

1 **General response.** First of all, we thank the reviewers for their helpful comments and remarks. We provide first general  
2 comments prior to address additional points raised by the reviewers.

3 We want to stress that we have proposed a generalization of regression trees that (1) adapt to the smoothness of the  
4 prediction function relating input and output variables while (2) preserving the interpretability of the prediction and (3)  
5 being robust to noise. The three points, smoothness, interpretability and robustness to noise, are all important and have  
6 been illustrated empirically. There is however *no free lunch*, and these additional properties come with a computational  
7 cost, as described for training in Appendix A.2 (note that, as mentioned in the main paper line 193, we make use of the  
8 Moore-Penrose pseudo-inverse which explains why the complexity is only quadratic in  $K$ ). Applying PR trees is also  
9 more costly than applying standard decision trees as the function  $\Psi$  (Eq. 2) needs to be evaluated on all regions. We  
10 provide below the prediction time, in seconds, on some datasets (we'll include these results in Appendix A.2).

Dataset	PR Tree	Std Tree	# Observations
BD	0.3	1.00E-04	146
BO	0.24	1.00E-04	101
DI	0.2	9.00E-05	88
RI	0.04	2.00E-04	14

11 We also want to emphasize that the theoretical framework we propose does not assume that the  $x_j, 1 \leq j \leq p$ , are  
12 independent. The notation  $\phi \left( \prod_{1 \leq j \leq p} \right)$  in Eq. 3 means that  $\phi$  is a multivariate function of the  $p$  variables  $\frac{u_j - x_j}{\sigma_j}$ . For  
13 convenience, we have used functions  $\phi$  that lead to standard cdfs for  $\Psi$  in our experiments, dropping the dependencies  
14 between  $x_j$ . Other choices could be made, in particular when dependencies between  $x_j$  are known. In any case,  $u_j$   
15 cannot be interpreted as a location parameter or as a center of a region as it is the variable that is integrated out.

16 **Reviewer 1.** Oops, you are right: The expectation in the expression of  $a_n$  in Proposition 1 should be removed (this  
17 proposition directly derives from Proposition C2 in Appendix C2.2, with no expectation; the expectation should also be  
18 removed from Proposition C3 in Appendix 2.4). The regions  $\mathcal{R}_k^{(n)}$  are fixed for a given  $n$ .

19 **Reviewer 2.** An important difference wrt to the work by Gérard Biau, Luc Devroye and Gabor Lugosi ([1]) is that we  
20 are not averaging over independent classifiers as regions are dependent on each other. Our consistency proof radically  
21 differs from theirs because of this difference.

22 Adaptive Neural Trees ([2]) and Deep Neural Decision Forests ([3]) are both built from decision trees. These models  
23 are very close to soft trees, to which we compare ourselves. In each case however, the models are enhanced with  
24 a neural network representation and suffer from a lack of interpretability (one can even argue that these models are  
25 not tree models *per se*). The paper of Forsst & Hinton ([4]) considers a specific variant of the soft tree model, with  
26 knowledge distillation. Distilling knowledge into our trees is clearly an interesting research direction that we plan to  
27 investigate.

28 Because of their interpretability, decision trees seem to be still heavily used in the industry, as mentioned in the 2019  
29 Kaggle survey (<https://www.kaggle.com/kaggle-survey-2019>). This said, Random Forests aim at reducing the variance  
30 (and this comes at the expense of a small increase in the bias) whereas our adaptation to smoothness aims at reducing  
31 the bias. Combining both, as in PR-RF, reduces both bias and variance and leads to a method which significantly  
32 outperforms RF (Table 5, Appendix A.4).

33 **Reviewer 3.** It is true that a standard regression tree with enough leaves can also approximate a smooth link function.  
34 However, to obtain such a tree, one needs large samples, which are unfortunately not available in practice (as exemplified,  
35 *e.g.*, by the difference between standard and PR trees in our experiments).

36 Uncertain decision trees were designed to deal with uncertainty in the input variables and rely on a set of given pdfs  
37 modeling the uncertainty on each attribute value for this particular example. This contrasts with our approach that aims  
38 at adapting to the smoothness of the prediction function. In particular, the intervals  $[a_{i,j}, b_{i,j}]$  (reference [24] of our  
39 paper) defining the support of the pdfs are given in uncertain decision trees whereas they are learned in our case.

40 Our discussion on overfitting simply amounts to saying that the more complex a model is, the more likely it is to overfit  
41 (in practice, the amount of samples available is usually not large enough to avoid that). We'll modify lines 228-230 as  
42 we agree that they may be confusing. The additional complexity of PR trees compared to standard trees is not important  
43 and has not led to overfitting in our experiments.

44 There is a typo in line 194 as it is  $\Psi$  (and not  $\phi$ ) that corresponds to the cdf of a normal distribution (multivariate normal  
45 distribution with diagonal covariance matrix equal to  $\sigma$ ).

46 **Reviewer 4.** One can obtain standard regression trees from Eqs 2 and 3 by setting  $\phi$  to  $(2\pi)^{-\frac{p}{2}} \prod_{j=1}^p \exp\left(-\frac{(u_j - x_j)^2}{2\sigma_j^2}\right)$ ,  
47 with  $\sigma_j \rightarrow 0$  for all  $j$ . In that case, the distribution of  $\mathbf{x}$  over regions is concentrated on one region.