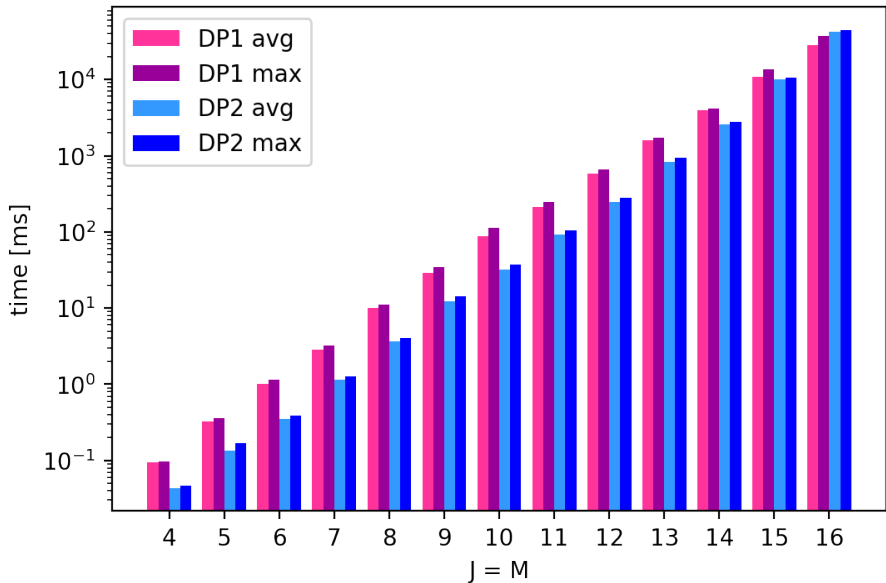
$r = 0.4$  , AVG and MAX execution time



$r = 0.8$  , AVG and MAX execution time

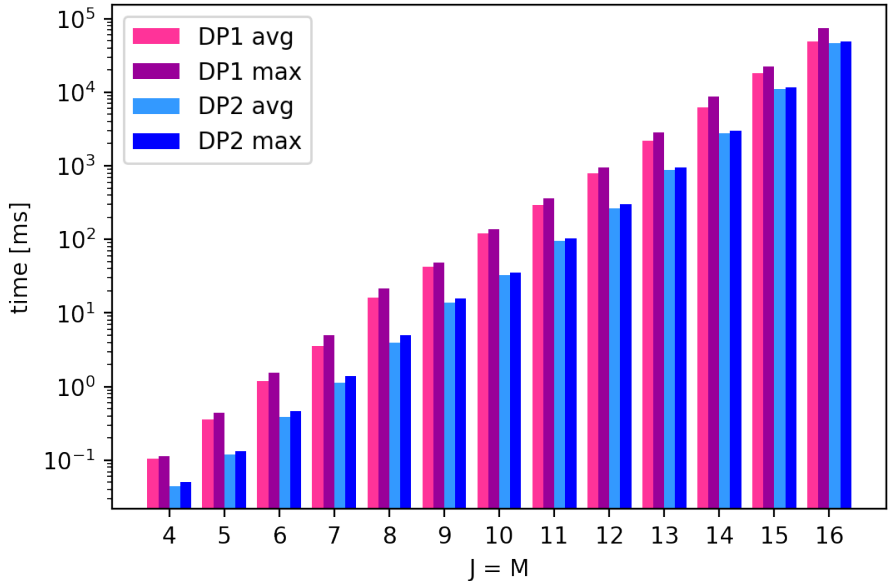


$r = 1.1$  , AVG and MAX execution time

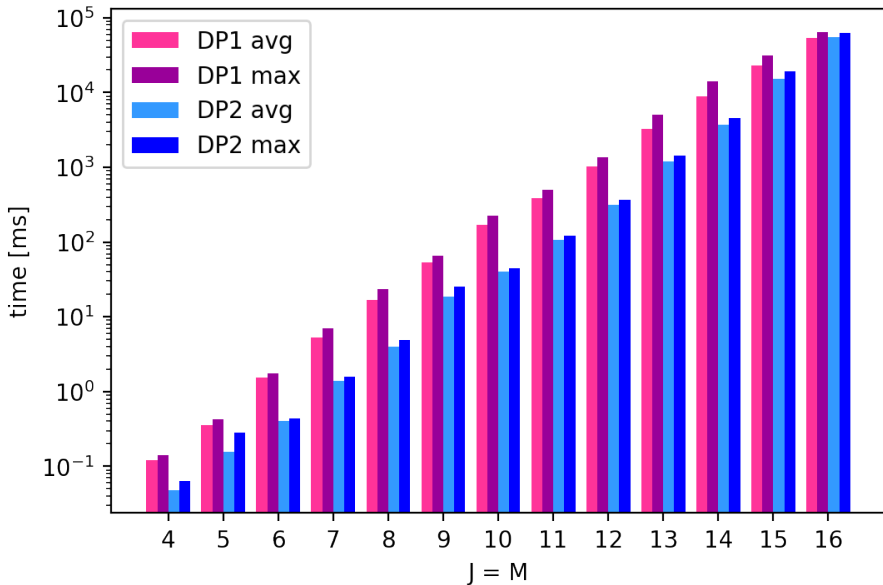




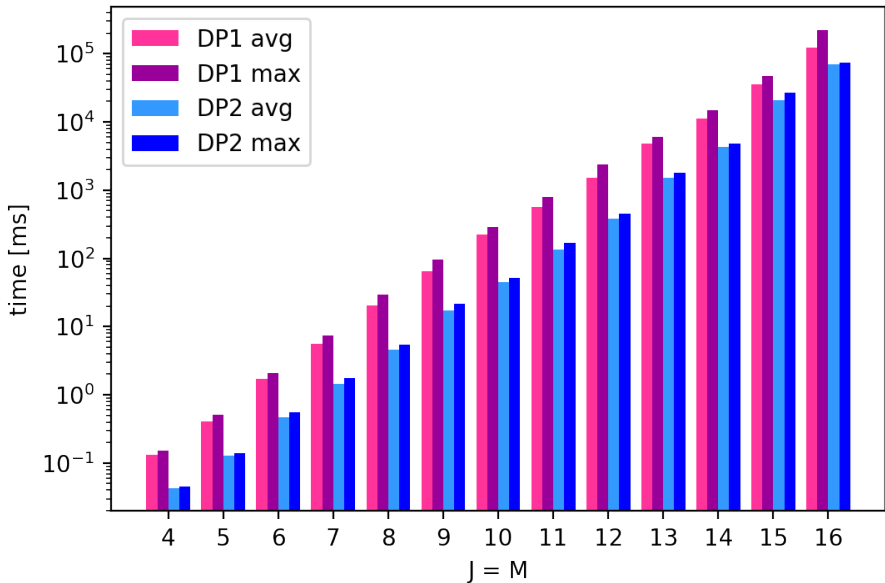
$r = 1.4$  , AVG and MAX execution time



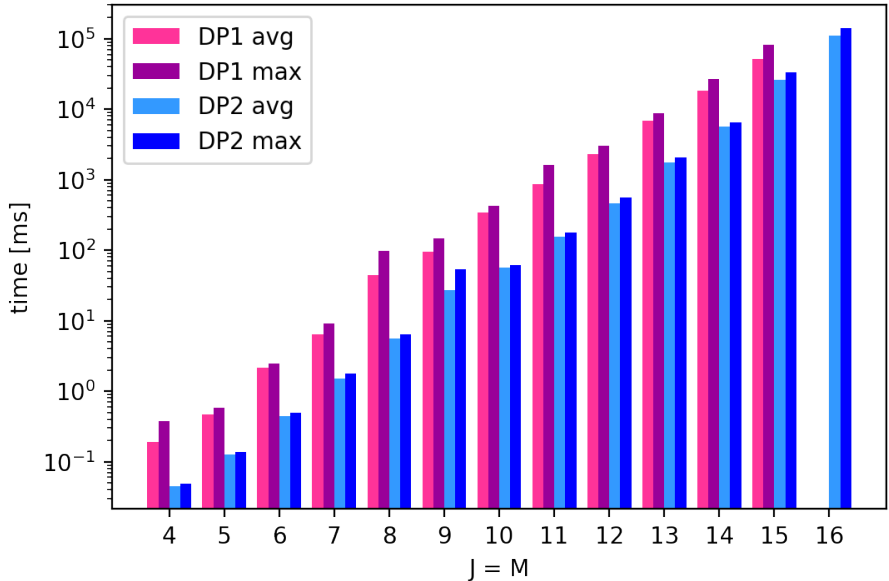
$r = 1.8$  , AVG and MAX execution time



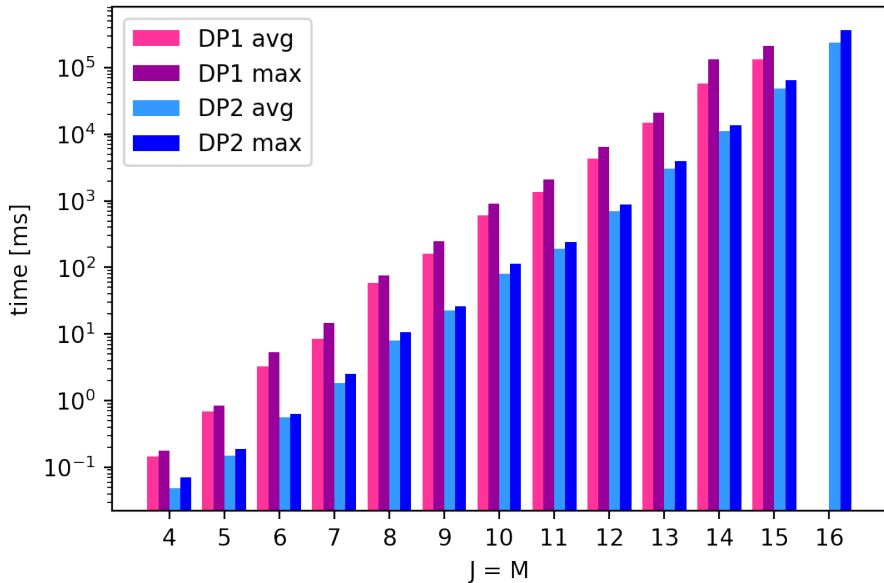
$r = 2.1$  , AVG and MAX execution time



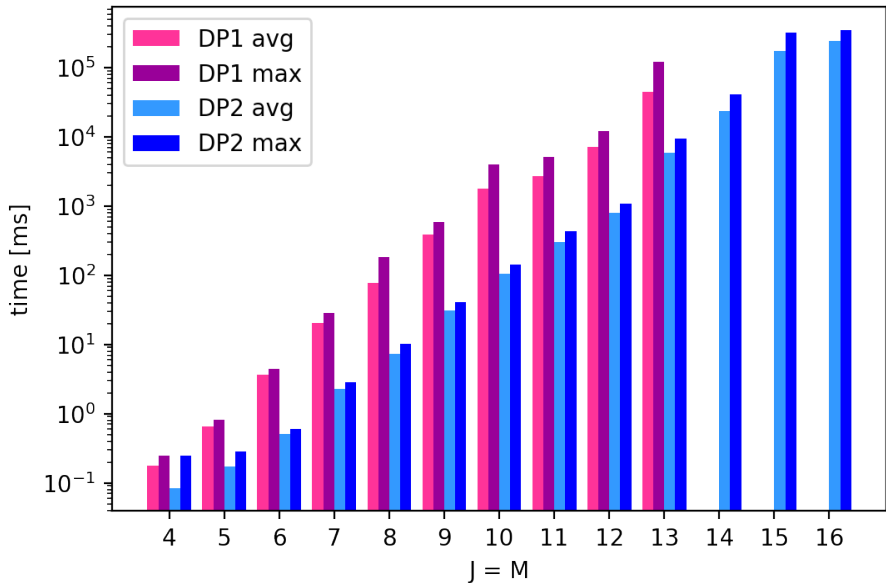
$r = 2.5$  , AVG and MAX execution time



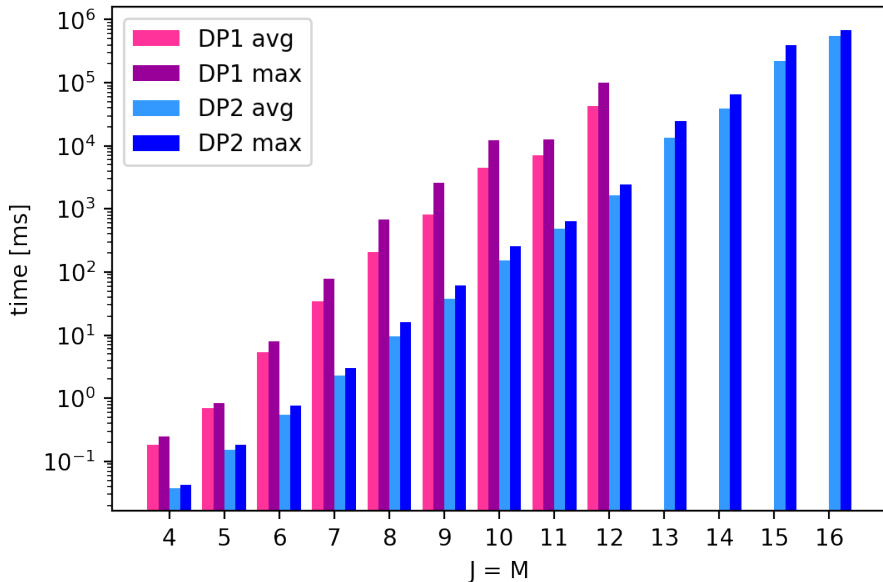
$r = 3.0$  , AVG and MAX execution time



$r = 3.5$  , AVG and MAX execution time



$r = 4.0$  , AVG and MAX execution time

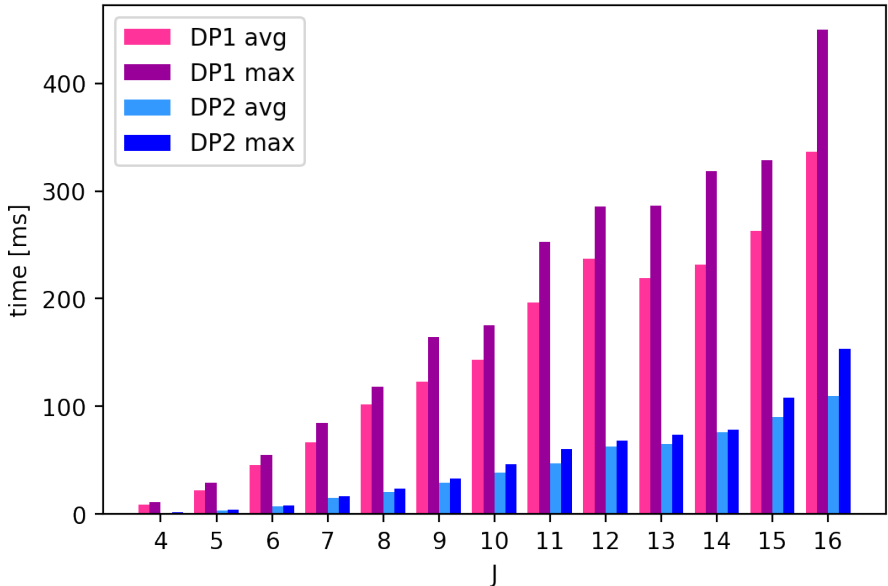


- DP2 percentual improvement wrt DP1  
in terms of MAX execution time

J = M	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
r = 0.1	0.01	0.59	0.61	0.65	0.62	0.65	0.61	0.59	0.48	0.44	0.37	0.07	<b>-0.69</b>
r = 0.4	0.44	0.35	0.58	0.59	0.53	0.60	0.57	0.54	0.48	0.42	0.21	<b>-0.04</b>	<b>-0.71</b>
r = 0.8	0.29	0.60	0.65	0.56	0.55	0.51	0.53	0.47	0.42	0.28	0.21	<b>-0.10</b>	<b>-0.85</b>
r = 1.1	0.53	0.54	0.67	0.61	0.63	0.59	0.67	0.58	0.58	0.46	0.34	0.23	<b>-0.21</b>
r = 1.4	0.55	0.70	0.70	0.72	0.77	0.68	0.74	0.72	0.69	0.66	0.66	0.49	0.34
r = 1.8	0.55	0.33	0.75	0.77	0.79	0.61	0.80	0.76	0.73	0.72	0.68	0.38	0.03
r = 2.1	0.70	0.73	0.73	0.76	0.81	0.77	0.82	0.78	0.81	0.70	0.68	0.43	0.66
r = 2.5	0.87	0.76	0.80	0.81	0.93	0.64	0.85	0.89	0.81	0.76	0.75	0.59	
r = 3.0	0.60	0.78	0.88	0.82	0.86	0.89	0.88	0.88	0.86	0.81	0.90	0.69	
r = 3.5	0.02	0.66	0.87	0.90	0.95	0.93	0.96	0.91	0.91	0.92			
r = 4.0	0.83	0.78	0.90	0.96	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.95	0.98				



$r = 1.8$  ,  $M = 10$ , AVG and MAX execution time



$r = 1.8$  ,  $J = 10$ , AVG and MAX execution time

