

Laboratory of mathematical methods and models in
bioinformatics

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**Mathematical problems
in biological evolution and molecular regulation**

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<http://lab6.iitp.ru/>

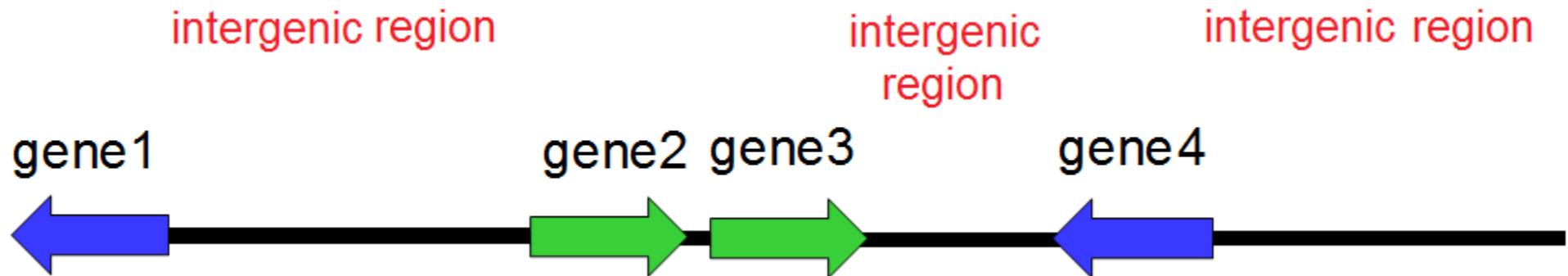
The layout. Experimental evidence (measurements, observations etc.) related to molecular biological processes is extracted from public data and analyzed to find

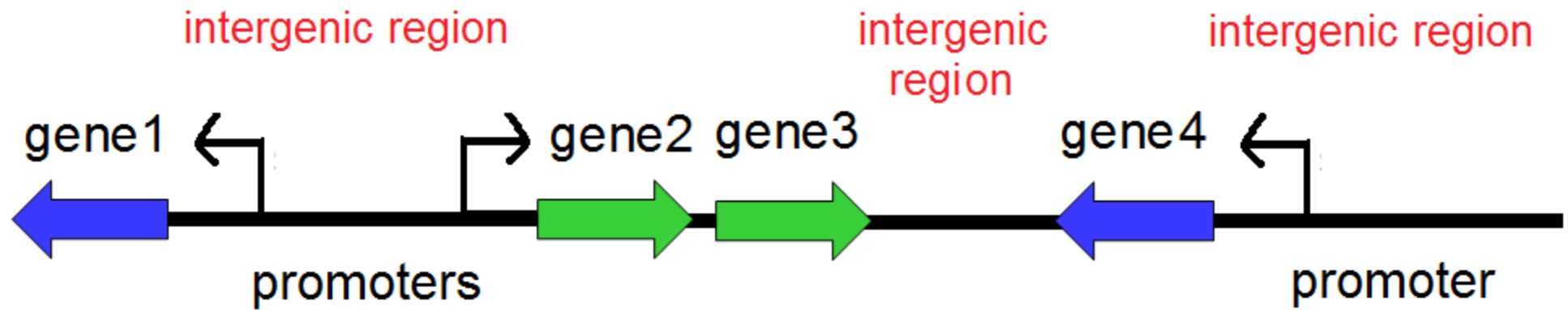
a “mathematical explanation” = a “model”.

Rules of "molecules' behavior" are sought for that best describe the experimental data and predict yet not obtained measurements. Otherwise, the model can be purely mathematical to **optimize a certain functional** to describe and predict biological objects.

This research includes: **1)** accurate formulation of the model and its computer verification to reproduce the known measurements and predict some unknown; **2)** mathematical studies of the model. We will exemplify some of our models, for which point 1) is true, but point 2) is uncertain. **The latter is a general problem!**

Research subject: Given is a **sequence** of typically 3 millions - 6 billions of characters in the 4-letter alphabet {A,C,T,G}. It contains many **genes**, which are shorter segments $[a_i, b_i]$, each with a **direction** (i.e., **vectors**)





In intergenic regions there are **promoters**, which are also **segments** $[c_j, d_j]$ of a **certain type**, each with a **direction** (i.e., **vectors** as well). Promoter examples:

human case **CAAACCCCAAAGACA**

bacterial case **TTGACA -17..18- TATAAT -4..7- A(or G)**

Thus, all genes and all promoters are **vectors**.

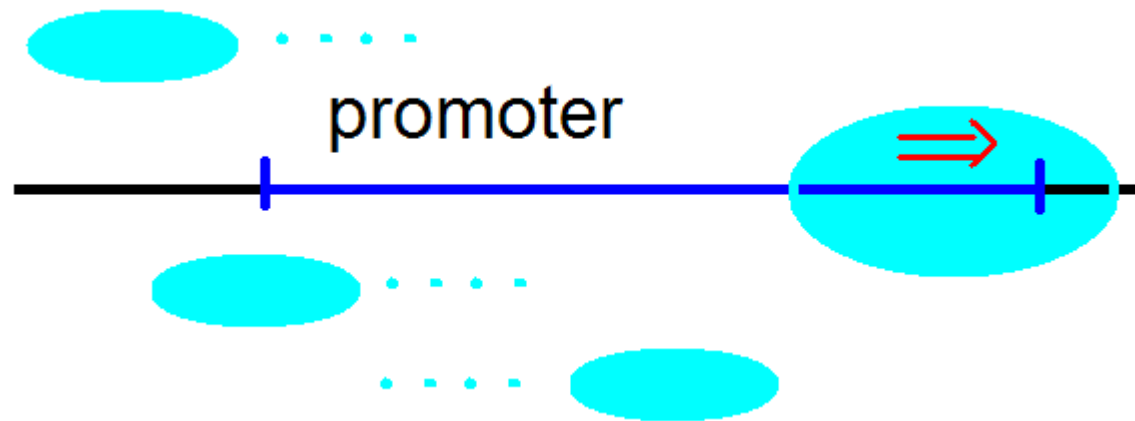
So, a **system of vectors on a fixed sequence** is given

Specific molecular machines (=polymerases) first **bind** to the sequence only at **promoters** and then **slide** along the sequence.

A polymerase after **binding to its promoter** **moves** to the **direction** of the promoter and **reads only genes co-directed** with the promoter (as co-directional vectors). Similar to a drive read head

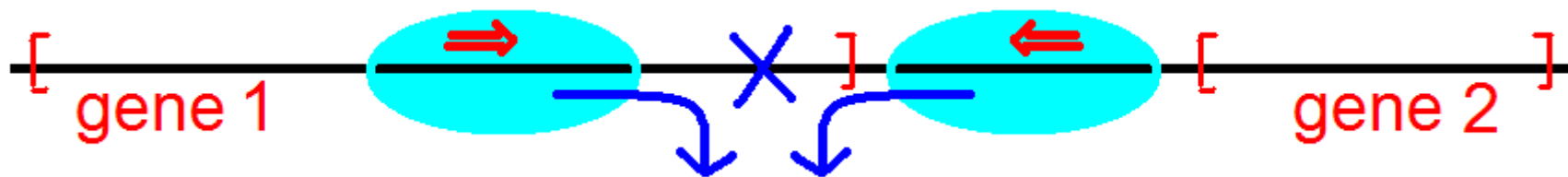
Attempts to bind a promoter are allowed to form a Poisson process, with a polymerase moving at a predetermined rate fixed for each type (e.g., 42 letters/sec) until colliding with another polymerase

The promoter is *available* if **none of polymerases overlap with it**. **Binding occurs** only if the promoter is available:



Each promoter, for each polymerase type, is characterized by the *intensity of binding attempts*

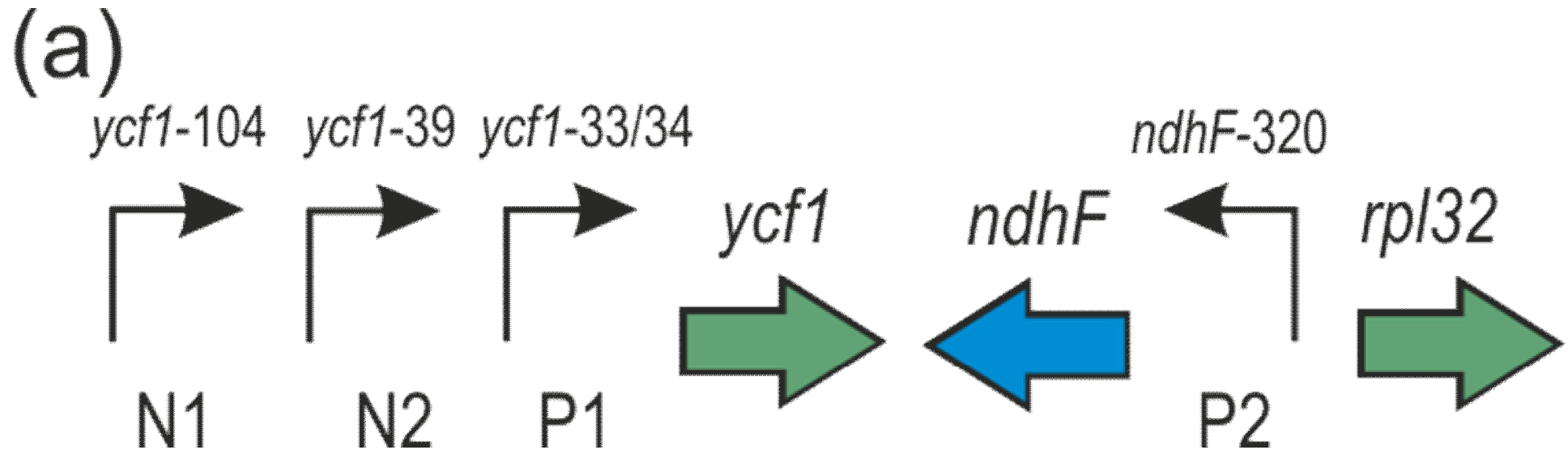
If two polymerases moving in **the same direction** collide, their rates become equal to that of the leading polymerase until it is attached to the sequence. In case of a **front collision** both polymerases **detach**:



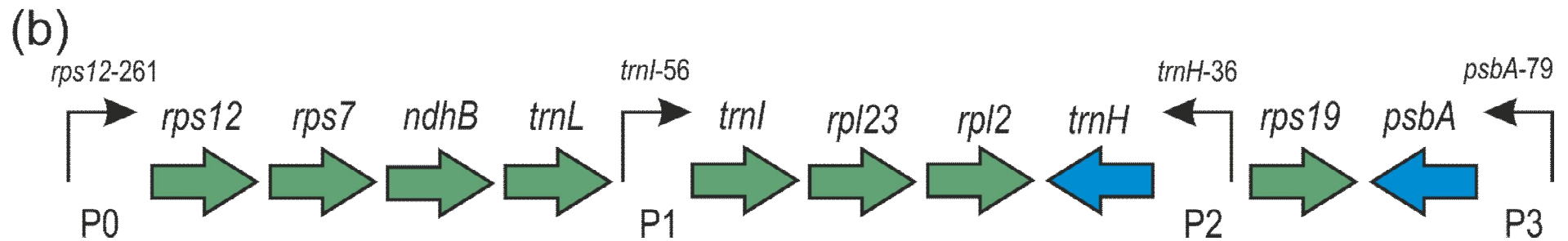
Many polymerases concurrently bind the sequence and move each in **its direction**

Example: 3 genes and 4 promoters.

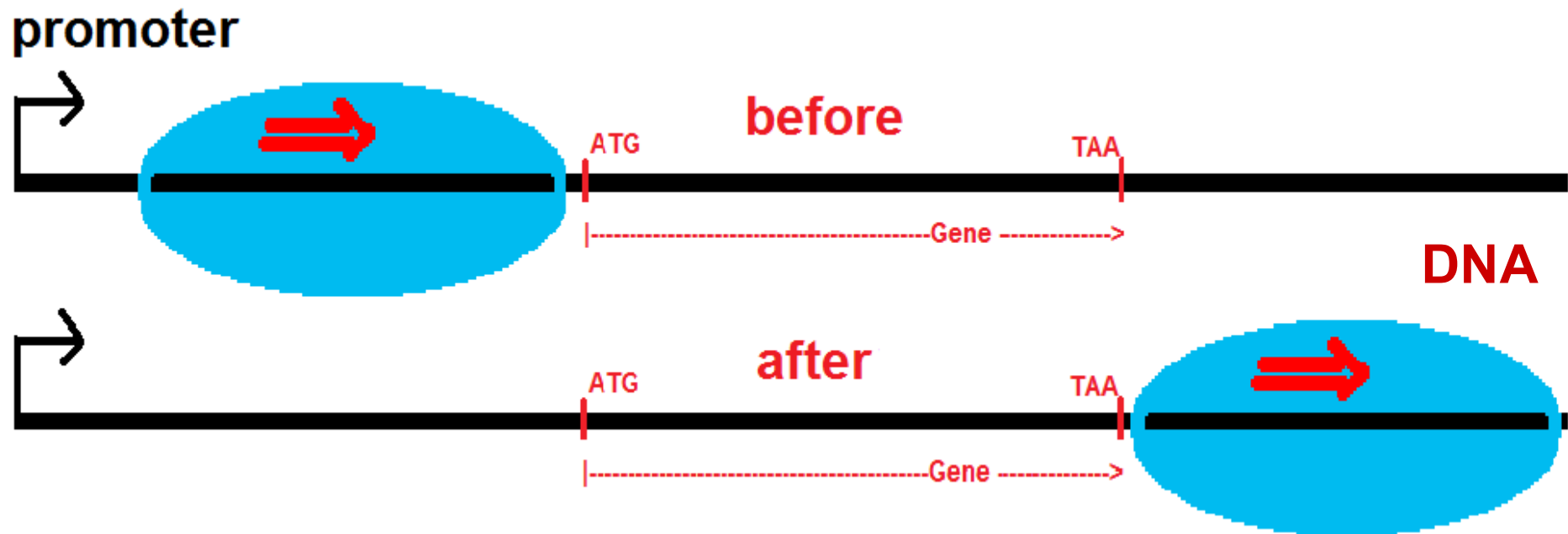
The mutual arrangement of promoters and genes is important and varies widely



Another example: 10 genes and 4 promoters



The gene is “**read**” if a polymerase **moved** from its **beginning** to the **end**. The gene’s reading frequency is called the *transcription level* of this gene

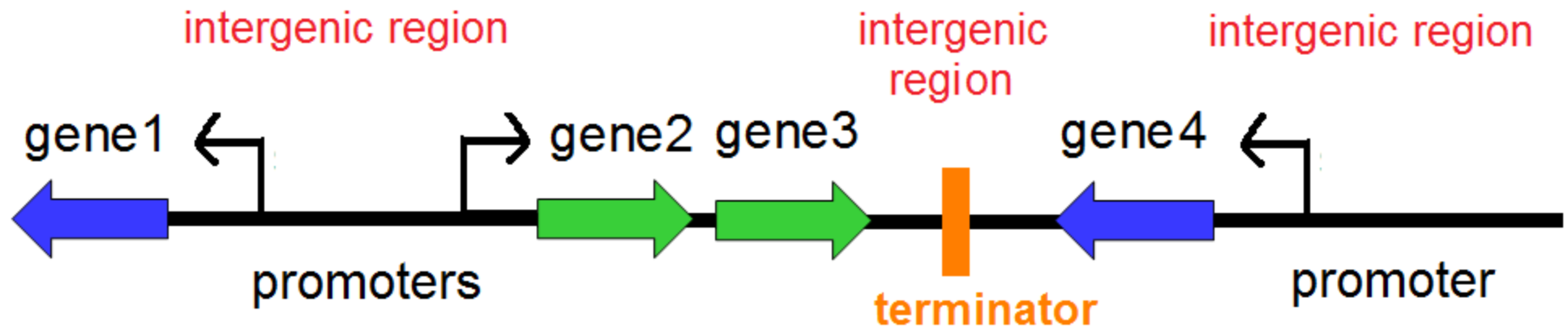


Problem 1: the dynamics of this process, including bifurcation points, is to be described.

There are many tasks here: for example, **1)** inferring transcription levels of all genes given the binding attempt intensities of all promoters; **2)** inferring binding attempt intensities that best approximate given gene transcription levels; **3)** inferring binding attempt intensities that best approximate known changes of gene transcription levels under wide fluctuations of temperature and polymerase rates (described by simple combinations of affine functions);

4) investigate for a more realistic case of the stochastic movement of polymerases.

Many particular questions remain, such as inferring the average length of the polymerase run, asymptotic distribution of the lengths, etc



The “**terminators**” are **regions** $[e_k, f_k]$ that allow through a certain average amount of polymerases in each direction.

Thus, a **system of vectors on a fixed sequence** is **given**: genes, promoters, terminators

Note a great practical value: e.g., changes in characters leading to terminators malfunction may cause severe human health disorders

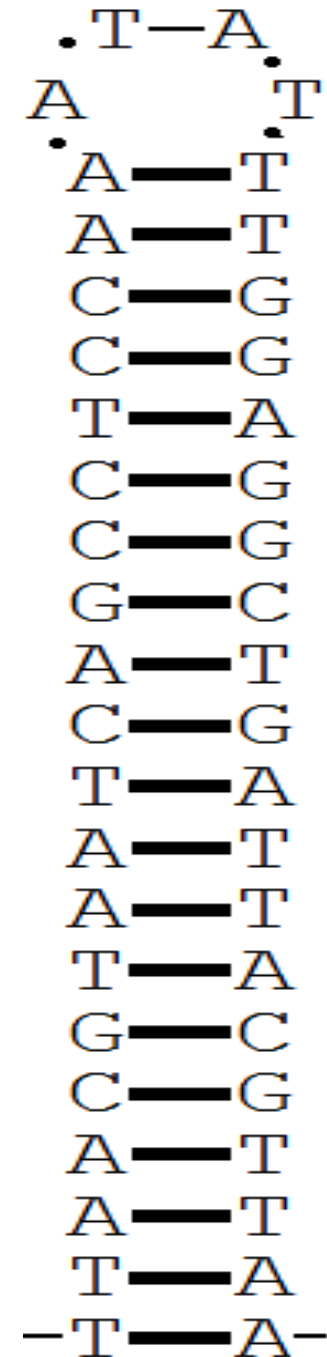
How a terminator works?

Terminator forms a «**helix**»

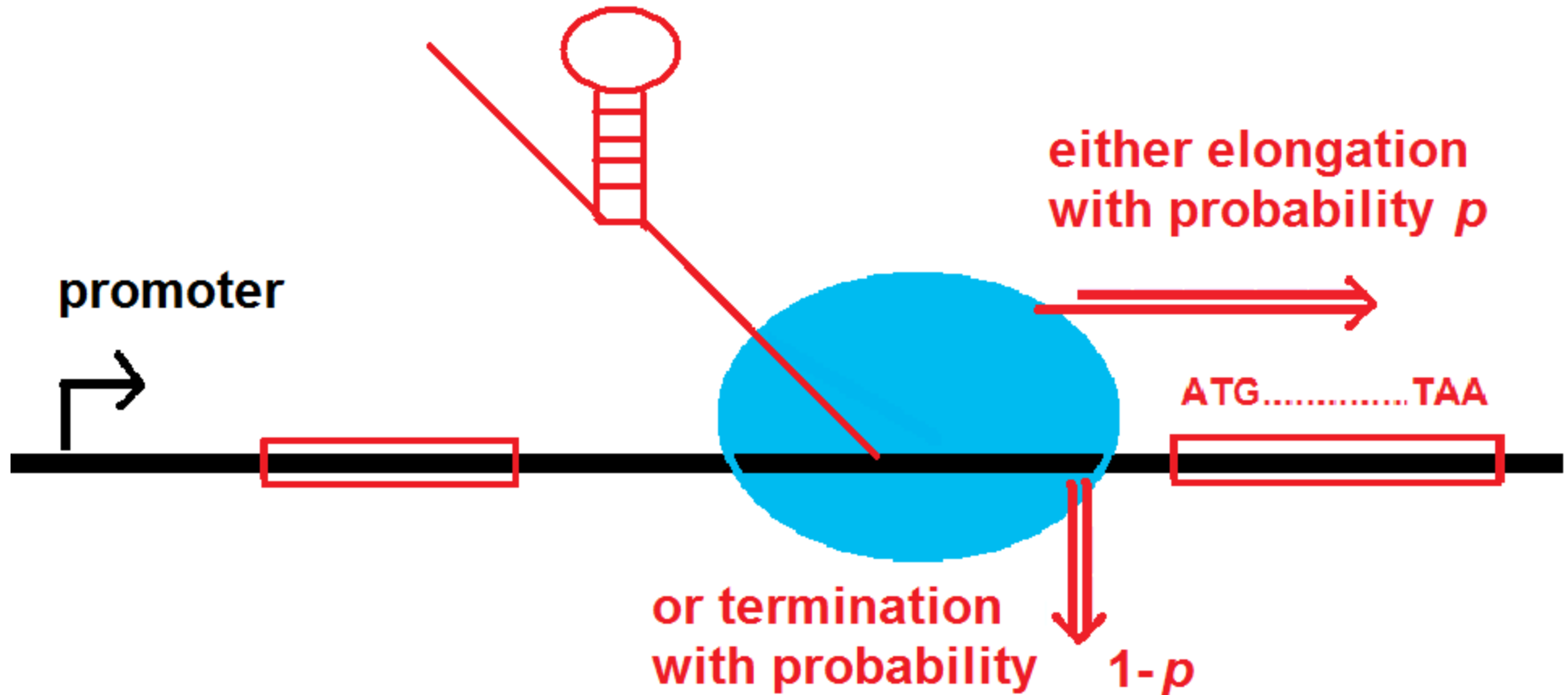
(in yellow is its left shoulder, in blue – the right shoulder).

Paired are G to C, and A to T

TTAACGTAATCAGCCTCCAAATATTTGGAGGCTGATTACGTTAA

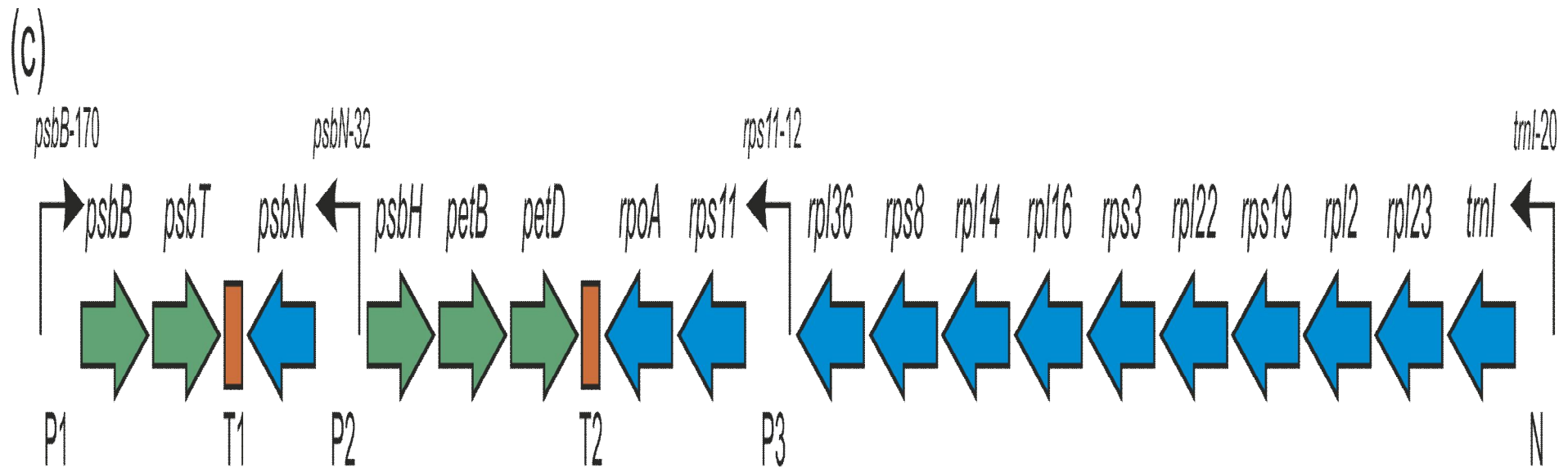


Each terminator has a certain intensity $1-p$ of the polymerase **detachments**



Example with terminators: 18 genes, 4 promoters and 2 terminators designated T1, T2.

The “**terminators**” are **regions** that allow through a certain average amount of polymerases in each direction



Comparison of gene transcription levels obtained in the model and experiment

for Locus (a) in *Arabidopsis* and Locus (b) in *Hordeum*.

Standard deviations are provided where applicable. Values separated by a “/” in the second column for Locus 2 are the results of two independent heat shock studies

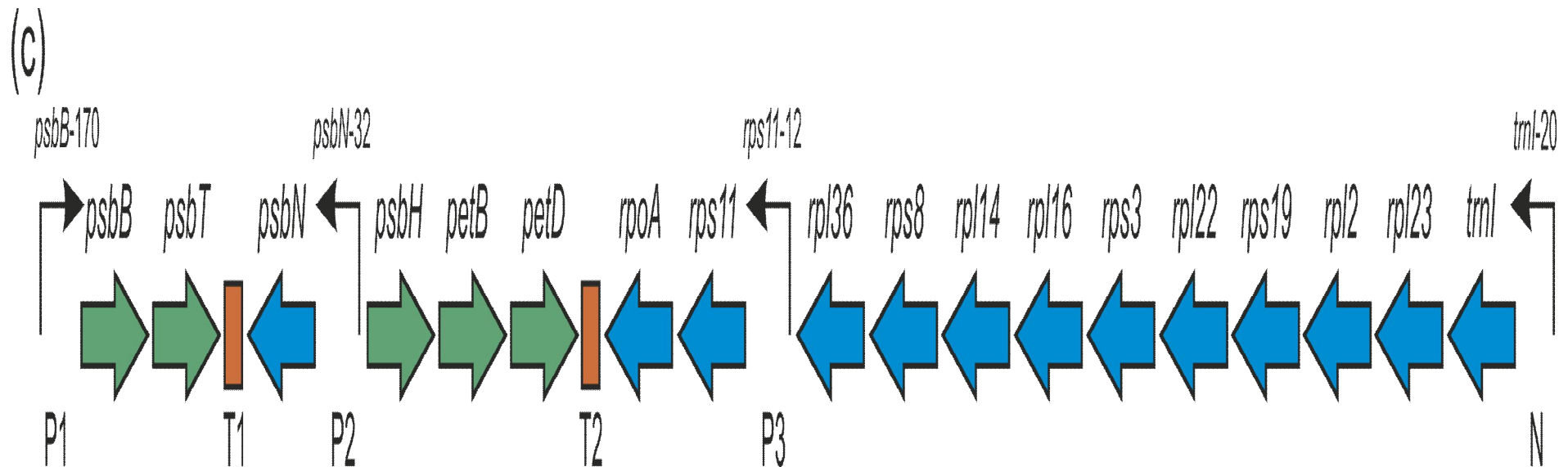
Gene	Experiment	Model
Locus (a)	<i>sig4</i> knockout, MT/WT	
<i>ycf1</i>	0.73 ± 0.04	0.76 ± 0.01
<i>ndhF</i>	0.43 ± 0.10	0.47 ± 0.19
<i>rpl32</i>	1.52 ± 0.06	1.55 ± 0.02
Locus (b)	Heat shock, HT/WT	
<i>rpl23–rpl2</i>	2.15 / 2.69	2.64 ± 0.02
<i>psbA</i>	0.53 / 0.55	0.54 ± 0.04

Comparison of gene transcription levels obtained in the model and experiments

MT/WT *sig3* and *sig4* gene knockout for Locus (c)

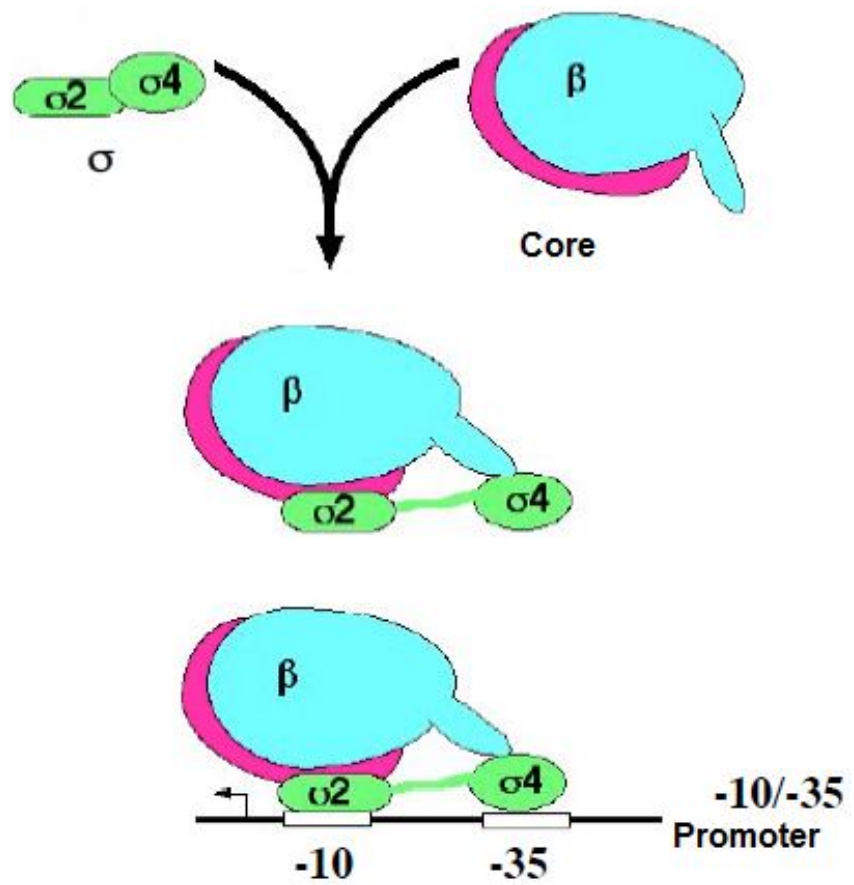
Gene	<i>sig3</i>-knockout	Model (<i>sig3</i>)	<i>sig4</i>-knockout	Model (<i>sig4</i>)
<i>psbB</i>	1.02 ± 0.36	1.27 ± 0.12	0.69 ± 0.19	0.84 ± 0.11
<i>psbT</i>	0.98 ± 0.25	1.30 ± 0.12	0.96 ± 0.15	0.85 ± 0.11
<i>psbN</i>	0.49 ± 0.46	0.41 ± 0.12	1.03 ± 0.02	1.02 ± 0.19
<i>psbH</i>	1.31 ± 0.05	1.28 ± 0.12	1.01 ± 0.08	0.83 ± 0.11
<i>petB</i>	0.91 ± 0.15	1.09 ± 0.11	0.87 ± 0.29	0.83 ± 0.11
<i>petD</i>	0.92 ± 0.09	0.89 ± 0.10	0.81 ± 0.21	0.81 ± 0.11
<i>rpoA</i>	0.94 ± 0.14	0.82 ± 0.20	0.79 ± 0.11	1.01 ± 0.14
<i>rps11</i>	0.92 ± 0.33	0.90 ± 0.21	0.98 ± 0.31	1.01 ± 0.13
<i>rpl36</i>	0.88 ± 0.11	1.03 ± 0.21	1.54 ± 0.62	1.08 ± 0.18
<i>rps8</i>	1.11 ± 0.04	1.03 ± 0.21	0.83 ± 0.15	1.08 ± 0.18
<i>rpl14</i>	1.04 ± 0.15	1.03 ± 0.21	1.11 ± 0.02	1.08 ± 0.18
<i>rpl16</i>	1.09 ± 0.03	1.03 ± 0.21	1.18 ± 0.03	1.08 ± 0.18
<i>rps3</i>	1.24 ± 0.26	1.03 ± 0.21	1.25 ± 0.02	1.08 ± 0.18
<i>rpl22</i>	1.09 ± 0.13	1.03 ± 0.21	1.20 ± 0.12	1.08 ± 0.18
<i>rps19</i>	1.15 ± 0.50	1.03 ± 0.21	0.96 ± 0.07	1.08 ± 0.17
<i>rpl2</i>	0.94 ± 0.15	1.03 ± 0.21	0.95 ± 0.06	1.08 ± 0.17
<i>rpl23</i>	1.05 ± 0.04	1.06 ± 0.20	1.35 ± 0.33	1.10 ± 0.17

Terminators T1 and T2 were postulated to bring the model predictions in agreement with the experiment. Introducing the two terminators in these specific regions allowed to reach the congruence. The terminators and their location were independently proved in the experiment

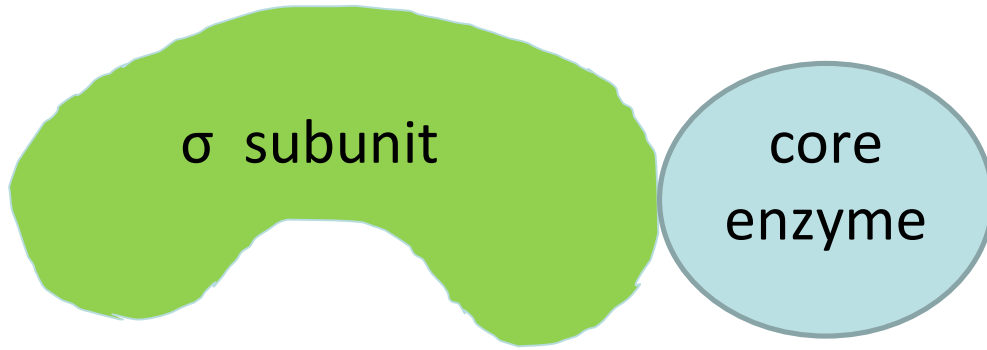


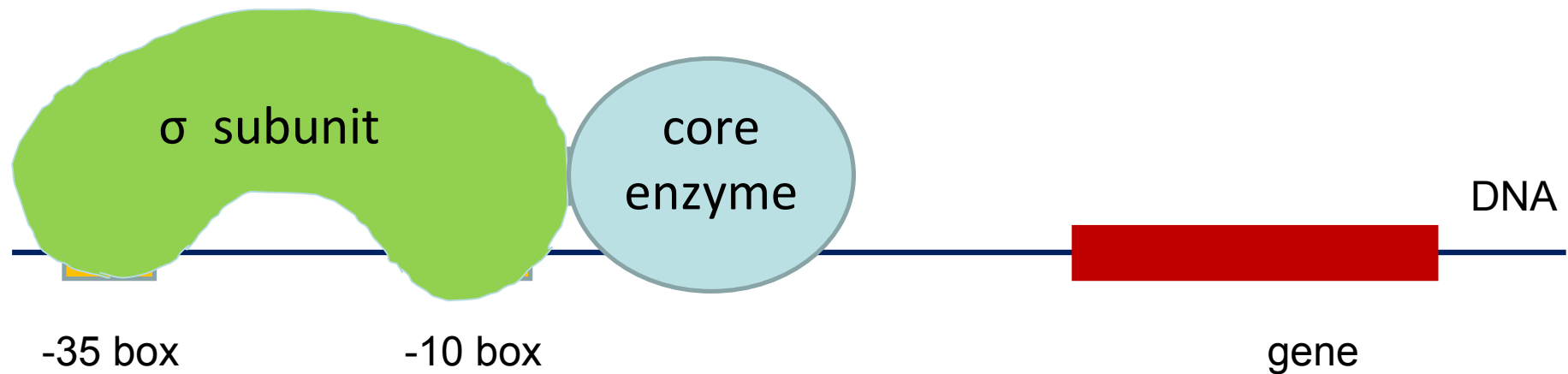
Two further pitfalls

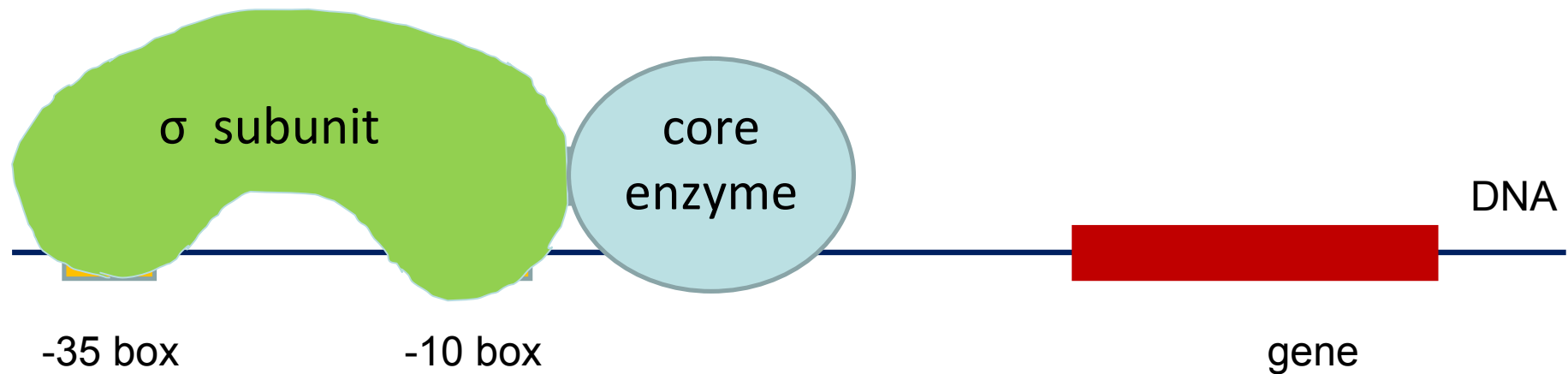
Binding is followed by the abort process: an alternation of movement at a fixed finite rate in the corresponding direction of promoter at an arbitrary (e.g., exponentially distributed) distance and instantaneous return to the initial position. Such alternations occur an arbitrary (e.g., geometrically distributed) number of times until the polymerase reaches at a threshold distance from the promoter. At this instance the polymerase detaches from the promoter, its size instantaneously decreases by a fixed value and movement continues in the same direction

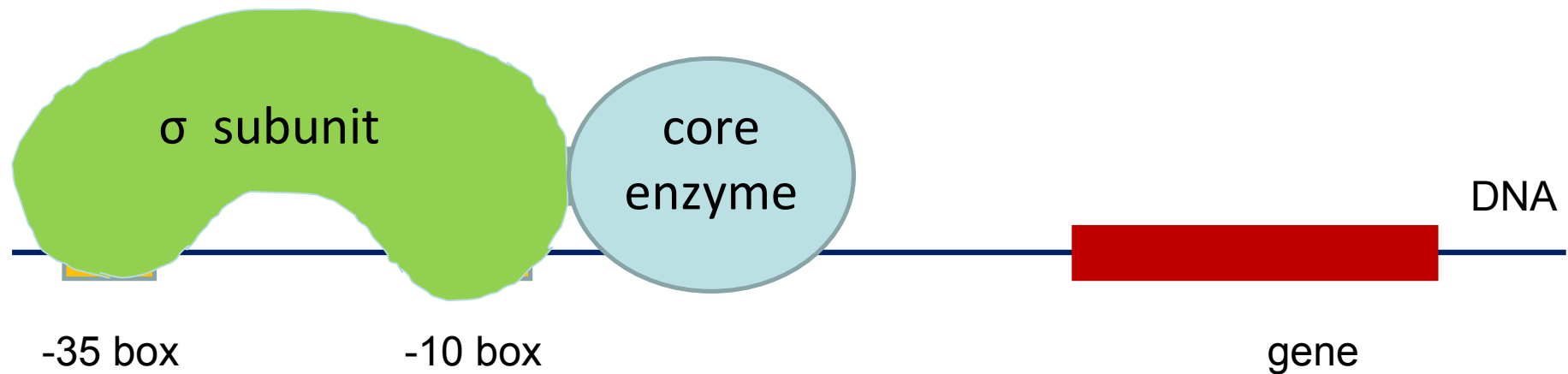


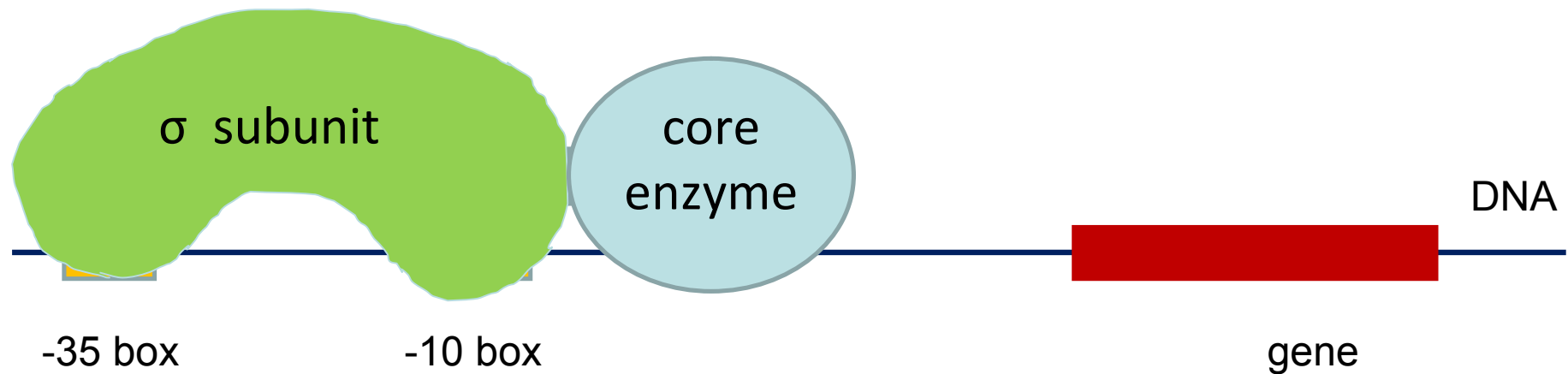


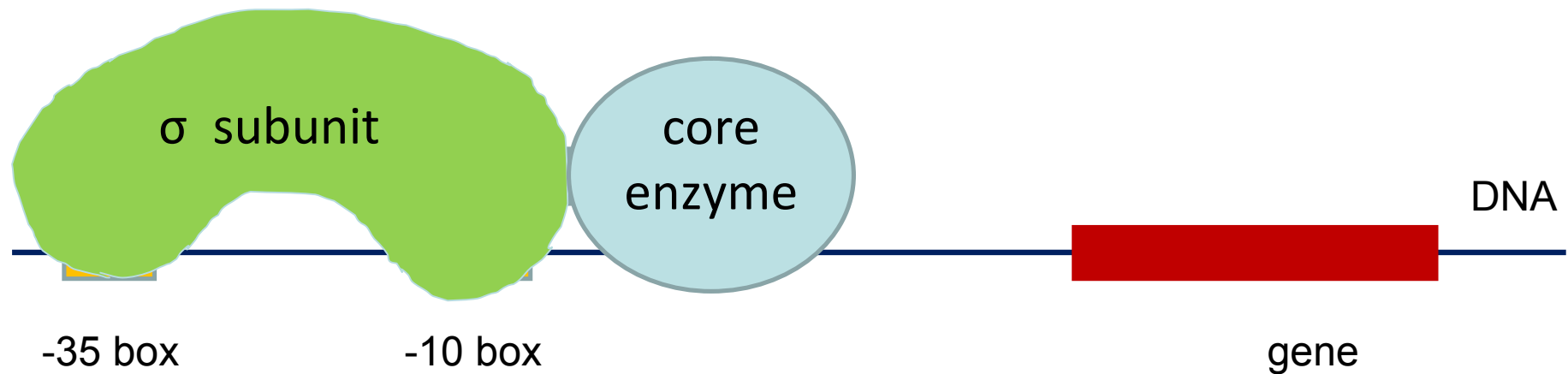


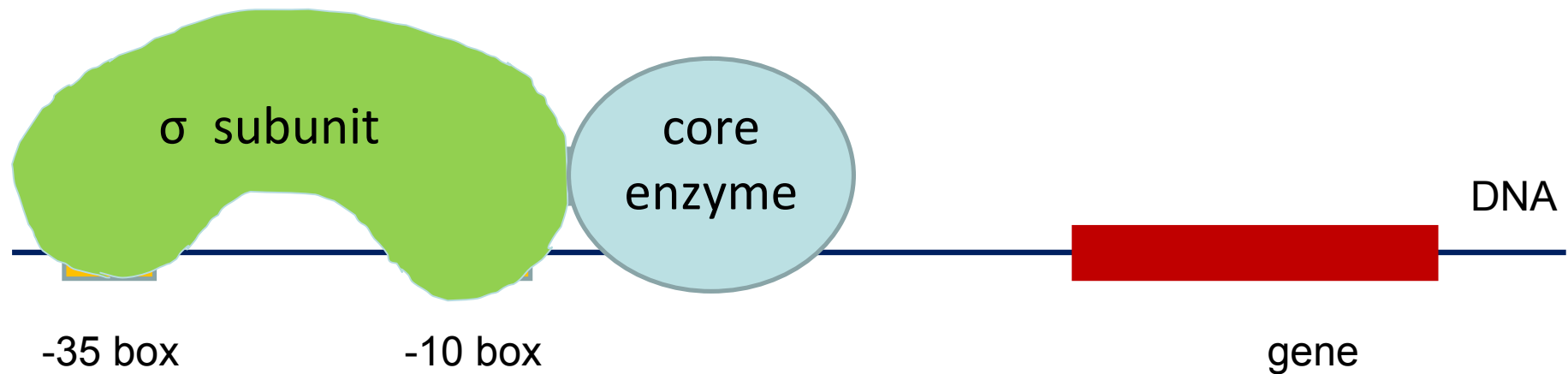


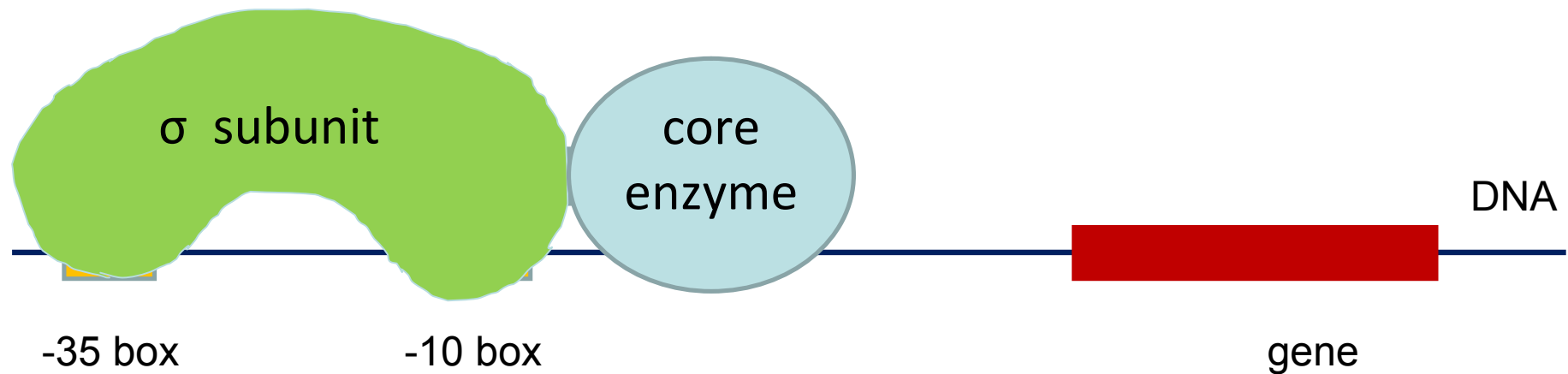


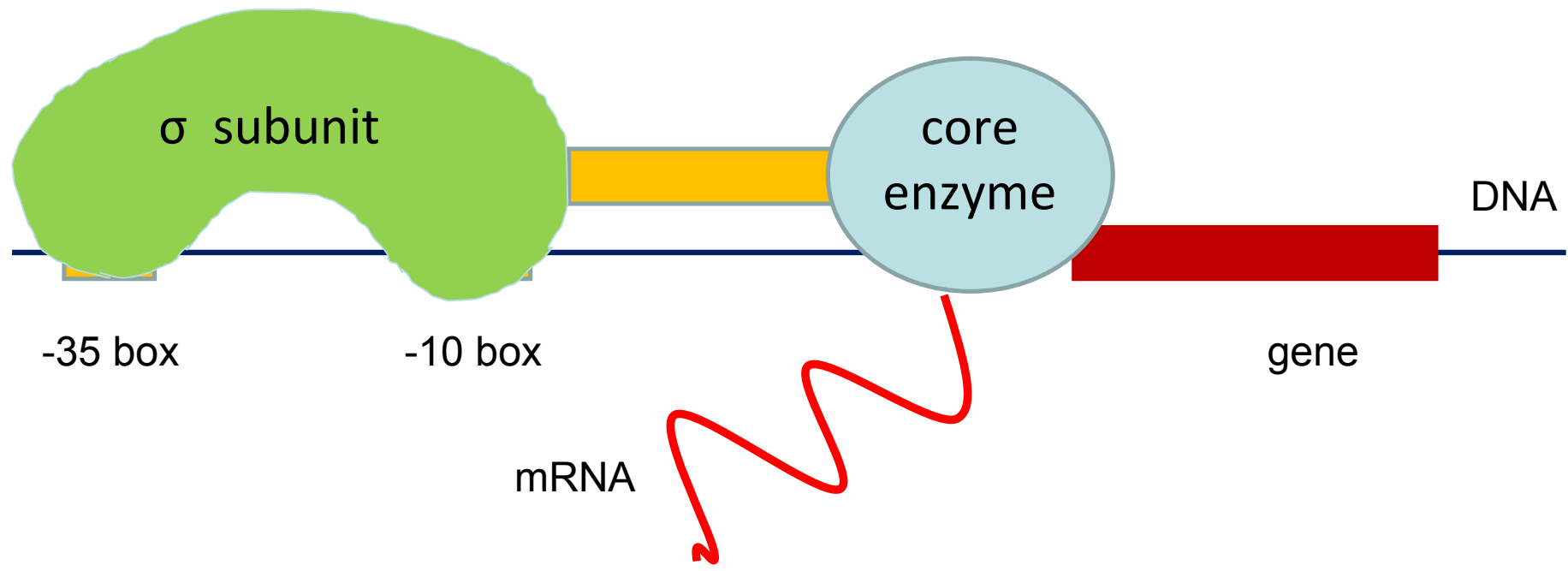












σ subunit

core enzyme

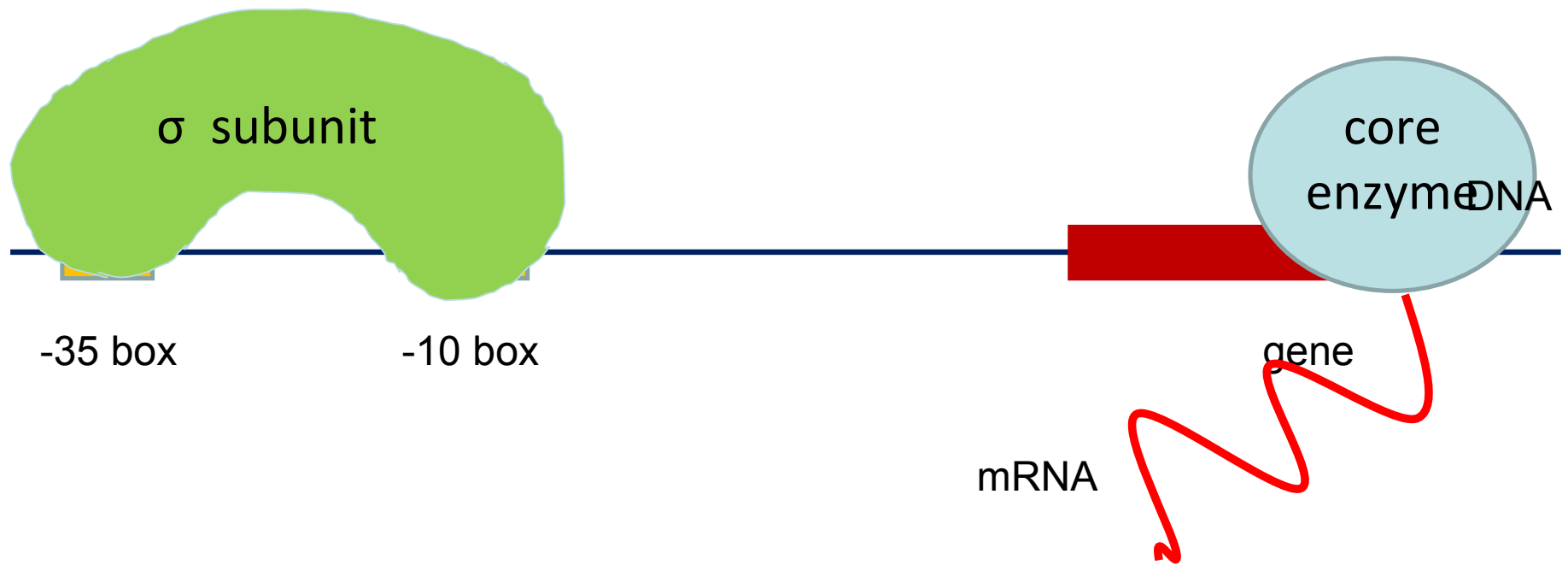
-35 box

-10 box

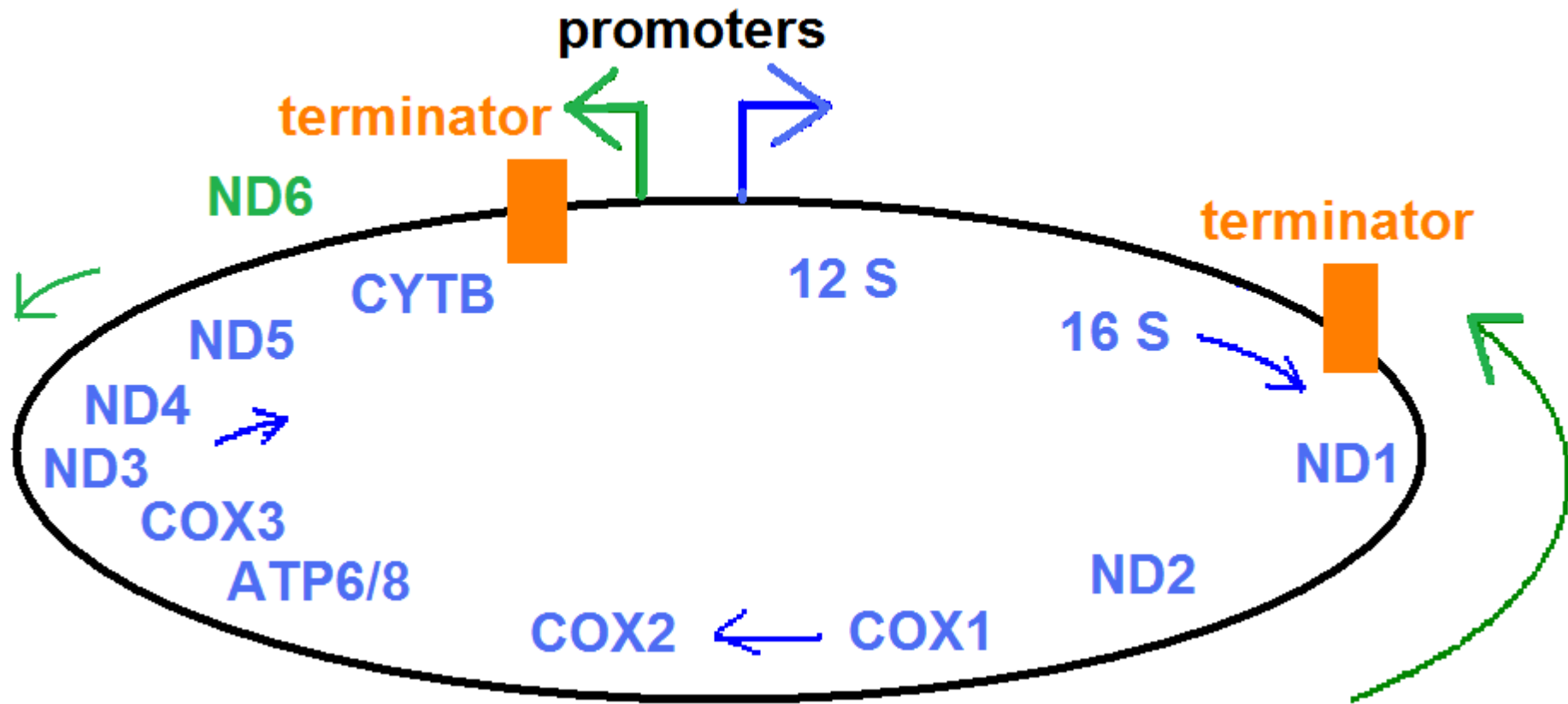
DNA

gene

mRNA



RNA Polymerase Competition in the **circle case** (mitochondrial DNA)



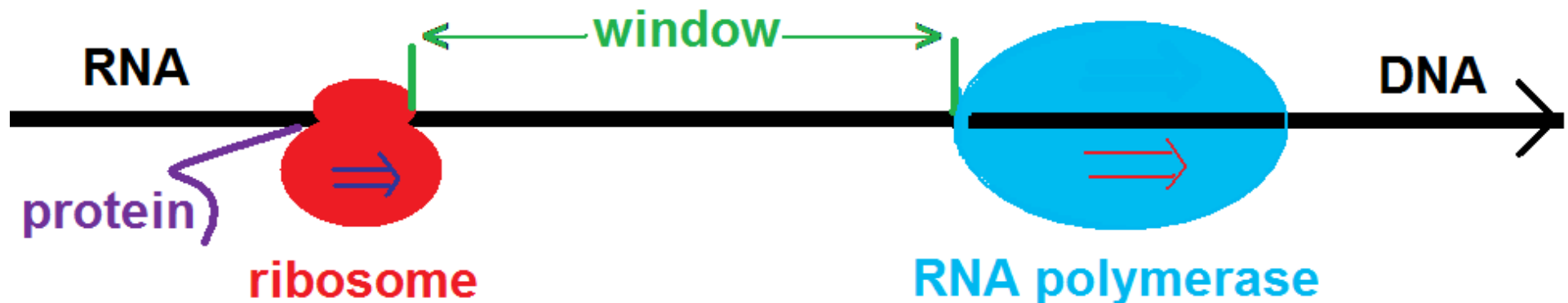
Initially, polymerases do not complete the circle, their counter-flows from the two promoters collide and the polymerases detach. Genes distant from the promoters have nearly zero expression levels, which contradicts biological observations. This is an unstable state: one of the promoters realizes by 10 more bindings, the extra polymerases avoid collisions and complete the full circle including the initial promoter. It **simulates the increasing number of successful bindings** and increases the number of polymerases completing the circle in one direction. If another promoter also receives enough bindings, the movement in **opposite direction may become more successful**. The directions are **rarely swapped several times**, and a winning direction rapidly establishes

Thus, **Problem 1**. Describe the process: multiple machines (polymerases) simultaneously attempt to bind different regions (if those are unattended at the instance of binding) of a long sequence. When bound, the machines slide along the sequence not affecting each other, OR collide in opposite directions and slip. Slippage can also be caused by scattered terminators. The fate depends on the local arrangement of objects in the sequence. To estimate frequencies of pre-defined regions (genes).

Among particular questions: what is an average distance that machine cover before collision?

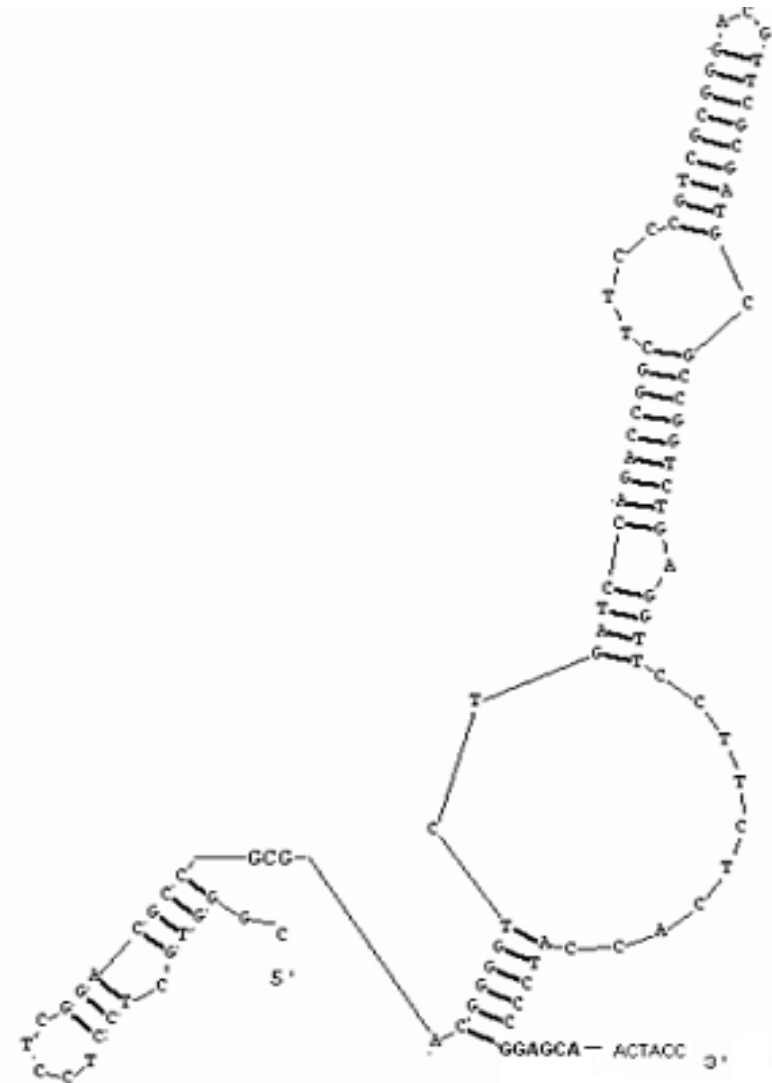
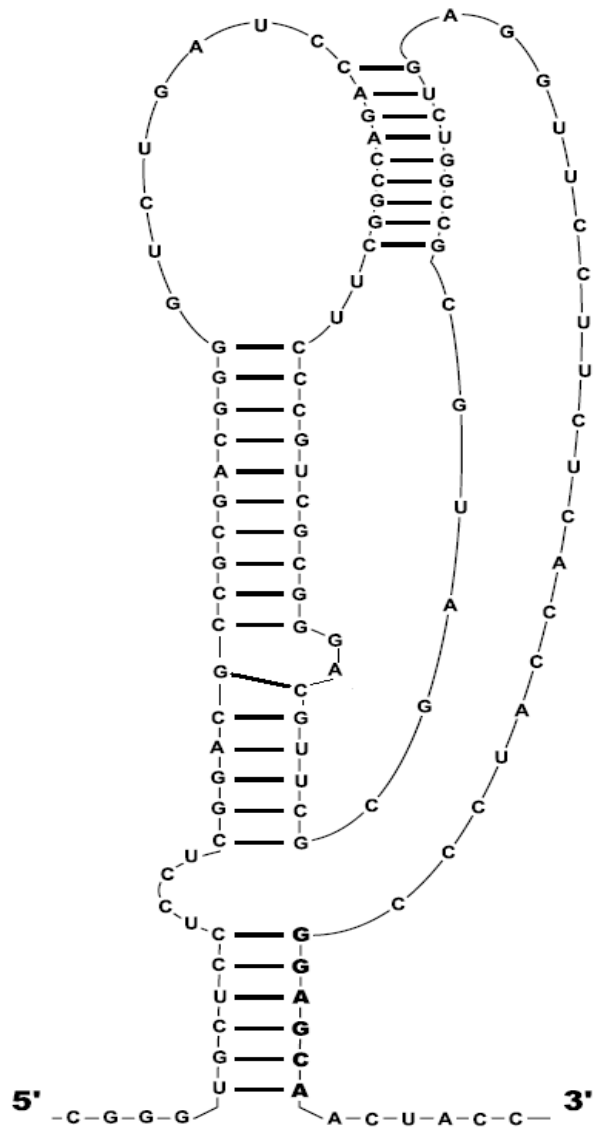
Other problems (detailed in the proceedings):

2. Two **molecular machines follow** each other at a certain distance (a **“window”**).

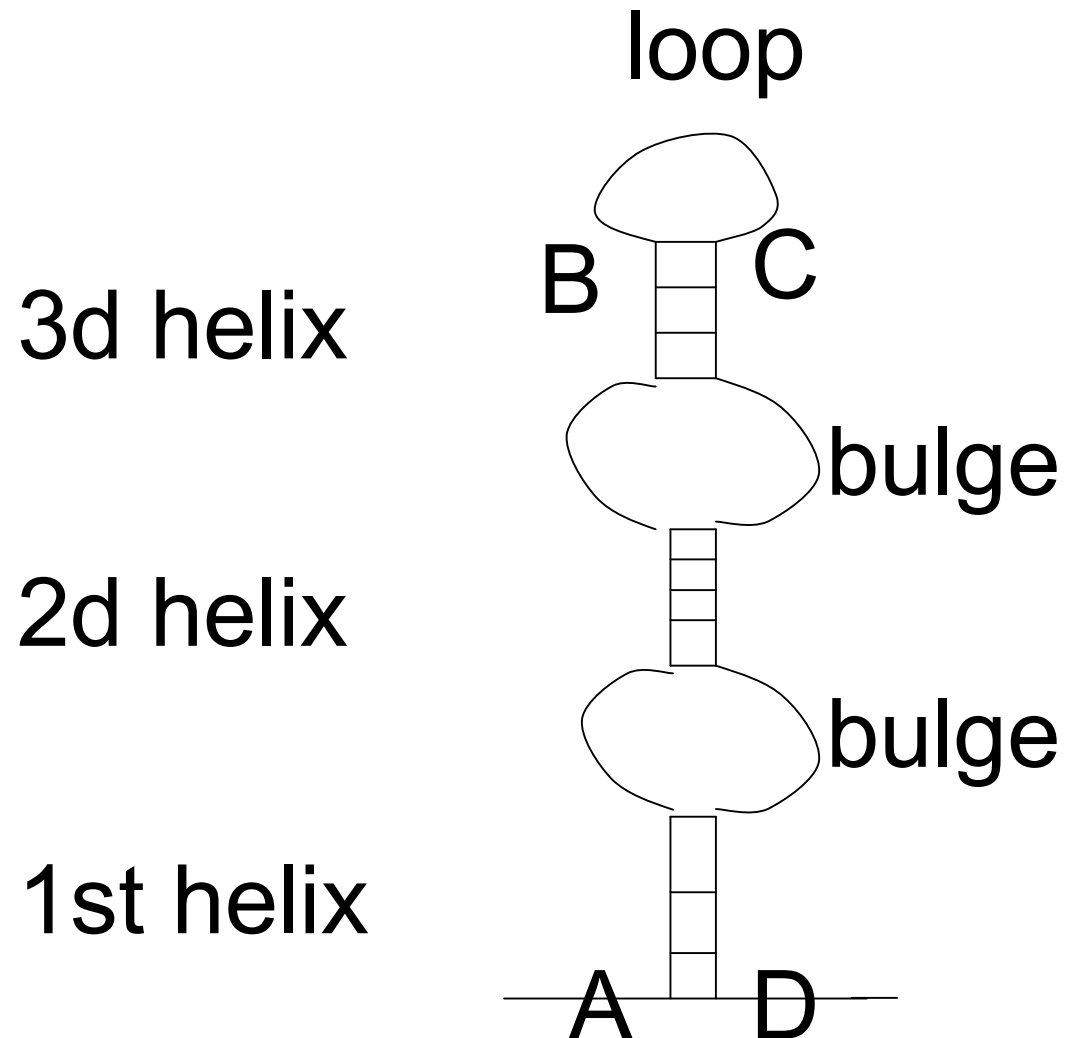


The machines' behavior is controlled by a
secondary structure
with minimal energy formed in the window

Secondary structures are composed of helices. The example of a very simple structure. How to classify such structures and estimate their energies? We offered some solutions



A **hairpin** is a linear chain of **helices**:



Thus we estimated the **hairpin energy** as the sum of the **bond energy** $\frac{1}{RT} \cdot \sum_i E_i$

and **loop energy** $\sum_i \left(1.77 \cdot \ln(l_i + 1) + B + \frac{C}{l_i} \right)$

where i varies over all **helices** of the hairpin and E_i is the energy of the i -th **helix** determined from the experimentally known hydrogen bonds and stacking energies; l_i is the loop length of the i -th **helix**; and B , C are constants

All elements can be accurately described here.

Thus, problem 2:

to describe the process dynamics

Problem 3. The behavior is described by a
Gibbs functional with nonlocal interaction.

To find are its global minima

Problem 4. A set of trees is given.

To find is the **average tree**.

The problems begin with defining an “**average**”
tree.

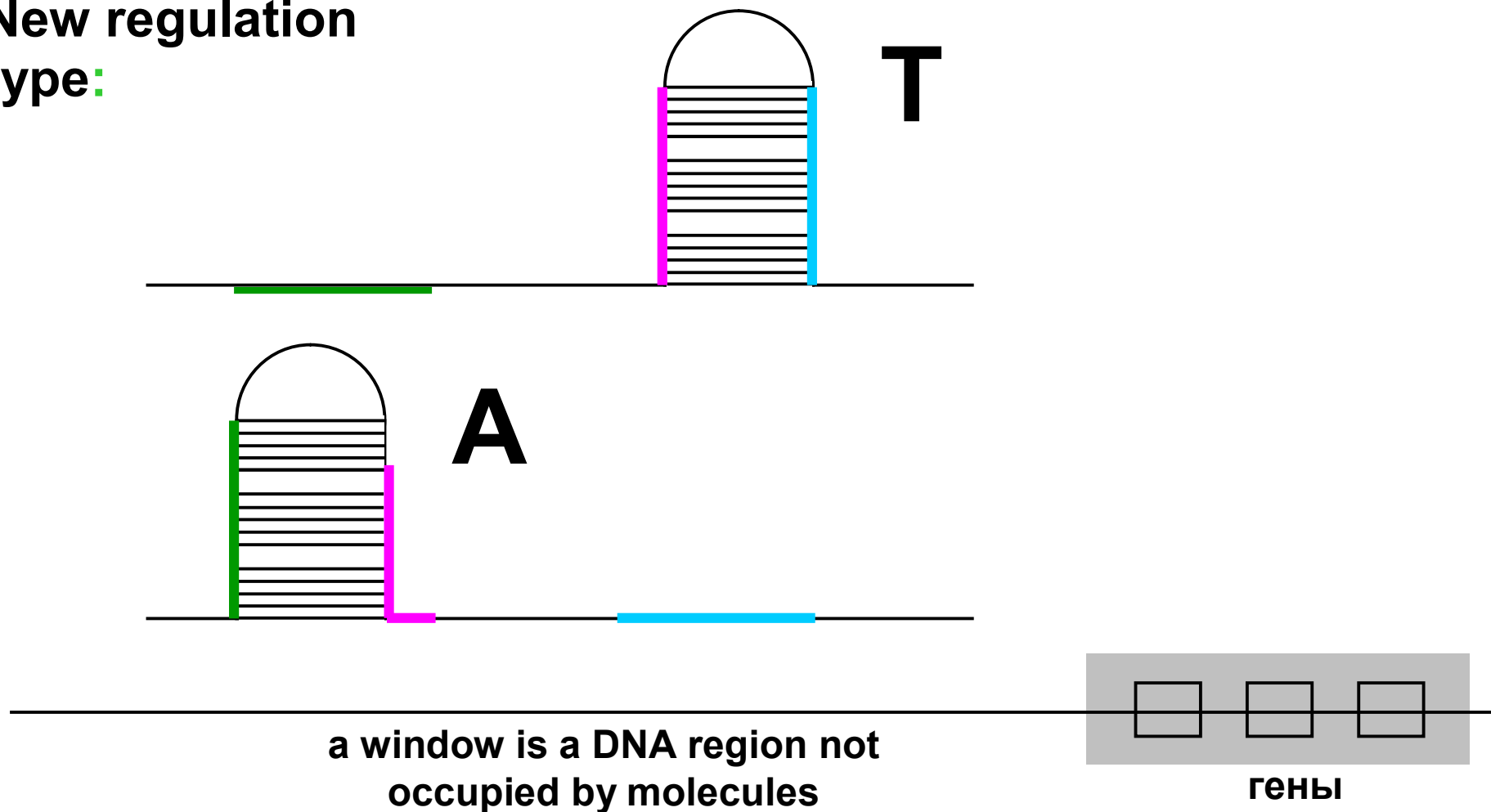
Problem 5. We described co-evolution of a large
number of long sequences (genomes).

**Is there a time point when sequences with
similar characteristics form clusters, i.e.,
species?**

We are thankful to L. Rusin, K. Gorbunov,
L. Rubanov, S. Pirogov, E. Zhizhina for
cooperation and publishing the results

Thank You

New regulation
type:



Two signal states. The outcome depends on which **alternative** structure is formed: «**T**» –«**termination**» (polymerase detaches) or «**A**» –«**antitermination**» (polymerase continues moving and reading downstream genes)

Transitions allowed in the model for this regulation:

(1) Right border y of the window **moves** at one character to the right or is fixed or signal “T” is received (**“slippage”**). Alternatively: right border y reaches the gene start and signal “A” is received.

Decision between T and A is determined by the secondary structure formed in the window;

(2) Left border x of the window **moves** at three characters to the right **or is fixed**, depending on frequency c of prior gene reading;

(3) The secondary structure transforms in the window, i.e. current structure ω transforms into new structure ω' , very fast!

In reality, border x is the right border of one molecular machine (“ribosome”), and y is the left border of another machine (the already familiar polymerase). Thus, the window corresponds to a gap between the ribosome and polymerase.

Both machines move to the right

Each of the four transitions is described as a Poisson flow with rate constants k_1, k_2, k_3, k_4 :

polymerase shift: $k_1 = -[40 - F(\omega)]$

polymerase slippage:

$$k_2 = -\frac{1}{4} \frac{\delta}{L_1^2 \cdot (p(\omega) - p_0)^2 + 1} \cdot \exp\left(-\frac{r}{r_0}\right)$$

ribosome shift: $k_3 = -\frac{45 \cdot c}{c_0 + c}$

Secondary structure rearrangement from state ω into state ω' within the window:

$$k_4 = -\left[\kappa \cdot \exp\left(\frac{1}{2} \left((G_{loop}(\omega) + G_{hel}(\omega)) - (G_{loop}(\omega') + G_{hel}(\omega')) \right) \right) \right]$$

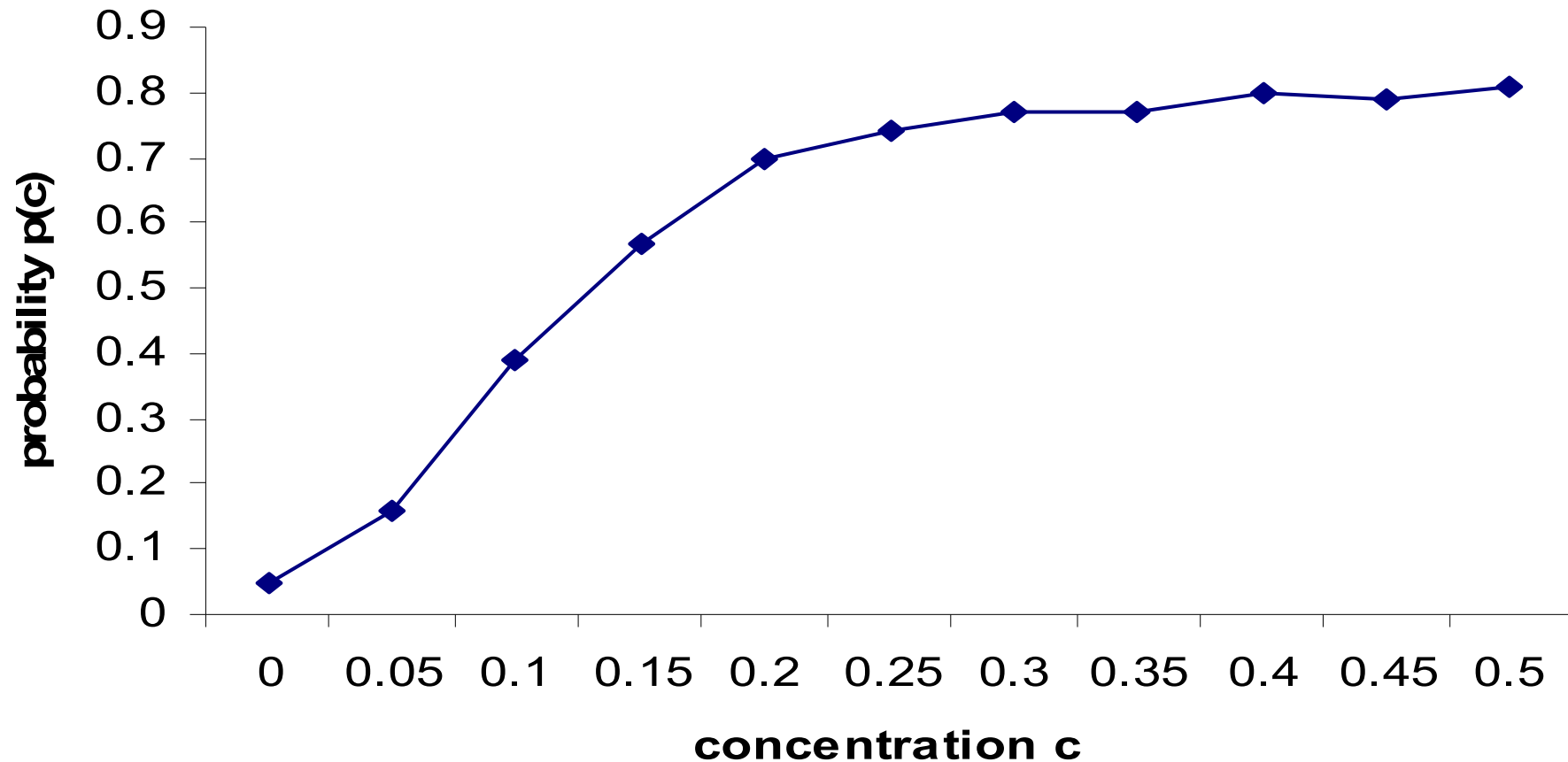
where $G_{loop}(\omega)$ - loop energy of ω , >0 ;

$G_{hel}(\omega)$ - bond energy of neighboring pairs in ω
(stacking), <0

To find is frequency $p(c)$ of occurrence of state “T” (failure to read genes, i.e. polymerase slippage) at time $t+dt$ depending on reading frequency c at time t

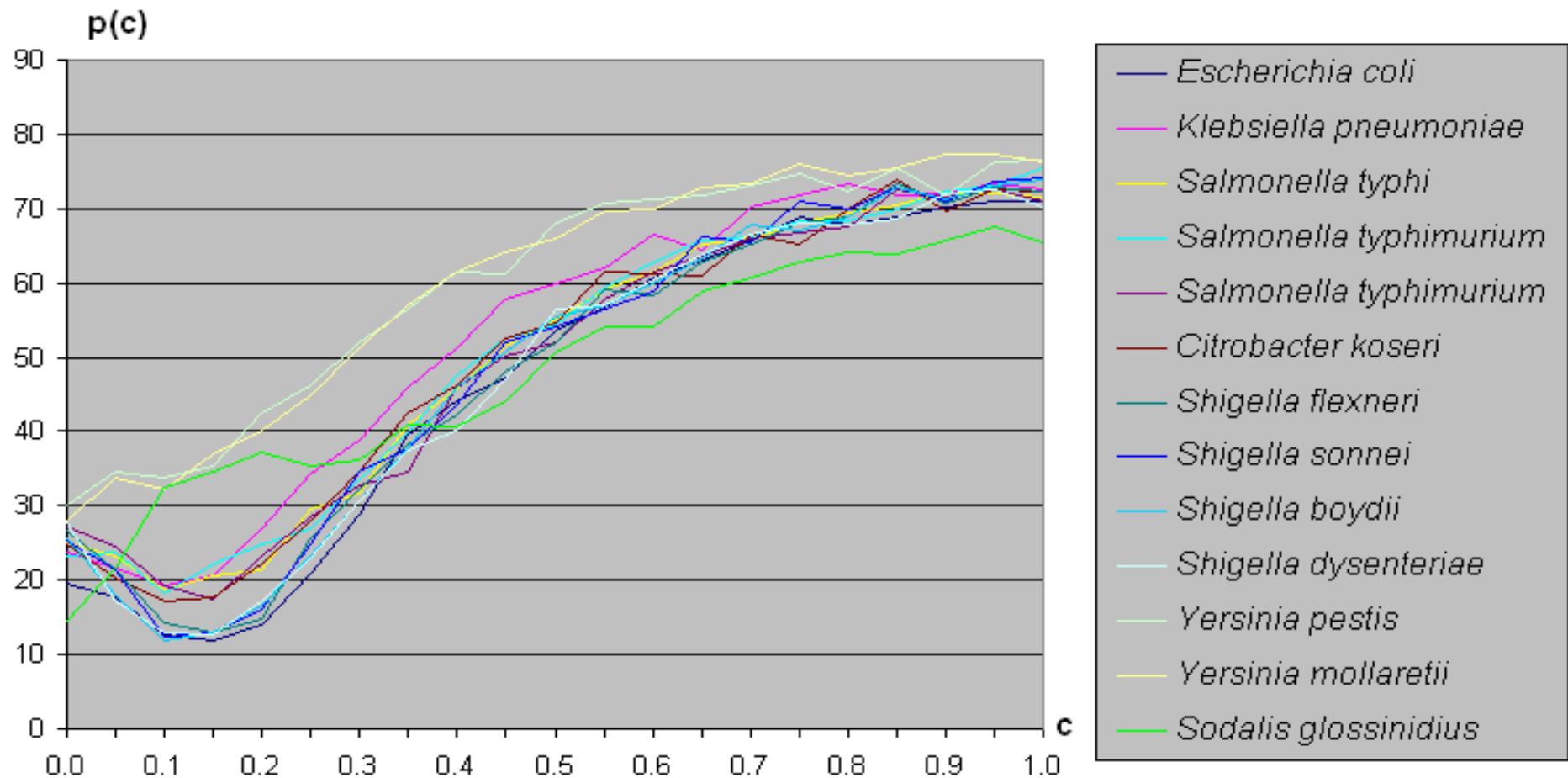
An example model prediction (the case of tryptophan biosynthesis regulation in *Vibrio cholerae*):

Vibrio cholerae trp



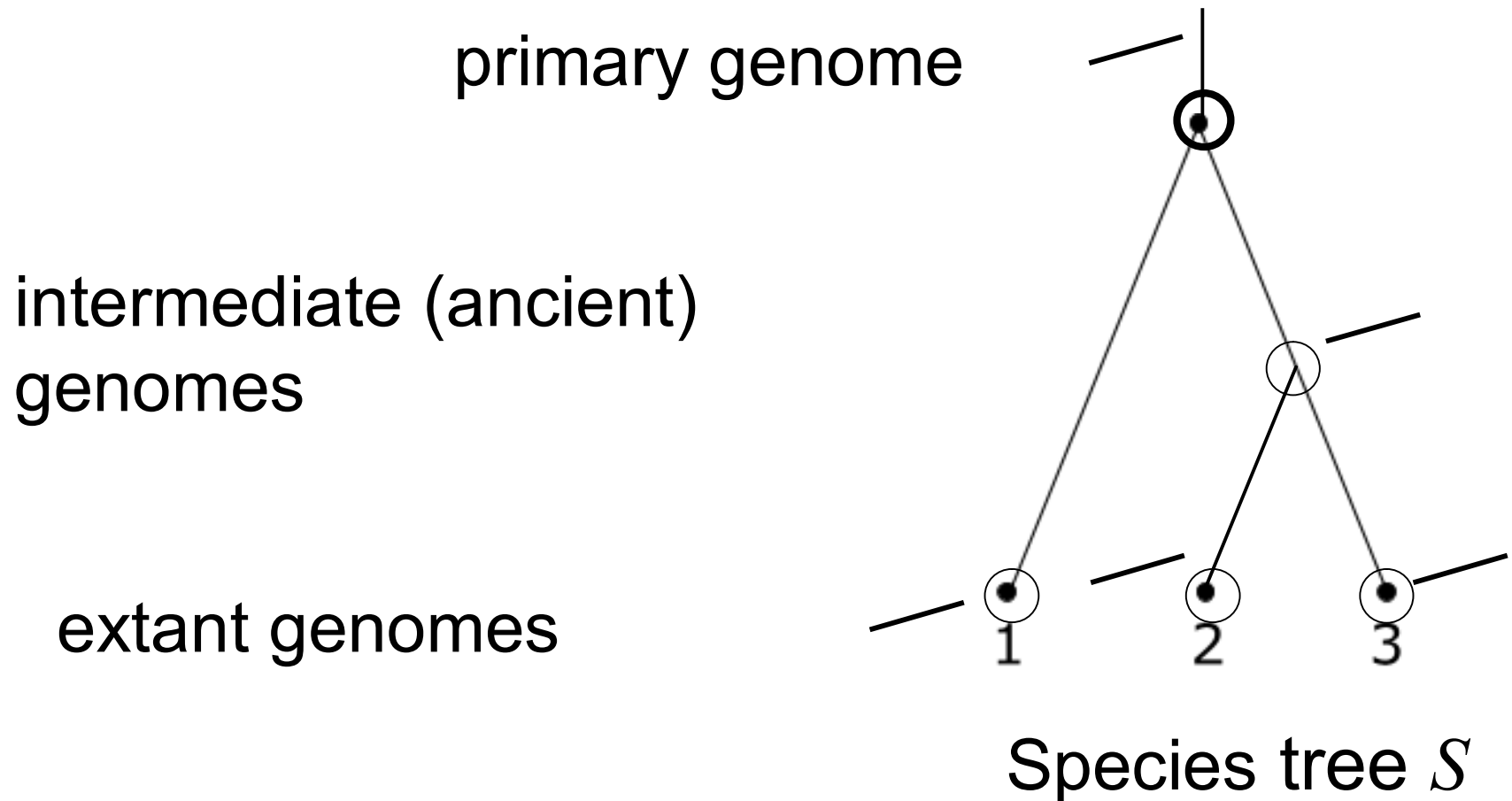
The model conforms well with known evidence and has high predictive capacity

for most leader regions of amino acid operons and aminoacyl-tRNA synthetases. Shown below are *thrA* operons in gamma-proteobacteria



PROBLEM III

At each node of the organism (species) tree a genome is duplicated (=speciation event). Thus, the primary genome generates intermediate (ancient) and ultimately modern genomes. The tree corresponds to discrete time



A gene undergoes three types of changes: continuous character substitution, insertions and deletions of blocks of characters. Thus, an instant gene is a sequence, and a gene sampled over time is a cluster of similar sequences (a function of time).

Dynamic in case of character **substitution**. Let a gene be sequence σ that transforms into sequence σ' of the same length in time t , with the i -th position transition rate γ_i . Given the transition rate matrix R , we estimate the transition probability trivially:

$$\ln \prod_i \left(e^{\gamma_i t R} \right) (\sigma_i, \sigma'_i)$$

If insertions and deletions are allowed, sequences σ and σ' may differ in length. Their subsequent alignment produces new sequences, $\bar{\sigma}$ and $\bar{\sigma}'$. E.g., primary sequences are

GGGTTTCAAACCATGGCCCAATGGG σ
TGGTTTCAAACCAATTTGG σ'

and their alignment (new sequences) are:

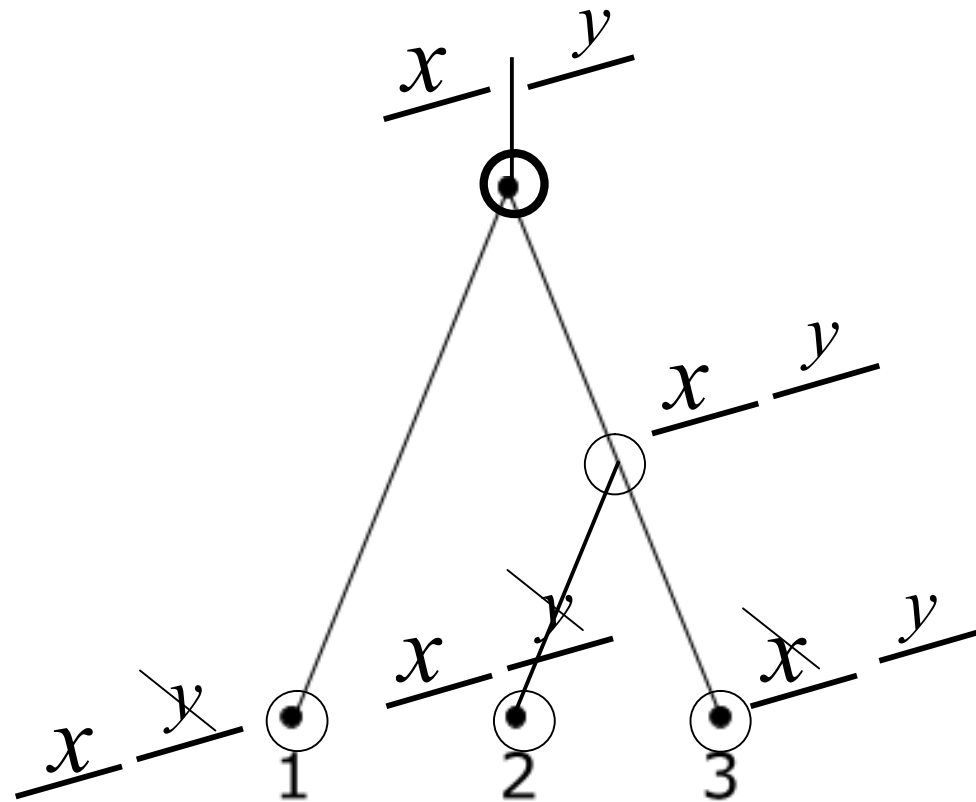
GGGTTTCAAACCA-T-TGGCCCAATGGG $\bar{\sigma}$
TGGTTTCAAACCAATTTGG----- $\bar{\sigma}'$

Designate the lengths of empty strings as l_m . Estimate such transition probability:

$$\ln \prod_i \left(e^{\gamma_i t R} \right) (\bar{\sigma}_i, \bar{\sigma}'_i) - 10 \cdot \sum_m \ln (l_m + 1)$$

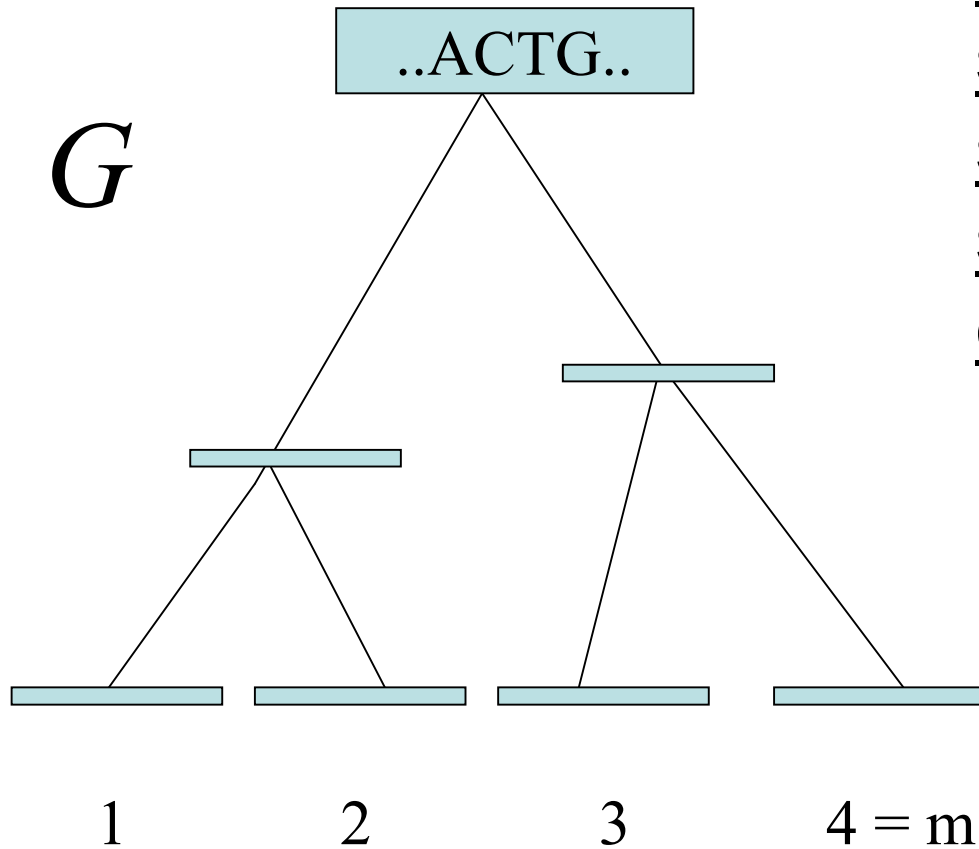
Some genes, apart from speciation, undergo the events of duplications, losses, etc.

Here the gene duplicated into x and y in the root, and some of its copies were lost in the leaves:



Species tree S

Given are a gene tree and modern sequences; edge lengths are times of transition from ancestors to descendants.



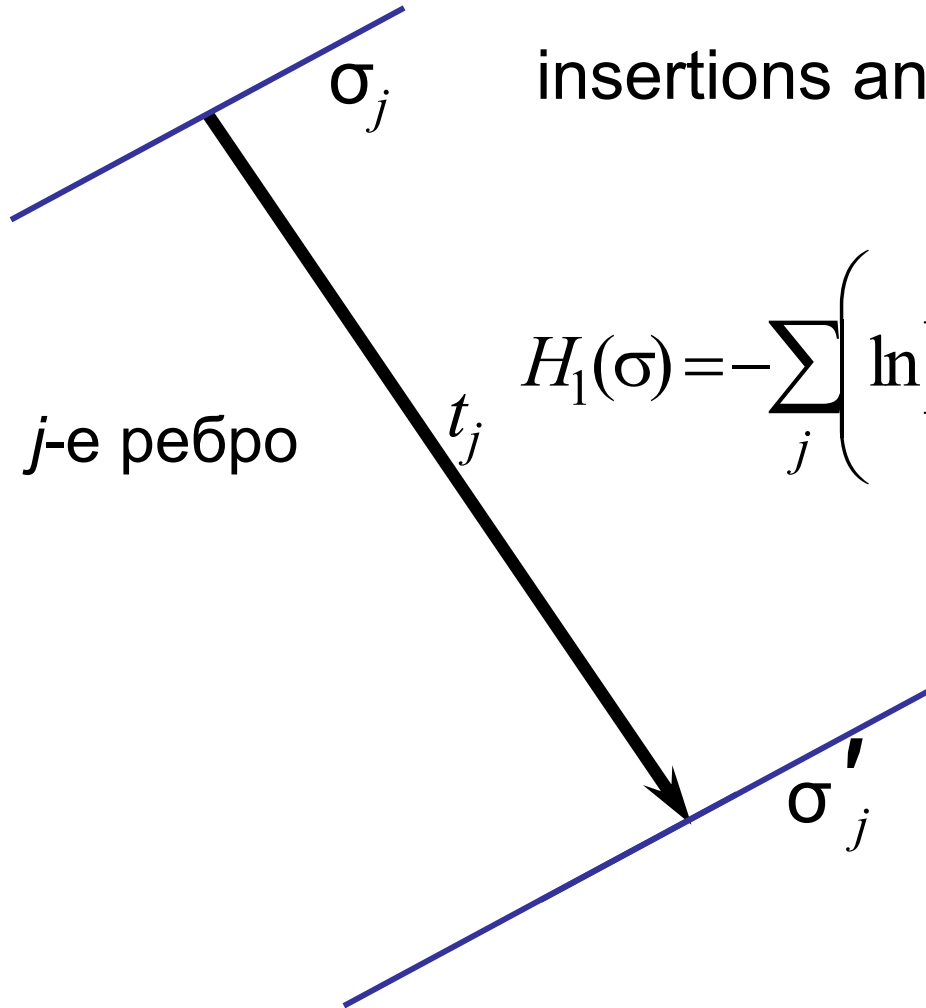
We search for all ancient sequences and secondary structures in all sequences; name this set configuration σ

In our model the desired configuration is defined by the global minimum of functional:

$$H(\sigma) = H_1(\sigma) + H_2(\sigma)$$

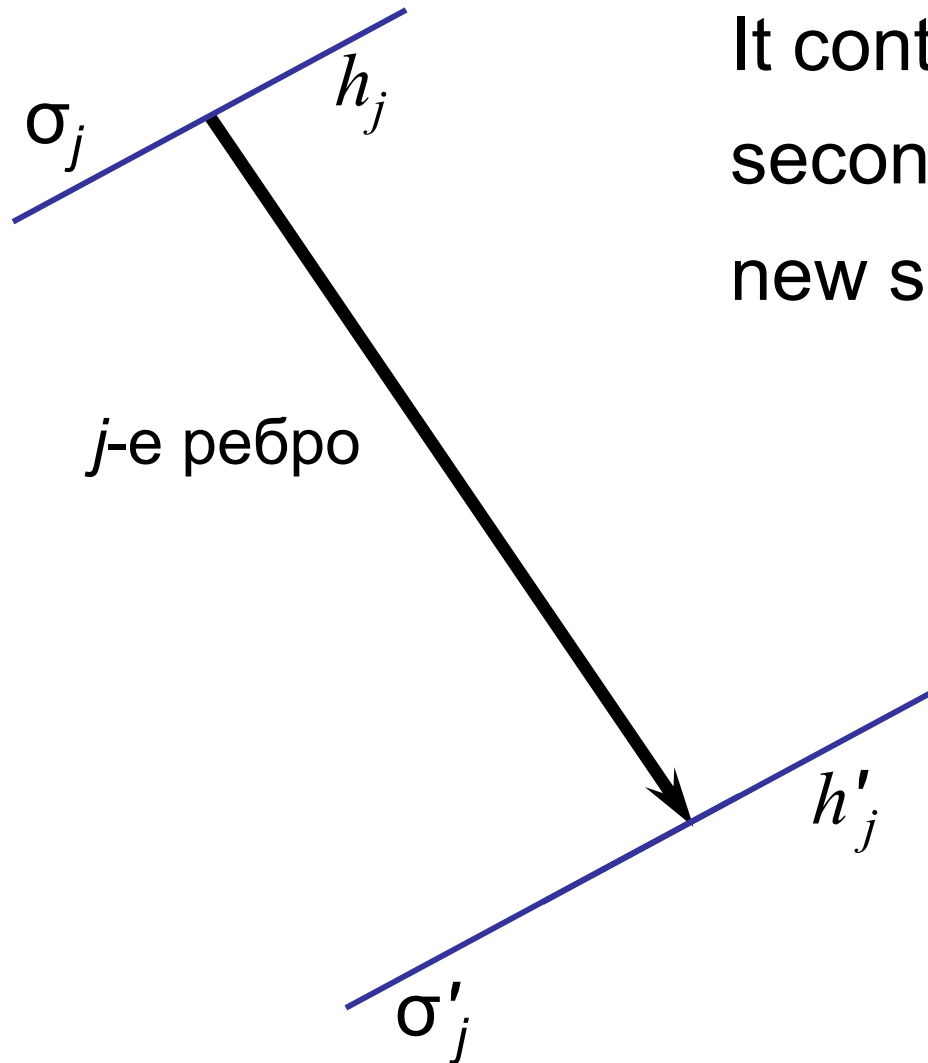
Слагаемое $H_1(\sigma)$ в H

Consider an edge from certain configuration σ . Over time t_j it contains character substitutions with rates R , insertions and deletions. Define as above:



$$H_1(\sigma) = - \sum_j \left(\ln \prod_{i=1}^{n_j} \left(e^{\gamma_i t_j R} \right) (\bar{\sigma}_{ji}, \bar{\sigma}'_{ji}) - 10 \cdot \sum_m \ln(l_{jm} + 1) \right)$$

Слагаемое $H_2(\sigma)$ в H



Another edge from configuration σ .
It contains a transition from
secondary structure h_j in σ_j to
new secondary **structure** h'_j in σ'_j .

Тогда:

$$H_2(\sigma) = -\sum_j \Phi(h_j, h'_j)$$

We minimize the functional with annealing. At each algorithm step current configuration σ is replaced by new configuration $\tilde{\sigma}$ from a set of candidates with probability

$$q(\sigma, \tilde{\sigma}) = \exp \left\{ -\beta_m \cdot [H(\tilde{\sigma}) - H(\sigma)]^+ \right\}$$

or is kept unchanged with probability $(1 - q)$

Convergence to the global minimum is proved under

$$\lim_{m \rightarrow \infty} \frac{\log m}{\beta_m} > \text{const}$$

Solution (partly shown): evolution of the ancient signal

gGTTGGGGCGGGCcgctgtcttcgaaaaattttaaatgacGAGCCCGCATCCAATaaaGATGCGGGCattTCcctc N01: H3=-29.2
gGTTGGGGCGGGCTgctgtactcaaaaaattttAAAGAcGAGCCCGCATCCAACaaaGATGCGGGCTTtTTTTTt N02: H3=-51.3
TGTTGGGGCGGGCTgctgcgcaacaagaattccAAAAAAGCCCGCATCCAACAaGATGCGGGCTTTTTTTTa N03: H3=-45.1
TGTTGGGGCAGGCTgctgagcgaaagaattcaAAAAAAGGCCTGTATCCAACAaGATACAGGCCTTTTTTTa N12: H3=-61.3
TGTTGGGGCAGGCTgctgagcgaaagaattcaAAAAAAGGCCTGTATCCAATAaGATACAGGCCTTTTTTTa N13: H3=-47.5
tGTTGGGGCAGGCTgctgagcgcaaaatttcacAAAAAAGGCCTGTATCCAACcGATACAGGCCTTTTTTTa VC: E=-234.3

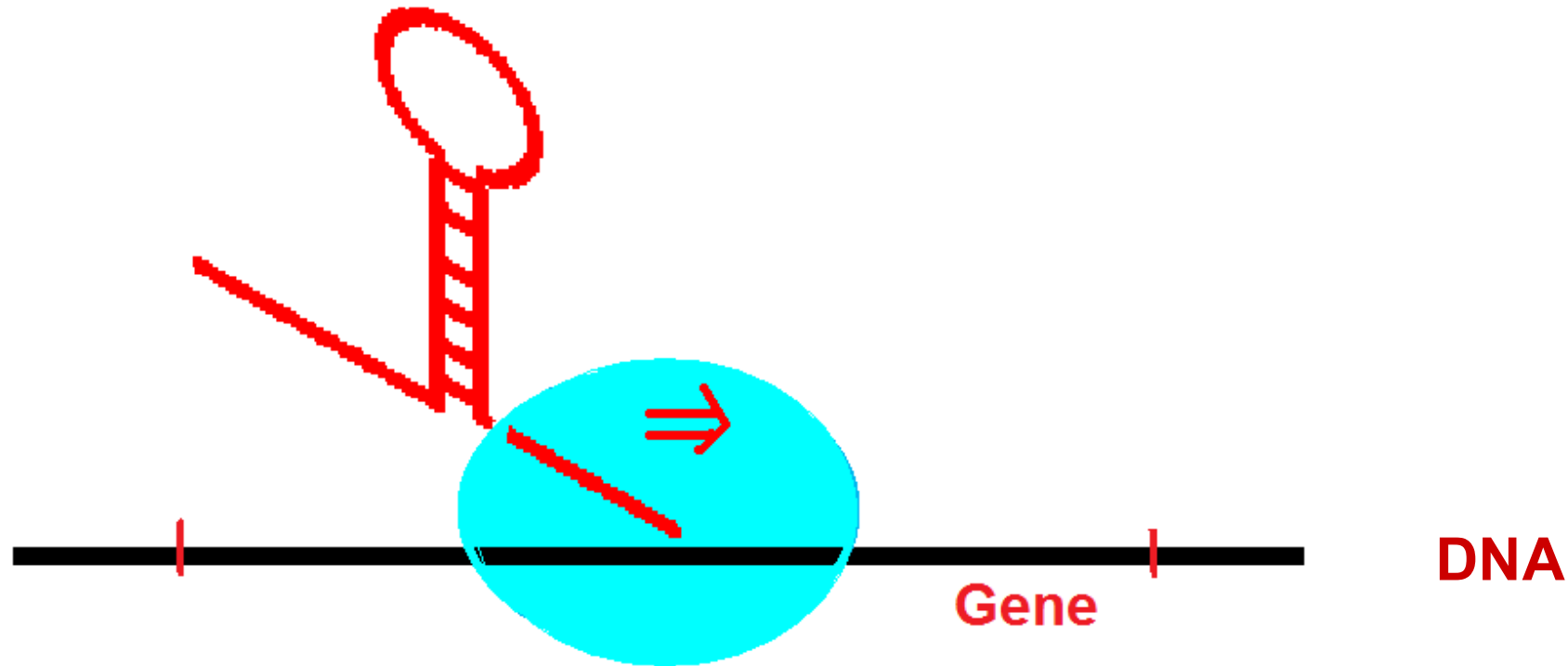
gGTTGGGGCGGGCcgctgtcttcgaaaaattttaaatgacGAGCCCGCATCCAATaaaGATGCGGGCattTCcctc N01: H3=-29.2
gGTTGGGGCGGGCTgctgtactcaaaaaattttAAAGAcGAGCCCGCATCCAACaaaGATGCGGGCTTtTTTTTt N02: H3=-51.3
TGTTGGGGCGGGCTgctgcgcaacaagaattccAAAAAAGCCCGCATCCAACAaGATGCGGGCTTTTTTTTa N03: H3=-45.1
TGTTGGGGCAGGCTgctgagcgaaagaattcaAAAAAAGGCCTGTATCCAACAaGATACAGGCCTTTTTTTa N12: H3=-61.3
TGTTGGGGCAGGCTgctgagcgaaagaattcaAAAAAAGGCCTGTATCCAATAaGATACAGGCCTTTTTTTa N13: H3=-61.3
TGTTGGGGCAGGCTgctgagcgaaagaacaatttcAAAAAAGGCCTGTATCCAACAaGATACAGGCCTTTTTTTTa VV: E=-248.1

gGTTGGGGCGGGCcgctgtcttcgaaaaattttaaatgacGAGCCCGCATCCAATaaaGATGCGGGCattTCcctc N01: H3=-29.2
gGTTGGGGCGGGCTgctgtactcaaaaaattttAAAGAcGAGCCCGCATCCAACaaaGATGCGGGCTTtTTTTTt N02: H3=-51.3
TGTTGGGGCGGGCTgctgcgcaacaagaattccAAAAAAGCCCGCATCCAACAaGATGCGGGCTTTTTTTTa N03: H3=-45.1
TGTTGGGGCAGGCTgctgagcgaaagaattcaAAAAAAGGCCTGTATCCAACAaGATACAGGCCTTTTTTTa N12: H3=-57.1
TGTTGGGGCAGGCTgctgagcgaaagaattcacAAAAAAGGCCTGTATCCAACAaGATACAGGCCTTTTTTTa VP: E=-182.6

gGTTGGGGCGGGCcgctgtcttcgaaaaattttaaatgacGAGCCCGCATCCAATaaaGATGCGGGCattTCcctc N01: H3=-29.2
gGTTGGGGCGGGCTgctgtactcaaaaaattttAAAGAcGAGCCCGCATCCAACaaaGATGCGGGCTTtTTTTTt N02: H3=-51.3
TGTTGGGGCGGGCTgctgcgcaacaagaattccAAAAAAGCCCGCATCCAACAaGATGCGGGCTTTTTTTTa N03: H3=-39.1
TGatGGTIGCGGGCTgatgcgcaacaagaataacAGAAAAAGCCCGCACCCAacaaaaTGCGGGCTTTTTTTTa N04: H3=-24.6
aGAtgGTIGCGGGTtagtgctgacaaaaaaaaatgaacAAAAAACC CGCACTCaacaaaaAGCGGGTTTTTTtata N09: H3=-39.0
aaTGGTIGCGGGTtagtactggcaaaaaaaaaatgaacAAAAAACC CGCAaCTCAactaaaAGCGGGTTTTTTtata N10: H3=-51.0
aaTGGTIGCGGGTtagtacggcaaaaaaaaaagaacAAAAAACC CGCAaCTCAactgaaAGCGGGTTTTTTtata N11: H3=-6.2
aaTGGGGCGGGctagtgcggtgaagaatagaattcatGAACCCGCaTTTCCCGAGaGCGGGTTTTttttatg AB: E=-240.5

gGTTGGGGCGGGCcgctgtcttcgaaaaattttaaatgacGAGCCCGCATCCAATaaaGATGCGGGCattTCcctc N01: H3=-29.2
gGTTGGGGCGGGCTgctgtactcaaaaaattttAAAGAcGAGCCCGCATCCAACaaaGATGCGGGCTTtTTTTTt N02: H3=-51.3
TGTTGGGGCGGGCTgctgcgcaacaagaattccAAAAAAGCCCGCATCCAACAaGATGCGGGCTTTTTTTTa N03: H3=-39.1
TGatGGTIGCGGGCTgatgcgcaacaagaataacAGAAAAAGCCCGCACCCAacaaaaTGCGGGCTTTTTTTTa N04: H3=-24.6
aGAtgGTIGCGGGTtagtgctgacaaaaaaaaatgaacAAAAAACC CGCACTCaacaaaaAGCGGGTTTTTTtata N09: H3=-39.0
aaTGGTIGCGGGTtagtactggcaaaaaaaaaatgaacAAAAAACC CGCAaCTCAactaaaAGCGGGTTTTTTtata N10: H3=-51.0
aaTGGTIGCGGGTtagtacggcaaaaaaaaaagaacAAAAAACC CGCAaCTCAactgaaAGCGGGTTTTTTtata N11: H3=-35.0
aaTGGTIGCGGGTtagtgagcaaaaacaagatacAGAAAAACC CGGATTCAactGAATaGCGGGTTTTTTtata HI: E=-269.3

The polymerase is a machine that slides along DNA in a certain direction and reads a gene if reaches it (similar to a drive read head)



The polymerase **can detach** from DNA, e.g., after encountering such a DNA helix

A stack array of two or more sequences that maximizes their similarity is the “**alignment**”:

T1 TTAACGTAATCAGCCTCCAAATATTGGAGGCTGATTACGTTAA

T2 GTATCTAGGGAGTAGTCATTTCCAAATGAATCTCCCTAGATAC

Evidently, structures T1 and T2 are similar in folding into helices

RNA Polymerase Competition in the circle case (mitochondrial DNA)

