

ECE276B: Planning & Learning in Robotics

Lecture 6: Configuration Space

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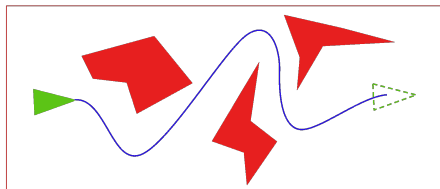
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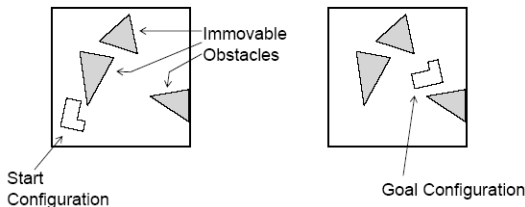
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Motion Planning

- ▶ Motion planning in robotics is a deterministic shortest path (DSP) problem with continuous state and control spaces in a known environment

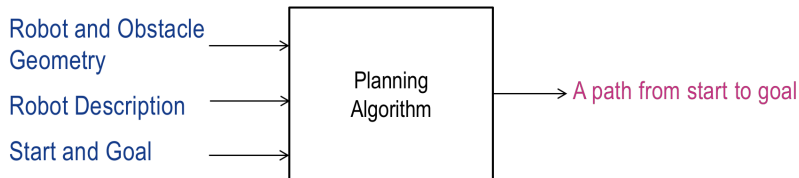


- ▶ When the robot body is not a point, the problem is also known as the **Piano Movers Problem**

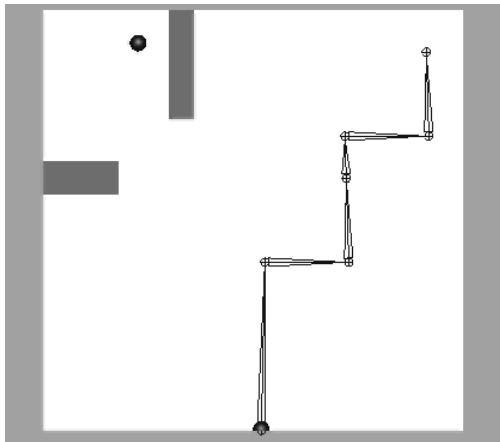


What is Motion Planning?

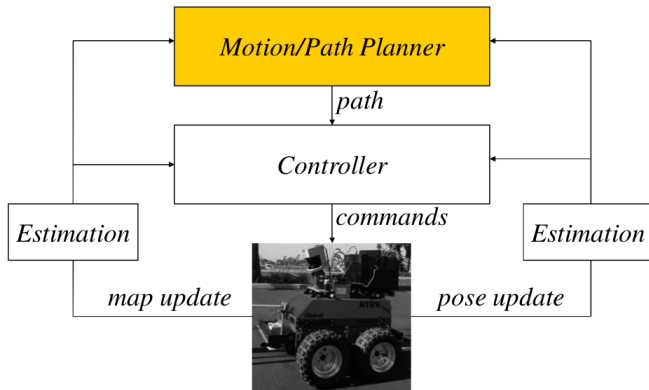
- ▶ Objective: find a feasible and cost-minimal path from the current configuration of the robot to a goal region
- ▶ Cost function: distance, time, energy, risk, etc.
- ▶ Constraints:
 - ▶ environment constraints (e.g., obstacles)
 - ▶ kinematics/dynamics of the robot



Example: 6 Joint Robot Arm



Planning vs Control



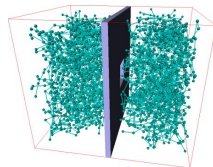
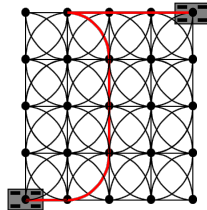
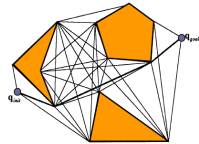
- ▶ Distinction between planning and control
 - ▶ **Planning**: the automatic generation of global collision-free trajectories (global reasoning)
 - ▶ **Control**: the automatic generation of control inputs for local, reactive trajectory tracking (local reasoning)

Analyzing Motion Planning Algorithms

- ▶ **Completeness:** a planning algorithm is called complete if it:
 - ▶ returns a feasible solution, if one exists,
 - ▶ returns FAIL in finite time, otherwise.
- ▶ **Optimality:**
 - ▶ a planning algorithm is optimal if it returns a path with shortest length J^* among all possible paths from start to goal
 - ▶ a planning algorithm is ϵ -**suboptimal** if it returns a path with length $J \leq \epsilon J^*$ for $\epsilon \geq 1$ where J^* is the optimal length
- ▶ **Efficiency:** a planning algorithm is efficient if it finds a solution with the least possible computation operations across all inputs
- ▶ **Generality:** a planning algorithm is general if it can handle high-dimensional robots or environments and various obstacle or kinematics/dynamics constraints

Motion Planning Approaches

- ▶ **Exact algorithms** in continuous space
 - ▶ Computationally expensive and unsuitable for high-dimensional spaces
- ▶ **Search-based planning algorithms**
 - ▶ discretize the state space regularly to construct a graph incrementally.
 - ▶ solve a DSP problem via label correcting.
 - ▶ inefficient in high-dim spaces due to the regular discretization without heuristic function guidance
 - ▶ resolution complete with finite-time (sub)optimality guarantees
- ▶ **Sampling-based planning algorithms**
 - ▶ discretize the state space irregularly by sampling states to construct a graph incrementally
 - ▶ solve a DSP problem via label correcting
 - ▶ efficient in high-dim spaces but problems with “narrow passages”
 - ▶ probabilistically complete with asymptotic (sub)optimality guarantees



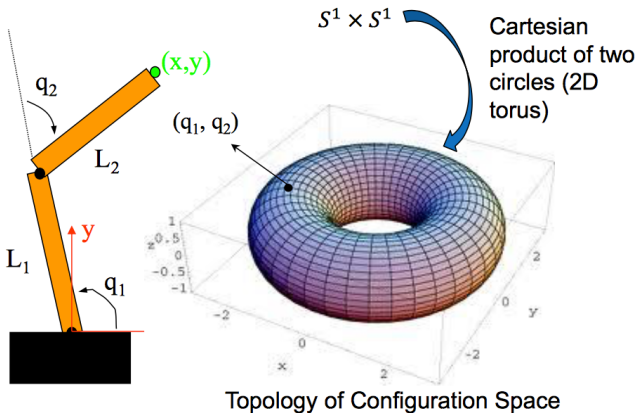
Configuration Space

- ▶ A **configuration** is a specification of the position of **every** point on a robot body
- ▶ A configuration \mathbf{q} is usually expressed as a vector of the Degrees Of Freedom (DOF) of the robot:

$$\mathbf{q} = (q_1, \dots, q_n)$$

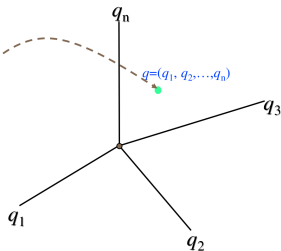
- ▶ 3 DOF: Differential drive robot $(x, y, \theta) \in \mathbb{R}^2 \times [-\pi, \pi)$
 - ▶ 6 DOF: Rigid body with pose $T \in SE(3)$
 - ▶ 7 DOF: 7-link manipulator (humanoid arm): $(\theta_1, \dots, \theta_7) \in [-\pi, \pi)^7$
- ▶ **Configuration space** C : set of all possible robot configurations
- ▶ $\dim(C)$: min DOF needed to completely specify a robot configuration
- ▶ **Work space** W : 2D or 3D Euclidean space where the robot operates

Example: C-Space of a Two Link Manipulator



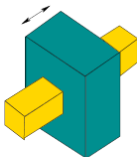
Degrees of Freedom for Robots with Joints

- ▶ An **articulated object** is a set of rigid bodies connected by joints.
- ▶ Examples of articulated robots: arms, humanoids



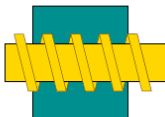
Revolute

1 Degree of Freedom



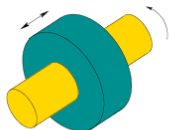
Prismatic

1 Degree of Freedom



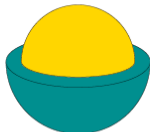
Screw

1 Degree of Freedom



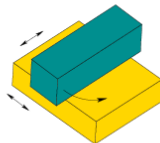
Cylindrical

2 Degrees of Freedom



Spherical

3 Degrees of Freedom

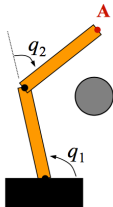
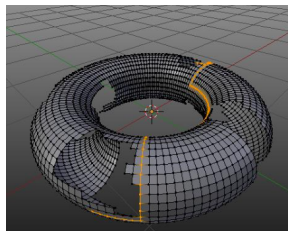


Planar

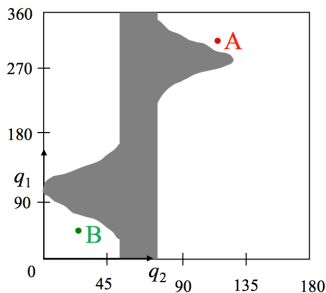
3 Degrees of Freedom

Obstacles in C-Space

- ▶ A configuration $\mathbf{q} \in \mathcal{C}$ is collision-free, or **free**, if the robot placed at \mathbf{q} does not intersect any obstacles in the work space W
- ▶ The **free space** $\mathcal{C}_{free} \subseteq \mathcal{C}$ is the set of all free configurations
- ▶ The **obstacle space** $\mathcal{C}_{obs} \subseteq \mathcal{C}$ is the set of all configurations in which the robot collides either with an obstacle or with itself (self-collision)

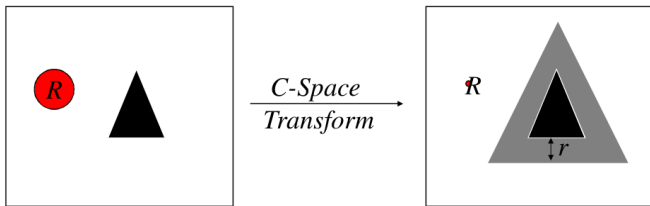


B



How do we compute C_{obs} ?

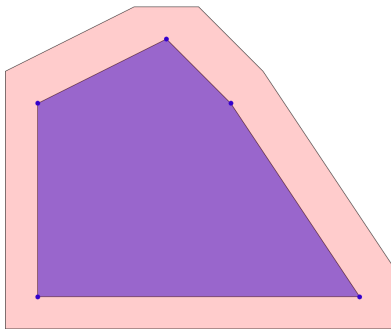
- ▶ **Input:** polygonal robot body R and polygonal obstacle O in environment
- ▶ **Output:** polygonal obstacle CO in configuration space
- ▶ **Assumption:** the robot translates only
- ▶ **Idea:**
 - ▶ Circular robot: expand all obstacles by the radius of the robot
 - ▶ Symmetric robot: Minkowski (set) sum
 - ▶ Asymmetric robot: Minkowski (set) difference



C_{obs} for Symmetric Robots

- ▶ The obstacle CO in C-Space is obtained via the **Minkowski sum** of the obstacle set O and the robot set R :

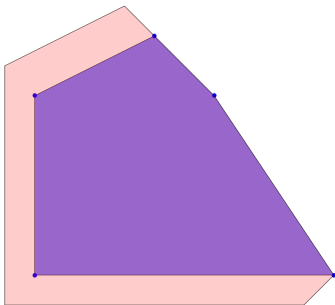
$$CO = O \oplus R := \{a + b \mid a \in O, b \in R\}$$



C_{obs} for Asymmetric Robots

- ▶ When the robot is not symmetric about the origin, we need to flip the robot set R before adding it to the obstacle set O :

$$CO = O \oplus (-R) = \{a - b \mid a \in O, b \in R\}$$

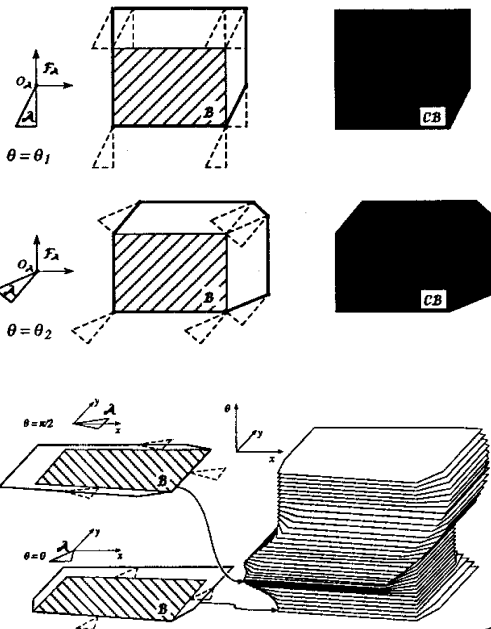


Properties of C_{obs}

- ▶ Properties of C_{obs}
 - ▶ If O and R are **convex**, then C_{obs} is **convex**
 - ▶ If O and R are **closed**, then C_{obs} is **closed**
 - ▶ If O and R are **compact**, then C_{obs} is **compact**
 - ▶ If O and R are **algebraic**, then C_{obs} is **algebraic**
 - ▶ If O and R are **connected**, then C_{obs} is **connected**
- ▶ After a C-Space transform, planning can be done for a point robot
 - ▶ **Advantage:** collision checking for a point robot is very efficient
 - ▶ **Disadvantage:** need to transform the obstacles every time the map is updated (e.g., if the robot is circular, $O(n)$ methods exist to compute distance transforms)
 - ▶ **Disadvantage:** expensive to compute in higher dimensions
 - ▶ **Alternative:** plan in the original space and only check configurations of interest for collisions

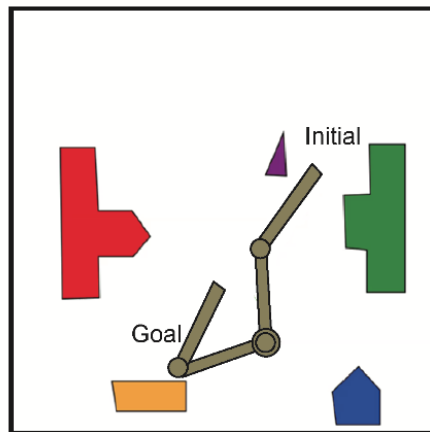
Minkowski Sums in Higher Dimensions

- ▶ The configuration space for a rigid non-circular robot in a 2D world is 3 dimensional (2D position + orientation)

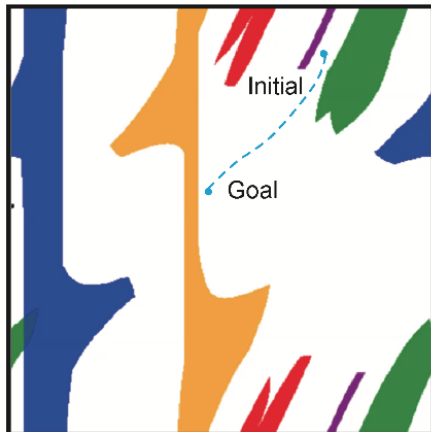


Configuration Space for Articulated Robots

- ▶ The configuration space for a N -DOF robot arm is N -dimensional
- ▶ Computing exact C-Space obstacles becomes complicated



Workspace



Configuration space

Motion Planning as Graph Search Problem

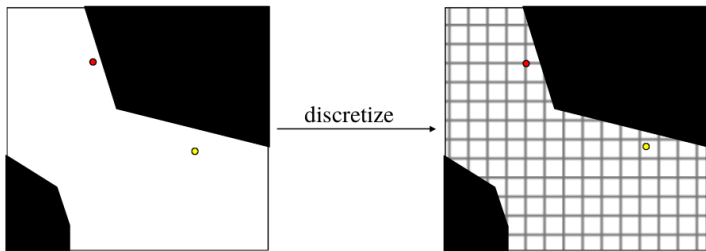
- ▶ Motion planning as a deterministic shortest path problem on a graph:
 1. Decide:
 - a) pre-compute the C-Space (e.g., inflate the obstacles with the robot radius)
 - b) perform collision checking on the fly
 2. Construct a graph representing the planning problem
 3. Search the graph for a (close-to) optimal path
- ▶ Often collision checking, graph construction, and planning are all interleaved and performed on the fly

Graph Construction

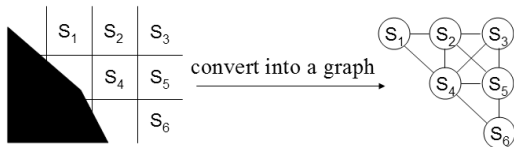
- ▶ **Cell decomposition:** decompose the free space into simple cells and represent its connectivity by the adjacency graph of these cells
 - ▶ X-connected grids
 - ▶ Tree decompositions
 - ▶ Lattice-based graphs
- ▶ **Skeletonization:** represent the connectivity of free space by a network of 1-D curves:
 - ▶ Visibility graphs
 - ▶ Generalized Voronoi diagrams
 - ▶ Other Roadmaps

X-connected Grid

1. Overlay a uniform grid over the C-space

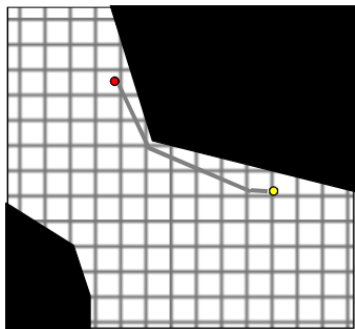
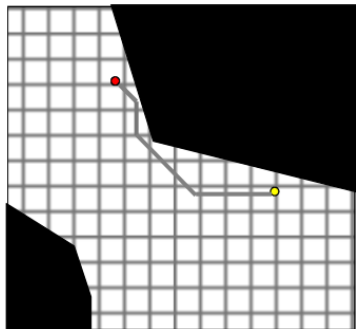


2. Convert the grid into a graph:



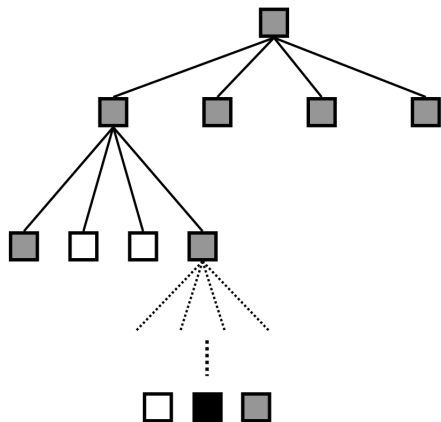
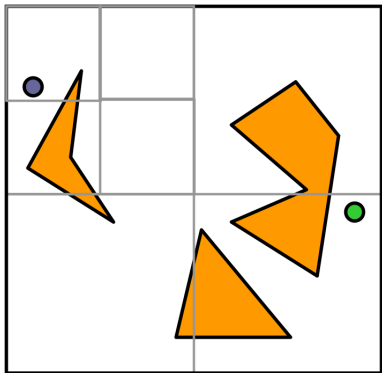
X-connected Grid

- ▶ How many neighbors?
 - ▶ 8-connected grid: paths restricted to 45° turns
 - ▶ 16-connected grid: paths restricted to 22.5° turns
 - ▶ 3-D (x, y, θ) discretization of $SE(2)$



- ▶ Problems:
 1. What should we do with partially blocked cells?
 2. Discretization leads to a very dense graph in high dimensions and many of the transitions are difficult to execute due to dynamics constraints

Adaptive Quadtree Decomposition

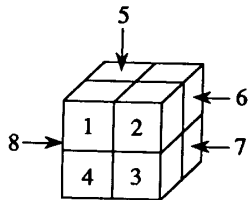
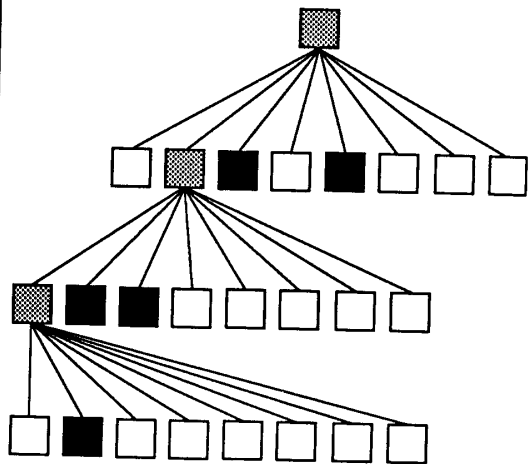
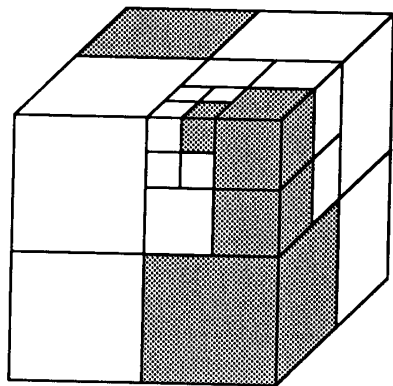


 empty

 mixed

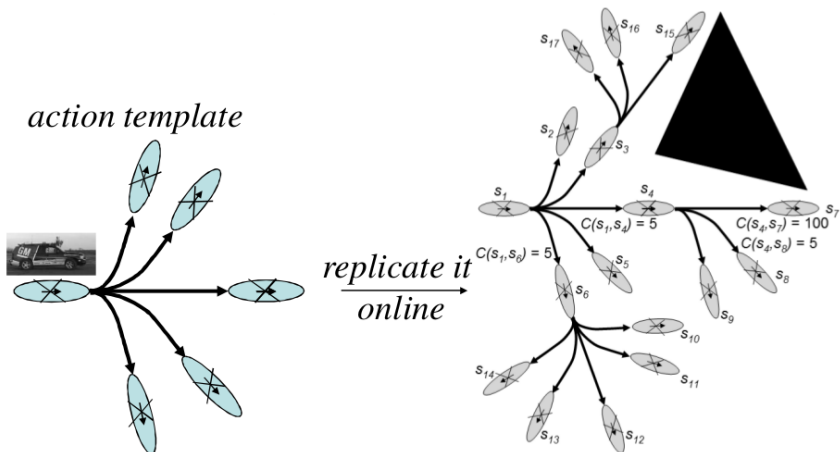
 full

Adaptive Octree Decomposition



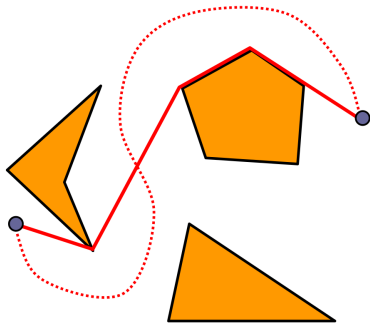
Lattice-based Graph

- ▶ Instead of dense discretization, construct a graph by a recursive application of a finite set of dynamically feasible motions (e.g., action template, motion primitive, movement primitive, macro action, etc.)
- ▶ **Pros:** sparse graph, feasible paths
- ▶ **Cons:** possibly incomplete



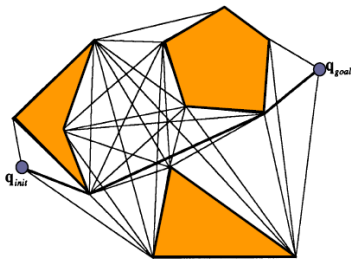
Visibility Graph

- ▶ Shakey Project, SRI [Nilsson, 1969]
- ▶ Also called **Shortest Path Roadmap**
- ▶ **Shortest paths are like rubber-bands:** if there is a collision-free path between two points, then there is a piecewise linear path that bends only at the obstacle vertices.



- ▶ **Visibility Graph:**

- ▶ Nodes: start, goal, and all obstacle vertices
- ▶ Edges: between any two vertices that “see” each other, i.e., the edge does not intersect obstacles or is an obstacle edge



Visibility Graph Construction

Algorithm 1 Visibility Graph Construction

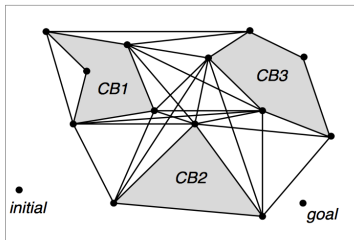
```
1: Input:  $\mathbf{q}_I, \mathbf{q}_G$ , polygonal obstacle vertices  $\mathcal{P}$ 
2: Output: visibility graph  $G$ 
3: for every pair of vertices  $u, v$  in  $\mathcal{P} \cup \{\mathbf{q}_I, \mathbf{q}_G\}$  do ▷  $O(n^2)$ 
4:   if segment( $u, v$ ) is an obstacle edge then ▷  $O(n)$ 
5:     insert edge( $u, v$ ) into  $G$ 
6:   else
7:     for every obstacle edge  $e$  do ▷  $O(n)$ 
8:       if segment( $u, v$ ) intersects  $e$  then
9:         break and go to line 3
10:    insert edge( $u, v$ ) into  $G$ 
```

- ▶ **Time complexity:** $O(n^3)$ but can be reduced to $O(n^2 \log n)$ with rotational sweep or even to $O(n^2)$ with an optimal algorithm
- ▶ **Space complexity:** $O(n^2)$

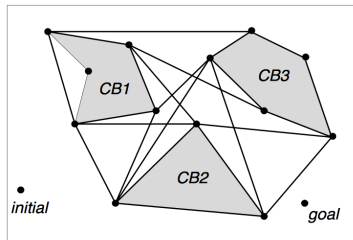
Reduced Visibility Graph

- ▶ In fact, not all edges are needed
- ▶ **Reduced visibility graph** – keep only edges between consecutive **reflex vertices** and **bitangents**
- ▶ A vertex of a polygonal obstacle is **reflex** if the exterior angle (computed in C_{free}) is larger than π
- ▶ A **bitangent edge** must touch two **reflex vertices** that are mutually visible from each other, and the line must extend outward past each of them without poking into C_{obs}

Visibility Graph

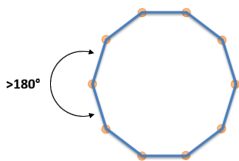


Reduced Visibility Graph

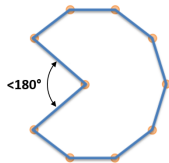


Reflex Vertices and Bitangents

- ▶ A vertex of a polygonal obstacle is **reflex** if the exterior angle (computed in C_{free}) is larger than π



(a) 10 reflex vertices



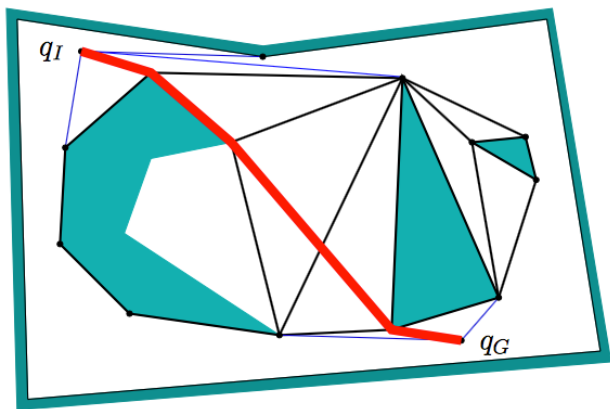
(b) 9 reflex vertices

- ▶ A **bitangent edge** must touch two **reflex vertices** that are mutually visible from each other, and the line must extend outward past each of them without poking into C_{obs}



Reduced Visibility Graph

- ▶ The reduced visibility graph includes edges between consecutive reflex vertices on C_{obs} and bitangent edges
- ▶ The shortest path in a reduced visibility graph is the shortest path between start q_I and goal q_G

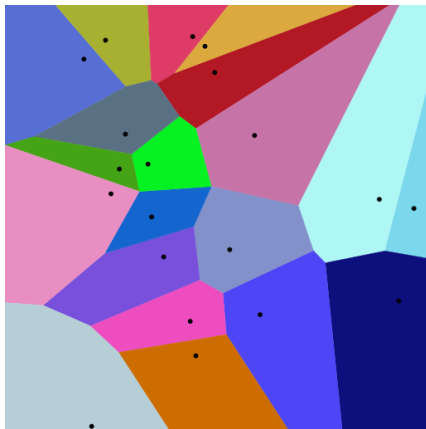


Reduced Visibility Graph

- ▶ What do we need to construct a reduced visibility graph?
 - ▶ Subroutine to check if a vertex is reflex
 - ▶ Subroutine to check if two vertices are visible
 - ▶ Subroutine to check if there exists a bitangent
- ▶ Pros:
 - ▶ independent of the size of the environment
 - ▶ can make multiple shortest path queries for the same graph, i.e., the environment remains the same but the start and goal change
- ▶ Cons:
 - ▶ shortest paths always graze the obstacles
 - ▶ hard to deal with a non-uniform cost function
 - ▶ hard to deal with non-polygonal obstacles
 - ▶ can get expensive in high dimensions with a lot of obstacles

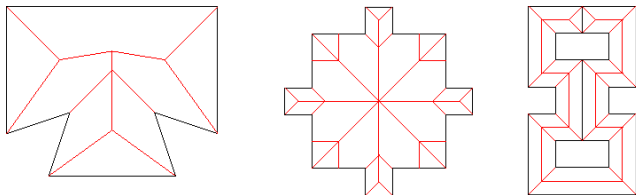
Voronoi Diagram

- ▶ Suppose there are n point obstacles \mathbf{o}_k for $k = 1, \dots, n$
- ▶ **Voronoi diagram:** a collection of Voronoi cells V_k for $k = 1, \dots, n$
- ▶ **Voronoi cell of \mathbf{o}_k :** a set V_k of points \mathbf{x} such that:
$$d(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{o}_k) \leq d(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{o}_j), \text{ for all } j \neq k$$
- ▶ Example: the points may represent fire stations and the Voronoi cells specify their serving areas

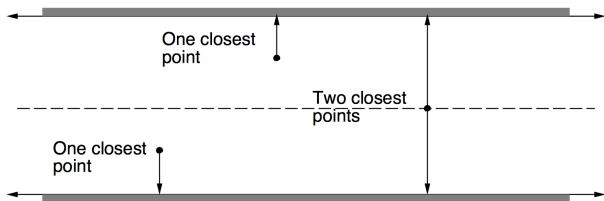


Maximum Clearance Roadmap

- ▶ Maximize clearance instead of minimizing travel distance
- ▶ Maintains a set of points that are equidistant to two nearest obstacles



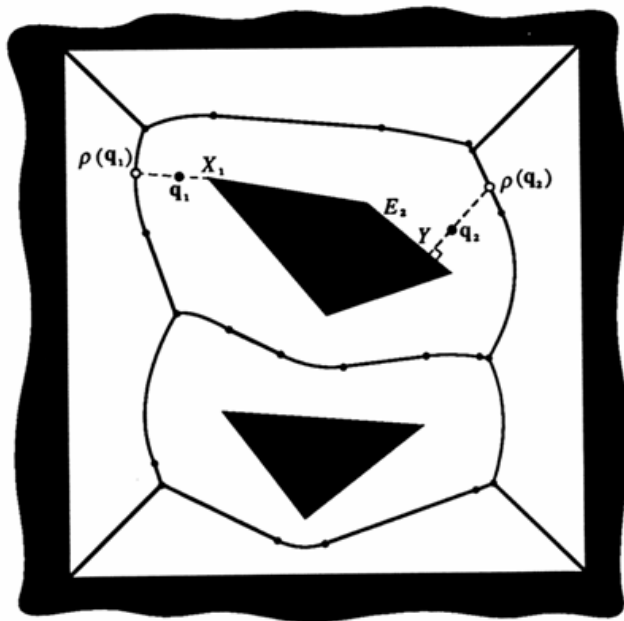
- ▶ Suppose we have just two line obstacles. What is the set of points that keeps the robots as far away from the obstacles as possible?



Maximum Clearance Roadmap

- ▶ Construction:
 - ▶ Naive implementation: take every pair of obstacle features, compute locus of equally spaced points, and take the intersection
 - ▶ Efficient algorithms available, e.g., CGAL, distance transform + skeletonization (e.g., Zhang-Suen or Guo-Hall algorithms)
- ▶ Motion Planning:
 - ▶ Add a shortest path from start to the nearest segment of the diagram
 - ▶ Add a shortest path from goal to the nearest segment of the diagram
- ▶ Complexity:
 - ▶ Time complexity for n points in \mathbb{R}^d : $O(n \log n + n^{\lceil d/2 \rceil})$
 - ▶ Space complexity: $O(n)$
- ▶ Pros:
 - ▶ paths tend to stay away from obstacles
 - ▶ independent of the size of the environment
- ▶ Cons:
 - ▶ difficult to construct in higher dimensions
 - ▶ can result in highly suboptimal paths

Maximum Clearance Roadmap



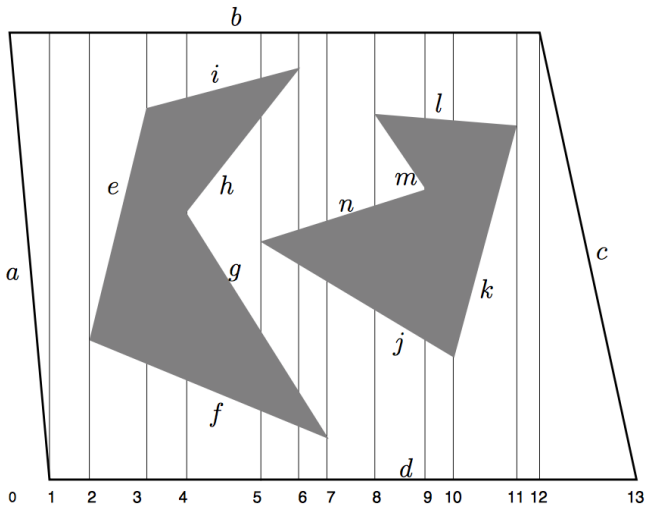
Trapezoidal Decomposition

- ▶ The free space C_{free} is represented by a collection of non-overlapping trapezoids whose union is exactly C_{free} :
- ▶ Draw a vertical line from every vertex until you hit an obstacle
 - ▶ **Nodes:** trapezoid centroids and line midpoints
 - ▶ **Edges:** between every pair of nodes whose cells are adjacent

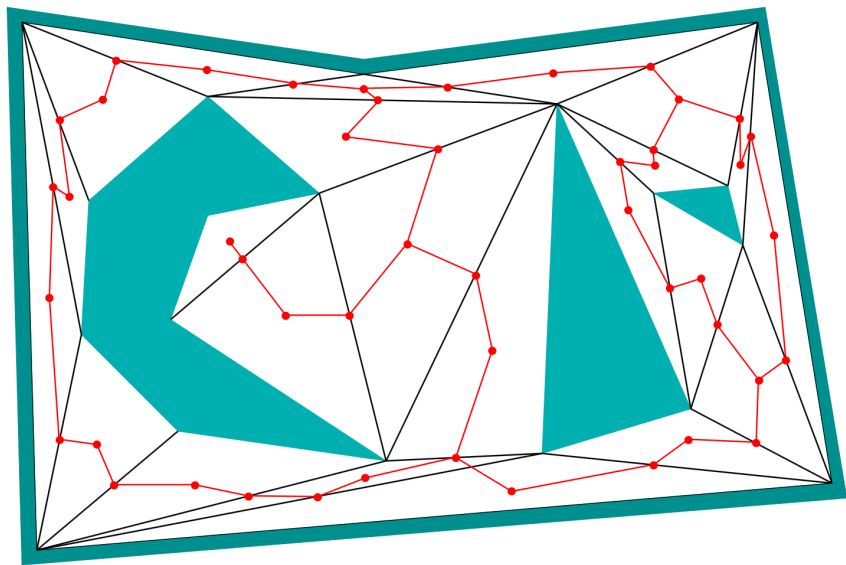


Cylindrical Decomposition

- ▶ Similar to trapezoidal decomposition, except the vertical lines continue after obstacles
- ▶ Generalizes better to high dimensions and complex configuration spaces



Triangular Decomposition



Probabilistic Roadmaps

- ▶ Construction:
 - ▶ Randomly sample valid configurations
 - ▶ Add edges between samples that are easy to connect with a simple local controller (e.g., straight line controller)
 - ▶ Add start and goal configurations to the graph with appropriate edges
- ▶ Pros and Cons:
 - ▶ Simple and highly effective in high dimensions
 - ▶ Can result in suboptimal paths, no guarantees on suboptimality
 - ▶ Difficulty with narrow passages

