Questioning Questions in Computational Neuroscience

Pasta and Profs

November 20, 2016

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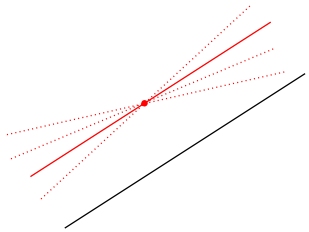
Asking the Right Question Is Critical



Parallel postulate

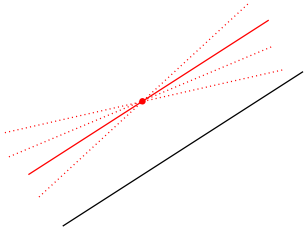
Euclid (circa BC 300)

Eugenio Beltrami (1985-1900)

Euclid's 5th postulate (parallel postulate).

- How can we prove the parallel postulates using ... ?
  Unsolvable. Unsolved for thousands of years.

Asking the Right Question Is Critical



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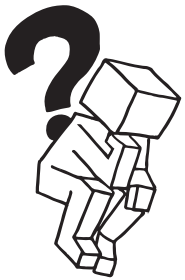
- How can we prove the parallel postulates using ... ?
  Unsolvable. Unsolved for thousands of years.
- ~~How~~ can we prove the parallel postulates using ... ?
  Solvable. The answer is "No" (Beltrami)

Image sources: Painting by Justus of Ghent; public domain photo.

Today's Topic

- Re-evaluating current questions in (computational) neuroscience.
- Showing how slight change in perspective can lead to new insights.



Background: Current Questions in Neuroscience

10 Unsolved Questions of Neuroscience

1. How is **information coded** in neural activity?
2. How are **memories stored** and retrieved?
3. What does the **baseline activity** in the brain represent?
4. How do brains **simulate the future**?
5. What are **emotions**?
6. What is **intelligence**?
7. How is **time represented** in the brain?
8. Why do brains **sleep and dream**?
9. How do the specialized systems of the brain **integrate** with one another?
10. What is **consciousness**?

Eagleman, *Discover* (2007)

Outline

Questions to Consider

1. How to understand the neural code?
2. How did consciousness evolve?
3. How does the visual system process texture?
4. How to acquire the connectome? (Time permitting)

1. How to Understand the Neural Code?

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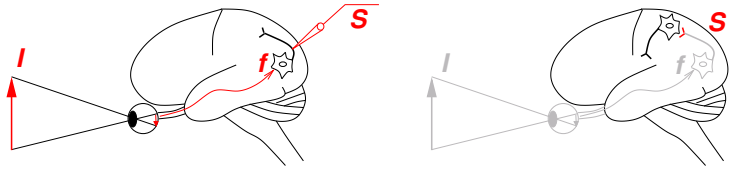

(a) From the OUTSIDE (b) From the INSIDE

- How can **we** understand the neural code? (X)

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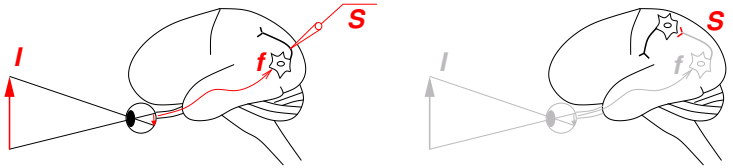


(a) From the OUTSIDE (b) From the INSIDE

- How can **we** understand the neural code? (X)
- How can **the brain itself** understand its neural code? (O)

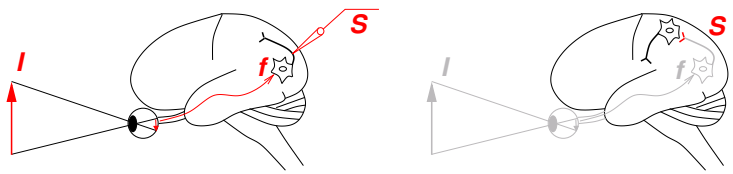
Understanding the Neural Code, by the Brain

- What do these blinking lights mean?
- This is the BRAIN's perspective.
  - Seems impossible to solve!

Understanding the Neural Code, by Us

- Now we can understand the meaning.
- This is OUR perspective.
  - However, this methodology is not available to the brain!

How to Understand the Neural Code?



(a) From the OUTSIDE (b) From the INSIDE

- How can **we** understand the brain? (X)
- How can **the brain itself** understand itself? (O)
  - Solution: sensorimotor learning – not obvious when wrong question asked (Choe and Smith 2006; Choe et al. 2007). Cf. Buzsaki's "Inside-Out approach". *Rhythms of the Brain* (2006).

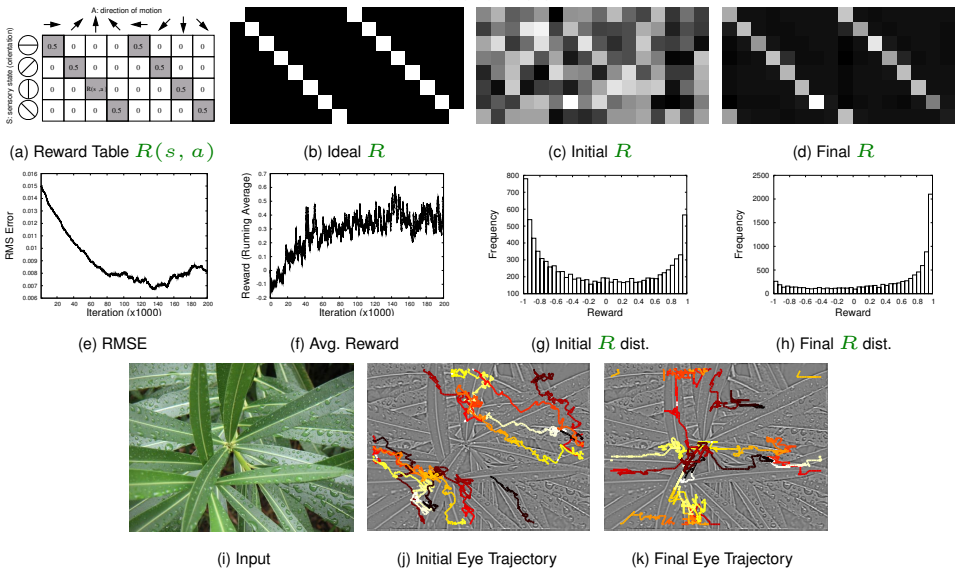
Sensorimotor Learning to the Rescue

- Property of motor output that maintains internal state invariant
- Same as property of encoded sensory information.

Understanding, Inside the Brain

Choe et al., *Int'l J. of Humanoid Robotics* 2007

Results



(a) Reward Table $R(s, a)$ (b) Ideal R (c) Initial R (d) Final R

(e) RMSE (f) Avg. Reward (g) Initial R dist. (h) Final R dist.

(i) Input (j) Initial Eye Trajectory (k) Final Eye Trajectory

Choe et al., *Int'l J. of Humanoid Robotics* 2007

2. How did Consciousness Evolve?

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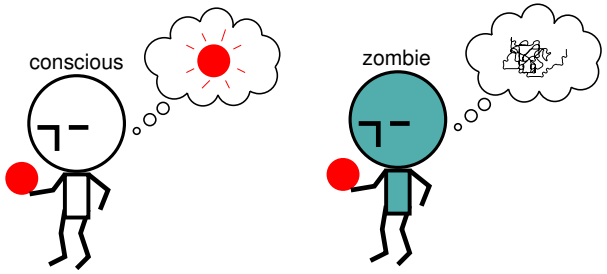

- How did consciousness evolve? (X)

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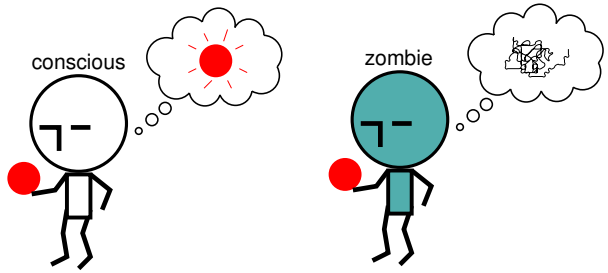
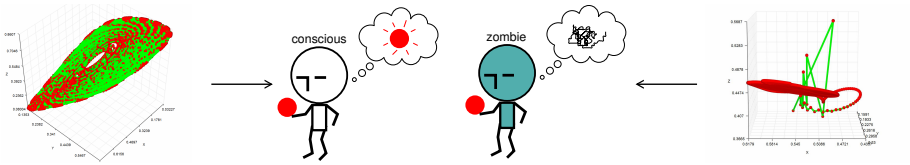


- How did consciousness evolve? (X)
- How did the **necessary conditions** of consciousness evolve? (O)

2. How did Consciousness Evolve?

- How did consciousness evolve? (X)
- How did the **necessary conditions** of consciousness evolve? (O)
  - Former is subjective, latter is objective.
  - Predictive dynamics found to be key (Choe et al. 2012).



Necessary Condition for Consciousness

- Are there future events that are 100% predictable?

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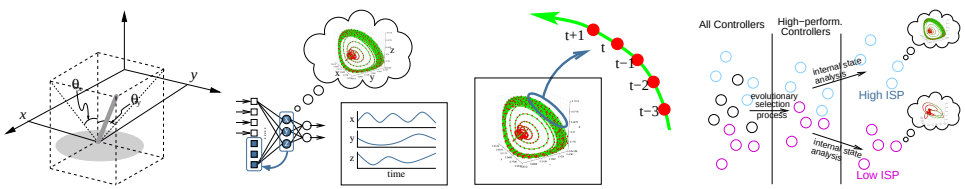
Necessary Condition for Consciousness

- Are there future events that are 100% predictable?
- What if I say there are such events?
- I will clap my hands in the next 5 seconds.
- “My” actions are 100% predictable, and this (authorship) is a key property of the self, the subject of consciousness.
- Thus, the brain dynamics have to be predictable.

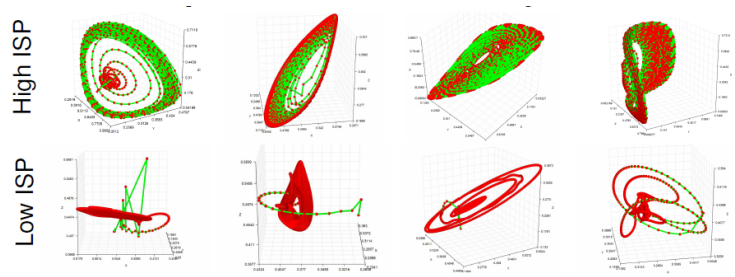
Could the Necessary Condition Evolve?



(a) Task (b) Controller (c) Measure ISP (d) Overview

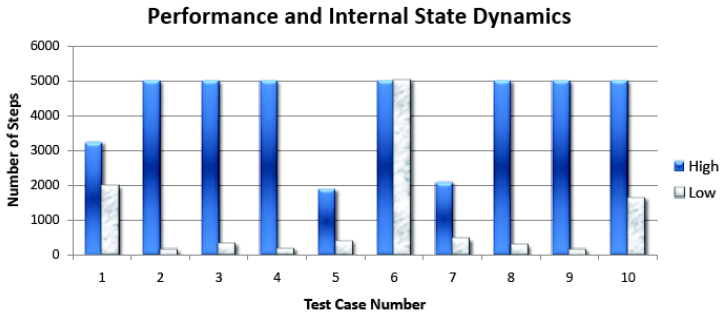
- Simulated evolution.
- Measure predictability of internal state dynamics.

Predictable vs. Unpredictable Internal Dyn.



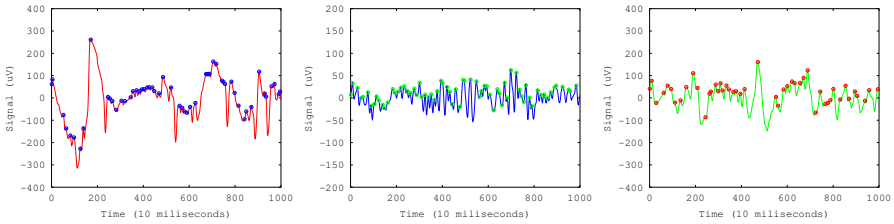
- Internal dynamics of a simple pole-balancing controller neural network (Kwon and Choe 2008).

Predictable vs. Unpredictable Internal Dyn.



- Performance in controllers with high vs. low internal state predictability (Kwon and Choe 2008).
- Controllers with high ISP better fit in changing environment: Necessary condition can evolve!

Analysis of Real EEG Data

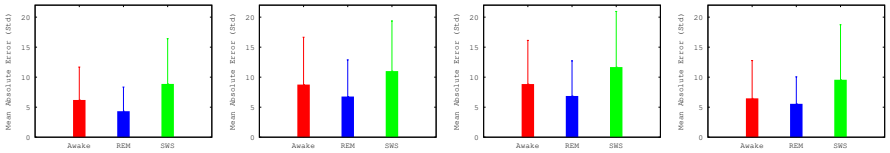


Awake REM Sleep Slow Wave Sleep

- Awake, REM sleep, and Slow-wave sleep EEG data.
- Inter-Peak Interval (IPI) predictability.

Yoo et al. *Frontiers in Neurorobotics* 2013.

Real EEG Data: Prediction Error



Subject 1 Subject 2 Subject 3 Subject 4

- All differences were significant ($p < 10^{-6}$) except for subject 4, Awake vs. REM.
- Bottom line: Awake and REM more predictable than SWS.

Yoo et al. *Frontiers in Neurorobotics* 2013.

3. How Does the Visual System Process Texture?

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- How does the visual system process texture? (X)

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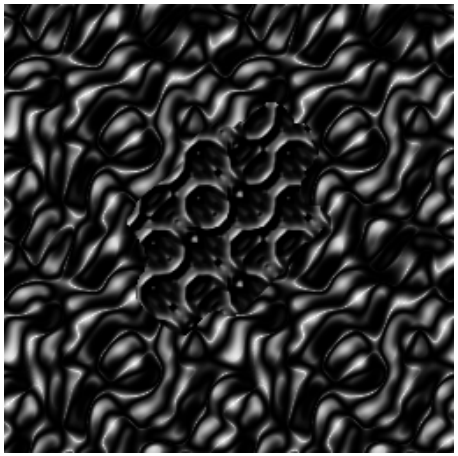
- What is the nature of texture? (O)

How Visual System Processes Texture?

- How does the visual system process texture? (X)
- What is the nature of texture? (O)
  - Texture is a surface property and is thus tactile.
  - Tactile RFs more powerful than visual RFs (Bai et al. 2008; Park et al. 2009).

Texture in 2D

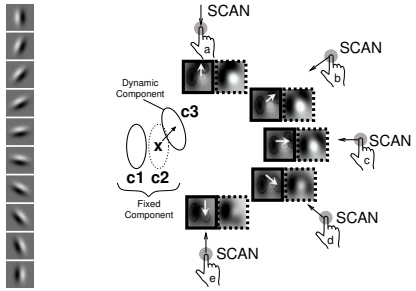


- Can you easily see the texture boundary?

Texture in 3D

- Now can you see the boundary?

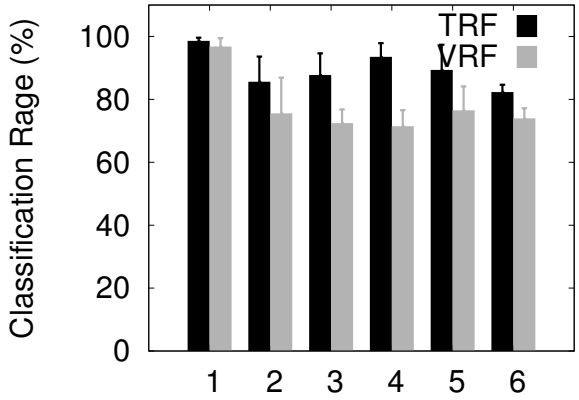
Preprocessing with Visual vs. Tactile RF



(a) Visual RFs (b) Tactile RFs

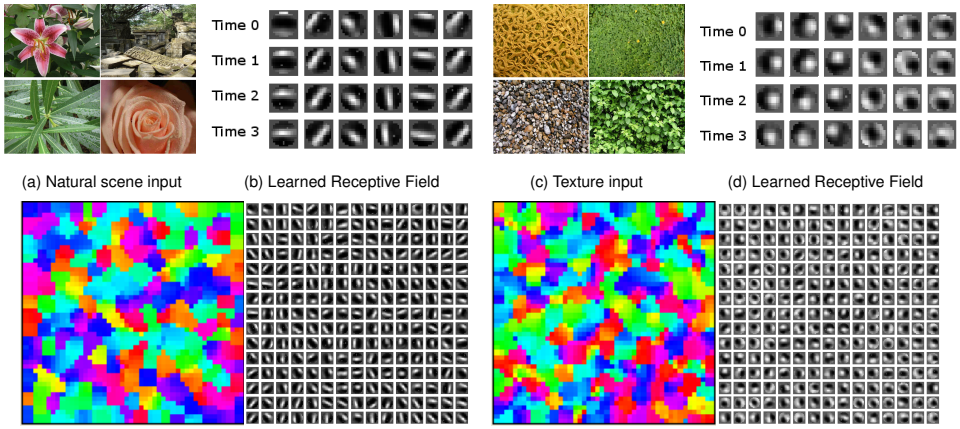
- Preprocess texture with visual vs. tactile receptive field.
- Run classifier on result.

Tactile vs. Visual Texture Processing



- Tactile filter better than visual filter (Bai et al. 2008).
- Texture may be more intimately related to touch.

Natural Scene:Texture = Visual:Tactile



(a) Natural scene input (b) Learned Receptive Field (c) Texture input (d) Learned Receptive Field

(e) Orientation map (Nat. Scn.) (f) Full visual map (Nat. Scn.) (e) Orientation map (Texture) (f) Full tactile map (Texture)

- Train identical cortical devel. model w/ (1) natural scene and (2) texture.
- (1) leads to visual RFs. (2) Leads to tactile RFs.

Park et al. *IEEE CIMSVP* 2010

4. How to Acquire the Connectome

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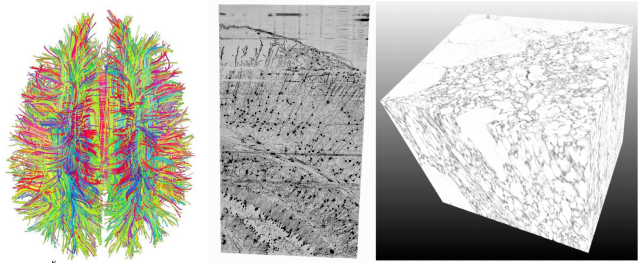
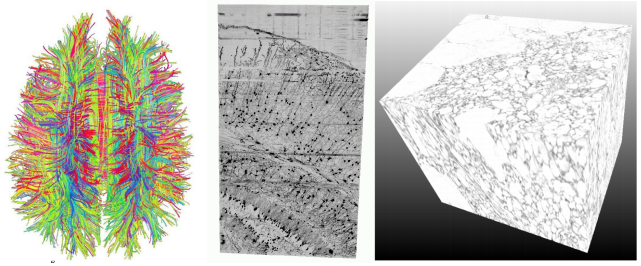


Imaging: Diffusion Tensor Imaging	Light Microscopy	Electron Microscopy
Scale: $\sim$ 10 cm cube	$\sim$ 1 cm cube	$\sim$ 100 um cube
Resolution: $\sim$ 1 mm cube	$\sim$ 1 um cube	$\sim$ 10 nm cube
Hagmann et al. (2007)	Mayerich et al. (2008)	Denk and Horstmann (2004)

- How to acqiure the connectome? (X)

4. How to Acquire the Connectome



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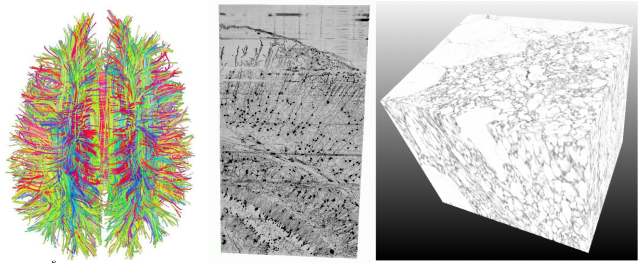
4. How to Acquire the Connectome



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- How to acqiure the connectome? (X)
- What if the connectome is available today? (O)
  - Test analysis methods with synthetic connectome.

What if Connectome is Available Today?

- *C. elegans* connectome is available (White et al. 1986).
  - Without activity and behavior data, progress is slow.
- Izquierdo and Beer (2013): used genetic algorithm to search for the parameters.
- Sohn et al. (2011): used cluster analysis to identify functional modules.

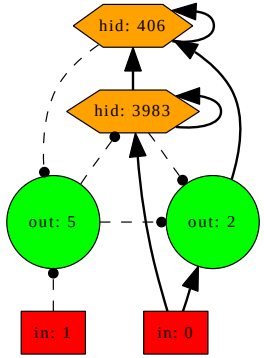
Analysis of the Connectome

- Neuroimaging-based
  - Park et al. (2014): Used graph-ICA to identify task-sepecific subnetworks.
  - van den Heuvel and Sporns (2011): Rich club
- EM-level connectome
  - Seung and Sümbül (2014): Cell types, connectivity, and function (direction selectivity) in the retina.

Synthetic Connectomics

- Simulated evolution of neural network controllers.
- Use a topological evolution algorithm (NEAT, Stanley and Miikkulainen 2002).
- Full access to connectivity, weight, activity, and behavior.

Example: Analyze This!

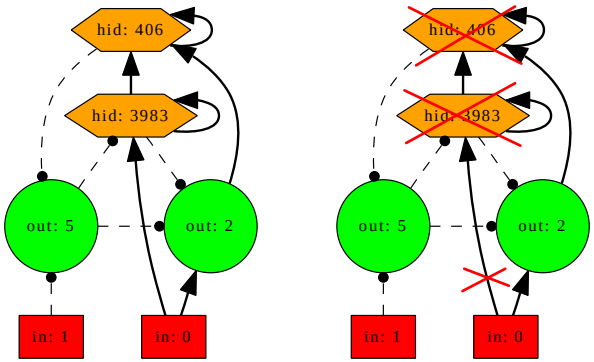


- Simple circuit evolved using Neuroevolution (NEAT).
  - Hard to know what it does without sensorimotor linkage: Brain in a vat.

Example: Context

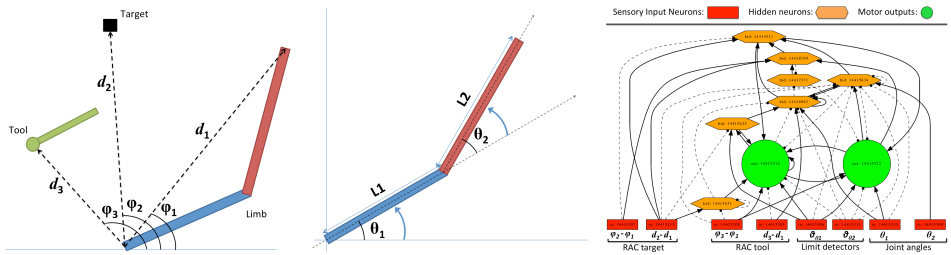
- Task: Navigation to goal.
- Input: fixed input (bias) and angle to goal.
- Output: thrust and angle adjust.

Approach: Lesion Study



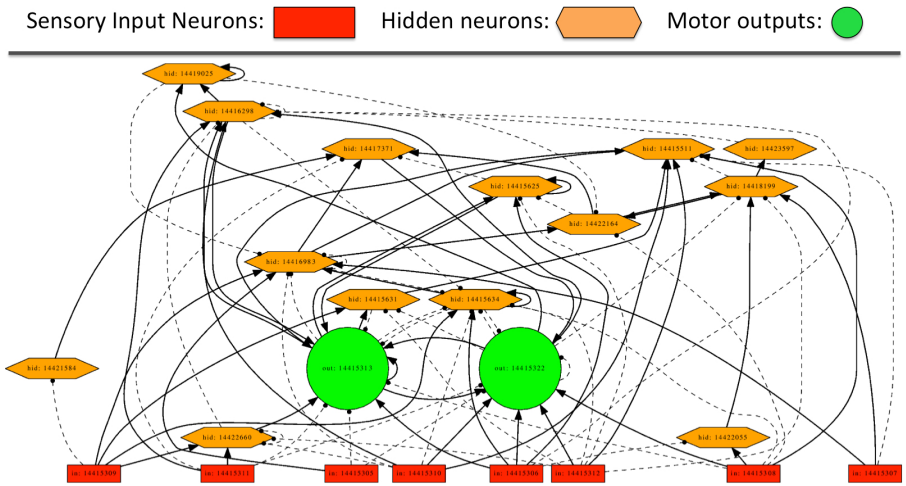
- Observe behavior after eliminating connections or neurons.
- Result: works well with almost everything gone!
  - Need to study behavior in a social context to fully

Example 2: Tool Use



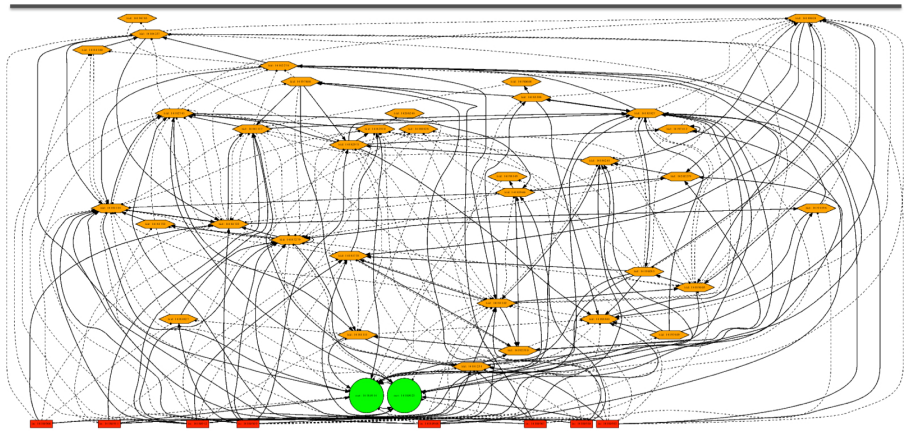
- Articulated arm.
- Tool (green bar) pick up and reach goal.
- Evolved neural network controller.

Evolved Circuits: S^{2}T



- Complexity depends on fitness criterion used.

Evolved Circuits: DS

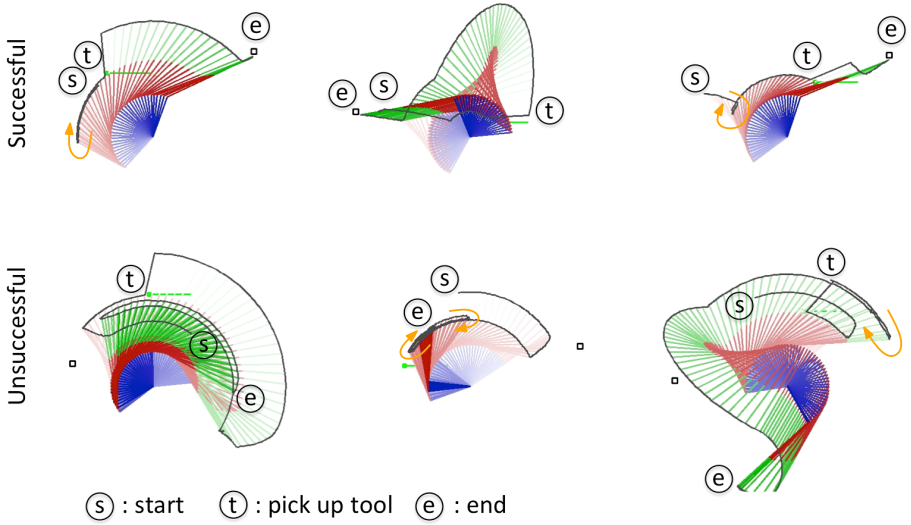


- Complexity depends on fitness criterion used.
- How can we analyze these circuits?

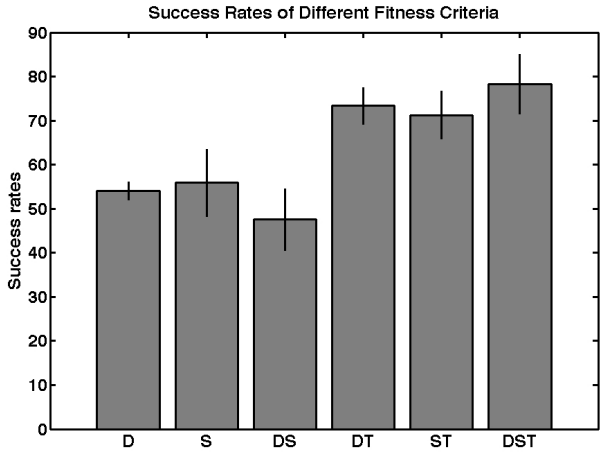
Tool Use Behavior

- Articulated arm.
- Tool (green bar) pick up and reach goal.

Tool Use Behavior: Various Patterns



Performance

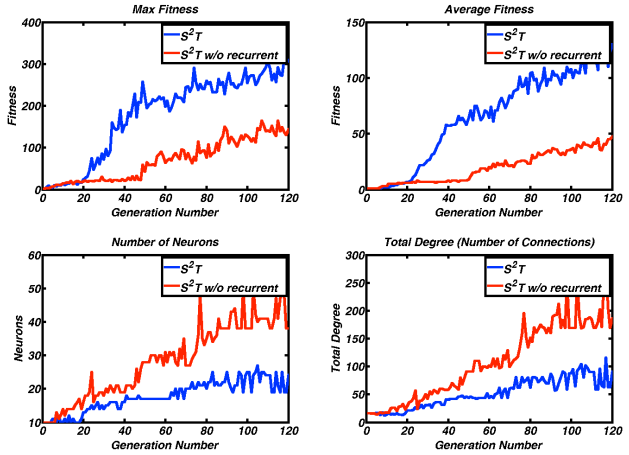


- D: distance, S: speed, T: tool pick up frequency
- Decent performance, bettwe with “T”.

How to Understand the Evolved Networks?

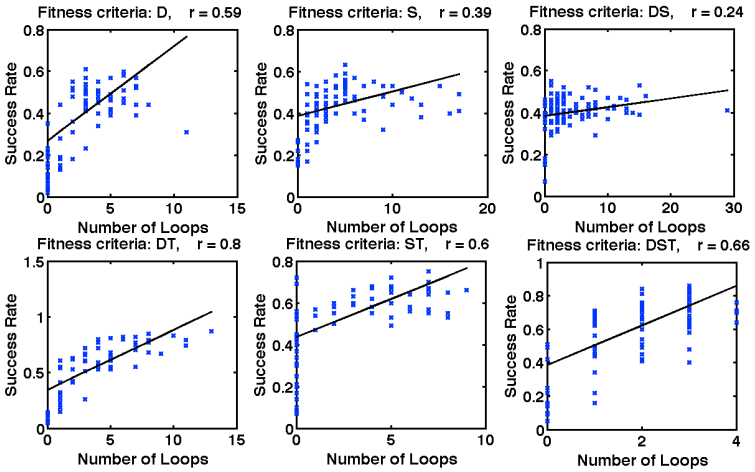
- Analyze recurrent loops (cycles in the connectivity).
- Clustering of activation dynamics.
- Correlated behavior and activation dynamics.
- Mostly preliminary work at this point.

Importance of Recurrent Connections



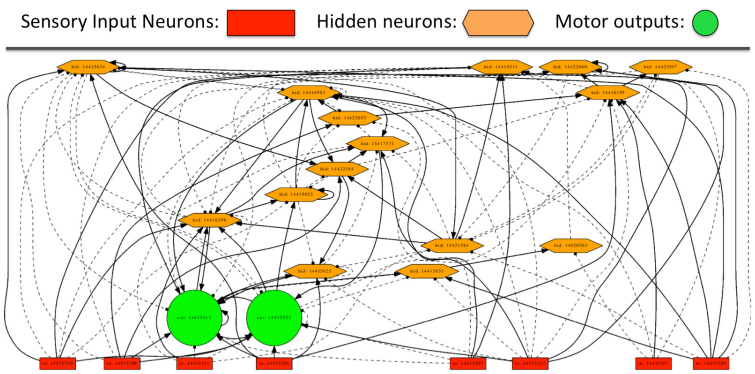
- Faster evolution (top), more compact networks (bottom).

Recurrent Loops vs. Performance



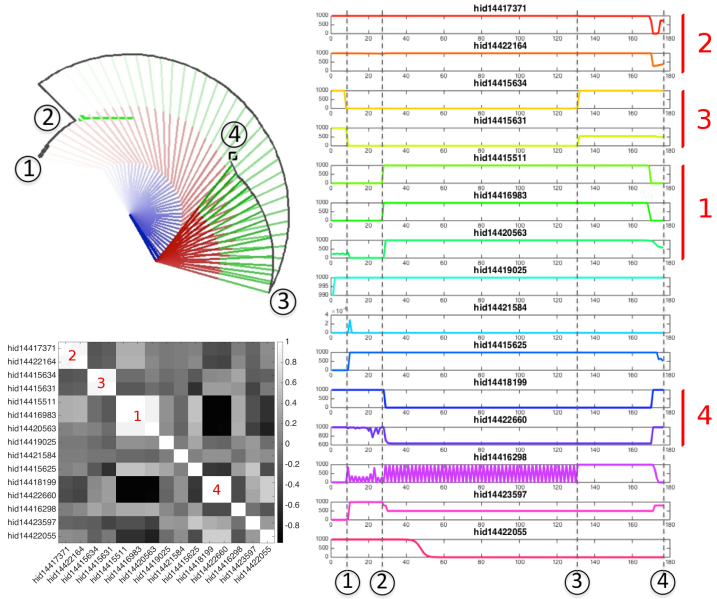
- Number of loops positively correlated with performance.

Example Network



- A representative successful network.

Activation of Neurons and Behavior



Synthetic Connectomics Techniques to be Explored

- Behavior categorization
- Internal dynamics categorization
- Systematic lesion studies and causality analysis
- Individual vs. social context comparison
- Circuit module identification through phylogenetic profiling
- Task-circuit mapping through black-box transfer learning

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion: More Questions

- How are memories stored and retrieved? (X)
  - Assumes memory is about the past.
  - Assumes that memory is internal.
- How are memories used to predict? (O)
  - Memory is for the future (Lim and Choe 2006b, 2005, 2006a, 2008).
- How are the processings of internal and external memory related? (O)
  - Memory can be inside AND outside (Chung and Choe 2011).

Discussion: Yet More Questions

- How does the brain process information? (X)
  - Information has meaning only relative to an observer.
  - Shannon's information: No semantics, by definition.
- How does the brain process meaning? (O)
  - Meaning/semantics should be inherent to the brain.
- How does the brain optimize speed/accuracy/quantity? (X)
- How does the brain optimize quality? (O)

Conclusion

- Taking the brain's own perspective.
- Reducing to tractable, objective necessary conditions.
- Questioning the nature of things.
- Do we have powerful enough tools, if full data is given?

Acknowledgments

- Neural coding: Bhamidipati (2004); Choe and Bhamidipati (2004); Choe and Smith (2006); Choe et al. (2007); Choe (2011); Choe et al. (2008)
- Consciousness: Kwon and Choe (2008); Choe et al. (2012); Chung et al. (2012)
- Texture: Bai et al. (2008); Park et al. (2009); Bai (2008); Park (2009)

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