

# CORE: A COnfusion REduction Algorithm for Keypoints Filtering

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Abstract: In computer vision, extracting keypoints and computing associated features is the first step for many applications such as object recognition, image indexation, super-resolution or stereo-vision. In many cases, in order to achieve good results, pre or post-processing are almost mandatory steps. In this paper, we propose a generic pre-filtering method for floating point based descriptors which address the confusion problem due to repetitive patterns. We sort keypoints by their unicity without taking into account any visual element but the feature vectors's statistical properties thanks to a kernel density estimation approach. Even if highly reduced in number, results show that keypoints subsets extracted are still relevant and our algorithm can be combined with classical post-processing methods.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Over the last recent years, keypoint detection and feature computation have seen an increasing attention in computer vision researches, partly thanks to the ongoing development of robotic and need of efficient image databases queries. As a major contribution we can cite the SIFT (Lowe, 1999) descriptor by D. Lowe. Based on oriented gradient histograms, it proved to be very efficient (Mikolajczyk and Schmid, 2005) and inspired many others such as ASIFT (Morel and Yu, 2009) and SURF (Bay et al., 2006). Nowadays it is still used in modern applications and has even been ported to GPU architectures (Wu, 2007). However, its computation times are not suitable for real-time applications and the rises of small embedded platforms such as smartphones aspired to faster computation times and less memory consumption. Thus, in 2010 Calonder *et al.* introduced the BRIEF (Calonder et al., 2010) descriptor, leading the way to the binary descriptors field which produced ORB (Rublee et al., 2011), BRISK (Leutenegger et al., 2011), FREAK (Ortiz, 2012), D-BRIEF (Trzcinski and Lepetit, 2012) and state-of-the-art Bin-boost (T. Trzcinski and Lepetit, 2013). In this area, some descriptors propose a way of improving keypoint selection. For example, ORB orders the FAST (Rosten and Drummond, 2006) responses by a harris corner measure (Harris and Stephens, 1988). With our contribution, we propose a solution to both generally improve the selection and to address a specific case that we are presenting in the next section.

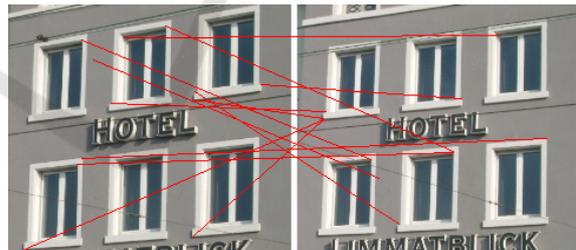


Figure 1: Example from the Zurich Building Image Database of repetitive patterns leading in "good-false" matches with the sift descriptor.

### 1.1 The Repetitive Patterns Problem

A frequent and troublesome problem easily encountered when trying to match pairs in different images is the repetitive pattern case, as we can see in figure 1: the exact same pattern is present in multiple occurrences within the image. These visual features make it highly responsive to saliency analysis, returning numerous keypoints that have almost the same feature vectors, which results in high confusion during matching phase. Usually, the mismatch problem is handled from a given putative point correspondences by different kinds of approaches. A first kind of methods is based on a robust statistic estimation such as LMS (Least Median of Squares) or M-estimators. In (Deriche et al., 1994) Deriche *et al.* applied the LMS for the robust estimation of the fundamental matrix. In a similar approach Torr *et al.* (Torr and Murray, 1995) proposed a method for the estimation of both

the fundamental matrix and motion estimation. Another robust estimation methods can be found in the literature such as the algorithms proposed by Ma *et al* (Zhao *et al.*, 2011; Ma *et al.*, 2014).

Another kind of methods, known as resampling methods, act by trying to get a minimum subset of mismatch-free correspondence. Methods belonging to this category are usually extensions of the well known RANSAC (RANdom SAmple Consensus) (Fischler and Bolles, 1981) such as MLESAC (Torr and Zisserman, 2000) or SCRAMSAC (Sattler *et al.*, 2009). We can also cite (Pang *et al.*, 2014) and (Rabin *et al.*, 2007).

Other algorithms are based on different approaches as the ICF (Identifying point correspondences by Correspondence Function) proposed by Li *et al* (Li and Hu, 2010).

Another way to consider the mismatch problem is to filter out repetitive patterns in each image. Such a priori approaches may be combined with the previous methods that are performed a posteriori from a given putative point correspondences. When looking at the literature, detecting repetitive pattern is a known issue in several different applications although it is reputed to be difficult. Repetitive structures can be detected through symmetry analysis (Loy and Eklundh, 2006; Lee *et al.*, 2008; Liu *et al.*, 2004) and despite being mostly 2D analysis, recent propositions try to take into account non-planar 3D repetitive elements (Jiang *et al.*, 2011; Pauly *et al.*, 2008). Mortensen *et al.* enrich the SIFT descriptor with information about the image global context (Mortensen *et al.*, 2005), inspired by shape contexts (Belongie *et al.*, 2002). The SERP (Mok *et al.*, 2011) descriptor and the CAKE (Martins *et al.*, 2012) keypoint extractor both rely on kernel density estimation (Parzen, 1962). The first one uses mean-shift clustering on SURF descriptors, whereas the second one builds a new keypoint extractor based on Shannon's definition of information. As we're about to see in the next section, our approach does also rely on kernel density estimation but in a different way.

In this paper we propose a new approach to cope with the keypoints confusion problem. We don't take into account the keypoints visual properties since they may vary with the type of extractor chosen, but instead we analyse the statistics properties of their associated feature vectors. We estimate a numerical value that is associated to the confusion risk of a given feature vector between another vector in a different image. With this criterion, we can then sort the keypoints from low confusion risk, to high confusion risk. With the right threshold, we can thus decide which points should be discarded and which ones should be

kept. The rest of the paper is organized as follow: Section 2.1 will present an overview of our proposed method. In section 2.2 we will explain the criterion computation. Section 2.3 will address the problem of threshold setting. Finally, Section 3.1 will detail our experiments methodology and sections 3.2 and 4 will respectively present results and conclusions.

Further in the text we will use the following notation: we let  $P_x(y)$  be the probability  $\Pr(x=y)$  that the variable  $x$  is equal to the value  $y$ .

## 2 PROPOSED METHOD

### 2.1 Overview

Let  $I$  be the image resulting of the observation (with a camera) of a specific scene. Let  $I'$  be (a potential) another observation of the same scene in which changes result from various transformations such as perspective changes, light modifications, etc. In our model,  $I$  is deterministic whereas  $I'$  is a potential (not yet observed) different version of  $I$  and is hence considered to be stochastic. Let now  $u_i, i \in \{1, \dots, N\}$  be  $D$ -dimensional feature vectors computed on  $N$  keypoints of  $I$  and let  $u'_i, i \in \{1, \dots, N\}$ , be their  $N$  respective equivalents in  $I'$ . We assume that even if descriptors try to be invariant as much as possible to most transformations, each feature vector in image  $I$  is subject to slight variations in image  $I'$  we can assimilate as randomness. By doing so we consider  $u'_i$  as random vectors and we shall define a criterion associated to each keypoints of  $I$  that characterizes the confusion risk, i.e. a value correlated to the probability that in  $I'$ , a vector  $u'_j, j \neq i$  is closer to  $u_i$  than  $u_j$ .

For each keypoint  $i$  of  $I$  we define  $C_i$ , the criterion, as the probability density that any other random  $u'_j, j \neq i$  is equal to  $u_i$ , i.e.  $P_{u'_j, j \neq i}(u_i)$ . This density should act as a criterion for separating relevant and high confusion risk keypoints.

From this definition, we can write:

$$C_i \equiv P_{u'_j, j \neq i}(u_i) = \sum_{j \neq i} \Pr(k = j, u = u_i) \quad (1)$$

$$= \sum_{j \neq i} P_{k, k \neq i}(j) P_{u/j}(u_i) \quad (2)$$

where  $P_{k, k \neq i}(j)$  denotes the probability of choosing keypoint  $j$  and  $P_{u/j}(\cdot)$  is the probability density function (PDF) of the feature vector given the keypoint number. We simply assume  $P_{k, k \neq i}(j) = \frac{1}{N-1}$  (the  $N-1$  keypoints are equiprobable) and we

note  $P_{u_j}(u) = \frac{1}{h}K\left(\frac{|u-u_j|}{h}\right)$  where  $K$  is a normalized symmetric function and  $h$  is a smoothing parameter. We thus obtain the estimation of  $C_i$  by the classical Parzen-Rosenblatt kernel density estimator (KDE):

$$C_i = \frac{1}{h(N-1)} \sum_{j \neq i} K\left(\frac{|u_i - u_j|}{h}\right) \quad (3)$$

The CORE algorithm (given in Algorithm 1) is very straightforward and easy to implement.

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**Algorithm 1:** CORE algorithm.

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**Data:**  $I$  : image input  
**Data:**  $p$  : probability confusion tolerated  
**Data:**  $D$  : descriptor dimension  
**Data:**  $\sigma$  : average variance of descriptor's feature vectors  
**Data:**  $C_{th} \leftarrow \text{findThreshold}(p, \sigma, D)$  (b)  
**Result:**  $\chi$  : keypoint set returned  
 $K \leftarrow$  keypoint set detected  
 $U \leftarrow$  associated feature vectors  
**for**  $u_i \in U$  **do**  
 |  $c_i \leftarrow \text{KDE}(u_i, U)$  (a)  
**end**  
**for**  $k_i \in K$  **do**  
 | **if**  $c_i < C_{th}$  **then**  
 | | Add  $k_i$  to  $\chi$   
 | **end**  
**end**  
**return**  $\chi$

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Steps (a) and (b) are explained in next subsections.

## 2.2 Criterion Computation

We suppose that the vectors variations causes are numerous and are either from natural origins or can be considered as such. Therefore, it makes sense to consider this behavior to be Gaussian. With this assumption we can define  $K$  as the classical Gaussian Kernel:

$$K(u) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} \exp\left(-\frac{1}{2}u^2\right) \quad (4)$$

From such a definition,  $h$  takes the meaning of a standard deviation  $\sigma$  of which we further address the setting in our experiments section.

Thus, the criterion formula is :

$$C_i = \frac{1}{(N-1)\sigma\sqrt{2\pi}} \sum_{i \neq j} \exp\left(-\frac{d(u_i, u_j)^2}{2\sigma^2}\right) \quad (5)$$

where  $d(u_i, u_j) = \sqrt{\|u_i - u_j\|}$  is the euclidean distance between vector  $u_i$  and  $u_j$ .

## 2.3 Thresholding

Again, a relevant value of the threshold  $C_{th}$  to apply on the  $C_i, i \in \{1, \dots, N\}$  can be estimated by considering the confusion problem with a probabilistic point of view. With the notations of the previous section, let  $u_i$  and  $u'_i$  be the feature vectors computed on the same keypoint  $i$  of two different versions of a scene. Let now  $v_i = u'_i - u_i$ ,  $v_j = u'_j - u_i$ ,  $d_i^2 = \|v_i\|^2$  and  $d_j^2 = \|v_j\|^2$  where  $u_j, u'_j$  are the corresponding feature vectors computed on another keypoint  $j$ .

To estimate  $C_{th}$  we shall express  $C_i$  as a function of  $p = \Pr(d_j^2 < d_i^2)$  the probability of a confusion. In our approach,  $p$  is a user-defined parameter which tunes an acceptable confusion rate. To derive this relation we need first to estimate  $P_{d_j^2}(\cdot)$ , (and hence  $P_{v_j}(\cdot) = P_{u'_j, j \neq i}(\cdot) - u_i$ ) which is governed by the distribution of the  $u_j, j \neq i$ . However, we shall assume that  $p$  only depends on the behavior of  $P_{v_j}(\cdot)$  in a small neighborhood of  $u_i$ . We hence approximate  $P_{v_j}(\cdot)$  by a  $D$ -dimensional uncorrelated Gaussian distribution  $N(\cdot; 0, \Sigma_{v_j})$  of which the central value  $\Pr(v_j = 0) = P_{v_j}(0) = C_i$  by vertu of the definition of  $C_i$  given in the previous section. The diagonal element  $\sigma_{v_j}$  of the covariance matrix  $\Sigma_{v_j}$  is simply related to  $C_i$  by considering the normalisation condition on  $P_{v_j}(\cdot)$  which can be written:

$$C_i = (2\pi\sigma_{v_j}^2)^{-D/2} \quad (6)$$

From this assumption,  $P_{d_j^2}(\cdot)$  is given by a chi-squared distribution with  $D$  degrees of freedom which can be approximated by a Gaussian law  $N(\cdot; E_j, \sigma_j)$  due to the large value of  $D$ . The values of  $E_j$  and  $\sigma_j$  are classically related to the values of  $\sigma_{v_j}$  and  $D$  by:  $E_j = \sigma_{v_j}^2 D$  and  $\sigma_j = \sigma_{v_j} \sqrt{2D}$ .

Thanks to the Gaussian assumption on the  $u'_i$  values and using the same considerations as before, we can also approximate  $P_{d_i^2}$  by a gaussian law  $N(\cdot; E_i, \sigma_i)$  with  $E_i = \sigma^2 D$  and  $\sigma_i = \sigma \sqrt{2D}$ .

From these definitions we can now write:

$$p = \Pr(d_j^2 < d_i^2) \quad (7)$$

$$= \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \int_x^{\infty} P_{d_i^2}(x) P_{d_j^2}(y) dy dx \quad (8)$$

$$= \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \int_x^{\infty} N(x; E_j, \sigma_j) N(y; E_i, \sigma_i) dy dx \quad (9)$$

$$= \frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2\sigma_j\sqrt{2\pi}} \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \exp\left[-\frac{(x-E_j)^2}{2\sigma_j^2}\right] \times \operatorname{erf}\left[\frac{x-E_i}{\sigma_i\sqrt{2}}\right] dx \quad (10)$$

$$= \frac{1}{2} \left[ 1 + \operatorname{erf}\left(\frac{E_i-E_j}{\sqrt{2(\sigma_i^2+\sigma_j^2)}}\right) \right] \quad (11)$$

After a straightforward, albeit a bit tedious, calculation we obtain from (11):

$$\sigma_{v_j}^2 = \sigma^2 \frac{D + 2\sqrt{\gamma(D-\gamma)}}{D-2\gamma} \quad (12)$$

$$\text{with } \gamma = 2 \operatorname{erf}^{-1}(2p-1)^2 \quad (13)$$

From (12) and (13), the threshold  $C_{th}$  which corresponds to a specific  $p$  is then given by (6).

### 3 EXPERIMENTS

#### 3.1 Protocol

A quick example of keypoints filtered by proposed method with the SIFT descriptor is shown with figure 2 where the confusion probability tolerated is 10%. As we can see, the vast majority of the chessboard image's points are removed except for some on the corners, whereas the ones on the photograph are mostly kept. This tends to confirm the wanted behavior of our algorithm.

For validating our contribution, we're looking to prove that our algorithm does actually extract a better keypoint subset less subject to confusion. For this, we choose the classical application which consists in matching keypoints pairs in different images. Specifically, we use a similar approach as used by SCRAM-SAC by estimating an underlying model (*i.e.* fundamental matrix) and analysing the ratio of correspondences consistent with it, called the inliers. We first apply our experiments on a personal set of 10 couples of document images captured by a smartphone camera. Printed document images are very good candidates for confusion reduction due to the letters and words repetitions. Moreover, their visual properties make them highly responsive to saliency analysis, resulting in a profusion of keypoints returned; usually around 30.000 for a 2560x1920 picture with default sift parameters. Thus, we also test our method as a way of reducing huge keypoint sets without relying on visual analysis. As for the descriptor selection, considering its wide popularity and efficiency, it

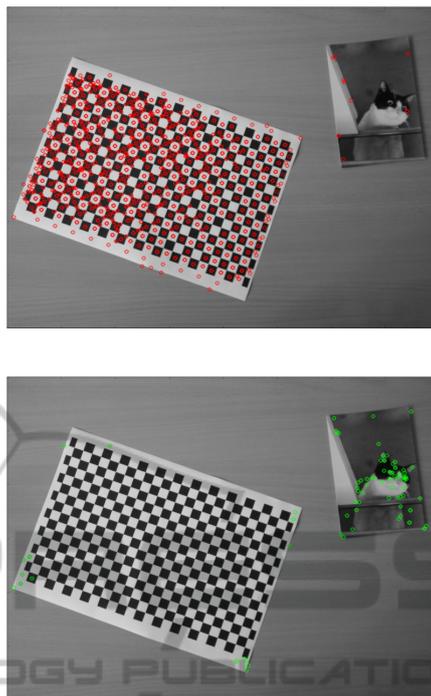


Figure 2: CORE application, top shows keypoints removed and bottom is keypoints kept with  $p = 0.1$ .

is an obvious choice to base our protocol experiment on the SIFT one. We also follow the idea of David Lowe in (Lowe, 1999) to keep only high-quality feature matches: we reject poor matches by computing the ratio between the best and second-best match (labelled 2NN for 2 nearest neighbours). If the ratio is below a given threshold (we use 0.8), the match is discarded as being low-quality.

We proceed as follows: for each image pair, we apply our CORE algorithm on the keypoints returned by SIFT. This returns a reduced keypoint set with which we establish correspondences by brute-force matching. We then use the RANSAC algorithm to estimate the fundamental matrix and analyse the inlier ratio. For a fair comparison, we do the same with another keypoint subset by following Lowe idea of saliency analysis by a contrast threshold, so we end up with a different keypoint set with equal size. On both of these approaches, we also apply the SCRAMSAC test to see how his matching filter behaves with these two different pre-processing methods. Last, to serve as a control test we extract a random keypoint subset with same size in order to prove that our method (as well as Lowe's one) is better and makes more sense than randomness. We repeat this for different  $p$  values, respectively 0.5, 0.25, 0.15, 0.10 and 0.05.

Finally, a valid criticism would be that analysing the inlier ratio might not be always pertinent since the

fundamental matrix computed is not always accurate. That’s why we propose a manual validation step: for each couple of images, we apply the sift algorithm on both images to detect and compute feature vectors. From here, we build a first set of results by brute-force matching the vectors; this will serve as a base for comparisons. Thereafter, we apply the 2NN filter; this is our second result-set. Last, we use our CORE algorithm in order to remove keypoints that could lead to confusion before applying the matching and previous filter, giving us our third and last result-set. For each of these three sets, an operator manually evaluates each match, giving us the table in the result section 3.2. We also use the Zurich Image database (Shao and Gool, 2003) instead of document images to show that our algorithm is not exclusive to these and arbitrarily set a fixed  $p$  value of 0.1. Plus, since we’re not computing average results here we also include two image couples from images figure 2.

But before presenting our results, we still need to address the  $\sigma$  setting as shown earlier in section 2.2: since it characterizes the feature vector values variations, we use our images set to compute the global mean value of variances of vectors elements thanks to the correct matches manually checked. We found it to be roughly around 32.135 for the SIFT descriptor. However, even if early tests didn’t find notable sensibility for values above 10, for very specific applications it could be understandable to re-evaluate it more precisely.

### 3.2 Results

Results from first part of the experiment are presented with figure 3. We see that for every  $p$  values, number of inliers is always greater than other subsets of equal size resulting from saliency analysis. Moreover, with small  $p$  values (between 0.25 and 0.05), inlier ratio is always improved by CORE pre-processing and starting with  $p = 0.15$ , CORE is doing better than SCRAMSAC.

However, for  $p = 0.5$  (50% of confusion tolerated), the inlier ratio is actually smaller with our method. This could come from the large confusion tolerated that doesn’t remove enough keypoints: we don’t take advantage of confusion reduction and some very similar keypoints were removed whereas their feature vector transformation may have not been enough to generate confusion. So we recommend using  $p$  values being inferior than 0.25 and best results seem to be achieved with 0.10. Not studied here, another advantage of our algorithm would be the speed-up gained during matching phase and model estimation as we observed the average computation time to

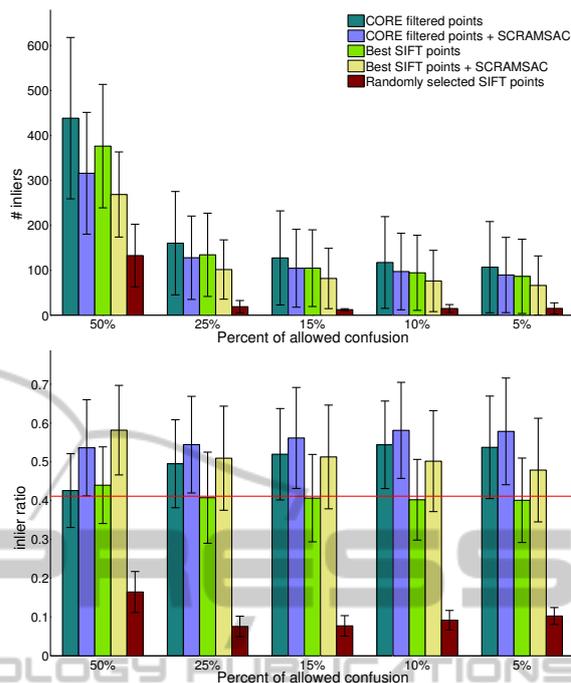


Figure 3: Average results of first part of the test with different filters. For each  $p$  value, we compare the results with subsets of equal size. Top: raw numbers of inliers, bottom: inlier ratio. Horizontal red line corresponds to SIFT inlier ratio without any filtering.

be 20 times faster than without filtering. Finally, it is worth noting that our pre-processing filter (CORE) behaves well with post-processing (SCRAMSAC) by always increasing the inlier ratio, regardless of the  $p$  value used and the poor results from control test based on randomness prove the relevance of pre-processing.

Now, concerning the second part of the test, shown by table 1, we can see that our contribution globally improves the good matching ratio: we find a mean increasing value of 8.52% for the Zurich images. Images 4.c and 4.i show slight improvements (with respectively 1.13% and 2.72% ratio increasing) while the other ones extracted from this dataset range from 6.22% to 13.8%. An explanation could come from contextual information from the scene that could prevent some confusion. The chessboard images that hardly benefit from contextual information at all and contain real repetition jump with respectively 36.99% and 50.46%.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

We presented the CORE algorithm, a pre-processing filter which extract from a feature vector set a smaller subset less subject to confusion by removing highly

Table 1: Comparisons of the results (percentage, number of good matches/total matches) for three different approaches: first column plain matching SIFT, second column SIFT with the 2NN filter ( $d = 0.8$ ) and last column SIFT with both CORE ( $p = 0.1$ ) and 2NN filter ( $d = 0.8$ ).

couple	unfiltered		2NN		CORE + 2NN	
	percentage	good matches / total matches	percentage	good matches / total matches	percentage	good matches / total matches
object0014	23.89%	322 / 1348	70.68%	258 / 365	81.82%	153 / 187
object0008	20.00%	336 / 1680	52.71%	204 / 387	66.51%	143 / 215
object0039	26.78%	448 / 1673	66.24%	310 / 468	67.37%	159 / 236
object0110	24.58%	222 / 903	57.29%	165 / 288	69.34%	95 / 137
object0164	25.16%	685 / 2723	65.66%	545 / 830	71.88%	317 / 441
object0170	41.61%	928 / 2230	80.25%	760 / 947	87.83%	469 / 534
object0181	32.35%	645 / 1994	74.77%	495 / 662	81.69%	290 / 355
object0192	18.75%	486 / 2592	64.78%	309 / 477	73.93%	241 / 326
object0106	25.06%	505 / 2015	74.71%	325 / 435	77.42%	216 / 279
chess01	15.92%	225 / 1413	47.49%	142 / 299	84.48%	49 / 58
chess02	10.72%	182 / 1698	35.98%	127 / 353	86.44%	51 / 59

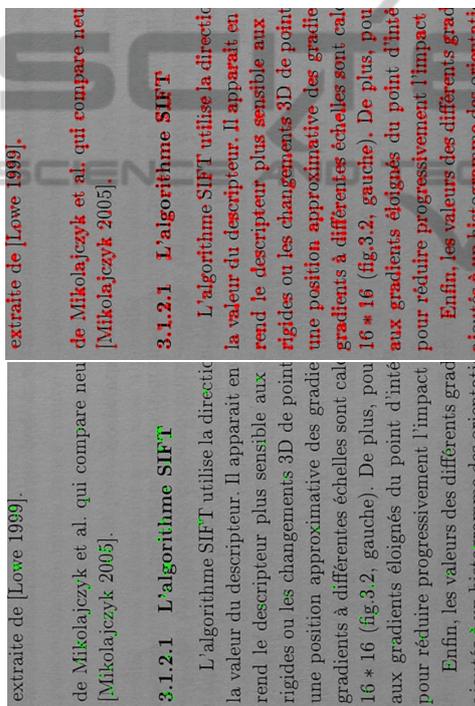


Figure 4: Example from our personal image document dataset, top is keypoints removed and bottom is keypoints kept.  $p = 0.1$ .

similar keypoints thanks to a probability approach. Results showed that subsets extracted are more discriminant and our approach can be combined with post-processing ones.

However, due to the kernel density estimator used, our algorithm can only be applied on floating point based descriptors, putting aside the recent developments in the binary descriptors field. A binary version of CORE will require a very different approach and this will be the subject of future work.

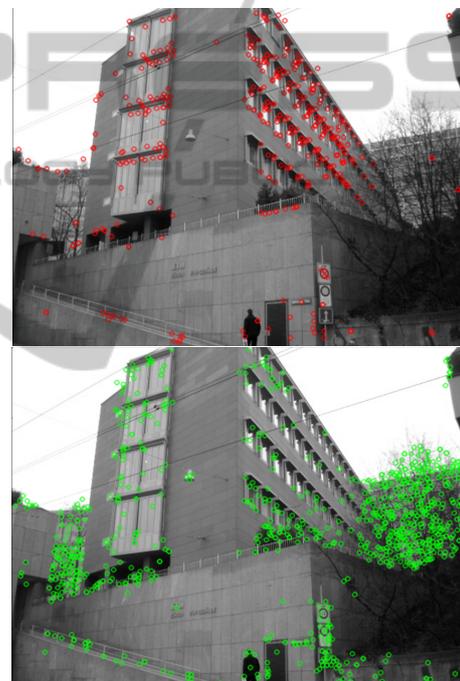


Figure 5: Example from Zurich dataset, top is keypoints removed and bottom is keypoints kept.  $p = 0.1$ .

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