

# Reinforcement Learning for Global-Local Control of Dynamic Networks with Applications to Systemic Risk

**Nils Detering**

Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf

together with Florian Grell (Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf) and Thilo Meyer-Brandis  
(University of Munich)

**Swissquote Workshop on Graph Learning in Financial Networks**

# Contents

- Introduction
- Markov Decision Process on a dynamic graph
- Intervention in a dynamic financial network
- Reinforcement Learning on Graphs with GNN
- Permutation equivariance, indistinguishability, and fairness of MP-GNN
- RL-Actor-Critic GNN architecture and numerical results

# Motivation: Systemic Risk

- ▶ Before the financial crisis of 2007/2008, banks were mostly considered in isolation.
- ▶ Regulation primarily aimed at limiting the probability of default of individual institutions.

## Problem:

- ▶ Financial systems are highly interconnected:
  - ▶ loans between banks,
  - ▶ common asset holdings,
  - ▶ derivatives exposures,
  - ▶ fire-sale externalities,
  - ▶ ...
- ▶ Shocks can therefore propagate through the network.
- ▶ Local problems can lead to a systemic crises.

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- ▶ Local problems can lead to a systemic crises.

*Stability of individual banks does not automatically imply stability of the system.*

# Literature: Systemic Risk in Financial Networks

## Motivation and basic model

- ▶ Financial systems exhibit complex, heterogeneous dependency structures, naturally modeled as weighted graphs (nodes: institutions; edges: monetary exposures,...).
- ▶ Default contagion first studied explicitly via clearing equilibrium payments Eisenberg and Noe (2001)

## More advanced contagion channels and extensions

- ▶ Beyond defaults, important contagion channels include fire sales, common asset holdings,.....
- ▶ Extensions incorporate multiple contagion channels, bankruptcy costs, and systemic dynamics Rogers and Veraart (2013); Weber and Weske (2017a); Capponi et al. (2016); Gouriéroux et al. (2012); Cifuentes et al. (2005); Nier et al. (2007); Bichuch and Chen (2020); Bichuch and Feinstein (2022),.....

## Random networks and asymptotic analysis

- ▶ Random network approaches (Gai and Kapadia (2010); Amini et al. (2016); Detering et al. (2019)) analyze systemic damage using asymptotic methods as networks grow large.
- ▶ Modeling of local interactions by preserving empirical network statistics (e.g., degree heterogeneity).

# Literature: Systemic Risk in Financial Networks

**Fewer works on network control related to systemic risk:** Endogenous network formation, optimal bailouts, .... and dynamic evolution turn out challenging to investigate analytically.

**Notable exceptions (incomplete list):**

- ▶ Amini et al. (2017) and Minca and Sulem (2014) study optimal equity infusions into a financial network. Problem reduces to a combinatorial optimization problem.
- ▶ Capponi and Chen (2015) analyses a lender of last resort and shows that time sequence of clearing payments is unique when a liquidity loan allocation strategy is specified. Capponi et al. (2022) consider optimal bailouts and the feedback effects from increased sovereign's default risk.
- ▶ Veraart (2022) considers portfolio compression and states it as an optimization problem.
- ▶ Papachristou et al. (2023) studies dynamic interventions in an Eisenberg-Noe setting and shows that the problem can be turned into a sequence of linear programs.
- ▶ Carmona et al. (2013) and follow up articles Fouque and Ichiba (2013); Carmona et al. (2016); Garnier et al. (2013) study mean field setting for inter-bank borrowing and lending by diffusion processes coupled through their drifts.

# Reinforcement Learning on networks

## Technical challenges with numerical procedures for network control:

- ▶ Financial networks are heterogeneous and sparse.
- ▶ It is well known that heterogeneous, sparse networks are most difficult to control (see Liu et al. (2011)).
- ▶ Moreover, control policies often need to be transparent and fair which adds constraints.
- ▶ Controls are often of *Global-Local* nature.

## Our contribution:

- ▶ We address *Global-Local* control of financial networks using reinforcement learning on graphs.
- ▶ Policy gradient methods with Graph Neural Networks (GNN),
- ▶ Our approach is scalable and leverages relational information, symmetry structures, permutation invariance,....
- ▶ We can ensure that certain fairness and transparency requirements hold.
- ▶ **Case study:** How do regulators intervene optimally in case the financial system is under stress and needs to be supported to prevent a damaging cascade?

# Contents

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# Model Setup: MDP on a dynamic graph

## Graph Structure:

- ▶ Graph with fixed set of  $n$  nodes
- ▶ Let  $V, W, U$  be finite sets.
- ▶ Each node has an  $m$ -dimensional feature vector
- ▶ Graph described by:
  - ▶ Node features  $\in V^m$ ,
  - ▶ weighted adjacency matrix  $\in W^{n \times n}$ ,
  - ▶ a global feature  $\in U^k$

## State Space:

$$\mathcal{S} := V^{n \times m} \times W^{n \times n} \times U^k$$

# Model Setup: MDP on a dynamic graph

## Markov Decision Process (MDP):

- ▶ Markov Decision Process  $(\mathcal{S}, \mathcal{A}, \mathcal{R}, p)$ :
  - ▶ consisting of the state space  $\mathcal{S}$  as defined above,
  - ▶ a finite action space  $\mathcal{A} := \bigcup_{s \in \mathcal{S}} \mathcal{A}_s$ , where  $\mathcal{A}_s$  is set of possible actions in state  $s$ ,
  - ▶ a set of possible rewards  $\mathcal{R} \subset \mathbb{R}$ .
  - ▶ Transition dynamics described by Markov kernel:

$$p : \mathcal{P}(\mathcal{S}) \otimes \mathcal{P}(\mathcal{R}) \times \mathcal{S} \times \mathcal{A} \rightarrow [0, 1] \quad (1)$$

- ▶ Usually factorization of kernel:

$$p(\{s', r\}; s, a) = h(\{s'\}; s, a) \cdot q(\{r\}; s', s, a)$$

- ▶  $h$ : State transition kernel
  - ▶  $q$ : Reward kernel (often deterministic)
- ▶ Given distribution  $\mu$  over  $\mathcal{S}$  and a policy  $\pi$ , there exists stochastic process  $(S_t, A_t, R_t)_{t \in \mathbb{N}_0}$  with values in  $(\mathcal{S} \times \mathcal{A} \times \mathcal{R})$  such that conditional prob. are given by (1).

# Model Setup: Learning Objective

**Learning Objective, infinite horizon:**

$$\max_{\pi} \mathbb{E}_s^{\pi} \left[ \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \gamma^t R_t \right], \quad \gamma \in (0, 1)$$

Optimal policy  $\pi^*$  exists, stationary, deterministic:

$$\pi_t^*(\cdot; s_0, \dots, s_t) = \delta_{f(s_t)}(\cdot), \quad f: \mathcal{S} \rightarrow \mathcal{A}.$$

# Contents

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# Intervention in a Dynamic Financial Network

## Financial network setup:

- ▶ Discrete multi-period model of a network with  $n$  banks.
- ▶ At each time step  $t = 0, 1, \dots$ , a shock may trigger a default cascade.
- ▶ A regulator can inject capital (prior to the shock) to prevent or mitigate the cascade.

## System state:

$$(X(t), L(t), S(t))_{t=0, \dots, T} \in \mathcal{S} = V^{n \times 2} \times W^{(n+1) \times (n+1)} \times U^k$$

- **Assets:**  $X(t) \in V^{n \times 2}$ ,  $X_{i,1}(t)$  risk-free,  $X_{i,2}(t)$  risky.
- **Liabilities:**  $L(t) \in W^{(n+1) \times (n+1)}$ ,  $L_{i,j}(t)$ : debt of bank  $i$  to bank  $j > 0$ ,  $L_{i,1}(t)$ : to external parties.

$$\text{Total liabilities } \sum_j L_{i,j}(t), \quad \text{Claims } \sum_j L_{j,i}(t)$$

- **Market price:**  $S(t) \in U$ , value of the risky asset at time  $t$ .

**Objective:** Dynamic capital injections to limit systemic risk.

# Intervention in a Dynamic Financial Network

- **Assets:** Of bank  $i$  at time  $t$

$$A_i(t) = \sum_{j=1}^n L_{j,i}(t) + X_{i,1}(t) + X_{i,2}(t) S(t).$$

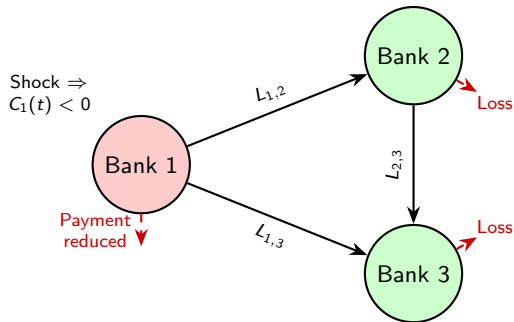
- **Liabilities:**  $\sum_{j=1}^n L_{i,j}(t)$ , and the **equity**  $C_i(t) = A_i(t) - \sum_{j=1}^n L_{i,j}(t)$ .
- **Contagion effect:** If  $C_i(t) < 0$  for at least one bank  $i$ , clearing is performed according to the fixed-point model of Weber and Weske (2017b), taking into account bankruptcy costs, cross-holdings, and fire sales.
- The network **after clearing** at time  $t + 1$  is given by

$$(X(t+1), L(t+1), S(t+1)) = \Lambda((X(t), L(t), S(t) + N(t)),$$

where  $\Lambda : V^{n \times 2} \times W^{(n+1) \times (n+1)} \times U^k \rightarrow V^{n \times 2} \times W^{(n+1) \times (n+1)} \times U^k$  denotes the clearing operation and  $N(t)$  describes non fire-sales related stochastic fluctuations of the risky assets.

# Illustration: Clearing in a Financial Network

**Idea:** If a bank defaults, its repayments to creditors are reduced. These losses propagate along the edges of the network until a new equilibrium (*clearing state*) is reached.



# Intervention in a Dynamic Financial Network

## Capital injections by the regulator:

- ▶ At each time step  $t$ , a regulator (e.g., lender of last resort) can choose a capital injection from an action space:

$$A_s \subset \left\{ a \in \mathbb{R}_+^n \mid \sum_i |a_i| \leq c \right\}$$

where  $c > 0$  denotes the maximum available total budget.

- ▶ The allocated amount  $a_i$  for state  $s \in \mathcal{S}$  is added to the risk-free assets of bank  $i$ :

$$X_{i,1}(t) \leftarrow X_{i,1}(t) + a_i, \quad i = 1, \dots, n.$$

- ▶ The regulator's objective is to maximize  $\max_{\pi} \mathbb{E}_s^{\pi} \left[ \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \gamma^t R_t \right]$ , with periodic reward (tradeoff between capital usage and stabilization)

$$R_t = -\bar{C} \sum_{i=1}^n a_i + \sum_{i=1}^n (C_i(t+1) - C_i(t)),$$

for a fixed weight  $\bar{C} > 1$ .

# Contents

- Introduction
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- Intervention in a dynamic financial network
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# Policy gradient with Graph Neural Networks

- ▶ Standard approach to finding such an optimal policy is via solving the Bellman optimality equation.
- ▶ However, often  $p : \mathcal{P}(\mathcal{S}) \otimes \mathcal{P}(\mathcal{R}) \times \mathcal{S} \times \mathcal{A} \rightarrow [0, 1]$  is not known.
- ▶ Reinforcement learning offers model independent, sample based numerical procedure.
- ▶ Q learning not feasible because  $\mathcal{S} = V^{n \times m} \times W^{n \times n} \times U^k$  is huge.
- ▶ Therefore focus on a family of parametrised differentiable policies  $\{\pi_\theta : \theta \in \Theta\}$  with a parameter space  $\Theta \subset \mathbb{R}^d$  and maximize  $J_s(\theta) := \mathbb{E}_s^{\pi_\theta} [\sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \gamma^t R_t]$  over  $\Theta$ 
  - Gradient can be written as

$$\nabla_\theta J_s(\theta) = \mathbb{E}_s^{\pi_\theta} \left[ \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \gamma^t \nabla_\theta (\log(\pi_\theta(\{A_t\}; S_t))) \Psi_t \right],$$

and we can use gradient descent with  $\Psi_t = \sum_{k=t}^{\infty} \gamma^{k-1} R_k$  or modifications.

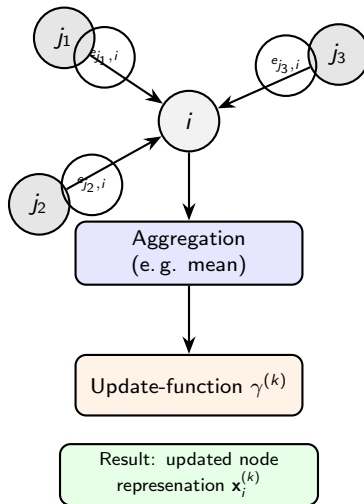
# Policy Representation with Graph Neural Networks

**Motivation:** Our state space is a *network* - nodes represent financial institutions, edges represent monetary liabilities. To ensure the policy  $\pi_\theta$  can exploit the network structure, we parametrize it using a **Message Passing Graph Neural Network (MP-GNN)**.

## Idea of Message Passing:

- ▶ Each node gathers information from its neighborhood.
- ▶ These *messages* are aggregated and incorporated into the node state.
- ▶ After several layers, each node contains a representation of its local environment.

# Policy Representation with Graph Neural Network



# Message Passing Network GNN (MP-GNN): Formal Definition

Let  $K$  fixed number of layers and  $\sigma$  activation function. Let further  $m_k \in \mathbb{N}$  for  $k = 1, \dots, K$  with  $m_1 = m$  (feature dimension). Define a map

$$f : \mathbb{R}^m \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^{m_K}, \mathbf{x}_i^{(0)} \mapsto \mathbf{x}_i^{(K)}$$

recursively by:

$$\mathbf{x}_i^{(k)} = \gamma^{(k)} \left[ \mathbf{x}_i^{(k-1)}, \bigoplus_{j \in \mathcal{N}^-(i)} \phi \left( \mathbf{x}_j^{(k-1)}, \mathbf{e}_{j,i} \right), \bigoplus_{j \in \mathcal{N}^+(i)} \phi \left( \mathbf{x}_j^{(k-1)}, \mathbf{e}_{j,i} \right) \right],$$

where  $\bigoplus_{j \in \mathcal{N}^{+-}(i)}$  represents mean aggregation over the in- and out-neighborhood  $\mathcal{N}^-(i)$  and  $\mathcal{N}^+(i)$  of  $i$ , and

$$\phi \left( \mathbf{x}_j^{(k-1)}, \mathbf{e}_{j,i} \right) = \mathbf{e}_{j,i} \mathbf{x}_j^{(k-1)}, \quad \gamma^{(k)}(z) = \sigma \left( \mathbf{W}^{(k)} \cdot z + b^{(k)} \right).$$

Here,  $\mathbf{W}^{(k)} \in \mathbb{R}^{m_k \times 3m_{k-1}}$ ,  $b^{(k)} \in \mathbb{R}^{m_k}$ ,  $k = 1 \dots K$  are a trainable weight matrices and bias vectors.

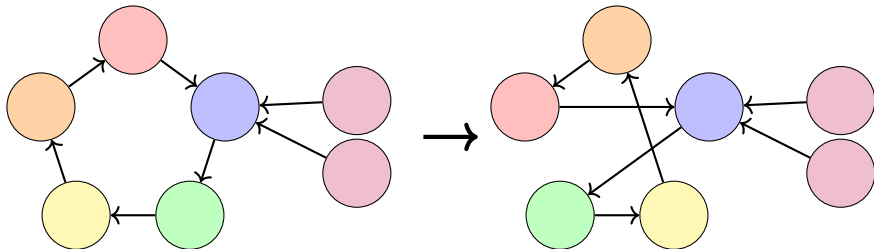
**Result:** Each node obtains an embedding that takes information from its local environment into account  
- suitable for parametrizing policies  $\pi_\theta$  on networks.

# Contents

- Introduction
- Markov Decision Process on a dynamic graph
- Intervention in a dynamic financial network
- Reinforcement Learning on Graphs with GNN
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- RL-Actor-Critic GNN architecture and numerical results

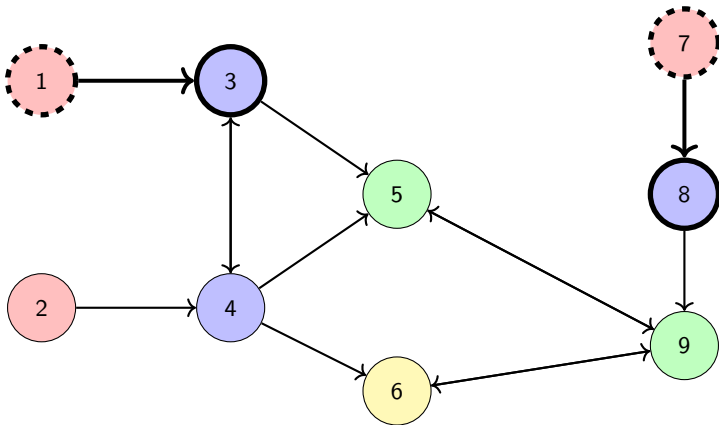
# Desirable graph function properties

- ▶ Functions on networks might need to fulfill some fairness constraints.
  - Reshuffling of node indices or positions should not change the function value.
  - Depending on context, node with *same or similar* neighborhood should be treated equally.



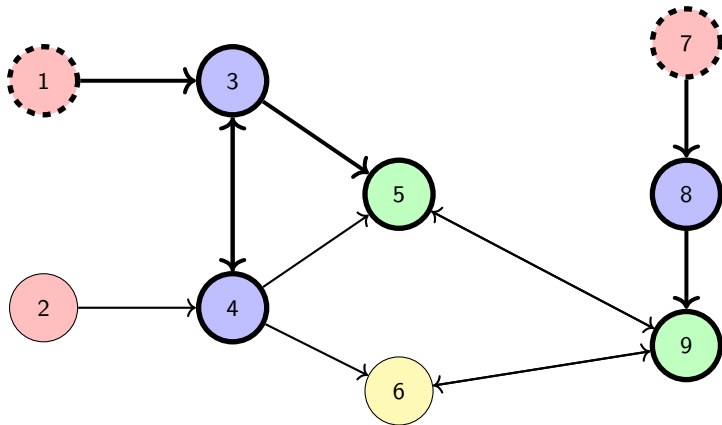
- ▶ Denote by  $\mathcal{F}_n^{\text{inv}}$  and  $\mathcal{F}_n^{\text{eq}}$  the set of permutation invariant (for graph labels) and equivariant (node labels) functions.

## $k$ -hop indistinguishability and $k$ -hop-fair maps



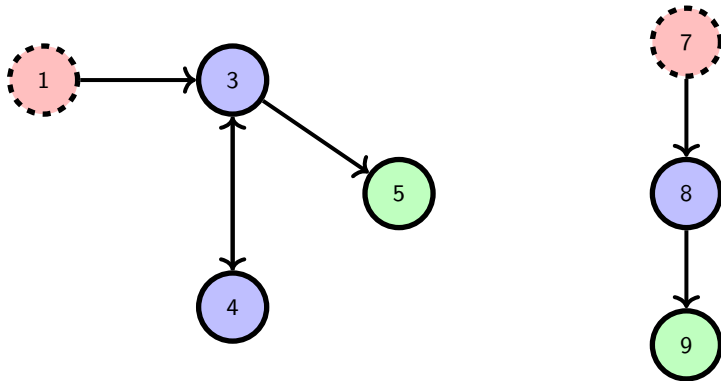
Node 1 and 7 have isomorphic 1-hop neighborhoods.

## $k$ -hop indistinguishability and $k$ -hop-fair maps



Node 1 and 7 have non-isomorphic 2-hop neighborhoods. We say that 1 and 7 are 1-hop indistinguishable

## $k$ -hop indistinguishability and $k$ -hop-fair maps



Node 1 and 7 have non-isomorphic 2-hop neighborhoods.

# Invariant Outputs and Universality for MP-GNN

To obtain a global (invariant) network output  $f(G) \in \mathbb{R}^d$ , a *permutation-invariant readout* is applied, e.g.:

$$f(G) = \rho\left(\bigoplus_{i=1}^n \gamma_i^{(K)}\right), \quad \bigoplus \in \{\text{sum, mean, maximum}\}.$$

## Universal approximation

- ▶ Standard **k-layer-GNNs** (message passing) can represent only a subset of  $\mathcal{F}_n^{\text{inv}}$  and  $\mathcal{F}_n^{\text{eq}}$ , limited by the **1-Weisfeiler–Lehman (1-WL)** isomorphism test.
- ▶ As our results reveal, partly this is due to the additional property of **k-layer-GNNs** being  $k$ -hop fair.

Literature: Maron et al. (2019), Keriven and Peyré (2019); Xu et al. (2019).

# Contents

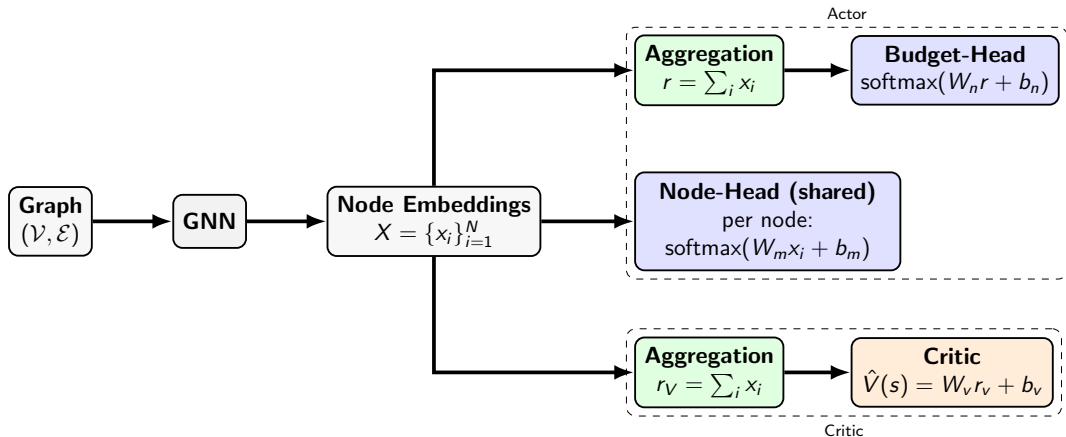
- Introduction
- Markov Decision Process on a dynamic graph
- Intervention in a dynamic financial network
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# Architecture for Actor-critic learning

## Specification of the GNN-MPN model:

- ▶ Two-layer message-passing network (MPN) used as a feature extractor with a 5-dimensional feature representation. The feature extractor is shared by actor and the critic.
- ▶ For the **critic**  $\hat{V}_\phi \in \mathcal{F}_n^{\text{inv}}$ : an additional feedforward layer with output dimension 1 on top of the MPN representation.
- ▶ For the **actor**  $\pi_\theta \in \mathcal{F}_n^{\text{eq}}$ : two parallel feedforward layers, one for the injected capital, one for the node weights (which share each node receives). Node weights are 2-hop fair.
- ▶ Action selection is performed via a **softmax** function.
- ▶ The risky asset is modeled by an **Ornstein-Uhlenbeck process**.

# Architektur



# Architecture Dependent Lipschitz Bounds

## Robustness of GNN Policies

- ▶ The GNN encoder, policy, and policy-gradient estimator are Lipschitz continuous with respect to: network parameters, node features, graph structure.
- ▶ Explicit bounds are derived in terms of: graph connectivity, aggregation operator, network depth.
- ▶ Deeper GNNs lead to exponentially larger Lipschitz constants.

# Convergence guarantees

Consider the projected batch REINFORCE update on a compact hyperrectangle  $\Theta$  :

$$\theta_{k+1} = \Pi_{\Theta} \left( \theta_k + \frac{\alpha_k}{m} \sum_{l=1}^m \nabla \hat{J}_l(\theta_k) \right).$$

## Theorem 1 (Almost sure convergence)

*Assume that the step sizes satisfy*

$$\alpha_k > 0, \quad \alpha_k \xrightarrow[k \rightarrow \infty]{} 0, \quad \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \alpha_k = \infty, \quad \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \alpha_k^2 < \infty.$$

*If*

$$S_{\Theta} := \left\{ \theta \in \Theta : \Pi_{T_{\Theta}(\theta)}(\nabla J(\theta)) = 0 \right\}$$

*has empty interior, then*

$$\text{dist}(\theta_k, S_{\Theta}) \xrightarrow[k \rightarrow \infty]{} 0 \quad \text{almost surely.}$$

# Convergence guarantees

Consider the projected batch REINFORCE update on a compact hyperrectangle  $\Theta$  :

$$\theta_{k+1} = \Pi_{\Theta} \left( \theta_k + \frac{\alpha_k}{m} \sum_{l=1}^m \nabla \hat{J}_l(\theta_k) \right).$$

## Theorem 2 (Finite-time result for $N$ steps)

Assume  $0 < \alpha_k < \frac{2}{L_J}$  and define for  $k = 0, \dots, N-1$

$$w_k := \alpha_k - \frac{L_J}{2} \alpha_k^2, \quad W_N := \sum_{k=0}^{N-1} w_k, \quad \mathbb{P}(\tau = k) = \frac{w_k}{W_N}.$$

Then the expected projected gradient norm at the random iterate  $\theta_{\tau+1}$  satisfies

$$\left[ \left\| \Pi_{\Theta}(\theta_{\tau+1}) (\nabla J(\theta_{\tau+1})) \right\|^2 \right] \leq \mathcal{O} \left( \frac{1}{\sum_{k=0}^{N-1} \alpha_k} \right) + \mathcal{O} \left( \frac{1}{m} \right),$$

where the expectation is taken with respect to  $\tau$  and the rollout randomness used to generate the iterates.

# Training

## Training setup:

- ▶ Training over 40,000 epochs with 100 time steps each using a **Proximal Policy Optimization (PPO)** algorithm with a shared feature extractor for actor and critic.
- ▶ After every 19,840 time steps, 10 update steps for the policy and critic are performed.

# Some numerical results

A circle with one weak node.

# Some numerical results

A star shaped network with one a weak core.

# Some numerical results

A network with two symmetric circles.

# Some numerical results

A network with a stressed community.

# Thank you!

**Nils Detering**

Department of Mathematics  
Heinrich-Heine Universität, Düsseldorf  
Germany

[nils.detering@hhu.de](mailto:nils.detering@hhu.de)

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