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6.4 MAXIMUM FLOW

- ▶ *introduction*
- ▶ *Ford-Fulkerson algorithm*
- ▶ *maxflow-mincut theorem*
- ▶ *running time analysis*
- ▶ *Java implementation*
- ▶ *applications*

Algorithms

ROBERT SEDGEWICK | KEVIN WAYNE

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6.4 MAXIMUM FLOW

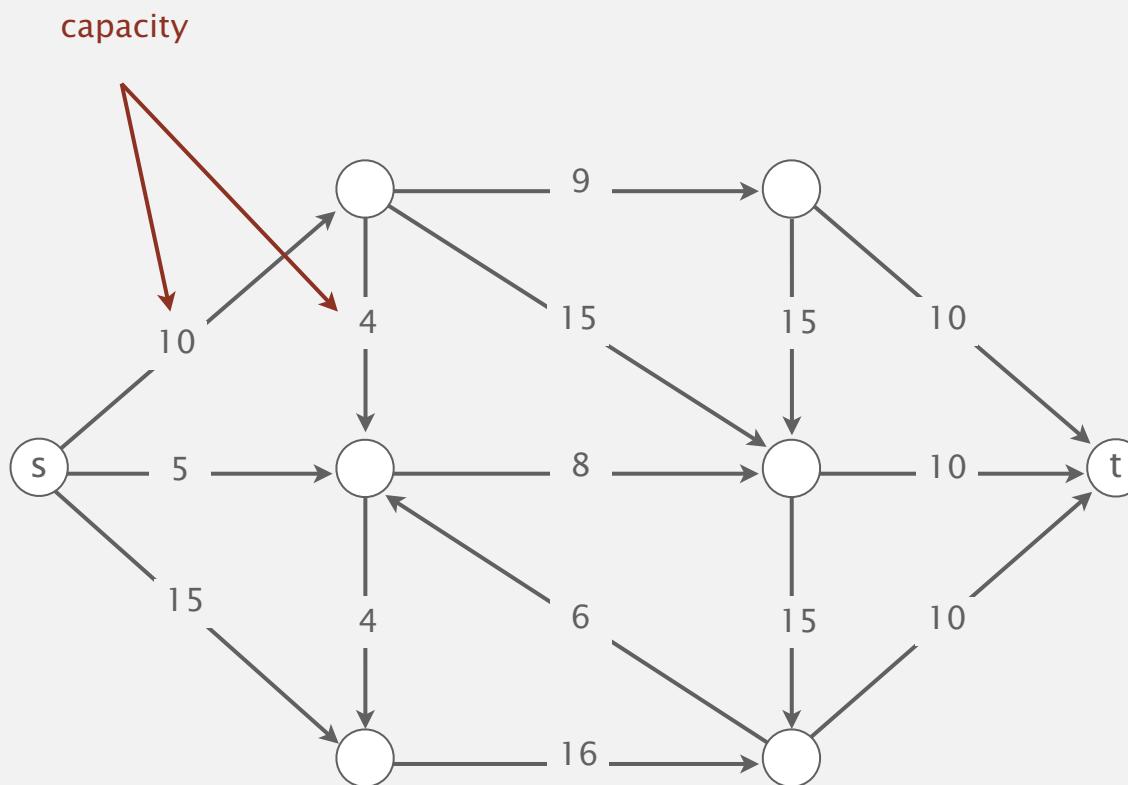
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Mincut problem

Input. An edge-weighted digraph, source vertex s , and target vertex t .



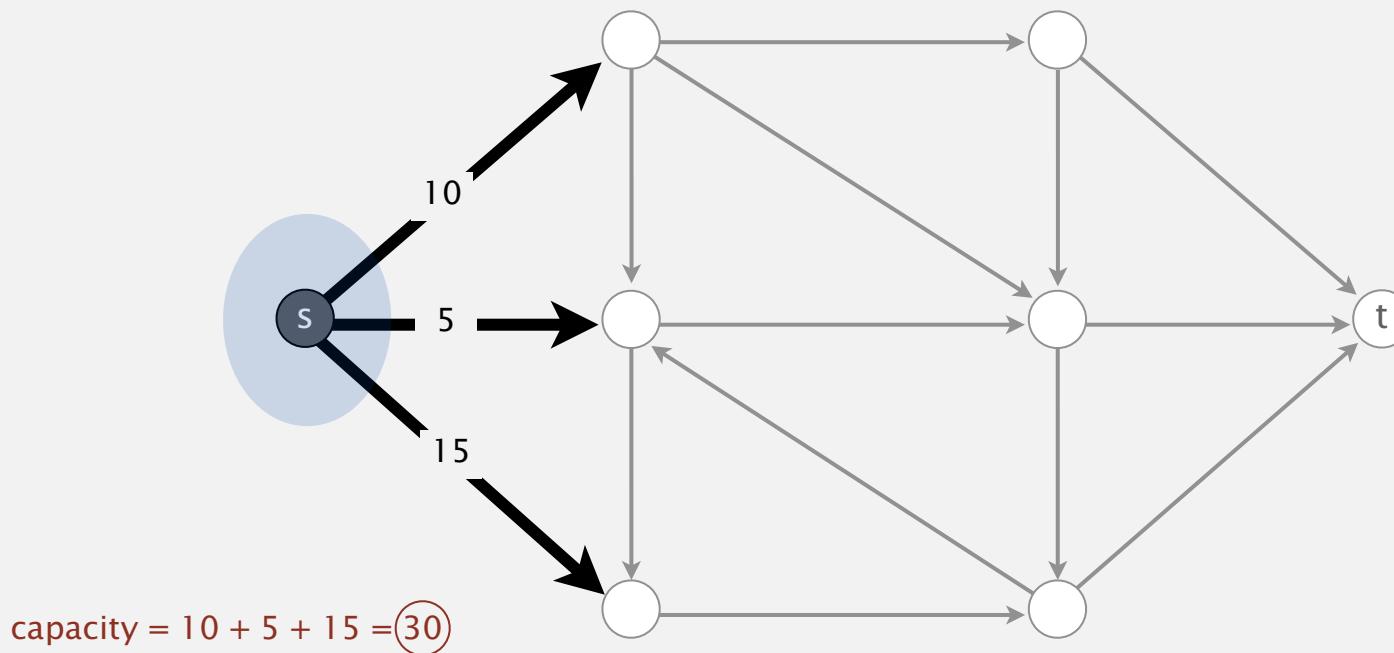
each edge has a
positive capacity



Mincut problem

Def. A *st-cut (cut)* is a partition of the vertices into two disjoint sets, with s in one set A and t in the other set B .

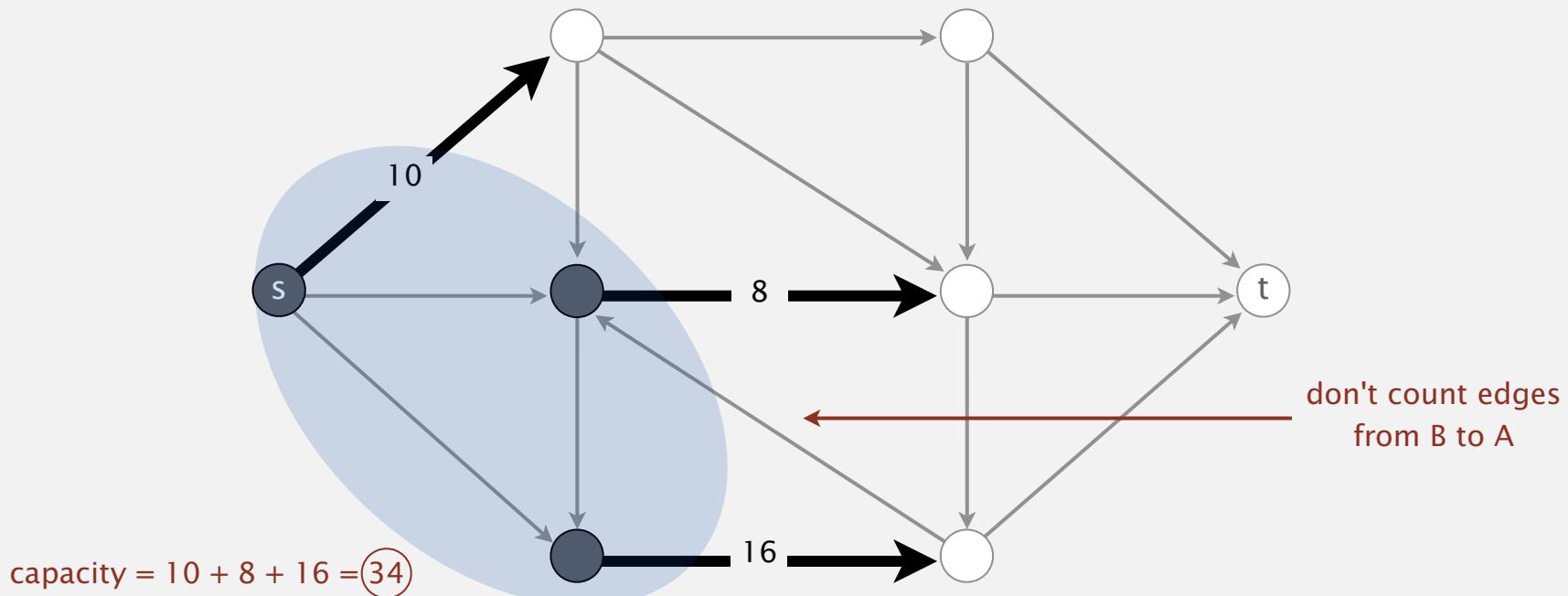
Def. Its **capacity** is the sum of the capacities of the edges from A to B .



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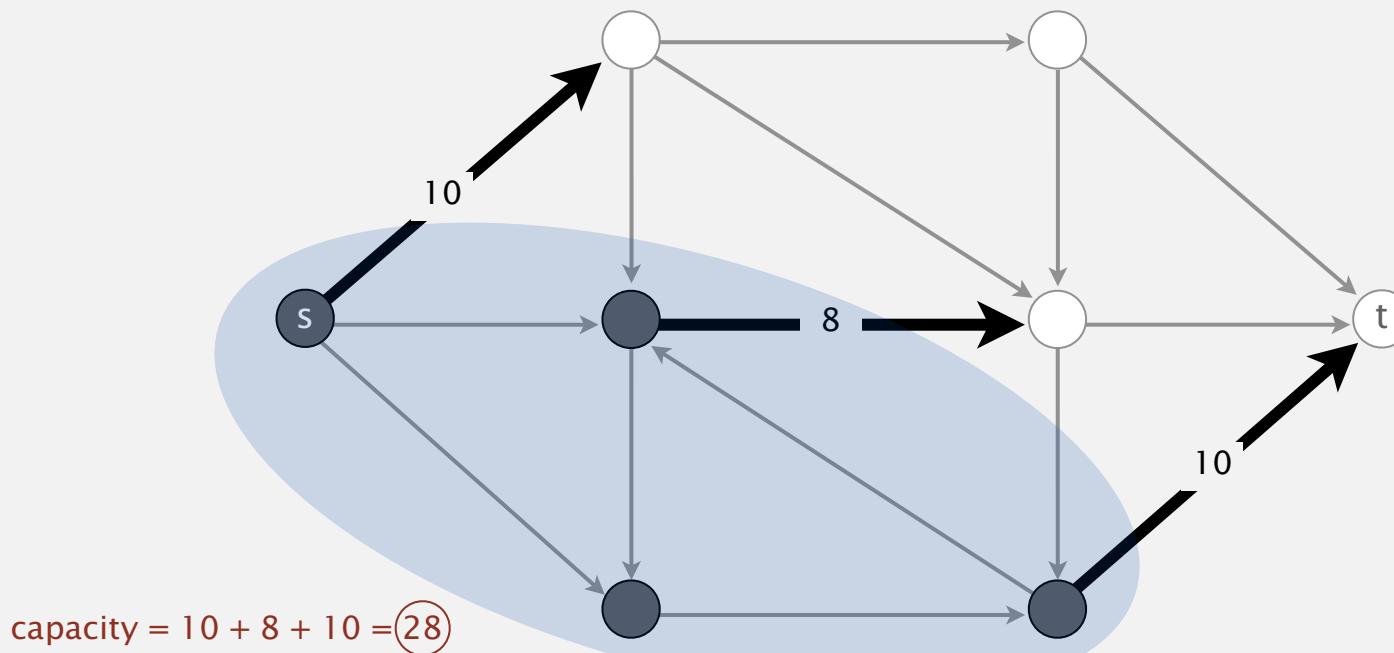


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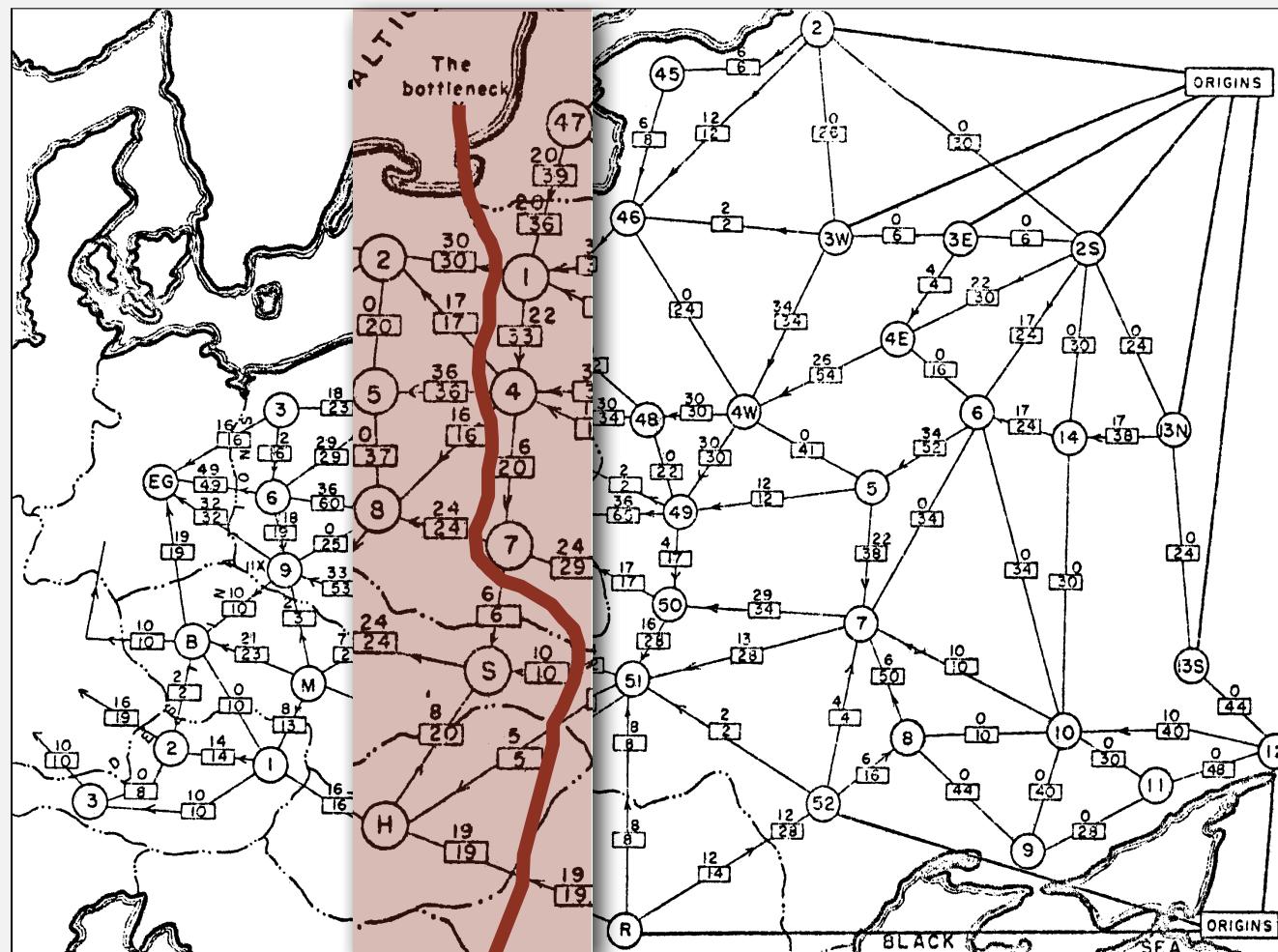
Def. Its **capacity** is the sum of the capacities of the edges from A to B .

Minimum st-cut (mincut) problem. Find a cut of minimum capacity.



Mincut application (1950s)

"Free world" goal. Cut supplies (if cold war turns into real war).



rail network connecting Soviet Union with Eastern European countries (map declassified by Pentagon in 1999)

Potential mincut application (2010s)

Government-in-power's goal. Cut off communication to set of people.

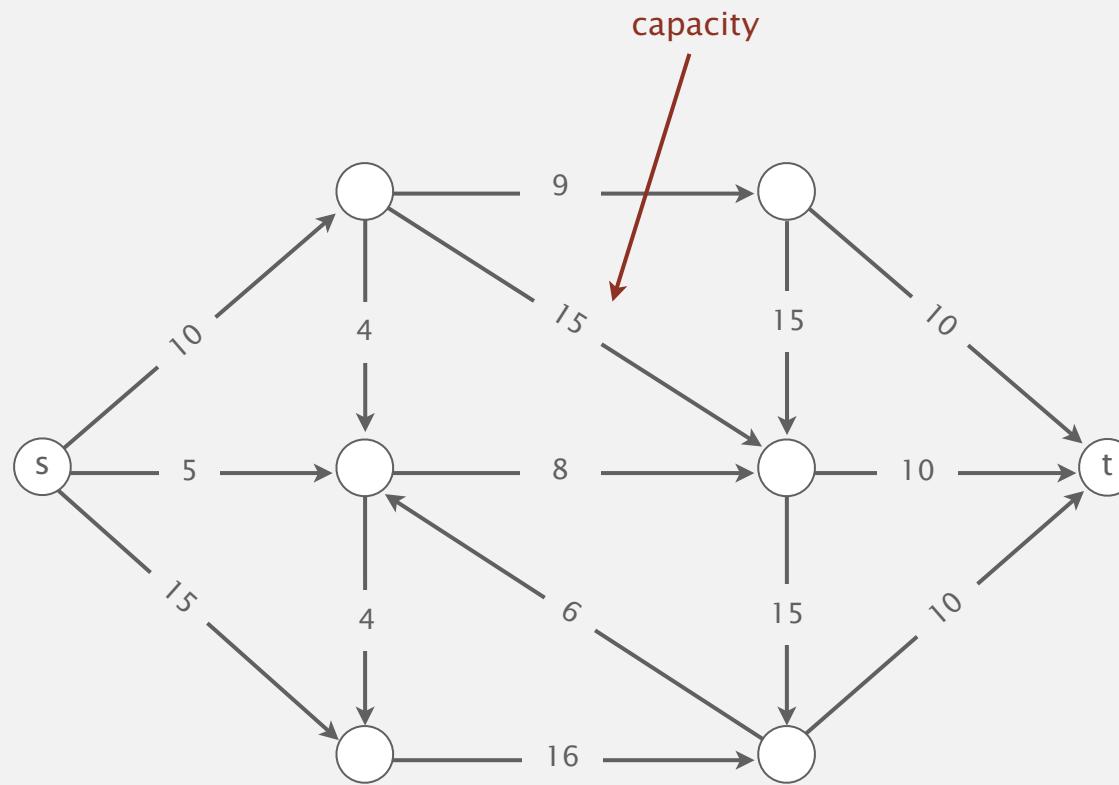


Maxflow problem

Input. An edge-weighted digraph, source vertex s , and target vertex t .



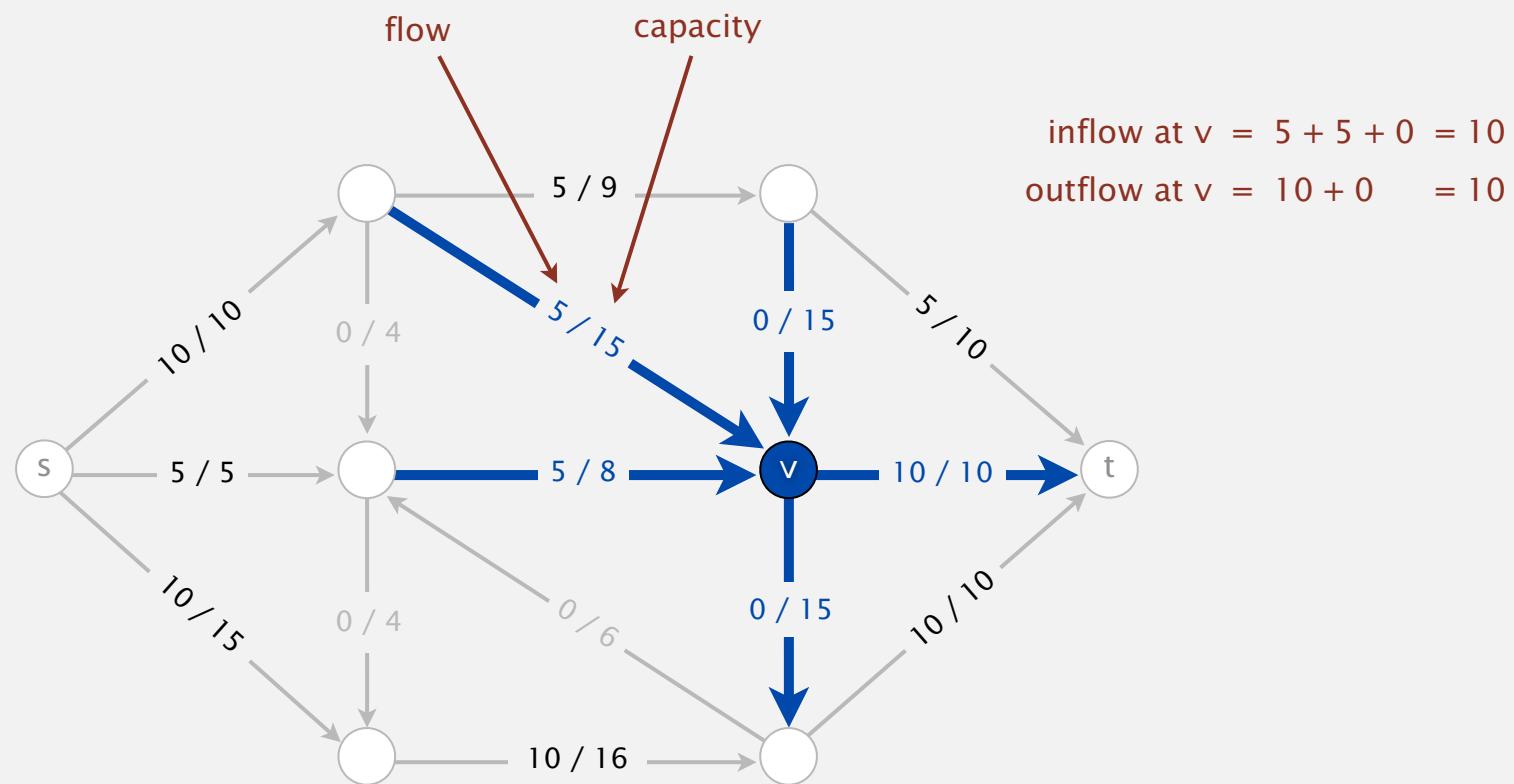
each edge has a
positive capacity



Maxflow problem

Def. An *st-flow* (*flow*) is an assignment of values to the edges such that:

- Capacity constraint: $0 \leq \text{edge's flow} \leq \text{edge's capacity}$.
 - Local equilibrium: $\text{inflow} = \text{outflow}$ at every vertex (except s and t).



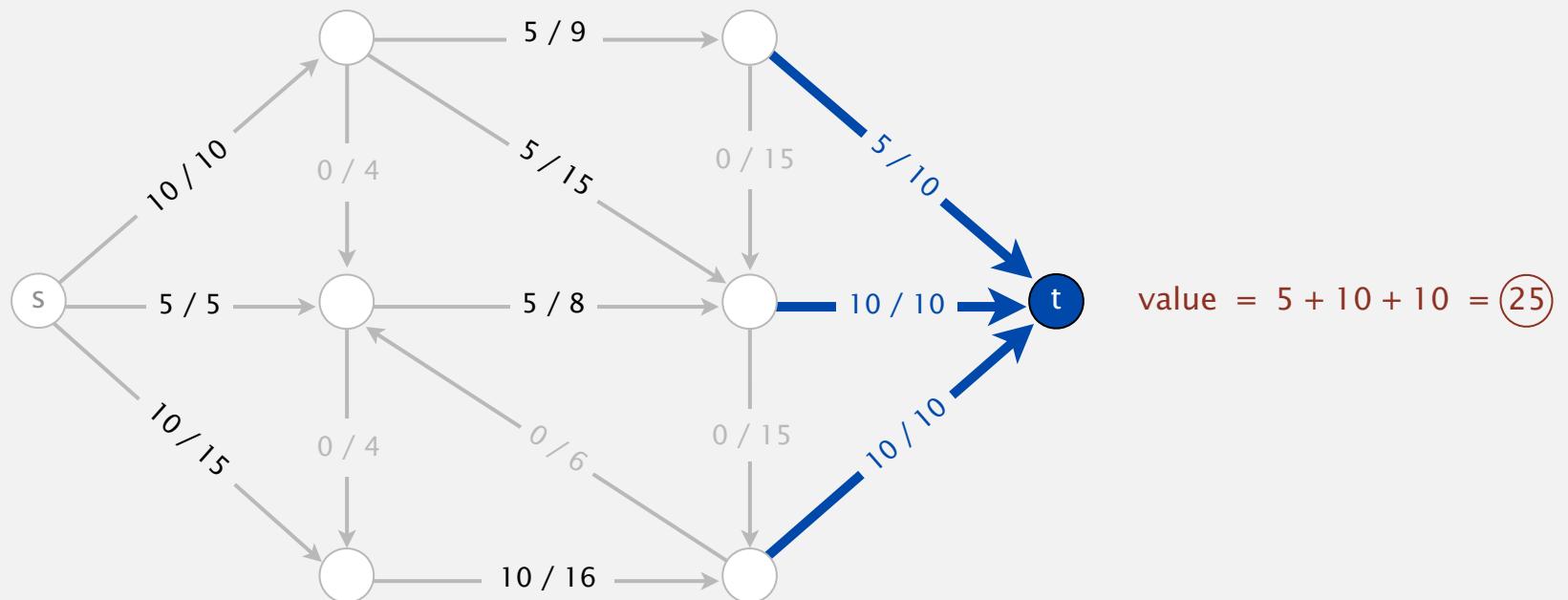
Maxflow problem

Def. An *st-flow (flow)* is an assignment of values to the edges such that:

- Capacity constraint: $0 \leq$ edge's flow \leq edge's capacity.
- Local equilibrium: inflow = outflow at every vertex (except s and t).

Def. The **value** of a flow is the inflow at t .

we assume no edge points to s or from t



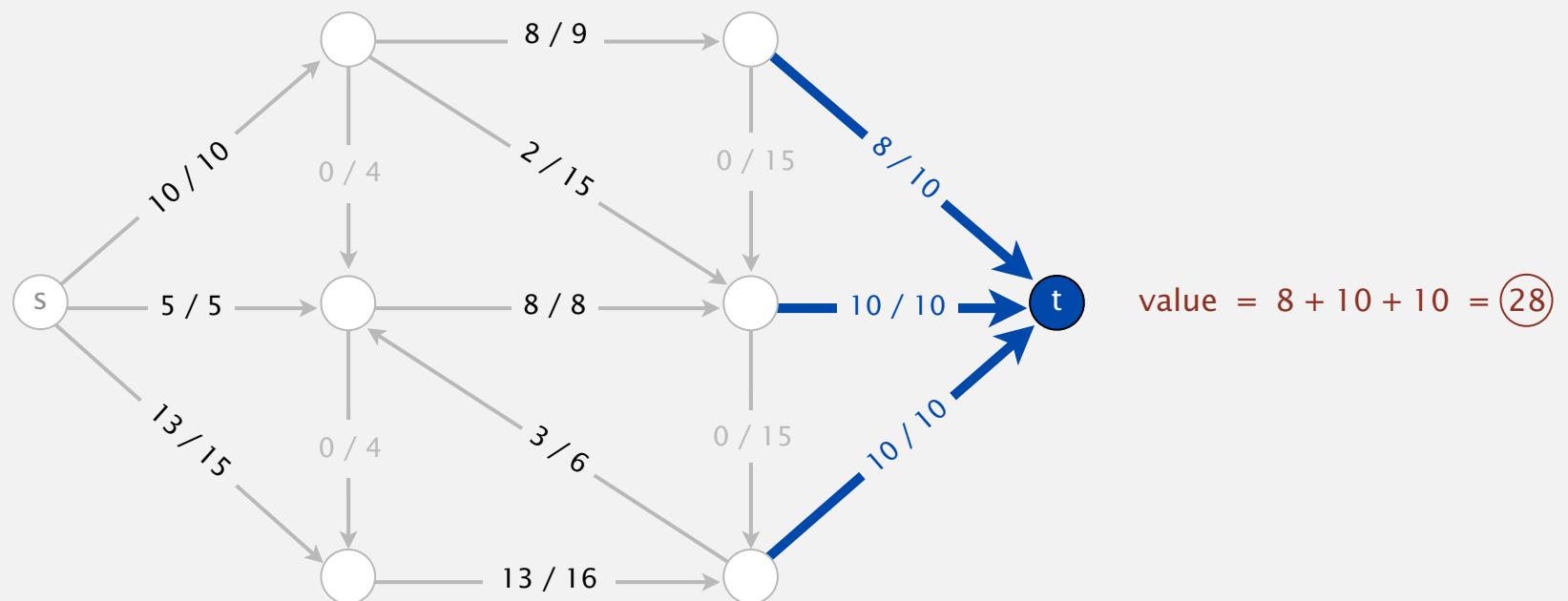
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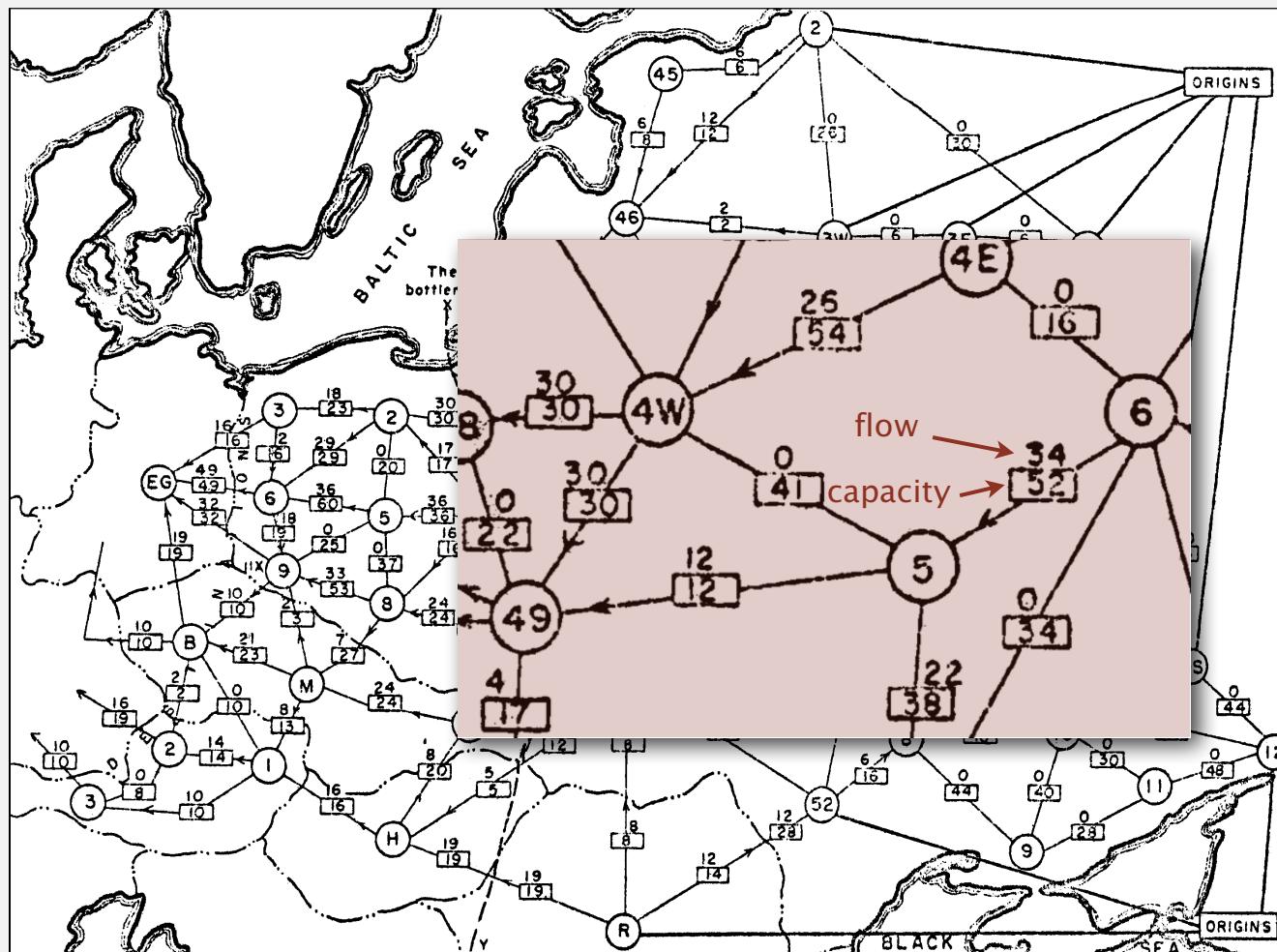
Def. The **value** of a flow is the inflow at t .

Maximum st-flow (maxflow) problem. Find a flow of maximum value.



Maxflow application (1950s)

Soviet Union goal. Maximize flow of supplies to Eastern Europe.



rail network connecting Soviet Union with Eastern European countries

(map declassified by Pentagon in 1999)

Potential maxflow application (2010s)

"Free world" goal. Maximize flow of information to specified set of people.



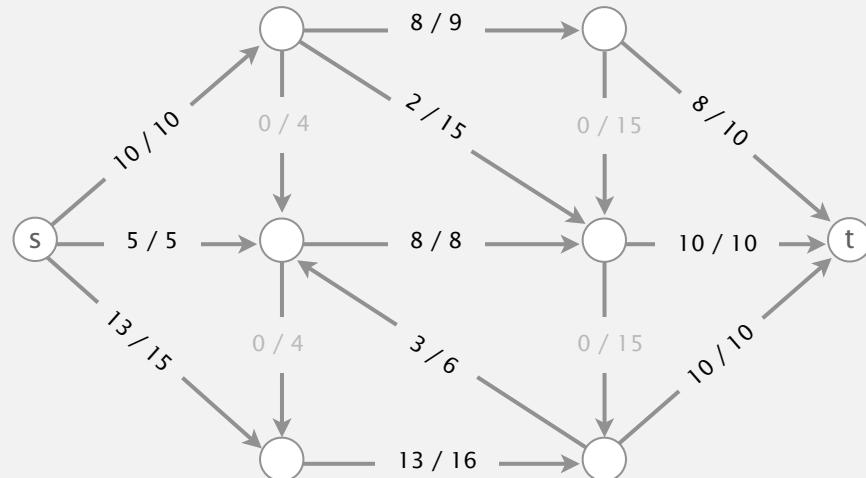
facebook graph

Summary

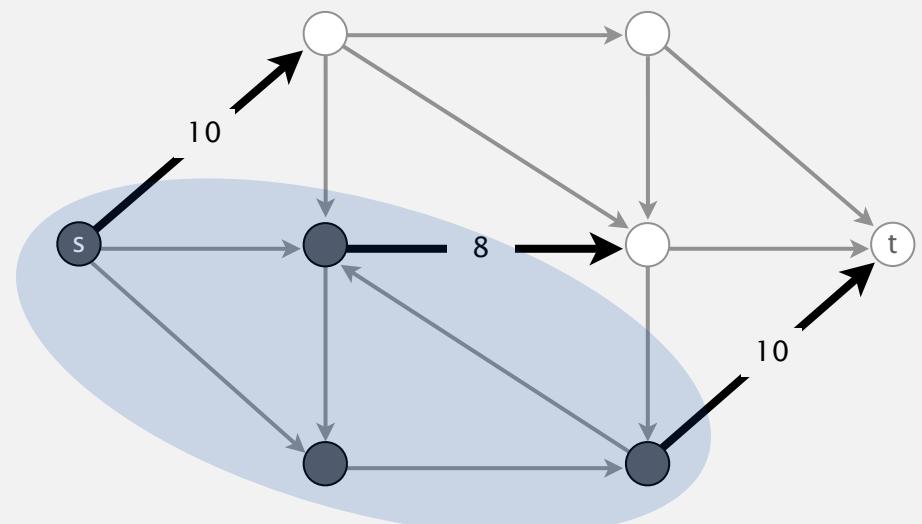
Input. A weighted digraph, source vertex s , and target vertex t .

Mincut problem. Find a cut of minimum capacity.

Maxflow problem. Find a flow of maximum value.



value of flow = 28



capacity of cut = 28

Remarkable fact. These two problems are dual!

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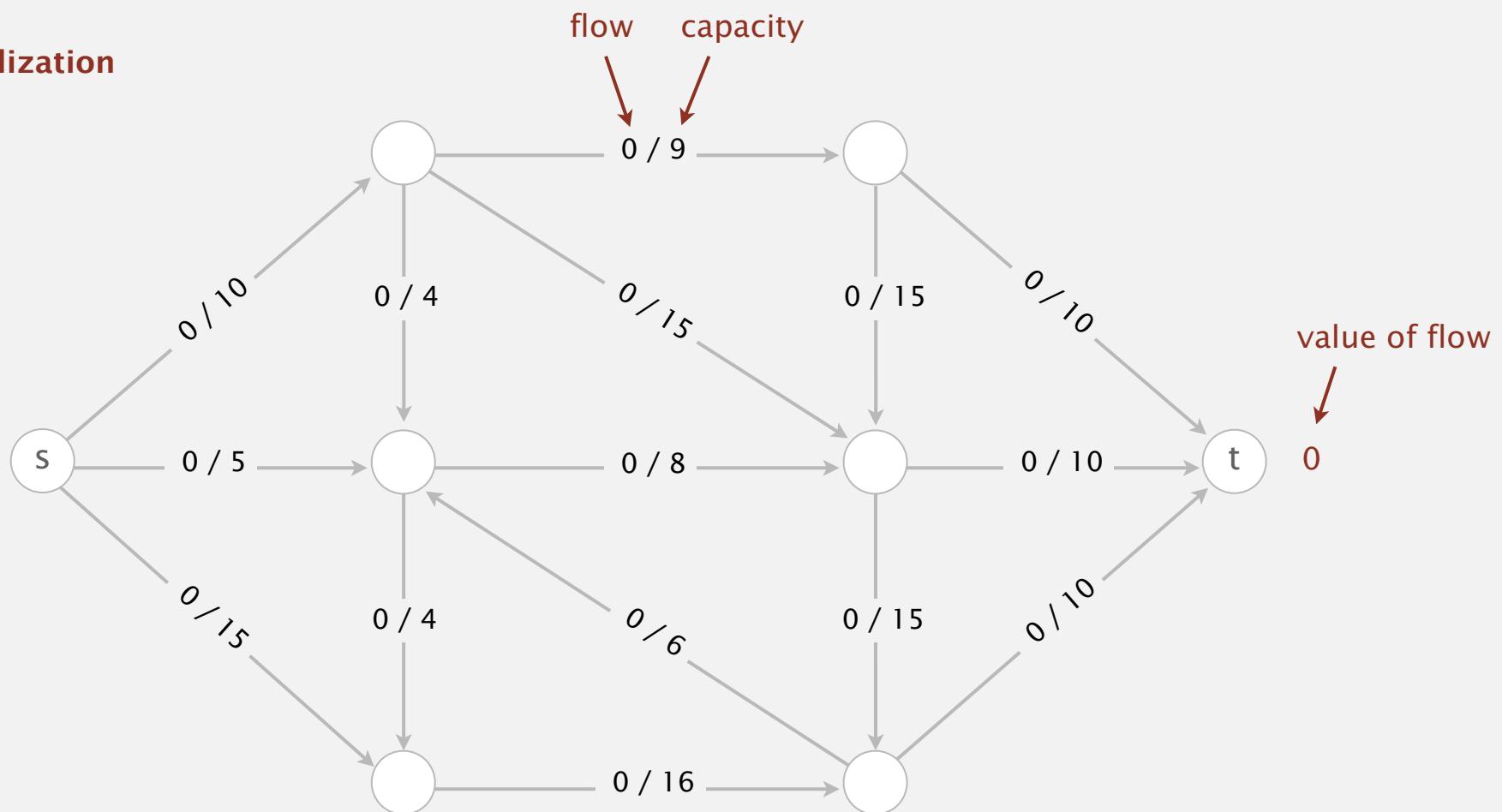
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Ford-Fulkerson algorithm

Initialization. Start with 0 flow.

initialization

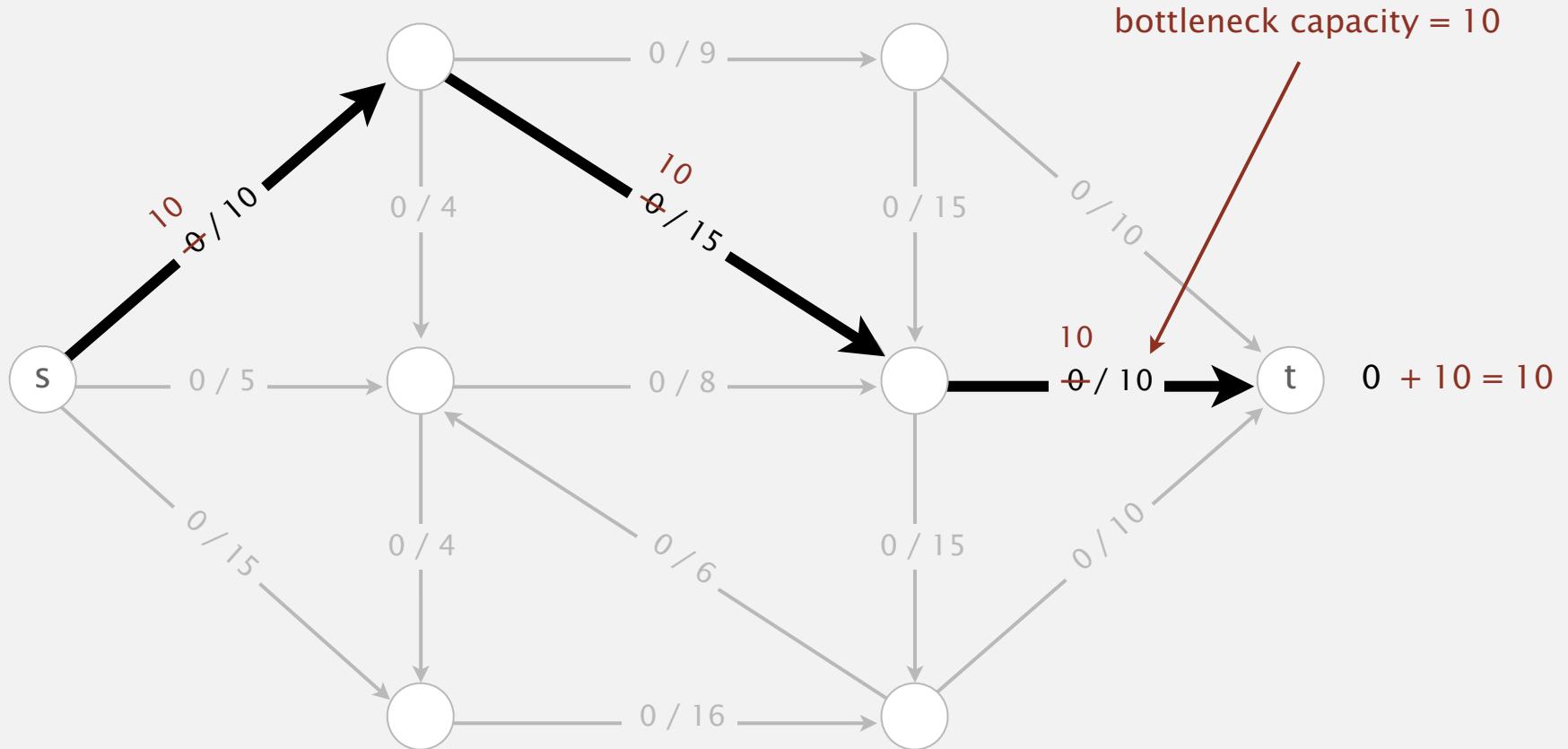


Idea: increase flow along augmenting paths

Augmenting path. Find an undirected path from s to t such that:

- Can increase flow on forward edges (not full).
- Can decrease flow on backward edge (not empty).

1st augmenting path

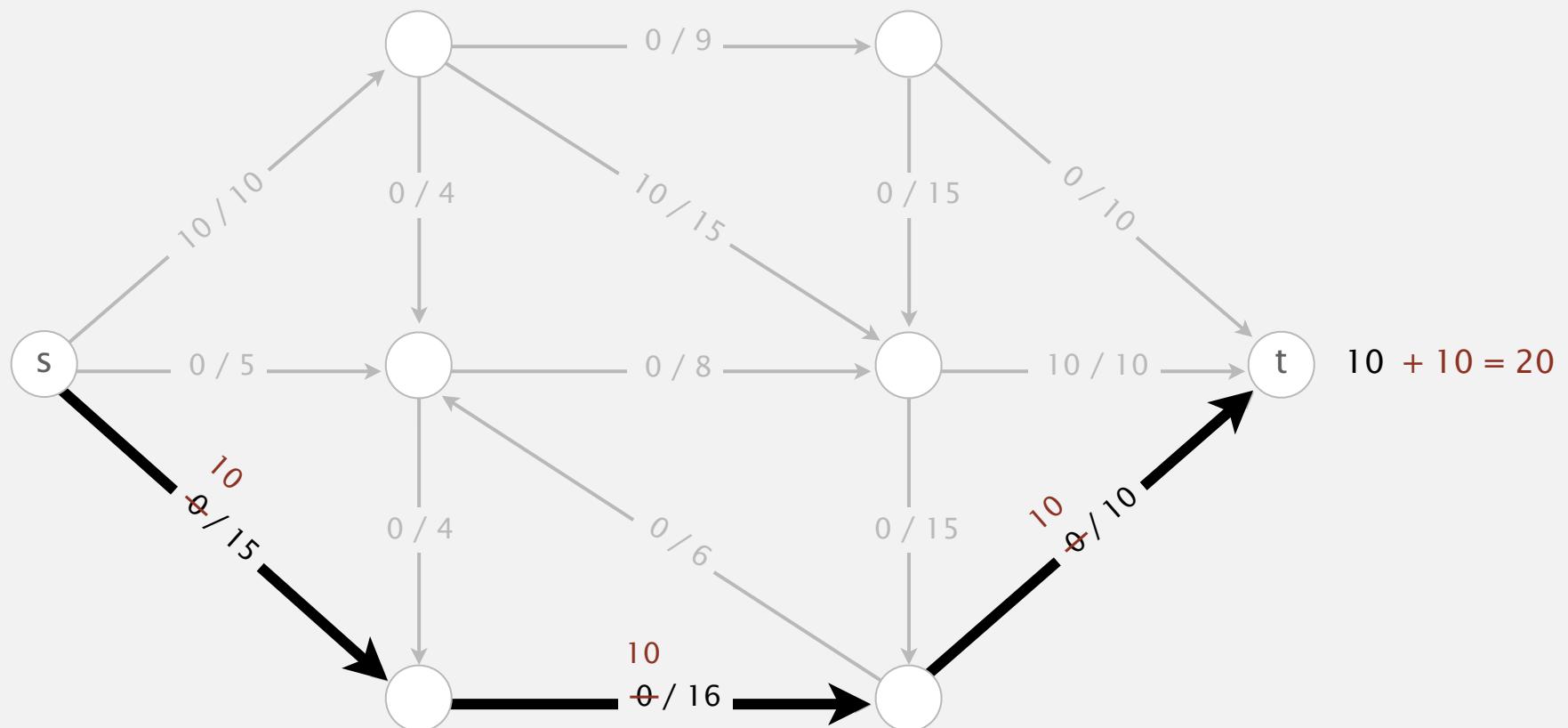


Idea: increase flow along augmenting paths

Augmenting path. Find an undirected path from s to t such that:

- Can increase flow on forward edges (not full).
- Can decrease flow on backward edge (not empty).

2nd augmenting path

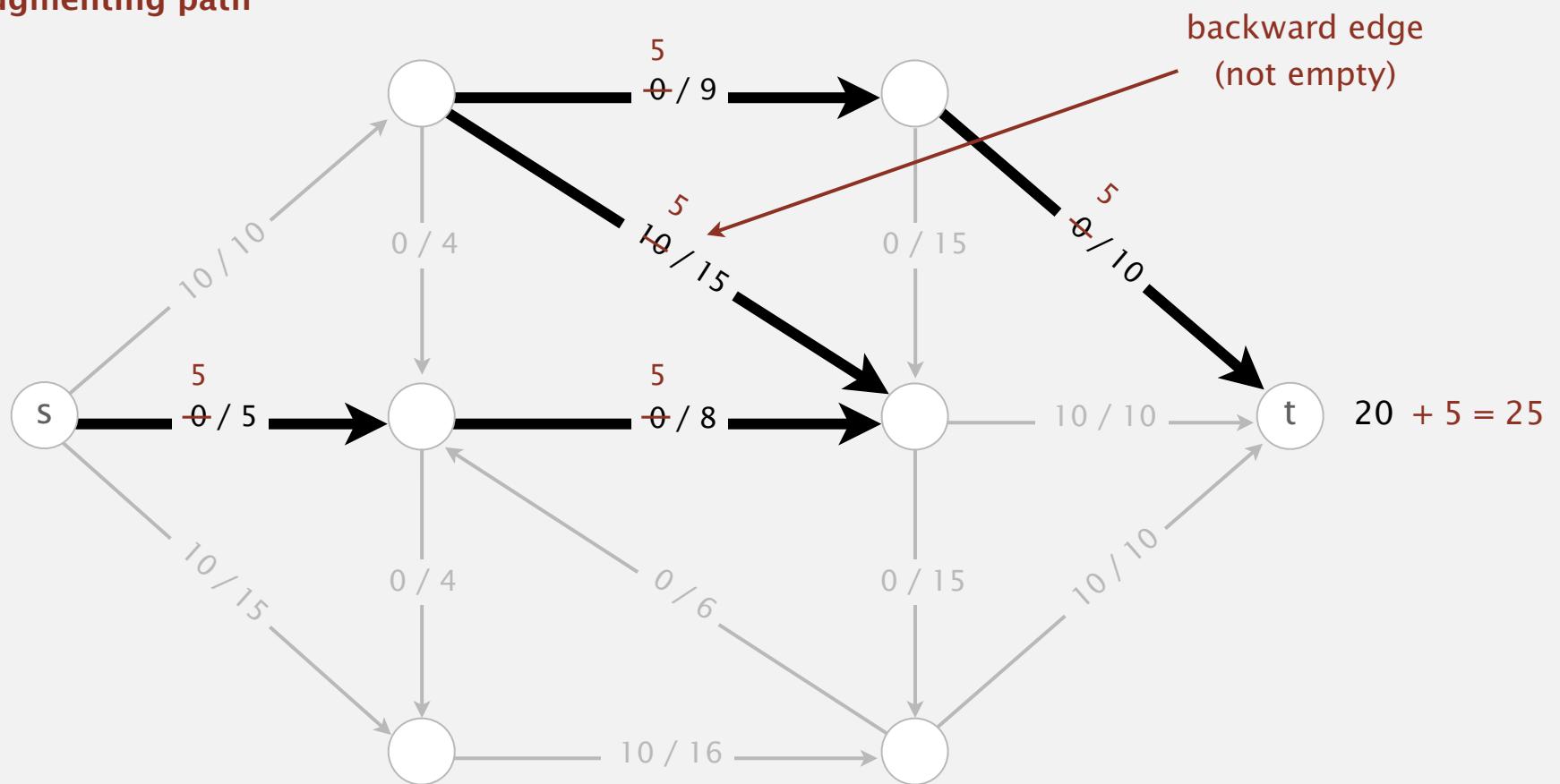


Idea: increase flow along augmenting paths

Augmenting path. Find an undirected path from s to t such that:

- Can increase flow on forward edges (not full).
- Can decrease flow on backward edge (not empty).

3rd augmenting path

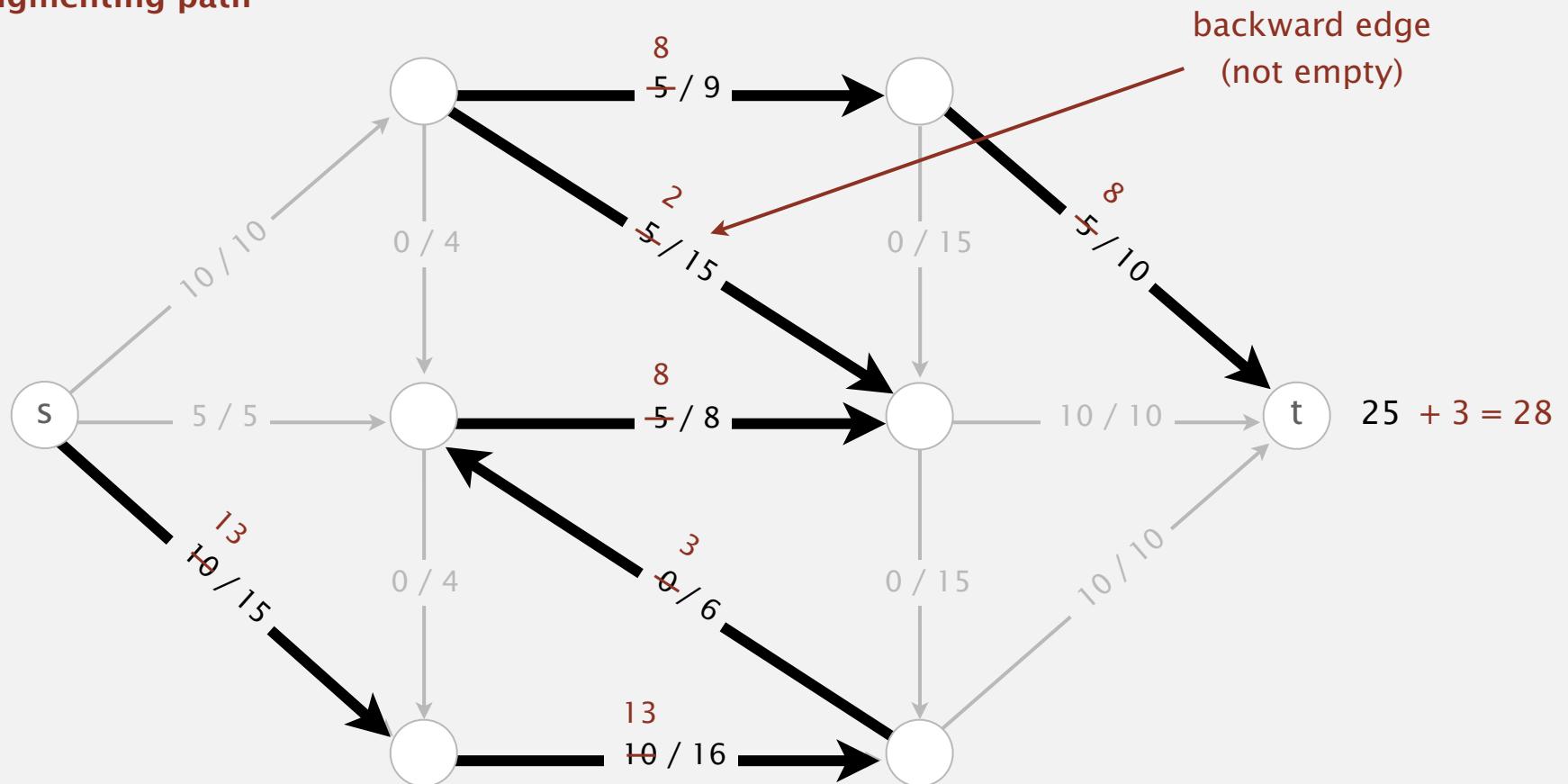


Idea: increase flow along augmenting paths

Augmenting path. Find an undirected path from s to t such that:

- Can increase flow on forward edges (not full).
- Can decrease flow on backward edge (not empty).

4th augmenting path



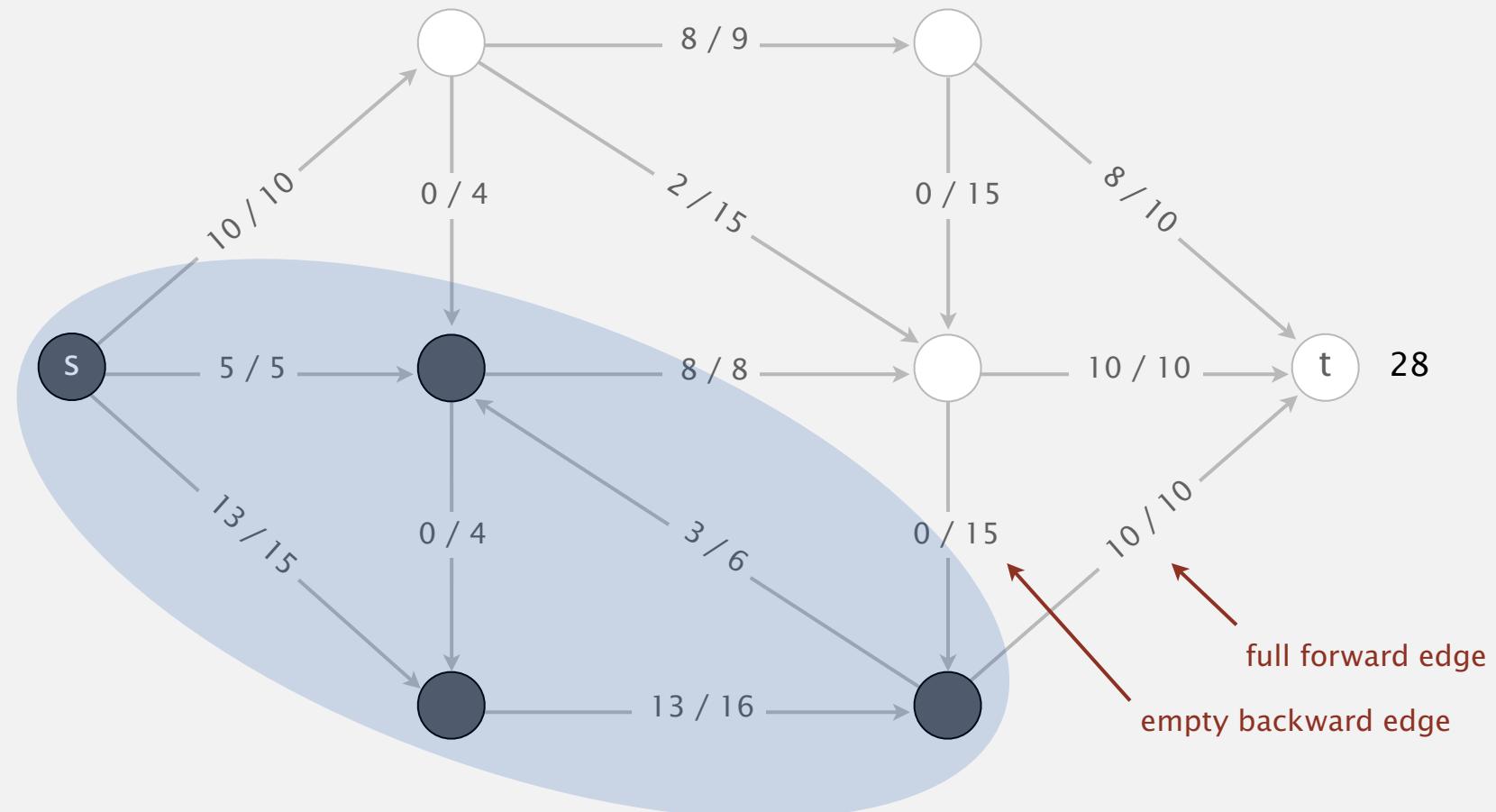
Idea: increase flow along augmenting paths

Termination. All paths from s to t are blocked by either a

- Full forward edge.
- Empty backward edge.

maxflow 28
cut capacity left, right $9+8+16 = 33$

no more augmenting paths



Ford-Fulkerson algorithm

Ford-Fulkerson algorithm

Start with 0 flow.

While there exists an augmenting path:

- **find an augmenting path**
 - **compute bottleneck capacity**
 - **increase flow on that path by bottleneck capacity**
-

Questions.

- How to compute a mincut?
- How to find an augmenting path?
- If FF terminates, does it always compute a maxflow?
- Does FF always terminate? If so, after how many augmentations?

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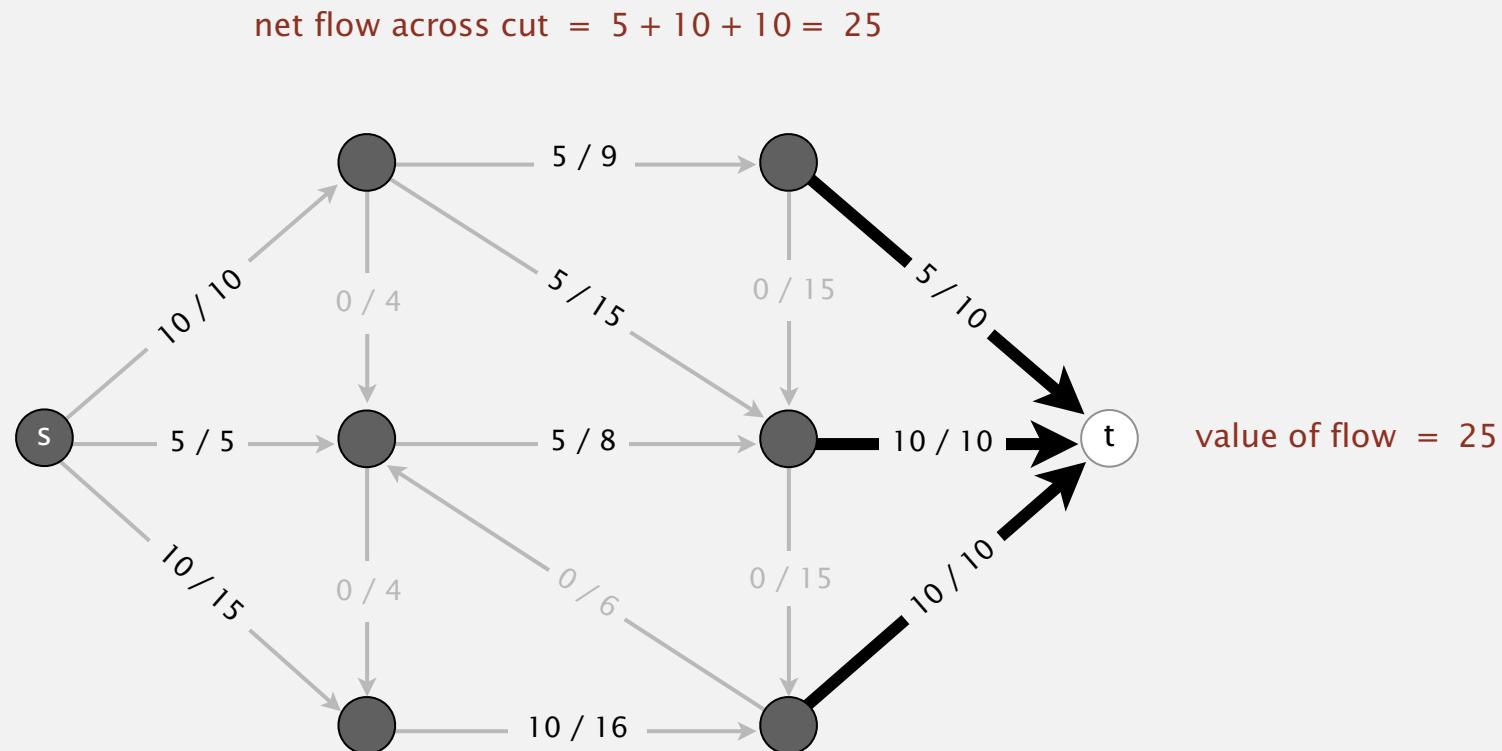
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Relationship between flows and cuts

Def. The **net flow across** a cut (A, B) is the sum of the flows on its edges from A to B minus the sum of the flows on its edges from B to A .

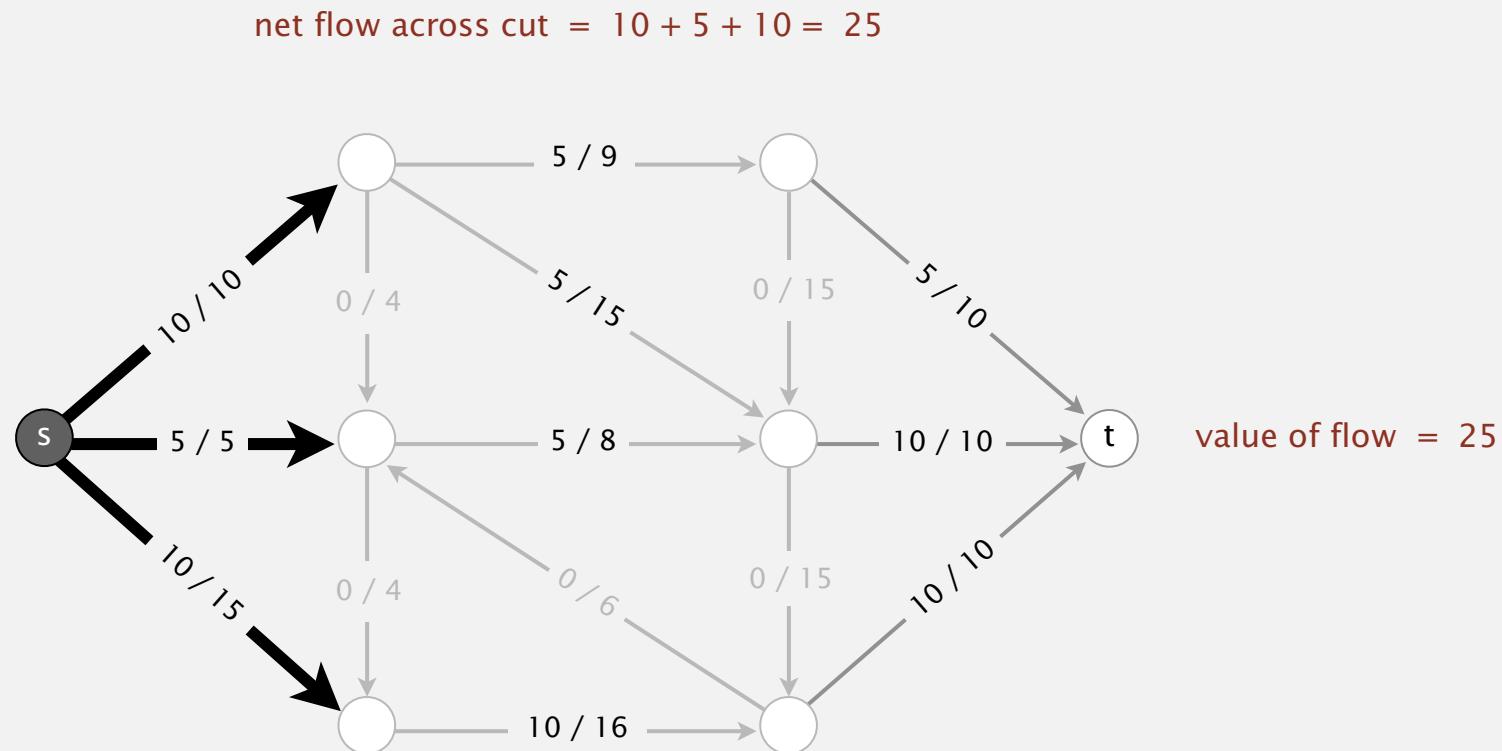
Flow-value lemma. Let f be any flow and let (A, B) be any cut. Then, the net flow across (A, B) equals the value of f .



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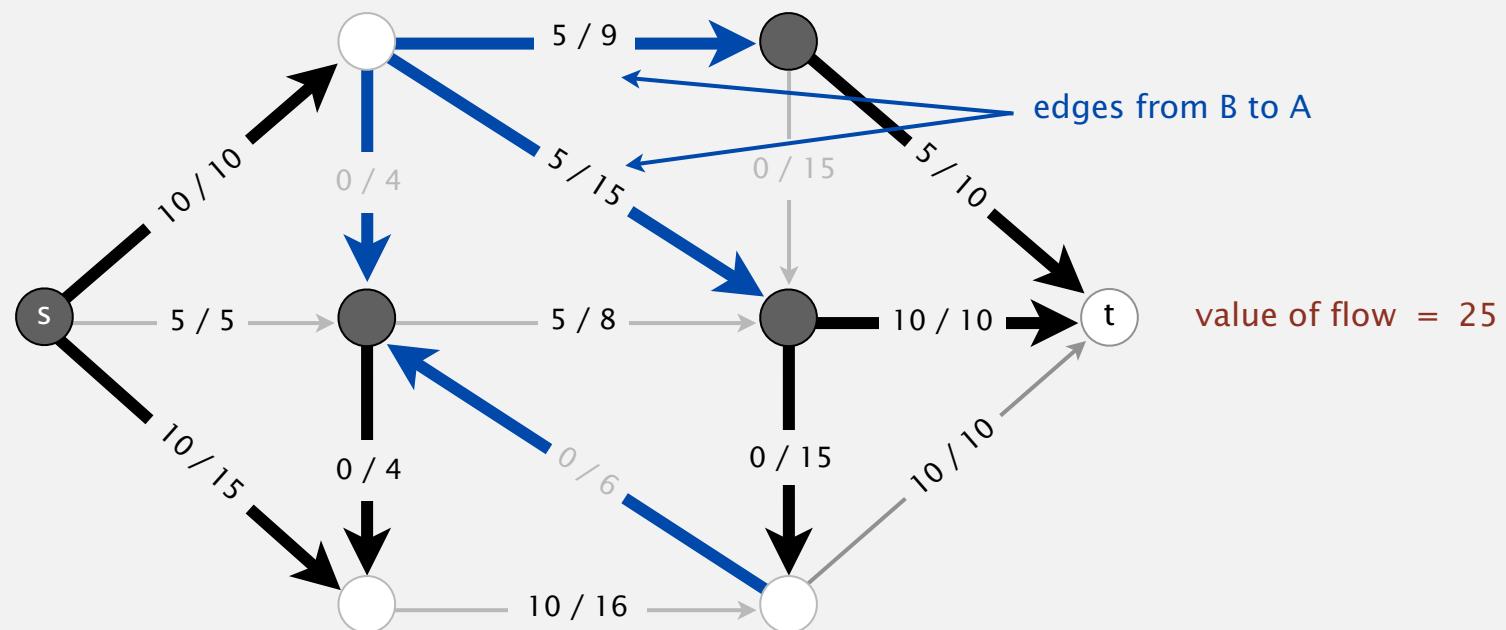


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$$\text{net flow across cut} = (10 + 10 + 5 + 10 + 0 + 0) - (5 + 5 + 0 + 0) = 25$$



Relationship between flows and cuts

Def. The **net flow across** a cut (A, B) is the sum of the flows on its edges from A to B minus the sum of the flows on its edges from B to A .

Flow-value lemma. Let f be any flow and let (A, B) be any cut. Then, the net flow across (A, B) equals the value of f .

Pf. By induction on the size of B .

- Base case: $B = \{t\}$.
- Induction step: remains true by local equilibrium when moving any vertex from A to B .

Corollary. Outflow from s = inflow to t = value of flow.

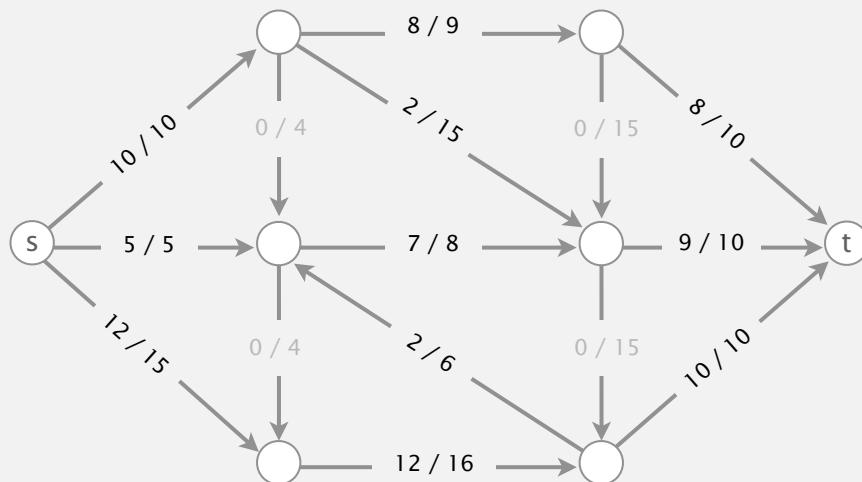
Relationship between flows and cuts

Weak duality. Let f be any flow and let (A, B) be any cut.
Then, the value of the flow \leq the capacity of the cut.

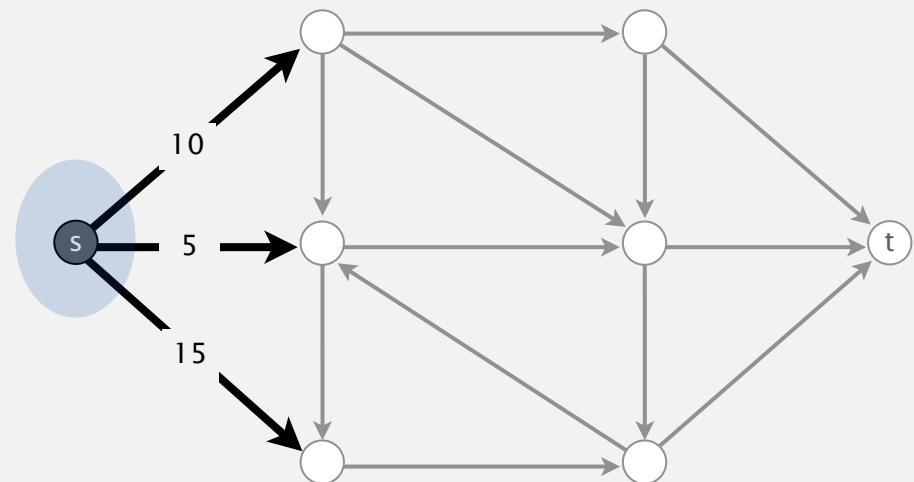
Pf. Value of flow f = net flow across cut $(A, B) \leq$ capacity of cut (A, B) .

↑
flow-value lemma

↑
flow bounded by capacity



value of flow = 27



capacity of cut = 30

Maxflow-mincut theorem

Augmenting path theorem. A flow f is a maxflow iff no augmenting paths.

Maxflow-mincut theorem. Value of the maxflow = capacity of mincut.

Pf. The following three conditions are equivalent for any flow f :

- i. There exists a cut whose capacity equals the value of the flow f .
- ii. f is a maxflow.
- iii. There is no augmenting path with respect to f .

[i \Rightarrow ii]

- Suppose that (A, B) is a cut with capacity equal to the value of f .
- Then, the value of any flow $f' \leq$ capacity of $(A, B) =$ value of f .
- Thus, f is a maxflow.

↑
weak duality

↑
by assumption

Maxflow-mincut theorem

Augmenting path theorem. A flow f is a maxflow iff no augmenting paths.

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- i. There exists a cut whose capacity equals the value of the flow f .
- ii. f is a maxflow.
- iii. There is no augmenting path with respect to f .

[ii \Rightarrow iii] We prove contrapositive: \sim iii \Rightarrow \sim ii.

- Suppose that there is an augmenting path with respect to f .
- Can improve flow f by sending flow along this path.
- Thus, f is not a maxflow.

Maxflow-mincut theorem

Augmenting path theorem. A flow f is a maxflow iff no augmenting paths.

Maxflow-mincut theorem. Value of the maxflow = capacity of mincut.

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[iii \Rightarrow i]

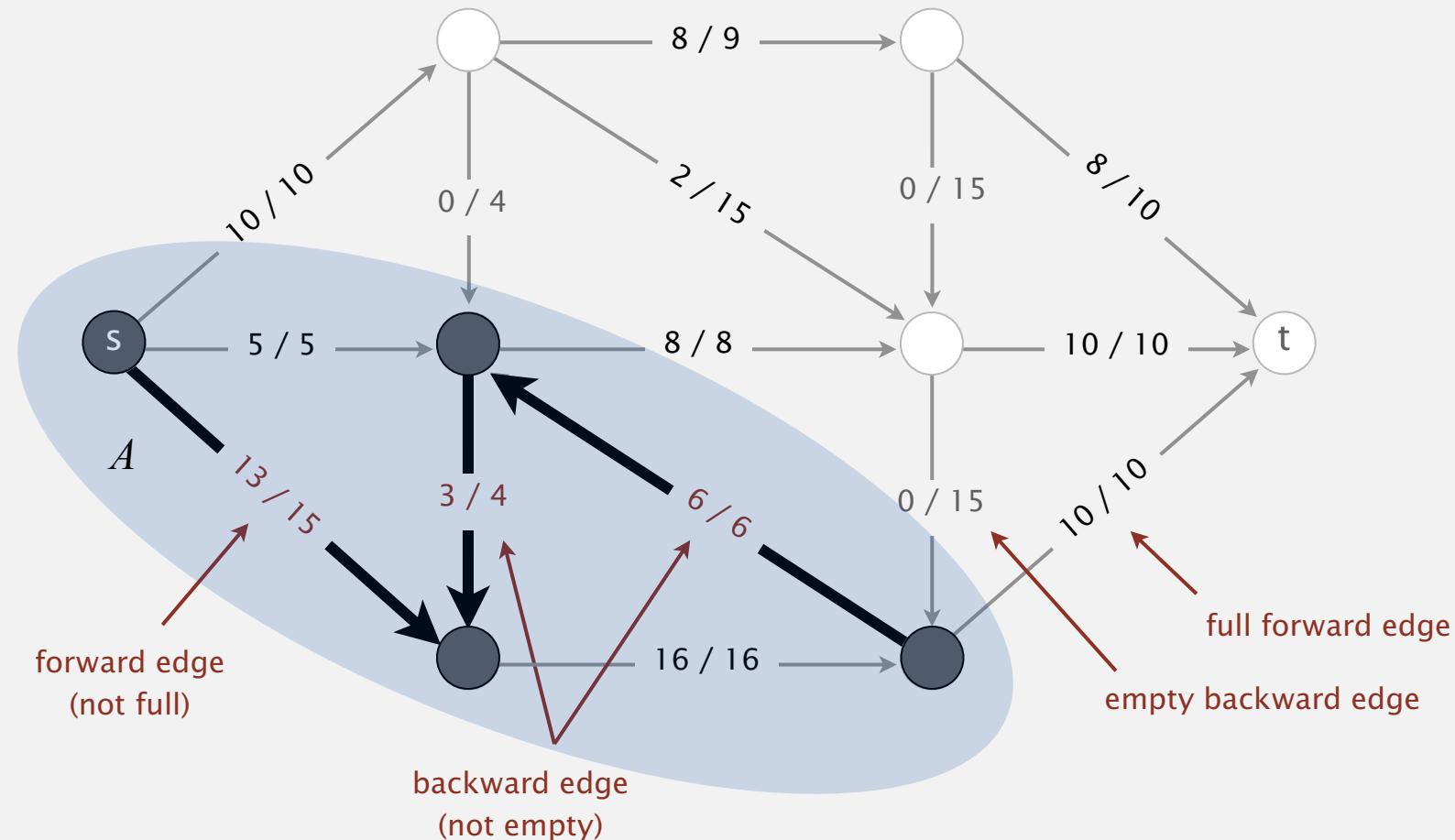
Suppose that there is no augmenting path with respect to f .

- Let (A, B) be a cut where A is the set of vertices connected to s by an undirected path with no full forward or empty backward edges.
- By definition, s is in A ; since no augmenting path, t is in B .
- Capacity of cut = net flow across cut \leftarrow forward edges full; backward edges empty
= value of flow f . \leftarrow flow-value lemma

Computing a mincut from a maxflow

To compute mincut (A, B) from maxflow f :

- By augmenting path theorem, no augmenting paths with respect to f .
- Compute $A = \text{set of vertices connected to } s \text{ by an undirected path}$ with no full forward or empty backward edges.



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Ford-Fulkerson algorithm

Ford-Fulkerson algorithm

Start with 0 flow.

While there exists an augmenting path:

- find an augmenting path
- compute bottleneck capacity
- increase flow on that path by bottleneck capacity

Questions.

- How to compute a mincut? Easy. ✓
- How to find an augmenting path? BFS works well.
- If FF terminates, does it always compute a maxflow? Yes. ✓
- Does FF always terminate? If so, after how many augmentations?

yes, provided edge capacities are integers
(or augmenting paths are chosen carefully)

requires clever analysis

Ford-Fulkerson algorithm with integer capacities

Important special case. Edge capacities are integers between 1 and U .

Invariant. The flow is integer-valued throughout Ford-Fulkerson.

Pf. [by induction]

- Bottleneck capacity is an integer.
- Flow on an edge increases/decreases by bottleneck capacity.

Proposition. Number of augmentations \leq the value of the maxflow.

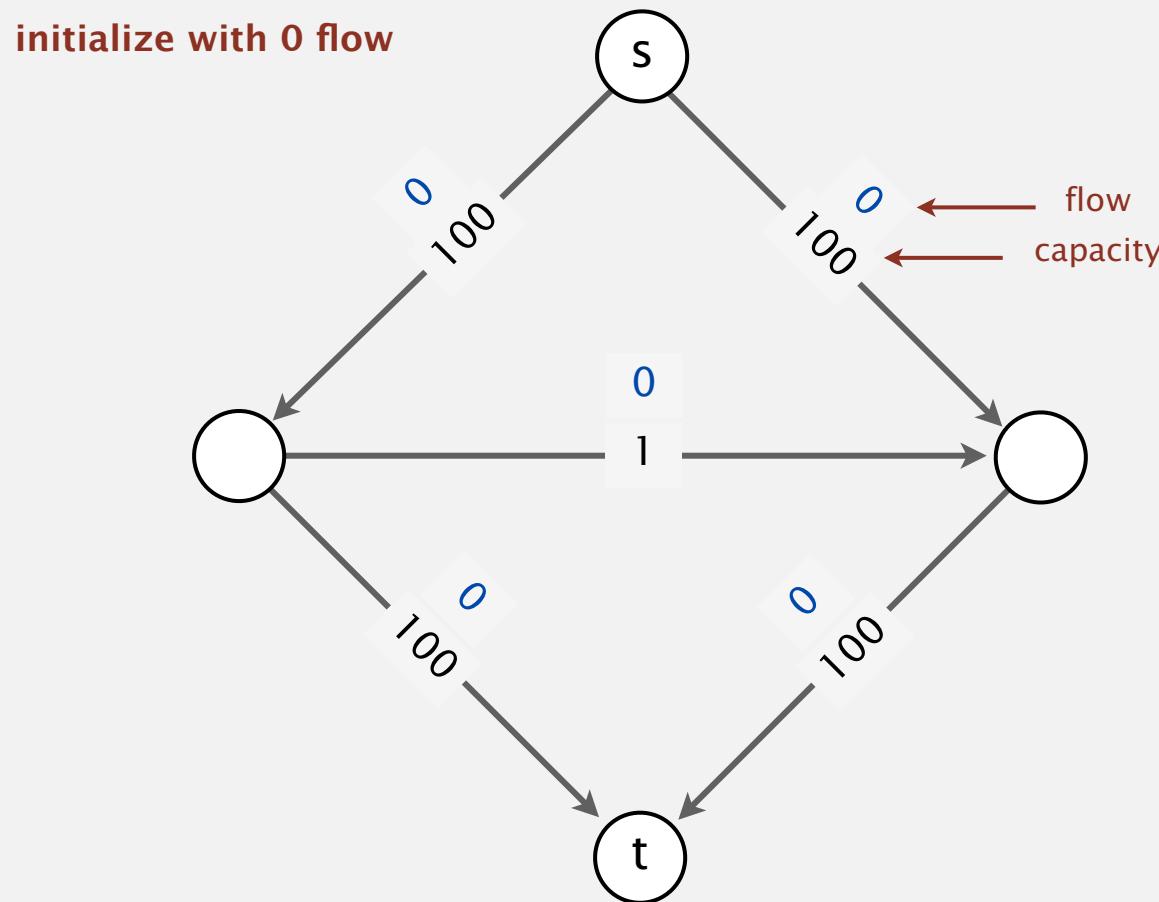
Pf. Each augmentation increases the value by at least 1.

Integrality theorem. There exists an integer-valued maxflow.

Pf. Ford-Fulkerson terminates and maxflow that it finds is integer-valued.

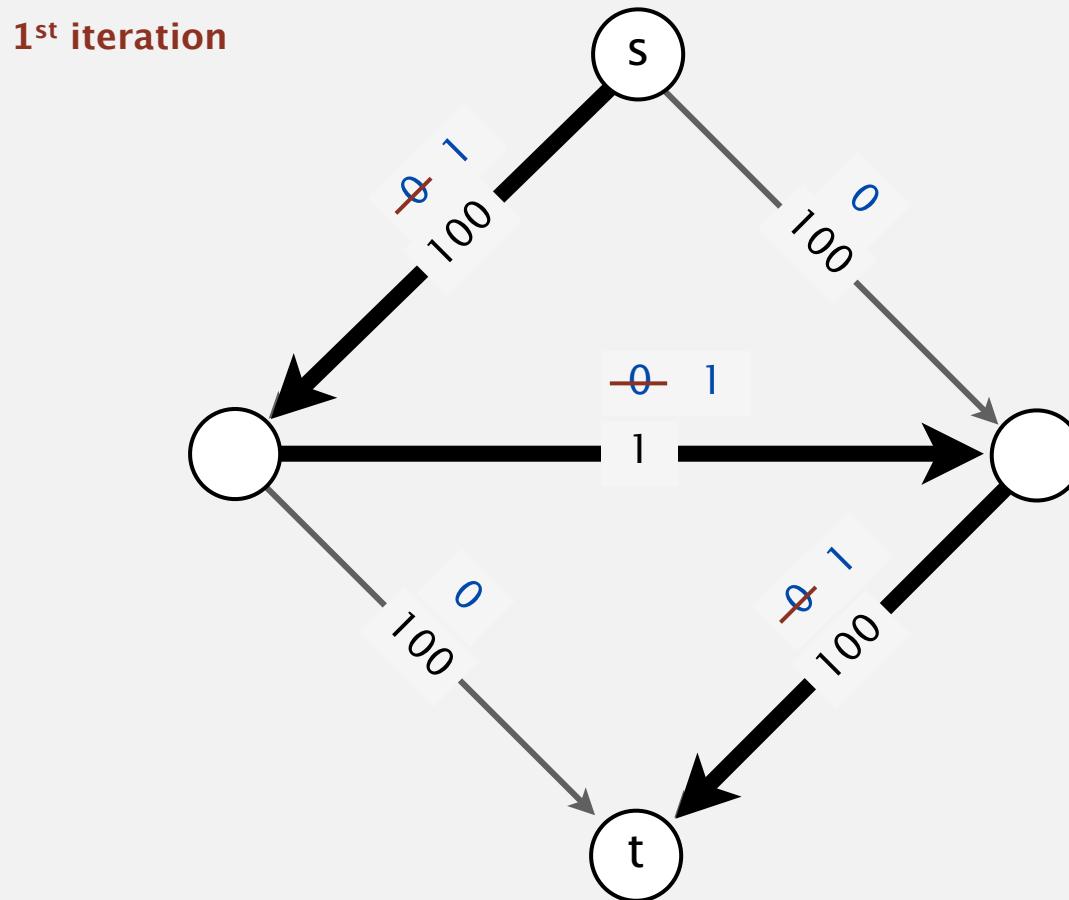
Bad case for Ford-Fulkerson

Bad news. Even when edge capacities are integers, number of augmenting paths could be equal to the value of the maxflow.



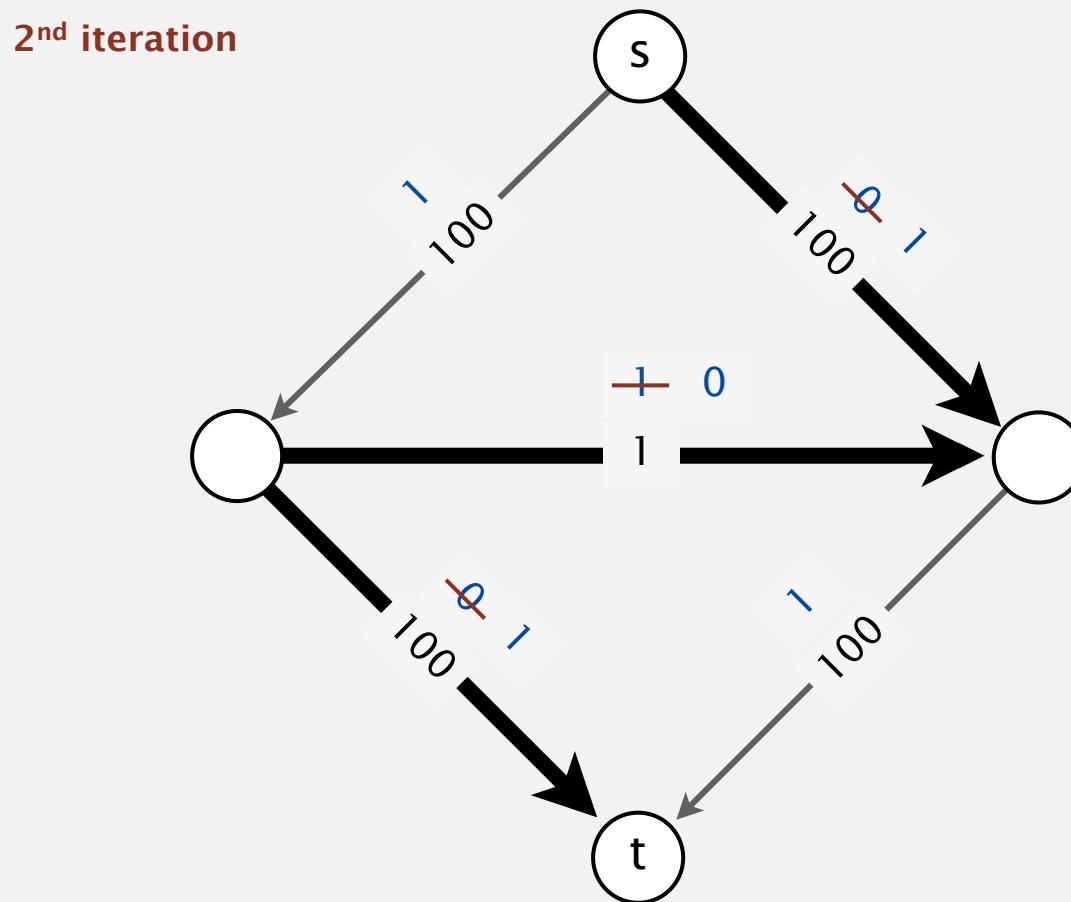
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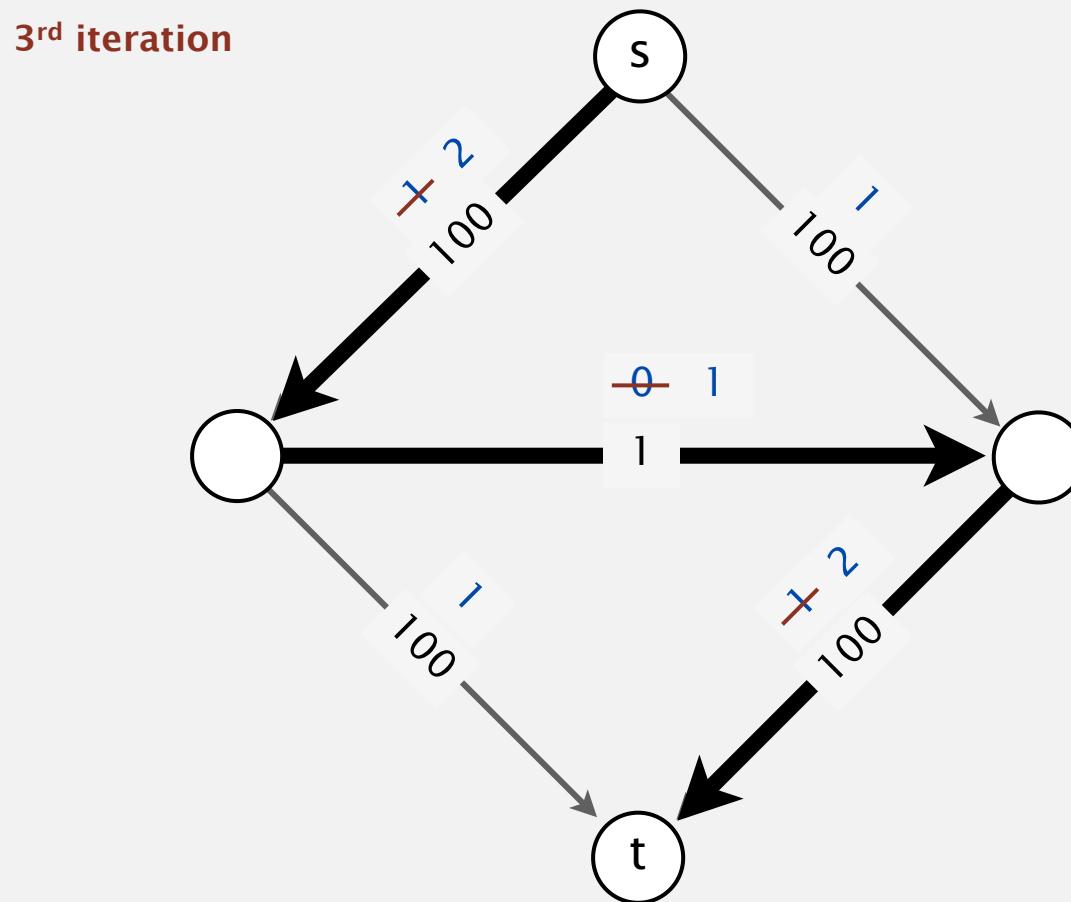
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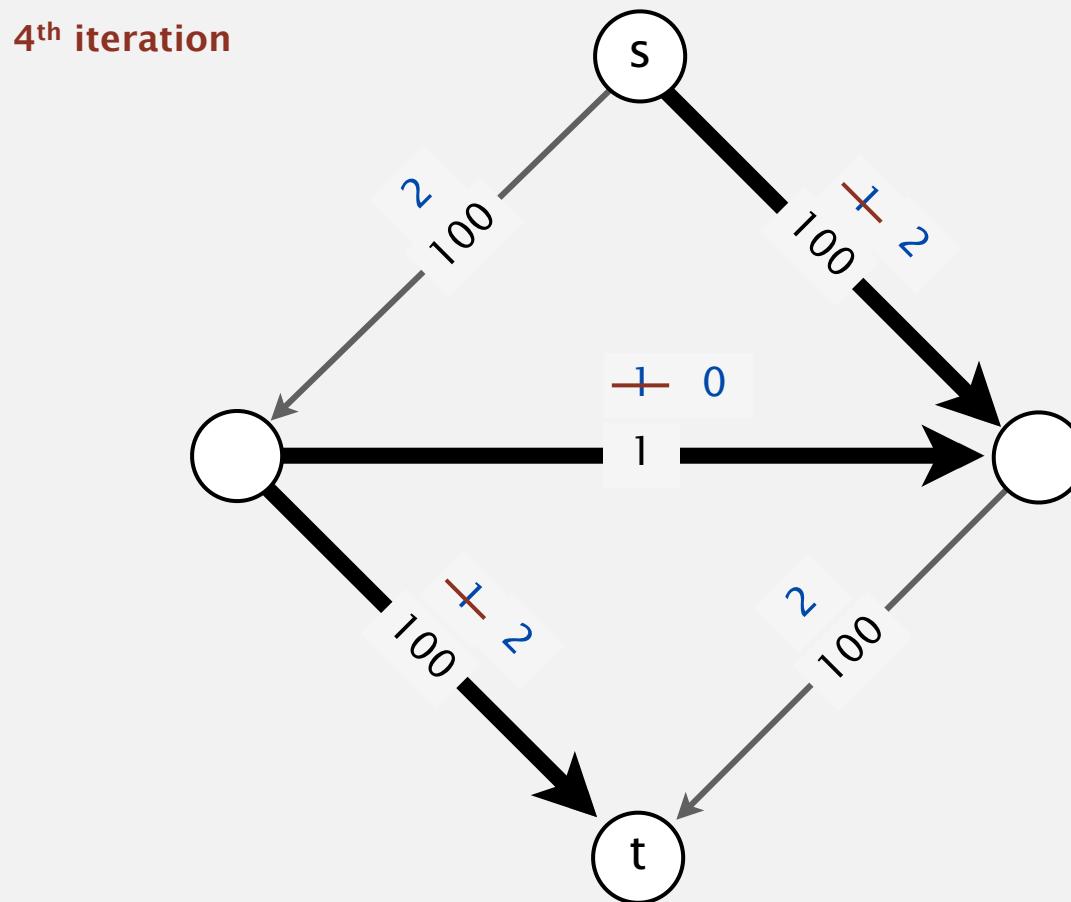
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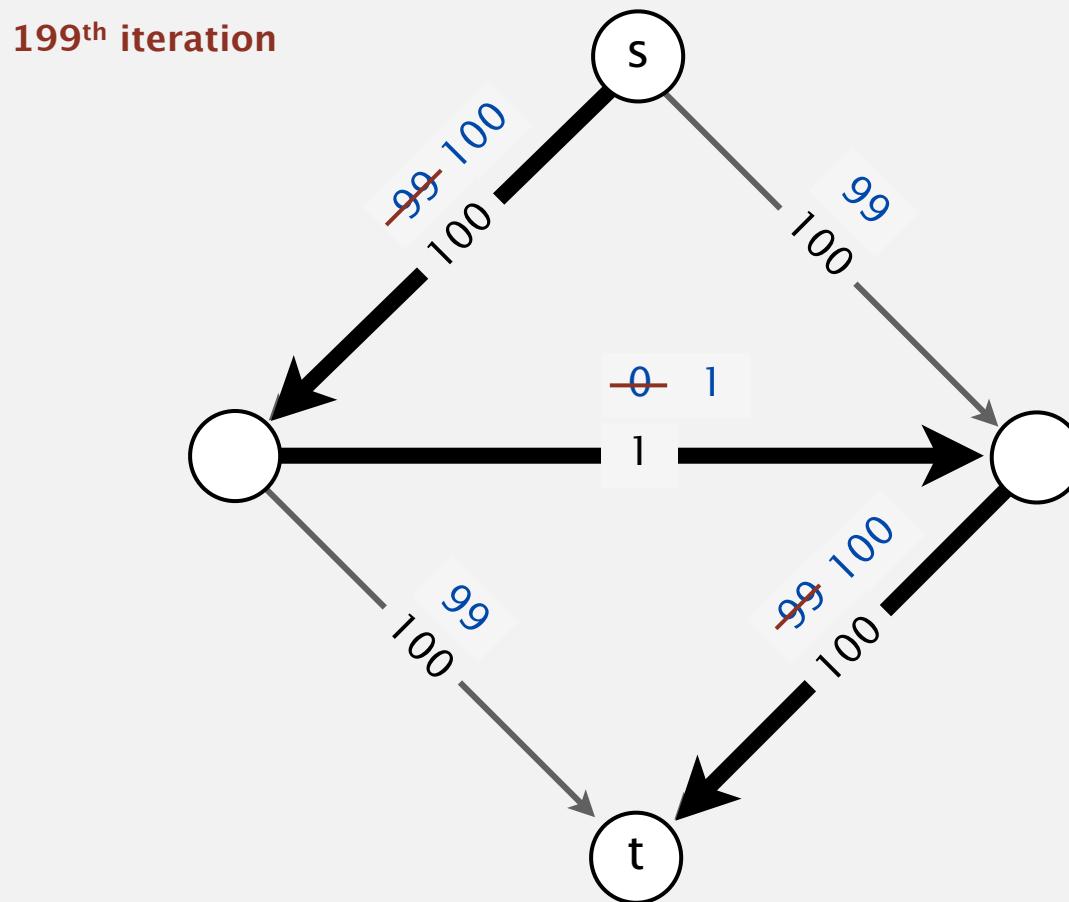
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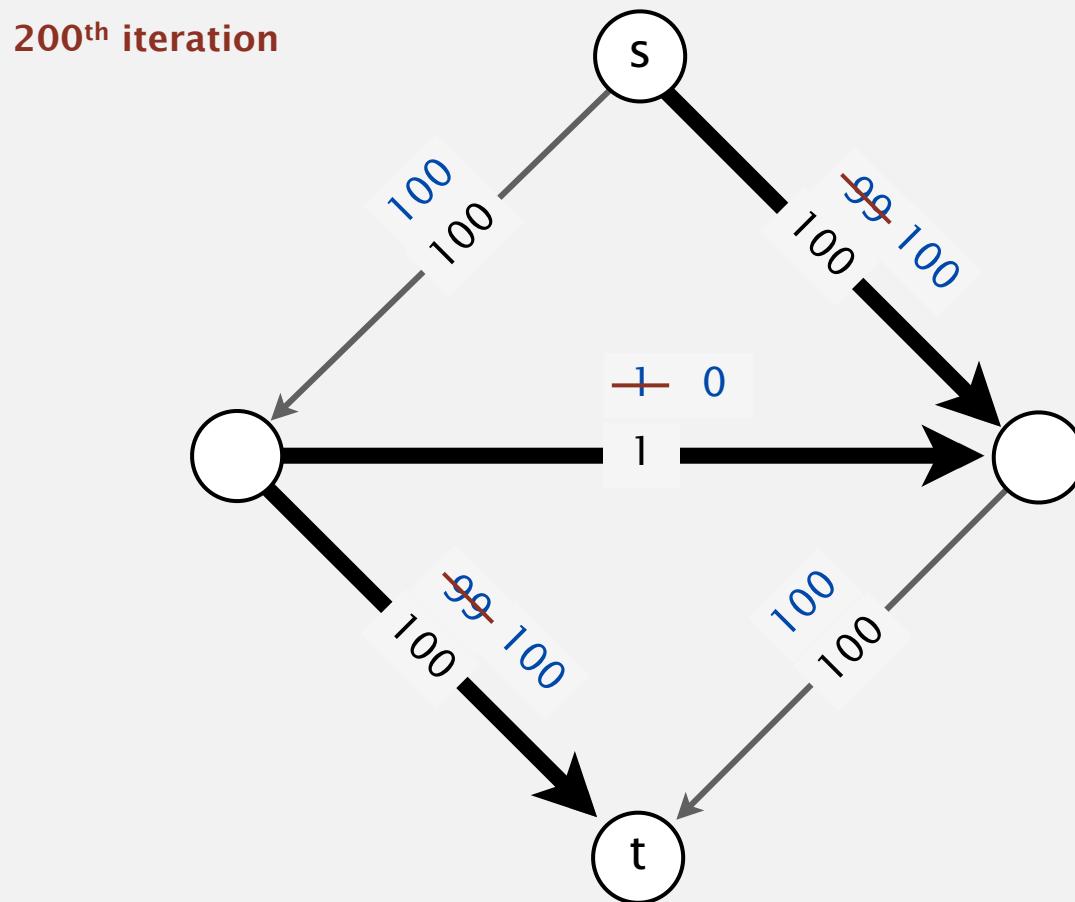
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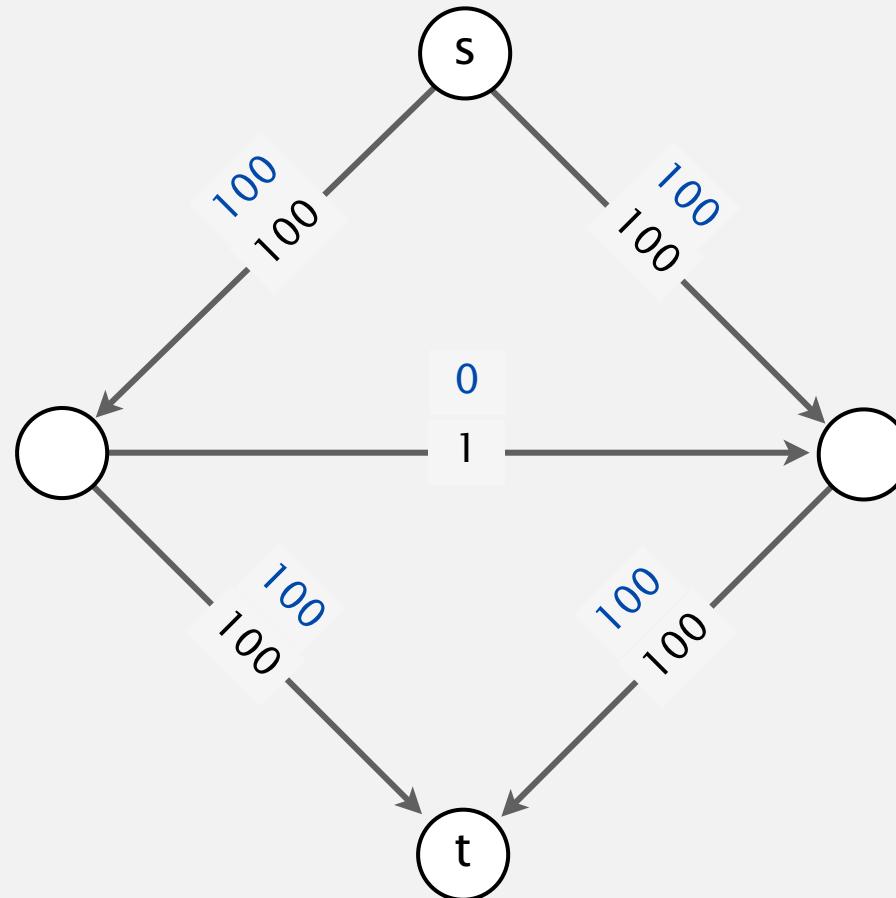


Bad case for Ford-Fulkerson

Bad news. Even when edge capacities are integers, number of augmenting paths could be equal to the value of the maxflow.

can be exponential in input size

Good news. This case is easily avoided. [use shortest/fattest path]



How to choose augmenting paths?

FF performance depends on choice of augmenting paths.

| augmenting path | number of paths | implementation |
|-----------------|------------------------|------------------|
| shortest path | $\leq \frac{1}{2} E V$ | queue (BFS) |
| fattest path | $\leq E \ln(E U)$ | priority queue |
| random path | $\leq E U$ | randomized queue |
| DFS path | $\leq E U$ | stack (DFS) |

digraph with V vertices, E edges, and integer capacities between 1 and U



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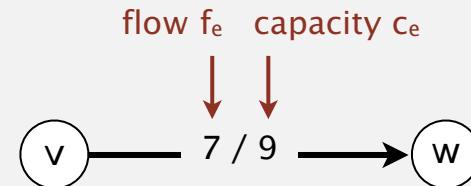
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Flow network representation

Flow edge data type. Associate flow f_e and capacity c_e with edge $e = v \rightarrow w$.



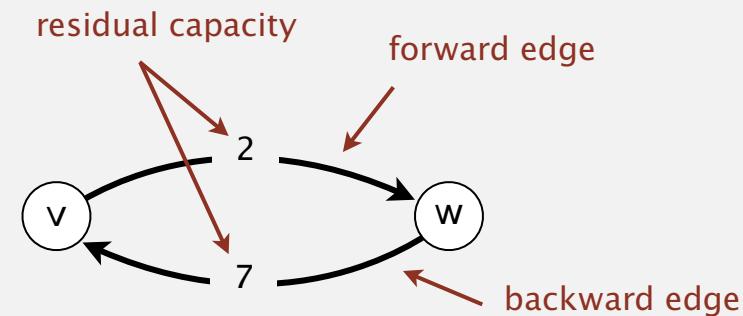
Flow network data type. Need to process edge $e = v \rightarrow w$ in either direction:
Include e in both v and w 's adjacency lists.

Residual capacity.

- Forward edge: residual capacity $= c_e - f_e$.
- Backward edge: residual capacity $= f_e$.

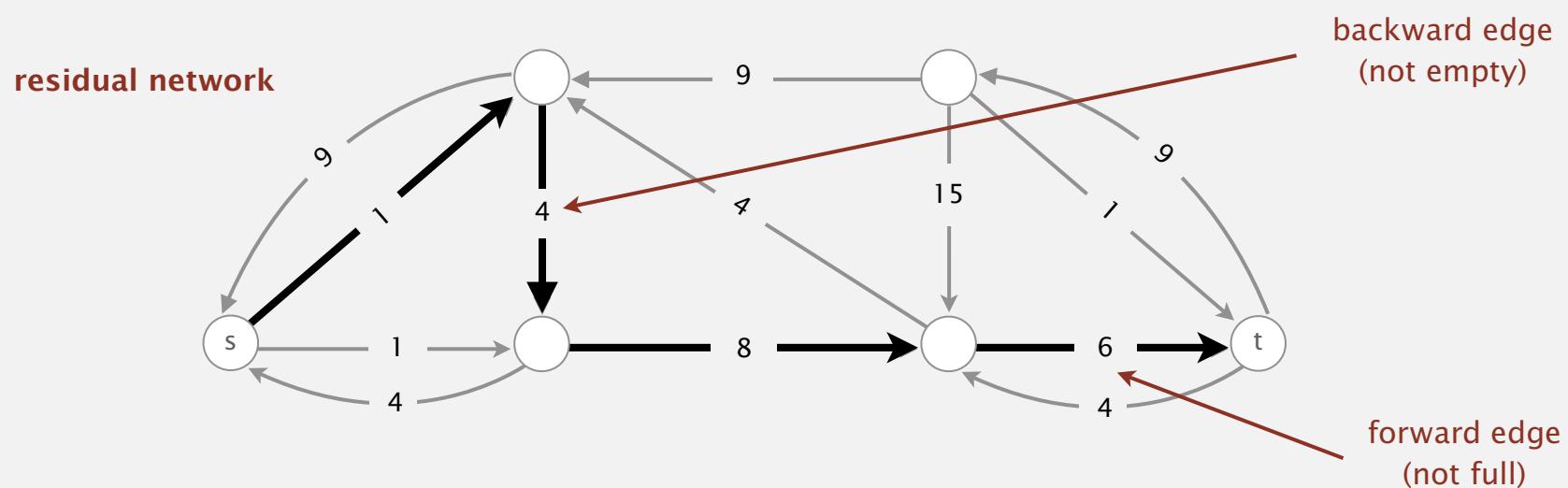
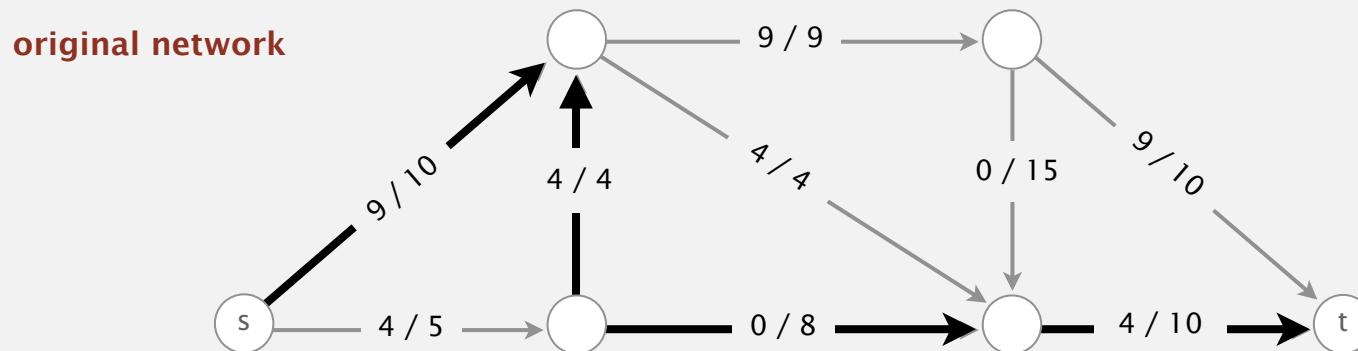
Augment flow.

- Forward edge: add Δ .
- Backward edge: subtract Δ .



Flow network representation

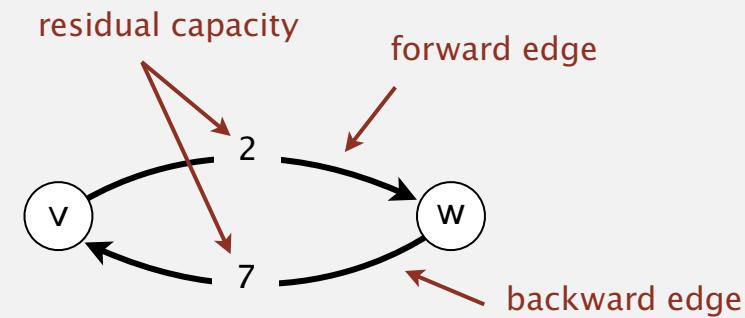
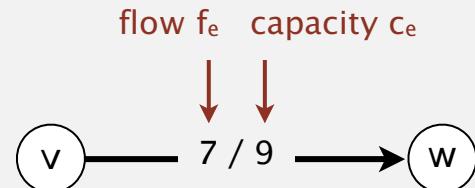
Residual network. A useful view of a flow network.



Key point. Augmenting path in original network is equivalent to directed path in residual network.

Flow edge API

| | |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| public class FlowEdge | |
| FlowEdge(int v, int w, double capacity) | <i>create a flow edge v→w</i> |
| int from() | <i>vertex this edge points from</i> |
| int to() | <i>vertex this edge points to</i> |
| int other(int v) | <i>other endpoint</i> |
| double capacity() | <i>capacity of this edge</i> |
| double flow() | <i>flow in this edge</i> |
| double residualCapacityTo(int v) | <i>residual capacity toward v</i> |
| void addResidualFlowTo(int v, double delta) | <i>add delta flow toward v</i> |
| String toString() | <i>string representation</i> |



Flow edge: Java implementation

```
public class FlowEdge
{
    private final int v, w;          // from and to
    private final double capacity;   // capacity
    private double flow;            // flow
```

← flow variable
(mutable)

```
public FlowEdge(int v, int w, double capacity)
{
    this.v      = v;
    this.w      = w;
    this.capacity = capacity;
}

public int from()      { return v; }
public int to()        { return w; }
public double capacity() { return capacity; }
public double flow()    { return flow; }

public int other(int vertex)
{
    if      (vertex == v) return w;
    else if (vertex == w) return v;
    else throw new RuntimeException("Illegal endpoint");
}

public double residualCapacityTo(int vertex)      {...}
public void addResidualFlowTo(int vertex, double delta) {...}
```

← next slide

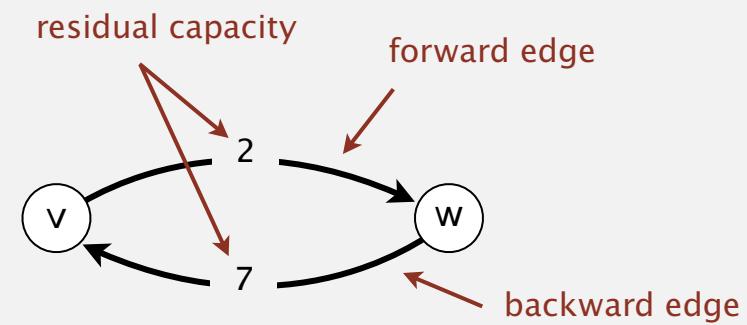
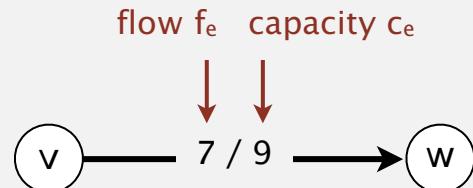
Flow edge: Java implementation

```
public double residualCapacityTo(int vertex)
{
    if (vertex == v) return flow;
    else if (vertex == w) return capacity - flow;
    else throw new IllegalArgumentException();
}
```

← backward edge
← forward edge

```
public void addResidualFlowTo(int vertex, double delta)
{
    if (vertex == v) flow -= delta;
    else if (vertex == w) flow += delta;
    else throw new IllegalArgumentException();
}
```

← backward edge
← forward edge



Flow network API

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| public class FlowNetwork | |
| FlowNetwork(int V) | <i>create an empty flow network with V vertices</i> |
| FlowNetwork(In in) | <i>construct flow network input stream</i> |
| void addEdge(FlowEdge e) | <i>add flow edge e to this flow network</i> |
| Iterable<FlowEdge> adj(int v) | <i>forward and backward edges incident to v</i> |
| Iterable<FlowEdge> edges() | <i>all edges in this flow network</i> |
| int V() | <i>number of vertices</i> |
| int E() | <i>number of edges</i> |
| String toString() | <i>string representation</i> |

Conventions. Allow self-loops and parallel edges.

Flow network: Java implementation

```
public class FlowNetwork
{
    private final int V;
    private Bag<FlowEdge>[] adj;

    public FlowNetwork(int V)
    {
        this.V = V;
        adj = (Bag<FlowEdge>[]) new Bag[V];
        for (int v = 0; v < V; v++)
            adj[v] = new Bag<FlowEdge>();
    }

    public void addEdge(FlowEdge e)
    {
        int v = e.from();
        int w = e.to();
        adj[v].add(e);
        adj[w].add(e);
    }

    public Iterable<FlowEdge> adj(int v)
    { return adj[v]; }
}
```

same as EdgeWeightedGraph,
but adjacency lists of
FlowEdges instead of Edges

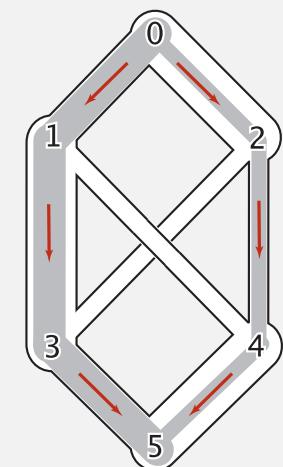
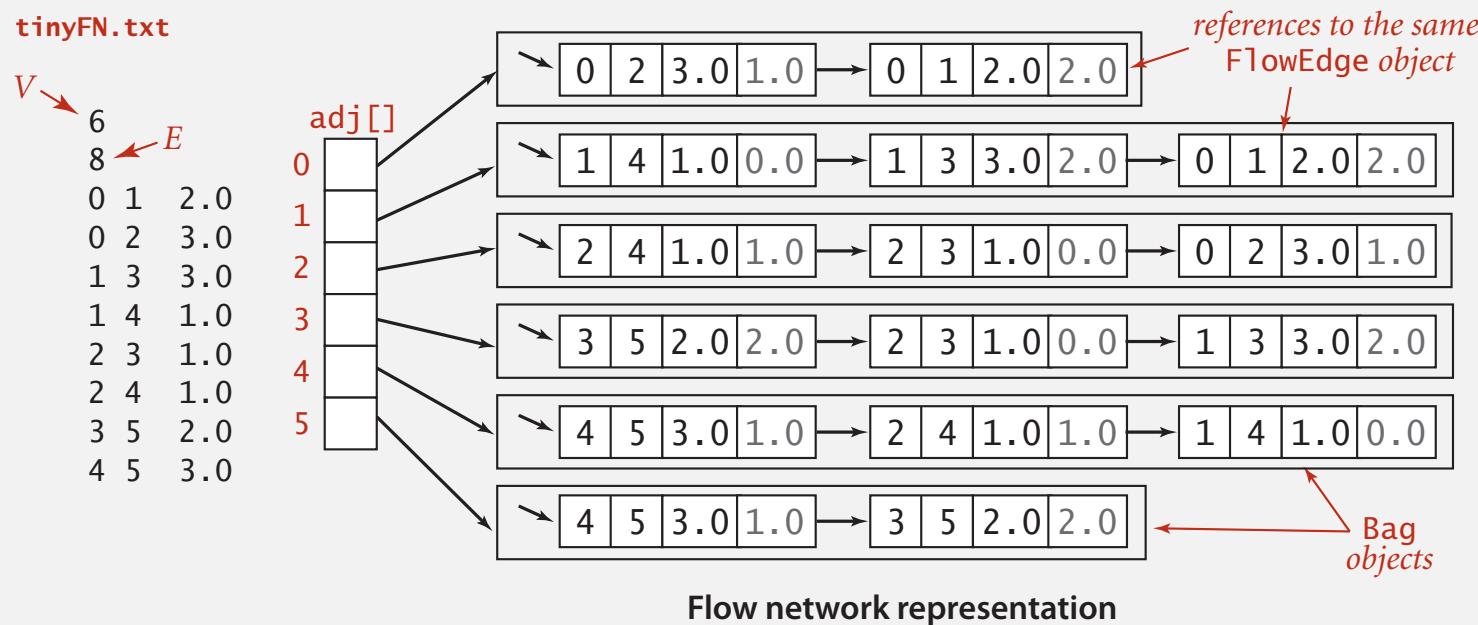


add forward edge
add backward edge



Flow network: adjacency-lists representation

Maintain vertex-indexed array of FlowEdge lists (use Bag abstraction).



Ford-Fulkerson: Java implementation

```
public class FordFulkerson
{
    private boolean[] marked;      // true if s->v path in residual network
    private FlowEdge[] edgeTo;     // last edge on s->v path
    private double value;         // value of flow

    public FordFulkerson(FlowNetwork G, int s, int t)
    {
        value = 0.0;
        while (hasAugmentingPath(G, s, t))
        {
            double bottle = Double.POSITIVE_INFINITY;
            for (int v = t; v != s; v = edgeTo[v].other(v))
                bottle = Math.min(bottle, edgeTo[v].residualCapacityTo(v)); ← compute bottleneck capacity

            for (int v = t; v != s; v = edgeTo[v].other(v))
                edgeTo[v].addResidualFlowTo(v, bottle); ← augment flow

            value += bottle;
        }
    }

    private boolean hasAugmentingPath(FlowNetwork G, int s, int t)
    { /* See next slide. */ }

    public double value()
    { return value; }

    public boolean inCut(int v) ← is v reachable from s in residual network?
    { return marked[v]; }
}
```

Finding a shortest augmenting path (cf. breadth-first search)

```
private boolean hasAugmentingPath(FlowNetwork G, int s, int t)
{
    edgeTo = new FlowEdge[G.V()];
    marked = new boolean[G.V()];

    Queue<Integer> queue = new Queue<Integer>();
    queue.enqueue(s);
    marked[s] = true;
    while (!queue.isEmpty())
    {
        int v = queue.dequeue();

        for (FlowEdge e : G.adj(v))          found path from s to w
        {                                     in the residual network?
            int w = e.other(v);
            if (e.residualCapacityTo(w) > 0 && !marked[w])
            {
                edgeTo[w] = e;           save last edge on path to w;
                marked[w] = true;        ← mark w;
                queue.enqueue(w);       add w to the queue
            }
        }
        return marked[t];      ← is t reachable from s in residual network?
    }
}
```

Algorithms

ROBERT SEDGEWICK | KEVIN WAYNE

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6.4 MAXIMUM FLOW

- ▶ *introduction*
- ▶ *Ford-Fulkerson algorithm*
- ▶ *maxflow-mincut theorem*
- ▶ *running time analysis*
- ▶ ***Java implementation***
- ▶ *applications*

Algorithms

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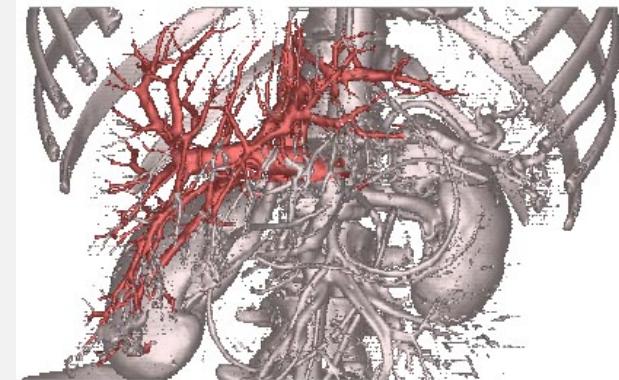
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Maxflow and mincut applications

Maxflow/mincut is a widely applicable problem-solving model.

- Data mining.
- Open-pit mining.
- Bipartite matching.
- Network reliability.
- Baseball elimination.
- Image segmentation.
- Network connectivity.
- Distributed computing.
- Security of statistical data.
- Egalitarian stable matching.
- Multi-camera scene reconstruction.
- Sensor placement for homeland security.
- Many, many, more.



liver and hepatic vascularization segmentation

Bipartite matching problem

N students apply for N jobs.



Each gets several offers.



Is there a way to match all students to jobs?



bipartite matching problem

| | | | |
|---|----------|----|----------|
| 1 | Alice | 6 | Adobe |
| | Adobe | | Alice |
| | Amazon | | Bob |
| | Google | | Carol |
| 2 | Bob | 7 | Amazon |
| | Adobe | | Alice |
| | Amazon | | Bob |
| 3 | Carol | | Dave |
| | Adobe | | Eliza |
| | Facebook | 8 | Facebook |
| | Google | | Carol |
| 4 | Dave | 9 | Google |
| | Amazon | | Alice |
| | Yahoo | | Carol |
| 5 | Eliza | 10 | Yahoo |
| | Amazon | | Dave |
| | Yahoo | | Eliza |

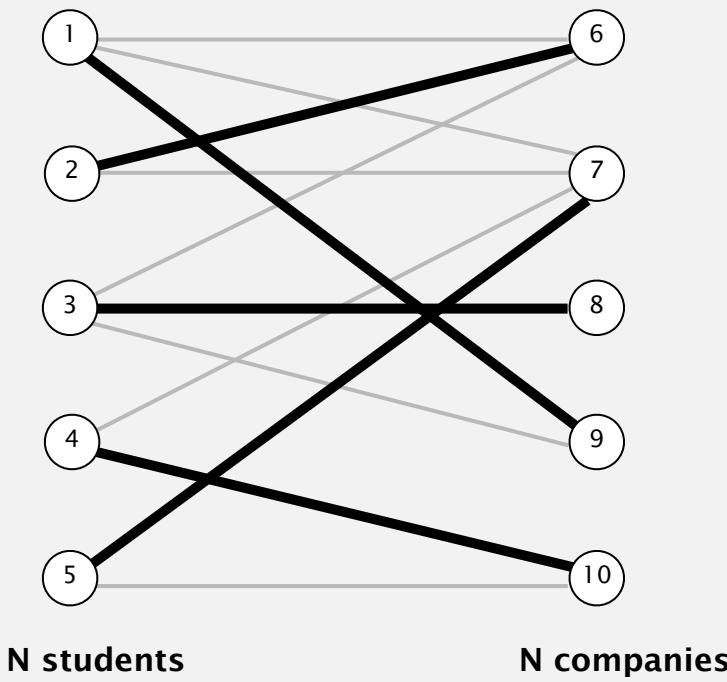
Bipartite matching problem

Given a bipartite graph, find a perfect matching.

perfect matching (solution)

| | |
|-------|------------|
| Alice | — Google |
| Bob | — Adobe |
| Carol | — Facebook |
| Dave | — Yahoo |
| Eliza | — Amazon |

bipartite graph

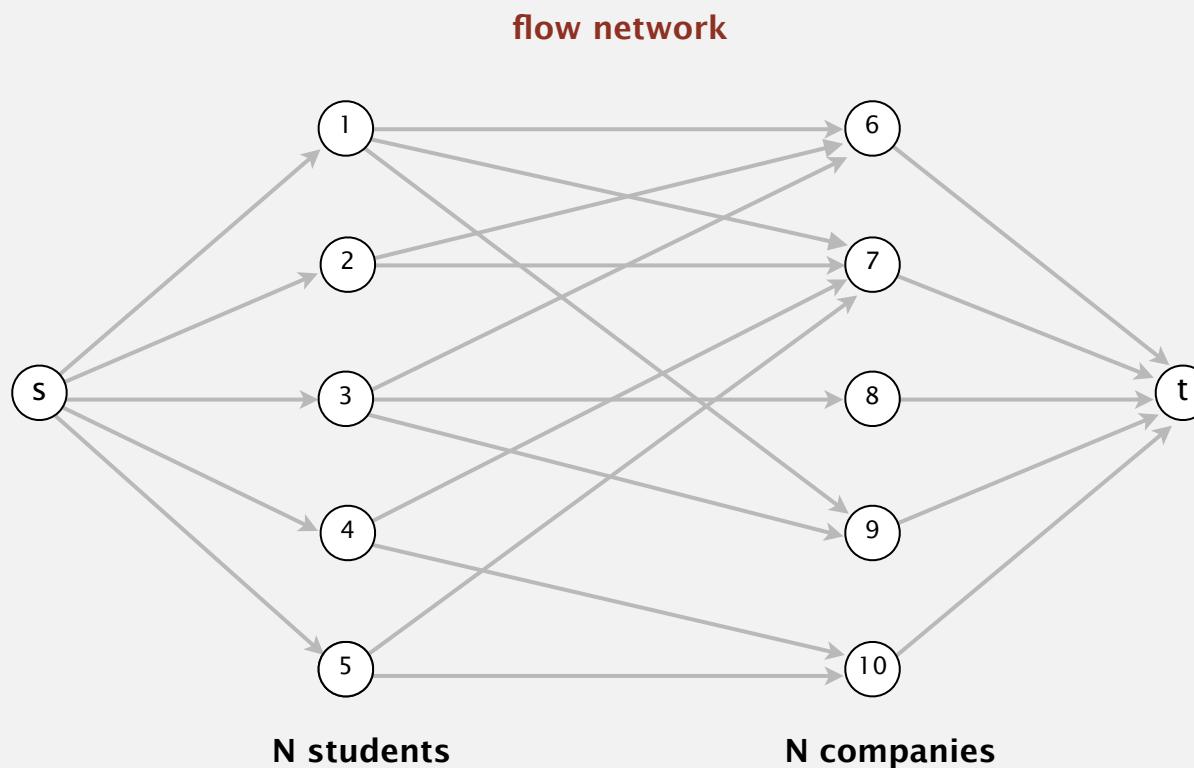


bipartite matching problem

| | | | |
|---|-------|----|----------|
| 1 | Alice | 6 | Adobe |
| | | | Alice |
| 2 | Bob | 7 | Amazon |
| | | | Bob |
| 3 | Carol | 8 | Facebook |
| | | | Carol |
| 4 | Dave | 9 | Google |
| | | | Dave |
| 5 | Eliza | 10 | Yahoo |
| | | | Eliza |

Network flow formulation of bipartite matching

- Create s, t , one vertex for each student, and one vertex for each job.
- Add edge from s to each student (capacity 1).
- Add edge from each job to t (capacity 1).
- Add edge from student to each job offered (infinite capacity).

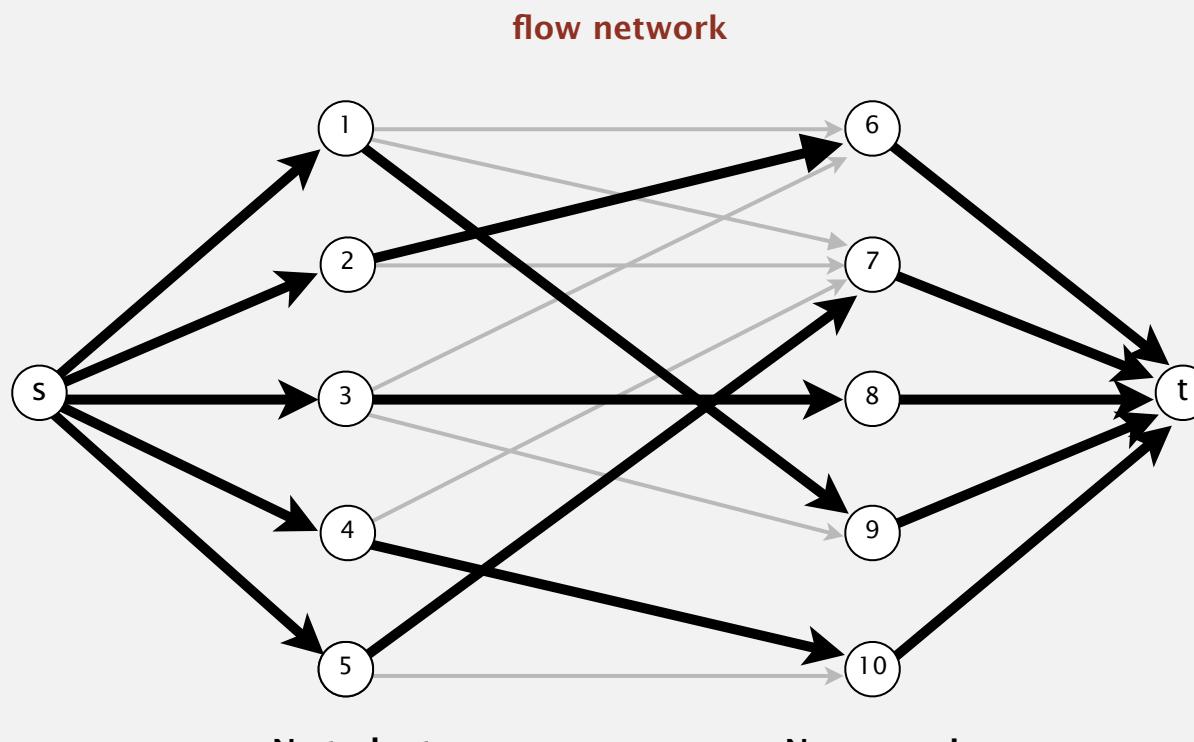


bipartite matching problem

| | | | |
|---|----------|----|----------|
| 1 | Alice | 6 | Adobe |
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| | Amazon | | Dave |
| | Yahoo | | Eliza |

Network flow formulation of bipartite matching

1-1 correspondence between perfect matchings in bipartite graph and integer-valued maxflows of value N .

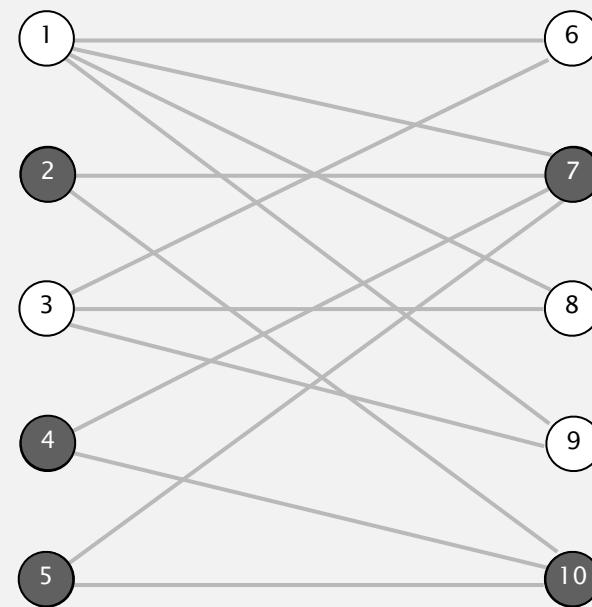


bipartite matching problem

| | | | |
|---|----------|----|----------|
| 1 | Alice | 6 | Adobe |
| | Adobe | | Alice |
| | Amazon | | Bob |
| | Google | | Carol |
| 2 | Bob | 7 | Amazon |
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| | Yahoo | | Carol |
| 5 | Eliza | 10 | Yahoo |
| | Amazon | | Dave |
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What the mincut tells us

Goal. When no perfect matching, explain why.



no perfect matching exists

$$S = \{ 2, 4, 5 \}$$
$$T = \{ 7, 10 \}$$

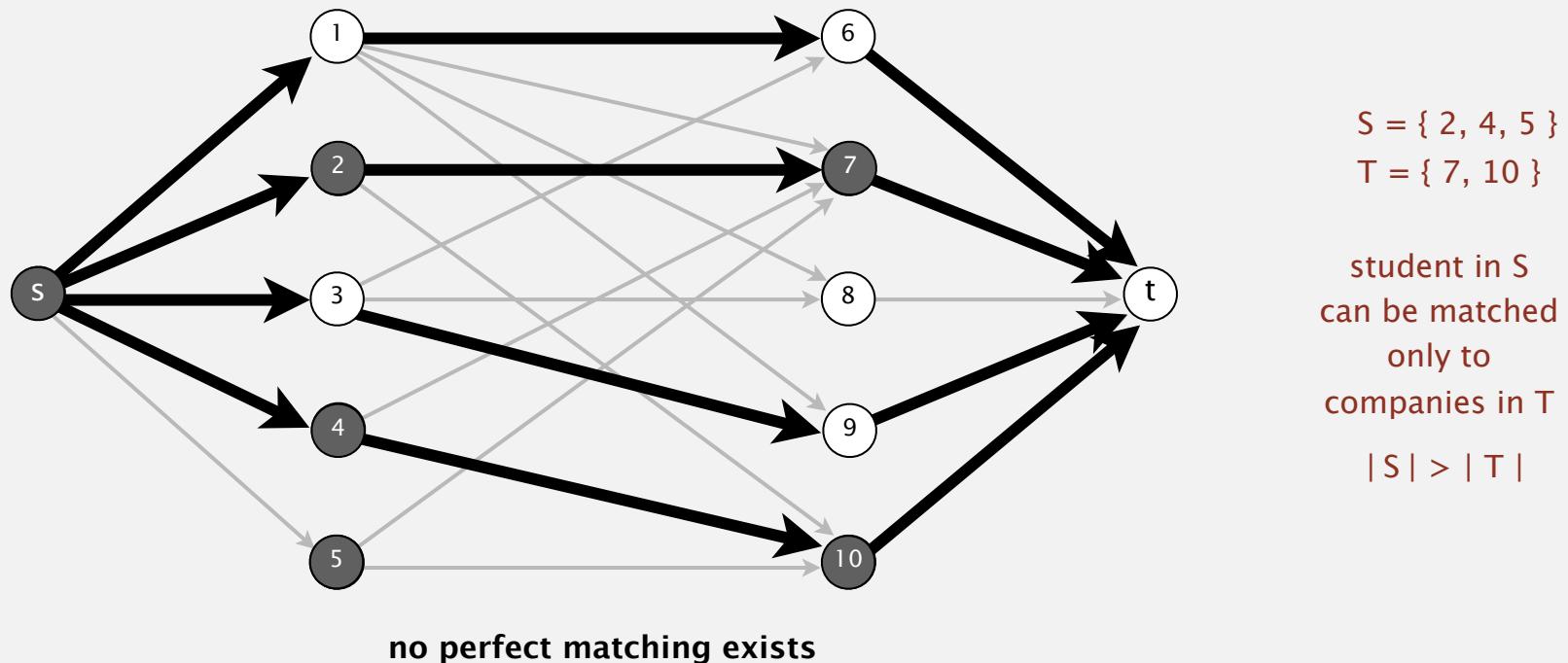
student in S
can be matched
only to
companies in T

$$|S| > |T|$$

What the mincut tells us

Mincut. Consider mincut (A, B) .

- Let S = students on s side of cut.
- Let T = companies on s side of cut.
- Fact: $|S| > |T|$; students in S can be matched only to companies in T .



Bottom line. When no perfect matching, mincut explains why.

Baseball elimination problem

Q. Which teams have a chance of finishing the season with the most wins?

| i | team | wins | losses | to play | ATL | PHI | NYM | MON | |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|--------|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|
| 0 |  | Atlanta | 83 | 71 | 8 | - | 1 | 6 | 1 |
| 1 |  | Philly | 80 | 79 | 3 | 1 | - | 0 | 2 |
| 2 |  | New York | 78 | 78 | 6 | 6 | 0 | - | 0 |
| 3 |  | Montreal | 77 | 82 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | - |

Montreal is mathematically eliminated.

- Montreal finishes with ≤ 80 wins.
- Atlanta already has 83 wins.

Baseball elimination problem

Q. Which teams have a chance of finishing the season with the most wins?

| i | team | wins | losses | to play | ATL | PHI | NYM | MON | |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|--------|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|
| 0 |  | Atlanta | 83 | 71 | 8 | - | 1 | 6 | 1 |
| 1 |  | Philly | 80 | 79 | 3 | 1 | - | 0 | 2 |
| 2 |  | New York | 78 | 78 | 6 | 6 | 0 | - | 0 |
| 3 |  | Montreal | 77 | 82 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 0 | - |

Philadelphia is mathematically eliminated.

- Philadelphia finishes with ≤ 83 wins.
- Either New York or Atlanta will finish with ≥ 84 wins.

Observation. Answer depends not only on how many games already won and left to play, but on **whom** they're against.

Baseball elimination problem

Q. Which teams have a chance of finishing the season with the most wins?

| i | team | wins | losses | to play | NYY | BAL | BOS | TOR | DET | |
|---|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|--------|---------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|---|
| 0 |  | New York | 75 | 59 | 28 | - | 3 | 8 | 7 | 3 |
| 1 |  | Baltimore | 71 | 63 | 28 | 3 | - | 2 | 7 | 4 |
| 2 |  | Boston | 69 | 66 | 27 | 8 | 2 | - | 0 | 0 |
| 3 |  | Toronto | 63 | 72 | 27 | 7 | 7 | 0 | - | 0 |
| 4 |  | Detroit | 49 | 86 | 27 | 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 | - |

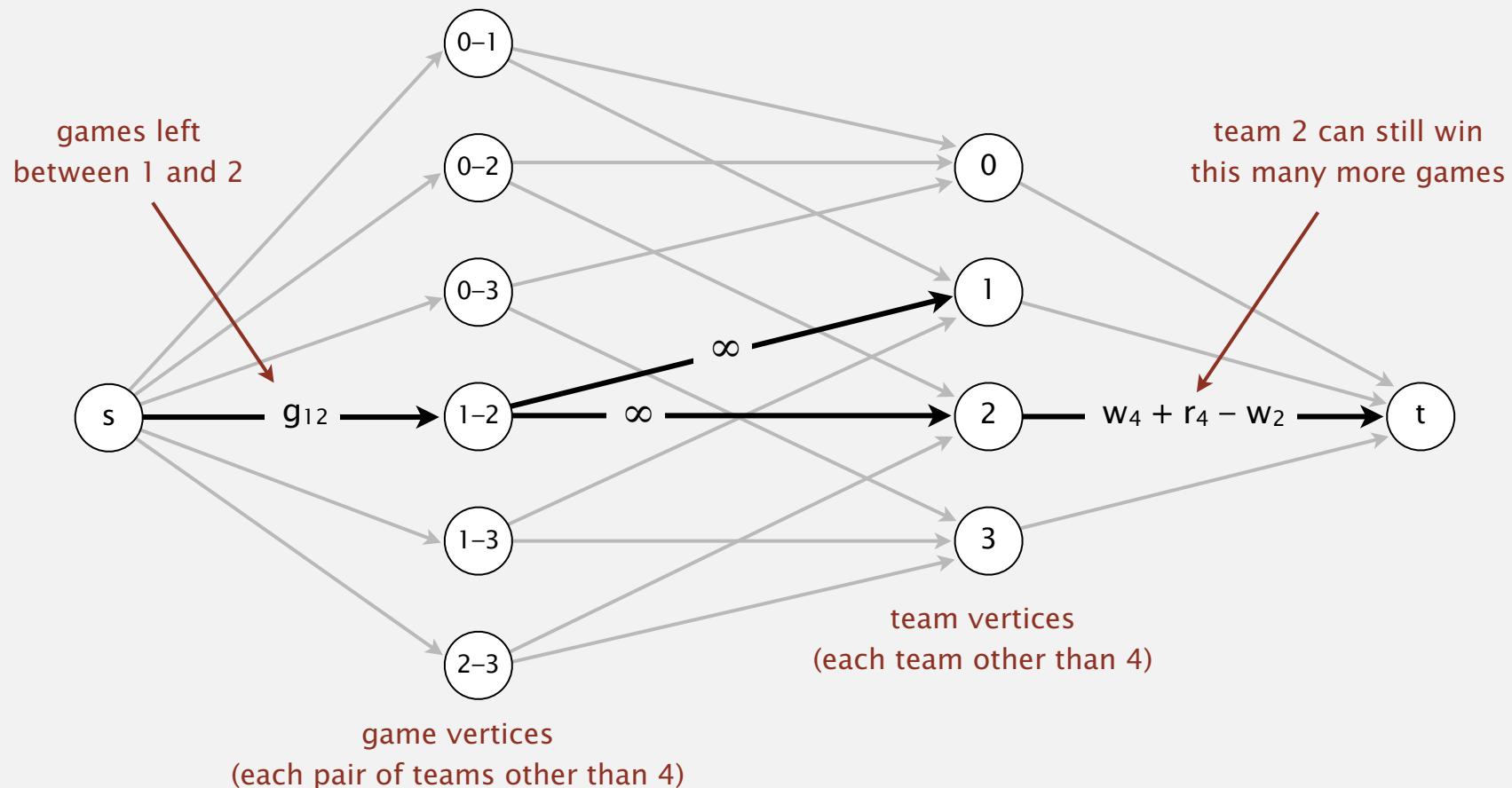
AL East (August 30, 1996)

Detroit is mathematically eliminated.

- Detroit finishes with ≤ 76 wins.
- Wins for $R = \{ \text{NYY}, \text{BAL}, \text{BOS}, \text{TOR} \} = 278$.
- Remaining games among $\{ \text{NYY}, \text{BAL}, \text{BOS}, \text{TOR} \} = 3 + 8 + 7 + 2 + 7 = 27$.
- Average team in R wins $305/4 = 76.25$ games.

Baseball elimination problem: maxflow formulation

Intuition. Remaining games flow from s to t .



Fact. Team 4 not eliminated iff all edges pointing from s are full in maxflow.

Maximum flow algorithms: theory

(Yet another) holy grail for theoretical computer scientists.

| year | method | worst case | discovered by |
|------|--------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1951 | simplex | $E^3 U$ | Dantzig |
| 1955 | augmenting path | $E^2 U$ | Ford-Fulkerson |
| 1970 | shortest augmenting path | E^3 | Dinitz, Edmonds-Karp |
| 1970 | fattest augmenting path | $E^2 \log E \log(EU)$ | Dinitz, Edmonds-Karp |
| 1977 | blocking flow | $E^{5/2}$ | Cherkasky |
| 1978 | blocking flow | $E^{7/3}$ | Galil |
| 1983 | dynamic trees | $E^2 \log E$ | Sleator-Tarjan |
| 1985 | capacity scaling | $E^2 \log U$ | Gabow |
| 1997 | length function | $E^{3/2} \log E \log U$ | Goldberg-Rao |
| 2012 | compact network | $E^2 / \log E$ | Orlin |
| ? | ? | E | ? |

maxflow algorithms for sparse digraphs with E edges, integer capacities between 1 and U

Maximum flow algorithms: practice

Warning. Worst-case order-of-growth is generally not useful for predicting or comparing maxflow algorithm performance in practice.

Best in practice. Push-relabel method with gap relabeling: $E^{3/2}$.

On Implementing Push-Relabel Method for the Maximum Flow Problem

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Abstract. We study efficient implementations of the push-relabel method for the maximum flow problem. The resulting codes are faster than the previous codes, and much faster on some problem families. The speedup is due to the combination of heuristics used in our implementations. We also exhibit a family of problems for which the running time of all known methods seem to have a roughly quadratic growth rate.



European Journal of Operational Research 97 (1997) 509–542

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RESEARCH

Theory and Methodology

Computational investigations of maximum flow algorithms

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Received 30 August 1995; accepted 27 June 1996

Summary

Mincut problem. Find an st -cut of minimum capacity.

Maxflow problem. Find an st -flow of maximum value.

Duality. Value of the maxflow = capacity of mincut.

Proven successful approaches.

- Ford-Fulkerson (various augmenting-path strategies).
- Preflow-push (various versions).

Open research challenges.

- Practice: solve real-world maxflow/mincut problems in linear time.
- Theory: prove it for worst-case inputs.
- Still much to be learned!

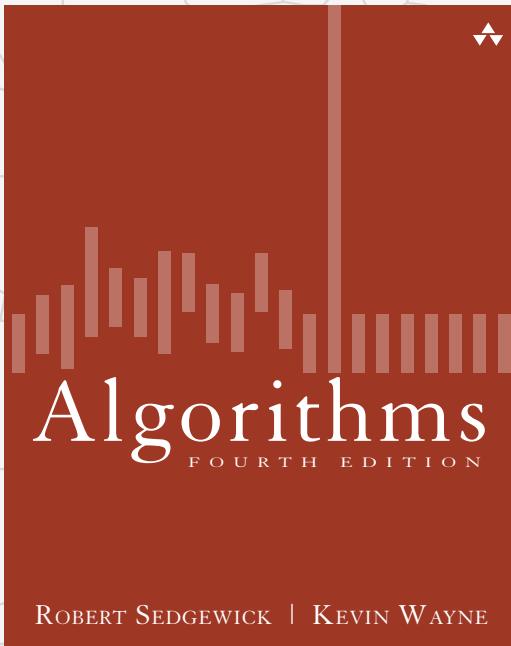
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