

Computational Neuroscience: Neural Dynamics

What is this course about?

Embodied cognition vs. Information processing



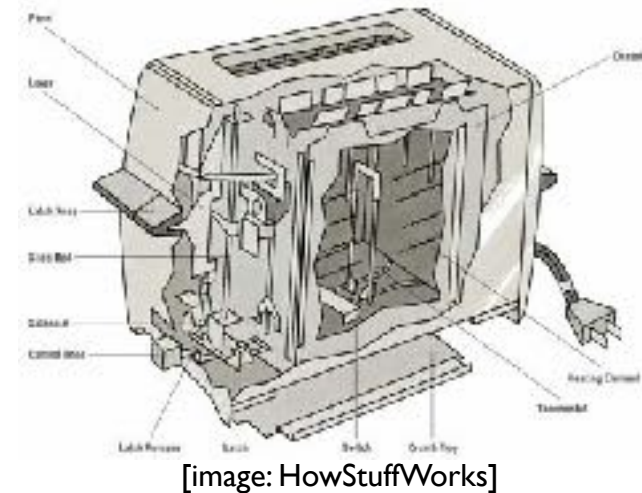
Soccer playing contains a lot of cognition

- see and recognize the ball and the other players, estimate their velocities (perception, scene representation)
- select a visual target, track it, controlling gaze (attention)
- use working memory when players are out of view to predict where you need to look to update (working memory)
- plan and control own motion, initiate and control kick, update movement plans any time (planning)
- get better at playing (learning)
- know goal of the game/rules, how hard the ball is, how fast players are (background knowledge)



Cognition contains a lot of embodiment

- explore scene, recognize screws, while keeping track of spatial arrangement (scene representation, coordinate transforms)
- plan action, find tools, apply them to remembered locations, updated by current pose of toaster (working memory, scene representation)
- manipulating cover, taking it off, recognizing spring, re-attaching it (goal-directed action plan)
- mounting cover back on, generating the correct action sequence (sequence generation)
- get better at this (learning)
- know about cover, screws, hard to turn (background knowledge)



Embodied cognition implies constraints

- active perception for a purpose through which perceptual objects are grounded: sensory autonomy
- cognitive processes continuously updated and continuously linkable to motor processes: stability
- invariance and abstraction must retain this linkage to the sensory and motor surfaces
- cognition is sensitive to behavioral history, environmental context: learning, adaptation
- (cognition arises from neural systems)
- build in “back-ground knowledge” (Searle)

The embodiment hypothesis

- there is no particular boundary

 - up to which, cognition is embodied

 - beyond which cognition loses the properties of embodiment

- => all cognition shares properties of embodied cognition

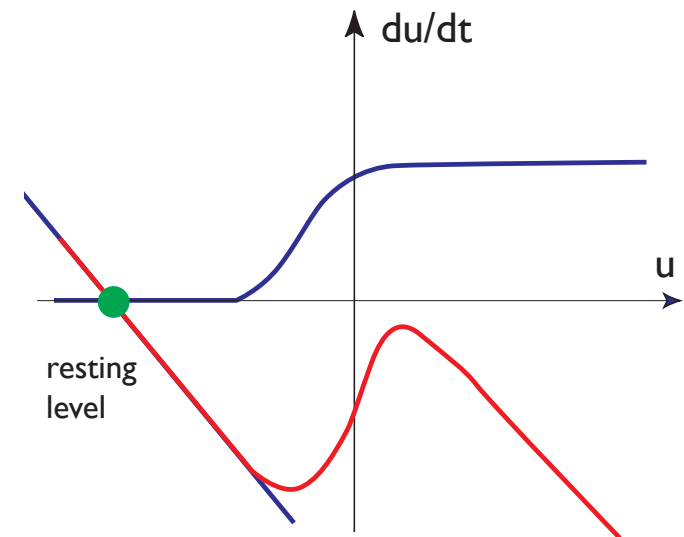
Neural dynamics hypothesis

- because embodied cognition unfolds in time, in interaction among processes, including often interaction (loop) between organisms and their environment
- => embodied cognition requires dynamics...



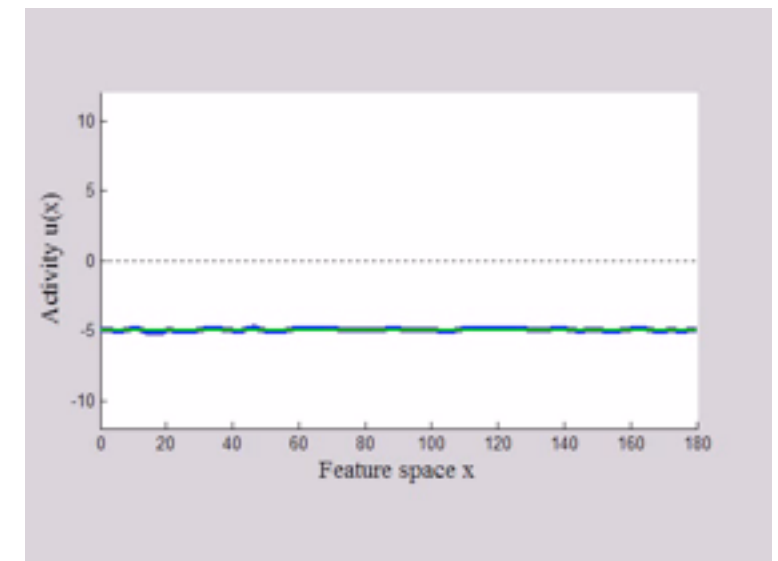
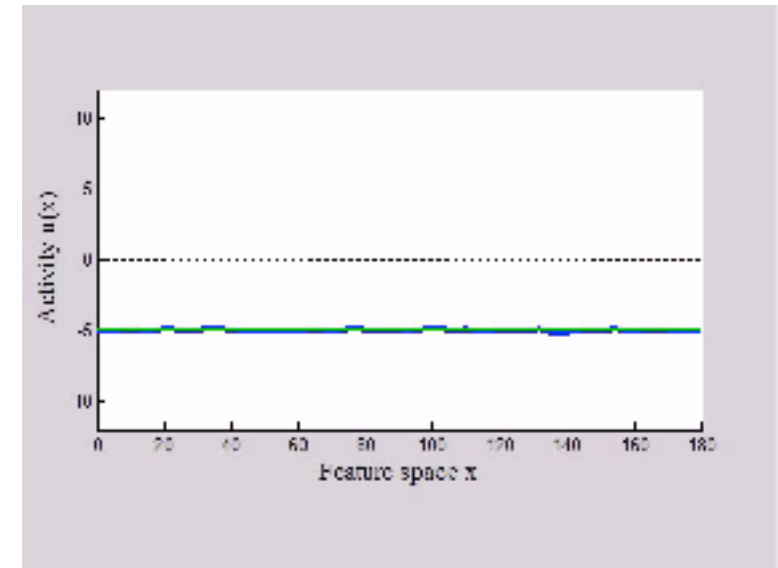
Neural dynamics hypothesis

- neural dynamics is a powerful theoretical language with which embodied and situated cognitive systems can be designed and modeled



Dynamic Field Theory

- the most conceptually consistent branch of this language
- which focusses purely on the functional significance of neuronal activity
- abstracting from the functionally insignificant discrete spatial and temporal structure of neuronal computation



Autonomous cognitive robots

- autonomy: actively generate behavior, initiating, selecting, terminating actions based on the system's own perceptual processes
- autonomous robots are model systems on which ideas of embodied (and general) cognition may be tested, evaluated, and heuristically expanded
- autonomous robots are also artificial embodied cognitive systems of interest in their own right.



What contents do you learn?

■ elements of embodied cognition

- detection decisions

- selection decisions

- working memory for metric information

- memory trace

What contents do you learn?

theoretical concepts

-  behavioral dynamics

-  neural dynamics

-  dynamic neural fields

-  Dynamic Field Theory

What contents do you learn?

neural foundations

-  Braitenberg vehicles

-  rate code

-  population code

What contents do you learn?

- mathematic concepts

- dynamical systems

- stability, attractors, instabilities

- numerical solution of differential equations

What contents do you learn?

■ theory-experiment relationships

- accounting for neural and behavioral data

- accounting for behavior in process models

What contents do you learn?

■ robotic and simulated behavior

- as a heuristic tool

- to demonstrate function from neural dynamics

- to uncover overlooked problems

What skills do you learn?

academic skills

-  read and understand scientific texts

-  write technical texts, using mathematical concepts and illustrations

What skills do you learn?

■ mathematical skills

- conceptual understanding of dynamical systems
- capacity to read differential equations and illustrate them
- compute fixed points and determine stability
- perform “mental simulation” of differential equations
- write and run numerical simulators

What skills do you learn?

■ interdisciplinary skills

- handle concepts from a different discipline
- handle things that you don't understand
- sharpen sense of what you understand and what not