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Informed Search Algorithms

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(Russell Lecture Notes)

Outline

- ◇ Best-first search
- ◇ A* search
- ◇ Heuristics

Review: Tree search

```
function TREE-SEARCH(problem, fringe) returns a solution, or failure
  fringe ← INSERT(MAKE-NODE(INITIAL-STATE[problem]), fringe)
  loop do
    if fringe is empty then return failure
    node ← REMOVE-FRONT(fringe)
    if GOAL-TEST[problem] applied to STATE(node) succeeds return node
    fringe ← INSERTALL(EXPAND(node, problem), fringe)
```

A strategy is defined by picking the **order of node expansion**

Best-first search

Idea: use an **evaluation function** for each node
– estimate of “desirability”

⇒ Expand most desirable unexpanded node

Implementation:

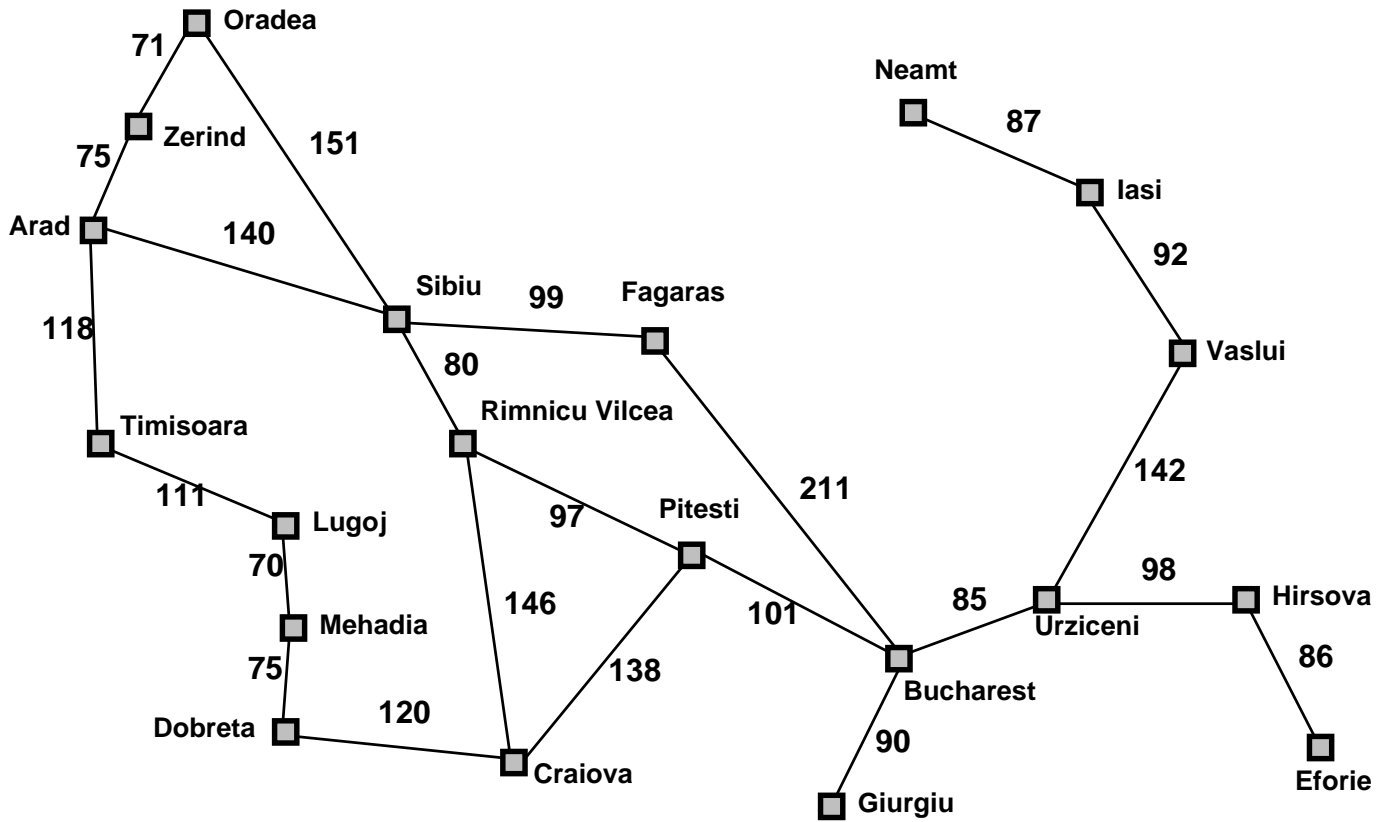
fringe is a queue sorted in decreasing order of desirability

Special cases:

greedy search

A* search

Romania with step costs in km



Straight-line distance
to Bucharest

Arad	366
Bucharest	0
Craiova	160
Dobreta	242
Eforie	161
Fagaras	178
Giurgiu	77
Hirsova	151
Iasi	226
Lugoj	244
Mehadia	241
Neamt	234
Oradea	380
Pitesti	98
Rimnicu Vilcea	193
Sibiu	253
Timisoara	329
Urziceni	80
Vaslui	199
Zerind	374

Greedy search

Evaluation function $h(n)$ (**h**euristic)

= estimate of cost from n to the closest goal

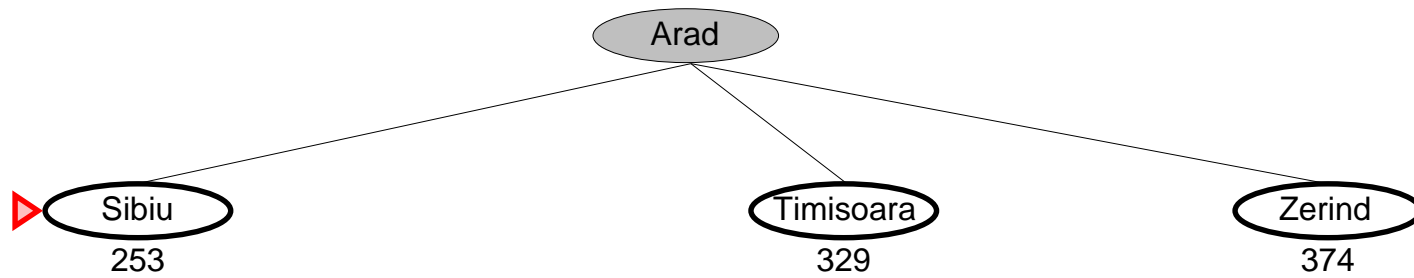
E.g., $h_{\text{SLD}}(n)$ = straight-line distance from n to Bucharest

Greedy search expands the node that **appears** to be closest to goal

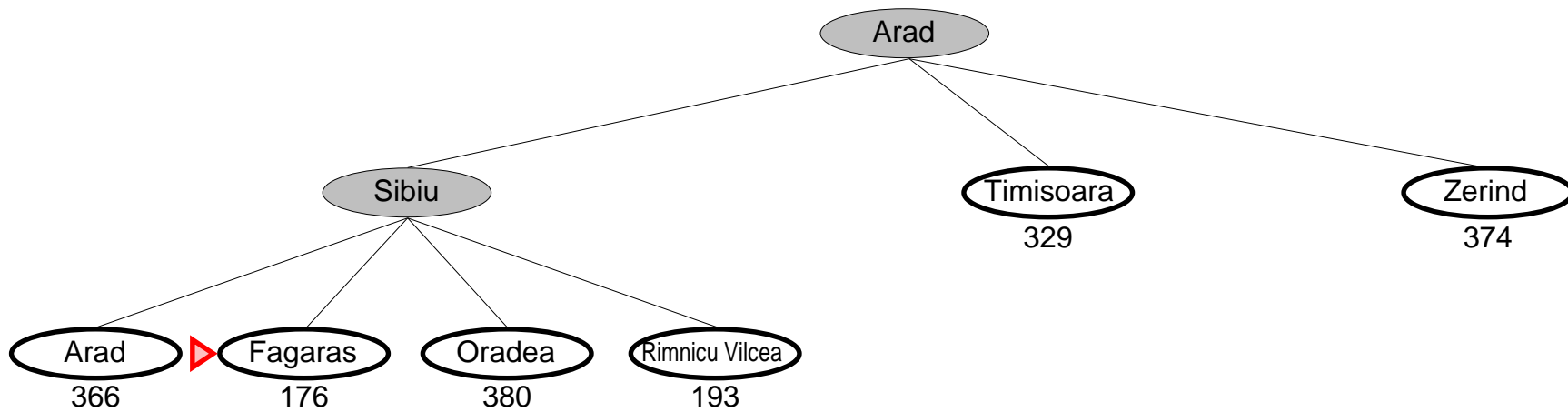
Greedy search example



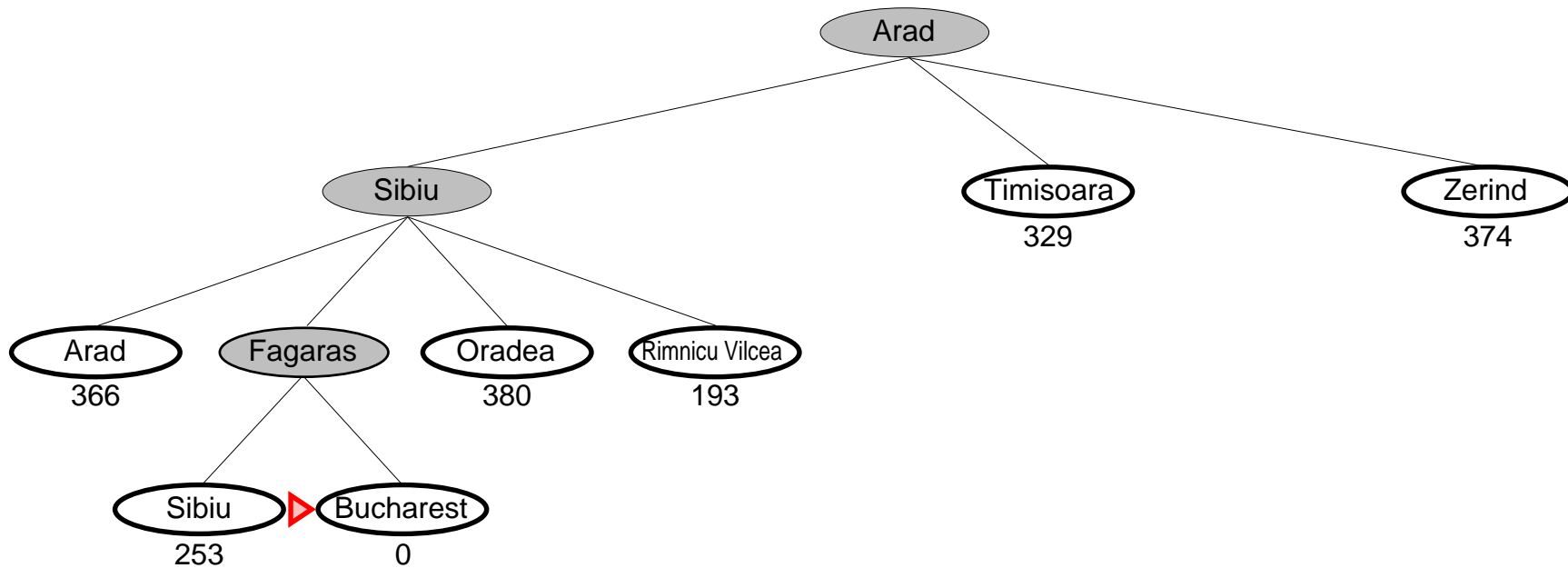
Greedy search example



Greedy search example



Greedy search example



Properties of greedy search

Complete??

Properties of greedy search

Complete?? No—can get stuck in loops, e.g., with Oradea as goal,

lasi → Neamt → lasi → Neamt →

Complete in finite space with repeated-state checking

Time??

Properties of greedy search

Complete?? No—can get stuck in loops, e.g.,

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Complete in finite space with repeated-state checking

Time?? $O(b^m)$, but a good heuristic can give dramatic improvement

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Space?? $O(b^m)$ —keeps all nodes in memory

Optimal?? No

A* search

Idea: avoid expanding paths that are already expensive

Evaluation function $f(n) = g(n) + h(n)$

$g(n)$ = cost so far to reach n

$h(n)$ = estimated cost to goal from n

$f(n)$ = estimated total cost of path through n to goal

A* search uses an **admissible** heuristic

i.e., $h(n) \leq h^*(n)$ where $h^*(n)$ is the **true** cost from n .

(Also require $h(n) \geq 0$, so $h(G) = 0$ for any goal G .)

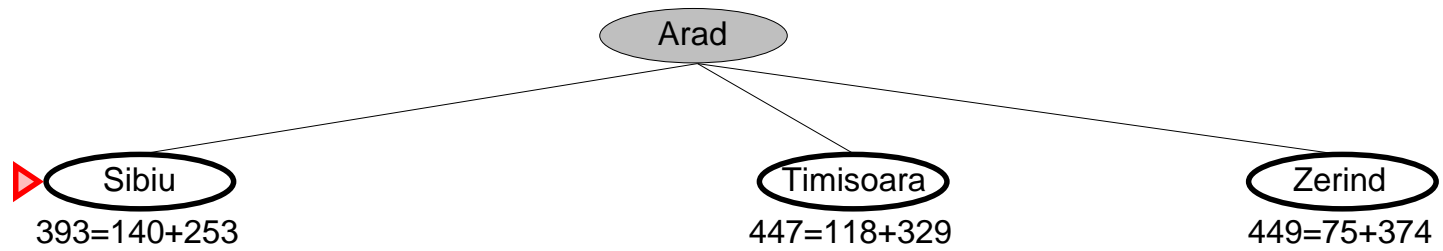
E.g., $h_{\text{SLD}}(n)$ never overestimates the actual road distance

Theorem: A* search is optimal

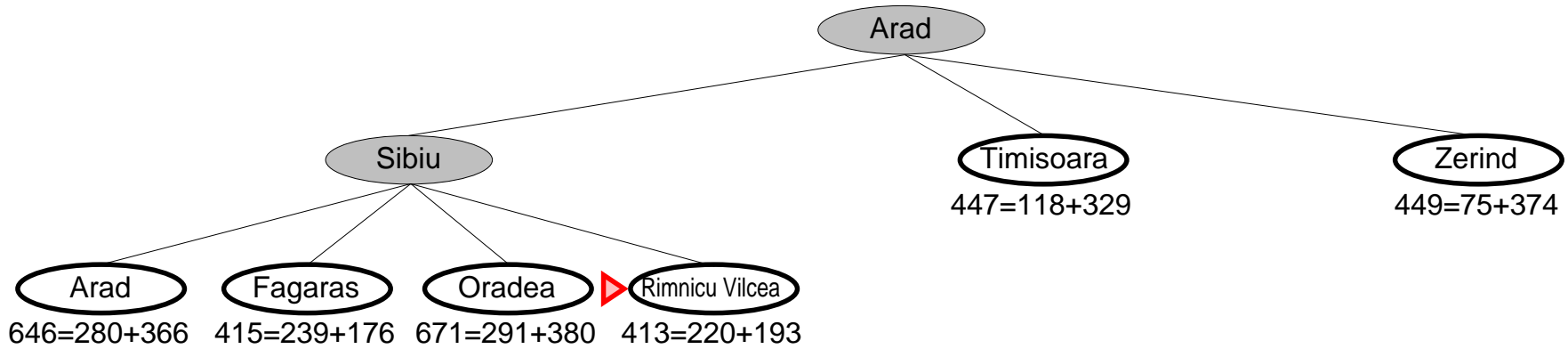
A* search example

▶ Arad
 $366=0+366$

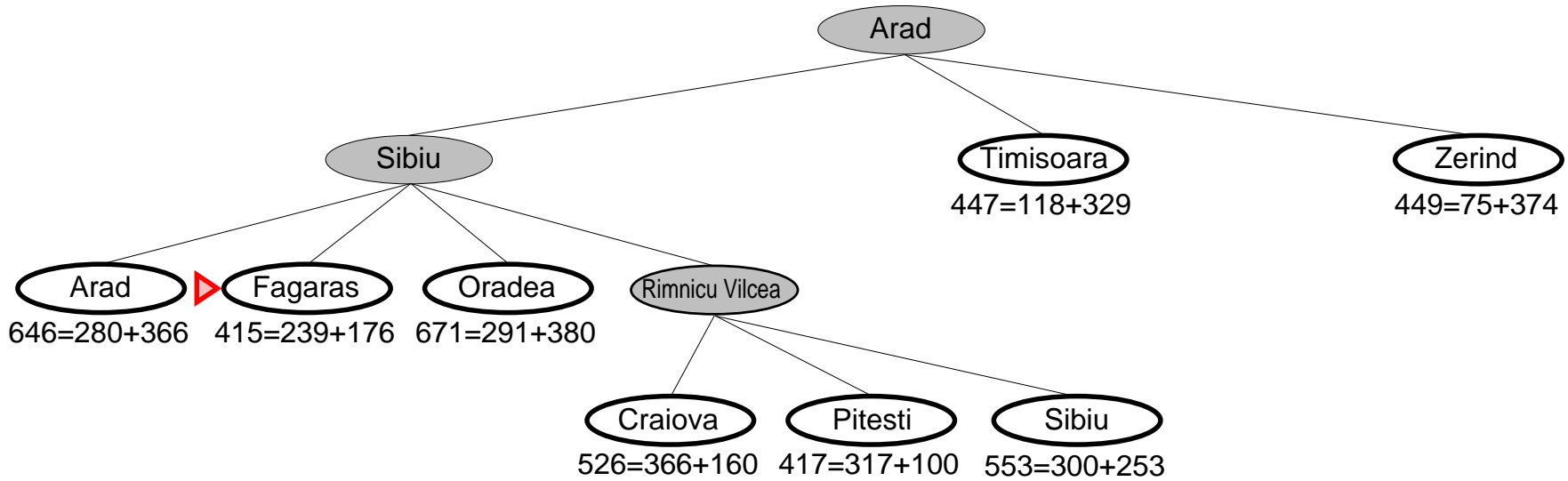
A* search example



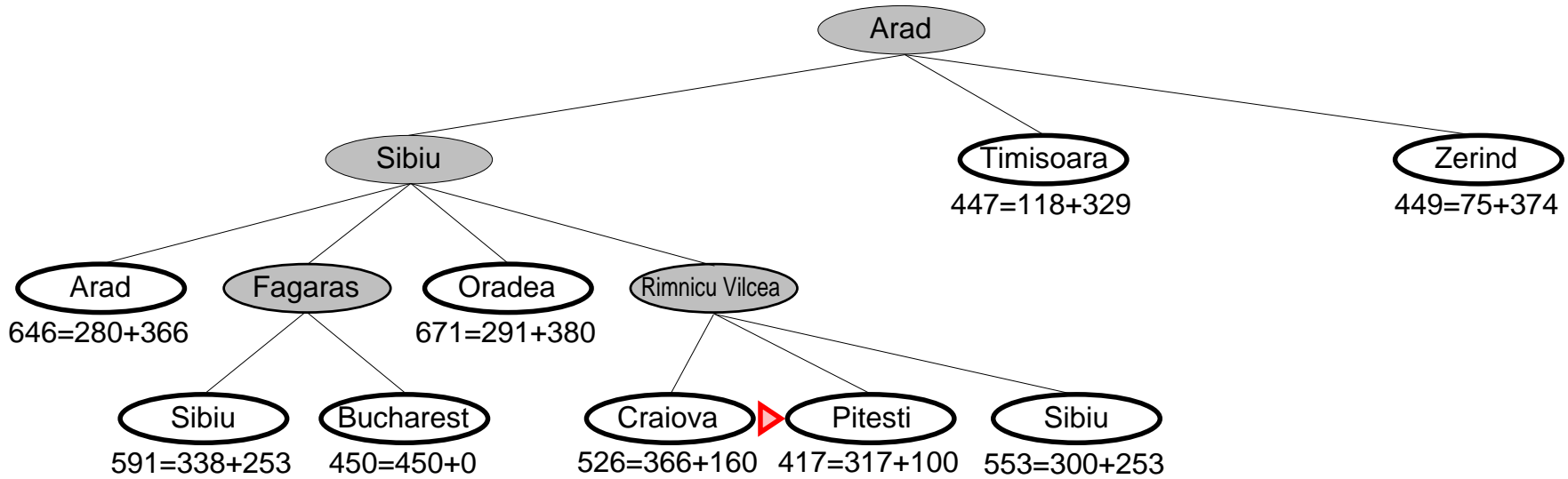
A* search example



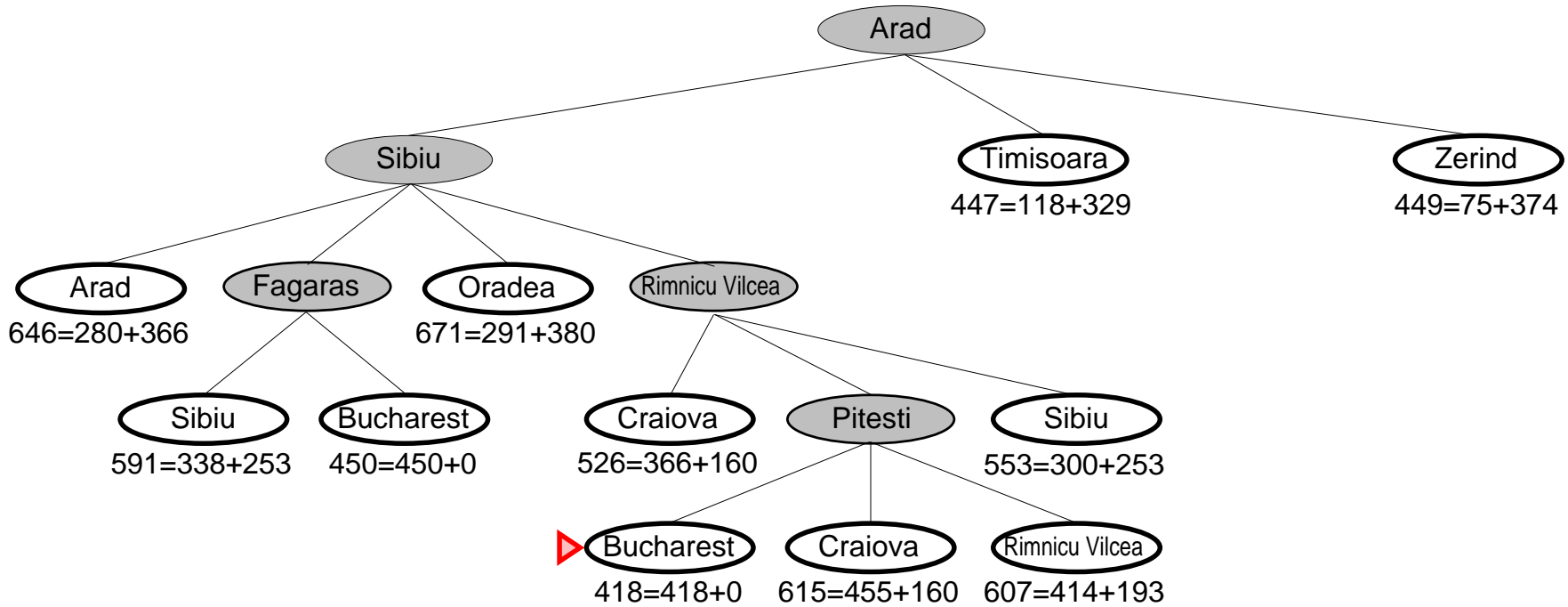
A* search example



A* search example

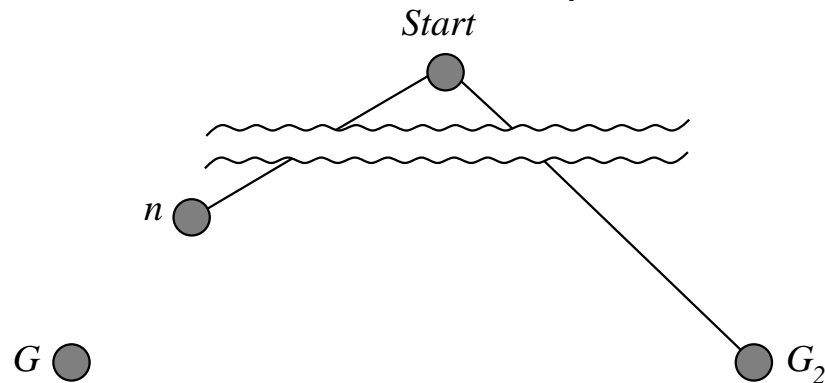


A* search example



Optimality of A* (standard proof)

Suppose some suboptimal goal G_2 has been generated and is in the queue. Let n be an unexpanded node on a shortest path to an optimal goal G_1 .



$$\begin{aligned} f(G_2) &= g(G_2) && \text{since } h(G_2) = 0 \\ &> g(G_1) && \text{since } G_2 \text{ is suboptimal} \\ &\geq f(n) && \text{since } h \text{ is admissible} \end{aligned}$$

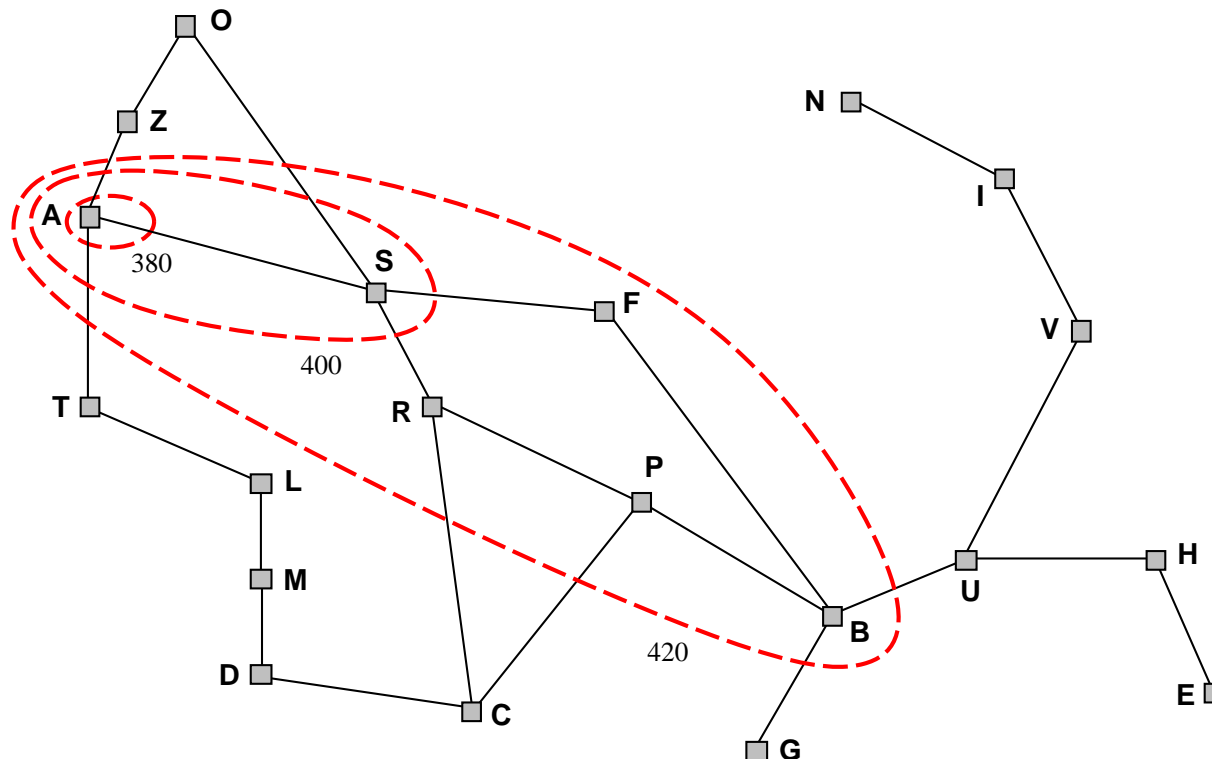
Since $f(G_2) > f(n)$, A* will never select G_2 for expansion

Optimality of A* (more useful)

Lemma: A* expands nodes in order of increasing f value*

Gradually adds “ f -contours” of nodes (cf. breadth-first adds layers)

Contour i has all nodes with $f = f_i$, where $f_i < f_{i+1}$



Properties of A^*

Complete??

Properties of A*

Complete?? Yes, unless there are infinitely many nodes with $f \leq f(G)$

Time??

Properties of A*

Complete?? Yes, unless there are infinitely many nodes with $f \leq f(G)$

Time?? Exponential in [relative error in $h \times$ length of soln.]

Space??

Properties of A*

Complete?? Yes, unless there are infinitely many nodes with $f \leq f(G)$

Time?? Exponential in [relative error in $h \times$ length of soln.]

Space?? Keeps all nodes in memory

Optimal??

Properties of A*

Complete?? Yes, unless there are infinitely many nodes with $f \leq f(G)$

Time?? Exponential in [relative error in $h \times$ length of soln.]

Space?? Keeps all nodes in memory

Optimal?? Yes—cannot expand f_{i+1} until f_i is finished

A* expands all nodes with $f(n) < C^*$

A* expands some nodes with $f(n) = C^*$

A* expands no nodes with $f(n) > C^*$

Proof of lemma: Consistency

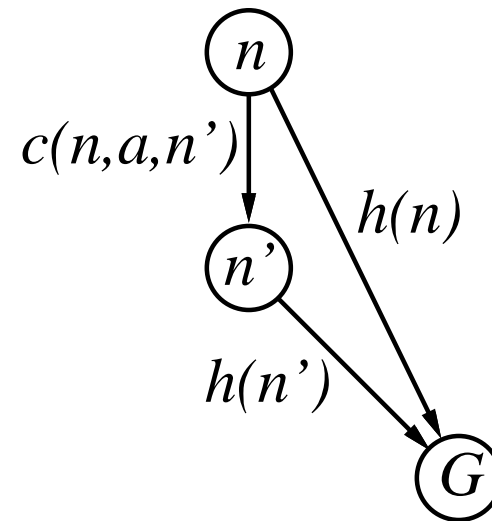
A heuristic is **consistent** if

$$h(n) \leq c(n, a, n') + h(n')$$

If h is consistent, we have

$$\begin{aligned} f(n') &= g(n') + h(n') \\ &= g(n) + c(n, a, n') + h(n') \\ &\geq g(n) + h(n) \\ &= f(n) \end{aligned}$$

I.e., $f(n)$ is nondecreasing along any path.



Admissible heuristics

E.g., for the 8-puzzle:

$h_1(n)$ = number of misplaced tiles

$h_2(n)$ = total **Manhattan** distance

(i.e., no. of squares from desired location of each tile)

7	2	4
5		6
8	3	1

Start State

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	

Goal State

$h_1(S) = ??$

$h_2(S) = ??$

Admissible heuristics

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(i.e., no. of squares from desired location of each tile)

7	2	4
5		6
8	3	1

Start State

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	

Goal State

$h_1(S) = ??$ 6

$h_2(S) = ??$ $4+0+3+3+1+0+2+1 = 14$

Dominance

If $h_2(n) \geq h_1(n)$ for all n (both admissible)
then h_2 dominates h_1 and is better for search

Typical search costs:

$d = 14$ IDS = 3,473,941 nodes

$A^*(h_1) = 539$ nodes

$A^*(h_2) = 113$ nodes

$d = 24$ IDS \approx 54,000,000,000 nodes

$A^*(h_1) = 39,135$ nodes

$A^*(h_2) = 1,641$ nodes

Given any admissible heuristics h_a, h_b ,

$$h(n) = \max(h_a(n), h_b(n))$$

is also admissible and dominates h_a, h_b

Summary

Heuristic functions estimate costs of shortest paths

Good heuristics can dramatically reduce search cost

Greedy best-first search expands lowest h

- incomplete and not always optimal

A* search expands lowest $g + h$

- complete and optimal
- also optimally efficient (up to tie-breaks, for forward search)

Admissible heuristics can be derived from exact solution of relaxed problems