Why ℓ_p-methods in Signal and Image Processing: A Fuzzy-Based Explanation

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1. Need for Deblurring

- Cameras and other image-capturing devices are getting better and better every day.
- However, none of them is perfect, there is always some blur, that comes from the fact that:
  - while we would like to capture the intensity $I(x,y)$ at each spatial location (x,y),
  - the signal $s(x,y)$ is influenced also by the intensities $I(x',y')$ at nearby locations (x',y'):

$$s(x,y)=\int w(x,y,x',y')\cdot I(x',y')\,dx'\,dy'.$$

- When we take a photo of a friend, this blur is barely visible – and does not constitute a serious problem.
- However, when a spaceship takes a photo of a distant plant, the blur is very visible – so deblurring is needed.

2. In General, Signal and Image Reconstruction Are Ill-Posed Problems

- The image reconstruction problem is *ill-posed* in the sense that:
  - large changes in $I(x, y)$
  - can lead to very small changes in $s(x, y)$.
- Indeed, the measured value $s(x, y)$ is an average intensity over some small region.
- Averaging eliminates high-frequency components.
- Thus, for $I^*(x, y) = I(x, y) + c \cdot \sin(\omega_x \cdot x + \omega_y \cdot y)$, the signal is practically the same: $s^*(x, y) \approx s(x, y)$.
- However, the original images, for large c, may be very different.

3. Need for Regularization

- To reconstruct the image reasonably uniquely, we must impose additional conditions on the original image.
- This imposition is known as *regularization*.
- Often, a signal or an image is smooth (differentiable).
- Then, a natural idea is to require that the vector $d = (d_1, d_2, \ldots)$ formed by the derivatives is close to 0:

$$\rho(d, 0) \le C \Leftrightarrow \sum_{i=1}^{n} d_i^2 \le c \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} C^2.$$

- For continuous signals, sum turns into an integral:

$$\int (\dot{x}(t))^2\,dt \le c \text{ or } \int \left(\left(\frac{\partial I}{\partial x}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{\partial I}{\partial y}\right)^2\right) dx\,dy \le c.$$

4. Tikhonov Regularization

- Out of all smooth signals or images, we want to find the best fit with observation: $J \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \sum_i e_i^2 \to \min$.
- Here, e_i is the difference between the actual and the reconstructed values.
- Thus, we need to minimize J under the constraint

$$\int (\dot{x}(t))^2\,dt \le c \text{ and } \int \left(\left(\frac{\partial I}{\partial x}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{\partial I}{\partial y}\right)^2\right)\,dx\,dy \le c.$$

- Lagrange multiplier method reduced this constraint optimization problem to the unconstrained one:

$$J + \lambda \cdot \int \left(\left(\frac{\partial I}{\partial x}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{\partial I}{\partial y}\right)^2\right)\,dx\,dy \to \min_{I(x,y)}.$$

- This idea is known as *Tikhonov regularization*.

5. From Continuous to Discrete Images

- In practice, we only observe an image with a certain spatial resolution.
- So we can only reconstruct the values $I_{ij} = I(x_i, y_j)$ on a certain grid $x_i = x_0 + i \cdot \Delta x$ and $y_j = y_0 + j \cdot \Delta y$.
- In this discrete case, instead of the derivatives, we have differences:

$$J + \lambda \cdot \sum_i \sum_j ((\Delta_x I_{ij})^2 + (\Delta_y I_{ij})^2) \to \min_{I_{ij}} .$$

- Here:
  - $\Delta_x I_{ij} \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} I_{ij} - I_{i-1,j}$, and
  - $\Delta_y I_{ij} \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} I_{ij} - I_{i,j-1}$.

6. Limitations of Tikhonov Regularization and ℓ^p-Method

- Tikhonov regularization is based on the assumption that the signal or the image is smooth.
- In real life, images are, in general, not smooth.
- For example, many of them exhibit a fractal behavior.
- In such non-smooth situations, Tikhonov regularization does not work so well.
- To take into account non-smoothness, researchers have proposed to modify the Tikhonov regularization:
  - instead of the squares of the derivatives,
  - use the p-th powers for some $p \neq 2$:

$$J + \lambda \cdot \sum_i \sum_j (|\Delta_x I_{ij}|^p + |\Delta_y I_{ij}|^p) \to \min_{I_{ij}}.$$

- This works much better than Tikhonov regularization.

7. Remaining Problem

- *Problem:* the ℓ^p-methods are heuristic.
- There is no convincing explanation of why necessarily we replace the square:
  - with a p-th power and
  - not, for example, with some other function.
- *We show:* that a natural formalization of the corresponding intuitive ideas indeed leads to ℓ^p-methods.
- To formalize the intuitive ideas behind image reconstruction, we use *fuzzy techniques*.
- Fuzzy techniques were designed to transform:
  - imprecise intuitive ideas into
  - exact formulas.

8. Let us Apply Fuzzy Techniques to Our Problem

- We are trying to formalize the statement that the image is continuous.
- This means that the differences $\Delta x_k \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} \Delta_x I_{ij}$ and $\Delta_y I_{ij}$ between image intensities at nearby points are small.
- Let $\mu(x)$ denote the degree to which x is small, and $f_\&(a,b)$ denote the "and"-operation.
- Then, the degree d to which Δx_1 is small *and* Δx_2 is small, etc., is:

$$d = f_\&(\mu(\Delta x_1), \mu(\Delta x_2), \mu(\Delta x_3), \ldots).$$

- *Known:* each "and"-operation can be approximated, for any $\varepsilon > 0$, by an *Archimedean* one:

$$f_\&(a,b) = f^{-1}(f(a)) \cdot f(b)).$$

- Thus, without losing generality, we can safely assume that the actual "and"-operation is Archimedean.

9. Analysis of the Problem

- We want to select an image with the largest degree of satisfying this condition:

$$d = f^{-1}(f(\mu(\Delta x_1))\cdot f(\mu(\Delta x_2))\cdot f(\mu(\Delta x_3))\cdot \ldots) \to \max .$$

- Since the function $f(x)$ is increasing, maximizing d is equivalent to maximizing

$$f(d) = f(\mu(\Delta x_1)) \cdot f(\mu(\Delta x_2)) \cdot f(\mu(\Delta x_3)) \cdot \ldots$$

- Maximizing this product is equivalent to minimizing its negative logarithm

$$L \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} -\ln(d) = \sum_k g(\Delta x_k), \text{ where } g(x) \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} -\ln(f(\mu(x))).$$

- In these terms, selecting a membership function is equivalent to selecting the related function $g(x)$.

10. Which Function $g(x)$ Should We Select: Idea

- The value $\Delta x_i = 0$ is small, so $\mu(0) = 1$ and $g(0) = -\ln(1) = 0$.
- The numerical value of a difference Δx_i depends on the choice of a measuring unit.
- If we choose a measuring unit (MU) which is a times smaller, then $\Delta x_i \to a \cdot \Delta x_i$.
- It's reasonable to request that the requirement $\sum\limits_k g(\Delta x_k) \to \min$ not change if we change MU.
- For example, if $g(z_1) + g(z_2) = g(z_1') + g(z_2')$, then

$$g(a \cdot z_1) + g(a \cdot z_2) = g(a \cdot z_1') + g(a \cdot z_2').$$

11. Main Result

- *Reminder:* selecting the most reasonable values of Δx_k ($d \to \max$) is equivalent to $\sum\limits_k g(\Delta x_k) \to \min$.
- *Main condition:* we are looking for a function $g(x)$ for which $g(z_1) + g(z_2) = g(z_1') + g(z_2')$, then

$$g(a \cdot z_1) + g(a \cdot z_2) = g(a \cdot z_1') + g(a \cdot z_2').$$

- *Main result:* $g(a) = C \cdot a^p + \text{const}$, for some $p > 0$.
- *Fact:* minimizing $\sum\limits_k g(\Delta x_k)$ is equivalent to minimizing the sum $\sum\limits_k |\Delta x_k|^p$.
- *Fact:* minimizing $\sum\limits_k |\Delta x_k|^p$ under condition $J \le c$ is equivalent to minimizing $J + \lambda \cdot \sum\limits_k |\Delta x_k|^p$.
- *Conclusion:* fuzzy techniques indeed justify ℓ^p-method.

12. Proof

- We are looking for a function $g(x)$ for which $g(z_1)+g(z_2)=g(z_1')+g(z_2')$, then
$$g(a\cdot z_1)+g(a\cdot z_2)=g(a\cdot z_1')+g(a\cdot z_2').$$
- Let us consider the case when $z_1'=z_1+\Delta z$ for a small Δz, and $z_2'=z_2+k\cdot\Delta z+o(\Delta z)$ for an appropriate k.
- Here, $g(z_1+\Delta z)=g(z_1)+g'(z_1)\cdot\Delta z+o(\Delta z)$, so $g'(z_1)+g'(z_2)\cdot k=0$ and $k=-\dfrac{g'(z_1)}{g'(z_2)}$.
- The condition $g(a\cdot z_1)+g(a\cdot z_2)=g(a\cdot z_1')+g(a\cdot z_2')$ similarly takes the form $g'(a\cdot z_1)+g'(z_2)\cdot k=0$, so
$$g'(a\cdot z_1)-g'(a\cdot z_2)\cdot\frac{g'(z_1)}{g'(z_2)}=0.$$
- Thus, $\dfrac{g'(a\cdot z_1)}{g'(z_1)}=\dfrac{g'(a\cdot z_2)}{g'(z_2)}$ for all a, z_1, and z_2.

13. Proof (cont-d)

- *Reminder:* $\dfrac{g'(a\cdot z_1)}{g'(z_1)}=\dfrac{g'(a\cdot z_2)}{g'(z_2)}$ for all z_1 and z_2.
- This means that the ratio $\dfrac{g'(a\cdot z_1)}{g'(z_1)}$ does not depend on z_i: $\dfrac{g'(a\cdot z_1)}{g'(z_1)}=F(a)$ for some $F(a)$.
- For $a=a_1\cdot a_2$, we have

$$F(a)=\frac{g'(a\cdot z_1)}{g'(z_1)}=\frac{g'(a_1\cdot a_2\cdot z_1)}{g'(z_1)}=$$

$$\frac{g'(a_1\cdot(a_2\cdot z_1))}{g'(a_2\cdot z_1)}\cdot\frac{g'(a_2\cdot z_1)}{g'(z_1)}=F(a_1)\cdot F(a_2).$$

- So, $F(a_1\cdot a_2)=F(a_1)\cdot F(a_2)$, thus $F(a)=a^q$ for some real number q.
- $\dfrac{g'(a\cdot z_1)}{g'(z_1)}=F(a)$ becomes $g'(a\cdot z_1)=g'(z_1)\cdot a^p$.

14. Proof (final part)

- *Reminder:* we have $g'(a \cdot z_1) = g'(z_1) \cdot a^p$.
- For $z_1 = 1$, we get $g'(a) = C \cdot a^q$, where $C \stackrel{\text{def}}{=} g'(1)$.
- We could have $q = -1$ or $q \neq -1$.
- For $q = -1$, we get $g(a) + C \cdot \ln(a) + \text{const}$, which contradicts to $g(0) = 0$.
- Integrating, for $q \neq -1$, we get

$$g(a) = \frac{C}{q+1} \cdot a^{q+1} + \text{const}.$$

- The main result is proven.

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