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# State Estimation for General Class of Dynamical Systems: An Extension to Particle Filters

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**Abstract** – Many physical systems are nonlinear and non-Gaussian in their state-space models. Particle Filter (PF) is a sequential Monte Carlo method that uses sets of sample scenarios, i.e. "particles" to represent probability densities, and it can be applied for state estimation in nonlinear/non-Gaussian state-spaces models. Conventional variants of PF do not assume any noise for the system input, while the corresponding measurement models disregard the system input as an argument. In reality, physical systems receive inputs contaminated with the measurement noise. In this work, a generalized particle filter algorithm is developed that handles the noisy input of the state-space model in a probabilistic framework. Three advanced variants of PF are then developed to improve the filtering accuracy. Performance of the developed filters are then verified with simulation of univariate and bivariate non-stationary growth models as benchmarks.

Keywords: Dynamic system, Particle Filter, State estimation, Noisy input, Non-stationary growth model

## 1. Introduction

In many engineering problems, internal state of a system is to be estimated using sequential measurements on timevarying inputs and outputs of the system. State-space model of a dynamical system includes at least two parts: a system model that describes the state evolution with time, and a measurement model that shows the relation of the state and the measurements. Sequential Bayesian estimation is a rigorous approach for state estimation in dynamical systems. The optimal algorithm in closed form is called Kalman Filter (KF) [1], which applies only for first order Markovian systems with linear/Gaussian state-space models. Extended Kalman Filter (EKF) is a variant of KF that projects its applications to nonlinear systems [2]. With availability of low cost computational power, Monte Carlo methods have been applied to simulate the state probability distribution using weighted sample scenarios, called particles [3]. The so called Particle Filter (PF) is not restricted to linear/Gaussian systems and therefore, its variants have found a wide range of applications in various fields of science and engineering [4-8]. A dynamical system that receives time-varying input has the following state-space model:

$$\dot{x} = F(x, u) + \tau \tag{1}$$

$$y = G(x, u) + v \tag{2}$$

Where x is the state, u is the input and y is the output of the system.  $\tau$  is the process noise and v is the measurement noise. In discrete form, for a first order Markov process, state-space model at a time step k can be presented as:

$$x_k = F(x_{k-1}, u_k) + \tau_k \tag{3}$$

$$y_k = G(x_k, u_k) + \nu_k \tag{4}$$

Generic PF overlooks the role of input  $u_k$  in the system model [3]. Inclusion of the input into the system model has just been attended in a few recent works. However, in these works, the inputs of the systems have still been treated as deterministic variables [9,10]. In the real systems as illustrated in Fig. 1, the inputs are noisy, and there is a need for the development of PF framework such that it can manage general class of dynamical systems including noisy inputs. In a recent research work, the authors presented a PF based framework to address the stated problems [11]. In this paper, new

variants of PF will be developed to manage the stochastic nature of the system input. To verify performance of the developed framework, a comparative study will be presented using one-dimensional and two-dimensional generalized non-stationary growth model. A conclusive summary of the paper will be provided in the last section.



Fig. 1: Configuration of state estimation filter.

## 2. Sequential Bayesian State Estimation

In a dynamical system with discrete state-space model, system model *F* estimates the state  $x_k$  with an uncertainty of  $f_x(x_k|x_{k-1}, u_k)$ . At the same time, measurement model *G* estimates the output  $y_k$  with a marginal distribution of  $f_y(y_k|x_k, u_k)$ . We assume that uncertainty of *F* and marginal distribution of *G* are available. We also assume known densities for the initial state  $f_x(x_0)$  and the system input  $f_u(u_k)$ . If the historical data on the input  $Y_k \triangleq \{y_1, y_2, ..., y_k\}$  and the output  $U_k \triangleq \{u_1, u_2, ..., u_k\}$  become available, the marginal filtering density can be found using Bayes' theorem:

$$f_x(x_k|Y_k, U_k) = f_{y,u}(y_k, u_k|x_k) f_x(x_k|Y_{k-1}, U_{k-1}) / f_{y,u}(y_k, u_k|Y_{k-1}, U_{k-1})$$
(5)

Where,

$$f_x(x_k|Y_{k-1}, U_{k-1}) = \int f_x(x_k|x_{k-1}) f_x(x_{k-1}|Y_{k-1}, U_{k-1}) dx_{k-1}$$
(6)

$$f_{y,u}(y_k, u_k|x_k) = f_y(y_k|x_k, u_k) / f_x(x_k) \int f_x(x_k|x_{k-1}, u_k) f_x(x_{k-1}) \, dx_{k-1}$$
(7)

and

$$f_{y,u}(y_k, u_k | Y_{k-1}, U_{k-1}) = \int f_{y,u}(y_k, u_k | x_k) f_x(x_k | Y_{k-1}, U_{k-1}) dx_k$$
(8)

The system output  $u_k$  is independent from the previous state of the system, therefore, the probability transition density in Eq. 6 reduces to,

$$f_x(x_k|x_{k-1}) = \int f_x(x_k|x_{k-1}, u_k) f_u(u_k) \,\mathrm{d}u_k \tag{9}$$

The state probability  $f_x(x_k)$  in Eq. 7 can be found sequentially by integrating the transition density of Eq. 9,

$$f_x(x_k) = \int f_x(x_k | x_{k-1}) f_x(x_{k-1}) \, \mathrm{d}x_{k-1} \tag{10}$$

In this way, the posterior filtering density at time step k is calculated by Eq. 5.

## 3. State Estimation by PF

Instead of a continuous mathematical function, the posterior density in Eq. 5 can be numerically represented by a set of weighted scenarios, known as particles.

$$f_x(x_k|Y_k, U_k) \approx \sum_{i=1}^m \omega_k^i \,\delta\big(x_k - x_k^i\big) \tag{11}$$

Where  $x_k^1, ..., x_k^m$  and  $\omega_k^1, ..., \omega_k^m$  are the particles and the corresponding weights respectively, such that,  $\sum_{i=1}^m \omega_k^i = 1$ . To find the weights  $\omega_k^i$  in Eq.(11), when new measurements on the input  $u_k$  and the output  $y_k$  become available, the weights can be calculated using the values from last time step.

$$\omega_{k}^{i} \propto \omega_{k-1}^{i} f_{y,u}(y_{k}, u_{k} | x_{k}^{i}) f_{x}(x_{k}^{i} | x_{k-1}^{i}) / g_{x}(x_{k}^{i} | x_{k-1}^{i}, y_{k}, u_{k})$$
(12)

Where  $g_x(x_k|x_{k-1}^i, y_k, u_k)$  is the importance density with an optimal value to minimize the variance of the weights, that reduces Eq. 12 to:

$$\omega_{k}^{i} = \omega_{k-1}^{i} \int f_{y,u}(y_{k}, u_{k} | x_{k}) f_{x}(x_{k} | x_{k-1}^{i}) dx_{k}$$
(13)

The optimal result in Eq. (13) cannot be found, because the posterior is not yet available. That is why the choice of importance density  $g_x$  remains a filter design decision that has no unique global answer, and it is addressed differently in several variants of PF [12]. In the following, four variants of PF are developed with the ability to receive stochastic input.

#### 3.1. Generic Particle Filter

A simple candidate for the importance density is the prior:

$$g_{x}(x_{k}|x_{k-1}^{i}, y_{k}, u_{k}) = f_{x}(x_{k}|x_{k-1}^{i})$$
(14)

that reduces Eq. 12 to

$$\omega_k^i \propto \omega_{k-1}^i f_{y,u} \left( y_k, u_k \middle| x_k^i \right) \tag{15}$$

The particles  $x_k^i$  are propagated before the measurements on the input  $u_k$  are available, and they are consequently independent at each time step, i.e.  $f_u(u_k|x_k^i) = f_u(u_k)$ . We can therefore rewrite Eq. 15 as,

$$\omega_k^i \propto \omega_{k-1}^i f_y \left( y_k \big| x_k^i, u_k \right) \tag{16}$$

The propagated particles  $x_k^i$  and their corresponding weights  $\omega_k^i$  represent the posterior density as laid out in Eq. (11). A common problem with the generic PF is that after some iteration, one particle holds the entire share of the weights and the other particles retain no weight. This so-called degeneracy can be avoided by resampling a set of new particles from the posterior density, in case the effective sample size  $N_{eff}$  falls below a predefined threshold  $N_T$  [13]. Table 1 presents the generic PF process for state estimation.

$\{(x_k^i, \omega_k^i)\}_{i=1:m} = \Pr[\{(x_{k-1}^i, \omega_{k-1}^i)\}_{i=1:m}, y_k, u_k]$				
• Draw input samples:	$u_k^i \sim f_u(u_k)$			
Propagate priors:	$x_k^i \sim f_x(x_k   x_{k-1}^i, u_k^i)$			
• Update the weights:	$\omega_k^{i\prime} = \omega_{k-1}^i f_{\mathcal{Y}}(y_k   x_k^i, u_k^i)$			
• Normalize the weights:	$\omega_k^i = \omega_k^i  / \sum_{i=1}^m \omega_k^i  '$			
• Construct posterior density:	$f_x(x_k y_k,u_k) \approx \sum_{i=1}^m \omega_k^i \delta(x_k - x_k^i)$			
• Check effective sample size:	$N_{eff} \approx 1/\sum_{i=1}^{m} (\omega_k^i)^2$			
• If $N_{eff} \leq N_T$ , Resample:	$\{(x_k^i, \omega_k^i = 1/m)\}_{i=1:m} \sim f_x(x_k   y_k, u_k)$			

Table 1: PF process.

#### 3.2. Auxiliary Particle Filter (APF)

As stated earlier, the choice of importance density is crucial in a filter design. If the importance density only corresponds to the prior density, like generic PF, the propagated particles may land in the regions with low likelihoods where the corresponding weights get small values. To improve the filtering performance, we may give more chance to the particles, which will find more likelihood after propagation. For this objective, in auxiliary particle filter (APF), the particles are drawn from the joint distribution of the prior and the likelihood [5]. Therefore, the importance density is defined the joint density of the state  $x_k$  and the index of the particle j in the previous step, i.e.  $g_{x,j}(x_k, j|Y_{k-1}, U_{k-1})$ . From Bayes' rule the joint density of  $x_k$  and j is found as

$$f_{x,j}(x_k, j|Y_k, U_k) \propto f_{y,u}(y_k, u_k|x_k) g_{x,j}(x_k, j|Y_{k-1}, U_{k-1}) = \omega_{k-1}^j f_{y,u}(y_k, u_k|x_k) f_x(x_k|x_{k-1}^j)$$
(17)

 $x_k$  is still unknown and it can be estimated by a representative value  $\mu_k^j$  from the prior, which may be chosen the mean, the mode or a random draw from the prior. Therefore,

$$f_{x,j}(x_k, j|Y_k, U_k) \approx \omega_{k-1}^j f_{y,u}(y_k, u_k | \mu_k^j) f_x(x_k | x_{k-1}^j)$$
(18)

That reduces Eq. (12) to

$$\omega_k^i \propto f_{y,u}(y_k, u_k | x_k^i) / f_{y,u}\left(y_k, u_k | \mu_k^{j^i}\right)$$
<sup>(19)</sup>

And similar to Eq. (16)

$$\omega_k^i \propto f_y(y_k | x_k^i, u_k) / f_y\left(y_k | \mu_k^{j^i}, u_k\right)$$
<sup>(20)</sup>

The density function to draw candidate particles from the last step and propagate to the current step is therefore,

$$f_x(x_{k-1}|y_k, u_k) \approx \sum_{j=1}^m \omega_{k-1}^j f_y(y_k|\mu_k^j, u_k) \,\delta\big(x_{k-1} - x_{k-1}^j\big) \tag{21}$$

Table 2 summarizes the process of APF for state estimation.

$\{(x_k^i, \omega_k^i)\}_{i=1:m} = APF[\{(x_{k-1}^i, \omega_{k-1}^i)\}_{i=1:m}, y_k, u_k]$				
• Draw input samples:	$u_k^i \sim f_u(u_k)$			
Generate representatives:	$\mu_k^i = E(x_k   x_{k-1}^i, u_k^i)$			
• Find representative weights:	$\omega_{\mu_k}^i \propto \omega_{k-1}^i f_y(y_k   \mu_k^i, u_k^i)$			
Construct representative density:	$f_x(x_{k-1} y_k,u_k) \approx \sum_{i=1}^m \omega_{\mu_k}^i \delta\left(x_{k-1} - x_{k-1}^i\right)$			
• Draw particles from last step:	$x_{k-1}^i \sim f_x(x_{k-1} y_k, u_k)$			
• Redraw input samples:	$u_k^i \sim f_u(u_k)$			
Propagate priors:	$x_k^i \sim f_x(x_k   x_{k-1}^i, u_k^i)$			
Regenerate representatives:	$\mu_k^i = E(x_k   x_{k-1}^i, u_k^i)$			
• Update the weights:	$\omega_k^i \propto f_y(y_k   x_k^i, u_k^i) . / f_y(y_k   \mu_k^i, u_k^i)$			
Construct posterior density:	$f_x(x_k y_k,u_k) \approx \sum_{i=1}^m \omega_k^i \delta(x_k - x_k^i)$			
Check effective sample size:	$N_{eff} \approx 1/\sum_{i=1}^{m} (\omega_k^i)^2$			
• If $N_{eff} \leq N_T$ , Resample:	$\{(x_k^i, \omega_k^i = 1/m)\}_{i=1:m} \sim f_x(x_k   y_k, u_k)$			

Table 2: APF process.

## 3.3. Regularized Particle Filter (RPF)

When the particles are drawn from a discrete distribution function, the particles with smaller weights have lower chance, while the highly weighted particles will repeatedly be chosen, causing loss of diversity. This problem can be prevented with constructing a continuous distribution function for the posterior density. Regularization is usually done using rescaled kernel density  $K_h(x) = h^{-D}K(x/h)$ , where h > 0 is the bandwidth with an optimal value of  $h_{opt}$  for a *D* dimensional state of *x* [14]. Equation 11 can therefore be restated in the continuous form as

$$f_x(x_k|Y_k, U_k) \approx \sum_{i=1}^m \omega_k^i K_h(x_k - x_k^i)$$
(22)

There are different choices of kernel functions among which Epanechnikov and Gaussian functions are commonly used for regularization [15]. The process of RPF technique for state estimation is outlined in Table 3.

$\{(x_k^i, \omega_k^i)\}_{i=1:m} = RPF[\{(x_{k-1}^i, \omega_{k-1}^i)\}_{i=1:m}, y_k, u_k]$		
• Draw input samples:	$u_k^i \sim f_u(u_k)$	
Propagate priors:	$x_k^i \sim f_x(x_k   x_{k-1}^i, u_k^i)$	
• Update the weights:	$\omega_k^{i\prime} = \omega_{k-1}^i f_y(y_k   x_k^i, u_k^i)$	
• Normalize the weights:	$\omega_k^i = \omega_k^i  / \sum_{i=1}^m \omega_k^i  / $	
Regularize posterior density:	$f_x(x_k y_k, u_k) \approx \sum_{i=1}^m \omega_k^i K_h(x_k - x_k^i)$	

Table 3: RPF process.

## 3.4. Regularized Auxiliary Particle Filter (RAPF)

While APF improves the sampling process by drawing the particles of larger likelihoods in the next step, it still suffers from loss of diversity and sensitivity to the outliers in the proposal particles. If the process noise is small, sampling the particles with higher probability and propagating them to the next step will lead to congestion of the priors within a narrow neighbourhood, which does not represent the distribution of the state. This deficiency is addressed in RAPF technique by regularizing the empirical density  $f_x(x_{k-1}^j|y_k, u_k)$  and sampling from the resulting continuous distribution [16]. Similar to RPF, regularization of discrete density functions is doable with rescaled Kernel density:

$$f_x(x_{k-1}|y_k, u_k) \approx \sum_{j=1}^m \omega_{k-1}^j f_y(y_k|\mu_k^j, u_k) K_h(x_{k-1} - x_{k-1}^j)$$
(22)

The likelihood of the representative particle  $f_y(y_k|\mu_k^j, u_k)$  may end up with small values, leading to large weights  $\omega_k^i$  for the corresponding particles through Eq. (20). This will nullify the effect of the other particles with small weights, whereas they are equally consuming the computational efforts. To control the variance of the weights and improve effectiveness of the sampled particles, a rejection algorithm can be employed by defining an acceptance threshold for the samples, i.e.,  $> \omega_k^i > 1/w$ , where w > 1 is a chosen design factor for rejection. RAPF technique with rejection algorithm is outlined in table 4.

# 4. Verification of Performance

To evaluate and compare performance of the developed filters, the well-known non-stationary growth model (NGM) [17] will be utilized. We have enhanced this model with non-uniform steps  $\Delta t$  and including the input u for performance evaluation of the systems with stochastic inputs [11,18].

$$u_{k} = u_{A_{k}} + \kappa_{k}$$

$$x_{k} = \frac{1}{2} x_{k-1} \Delta t_{k} + \frac{25 (x_{k-1} + u_{A_{k}}) \Delta t_{k}}{1 + (x_{k-1} + u_{A_{k}})^{2} \Delta t_{k}^{2}} + 8 \Delta t_{k} u_{A_{k}} \cos(1.2(k-1))/|u_{A_{k}}| + \tau_{k}$$

$$y_{k} = \frac{1}{20} x_{k} (x_{k} + u_{A_{k}}) + \nu_{k}$$
(24)

We assume the input noise  $\kappa$  and the output noise  $\nu$  have unknown distributions. Instead, the input noise and the output noise are represented by sets of *s* redundant measurements in each case. The model exemplifies a system with unknown noise characteristics for the sensors, where, there are several readings from the sensors at each time step.

#### Table 4: RAPF process.

$\{(x_k^i, \omega_k^i)\}_{i=1:m} = RAPF[\{(x_{k-1}^i, \omega_{k-1}^i)\}_{i=1:m}, y_k, u_k]$				
٠	Draw input samples:	$u_k^i \sim f_u(u_k)$		
٠	Generate representatives:	$\mu_k^i = E(x_k   x_{k-1}^i, u_k^i)$		
٠	Find representative weights:	$\omega_{\mu_k}^i \propto \omega_{k-1}^i f_{\mathcal{Y}}(y_k   \mu_k^i, u_k^i)$		
٠	Regularize representative density:	$f_x(x_{k-1} y_k, u_k) \approx \sum_{i=1}^m \omega_{\mu_k}^i K_h(x_{k-1} - x_{k-1}^i)$		
٠	Draw particles from last step:	$x_{k-1}^{i} \sim f_{x}(x_{k-1} y_{k},u_{k})$		
٠	Redraw input samples:	$u_k^i \sim f_u(u_k)$		
٠	Propagate priors:	$x_k^i \sim f_x(x_k   x_{k-1}^i, u_k^i)$		
٠	Regenerate regularized representatives:	$\mu_k^i = E(x_k   x_{k-1}^i, u_k^i)$		
٠	Update the weights:	$\omega_k^i \propto f_y(y_k   x_k^i, u_k^i) . / f_y(y_k   \mu_k^i, u_k^i)$		
٠	If $\omega_k^i > w$ or $\omega_k^i < 1/w$ , reject the proposal x	$_{k}^{i}$ , return to "Draw particles from last step".		
٠	Regularize posterior density:	$f_x(x_k y_k, u_k) \approx \sum_{i=1}^m \omega_k^i K_h(x_k - x_k^i)$		

## 4.1. Univariate Non-stationary Growth Model (UNGM)

We assume a univariate non-stationary growth model (UNGM) with a single input with actual value of  $u_{A_k} = 8(sin(1.2 k) + sin(k^2))$  and a single output with the following assumptions:  $\Delta t_k \sim \mathcal{U}(0,2)$ ,  $\tau_k \sim \mathcal{N}(0,5)$  and random measurement samples generated from an arbitrary distribution such that  $\{v_k^l | E(v_k^l) = 0, Var(v_k^l) = 2\}_{l=1:50}$  and  $\{\kappa_k^l | E(\kappa_k^l) = 0, Var(\kappa_k^l) = 2\}_{l=1:50}$ . Figure 2 shows the actual and the observed input, the actual state and the observed output of the system in 50 time-steps. State estimation has been repeated for 20 times by each of the developed filters using 100 particles. Figure 3 shows the estimation results for 10 iterations, and table 5 compares the root mean square error of

state estimation for the filters. The largest error associates with generic PF and it is unable to track the system state at many time steps, as shown in Fig. 3. RAPF has a slightly better performance than APF for this model, while it is computationally more costly than APF. Among the developed techniques, RPF shows relatively the best performance with the least averaged error over the 50 time steps.



Fig. 2: One-dimensional state-space; (a) system input, (b) internal state, and (c) measured output.



Fig. 3: State estimation results for PF, APF, RPF and RAPF.

Table 5: Root mean square error for state estimation for UNGM.

Technique	Error
PF	8.88
APF	7.05
RPF	5.38
RAPF	6.48

#### 4.2. Bivariate Non-stationary Growth Model (BNGM)

To evaluate filtering performance in a higher dimensional state-space, we use complex numbers in the model in Eq. 24 that creates a bivariate system with dependent variables. In this simulation, the actual input value is assumed to be  $u_{A_k} = 8(1+i)(sin(1.2 k) - i sin(k^2))$  and for the output:  $\tau_k = \tau_{k_R} + i \tau_{k_I}$ , where  $\tau_{k_R}, \tau_{k_I} \sim \mathcal{N}(0,5)$ . Random measurement samples are generated from an arbitrary distribution such that  $\{v_k^l = v_{k_R}^l + i v_{k_I}^l | E(v_k^l) = 0, Var(v_{k_R}^l) = Var(v_{k_I}^l) = 2\}_{l=1:50}$  and  $\{\kappa_k^l = \kappa_{k_R}^l + i \kappa_{k_I}^l | E(\kappa_k^l) = 0, Var(\kappa_{k_R}^l) = Var(\kappa_{k_I}^l) = 2\}_{l=1:50}$ . In Fig. 4 the actual and the observed input, the actual state and the observed output of the system are shown in 50 time-steps. Likewise the UNGM, state estimation has been repeated for 20 times by each of the developed filters with 100 particles. To compare estimation error of the filters, table 6 provides the root mean square errors over the entire estimated states. Unlike UNGM, generic PF shows a better performance in comparison with APF. Performance of RAPF filter is almost the same as that of PF, and similar to UNGM, the best accuracy is achieved by RPF.

Technique	Error		
	Real part	Imag. Part	Total
PF	5.50	4.53	7.13
APF	6.01	5.64	8.24
RPF	4.74	3.71	6.02
RAPF	5.49	4.68	7.21

Table 6: Root mean square error for state estimation for BNGM.

## 5. Summary and Conclusion

Monte Carlo method has been applied to sequential Bayesian state estimation framework for general class of dynamical systems with first order Markovian model. The resulting filter, i.e. PF can estimate the state considering the noisy input of the systems. In addition to the generic PF, three other variants of this filter, i.e. APF, RPF and RAPF were developed and presented. To verify the performance of the filters in a one-dimensional state-space, an extended form of the well-known NGM has been employed for simulating a highly nonlinear system behaviour. To verify the filtering performance with a higher dimension, the NGM was utilized such that the input, the state and the output variables were taken complex variables. Results of applying the developed filters on the NGM model shows that RPF provides the highest accuracy for the simulation model under study, for both one-dimensional and two-dimensional models. It should be noted that filtering performance is depended on the individual systems, so that a filter with superior performance in one system may show poor results on another system [19].

The work shows that PF framework can effectively be extended to more complex dynamical systems where the system receives noisy inputs.



Fig. 4: Two-dimensional state-space; top: system input, middle: internal state, and bottom: measured output.

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