BAYESIAN STATISTICAL MODELS - University of Milano-Bicocca

Case study - Bayesian spatial models

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We consider first a set of data related to heavy metals measured in the top soil in a flood plain along the river Meuse, observed at some specific location, along with a handful of covariates such as the distance from the river and the altitude of each specific location. The data are available online in the *river.rda* file.

- y contains the logarithm of the zinc measurements.
- X contains the altitude (log-scaled) and the distance from the river of each point.
- S contains the coordinates of each observation.

We want to investigate if the spatial component is significant for the model specification. To this end, we consider an integrated model for point-referenced data of the form

$$\begin{aligned} \boldsymbol{Y} \mid \boldsymbol{\beta}, \tau^2 &\sim N(\mathrm{X}\boldsymbol{\beta}, \sigma^2 H(\phi) + \tau^2 \mathrm{I}_n), \qquad \text{where } [H(\phi)]_{ij} = \rho(||\boldsymbol{s}_i - \boldsymbol{s}_j||, \phi), \\ \boldsymbol{\beta} &\sim N(\boldsymbol{b}_0, \Lambda_0), \\ \boldsymbol{\theta} = (\sigma^2, \phi, \tau^2) &\sim \pi(\sigma^2, \phi, \tau^2), \end{aligned}$$

with the following prior assumption

$$\begin{aligned} \sigma^2 &\sim IG(a_\sigma, b_\sigma), \\ \tau^2 &\sim IG(a_\tau, b_\tau), \\ \phi &\sim IG(a_\phi, b_\phi). \end{aligned}$$

We assume a Gaussian covariance function, i.e. $\rho(d, \phi) = \mathrm{e}^{-\phi^2 d^2}$. The model specification is completed by setting $\boldsymbol{b}_0 = \mathbf{0}$, $\Lambda_0 = \mathrm{diag}(10^3)$, $a_\sigma = a_\tau = a_\phi = 2.1$ and $b_\sigma = b_\tau = b_\phi = 10$.

- Produce a code in STAN that produce a sample from the posterior distribution of interest, while performing prediction for a new single observation.
- Exclude the first observation from the dataset and use such observation to perform prediction. Sample $5\,000$ realizations from the posterior distribution of interest, after $2\,000$ burnin iterations. Check the convergence of the sampled chains.
- Write a function that estimate the model without the spatial component. Test if the first model is significantly different from this simpler model.

Lastly, we consider a set of data regarding sudden infant deaths in North Carolina for 1974-78. We also have access to other information for each specific areas, such as number of births and number of non-white birth. The data are observed for each specific county in North Carolina. The data are available online in the *sids.rda* file. For each observation, we then have

- y, number of sudden infant deaths specific for each county.
- X contains the number of births and non-white births in the time window of the study.
- W, the adjacency matrix of the counties.
- O, an offset quantity, namely the surface area of each county.

We consider a model of the form

$$\begin{aligned} Y_i \mid \mu_i &\overset{ind}{\sim} Poi(\mu_i), \qquad i = 1, \dots, n, \\ \log(\mu_i) &= \boldsymbol{x}_i^\intercal \boldsymbol{\beta} + \phi_i + \log(O_i), \qquad i = 1, \dots, n, \\ \boldsymbol{\beta} &\sim N(\boldsymbol{b}_0, \Lambda_0), \\ (\phi_1, \dots, \phi_n) &\sim CAR(W, \rho, \tau^2), \\ \rho &\sim Beta(a_\rho, b_\rho), \\ \tau^2 &\sim IG(a_\tau, b_\tau), \end{aligned}$$

where we consider the adjusted CAR specification for the spatial random effect, with

$$\phi_i \mid \boldsymbol{\phi}_{-i} \sim N\left(\rho \sum_{j=1}^{n} \frac{w_{ij}}{w_{i+}} \phi_j, \frac{\tau^2}{w_{i+}}\right), \qquad i = 1, \dots, n.$$

- Produce a code in STAN that produce a sample from the posterior distribution of interest.
- Sample $5\,000$ realizations from the posterior distribution of interest, after $2\,000$ burnin iterations. Check the convergence of the sampled chains. Plot the random effects associated at each spatial location.
- Write a function that estimate the model without the spatial component. Test if the first model is significantly different from this simpler model.