

Path Planning

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Objectives

Specific Objectives

- Role of path planning in robotics
- Main techniques

Source

- Stuart Russell & Peter Norvig (2009). Artificial Intelligence: A Modern Approach. (3rd Edition). Ed. Pearson
- P. Muñoz, B. Castaño and M.D. R-Moreno. 3Dana: A Path Planning Algorithm for Surface Robotics (2017). Int. Scientific Journal Engineering Applications of AI. Vol. 60, pp:175-192

Outline

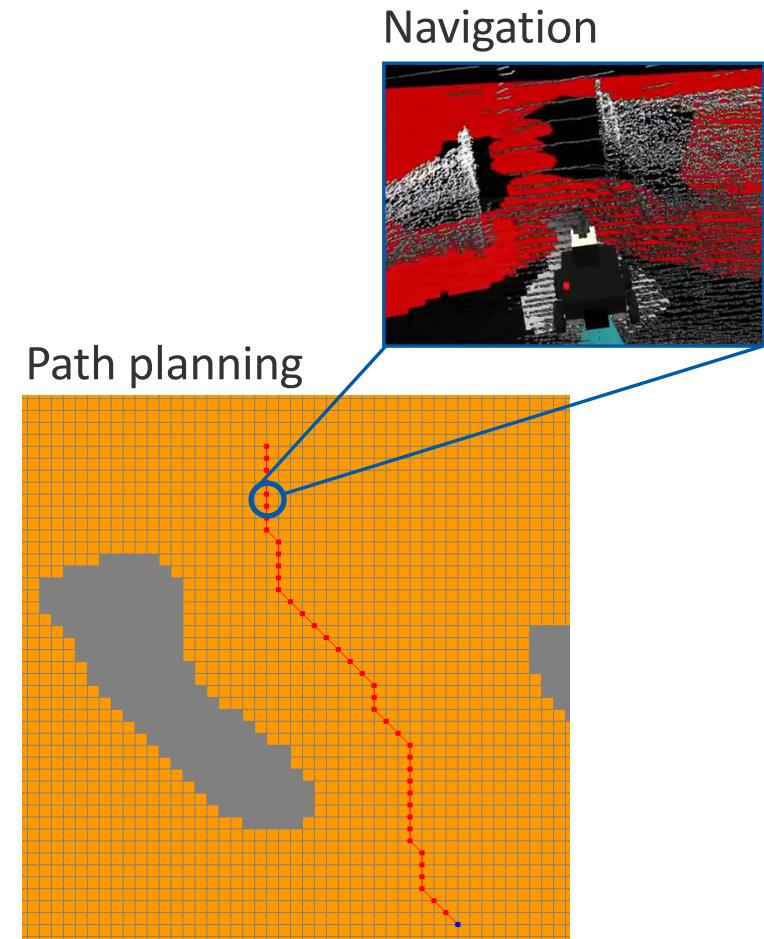
- Introduction
- Dijkstra
- A*
- A*PS
- Theta*
- S-Theta*
- Conclusions

Introduction

- Path-planning problem aims to obtain feasible and optimal (or near to it) routes between two or more points
 - Find optimal (or near to it) paths is not trivial
 - Feasible implies not transverse over obstacles or overcome system limitations
 - Usually parameters: path length, run-time, expanded nodes and number of heading changes
- It is a fundamental task in mobile robots and video games

Introduction

- Navigation
 - Local paths
 - Guided by sensors
- Path Planning
 - Global paths
 - Known terrain
 - Related to AI



Introduction

- First point to address: the environment
 - Local planning vs Long term planning
 - Totally observable vs Partially observable
 - Discrete vs Continuous
 - Dynamic environment? Maybe
 - Extra information on the terrain? Maybe

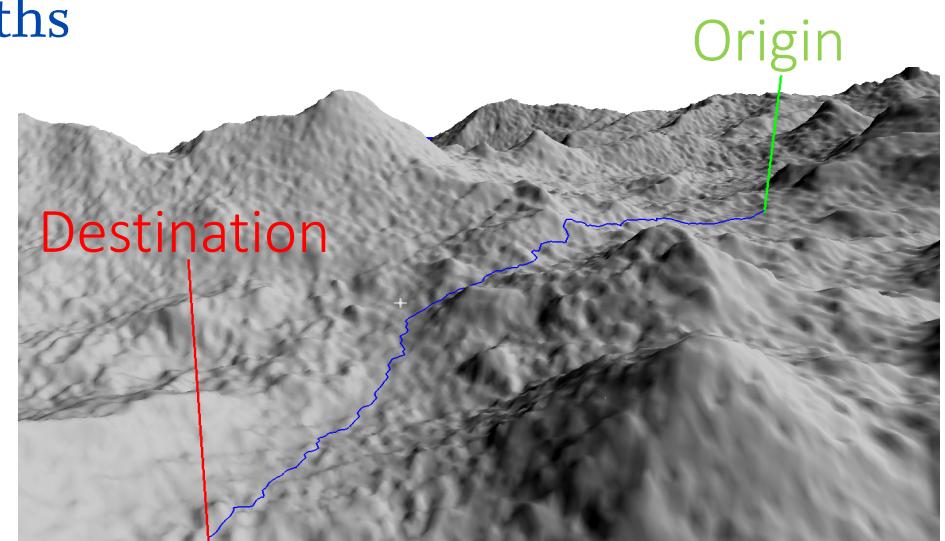


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Introduction

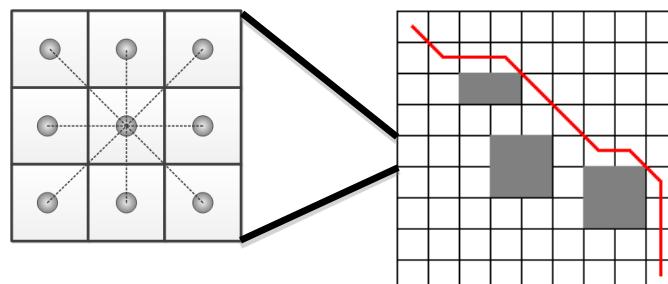
- Long term path-planning is more related to AI
- Easier with fully observable environment
- High effort trying to obtain optimal paths
- In some domains (such as planetary exploration) path-planning and task-planning are highly coupled



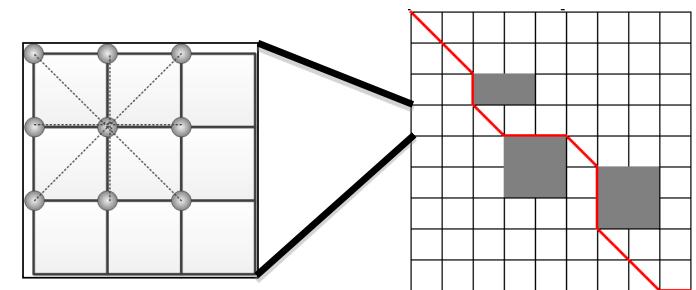
Introduction

- Classical path-planning algorithms are based on A* algorithm
- Works over 2D grids with blocked and unblocked cells
- Nodes are (*usually*) 8-connected with its neighbors
- Two representations:

Center node

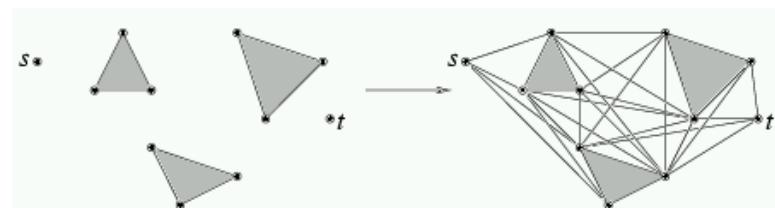
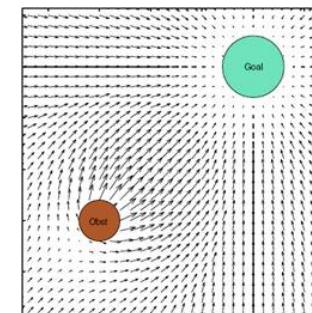
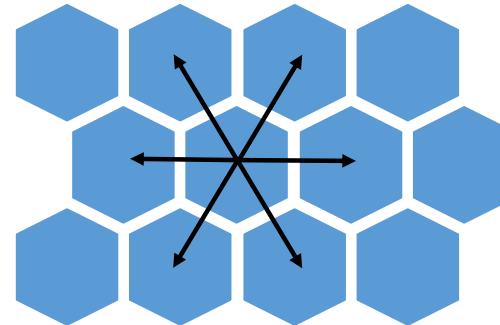


Corner node



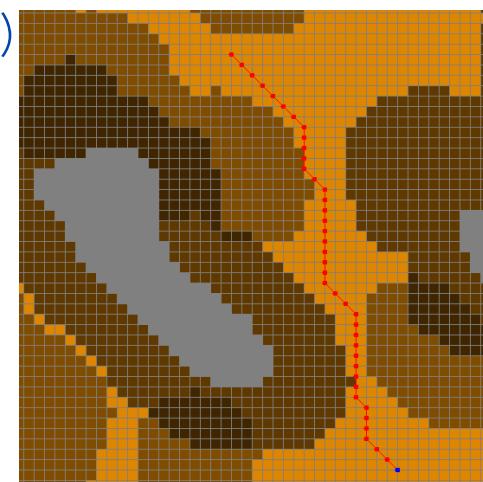
Introduction

- Hexagonal cells
 - 6 neighbours
 - More complex!
- Potential fields
 - Attraction/repulsion
- Visibility graphs
 - Pair of interconnected points
 - Expensive to calculate
 - Fast and optimal solution
 - [Video](#)



Introduction

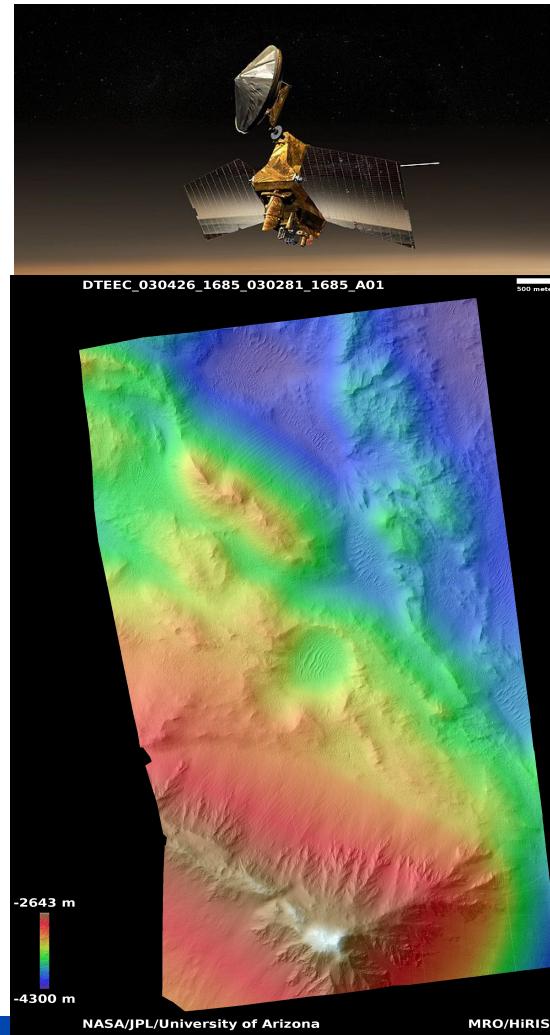
- Costs maps
 - Extension of 2D maps
 - Add information
 - Typically, lineal combination of factors (rocks, hills, etc)
- Goal: avoid hazardous areas



Introduction

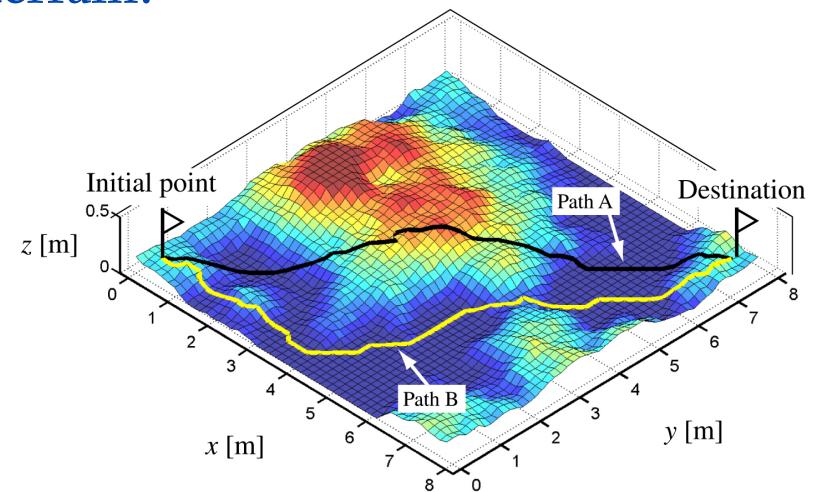
- Digital terrain models (DTM)
- Mars on high resolution
 - From 2m of horizontal resolution
 - Up to 25cm!
 - Vertical resolution in dc
- Used for planning (MER/MSL)
- Free download

www.uahirise.org/dtm



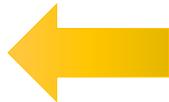
Introduction

- For dynamic environments usually a replanning strategy is followed
- Optimize the replanning process?
- What can be taken into consideration into the terrain?
 - Altitude → DEM
 - Hazardous areas



Introduction

- Deterministic algorithms
 - Non Informed search
 - Heuristic search
- Stochastic algorithms
 - Tree search
 - Genetic algorithms
 - Ant colony



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Dijkstra

- Non informed search
- Pick the unvisited vertex with the lowest-distance
- Calculate the distance through it to each unvisited neighbor
- Update the neighbor's distance if smaller
- Mark visited when done with neighbors

Dijkstra

```
1  function Dijkstra(Graph, source):
2      dist[source] := 0                                // Initializations
3      for each vertex v in Graph:
4          if v ≠ source
5              dist[v] := infinity                      // Unknown distance from source to v
6              previous[v] := undefined                 // Predecessor of v
7          end if
8          PQ.add_with_priority(v,dist[v])
9      end for
10
11
12     while PQ is not empty:                         // The main loop
13         u := PQ.extract_min()                      // Remove and return best vertex
14         for each neighbor v of u:                  // where v has not yet been removed from PQ.
15             alt = dist[u] + length(u, v)
16             if alt < dist[v]                        // Relax the edge (u,v)
17                 dist[v] := alt
18                 previous[v] := u
19                 PQ.decrease_priority(v,alt)
20             end if
21         end for
22     end while
23     return previous[]
```

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A*

- A* makes guided search using two values:
 - Accumulate cost ($G(t)$): cost to reach a node
 - Heuristic ($H(t)$): predicted cost to achieve goal from a node (Euclidian distance, Octal distance)
- Node Evaluation: $F(t) = G(t)+H(t)$
- A* is simple, fast and guarantee optimal paths in eight-connected grids
- Artificially restricted to 45° headings

Algorithm 1 A* search

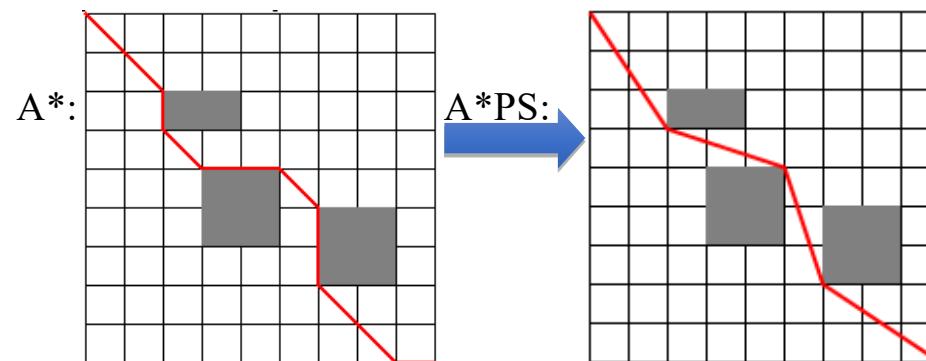
```
1   $G(s) \leftarrow 0$ 
2   $parent(s) \leftarrow s$ 
3   $open \leftarrow \emptyset$ 
4   $open.insert(s, G(s), H(s))$ 
5   $closed \leftarrow \emptyset$ 
6  while  $open \neq \emptyset$  do
7       $p \leftarrow open.pop()$ 
8      if  $p = g$  then
9          return  $path$ 
10     end if
11      $closed.insert(p)$ 
12     for  $t \in neighbours(p)$  do
13         if  $t \notin closed$  then
14             if  $t \notin open$  then
15                  $G(t) \leftarrow \infty$ 
16                  $parent(t) \leftarrow null$ 
17             end if
18              $UpdateVertex(p, t)$ 
19         end if
20     end for
21 end while
22 return  $fail$ 
```

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A* Post Processed

- A* Post Processed (A*PS) tries to smooth A* routes by removing intermediate nodes when there is line of sight between 2 no neighbors nodes, that is, there are no obstacles



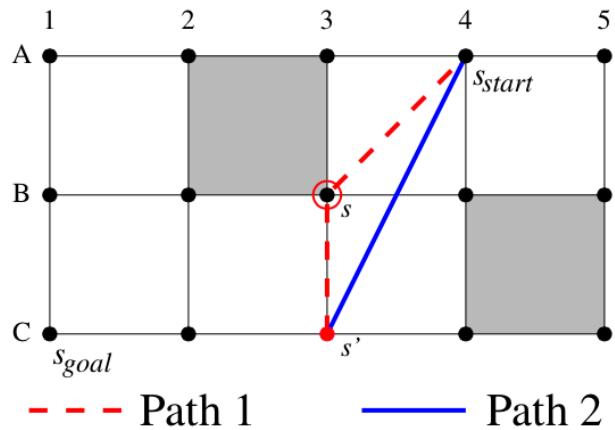
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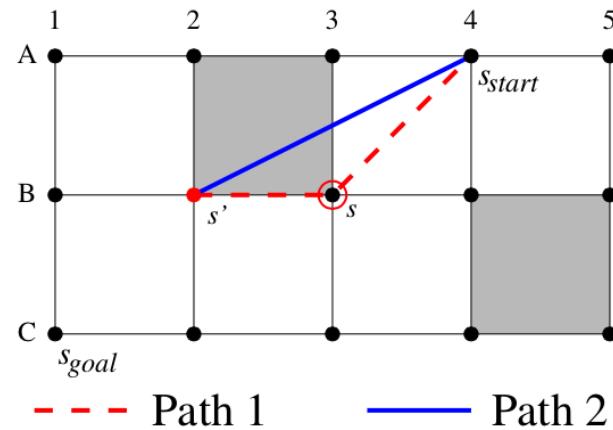
Theta*

- Theta* is a variation of A* that integrates the line of sight check during search
- For this reason Theta* is not restricted to 45° headings, and gets more realistic paths than A* without post processing
- Theta* is slower than A* due to line of sight calculation, but paths are shorter and smoothest

Theta*



(a) Path 2 is unblocked



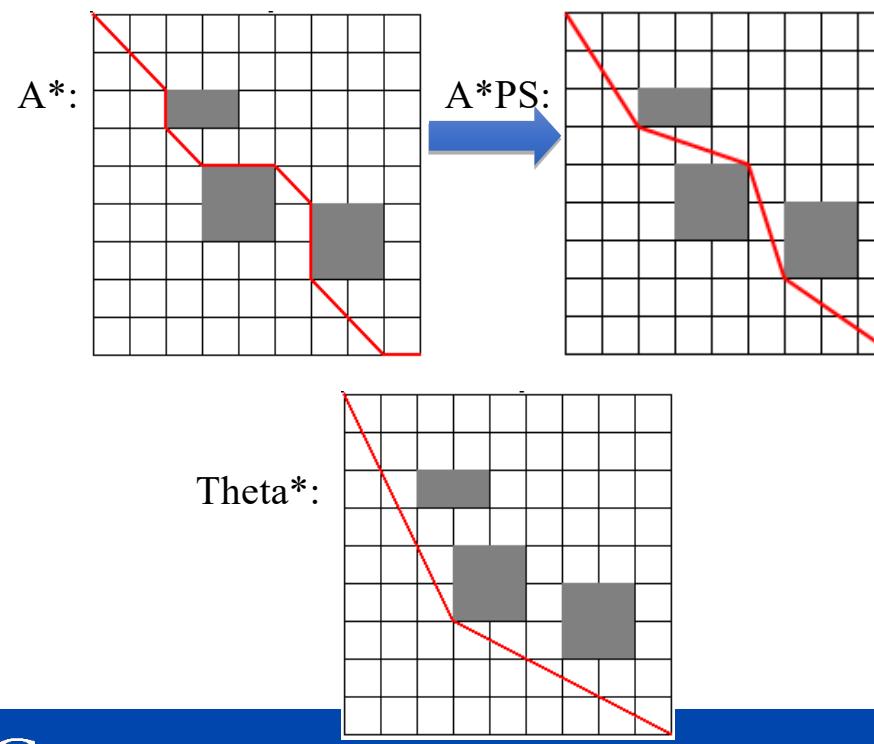
(b) Path 2 is blocked

Algorithm 2 Update vertex function for Basic Theta*

```
1  UpdateVertex(p, t)
2  if LineOfSight(parent(p), t) then
3      if G(parent(p)) + dist(parent(p), t) < G(t) then
4          G(t)  $\leftarrow$  G(parent(p)) + dist(parent(p), t)
5          parent(t)  $\leftarrow$  parent(p)
6          if t  $\in$  open then
7              open.remove(t)
8          end if
9          open.insert(t, G(t), H(t))
10         end if
11     else
12         if G(p) + dist(p, t) < G(t) then
13             G(t)  $\leftarrow$  G(p) + dist(p, t)
14             parent(t)  $\leftarrow$  p
15             if t  $\in$  open then
16                 open.remove(t)
17             end if
18             open.insert(t, G(t), H(t))
19         end if
20     end if
```

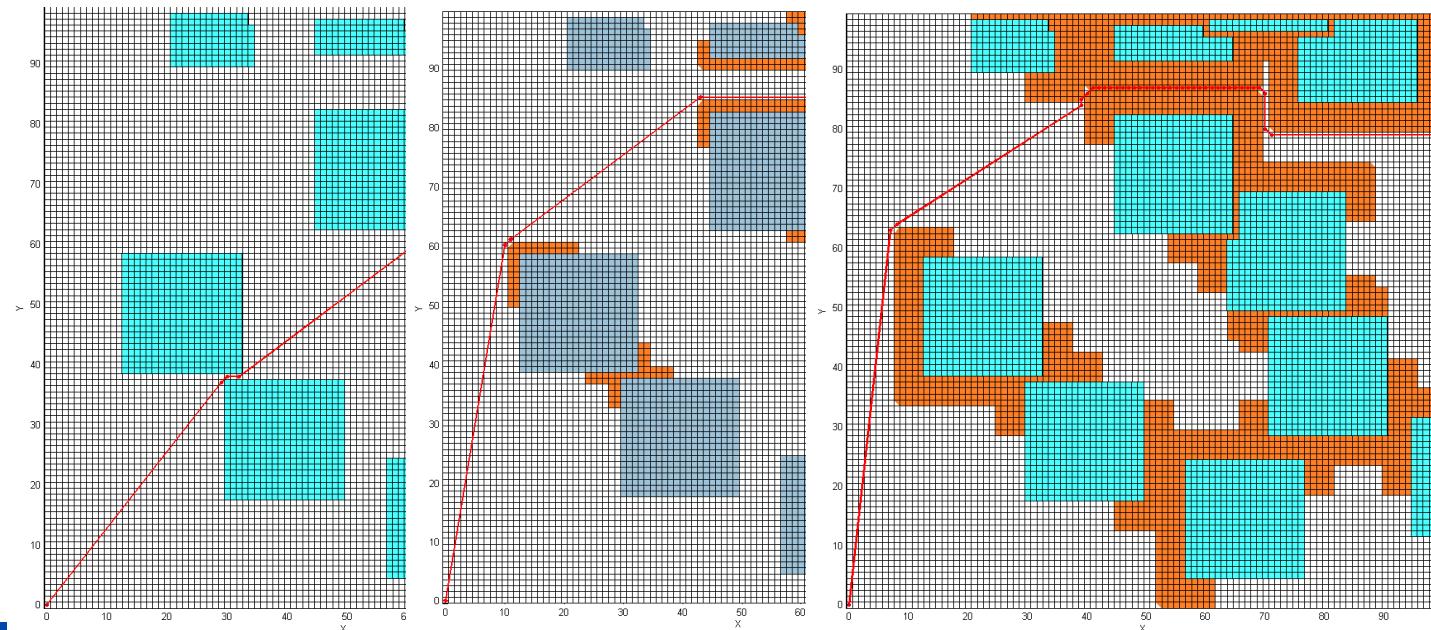
Theta*

- A*PS and Theta* are any-angle algorithms: not restricted to 45° headings



Theta*

- What about crossing the obstacles at the corner?
→ Safety margin



Outline

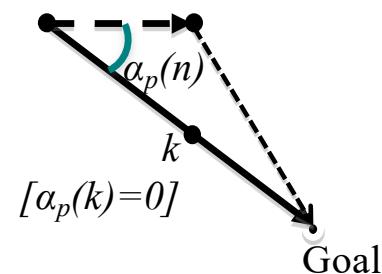
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S-Theta*

- Theta* updates a node depending on the distance to reach it, regardless of its orientation
- Adapt Theta* to take into consideration heading changes during the search process
 - Robotics hardware is usually very limited
 - Rotation cost is greater than the movement straight
- Best path between two points in a free obstacle grid is straight line
- Achieve less heading changes in exchange of a slight degradation of the path length

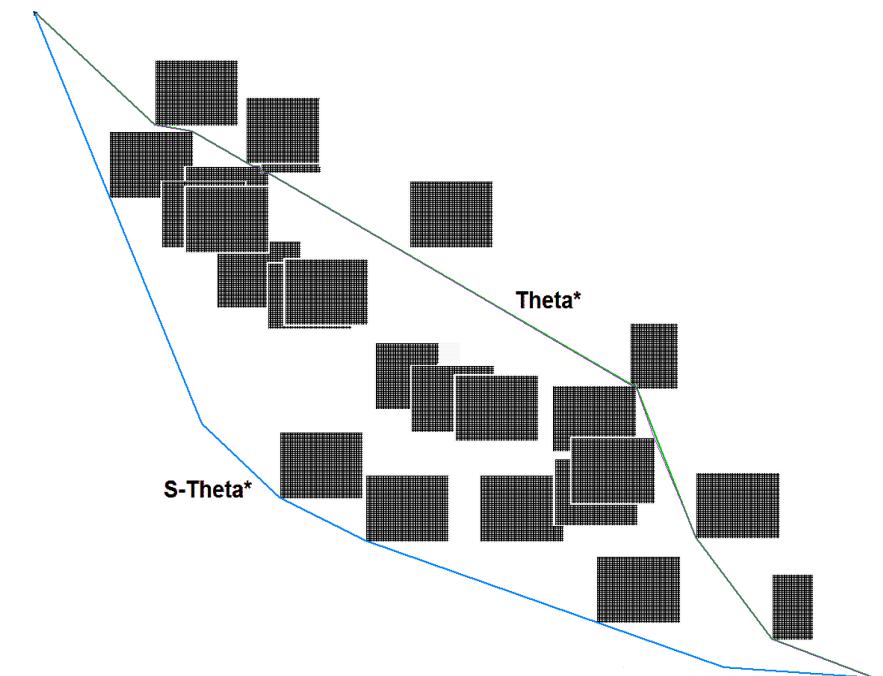
S-Theta*

- Include a new term in the cost function: $\alpha(n)$ that represents the heading change variation to reach a node n in relationship with the objective and previous nodes
- This term guides the search process to:
 - Smooth heading changes
 - Reduce number of heading changes
- $F(t) = G(t)+H(t)+\alpha(n)$



S-Theta*

- $\alpha(n)$ tries to surround obstacles and return the best path
- Does not expand nodes far from the line
- Need to weight
 - $\alpha(n) = \alpha(n) \times N$
 - $\alpha(n)$ is $[0^\circ, 180^\circ]$



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Conclusions

- Classical path-planning based on informed search methods provides a good approximation for big observable areas
- Heuristics are very relevant
- Representation of the environment is an important point to consider
- Large number of works, but still possibility to improve
 - Field D*, Block A*, Lazy Theta*...