

An Object Tracking in Particle Filtering and Data Association Framework, Using SIFT Features

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Keywords: SIFT, Particle filtering, Objects tracking, Video surveillance.

Abstract

We address the problematic of the multi-object tracking in video surveillance context with single static cameras. We propose a novel approach for multi-object tracking in a particle filtering and data association framework allowing real-time tracking and dealing with the most important challenges (1) selecting and tracking real object of interest in noisy environments (2) managing situations of occlusion. In this study we will consider tracker inputs from motion detection approach (classically based on background subtraction and clustering). Particle filtering has proven very successful for non-linear and non-Gaussian estimation problems. The article presents SIFT features tracking into a particle filtering and data association. The performance of the proposed algorithm is evaluated on sequences from ETISEO, CAVIAR, PETS2001 and VS-PETS2003 datasets in order to show the improvements upon state-of-the-art methods.

1 Introduction

Real-time object tracking is an important and challenging task in Computer Vision. Among the application fields that drive development in this area, video-surveillance has a strong need for computationally efficient approaches, which combine real-time processing with high performances level. Proposed solutions must be able to adapt to different environments and noises and to track with precision a large variety of objects.

In the video surveillance context, many object tracking techniques were proposed [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]. Literature techniques can be classified according to three criteria.

The first one concerns the tracking targets initialization. Many approaches can be distinguished, from object detector on static images, to initialization by motion detection and clustering, through learned models on whole or parts of objects. In [6], Breitenstein et al. track peoples using continuous confidence of pedestrian detectors [7, 8] and online trained classifiers. In [9] Moutarde et al. use “connected control-points” features with adaboost for detecting and tracking vehicles and pedestrians. Wu et al. use human body parts detectors in [10]. These parts detectors are learned by boosting a number of weak classifiers based on edgelet features. Siebel et al. [11] use motion detection to

detect moving regions, detect and track heads on these regions, and finally track people shapes.

The second criterion concerns the type of used features for the characterization and the matching of objects over the time. Among all existing features in the state-of-the art, local features are widely used for their accuracy, stability and the invariance against scale, rotation, illumination changes within the images and affine transformations that they can provide. We can mention SIFT[12] and its derivatives PCA-SIFT[13], GLOH[14] and DAISY[15]. Other local features like SURF[16], HOG[7], and BRIEF [17] use some similar concepts for their computing. However they differ on the type of used information (gradient or integral image), the size and shapes (rectangular or circular) of computing regions around points of interest or the normalization and weighting technics.

The last criterion concerns features searching and matching technics along the time. The commonly encountered technics are related to filtering approaches. The oldest and well-known one is the Kalman filter. More recently, many technics increasingly sophisticated were used including Particle filters[18, 19, 20, 21, 22]. In [23] Almeida et al. detect and track multiple moving objects using particle filters to estimate the object states, and sample based joint probabilistic data association filters to perform the assignment between the features and filters. Rui et al. propose in [24] an unscented particle filter to generate sophisticated proposal distributions to improve the tracking performances. Nummiaro et al. [25] integrate adaptive color distribution to model targets into particle filtering for object tracking purpose.

Our approach use moving object as input. These objects are detected using background subtraction and clustering methods. Once objects detected, we track them using particle filtering method applied on SIFT features and with a specific data association method based on the tracked SIFT features.

This paper presents the following contributions: (1) we present a novel approach for object tracking in a Particle Filtering and Data Association framework. (2) Our approach exploits the high reliability of SIFT features to perform a first tracking information using particle filter. This use is performed in a particular way, based on more precise features detection and selection. (3) In order to deal with less reliable SIFT features and the complex situation which can occurs during object tracking, we propose a novel approach for data association, based on reliability measure of tracked SIFT features, computed during the particle filtering step (4) We present evaluation on several dataset demonstrating that the

proposed approach is applicable for video surveillance context and provide interesting results.

2 Our approach

We first present an overview of the algorithm. Our approach consists in two levels of processing collaborating together. First of all, a set of SIFT[12] features is extracted from detected objects, denoted $do(t)$, according to some criteria detailed in Sec 2.1. All SIFT features are tracked along the time using a particle filter and their state are updated at each frame. We will explain what is the “state” of the SIFT feature in Sec 2.2. Next step is the updating of the state of tracked objects of interest, denoted $to(t-1)$, using the tracked SIFT features. A reasoning based on weighted scoring is introduced to minimize error due to the effects of SIFT features detected on background or diverged from the correct object during tracking. In this step, occluded objects are referenced and maintained for tracking resume. Finally, new detected objects are used to initialize new tracked objects. (see Figure 1)

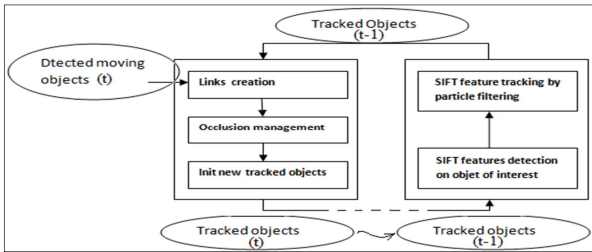


Figure 1: diagram of our object tracking framework

2.1. SIFT features detection

For each $do(t)$, defined by a bounding box and a set of motion pixels, our system detects and compute a set of SIFT features on this object. The bounding box is divided into small rectangular sub regions. The aim of this subdivision is the good spatial repartition of features into the object allowing better partial occlusion management. Another benefit is the possibility of parallelization of computing per sub-region for real time processing using multi-cores processors. The number of sub-regions is calculated according to the bounding box dimensions into a specific range to ensure the robustness and optimize the processing time. Each sub region must contains a constant number of SIFT features. A SIFT detector with more permissive curvature and contrast thresholds than optimum ones [12] is used to obtain more SIFT points. Then the needed number of features is selected according to their robustness based on the detection scale, the curvature and contrast values. This selection is also done using the motion state of pixels assuming that SIFT points located on moving pixels belong to the object of interest with a high probability.

A first reliability measure based on these selection criteria will be useful in data association step.

2.2. SIFT feature tracking by particle filters

All SIFT features are tracked during the time using a particle filtering method. As a reminder about particle filters, let x_t

denote the state of the system at the current time t , and $y^t = (y_1, \dots, y_t)$ the observations up to time t . For tracking, the distribution of interest is the filtering distribution $p(x_t|y^t)$. In Bayesian sequential estimation this distribution can be computed using the two step recursion:

$$\text{predict } p(x_t|y^{t-1}) = \int D(x_t|x_{t-1})p(dx_{t-1}|y^{t-1}) \quad (1)$$

$$\text{update } p(x_t|y^t) = \frac{L(y_t|x_t)p(x_t|y^{t-1})}{\int (x_t|S_t)p(ds_t|y^{t-1})} \quad (2)$$

where the prediction distribution follows from marginalization and the new filtering distribution is a direct consequence of Bayes’ rule. The recursion requires the specification of a dynamic model describing the state evolution $D(x_t|x_{t-1})$, and a model giving the likelihood of any state in the light of the current observation $L(y_t|x_t)$. The recursion is initialized with some initial distribution $p(x_0)$.

In our approach, the state of a SIFT feature $x = \{x, y, u, v, h, n\}$ consists in the SIFT feature position (x, y) , the velocity component (u, v) , the SIFT descriptor h associated to the SIFT point, and finally n , the measurement error estimation following a normalized distribution. In particle filtering, each hypothesis about the new state is represented by a particle which has its own state with the same structure than the SIFT feature one. Each SIFT feature is tracked using a constant number of particles.

The prediction step consists of applying the dynamic model to all the particles of the tracked SIFT feature to compute the new estimated location of each one.

$$(x, y)_t = (x, y)_{t-1} + (u, v)_{t-1} \cdot \Delta_t + n_{(x,y)} \quad (3)$$

$$(u, v)_t = (u, v)_{t-1} + n_{(u,v)} \quad (4)$$

The update step consists of estimating the new location of the tracked feature using the predicted state of all particles. This step is performed in three sub-steps: particle weighting, particle sampling and new state estimation describe below.

2.2.1 Weighting of particles

Each particle is weighted using two different weights (eq 5): the first and most important one is the similarity score between the particle descriptor and the tracked feature descriptor. The second weighting criteria aimed to minimize the importance of particles on the background using the “motion state” of pixel at the same position of the particles.

$$Wp = c \left[\frac{1}{\sigma\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{-\frac{d(H_f, H_p)^2}{2\sigma^2}} \right] \quad (5)$$

$d(H_f, H_p)$ denotes the similarity distance between the tracked feature descriptor and the current particle descriptor. We use Euclidean distance after testing some other distances without significant improvements. σ denotes a standard deviation computed on tracked feature similarity variations up to time $t-1$. $c \in \{c_0, 1\}$, with $c_0 \in]0, 1[$, denotes the coefficient of confidence of the particle according to its belonging to the moving region. At a given time t and for a given object, c can take two values: 1 if the pixel which corresponds to the

particle is a motion pixel and smaller value c_0 otherwise. c_0 depends on the quality of the detection of the object measured by the density of its motion pixels. For a low density c_0 will be near to 1. A high density is obtained in a good or noisy detection cases. Here c_0 will be smaller. In fact when the motion detection performs well, non-motion pixels are probably background ones. In the high noise case the object of interest is probably fully detected, so this weight will have low impact in (5). When the images resolution is high and the tracked objects enough large in the image, c would serve no purpose; the robustness of the SIFT descriptor is sufficiently discriminative. However, in the practice, video-surveillance images have medium resolution quality and are relatively noisy. They monitor large area making object smaller. For these reason, our second weighting technique increases accuracy, what is demonstrated in Sec 3.1.2.

2.2.2 Sampling particles

After weighting, all particles are sampled using ‘‘Sampling Importance Re-sampling’’ (SIR) method [26, 27] to take the most important, drop the less important and replace them by new generated particles from the kept ones. The sampling step allows the tracker to keep the more reliable particles and the re-sampling step avoids information degeneration. Each feature keeps a constant number of particles along the time making the processing time easier to control. Finally, all particles are re-weighted with the same normalized weight.

2.2.3 New state estimation

The estimation of the new location of the tracked feature is obtained as the barycentre of all particles. The descriptor of the tracked feature is computed around the new location.

A variation measure between the previous descriptor and the new one is computed. This variation measure is used for the feature variation learning in order to decide if a new state is acceptable. If the variation is too important the SIFT feature is dropped and replace it by a new detected one.

2.3. Data association

At this point all of the tracked features are updated. The next step consists of linking previously tracked objects $to(t-1)$, with new detected objects $do(t)$, dealing with complex situations like partial or full occlusions. From a given frame to the next one, only four cases can occur.

In the first case a unique $do(t)$ corresponds to only one $to(t-1)$. Here the system updates the $to(t-1)$ by linking it directly with $do(t)$.

In the second case a unique $do(t)$ corresponds to a set of Q $to_k(t-1)$ where $k \in \{1, \dots, Q\}$. This situation occurs when the detection at t did not split detected moving objects typically during a partial occlusions or high objects proximity. Here the system tries to split the bounding box of $do(t)$ into Q smaller bounding boxes. This split is performed by estimating the best bounding boxes using to the spatial distribution of SIFT points before the merge. This distribution is given by the ratios between features locations and the borders of the bounding before detection merging.

In the third case a unique $to(t-1)$ corresponds to a set of R $do_l(t)$, where $l \in [1, R]$, like in dispersing group of persons, end of short occlusion or a person leaving a car for example. Here two situations can be distinguished: $to_i(t-1)$ can be a result of a previous merge of tracked objects at time $t-p$ like described in the previous paragraph. In this case, the tracking is resumed using occlusion management approach (Sec 2.4). Otherwise, if $to_i(t-1)$ has always been tracked as a group of objects since its appearance in the scene, new $to_i(t)$ are initialized by each $do_l(t)$ after split.

In the last case no $do(t)$ corresponds to a $to(t-1)$. It occurs in full occlusion situations or when the $to(t-1)$ leaves the scene. According to some criteria like scene exit proximity or detected intersection between $to(t-1)$, the system considers this object as lost or as occluded object. If the object is lost, its tracking is definitely stopped. Otherwise, the object is kept for tracking resume if it re-appears after occlusion.

The first step of our data association method consists of detecting in which case each $to(t-1)$ is it at time t . To do this, a linking scores matrix $M \times N$ denoted \mathbf{S} is constructed. M is the number of $to(t-1)$ and N the number of $do(t)$. Each element $s(to_i(t-1), do_j(t))$ of \mathbf{S} is calculated as the weighted proportion of SIFT features from the i^{th} $to(t-1)$ that geometrically belongs to the j^{th} $do(t)$. The contribution of each SIFT features in the linking score value is directly proportional to its reliability. This reliability is given by the learned similarity variation of the tracked feature up to time t , and by the motion state of the pixel at the same location:

$$s(to_i(t-1), do_j(t)) = \frac{1}{P} \sum_{k=1}^P w_k(i, j) \quad (6)$$

where $w_k(i, j) \in [0, 1]$ is the reliability score of the k^{th} feature of $to_i(t-1)$ that is geometrically contained by $do_j(t)$. $to_i(t-1)$ has P SIFT features.

Putting these links score values in a matrix form make the decisions easier and faster. We use the Hungarian algorithm [28] to select best links.

Note that after this data association step, SIFT points outside of their objects (moved on background or on another objects during their proximity or partial occlusion) are dropped and replaced by new detected SIFT features. Sub-regions which are common to multiples objects in case of partial occlusions are not used for the detection. On the other hand, the system keeps a uniform spatial repartition of the SIFT features by filtering too closest features. The system keeps the most reliable feature and replaces others by new detected ones in sub-regions of the object with less number of features.

2.4. Occlusion management

After links creation, some $do(t)$ may not be linked with any $to(t-1)$. They can be new objects appearing for the first time in the scene or previously occluded object which re-appears.

Before initializing new $to(t)$ with unlinked $do(t)$, an attempt of matching between these unlinked $do(t)$ and some tracked objects in occlusion state is done using the following criteria.

First, a matching between SIFT features which were used for object tracking before occlusion and new detected ones on the candidate object. In the case of an object which did not change orientation during occlusion (straight move for example), this matching of SIFT features performs well.

The second criterion is based on the dominant color descriptor. During tracking, the k dominant colors[29] of the object are extracted with their proportions and used to weight a matching hypothesis with a candidate object after occlusion.

Finally, we use two “world” coherency criteria, based on the calibration information: The 3D dimensions and the 3D positions. During tracking, 3D dimensions and speed of the tracked object are learned in two Gaussian models. For each candidate for resume-after-occlusion, its 3D dimensions and position must fit into the learned Gaussian models.

Note that we keep fully occluded object for future tracking resume only for a predefined short time. Long period increases the number of combinations and the risk of errors.

2.5. Real object of interest validation

For free $do(t)$ after links creation and occlusion management, new $to(t)$ are initialized. A set of SIFT features are detected and assigned to these objects as described in Sec. 2.1.

New $to(t)$ have an intermediate state before their full validation. Some $do(t)$ can be noise, like illumination changes reflected on the floor or on some static scene objects, or tree branches moving. For this reason, each new $to(t)$ is tracked normally, but controlled during a given number of frames before considerate it as a real object of interest. Our system uses the persistence, the trajectory, and the 3D speed of each new $to(t)$ during this number of frames as criteria to validate it as object of interest. In the case of noise, the new $to(t)$ can disappear after few frames. It can have incoherent or oscillatory motion or a high speed which cannot match the possible speed of any objects of interest.

3 Experimental results

We evaluate the tracking algorithm on 121 sequences from four datasets: CAVIAR[30], ETISEO[31], PETS2001[32] and VS-PETS2003[33]. We have selected these sequences according to the availability of their ground truth data. They contain different levels of complexity with challenging situations, like the football match in VS-PETS2003 dataset.

In order to compare our tracker with another one on ETISEO dataset providing the largest variety of situations and contexts, we used the tracking evaluation metrics defined in ETISEO benchmarking project (A.T.Nghiem et al., 2007).

The “tracking time” metric $M1$ measures the percentage of time during which a reference object (ground truth data) is tracked. The “object ID persistence” metric $M2$ computes throughout time how many tracked objects are associated with one reference object. The third metric $M3$ “object ID confusion” computes the number of reference object IDs per tracked object. These metrics must be used together to obtain a complete tracker evaluation. Like in [34], we also use a

mean metric M taking the average value of these three tracking metrics. All of the four metric values are defined in the interval $[0, 1]$. The higher the metric value is, the better the tracking algorithm performance gets.

Our evaluation is divided into two parts. First, we have evaluated our tracker with different configurations and parameters, to highlight our contributions. The second part concerns a comparison to existing evaluation on ETISEO dataset with the same metrics on common sequences.

3.1. Evaluation with different configuration

3.1.1 Detection and selection of SIFT points

In this part, we tried three configurations to evaluate our SIFT point detection and selection method. First, we just applied an implementation of SIFT algorithm with the optimum parameters as defined in [12] on the whole objects of interest. In the second configuration, we divided objects into sub-regions and we used SIFT algorithm with more permissive parameters and selected the needed number of points per sub-region according to their detection order. The third configuration is the one we used for our approach (Sec 2.1).

| | | PETS 2001 | VS-PETS 2003 |
|-----------------|----------------|-----------|--------------|
| Configuration 1 | \overline{M} | 0.43 | 0.18 |
| Configuration 2 | \overline{M} | 0.65 | 0.41 |
| Configuration 3 | \overline{M} | 0.69 | 0.48 |

Table 1: evaluation of different SIFTS features detection and selection methods on PETS2001 and VS-PETS2003 datasets

For this test, we have disabled the occlusion management part to highlight the contribution of the SIFT detection and selection method especially for partial occlusion cases.

We used 2 datasets: in PETS2001, some persons are partially occluded by passing vehicles. In VS-PETS2003, the football match provides a lot of partial occlusions between players.

Table 1 shows that our SIFT detection and selection improves results in comparison to the other tested configurations. The first reason is the number of detected points. We observed that for configuration 1, the SIFT algorithm provides very low number of SIFT points, due to the small size of objects in the images, and the image resolution. This makes the data association less precise. Our method (configuration 3) provides more points improving the robustness of data association process.

The second reason is the localization of the detected points. For the configuration 1, most detected points are concentrated on the feet of tracked persons. The concentration of tracked SIFT features in one region of the tracked object makes the tracking fail if only this region is occluded. The improvement of sub-regions division is demonstrated by the results of configuration 2 and 3. The spatial repartition of features, although low reliability of some of them, ensure existence of some points on visible parts of objects in partial occlusions.

The Last reason is the selection of SIFT features according to their reliability. In configuration 2, we take the n first detected SIFT points; n is the needed number of points per sub-region.

This increases the risk of taking less reliable points instead of more reliable ones. In our used method (configuration 3), we select the most reliable points as described in section 2.1.

The improvements of our features detection and selection approach are illustrated in Figure .

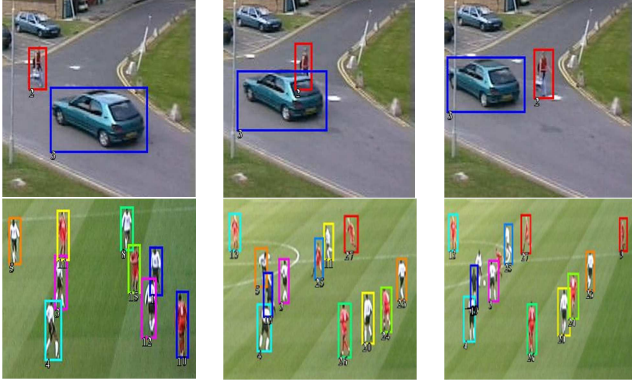


Figure 2: Partial and full occlusion management

3.1.2 Particles weighting by motion state

To highlight the contribution of particle weight by motion state, given by c in eq. (5), we have taken a subsequence of 50 frames from PORTUGAL-FV sequences of CAVIAR dataset. It contains a person browsing the scene in straight line. We apply SIFT algorithm on this person and select one SIFT feature on its head. After that we annotate the approximate location of this SIFT point manually on the 49 remaining frames. Finally, we tracked this point along the subsequence using the described particle filter (Sec 2.2) with and without using the weighting method by motion-state (Sec 2.2.1).

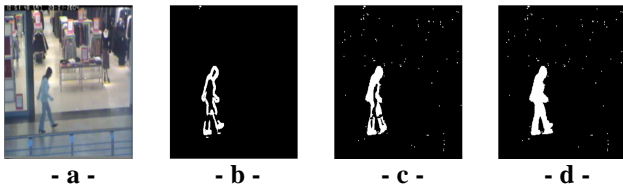


Figure 3: different qualities of motion detection. (a) Original image. (b) Low detection. (c) Medium detection. (d) High detection.

To make this test more relevant, we change some parameters on the motion detection algorithm to make it providing three different qualities of detections (see Figure).

We have observed that when we don't use motion state of pixels for particles weighting, the SIFT point leaves the person and stays on background after the 32th frame. This is due to the successive updates of the SIFT descriptor during its tracking. From the 24 frame, the SIFT point is located too close to the contour of the person's head, so the computing window of SIFT descriptor takes more information from background. The SIFT point continue to diverge, attracted by the background, until the 32th frame when it stays on it. On the other hand, the SIFT point stays all the 50 frames on the head of the person when we use the motion state for particles weighting.

3.1.3 Data association and occlusion management

We assume that the acceptance of less reliable SIFT features to ensure spatial repartition can decrease the reliability of

object localization. At the same time, our use of motion state of pixels to weight particles decrease slightly the final weight of each particle, making the SIFT feature moves a little bit more around its real position (see Table 2).

| | Without motion state weighting | With motion state weighting |
|------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Low detection | 5.59 | 6.12 |
| Medium detection | 5.59 | 6.72 |
| High detection | 5.59 | 6.04 |

Table 2: divergence of SIFT point until frame 32: the mean of 2D distance between tracked SIFT point and annotated position

Our data association approach compensate the unreliability of SIFT features in this case. Using reliability measure of SIFT features as a weight in link scores allows the algorithm to select the right links, and drop unreliable SIFT features.

Table 3 validates this method and our tracking framework.

| | M1 | M2 | M3 | \bar{M} |
|-------------|------|------|------|-------------|
| CAVIAR | 0.78 | 0.82 | 0.91 | 0.84 |
| ETISEO | 0.7 | 0.91 | 0.92 | 0.84 |
| PETS2001 | 0.84 | 0.90 | 0.94 | 0.89 |
| VS-PETS2003 | 0.47 | 0.79 | 0.84 | 0.70 |

Table 3: global evaluation results on the selected 121 sequences.

3.2. Comparison to state of the art results on ETISEO

We compared the results of our approach on ETISEO dataset with the results of [34] who obtained themselves better results than those of ETISEO project. The comparison is provided in Table 4. We obtained better results on the same sequences with the same metrics for most of them.

| | | ETI-VS1-BE-18-C4 | ETI-VS1-BE-16-C4 | ETI-VS1-MO-7-C1 |
|------------------------|-----------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Proposed tracked | M1 | 0.68 | 0.54 | 0.90 |
| | M2 | 1 | 1 | 0.89 |
| | M3 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | \bar{M} | 0.89 | 0.85 | 0.93 |
| T_{CHAU} [34] | M1 | 0.64 | 0.36 | 0.87 |
| | M2 | 1 | 1 | 0.92 |
| | M3 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | \bar{M} | 0.88 | 0.79 | 0.93 |

Table 4: Comparison of proposed tracker performances with the one proposed by CHAU et al. [34] on three ETISEO sequences

Note that the average runtime of our code is 4–8 fps for ETISEO, PETS2001 and VS-PETS2003 datasets, and 12–32 fps for CAVIAR dataset, with Intel(R) Xeon(R) E5530 2.40GHz, depending on the image size, number and 2D size of detections in each sequence.

4 Conclusion

The main idea presented in this paper is that the correct use of local features as long as they are selected and tracked reliably and wisely used in data association technique by correct weighting, can solve most of object tracking issues.

Many works aim at resolving the problems given by tracking process such as occlusion, but there is still not a robust tracker which can well deals with all possible situations.

The proposed approach has been tested and validated on 121 real video sequences from four different datasets. The experimentation results show that the proposed tracker provides good results in many scenes although each tested scene has its proper complexity. Our tracker also gets the best performances than other recent approaches [34].

Our algorithm processes in a real-time. However, some drawbacks still exist in this approach: the use of motion detection as unique input for our tracker make the time of tracking lower and trajectories segmented for objects which stop moving for a long time. Adding object detectors on static images (people detector, car detector, .etc.) can avoid this kind of problems. For Occlusion management, our criteria for candidate validation provide good results but can be improves with more reliable descriptors (e.g. color covariance). All these improvements are in track for our future works.

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