

# **Complex Dynamics as Foundation of Relativistic Spacetime**

Ervin Goldfain

## Abstract

We explore the idea that Minkowski spacetime and the principle of locality reflect the asymptotic properties of *self-organized criticality* (SOC). Both properties arise from demanding that the scaling behavior of space and time coordinates follows the power-law distribution of Gaussian random walks.

**Key words:** complex dynamics, self-organized criticality, minimal fractal manifold, Minkowski spacetime, the principle of locality, Gaussian random walks.

## **1. Introduction**

SOC can be traced back to a theory developed in the mid-1980's aimed to explain how *complex nonlinear systems* with extended degrees of freedom can reproduce the power-law behavior of certain physical observables [1-2]. Nowadays, SOC is understood as a generic model for self-sustained criticality in large-scale systems outside equilibrium. The trademark signature of SOC is two-fold:

- a) it occurs in global ensembles of multiple interacting components,
- b) it is characterized by a power-law distribution of “avalanche” sizes.

SOC is a powerful analytical tool whose applications extend over several fields dealing with *nonlinear dissipative systems*, ranging from astrophysics, natural hazards, magnetospheric physics, complex networks, biophysics and social sciences.

Elaborating from the SOC framework, the goal of our brief report is to confirm that,

- 1) space and time coordinates are on *equal footing*, with no physical distinction between  $x_i$ ,  $i=1,2,3$  and  $x_0 = t$  in natural units ( $c=1$ ).
- 2) the *principle of locality* emerges as asymptotic case of the *finite-size scaling ansatz* (FSS) introduced in the next paragraph.

## **2. The FSS ansatz and its asymptotic connection to spacetime**

The scaling behavior of avalanches can be derived from the statistical attributes of several observables of interest [1-2] : e.g., the size  $s$  of the avalanche, the area  $a$  of the avalanche, the avalanche duration  $t$  and the linear size of the avalanche  $r$ . The probability distribution associated with these observables obeys the FSS ansatz

$$P(\eta, L_\eta) \sim \eta^{-\tau_\eta} \Phi\left(\frac{\eta}{\eta_c}\right) \text{ for } \eta \gg 1, L_\eta \gg 1 \quad (1)$$

$$\eta_c(L_\eta) \sim L_\eta^{D_\eta} \text{ for } L_\eta \gg 1$$

in which

$$\eta = (s, a, t, r) \quad (2)$$

Here  $L_\eta$  denotes the uppermost limit of  $\eta$ , whose cutoff value is set by  $\eta_c$ . The parameters  $\tau_\eta$  and  $D_\eta$  represent the avalanche-size exponent and avalanche dimension, respectively, and their specific values fix the *universality* class of the SOC process described by (1).

Proceeding along these lines, we find it reasonable to conjecture that the conventional space and time coordinates may be assigned a statistical meaning outside the effective framework of Quantum Field Theory and General Relativity. In particular, inspired by the

concept of minimal fractal manifold (MFM) [6], both space and time coordinates are interpreted as intrinsically *random variables*, echoing the behavior of parameters  $s$  and  $t$  at energies near or exceeding the Fermi scale. On this basis, we write

$$x = (x_\mu), \quad \mu = 0, 1, 2, 3 \quad (3)$$

$$\varepsilon = 4 - D = \frac{\Delta x}{x} \ll 1 \quad (4)$$

in which  $D$  represents the dimensionality of ordinary 3+1 spacetime and  $\Delta x$  is the resolution of coordinate measurements. The most natural identification of coordinates with the avalanche size is provided by

$$s \rightarrow X = \frac{x}{\Delta x} = \varepsilon^{-1} \gg 1 \quad (5)$$

On account of (3) – (5), (1) turns into

$$P(X, L) = X^{-\tau_x} \Phi\left(\frac{X}{X_c}\right), \quad X \gg 1, \quad L \gg 1 \quad (6a)$$

$$X_c = L^{D_x}, \quad L \gg 1 \quad (6b)$$

The contribution of the cutoff function  $\Phi$  becomes negligible when  $X$  falls far below its cutoff value, i.e.

$$\Phi\left(\frac{X}{X_c}\right) = \text{const.}, \quad X \ll X_c \quad (7)$$

The key assumption of this work is that the limit (7) of the power-law (6) reproduces the probability distribution of *Gaussian random walks* (GRW). The rationale behind this assumption lies on two premises:

a) GRW is statistically self-similar, its distribution is stationary and isotropic [5]. The latter property is consistent with space-reflection and time-inversion symmetries of classical and quantum dynamics.

b) the GRW is a common denominator of basic stochastic processes, including Brownian motion, diffusion and quantum mechanical paths [5].

It is known that the dimension of the GRW is equal to  $D_{RW} = 2$  [3, 5]. It follows that, on a minimal fractal manifold defined by a scale-dependent deviation  $\varepsilon = 4 - D$ , the value of the avalanche size exponent entering (6a) is expected to be

$$\tau_x = D_{RW} \pm \varepsilon \quad (8)$$

In the limit  $L \rightarrow \infty$ , the conditional probability of measuring  $X'$  for a given  $X$  assumes the form [2]

$$P_{X',X}(X', X) \sim \delta(X' - X^{\gamma_{X',X}}) \quad (9)$$

where

$$\gamma_{X',X} = \frac{\tau_x - 1}{\tau_{x'} - 1} \quad (10)$$

It is apparent from (5), (6a) and (8) that the conventional limit of smooth four-dimensional spacetime ( $\varepsilon = 0$ ) implies that the scaling behavior of space and time is *identical*. It also implies that (10) is equal to one and that (9) is no longer sensitive to the

continuous variation of  $\varepsilon$  with the energy scale. As a result, the measurement of  $X'$  is independent of the measurement of  $X$ , a statement reflecting the *principle of locality* of relativistic physics [4].

In closing, we point out that our findings are consistent with the body of ideas discussed in [7-11]. In the same context, we acknowledge here a number of earlier contributions connecting the SOC framework with spacetime geometry, Quantum Field Theory and the Standard Model of particle physics [12-15].

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