

# A Hierarchical Magnification Approach for Enhancing the Insight in Data Visualizations

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**Abstract:** Non-linear deformations are useful for applications where users face highly cluttered visual displays, either due to large datasets, or visualizations on small screens, or a combination of both, that increases the density of the data and makes the perception of patterns difficult. Non-linear deformations have been used to magnify significant/cluttered regions in data visualization, for the purpose of reducing clutter and enhancing the perception of patterns. General deformation methods (e.g. logarithmic scaling and fish-eye views) suffer from several drawbacks, since they do not consider the prominent features that must be preserved in the visualization. This work introduces a hierarchical approach for non-linear deformation that aims to reduce visual clutter by magnifying significant regions, and lead to enhanced visualizations of two/three-dimensional datasets on highly cluttered displays. The proposed approach utilizes an energy function, which aims to determine the optimal deformation for every local region in the data, taking the information from multiple single-layer significance maps into account. The problem is subsequently transformed into an optimization problem for the minimization of the energy function under specific spatial constraints. The proposed hierarchical approach for the generation of the significance map, surpasses current methods, and manages to efficiently identify significant regions and achieve better results.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

According to Rosenholtz et al. (Rosenholtz et al., 2005) clutter is defined as the state at which excess items, or their representation or organization, leads to a degradation of performance at some task. Visual clutter (Ellis and Dix, 2007) can mislead users into deriving wrong conclusions, and increase the decision confidence on erroneous decisions. It can be caused when large data volumes are visualized on small display devices, which reduce the visualization space and its information capacity.

Non-linear deformations have been used to magnify highly cluttered regions, and thus, reduce the total cluttering in visualizations (Ellis and Dix, 2007) (Wu et al., 2013) (Tao et al., 2014). The most commonly used functions for non-linear transformations and clutter reduction are the logarithmic and square root mappings (Maciejewski et al., 2013), which do not take into account the content of the visualizations. According to Ellis et al. (Ellis and Dix, 2007), other popular methods for clutter reduction include: sampling/filtering, changing the opacity of the visual objects, and dimensional reordering. This work

focuses, only on non-linear transformations for clutter reduction, since they can be used to create a general approach that can be applied on multiple types of data visualizations.

Towards reducing visual clutter on the visualizations, this work proposes a hierarchical magnification approach for non-linear deformation. Building upon the current state-of-the art, the proposed method enhances significant regions of the data based on an underlying significance map. It can be considered as a focus+context technique, in which the focus points are calculated automatically, based on their underlying significance. The proposed approach distributes the distortion of the input data to regions of low significance, while significant neighboring regions are uniformly magnified. In other words, although the deformation of all the cells in the grid is non-uniform, small neighborhoods of significant regions that have similar significance values, are magnified by a similar amount, i.e. uniformly. This procedure results in a deformation of the visualizations that reduces the visual clutter, and enhances the analytics potential of the visualizations.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows: Sec-

tion 2 presents the related work on visualization deformation. The proposed magnification approach is presented in Section 3. Section 4 illustrates the application of the Magnification approach onto different types of visualizations, as well as its comparison with existing approaches. Finally, the paper concludes in Section 5.

## 2 RELATED WORK

Over the last decade, many researchers have focused their efforts on reducing visual clutter (Ellis and Dix, 2007) and capturing important properties of the data, for extracting meaningful information. In this direction several techniques dealing with clutter have been proposed, like non-linear deformation, adjustment of sampling ratios (Bertini and Santucci, 2006), etc. Still, spatial deformation has been identified as one of the most popular antagonists for clutter reduction (Ellis and Dix, 2007). Thereby, the positions of the visual objects (e.g. a node of a graph, or a word in context preserving word clouds) are displaced on the display, so as to accommodate for the better visualization of data patterns.

Regarding spatial deformation of the position/size of the visual objects, Keim et al. (Keim et al., 2010) presented the generalized scatterplots, a method to deform the positions of the points on the scatterplots and reduce visual clutter. The authors also made use of point displacement around the initial point of reference, in order to further reduce visual clutter in high density areas. In the field of flow visualization, Tao et al. (Tao et al., 2014) proposed the utilization of a 3D deformation method, based on an entropy significance map. The proposed approach magnifies regions with high entropy in the flow visualizations, and reduces visual clutter. Similarly, Wang et al. (Wang et al., 2011) proposed a method for Focus+Context visualization of volumetric data based on 3D grid deformation. The authors utilized a significance map in order to magnify important regions at the expense of reducing the size of less significant regions. The previous methods were only adjusted for specific visualizations, and they did not take the human perception for clutter reduction into consideration. Based on these limitations, Wu et al. (Wu et al., 2013) presented a general visualization resizing framework, in order to scale every visualization approach on small displays. The authors utilized a clutter and a degree of interest map in order to generate a 2-dimensional significance map. The positions of the data objects (i.e. scatterplot point positions, graph layout, and word positions on a context preserving word cloud) are distorted in order

to allow for the visualization of significant visualization areas on small screen sizes. The limitations of the aforementioned approaches, are that they utilize significance maps created taking only one grid layer with a specific resolution into account, and thus, they lose important information. The introduction of the hierarchical significance map in this work is able to more efficiently identify significant regions, and provides better results.

The aforementioned methods deal only with the spatial visual variables, which refer to the size/position/shape of the visual objects. Very few approaches have been proposed for non-spatial visual variables, such as the color. For example, Thompson et al. (Thompson et al., 2013) proposed a method for color mapping that takes the input data distribution into account. The authors produced palettes utilizing perceptual color distance, in order to emphasize prominent values in the data. They also introduced two different color mappings, one for the visual detection of large differences in data values, and one for the visual detection of similar values, so that small differences can be detected. Eisemann et al. (Eisemann et al., 2011) proposed the use of a simple projection technique based on angular interpolation, in order to distort the dataset before mapping its values to colors. The user of the visualization can select the desired distortion factor. Maciejewski et al. (Maciejewski et al., 2013) utilized Box-Cox transformations for transforming the distribution data, as close to a normal distribution as possible, before applying a color scheme for choropleth maps. Unlike previous methods, the approach proposed in this paper is applied on both spatial and non-spatial visual variables.

Towards the direction of reducing visual clutter, this paper presents an extension of the previous works on deformation, using Focus+Context techniques. In particular, the current paper extends the work of Wu et al. (Wu et al., 2013), via the introduction of a **hierarchical approach** for the generation of the significance map. The latter manages to retrieve information from multiple levels (i.e. layers) of abstraction of increasing granularity, and facilitates, thus, a significantly more efficient detection of, a more accurate focusing on and a more effective preservation of significant patterns or objects. The proposed approach results in less distortion of significant objects, when compared to previous methods, leading to better results. Additionally, unlike previous approaches, the magnification method is applied on both spatial and non-spatial visual variables.

### 3 MAGNIFICATION APPROACH

An overview of the proposed visualization magnification approach is presented in Figure 1. Taking into account the input dataset, the first step is the generation of the hierarchical significance map, which defines regions of the input space that are important and need to be magnified. Independent of the type of the input data that can be either N-dimensional points, or word clouds, multiple grid resolutions are defined, while a significance map is generated for each such resolution. The significance maps are afterwards combined for the generation of the hierarchical significance map that includes both small and large significant regions, or in other words includes both small and large data patterns.

The second step is the generation of the multi-resolution grid, which assigns a larger number of hyperrectangles in the regions of the input space with high significance. The hyperrectangles are N-dimensional representations of rectangles. Each hyperrectangle represents a cell in the grid. In the case of 2 dimensions each cell is a rectangle, and in 3 dimensions each cell is a rectangular cuboid. The advantage of the multi-resolution grid, when compared to the uniform grid, is that it results in better local pattern preservation in the deformed space. Furthermore, the optimization space (number of variables) of the multi-resolution grid is much smaller when compared to the uniform grid, and thus, the optimization procedure is much faster.

Afterwards, the grid deformation energy is defined, based on the significance of each hyperrectangle. This energy term allows significant hyperrectangles to be more magnified, in order to enhance the patterns that exist in them. The optimization procedure minimizes the grid deformation energy and enhances significant regions of the input data space. The core idea of the optimization approach is to assign to each hyperrectangle a size that corresponds to its underlying significance, while keeping their distortion to a minimum.

#### 3.1 Generation of the Hierarchical Significance Map

The hierarchical significance map takes multiple grid resolutions into account, and is able to efficiently identify significant regions. This hierarchical procedure has been used before in the literature for the generation of saliency maps on images (Itti et al., 1998) and meshes (Jia et al., 2014). The advantage of this hierarchical definition over the single-layer approach, is that it captures both large and small patterns, since

low resolution grids might lose small patterns but can capture large patterns, while the opposite stands true for high resolution grids.

For the creation of the hierarchical significance map, a hierarchy of layers is generated. Each layer covers the input space with different grid resolutions. The significance map is calculated and normalized for each layer separately. Afterwards, the significance maps of each individual layer are superpositioned for the generation of the hierarchical significance map which will be used for the deformation procedure.

For the generation of the hierarchical significance map, the grid of each layer of the hierarchy must be defined. Each one/two/three-dimensional grid  $G = (V, E, F)$  is comprised of a set of vertices  $V$ , a set of edges  $E$  and a set of hyperrectangles  $F$ , where  $V = [v_0^T, v_1^T, \dots, v_{end}^T]$ , and  $v_i \in \mathbb{R}^N$  is the vertex position in the N-dimensional space. The vertices and edges partition the input space into a grid comprised of hyperrectangles of the same size. The reason why the hyperrectangles have the same size is that in each layer, the grid is uniform, i.e. each dimension is equally partitioned. An example of equal hyperrectangle size is provided in Figure 2(a).

Each hyperrectangle  $f_i \in F$  is comprised of a set of edges  $E(f_i) \subset E$  and vertices  $V(f_i) \subset V$ . The total number of hyperrectangles is  $\prod_{i=1}^N n_i$ , where  $n_i$  is the number of partitions per dimension. Each partition in a dimension is a line segment, equal in size with all the other partitions in the same dimension.

Let  $G_l = (V_l, E_l, F_l)$  denote the grid in layer  $l$  with  $n_l$  partitions per dimension. Each grid  $G_l$  has  $n_l = 2^l$  partitions per dimension, e.g. the grid of layer 1,  $G_1$  has  $n_1 = 2$  partitions per dimension. The value of  $l$  is within  $l \in [1, \dots, M]$ , where  $M$  is the maximum level allowed, and depends on the maximum resolution allowed by the multi-resolution grid defined in Section 3.2.

The first step towards the generation of the hierarchical significance map is the definition of a single-layer high resolution significance map in the input data space. There are multiple choices for the selection of the appropriate single-layer significance map. In the context of this work, the experimental results were created and compared using both entropy (Cover and Thomas, 2012) and saliency maps (Wu et al., 2013)(Wang et al., 2008). Afterwards, the calculation of the significance value for each hyperrectangle is defined as the average significance value of the region covered by it, while the significance map of layer  $l$  is defined as  $S_l$ . The significance value of each hyperrectangle  $f_i^l$  is denoted as  $s_i^l \in S_l$ . The second step is the normalization of significance maps of each in-

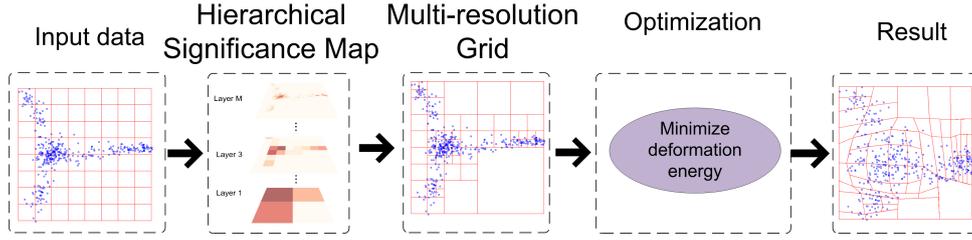


Figure 1: Method overview: The first step is the generation of hierarchical significance map. Afterwards the multi-resolution grid is generated and the optimization is applied onto this grid based on the hierarchical significance map in order to identify its optimal deformation. The result is a deformed visualization space which enhances cluttered areas on the display. An HR copy of this Figure can be found in the following link <http://www.iti.gr/~drosou/HierarchicalMagnification/Fig1.jpg>.

dividual layer, for the subsequent superposition of the maps. The operator  $\mathfrak{X}(\cdot)$  defined in (Itti et al., 1998) is utilized so as to normalize each significance map.

The same normalization operator  $\mathfrak{X}(\cdot)$  has also been used in other research works (e.g. (Jia et al., 2014) and (Lee et al., 2005)), and has as a result the promotion of significance maps, which are comprised of a small number of high significance values, while efficiently suppressing significance maps with a large number of similar values.

The final hierarchical significance map is created for the resolution of the last layer of the grid hierarchy  $G_M$ . To achieve this, let us denote as  $Q(f_i^l)$ , where  $l$  is the level of the hierarchy and  $f_i^l \in F_l$  is a specific hyperrectangle belonging to layer  $l$ , as the set of hyperrectangles from all the layers of the hierarchy, so that they intersect with the N-dimensional hyperrectangle  $f_i^l$ . In the specific case of this paper that  $n_l = 2^l$  partitions per dimension are considered, if two hyperrectangles intersect, it means that one contains the other. The same stands true for every  $n_l = r^l$  for  $r \in \mathbb{N}_{>1}$ . In the same notion  $Q_s(f_i^l)$  is the set of significance values of all the hyperrectangles belonging to  $Q(f_i^l)$ . The superpositioning of the different maps is performed on *layer M* and the final hierarchical significance map, denoted as  $S^{hier}$ , is calculated for each hyperrectangle in *layer M*. Let  $s_i^h$  be the final hierarchical significance value of hyperrectangle  $f_i^M \in F_M$ . The calculation of  $s_i^h$  is described in Eq.(1)

$$s_i^{hier} = \sum_{s_j^l \in Q_s(f_i^M)} \mathfrak{X}(s_j^l) \quad (1)$$

Finally, the hierarchical significance map is defined as  $S^{hier} = \cup s_i^{hier}$ .

### 3.2 Multi-resolution Grid

The multi-resolution grid is a non-uniform grid on the N-dimensional space, in which the distribution of hyperrectangles is not uniform, but instead distributes

more hyperrectangles in regions with high significance. The advantage of the multi-resolution grid is that regions with high significance are less distorted when magnified, since they have higher resolution. In addition the optimization space of the vertex positions of the grid is much smaller when compared to the full resolution grid, and thus, has better speed performances and also produces better results (as shown in Section 4.1).

The algorithm for the creation of the multi-resolution grid is similar to the one used for the creation of a quad tree. The algorithm takes as input a specific user-defined significance *threshold*. In the context of this work this *threshold* is set to a value that results in the reduction of the number of optimization variables by 20% to 50%, depending on the application. This algorithm has as a result, that the significance value of each hyperrectangle is the largest possible value, which is smaller than the provided *threshold* (i.e. the infimum). The multi-resolution grid is denoted as  $G_{mul}(V_{mul}, E_{mul}, F_{mul})$ , where  $F_{mul}$  are hyperrectangles of the multi-resolution grid,  $V_{mul}$  the vertices and  $E_{mul}$  the edges.

The significance value  $s_i^{mul}$  of each hyperrectangle  $f_i^{mul} \in F_{mul}$  in the multi-resolution grid is calculated from the hierarchical significance map  $S^{hier}$  defined in Section 3.1. For this calculation, the values of hierarchical significance map  $S^{hier}$  have to be mapped on the hyperrectangles in  $F_{mul}$ . As explained in Section 3.1, the hierarchical significance map  $S^{hier}$  is defined for each hyperrectangle of the grid  $G_M$  in the maximum layer of the grid hierarchy *layer M*.

Let  $P(f_i^{mul})$  denote the set of all hyperrectangles from grid  $G_M$ , which intersect with  $f_i^{mul} \in F_{mul}$ . Additionally, let  $P_s(f_i^{mul})$  denote the set of significance values of all the hyperrectangles belonging to  $P(f_i^{mul})$ . The procedure of calculation of the significance value of each hyperrectangle  $f_i^{mul} \in F_{mul}$  in the multi-resolution grid  $G_{mul}$  is defined in Eq.(2).

$$s_i^{mul} = \sum_{\forall s_j^{hier} \in P_s(f_i^{mul})} s_j^{hier} \quad (2)$$

The significance map of the multi-resolution grid  $G_{mul}$  is defined as  $S^{mul} = \bigcup S_i^{mul}$ . The algorithm for the computation of the multi-resolution grid can be found in the following link <http://www.iti.gr/~drosou/HierarchicalMagnification/multiResGrid.png>.

### 3.3 Grid Deformation Procedure

This section follows the work presented in (Wang et al., 2008) and (Wu et al., 2013), regarding the grid deformation procedure. The deformation procedure presented here has been firstly proposed by (Wang et al., 2008) for image resizing. The same procedure has afterwards been utilized by (Wu et al., 2013) for resizing data visualizations. More details can be found in (Wang et al., 2008) and (Wu et al., 2013).

The purpose of grid deformation is to enlarge significant regions of the input space, and visualize any patterns that were previously hidden due to high cluttering. The deformation method takes as input a grid  $G = (V, E, F)$  and its significance map  $S$ , where  $V$  the matrix of vertices,  $E$  matrix of edges, and  $F$  the matrix of hyperrectangles. These matrices have specific relationships between them, i.e.  $F = QV$  and  $E = HV$ , where  $Q$  and  $H$  are also matrices which depend on the grid. The result of deformation is a new grid  $G' = (V', E', F')$ , created by changing the positions of the vertices in  $V$ , according to the given significance map.

According to (Wang et al., 2008) and (Wu et al., 2013), the ideal deformation of each  $v_i \in V$  into a new position should be defined as  $v'_i = c * v_i$ , where  $c$  is the scale factor. This equation refers to the uniform scaling case, and requires an extension of the area covered by the data in the input space. In the case that the area covered by the data in the input space is considered static, then the enlargement is not possible. One of the alternatives proposed in the literature (see Section 2) is to introduce a non-linear deformation of each hyperrectangle, so that more space is given to more significant hyperrectangles (Wang et al., 2008)(Wu et al., 2013).

The main objective of the utilized grid deformation method is to minimize the total deformation energy, defined as the distance from the uniformly scaled position. Let  $f_i \in F$  be a hyperrectangle defined as  $f_i^T = q_i V$ , where  $q_i$  is a  $2^N \times |V|$  matrix ( $N$  is the dimension) and its element in the  $r_{th}$  row and  $c_{th}$  column is defined as:

$$q_{i,rc} = \begin{cases} 1 & ,if v_c \in f_i, \text{ and } f_{i,r} = v_c \\ 0 & ,else \end{cases} \quad (3)$$

where  $f_{i,r}$  is the  $r_{th}$  vertex in  $f_i$ . Given  $Q = [q_0^T, q_1^T, \dots, q_{|F|}^T]^T$ , the matrix of hyperrectangles is defined as  $F = QV$ .

The uniformly scaled hyperrectangle is defined as  $f'_i = c_i f_i$ , where  $c_i$  is the desired scale matrix for the  $i_{th}$  hyperrectangle. Let  $F^T = [f_1, f_2, \dots, f_{|F|}]$  be a matrix of all the quads, and  $W_F$  be a  $|F| \times |F|$  matrix of the significance of each quad, while its element in the  $r_{th}$  row and  $c_{th}$  column is defined as:

$$W_{F,rc} = \begin{cases} \sqrt{s_r} & ,if r = c \\ 0 & ,else \end{cases} \quad (4)$$

where  $s_r$  is the significance of hyperrectangle  $f_r$ . Furthermore, let  $C$  be the desired scale matrix  $C$  with:

$$C_{rc} = \begin{cases} c_r & ,if r = c \\ 0 & ,else \end{cases} \quad (5)$$

The total hyperrectangle deformation energy is defined in Eq.(6)

$$\|W_F F' - W_F C F\|^2 = \|W_F Q V' - W_F C Q V\|^2 \quad (6)$$

The minimization of the total hyperrectangle deformation energy allows for the hyperrectangles with large significance, to have a smaller distance from their uniformly scaled version (which refers to the lack of distortion for all the objects), and thus, under the constraint of static space, significant hyperrectangles are enlarged more than less significant ones.

An additional energy term that is used for the deformation procedure is the edge bending, as proposed in (Wu et al., 2013) and (Wang et al., 2008).

Given an edge  $e_k$ , its uniformly scaled version is defined as  $e'_k = l_k e_k$ , where  $l_k$  is a  $2 \times 2$  scale matrix. Let  $E^T = [e_1, e_2, \dots, e_{|E|}]$  be a matrix of all the edges, and  $W_E$  be a  $|E| \times |E|$  matrix of the significance of each edge, while its element in the  $r_{th}$  row and  $c_{th}$  column is defined as:

$$W_{E,rc} = \begin{cases} \sqrt{s_r} & ,if r = c \\ 0 & ,else \end{cases} \quad (7)$$

where  $s_r$  is the average significance factor for all the hyperrectangles in which edge  $e_r$  belongs. Furthermore, let  $L$  be the desired scale matrix  $L$  with:

$$L_{rc} = \begin{cases} l_r & ,if r = c \\ 0 & ,else \end{cases} \quad (8)$$

The total edge bending energy is defined as

$$\|W_E E' - W_E L E\|^2 = \|W_E H V' - W_E L H V\|^2 \quad (9)$$

where  $H$  is a matrix such that  $E = H V$ . The edge bending energy term scales the edge lengths and tries



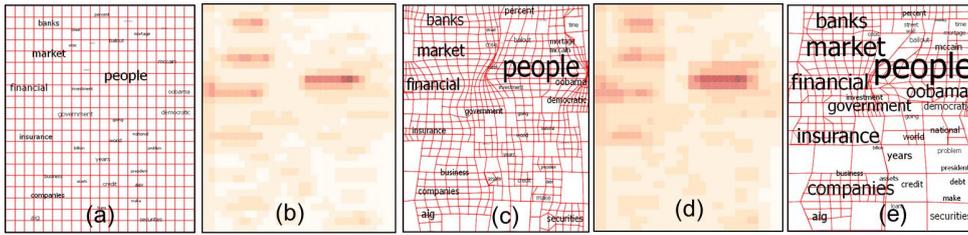


Figure 2: Results of the application of the Magnification approach on the word cloud visualization with magnification factor equal to 4. (a) Input visualization (b) Single layer significance map proposed in (Wu et al., 2013). (c) Results obtained from the single layer significance map (in (b)). (d) Hierarchical significance map generated from the saliency based significance map proposed in (Wu et al., 2013). (e) Result obtained from the hierarchical significance map (in (d)). The proposed approach in (e), takes better advantage of the empty space, and enlarges more the words of the visualization. An HR copy of this Figure can be found in the following link <http://www.iti.gr/~drosou/HierarchicalMagnification/Fig2.jpg>.

2003), and is a symmetric metric.

### 4.2 Word Clouds

In this experiment, the efficiency of the proposed multi-resolution magnification approach is demonstrated on the word clouds visualization.

The resizing of the word cloud in smaller screens can cause cluttering. The most common reason for this type of cluttering is that some words can become very small to read/understand, which unavoidably leads to information loss. High cluttering is also caused by not preserving the relative sizes of the words in the deformed space. In order to solve this issue, we utilize non-linear deformation that increases the size of the words, while also preserving the relative sizes of the words. The increase in the size of the words is performed in such a way (through the use of the significance map and the deformation procedure), so as to preserve the relative sizes of the words as much as possible, and thus, have a minimum change in the relationship between different words. Hence, the size of the words in the magnified space is (almost) proportional to the size of the words in the input space.

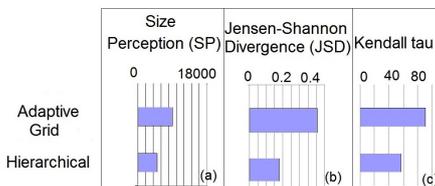


Figure 3: The evaluation results using the SP (a) and JSD (b) and Kendall tau (c) metrics applied on Figure 2(c), and Figure 2(e) respectively. Smaller values represent better results. The hierarchical approach provides the best results in all the metrics.

In this context, each word is considered as a visual item, which is attached on all the grid cells that contain it. After the grid deformation, the position

of the words is adjusted by means of interpolation, while the final word resizing is found from the associated cell deformations. In addition, in order to avoid word overlapping, a collision avoidance algorithm which can change the positions of the words in case of collision was implemented.

In this experiment, a context-preserving word cloud by a force-directed algorithm (Cui et al., 2010) was used on a real dataset with 13,828 news articles spanning one year (from 2008 to 2009) that were related to American International Group (AIG). The context-preserving word cloud results in positioning semantically-similar words close to each other.

Figure 2 presents the results of applying the proposed Magnification approach on the aforementioned word cloud visualization. Figure 2(a) shows the input data. Figure 2(b) and Figure 2(d) illustrate the single layer and hierarchical significance maps respectively, generated using the significance map proposed in (Wu et al., 2013) as a base. As shown in these figures, the hierarchical significance map is smoother around significant regions. The corresponding results of each of these maps are shown in Figure 2(c) and Figure 2(e), in which the first utilizes the single layer significance map, while the latter utilizes the hierarchical significance map. Figure 2(e) utilizes better the empty space for the magnification of the words, and produces better results.

Figure 3 presents the evaluation results applied on Figure 2, using the SP and JSD evaluation metrics presented in Section 4.1, as well as the Kendall tau distance metric presented in the next paragraphs. The SP metric shows that the multi-resolution grid has the smallest distance between the perception of the sizes of the words, and their intended size, and thus, it is more perceptually consistent. The JSD metric is used to compare the normalized distribution of the sizes of the words in the input word cloud with respect to the word sizes in the deformed spaces. The proposed approach provides the better results. A fig-

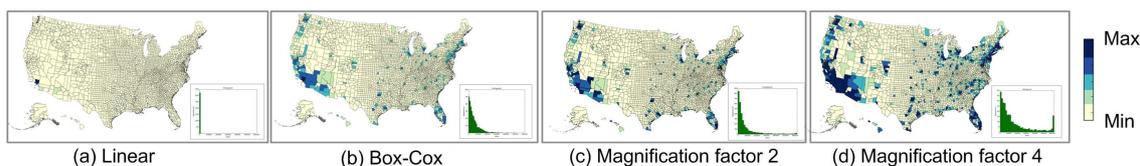


Figure 4: Results of the application of the Magnification approach on a choropleth map, visualizing the unemployment data for each US area in 2011. The lower right part of each subfigure shows the corresponding distribution. (a) Lineal mapping. (b) Box-Cox mapping (Maciejewski et al., 2013). (c) Magnification factor equal to 2. (d) Magnification factor equal to 4. Although subfigure (d) loses some information regarding the high values of the dataset, it provides more color resolution to the lower ranges of the data (where the majority of the data values lies), and thus, small differences between the different states are better visualized and perceived. An HR copy of this Figure can be found in the following link <http://www.iti.gr/~drosou/HierarchicalMagnification/Fig4.jpg>.

ure that shows the normalized distributions can be found in the following link <http://www.iti.gr/~drosou/HierarchicalMagnification/normDistr.png>.

In order to measure how the relative sizes of the words change, after the application of each deformation method, we utilize the Kendall tau distance (Fagin et al., 2003). This is a distance metric between two ordered lists. In this case the first ordered list is the list of sizes of the input words, and the second is the list of words in the magnified result. Figure 3(c) shows the results of this metric. Smaller values represent a greater preservation of the relative ordering of the sizes in the words. The smallest Kendall tau distance is obtained by the proposed hierarchical approach. A figure that shows how the ordered lists change for each method can be found in the following link <http://www.iti.gr/~drosou/HierarchicalMagnification/wordsOrder.png>.

### 4.3 Scatterplots

This section presents the application of the Magnification approach on scatterplot visualizations. Each point in the scatterplot is attached to a specific hyperrectangle of the grid. After the magnification procedure, the new point positions are found by means of interpolation on the new hyperrectangle positions. The size of the points does not change.

For the generation of the scatterplots, the data from INSPIRE (Wong and Thomas, 2009) is used. These data reveal the topic distribution of IEEE Vis, IEEE InfoVis and, IEEE VAST proceeding papers published from 2006 to 2008.

Figure 5 presents the results of the application of the magnification approach on the scatterplot visualization of the aforementioned INSPIRE dataset. Two types of significance maps were utilized, the entropy and saliency (Wu et al., 2013) maps, using both one layer and hierarchical significance definition. The hierarchical significance map takes better advantage of the empty space, and enlarges the significant areas more, with minimum deformation of the local pattern

distribution.

The values of the PP evaluation metric applied on Figure 5 are shown in Figure 6. Since the size of the points in the scatterplot remains the same after the magnification procedure, only the PP metric is used. This figure reveals that the best results are obtained from the hierarchical grid approach proposed in this work, using the saliency-based significance map proposed in (Wu et al., 2013).

Figure 7 presents an example of application of the Magnification approach on a 3D scatterplot visualization using the forest fires dataset (Cortez and Morais, 2007), which contains meteorological data from burned forests in the northeast region of Portugal. Specifically, the Fine Fuel Moisture Code (FFMC), Drought Code (DC), and the Initial Spread Index (ISI), are used for the generation of the scatterplot. The hierarchical grids for the initial and magnified scatterplots are shown in Figure 7(a) and Figure 7(b), using entropy significance map, while the corresponding magnification results are shown in Figure 7(c) and Figure 7(d). The correlations between the visualized variables, which are hidden in the initial view due to high cluttering, are visualized better in the magnified result.

### 4.4 Choropleth Maps

This section presents the application of the Magnification approach on choropleth maps, in which color is utilized to encode quantitative information. In this visualization, each area of the map has a specific attribute value which is mapped on to its color. The magnification approach is applied on the 1-dimensional input dataset, and afterwards, the magnified space is mapped onto the color values. For this visualization the unemployment of 2011 from the US Census (Census, 2014) dataset is used.

Figure 4 presents the results of the Magnification approach on the choropleth map. Figure 4(a) presents the case of linear mapping, Figure 4(b) the Box-Cox transformation proposed by (Maciejewski

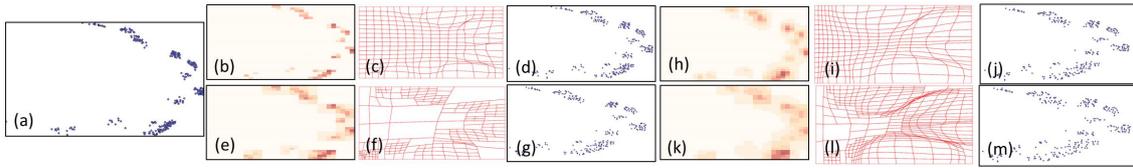


Figure 5: Results of the application of the Magnification approach on a scatterplot visualization with magnification factor equal to 3. (a) Input visualization. (b),(e) Single layer and hierarchical significance maps generated using the entropy of each hyperrectangle. (c),(d),(f),(g) Results of the significance maps shown in (b) and (e) using the method proposed in (Wu et al., 2013) and in this paper respectively. (h),(k) Single layer and hierarchical significance maps generated from the saliency based significance map proposed in (Wu et al., 2013). (i),(j),(l),(m) Results of the significance maps shown in (h) and (k) using the method proposed in (Wu et al., 2013) and in this paper respectively. An HR copy of this Figure can be found in the following link <http://www.iti.gr/~drosou/HierarchicalMagnification/Fig5.jpg>.

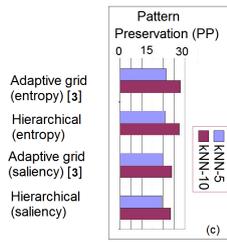


Figure 6: PP metric for Figure 5. The smaller the value the better the results. The best results are obtained from proposed approach using a saliency significance map.

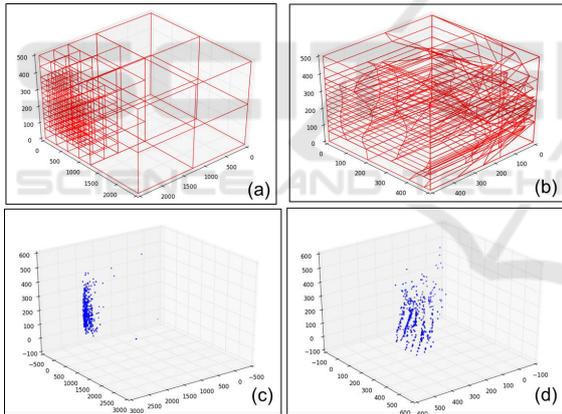


Figure 7: Application of the Magnification approach on a 3D scatterplot visualization using the forest fires dataset (Cortez and Morais, 2007). An HR copy of this Figure can be found in the following link <http://www.iti.gr/~drosou/HierarchicalMagnification/Fig7.jpg>.

et al., 2013), while Figure 4(c) and Figure 4(d) present the results with a magnification factor manually selected to be equal to 2 and 4 respectively. The right lower part of the figures shows the histogram of the distribution of the data in each case.

In the case of linear mapping shown in Figure 4(a), due to the fact that the distribution is very skewed towards zero, most of the information is clustered and is not visualized. On the other hand, the visualization on Figure 4(c) and Figure 4(d) is more uniformly distributed, and the choropleth map shows

more information regarding the status of the civilian labor force to the different areas of the US. It should be noted that the results and distribution of the data for the (Maciejewski et al., 2013) mapping resemble the results of the magnification approach for a magnification factor equal to 4. The visualization in Figure 4(d) provides more information regarding the distribution of the data in the lower ranges of its values, and the small differences between the different states are more evident.

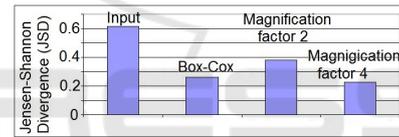


Figure 8: The JSD metric measures the distance of the color distribution created from the deformation methods in Figure 4, from the optimum uniform distribution (according to (Brewer and Pickle, 2002)). Using a magnification factor equal to 4, the results are better than Box-Cox mapping.

For the evaluation of the deformation results in Figure 4, the work presented by Brewer and Pickle (Brewer and Pickle, 2002) is used. Specifically, Brewer and Pickle contacted multiple user studies in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the different color mapping techniques in choropleth maps, and investigate how they affected user performance in various tasks. They found that the best mapping method is the quantile mapping, which assigns the same number of data objects to each of the available colors. This is in fact a uniform distribution in the color plane. Taking this fact into account, the use of the JSD metric is used to measure the distance of the distribution of the colors created by the deformation procedure, from the optimum uniform distribution.

The results of the JSD metric are presented in Figure 8, which show that increasing of the magnification factor results in more uniform distributions, and thus, better results. Using magnification factor equal to 4, the results are better than Box-Cox mapping.

## 4.5 User Evaluation Results

This section presents the results of the user evaluation studies. The participants were presented with a variety of visualization methods that were magnified utilizing either the proposed magnification approach, or other state-of-the-art methods. The applications considered resizing/magnification of: scatterplot, word cloud and color (in choropleth maps). In the case of scatterplot and word cloud magnification, the approach proposed by Wu et al. (Wu et al., 2013) was used for comparison. In the case of the choropleth map, the Box-Cox mapping (Maciejewski et al., 2013) has been used for comparison with the proposed approach. For the evaluation studies, the same datasets presented in this paper were utilized.

Three visualizations were given for each application, the input visualization, and the two result visualizations (produced by applying the proposed approach and the other state-of-the-art method respectively). The participants were asked to select one of the result visualization. The following questions were asked to the participants depending on the application:

- In the scatterplot and word cloud application: Which result provides better understanding/insight about the input visualization?
- In the choropleth map application: Which result represents more information about the input data?

Table 1: The results of the user evaluation studies on 22 individuals. The participants had to select between the proposed hierarchical approach and other state-of-the-art methods.

	Hierarchical	Other	p-val
<b>Scatterplot</b>	63.64%	36.36%	0.2008
<b>Choropleth</b>	95.45%	4.55%	0.00002
<b>Word-cloud</b>	81.82%	18.18%	0.0028
<b>Overall</b>	80.03%	19.69%	1.522e-06

The results of the user evaluation studies are illustrated in Table 1. As shown in this figure, the participants selected the results of hierarchical approach more often than the competing method. The difference is larger in the choropleth map and word cloud visualizations. Smaller difference can be found in the scatterplot application. General discussion with the users after the evaluation revealed two distinct groups.

The first group preferred displays with dense clusters, that had a large distance between them, and this is the reason they selected the less magnified result (i.e. the competing method in (Wu et al., 2013), since the magnification using the hierarchical method was generally larger). On the other hand, the second group found that the more magnified view provided better insight regarding the fine details within a cluster. Table 1 also presents the results of hypothesis testing, i.e. chi-square goodness of fit, in order to identify the difference of the observed distributions with respect to random guess. In all the cases except for the scatterplot visualization, the results are indeed statistically significant. Overall, 80.03% of the participants selected the hierarchical approach with p-value below 0.005.

## 5 CONCLUSIONS

This work introduces a hierarchical magnification approach that enables the interactive reduction of visual clutter, and the magnification of significant regions of the data in multiple dimensions. Significant regions are uniformly magnified with minimum distortion, while the distortion is distributed to the less significant areas of the display. This is particularly useful for visualization resizing to fit small screens.

The proposed hierarchical significance map combines the information of the significance maps over multiple grid scales, based on each hyperrectangle's intersections with other hyperrectangles, and the significance of each grid using a normalization operator. The proposed approach identifies both small and large objects/patterns, and scales them with minimum distortion in the magnified space. In addition, the introduction of the multi-resolution grid reduces the number of variables in the optimization space, and thus, decreases the running time of the algorithm.

The efficiency of the proposed approach was demonstrated on multiple visualization approaches, and the results were found to be superior to previous methods using multiple evaluation metrics and user studies.

The main advantage of the proposed approach is that it does not address specific application areas. The proposed approach can be used in order to enhance any type of significance map, but the exact choice of the significance map depends on the application.

Future work includes the research of additional irregular grid formations (e.g. non-rectangular grids based on edge detection algorithms), and their effect on the distortion after the optimization procedure. Alternative significance maps will also be considered,

since an important aspect of the future work includes the automatic selection of the most appropriate significance map based on the input dataset.

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