

10/02/25
ISDA 2025

Optimal Sensor Selection and Ensemble-Based Inversion for Steady State Nuclear Reactor Models

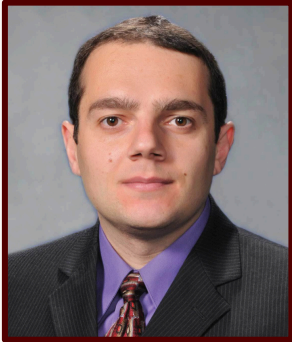
F. A. B. Silva, J. C. Ragusa, C. Fiorina



TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
Department of
Nuclear Engineering



Acknowledgments



Jean C. Ragusa

**Professor, Department of Nuclear Engineering
Associate Director, Institute for Scientific Computation**

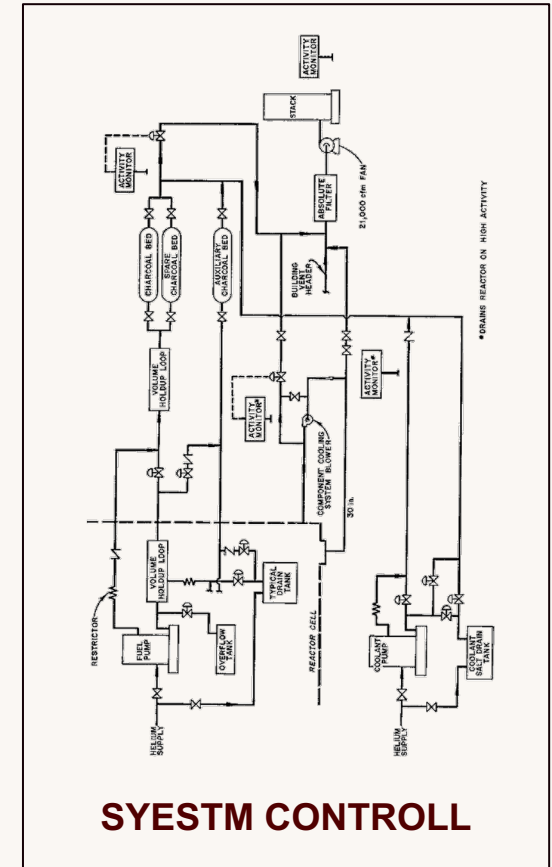
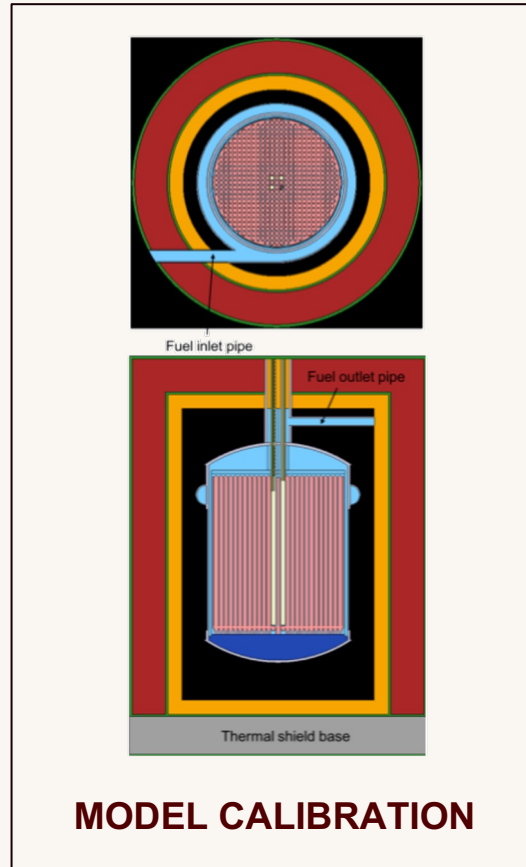
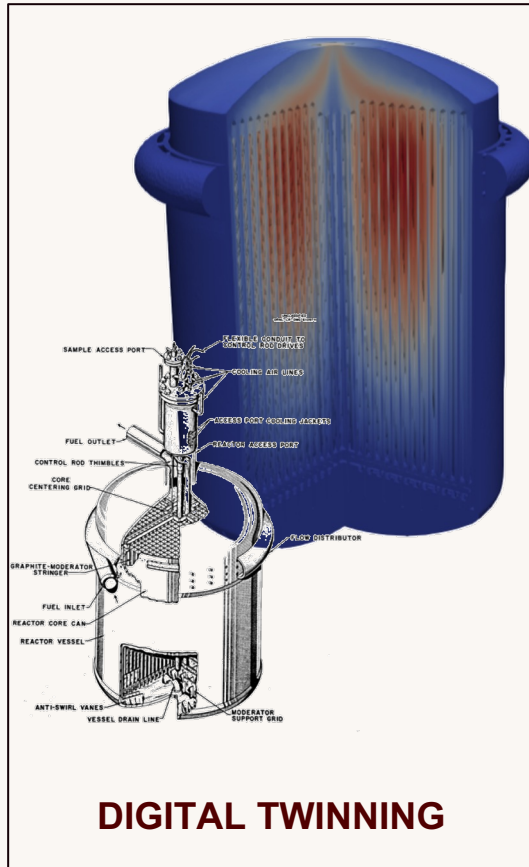


Carlo Fiorina

Associate Professor, Department of Nuclear Engineering



Motivations





Challenges and Possible Approaches

DATA ASSIMILATION

- Bayesian filters
- Kalman(-ized) filters
- Variational methods
- Data interpolation
- Variational data fitting
- Variational parameter inversion (e.g., EnKI, ...)

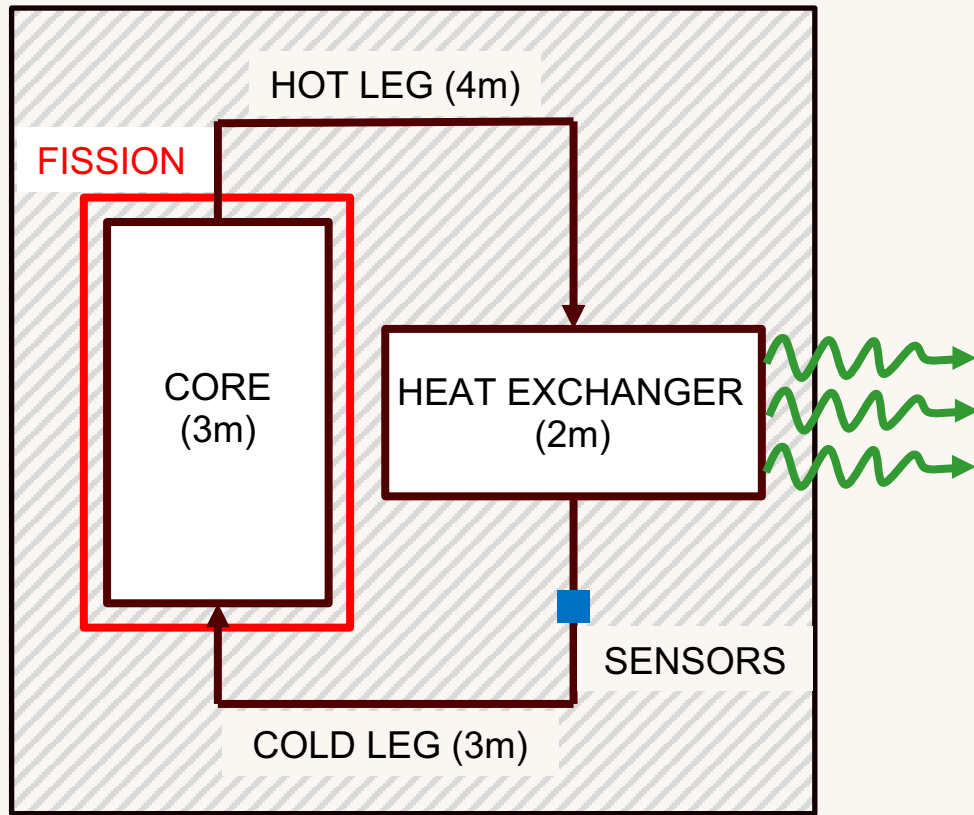
OPTIMAL EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

- Bayesian OED
- Model-aware sequential OED
- Model-free sequential OED
- “Alphabetical” OED (e.g., A/E/D/...-OED)
- ...



Nuclear Reactor Model

A Simplified Model



GEOMETRY

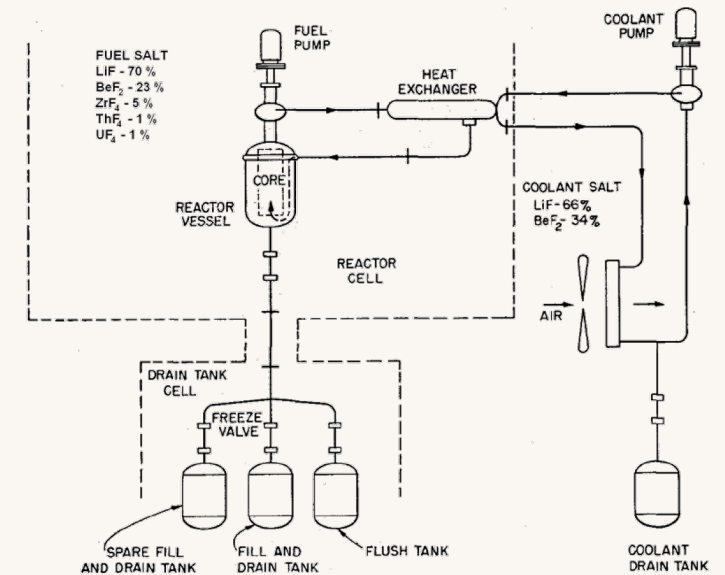
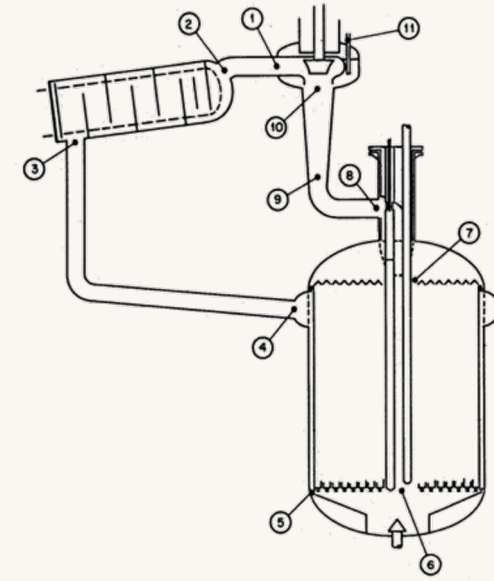
- closed loop geometry
- uniform velocity
- no radial effects

MISSING

- graphite coupling
- pipe cross-sections
- momentum equation

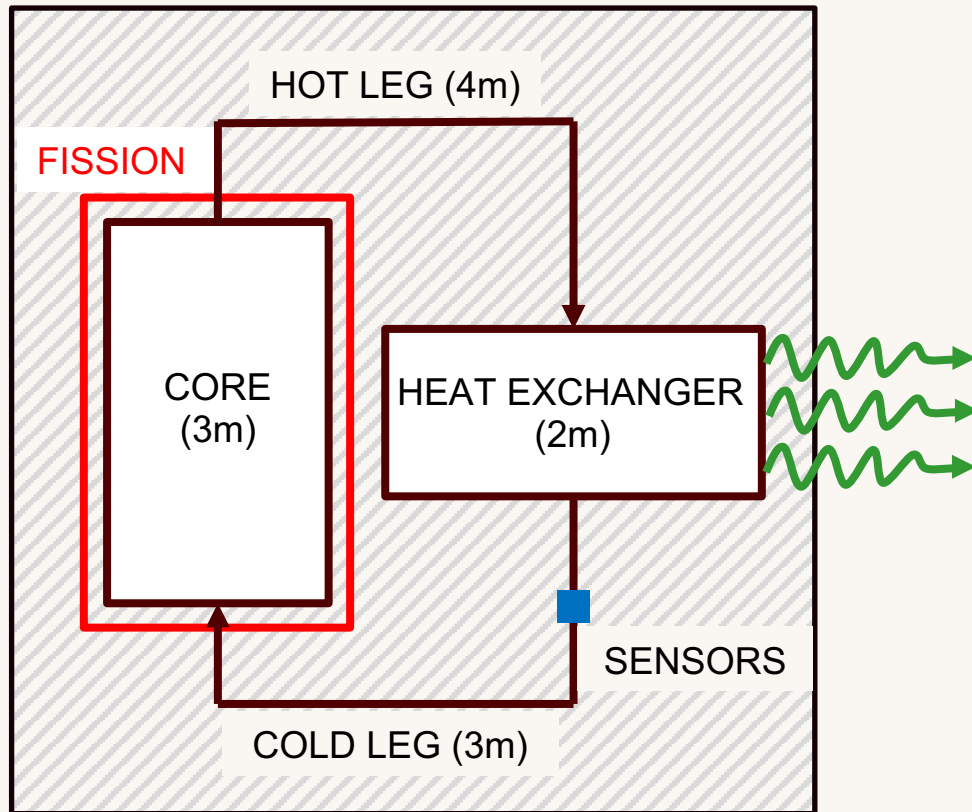
MODEL GOALS

- parameter calibration
- state reconstruction
- sensor collocations





A Simplified Model



NEUTRON DIFFUSION EQUATION

- 6 energy groups
- diffusive transport
- fission only in core

$$\begin{aligned}
 & -\partial_x D(T) \partial_x \psi^g - \sigma_t^g(T) \psi^g \\
 & + \sum_{g'=1}^6 (1 - \beta) \chi_p^g v_f^{g'} \sigma_f^{g'}(T, x) \psi^{g'} / k_{\text{eff}} \\
 & + \sum_{g'=1}^6 \sigma_s^{g' \rightarrow g}(T) \psi^{g'} - \chi_d^g \sum_{p=1}^8 \lambda^p c^p = 0
 \end{aligned}$$

PRECURSOR TRANSPORT EQUATION

- 8 precursor groups
- advection at constant speed
- no heating effect

$$\begin{aligned}
 & -\partial_x v c^p - \lambda^p c^p \\
 & + \beta^p \sum_{g=1}^6 v_f^g \sigma_f^g(T, x) \psi^g / k_{\text{eff}} = 0
 \end{aligned}$$

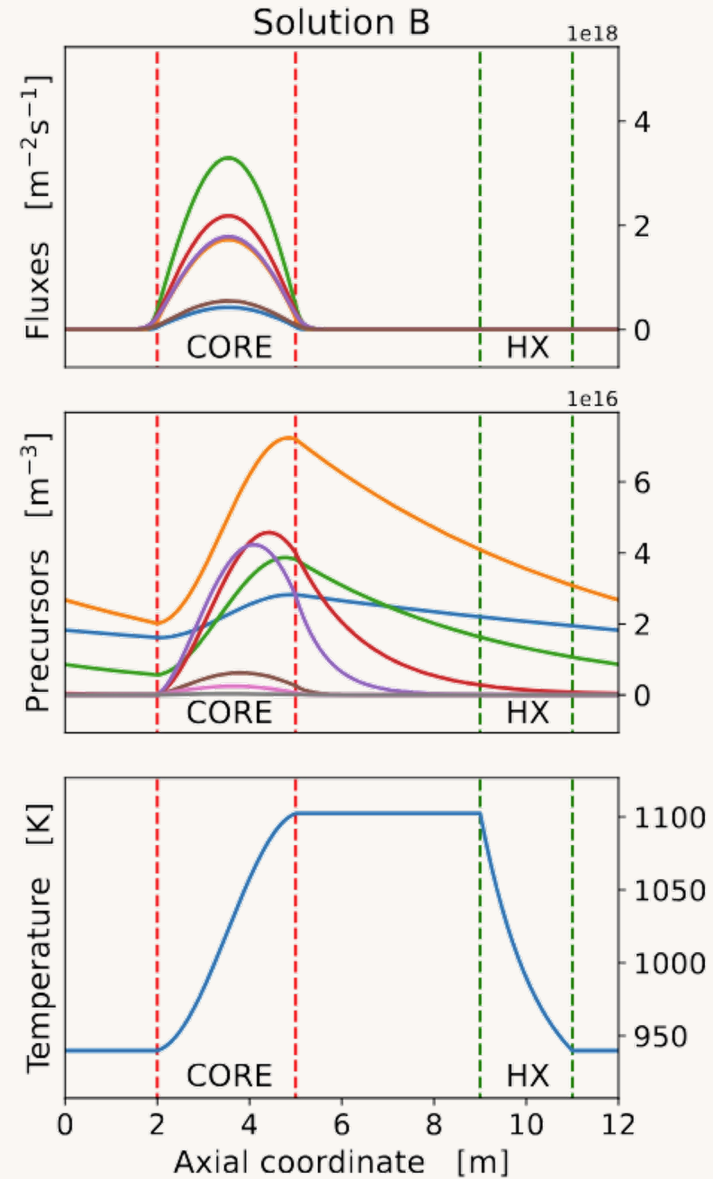
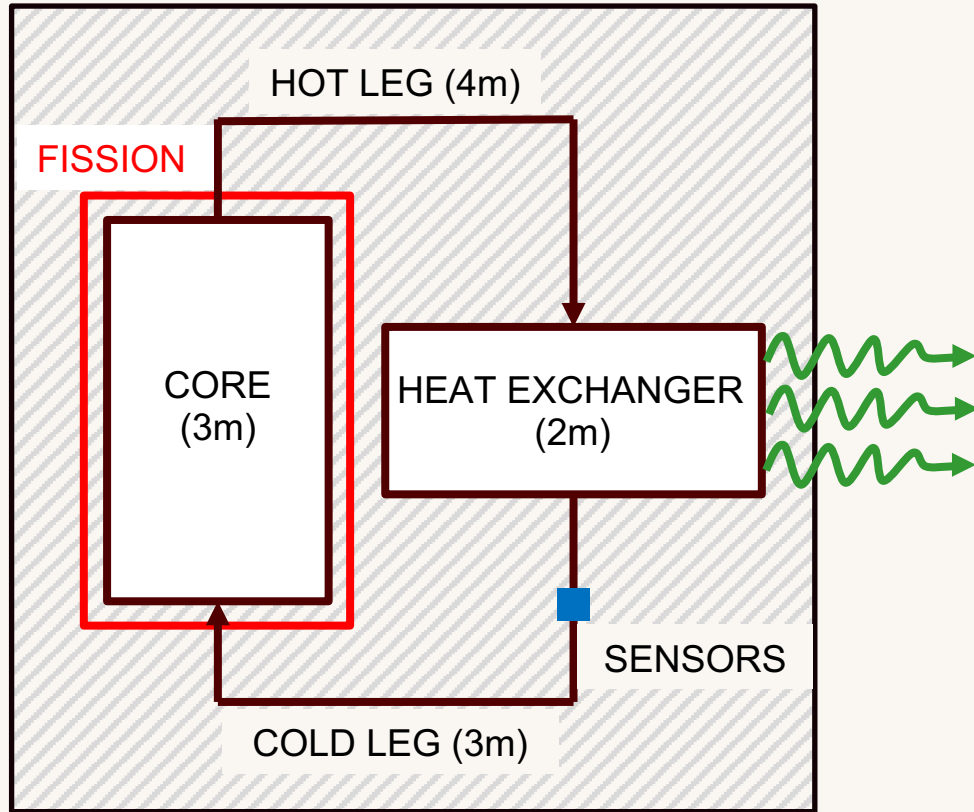
FUEL ENERGY EQUATION

- constant properties
- advection at constant speed
- average value for h, T_∞

$$\begin{aligned}
 & -\rho c_p \partial_x v T + \partial_x k \partial_x T - h(x)(T - T_\infty) \\
 & + \sum_{g=1}^6 E_f \sigma_f^g(T, x) \psi^g / k_{\text{eff}} = 0
 \end{aligned}$$

$$\int_{\Omega_{\text{Core}}} \sum_{g=1}^6 E_f \sigma_f^g(T, x) \psi^g dx = P$$

A Simplified Model



FREE PARAMETERS

- $v = 10^{-1} - 10^1 \text{ m/s}$
- $P = 10^6 - 10^8 \text{ W}$
- $h = 10^5 - 10^7 \text{ W/mK}$

OBSERVABLE FIELDS

- Thermal flux (ψ_6)
- Temperature (T)

MODEL GOALS:

- Parameter calibration
- State reconstruction
- Sensor collocations



Notation and Assumptions

MODEL PARAMETERS

$$\boldsymbol{\vartheta} = \{v, P, h; D, \sigma_{f,0}^g, \sigma_{s,0}^g, \sigma_{t,0}^g, \dots\} \sim \Pi_0(\boldsymbol{\Theta})$$

MULTI-PHYSICAL STATE

$$u(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}) = \{\psi^1, \dots, \psi^6, c^1, \dots, c^8, T\}$$

SENSOR MODEL

$$\mathcal{H} = [h_{x_1}^{\psi^6}, \dots, h_{x_N}^{\psi^6}, h_{x_1}^T, \dots, h_{x_M}^T]^T \subset \mathcal{O}$$

NOISE MODEL

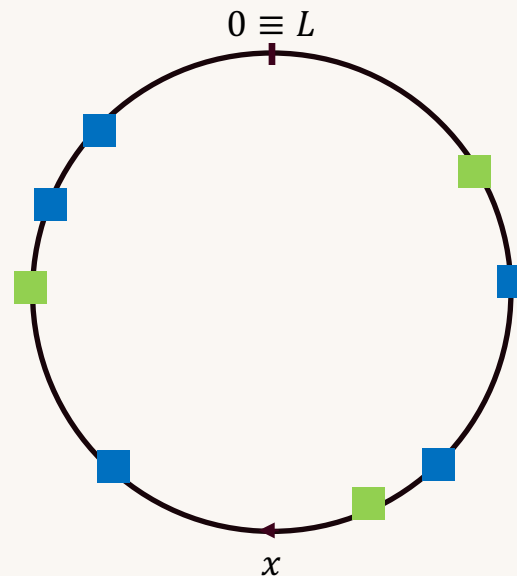
$$\boldsymbol{\varepsilon} = [\varepsilon_{x_1}^{\psi^6}, \dots, \varepsilon_{x_N}^{\psi^6}, \varepsilon_{x_1}^T, \dots, \varepsilon_{x_M}^T]^T \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \sigma \mathbf{I})$$

PARAMETER LIKELIHOOD

$$\mathcal{L}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}|\mathbf{d}) \propto \exp\left(-\|\mathbf{d} - \mathcal{G}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta})\|_{(\sigma \mathbf{I})}^2\right)$$

EXPERIMENTAL DATA

$$\mathbf{d} = \mathcal{H}(u(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}^*)) + \boldsymbol{\varepsilon} = \mathcal{G}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}^*) + \boldsymbol{\varepsilon}$$



$$h_{x_1}^T(u) = \frac{\int_{\Omega} (T(x) - T_R) e^{\kappa \cos\left(\frac{2\pi(x-x_1)}{L}\right)} dx}{\int_{\Omega} \Delta T_R e^{\kappa \cos\left(\frac{2\pi(x-x_1)}{L}\right)} dx}$$

$$h_{x_1}^{\psi^6}(u) = \frac{\int_{\Omega} \psi^6(x) e^{\kappa \cos\left(\frac{2\pi(x-x_1)}{L}\right)} dx}{\int_{\Omega} \psi_R e^{\kappa \cos\left(\frac{2\pi(x-x_1)}{L}\right)} dx}$$

- $\kappa = 5 \times 10^4$
- $L = 12\text{m}$
- $\Delta T_R = 65.041\text{ K}$
- $T_R = 900.000\text{ K}$
- $\psi_R = 4.234 \times 10^{17} \text{ pm}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1}$



Optimal Sensor Selection



Average D-optimal Experimental Design

SENSOR DICTIONARY

$$\mathcal{O} = \{h_1, h_2, \dots, h_{N_s}\}. \quad (\text{accessible fields + locations})$$

BUDGET ALLOCATION

$$\boldsymbol{\omega} = \{\omega_1, \omega_2, \dots, \omega_{N_s}\}, \quad \sum_{k=1}^{N_s} \omega_k = 1, \quad \omega_k > 0.$$

LOCAL FISHER INFORMATION MATRIX

$$M(\boldsymbol{\omega}; \boldsymbol{\vartheta}^*) = \sum_{k=1}^{N_s} \omega_k \left. \frac{\partial h_k(u(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}))}{\partial \boldsymbol{\vartheta}} \right|_{\boldsymbol{\vartheta}^*} \left. \frac{\partial h_k(u(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}))}{\partial \boldsymbol{\vartheta}} \right|_{\boldsymbol{\vartheta}^*}^\top.$$



OPTIMAL EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN

$$\begin{aligned} \boldsymbol{\omega}_{\text{opt}} &= \arg \min_{\substack{\sum_{k=1}^{N_s} \omega_k = 1 \\ \omega_k > 0}} - \int_{\mathcal{P}} \log(\det(M(\boldsymbol{\omega}; \boldsymbol{\vartheta}))) \Pi_0(d\boldsymbol{\vartheta}) \\ &\approx \arg \min_{\substack{\sum_{k=1}^{N_s} \omega_k = 1 \\ \omega_k > 0}} - \frac{1}{N_{\Xi}} \sum_{n=1}^{N_{\Xi}} \log(\det(M(\boldsymbol{\omega}; \boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n))) := \bar{\Psi}(\boldsymbol{\omega}) \end{aligned}$$

employing the training set $\{u(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n), \boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n \sim \Pi_0(\boldsymbol{\Theta})\}_{n=1}^{N_{\Xi}}$,
and (quasi-)Montecarlo integration

Optimization Algorithm

[Ucinski]



0. **INITIALIZE** $\omega_0 = \{\omega_{0,1}, \omega_{0,2}, \dots, \omega_{0,N_s}\}$, $\sum_{k=1}^{N_s} \omega_{0,k} = 1$, $\omega_{0,k} > 0$

FOR $s = 0, 1, 2, \dots$

1. **DIFFERENCIATE** $\xi_k(\omega_s) = \frac{1}{N_{\Xi}} \sum_{n=1}^{N_{\Xi}} \left. \frac{\partial h_k(u(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}))}{\partial \boldsymbol{\vartheta}} \right|_{\boldsymbol{\vartheta}^*}^{\top} M^{-1}(\omega_s; \boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n) \left. \frac{\partial h_k(u(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}))}{\partial \boldsymbol{\vartheta}} \right|_{\boldsymbol{\vartheta}^*}^{\top} = \frac{\partial \bar{\Psi}(\omega)}{\partial \omega_k}$

2. **MAXIMIZE** $k_s^* = \arg \min_{k=1, \dots, N_{\Xi}} \xi_k(\omega_s)$

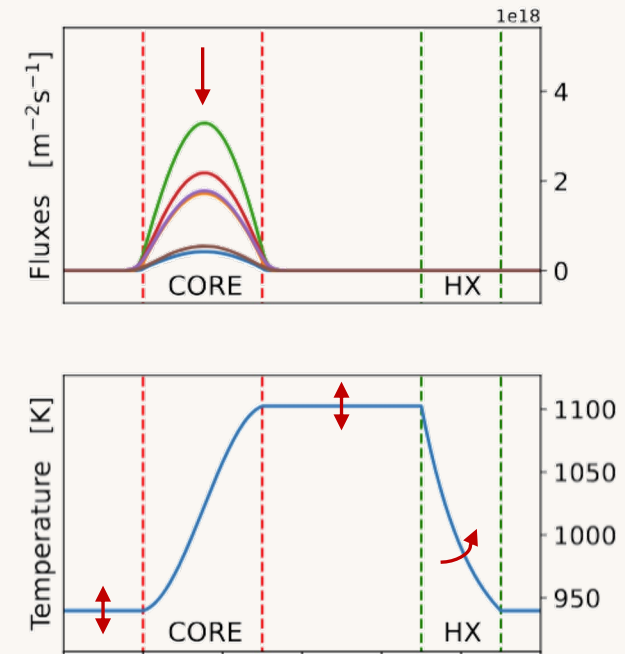
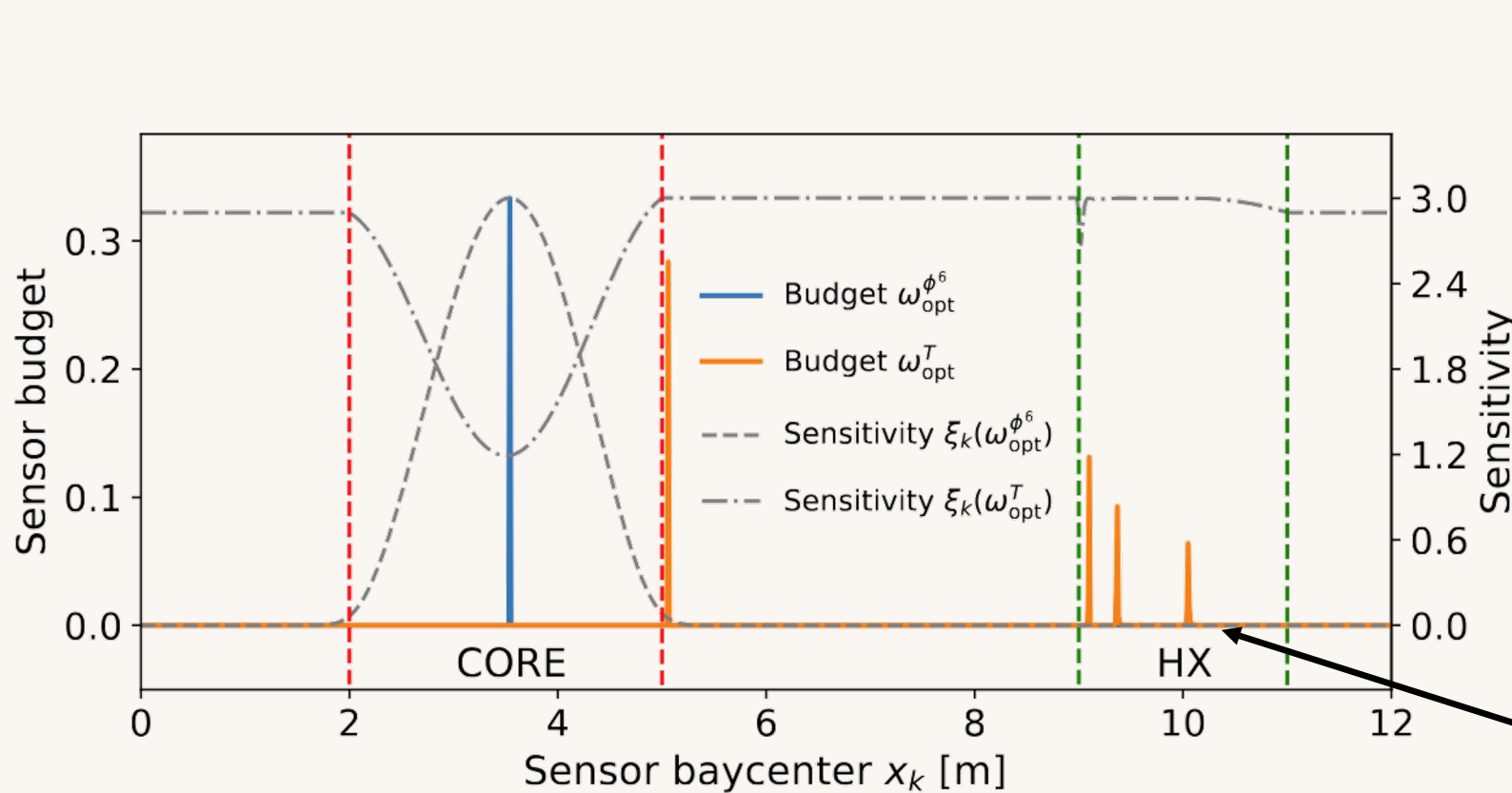
3. **LINE SEARCH** $\gamma_s = \arg \min_{0 < \gamma < 1} -\frac{1}{N_{\Xi}} \sum_{n=1}^{N_{\Xi}} \log(\det((1 - \gamma)M(\omega_s; \boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n)) + \gamma M(\boldsymbol{\delta}_{k_s, k_s^*}; \boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n))$

4. **UPDATE** $\omega_{s+1} = (1 - \gamma_s)\omega_s + \gamma_s \boldsymbol{\delta}_{k_s, k_s^*}$

*. **BREAK IF** $\xi_k(\omega_s) - N_p < \text{tol}$



Average D-optimal Experimental Design



The support of ω_{opt} identifies the sensor in \mathcal{H} , and therefore \mathcal{G}



Ensemble Based Inversion

Maximum Likelihood Estimation

[Iglesias]



$$\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_{\text{opt}} = \arg \max_{\boldsymbol{\vartheta} \in \mathcal{D}} \|\mathbf{d} - \mathcal{G}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta})\|_{(\sigma \mathbf{I})^{-1}}^2$$

0. **SAMPLE** $\{\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_0^s \sim \Pi_0(\Theta)\}_{s=1}^{N_E}$

FOR $s = 0, 1, 2, \dots$

1. **EXACT PARAMETER-TO-MEASUREMENTS**

$$\{\mathcal{G}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n^s) = \mathcal{H}u(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n^s)\}_{s=1}^{N_E}$$

2. **CORRELATION MATRICES**

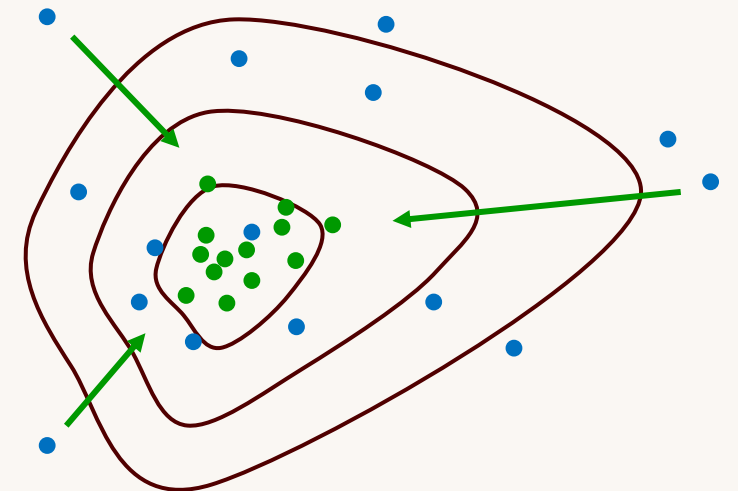
$$\mathbf{P}^s = \text{cov}(\mathcal{G}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n^s), \mathcal{G}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n^s)), \quad \mathbf{Q}^s = \text{cov}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n^s, \mathcal{G}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n^s)).$$

3. **ENSEMBLE KALMAN UPDATE**

$$\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_{n+1}^s = \boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n^s + \mathbf{Q}^s (\mathbf{P}^s + \sigma \mathbf{I})^{-1} (\mathbf{d} - \mathcal{G}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n^s))$$

$$\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_0^s \sim \Pi_0(\Theta)$$

$$\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n^s \sim \pi_0 \cdot f^s(\boldsymbol{\vartheta} | \mathbf{d})$$





Surrogate Modeling

GPR IS USED TO SURROGATE THE PARAMETER-TO-OBSERVABLE MAP

$$\mathcal{G}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}) \approx \mathcal{GP}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}) \sim \mathcal{N}(\mu(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}), K_{\mathcal{GP}}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}, \boldsymbol{\vartheta}')) \longleftarrow \mathcal{N}(0, k^{\text{pr}}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}, \boldsymbol{\vartheta}'; \Lambda)) : \text{Bayesian Prior}$$

Λ : Optimized Hyper-parameters

- COMPUTE THE TRAINING SET

$$\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{G}} := \{\mathcal{G}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n) = \mathcal{H}u(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n), \boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n \in \mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{G}}\}, \quad \mathbb{E}_{\boldsymbol{\vartheta}} := \{\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n \sim \Pi_0(\Theta)\}_{n=1}^{N_{\mathbb{E}}}$$

- DEFINE THE TRAINING MEAN AND COVARIANCE

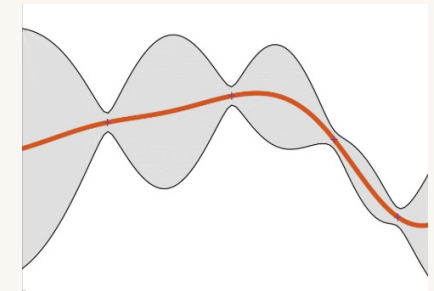
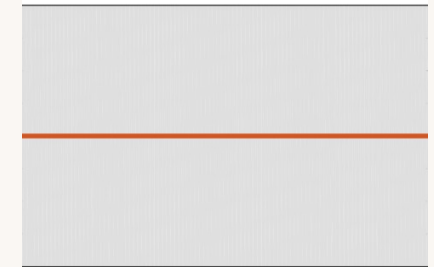
$$(\mathbf{d}_{\text{tr}})_i = \mathcal{G}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_i), \quad (\mathbf{K}_{\text{tr}})_{ij} = k^{\text{pr}}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_i, \boldsymbol{\vartheta}_j; \Lambda)$$

- UPDATE MEAN AND COVARIANCE

$$\mu(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}) = \mathbf{d}_{\text{tr}}^{\top} \mathbf{K}_{\text{tr}}^{-1} k^{\text{pr}}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}, \mathbb{E}_{\boldsymbol{\vartheta}}; \Lambda)$$

$$K_{\mathcal{GP}}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}, \boldsymbol{\vartheta}') = k^{\text{pr}}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}, \boldsymbol{\vartheta}'; \Lambda) - k^{\text{pr}}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}, \mathbb{E}_{\boldsymbol{\vartheta}}; \Lambda)^{\top} \mathbf{K}_{\text{tr}}^{-1} k^{\text{pr}}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}', \mathbb{E}_{\boldsymbol{\vartheta}}; \Lambda) \longrightarrow$$

We replace $\mathcal{G}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta})$ with surrogate random variable $\mathcal{GP}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta})$ and use the predictive variance $K_{\mathcal{GP}}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}, \boldsymbol{\vartheta})$ to inflate the measurement likelihood





Maximum Likelihood Estimation

$$\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_{\text{opt}} \approx \arg \max_{\boldsymbol{\vartheta} \in \mathcal{D}} \|\mathbf{d} - \mathcal{GP}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta})\|^2_{(\sigma \mathbf{I} + \mathbf{K}_{\mathcal{GP}}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}, \boldsymbol{\vartheta}))^{-1}}$$

0. **SAMPLE** $\{\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_0^s \sim \Pi_0(\Theta)\}_{s=1}^{N_E}$

FOR $s = 0, 1, 2, \dots$

1. **SURROGATE PARAMETER-TO-MEASUREMENTS**

$$\{\mathcal{GP}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n^s)\}_{s=1}^{N_E}$$

2. **CORRELATION MATRICES**

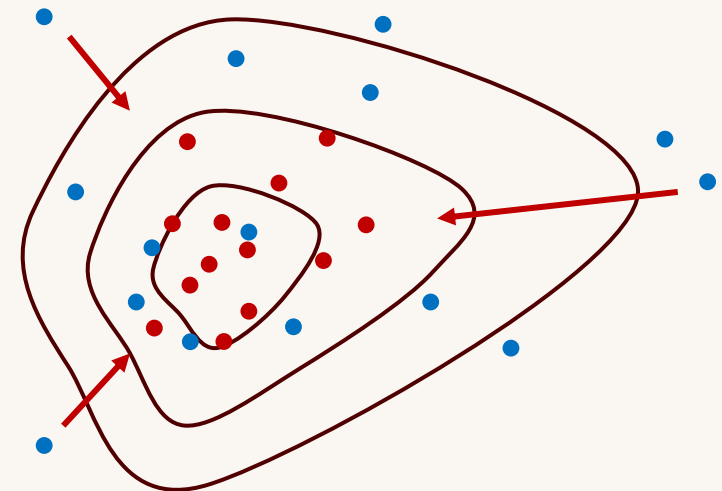
$$\mathbf{P}^s = \text{cov}(\mathcal{GP}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n^s), \mathcal{GP}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n^s)), \quad \mathbf{Q}^s = \text{cov}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n^s, \mathcal{GP}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n^s))$$

3. **INFLATED ENSEMBLE KALMAN UPDATE**

$$\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n^{s+1} = \boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n^s + \mathbf{Q}^s \left(\mathbf{P}^s + \sigma \mathbf{I} + \mathbf{K}_{\mathcal{GP}}(\bar{\boldsymbol{\vartheta}}^s, \bar{\boldsymbol{\vartheta}}^s) \right)^{-1} (\mathbf{d} - \mathcal{GP}(\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n^s))$$

$$\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_0^s \sim \Pi_0(\Theta)$$

$$\boldsymbol{\vartheta}_n^s \sim \pi_0 \cdot f^s(\boldsymbol{\vartheta} | \mathbf{d})$$

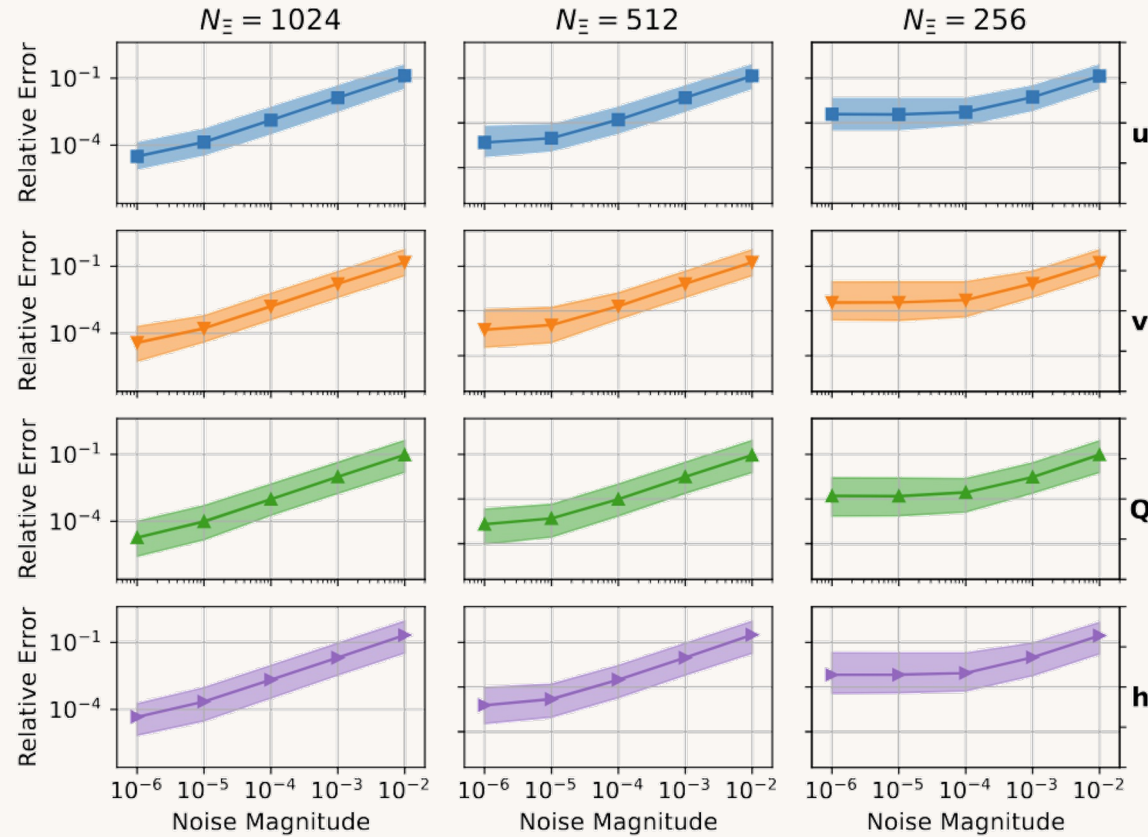
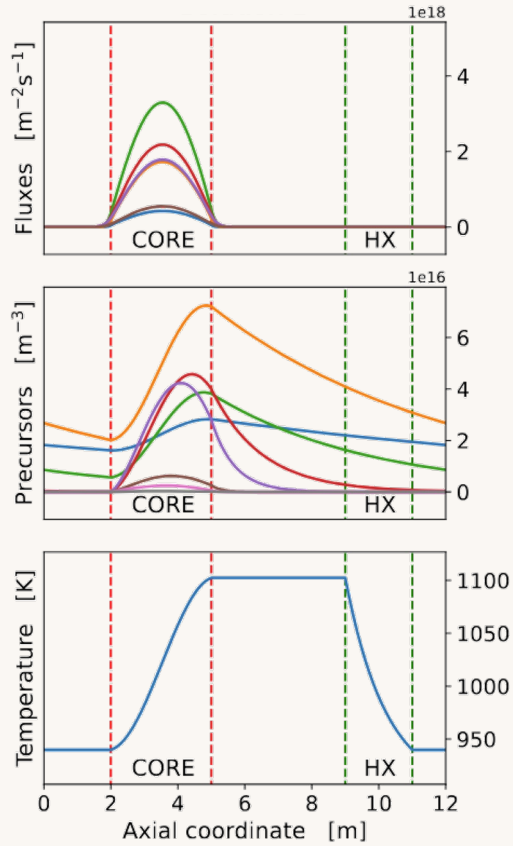




Numerical Results



Noise and Accuracy Convergence

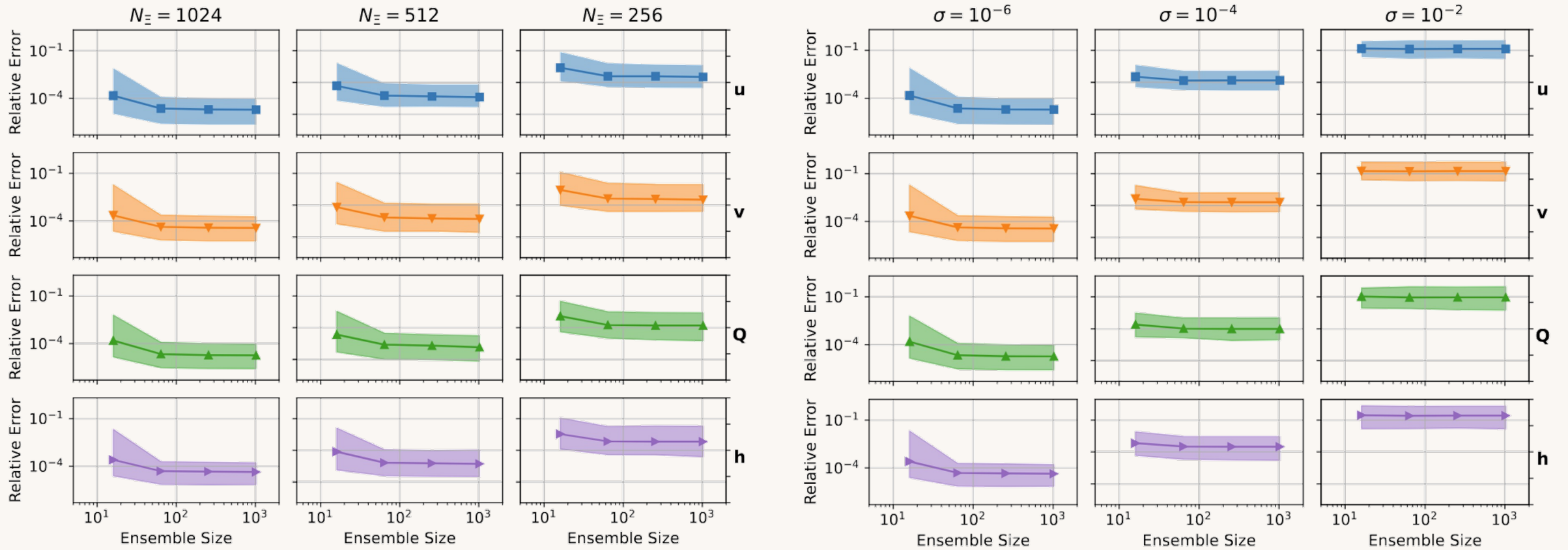


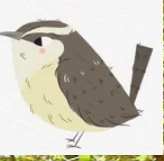
STATE
RECONSTRUCTION
ERROR

PARAMETER
EXTIMATION
ERROR



Large-ensemble Convergence





Conclusions



Summary and Developments

SUMMARY

- Computational framework for **parameter estimation** and **state reconstruction** in multi-physics nuclear systems
- Combination of **optimal Experimental Design** and **Ensemble Kalman Inversion**
- **Gaussian Process surrogates** accelerate inference while retaining accuracy
- Method successfully reconstructs reactor states from **sparse, noisy sensor data**

DEVELOPMENTS

- Explore advanced surrogate models **beyond** Gaussian Process Regression
- Incorporate **time-dependent** dynamics for transient analysis
- Extend framework to **higher-dimensional** nuclear reactor models



References

- [Kuss]** M. Kuss, *Gaussian process models for robust regression, classification, and reinforcement learning*, Ph.D. thesis, Biologische Kybernetik (2006)
- [Iglesias]** M. A. Iglesias, K. J. H. Law, A. M. Stuart, *Ensemble Kalman methods for inverse problems*, *Inverse Problems* 29 (4) (2013) 045001, 20
- [Argaud]** J.-P. Argaud, B. Bouriquet, F. De Caso, H. Gong, Y. Maday, O. Mula, *Sensor placement in nuclear reactors based on the generalized empirical interpolation method*, *Journal of Computational Physics* 363 (2018)
- [Kochunas]** B. Kochunas, X. Huan, *Digital twin concepts with uncertainty for nuclear power applications*, *Energies* 14 (14) (2021)
- [Introini]** C. Introini, S. Riva, S. Lorenzi, S. Cavalleri, A. Cammi, *Non-intrusive system state reconstruction from indirect measurements: A novel approach based on hybrid data assimilation methods*, *Annals of Nuclear Energy* 182 (2023)
- [Ucinski]** D. Ucinski, *Optimal measurement methods for distributed parameter system identification*, CRC press, 2004.
- [Cammi]** A. Cammi, V. Di Marcello, L. Luzzi, V. Memoli, M. E. Ricotti, *A multi-physics modelling approach to the dynamics of Molten Salt Reactors*, *Annals of Nuclear Engineering*, 38 (6) (2011)
- [Fratoni]** Fratoni, Massimiliano, Shen, Dan, Ilas, Germina, & Powers, Jeff (2020). *Molten Salt Reactor Experiment Benchmark Evaluation*.



THANK YOU

Texas A&M University
Department of Nuclear Engineering

francesco.silva@tamu.edu