Bayesian Portfolio Optimization for Electricity Generation Planning

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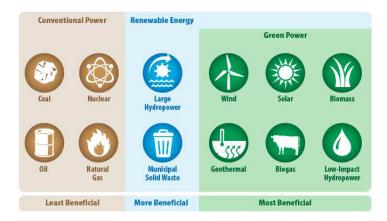
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- In the early and middle years of the 19th century, the fundamental principles of electricity generation were discovered (Breeze, 2014).
- Already in the last years of the 19th century, the electricity generation plants started to be built together with the transmission networks (Hughes, 1983).
- During the time, the mankind has developed several electricity generation technologies based on different sources such as wind, gas, coal, biomass, nuclear, and so on. Evidently, each technology has associated costs, sustainability and security of supply characteristics, efficiency and environmental concerns.

Different energy sources.



Source: US Environmental Protection Agency.

- The worldwide demand for energy has been increasing over the last decades and it will continue to grow (IEA, 2016).
- Consequently, for both countries and companies, the long-term planning of the electricity generation infrastructure is of utmost importance. Actually, it should be part of the central objectives of any energy policy.
- The achievement of an optimal designed electricity generation infrastructure bends towards a more balanced portfolio allocation among the different available technologies.
- It is also important to distinguish in the planning process the already existing electricity producing plants with maintenance costs from the ones desired to be built. Obviously, drastic changes of the electricity investment allocations is not feasible.

Energy planning.



Source: 3COTECH, Inc.

- The U.S. Energy Information Administration has not only historical data on the average annual operation, maintenance, and fuel costs for existing power plants by major fuel or energy source types, but also projections for electricity generation costs (EIA, 2016).
- However, even so, the costs have a significant uncertainty. For instance, future control on CO₂ emission and the corresponding mechanisms will surely impact the electricity generation costs. Precisely, the future price of an emitted ton of CO₂ is uncertain and this uncertainty should be taken into account in the planning process.
- Electricity generation policies solely relying on the evolution of historical average costs of electricity generation technologies are unsatisfactory.

Energy costs.



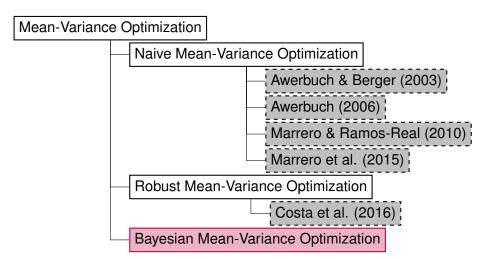
Source: sierraclub.org.

- Considering the costs as random variables, in the literature, the allocation of resources in the available electricity generation technologies has been solved as a mean-variance optimization problem using the expected values and covariance matrix of the technology costs in megawatt hours (see, for instance Awerbuch (2006), Awerbuch and Berger (2003), Marrero and Ramos-Real (2010), Marrero et al. (2015)).
- The mean-variance optimization, introduced by Markowitz, was the first mathematical formalization of investment diversification and it is part of the modern portfolio theory (MPT). The mean-variance optimized portfolios compose the called efficient frontier, a set of portfolios that dominate all other feasible portfolios in terms of their mean and variance tradeoff. In the MPT, the random variables of interest are the returns of the risky assets instead of the costs of the technologies.

- The expected values and the covariance matrix of the electricity generation technology costs for a future time horizon are not exactly known. The usefulness of the allocations obtained from the mean-variance optimization depends on the preciseness of such parameters.
- For instance, in the MPT context, it was shown by Black and Litterman (1991) that small changes in the expected returns can produce large changes in asset allocation decisions.
- In the MPT literature, several robust versions of the mean-variance optimization were proposed to consider uncertainties on the expected returns and covariance matrix (see, for instance, Fabozzi et al. (2007), Bertsimas et al. (2011), Kim et al. (2014)). Particularly in Costa et al. (2016), for the first time in the electricity planning context, it was presented a robust portfolio optimization approach to deal with uncertainties in the input parameters.

- In the electricity planning processes, it is usual to have the participation of specialists in the electricity generation technologies of interest. Undoubtedly, a natural way of conducting a comprehensive planning process is to take into account the available data together with the prior experience of the participant specialists.
- Bayesian approaches treat probability distributions as uncertain and subject to updates as new information becomes available. Consequently, the Bayesian approach has been successfully applied in the MPT context to take into account not only the beliefs of the investors but also the uncertainties in the expected returns and the correspondent covariance matrix (see, for instance, Black and Litterman (1990), Meucci (2005), Rachev et al. (2008)). The Bayesian mean-variance portfolio optimizations could take into account both the estimation uncertainty and the specialist prior information.

Mean-Variance Optimization and Energy Planning:



Objective: introduction of the Bayesian asset allocation approach to electricity generation planning.

Organization:

- brief review of the classical mean-variance optimization with the basic notation and fundamental concepts;
- presentation of the Bayesian approach using both improper and proper priors;
- application comparing the Bayesian with the naive mean-variance optimal portfolios.

- The classical or naive mean-variance optimization presumes that cost and risk, measured as the portfolio volatility, are known when making portfolio-selection decisions.
- A rational planner prefers a portfolio with a lower expected cost for a given level of risk. Alternatively, a preferred portfolio is one that minimizes risk for a given expected cost.
- The set of portfolios that are optimal is called the efficient frontier.
 No rational planner would select a portfolio lying above the efficient frontier, since that would mean accepting a higher cost for the same amount of risk as an efficient portfolio or a greater risk for the same expected cost as an efficient portfolio.

It is important to distinguish in the planning process an already existing electricity producing plant using technology i, with random cost C_i^e in USD/MWh, from a prospective idea of using i, with random cost C_i^p in USD/MWh. The random vectors of costs for existing and prospective technologies when there are N different technologies are given by

$$C^e \equiv (C_1^e \ C_2^e \ \dots \ C_N^e)'$$
 and $C^p = (C_1^p \ C_2^p \ \dots \ C_N^p)',$ (1)

respectively. It is also usual to assume that the random costs are multivariate normal

$$C^e | \mu^e, \Sigma^e \sim \mathsf{N}\left(\mu^e, \Sigma^e\right) \quad ext{and} \quad C^p | \mu^p, \Sigma^p \sim \mathsf{N}\left(\mu^p, \Sigma^p\right),$$
 (2)

where $\mu^e \equiv (\mu_i^e)_{N \times 1}$ and $\mu^p = (\mu_i^p)_{N \times 1}$ are mean vectors and Σ^e and Σ^p are $N \times N$ covariance matrices.

The means μ_i^e and μ_i^p are different, because maintenance costs are different from the costs of building a new plant. Additionally, the risk of maintenance σ_i^e is also different from the risk of building a new plant σ_i^p . However, since the technology is the same, the correlation between C_i^e and C_i^p is equal to $\rho_{C_i^e,C_i^p}=1$. Thus, we can write almost surely (with probability 1) that (Proposition 1.1.2 from Davis and Vinter (1985))

$$C_i^e = \frac{\sigma_i^e}{\sigma_i^p} \left(C_i^p - \mu_i^p \right) + \mu_i^e. \tag{3}$$

Essentially, the equation (3) says that the source of uncertainty for both C_i^e and C_i^p is the same. Additionally, $\Sigma^e = \operatorname{diag}\left(\sigma^e\right)R\operatorname{diag}\left(\sigma^e\right)$ and $\Sigma^p = \operatorname{diag}\left(\sigma^p\right)R\operatorname{diag}\left(\sigma^p\right)$, where the correlation matrix R is the same for both the existing and the prospective costs, $\sigma^e = (\sigma_i^e)_{N \times 1}$ and $\sigma^p = (\sigma_i^p)_{N \times 1}$.

Defining $C = (C^{et} C^{pt})'$, it follows that

$$C|\mu, \Sigma \sim N(\mu, \Sigma),$$
 (4)

where

$$\boldsymbol{\mu} = \left(\boldsymbol{\mu}^{e\prime} \; \boldsymbol{\mu}^{p\prime}\right)' \tag{5}$$

and

$$\Sigma = \begin{pmatrix} \Sigma^e & \operatorname{diag}(\sigma^e) R \operatorname{diag}(\sigma^p) \\ \operatorname{diag}(\sigma^e) R \operatorname{diag}(\sigma^p) & \Sigma^p \end{pmatrix}. \tag{6}$$

The portfolio weights are the proportions of the total budget allocated in each technology. The allocation vectors in the existent and prospective technologies are denoted by $\omega^e = (\omega_i^e)_{N \times 1}$ and $\omega^p = (\omega_i^p)_{N \times 1}$, respectively. Naturally, $0 \le \omega_i^e \le 1$, $\forall i = 1, 2, ..., N$; $0 \le \omega_i^p \le 1$,

$$\forall i=1,2,\ldots,N$$
; and

$$\sum_{i=1}^{N} \left(\omega_i^e + \omega_i^p\right) = 1. \tag{7}$$

Defining $\omega=(\omega^{e'}\ \omega^{p'})'$, we denote by Ω the set of admissible electricity generation mix so that we must have $\omega\in\Omega$. The set Ω will represent constraints like equation (7), $\omega'\mathbf{1}_{2N}=1$ ($\mathbf{1}_{2N}$ is a $2N\times 1$ vector of ones), and minimum and/or maximum values for the allocations ($\omega_{\min}\leq\omega$ and/or $\omega\leq\omega_{\max}$). Using the ω definition, the total cost of the portfolio is given by

$$C = \omega' C. \tag{8}$$

Using the previous equation (8), the expected cost of the portfolio is given by

$$\mathsf{E}\left[\mathcal{C}\right] = \boldsymbol{\omega}'\boldsymbol{\mu} \tag{9}$$

and the variance of the portfolio is given by

$$Var [\mathcal{C}] = \omega' \Sigma \omega. \tag{10}$$

For the case in which the vector of expected costs μ and the covariance matrix Σ are known, three kinds of mean-variance problems are usually considered in the literature. The first approach minimizes the variance of the costs conditional on a target maximum expected cost c. The target maximum expected cost $c \in \Re_+$ is provided by the electricity energy policy planner which represents the maximum allowable expected energy cost. Formally, the problem is written as follows

$$\min_{\omega} \omega' \Sigma \omega \tag{11}$$

s. t.
$$\omega' \mu \le c, \ \omega \in \Omega$$
. (12)

The second approach, a dual form of the first approach, minimizes the expected cost conditional on a maximum value s^2 for the variance of the costs. The value s^2 , provided by the policy planner, represents the maximum value that the variance of the cost could achieve. Formally, the problem is written as follows

$$\min_{\omega} \omega' \mu \tag{13}$$

s. t.
$$\omega' \Sigma \omega \leq s^2$$
, $\omega \in \Omega$. (14)

The third approach minimizes a combination of the expectation and variance of the costs, weighted by a risk aversion parameter $\lambda>0$. Higher value of λ indicates a greater risk aversion. Formally, the problem is written as follows

$$\min_{\omega} \omega' \mu + \lambda \omega' \Sigma \omega \tag{15}$$

s. t.
$$\omega \in \Omega$$
. (16)

Trivially, using quadratic programming solvers, the previous three problems can be solved for the case in which the vector of expected costs μ and covariance matrix Σ are assumed to be known.

Bayesian Approach

In terms of modeling, the Bayesian approaches address estimation risk from a conceptually different perspective. Instead of treating the unknown parameters as constants, they are considered random. Additionally, the belief or prior knowledge of the specialist about the input parameters is combined with the observed data. The Bayesian models yield an entire distribution of predicted costs which explicitly takes into account the estimation and predictive uncertainty.

Bayesian Approach

The predictive, posterior or updated distribution of the unknown parameters μ and Σ , according to the Bayes' theorem, is given by

$$p(\mu, \Sigma | c_1, \dots, c_T) \propto L(\mu, \Sigma | c_1, \dots, c_T) \pi(\mu, \Sigma),$$
 (17)

where c_1,\ldots,c_T are recorded observations; $\pi\left(\cdot\right)$ is the prior distribution; and L $\left(\cdot|\cdot\right)$ is the likelihood function. Particularly, the likelihood function is given by

$$\mathsf{L}(\boldsymbol{\mu}, \boldsymbol{\Sigma} | \boldsymbol{c}_1, \dots, \boldsymbol{c}_T) \propto |\boldsymbol{\Sigma}|^{-\frac{T}{2}} \exp \left[-\frac{1}{2} \sum_{i=1}^{T} (\boldsymbol{c}_i - \boldsymbol{\mu})' \boldsymbol{\Sigma}^{-1} (\boldsymbol{c}_i - \boldsymbol{\mu}) \right].$$
 (18)

In the following subsections, we present the predictive distributions using improper and proper priors for the unknown parameters μ and Σ .

Improper Prior Case

In many cases, our prior beliefs are vague and thus difficult to translate into an informative prior. Therefore, we want to reflect our uncertainty about the model parameters without substantially influencing the predictive parameter inference. The so-called non-informative priors, also called vague or diffuse priors, are employed to that end. We consider the case when the investor is uncertain about the distribution of both parameters, μ and Σ , and has no particular prior knowledge of them. This uncertainty can be represented by a improper or diffuse prior, which is typically taken to be the Jeffreys' prior,

$$\pi\left(\boldsymbol{\mu}, \boldsymbol{\Sigma}\right) \propto \left|\boldsymbol{\Sigma}\right|^{-\frac{(2N+1)}{2}},$$
 (19)

where μ and Σ are considered independent in the prior, and μ is not restricted. The prior is non-informative in the sense that only changes in the data exert an influence on the predictive distribution of the parameters.

Improper Prior Case

When the sample mean, $\hat{\mu}$, and sample covariance matrix, $\hat{\Sigma}$, are given, it is straightforward to verify that the predictive distribution of the costs is a multivariate Student's t-distribution with T-2N degrees of freedom (if T-2N=1 the predictive distribution becomes a multivariate Cauchy distribution). Consequently,

$$C|\tilde{\boldsymbol{\mu}}, \tilde{\boldsymbol{\Sigma}} \sim \mathsf{t}_{T-2N}\left(\tilde{\boldsymbol{\mu}}, \tilde{\boldsymbol{\Sigma}}\right), T-2N \ge 2,$$
 (20)

where the predictive mean and covariance matrix are, respectively,

$$\tilde{\mu} = \hat{\mu} \text{ and } \tilde{\Sigma} = \frac{\left(1 + T^{-1}\right)\left(T - 1\right)}{T - 2N - 2}\hat{\Sigma}.$$
 (21)

Improper Prior Case

The predictive covariance here represents the sample covariance scaled up by a factor, reflecting estimation risk. For a given number of technologies N, the uncertainty $\tilde{\Sigma}$ decreases as more historical data become available. Actually, when N is fixed and $T \to \infty$, we have $\tilde{\Sigma} \to \hat{\Sigma}$. On the other hand, with a fixed number of historical observations T, increasing the number of technologies N respecting the constraint T-2N-2>0, leads to higher uncertainty and estimation risk, since the relative amount of available data declines. In practice, there are more information coming from specialists on energy costs. Consequently, in the next subsection, we present a study with proper priors.

Proper Prior Case

The specialists have informative beliefs about the mean and covariance of technology costs. In this subsection, we adopt conjugate priors because it is an algebraic convenience producing a closed expression for the posterior. The conjugate prior for the unknown covariance matrix of the normal distribution is the inverse Wishart distribution while the conjugate prior for the mean vector of the normal distribution (conditional on Σ) is the multivariate normal:

$$\mu | \Sigma \sim N\left(\eta, \frac{1}{\tau}\Sigma\right), \Sigma \sim W^{-1}\left(\Psi, \nu\right),$$
 (22)

where η is the vector of expected costs based on the specialist experience, $\tau \in \Re_+$ represents the strength of the confidence the specialist places on the value of η , Ψ is the covariance matrix based on the specialist experience, $\nu \in \Re$ represents the degrees of freedom of the inverse Wishart distribution reflecting the confidence about Ψ .

Proper Prior Case

Lower values of τ and ν indicates higher uncertainty about $\pmb{\eta}$ and $\pmb{\Psi},$ respectively.

As in the improper prior case, the predictive distribution of the costs is a multivariate Student's t-distribution

$$C|\check{\boldsymbol{\mu}}, \check{\boldsymbol{\Sigma}} \sim \mathsf{t}_{T-2N}\left(\check{\boldsymbol{\mu}}, \check{\boldsymbol{\Sigma}}\right), T-2N \ge 2,$$
 (23)

where the predictive mean and covariance matrix are, respectively,

$$\check{\boldsymbol{\mu}} = \frac{\tau}{T + \tau} \boldsymbol{\eta} + \frac{T}{T + \tau} \hat{\boldsymbol{\mu}} \tag{24}$$

and

$$\check{\boldsymbol{\Sigma}} = \frac{T+1}{T(\nu+2N-1)} \left[\boldsymbol{\Psi} + (T-1)\,\hat{\boldsymbol{\Sigma}} + \frac{T\tau}{T+\tau} \left(\boldsymbol{\eta} - \hat{\boldsymbol{\mu}} \right) \left(\boldsymbol{\eta} - \hat{\boldsymbol{\mu}} \right)' \right]. \tag{25}$$

Proper Prior Case

We notice that the predictive mean $\check{\mu}$ is a weighted average of the prior mean, η , and the sample mean, $\hat{\mu}$. In other words, the sample mean is shrunk toward the prior mean. Actually, the predictive mean and predictive covariance matrix are not proportional to the sample estimates. The improper prior case is appropriate to employ when we do not suspect that the sample mean or sample covariance matrix contain substantial estimation errors. Otherwise, the proper prior case is better when the planner believes that in the future the expectation and covariance matrix of the costs will differ substantially from the historical ones.

In this section, we present a application to illustrate the robust Bayesian approaches. In Losekann et al. (2013), the vector of expected costs and standard deviations are given for 8 different technologies (differentiating between existent and prospective cases). Additionally, the correlation matrix of the technologies is also given. For the purpose of our application, we consider the data from Losekann et al. (2013) as the sample estimates of the parameters $\hat{\mu}$ and $\hat{\Sigma}$. The naive mean-variance efficient frontier obtained using $\hat{\mu}$ and $\hat{\Sigma}$ is presented in figure 1 (repeated in the two graphics). It is important to notice that the portfolios above the efficient frontier are inefficient and the portfolios below the efficient frontier are unrealizable.

Technologies considered (the order is the same adopted inside the vectors and matrices):

- Gas
- Coal
- Nuclear
- Fuel Oil
- Biomass
- Hydro
- Wind
- Small Hydro (hydroelectric power on a scale suitable for local community and industry, or to contribute to distributed generation in a regional electricity grid)

The data from Losekann et al. (2013):

$$\hat{\boldsymbol{\mu}}^e = (9.9010\ 11.5560\ 10.1260\ 19.0980\ 14.0390\ 4.1200\ 10.9860\ 6.8850)'\ , \\ \hat{\boldsymbol{\mu}}^p = (9.2770\ 11.1180\ 10.0110\ 16.4680\ 13.4560\ 5.0240\ 10.4440\ 6.9090)'\ , \\ \hat{\boldsymbol{\sigma}}^e = (0.1500\ 0.1125\ 0.0625\ 0.2250\ 0.0813\ 0.0313\ 0.0250\ 0.0187)'\ , \\ \hat{\boldsymbol{\sigma}}^p = (0.1500\ 0.1187\ 0.1500\ 0.2188\ 0.0875\ 0.2062\ 0.1187\ 0.1187)'\ , \\ \hat{\boldsymbol{\sigma}}^p = (0.1500\ 0.1187\ 0.1500\ 0.2188\ 0.0875\ 0.2062\ 0.1187\ 0.1187)'\ , \\ \hat{\boldsymbol{R}} = \begin{pmatrix} 1.00 & 0.47 & 0.06 & 0.49 & -0.44 & 0.00 & 0.00 & 0.00 \\ 0.47 & 1.00 & 0.12 & 0.27 & -0.38 & 0.00 & 0.00 & 0.00 \\ 0.06 & 0.12 & 1.00 & 0.08 & -0.22 & 0.00 & 0.00 & 0.00 \\ 0.49 & 0.27 & 0.08 & 1.00 & -0.17 & 0.00 & 0.00 & 0.00 \\ -0.44 & -0.38 & -0.22 & -0.17 & 1.00 & 0.00 & 0.00 & 0.00 \\ 0.00 & 0.00 & 0.00 & 0.00 & 0.00 & 1.00 & 0.00 \\ 0.00 & 0.00 & 0.00 & 0.00 & 0.00 & 0.00 & 1.00 & 0.00 \\ 0.00 & 0.00 & 0.00 & 0.00 & 0.00 & 0.00 & 0.00 & 1.00 \end{pmatrix}.$$

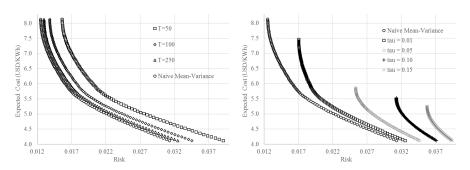


Figure 1: Efficient frontiers using naive and Bayesian approaches for the improper prior case for some values of T (left) and the proper prior case for some values of τ with fixed T and ν (right).

- In the improper prior case, illustrated in figure 1 (left), the efficient frontier changes depending on the value of *T*.
- The predictive covariance of the improper case is the sample covariance scaled up by a factor that approaches to one when T increases. T is not only a proxy to the size of the sample used in the estimation but also the degree of confidence the planner has on the estimations based only on historical data.
- Decreasing the value of T shifts the efficient frontier to the right.
 The same shift to the right was observed by Costa et al. (2016)
 using the robust mean-variance optimization when decreasing the
 degree of confidence the planner has on the estimations. However,
 the robust mean-variance optimization is computationally more expensive than our approach because the first requires several optimizations.

- In the proper prior case, the hyperparameters η and Ψ represent the prior information of the specialist about the expected value and covariance matrix of the technology costs, respectively.
- For illustration purposes, we assume that η and Ψ are obtained increasing in 10% the parameters $\hat{\mu}$, $\hat{\sigma^e}$ and $\hat{\sigma^p}$.
- In figure 1 (right), we present the obtained efficient frontiers for different values of τ with T=50 and $\nu=34$.
- The resulting efficient frontiers are not simple shifts of the naive mean-variance frontier. Intuitively, the informative proper prior case is better than the improper prior when the planner believes that in the future the costs will differ substantially from the historical ones.

Final Remarks

- In this paper, we introduce the use of the Bayesian mean-variance optimization in the electricity generation planning. We illustrate the application of the approach using improper and proper priors.
- Comparing with the existent robust approach to electricity portfolio selection, the Bayesian approach has the advantage of not only dealing with the estimation uncertainty, but also considering the prior information of the specialists in the planning process.
- Particularly, in the proper prior case, we have assumed that the covariance matrix of the expected value of the costs are proportional to the covariance matrix of the costs. In practice, the assumption is not necessarily valid. For future research, we suggest the investigation of changing the proper priors to give more flexibility to the electricity generation planner.

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