

Markov Chains

Johann Pascher

2025

Abstract

Markov chains are a cornerstone of stochastic processes, characterized by discrete states and memoryless transitions. This treatise explores the tension between their apparent determinism—driven by recognizable patterns and strict preconditions—and their fundamentally stochastic nature, rooted in probabilistic transitions. We examine why discrete states foster a sense of predictability, yet uncertainty persists due to incomplete knowledge of influencing factors. Through mathematical derivations, examples, and philosophical reflections, we argue that Markov chains embody epistemic randomness: deterministic at heart, but modeled probabilistically for practical insight. The discussion bridges classical determinism (Laplace’s demon) with modern pattern recognition, and extends to connections with T0 Theory’s time-mass duality and fractal geometry, highlighting applications in AI, physics, and beyond.

1 Introduction: The Illusion of Determinism in Discrete Worlds

Markov chains model sequences where the future depends solely on the present state, a property known as the **Markov property** or memorylessness. Formally, for a discrete-time chain with state space $S = \{s_1, s_2, \dots, s_n\}$, the transition probability is:

$$P(X_{t+1} = s_j \mid X_t = s_i, X_{t-1}, \dots, X_0) = P(X_{t+1} = s_j \mid X_t = s_i) = p_{ij}, \quad (1)$$

where P is the transition matrix with $\sum_j p_{ij} = 1$.

At first glance, discrete states suggest determinism: Preconditions (e.g., current state s_i) rigidly dictate outcomes. Yet, transitions are probabilistic ($0 < p_{ij} < 1$), introducing uncertainty. This treatise reconciles the two: Patterns emerge from preconditions, but incomplete knowledge enforces stochastic modeling.

2 Discrete States: The Foundation of Apparent Determinism

2.1 Quantized Preconditions

States in Markov chains are discrete and finite, akin to quantized energy levels in quantum mechanics. This discreteness creates "preferred" states, where patterns (e.g., recurrent

loops) dominate:

$$\pi = \pi P, \quad \sum_i \pi_i = 1, \quad (2)$$

the stationary distribution π , where $\pi_i > 0$ indicates "stable" or preferred states.

Patterns recognized from data (e.g., $p_{ii} \approx 1$ for self-loops) act as "templates," making chains feel deterministic. Without pattern recognition, transitions appear random; with it, preconditions reveal structure.

2.2 Why Discrete?

Discreteness simplifies computation and reflects real-world approximations (e.g., weather: finite categories). However, it masks underlying continuity—preconditions are "binned" into states.

3 Probabilistic Transitions: The Stochastic Core

3.1 Epistemic vs. Ontic Randomness

Transitions are probabilistic because we lack full knowledge of preconditions (epistemic randomness). In a deterministic universe (governed by initial conditions), outcomes follow Laplace's equation:

$$\frac{\partial f}{\partial t} + \mathbf{v} \cdot \nabla f = 0, \quad (3)$$

but chaos amplifies ignorance, yielding effective probabilities.

3.2 Transition Matrix as Pattern Template

The matrix P encodes recognized patterns: High p_{ij} reflects strong precondition links. Yet, even with perfect patterns, residual uncertainty (e.g., noise) demands $p_{ij} < 1$.

Aspect	Deterministic View	Stochastic View
States	Discrete, fixed preconditions	Discrete, but transitions uncertain
Patterns	Templates from data (e.g., π_i)	Weighted by p_{ij} (epistemic gaps)
Preconditions	Full causality (Laplace)	Incomplete (modeled as Proba)
Outcome	Predictable paths	Ensemble averages (Law of Large Numbers)

Table 1: Determinism vs. Stochastics in Markov Chains

4 Pattern Recognition: From Chaos to Order

4.1 Extracting Templates

Patterns are "better templates" than raw probabilities: From data, infer P via maximum likelihood:

$$\hat{P} = \arg \max_P \prod_t p_{X_t X_{t+1}}. \quad (4)$$

This shifts from "pure chance" to precondition-driven rules (e.g., in AI: N-grams as Markov for text).

4.2 Limits of Patterns

Even strong patterns fail under novelty (e.g., black swans). Preconditions evolve; stochasticity buffers this.

5 Connections to T0 Theory: Fractal Patterns and Deterministic Duality

T0 Theory, a parameter-free framework unifying quantum mechanics and relativity through time-mass duality, offers a profound lens for interpreting Markov chains. At its core, T0 posits that particles emerge as excitation patterns in a universal energy field, governed by the single geometric parameter $\xi = \frac{4}{3} \times 10^{-4}$, which derives all physical constants (e.g., fine-structure constant $\alpha \approx 1/137$ from fractal dimension $D_f = 2.94$). This duality, expressed as $T_{\text{field}} \cdot E_{\text{field}} = 1$, replaces probabilistic quantum interpretations with deterministic field dynamics, where masses are quantized via $E = 1/\xi$.

5.1 Discrete States as Quantized Field Nodes

In T0, discrete states mirror quantized mass spectra and field nodes in fractal spacetime. Markov transitions can model renormalization flows in T0's hierarchy problem resolution: Each state s_i represents a fractal scale level, with p_{ij} encoding self-similar corrections $K_{\text{frak}} = 0.986$. The stationary distribution π aligns with T0's preferred excitation patterns, where high π_i corresponds to stable particles (e.g., electron mass $m_e = 0.511$ MeV as a geometric fixed point).

5.2 Patterns as Geometric Templates in ξ -Duality

T0's emphasis on patterns—derived from ξ -geometry without stochastic elements—resolves Markov chains' epistemic uncertainty. Transitions p_{ij} become deterministic under full precondition knowledge: The scaling factor $S_{T0} = 1 \text{ MeV}/c^2$ bridges natural units to SI, akin to how T0 predicts mass scales from geometry alone. Fractal renormalization $\prod_{n=1}^{137} (1 + \delta_n \cdot \xi \cdot (4/3)^{n-1})$ parallels Markov convergence to π , transforming apparent randomness into hierarchical order.

5.3 From Epistemic Stochasticity to Ontic Determinism

T0 challenges Markov's probabilistic veil by providing complete preconditions via time-mass duality. In simulations (e.g., T0's deterministic Shor's algorithm), chains evolve without randomness, echoing Laplace but augmented by fractal geometry. This connection suggests applications: Modeling particle transitions in T0 as Markov-like processes for quantum computing, where uncertainty dissolves into pure geometry.

Thus, Markov chains in T0 context reveal their deterministic heart: Stochasticity is epistemic, lifted by ξ -driven patterns.

6 Conclusion: Deterministic Heart, Stochastic Veil

Markov chains are neither purely deterministic nor stochastic—they are **epistemically stochastic**: Discrete states and patterns impose order from preconditions, but incomplete knowledge veils causality with probabilities. In a Laplace-world, they collapse to automata; in ours, they thrive on uncertainty. Through T0 Theory’s lens, this veil lifts, unveiling geometric determinism.

True insight: Recognize patterns to approximate determinism, but embrace probabilities to navigate the unknown—until theories like T0 reveal the underlying unity.

7 Example: Simple Markov Chain Simulation

Consider a 2-state chain ($S = \{0, 1\}$) with $P = \begin{pmatrix} 0.7 & 0.3 \\ 0.4 & 0.6 \end{pmatrix}$. Starting at 0, probability of being at 1 after n steps: $p_n(1) = (P^n)_{01}$.

$$P^2 = \begin{pmatrix} 0.61 & 0.39 \\ 0.52 & 0.48 \end{pmatrix}, \quad \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} P^n = \begin{pmatrix} 0.571 & 0.429 \\ 0.571 & 0.429 \end{pmatrix}. \quad (5)$$

This converges to $\pi = (4/7, 3/7)$, a pattern from preconditions—yet each step stochastic.

8 Notation

X_t State at time t

P Transition matrix

π Stationary distribution

p_{ij} Transition probability

ξ T0 geometric parameter; $\xi = \frac{4}{3} \times 10^{-4}$

S_{T0} T0 scaling factor; $S_{T0} = 1 \text{ MeV}/c^2$

This document is part of the T0 series: Exploring patterns and duality in physics and processes

Johann Pascher, HTL Leonding, Austria

[T0 Theory: Time-Mass Duality Framework](#)