

Polyview Fusion: A Strategy to Enhance Video-Denoising Algorithms

Kai Zeng, *Student Member, IEEE*, and Zhou Wang, *Member, IEEE*

Abstract—We propose a simple but effective strategy that aims to enhance the performance of existing video denoising algorithms, i.e., polyview fusion (PVF). The idea is to denoise the noisy video as a 3-D volume using a given base 2-D denoising algorithm but applied from multiple views (front, top, and side views). A fusion algorithm is then designed to merge the resulting multiple denoised videos into one, so that the visual quality of the fused video is improved. Extensive tests using a variety of base video-denoising algorithms show that the proposed PVF method leads to surprisingly significant and consistent gain in terms of both peak signal-to-noise ratio (PSNR) and structural similarity (SSIM) performance, particularly at high noise levels, where the improvement over state-of-the-art denoising algorithms is often more than 2 dB in PSNR.

Index Terms—Image fusion, polyview, video denoising, video quality enhancement.

I. INTRODUCTION

Digital video has become ubiquitous and indispensable in our everyday lives. Video signals are subject to noise contaminations during acquisition and transmission. It is highly desirable to remove/reduce the noise in the video signal (or “denoise” the video), to enhance perceived video quality, and to help improve the performance of subsequent processes, such as compression; segmentation; and object detection, recognition, and tracking [1].

Existing video denoising algorithms may be classified into 2-D and 3-D approaches. The simplest 2-D approaches denoise the video frame by frame by employing 2-D still-image denoising algorithms, for which well-known and state-of-the-art algorithms include spatially adaptive 2-D Wiener filtering (Wiener-2-D) [2], Bayes’ least-square estimation based on the Gaussian scale mixture model (BLS-GSM) [3], nonlocal means [4], K-SVD [5], Stein’s unbiased risk estimator-linear expansion of threshold (SURE-LET) [6], and block matching and 3-D transform shrinkage (BM3D) [7]. Since the correlation between neighboring frames is completely ignored, these methods do not make use of all available information. Advanced 2-D approaches explore the correlation between adjacent frames. By incorporating motion compensation processes, state-of-the-art image denoising algorithms were extended to video, leading to the ST-GSM [8], and video SURE-LET [9] algorithms. In [10], multiple similar patches in neighboring frames that may not reside along a single trajectory are found. This is followed by transform- and shrinkage-based denoising procedures. In the video BM3D (VBM3D) method [11], similar patches in both intra- and interframes are aggregated before a two-stage 3-D collaborative filtering algorithm is employed for noise removal. Three-dimensional

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The authors are with the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, ON N2L 3G1, Canada (e-mail: kzeng@eng-mail.uwaterloo.ca; zhouwang@ieec.org).

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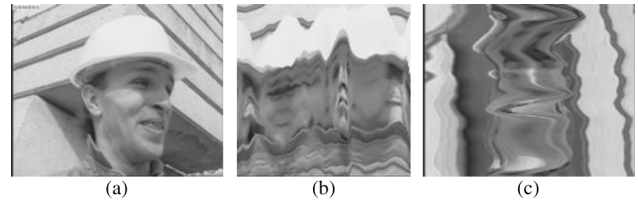


Fig. 1. Video signal observed from (a) front view, (b) side view, and (c) top view.

video-denoising schemes treat video sequences as 3-D volumes. These methods may operate in the space-time domain by adaptive weighted local averaging [12], 3-D order-statistic filtering [13], 3-D Kalman filtering [14], or 3-D Markov-model-based filtering [15]. They may also be applied in the 3-D transform domain, where soft/hard thresholding or Bayesian estimation is employed to eliminate noise, followed by an inverse 3-D transform that brings the signal back to the space-time domain [16]. Recently, 3-D-patch-based methods that achieved highly competitive denoising performance have also been investigated [17], [18].

To make best use of all available information, an ideal video-denoising algorithm would need to operate in 3-D. However, in the presence of significant motion, direct space-time 3-D filtering or 3-D transform-based approaches are difficult to effectively cover all motion-associated image content within local regions. On the other hand, 2-D denoising algorithms that use intra- and/or interframe information may be more efficient, but their performance is restricted by not taking full advantage of the neighboring pixels in all three dimensions simultaneously.

Here, we propose to a polyview fusion (PVF) scheme, where the same noisy video volume is denoised using 2-D approaches but from three different views, i.e., front, top, and side views. This is followed by a normalization procedure inspired by the structural similarity (SSIM) measure [19] and a fusion process based on local variance. By doing so, the advantage of 2-D approaches is utilized, whereas each pixel is denoised by its neighboring pixels from all three dimensions, thus providing a compromise between 2-D and 3-D approaches.

II. PROPOSED METHOD

A digital video signal can be expressed as a 3-D function $f(u, v, t)$ discrete in both space and time, where u and v are the horizontal and vertical spatial indices, respectively, and t is the time index. A video is typically played along the time axis. At any time instance $t = t_0$, the video is displayed as a 2-D front-view image $f(u, v, t_0)$, and the image changes for different values of t_0 . If we consider a video signal as 3-D volume data, then it can also be viewed from the side or the top. This gives two other ways to play the same video, i.e., a sequence of 2-D top-view images $f(u_0, v, t)$ for different values of u_0 and a sequence of 2-D side-view images $f(u, v_0, t)$ for different values of v_0 . An example is shown in Fig. 1, where the rarely observed side- and top-view images demonstrate some interesting regularized spatiotemporal structures.

Let x be an original noise-free video signal that is contaminated by additive independent zero-mean noise n with standard deviation σ_n , resulting in a noisy signal

$$y = x + n. \quad (1)$$

A video-denoising operator $D(\cdot)$ takes the noisy observation y and maps it to an estimator of x , i.e.,

$$\hat{x} = D(y) \quad (2)$$



Fig. 2. Denoised frames from three different views using different denoising algorithms. (a) Original frame. (b) Noisy frame with $\sigma_n = 50$. (c) (Left to right) Denoised frames by SURE-LET, BLS-GSM, K-SVD, and VBM3D. (Top to bottom) Denoised frames from front, top, and side views, respectively.

so that the difference between x and \hat{x} is as small as possible.

The proposed PVF method relies on a base video-denoising algorithm. The base denoiser is applied to the same noisy signal y but from different views, resulting in multiple versions of denoised signals, i.e.,

$$z_i = D_i(y), \quad i = 1, \dots, N. \quad (3)$$

In our current work, $N = 3$ because we have three different views, but in principle, the general approach also applies to the cases of less or more views, or multiple denoising algorithms. Fig. 2 shows sample denoised frames created by applying different denoising algorithms from three different views. It can be observed that the denoised frames have quite different appearances, even when the same denoising method is applied (from different views). Some image structures preserved in one of the views may be missing in the other views, and some artifacts that appear in one view may also be absent from another view. This suggests that the denoised frames from different views could complement each other, and fusing them (in appropriate ways) could potentially improve the denoising result. Let $\mathbf{z} = [z_1, z_2, \dots, z_N]^T$ be a vector that contains all denoised results. Then, the final denoised signal \hat{x} is obtained by applying a fusion operator $F(\cdot)$ to \mathbf{z} , i.e.,

$$\hat{x} = D(y) = F(\mathbf{z}) = F(D_1(y), D_2(y), \dots, D_N(y)). \quad (4)$$

In the case that the base denoisers D_i s are predetermined, the remaining task is to define fusion rule F .

Before the fusion step, however, we first apply a normalization process to each z_i . This is inspired by the SSIM index [19], which has been shown to be a much better predictor of the perceived image quality than the mean squared error (MSE). Given two image patches, the SSIM index separates the similarity measure into the luminance, contrast, and structure components. Since the luminance and contrast (measured by mean intensity and standard deviation, respectively) of an image patch can be adjusted freely without changing its structure, we can improve the SSIM measure by adapting the luminance and contrast of each z_i to match those of x while maintaining its structure. Specifically, we compute

$$\hat{z}_i = \frac{\sigma_x}{\sigma_{z_i}}(z_i - \mu_{z_i}) + \mu_x \quad (5)$$

TABLE I
SRCC BETWEEN LOCAL VARIANCE AND PSNR FOR $\sigma_n = 50$

	SURE-LET	BLS-GSM	K-SVD	VBM3D
Akiyo	0.436	0.658	0.718	0.747
Carphone	0.316	0.498	0.596	0.559
Mobile	0.645	0.882	0.891	0.748
Foreman	0.321	0.579	0.537	0.590
Miss America	0.288	0.418	0.470	0.581
Mother Daughter	0.439	0.721	0.746	0.820
News	0.566	0.767	0.779	0.772
Salesman	0.734	0.769	0.788	0.820
Suzie	0.291	0.458	0.531	0.420

where μ_x and μ_{z_i} , and σ_x and σ_{z_i} , denote the means and standard deviations of x and z_i , respectively. The computation in (5) requires the mean and standard deviation of x , which is not available. Fortunately, we can estimate them from noisy signal y using (1) and known noise properties (independence, zero mean, and known standard deviation) by

$$\mu_x = \mu_y \quad \text{and} \quad \sigma_x = \sqrt{\sigma_y^2 - \sigma_n^2} \quad (6)$$

where μ_y and σ_y^2 are the mean and variance of y , respectively.

Our fusion rule is based on variance weighted averaging, which can be expressed as

$$\hat{x} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^N \sigma_{z_i}^2 \hat{z}_i}{\sum_{i=1}^N \sigma_{z_i}^2}. \quad (7)$$

This is determined by our empirical studies on the relationship between the variance and the quality of denoised video patches using state-of-the-art video-denoising algorithms. Specifically, for three given 3-D patches denoised by the same video denoising algorithm but from three different views, we compute their corresponding variances and PSNR values between the denoised and original patches. We then calculate the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient (SRCC) between the three variance and three PSNR values. Table I shows the average SRCC values (over all patches) for nine video sequences denoised with four denoising algorithms. It can be seen that, although a fairly large variations are observed (depending on both denoising algorithm and video sequence), the correlations are all positive. This



Fig. 3. Comparison of one denoised frame from the “Akiyo” sequence with and without PVF. In the SSIM quality maps, brighter pixels indicate higher SSIM values and, thus, better quality. (a1)–(e1) Wiener2-D, SURE-LET, BLS-GSM, K-SVD, and VBM3D denoised frames without PVF. (a2)–(e2) SSIM quality maps for (a1)–(e1). (a3)–(e3) Wiener2-D, SURE-LET, BLS-GSM, K-SVD, and VBM3D denoised frames with PVF. (a4)–(e4): SSIM quality maps for (a3)–(e3).

suggests that the patches of larger variances tend to have better image quality, thus justifying variance-based weighting.

III. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

The proposed approach is tested on publicly available video sequences, which contain various content and rich motion styles. The sequences are of size $144 \times 176 \times 144$ and are contaminated by independent zero-mean white Gaussian noise, where the standard deviation of the noise covers a wide range between 10 and 100. After the noisy sequences are denoised using a base denoiser along three different views, the noisy and denoised sequences are divided into $16 \times 16 \times 16$ nonoverlap 3-D patches, within which sample means and

variances are computed and employed in the normalization and fusion processes described in Section II. The choices of nonoverlapping patches and size 16 are based on compromises between the denoising performance and complexity. In our simulations, there is no clipping of our-of-range values in the noise contamination and denoising processes.

All test sequences are in YCbCr 4:2:0 format, and only the denoising results of the luma channel are reported here. Two objective criteria PSNR and SSIM are employed to evaluate the quality of the denoised video. Assume that x and y are the noise-free and denoised images, respectively, and L is the dynamic range of intensity values. Then

$$\text{PSNR}(x, y) = 10 \log_{10} \left(\frac{L^2}{\text{MSE}(x, y)} \right). \quad (8)$$

TABLE III
AVERAGE PSNR AND SSIM IMPROVEMENT OVER ALL TEST SEQUENCES

Noise std (σ_n)	10	15	20	50	100
PSNR Improvement (dB)					
Wiener-2D	1.428	1.473	1.905	3.218	4.973
SURE-LET	1.882	2.050	2.143	2.472	2.780
BLS-GSM	1.848	1.980	2.068	2.248	2.007
K-SVD	1.748	1.817	1.853	1.895	1.772
ST-GSM	0.582	0.643	0.678	1.015	1.268
VBM3D	0.245	0.259	0.311	1.038	1.958
SSIM Improvement					
Wiener-2D	0.034	0.064	0.093	0.193	0.226
SURE-LET	0.024	0.036	0.047	0.094	0.141
BLS-GSM	0.048	0.023	0.030	0.065	0.081
K-SVD	0.013	0.020	0.026	0.048	0.049
ST-GSM	0.002	0.003	0.010	0.012	0.021
VBM3D	0.001	0.002	0.003	0.023	0.061

TABLE IV
COMPUTATIONAL COMPLEXITY ANALYSIS

Base denoiser	One view denoising time (second)	PVF time (second)	PVF (%)
Wiener-2D	1.353	0.1813	4.276
SURE-LET	27.13		0.222
BLS-GSM	140.3		0.043
K-SVD	684.5		0.009
ST-GSM	1748		0.004
VBM3D	8.791		0.683

with the complexity of the base denoisers. The results are reported in Table IV, where the speed is measured in seconds based on Matlab implementations of the algorithms on a computer with Intel Core2 Duo CPU E8600 processor at 3.33 GHz. Although the implementations are not speed optimal, they give us a general idea about the amount of added complexities due to the PVF process. As can be observed, generally, the PVF procedure is of low complexity relative to the base denoising algorithms. The percentage of time spent on PVF ranges from 0.004% to 4.276% of the overall denoising process (where a base denoiser needs to be run three times and, thus, the overall process increases the computational cost by a factor of 3 or more). In conclusion, the complexity of the overall denoising algorithm mainly depends on the complexity of the base denoiser, and the PVF portion is mostly negligible.

IV. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

A PVF approach is proposed to enhance video-denoising algorithms by fusing denoising results from multiple views. Our experiments demonstrate significant and consistent improvement over existing video-denoising methods. In practice, to apply PVF, one would need to store all video frames involved in the denoising and fusion processes in the memory. This may be a problem in practical systems, particularly when the video sequence is long. It is therefore preferable to divide long sequences into segments along the temporal direction and then denoise each segment independently. By adjusting the length of the segments, the memory requirement can be controlled.

In the future, better denoising results may be obtained by incorporating more advanced denoising algorithms or by improving the fusion method. Although our current implementation only fuses the denoising results by the same base denoiser applied along three views, the general PVF approach facilitates fusing the results of any finite number of denoising algorithms. Two issues are critical to the success of this approach. First, the denoising algorithms need to be complementary to each other. Second, the fusion algorithm needs to select the best denoising result among many or optimally assign weights to multiple denoising results. In our current experiment, we observe that 2-D approaches from different views tend to be more complementary to each

other than 3-D approaches, which have already considered the dependencies between neighboring pixels from all directions. Since the structural regularities exhibited in the top and side views are substantially different from those in the front view (as can be observed in Fig. 2), it is preferable to use different denoising methods that are best suited to the corresponding views before fusing the results. Currently, no denoising algorithm specifically tuned to denoise from top and side views has been developed. This gives us another interesting topic for future study.

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