

# MULTI-AGENT SYSTEMS FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE

---

Ayan Mukhopadhyay



VANDERBILT  
UNIVERSITY



Washington  
University in St. Louis



Stanford  
University



Institute for Software  
Integrated Systems



CARS



TN TDOT  
Department of  
Transportation



VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

# WHY CARE ABOUT EMERGENCY RESPONSE?

## NATION ROUSED AGAINST MOTOR KILLINGS

**T**HIS need for vigorous nationwide action to promote street and highway safety has prompted Secretary Hoover to call a conference of representatives of government and other agencies interested in checking the steady increase in vehicular accidents. The conference will be held in Washington on Dec. 18. It will treat the subject from medical, industrial, scientific, traffic control, construction and engineering, city planning and zoning, insurance, education and the motor vehicle and public relations.

**T**HE horrors of war appear to be less appalling than the horrors of motor vehicles. The former is a far more destructive piece of machinery than the machine gun. The reckless motorist deals more death than the artillerists. The man in the street seems less safe than the soldier in the trenches.

Fifty thousand of our men were killed in action or died of wounds in the nineteen months of this country's participation in the World War. This is at the rate of 2,600 fatalities a month. Motor vehicles, however, deal with the circuiting toll of 7,000 lives destroyed monthly by accidents in the United States.

The greatest single lethal factor is the automobile. It left America in 11 years. It covered through 1924. It killed for 16,000 victims. According to the tragic auto mishaps recorded in the first nine months of this year there will be an increase of more than 2,000 for 1925. At the beginning of October approximately 34,000 motor deaths had already been reported.

A conference called by Secretary Hoover for next month will concentrate its deliberations upon street and highway safety. A Committee on Motor Vehicles was appointed by Mr. Hoover to supply the conference with a clearer defined picture of the public accident situation. This committee is placing particular emphasis upon the automobile in the United States. Bureau on motor-vehicle statistics, which revealed that 2,000 persons died in vehicular mishaps in 1923, an increase of almost 2,000 over 1922.

While the number killed in automobile accidents last year was given as 16,000, the motor car was also concerned in other highway fatalities. The Census Bureau charges each accident to the heavier vehicle involved. A collision between a truck and a car is counted as two accidents. When street cars collide with machines, the street cars are blamed upon the records. There were 2,000 deaths in train grade crossing accidents in 1923. Many of the 2,000 who

**S**ecretary Hoover's Conference Will Suggest Many Ways to Check The Alarming Increase of Automobile Fatalities.—Studying Huge Problem



**R**oads become insignificant by comparison with those caused by automobile accidents. The basic economic cost caused by street and highway accidents is set forth in a preliminary report prepared by the Committee on Statistics appointed by Secretary Hoover. On this subject the report says:

"The present loss due to these ap-

proximately 30,000 accidents in which personal injuries occur can probably never be known. Several estimates have been made. One would put the loss in

excess of the annual liability of \$5,000 per life and average of \$100 for each person injured."

"These two items, applied to 22,000 fatalities and 78,000 non-fatal injuries respectively, give an approximate total of \$200,000,000. Add to this an average actual property damage of \$50 due to all accidents involving either personal injury or property damage (conservatively estimated at 1,000,000), there results a total estimated loss of nearly \$200,000,000 annually."

"In these estimates no account is



inserting them in the actual use of the highway in the presence of superior force in the shape of the combatant nations."

"It is usually only when in event of the post-mortem of an accident or of his own bodily post-mortem from such accident that the pedestrian is, so to speak, allowed to enjoy his legal rights. Most of us prefer to roll over and die without having to consider the price of such rights."

"Some time ago General O'Riley was quoted as saying that 'most of us are still addicted to habitation on the street which is the second best life of a pedestrian, as when all others are horse drawn.' The modern street calls for an entirely new set of habits and for a kind of alertness and recognition which we did not even dream of twenty years ago. The motorist must learn to let the pedestrian familiarize himself with the rules of the road and traffic regulations as well as the problems of the motor vehicles driven."

Pedestrian like a Rabbit.

in streets and roads. Apparently, that would be a privileged class who would steer such matters. In reality, the automobile drivers are a privileged class right now.

"Under present conditions there is a deadly competition between pedestrian and motorist for a use of those strips of territory we call street, a conflict deadly to the walker, with the victim to the motorist."

"Frankly, it is largely a matter of viewpoint, this war problem, and the same individual who sits in his car is much altered from his other self behind the wheel. As both must use the highway and as both must share equally the same space at once, what is the solution, as they so often do, what is the solution?"

"Manifestly, the sit, or cannot go on. The mangling and crushing cannot continue. However, 'he for relief' The motorist, who, when he has his child off to school or out to play, the following aged person who tremblingly attempts a crossing must have some assurance of their safety. Conversely, the conscientious operator who, with tears in his eyes, leaves the foot door out his car with path from the nearest direct route is entitled to some regard."

"As it stands, the motorist has won his contest for the use of the streets over the foot passenger, despite the present efforts of police courts and manufacturers to make the pedestrian safe and kind. The motorist has inspired fear and the sort of respect that breeds fierce fighters."

"If we have failed adequately to regulate the use of the streets, what is the better in attempting to regulate pedestrians? It is well enough to condemn the 'jay-walkers,' if by that term we mean the reckless individual who is bent on getting where he wants to go off or on a crosswalk, without looking or caring for his movements. But if we mean the average and the under-average in intelligence and alertness of our population who do not use the best judgment because they have not been taught, then we have never learned, never scaling fruits of knowledge toward them, eating up the highway so fast as to upset all calculations of time and space, try to thread their way through the crossroads, and cross at all, then I disagree emphatically."

As to Regulating Jaywalkers.

"Any regulation of the pedestrian is to be done with caution. His constitutional rights still exist upon paper, at least. To place in the hands of any single official such as the Police Commissioner of this nation, or other city, the uncontrolled power to penalize code for his conduct is a questionable credential, no matter how well meaning that official may

# WHY CARE ABOUT EMERGENCY RESPONSE?

## NATION ROUSED AGAINST MOTOR KILLINGS

**T**HE need for vigorous nation-wide action to promote street and highway safety has prompted Secretary Hoover to call a conference of representatives of business and commerce interested in checking the steady increase in vehicular accidents. The conference will

**Secretary Hoover's Conference Will Suggest Many Ways to Check The Alarming Increase of Automobile Fatalities.—Studying Huge Problem**

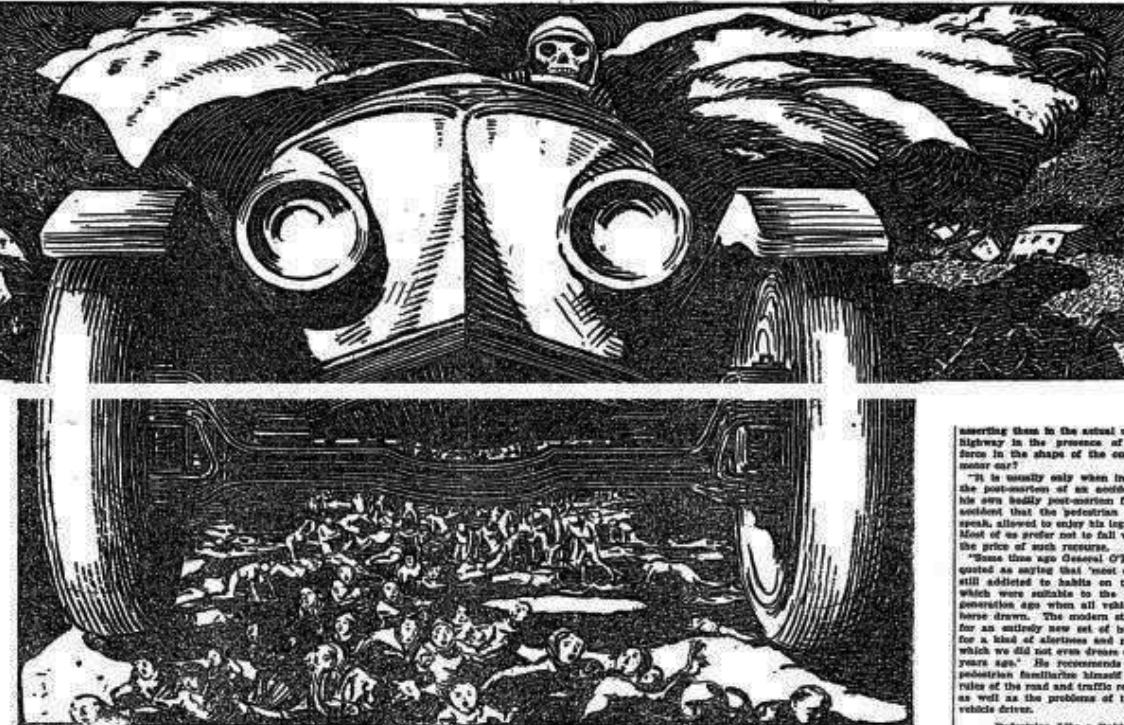
**Murder Machines: Why Cars Will Kill 30,000 Americans This Year**

By Hunter Oatman-Stanford — March 10th, 2014

[Share 8:](#) [Tweet](#)



There's an open secret in America: If you want to kill someone, do it with a car. As long as you're sober, chances are you'll never be charged with any crime, much less manslaughter. Over the past hundred years, as automobiles have been woven into the fabric of our daily lives, our legal system has undermined public safety, and we've been collectively trained to think of these deaths as unavoidable "accidents" or acts of God. Today, despite the efforts of major public-health agencies and grassroots safety campaigns, few are aware that car crashes are the number one cause of death for Americans under 35. But it wasn't always this way.



its streets and roads. Apparently, that would be a privileged class who would steer such matters. In reality, the automobile drivers are a privileged class right now.

"Under present conditions there is a deadly competition between pedestrian and motorist for a use of those strips of territory we call street—a conflict deadly to the walker, with the victim to the motorist."

"Frankly, it is largely a matter of viewpoint, this motor problem, and the same individual if safe is much altered from his other self—when the wheel. As both must use the highway, the motorist has almost won out the same man at once when the two meet, as they so often do, what is the solution?

"Manifestly, the sit... or cannot go on. The mangling and crushing cannot continue. However, 'in for relief' the motorist is, when he sees a child start off to school or out to play, the faltering aged person who tremulously attempts a crossing must have some assurance of their safety. Conversely, the consciousness operator who—with temerity drives over the foot darts out his head with such unanticipated directness is entitled to some regard."

"As it stands, the motorist has won his contest for the use of the streets over the foot passengers, despite the present efforts of police courts and manufacturers to make the motorist safe and kind. The motorist has inspired fear and the sort of respect that breeds fierce Neutrality."

"If we have failed adequately to regulate the use of the streets, is the better in attempting to regulate pedestrians? It is well enough to condemn the 'jay-walkers,' if by that term we mean the reckless individual who is bent on getting where he wants to go off a crosswalk, without looking or caring for his movements. But if we mean the average and the under-average in intelligence and alertness of our population, who do not use the best judgment because they have no time, and who are not like the never-hesitating, never-taking-trials of automobile, rolling over recklessly toward them, eating up the highway so fast as to upset all calculations of time and space, try to thread their way through a crowd of people across at all, then I disagree emphatically."

*inserting them in the actual use of the highway in the presence of superior force in the shape of the omnipresent motorist*

"It is usually only when in event of the post-mortem of an accident or of his own bodily post-mortem from such accident that the pedestrian is, as to most men, allowed to enjoy his legal rights! Most of us prefer to fall victim to the price of such negligence."

"Some time ago General O'Rourke was quoted as saying that 'most of us are still addicted to habits on the street which are second to the life of a garrison dog; when all soldiers were horse-drawn.' The modern street calls for an entirely new set of habits and for a kind of alertness and recognition which we did not even dream of twenty years ago. The motorist, however, must be a pedestrian familiarize himself with the rules of the road and traffic regulations as well as the problems of the motor vehicles driven."

*Pedestrian like a Rabbit*

"Any regulating of the pedestrian is to be done with caution. His constitutional rights still rest on paper, at least. To place in the hands of any single official such as the Police Commissioner of this metropolis, this uncontrolled power to penalize code for his conduct is a questionable credential, no matter how well meaning that official may

# WHY CARE ABOUT EMERGENCY RESPONSE?

## NATION ROUSED AGAINST MOTOR KILLINGS

**T**HE need for vigorous nation-wide action to promote street and highway safety has prompted Secretary Hoover to call a conference of representatives of state and local authorities interested in checking the steady increase in vehicular fatalities. The conference will

**Secretary Hoover's Conference Will Suggest Many Ways to Check The Alarming Increase of Automobile Fatalities.—Studying Huge Problem**

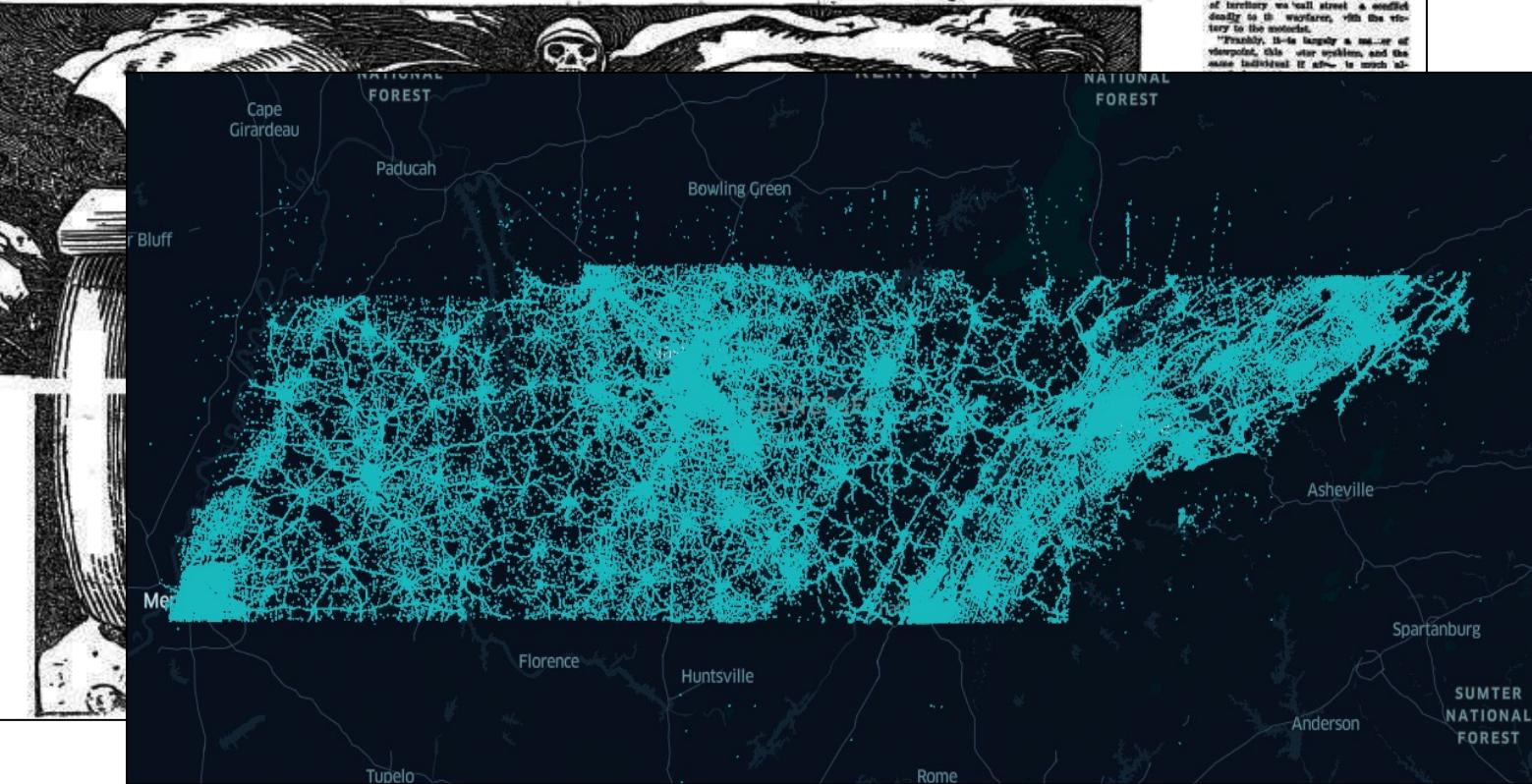
**Murder Machines: Why Cars Will Kill 30,000 Americans This Year**

By Hunter Oatman-Stanford — March 10th, 2014

[Share 8:](#) [Tweet](#)



**T**here's an open secret in America: If you want to kill someone, do it with a car. As long as you're sober, chances are you'll never be charged with any crime, much less manslaughter. Over the past hundred years, as automobiles have been woven into the fabric of our daily lives, our legal system has undermined public safety, and we've been collectively trained to think of these deaths as unavoidable "accidents" or acts of God. Today, despite the efforts of major public-health agencies and grassroots safety campaigns, few are aware that car crashes are the number one cause of death for Americans under 35. But it wasn't always this way.



its streets and roads. Apparently, that would be a privileged class who would never touch motorists. In reality, the automobile drivers are a privileged class right now.

"Under present conditions there is a deadly competition between pedestrian and motorist for a use of those strips of territory we call street a conflict deadly to the weaker, with the victim to the stronger."

"Frankly, it's largely a matter of perspective, this war problem, and the same individual if alive is much al-

# WHY CARE ABOUT EMERGENCY RESPONSE?

## *Giants Club: African leaders to gather in Kenya to tackle elephant poaching crisis*

In the past three years, 100,000 elephants have been killed in Africa to supply ivory to illegal markets

Alex Dymoke | Friday 26 February 2016 12:00 |



# WHY CARE ABOUT EMERGENCY RESPONSE?

## *Giants Club: African leaders to gather in Kenya to tackle elephant poaching crisis*

In the past three years, 100,000 elephants have been killed in Africa to supply ivory to illegal markets

Alex Dymoke | Friday 26 February 2016 12:00 |

A large image showing a pangolin walking across a dry, sandy ground. The background features a savanna landscape with sparse trees under a blue sky with white clouds. The pangolin's unique scales are clearly visible on its back and tail.

MAGAZINE | WILDLIFE WATCH

### Poaching is sending the shy, elusive pangolin to its doom

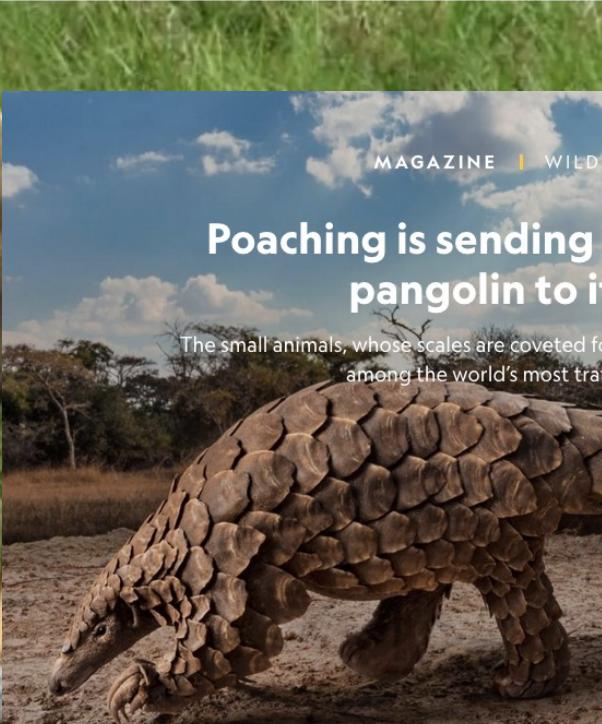
The small animals, whose scales are coveted for use in Chinese medicine, are now among the world's most trafficked mammals.

# WHY CARE ABOUT EMERGENCY RESPONSE?

## *Giants Club: African leaders to gather in Kenya to tackle elephant poaching crisis*

In the past three years, 100,000 elephants have been killed in Africa to supply ivory to illegal markets.

Alex Dymoke | Friday 26 February 2016 12:00 |



## Vietnam boats using child labour for illegal fishing

**Children as young as 11 discovered on boats fishing illegally in Thai waters for seafood that could end up on sale in EU supermarkets**



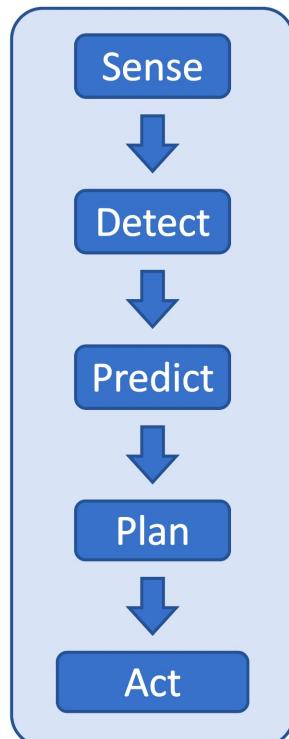
▲ Thai police patrol the Gulf of Thailand looking for Vietnamese boats that are fishing illegally, such as this one. Photograph: Madaree Tohlala/AFP via Getty Images

# WHY CARE ABOUT EMERGENCY RESPONSE?



# SMART EMERGENCY RESPONSE

## Proactive Resource Management



**Research Objective:** framework for *proactive* resource allocation and dispatch that optimizes the expected long-term utility of the system

### Challenges:

#### Large multi-agent systems with complex agent interactions



#### Environmental Dynamics



#### Resilience



# SMART EMERGENCY RESPONSE: PROBLEMS

- **Extremely large and multi-modal data** – the analysis of wildfires uses billions of data points created from satellite imagery; accident prediction uses granular traffic data (think of a measurement coming from every road segment of a city every 30 seconds)

# SMART EMERGENCY RESPONSE: PROBLEMS

- **Extremely large and multi-modal data** – the analysis of wildfires uses billions of data points created from satellite imagery; accident prediction uses granular traffic data (think of a measurement coming from every road segment of a city every 30 seconds)
- **Extremely sparse data** – most places are not on fire most of the time, most road segments do not have accidents most of the time.

# SMART EMERGENCY RESPONSE: PROBLEMS

- **Extremely large and multi-modal data** – the analysis of wildfires uses billions of data points created from satellite imagery; accident prediction uses granular traffic data (think of a measurement coming from every road segment of a city every 30 seconds)
- **Extremely sparse data** – most places are not on fire most of the time, most road segments do not have accidents most of the time.
- **State uncertainty** – how can we allocate many agents (firefighters) to stop a rapidly moving fire, especially when smoke prohibits observing the fire? Such problems are typically intractable.

# SMART EMERGENCY RESPONSE: PROBLEMS

- **Extremely large and multi-modal data** – the analysis of wildfires uses billions of data points created from satellite imagery; accident prediction uses granular traffic data (think of a measurement coming from every road segment of a city every 30 seconds)
- **Extremely sparse data** – most places are not on fire most of the time, most road segments do not have accidents most of the time.
- **State uncertainty** – how can we allocate many agents (firefighters) to stop a rapidly moving fire, especially when smoke prohibits observing the fire? Such problems are typically intractable.
- **Communication Uncertainty** – disasters often cause communication failure. How can “multi-agent systems” work if agents cannot communicate?

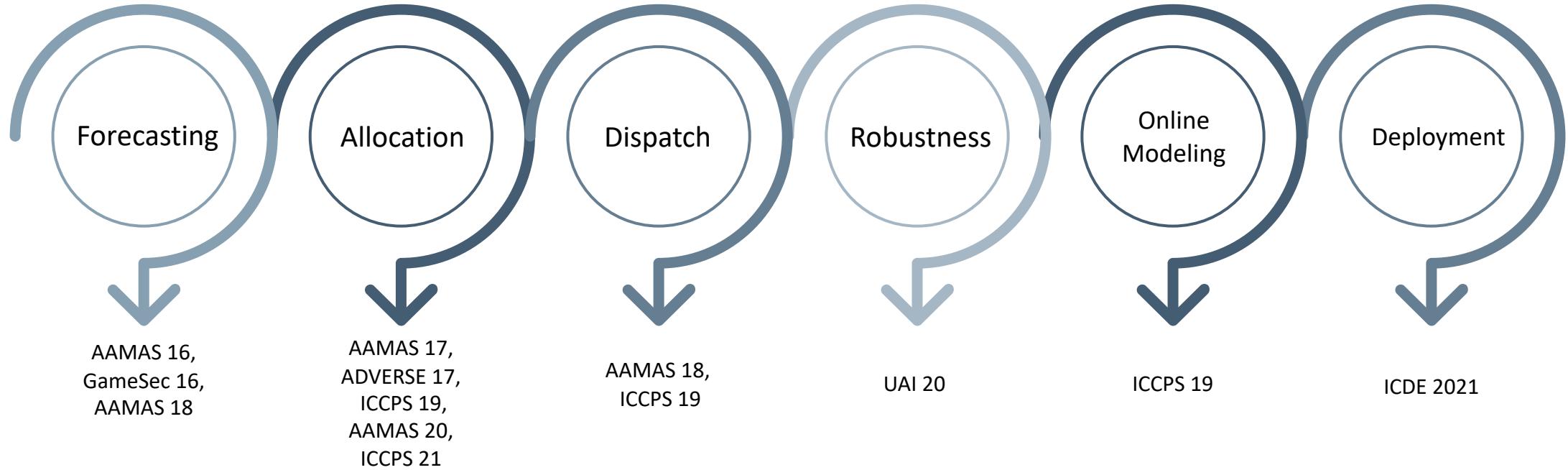
# SMART EMERGENCY RESPONSE: PROBLEMS

- **Extremely large and multi-modal data** – the analysis of wildfires uses billions of data points created from satellite imagery; accident prediction uses granular traffic data (think of a measurement coming from every road segment of a city every 30 seconds)
- **Extremely sparse data** – most places are not on fire most of the time, most road segments do not have accidents most of the time.
- **State uncertainty** – how can we allocate many agents (firefighters) to stop a rapidly moving fire, especially when smoke prohibits observing the fire? Such problems are typically intractable.
- **Communication Uncertainty** – disasters often cause communication failure. How can “multi-agent systems” work if agents cannot communicate?
- **Adversarial effects** – if we know where poaching is expected to occur and deploy rangers, poachers will move. How can we solve interactions that take the form of games?

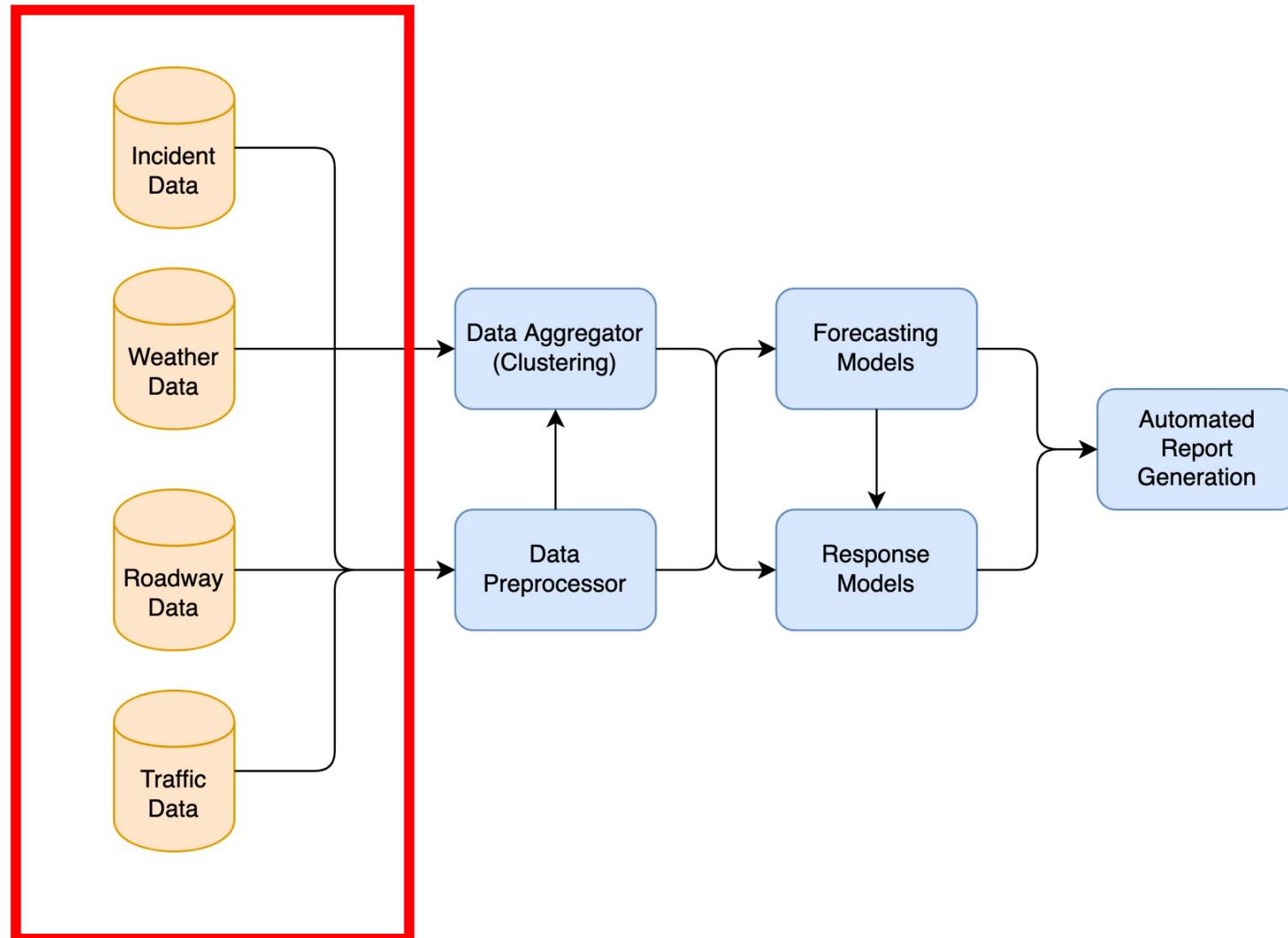
# SMART EMERGENCY RESPONSE: PROBLEMS

- **Extremely large and multi-modal data** – the analysis of wildfires uses billions of data points created from satellite imagery; accident prediction uses granular traffic data (think of a measurement coming from every road segment of a city every 30 seconds)
- **Extremely sparse data** – most places are not on fire most of the time, most road segments do not have accidents most of the time.
- **State uncertainty** – how can we allocate many agents (firefighters) to stop a rapidly moving fire, especially when smoke prohibits observing the fire? Such problems are typically intractable.
- **Communication Uncertainty** – disasters often cause communication failure. How can “multi-agent systems” work if agents cannot communicate?
- **Adversarial effects** – if we know where poaching is expected to occur and deploy rangers, poachers will move. How can we solve interactions that take the form of games?
- **Dynamic environments** – what if we manage to learn complex models for emergency response and deploy them, but an event changes the dynamics of the problem?

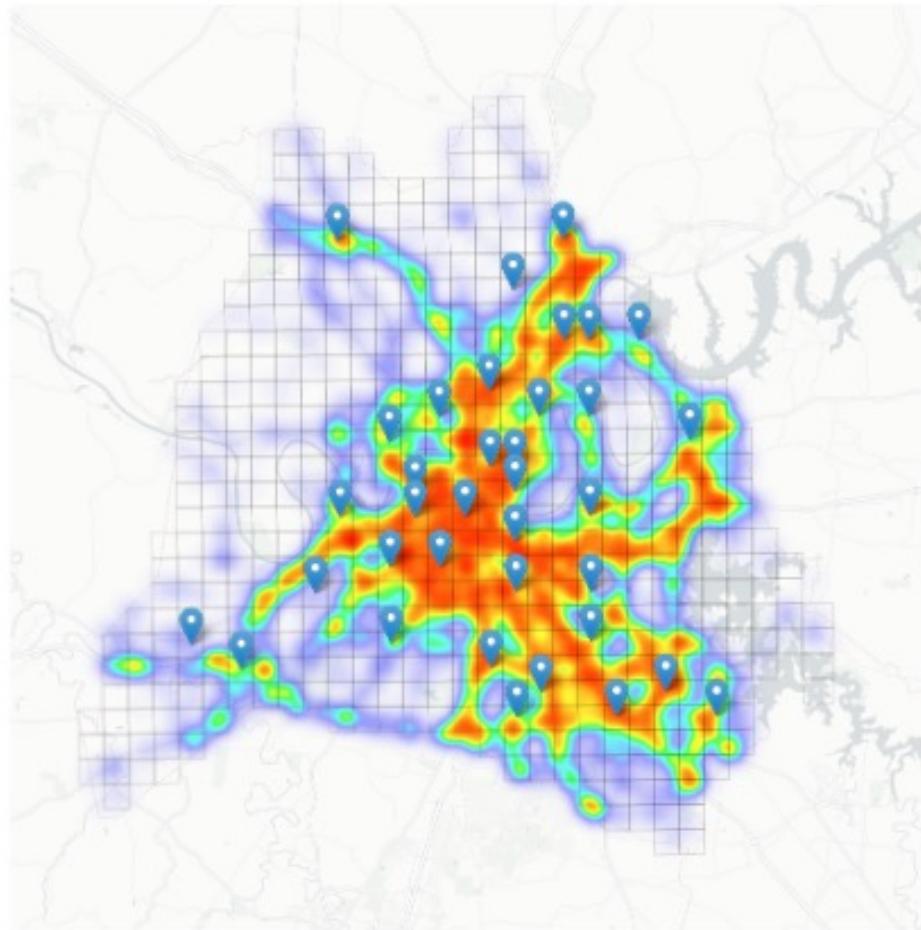
# PROBLEMS



# FORECASTING SPATIAL-TEMPORAL INCIDENTS

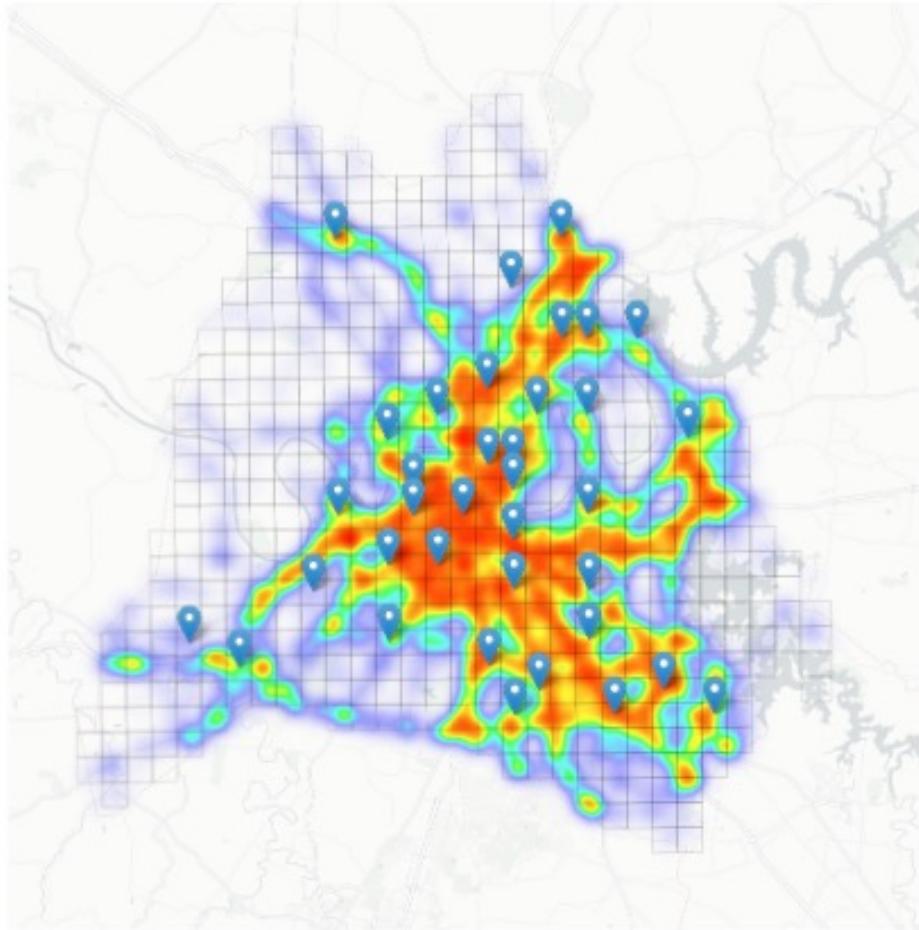


# HANDLING COMPLEX EVENTS

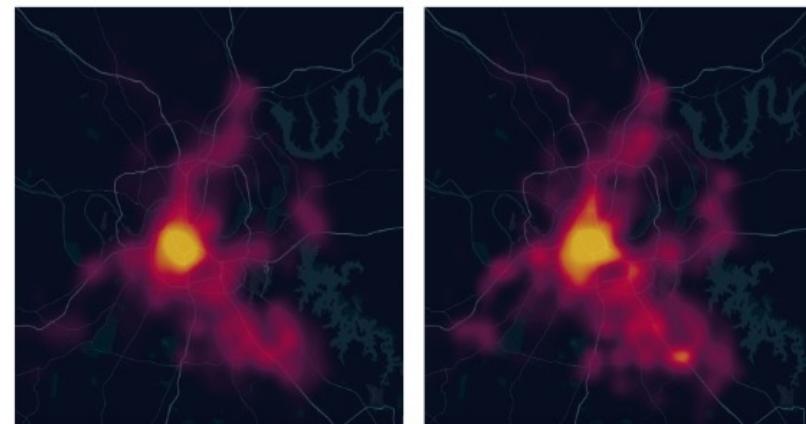


- D: For a given spatial area, incidents happen at specific coordinates and times, with some severity. Let the set of all incident be represented by D.
- G: Consider the entire spatial area to be divided into a set of cells.
- X: For each cell, consider a distribution  $F$ , that models the distribution of incident occurrence in the cell, measured by a random variable.

# HANDLING COMPLEX EVENTS



- We have shown how a combination of non-spatial clustering, synthetic resampling, and conditioning on carefully chosen features can be used to learn accurate predictive models.



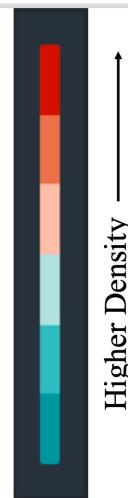
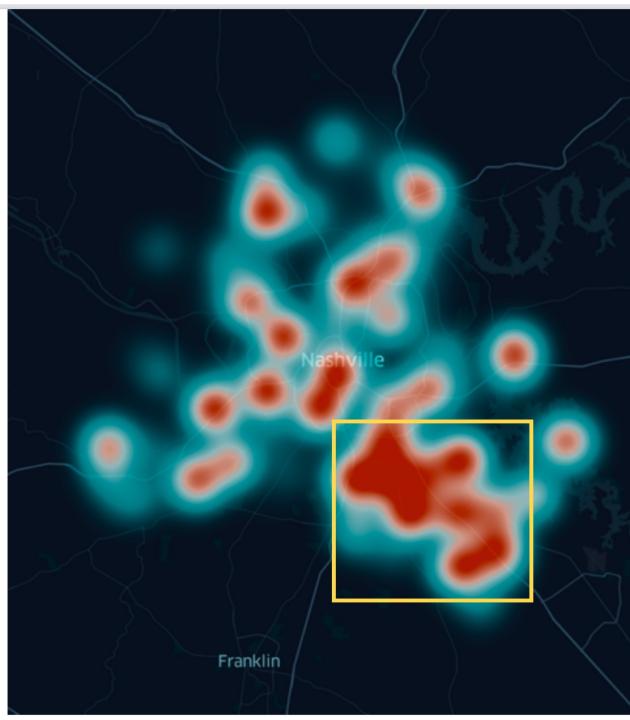
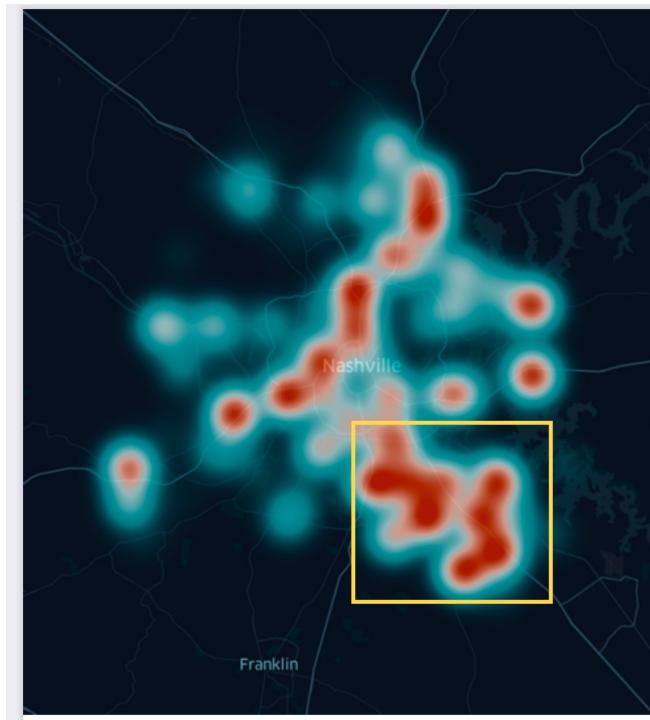
Predicted Incidents vs Actual Incidents

# HANDLING DYNAMIC ENVIRONMENTS

Technical Challenge:

What if we deploy a model but the environment changes?

Create online models that adapt to changing dynamics.



# THE SPECTRUM OF MULTI-AGENT SYSTEMS

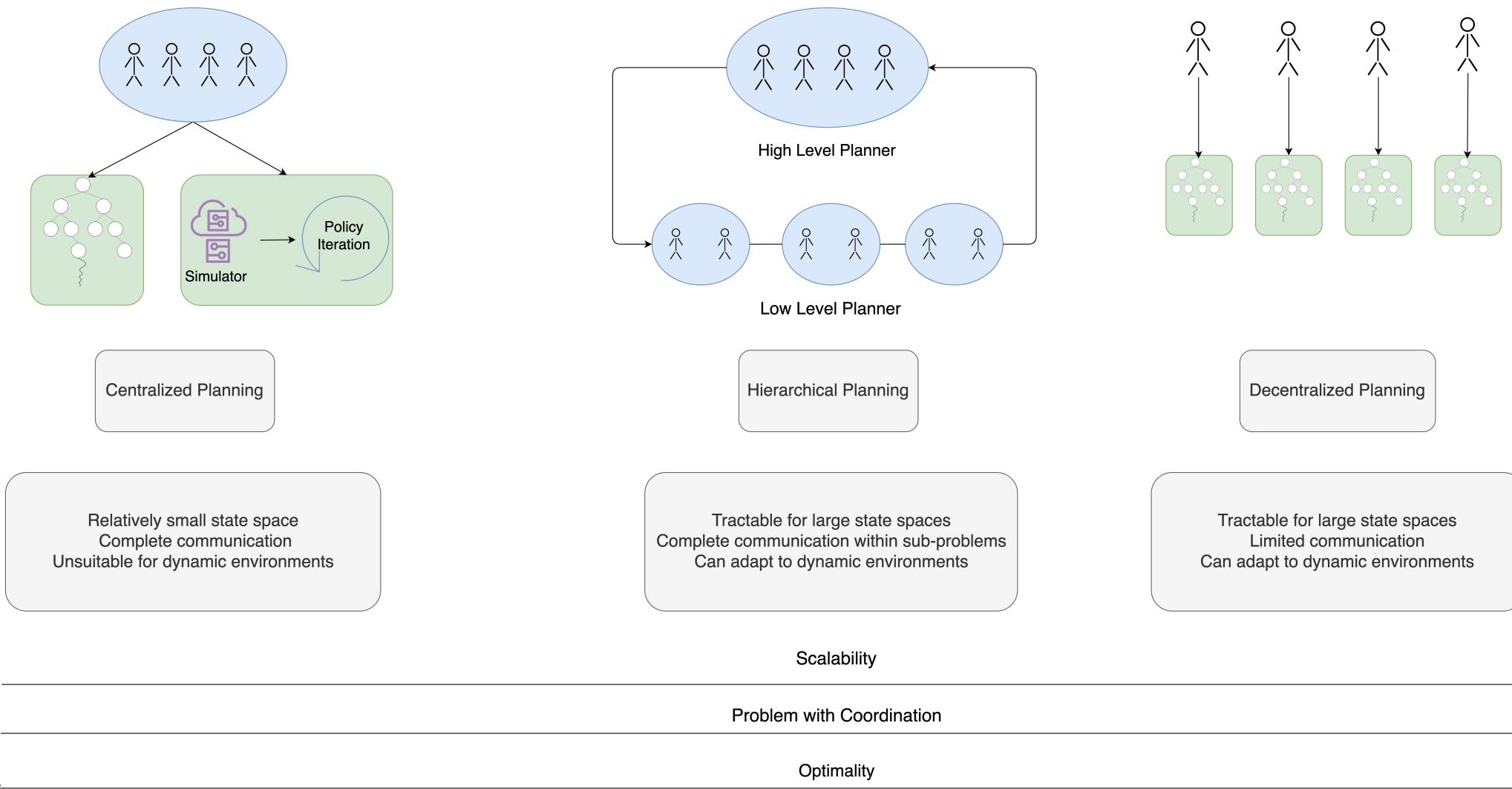
# THE SPECTRUM OF MULTI-AGENT SYSTEMS



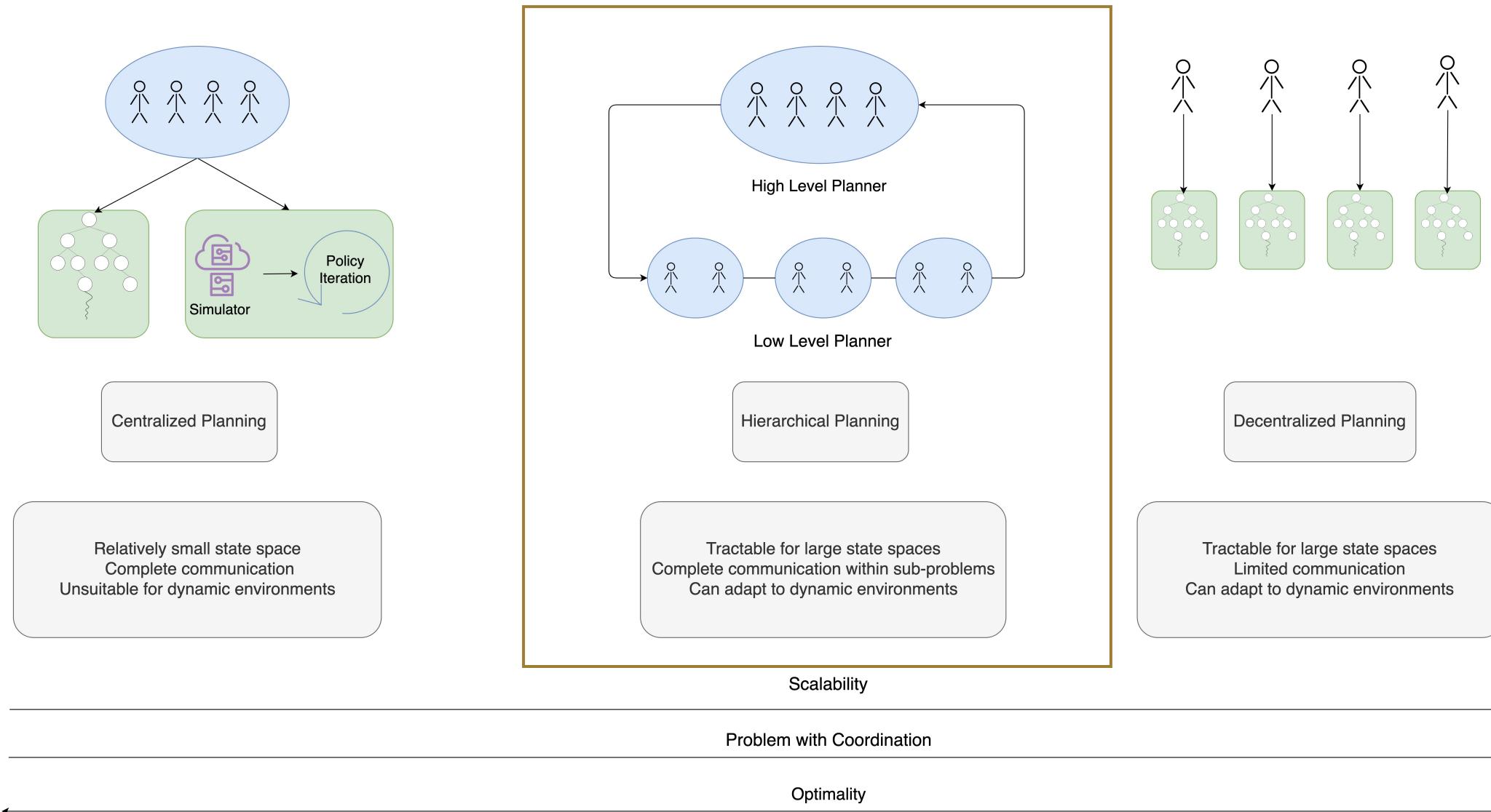
# THE SPECTRUM OF MULTI-AGENT SYSTEMS



# THE SPECTRUM OF MULTI-AGENT SYSTEMS



# THE SPECTRUM OF MULTI-AGENT SYSTEMS



# HOW CAN LARGE-SCALE MULTI-AGENT SYSTEMS BE SOLVED TRACTABLY?

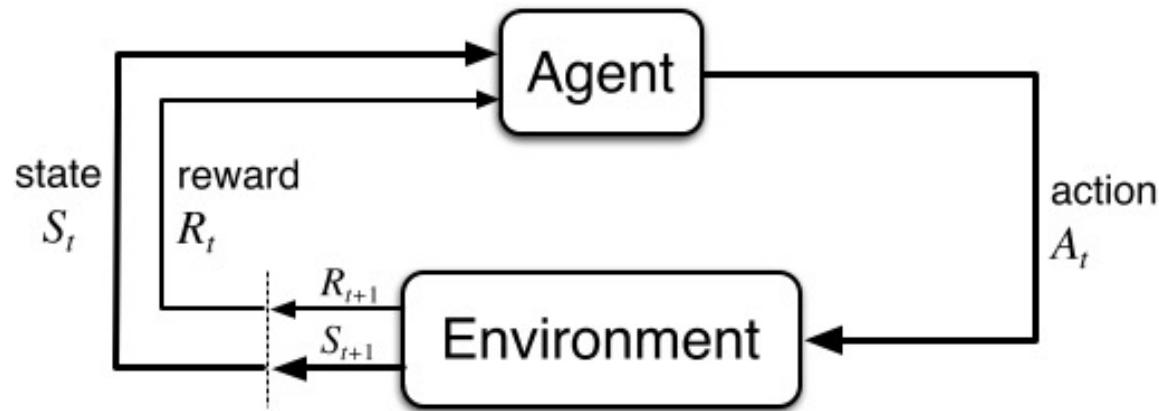
Problem: Dynamically re-balance the spatial distribution of responders to account for incident distribution shifts and coverage gaps

\*In practice, emergency dispatchers *must* send the closest responder to an incident<sup>[1]</sup>. This can lead to coverage gaps when responders become busy



## SYSTEM MODEL : SEMI-MARKOV DECISION PROCESSES

A natural modeling framework for control problems in which a decision agent interacts with an uncertain environment and actions have future consequences is the (*Semi*)-Markov Decision Process (SMDP)\*



- State: Responder and incident information
- Action: Directing responders to valid locations
- Transitions: Environment evolution depends on incident arrival model and responder travel times
- Cost: Incident response times

Goal: minimize long term cost incurred by the decision agent

\* *Semi*-Markov because process evolves in continuous time and transitions are not memoryless

# SYSTEM MODEL : SEMI-MARKOV DECISION PROCESSES

Find a *policy*: a general mapping from states to actions

Methods: Reinforcement Learning

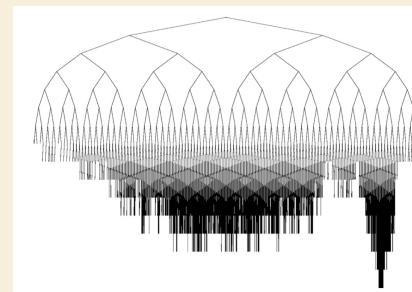
Approximate Dynamic Programming

Barriers:

- Long time to learn a policy due to large state-action space
- Must re-learn models to account for non-stationary environment
- Not resilient to failures and unexpected environmental shifts (disasters)

Evaluate potential actions for a given state using generative models

- Focuses computation on one relevant state
- Adaptable – if environment changes or there is a failure, simply update the underlying models



Monte Carlo Tree Search

Heuristic planning algorithm which balances exploration and exploitation to efficiently navigate a decision tree, focusing computation on promising action trajectories

# SYSTEM MODEL : SEMI-MARKOV DECISION PROCESSES

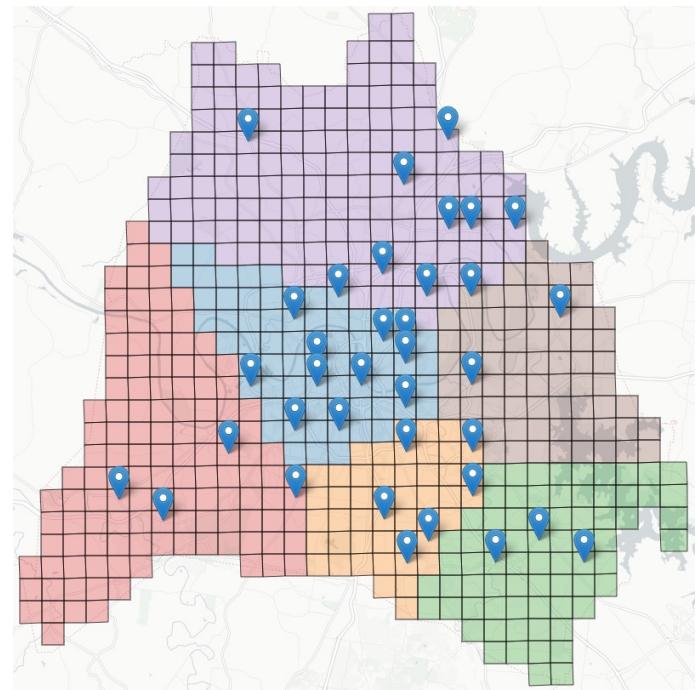
Challenge: How to scale MCTS to practical problem instances?

Example: 20 responders and 30 possible waiting locations (depots):

$$P(30, 20) = 30! / (30-20)! = 7.31 \times 10^{25} \text{ possible allocations!}$$

## Approach: Hierarchical Planning

- Split urban area into regions, similar to jurisdictions already used by response agencies. Assume each region is largely independent
- Significantly reduces complexity: splitting the above example into 5 evenly sized sub-problems gives us  
$$5 * P(6, 4) = 5 * 360 = 1800$$
 possible allocations
- Within each region, can tractably solve the sub-problem using MCTS

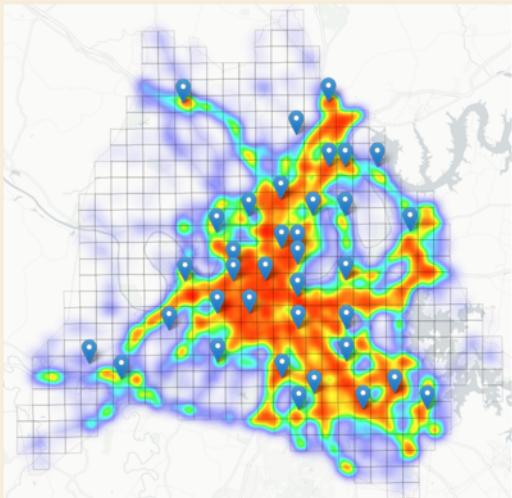


*Davidson County, TN, with the locations of ambulance depots shown as pins. Colors represent a possible segmentation into 6 regions*

# HIERARCHICAL PLANNING

How to create regions?

- Use incident density to create clusters using standard approaches like k-means



How to allocate responders across regions?

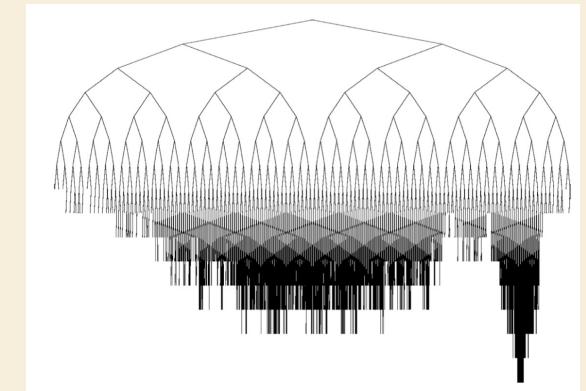
- Approximate waiting times within a region using a multi-server queue model (M/M/c queue)
- Solve optimization problem to minimize the queue *waiting time*<sup>[1]</sup>

$$\begin{aligned} & \min_x \sum_{j=1}^k w_j(x_j) \\ \text{s.t. } & \sum_{i=1}^k x_i = |\Lambda| \\ & x_i \in \mathbb{Z}^{0+} \quad \forall i \in \{1, \dots, k\} \end{aligned}$$

High Level Planner

How to dynamically reallocate responders within each region?

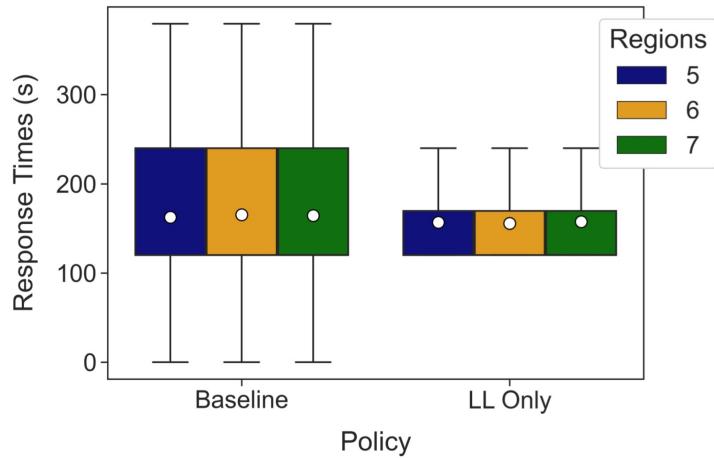
- Use Monte-Carlo Tree Search combined with a generative incident prediction model to find best allocations.



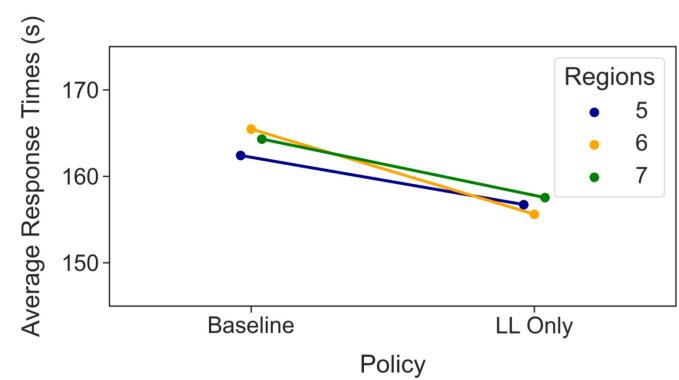
Low Level Planner

# EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

## Stationary Experiments

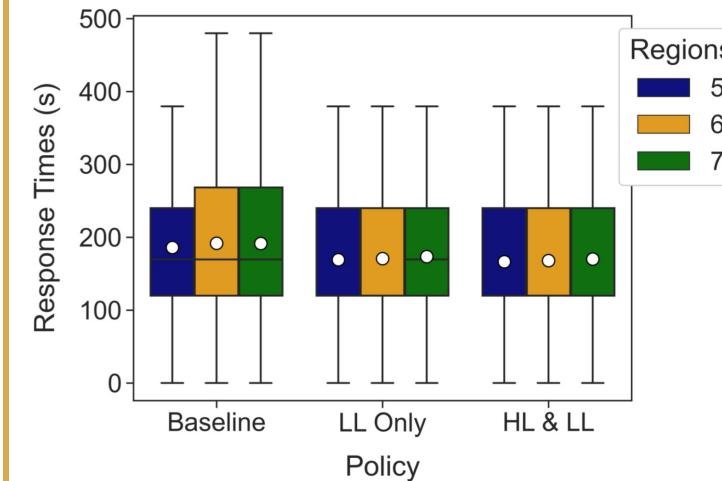


Dynamic allocation reduces upper quartile of response times by **71 seconds**

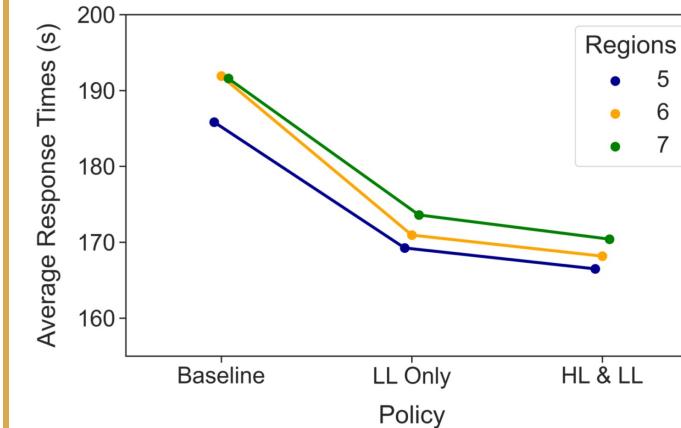


**7.5 second reduction in mean response times**

## Non-Stationary Experiments



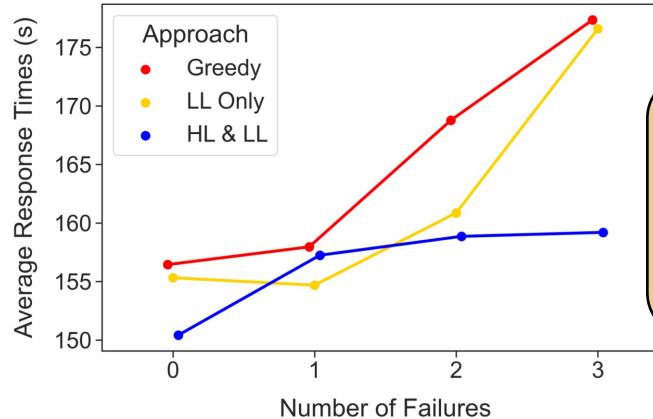
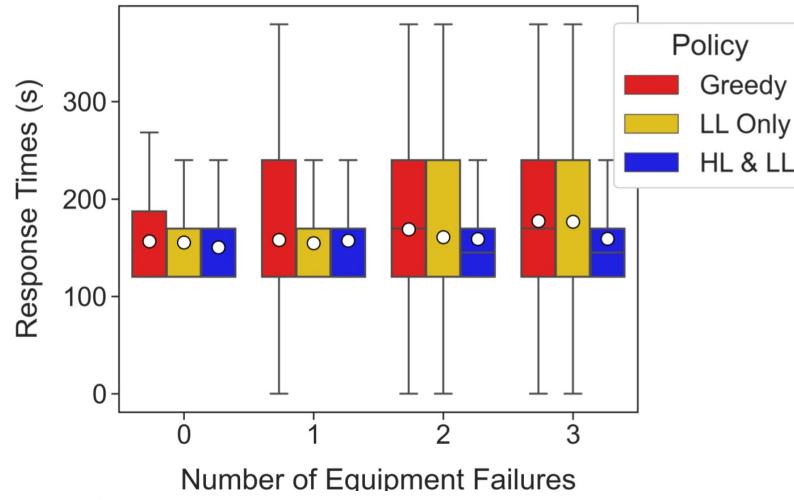
When incident spikes are introduced, the low-level planner alone reduces mean response times by **18.6 seconds**



Adding high-level region rebalancing further improves response times – a **21.6 second reduction**

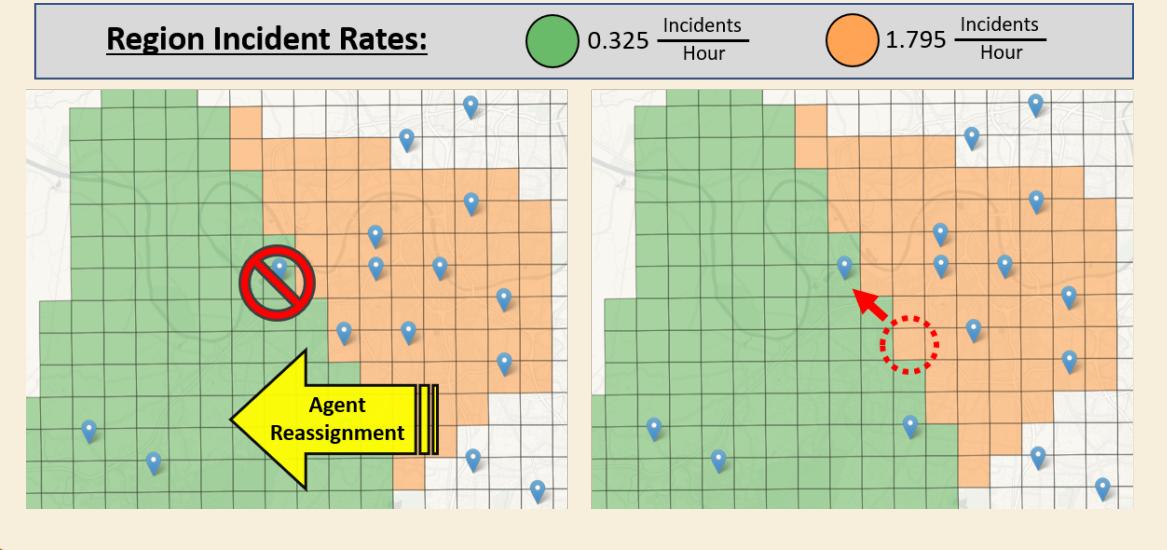
# EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

## Ambulance Failure Experiments

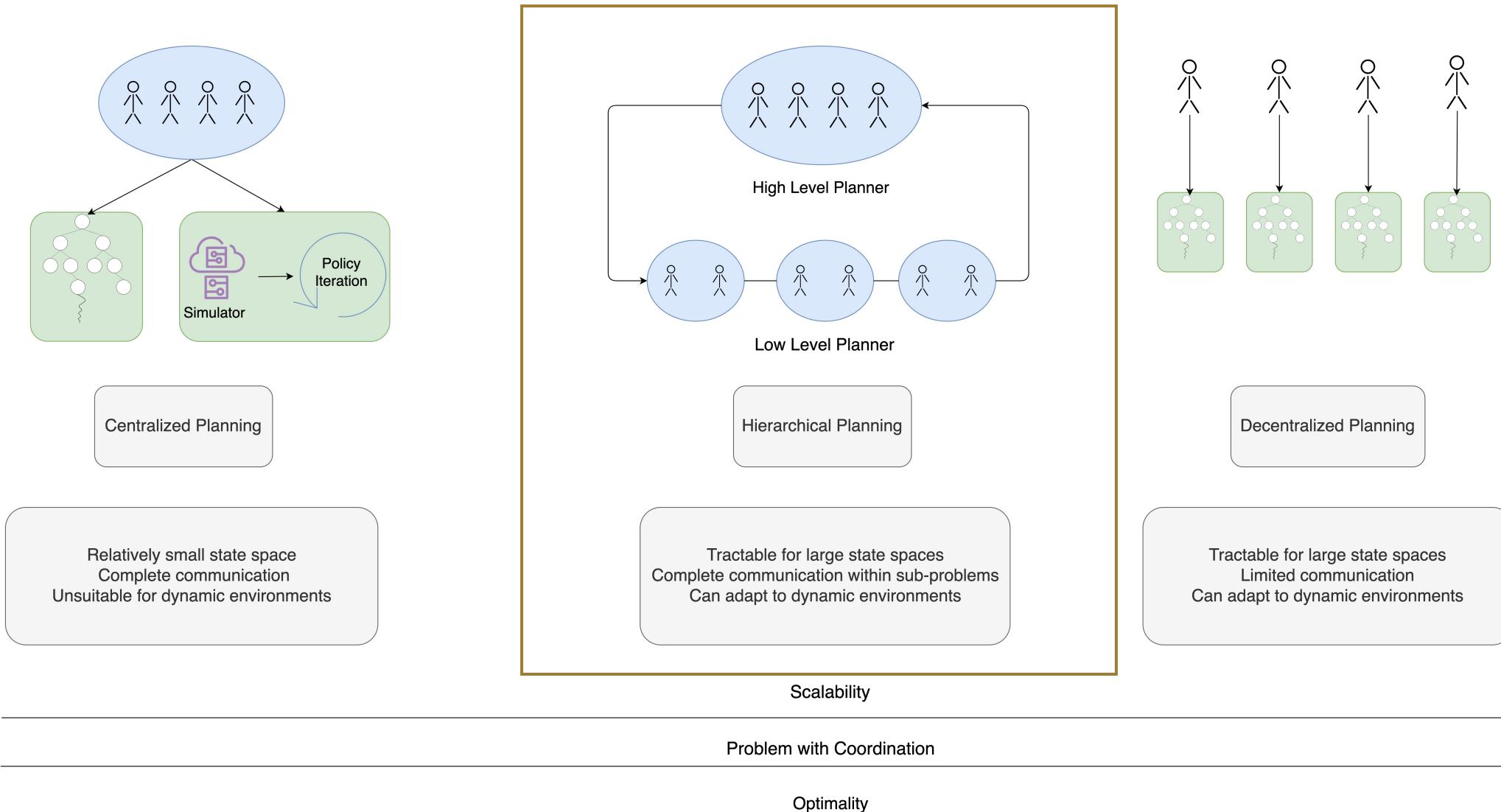


High-level region rebalancing makes the system more resilient to ambulance failure; improves response times by over **20 seconds** on average when 3 failures occur

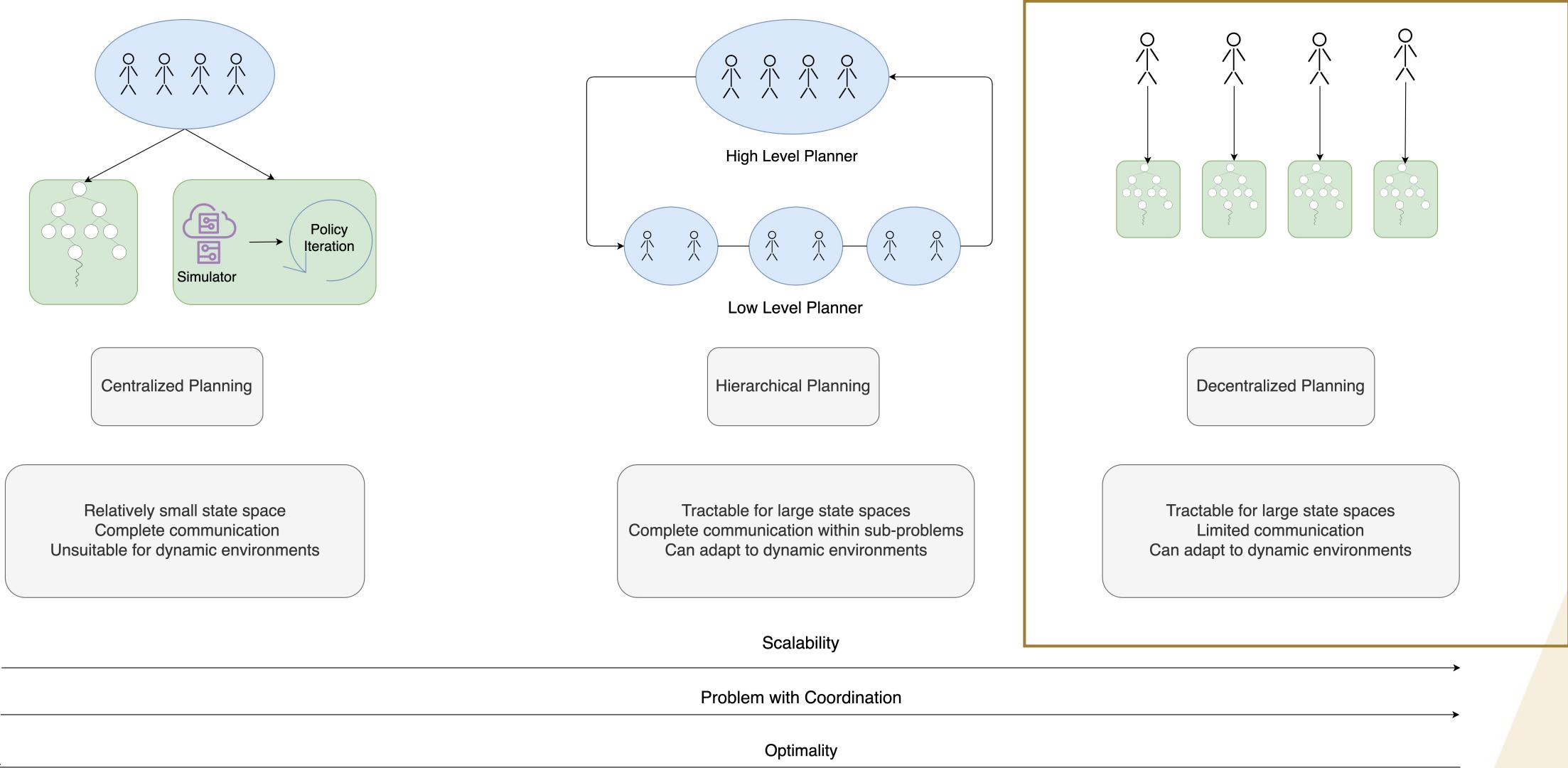
## Failure Adaptation Example



# MULTI-AGENT PLANNING FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE



# MULTI-AGENT PLANNING FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE

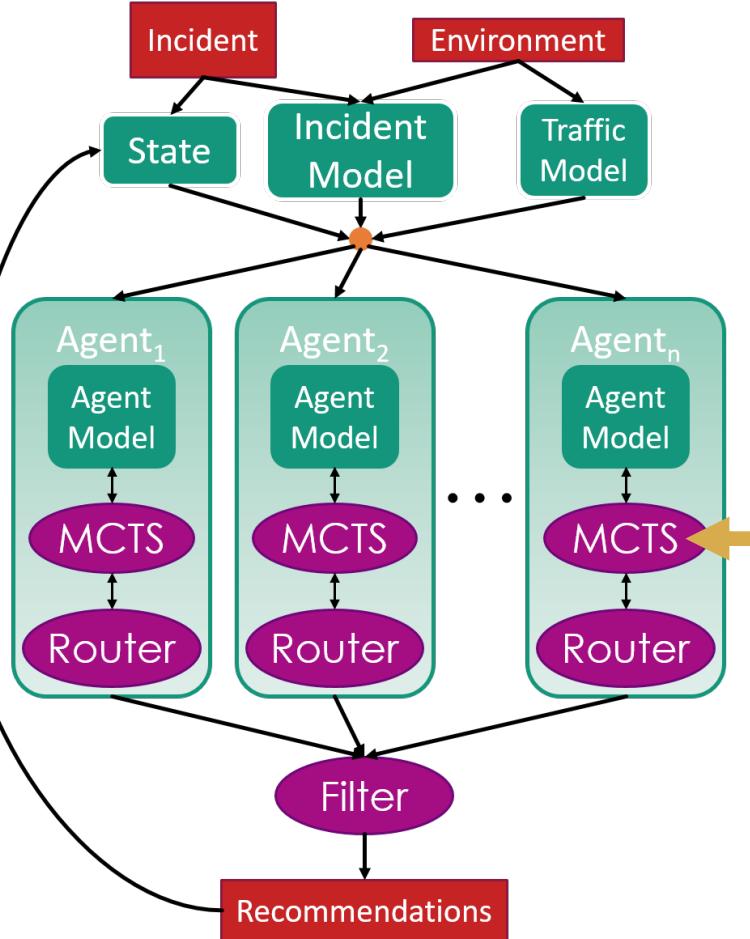


# HOW CAN AGENTS PLAN UNDER COMMUNICATION UNCERTAINTY?

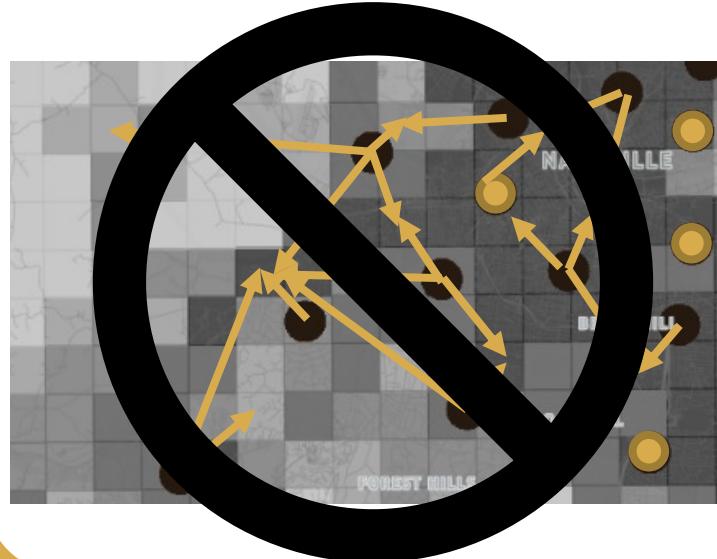
- In December 2020, a bomb attack in Nashville downtown destroyed AT&T's communication infrastructure.
- There were extended outages for 66 public-safety answering points.
- Emergency Response was affected in four states for multiple days.
- Communication also gets hampered during natural disasters like hurricanes.



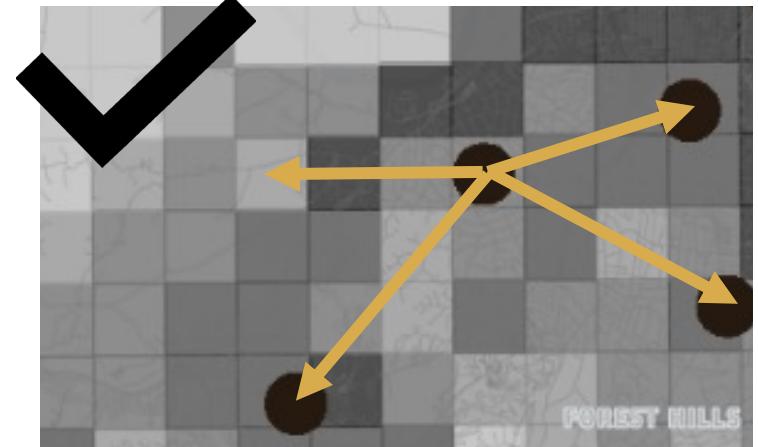
### Partially Decentralized Decision Process



### Monolithic State Space

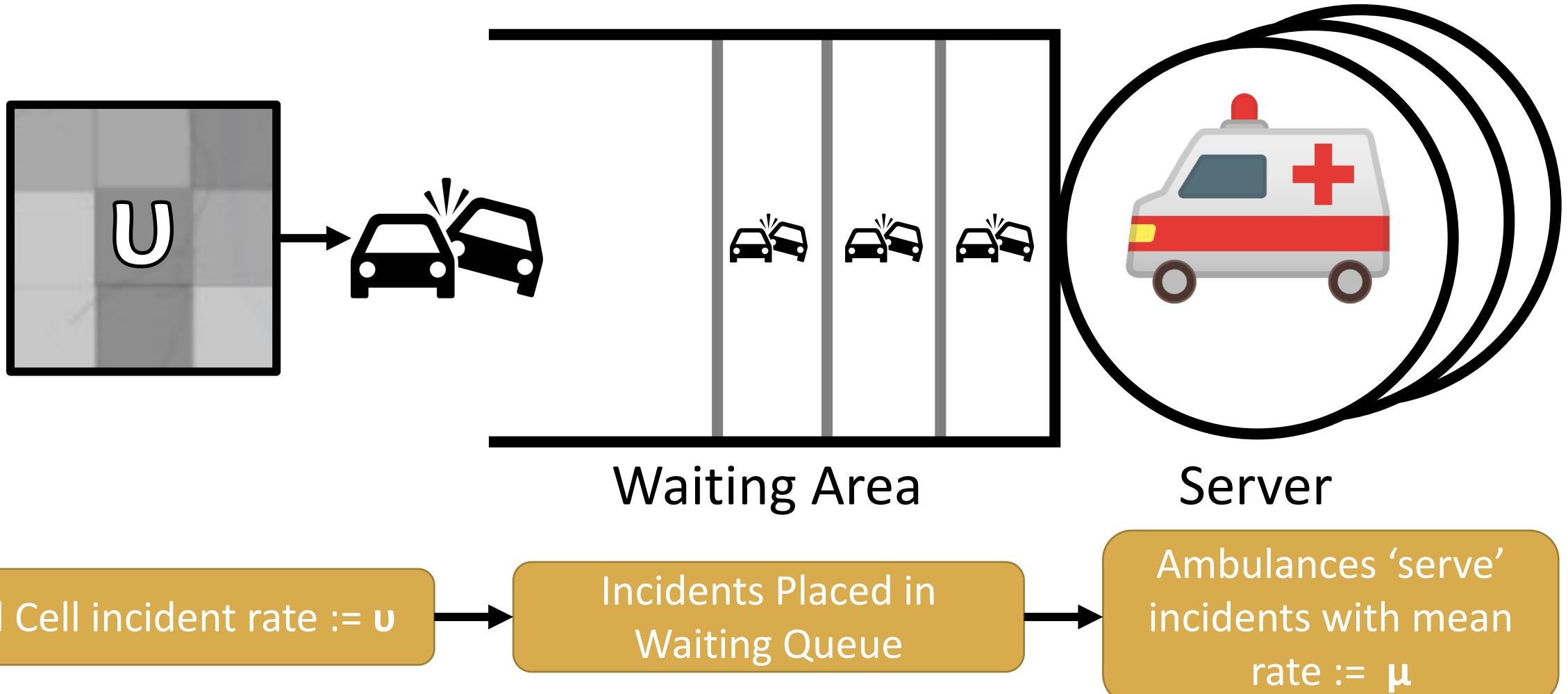


### State space split for each agent



Standard MCTS;  
Action space limited to relevant actions for the Agent

# APPROXIMATE AGENT BEHAVIOR

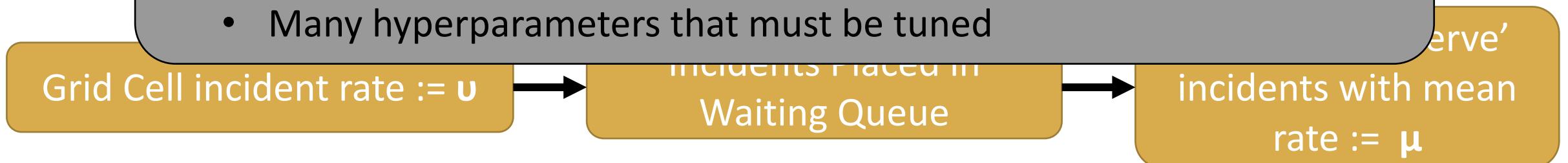


The “responsibility” of responding to an area is split among several agents. Each agent calculates this responsibility and assumes every agent will do the same.

# APPROXIMATE AGENT BEHAVIOR

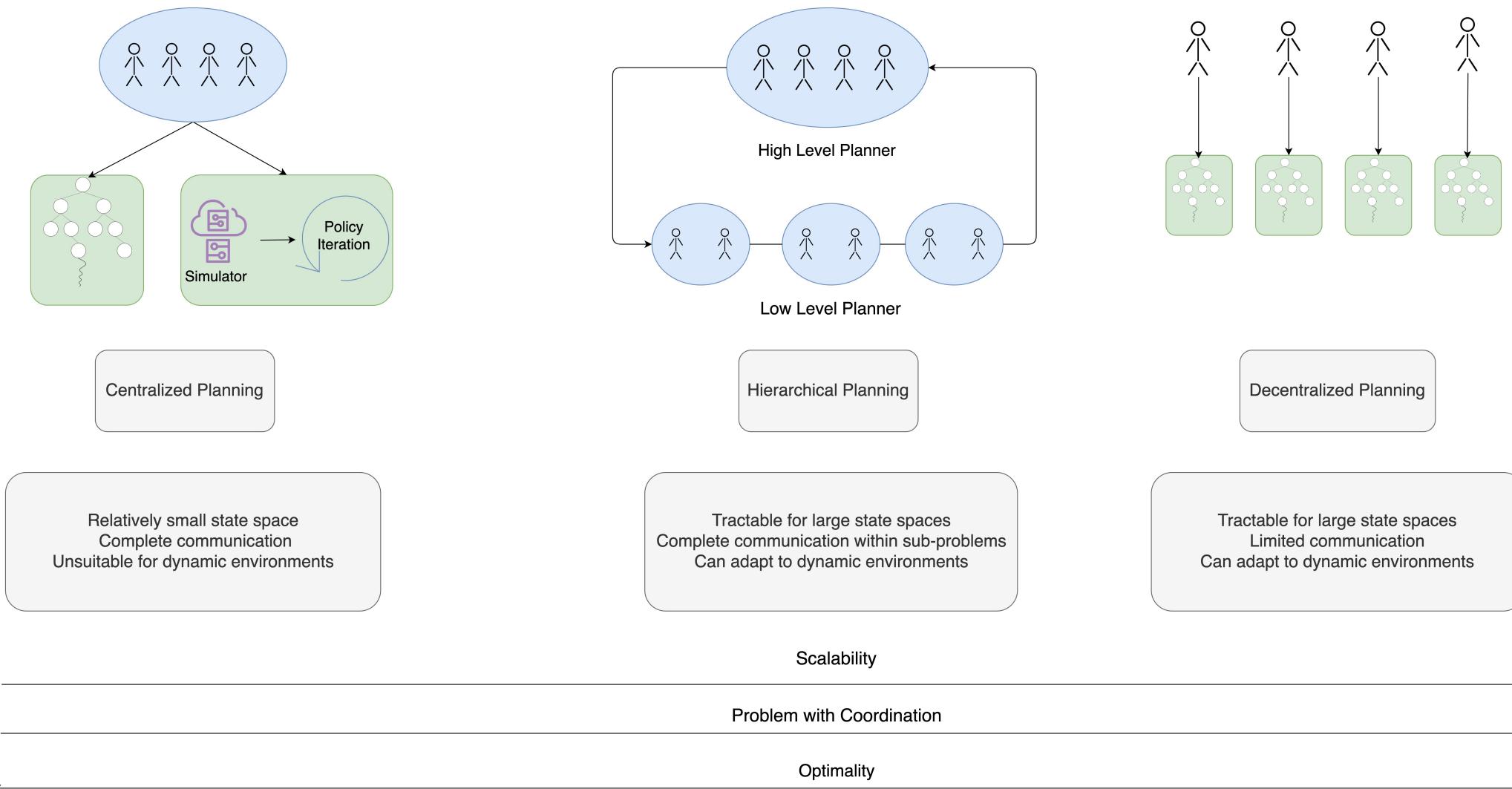
## Distributed MCTS – Takeaways

- **Pros:**
  - Scales very well as the number of agents increases
  - Resilient to communication failures
- **Cons:**
  - Requires many assumptions regarding agent behavior – can lead to suboptimal decision making
  - Many hyperparameters that must be tuned

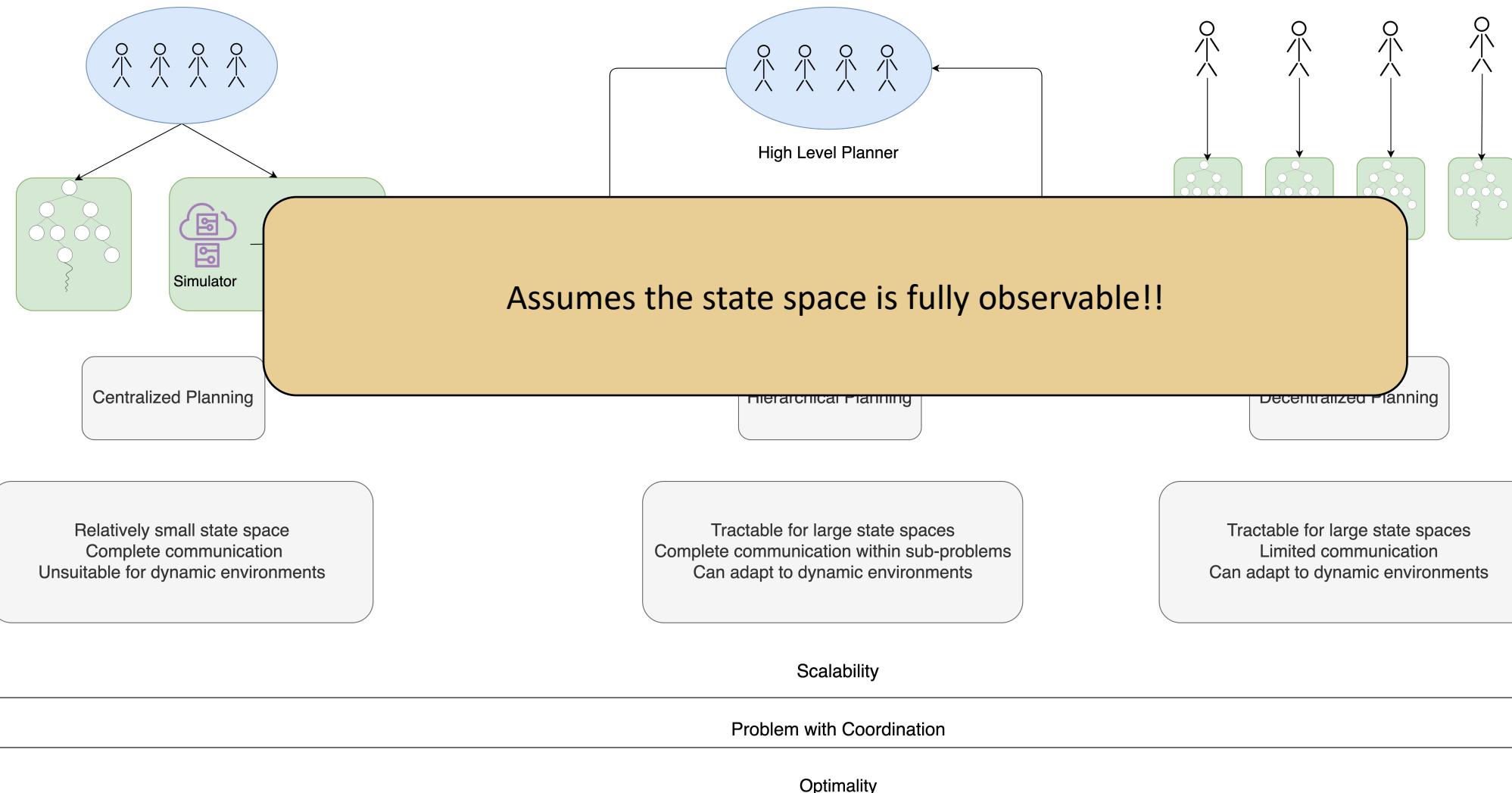


The “responsibility” of responding to an area is split among several agents. Each agent calculates this responsibility and assumes every agent will do the same.

# MULTI-AGENT PLANNING FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE



# MULTI-AGENT PLANNING FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE



## HOW CAN MULTI-AGENT SYSTEMS OPERATE UNDER STATE UNCERTAINTY?

- In 2018, a large wildfire (named Camp Fire) in California resulted in the loss of 88 lives, displaced countless more, and destroyed more than 18,500 structures.
- Due to the lack of ground surveillance and smoke prohibiting accurate air surveillance, how can agents respond to fires?



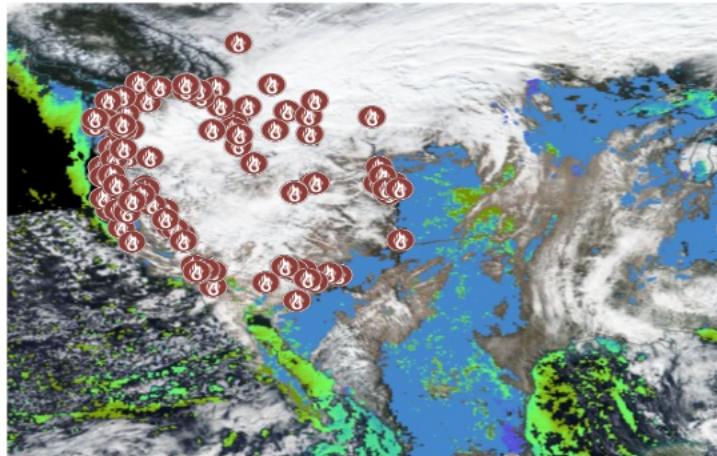


# HOW CAN MULTI-AGENT SYSTEMS OPERATE UNDER STATE UNCERTAINTY?

---

- Unpredictable spread
  - Susceptible to sudden wind changes.
  - Vegetation and fuel dependent.
- Unobservable true state of the fires
  - Smoke covering the fire or otherwise inaccessible areas
  - Delay in communication

# Aggregating Wildfire Data

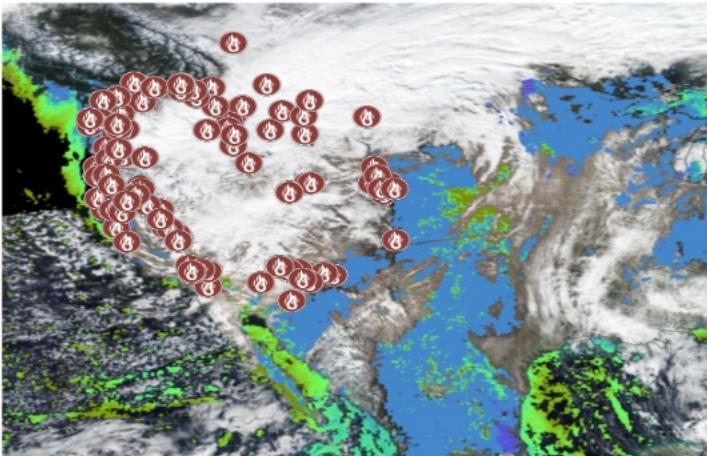


Fire Occurrence Data

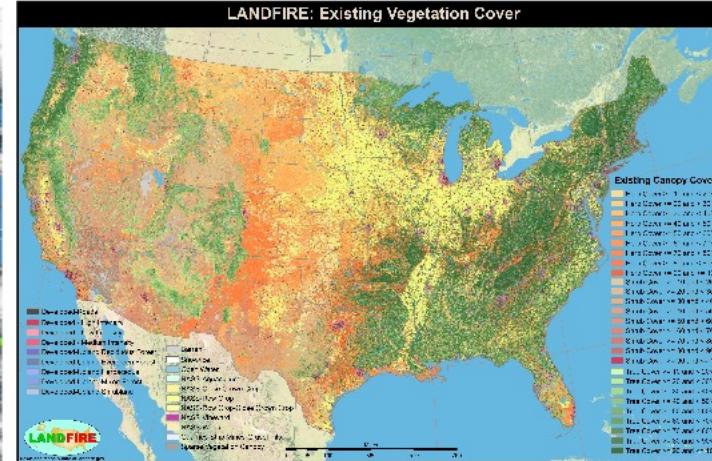


Fire Relevant Geospatial Features Data

# Aggregating Wildfire Data

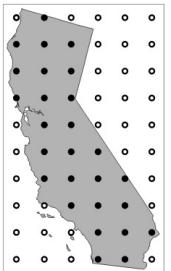


Fire Occurrence Data



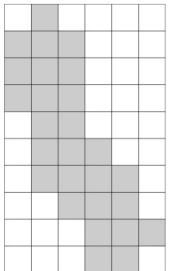
Fire Relevant Geospatial Features Data

Vectorize the raster data



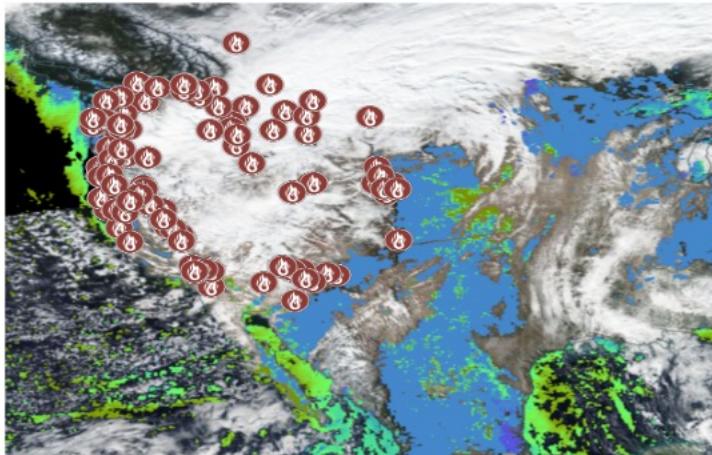
Executes a point in polygon query  
for each pixel (21 billion pixels)

Rasterize the vector data

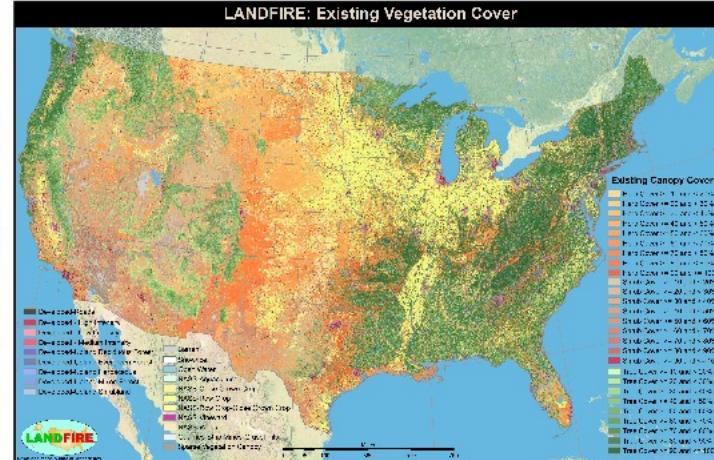


Clips each raster layer for each  
fire cell (3 million polygons)

# Aggregating Wildfire Data

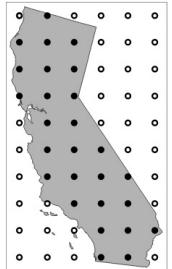


Fire Occurrence Data



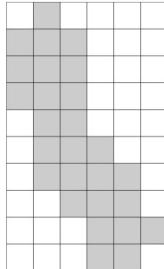
Fire Relevant Geospatial Features Data

Vectorize the raster data



Executes a point in polygon query  
for each pixel (21 billion pixels)

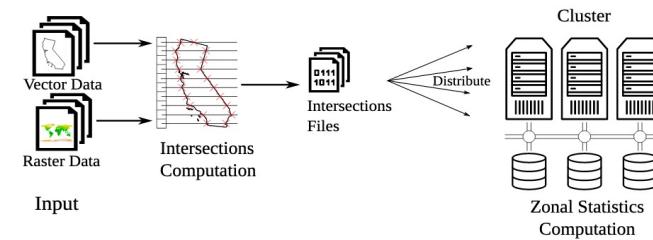
Rasterize the vector data



Clips each raster layer for each  
fire cell (3 million polygons)

We use a novel approach, *Raptor Zonal Statistics*:

- does not convert data from one form to another
- computes an intermediate data structure, *intersection file*
- serves as a map between raster and vector data
- used to leverage parallel computation
- scans the raster dataset only once

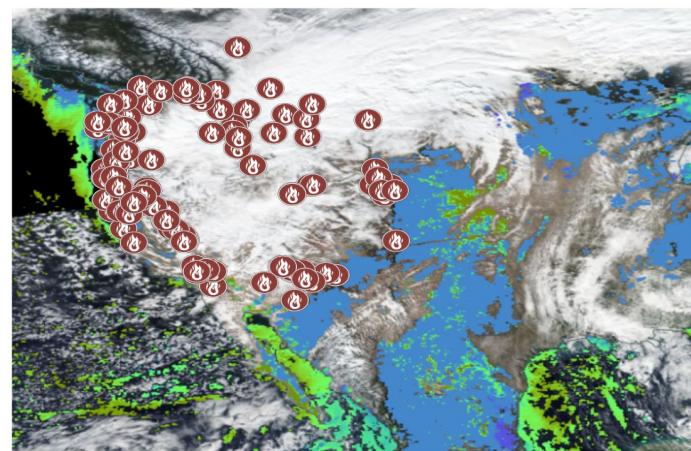


# WildfireDB: An Open-Source Wildfire Dataset

- First open-source wildfire database that combines wildfire occurrences, weather, and covariates from satellite imagery.
- > 17 million data points.
- Features – vegetation type, vegetation height, topography, wind direction and strength relative to the spread for all wildfires that occurred in the US since 2012.
- Spatial granularity of 375m x 375m.

Data Example

Polygon ID	Acquisition Date	FRP	Neighbor Polygon ID	FRP	Canopy Base Density max.	Canopy Base Density min.	Canopy Base Density median	Canopy Base Density sum	Canopy Base Density mode	Canopy Base Density count	Canopy Base Density mean	...	Neighbor Slope max.	Neighbor Slope min.	Neighbor Slope median	Neighbor Slope sum	Neighbor Slope mode	Neighbor Slope count	Neighbor Slope mean
7234	2012-01-16	3.20	7233	0.0	0.0	13.0	0.0	9.0	1303.0	0.0	156	...	37.0	3.0	17.0	3109.0	24.0	169.0	18.396450



# WILDFIRE RESPONSE : SYSTEM MODEL

We formulate the dynamic decision framework as a POMDP (partially observable Markov decision process):

- States  $\mathcal{S}$ :  $s_t = \{X_t, F_t\}$ , where
  - $X_t = \{X_t^1, X_t^2, \dots, X_t^k\}$ : the status of the fire (binary) denotes, and
  - $F_t = \{F_t^1, F_t^2, \dots, F_t^k\}$ : the fuel level in each cell in  $G$  (integer)
- Actions  $\mathcal{A}$ : the different permutations of cell indices
  - That suppression efforts may apply to
  - Up to a maximum number as a resource constraint
- State transitions  $T(s' | s, a)$ : the conditional transition probability from state  $s$  to  $s'$  when action  $a$  is taken. It includes:
  - ① **Burning**: fuel decrements in previously burning cells
  - ② **Action effectiveness**: a probability  $q$  that an action was successful
  - ③ **Fire dynamics**: a generative model to simulate the spread of fire

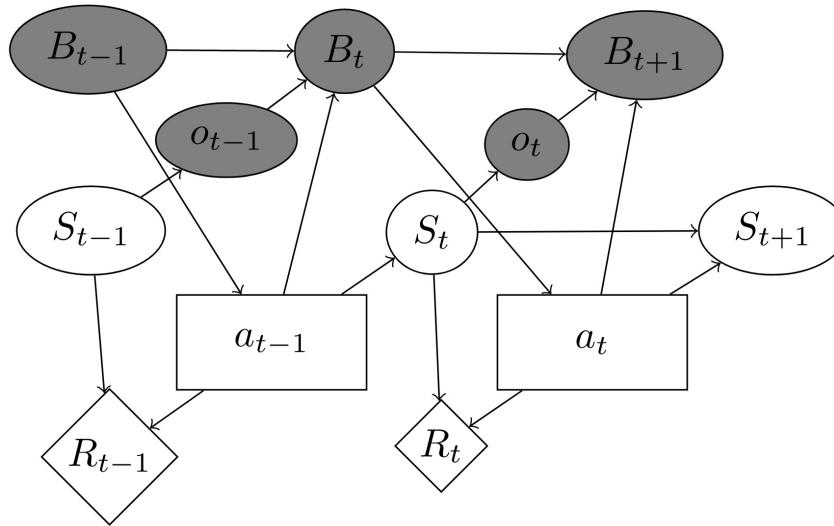
# WILDFIRE RESPONSE : SYSTEM MODEL

- Observations  $\mathcal{O}$ :  $o_t^i$  denotes whether cell  $i$  is seen burning in time step  $t$ .
- Observation transitions  $Z(o \mid s, a)$ : the probability of receiving observation  $o$  at state  $s$  when action  $a$  is taken.
- Reward function  $R : \mathcal{S} \times \mathcal{A} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ , such that

$$R(s_t, a) = \sum_{g_i \in G} x_t^i U(g_i)$$

where  $U(g_i)$  denotes the utility for a cell  $g_i \in G$  to be on fire.

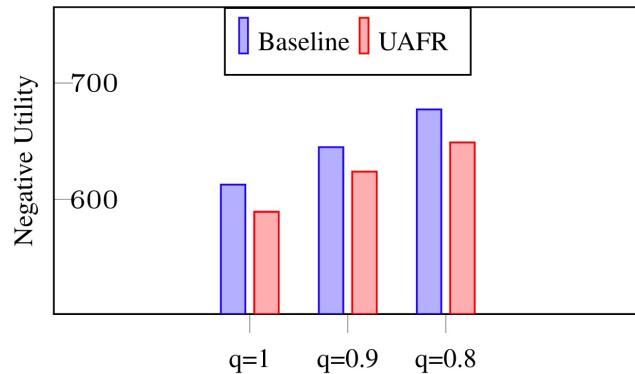
# WILDFIRE RESPONSE : APPROACH



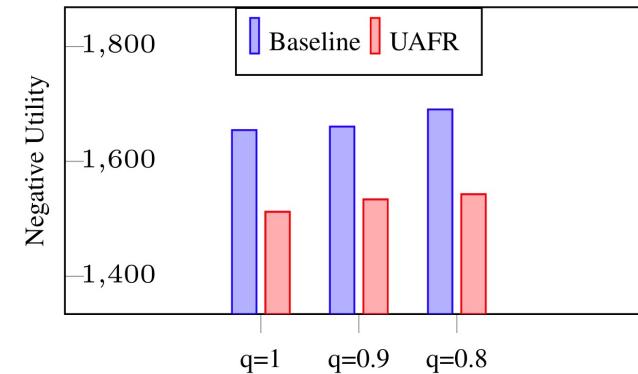
We solve the POMDP using a sampling-based Online Monte Carlo Tree Search (MCTS) algorithm

- Built upon the partially observable Monte Carlo planning algorithm with observation widening (POMCPOW)<sup>1</sup>.
- Replaced the weighted particle filter with particle filter without rejection, to combat observation sparsity.

# WILDFIRE RESPONSE : RESULTS



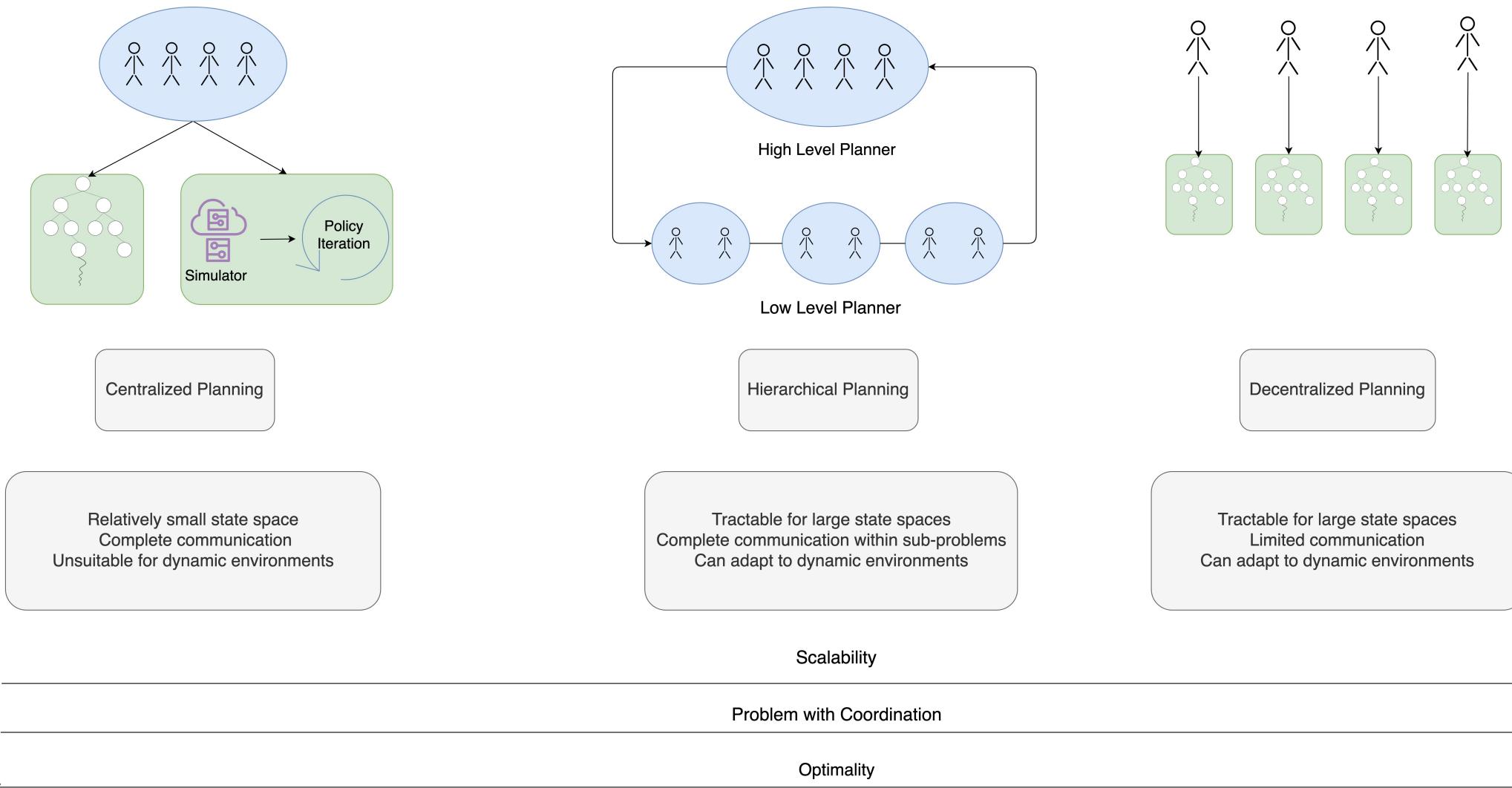
Effectiveness comparison  $10 \times 10$  grid



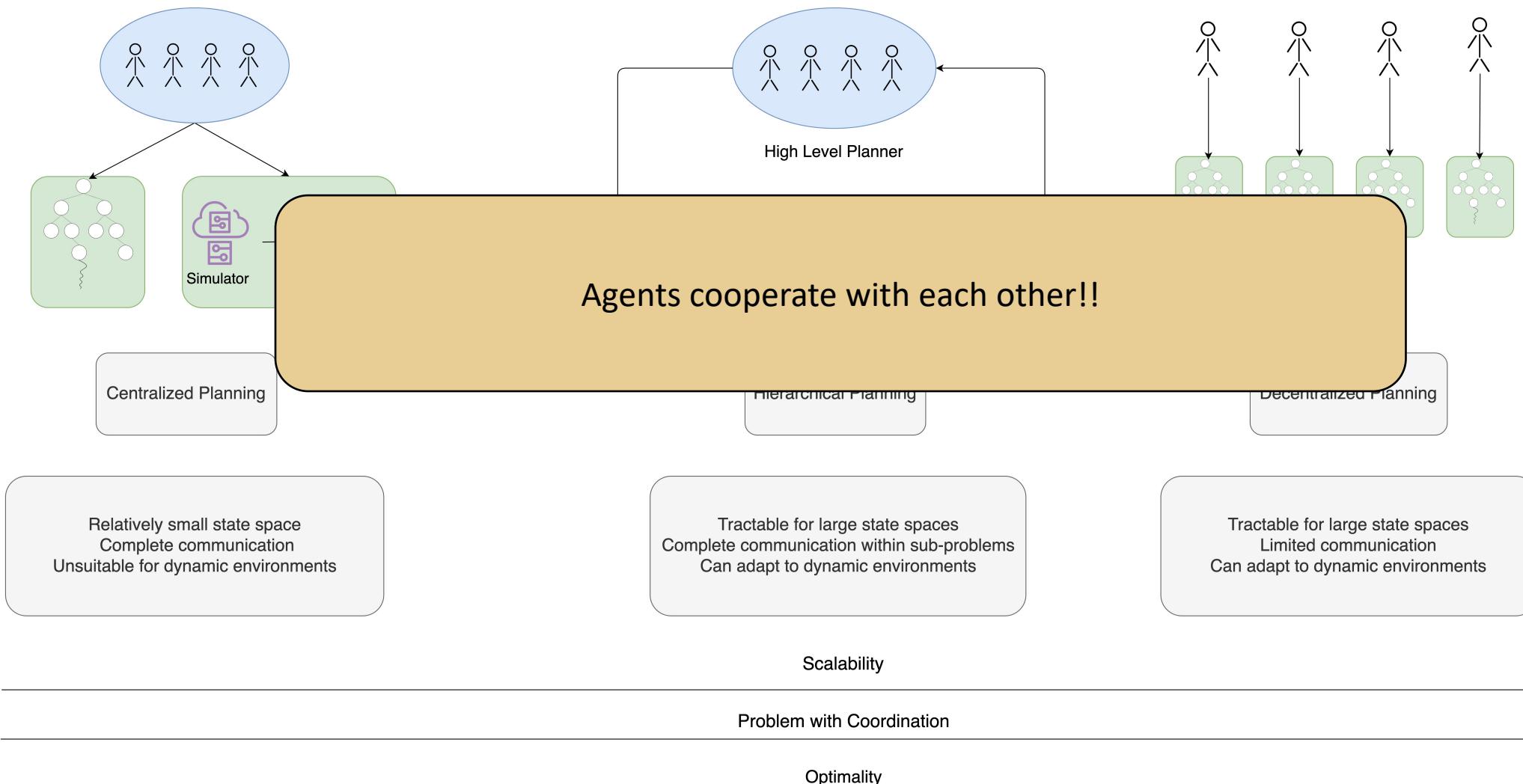
Effectiveness comparison  $12 \times 12$  grid

- We see that Uncertainty-Aware Fire Response does significantly better than baseline methods.
- $q$  denotes action effectiveness. In the field, every time a fire is responded to, it is not necessarily put out.
- Baseline results : It is hard to scale POMDP solutions to large areas. We are currently exploring how active human-agent collaboration can help scale to larger areas.

# MULTI-AGENT PLANNING FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE

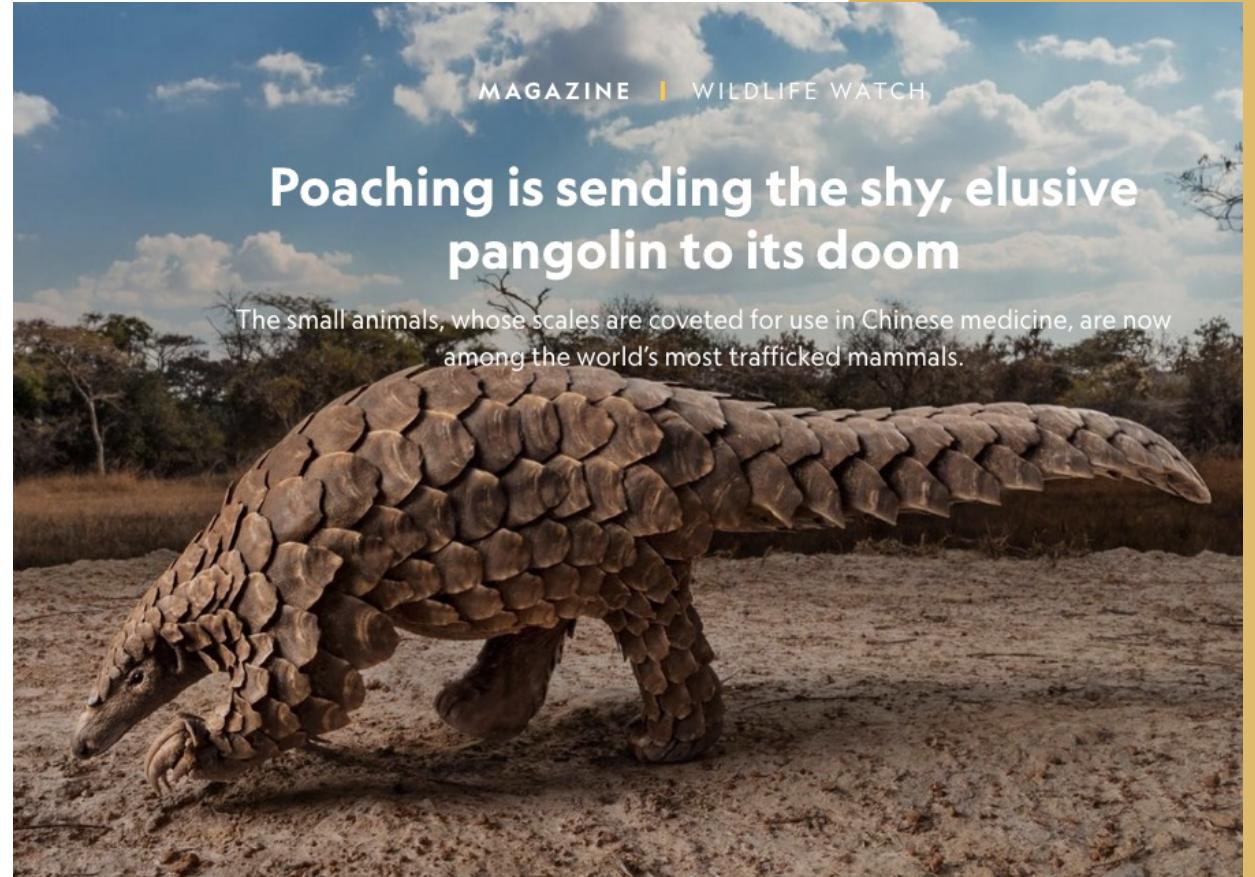


# MULTI-AGENT PLANNING FOR EMERGENCY RESPONSE



# HOW CAN AGENTS PLAN UNDER ADVERSARIAL BEHAVIOR?

- Multi-agent systems are often deployed against adversarial agents.
- Consider poaching; typically, poachers can wait and observe patrols and shift their locations for committing illegal activities.
- How can agents plan if the underlying distribution of incidents “reacts” to the planned agent behavior?



# HANDLING ADVERSARIAL INTERACTIONS

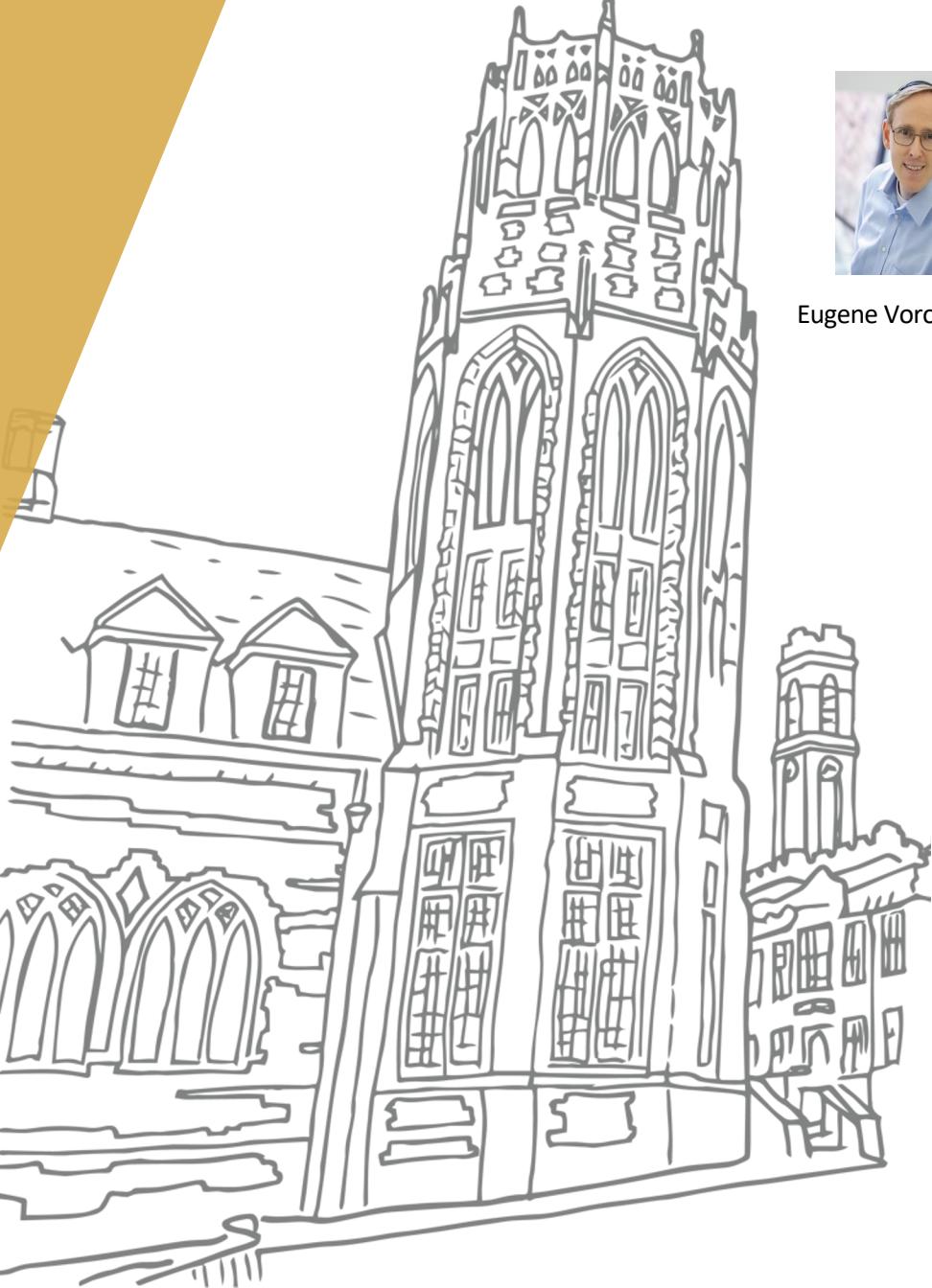
- We created two algorithmic approaches, one optimal and relatively slow and another that trades optimality for efficiency.
- Our approach works on any off-the-shelf ML approach and makes it robust to spatial shifts.

$$\max_{\theta} \underbrace{\min_{s \in S} \sum_{d_i \in D} f(x_i(s); \theta, w)}_{\text{Hierarchy}} \underbrace{f(x_i(s); \theta, w)}_{\text{Combinatorial + Discrete}}$$



## Open Questions/Current Interests

- What if the environment itself is computationally challenging to replicate?  
Consider the interaction of wildfire and power systems.
- Can learning be integrated into decision-making?
- How can multi-agent POMDPs scale to real-world scenarios concerning emergency response?



Eugene Vorobeychik



Mykel Kochenderfer



Abhishek Dubey



Milind Tambe



Gautam Biswas



Paul Speer



Hendrik Baier



Geoffrey Pettet



Zilin Wang



VANDERBILT  
UNIVERSITY



Stanford  
University



**CRCS** Center for Research on  
Computation and Society  
at Harvard John A. Paulson School of Engineering and Applied Sciences



Thank you!

---

[ayan.mukhopadhyay@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:ayan.mukhopadhyay@vanderbilt.edu)



## Relevant Publications

- Pettet, Geoffrey, Ayan Mukhopadhyay, Mykel J. Kochenderfer, and Abhishek Dubey. "Hierarchical planning for resource allocation in emergency response systems." In *Proceedings of the ACM/IEEE 12th International Conference on Cyber-Physical Systems*, pp. 155-166. 2021.
- Mukhopadhyay, Ayan, Kai Wang, Andrew Perrault, Mykel Kochenderfer, Milind Tambe, and Yevgeniy Vorobeychik. "Robust Spatial-Temporal Incident Prediction." In *Conference on Uncertainty in Artificial Intelligence*, pp. 360-369. PMLR, 2020.
- Pettet, Geoffrey, Ayan Mukhopadhyay, Mykel Kochenderfer, Yevgeniy Vorobeychik, and Abhishek Dubey. "On algorithmic decision procedures in emergency response systems in smart and connected communities." *arXiv preprint arXiv:2001.07362* (2020).
- Mukhopadhyay, Ayan, Geoffrey Pettet, Chinmaya Samal, Abhishek Dubey, and Yevgeniy Vorobeychik. "An online decision-theoretic pipeline for responder dispatch." In *Proceedings of the 10th ACM/IEEE International Conference on Cyber-Physical Systems*, pp. 185-196. 2019.
- Mukhopadhyay, Ayan, Zilin Wang, and Yevgeniy Vorobeychik. "A decision theoretic framework for emergency responder dispatch." In *International Conference on Autonomous Agents and Multiagent Systems*. 2018.
- Mukhopadhyay, Ayan, and Yevgeniy Vorobeychik. "Prioritized allocation of emergency responders based on a continuous-time incident prediction model." In *International Conference on Autonomous Agents and MultiAgent Systems*. 2017.
- Mukhopadhyay, Ayan, Chao Zhang, Yevgeniy Vorobeychik, Milind Tambe, Kenneth Pence, and Paul Speer. "Optimal allocation of police patrol resources using a continuous-time crime model." In *International Conference on Decision and Game Theory for Security*, pp. 139-158. Springer, Cham, 2016.