
Virgo: Scalable Unsupervised Classification of Cosmological Shock Waves

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Abstract

Cosmological shock waves are essential to understanding the formation of cosmological structures. To study them, scientists run computationally expensive high-resolution 3D hydrodynamic simulations. Interpreting the simulation results is challenging because the resulting data sets are enormous, and the shock wave surfaces are hard to separate and classify due to their complex morphologies and multiple shock fronts intersecting. We introduce a novel pipeline, VIRGO, combining physical motivation, scalability, and probabilistic robustness to tackle this unsolved unsupervised classification problem. To this end, we employ kernel principal component analysis with low-rank matrix approximations to denoise data sets of shocked particles and create labeled subsets. We perform supervised classification to recover full data resolution with stochastic variational deep kernel learning. We evaluate on three state-of-the-art data sets with varying complexity and achieve good results. The proposed pipeline runs automatically, has few hyperparameters, and performs well on all tested data sets. Our results are promising for large-scale applications, and we highlight now enabled future scientific work.

1 Introduction

Cosmological structures form by gravitationally accreting mass from their surroundings [e.g. 3, 44, 29]. As galaxies fall into clusters, they dissipate their energy in the form of shock waves in the diffuse gas between them, labeled as the intra-cluster medium (ICM) [e.g. 6, 35, 36, 52, 53, 38, 47]. In these systems, the evolution of shock waves is the primary driver setting the global physical properties [e.g. 41, 48, 49, 20, 54, 46, 10]. These shock waves are defined as discontinuities in density and temperature, propagating through the ICM. They are powerful accelerators of relativistic particles, which we can observe as synchrotron emission sources from merging galaxy clusters [51]. Modeling these cosmological systems with state-of-the-art simulations requires modern supercomputers, as there is large degeneracy in the possible geometry. The produced data sets contain up to $\mathcal{O}(10^{10})$ particles, which we need to interpret to make conclusions about formation scenarios. However, shock wave structures in galaxy clusters form highly complex shapes and surfaces (see Fig. 1), and collisions between them lead to a superposition of different shock waves with overlapping geometries. From first principles, we can not make a simple, prior connection between in-falling substructures and shock wave surfaces. This setup poses a complex unsupervised classification problem for an unknown number of target classes in which we must find, separate, and label coherent shock wave structures in simulated data. To this end, we propose a novel, physically motivated, and fully scalable

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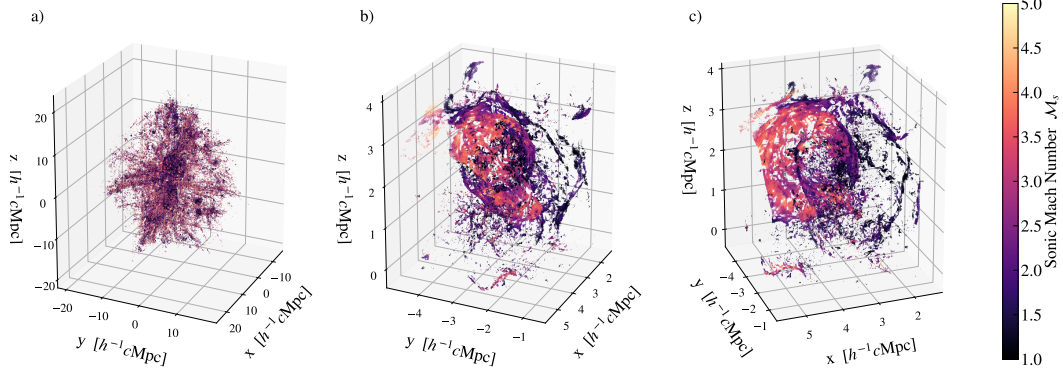


Figure 1: Simulated data set (CLUSTHD₂) containing all particles with a detected shock in the velocity range $\mathcal{M}_s \in [1, 5]$. *a)* Full simulation domain. *b)* Manual selection showing the complex shock structure of multiple ongoing merger shocks. We want to determine all shock surface particles as separate labeled groups and remove non-shock wave particles. *c)* Same as *b)*, but rotated by 45°.

machine learning pipeline to solve the outlined problem. We separate the unsupervised classification task by creating labels for a random subset of each data set and then training a classifier on that subset. For pre-processing, we exploit the non-stationarity of the problem with kernel principal component analysis (kernel PCA) [18, 40] and use Gaussian mixture models (GMM) [1] to pre-clean the data from unwanted non-shock wave particles. For the subset classification, we further use physically motivated kernel functions with kernel PCA, Nyström approximation [9, 37] and employ an agglomerative clustering (friends-of-friends (FoF) [5]) algorithm with an automatically set linking length. Finally, we use the labeled subset to train a stochastic variational deep kernel learning (SV-DKL, DKL) [14, 15, 56, 55] classifier to use our algorithm on the full data sets. For the first time, we can tackle this previously unsolved problem with our described pipeline and guarantee scalability for state-of-the-art and future data sets.

2 Background and Related Work

We utilize FoF and GMM for their flexibility and good scalability to large data sets [24]. The FoF algorithm is commonly used in astrophysics, e.g., for structure identification [5, 7]. We use the for physics applications attractive [22] kernel functions [39], as we can create physically motivated kernel functions with interpretable parameters and consider information like, e.g., symmetry or local density changes. For more flexible kernel functions, the authors of [56] introduced scalable deep kernel learning (DKL) to utilize the adaptive basis functions of a neural network (NN). A deep kernel NN is used as input for a base kernel of a Gaussian process [37] and their parameters are jointly trained. The DKL approach was expanded by [55], introducing stochastic variational deep kernel learning (SV-DKL). Gaussian processes have found applications in astrophysics [42, 50, 26, 23, 19, 25]. The authors of [22] also suggest SV-DKL for large-scale physics simulation interpolation. There have been analytical [43] and deep learning [27, 28] approaches to shock wave and supernovae identification. Clustering algorithms are commonly used in astrophysics [5, 59, 11, 34, 33]. In comparison, SV-DKL is the only approach offering Gaussian process non-parametric and statistical benefits, sufficient scalability and flexibility of applied metrics to solve our problem. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first application of DKL and SV-DKL to an astrophysical task. Previous work only hinted at DKL applications [30]. Furthermore, we are not aware of any preceding work having solved this unsupervised classification problem, in particular not with state-of-the-art resolution data sets.

3 Data Sets

We employ three data sets for the shock surface classification to gauge the flexibility of our pipeline for increasing physical complexity and different scales. All data sets were generated with OPEN-GADGET3[45, 2] (GNU). We name the data sets CLUSTHD (Fig. 1), CLUSTMHD and BOXMHD. The first two are ultra-high-resolution (magneto) hydrodynamics simulations (MHD) of a single

massive galaxy cluster ($\sim 10^9$ particles), and BoxMHD is a high-resolution simulation of a large cosmological volume with many clusters ($\sim 10^{10}$ particles), but at lower resolution². The magnetic fields lead to additional motions perpendicular to the shock propagation and more patchy shock wave surfaces. For BoxMHD, our problem scales from unsupervised classification of an unknown number of target classes from a single cluster to the same for an unknown number of clusters. We reduce the full data set of the simulation to only the parameters relevant for the actual shock surfaces. These are the spatial positions \mathbf{x} , the sonic Mach number \mathcal{M}_s and the shock normal vector $\hat{\mathbf{n}}_s$.

4 VIRGO Model Pipeline

We propose a new pipeline to solve the unsupervised classification of an unknown number of cosmological shock waves in four separate steps:

- 1) For data pre-processing, we remove data points above a conservative Mach threshold ($\mathcal{M}_s \leq 15$) and rescale the data set to a zero mean and unit variance. We only use the particle position \mathbf{x} and shock normal vector $\hat{\mathbf{n}}_s$. Each particle therefore is a 6-dimensional vector $\mathbf{q} = (x_x, x_y, x_z, \hat{n}_{sx}, \hat{n}_{sy}, \hat{n}_{sz})^\top$.
- 2) The raw simulation output is noisy with non-shock wave particles and not centered, as is illustrated in Fig. 1a. We use an RBF kernel with the Nyström approximation on the particle positions \mathbf{x} for kernel PCA. We use GMM in the feature space with expectation maximization to separate the actual cluster of shock waves from non-shock wave particles by density estimation.
- 3) We construct a physically motivated composite kernel k_v by adding two separate composite kernels made up of Matérn- $\frac{5}{2}$ kernels k_M and linear kernels k_L

$$\begin{aligned} k_1(\mathbf{q}, \mathbf{q}') &= k_M(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}') \cdot k_L(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}') \\ k_2(\mathbf{q}, \mathbf{q}') &= k_M(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}') \cdot k_L(\hat{\mathbf{n}}_s, \hat{\mathbf{n}}_s') \\ k_v(\mathbf{q}, \mathbf{q}') &= k_1(\mathbf{q}, \mathbf{q}') + k_2(\mathbf{q}, \mathbf{q}'). \end{aligned}$$

k_1 creates a non-stationary kernel for spatial information, whereas k_2 combines local spatial information with shock normal directions of the particles. We combine k_v with the Nyström approximation and PCA, accepting a reduction of the data set to a random subset for computational limitations. The resulting feature space enables separation with a fixed linking length β FoF algorithm. We estimate β with the average n-next-neighbor distance in the resulting feature space.

- 4) We use this labeled subset to train an SV-DKL classifier. With the deep kernel, we gain a locally adaptable similarity metric required for robust classification. The SV-DKL framework allows us to achieve fast inference and good scalability, as we are not limited by the size of the data set.

Our approach is distinctly scalable, as we can downsize the data set at each step only to recover full resolution with the SV-DKL at the end. We collect our analysis and tools in a Python software package to be available for future work, called VIRGO³. The package utilizes already implemented features of PyTorch [31] (BSD), GPyTorch [12] (MIT), scikit-learn [32] (BSD) and pyfof [13] (MIT).

5 Experiments

We evaluate our pipeline on the data sets from Sec. 3⁴. Different time steps of one simulation, indicated by an index, are quasi-independent data sets to be solved due to morphing structures and changing number of target classes. As there exist no labeled data sets, we must verify the results visually by the coherence of the shock wave surface classification and the removal of non-shock particles. In our studies, we observe that any other approach visibly over- or under-segments the shock waves. We show the denoising and centering process representative for CLUSTHD₂ in Fig. 2. Our approach accurately separates the dense cluster region from the general simulation output. Should more structures be present, we increase the number of GMM components and obtain reliable results for all tested data sets. We classify the denoised result as described in step 3) while reducing the data set in size to a random subset. However, we recover full resolution with the SV-DKL classifier trained on the labeled subset. This final classification does not depend on the choice of the random subset in

²You can find more information, as well as a movie of some of the simulations at <http://www.magneticum.org/complements.html#Compass>

³Variational Inference package for unsupervised classification of (inter-)Galactic shock waves. The source code is publicly available at <https://github.com/maxlampe/virgo> (MIT)

⁴Used hardware, training and model parameters are stated in the appendix.

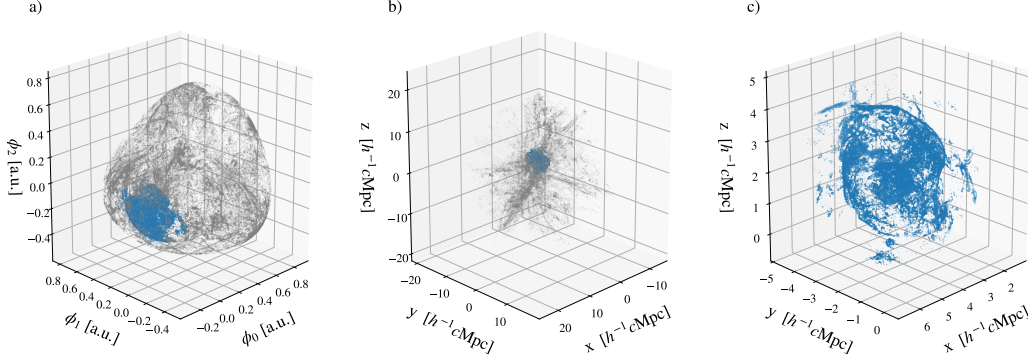


Figure 2: Denoising process of Sec. 4 step 2) for CLUSTHD₂ data set from Fig. 1. *a*) GMM fitted in kernel-PCA space with low-density noise (gray) and high-density cluster component (blue). *b*) Labeled data from *a*), but in physical space. *c*) Resulting denoised data set for further analysis.

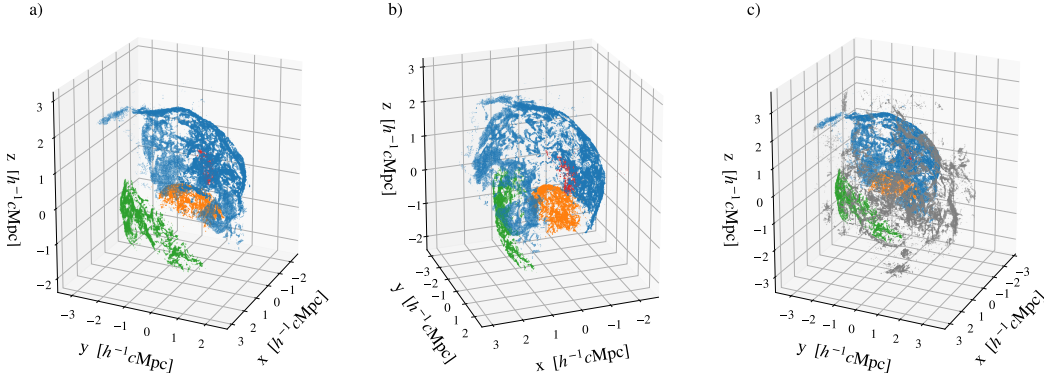


Figure 3: Full resolution reconstruction of CLUSTHD₂ with the SV-DKL classification. This result is the final VIRGO output for the raw input in Fig. 1. *a*) Labeled data set with SV-DKL classifier, step 4) in Sec. 4. *b*) same as *a*), but rotated by 45°. *c*) Same as *a*), but with non-shock wave particles.

the previous step. Fig. 3 shows the reconstructed and labeled data set of CLUSTHD₂. The complex morphology of the shock waves and its substructures are restored and correctly labelled. We compare the SV-DKL against a k -nearest-neighbor (k -NN, $k = 10$) classifier and a fully connected NN (like deep kernel NN) in Tab. 1. The SV-DKL outperforms the other methods in accuracy. However, k -NN achieves decent accuracy, and we recommend it as a cost-effective replacement for online applications. VIRGO also successfully separates and labels shock waves on the more complex BOXMHD data set. We repeat step 2) for this data set twice to deal with the multiple cluster objects. This additional step is required to single out dense objects and do single cluster analysis. In addition, VIRGO shows signs of generalization, as we used the trained classifier from the labeled subset of CLUSTHD₂ on the full data set of CLUSTHD₃ and obtained good results as well. However, this requires the same amount of target shock wave classes. Overall, VIRGO solves the outlined classification problem of cosmological shock waves and delivers robust results on all tested data sets.

Table 1: Comparing average test accuracies on the labeled subsets of the data after step 3) in Sec. 4 for different methods on different data sets for ten independent runs.

Method	CLUSTHD ₁	CLUSTHD ₂	CLUSTHD ₃	CLUSTMHD ₁	BoxMHD ₁
k -NN	97.10 ± 0.34	96.61 ± 0.32	97.19 ± 0.30	96.57 ± 0.39	96.69 ± 0.48
FC-NN	95.33 ± 1.32	95.51 ± 0.84	96.63 ± 0.41	96.19 ± 0.50	95.05 ± 0.69
SV-DKL	97.57 ± 0.54	97.00 ± 0.49	98.36 ± 0.18	98.08 ± 0.16	98.02 ± 0.37

6 Discussion and Limitations

We demonstrated the capability of VIRGO to capture the irregular shapes of shock wave surfaces. For future work, we propose using VIRGO to improve large-scale galaxy-cluster simulations by increasing the efficiency of particle injections at shock structures [e.g. 8, 58, 57, 4] or to study supernovae remnants [17]. We determine the linking length estimator from step 3) to be most prone to error and limitation. However, our data sets are insufficient to construct an estimator for this hyper-parameter without overfitting. Also, labeling errors in step 3) will be propagated by the SV-DKL. The Gaussian process might correct minor errors, but this will not fix larger misclassifications. For applications to more complex data sets, VIRGO should be combined with a better structure finder and a criterion for actual shock wave detection. Future work should verify the robustness of our chosen hyper-parameters in a broader set of simulated data, as this might pose a challenge for users. We also propose training the same DKL over different data sets with SV-DKL to yield a more generalizable solution. The DKL could be combined with PCA and k -NN to achieve better computational scalability, classification for an unknown number of shock waves in a cluster, and robustness regarding the linking length hyper-parameter, as the pre-trained DKL could even replace or at least improve the subset labeling of step 2).

We introduced a novel, physically motivated, and scalable pipeline. The unsupervised classification problem of cosmological shock waves was successfully solved for the first time. We hope our work inspires other astrophysics and physical sciences applications with (SV)DKL.

7 General Impact Statement

We believe our proposed pipeline will increase progress in cosmology simulation studies and lead to new applications in astrophysics. While our approach is unique and distinct, it is limited to specific synthetic data sets which are generated and therefore don't necessitate privacy or fairness considerations. The data sets we are using do not contain any personally identifiable information or offensive content. Hence, we think a broader impact discussion is not applicable. Furthermore, given our specific data structure (spatial points and shock normal vectors), we see no possible applications outside natural sciences and for other purposes, even with malicious intent. We cannot outline any societal impact beyond scientific interpretations of cosmological structure formation.

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Checklist

1. For all authors...
 - (a) Do the main claims made in the abstract and introduction accurately reflect the paper's contributions and scope? [\[Yes\]](#)
 - (b) Did you describe the limitations of your work? [\[Yes\]](#) See Sec. 6 "Discussion and Limitations"
 - (c) Did you discuss any potential negative societal impacts of your work? [\[Yes\]](#) See Sec. 7 "General Impact Statement"
 - (d) Have you read the ethics review guidelines and ensured that your paper conforms to them? [\[Yes\]](#)
2. If you are including theoretical results...
 - (a) Did you state the full set of assumptions of all theoretical results? [\[No\]](#) We are not including theoretical results. Where appropriate, we state taken assumptions.
 - (b) Did you include complete proofs of all theoretical results? [\[No\]](#) We are not including theoretical results.
3. If you ran experiments...
 - (a) Did you include the code, data, and instructions needed to reproduce the main experimental results (either in the supplemental material or as a URL)? [\[Yes\]](#) The code is publicly available, see Sec. 4 (MIT license) and all data sets will be made available at request or can be generated with the stated software, see Sec. 3. We also have an anonymized, supplementary zip file with code and data, which is available at request, as we can only submit one pdf file for this workshop on the submission page.
 - (b) Did you specify all the training details (e.g., data splits, hyperparameters, how they were chosen)? [\[Yes\]](#) See Sec. 5 and Sec. A
 - (c) Did you report error bars (e.g., with respect to the random seed after running experiments multiple times)? [\[Yes\]](#) See Sec. 5
 - (d) Did you include the total amount of compute and the type of resources used (e.g., type of GPUs, internal cluster, or cloud provider)? [\[Yes\]](#) See Sec. A
4. If you are using existing assets (e.g., code, data, models) or curating/releasing new assets...
 - (a) If your work uses existing assets, did you cite the creators? [\[Yes\]](#)
 - (b) Did you mention the license of the assets? [\[Yes\]](#)
 - (c) Did you include any new assets either in the supplemental material or as a URL? [\[Yes\]](#) See answer to checklist question 3.a)
 - (d) Did you discuss whether and how consent was obtained from people whose data you're using/curating? [\[Yes\]](#) We are only using self-generated data.
 - (e) Did you discuss whether the data you are using/curating contains personally identifiable information or offensive content? [\[Yes\]](#) See Sec. 7
5. If you used crowdsourcing or conducted research with human subjects...
 - (a) Did you include the full text of instructions given to participants and screenshots, if applicable? [\[No\]](#) We did not use crowdsourcing or conducted research with human subjects.
 - (b) Did you describe any potential participant risks, with links to Institutional Review Board (IRB) approvals, if applicable? [\[No\]](#) We did not use crowdsourcing or conducted research with human subjects.
 - (c) Did you include the estimated hourly wage paid to participants and the total amount spent on participant compensation? [\[No\]](#) We did not use crowdsourcing or conducted research with human subjects.

A Appendix

The deep kernel NN is adjusted to our problem regarding the accuracy and a minimal number of parameters and is a fully connected NN with ReLU activation functions after each layer. We use an RBF kernel for the additive base kernels. The inducing points and training parameters are set up as in [55] and [16], unless stated otherwise below. We use a standard softmax likelihood. We optimized all parameters in steps 1) to 3) from Sec. 4 to run all experiments on a Linux machine with two 2.4 GHz CPU cores and 8 GB RAM to highlight its efficiency. However, step 4) required a GPU with 16 GB RAM. We list any distinct parameters for our pipeline and its training: For the denoising step 2), we use an RBF kernel with the Nyström approximation $m = 100$, PCA with $k = 5$ components, and GMM with 2 or 5 components, depending on the data set. The physically motivated kernel k_V of step 3) is used with Nyström approximation $m = 500$, PCA with $k = 6$ components, and we estimate the FoF linking length β as the average 20-next-neighbor distance. The deep kernel NN is set up with six input features, $n_h = 1$ hidden layer of size 20, $n_f = 10$ output features, and without pre-training. We trained the SV-DKL of step 4) over 20 epochs, with a batch size of 1024, a grid of 64 inducing points, an overall learning rate of $\alpha = 0.1$, a learning rate scheduler decreasing it by 0.1 after 50 and 75% of the training time, decreased learning rate for the Gaussian process parameters $\alpha_{GP} = \alpha/100$, L2 regularization with weight decay of 10^{-4} , and an ADAM optimizer ($\beta_1 = 0.9$, $\beta_2 = 0.999$) [21]. We employed an 80/10/10 split between training, validation and test sets.