

POSTER PRESENTATION

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Optimal information encoding for multiple, simultaneously presented stimuli

Jan Pieczkowski^{1,2*}, Lawrence York², Jeanette Hellgren Kotaleski^{1,3}, Mark van Rossum²

From Twenty First Annual Computational Neuroscience Meeting: CNS*2012
Decatur, GA, USA. 21-26 July 2012

Information in the brain is usually encoded in a way that distributes the activity over a population of neurons, referred to as *population coding*[1]. Population coding has been observed in almost all brain systems and renders the neural code robust, accurate, and failure resistant.

The coding of single stimuli in population codes is relatively well understood [2], and in particular the noise models, correlations, neural heterogeneity and links to psychophysics have been studied. However, the situation is much less clear when multiple stimuli are simultaneously encoded [3].

Theoretical studies (e.g., [4]) have thus far only examined linear supposition schemes that encode a probabilistic stimulus ensemble. However, experimental studies (c.f. [5], [6], [7]) suggest a non-linear encoding scheme using a maximum rule, where the response of a single neuron to a pair of stimuli equals the response to the constituent that on its own produces the maximum response, i.e.

$$R_{A,B} = \max(R_A, R_B)$$

We investigate the theoretical implications of these findings by comparing different encoding strategies and examine the decoding accuracy. The goal is to find the optimal encoding scheme for multiple stimuli.

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In our current study, we focus on the simultaneous coding of visual stimuli representing overlapping

movements of two groups of points in different directions. We investigate different ways of decoding these, among them a Maximum Likelihood decoder and estimate error rates made by these predictors, comparing to maximum rule to a linear rule.

Author details

¹Department of Computational Biology, CSC, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden. ²Department of Informatics, Edinburgh University, Edinburgh, EH8 9AB, UK. ³Department of Neuroscience, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden.

Published: 16 July 2012

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doi:10.1186/1471-2202-13-S1-P17

Cite this article as: Pieczkowski et al.: Optimal information encoding for multiple, simultaneously presented stimuli. *BMC Neuroscience* 2012 **13** (Suppl 1):P17.

* Correspondence: janpi@kth.se

¹Department of Computational Biology, CSC, Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden

Full list of author information is available at the end of the article