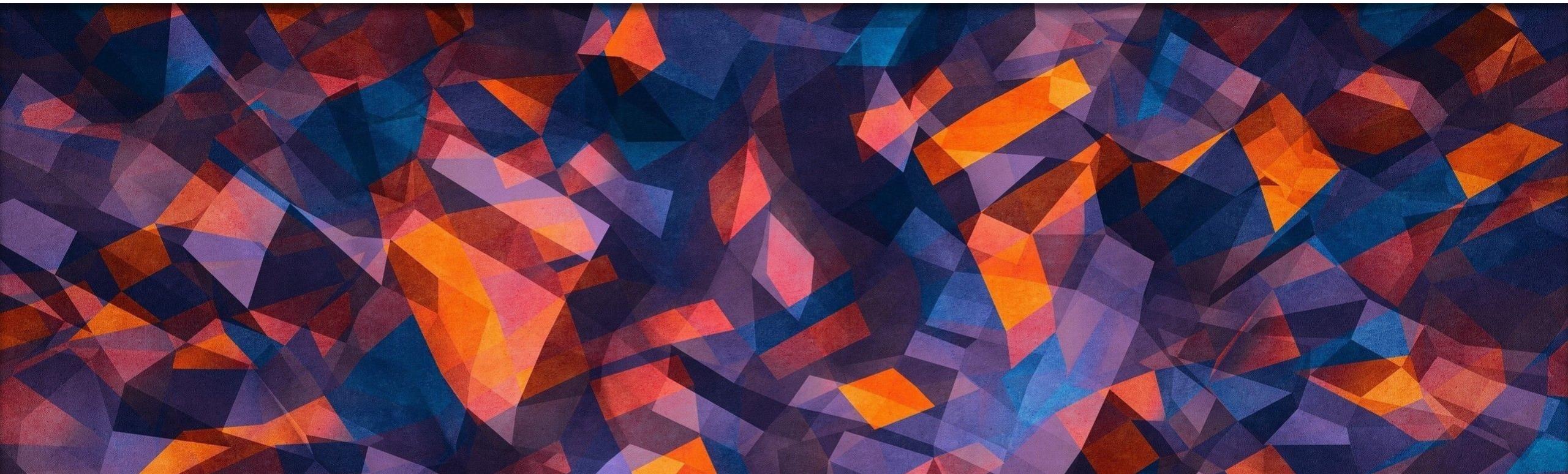




Universität St.Gallen



Web-based Autonomous Systems

Coordination II: Self-Organization and Stigmergy

Chair for Interaction- and Communication-based Systems (ICS-HSG)

Our Journey

Prerequisites:
• ASSE
• (...)



Week 1:
Introduction



Week 2:
A Web for Machines



Week 3:
Knowledge Representation and Reasoning for the Web



Week 4:
Linked Data and Distributed Knowledge Graphs



Week 4:

Linked Data and Distributed Knowledge Graphs



Week 5:

Autonomous Agents (Arch. and Programming)



Week 6 (Coordination I):
Agent Communication and Interaction



Week 7 (Coordination II):
Self-Organization and Stigmergy



Exercises

- Ex1: Writing Your First Agent(s)!
- Ex2: Automated Planning
- Ex3: Web Ontologies
- Ex4: Operating on Linked Data
- Ex5: BDI Agents
- Ex6: Interacting Agents on the Web

- Ex7: Ant Colony Optimization
- Ex8: Organized Agents
- Ex9: Trustworthy Agents
- Ex10: Axelrod's Agents
- Ex11: Reinforcement Learning Agents
- Course Review and Q&A

Week 10:
Game Theory and Social Choice



Week 11:
Reinforcement Learning and Multi-Agent Learning



Week 9 (Coordination IV):
Trust & Reputation



Week 12:
An Industry Perspective



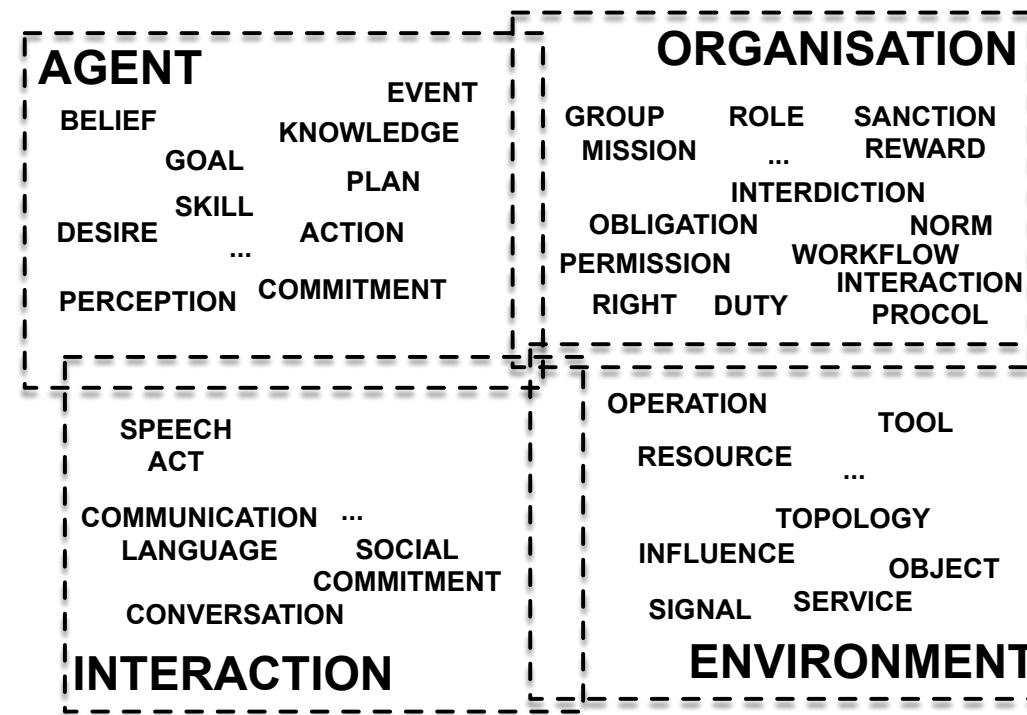
Coordination in Multi-Agent Systems

Week 9 (Coordination IV):
Trust & Reputation

Week 6 (Coordination I):
Communication and Interaction

Week 8 (Coordination III):
Normative MAS and Organizations

Week 7 (Coordination II):
Self-Organization and Stigmergy



Modelling Dimensions for Multi-Agent Systems
[Demazeau, 1995]

Today's Agenda

- Self-Organization and Swarm Intelligence
 - Flocking Behavior: Bird-oid Objects (Boids)
 - Swarm Robotics
 - Non-Functional Properties of Self-Organizing Systems
 - Design Principles for Self-Organizing Systems
- Stigmergy
 - Ant Colony Optimization
 - Cognitive Stigmergy

Self-Organization and Swarm Intelligence

Simple rules of local interaction create global emergent behavior



Self-Organization:
emergent behavior

Swarm Intelligence: “the emergent collective
intelligence of groups of **simple agents**” [Bonabeau et al., 1999]

E. Bonabeau et al. Swarm intelligence: from natural to artificial systems. 1999.

Flocking Behavior: Flight of the Starlings



<https://youtube.com/clip/UgkxI1WN-GiufL3V81Q1MOsAw4FAIrQQLLSx>



Common Starling

How to model/simulate
flocking behavior?

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_starling

Flocks, Herds, and Schools: A Distributed Behavioral Model¹

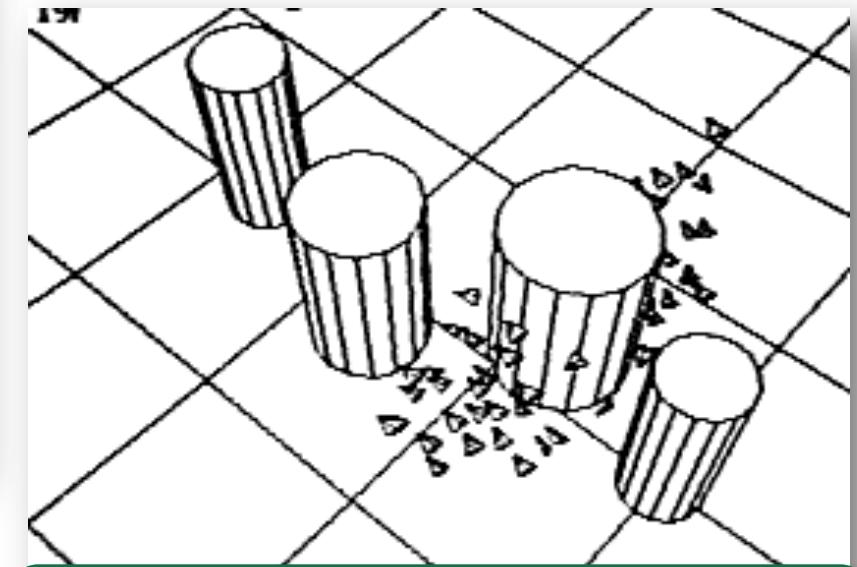
Craig W. Reynolds
Symbolics Graphics Division

[obsolete addresses removed²]

Abstract

The aggregate motion of a flock of birds, a herd of land animals, or a school of fish is a beautiful and familiar part of the natural world. But this type of complex motion is rarely seen in computer animation. This paper explores an approach based on simulation as an alternative to scripting the paths of each bird individually. The simulated flock is an elaboration of a particle system, with the simulated birds being the particles. The aggregate motion of the simulated flock is created by a distributed behavioral model much like that at work in a natural flock; the birds choose their own course. Each simulated bird is implemented as an independent actor that navigates according to its local perception of the dynamic environment, the laws of simulated physics that rule its motion, and a set of behaviors programmed into it by the “animator.” The aggregate motion of the simulated flock is the result of the dense interaction of the relatively simple behaviors of the individual simulated birds.

[Reynolds, SIGGRAPH 1987]

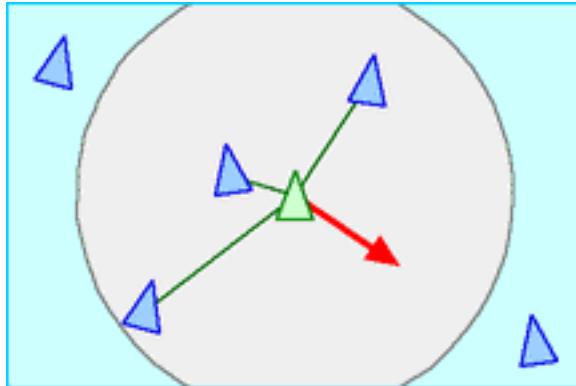


Original demo reel (1987)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xBniZYiyrb4>

Flocking Behavior: Bird-oid Objects (Boids)

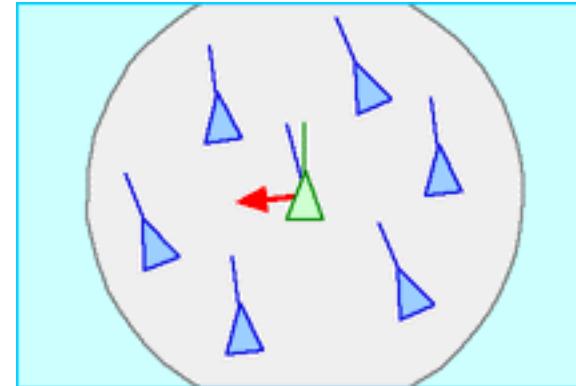
Each bird in the flock implements **3 simple steering behaviors**

- local information: positions and headings of nearby flockmates



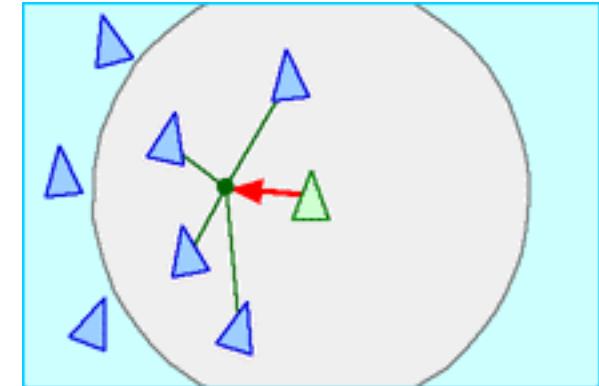
Separation

steer to avoid crowding
local flockmates



Alignment

steer towards the average
heading of local flockmates



Cohesion

steer to move towards the average
position of local flockmates

Let's see how this works (hands-on)!

View at home: <https://youtu.be/QbUPfMXXQIY>

Boids in the Motion Picture Industry



Batman Returns (1992)

Bat swarms: <https://youtu.be/YpoT-QRgOK4>

Penguin flocks: <https://youtu.be/APs3qbAE1FY>
(Craig Reynolds was part of the crew)



The Lion King (1994)

The stampede:

<https://youtu.be/YpoT-QRgOK4?t=10>



**Multiple Agent Simulation System
in Virtual Environment (MASSIVE)**
<https://massivesoftware.com/>



The Lord of the Rings Trilogy
(2001, 2002, 2003)

<https://youtu.be/YpoT-QRgOK4>

Craig Reynolds, *Boids: Background and Update*, <http://www.red3d.com/cwr/boids/>

Swarm Robotics



Swarm-bots [Gross et al., 2006]: <https://youtu.be/seGqyQ32pv4>



Kilobots [Rubenstein et al., 2012]
<https://youtu.be/G1t4M2Xnlhl?t=94>

Termes [Petersen et al., 2011]
<https://youtu.be/nFjtRONfae4?t=38>

Particle Robots [S. Li et al., 2019]
<https://youtu.be/aXrljS7wBic>

R. Gross et al., Autonomous Self-Assembly in Swarm-Bots. IEEE Transactions on Robotics, vol. 22. 2006.

M. Rubenstein et al.. Kilobot: A low cost scalable robot system for collective behaviors. ICRA 2012.

K.H. Petersen et al.. Termes: An autonomous robotic system for three-dimensional collective construction. Robotics: science and systems VII. 2011.

S. Li et al. Particle robotics based on statistical mechanics of loosely coupled components. Nature 567. 2019.

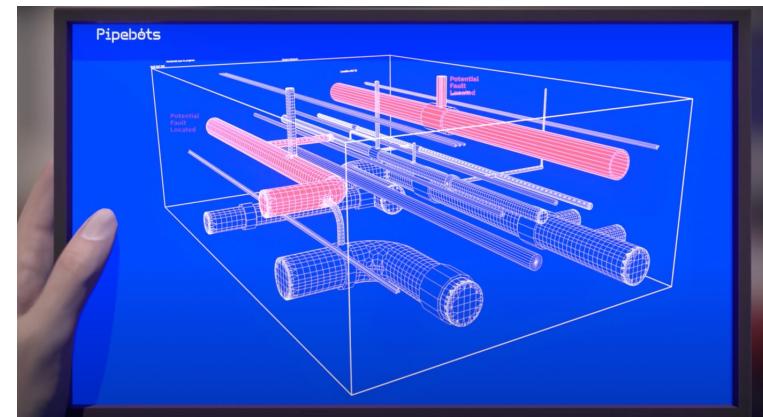
Swarm Robotics



Swarmanoid (2011):
<https://youtu.be/M2nn1X9Xlps>



CoCoRo (2011):
<https://youtu.be/WjDeFzAGJSs>



Pipebots (ongoing):
<https://youtu.be/pppxa9MpoeY>

Pipebots: <http://pipebots.ac.uk/>
Swarmanoid: <http://www.swarmanoid.org/>
CoCoRo project: <https://www.thomasschmickl.eu/projects/eu-project-cocoro>

Non-Functional Properties of SOS

Scalability

- addition or removal of new individuals does not impact overall system performance significantly

Robustness

- the system continues to operate as intended if individuals are lost or malfunction (within some limits)

Flexibility

- the system adapts to dynamic environments and changing working conditions

Discussion:
What are the drawbacks?

Decentralized Control

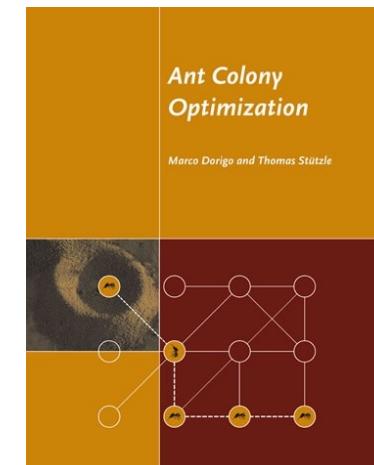
- the systems are composed of (many) interacting individuals with no central coordinator
- individuals are generally assumed to be homogeneous (identical or from a small set of classes)
- individuals are generally assumed to implement simple behavioral rules

Local Interaction

- individuals interact based on local information: they do not know the global state of the swarm and its overall objective
- individuals are agnostic to who their neighbors are
- interactions among individuals can be direct or through the environment (stigmergy)

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 - Flocking Behavior: Bird-oid Objects (Boids)
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 - Non-Functional Properties of Self-Organizing Systems
 - Design Principles for Self-Organizing Systems
- Stigmergy
 - Ant Colony Optimization
 - Cognitive Stigmergy



[Dorigo and Stützle, 2004]

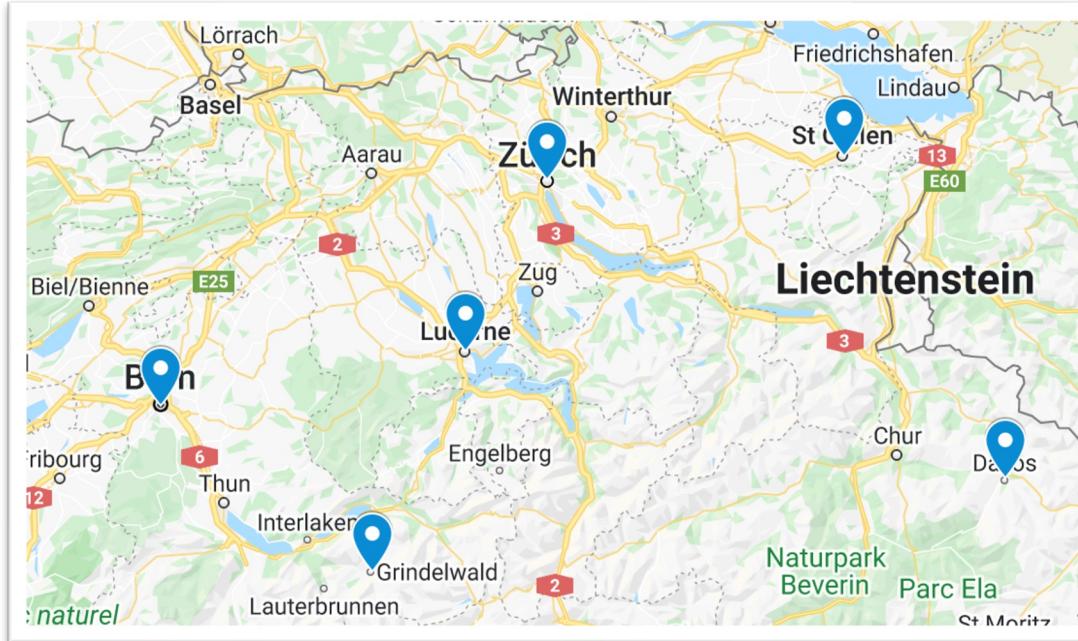
Chapter 3.1
Chapter 3.3.1

M. Dorigo and T. Stützle. *Ant Colony Optimization*. MIT Press, 2004.

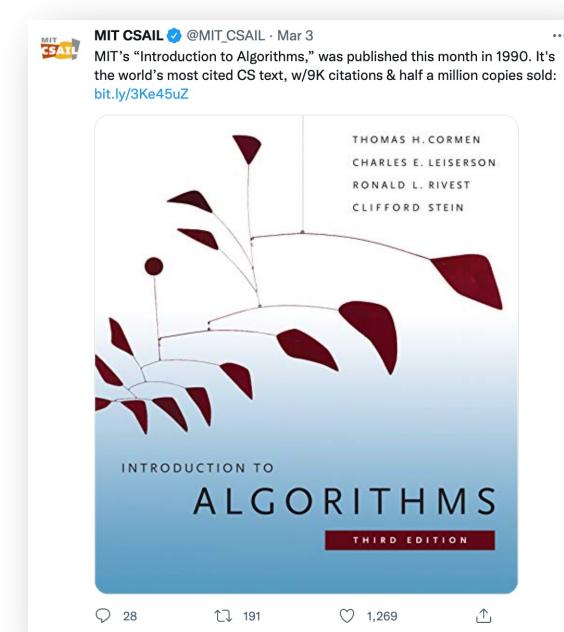
The Traveling-Salesman Problem

Formulation: A salesperson wants to find a shortest tour that takes them through a set of customer cities and back to the initial city, visiting each city exactly once.

- NP-hard problem, standard testbed for new algorithmic ideas



The Traveling-Swiss-Salesman Problem



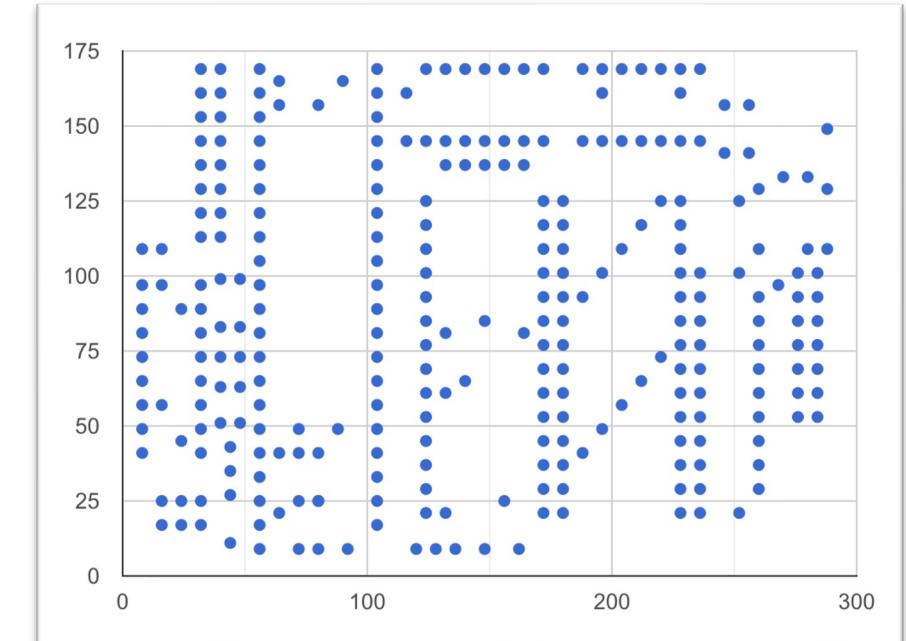
The Traveling-Salesman Problem

Formulation: A salesperson wants to find a shortest tour that takes them through a set of customer cities and back to the initial city, visiting each city exactly once.

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The Traveling-Swiss-Salesman Problem



Drilling holes in a circuit board (Google OR-Tools)
<https://developers.google.com/optimization/routing/tsp>

The Traveling-Salesant Problem

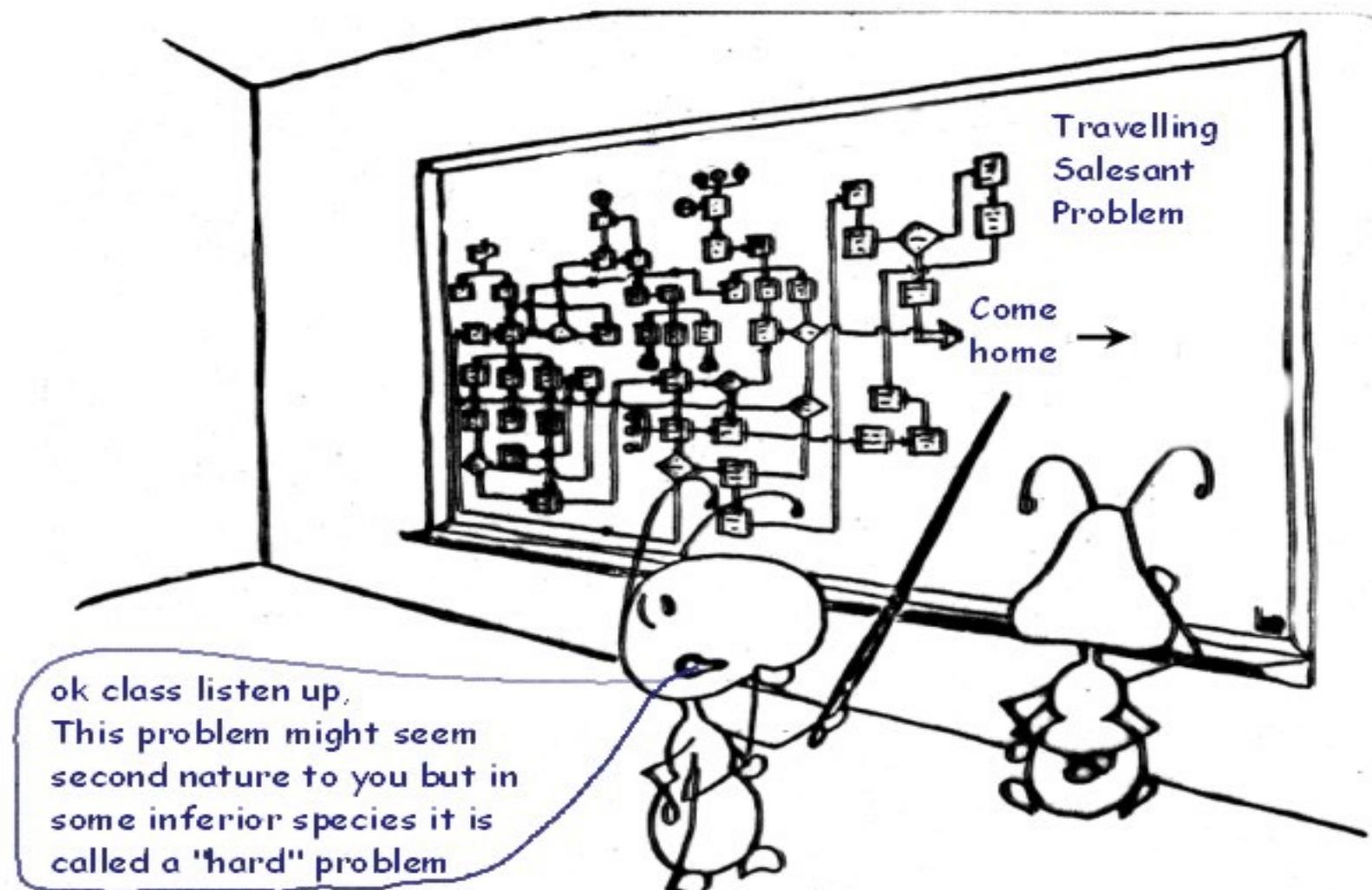


Image: unknown source

The Double Bridge Experiments

Ants are navigation experts — not individually, but as a colony [Goss et al., 1989]

- a series of controlled experiments studied the built-in path-optimization ability of Argentine ants
- the experiments used a double bridge to connect a nest to a food source
- the authors proposed a stochastic model that describes the observed dynamics of the ant colony through probabilistic rules and local information

Naturwissenschaften 76, 579 – 581 (1989) © Springer-Verlag 1989

Self-organized Shortcuts in the Argentine Ant

S. Goss, S. Aron, J. L. Deneubourg, and J. M. Pasteels

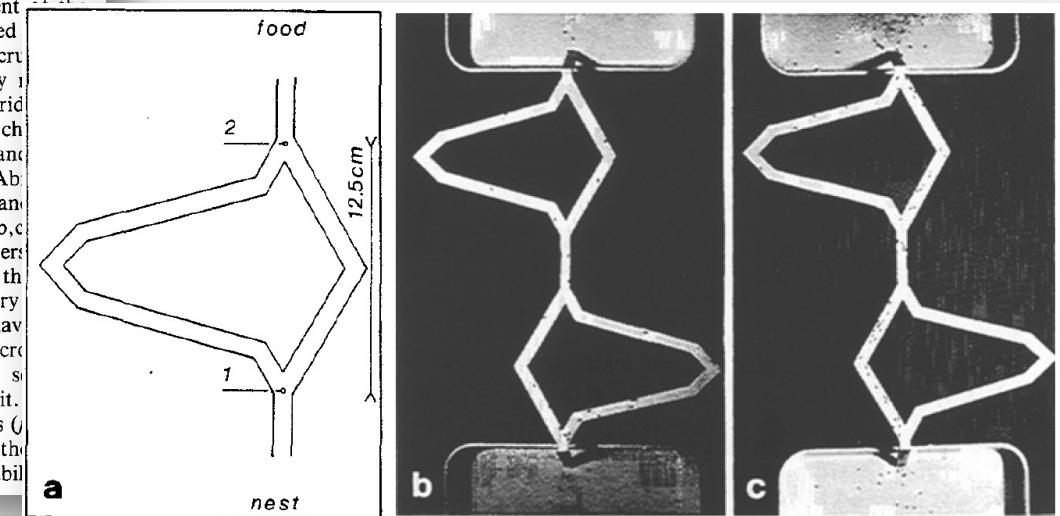
Unit of Behavioural Ecology, C.P. 231, Université Libre de Bruxelles,
B-1050 Bruxelles

It is evident that finding the shortest route is extremely important not only for Roman road builders, thirsty rugbymen and applied mathematicians working on this very problem, but also for any animal that must move regularly between different points. How can an animal with only limited and local navigational information achieve this? Many ant and epigaeic termite species illustrate this problem in the clearest possible way. The individual workers are generally less than 1 or 2 cm long, and must cover distances of 1 to 100 m be-

such that a forager going in either direction (leaving the nest or leaving the food) must choose between one or the other (at choice points 1 and 2, respectively). Each branch is at an angle of 30° to the axis of the central bridge, so that the forager has no preference for one or the other branch due to its disposition. This value of 30° has been chosen to minimize the perturbation to the forager's movement, so that on leaving one or the other branch they continue rather than double back onto

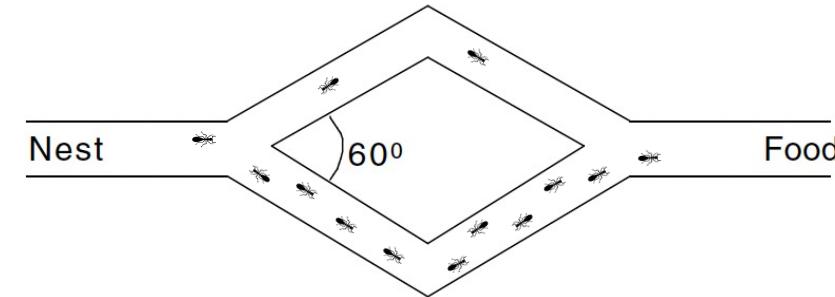
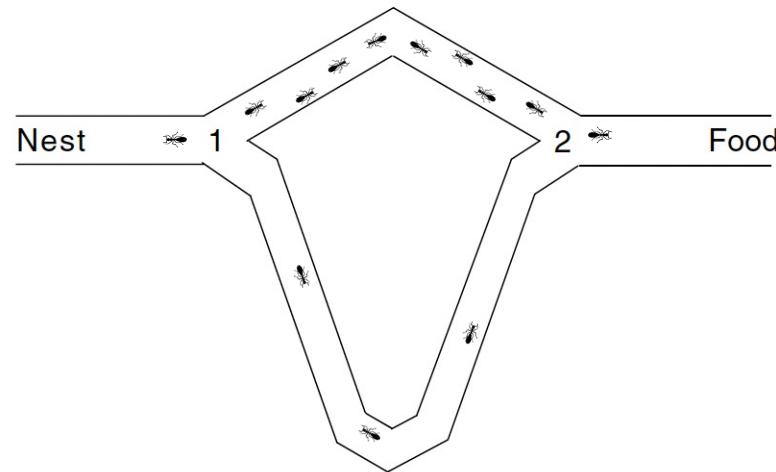
the other branch. To examine if any external bias is involved, one module's short branch is on the opposite side of the bridge as the other.

Five to 10 min after placement of the bridge, explorers have crossed it and discovered the food. Food recruitment adds to the exploratory traffic, and traffic on the bridge increases, the foragers at first choosing equally between the short and long branch of both modules. After some minutes later, one branch becomes visibly preferred (Fig. 1b,c). Knowing that *I. humilis* workers both leaving and returning to the food during food [3] and exploratory recruitment, we model the behaviour of the bridge as follows. Φ ants cross the bridge in each direction per second, each laying one pheromone unit. Arriving at one of the choice points (0 or 1 or 2 of a module), each ant chooses the short or the long branch with probability



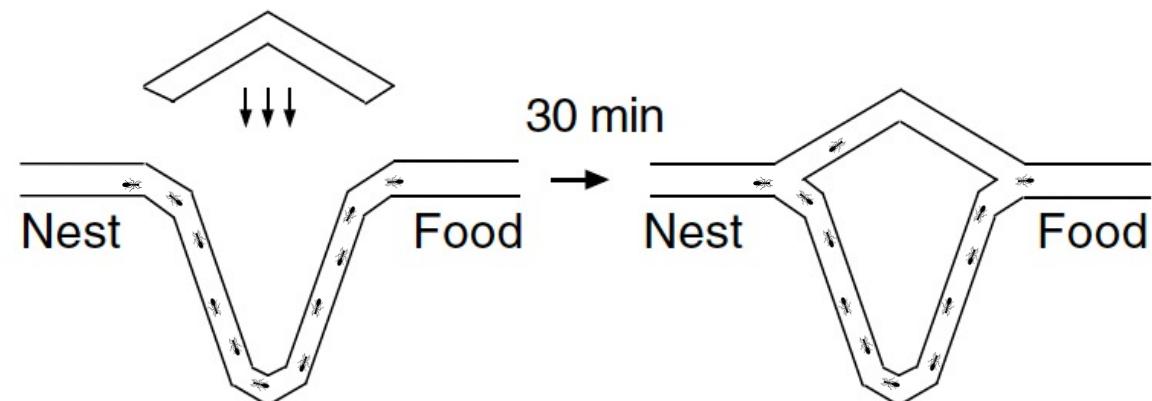
Theoretical foundation for colonies of artificial ants

The Double Bridge Experiments



path that form a labyrinth worthy of the Minotaur. The Argentine ant *Iridomyrmex humilis* studied in this article has only a limited individual capacity for orientation [2], yet we shall see how by interacting with each other via their trail pheromone, they are capable of selecting with great reliability the shortest route between nest and food.

[S. Goss et al., 1989]



M. Dorigo and T. Stützle. Ant Colony Optimization. MIT Press. 2004.
S. Goss et al. Self-organized shortcuts in the Argentine ant. Naturwissenschaften 76. 1989.

Stigmergy: “Stimulation of workers by the performance they have achieved” [Grassé, 1959]

- initially defined to describe the indirect interaction mediated by modifications of the environment in the workers caste of some species of termites

stigma (Gk.)
mark, sign



ergon (Gk.)
work, action

**Coordinated work/action
through the environment**



M. Dorigo and T. Stützle. Ant Colony Optimization. MIT Press. 2004.

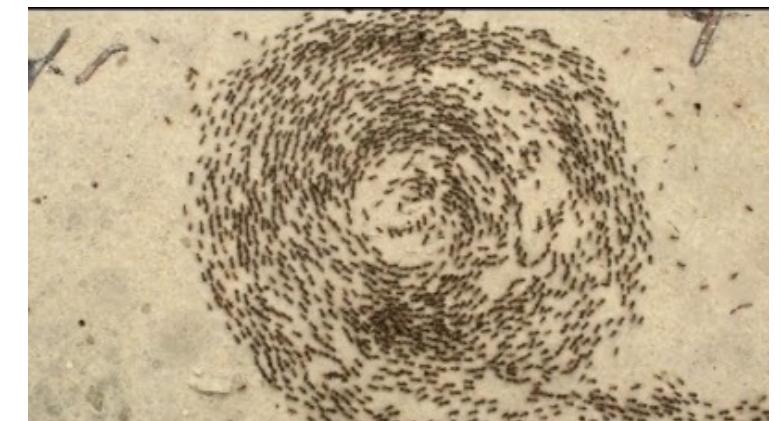
Pierre-Paul Grassé. La reconstruction du nid et les coordinations interindividuelles chez Bellicositermes natalensis et Cubitermes sp.
La théorie de la stigmergie: Essai d'interprétation du comportement des termites constructeurs. Insectes Sociaux, 6, 1959.

Ant Colony Optimization

- a family of algorithms for finding **minimum cost paths** in graphs
- inspired by the behavioral model from the double bridge experiments, but with adaptations

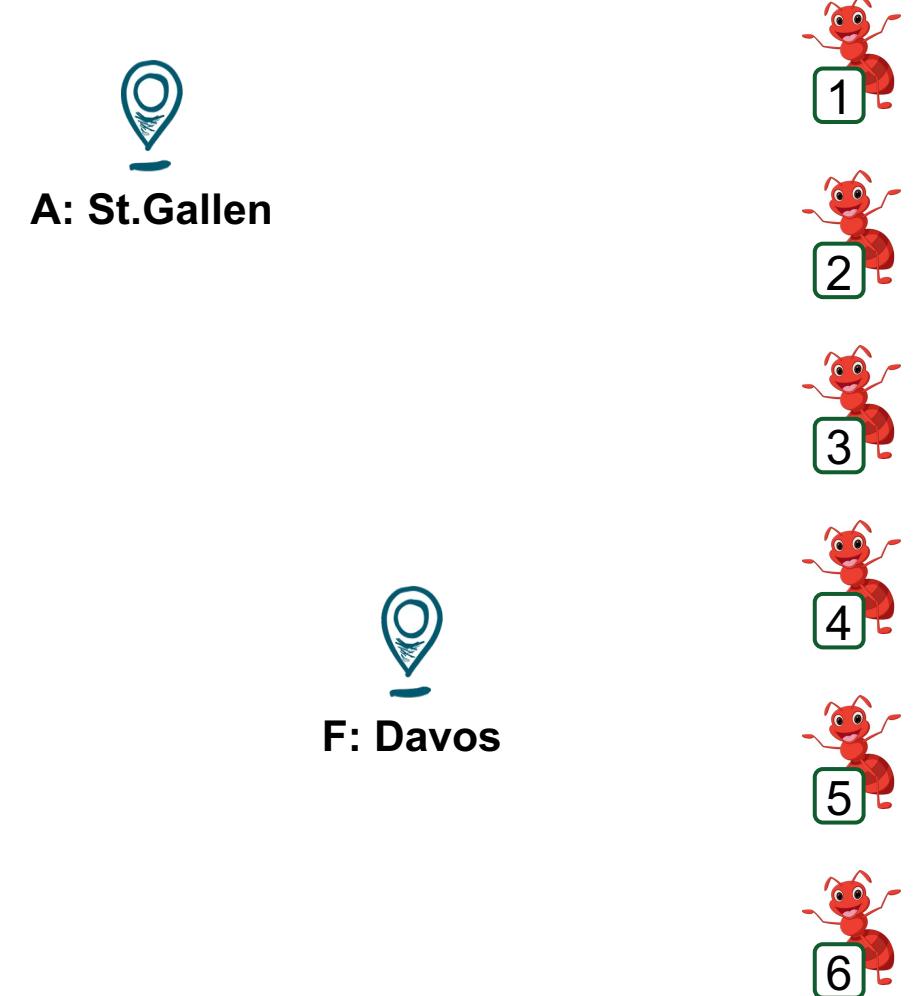
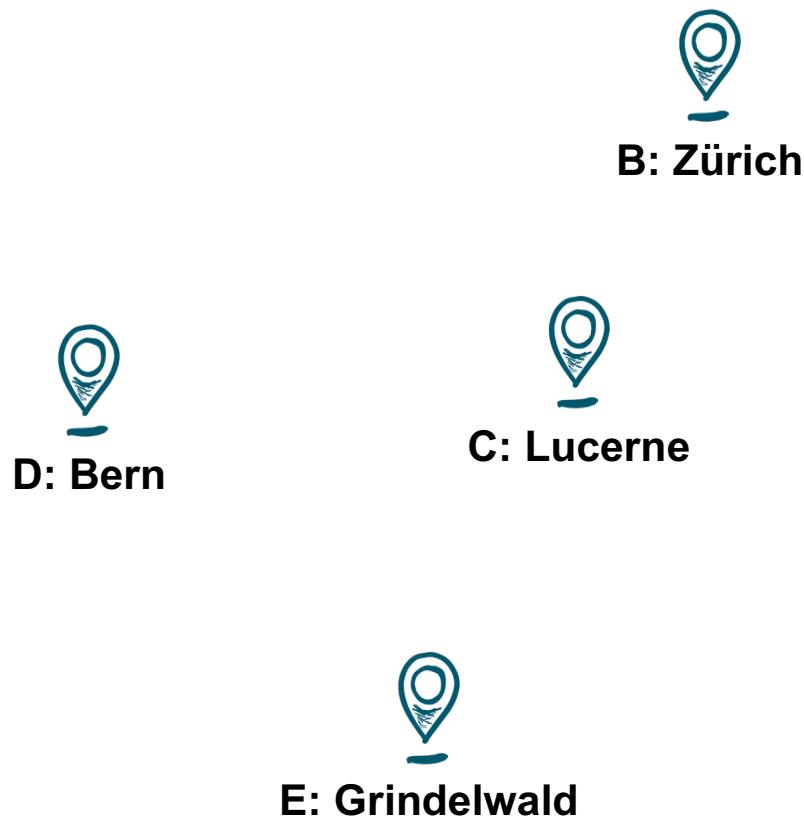
Artificial ants are equipped with a **small memory** that allows them to avoid loops and to find minimal cost paths

- used to store the partial paths they have followed so far
(used in **path construction**)
- used to store the cost of the links they have traversed
(solution quality determines the **amount of pheromone** to be deposited)



<https://youtu.be/LEKwQxO4EZU>

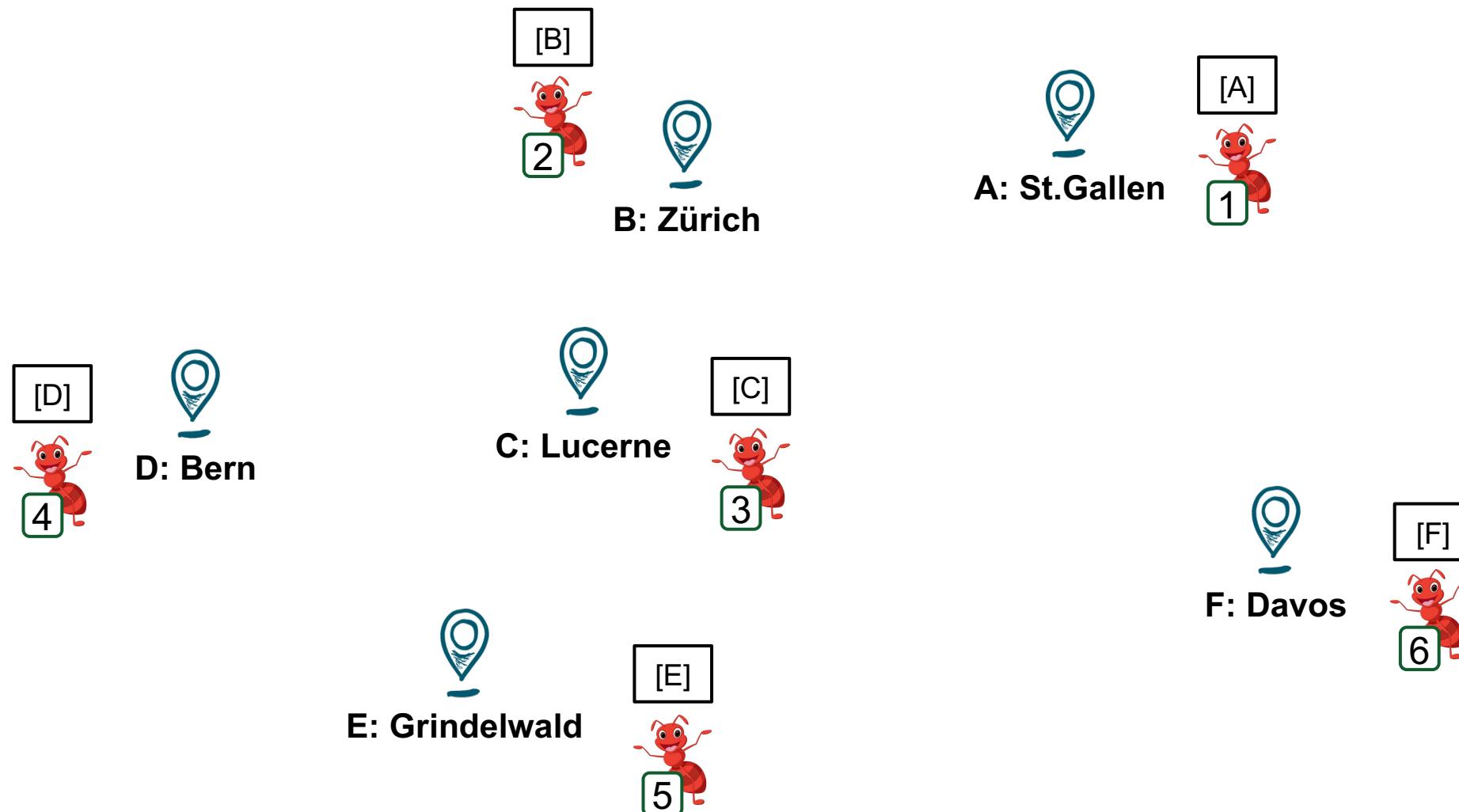
Ant System [Dorigo et al., 1996]: Overview



M. Dorigo and T. Stützle. Ant Colony Optimization. MIT Press. 2004.

M. Dorigo et al., Ant System: Optimization by a colony of cooperating agents. IEEE Transactions on Systems, Man, and Cybernetics, vol. 26, 1996.

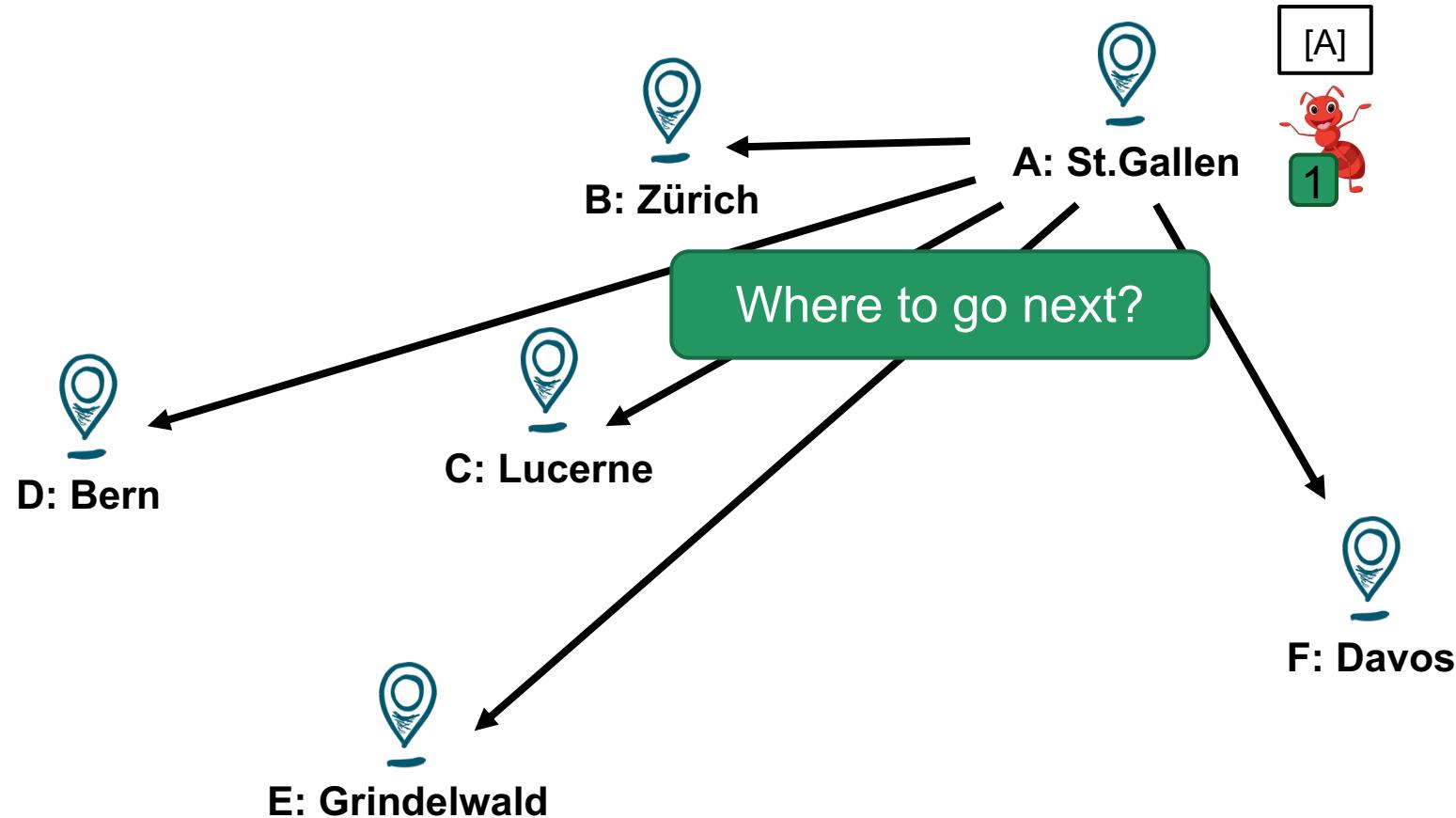
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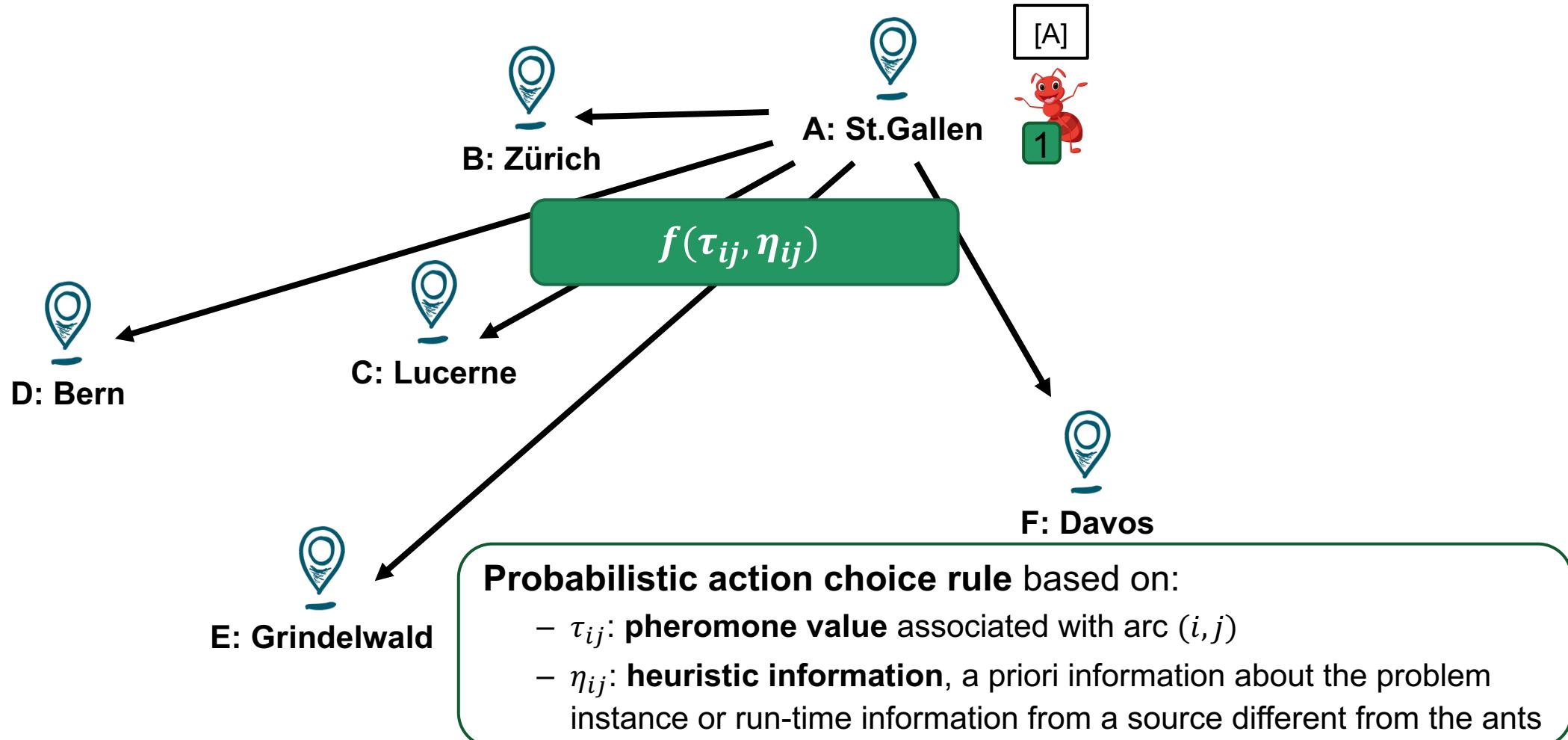
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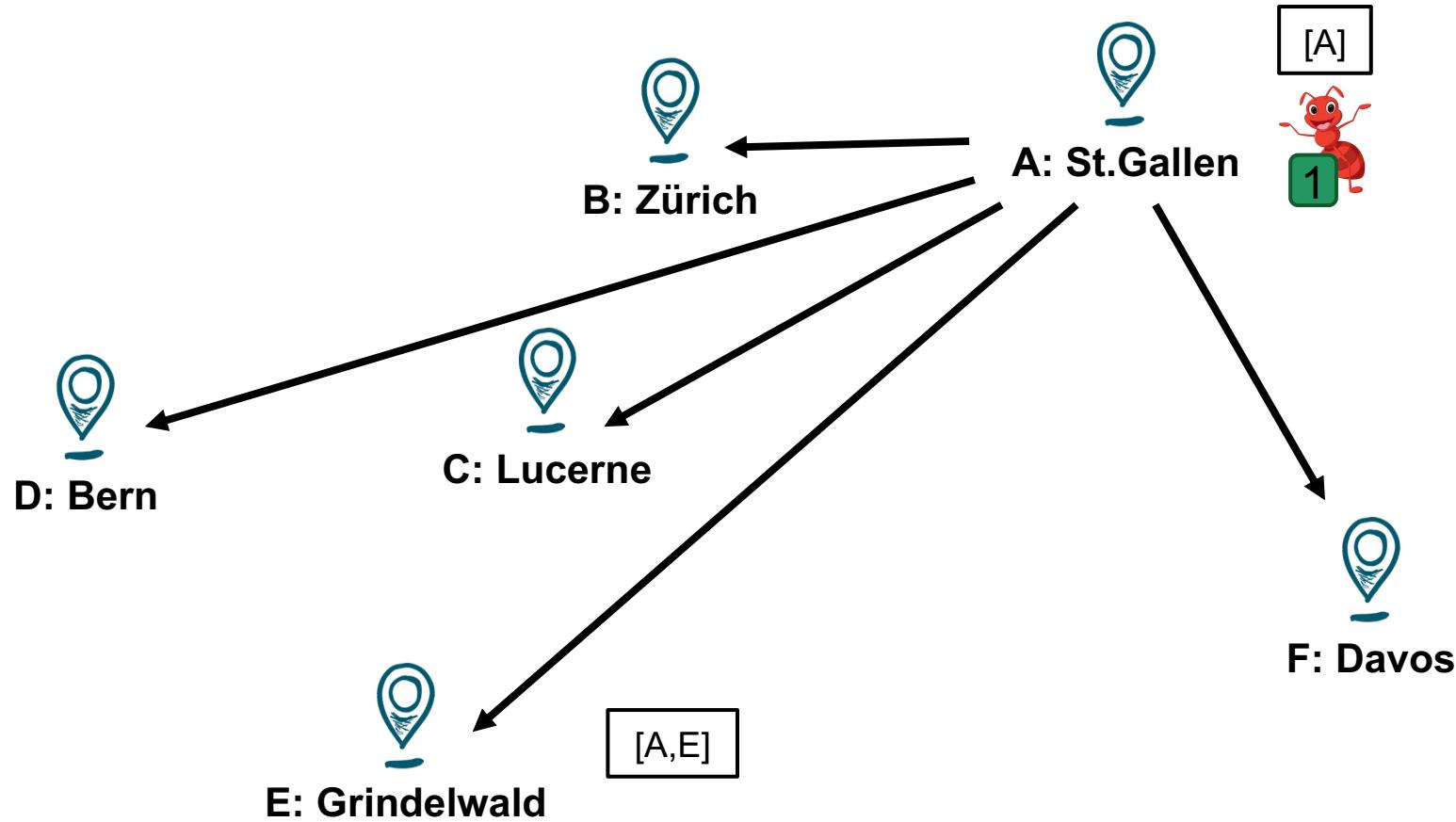
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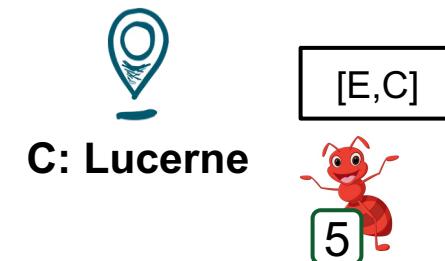
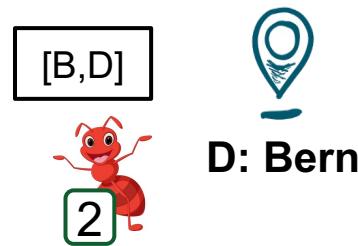
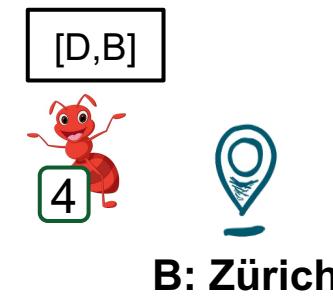


M. Dorigo and T. Stützle. Ant Colony Optimization. MIT Press. 2004.

M. Dorigo et al., Ant System: Optimization by a colony of cooperating agents. IEEE Transactions on Systems, Man, and Cybernetics, vol. 26, 1996.

Ant System [Dorigo et al., 1996]: Overview

Iteration #2

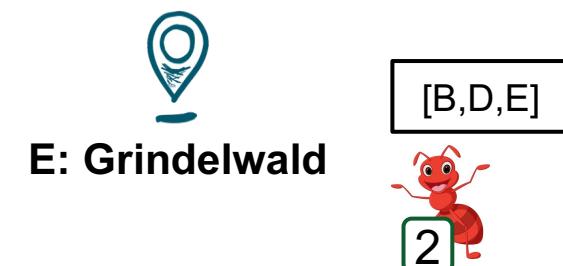
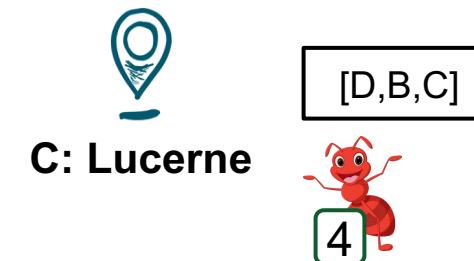
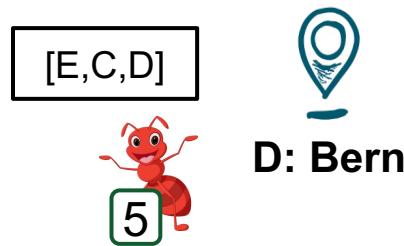
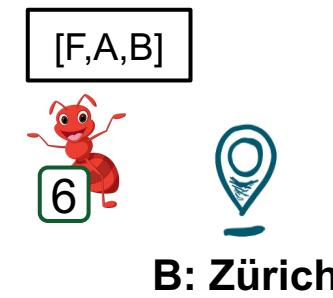


M. Dorigo and T. Stützle. Ant Colony Optimization. MIT Press. 2004.

M. Dorigo et al., Ant System: Optimization by a colony of cooperating agents. IEEE Transactions on Systems, Man, and Cybernetics, vol. 26, 1996.

Ant System [Dorigo et al., 1996]: Overview

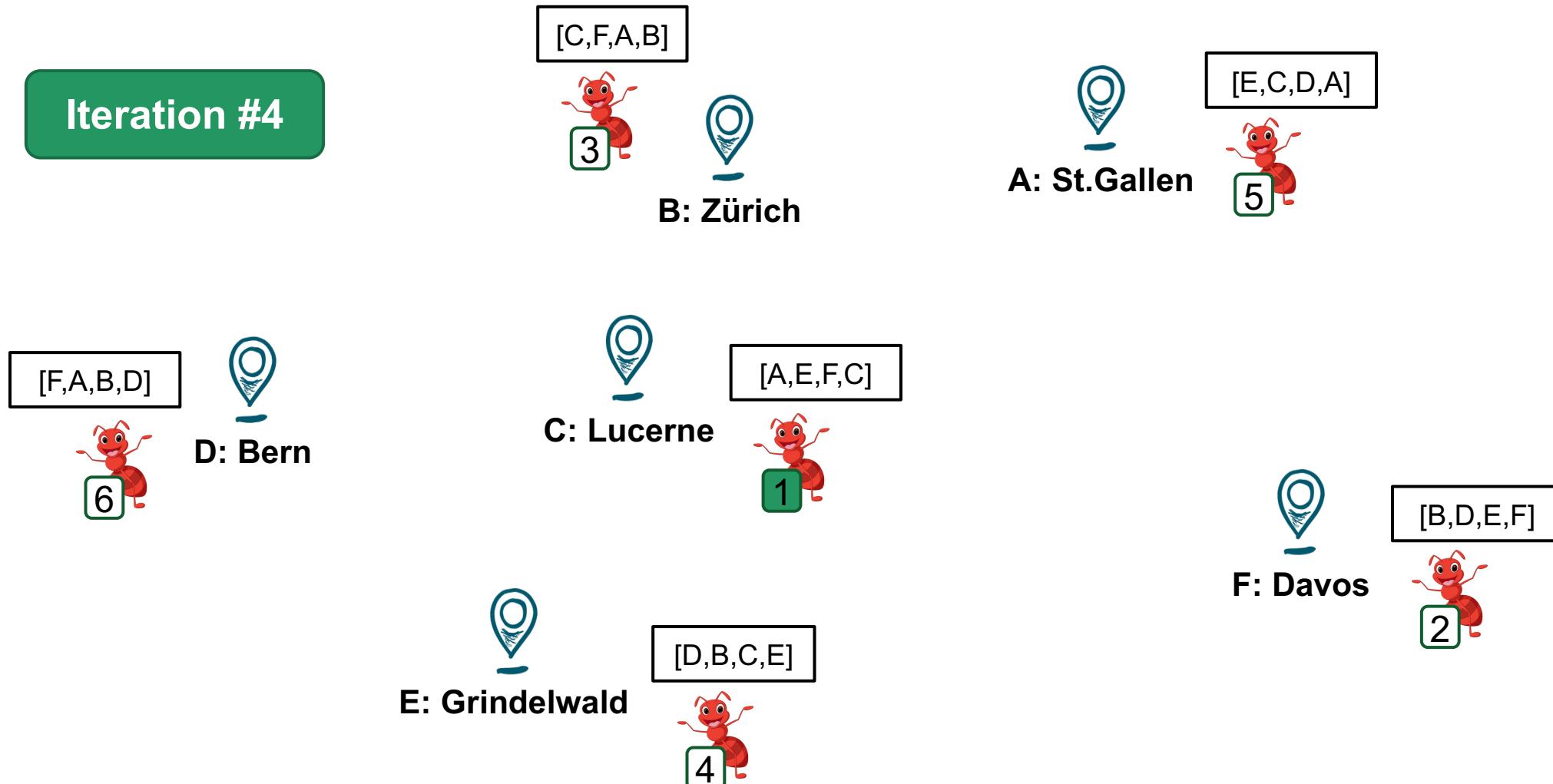
Iteration #3



M. Dorigo and T. Stützle. Ant Colony Optimization. MIT Press. 2004.

M. Dorigo et al., Ant System: Optimization by a colony of cooperating agents. IEEE Transactions on Systems, Man, and Cybernetics, vol. 26, 1996.

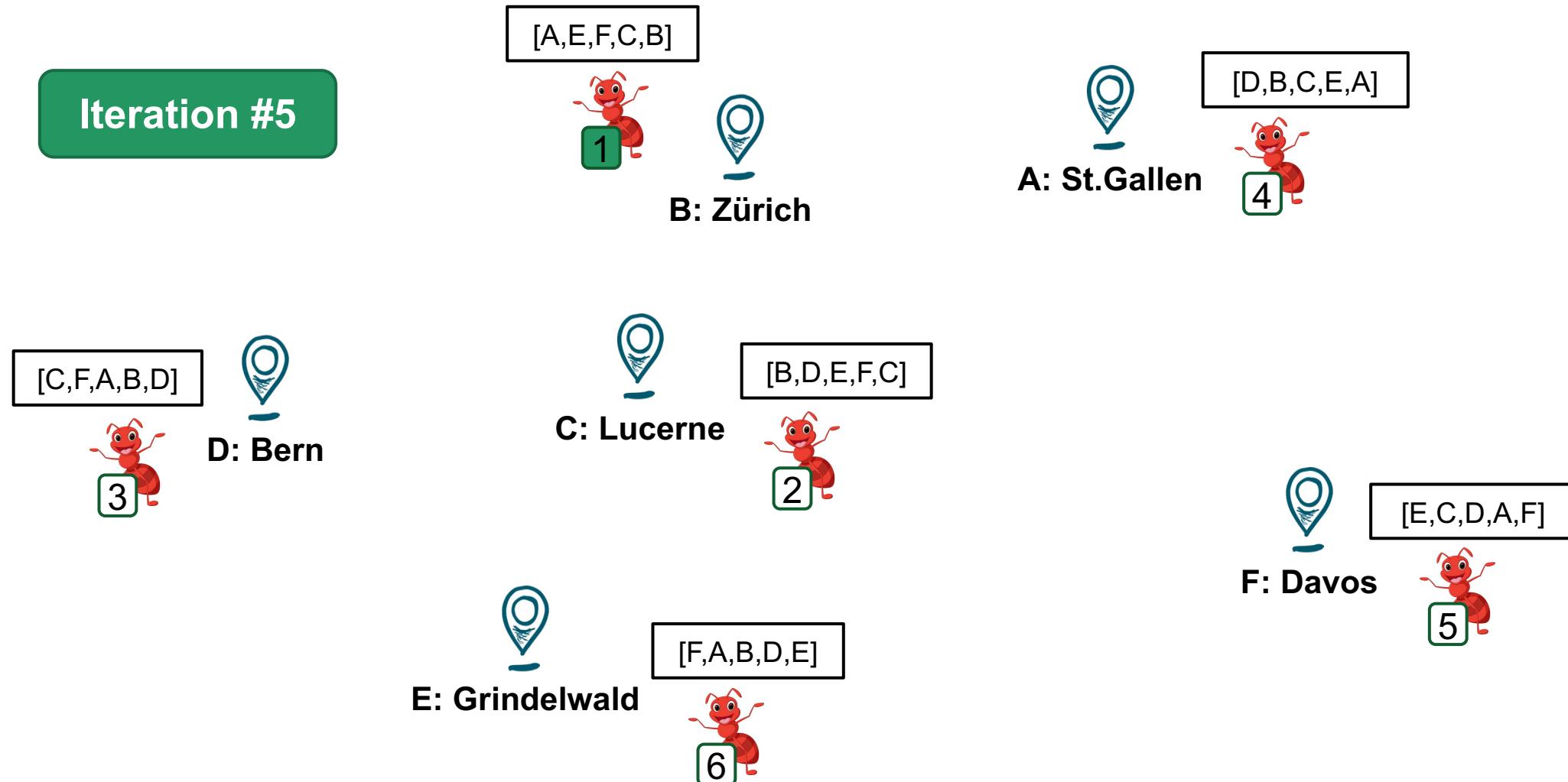
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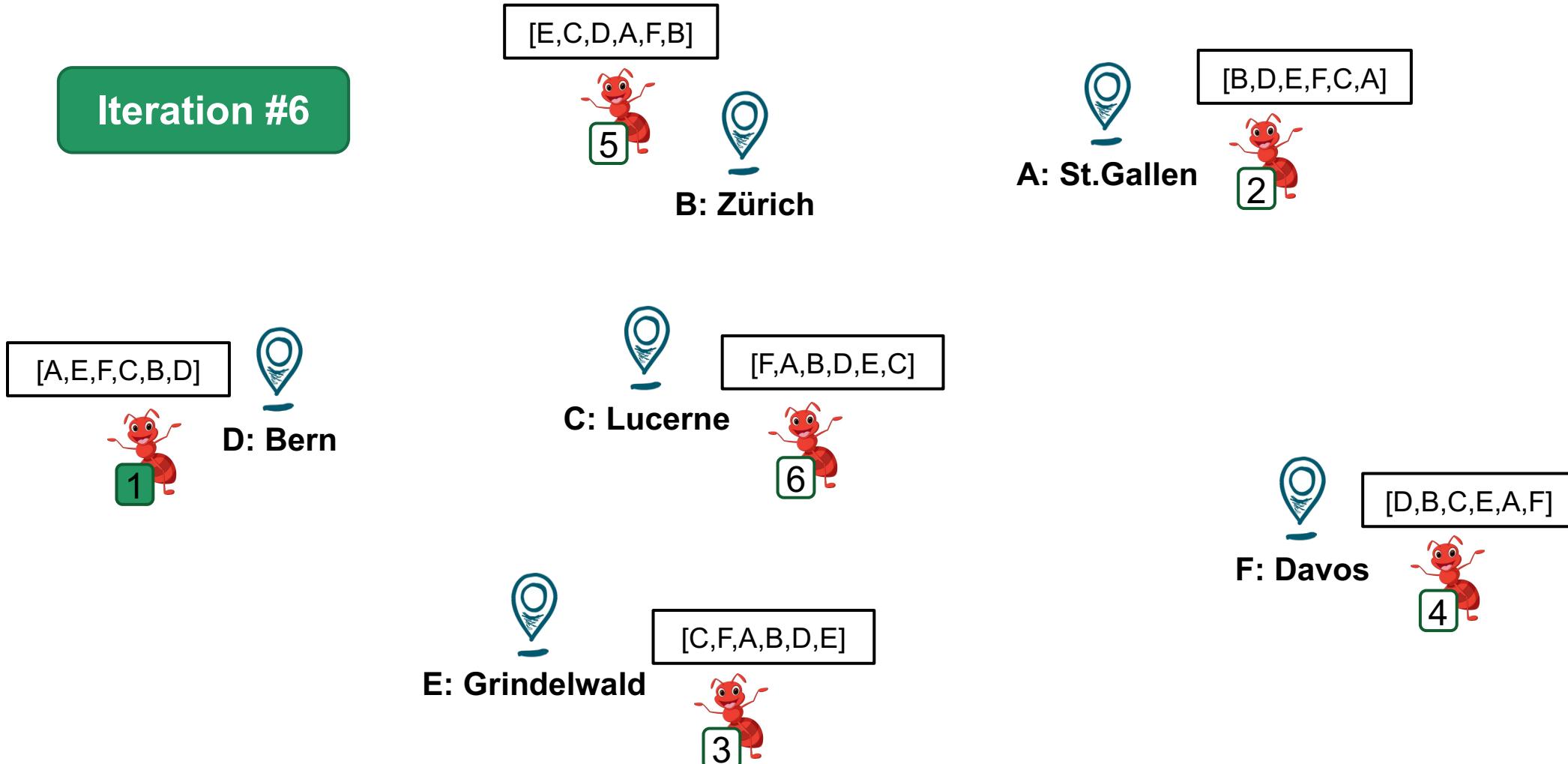
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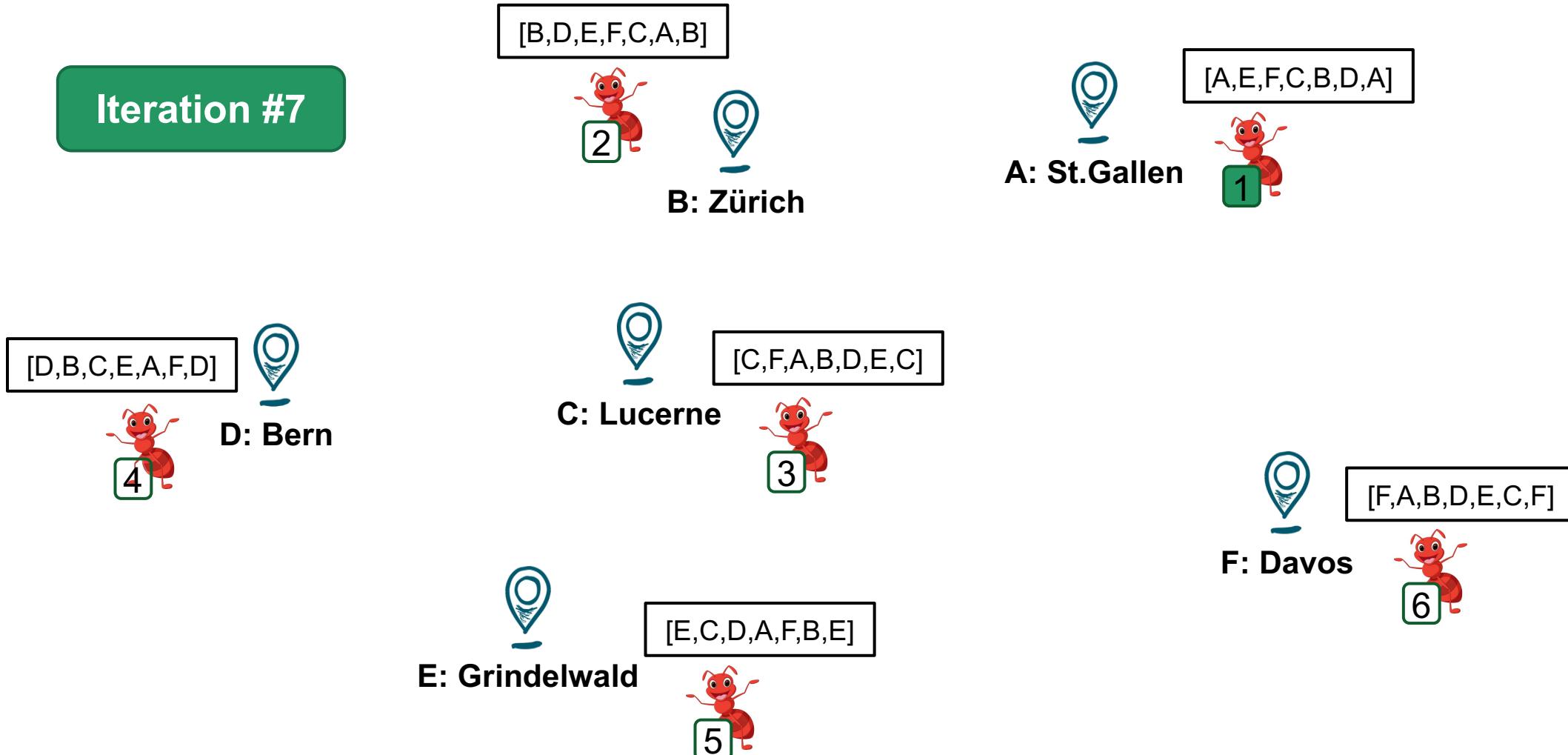
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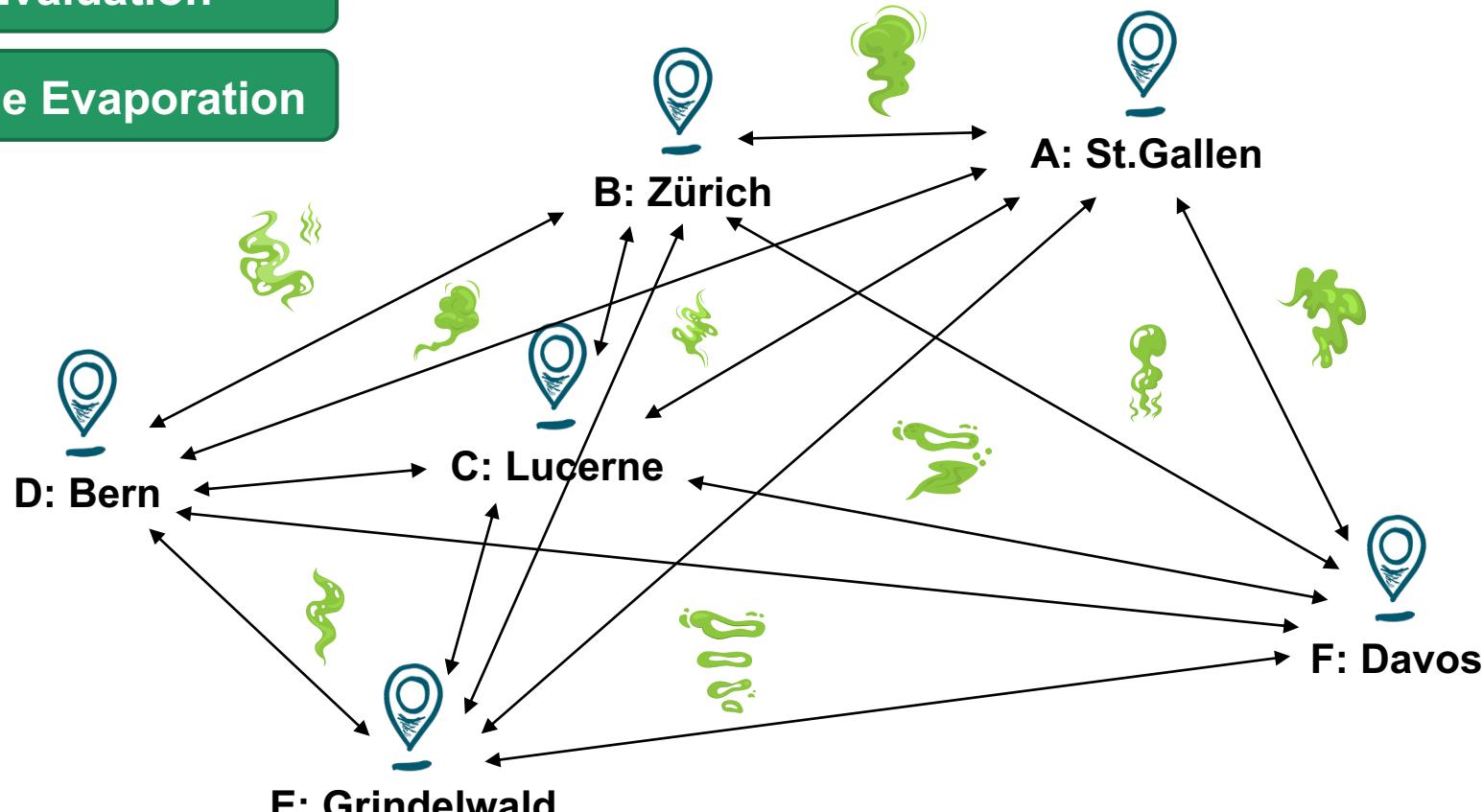
M. Dorigo and T. Stützle. Ant Colony Optimization. MIT Press. 2004.

M. Dorigo et al., Ant System: Optimization by a colony of cooperating agents. IEEE Transactions on Systems, Man, and Cybernetics, vol. 26, 1996.

Ant System [Dorigo et al., 1996]: Overview

Tour Evaluation

Pheromone Evaporation



	$C^1 = 1024$	[A,E,F,C,B,D,A]
	$C^2 = 847$	[B,D,E,F,C,A,B]
	$C^3 = 675$	[C,F,A,B,D,E,C]
	$C^4 = 884$	[D,B,C,E,A,F,D]
	$C^5 = 815$	[E,C,D,A,F,B,E]
	$C^6 = 675$	[F,A,B,D,E,C,F]

M. Dorigo and T. Stützle. Ant Colony Optimization. MIT Press. 2004.

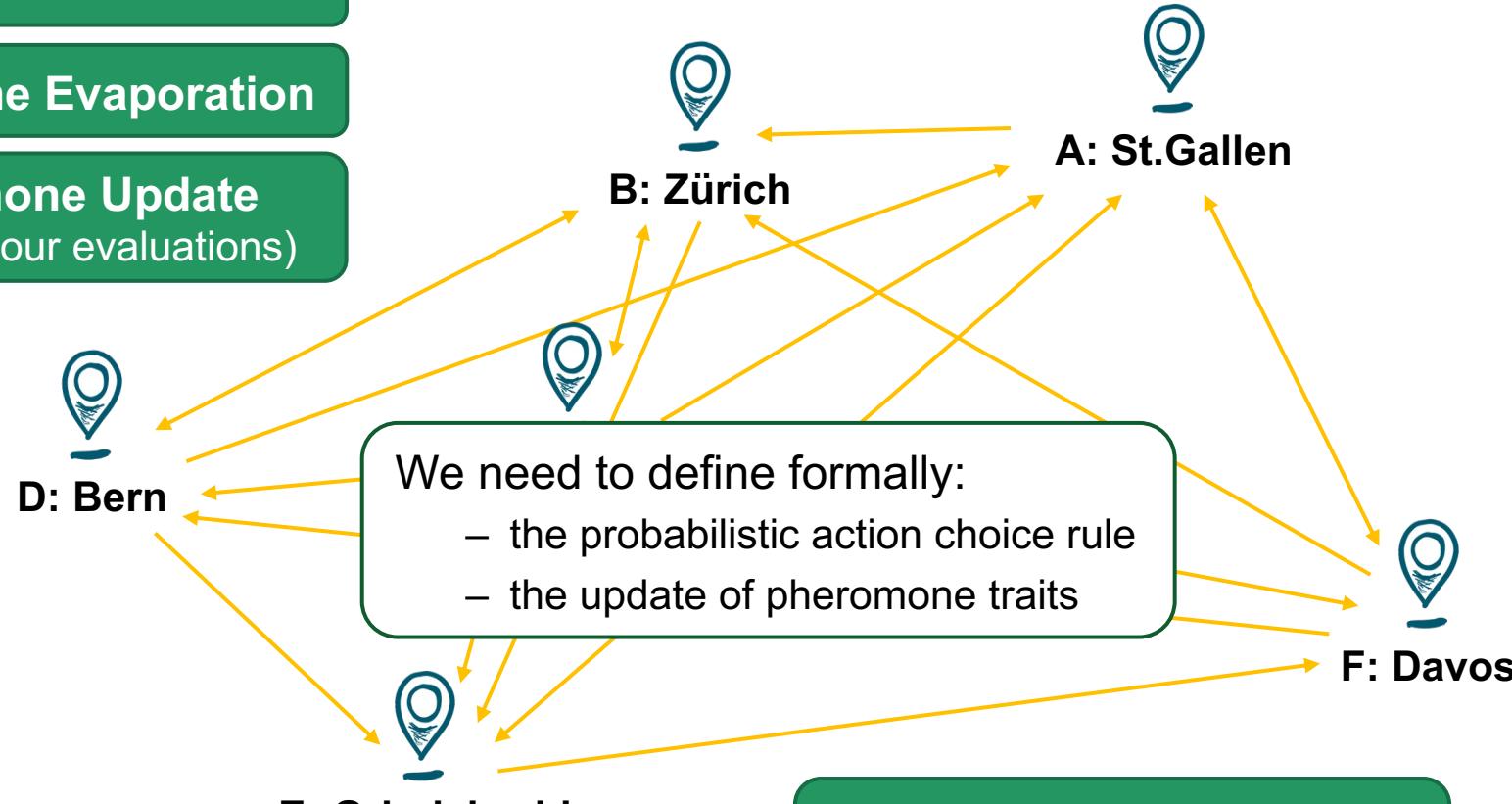
M. Dorigo et al., Ant System: Optimization by a colony of cooperating agents. IEEE Transactions on Systems, Man, and Cybernetics, vol. 26, 1996.

Ant System [Dorigo et al., 1996]: Overview

Tour Evaluation

Pheromone Evaporation

Pheromone Update
(based on tour evaluations)



	$C^1 = 1024$	[A,E,F,C,B,D,A]
	$C^2 = 847$	[B,D,E,F,C,A,B]
	$C^3 = 675$	[C,F,A,B,D,E,C]
	$C^4 = 884$	[D,B,C,E,A,F,D]
	$C^5 = 815$	[E,C,D,A,F,B,E]
	$C^6 = 675$	[F,A,B,D,E,C,F]

M. Dorigo and T. Stützle. Ant Colony Optimization. MIT Press. 2004.

M. Dorigo et al., Ant System: Optimization by a colony of cooperating agents. IEEE Transactions on Systems, Man, and Cybernetics, vol. 26, 1996.

Ant System: Tour Construction

Probability with which ant k at city i chooses to go to city j :

$$p_{ij}^k = \begin{cases} \frac{[\tau_{ij}]^\alpha [\eta_{ij}]^\beta}{\sum_{l \in \mathcal{N}_i^k} [\tau_{il}]^\alpha [\eta_{il}]^\beta}, & \text{if } j \in \mathcal{N}_i^k \\ 0, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

where:

- \mathcal{N}_i^k is the set of cities reachable from city i that ant k has not visited yet (the *feasible neighborhood*)
- τ_{ij} is the amount of pheromone on the arc from city i to city j ;
- $\eta_{ij} = 1/d_{ij}$ is a heuristic value based on the distance d_{ij} between city i and city j (available a priori);
- α and β are two parameters that determine the relative influence of the pheromone trail and the heuristic information

Exploration vs. Exploitation

- if $\alpha = 0$, the closest cities are most likely to be selected next
- if $\beta = 0$, only the pheromone values are used

In practice, good parameter values are chosen empirically

Common values [Dorigo & Stützle, 2004]:
 $\alpha = 1$ and $\beta = 2$ to 5

Ant System: Update of Pheromone Trails

Pheromone trails are updated after all the ants have constructed their tours (*ant-cycle* variant [Dorigo, 1992])

Step 1: Pheromone is first removed from all arcs (pheromone evaporation):

$$\tau_{ij} \leftarrow (1 - \rho)\tau_{ij}, \forall (i, j) \in E$$

where E is the set of all arcs and $0 < \rho \leq 1$ is the pheromone evaporation rate

Common evaporation rate value [Dorigo & Stützle, 2004]:
 $\rho = 0.5$

- pheromone evaporation allows to “forget” bad decisions taken previously: if an arc is not chosen by the ants, its associated pheromone value decreases exponentially in the number of iterations

Step 2: Pheromone is then added on the arcs the ants have crossed in their tours:

$$\tau_{ij} \leftarrow \tau_{ij} + \sum_{k=1}^m \Delta\tau_{ij}^k, \forall (i, j) \in E$$

where m is the total number of ants, and $\Delta\tau_{ij}^k$ is the amount of pheromone ant k deposits on the arcs it has visited and is defined as:

$$\Delta\tau_{ij}^k = \begin{cases} 1/C^k, & \text{if } (i, j) \in T^k \\ 0, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

where T^k is the tour built by ant k and C^k is the tour’s cost (the sum of the distances of all arcs in T^k)

A common value for m is the number n of nodes in the graph
 [Dorigo & Stützle, 2004]

Ant System: Initializing Pheromone Trails

Pheromone trails are initialized to a value slightly higher than the expected amount of pheromone deposited by the ants in one iteration

- if the initial pheromone values are too high, many iterations are lost until pheromone evaporation reduces enough pheromone values such that the pheromone added by the ants can bias the search
- if the initial pheromone values are too low, the search is quickly biased towards the first tours generated by the ants

$$\forall(i,j), \tau_{ij} = \tau_0 = m/C^{nn}$$

where:

- m is the number of ants
- C^{nn} is the expected cost of a tour generated using a *nearest-neighbor heuristic* (e.g., choosing the next closest city that was not yet visited)

Today's Agenda

- Self-Organization and Swarm Intelligence
 - Flocking Behavior: Bird-oid Objects (Boids)
 - Swarm Robotics
 - Non-Functional Properties of Self-Organizing Systems
 - Design Principles for Self-Organizing Systems
- Stigmergy
 - Ant Colony Optimization
 - Cognitive Stigmergy

Stigmergy in self-organizing multi-agent systems generally brings two biases [Ricci et al., 2007]:

- the agent model is assumed to be very simple, such as ant-like agents
- the environment model is often quite elementary, such as a pheromone infrastructure

Cognitive Stigmergy: Towards a Framework Based on Agents and Artifacts

Alessandro Ricci, Andrea Omicini, Mirko Viroli, Luca Gardelli,
and Enrico Oliva

ALMA MATER STUDIORUM—Università di Bologna
via Venezia 52, 47023 Cesena, Italy

a.ricci@unibo.it, andrea.omicini@unibo.it, mirko.viroli@deis.unibo.it,
luca.gardelli@unibo.it, enrico.oliva@unibo.it

Abstract. *Stigmergy* has been adopted in MAS (multi-agent systems) and in other fields as a technique for realising forms of emergent coordination in societies composed by a large amount of ant-like, non-

How can **stigmergy** be transposed in
systems of **cognitive agents**?

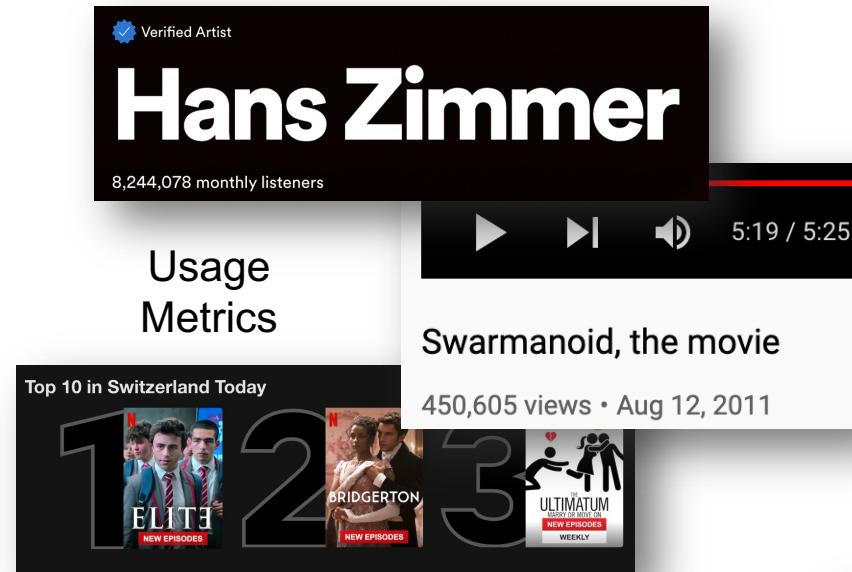
Artifacts as enablers for stigmergy

Workspaces capture locality

From pheromones to **annotations**:

- annotations hold a **symbolic value** referring to some **ontology**
- can be both **intentional** (created by agents) or **unintentional** (created by artifacts)

“Trails” of Cognitive Stigmergy on the Web



Product/Service Ratings

★ 4.67 · 6 reviews

Cleanliness



Communication



Check-in



Promote **awareness** of others' activity

Some are **unintentional**, others are **intentional**

Useful both for **people** and **artificial agents**

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Pebble: E-Paper Watch for iPhone and Android
A product design project in Penobscot, CA by Pebble Technology - funded on May 11, 2013

Windwerk Indoor Skydiving was live.
March 26 at 3:57 PM - 4
Live from Winterthur. The 2022 Indoor Skydiving Swiss Championships Finals.

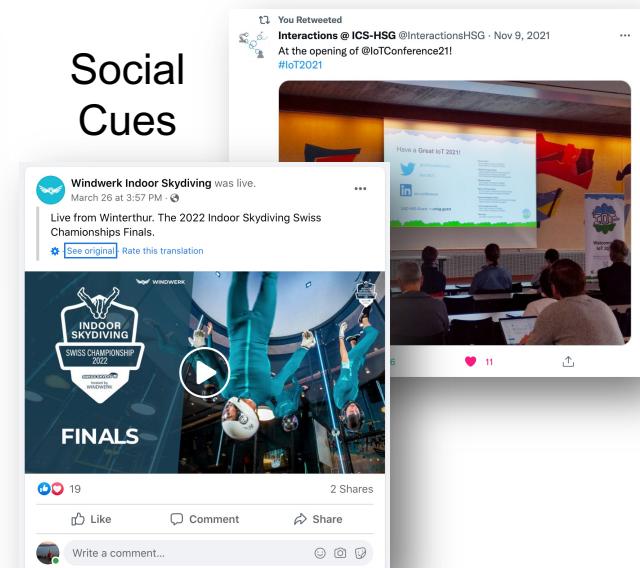
Y Combinator Congrats to the Pylon (pylonump.com)
Pylon (YC S21) provides water and electricity to emerging markets with a platform for opening new revenue streams:

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Aggregation & Diffusion of Information

Social Cues

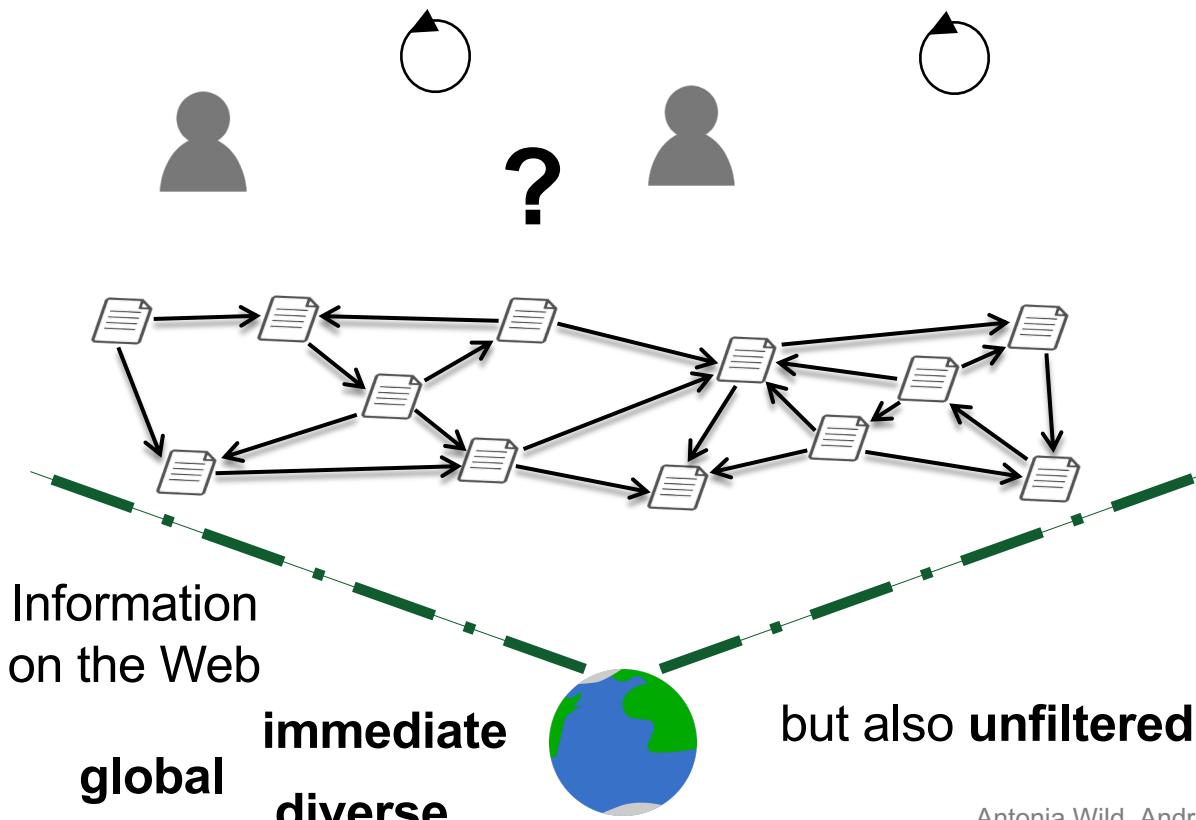


Etc...

Case Study: Tackling Online Disinformation

Credibility analysis of online information is hard

- automated fact-checking can **scale** but **lacks accuracy**
- manual fact-checking is more **accurate** but **lacks scale**



<https://euvdisinfo.eu/>

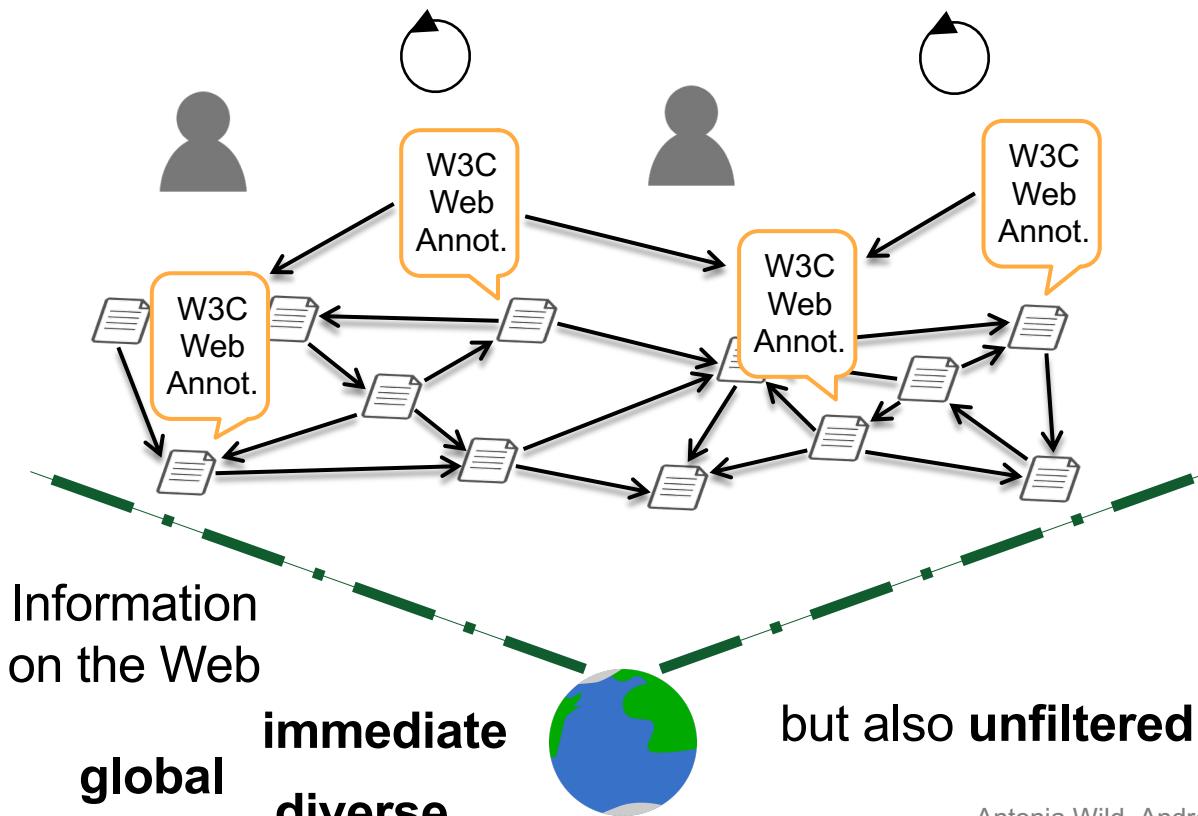
Antonia Wild, Andrei Ciortea, and Simon Mayer. Designing Social Machines for Tackling Online Disinformation, DecentWeb 2020.

W3C Web Annotation Working Group: <https://www.w3.org/annotation/>; W3C CredWeb Community Group: <https://www.w3.org/community/credibility/>

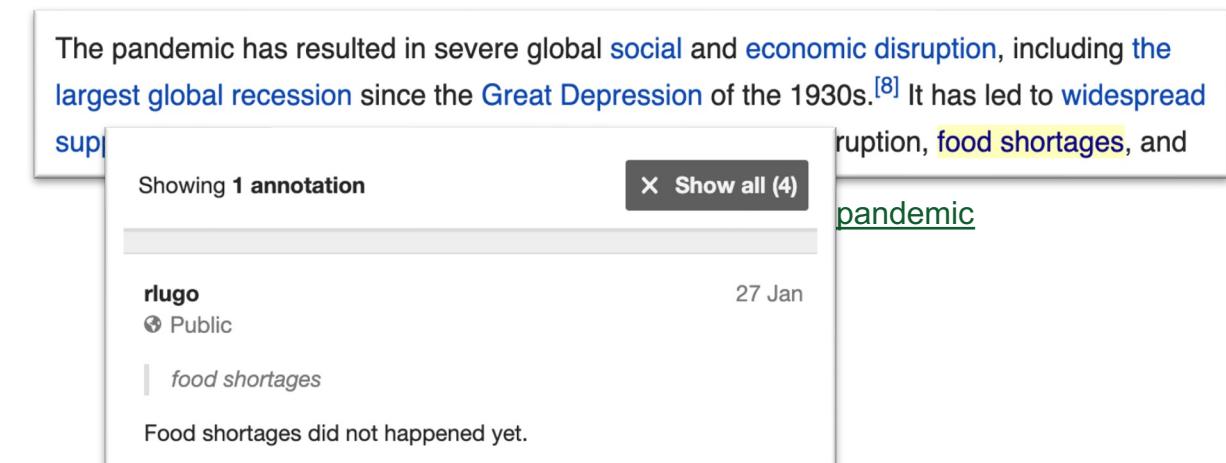
Case Study: Tackling Online Disinformation

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W3C Web Annotations: transparency **at source** on the **open Web**



The screenshot shows a web page with a text block containing blue links. Below it is a sidebar with the heading "Showing 1 annotation". It displays an annotation from "rlugo" (Public) dated "27 Jan" with the text "food shortages". The annotation includes the note "Food shortages did not happen yet."

The pandemic has resulted in severe global social and economic disruption, including the largest global recession since the Great Depression of the 1930s.^[8] It has led to widespread disruption, food shortages, and pandemic

X Show all (4)

rlugo Public 27 Jan

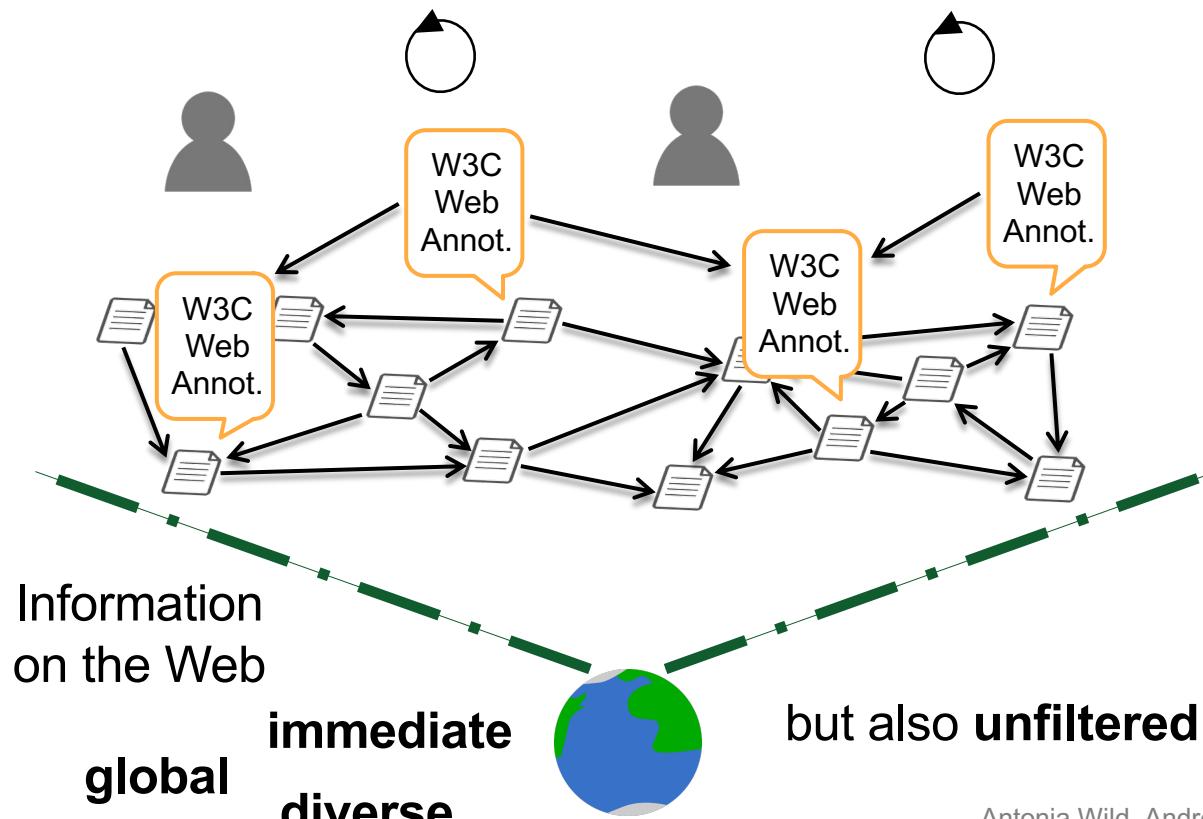
food shortages

Food shortages did not happen yet.

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W3C Web Annotations: transparency **at source** on the **open Web**

Fact-checking workflows defined by experts



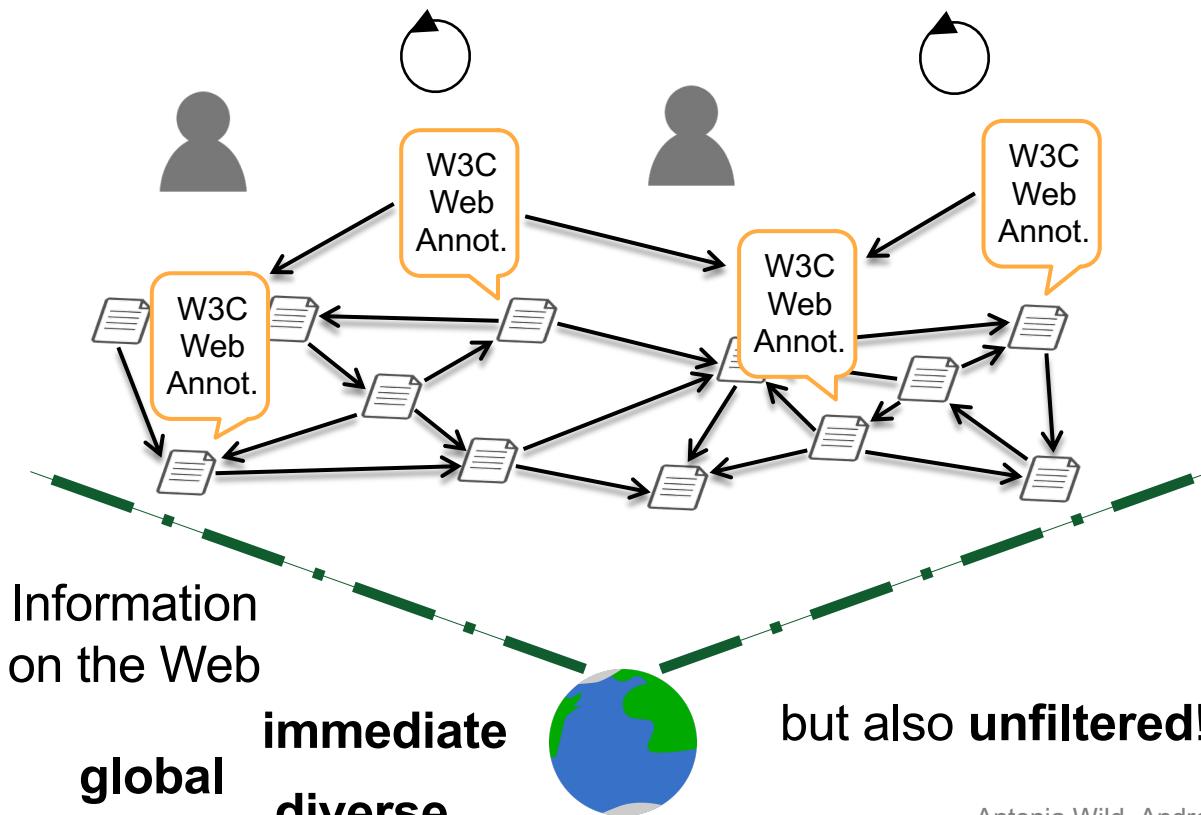
What's missing: designing hybrid organizations of people and autonomous agents

— and deploying them **at scale!**

Case Study: Tackling Online Disinformation

Credibility analysis of online information is hard

- automated fact-checking can **scale** but **lacks accuracy**
- manual fact-checking is more **accurate** but **lacks scale**



aDecentWeb 2020

Designing Social Machines for Tackling Online Disinformation

Antonia Wild
University of St. Gallen
St. Gallen, Switzerland
antonia.wild@student.unisg.ch

Andrei Ciortea
University of St. Gallen
St. Gallen, Switzerland
Inria, Université Côte d'Azur, CNRS
Sophia Antipolis, France
andrei.ciortea@unisg.ch

Simon Mayer
University of St. Gallen
and ETH Zürich
St. Gallen, Switzerland
simon.mayer@unisg.ch

ABSTRACT

Traditional news outlets as carriers and distributors of information have been challenged by online social networks with regards to their gate-keeping function. We believe that only a combined effort

Web – and envisioned the use of *annotations* as a suitable mechanism.³ Such *Web Annotations*, now a W3C Recommendation [16], construct a metadata layer on top of existing resources and without requiring their modification. As such, they can be regarded as a con-

Next week:
More on **organizations** and **cognitive stigmergy** for coordination

Our Journey

Prerequisites:
 • ASSE
 • (...)



**Week 1:
Introduction**



**Week 2:
A Web for Machines**



**Week 3:
Knowledge Representation
and Reasoning for the Web**



**Week 4:
Linked Data and Distributed
Knowledge Graphs**



**Week 5:
Autonomous Agents
(Arch. and Programming)**



**Week 6 (Coordination I):
Agent Communication
and Interaction**



**Week 7 (Coordination II):
Self-Organization and
Stigmergy**



**Week 9 (Coordination IV):
Trust & Reputation**



**Week 10:
Game Theory and
Social Choice**



**Week 11:
Reinforcement Learning
and Multi-Agent Learning**



**Week 12:
An Industry Perspective**



Exercises

- Ex1: Writing Your First Agent(s)!
- Ex2: Automated Planning
- Ex3: Web Ontologies
- Ex4: Operating on Linked Data
- Ex5: BDI Agents
- Ex6: Interacting Agents on the Web

- Ex7: Ant Colony Optimization
- Ex8: Organized Agents
- Ex9: Trustworthy Agents
- Ex10: Axelrod's Agents
- Ex11: Reinforcement Learning Agents
- Course Review and Q&A

Any Questions / Comments / Doubts / Concerns?



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