Issues of Scale in Spatial Ecology - 2

How do we detect changes in process with scale?

A survey of quantitative methods …

“first law of geography: everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things.”

–Waldo Tobler

“first law of geography: everything is related to everything else, but near things are more related than distant things.”

In essence, Tobler’s law describes what we call **autocorrelation or spatial dependence:** the similarity of observations based on the distance (in space or time) between them

Statistics for identifying scale

- Many methods are available, we will focus on a few of the common approaches
- Different techniques are closely related with similar assumptions
  - all techniques are sensitive to sampling intervals (grain) and record length (extent)
  - in other words, the methods themselves are sensitive to scale
  - reliability can depend on the "stationarity" of the data
    - Stationarity = lack of trend or same mean, variance, and *isotropy* throughout the study area
      - Isotropy = the pattern is the same in all directions

Useful methods for quantifying pattern of spatial (or temporal) structure include:

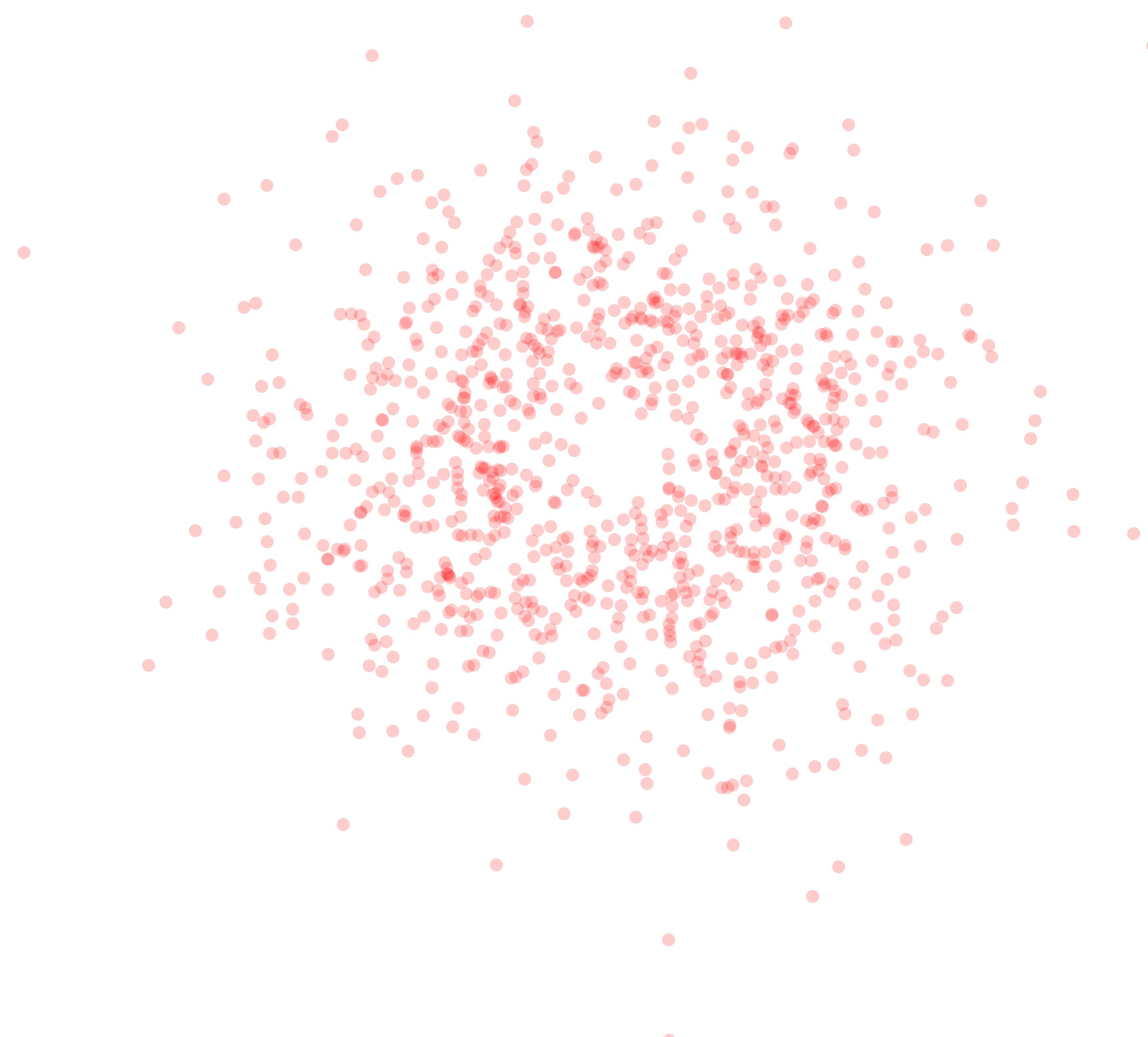
1. Variogram / Semivariance / Kriging
2. Correlogram / Autocorrelation
3. Spectral analysis
4. Point pattern analyses

Semivariogram

Two common uses:

1. Structure recognition

2. Optimal interpolation
   (e.g., kriging)



Semivariogram

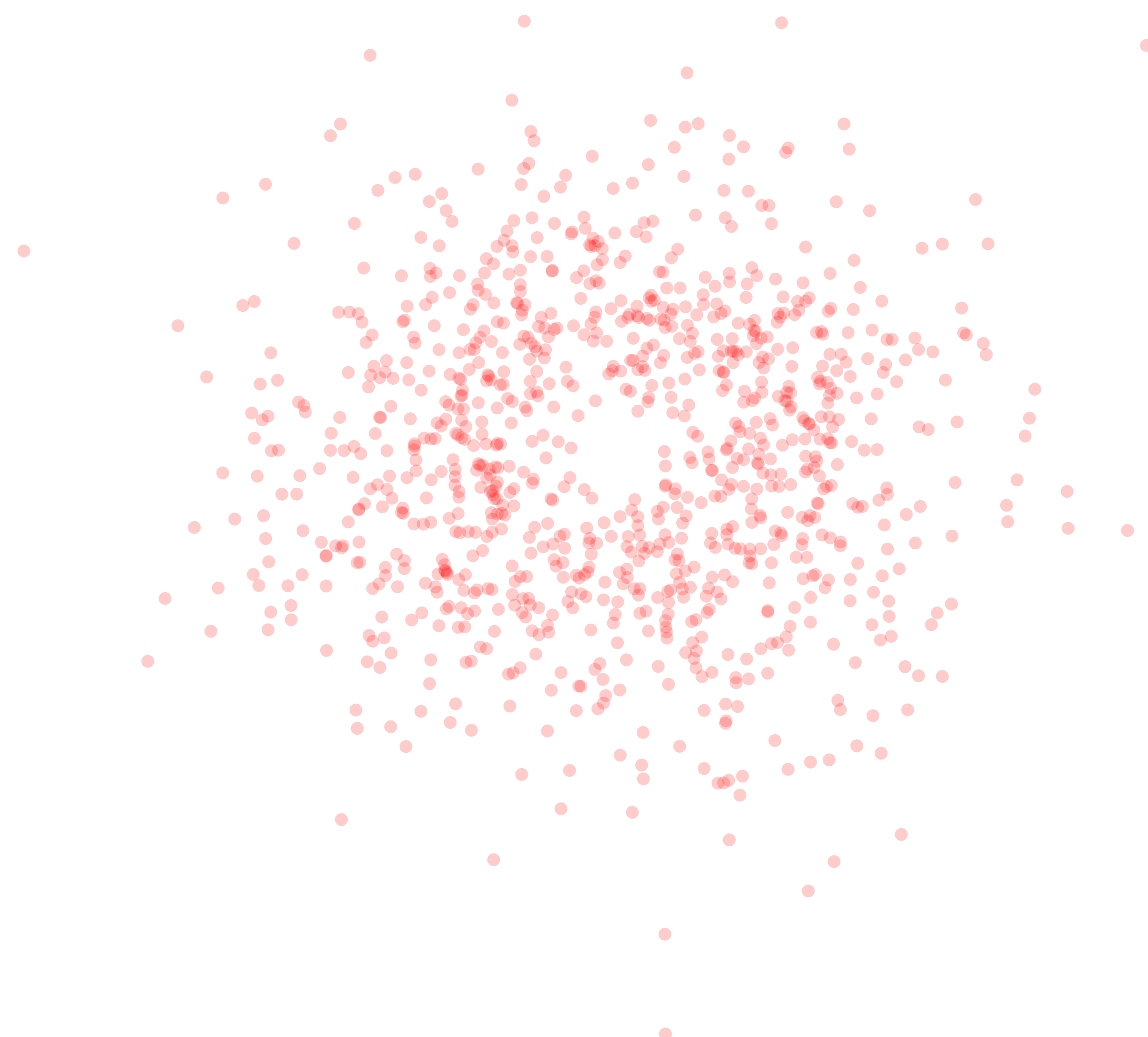
Examine the dissimilarity in values measured at two points some distance apart.

1. Rearrange data into **pairs** separated by distance *h*

2. Calculate squared distances by summation over all possible pairs at that distance *h* (*ideally at least 50 pairs for each value of h*)

3. Analyze how patterns of dissimilarities changes as a function of *h*

Note that the common implementation assumes *stationarity*



Semivariance

$$\hat{\gamma} = 1/2N(h)\sum_{i=1}^{N(h)}(X_i - X_{i+h})^2$$

- *N(h)* = number of lagged data pairs
- *h* = lagged distance
- *X*'s = data observations

Analyze dissimilarities

Lag(1) = difference between adjacent points

Lag(2) = difference between points 2 units apart

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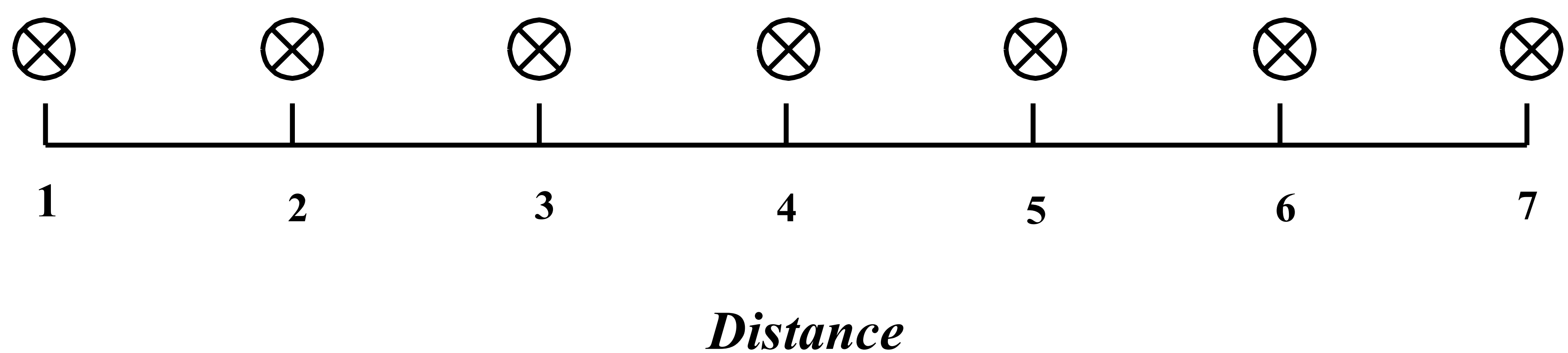
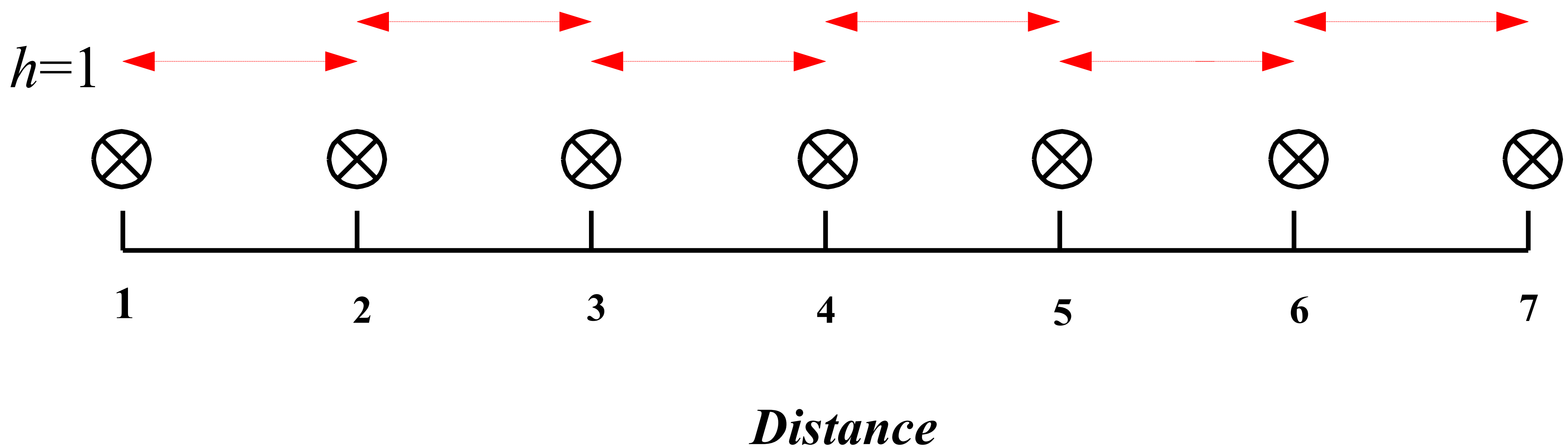
Lag(n/2) = difference between points **1/2 the extent** of the study area (n = # of points)

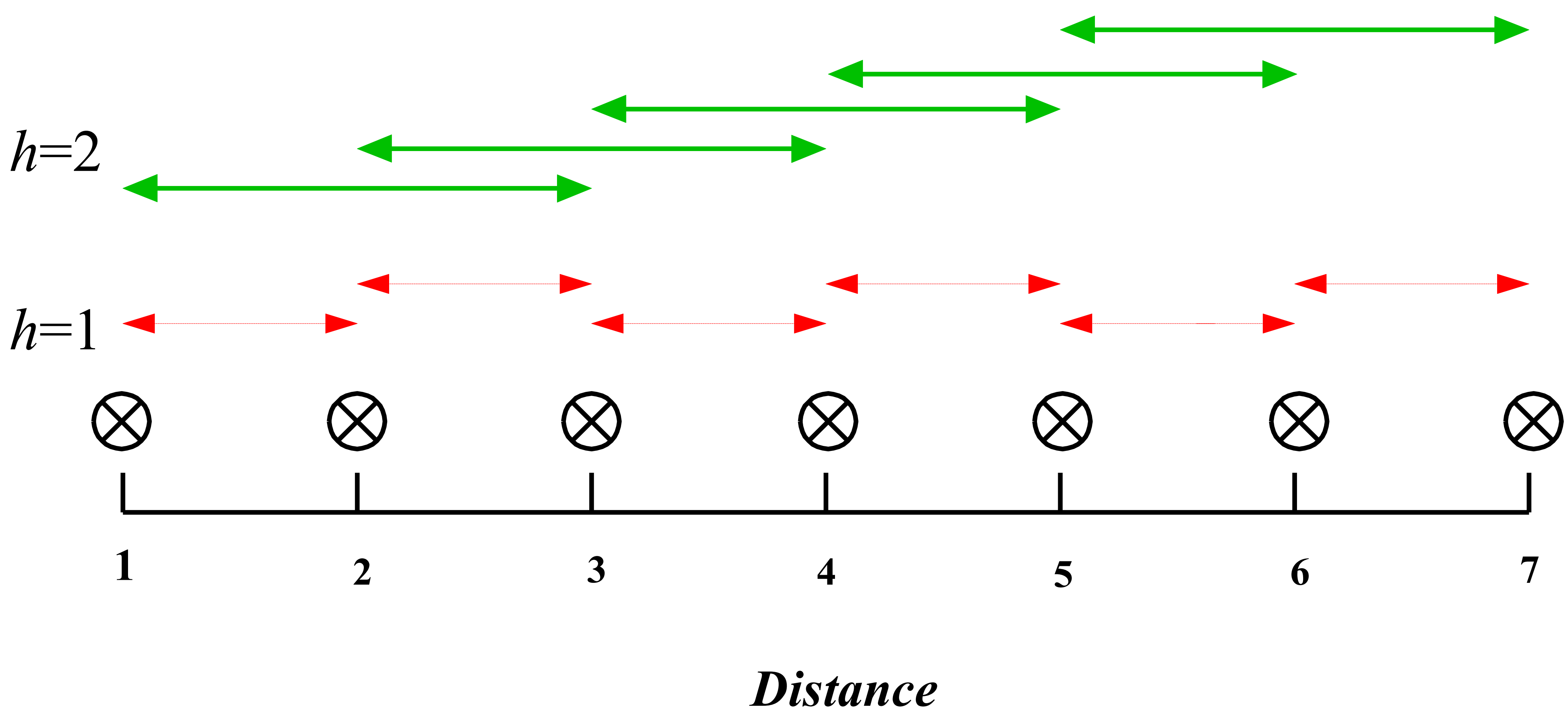
Counting lags



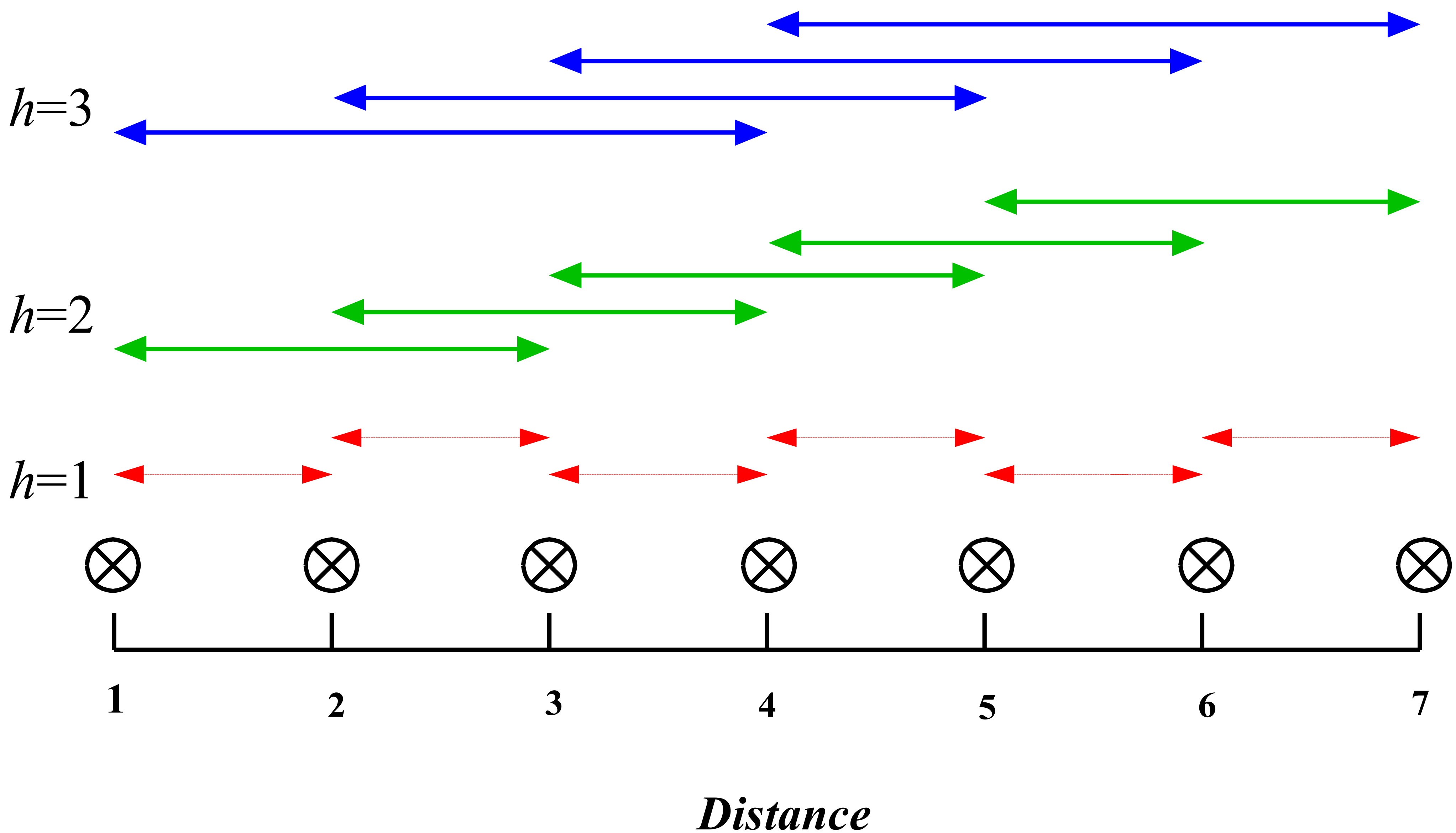
Counting lags



Counting lags



Counting lags

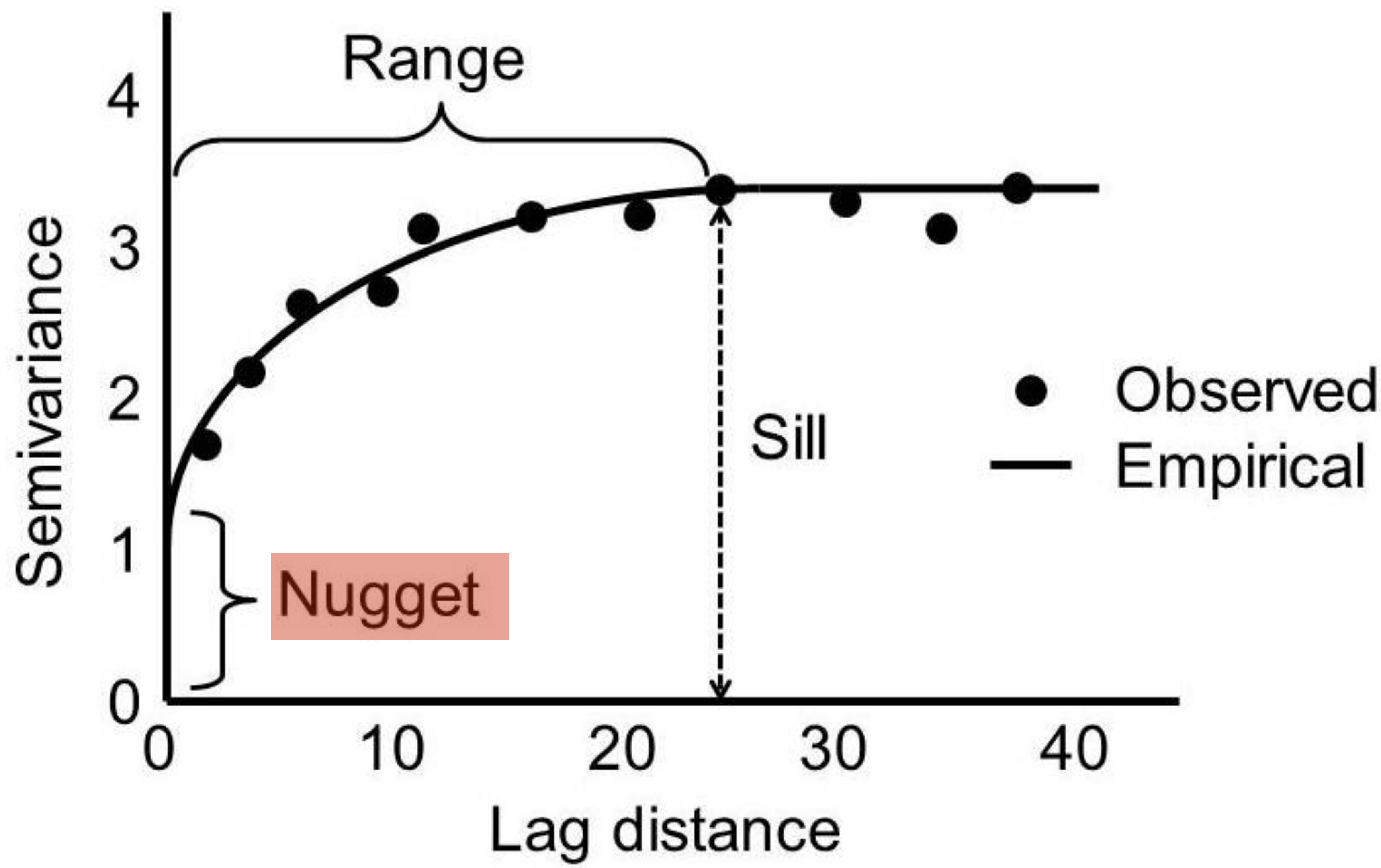


Semivariogram

nugget = value at *h*=0

- indicates measurement errors or spatial sources of variation at distances smaller than the sampling interval or both

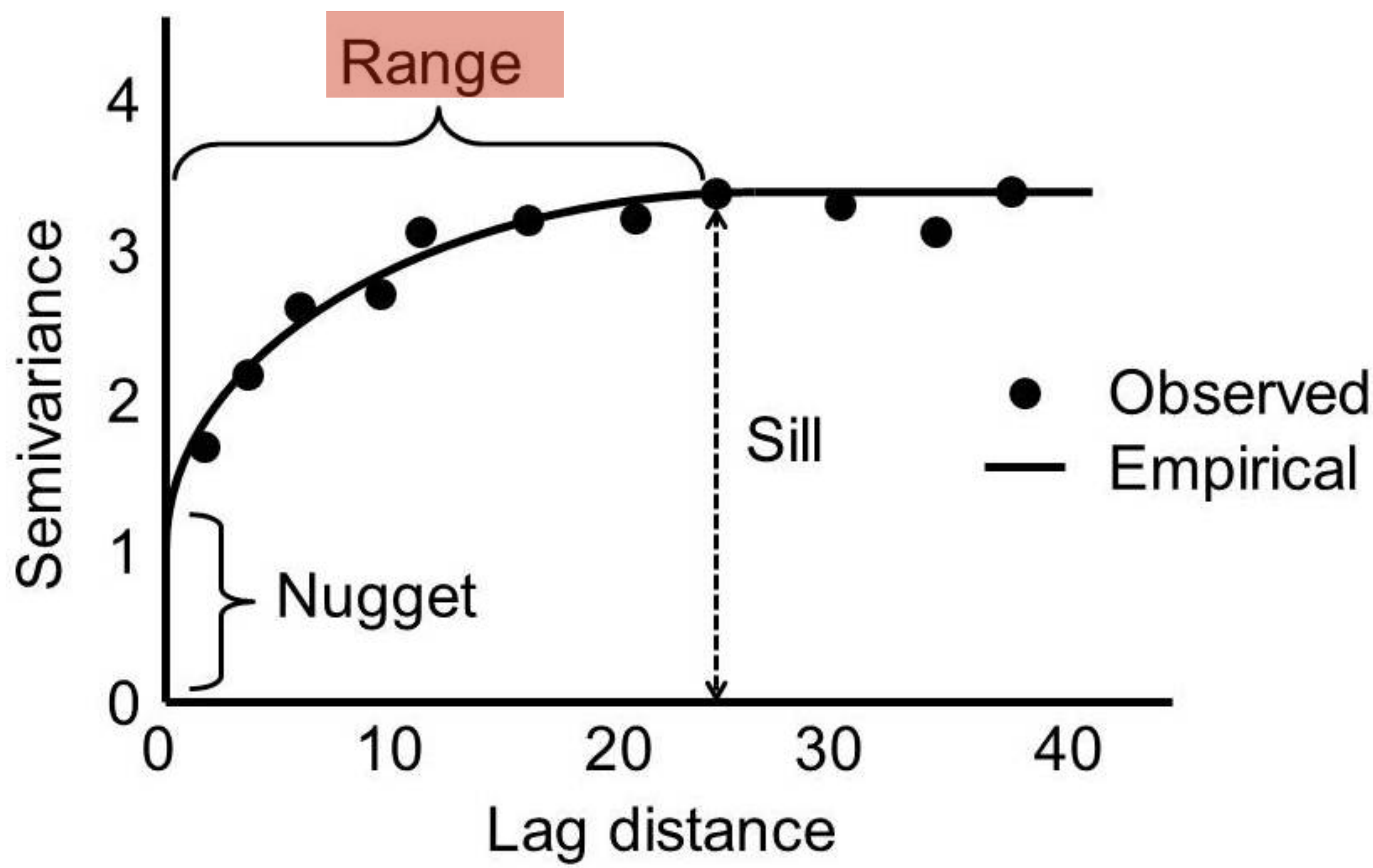
- In theory, nugget should always = 0



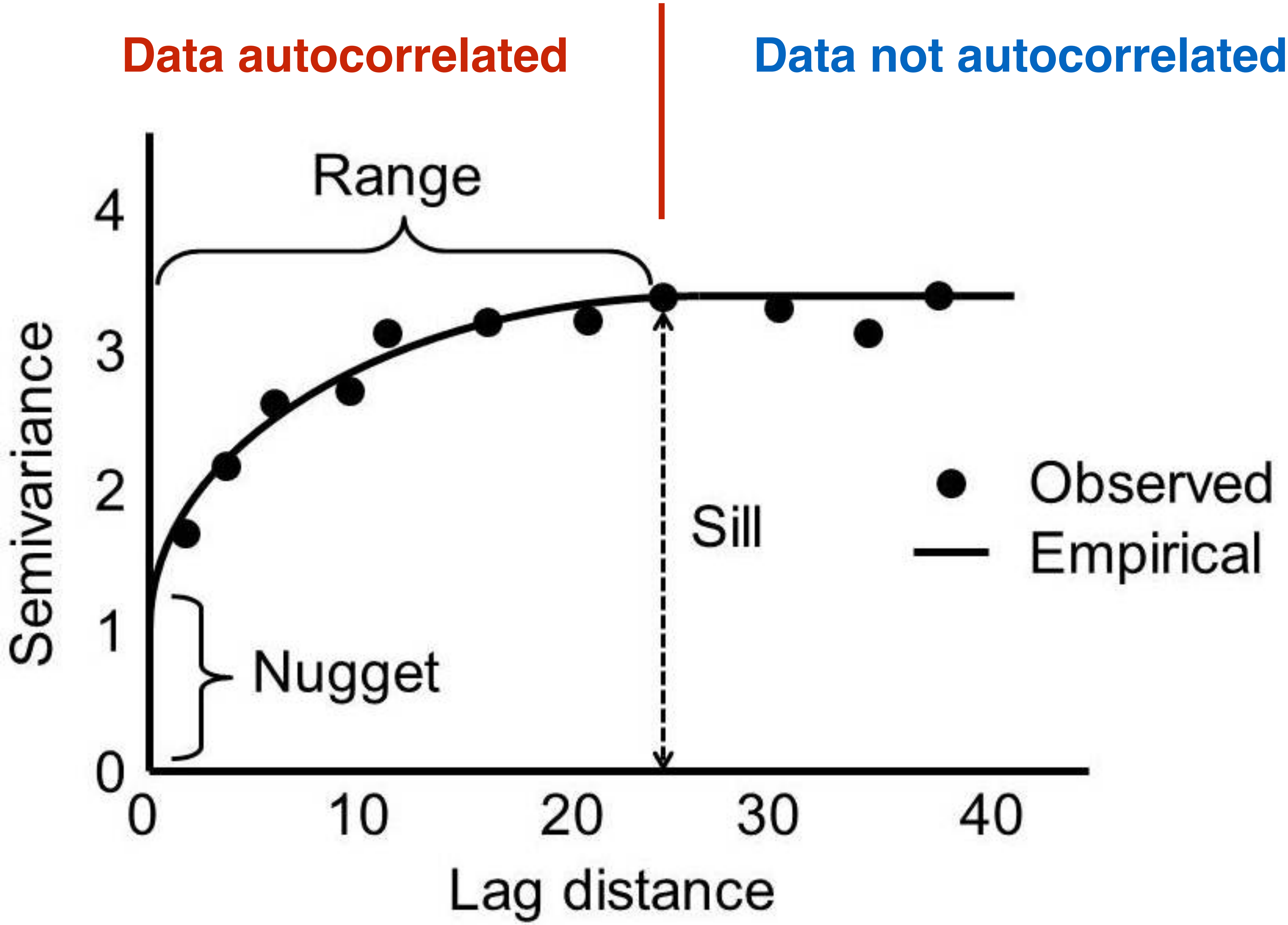
Semivariogram

Range

- Distance within which sampled points are spatially dependent
- if semivariogram is flat THERE IS NO SPATIAL STRUCTURE



Semivariogram



Semivariogram

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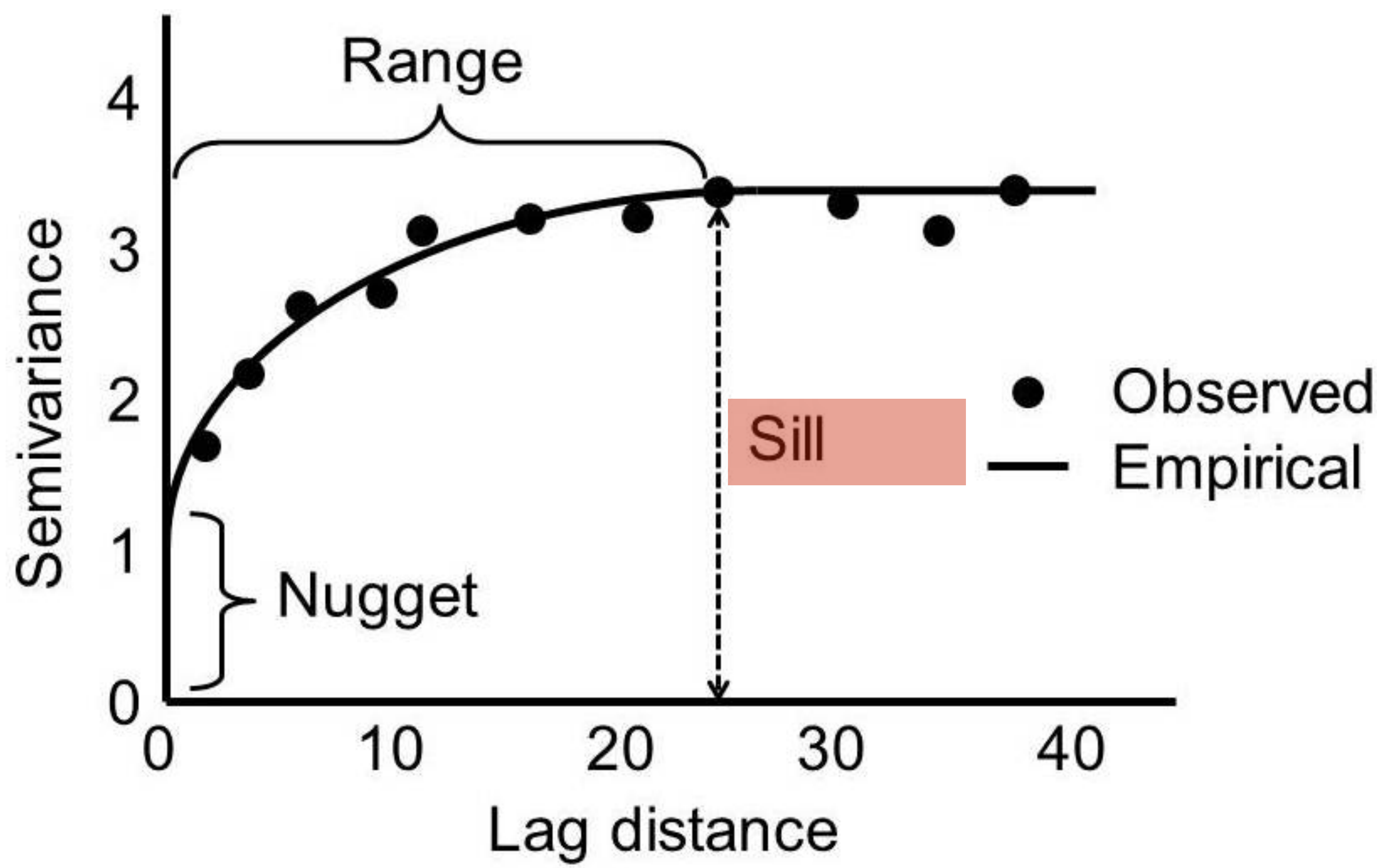
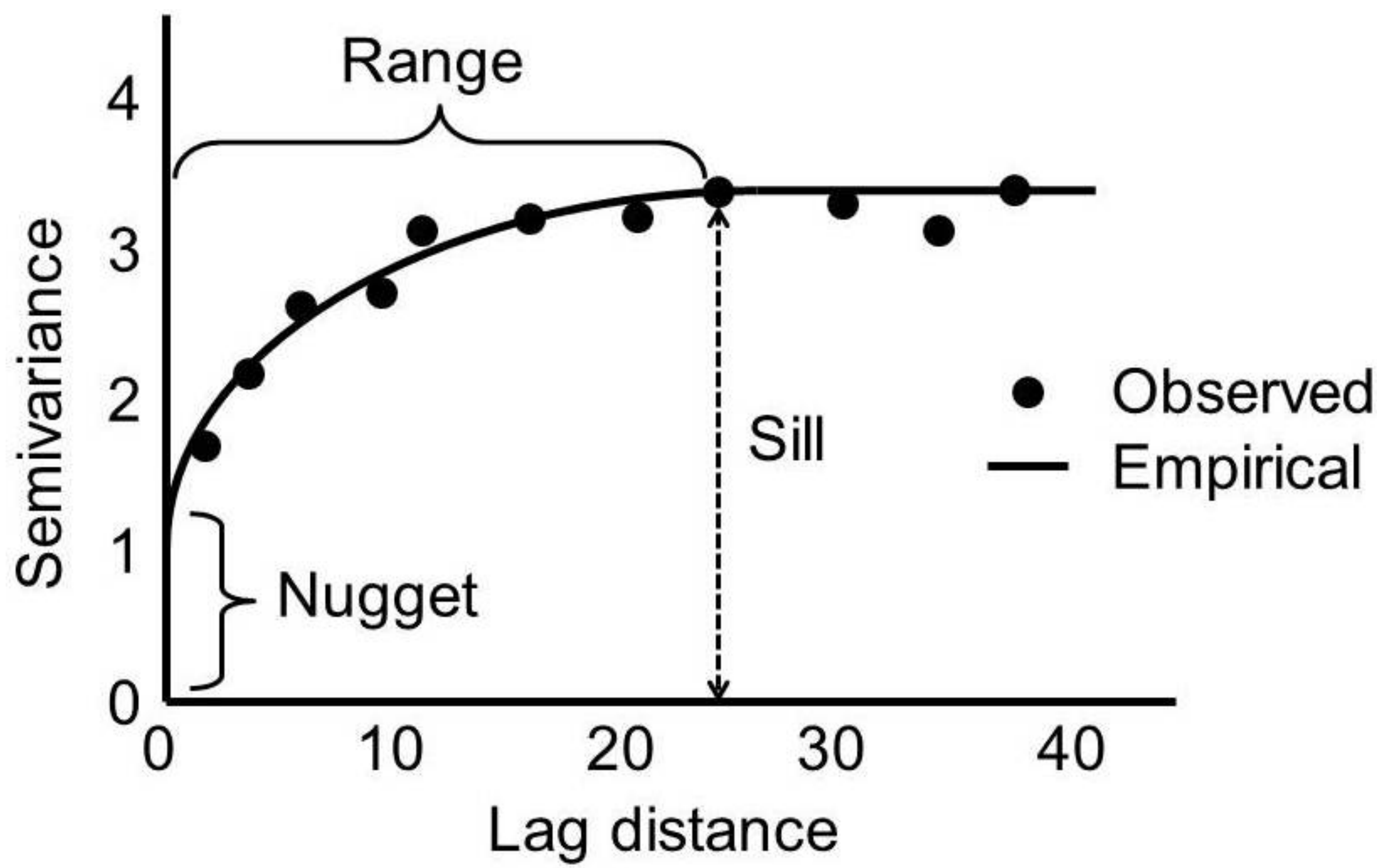
- Height of the range, where the semivariogram flattens out



Semivariogram

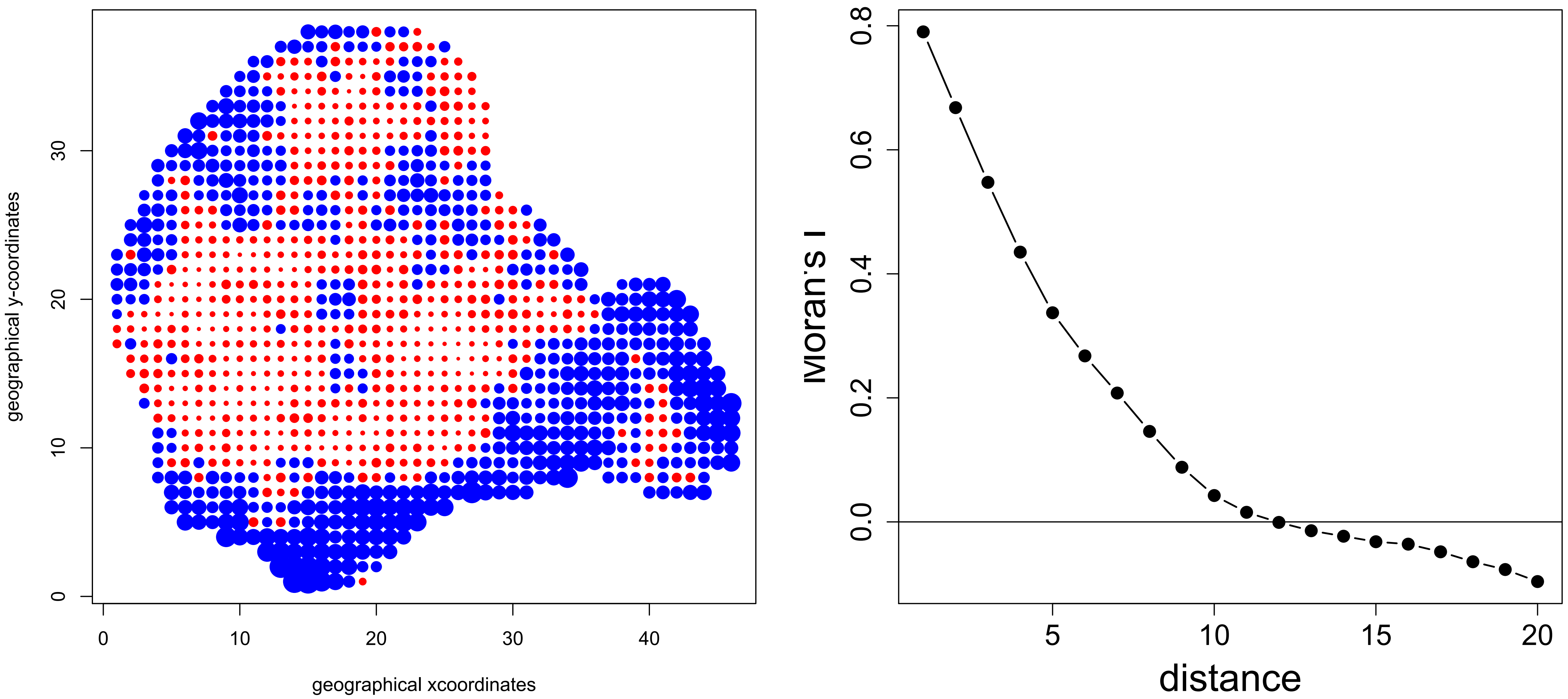
Key point: identifies the scale at which points are spatially dependent



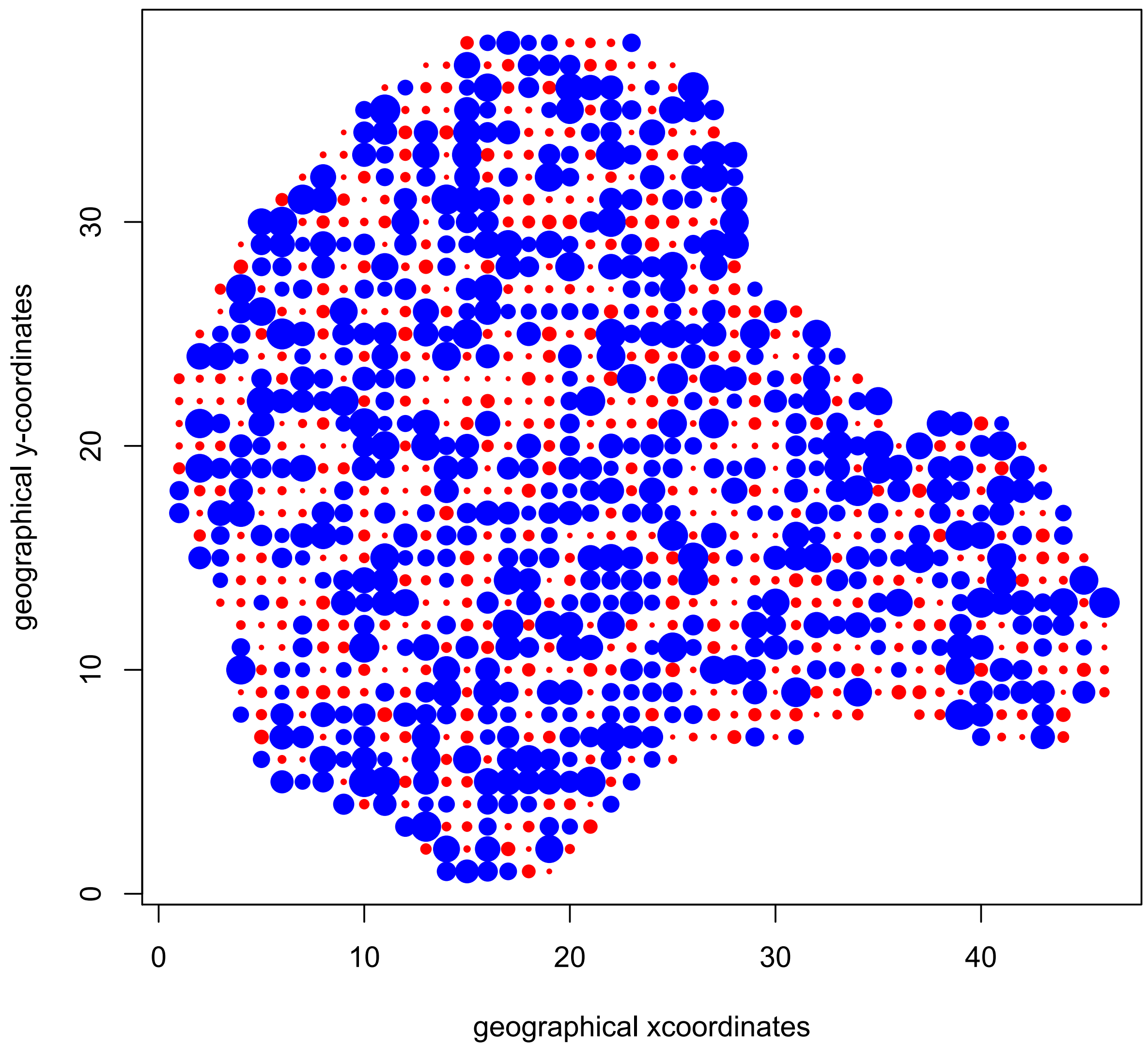
2. Correlogram / Autocorrelation

- general principles similar to semivariance
- *correlations* (instead of dissimilarities) estimated between lagged pairs of data
- a **correlogram** visualizes results (aka ‘autocorrelation plot’)
  - Plot of Moran’s I against distance classes is a Correlogram
  - Moran’s I = degree of correlation between values of a variable as a function of spatial location (similar to Pearson’s coefficient)
    - Varies from -1 (negative autocorrelation) to 1 (positive autocorrelation)
    - 0 = no spatial structure

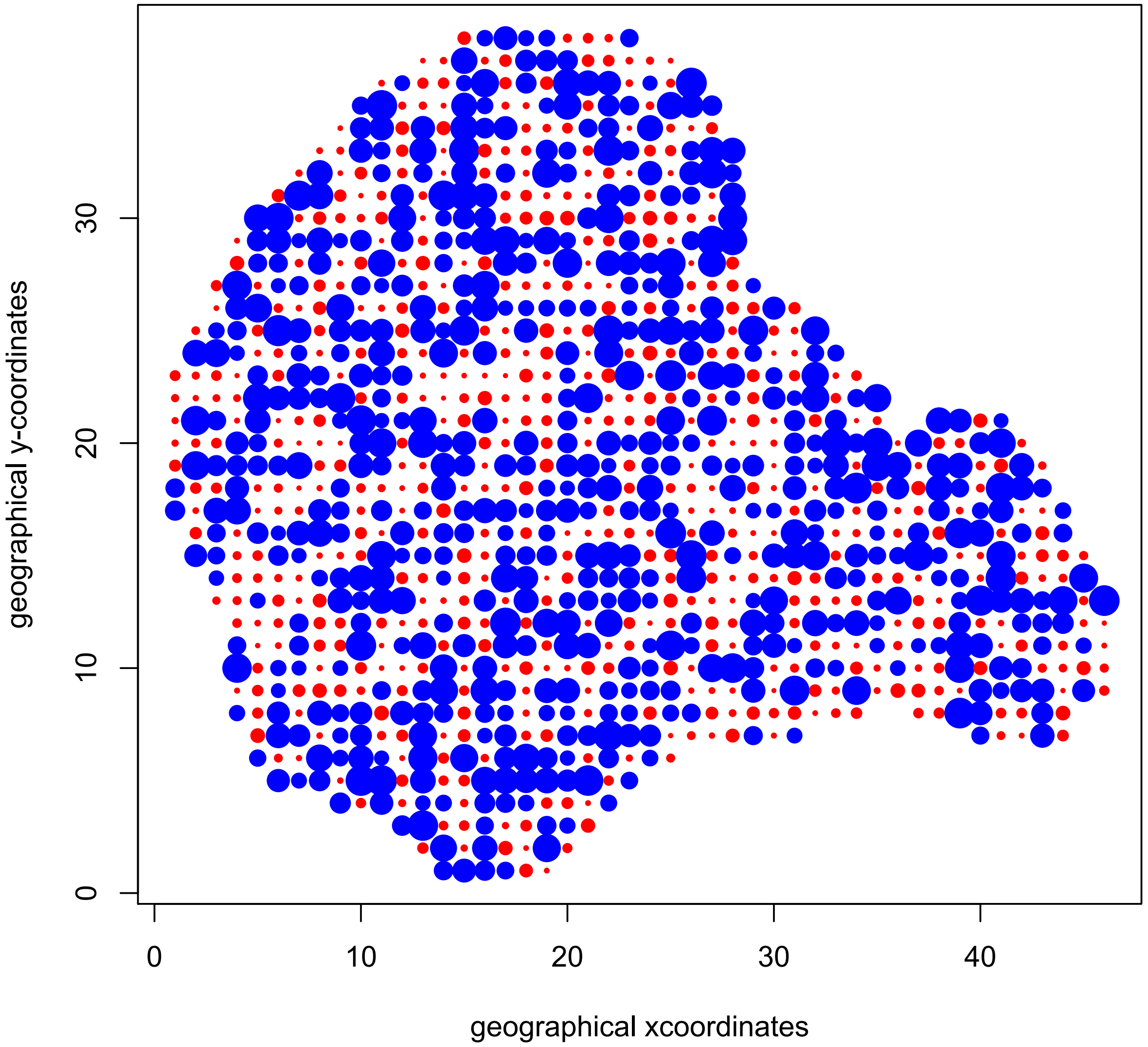
Spatial pattern vs. correlogram

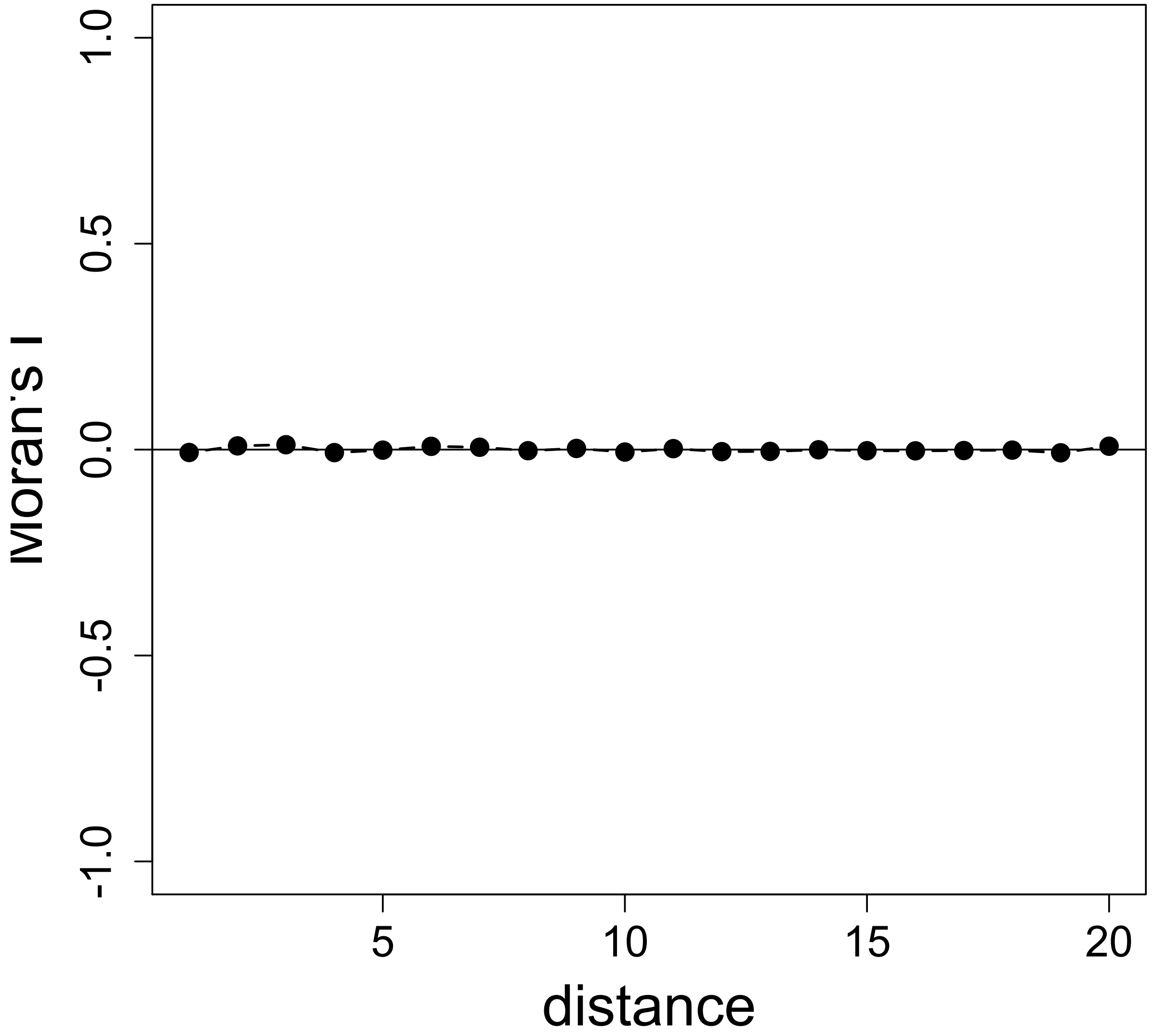


Spatial pattern vs. correlogram

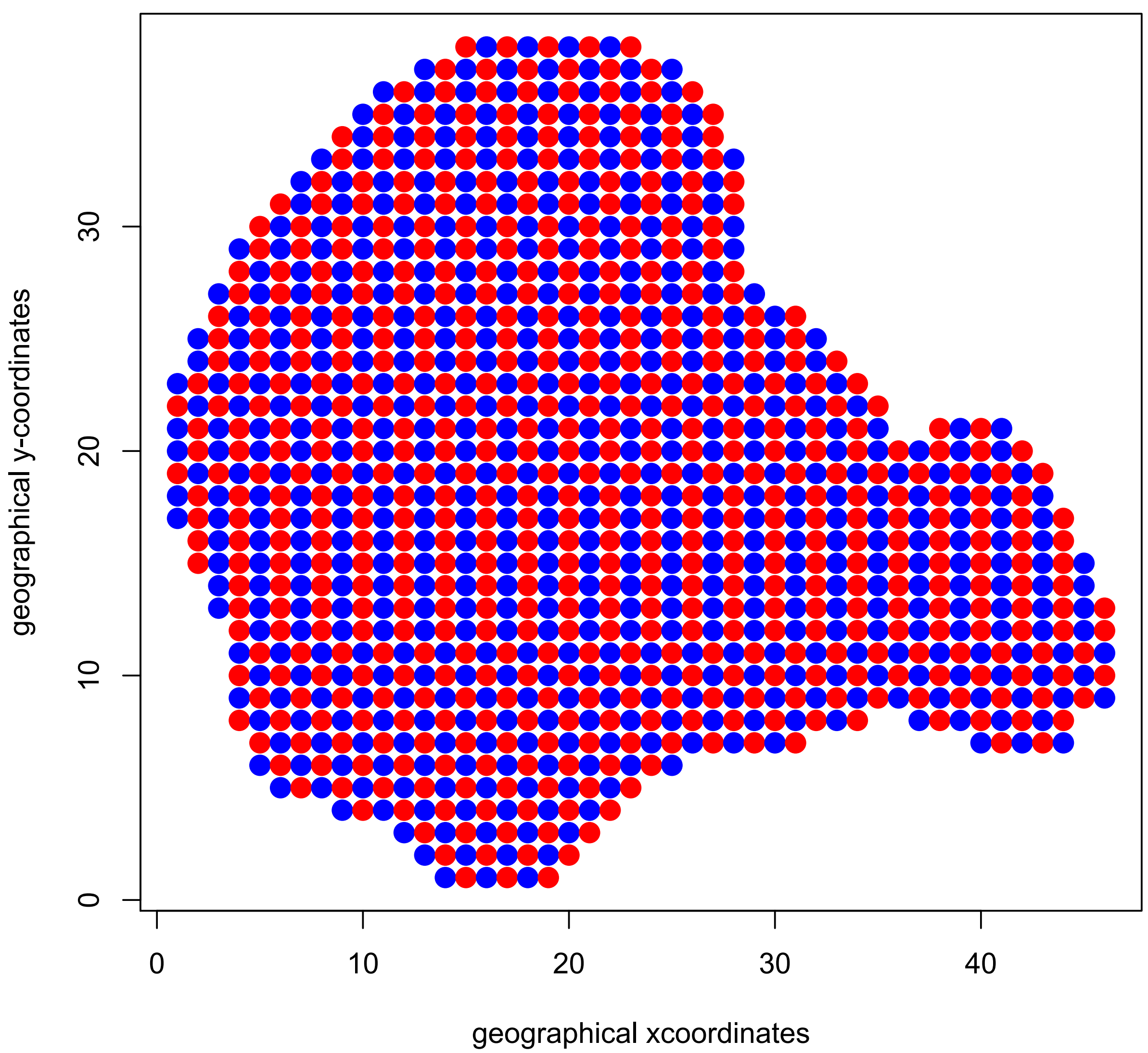


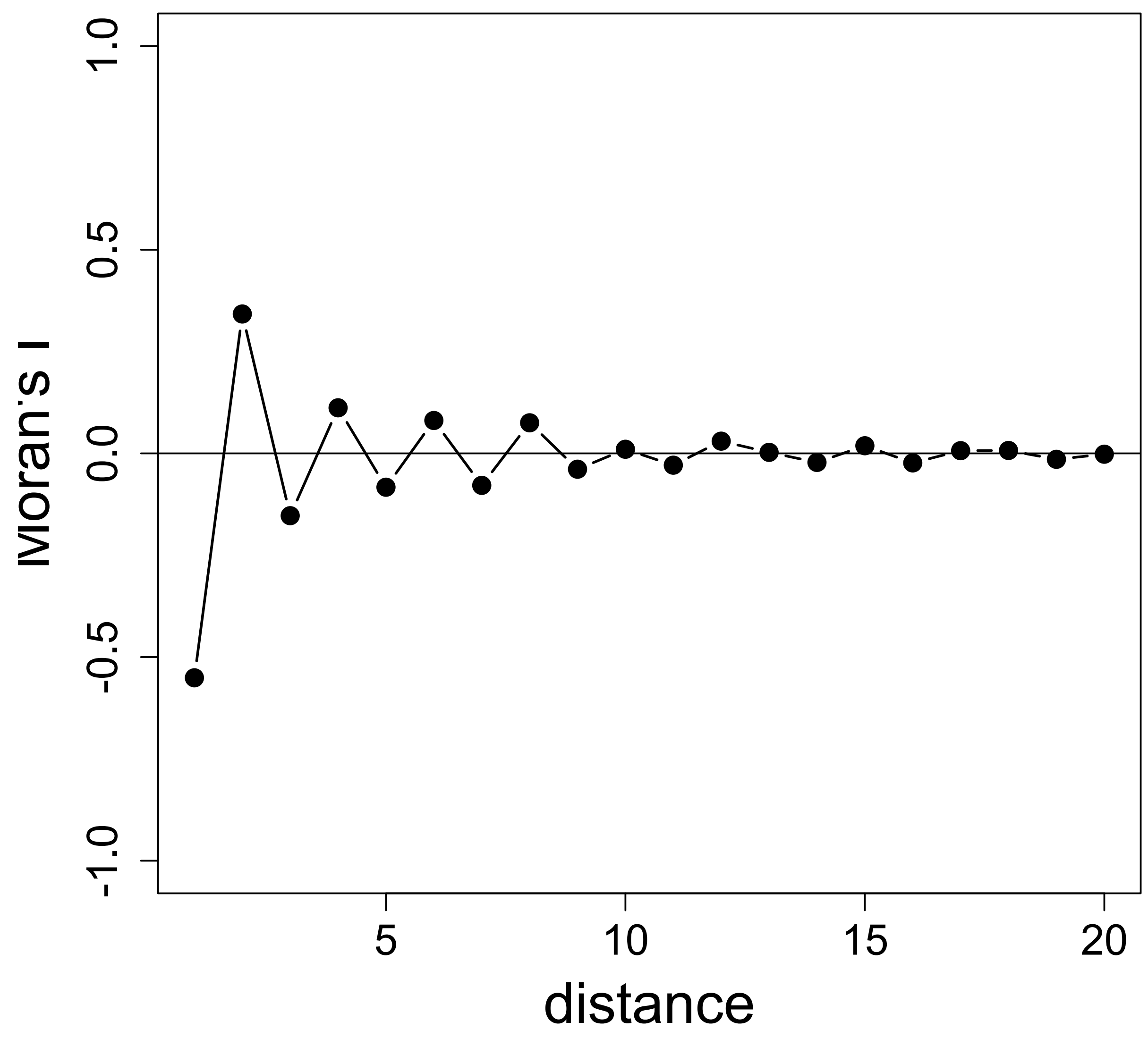
Spatial pattern vs. correlogram



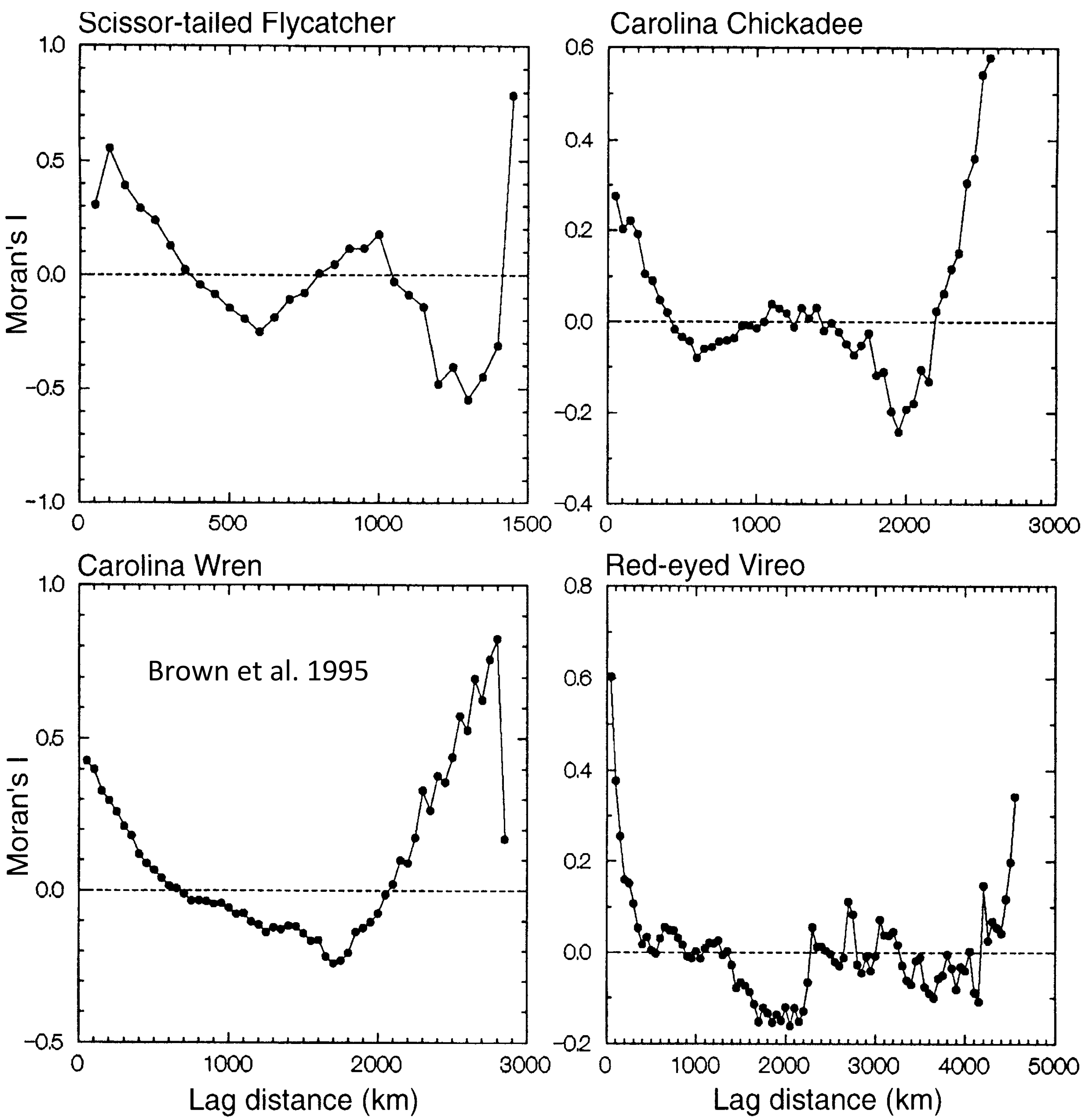


Spatial pattern vs. correlogram





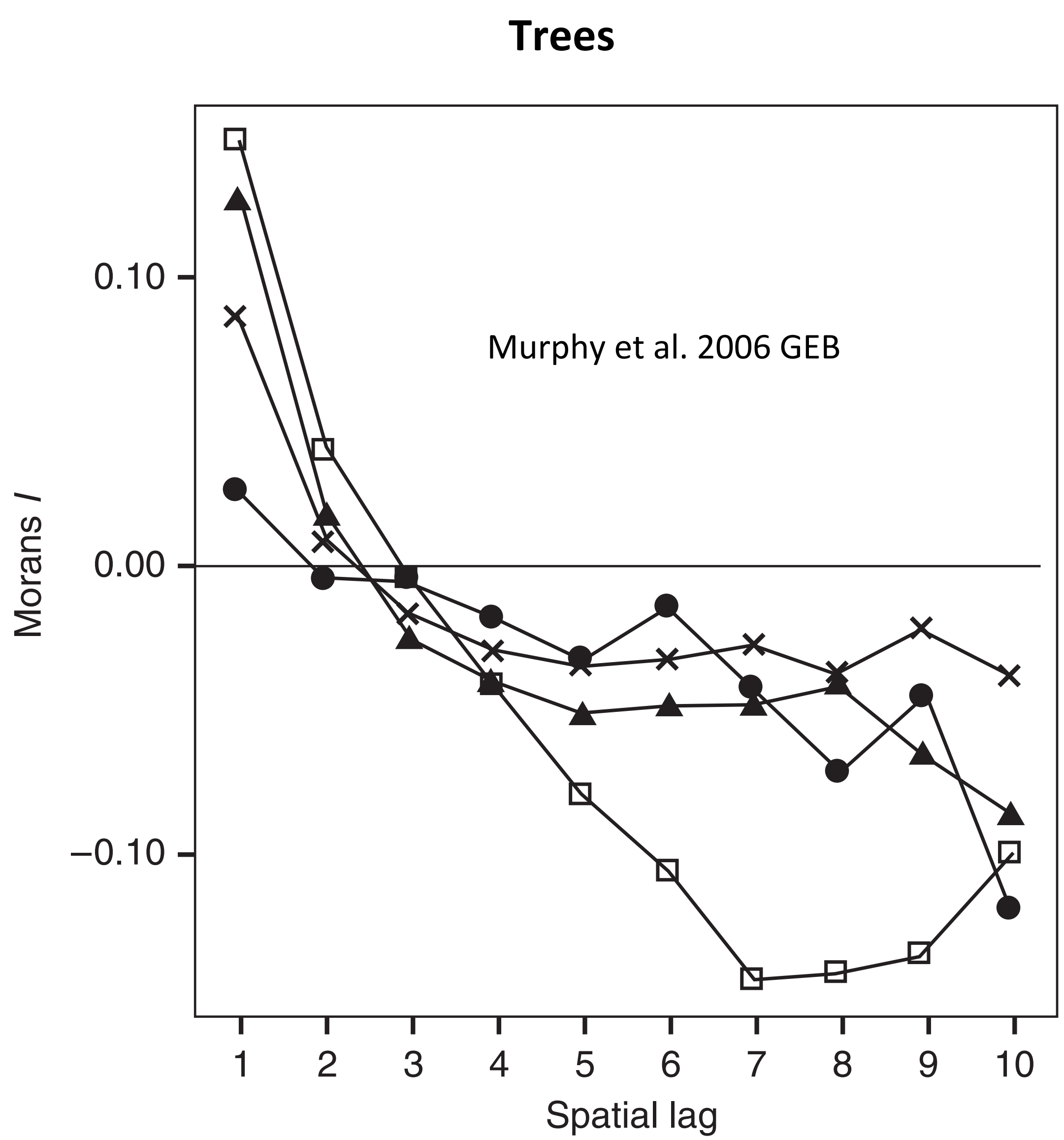
Spatial pattern vs. correlogram



Spatial autocorrelation of bird abundance across their geographic ranges

What pattern of abundance might explain these correlograms?

Spatial pattern vs. correlogram



Spatial autocorrelation of tree species abundance across their geographic ranges

What pattern of abundance might explain these results?

Interpreting correlograms

- provides visualization of change in space (or time)
- indicates positive and negative autocorrelation
- Restrictions:
    - data should be equally spaced
    - residuals should be normally distributed
    - requires at least ~50 data pairs