

An ACO Algorithm Benchmarked on the BBOB Noiseless Function Testbed

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ABSTRACT

ACO_R is an ant colony optimization algorithm for continuous domains. In this article, we benchmark ACO_R on the BBOB noiseless function testbed, and compare its performance to PSO, ABC and GA algorithms from previous BBOB workshops. Our experiment shows that ACO_R performs better than PSO, ABC and GA on the moderate functions, ill-conditioned functions and multi-modal functions. Among 24 functions, ACO_R solved 19 in dimension 5, 9 in dimension 20, and 7 across dimensions from 2 to 40. Furthermore, in dimension 5, we present the results of the ACO_R when it uses variable correlation handling. The latter version is competitive on the five dimensional functions to (1+1)-CMA-ES and BIPOP-CMA-ES.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

G.1.6 [Numerical Analysis]: Optimization—*global optimization, unconstrained optimization*; F.2.1 [Analysis of Algorithms and Problem Complexity]: Numerical Algorithms and Problems

General Terms

Algorithms

Keywords

Benchmarking, Black-box optimization, Ant colony optimization, Continuous domains

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1. INTRODUCTION

The ant colony optimization (ACO) metaheuristic was originally proposed for solving discrete optimization problems [2]. Recently, the adaption of ACO algorithms for continuous domains received increasing attention [9, 11, 13]. Socha and Dorigo [13] replaced the discrete probability distribution with probability density functions (PDFs) in the solution construction for continuous domains, and thus proposed an ACO algorithm for continuous domains, called ACO_R. The popularity of ACO_R is illustrated by the more than 260 citations according to Google Scholar as of March 2012 and by being one of top 10 cited papers of the recent five years in the European Journal of Operational Research. However, ACO_R has not been benchmarked so far on the BBOB function testbed.

In this article, we benchmark ACO_R on the BBOB noiseless function testbed. We test two versions of ACO_R. The first version uses the original mechanism, proposed in [13] to handle variable correlations; the second version does not use this mechanism. In what follows, these two versions are called ACO_R-vch and ACO_R, respectively. As a better illustration, we compare the performance of ACO_R to the data obtained by three standard nature-inspired algorithms PSO [4], ABC [3], and GA [12] which have been benchmarked in the previous BBOB workshops. Furthermore, we compare ACO_R-vch to performance data for (1+1)-CMA-ES [1] and for BIPOP-CMA-ES [6] from the BBOB 2009 workshop.

2. ALGORITHM PRESENTATION

ACO_R [13] uses a solution archive to create a probability distribution of promising solutions over the search space. The solution archive is initialized by k random solutions. The algorithm iteratively updates the solution archive by generating m new solutions and then keeping only the best k solutions of the $k + m$ solutions. Solutions are generated variable by variable based on a Gaussian kernel, which is defined as a weighted sum of several Gaussian functions g_j^i , where j is a solution index and i is a variable index. The Gaussian kernel for variable i is:

$$G^i(x) = \sum_{j=1}^k \omega_j g_j^i(x) = \sum_{j=1}^k \omega_j \frac{1}{\sigma_j^i \sqrt{2\pi}} e^{-\frac{(x-\mu_j^i)^2}{2\sigma_j^{i2}}}, \quad (1)$$

where $j \in \{1, \dots, k\}$, $i \in \{1, \dots, D\}$, with D being the problem dimensionality, and ω_j is a weight associated with the ranking of solution s_j in the archive, $rank(j)$. ω_j is defined by:

$$\omega_j = \frac{1}{qk\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{-\frac{(rank(j)-1)^2}{2q^2k^2}}, \quad (2)$$

where q is a parameter. In $g_j^i(x)$ of Equation 1, $\mu_j^i = s_j^i$, and σ_j^i is equal to

$$\sigma_j^i = \xi \sum_{r=1}^k \frac{|s_r^i - s_j^i|}{k-1}, \quad (3)$$

where ξ is a parameter. The $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ we test here is based on a re-implementation in C++ of the original implementation in R that was used in [13].

3. EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURE

We use here the parameter values that were recommended in the original paper [13], that is: $m=2$, $k=50$, $q=0.1$, $\xi=0.85$. A maximum of 10^7 function evaluations was used. Every periodic 25000 iterations with a relative solution improvement less than 10^{-8} , $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ restarts without forgetting the best-so-far solution. To ensure that the final best solution is inside the bounds, the bound constraints are enforced by clamping each generated solution that violates the bound constraint to the nearest solution on the bounds. The negative impact of an infeasible final solution outside the bounds on algorithm comparisons was presented by Liao et al. [10].

4. RESULTS

Results from experiments following the procedure in [7] on the benchmark functions from [5,8] are presented in Figures 1, 2, and 3 and in Tables 1 and 2.

Among the 24 functions, $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ solved 19 (16 with a 100% success rate) in dimension 5 and 9 (6 with a 100% success rate) in dimension 20. $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ solved all the moderate and multi-modal functions in dimension 5, in which $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ almost reaches a 100% success rate for all these functions except one failure trial in f_{19} . $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ solved $f_1, f_2, f_5, f_6, f_8, f_9, f_{21}$ over dimensions from 2 to 40.

We compare the performance of $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ to the data obtained by PSO, ABC and GA in previous BBOB workshops. As seen from Figures 2 and 3, we observe that $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ obtains better performance than the references when comprehensively considering all functions. Figures 2 clearly illustrates that $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ obtains better run-time performance than PSO, ABC and GA on the moderate functions, ill-conditioned functions and multi-modal functions. Especially on the moderate functions, across dimensions 5 and 20, $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ clearly dominates PSO, ABC and GA.

We also observe that $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ solved two Rosenbrock functions (f_8 and f_9) on dimension 20 with a 100% success rate, and solved two Schaffers F7 functions (f_{17} and f_{18}) on dimension 5 with a 100% success rate. However, $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ does not perform very good on multi-modal functions of higher dimensions and even some weakly structured functions of

lower dimensions. In the comparisons, PSO is the only one that could solve the Katsuura function (f_{23}) of dimension 2 and 3; ABC obtained the best performance on the two separable Rastrigin functions.

5. CPU TIMING EXPERIMENT

The $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ was run on f_8 until at least 30 seconds have passed. These experiment were conducted with Intel Xeon E5410 (2.33 GHz) on Linux (kernel 2.6.9 - 78.0.22). The results were 3.0E-06, 3.0E-06, 6.5E-04, 7.5E-04, 9.5E-04 and 1.4E-03 seconds per function evaluation in dimensions 2, 3, 5, 10, 20, and 40, respectively.

6. DISCUSSION

We additionally present some performance results of $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ -vch comparing it to the data obtained by (1+1)-CMA-ES and BIPOP-CMA-ES in the BBOB 2009 workshop. We restrict the comparison to functions of 5 dimensions. In Figure 4, we observe that $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ -vch greatly improves over $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ in functions with moderate or high conditioning ($f_6 - f_{14}$) and that $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ -vch performs very competitive to (1+1)-CMA-ES and BIPOP-CMA-ES. In the separable, multi-modal and weakly structured functions, $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ -vch performs slightly worse than $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$, while $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ -vch performs clearly better than $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ on moderate and ill-conditioned functions. Both $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ and $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ -vch obtain a better performance than (1+1)-CMA-ES in the separable, multi-modal functions, or when comprehensively considering all functions. In the weakly structured functions and multi-modal functions they perform worse than BIPOP-CMA-ES, while they perform better on the separable functions.

7. CONCLUSION

In this article, we present benchmark results for a re-implementation of $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ on the BBOB noiseless function testbed. Furthermore, we discuss the performance of $ACO_{\mathbb{R}}$ -vch with variable correlation handling. It is observed that the latter version is competitive to (1+1)-CMA-ES and BIPOP-CMA-ES in functions with moderate or high conditioning.

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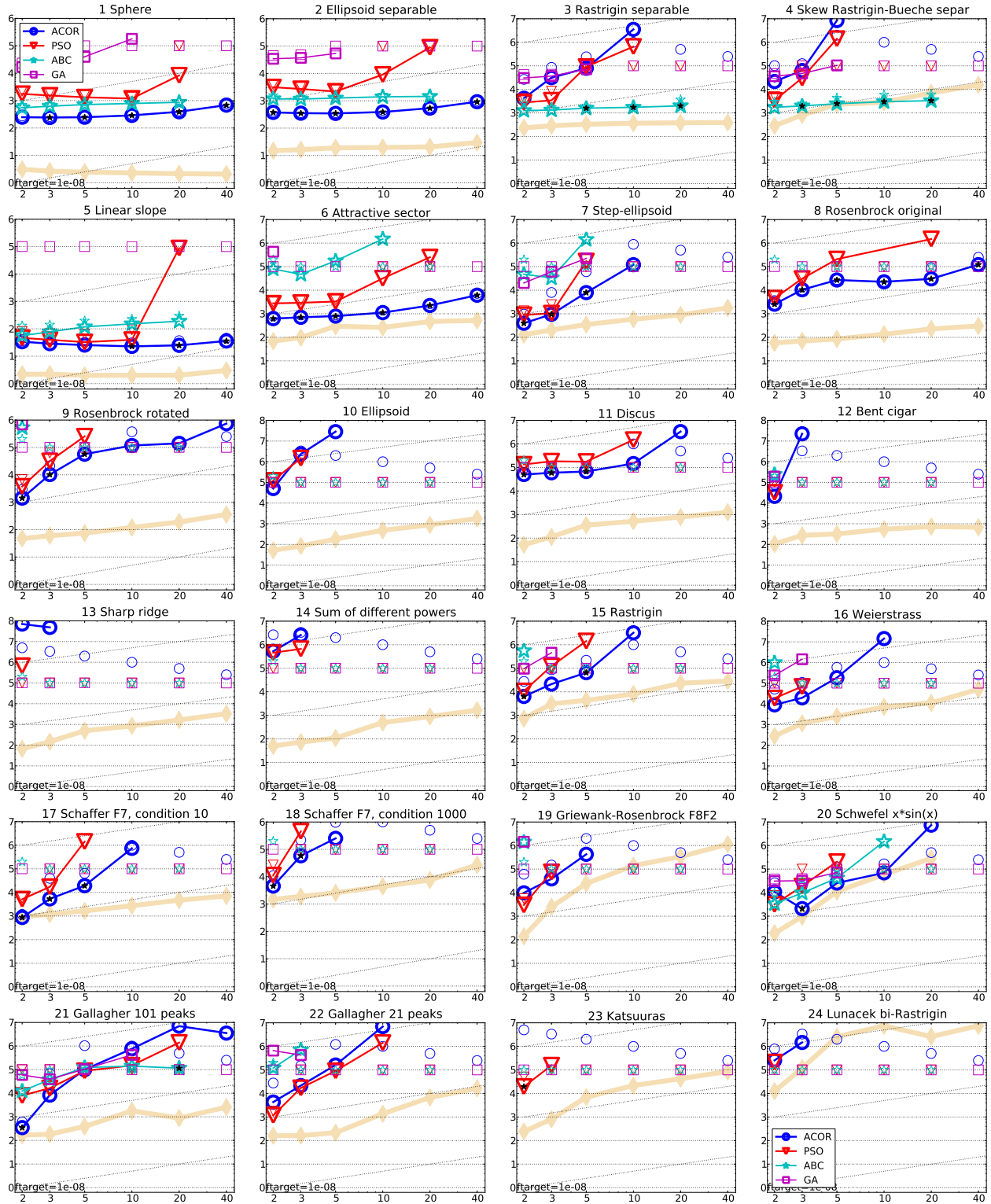


Figure 1: Expected running time (ERT in number of f -evaluations) divided by dimension for target function value 10^{-8} as \log_{10} values versus dimension. Different symbols correspond to different algorithms given in the legend of f_1 and f_{24} . Light symbols give the maximum number of function evaluations from the longest trial divided by dimension. Horizontal lines give linear scaling, slanted dotted lines give quadratic scaling. Black stars indicate statistically better compared to all other algorithms with $p < 0.01$ and Bonferroni correction number of dimensions (six). Legend: \circ :ACOR, ∇ :PSO, \star :ABC, \square :GA

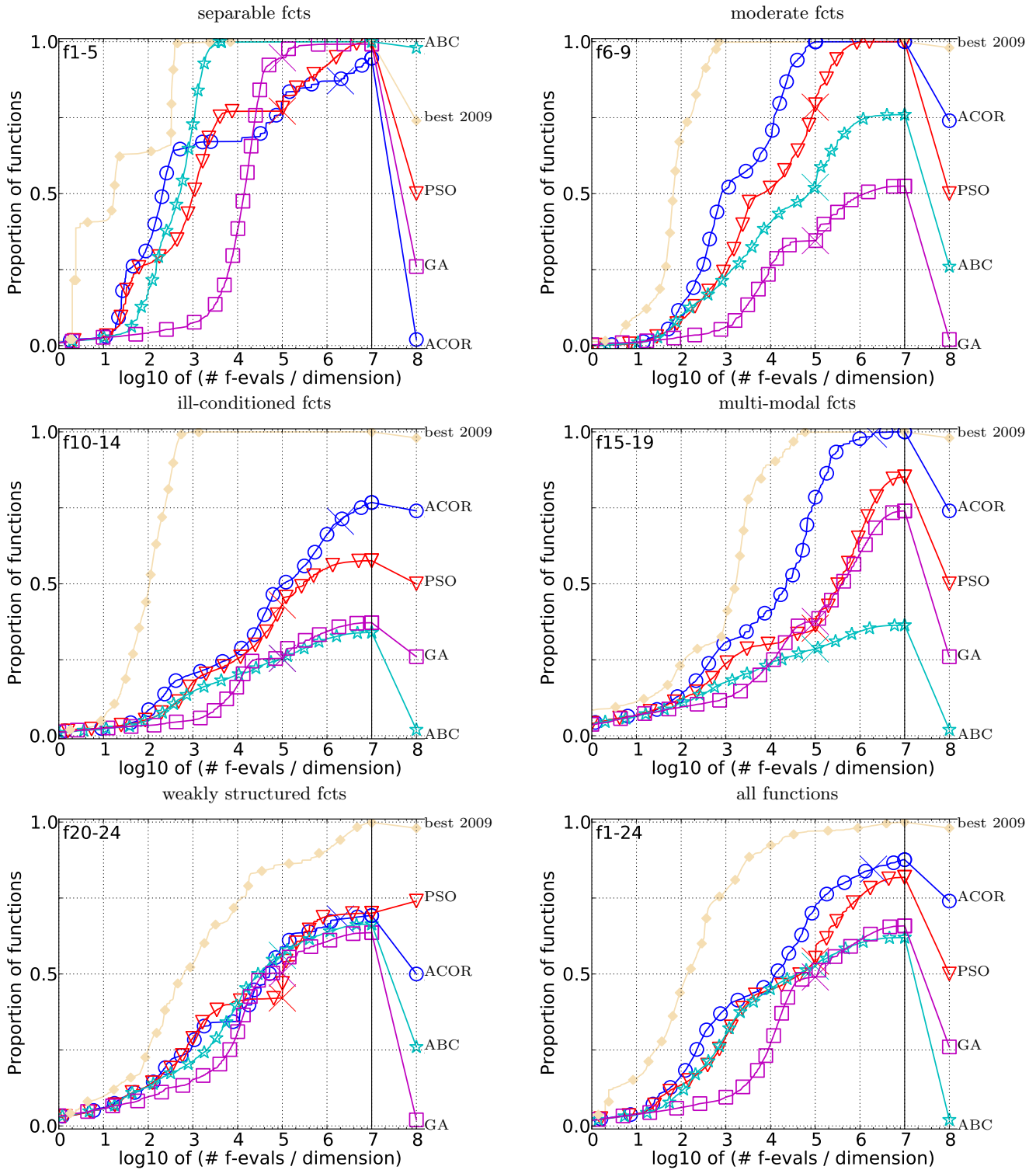


Figure 2: Bootstrapped empirical cumulative distribution of the number of objective function evaluations divided by dimension (FEvals/D) for 50 targets in $10^{[-8..2]}$ for all functions and subgroups in 5-D. The “best 2009” line corresponds to the best ERT observed during BBOB 2009 for each single target.

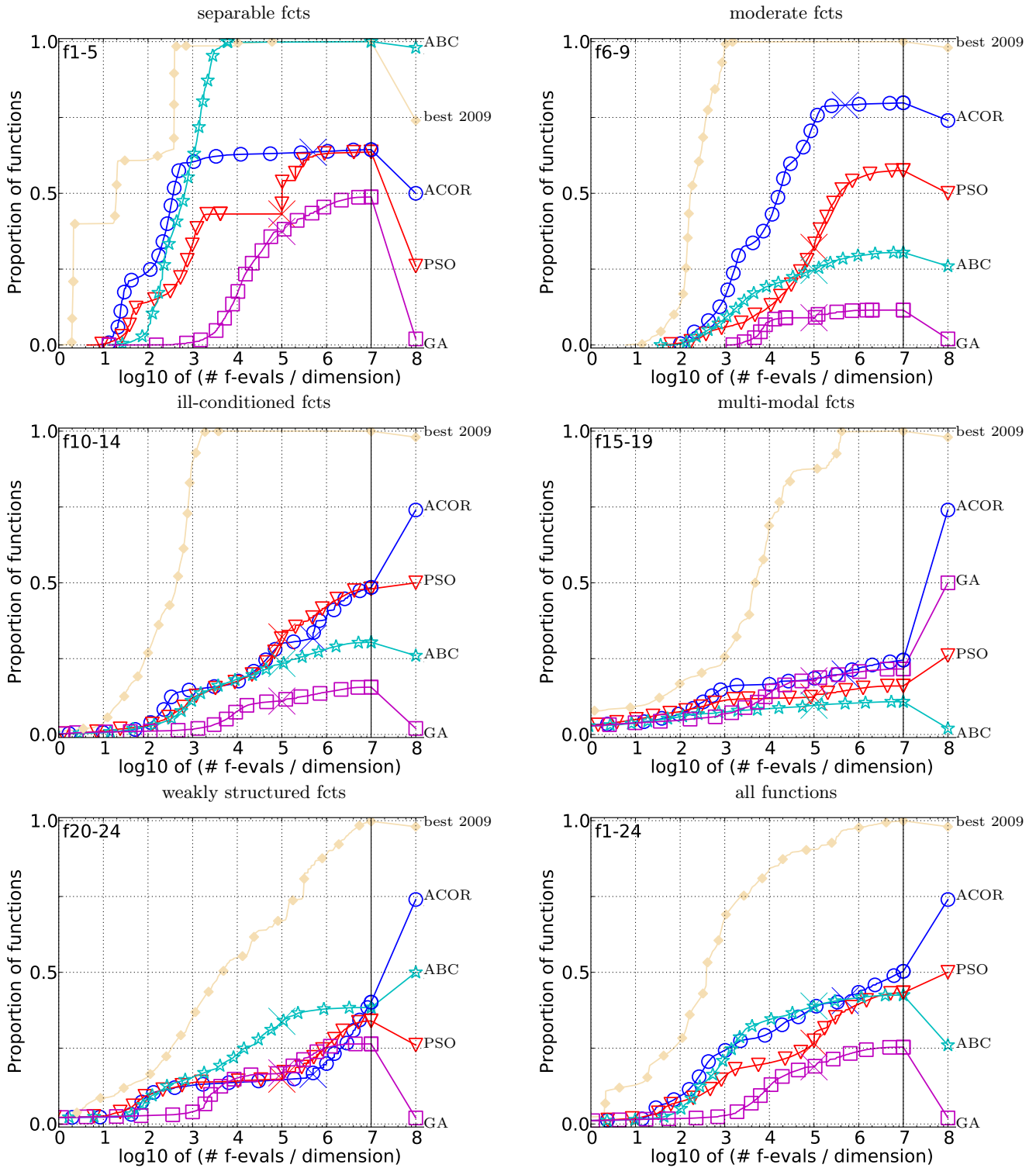


Figure 3: Bootstrapped empirical cumulative distribution of the number of objective function evaluations divided by dimension (FEvals/D) for 50 targets in $10^{[-8..2]}$ for all functions and subgroups in 20-D. The “best 2009” line corresponds to the best ERT observed during BBOB 2009 for each single target.

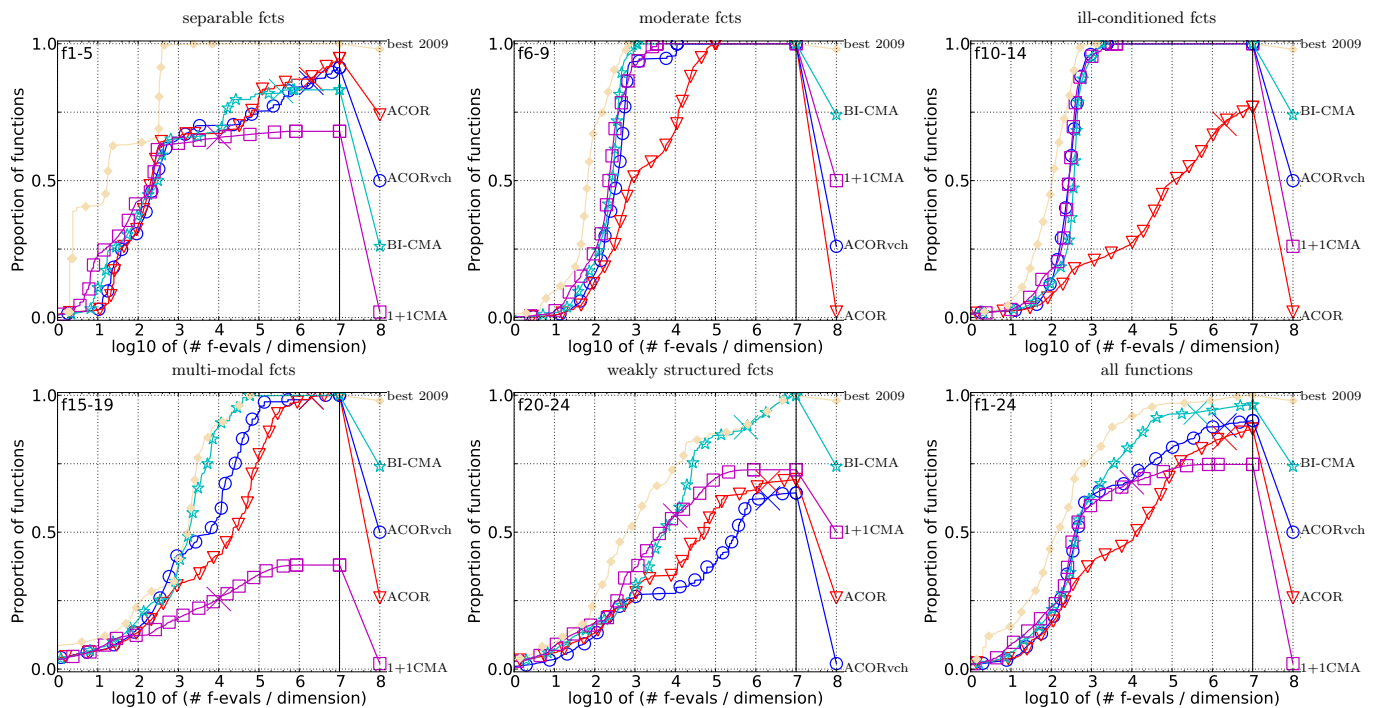


Figure 4: Bootstrapped empirical cumulative distribution of the number of objective function evaluations divided by dimension (FEvals/D) for 50 targets in $10^{[-8..2]}$ for all functions and subgroups in 5-D. The “best 2009” line corresponds to the best ERT observed during BBOB 2009 for each single target.

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