

Chaotic Dynamics and Diffusion in a Piecewise Linear Equation

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Genetic interactions are often modeled by logical networks in which time is discrete and all gene activity states update simultaneously. However, there is no synchronizing clock in organisms. An alternative model assumes that the logical network is preserved and plays a key role in driving the dynamics in piecewise nonlinear differential equations. We examine dynamics in a particular 4 dimensional equation of this class. In the equation two of the variables form a negative feedback loop that drives a second negative feedback loop. By modifying the original equations by eliminating exponential decay, we generate a modified system that is amenable to detailed analysis. In the modified system, we can determine in detail the Poincaré (return) map on a cross section to the flow. By analyzing the eigenvalues of the map for the different trajectories, we are able to show that except for a set of measure 0, the flow must necessarily have an eigenvalue greater than 1 and hence there is sensitive dependence to initial conditions. Further, there is an irregular oscillation whose amplitude is described by a diffusive process that is well-modeled by the Irwin-Hall distribution. There are a large class of other piecewise linear nonlinear networks that might be analyzed using similar methods. The analysis gives insight into possible origins of chaotic dynamics in periodically forced dynamical systems.

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