Exercise 6: Can’t see the tree for the forests!

Task 1: Radical deforestation

We are given a complete weighted graph $G = (V, (V \choose 2), W)$. The goal is to find an extremely fast variant of the GHS algorithm in this setting. W.l.o.g., we assume that the system is synchronous. Message size is $O(\log n)$, where we assume that an edge weight fits into a message. W.l.o.g., all edge weights are distinct and node identifiers are $1, \ldots, n$.

a) Suppose that at the beginning of phase $i$, the set $T_i$ of previously selected MST edges is known. Denote by $C$ the set of (node sets of) connectivity components of $(V, T_i)$. For $C, C' \in C$, denote by $e(C, C')$ the lightest edge between $C$ and $C'$. Find a subroutine that permits to determine for each $C \in C$ the lightest $|C|$ edges $e(C, \cdot)$ in $O(1)$ rounds! At the end, the nodes in $C$ must know these edges. (Hint: For component $C$, use not only the edges within the component, but also those between $C$ and all other nodes. This way you still don’t overuse any edges! Exploit that $|C| \leq n$ and that only the lightest edge $e(C, C')$ between any pair of components $C, C'$ is of interest.)

b) Use a) to devise an MST algorithm that requires $O(1)$ rounds per phase, maintains that at the beginning of each phase, all nodes know all previously determined MST edges, and in each but the last phase, each component $C$ is merged with at least $\min_{C \in C} \{|C|\}$ other components!

c) Prove that the algorithm from b) computes the MST in $O(\log \log n)$ rounds! (Hint: Bound the minimal size of a component after phase $i$ from below!)

Task 2: Steiner trees

The Steiner tree problem is a generalization of the MST problem. The goal is to find a minimum cost tree connecting a set of terminals $T \subseteq V$. This problem is NP-hard to approximate within factor 96/95; we’ll settle for a 2-approximation.

**Definition 1** (Terminal graph). Given a connected simple weighted graph $G = (V, E, W)$ and terminals $T \subseteq V$, the terminal graph is $(T, (T \choose 2), W_T)$, where $W_T(s, t)$ is the minimum weight of a path from $s$ to $t$ in $G$. (For a path $p = (v_0, \ldots, v_k)$, its weight is $\sum_{i=1}^{k} W(v_{i-1}, v_i)$.)

a) Consider an optimal tree $O$. Show that when visiting all nodes of $O$ and returning to the root in the order given by a depth-first-search using the tree edges, each edge of $O$ is traversed exactly twice. This is also called an Euler tour of $O$.

b) List the nodes of $T$ according to the order in which they are visited in the Euler tour of $O$. Denote this list by $(t_1, \ldots, t_{|T|})$. Show that

$$\sum_{i=1}^{|T|-1} W_T(t_i, t_{i+1}) \leq 2W(O).$$

($W(O)$ is defined in the obvious way.)

c) Conclude that an MST of the terminal graph induces a spanning subgraph whose weight is at most twice the weight of $O$!
d) Assuming an MST of the terminal graph is already constructed and a corresponding edge set is already known (in the sense that nodes know their incident edges in this set), can you construct a 2-approximate solution that is a tree fast? How fast is your post-processing routine?

We will devise an efficient distributed algorithm that constructs a 2-approximate Steiner tree in this manner in a future exercise.

**Task 3*: The traveling salesman**

In the traveling salesman problem (TSP), a set of cities $V$ is connected by charter flights $E \subseteq \binom{V}{2}$ of cost $W(e)$. The goal is to visit each city once, while minimizing the total cost of chartered flights.

a) Give a 2-approximation algorithm for the TSP problem. Do so before looking at the further parts of this exercise!

b) Find an example showing that your algorithm does not guarantee a factor-2 approximation of the optimal solution. If you did not solve a), congratulations! Then it suffices to find an instance where an MST is not induce a factor-2 approximation.

c) Show that your algorithm (or one you come up with now) does yield a factor-2 approximation if the cost function is metric, i.e., it satisfies the triangle inequality $W(v, w) \leq W(v, u) + W(u, w)$ for all $v, w, u \in V$.

d) Research how the size of the largest TSP instances that could be solved/approximated at the time changed over the years. How much of this is to be attributed to hardware improvements and how much to algorithmic improvements?

e) Tell about your journey in the exercise session!