Econ 626: Quantitative Methods II

Fall 2018

Lecture 1: August 27-29

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Disclaimer: Zhikun is fully responsible for the errors and typos appeared in the notes.

1.1 Some history

1.1.1 About the Bernoulli brothers

1.1.2 Brachistochrone problem

Brachistochrone means shortest time. Note that the shortest path is not the fastest one.

1.2 Methods of solving dynamic optimization

- 1. Calculus of variations (Newton, ...), 1696-1697
- 2. Optimal control (Pontryign, ...), 1960-1961
- 3. Dynamic programming (Bellman), 1957

Example: Suupose that a firm receives an order for B units of a product to be delivered by time T. Its goal is to accomplish this at minimum cost.

Assumptions: Unit production cost rises linearly with the production rate, given by

$$c_1x'(t), c_1 > 0$$

- x(t) inventory accumulated by time t
- x'(t) production rate
- $c_2 > 0$ unit cost of holding inventory per unit of time

Total cost:

$$c_1x'(t)x'(t) + c_2x(t) = c_1(x'(t))^2 + c_2x(t)$$

This is a continuous time problem:

$$\min \int_0^T [c_1(x'(t))^2 + c_2 x(t)] dt$$

s.t.
$$x(0) = 0, x(T) = B, x'(t) \ge 0$$

 $^{^1\}mathrm{This}$ note contains 3-days lectures. Visit $\mathtt{http://www.luzk.net/misc}$ for updates.

Goal: Find x(t) which will minimize the total cost of production.

Guess: One possible solution is to produce at a constant rate by setting $x'(t) = \frac{B}{T}$. This is indeed feasible:

$$x(t) = \int_0^t \frac{B}{T} dt = \frac{B}{T} t \tag{1.1}$$

because x(0) = 0, x(T) = B, and $x'(t) \ge \frac{B}{T}$. In that case,

$$\int_0^T \left[c_1(x'(t))^2 + c_2 x(t)\right] dt = \int_0^T \left[c_1(\frac{B}{T})^2 + c_2 \frac{B}{T} t\right] dt = \left[c_1(\frac{B}{T})^2 t + c_2 \frac{B}{2T} t^2\right] \Big|_0^T = c_1 \frac{B^2}{T} + c_2 \frac{BT}{2}$$
(1.2)

A Simplified Version: Suppose that $c_2 = 0, c_1 = 1$. The problem is still dynamic in nature. Now the problem becomes

$$\min \int_0^T (x'(t))^2 dt$$
s.t. $x(0) = 0, x(T) = B, x'(t) \ge 0$ (1.3)

Discrete Approximation: Let us convert (1.3) into discrete time setting. Divide the interval $[0, T] \in \mathbb{R}$ into $\frac{T}{k}$ segments with equal length of k.

[Insert a graph here]

• Approximation of x(t)x(t) can be approximated by polygonal line with vertices y at the end point of each segment:

$$(0,0),(k,y_1),(2k,y_2),...,(T,B)$$

.

[Insert a graph here]

• Approximation of x'(t)

$$x'(t) \approx \frac{\Delta x}{\Delta t} = \frac{y_i - y_{i-1}}{k}.$$

Then the objective of the firm is to determine $y_i, i = 1, ..., \frac{T}{k} - 1$ (since the last period value $y_{\frac{T}{k}} = B$), which minimizes the following

$$\min \sum_{i=1}^{\frac{T}{k}} \left[\frac{y_i - y_{i-1}}{k} \right]^2 k$$

$$y_0 = 0, y_{\frac{T}{k}} = B, y_i - y_{i-1} \ge 0$$
(1.4)

(1.4) is the discrete analogue of (1.3).

• FONC w.r.t. y_i :

$$2\frac{y_{i} - y_{i-1}}{k} - 2\frac{y_{i+1} - y_{i}}{k} = 0 \iff y_{i} - y_{i-1} = y_{i+1} - y_{i} \text{ or } \Delta y_{i} = \Delta y_{i+1}$$
 (1.5)

• The solution property:

Each 'day' the firm produces the same amount \longrightarrow optimal strategy is to produce at the constant rate. The analogue between (1.3) and (1.4) suggests that constant production rate might be optimal in the continuous case as well.

[Insert a graph here]

Claim 1.1 Constant production rate is optimal for the continuous time version, (1.3).

Remark 1.2 This should not be surprising since " $(1.3) = \lim_{k \to 0} (1.4)$ ".

Proof: Let z(t) be some other C^1 feasible path $\Longrightarrow z(0) = 0$ and z(T) = B.

Define $h(t) \equiv z(t) - x(t)$. Here, h(t) is called a deviation path, z(t) is called a comparison path. Since both x(t), z(t) are feasible, we have

$$h(0) = h(T) = 0$$

$$z(t) = h(t) + x(t)$$

$$z'(t) = h'(t) + x'(t) = h'(t) + \frac{B}{T}$$

$$\int_{0}^{T} (z'(t))^{2} dt - \int_{0}^{T} (x'(t))^{2} dt = \int_{0}^{T} \left(h'(t) + \frac{B}{T}\right)^{2} dt - \int_{0}^{T} \left(\frac{B}{T}\right)^{2} dt$$

$$= \int_{0}^{T} \left[(h'(t))^{2} + 2h'(t)\frac{B}{T} + (\frac{B}{T})^{2}\right] dt - \int_{0}^{T} \left(\frac{B}{T}\right)^{2} dt$$

$$= \int_{0}^{T} (h'(t))^{2} dt + \int_{0}^{T} 2h'(t)\frac{B}{T} dt$$

$$= \int_{0}^{T} (h'(t))^{2} dt + \left[2h(t)\frac{B}{T}\right] \Big|_{0}^{T}$$

$$= \int_{0}^{T} (h'(t))^{2} dt + 2\frac{B}{T}(h(T) - h(0))$$

$$= \int_{0}^{T} (h'(t))^{2} \ge 0$$

1.3 Dynamic Optimization Framework

In general, a path can be identified if we know

- 1. starting time t_0
- 2. starting state $\mathbf{x}(\mathbf{t_0})$
- 3. direction of path $\mathbf{x}'(\mathbf{t})$

In general, the simplest general calculus of variations problem:

$$\int_{t_0}^{t_1} F(t, x(t), x'(t)) dt$$
s.t. $x(t_0) = x_0, x(t_1) = x_1$ (1.6)

- x choice vaiable, can be a vector
- we can have higher order derivatives

Note: FONCs of a continuous (discrete) time dynamic optimization model is a differential (difference) equations of several orders.

August 28, 2018 Continued

Objective Function

Value of the variable of interest - utility or profits, addded up over time. Examples include

Discrete -
$$\sum_{t=0}^{\infty} u(c_t), \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \Pi(P_t)$$
Continuous -
$$\int_{0}^{\infty} u(c(t)) dt, \int_{0}^{\infty} \Pi(P(t)) dt$$

$$\sum_{t=0}^{\infty} u(c_t) = u(c_0) + u(c_1) + \dots$$

Discounting in Discrete Time

- $\bullet \ \beta = {\tt discount \ rate}, \ 0 < \beta < 1$
- $\beta^t = \text{discount factor}$
- Life-time utility = $\sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \beta^t u(c_t)$ Also called Present Discountied Value of the lifetime utility (PDV)

Discounting in Continuous Time

If we invest \$P at interest rate r/year, then

- after one year, P + rP = (1 + r)P
- after two years, $(1+r)^2P$
- after t years, $(1+r)^t P$

If interest is paid twice a year, then

- after 6 months, $P + \frac{r}{2}P = (1 + \frac{r}{2})P$
- after 1 year, $(1+\frac{r}{2})^2P$

• after t years, $(1 + \frac{r}{2})^{2t}P$

Generally, if interest is paid m times per year, where the per period rate is $\frac{r}{m}$, then

- after 1 year, $(1 + \frac{r}{m})^m P$
- after t years, $(1 + \frac{r}{m})^{mt}P$

In the limit, if we discount continuously, $m \longrightarrow \infty$:

$$\lim_{m \to \infty} \left(1 + \frac{r}{m} \right)^{mt} = e^{rt} \tag{1.7}$$

If we invest \$P\$ today at interest rate r, computed continuously, then the amount will grow to Pe^{rt} . Conversely, today's value of time t Pe^{rt} . Hence, $e^{-rt} \equiv continuous$ time discount factor.

 $\Longrightarrow \max \int_0^\infty u(c(t))e^{-\delta t} dt, \ t \in \mathbb{R}$

Comments

- $0 < \delta < 1$ is the discount rate.
- $e^{-\delta t}$ is the discount factor.
- As $t \uparrow$, we have $e^{-\delta t} \downarrow$.
- Generally, $\delta = \delta(t)$. Uzawa (1961)

Depreciation (Decay)

Say, the stock of capital depreciates at rate b > 0

$$\Longrightarrow \frac{K'(t)}{K(t)} = -b$$
$$K'(t) + bK(t) = 0$$

First order linear differential equation

$$e^{bt}[K'(t) + bK(t)] = 0$$

$$\int e^{bt}[K'(t) + bK(t)]dt = C_1$$

$$e^{bt}K(t) + C_2 = C_1$$

$$K(t) = C_3e^{-bt}$$

 \implies b is the exponential rate of depreciation. If $K(0) = C_3$ is known, then $K(t) = K(0)e^{-bt}$

Note

If K(100) is known, say $K(100) = C_3 e^{-100b}$, then

$$K(t) = K(100)e^{(100-t)b}$$

In discrete time

 $K_{t+1} = (1 - \delta)K_t$, or $K_{t+1} - (1 - \delta)K_t = 0$, which is s first order linear difference equation.

1.3.1 Dynamic Models

- Infinite horizon v.s. finite horizon
- Discrete time v.s. continuous time
- Deterministic v.s. Stochastic
- Linear v.s. nonlinear

1.4 Dynamic Programming

Consider the following dynamic discret-time, infinite horizon, deterministic model:

$$\max \quad \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \beta^t u(C_t), \quad 0 < \beta < 1 \tag{1.8}$$

$$s.t. \quad C_t + I_t = f(K_t) \tag{1.9}$$

- \bullet K_t accumulated by the end of period t-1
- Capital evolution equation:

$$K_{t+1} = I_t + (1 - \delta)K_t$$

= $K_t - \delta K_t + I_t$ (1.10)

- Assumption:
 - 1. $\delta = 1$
 - 2. disposible equipment

$$I_t = K_{t+1}$$
 (think about saving) (1.11)

Then (1.9) becomes

$$C_t + K_{t+1} = f(K_t) (1.12)$$

 $(1.8) \& (1.9) \Longrightarrow$

$$\max \quad \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \beta^t u(C_t) \tag{1.13}$$

s.t.
$$C_t + K_{t+1} = f(K_t)$$
 (1.14)

Choice variable: $\{C_t\}_{t=0}^{\infty}$, and $\{K_{t+1}\}_{t=0}^{\infty}$ with K_0 given.

This is a dynamic programming problem. It's solutions are called **policy functions** because the solutions will offer rules about how to choose the optimal values of choice variables as functions of the state variables.

In our case, a policy function will be a rule that will tell the decision maker how to choose optimally C_t and K_{t+1} , give K_t .

1.4.1 Finite Horizon Version

Consider a finite-horizon version of (1.13)-(1.14):

$$\max \quad \sum_{t=0}^{T} \beta^t u(C_t) \tag{1.15}$$

s.t.
$$C_t + K_{t+1} = f(K_t)$$
 (1.16)

where we choose $\{C_t, K_{t+1}\}_{t=0}^T$.

Notice the recursive structure of the dynamic programming problem: Each period's decision problem is identical to other periods' decision problems, thus we can treat a given dynamic programming problem as a sequence of static problems.

Bellman's insight [Insert a graph here]

Plug (1.16) in to (1.15)

$$\max_{\{K_t\}_{t=1}^T} \sum_{t=0}^T \beta^t u(f(K_t) - K_{t+1})$$
(1.17)

FONC w.r.t. K_{t+1} :

$$-\beta^{t}u'(f(K_{t}) - K_{t+1}) + \beta^{t+1}u'(f(K_{t+1}) - K_{t+2})f'(K_{t+1}) = 0$$
(1.18)

which applies to t < T, since K_{T+1} is useless. Rewrite the FONC

$$u'(f(K_t) - K_{t+1}) = \beta u'(f(K_{t+1}) - K_{t+2})f'(K_{t+1})$$
(1.19)

which is a second-order difference equation.

Using $C_t = f(K_t) - K_{t+1}$, we can get the Euler equation

$$u'(C_t) = \beta u'(C_{t+1})f'(K_{t+1}). \tag{1.20}$$

Two Period Model
[Insert a graph here]

The Last Period

When t = T, the last period, we will want to consume everything because there is no tormorrow.

$$K_{T+1} = 0 \Longrightarrow C_{T+1} = f(K_T)$$

Thus our problem becomes

$$\max \quad \sum_{t=0}^{T} \beta^t u(C_t) \tag{1.21}$$

s.t.
$$C_t + K_{t+1} = f(K_t)$$

 K_0 given and $K_{T+1} = 0$ (1.22)

Example: Let $u(C) = \ln C$, $f(K) = K^{\alpha}$, $0 < \alpha < 1$, then the Euler equation becomes

$$\frac{1}{C_t} = \frac{\beta}{C_{t+1}} \alpha K_{t+1}^{\alpha - 1} \tag{1.23}$$

or
$$\frac{1}{K_t^{\alpha} - K_{t+1}} = \frac{\beta}{K_{t+1}^{\alpha} - K_{t+2}} \alpha K_{t+1}^{\alpha - 1}, \tag{1.24}$$

which is (1.19) with specific utility and production functions.

$$\frac{1}{K_{t}^{\alpha} - K_{t+1}} = \frac{\beta}{K_{t+1}^{\alpha} - K_{t+2}} \alpha K_{t+1}^{\alpha - 1}$$

$$\iff \frac{\frac{1}{K_{t}^{\alpha}}}{\frac{1}{K_{t}^{\alpha}} (K_{t}^{\alpha} - K_{t+1})} = \frac{\alpha \beta \frac{1}{K_{t+1}^{\alpha}} K_{t+1}^{\alpha - 1}}{\frac{1}{K_{t+1}^{\alpha}} (K_{t+1}^{\alpha} - K_{t+2})}$$

$$\iff \frac{1}{K_{t}^{\alpha}} \frac{1}{1 - \frac{K_{t+1}}{K_{t}^{\alpha}}} = \frac{\beta}{1 - \frac{K_{t+2}}{K_{t+1}^{\alpha}}} \alpha \frac{K_{t+1}^{\alpha - 1}}{K_{t+1}^{\alpha}}$$
(1.25)

Define $w_t \equiv \frac{K_{t+1}}{K_t^{\alpha}} = \text{saving rate, then}$

$$\Longrightarrow \frac{w_t}{1 - w_t} = \frac{\alpha \beta}{1 - w_{t+1}} \tag{1.26}$$

We have transformed the original 2nd order difference equation into a 1st order difference equation system

$$\begin{cases} \frac{w_t}{1 - w_t} = \frac{\alpha \beta}{1 - w_{t+1}} \\ w_t = \frac{K_{t+1}}{K_t^{\alpha}} \end{cases}$$
 (1.27)

(1.26) can be rewritten as

$$w_{t+1} = 1 + \alpha\beta - \alpha\beta \frac{1}{w_t} \tag{1.28}$$

Plot it with $\alpha = 0.8, \beta = 0.8$:

$$w_{t+1} = 1.6 - \frac{0.64}{w_t} \tag{1.29}$$

Let $w_{t+1} = w_t = w^*$, solving $w = 1 + \alpha \beta - \frac{\alpha \beta}{w}$ yields

$$w_{1,2} = \begin{cases} \frac{(1+\alpha\beta) + \sqrt{(1+\alpha\beta)^2 - 4\alpha\beta}}{2} = 1\\ \frac{(1+\alpha\beta) - \sqrt{(1+\alpha\beta)^2 - 4\alpha\beta}}{2} = \alpha\beta \end{cases}$$
(1.30)

However, w cannot be 1. It is not optimal because it means that consumption equals zero, which does not make sense. We rule it out. Hence,

$$w^* = \alpha \beta \tag{1.31}$$

To proceed, let us compute w's a follows:

$$w_t = \frac{K_{t+1}}{K_t} \Longrightarrow \frac{K_{T+1}}{K_T} = 0 \tag{1.32}$$

since $K_{T+1} = 0$.

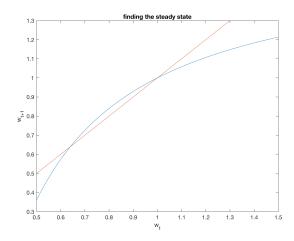


Figure 1.1: The red line is the 45-degree line and the two intersections are possible steady states.

As we are working backwards, rewrite (1.26) as

$$w_t = \frac{\alpha\beta}{1 + \alpha\beta - w_{t+1}}. (1.33)$$

Hence

$$w_{T-1} = \frac{\alpha\beta}{1 + \alpha\beta - w_T} = \frac{\alpha\beta}{1 + \alpha\beta} \tag{1.34}$$

$$w_{T-2} = \frac{\alpha\beta}{1 + \alpha\beta - w_{T-1}} = \frac{\alpha\beta}{1 + \alpha\beta - \frac{\alpha\beta}{1 + \alpha\beta}} = \frac{\alpha\beta + (\alpha\beta)^2}{1 + \alpha\beta + (\alpha\beta)^2}$$
(1.35)

$$w_{T-4} = \frac{\alpha\beta}{1 + \alpha\beta - w_{T-3}} = \frac{\alpha\beta + (\alpha\beta)^2 + (\alpha\beta)^3 + (\alpha\beta)^4}{1 + \alpha\beta + (\alpha\beta)^2 + (\alpha\beta)^3 + (\alpha\beta)^4}$$

$$(1.37)$$

$$w_{T-t} = \frac{\sum_{s=0}^{t} (\alpha \beta)^s - 1}{\sum_{s=0}^{t} (\alpha \beta)^s} \qquad (t = 1, 2, \dots, T - 1)$$
(1.38)

$$\dot{w}_1 = w_{T-(T-1)} = \frac{\sum_{s=0}^{T-1} (\alpha \beta)^s - 1}{\sum_{s=0}^{T-1} (\alpha \beta)^s}$$
(1.39)

$$w_0 = w_{T-T} = \frac{\sum_{s=0}^{T} (\alpha \beta)^s - 1}{\sum_{s=0}^{T} (\alpha \beta)^s}$$
(1.40)

By re-labelling, we can get the general formula for $0 \le t \le T - 1$:

$$w_t = \frac{\sum_{s=0}^{T-t} (\alpha \beta)^s - 1}{\sum_{s=0}^{T-t} (\alpha \beta)^s}$$
 (1.41)

Recall $\sum_{s=0}^{n} b^s = \frac{1-b^{n+1}}{1-b}$, and we can rewrite (1.41):

$$w_{t} = \frac{\sum_{s=0}^{T-t} (\alpha \beta)^{s} - 1}{\sum_{s=0}^{T-t} (\alpha \beta)^{s}} = w_{t} = \frac{\frac{1 - (\alpha \beta)^{T-t+1}}{1 - (\alpha \beta)} - 1}{\frac{1 - (\alpha \beta)^{T-t+1}}{1 - (\alpha \beta)}} = \frac{\alpha \beta - (\alpha \beta)^{T-t+1}}{1 - (\alpha \beta)^{T-t+1}}, \quad t = 0, 1, \dots, T - 1.$$
 (1.42)

Recall $w_t = \frac{K_{t+1}}{K_t^{\alpha}}$, we have

$$K_{T+1} = w_T K_t^{\alpha} = \frac{\alpha \beta - (\alpha \beta)^{T-T+1}}{1 - (\alpha \beta)^{T-T+1}} K_t^{\alpha} = \frac{\alpha \beta - (\alpha \beta)^1}{1 - (\alpha \beta)^1} K_t^{\alpha} = 0$$
(1.43)

which is consistent with $K_{T+1} = 0$.

Now let $T \longrightarrow \infty$,

$$\lim w_t = \alpha\beta = w^*$$

1.4.2 Infinite Horizon Model

Back to the infinite horizon model

$$\max_{\{C_t, K_{t+1}\}_{t=0}^{\infty}} \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \beta^t u(C_t)$$
 (1.44)

s.t.
$$C_t + K_{t+1} = f(K_t)$$

$$K_0 \text{ given}$$

$$(1.45)$$

Note: Since this is an infinite horizon problem, we cannot proceed with backward recursion.

Instead, we will use forward recursion. For this, we require additive-separability:

$$\sum_{t=s}^{\infty} u(C_t) = u(C_s) + \sum_{t=s+1}^{\infty} u(C_t)$$
(1.46)

which implies time-separability – $MU(C_t) = MU(C_{t+1})$.

As we saw,

$$K_{t+1} = q(K_t), \quad t = 0, 1, \dots$$
 (1.47)

where $g: \mathbb{R}_+ \longrightarrow \mathbb{R}_+$ is the saving function, which is also called policy function in the language of Dynamic Programming.

Value function is the value of the objective function in optimum, i.e., the maximized value of the objective function.

By (1.47), we have

$$K_1 = g(K_0) (1.48)$$

$$K_2 = g(K_1) = g(g(K_0)) \equiv \bar{g}(K_0)$$
 (1.49)

$$K_3 = g(K_2) = g(\bar{g}(K_0)) \equiv \bar{g}(K_0)$$
 (1.50)

:

Hence the whole sequence of choice variables, $\{C_t, K_{t+1}\}_{t=0}^{\infty}$, depends on K_0 , so does the value function $V(\cdot)$:

$$V(K_0) = \begin{cases} \max_{\{C_t, K_{t+1}\}_{t=0}^{\infty}} \sum_{t=0}^{\infty} \beta^t u(C_t) \\ \text{s.t.} \quad C_t + K_{t+1} = f(K_t), \quad K_0 \text{ given} \end{cases}$$
(1.51)

Let us simplify the problem by breaking it into two problems.

$$V(K_0) = \begin{cases} \max_{\{C_0, K_1\}} \left[u(C_0) + \begin{cases} \max_{\{C_t, K_{t+1}\}_{t=1}^{\infty} \\ \text{s.t. } C_t + K_{t+1} = f(K_t), & K_1 \text{ given} \end{cases} \right] \\ \text{s.t. } C_0 + K_1 = f(K_0), \quad K_0 \text{ given} \end{cases}$$
(1.52)

Noticing that $\begin{bmatrix} \max_{\{C_t, K_{t+1}\}_{t=1}^{\infty} \\ \text{s.t.} \end{bmatrix} \sum_{t=1}^{\infty} \beta^t u(C_t) \\ \text{s.t.} \quad C_t + K_{t+1} = f(K_t), \quad K_1 \text{ given} \end{bmatrix} = \beta V(K_1), \text{ we can write } (1.52) \text{ as}$

$$V(K_0) = \begin{cases} \max_{\{C_0, K_1\}} \left\{ u(C_0) + \beta V(K_1) \right\} \\ \text{s.t.} \quad C_0 + K_1 = f(K_0), \quad K_0 \text{ given} \end{cases}$$
(1.53)

or

$$V(K_0) = \max_{\{K_1\}} \left\{ u(f(K_0) - K_1) + \beta V(K_1) \right\}$$
(1.54)

which is Bellman's equation. BE is a functional equation, meaning the unknown is a function $V(\cdot)$.

Jargons: In dynamic programming, as in optimal control:

- 1. State variable: Ex. K_0
- 2. Control variable: Ex. K_1

FONC w.r.t K_1 :

$$-u'(f(K_0) - K_1) + \beta V'(K_1) = 0 (1.55)$$

$$u'(f(K_0) - K_1) = \beta V'(K_1) \tag{1.56}$$

Theorem 1.3 (Envelope Theorem) Let f(x, a) be the a C^1 function of $x \in \mathbb{R}^n$, where a is some exogenously determined parameter, $a \in \mathbb{R}$, and consider the problem of maximizing the function f(x, a). Suppose that $x^*(a)$ is an interior solution, where $x^*(a)$ is a C^1 function of a. Then

$$\frac{\mathrm{d}}{\mathrm{d}a}f(x^*(a),a) = \sum_{i} \frac{\partial f}{\partial x_i}(x^*(a),a) \frac{\mathrm{d}x_i}{\mathrm{d}a}(a) + \frac{\partial f}{\partial a}(x^*(a),a)$$

$$= \frac{\partial f}{\partial a}(x^*(a),a)$$
(1.57)

References