



Institute of  
Science and  
Technology  
Austria



# Unified Privacy Guarantees for Decentralized Learning via Matrix Factorization

---

**Dimitri Lerévérend<sup>3</sup>**

Joint work with: Aurélien Bellet<sup>1</sup>   Edwige Cyffers<sup>2</sup>   Davide Frey<sup>3</sup>

Romaric Gaudel<sup>3</sup>   François Taïani<sup>3</sup>

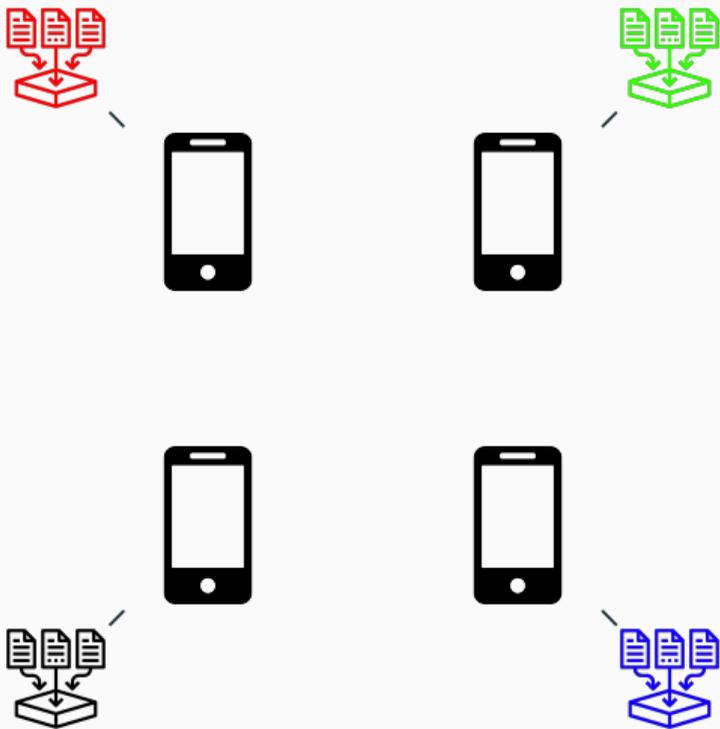
February 3, 2026

<sup>1</sup>Inria, Université de Montpellier, INSERM, Montpellier, France

<sup>2</sup>Institute of Science and Technology Austria, Klosterneuburg, Austria

<sup>3</sup>Université de Rennes, Inria, CNRS, IRISA, Rennes, France

# Decentralized Learning (DL)

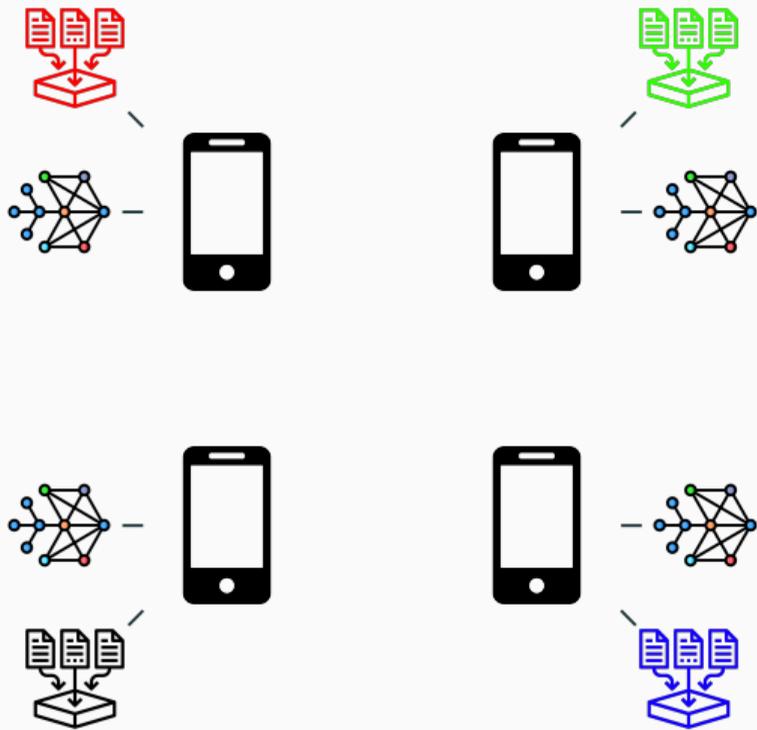


## DL main characteristics

- Possibly **heterogeneous** data

⇒ How can we guarantee **privacy** in this setting?

# Decentralized Learning (DL)

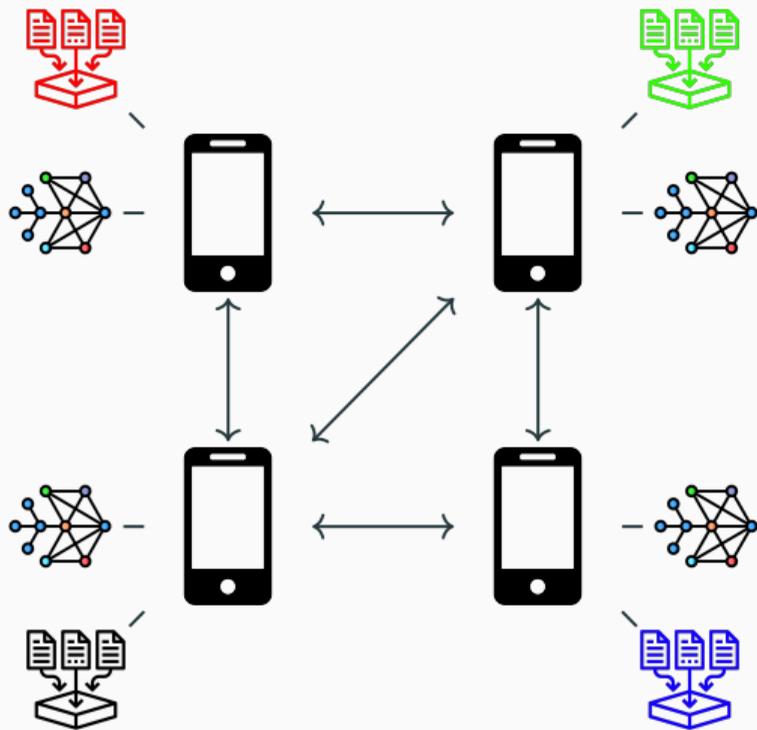


## DL main characteristics

- Possibly **heterogeneous** data
- **Local** model training

⇒ How can we guarantee **privacy** in this setting?

# Decentralized Learning (DL)

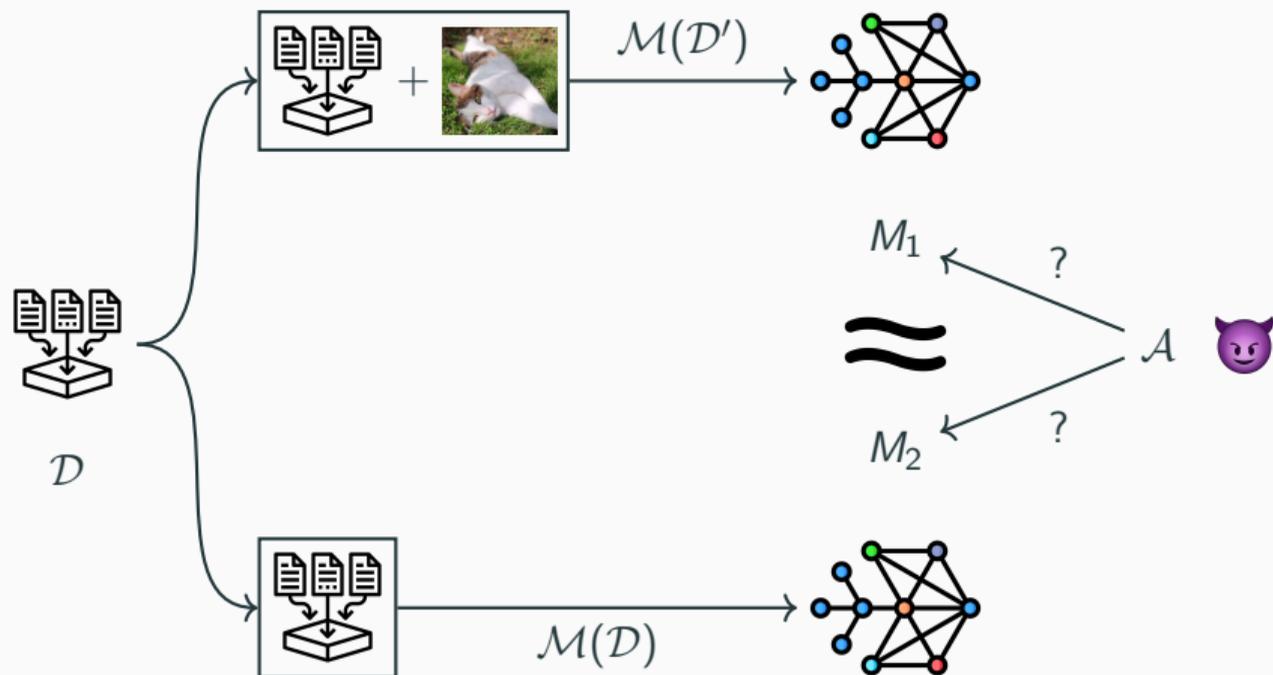


## DL main characteristics

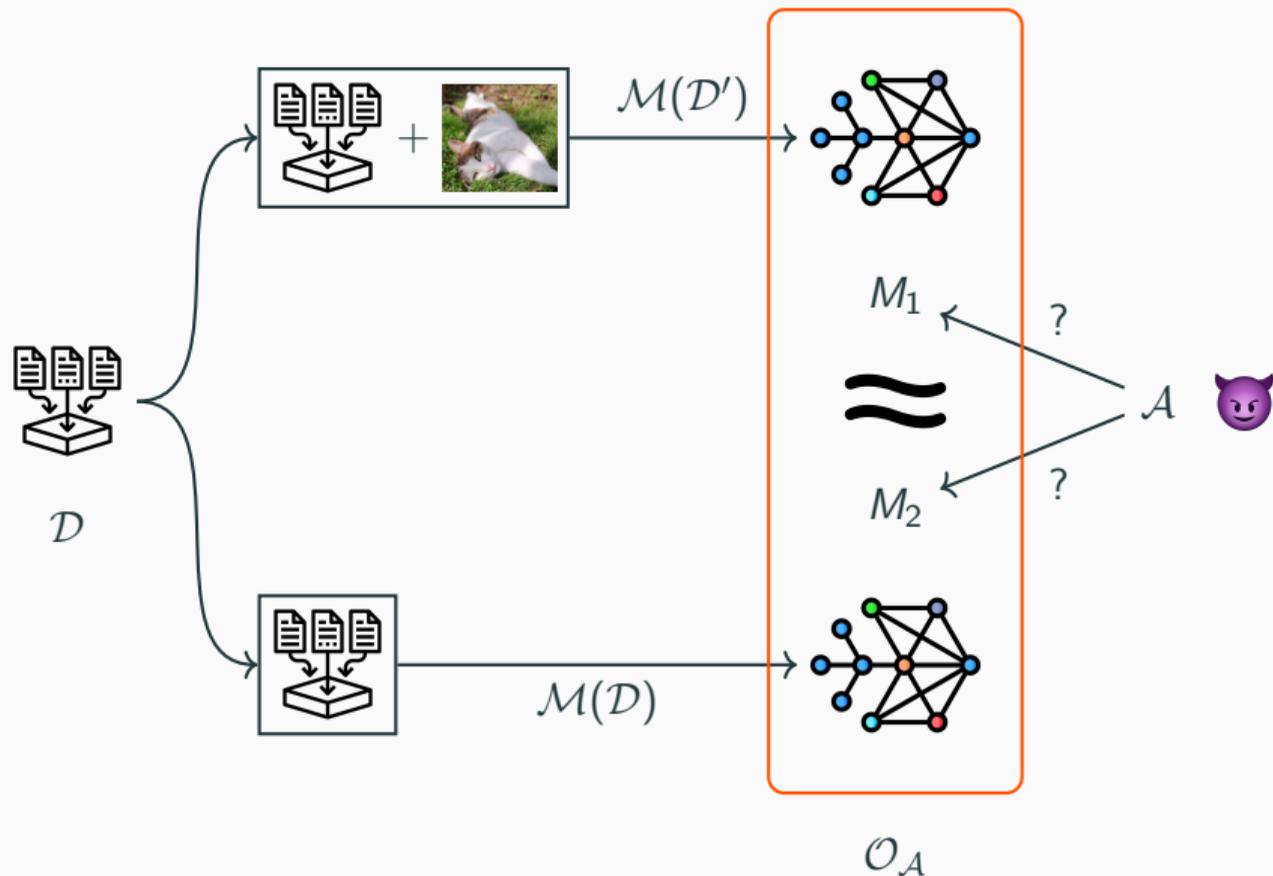
- Possibly **heterogeneous** data
- **Local** model training
- **Synchronous** model exchanges
- Communication graph  $W$
- No central server

⇒ How can we guarantee **privacy** in this setting?

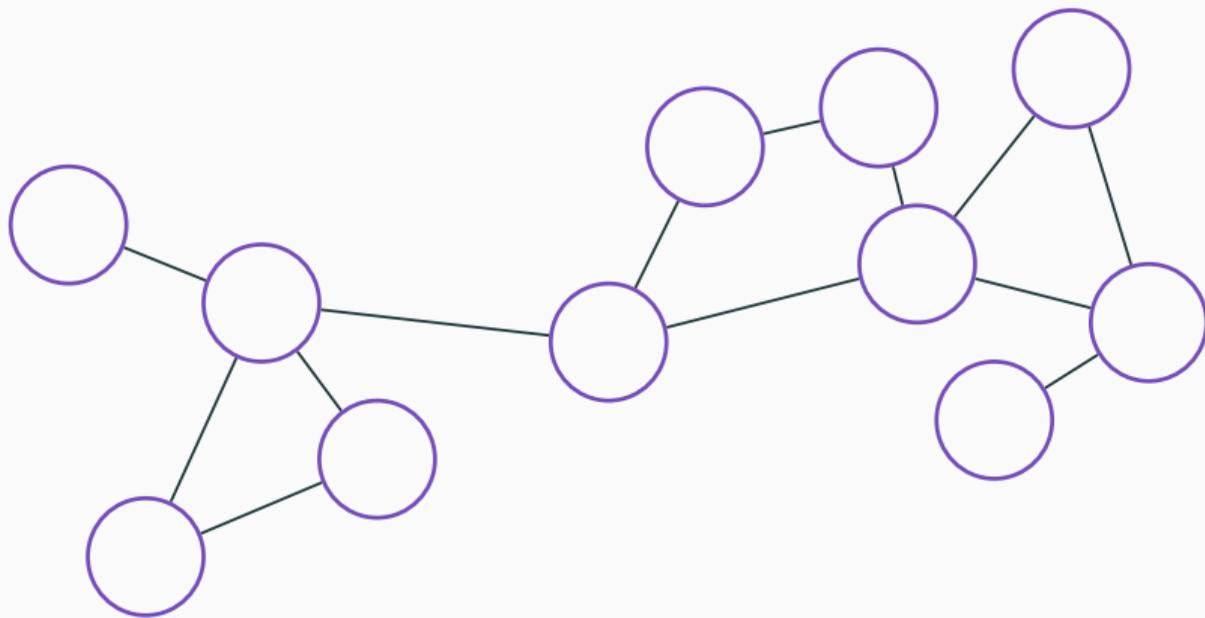
# Differential Privacy in a nutshell



# Differential Privacy in a nutshell



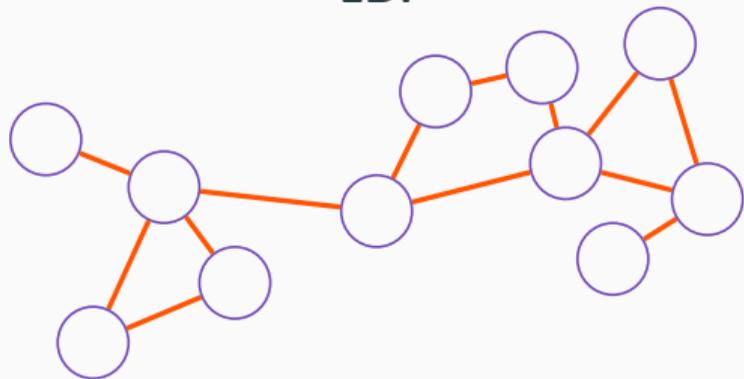
## Who is the attacker?



Observations of  $\mathcal{A}$  ( $\mathcal{O}_{\mathcal{A}}$ )?

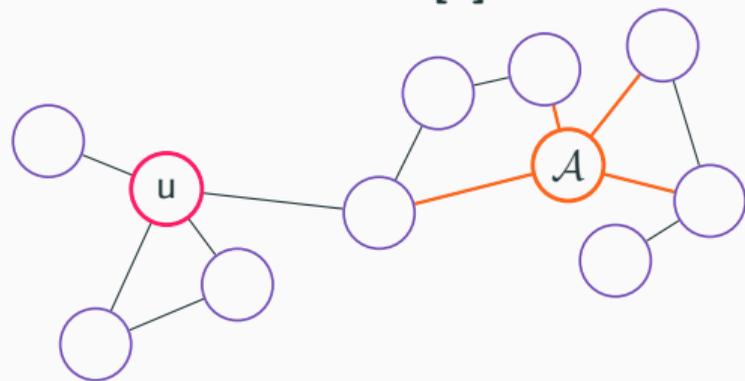
## DP & DL: a game of observations

LDP



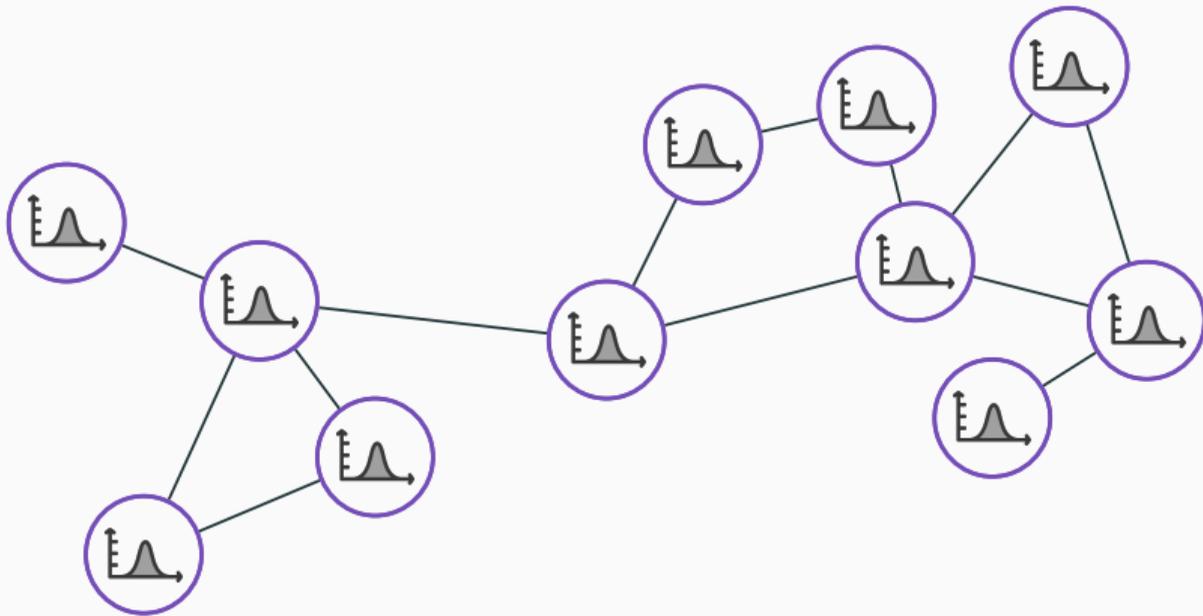
- $\mathcal{O}_{\mathcal{A}}$ : all messages sent on the network

PNDP [3]



- $\mathcal{O}_{\mathcal{A}}$ : messages received by node  $\mathcal{A}$

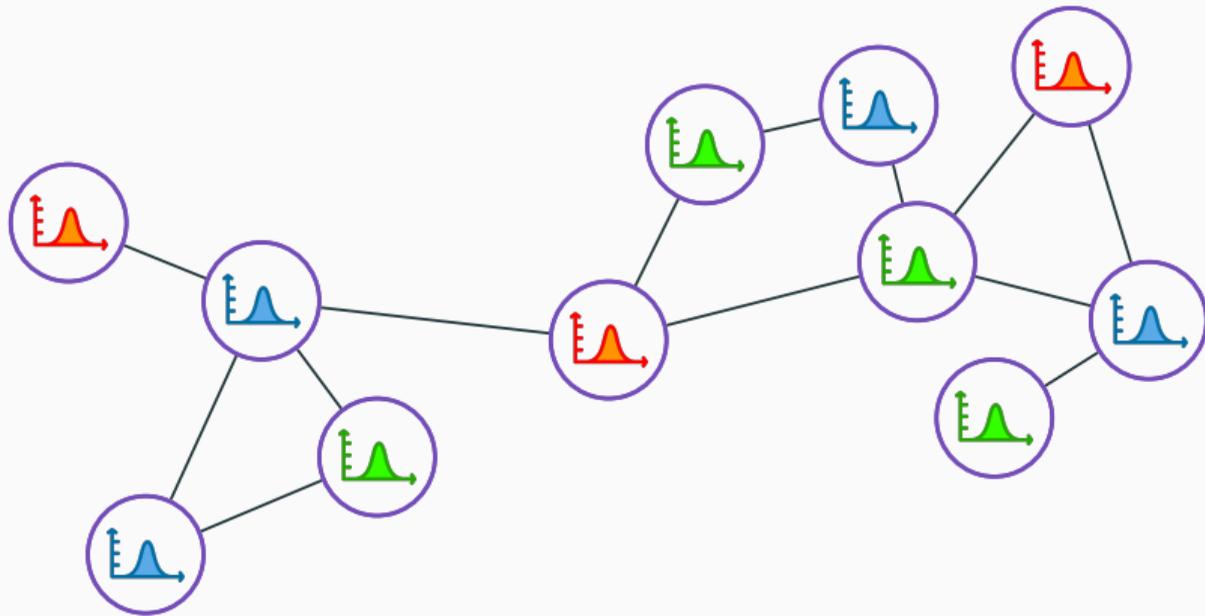
## Noisy approaches — DP-D-SGD



### Limitations

- Impacts utility
- Difficult to scale

# Correlated-noise approaches



## Correlation axis

- Space (Decor [1], ZIP-DL (ours, [2]))  $\implies$  Complex analysis
- Time?  $\implies$  No composition theorem.

## Background: Matrix factorization in **Centralized** settings

---

## Matrix Factorization in **Centralized** settings [6]

- Stack gradients and models into vectors:

$$A = \mathbf{1}_{i \geq j} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & \cdots & 0 \\ 1 & 1 & \cdots & 0 \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ 1 & 1 & \cdots & 1 \end{pmatrix}, \quad G = \begin{pmatrix} g_1 \\ g_2 \\ \vdots \\ g_t \end{pmatrix}, \quad \theta = \begin{pmatrix} \theta_1 \\ \theta_2 \\ \vdots \\ \theta_t \end{pmatrix}$$

- $A$ : **workload** matrix.
- We can rewrite SGD as a **linear system**:

$$\theta = \mathbf{1}_t \otimes \theta_0 - \eta AG.$$

### **Equivalent mechanism**

$$\text{SGD: } \mathcal{M}(G) = AG$$

$$\text{DP-SGD: } \mathcal{M}(G) = A(G + Z), \quad Z \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \nu^2 I_t)$$

$$\text{Matrix mechanism: } \mathcal{M}(G) = AG + BZ, \quad Z \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \nu^2 I_t)$$

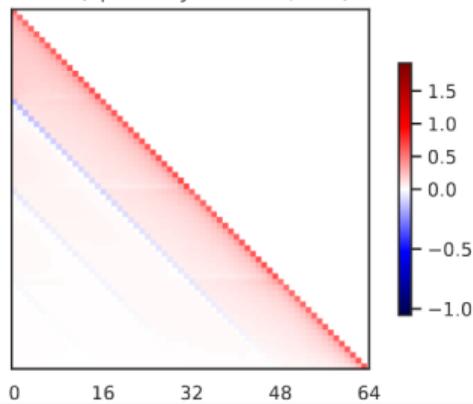
# Matrix Factorization in **Centralized** settings [6]

Goal: find good factorizations  $A = BC$ .

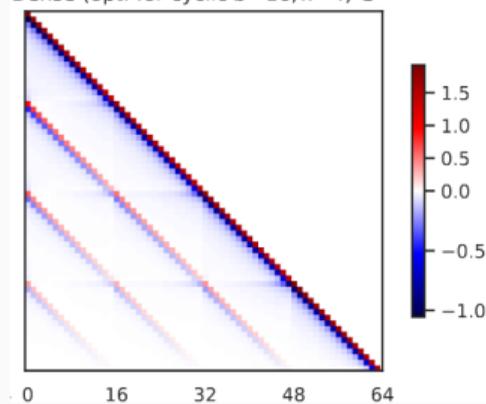
## Theorem — DP guarantees for Centralized learning [4]

- Hypothesis:
  - **Centralized/Federated** setting
  - $A = BC$  and  $A$  is squared & lower triangular & invertible.
- Then,  $\mathcal{M}(G) = B(CG + Z)$  with  $Z \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \nu^2)$  with  $\nu = \sigma \text{sens}(C)$  is  $\frac{1}{\sigma}$ -GDP, even under **adaptive**  $G$ .

Dense (opt. for cyclic  $b=16, k=4$ )  $\mathbf{C}$



Dense (opt. for cyclic  $b=16, k=4$ )  $\mathbf{C}^{-1}$



# Matrix Factorization in **Centralized** settings [6]

Goal: find good factorizations  $A = BC$ .

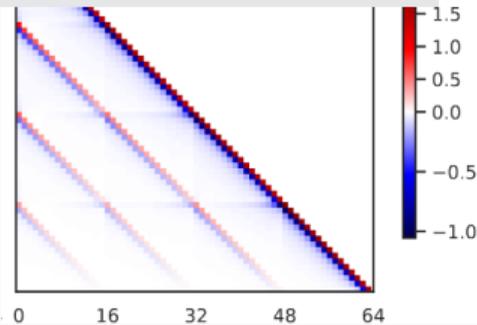
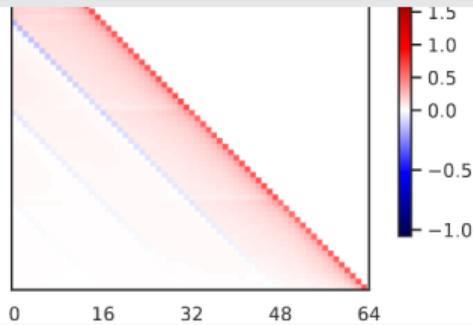
## Theorem — DP guarantees for Centralized learning [4]

- Hypothesis:

- **Our objectives**

1. Adapt the matrix-factorization formalism to decentralized settings.
2. Extend the centralized theorem by relaxing structural assumptions.
3. Derive tighter privacy accounting for decentralized mechanisms.
4. Introduce MAFALDA-SGD for optimized correlated noise.

-GDP,



**Our work: Unifying it all in DL**

---

## Adapting MF to DL

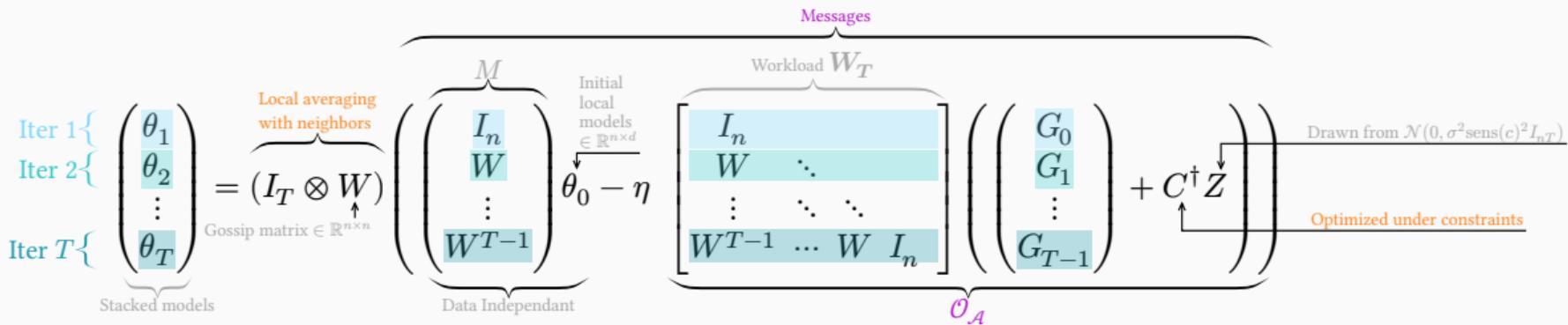
We stack through both time and space:  $T$  block of  $n$  values, one for each node.

### Communication workload

$$\mathbf{W}_T = \begin{bmatrix} I_n & 0 & 0 & \dots & 0 \\ W & I_n & 0 & \dots & 0 \\ W^2 & W & I_n & \dots & 0 \\ \dots & \dots & \dots & \ddots & \dots \\ W^{T-1} & W^{T-2} & W^{T-3} & \dots & I_n \end{bmatrix}, \quad \mathbf{G} = \begin{bmatrix} G_1 \\ G_2 \\ G_3 \\ \vdots \\ G_T \end{bmatrix}$$

- $W$ : communication matrix

# Matrix Factorization in DL — high level view



## Attacker observations:

$$\mathcal{O}_A = AG + BZ$$

- $A$  is a **rectangular** matrix.
- $A$  has a column-echelon structure.

# Adaptive privacy guarantees

## Theorem — Unified DP guarantees for DL

- Hypothesis:
  - Decentralized learning settings
  - $A = BC$  and  $A$  is rectangular & column echelon.
- Then,  $\mathcal{M}(G) = B(CG + Z)$  with  $Z \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \nu^2)$  with  $\nu = \sigma \text{sens}(C; B)$  is  $\frac{1}{\sigma}$ -GDP, even under adaptive  $G$ .
- $\text{sens}_{\Pi}(C; B) \leq \max_{\pi \in \Pi} \sum_{s, t \in \pi} \left| (C^{\top} B^{\dagger} BC)_{s, t} \right|$

## Novelties

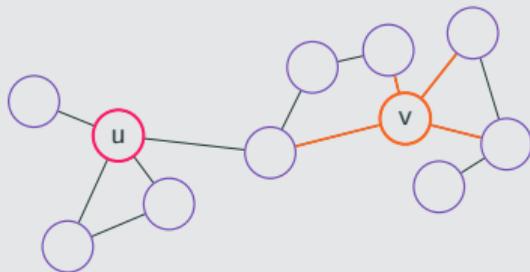
- Wider range of workloads
- Extends the notion of sensitivity

## Remark — Recovering known threat models

### LDP + DP-D-SGD

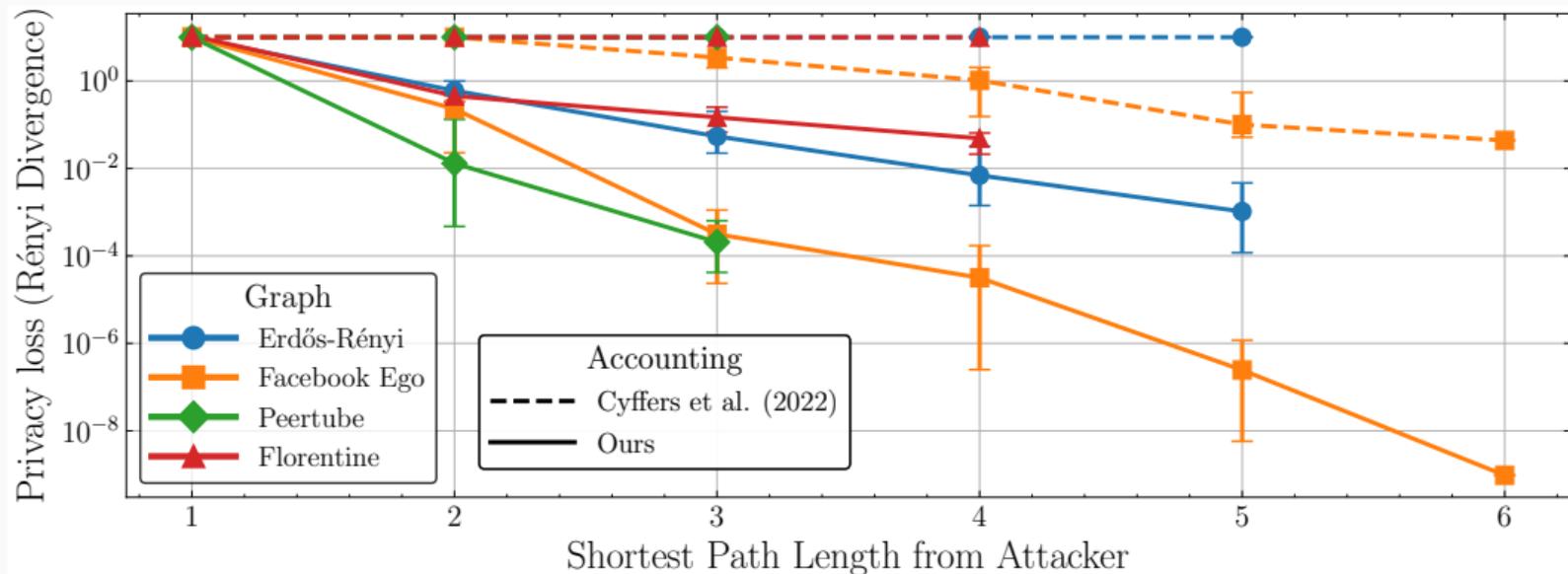
- Attacker observes all noisy gradients.
- IID noises accross all nodes and rounds.
- $A = B = \mathbf{W}_T, C = I_{nT}$

### PNDP [3]



- Attacker  $\mathcal{A}$  observes a subset of noisy gradients
- $P_{\mathcal{A}}\mathbf{W}_T G$  projection on the gradients observed by  $\mathcal{A}$

## Application 1 — Tighter accounting



- Recover existing privacy accounting such as PNDP [3].
- We derive tighter PNDP bounds for DP-D-SGD.

## **Application 2: Correlation optimization (Mafalda-SGD)**

---

# Matrix Factorization for Local Differential Private-SGD (MAFALDA-SGD)

- Adapt optimization objective to LDP setting.
- Force same noise pattern for all nodes.
- The new minimization problem is

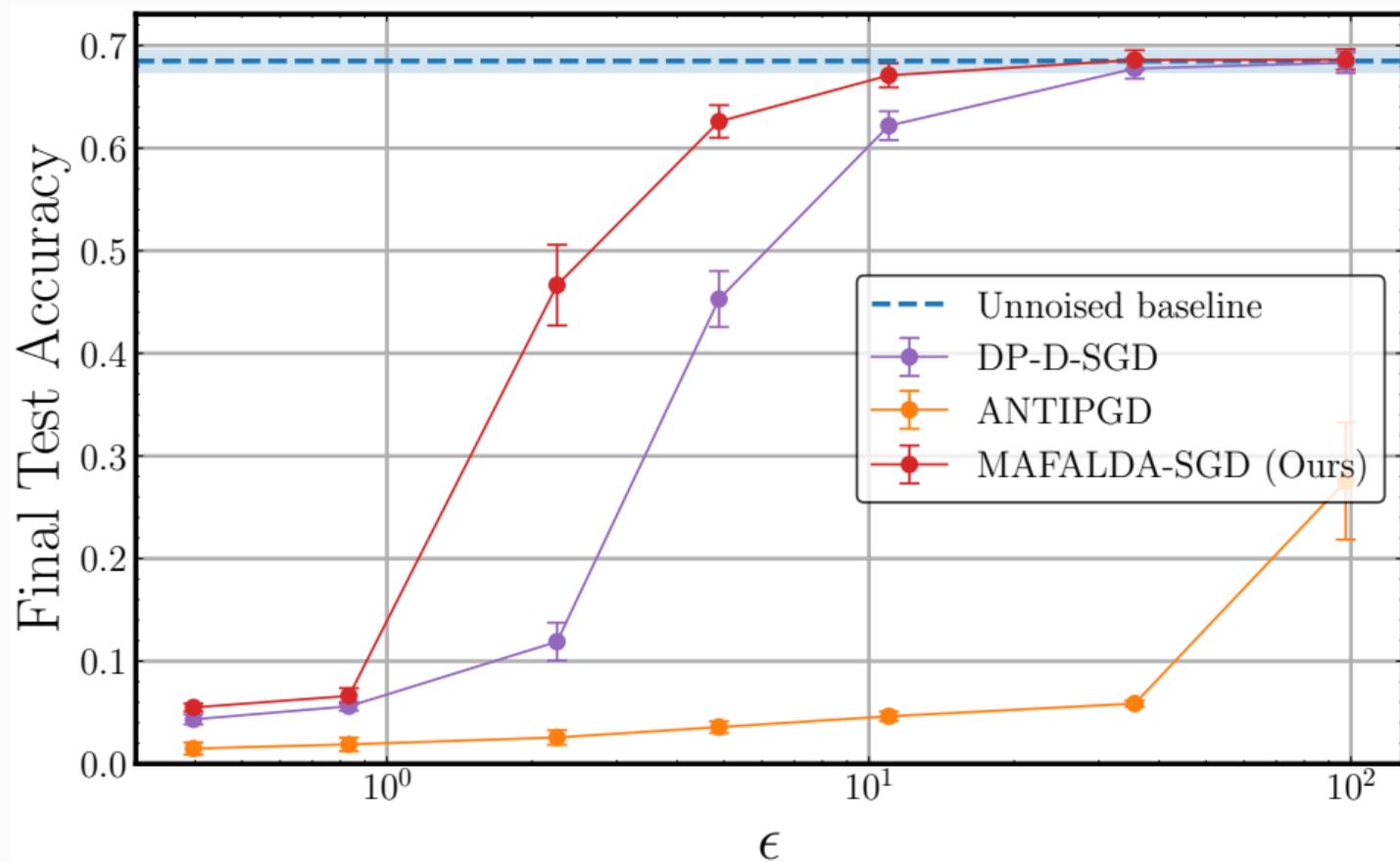
$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{opti}}(\mathbf{W}_T, C_{\text{local}}) = \frac{\text{sens}}{\Pi_{\text{local}}} (C_{\text{local}})^2 \left\| L C_{\text{local}}^\dagger \right\|_F^2$$

with  $L$  the Choleski decomposition such that

$$L^\top L = \sum_{i=1}^n A_i^\top A_i,$$
$$A_i := \left[ (I_T \otimes W) \mathbf{W}_T \mathbf{K}^{(T,n)} \right]_{[:,iT:(i+1)T-1]}$$

- Solve  $\min_{C_{\text{local}}} \mathcal{L}_{\text{opti}}(\mathbf{W}_T, C_{\text{local}})$  using L-BFGS [6].

## Experimental results — FEMNIST



# Conclusion

## Our work

- Unifies DP guarantees under various noise patterns/attackers
- Derives tighter privacy guarantees for MF mechanisms
- Introduces a novel algorithm that outperforms LDP baselines

## Future works

- Explore localized optimums and other threat models
- Find cross-nodes optimal correlations



-  Youssef Allouah, Anastasia Koloskova, Aymane El Firdoussi, Martin Jaggi, and Rachid Guerraoui.  
**The privacy power of correlated noise in decentralized learning.**  
*In Proceedings of the 41st International Conference on Machine Learning*, pages 1115–1143, 2024.
-  Sayan Biswas, Davide Frey, Romaric Gaudel, Anne-Marie Kermarrec, Dimitri Lerévérénd, Rafael Pires, Rishi Sharma, and François Taïani.  
**Low-cost privacy-preserving decentralized learning.**  
*Proceedings on Privacy Enhancing Technologies*, 2025.

-  Edwige Cyffers, Mathieu Even, Aurélien Bellet, and Laurent Massoulié.  
**Muffliato: Peer-to-Peer Privacy Amplification for Decentralized Optimization and Averaging.**  
NeurIPS, 2022.
-  Sergey Denisov, H Brendan McMahan, John Rush, Adam Smith, and Abhradeep Guha Thakurta.  
**Improved differential privacy for sgd via optimal private linear operators on adaptive streams.**  
*Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems*, 35:5910–5924, 2022.

-  Abdellah El Mrini, Edwige Cyffers, and Aurélien Bellet.  
**Privacy attacks in decentralized learning.**  
ICML'24. JMLR.org, 2024.
-  Krishna Pillutla, Jalaj Upadhyay, Christopher A. Choquette-Choo, Krishnamurthy Dvijotham, Arun Ganesh, Monika Henzinger, Jonathan Katz, Ryan McKenna, H. Brendan McMahan, Keith Rush, Thomas Steinke, and Abhradeep Thakurta.  
**Correlated noise mechanisms for differentially private learning, 2025.**

## Experimental results — Housing

