

Time parameters and Lorentz transformations of relativistic stochastic processes

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Rules for the transformation of time parameters in relativistic Langevin equations are derived and discussed. In particular, it is shown that, if a coordinate-time parameterized process approaches the relativistic Jüttner-Maxwell distribution, the associated proper-time parameterized process converges to a modified momentum distribution, differing by a factor proportional to the inverse energy.

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Stochastic processes (SPes) present an ubiquitous tool for modelling complex phenomena in physics [1–3], biology [4, 5], or economics and finance [6–9]. Stochastic concepts provide a promising alternative to deterministic models whenever the underlying microscopic dynamics of a relevant observable is not known exactly but plausible assumptions about the underlying statistics can be made. A specific area where the formulation of consistent microscopic interaction models becomes difficult [10–12] concerns classical relativistic many-particle systems. Accordingly, SPes provide a useful phenomenological approach to describing, e.g., the interaction of a relativistic particle with a fluctuating environment [13–17]. Applications of stochastic concepts to relativistic problems include thermalization processes in quark-gluon plasmas, as produced in relativistic heavy ion colliders [18–21], or complex high-energy processes in astrophysics [22–25].

While these applications illustrate the practical relevance of relativistic SPes, there still exist severe conceptual issues which need clarification from a theoretical point of view. Among these is the choice of the time-parameter that quantifies the evolution of a relativistic SP [26]. This problem does not arise within a nonrelativistic framework, since the Newtonian physics postulates the existence of a universal time which is the same for any inertial observer; thus, it is natural to formulate nonrelativistic SPes by making reference to this universal time. By contrast, in special relativity [27, 28] the notion of time becomes frame-dependent, and it is necessary to carefully distinguish between different time parameters when constructing relativistic SPes. For example, if the random motion of a relativistic particle is described in a t -parameterized form, where t is the time coordinate of some fixed inertial system Σ , then one may wonder if/how this process can be re-expressed in terms of the particle's proper-time τ , and *vice versa*. Another closely related question [17] concerns the problem of how a certain SP appears to a moving observer, i.e.: How does a SP behave under a Lorentz transformation?

The present paper aims at clarifying the above questions for a broad class of relativistic SPes governed by relativistic Langevin equations [13–17]. First, we will

discuss a heuristic approach that suffices for most practical calculations and clarifies the basic ideas. Subsequently, these heuristic arguments will be substantiated with a mathematically rigorous foundation by applying theorems for the time-change of (local) martingale processes [29]. The main results can be summarized as follows: If a relativistic Langevin-Itô process has been specified in the inertial frame Σ and is parameterized by the associated Σ -coordinate time t , then this process can be reparameterized by its proper-time τ and the resulting process is again of the Langevin-Itô type. Furthermore, the process can be Lorentz transformed to a moving frame Σ' , yielding a Langevin-Itô process that is parameterized by the Σ' -time t' . In other words, similar to the case of purely deterministic relativistic equations of motions, one can choose freely between different time parameterizations in order to characterize these relativistic SPes – but the noise part needs to be transformed differently than the deterministic part.

Notation.– We adopt the metric convention $(\eta_{\alpha\beta}) = \text{diag}(-1, 1, \dots, 1)$ and units such that the speed of light $c = 1$. Contra-variant space-time and energy-momentum four-vectors are denoted by $(x^\alpha) = (x^0, x^i) = (x^0, \mathbf{x}) = (t, \mathbf{x})$ and $(p^\alpha) = (p^0, p^i) = (p^0, \mathbf{p})$, respectively, with Greek indices $\alpha = 0, 1, \dots, d$ and Latin indices $i = 1, \dots, d$, where d is the number of space dimensions. Einstein's summation convention is applied throughout.

Relativistic Langevin equations.– As a starting point, we consider the t -parameterized random motion of a relativistic particle (rest mass M) in the inertial lab frame Σ . The lab frame is defined by the property that the thermalized background medium (heat bath) causing the stochastic motion of the particle is at rest in Σ (on average). We assume that the particle's trajectory $(\mathbf{X}(t), \mathbf{P}(t)) = (X^i(t), P^i(t))$ in Σ is governed by a stochastic differential equation (SDE) of the form [13–17]

$$dX^\alpha(t) = (P^\alpha/P^0) dt, \quad (1a)$$

$$dP^i(t) = A^i dt + C^i_j dB^j(t). \quad (1b)$$

Here, $dX^0(t) = dt$ and $dX^i(t) := X^i(t + dt) - X^i(t)$ denote the time and position increments, $dP^i(t) :=$

$P^i(t + dt) - P^i(t)$ the momentum change. $P^0(t) := (M^2 + \mathbf{P}^2)^{1/2}$ is the relativistic energy, and $V^i(t) := dX^i/dt = P^i/P^0$ are the velocity components in Σ . In general, the functions A^i and C^i_j may depend on the time, position and momentum coordinates of the particle. The random driving process $\mathbf{B}(t) = (B^j(t))$ is taken to be a d -dimensional t -parameterized standard Wiener process (WP) [29–31], i.e., $\mathbf{B}(t)$ has continuous paths, for $s > t$ the increments are normally distributed,

$$\mathcal{P}\{\mathbf{B}(s) - \mathbf{B}(t) \in [\mathbf{u}, \mathbf{u} + d\mathbf{u}]\} = \frac{e^{-|\mathbf{u}|^2/[2(s-t)]}}{[2\pi(s-t)]^{d/2}} d^d\mathbf{u}, \quad (2)$$

and independent for non-overlapping time intervals [40].

Upon naively dividing Eq. (1b) by dt , we see that A^i can be interpreted as a deterministic force component, while $C^i_j dB^j(t)/dt$ represents random ‘noise’. However, for the Wiener process the derivatives $dB^j(t)/dt$ are not well-defined mathematically so the differential representation (1) is in fact short hand for a stochastic integral equation [29, 31] with $C^i_j dB^j$ signifying an infinitesimal increment of the Itô integral [32, 33]. Like a deterministic integral, stochastic integrals can be approximated by Riemann-Stieltjes sums but the coefficient functions need to be evaluated at the *left* end point t of any time interval $[t, t + dt]$ in the Itô discretization [41]. In contrast to other discretization rules [1, 29, 31, 34, 35], the Itô discretization implies that the mean value of the noise vanishes, i.e., $\langle C^i_j dB^j(t) \rangle = 0$ with $\langle \cdot \rangle$ indicating an average over all realizations of the Wiener process $\mathbf{B}(t)$. In other words, Itô integrals with respect to $\mathbf{B}(t)$ are (local) martingales [29]. Upon applying Itô’s formula [29, 31] to the mass-shell condition $P^0(t) = (M^2 + \mathbf{P}^2)^{1/2}$, one can derive from Eq. (1b) the following equation for the relativistic energy:

$$dP^0(t) = A^0 dt + C^0_r dB^r(t), \quad (3)$$

$$A^0 := \frac{A_i P^i}{P^0} + \frac{D_{ij}}{2} \left[\frac{\delta^{ij}}{P^0} - \frac{P^i P^j}{(P^0)^3} \right], \quad C^0_j := \frac{P^i C_{ij}}{P^0},$$

where $A_i := A^i$, $D_{ij} := D^{ij} = \sum_r C^i_r C^j_r$ and $C_{ir} := C^i_r$.

Equations (1) define a straightforward relativistic generalization [13–15] of the classical Ornstein-Uhlenbeck process [36], representing a standard model of Brownian motion theory [42]. The structure of Eq. (1a) ensures that the velocity remains bounded, $|\mathbf{V}| < 1$, even if the momentum \mathbf{P} were to become infinitely large. When studying SDEs of the type (1), one is typically interested in the probability $f(t, \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{p}) d^d x d^d p$ of finding the particle at time t in the infinitesimal phase space interval $[\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x} + d\mathbf{x}] \times [\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{p} + d\mathbf{p}]$. Given Eqs. (1), the non-negative, normalized probability density $f(t, \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{p})$ is governed by the Fokker-Planck equation (FPE)

$$\left(\frac{\partial}{\partial t} + \frac{p^i}{p^0} \frac{\partial}{\partial x^i} \right) f = \frac{\partial}{\partial p^i} \left[-A^i f + \frac{1}{2} \frac{\partial}{\partial p^k} (D^{ik} f) \right], \quad (4)$$

where $p^0 = (M^2 + \mathbf{p}^2)^{1/2}$. Deterministic initial data $\mathbf{X}(0) = \mathbf{x}_0$ and $\mathbf{P}(0) = \mathbf{p}_0$ translates into the localized initial condition $f(0, \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{p}) = \delta(\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}_0) \delta(\mathbf{p} - \mathbf{p}_0)$. Physical constraints on the coefficients $A^i(t, \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{p})$ and $C^i_r(t, \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{p})$ may arise from symmetries and/or thermodynamic considerations. For example, neglecting additional external force fields and considering a heat bath that is stationary, isotropic and position independent in Σ , one is led to the ansatz

$$A^i = -\alpha(p^0) p^i, \quad C^i_j = [2D(p^0)]^{1/2} \delta^i_j. \quad (5a)$$

where the friction and noise coefficients α and D depend on the energy p^0 only. Moreover, if the stationary momentum distribution is expected to be a thermal Jüttner function [37, 38], i.e., if $f_\infty := \lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} f \propto \exp(-\beta p^0)$ in Σ , then α and D must satisfy the fluctuation-dissipation condition [13]

$$0 \equiv \alpha(p^0) p^0 + dD(p^0)/dp^0 - \beta D(p^0). \quad (5b)$$

In this case, one still has the freedom to adapt one of the two functions α or D .

In the remainder, we shall discuss how the process (1) can be reparameterized in terms of its proper-time τ , and how it transforms under the proper Lorentz group [28].

Proper-time parameterization.– The proper-time differential $d\tau(t) = (1 - \mathbf{V}^2)^{1/2} dt$ may be expressed as

$$d\tau(t) = (M/P^0) dt. \quad (6a)$$

The inverse of the function τ is denoted by $\hat{X}^0(\tau) = t(\tau)$ and represents the time coordinate of the particle in the inertial frame Σ , parameterized by the proper time τ . Our goal is to find SDEs for the reparameterized processes $\hat{X}^\alpha(\tau) := X^\alpha(t(\tau))$ and $\hat{P}^\alpha(\tau) = P^\alpha(t(\tau))$ in Σ . The heuristic derivation is based on the relation

$$dB^j(t) \simeq \sqrt{dt} = \left(\frac{\hat{P}^0}{M} \right)^{1/2} \sqrt{d\tau} \simeq \left(\frac{\hat{P}^0}{M} \right)^{1/2} d\hat{B}^j(\tau), \quad (6b)$$

where $\hat{B}^j(\tau)$ is a standard Wiener process with time-parameter τ . The rigorous justification of Eq. (6b) is given below. Inserting Eqs. (6) in Eqs. (1) one finds

$$d\hat{X}^\alpha(\tau) = (\hat{P}^\alpha/M) d\tau, \quad (7a)$$

$$d\hat{P}^i(\tau) = \hat{A}^i d\tau + \hat{C}^i_j d\hat{B}^j(\tau), \quad (7b)$$

where $\hat{A}^i := (\hat{P}^0/M) A^i(\hat{X}^0, \hat{\mathbf{X}}, \hat{\mathbf{P}})$ and $\hat{C}^i_j := (\hat{P}^0/M)^{1/2} C^i_j(\hat{X}^0, \hat{\mathbf{X}}, \hat{\mathbf{P}})$. The FPE for the associated probability density $\hat{f}(\tau, x^0, \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{p})$ reads

$$\left(\frac{\partial}{\partial \tau} + \frac{p^\alpha}{M} \frac{\partial}{\partial x^\alpha} \right) \hat{f} = \frac{\partial}{\partial p^i} \left[-\hat{A}^i \hat{f} + \frac{1}{2} \frac{\partial}{\partial p^k} (\hat{D}^{ik} \hat{f}) \right] \quad (8)$$

where now $\hat{D}^{ik} := \sum_r \hat{C}^i_r \hat{C}^k_r$. We note that $\hat{f}(\tau, x^0, \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{p}) d^d x d^d p$ gives probability of finding the particle at proper-time τ in the interval $[t, t + dt] \times [\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x} + d\mathbf{x}] \times [\mathbf{p}, \mathbf{p} + d\mathbf{p}]$ in the inertial frame Σ .

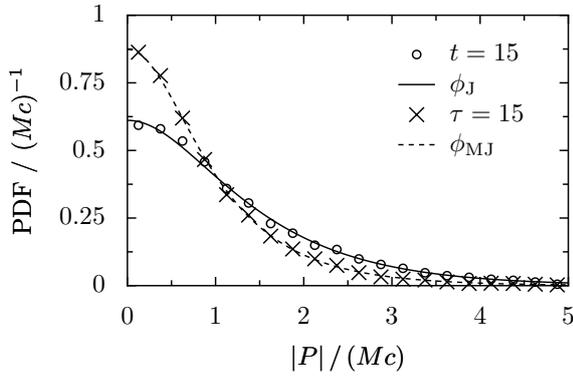


FIG. 1: ‘Stationary’ probability density function (PDF) of the absolute momentum $|P|$ measured at time $t = 15$ (\times) and $\tau = 15$ (\circ) from 10000 sample trajectories of the one-dimensional ($d = 1$) relativistic Ornstein-Uhlenbeck process [13], corresponding to coefficients $D(p^0) = \text{const}$ and $\alpha(p^0) = \beta D/p^0$ in Eqs. (1) and (5). Simulation parameters: $dt = 0.001$, $M = c = \beta = D = 1$.

Remarkably, if the coefficient functions satisfy the constraints (5) – so that the stationary solution f_∞ of Eq. (4) is a Jüttner function $\phi_J(\mathbf{p}) = \mathcal{Z}^{-1} \exp(-\beta p^0)$ – then the stationary solution \hat{f}_∞ of the corresponding proper-time FPE (8) is given by a modified Jüttner function $\phi_{MJ}(\mathbf{p}) = \hat{\mathcal{Z}}^{-1} \exp(-\beta p^0)/p^0$. The latter can be derived from a relative entropy principle, using a Lorentz invariant reference measure in momentum space [39]. Physically, the difference between f_∞ and \hat{f}_∞ is due to the fact that measurements at $t = \text{const}$ and $\tau = \text{const}$ are non-equivalent even if $\tau, t \rightarrow \infty$. This can also be confirmed by direct numerical simulation of Eqs. (1), see Fig. 1.

Having discussed the proper-time reparameterization, we next show that a similar reasoning can be applied to transform the SDEs (1) to a moving frame Σ' [17].

Lorentz transformations.– Neglecting time-reversals, we consider a proper Lorentz transformation [28] from the lab frame Σ to Σ' , mediated by a constant matrix Λ^ν_μ with $\Lambda^0_0 > 0$, that leaves the metric tensor $\eta_{\alpha\beta}$ invariant. We proceed in two steps: First we define

$$Y'^\nu(t) := \Lambda^\nu_\mu X^\mu(t), \quad G'^\nu(t) := \Lambda^\nu_\mu P^\mu(t).$$

Then we replace t by the coordinate time t' of Σ' to obtain processes $X'^\alpha(t') = Y'^\alpha(t(t'))$ and $P'^\alpha(t') = G'^\alpha(t(t'))$. Note that $dt'(t) = dY'^0(t) = \Lambda^0_\mu dX^\mu(t)$, and, hence,

$$dt'(t) = \frac{\Lambda^0_\mu P^\mu}{P^0} dt = \frac{G'^0}{P^0} dt = \frac{P'^0(t'(t))}{(\Lambda^{-1})^0_\mu P'^\mu(t'(t))} dt, \quad (9)$$

where Λ^{-1} is the inverse Lorentz transformation. Thus, a similar heuristics as in Eq. (6b) gives

$$dB^j(t) \simeq \sqrt{dt} = \left(\frac{P^0}{P'^0} \right)^{1/2} \sqrt{dt'} \simeq \left[\frac{(\Lambda^{-1})^0_\mu P'^\mu}{P'^0} \right]^{1/2} dB'^j(t'),$$

where $B'^j(t')$ is a Wiener process with time t' . Furthermore, defining primed coefficient functions in Σ' by

$$\begin{aligned} A'^i(x'^0, \mathbf{x}', \mathbf{p}') &:= [(\Lambda^{-1})^0_\mu p'^\mu / p'^0] \times \\ &\quad \Lambda^i_\nu A^\nu((\Lambda^{-1})^0_\mu x'^\mu, (\Lambda^{-1})^i_\mu x'^\mu, (\Lambda^{-1})^i_\mu p'^\mu), \\ C'^i_j(x'^0, \mathbf{x}', \mathbf{p}') &:= [(\Lambda^{-1})^0_\mu p'^\mu / p'^0]^{1/2} \times \\ &\quad \Lambda^i_\nu C^\nu_j((\Lambda^{-1})^0_\mu x'^\mu, (\Lambda^{-1})^i_\mu x'^\mu, (\Lambda^{-1})^i_\mu p'^\mu), \end{aligned}$$

the particle’s trajectory $(\mathbf{X}'(t'), \mathbf{P}'(t'))$ in Σ' is again governed by a SDE of the standard form

$$dX'^\alpha(t') = (P'^\alpha / P'^0) dt', \quad (11a)$$

$$dP'^i(t') = A'^i dt' + C'^i_j dB'^j(t'). \quad (11b)$$

Rigorous justification.– We will now rigorously derive the transformations of SDEs under time changes and thereby show that the heuristic transformations leading to Eqs. (7) and (11) are justified; i.e., we are interested in a time-change $t \mapsto \check{t}$ of a generic SDE

$$dY(t) = E dt + F_j dB^j(t), \quad (12a)$$

where E and F_j will typically be smooth functions of the state-variables (Y, \dots) [43], and $\mathbf{B}(t) = (B^j(t))$ is a d -dimensional standard Wiener process [44]. We consider a time-change $t \mapsto \check{t}$ specified in the form [cf. Eqs. (6a) and (9)]

$$d\check{t} = H dt, \quad \check{t}(0) = 0, \quad (12b)$$

with H being a strictly positive smooth function [45] of (Y, \dots) . The inverse of $\check{t}(t)$ is denoted by $t(\check{t})$. We would like to show that Eq. (12a) can be rewritten as

$$d\check{Y}(\check{t}) = \check{E} d\check{t} + \check{F}_j d\check{B}^j(\check{t}), \quad (12c)$$

where $\check{Y}(\check{t}) := Y(t(\check{t}))$, $\check{E}(\check{t}) := E(t(\check{t}))/H(t(\check{t}))$, $\check{F}^j(\check{t}) := F^j(t(\check{t}))/\sqrt{H(t(\check{t}))}$, and

$$d\check{B}^j(\check{t}) := \sqrt{H} dB^j(t) \quad (12d)$$

is a d -dimensional Wiener process with respect to the new time parameter \check{t} [46].

First, we need to prove that Eq. (12d) or, equivalently, $\check{B}^j(\check{t}) := \int_0^{t(\check{t})} \sqrt{H(s)} dB^j(s)$ does indeed define a Wiener process. To this end, we note that for fixed $j \in \{1, \dots, d\}$ the process $L^j(t) := \int_0^t \sqrt{H(s)} dB^j(s)$ is a continuous local martingale, whose quadratic variation

$$[L^j, L^j](t) := \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \sum_{k=0}^{2^n-1} \left\{ L^j \left(\frac{(k+1)t}{2^n} \right) - L^j \left(\frac{kt}{2^n} \right) \right\}^2$$

is given by $[L^j, L^j](t) = \int_0^t H(s) ds$ [47]. For the quadratic variation of $\check{B}^j(\check{t}) = L^j(t(\check{t}))$ we then obtain $[\check{B}^j, \check{B}^j](\check{t}) = [L^j, L^j](t(\check{t})) = \int_0^{t(\check{t})} H(s) ds = \check{t}$. For $i \neq j$, we have $[\check{B}^j, \check{B}^i](\check{t}) = \int_0^{t(\check{t})} H(s) d[B^j, B^i](s) = 0$. Thus, Lévy’s Theorem [48] implies that $\check{\mathbf{B}}(\check{t}) = (\check{B}^j(\check{t}))$ is a d -dimensional standard Wiener process. Finally, using

the definitions of \check{Y} , \check{E} , and \check{F}^j , we find [49]

$$\begin{aligned}\check{Y}(\check{t}) &= \int_0^{t(\check{t})} E(s) ds + \int_0^{t(\check{t})} F_j(s) dB^j(s) \\ &= \int_0^{\check{t}} \frac{E(t(\check{s}))}{H(t(\check{s}))} d\check{s} + \int_0^{\check{t}} \frac{F_j(t(\check{s}))}{\sqrt{H(t(\check{s}))}} d\check{B}^j(\check{s}) \\ &= \int_0^{\check{t}} \check{E}(\check{s}) d\check{s} + \int_0^{\check{t}} \check{F}_j(\check{s}) d\check{B}^j(\check{s}),\end{aligned}\quad (13)$$

which is just the SDE (12c) written in integral notation.

Summary.— The above discussion shows how relativistic Langevin equations of the type (1) can be Lorentz transformed [17] and reparameterized within a common framework. The relativistic Langevin theory [13–17] is now as well-founded and mathematically complete as the classical theories of nonrelativistic Brownian motions and deterministic relativistic motions (which are both included as special limit cases). From a physics point of view, the most remarkable observation consists in the fact that the τ -parameterized Brownian motion converges to a modified Jüttner function [39] if the corresponding t -parameterized process converges to a Jüttner function [37]. With regard to applications [20, 21] this means that the correct form of the fluctuation-dissipation relation depends on the choice of the time-parameter in the relativistic Langevin equation.

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- [40] For simplicity, we have assumed that $\mathbf{B}(t)$ is d -dimensional, implying that C_j^i is a square matrix. However, all results still hold if $\mathbf{B}(t)$ has a different dimension.
- [41] One could also consider other discretization rules [1, 29, 31, 34, 35], but then the rules of stochastic differential calculus have to be adapted.
- [42] In the nonrelativistic limit $c \rightarrow \infty$, $P^0 \rightarrow M$ in Eq. (1a).
- [43] The state variables of the system are assumed to have continuous paths and need to satisfy suitable integrability conditions. More generally, $E = E(t)$ and $F_j = F_j(t)$ can be assumed to be continuous adapted processes.
- [44] The Wiener process is defined on a complete filtered probability space $(\Omega, \mathcal{F}, \mathbb{F}, P)$ that satisfies the usual hypotheses [29]. The increasing family $\mathbb{F} = (\mathcal{F}_t)$ is called a filtration. \mathcal{F}_t denotes the information that will be available to an observer at time t who follows the particle.
- [45] More precisely, in general $H = H(t)$ is a strictly positive, continuous adapted process such that $\mathcal{P}[\int_0^t H(s) ds < \infty \forall t] = 1$ and $\mathcal{P}[\int_0^\infty H(s) ds = \infty] = 1$.
- [46] The information available to an observer of the particle at time \check{t} is denoted by $\mathcal{G}_{\check{t}}$. The corresponding filtration is denoted by $\mathbb{G} = (\mathcal{G}_{\check{t}})$; cf. Chapt. I.1 in [29]. The mathematically precise statement regarding the time-change is that $\check{\mathbf{B}}(\check{t})$ is a standard Wiener process with respect to \mathbb{G} .
- [47] Convergence is uniform on compacts in probability; see [29] for a definition of the quadratic covariation $[L^i, L^j]_t$.
- [48] See Theorem II.8.40, p. 87 in Protter [29].
- [49] The second equality follows from Eqs. (12b) and (12d) by approximating the processes E and F^j by simple predictable processes, see p. 51 and Theorem II.5.21 in [29].

