

# Sampling Strategies for Static Powergrid Models

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Abstract: Machine learning and computational intelligence technologies gain more and more popularity as possible solution for issues related to the power grid. One of these issues, the power flow calculation, is an iterative method to compute the voltage magnitudes of the power grid's buses from power values. Machine learning and, especially, artificial neural networks were successfully used as surrogates for the power flow calculation. Artificial neural networks highly rely on the quality and size of the training data, but this aspect of the process is apparently often neglected in the works we found. However, since the availability of high quality historical data for power grids is limited, we propose the Correlation Sampling algorithm. We show that this approach is able to cover a larger area of the sampling space compared to different random sampling algorithms from the literature and a copula-based approach, while at the same time inter-dependencies of the inputs are taken into account, which, from the other algorithms, only the copula-based approach does.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The knowledge about the current state of the power grid is usually limited to information about the power generation or consumption of the grids' participants, either through prognosis or by estimations via default load profiles. However, a stable grid operation requires a certain frequency level (50 Hz in Europe) and certain voltage levels. Since only the power values are known, voltage information needs to be calculated, which is done with Power Flow (PF) analysis (Powell, 2004). The PF analysis is performed many times during the operation of power grid,s and the results can be used, e. g., for market analysis or short-term operational planning.

Since the PF analysis often requires performing matrix inversion, a task with a high computational burden, there are many approaches to reduce this computation time. Besides improvements for the traditional methods, the advancement and application of Machine Learning (ML) models for energy systems have also increased in the past two decades. Although the number of papers that solely focus on PF is rather small (Hasan et al., 2020), there are many works about the closely related optimal PF and probabilistic PF, which are specific use cases for PF. Artificial

neural networks are used with great performance for various PF-related problems. However, artificial neural networks require a large amount of data, especially when several hidden layers are used.

In our previous works in (Balduin et al., 2019; Balduin et al., 2020), we built a deep neural network to avoid the costly PF for a low voltage power grid model. One issue we identified concerns the availability of power system data that can be used for training. Therefore, we decided to take a deeper look at the available data sets and sampling algorithms in the literature.

The contribution of this paper is two-fold. First, we are pointing out the challenges and pitfalls of retrieving training data for a power grid simulation model and how different approaches in the literature handled this. Second, we present the correlation-based approach that we built to overcome some of those issues.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. In section 2 we present the results of our investigation and discuss relevant literature. The simulation model is described in section 3, section 4 provides some of the basics of sampling strategies, and in section 5 we discuss the challenges of applying sampling strategies to power grid models. In section 6, we present our *Correlation Sampling* approach, which we compare and discuss in section 7. We conclude our paper in section 8.

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## 2 RELATED WORK

The Open Power System Data platform (Wiese et al., 2019) provides a hub for different data sets that can be used for electricity system modeling. In their work, the authors criticize that the quality and accessibility of publicly available data sets is often inadequate, require different files to download, have poor documentation, or are erroneous. This is different for the data sets provided or linked on the Open Power System Data platform; however most concern power generation. The available load data sets are highly aggregated hourly or monthly time series or small-scale household data sets. Another good overview of data sets, especially for distribution grids, can be found in the wiki of the openmod initiative<sup>1</sup>. The Simbench project (Spalthoff et al., 2019) provides a large data set, ranging over all German voltage-levels, containing time series for loads and generation. Finally, there are the IEEE test cases, which mainly focus on North-American-style systems.

Besides using publicly available datasets some works propose methodologies to create synthetic datasets. (Hülk et al., 2017) used annual consumption data to generate a synthetic data set of the German energy system. This was extended by (Amme et al., 2018) with a focus on the medium-voltage grid level. Likewise, in the research project SmartNord (Blank et al., 2015), a methodology was proposed to generate synthetic household loads that, once aggregated, follow the German default load profile H0, which grid operators use.

When neither of the above mentioned data sets fit or the data set is not large enough, sampling may be the solution. While this originates in the field of probabilistic PF, where inputs of the PF calculation are modeled as random variables (Chen et al., 2008), sampling is used in other PF-related fields as well. (Cai et al., 2013) use polynomial normal transformation together with Latin Hypercube sampling to build probability distribution models for probabilistic PF. Their models were able to handle correlated inputs and achieved better results on the IEEE 14-bus and 118-bus systems compared to a Simple Random Sampling (SRS) approach. Also in the field of probabilistic PF, (Huang et al., 2020) sampled with Latin Hypercube sampling as well but used D-vine copulas to model the inter-dependencies of wind speed between four wind farms. They evaluated the approach on a modified IEEE 33-bus system against SRS.

(Lei et al., 2020) used a Monte-Carlo simulation

<sup>1</sup>[https://wiki.openmod-initiative.org/wiki/Distribution\\_network\\_datasets](https://wiki.openmod-initiative.org/wiki/Distribution_network_datasets), retrieved on 07 Apr. 2022

approach combined with an interior point algorithm to obtain feasible samples for optimal PF. They also did a sample pre-classification to group samples that share the same active constraints. The test cases were carried out on the IEEE 39, 57, and 118-bus systems as well as on a Polish 2383-bus system. Some works, especially in the field of optimal PF simply use the base load values provided with most power grid models, e. g., the works in (Guha et al., 2019) and (Pan et al., 2019) use 10% and (Zamzam and Baker, 2020) even 70% deviation of the base load, although they, at least, did not sample from a uniform distribution.

In (Thayer and Overbye, 2020), the authors sampled a variation of the overall consumption and individual scaling factors for each load on the IEEE 14-bus system. Afterwards, loads are summed up and linearly scaled to match the overall consumption. Their use case was voltage control based on deep reinforcement learning. Quite similar is the work of (Diao et al., 2019). However, the authors used the base load of the IEEE 14-bus system and created a load fluctuation between 80 % and 120 % of the base load values.

From this literature research we conclude that there are a couple of data sets available as well as several ways to generate synthetic data sets. Unfortunately, those data sets comprise not more than one year of data. Furthermore, we found different approaches to directly sample the power grid model, predominantly one of the IEEE test cases, from different research fields. Some of the works we have discussed consider actual time series of, e. g., wind farms for generation, others simply used the base load for sampling. The resulting sampling data has a high chance to have completely different distributions than realistic (or synthetic) data, which can affect the quality of a prediction model. To this end, we propose a methodology that takes into account realistic time series and their inter-dependencies while at the same time preserve the flexibility of the sampling procedure.

## 3 SIMULATION MODEL

We used the Python library *pandapower* (Turner et al., 2018), which allows to model arbitrary power grid topologies and is able to perform a power flow calculation for that topology given a set of input data for all relevant nodes. To setup the simulation, a grid model is instantiated and a data set is loaded. We used a power grid from the Simbench project (1-LV-rural3--0-sw), because they have data sets included that are explicitly tailored for the grid topology. The simulation loop consists of assigning input

values (active and reactive power) from the data set to the corresponding nodes of the power grid, performing the power flow calculation, and then saving the results from the buses: voltage magnitude per unit (although not used for this paper), active, and reactive power. This process is repeated until all entries of the data set are simulated.

## 4 SAMPLING STRATEGIES

Since the model described above is a computer-based simulation model, the design of experiments literature would recommend space-filling designs (Dean and Voss, 1999). Such designs aim to spread the sample points for each input evenly in the sample space. This can be achieved with Monte Carlo Sampling (sometimes also called Simple Random Sampling (SRS)), i. e., using the uniform distribution independently for each input. Given that enough samples were drawn, this approach creates nearly orthogonal sampling designs i. e., the inputs are uncorrelated.

In general, orthogonality and uniformly distributed inputs are desired properties of a sampling design since they can improve the validity of the prediction model created from that design. However, there are cases where some of the inputs in the original system-under-investigation are correlated and the power grid is a prime example for this. To build a model that captures this behavior, the sample distributions for those inputs need to be correlated as well. One solution is to use Copulas, which were first proposed by (Sklar, 1959). Copulas can handle marginal distributions of random variables and dependencies separately. That is why an increasing number of publications that have to deal with dependencies in power system modeling use Copulas.

## 5 CHALLENGES OF POWER GRID SAMPLING

The power grid is a complex system, i. e., the more basic approaches from the design of experiments literature for sampling and analysis cannot be applied to the power grid model without modifications. The complex inter-dependencies between the parts of the power grid make it hard to guarantee properties like orthogonality or uniformly distributed marginal distributions of the inputs without risking a decrease of the quality of the prediction model. Not considering specific correlations could even lead to ill-conditioned states of the power grid, where the PF calculation

fails.

(Gerster et al., 2021) investigated sampling strategies for the determination of flexibility potentials at vertical system interconnections. One of their major conclusions concerns the application of uniform sampling for each of the inputs. With an increasing number of inputs, the samples suffer more and more from the convolution problem (Bremer and Lehnhoff, 2018), i. e., at the vertical system interconnection point the actually covered space on the P-Q plane gets smaller the more inputs are involved.

Another challenge concerns the definition of the sample space of the inputs. While for most inputs, zero can be considered as minimum value, the maximum is not clearly defined. The base value attached to the publicly available power grid models and test cases may serve as reference value. However, it is not a maximum value since calculating the PF using base loads usually results in a healthy or, depending on the test case, slightly violated system state. It is also not an average value, which can be seen at the distributions of realistic load or generation profiles.

The advantage of using the base load as reference and creating samples around those values with a specific deviation is that just the grid model itself without any time series data is required. This makes it convenient if only the general capabilities of an ML model should be explored. However, unless the ML model is at least evaluated on realistic data, the model may only be a showcase for a certain ML algorithm on an environment that happens to be a power grid model. It does not necessarily imply that this model still performs well if realistic data is used.

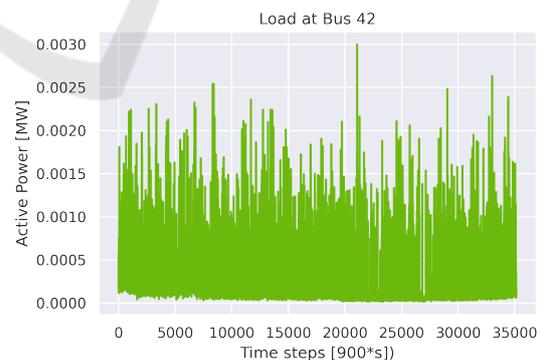


Figure 1: Active power time series of the load connected to bus 42 (randomly selected) over one year of simulated time. Taken from the Simbench grid 1-LV-rural3--0-sw.

Figure 1 illustrates the active power of a randomly selected household of the power grid described in section 3. The maximum peak power is 3 kW, which is the nominal power of the corresponding load in the grid model. In Figure 2 we plotted the histogram of

this time series. Now it becomes obvious that most of the data is between 0.0 and 0.5 kW. Actually, the mean value is  $\approx 0.2657$ , the standard deviation  $\approx 0.2781$ , and the median is  $\approx 0.1835$ . Sampling around the base load of 3 kW would result in samples that, although valid, do not represent the original data and, consequently, which do not contain the necessary information for a ML model that should make predictions based on realistic input data.

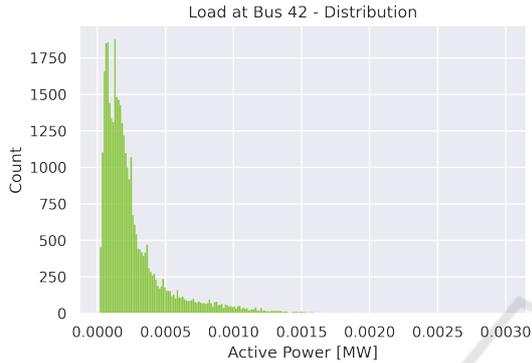


Figure 2: Histogram of the same active power time series as in Figure 1.

Next, we simulated the power grid for one year of simulated time. We followed (Gerster et al., 2021) and plotted active against reactive power at the slack bus to get an estimate of the distribution of all of the simulation data and to be able to detect possible convolution problems. This can be seen in Figure 3.

Now, we wanted to evaluate how well different sampling algorithms from the literature perform for this data set. We started with two variants of the SRS method; the first samples between 0 and the base load (Equation 1) and the second samples around the base load with a certain  $\delta$  (Equation 2).

$$\mathbf{p}^* \sim \text{Uniform}[0, \mathbf{p}_b] \quad (1)$$

$$\mathbf{p}^* \sim \text{Uniform}[(1 - \delta) \cdot \mathbf{p}_b, (1 + \delta) \cdot \mathbf{p}_b] \quad (2)$$

Here,  $\mathbf{p}_b$  is the vector of base loads in the grid,  $\delta$  is the deviation from the base load, and  $\mathbf{p}^*$  is the vector of sampled power values. We used this formulas to generate 5000 samples for active and reactive power consumption as well as active power generation (the generators of the grid in-use had reactive power set to zero) with a  $\delta$  of 0.5 in the second case. Afterwards, we calculated the PF for all samples to obtain the active and reactive power for the slack bus, just like above. The results can be seen in Figure 3. While all of the samples were feasible (i. e., the PF converged), we see that those distributions did not match at all.

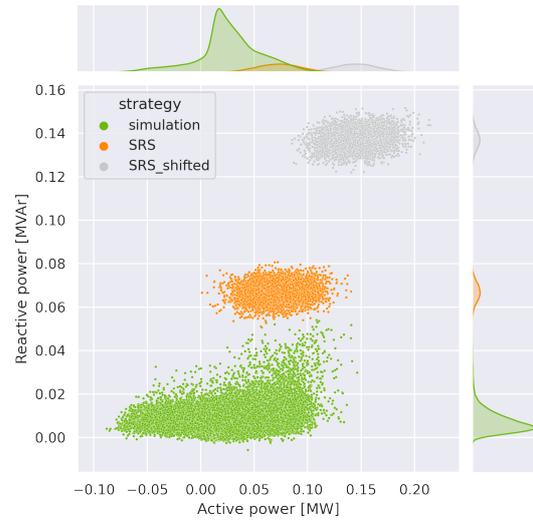


Figure 3: Plot of the  $P$ - $Q$  plane at the slack bus. The lower dot cloud represents the results from original data sets. The middle dot cloud represents the results from the first SRS variant (sampling between zero and the base load) and the upper dot cloud the results from the second SRS variant (sampling around the base load).

A more advanced sampling strategy was used by (Thayer and Overbye, 2020). First, the authors used Equation 1 to sample active power on the interval  $[0.0, 1.0)$ . Next, they varied the total active power loading  $P'$  uniformly between 60 % and 140% of the total active power loading  $\bar{P}$  calculated from the base load. Each of the loads is scaled linearly with the factor  $P'/\bar{P}^*$  where  $\bar{P}^*$  is the total active power calculated from the samples  $\mathbf{p}^*$ . For reactive power  $Q$ , a power factor  $pf$  for each load is drawn uniformly on the interval  $[0.8, 1.0)$  and  $Q$  is calculated with

$$Q = P \cdot \tan(\arccos(pf)) \cdot L, L \in \{-1, 1\}. \quad (3)$$

The factor  $L$  is a random variable with a chance of 10% to be -1 and, therefore, to flip the sign of  $Q$ . Like before, we created 5000 samples and calculated the PF results. The  $P$ - $Q$  plot is shown in Figure 4. While a much larger part of the sampling space is covered, the areas of the original data and the sample data were completely different.

Finally, we created a Gaussian copula to perform the same task. We used the python package *copulas*<sup>2</sup>, which provides appropriate functions. The result is shown in Figure 4. The copula samples cover most of the space that is covered by the original data as well.

We performed this experiment with different grid models and different time series and got similar results. Our conclusion is that SRS-based approaches

<sup>2</sup><https://sdv.dev/>, retrieved on 14 Apr. 2022

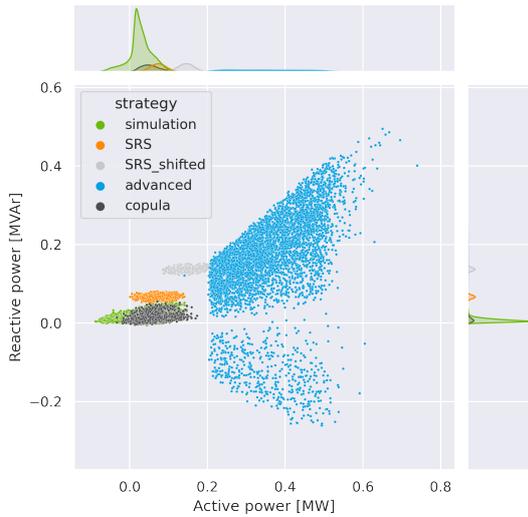


Figure 4: The results of the advanced and the copula-based sampling were added to the plot. The darker dot cloud on top of the dot cloud of original data shows that copulas were able to reproduce the behavior of the original data.

are fine when no realistic data sets are available or the model prediction model will not be used with realistic data sets. In any other case, copulas allow to create samples that represent the realistic data set.

However, there is one additional concern related to our specific use case. The copula samples might match the realistic data too well. One of the desired properties for sampling designs is that the sample points are *evenly spread* over the whole sample space. Although we don't know the real boundaries of the sampling space, the SRS-based approaches cover valid areas of the sampling space that are not covered by the copula samples. We address this shortcoming with our sampling algorithm.

## 6 CORRELATION SAMPLING

The correlation sampling approach consists of two parts. In the first part, the correlations between the inputs are calculated and, in the second part, those correlations are used to create a sampling design.

### 6.1 Correlations

Naturally, the different entities that are connected to the power grid have inter-dependencies. Households follow similar patterns although there are different types of profiles. Photovoltaic modules are heavily dependent on the time of the day and weather conditions like cloudiness and solar radiation, which results in high correlations at spatially close positioned mod-

ules. Correlation can also be found between commercial facilities like different super markets or between several heating devices, which are dependent on temperature conditions.

Utilizing those inter-dependencies is also done in (Huang et al., 2020) to sample wind power plants for probabilistic PF and in (Blank, 2015) to assess the reliability of coalitions for the provision of ancillary services. Those inter-dependencies can also be found in the time series data sets for power grids, at least when the data set aims to be realistic. Therefore, we decided to use correlations, or, more specific partial correlations, to generate samples. The widely used correlation coefficient by Pearson (Benesty et al., 2009) is defined as

$$\mathbf{r}_{XY} = \frac{\text{cov}(X, Y)}{\sigma_X \sigma_Y} \quad (4)$$

with  $X, Y$  being random variables,  $\sigma_X, \sigma_Y$  the standard deviation of  $X$  and  $Y$  and  $\text{cov}$  is the covariance. When more than two random variables are involved, other variables  $\mathbf{Z} = (Z_1, \dots, Z_n)$  may have correlation to  $X$  and  $Y$  as well. Especially,  $Z_i$  might be related to both  $X$  and  $Y$ . To get the unbiased correlation between  $X$  and  $Y$ , the partial correlation can be calculated with

$$\mathbf{r}_{XY|Z_i} = \frac{\mathbf{r}_{XY} - \mathbf{r}_{XZ_i} \cdot \mathbf{r}_{YZ_i}}{\sqrt{1 - \mathbf{r}_{XZ_i}^2} \cdot \sqrt{1 - \mathbf{r}_{YZ_i}^2}} \quad (5)$$

This can be described as two linear regression problems, the first between  $Z_i$  and  $X$  and the second between  $Z_i$  and  $Y$  (Whittaker, 2009). Since the residuals of those linear regressions are uncorrelated to  $Z_i$ , the sample correlation can be calculated to obtain the partial correlation between  $X$  and  $Y$ .

We will illustrate this using the data set from the Simbench grid that was already used in the previous chapter. The Partial Correlation Matrix (PCM)  $C$  between all of the inputs for the power grid over the entire data set, displayed as heat map, can be seen in Figure 5.

Although this PCM is sufficient for our sampling algorithm, we still used the whole data set to calculate the correlations. To overcome this, we selected a subset of the data set containing 2500 samples<sup>3</sup> and calculated the PCM as  $C'$  again. This heat map can be seen in Figure 6.

If you take a close look at both heat maps, you probably recognize similar "patterns". In fact, those PCMs are quite similar with a correlation factor of  $\mathbf{r}_{CC'} = 0.98$ , with duplicates (the lower left triangle of the matrix) included. The accumulated point-wise

<sup>3</sup>This number is arbitrarily chosen and may only fit the current use case.

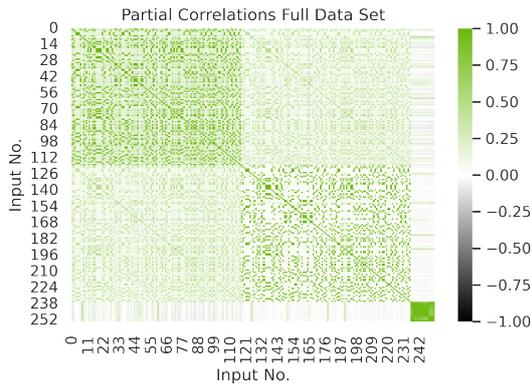


Figure 5: Heat map to illustrate the partial correlations between the inputs of data set provided by the Simbench power grid.

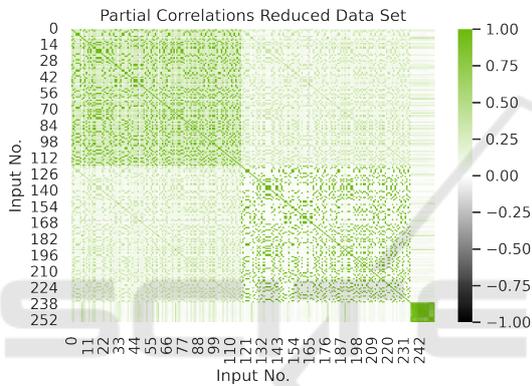


Figure 6: In contrast to Figure 5, the correlations are calculated from a small subset of the data.

difference  $C - C'$  sums up to  $-391.6$  with a mean of  $-0.006$ , which indicates that the reduced PCM slightly over-estimates positive correlations. With a standard deviation of  $0.055$ , we concluded that the reduced PCM is similar enough<sup>4</sup>.

## 6.2 Sampling

The next step concerned how to integrate the PCM  $C'$  into the sampling procedure. Most of the partial correlations are lower than  $0.5$  but there is another cluster between  $\approx 0.85$  and  $1.0$ . To not suppress the randomness of the sampling, we defined a threshold  $t$  of  $0.85$  and ignored all correlations that were lower with their absolute value. Each sample  $\mathbf{s}$  is initially generated with the Dirichlet distribution, which was used by (Gerster et al., 2021) with good results. For each sample  $\mathbf{s}_i$  in  $\mathbf{s}$ , all subsequent entries  $\mathbf{s}_j$  with  $i < j$ , are adapted depending on their partial correlation  $C_{ij}^j$ :

<sup>4</sup>This may depend on the data sets in-use. For our use case, the similarity was sufficient

$$\mathbf{s}_j = \begin{cases} \mathbf{s}_j, & |C_{ij}| < t \\ \mathbf{s}_i + \mathbf{s}_j \cdot (1 - C_{ij}), & C_{ij} > 0 \\ 1 - \mathbf{s}_i + \mathbf{s}_j \cdot (1 + C_{ij}), & C_{ij} < 0 \end{cases} \quad (6)$$

The general idea is to pull the value of sample  $\mathbf{s}_j$  towards the value of sample  $\mathbf{s}_i$  if they're highly correlated. In Equation 6, cases two and three account for positive and negative correlation respectively.

We also applied some additional optimizations to better suit the current use case. First of all, we multiplied  $\mathbf{s}_j$  with a normal distributed noise factor of  $10\%$  in cases where the correlation exceeds the threshold to relax the linear dependency towards  $\mathbf{s}_i$ . Second, to overcome some of the issues we've seen at the other sampling approaches, we calculated the sum of all values of this sample  $\mathbf{s}$  and compared it to an interval  $[s_{\min}, s_{\max}]$ . When  $\mathbf{s}$  is not in  $[s_{\min}, s_{\max}]$ ,  $\mathbf{s}$  is discarded and sampled again.

The values  $s_{\min}$  and  $s_{\max}$  are derived from the data set again, by normalizing each time series individually, then building the sum for each time step, and finally, assigning the minimum value to  $s_{\min}$  and the maximum value to  $s_{\max}$ . However, since we used a reduced data set and, therefore, the interval  $[s_{\min}, s_{\max}]$  may be too small, we extended it by  $20\%$  in each direction.

## 7 EVALUATION

### 7.1 Results

We used the described methodology to create samples like we did for the other sampling strategies. The  $P-Q$  plot at the slack bus is shown in Figure 7. It can be seen that the correlation samples not only cover the space of the real data but are also located in the regions largely around the real data. This even includes most of the space covered by the other sampling strategies.

The correlation between the copula-sampled PCM and the original full-data PCM is  $\approx 0.98$ , which matches the correlation of the PCM of the reduced data set. For the correlation-sampled PCM, the is  $\approx 0.864$ , which is less than the reduced data set but still very high. However, this difference may be one of the reasons why a larger area is covered.

We repeated this comparison with another power grid model, the CIGRE low voltage benchmark grid, in combination with synthetic time series data from Smart Nord, since we used this model in our previous works already. The results are shown in Figure 8 and this resembles all the issues and conclusions we iden-

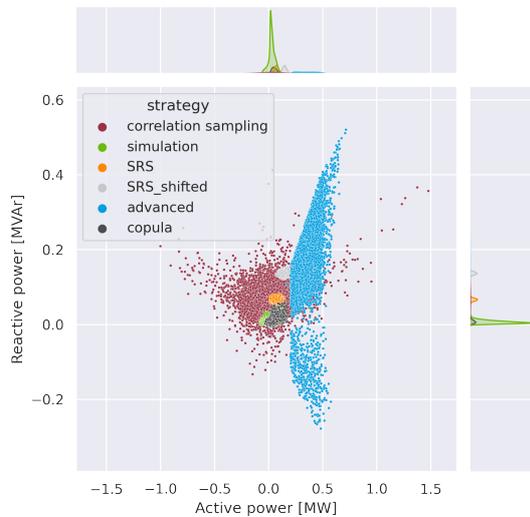


Figure 7: The results of the correlation samples are added to the  $P$ - $Q$  plot. A large area around the original data is covered, which includes even the areas of most of the other sampling algorithms.

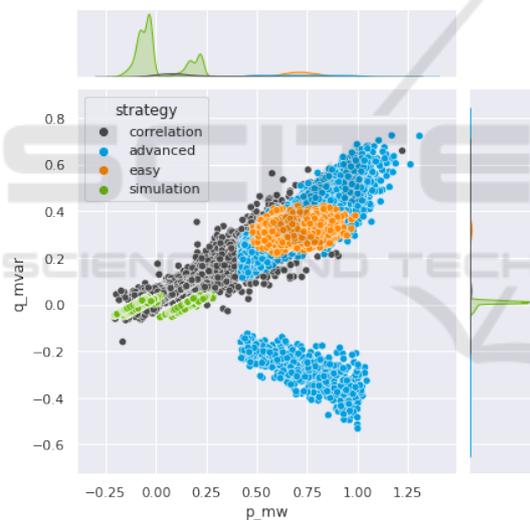


Figure 8: The  $P$ - $Q$  plot with different sampling algorithms for the CIGRE low voltage grid.

tified for the Simbench grid, although the data sets are completely independent of each other.

## 7.2 Discussion

The correlation sampling approach is, in its current state, a subject of experimentation. There are several parameters, like the correlation threshold or the number of samples that are used to calculate the partial correlations, which were determined experimentally and not for a special mathematical reason. There might be parameters that even lead to better results.

Furthermore, only linear correlations are considered but in the data sets might be nonlinear correlations as well, which could be utilized to get more accurate samples.

On the other side, correlation sampling solved the issue we had with other sampling strategies. It covers the areas of the original data in the output space and, at the same, the regions beyond as well. In theory, this improves a prediction model's capabilities to generalize when some parameters in the grid configuration have changed. However, this is beyond the scope of this paper.

## 8 CONCLUSION

In this paper, we presented a small literature research about available data sets for power system modeling, where to find them, and discussed some of the issues some of those data sets have. We also reviewed algorithms from the literature that were used to sample data sets for power grid simulation models and pointed out advantages and disadvantages.

The main issue of those strategies that neglect inter-dependencies is that created samples cover entirely different areas of the output space considering the  $P$ - $Q$  plane at the grid interconnection point. A prediction model trained with those samples will most probably fail when more realistic type of data will be used as prediction input. On the other side, copulas resemble the original data very well and we recommend them as first choice whenever a prediction model should be used in a context with realistic data.

Furthermore, we presented our *Correlation Sampling* approach that aims to not only cover the "realistic" areas of the output space by taking inter-dependencies between the inputs into account. But also to cover the regions beyond to improve the generalization capabilities of the model.

Although those first results looks promising, we see a lot of potential for improvements of the algorithm. Additionally, the data set created with correlation sampling still needs to be used to build a surrogate model, which is the primary purpose we developed that algorithm. We will present the results from those experiments in future work.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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