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# Machine Learning Based Soft Detection for Extremely High Bandwidth Efficiency 4K-QAM and Beyond

Research Scholarship for M.Eng. Students project under Contract No. M-Eng.-EE-003/2566  
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**1**

# **Research Objectives**

# What is QAM?

“QAM”

stands for Quadrature Amplitude Modulation.

- ▶ very popular and commercial digital modulation scheme used in modern communication systems to transmit digital signal.

# Definition of $M$ -QAM Signal

$$s(t) = m_1(t) \cos \omega_c t + m_2(t) \sin \omega_c t, \quad 0 \leq t \leq T_s$$

(in-phase)

(quadrature)

$M$  : modulation order

$T_s$  : symbol period (its reciprocal is symbol rate)

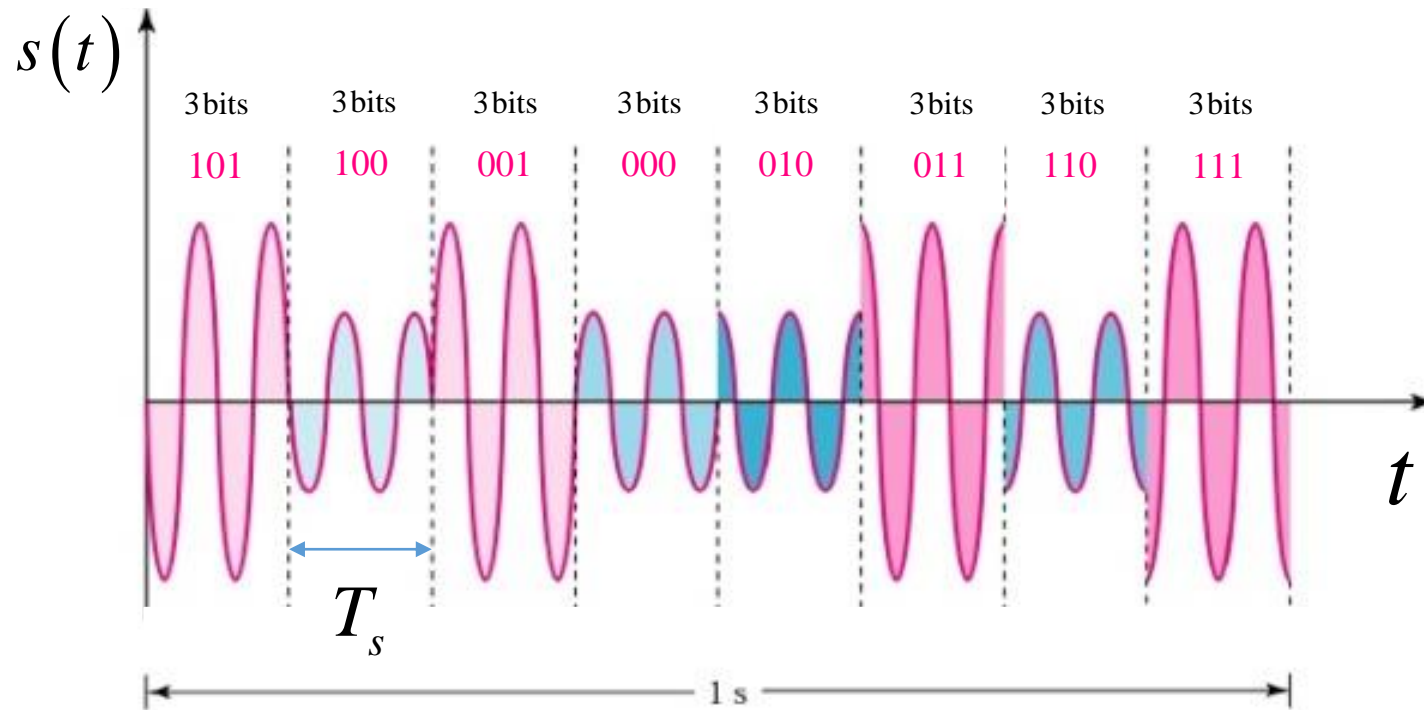
$m = \log_2 M$  : the number of bits per symbol

$d$  : minimum Euclidean distance

$$m_1(t), m_2(t) \in \left\{ \pm d, \pm 3d, \dots, \pm (\sqrt{M} - 1)d \right\}$$

# Example : 8-QAM Signals

*Eight possible waveforms* associated with different **3-bits**.



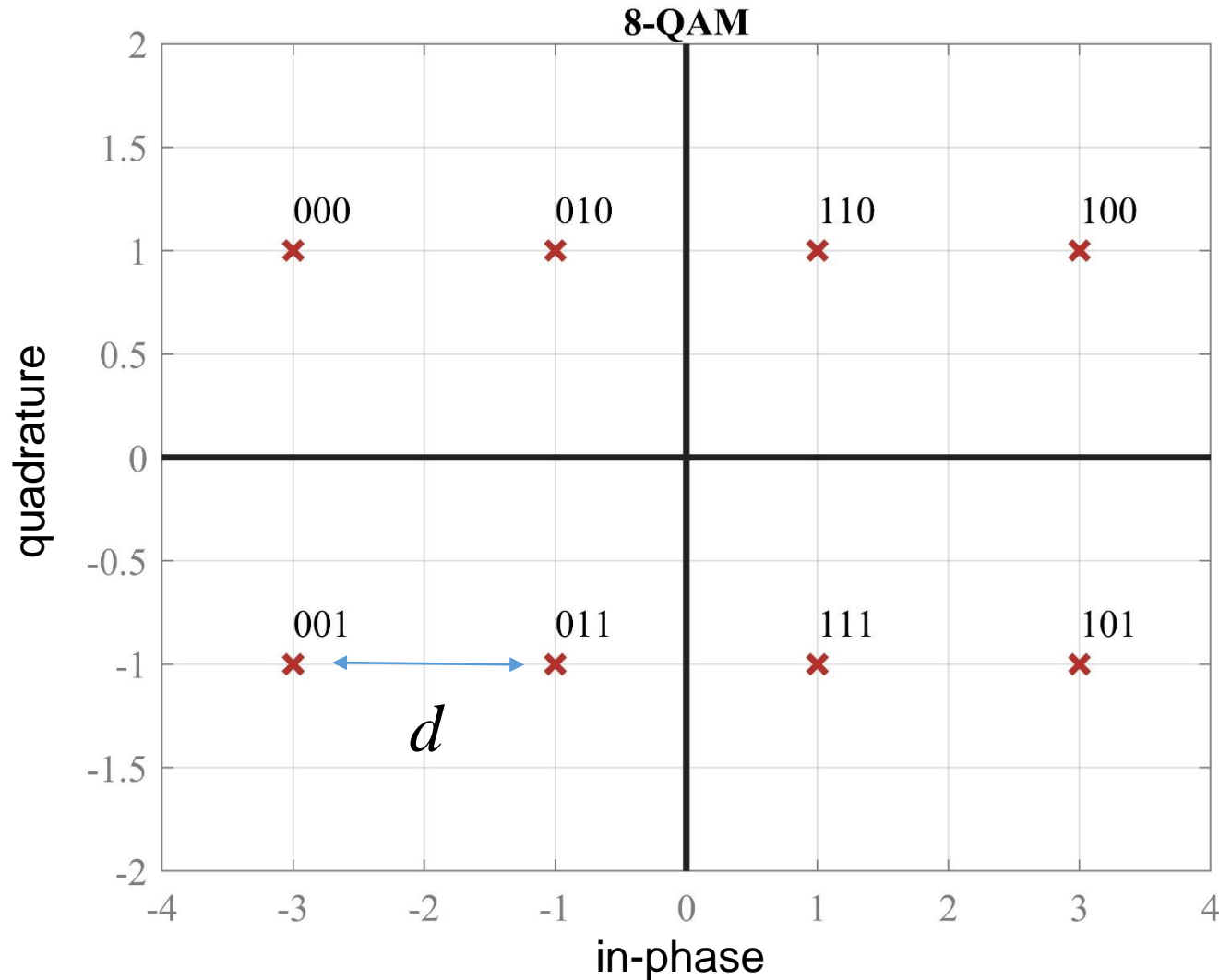
symbol rate = 8 baud  
bit rate =  $8 \times 3 = 24$  bps

$$M = 8$$

$$m = \log_2 8 = 3$$

**One** 8-QAM symbol carries **three** bits.

# Example : 8-QAM Signals (cont.)



$$s = m_1 + jm_2$$

- constellation
- Gray-labelling
- rectangular
- Min. Euclidean distance

# Please Imagine !?

8-QAM : 3 bits per symbol

16-QAM : 4 bits per symbol

256-QAM : 8 bits per symbol

4096-QAM : ??? bits per symbol

4096-QAM is known as **4K-QAM**

-more bits  
bandwidth  
efficient  
- same bandwidth  
- same symbol period

higher  
order

# Pros. & Cons. of Higher-Order QAM

- 01 high data rate (bps)
- 02 high spectral efficiency (bps/Hz)
- 03 supports various data rates
- 04 very sensitive to interference (dense constellation)

# Existing Communication Standards

Higher-order QAM in existing communication systems and standards

DVB-C2-future extensions <a href="#">[1]</a>	65536-QAM
Asymmetric digital subscriber loop for copper twisted cables <a href="#">[2]</a>	32768-QAM
power line ethernets <a href="#">[3]</a>	4096-QAM
IEEE802.11be <a href="#">[4]</a>	4096-QAM



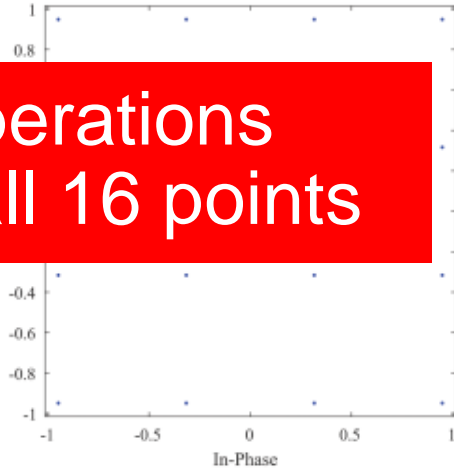
High-order QAM is preferred !



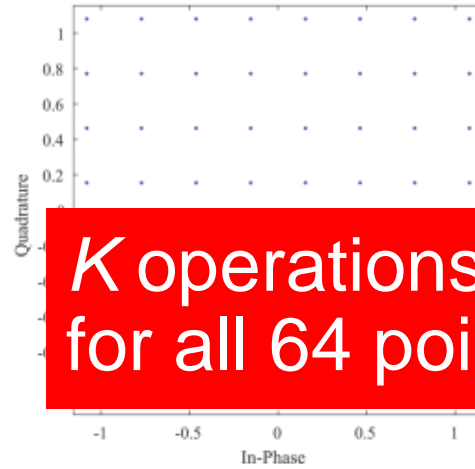
So, we focus on 4K-QAM and beyond !!

# Major Problem : QAM Receiver

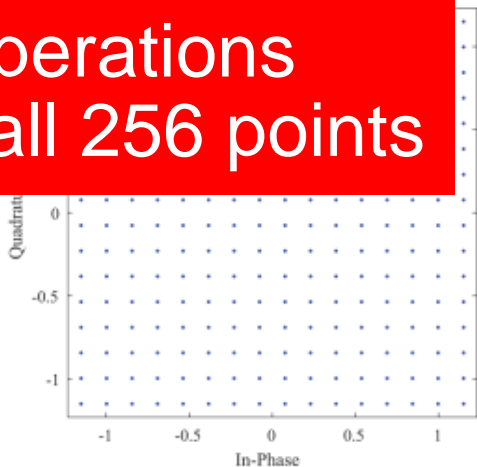
$K$  operations  
for all 16 points



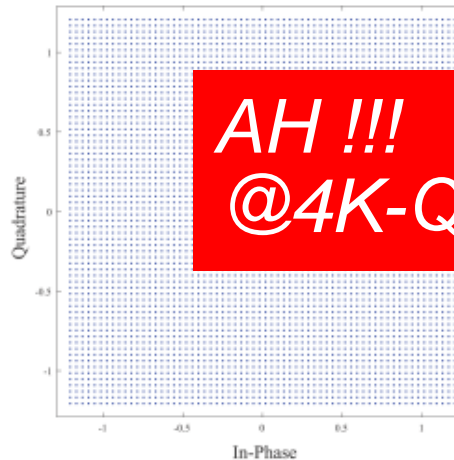
$K$  operations  
for all 64 points



$K$  operations  
for all 256 points



*AH !!!*  
*@4K-QAM*



Higher order  
Higher complexity

not only provide  
hard bit estimation

Modern QAM receiver  
needs to provide

**“soft bit”**

more computational time & complexity

# Our Approach

We expect that

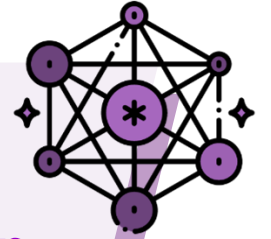
“**Neural Network**” (**NN**)

(from AI/machine learning world)

can solve the problem

# Objectives

1. To **propose** NN-based 4K-QAM soft demodulator



2. To **investigate** the performance NN-based 4K-QAM soft demodulator in **coded 4K-QAM systems**



# Scopes of Research

1

Focus only on **rectangular QAM** systems under AWGN and Rayleigh fading channels.

2

Consider **Gray code** mapping for QAM constellation.

3

Using **LDPC codes as FEC**, with structure and parameters based on **Wi-Fi 7 standard**.

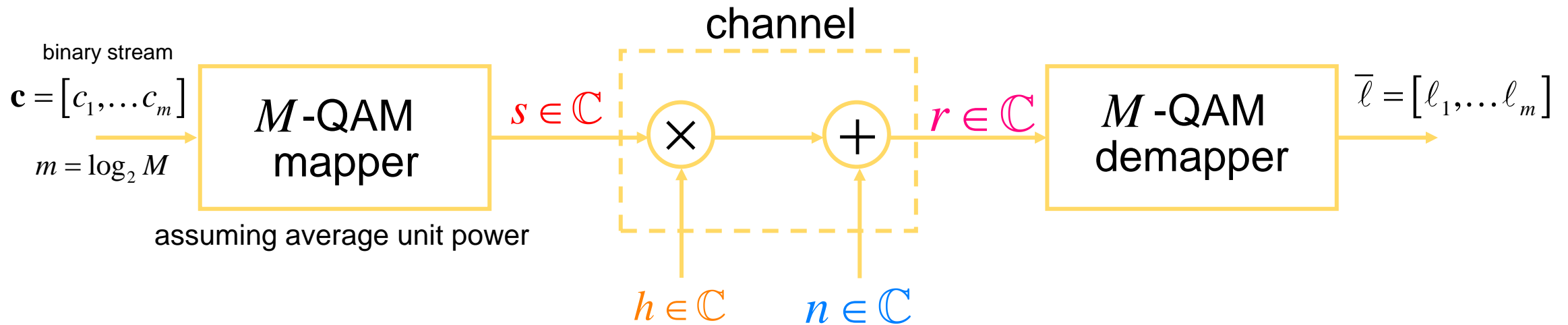




**2**

**Background**

# System Model



$$r = hs + n$$

$s$  : QAM symbol

$r$  : received symbol

$h$  : fading coefficient

$n$  : additive white Gaussian noise

Rayleigh fading channel:

$$h = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}} (a + bj),$$

$$a, b \sim N(0, 1)$$

(two i.i.d. random variables)

AWGN channel:  $h = 1$

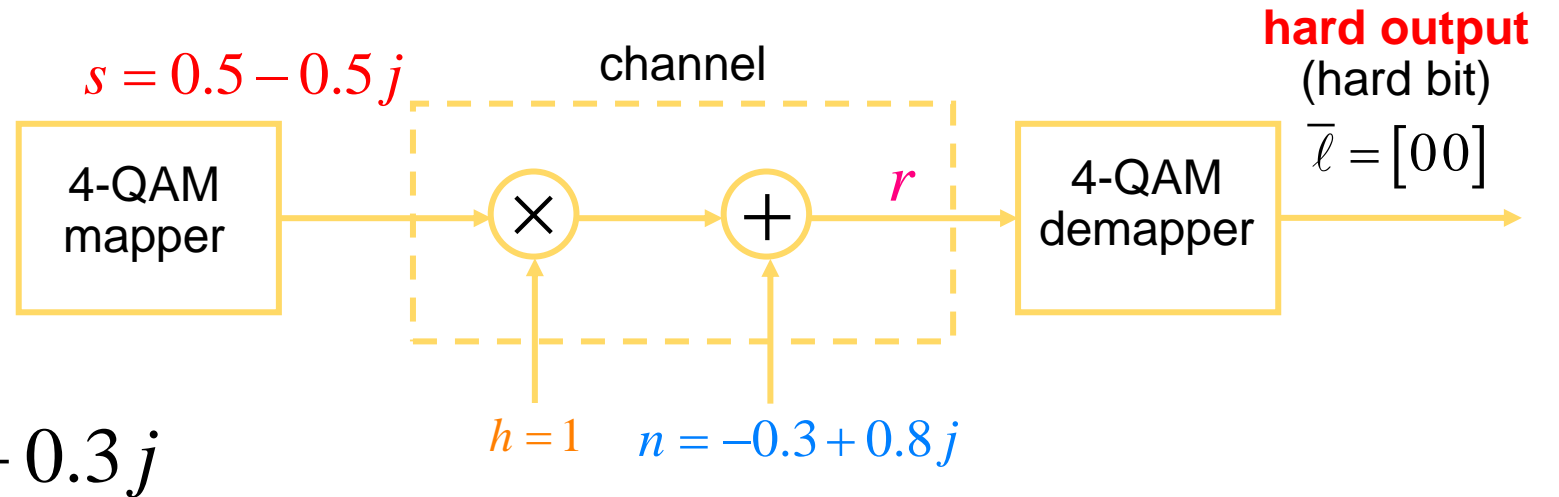
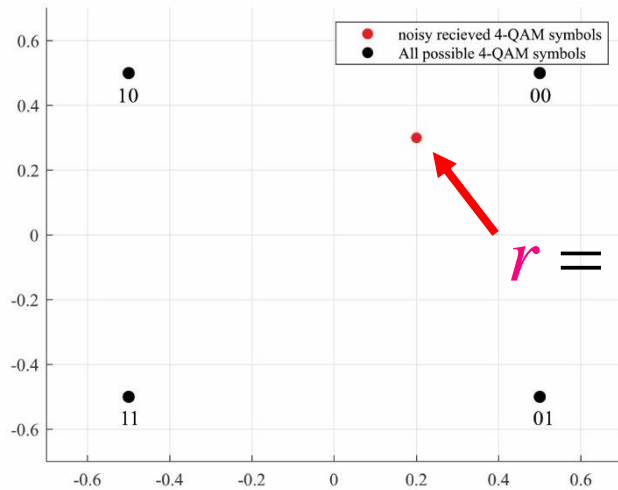
SNR definition:

$$\frac{E_s}{N_0} = mR \frac{E_b}{N_0}$$

$R$  : coding rate

# System Model (cont.)

## Example: 4-QAM



4-QAM symbols	Gray labeling	received symbol	Euclidean distance
$0.5 + 0.5j$	00	$0.2 + 0.3j$	0.36
$0.5 - 0.5j$	01	$0.2 + 0.3j$	0.85
$-0.5 - 0.5j$	11	$0.2 + 0.3j$	1.06
$-0.5 + 0.5j$	10	$0.2 + 0.3j$	0.73

# Log-MAP Algorithm

The **log-likelihood ratio (LLR)** is defined as

$$l_i \triangleq \ln \left( \frac{\Pr(c_i = 1|r)}{\Pr(c_i = 0|r)} \right), i = 1, \dots, m.$$



The **optimal** log maximum a posteriori (MAP) is given by:

$$l_i = \ln \left( \frac{\sum_{s \in S_i^1} e^{\left( -\frac{\|r - hs\|^2}{\sigma^2} \right)}}{\sum_{s \in S_i^0} e^{\left( -\frac{\|r - hs\|^2}{\sigma^2} \right)}} \right), i = 1, \dots, m$$

$\sigma^2$  : noise variance

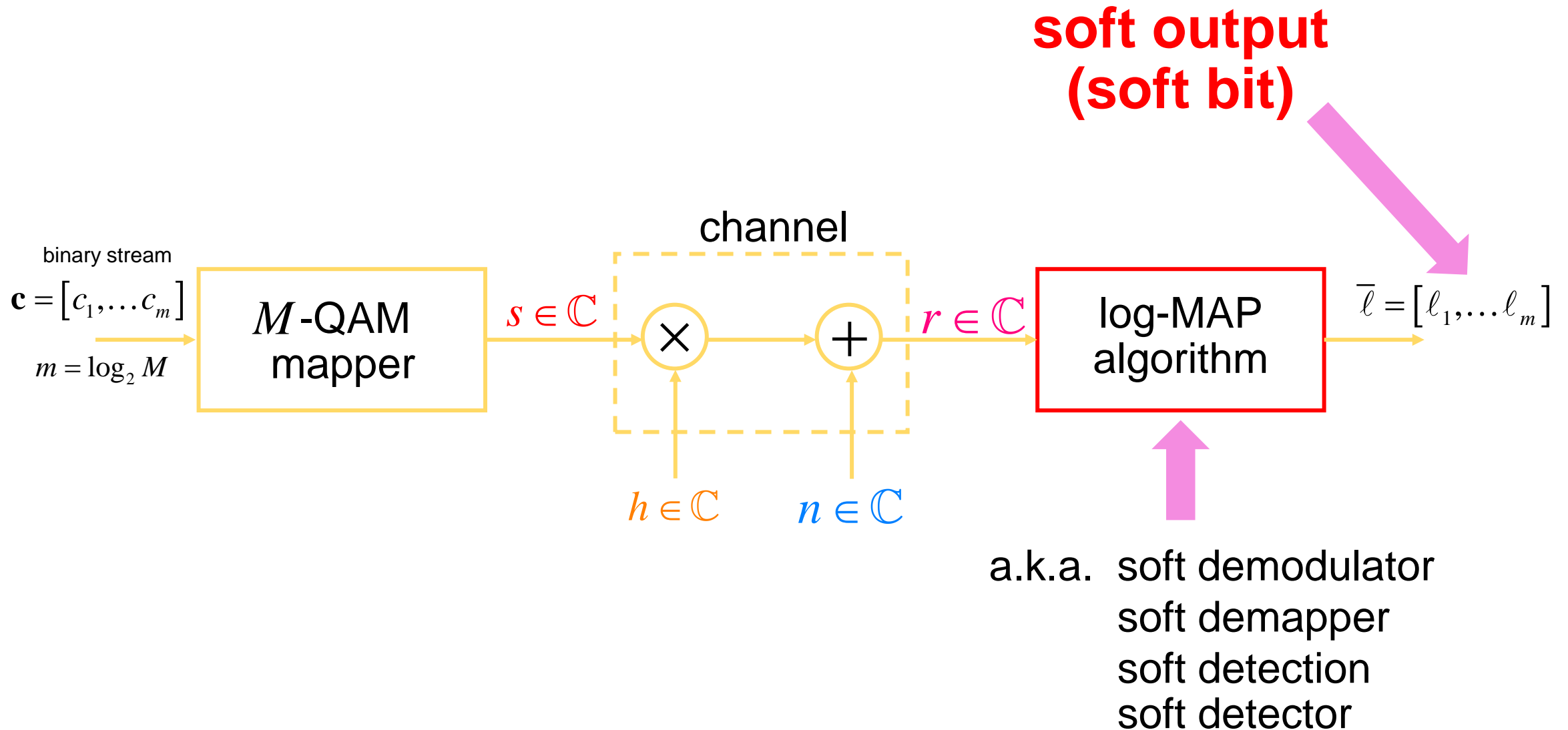
$S_i^b$  : sub set of  $M$ -QAM symbols,  $b \in \{0, 1\}$

if  $\Pr(b_i = 1|r) > \Pr(b_i = 0|r)$  then  $\log \left( \frac{\Pr(b_i = 1|r)}{\Pr(b_i = 0|r)} \right) \rightarrow$  positive value

if  $\Pr(b_i = 1|r) < \Pr(b_i = 0|r)$  then  $\log \left( \frac{\Pr(b_i = 1|r)}{\Pr(b_i = 0|r)} \right) \rightarrow$  negative value

- positive LLR
- negative LLR
- magnitude of LLR

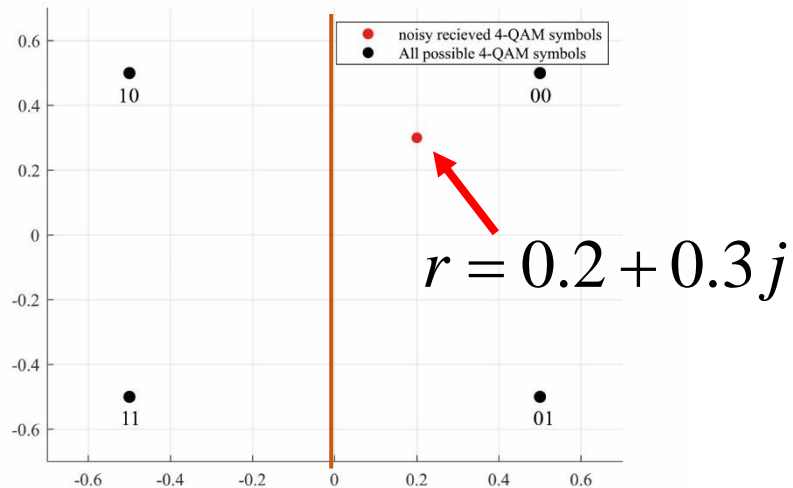
# Soft Bit



# Log-MAP Algorithm (cont.)

## Example: 4-QAM

Given that,



$$s \in \{\pm 0.5 \pm 0.5j\}$$

$$h = 1$$

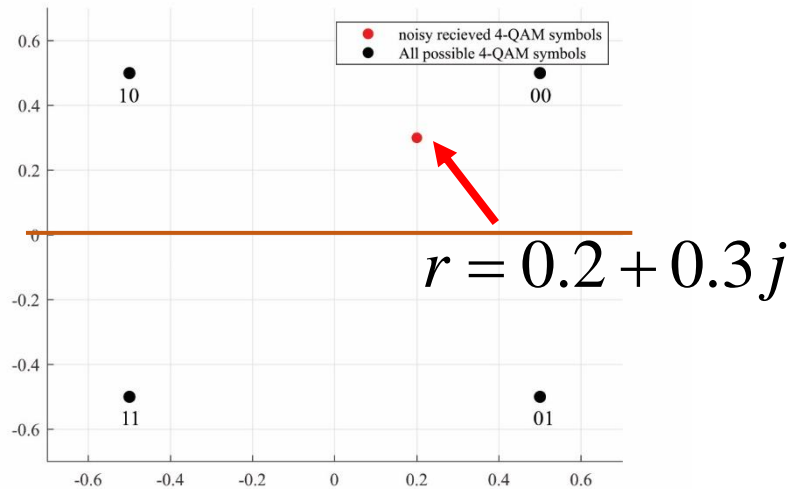
$$\sigma^2 = 0.05$$

$$\begin{aligned} \ell_1 &= \ln \left( \frac{\sum_{s \in \mathcal{S}_1^1} e^{\left( \frac{-\|r-hs\|^2}{\sigma^2} \right)}}{\sum_{s \in \mathcal{S}_1^0} e^{\left( \frac{-\|r-hs\|^2}{\sigma^2} \right)}} \right) \\ &= \ln \left( \frac{e^{\left( \frac{-\|(0.2+0.3j)-(-0.5+0.5j)\|^2}{0.05} \right)} + e^{\left( \frac{-\|(0.2+0.3j)-(-0.5-0.5j)\|^2}{0.05} \right)}}{e^{\left( \frac{-\|(0.2+0.3j)-(0.5+0.5j)\|^2}{0.05} \right)} + e^{\left( \frac{-\|(0.2+0.3j)-(0.5-0.5j)\|^2}{0.05} \right)}} \right) \\ &= -16 \end{aligned}$$

# Log-MAP Algorithm (cont.)

## Example: 4-QAM

Given,



$$s \in \{\pm 0.5 \pm 0.5 j\}$$

$$h = 1$$

$$\sigma^2 = 0.05$$

$$\ell_2 = \log \left( \frac{e^{\left( -\frac{|(0.2+0.3j)-(-0.5-0.5j)|}{0.05} \right)} + e^{\left( -\frac{|(0.2+0.3j)-(0.5-0.5j)|}{0.05} \right)}}{e^{\left( -\frac{|(0.2+0.3j)-(0.5+0.5j)|}{0.05} \right)} + e^{\left( -\frac{|(0.2+0.3j)-(-0.5+0.5j)|}{0.05} \right)}} \right)$$
$$= -24$$

# log-MAP algorithm (cont.)

$$\left. \begin{array}{l} \Pr(b_i = 1|r) = 0.1 \\ \Pr(b_i = 0|r) = 0.9 \end{array} \right\} \log\left(\frac{\Pr(b_i = 1|r)}{\Pr(b_i = 0|r)}\right) = \log\left(\frac{0.1}{0.9}\right) = -2.1972$$

$$\left. \begin{array}{l} \Pr(b_i = 1|r) = 0.3 \\ \Pr(b_i = 0|r) = 0.7 \end{array} \right\} \log\left(\frac{\Pr(b_i = 1|r)}{\Pr(b_i = 0|r)}\right) = \log\left(\frac{0.3}{0.7}\right) = -0.8473$$

$$\left. \begin{array}{l} \Pr(b_i = 1|r) = 0.49 \\ \Pr(b_i = 0|r) = 0.51 \end{array} \right\} \log\left(\frac{\Pr(b_i = 1|r)}{\Pr(b_i = 0|r)}\right) = \log\left(\frac{0.49}{0.51}\right) = -0.04$$

ambiguity

+++++

# Max-Log-MAP Algorithm

Apply this approximation,

$$\log \left( \sum_j \exp(-x_j^2) \right) \approx \max_j (-x_j^2)$$

**well known**  
**suboptimal** detection

get rid of exponential & logarithm

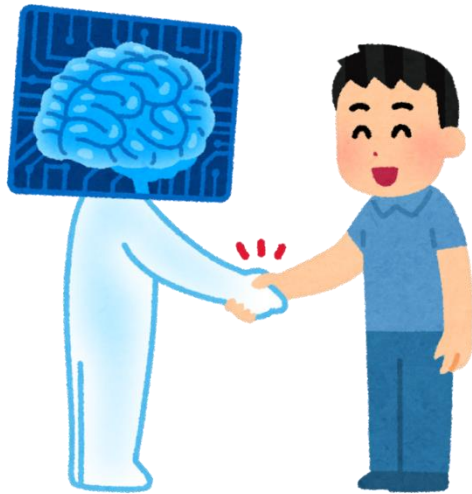
$$l_i = \log \left( \frac{\sum_{s \in S_i^1} e^{\left( -\frac{\|r - hs\|^2}{\sigma^2} \right)}}{\sum_{s \in S_i^0} e^{\left( -\frac{\|r - hs\|^2}{\sigma^2} \right)}} \right)$$

log-MAP

$$l_i \approx \frac{1}{\sigma^2} \left( \min_{s \in S_i^1} \|r - hs\|^2 - \min_{s \in S_i^0} \|r - hs\|^2 \right), i = 1, \dots, m$$

lower complexity

# Artificial Intelligence (AI)



## Artificial intelligence (AI)

A program that can sense, reason, act, and adapt.

## Machine learning

Algorithm that can learn from data and thus perform tasks without explicit instructions.

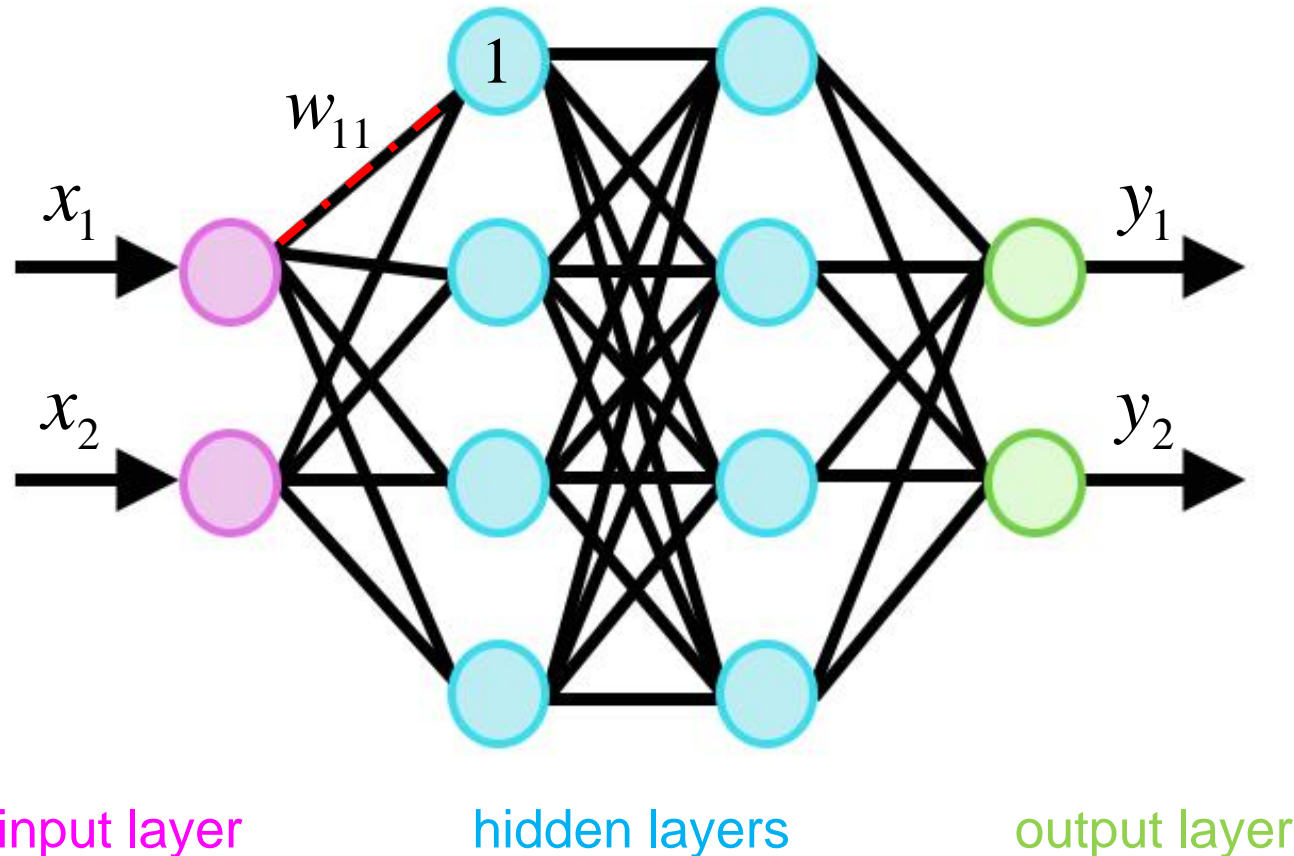
## Deep learning

Subset of machine learning in which multilayer neural network.

# Neural Network (NN)

A neural network, also known as an artificial neural network (ANN), is a computational model **inspired by the structure and function of the human brain**.

ex. NN with 2 inputs + 2 hidden layers + 2 outputs.



- 3 categories of layer
- weights
- fully connected
- #neurons
- #hidden
- shallow / deep
- neuron =  $\Sigma \mid f$

# Neural Network (NN) (cont.)

NN attempts to **learn**  
the relationship between **inputs** and **responses**

$$x^1 \leftrightarrow y^1$$

$$x^2 \leftrightarrow y^2$$

⋮

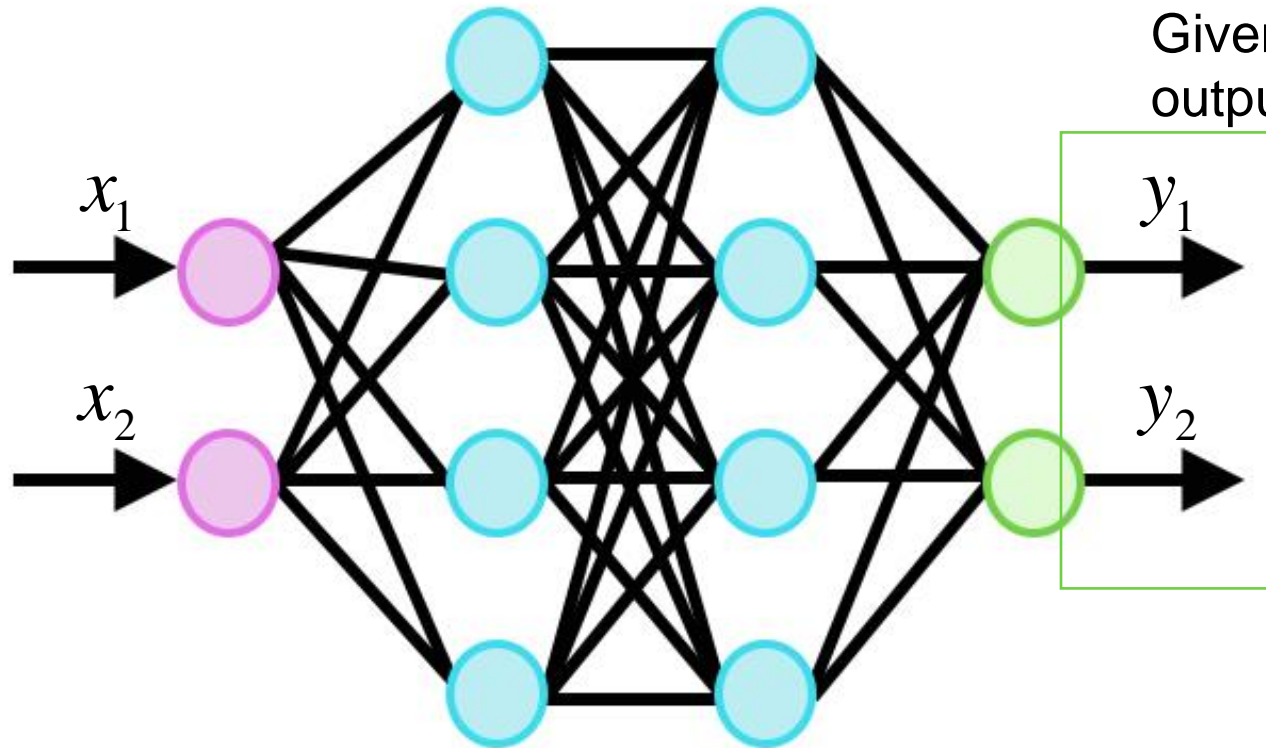
$$x^k \leftrightarrow y^k$$

Relationship can be

scalar to scalar  
scalars to scalar  
vector to vector  
etc.

# Neural Network (NN) (cont.)

ex. NN with 2 inputs + 2 hidden layers + 2 outputs.

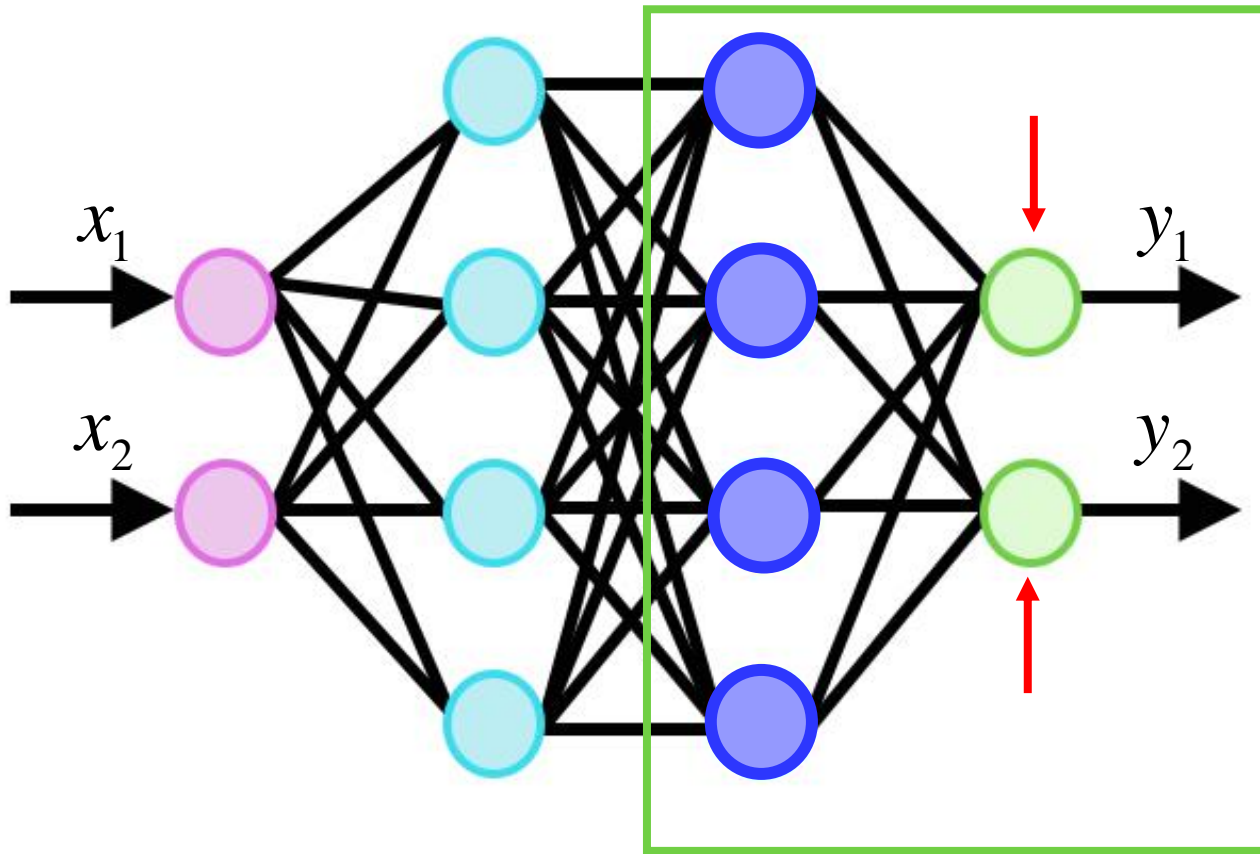


Given the input to NN,  
output from NN is often called **prediction**.

The ultimate goal is  
to find set of **suitable weights**  
that **minimize** the **error**  
between predictions  
and responses  
(real output / ground truth).

# Neural Network (NN) (cont.)

ex. NN with 2 inputs + 2 hidden layers + 2 outputs.



Operation in NN can be viewed  
in matrix / vector form

$$\mathbf{y} = f(\mathbf{W}\mathbf{z} + \mathbf{b})$$

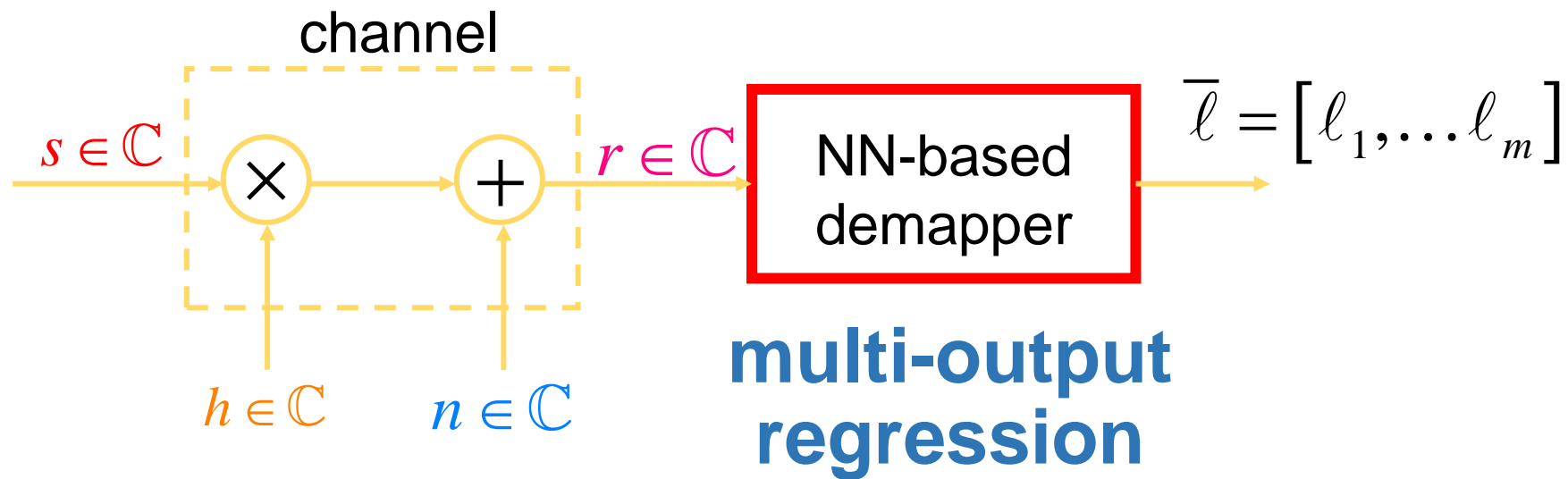
# Overview of NN Generation

1. Data collection: a large number of input/response pairs
2. Dataset generation:
  - training set (a%)
  - validation set (b%)
  - testing set (c%)

a+b+c = 100%
3. Define NN architecture and related parameters (e.g., optimizer, loss function)
4. **Training process**: determine weights for NN
5. **Evaluation**: assess performance of NN

# NN-based Soft Demodulator

given received signal as the input of NN



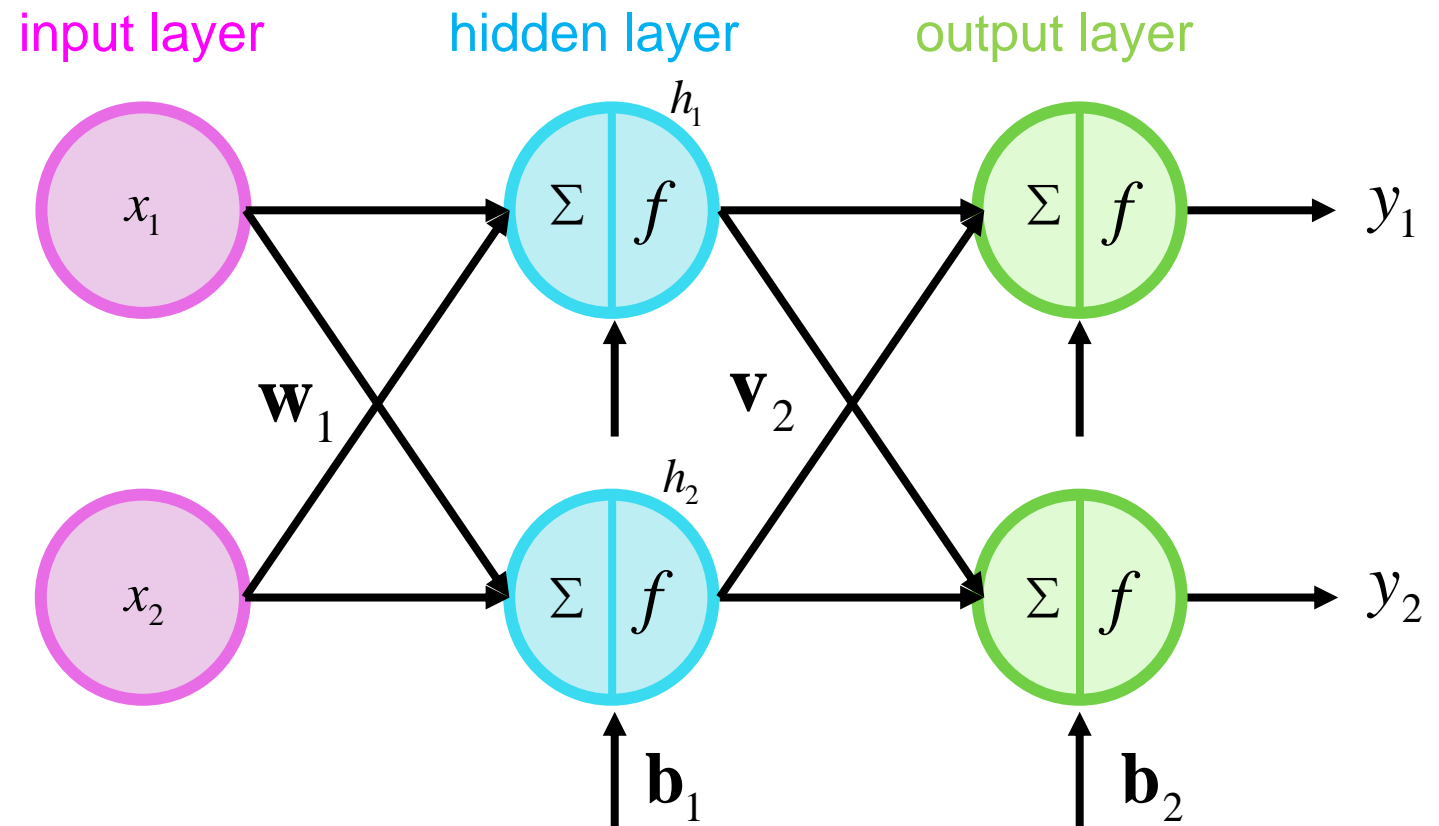
able to estimate LLR

# NN-Based Example

NN task: find good  
 $\mathbf{w}_1, \mathbf{v}_2, \mathbf{b}_1, \mathbf{b}_2$

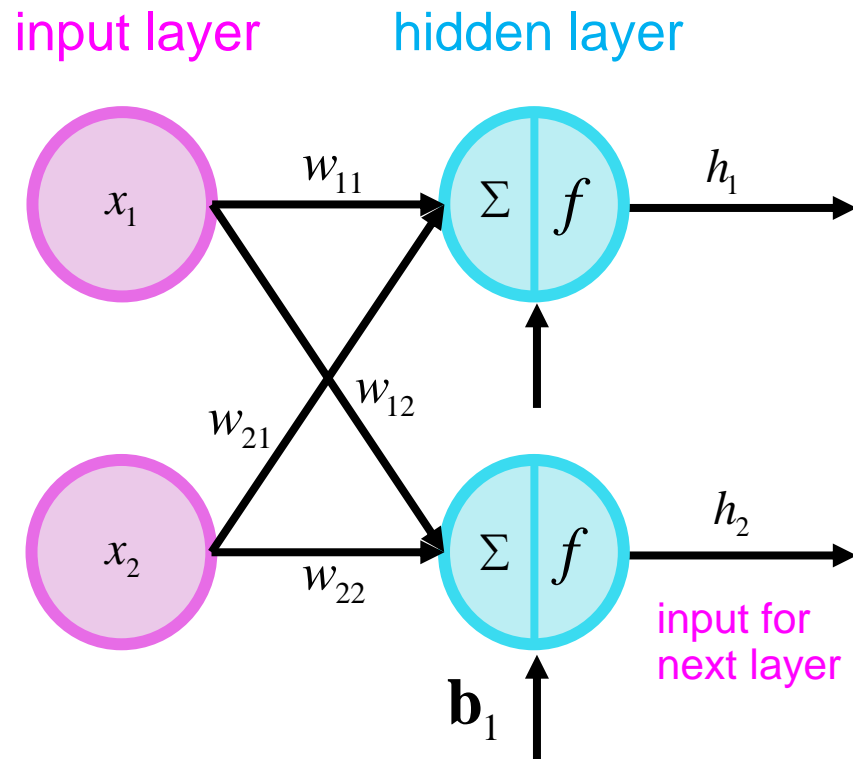
$\mathbf{w}_1, \mathbf{v}_2$  : weight

$\mathbf{b}_1, \mathbf{b}_2$  : bias



# NN-Based Example (cont.)

STEP01: Input layer



assume

$$\mathbf{x} = \begin{bmatrix} 0.2 \\ 0.3 \end{bmatrix} \quad \mathbf{w}_1 = \begin{bmatrix} 0.1 & 0.3 \\ 0.2 & 0.4 \end{bmatrix} \quad \mathbf{b}_1 = \begin{bmatrix} 0.5 \\ 0.6 \end{bmatrix}$$

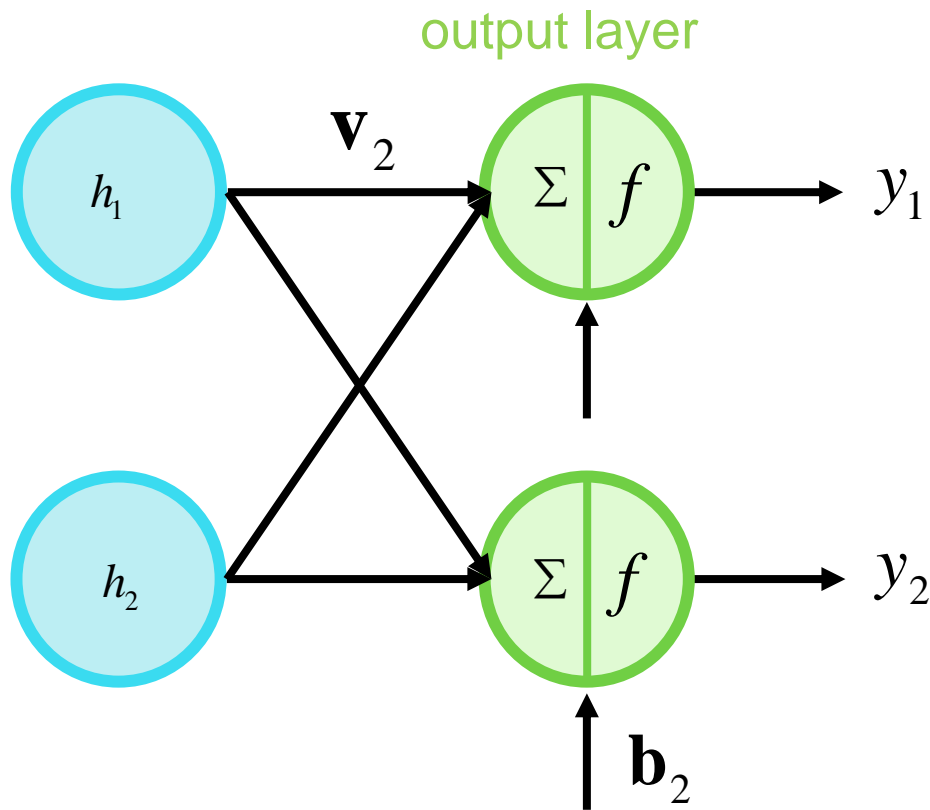
$$\mathbf{h} = \begin{bmatrix} h_1 \\ h_2 \end{bmatrix} = f \left( \begin{bmatrix} x_1 \\ x_2 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} w_{11} & w_{21} \\ w_{12} & w_{22} \end{bmatrix} + \begin{bmatrix} b_{11} \\ b_{12} \end{bmatrix} \right)$$

$f$  : Sigmoid function (can be changed)

$$\mathbf{h} = \begin{bmatrix} h_1 \\ h_2 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 0.6225 \\ 0.7109 \end{bmatrix}$$

# NN-Based Example (cont.)

STEP02: Input layer



output from the last layer  
will be an input for the next layer

assume

$$\mathbf{h} = \begin{bmatrix} 0.6225 \\ 0.7109 \end{bmatrix} \quad \mathbf{v}_2 = \begin{bmatrix} 1.0 & 1.5 \\ 2.0 & 2.5 \end{bmatrix} \quad \mathbf{b}_2 = \begin{bmatrix} 1 \\ 1.5 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$\mathbf{y} = \begin{bmatrix} y_1 \\ y_2 \end{bmatrix} = f \left( \begin{bmatrix} h_1 \\ h_2 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} v_{11} & v_{21} \\ v_{12} & v_{22} \end{bmatrix} + \begin{bmatrix} b_{21} \\ b_{22} \end{bmatrix} \right)$$

prediction  
(LLR approximation)

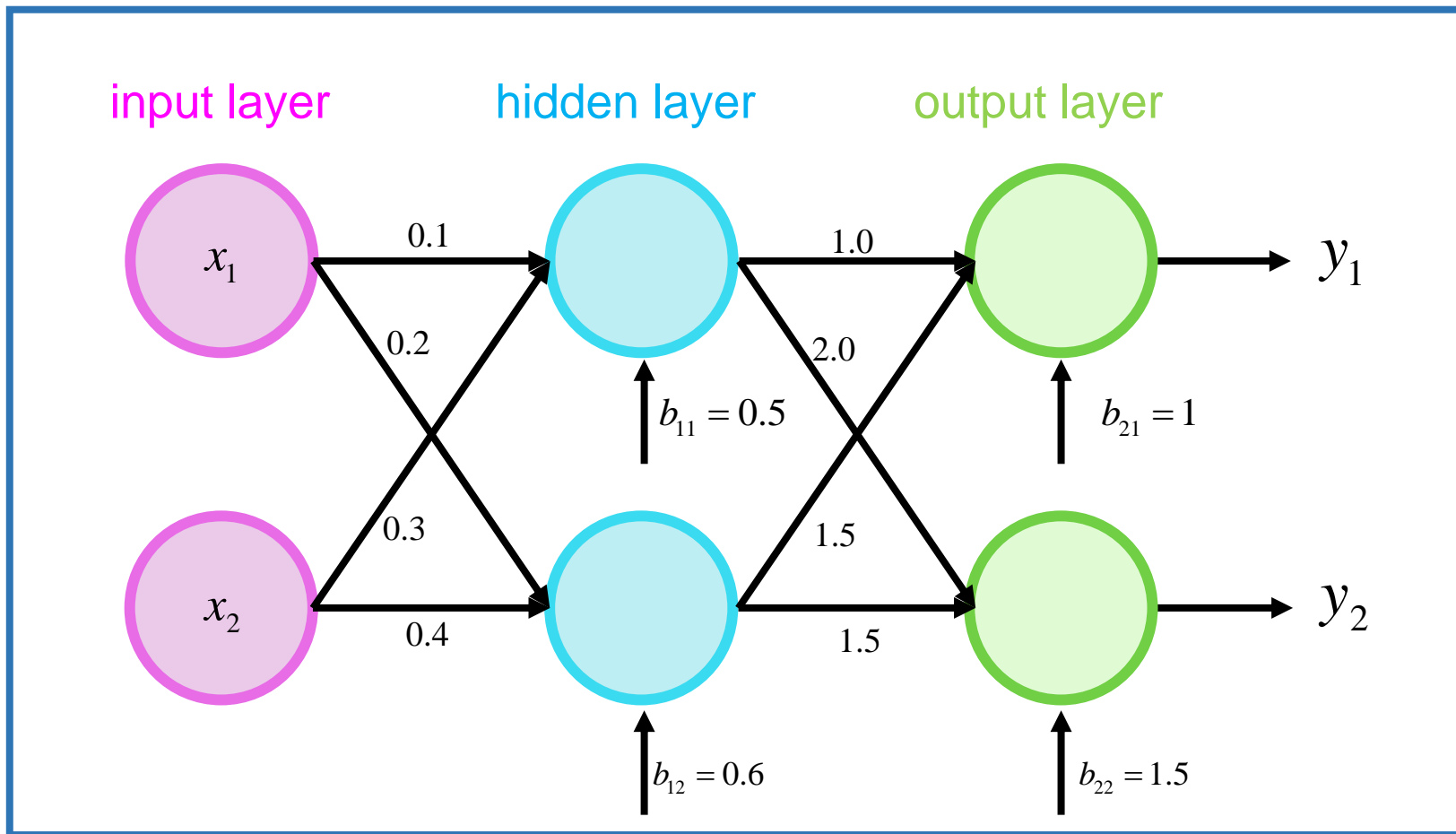
$$\mathbf{y} = \begin{bmatrix} 2.69 \\ 4.53 \end{bmatrix}$$

response  
(ground truth)

$$\bar{\ell} = \begin{bmatrix} -16 \\ -24 \end{bmatrix}$$

**Loss function**  
Mean Square Error  
(MSE) ~ 581.64

# NN-Based Example (cont.)



called  
**NN model**



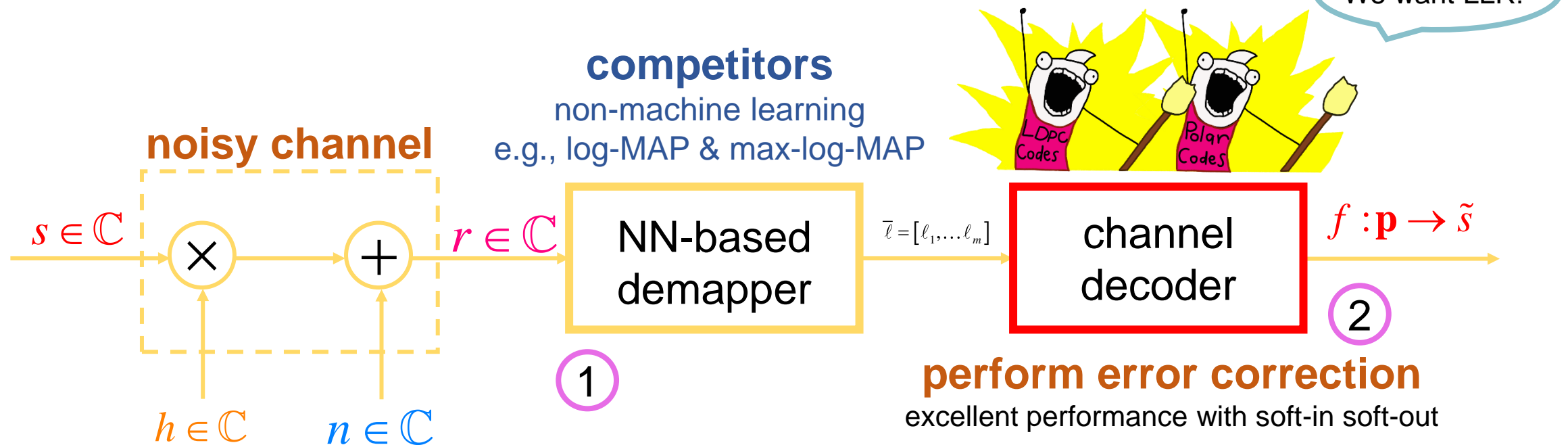
**3**

# **Literature Review**

# Related Works

All works in this section constructed “**Neural Network**” to estimate **LLR** from **QAM** system with the goal to **reduce complexity**.

LLR is essential for modern channel decoders.



# Related Works

2019, O. Shantal and J. Hoydis {shallow}

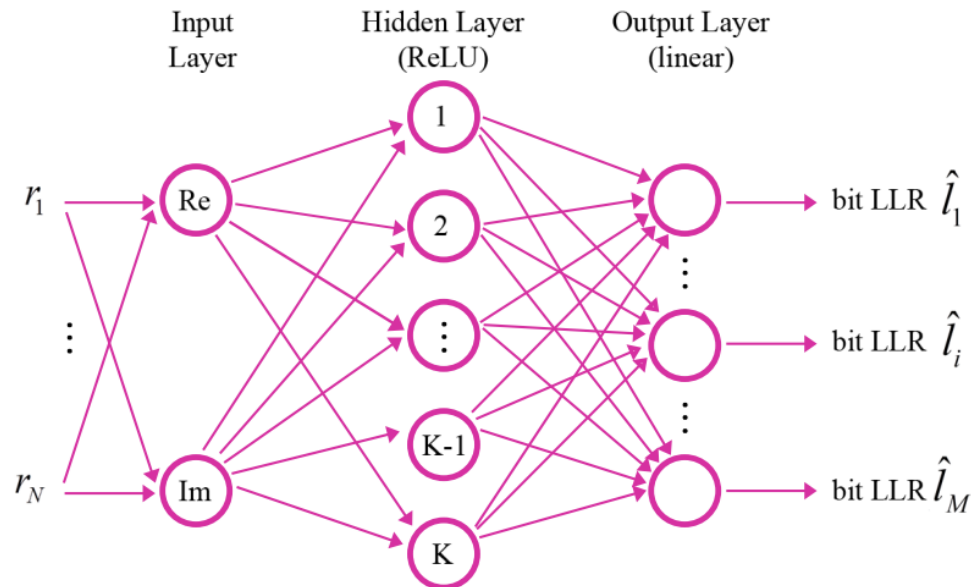
O. Shantal and J. Hoydis, "Machine LLRning": Learning to Softly Demodulate, 2019 IEEE Globecom Workshops (GC Wkshps), Waikoloa, HI, USA, 2019, pp. 1-7

Define this term "Machine LLRning"

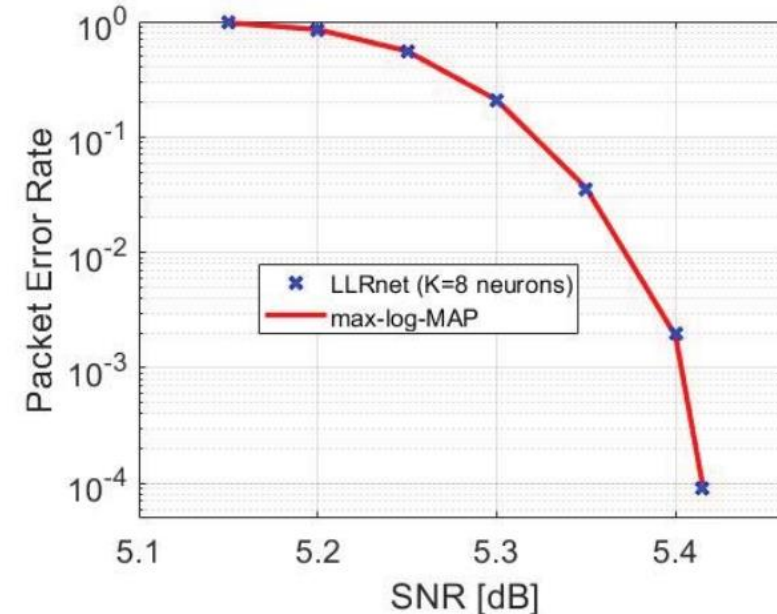
16-QAM (8 neurons) to 1024-QAM (64 neurons)

80% complexity reduction

$$\text{MSE} = 10^{-5}$$



identical decoding performance



# Related Works

**2020, R. N. Toledo, C. Akamine, F. Jerji and L. A. Silva {shallow}**

R. N. Toledo, C. Akamine, F. Jerji and L. A. Silva, "M-QAM Demodulation based on Machine Learning," 2020 IEEE International Symposium on Broadband Multimedia Systems and Broadcasting (BMSB), Paris, France, 2020, pp. 1-6

**256-QAM (20 neurons) to 4096-QAM (50 neurons)  
6.7% time processing reduction for 4K-QAM  
only AWGN is considered**

**2021, S. K. Vankayala, S. Kumar, K. G. Shenoy et al., {shallow}**

S. K. Vankayala, S. Kumar, K. G. Shenoy, D. Thirumulanathan, S. Yoon and I. Kommineni, "Neural Network Architecture for LLR Computation in 5G Systems and Related Business Aspects," 2021 24th International Symposium on Wireless Personal Multimedia Communications (WPMC), Okayama, Japan, 2021, pp. 1-6

**1024-QAM (8 neurons) to 4096-QAM (8 neurons)  
using special activation function  
ignoring some weights during training**

# Related Works (cont.)

**2022, S. Zheng, X. Zhou, S. Chen et al., {deep, 3 hidden layers}**

S. Zheng, X. Zhou, S. Chen, P. Qi, C. Lou and X. Yang, "DemodNet: Learning Soft Demodulation from Hard Information Using Convolutional Neural Network," ICC 2022 - IEEE International Conference on Communications, Seoul, Korea, Republic of, 2022, pp. 1-6

**16-QAM to 256-QAM (64-128-128)**

**using convolutional NN with taking hard info. (special preprocessing)**

**2023, Y. Zhang et al., {deep, 3 hidden layers}**

Y. Zhang et al., "Low Complexity Log Likelihood Ratio Estimation Algorithm Based on Neural Network in Decoding," 2023 6th International Conference on Electronics Technology (ICET), Chengdu, China, 2023, pp. 652-657

**16-QAM (4-4) to 64-QAM (4-16-8)**

**construct NN for various SNR.**

**only AWGN is considered.**

# Summary

1. Only 5 papers exist.
2. Mainly focus on AWGN channel.
3. NN-based 4K-QAM soft demodulator for **Rayleigh fading** channel has not yet been explored.
4. NN-based QAM soft demodulator for  **$M > 4096$**  has not yet been mentioned.



4

# Research Methodology

# NN Architecture

**4 inputs:**

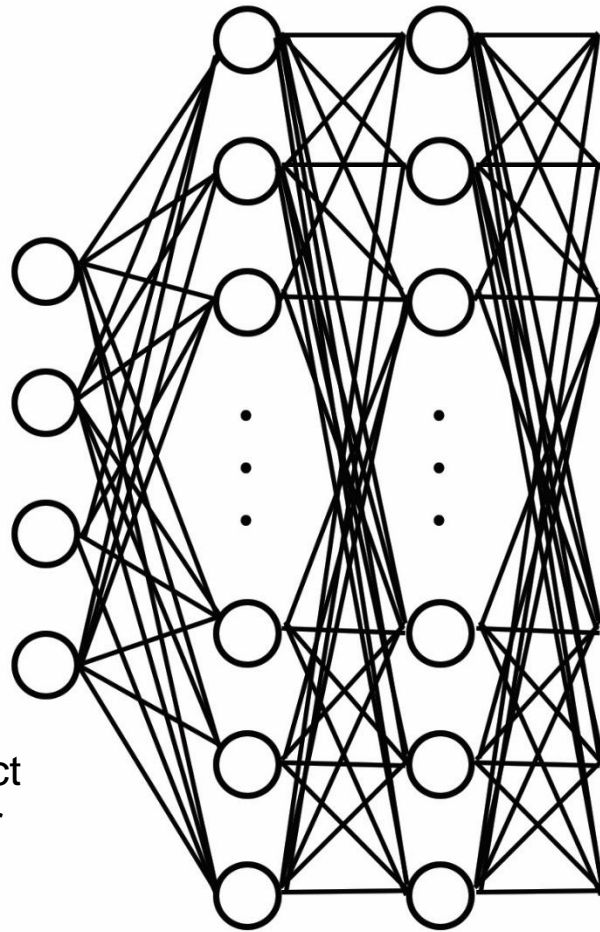
$\text{Re}(r)$

$\text{Im}(r)$

$\text{Re}(h)$

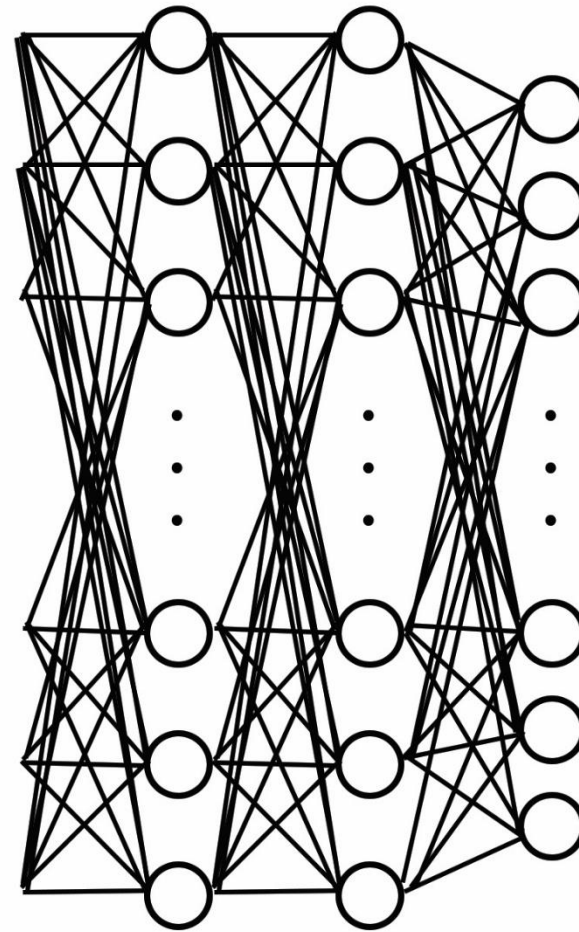
$\text{Im}(h)$

assuming perfect  
C.S.I at receiver



input  
layer

...



hidden layers

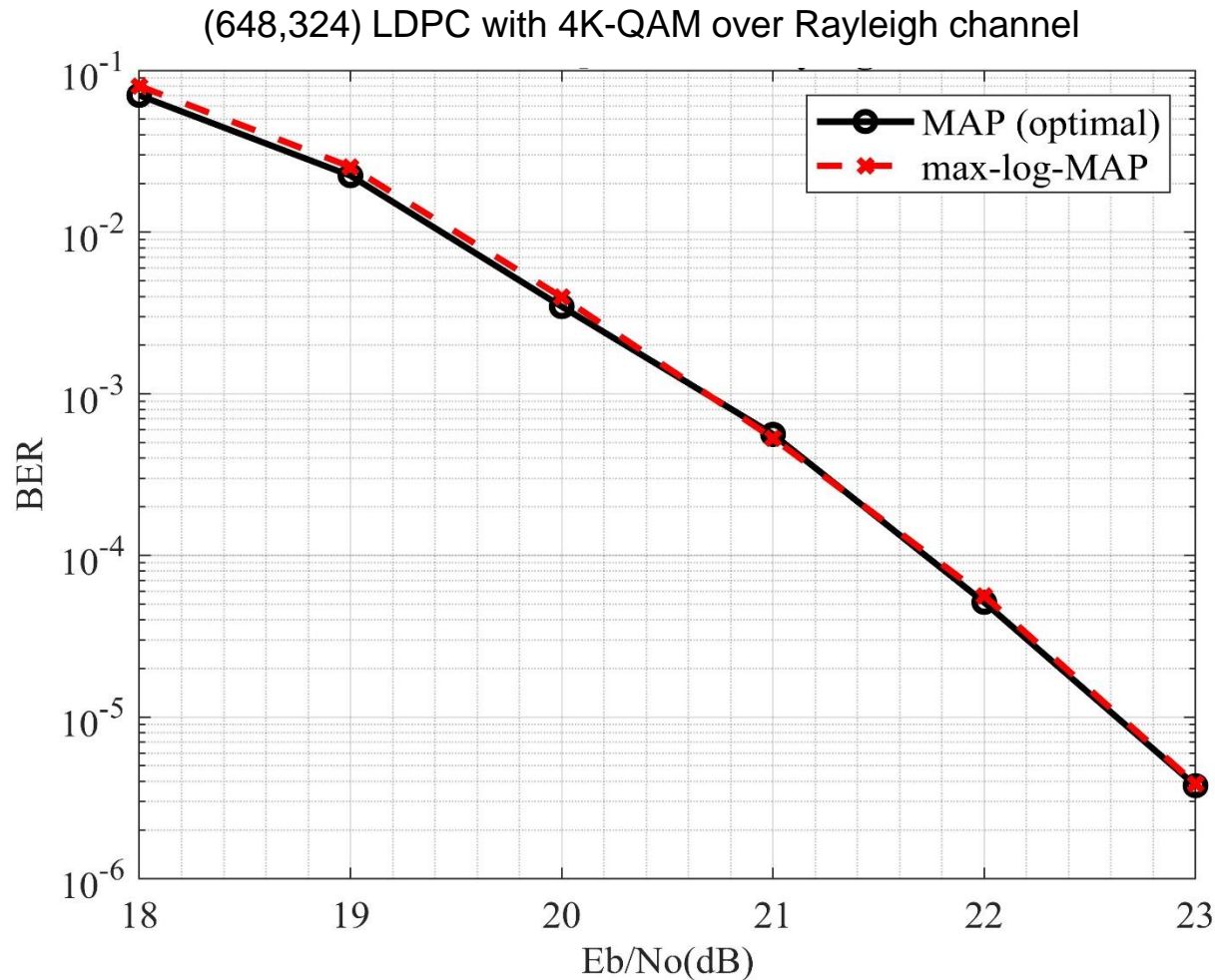
output  
layer

***m* outputs:**

$$\bar{l} = [l_1, \dots, l_m]$$

LLR

# LLR Characteristic in 4K-QAM



We prefer to use **LLR** calculated from **max-log-MAP** as an **input** for **NN training**.

- numerical stability
- time consuming
- only for 4K-QAM

# Data Collection: Input for Training

inputs

responses

$$r^1 \leftrightarrow \bar{l}^1 = [l_1, \dots, l_m]$$

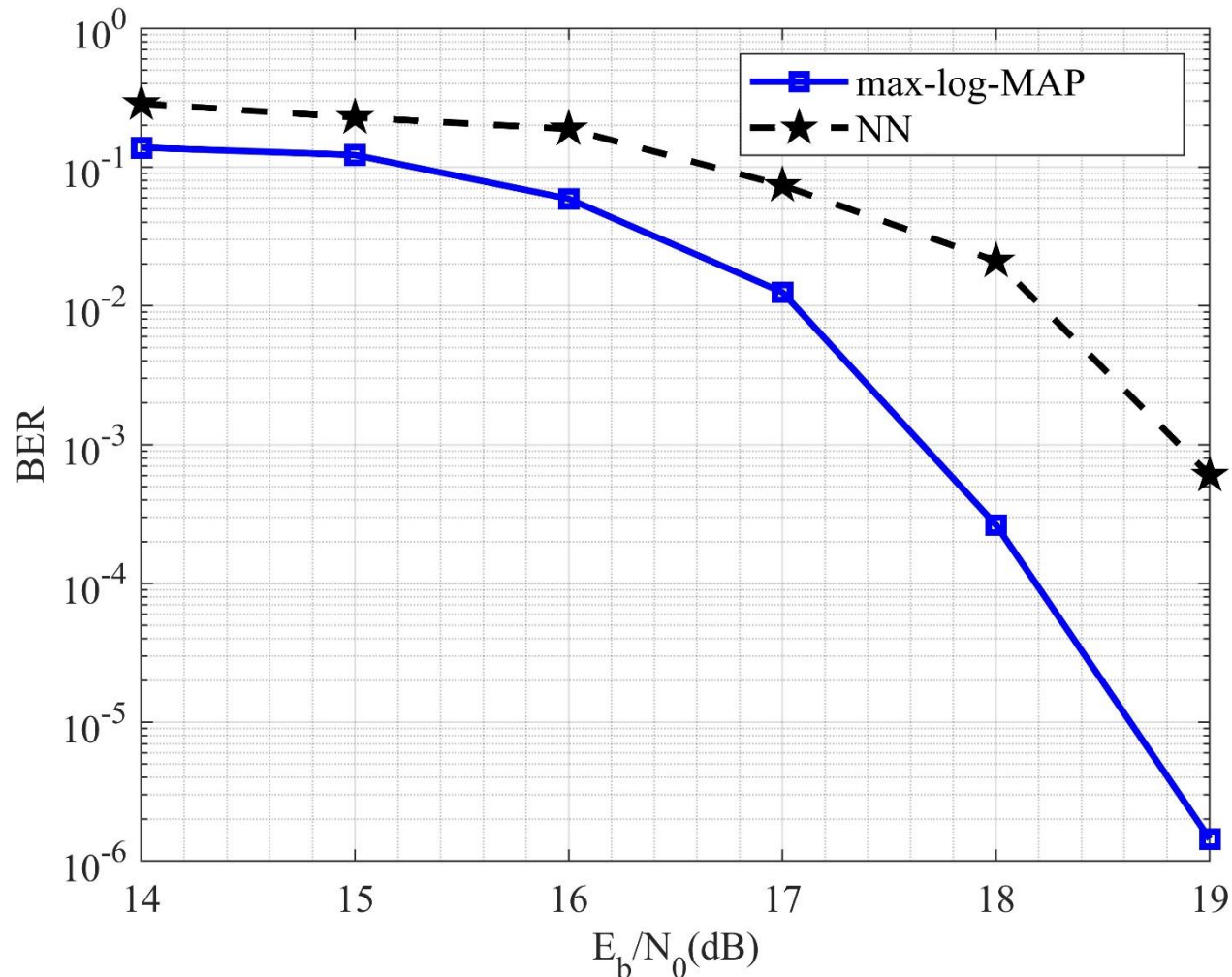
$$r^2 \leftrightarrow \bar{l}^2 = [l_1, \dots, l_m]$$

⋮

$$r^k \leftrightarrow \bar{l}^k = [l_1, \dots, l_m]$$

**here are feature/response pairs**

# It Is Not Easy Task

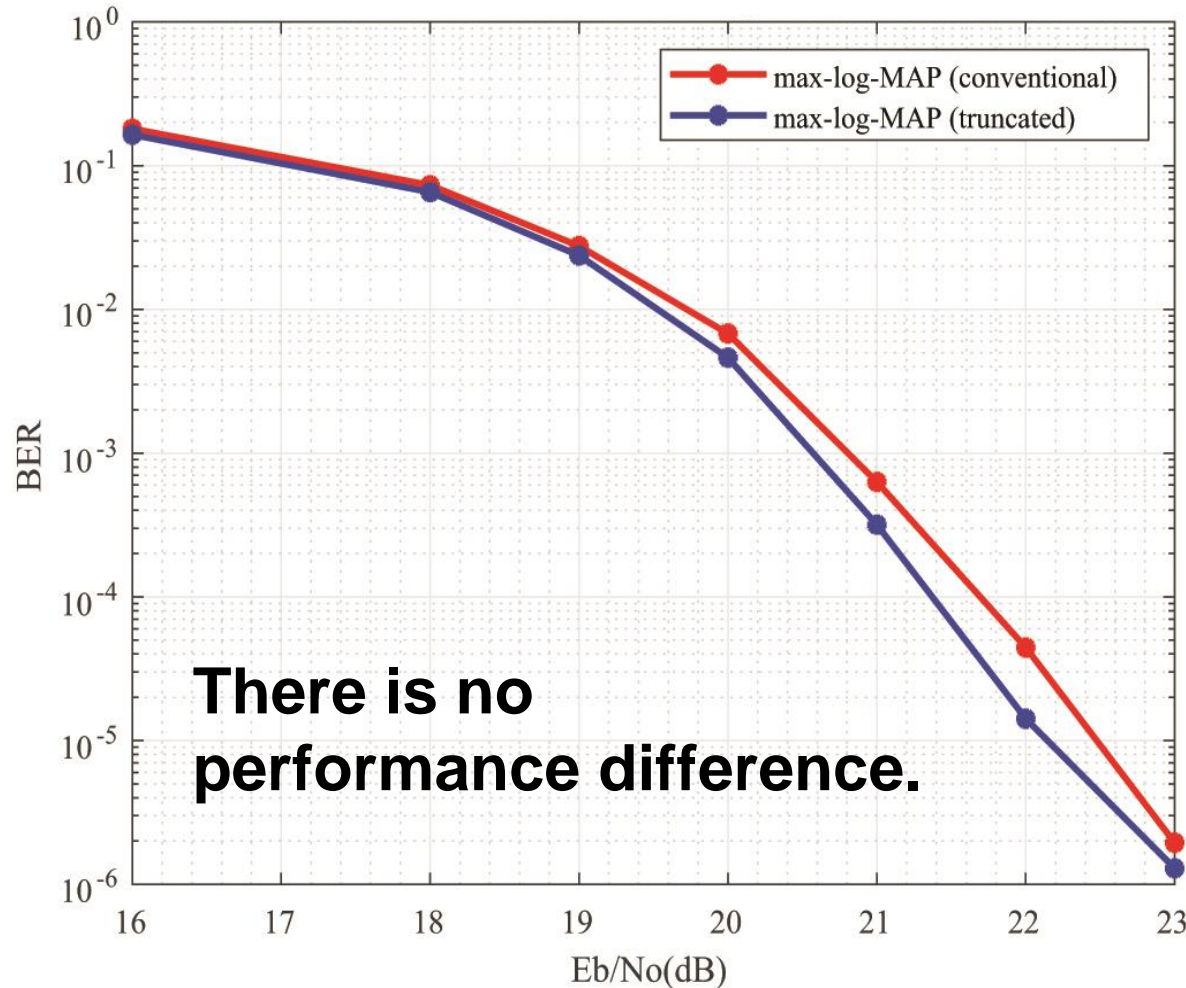


Simply **put**  
a **large collection**  
of feature/response  
pairs into **NN**  
does **not work !**

$$k \rightarrow \infty$$

**Loss does not go to 0.**

# Take a Look at Training Input



## LLR truncation

$$l_i = \begin{cases} -20 & , \quad l_i \leq -20 \\ l_i & , \quad -20 < l_i < 20 \\ 20 & , \quad l_i \geq 20 \end{cases}$$

**So, the magnitude of LLR is not sensitive to performance.**

**Finite range of LLR is hardware-friendly.**

# Define A New Measurement

Accuracy regarding LLR sign agreement

$$K = \frac{1}{km} \sum_{i=1}^{km} f \left( \ell_i^{\text{exact}}, \ell_i^{\text{predict}} \right)$$

$$\text{where, } f \left( \ell_i^{\text{exact}}, \ell_i^{\text{predict}} \right) = \begin{cases} 1, & \text{sign} \left( \ell_i^{\text{exact}} \right) = \text{sign} \left( \ell_i^{\text{predict}} \right) \\ 0, & \text{sign} \left( \ell_i^{\text{exact}} \right) \neq \text{sign} \left( \ell_i^{\text{predict}} \right) \end{cases}$$

no sign difference  $\rightarrow$  100% accuracy

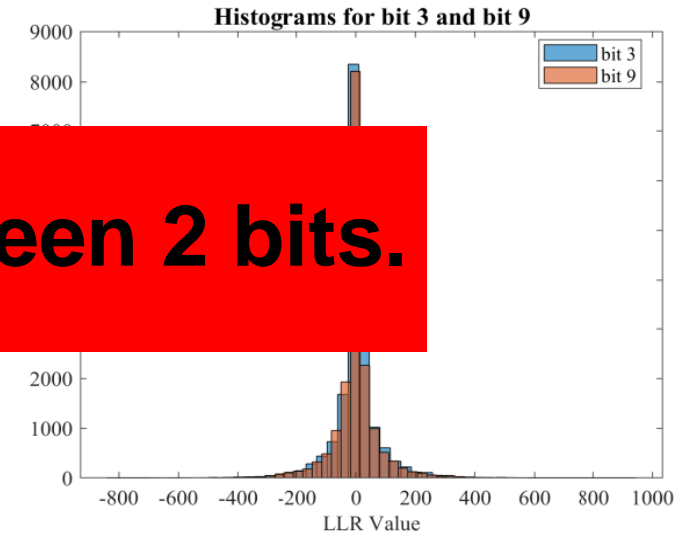
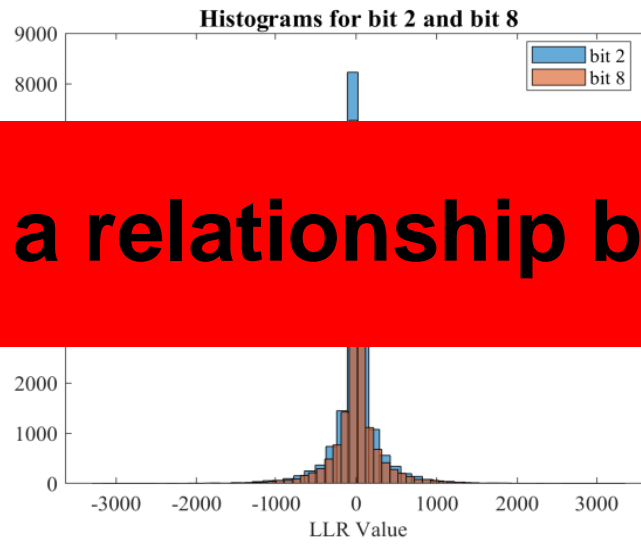
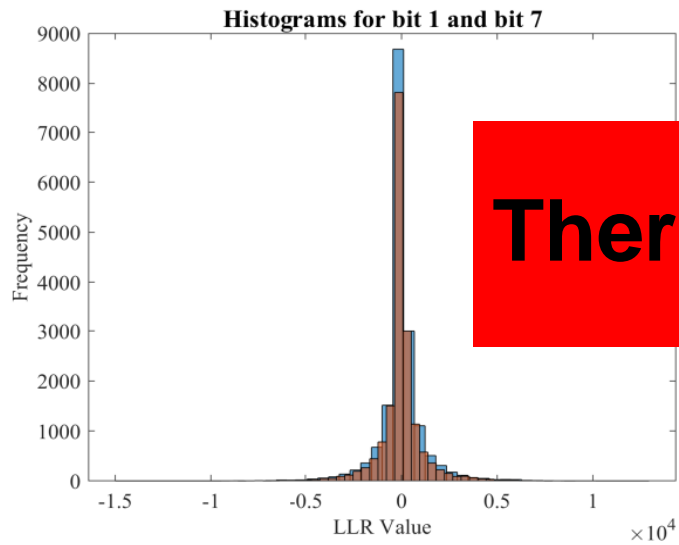
# We found this !

Apply previous measurement per bit

Bit	1	2	3	4	5	6
ACC	1.00	0.99	0.98	0.87	0.57	0.54
Bit	7	8	9	10	11	12
ACC	1.00	0.98	0.97	0.89	0.57	0.56

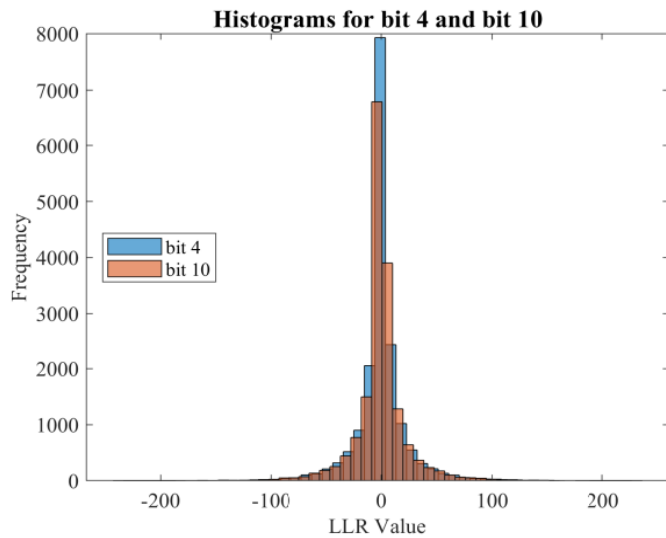
AWGN channel  
#dataset = 100k  
NN (shallow): 256 nodes

**Here is the problem.**

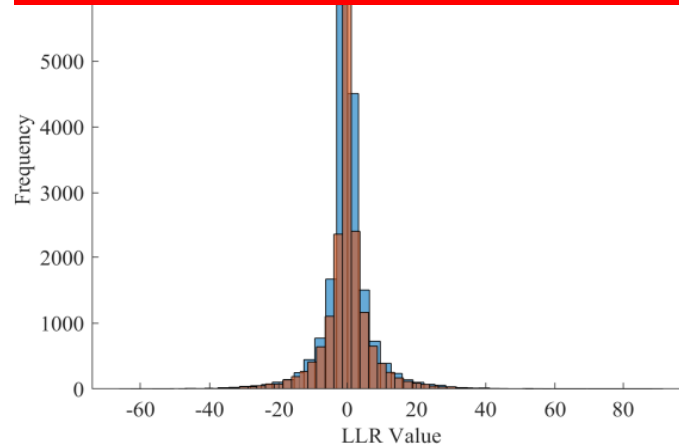


**There is a relationship between 2 bits.**

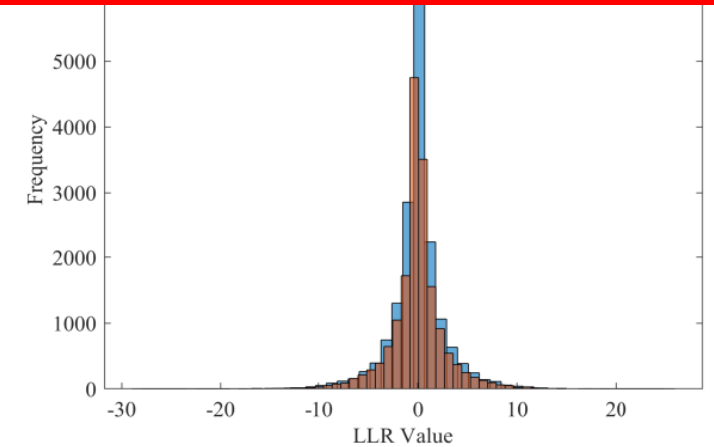
(a) Histogram for Bit 1 and Bit 7.



(d) Histogram for Bit 4 and Bit 10.



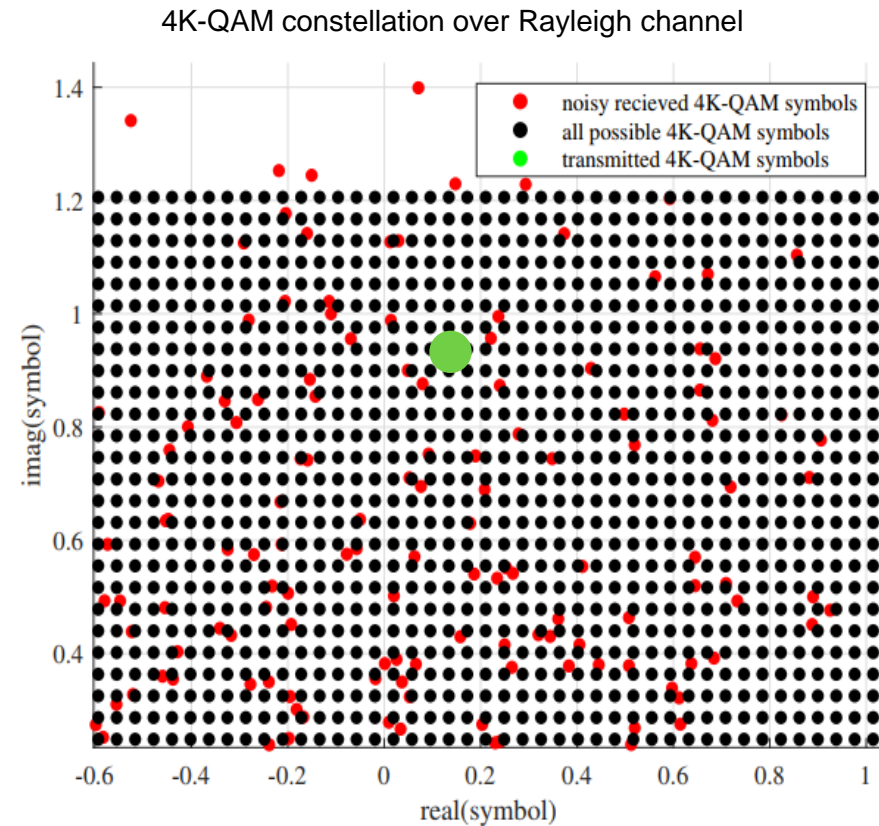
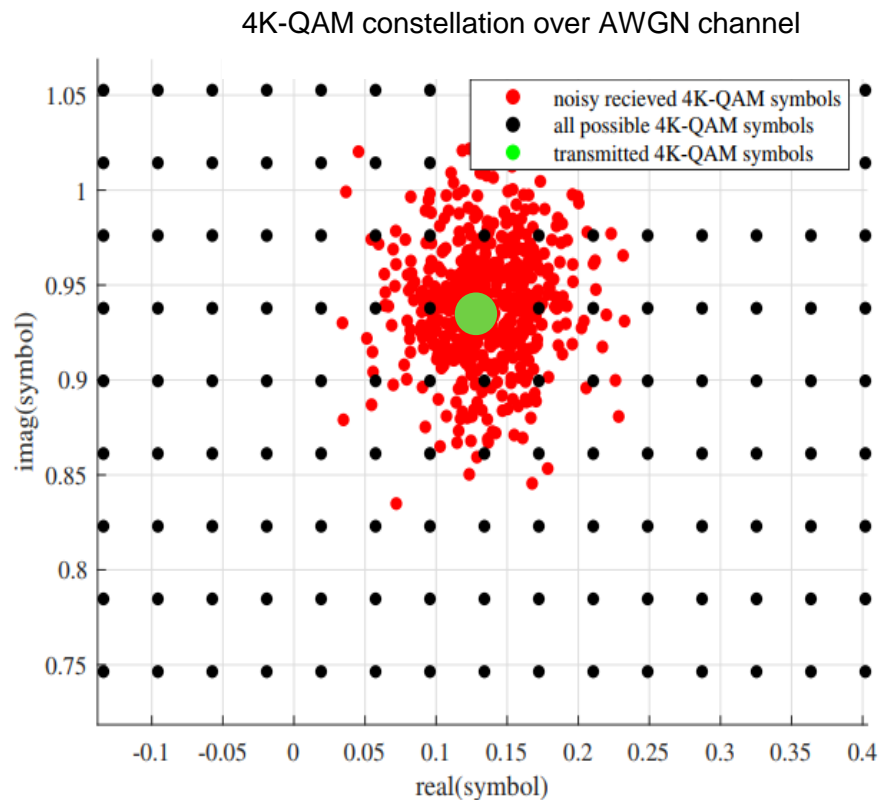
(e) Histogram for Bit 5 and Bit 11.



(f) Histogram for Bit 6 and Bit 12.

**high level of ambiguity at bit 5 6 11 12**

# Difficulty of Rayleigh Fading Channel



**training NN for Rayleigh case is more harder than AWGN**  
(need deeper NN architecture)

# Proposed Trainable Framework

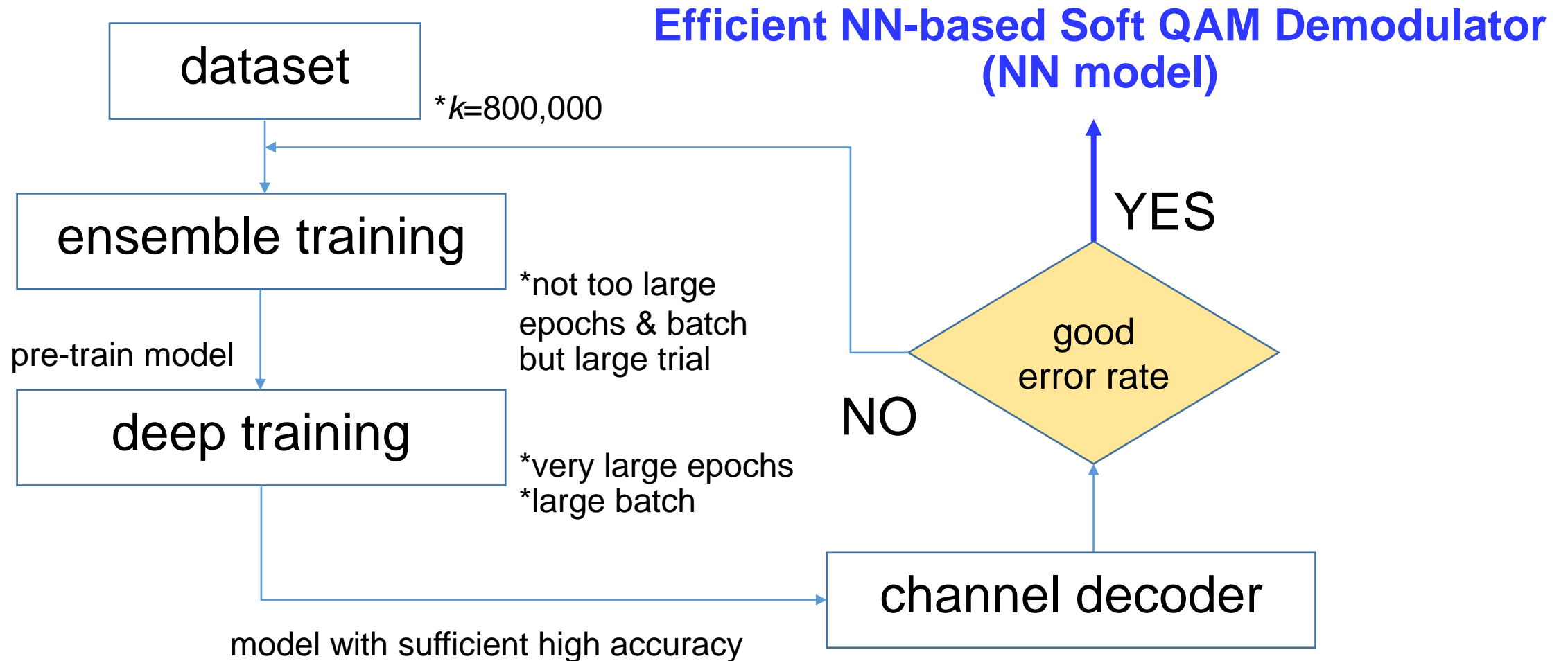
## Data-preprocessing :

- 4 input feature needs z-normalization
- input response needs special **min-max scaling**

## Specific training parameters :

- fully connected feed forward neuron network
- learning rate : 0.0001
- optimizer: SGDM
- L2 regularization (penalized rate 0.001)
- batch normalization layer
- activation function : LeakyReLU
- loss function: MSE

# Proposed Trainable Framework (cont.)





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# **Results & Discussion**

# Accuracy for NN-based 4K-QAM

full option	99 %
only preprocessing	75 %
only network tweaking	69 %
original data	55 %

Train NN with **proposed framework**  
achieve **almost perfect accuracy**.

# Complexity in Terms of FLOPs

For M-QAM

$$\text{FLOPs}_{\log\text{-MAP}} = 56M \log_2 M + 51 \log_2 M$$

$$\text{FLOPs}_{\max\text{-log-MAP}} = 5M \log_2 M + 8(\log_2 M)^2 - 6 \log_2 M$$

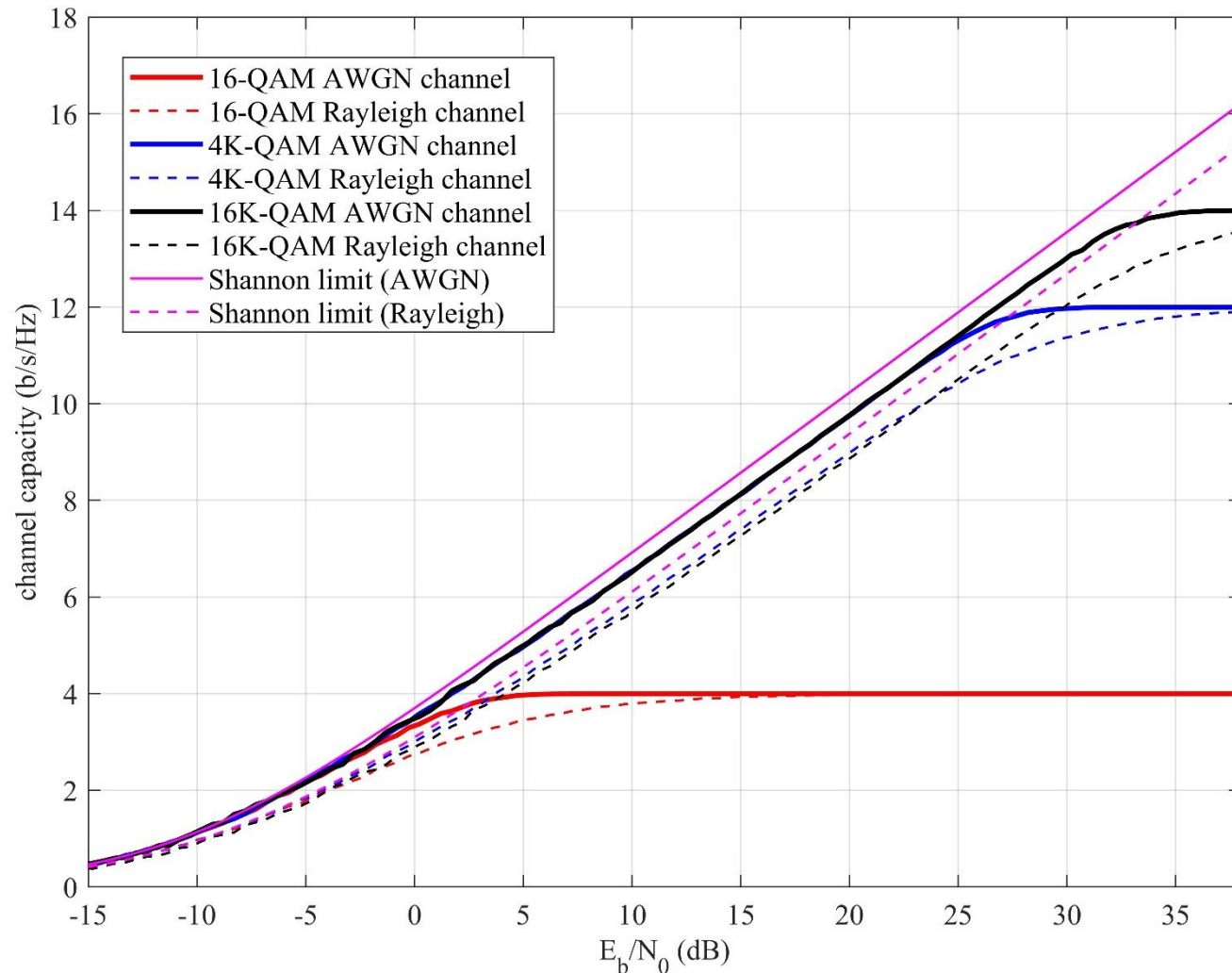
For 4K-QAM

$$\text{FLOPs}_{\text{NN-4inputs}} = 34n_p + (n_h - 1)(2n_p^2 + 4n_p) - 1$$

$n_p$  : #nodes per 1 hidden

$n_h$  : #hidden layers

# Channel Capacity as Reference



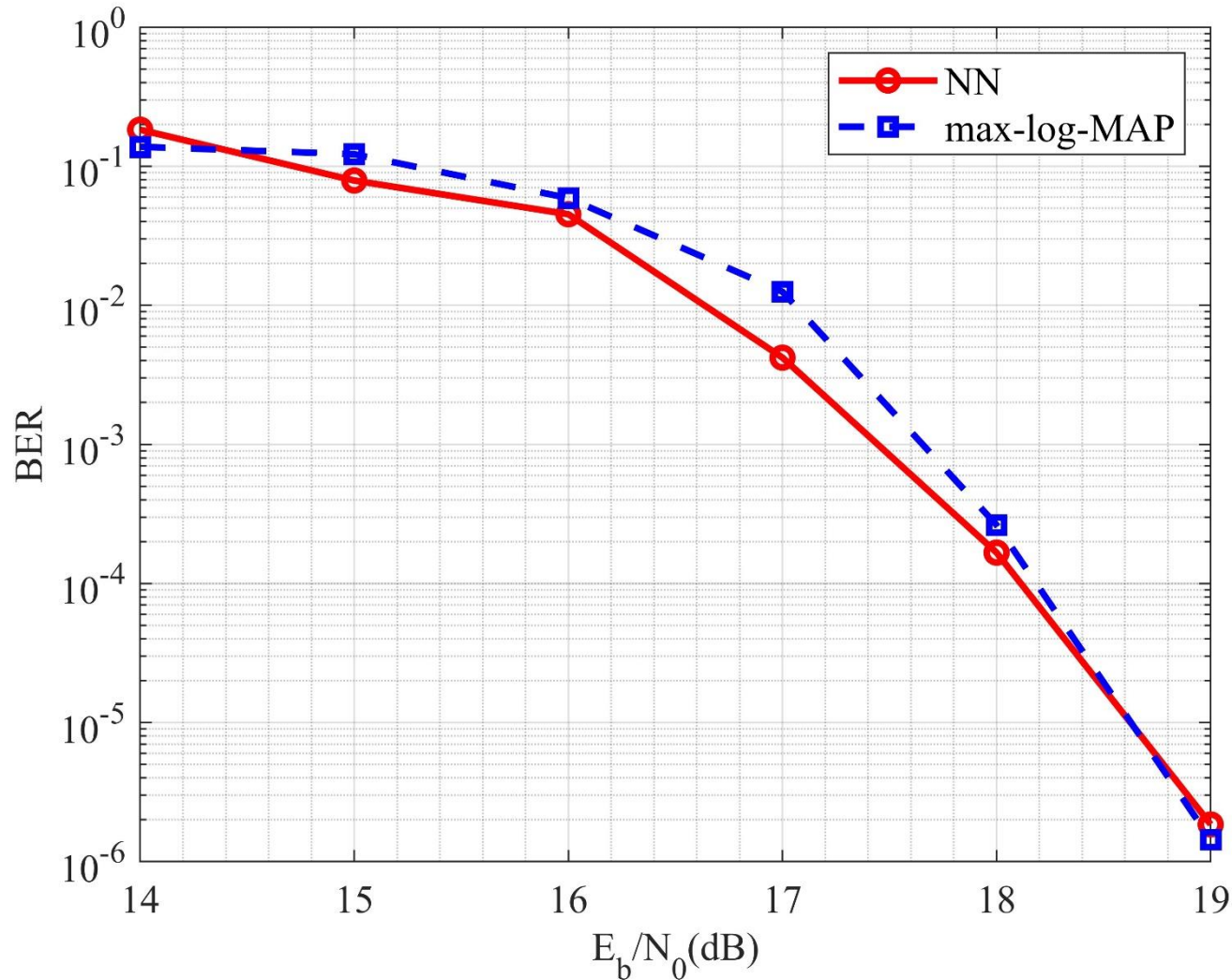
**minimum SNR**  
for reliable transmission

**6 bps/Hz ~ 11 dB**  
(Rate = 1/2 with 4K-QAM)

**10 bps/Hz ~ 20 dB**  
(Rate = 5/6 with 4K-QAM)

**7 bps/Hz ~ 13 dB**  
(Rate = 1/2 with 16K-QAM)

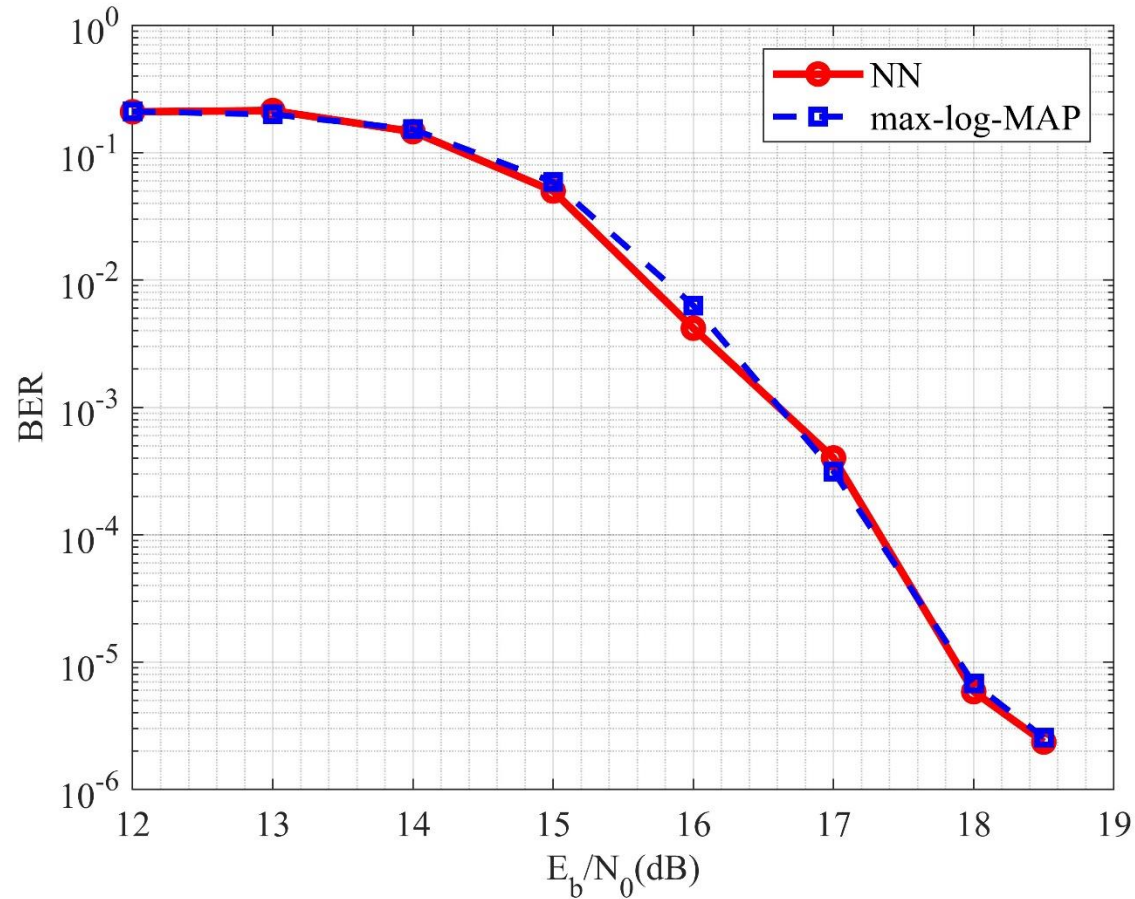
# Results



**(648,324) LDPC**  
**4096-QAM**  
**AWGN channel**  
**shallow NN (256 nodes)**

**99.68%**  
**complexity reduction**

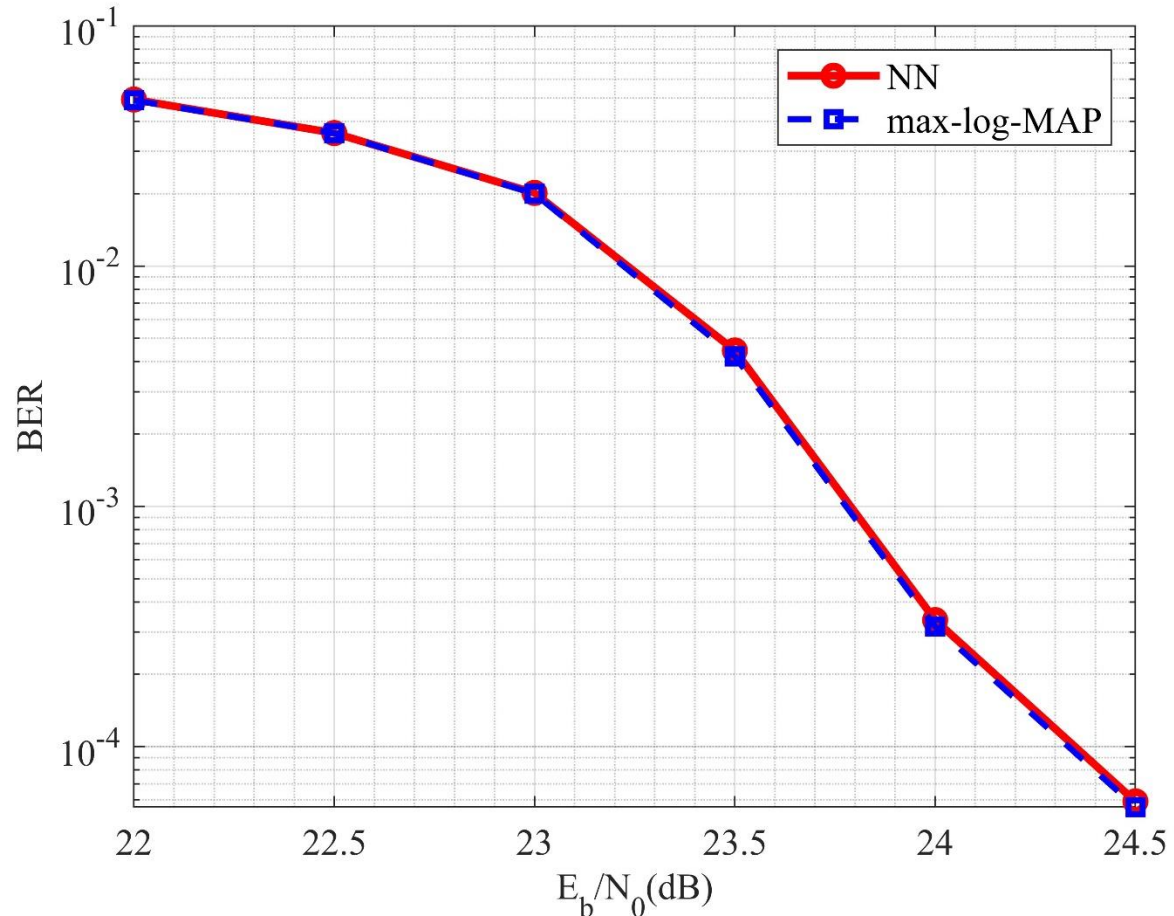
# Results (cont.)



**(1296,648) LDPC**  
**4096-QAM**  
**AWGN channel**  
**shallow NN (256 nodes)**

**99.68%**  
**complexity reduction**

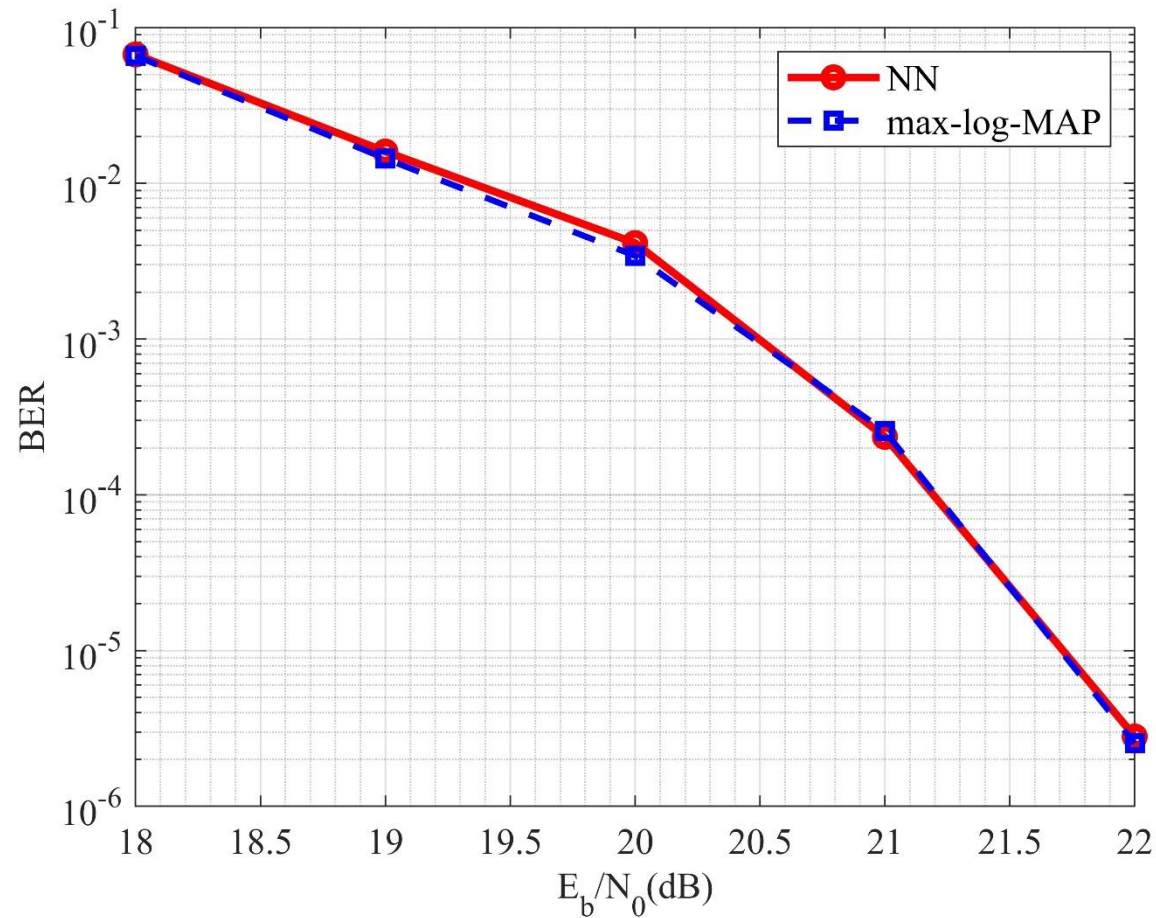
# Results (cont.)



**(1944,1260) LDPC**  
**4096-QAM**  
**AWGN channel**  
**shallow NN (256 nodes)**

**99.68%**  
**complexity reduction**

# Results (cont.)



**(1944,1260) LDPC**

**16384-QAM**

**AWGN channel**

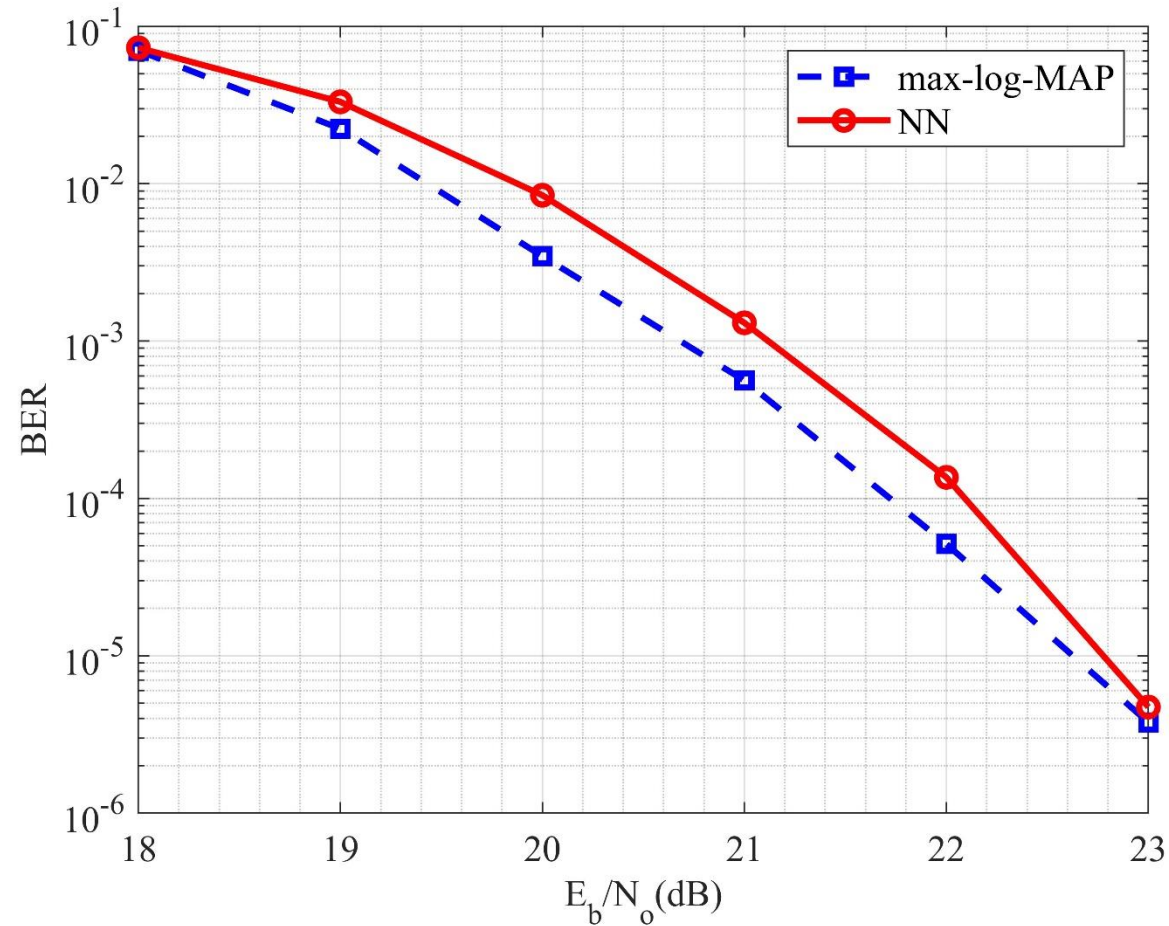
**deep NN**

(128-128-128)

**97.44%**

**complexity reduction**

# Results (cont.)



**(648,324) LDPC**

**16384-QAM**

**Rayleigh fading channel**

**deep NN**

(128-128-128-128-128-128-128-128-128)

**90.32%**

**complexity reduction**



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**Conclusion**

# Conclusions

To the best of our knowledge,  
this is the first work that considers this machine learning problem seriously.

- We propose a ***trainable framework*** for ***NN-based QAM soft demodulator*** for  $M \geq 4096$ .
- Proposed NN-based 4K-QAM soft demodulator can be efficiently utilized with ***significant complexity reduction***.

Problem : all numerical experiments are time-consuming !

Future work : we expect that NN architecture can be optimized  
(for further complexity reduction) !!

# Publication

Accepted for presentation in 2024 6th International Conference on Computer Communication and the Internet (ICCCI 2024), Tokyo (with IEEE Conference Proceedings)

Preparing manuscript for IEEE Comm. Letter submission



**Thank you for your  
kind attention**

**any questions  
or suggestions  
are appreciated**

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