



# Working Memory and Metastability in a System of Spiking Neurons with Synaptic Plasticity

Morgan André and Christophe Pouzat  
Universidade Estadual de Campinas  
IRMA, Strasbourg University, CNRS  
mrgn.andre@gmail.com christophe.pouzat@math.unistra.fr

NeuroMat Webminar, April 27 2021

## Outline

## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction: delayed responses, working memory, persistent activity and all that</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Metastability</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Definition of the model</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Empirical results</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Mean-field analysis</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Conclusion and perspective</b>	<b>20</b>

## **1 Introduction: delayed responses, working memory, persistent activity and all that**

### **It starts with Fuster in 1973**

A delayed-response trial typically consists of the presentation of one of two possible visual cues, an ensuing period of enforced delay and, at the end of it, a choice of motor response in accord with the cue. The temporal separation between cue and response is the principal element making the delayed response procedure a test of an operationally defined short-term memory function.

Reference: Fuster J. (1973) *Unit Activity in Prefrontal Cortex During Delayed-Response Performance: Neuronal Correlates of Transient Memory*. *J. Neurophys.* **36**: 61-78.

## Fuster's paradigm

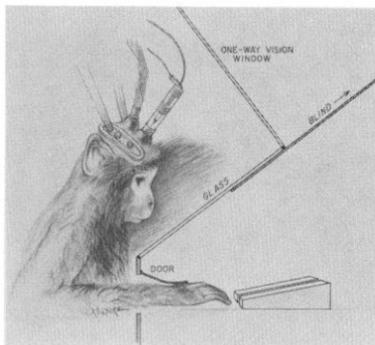


FIG. 1. Diagram of an experimental animal in the testing apparatus.

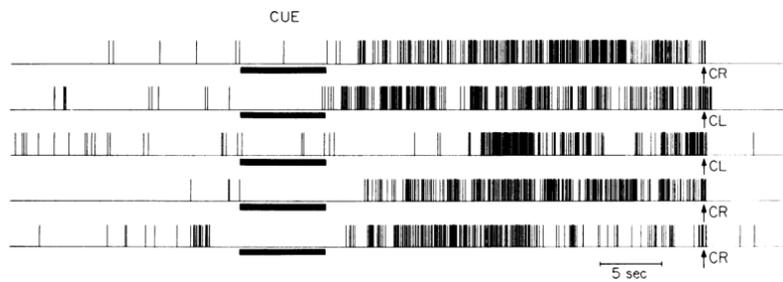


FIG. 4. Unit of type D during five delayed-response trials with 32-sec delay. Spikes are represented by vertical lines in a graphic display obtained by computer method. The notation next to the arrow at the end of each trial's delay refers to the accuracy (C, correct; I, incorrect) and side (R, right; L, left) of the response. The series of single-trial records in this figure—as in subsequent figures—is made of records from consecutive trials.

Figures 1 and 4 of Fuster (1973).

## Other delayed activities are observed

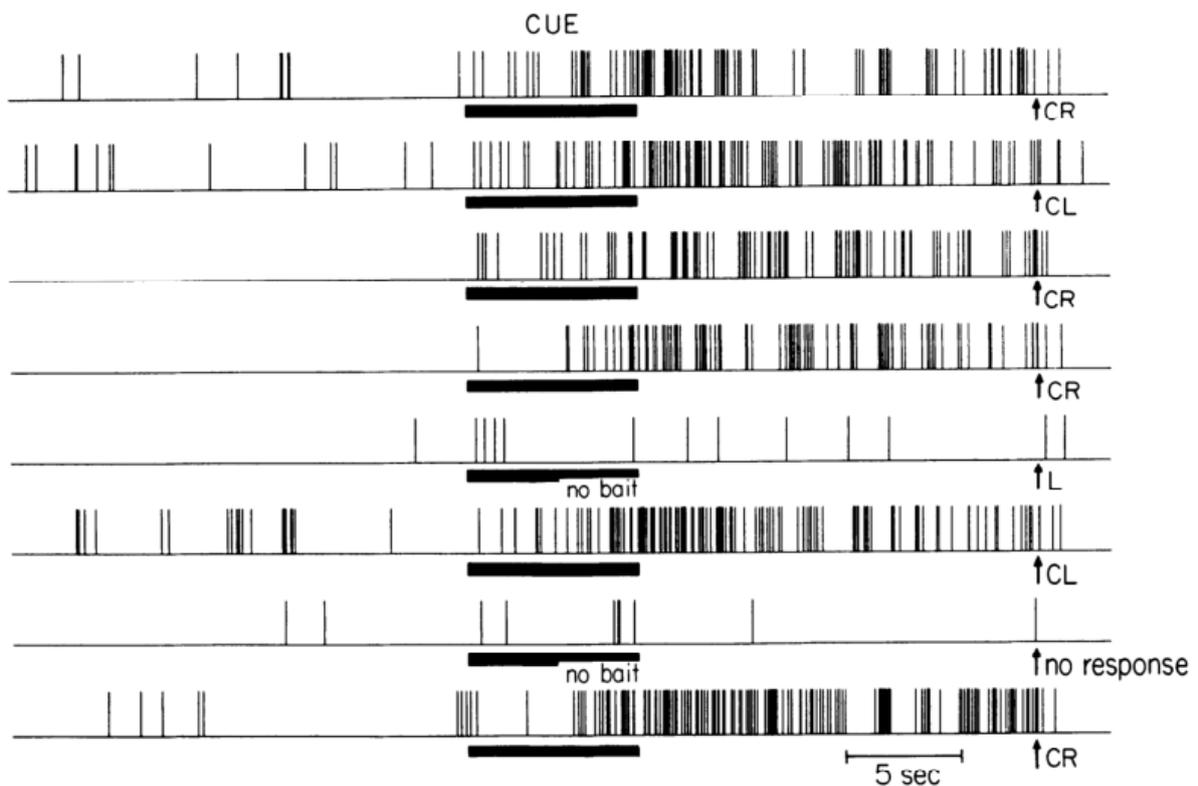


FIG. 6. Unit of type C. Note absence of sustained activation on dry-run trials (fifth and seventh).

Figure 6 of Fuster (1973).

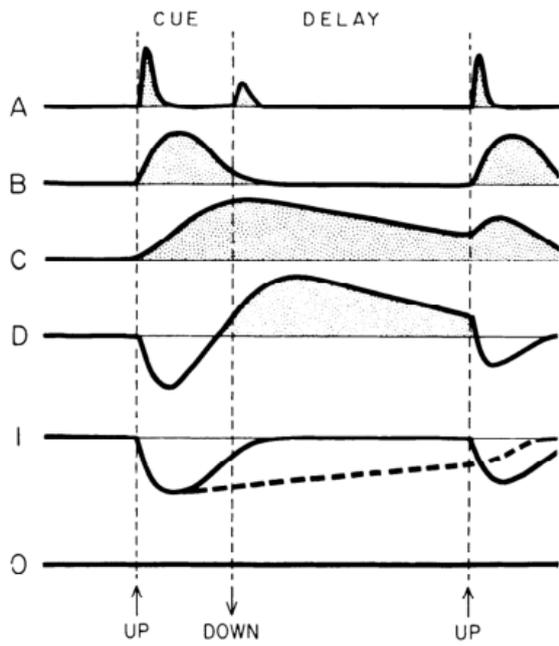
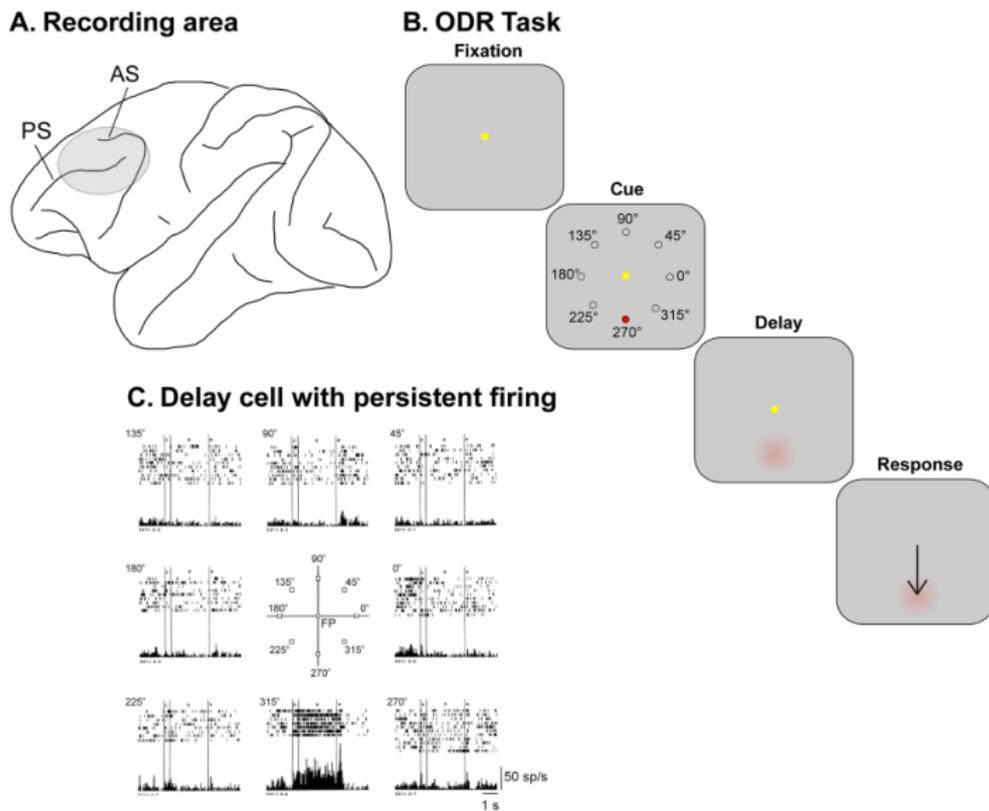


TABLE 1. Classification of units in prefrontal cortex by firing changes during delayed-response performance

Type	No. of Units	Percent
A	20	6.1
B	39	11.9
C	110	33.5
D	55	16.8
I <sub>1</sub>	15	4.6
I <sub>2</sub>	25	7.6
O	64	19.5
Total	328	100.0

Figure 3 and Table 1 of Fuster (1973).

A “modern” version of Fuster’s paradigm

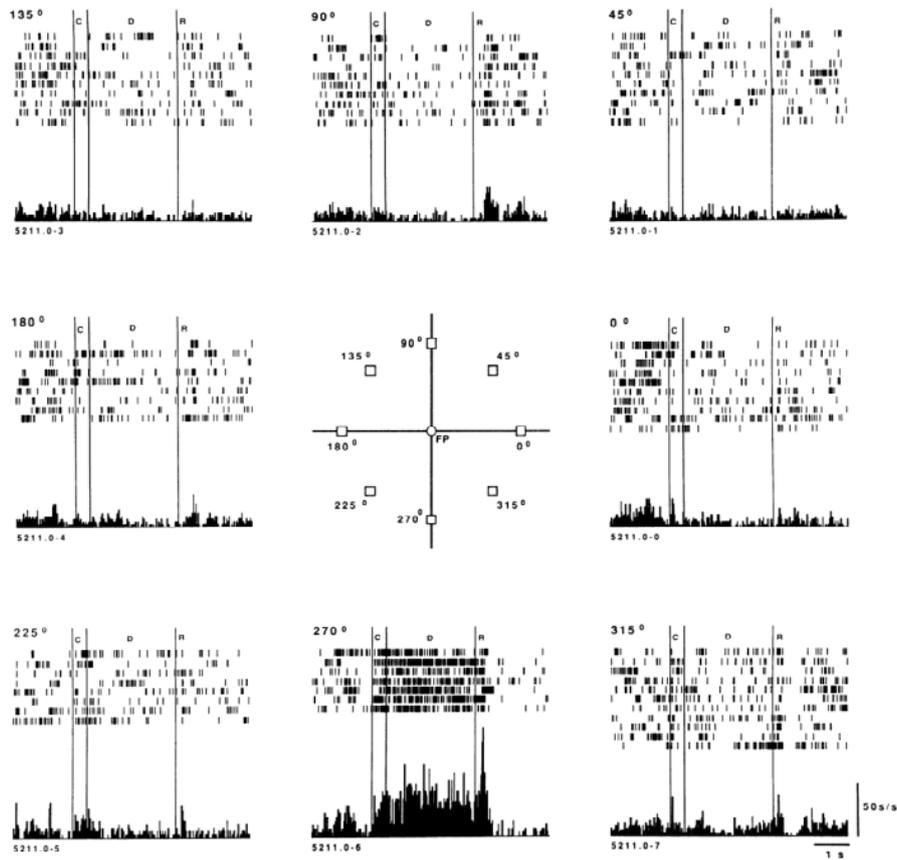


Adaptation of figures from Funahashi et al (1989) by Constantinidis et al (2018).

References:

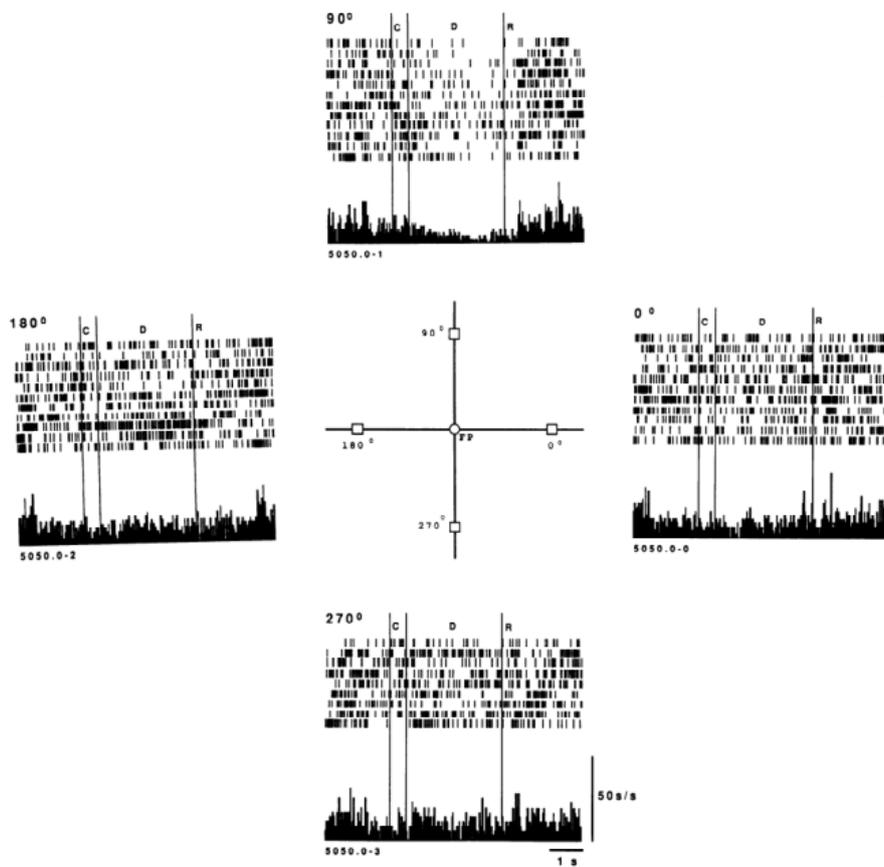
- S. Funahashi, C. J. Bruce, and P. S. Goldman-Rakic (1989) Mnemonic coding of visual space in the monkey's dorsolateral prefrontal cortex . *J. Neurophys.* **61**: 341-349.
- Christos Constantinidis, Shintaro Funahashi, Daeyeol Lee, John D. Murray, Xue-Lian Qi, Min Wang and Amy F.T. Arnsten (2018) Persistent Spiking Activity Underlies Working Memory *Journal of Neuroscience* **38 (32)**: 7020-7028.

A better view of the rasters



Funahashi et al (1989) Figure 3.

An example of “inhibition” during the delay



Funahashi et al (1989) Figure 5.

Funahashi et al excitation / inhibition summary

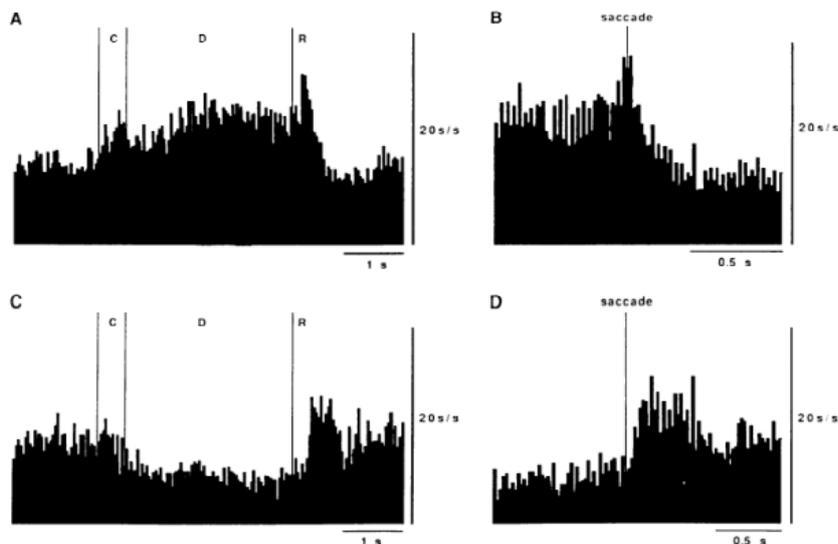
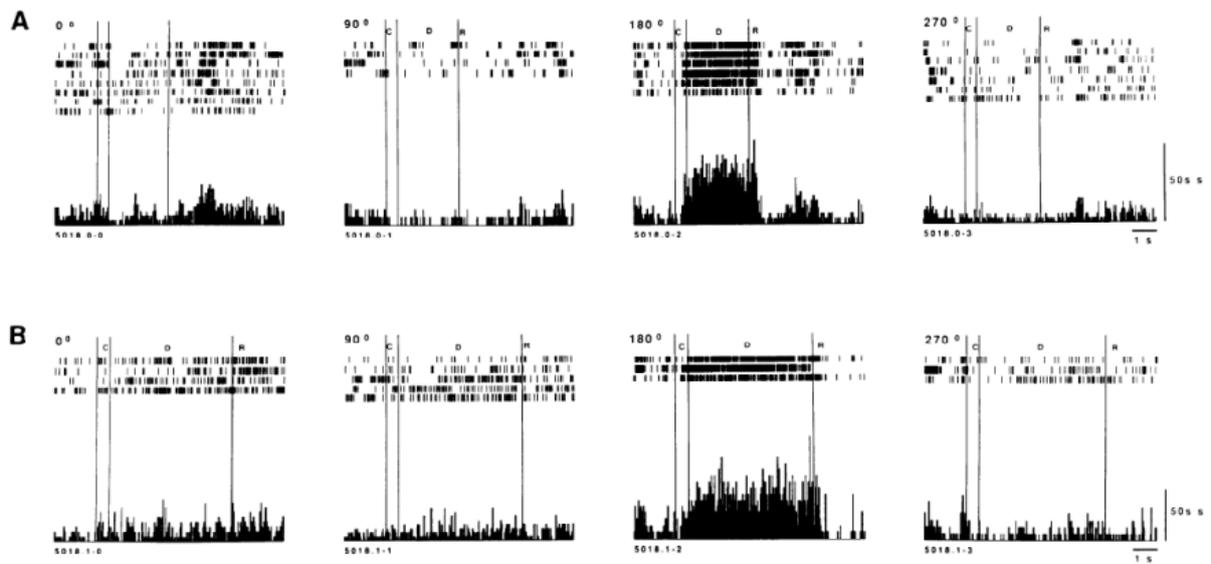


FIG. 10. The time course of excitatory and inhibitory delay period activity. These histograms sum neural activity at the preferred cue direction for all 46 principal sulcus neurons with excitatory directional delay period activity (*A, B*) and all 23 principal sulcus neurons with inhibitory directional delay period activity (*C, D*). *A* and *C* were aligned at the cue presentation; *B* and *D* were aligned at the initiation of the saccadic eye movements. All delay periods were 3 s.

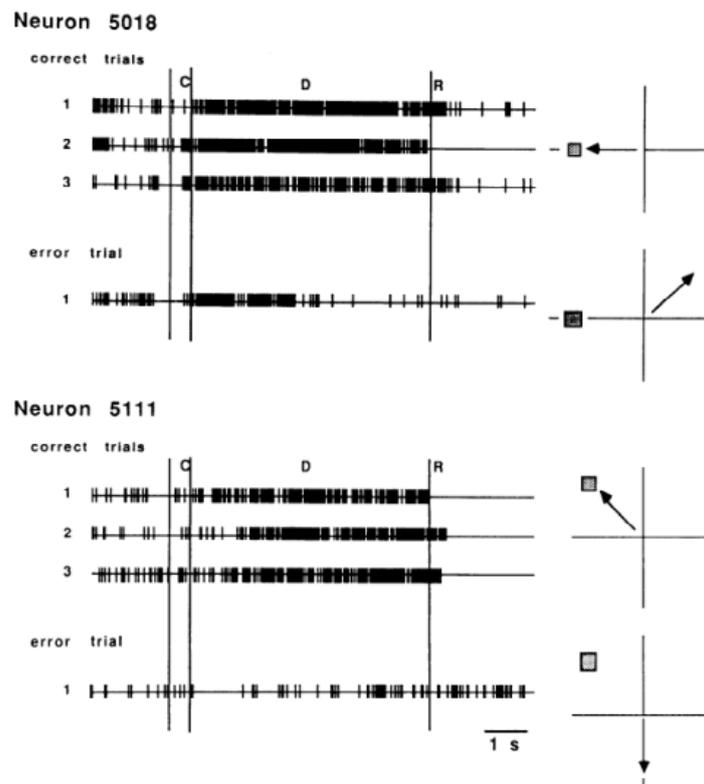
Funahashi et al (1989) Figure 10.

## Changing the delay



Funahashi et al (1989) Figure 11.

What happens when mistakes are made?

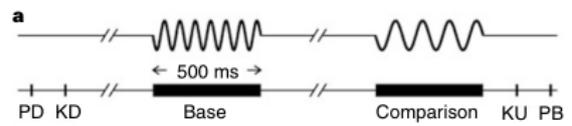


Funahashi et al (1989) Figure 13.

## Neuronal correlates of parametric working memory in the prefrontal cortex

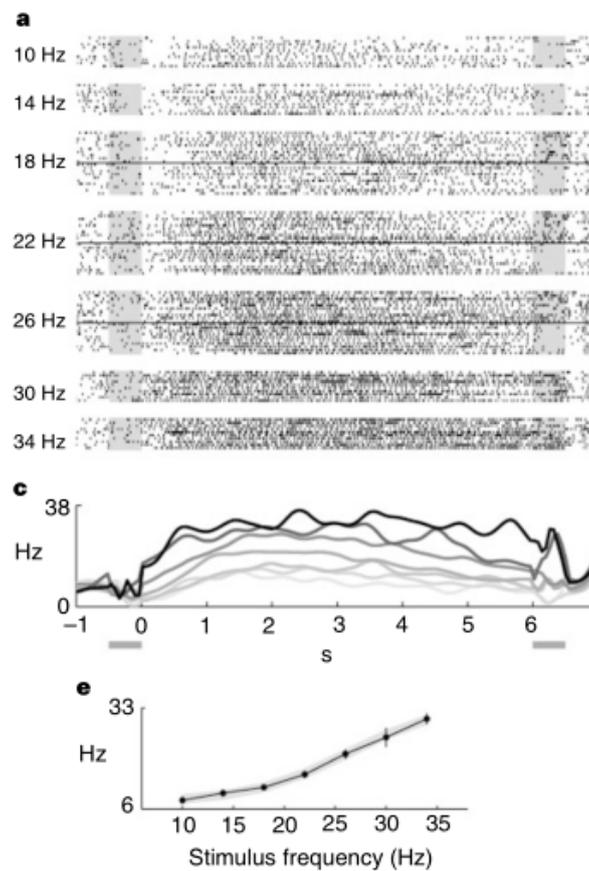
Ranulfo Romo, Carlos D. Brody, Adrián Hernández & Luis Lemus

*Instituto de Fisiología Celular, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México D.F. 04510, México*



Romo et al (1999) title and figure 1a.

Reference: Romo, R., Brody, C., Hernández, A. et al. Neuronal correlates of parametric working memory in the prefrontal cortex. *Nature* **399**, 470–473 (1999). <https://doi.org/10.1038/20939>.



Part of Romo et al (1999) figure 2.

# Synaptic reverberation underlying mnemonic persistent activity

Xiao-Jing Wang

Stimulus-specific persistent neural activity is the neural process underlying active (working) memory. Since its discovery 30 years ago, mnemonic activity has been hypothesized to be sustained by synaptic reverberation in a recurrent circuit. Recently, experimental and modeling work has begun to test the reverberation hypothesis at the cellular level. Moreover, theory has been developed to describe memory storage of an analog stimulus (such as spatial location or eye position), in terms of continuous 'bump attractors' and 'line attractors'. This review summarizes new studies, and discusses insights and predictions from biophysically based models. The stability of a working memory network is recognized as a serious problem; stability can be achieved if reverberation is largely mediated by NMDA receptors at recurrent synapses.

persistent activity to subserve working memory, it must be stimulus-selective, and therefore information-specific. Moreover, it must be able to be turned on and switched off rapidly (=100 ms) by transient inputs.

For 30 years, persistent activity in the cortex has been documented by numerous unit recordings from behaving monkeys during working memory tasks (Box 1). How does stimulus-selective persistent activity arise in a neural network? Can we explain persistent activity in terms of the biophysics of neurons and synapses, and circuit connectivity?

Reference: Wang XJ. Synaptic reverberation underlying mnemonic persistent activity. *Trends Neurosci.* 2001 Aug;**24**(8):455-63. doi: 10.1016/s0166-2236(00)01868-3.

## Cellular substrate

# Heterogeneity in the pyramidal network of the medial prefrontal cortex

Yun Wang<sup>1</sup>, Henry Markram<sup>2</sup>, Philip H Goodman<sup>3</sup>, Thomas K Berger<sup>2</sup>, Junying Ma<sup>1</sup> & Patricia S Goldman-Rakic<sup>4,5</sup>

The prefrontal cortex is specially adapted to generate persistent activity that outlasts stimuli and is resistant to distractors, presumed to be the basis of working memory. The pyramidal network that supports this activity is unknown. Multineuron patch-clamp recordings in the ferret medial prefrontal cortex showed a heterogeneity of synapses interconnecting distinct subnetworks of different pyramidal cells. One subnetwork was similar to the pyramidal network commonly found in primary sensory areas, consisting of accommodating pyramidal cells interconnected with depressing synapses. The other subnetwork contained complex pyramidal cells with dual apical dendrites displaying nonaccommodating discharge patterns; these cells were hyper-reciprocally connected with facilitating synapses displaying pronounced synaptic augmentation and post-tetanic potentiation. These cellular, synaptic and network properties could amplify recurrent interactions between pyramidal neurons and support persistent activity in the prefrontal cortex.

Reference: Wang, Y., Markram, H., Goodman, P. H., Berger, T. K., Ma, J., & Goldman-Rakic, P. S. (2006). Heterogeneity in the pyramidal network of the medial prefrontal cortex. *Nature Neuroscience*, **9**(4), 534–542. doi:10.1038/nn1670.

**This is not the whole story!**

- NMDA receptors are also involved: Min Wang, Yang Yang, Ching-Jung Wang, Nao J. Gamo, Lu E. Jin, James A. Mazer, John H. Morrison, Xiao-Jing Wang, Amy F.T. Arnsten (2013) NMDA Receptors Subserve Persistent Neuronal Firing during Working Memory in Dorsolateral Prefrontal Cortex. *Neuron*, **77** (4): 736-749.
- Dopamine also plays a key role: MIN WANG, SUSHEEL VIJAYRAGHAVAN, PATRICIA S. GOLDMAN-RAKIC (2004) Selective D2 Receptor Actions on the Functional Circuitry of Working Memory. *SCIENCE*, **303**: 853-856

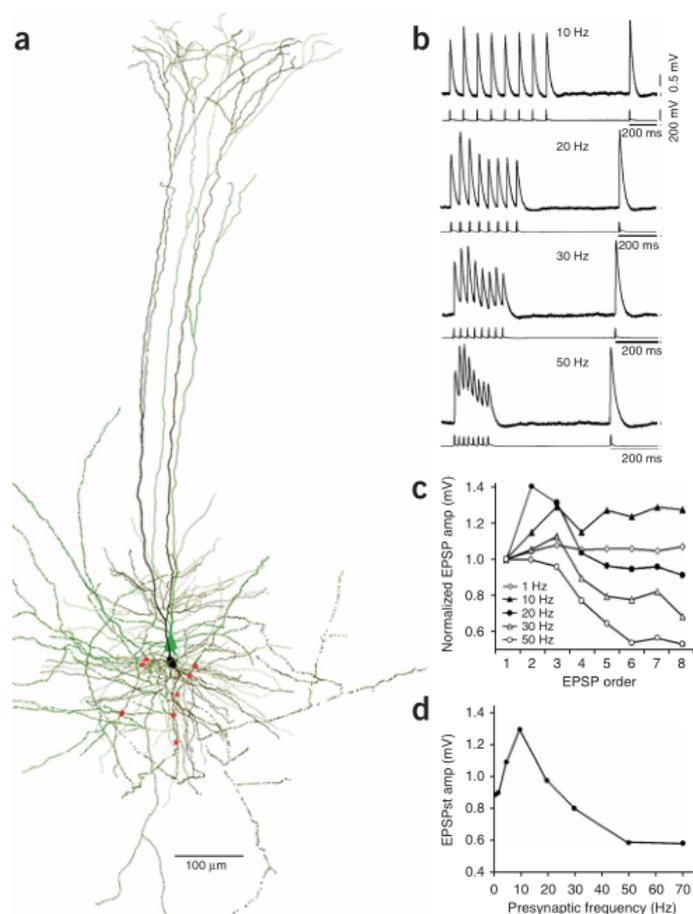


Figure 1 of Wang et al (2006).

### Models with short term facilitation



ELSEVIER

Available online at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

ScienceDirect

Current Opinion in  
Neurobiology

## Working models of working memory

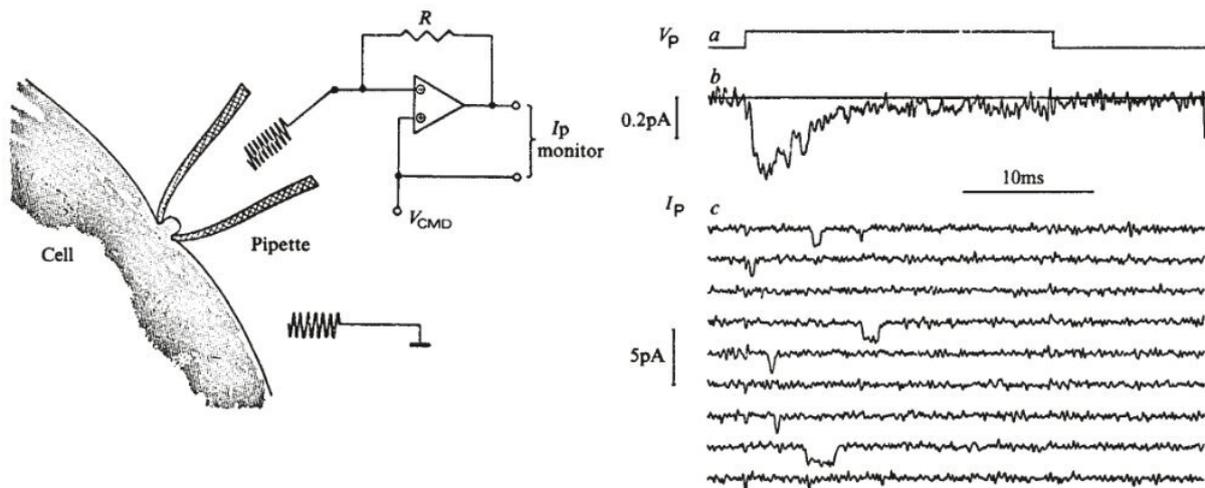
Omri Barak<sup>1</sup> and Misha Tsodyks<sup>2</sup>

Working memory is a system that maintains and manipulates information for several seconds during the planning and execution of many cognitive tasks. Traditionally, it was believed that the neuronal underpinning of working memory is stationary persistent firing of selective neuronal populations. Recent advances introduced new ideas regarding possible mechanisms of working memory, such as short-term synaptic facilitation, precise tuning of recurrent excitation and inhibition, and intrinsic network dynamics. These ideas are motivated by computational considerations and careful analysis of experimental data. Taken together, they may indicate the plethora of different processes underlying working memory in the brain.

activity related to storing a fixed item is not stationary, and there is a large heterogeneity in the firing profiles of different neurons [3,4,5,6]. From the computational side, the network activity representing a memorized item should exhibit a sufficient degree of stability to ensure memory retention. This requirement is especially challenging for storing continuous variables, such as orientation or spatial position of a visual cue, because of an inevitable drift along the variable's representation. Furthermore, integrating the various data-driven challenges in a self-consistent manner is often a non-trivial computational problem.

Reference: Omri Barak, Misha Tsodyks (2014) Working models of working memory, *Current Opinion in Neurobiology*, **25**: 20-24.

## Membrane conductances (ion channels) generate fluctuations



Figures 1 and 2 of Sigworth and Neher (1980). Reference: Sigworth, F. J., & Neher, E. (1980). Single Na<sup>+</sup> channel currents observed in cultured rat muscle cells. *Nature*, **287**: 447-449.

## Synapses generate even more fluctuations

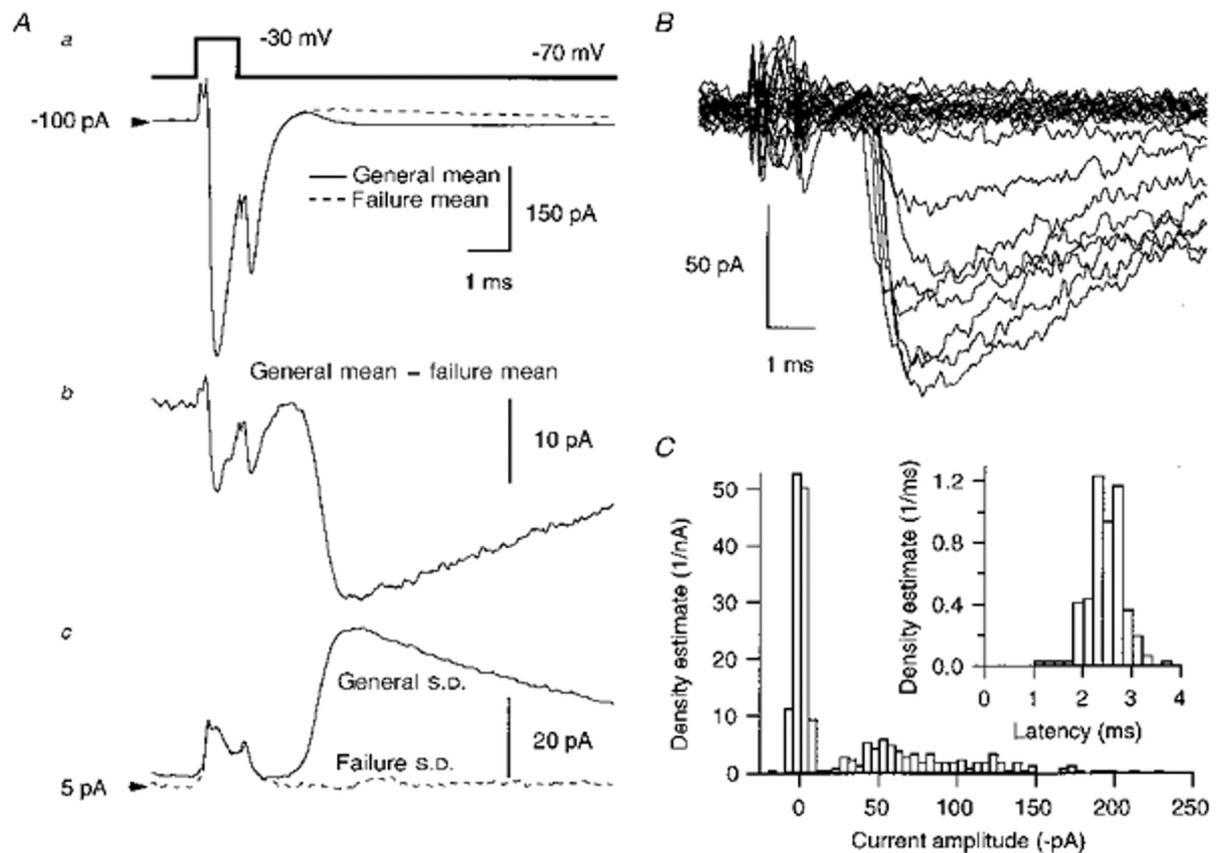


Figure 1 of Pouzat and Marty (1998).

Reference: Pouzat, C., & Marty, A. (1998). Autaptic inhibitory currents recorded from interneurons in rat cerebellar slices. *The Journal of Physiology*, **509**(Pt 3), 777.

## 2 Metastability

### Metastability: general view

*Metastability* is a notion which initially came from statistical physics, and which has now been studied in a wide range of fields to explain various phenomena. Examples: Supercooling water, avalanche, nuclear physics etc.

Informally a system is metastable if, under the right conditions, it tends to persist in a seemingly stable (but in fact precarious) equilibrium for a long time, before falling into the actual equilibrium because of an unusually big (but statistically unavoidable) deviation from this pseudo-equilibrium.

### Metastability: a little bit more specific

In the specific field of *interacting particle systems*, metastability is characterized by the following two properties (Cassandro et al. 1984):

- the time it takes for the system to get to the actual equilibrium (quiescent state) is asymptotically memory-less,
- and before reaching this equilibrium the system behaves as if it were in a stationary regime.

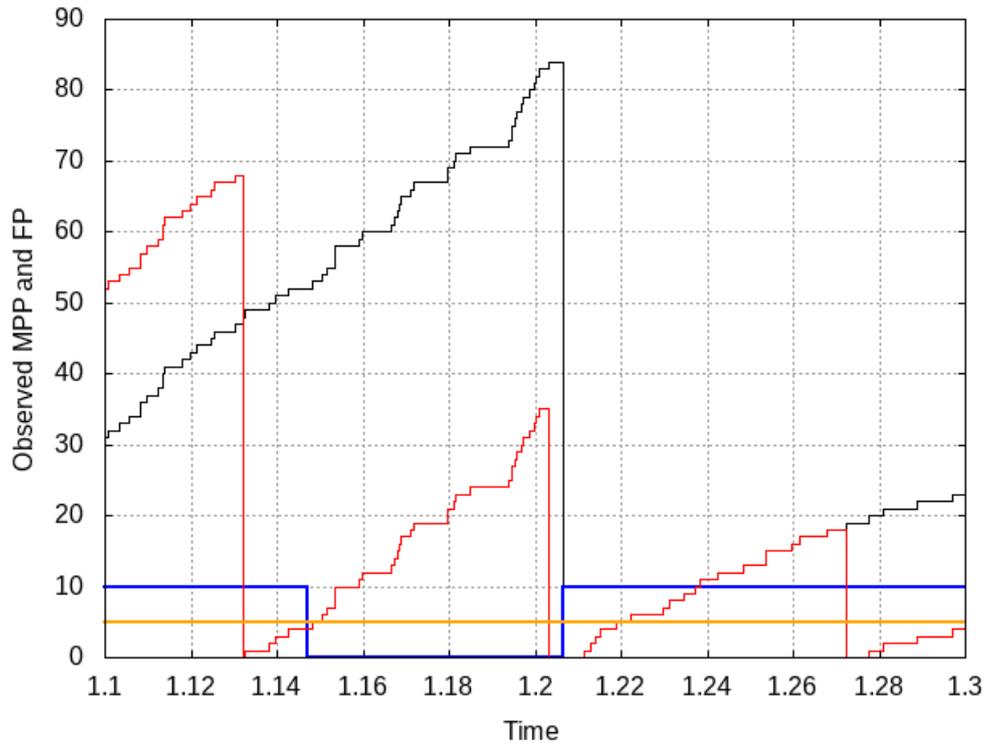
Reference: Cassandro, M., & Galves, A., Olivieri, E., & Vares, M.E. (1984). Metastable Dynamics of Stochastic Dynamics: A Pathwise Approach. *Journal of Statistical Physics*, Vol. 777.

## 3 Definition of the model

### Definition

- The system consists in a finite set of  $N$  identical neurons.
- Each neuron is synaptically connected to all the others.
- Each neuron  $i \in \{1, \dots, N\}$  is associated with a membrane potential denoted  $(U_i(t))_{t \geq 0}$ , taking value in  $\mathbb{N}$ .
- There is a threshold  $\theta \in \mathbb{N}$ . If  $U_i(t) < \theta$  neuron  $i$  cannot spike, while if  $U_i(t) \geq \theta$  it spikes at rate  $\beta$ .
- When a neuron spikes its membrane potential is reset to zero. That's the only way the membrane potential can decrease.
- Each neuron  $i$  has a facilitation state evolving with  $t$ , we denote it  $(F_i(t))_{t \geq 0}$  and it takes value in  $\{0, 1\}$ .
- If  $F_i(t) = 1$  and a spike occurs at time  $t$  for neuron  $i$ , then the membrane potential of every neuron is incremented by 1.
- If  $F_i(t) = 0$  the spike has no post-synaptic effect.
- The facilitation state of a given neuron is set to 1 immediately after a spike has been emitted by this neuron, then the facilitation is lost at rate  $\lambda$ .
- We are here modelling the sub-network of strongly interconnected pyramidal cells with facilitating synapses described by Wang et al (2006) in the prefrontal cortex.

In picture



Simulation with  $N = 50$ ,  $\beta = 10$ ,  $\lambda = 10$  and  $\theta = 5$ .

## 4 Empirical results

### Simulations outline

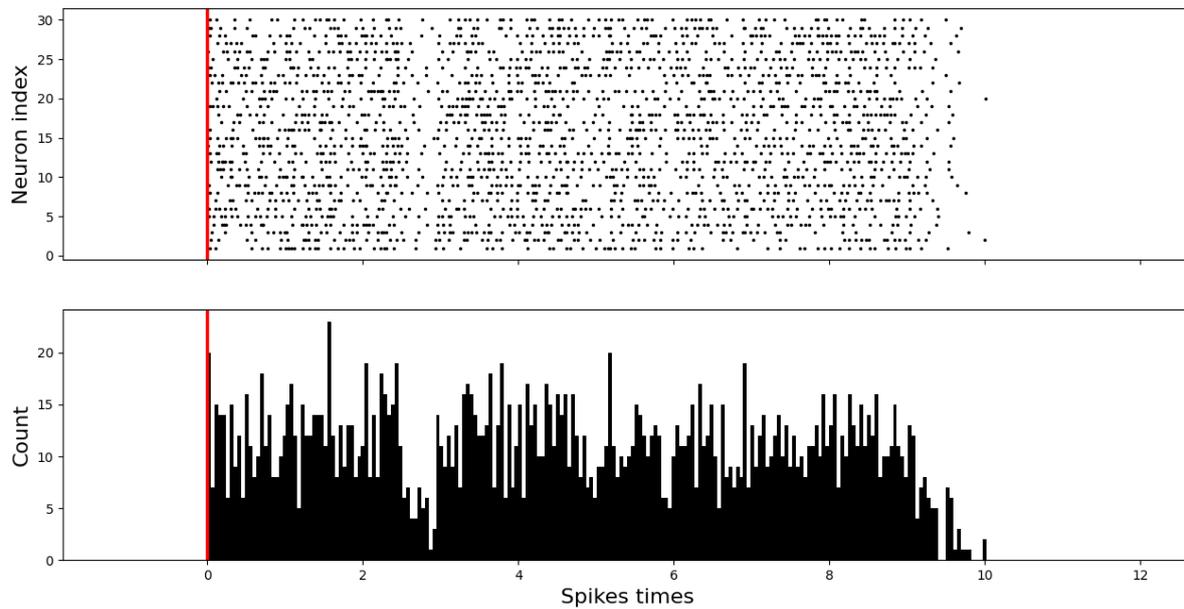
Simulations are easily performed since the “global” network rate is constant between two successive events (spike or facilitation loss). Our C code writes to disk:

```
# Simulation of a networks with 50 neurons
# Xoroshiro128+ PRNG seeds set at 20061001 and 19731004
# The initial max membrane potential was set to 50
# The initial probability for a synapse to be active was set to 0.750000
# Parameter theta = 5.000000
# Parameter beta = 10.000000
# Parameter lambda = 10.000000
# Simulation duration = 50.000000
```

# Spike time	Total nb of spikes	Neuron of origin
0.0012163964	1	11
0.0015877227	2	39
0.0021882591	3	4
0.0046765785	4	18
0.0065390698	5	33
...		

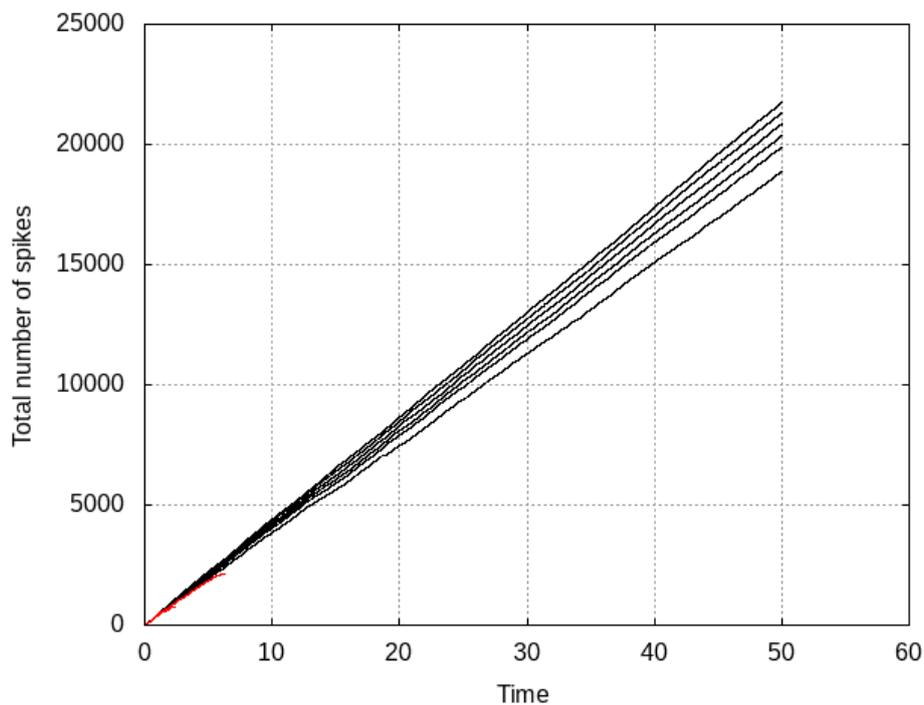
Note: by global rate we mean the rate of the joint process:  $(U_i, F_i)_{i \in \{1, \dots, N\}}$ .

### Tiny network example



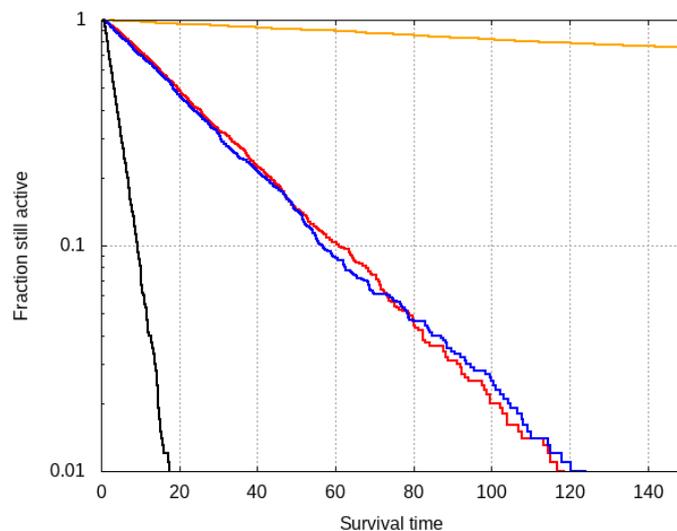
Trajectory of an entire system composed of 30 neurons, with  $\lambda = 5$ ,  $\beta = 10$  and  $\theta = 5$ . The initial probability for the synapses to be active was 0.75, the initial membrane potentials were drawn uniformly on  $\{0, 1, \dots, 29\}$ .

### Increasing $\lambda$



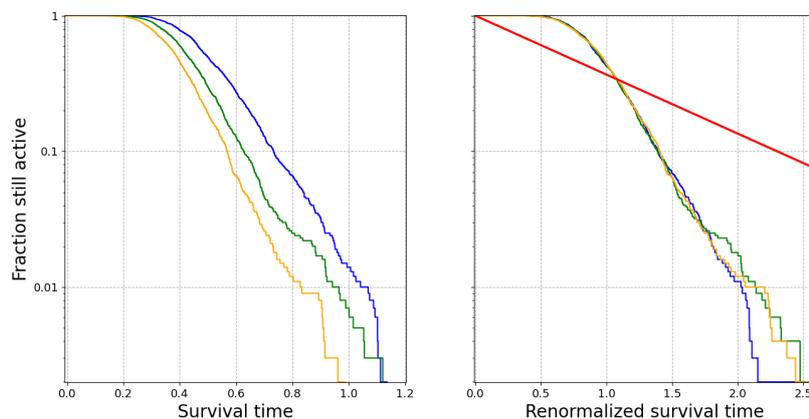
Observed counting processes of a network made of 50 neurons with increasing values of  $\lambda$  from 1 to 9. In black, “top to bottom”,  $\lambda \in \{1, 2, \dots, 6\}$ ; in red,  $\lambda > 6$ .

## Survival time distribution



Empirical survival functions for 1000 replicates with  $\theta = 5$ ,  $\lambda = 6$  (blue and red),  $\lambda = 7$  (black) and  $\lambda = 5$  (orange),  $\beta = 10$  and a network with 50 neurons. The initial probability for the synapses to be active was 0.75, the initial membrane potentials were drawn uniformly on  $\{0, 1, \dots, 49\}$ . All simulations except the blue and red start from *the same* random initial state. **A log scale is used for the ordinate.**

## Survival time when $\lambda$ is “too” large



Empirical survival functions for 1000 replicates with  $\lambda = 15$  (blue),  $\lambda = 30$  (green),  $\lambda = 60$  (orange),  $\beta = 10$  and a network with 50 neurons. The initial probability for the synapses to be active was 0.75, the initial membrane potentials were drawn uniformly on  $\{0, 1, \dots, 49\}$ . All simulations start from *the same* random initial state.

On the left side the empirical survival function are computed from raw datas, whereas on the right side the data are renormalized (divided by the mean). **A log scale is used for the ordinate.** The red line on the right side corresponds to the function  $t \mapsto e^{-t}$ . The survival functions doesn't seem to follow any exponential distribution here.

## 5 Mean-field analysis

What can we do, what do we want?

- We cannot yet prove that the metastable state exists.
- We will therefore postulate that it does: that's what the simulations show.
- We will use the intrinsic symmetry of the model: the neurons are all equivalent.
- We will try to get network properties in the metastable state:
  - network firing rate
  - number of neurons in each state
  - number of facilitated synapses
  - ...

from the 4 network parameters:  $N, \theta, \beta, \lambda$ .

**Notations and remarks**

- We have  $(U_i(t))_{t \geq 0} \in \mathbb{N}$ , but from the network dynamics what matters is to know whether  $U_i(t) \geq \theta$  or not.
- We then have to consider  $\theta + 1$  different *states* for  $U_i(t)$ :  $\{0, 1, \dots, \theta - 1, \geq \theta\}$ , that is,  $\theta$  states below threshold and 1 state above.
- Let us write
  - $N_i(t)$  for  $i \in \{0, 1, \dots, \theta - 1\}$  the number of neurons whose membrane potential equals  $i$
  - $N_\theta(t)$  the number of neurons whose membrane potential is  $\geq \theta$
 at time  $t$ .
- We obviously have:  $\sum_{i=0}^{\theta} N_i(t) = N$  at all times.
- *Then under our assumption of quasi-stationarity, the expectations of the  $N_i$  should be almost constant in the metastable phase.*
- Thus we let  $\mu_0, \mu_1, \dots, \mu_\theta$  be the constants such that  $\mathbb{E}(N_0(t)) \approx \mu_0, \dots, \mathbb{E}(N_\theta(t)) \approx \mu_\theta$ , where  $t$  is any time before the extinction of the system.

**Another key quantity**

- If we manage to compute  $\mu_\theta$ , we know the approximate network rate at anytime (before extinction):  $\nu_N = \mu_\theta \beta$ .
- In our model, when neuron  $j$  spikes at time  $s$  we have  $F_j(s+) = 1$ , the question is:
  - *if the next spike of  $j$  happens at time  $s + \tau$ , do we still have  $F_j(s + \tau) = 1$ ?*
  - By our model definition *and our quasi-stationarity assumption* we have:  $\mathbb{E}[F_j(s + \tau) | \tau] = e^{-\lambda \tau}$ .
- We introduce now our second “key” quantity:

$$\mu_E = \mathbb{E}(e^{-\lambda \tau}),$$

where the expectation is taken with respect to the unknown distribution of the conditioning *rv*  $T$  whose realization is  $\tau$ .

- $\mu_E$  is the “mean probability” that the synapse is still facilitated when the neuron spikes.

### Circulation among $U$ states

- Remark that  $\mu_E$  allows us to define the rate of “effective” spikes (spikes that have a post-synaptic effect):  $\mu_\theta \beta \mu_E$ .
- Stationarity means that the rate at which neurons leave membrane potential state  $i \in \{0, 1, \dots, \theta - 1, \geq \theta\}$  must equal the rate at which neurons enter that state.
- For  $i \in \{1, \dots, \theta - 1\}$  this translates into:

$$(\mu_\theta \beta \mu_E) \mu_i = (\mu_\theta \beta \mu_E) \mu_{i-1},$$

that is:

$$\mu_0 = \mu_1 = \dots = \mu_{\theta-1}.$$

- For the two extrem states, we have:

$$(\mu_\theta \beta \mu_E) \mu_0 = \mu_\theta \beta,$$

leading to

$$\mu_0 = 1/\mu_E.$$

- But we have:

$$\sum_{i=0}^{\theta-1} \mu_i + \mu_\theta = N.$$

- Using the equality of the  $\mu_i$  for  $i < \theta$  and our last equality ( $\mu_0 = 1/\mu_E$ ), yields:

$$\mu_\theta = N - \frac{\theta}{\mu_E}.$$

- We see that as  $\mu_E$  increases, so does  $\mu_\theta$  and therefore  $\nu_N = \mu_\theta \beta$ , the network spike rate.
- We can also obtain a new expression for the rate of “effective” spikes:

$$\mu_\theta \beta \mu_E = \left( N - \frac{\theta}{\mu_E} \right) \beta \mu_E = \beta (\mu_E N - \theta).$$

### Getting an implicit equation for $\mu_E$

- In the metastable state, a neuron leaves a membrane potential state below threshold at rate:  $\beta (\mu_E N - \theta)$ .
- That neuron must go through a succession of  $\theta$  states to reach threshold, the distribution of the time to reach threshold is therefore an Erlang distribution with parameters  $\theta$  and  $\beta (\mu_E N - \theta)$  and its mean value is:

$$\frac{\theta}{\beta (\mu_E N - \theta)}.$$

- Once threshold has been reached, the rate at which a spike is generated is  $\beta$  so the interval between two successive spikes of a given neuron is approximately

$$T \approx \frac{\theta}{\beta (\mu_E N - \theta)} + Y,$$

where  $Y$  is an exponential random variable with rate parameter  $\beta$ .

- Remember that  $\mu_E = \mathbb{E}[\exp(-\lambda T)]$ .
- We therefore have:

$$\mu_E \approx \int_0^\infty \exp\left[-\lambda\left(\frac{\theta}{\beta(\mu_E N - \theta)} + y\right)\right] \beta \exp(-\beta y) dy,$$

that is

$$\mu_E \approx \left[ \exp\left(-\frac{\lambda\theta}{\beta(\mu_E N - \theta)}\right) \right] \int_0^\infty \beta \exp(-(\lambda + \beta)y) dy.$$

- Leading to:

$$\mu_E \approx \frac{\beta}{\lambda + \beta} \exp\left(-\frac{\lambda\theta}{\beta(\mu_E N - \theta)}\right).$$

- *This is an implicit equation we must solve for  $\mu_E$ .*

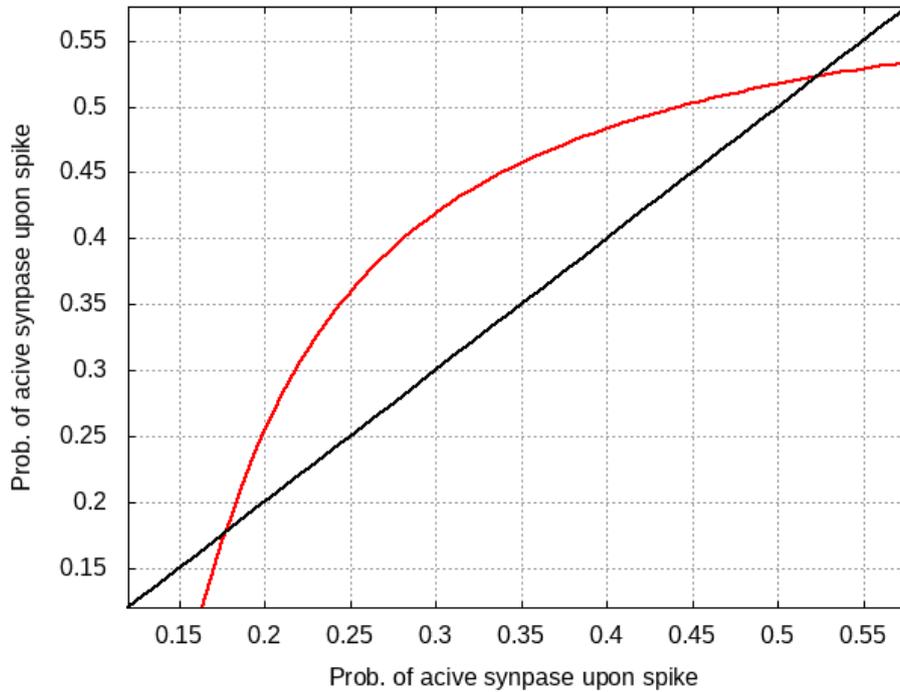
### Remarks

- We can do better than that and work with the distribution of the Erlang random variable—giving the time spent below threshold—instead of the mean of the latter as we just did.
- This requires a numerical integration whose precision we can check.
- Looking at:

$$\mu_E \approx \frac{\beta}{\lambda + \beta} \exp\left(-\frac{\lambda\theta}{\beta(\mu_E N - \theta)}\right),$$

we see that the right hand side is a decreasing function of  $\lambda$ , so if  $\lambda$  is too large the equation could have no solution implying that there is no metastable state as we saw in the simulations.

### Graphical solution of the implicit equation



Example with  $N = 50$ ,  $\theta = 6$ ,  $\beta = 10$ ,  $\lambda = 6$ .

## Comparison between mean-field solution and simulations

The implicit equation solution gives:

With  $N=500$ ,  $\beta=10.0$ ,  $\lambda=6.0$ ,  $\theta=51$  we get:

```
[...]  
mu_E      = 0.54435,  
nu_N      = 4063.10,  
mu_theta  = 406.31,  
mu_A      = 308.56.
```

One numerical simulation gives:

Dealing with `sim_n500_u50_f0p75_b10_l6_sim1_neuron`:

```
[...]  
*** Network level statistics ****  
Ignoring 10 time unit(s) at both ends we get:  
nu_N = 4056.3, with a 95% CI of [4045.4,4067.3].  
The mean nb of neurons above threshold is: 405.861  
The mean nb of active synapse is: 308.909
```

## 6 Conclusion and perspective

### A conclusion for the mathematicians in the room

Remains the question of whether or not it is possible to establish rigorous results for this model, and if so how to do it?

### Asymptotic memorylessness

If you write  $\tau_N$  for the time of extinction of a system containing  $N$  neurons, the standard way to obtain the asymptotic memorylessness is to show:

$$\lim_{N \rightarrow \infty} \left| \mathbb{P} \left( \frac{\tau_N}{\beta_N} > s + t \right) - \mathbb{P} \left( \frac{\tau_N}{\beta_N} > s \right) \mathbb{P} \left( \frac{\tau_N}{\beta_N} > t \right) \right| = 0,$$

where  $\beta_N$  is some time scale satisfying  $\mathbb{E}(\tau_N) \underset{N \rightarrow \infty}{\sim} \beta_N$ .

See for example: Cassandro et al. (1984) Andre (2019) Andre and Planche (2021)

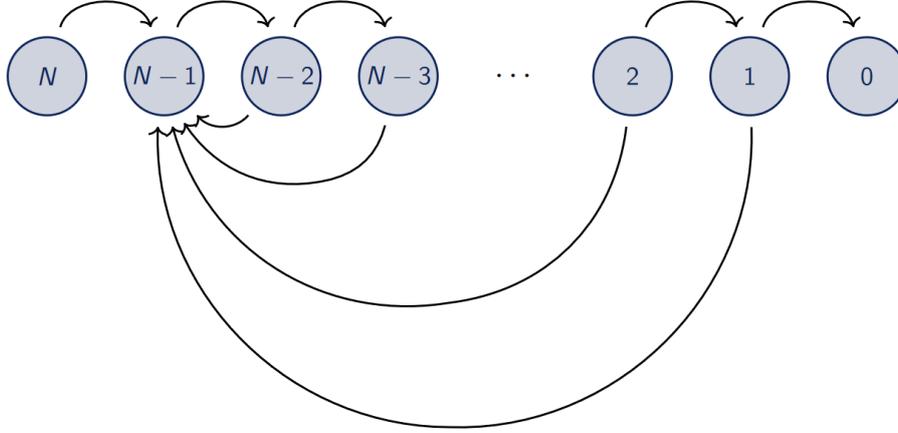
References: Cassandro, M., & Galves, A., Olivieri, E., & Vares, M.E. (1984). Metastable Dynamics of Stochastic Dynamics: A Pathwise Approach. *Journal of Statistical Physics*, Vol. 35.

André, M. (2019). A Result of Metastability for an Infinite System of Spiking Neurons. *Journal of Statistical Physics*, Vol. 177.

André, M., & Planche, L. (2021). The Effect of Graph Connectivity on Metastability in a Stochastic System of Spiking Neurons. *Stochastic Processes and their Applications*, Vol. 131.

### Asymptotic memorylessness

In the setting of André and Planche (2021), which is close to our model, a simple technique is to consider only the number of active neurons at any time  $t$ .



This is a (continuous time) Markov chain  $\rightarrow$  compute the invariant measure explicitly  $\rightarrow$  use it to conclude.

### Asymptotic memorylessness

This technique is NOT applicable here.

Indeed if for any  $t \geq 0$  we write  $X(t)$  for the number of neurons above the threshold in our model, then  $(X(t))_{t \geq 0}$  is not a Markov chain.

An alternative approach would to define  $(X(t))_{t \geq 0}$  as the process that gives the count of neurons for each possible value of the membrane potential.

### Asymptotic memorylessness

That is, for any  $t \geq 0$

$$X(t) = (X_0(t), X_1(t), \dots, X_{\theta-1}(t), X_{\theta}^F(t), X_{\theta}^{NF}(t)).$$

with

$$X_i(t) = \sum_{j=1}^N \mathbb{1}_{\{U_j=i\}} \text{ for } i \in \{0, \dots, \theta-1\},$$

and

$$X_{\theta}^F(t) = \sum_{j=1}^N \mathbb{1}_{\{U_j=\theta, F_j=1\}},$$

$$X_{\theta}^{NF}(t) = \sum_{j=1}^N \mathbb{1}_{\{U_j=\theta, F_j=0\}}.$$

Then  $(X(t))_{t \geq 0}$  is a Markov chain on  $\{0, \dots, N\}^{\theta+2}$ , but it is also far less tractable than the previous case...

### Pseudo stationarity

Remains the question of how to give a precise mathematical formulation of the second point in the characterization of metastability.

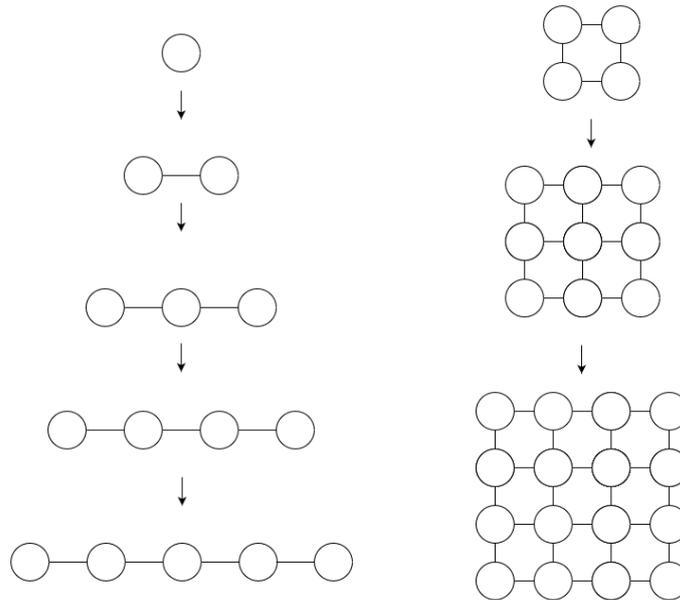
A standard way of expressing this pseudo-stationarity is as follows (see Cassandro et al. 1984). Let  $(\xi_N(t))_{t \geq 0}$  be the state of a stochastic system taking values in some state space  $X^N$ .

Then prove that there is a non trivial measure  $\mu$  on  $X^{\mathbb{Z}}$ , invariant for the infinite counterpart of the system, and which correspond to the weak limit of  $(\xi_N(t))_{t \geq 0}$  when  $N$  goes to  $\infty$ .

Finally prove that, for any suitable  $f : X^{\mathbb{Z}} \mapsto \mathbb{R}$ , we have

$$\frac{1}{R} \int_s^{s+R} f(\xi_N(t)) dt \approx \int f d\mu.$$

### Pseudo stationarity



Problem: a sequence of complete graphs doesn't preserve the local structure!

# The end