

Generating synthetic star catalogs from simulated data for next-gen observatories with py-ananke

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DOI: [10.xxxxxx/draft](https://doi.org/10.xxxxxx/draft)

Software

- Review
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Editor: [Warrick Ball](#)

Reviewers:

- @rrjbca
- @lheckmann

Submitted: 23 November 2023

Published: unpublished

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Summary

We find ourselves on the brink of an exciting era in observational astrophysics, driven by groundbreaking facilities like JWST, Euclid, Rubin, Roman, SKA, or ELT. Simultaneously, computational astrophysics has shown significant strides, yielding highly realistic galaxy formation simulations, thanks to both hardware and software enhancements. Bridging the gap between simulations and observations has become paramount for meaningful comparisons.

We introduce py-ananke, a Python pipeline designed to generate synthetic resolved stellar surveys from cosmological simulations, adaptable to various instruments. Building upon its predecessor, ananke by Sanderson et al. (2020), which produced Gaia DR2 mock star surveys, the py-ananke package offers a user-friendly “plug & play” experience. The pipeline employs cutting-edge phase-space density estimation and initial mass function sampling to convert particle data into synthetic stars, while interpolating pre-computed stellar isochrone tracks for photometry. Additionally, it includes modules for estimating interstellar reddening, dust-induced extinctions, and for quantifying errors through dedicated modeling approaches. py-ananke promises to serve as a vital bridge between computational astrophysics and observational astronomy, facilitating preparations and making scientific predictions for the next generation of telescopes.

Statement of need

The upcoming decade holds promise for groundbreaking discoveries, thanks to a multitude of recent and forthcoming observational facilities. The James Webb Space Telescope (Gardner et al., 2006), for instance, with its exceptional specifications, has already delved into early universe galaxies with unprecedented detail, revealing their rich diversity (Adams et al., 2023; Casey et al., 2023; Eisenstein et al., 2023; Ferreira et al., 2022, 2023; Finkelstein et al., 2023; Harikane et al., 2023; Hsiao et al., 2023; Kartaltepe et al., 2023; Kocevski et al., 2023; Pérez-González et al., 2023; Trussler et al., 2023). The recently launched Euclid Telescope (Laureijs et al., 2011) promises to shed light on the universe’s accelerating expansion by surveying an immense number of galaxies (Euclid Collaboration et al., 2022). The Vera Rubin Observatory (Ivezić et al., 2019), with first light expected soon, will precisely map the Milky Way (MW) up to the virial radius and nearby galaxies, providing exceptional stellar astrometry data. Furthermore,

the Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope (Akeson et al., 2019), set to launch in the next couple of years, will offer a wide field of view for deep-sky near-infrared exploration, facilitating the study of resolved stellar populations in nearby galaxies (Dey et al., 2023; Han et al., 2023). However, these observatories will generate an unprecedented amount of raw data, necessitating community preparedness.

In parallel, a number of projects have emerged over the last decade in computational astrophysics, continuously surpassing hardware and software limits to simulate galaxy formation in a cosmological context realistically (Agertz et al., 2021; Applebaum et al., 2021; Bastian et al., 2020; Crain et al., 2015; Davé et al., 2016, 2019; Dolag et al., 2015, 2016; Y. Dubois et al., 2014; Yohan Dubois et al., 2021; Feldmann et al., 2023; Feng et al., 2016; Henden et al., 2018; Hirschmann et al., 2014; Hopkins et al., 2014, 2018, 2023; Khandai et al., 2015; Kruijssen et al., 2019; Nelson et al., 2018; Pakmor et al., 2023; Peebles et al., 2019; Pfeffer et al., 2018; Pillepich et al., 2018; Rey et al., 2023; Schaye et al., 2015, 2023; Springel et al., 2018; Stinson et al., 2010, 2013; Tremmel et al., 2017; Vogelsberger et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2015). These simulations serve as invaluable test beds for tools developed in anticipation of the next-generation telescope era, but also for our own models. However, translating these simulations into mock observables is challenging due to the representation of stellar populations as star particles, with each particle representing a total stellar mass between 10^3 and 10^8 times the mass of the Sun. To compare simulations with real data, one must break down these particles into individual stars consistently. Since the simulation resolution is not “one star particle per star” in the vast majority of these simulations, producing mock observables necessarily requires a series of assumptions that can have different effects on the final prediction.

This challenge was addressed by Sanderson et al. (2020) when producing a mock Gaia DR2 catalog from Milky-Way-mass simulated galaxies in the latte suite of FIRE simulations (Wetzel et al., 2016) using the so-called ananke pipeline. They used phase-space density estimation and initial mass function sampling to transform particle data into individual synthetic stars, retaining parent particle age and metallicity. Photometry was determined by interpolating pre-computed stellar isochrone tracks from the Padova database (Paola Marigo et al., 2017) based on star mass, age, and metallicity. Additional post-processing included estimating interstellar reddening, per-band dust extinctions using metal-enriched gas distribution, and error quantification based on a model described by functions calibrated to (Gaia Collaboration et al., 2018) characterizations. Each different step of the process, and its associated assumptions, was modularized and its assumptions documented, both to understand and isolate the effect of each assumption on the final product and to retain enough information at each step that a change to one assumption did not necessarily require re-producing the predictions from scratch.

The ananke pipeline by Sanderson et al. (2020), though powerful, lacks user-friendliness and flexibility. It is challenging to integrate into other pipelines and expand beyond the Gaia photometric system. The development of py-ananke aims to make this framework more accessible to a wider community. By providing a self-contained and easily installable Python package, it streamlines the ananke pipeline, automating tasks previously requiring manual intervention. py-ananke also expands ananke’s photometric system support and employs a modular implementation for future enhancements, promising a smoother upgrade path for users.

87 Overview of py-ananke's framework and infrastructure

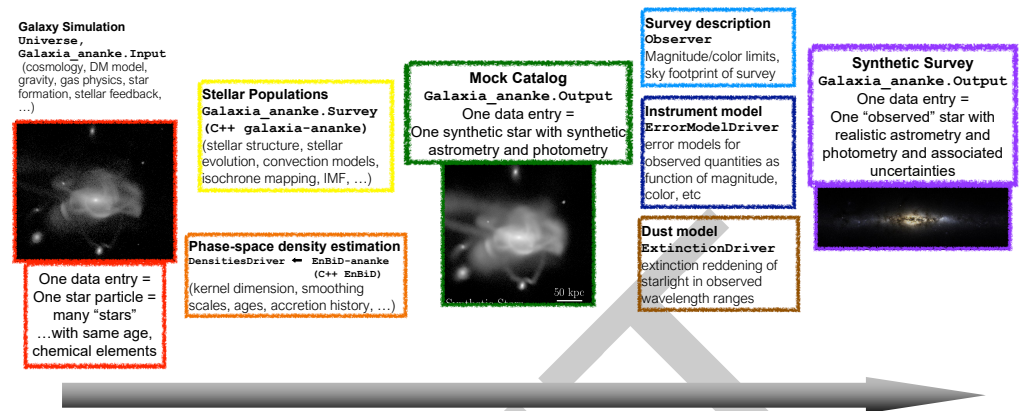


Figure 1: Schematic illustrating the inner framework of the py-ananke pipeline. The modules py-EnBiD-ananke and py-Galaxia-ananke are referred to by their import names `EnBiD_ananke` and `Galaxia_ananke`, with their respective C++ backend softwares `EnBiD` and `galaxia-ananke`. The pipeline framework is illustrated from input to final output from left to right, showcasing the different objects and their purposes.

88 The implementation of py-ananke is designed to streamline the ananke pipeline, and to prevent
 89 the need for the user to manually handle the interface between Python and the C++ backend
 90 software. It notably introduces dedicated wrapper submodules (hosted in repositories that are
 91 separate from that of py-ananke, but linked as git submodules), namely py-EnBiD-ananke
 92 and py-Galaxia-ananke, specifically developed to handle the installation and utilization of
 93 these C++ subroutines, namely `EnBiD` (Sharma & Steinmetz, 2006, 2011) and a modified version
 94 of `Galaxia` (Sharma et al., 2011a, 2011b) called `galaxia-ananke`. These submodules relieve
 95 users from the need to directly manage the C++ software while isolating the C++ wrapping
 96 process. This allows py-ananke to focus on processing inputs and outputs using pure Python.
 97 Figure 1 illustrates the inner framework process of the full pipeline, showcasing the various
 98 module and submodule classes and where they are used in an input to output fashion from left
 99 to right.

100 py-EnBiD-ananke

101 The full description of `EnBiD` is detailed in Sharma & Steinmetz (2006), but to summarize,
 102 `EnBiD` uses a binary space partitioning tree to estimate the space density of a discrete data
 103 sample of particles given their coordinates in that space. The tree is recursively built by
 104 successively splitting spatial volumes in equally sample-populated volumic tree-nodes until
 105 each leaf node contains one single particle. The densities at the location of each particle are
 106 estimated using the volume of the leaf node that contains that particle and smoothed using
 107 kernel smoothing methods.

108 The py-EnBiD-ananke submodule handles the installation of `EnBiD` and interfaces with its
 109 pipeline. The installation pulls the archived source code of `EnBiD` from its SourceForge
 110 repository and builds its executable which gets added to the packaged data. Note that for
 111 this version of py-ananke, the `EnBiD` pipeline is configured to determine 3D space densities for
 112 a set of particles, which py-ananke uses twice to get separate estimates of the position and
 113 velocity densities. In this situation, py-ananke combines both densities into a 6D phase space
 114 density, but future versions will consider the native implementation for determining true 6D
 115 phase space densities.

116 py-EnBiD-ananke consists of a collection of functions that are combined into the pipeline-

function `enbid` that takes particles 3D coordinates as input and returns their densities. The role of each sub-function is to write the files that are given as input to the EnBiD pipeline, to run the EnBiD pipeline and to read the pipeline's output files, for which various operational constants and templates are defined in a dedicated module file.

py-Galaxia-ananke

The full description of Galaxia is detailed in Sharma et al. (2011b), but to summarize, Galaxia uses a given galactic model to generate a population of synthetic stars that composes it, with its associated astrometric and photometric catalog. The original pipeline had a more general purpose as the input galactic model can be generated via an N-Body simulation as much as it can be specified as a set of density distributions. However, for our purpose with our modified version `galaxia-ananke`, the pipeline uses cosmological simulation star particle data provided by the user, specifically the mass, position, velocity, age, metallicity & abundances, as well as phase space densities for each star particle.

`galaxia-ananke` generates the synthetic stars by sampling phase space to reproduce the distribution representing overlapping phase space kernels centered at each particle, inversely scaled with the particle density, and by sampling mass to reproduce a Kroupa (2001) initial mass function. Each synthetic star carries the other properties of the parent particle such as age and metallicity, with which the masses are used to interpolate photometry from pre-computed isochrone tracks (details on those are described in section Dependencies). Finally, astrometry is determined by converting the phase space coordinates to celestial coordinates given a user-specified observer phase space position.

The `py-Galaxia-ananke` submodule handles the installation of `galaxia-ananke`, a modified version of Galaxia, and interfaces with its pipeline. The `galaxia-ananke` source code lives in a separate repository which is linked as a git submodule in the repository of `py-Galaxia-ananke`. At installation, `py-Galaxia-ananke` builds and packages the executable of `galaxia-ananke` from its source code directly from its git submodule, as well as the operational data for `galaxia-ananke` which includes the collections of isochrones sets. All the resulting `galaxia-ananke` packaged data is eventually placed in a dedicated cache folder that is created in the site-specific directory of the running Python installation.

`py-Galaxia-ananke` consists of mainly three classes, with one function utilizing them to run the `galaxia-ananke` pipeline. It also includes a submodule that interfaces via dedicated objects with the data from the collection of isochrones sets/photometric systems. The three classes of `py-Galaxia-ananke` serve the following roles:

- Input objects are used to store the input star particles data, and have methods that write the input files that `galaxia-ananke` requires
- Survey objects receive Input objects and the selection of photometric systems to simulate, and have methods that run the `galaxia-ananke` pipeline and return Output objects
- Output objects serve as the main interface with `galaxia-ananke`'s output files, and have methods that turn them into HDF5 files and associated `vaex` dataframes

py-ananke

The implementation of `py-ananke` involves six classes, with only one - `Ananke` - being relevant to the end user:

- `Ananke` objects serve as the user interface, connecting all of `py-ananke`'s classes and the `py-Galaxia-ananke` classes (described in the previous subsection) to execute the full pipeline via its method `run`
- `Universe` objects store the particle data and various parameters provided to `Ananke`
- `Observer` objects store the observing configuration, including the position in space
- `DensitiesDriver` objects utilize the particle data from the `Universe` class to compute and store phase space densities, employing `py-EnBiD-ananke`

- ExtinctionDriver objects are utilized by Ananke objects for post-processing to estimate and append extinctions in the output catalogs of py-Galaxia-ananke, only if the user specified dust column densities per star particle
- ErrorModelDriver objects are utilized by Ananke objects for post-processing to determine and append errors on the quantities in the output catalogs of py-Galaxia-ananke

The latter two driver classes require respectively extinction coefficients and error models that are photometric-system-dependents and can be specified by the user. Also, py-ananke is designed with dedicated source files to contain default implementations, which currently only hold default for the Gaia photometric system. Future updates will continue to expand this further.

Dependencies

py-ananke makes use of the following Python packages:

- astropy (Astropy Collaboration et al., 2013, 2018, 2022)
- ebcpy (Sharma, 2020)
- h5py (Collette, 2013)
- numpy (Harris et al., 2020)
- pandas (The pandas development team, 2023)
- pytest (Pajankar, 2017)
- scipy (Virtanen et al., 2020)
- vaex (Breddels & Veljanoski, 2018)

It also uses adapted versions of the C++ packages:

- EnBiD (Sharma & Steinmetz, 2006, 2011) integrated in py-EnBiD-ananke
- Galaxia (Sharma et al., 2011a, 2011b) integrated as galaxia-ananke in py-Galaxia-ananke

Lastly, the galaxia-ananke C++ submodule uses sets of pre-computed stellar isochrones generated by the Padova database¹, using:

- PARSEC version 1.2S (Bressan et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2014, 2015; Tang et al., 2014) and COLIBRI PR16 (Paola Marigo et al., 2013; Rosenfield et al., 2016) evolutionary tracks as in Paola Marigo et al. (2017) (the solar metallicity is assumed to be 0.0152), with the mass-loss on the red giant branch using the Reimers formula with $\eta_{\text{Reimers}} = 0.2$, and $\eta_{\text{inTPC}} = 10$ for the resolution of the thermal pulse cycles in the COLIBRI section,
- specific choices of photometric systems for the corresponding instrument² with OBC bolometric corrections as described in L. Girardi et al. (2002), Léo Girardi et al. (2008) and P. Marigo et al. (2008),
- circumstellar dust compositions with a combination of 60% Silicate + 40% AlOx around O-rich M stars, and a combination of 85% AMC + 15% SiC around C-rich C stars, as in Groenewegen (2006),
- periods from Trabucchi et al. (2019) and Trabucchi et al. (2021) for long-period variability during the red and asymptotic giant branch phases.

Past and Ongoing Applications

Sanderson et al. (2020)'s data have now been in public use for 5 years and have delivered on the promise of this technique, leading to the discovery of a new stellar stream (Necib et al., 2020), the development and validation of new machine learning methods for inferring the origins of stars (Ostdiek et al., 2020), insights into the formation history of the MW (Nikakhtar

¹<http://stev.oapd.inaf.it/cgi-bin/cmd>

²further described in <http://stev.oapd.inaf.it/cmd/photosys.html>

et al., 2021), searches for dark matter subhalos (Bazarov et al., 2022), and inference of the MW's interstellar dust distribution (Miller et al., 2022).

In addition, a number of studies have also made use of the existing ananke pipeline that generated Sanderson et al. (2020)'s data, often through the extensive effort to adapt it to other photometric systems:

- Shipp et al. (2023) investigated the detectability of MW stellar streams in the Dark Energy Survey (Abbott et al., 2018, 2021; Flaugher et al., 2015), for which they produced mock star catalogs mimicking DECam photometry from disrupted star clusters identified around simulated MW-mass galaxies
- Nguyen et al. (2023) produced a synthetic survey mimicking the third data release of Gaia (Gaia Collaboration et al., 2021, 2023), similar to how Sanderson et al. (2020) produced a synthetic survey of the second data release of Gaia (Gaia Collaboration et al., 2018)

These studies required significant effort caused by the challenges of using ananke, which py-ananke is designed to alleviate. Current ongoing projects are already using the new py-ananke package, and are benefiting significantly from its ergonomicity.

Author Contributions

As the lead developer on py-ananke, ACRT adapted ananke by integrating its routines into a self-contained fully installable Python package, and implemented the new modular and object-oriented infrastructure py-ananke relies on, including the submodule py-EnBiD-ananke and py-Galaxia-ananke submodules, preparing all the associated repository overarching organization. RES, ananke's original developer, supervised ACRT throughout py-ananke's development and helped to disseminate early in-development versions of the software to collaborators. SS is the original developer of the C++ softwares EnBiD and Galaxia which ananke relies heavily upon. APE tested the package for their own projects under the supervision of NGC. FN also tested the package for their projects and implemented fixes to the source code during testing. ACRT, NP and NGC added sets of isochrones to those in the galaxia-ananke C++ submodule that had previously been assembled by RES.

Acknowledgements

ACRT and RES acknowledge support from the Research Corporation through the Scialog Fellows program on Time Domain Astronomy, from NSF grant AST-2007232, from NASA grant 19-ATP19-0068, and from HST-AR-15809 from the Space Telescope Science Institute (STScI), which is operated by AURA, Inc., under NASA contract NAS5-26555.

Development of this code package made use of resources provided by the Frontera computing project at the Texas Advanced Computing Center (TACC). Frontera is made possible by National Science Foundation award OAC-1818253. Simulations used as test data for the package, and which form part of the example suite, were run using Early Science Allocation 1923870 and analyzed using computing resources supported by the Scientific Computing Core at the Flatiron Institute. This work used additional computational resources from the University of Texas at Austin and TACC, the NASA Advanced Supercomputing (NAS) Division and the NASA Center for Climate Simulation (NCCS), and the Extreme Science and Engineering Discovery Environment (XSEDE), which was supported by National Science Foundation grant number OCI-1053575.

Package development and testing was performed in part at the Aspen Center for Physics, which is supported by National Science Foundation grant PHY-1607611, and at the Kavli Institute for Theoretical Physics workshop "Dynamical Models for Stars and Gas in Galaxies in the

Gaia Era” and the 2019 Santa Barbara Gaia Sprint, supported in part by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. NSF PHY-1748958 and by the Heising-Simons Foundation.

The authors are grateful to Anthony Brown and Jos de Bruijne for their cooperation in building the Gaia error models encoded in this package. We also gratefully acknowledge the input and encouragement of the many participants of the Gaia Sprints (2017–2019), and of the Gaia Challenge series (2012–2019).

The authors thank the extended [Galaxy Dynamics @ UPenn group](#) and the attendees of the “anankethon” workshops for the valuable feedback and suggestions they provided which have contributed to the refinement and enhancement of the package.

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