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On the Observation closest to the Origin

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ABSTRACT

Out of  $n$  i.i.d. random vectors in  $\mathbb{R}^d$  let  $X_n^*$  be the one closest to the origin. We show that  $X_n^*$  has a nondegenerate limit distribution if and only if the common probability distribution satisfies a condition of multidimensional regular variation.

We apply the result to a problem of density estimation.

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## 1. Introduction.

Suppose  $X_1, \dots, X_n$  are i.i.d. observations in a Euclidean space which for convenience we take to be the plane  $R^2$ . The polar coordinates of  $X_i$  are denoted by  $(|X_i|, \theta(X_i))$ . Call the observation with minimum modulus  $X_n^*$ ; if more than one observation has modulus equal to  $\bigwedge_{i=1}^n |X_i|$ , choose  $X_n^*$  from the tied observations by randomization.

As  $n \rightarrow \infty$   $X_n^*$  will converge to  $Q$  but it may be possible to normalize  $X_n^*$  so that a non-trivial limiting distribution exists.

So we ask: when do there exist constants  $c_n$ ,  $0 < c_n \rightarrow 0$  such that

$$(1) \quad c_n^{-1} X_n^* \Rightarrow Y$$

where the limit vector  $Y$  is finite and  $|Y|$  non-degenerate. Here the arrow " $\Rightarrow$ " indicates weak convergence.

In section 2 we show that the necessary and sufficient condition for (1) is multivariate regular variation at  $Q$  of the distribution of  $X_1$ . Also the polar coordinates of  $Y$  are independent random variables.

In the latter section of the paper we examine a related density estimation problem.

## 2. Multivariate Regular Variation and the Observation closest to $Q$ .

The condition that the distribution of  $X_1$  be regularly varying at  $Q$  can conveniently be expressed either in terms of vague convergence of measures or, a regular variation property in terms of the distribution of  $(|X_1|, \theta(X_1))$  and the following are equivalent:

(i) There exist constants  $c_n$ ,  $0 < c_n \rightarrow 0$  and a limit measure  $\nu$  on  $R^2$  which is finite on bounded neighbourhoods of  $Q$  such that

$$n P[c_n^{-1} X_1 \in \cdot] \xrightarrow{v} \nu$$

(" $\xrightarrow{v}$ " denotes vague convergence). This sequential form of the condition is the same as saying there exists a (necessarily regularly varying) function  $U: R_+ \rightarrow R_+$  such that

$$P[X_1 \in t \cdot (\cdot)] / U(t) \xrightarrow{v} \nu \quad \text{as } t \rightarrow 0.$$

(ii) There exist constants  $c_n$ ,  $0 < c_n \rightarrow 0$ ,  $\alpha > 0$ , and a probability measure  $S$  on  $B([0, 2\pi])$  such that

$$n P[c_n^{-1} |\tilde{X}_1| \leq r, \theta(X_1) \leq \theta] \xrightarrow{y} r^\alpha S([0, \theta]).$$

This is the same as

$$\frac{P[|X_1| \leq tr, \theta(X_1) \leq \theta]}{P[|X_1| \leq t]} \xrightarrow{y} r^\alpha S([0, \theta])$$

as  $t \rightarrow 0$ . Cf. Stam (1977), de Haan and Resnick (1977). We remark that the constants  $\{c_n\}$  in (i) and (ii) need not be the same; their quotient tends to a positive constant.

Theorem 1.

There exists a sequence of positive constants  $\{c_n\}$  such that  $c_n^{-1} \tilde{X}_n^*$  converges in distribution to a finite limit vector  $\tilde{Y}$  with  $|\tilde{Y}|$  non-degenerate iff the distribution of  $\tilde{X}_1$  is regularly varying at  $0$  as described in (i) or (ii) above. In this case  $P[|\tilde{Y}| > r, \theta(\tilde{Y}) \leq \theta] = S([0, \theta])e^{-r^\alpha}$ , with  $0 < \alpha < \infty$  so that  $|\tilde{Y}|$  and  $\theta(\tilde{Y})$  are independent.

Proof:

We first prove the theorem under the added assumption that  $|\tilde{X}_1|$  has a continuous distribution. This assumption is removed at the end. With this added assumption, it is easy to derive the distribution of  $\tilde{X}_n^*$ : by symmetry  $\tilde{X}_n^*$  could be any one of the  $\tilde{X}_i$ 's with equal probability. If  $\tilde{X}_n^* = \tilde{X}_1$  then  $\bigwedge_{i=2}^n (\tilde{X}_i) > |\tilde{X}_1|$ . Thus we get

$$(2) \quad P[|c_n^{-1} \tilde{X}_n^*| \leq r, \theta(\tilde{X}_n^*) \leq \theta] = \int_0^r P[\bigwedge_{i=2}^n c_n^{-1} |\tilde{X}_i| > u] n P[c_n^{-1} |\tilde{X}_1| \in du, \theta(\tilde{X}_1) \leq \theta]$$

Supposing (ii) holds we easily get  $P[\bigwedge_{i=2}^n c_n^{-1} |\tilde{X}_i| > u] \rightarrow e^{-u^\alpha}$  uniformly. Assume  $S\{\theta\} = 0$  and write the integral in (2) as

$$\int_0^r \{P[\bigwedge_{i=2}^n c_n^{-1} |\tilde{X}_i| > u] - e^{-u^\alpha}\} n P[c_n^{-1} |\tilde{X}_1| \in du, \theta(\tilde{X}_1) \leq \theta] + \int_0^r e^{-u^\alpha} n P[c_n^{-1} |\tilde{X}_1| \in du, \theta(\tilde{X}_1) \leq \theta]$$

The first term goes to zero by uniform convergence. The second term is seen to converge vaguely in the usual way by appealing to the Helly-Bray lemma (Loève, 1963, p. 180) and so

$$P[c_n^{-1} |\tilde{X}_n^*| \leq r, \theta(\tilde{X}_n^*) \leq \theta] \xrightarrow{Y} \int_0^r e^{-u^\alpha} du^\alpha S([0, \theta])$$

$$= P[|\tilde{Y}| \leq r, \theta(\tilde{Y}) \leq \theta].$$

For the converse suppose there exists  $c_n, 0 < c_n \rightarrow 0$ , and  $\tilde{Y}$  with  $P[\tilde{Y} = 0] < 1$  such that  $c_n^{-1} \tilde{X}_n^* \Rightarrow \tilde{Y}$ . Then  $c_n^{-1} \bigwedge_{i=1}^{n_n} |X_i| = c_n^{-1} |\tilde{X}_n^*| \Rightarrow |\tilde{Y}|$ . Since the only normalization necessary here for convergence of the minima is scaling, we can easily identify the distribution of  $|\tilde{Y}|$  to be the extreme value distribution  $P[|\tilde{Y}| > x] = e^{-kx^\alpha}$ ,  $x > 0$  for some  $0 < \alpha < \infty$ ,  $k > 0$ . Without loss of generality, suppose  $k = 1$ .

This distribution is continuous so  $P[\bigwedge_{i=2}^n c_n^{-1} |X_i| > u] \rightarrow e^{-u^\alpha}$  uniformly. To deal with the rest of the integral in the right side of (2) we use the selection theorem: Since  $n P[c_n^{-1} |X_1| \leq u, \theta(X_1) \leq \theta] \leq n P[c_n^{-1} |X_1| \leq u] \rightarrow -\log P[|\tilde{Y}| > u] = u^\alpha$  as  $n \rightarrow \infty$  (an easy consequence of  $c_n^{-1} \bigwedge_{i=1}^n |X_i| \Rightarrow |\tilde{Y}|$ ) we have for each  $u, \theta$  that  $n P[c_n^{-1} |X_1| \leq u, \theta(X_1) \leq \theta]$  is a bounded sequence.

Thus we are assured of the existence of a vaguely convergent subsequence  $n'$  and a vague limit  $\Psi(du, d\theta)$  such that

$$n' P[c_{n'}^{-1} |X_1| \in du, \theta(X_1) \in d\theta] \xrightarrow{Y} \Psi(du, d\theta).$$

As in the first half of the proof the uniform convergence of  $P[\bigwedge_{i=2}^n |X_i| > c_n \cdot u]$  gives as  $n' \rightarrow \infty$

$$P[c_{n'}^{-1} |\tilde{X}_{n'}^*| \leq r, \theta(\tilde{X}_{n'}^*) \leq \theta] \xrightarrow{Y} \int_0^r e^{-u^\alpha} \Psi(du \times [0, \theta])$$

If along another subsequence  $n''$

$$n'' P[c_{n''}^{-1} |X_1| \in du, \theta(X_1) \in d\theta] \xrightarrow{Y} \Psi'(du, d\theta)$$

then the measures determined by the distribution functions

$$\int_0^r e^{-u^\alpha} \Psi(du \times [0, \theta]), \int_0^r e^{-u^\alpha} \Psi'(du \times [0, \theta]) \text{ and } P[|\tilde{Y}| \leq r, \theta(\tilde{Y}) \leq \theta]$$

are all equal.

Since  $e^{-u^\alpha}$  is non-vanishing, it is easy to see  $\Psi = \Psi'$ . Therefore the vague limit of  $n P[c_n^{-1} |X_1| \leq r, \theta(X_1) \leq \theta]$  exists.

This is equivalent to our first definition (i) of multivariate regular variation.

We now remove the assumption that  $|X_1|$  has a continuous distribution thus allowing more than one observation to achieve minimum modulus. Formula (2) must be modified. As before, by symmetry  $X_n^*$  could be any one of the  $X_i$ 's with equal probability so that

$$(3) \quad \begin{aligned} &P[c_n^{-1} |X_n^*| \leq r, \theta(X_n^*) \leq \theta] \\ &= n P[c_n^{-1} |X_1| \leq r, \theta(X_1) \leq \theta, X_1 = X_n^*]. \end{aligned}$$

Write  $[X_n^* = X_1] = \bigcup_{k=0}^{n-1} A_k$  where  $A_k$  is the event that  $k$  observations from  $X_2, \dots, X_n$  have moduli equal to  $|X_1|$ ,  $n-k-1$  observations have moduli  $> |X_1|$  and the randomization procedure selects  $X_1$  from among those  $k+1$  observations with minimum modulus.

Then (3) becomes

$$\begin{aligned} &n \int_{\{x \mid |x| \leq r, \theta(x) \leq \theta\}} P[c_n^{-1} X_n^* = x \mid c_n^{-1} X_1 = x] P[c_n^{-1} X_1 \in dx] \\ &= n \int_{\{x\}} \sum_{k=0}^{n-1} \frac{1}{k+1} \binom{n-1}{k} P[c_n^{-1} |X_1| = |x|]^k P[c_n^{-1} |X_1| > |x|]^{n-k-1} \\ &\quad P[c_n^{-1} X_1 \in dx] \\ &= \int_0^r \sum_{k=0}^{n-1} \frac{1}{k+1} \binom{n-1}{k} P[c_n^{-1} |X_1| = u]^k P[c_n^{-1} |X_1| > u]^{n-k-1} \\ &\quad n P[c_n^{-1} |X_1| \in du, \theta(X_1) \leq \theta]. \end{aligned}$$

Note the  $k=0$  term (no ties) corresponds to the rightside of (2). For proving either necessity or sufficiency in this theorem, we have at our disposal the condition

$$(4) \quad P[\bigwedge_1^n |X_i| > c_n u] = P[|X_1| > c_n u]^n \rightarrow e^{-u^\alpha}$$

for some  $\alpha$ . We now show (4) implies

$$I_n(u) := \sum_{k=1}^{n-1} \frac{1}{k+1} \binom{n-1}{k} p^k g^{n-k-1} \rightarrow 0$$

as  $n \rightarrow \infty$  uniformly in  $u \in [0, r]$ , where  $p = p_n(u) = P[c_n^{-1} |X_1| = u]$ ,  $g = g_n(u) = P[c_n^{-1} |X_1| > u]$ .

This then shows that  $P[c_n^{-1} |X_n^*| \leq r, \theta(X_n^*) \leq \theta]$  equals the righthandside of (2) plus  $o(1)$ ; the case where the df of  $|X_1|$  is not continuous can then be reduced to the continuous case.

Rewrite  $I_n(u)$  as

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{k=1}^{n-1} \frac{1}{k+1} \frac{(n-1)!}{k!(n-k-1)!} p^k g^{n-k-1} &= \sum_{k=2}^n \frac{1}{n} \frac{n!}{k!(n-k)!} p^k g^{n-k} \\ &= n^{-1} \sum_{k=2}^n \binom{n}{k} p^k g^{n-k} / p = [(p+g)^n - g^n - npg^{n-1}] / np \end{aligned}$$

If  $p=0$ ,  $I_n(u) = 0$  so

$$I_n(u) = [(p+g)^n - g^n - npg^{n-1}] / np$$

where the right side is interpreted as 0 if  $p=0$ .

To help us check  $I_n(u) \rightarrow 0$  uniformly for  $u \in [0, r]$  we write down the following facts:

a)  $g \rightarrow 1$  as  $n \rightarrow \infty$  uniformly on  $[0, r]$ .

This is simply because  $g = P[c_n^{-1} |X_1| > u] \geq P[c_n^{-1} |X_1| > r]$ .

b)  $n p_n(u) \rightarrow 0$  uniformly since for any given  $\epsilon > 0$

$$n p_n \leq n P[c_n^{-1} |X_1| \in (v, v+\epsilon)] \rightarrow e^{-u^\alpha} - e^{-(v+\epsilon)^\alpha}$$

and the last convergence is uniform.

c) As a consequence of (a) and (b) we have  $np/g \rightarrow 0$  uniformly on  $[0, r]$ .

Finally we have

$$\begin{aligned} 0 \leq I_n(u) &= g^n [(1+p/g)^n - 1] / np - g^{n-1} \\ &= g^n [\exp \{n \log(1+p/g)\} - 1] / np - g^{n-1}. \end{aligned}$$

Since  $p/g \rightarrow 0$ ,  $n \log(1+p/g) \sim np/g \rightarrow 0$  by (c) and therefore  $\exp \{n \log(1+p/g)\} - 1 \sim n \log(1+p/g) \sim np/g$  as  $n \rightarrow \infty$ . Thus given  $\epsilon > 0$ , for  $n$  sufficiently large we have uniformly

$$\begin{aligned} 0 \leq I_n(u) &\leq g^n(1+\epsilon) (np/g) / np - g^{n-1} \\ &= (1+\epsilon) g^{n-1} - g^{n-1} = \epsilon g^{n-1} \leq \epsilon \end{aligned}$$

and this suffices for the desired result.



Remark

Under the regular variation conditions, the point process  $\{c_n^{-1} \tilde{X}_k\}_{k=1}^n$  converges weakly to a Poisson point process with mean measure  $\nu$ . Applying the functional which maps point processes to the point closest to  $\underline{0}$  gives via the continuous mapping theorem the sufficiency half of the theorem.

Example

If  $\tilde{X}_1$  is uniformly distributed on the unit disc then picking  $c_n = (2n)^{-1/2}$  gives  $c_n^{-1} \tilde{X}_n^* \Rightarrow \underline{Y} = (Y_1, Y_2)$  i.i.d.  $N(0, 1)$ . To check this one observes that for  $0 \leq r \leq 1$ ,  $0 \leq \theta \leq 2\pi$

$$P[|\tilde{X}_1| \leq r, \theta(\tilde{X}_1) \leq \theta] = \frac{r^2 \theta}{2\pi}$$

and hence  $2n \pi P\{c_n^{-1} \tilde{X}_1 \in \cdot\}$  converges to Lebesgue measure. Note that the convergence to the normal distribution is no longer true in  $\mathbb{R}^k$  with  $k \neq 2$ .

Example

Suppose  $\tilde{X}_1$  has a bivariate Cauchy density  $(1+x_1^2 + x_2^2)^{-3/2} / 2\pi$ . Then

$$P[|\tilde{X}_1| \leq r, \theta(\tilde{X}_1) \leq \theta] = (1-(1+r^2)^{-1/2}) \theta / 2\pi.$$

Since  $P[|\tilde{X}_1| \leq t] \sim t^2/2$  as  $t \rightarrow 0$  we may set  $c_n = n^{-1/2}$  and

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} n P[|c_n^{-1} \tilde{X}_1| \leq r, \theta(c_n^{-1} \tilde{X}_1) \leq \theta] = \frac{1}{2} r^2 \theta / 2\pi$$

so that  $\alpha = 2$ ,  $S([0, \theta]) = \theta / 2\pi$ . As before  $\underline{Y} = (Y_1, Y_2)$  is i.i.d.  $N(0, 1)$  and  $\nu(dx_1, dx_2) = dx_1 dx_2 / 2\pi$ .

Remark

In both previous examples we had  $\alpha = 2$ . This is due to the fact that in both cases  $\tilde{X}_1$  has a continuous density which is positive at  $\underline{0}$ . Cf. section 3 below. An example where this is not the case is the following:

Example

Suppose  $\tilde{X}_1$  has a bivariate gamma density concentrated on  $\mathbb{R}_+^2$ :

$$f(x_1, x_2) = e^{-(x_1 + x_2)} (1 - e^{-x_1 \wedge x_2}); x_1, x_2 \geq 0$$

(Johnson and Kotz, 1972, p. 218). As  $x_1 \rightarrow 0, x_2 \rightarrow 0$

$$f(x_1, x_2) \sim x_1 \wedge x_2.$$

Since  $f(t, t) = t$ , we have for  $\underline{x} = (x_1, x_2) \in (0, \infty)^2$ :

$$P[\underline{X}_1 \leq t \underline{x}] / t^3 = \int_0^{x_1} \int_0^{x_2} \frac{f(t \underline{y})}{f(t, t)} d\underline{y} \rightarrow \int_0^{x_1} \int_0^{x_2} y_1 \wedge y_2 dy_1 dy_2 =: v([0, x_1] \times [0, x_2])$$

as  $t \downarrow 0$  (cf. de Haan and Resnick, 1979, Theorem 1) and we have verified that the regular variation condition (i) holds.

Hence  $\alpha = 3$ . To find  $S$  observe for  $\theta_0 \in [0, \pi/2]$ :

$$v\{\underline{x} : |\underline{x}| \leq r_0, \theta(\underline{x}) \leq \theta_0\} = \int_{r \leq r_0} \int_{\theta \leq \theta_0} (r \cos \theta \wedge r \sin \theta) r dr d\theta$$

$$= \frac{1}{3} r^3 \int_0^{\theta_0} (\cos \theta \wedge \sin \theta) d\theta$$

so that (note that  $v$  is specified only up to a multiplicative constant)

$$(2 - \sqrt{2}) S([0, \theta]) = \begin{cases} 1 - \cos \theta & 0 \leq \theta \leq \pi/4 \\ 1 - \sqrt{2} + \sin \theta & \pi/4 \leq \theta \leq \pi/2. \end{cases}$$

### 3. Density Estimation

Suppose  $\underline{Y}_i$  are i.i.d. random vectors in  $\mathbb{R}^2$  with distribution function  $F$ . Suppose  $F$  has a positive derivative  $F'$  at some point  $\underline{x}_0$  in the sense that for every rectangle  $I$  with one endpoint in the origin

$$(5) \lim_{t \rightarrow 0} P[\underline{Y}_1 - \underline{x}_0 \in t \cdot I] / t^2 |I| = F'(\underline{x}_0)$$

where  $|I|$  is Lebesgue measure of  $I$  (cf. Saks, 1964).

This condition is satisfied for instance if  $F$  has a density continuous and positive at  $\underline{x}_0$ . We are going to estimate  $F'(\underline{x}_0)$  using the  $\underline{Y}$ -observations.

Translating  $x_0$  to the origin by setting  $\tilde{X}_i = Y_i - x_0$  shows that (5) is the regular variation condition (i) of section 2 and  $v(dx_1, dx_2) = F'(x_0) dx_1 dx_2$ . Since  $S$  is the uniform distribution on  $[0, 2\pi]$ , the problem is really one-dimensional and we may as well work with  $\{|\tilde{X}_i|, i \leq n\}$ . Since

$$n P[c_n^{-1} |\tilde{X}_1| \leq r] \rightarrow r^2$$

with  $c_n = (n \pi F'(x_0))^{-1/2}$ , the point process on  $R_+$  with points  $\{|\tilde{X}_i|/c_n, i \leq n\}$  converges weakly to a Poisson process on  $R_+$  with mean measures on  $[0, x] = x^2$ .

So the order statistics  $\{c_n^{-1} |\tilde{X}_n^{(i)}|, i \leq n\}$  from  $\{c_n^{-1} |\tilde{X}_i|, i \leq n\}$  form asymptotically a Poisson process and we base our estimate on the  $k^{\text{th}}$  smallest  $\tilde{X}_n^{(k)}$  where  $k = k(n) \rightarrow \infty$  and  $k/n \rightarrow 0$ . The law of large numbers then will give weak consistency.

It is convenient to use the Renyi representation for order statistics  $(Z_n^{(1)}, Z_n^{(2)}, \dots, Z_n^{(n)})$  from the exponential distribution (Feller, 1971, chapter 1): If  $E_1, E_2, \dots$  are i.i.d.,  $P[E_i > x] = e^{-x}$ , then the  $k^{\text{th}}$

smallest  $Z_n^{(k)} \stackrel{d}{=} \frac{E_1}{n} + \frac{E_2}{n-1} + \dots + \frac{E_k}{n-k+1}$ . If  $k = k(n) \rightarrow \infty, k/n \rightarrow 0$  then

$$\frac{n}{k} \left( \frac{Z_1}{n} + \frac{Z_2}{n} + \dots + \frac{Z_k}{n-k+1} \right) \xrightarrow{p} 1$$

We now use a probability integral transformation:

Let  $\Psi(x) = -\log P[|\tilde{X}_1| > x]$ . From the regular variation condition we have  $\lim_{t \rightarrow 0} \Psi(t)/t^2 = F'(x_0)\pi$  and so for the inverse function  $\Psi^{-1}$  we have

$$\lim_{t \rightarrow 0} \Psi^{-1}(t)/t^{1/2} = (F'(x_0)\pi)^{-1/2}.$$

Since  $|\tilde{X}_n^{(k)}| \stackrel{d}{=} \Psi^{-1}\left(\frac{Z_1}{n} + \dots + \frac{Z_k}{n-k+1}\right)$  it follows

$$\begin{aligned} \left(\frac{n}{k}\right)^{1/2} |\tilde{X}_n^{(k)}| &\stackrel{d}{=} \left(\frac{n}{k}\right)^{1/2} \Psi^{-1}\left(\frac{k}{n} \left[\left(\frac{n}{k}\right) \left(\frac{Z_1}{n} + \dots + \frac{Z_k}{n-k+1}\right)\right]\right) \\ &\sim \left(\frac{n}{k}\right)^{1/2} \Psi^{-1}(k/n) \xrightarrow{p} (F'(x_0)\pi)^{-1/2}. \end{aligned}$$

So our estimate of  $F'(x_0)$  is

$$k/(n \pi |\tilde{X}_n^{(k)}|^2).$$

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