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| Loïc Chaumont, Ron Doney. On Lévy processes conditioned to stay positive.. 2004. hal-00003128v1

HAL Id: hal-00003128

<https://hal.science/hal-00003128v1>

Preprint submitted on 22 Oct 2004 (v1), last revised 1 Feb 2005 (v2)

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On Lévy processes conditioned to stay positive.

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Abstract: We construct the law of Lévy processes conditioned to stay positive under general hypotheses. We obtain a Williams type path decomposition at the minimum of these processes. This result is then applied to prove the weak convergence of the law of Lévy processes conditioned to stay positive as their initial state tends to 0. We describe an absolute continuity relationship between the limit law and the measure of the excursions away from 0 of the underlying Lévy process reflected at its minimum. Then, when the Lévy process creeps upwards, we study the lower tail at 0 of the law of the height this excursion.

Key words: Lévy process conditioned to stay positive, path decomposition, weak convergence, excursion measure, creeping.

A.M.S. Classification: 60G51, 60G17.

1 Introduction

In [6] it was shown how, given the measure \mathbb{P} of a Lévy process satisfying some weak assumptions, one can construct for each $x > 0$ a measure \mathbb{P}_x^\uparrow corresponding, in the sense of Doob's theory of h-transforms, to conditioning the process starting at x to stay positive. Using a different construction Bertoin [3] had shown the existence of a measure \mathbb{P}_0^\uparrow under which the process starts at 0 and stays positive. A natural question is whether \mathbb{P}_x^\uparrow converges to $\mathbb{P}^\uparrow := \mathbb{P}_0^\uparrow$ as $x \downarrow 0$. Recently, it has been proved by Tanaka [16] that this convergence in law holds in the sense of finite dimensional distributions, under very general hypotheses, but here we are interested in convergence in law on Skohorod's space of càdlàg trajectories. Since it was also shown in [6], extending a famous result for the 3-dimensional Bessel process due to Williams, that under \mathbb{P}_x^\uparrow the post-minimum process is independent of the pre-minimum process and has law \mathbb{P}^\uparrow , this essentially amounts to showing

that the pre-minimum process vanishes as $x \downarrow 0$. Such a result has been verified in the case of spectrally negative processes in [2], and for stable processes and for processes which creep downwards in [6].

In the third section of this paper, we give a simple proof of this result for a general Lévy process. This proof does not use the description of the law of the pre-minimum process which is given in [6], but is based on knowledge of the distribution of the all-time minimum under \mathbb{P}_x^\uparrow , which was also established in [6]. As a consequence, we are able to extend the description of the excursion measure of the process reflected at its minimum (see Proposition 15, P. 202 of [1] for the spectrally negative case) to the general case. This description has recently been used in [8] to perform some semi-explicit calculations for the reflected process when X has jumps of one sign only, and our result suggests the possibility that such calculations could be performed in other cases. However a key fact in the calculations in [8] is that, in the spectrally negative case, the harmonic function h used in conditioning to stay positive and the excursion measure \underline{n} of the reflected process satisfy

$$\underline{n}(H > x)h(x) = 1,$$

where H denotes the height of a generic excursion. This leads us to wonder whether this relation could hold **asymptotically as** $x \downarrow 0$ in other cases. Intuitively it seems obvious that this should be the case when the reflected excursion **creeps upwards**. This is what we establish in Theorem 3.

2 Notation and Preliminaries

Let \mathcal{D} denote the space of càdlàg paths $\omega : [0, \infty) \rightarrow \mathbb{R} \cup \{\delta\}$ with lifetime $\zeta(\omega) = \inf\{s : \omega_s = \delta\}$, where δ is a cemetery point. \mathcal{D} will be equipped with the Skorokhod topology, with its Borel σ -algebra \mathcal{F} , and the usual filtration $(\mathcal{F}_s, s \geq 0)$. Let $X = (X_t, t \geq 0)$ be the coordinate process defined on the space \mathcal{D} . We write \overline{X} and \underline{X} for the supremum and infimum processes, defined for all $t < \zeta$ by

$$\begin{aligned}\overline{X}_t &= \sup\{X_s : 0 \leq s \leq t\}, \\ \underline{X}_t &= \inf\{X_s : 0 \leq s \leq t\}.\end{aligned}$$

We write τ_A for the entrance time into a Borel set A , and m for the time at which the absolute infimum is attained:

$$\begin{aligned}\tau_A &= \inf\{s > 0 : X_s \in A\}, \\ m &= \sup\{s < \zeta : X_s \wedge X_{s-} = \underline{X}_s\},\end{aligned}$$

with the usual convention that $\inf\{\emptyset\} = +\infty$ and $\sup\{\emptyset\} = 0$.

For each $x \in \mathbb{R}$ we denote by \mathbb{P}_x the law of a Lévy process starting from x , and write $\mathbb{P}_0 = \mathbb{P}$. We assume throughout the sequel that (X, \mathbb{P}) is not a compound

Poisson process. It is well known that the reflected process $X - \underline{X}$ is Markov. Note that the state 0 is regular for $(-\infty, 0)$ under \mathbb{P} , if and only if it is regular for $\{0\}$ for the reflected process. In this case, we will simply say that 0 is regular downwards and if 0 is regular for $(0, \infty)$ under \mathbb{P} , we will say that 0 is regular upwards.

Let \underline{L} be the local time of the reflected process $X - \underline{X}$ at 0 and let \underline{n} be the measure of its excursions away from 0. If 0 is regular downwards then, up to a multiplicative constant, \underline{L} is the unique additive functional of the reflected process whose set of increasing points is $\{t : (X - \underline{X})_t = 0\}$ and \underline{n} is the corresponding Itô measure of excursion; we refer to [1], Chap. IV, sections 2-4 for a proper definition of \underline{L} and \underline{n} . If 0 is not regular downwards then the set $\{t : (X - \underline{X})_t = 0\}$ is discrete and we define the local time \underline{L} as the counting process of this set, i.e. \underline{L} is a jump process whose jumps have size 1 and occur at each zero of $X - \underline{X}$. Then, the measure \underline{n} is the probability law of the process X under the law \mathbb{P} , killed at its first passage time in the negative halfline, i.e. $\tau_{(-\infty, 0)}$.

Let us first consider the function h defined for all $x \geq 0$ by:

$$h(x) := \mathbb{E} \left(\int_{[0, \infty)} \mathbb{1}_{\{X_t \geq -x\}} d\underline{L}_t \right). \quad (2.1)$$

It follows from (2.1) (or (2.2) below) and general properties of Lévy processes that h is *finite, continuous, increasing* and that $h - h(0)$ is *subadditive* on $[0, \infty)$. Moreover, $h(0) = 0$ if 0 is regular downwards and $h(0) = 1$ if not (in the latter case, the counting measure $d\underline{L}_t$ gives mass 1 to the point $t = 0$). The following identity follows from the exit formula of excursion theory when 0 is regular downwards and is obtained by direct calculations in the other case. For all $\varepsilon > 0$,

$$\mathbb{P}_x(\tau_{(-\infty, 0)} > \mathbf{e}/\varepsilon) = \mathbb{P}(\underline{X}_{\mathbf{e}/\varepsilon} \geq -x) = \mathbb{E} \left(\int_0^\infty e^{-ct} \mathbb{1}_{\{\underline{X}_t \geq -x\}} d\underline{L}_t \right) \underline{n}(\mathbf{e}/\varepsilon < \zeta),$$

so that, by monotone convergence, for all $x \geq 0$:

$$h(x) = \lim_{\varepsilon \rightarrow 0} \frac{\mathbb{P}_x(\tau_{(-\infty, 0)} > \mathbf{e}/\varepsilon)}{\underline{n}(\mathbf{e}/\varepsilon < \zeta)}. \quad (2.2)$$

In the next lemma, we show that h is excessive or invariant for the process (X, \mathbb{P}_x) , $x > 0$ killed at time $\tau_{(-\infty, 0)}$. This result has been proved by Silverstein [14], see also Tanaka [16]. Here, we give a different proof which bears on the representation of h stated in (2.2). For $x > 0$, we denote by \mathbb{Q}_x the law of the killed process, i.e. for $\Lambda \in \mathcal{F}_t$:

$$\mathbb{Q}_x(\Lambda, t < \zeta) = \mathbb{P}_x(\Lambda, t \leq \tau_{(-\infty, 0)}),$$

and by (q_t) its semigroup. Recall that \mathbb{Q}_0 and $q_t(0, dy)$ are well defined in the non regular case, and we have $\mathbb{Q}_0 = \underline{n}$.

Lemma 1 *If (X, \mathbb{P}) drifts towards $-\infty$ then h is excessive for (q_t) , i.e. for all $x \geq 0$ and $t \geq 0$, $\mathbb{E}_x^{\mathbb{Q}}(h(X_t) \mathbb{1}_{\{t < \zeta\}}) \geq h(x)$. If (X, \mathbb{P}) does not drifts to $-\infty$, then h is invariant for (q_t) , i.e. for all $x \geq 0$ and $t \geq 0$, $\mathbb{E}_x^{\mathbb{Q}}(h(X_t) \mathbb{1}_{\{t < \zeta\}}) = h(x)$.*

Proof: From (2.2), monotone convergence and the Markov property, we have

$$\begin{aligned}
\mathbb{E}_x^{\mathbb{Q}}(h(X_t)\mathbb{1}_{\{t<\zeta\}}) &= \lim_{\varepsilon\rightarrow 0} \mathbb{E}_x \left(\frac{\mathbb{P}_{X_t}(\tau_{(-\infty,0)} > \mathbf{e}/\varepsilon)\mathbb{1}_{\{t\leq\tau_{(-\infty,0)}\}}}{\underline{n}(\mathbf{e}/\varepsilon < \zeta)} \right) \\
&= \lim_{\varepsilon\rightarrow 0} \mathbb{E}_x \left(\frac{\mathbb{1}_{\{\tau_{(-\infty,0)}>\mathbf{e}/\varepsilon+t\}}}{\underline{n}(\mathbf{e}/\varepsilon < \zeta)} \right) = \lim_{\varepsilon\rightarrow 0} e^{\varepsilon t} \left(\frac{\mathbb{P}_x(\tau_{(-\infty,0)} > \mathbf{e}/\varepsilon)}{\underline{n}(\mathbf{e}/\varepsilon < \zeta)} \right. \\
&\quad \left. + \int_0^t \varepsilon e^{-\varepsilon u} \frac{\mathbb{P}_x(\tau_{(-\infty,0)} > u)}{\underline{n}(\mathbf{e}/\varepsilon < \zeta)} du \right) \\
&= h(x) + \frac{1}{\underline{n}(\zeta)} \int_0^t \mathbb{P}_x(\tau_{(-\infty,0)} > u) du, \tag{2.3}
\end{aligned}$$

where $\underline{n}(\zeta) = \int_0^\infty \underline{n}(\zeta > t) dt$. It is known that for $x > 0$, $E_x(\tau_{(-\infty,0)}) < \infty$ if and only if X drifts towards $-\infty$, see [1], Prop. VI.17. Hence, since moreover for $x > 0$, $0 < h(x) < +\infty$, then (2.2) shows that $\underline{n}(\zeta) < +\infty$ if and only if X drifts towards $-\infty$. Consequently, from (2.3), if X drifts towards $-\infty$, then $\mathbb{E}_x^{\mathbb{Q}}(h(X_t)\mathbb{1}_{\{t<\zeta\}}) \geq h(x)$, for all $t \geq 0$, whereas if (X, \mathbb{P}) does not drift to $-\infty$, then $\underline{n}(\zeta) = +\infty$ and (2.3) shows that $\mathbb{E}_x^{\mathbb{Q}}(h(X_t)\mathbb{1}_{\{t<\zeta\}}) = h(x)$, for all $x \geq 0$. ■

3 The process conditioned to stay positive

We now define the Lévy process (X, \mathbb{P}_x) conditioned to stay positive. The latter has now a long history, see [3], [6], [10], [16] and the references contained in these papers. We begin this section by some properties of the process conditioned to stay positive (stated in Proposition 1 and Theorem 1) which are usually established under the additional assumptions that the semigroup of (X, \mathbb{P}) is absolutely continuous and/or 0 is regular downwards and/or upwards...

Write $(p_t, t \geq 0)$ for the semigroup of (X, \mathbb{P}) and recall that $(q_t, t \geq 0)$ is the semigroup (in $(0, \infty)$ or in $[0, \infty)$) of the process (X, \mathbb{Q}_x) . Then we introduce the new semigroup

$$p_t^\uparrow(x, dy) := \frac{h(y)}{h(x)} q_t(x, dy), \quad x > 0, y > 0, t \geq 0. \tag{3.1}$$

From Lemma 1, (p_t^\uparrow) is sub-Markov when (X, \mathbb{P}) drifts towards $-\infty$ and it is Markov in the other cases. For $x > 0$ we denote by \mathbb{P}_x^\uparrow the law of the strong Markov process started at x and whose semigroup in $(0, \infty)$ is (p_t^\uparrow) . When (p_t^\uparrow) is sub-Markov, $(X, \mathbb{P}_x^\uparrow)$ has state space $(0, \infty) \cup \{\delta\}$ and this process has finite lifetime. In any case, for $\Lambda \in \mathcal{F}_t$, we have

$$\mathbb{P}_x^\uparrow(\Lambda, t < \zeta) = \frac{1}{h(x)} \mathbb{E}_x^{\mathbb{Q}}(h(X_t)\mathbb{1}_\Lambda \mathbb{1}_{\{t<\zeta\}}). \tag{3.2}$$

Note that when 0 is not regular downwards then definitions (3.1) and (3.2) also make sense for $x = 0$. We show in the next proposition that \mathbb{P}_x^\uparrow is the limit

as $\varepsilon \downarrow 0$ of the law of the process under \mathbb{P}_x conditioned to stay positive up to an independent exponential time with parameter ε , so we will refer to $(X, \mathbb{P}_x^\uparrow)$ as the process “conditioned to stay positive”. Note that the following result has been shown in [6] under stronger hypotheses, however, to make this paper self-contained, we recall the proof hereafter.

Proposition 1 *Let e be an exponential time with parameter 1 which is independent of (X, \mathbb{P}) .*

For all $x > 0$, for all (\mathcal{F}_t) stopping time T and for all $\Lambda \in \mathcal{F}_T$,

$$\lim_{\varepsilon \rightarrow 0} \mathbb{P}_x(\Lambda, T < e/\varepsilon \mid X_s > 0, 0 \leq s \leq e/\varepsilon) = \mathbb{P}_x^\uparrow(\Lambda, T < \zeta).$$

This result also holds for $x = 0$ when 0 is not regular downwards.

Proof: According to the Markov property and the lack-of-memory property of the exponential law, we have

$$\begin{aligned} & \mathbb{P}_x(\Lambda, T < e/\varepsilon \mid X_s > 0, 0 \leq s \leq e/\varepsilon) = \\ & \mathbb{E}_x \left(1_\Lambda 1_{\{T < (e/\varepsilon) \wedge \tau_{(-\infty, 0)}\}} \frac{\mathbb{P}_{X_T}(\tau_{(-\infty, 0)} \geq e/\varepsilon)}{\mathbb{P}_x(\tau_{(-\infty, 0)} \geq e/\varepsilon)} \right). \end{aligned}$$

By (2.2) and Fatou’s lemma we obtain

$$\liminf_{\varepsilon \rightarrow 0} \mathbb{P}_x(\Lambda, T < e/\varepsilon \mid X_s > 0, 0 \leq s \leq e/\varepsilon) \geq \frac{1}{h(x)} \mathbb{E}_x^\mathbb{Q}(h(X_T) 1_\Lambda \mathbb{1}_{\{T < \zeta\}}).$$

Replacing Λ by Λ^c in this inequality gives

$$\frac{1}{h(x)} \mathbb{E}_x^\mathbb{Q}(h(X_T) 1_{\Lambda^c} \mathbb{1}_{\{T < \zeta\}}) \leq 1 - \limsup_{\varepsilon \rightarrow 0} \mathbb{P}_x(\Lambda, T < e/\varepsilon \mid X_s > 0, 0 \leq s \leq e/\varepsilon).$$

Recall that h is excessive for the semigroup (q_t) , hence the inequality of Lemma 1 also holds at any stopping time, i.e. $\mathbb{E}_x^\mathbb{Q}(h(X_T) 1_{\{T < \zeta\}}) \geq h(x)$. This inequality and the preceding one imply

$$\frac{1}{h(x)} \mathbb{E}_x^\mathbb{Q}(h(X_T) 1_\Lambda \mathbb{1}_{\{T < \zeta\}}) \geq \limsup_{\varepsilon \rightarrow 0} \mathbb{P}_x(\Lambda, T < e/\varepsilon \mid X_s > 0, 0 \leq s \leq e/\varepsilon),$$

which ends the proof of the proposition. ■

Remark 1 *In the discrete time setting, that is for random walks, another characterization of the harmonic function h has been given by Bertoin and Doney [4], Lemma 1. By following their proof along the lines, it clearly appears that a continuous time equivalent holds. For Lévy processes, such that $\limsup_t X_t = +\infty$, this result is*

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \frac{\mathbb{P}_x(\tau_{[n, \infty)} < \tau_{(-\infty, 0)})}{\mathbb{P}_y(\tau_{[n, \infty)} < \tau_{(-\infty, 0)})} = \frac{h(x)}{h(y)}, \quad x, y > 0.$$

Then, as in discrete time, a consequence is the following equivalent definition of $(X, \mathbb{P}_x^\uparrow)$:

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow +\infty} \mathbb{P}_x(\Lambda \mid \tau_{[n, \infty)} < \tau_{(-\infty, 0)}) = \mathbb{P}_x^\uparrow(\Lambda), \quad t > 0, \quad \Lambda \in \mathcal{F}_t.$$

Note that a similar conditioning has been studied by Hirano [11] in some special cases.

In the case where 0 is regular downwards, definition (3.1) doesn't make sense for $x = 0$, but in [3] it was shown that in any case, the law of the process

$$((X - \underline{X})_{g_t+s}, s \leq t - g_t), \quad \text{where } g_t = \sup\{s \leq t : (X - \underline{X})_s = 0\}$$

converges as $t \rightarrow \infty$ to a Markovian law under which X starts at 0 and has semigroup p_t^\uparrow . Similarly, under additional hypothesis, Tanaka [16], Th.7 proved that the process

$$(X - \underline{X})_{b_\lambda+s}, s \leq a_\lambda - b_\lambda), \quad \text{where } \begin{cases} a_\lambda = \inf\{t : (X - \underline{X})_t > \lambda\} \\ b_\lambda = \sup\{t \leq a_\lambda : (X - \underline{X})_t = 0\} \end{cases}$$

converges as $\lambda \rightarrow +\infty$ towards the same law. We will denote this law by \mathbb{P}^\uparrow . Thm 3 of [6] gives the entrance law of the process (X, \mathbb{P}^\uparrow) . Note that Doney [7], extending a discrete time result from Tanaka [15], obtained a path construction of (X, \mathbb{P}^\uparrow) . Another path construction of (X, \mathbb{P}^\uparrow) is contained in Bertoin [3]. These two constructions are quite different from each other but coincide in the Brownian case. Roughly speaking, we could say that Doney-Tanaka's construction is based on a rearrangement of the excursions away from 0 of the Lévy process reflected at its minimum whereas Bertoin's construction consists in sticking together the positive excursions away from 0 of the Lévy process itself.

The next theorem describes the decomposition of the process $(X, \mathbb{P}_x^\uparrow)$ at the time of its minimum. It is also well known in the literature under various hypothesis, see [6], [10]. Here, we have tried to state it under the weakest possible assumptions.

Theorem 1 *Define the pre-minimum and post-minimum processes respectively as follows: $(X_t, 0 \leq t < m)$ and $(X_{t+m} - U, 0 \leq t < \zeta - m)$, where $U := X_m \wedge X_{m-}$.*

1. *Under \mathbb{P}_x^\uparrow , $x > 0$, the pre-minimum and post-minimum processes are independent. The process $(X, \mathbb{P}_x^\uparrow)$ reaches its absolute minimum U once only and its law is given by:*

$$\mathbb{P}_x^\uparrow(U \geq y) = \frac{h(x-y)}{h(x)} 1_{\{y \leq x\}}. \quad (3.3)$$

2. *Under \mathbb{P}_x^\uparrow , the law of the post-minimum process is \mathbb{P}^\uparrow . In particular, it is strongly Markov and does not depend on x . The semigroup of (X, \mathbb{P}^\uparrow) in $(0, \infty)$ is (p_t^\uparrow) . Moreover, $X_0 = 0$, \mathbb{P}^\uparrow -a.s. if and only if 0 is regular upwards.*

Proof: Denote by $\mathbb{P}_x^{\mathbf{e}/\varepsilon}$ the law of the process (X, \mathbb{P}_x) killed at time \mathbf{e}/ε . Since (X, \mathbb{P}) is not a compound Poisson process, it almost surely reaches its minimum at a unique time on the interval $[0, \mathbf{e}/\varepsilon]$. Recall that by a result of Millar [12], pre-minimum and post-minimum processes are independent under $\mathbb{P}_x^{\mathbf{e}/\varepsilon}$ for all $\varepsilon > 0$. According to Proposition 1, the same properties hold under \mathbb{P}_x^\dagger . Let $0 \leq y \leq x$. From Proposition 1 and (2.2):

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{P}_x^\dagger(U < y) &= \mathbb{P}_x^\dagger(\tau_{(0,y]} < \zeta) = \lim_{\varepsilon \rightarrow 0} \mathbb{P}_x(\tau_{(0,y]} < \mathbf{e}/\varepsilon \mid \tau_{(-\infty,0)} > \mathbf{e}/\varepsilon) \\ &= \lim_{\varepsilon \rightarrow 0} \mathbb{P}_{x-y}(\tau_{(-\infty,0)} > \mathbf{e}/\varepsilon, \tau_{(-\infty,y]} < \mathbf{e}/\varepsilon) / \mathbb{P}_x(\tau_{(-\infty,0)} > \mathbf{e}/\varepsilon) \\ &= 1 - \frac{h(x-y)}{h(x)}. \end{aligned}$$

(In the above equalities, we used the well known fact that for any $a < b$, $\tau_{(a,b]} = \tau_{(a,b)}$, \mathbb{P} -a.s.) The first part of the theorem is proved.

From the independence mentioned above, the law of the post-minimum process under $\mathbb{P}_x^{\mathbf{e}/\varepsilon}(\cdot \mid X_m > 0)$ is the same as the law of the post-minimum process under $\mathbb{P}_x^{\mathbf{e}/\varepsilon}$. Then, from Proposition 1, the law of the post-minimum processes under \mathbb{P}_x^\dagger is the limit of the law of the post-minimum process under $\mathbb{P}_x^{\mathbf{e}/\varepsilon}$, as $\varepsilon \rightarrow 0$. But in [3], Corollary 3.2, it has been proved that this limit law is this of a strong Markov process with semigroup (p_t^\dagger) . From [12], the process $(X, \mathbb{P}_x^{\mathbf{e}/\varepsilon})$ leaves its minimum continuously, (that is $\mathbb{P}_x^{\mathbf{e}/\varepsilon}(X_m > X_{m-}) = 0$) if and only if 0 is regular for upwards. Then we conclude with Proposition 1. \blacksquare

When (X, \mathbb{P}) has no negative jumps and 0 is not regular upwards, the initial law of (X, \mathbb{P}^\dagger) has been computed in [5]. It is given by:

$$\mathbb{P}^\dagger(X_0 \in dx) = \frac{x \pi(dx)}{\int_0^\infty u \pi(du)}, \quad x \geq 0, \quad (3.4)$$

where π is the Lévy measure of (X, \mathbb{P}) . It seems that no explicit formula can be obtained in the general case.

We can now state our convergence result. Recall that it has been proved in [6] through the same arguments in the special cases where (X, \mathbb{P}) is either a Lévy process which creeps downwards (see the next section for the definition of the creeping of a stochastic process) or a stable process. Note also that from Bertoin [1], Th. VII.14 this convergence also holds when (X, \mathbb{P}) has no positive jumps. Then Tanaka [16], Theorems 4 and 5 proved the finite dimensional convergence in the very general case.

Theorem 2 *Assume that 0 is regular upwards. Then the family $(\mathbb{P}_x^\dagger, x > 0)$ converges on the Skorokhod space to \mathbb{P}^\dagger . Moreover the semigroup $(p_t^\dagger, t \geq 0)$ has the Feller property on $[0, \infty)$.*

If 0 is not regular upwards, then for any $\varepsilon > 0$, the process $(X \circ \theta_\varepsilon, \mathbb{P}_x^\dagger)$ converges weakly towards $(X \circ \theta_\varepsilon, \mathbb{P}^\dagger)$, as x tends to 0. In that case, the Feller property of $(p_t^\dagger, t \geq 0)$ holds only on $(0, \infty)$.

Proof: Let (Ω, \mathcal{F}, P) be a probability space on which we can define a family of processes $(Y^{(x)})_{x>0}$ such that each process $Y^{(x)}$ has law \mathbb{P}_x^\dagger . Let also Z be a process with law \mathbb{P}^\dagger and which is independent of the family $(Y^{(x)})$. Let m_x be the unique hitting time of the minimum of $Y^{(x)}$ and define, for all $x > 0$, the process $Z^{(x)}$ by:

$$Z_t^{(x)} = \begin{cases} Y_t^{(x)} & t < m_x \\ Z_{t-m_x} + Y_{m_x}^{(x)} & t \geq m_x. \end{cases}$$

By the preceding theorem, under P , $Z^{(x)}$ has law \mathbb{P}_x^\dagger .

Now first assume that 0 is regular upwards, so that $\lim_{t \downarrow 0} Z_t = 0$, almost surely. We are going to show that the family of processes $Z^{(x)}$ converges in probability towards the process Z as $x \downarrow 0$ for the norm of the J_1 -Skorohod topology on the space $\mathcal{D}([0, 1])$. Let (x_n) be a decreasing sequence of real numbers which tends to 0. For $\omega \in \mathcal{D}([0, 1])$, we easily see that the path $Z^{(x_n)}(\omega)$ tends to $Z(\omega)$ as n goes to ∞ in the Skohorod's topology, if both $m_{x_n}(\omega)$ and $\bar{Z}_{m_{x_n}}^{(x_n)}(\omega)$ tend to 0. Hence, it suffices to prove that both m_x and $\bar{Z}_{m_x}^{(x)}$ converges in probability to 0 as $x \rightarrow 0$, i.e. for any fixed $\varepsilon > 0, \eta > 0$,

$$\lim_{x \downarrow 0} \mathbb{P}_x^\dagger(m > \varepsilon) = 0, \quad \lim_{x \downarrow 0} \mathbb{P}_x^\dagger(\bar{X}_m > \eta) = 0. \quad (3.5)$$

First, applying the Markov property at time ε gives

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{P}_x^\dagger(m > \varepsilon) &= \int_{0 < y \leq x} \int_{z > y} \mathbb{P}_x^\dagger(X_\varepsilon \in dz, \underline{X}_\varepsilon \in dy, \varepsilon < \zeta) \mathbb{P}_z^\dagger(U < y) \\ &= \int_{0 < y \leq x} \int_{z > y} \mathbb{Q}_x(X_\varepsilon \in dz, \underline{X}_\varepsilon \in dy, \varepsilon < \zeta) \frac{h(z)}{h(x)} \mathbb{P}_z^\dagger(U < y) \\ &= \int_{0 < y \leq x} \int_{z > y} \mathbb{P}_x(X_\varepsilon \in dz, \underline{X}_\varepsilon \in dy) \frac{h(z) - h(z - y)}{h(x)}, \end{aligned}$$

where we have used the result of Theorem 1 and the fact that \mathbb{Q}_x and \mathbb{P}_x agree on $\mathcal{F}_\varepsilon \cap (\underline{X}_\varepsilon > 0)$. Put $\tilde{h} := h - h(0)$, and recall from Section 2 that \tilde{h} is increasing and subadditive, hence we have $h(z) - h(z - y) \leq \tilde{h}(y)$, and so

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{P}_x^\dagger(m > \varepsilon) &\leq \frac{1}{h(x)} \int_{0 < y \leq x} \int_{z > y} \mathbb{P}_x(X_\varepsilon \in dz, \underline{X}_\varepsilon \in dy) \tilde{h}(y) \\ &= \frac{1}{h(x)} \int_{0 < y \leq x} \mathbb{P}_x(\underline{X}_\varepsilon \in dy) \tilde{h}(y) \leq \frac{\tilde{h}(x)}{h(x)} \mathbb{P}_x(\underline{X}_\varepsilon > 0). \end{aligned}$$

When 0 is not regular downwards $h(0) = 1$ (see Section 2), hence $\frac{\tilde{h}(x)}{h(x)} \rightarrow 0$ as $x \rightarrow 0$, and we obtain the result in that case. When 0 is regular, $\frac{\tilde{h}(x)}{h(x)} = 1$, but in that case, we clearly have $\mathbb{P}_x(\underline{X}_\varepsilon > 0) \rightarrow 0$ as $x \rightarrow 0$, so the result is also true.

For the second claim, we apply the strong Markov property at time $\tau := \tau_{(\eta, \infty)}$, with $x < \eta$, to get

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{P}_x^\uparrow(\overline{X}_m > \eta) &= \int_{z \geq \eta} \int_{0 < y \leq x} \mathbb{P}_x^\uparrow(X_\tau \in dz, \underline{X}_\tau \in dy, \tau < \zeta) \mathbb{P}_z^\uparrow(U < y) \\ &= \int_{z \geq \eta} \int_{0 < y \leq x} \mathbb{P}_x^\uparrow(X_\tau \in dz, \underline{X}_\tau \in dy, \tau < \zeta) \frac{h(z) - h(z - y)}{h(z)}. \end{aligned}$$

We now apply the simple bound

$$\frac{h(z) - h(z - y)}{h(z)} \leq \frac{\tilde{h}(y)}{h(z)} \leq \frac{\tilde{h}(x)}{h(\eta)} \text{ for } 0 < y \leq x \text{ and } z \geq \eta$$

to deduce that

$$\mathbb{P}_x^\uparrow(\overline{X}_m > \eta) \leq \frac{\tilde{h}(x)}{h(\eta)} \rightarrow 0 \text{ as } x \downarrow 0.$$

Finally when 0 is not regular upwards, (3.5) still holds but we can check that, at time $t = 0$, the family of processes $Z^{(x)}$ does not converge in probability towards 0. However following the above arguments we can still prove that for any $\varepsilon > 0$, $(Z^{(x)} \circ \theta_\varepsilon)$ converges in probability towards $Z \circ \theta_\varepsilon$ as $x \downarrow 0$. \blacksquare

The following absolute continuity relation between the measure \underline{n} of the process of the excursions away from 0 of $X - \underline{X}$ and \mathbb{P}^\uparrow has been shown in [6]: for $t > 0$ and $A \in \mathcal{F}_t$

$$\underline{n}(A, t < \zeta) = k \mathbb{E}^\uparrow(h(X_t)^{-1} A), \quad (3.6)$$

where $k > 0$ is a constant which depends only on the normalization of the local time \underline{L} . Relation (3.6) was established under some additional hypotheses in [6] but we can easily check that it still holds in all the cases which concern us. Then a consequence of Theorem 2 is:

Corollary 1 *For any $t > 0$ and for any \mathcal{F}_t -measurable, continuous and bounded functional F ,*

$$\underline{n}(F, t < \zeta) = k \lim_{x \rightarrow 0} \mathbb{E}_x^\uparrow(h(X_t)^{-1} F).$$

Another application of Theorem 2 is the asymptotic behavior of the semigroup $q_t(x, y)$, $t > 0$, $y > 0$, when x goes towards 0. Let us denote by $j_t(x)$, $t \geq 0$, $x \geq 0$ the density of the entrance law of the excursion measure \underline{n} , that is the Borel function which is defined for any $t \geq 0$ as follows:

$$\underline{n}(f(X_t), t < \zeta) = \int_0^\infty f(x) j_t(x) dx,$$

where f is any positive or bounded Borel function f .

Corollary 2 *The asymptotic behavior of $q_t(x, y)$ is given by:*

$$\int_0^\infty f(y)q_t(x, y) dy \sim_{x \rightarrow 0} h(x) \int_0^\infty f(y)j_t(y) dy.$$

Note that when 0 is not regular downwards, the measure \underline{n} is nothing but \mathbb{Q}_0 and $h(0) = 1$, so in that case Corollaries 1 and 2 are straightforward. In the other case, they are direct consequences of Theorem 2, (3.1) and (3.6), so their proofs are omitted.

We end this paper by a study of the asymptotic behaviour of the function h at 0 in terms of the lower tail of the height of the generic reflected excursion. We define the height of a path ω with finite lifetime $\zeta(\omega)$ as follows:

$$H(\omega) := \sup_{0 \leq t \leq \zeta} \omega_t.$$

The equality $n(H > x)h(x) = 1$ is proved in [1], Proposition VII.15 in the spectrally negative case, i.e. when (X, \mathbb{P}) has no positive jumps. However, this relation does not hold in general; a counter example is provided by the spectrally positive case, as we show hereafter: we can prove, using Corollary 1 that in any case one has

$$\begin{aligned} n(H > x) = n(\tau_{[x, \infty)} < \infty) &= \lim_{y \downarrow 0} \frac{1}{h(y)} \mathbb{Q}_y(\tau_{[x, \infty)} < \tau_{(-\infty, 0]}) \\ &= \lim_{y \downarrow 0} \frac{1}{h(y)} \mathbb{P}_y(\bar{X}(\tau_{(-\infty, 0]}) > x). \end{aligned}$$

Moreover, Theorem VII.8 in [1] implies that when the process has no negative jumps,

$$\mathbb{P}_y(\bar{X}(\tau_{(-\infty, 0]}) > x) = \frac{\hat{h}(x+y)}{\hat{h}(x)},$$

where \hat{h} is the harmonic function defined as in Section 2 with respect to the dual process $\hat{X} \stackrel{\text{(def)}}{=} -X$. Then in this case, one has $h(y) = y$, so that from above, $n(H > x) = \hat{h}'(x)/\hat{h}(x)$. We conclude that, the expression $n(H > x)h(x)$ can be equal to a constant only when \hat{h} is of the form $\hat{h}(x) = cx^\gamma$, for some positive constants c and γ , but it is possible only if (X, \mathbb{P}) is stable. Note that the equality $n(H > x)h(x) = 1$ has recently been noticed independently by Rivero [13] for any stable process, in a work on the more general setting of Markov self-similar processes.

In the spectrally positive case discussed above, we can check that the expression $n(H > x)h(x)$ tends to a constant as x goes to 0 under some mild regularity conditions. This raised the question to find some other conditions under which this property holds. The creeping of (X, \mathbb{P}) is one of these conditions.

We say that the process (X, \mathbb{P}) creeps (upwards) across the level $x > 0$ if it does not drift towards $-\infty$ and if

$$\mathbb{P}(X(\tau_{[x, \infty)}) = x) > 0. \quad (3.7)$$

It is well known that if X creeps across a positive level $x > 0$, then it creeps across all positive levels. Moreover, it is proved in [9] that this can happen if and only if

$$\lim_{x \downarrow 0} \mathbb{P}(X(\tau_{[x, \infty)}) = x) = 1. \quad (3.8)$$

We first need on the following lemma:

Lemma 2 *Define for all $x > 0$, $\sigma_x = \sup\{t : X_t \leq x\}$. If (X, \mathbb{P}) creeps upwards, then $\lim_{x \downarrow 0} \mathbb{P}^\dagger(X(\sigma_x) = x) = 1$.*

Proof: Let us first mention the following identity which is derived from Theorems 4.1 and 4.2 of Duquesne [10]:

$$(X(\sigma_x), \mathbb{P}^\dagger) = (X(\tau_{[x, \infty)}) + [X(g_x) - X(\tau_{[x, \infty)}-)], \mathbb{P}), \quad (3.9)$$

where $g_x = \sup\{t \leq \tau_{[x, \infty)} : \bar{X}_t = X_t \vee X_{t-}\}$. This identity can also be checked through Doney-Tanaka's construction of Lévy processes conditioned to stay positive (see Doney [7]). Then observe that $X(\tau_{[x, \infty)}) \geq x$ and $X(g_x) - X(\tau_{[x, \infty)}-) \geq 0$, \mathbb{P} -a.s. Moreover since (X, \mathbb{P}) creeps upwards, it is not a composed Poisson process, hence it cannot reach a positive level by a jump. In particular, on the event $\{X(\tau_{[x, \infty)}) = x\}$, the process is \mathbb{P} -a.s. continuous at time $\tau_{[x, \infty)}$ and on this event, $X(g_x) = X(\tau_{[x, \infty)}-) = X(\tau_{[x, \infty)})$ so that

$$\{X(\tau_{[x, \infty)}) = x\} = \{X(\tau_{[x, \infty)}) + [X(g_x) - X(\tau_{[x, \infty)}-)] = x\}, \quad \mathbb{P}\text{-a.s.}$$

We conclude with (3.9) and (3.8). ■

Theorem 3 *If (X, \mathbb{P}) creeps upwards, then $\underline{n}(H > x)h(x) \rightarrow 1$, as $x \rightarrow 0$.*

Proof: Recall that under the hypothesis of the theorem, the lifetime of (X, \mathbb{P}^\dagger) is almost surely infinite. Then fix $x > 0$. Since $\{H > x\} = \{\tau_{(x, \infty)} < \zeta\}$, from the identity (3.6) applied at the stopping time $\tau_{(x, \infty)}$, we have

$$h(x) \underline{n}(H > x) = h(x) \underline{n}(\tau_{(x, \infty)} < \zeta) \leq \underline{n}(h(X(\tau_{(x, \infty)})), \tau_{(x, \infty)} < \zeta) = 1. \quad (3.10)$$

From the Markov property applied at time $\tau_{(0, x]}$, and since h is increasing, we have for any $0 < x \leq y$,

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{P}_y^\dagger(X(\sigma_x) = x) &= \mathbb{E}_y^\dagger \left(\mathbb{P}_{X(\tau_{(0, x]})}^\dagger(X_{\sigma_x} = x) \mathbb{1}_{\{\tau_{(0, x]} < \infty\}} \right) \\ &= \frac{1}{h(y)} \mathbb{E}_y^\mathbb{Q} \left(h(X(\tau_{(0, x]})) \mathbb{P}_{X(\tau_{(0, x]})}^\dagger(X_{\sigma_x} = x) \mathbb{1}_{\{\tau_{(0, x]} < \zeta\}} \right) \\ &\leq \frac{h(x)}{h(y)}. \end{aligned} \quad (3.11)$$

Then under \mathbb{P}^\dagger , we have

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{P}^\dagger(X(\sigma_x) = x) &= \mathbb{E}^\dagger \left(\mathbb{P}_{X(\tau_{(x,\infty)})}^\dagger(X_{\sigma_x} = x) \right) \\ &= \underline{n} \left(h(X(\tau_{(x,\infty)})) \mathbb{P}_{X(\tau_{(x,\infty)})}^\dagger(X_{\sigma_x} = x) \mathbb{1}_{\{\tau_{(x,\infty)} < \zeta\}} \right). \end{aligned} \quad (3.12)$$

But since $X(\tau_{(x,\infty)}) \geq x$, inequality (3.11) gives

$$\mathbb{P}_{X(\tau_{(x,\infty)})}^\dagger(X_{\sigma_x} = x) \leq h(x)/h(X(\tau_{(x,\infty)})), \text{ a.s.}$$

Hence, from (3.12) we have

$$\mathbb{P}^\dagger(X(\sigma_x) = x) \leq h(x) \underline{n}(\tau_{(x,\infty)} < \zeta). \quad (3.13)$$

Finally, we deduce the result from (3.10), (3.13) and Lemma 2. ■

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