Programming by Optimisation:

A Practical Paradigm for Computer-Aided Algorithm Design

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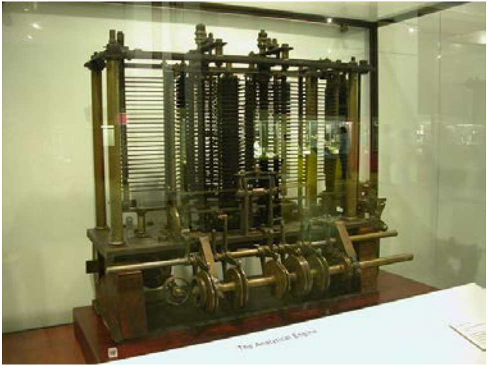
The age of machines



"As soon as an Analytical Engine exists, it will necessarily guide the future course of the science. Whenever any result is sought by its aid, the question will then arise – by what course of calculation can these results be arrived at by the machine in the shortest time?"

(Charles Babbage, 1864)

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When algorithms control the world

By Jane Wakefield
Technology reporter

If you were expecting some kind of warning when computers finally get smarter than us, then think again.

There will be no soothing HAL 9000-type voice informing us that our human services are now surplus to requirements.

In reality, our electronic overlords are already taking control, and they are doing it in a far more subtle way than science fiction would have us believe.

Their weapon of choice - the algorithm.

Behind every smart web service is some even smarter web code. From the web retailers - calculating what books and films we might be interested in, to Facebook's friend finding and image tagging services, to the search engines that guide us around the net.

Algorithms are spreading their influence around the globe

It is these invisible computations that increasingly control how we interact with our electronic world.

At last month's TEDGlobal conference, algorithm expert Kevin Slavin delivered one of the tech show's most "sit up and take notice" speeches where he warned that the "maths that computers use to decide stuff" was infiltrating every aspect of our lives.

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"The maths[!] that computers use to decide stuff [is] infiltrating every aspect of our lives."

- financial markets
- social interactions
- cultural preferences
- artistic production
- ...

Performance matters ...

- computation speed (time is money!)
- energy consumption (battery life, ...)
- quality of results (cost, profit, weight, ...)

... increasingly:

- globalised markets
- just-in-time production & services
- tighter resource constraints

Example: Resource allocation

- resources $>$ demands $\rightsquigarrow$ many solutions, easy to find

  economically wasteful

  $\rightsquigarrow$ reduction of resources / increase of demand

- resources $<$ demands $\rightsquigarrow$ no solution, easy to demonstrate

  lost market opportunity, strain within organisation

  $\rightsquigarrow$ increase of resources / reduction of demand

- resources $\approx$ demands

  $\rightsquigarrow$ difficult to find solution / show infeasibilityresources $\approx$ demands

  $\rightsquigarrow$ difficult to find solution / show infeasibility

This tutorial:

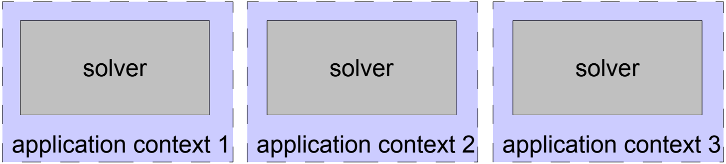
new approach to software development, leveraging ...

- human creativity
- optimisation & machine learning
- large amounts of computation / data

Key idea:

- program $\rightsquigarrow$ (large) space of programs
- encourage software developers to
  - avoid premature commitment to design choices
  - seek & maintain design alternatives
- automatically find performance-optimising designs for given use context(s)

$\Rightarrow$ Programming by Optimization (PbO)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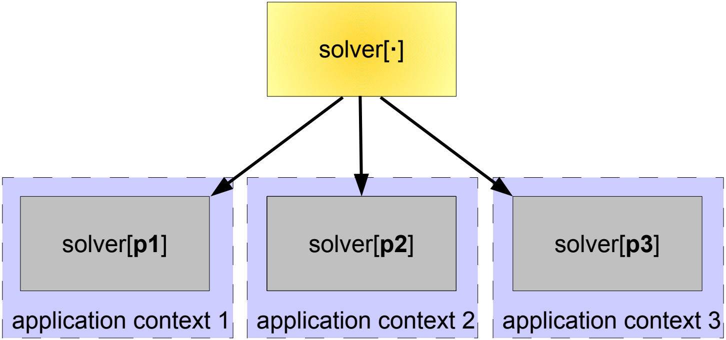
application context 1
application context 2
application context 3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application context 3

Outline

1. Programming by Optimization: Motivation & Introduction
2. Algorithm Configuration (incl. Coffee Break)
3. Portfolio-based Algorithm Selection
4. Software Development Support & Further Directions

Programming by Optimization: Motivation & Introduction

Example: SAT-based software verification

Hutter, Babić, Hoos, Hu (2007)

- **Goal:** Solve SAT-encoded software verification problems as fast as possible
- new DPLL-style SAT solver Spear (by Domagoj Babić)
  = highly parameterised heuristic algorithm
  (26 parameters, $\approx 8.3 \times 10^{17}$ configurations)
- manual configuration by algorithm designer
- automated configuration using ParamILS, a generic algorithm configuration procedure
  Hutter, Hoos, Stützle (2007)

Spear: Performance on software verification benchmarks

solver	num. solved	mean run-time
MiniSAT 2.0	302/302	161.3 CPU sec
Spear original	298/302	787.1 CPU sec
Spear generic. opt. config.	302/302	35.9 CPU sec
Spear specific. opt. config.	302/302	1.5 CPU sec

- $\approx$ 500-fold speedup through use automated algorithm configuration procedure (ParamILS)
- new state of the art

  (winner of 2007 SMT Competition, QF_BV category)

Levels of PbO:

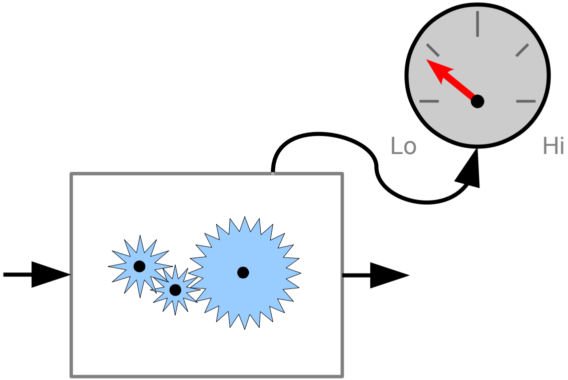
Level 4: Make no design choice prematurely that cannot be justified compellingly.

Level 3: Strive to provide design choices and alternatives.

Level 2: Keep and expose design choices considered during software development.

Level 1: Expose design choices hardwired into existing code (magic constants, hidden parameters, abandoned design alternatives).

Level 0: Optimise settings of parameters exposed by existing software.



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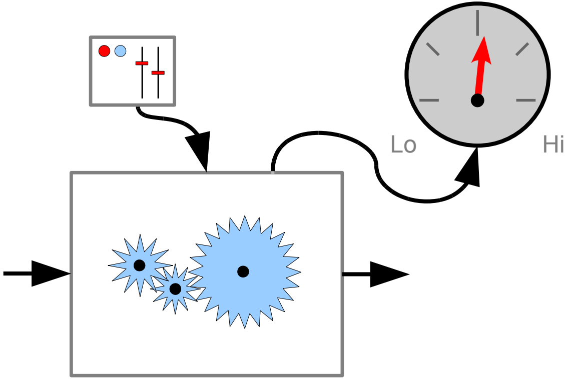
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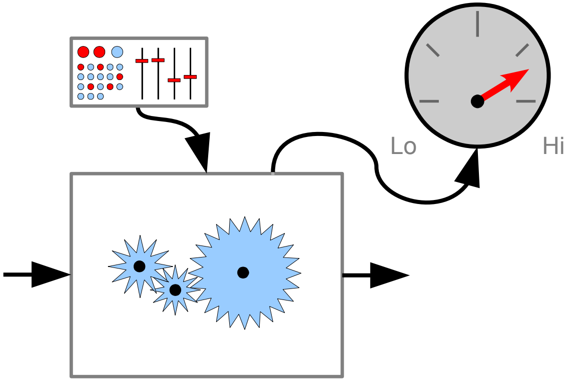

Lo
Hi

Success in optimising speed:

Application, Design choices	Speedup	PbO level
SAT-based software verification (SPEAR), 41 Hutter, Babić, Hoos, Hu (2007)	4.5–500 ×	2–3
AI Planning (LPG), 62 Vallati, Fawcett, Gerevini, Hoos, Saetti (2011)	3–118 ×	1
Mixed integer programming (CPLEX), 76 Hutter, Hoos, Leyton-Brown (2010)	2–52 ×	0

... and solution quality:

University timetabling, 18 design choices, PbO level 2–3
⇝ new state of the art; UBC exam scheduling
Fawcett, Chiarandini, Hoos (2009)

Machine learning / Classification, 786 design choices, PbO level 0–1
⇝ outperforms specialised model selection & hyper-parameter optimisation methods from machine learning
Thornton, Hutter, Hoos, Leyton-Brown (2012–13)

PbO enables . . .

- performance optimisation for different use contexts
  (some details later)

- adaptation to changing use contexts
  (see, *e.g.*, life-long learning – Thrun 1996)

- self-adaptation while solving given problem instance
  (*e.g.*, Battiti *et al.* 2008; Carchrae & Beck 2005; Da Costa *et al.* 2008)

- automated generation of instance-based solver selectors
  (*e.g.*, SATzilla – Leyton-Brown *et al.* 2003, Xu *et al.* 2008;
  Hydra – Xu *et al.* 2010; ISAC – Kadioglu *et al.* 2010)

- automated generation of parallel solver portfolios
  (*e.g.*, Huberman *et al.* 1997; Gomes & Selman 2001;
  Hoos *et al.* 2012)

Cost & concerns

But what about ...

- Computational complexity?
- Cost of development?
- Limitations of scope?

Computationally too expensive?

Spear revisited:

- total configuration time on software verification benchmarks: $\approx$ 30 CPU days
- wall-clock time on 10 CPU cluster: $\approx$ 3 days
- cost on Amazon Elastic Compute Cloud (EC2): 81.76 CAD (= 75.60 USD)
- 81.76 CAD pays for ...
  - 1:58 hours of typical software engineer in Canada
  - 7:54 hours at minimum wage in Quèbec

Too expensive in terms of development?

Design and coding:

- tradeoff between performance/flexibility and overhead
- overhead depends on level of PbO
- traditional approach: cost from manual exploration of design choices!

Testing and debugging:

- design alternatives for individual mechanisms and components can be tested separately

$\rightsquigarrow$ effort linear (rather than exponential) in the number of design choices

Limited to the "niche" of NP-hard problem solving?

Some PbO-flavoured work in the literature:

- computing-platform-specific performance optimisation of linear algebra routines
  (Whaley *et al.* 2001)
- optimisation of sorting algorithms using genetic programming
  (Li *et al.* 2005)
- compiler optimisation
  (Pan & Eigenmann 2006; Cavazos *et al.* 2007)
- database server configuration
  (Diao *et al.* 2003)

Overview

- Programming by Optimization (PbO):
  Motivation and Introduction

- Algorithm Configuration
  - Methods (components of algorithm configuration)
  - Systems (that instantiate these components)

[coffee]

  - Demo & Practical Issues
  - Case Studies

- Portfolio-Based Algorithm Selection

- Software Development Support & Further Directions

The Algorithm Configuration Problem

Definition

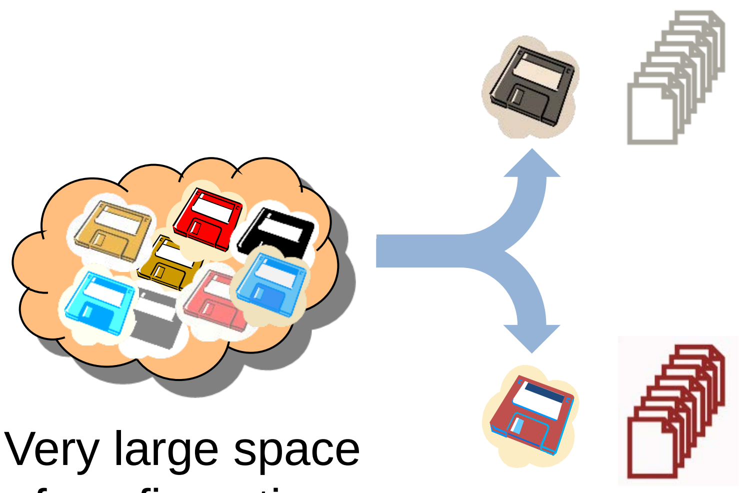
- Given:
  - Runnable algorithm *A* with configuration space $\boldsymbol{\Theta} = \Theta_1 \times \cdots \times \Theta_n$
  - Distribution *D* over problem instances Π
  - Performance metric $m : \boldsymbol{\Theta} \times \Pi \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$
- Find:

$$\boxed{\boldsymbol{\theta}^* \in \arg\min_{\boldsymbol{\theta} \in \boldsymbol{\Theta}} \mathbb{E}_{\pi \sim D}[m(\boldsymbol{\theta}, \pi)]}$$

Motivation

Customize versatile algorithms
for different application domains

- Fully automated improvements
- Optimize speed, accuracy, memory, energy consumption, …



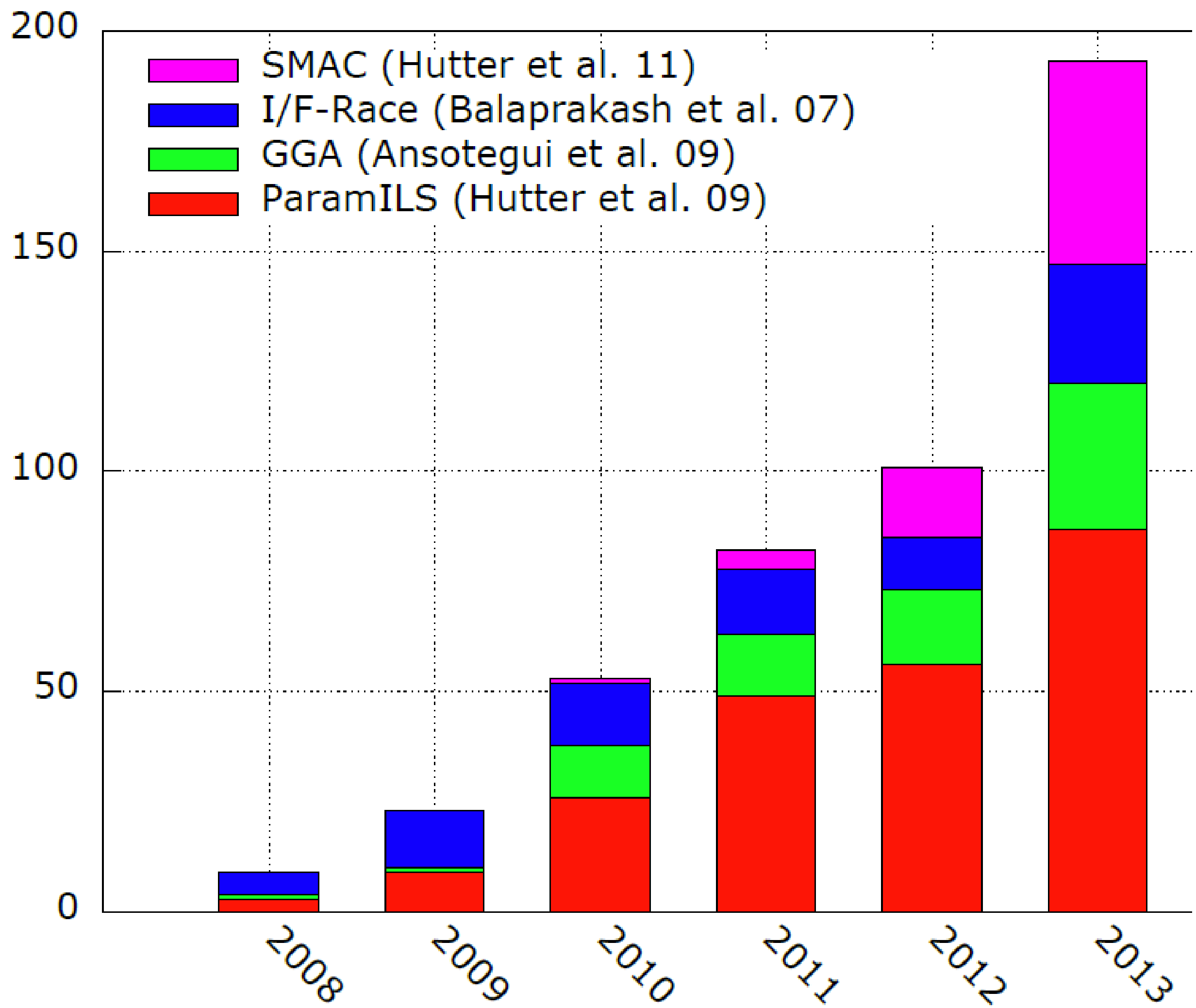
Very large space
of configurations

Algorithm Configuration is a Useful Abstraction

- Applicable to **different types of algorithms**
  - Tree search, local search, metaheuristics, machine learning, …
- **Large improvements** to solvers for **many hard combinatorial problems**
  - SAT, Max-SAT, MIP, SMT, TSP, ASP, time-tabling, AI planning, …
  - Competition winners for all of these rely on configuration tools

Algorithm Configuration is a Useful Abstraction

- Increasingly popular (citation numbers from Google scholar)



Algorithm Parameters

Parameter types

- Continuous, integer, ordinal
- **Categorical**: finite domain, unordered, e.g. {a,b,c}

Parameter space has **structure**

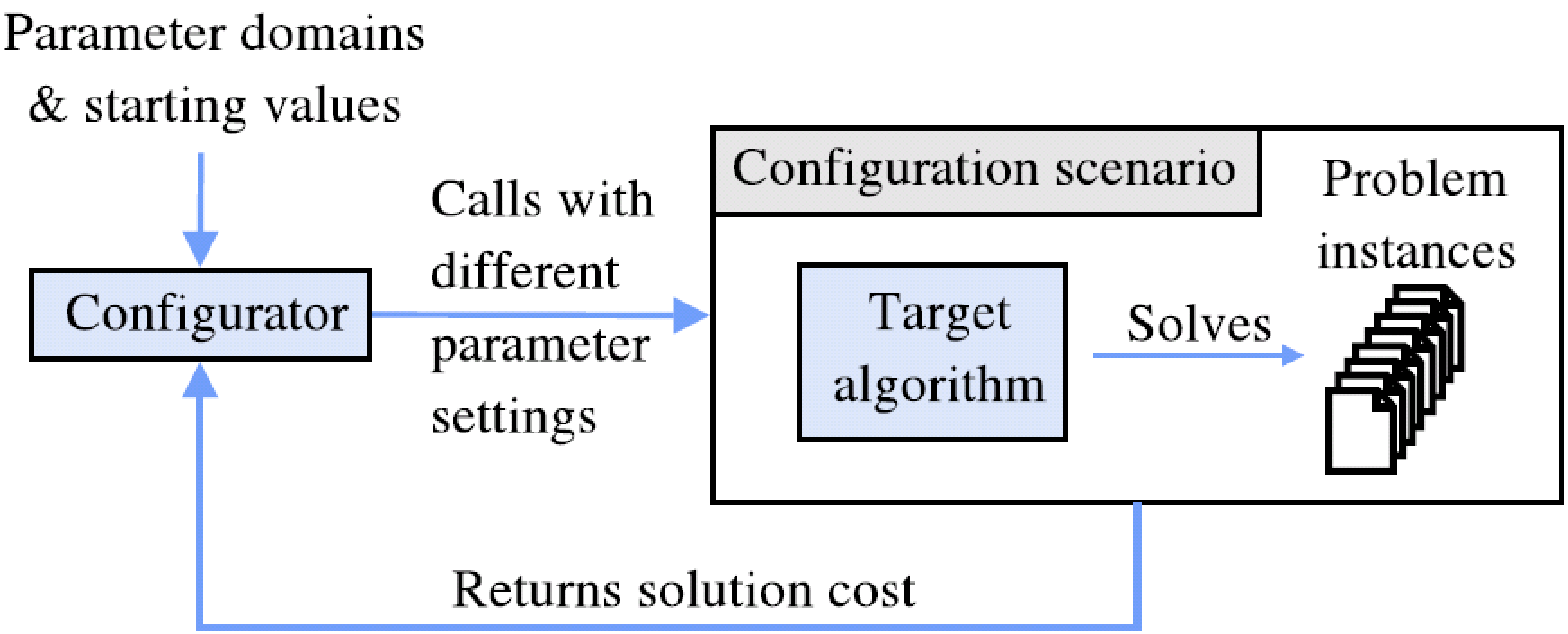
- E.g. parameter C of heuristic A is only active if A is used
- In this case, we say C is a **conditional parameter** with parent A

Parameters give rise to a **structured space of algorithms**

- Many **configurations** (e.g. 10^{47})
- Configurations often yield qualitatively different behaviour

$\rightarrow$ Algorithm configuration (as opposed to "parameter tuning")

The Algorithm Configuration Process



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Configurators have Two Key Components

- Component 1: which configuration to evaluate next?
  - Out of a large combinatorial search space
  - E.g., CPLEX: 76 parameters, 10^{47} configurations
- Component 2: how to evaluate that configuration?
  - Evaluating performance of a configuration is expensive
  - E.g., CPLEX: budget of 10000s per instance
  - Instances vary in hardness
    - Some take milliseconds, other days (for the default)
    - Improvement on a few instances might not mean much

Component 1: Which Configuration to Choose?

- For this component, we can consider a simpler problem:

Blackbox function optimization $\boxed{\min_{\theta \in \Theta} f(\theta)}$

  - **Only mode of interaction: query $f(\theta)$ at arbitrary $\theta \in \Theta$**

$$\theta \rightarrow \blacksquare \rightarrow f(\theta)$$

  - Abstracts away the complexity of multiple instances
  - Θ is still a structured space
    - Mixed continuous/discrete
    - Conditional parameters
    - Still more general than “standard” continuous BBO [e.g., Hansen et al.]

The Simplest Search Strategy: Random Search

- Select configurations uniformly at random
  - Completely uninformed
  - Global search, won't get stuck in a local region
  - At least it's better than grid search:

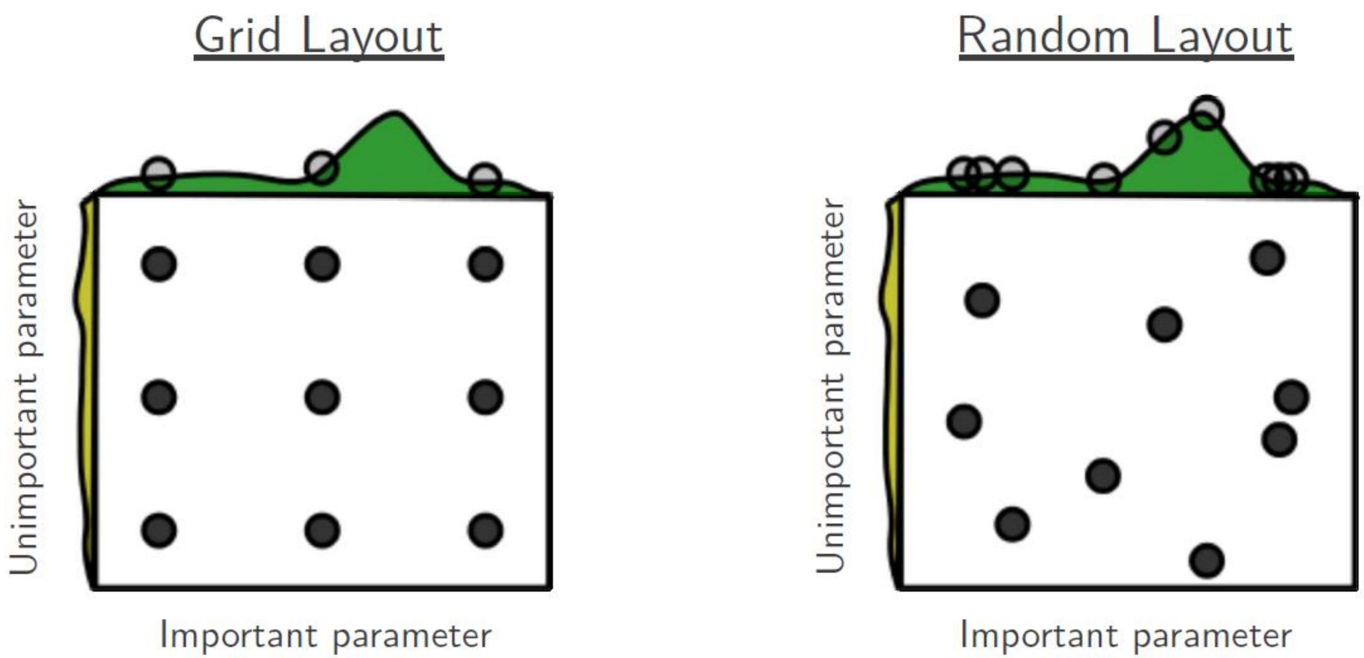


Image source: Bergstra et al, Random Search for Hyperparameter Optimization, JMLR 2012

The Other Extreme: Gradient Descent

(aka hill climbing)

Start with some configuration

repeat

    Modify a single parameter

    if *performance on a benchmark set degrades* **then**

        undo modification

until *no more improvement possible*
    (or “good enough")

Stochastic Local Search

[e.g., Hoos and Stützle, 2005]

- **Balance intensification and diversification**
  - Intensification: gradient descent
  - Diversification: restarts, random steps, perturbations, …

- Prominent general methods
  - Tabu search [Glover, 1986]
  - Simulated annealing [Kirkpatrick, Gelatt, C. D.; Vecchi, 1983]
  - Iterated local search [Lourenço, Martin & Stützle, 2003]

Population-based Methods

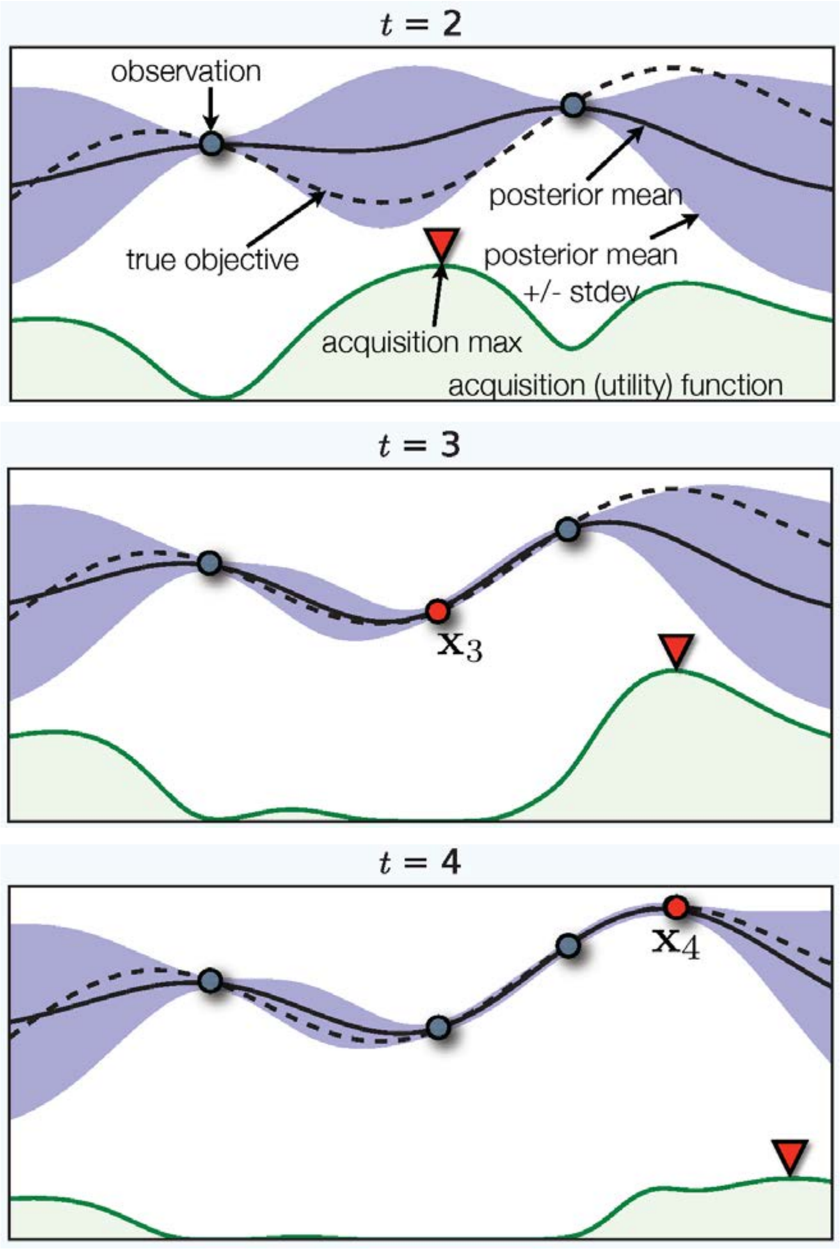
- Population of configurations
  - Global + local search via population
  - Maintain **population fitness & diversity**

- Examples
  - Genetic algorithms [e.g., Barricelli, ’57, Goldberg, ’89]
  - Evolutionary strategies [e.g., Beyer & Schwefel, ’02]

Sequential Model-Based Optimization

- Fit a (probabilistic) model of the function
- Use that model to trade off exploitation vs exploration

- In the machine learning literature also known as **Bayesian Optimization**



Sequential Model-Based Optimization

- Popular approach in statistics
  to minimize expensive blackbox functions [e.g., Mockus, '78]

- Recent progress in the machine learning literature:
  global convergence rates for continuous optimization
  [Srinivas et al, ICML 2010]
  [Bull, JMLR 2011]
  [Bubeck et al., JMLR 2011]
  [de Freitas, Smola, Zoghi, ICML 2012]

Estimation of Distribution (EDA)

[e.g., Pelikan, Goldberg and Lobo, 2002]

- Also uses a probabilistic model
- Also uses that model to inform where to evaluate next
- But models promising configurations: **P(x is "good")**
  - In contrast to modeling the function: **P(f|x)**

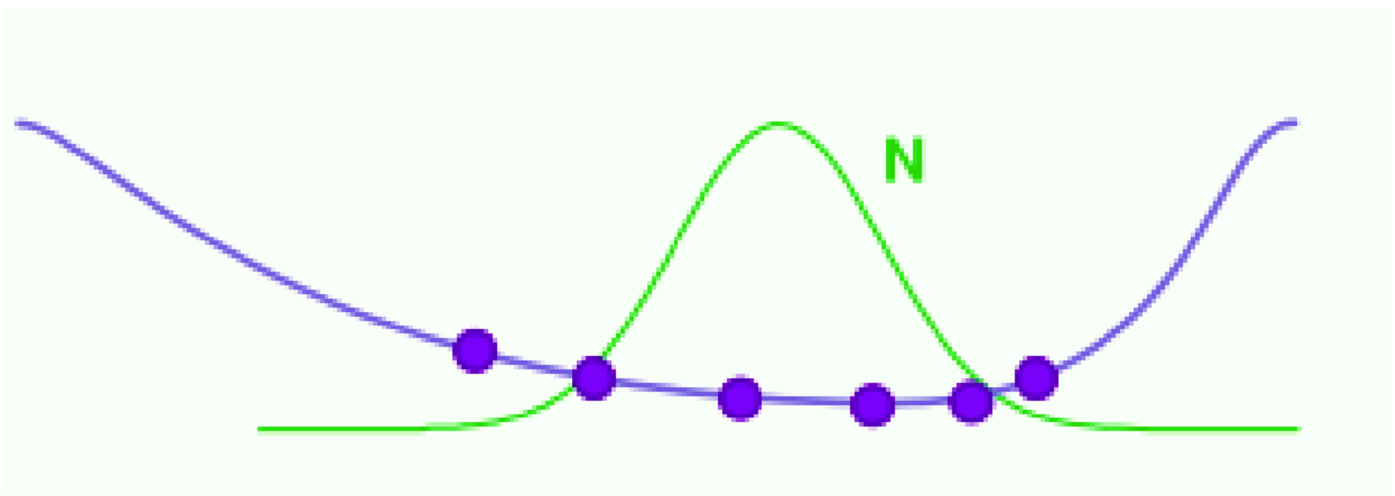
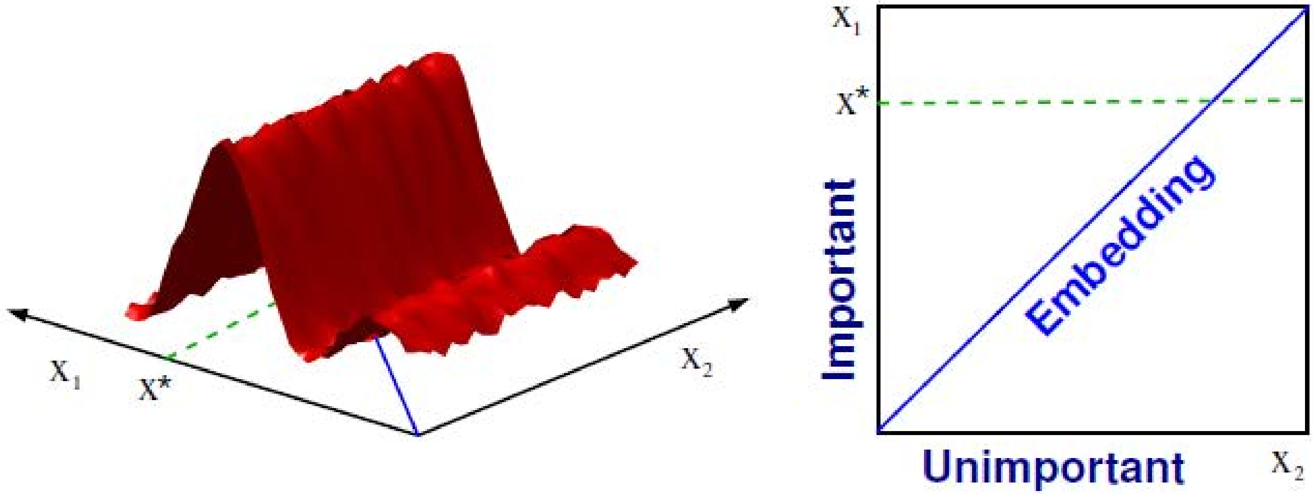


Image source: Wikipedia

Exploiting Low Effective Dimensionality

- Often, not all parameters are equally important
- Can search in an embedded lower-dimensional space



- For details, see:
  - Bayesian Optimization in High Dimensions via Random Embeddings [Wang et al, IJCAI 2013]

Summary 1: Which Configuration to Evaluate?

- Need to balance diversification and intensification
- The extremes
  - Random search
  - Hillclimbing
- Stochastic local search (SLS)
- Population-based methods
- Sequential Model-Based Optimization
- Estimation of Distribution (EDA) algorithms
- Exploiting low effective dimensionality

Component 2: How to Evaluate a Configuration?

Back to general algorithm configuration

- Given:
  - Runnable algorithm $\mathcal{A}$ with configuration space $\boldsymbol{\Theta} = \Theta_1 \times \cdots \times \Theta_n$
  - Distribution D over problem instances Π
  - Performance metric $m : \boldsymbol{\Theta} \times \Pi \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$
- Find:

$$\boxed{\boldsymbol{\theta}^* \in \arg\min_{\boldsymbol{\theta} \in \boldsymbol{\Theta}} \mathbb{E}_{\pi \sim D} [m(\boldsymbol{\theta}, \pi)]}$$

Recall the Spear example

- Instances vary in hardness
  - Some take milliseconds, other days (for the default)
  - Thus, improvement on a few instances might not mean much

Simplest Solution: Use Fixed N Instances

- Effectively treat the problem as a blackbox function optimization problem

- **Issue: how large to choose N?**
  - Too small: overtuning
  - Too large: every function evaluation is slow

- **General principle**
  - Don’t waste time on bad configurations
  - Evaluate good configurations more thoroughly

Racing Algorithms

[Maron & Moore, NIPS 1994]

[Birattari, Stützle, Paquete & Varrentrapp, GECCO 2002]

- Compare two or more algorithms against each other
  - Perform one run for each configuration at a time
  - **Discard configurations when dominated**

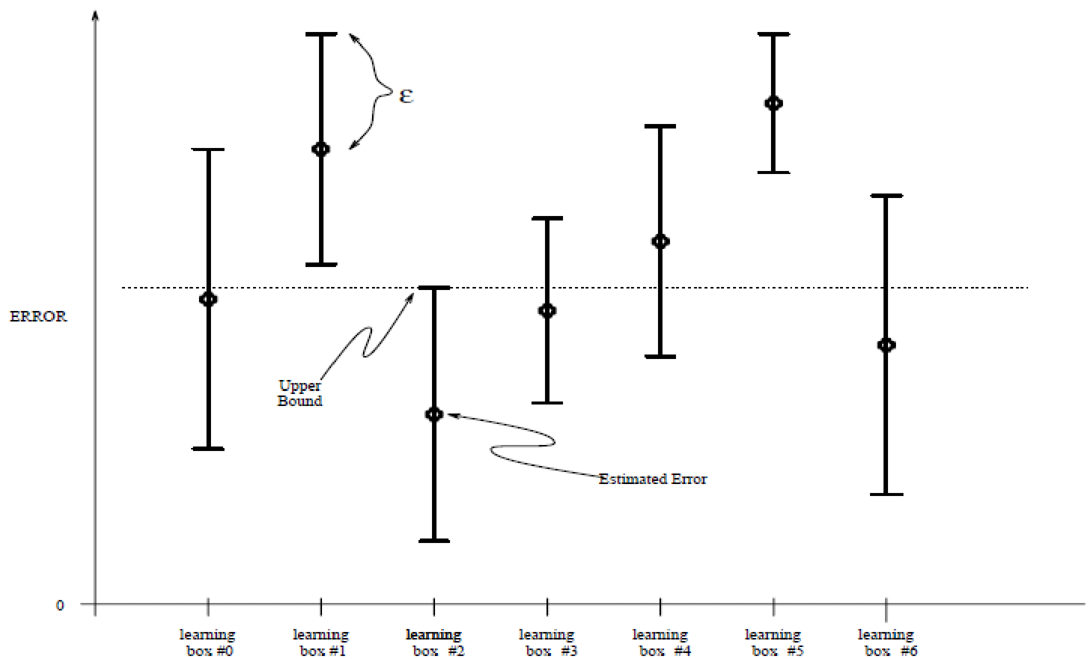


Image source: Maron & Moore, Hoeffding Races, NIPS 1994

Saving Time: Aggressive Racing

[Hutter, Hoos & Stützle, AAAI 2007]

- Race new configurations against the best known
  - Discard poor new configurations quickly
  - **No requirement for statistical domination**

- Search component should allow to return to configurations discarded because they were "unlucky"

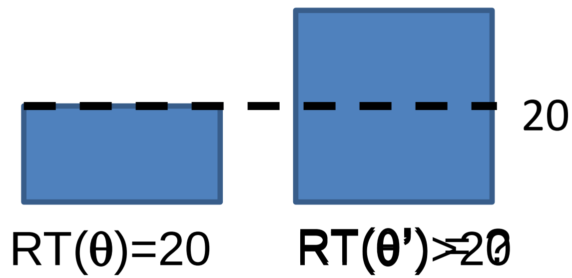
Saving More Time: Adaptive Capping

[Hutter, Hoos, Leyton-Brown & Stützle, JAIR 2009]

(only when minimizing algorithm runtime)

Can terminate runs for poor configurations θ' early:

- Is θ' better than θ?
  - Example:



  - Can terminate evaluation of θ' once guaranteed to be worse than θ

Summary 2: How to Evaluate a Configuration?

- Simplest: fixed set of N instances
- General principle
  - Don't waste time on bad configurations
  - Evaluate good configurations more thoroughly
- Instantiations of principle
  - Racing
  - Aggressive racing
  - Adaptive capping

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Overview: Algorithm Configuration Systems

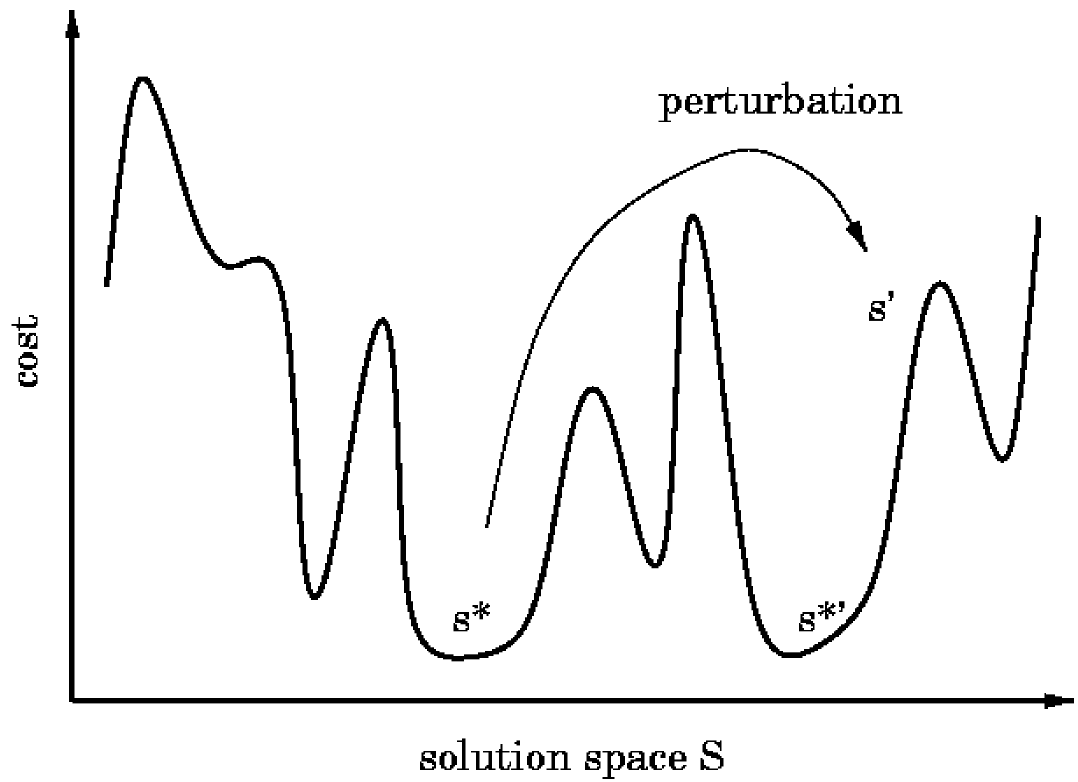
- Continuous parameters, single instances (**blackbox opt**)
  - Covariance adaptation evolutionary strategy (CMA-ES) [Hansen et al, since '06]
  - Sequential Parameter Optimization (SPO) [Bartz-Beielstein et al, '06]
  - Random Embedding Bayesian optimization (REMBO) [Wang et al, '13]

- **General algorithm configuration** methods
  - ParamILS [Hutter et al, '07 and '09]
  - Gender-based Genetic Algorithm (GGA) [Ansotegui et al, '09]
  - Iterated F-Race [Birattari et al, '02 and '10]
  - Sequential Model-based Algorithm Configuration (SMAC) [Hutter et al, since '11]
  - Distributed SMAC [Hutter et al, since '12]

The ParamILS Framework

[Hutter, Hoos, Leyton-Brown & Stützle, AAAI 2007 & JAIR 2009]

Iterated Local Search in parameter configuration space:



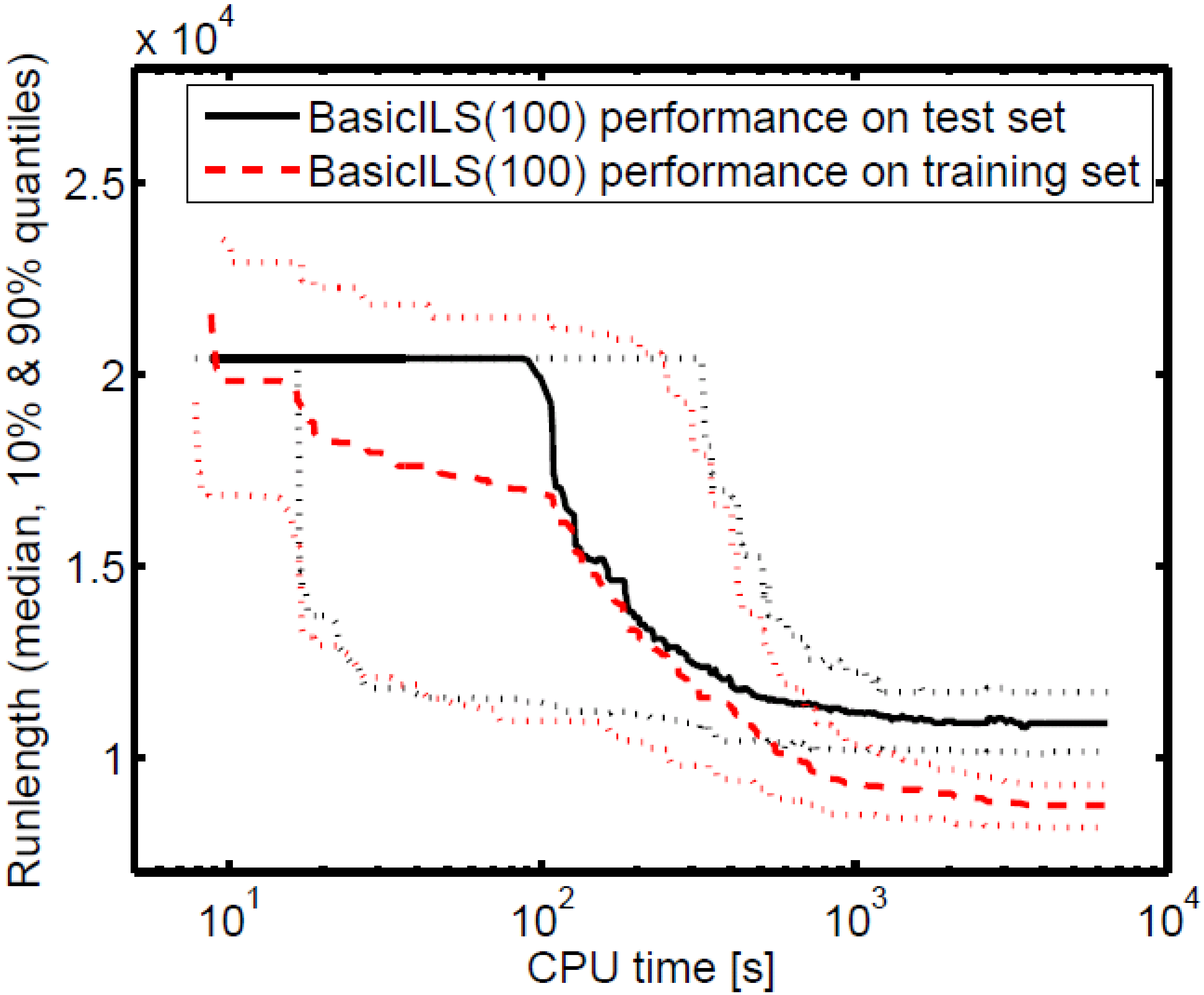
→ Performs **biased random walk over local optima**

The BasicILS(N) algorithm

- Instantiates the ParamILS framework
- **Uses a fixed number of N runs for each evaluation**
  - Sample N instance from given set (with repetitions)
  - Same instances (and seeds) for evaluating all configurations
  - Essentially treats the problem as blackbox optimization

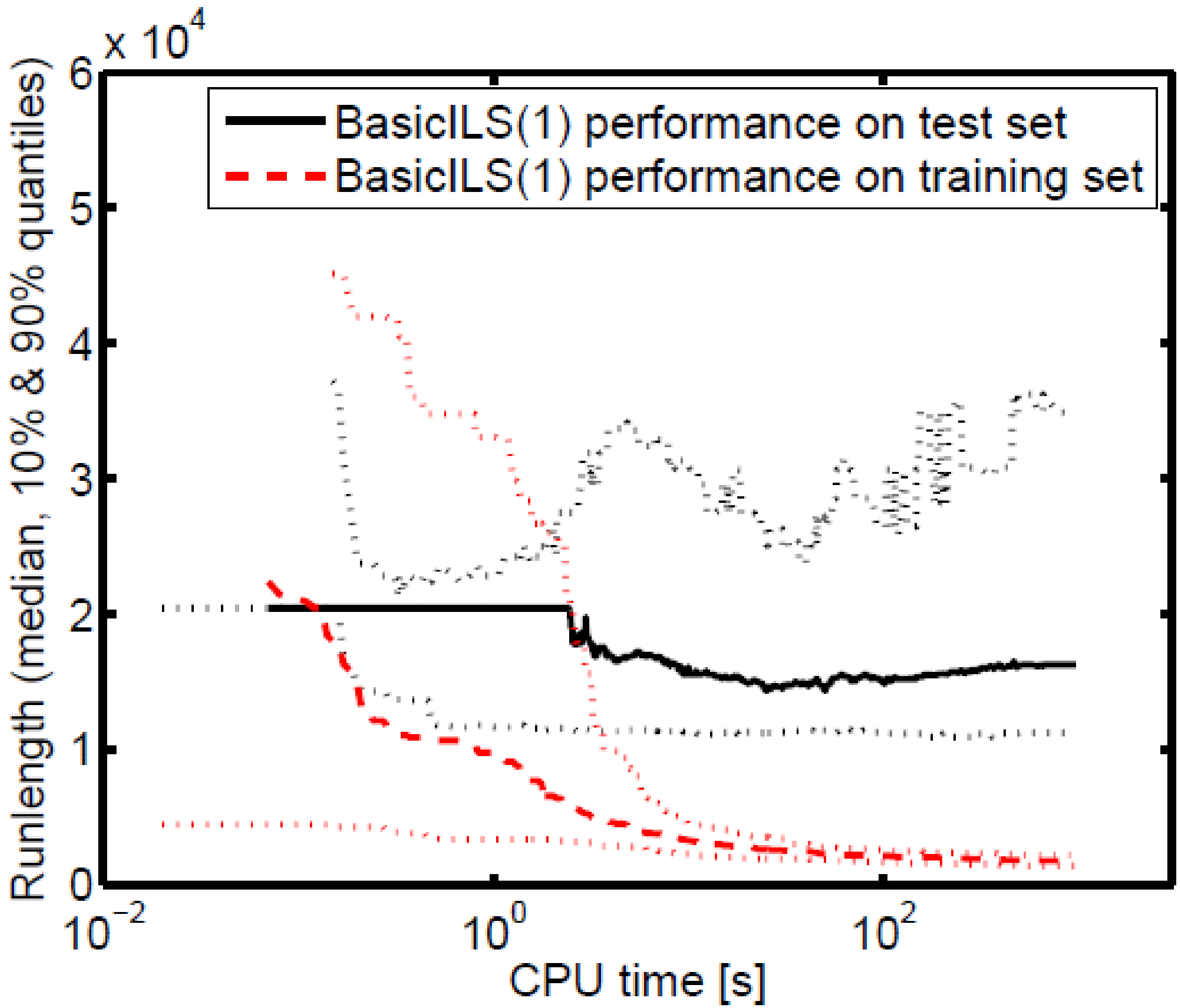
- **How to choose N?**
  - Too high: evaluating a configuration is expensive
    - $\rightarrow$ Optimization process is slow
  - Too low: noisy approximations of true cost
    - $\rightarrow$ Poor generalization to test instances / seeds

Generalization to Test set, Large N (N=100)



SAPS on a single QWH instance
(same instance for training & test; only difference: seeds)

Generalization to Test Set, Small N (N=1)



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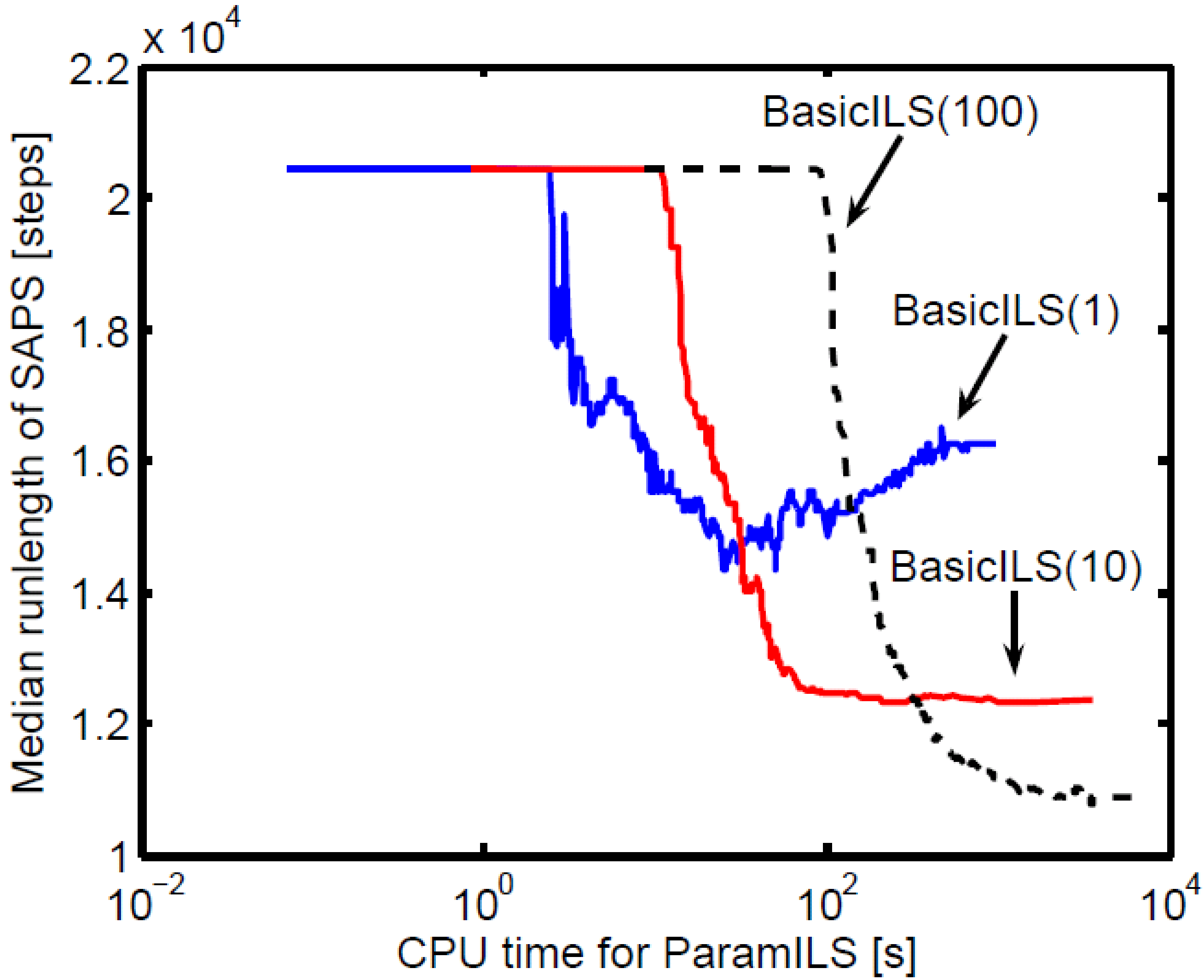
BasicILS: Speed/Generalization Tradeoff



Test performance of SAPS on a single QWH instance

The FocusedILS Algorithm

Aggressive racing: more runs for good configurations

– Start with $N(\theta) = 0$ for all configurations

– Increment $N(\theta)$ whenever the search visits θ

– "Bonus" runs for configurations that win many comparisons

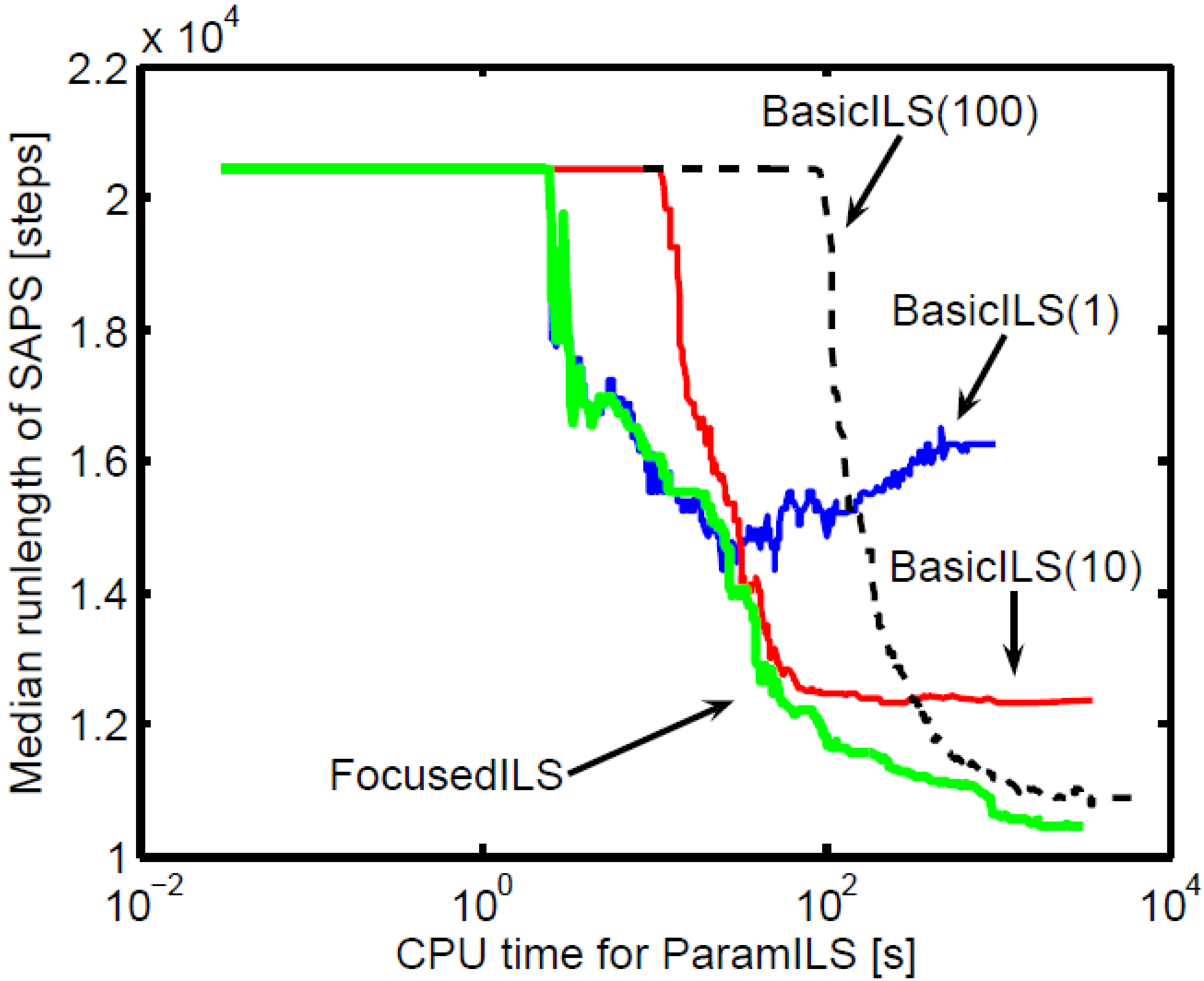
Theorem

As the number of FocusedILS iterations $\to \infty$,
it converges to the true optimal conguration

– Key ideas in proof:

1. The underlying ILS eventually reaches any configuration
2. For $N(\theta) \to \infty$, the error in cost approximations vanishes

FocusedILS: Speed/Generalization Tradeoff



Test performance of SAPS on a single QWH instance

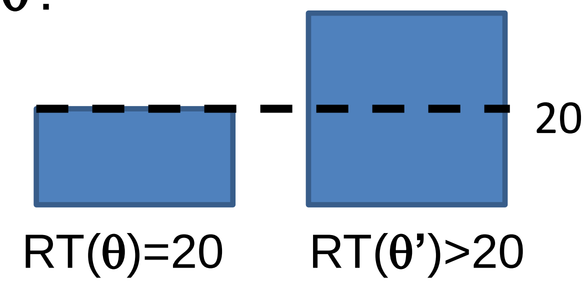
Speeding up ParamILS

[Hutter , Hoos, Leyton-Brown, and Stützle, JAIR 2009]

Standard adaptive capping

– Is θ' better than θ?

- Example:



- Can terminate evaluation of θ' once guaranteed to be worse than θ

Theorem

Early termination of poor configurations does not change ParamILS's trajectory

– Often yields substantial speedups
– Especially when best configuration is much faster than worst

Gender-based Genetic Algorithm (GGA)

[Ansotegui, Sellmann & Tierney, CP 2009]

- Genetic algorithm
  - **Genome = parameter configuration**
  - Combine genomes of 2 parents to form an offspring

- **Two genders in the population**
  - Selection pressure only on one gender
  - Preserves diversity of the population

Gender-based Genetic Algorithm (GGA)

[Ansotegui, Sellmann & Tierney, CP 2009]

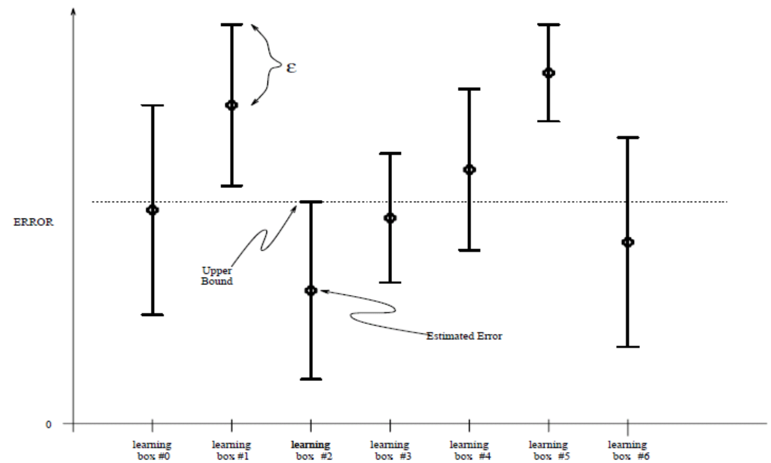
- Use N instances to evaluate configurations
  - Increase N in each generation
  - **Linear increase from N_{start} to N_{end}**
    - User specifies #generations ahead of time

- **Can exploit parallel resources**
  - Evaluate population members in parallel
  - Adaptive capping: can stop when the first k succeed

F-Race and Iterated F-Race

[Birattari et al, GECCO 2002 and book chapter 2010]

- **F-Race**
  - Standard racing framework
  - F-test to establish that some configuration is dominated
  - Followed by pairwise t tests if F-test succeeds



- **Iterated F-Race**
  - Maintain a probability distribution over which configurations are good
  - Sample k configurations from that distribution & race them
  - Update distributions with the results of the race

F-Race and Iterated F-Race

[Birattari et al, GECCO 2002 and book chapter 2010]

- **Can use parallel resources**
  - Simply do the k runs of each iteration in parallel
  - But does not support adaptive capping

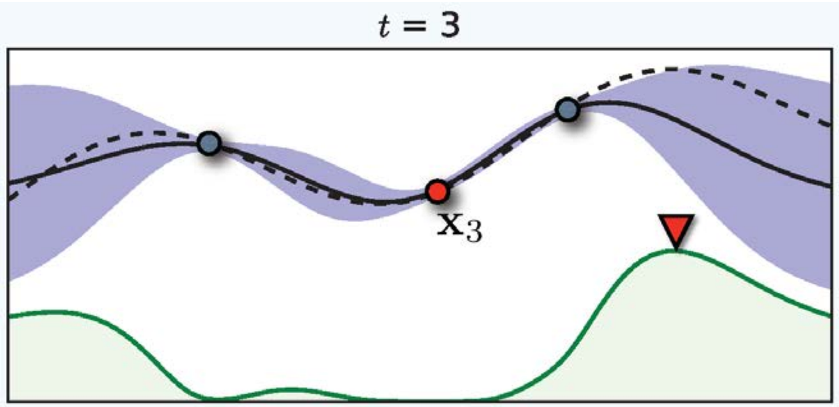
- Expected performance
  - Strong when the key challenge are reliable comparisons between configurations
  - Less good when the search component is the challenge

Model-Based Algorithm Configuration

[Hutter, Hoos & Leyton-Brown, LION 2011]

SMAC: Sequential Model-Based Algorithm Configuration

– Sequential Model-Based Optimization
& aggressive racing



repeat

- construct a model to predict performance
- use that model to select promising configurations
- compare each selected configuration against the best known

until time budget exhausted

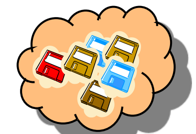
SMAC: Aggressive Racing

- Similar racing component as FocusedILS
  - more runs for good configurations
  - Increase #runs for incumbent over time
- **Theorem** for discrete configuration spaces:

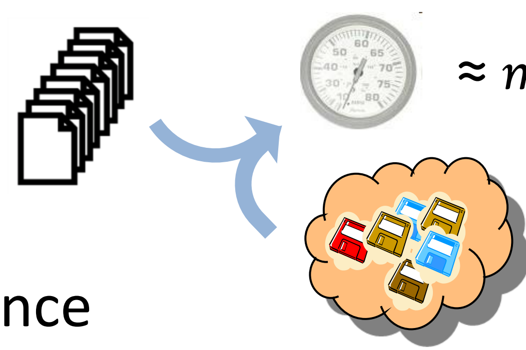
  As SMAC's overall time budget $\rightarrow \infty$,
  it converges to the optimal configuration

Powering SMAC: Empirical Performance Models

Given:

- Configuration space $\boldsymbol{\Theta} = \Theta_1 \times \cdots \times \Theta_n$ 
- For each problem instance i: $\mathbf{x}_i$, a vector of feature values 
- Observed algorithm runtime data: $(\theta_1, \mathbf{x}_1, y_1), \ldots, (\theta_n, \mathbf{x}_n, y_n)$ 

Find: a **mapping** m: $[\theta, \boldsymbol{x}] \mapsto y$ predicting A’s performance



$\approx m\,(\boldsymbol{\theta}, x)$

- Rich literature on such performance prediction problems
  [see, e.g, Hutter, Xu, Hoos, Leyton-Brown, AIJ 2014, for an overview]
- Here: use a model m based on **random forests**

Regression Trees: Fitting to Data

– In each internal criterion used

– In each leaf: sto

param 1	feature 2	param 3	runtime
false	2	red	3.7
false	2.5	blue	20
true	5.5	red	2.1
false	5.5	blue	25
false	5	red	1.2
true	4.5	green	19
true	4	blue	12
true	3.5	green	17

$\text{param}_3 \in \{\text{red}\}$

param 1	feature 2	param 3	runtime
false	2	red	3.7
true	5.5	red	2.1
false	5	red	1.2

$\text{param}_3 \in \{\text{blue, green}\}$

param 1	feature 2	param 3	runtime
false	2.5	blue	20
false	5.5	blue	25
true	4.5	green	19
true	4	blue	12
true	3.5	green	17

$\text{feature}_2 \leq 3.5$

param 1	feature 2	param 3	runtime
false	2	red	3.7

$\text{feature}_2 > 3.5$

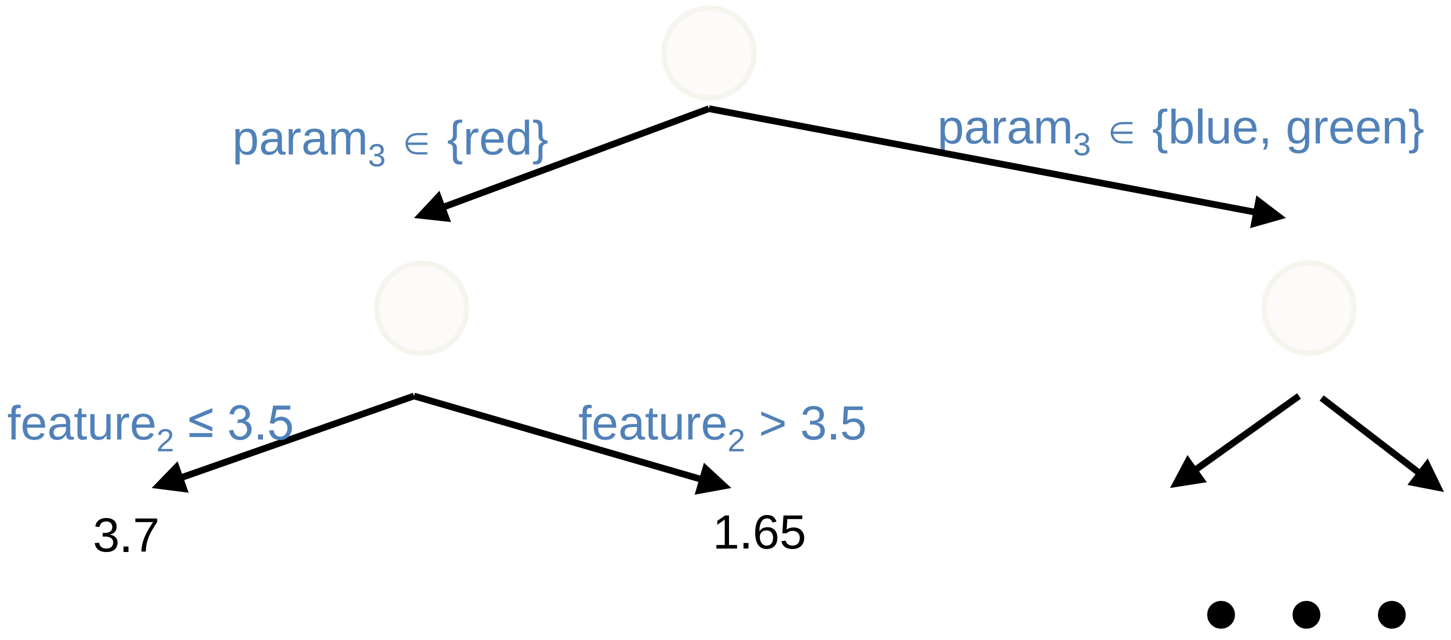
param 1	feature 2	param 3	runtime
true	5.5	red	2.1
false	5	red	1.2

• • •

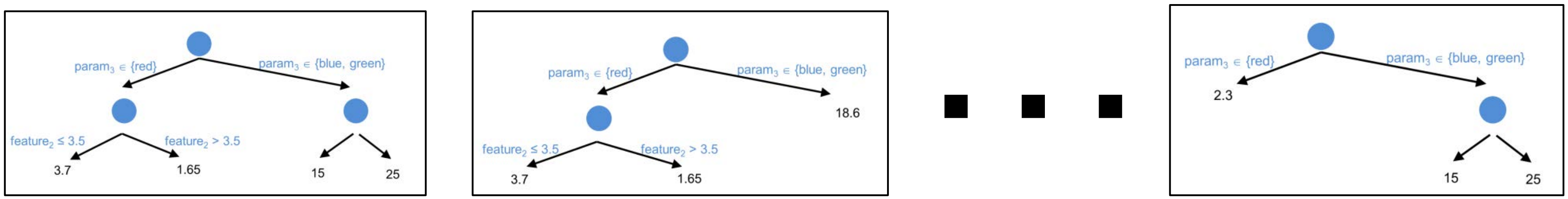
Regression Trees: Predictions for New Inputs

E.g. $x_{\mathbf{n+1}}$ = (true, 4.7, red)

– Walk down tree, return mean runtime stored in leaf $\Rightarrow$ 1.65



Random Forests: Sets of Regression Trees



Training

- Draw T **bootstrap samples** of the data
- For each bootstrap sample, fit a **randomized** regression tree

Prediction

- Predict with each of the T trees
- Return empirical **mean and variance** across these T predictions

Complexity for N data points

- Training: $O(TN \log^2 N)$
- Prediction: $O(T\log N)$

Advantages of Random Forests

Automated selection of important input dimensions

– Continuous, integer, and categorical inputs
– Up to 138 features, 76 parameters
– Can identify important feature and parameter subsets
  • Sometimes 1 feature and 2 parameters are enough

[Hutter, Hoos, Leyton-Brown, LION 2013]

Robustness

– No need to optimize hyperparameters
– Already good predictions with few training data points

SMAC: Averaging Across Multiple Instances

- Fit a random forest model $m : \mathbf{\Theta} \times \Pi \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$

- Aggregate over instances by marginalization

$$f(\boldsymbol{\theta}) := \mathbb{E}_{\pi \sim D}[m(\boldsymbol{\theta}, \pi)]$$

  – **Intuition: predict for each instance and then average**
  – More efficient implementation in random forests

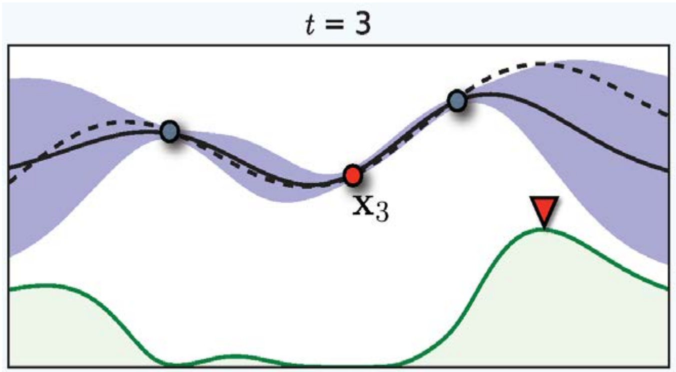
SMAC: Putting it all Together

Initialize with a single run for the default

repeat

- learn a RF model from data so far: $m : \boldsymbol{\Theta} \times \Pi \to \mathbb{R}$
- Aggregate over instances: $f(\boldsymbol{\theta}) := \mathbb{E}_{\pi \sim D}[m(\boldsymbol{\theta}, \pi)]$
- use model *f* to select promising configurations
- race each selected configuration against the best known

until time budget exhausted



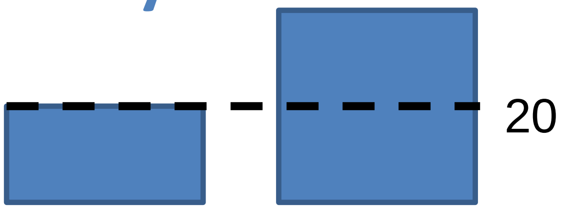
- **Distributed SMAC** [Hutter, Hoos & Leyton-Brown, 2012]
  - Maintain queue of promising configurations
  - Race these against best known on distributed worker cores

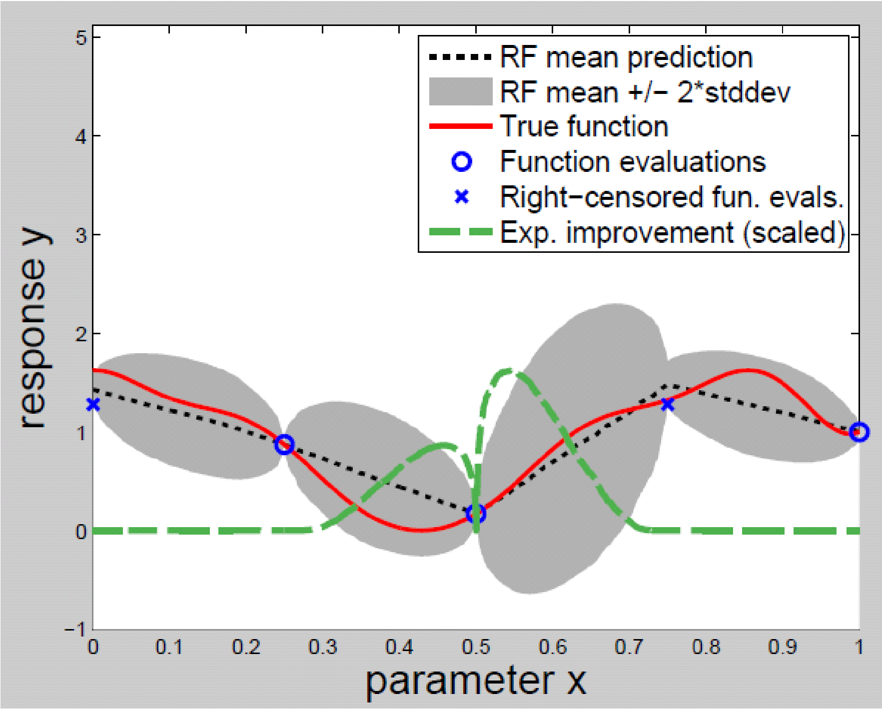
SMAC: Adaptive Capping

[Hutter, Hoos & Leyton-Brown, BayesOpt 2011]

Terminate runs for poor configurations θ early:

– Lower bound on runtime
  → right-censored data point





Experimental Evaluation

[Hutter, Hoos & Leyton-Brown, LION 2011]

Compared SMAC vs. ParamILS and GGA

– On 17 SAT and MIP configuration scenarios, same time budget




SMAC performed best

– Improvements in test performance of configurations returned
  - vs ParamILS: 0.93× – 2.25× (11/17 cases significantly better)
  - vs. GGA: 1.01× – 2.76× (13/17 cases significantly better)

Wall-clock speedups in distributed SMAC

– Almost perfect with up to 16 parallel workers

– Up to 50-fold with 64 workers
  - Reductions in wall clock time: 5h → 6 min -15 min
    2 days → 40min - 2h

Overview

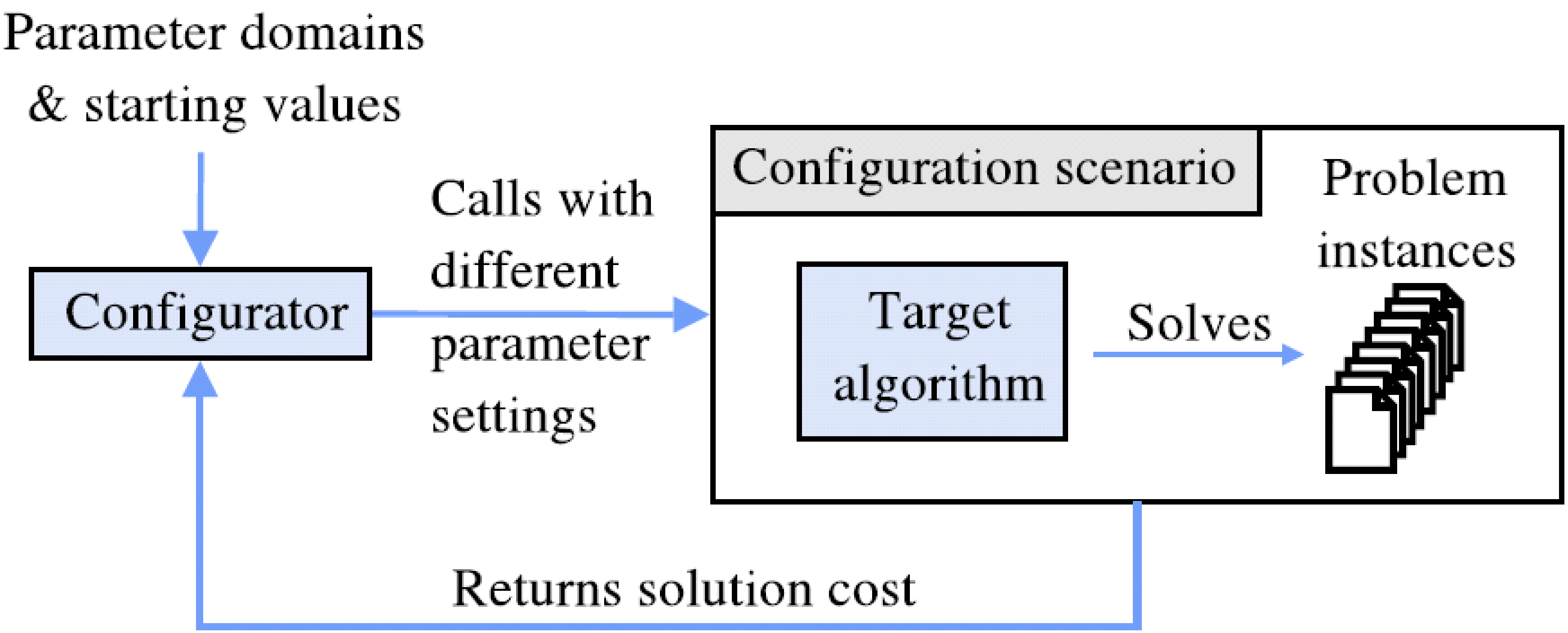
- Programming by Optimization (PbO):
  Motivation and Introduction

- Algorithm Configuration
  - Methods (components of algorithm configuration)
  - Systems (that instantiate these components)
  - Demo & Practical Issues
  - Case Studies

- Portfolio-Based Algorithm Selection

- Software Development Support & Further Directions

The Algorithm Configuration Process



What the user has to provide

Parameter space declaration file

preproc {none, simple, expensive} [simple]
alpha [1,5] [2]
beta [0.1,1] [0.5]

Wrapper for command line call

./wrapper –inst X –timeout 30
-preproc none -alpha 3 -beta 0.7
→ e.g. "successful after 3.4 seconds"

Example: Running SMAC

```
wget http://www.cs.ubc.ca/labs/beta/Projects/SMAC/smac-v2.06.00-master-615.tar.gz

tar xzvf smac-v2.06.00-master-615.tar.gz

cd smac-v2.06.00-master-615

./smac

./smac --seed 0 --scenarioFile example_scenarios/spear/spear-scenario.txt
```

For a usage screen

Scenario file holds:
- Location of parameter file, wrapper & instances
- Objective function (here: minimize avg. runtime)
- Configuration budget (here: 30s)
- Maximal captime per target run (here: 5s)

Output of a SMAC run

```
[…]

[INFO ] *****Runtime Statistics*****
 Incumbent ID: 12 (0x22BB8)
 Number of Runs for Incumbent: 43
 Number of Instances for Incumbent: 5
 Number of Configurations Run: 42
 Performance of the Incumbent: 0.01255555555555556
 Configuration Time Budget used: 30.589647351000067 s (101%)
 Sum of Target Algorithm Execution Times (treating minimum value as 0.1): 24.70000s
 CPU time of Configurator: 5.889042742 s
[INFO ] **********************************************

[INFO ] Total Objective of Final Incumbent 12 (0x22BB8) on training set:
0.01255555555555556; on test set: 0.014499999999999999

[INFO ] Sample Call for Final Incumbent 12 (0x22BB8)
cd /ubc/cs/home/h/hutter/tmp/smac-v2.06.00-master-615/example_scenarios/spear; ruby spear_wrapper.rb
instances/qcplin2006.10408.cnf 0 5.0 2147483647 3282095 -sp-update-dec-queue '0' -sp-rand-var-dec-scaling
'0.3528466348383826' -sp-clause-decay '1.713857938112484' -sp-variable-decay '1.461422623379798' -sp-orig-
clause-sort-heur '7' -sp-rand-phase-dec-freq '0.05' -sp-clause-del-heur '0' -sp-learned-clauses-inc
'1.452683835620401' -sp-restart-inc '1.6481745669620091' -sp-resolution '0' -sp-clause-activity-inc
'0.7121640599232154' -sp-learned-clause-sort-heur '12' -sp-var-activity-inc '0.9358501810374242' -sp-rand-var-dec-
freq '0.0001' -sp-use-pure-literal-rule '1' -sp-learned-size-factor '0.27995062371127827' -sp-var-dec-heur '16' -sp-
phase-dec-heur '6' -sp-rand-phase-scaling '1.0424648235977578' -sp-first-restart '31'
```

Decision #1: Configuration Budget & Captime

- **Configuration budget**
  - Dictated by your resources & needs
    - E.g., start configuration before leaving work on Friday
  - The longer the better (but diminishing returns)
    - Rough rule of thumb: typically at least enough time for 1000 target runs
    - But have also achieved good results with 50 target runs in some cases

- **Maximal captime per target run**
  - Dictated by your needs (typical instance hardness, etc)
  - Too high: slow progress
  - Too low: possible overtuning to easy instances
  - For SAT etc, often use 300 CPU seconds

Decision #2: Choosing the Training Instances

- **Representative instances, moderately hard**
  - Too hard: won't solve many instances, no traction
  - Too easy: will results generalize to harder instances?
  - Rule of thumb: mix of hardness ranges
    - Roughly 75% instances solvable by default in maximal captime
- **Enough instances**
  - The more training instances the better
  - Very homogeneous instance sets: 50 instances might suffice
  - Preferably $\geq$ 300 instances, better even $\geq$ 1000 instances

Decision #2: Choosing the Training Instances

- **Split instance set into training and test sets**
  - Configure on the training instances $\rightarrow$ configuration θ^*
  - Run (only) θ^* on the test instances
    - Unbiased estimate of performance

Pitfall: configuring on your test instances

That's from the dark ages

Fine practice: do multiple configuration runs and pick the θ^* with best training performance

Not (!!) the best on the test set

Decision #2: Choosing the Training Instances

- **Works much better on homogeneous benchmarks**
  - Instances that have something in common
    - E.g., come from the same problem domain
    - E.g., use the same encoding
  - One configuration likely to perform well on all instances

Pitfall: configuration on too heterogeneous sets

There often is no single great overall configuration
(but see algorithm selection etc, second half of the tutorial)

Decision #3: How Many Parameters to Expose?

- Suggestion: all parameters you don't know to be useless
  - More parameters $\rightarrow$ larger gains possible
  - More parameters $\rightarrow$ harder problem
  - Max. #parameters tackled so far: 768
    [Thornton, Hutter, Hoos & Leyton-Brown, KDD'13]
    - With more time you can search a larger space

Pitfall: including parameters that change the problem

E.g., optimality threshold in MIP solving
E.g., how much memory to allow the target algorithm

Decision #4: How to Wrap the Target Algorithm

- Do not trust any target algorithm
  - Will it terminate in the time you specify?
  - Will it correctly report its time?
  - Will it never use more memory than specified?
  - Will it be correct with all parameter settings?

Good practice: wrap target runs with tool controlling time and memory (e.g., runsolver [Roussel et al, '11]**)**

Good practice: verify correctness of target runs

Detect crashes & penalize them

Pitfall: blindly minimizing target algorithm runtime

Typically, you will minimize the time to crash

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Applications of Algorithm Configuration

Mixed integer programming

Scheduling and Resource Allocation

Exam Timetabling since 2010

Spam filters

Helped win Competitions

SAT: since 2009

ASP: since 2009

IPC: since 2011

Time-tabling: 2007

SMT: 2007

Other Academic Applications

Protein Folding, Computer GO

TSP & Quadratic Assignment Problem

Game Theory: Kidney Exchange

Linear algebra subroutines

Improving Java Garbage Collection

Evolutionary Algorithms

Machine Learning: Classification …

Back to the Spear Example

[Hutter, Babic, Hu & Hoos, FMCAD 2007]

Spear [Babic, 2007]

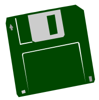
- 26 parameters
- 8.34×10^{17} configurations

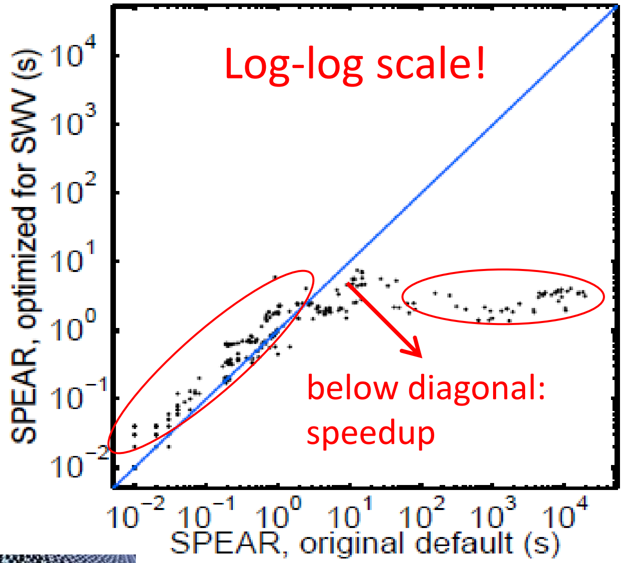
Ran ParamILS, 2 to 3 days × 10 machines

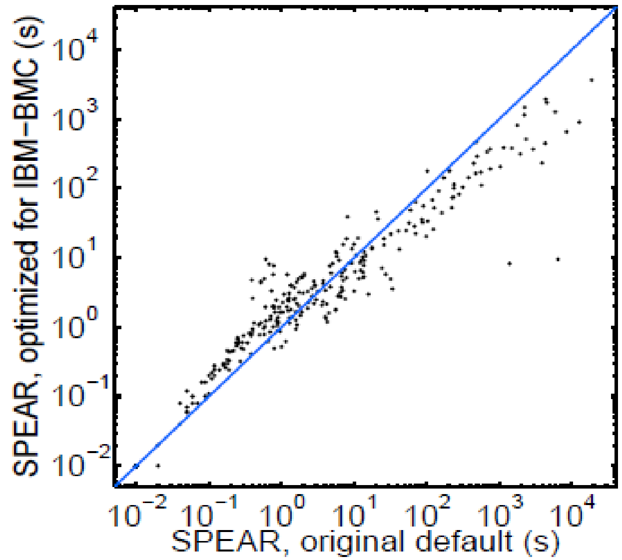
- On a training set from each of 2 distributions

Compared to default (1 week of manual tuning)

- On a disjoint test set from each distribution







500-fold speedup ⇒ won QF_BV category in 2007 SMT competition

4.5-fold speedup

Other Examples of PbO for SAT

- SATenstein [KhudaBukhsh, Xu, Hoos & Leyton-Brown, IJCAI 2009]
  - Combined ingredients from existing solvers
  - 54 parameters, over 10^{12} configurations
  - Speedup factors: 1.6x to 218x

- Captain Jack [Tompkins & Hoos, SAT 2011]
  - Explored a completely new design space
  - 58 parameters, over 10^{50} configurations
  - After configuration: best known solver for 3sat10k and IL50k

Configurable SAT Solver Competition (CSSC)

[Hutter, Balint, Bayless, Hoos & Leyton-Brown 2013]

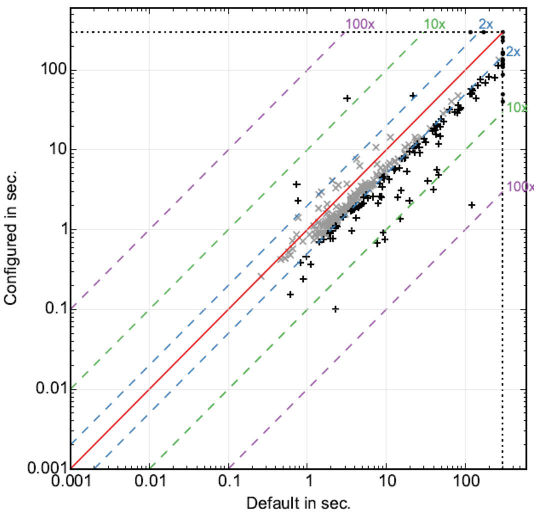
- Annual SAT competition
  - Scores SAT solvers by their performance across instances
  - Medals for best average performance with solver defaults
    - Misleading results: implicitly highlights solvers with good defaults

- CSSC 2013 & 2014
  - Better reflects an application setting: homogeneous instances
    $\rightarrow$ can automatically optimize parameters
  - Medals for best performance after configuration

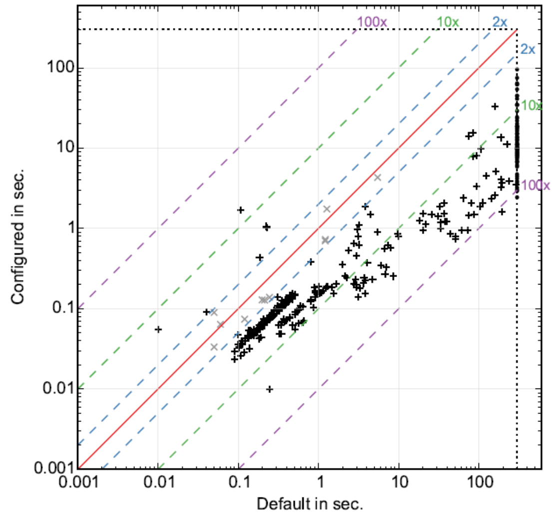
CSSC Result #1

[Hutter, Lindauer, Balint, Bayless, Hoos & Leyton-Brown 2014]

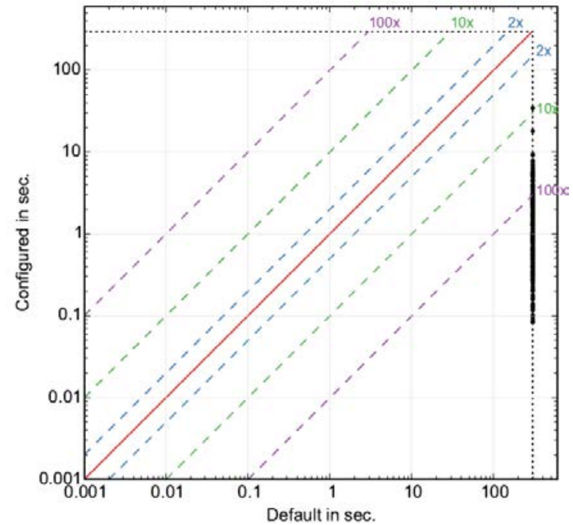
- Solver performance often improved a lot:



Lingeling on CircuitFuzz:
Timeouts: 119 → 107



Clasp on n-queens:
Timeouts: 211 → 102



probSAT on unif rnd 5-SAT:
Timeouts: 250 → 0

CSSC Result #2

[Hutter, Lindauer, Balint, Bayless, Hoos & Leyton-Brown 2014]

- Automated configuration changed algorithm rankings
  - Example: random SAT+UNSAT category in 2013

Solver	CSSC ranking	Default ranking
Clasp	1	6
Lingeling	2	4
Riss3g	3	5
Solver43	4	2
Simpsat	5	1
Sat4j	6	3
For1-nodrup	7	7
gNovelty+GCwa	8	8
gNovelty+Gca	9	9
gNovelty+PCL	10	10

Configuration of a Commercial MIP solver

[Hutter, Hoos & Leyton-Brown, CPAIOR 2010]

Mixed Integer Programming (MIP)

$$\begin{aligned} \min \quad & c^{\mathsf{T}} x \\ \text{s. t.} \quad & Ax \leq b \\ & x_i \in \mathbb{Z} \text{ for i} \in \text{I} \end{aligned}$$

Commercial MIP solver: IBM ILOG CPLEX

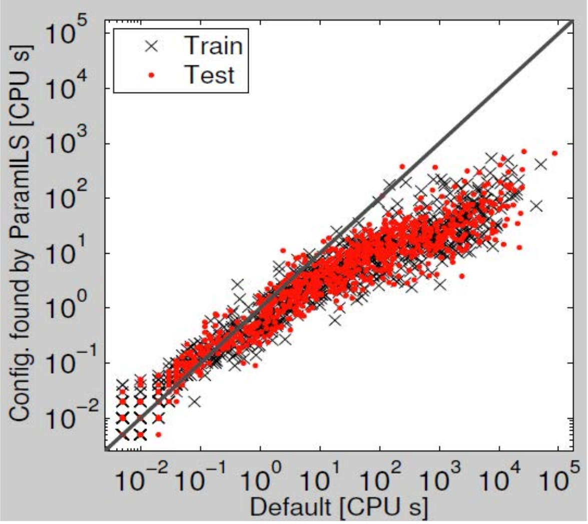
- Leading solver for 15 years
- Licensed by over 1 000 universities and 1 300 corporations
- 76 parameters, 10^{47} configurations

Minimizing runtime to optimal solution

- Speedup factor: 2× to 50×
- Later work: speedups up to 10,000×

Minimizing optimality gap reached

- Gap reduction factor: 1.3× to 8.6×



Comparison to CPLEX Tuning Tool

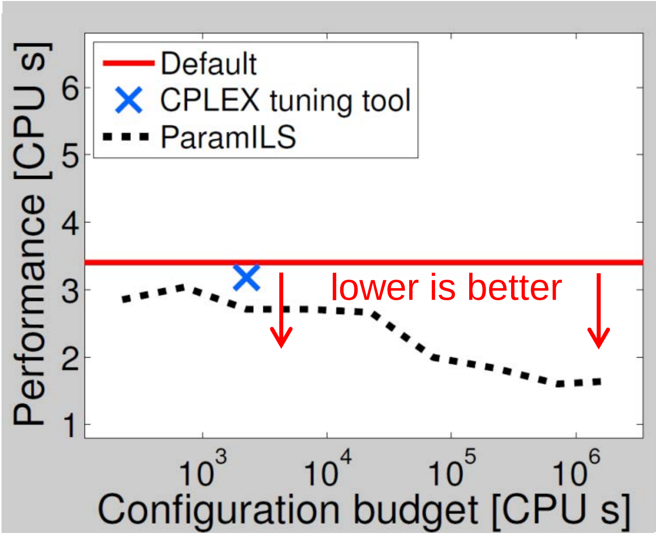
[Hutter, Hoos & Leyton-Brown, CPAIOR 2010]

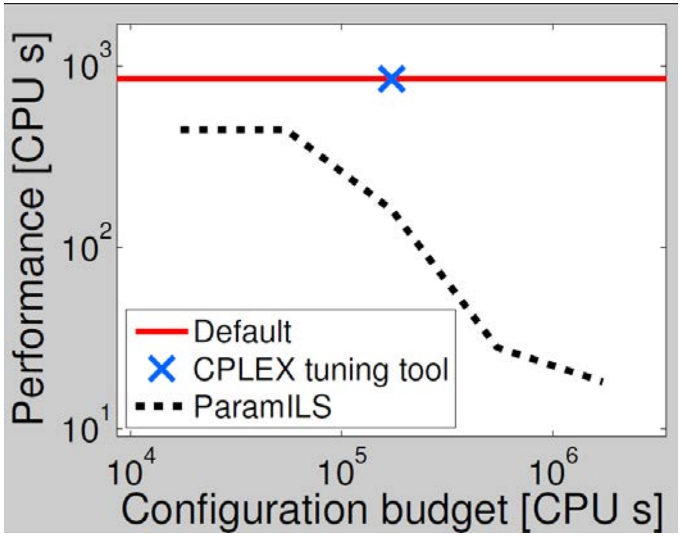
CPLEX tuning tool

– Introduced in version 11 (late 2007, after ParamILS)
– Evaluates predefined good configurations, returns best one
– Required runtime varies (from < 1h to weeks)

ParamILS: anytime algorithm

– At each time step, keeps track of its incumbent





2-fold speedup
(our worst result)

50-fold speedup
(our best result)

Configuration of Machine Learning Algorithms

- Machine Learning has celebrated **substantial successes**
- But it requires **human machine learning experts** to
  - Preprocess the data
  - Perform feature selection
  - Select a model family
  - Optimize hyperparameters
  - …
- **AutoML**: taking the human expert out of the loop
  - AutoML Workshops at ICML & NIPS this year
  - Very related to PbO

Cross-validation for hyperparameter opt.

- To gain confidence in a parameter configuration:
  - Evaluate performance as **average performance across k cross-validation folds** (here: k=3)

$$\boldsymbol{\lambda}^* \in \operatorname*{argmin}_{\boldsymbol{\lambda} \in \boldsymbol{\Lambda}} \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^{k} \mathcal{L}(A_{\boldsymbol{\lambda}}, \mathcal{D}_{\text{train}}^{(i)}, \mathcal{D}_{\text{valid}}^{(i)})$$

Hyperparameter Optimization as AC

- Performance metric: **cross-validation accuracy**
- Each cross-validation fold corresponds to an instance:

$$\boxed{\boldsymbol{\theta}^* \in \arg\min_{\boldsymbol{\theta} \in \boldsymbol{\Theta}} \mathbb{E}_{\pi \sim D}[m(\boldsymbol{\theta}, \pi)]}$$

$$\boxed{\boldsymbol{\lambda}^* \in \operatorname*{argmin}_{\boldsymbol{\lambda} \in \boldsymbol{\Lambda}} \frac{1}{k} \sum_{i=1}^{k} \mathcal{L}(A_{\boldsymbol{\lambda}}, \mathcal{D}^{(i)}_{\text{train}}, \mathcal{D}^{(i)}_{\text{valid}})}$$

  – We do not need to evaluate all folds for every configuration!
  – In practice, almost k-fold speedup for k-fold CV

Case Study: Auto-WEKA

[Thornton, Hutter, Hoos & Leyton-Brown, KDD'13]

WEKA [Witten et al, 1999-current]

- most widely used off-the-shelf machine learning package
- over 20,000 citations on Google scholar

Java implementation of a **broad range of methods**

- 27 base classifiers (with up to 10 parameters each)
- 10 meta-methods
- 2 ensemble methods
- 3 feature search methods & 8 feature evaluators

Different methods work best on different data sets

- Want a **true off-the-shelf solution**: Learn

WEKA's configuration space

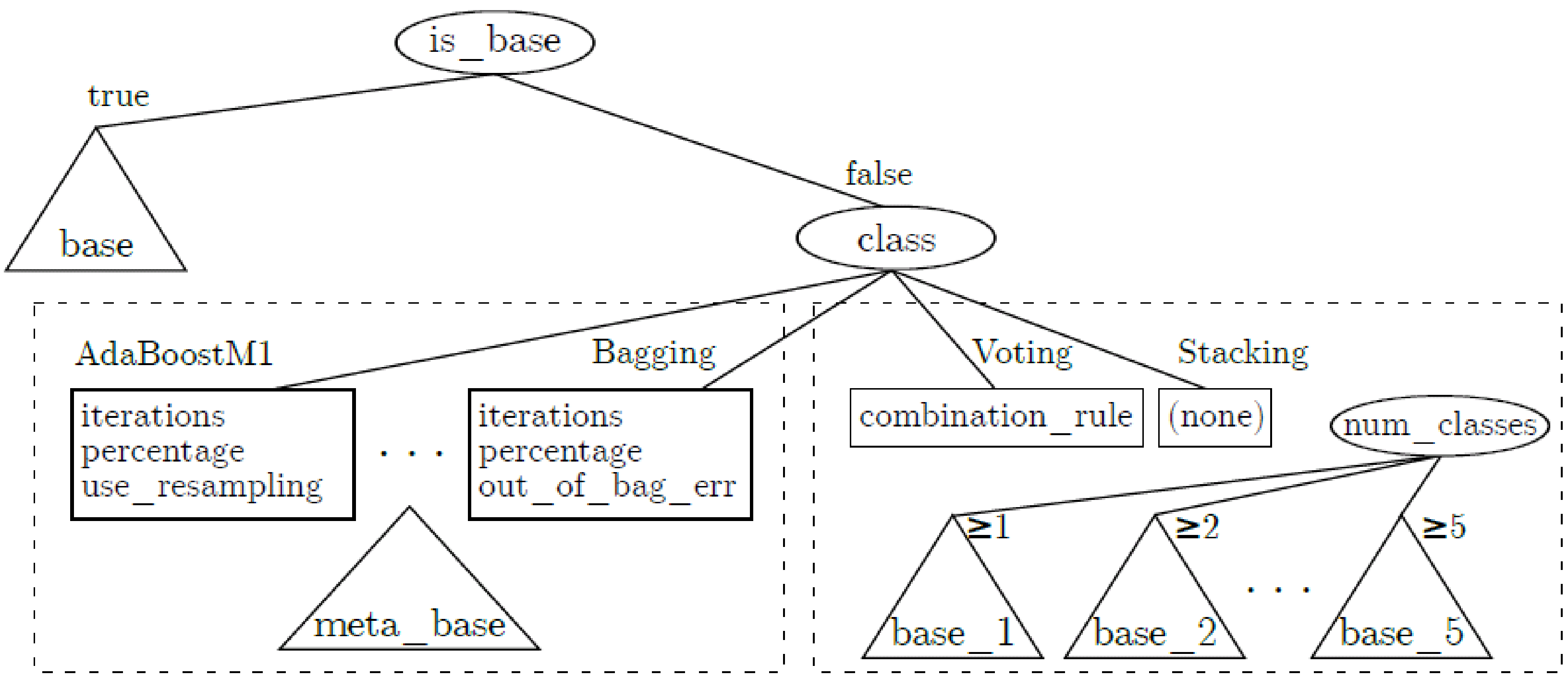
[Thornton, Hutter, Hoos & Leyton-Brown, KDD'13]

Base classifiers

- 27 choices, each with subparameters

Hierarchical structure on top of base classifiers

- In total: **768 parameters, 10^{47} configurations**
- Optimize cross-validation performance over this space using SMAC



Auto-WEKA: Results

[Thornton, Hutter, Hoos & Leyton-Brown, KDD'13]

Auto-WEKA performs better than best base classifier

- Even when "best classifier" uses an oracle
- Especially on the 8 largest datasets
- In 6/21 datasets more than 10% reductions in relative error
- Time requirements: 30h on 4 cores

Comparison to full grid search

- Union of grids over parameters of all 27 base classifiers
- **Auto-WEKA is 100 times faster**
- **Auto-WEKA has better generalization performance in 15/21 cases**

Auto-WEKA based on SMAC vs. TPE [Bergstra et al, NIPS'11]

- SMAC yielded **better CV performance in 19/21 cases**
- SMAC yielded **better generalization performance in 14/21 cases**
- Differences usually small, in 3 cases substantial (SMAC better)

Auto-WEKA Discussion

- PbO enables effective off-the-shelf machine learning
  - Expert understanding of ML techniques not required to use them
  - Users still need to provide **good features**

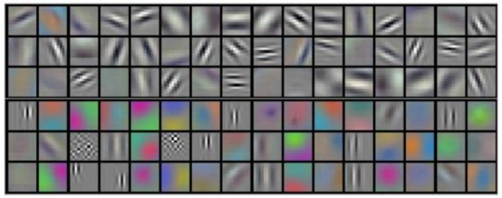
Learn

- Auto-WEKA is available online: automl.org/autoweka

- Ongoing:
  - **Wrappers** from several programming languages
  - Auto-sklearn (python)

ML Case Study 2: Deep Learning

- What is deep learning?
  - Neural networks with many layers
- Why is there so much excitement about it?
  - Dramatically improved the state-of-the-art in many areas, e.g.,
    - Speech recognition
    - Image recognition
  - Automatic learning of representations
    → no more manual feature engineering



Source: Krizhevsky et al, 2012

Source: Le et al, 2012

- What changed?
  - Larger datasets
  - Better regularization methods, e.g., dropout [Hinton et al, 2012]
  - Fast GPU implementations [Krizhevsky et al, 2012]

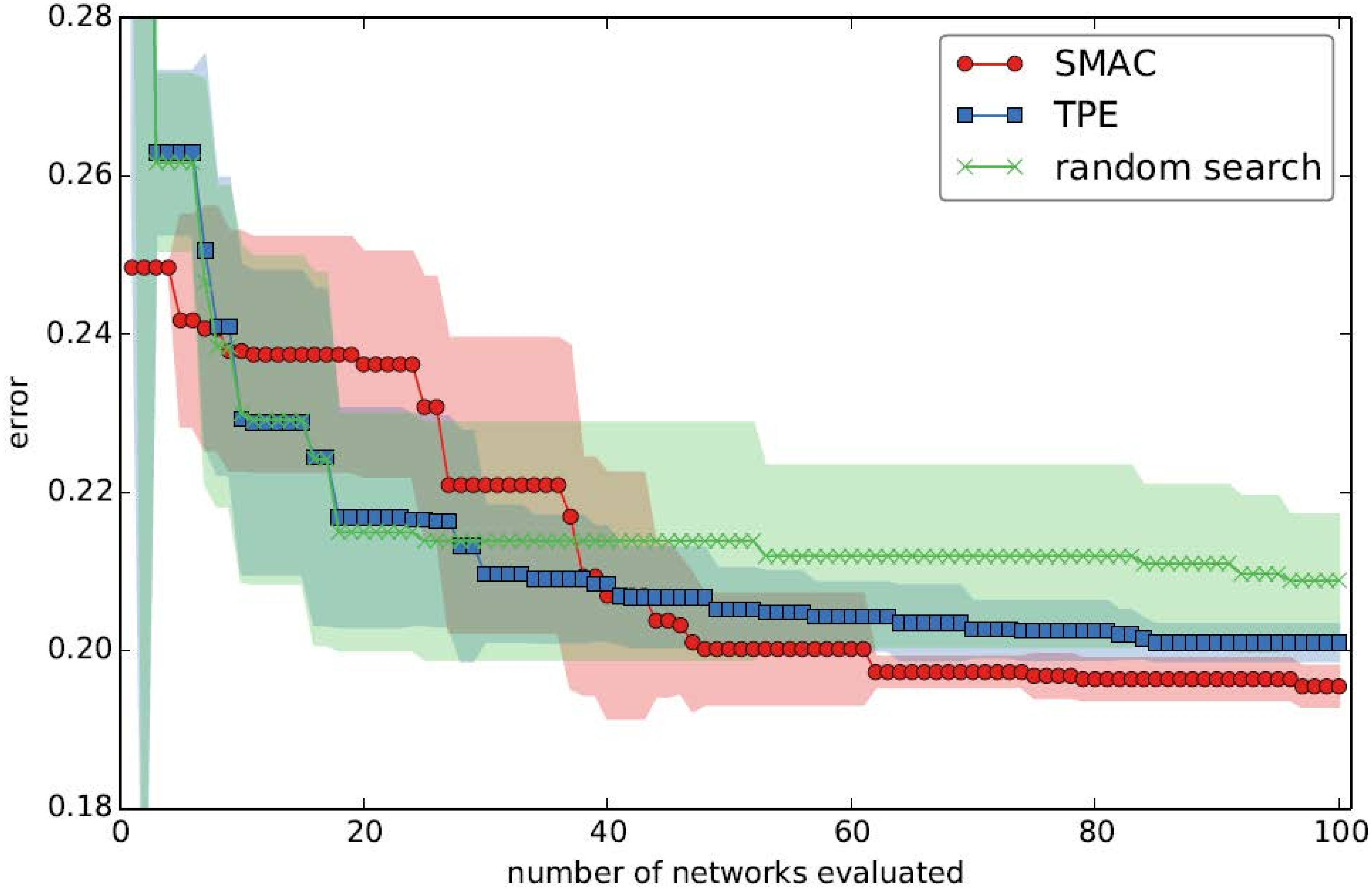
ML Case Study 2: Deep Learning

- Deep neural networks have **many hyperparameters**
  - Continuous : learning rate, momentum, regularization, …
  - Integer: #layers, #units per layer, batch size in SGD, …
  - Categorical: preprocessing, activation function
  - Conditional : all hyperparameters in layer K are only active if the network has at least K layers
- We parameterized the Caffe framework [Jia, 2013]
  - 9 network hyperparameters
  - 12 hyperparameters per layer, up to 6 layers
  - In total 81 hyperparameters

Automatic Structure & Hyperparameter Search

[Domhan, Springenberg & Hutter, AutoML'14]

- Optimized Caffe for CIFAR-10 image classification task: deep neural network on k-means features [Coates & Ng, 2011]



Yielded best results for this architecture

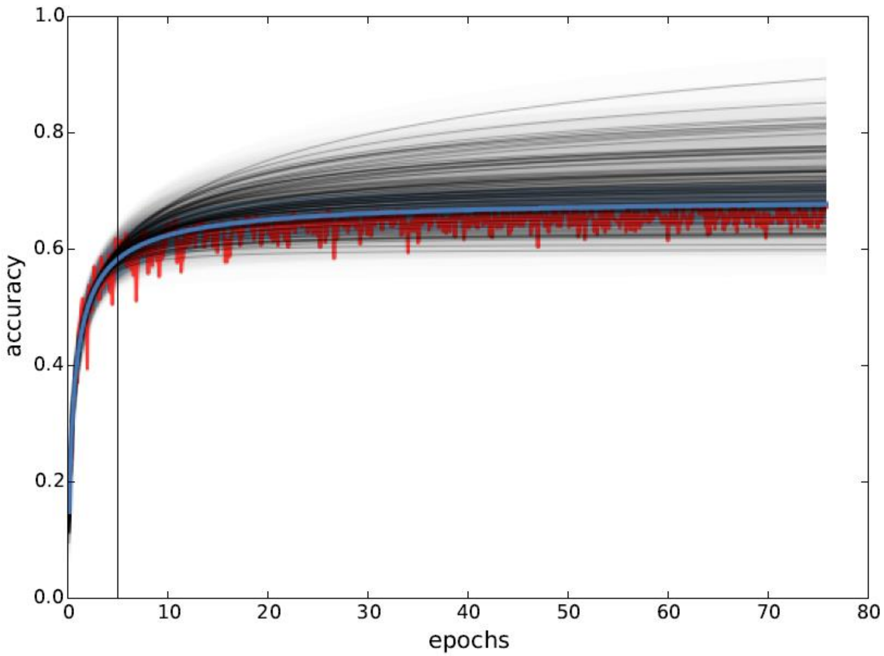
[Domhan, Springenberg & Hutter, AutoML'14]

Method	Number of centroids	Test set accuracy
SVM [Coates & Ng, 2011]	4000	79.6%
SVM [Coates & Ng, 2011]	1600	77.9%
Deep neural network [Sversky et al, 2011]	400	78.9%
Deep neural network (SMAC)	400	**80.9**%
Deep neural network (TPE)	400	80.2%
Deep neural network (random search)	400	80.1%

Speedups by Prediction of Learning Curves

[Domhan, Springenberg & Hutter, AutoML'14]

- Humans can look inside the blackbox
  - They **can predict the final performance of a target algorithm run early**
  - After a few epochs of stochastic gradient descent
  - **Stop if not promising**



- We automated that heuristic
  - Fitted linear combination of 22 parametric models
  - MCMC to preserve uncertainty over model parameters
  - Stopped poor runs early: overall 2.2-fold speedup

Summary of Algorithm Configuration

- Algorithm Configuration
  - Methods (components of algorithm configuration)
  - Systems (that instantiate these components)
  - Demo & Practical Issues
  - Case Studies
- Useful abstraction with many (!) applications
- Often better performance than human domain experts
  - At the push of a button

"Civilization advances by extending the number of important operations which we can perform without thinking of them"
(Alfred North Whitehead)

- Coming up: AAAI-15 Workshop on Algorithm Configuration

Overview

- Programming by Optimization (PbO): Motivation and Introduction

- Algorithm Configuration

- **Portfolio-Based Algorithm Selection**
  - **SATzilla: a framework for algorithm selection**
  - **Hydra: automatic portfolio construction**

- Software Development Tools and Further Directions

Motivation: no single great configuration exists

- Heterogeneous instance distributions
  - Even the best overall configuration is not great. E.g.:

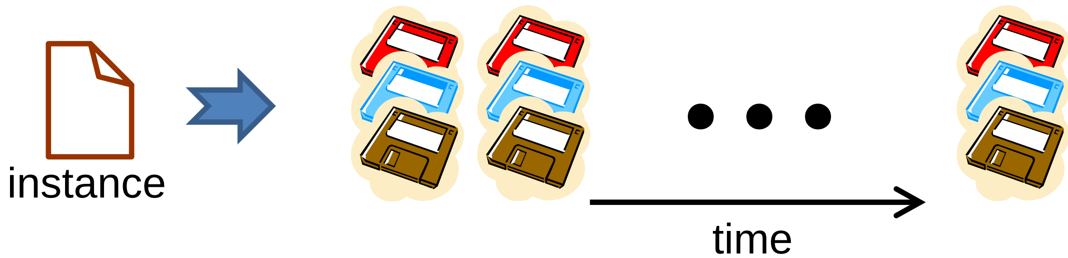
Configuration	Instance type 1	Instance type 2
#1	1s	1000s
#2	1000s	1s
#3	100s	100s

- Likewise, there is no single best solver
  - For example SAT solving:
    different solvers win different categories
  - **Virtual best solver (VBS) much better than single best solver (SBS)**

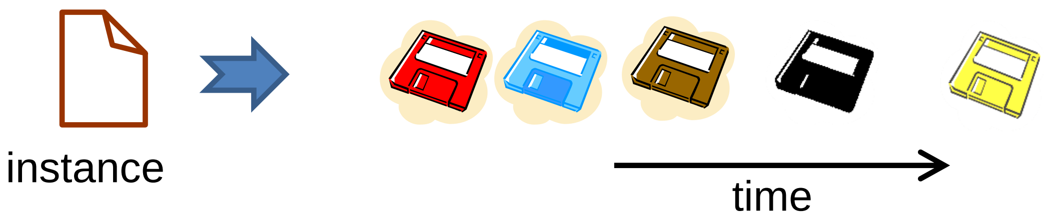
Algorithm portfolios

Exploiting complementary strengths of different algorithms

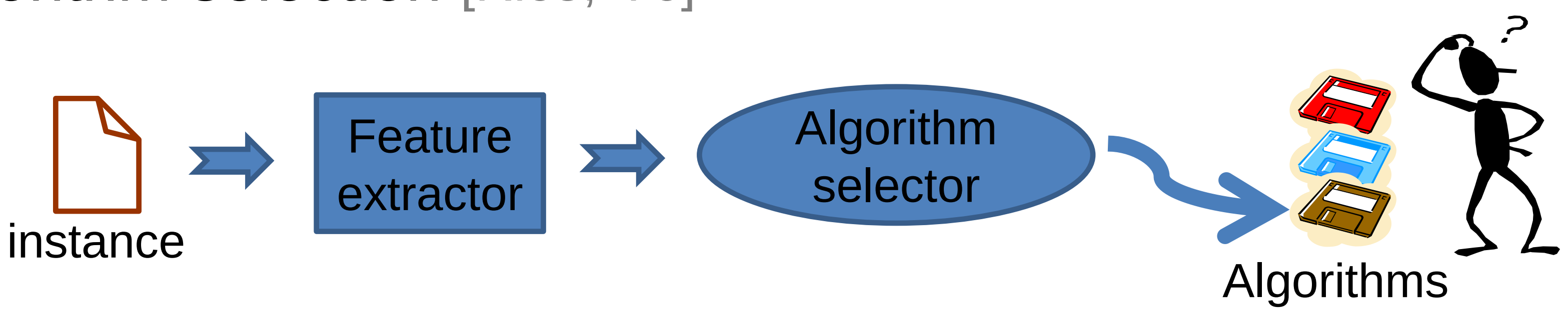
Parallel portfolios [Huberman et al, '97]



Algorithm schedules [Sayag et al, ‘06]



Algorithm selection [Rice, '76]



Portfolios have been successful in many areas

[*] *Algorithm Selection* [†] *Sequential Execution* [‡] *Parallel Execution*

- **Satisfiability:**
  - SATzilla[*†] [various coauthors, cited in the following slides; 2003—ongoing]
  - 3S[*†] [Sellmann, 2011]
  - ppfolio[‡] [Roussel, 2011]
  - claspfolio[*] [Gebser, Kaminski, Kaufmann, Schaub, Schneider, Ziller, 2011]
  - aspeed[†‡] [Kaminski, Hoos, Schaub, Schneider, 2012]
- **Constraint Satisfaction:**
  - CPHydra[*†] [O'Mahony, Hebrard, Holland, Nugent, O'Sullivan, 2008]

Portfolios have been successful in many areas

[*]Algorithm Selection *[†]Sequential Execution* *[‡]Parallel Execution*

- **Planning:**
  - FD Stone Soup[†] [Helmert, Röger, Karpas, 2011]
- **Mixed Integer Programming:**
  - ISAC[*] [Kadioglu, Malitsky, Sellmann, Tierney, 2010]
  - MIPzilla[*†] [Xu, Hutter, Hoos, Leyton-Brown, 2011]
- **..and this is just the tip of the iceberg:**
  - http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=1456656 [Smith-Miles, 2008]
  - http://4c.ucc.ie/~larsko/assurvey [Kotthoff, 2012]

Overview

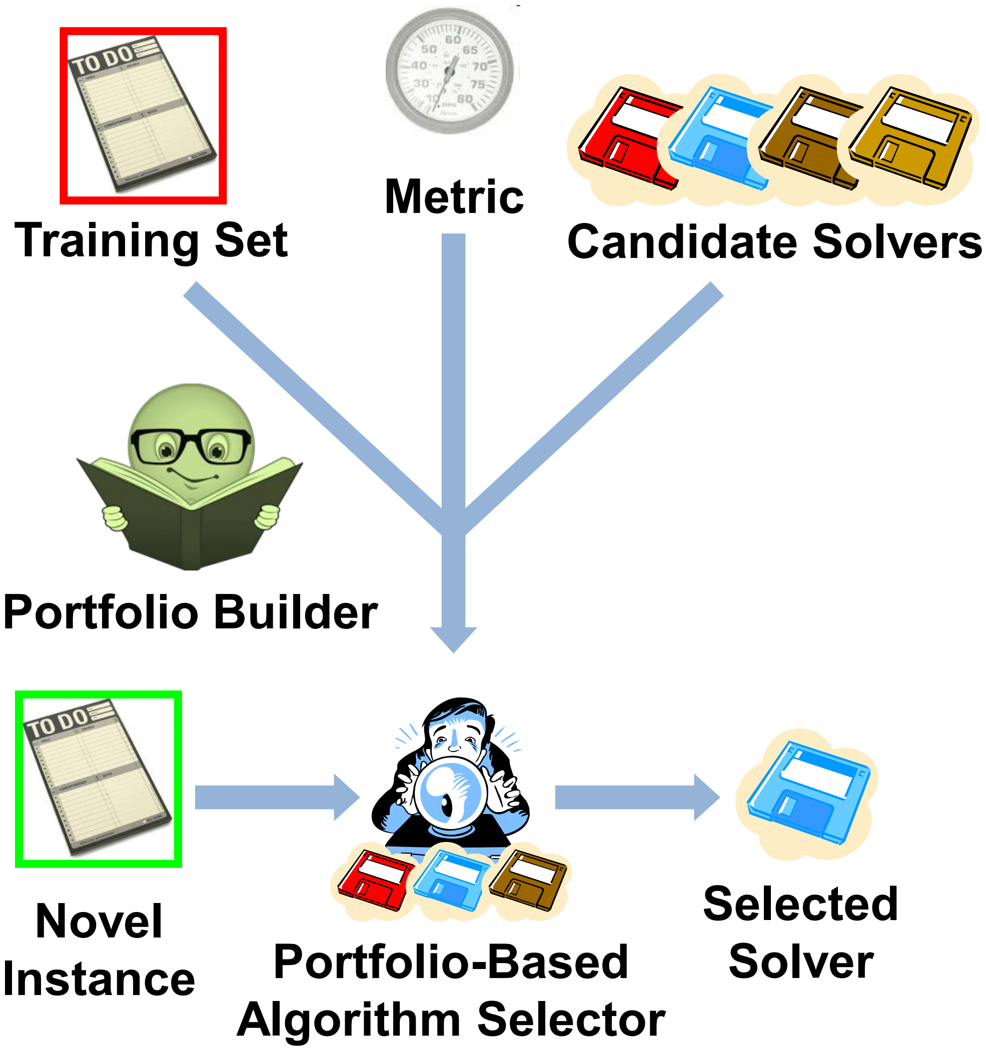
- Programming by Optimization (PbO): Motivation and Introduction
- Algorithm Configuration
- **Portfolio-Based Algorithm Selection**
  - **SATzilla: a framework for algorithm selection**
  - **Hydra: automatic portfolio construction**
- Software Development Tools and Further Directions

SATzilla: the early core approach

[Leyton-Brown, Nudelman, Andrew, J. McFadden, Shoham, '03]
[Nudelman, Leyton-Brown, Devkar, Shoham, Hoos; '04]

- Training (part of algorithm development)
  - Build a statistical model to predict runtime for each component algorithm
- Test (for each new instance)
  - Predict performance for each algorithm
  - Pick the algorithm predicted to be best
- Good performance in SAT competitions
  - 2003: 2 silver, 1 bronze medals
  - 2004: 2 bronze medals

SATzilla (stylized version)

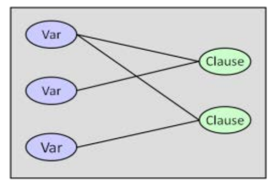


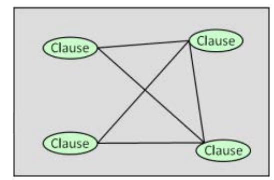
- **Given:**
  - **training set of instances**
  - **performance metric**
  - **candidate solvers**
  - **portfolio builder** ***(incl. instance features)***
- Training:
  - collect performance data
  - learn a model for selecting among solvers
- At Runtime:
  - evaluate model
  - run selected solver

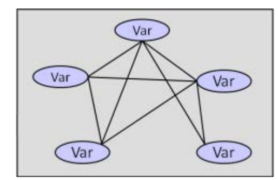
SAT Instance Features (2003—2014)

Over 100 features. Some illustrative examples:

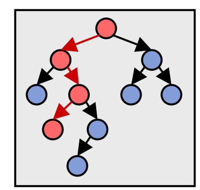
- Instance **size** (clauses, variables, clauses/variables, …)
- **Syntactic** properties (e.g., positive/negative clause ratio)
- Statistics of various **constraint graphs**
  - factor graph
  - clause–clause graph
  - variable–variable graph



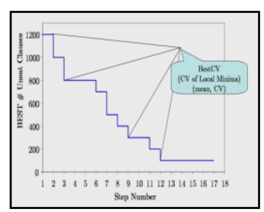


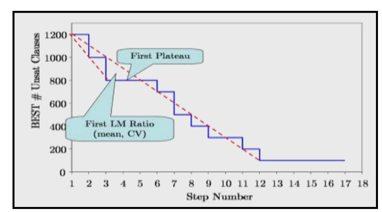


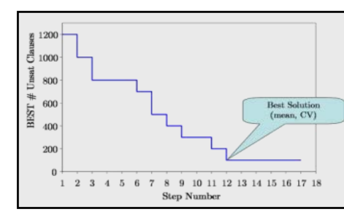
- Knuth's **search space size** estimate



- **Tree search probing**
- **Local search probing**







- **Linear programming** relaxation

maximize: $\sum_{k\in C}\left(\sum_{i\in L, i\in k} v_i + \sum_{j\in \bar{L}, j\in k}(1-v_j)\right)$

subject to: $\sum_{i\in k, i\in L} v_i + \sum_{j\in k, j\in \bar{L}}(1-v_j) \geq 1 \quad \forall k \in C$

$v_i \in \{0,1\} \quad \forall i$

SATzilla 2007

[Xu, Hutter, Hoos & Leyton-Brown, CP 2007; JAIR 2008]

- Substantially extended features
- Early algorithm schedule: identify a set of "**presolvers**" and a schedule for running them
  - For every choice of two presolvers + captimes, run the entire SATzilla pipeline and evaluate overall performance
  - Keep the choice that yields best performance
  - For later steps: Discard instances solved by this presolving schedule
- Identify a "**backup solver**": SBS on the remaining data
  - Needed in case feature computation crashes
- 2007 SAT competition: **3 gold**, 1 silver, 1 bronze medals

SATzilla 2009

[Xu, Hutter, Hoos & Leyton-Brown, CP 2007; JAIR 2008]

- Robustness: selection of best subset of component solvers
  - Consider every subset of the given solver set
    - omitting a weak solver prevents models from accidentally choosing it
    - conditioned on choice of presolvers
    - computationally cheap: models decompose across solvers
  - Keep the subset that achieves the best performance
- Fully automated procedure
  - optimizes loss on a validation set
- 2009 SAT competition: **3 gold**, 2 silver medals

SATzilla 2011 and later: cost-sensitive DFs

[Xu, Hutter, Hoos & Leyton-Brown, SAT 2012]

- How it works:
  - Build classifier to determine which algorithm to prefer between each pair of algorithms in the portfolio
  - Loss function: **cost of misclassification**
- Both decision forests and support vector machines have **cost-sensitive variants**
- Classifiers vote for different algorithms; select algorithm with most votes
  - Advantage: selection is a classification problem
  - Advantage: big and small errors treated differently
- 2011 SAT competition: entered **Evaluation Track** (more later)

2012 SAT Challenge: Application

Rank	Solver	% solved	# solved
	VBS	**94.7**	**568**
1	SATzilla2012 APP	88.5	531
2	SATzilla2012 ALL	85.8	515
3	Industrial SAT Solver	83.2	499
4	interactSAT	80.0	480
5	glucose	79.2	475
6	SINN	78.7	472
7	ZENN	78.0	468
8	Lingeling	77.8	467

* Interacting multi-engine solvers: like portfolios, but richer interaction between solvers

2012 SAT Challenge: Hard Combinatorial

Rank	Solver	% solved	# solved
	VBS	**88.2**	**529**
1	SATzilla2012 COMB	79.3	476
2	SATzilla2012 ALL	78.8	473
3	ppfolio2012	70.3	422
4	interactSAT_c	79.5	417
5	pfolioUZK	66.8	401
6	aspeed-crafted	61.7	370
7	clasp-crafted	61.2	367
8	claspfolio-crafted	58.7	352

SAT Challenge 2012: Random

Rank	Solver	% solved	# solved
	VBS	**93.0**	**558**
1	CCASat	70.5	423
2	SATzilla2012 RAND	53.5	321
3	SATzilla2012 ALL	51.0	306
4	sattime2012	44.8	269
5	ppfolio2012	42.2	253
6	pfolioUZK	38.3	230
7	ssa	25.0	150
8	gNovelty+PCL	20.5	123

2012 SAT Challenge: Sequential Portfolio

Rank	Solver	% solved	# solved
	VBS	**80.7**	**484**
1	SATzilla2012 ALL	72.2	433
2	ppfolio2012	61.7	370
3	pfolioUZK	60.3	362

- 3S **deserves mentioning**, but didn't rank officially
  [Kadioglu, Malitsky, Sabharwal, Samulowitz, Sellmann, 2011]
  - Disqualified on a technicality
    - chose a buggy solver that returned an incorrect result
    - an occupational hazard for portfolios!
  - Overall performance **nearly as strong as SATzilla**

SAT competitions 2013 onwards

- 2013: “The emphasis of SAT Competition 2013 is on evaluation of core solvers:”
  - Single-core portfolios of >2 solvers **not eligible**
  - One “open track” allowing parallel solvers, portfolios, etc
  - That open track was dominated by portfolios

- 2014
  - “SAT Competition 2014 only allows submission of core solvers”

Try it yourself!

- SATzilla is **freely available online**

  http://www.cs.ubc.ca/labs/beta/Projects/SATzilla/

- You can try it for your problem
  - we have features for SAT, MIP and TSP
  - you need to provide features for other domains
    - in many cases, the general ideas behind our features apply
    - can also make features by reducing your problem to e.g. SAT and computing the SAT features

Automatically Configuring Algorithms for Portfolio-Based Selection

Xu, Hoos, Leyton-Brown (2010); Kadioglu *et al.* (2010)

Note:

- SATzilla builds algorithm selector based on given set of SAT solvers

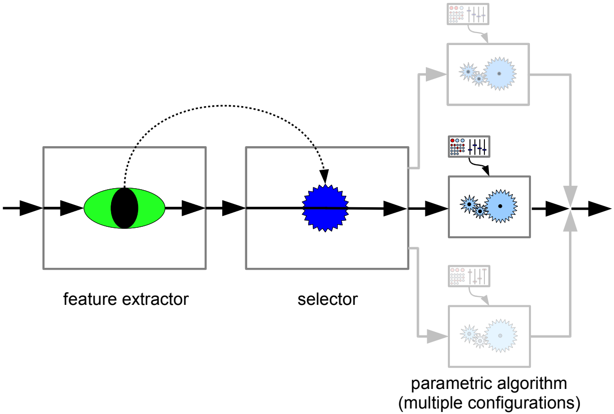
  but: success entirely depends on quality of given solvers

- Automated configuration produces solvers that work well *on average* on a given set of SAT instances

  (*e.g.*, SATenstein – KhudaBukhsh, Xu, Hoos, Leyton-Brown 2009)

  but: may have to settle for compromises
  for broad, heterogenous instance sets

Idea: Combine the two approaches $\rightsquigarrow$ portfolio-based selection from set of automatically constructed solvers


feature extractor
selector
parametric algorithm
(multiple configurations)

Approach #1:

1. build solvers for various types of instances using automated algorithm configuration

2. construct portfolio-based selector from these

Problem: requires suitably defined sets of instances

Solution: automatically partition heterogenous instance set

Instance-specific algorithm configuration (ISAC)

Kadioglu, Malitsky, Sellmann, Tierney (2010); Malitky, Sellman (2012)

1. cluster training instances based on features (using G-means)
2. configure given parameterised algorithm independently for each cluster (using GGA)
3. construct portfolio-based selector from resulting configurations (using distance to cluster centroids)

Drawback: Instance features may not correlate well with impact of algorithm parameters on performance (*e.g.*, uninformative features)

Approach #2:

Key idea: Augment existing selector *AS* by targetting instances on which *AS* performs poorly

(*cf.* Leyton-Brown *et al.* 2003; Leyton-Brown *et al.* 2009)

- interleave configuration and selector construction
- in each iteration, determine configuration that complements current selector best

Advantages:

- any-time behaviour: iteratively adds configurations
- desirable theoretical guarantees (under idealising assumptions)

Hydra

Xu, Hoos, Leyton-Brown (2010); Xu, Hutter, Hoos, Leyton-Brown (2011)

1. configure given target algorithm A on complete instance set I
   $\rightsquigarrow$ configuration A_1 = selector AS_1 (always selects A_1)

2. configure a new copy of A on I such that performance of selector $AS := AS_1 + A_{new}$ is optimised
   $\rightsquigarrow$ configuration A_2
   $\rightsquigarrow$ selector $AS_2 := AS_1 + A_2$ (selects from $\{A_1, A_2\}$)

3. configure a new copy of A on I such that performance of selector $AS := AS_2 + A_new$ is optimised
   $\rightsquigarrow$ configuration A_3
   $\rightsquigarrow$ selector $AS_3 := AS_2 + A_3$ (selects from $\{A_1, A_2, A_3\}$)

...

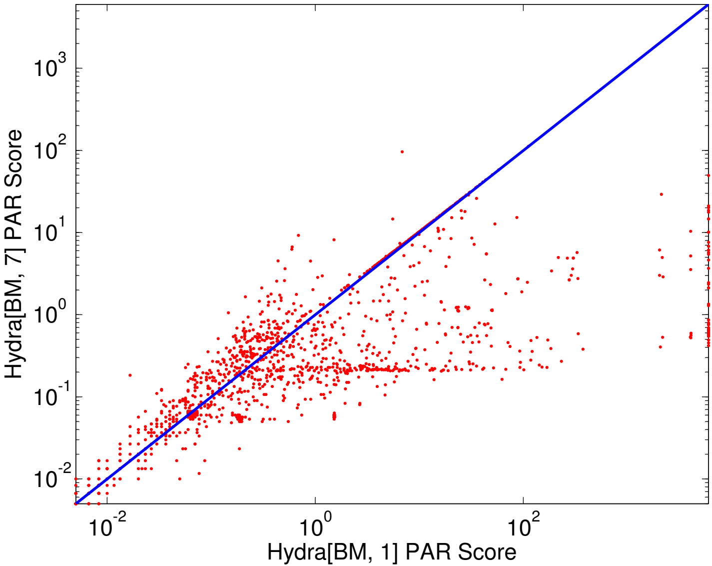
Note:

- effectively adds A with maximal marginal contribution in each iteration
- estimate marginal contribution using perfect selector (oracle) $\rightsquigarrow$ avoids costly construction of selectors during configuration
- works well using FocusedILS for configuration, *zilla for selection (but can use other configurators, selectors)
- can be further improved by adding multiple configurations per iteration; using performance estimates from configurator

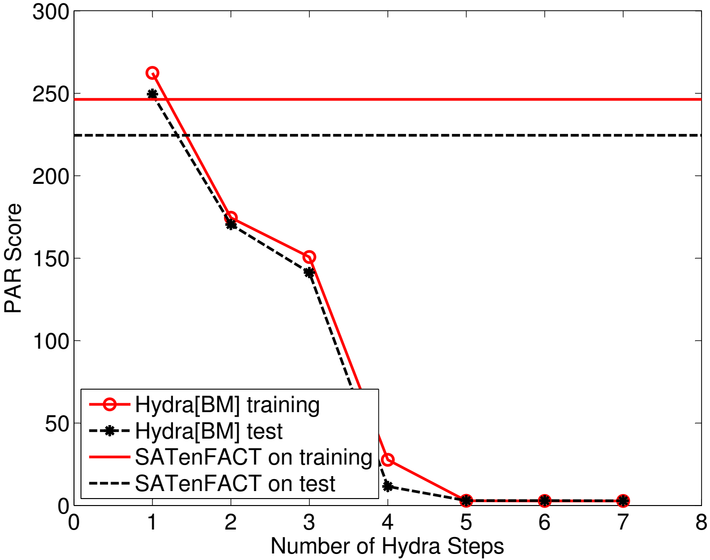
Results on SAT:

- target algorithm: SATenstein-LS (KhudaBukhsh *et al.* 2009)
- 6 well-known benchmark sets of SAT instances (application, crafted, random)
- 7 iterations of Hydra
- 10 configurator runs per iteration, 1 CPU day each

Results on mixture of 6 benchmark sets



Results on mixture of 6 benchmark sets

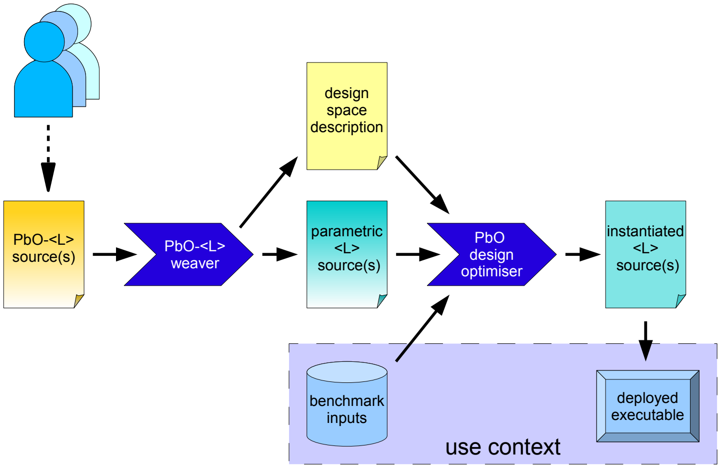


Note:

- good results also for MIP (CPLEX)
  (Xu, Hutter, Hoos, Leyton-Brown 2011)
- idea underlying Hydra can also be applied to automatically construct *parallel algorithm portfolios* from single parameterised target algorithm
  (Hoos, Leyton-Brown, Schaub, Schneider 2012–14)

Software Development Support and Further Directions

Software development in the PbO paradigm



Design space specification

Option 1: use language-specific mechanisms

- command-line parameters
- conditional execution
- conditional compilation (`ifdef`)

Option 2: generic programming language extension

Dedicated support for ...

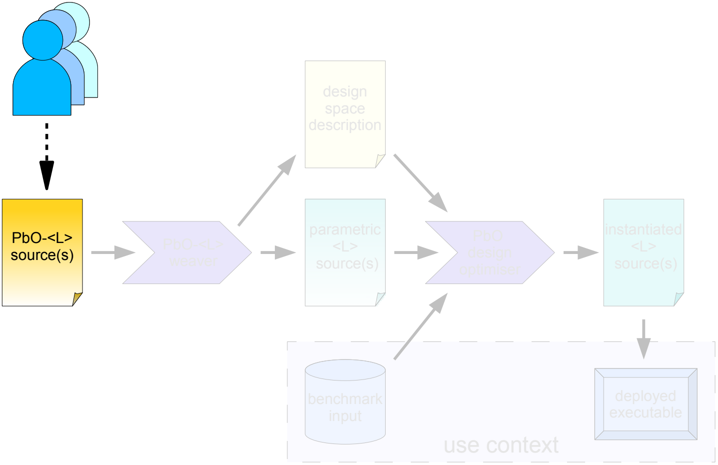
- exposing parameters
- specifying alternative blocks of code

Advantages of generic language extension:

- reduced overhead for programmer
- clean separation of design choices from other code
- dedicated PbO support in software development environments

Key idea:

- augmented sources: *PbO-Java* = Java + PbO constructs, ...
- tool to compile down into target language: *weaver*


PbO-<L> source(s)
PbO-<L> weaver
design space description
parametric <L> source(s)
PbO design optimiser
instantiated <L> source(s)
benchmark input
deployed executable
use context

Exposing parameters

```
...
numerator -= (int) (numerator / (adjfactor+1) * 1.4);
...      ...
##PARAM(float multiplier=1.4)
numerator -= (int) (numerator / (adjfactor+1) * ##multiplier);

...
```

- parameter declarations can appear at arbitrary places (before or after first use of parameter)
- access to parameters is read-only (values can only be set/changed via command-line or config file)

Specifying design alternatives

- **Choice:** set of interchangeable fragments of code that represent design alternatives (**instances of choice**)
- **Choice point:** location in a program at which a choice is available

```
##BEGIN CHOICE preProcessing
<block 1>
##END CHOICE preProcessing
```

Specifying design alternatives

- **Choice:** set of interchangeable fragments of code that represent design alternatives (**instances of choice**)
- **Choice point:**
  location in a program at which a choice is available

```
##BEGIN CHOICE preProcessing=standard
<block S>
##END CHOICE preProcessing

##BEGIN CHOICE preProcessing=enhanced
<block E>
##END CHOICE preProcessing
```

Specifying design alternatives

- **Choice:** set of interchangeable fragments of code that represent design alternatives (**instances of choice**)
- **Choice point:**
  location in a program at which a choice is available

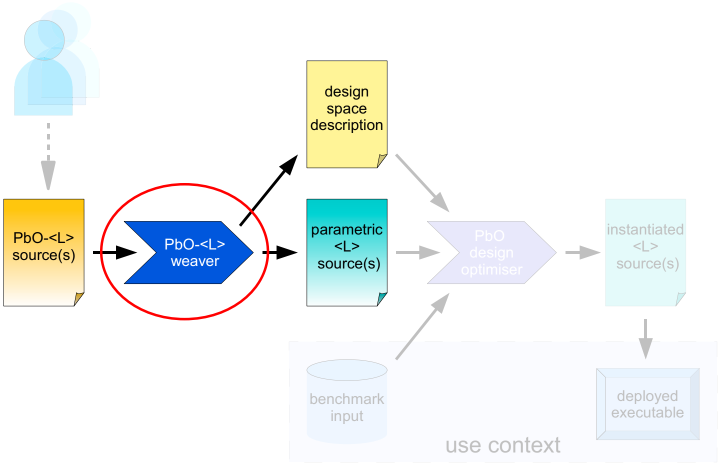
```
##BEGIN CHOICE preProcessing
<block 1>
##END CHOICE preProcessing

...

##BEGIN CHOICE preProcessing
<block 2>
##END CHOICE preProcessing
```

Specifying design alternatives

- **Choice:** set of interchangeable fragments of code that represent design alternatives (**instances of choice**)

- **Choice point:**
  location in a program at which a choice is available

```
##BEGIN CHOICE preProcessing
<block 1a>
  ##BEGIN CHOICE extraPreProcessing
  <block 2>
  ##END CHOICE extraPreProcessing
<block 1b>
##END CHOICE preProcessing
```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PbO-<L> source(s)
PbO-<L> weaver
parametric <L> source(s)
PbO design optimiser
instantiated <L> source(s)
benchmark input
deployed executable
use context

The Weaver

transforms PbO-<L> code into <L> code
(<L> = Java, C++, ...)

- parametric mode:
  - expose parameters
  - make choices accessible via (conditional, categorical) parameters
- (partial) instantiation mode:
  - hardwire (some) parameters into code (expose others)
  - hardwire (some) choices into code (make others accessible via parameters)

The road ahead

- Support for PbO-based software development
  - Weavers for PbO-C, PbO-C++, PbO-Java
  - PbO-aware development platforms
  - Improved / integrated PbO design optimiser
  - Debugging and performance analysis tools
- Best practices
- Many further applications
- Scientific insights

Which choices matter?

Observation: Some design choices matter more than others

depending on ...

- algorithm under consideration
- given use context

Knowledge which choices / parameters matter may ...

- guide algorithm development
- facilitate configuration

3 recent approaches:

- Forward selection based on empirical performance models

  Hutter, Hoos, Leyton-Brown (2013)

- Functional ANOVA based on empirical performance models

  Hutter, Hoos, Leyton-Brown (2014)

- Ablation analysis

  Fawcett, Hoos (2013–14)

Functional ANOVA based on empirical performance models

Hutter, Hoos, Leyton-Brown (2014)

Key idea:

- build regression model of algorithm performance as a function of all input parameters (= design choices)

  $\rightsquigarrow$ empirical performance models (EPMs)

- analyse variance in model output (= predicted performance) due to each parameter, parameter interactions

- importance of parameter: fraction of performance variation over configuration space explained by it (main effect)

- analogous for sets of parameters (interaction effects)

Decomposition of variance in a nutshell

For parameters $p_1, \ldots, p_n$ and a function (performance model) y:

$$
\begin{aligned}
y(p_1, \ldots, p_n) \quad = \quad & \mu \\
& + f_1(p_1) + f_2(p_2) + \cdots + f_n(p_n) \\
& + f_{1,2}(p_1, p_2) + f_{1,3}(p_1, p_3) + \cdots + f_{n-1,n}(p_{n-1}, p_n) \\
& + f_{1,2,3}(p_1, p_2, p_3) + \cdots \\
& + \cdots
\end{aligned}
$$

Note:

- Straightforward computation of main and interaction effects is intractable.
  (integration over combinatorial spaces of configurations)
- For random forest models, marginal performance predictions and variance decomposition (up to constant-sized interactions) can be computed exactly and efficiently.

Empirical study:

- 8 high-performance solvers for SAT, ASP, MIP, TSP
  (4–85 parameters)
- 12 well-known sets of benchmark data
  (random + real-world structure)
- random forest models for performance prediction,
  trained on 10 000 randomly sampled configurations per solver
  + data from 25+ runs of SMAC configuration procedure

Fraction of variance explained by main effects:

CPLEX on RCW (comp sust)	70.3%
CPLEX on CORLAT (comp sust)	35.0%
Clasp on software verificatition	78.9%
Clasp on DB query optimisation	62.5%
CryptoMiniSAT on bounded model checking	35.5%
CryptoMiniSAT on software verification	31.9%

Fraction of variance explained by main + 2-interaction effects:

CPLEX on RCW (comp sust)	70.3% + 12.7%
CPLEX on CORLAT (comp sust)	35.0% + 8.3%
Clasp on software verificatition	78.9% + 14.3%
Clasp on DB query optimisation	62.5% + 11.7%
CryptoMiniSAT on bounded model checking	35.5% + 20.8%
CryptoMiniSAT on software verification	31.9% + 28.5%

Note:

may pick up variation caused by poorly performing configurations

Simple solution:

cap at default performance or quantile from distribution of randomly sampled configurations; build model from capped data.

Ablation analysis

Fawcett, Hoos (2013–14)

Key idea:

- given two configurations, A and B, change one parameter at a time to get from A to B

  $\rightsquigarrow$ ablation path

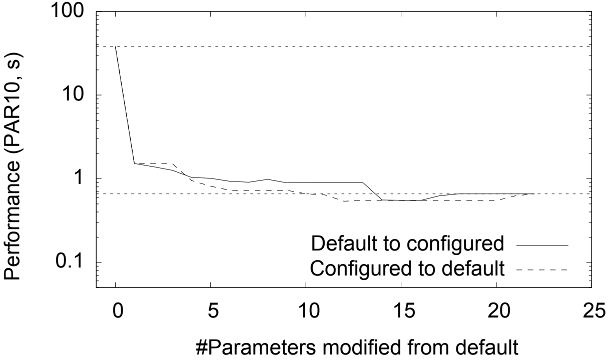
- in each step, change parameter to achieve maximal gain (or minimal loss) in performance

- for computational efficiency, use racing (F-race) for evaluating parameters considered in each step

Empirical study:

- high-performance solvers for SAT, MIP, AI Planning
  (26–76 parameters),
  well-known sets of benchmark data (real-world structure)
- optimised configurations obtained from ParamILS
  (minimisation of penalised average running time;
  10 runs per scenario, 48 CPU hours each)

Ablation between default and optimised configurations:



LPG on Depots planning domain

Which parameters are important?

LPG on `depots`:

- `cri_intermediate_levels` (43% of overall gain!)
- `triomemory`
- `donot_try_suspected_actions`
- `walkplan`
- `weight_mutex_in_relaxed_plan`

Note: Importance of parameters varies between planning domains

Algorithm configuration: parameter importance
$\rightsquigarrow$ Algorithm selection: component contribution

Xu, Hutter, Hoos, Leyton-Brown (2012)

Consider:

portfolio-based algorithm selector AS
with candidate algorithms $A_1, A_2, \ldots A_k$

Question:

How much does each A_i contribute
to overall performance of AS?

Marginal contribution of A_i to portfolio-based selector AS

$=$ difference in performance of AS with and without A_i (trained separately)

- $\neq$ frequency of selecting A_i
- $\neq$ fraction of instances solved by A_i
- $\neq$ contribution of A_i to virtual best solver (VBS)

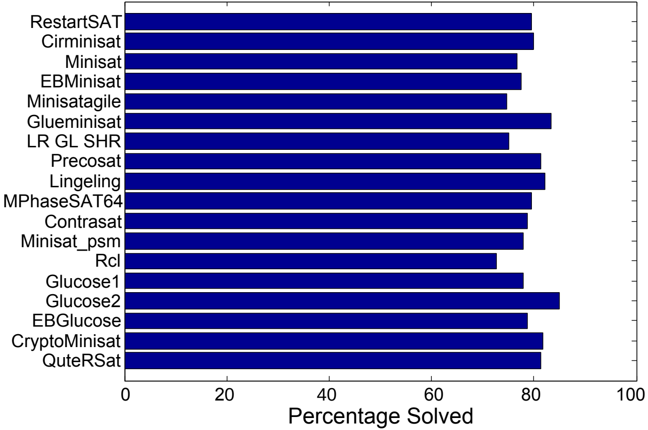
Application to SATzilla:

- all instances from 2011 SAT Competition:
  300 Application; 300 Crafted; 300 Random
- candidate solvers from 2011 SAT Competition:
  - for determining virtual best solver (VBS)
    and single best solver (SBS):
    all solvers from Phase 2 of competition:
    31 Application; 25 Crafted; 17 Random
  - for building SATzilla:
    all sequential, non-portfolio solvers from Phase 2:
    18 Application; 15 Crafted; 9 Random
- SATzilla assessed by 10-fold cross validation

SATzilla 2011 Performance (Inst. Solved)

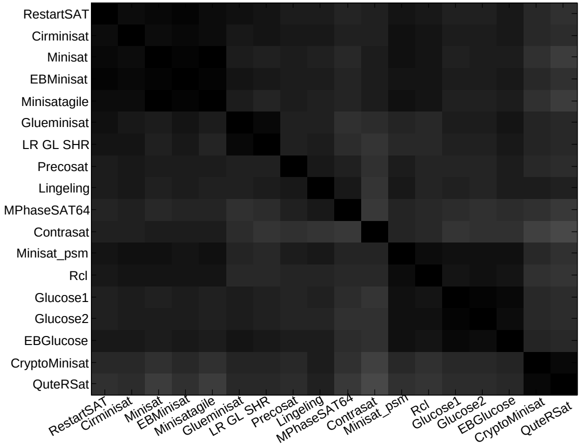
Solver	*Application*	*Crafted*	*Random*
VBS	84.7%	76.3%	82.2%
SATzilla 2011	75.3%	66.0%	80.8%
SATzilla 2009	70.3%	63.0%	80.3%
Gold medalist (SBS)	71.7%	54.3%	68.0%

Performance of Individual Solvers
Application



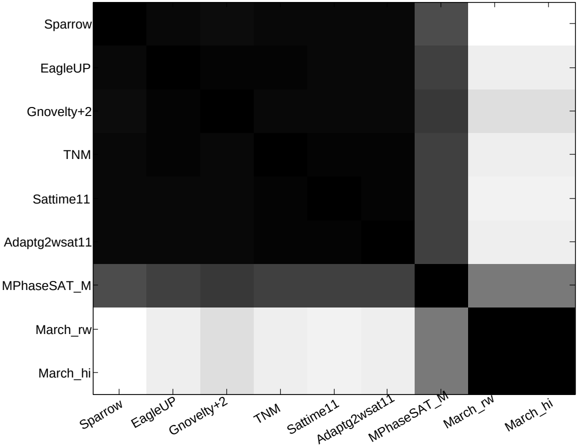
5000 CPU sec cutoff

Correlation of Solver Performance
Application



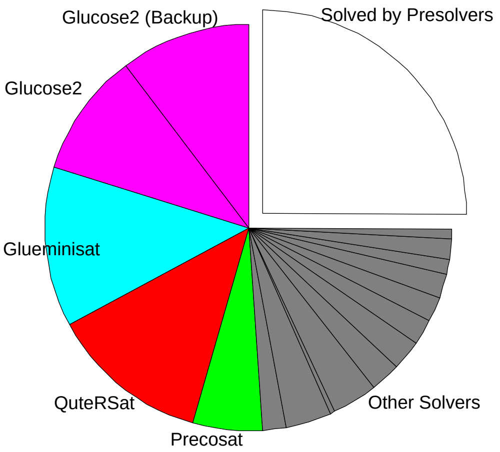
darker = higher Spearman correlation coefficient

Correlation of Solver Performance
Random

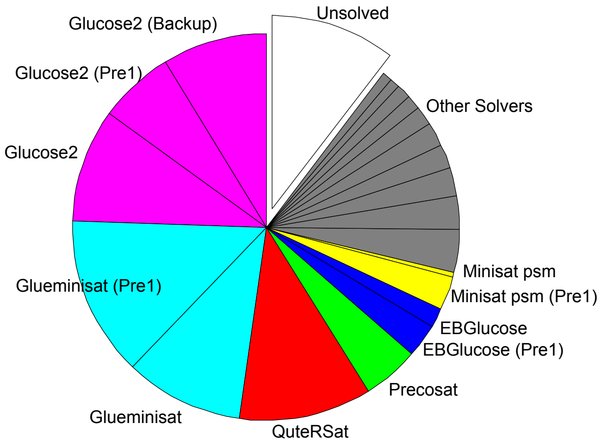


darker = higher Spearman correlation coefficient

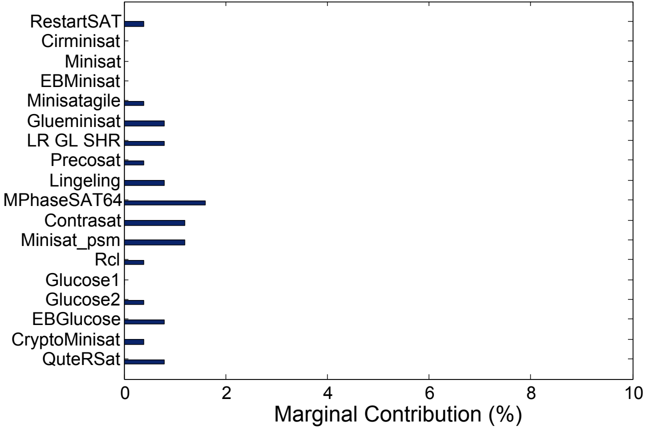
Solver Selection Frequency in SATzilla 2011 Application



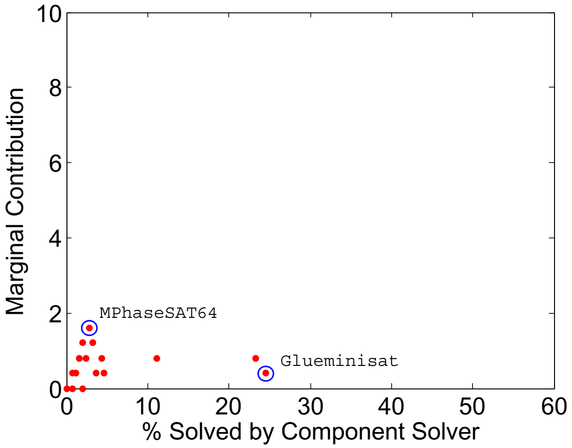
Instances Solved by SATzilla 2011 Components
Application



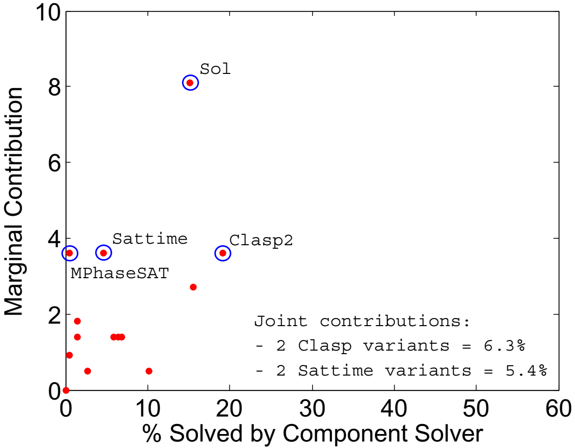
Marginal Contribution of Components
Application



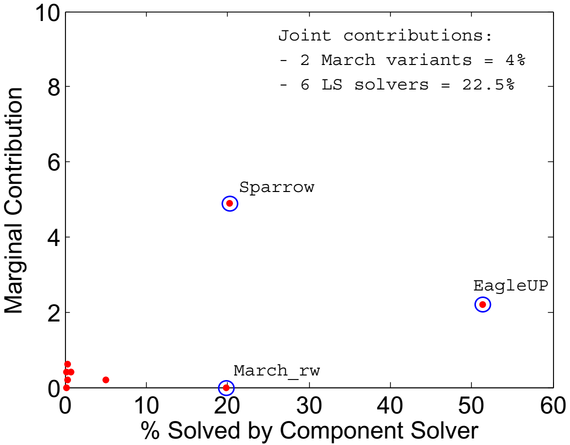
Instances Solved *vs* Marginal Contribution of Components
Application



Instances Solved *vs* Marginal Contribution of Components
Crafted



Instances Solved *vs* Marginal Contribution of Components
Random



Leveraging parallelism

- design choices in parallel programs

  (Hamadi, Jabhour, Sais 2009)

- deriving parallel programs from sequential sources
  $\rightsquigarrow$ concurrent execution of optimised designs
  (parallel portfolios)

  (Hoos, Leyton-Brown, Schaub, Schneider 2012)

- parallel design optimisers

  (*e.g.*, Hutter, Hoos, Leyton-Brown 2012)

- use of cloud resources (parallel runs of design optimisers, ...)

  (Geschwender, Hutter, Kotthoff, Malitsky, Hoos, Leyton-Brown 2014)

Take-home Message

Programming by Optimisation ...

- leverages computational power to construct better software
- enables creative thinking about design alternatives
- produces better performing, more flexible software
- facilitates scientific insights into
  - efficacy of algorithms and their components
  - empirical complexity of computational problems

... changes how we build and use high-performance software

More Information:

- www.cs.ubc.ca/labs/beta/Projects/PbO-AAAI-14
- www.prog-by-opt.net
- PbO article in Communications of the ACM (Hoos 2012)
- Senior member's talk (HH): Wed, 8:30–9:15, Rm 303B
- Forthcoming book (Morgan & Claypool)

If PbO works for you:

- Make our day – let us know!
- Share the joy – tell everyone else!