

Nested filtering methods for Bayesian inference in state space models

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Joint work with

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Nested filters

- Model inference

- Nested hybrid filter (NHF)

- Nested Gaussian filter (NGF)

Ongoing work

Some numerical results

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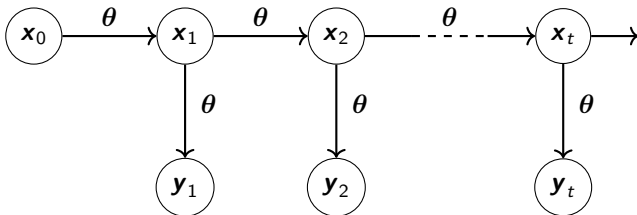
We aim at **estimating the time evolution** of **dynamical systems** of different fields of science, such as:

- **Geophysics.** Prediction of the weather, ice sea changes, climate (i.e. fluid dynamics).
- **Biochemistry.** Prediction of the interactions and population of certain molecules.
- **Ecology.** Prediction of the population of prey and predator species in certain region.
- **Quantitative finance.** Evaluation/estimation of price options and risk.
- **Engineering.** Object/target tracking for applications such as surveillance or air traffic control.
- ...

→ There are **plenty of applications** where the estimation of a dynamical system is needed.

State-space model

These systems can be represented by **Markov state-space dynamical models**:



State-space model

The state (\mathbf{x}_t), the observations (\mathbf{y}_t) and the parameters (θ) of these state-space systems are related following the **equations**

$$\mathbf{x}_t = \mathbf{f}(\mathbf{x}_{t-1}, \theta) + \mathbf{v}_t,$$

$$\mathbf{y}_t = \mathbf{g}(\mathbf{x}_t, \theta) + \mathbf{r}_t,$$

- \mathbf{f} and \mathbf{g} are the state transition function and the observation function
- \mathbf{v}_t and \mathbf{r}_t are state and observation noises

In terms of a set of **relevant probability density functions (pdfs)**:

- Prior pdfs: $\theta \sim p(\theta)$ and $\mathbf{x}_0 \sim p(\mathbf{x}_0)$
- Transition pdf of the state: $\mathbf{x}_t \sim p(\mathbf{x}_t | \mathbf{x}_{t-1}, \theta)$
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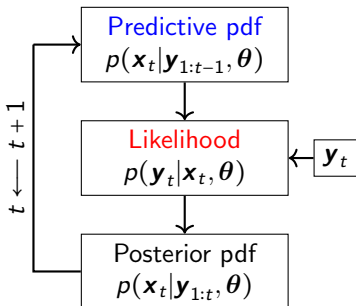
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State estimation

→ Goal: **Bayesian estimation of the state variables**, $p(\mathbf{x}_t | \mathbf{y}_{1:t}, \theta)$.

Classical filtering methods assume θ is known, and compute



Both $p(\mathbf{x}_t | \mathbf{x}_{t-1}, \theta)$ and $p(\mathbf{y}_t | \mathbf{x}_t, \theta)$ are described by the model.

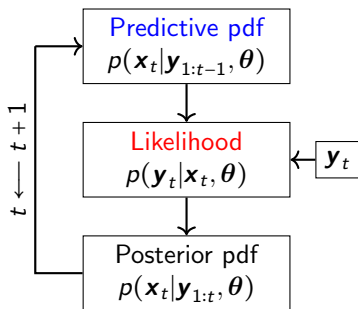
→ Usually θ is not given and it needs to be estimated as well.

Therefore, we are interested in both parameter and state estimation.

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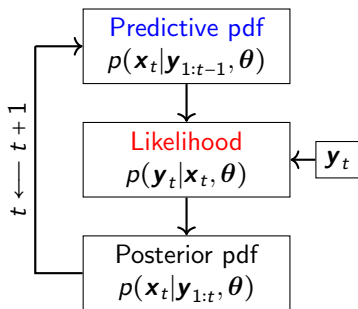
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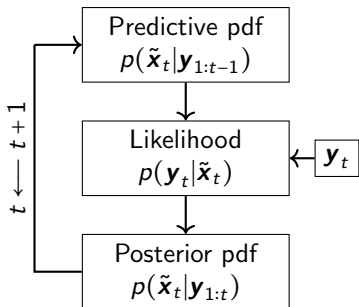
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State-of-the-art methods for parameter and state estimation

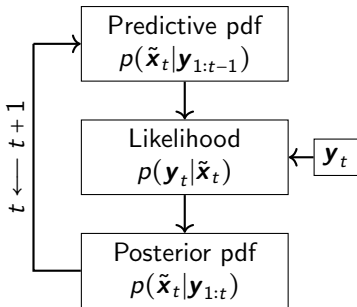
1. State augmentation methods with artificial dynamics



- Use of an **extended state vector** $\tilde{\mathbf{x}}_t = [\mathbf{x}_t, \boldsymbol{\theta}_t]^\top$.
- **Artificial dynamics** are introduced in $\boldsymbol{\theta}$ to avoid degeneracy.
- **Easy to apply** but the artificial dynamics might introduce **bias** and the method **lacks theoretical guarantees**.

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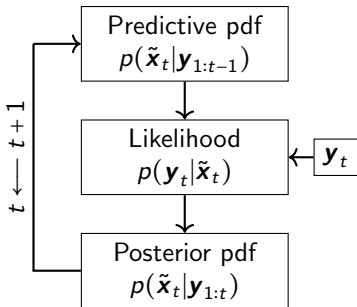
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State-of-the-art methods for parameter and state estimation

2. Particle learning (PL) techniques

- It is a **sampling-resampling scheme**.
- It depends only on a set of **finite-dimensional statistics**. In a Monte Carlo setting this means that the static parameters can be **efficiently represented by sampling**.
- The posterior probability distribution of θ conditional on the states $\mathbf{x}_0, \dots, \mathbf{x}_t$ can be **computed in closed form**.
- However, this approach is **restricted to very specific models**.

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State-of-the-art methods for parameter and state estimation

3. Recursive maximum likelihood (RML) methods

- They enable the **sequential processing of the observed data** as they are collected.
- They are **well-principled**.
- They can be applied to a **broad class of models**.
- However, they do not yield full posterior distributions of the unknowns and therefore, they **only output point estimates instead**.

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State-of-the-art methods for parameter and state estimation

4. There have been advances leading to methods that
 - aim at calculating the **posterior probability distribution of the unknown variables and parameters** of the models and they can **quantify the uncertainty or estimation error**.
 - can be applied to a **broad class of models**.
 - are **well-principled probabilistic methods** with **theoretical guarantees**.

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State-of-the-art methods for parameter and state estimation

Some examples are:

- **particle Markov chain Monte Carlo (PMCMC)**¹
- **sequential Monte Carlo square (SMC²)**²

- they are **batch techniques**: the whole sequence of observations has to be re-processed from scratch.
- The **computational cost becomes prohibitive in high-dimensional problems**.

¹Andrieu, Doucet, and Holenstein, "Particle Markov chain Monte Carlo methods".

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State-of-the-art methods for parameter and state estimation

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Summary and Motivation

The state-of-the-art methods have one or more of the following **issues**:

- **Lack of theoretical guarantees.**
- Restricted to **very specific models.**
- **Estimation error not quantified** (it only provides point estimates).
- **Batch technique** (the whole sequence of observations have to be re-processed from scratch every time step).
- **Prohibitive computational cost** for **high-dimensional problems.**

→ We propose a **set of algorithms** that estimate the **joint posterior probability distribution of the parameters and the state**, while **solving all the issues.**

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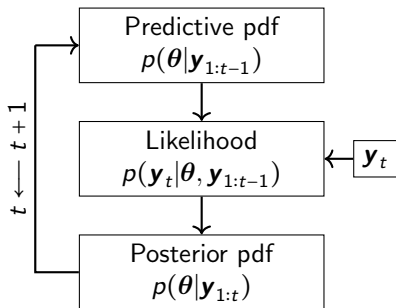
Model inference

We aim at computing the **joint posterior pdf** $p(\boldsymbol{\theta}, \mathbf{x}_t | \mathbf{y}_{1:t})$, that can be written as

$$p(\boldsymbol{\theta}, \mathbf{x}_t | \mathbf{y}_{1:t}) = \underbrace{p(\mathbf{x}_t | \boldsymbol{\theta}, \mathbf{y}_{1:t})}_{2^{\text{nd}} \text{ layer}} \underbrace{p(\boldsymbol{\theta} | \mathbf{y}_{1:t})}_{1^{\text{st}} \text{ layer}}$$

→ The **key difficulty** in this class of models is **the Bayesian estimation of the parameter vector $\boldsymbol{\theta}$** .

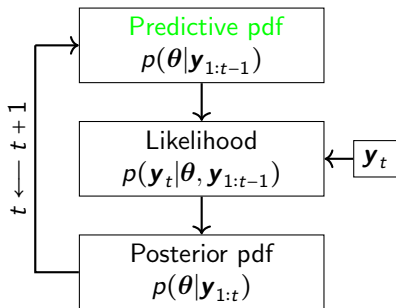
1st layer of inference



The **posterior pdf** can be written as

$$p(\theta | \mathbf{y}_{1:t}) \propto p(\mathbf{y}_t | \theta, \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1}) p(\theta | \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1})$$

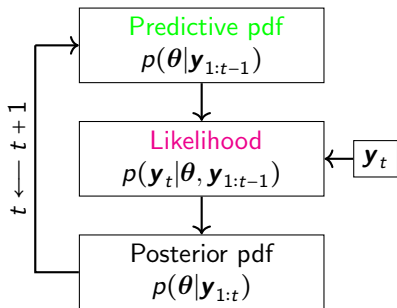
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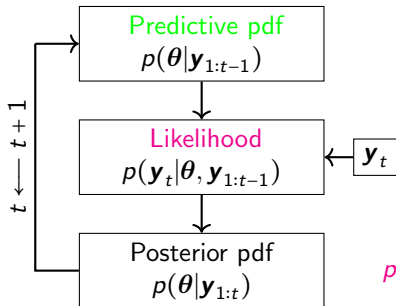
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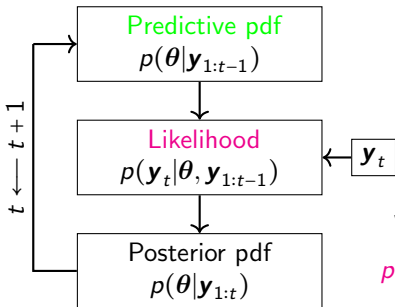
$$p(\theta | \mathbf{y}_{1:t}) \propto p(\mathbf{y}_t | \theta, \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1}) p(\theta | \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1})$$

where

$$p(\mathbf{y}_t | \theta, \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1}) =$$

$$\int p(\mathbf{y}_t | \mathbf{x}_t, \theta) p(\mathbf{x}_t | \theta, \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1}) d\mathbf{x}_t$$

1st layer of inference



The **posterior pdf** can be written as

$$p(\theta|y_{1:t}) \propto p(y_t|\theta, y_{1:t-1})p(\theta|y_{1:t-1})$$

where

$$p(y_t|\theta, y_{1:t-1}) = \int \underbrace{p(y_t|x_t, \theta)}_{\text{Likelihood (2}^{nd} \text{ layer)}} \underbrace{p(x_t|\theta, y_{1:t-1})}_{\text{Pred. pdf (2}^{nd} \text{ layer)}} dx_t$$

Model inference

$$\underbrace{p(\theta | \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1})}_{\text{Pred. pdf of } \theta}$$

Pred. pdf of θ

$$\underbrace{p(\mathbf{y}_t | \theta, \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1})}_{\text{Likelihood of } \theta} = \int p(\mathbf{y}_t | \mathbf{x}_t, \theta) p(\mathbf{x}_t | \theta, \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1}) d\mathbf{x}_t$$

Likelihood of θ

$$\underbrace{p(\mathbf{x}_t | \theta, \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1})}_{\text{Pred. pdf of } \mathbf{x}} = \int p(\mathbf{x}_t | \mathbf{x}_{t-1}, \theta) p(\mathbf{x}_{t-1} | \theta, \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1}) d\mathbf{x}_{t-1}$$

Pred. pdf of \mathbf{x}

$$\underbrace{p(\mathbf{y}_t | \mathbf{x}_t, \theta)}_{\text{Likelihood of } \mathbf{x}}$$

Likelihood of \mathbf{x}

$$\underbrace{p(\mathbf{x}_t | \theta, \mathbf{y}_{1:t})}_{\text{Post. pdf of } \mathbf{x}} \propto p(\mathbf{y}_t | \mathbf{x}_t, \theta) p(\mathbf{x}_t | \theta, \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1})$$

Post. pdf of \mathbf{x}

$$\underbrace{p(\theta | \mathbf{y}_{1:t})}_{\text{Post. pdf of } \theta} \propto p(\mathbf{y}_t | \theta, \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1}) p(\theta | \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1})$$

Post. pdf of θ

1st layer

2nd layer

Family of nested filters

1. Nested particle filters (NPFs)³.

- Both layers → Sequential Monte Carlo (SMC) methods

2. Nested hybrid filters (NHF)⁴.

- θ -layer → Monte Carlo-based methods (e.g., SMC or SQMC)
- x -layer → Gaussian techniques (e.g., EKFs or EnKFs)

3. Nested Gaussian filters (NGFs)⁵.

- θ -layer → Deterministic sampling methods (e.g., UKF).
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SMC (N samples)

1st layer

- **Jittering:** $\bar{\theta}_t^i \sim \kappa_N(\theta | d\theta_{t-1}^i), 1 \leq i \leq N \rightarrow p(\theta | \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1})$
- Likelihood of θ : weights $w_t^i \rightarrow p(\mathbf{y}_t | \bar{\theta}_t^i, \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1})$

EKF (per each sample i)

2nd layer

- Prediction: $p(\mathbf{x}_t | \bar{\theta}_t^i, \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1}) \approx \mathcal{N}(\mathbf{x}_t | \mathbf{x}_{t|t-1}^i, \mathbf{C}_{t|t-1}^i, \bar{\theta}_t^i)$
 - Likelihood of θ and \mathbf{x}_t : $p(\mathbf{y}_t | \mathbf{x}_t, \bar{\theta}_t^i)$
 - Update: $p(\mathbf{x}_t | \bar{\theta}_t^i, \mathbf{y}_{1:t}) \approx \mathcal{N}(\mathbf{x}_t | \mathbf{x}_{t|t}^i, \mathbf{C}_{t|t}^i, \bar{\theta}_t^i)$
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Recursivity of NPF and NHF

- θ is static and **samples θ_{t-1}^i do not evolve**. After several resampling steps the filter would **degenerate**.
- It is convenient to have a procedure to generate a new set $\{\bar{\theta}_t^i\}_{1 \leq i \leq N}$ which yields an approximation of $p(\theta | \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1})$.

→ The jittering step allows these filters to run **recursively**:

We mutate the particles $\theta_{t-1}^1, \dots, \theta_{t-1}^N$ independently using a jittering kernel $\kappa_N(\theta | d\theta)$ and obtain $\bar{\theta}_t^1, \dots, \bar{\theta}_t^N$.

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Convergence Theorem (NHF)

The sequence of **posterior probability measures of the unknown parameters**, $p(\boldsymbol{\theta}|\mathbf{y}_{1:t})$, $t \geq 1$, can be constructed recursively starting from a prior $p(\boldsymbol{\theta})$ as

$$p(\boldsymbol{\theta}|\mathbf{y}_{1:t}) \propto u_t(\boldsymbol{\theta}) * p(\boldsymbol{\theta}|\mathbf{y}_{1:t-1})$$

where $u_t(\boldsymbol{\theta}) = p(\mathbf{y}_t|\boldsymbol{\theta}, \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1})$.

A.1. The estimator $\hat{u}_t(\boldsymbol{\theta})$ is random and can be written as

$$\hat{u}_t(\boldsymbol{\theta}) = u_t(\boldsymbol{\theta}) + b_t(\boldsymbol{\theta}) + m_t(\boldsymbol{\theta}),$$

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Convergence Theorem (NHF)

Theorem 1

Let the sequence of observations $y_{1:t_0}$ be arbitrary but fixed, with $t_0 < \infty$, and choose an arbitrary function $h \in B(D)$. Let $p^N(d\theta|y_{1:t}) = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \delta_{\theta_i^t}(d\theta)$ be the random probability measure in the parameter space generated by the nested filter. If A.1 holds and under regularity conditions, then

$$\left\| \int h(\theta) p^N(d\theta|y_{1:t}) - \int h(\theta) \bar{p}(\theta|y_{1:t}) d\theta \right\|_p \leq \frac{c_t \|h\|_\infty}{\sqrt{N}},$$

for $t = 0, 1, \dots, t_0$, where $\{c_t\}_{0 \leq t \leq t_0}$ is a sequence of constants independent of N . \square

If, instead of the true likelihood $u_t(\theta)$, we use another biased function $\bar{u}_t(\theta) \neq u_t(\theta)$ to update the posterior probability measure $p(\theta|y_{1:t})$, then we obtain the new sequence of measures

$$\bar{p}(\theta|y_{1:t}) \propto \bar{u}_t(\theta) * \bar{p}(\theta|y_{1:t-1}), \quad t = 1, 2, \dots$$

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Nested Gaussian filter (NGF)

UKF (M sigma-points)

1st layer

- Generate sigma-points: $\{\theta_t^i, w_t^i\}, 0 \leq i \leq M-1 \rightarrow p(\theta | \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1})$
- Likelihood of $\theta \rightarrow p(\mathbf{y}_t | \theta_t^i, \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1})$

EKF (per each sample sigma-point i)

2nd layer

- Prediction: $p(\mathbf{x}_t | \theta_t^i, \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1}) \approx \mathcal{N}(\mathbf{x}_t | \mathbf{x}_{t|t-1}^i, \bar{\theta}_t^i, \mathbf{C}_{t|t-1}^i, \bar{\theta}_t^i)$
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Recursivity of NGF

→ This filter is **not recursive**.

- As every time step t the **sigma-points** θ_t^i are recalculated, the computations of the second layer need to **start from scratch**.
- In order to make it **recursive** we approximate

$$p(\mathbf{x}_{t-1} | \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1}, \theta_t^i) \approx p(\mathbf{x}_{t-1} | \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1}, \theta_{t-1}^i).$$

Recursive NGF

Every time step the norm $\|\boldsymbol{\theta}_t^i - \boldsymbol{\theta}_{t-1}^i\|_p$ is computed and compared against a prescribed relative **threshold** $\lambda > 0$.

- If $\|\boldsymbol{\theta}_t^i - \boldsymbol{\theta}_{t-1}^i\|_p < \lambda \|\boldsymbol{\theta}_{t-1}^i\|_p$,
we assume $p(\mathbf{x}_{t-1} | \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1}, \boldsymbol{\theta}_t^i) \approx p(\mathbf{x}_{t-1} | \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1}, \boldsymbol{\theta}_{t-1}^i)$.
- If $\|\boldsymbol{\theta}_t^i - \boldsymbol{\theta}_{t-1}^i\|_p > \lambda \|\boldsymbol{\theta}_{t-1}^i\|_p$,
we need to compute the pdf $p(\mathbf{x}_{t-1} | \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1}, \boldsymbol{\theta}_t^i)$ from the prior $p(\mathbf{x}_0)$.

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Ongoing work

Focusing on an **efficient use of the available computational resources**.

- Reduction of the number of θ -samples when the filter converges [Accepted paper, ICASSP 2023]⁶.
- Adapting the number of samples of each layer online
→ Further study of $p(\mathbf{y}_t | \mathbf{y}_{1:t-1}, \boldsymbol{\theta})$.

⁶Pérez-Vieites and Elvira, “Adaptive Gaussian nested filter for parameter estimation and state tracking in dynamical systems”:

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The Lorenz 63 model

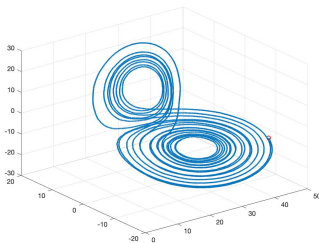
We consider a **stochastic Lorenz 63 model**, whose dynamics are described by

- the **state variables** x_t with dimension $d_x = 3$,
- the **static parameters** $\theta = [S, R, B]^T$ and
- the following **SDEs**

$$dx_1 = [-S(x_1 - x_2)]d\tau + \sigma dv_1,$$

$$dx_2 = [Rx_1 - x_2 - x_1x_3]d\tau + \sigma dv_2,$$

$$dx_3 = [x_1x_2 - Bx_3]d\tau + \sigma dv_3,$$



The Lorenz 63 model

- Applying a discretization method with step Δ , we obtain

$$x_{1,t+1} = x_{1,t} - \Delta S(x_{1,t} - x_{2,t}) + \sqrt{\Delta} \sigma v_{1,t},$$

$$x_{2,t+1} = x_{2,t} + \Delta [(R - x_{3,t})x_{1,t} - x_{2,t}] + \sqrt{\Delta} \sigma v_{2,t},$$

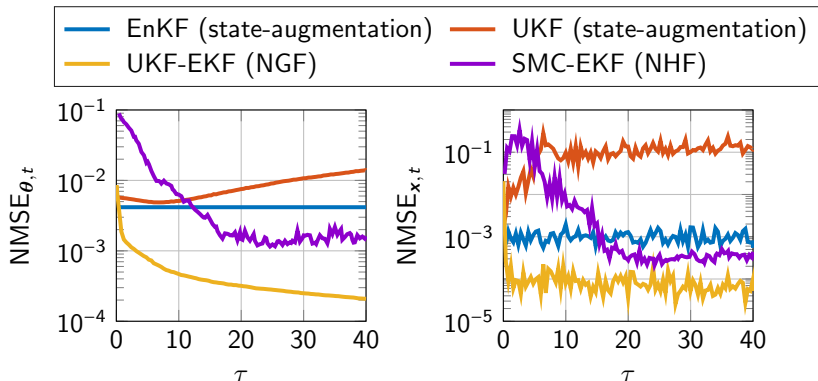
$$x_{3,t+1} = x_{3,t} + \Delta (x_{1,t}x_{2,t} - Bx_{3,t}) + \sqrt{\Delta} \sigma v_{3,t},$$

- We assume linear observations of the form

$$\mathbf{y}_t = k_o \begin{bmatrix} x_{1,t} \\ x_{3,t} \end{bmatrix} + \mathbf{r}_t,$$

where k_o is a fixed known parameter and $\mathbf{r}_t \sim \mathcal{N}(\mathbf{r}_t | \mathbf{0}, \sigma_y^2 \mathbf{I}_2)$.

Numerical results [Signal Processing 2021]⁷

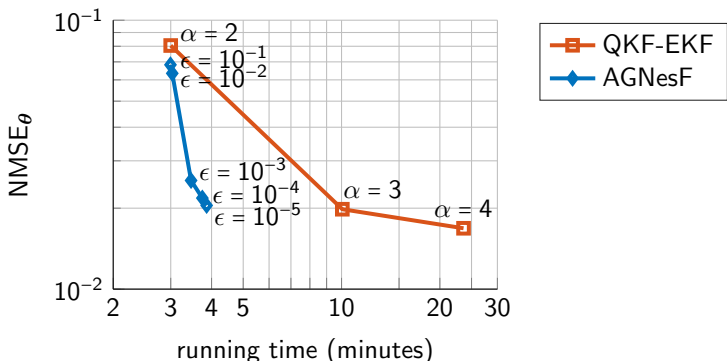


→ The nested schemes outperform the augmented-state methods.

→ The UKF-EKF is three times faster than SMC-EKF.

⁷Pérez-Vieites and Míguez, "Nested Gaussian filters for recursive Bayesian inference and nonlinear tracking in state space models".

Numerical results [ICASSP 2023]⁸



1. **NGF**: QKF-EKF with different number of points/samples, N_{θ} (the greater α , the greater N_{θ}).
2. **Adaptive Gaussian nested filter (AGNesF)**.

⁸Pérez-Vieites and Elvira, "Adaptive Gaussian nested filter for parameter estimation and state tracking in dynamical systems":

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We have introduced a **generalized nested methodology**

1. that is **flexible**. It admits different types of filtering techniques in each layer, leading to a **set of algorithms**.
2. that works **recursively**.
3. **with theoretical guarantees** (under general assumptions).

Open to collaborate and discuss possible applications !

- Time-series problems with availability of relatively frequent observations / data
- e.g., remote sensing, energy, ecology, but not only

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Thank you!

- Pérez-Vieites & Elvira (2023). *Adaptive Gaussian nested filter for parameter estimation and state tracking in dynamical systems*. In [ICASSP 2023 \[Accepted\]](#).
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