

# Sensitivity Analysis

Andrea Saltelli

Open Evidence Research, Open University of Catalonia



MNF990 / Theory of Science and Ethics,  
Bergen, October 4, 2021



# Where to find this talk: [www.andreasaltelli.eu](http://www.andreasaltelli.eu)

Andrea  
Saltelli

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CAETERIS ARE  
NEVER PARIBUS

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@isiteULNE

#statistiques #probabilités #modélisation  
#prédiction Isabelle Bruno du #CERAPS  
@univ\_lille @CNRS\_HdF @ScPoLille nous parle  
des dérives de la #quantophrénie dans un article à  
lire sur le media @FR\_Conversation  
[https://twitter.com/FR\\_Conversation/status/1302651033164881920](https://twitter.com/FR_Conversation/status/1302651033164881920)



Sep 7, 2020

**andrea saltelli**  
@AndreaSaltelli

Pour mes amis francophones. Honoured to be co-  
author of a statactivist like Isabelle Bruno du  
#CERAPS @univ\_lille @CNRS\_HdF @ScPoLille  
@OpenEvidence @UOCNews  
Statistiques et modèles mathématiques : doit-on

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Why something technical in  
this course





# Environmental Science & Policy

Volume 106, April 2020, Pages 87-98



## The technique is never neutral. How methodological choices condition the generation of narratives for sustainability

Andrea Saltelli <sup>a, b</sup>  , Lorenzo Benini <sup>c</sup>, Silvio Funtowicz <sup>a</sup>, Mario Giampietro <sup>d, e</sup>, Matthias Kaiser <sup>a</sup>, Erik Reinert <sup>a, f</sup>, Jeroen P. van der Sluijs <sup>a, g, h</sup>

Something general about  
mathematical modelling

# Caeteris are never paribus

Ceteris paribus or caeteris paribus is a Latin phrase meaning "all other things being equal" or "other things held constant" or "all else unchanged" (Wikipedia)

# The case of DSGE, dynamic stochastic general equilibrium models

Rational expectations of agents  
Efficient market hypothesis

Philip Mirowski



Philip Mirowski, 2013, Never let a serious crisis go wasted, Verso Books.

The US senate and Queen Elisabeth perplexed...



Philip Mirowski, 2013, Never let a serious crisis go wasted, Verso Books.

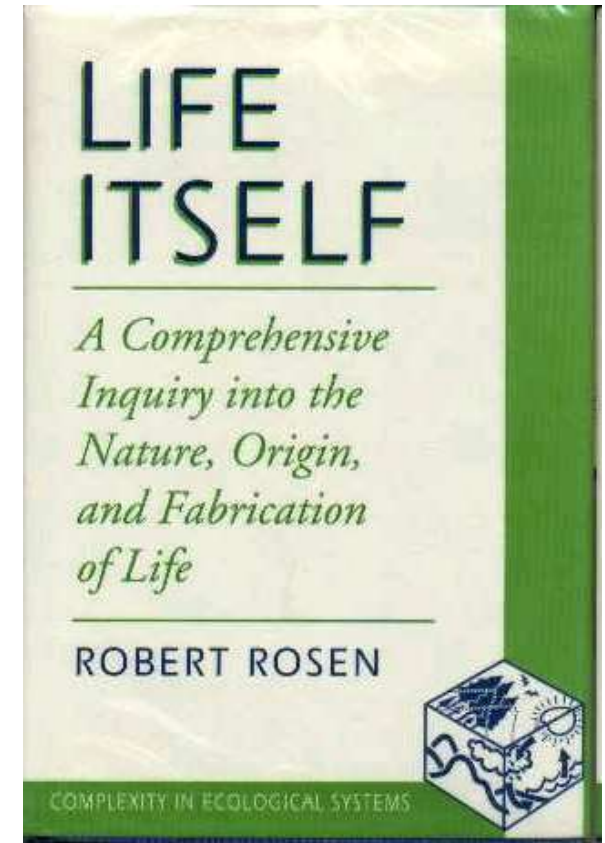
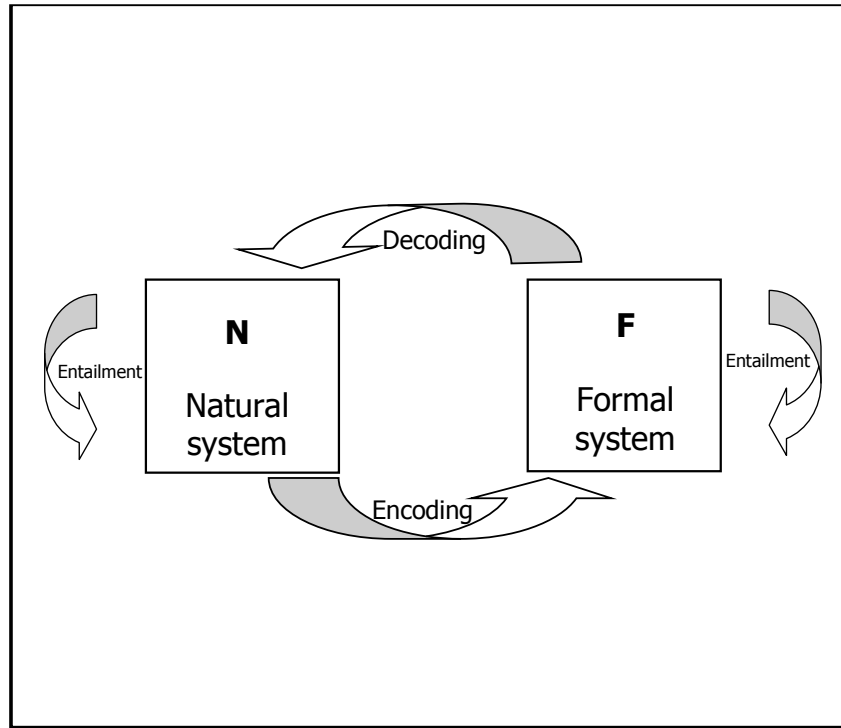
Models have  
little memory

“[...] The process of constructing and validating [value-at risk] models is time consuming and detail oriented; normally even the people who produced the model will not remember many of the assumptions incorporated into it, short of redoing their work, which means that the client cannot simply ask then what went into it.”

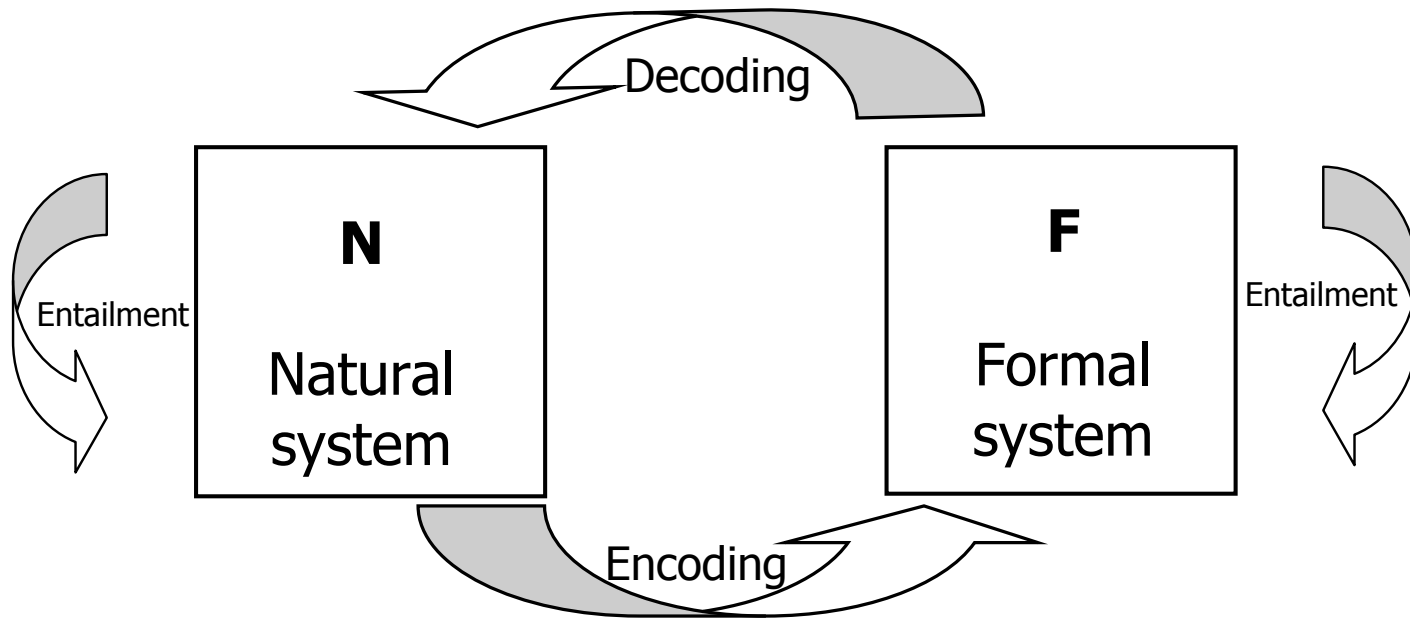
E. Millgram The Great Endarkenment, p. 29

Modelling is a  
craft more than  
a science

# Modelling as a craft rather than as a science for Robert Rosen



R. Rosen, *Life Itself: A Comprehensive Inquiry Into the Nature, Origin, and Fabrication of Life*. Columbia University Press, 1991.



What is a model ?



Robert Rosen

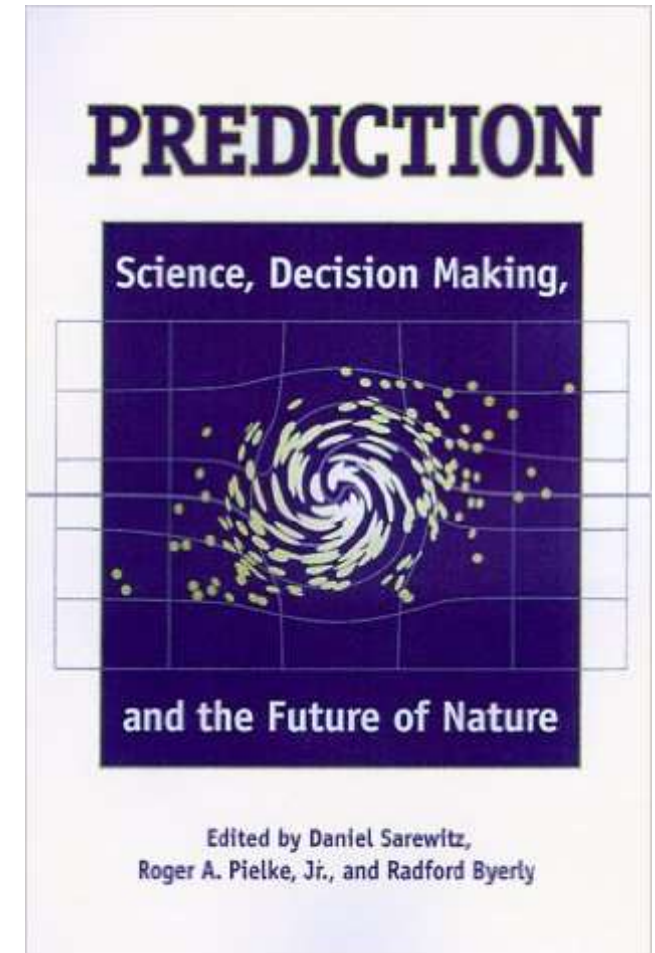
“models are most useful when they are used to challenge existing formulations, rather than to validate or verify them”



Naomi  
Oreskes

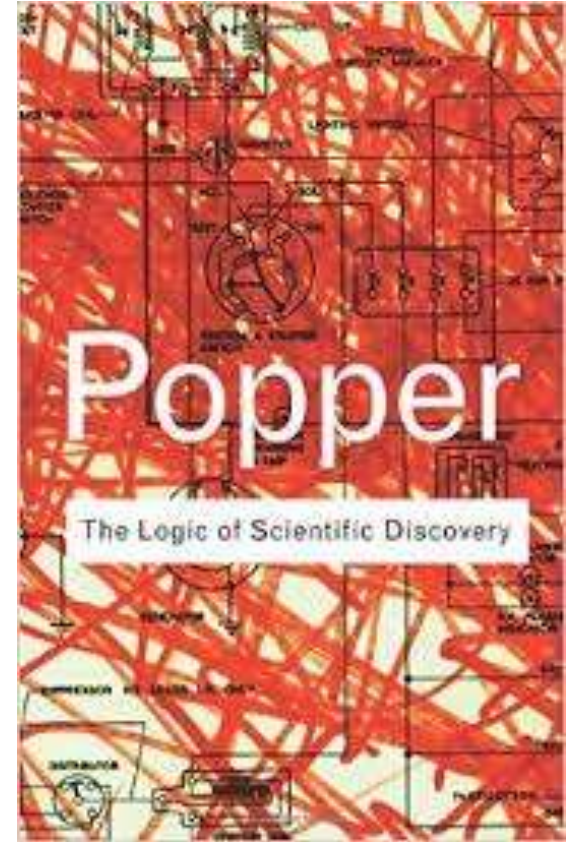
N. Oreskes, K. Shrader-Frechette, and K. Belitz, “Verification, Validation, and Confirmation of Numerical Models in the Earth Sciences,” *Science*, 263, no. 5147, 1994.

# Models are not physical laws



Oreskes, N., 2000, Why predict? Historical perspectives on prediction in Earth Science, in Prediction, Science, Decision Making and the future of Nature, Sarewitz et al., Eds., Island Press, Washington DC

“[...] to be of value in theory testing, the predictions involved must be capable of refuting the theory that generated them”  
(N. Oreskes)



“When a model generates a prediction, of what precisely is the prediction a test? The laws? The input data? The conceptualization?

Any part (or several parts) of the model might be in error, and there is no simple way to determine which one it is”

# Definitions

**Uncertainty analysis:** Focuses on just quantifying the uncertainty in model output

**Sensitivity analysis:** The study of the relative importance of different input factors on the model output

Why Sensitivity analysis?

It is in the guidelines!

# EC impact assessment guidelines: sensitivity analysis & auditing



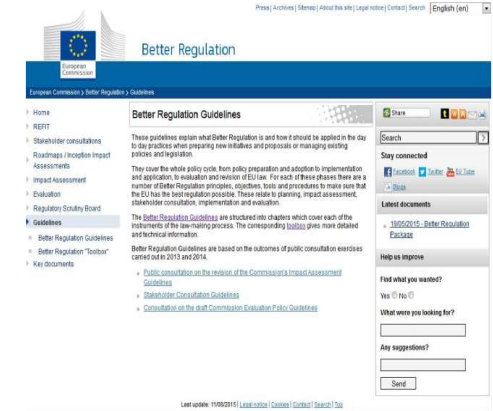
[http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/docs/br\\_toolbox\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/smart-regulation/guidelines/docs/br_toolbox_en.pdf)

## 4. SENSITIVITY AND UNCERTAINTY ANALYSES

Page 391

Six steps for a global SA:

1. Select one output of interest;
2. Participatory step: discuss which input may matter;
3. Participatory step (extended peer review): define distributions;
4. Sample from the distributions;
5. Run (=evaluate) the model for the sampled values;
6. Obtain in this way both the uncertainty of the prediction and the relative importance of variables.



# Is something wrong with this statement (p. 384 of EC guidelines)

The influence of the key variables  
should be investigated by a sensitivity analysis.



European Commission | Better Regulation | Guidelines

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REFIT  
Stakeholder consultations  
Roadmaps / Inception Impact Assessments  
Impact Assessment  
Evaluation  
Regulatory Scrutiny Board  
Guidelines  
Better Regulation Guidelines  
Better Regulation "Toolbox"  
Key documents

### Better Regulation Guidelines

These guidelines explain what Better Regulation is and how it should be applied in the day to day practices when preparing new initiatives and proposals or managing existing policies and legislation.

They cover the whole policy cycle, from policy preparation and adoption to implementation and application, to evaluation and revision of EU law. For each of these phases there are a number of Better Regulation principles, objectives, tools and procedures to make sure that the EU has the best regulation possible. These relate to planning, impact assessment, stakeholder consultation, implementation and evaluation.

The [Better Regulation Guidelines](#) are structured into chapters which cover each of the instruments of the law-making process. The corresponding [toolbox](#) gives more detailed and technical information.

Better Regulation Guidelines are based on the outcomes of public consultation exercises carried out in 2013 and 2014.

- Public consultation on the revision of the Commission's Impact Assessment Guidelines
- Stakeholder Consultation Guidelines
- Consultation on the draft Commission Evaluation Policy Guidelines

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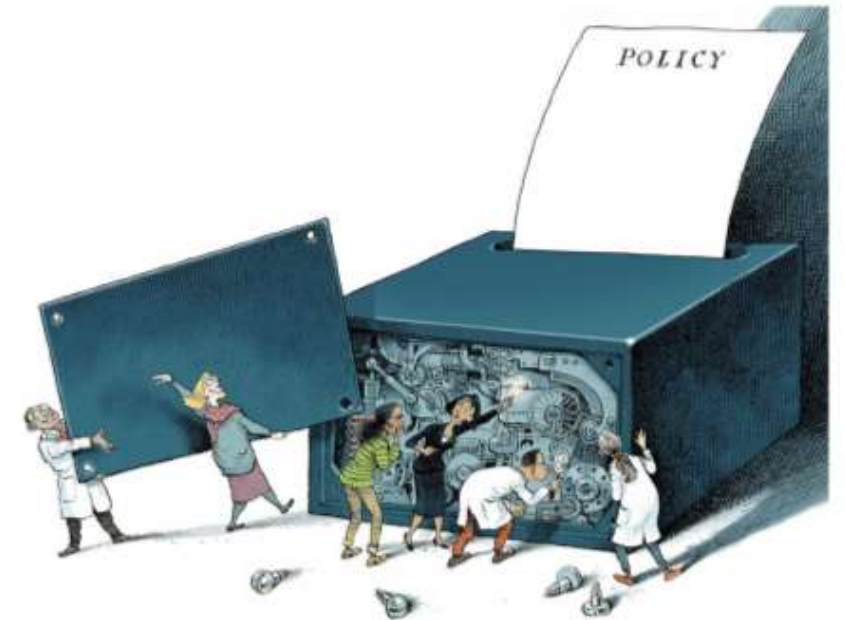
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# Five ways to ensure that models serve society: a manifesto

Pandemic politics highlight how predictions need to be transparent and humble to invite insight, not blame.

Andrea Saltelli , Gabriele Bammer, Isabelle Bruno, Erica Charters, Monica Di Fiore, Emmanuel Didier, Wendy Nelson Espeland, John Kay, Samuele Lo Piano, Deborah Mayo, Roger Pielke Jr, Tommaso Portaluri, Theodore M. Porter, Arnald Puy, Ismael Rafols, Jerome R. Ravetz, Erik Reinert, Daniel Sarewitz, Philip B. Stark, Andrew Stirling, Jeroen van der Sluijs & Paolo Vineis



# Mind the assumptions

Assess uncertainty and sensitivity



## Mind the hubris

Complexity can be the enemy of relevance

## Mind the framing

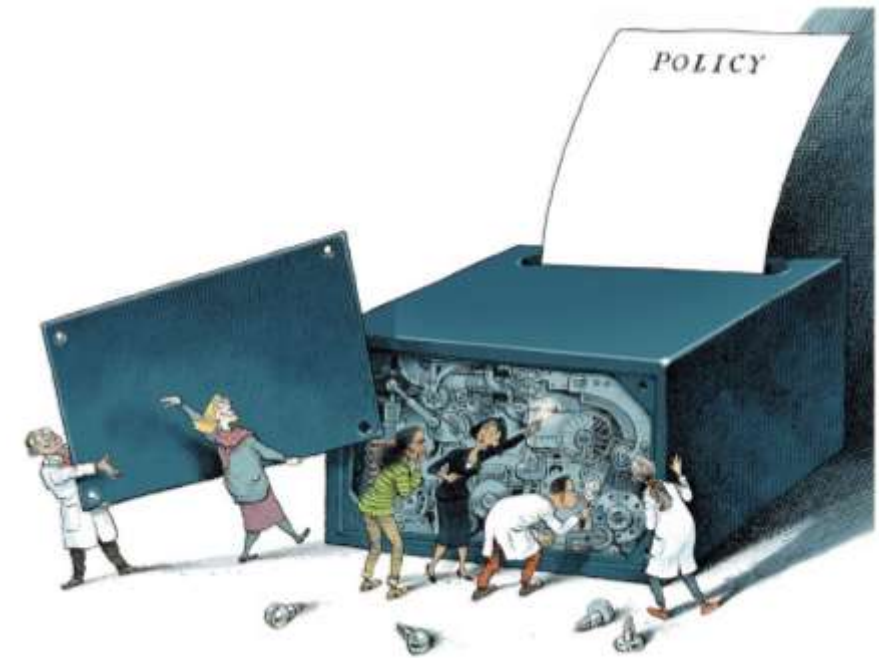
Match purpose and context

## Mind the consequences

Quantification can backfire.

## Mind the unknowns

Acknowledge ignorance

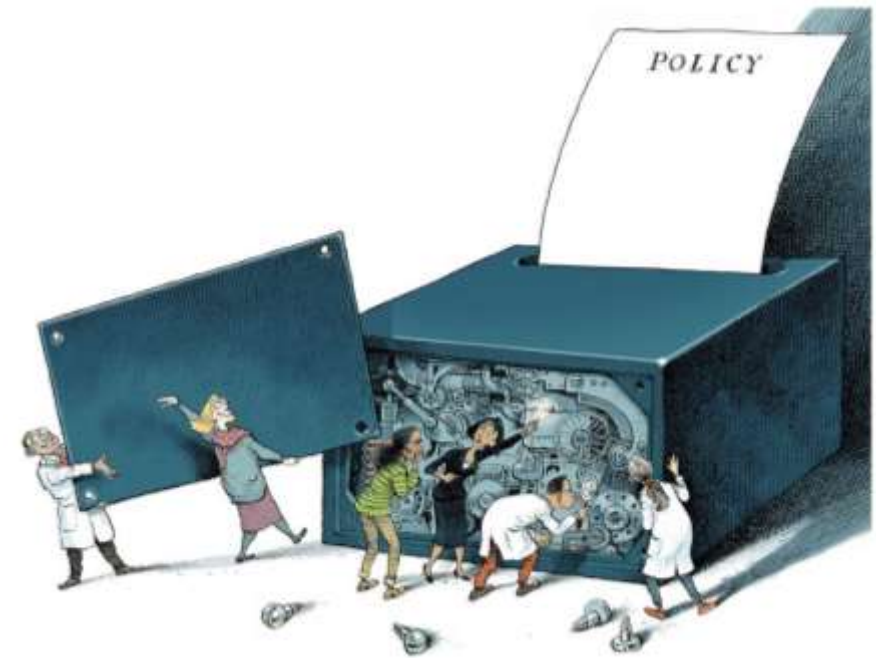


# Mind the assumptions

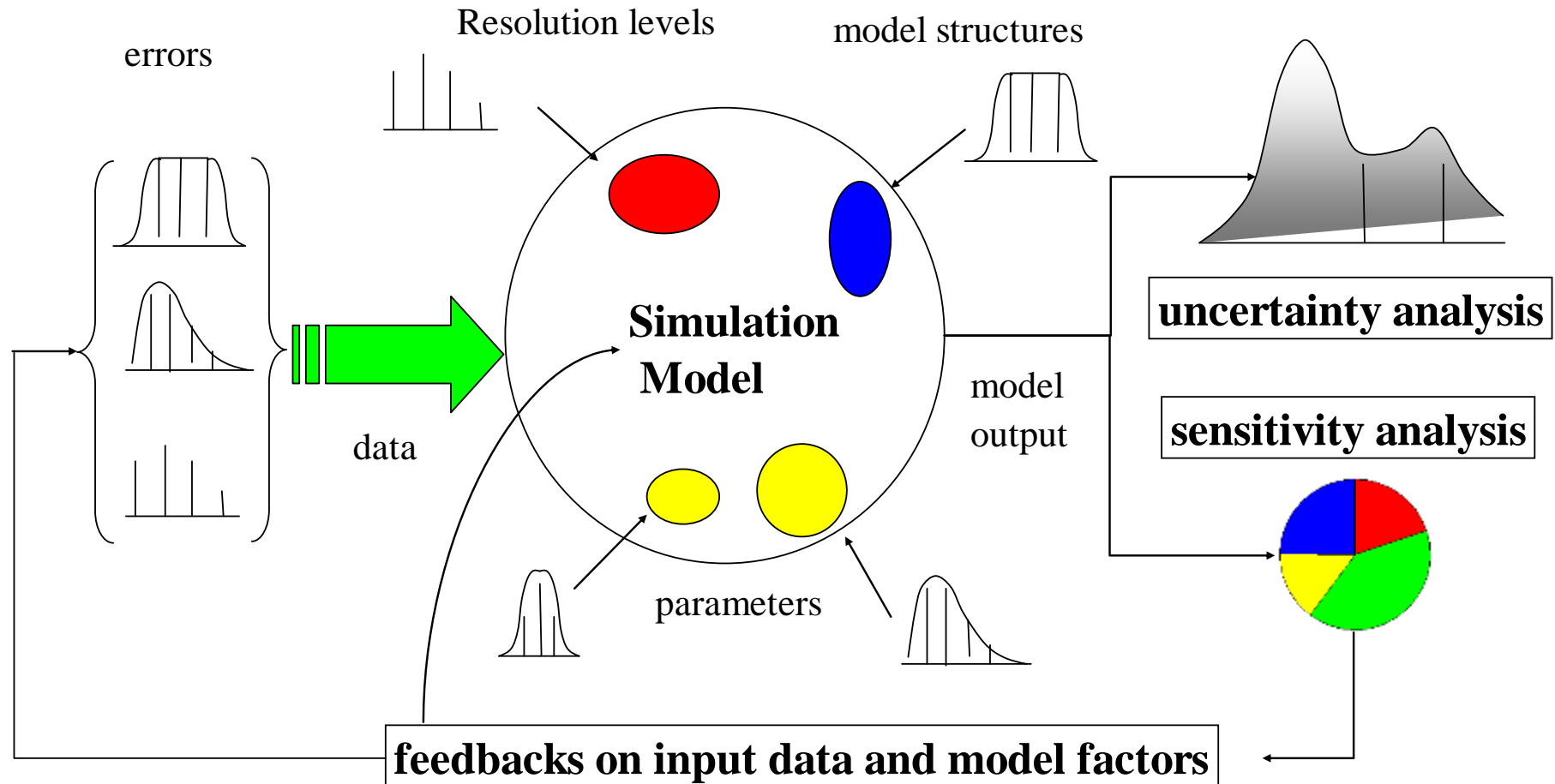
Assess uncertainty and sensitivity



Modelling without sensitivity analysis is like orthopedic without X-rays



# An engineer's vision of UA, SA

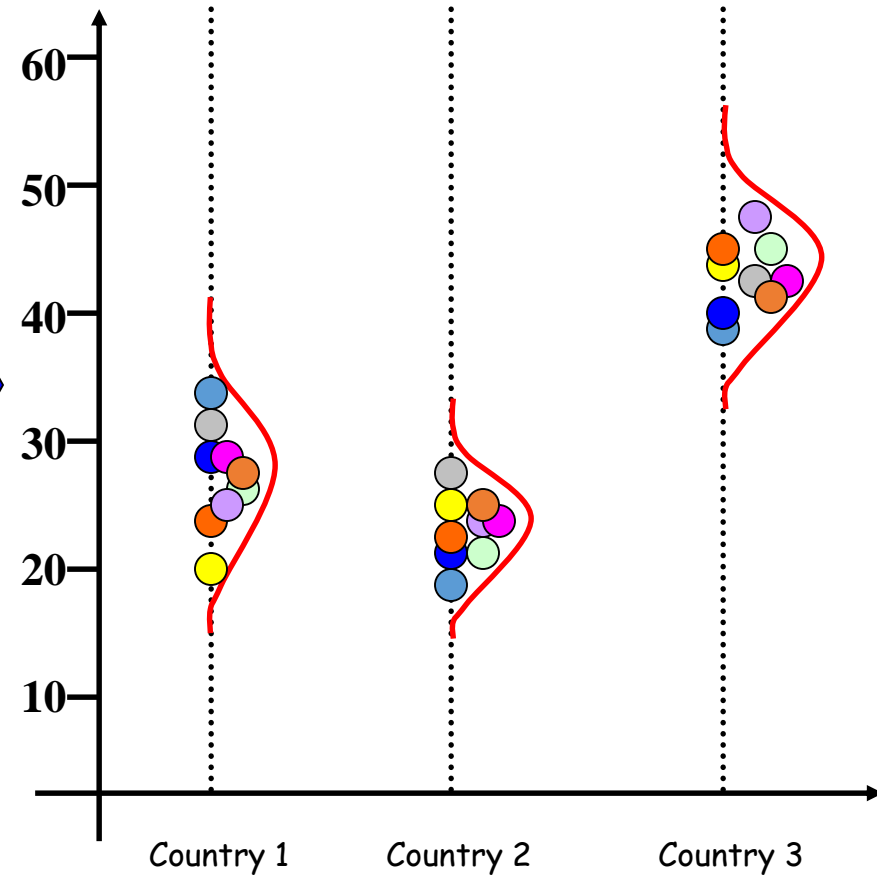
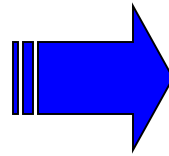
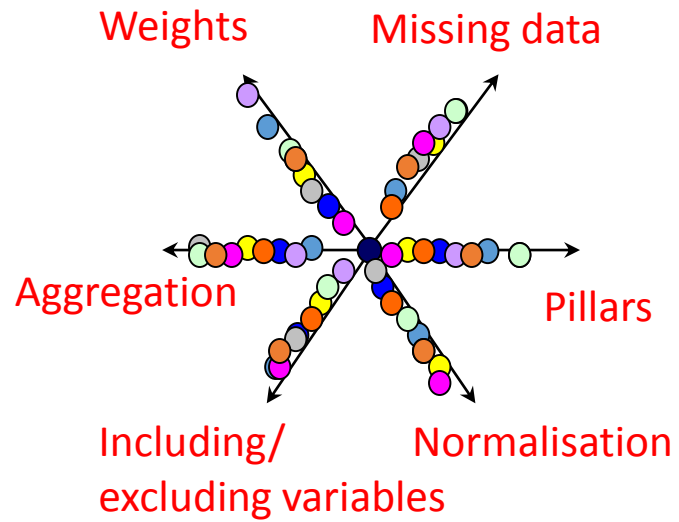


One can sample more than just factors:

- modelling assumptions,
- alternative data sets,
- resolution levels,
- scenarios ...

| Assumption           | Alternatives  |
|----------------------|---|
| Number of indicators | ▪ all six indicators included or one-at-time excluded (6 options)                                     |
| Weighting method     | ▪ original set of weights,<br>▪ factor analysis,<br>▪ equal weighting,<br>▪ data envelopment analysis |
| Aggregation rule     | ▪ additive,<br>▪ multiplicative,<br>▪ Borda multi-criterion   |

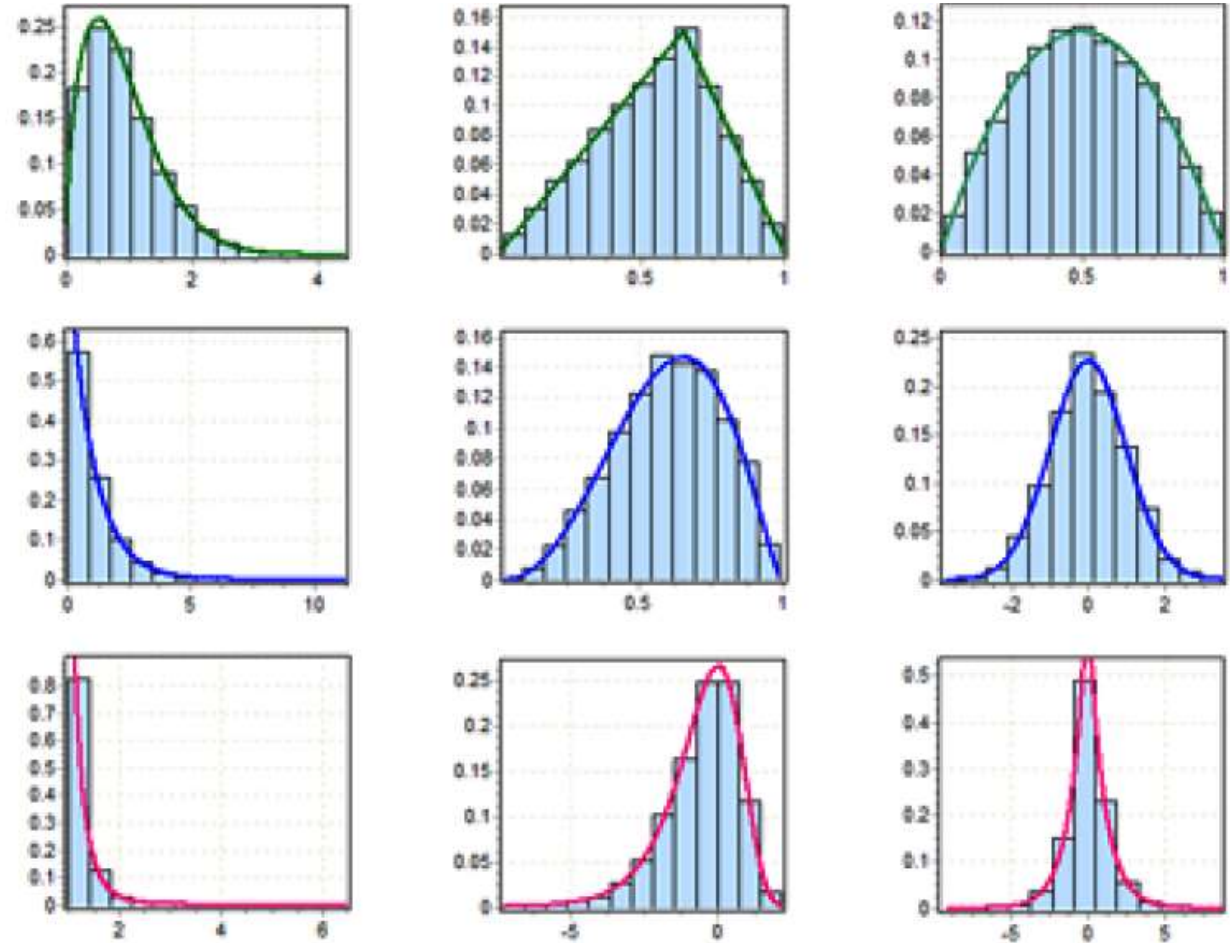
## Space of alternatives



|          |          |     |          |
|----------|----------|-----|----------|
| $x_{11}$ | $x_{12}$ | ... | $x_{1k}$ |
| $x_{21}$ | $x_{22}$ | ... | $x_{2k}$ |
| ...      | ...      | ... | ...      |
| $x_{N1}$ | $x_{N2}$ | ... | $x_{Nk}$ |

Each column is a sample from the distribution of a factor

Each row is a sample trial to generate a value of  $y$



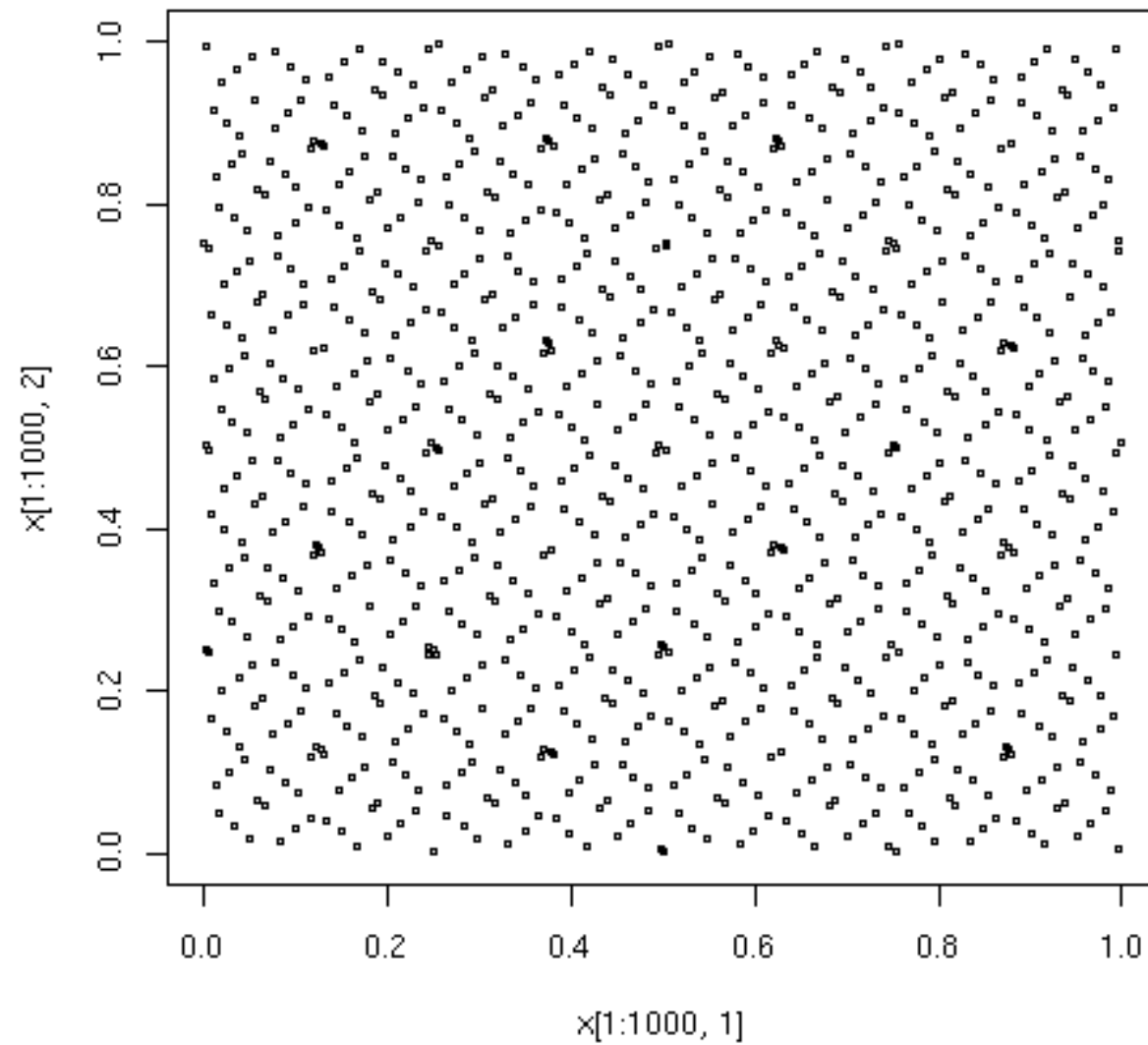
Examples of distributions of input factors



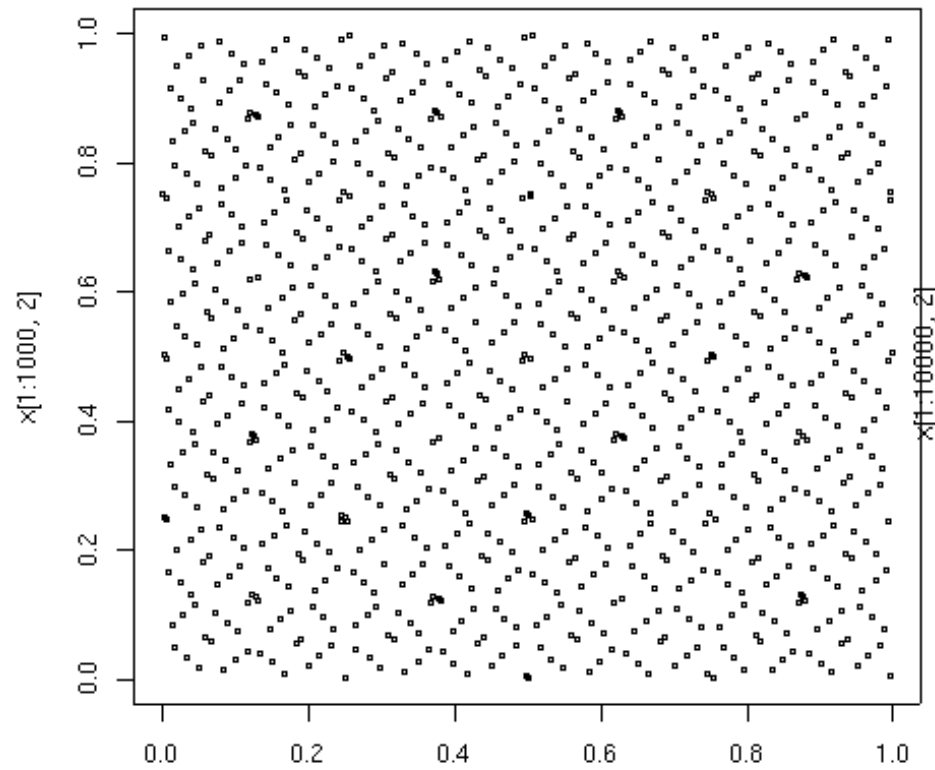
Ilya M. Sobol'

How to generate  
the random sample?

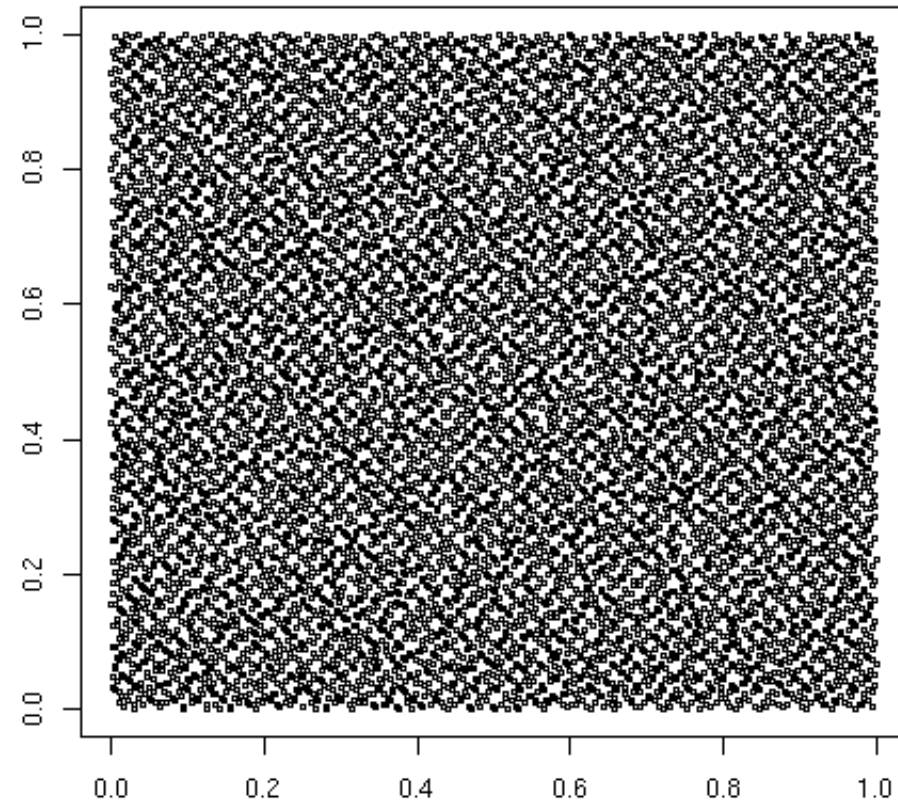
Quasi random  
sequences



An  $LP_\tau$  sequence

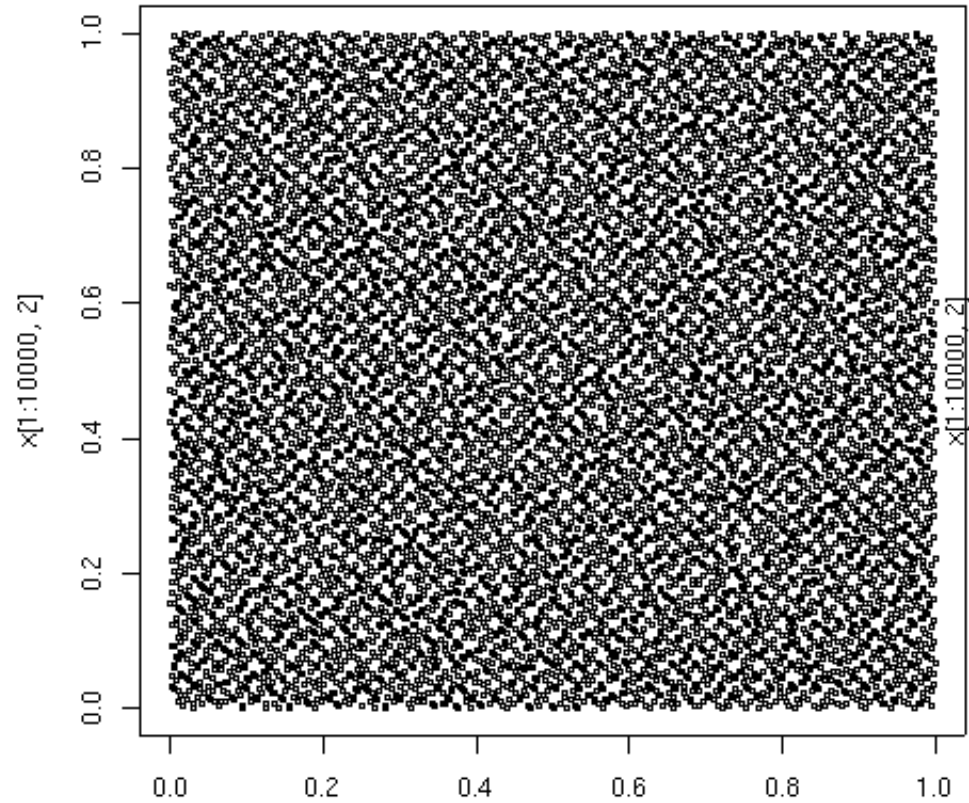


$X_1, X_2$  plane, 1000 Sobol' points

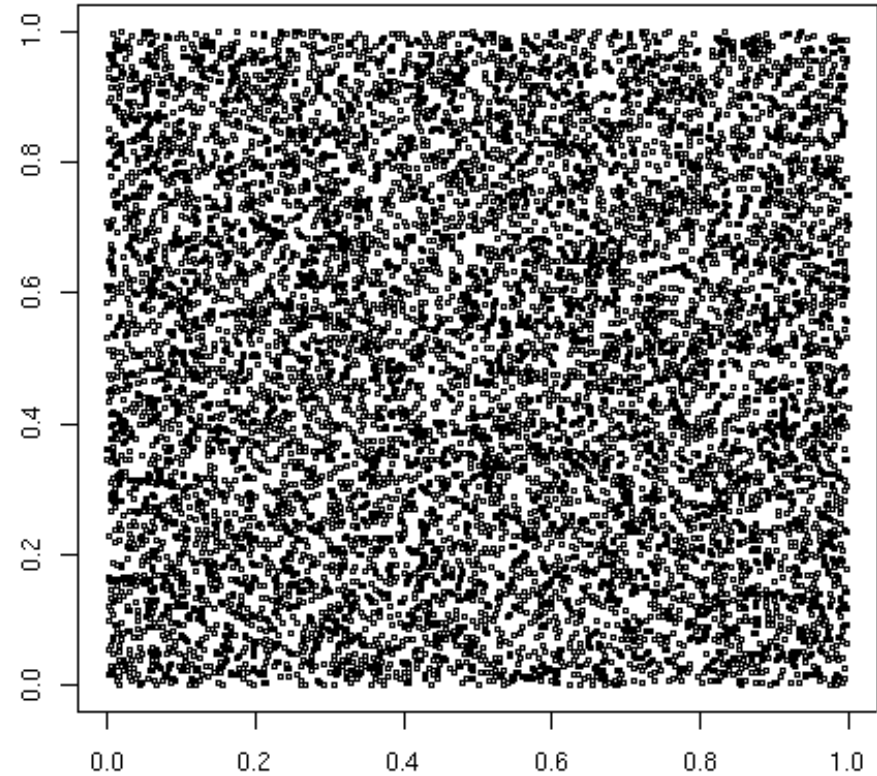


$X_1, X_2$  plane, 10000 Sobol' points

Sobol' sequences of quasi-random points



X1,X2 plane, 10000 Sobol' points



X1,X2 plane, 10000 random points

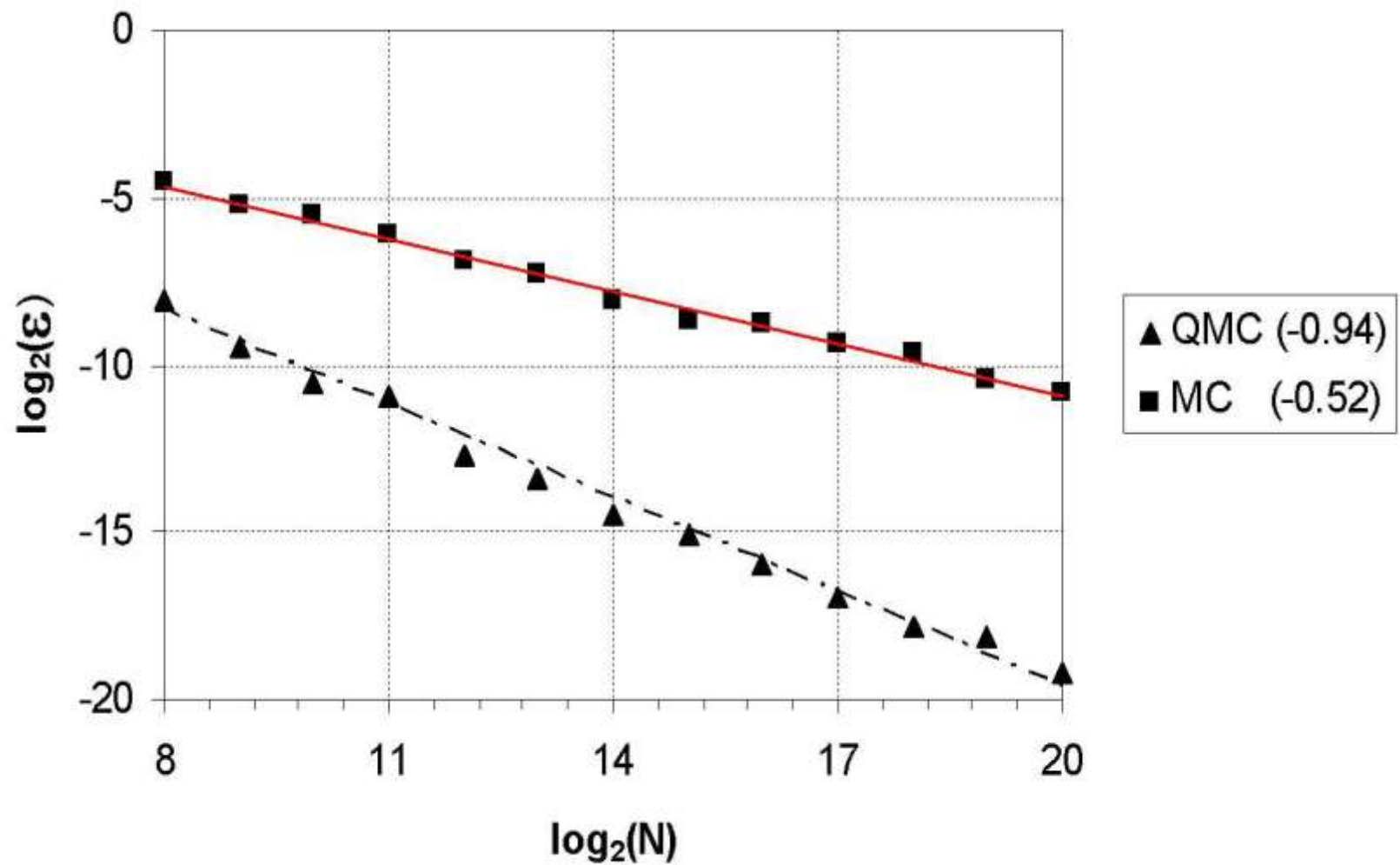
Sobol' sequences of quasi-random points  
against random points

# Why quasi-random: they have faster convergence



Sergei Kucherenko,  
Imperial College London

Kucherenko S., Feil B., Shah N., Mauntz W. The identification of model effective dimensions using global sensitivity analysis Reliability Engineering and System Safety 96 (2011) 440–449.



$$\varepsilon = \left( \frac{1}{K} \sum_{k=1}^K (I[f] - I_k[f])^2 \right)^{1/2}$$

$$\sum_{i=1}^n (-1)^i \prod_{j=1}^i x_j$$

Error=numeric-  
versus-analytic  
value the integral  
of the function (for  
n=360) over its  
dominion.

Root mean square error over K=50 different trials.



**Statistics > Applications**

*[Submitted on 10 May 2015]*

# **Exploring multi-dimensional spaces: a Comparison of Latin Hypercube and Quasi Monte Carlo Sampling Techniques**

Sergei Kucherenko, Daniel Albrecht, Andrea Saltelli

Comparing three different sampling methods  
over an array of functions of different  
dimensionality and difficulty

The concept of effective dimension



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**WWW.MATHEMATICSWEB.ORG**  
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Journal of Complexity 19 (2003) 101–124

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*Journal of*  
**COMPLEXITY**

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<http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jco>

# The effective dimension and quasi-Monte Carlo integration<sup>☆</sup>

Xiaoqun Wang<sup>a,b,\*</sup> and Kai-Tai Fang<sup>c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>*Department of Mathematical Sciences, Tsinghua University, Beijing 100084, China*

<sup>b</sup>*School of Mathematics, University of New South Wales, Sydney 2052, Australia*

<sup>c</sup>*Department of Mathematics, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong, China*

Received 12 February 2002; accepted 6 November 2002

The difficulty of a function/model is not in its number of dimensions but in the number of effective dimensions, either in the **truncation** or **superposition** sense

**truncation** sense = how many factors are important?

**superposition** sense=how high is the highest interaction?

Why Sensitivity analysis?

It can answer interesting  
questions

Global Environmental Change 20 (2010) 298–302



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Global Environmental Change

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/gloenvcha](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/gloenvcha)



# Sensitivity analysis didn't help. A practitioner's critique of the Stern review

Andrea Saltelli<sup>\*</sup>, Beatrice D'Hombres

*Joint Research Centre, Institute for the Protection and Security of the Citizen, Ispra, Italy*

# The case of Stern's Review – Technical Annex to postscript



William Nordhaus,  
University of Yale  
Nobel 'Economics'  
2018



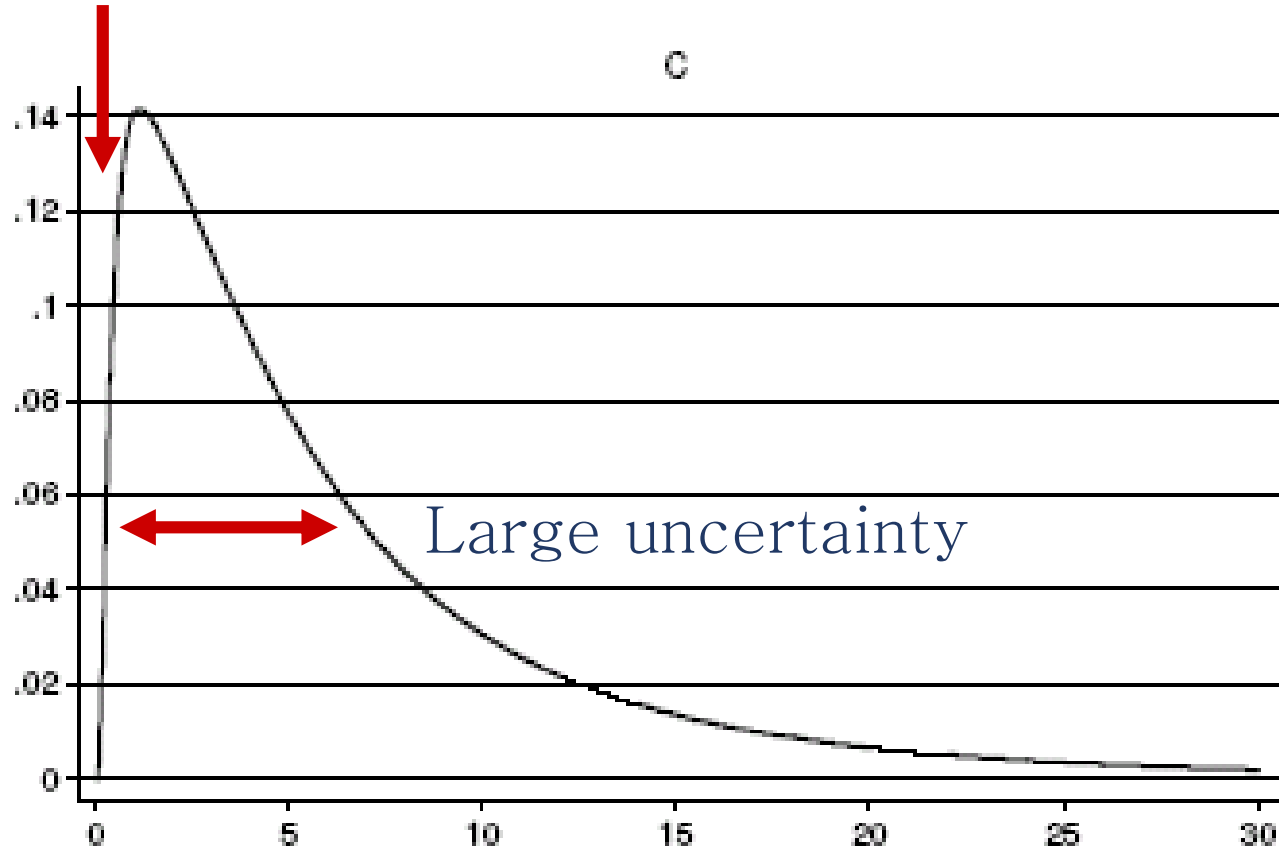
Nicholas Stern, London School  
of Economics

Stern, N., Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change. UK Government Economic Service, London, [www.sternreview.org.uk](http://www.sternreview.org.uk).

Nordhaus W., Critical Assumptions in the Stern Review on Climate Change, SCIENCE, 317, 201–202, (2007).

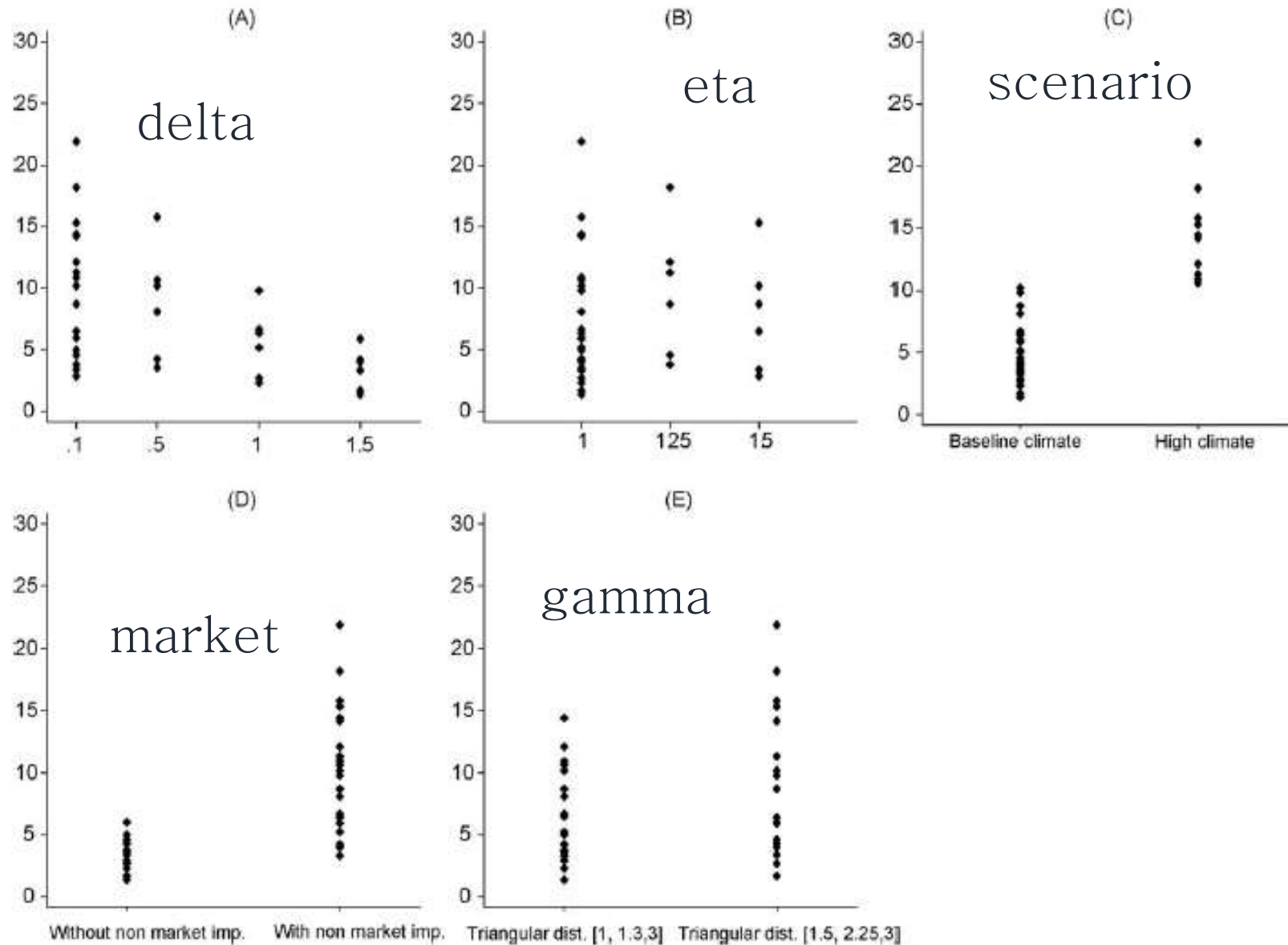
# How was it done? A reverse engineering of the analysis

Missing points



% loss in GDP per capita

# Sensitivity analysis here (by reverse engineering)



# ‘The Most Important Number You’ve Never Heard Of’

Sept. 17, 2021

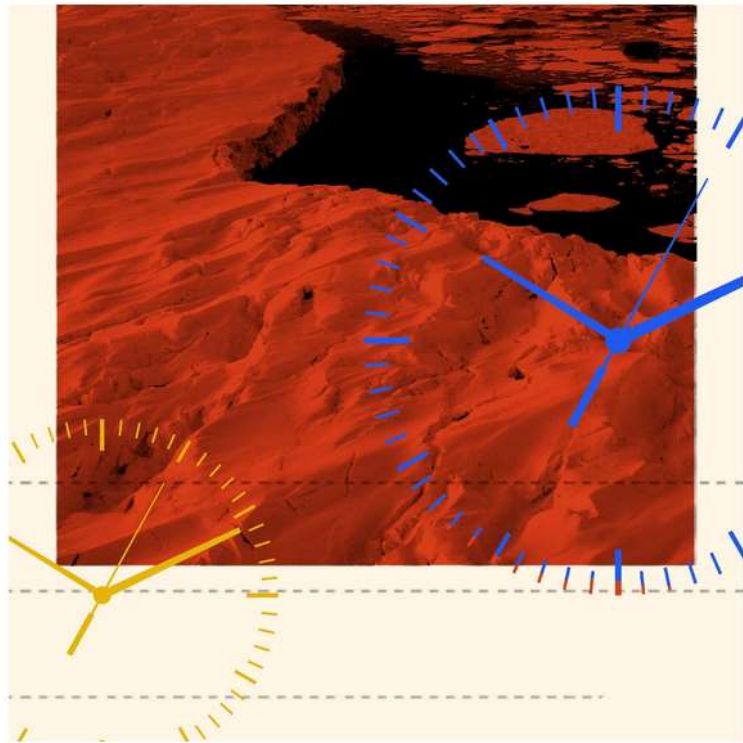


Illustration by Arsh Raziuddin, The New York Times

“social cost of carbon:

=\$56 a ton on average at a 3 percent discount rate

=\$171 a ton on average at a 2 percent discount rate”

**The New York Times**

Why sensitivity analysis?

It allows interesting discoveries

*J. R. Statist. Soc. A* (2013)  
176, Part 3, pp. 609–634

## Ratings and rankings: voodoo or science?

Paolo Paruolo

*University of Insubria, Varese, Italy*

and Michaela Saisana and Andrea Saltelli

*European Commission, Ispra, Italy*

Why sensitivity  
analysis

University rankings such as  
ARWU and THES are volatile  
and technically unsound

## Ratings and rankings: voodoo or science?

Paolo Paruolo

*University of Insubria, Varese, Italy*

and Michaela Saisana and Andrea Saltelli

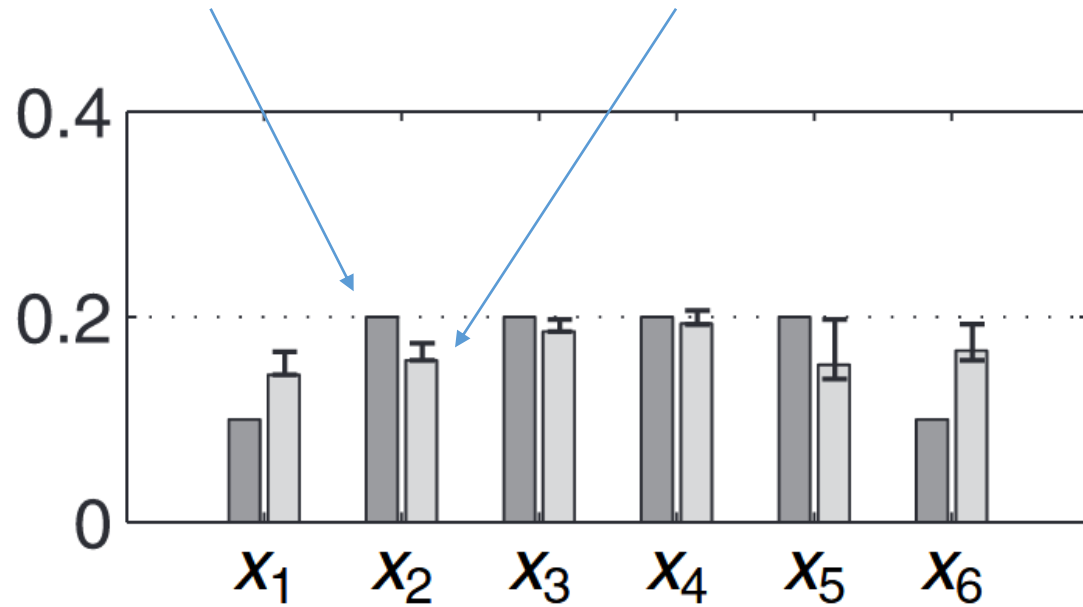
*European Commission, Ispra, Italy*

THE WORLD  
UNIVERSITY  
RANKINGS

Why sensitivity  
analysis

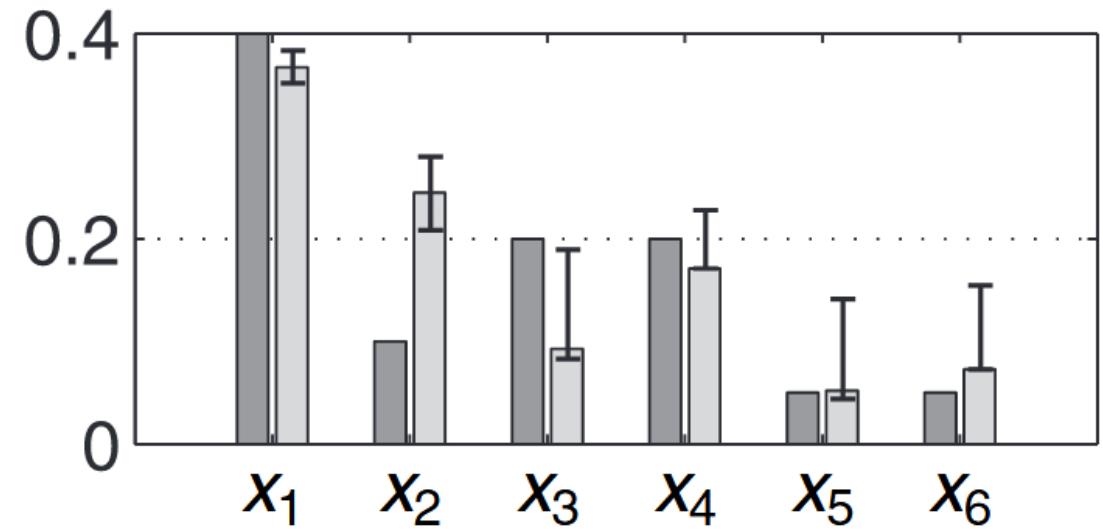
Developers' weight

Sensitivity analysis' weight



2008 ARWU

Alumni winning Nobel Prize  
 Staff winning Nobel Prize  
 Highly cited researchers  
 Articles in *Nature* and *Science*  
 Articles in *Science* and *Social Sciences Citation Index*  
 Academic performance (size adjusted)



2008 THES

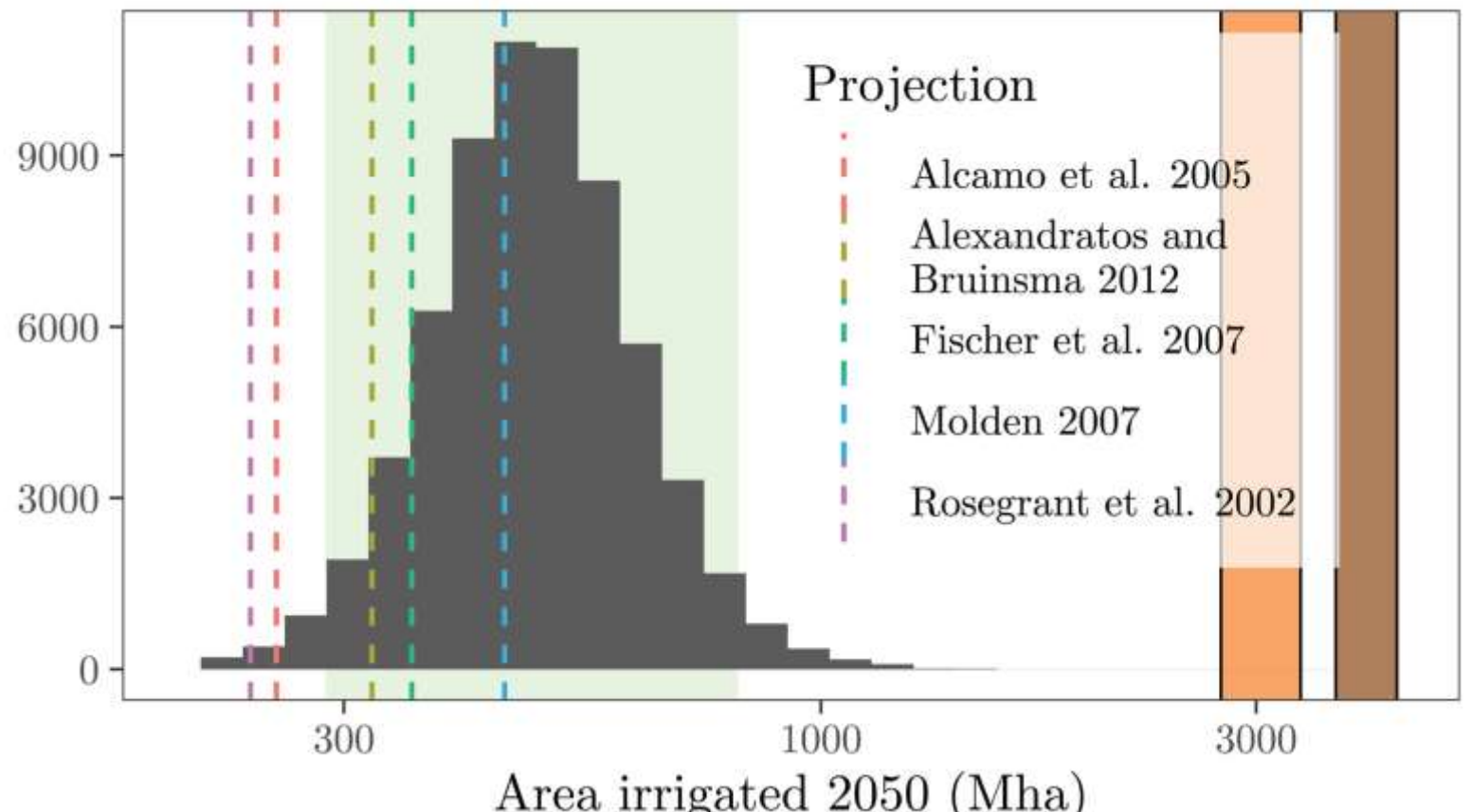
Academic review  
 Recruiter review  
 Teacher/student ratio  
 Citations per faculty  
 International staff  
 International students

At times a model routinely used to produce point estimates becomes non conservative if the uncertainty is plugged in

## Current Models Underestimate Future Irrigated Areas

A. Puy , S. Lo Piano, A. Saltelli

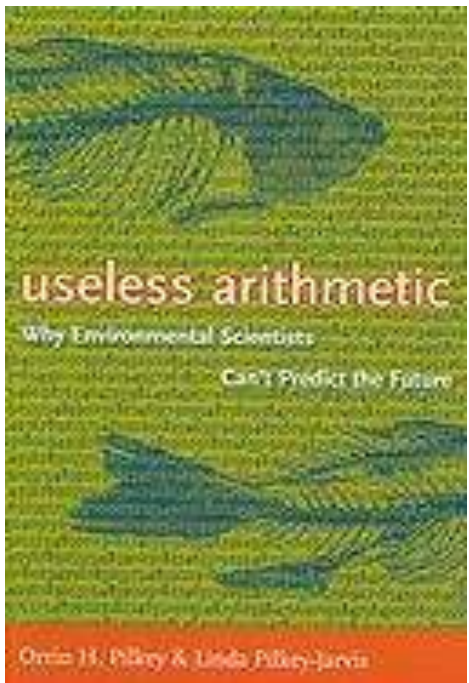
First published: 17 April 2020 | <https://doi.org/10.1029/2019GL083441>



# Limits of sensitivity analysis

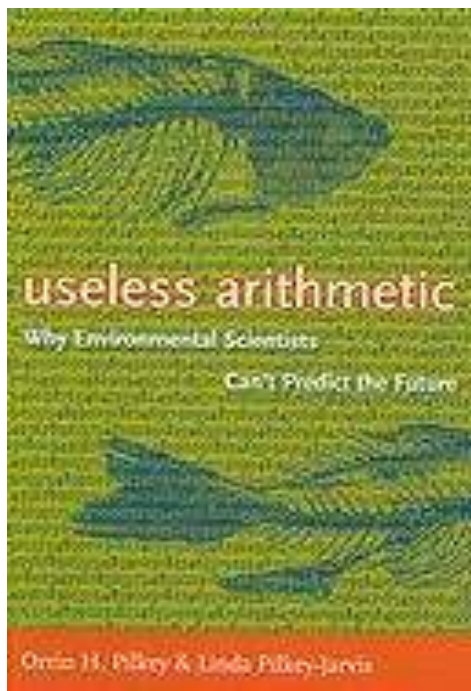


Orrin H.  
Pilkey



Useless Arithmetic: Why Environmental Scientists Can't Predict the Future  
by Orrin H. Pilkey and Linda Pilkey-Jarvis, Columbia University Press,  
2009.

The map is not the  
territory

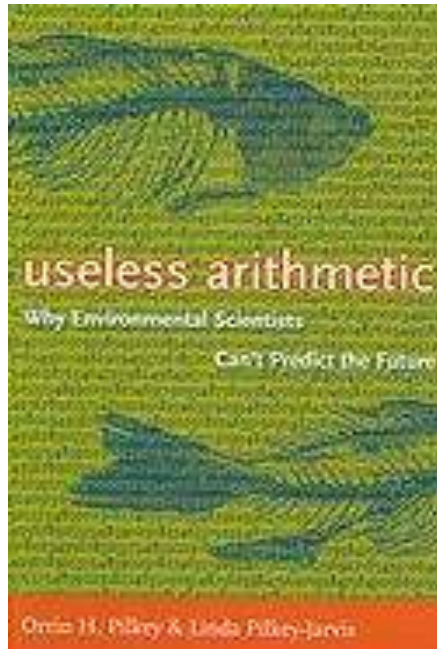


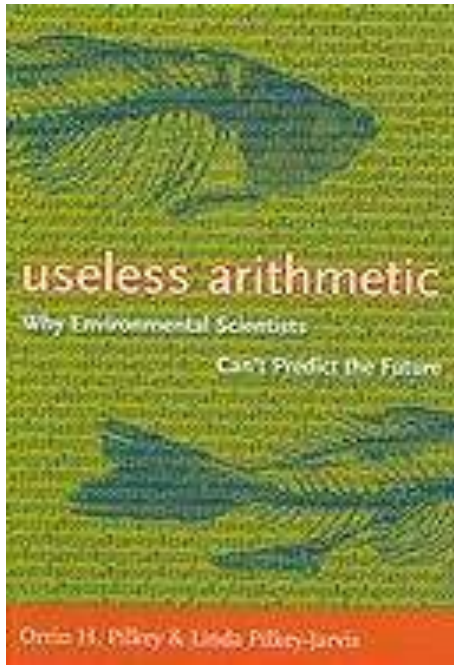
<<It is important, however, to recognize that the sensitivity of the parameter in the equation is what is being determined, not the sensitivity of the parameter in nature.

[...] If the model is wrong or if it is a poor representation of reality, determining the sensitivity of an individual parameter in the model is a meaningless pursuit.>>

One of the examples discussed concerns the **Yucca Mountain** repository for radioactive waste. TSPA model (for total system performance assessment) for safety analysis.

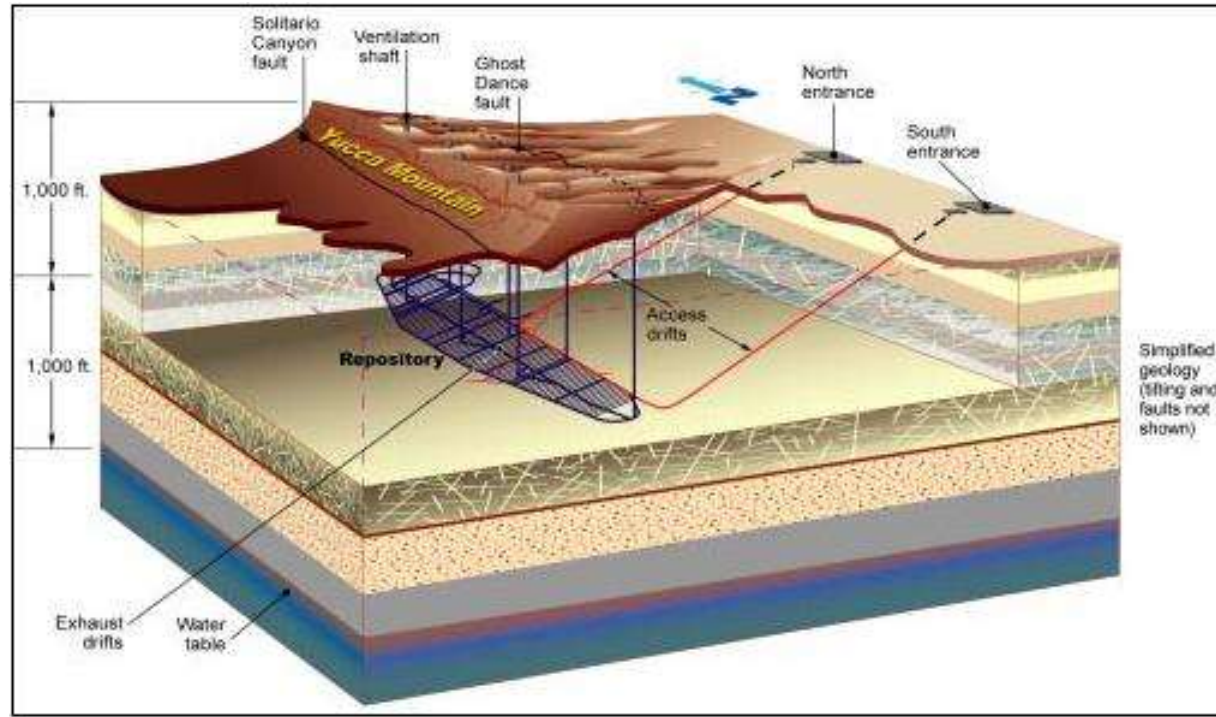
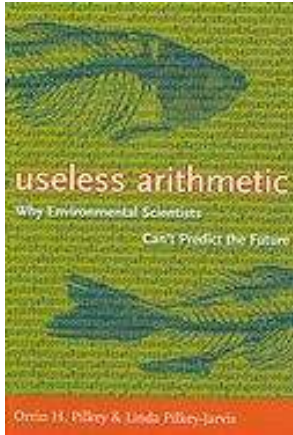
TSPA is Composed of 286 sub-models.





TSPA (like any other model) **relies on assumptions** → one is the low permeability of the geological formation → long time for the water to percolate from surface to disposal.



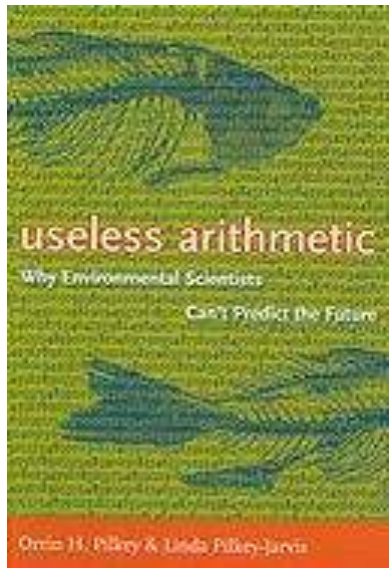


The confidence of the stakeholders in TSPA was not helped when evidence was produced which could lead to an upward revision of 4 orders of magnitude of this parameter  
(the  $^{36}\text{Cl}$  story)

## Type III error in sensitivity: Examples:

In the case of TSPA (Yucca mountain) a range of 0.02 to 1 millimetre per year was used for percolation of flux rate.

→... SA useless if it is instead ~ 3,000 millimetres per year.



“Scientific mathematical modelling should involve constant efforts to falsify the model”

➔ Organized skepticism (as per CUDOS)

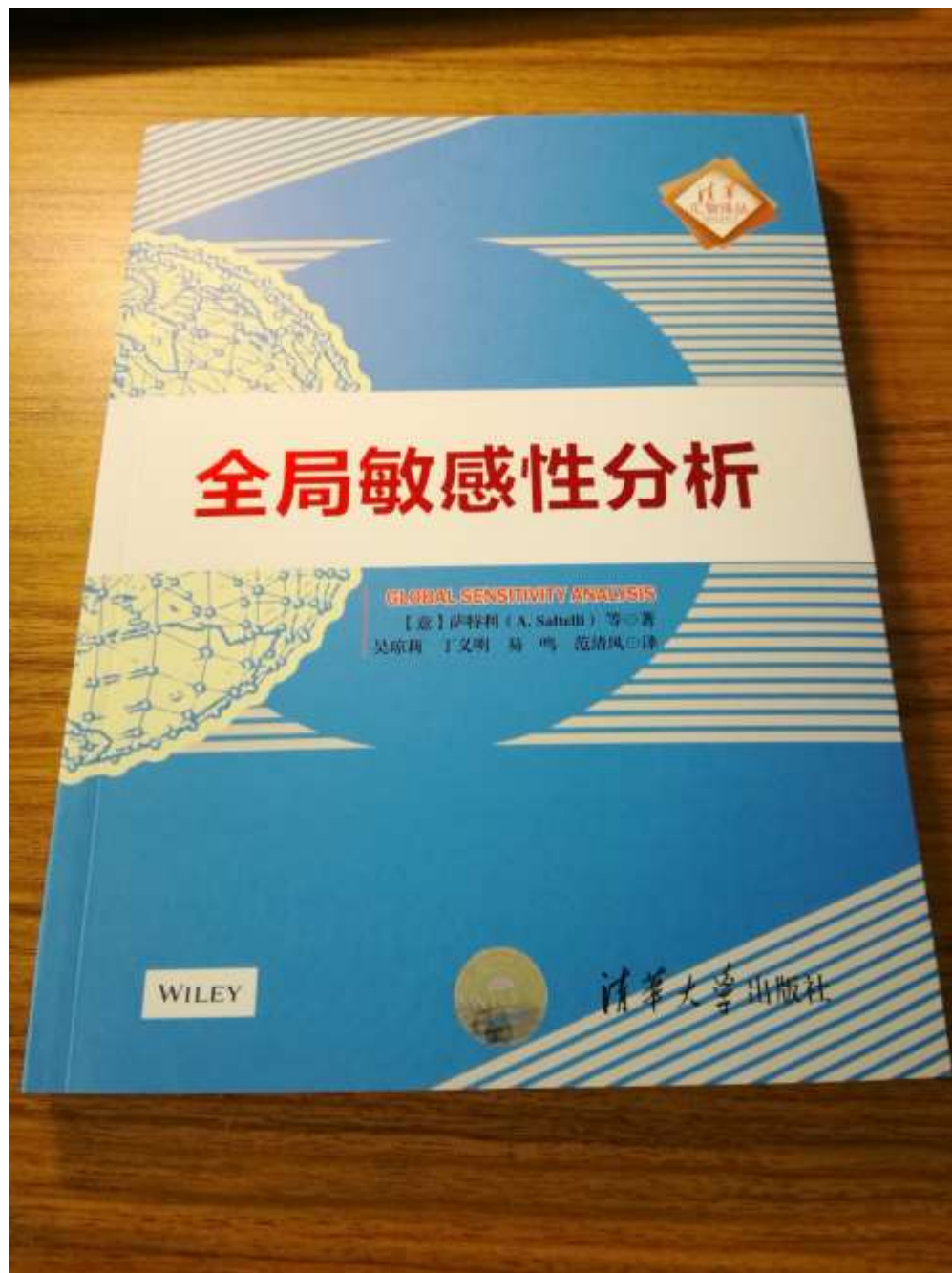
Where to study  
sensitivity analysis?

A. Saltelli, M. Ratto,  
T. Andres, F. Campolongo,  
J. Cariboni, D. Gatelli,  
M. Saisana, S. Tarantola

# GLOBAL SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

The Primer

 WILEY





A. Saltelli, M. Ratto,  
T. Andres, F. Campolongo,  
J. Cariboni, D. Gatelli,  
M. Saisana, S. Tarantola

# GLOBAL SENSITIVITY ANALYSIS

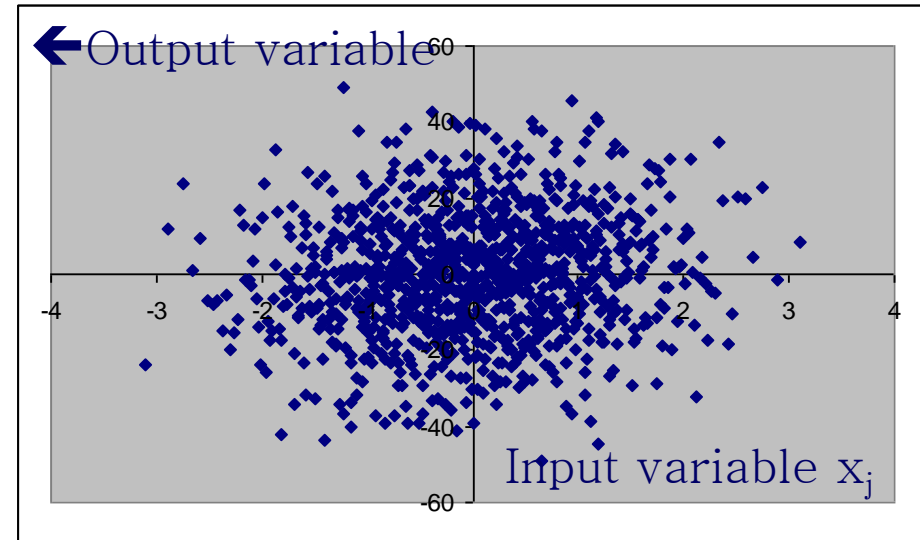
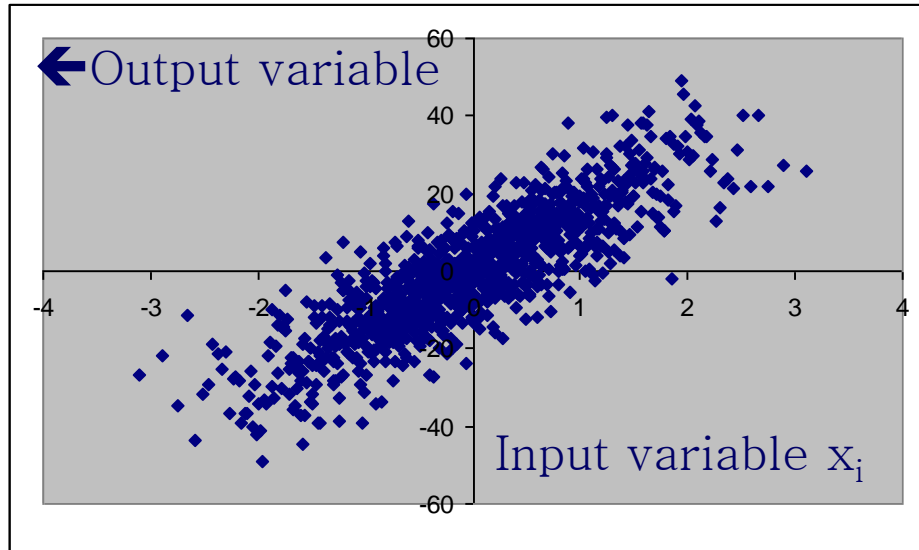
The Primer

 WILEY

Available for free at

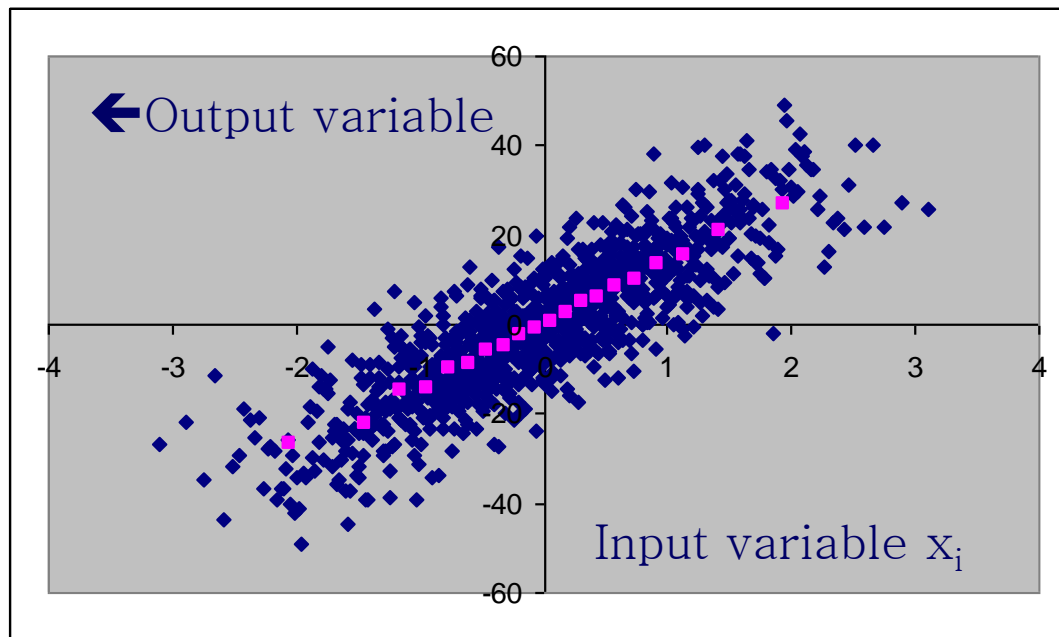
<http://www.andreasaltelli.eu>

How is it done in  
practice?



Plotting the output as a function of two different input factors

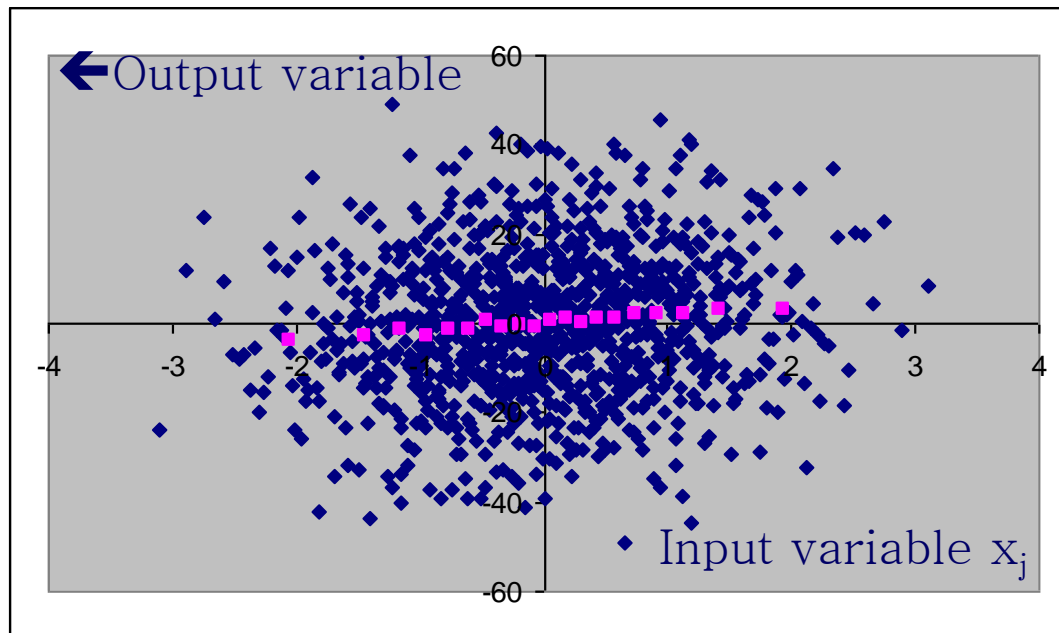
Which factor is more important?

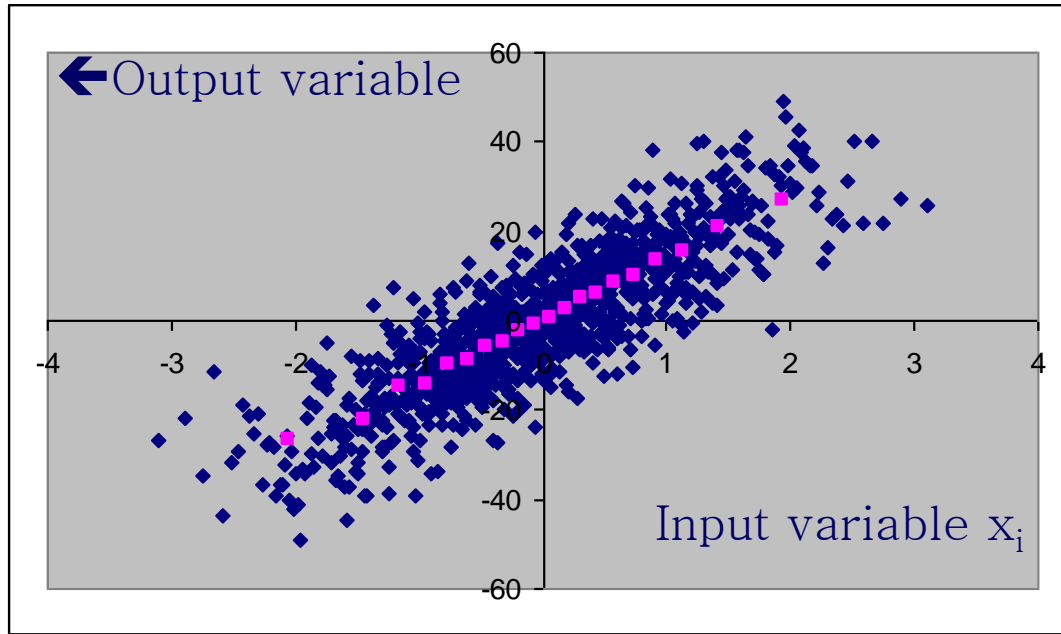


~1,000 blue points

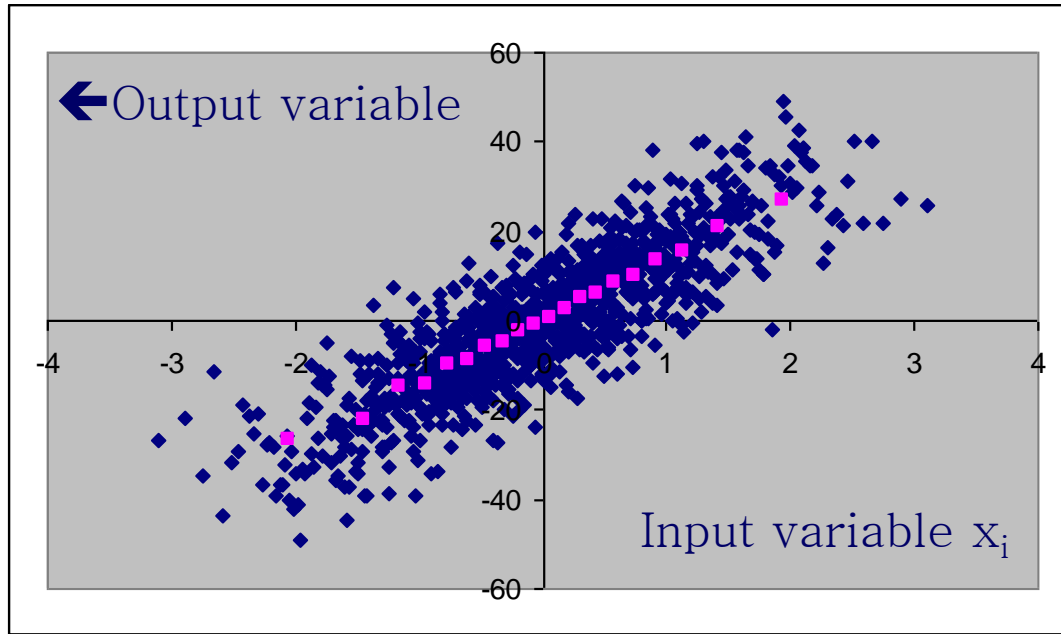
Divide them in 20 bins of ~ 50 points

Compute the bin's average (pink dots)



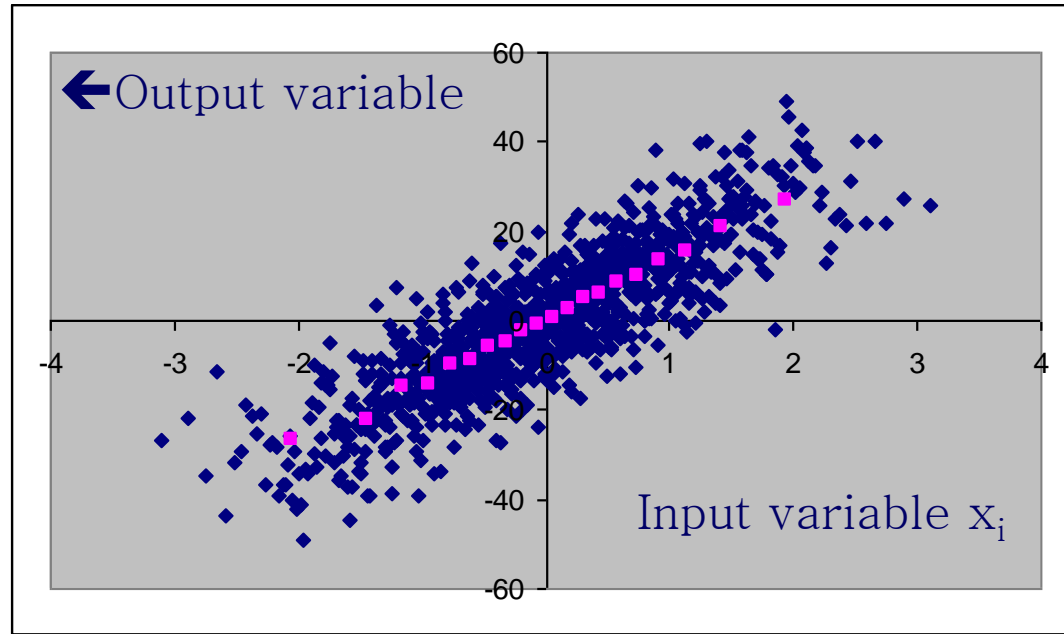


Each pink point is  $\sim E_{\mathbf{x}_{\sim i}}(Y|X_i)$

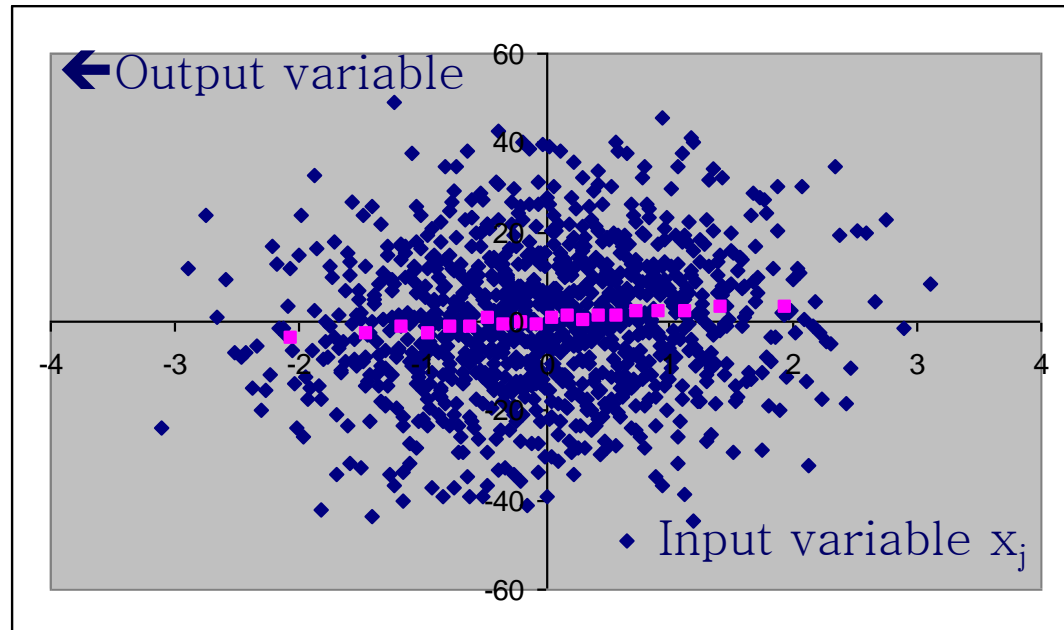


Take the variance of  
the pink points one  
obtains a sensitivity  
measure

$$V_{X_i} \left( E_{\mathbf{X}_{\sim i}} (Y | X_i) \right)$$



Which factor  
has the highest  
 $V_{X_i} \left( E_{\mathbf{x}_{\sim i}} (Y | X_i) \right) ?$



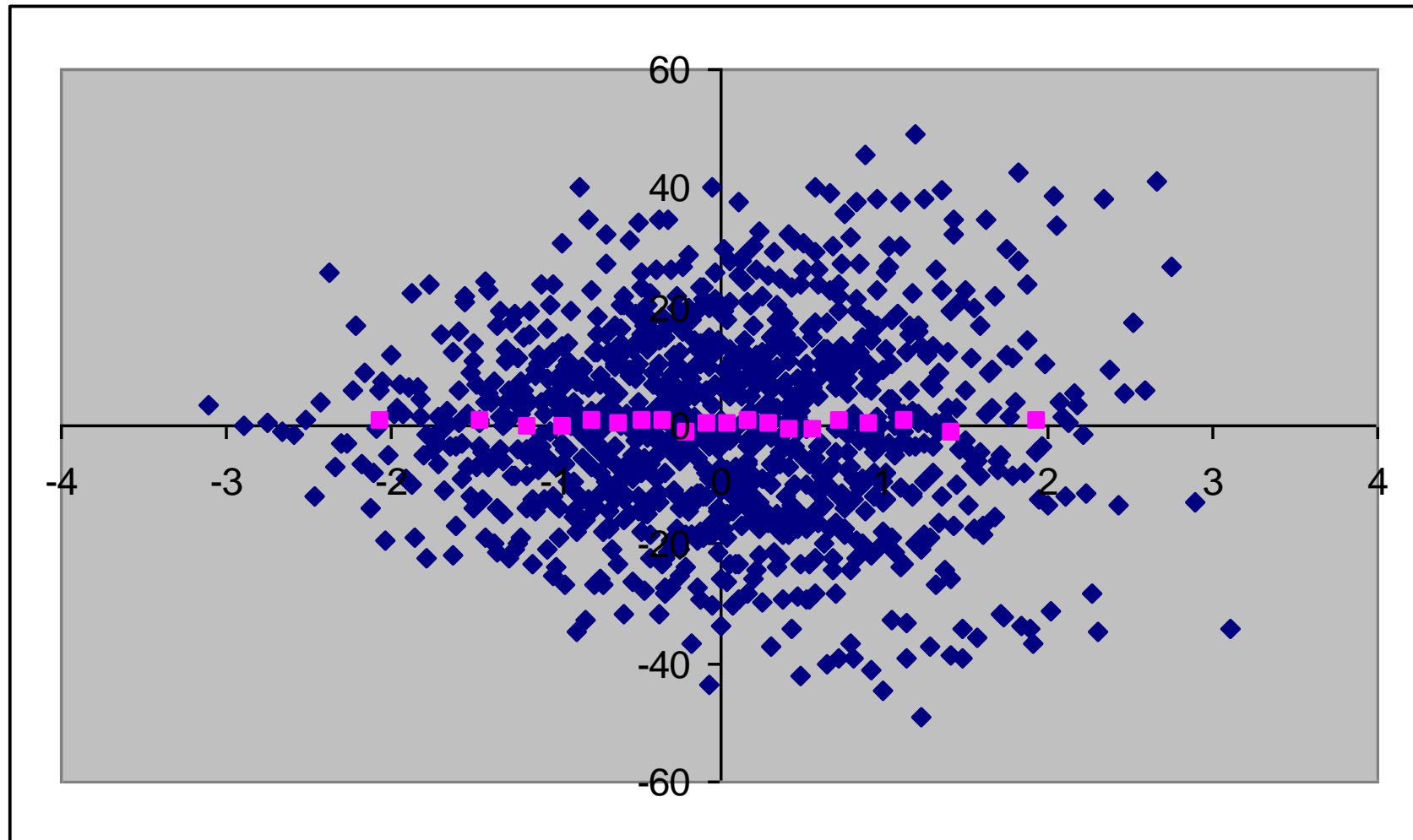
For additive models one can decompose the total variance as a sum of those partial variances

$$\sum_i V_{X_i} \left( E_{\mathbf{X}_{\sim i}} (Y | X_i) \right) \approx V(Y)$$

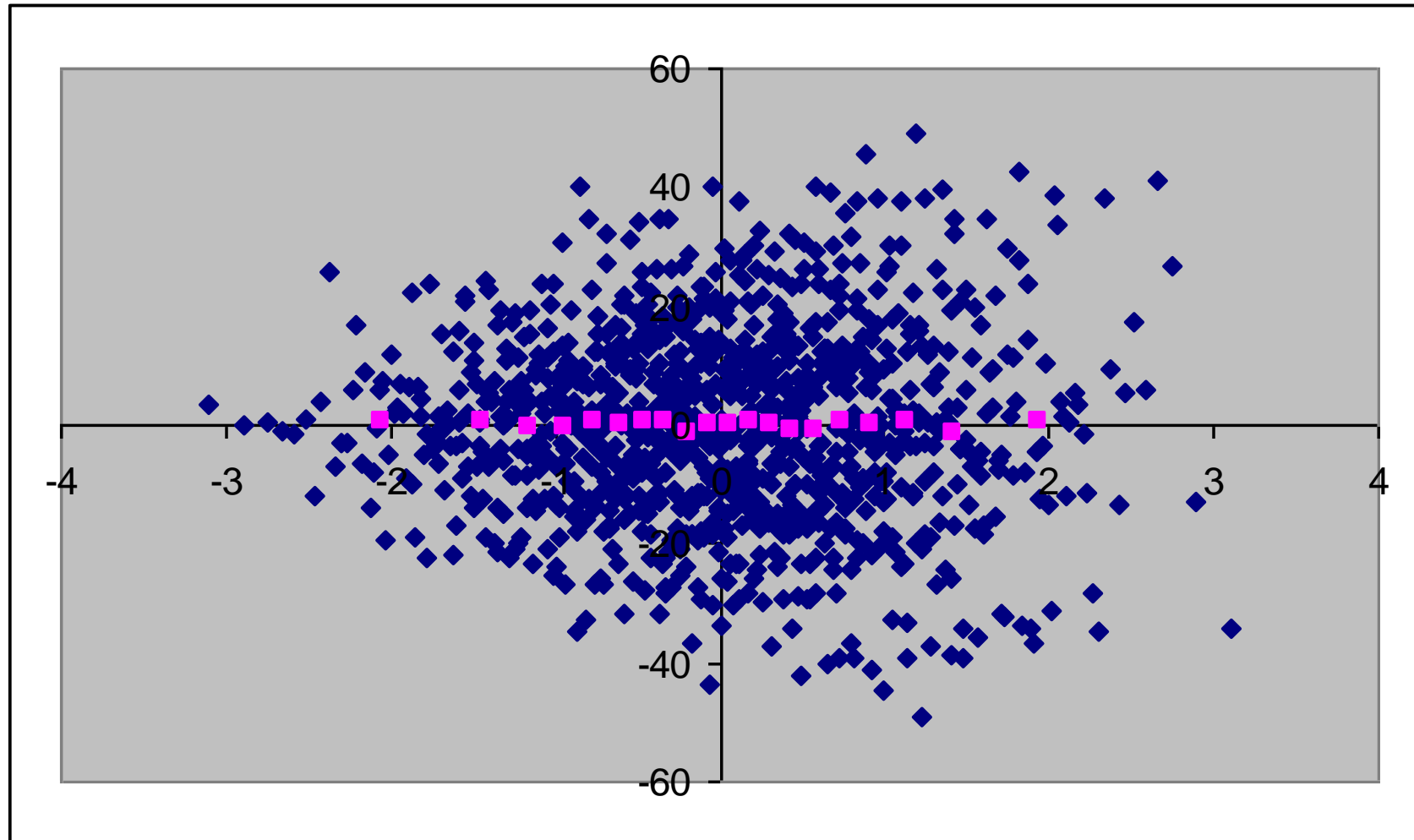
... which is also how additive models are defined

Non additive models

Is  $S_i = 0$ ?



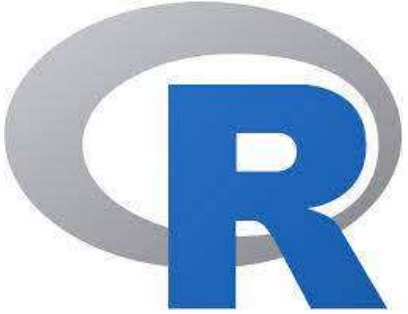
Is this factor non-important?



For non-additive models use  
total sensitivity indices,  
whose theory is in the primer



# Plenty of code available in R, MATLAB, and Python



<https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/sensitivity/sensitivity.pdf>

<https://cran.rstudio.com/web/packages/sensobol/index.html>



<https://www.uqlab.com/> (in MatLab, by Bruno Sudret and his team)

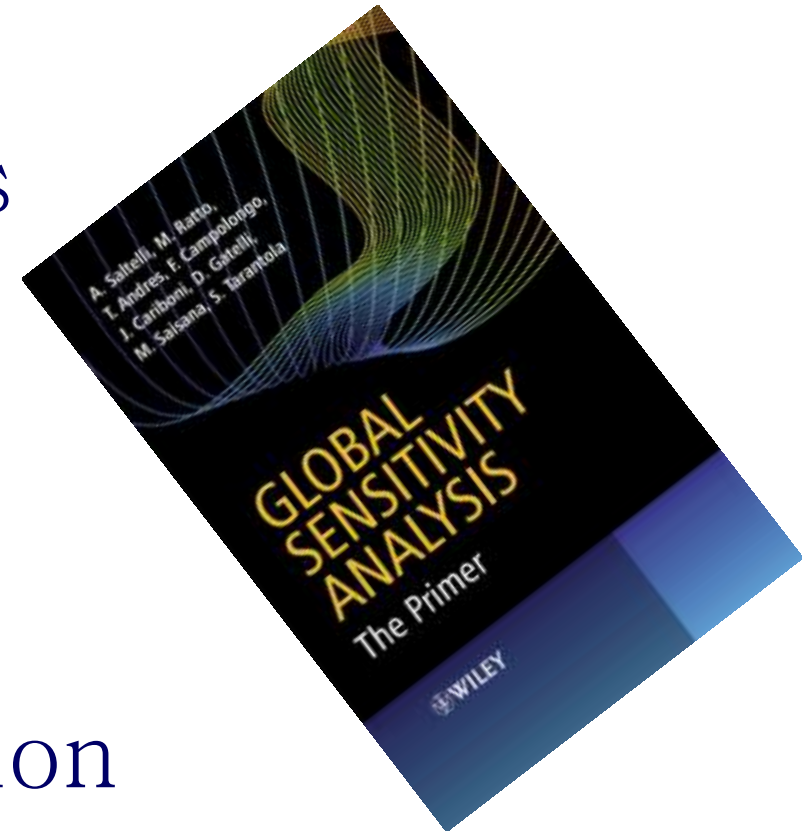


SALib <https://salib.readthedocs.io/en/latest/>

Why using variance-based  
sensitivity analysis methods

# Advantages with variance based methods:

- graphic interpretation scatterplots
- statistical interpretation
- expressed plain English
- working with sets
- relation to settings such as factor fixing and factor prioritization



# Why not using correlation- regression based techniques? PCC, PRCC, SRC, SRRC

*Reliability Engineering and System Safety* **28** (1990) 229–253

## **Non-parametric Statistics in Sensitivity Analysis for Model Output: A Comparison of Selected Techniques**

A. Saltelli

Commission of the European Communities, Joint Research Centre—Ispra Establishment,  
21020 Ispra (Varese), Italy

&

J. Marivoet

Belgian Nuclear Research Establishment SCK/CEN,  
Boeretang 200, B-2400, Belgium

(Received 26 May 1989; accepted 3 August 1989)

*Computational Statistics & Data Analysis* **13** (1992) 73–94  
North-Holland

## **Sensitivity analysis for model output**

**Performance of black box techniques on three  
international benchmark exercises**

A. Saltelli

*Commission of the European Communities, Joint Research Centre, Ispra, Italy*

T. Homma

*Japan Atomic Energy Research Institute, Tokai Research Establishment, Department of Environmental  
Safety Research, Tokai-Mura, Ibaraki, Japan*

Received February 1990

Revised October 1990

They assume linearity (PCC) or  
monotonicity (PRCC), which is  
difficult to know *ex-ante*

# Secrets of sensitivity analysis

Why should one  
ever run a model  
just once?

First secret: The most important question is the question.

Or: sensitivity analysis is not “run” on a model but on a model once applied to a question

Second secret: Sensitivity analysis should not  
be used to hide assumptions  
[it often is]



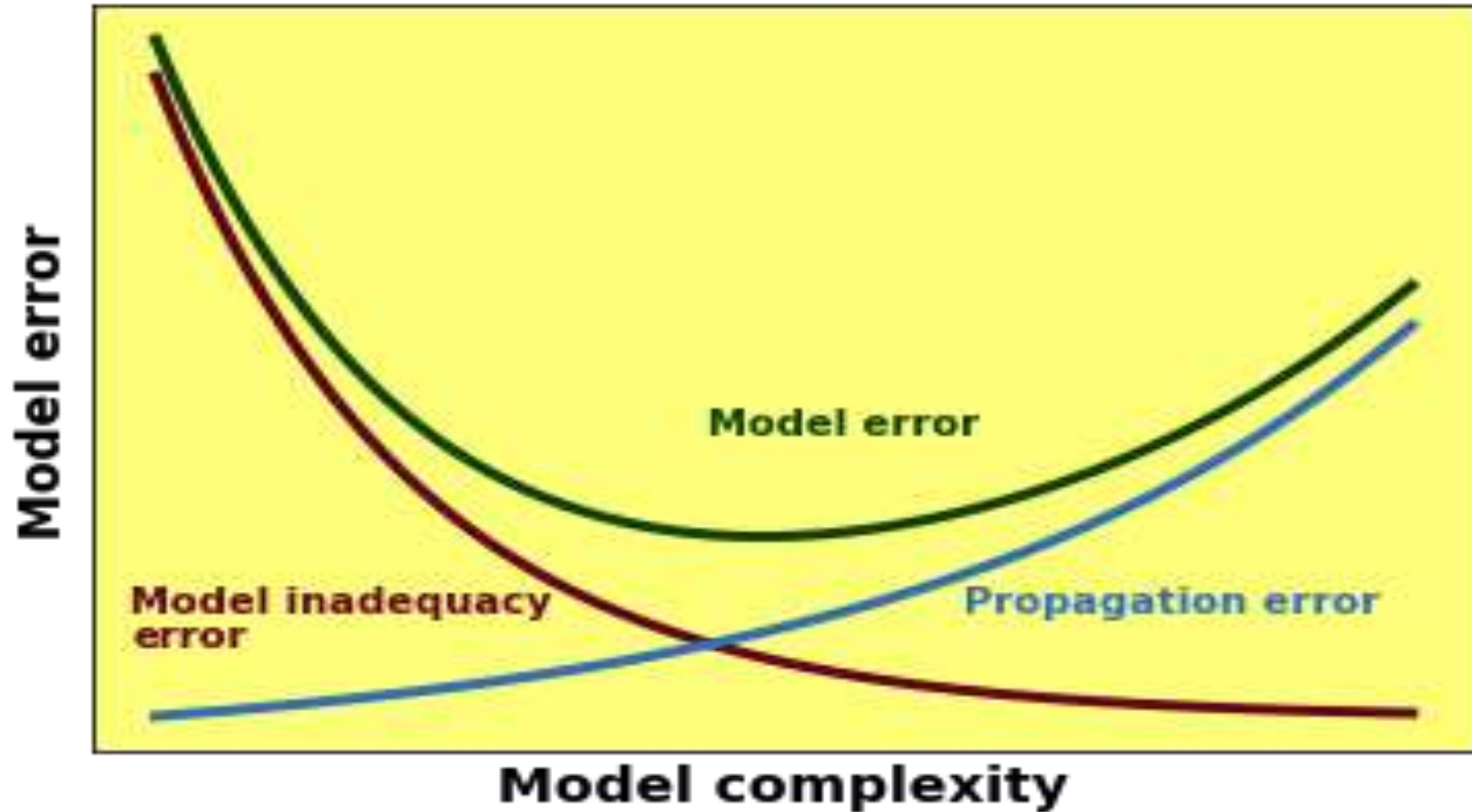
Third secret: If sensitivity analysis shows that a question cannot be answered by the model one should find another question or model

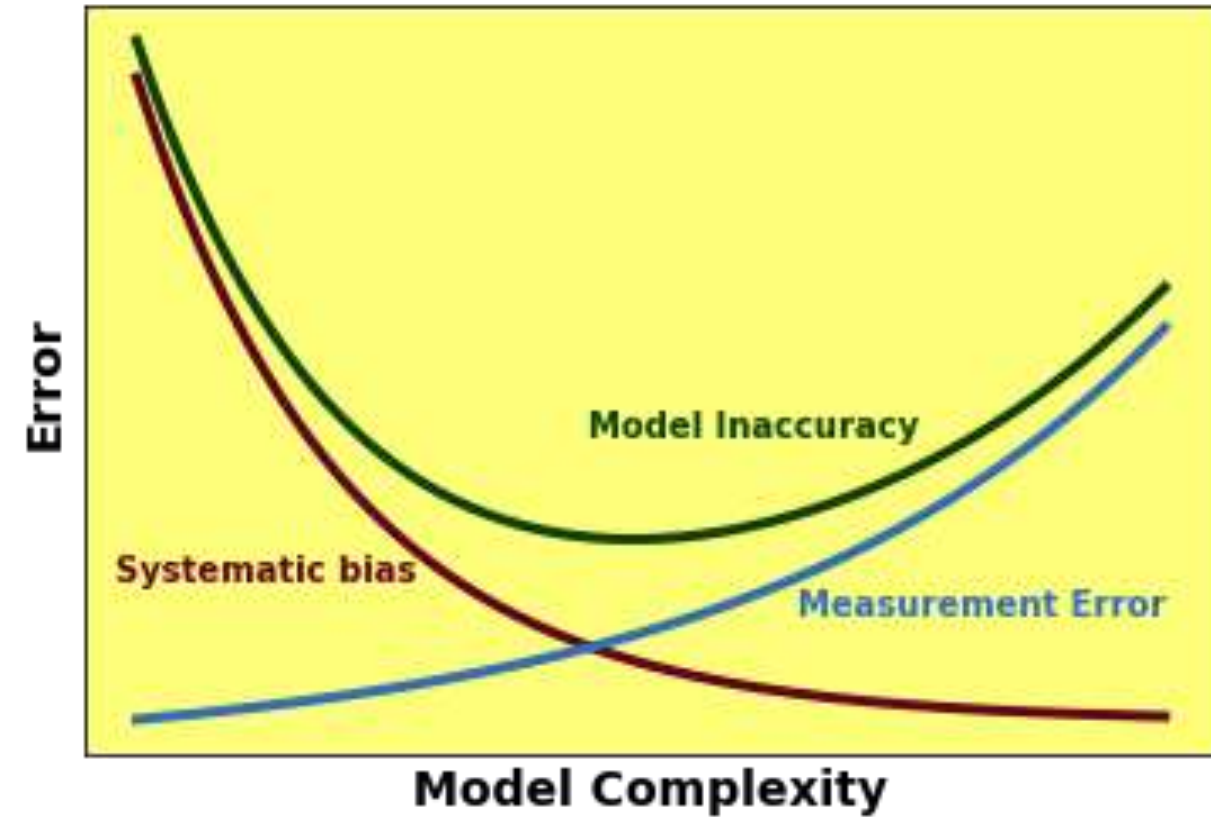
[Often the love for one's own model prevails]

Fourth (badly kept) secret:  
There is always one more bug!  
=Lubarsky's Law of Cybernetic Entomology



Fifth secret: use SA to calibrate complexity





Presented as ‘Conjecture  
by O’Neill’

In M. G. Turner and R. H. Gardner,  
“Introduction to Models” in Landscape  
Ecology in Theory and Practice, New  
York, NY: Springer New York, 2015, pp.  
63–95.

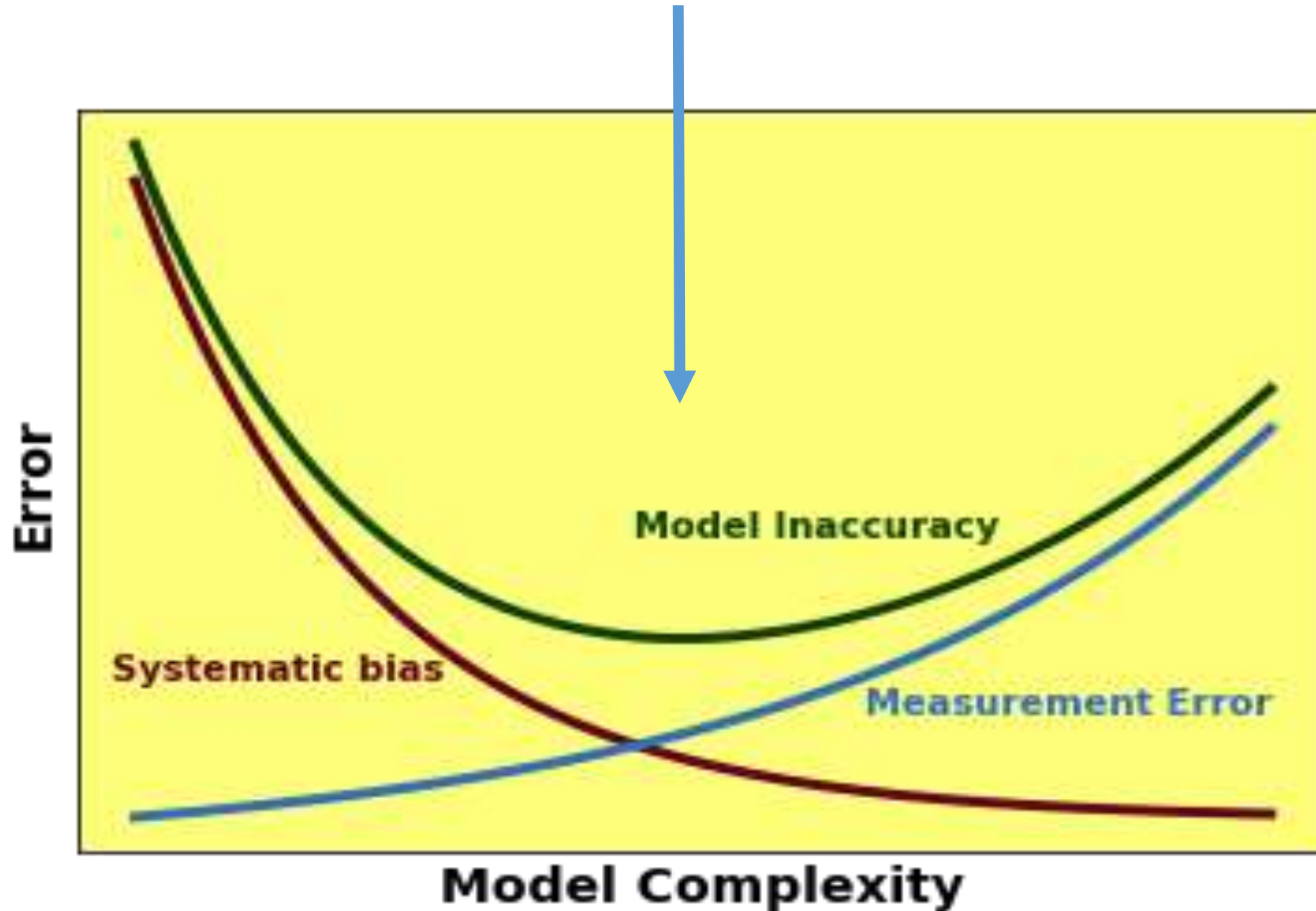


Lofti Aliasker Zadeh

Also known as Zadeh's principle of incompatibility, whereby as complexity increases “precision and significance (or relevance) become almost mutually exclusive characteristics”

L. Zadeh, “Outline of a New Approach to the Analysis of Complex Systems and Decision Processes,” *IEEE Trans. Syst. Man. Cybern.*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 28–44, 1973.

SA can help to find this minimum





Comment

Open Access

Published: 27 August 2019

# A short comment on statistical versus mathematical modelling

Andrea Saltelli 

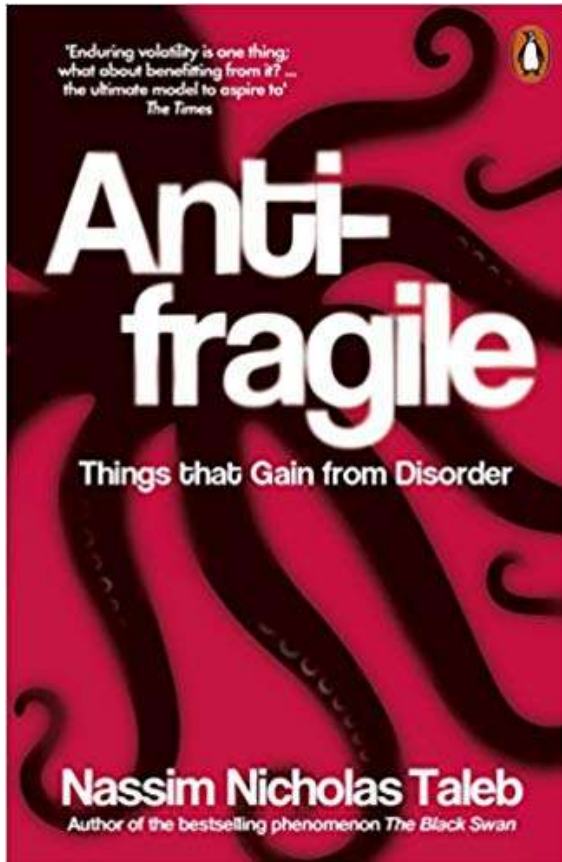
Sixth secret:

With SA it is easier to disprove than to prove; use  
SA 'via negativa':

Doing the right thing

or

Avoiding something wrong?



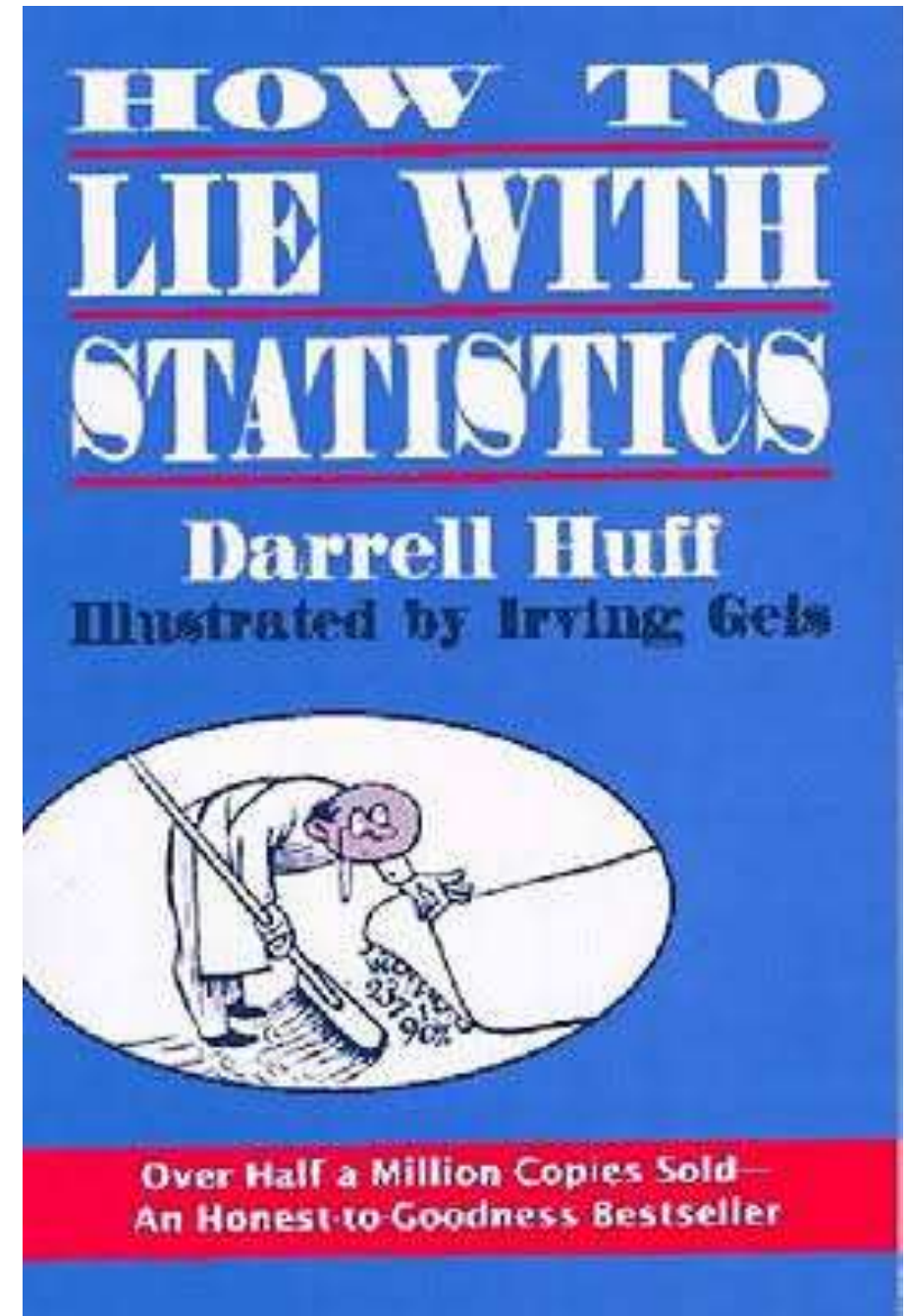
And of course please don't run a sensitivity analysis where each factors has a 5% uncertainty





Why?

Can we say that one lies with sensitivity analysis as one can lie with statistics?



Limit of SA: Often no SA (SA  
conflated with UA e.g. in economics) or  
one-factor-at-a-time SA

Why is OAT (one-factor-at-a-time) SA so bad?



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Environmental Modelling & Software

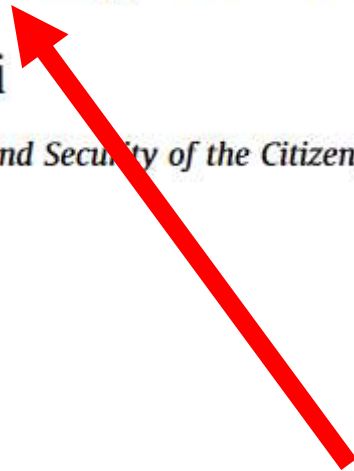
journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/envsoft](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/envsoft)



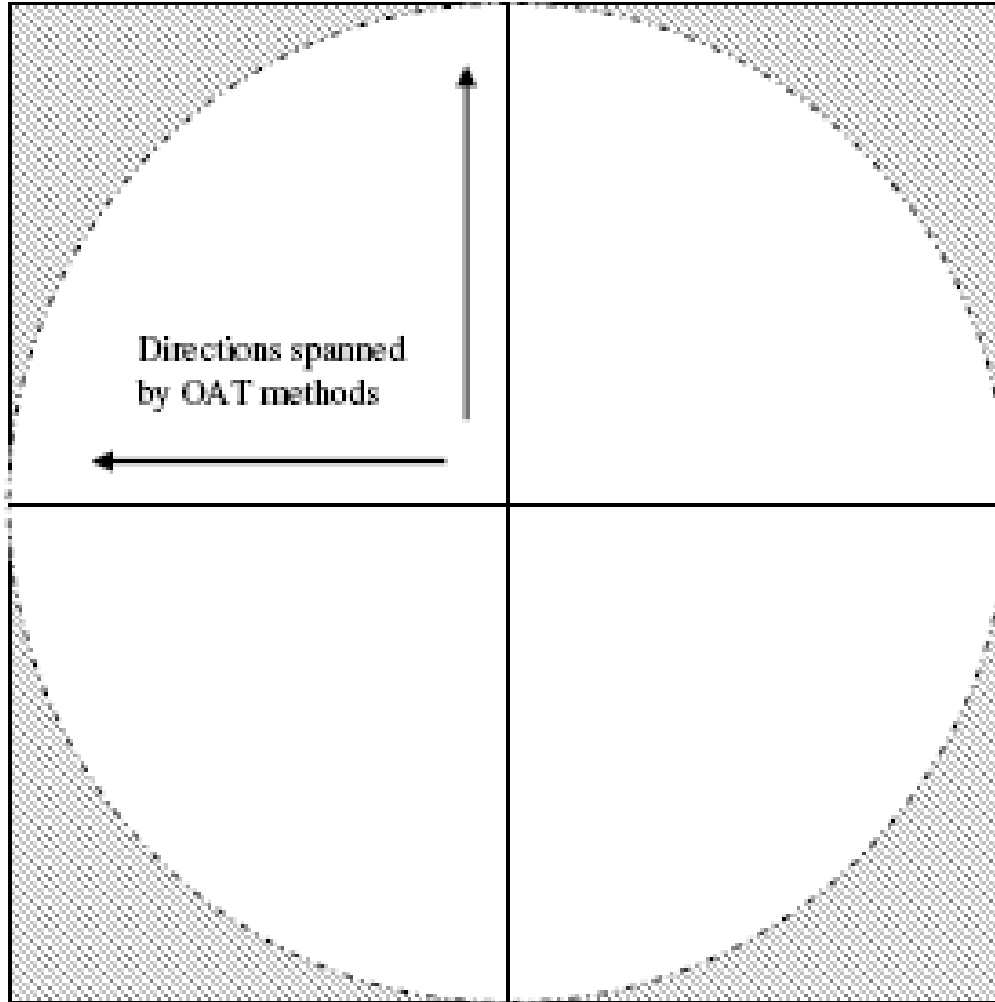
# How to avoid a perfunctory sensitivity analysis

Andrea Saltelli\*, Paola Annoni

*Joint Research Center, Institute for the Protection and Security of the Citizen, via E.Fermi, 2749, Ispra VA 21027, Italy*



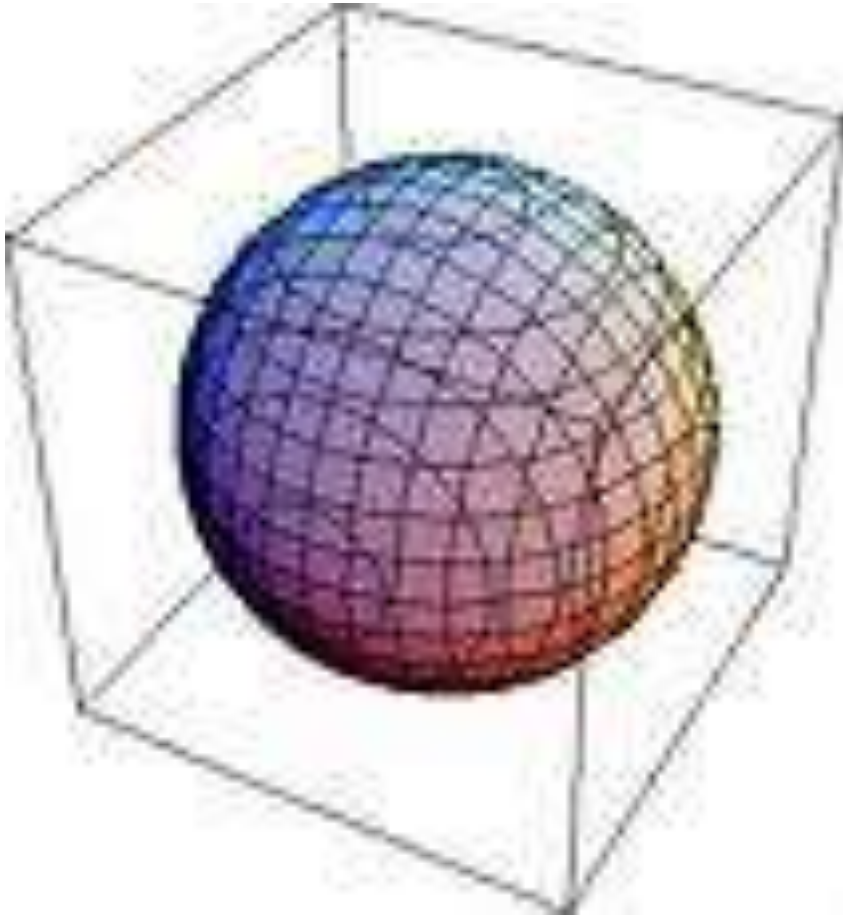
# OAT in 2 dimensions



Area circle  
/ area  
square = ?

~ 3/4

# OAT in 3 dimensions



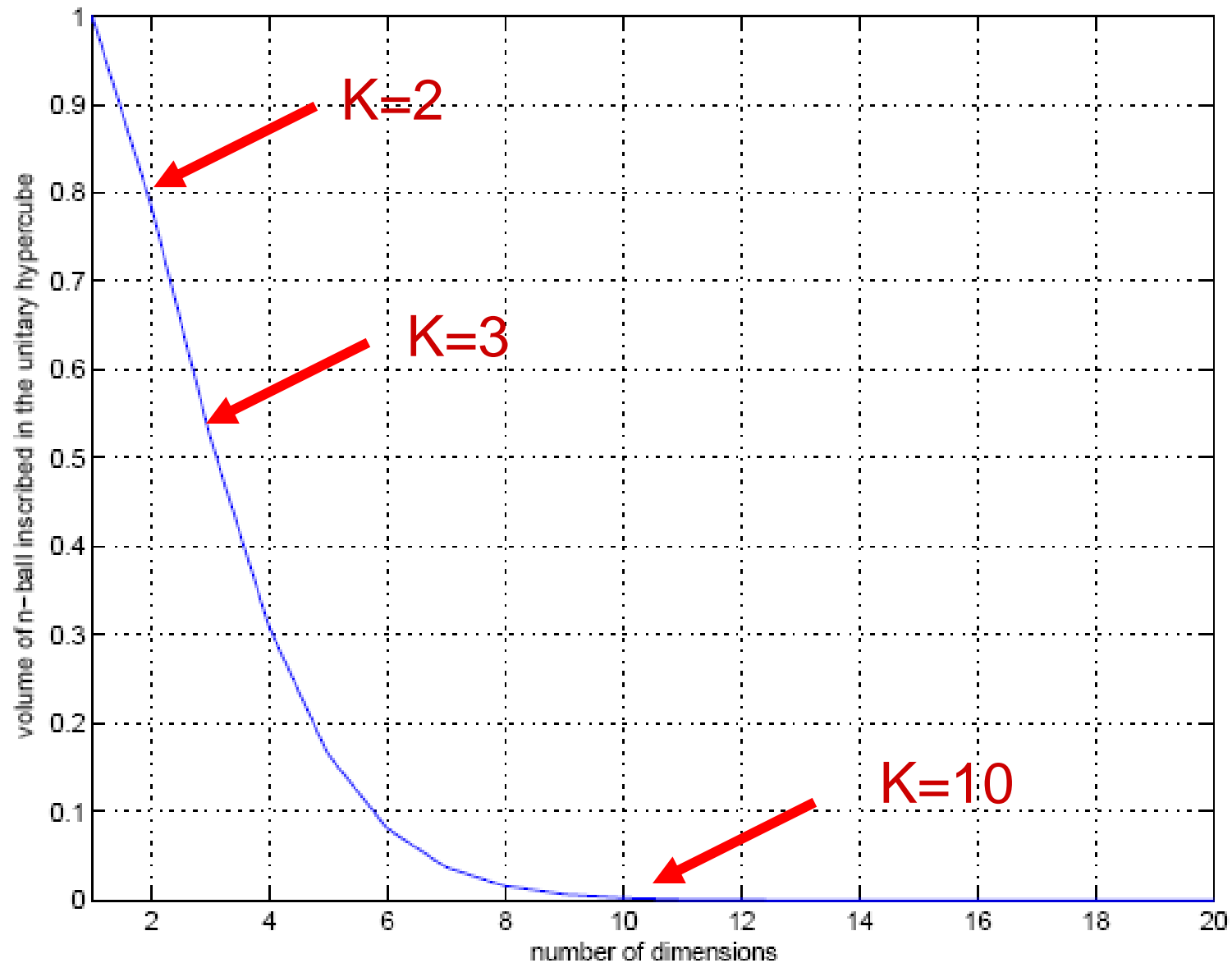
Volume sphere /  
volume cube = ?

$\sim 1/2$

OAT in 10 dimensions; Volume  
hypersphere / volume ten dimensional  
hypercube =?  $\sim 0.0025$



# OAT in k dimensions

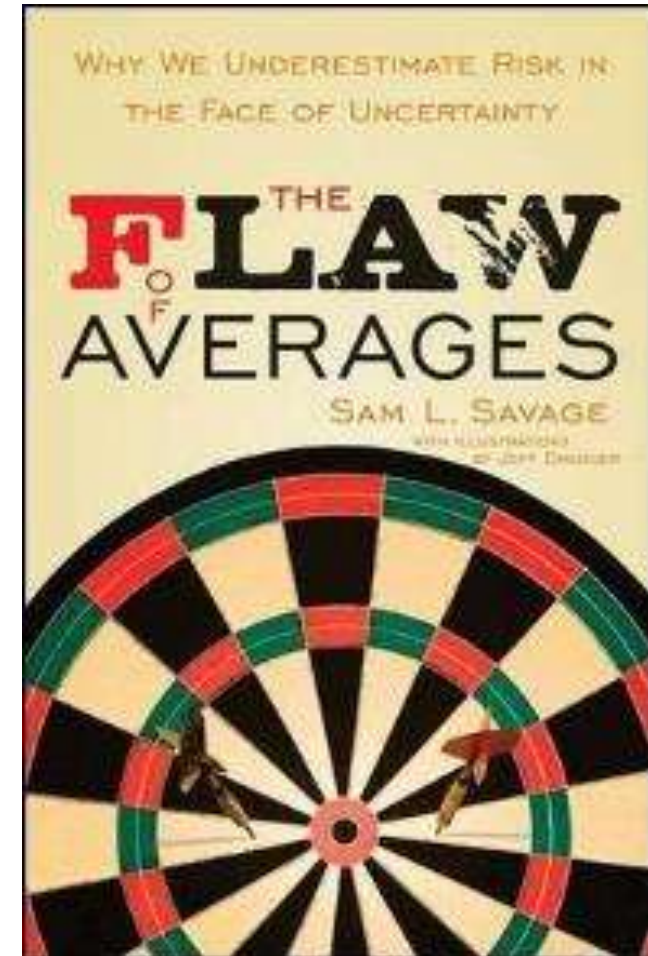
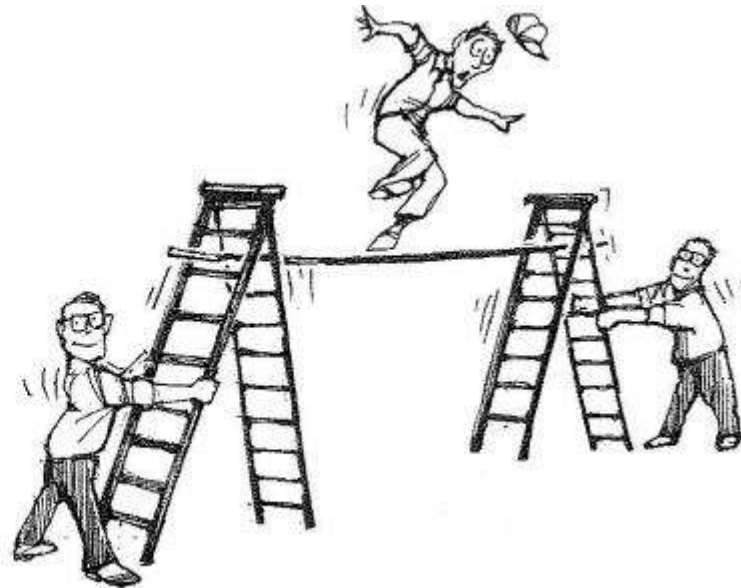


# How would you test the scaffolding?

How coupled ladders are shaken in most of available literature



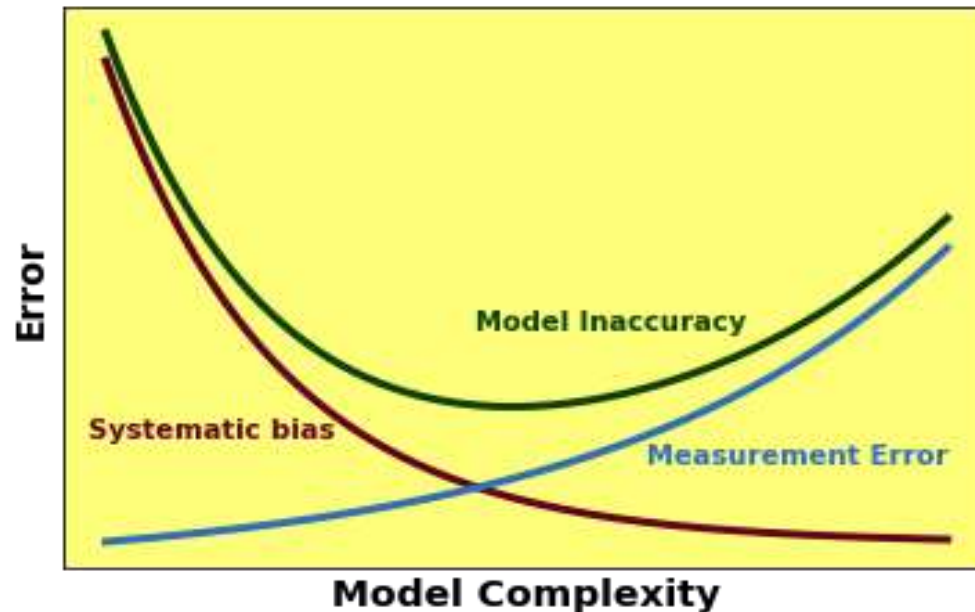
How to shake coupled ladders



# Lessons from sensitivity analysis

- Global SA
- UA and SA coupled
- Purpose- & context-specific
- The map is not the territory

- Memento







# Environmental Modelling & Software

Volume 114, April 2019, Pages 29-39



## Why so many published sensitivity analyses are false: A systematic review of sensitivity analysis practices

Andrea Saltelli <sup>a, b</sup>  , Ksenia Aleksankina <sup>c</sup>, William Becker <sup>d</sup>, Pamela Fennell <sup>e</sup>, Federico Ferretti <sup>d</sup>, Niels Holst <sup>f</sup>, Sushan Li <sup>g</sup>, Qiongli Wu <sup>h</sup>

# Literature search in Scopus

**Query:** “sensitivity analysis” & “model/modelling”  
& “uncertainty”; years 2012–2017; journal  
articles; in English

➔ 6000 articles

- AgrBioSci (Agricultural and Biological Sciences)
- BiochemGenMBio (Biochemistry, Genetics and Molecular Biology)
- BusManAcc (Business, Management and Accounting)
- Chemi (Chemistry)
- ChemEng (Chemical Engineering)
- CompSci (Computer Science)
- DecSci (Decisional Science)
- EarthSci (Earth and Planetary Sciences)
- EconFin (Economy and Finance)
- Energy (Energy)
- Engineering (Engineering)
- EnvSci (Environmental Science)
- ImmunMicrobio (Immunology and Microbiology)
- MatSci (Material Science)
- Math (Math)
- Medicine (Medicine)
- PharTox (Pharmacology and Toxicology)
- PhysAstro (Physics and Astronomy)
- SocSci (Social Science)

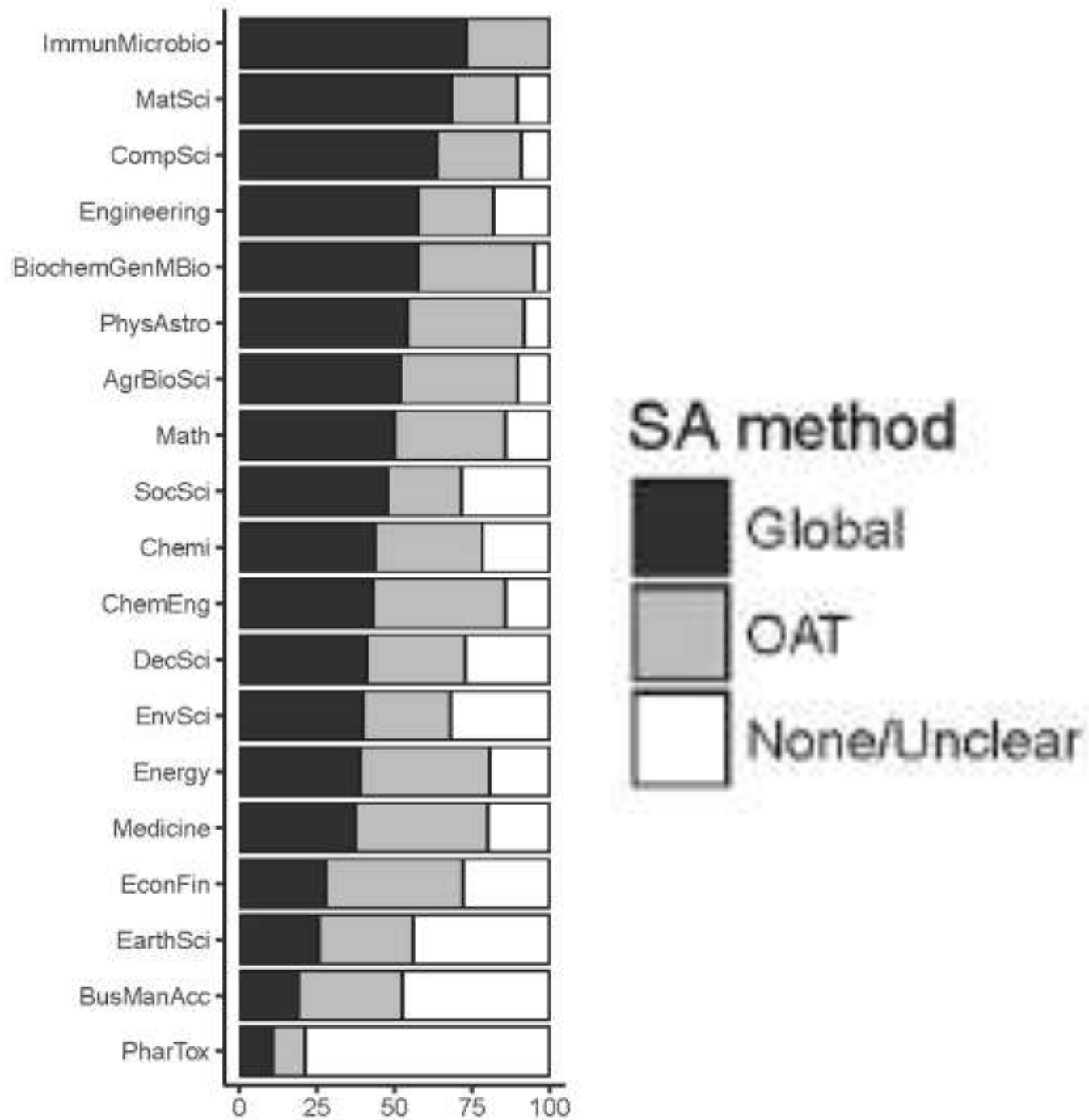
subject areas >100 articles

Taking the top twenty most-cited papers in each subject area:

→ 324 articles, divided among authors

Cleansing manually irrelevant articles:

→ 280 articles



Still many papers  
apply an OAT SA:  
65%

What if the model is truly linear?

|           |     |
|-----------|-----|
| Linear    | 7%  |
| Nonlinear | 61% |
| Unclear   | 32% |

|           |     |
|-----------|-----|
| Linear    | 7%  |
| Nonlinear | 61% |
| Unclear   | 32% |

65% highly cited articles are OAT

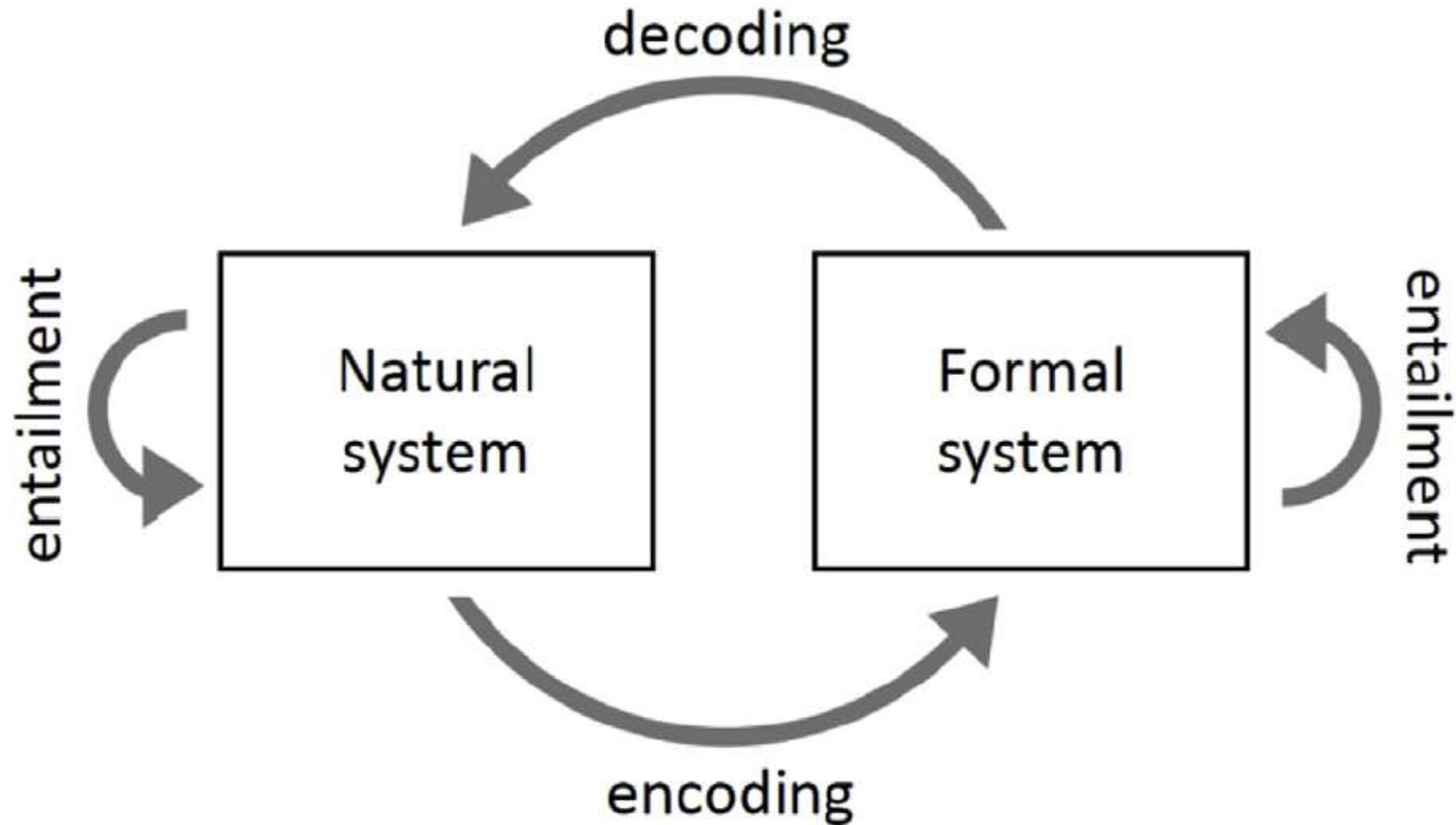
Taking all unclear = linear → still  
over 20%  $(.32+.07)*.65$  of papers wrong  
(OAT & non-linear model)

# Why?

## **5. Discussion**

*5.1. Reasons for bad practice*

Why? ➔ 1. Modelling as a craft



Why? ➔ 2. Each discipline going about modelling on its own separate way; pockets of SA practitioners (out of our 280 papers, 35 were methodological, of which 24 suggest global SA)

Why? ➔ 3. Mathematical modelling is not  
a discipline

Based on a survey of modellers: “there is no dominating paradigm in modelling and simulation... simulation verification is mostly a trial and error activity ➔ challenges model/simulation validity”

Padilla, J. J., Diallo, S. Y., Lynch, C. J., & Gore, R. (2018). Observations on the practice and profession of modeling and simulation: A survey approach. *SIMULATION*, 94(6), 493–506.

... mathematical modelling cannot do this:



**AMERICAN STATISTICAL ASSOCIATION RELEASES STATEMENT ON  
STATISTICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND *P*-VALUES**

*Provides Principles to Improve the Conduct and Interpretation of Quantitative  
Science*

March 7, 2016

Wasserstein, R.L. and Lazar, N.A., 2016. 'The ASA's statement on p-values: context, process, and purpose', *The American Statistician*, Volume 70, 2016 – Issue 2, Pages 129–133.

Why? ➡ 4. Good practices require  
training in statistics

Why? ➔ 5. More time is needed; though mature global sensitivity analysis methods around for more than 25 years researchers tend to emulate methods found in highly cited papers assuming that they are best practice

Why? ➔ 6. Strategic reasons: global SA is bad if one wants to play the uncertainty game, inflating or deflating uncertainties instrumentally

Solutions? Statistics as a discipline takes responsibility for statistical methods for model validation and verification

## A short comment on statistical versus mathematical modelling

Andrea Saltelli 

*Nature Communications* **10**, Article number: 3870 (2019) | [Cite this article](#)

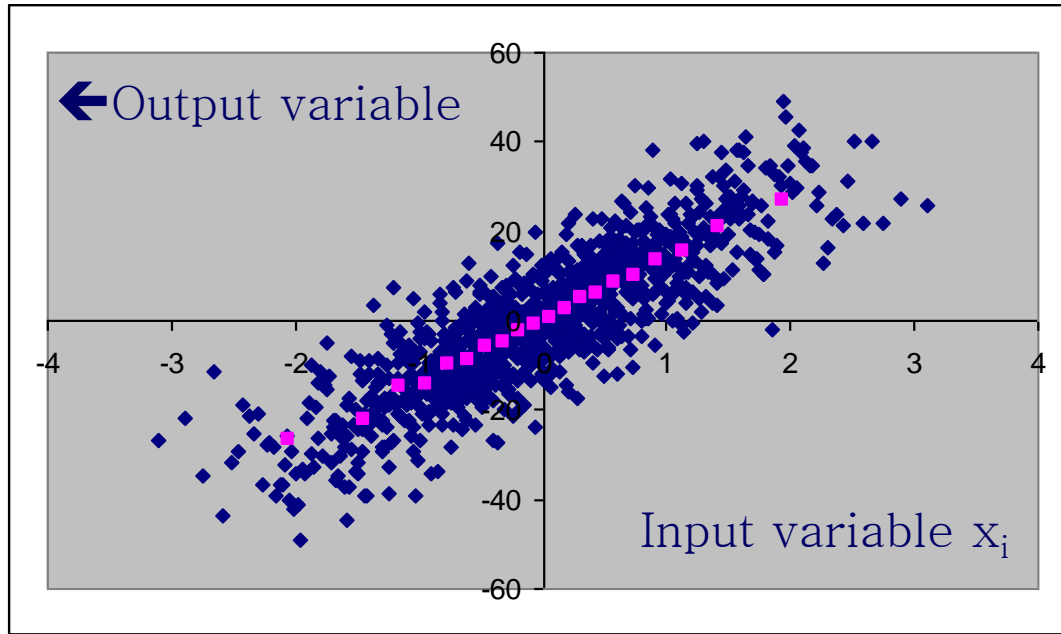
**37k** Accesses | **31** Citations | **416** Altmetric | [Metrics](#)

**While the crisis of statistics has made it to the headlines, that of mathematical modelling hasn't. Something can be learned comparing the two, and looking at other instances of production of numbers. Sociology of quantification and post-normal science can help.**

# The End

@andreasaltelli





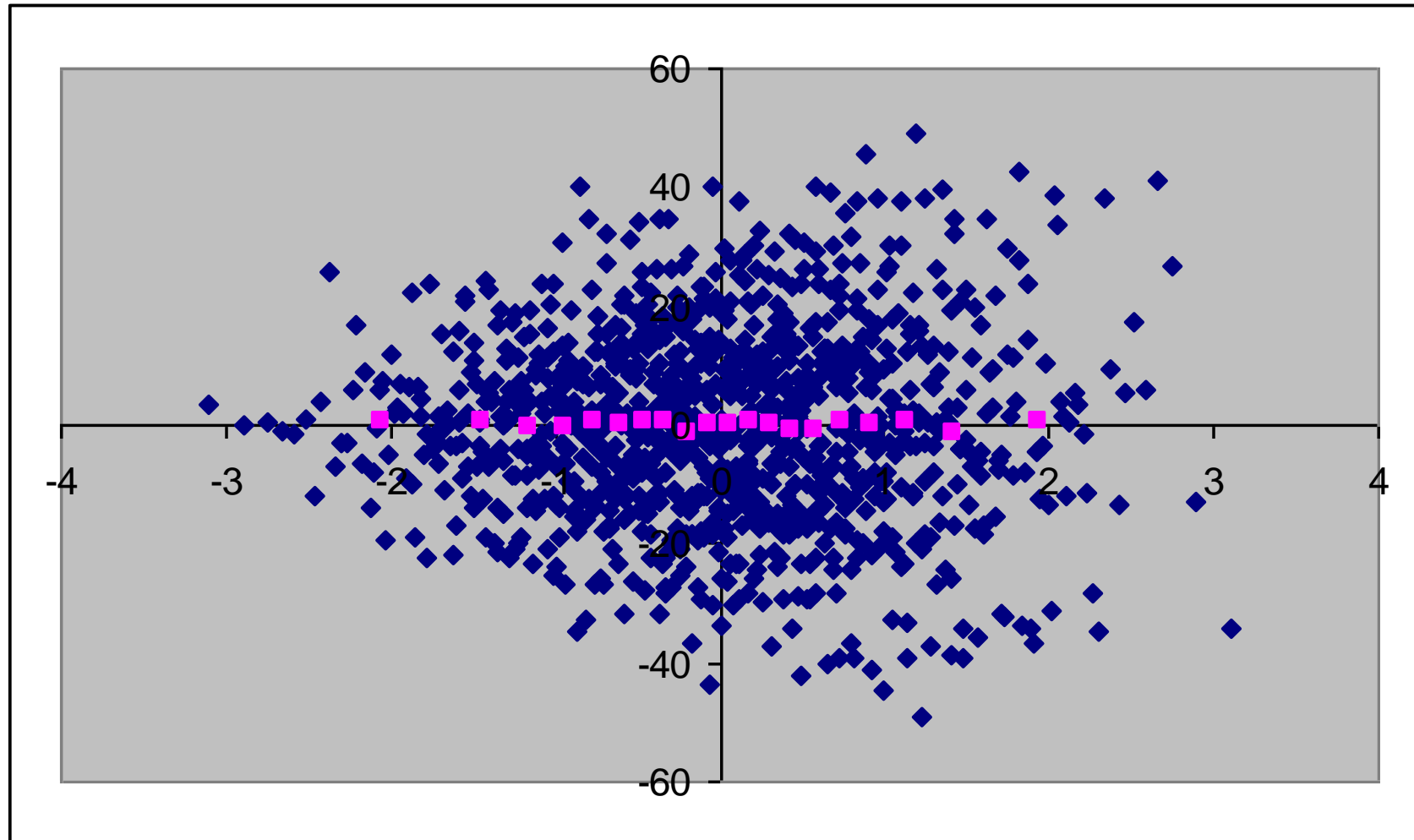
Take the variance of  
the pink points one  
obtains a sensitivity  
measure

$$V_{X_i} \left( E_{\mathbf{X}_{\sim i}} (Y | X_i) \right)$$

$$S_i = \frac{V_{X_i} \left( E_{\mathbf{x}_{\sim i}} (Y | X_i) \right)}{V(Y)}$$

The partial variance divided by the total variance is the so-called sensitivity index of the first order, identical in formulation to Pearson's correlation ratio

Is this factor non-important?



There are terms which capture two-way, three way,  $\cdots$  interactions among variables.

All these terms are linked by a formula

# Variance decomposition (ANOVA)

$$V(Y) =$$

$$\sum_i V_i + \sum_{i,j>i} V_{ij} + \dots + V_{123\dots k}$$

# Variance decomposition (ANOVA)

When the factors are independent the total variance can be decomposed into main effects and interaction effects up to the order  $k$ , the dimensionality of the problem.

If fact interactions terms are awkward to handle: **just the second order terms** for a model with  $k$  factors are as many as  $k(k-1)/2 \dots$

(10 factors=45 second order terms)

Wouldn't it be handy to have just a single 'importance' terms for all effects, inclusive of first order and interactions?

In fact such terms exist and can be computed easily, without knowledge of the individual interaction terms

Thus given a model  $Y=f(X_1,X_2,X_3)$

Instead of

$$\begin{aligned} V &= V_1 + V_2 + V_3 + \\ &+ V_{12} + V_{13} + V_{23} + \\ &+ V_{123} \end{aligned}$$

Or – divided by  $V$

$$\begin{aligned} 1 &= S_1 + S_2 + S_3 + \\ &+ S_{12} + S_{13} + S_{23} + \\ &+ S_{123} \end{aligned}$$

We have:

$$S_{T1} = S_1 + S_{12} + S_{13} + S_{123}$$

(and analogue formulae for  $S_{T2}$ ,  $S_{T3}$ )  
which can be computed without  
knowing  $S_1$ ,  $S_{12}$ ,  $S_{13}$ ,  $S_{123}$

$S_{T1}$  is called a total effect  
sensitivity index

$$E_{\mathbf{X}_{\sim i}} \left( V_{X_i} \left( Y | \mathbf{X}_{\sim i} \right) \right)$$

Total effect, or bottom marginal variance=  
 = the expected variance that would be left if  
 all factors but  $X_i$  could be fixed (self evident  
 definition )

$$S_{Ti} \equiv \frac{E\left(V\left(Y|\mathbf{X}_{\sim i}\right)\right)}{V_Y}$$