Lesson 17. Geometry and Algebra of "Corner Points"

0 Warm up

Example 1. Consider the system of equations

$$\begin{aligned} 3x_1 + x_2 - 7x_3 &= 17 \\ x_1 + 5x_2 &= 1 \\ -2x_1 + 11x_3 &= -24 \end{aligned} \tag{$*$}$$

Let $A = \begin{pmatrix} 3 & 1 & -7 \\ 1 & 5 & 0 \\ -2 & 0 & 11 \end{pmatrix}$. We have that $\det(A) = 84$.

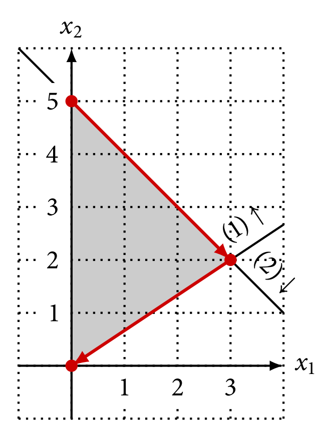
- Does $(*)$ have a unique solution, no solutions, or an infinite number of solutions?

- Are the row vectors of A linearly independent? How about the column vectors of A?

- What is the rank of A? Does A have full row rank?

1 Overview

- Due to convexity, local optimal solutions of LPs are global optimal solutions
  - $\Rightarrow$ Improving search finds global optimal solutions of LPs
- The simplex method: improving search among "corner points" of the feasible region of an LP
- How can we describe "corner points" of the feasible region of an LP?
- For LPs, is there always an optimal solution that is a "corner point"?



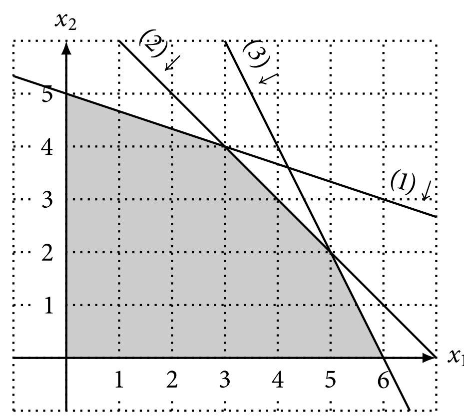
2 Polyhedra and extreme points

- A **polyhedron** is a set of vectors $\mathbf{x}$ that satisfy a finite collection of linear constraints (equalities and inequalities)
    - Also referred to as a **polyhedral set**
- In particular:

- Recall: the feasible region of an LP – a polyhedron – is a convex feasible region
- Given a convex feasible region S, a solution $\mathbf{x} \in S$ is an **extreme point** if there does <u>not</u> exist two distinct solutions $\mathbf{y}, \mathbf{z} \in S$ such that $\mathbf{x}$ is on the line segment joining $\mathbf{y}$ and $\mathbf{z}$
    - i.e. there does not exist $\lambda \in (0,1)$ such that $\mathbf{x} = \lambda \mathbf{y} + (1 - \lambda)\mathbf{z}$

Example 2. Consider the polyhedron S and its graph below. What are the extreme points of S?

$$S = \left\{ \mathbf{x} = (x_1, x_2) \in \mathbb{R}^2 : \begin{array}{rr} x_1 + 3x_2 \le 15 & (1) \\ x_1 + x_2 \le 7 & (2) \\ 2x_1 + x_2 \le 12 & (3) \\ x_1 \ge 0 & (4) \\ x_2 \ge 0 & (5) \end{array} \right\}$$



- "Corner points" of the feasible region of an LP $\Leftrightarrow$ extreme points

3 Basic solutions

- In Example 2, the polyhedron is described with 2 decision variables
- Each corner point / extreme point is
- Equivalently, each corner point / extreme point is
- Is there a connection between the number of decision variables and the number of active constraints at a corner point / extreme point?
- Convention: all variables are on the LHS of constraints, all constants are on the RHS
- A collection of constraints defining a polyhedron are **linearly independent** if the LHS coefficient matrix of these constraints has full row rank

Example 3. Consider the polyhedron S given in Example 2. Are constraints (1) and (3) linearly independent?

- Given a polyhedron S with n decision variables, $\mathbf{x}$ is a **basic solution** if
  (a) it satisfies all equality constraints
  (b) at least n constraints are active at $\mathbf{x}$ and are linearly independent
- $\mathbf{x}$ is a **basic feasible solution (BFS)** if it is a basic solution and satisfies all constraints of S

Example 4. Consider the polyhedron S given in Example 2. Verify that $(3, 4)$ and $(21/5, 18/5)$ are basic solutions. Are these also basic feasible solutions?

Example 5. Consider the polyhedron S given in Example 2.

a. Compute the basic solution $\mathbf{x}$ active at constraints (3) and (5). Is $\mathbf{x}$ a BFS? Why?
b. In words, how would you find <u>all</u> the basic feasible solutions of S?

4 Equivalence of extreme points and basic feasible solutions

- From our examples, it appears that for polyhedra, extreme points are the same as basic feasible solutions

Big Theorem 1. Suppose S is a polyhedron. Then $\mathbf{x}$ is an extreme point of S if and only if $\mathbf{x}$ is a basic feasible solution.

- See Rader p. 243 for a proof
- We use "extreme point" and "basic feasible solution" interchangeably

5 Adjacency

- An **edge** of a polyhedron S with n decision variables is the set of solutions in S that are active at $(n-1)$ linearly independent constraints

Example 6. Consider the polyhedron S given in Example 2.

a. How many linearly independent constraints need to be active for an edge of this polyhedron?
b. Describe the edge associated with constraint (2).

- Edges appear to connect "neighboring" extreme points
- Two extreme points of a polyhedron S with n decision variables are **adjacent** if there are $(n-1)$ common linearly independent constraints at active both extreme points
  - Equivalently, two extreme points are adjacent if the line segment joining them is an edge of S

Example 7. Consider the polyhedron S given in Example 2.

a. Verify that $(3,4)$ and $(5,2)$ are adjacent extreme points.
b. Verify that $(0,5)$ and $(6,0)$ are not adjacent extreme points.

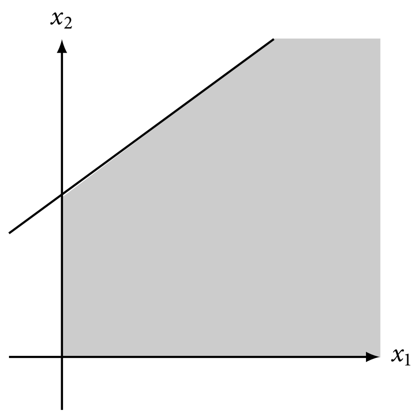
- We can move between adjacent extreme points by "swapping" active linearly independent constraints

6 Extreme points are good enough: the fundamental theorem of linear programming

Big Theorem 2. Let S be a polyhedron with at least 1 extreme point. Consider the LP that maximizes a linear function $\mathbf{c}^\top \mathbf{x}$ over $\mathbf{x} \in S$. Then this LP is unbounded, or attains its optimal value at some extreme point of S.

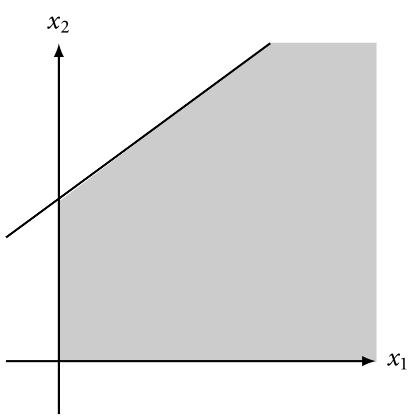
"Proof" by picture.

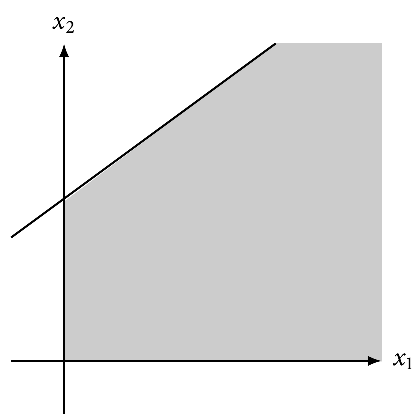
- Assume the LP has finite optimal value
- The optimal value must be attained at the boundary of the polyhedron, otherwise:



⇒ The optimal value is attained at an extreme point or "in the middle of a boundary"

- If the optimal value is attained "in the middle of a boundary", there must be multiple optimal solutions, including an extreme point:





⇒ The optimal value is always attained at an extreme point □

- **For LPs, we only need to consider extreme points as potential optimal solutions**
- It is still possible for an optimal solution to an LP to not be an extreme point
- If this is the case, there must be another optimal solution that is an extreme point

7 Food for thought

- Does a polyhedron always have an extreme point?
- We need to be a little careful with these conclusions – what if the Big Theorem doesn't apply?
- Next time: we will learn how to convert any LP into an equivalent LP that has at least 1 extreme point, so we don't have to be (so) careful