TOMOGRAPHIC FEATURE DETECTION AND CLASSIFICATION USING PARALLELOTOPE BOUNDED ERROR ESTIMATION

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ABSTRACT

We give a novel method for performing statistically significant detection of specified object features which operates directly on X-ray (Gaussian) or radio-isotope (Poisson) tomographic projection data. The method is based on constructing an exact $(1-\alpha)100\%$ confidence region on the object derived by backprojecting a projection-domain confidence region into object space. The projection-domain confidence region is a minimal volume hyper-rectangle specified by the projection data and the appropriate quantiles of the standard Gaussian or Poisson distribution. By testing whether this object-domain $(1-\alpha)100\%$ confidence region contains objects with hypothesized features we obtain a feature detection algorithm which has constant false alarm rate (CFAR) α and is adaptive in the sense that no image reconstruction is required and no unknown nuisance parameters need be estimated.

1. BACKGROUND

In a 1992 paper [1] we applied bounded error estimation, also known as set theoretic estimation, to image reconstruction from projections and the resultant set estimates were used to specify a multi-dimensional statistical confidence region on the true object. In particular we showed that when the error bounds were suitably chosen as quantiles of the projection noise distributions the Ellipsoid Parallel Cuts (EPC) algorithm [2] could be used to specify a set estimate of the object which corresponds to a region that is guaranteed to contain the true object with probability at least $1-\alpha$. Consistent with statistical terminology, we called this set estimate a level $(1-\alpha)100\%$ confidence region for the object. In subsequent papers [3, 4] we used this methodology to study confidence levels and statistical feasibility of popular image reconstructions such as filtered back projection, weighted-least-squares, and iterative maximum likelihood (EM algorithm) for emission computed tomography. Recently, Combettes published a paper which nicely lays out the equivalence between set theoretic estimation and statistical confidence regions in a general context [5].

The EPC algorithm is a bounded error estimation algorithm which finds a minimal volume ellipsoid containing the set of images which are consistent with the error bounds, called the *feasible set*. EPC is usually applied to measurements of a system output to find a (point) estimate of the input of the system which is robust to bounded error perturbations of the system matrix (mismodeling error) or the system output (additive measurement noise). Various point estimation strategies have been proposed which use the centroid or some other point within the final ellipsoid estimate of the feasible set [6]. When a feasible set estimator such as EPC is used to obtain confidence regions it is important that the size of the estimated set have coverage probability as close to $1-\alpha$ as possible to ensure a high precision, i.e. small volume, confidence region. However, we have found that the EPC algorithm may yield feasible sets whose true coverage probability greatly exceeds $1-\alpha$. This finding is consistent with remarks made by other investigators that the EPC algorithm tends to significantly oversestimate the size of the feasible set.

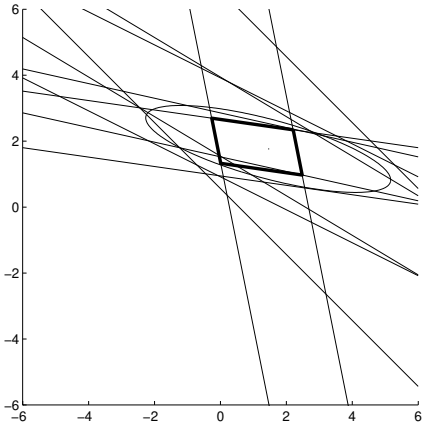

Figure 1: Feasible set, sequence of parallel cuts (PPC), final ellipsoid (EPC) and parallelotope (PPC) (dark outline). Note how PPC only slightly over-estimates the feasible set.

Recently a new feasible set algorithm was introduced in the context of robust adaptive control which finds a minimal volume paralellotope containing the feasible set [7]. This remarkable algorithm, which we call parallelotope parallel cuts (PPC), is faster than EPC, appears to be less sensitive to roundoff errors, and converges to the exact feasible set in a finite number of iterations for square system matrices. In the present context this means that for square matrices PPC can be applied to obtain confidence regions

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which have coverage probability which is exactly equal to $1-\alpha$ and have minimal volume. As a result we can use the well known duality between minimal volume confidence regions and rejection regions of optimal binary hypothesis tests [8] to specify an optimal detector. Specifically, by testing whether the minimal volume $(1-\alpha)100\%$ confidence region contains objects with hypothesized features we obtain a feature detection algorithm which has constant false alarm rate (CFAR) α and is adaptive in the sense that no reconstruction is required and no unknown nuisance parameters need be estimated.

Simulation results for a parallel ray projection geometry in emission and transmission tomography applications will be given in the full paper to illustrate the methodology.

2. BOUNDED ERROR ESTIMATION

Assume a nominal linear measurement model: $\overline{Y}_k = \underline{\phi}^T(k)\underline{\theta}$, $k = 1, ..., N$, where $\overline{Y}_k$ is the model output, $\underline{\phi}^T(k)$ is a vector specific to the system, e.g. the k-th row of the tomographic system matrix A, $\underline{\theta} \in \mathbb{R}^p$ is the parameter vector to be estimated, e.g. the object intensity $\underline{\lambda}$, and k is the measurement index. If it is known that the error $e(k) = Y_k - \overline{Y}(k)$ is bounded within $[e_{min}(k), e_{max}(k)]$:

$$e_{min}(k) \leq Y_k - \underline{\phi}^T(k)\underline{\theta} \leq e_{max}(k), \qquad k = 1, ..., N, \qquad (1)$$

then the set of all values of $\underline{\theta}$ consistent with (1) is given by the polytope $\Lambda = \cap_{k=1}^N H_k$, called the feasible set, which is the intersection of the hyperslabs: $H_k = \{\underline{\theta} : Y_k - e_{max}(k) \leq \underline{\phi}^T(k)\underline{\theta} \leq Y_k - e_{min}(k)\}$, $k = 1, ..., N$.

The Ellipsoid Parallel Cuts (EPC) and the Parallelotope Parallel Cuts (PPC) algorithms can be put in the common framework of finding a sequence of successively smaller sets $\{E_k\}_{k=1}^N$ all of which contain the feasible set Λ and such that E_N is set of minimal volume:

$$E_k = E(\underline{\theta}_k, C_k) = \{\underline{\theta} : \|C_k(\underline{\theta} - \underline{\theta}_k)\| \leq 1\} \qquad (2)$$

where $\underline{\theta}_k$ is a vector governing the center of E_k, C_k is a non-singular matrix governing the shape of E_k, and $\|\cdot\|$ is a norm. For EPC $\|\cdot\|$ corresponds to the l_2 norm ($\|\underline{z}\| = \underline{z}^T\underline{z}$), the E_k's are ellipsoids, $\underline{\theta}_k$ is the centroid of E_k, and C_k is a matrix governing the principal and minor axes of E_k. For PPC $\|\cdot\|$ corresponds to the l_∞ norm ($\|\underline{z}\| = \max z_i$), the E_k's are parallelopipeds, $\underline{\theta}_k$ is the geometric center of E_k, and C_k determines the length and orientation of the edges of E_k. In [2] and [7], respectively, the EPC and PPC algorithms are introduced and various theoretical properties are established. In particular, they establish that as long as $N \geq p$, the EPC and PPC algorithms are guaranteed to generate sequences E_k, $k = 1, \ldots, N$ which after N steps yields the minimal volume ellipsoid (EPC) or parallelopiped (PPC) containing Λ.

As reported in [7] the PPC algorithm has similar computational complexity as EPC yet consistently converges to a smaller feasible set estimate than EPC. Furthermore, unlike EPC, the PPC algorithm converges to the exact polyhedral feasible set Λ when the system matrix A is square and invertible. Our simulations show that in fact the Parallotope algorithm requires only about 75% of the runtime per iteration as compared to the EPC algorithm when implemented on a HP735.

3. CONFIDENCE REGIONS AND DETECTION

Let $\underline{Y}$ be random data which has probability distribution $P_{\underline{\theta}}(\underline{Y})$ which depends on an unknown parameter vector (an image) $\underline{\theta} \in \Theta$. A $(1-\alpha)100\%$ confidence region for $\underline{\theta}$ is defined as a subset $\Lambda_{1-\alpha}(\underline{Y})$ of Θ such that $P(\underline{\theta} \in \Lambda_{1-\alpha}) \geq 1-\alpha$, which is to be read "the probability that the random subset $\Lambda_{1-\alpha}(\underline{Y})$ contains the non-random parameter $\underline{\theta}$. Now assume that we want to test at some level of false alarm α whether the true image $\underline{\theta}$ has some simple feature, e.g. $\underline{\theta} = \underline{\theta}^o$ for some test image $\underline{\theta}^o$. Specifically, we need to specify a test of $H_0 : \underline{\theta} = \underline{\theta}^o$ vs. $H_1 : \underline{\theta} \neq \underline{\theta}^o$ subject to the false alarm constraint $P_{\underline{\theta}^o}(\text{decide } H_1) \leq \alpha$. It is obvious that the $1-\alpha$ confidence region $\Lambda_{1-\alpha}$ specifies such a test: *if* $\underline{\theta}^o \in \Lambda_{1-\alpha}$ *then decide* H_0, *otherwise decide* H_1. More generally, if we have a composite feature that we want to test, e.g. specified by some set of images $\mathcal{S}$, a level α test is specified by the following decision rule: *decide the true image has the composite feature when* $\Lambda_{1-\alpha} \supset \mathcal{S}$.

When $\underline{e}_{max}$ and $\underline{e}_{min}$ are selected to correspond to specific quantiles of the projection noise distribution the feasible set Λ can be identified as a $(1-\alpha)100\%$ confidence region for θ. For X-ray computed tomography (X-ray CT) the projection data $Y_1, \ldots, Y_N$, are distributed as independent Gaussian random variables with variances $\sigma_1^2, \ldots \sigma_N^2$ which do not depend on the object. When the variance is known the measurement variables $(Y_i - A\underline{\lambda})/\sigma_i$ can be used to give the standard $(1-\beta)100\%$ confidence rectangle on $A\underline{\lambda}$:

$$\begin{aligned} &\mathrm{X}_{k=1}^N [L_{min}(k), L_{max}(k)] = \\ &\quad \mathrm{X}_{k=1}^N \left[Y_k - \sigma_k Z_{1-\beta/2}, Y_k + \sigma_k Z_{1-\beta/2}\right] \end{aligned} \qquad (3)$$

where Z_ξ is the ξth percentile of the standard Gaussian distribution.

On the other hand, for emission computed tomography (ECT), the projection data are distributed as independent Poisson random variables with rates $E[\underline{Y}] = A\underline{\lambda}$. It can be shown [9] that for a Poisson variable Y_k, a $(1-\beta)100\%$ confidence rectangle for the rate $E[Y_k]$ is:

$$\begin{aligned} &\mathrm{X}_{k=1}^N [L_{min}(k), L_{max}(k)] = \\ &\quad \mathrm{X}_{k=1}^N \left[\frac{1}{2}\chi^2_{\beta/2}(2Y_k), \frac{1}{2}\chi^2_{1-\beta/2}(2[Y_k+1])\right] \end{aligned} \qquad (4)$$

where $\chi^2_\xi(\nu)$ is the ξth percentile of the chi-square distribution with ν degrees of freedom. The confidence rectangle (4) can be calculated recursively using known relations between Gamma(k) and Gamma(k+1) distributions. However this is very time-consuming and for our simulations we implement approximate confidence regions based on Normalizing square root transformations of Poisson random variables used in [1].

By setting $\beta = 1 - (1-\alpha)^{\frac{1}{N}}$ in either (3) or (4) a $(1-\alpha)100\%$ confidence region for $\underline{\lambda}$ is obtained:

$$\begin{aligned} \Lambda_{1-\alpha} &= \{\underline{\lambda} : \underline{L}_{min} \leq A\underline{\lambda} \leq \underline{L}_{max}\} \\ &= \{\underline{\lambda} : \underline{e}_{min} \leq \underline{Y} - A\underline{\lambda} \leq \underline{e}_{max}\} \end{aligned} \qquad (5)$$

where $\underline{e}_{min} \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \underline{Y} - \underline{L}_{max}$, $\underline{e}_{max} \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \underline{Y} - \underline{L}_{min}$. The $(1-\alpha)\%$ confidence region (5) is in the form of a bounded error (1) to

Confidence level	P_{EPC}	P_{PPC}
0.5	0.792	0.496
0.6	0.860	0.617
0.7	0.928	0.678
0.8	0.971	0.797
0.9	0.997	0.907
0.95	0.998	0.947

Table 1: H_0 coverage probabilities of the final ellipsoid and parallelotope containing for a 2×2 system. Observe that final parallelotope essentially meets the prescribed confidence level and is therefore of much smaller volume than the final ellipsoid satisfying the same confidence level constraint.

Confidence level	P_{EPC}	P_{PPC}
0.5	0.911	0.617
0.6	0.941	0.729
0.7	0.983	0.792
0.8	0.990	0.879
0.9	0.998	0.941
0.95	0.999	0.978

Table 2: H_0 coverage probabilities of the final ellipsoid and parallelotope confidence regions for a 6×2 system.

which EPC or PPC can be directly applied. The resulting final set E_N will be a minimum volume ellipsoid (EPC) or polytope (PPC) E_N which contains $\Lambda_{1-\alpha}$ and is therefore a valid $(1-\alpha)100\%$ region.

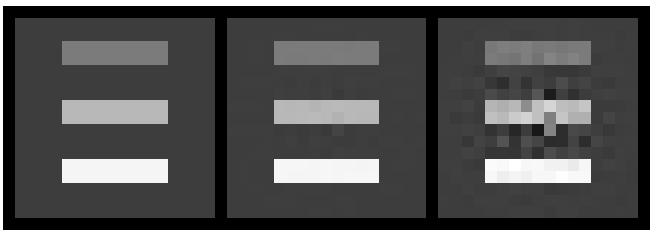

Figure 2: 17×17 phantom image, PPC centroid for contrast = 10000, and PPC centroid for contrast = 1000, respectively. Total Poisson counts = 3.8 million, initial cube size = 4.1635×10^{10}; confidence level = 80%. Object was tomographically sampled using Anger camera geometry with 17 parallel collimated detector bins over 45 detector angles in $[0^o, 180^o]$

4. NUMERICAL COMPARISONS

First we compare the performance of the EPC and PPC algorithms for a two dimensional problem with additive Gaussian noise. In this problem $\underline{\lambda} = [\lambda_1, \lambda_2]^T$ and the system matrix A is 6×2. Figure 1 shows the actual feasible set Λ, the sequence of PPC parallel cuts and the final ellipsoid and final parallelotope, respectively, for the same Gaussian noise realization. In tables 1 and 2 we compare the actual coverage probabilities of the final ellipsoid and final parallelotope, estimated empirically from 1000 trials, vs the prespecified confidence level $1-\alpha$ for 2×2 and 6×2 A matrices, respectively. Note that only the PPC algorithm gives a final set estimate E_6 having coverage probability close to the specified value $1-\alpha$ in each of these cases.

In Fig. 2 we illustrate properties of the PPC methodology for a small parallel ray Anger tomograph. In the final paper ROC curves will be shown for detection of a shortening of the middle bar in the 3 bar phantom (mean of the Poisson image). For the purposes of this summary we simply show the centroid of the final parallelopiped at two phantom contrast levels for a single realization of the Poisson noise. Note that for high contrast (contrast = 10000) the 80% PPC centroid is very close to the phantom, indicating that the centroid may be a reasonable estimator of the object. On the other hand, when contrast is lower the PPC centroid becomes a much more noisy estimator of the object. We also find that the centroid is also a poor estimator when the system matrix A is close to ill conditioned. We found it necessary to use an analytical bound on coverage probability to select a reliable initial PPC radius, i.e. one which ensures that the feasible set is contained in the initial parallelopiped. These and other issues will be discussed in the full paper.

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