

# Helices of RNAs

Jiabin Huang

AG Experimentelle Bioinformatik (Cyanolab)  
Institut für Biologie III  
Universität Freiburg

February 24, 2011

# Outline

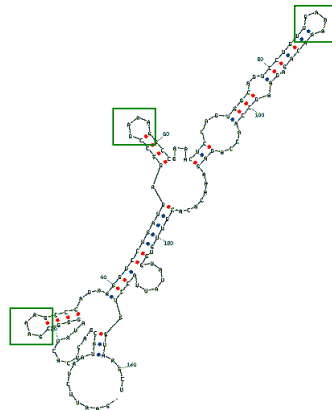
- Introducing abstract shapes
- Development of a new structure abstraction
- Implementation of an algorithm based on the new abstraction
- Possible problems

# Structural components of RNA

RNA has different structural components:

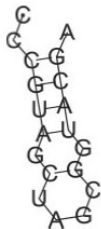
- single-stranded regions (SS)
- hairpin loops (HL)
- stacking regions (SR)
- bulges on 5' side (BL) or 3' side (BR)
- internal loops (IL)
- multiloops (ML).

# Structural components of RNA

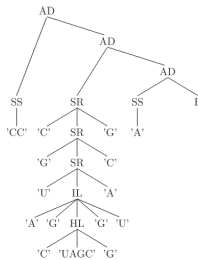


# Visualisation of structures

CCCGUAGCUAGCGGUACGA



*squiggle plot*



*tree*

# Suboptimal structures

But the "true" structure is not always the one with the lowest predicted free energy. So what to do?

- Enumerate suboptimal structures within a given energy range  $R$ .
- Hope to find a structure fulfilling your expectation or coming close to experimental results.

But the number of suboptimal structures grows exponentially with the energy range considered.

# Introducing abstract shapes

Solution: Use abstract shapes to describe a set of structures.

- An abstract shape represents a class of similar structures sharing a common pattern of helix nesting and adjacency.
- "Abstract" since we do not care about all details of the structures.
- Each shape class has a representative structure called shrep (with minimum folding energy).

# Introducing abstract shapes

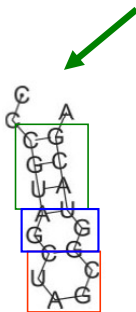
In the domain of shapes, we care only about

- open structures (OP)
- closed structure (CP)
- branching ("fork", FK)
- adjacency of structures (AD)

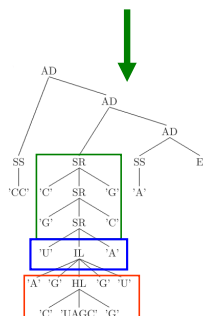
Level of detail is defined by an abstraction function  $\pi$ . The abstraction function can be defined on the level of the structural components.



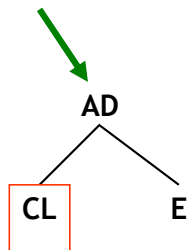
## Example



## squiggle plot



*tree*



*abstract shape*

### Abstract shape, Energy range: 5 kcal/mol

UCGCGCACAGGACAUCCUAGGUACAAGGCCGCCGU

-6.30	.((.(..(((.....))).(((.....)))))).	[ [] [] ]
-4.90	.....(((.....))).(((.....))).....	[ [] ]
-3.90	....((.(..(((.....)))...)).....	[ ]

## Drawback of abstract shape

- The major drawback of abstract shape analysis is the position independence of the abstraction

## new algorithm should be:

- develop a new algorithm for RNA secondary structures which keeps track of the position of structural elements
- be implemented in the framework of "Abstract shapes of RNA"
- be evaluated and compared to existing algorithms
- The new algorithm will be used to design prediction strategies for various classes of RNAs

# develop a new structure abstraction

The straightforward idea to overcome the position independence of the current available shape abstractions is

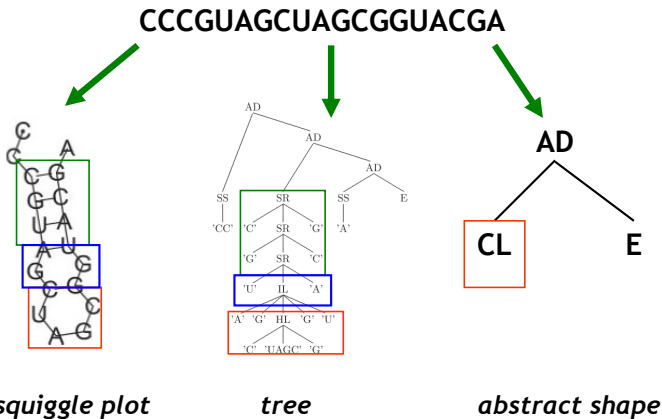
## what keeps track of positions

- hairpin loop, because it is the least expensive one
- multiloops, as possible braching points, are structurally important
- stacked pairs, bulge and internal loops are the main structural contributors
- possible different helices type

## which positions of the base pair will be tracked

- $i$
- $j$
- $(i,j)$
- $i+j/2$

## Todo: capture of the pdf picture



Output from the first trial version of helices shape

### Helices shape, Energy range: 5 kcal/mol

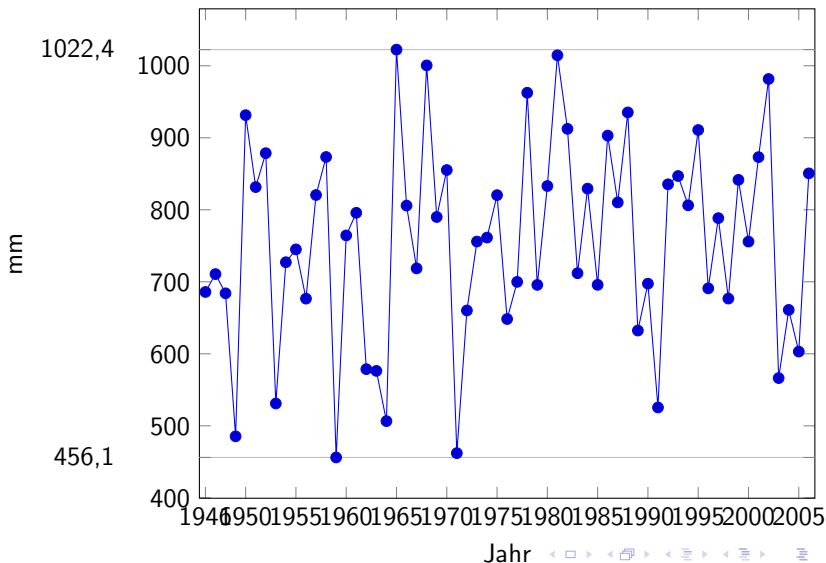
	UCGCGCACAGGACAUCCUAGGUACAAGGCCGCCGU	
-6.30	.(((.(.(((....))).(((.....)))))).	[13.5,25]
-4.60	.....(((....))).(((.....)))).	[13.5,26.5]
-3.90	....(((.(.(((....))).(.))).....	[13.5]
-3.60	.....(((....(((.....)))).(.)))..	[22]
-3.40	....(((.(.(((....))).(.)))....(((....)))..	[13.5,30]
-3.20	..((((.....(((.....)))).(.)))..	[17]
-2.80	.....(((.....(((.....)))).(.)))..	[25]
-2.40	.....(((.....)))).	[26.5]
-1.60	....(((.(.(((....))).(.)))....(((....)))	[13.5,31.5]

# Possible problems

- do not preserve nesting of elements and might lead to abstract shapes where a helix index occurs more than once → solved with different representation form
- abstracting from bulge and internal loops might be too rigorous → refine the definition of the abstraction, such that all critical criteria are met
- records of helices is a lot more than the records of shapes → runtime problem

# Growth of structure, helices and shape space

Niederschlag in den letzten 60 Jahren





# Outlook: Designing RNA class predictors

- specific classes of RNAs, such as riboswitches or miRNA precursors, show characteristic features within their folding space
- the energy landscape of riboswitches harbors two equally low, but well separated minima, but well separated minima
- miRNA precursors is governed by one deep and well-defined minimum
- develop specialized prediction algorithms for classes of RNAs

# End

- Thanks a lot for your attention !
- Questions ?