

# **Challenges in Evaluating Large Language Models**

**5th School on Automated Machine Learning**  
**Special focus: Foundation Models**

**David Salinas. June 2025.**



# AutoML School 2025

## MENU DU JOUR

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### ENTRÉES (10 MIN)

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LLM Evaluations - Introduction

### PLAT PRINCIPAL (30 MIN)

---

LLM Evaluations - Method Overview

Static Evaluations

Dynamic Evaluations

LLM as Judge

### DESSERT (~45 MIN)

---

LLM & AutoML Perspectives

Routing LLMs

Tuning LLM Pipelines

A Case Study: Tuning LLM Judges

Complete Session

~85 min

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- Know the main families of methods used to evaluate LLM
- Understand the key challenges faced when evaluating LLMs
- Get ideas about research ideas / low-hanging fruits combining AutoML & LLMs evaluations

Complete Session

~85 min

**LLM**

**Lifecycle**

# LLM

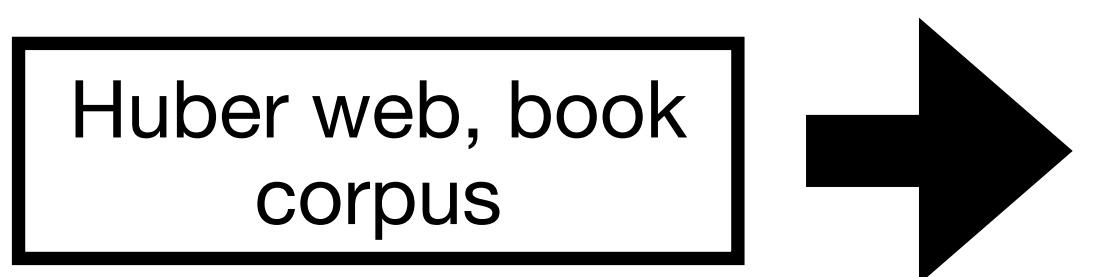
## Lifecycle

Huber web, book  
corpus

# LLM

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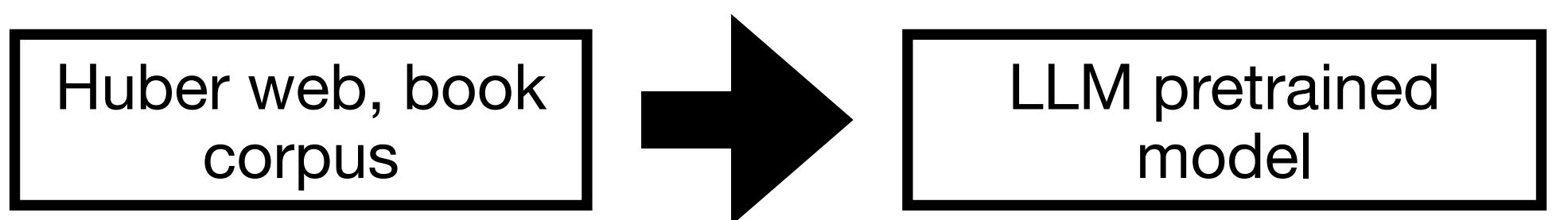
Pre-training



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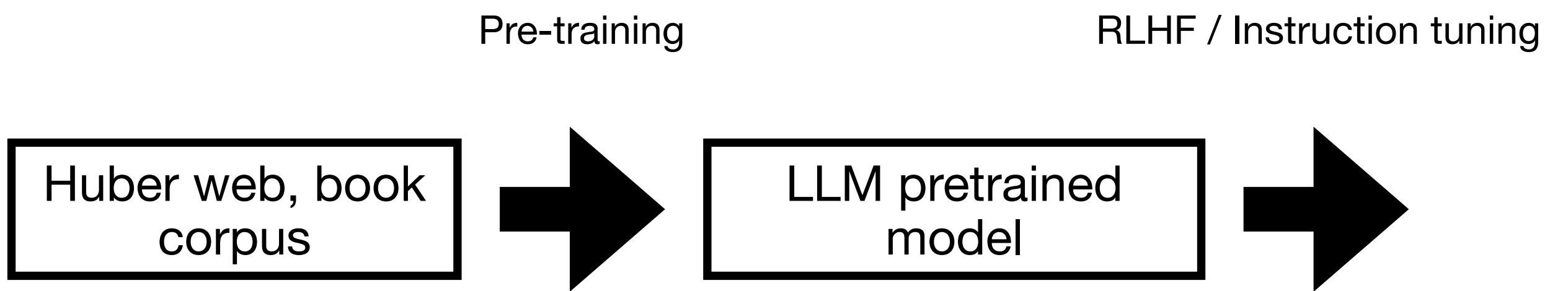
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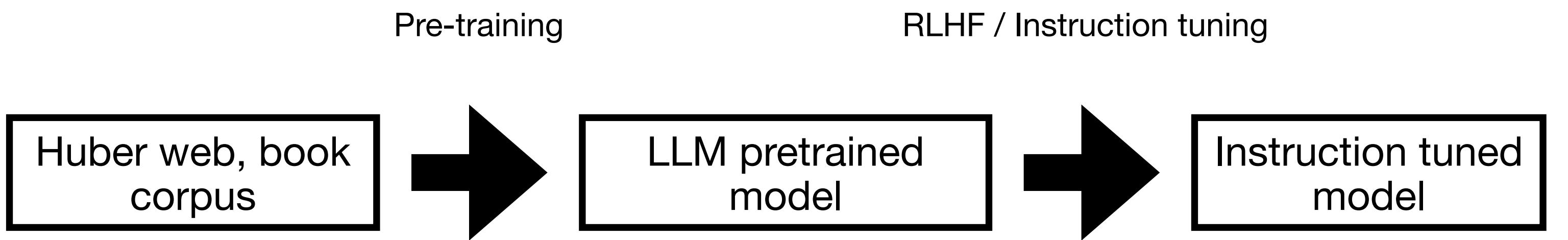
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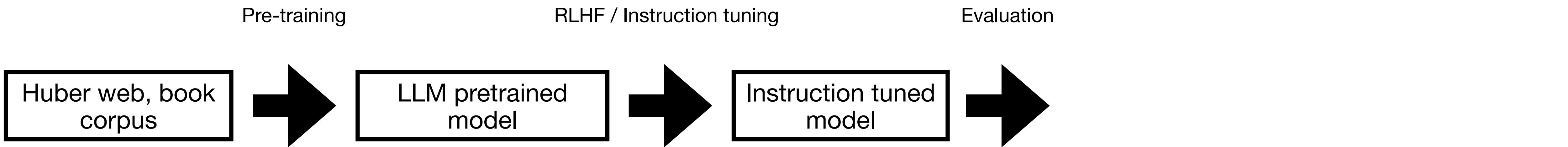
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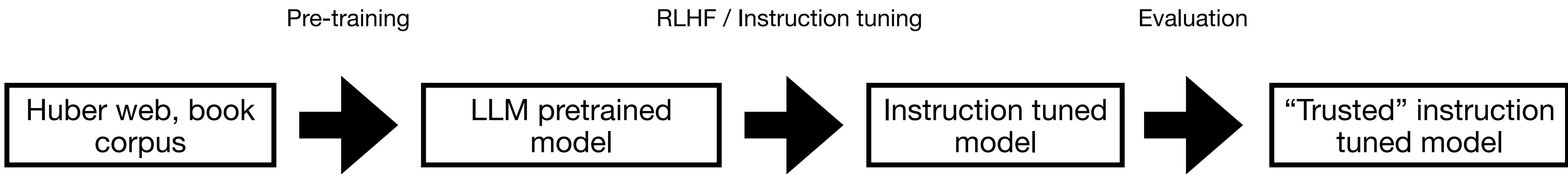
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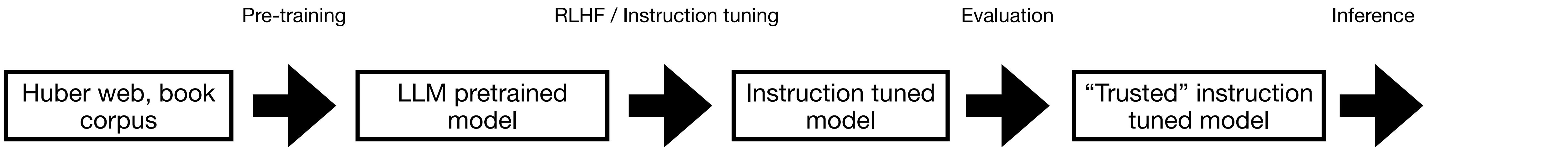
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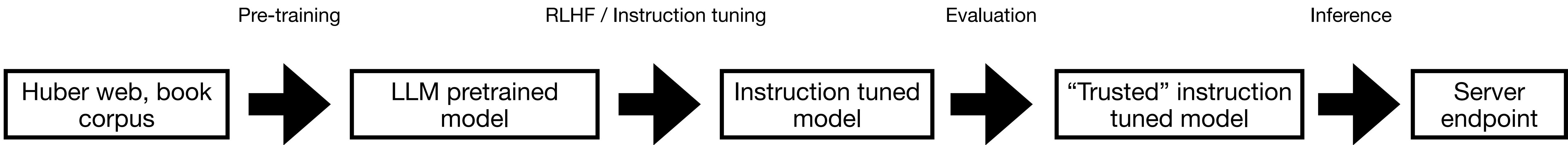
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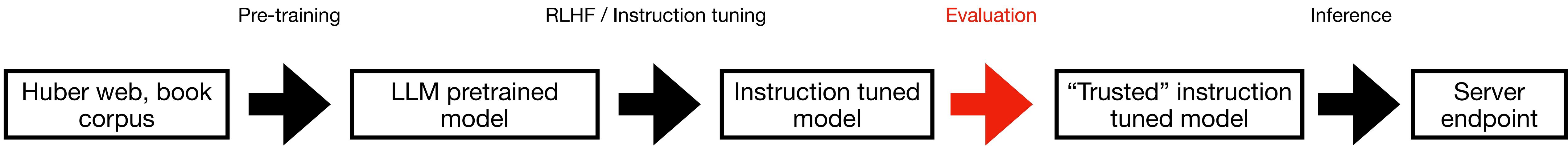
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# LLM Evaluation

## Factual Knowledge

What is the capital of Australia?

Who wrote "Pride and Prejudice" and when was it published?

What are the main components of photosynthesis?

## Language and Pattern Recognition

How many R's in strawberry?

What rhymes with "orange" in English?

Can you identify the grammatical error in this sentence: "Me and him went to the store"?

## Planning and Recommendations

Can you recommend a two day trip to Hawaii?

What's a good study schedule for learning Spanish in 3 months?

Help me plan a vegetarian dinner party for 8 people.

## Mathematical and Logical Reasoning

Can you prove the halting theorem?

If a train leaves Chicago at 2 PM traveling 60 mph, and another leaves New York at 3 PM traveling 80 mph, when do they meet?

Explain the prisoner's dilemma and its implications.

## Creative Tasks

Write a haiku about artificial intelligence.

Create a short story that begins with "The last library on Earth closed today."

Generate three marketing slogans for a sustainable clothing brand.

## Analysis and Interpretation

What are the main themes in George Orwell's "1984"?

Compare and contrast renewable vs. non-renewable energy sources.

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## Technical Problem-Solving

Debug this Python code that's supposed to sort a list but isn't working properly.

Explain how blockchain technology works in simple terms.

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- How do you select a LLM given the wide list (500+) of available options?

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# LLM evaluations

## Challenges

- Evaluating a generative model that produces open ended text is **hard**
- Many languages
- Many objectives
- Evaluating a single model with human annotations can costs thousands of dollars

# Multilingual evaluations

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- To evaluate multilingual models, we need multilingual benchmarks

# Multilingual evaluations

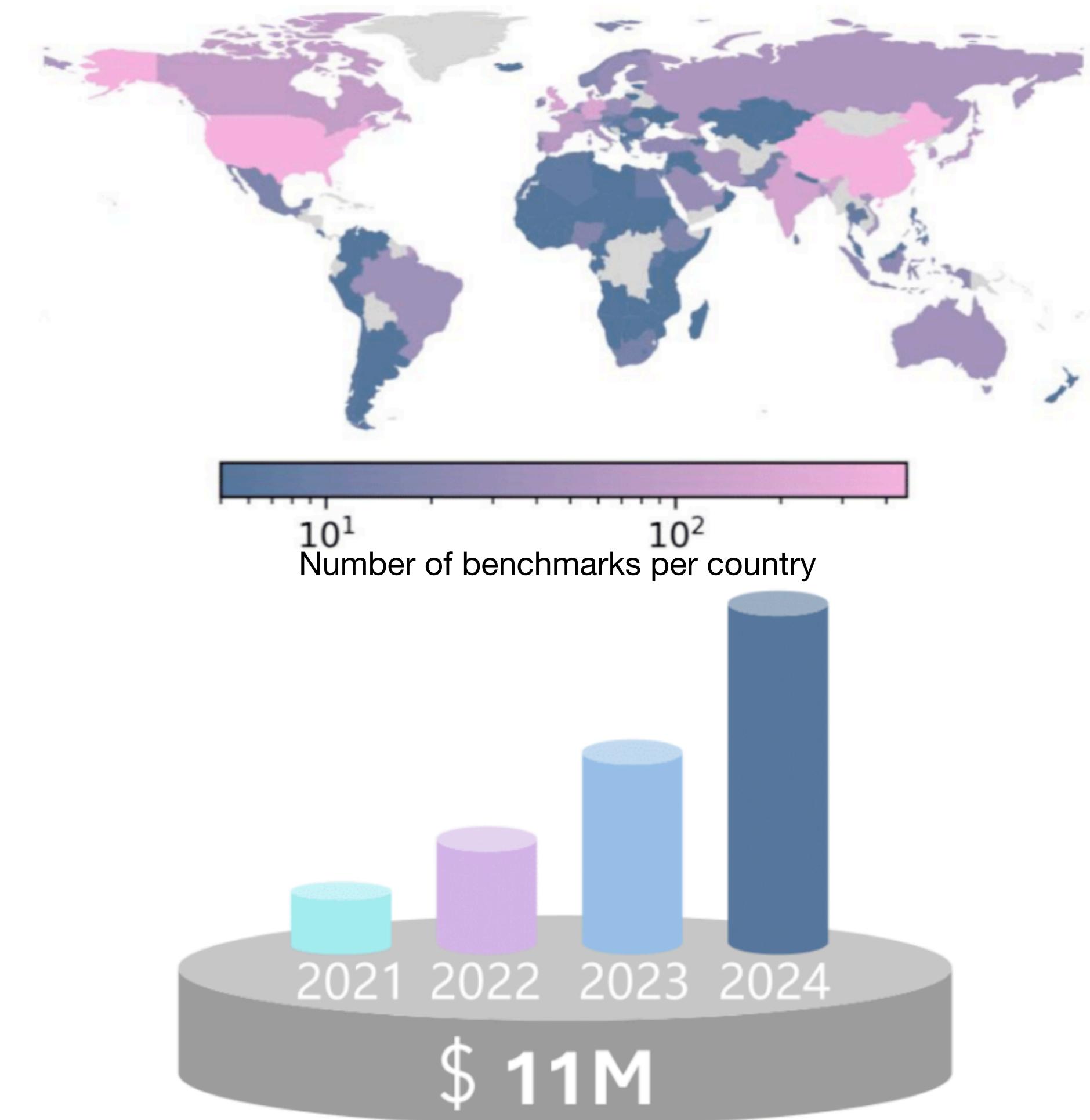
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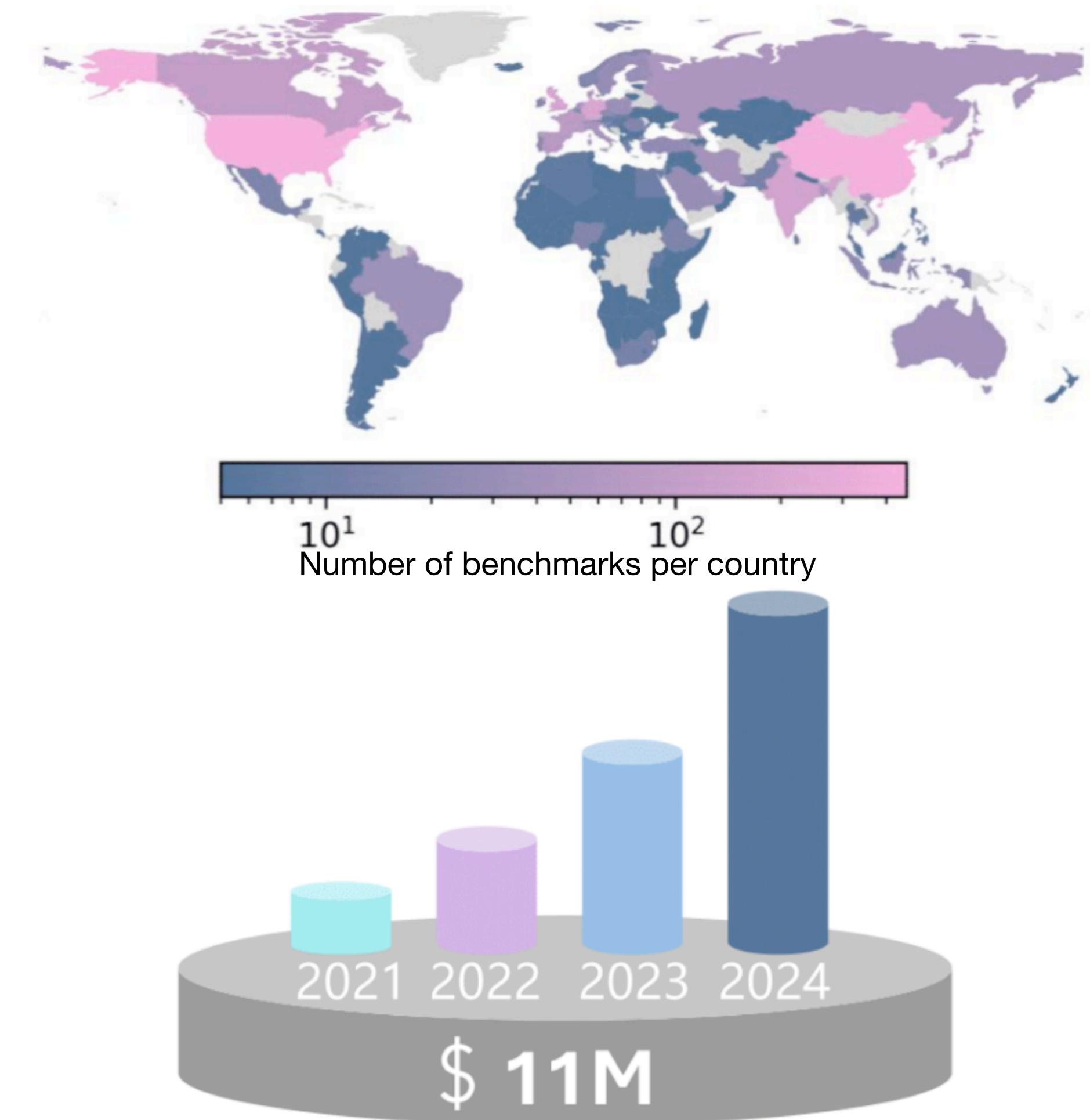
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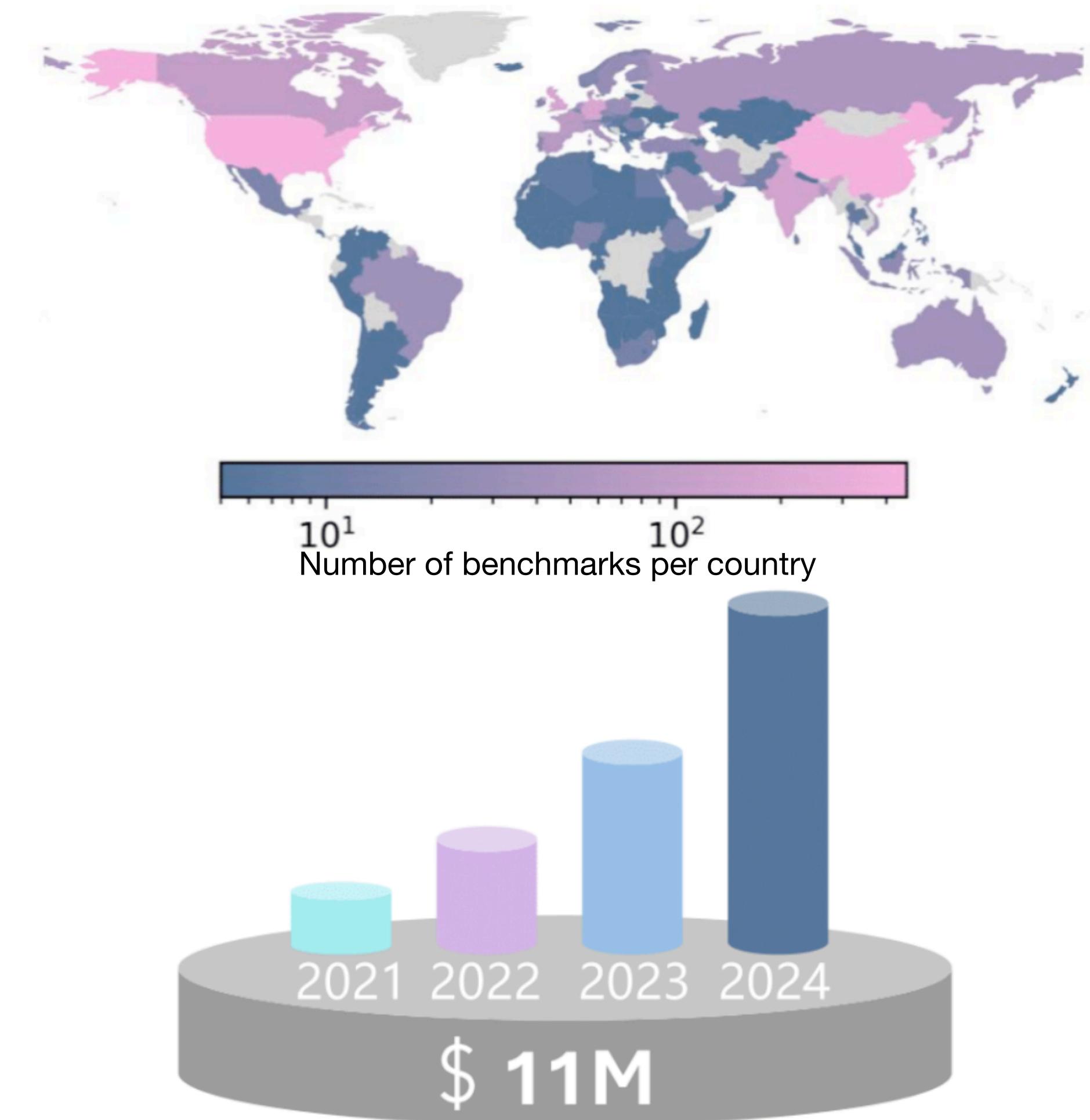
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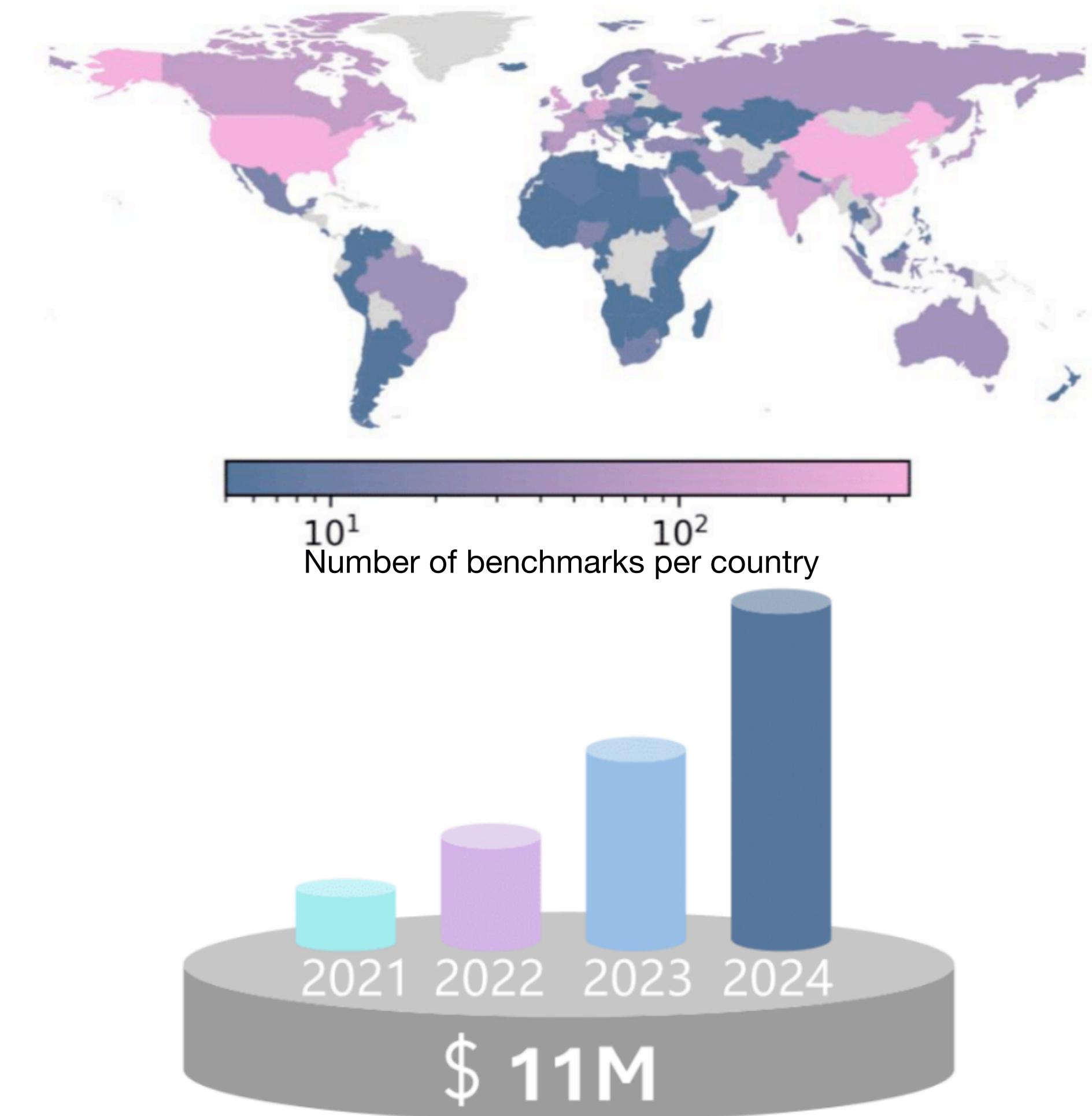
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- To evaluate multilingual models, we need multilingual benchmarks
- How would you do it? 🤔
- Issues of language covering
- Issues of automatic translation
  - Quick to get started but much worse correlation with human judgement
- Cultural & bias of US/Western centric benchmark



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# Evaluations goals

- Many objectives

Correctness/helpfulness

Fairness

Reasoning

Copyright

Safety

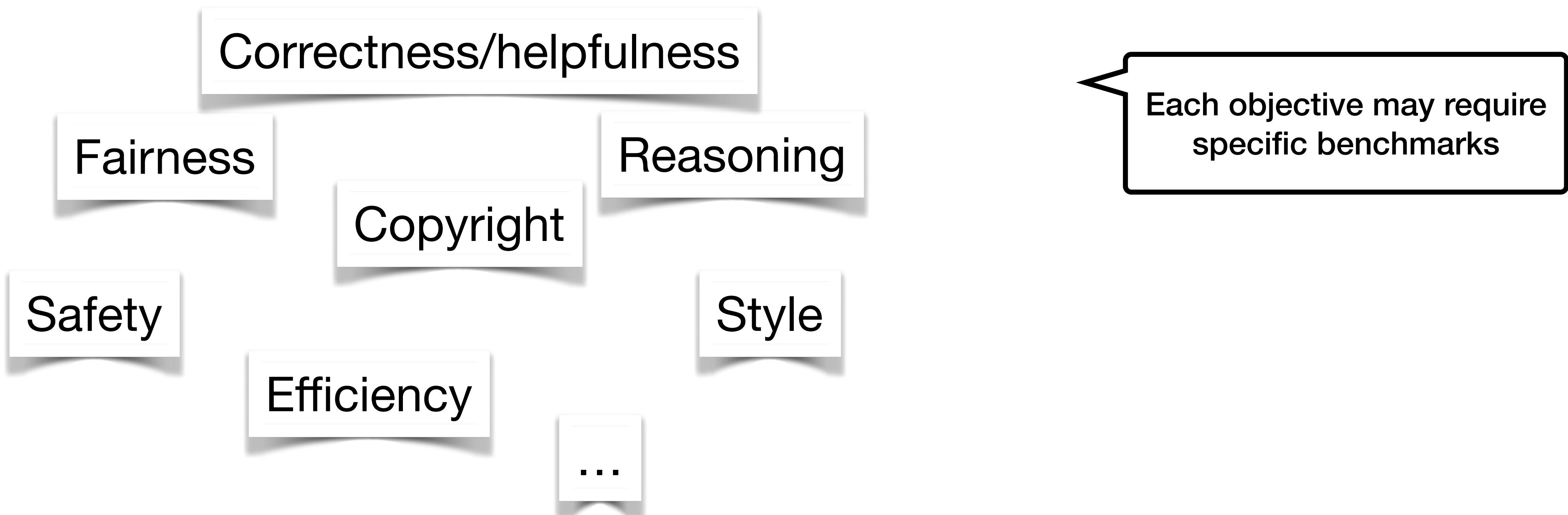
Style

Efficiency

...

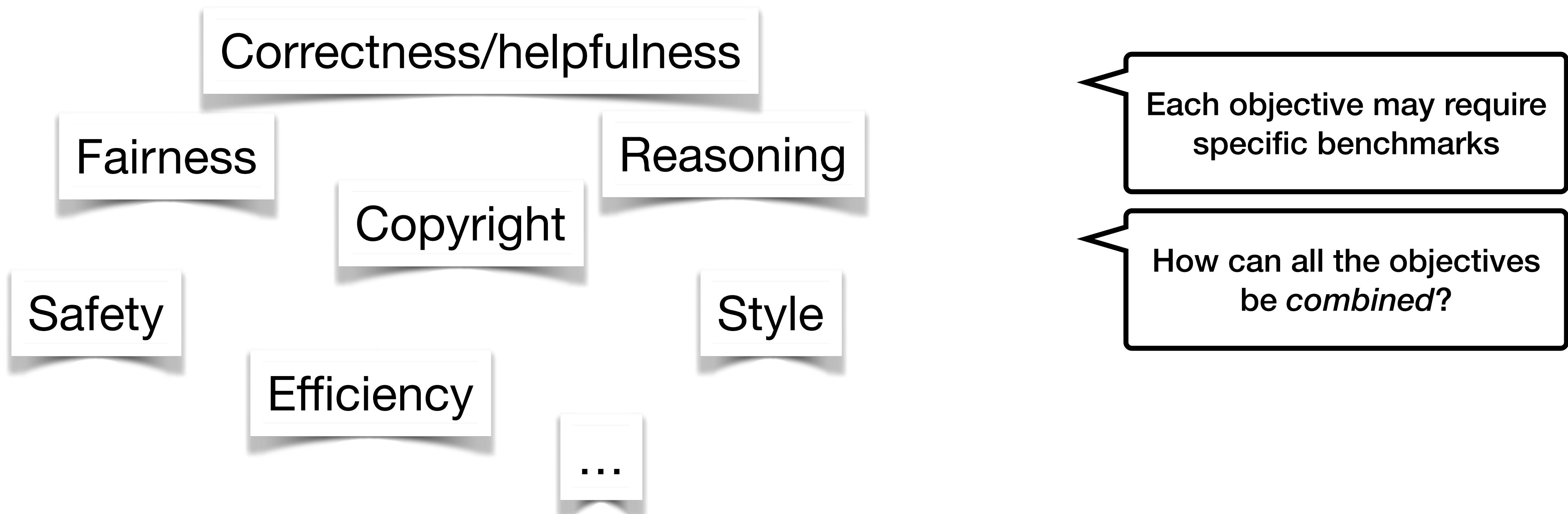
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# LLM Evaluations - methods overview

# **Static Evaluations**

**Static zero and few-shot benchmarks**

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- ... but low utility if it cannot handle conversation, is too toxic or refuses to answer

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Find the product of the given polynomials in the given polynomial ring.

$f(x) = 4x - 5$ ,  $g(x) = 2x^2 - 4x + 2$  in  $\mathbb{Z}_8[x]$ .

Choices:

- A "2x<sup>2</sup> + 5"
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cd lm-evaluation-harness
pip install -e .

lm_eval --model hf \
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    --tasks hellaswag \
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    --batch_size 8
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- Ask iid humans to rank models:

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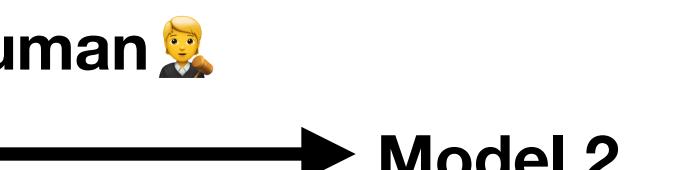
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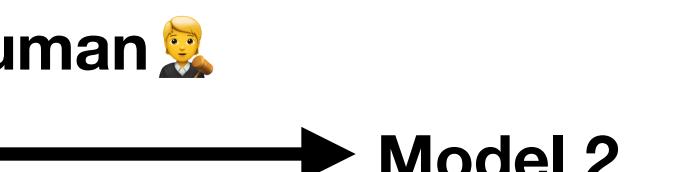
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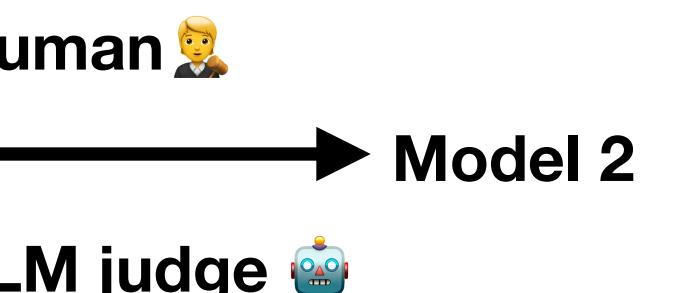
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3	2	<a href="#">ChatGPT-4o-latest (2025-01-29)</a>	1377
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NB: Those results are from May 2025. The exact ranking may have changed but the trend remain.

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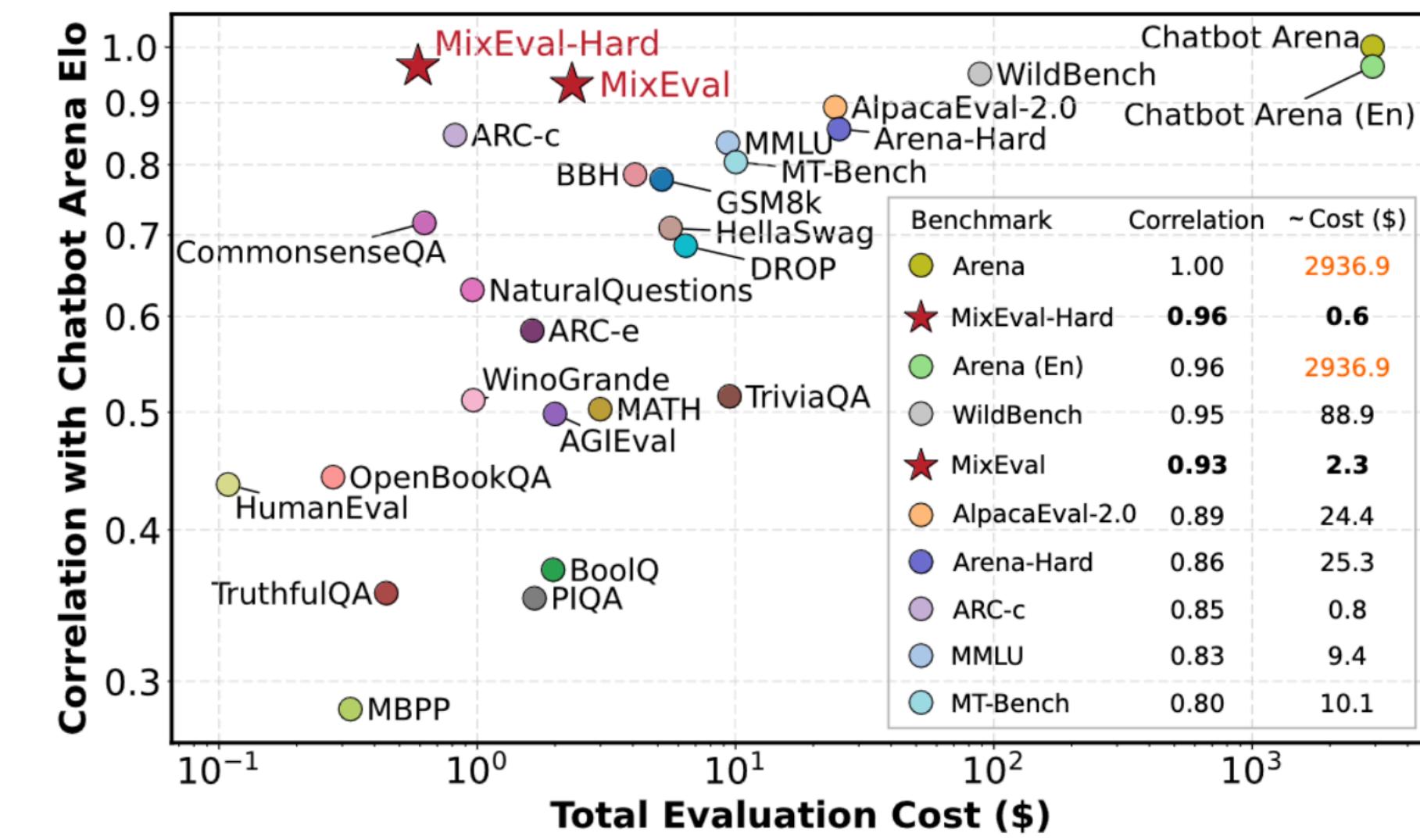
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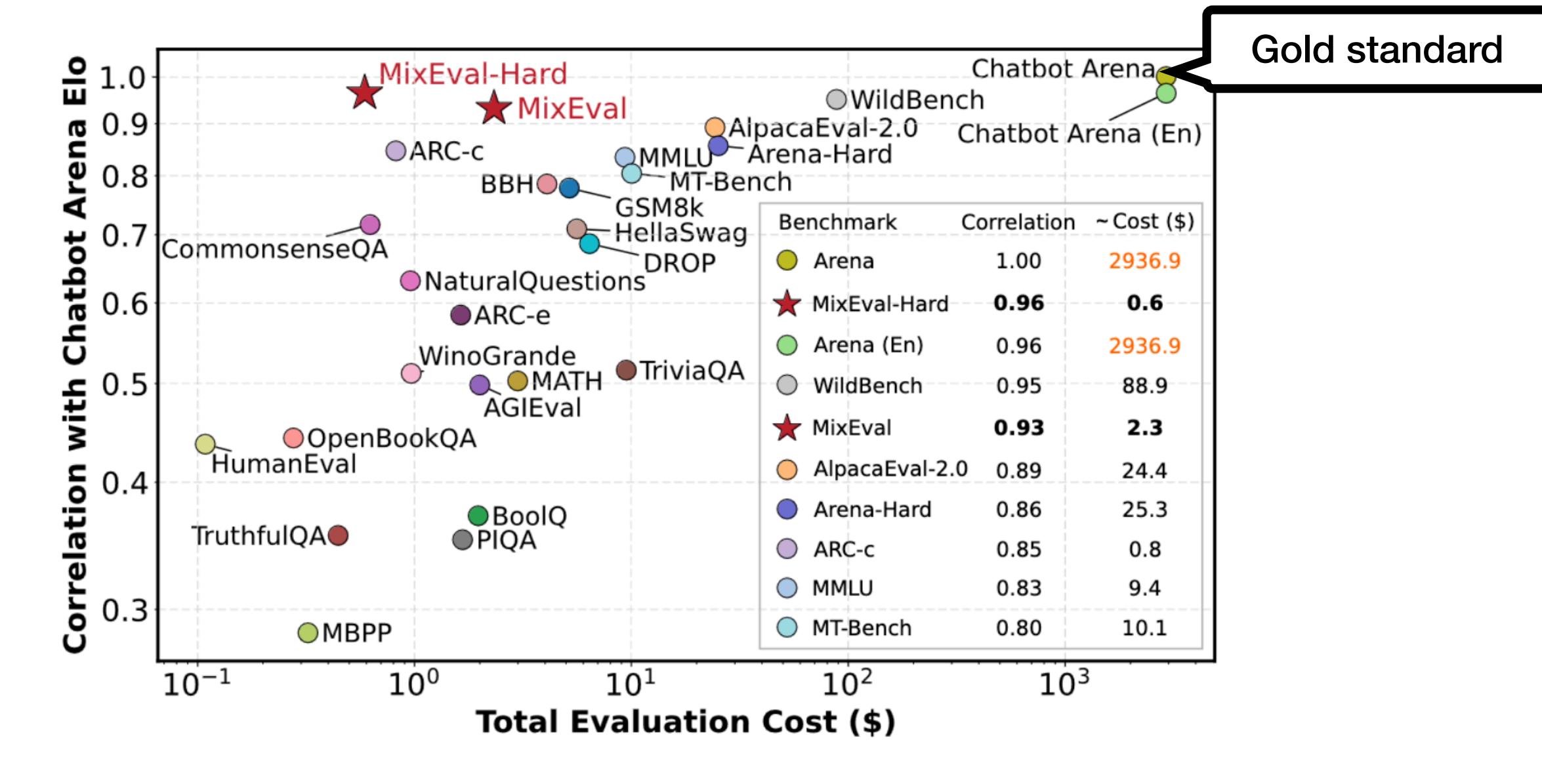
LLM evaluation cost and correlation with Elo ratings

Source: MixEval [Ni 2024]

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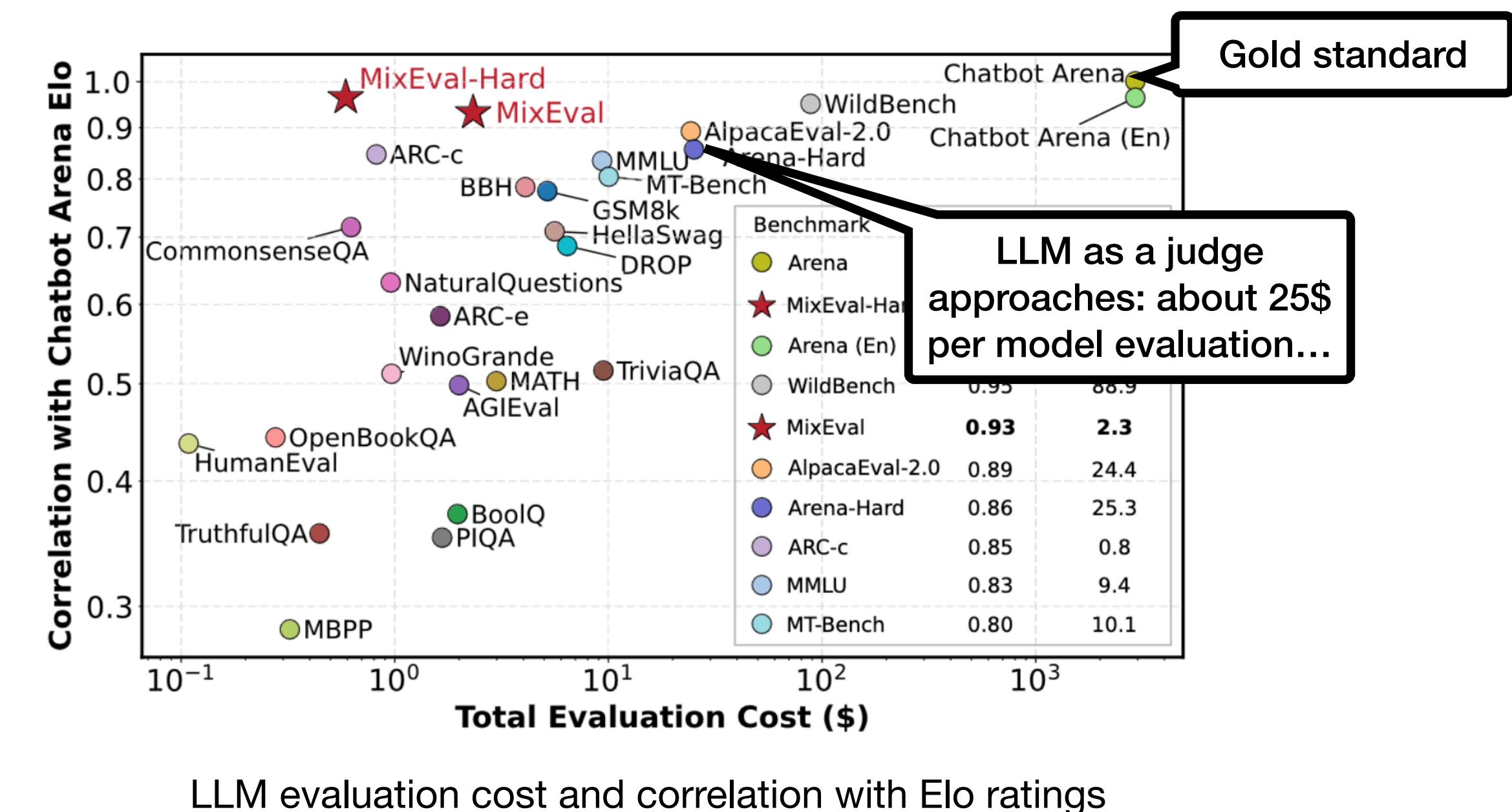


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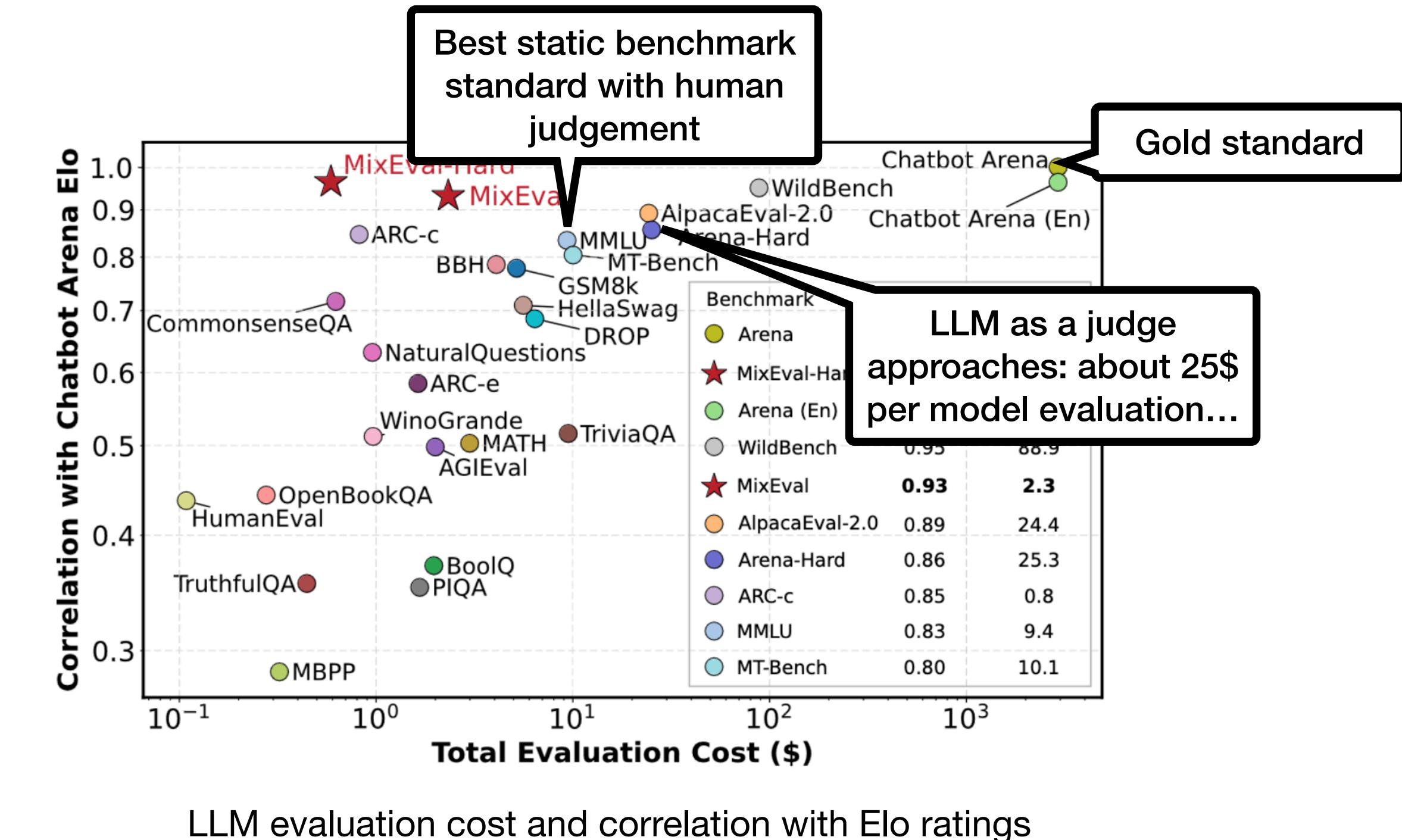


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Please say which model is better when answering the question: "What is some cool music from the 1920s?"

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\*\*Jazz\*\*  
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Rank	Model Name	LC Win Rate	Win Rate
1	GPT-4 Omni (05/13) ↗	57.5%	51.3%
2	GPT-4 Turbo (04/09) ↗	55.0%	46.1%
3	Yi-Large Preview ↗	51.9%	57.5%
4	GPT-4 Preview (11/06) ↗	50.0%	50.0%
5	Claude 3 Opus (02/29) ↗	40.5%	29.1%
6	GPT-4 ↗	38.1%	23.6%
7	Qwen1.5 72B Chat ↗	36.6%	26.5%
8	GPT-4 (03/14) ↗	35.3%	22.1%
9	Claude 3 Sonnet (02/29) ↗	34.9%	25.6%
10	LLama 3 70B Instruct ↗	34.4%	33.2%

Leaderboard: winrate against GPT4-turbo

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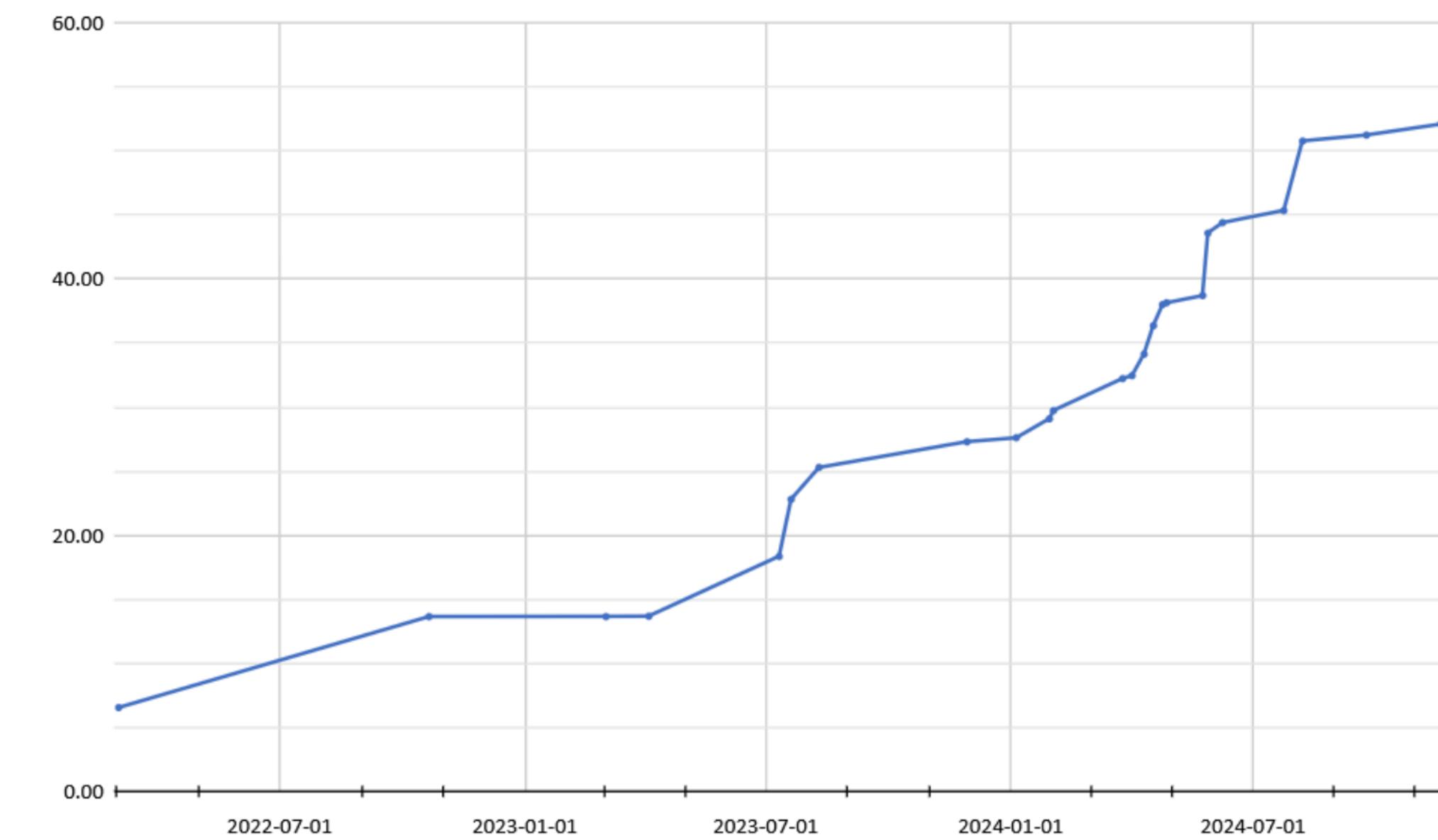
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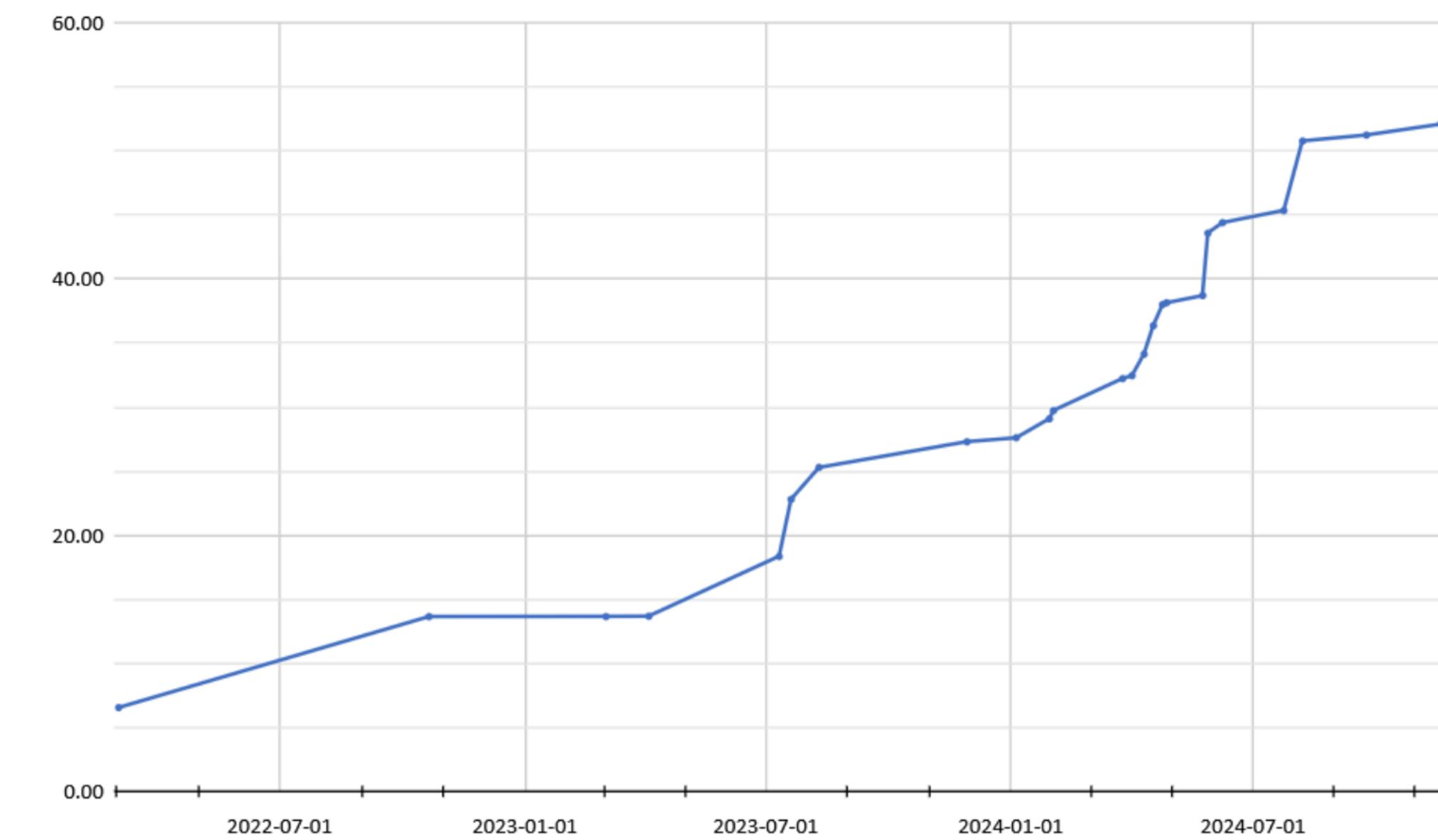
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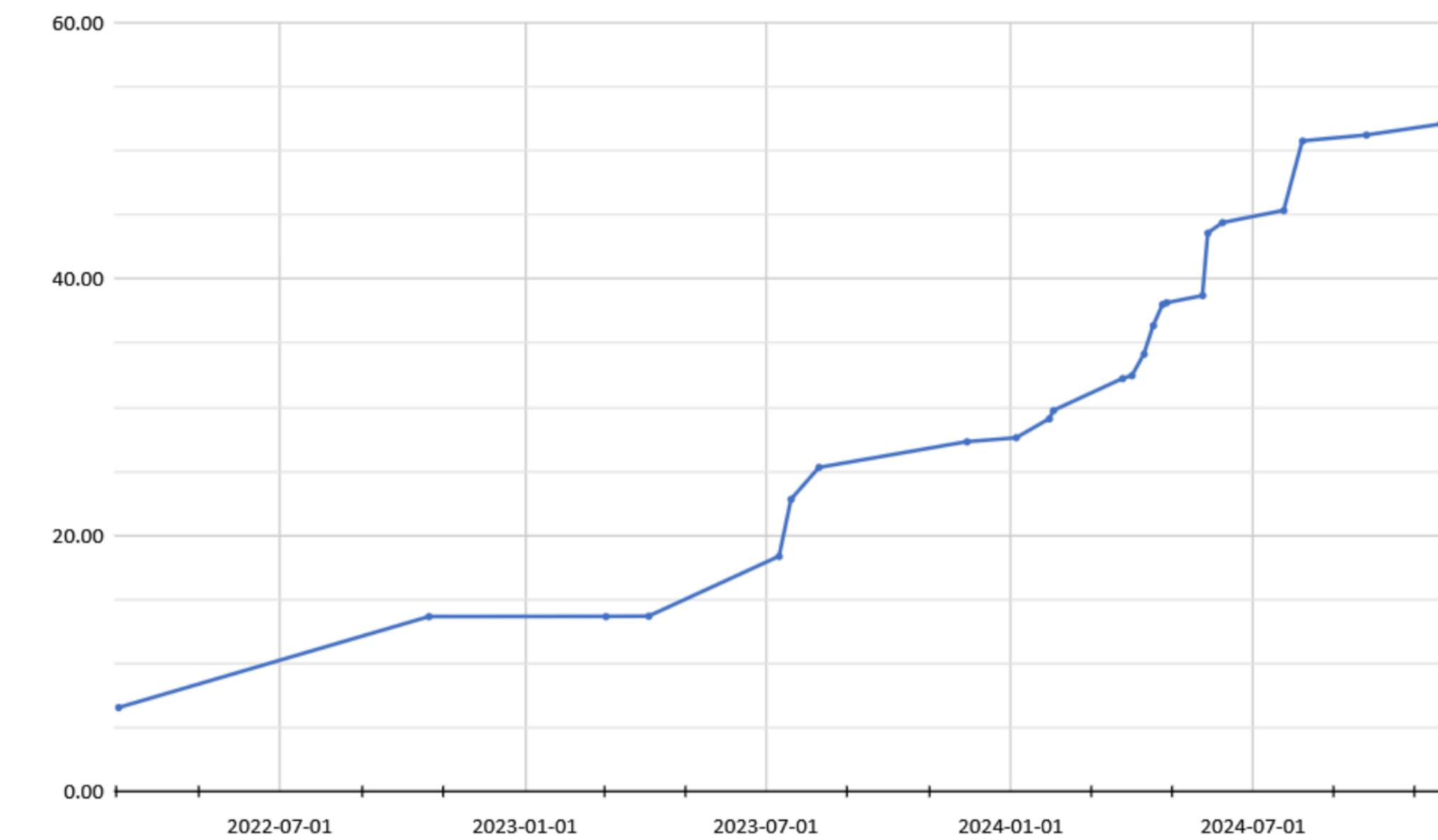
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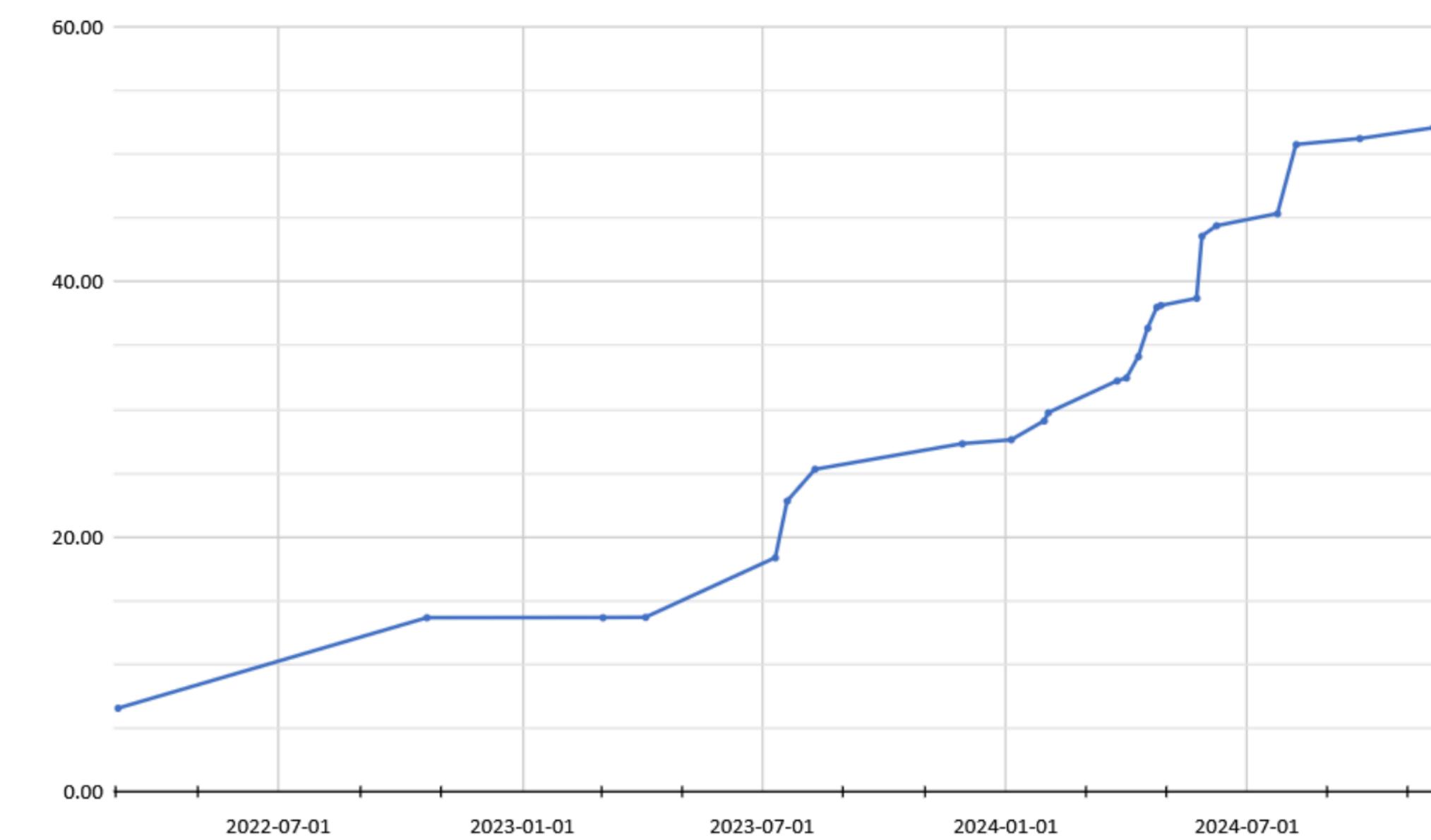
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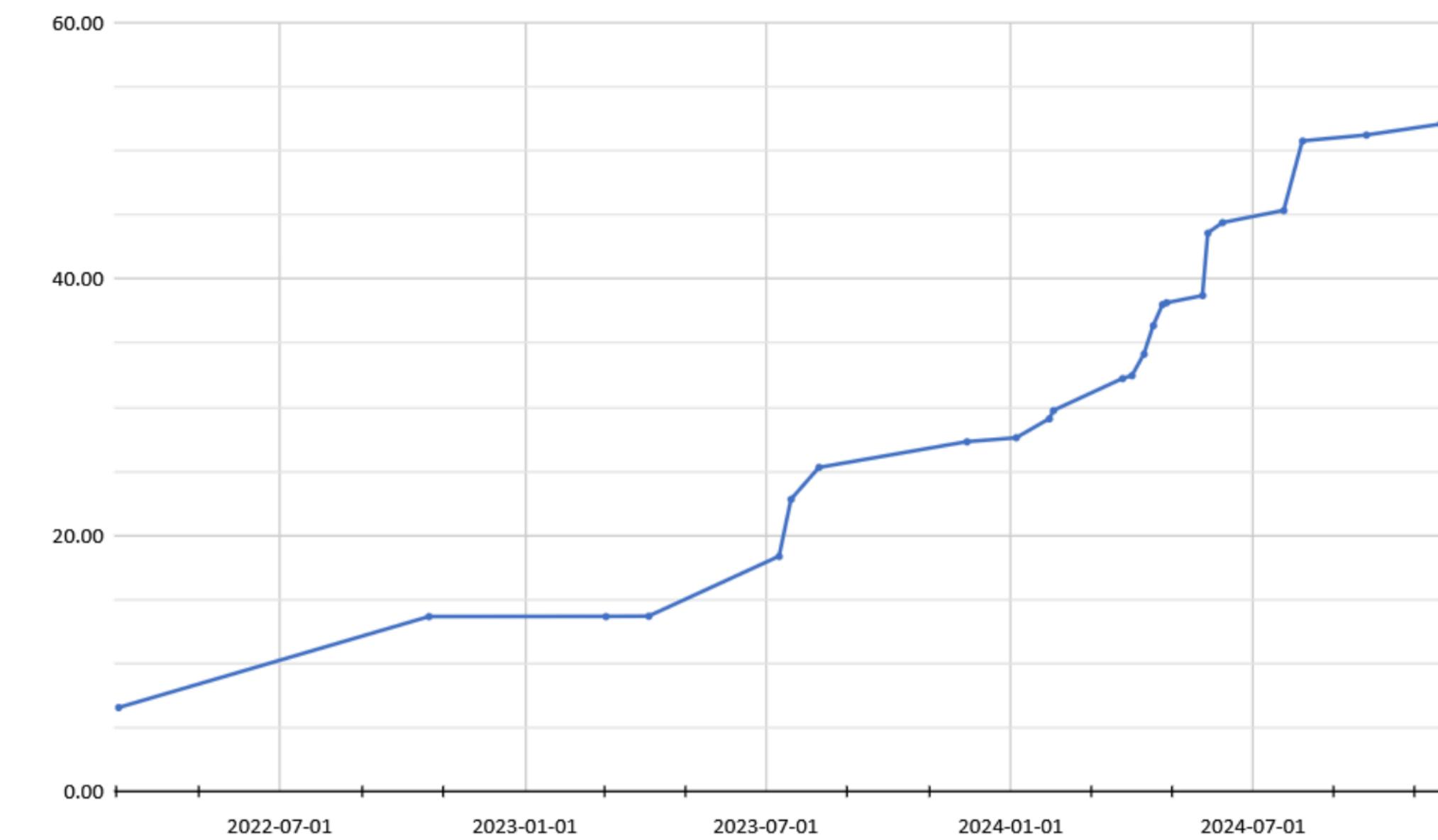
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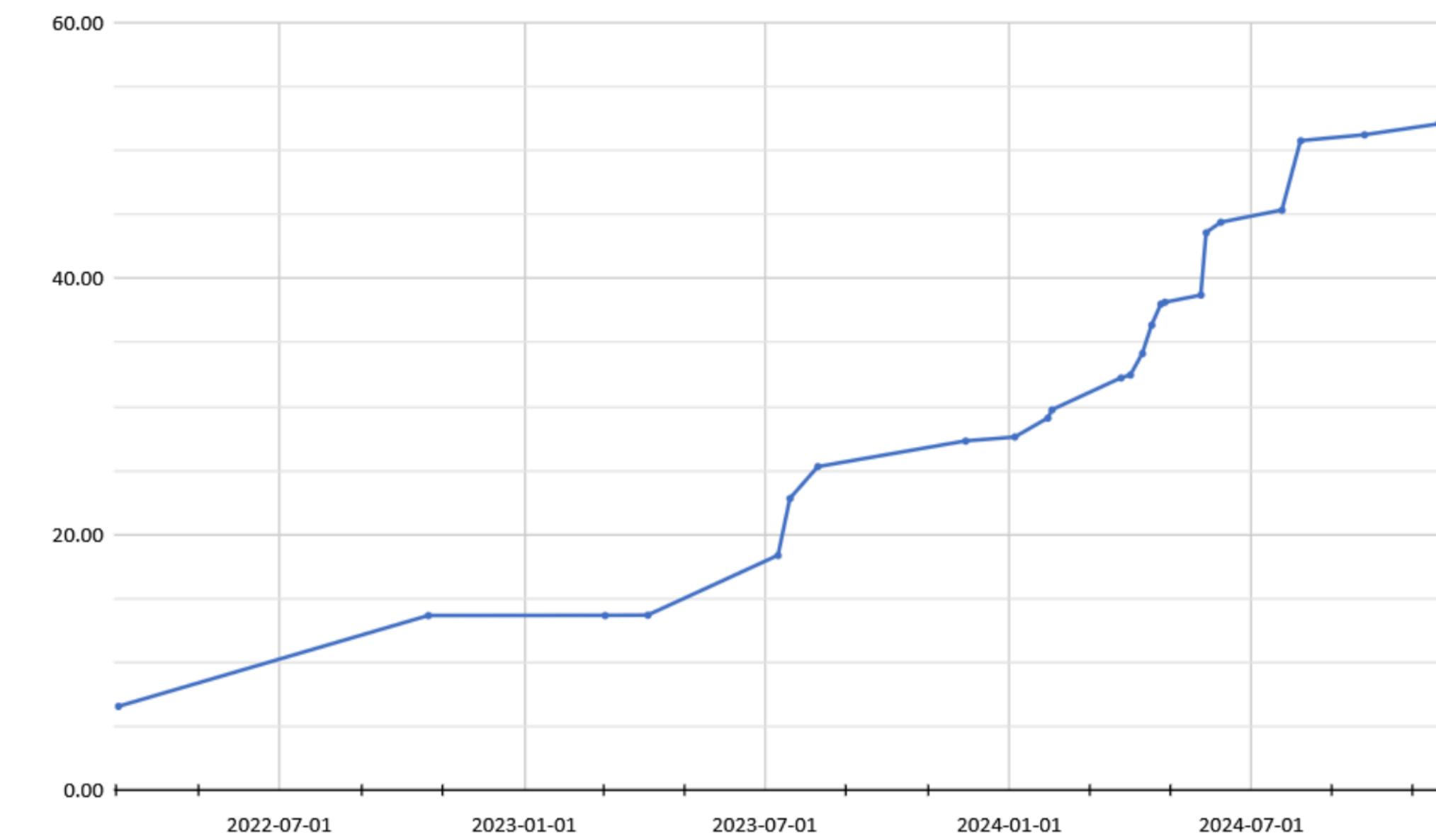
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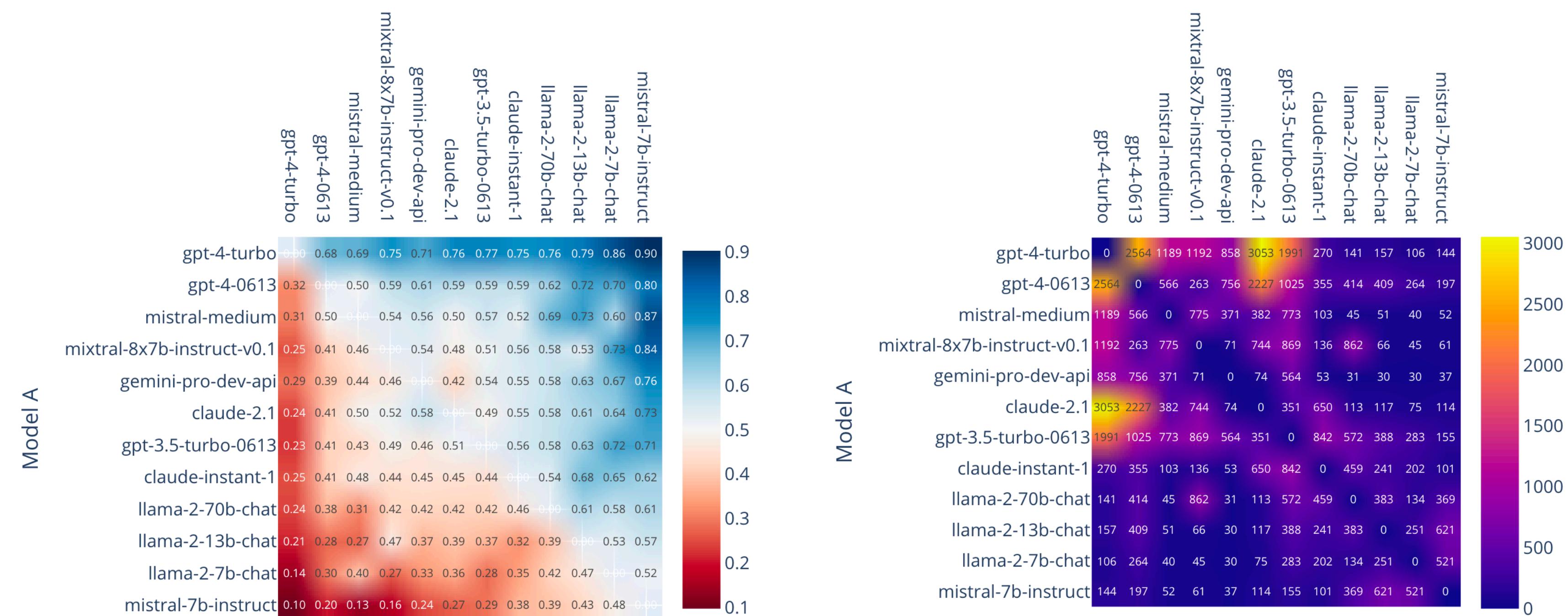


Figure 2. Win-rate (left) and battle count (right) between a subset of models in Chatbot Arena.

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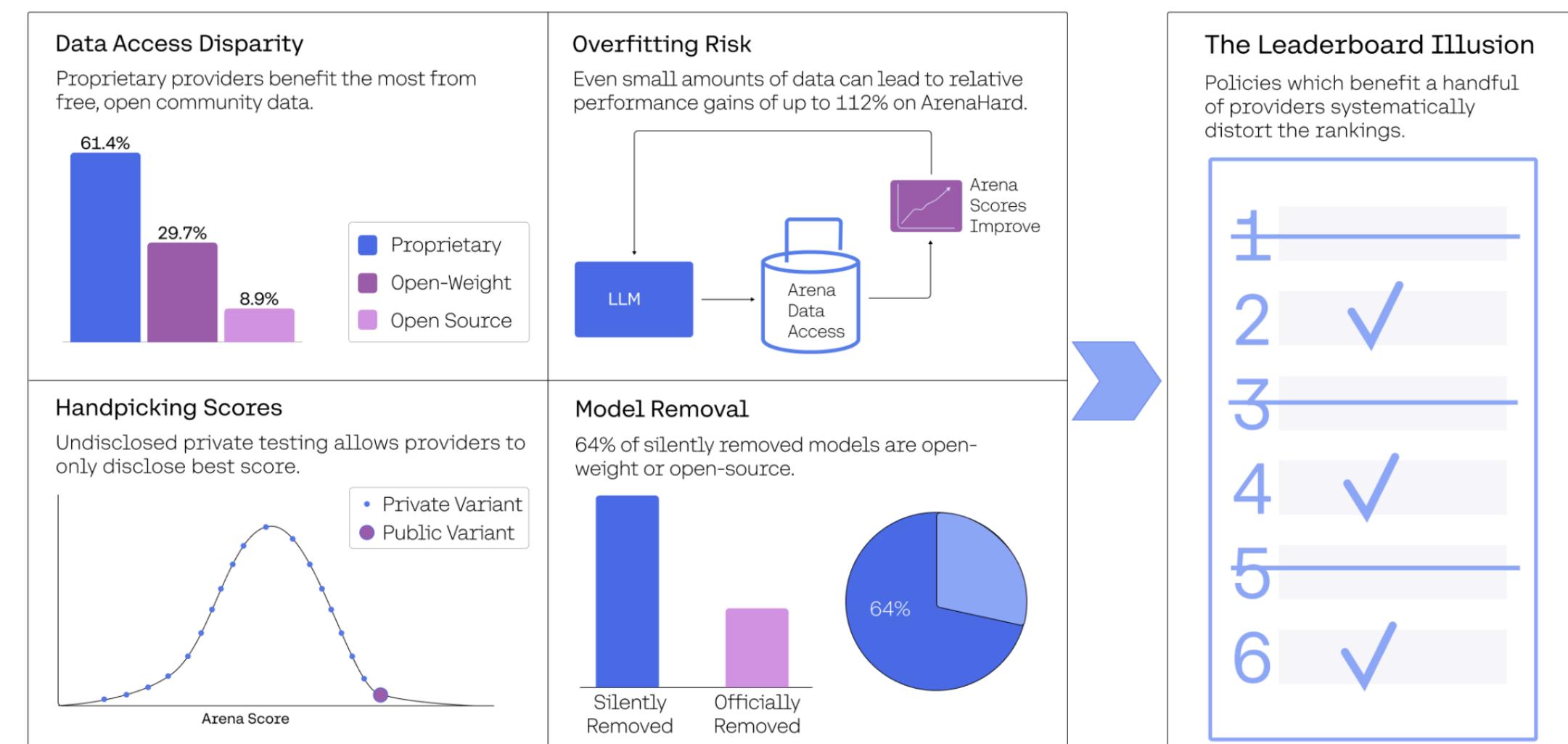


Figure 1: Overview of key insights. We investigate the prevalence of **undisclosed private testing and selective score reporting** on the Arena (Section 3), and highlight significant **data access disparities** between proprietary and open-source providers (Section 4.1). These disparities enable **overfitting to the Arena** (Section 4.2). Furthermore, **model deprecation practices** lack transparency, with many models silently deprecated without any notification to providers. We demonstrate how these deprecations contribute to unreliable rankings on the leaderboard (Section 5).

# TabArena

## Tabular leaderboard

- Live leaderboard for tabular methods: <http://tabarena.ai>
- Joint work with Nick Erickson, Lennart Purucker, Andrej Tschalzev, David Holzmüller, Prateek Mutalik Desai, David Salinas, Frank Hutter
- Very easy to host your leaderboard on Gradio/Hugging Face:
  - check out <https://pypi.org/project/gradio-leaderboard/>

#	Type	Model	Elo [↑]	Normalized Score [↑]	Rank [↓]	Median Train Time (s/1K) [↓]	Median Predict Time (s/1K) [↓]
0		AutoGluon 1.3 (4h)	1588	0.682	8.37	1408.78	3.333
1		RealMLP (tuned + ensemble)	1566	0.638	9	6566.62	10.264
2		LightGBM (tuned + ensemble)	1529	0.583	10.43	417.05	2.639
3		TabM (tuned + ensemble)	1527	0.592	10.44	38348.6	18.194
4		CatBoost (tuned + ensemble)	1485	0.555	12.29	1658.43	0.653
5		CatBoost (tuned)	1470	0.545	12.86	1658.43	0.081
6		LightGBM (tuned)	1450	0.519	13.76	417.05	0.334
7		XGBoost (tuned + ensemble)	1436	0.502	14.27	693.49	1.689
8		TabM (tuned)	1432	0.501	14.48	38348.6	2.038
9		CatBoost (default)	1429	0.508	14.7	6.83	0.08
10		ModernNCA (tuned + ensemble)	1425	0.519	14.86	20604.6	62.202

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- Dire need of trusted high-quality leaderboards

# LLM & AutoML perspectives

# Automatic Model Selection

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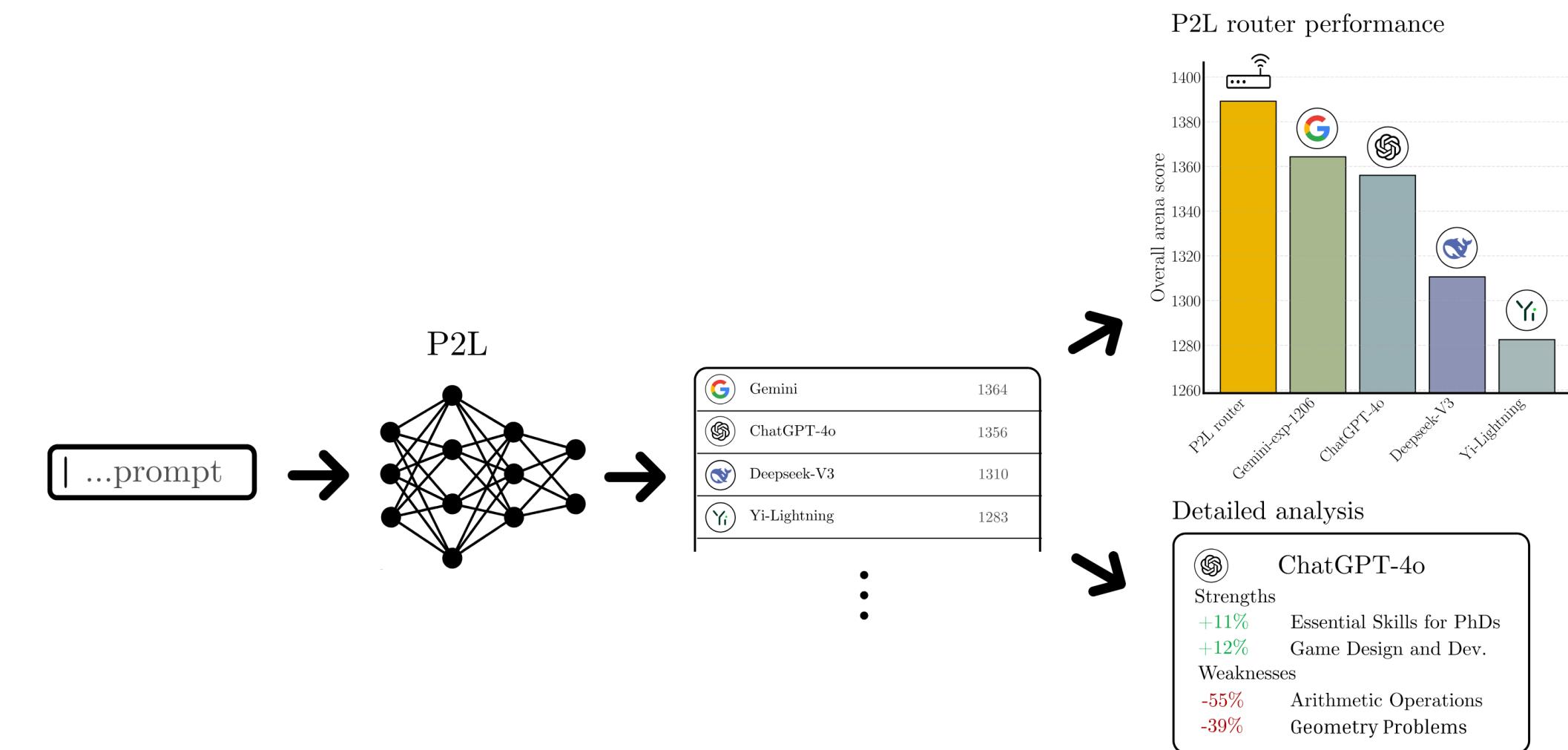
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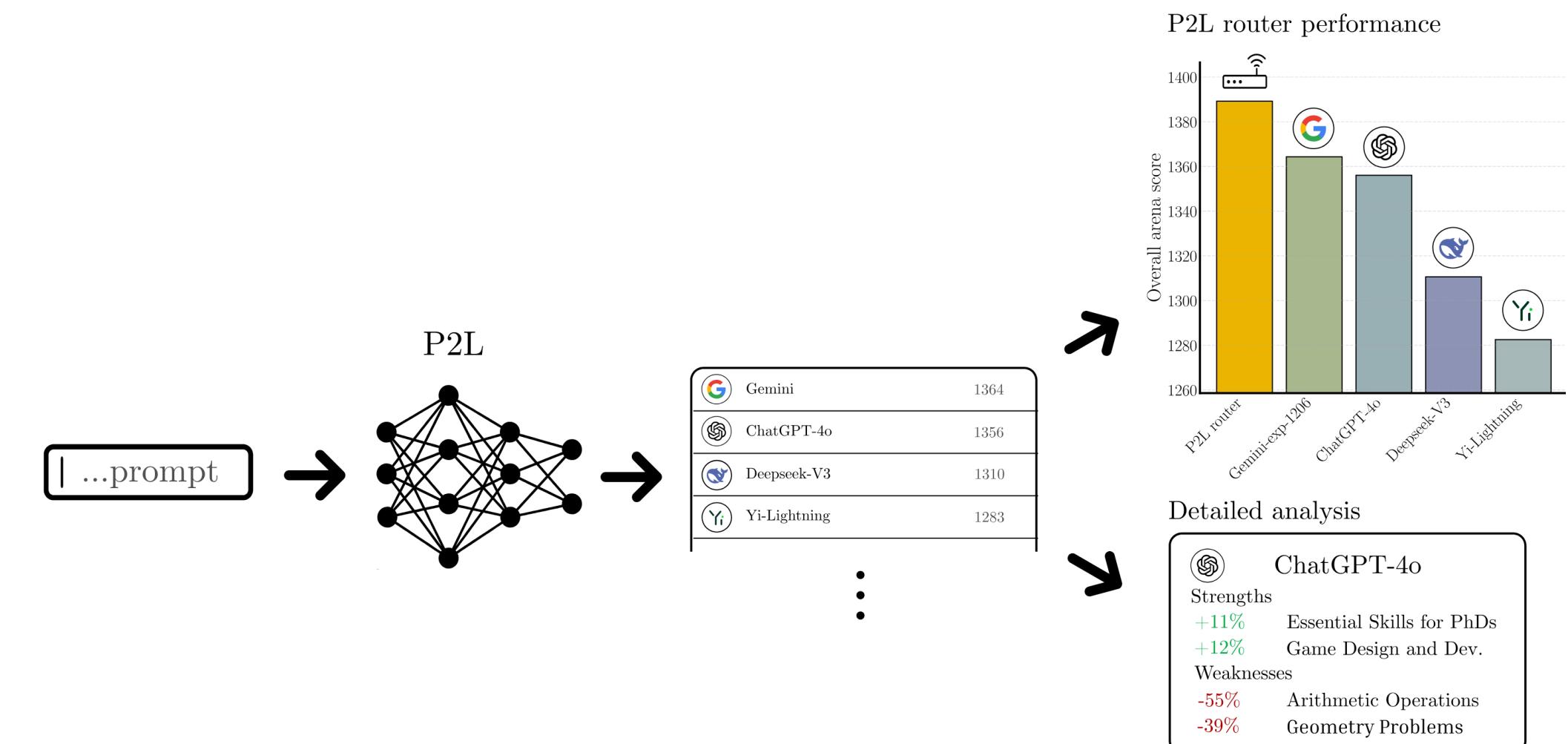
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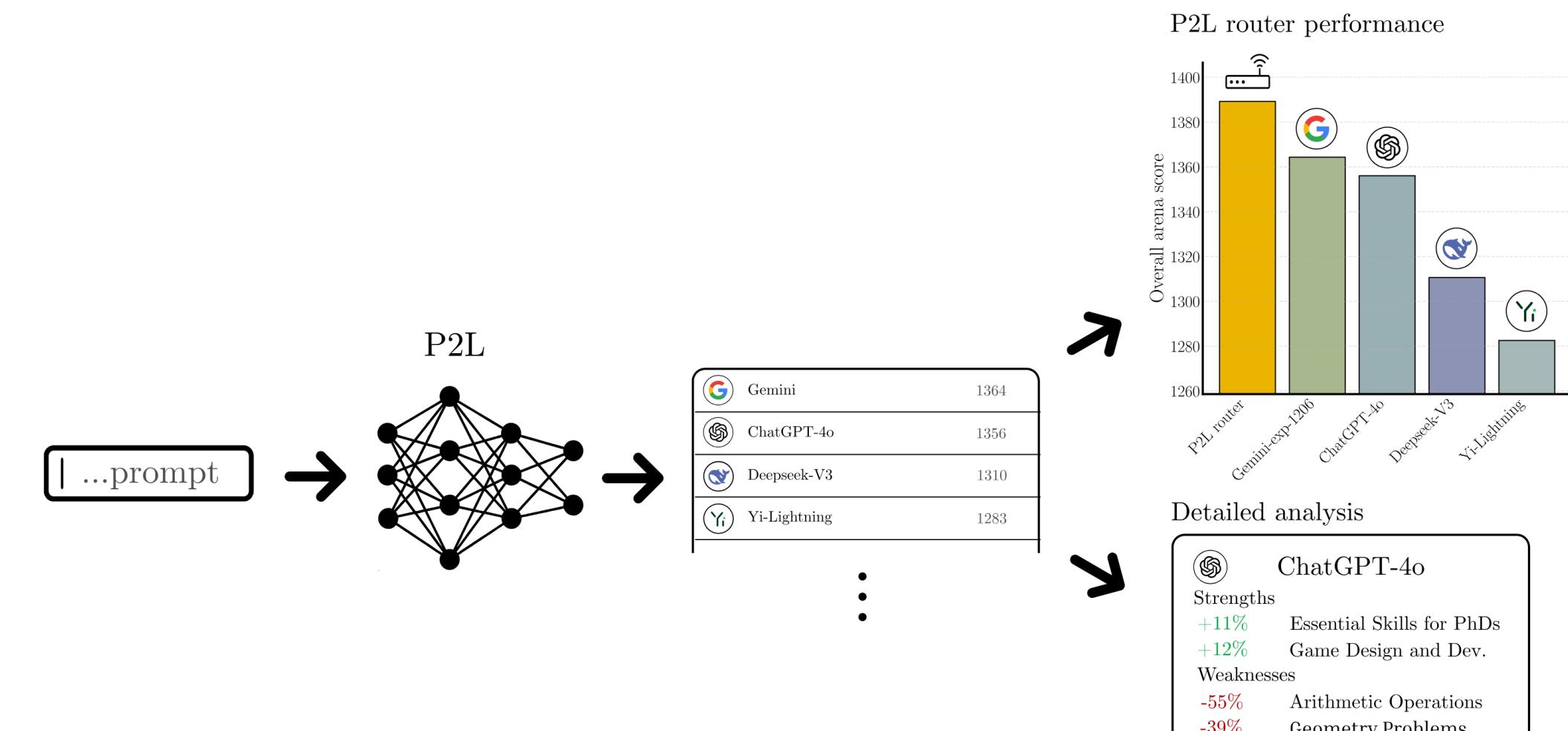


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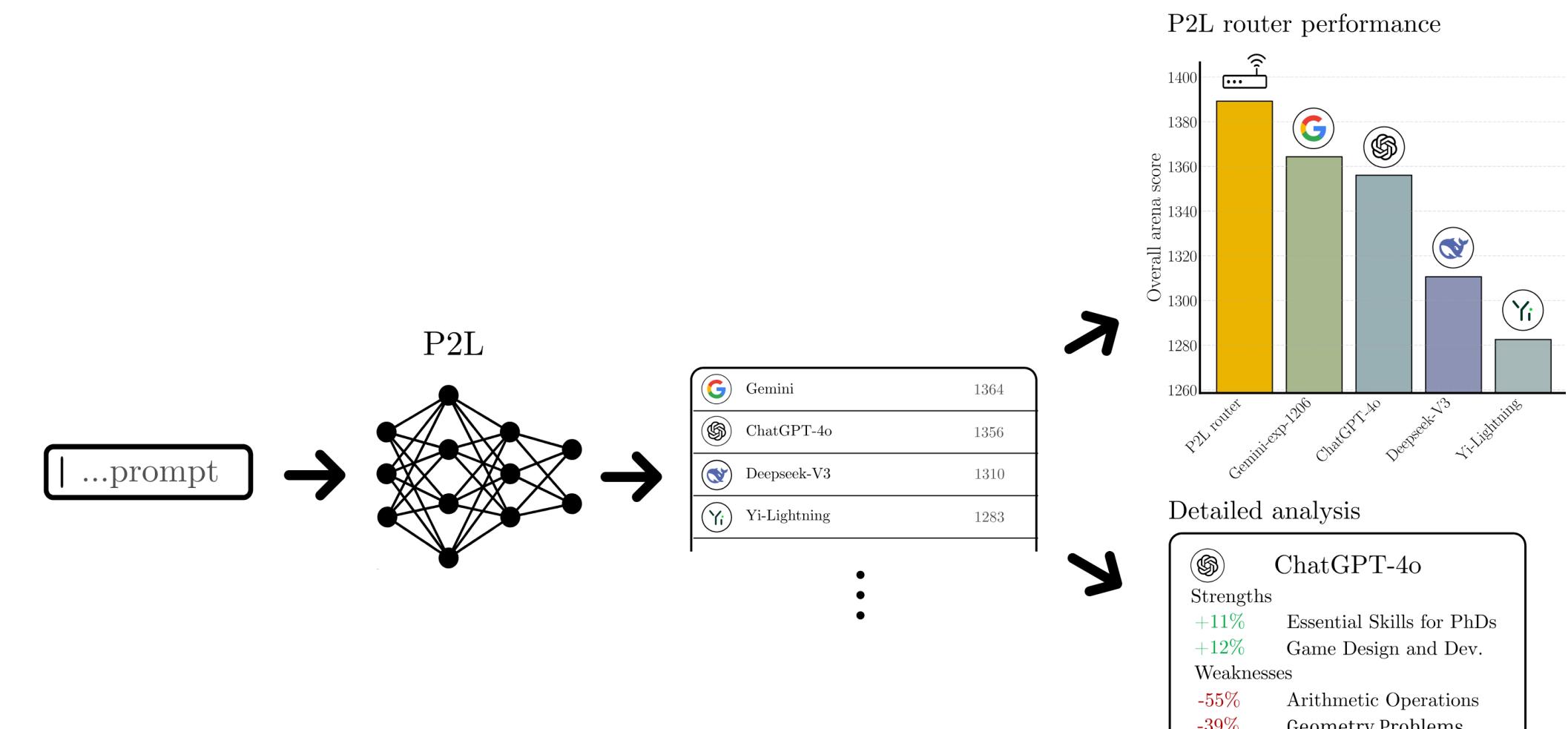


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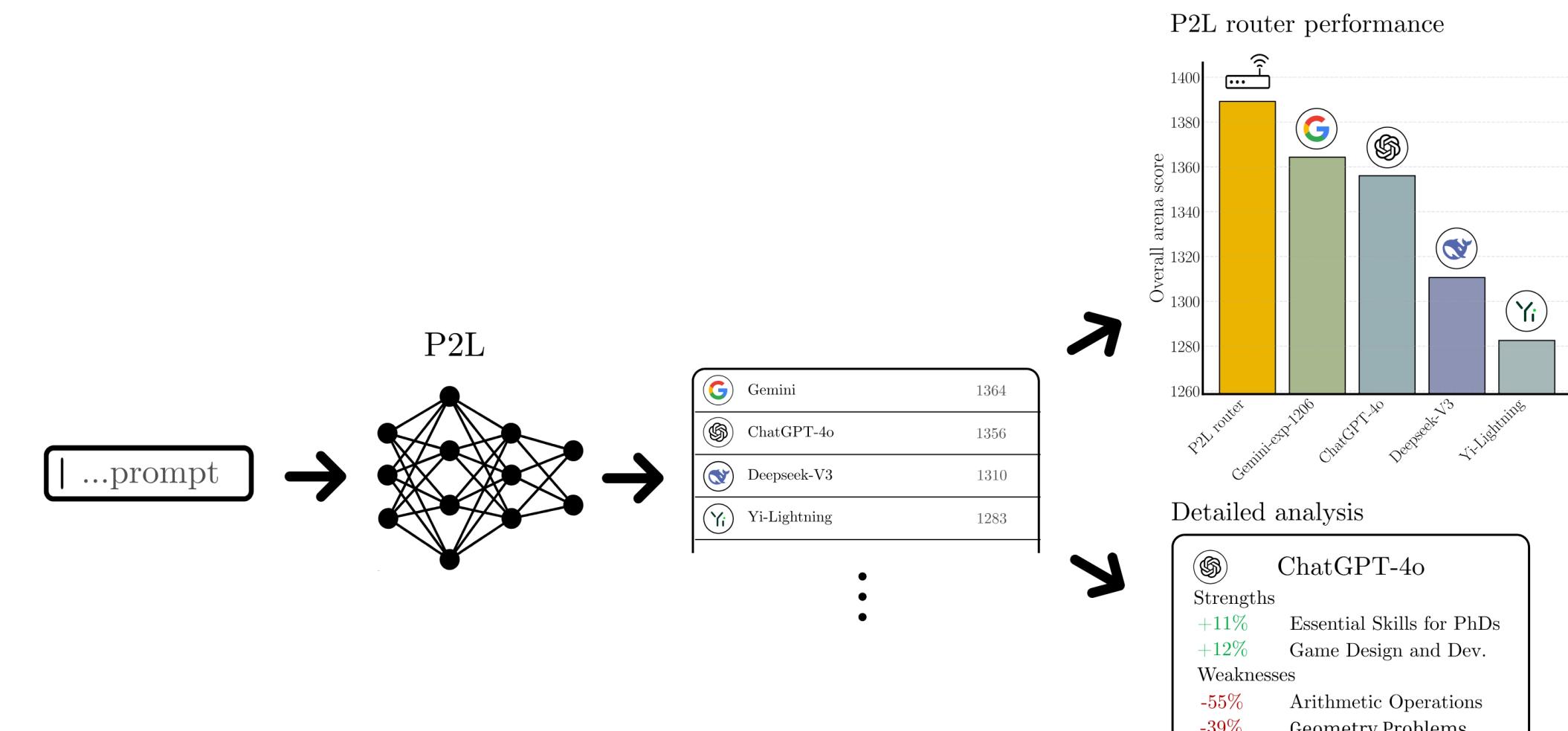


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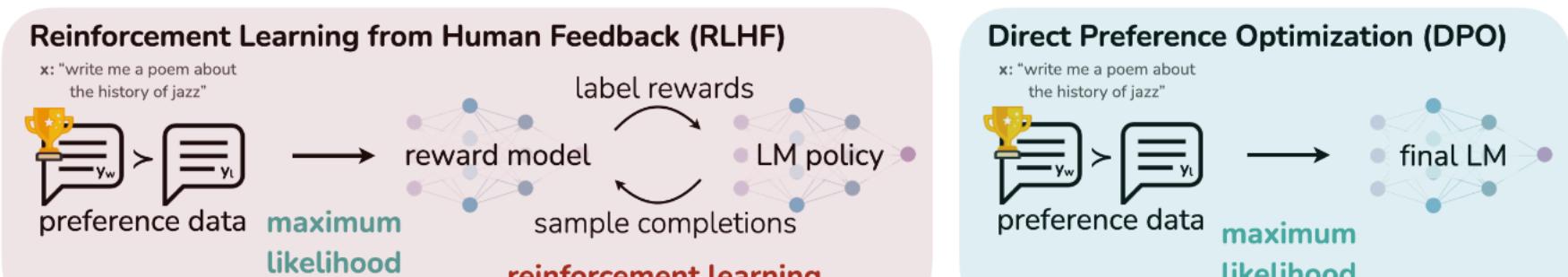
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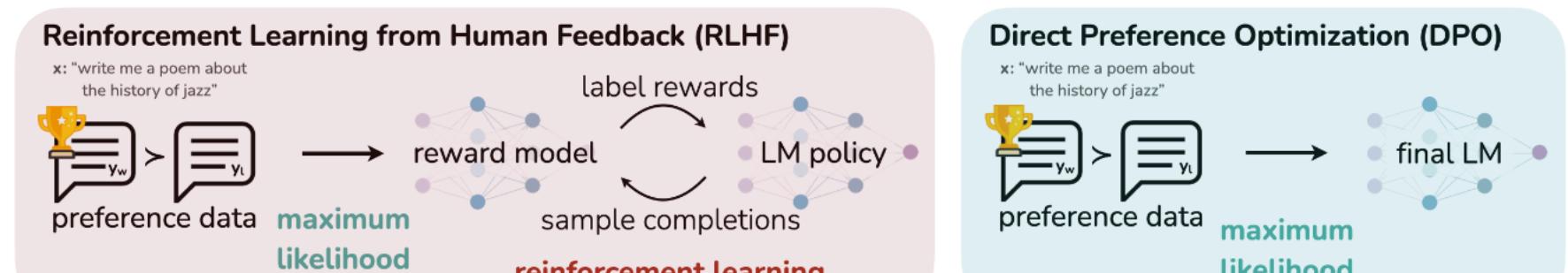
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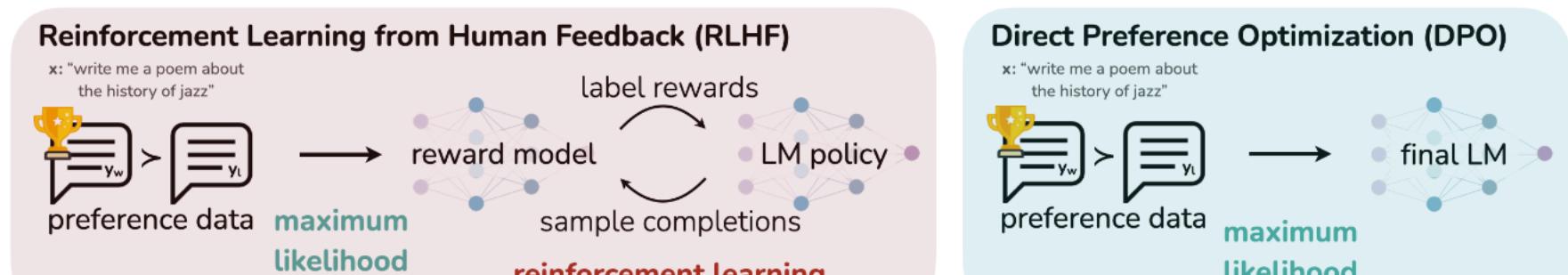
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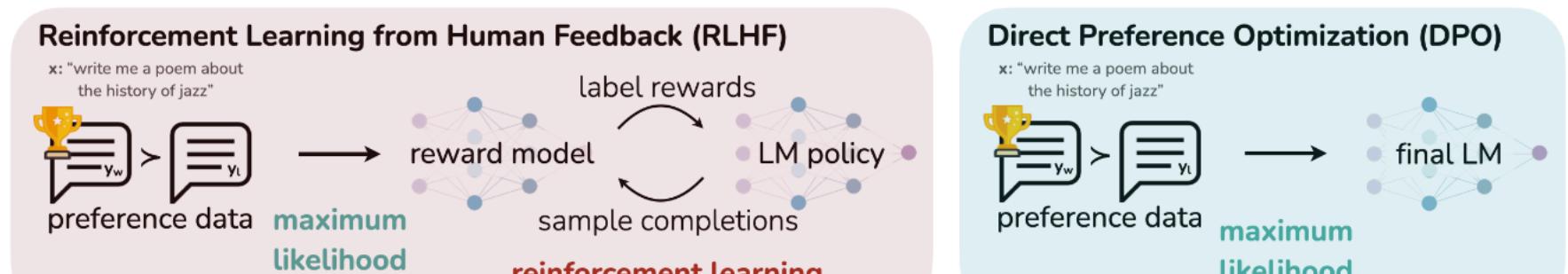
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  - SFT on best answer from annotators
  - ...

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# A case study: tuning LLM judges

# Multiobjective and multi fidelity optimization

# Preamble

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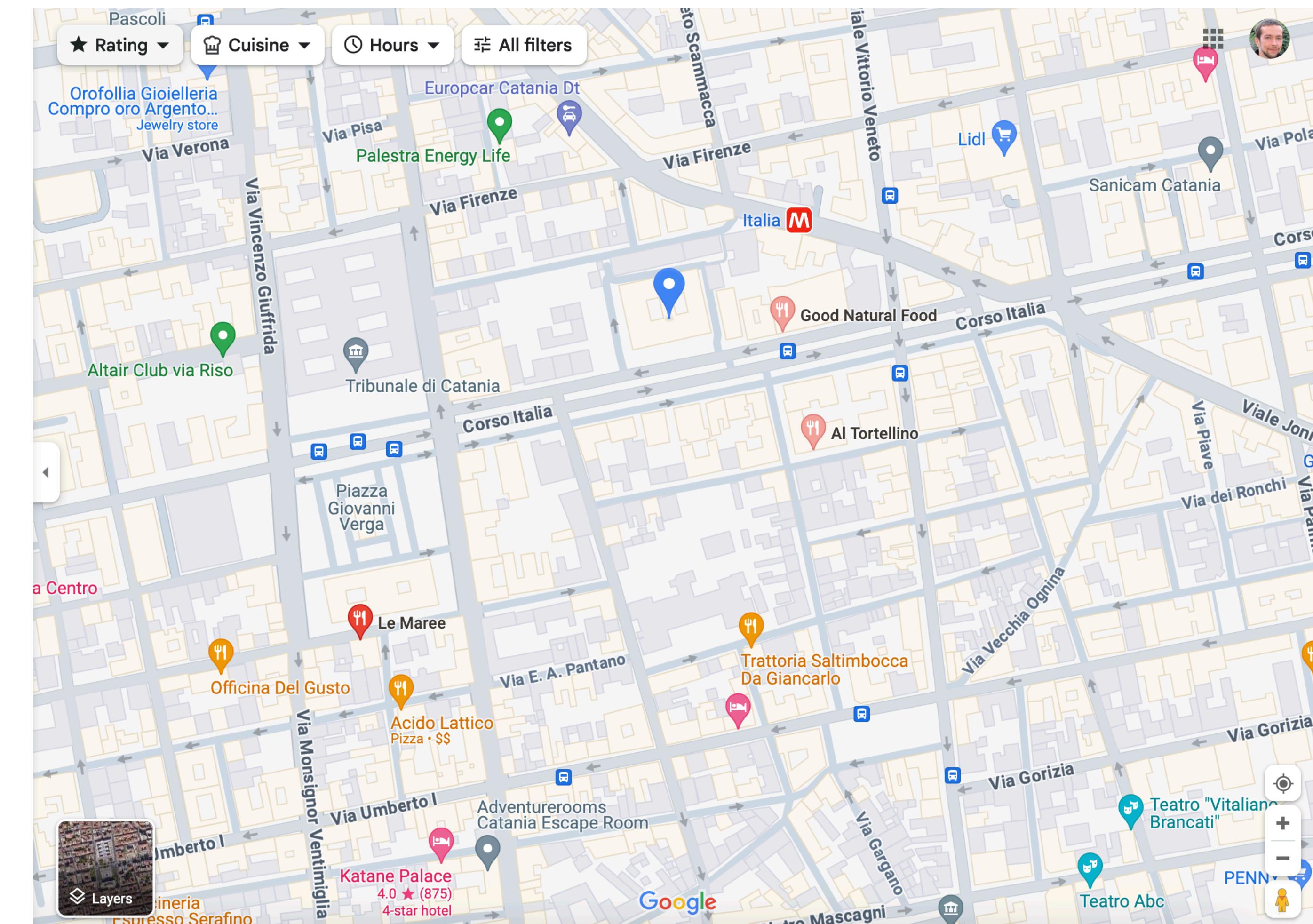
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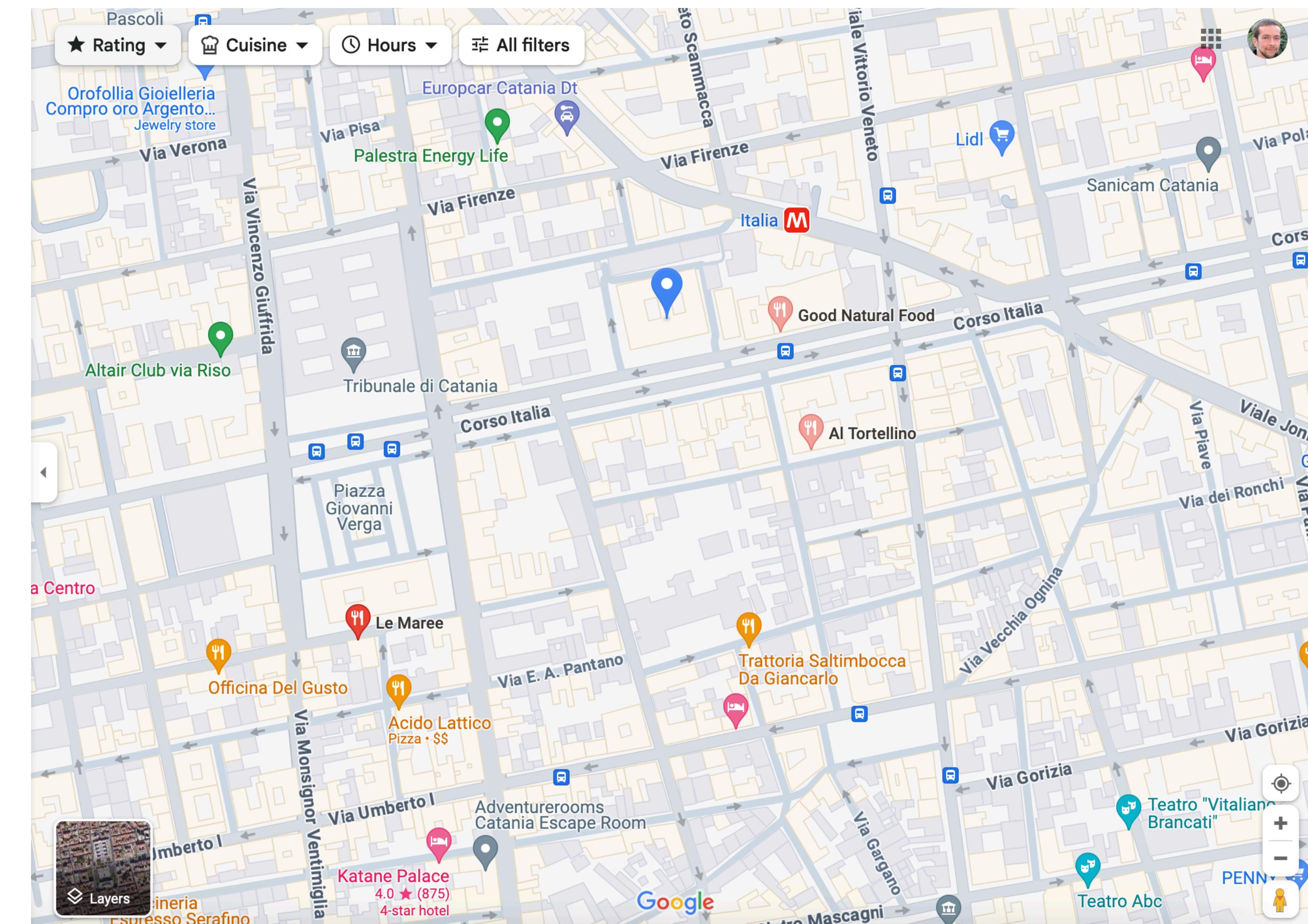
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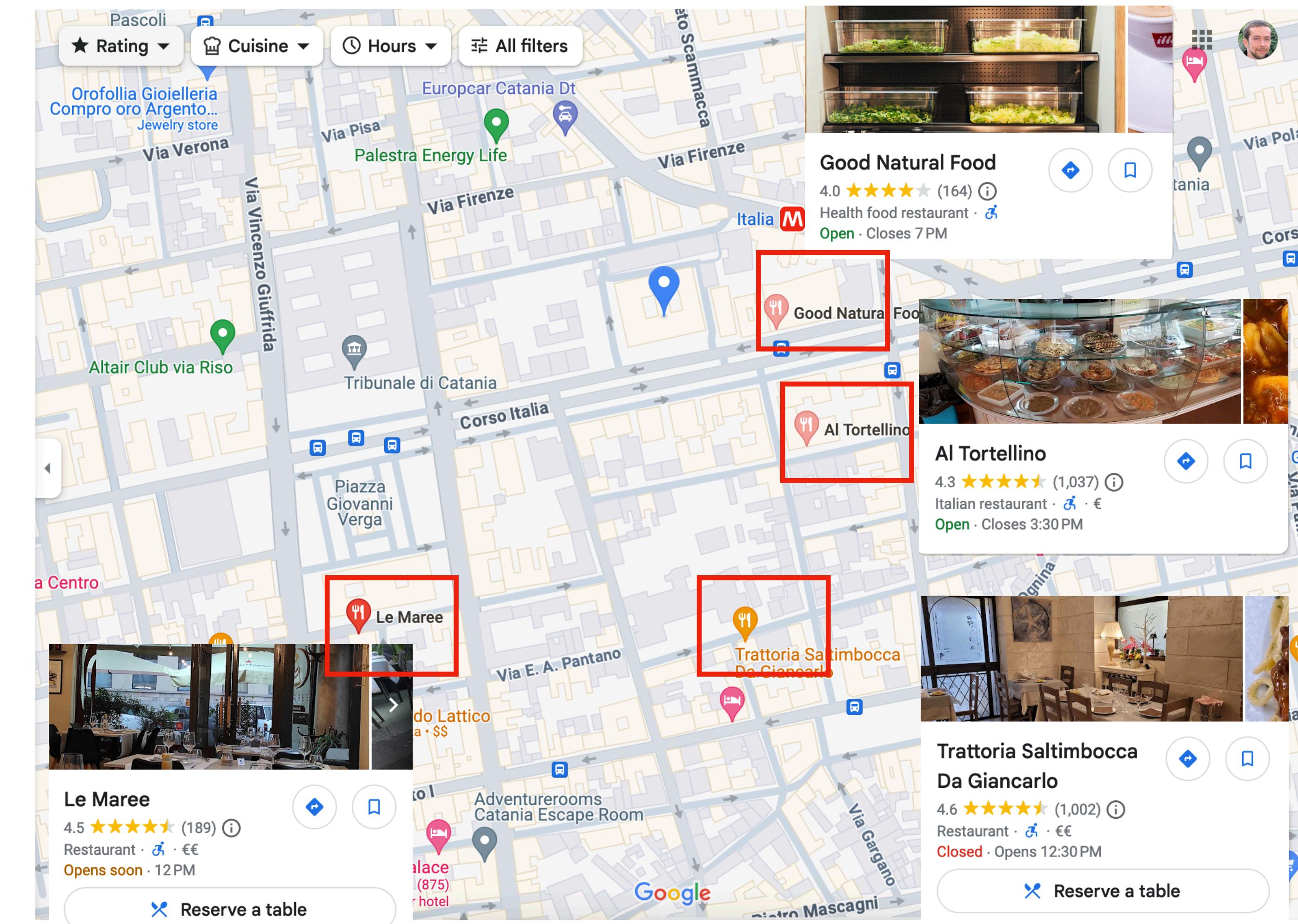
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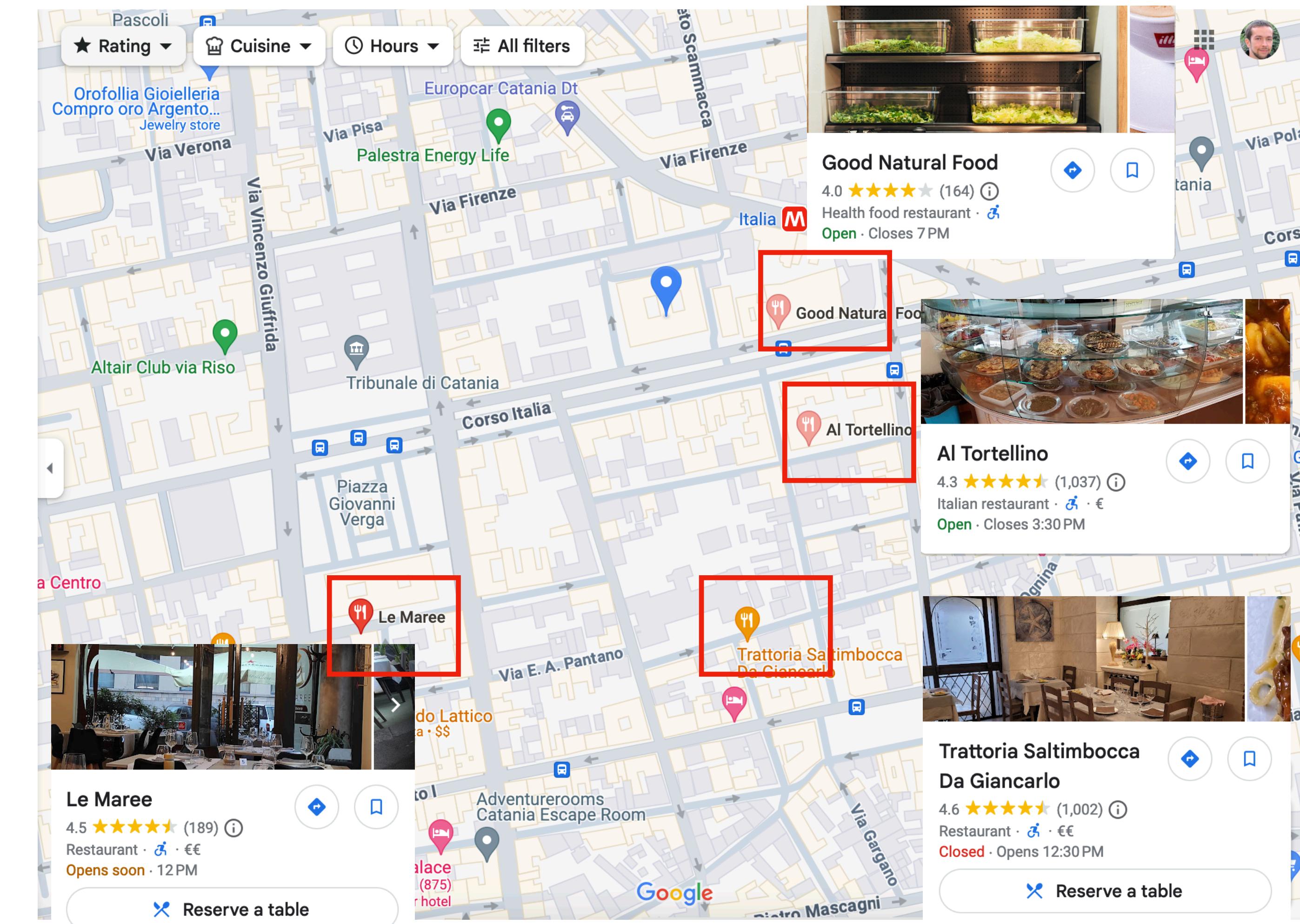


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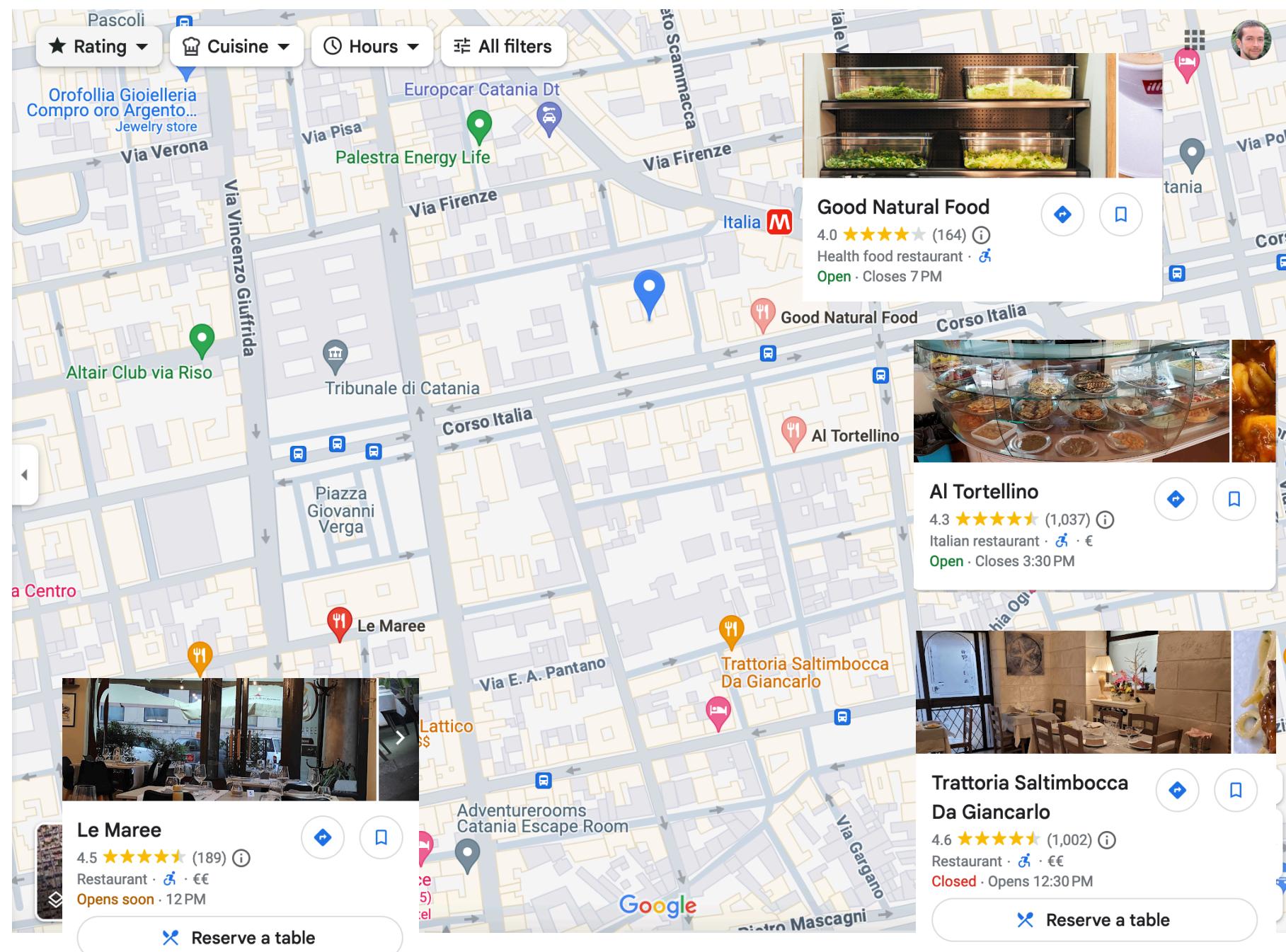
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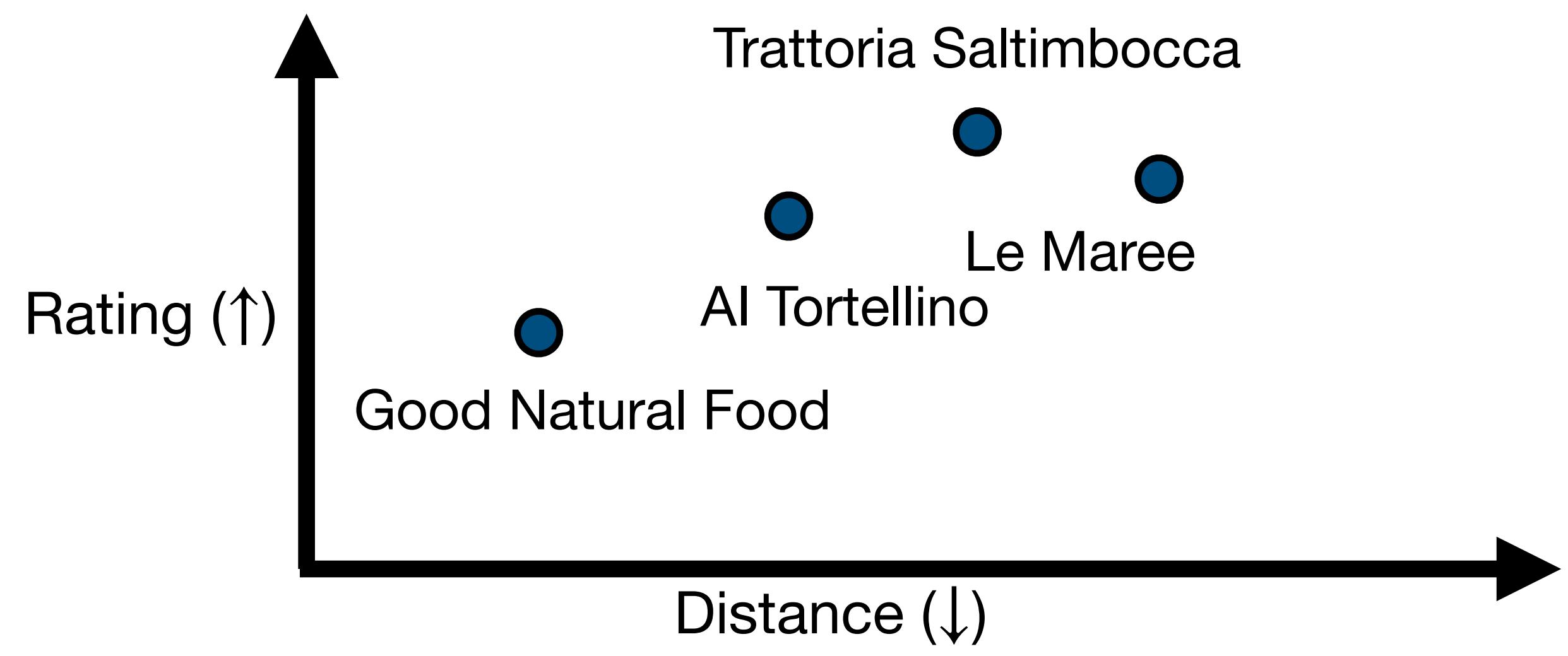
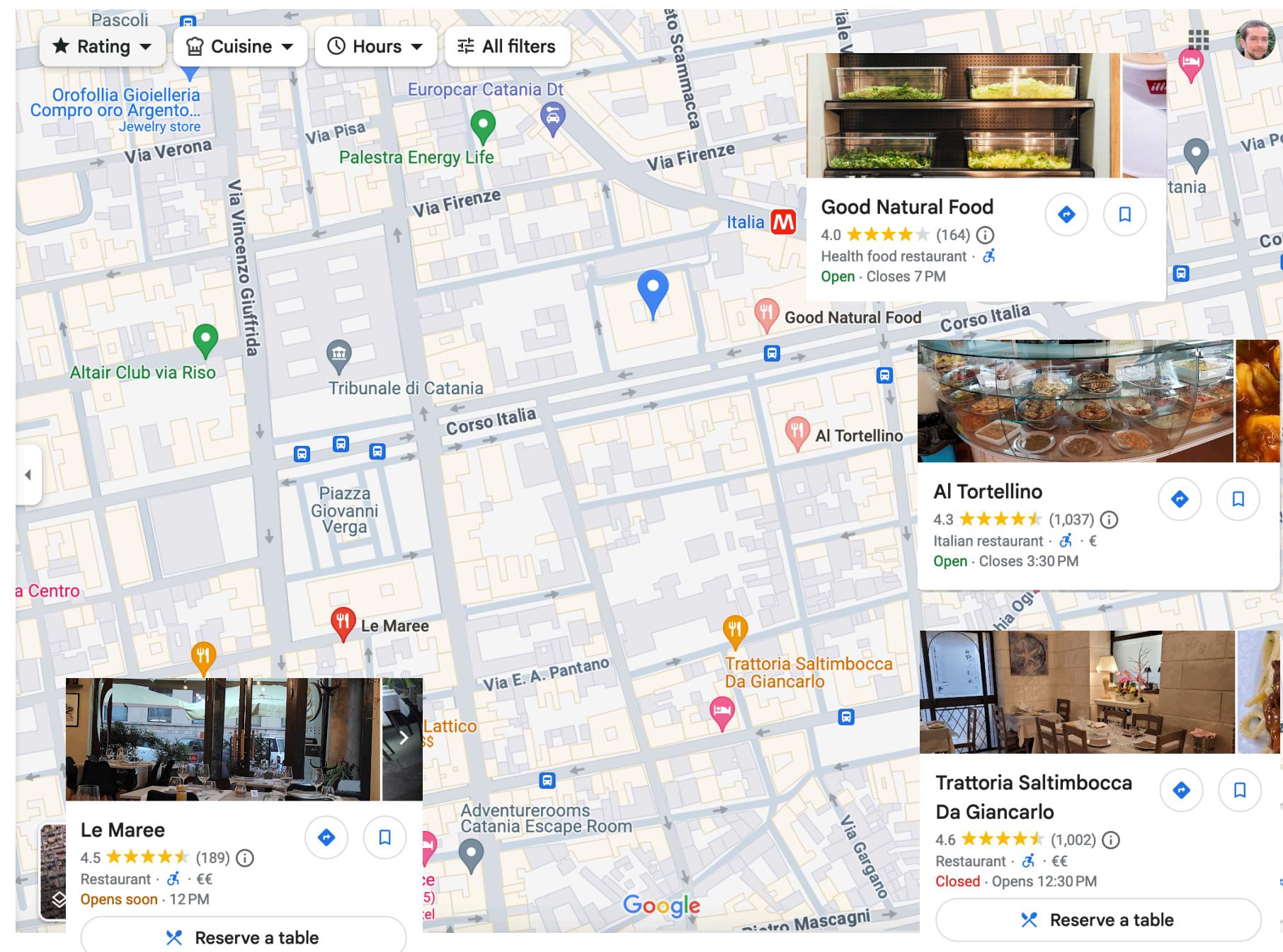
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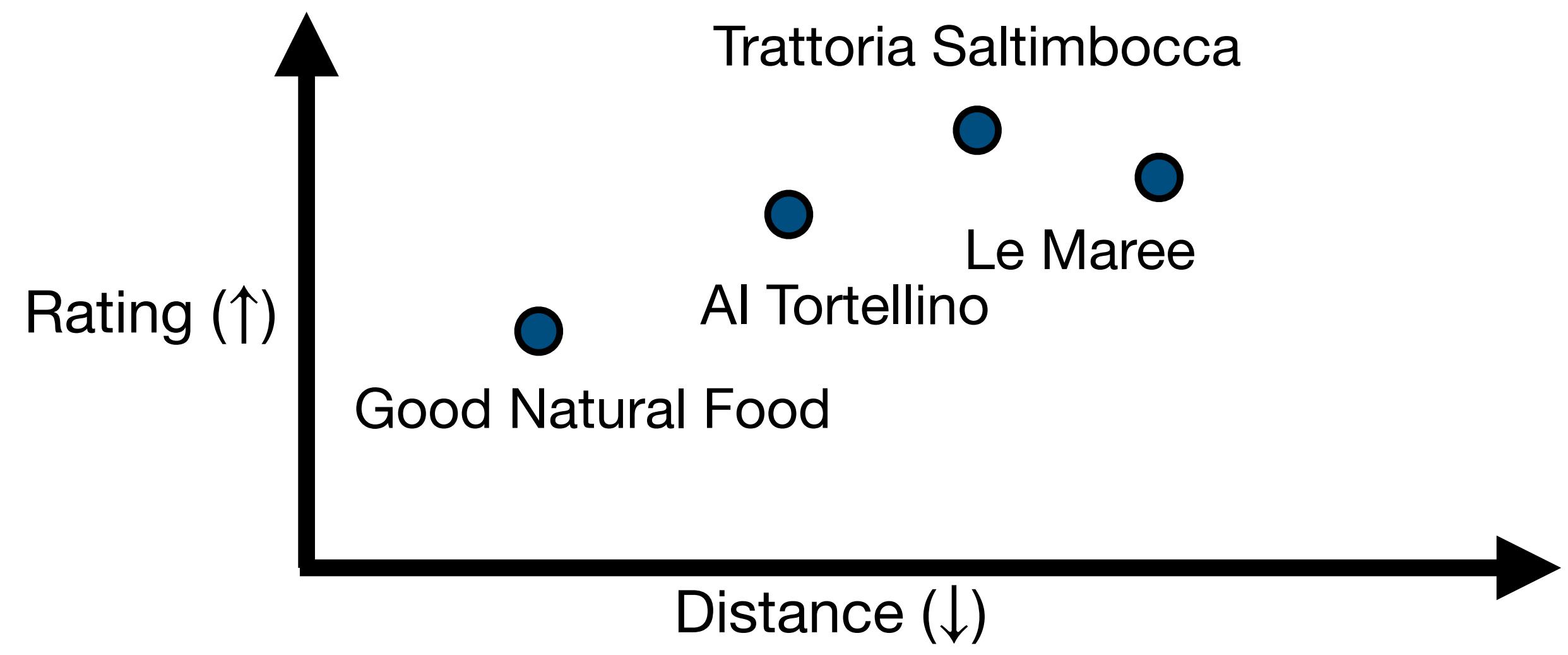
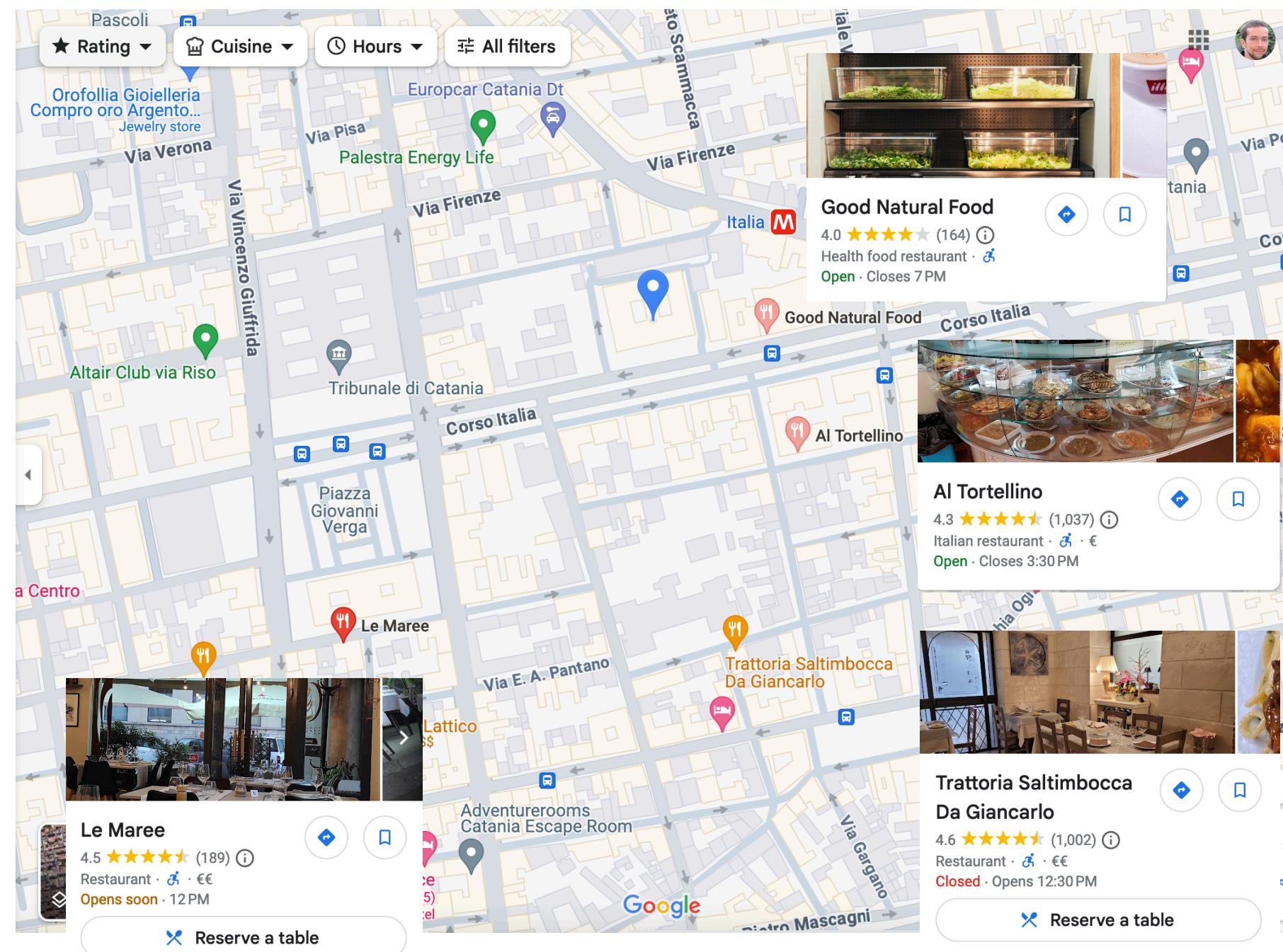
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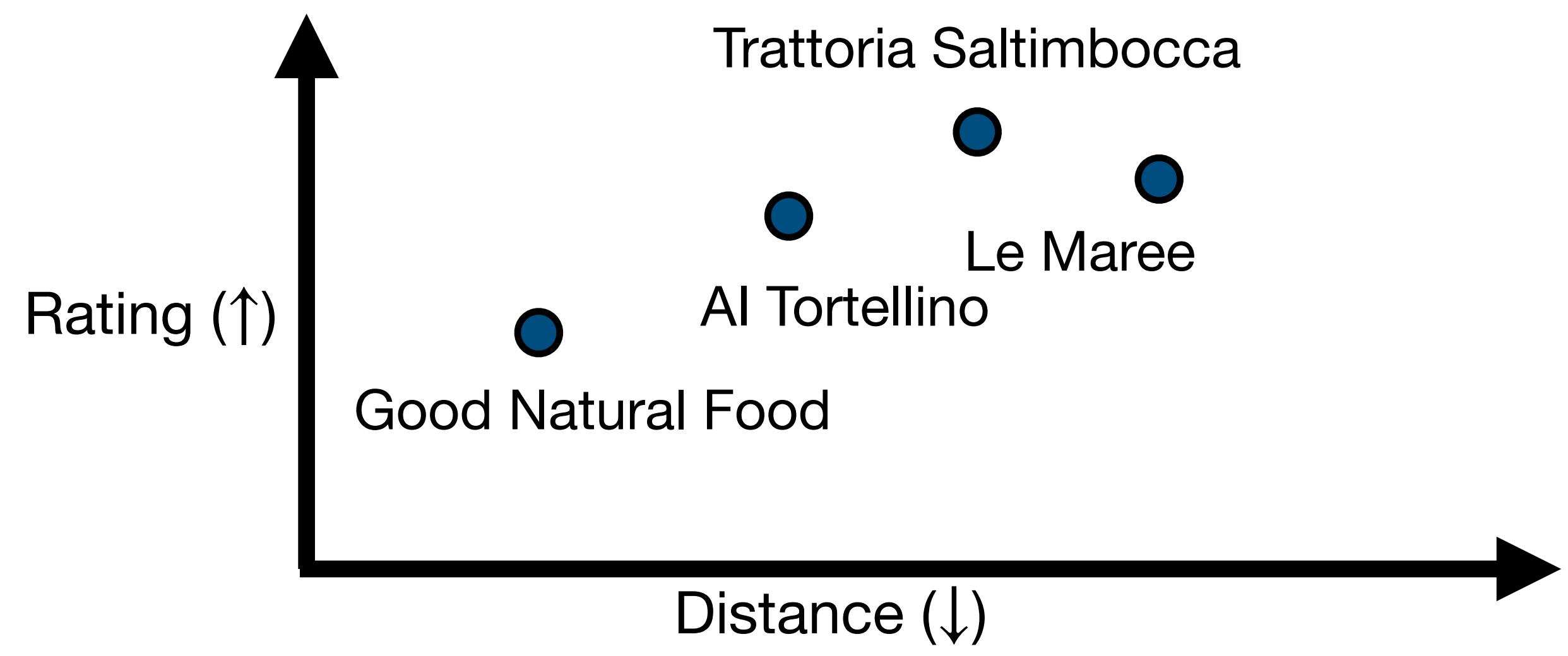
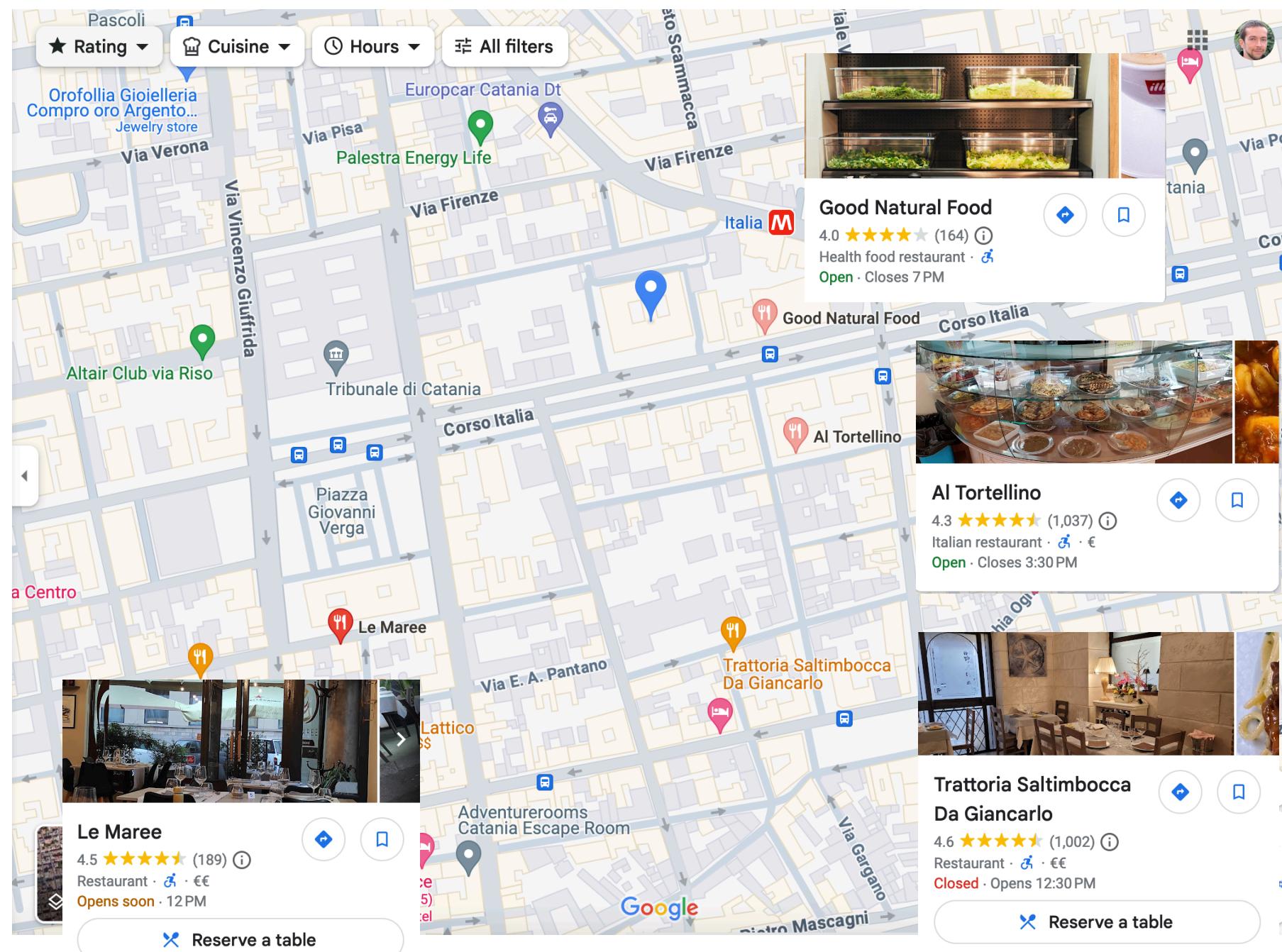
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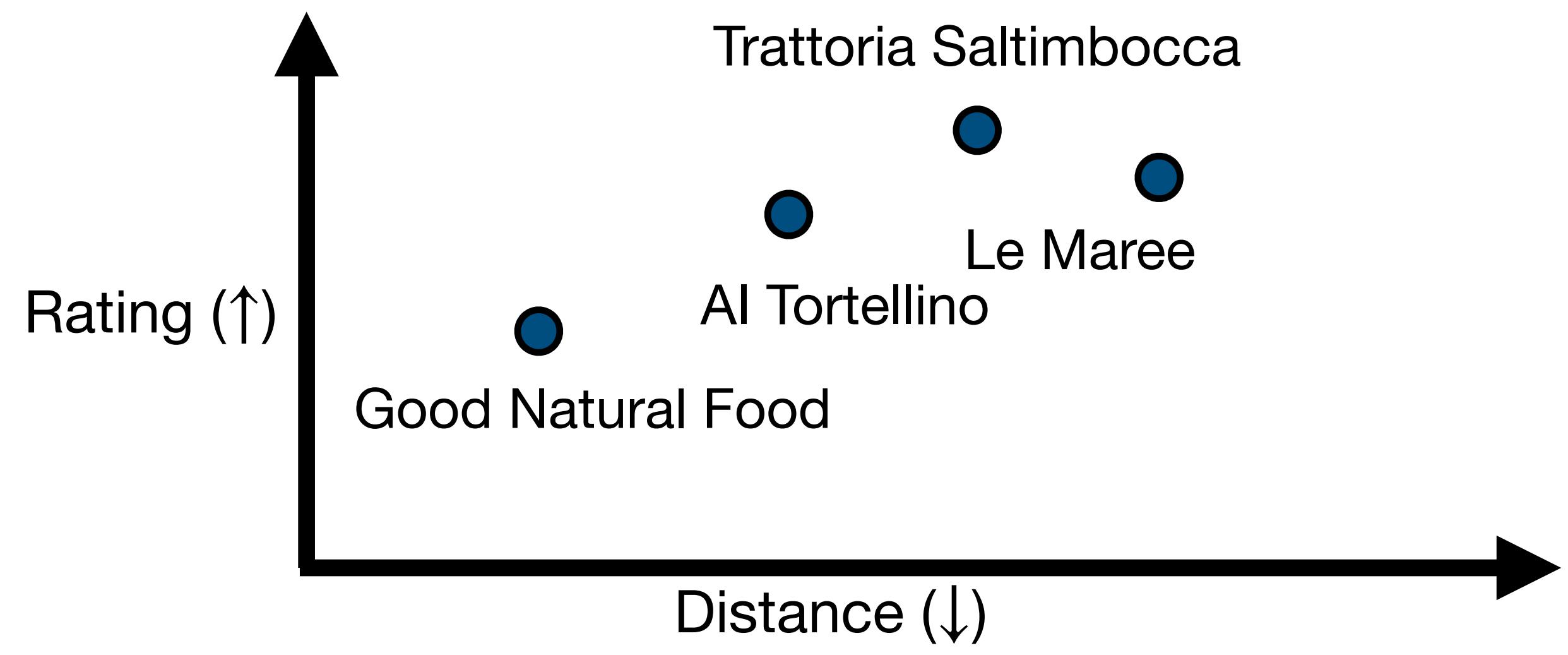
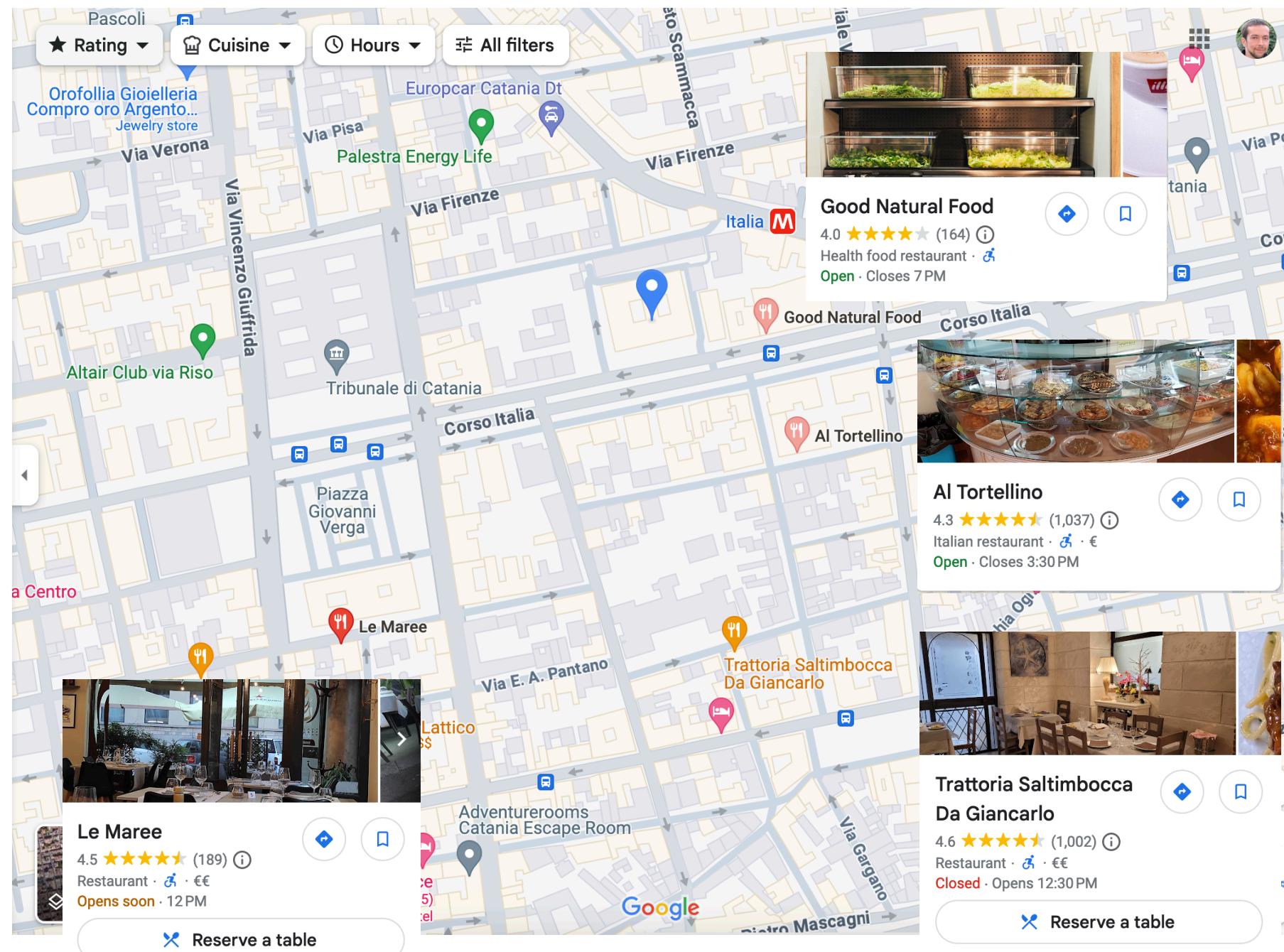
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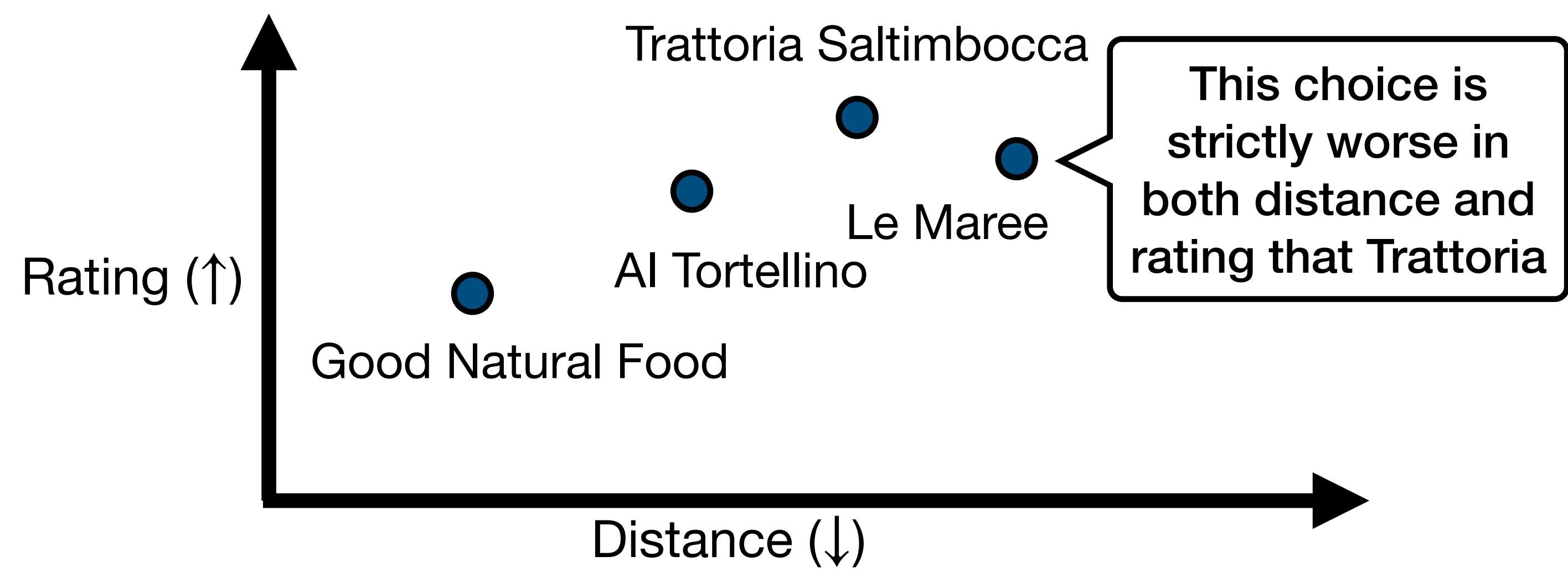
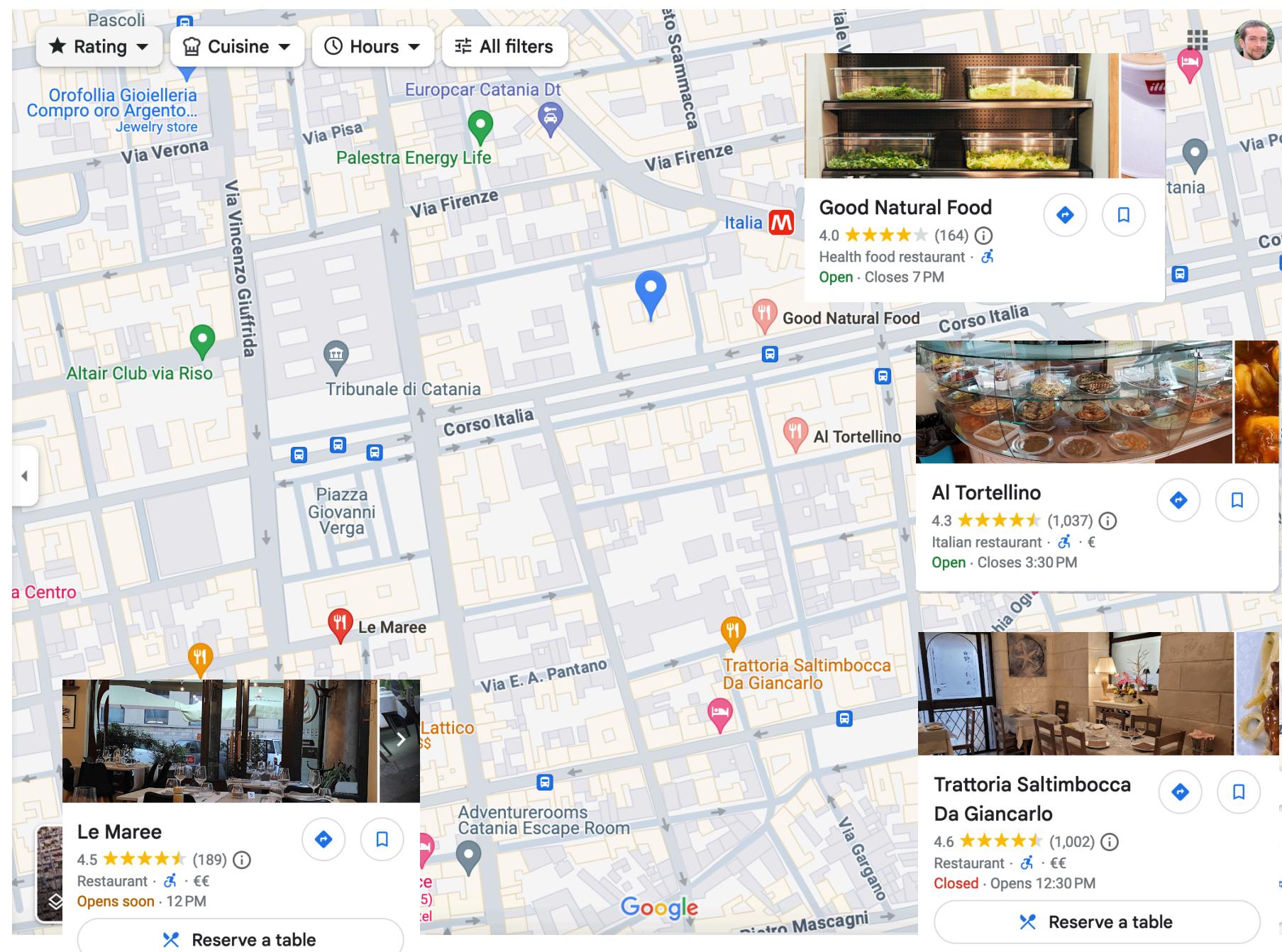
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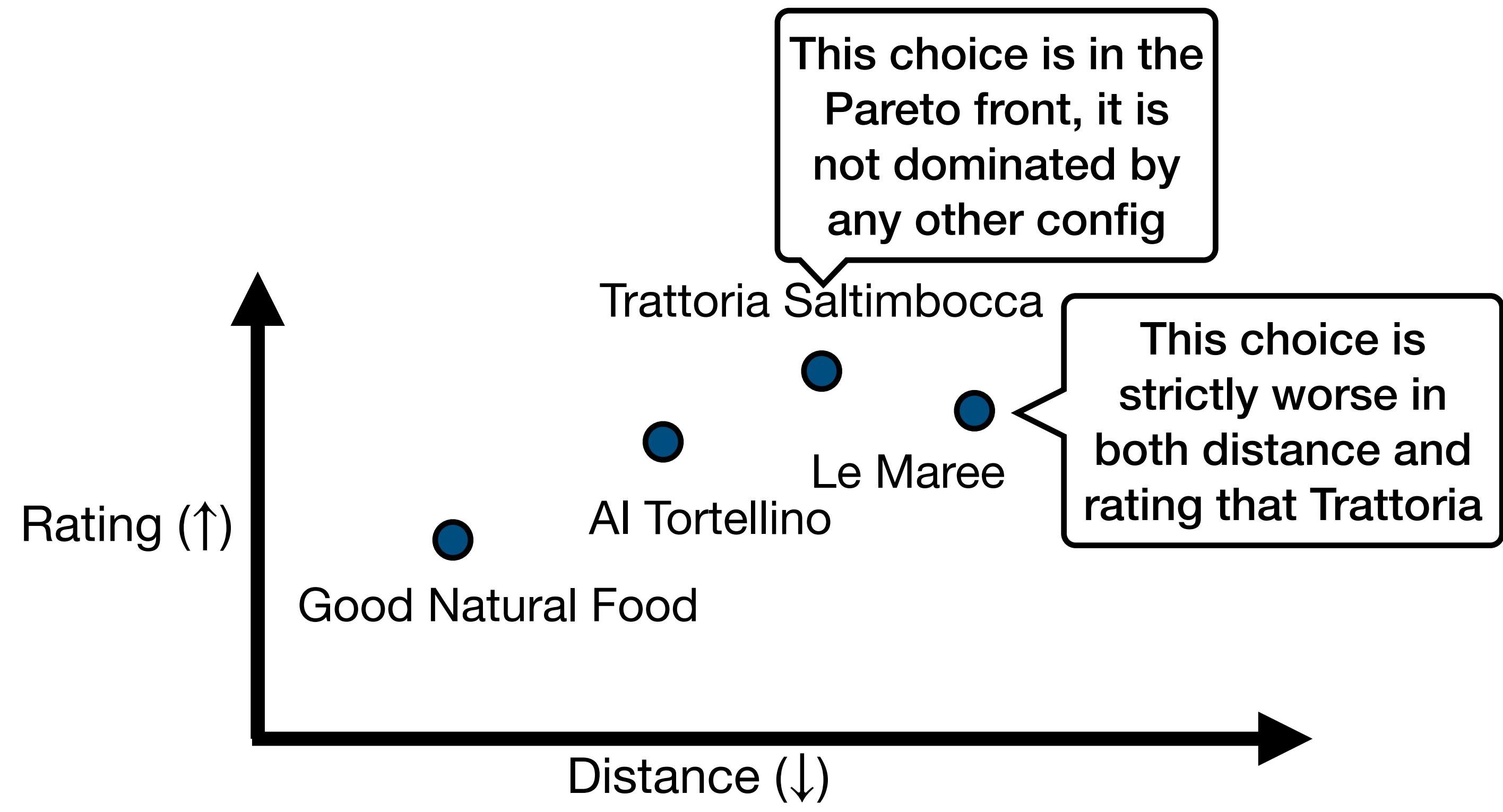
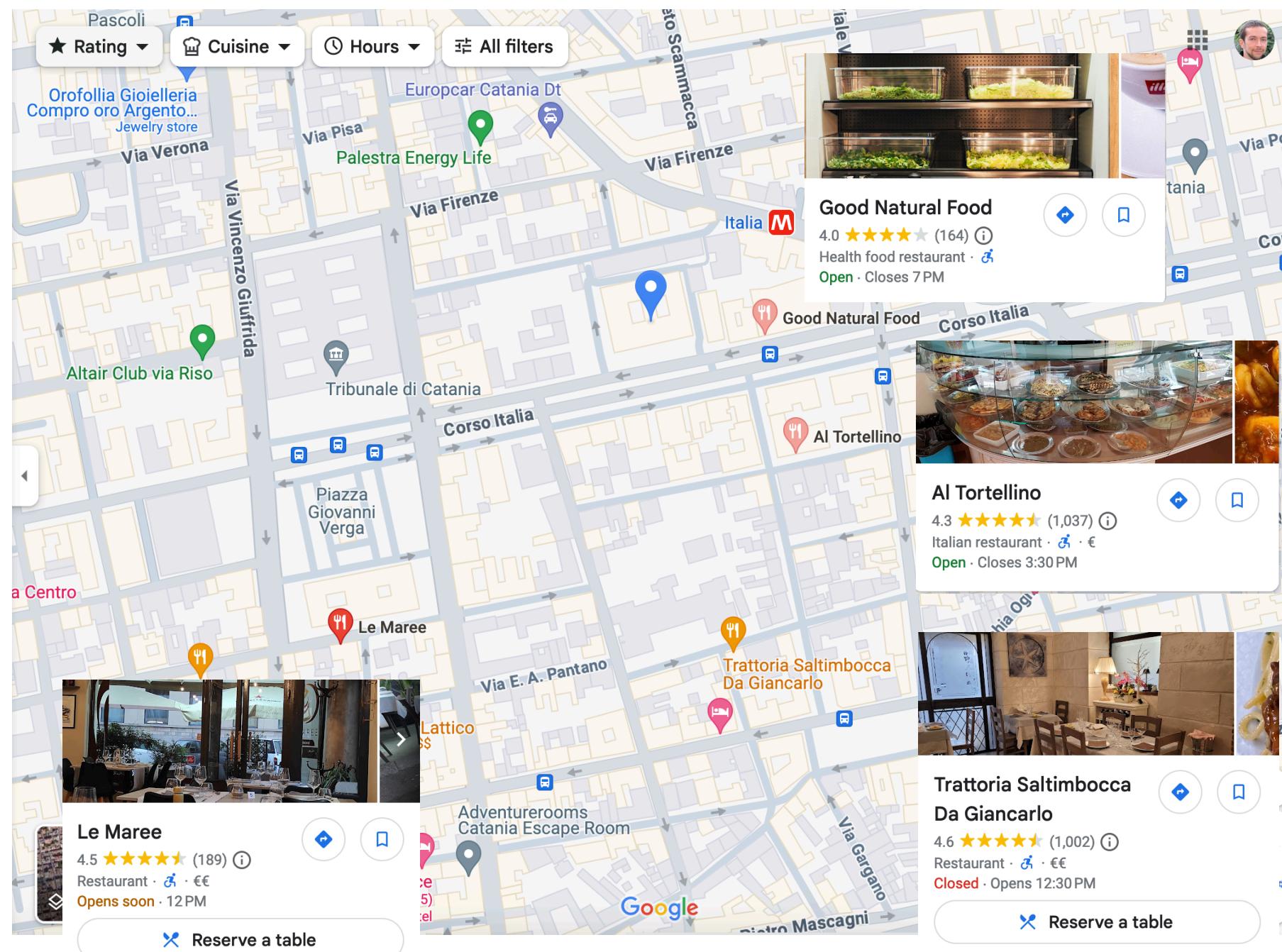
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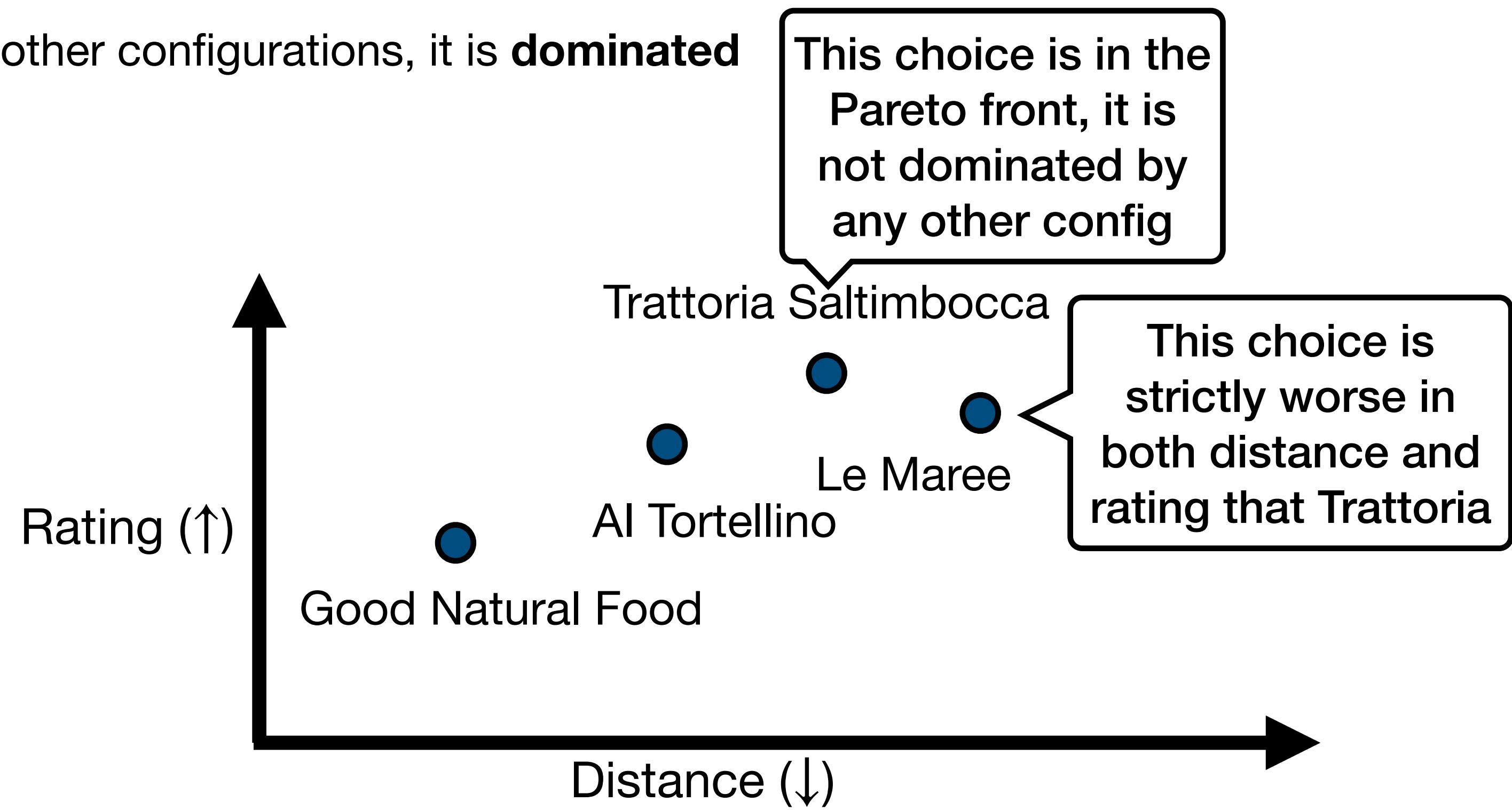
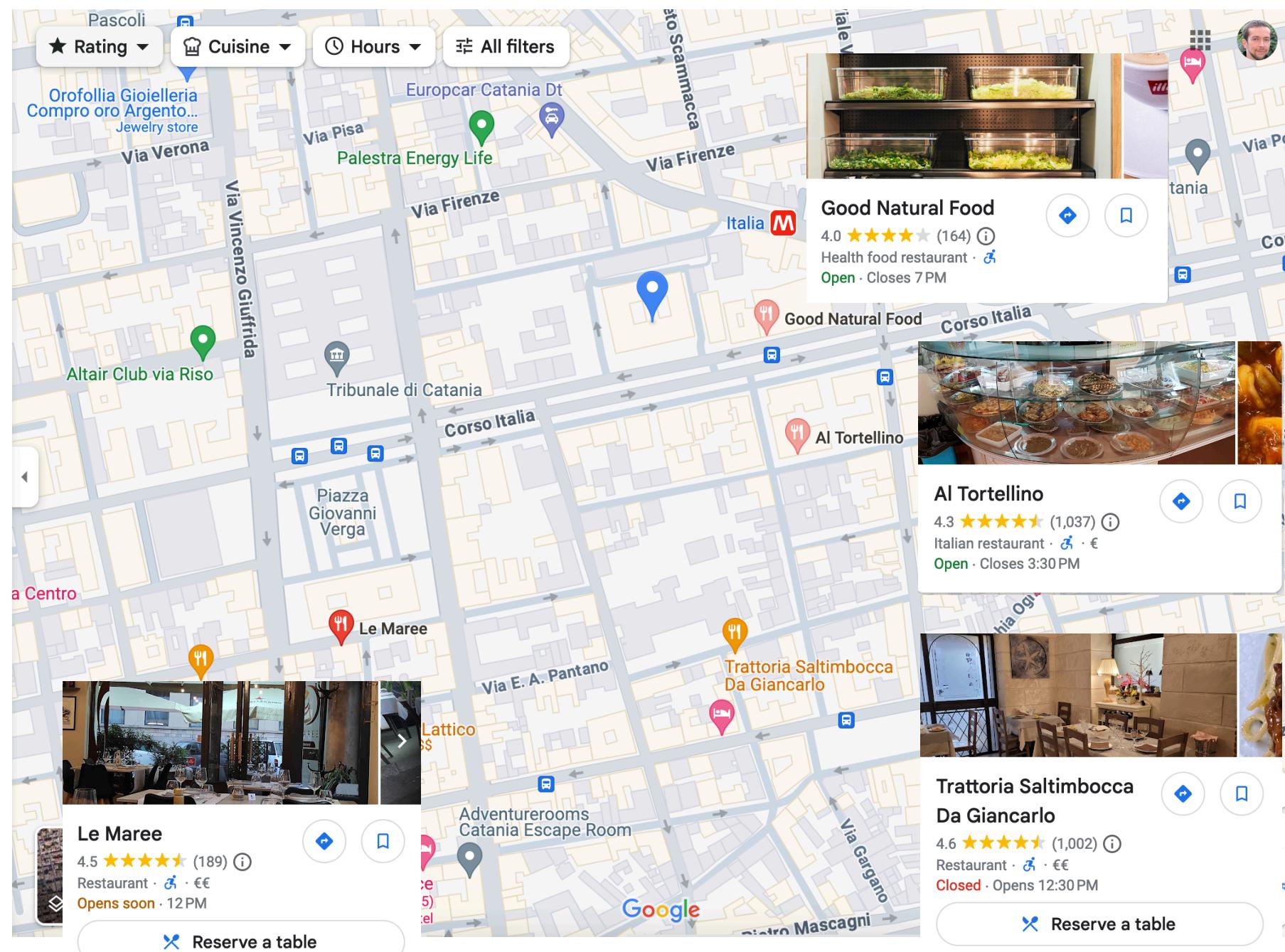
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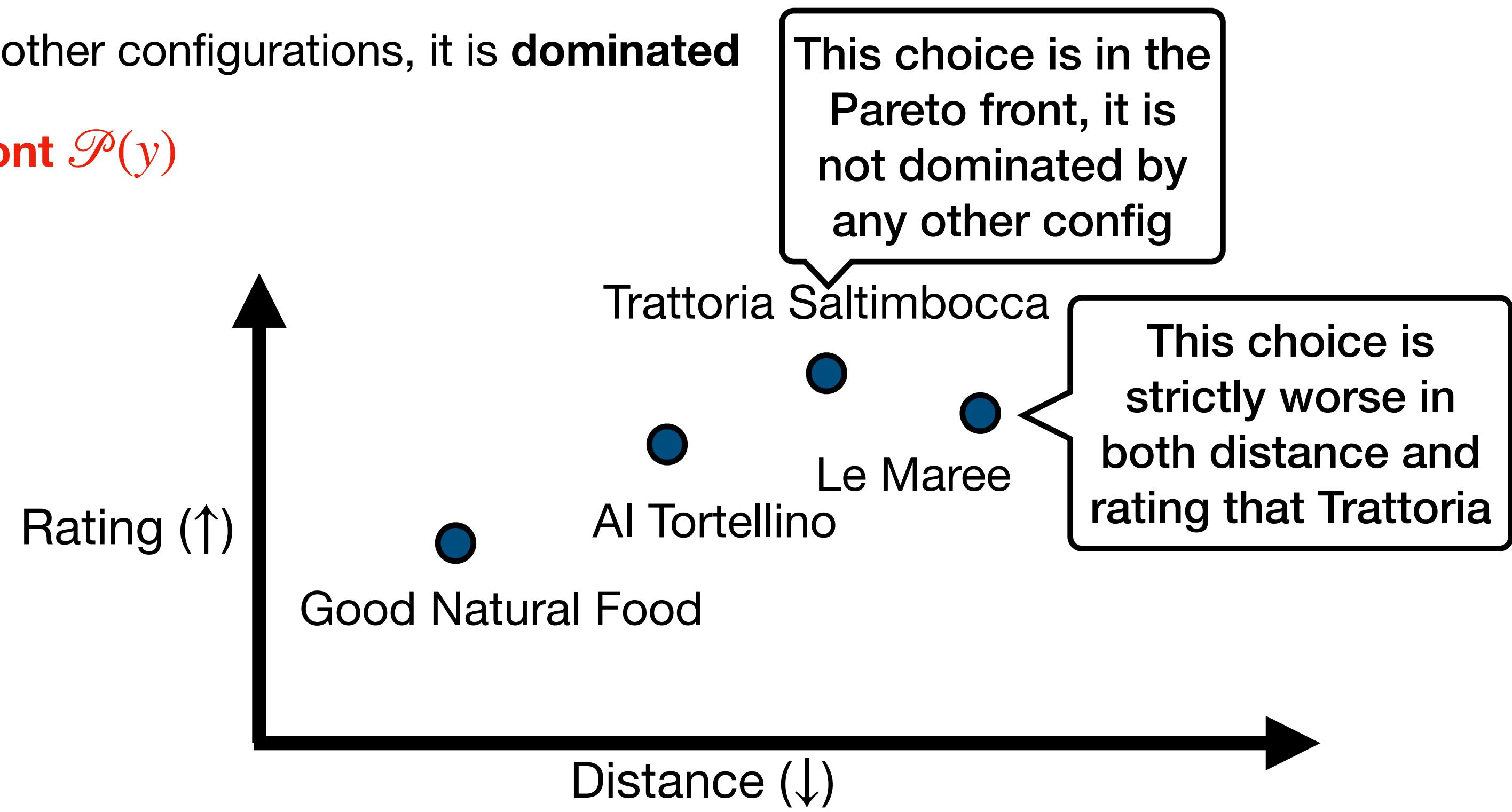
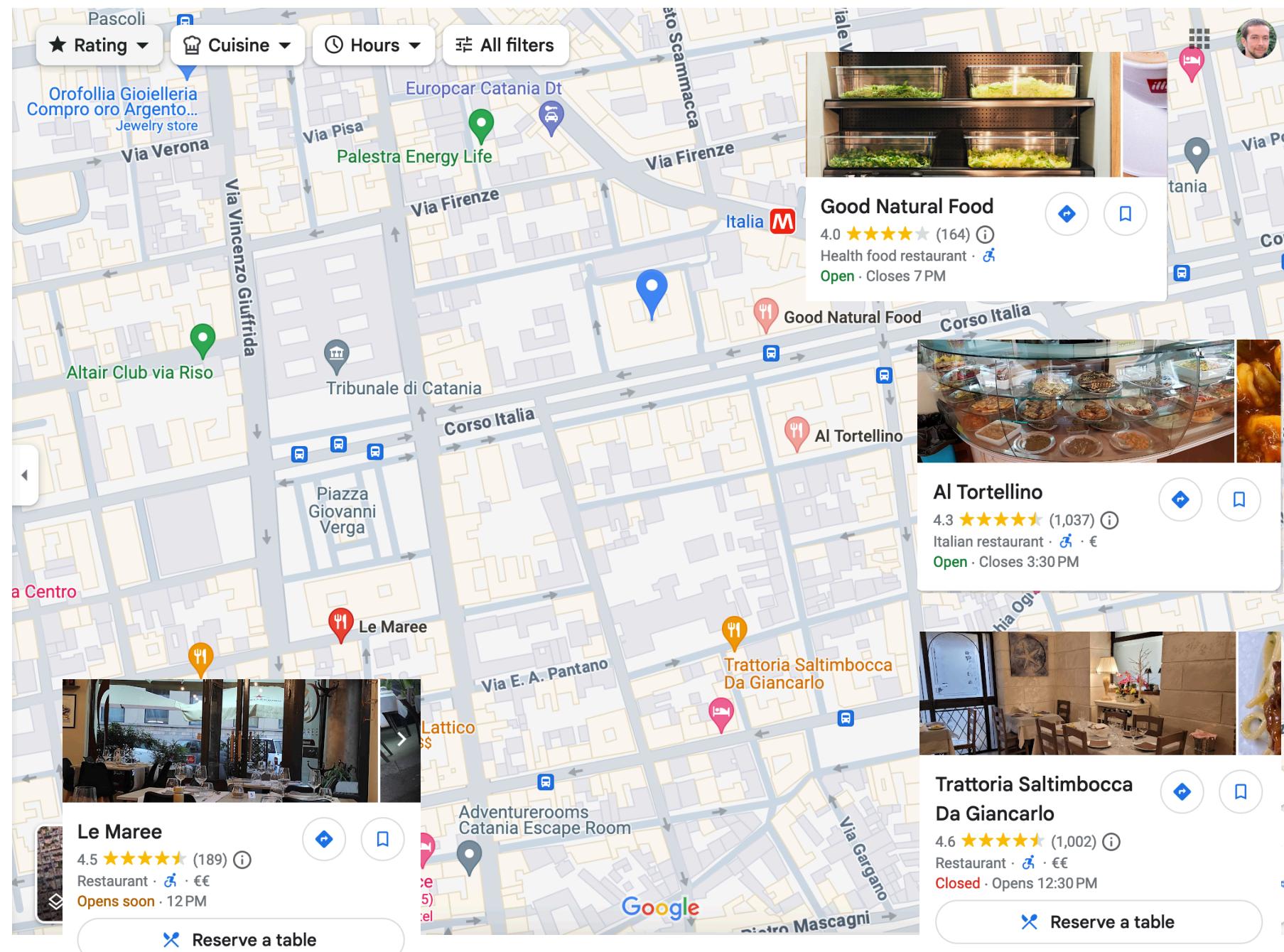
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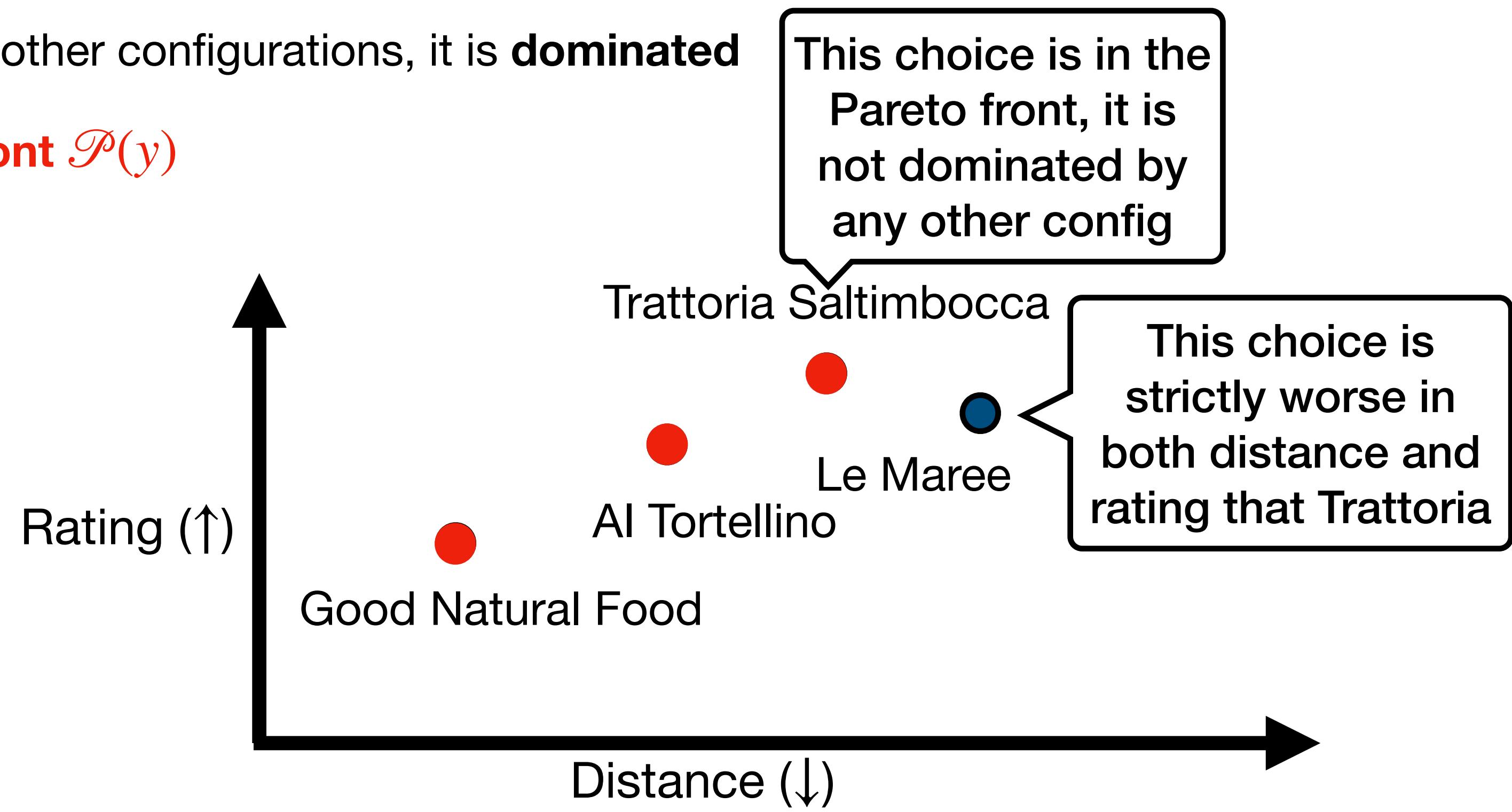
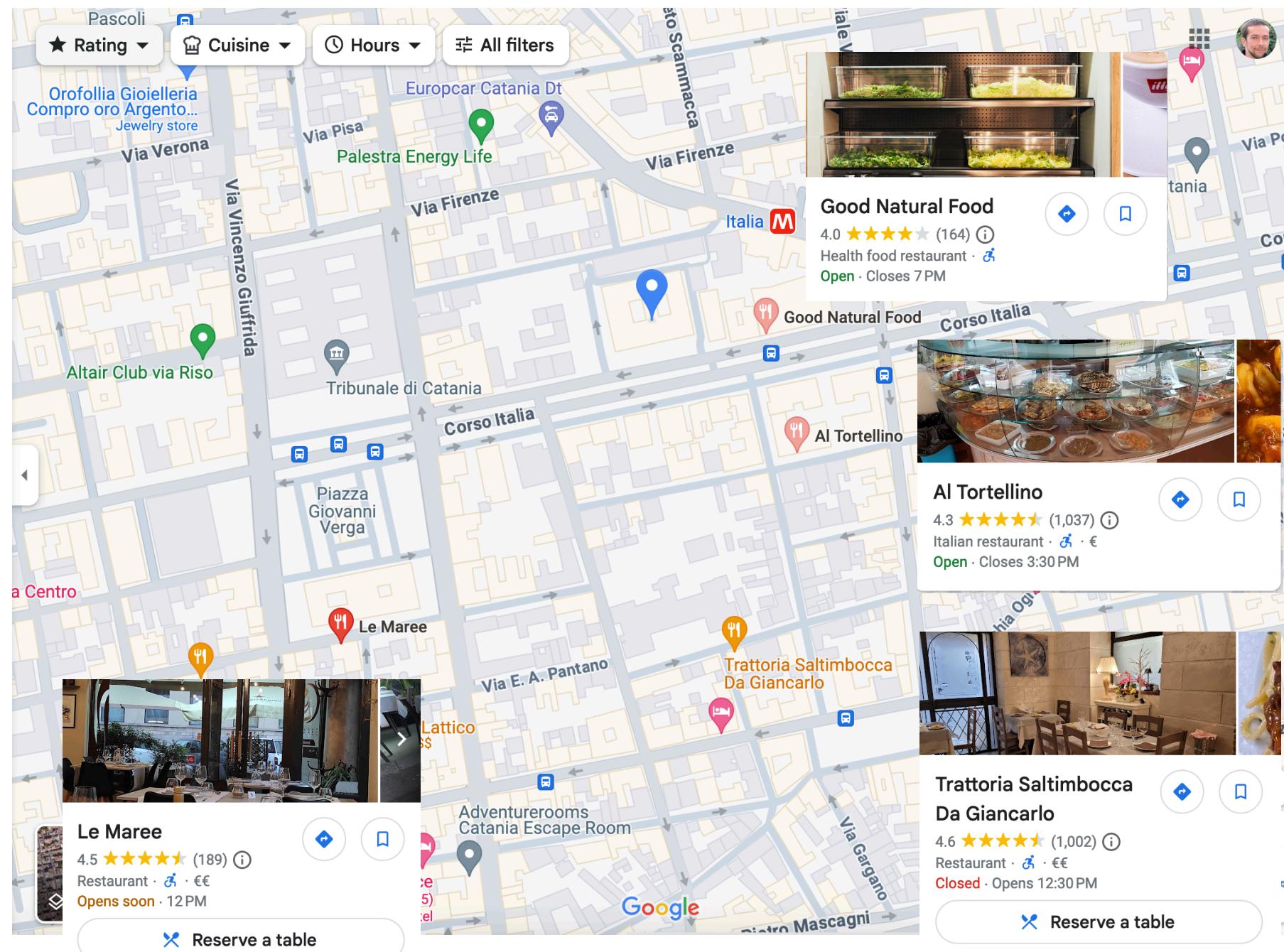
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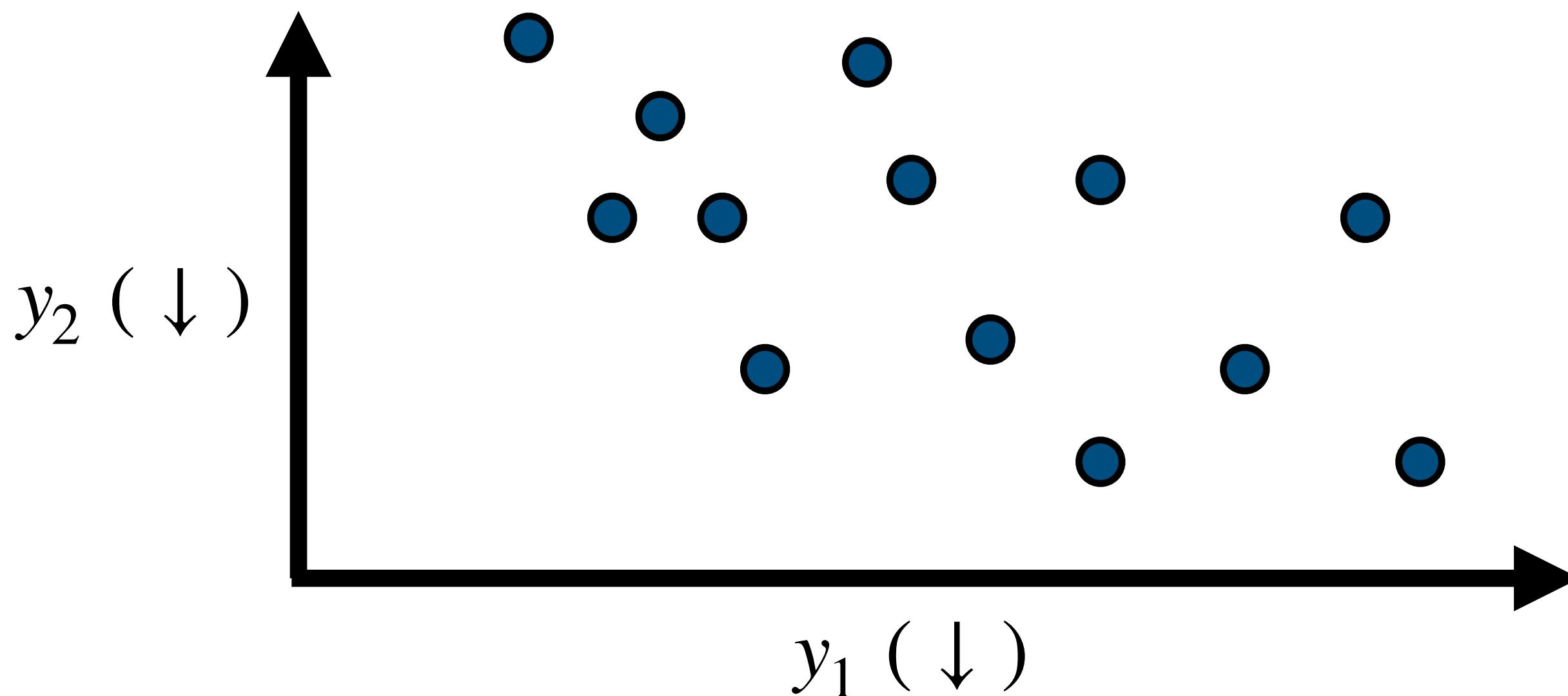
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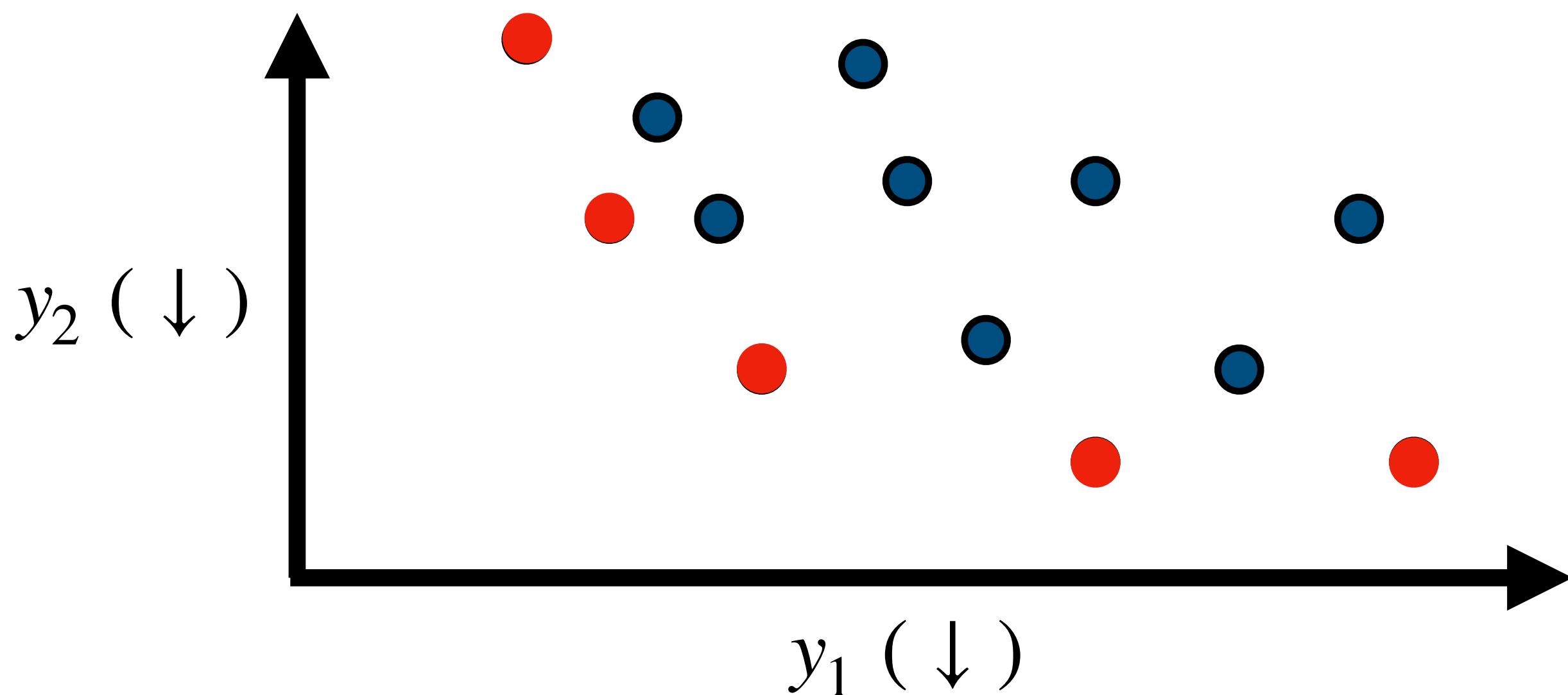
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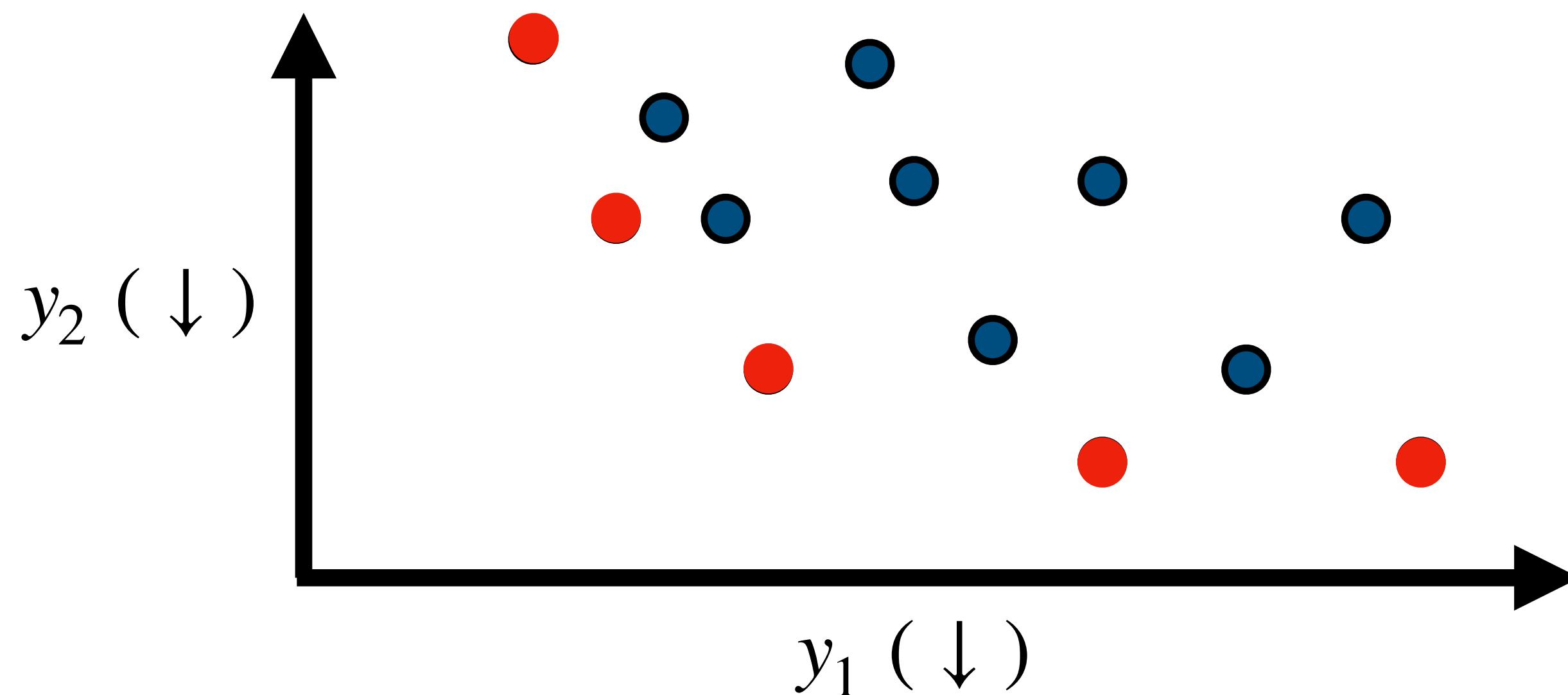
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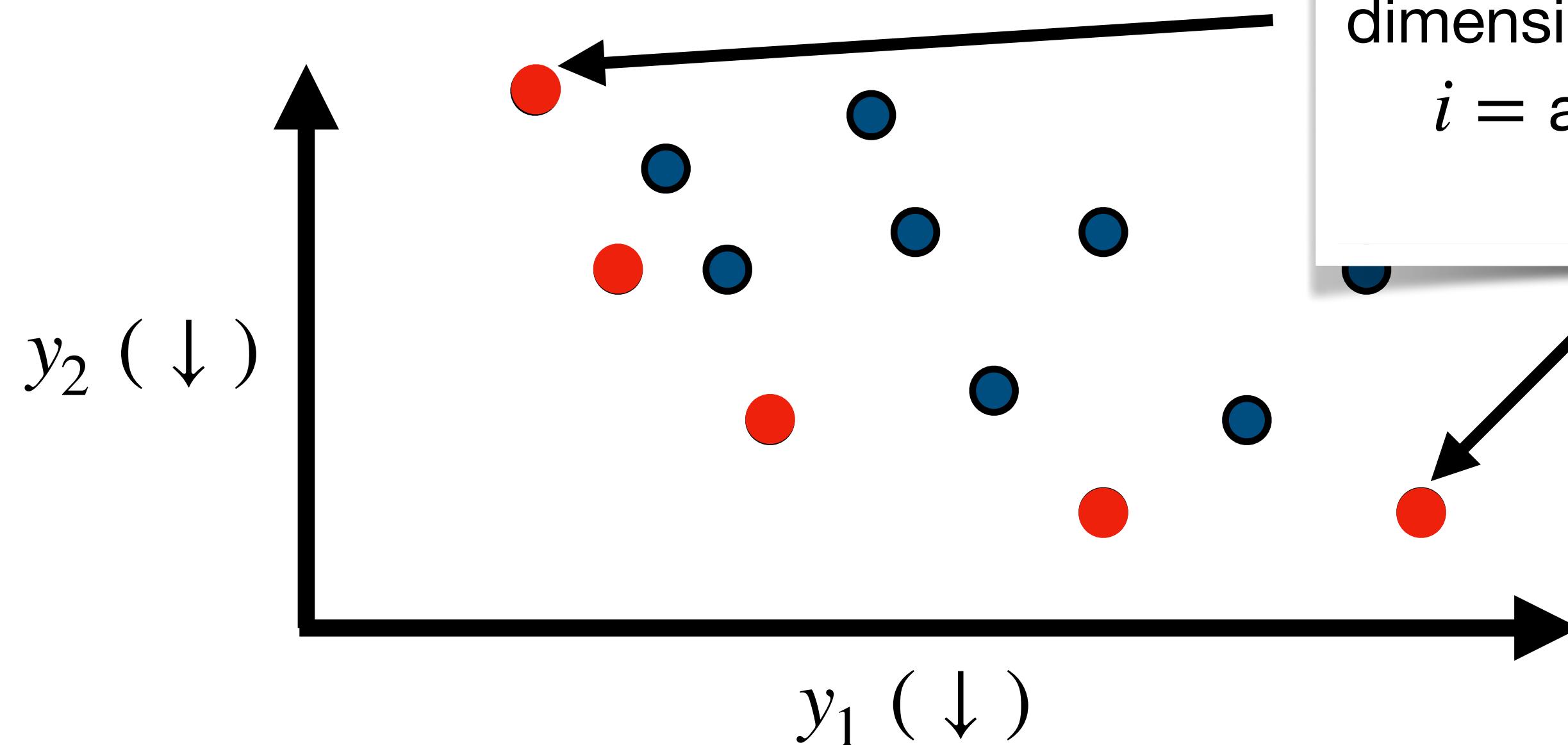
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The configuration minimizing the  $j$ -th dimension is always on the Pareto front!  
 $i = \operatorname{argmin}_{i \in [n]} y_{ij}$  is always on the Pareto front

# Multifidelity

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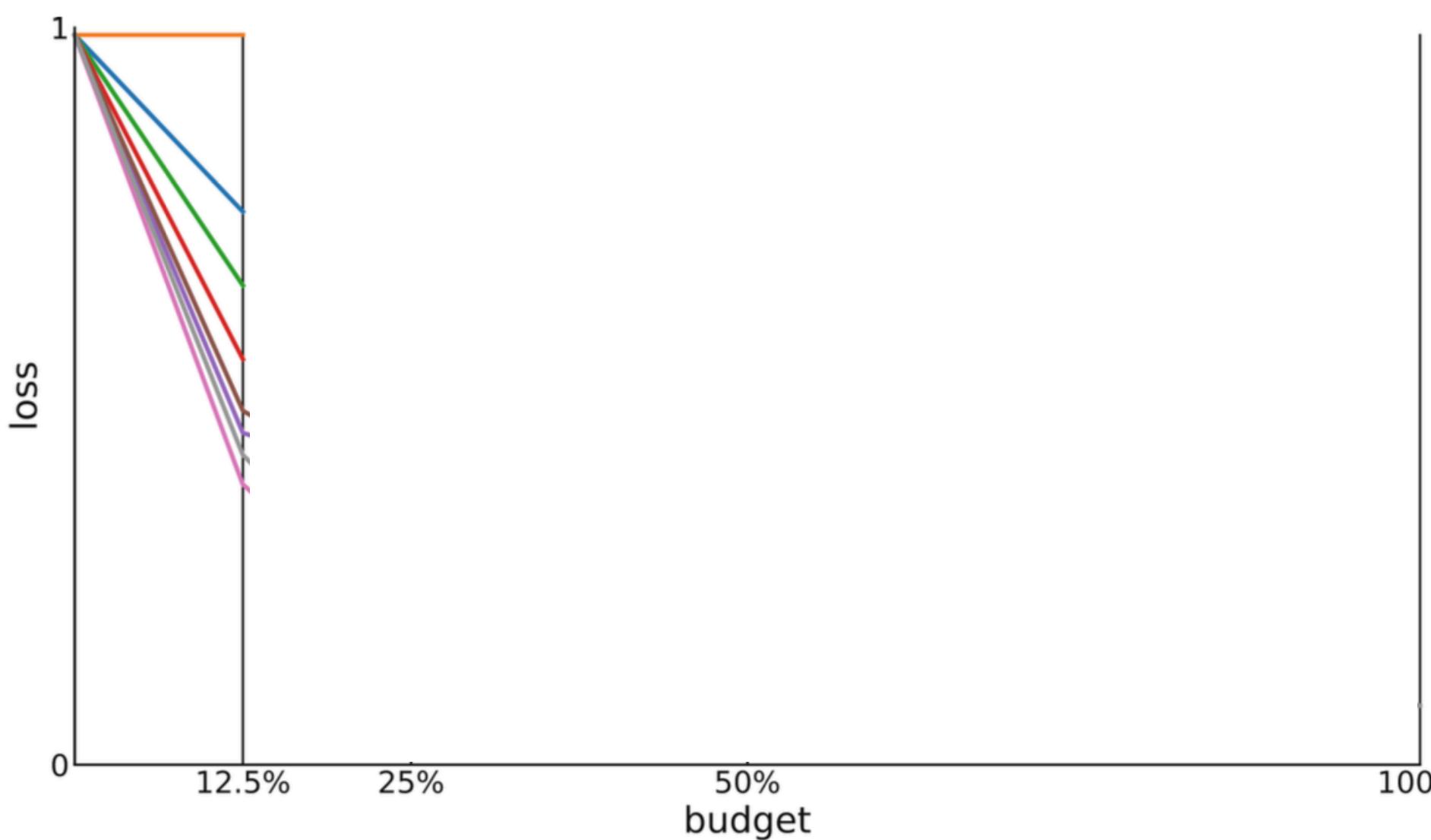


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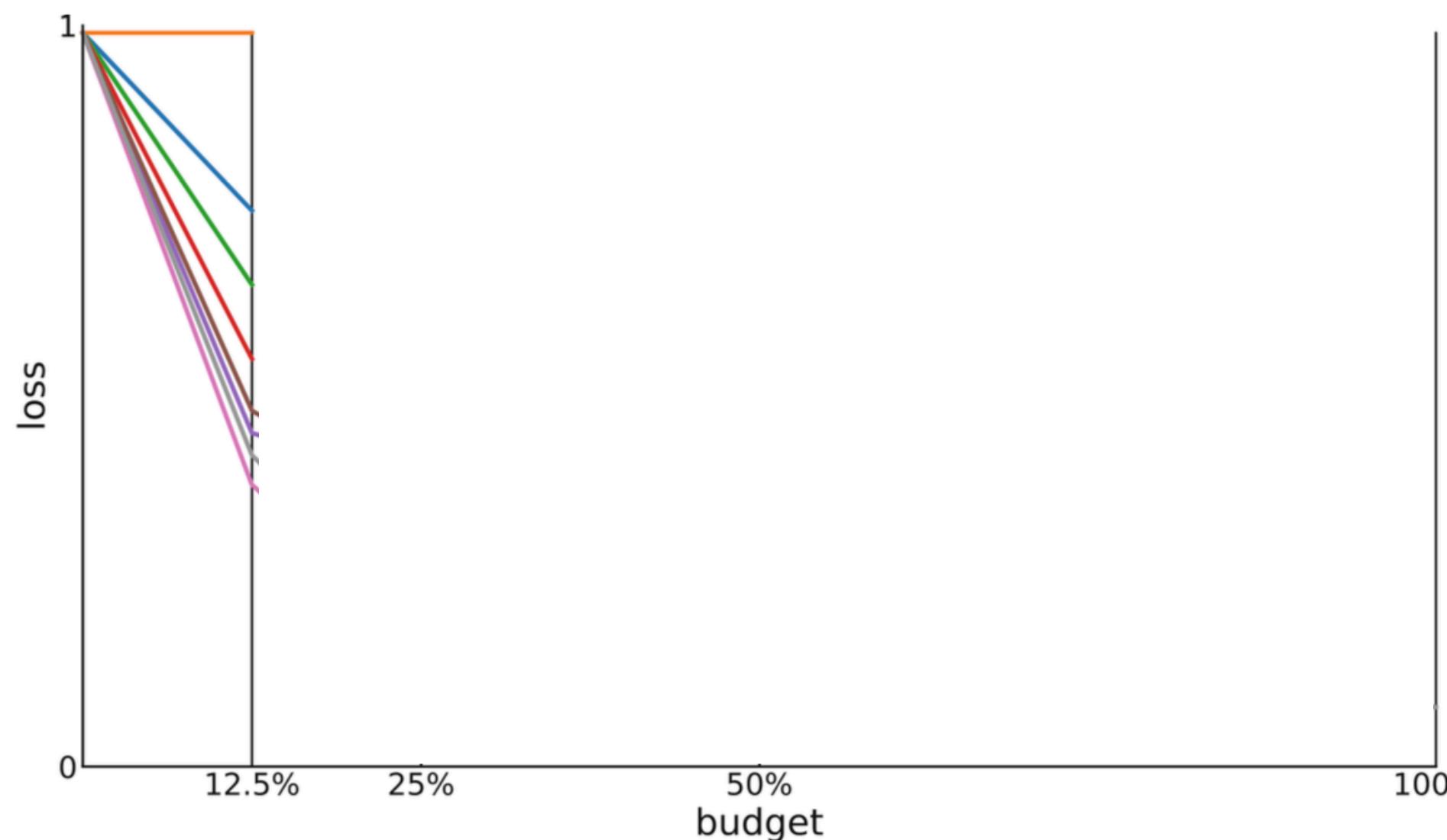


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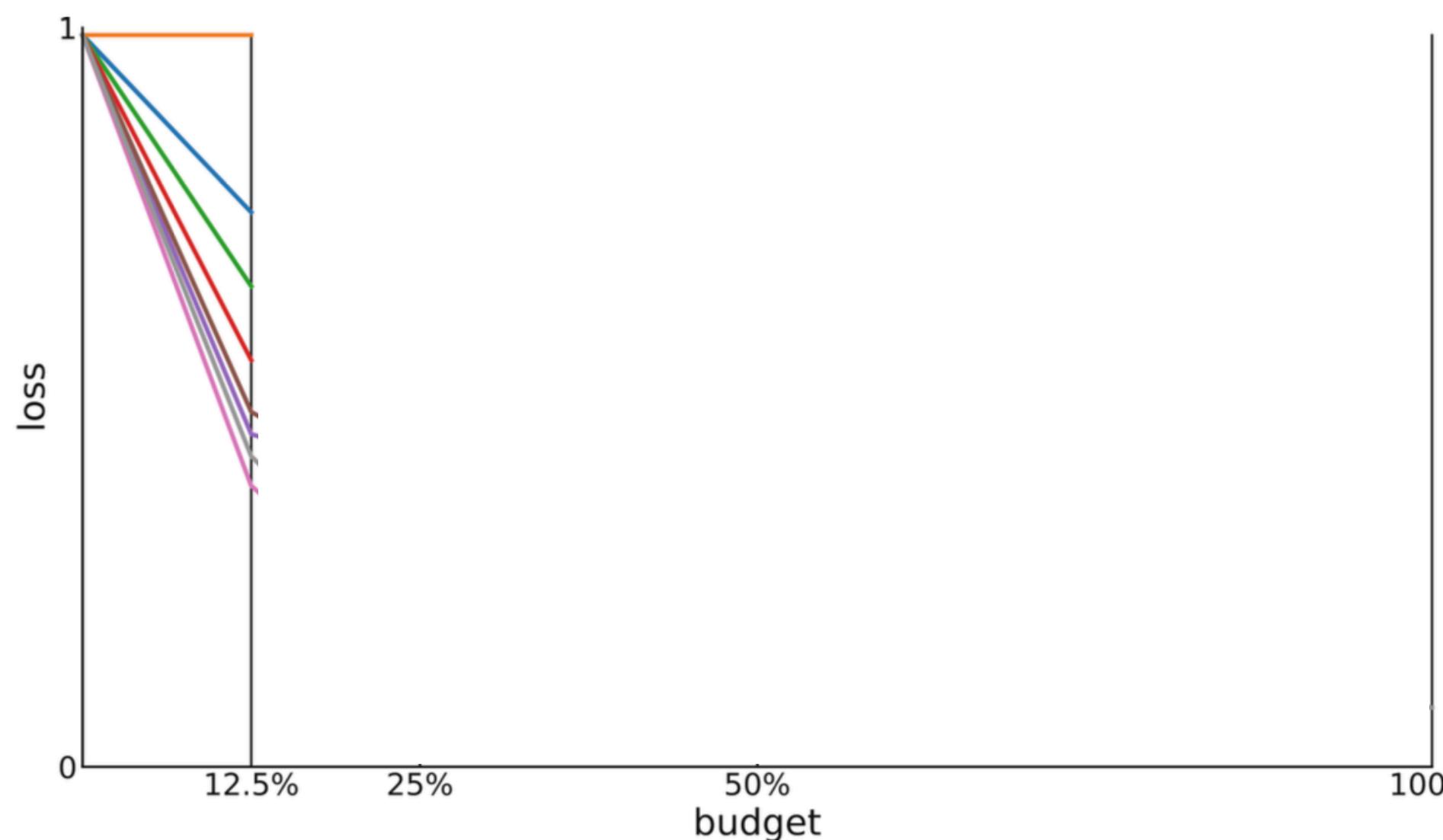


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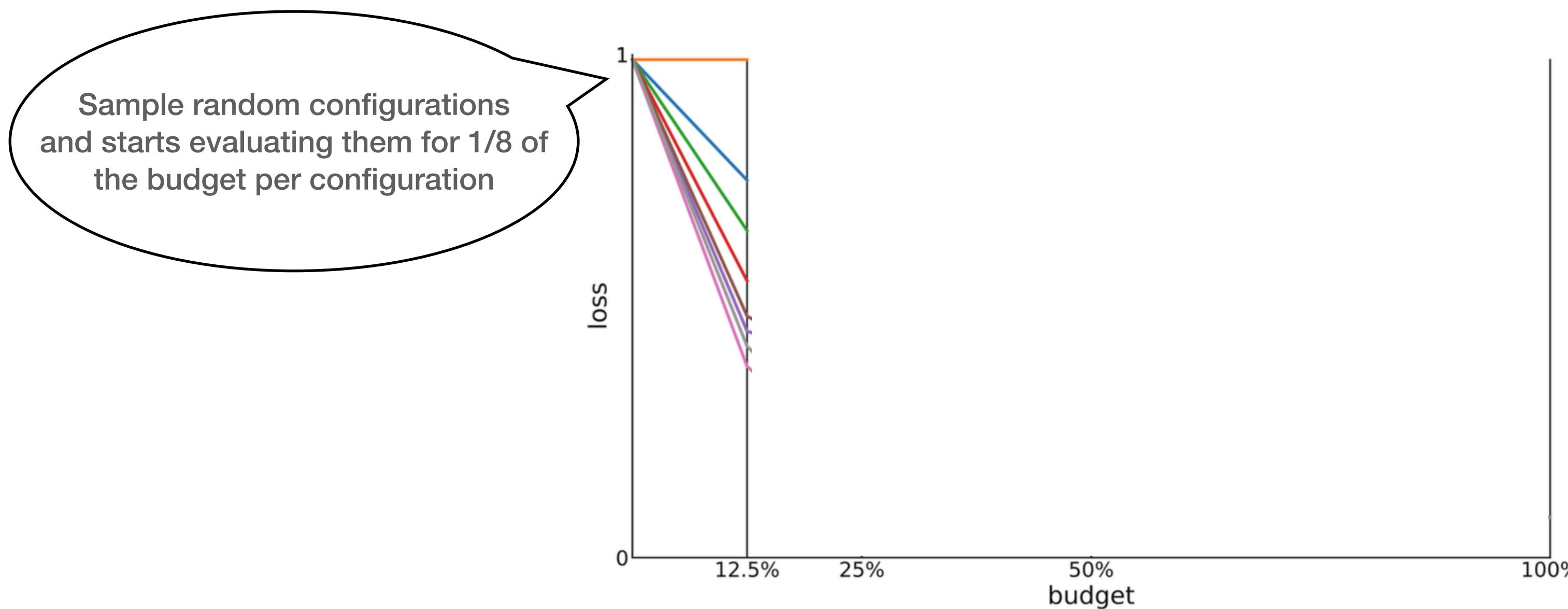


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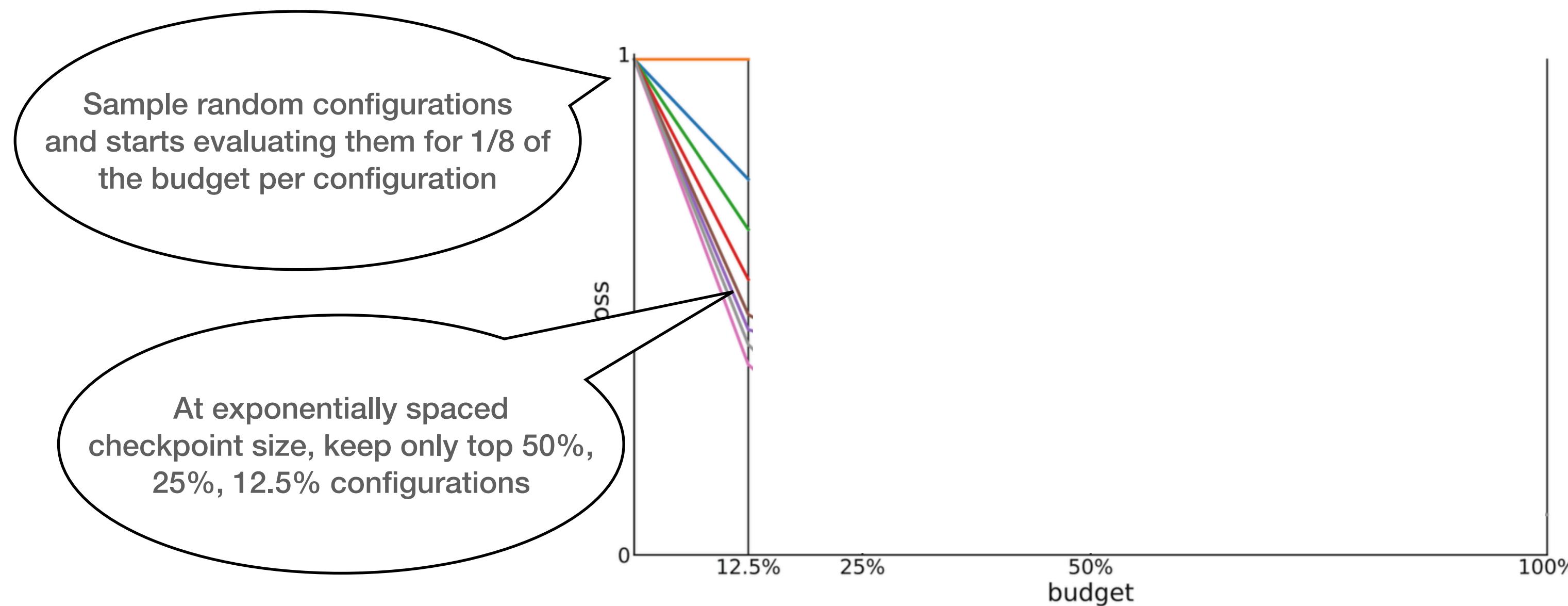


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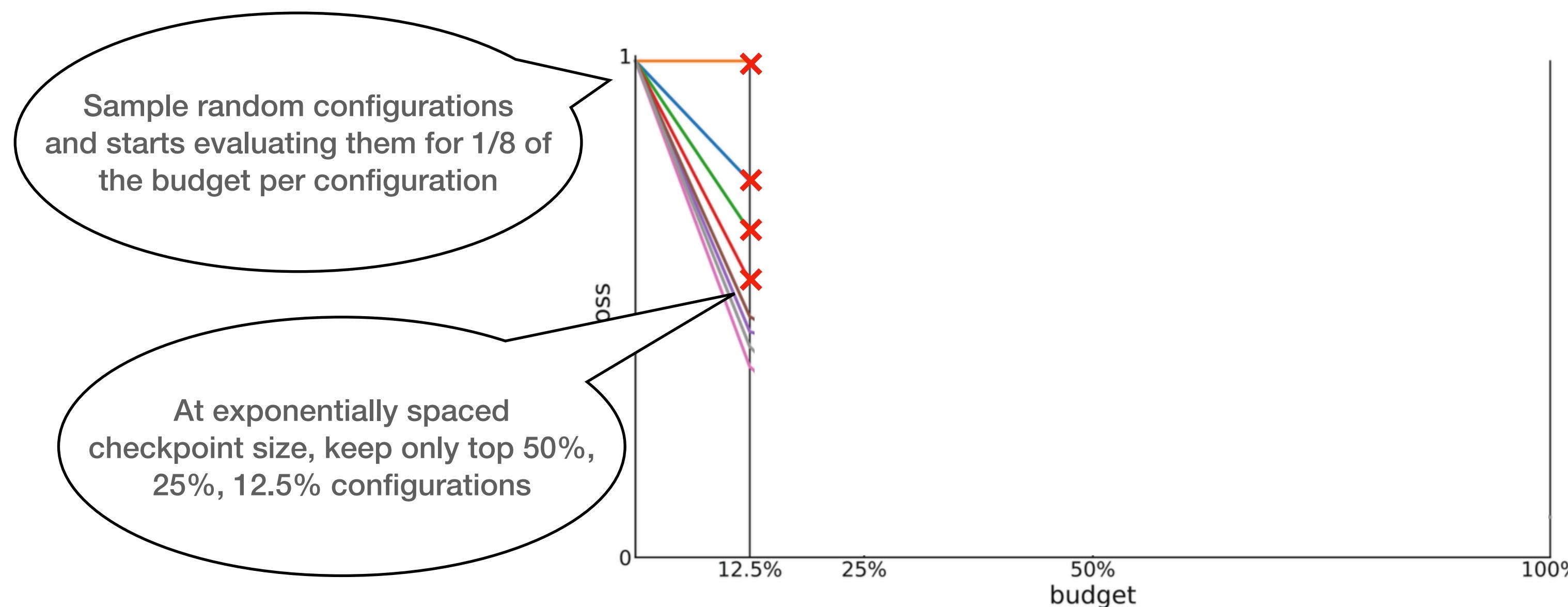


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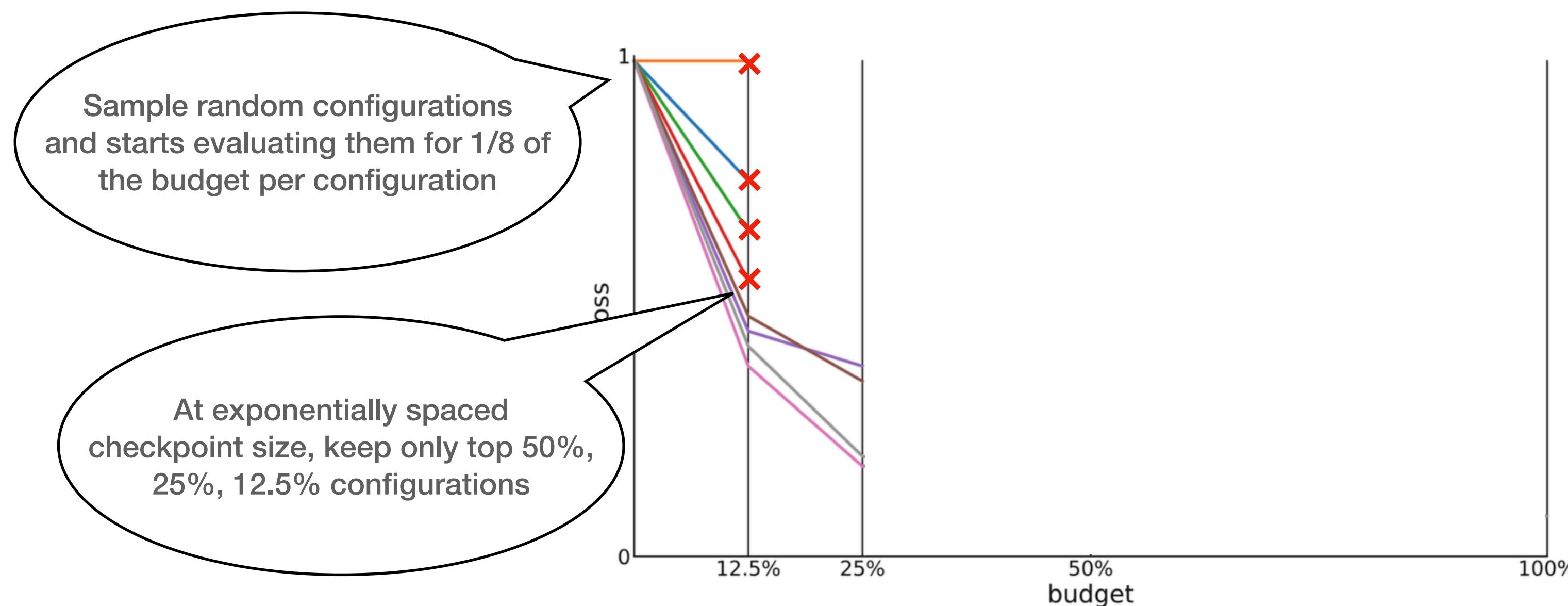


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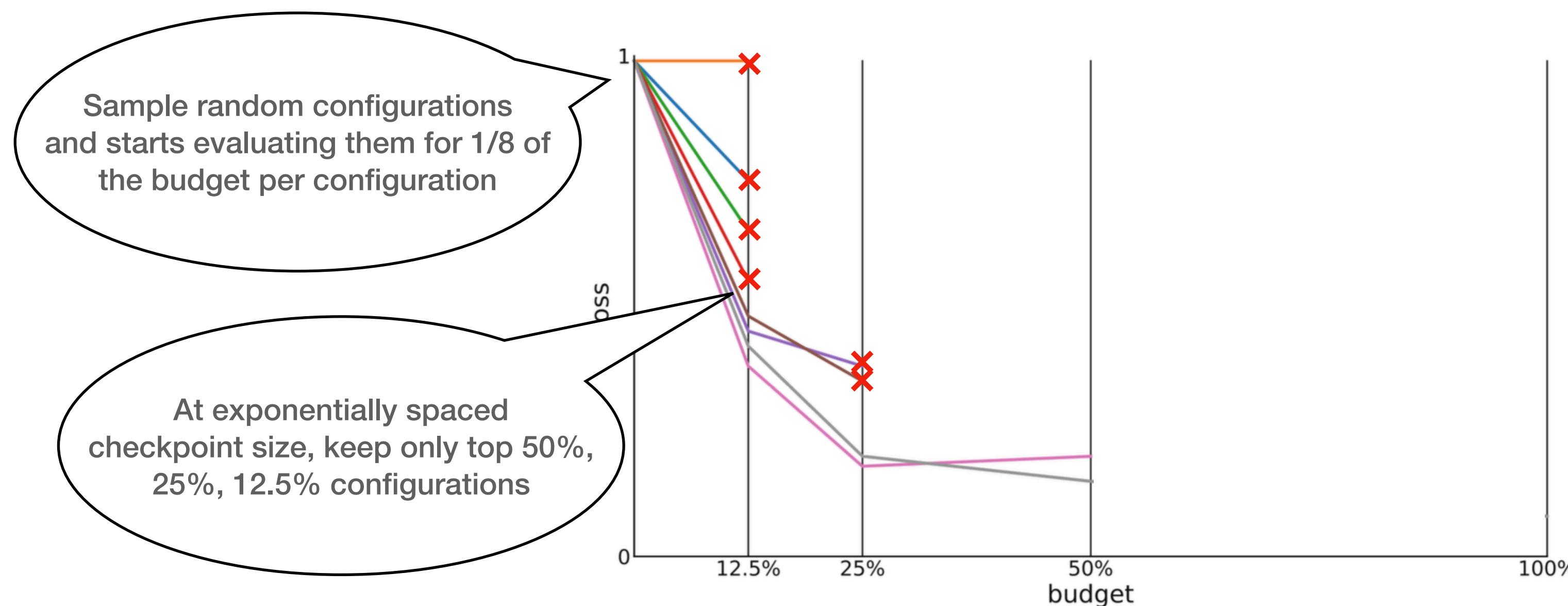


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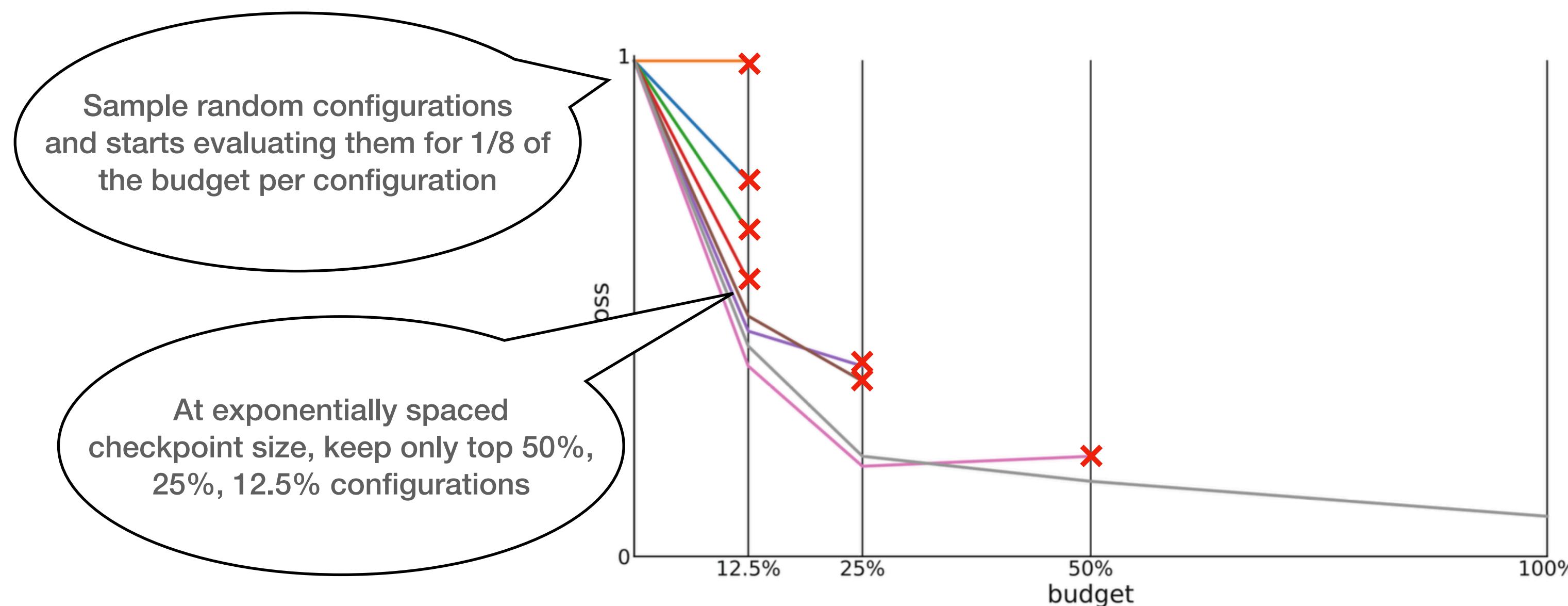


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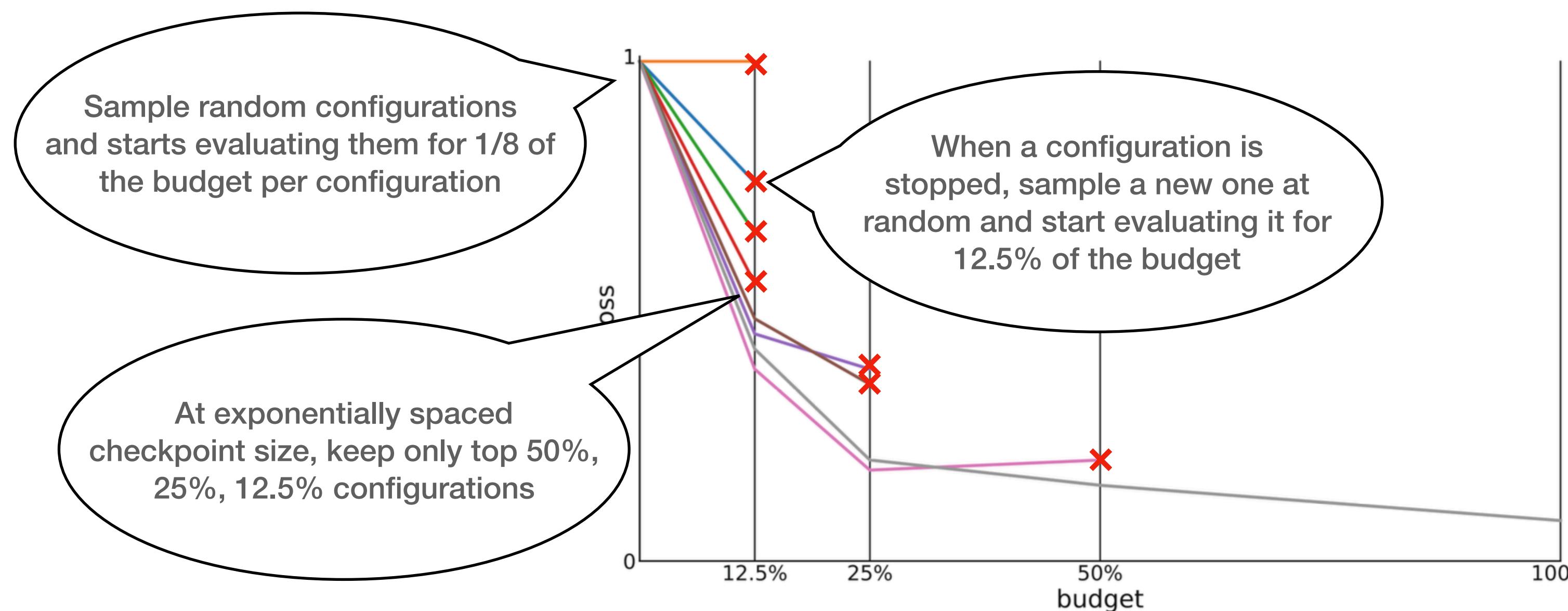


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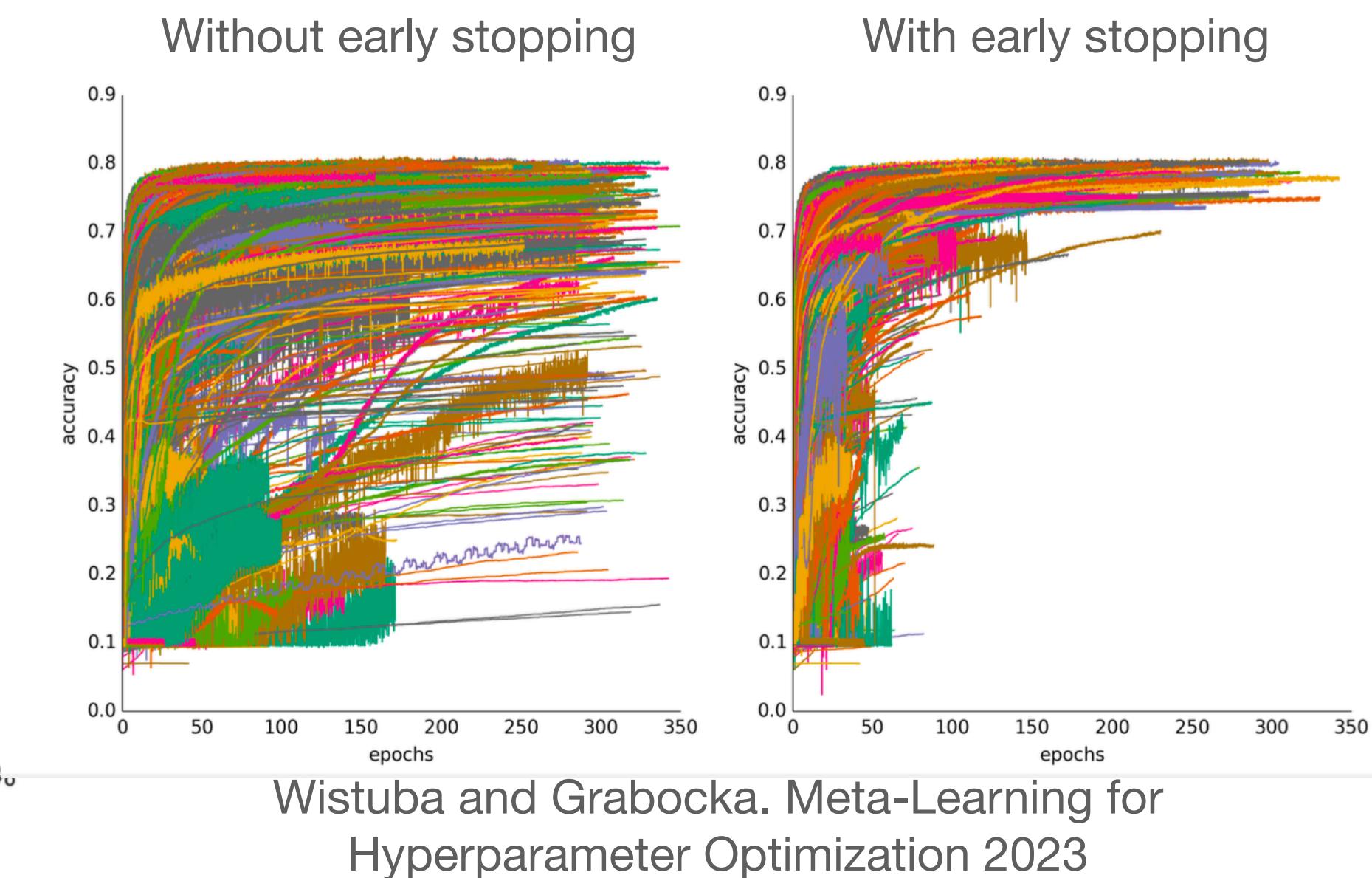
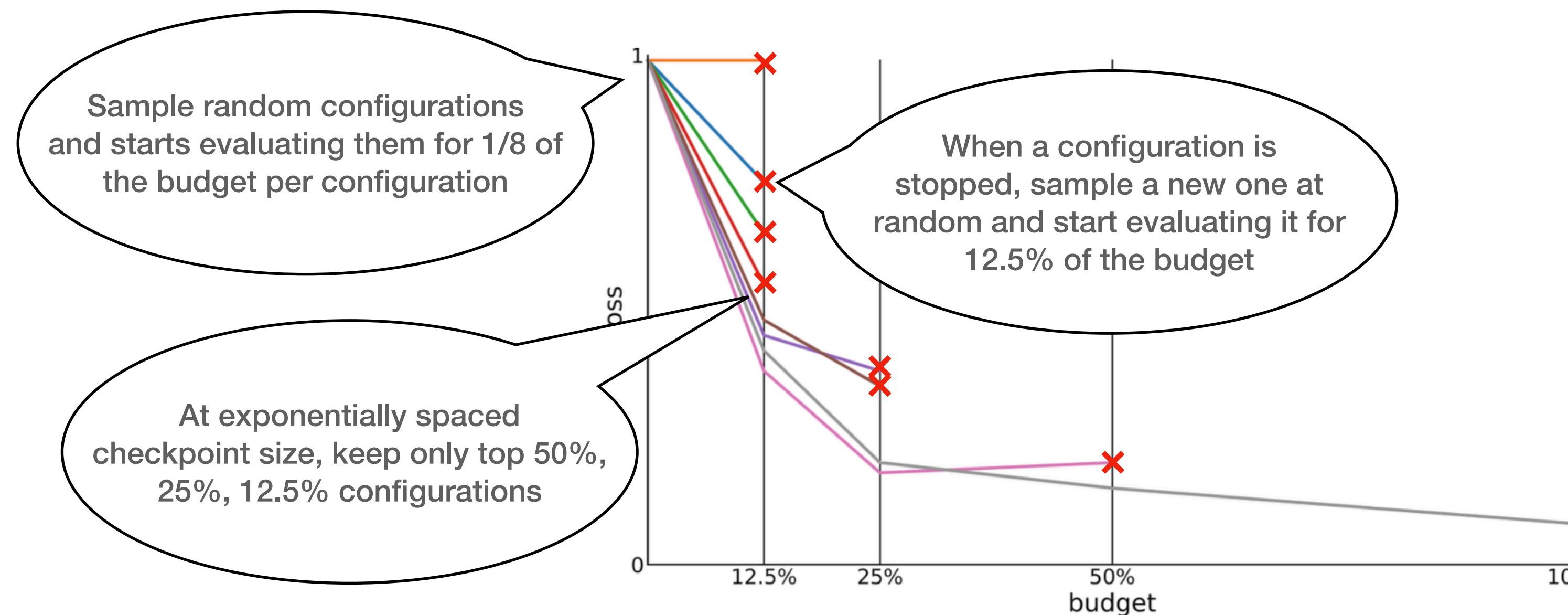


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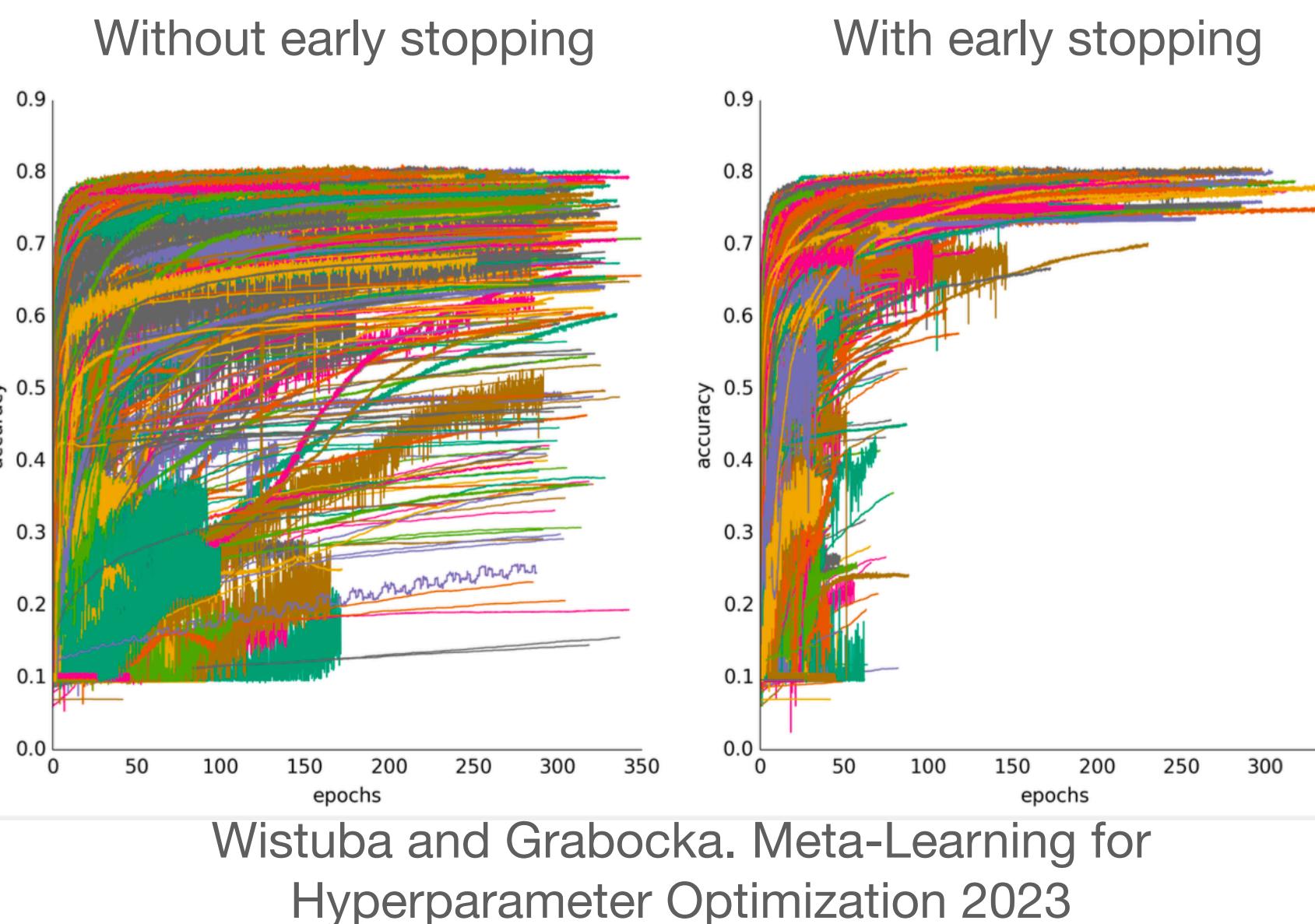
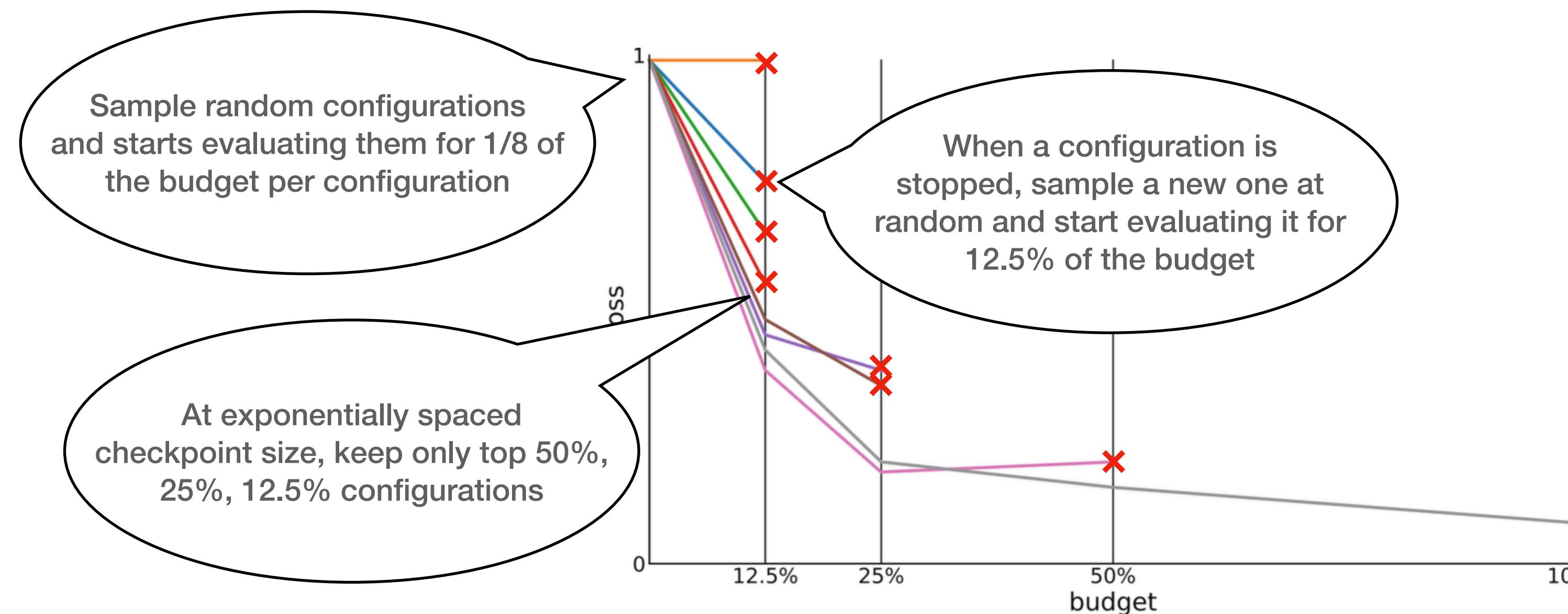


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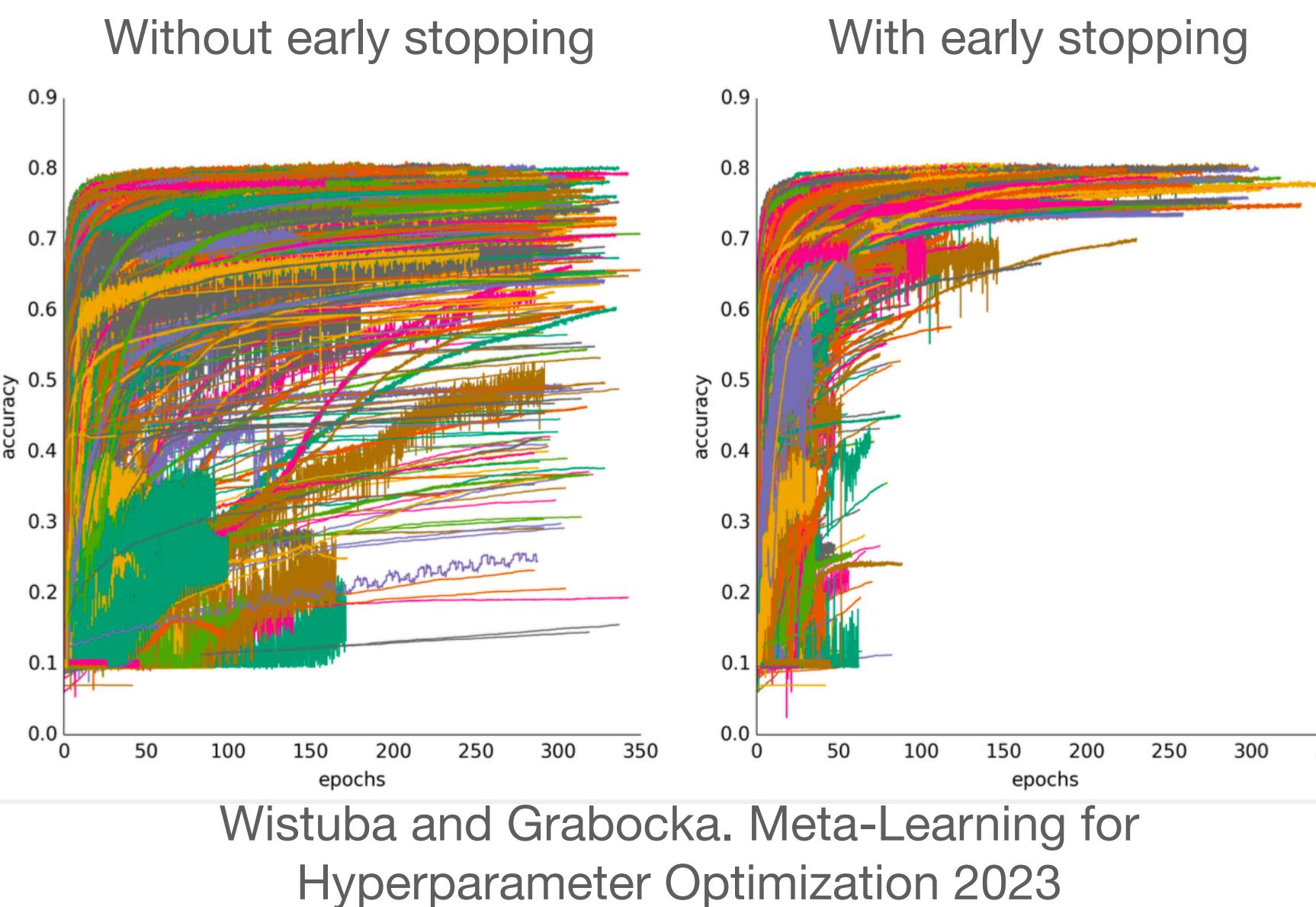
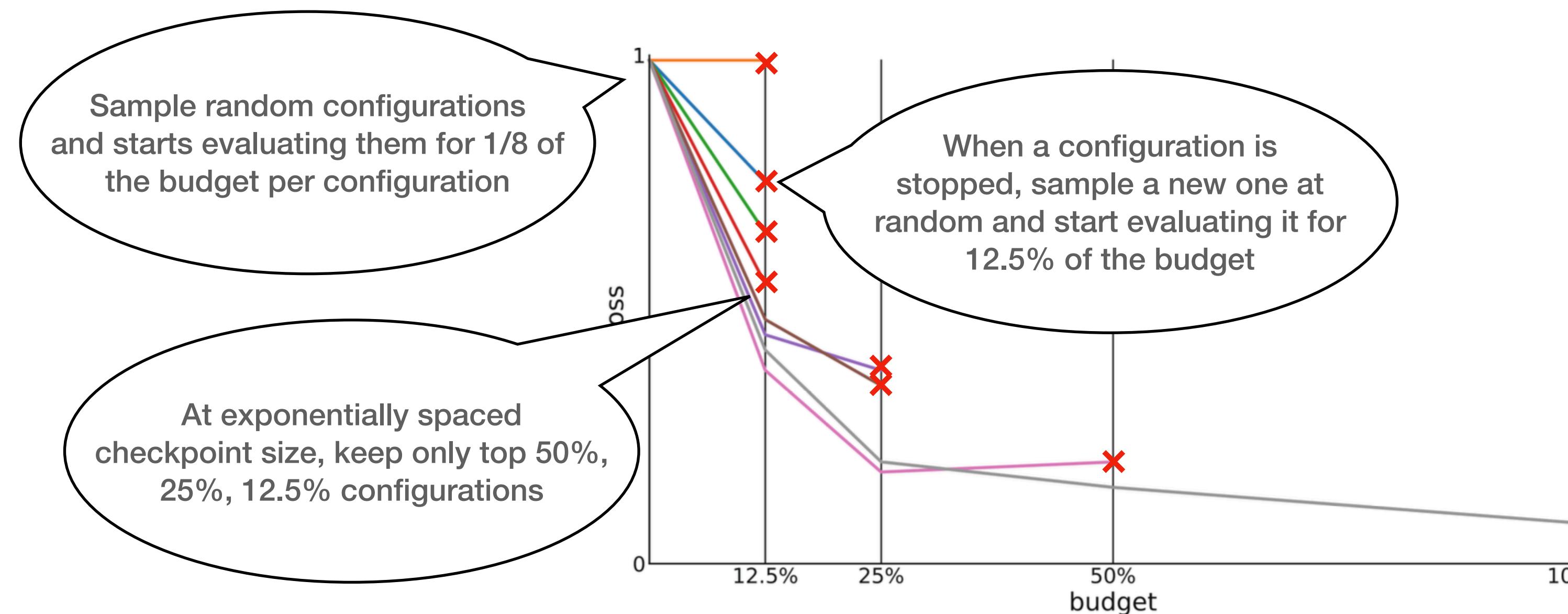


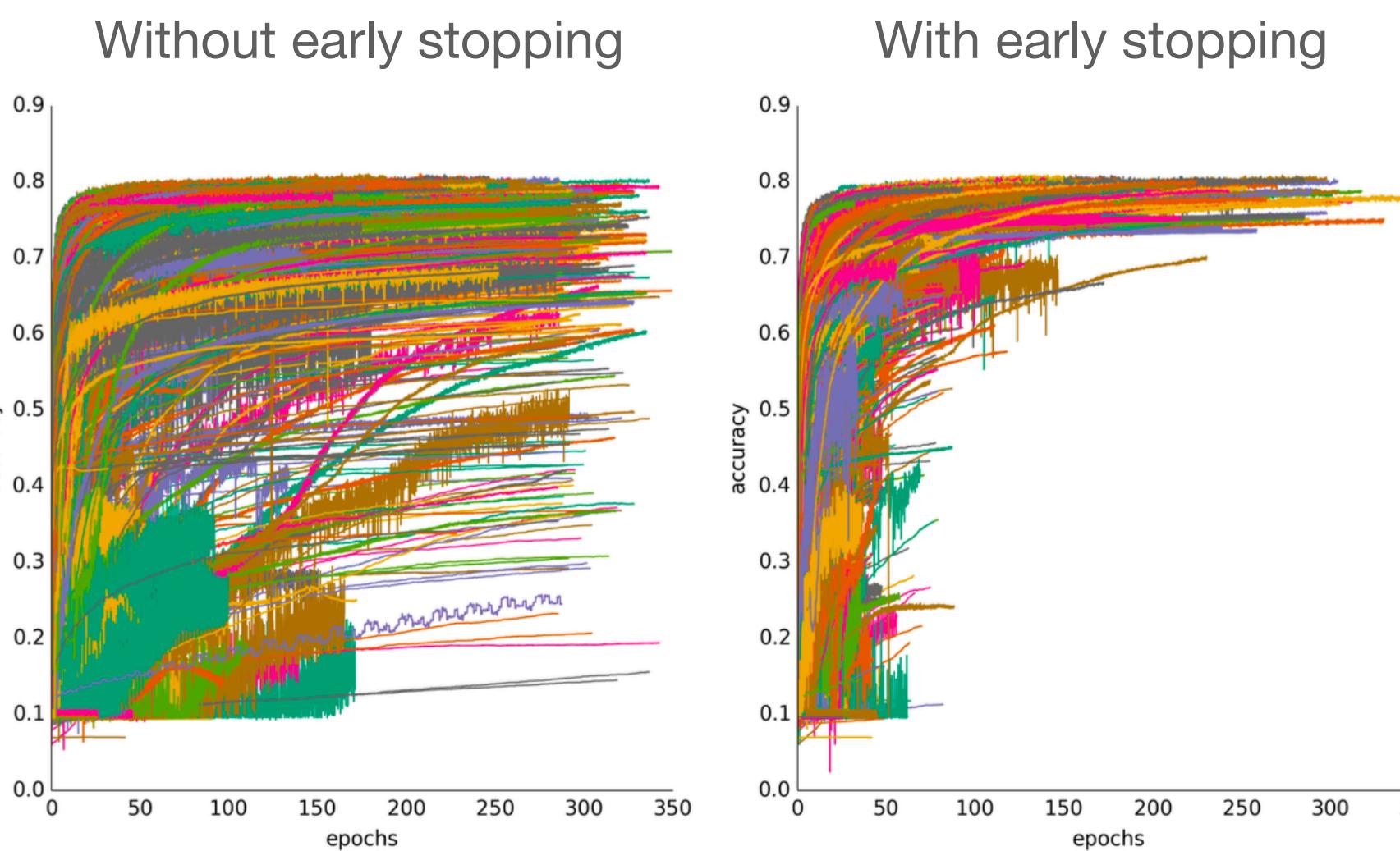
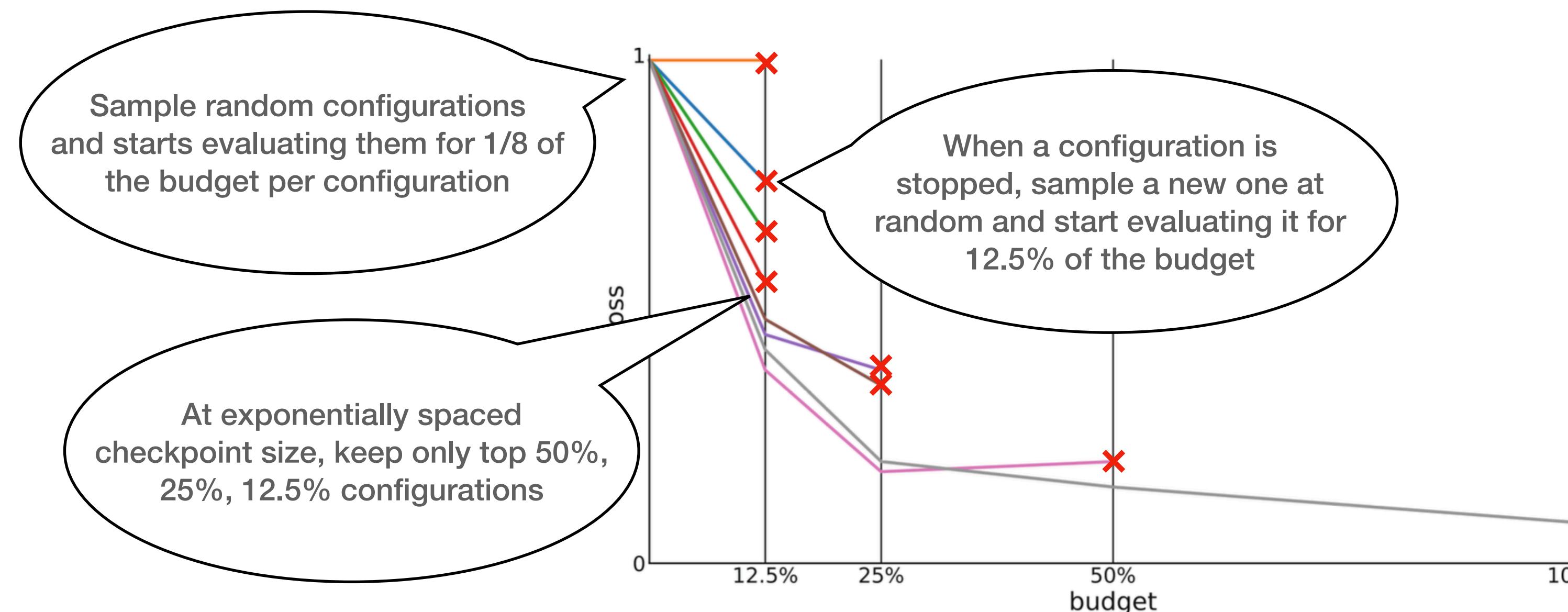
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Wistuba and Grabocka. Meta-Learning for Hyperparameter Optimization 2023

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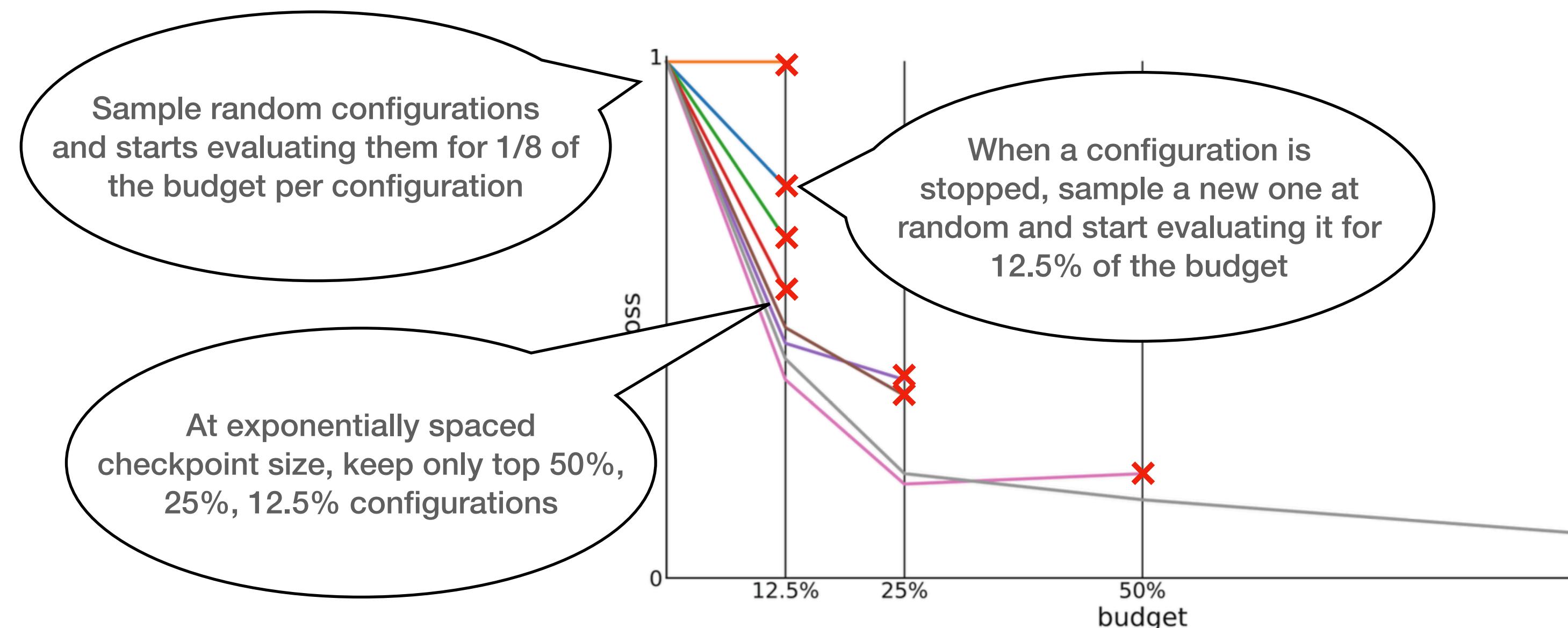
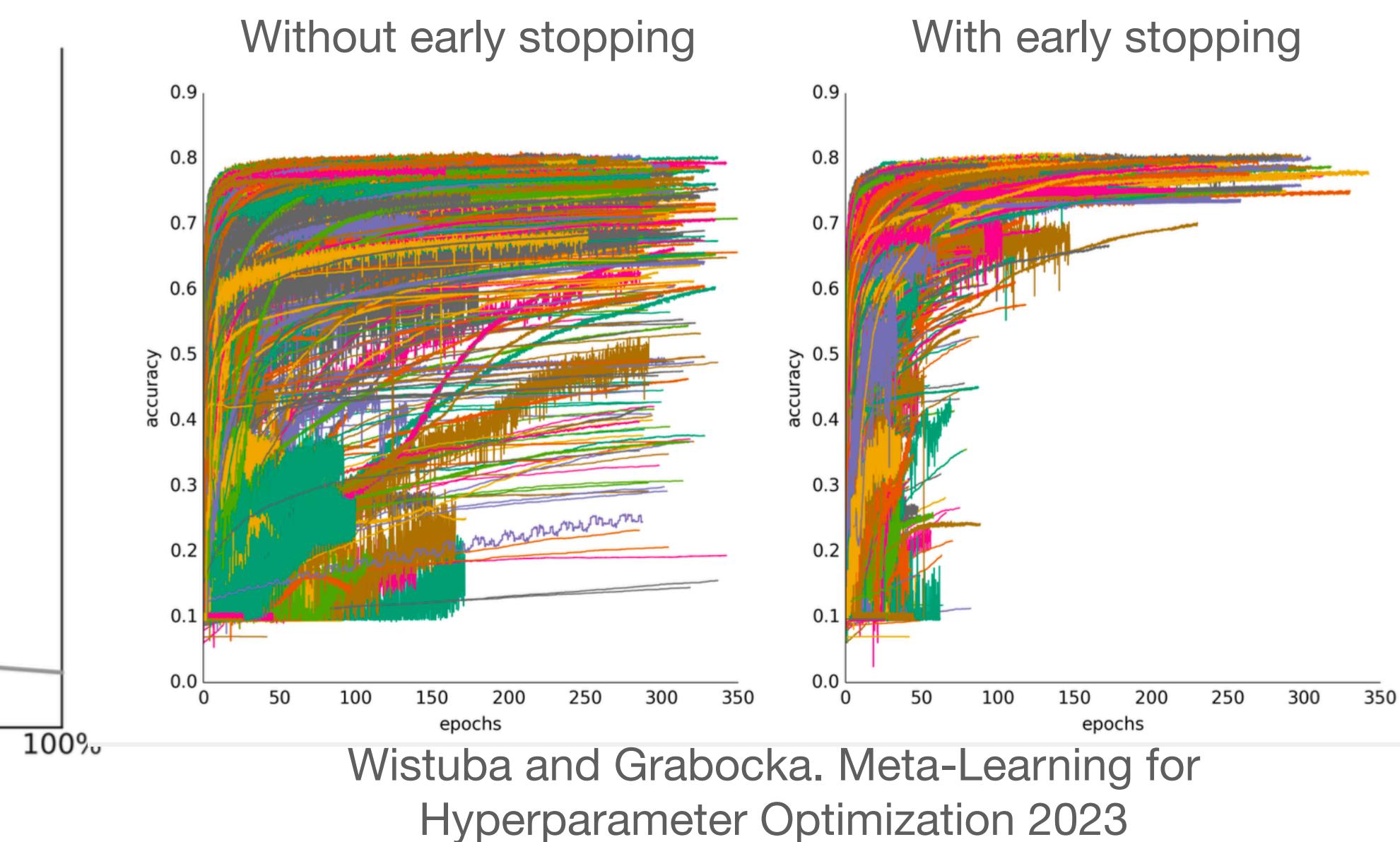


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Non-dominated sort allows to sort even when we have multiple objectives

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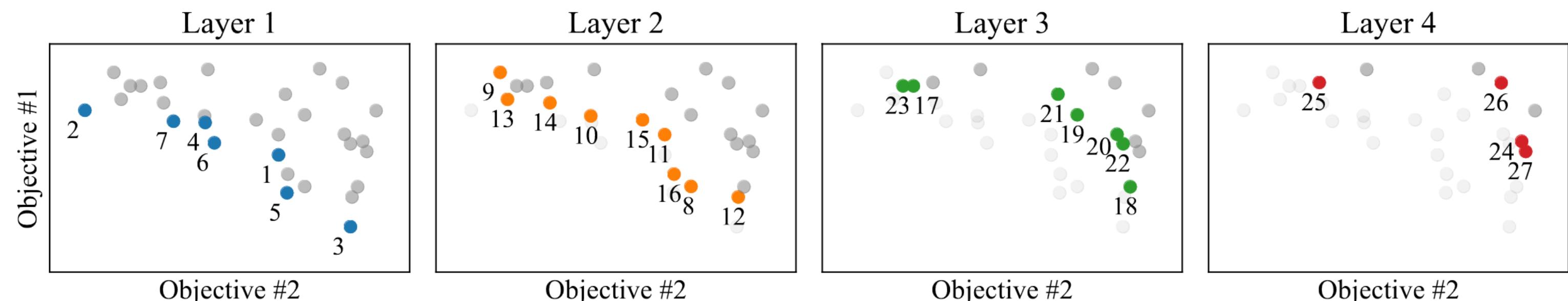


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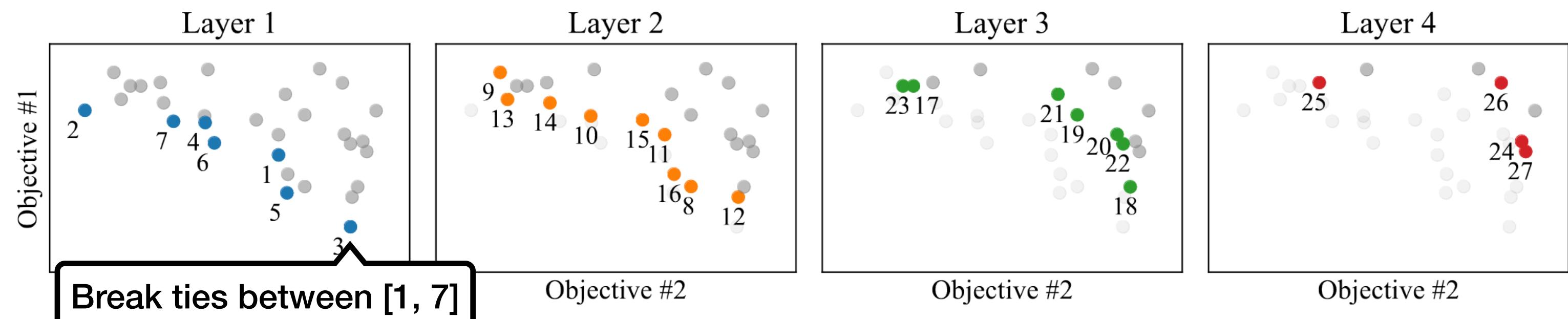


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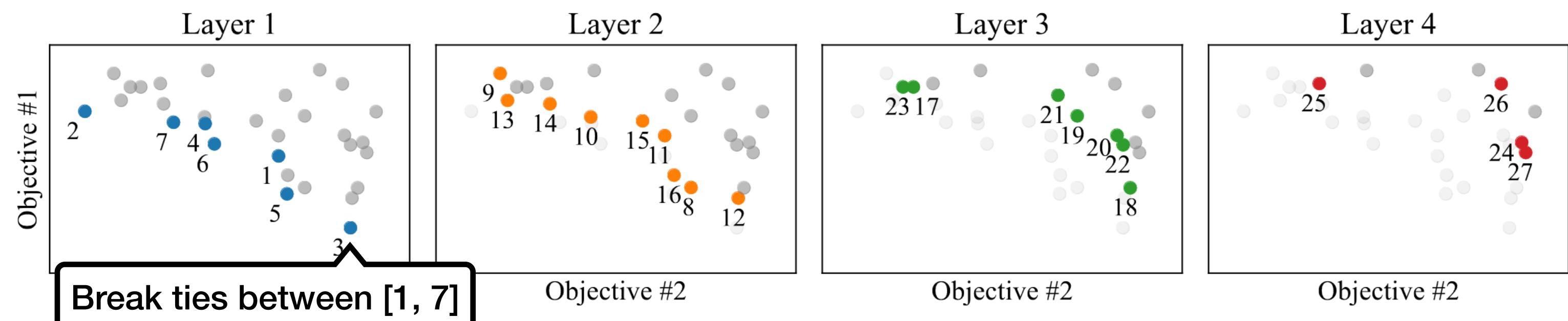


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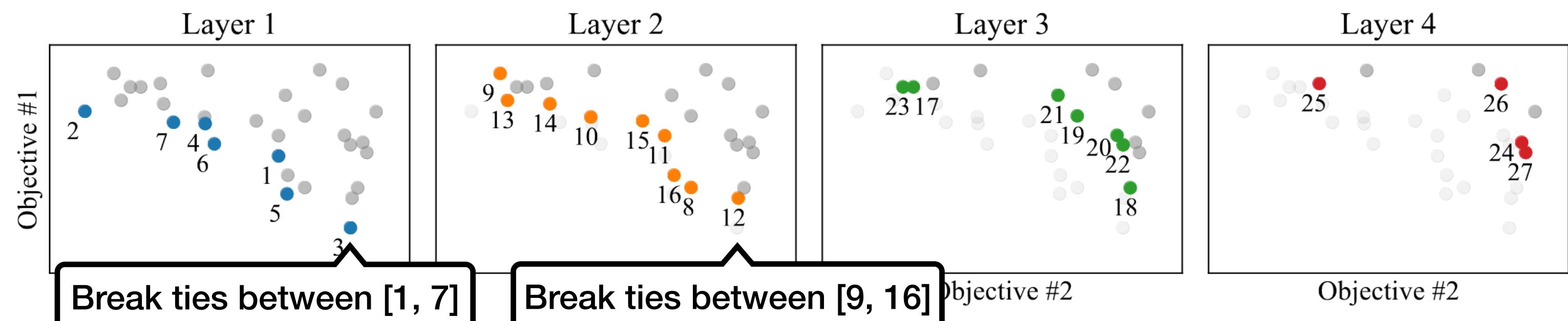


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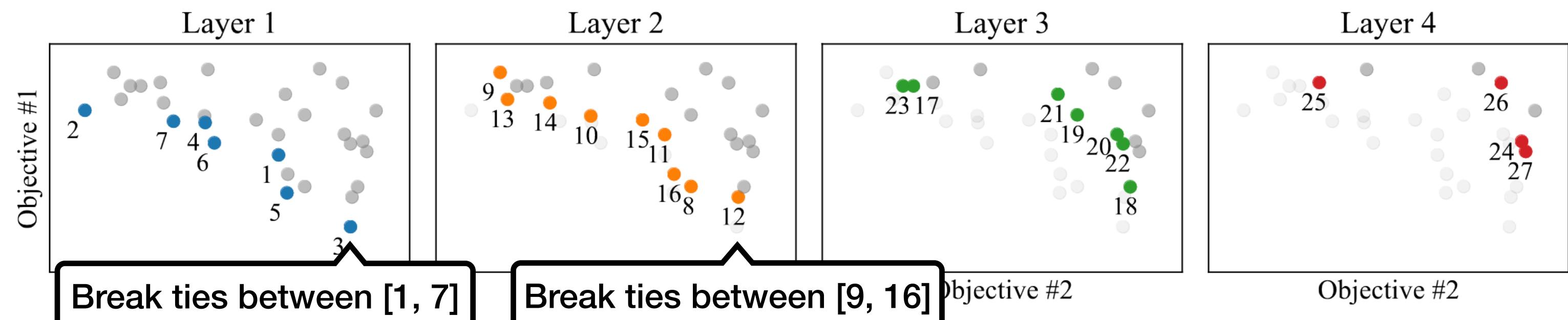


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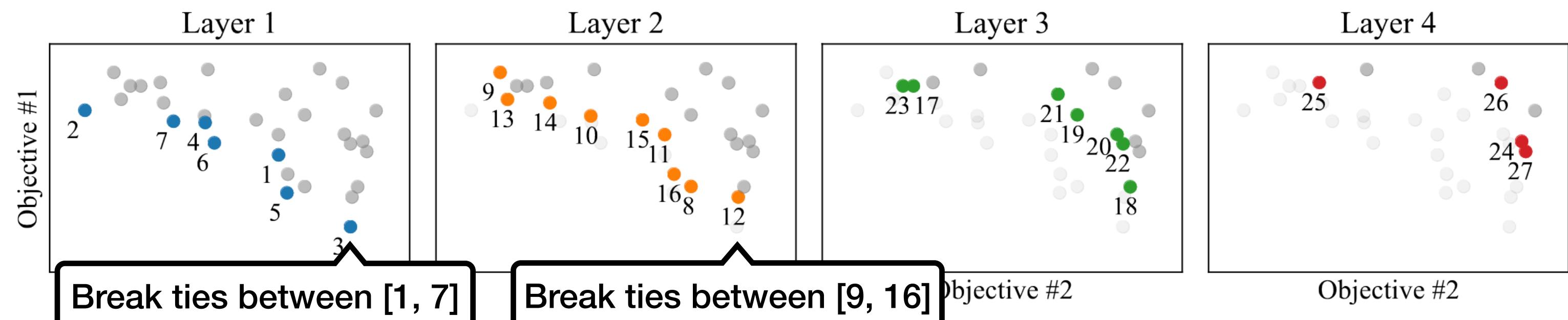


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  - Compute the Pareto front of  $y$ , break ties with an heuristic
  - Compute the Pareto front of  $y \setminus \mathcal{P}(y)$ , break ties with an heuristic
  - Heuristic choices aims at selecting a subset with a good coverage:
    - Crowding distance
    - Epsilon-net
    - ...

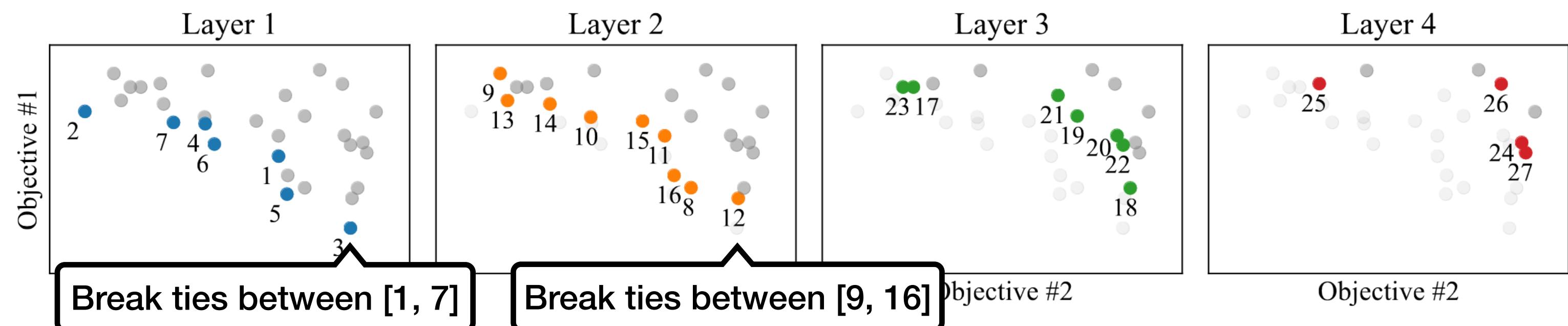
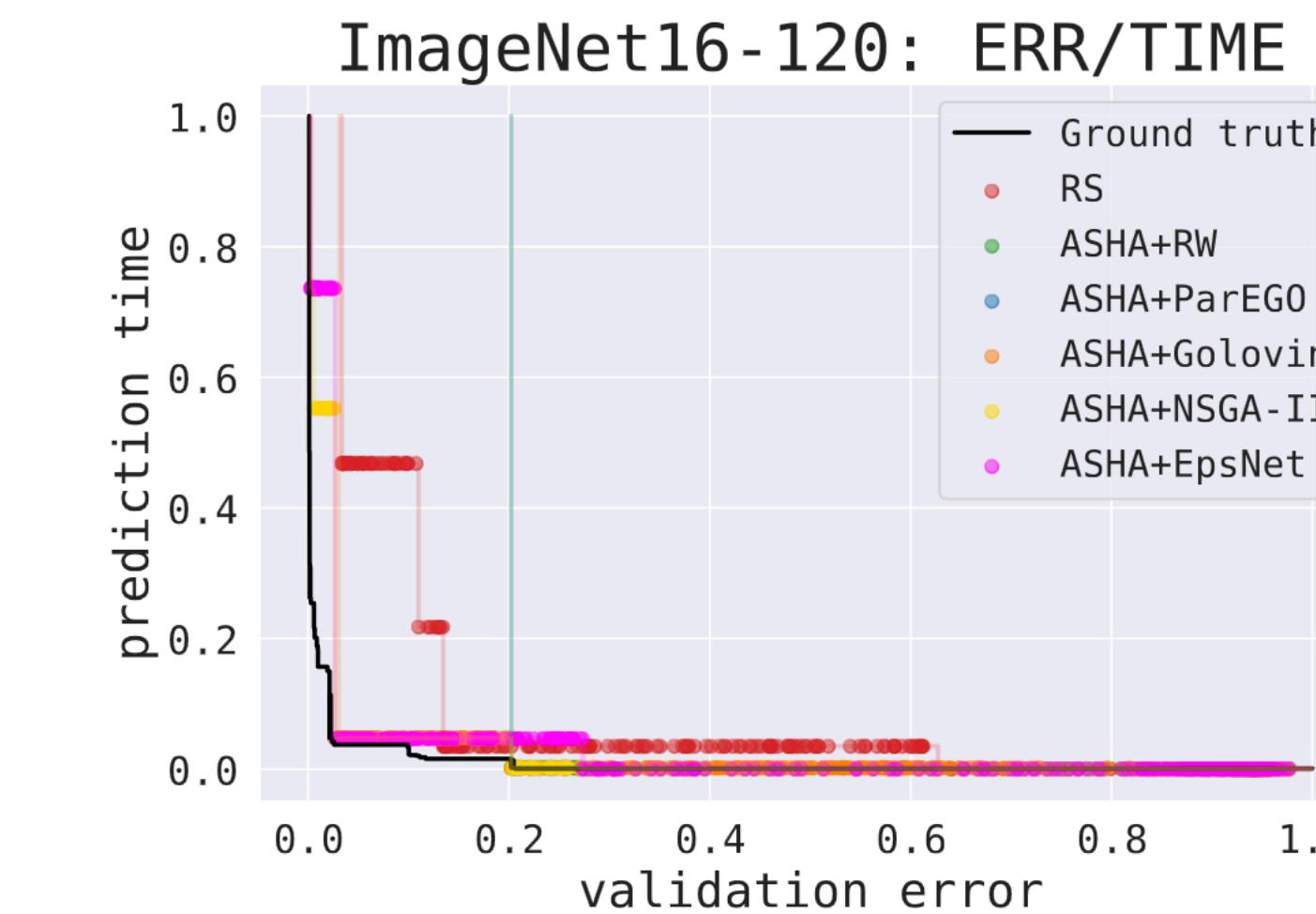
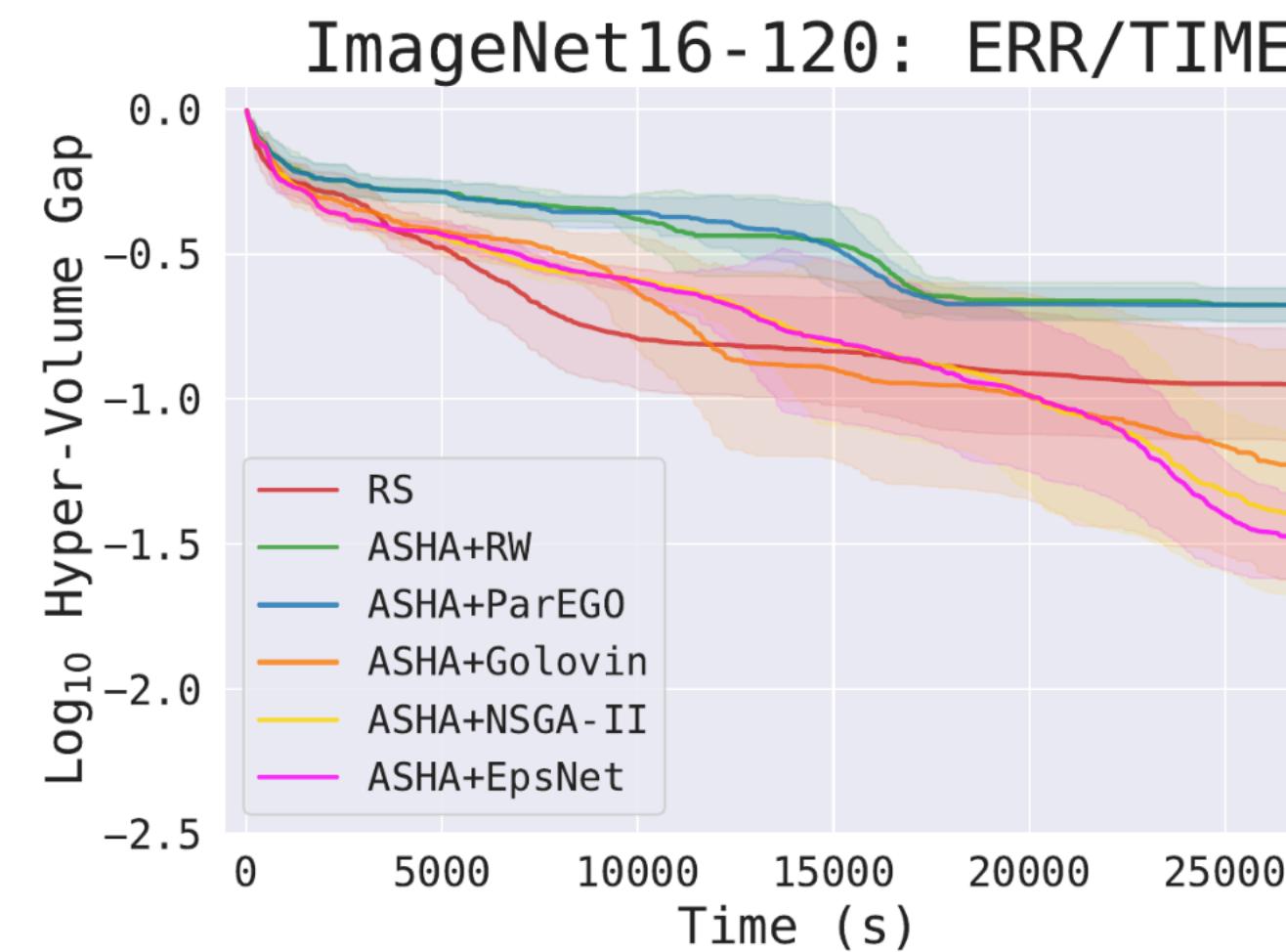


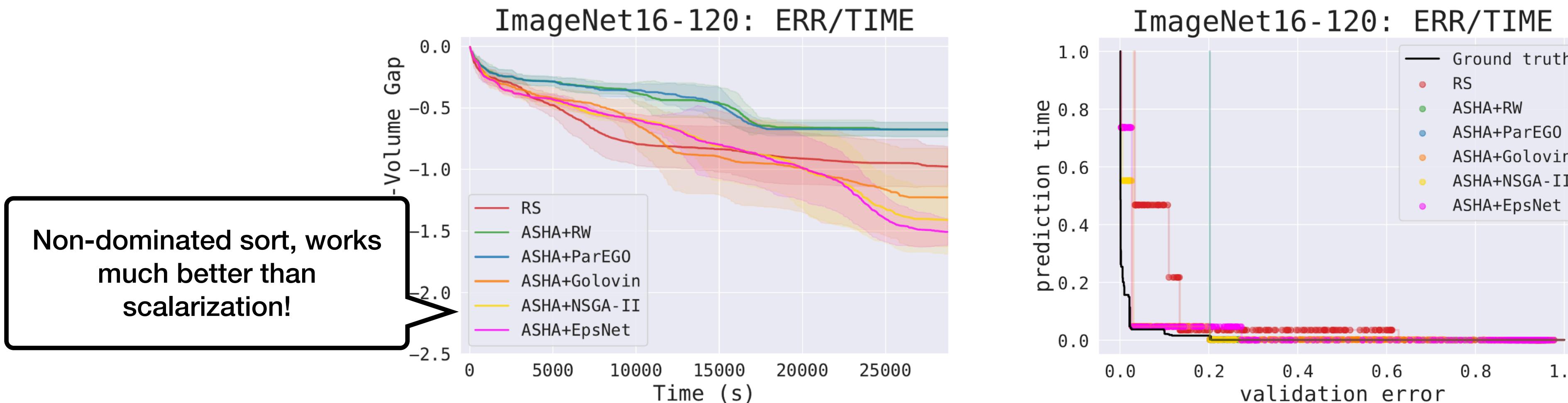
Figure 3: Illustration of non-dominated sorting. The layers show the partitioning of the data in Pareto fronts. The numbers depict the overall rank by computing the  $\epsilon$ -net within each layer.

# Extending Multifidelity to multi-objective



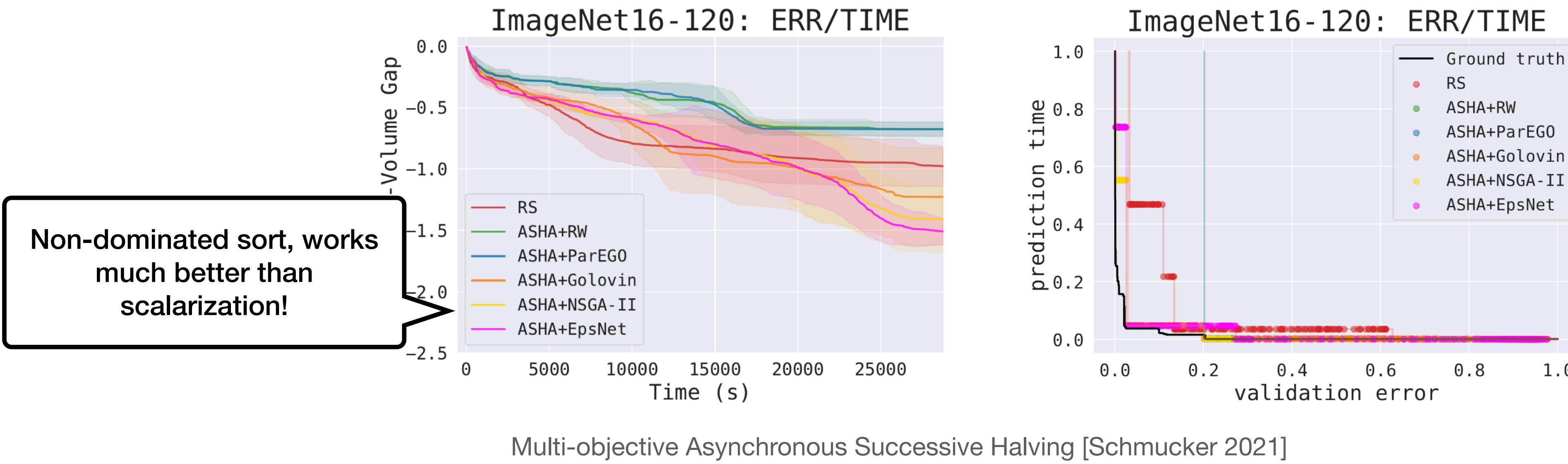
Multi-objective Asynchronous Successive Halving [Schmucker 2021]

# Extending Multifidelity to multi-objective

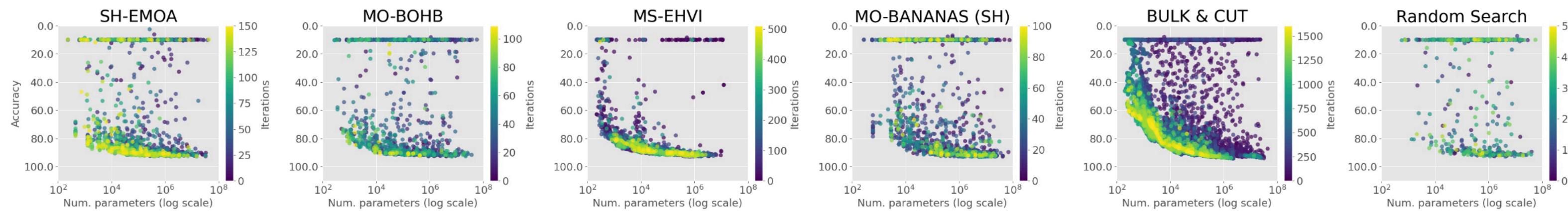


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# Extending Multifidelity to multi-objective

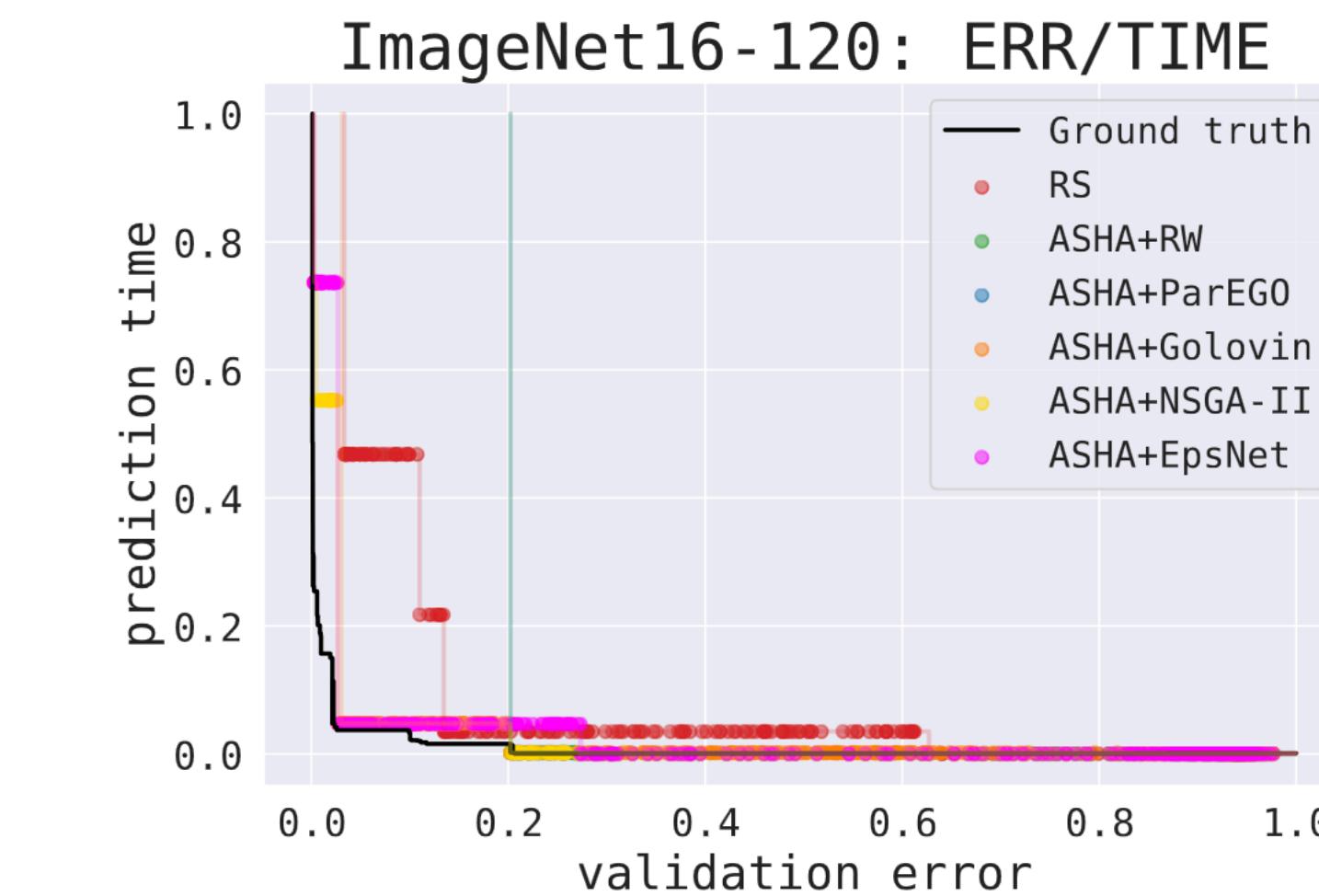
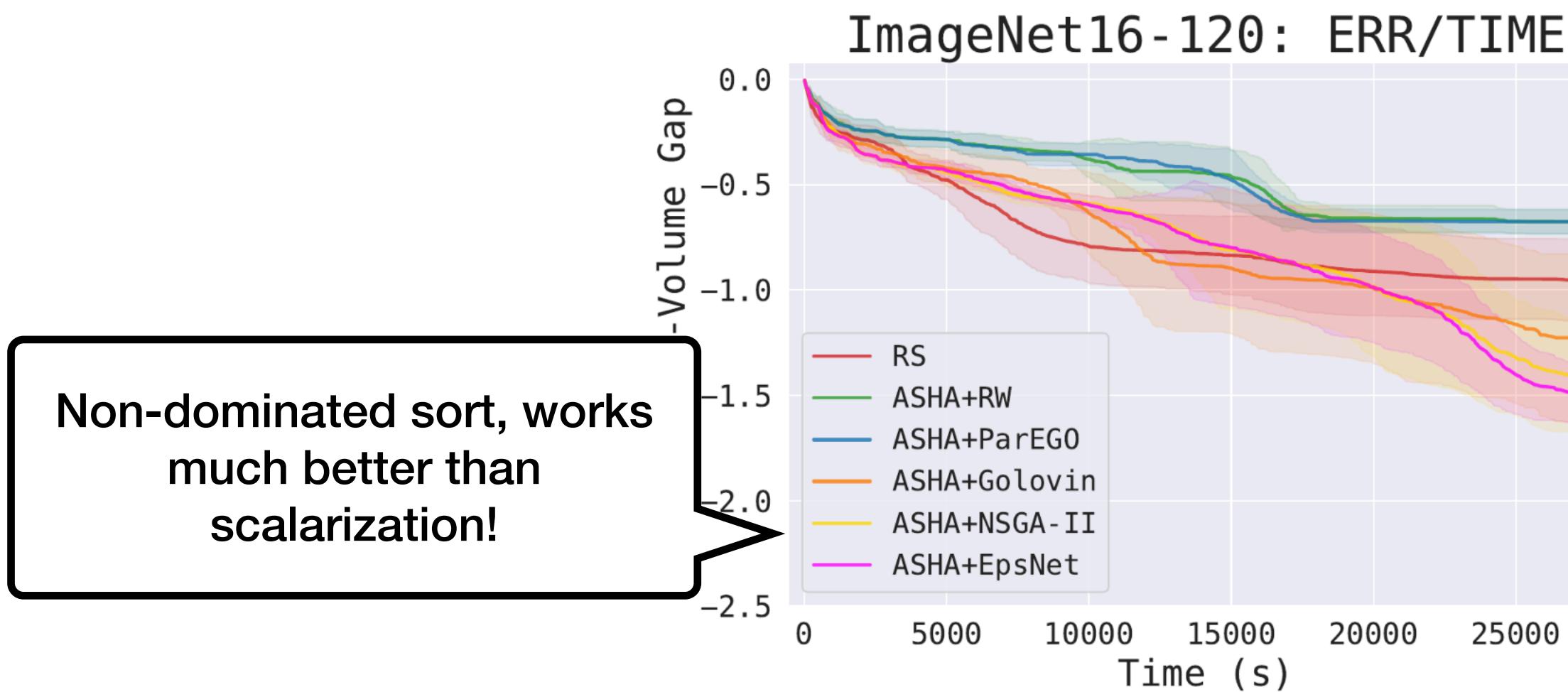


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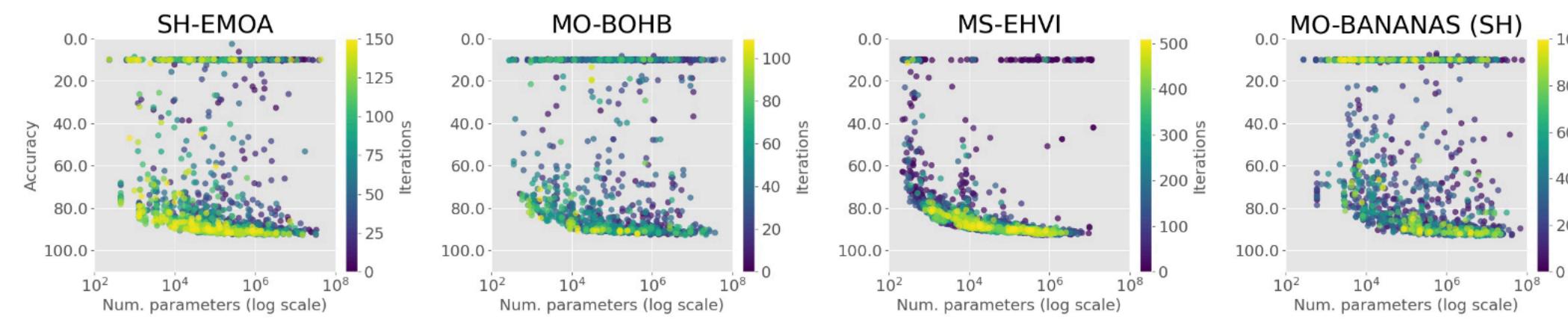


(b) Sampled configurations on Fashion-MNIST dataset.

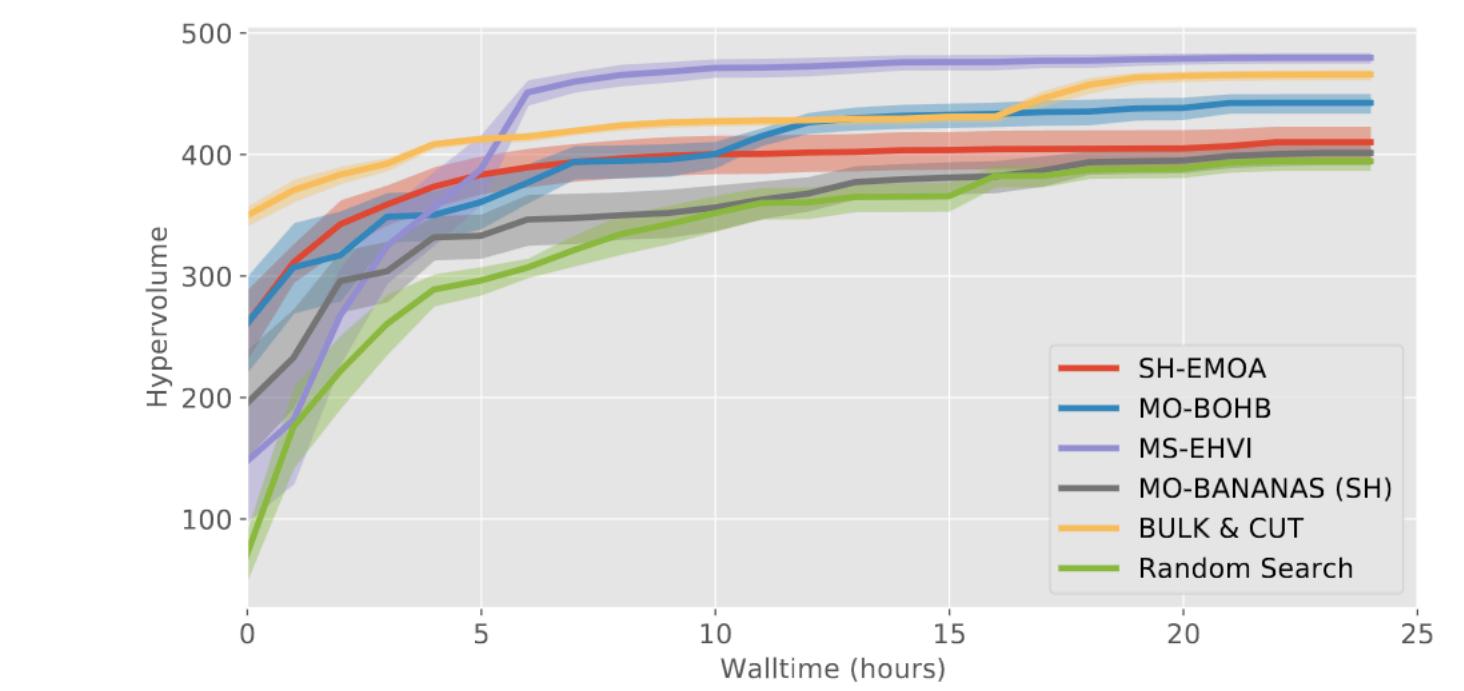
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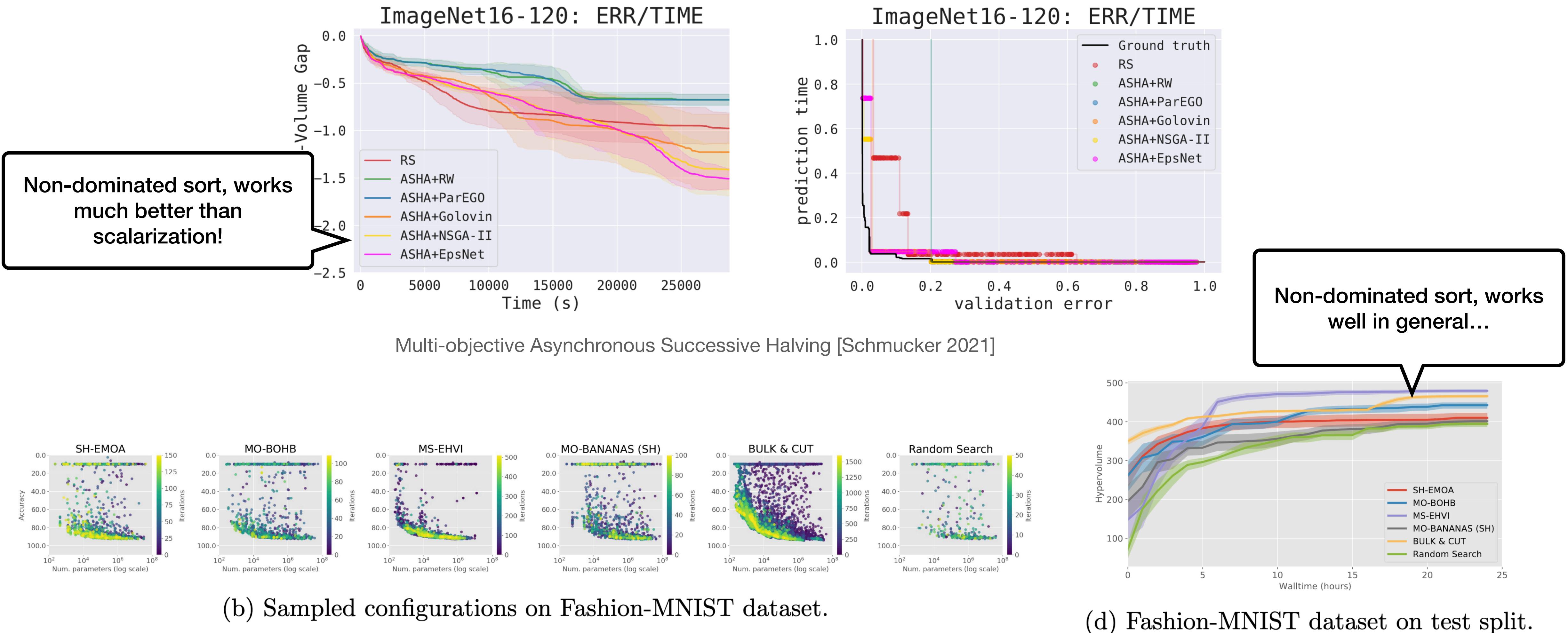


(b) Sampled configurations on Fashion-MNIST dataset.



(d) Fashion-MNIST dataset on test split.

# Extending Multifidelity to multi-objective



# A case study: tuning LLM judges

# LLM as a judge

## Quick recap

- Idea  : ask LLM to tell which LLM output is better

# LLM as a judge

## Quick recap

- Idea  : ask LLM to tell which LLM output is better

**Please say which model is better when answering the question:  
“What is some cool music from the 1920s?”**

**Model 1:** The 1920s was a fantastic decade for music, marked by the rise of jazz, blues ...

**Model 2:** The 1920s, often referred to as the "Roaring Twenties," was a period...

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Rank	Model Name	LC Win Rate	Win Rate
1	GPT-4 Omni (05/13) 	57.5%	51.3%
2	GPT-4 Turbo (04/09) 	55.0%	46.1%
3	Yi-Large Preview 	51.9%	57.5%
4	GPT-4 Preview (11/06) 	50.0%	50.0%
5	Claude 3 Opus (02/29) 	40.5%	29.1%
6	GPT-4 	38.1%	23.6%
7	Qwen1.5 72B Chat 	36.6%	26.5%
8	GPT-4 (03/14) 	35.3%	22.1%
9	Claude 3 Sonnet (02/29) 	34.9%	25.6%
10	Llama 3 70B Instruct 	34.4%	33.2%

Alpaca Eval Leaderboard:  
winrate against GPT4-turbo

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- Pros: cheaper than human annotations & can evaluate open-ended text
- Cons: can be biased, very often rely on GPT-4 or closed models
- Can be used for model selection, leaderboard...
- Our Goal:** Provide high-accuracy, low-cost LLM judges with **open** models

# Tuning LLM judges

## Search space

### Prompt Template

You are a highly efficient assistant, please evaluate and select the best large language model based on the quality of their responses to a given instruction.

**User Prompt:** Who is Geoffrey Hinton?

**Assistant A:** Geoffrey Hinton is a research scientist.

**Assistant B:** I do not know who Geoffrey Hinton is.

**# Your Output**

**## Format Description**

Your output should follow this format:

```
{  
    "answer": <your answer to the user  
    prompt>,  
    "explanation": <your explanation on  
    why you think A or B is better>,  
    "score_A": <between 0 and 10 to  
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}
```

**## Your output, do not repeat the input above.**

*Figure 3.* Illustration of the prompt templating approach. We parametrize the prompt with the following hyperparameters: **Provide answer**, **Provide explanation**, **Provide example**, **use JSON**, **output preference format**. Given each of the  $2^4 \times 5 = 80$  prompt hyperparameters, we generate a prompt like this one.

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# Tuning LLM judges

## Search space

- Prompt:
  - Output format: 5 options

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## Search space

- Prompt:
  - Output format: 5 options
  - 3 booleans to ask LLM to provide

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Your output should follow this format:

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# Tuning LLM judges

## Search space

- Prompt:
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    - answer: its own answer to the instruction as proposed

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## Search space

- Prompt:
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  - 3 booleans to ask LLM to provide
    - answer: its own answer to the instruction as proposed
    - example: an example of a judgement

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  - 7 open-weight options (Llama3, Qwen2.5, Gemma 2 at different size)

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In total we have  $5 \times 2^4 = 80$  prompts and  $7 \times 4 \times 80 \times 2 = 4480$  possible judges



Evaluating with Spearman correlation in brute force would cost \$2M (!)

# **LLM as a judge**

## **Hyperparameter optimization**

# **LLM as a judge**

## **Hyperparameter optimization**

- Multiobjective: accuracy & cost per evaluation

# **LLM as a judge**

## **Hyperparameter optimization**

- Multiobjective: accuracy & cost per evaluation
- Currently configurations are manually selected and evaluated...

# LLM as a judge

## Hyperparameter optimization

- Multiobjective: accuracy & cost per evaluation
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Performance of some judge hyperparameters for Alpaca Eval

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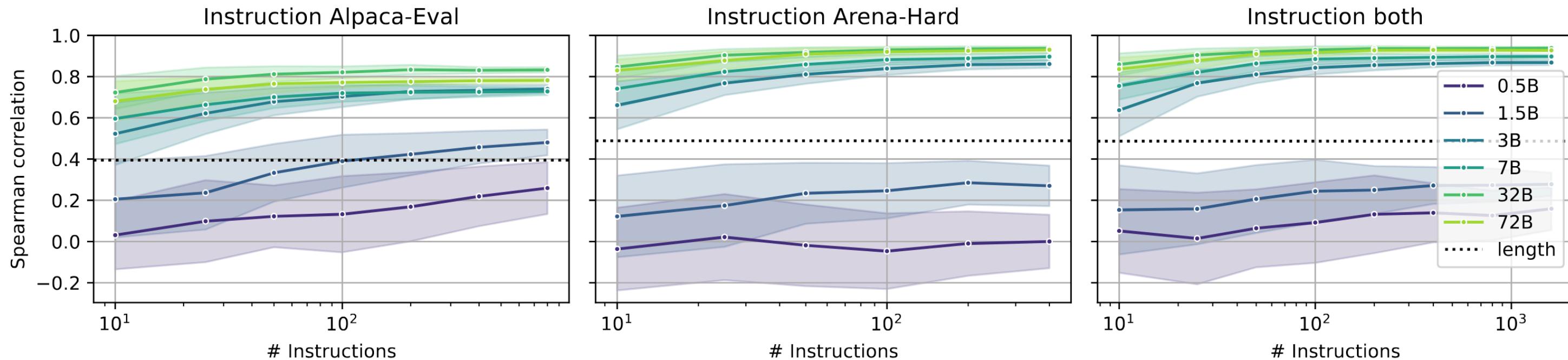
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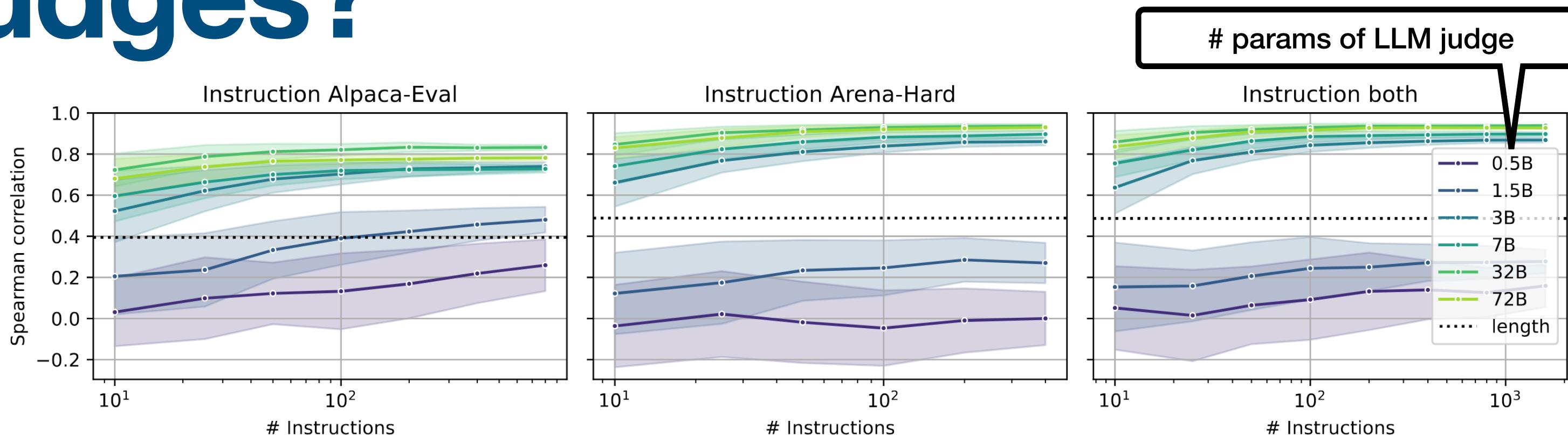
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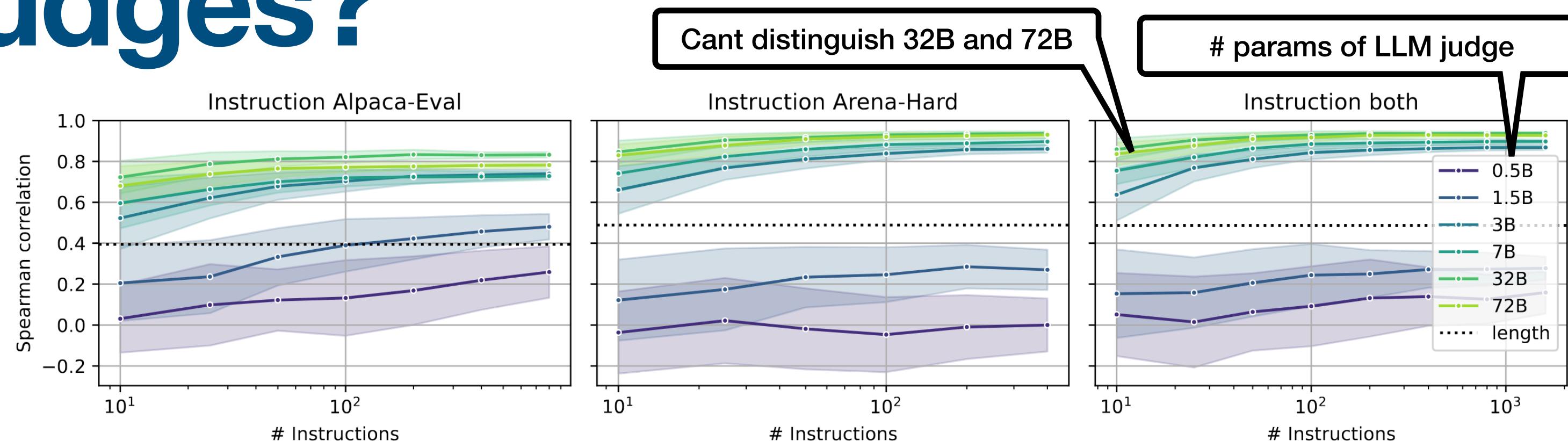
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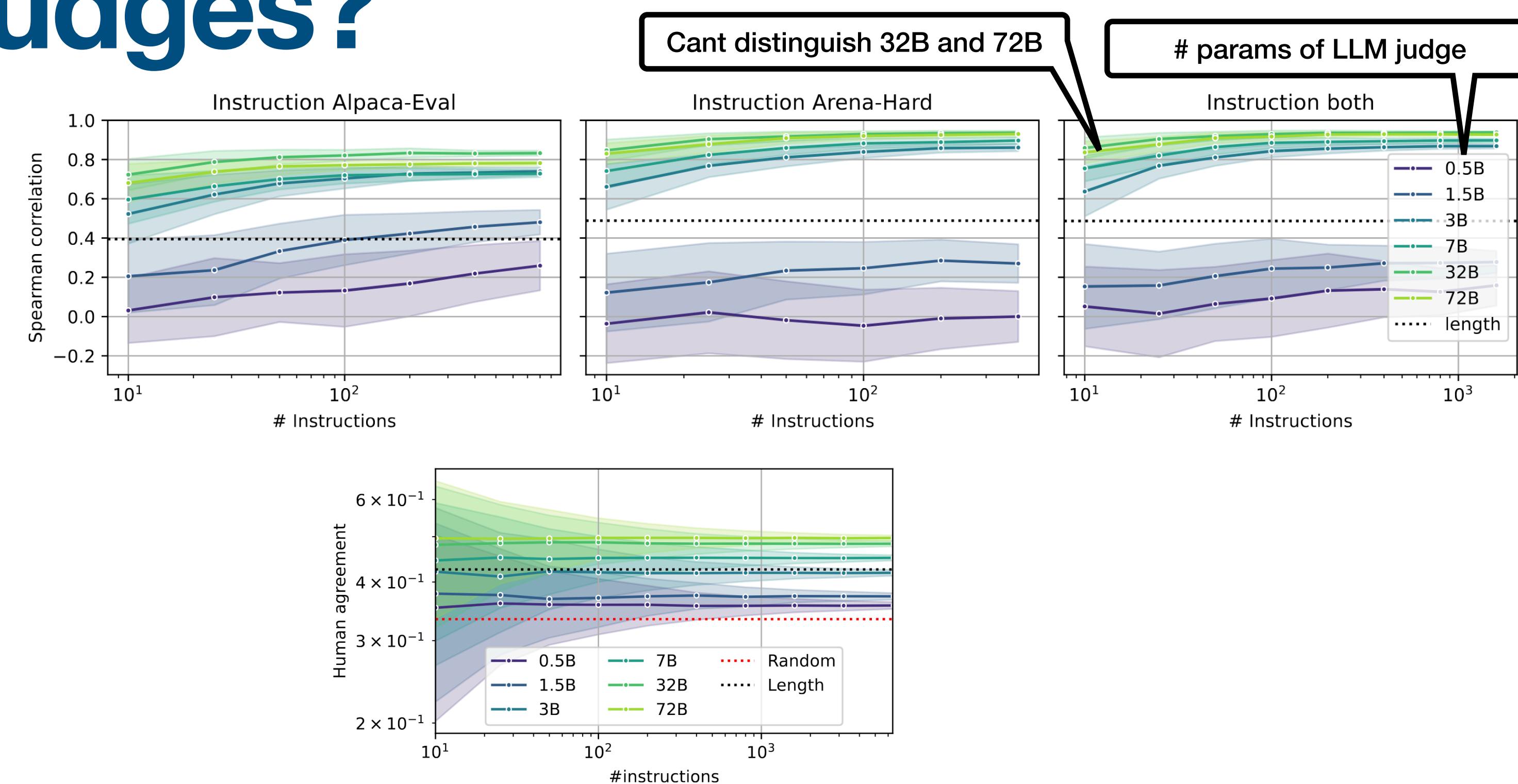
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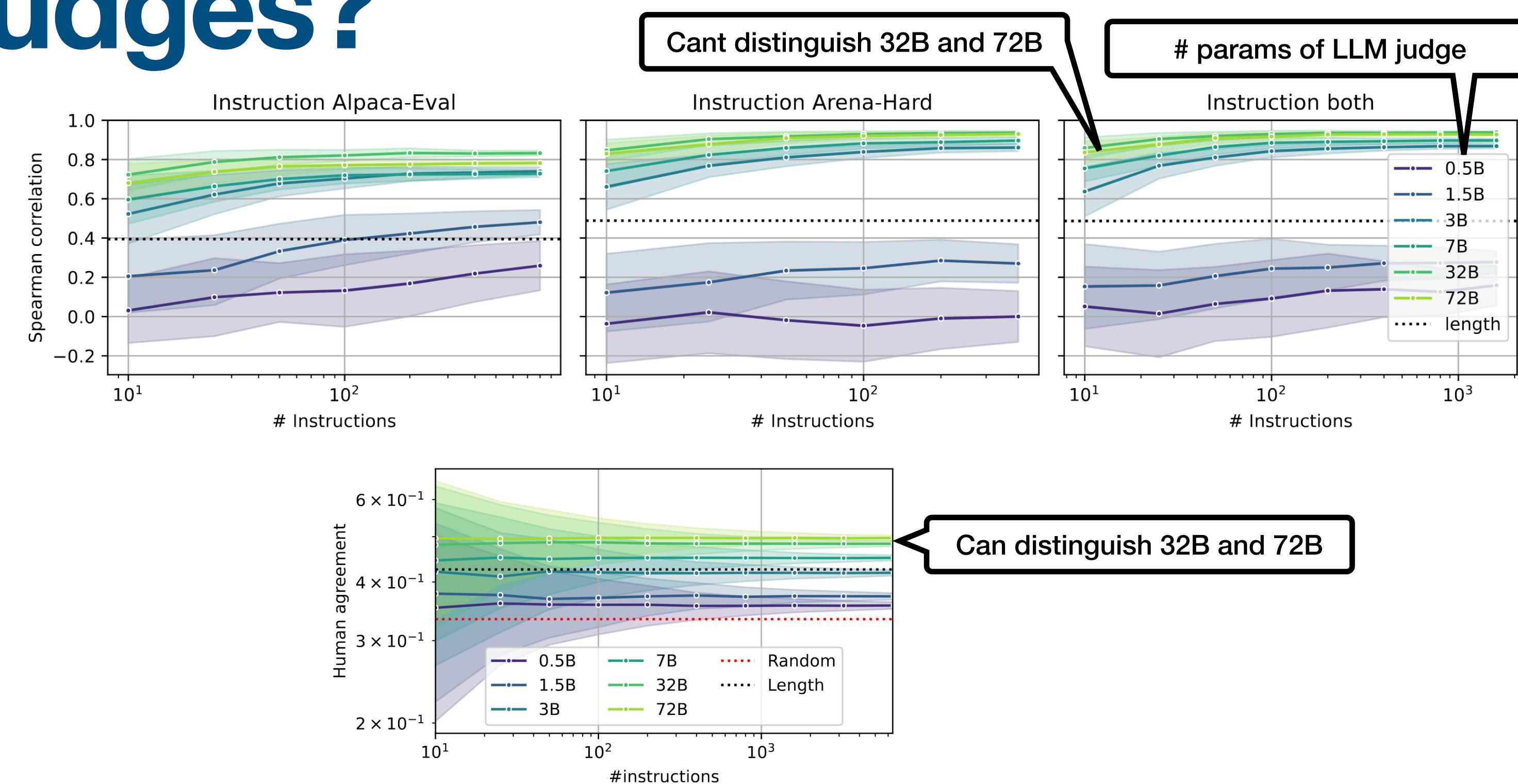
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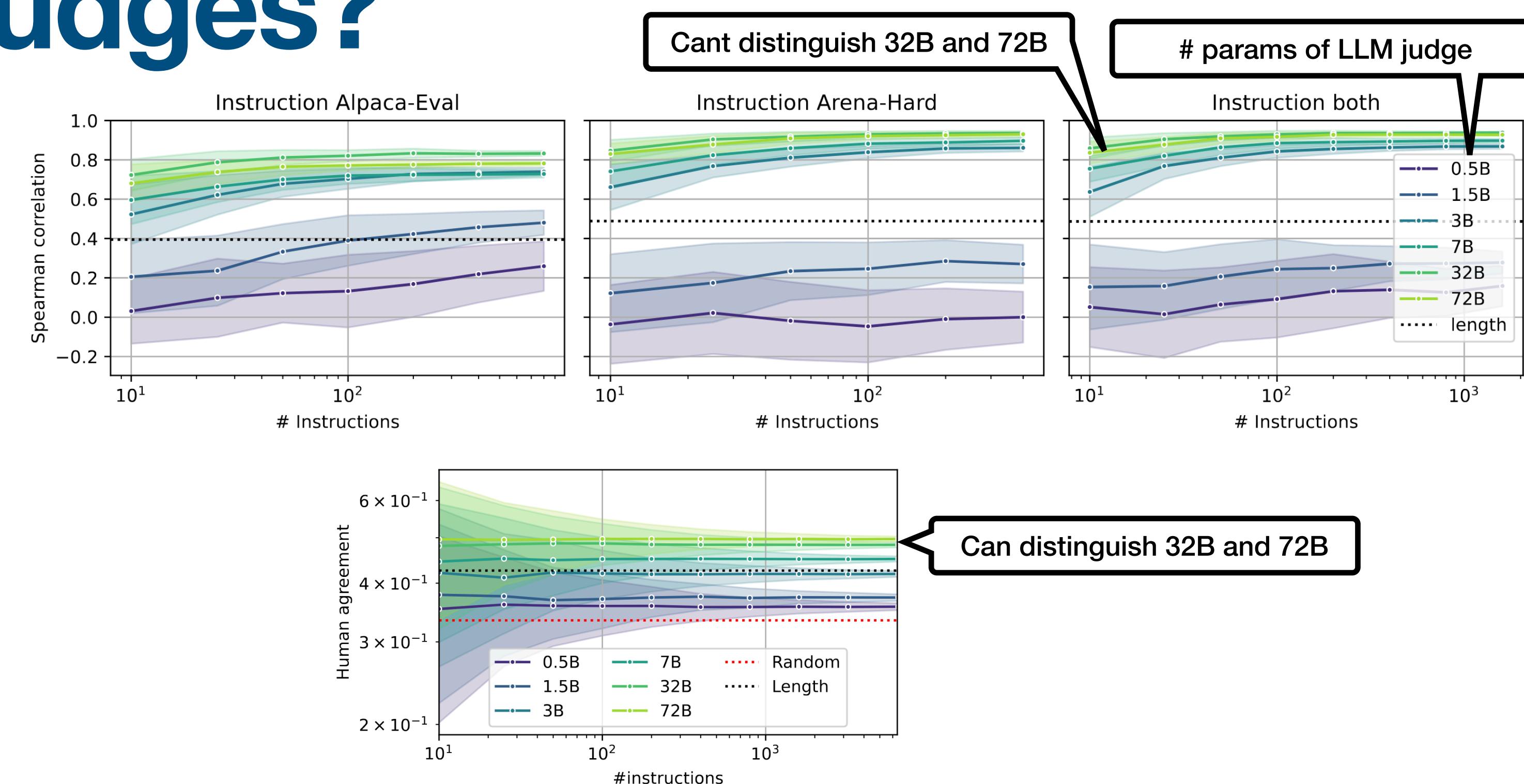
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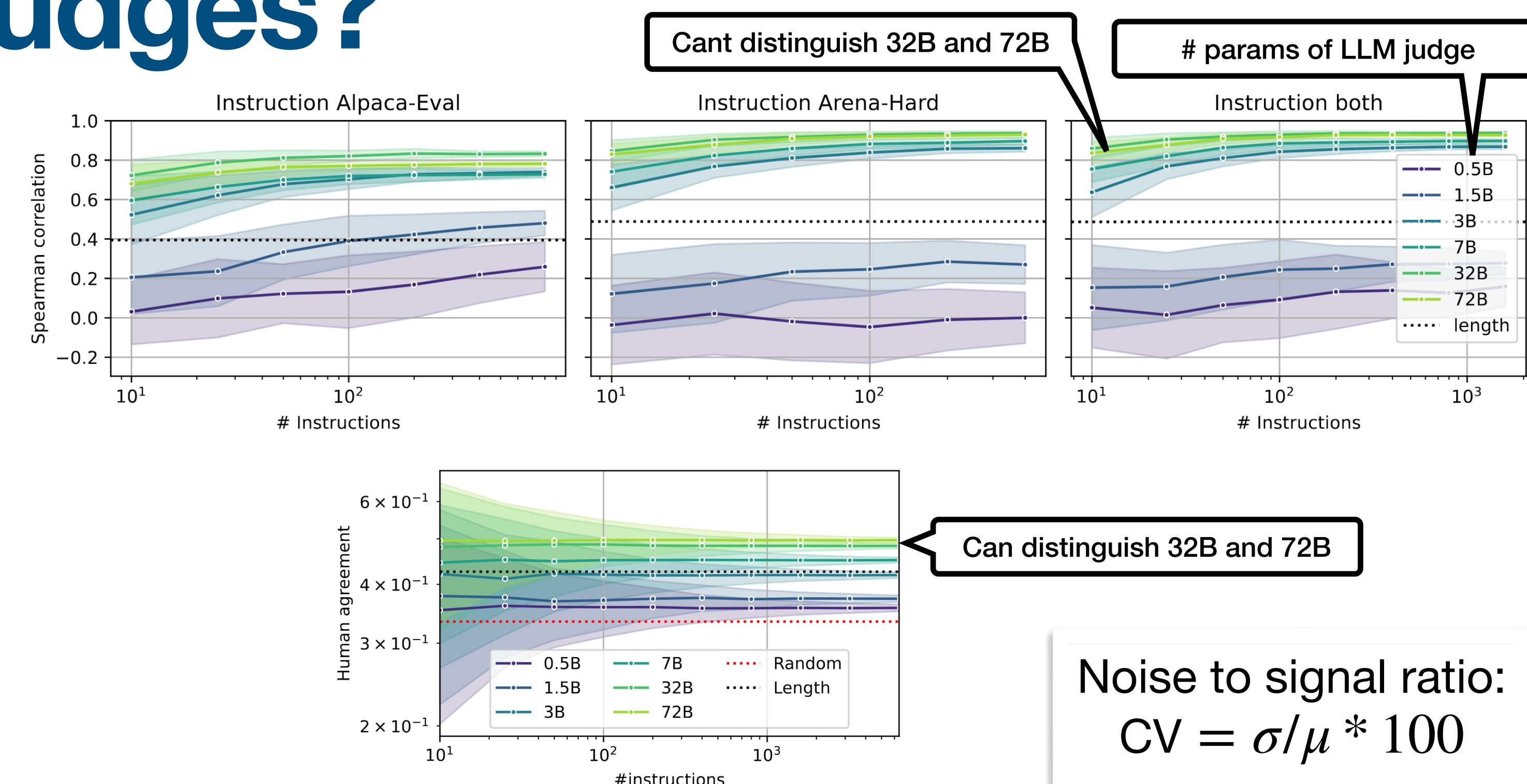
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1.5B	0.33 ± 0.137	41.26	0.37 ± 0.006	1.61
3B	0.82 ± 0.066	8.11	0.42 ± 0.006	1.45
7B	0.83 ± 0.082	9.84	0.45 ± 0.006	1.33
32B	0.90 ± 0.052	5.75	0.48 ± 0.006	1.29
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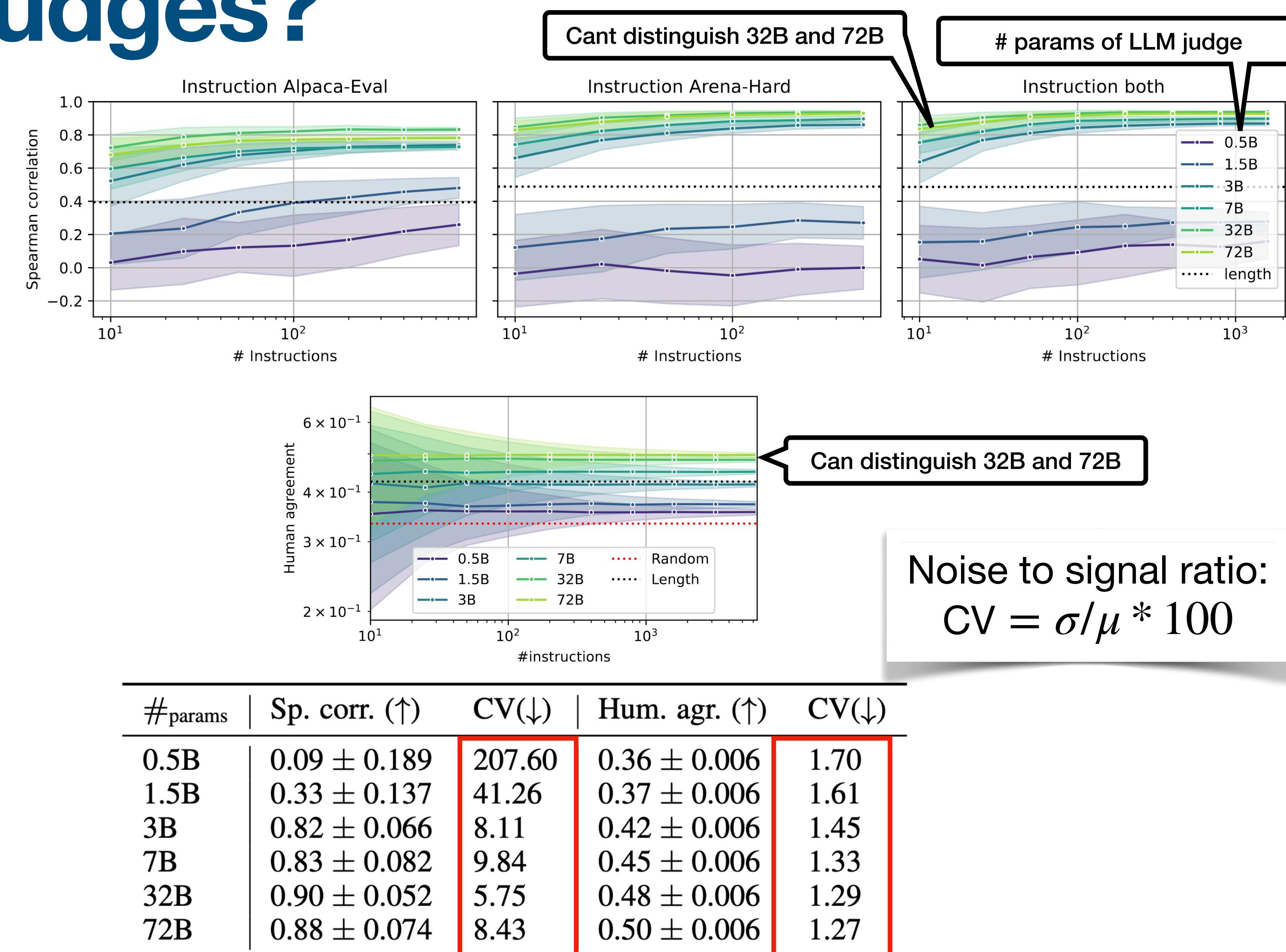
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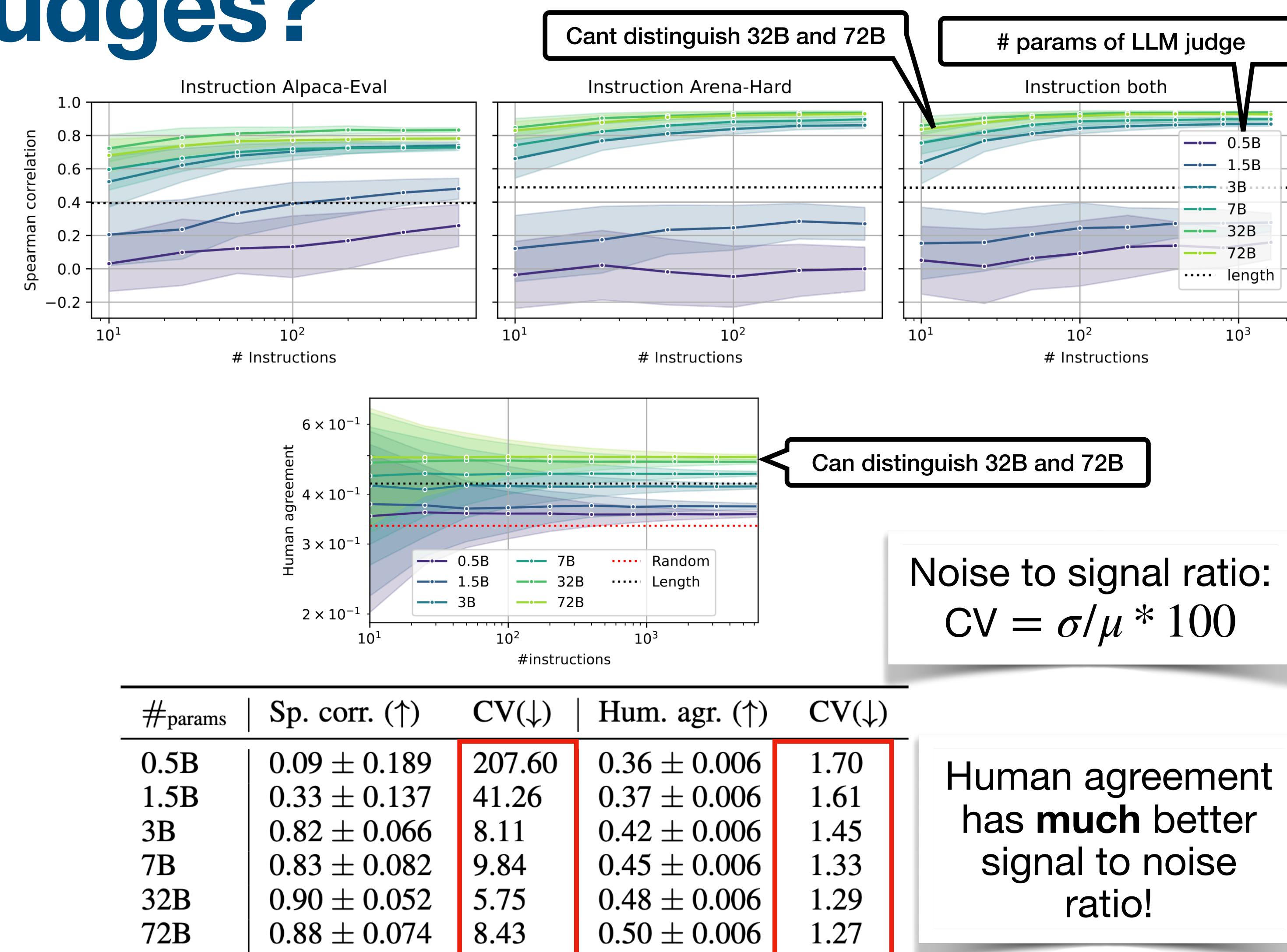


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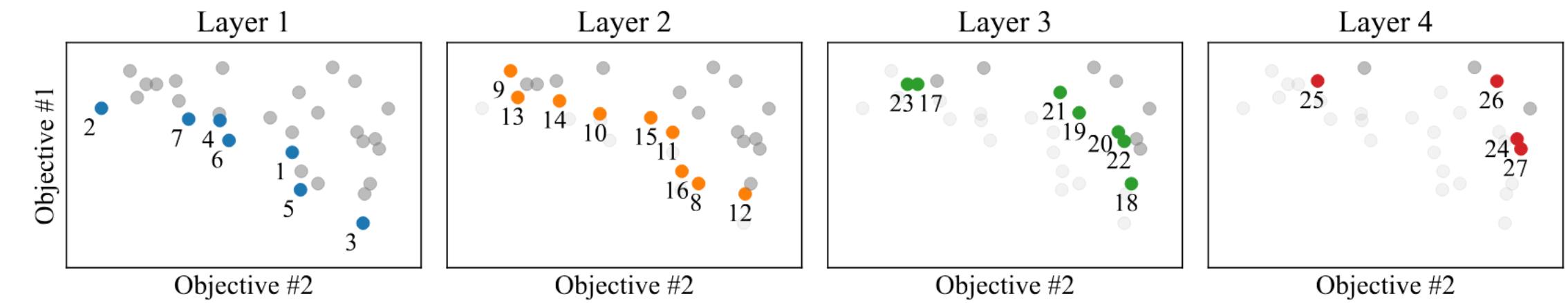
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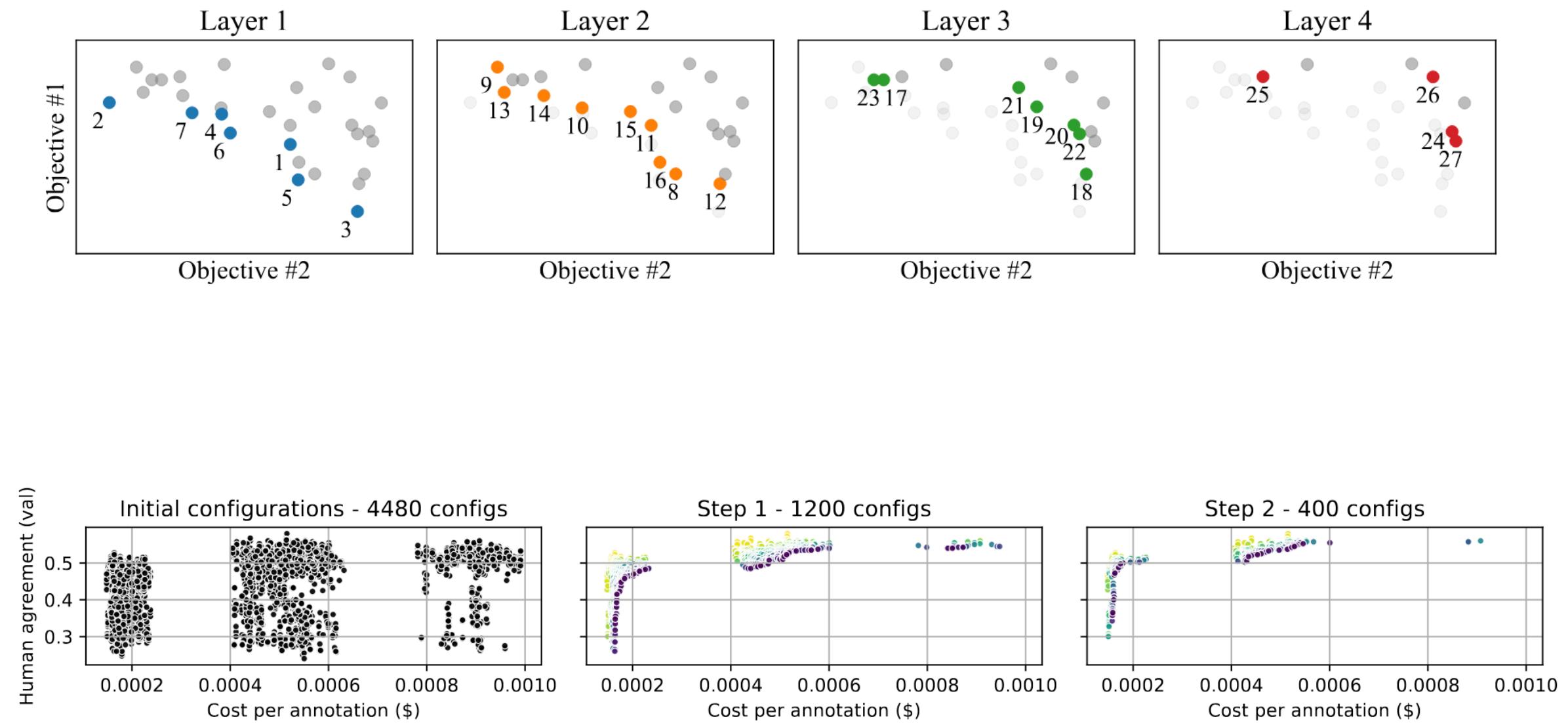


Figure 4. Illustration of the selection process. All 4480 configurations are first evaluated on 400 instructions (left), the top 1200 configurations are then evaluated on 1200 instructions (center) and finally the top 400 configurations are evaluated on 3548 instructions (right). The color denotes the ranking assigned by the non-dominated sort procedure.

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**How are tuned judges from open-weights compared to previous approaches?**

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Random	0.33 +/- 0.01	-
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PandaLM-7B	0.38 +/- 0.01	6.0
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Ours-small	0.67
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Judge	Sp. corr. ( $\uparrow$ )	Cost per 1K ann. ( $\downarrow$ )
Length	0.50 +/- 0.21	-
Arena-hard + Claude	0.82 +/- 0.12	75.0
Arena-hard + GPT4	0.90 +/- 0.06	50.0
Ours-small	0.81 +/- 0.10	0.21
Ours-medium	0.93 +/- 0.05	0.48
Ours-large	0.86 +/- 0.09	0.48

Table 4. For each judge, we compute the Spearman correlation between win-rates using the protocol of Arena-Hard and ELO-ratings computed from human annotations from Chatbot Arena. We report the mean and std over 100 bootstraps of the set of models.

LMSys test set

PandaLM test set

ArenaHard

# Analysing judge performance

## What hyperparameter/prompt works best?

- What is working best for LLM judges?

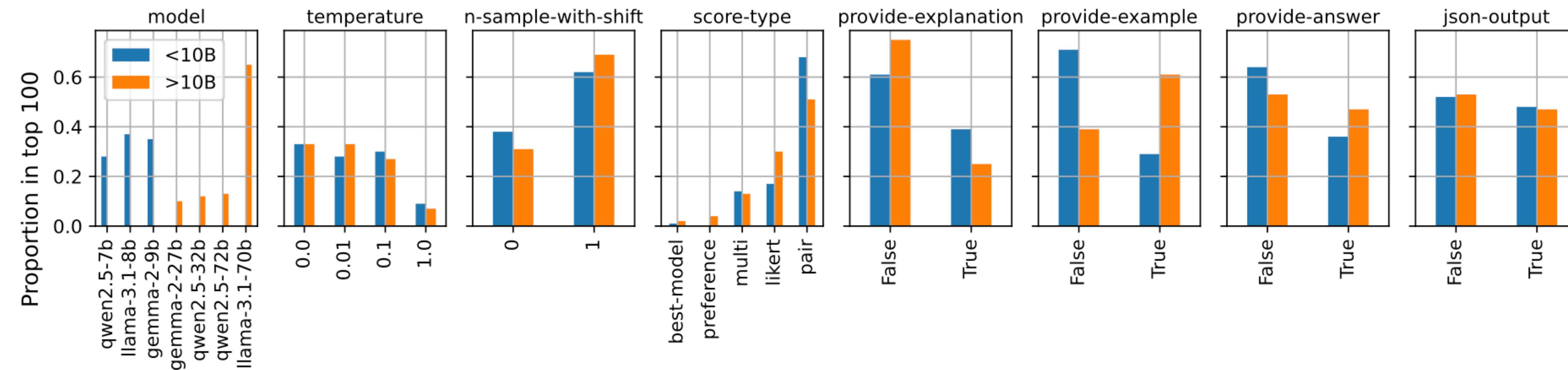


Figure 6. Fraction of time each hyperparameter appears in the top 100 configurations for small (<10B) and large models (>10B).

# Analysing judge performance

## What hyperparameter/prompt works best?

- What is working best for LLM judges?

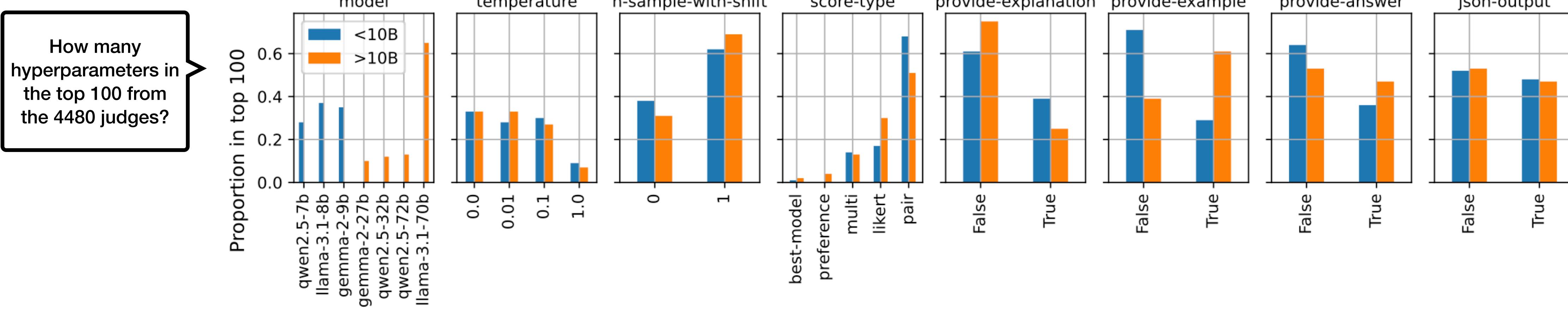


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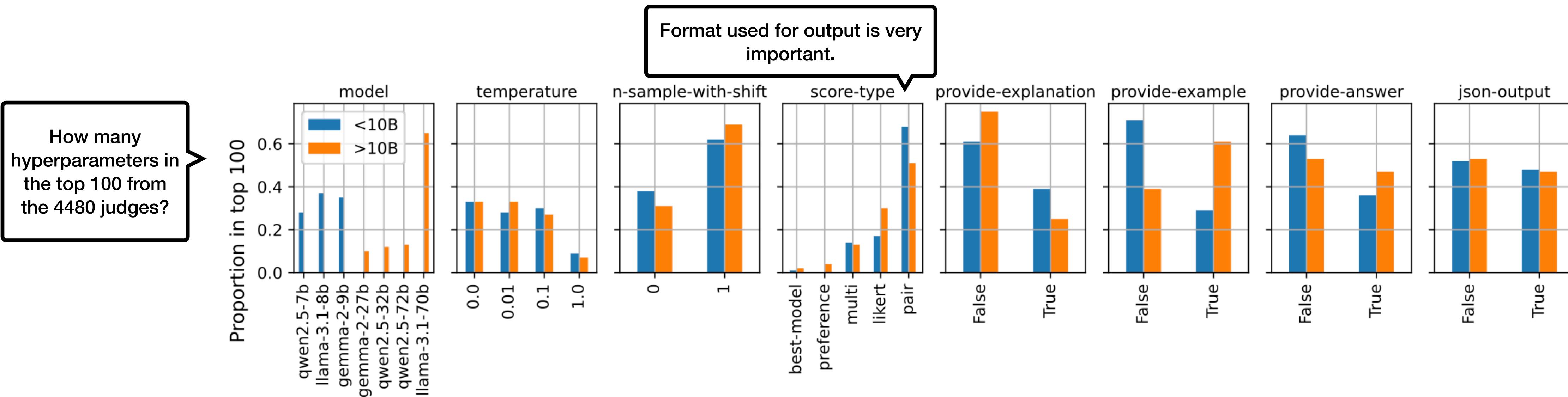


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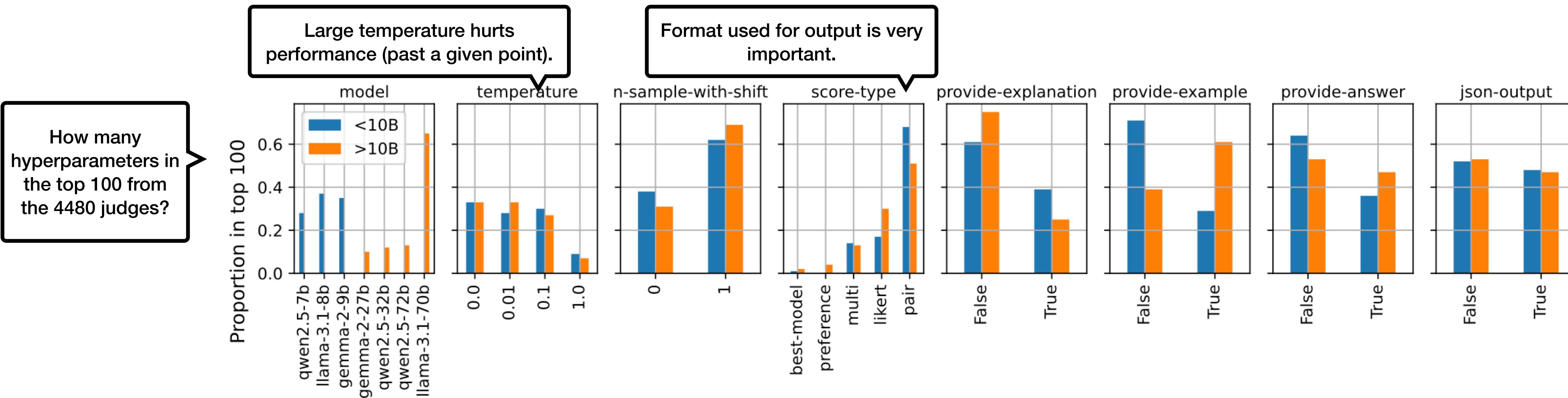


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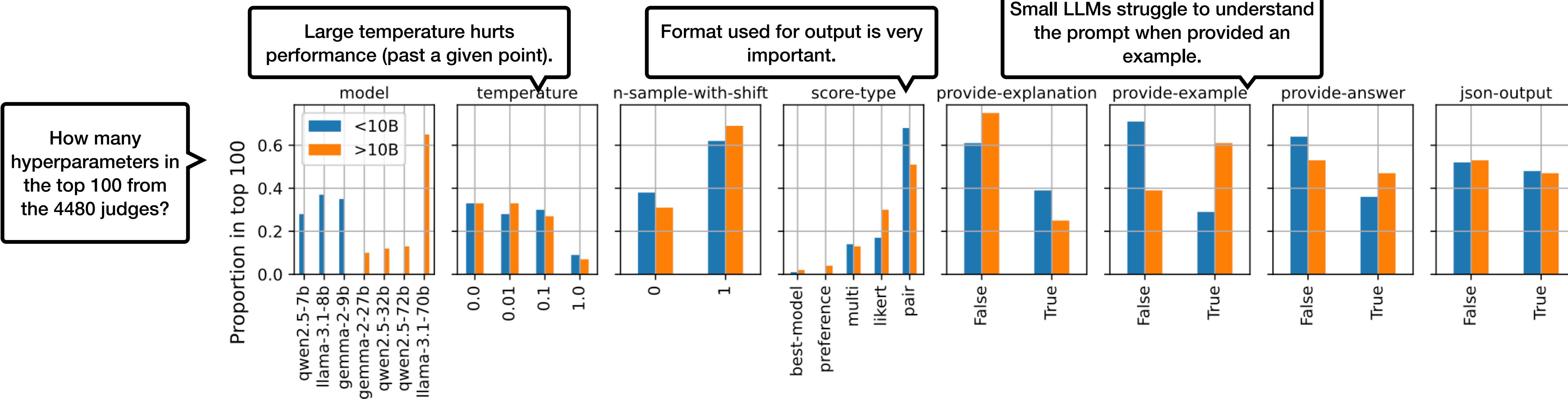


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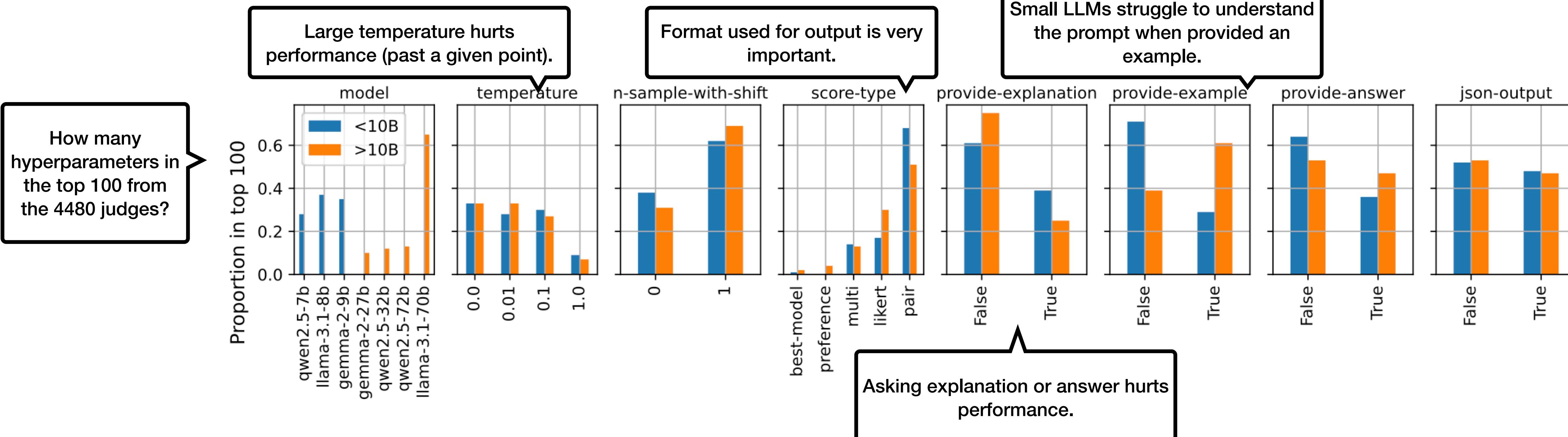
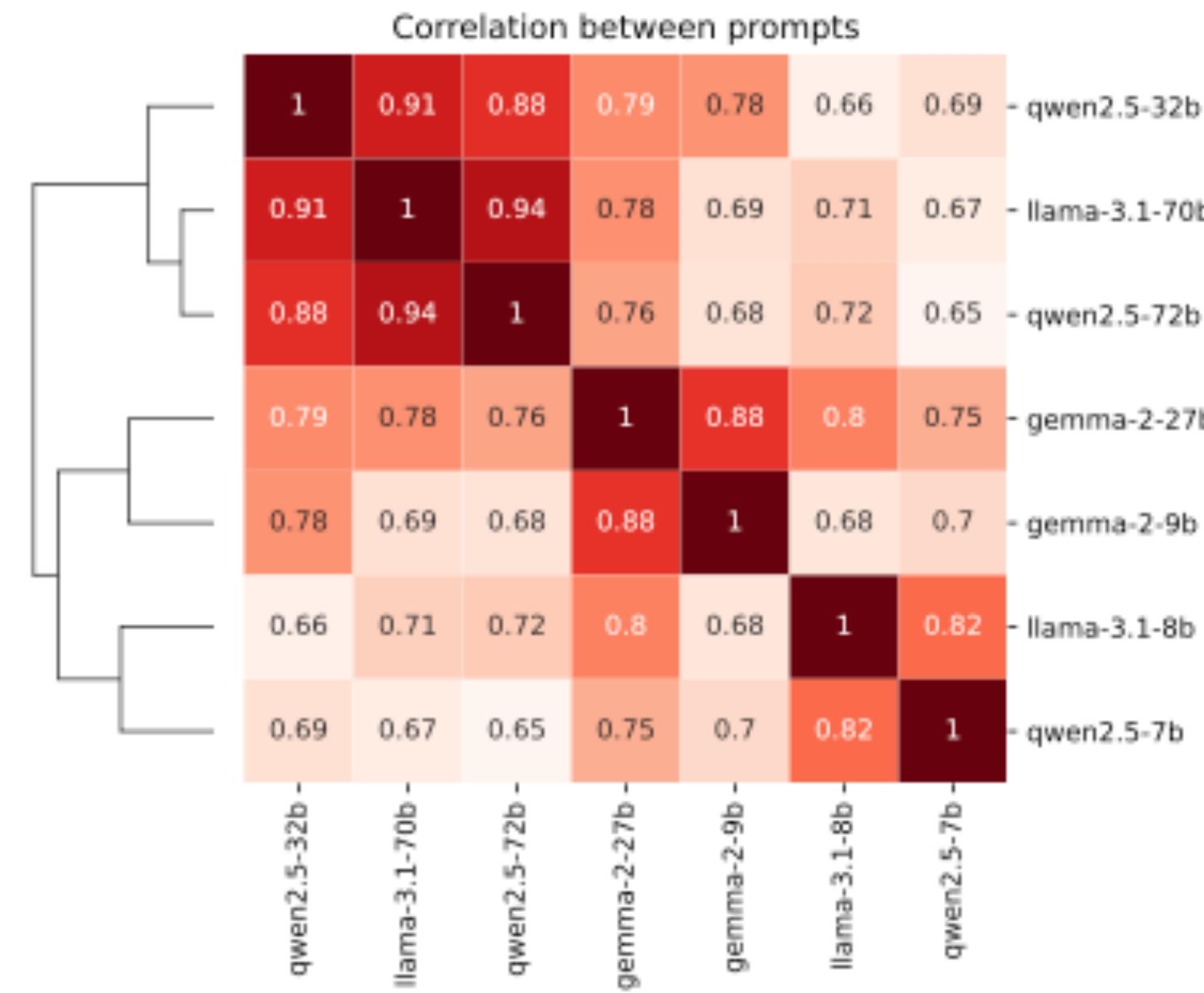


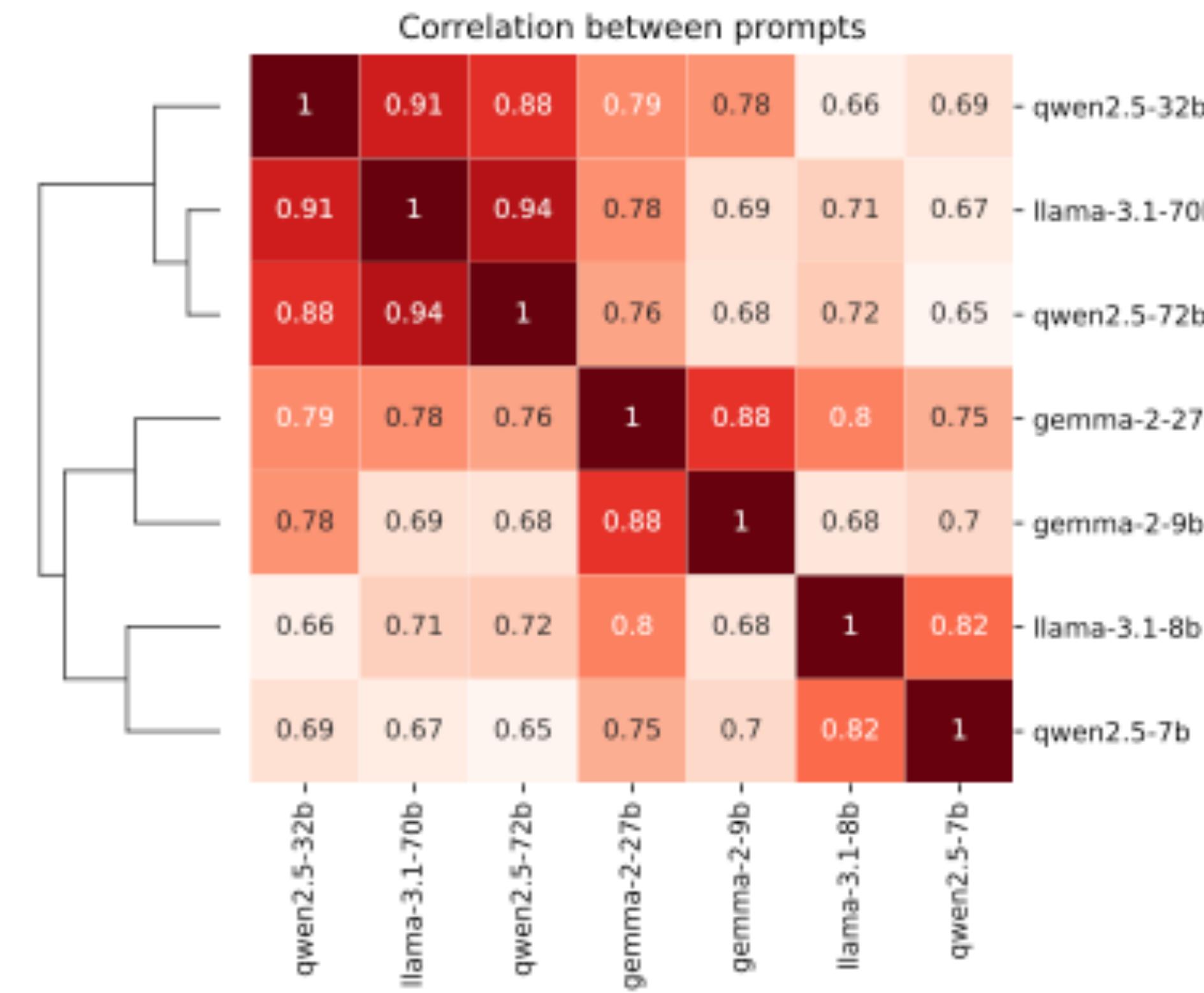
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# Prompt generalization



*Figure 7.* Prompt performance stability across different models. We show the correlation matrix between models when looking at their performance on all of the 80 different prompts.

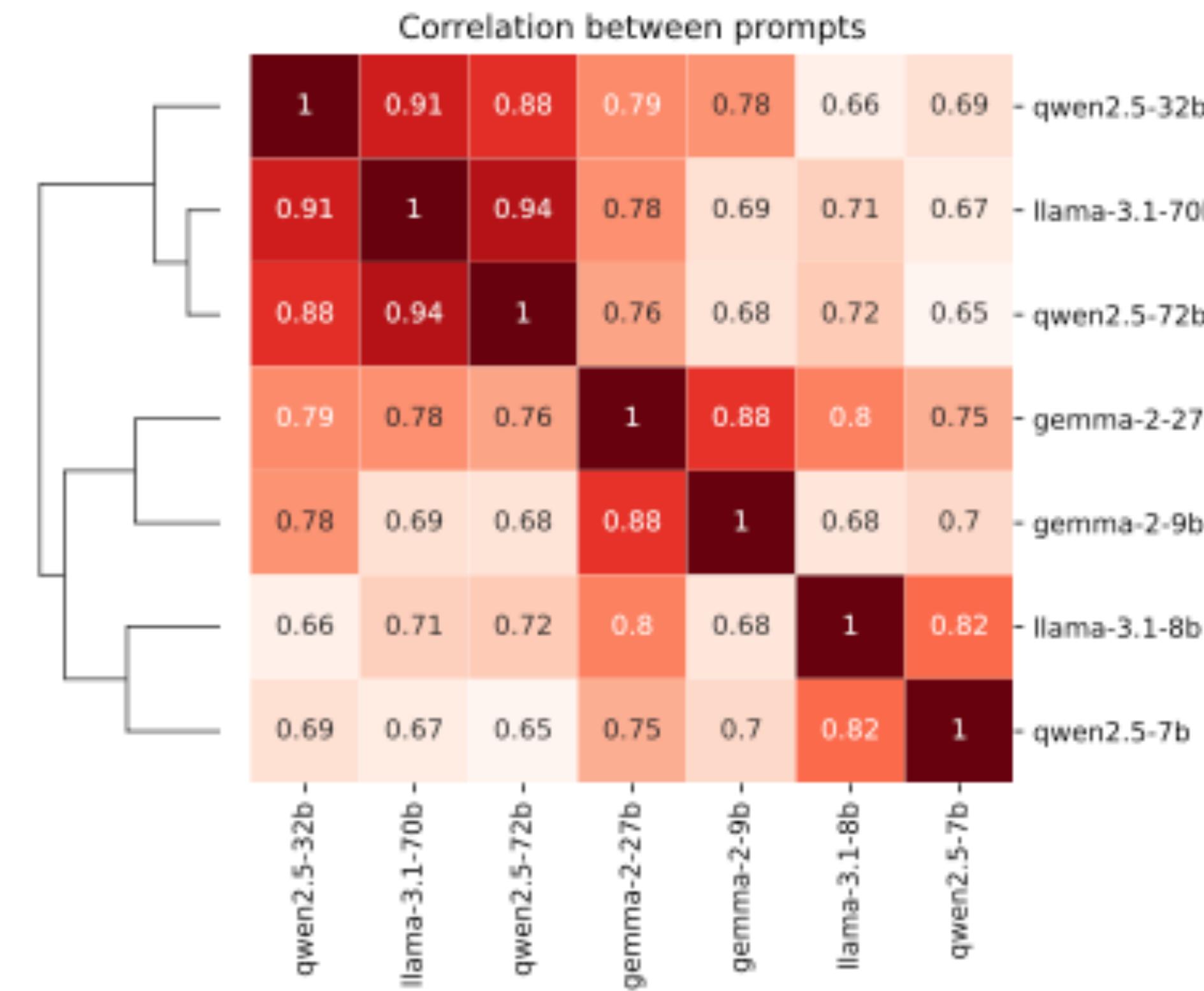
# Prompt generalization



Correlation between rank of prompt configurations across models

Figure 7. Prompt performance stability across different models. We show the correlation matrix between models when looking at their performance on all of the 80 different prompts.

# Prompt generalization

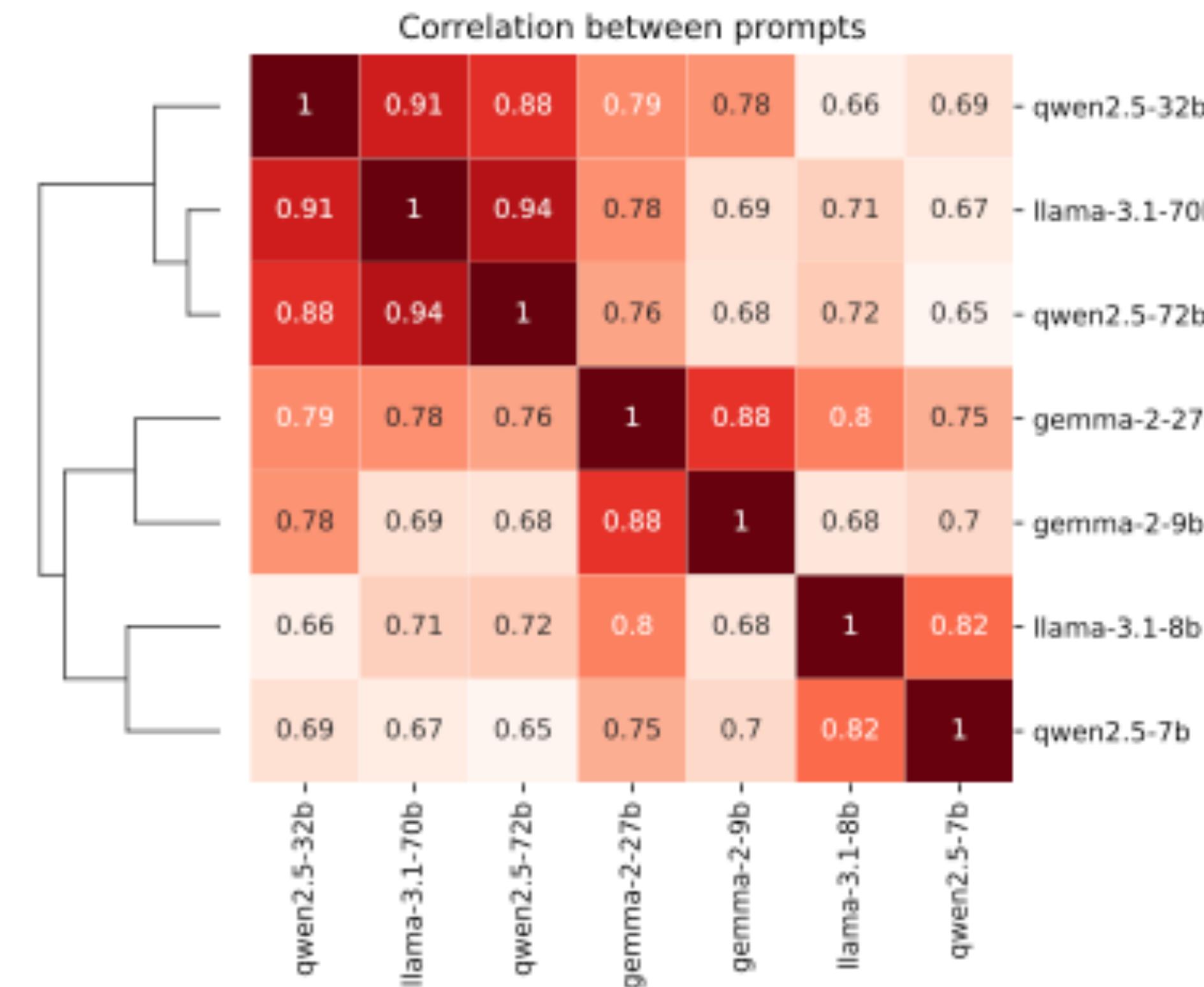


Correlation between rank of prompt configurations across models

High correlation => best prompt relatively stable across models

Figure 7. Prompt performance stability across different models. We show the correlation matrix between models when looking at their performance on all of the 80 different prompts.

# Prompt generalization



Correlation between rank of prompt configurations across models

High correlation => best prompt relatively stable across models

Correlation higher when model sizes and family are close

Figure 7. Prompt performance stability across different models. We show the correlation matrix between models when looking at their performance on all of the 80 different prompts.

You are a highly efficient assistant, who evaluates and selects the best large language model based on the quality of their responses to a given instruction.

You will be shown one instruction and the output of Assistant A and Assistant B and will have to decide which one was best.

Make sure to not over-confidently prefer one assistant or the other and also make sure to not bias your preference based on the ordering or on the length of the answers.

<|User Prompt|>  
Who is Barack Obama?

<|The Start of Assistant A's Answer|>  
Barack Obama is a former US president.  
<|The End of Assistant A's Answer|>

<|The Start of Assistant B's Answer|>  
I do not know who Barack Obama is.  
<|The End of Assistant B's Answer|>

# Your output

## Format description  
Your output should follow this format:  
```  
answer: <your answer to the user prompt>  
score: <one of A>>B, A>B, A=B, A<B, A<<B, see instruction bellow>  
```

The "score" value should indicate your preference for the assistant. You must output only one of the following choices as your final verdict with a label:

A>>B: Assistant A is significantly better  
A>B: Assistant A is slightly better  
A=B: Tie, relatively the same  
B>A: Assistant B is significantly better  
B>>A: Assistant B is significantly better

## Your output, do not repeat the input above  
```

*Figure 10.* Example of a prompt for the user prompt "Who is Barack Obama?". In this case, the judge is asked to provide its answer. It is asked to use the Likert format and provide its answer in raw text.

# Conclusion

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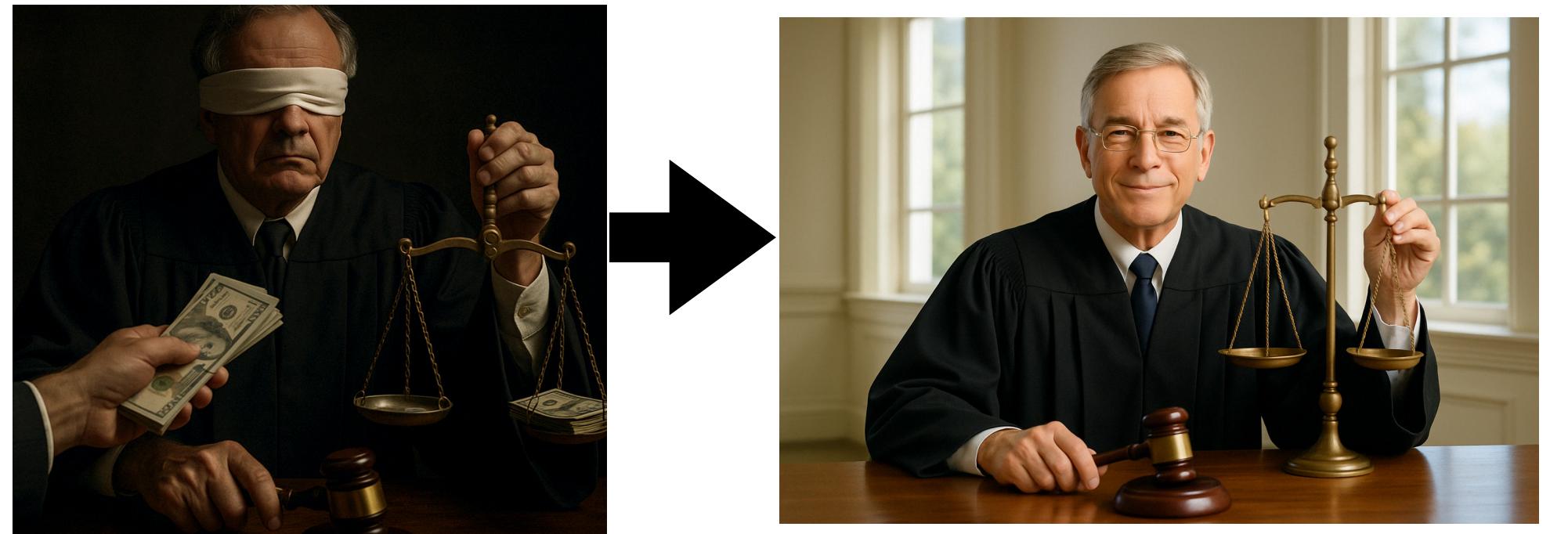
# Conclusion

- LLM judges can be tuned at a reasonable cost
- Tuning hyperparameters allows to match or outperform previous approaches
  - while diminishing the cost significantly
  - ... and using only open-weight models

# Next steps / future work

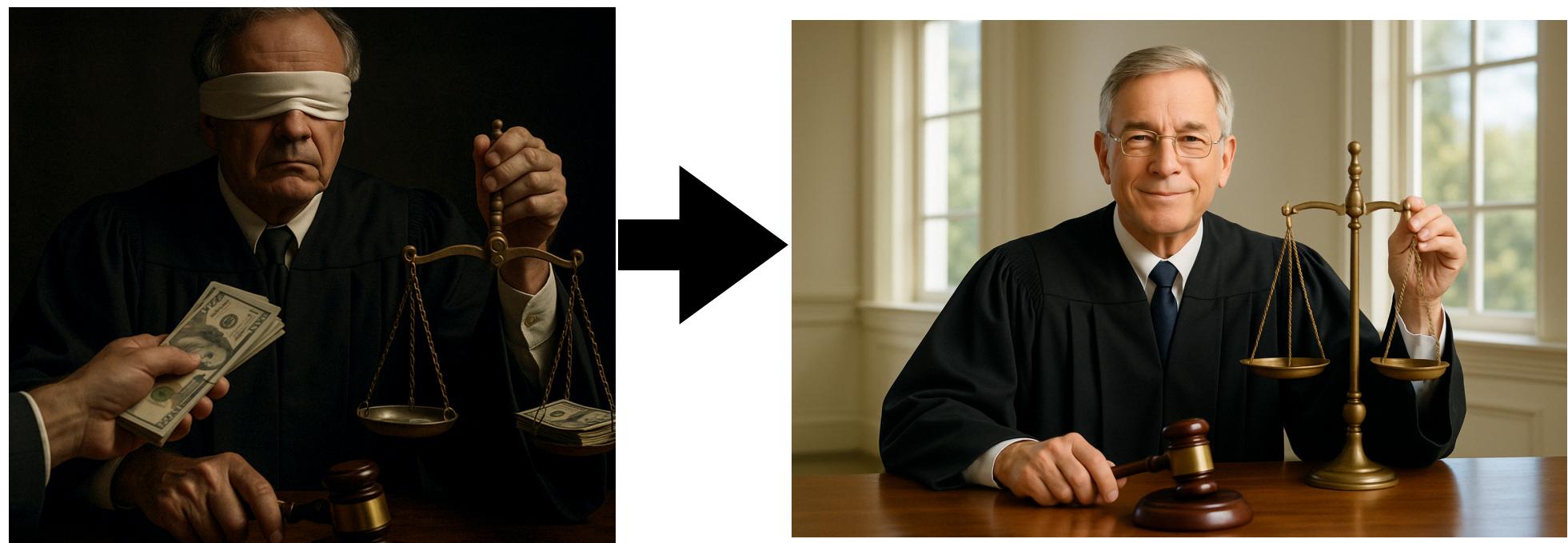
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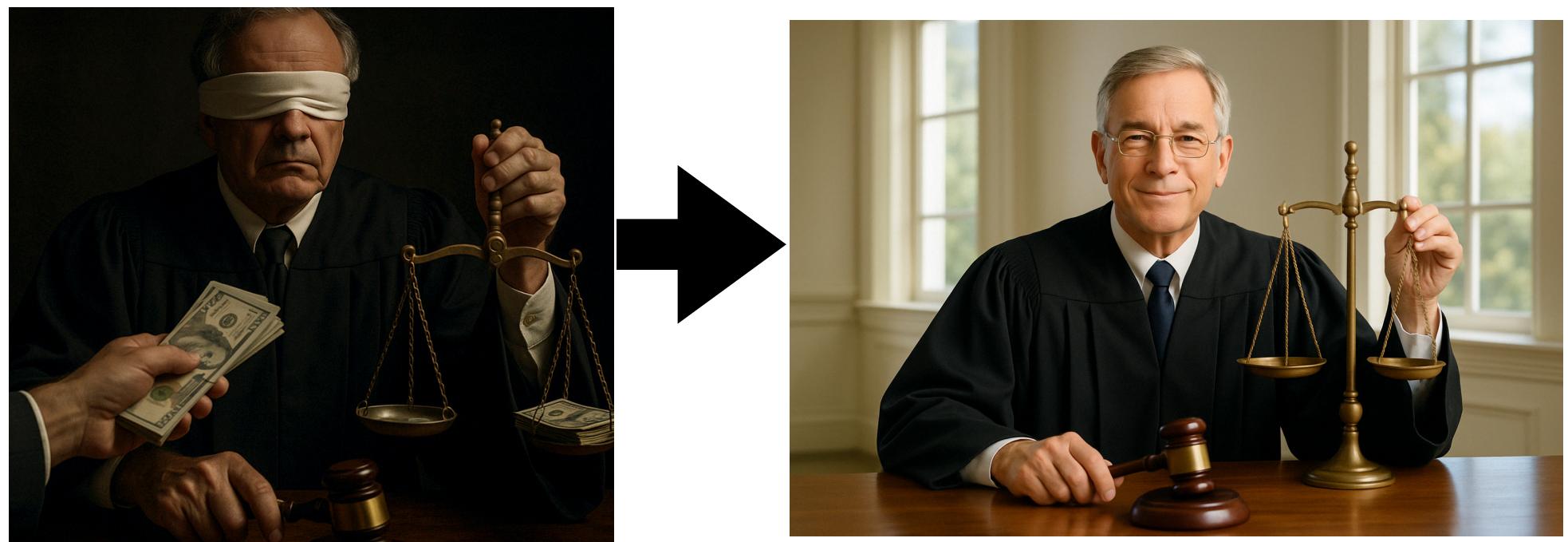


**Optimize instruction tuning hyperparameters  
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Pretrained model → Instruction-tuned model

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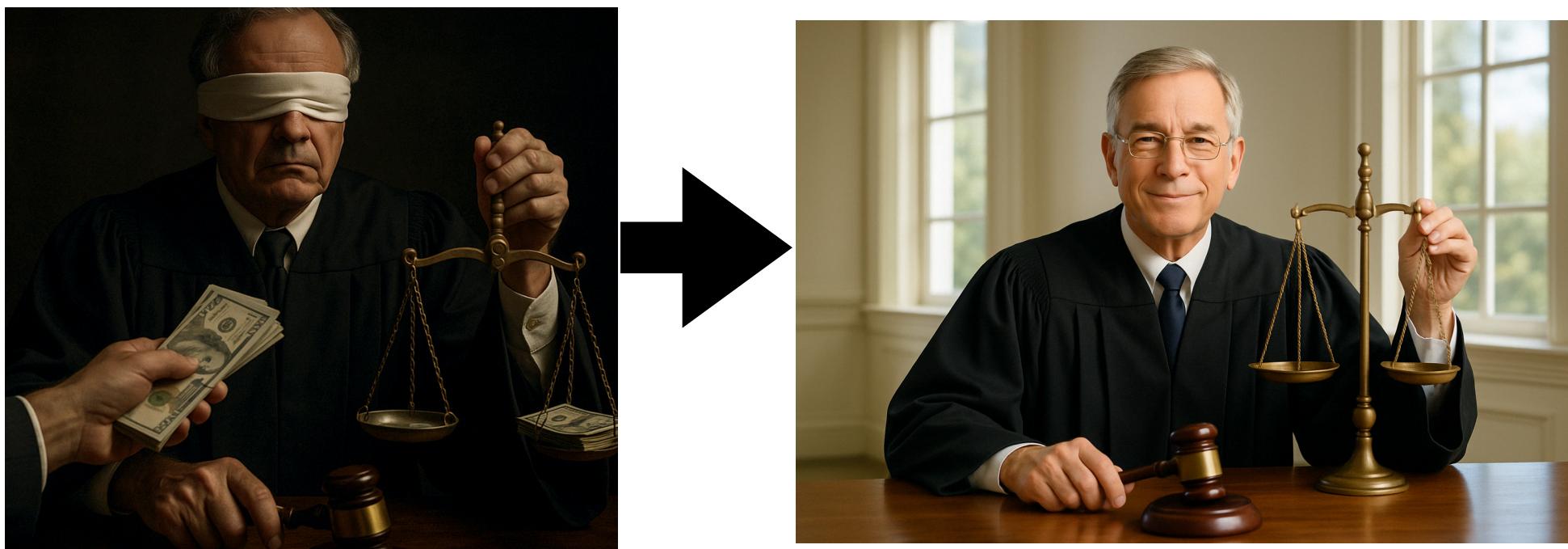
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Pretrained model → Instruction-tuned model

## Better AutoML for judges

- AutoML: tabular benchmark released <https://github.com/geoalgo/judgetuning> (together with code to reproduce results)
- Ensemble? Portfolio? Model-based optimizers?

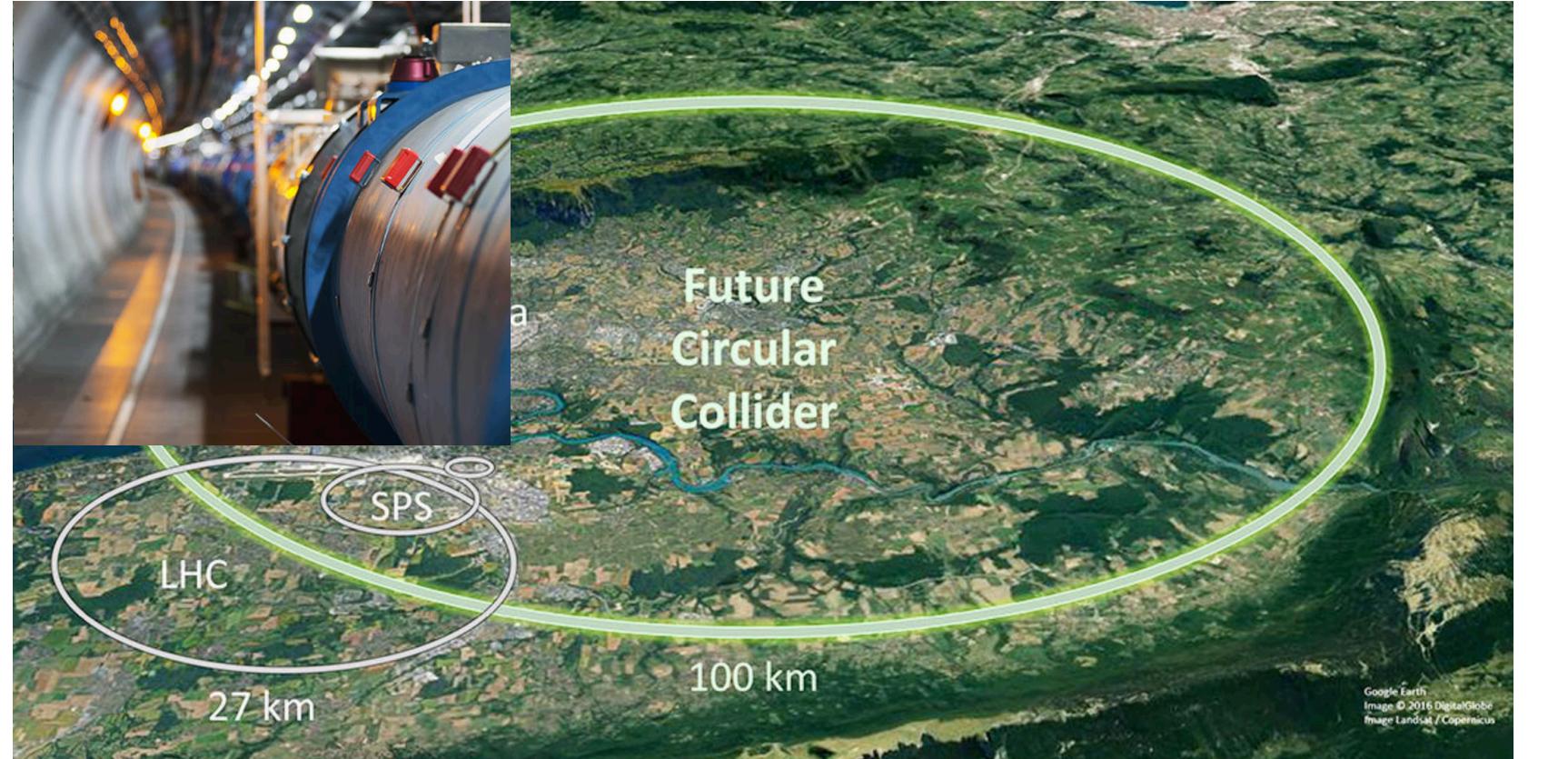
# A case of openness

# **A case of openness**

**Some of humanity largest projects**

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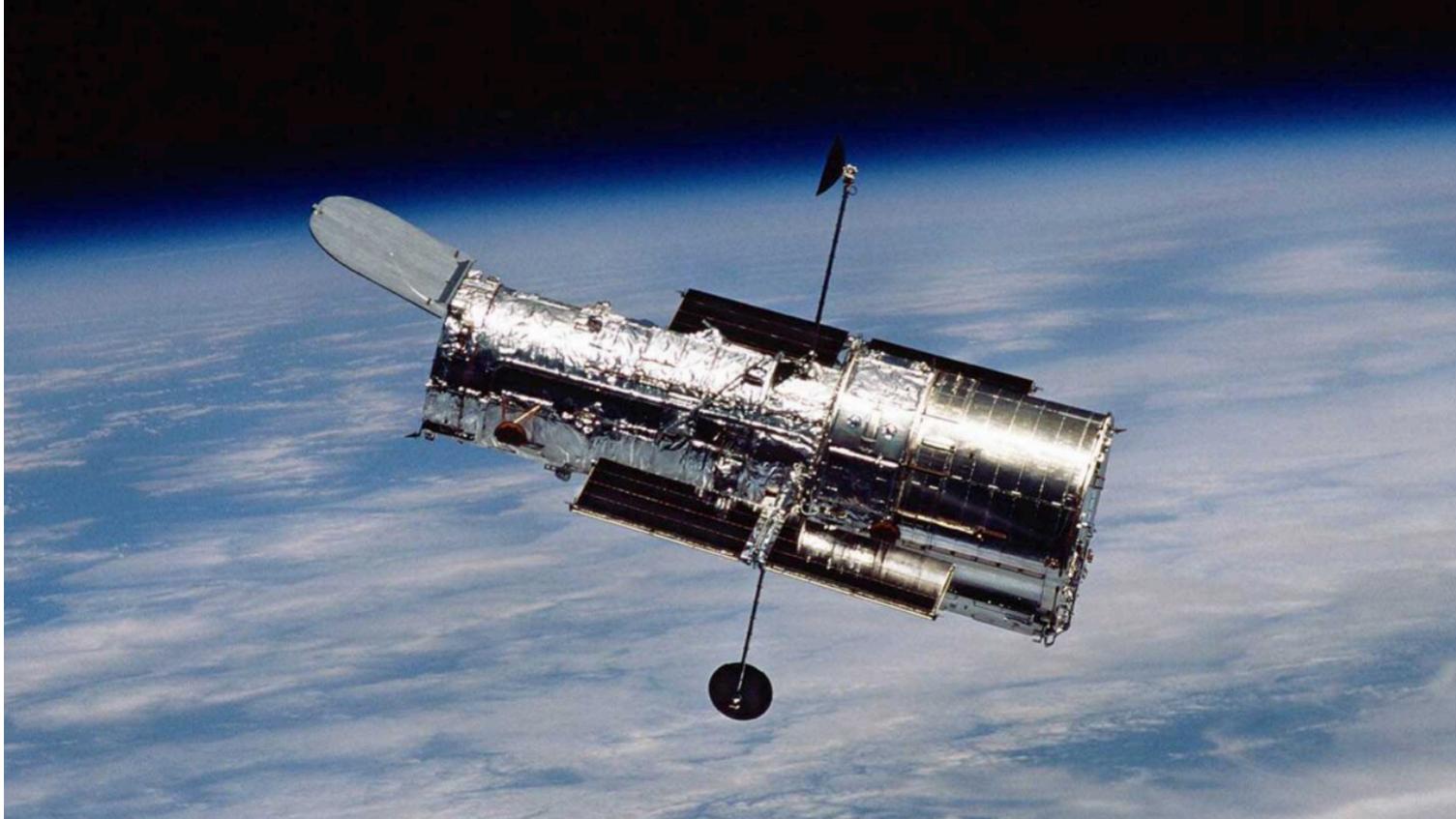
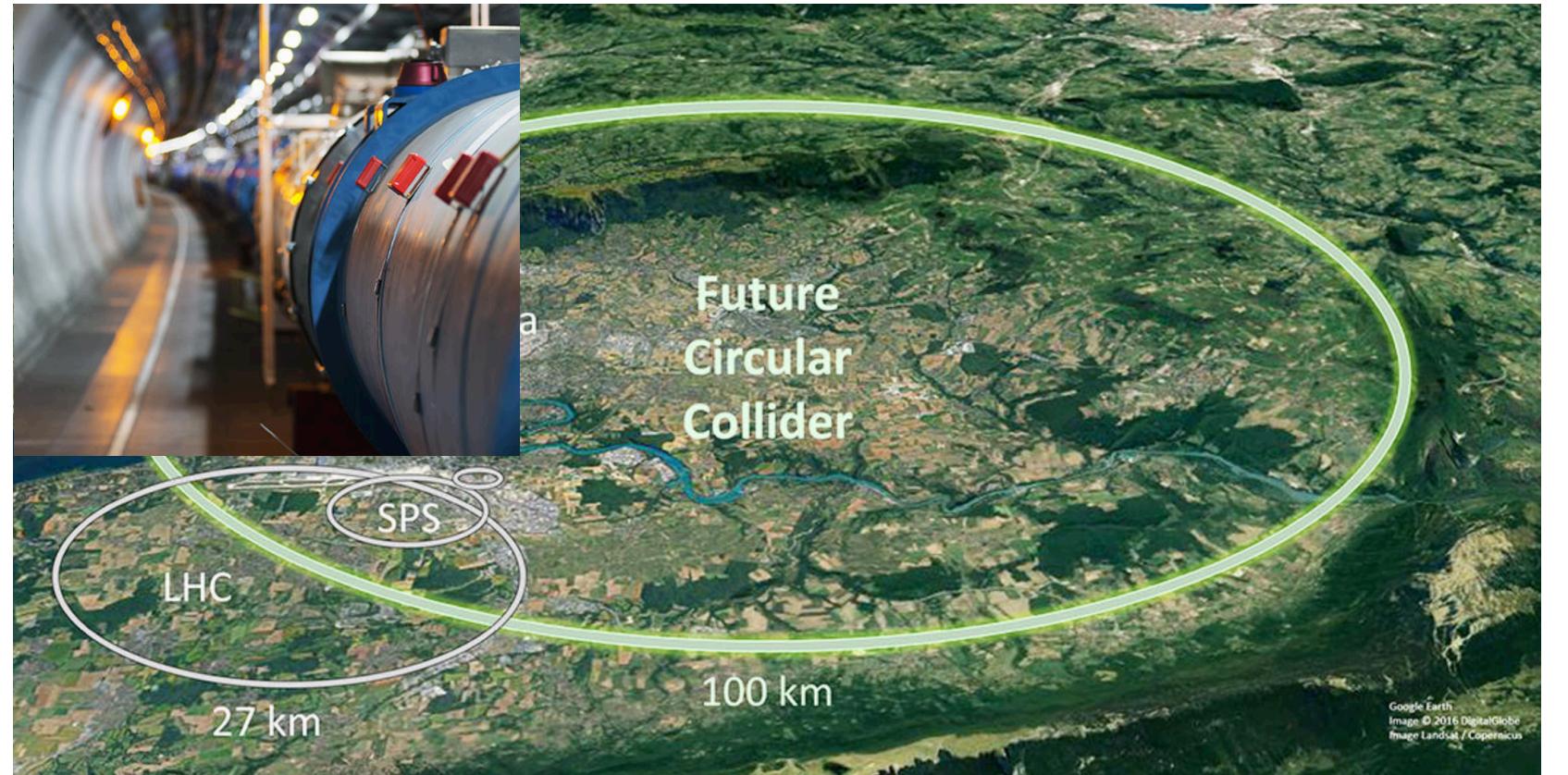
## Some of humanity largest projects



LHC: \$5 Billion, 23 countries

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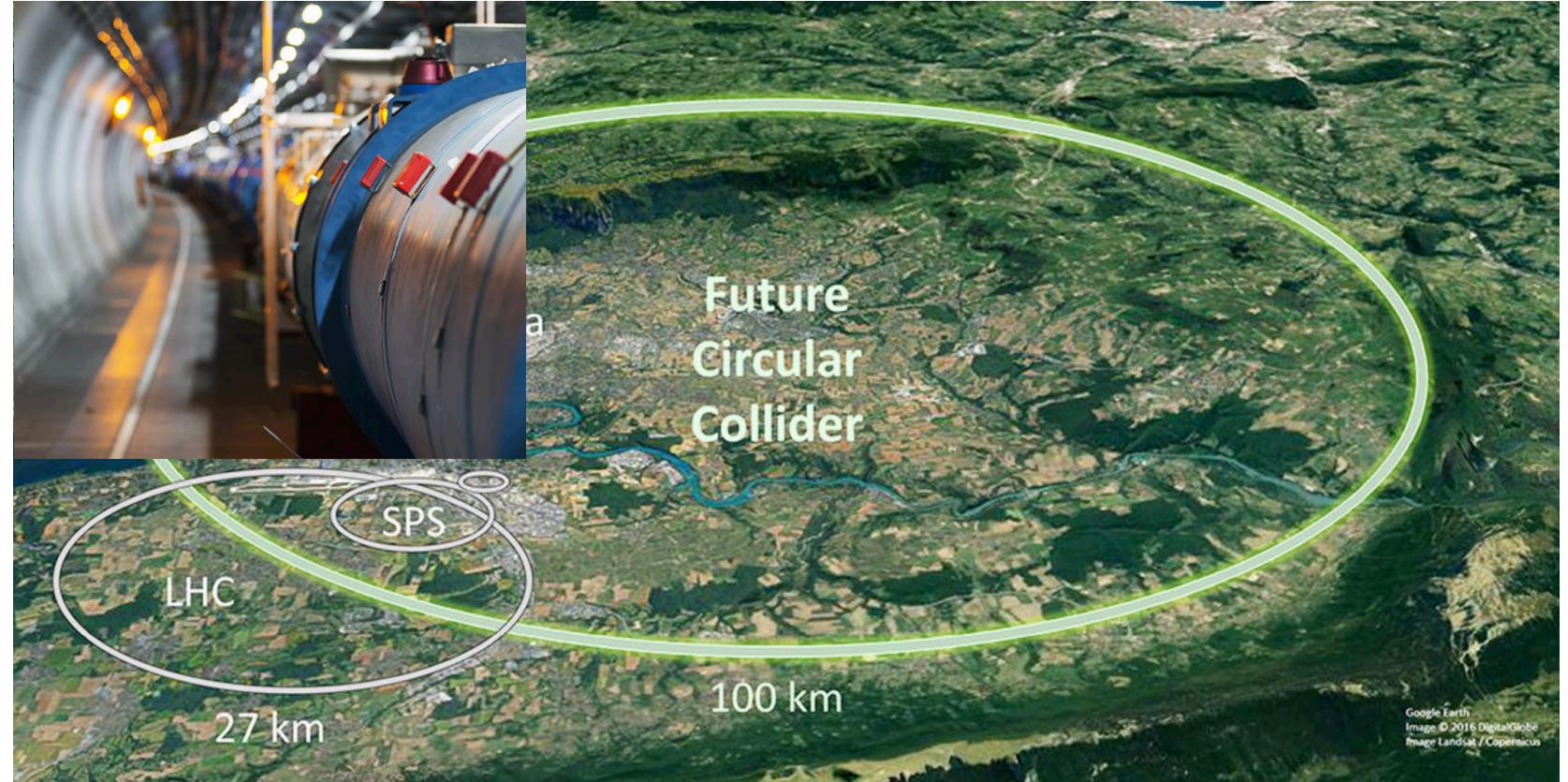
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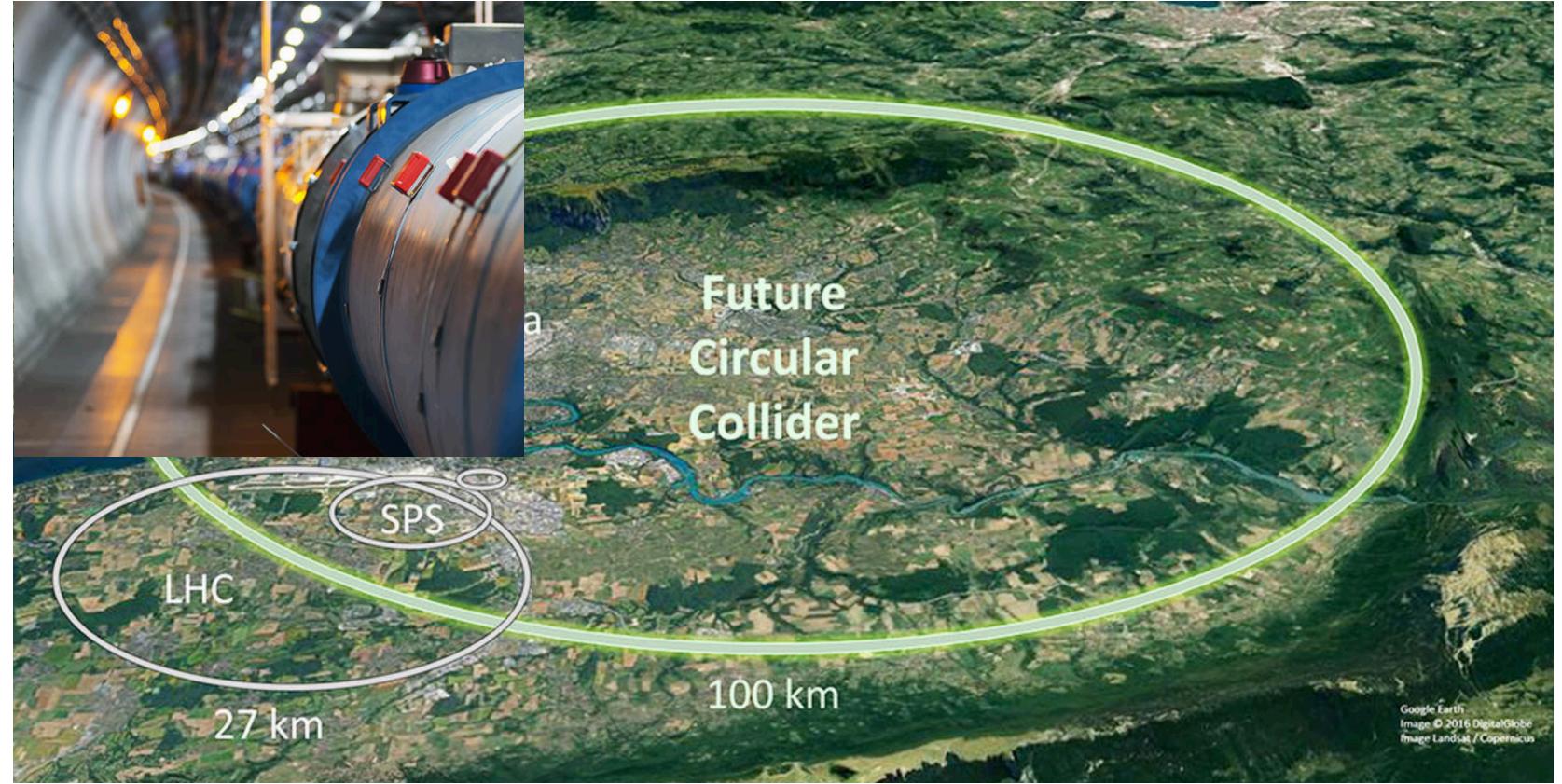
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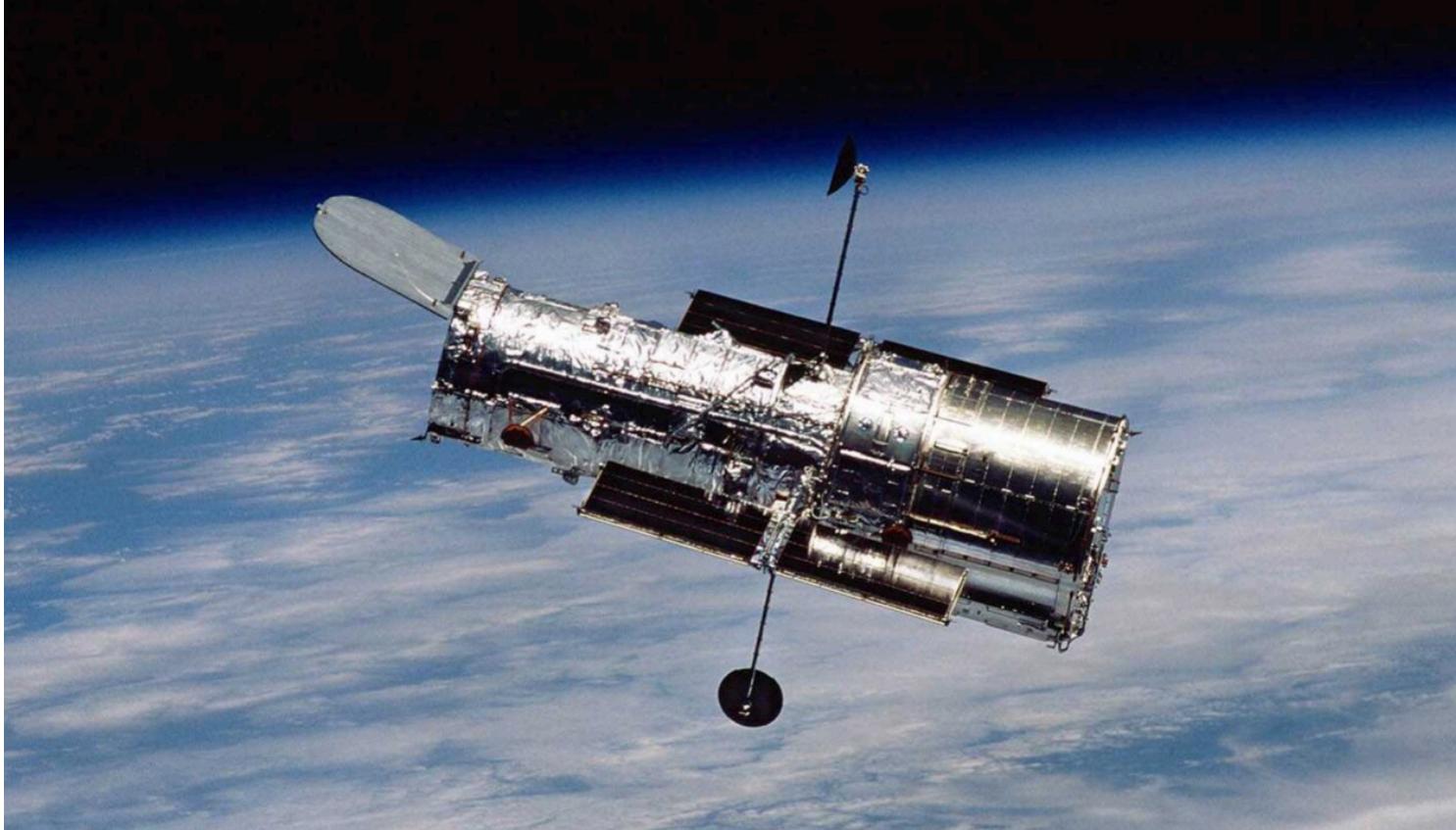
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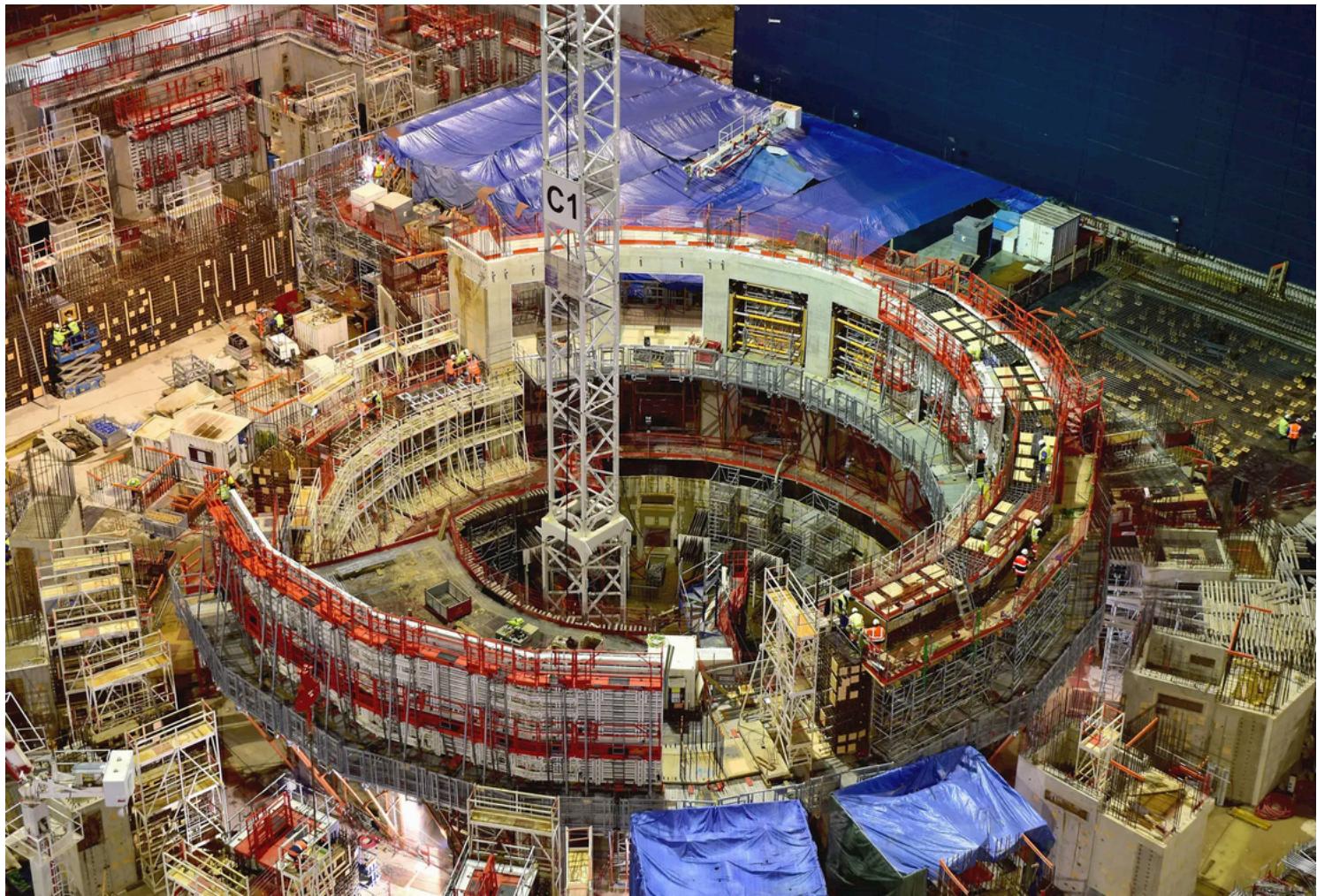
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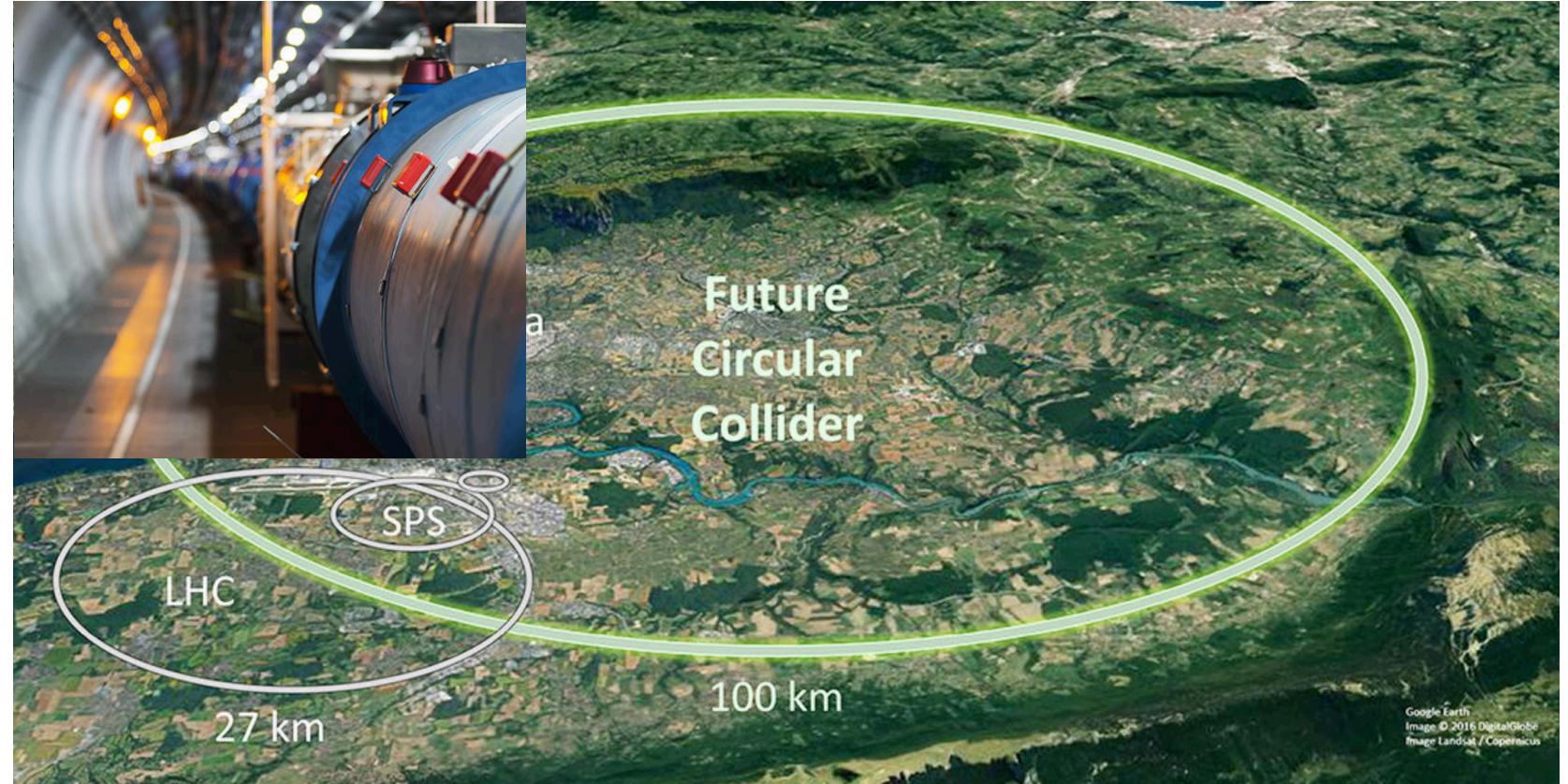


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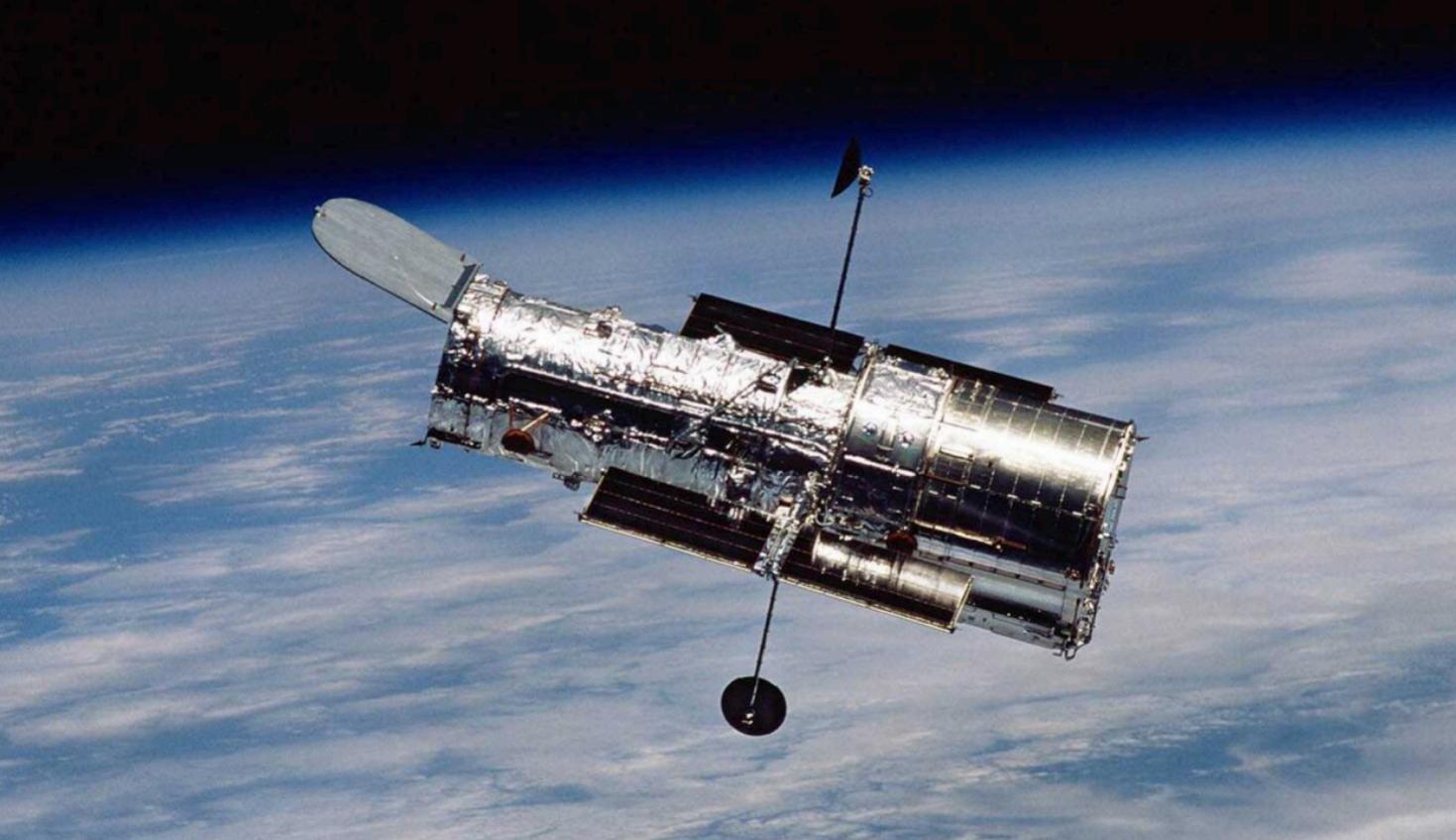


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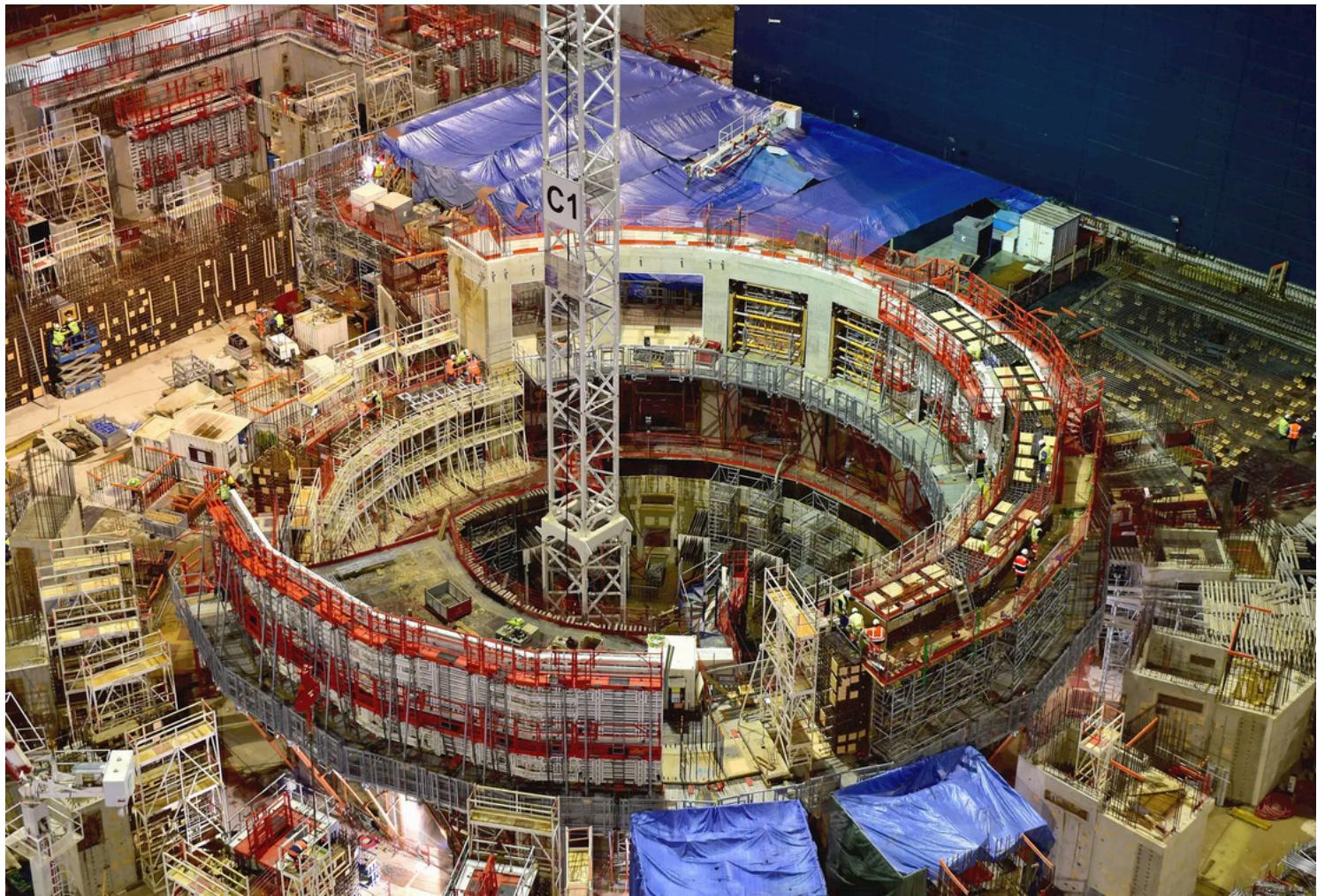
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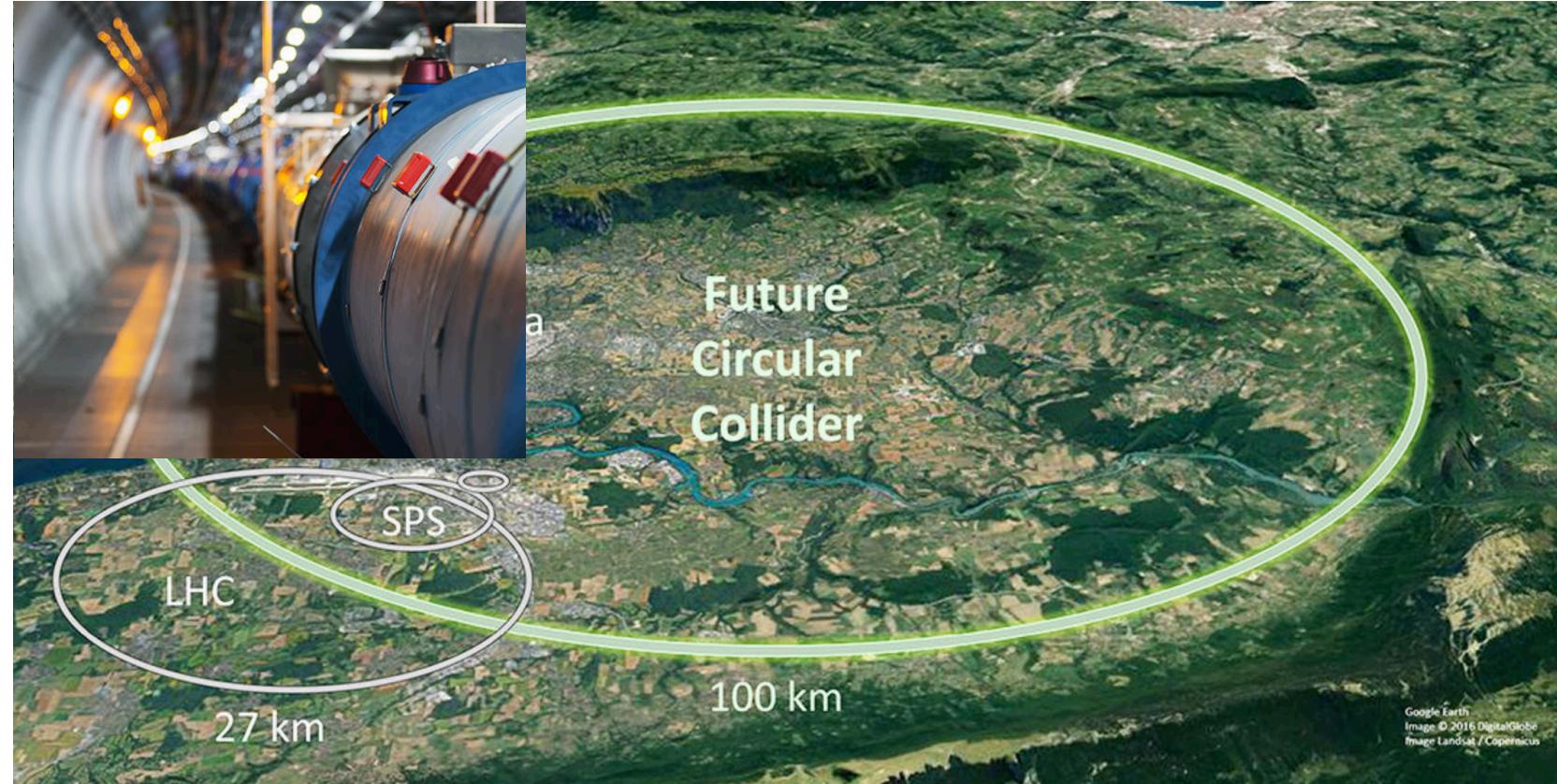
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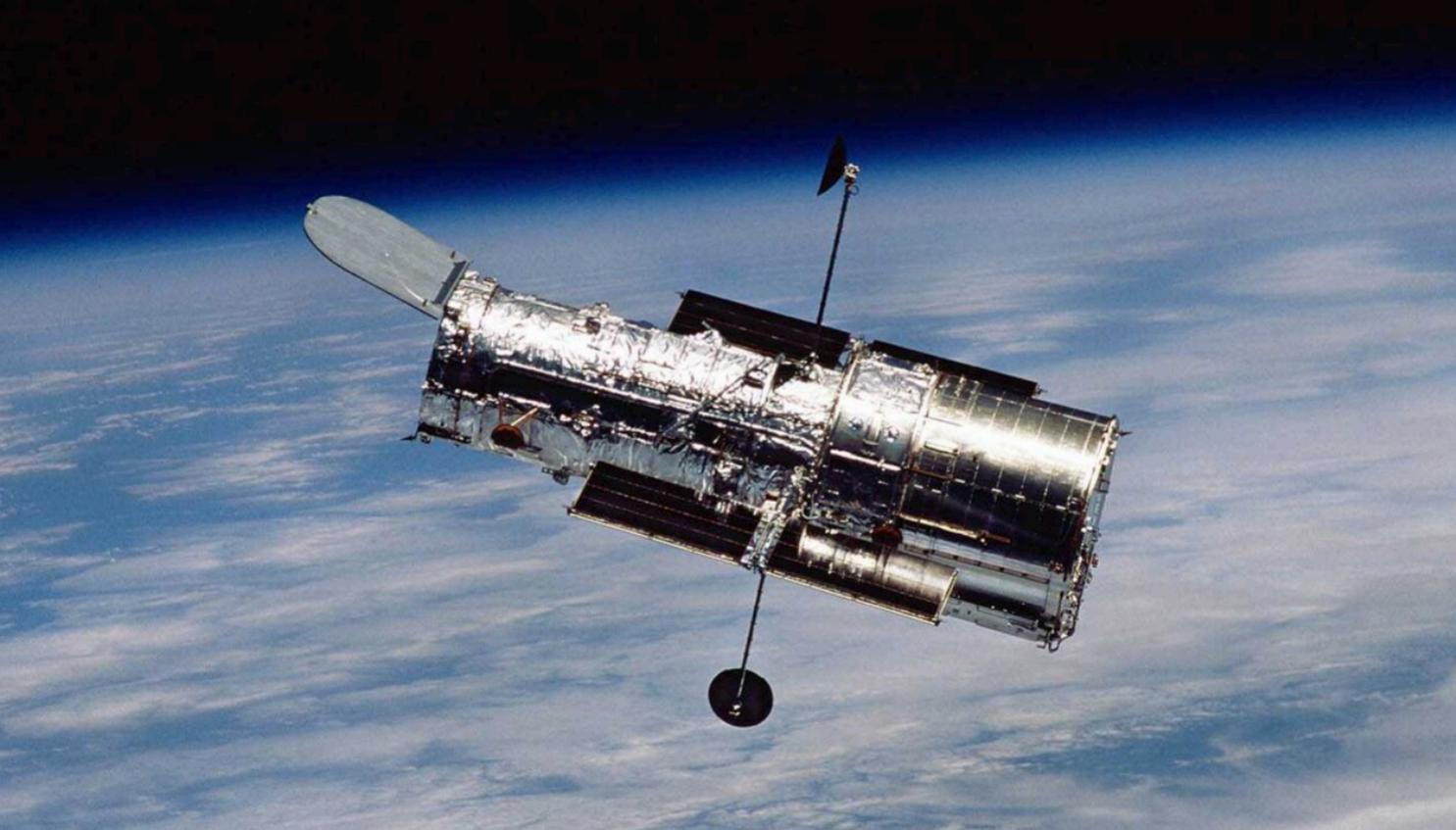
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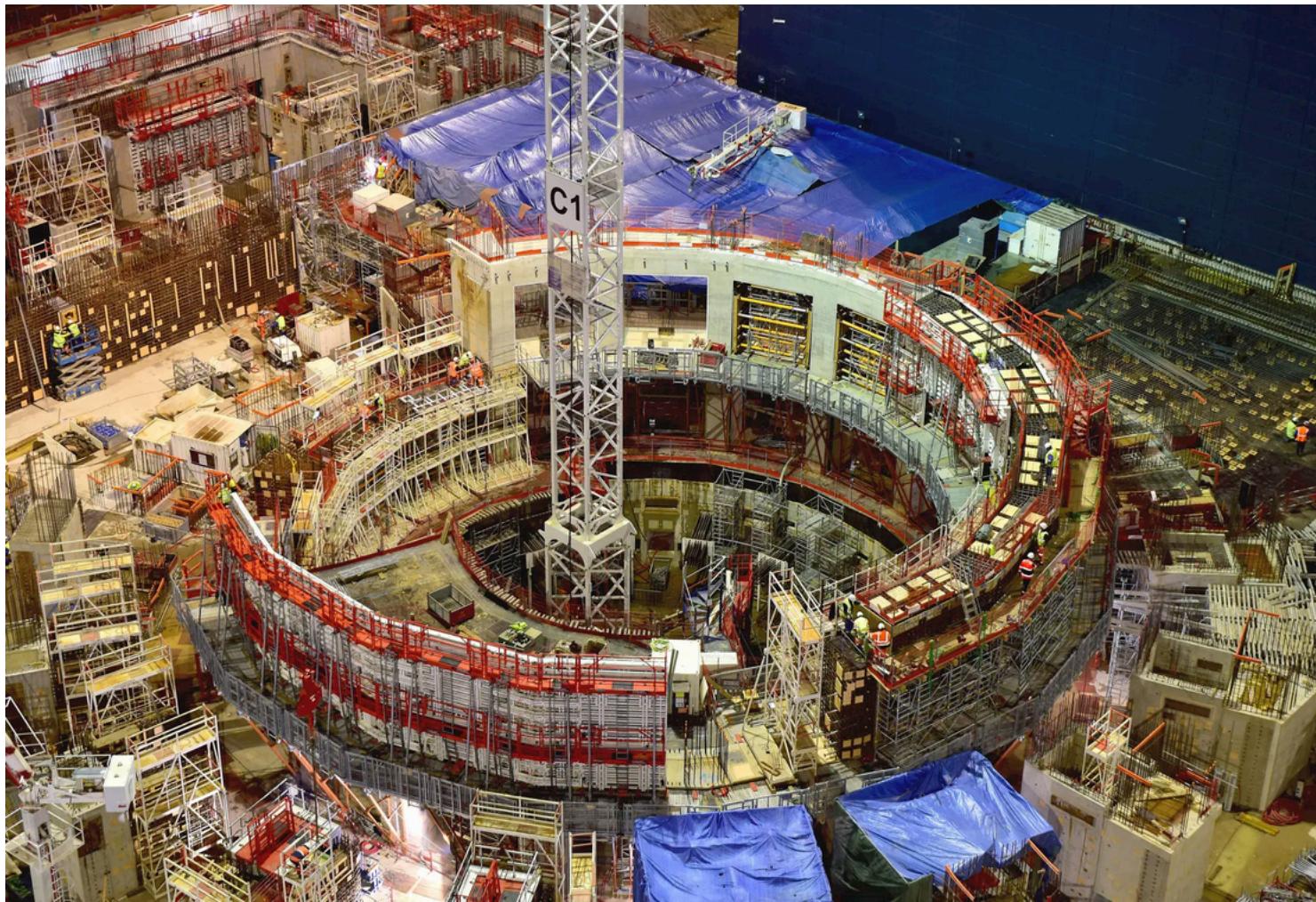
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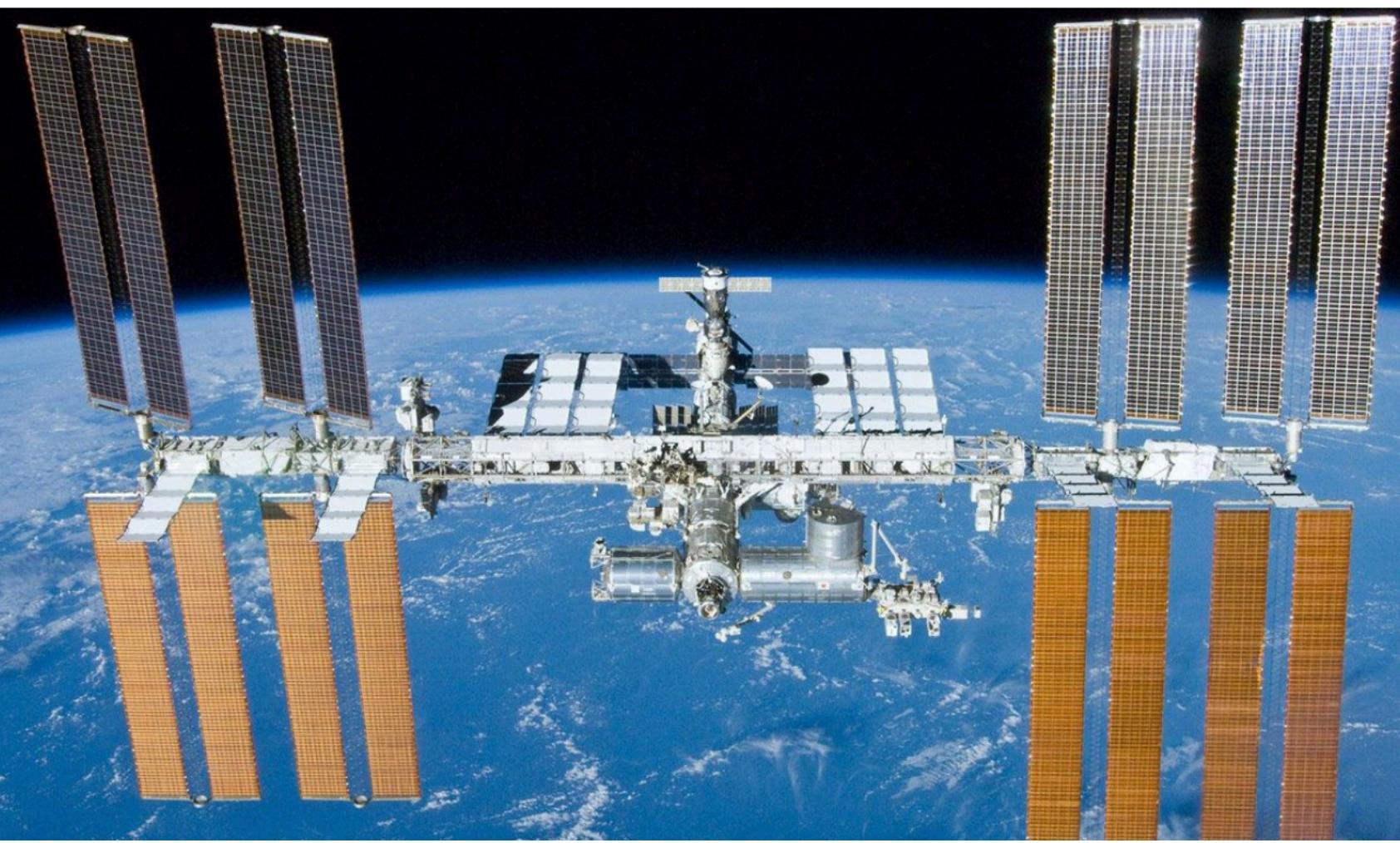
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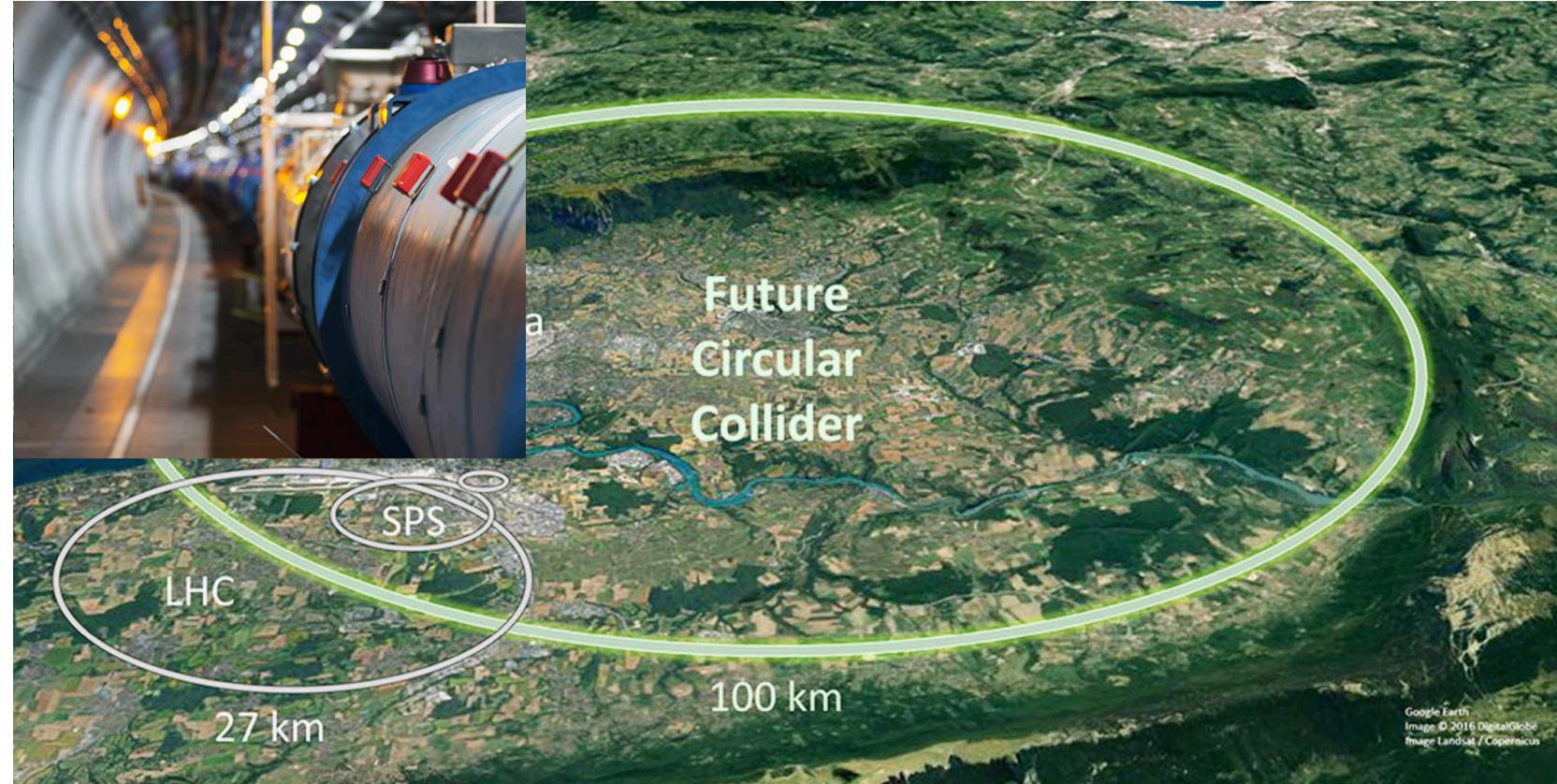


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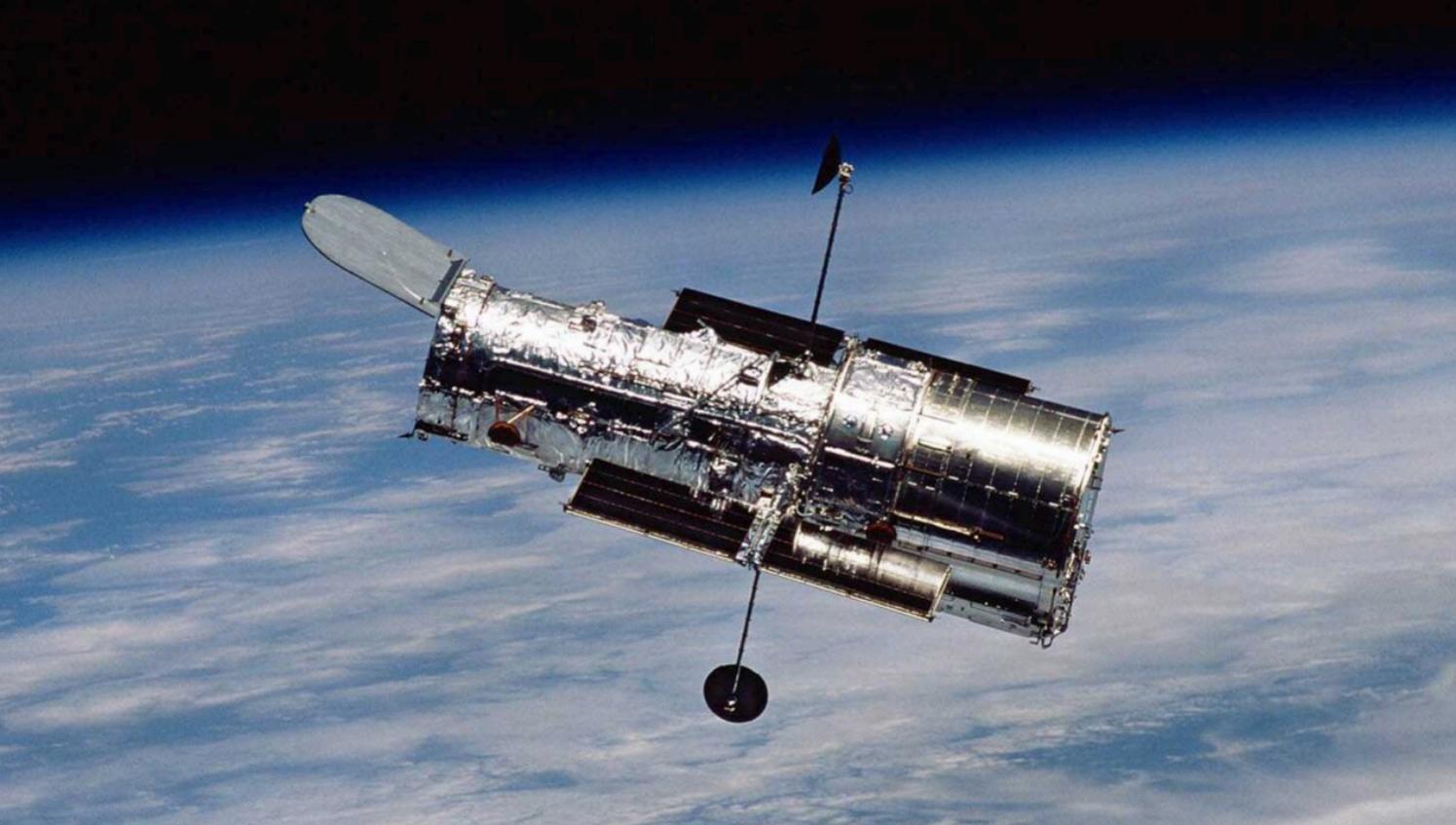


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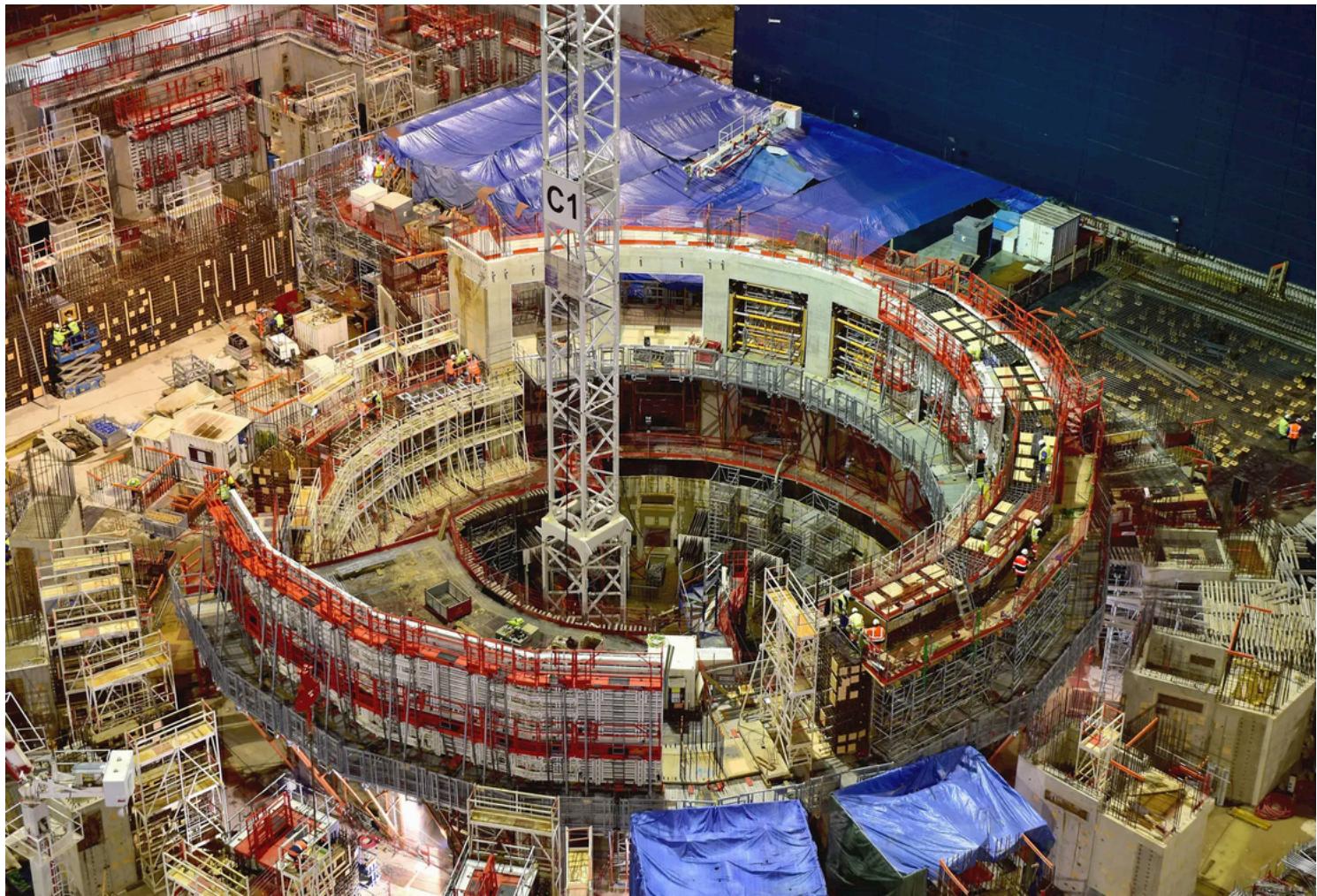
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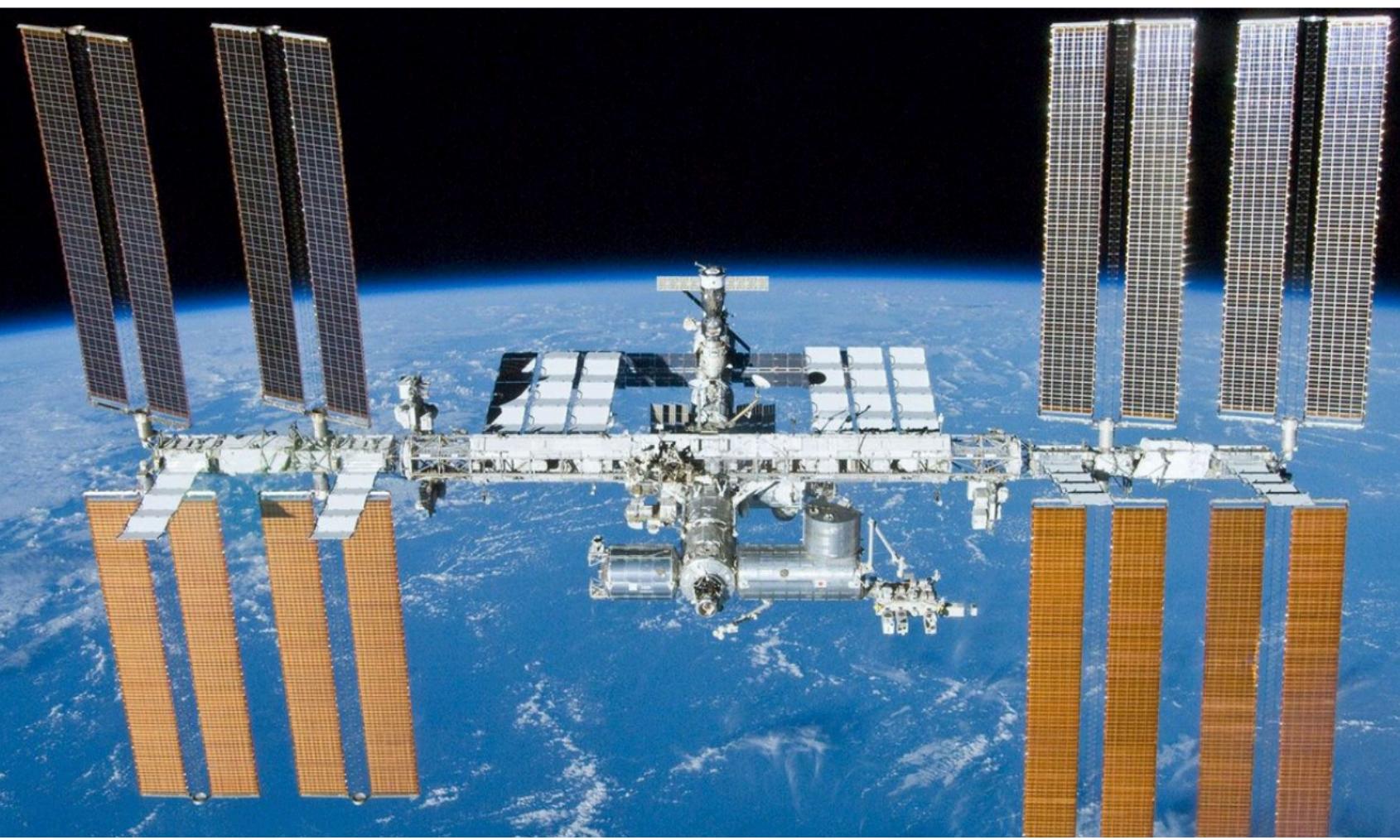
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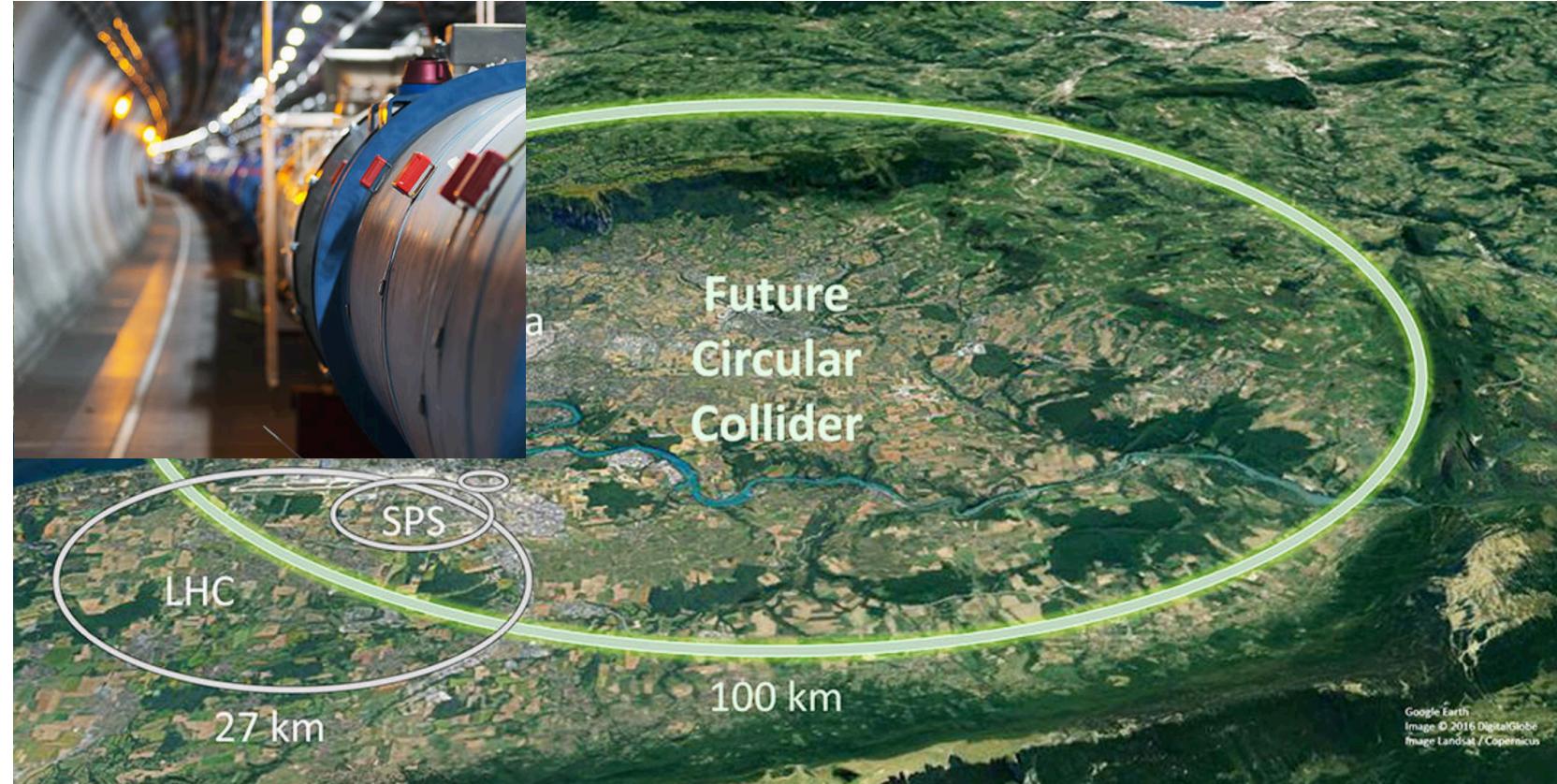
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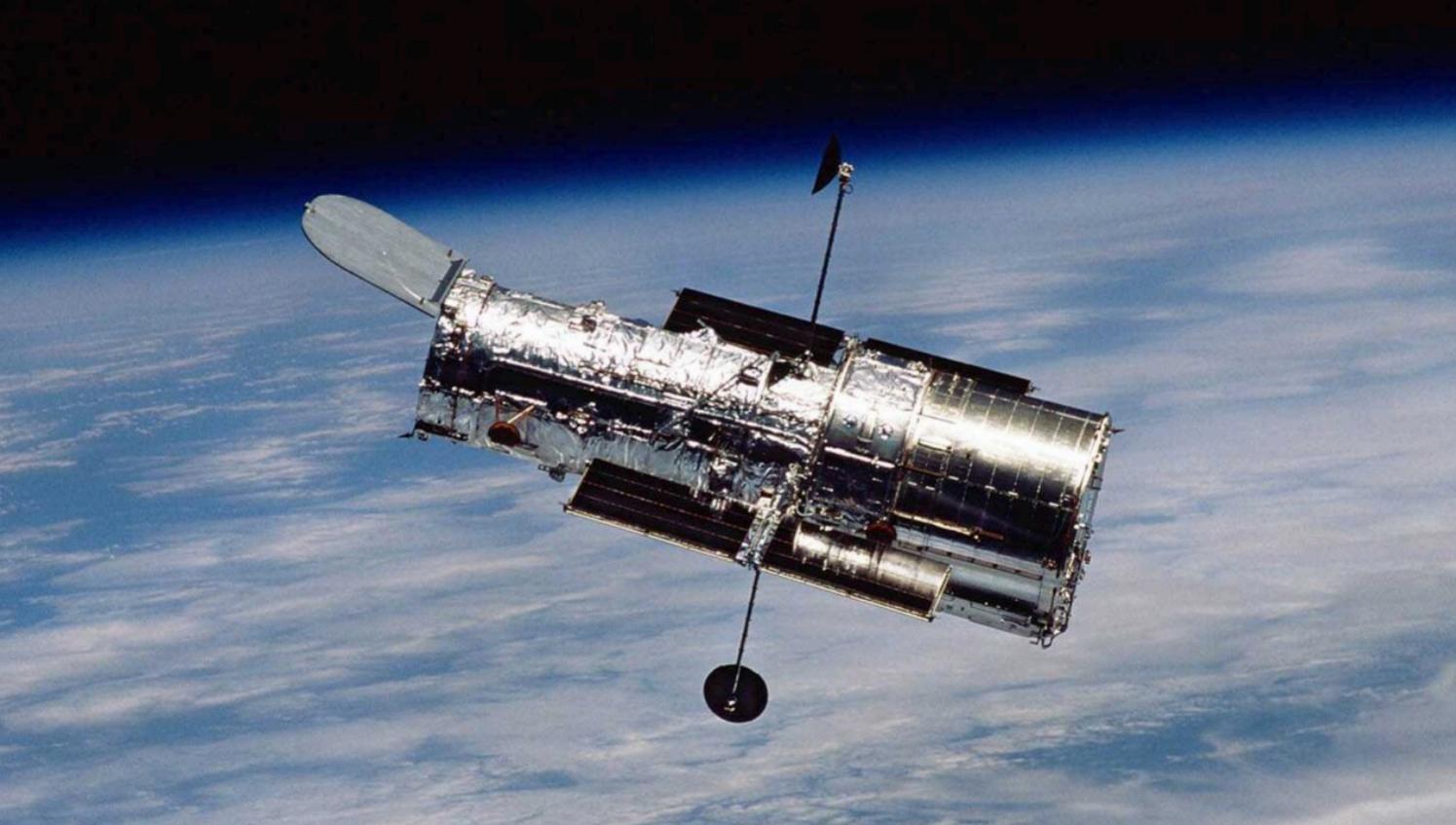
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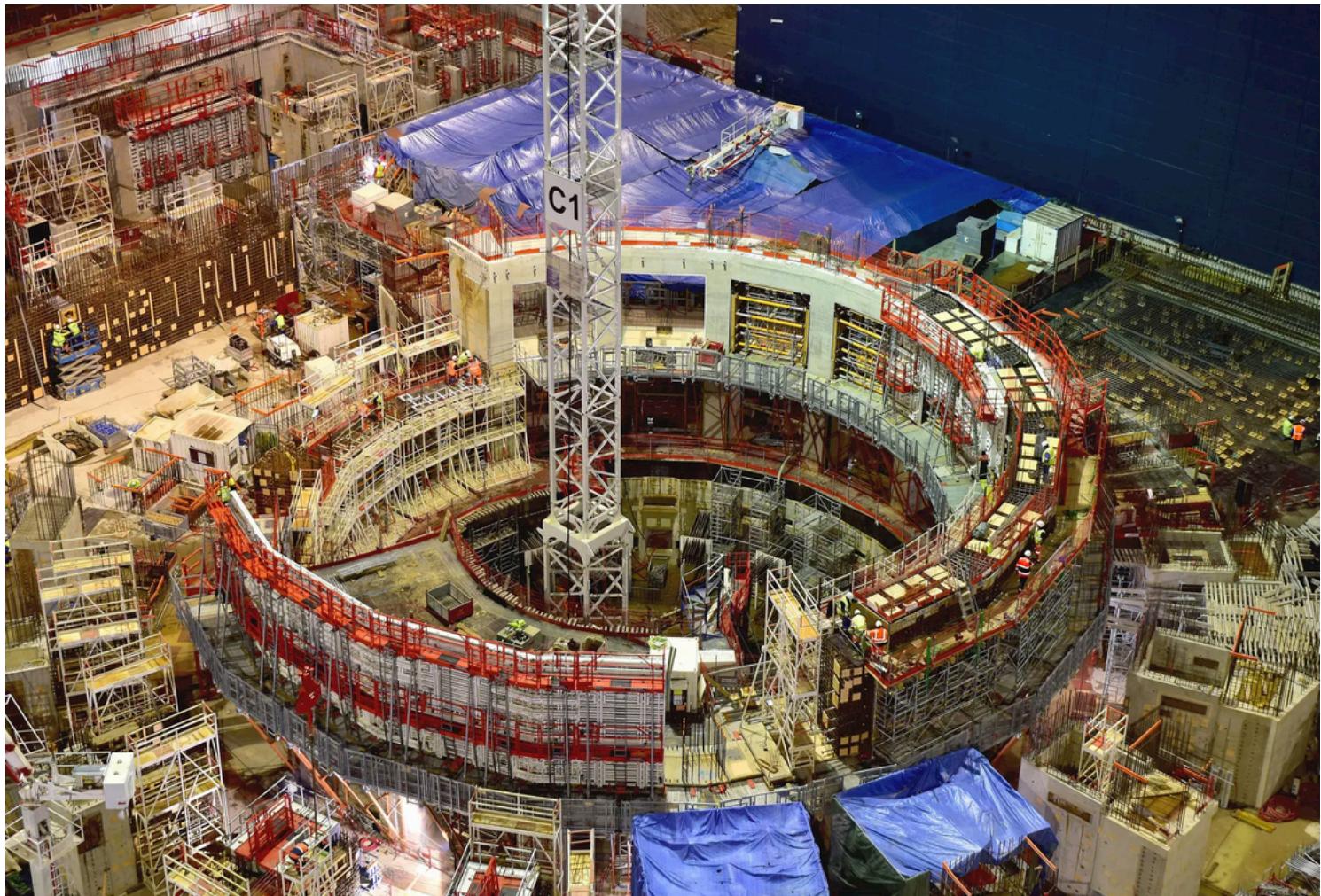
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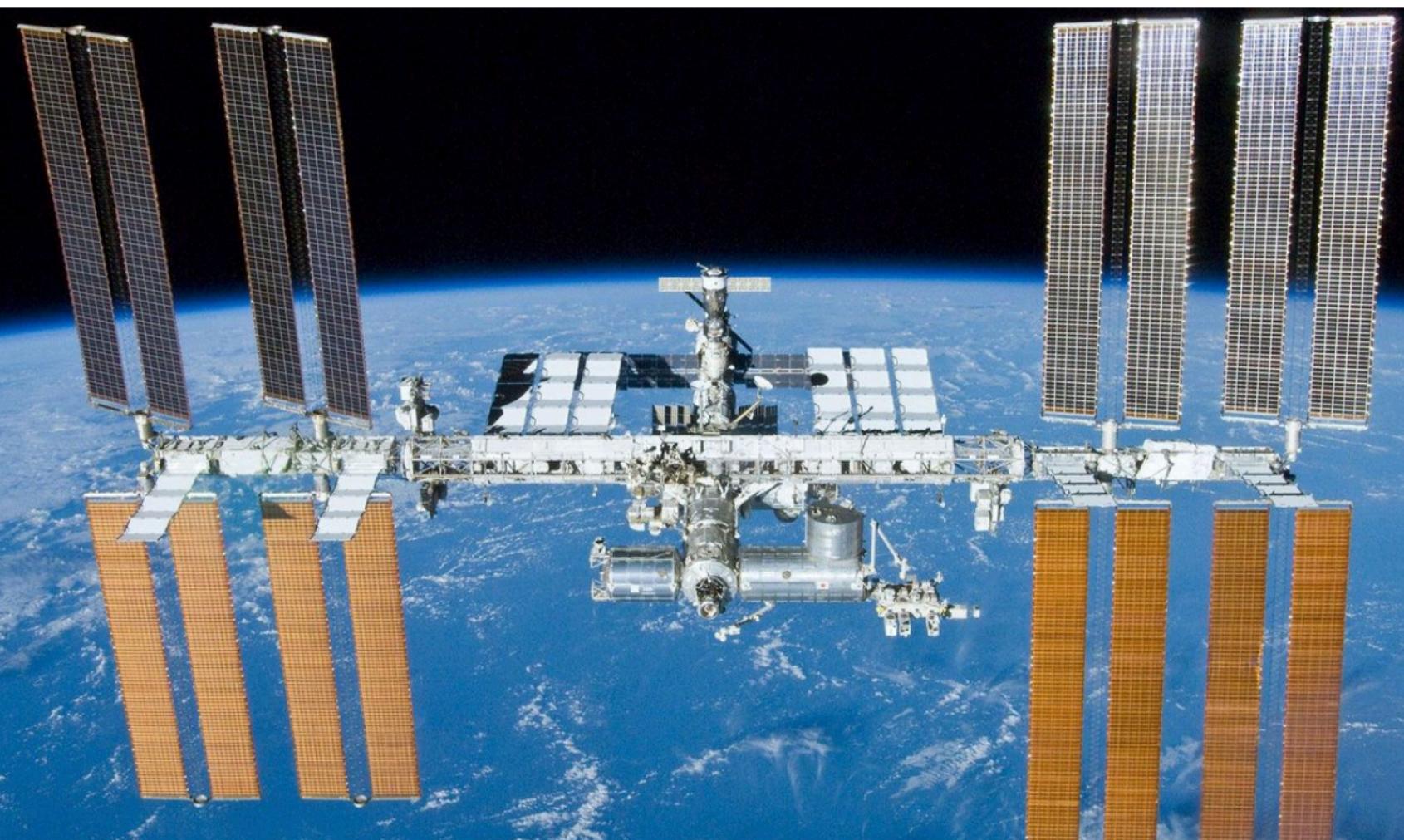
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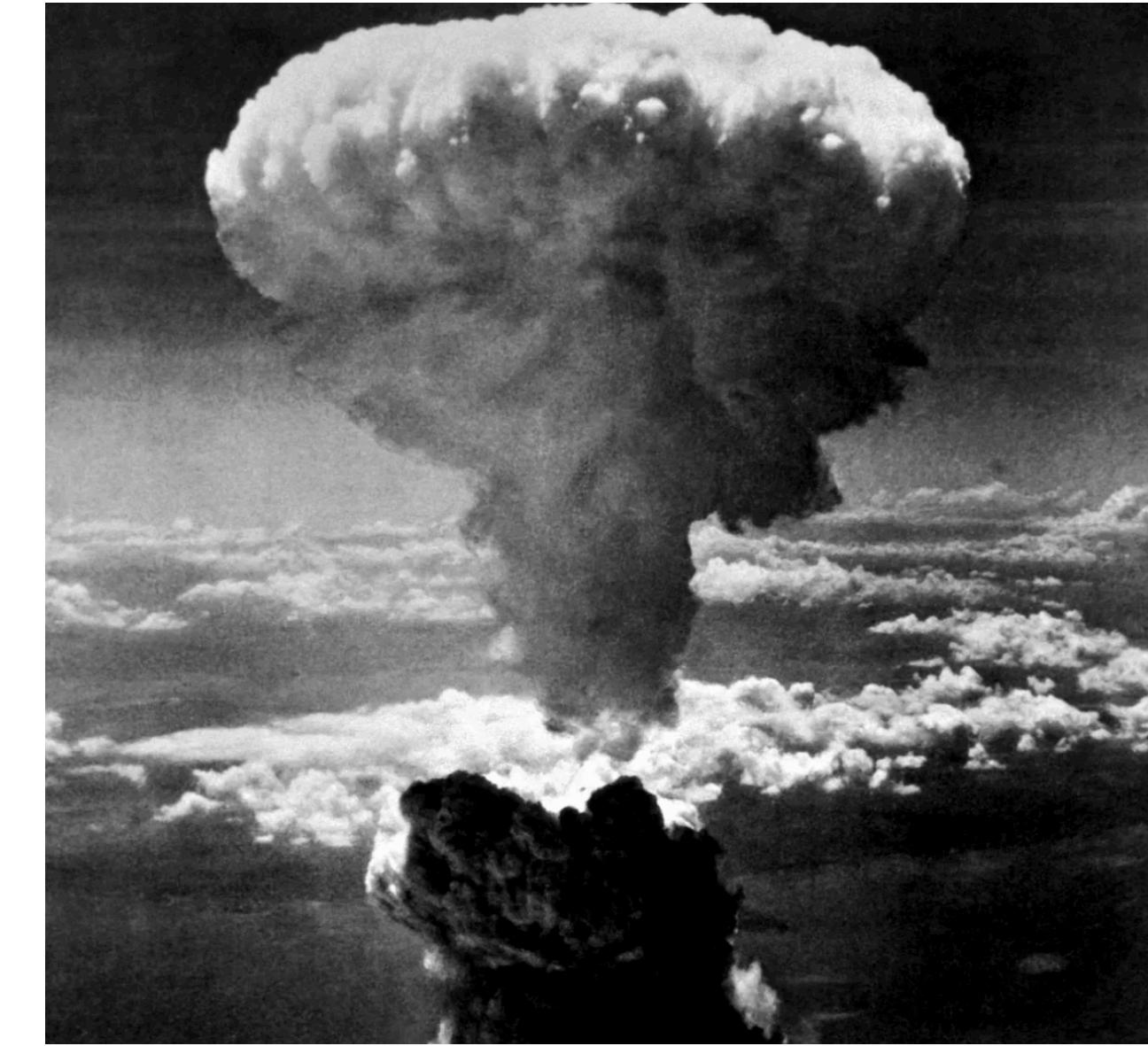
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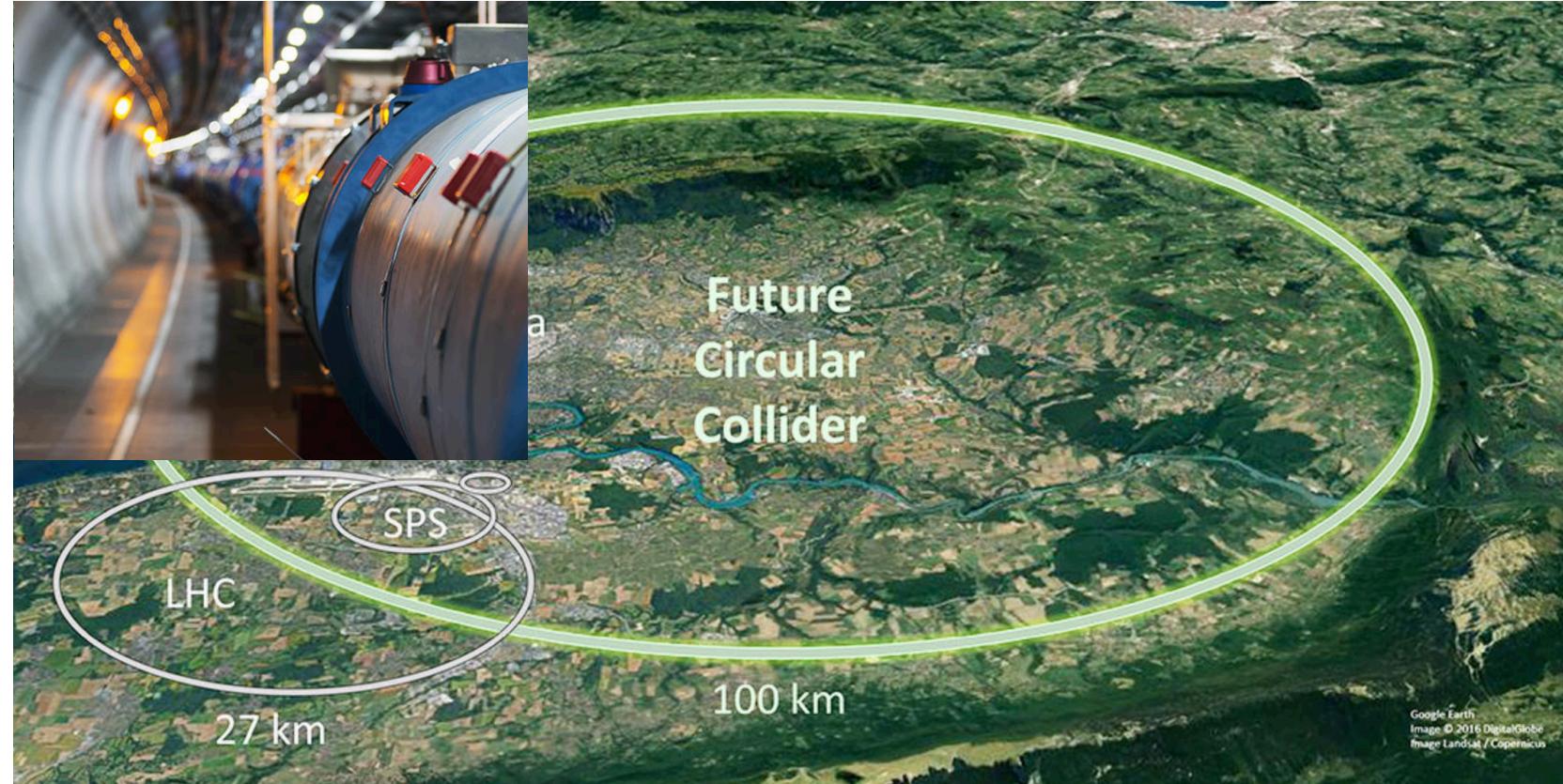


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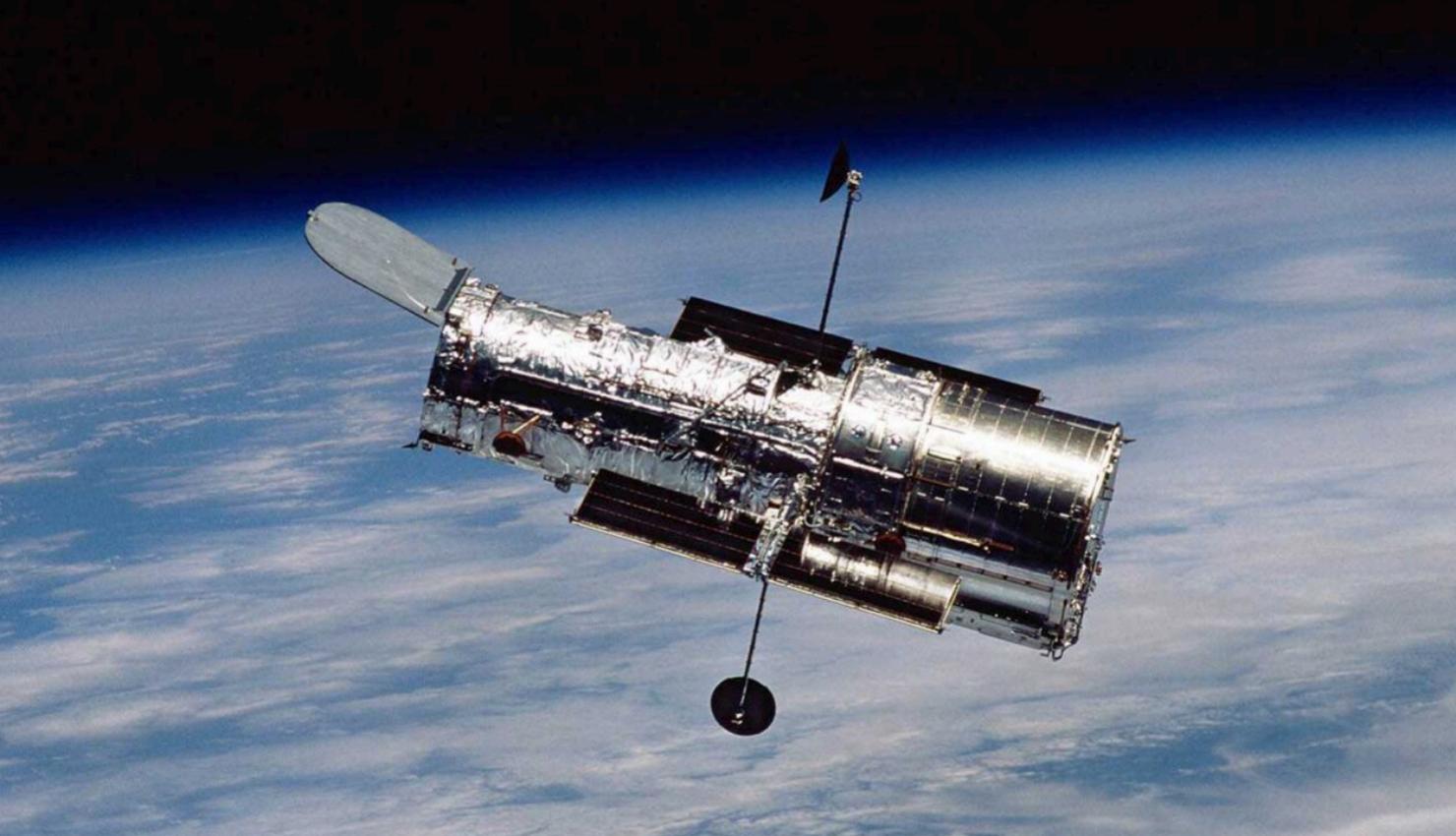


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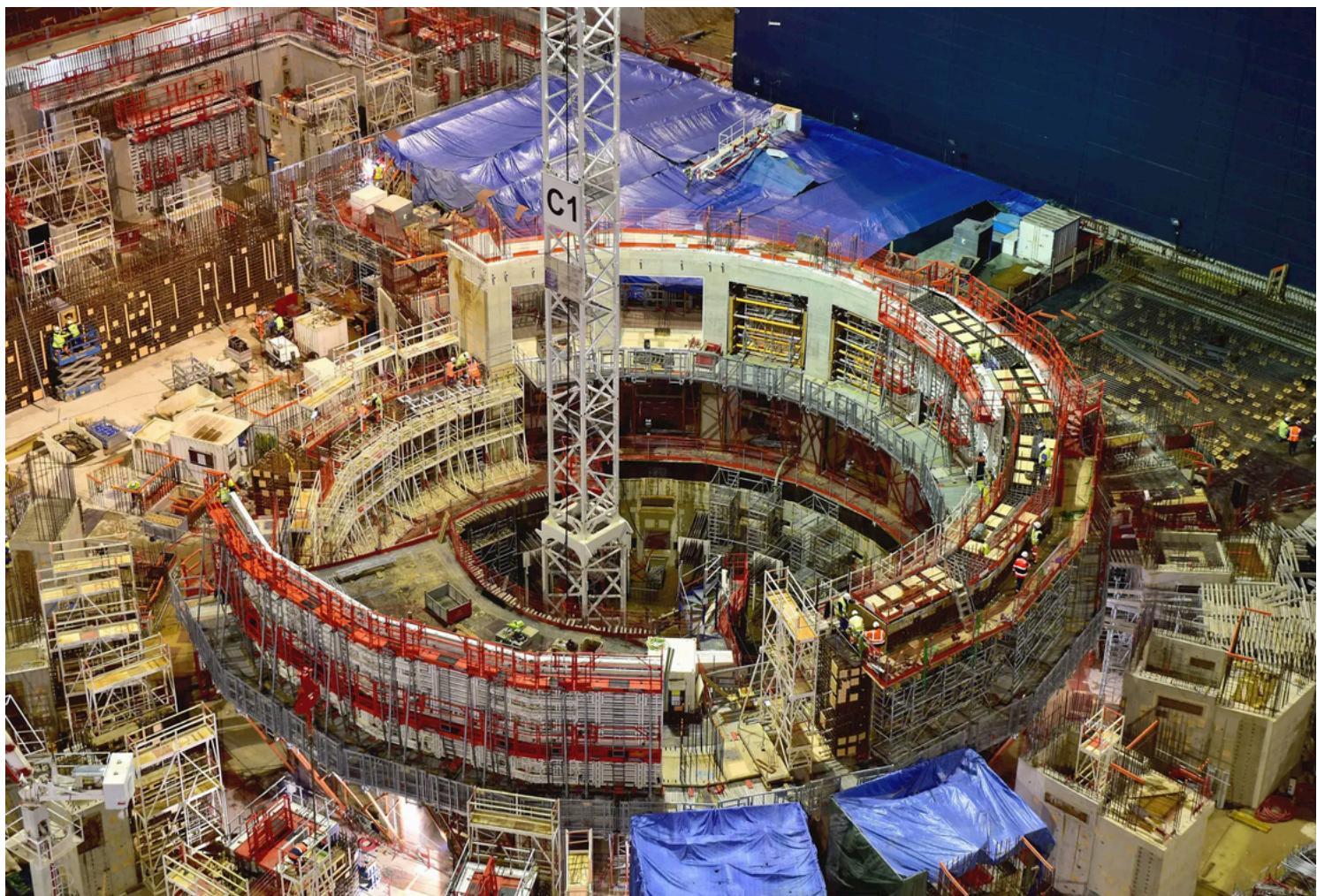
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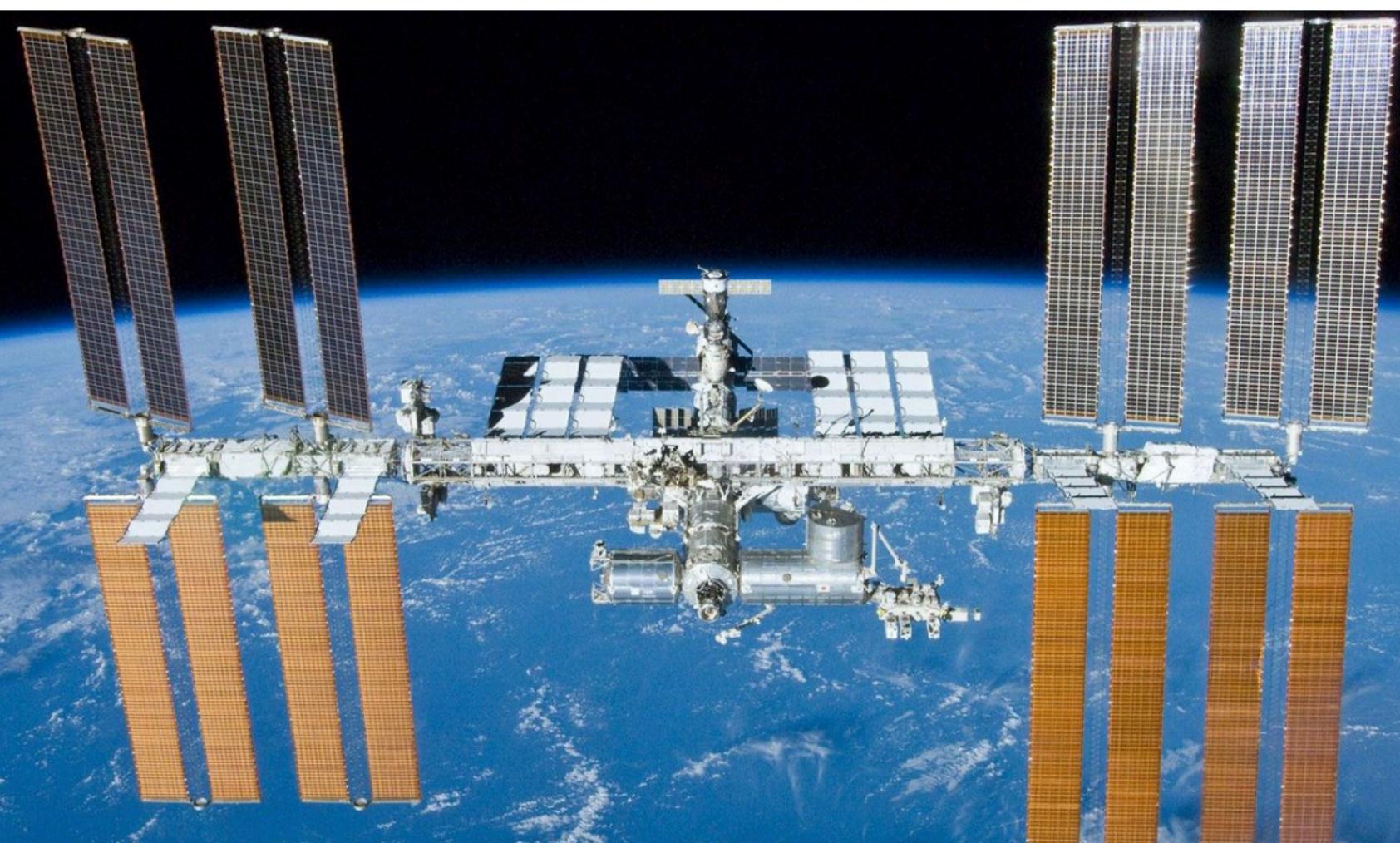
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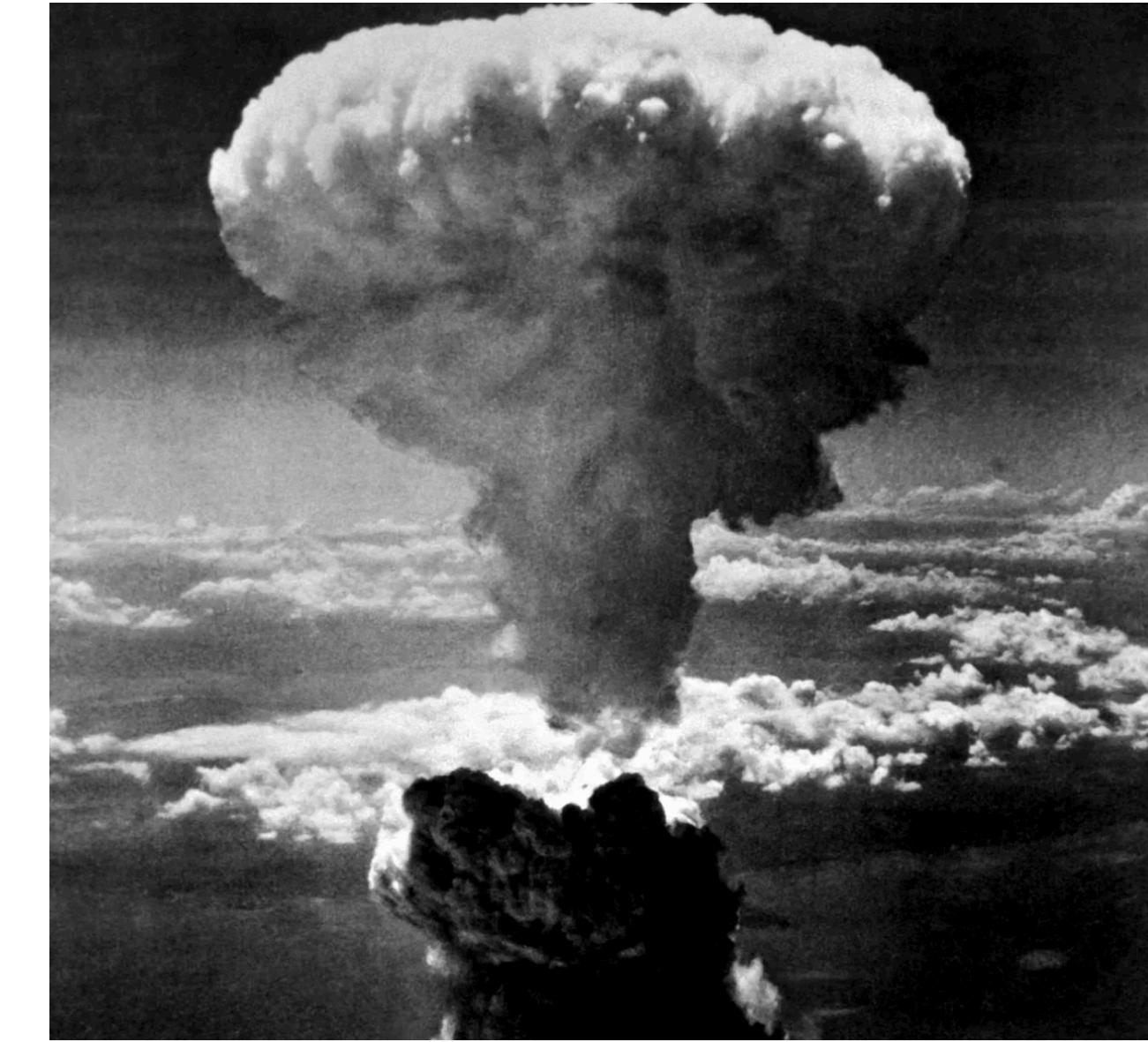
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Manhattan project \$30 billion, 3 countries

# The case of LLMs

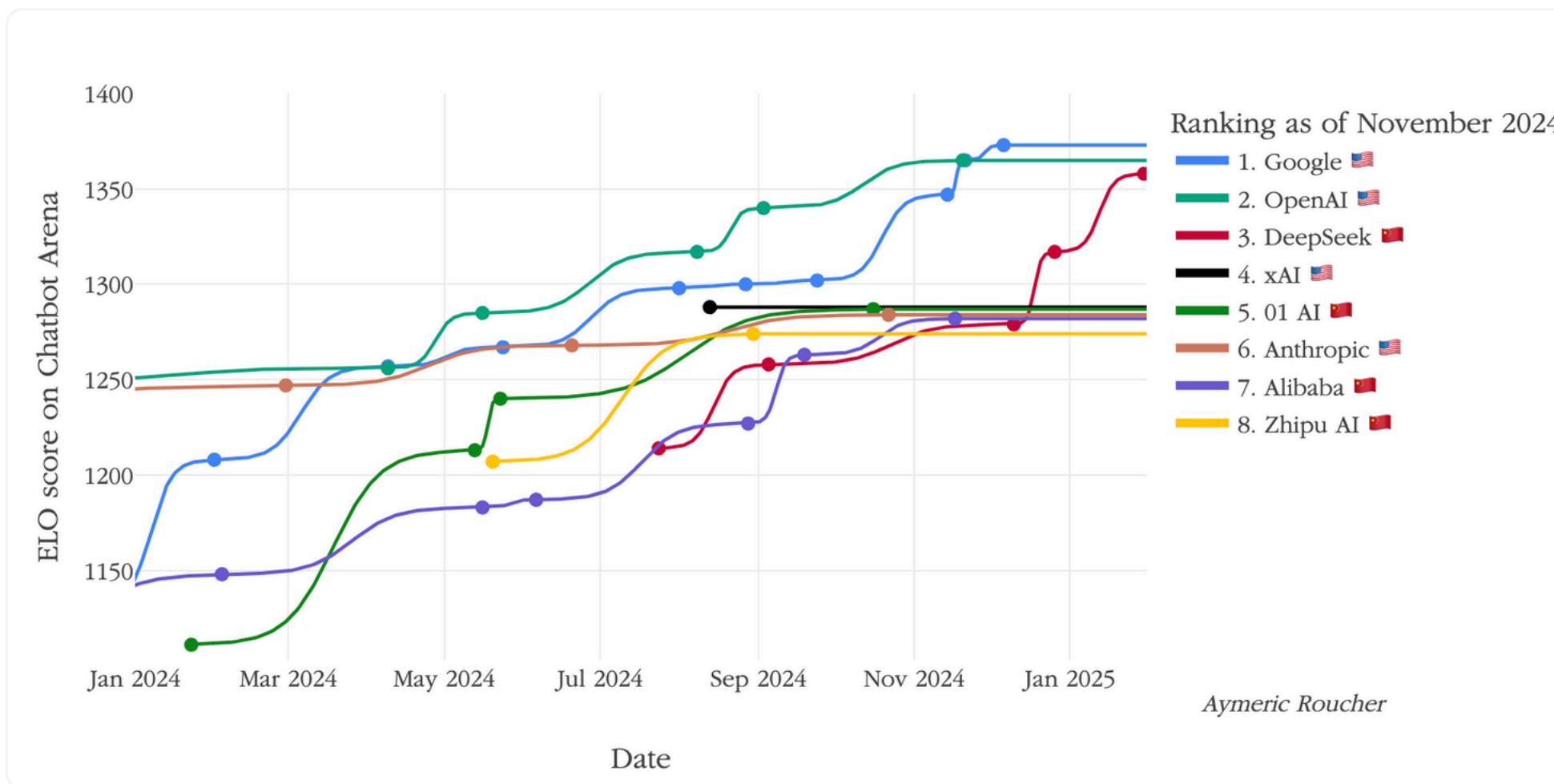
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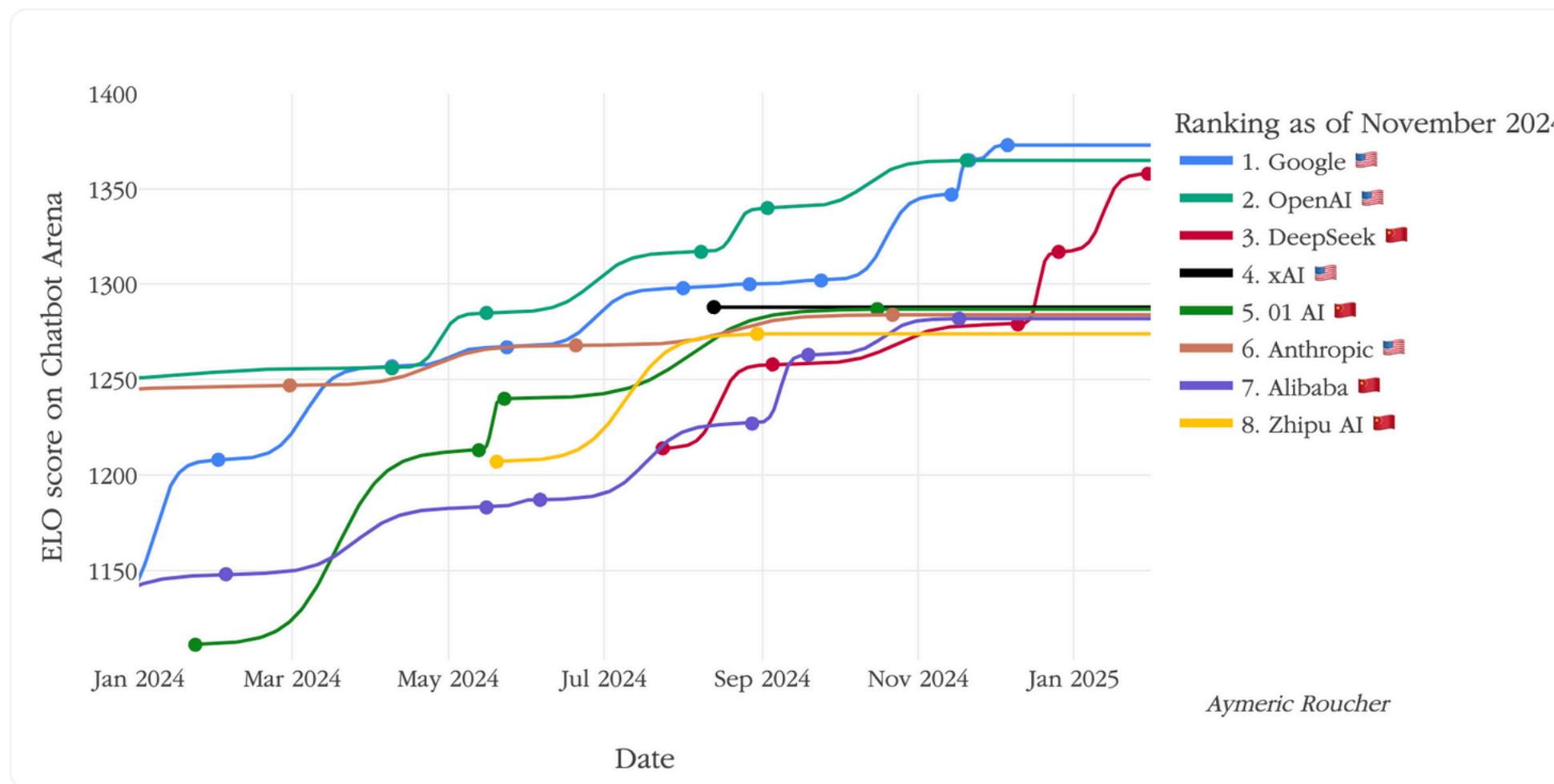
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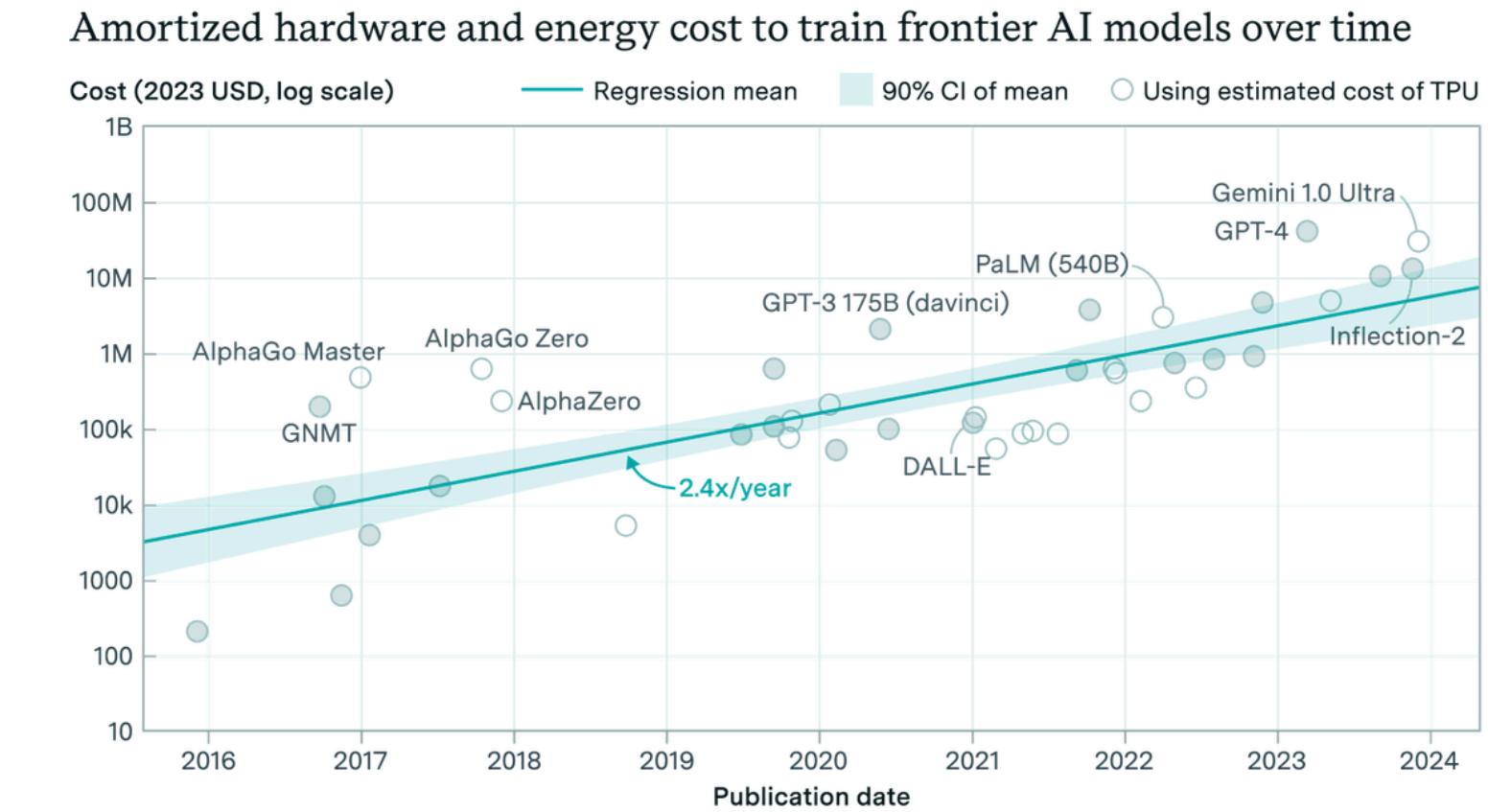
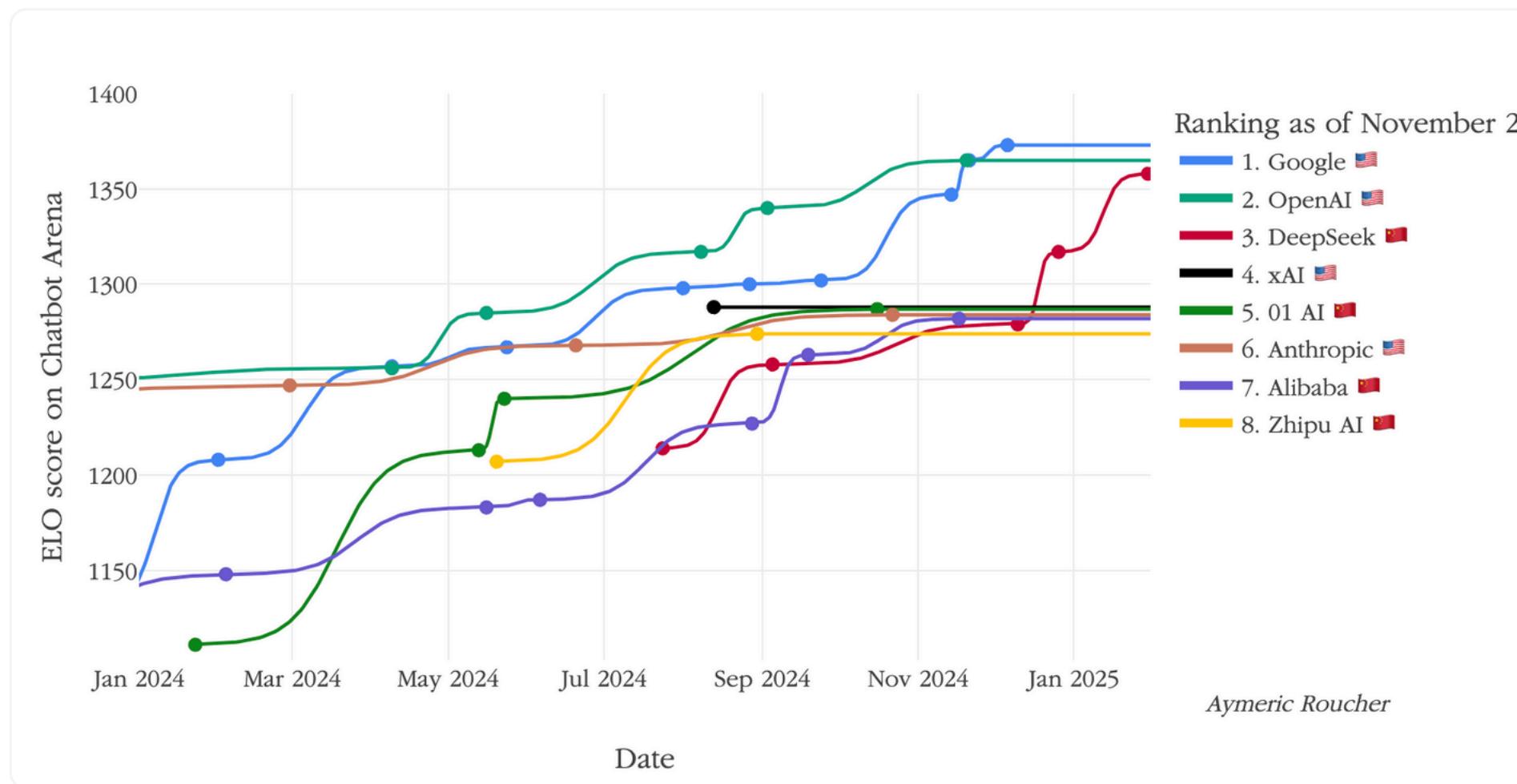
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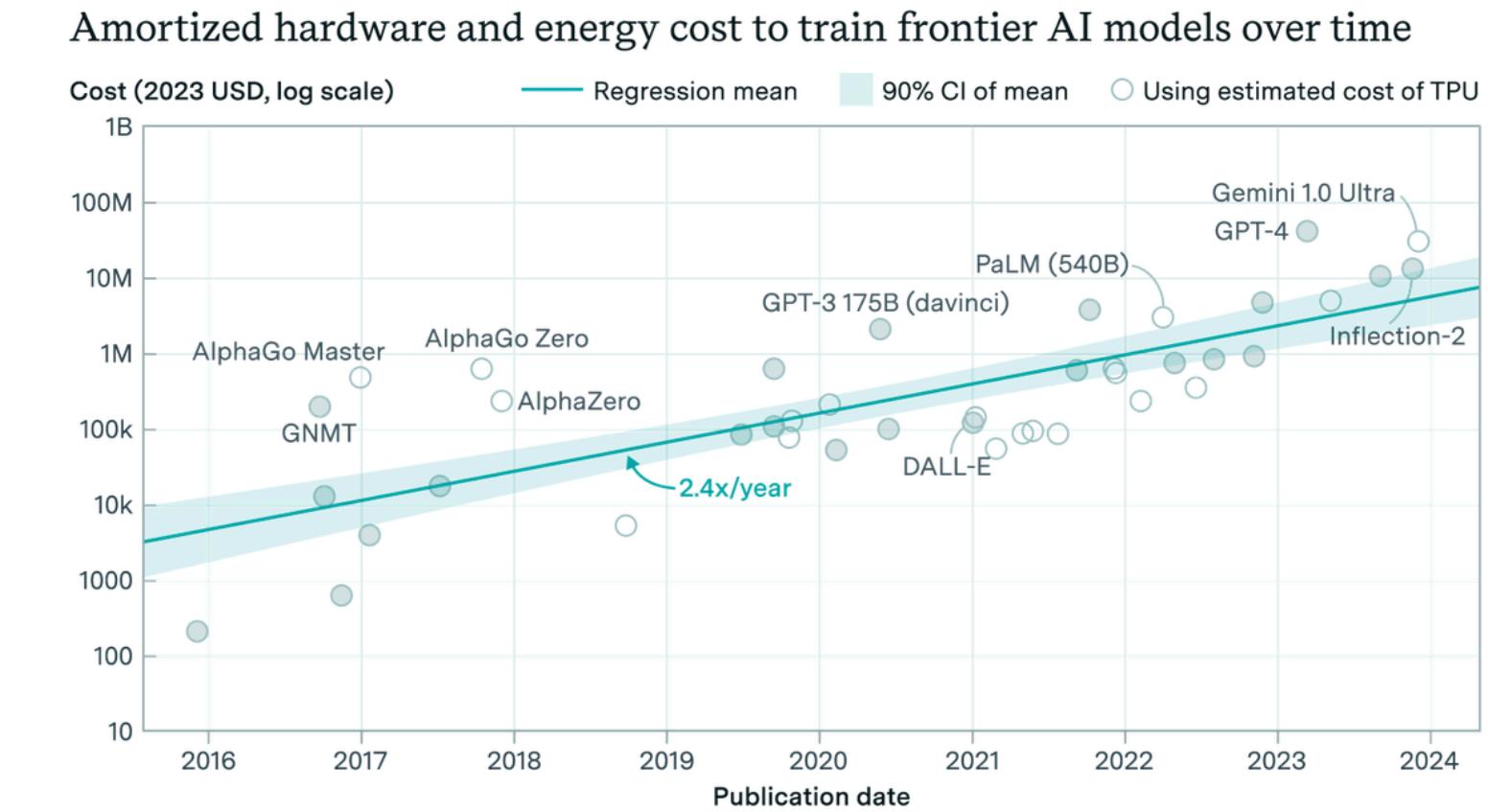
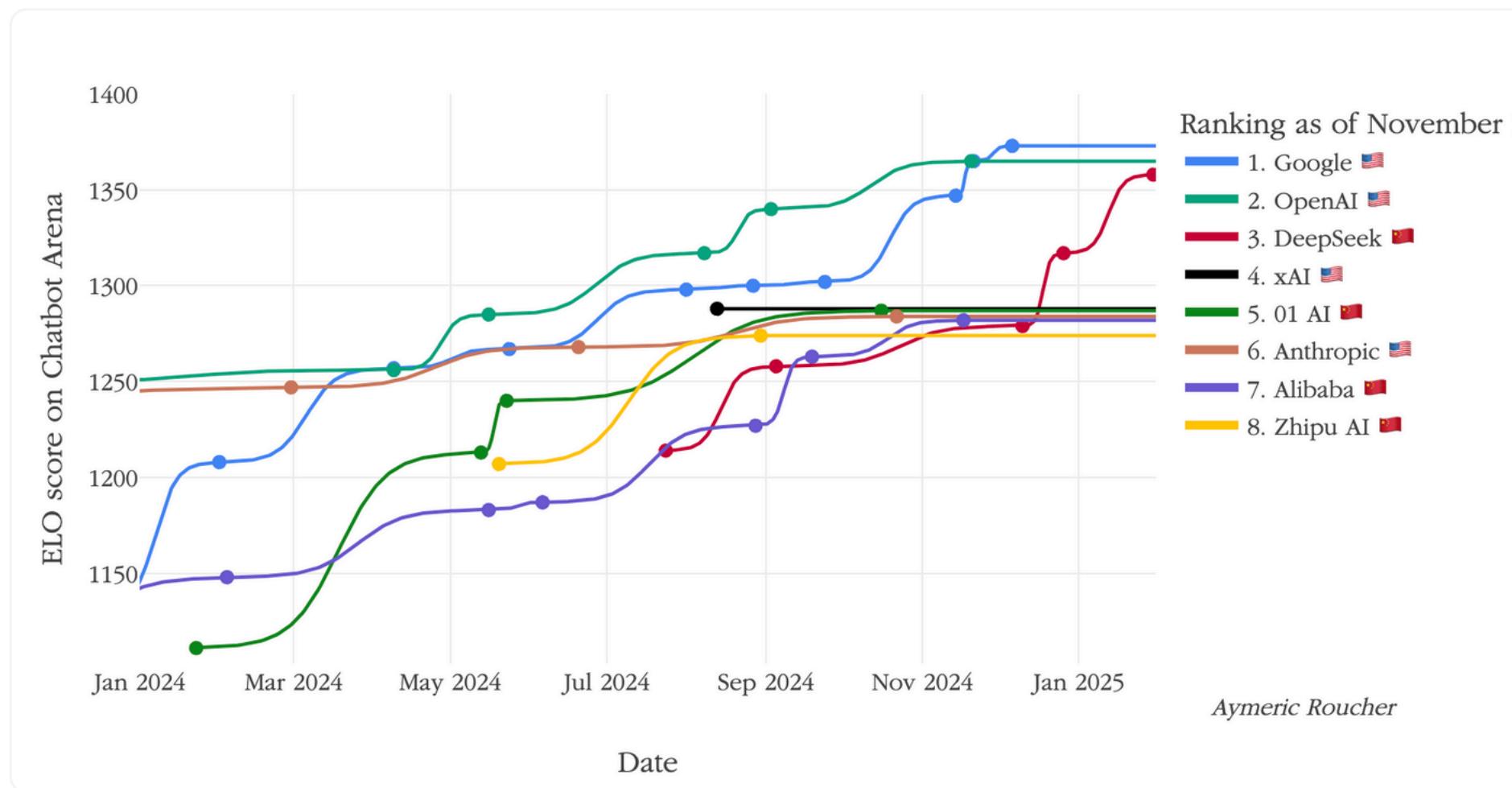
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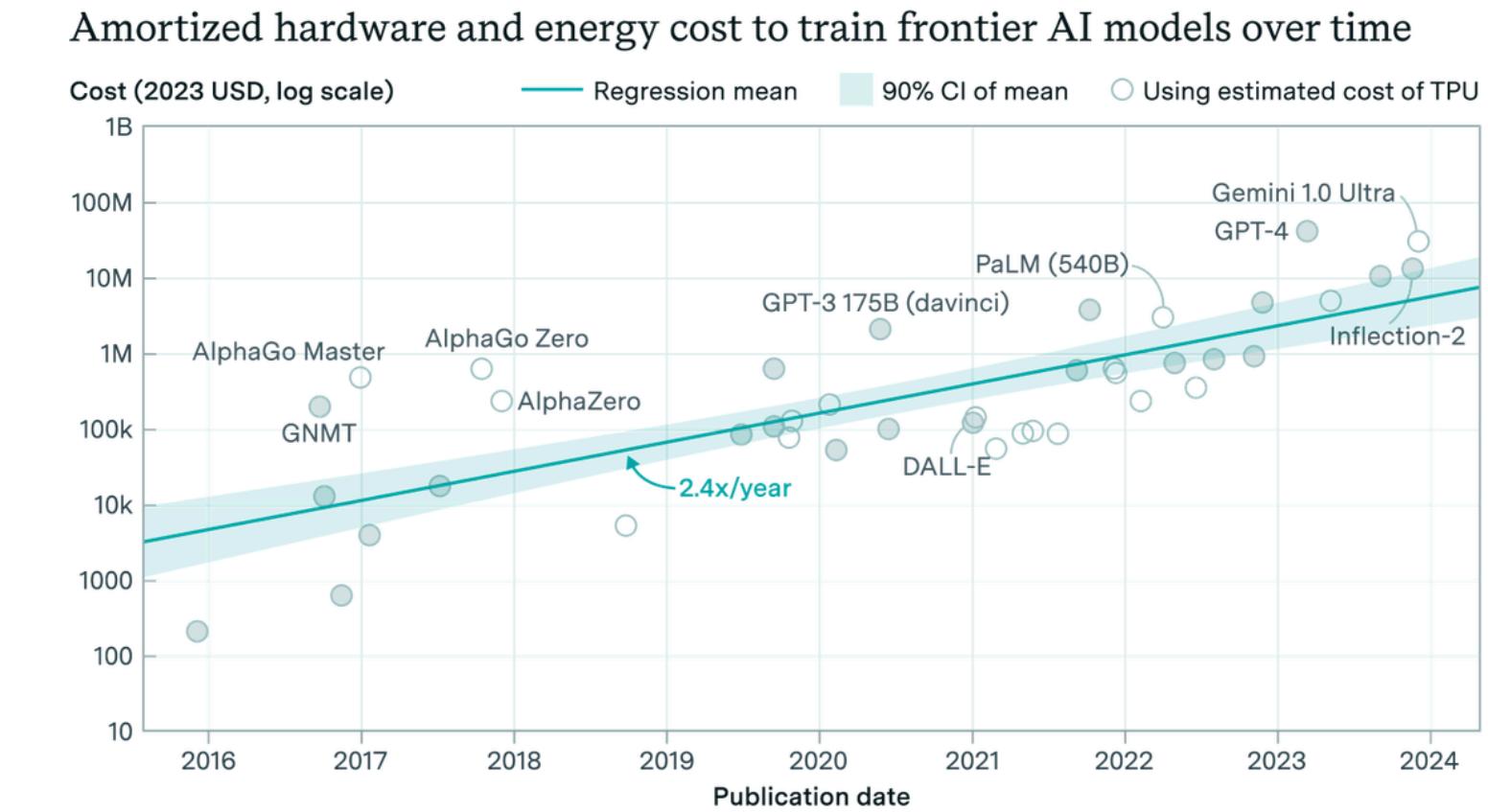
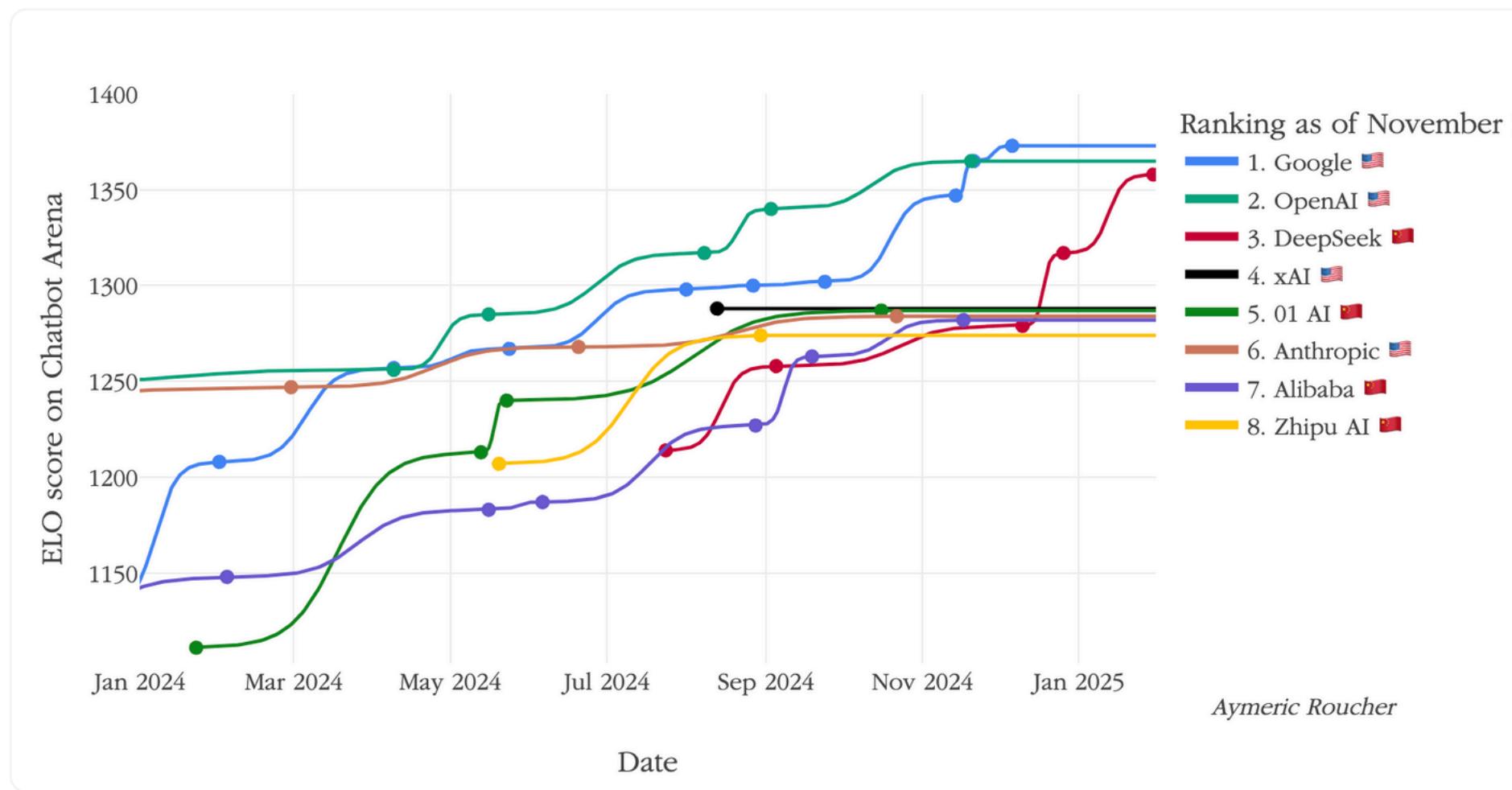
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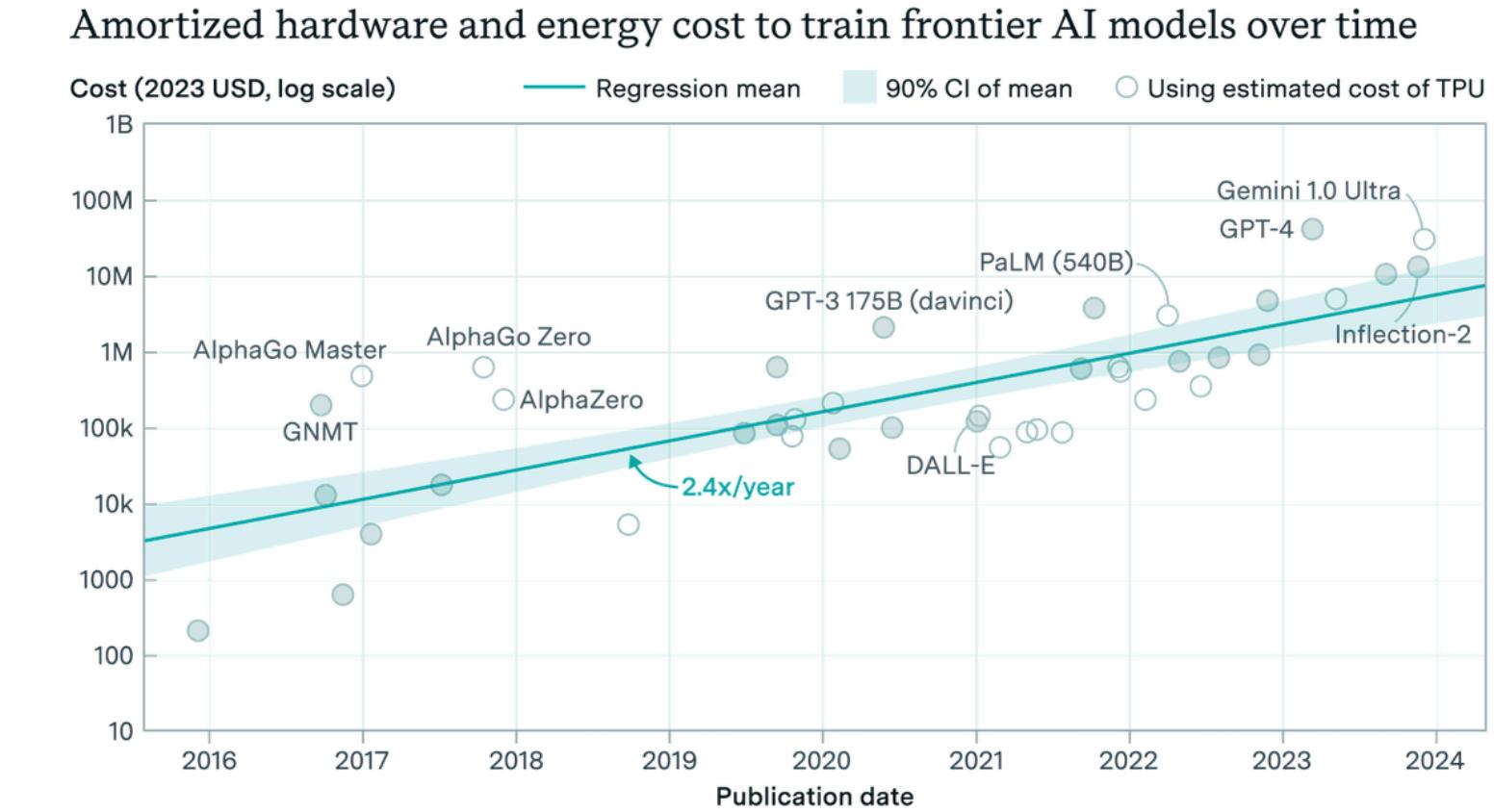
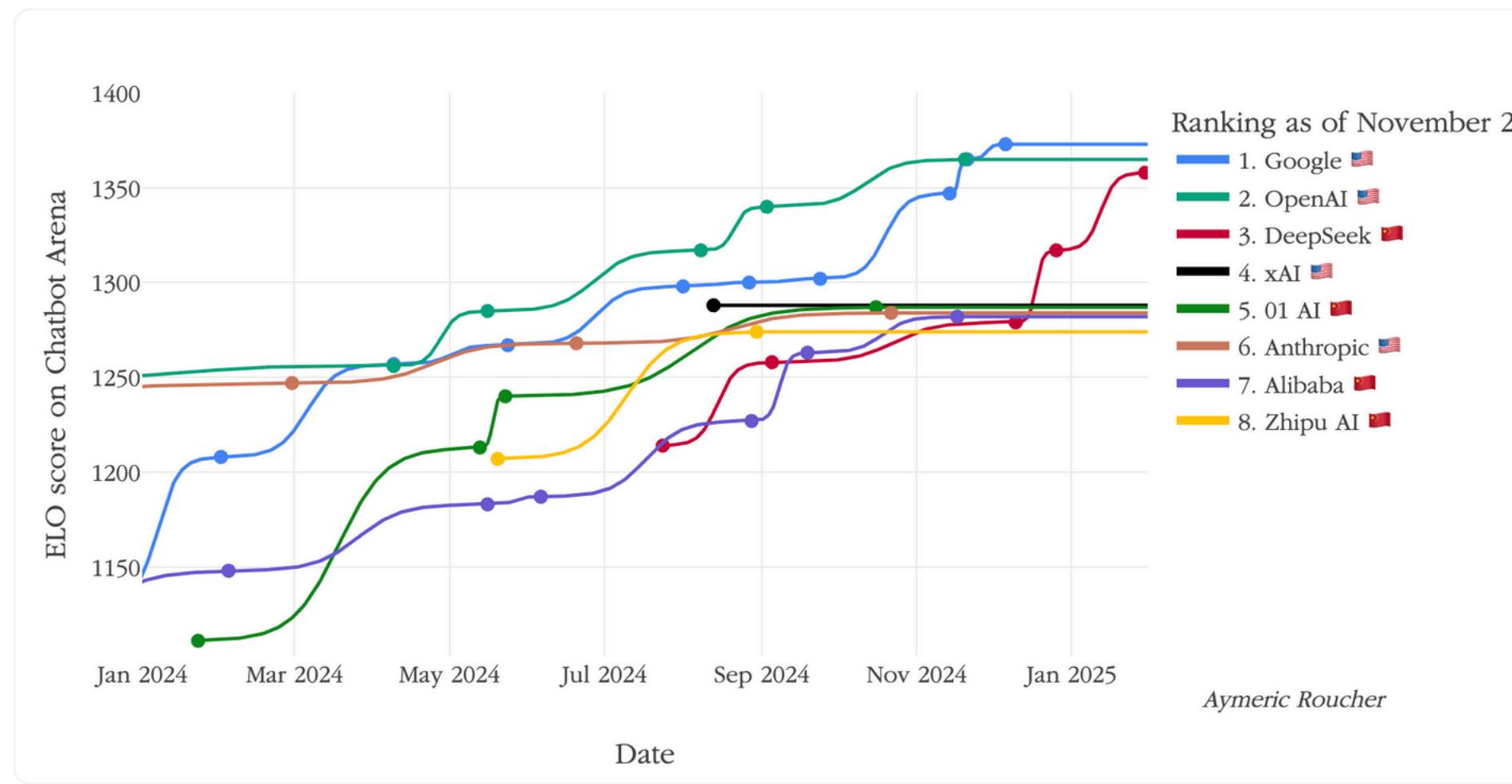
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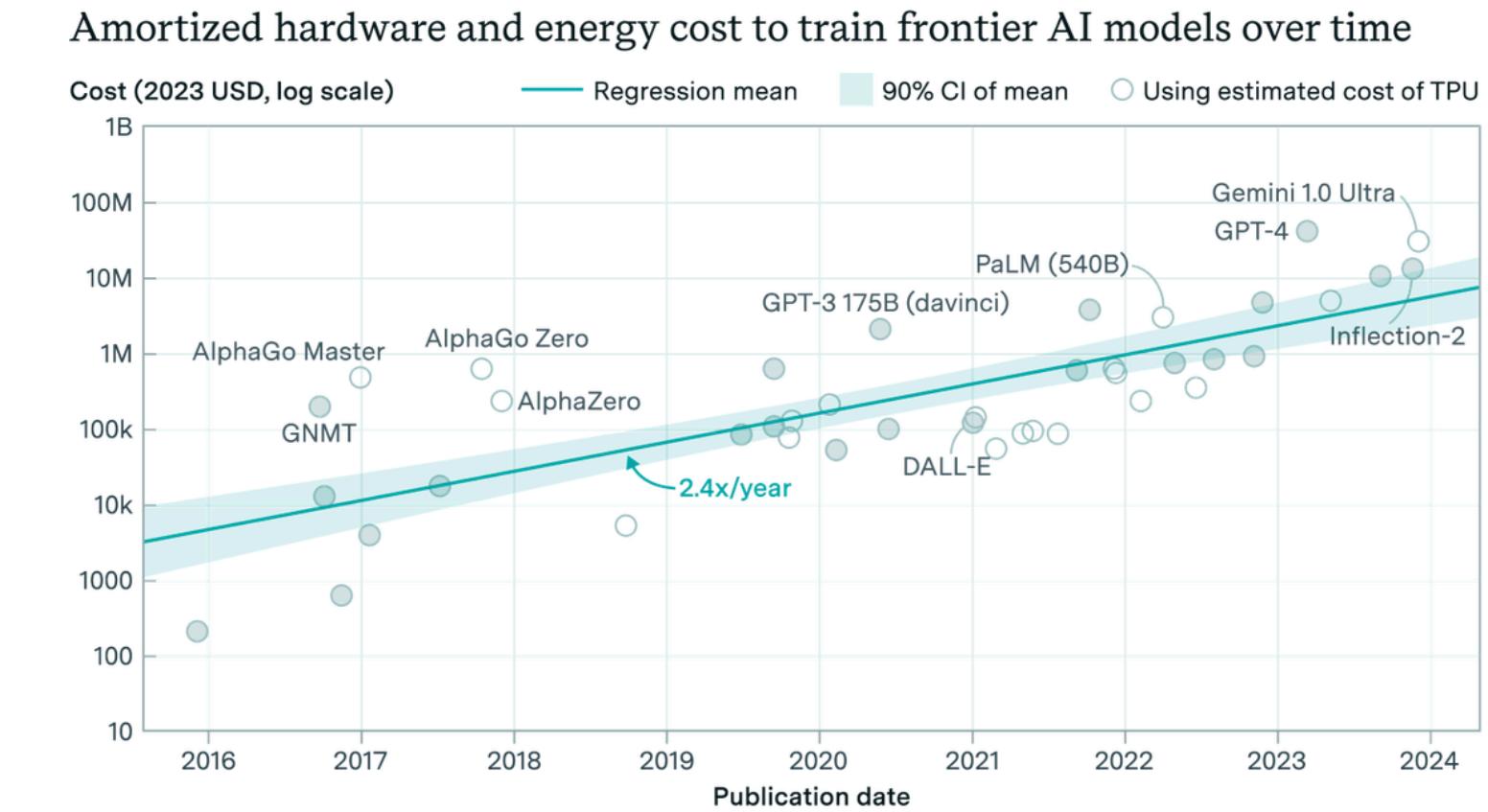
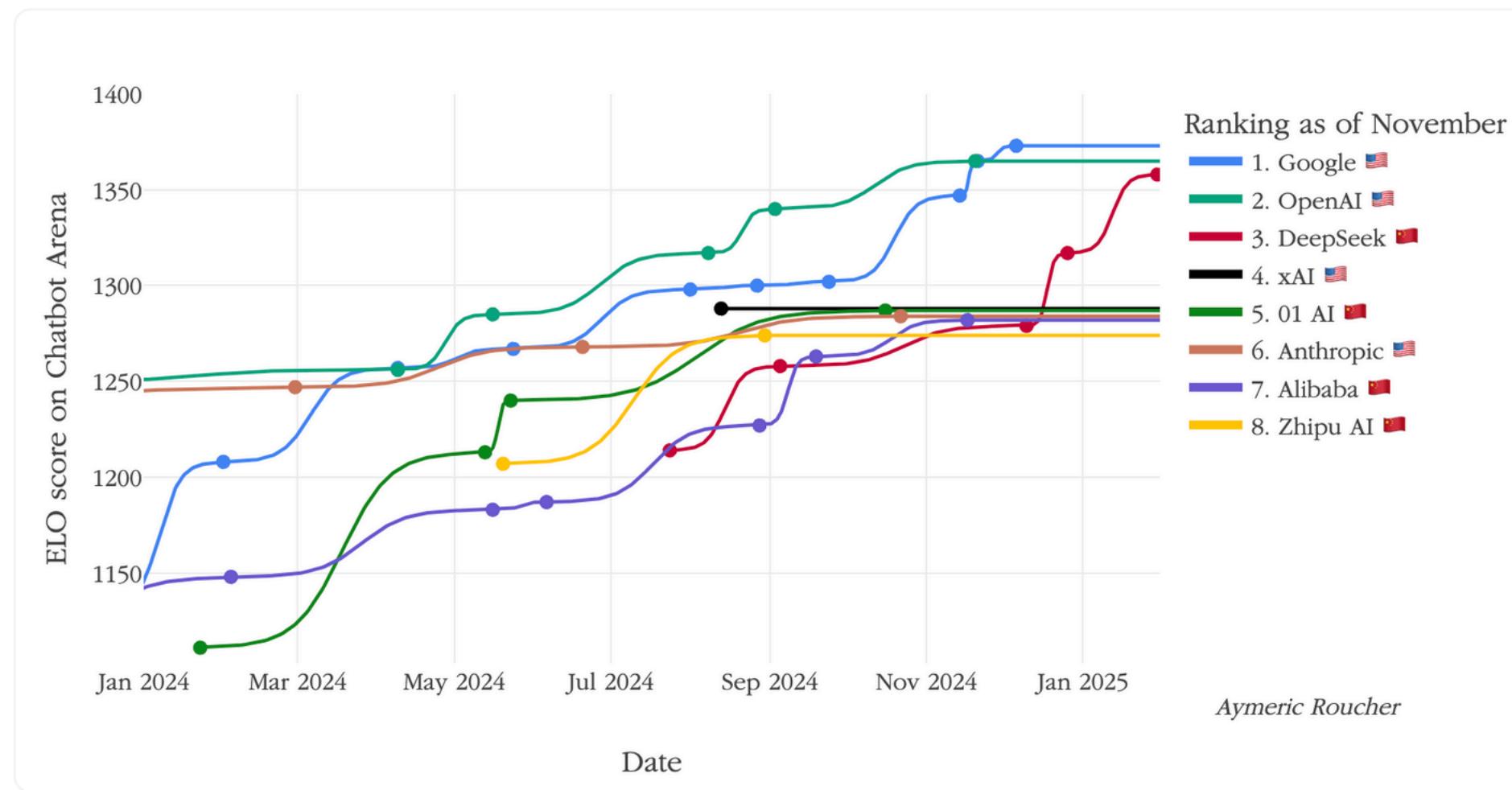
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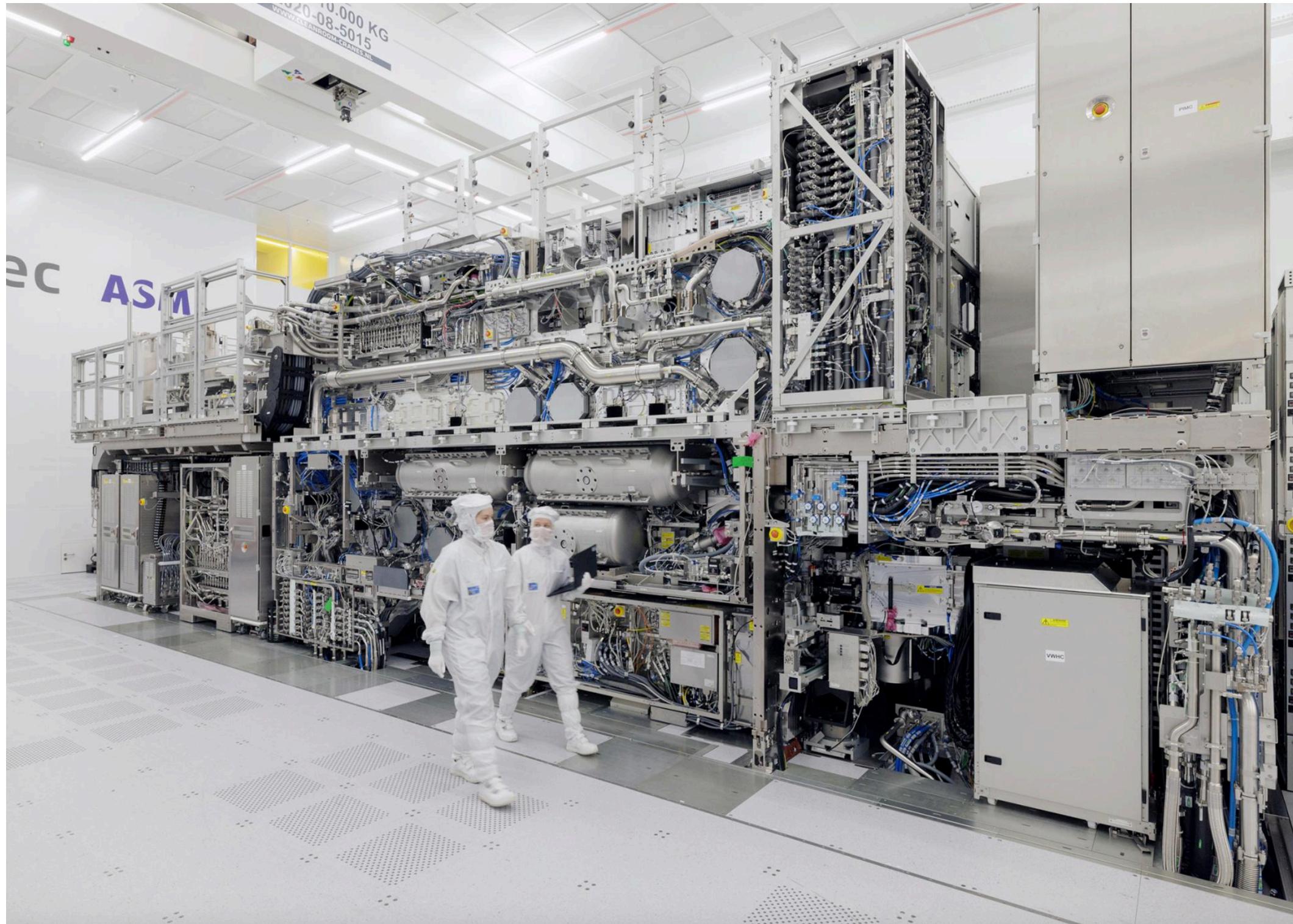
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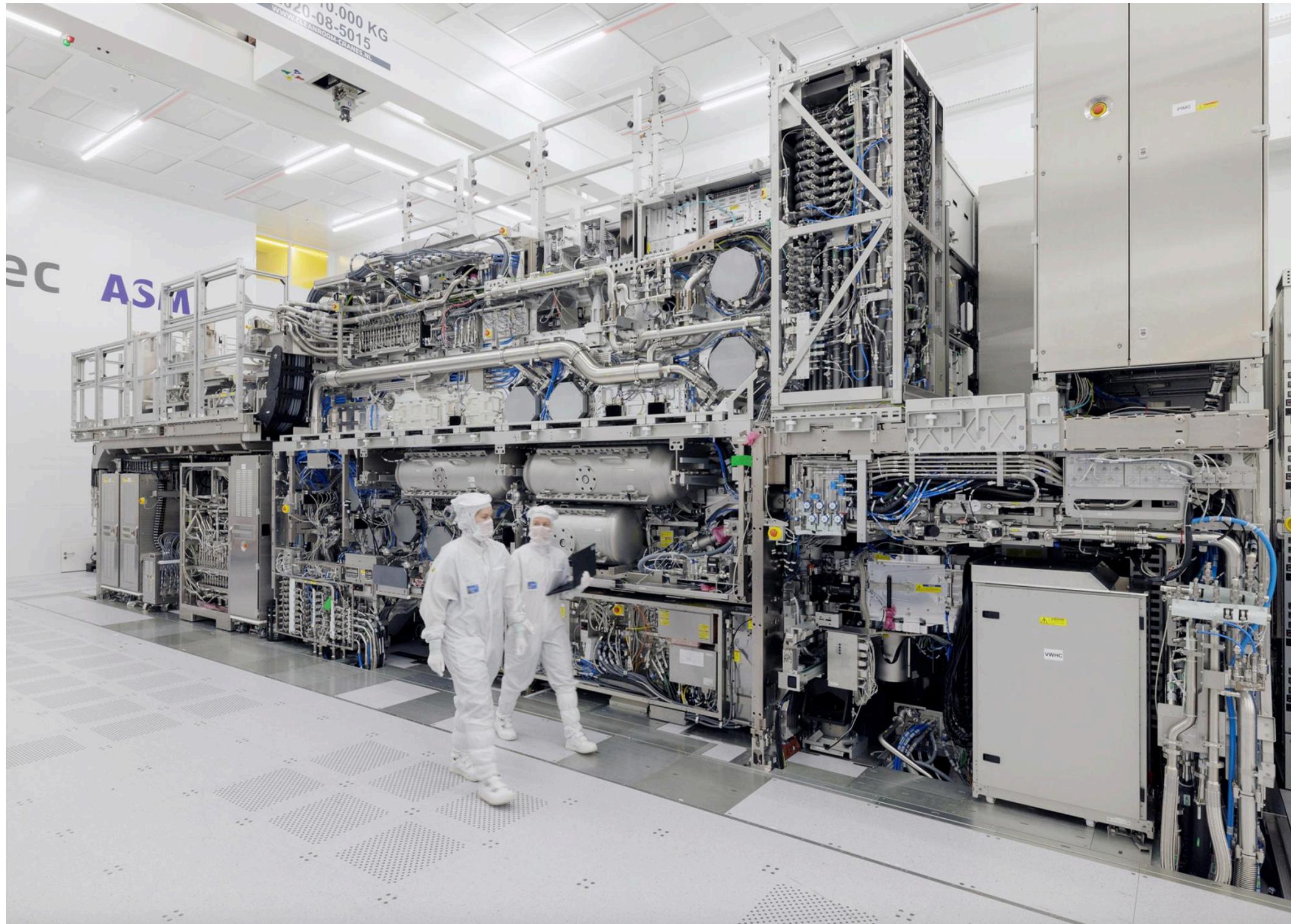
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An EUV machine, \$380 million

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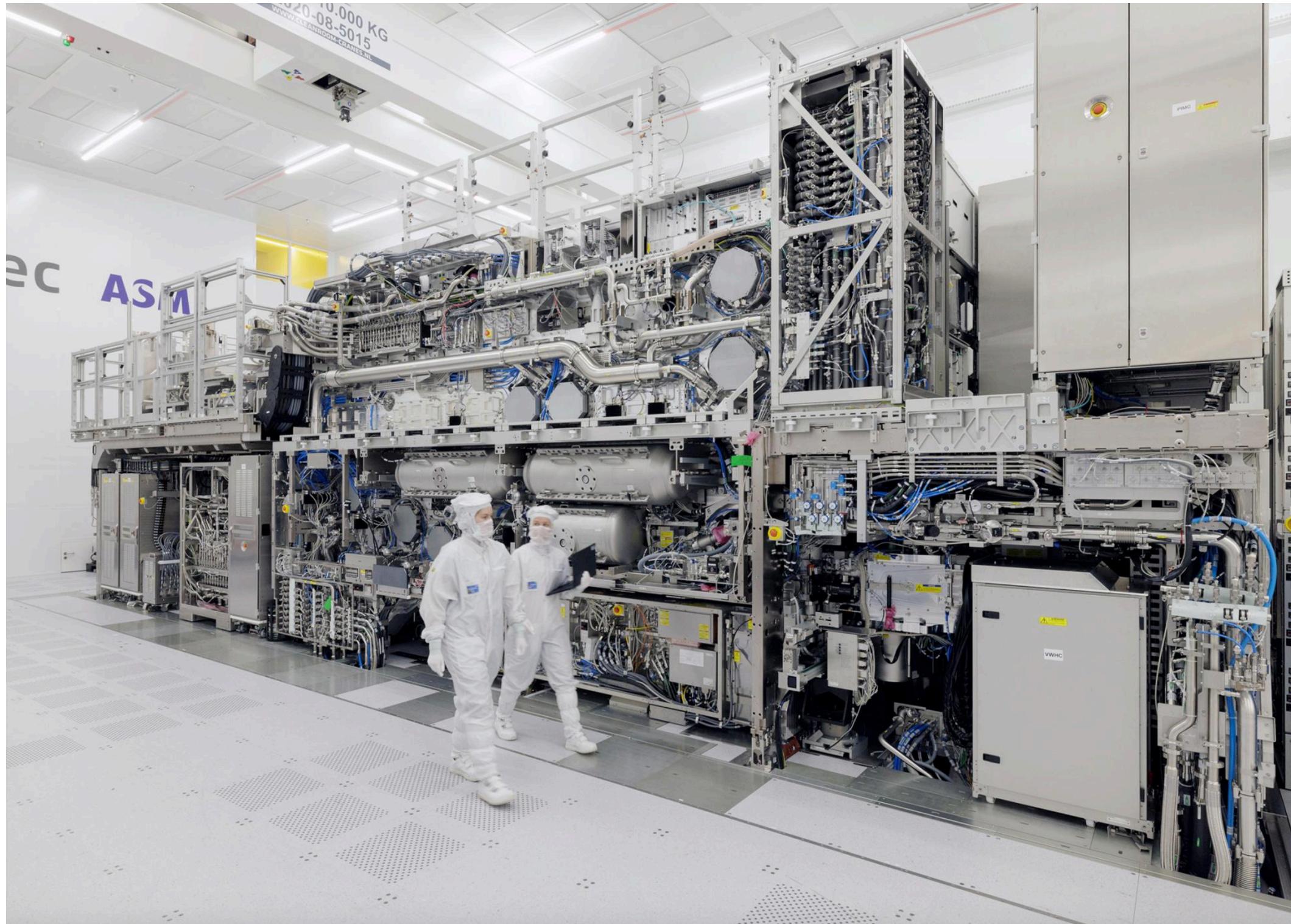


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It prints features of just a few nanometers; it is the key technology required to build GPU chips

# OpenEuroLLM

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AMD  
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# OpenEuroLLM

- An effort to build multilingual LLMs from scratch by 2028
  - Started in February 2025
  - Fully open: weights & code & data
  - €37.4 million funding. In addition many millions of GPU hours in EuroHPC

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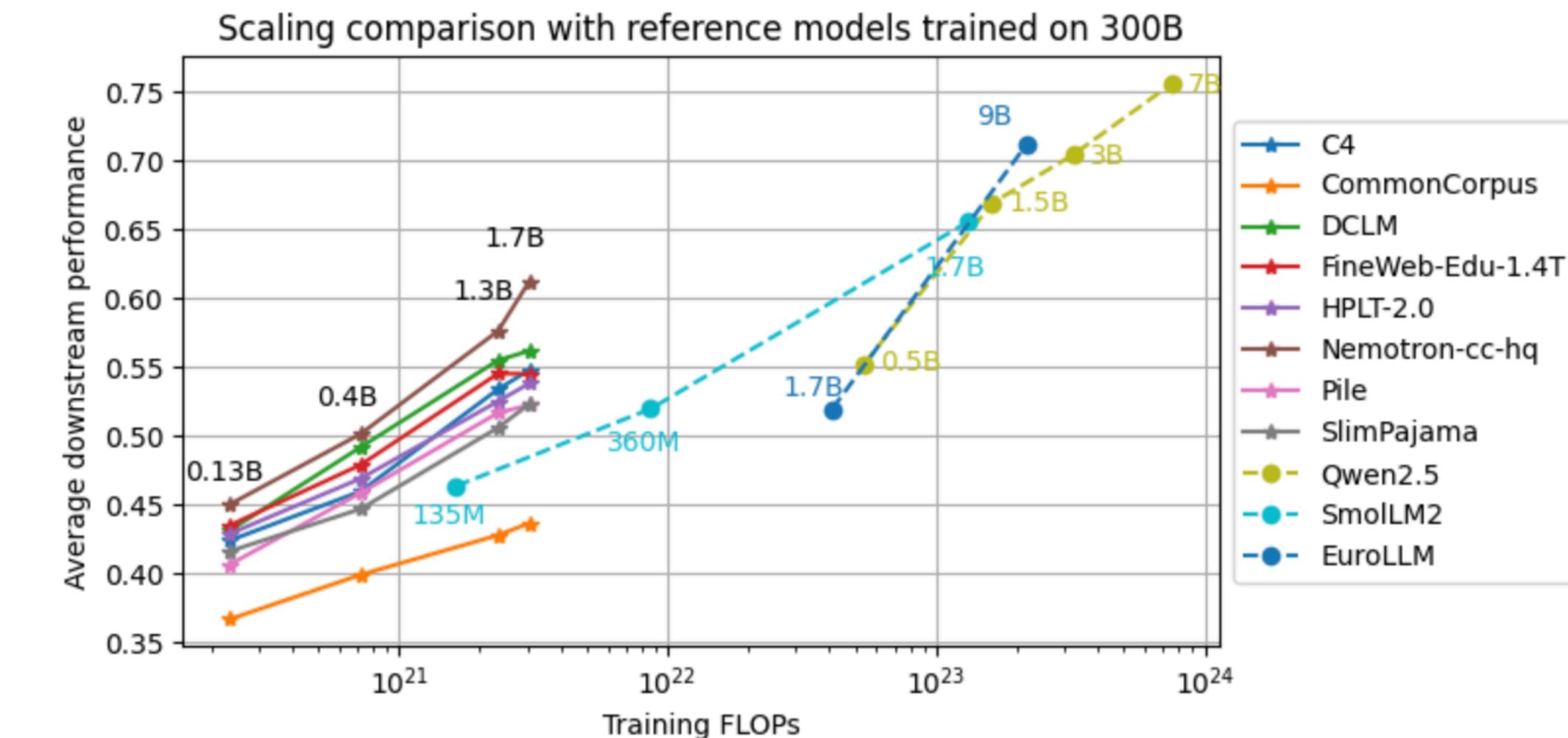
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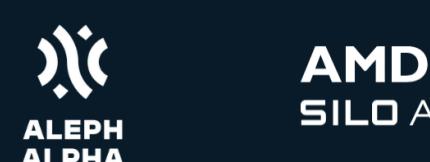


Reference analysis training 1.7B models from scratch for different datasets

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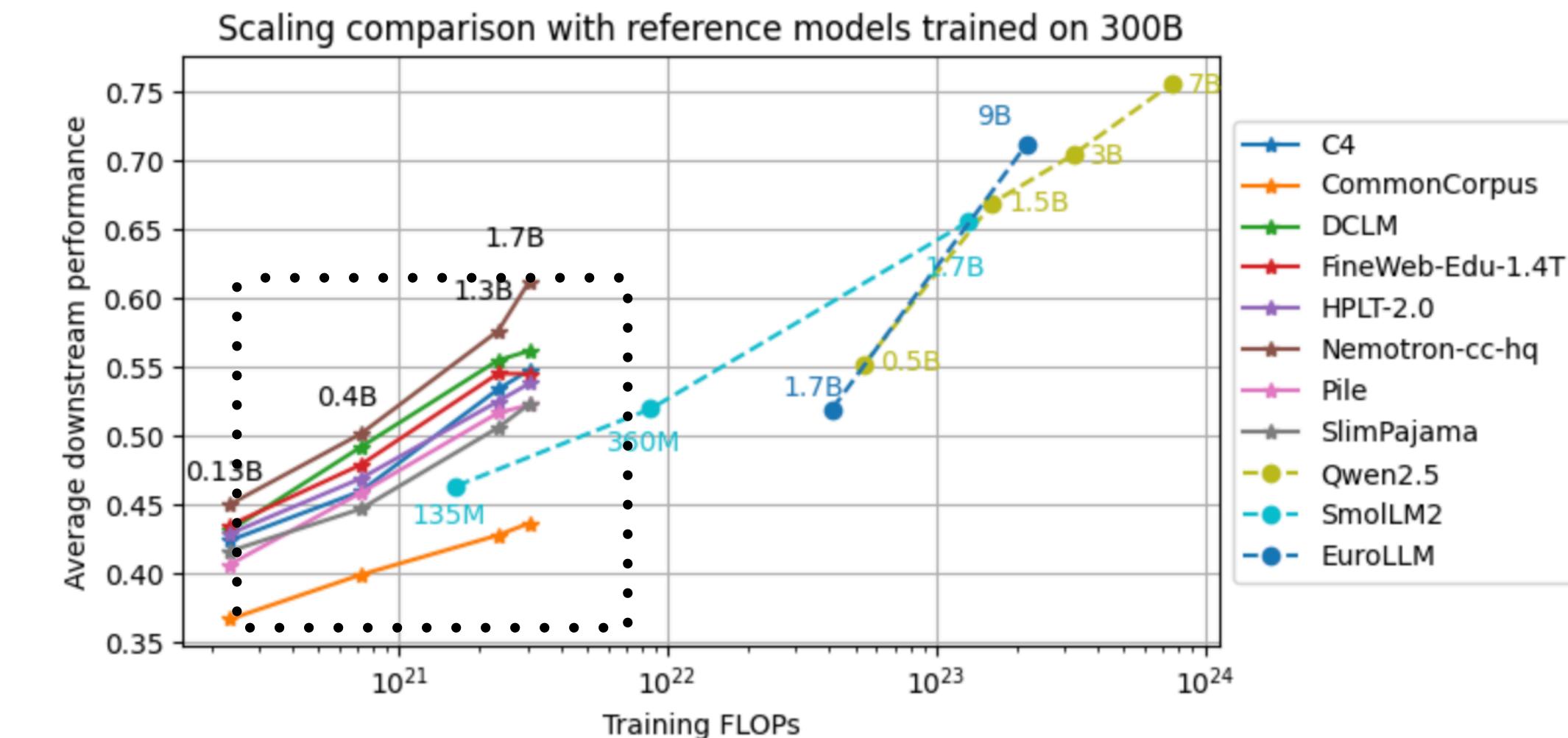
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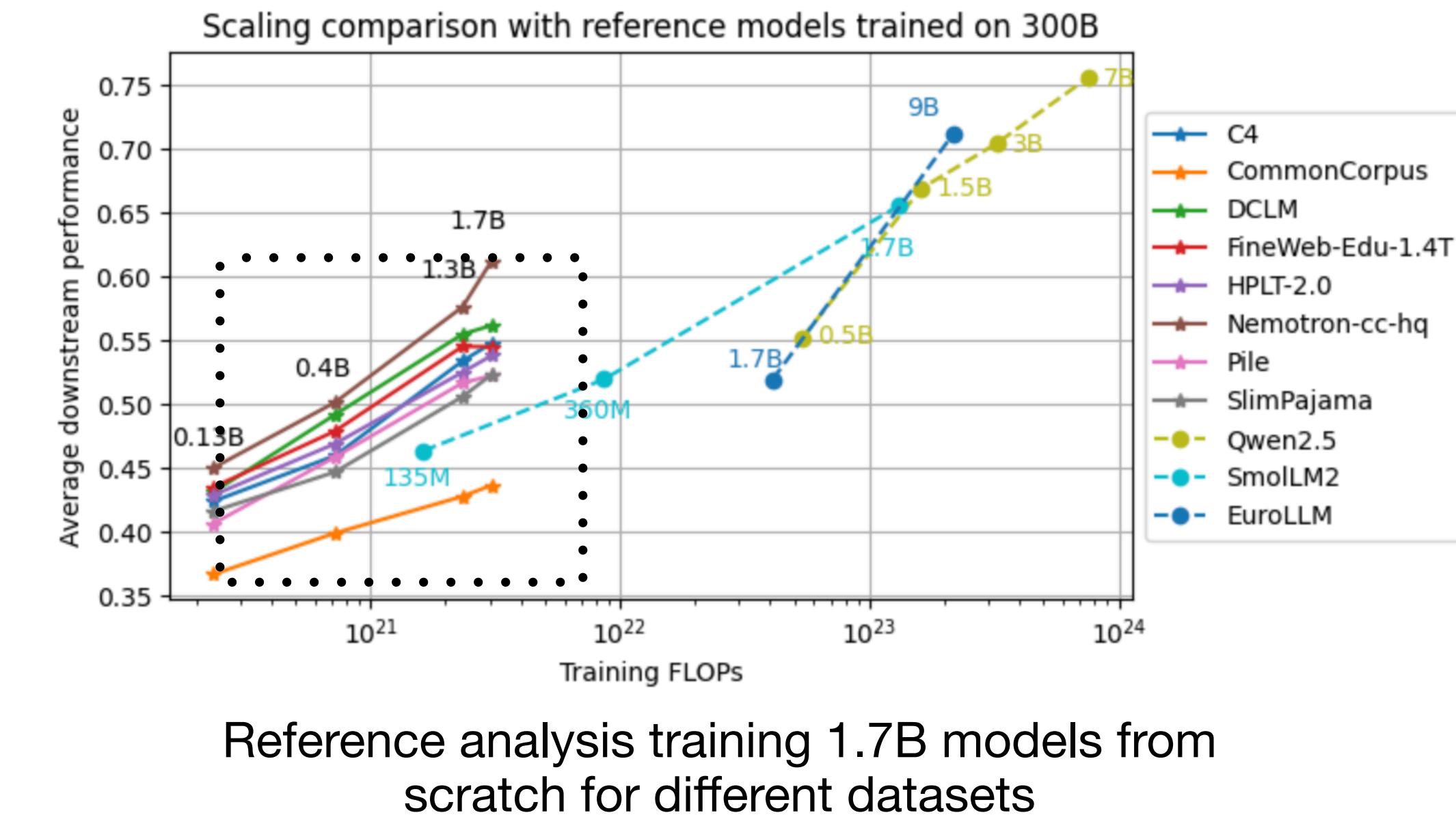
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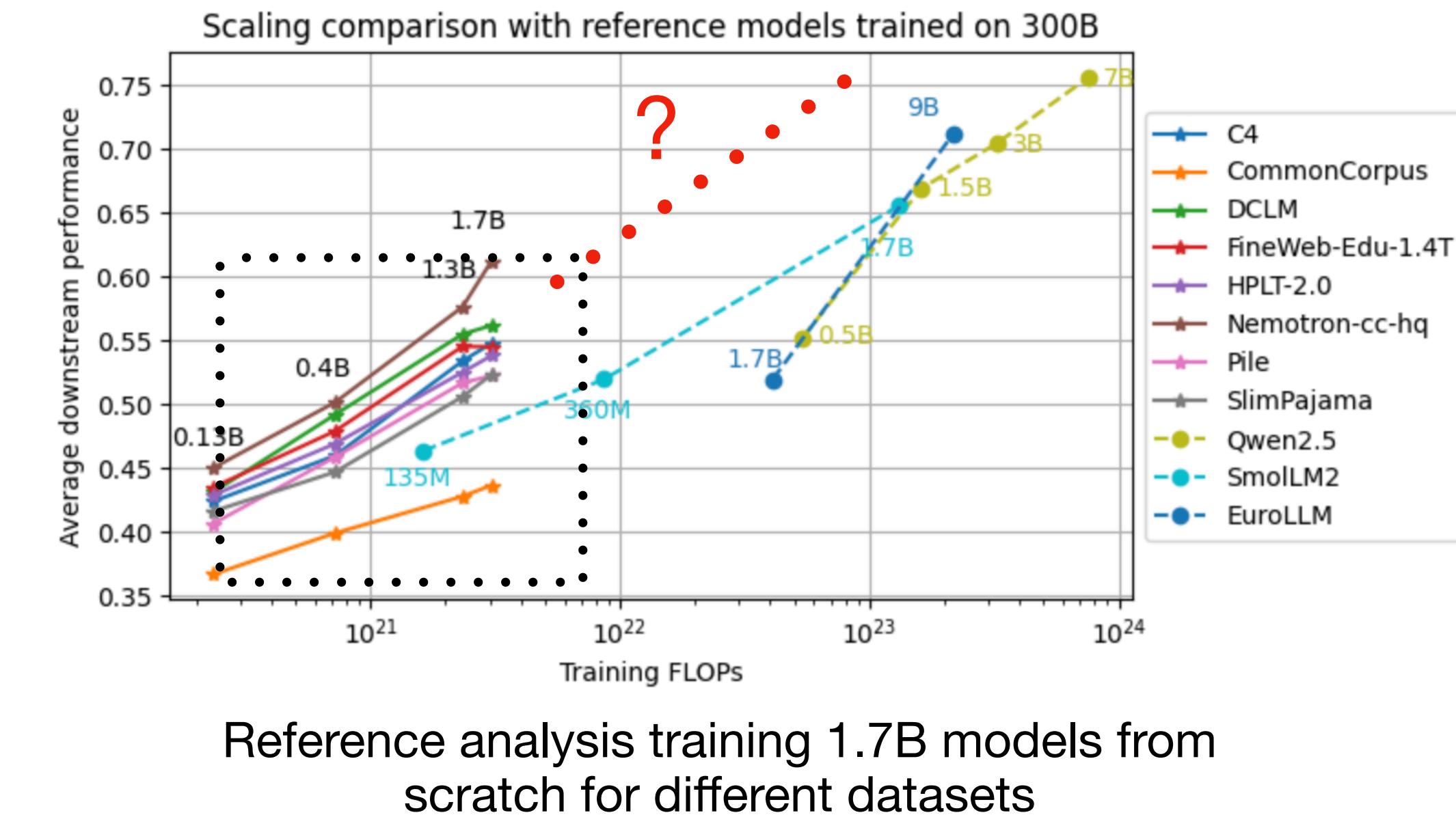
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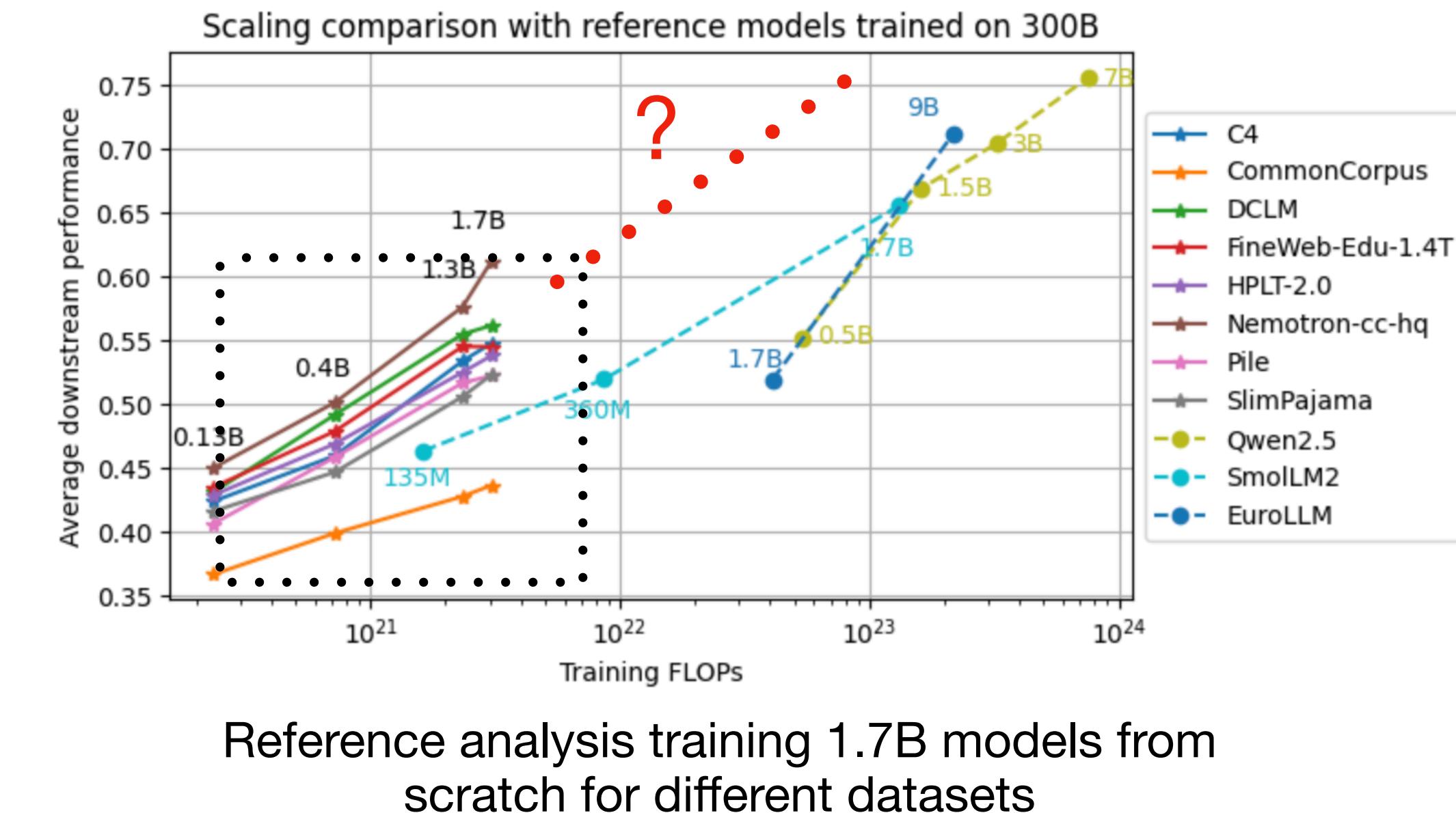
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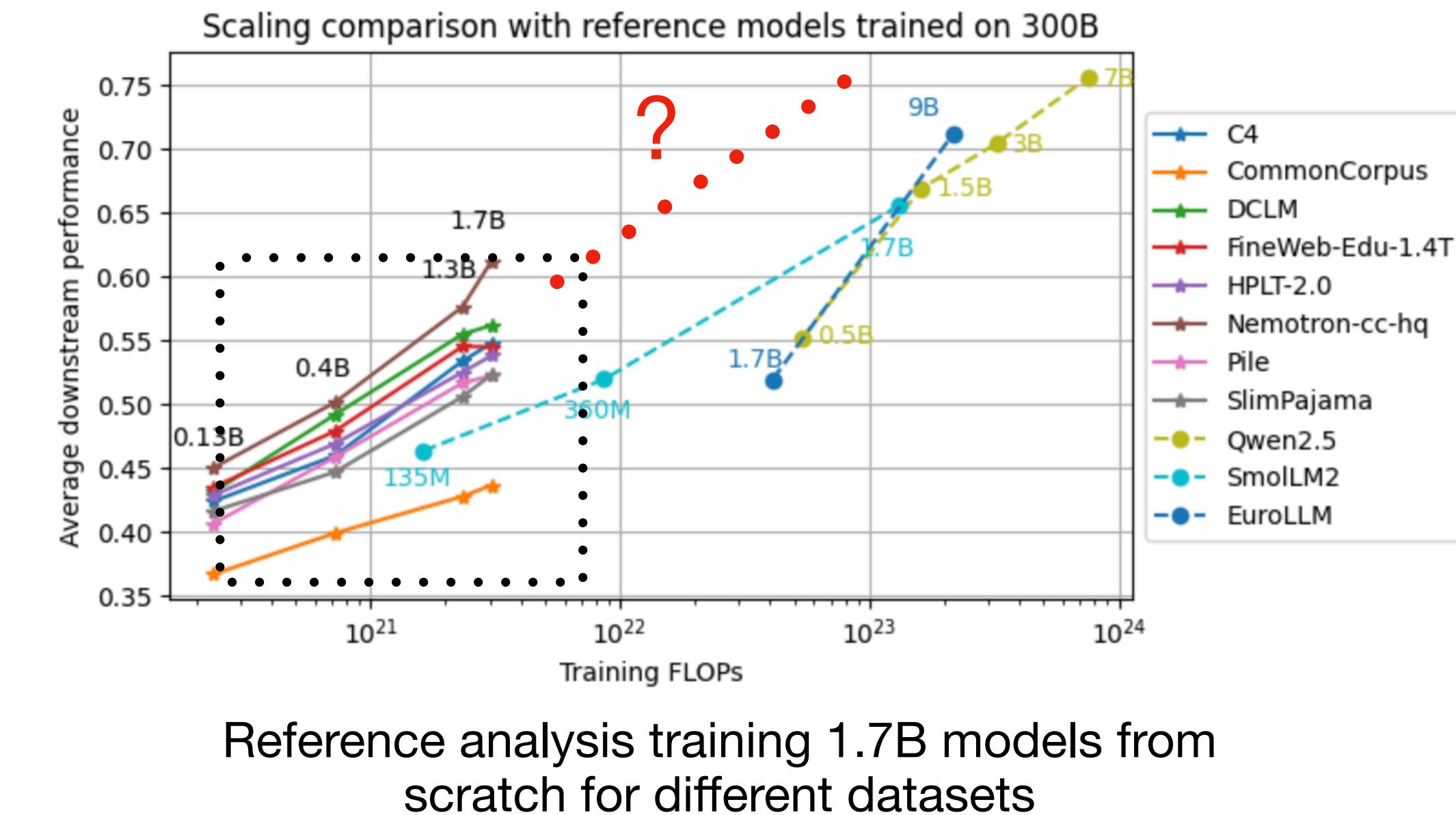
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- Lots of areas for AutoML in pre-training, post-training, evaluation 🎉



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# Conclusion

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- AutoML has a lot to say
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  - Costly =>
    - Multifidelity optimization
    - Transfer/meta-learning, portfolio, ...
- AutoML all the way for evaluations (LLM-judge), instruction tuning and maybe pretraining?

# Questions