NEO: Non Equilibrium Sampling on the Orbit of a Deterministic Transform

Abstract

Sampling from a complex distribution π and approximating its intractable nor-
malizing constant Z are challenging problems. In this paper, a novel family of
importance samplers (IS) and Markov chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) samplers is de-
rived. Given an invertible map T, these schemes combine (with weights) elements
from the forward and backward Orbits through points sampled from a proposal
distribution ρ. The map T does not leave the target π invariant, hence the name
NEO, standing for Non-Equilibrium Orbits. NEO-IS provides unbiased estimators
of the normalizing constant and self-normalized IS estimators of expectations under
π while NEO-MCMC combines multiple NEO-IS estimates of the normalizing
constant and an iterated sampling-importance resampling mechanism to sample
from π. For T chosen as a discrete-time integrator of a conformal Hamiltonian
system, NEO-IS achieves state-of-the art performance on difficult benchmarks
and NEO-MCMC is able to explore highly multimodal targets. Additionally, we
provide detailed theoretical results for both methods. In particular, we show that
NEO-MCMC is uniformly geometrically ergodic and establish explicit mixing
time estimates under mild conditions.

1 Introduction

Consider a target distribution of the form $\pi(x) \propto \rho(x)\mathrm{L}(x)$ where ρ is a probability density function
(pdf) on $\mathbb{R}^d$ and L is a nonnegative function. Typically, in a Bayesian setting, π is a posterior
distribution associated with a prior distribution ρ and a likelihood function L. An other situation
of interest is generative modeling where π is the distribution implicitly defined by a Generative
Adversarial Networks (GAN) discriminator-generator pair where ρ is the distribution of the generator
and L is derived from the discriminator [31, 6]. An other situation of interest is generative modeling
where π is the distribution implicitly defined by a Variational Auto Encoder (VAE) encoder-decoder
pair where ρ is the distribution output by the encoder and L is an importance weight between the
distribution of the decoder and of the encoder [14, 5]. We are interested in this paper in sampling from
π and approximating its intractable normalizing constant $\mathrm{Z} = \int \rho(x)\mathrm{L}(x)\mathrm{d}x$. These problems arise
in many applications in statistics, molecular dynamics or machine learning, and remain challenging.

Many approaches to compute normalizing constants are based on Importance Sampling (IS) - see
[1, 2] and the references therein - and its variations, among others, Annealed Importance Sampling
(AIS) [19, 33, 10] and Sequential Monte Carlo (SMC) [9]. More recently, Neural IS has also become
very popular in machine learning; see e.g. [11, 18, 21, 22, 32]. Neural IS is an adaptive IS which
relies on an importance function obtained by applying a normalizing flow to a reference distribution.
The parameters of this normalizing flow are chosen by minimizing a divergence between the proposal
and the target (such as the Kullback-Leibler [18] or the χ^2-divergence [1]).

More recently, the *Non-Equilibrium IS* (NEIS) method has been introduced by [23] as an alternative to these approaches. Similar to Neural IS, NEIS consists in transporting samples $\{X^i\}_{i=1}^N$ from a reference distribution using a family of deterministic mappings. This family for NEIS is chosen to be an homogeneous differential flow $(\phi_t)_{t \in \mathbb{R}}$. In contrast to Neural IS, for any $i \in [N]$, the sample X^i is propagated both forward and backward in time along the orbits associated with $(\phi_t)_{t \in \mathbb{R}}$ until stopping conditions are met. Moreover, the resulting estimator of the normalizing constant is obtained by computing weighted averages of the whole orbit $(\phi_t(X^i))_{t \in [\tau_{+,i}, \tau_{-,i}]}$, where $\tau_{+,i}, \tau_{-,i}$ are the resulting stopping times, and not only the endpoints $\phi_{\tau_{+,i}}(X^i), \phi_{\tau_{-,i}}(X^i)$. In [23], the authors provide an application of NEIS with $(\phi_t)_{t \in \mathbb{R}}$ associated with a conformal Hamiltonian dynamics, and reports impressive numerical results on difficult normalizing constants estimation problems, in particular for high-dimensional multimodal distributions.

We propose in this work NEO-IS which alleviates the shortcomings of NEIS. Similar to NEIS, samples are drawn from a reference distribution, typically set to ρ, and are propagated under the forward and backward orbits of a *discrete-time* dynamical system associated with an invertible transform T. An estimator of the normalizing constant is obtained by reweighting all the points on the whole orbits using the IS rule. Contrary to NEIS, the NEO-IS estimator of Z is unbiased under assumptions that are mild and easy to verify. It is more flexible than NEIS because it does not rely on the accuracy of the discretization of a continuous-time dynamical system.

We then show how it is possible to leverage the unbiased estimator of Z defined by NEO-IS to obtain NEO-MCMC, a novel massively parallel MCMC algorithm to sample from π. In a nutshell, NEO-MCMC relies on parallel walkers which each estimates the normalizing constant but are allowed to interact through a resampling mechanism.

Our contributions can be summarized as follows.

(i) We present a novel class of IS estimators of the normalizing constant Z referred to as NEO-IS. More broadly, a small modification of this algorithm also allows us to estimate integrals with respect to π. Both finite sample and asymptotic guarantees are provided for these two methodologies.

(ii) We develop a new massively parallel MCMC method, NEO-MCMC. NEO-MCMC combines NEO-IS unbiased estimator of the normalizing constant with iterated sampling-importance resampling methods. We prove that it is π-reversible and ergodic under very general conditions. We derive also conditions which imply that NEO-MCMC is uniformly geometrically ergodic (with an explicit expression of the mixing time).

(iii) We illustrate our findings using numerical benchmarks which show that both NEO-IS and NEO-MCMC outperform state-of-the-art (SOTA) methods in difficult settings.

2 NEO-IS algorithm

In this section, we derive the NEO-IS algorithm. The two key ingredients for this algorithm are (1) the reference distribution ρ and (2) a transformation T assumed to be a C^1-diffeomorphism with inverse T^{-1}. Write, for $k \in \mathbb{N}^* = \mathbb{N} \setminus \{0\}$, $T^k = T \circ T^{k-1}$, $T^0 = \mathrm{Id}_d$ and similarly $T^{-k} = T^{-1} \circ T^{-(k-1)}$. For any $k \in \mathbb{Z}$, denote by $\rho_k : \mathbb{R}^d \to \mathbb{R}_+$ the pushforward of ρ by T^k, defined for $x \in \mathbb{R}^d$ by $\rho_k(x) = \rho(T^{-k}(x)) \mathbf{J}_{T^{-k}}(x)$, where $\mathbf{J}_\Phi(x) \in \mathbb{R}^+$ is the absolute value of the Jacobian determinant of $\Phi : \mathbb{R}^d \to \mathbb{R}^d$ evaluated at x. In line with multiple importance sampling *à la* Owen and Zhou [20], we introduce the proposal density

$$\rho_{\mathrm{T}}(x) = \Omega^{-1} \sum_{k \in \mathbb{Z}} \varpi_k \rho_k(x) \,, \tag{1}$$

where $\{\varpi_k\}_{k \in \mathbb{Z}}$ is a nonnegative sequence and $\Omega = \sum_{k \in \mathbb{Z}} \varpi_k$. Note that we assume in the sequel that the support of the weight sequence defined as $\{k \in \mathbb{Z} : \varpi_k \neq 0\}$ is finite. Thus, the mixture distribution in (1) is a **finite mixture**. Given $x \in \mathbb{R}^d$, $\rho_{\mathrm{T}}(x)$ is a function of the forward and backward orbit of T through x.

For any nonnegative function f, the definition of ρ_{T} implies that $\int f(y) \rho_{\mathrm{T}}(y) \mathrm{d}y = \Omega^{-1} \int \sum_{k \in \mathbb{Z}} \varpi_k f(T^k(x)) \rho(x) \mathrm{d}x$. Assuming that $\varpi_0 > 0$, the ratio $\rho(x)/\rho_{\mathrm{T}}(x) \leq \varpi_0^{-1} \Omega < \infty$ is

bounded. We can therefore apply the IS principle which allows to write the identity

$$\int f(x)\rho(x)\mathrm{d}x = \int \left(f(y)\frac{\rho(y)}{\rho_{\mathrm{T}}(y)}\right)\rho_{\mathrm{T}}(y)\mathrm{d}y = \int \sum_{k\in\mathbb{Z}} f(\mathrm{T}^k(x))w_k(x)\rho(x)\mathrm{d}x \;, \qquad (2)$$

where the weights are given by (see Appendix A.1 for a detailed derivation),

$$w_k(x) = \varpi_k\rho(\mathrm{T}^k(x))/\{\Omega\rho_{\mathrm{T}}(\mathrm{T}^k(x))\} = \varpi_k\rho_{-k}(x)\Big/\sum\nolimits_{i\in\mathbb{Z}}\varpi_{k+i}\rho_i(x) \;. \qquad (3)$$

We assume in the sequel that $\varpi_0 > 0$. In particular, note that under this condition, the weights w_k are also upper bounded uniformly in x: for any $x \in \mathbb{R}^d$, $w_k(x) \leq \varpi_k/\varpi_0$. Eqs. (2) and (3) suggest to estimate the integral $\int f(x)\rho(x)\mathrm{d}x$ by $I_{\varpi,N}^{\mathrm{NEO}}(f) = N^{-1}\sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{k\in\mathbb{Z}} w_k(X^i)f(\mathrm{T}^k(X^i))$ where $\{X^i\}_{i=1}^N$ are i.i.d. samples from the proposal ρ, which is denoted by $X^{1:N} \overset{\mathrm{iid}}{\sim} \rho$.

This estimator is obtained by a weighted combination of the elements of the independent forward and backward orbits $\{\mathrm{T}^k(X^i)\}_{k\in\mathbb{Z}}$ with $X^{1:N} \overset{\mathrm{iid}}{\sim} \rho$. This estimator is referred to as NEO-IS. Choosing $f \equiv \mathrm{L}$ provides the NEO-IS estimator of the normalizing constant of π:

Algorithm 1 NEO-IS Sampler

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1. Sample $X^{1:N} \overset{\mathrm{iid}}{\sim} \rho$ for $i \in [N]$.

2. For $i \in [N]$, compute the path $(\mathrm{T}^j(X^i))_{j=0}^K$ and weights $(w_j(X^i))_{j\in\mathbb{Z}}$.

3. $I_{\varpi,N}^{\mathrm{NEO}}(f) = N^{-1}\sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{k=0}^K w_k(X^i)f(\mathrm{T}^k(X^i))$.

$$\widehat{Z}_{X^i}^{\varpi} = \sum_{k\in\mathbb{Z}} \mathrm{L}(\mathrm{T}^k(X^i))w_k(X^i) \;, \quad \widehat{Z}_{X^{1:N}}^{\varpi} = N^{-1}\sum_{i=1}^N \widehat{Z}_{X^i}^{\varpi} \;. \qquad (4)$$

We now study the performance of the NEO-IS estimator. The following two quantities play a fundamental role in the analysis:

$$E_{\mathrm{T}}^{\varpi} = \mathbb{E}_{X\sim\rho}\Big[\big(\sum_{k\in\mathbb{Z}} w_k(X)\mathrm{L}(\mathrm{T}^k(X))/\mathrm{Z}\big)^2\Big], M_{\mathrm{T}}^{\varpi} = \sup_{x\in\mathbb{R}^d}\sum_{k\in\mathbb{Z}} w_k(x)\mathrm{L}(\mathrm{T}^k(x))/\mathrm{Z} \;. \qquad (5)$$

Theorem 1. $\widehat{Z}_{X^{1:N}}^{\varpi}$ *is an unbiased estimator of* Z. *If* $E_{\mathrm{T}}^{\varpi} < \infty$, *then,* $\mathbb{E}[|\widehat{Z}_{X^{1:N}}^{\varpi}/\mathrm{Z}-1|^2] = N^{-1}(E_{\mathrm{T}}^{\varpi} - 1)$. *If* $M_{\mathrm{T}}^{\varpi} < \infty$, *then, for any* $\delta \in (0,1)$, *with probability* $1-\delta$, $\sqrt{N}\left|\widehat{Z}_{X^{1:N}}^{\varpi}/\mathrm{Z}-1\right| \leq M_{\mathrm{T}}^{\varpi}\sqrt{\log(2/\delta)/2}$.

The (elementary) proof is postponed to Appendix A.2. E_{T}^{ϖ} plays the role of the second-order moment of the importance weights $\mathbb{E}_{X\sim\rho}[\mathrm{L}^2(X)]$ which is key to the performance of IS algorithms [1, 2]. In addition, since the NEO-IS estimator $\widehat{Z}_{X^{1:N}}^{\varpi}$ is unbiased, the Cauchy-Schwarz inequality shows that $\mathbb{E}_{X\sim\rho}\big[\big(\sum_{k\in\mathbb{Z}} w_k(X)\mathrm{L}(\mathrm{T}^k(X))\big)^2\big] \geq \mathrm{Z}^2$ and hence that $E_{\mathrm{T}}^{\varpi} \geq 1$. Note that if $\|\mathrm{L}\|_{\infty} = \sup_{x\in\mathbb{R}^d} \mathrm{L}(x) < \infty$, then since the weights are uniformly bounded by $\Omega\varpi_0^{-1}$, we have $M_{\mathrm{T}}^{\varpi} \leq \|\mathrm{L}\|_{\infty}\Omega\varpi_0^{-1}/\mathrm{Z}$.

Using the NEO-IS estimate $\widehat{Z}_{X^{1:N}}^{\varpi}$ of the normalizing constant, we can construct a self-normalized IS estimate of $\int f(x)\pi(x)\mathrm{d}x$:

$$J_{\varpi,N}^{\mathrm{NEO}}(f) = N^{-1}\sum_{i=1}^N \frac{\widehat{Z}_{X^i}^{\varpi}}{\widehat{Z}_{X^{1:N}}^{\varpi}}\sum_{k\in\mathbb{Z}} \frac{\mathrm{L}(\mathrm{T}^k(X^i))w_k(X^i)}{\widehat{Z}_{X^i}^{\varpi}}f(\mathrm{T}^k(X^i)) \;, \qquad (6)$$

referred to as NEO-SNIS estimator. This expression may seem unnecessarily complicated but highlights the hierarchical structure of the estimator. We combine estimators $(\widehat{Z}_{X^i}^{\varpi})^{-1}\sum_{k\in\mathbb{Z}} \mathrm{L}(\mathrm{T}^k(X^i))w_k(X^i)f(\mathrm{T}^k(X^i))$ evaluated on the forward and backward orbits through the points $\{X^i\}_{i=1}^N$ using weights $\{\widehat{Z}_{X^i}^{\varpi}/\widehat{Z}_{X^{1:N}}^{\varpi}\}_{i=1}^N$. Although the NEO-IS estimator is unbiased, the NEO-SNIS is in general biased. However, for bounded functions, both the bias and the variance of the NEO-SNIS estimator are $O(N^{-1})$, with constants proportional to E_{T}^{ϖ}. For g a bounded function, define $\pi(g) = \int g(x)\pi(x)\mathrm{d}x$.

Theorem 2. *Assume that* $E_{\mathrm{T}}^{\varpi} < \infty$. *Then, for any function* g *satisfying* $\sup_{x\in\mathbb{R}^d} |g(x)| \leq 1$ *on* $\mathbb{R}^d$, *and* $N \in \mathbb{N}$

$$\mathbb{E}_{X^{1:N}\overset{\mathrm{iid}}{\sim}\rho}\left[|J_{\varpi,N}^{\mathrm{NEO}}(g) - \pi(g)|^2\right] \leq 4 \cdot N^{-1}E_{\mathrm{T}}^{\varpi} \;, \qquad (7)$$

$$\left|\mathbb{E}_{X^{1:N}\overset{\mathrm{iid}}{\sim}\rho}\left[J_{\varpi,N}^{\mathrm{NEO}}(g) - \pi(g)\right]\right| \leq 2 \cdot N^{-1}E_{\mathrm{T}}^{\varpi} \;. \qquad (8)$$

120 *If $M_T^\varpi < \infty$, then for $\delta \in (0, 1]$, with probability at least $1 - \delta$,*

$$\sqrt{N}|J_{\varpi,N}^{\mathrm{NEO}}(g) - \pi(g)| \le \|g\|_\infty M_T^\varpi \sqrt{32 \log(4/\delta)} \ . \tag{9}$$

121 The proof is postponed to Appendix A.3. These results extend to NEO-SNIS estimators the results
122 known for self-normalized estimators; see e.g., [1, 2] and the references therein. The upper bounds
123 stated in this result suggest it is good practice to keep E_T^ϖ/N small in order to obtain sensible
124 approximations. For two pdfs p and q on $\mathbb{R}^d$, denote by $\mathrm{D}_{\chi^2}(p, q) = \int \{p(x)/q(x) - 1\}^2 q(x) \mathrm{d}x$ the
125 χ^2-divergence between p and q.

126 **Lemma 3.** *For any nonnegative sequence $(\varpi_k)_{k \in \mathbb{Z}}$, we have $E_T^\varpi \le \mathrm{D}_{\chi^2}(\pi \| \rho_T) + 1$.*

127 The proof is postponed to Appendix A.4. Lemma 3 suggests that accurate sampling requires N to
128 scale linearly with the χ^2-divergence between the target π and the extended proposal ρ_T.

129 **Remark 1.** We can extend NEO to non homogeneous flows, replacing the family $\{T^k : k \in \mathbb{Z}\}$ with
130 a collection of mappings $\{T_k : k \in \mathbb{Z}\}$. This would allow us to consider further flexible classes of
131 transformations such as normalizing flows; see e.g. [21]. The χ^2-divergence $\mathrm{D}_{\chi^2}(\pi \| \rho_T)$ provides
132 natural criteria for learning the transformation. We leave this extension to future work.

133 **Conformal Hamiltonian transform** The efficiency of NEO relies heavily on the choice of T.
134 Intuitively, a sensible choice of T requires that (i) E_T^ϖ is small, i.e. ρ_T should be close to π by
135 Lemma 3 (see (5)), (ii) the inverse T^{-1} and the Jacobian of T are easy to compute. Following [23],
136 we use for T a discretization of a conformal Hamiltonian dynamics. Assume that $U(\cdot) = -\log \pi(\cdot)$ is
137 continuously differentiable. We consider the augmented distribution $\tilde{\pi}(q, p) \propto \exp\{-U(q) - K(p)\}$
138 on $\mathbb{R}^{2d}$, where q is the position, p is the momentum, and $K(p) = p^T \mathrm{M}^{-1} p/2$ is the kinetic energy,
139 with M a positive definite mass matrix. By construction, the marginal distribution of the momentum
140 under $\tilde{\pi}$ is the target pdf $\pi(q) = \int \tilde{\pi}(q, p) \mathrm{d}p$. The conformal Hamiltonian ODE associated with $\tilde{\pi}$ is
141 defined by

$$\begin{aligned}
\mathrm{d}q_t/\mathrm{d}t &= \nabla_p H(q_t, p_t) = \mathrm{M}^{-1} p_t \ , \\
\mathrm{d}p_t/\mathrm{d}t &= -\nabla_q H(q_t, p_t) - \gamma p_t = -\nabla U(q_t) - \gamma p_t \ ,
\end{aligned} \tag{10}$$

142 where $H(q, p) = U(q) + K(p)$, and $\gamma > 0$ is a damping constant. Any solution $(q_t, p_t)_{t \ge 0}$ of (10)
143 satisfies setting $H_t = H(q_t, p_t)$, $\mathrm{d}H_t/\mathrm{d}t = -\gamma p_t^T \mathrm{M}^{-1} p_t \le 0$. Hence, all orbits converge to fixed
144 points that satisfy $\nabla U(q) = 0$ and $p = 0$; see e.g. [12, 17].

Figure 1: Left: $E_{T_h}^{\mathbb{1}_{[K]}}(K)$ vs $E^{\mathrm{IS}}(K)$ (red) in $\log_{10}$-scale as a function of optimization step K.
Second left to right: Corresponding orbits for $\gamma = 0.1, 1, 2$.

In the applications below, we consider the conformal version of the symplectic Euler (SE) method of
(10), see [12]. This integrator can be constructed as a splitting of the two conformal and conservative
parts of the system (10). When composing a dissipative with a symplectic operator, we set for all
$(q, p) \in \mathbb{R}^{2d}$, $\mathrm{T}_h(q, p) = (q + h\mathrm{M}^{-1}\{\mathrm{e}^{-h\gamma}p - h\nabla U(q)\}, \mathrm{e}^{-h\gamma}p - h\nabla U(q))$, where $h > 0$ is a
discretization stepsize. This transformation can be connected with classical momentum optimization
schemes, see [12, Section 4]. By [12, Section 3], for any $h > 0$ T_h is a C^1-diffeomorphism on
$\mathbb{R}^{2d}$ with Jacobian given by $\mathbf{J}_{\mathrm{T}_h}(q, p) = \mathrm{e}^{-\gamma h d}$. In addition, its inverse is $\mathrm{T}_h^{-1}(q, p) = (q - h\mathrm{M}^{-1}p, \mathrm{e}^{\gamma h}\{p + h\nabla U(q - h\mathrm{M}^{-1}p)\})$. Therefore, the weight (3) of the NEO estimator is given by

$$w_k(q, p) = \frac{\varpi_k \tilde{\rho}(\mathrm{T}_h^k(q, p)) \mathrm{e}^{-\gamma k h d}}{\sum_{j \in \mathbb{Z}} \varpi_{k+j} \tilde{\rho}(\mathrm{T}_h^j(q, p)) \mathrm{e}^{-\gamma j h d}} \ ,$$

145 where $\tilde{\rho}(q, p) \propto \rho(q) \mathrm{e}^{-K(p)}$. Figure 1 displays for different values of γ, the bound $E_{T_h}^{\mathbb{1}_{[0:K]}} - 1$ (5)
146 as a function of K corresponding to the sequence of weights $(\varpi_k)_{k \in \mathbb{Z}} = (\mathbb{1}_{[0:K]}(k))_{k \in \mathbb{Z}}$ (i.e. only

147 the $K+1$ first elements of the forward orbits are used and are equally weighted). For comparison,
148 we also present on the same plot, the bounds achieved by averaging $K+1$ independent IS estimates,
149 $E^{\mathrm{IS}}(K) - 1 = (K+1)^{-1}\mathbb{E}_{X\sim\rho}[\mathrm{L}(X))^2]$. Interestingly, Figure 1 shows that there is a trade-off in
150 the choice of γ which controls the exploration of the state space by the Hamiltonian dynamics since
151 the higher γ, the faster the orbits converge towards the modes.

3 NEO-MCMC algorithm

153 We now derive sampling methods based on the NEO-IS estimator. A natural idea consists in
154 adapting the Sampling Importance Resampling procedure (SIR) (see for example [24, 27]) to the
155 NEO framework.

156 The SIR method to sample $J^{\mathrm{NEO}}_{\varpi,N}$ (see (6))
157 consists of 4 steps.

158 (SIR-1) Draw independently $X^{1:N} \overset{\text{iid}}{\sim}$
159 ρ and compute the associated forward
160 and backward orbits $\{\mathrm{T}^k(X^i)\}_{k\in\mathbb{Z}}$ of the
161 point.
162 (SIR-2) Compute the normalizing con-
163 stants associated with each orbit $\{\widehat{Z}^{\varpi}_{X^i}\}_{i=1}^N$.
164 (SIR-3) Sample an orbit index $I_N \in [N]$
165 with probability $\{\widehat{Z}^{\varpi}_{X^i}/\sum_{j=1}^N \widehat{Z}^{\varpi}_{X^j}\}_{i=1}^N$.
166 (SIR-4) Draw the iteration index K^N
167 on the I^N-th orbit with probability
168 $\{\mathrm{L}(\mathrm{T}^k(X^{I^N}))w_k(X^{I^N})/\widehat{Z}^{\varpi}_{X^{I^N}}\}_{k\in\mathbb{Z}}$.

169 The resulting draw is denoted by
170 $U^N = \mathrm{T}^{K^N}(X^{I^N})$. By construc-
171 tion, for any bounded function f,
172 we get that $\mathbb{E}\left[f(U^N)\big|X^{1:N},I^N\right] =$

Algorithm 2 NEO-MCMC Sampler

At step $n \in \mathbb{N}^*$, given the conditioning orbit point Y_{n-1}.

Step 1: Update the conditioning point

1. Set $X^1_n = Y_{n-1}$ and for any $i \in \{2,\ldots,N\}$, sample $X^i_n \overset{\text{iid}}{\sim} \rho$.

2. Sample the orbit index I_n with probability proportional to $(\widehat{Z}^{\varpi}_{X^i_n})_{i\in[N]}$, (4).

3. Set $Y_n = X^{I_n}_n$

Step 2: Output a sample

4. Sample index K_n with probability proportional to $\{w_k(Y_n)\mathrm{L}(\mathrm{T}^k(Y_n))/\widehat{Z}^{\varpi}_{Y_n}\}_{k\in\mathbb{Z}}$

5. Output $U_n = \mathrm{T}^{K_n}(Y_n)$.

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173 $\{\widehat{Z}^{\varpi}_{X^{I^N}}\}^{-1}\sum_{k\in\mathbb{Z}} w_k(X^{I^N})\mathrm{L}(\mathrm{T}^k(X^{I^N}))$ which implies $\mathbb{E}\left[f(U^N)\big|X^{1:N},I^N\right] = J^{\mathrm{NEO}}_{\varpi,N}(f)$ (see
174 (6)). Using Theorem 2, we therefore obtain $|\mathbb{E}[f(U^N)] - \int f(z)\pi(z)\mathrm{d}z| \leq 10^{1/2}\|f\|_{\infty}E^{\varpi}_{\mathrm{T}}N^{-1}$,
175 showing that the law of the random variable $\mu_N = \mathrm{Law}(U^N)$ converges in total variation to π as
176 $N \to \infty$,

$$\|\mu_N - \pi\|_{\mathrm{TV}} = \sup_{\|f\|_{\infty}\leq 1} |\mu_N(f) - \pi(f)| \leq 10^{1/2}E^{\varpi}_{\mathrm{T}}N^{-1} \ . \tag{11}$$

177 Based on [3], we now derive the NEO-MCMC procedure, which in a nutshell consists in iterating
178 the SIR procedure while keeping a conditioning point (or equivalently, orbit); see Appendix C. The
179 convergence of NEO-MCMC does not rely on letting $N \to \infty$: the NEO-MCMC works as soon as
180 $N \geq 2$, although as we will see below the mixing time decreases as N increases.

181 This procedure is summarized in Algorithm 2. The NEO-MCMC procedure is an iterated algorithm
182 which produces a sequence $\{(Y_n,U_n)\}_{n\in\mathbb{N}}$ of points in $\mathbb{R}^d$. The n-th iteration of the NEO-MCMC
183 algorithm consists in two main steps: 1) updating the conditioning point $Y_{n-1} \to Y_n$ 2) sampling
184 U_n by selecting a point in the orbit $\{\mathrm{T}^k(Y_n)\}_{k\in\mathbb{Z}}$ of the conditioning point. Compared to SIR, only
185 the generation of the points (step (SIR-1)) is modified: we set $X^1_n = Y_{n-1}$ (the **conditioning point**),
186 and then draw $X^{2:N}_n \overset{\text{iid}}{\sim} \rho$.

187 The sequence $\{Y_n\}_{n\in\mathbb{N}}$ defined by Algorithm 2 is a Markov chain: $\mathbb{P}\left(Y_n \in \mathsf{A}\,|\,Y_{0:n-1}\right) =$
188 $\mathbb{P}\left(Y_n \in \mathsf{A}\,|\,Y_{n-1}\right) = P(Y_n,\mathsf{A})$ where

$$P(y,\mathsf{A}) = \int \delta_y(\mathrm{d}x^1)\prod_{j=2}^N \rho(x^j)\mathrm{d}x^j \sum_{i=1}^N \frac{\widehat{Z}^{\varpi}_{x^i}}{\sum_{j=1}^N \widehat{Z}^{\varpi}_{x^j}}\mathbb{1}_{\mathsf{A}}(x^i) \ , \quad y \in \mathbb{R}^d \ , \mathsf{A} \in \mathcal{B}(\mathbb{R}^d) \ . \tag{12}$$

189 Note that this Markov kernel describes the way, at stage $n+1$, the conditioning point Y_{n+1} is
190 selected given Y_n, which **depends only on** the estimator of the normalizing constants associated
191 with each orbit, **but not** on the sample U_n selected on the conditioning orbit. In addition, given the

conditioning point Y_n at the n-th iteration, the conditional distribution of the output sample U_n is $\mathbb{P}\left(U_n \in \mathsf{B} \,|\, I_n, X_n^{1:N}\right) = \mathbb{P}\left(U_n \in \mathsf{B} \,|\, Y_n\right) = Q(Y_n, \mathsf{B})$ where

$$Q(y, \mathsf{B}) = \sum_{k \in \mathbb{Z}} \frac{w_k(y)\mathrm{L}(\mathrm{T}^k(y))}{\widehat{\mathrm{Z}}_y^{\varpi}} \mathbb{1}_{\mathsf{B}}(\mathrm{T}^k(y)), \quad y \in \mathbb{R}^d, \mathsf{B} \in \mathcal{B}(\mathbb{R}^d). \tag{13}$$

With these notations, if the Markov chain is started at $Y_0 = y$, then for any $n \in \mathbb{N}$, the law of the n-th conditioning point is $\mathbb{P}\left(Y_n \in \mathsf{A} \,|\, Y_0 = y\right) = P^n(y, \mathsf{A})$ and the law of the n-th sample is $\mathbb{P}\left(U_n \in \mathsf{B} \,|\, Y_0\right) = P^n Q(y, \mathsf{B})$. Define $\tilde{\pi}$ the pdf given, for $y \in \mathbb{R}^d$, by

$$\tilde{\pi}(y) = \frac{\rho(y)}{\mathrm{Z}} \sum_{k \in \mathbb{Z}} w_k(y)\mathrm{L}(\mathrm{T}^k(y)) = \frac{\rho(y)\widehat{\mathrm{Z}}_y^{\varpi}}{\mathrm{Z}}. \tag{14}$$

The following theorem shows that, for any initial condition $y \in \mathbb{R}^d$, the distribution of the variable Y_n converges in total variation to $\tilde{\pi}$ and that the distribution of U_n converges to π.

Theorem 4. *The Markov kernel P is reversible with respect to the distribution $\tilde{\pi}$, ergodic and Harris positive, i.e., for all $y \in \mathbb{R}^d$, $\lim_{n\to\infty} \|P^n(y, \cdot) - \tilde{\pi}\|_{\mathrm{TV}} = 0$. In addition, $\pi = \tilde{\pi}Q$ and $\lim_{n\to\infty} \|P^n Q(y, \cdot) - \pi\|_{\mathrm{TV}} = 0$. Moreover, for any bounded function g and any $y \in \mathbb{R}^d$, $\lim_{n\to\infty} n^{-1} \sum_{i=0}^{n-1} g(U_i) = \pi(g)$, $\mathbb{P}_y$-almost surely.*

The proof is postponed to Appendix A.5.

Remark 2. We may provide another sampling procedure of $\{Y_n\}_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$. Define the pdf on the extended space $[N] \times \mathbb{R}^{dN}$ by $\check{\pi}(i, x^{1:N}) = N^{-1}\tilde{\pi}(x^i) \prod_{j=1, j \neq i}^{N} \rho(x^j)$. Consider a Gibbs sampler targeting $\check{\pi}$ consisting in (a) sampling $X_n^{1:N\setminus\{I_{n-1}\}} | (I_{n-1}, X_{n-1}) \sim \prod_{j \neq I_{n-1}} \rho(x^j)$, (b) sampling $I_n | X_n^{1:N} \sim \mathrm{Cat}(\{\widehat{\mathrm{Z}}_{X_n^i}^{\varpi} / \sum_{j=1}^{N} \widehat{\mathrm{Z}}_{X_n^j}^{\varpi}\}_{i=1}^{N}$ and (c) set $Y_n = X_n^{I_n}$. This algorithm is a Gibbs sampler on $\check{\pi}$ and we easily verify that the distribution of $\{Y_n\}_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ is the same as Algorithm 2.

The next theorem provides non asymptotic quantitative bounds on the convergence in total variation. The main interest of NEO-MCMC algorithm is motivated empirically from observed behaviour: the mixing time of the corresponding Markov chain improves as N increases. This behaviour is quantified theoretically in the next theorem. Moreover, this improvement is obtained with little extra computational overhead, since sampling N points from the proposal distribution ρ, computing the forward and backward orbits of the points and evaluating the normalizing constants $\{\widehat{\mathrm{Z}}_{X_n^i}^{\varpi}\}_{i=1}^{N}$ can be performed in parallel.

Theorem 5. *Assume that $M_{\mathrm{T}}^{\varpi} < \infty$, see (5). Set $\epsilon_N = (N-1)/(2M_{\mathrm{T}}^{\varpi} + N - 2)$ and $\kappa_N = 1 - \epsilon_N$. Then, for any $y \in \mathbb{R}^d$ and $k \in \mathbb{N}$, $\|P^k(y, \cdot) - \tilde{\pi}\|_{\mathrm{TV}} \leq \kappa_N^k$ and $\|P^k Q(y, \cdot) - \pi\|_{\mathrm{TV}} \leq \kappa_N^k$.*

Instead of sampling the new points $X_n^{2:N}$ independently from ρ (Step 1 in Algorithm 2), it is possible to draw the proposals $X_n^{1:N}$ conditional to the current point Y_{n-1}; see [29, 8, 26, 25] for related works. Following [25], we use a reversible Markov kernel with respect to the proposal ρ, i.e., such that $\rho(x)m(x, x') = \rho(x')m(x', x)$, assuming for simplicity that this kernel has density $m(x, x')$. If $\rho = \mathrm{N}(0, \sigma^2 \mathrm{Id}_d)$, an appropriate choice is an autoregressive kernel $m(x, x') = \mathrm{N}(x'; \alpha x, \sigma^2(1 - \alpha^2) \mathrm{Id}_d)$. More generally, we can use a Metropolis–Hastings kernel with invariant distribution ρ. In this case, for each $i \in [N]$, define for $i \in [N]$,

$$r_i(y, x^{1:N\setminus\{i\}}) = \prod_{j=2}^{i-1} m(x^{j-1}, x^j) \prod_{j=i+1}^{N} m(x^{j-1}, x^j). \tag{15}$$

Since m is reversible with respect to ρ, for all $i, j \in [N]$, $\rho(x^i)r_i(x^i, x^{1:N\setminus\{i\}}) = \rho(x^j)r_j(x^j, x^{1:N\setminus\{j\}})$. The only modification in Algorithm 2 is Step 1, which is replaced by: *Draw $U_n \in [N]$ uniformly, set $X_n^{U_n} = Y_{n-1}$ and sample $X_n^{1:N\setminus\{U_n\}} \sim r_{U_n}(X_n^{U_n}, \cdot)$.* The validity of this procedure is established in Appendix A.5.

4 Continuous-time version of NEO and NEIS

The NEO framework takes up and extends NEIS introduced in [23]. NEIS focuses on normalizing constant estimation and should be therefore compared with NEO-IS. In [23], the authors do not

consider possible extensions of these ideas to sampling problems. Proofs of the statements and detailed technical conditions are postponed to Appendix B. We first consider how NEO can be adapted to continuous-time dynamical system. Consider the Ordinary Differential Equation (ODE) $\dot{x}_t = b(x_t)$, where $b\colon \mathbb{R}^d \to \mathbb{R}^d$ is a smooth vector field. Denote by $(\phi_t)_{t\in\mathbb{R}}$ the flow of this ODE (assumed to be well-behaved). Under appropriate regularity condition $\mathbf{J}_{\phi_t}(x) = \exp(\int_0^t \nabla \cdot b(\phi_s(x))\mathrm{d}s)$; see Lemma S4. Let $\varpi : \mathbb{R} \to \mathbb{R}_+$ be a nonnegative smooth function with finite support, with $\Omega^c = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \varpi(t)\mathrm{d}t$. The continuous-time counterpart of the proposal distribution (1) is $\rho_{\mathrm{T}}^c(x) = (\Omega^c)^{-1}\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \varpi(t)\rho(\phi_{-t}(x))\mathbf{J}_{\phi_{-t}}(x)\mathrm{d}t$, which is a continuous mixture of the pushforward of the proposal ρ by the flow of $(\phi_s)_{s\in\mathbb{R}}$. Assuming for simplicity that $\rho(x) > 0$ for all $x \in \mathbb{R}^d$, then $\rho_{\mathrm{T}}^c(x) > 0$ for all $x \in \mathbb{R}^d$, and using again the IS formula, for any nonnegative function f,

$$\int f(x)\rho(x)\mathrm{d}x = \int f(x)\frac{\rho(x)}{\rho_{\mathrm{T}}^c(x)}\rho_{\mathrm{T}}^c(x)\mathrm{d}x = \int \left[\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} w_t^c(x)f(\phi_t(x))\mathrm{d}t\right]\rho(x)\mathrm{d}x , \qquad (16)$$

$$w_t^c(x) = \varpi(t)\rho(\phi_t(x))\mathbf{J}_{\phi_t}(x) \Big/ \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \varpi(s+t)\rho(\phi_s(x))\mathbf{J}_{\phi_s}(x)\mathrm{d}s . \qquad (17)$$

These relations are the continuous-time counterparts of (2). Eqs. (16)-(17) define a version of NEIS [23], with a finite support weight function ϖ; see Appendices B.2 and B.3 for weight functions with infinite support. This identity is of theoretical interest but must be discretized to obtain a computationally tractable estimator. For $h > 0$, denote by T_h an integrator with stepsize $h > 0$ of the ODE $\dot{x} = b(x)$. We may construct NEO-IS and NEO-SNIS estimators based on the transform $\mathrm{T} \leftarrow \mathrm{T}_h$ and weights $\varpi_k \leftarrow \varpi(kh)$. Provided that the order of the integrator is larger than 2, then for any $x \in \mathbb{R}^d$, $\sum_{k\in\mathbb{Z}} w_k(x)f(\mathrm{T}_h^k(x)) = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} w_t^c(x)f(\phi_t(x))\mathrm{d}t + O(h)$. Therefore, taking $h \downarrow 0^+$, the NEO-IS converges to the continuous-version (16)-(17). There is however an important difference between NEO and the NEIS method in [23] which stems from the way (16)-(17) are discretized. Compared to NEIS, NEO-IS using $\mathrm{T} \leftarrow \mathrm{T}_h$ and weights $\varpi_k \leftarrow \varpi(kh)$ is unbiased for any stepsize $h > 0$. NEIS uses an approach inspired by the nested-sampling approach, which amounts to discretizing the integral in (16) also in the state-variable x; see [28, 7]. This discretization is biased which prevents the use of this approach to develop MCMC sampling algorithm; see Appendix B.

5 Experiments and Applications

Normalizing constant estimation The performance of NEO-IS is assessed on different normalizing constant estimation benchmarks; see [13]. We focus on two challenging examples. Additional experiments and discussion on hyperparameter choice are given in the supplementary material, see Appendix D. **(1) Mixture of Gaussian** (MG25): $\pi(x) = P^{-1}\sum_{i=1}^{P} \mathrm{N}(x; \mu_{i,j}, D_d)$, where $d \in \{10, 20, 40\}$, $D_d = \mathrm{diag}(0.01, 0.01, 0.1, \ldots, 0.1)$ and $\mu_{i,j} = [i, j, 0, \ldots, 0]^T$ with $i, j \in \{-2, \ldots, 2\}$. **(2) Funnel distribution** (Fun) $\pi(x) = \mathrm{N}(x_1; 0, a^2)\prod_{i=1}^{d} \mathrm{N}(x_i; 0, e^{2bx_1})$ with $d \in \{10, 20, 40\}$, $a = 1$, and $b = 0.5$. In both case, the proposal is $\rho = \mathrm{N}(0, \sigma_\rho^2 \mathrm{Id}_d)$ with $\sigma_\rho^2 = 5$.

The NEO-IS estimator is compared with (i) the IS estimator using the proposal ρ, (ii) the Adaptive Importance Sampling (AIS) estimator of [30] and (iii) the Neural Importance Sampling (NIS)[1]. For NEO-IS, we use $\varpi_k = \mathbb{1}_{[K]}(k)$ with $K = 10$ (ten steps on the forward orbit), and conformal Hamiltonian dynamics $\gamma = 1$, $M = 5 \cdot \mathrm{Id}_d$ for dimensions $d = \{10, 20\}$, and $\gamma = 2.5$ for $d = 40$ (where γ is the damping factor, M the mass matrix, h is the stepsize of the integrator). The parameters of AIS are set to obtain a complexity comparable to NEO-IS; see Appendix D. For NIS, we use the default parameters. In Fun, we set $\gamma = 0.2$, $K = 10$, $M = 5 \cdot \mathrm{Id}_d$, and $h = 0.3$. The IS estimator was based on $5 \cdot 10^5$ samples, and NIS, NEO-IS and AIS were computed with $5 \cdot 10^4$ samples. Figure 2 shows that NEO-IS consistently outperforms the competing methods.

Sampling NEO-MCMC is assessed for the distributions (MG25) ($d = 40$) and Fun ($d = 20$). NEO-MCMC sampler is compared with (i) the No-U-Turn Sampler - Pyro library [4] - and (ii) i-SIR algorithm [25]. The proposal distribution is $\rho = \mathrm{N}(0, \sigma_\rho^2 \mathrm{Id}_d)$ with $\sigma_\rho^2 = 5$. Dependent proposals are used (see (15)) with $m(x, x') = \mathrm{N}(x'; \alpha x, \sigma_\rho^2(1 - \alpha^2) \mathrm{Id}_d)$ with $\alpha = 0.99$. For NUTS, the default parameters are used. For i-SIR, we use the same number of proposals $N = 10$, proposal distribution

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[1]We used the implementation provided by: https://github.com/ndeutschmann/zunis

Figure 2: Boxplots of 500 independent estimations of the normalizing constant in dimension $d = \{10, 20, 45\}$ (from left to right) for `MG25` (top) and `Fun` (bottom). The true value is given by the red line. The figure displays the median (solid lines), the interquartile range, and the mean (dashed lines) over the 500 runs.

and dependent proposal as for NEO-MCMC. To make a fair comparison, we use the same clock time for all three algorithms. The number of iterations for correlated i-SIR, NEO-MCMC, and NUTS are $n = 4 \cdot 10^6$, $n = 4 \cdot 10^5$, and $n = 5 \cdot 10^5$, respectively. Figure 3 displays the empirical

Figure 3: Empirical 2-D histogram of the samples of different algorithms targeting the the *Mixture of Gaussian* example (top) and the *Funnel* example (bottom). From left to right: samples from the target distribution, correlated i-SIR, NUTS, NEO-MCMC.

two-dimensional histograms of the two first coordinates of samples from the ground truth, i-SIR, NUTS and NEO-MCMC sampler. It is worthwhile to note that NEO-MCMC algorithm performs much better for `MG25` which is a very challenging distribution, even for SOTA algorithm such as NUTS, which struggles to cross energy barriers between modes. For `Fun`, NEO-MCMC performs favourably with respect to NUTS, which is well adapted for this type of distributions.

Block Gibbs Inpainting with Deep Generative models and NEO-MCMC We apply NEO-MCMC to the task of sampling the posterior of a deep latent variable model. The model consists of a latent variable $x \sim \mathrm{N}(z; 0, \mathrm{Id}_d)$ and a conditional distribution $p(y \mid x)$ which generates an image $y = (y^1, \ldots, y^D) \in \mathbb{R}^D$. Given a family of parametric *decoders* $\{x \mapsto p_\theta(y \mid x), \theta \in \Theta\}$, and a training set $\mathcal{D} = \{y_i\}_{i=1}^M$, training involves finding the MLE $\theta^* = \arg\max_{\theta \in \Theta} p_\theta(\mathcal{D})$. As $p_\theta(y) = \int p_\theta(y \mid x) p(x) \mathrm{d}x$, the likelihood is intractable and to alleviate this problem, [14] proposed to train jointly an approximate posterior $q_\phi(x|y)$ that maximizes a tractable lower-bound on the log-likelihood: $\mathrm{ELBO}(y, \theta, \phi) = \mathbb{E}_{X \sim q_\phi(\cdot|y)}[\log p_\theta(y, X)/q_\phi(X|y)] \le p_\theta(y)$, where $q_\phi(x \mid y)$ is a

Figure 4: Gibbs inpainting for CelebA dataset. From top to bottom: i-SIR, HMC and NEO-MCMC: From left to right, original image, blurred image to reconstruct, and output every 5 iterations of the Markov chain. Last line: a forward orbit used in NEO-MCMC.

tractable conditional distribution with parameters $\phi \in \Phi$. It is assumed in the sequel that conditional to the latent variable x, the coordinates are independent, *i.e.* $p_\theta(y \mid x) = \prod_{i=1}^{D} p_\theta(y^i|x)$.

It is possible to train VAE with the NEO algorithm using the unbiased estimate of the normalizing constant to construct an ELBO. This approach is described in the supplement Appendix E. It is assumed here that the VAE has been trained and we are only interested in the sampling problem. In our experiment, we use a VAE trained on CelebA dataset [2] [16]. We consider the Block Gibbs inpainting task introduced in [15, Section 5.2.2]. We in-paint the bottom of an image using Block Gibbs sampling. Given an image y, denote by $[y^t, y^b]$ the top and the bottom half pixels. A two-stage Gibbs sampler amounts to (a) sampling $p_{\theta^*}(x|y^t, y^b)$ and (b) sampling $p_{\theta^*}(y^b|x, y^t) = p_{\theta^*}(y^b|x)$ (since y^b and y^t are independent conditional on x). Starting from an image y_0, we sample at each step $x_k \sim p_{\theta^*}(y \mid y_k)$ and then $\tilde{y}_k \sim p_{\theta^*}(y \mid x_k)$. We then set $y_{k+1} = (y_*^t, \tilde{y}_{k+1}^b)$. Stage (b) is elementary but stage (a) is challenging. We use the following decomposition of $p_{\theta^*}(x \mid y) = q_{\phi^*}^\beta(x \mid y) p_{\theta^*}(x, y)/(q_{\phi^*}^\beta(x \mid y) p_{\theta^*}(y))$ with $\beta \in (0, 1)$. We identify the *proposal* $\rho(x) \propto q_{\phi^*}^\beta(x \mid y)$, the *likelihood* $\mathrm{L} \leftarrow p_{\theta^*}(x, y)/q_{\phi^*}^\beta(x \mid y)$ and the normalizing constant $\mathrm{Z} = p_{\theta^*}(y)$ and apply i-SIR and NEO-MCMC sampler for stage (a). We compare different algorithms in stage (a): i-SIR, HMC and NEO-MCMC, with the same computational complexity ($N = 10$, $K = 12$, $\gamma = 0.2$ for NEO-MCMC, $N = 120$ for i-SIR, and HMC is run with $K = 20$ leap-frog steps). For each algorithm, 10 steps are performed. Figure 4 displays the evolution of the resulting Markov chains. The samples clearly illustrate that NEO-MCMC mixes better than i-SIR and HMC. More are showcased in the supplementary.

6 Conclusion

In this paper, we have proposed a new family of algorithms, NEO, for computing normalizing constants and sampling from complex distributions. This methodology comes with asymptotic and non-asymptotic convergence guarantees. For normalizing constant estimation, NEO-IS compares favorably to state-of-the-art algorithms on difficult benchmarks. NEO-MCMC is also very efficient for sampling complex distributions: it is particularly well-adapted to sampling multimodal distributions, thanks to its proposal mechanism which avoids being trapped in local modes. There are numerous potential extensions to this work. For example, it would be interesting to consider deterministic transformations other than conformal Hamiltonian dynamics integrators. These transformations could be trained, as for Neural IS, using a variation lower bound. It would also be interesting to further investigate the influence of the mixture weights $\{\varpi_k\}_{k \in \mathbb{Z}}$ on the efficiency of NEO.

Broader impact: Sampling from complex target distributions and computing their normalizing constants has numerous applications. Our work proposes novel methods to address such problems and has thus potential applications in many areas. This work does not present any foreseeable societal consequence.

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[2]See https://github.com/YannDubs/disentangling-vae/tree/master/results/betaH_celeba

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