

Global Camera Parameterization for Bundle Adjustment

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Abstract: Bundle adjustment is an important optimization technique in computer vision. It is a key part of Structure from Motion computation. An important problem in Bundle Adjustment is to choose a proper parameterization of cameras, especially their orientations. In this paper we propose a new parameterization of a perspective camera based on quaternions, with no redundancy in dimensionality and no constraints on the rotations. We conducted extensive experiments comparing this parameterization to four other widely used parameterizations. The proposed parameterization is non-redundant, global, and achieving the same performance in all investigated parameters. It is a viable and practical choice for Bundle Adjustment.

1 INTRODUCTION

Structure from motion (SfM) reconstruction received a lot of attention resulting in many practical applications such as Photosynth (Microsoft, 2008) and Bundler (Snavely, 2011). Current research aims at providing more precise reconstruction as well as the ability to handle larger datasets (Agarwal et al., 2010), (Crandall et al., 2011).

Bundle Adjustment (BA) (Triggs et al., 2000) is an important part of SfM as it optimizes the resulting estimates of 3D point coordinates and the position, orientation, and calibration of cameras (Figure 1). Detailed analysis of BA optimization methods, parameterizations, error modeling and constraints has been given in (Triggs et al., 2000). An efficient and comprehensive algorithm that utilizes the sparsity of BA has been developed by Lourakis and Argyros (Lourakis and Argyros, 2009) and the code was made freely available. This algorithm has been further used in (Snavely, 2011) to build a full structure from motion pipeline. An extended version of (Lourakis and Argyros, 2009) has been developed in (Konolige, 2010) utilizing the sparsity even further in order to reduce computation time. Recently, the performance of BA on large datasets has been scrutinized (Agarwal et al., 2010). The use of conjugate gradients and its effect on performance has been investigated in (Byröd and Åström, 2010). In (Jeong et al., 2010), significant performance improvements using multiple techniques, such as embedded point iterations and preconditioned conjugate gradients were shown.

1.1 Motivation

The choice of the camera parameterization has an important impact on BA performance. It directly influences the shape and the number of local minima of the objective function, which is minimized. In gradient based iterative optimization, e.g. in BA, the shape of the function has impact on the reduction of error within iteration, can lead to finding a better local minima or getting stuck in a worse one. Reducing the degrees of freedom can improve the convergence and the conditionality of the Jacobian matrix. Some parameterizations impose constraints on the actual values and therefore require special treatment. Last but not least, it is appealing to aim at a low number of parameters to reduce the computational demand of the BA.

The question which everyone must ask when designing BA parameterization is how to describe camera orientation. We believe this question still remains unanswered, since several parameterizations are being used in various BA softwares and there is no general rule which one to choose.

1.2 Parameterizing Camera Orientation

A standard perspective camera model, which uses a rotation matrix to describe camera orientation, is described in (Hartley and Zisserman, 2004). The rotation matrix can be parameterized in different ways.

In (Wheeler and Ikeuchi, 1995), quaternions (Hazewinkel, 1987) are investigated and their advantages and drawbacks are identified as well

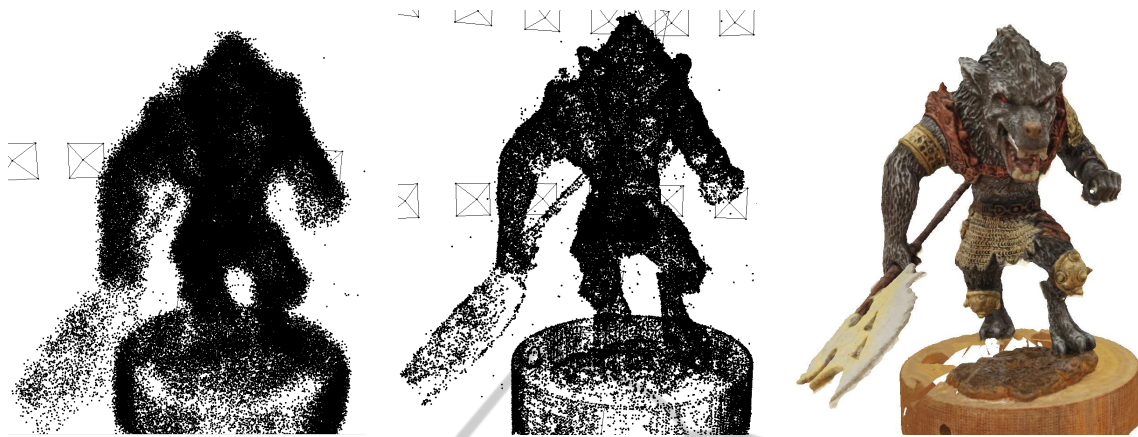


Figure 1: Bundle adjustment in action. After initial reconstruction, the refined parameters can be used to create a textured 3D model using dense reconstruction.

as a need for parameter scaling in gradient based optimization methods. In (Barfoot et al., 2011), authors use unit quaternions and rotation matrices and show how to update the parameters preserving their constraints. We will call this parameterization *4-quaternion* in the rest of the paper.

A non-redundant, local parameterization using a tangential hyperplane to the unit quaternion space, which will be further referred to as *3-quaternion-tangent*, is presented in (Schmidt and Niemann, 2001) and compared to the angle/axis representation (Craig, 2005) (further denoted as *angleaxis*), with rather inconclusive results in terms of performance.

In terms of practical applications, well known state of the art BA solvers support or use several different parameterizations. A general graph solver, which can be used for BA, described in (Kuemmerle et al., 2011), uses *4-quaternion*, *3-quaternion-tangent*, rotation matrices and euler angles. Method (Lourakis and Argyros, 2009) uses local parameterization, where only three components of the quaternion are optimized, which we will denote as *3-quaternion-local*. Method (Snavely, 2011) uses either *angleaxis*, *4-quaternion* or *3-quaternion-tangent* parameterizations. Google Ceres (Google, 2012) provides support for any projection function and its embedded BA solver offers the *angleaxis*, *4-quaternion* or *3-quaternion-tangent*.

All parameterizations which were emphasized will be described in greater detail in section 2.2.

1.3 Contribution

In this paper we describe a new way how to parameterize cameras inside BA using non-unit quaternions, while keeping the dimensionality as low as when using *3-quaternion-local*, *3-quaternion-tangent* or eu-

ler angles. Compared to the *angleaxis* representation, quaternions in general are easier to handle in terms of computation, which holds true also in our case. Compared to *3-quaternion-tangent*, there is no need in our case for extra care when updating the parameters. Our parameterization of rotation does not possess singularities as euler angles do and does not have to care about the border of the parameter space as in the case of *3-quaternion-local*. The performance in experiments on real datasets is the same as for other most common parameterizations. We present a global, non-redundant (i.e. minimal) and practical camera parameterization for Bundle Adjustment.

2 CAMERA PARAMETERS

In this section, we show a standard way how to describe a perspective camera and describe common ways how to parameterize camera orientation, which are later used in the experiments. Then we introduce the new parameterization.

2.1 A Standard Camera Parameterization

A perspective camera with radial distortion can be described (Hartley and Zisserman, 2004) as follows. A 3D point represented by coordinates $X \in \mathcal{R}^3$ in a Cartesian world coordinate system is transformed to the camera Cartesian coordinate system as

$$Y = R(X - C) = \begin{bmatrix} r_1^\top \\ r_2^\top \\ r_3^\top \end{bmatrix} (X - C) \quad (1)$$

by a 3×3 rotation matrix R with rows r_1, r_2, r_3 and camera center $C \in \mathcal{R}^3$. Then, it is projected to an image Cartesian coordinate system

$$\begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} r_1^\top (x-C) \\ r_2^\top (x-C) \\ r_3^\top (x-C) \end{bmatrix} \quad (2)$$

Assuming that the symmetry axis of the camera optical system is perpendicular to the image plane, radially symmetric ‘‘distortion’’ parameterized by ρ_1 and ρ_2 is applied

$$\begin{bmatrix} x_d \\ y_d \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \end{bmatrix} (1 + \rho_1 \|d\|^2 + \rho_2 \|d\|^4) \text{ with } d = \begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \end{bmatrix} \quad (3)$$

and, finally, the result is measured in an image coordinate system

$$\begin{bmatrix} u \\ v \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} k_{11} & k_{12} & k_{13} \\ 0 & k_{22} & k_{23} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x_d \\ y_d \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} \quad (4)$$

giving the image coordinates u, v . Parameters k_{11}, \dots, k_{23} are elements of the camera calibration matrix K (Hartley and Zisserman, 2004).

We parameterize rotation matrix R by quaternion $q = [q_1, q_2, q_3, q_4]^\top$ as

$$R = \frac{S}{\|q\|^2} \quad (5)$$

with

$$S = \begin{bmatrix} q_1^2 + q_2^2 - q_3^2 - q_4^2 & 2(q_2q_3 - q_1q_4) & 2(q_2q_4 + q_1q_3) \\ 2(q_2q_3 + q_1q_4) & q_1^2 - q_2^2 + q_3^2 - q_4^2 & 2(q_3q_4 - q_1q_2) \\ 2(q_2q_4 - q_1q_3) & 2(q_3q_4 + q_1q_2) & q_1^2 - q_2^2 - q_3^2 + q_4^2 \end{bmatrix} \quad (6)$$

where rows of R become $r_i^\top = s_i^\top / \|q\|^2$, $i = 1, 2, 3$ as a function of rows s_i^\top of S . Matrix S is parameterized by the quaternion and represents a composition of a rotation and a non-negative scaling.

Let us now observe an interesting fact. We substitute the quaternion parameterization to Eq. 2

$$\begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} r_1^\top (x-C) \\ r_2^\top (x-C) \\ r_3^\top (x-C) \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} s_1^\top / \|q\|^2 (x-C) \\ s_2^\top / \|q\|^2 (x-C) \\ s_3^\top / \|q\|^2 (x-C) \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} s_1^\top (x-C) \\ s_2^\top (x-C) \\ s_3^\top (x-C) \end{bmatrix} \quad (7)$$

and observe that the size of the quaternion has no effect on the projection. Non-unit quaternions hence give a redundant parameterization of camera rotations (Triggs et al., 2000). The redundancy is often removed by (i) imposing $\|q\|^2 = 1$ (Triggs et al., 2000;

Wheeler and Ikeuchi, 1995), (ii) using a parameterization that is not completely global (Triggs et al., 2000; Lourakis and Argyros, 2009), or (iii) using a very local parameterization in the tangent space around the identity (Triggs et al., 2000; Snavely, 2011; Agarwal et al., 2010).

2.2 Common Parameterizations

4-quaternions

One way to approach the parameterization of rotation matrix R inside BA is to optimize all four elements of the quaternion. This parameterization does not suffer from singularities. It has, however, one extra degree of freedom since, Eq. (7), the magnitude of the quaternion does not have effect on the projection function. Since unit quaternions are subject to $\|q\|^2 = 1$ constraint, we need to normalize it to obtain a rotation. Usually, the drawback of having four parameters and extra degree of freedom using quaternion is solved in one of the two following ways.

3-quaternions-tangent

First, it is possible to use a local approximation to the unit quaternion by calculating the tangent space of the unit quaternion manifold at each iteration (Schmidt and Niemann, 2001). When moving in the tangential hyperplane, we obtain a vector v which needs to be projected back onto the unit quaternion manifold.

3-quaternions-local

Another way is to use the fact that $\|q\|^2 = 1$, optimize only three components of a quaternion and calculate the remaining component as

$$q_1 = \sqrt{1 - q_2^2 - q_3^2 - q_4^2} \quad (8)$$

This, however, limits us only to rotations by $\langle -\frac{\pi}{2}; \frac{\pi}{2} \rangle$, since it does not allow for negative q_1 and $q_1 = \cos(\phi)$. Therefore, it is a common practice to save the initial orientation of a camera before the optimization and then to optimize only the difference from the initial orientation. This also prevents from dealing with the border of the parameter space in practical situations since a local update is never close to any rotation by 180° .

Angleaxis

A widely used (Heyden and Åström, 1997; Heyden and Åström, 1999; Shum et al., 1999) alternative to the quaternion is the *angleaxis* representation of rotations. It describes rotations by a vector a representing

the axis of rotation and the angle ϕ by which to rotate around it. Since only the direction of the rotation axis vector is important, we can use its length to store the rotation angle, such that $\phi = \frac{a}{\|a\|}$. This approach is almost equivalent to using unit quaternions. One difference is that the rotation matrix can be constructed as a polynomial function of a unit quaternion while it is necessary to use transcendental functions, i.e. sin and cos, when constructing the rotation matrix from a given *angleaxis* representation. Another difference is that in the *angleaxis* representation, one either has to deal with the boundary of the parameter space or one has to allow infinite possible representations of a rotation (due to the periodicity of sin and cos).

2.3 Global Non-redundant Camera Parameterization

We will next introduce a new parameterization of a general perspective camera with radial distortion, which is global and it is not redundant. This parameterization can be used in cases where focal length of the camera is one of the parameters being estimated.

The idea is simple. Since $\|q\|^2$ has no impact on the value of x, y in Eq. 7, we can use it to parameterize any remaining positive parameter.

Now, it is always possible to change the coordinate system in images to have $k_{11} > 0$. For instance, assuming initial parameters in the bundle adjustment q_0, C_0, K_0, ρ_0 , we can choose a new coordinate system in each image with its origin in the principal point (Hartley and Zisserman, 2004) and with k_{11} close to 1 by passing from u, v to u', v' by

$$\begin{bmatrix} u' \\ v' \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} k_{11} & 0 & k_{13} \\ 0 & k_{11} & k_{23} \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}^{-1} \begin{bmatrix} u \\ v \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & \frac{k_{12}}{k_{11}} & 0 \\ 0 & \frac{k_{22}}{k_{11}} & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x_d \\ y_d \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} \quad (9)$$

and from K_0 to

$$K'_0 = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & \frac{k_{12}}{k_{11}} & 0 \\ 0 & \frac{k_{22}}{k_{11}} & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \quad (10)$$

Notice that this change of the image coordinate system is a similarity transformation, i.e. a composition of a rotation, translation and scaling, and hence it does not change the distribution of image errors.

Now, with such a choice of image coordinate system, it is natural to set $k_{11} = \|q\|^2$. Since q_0 is initiated from an initial rotation matrix R_0 , it has the norm equal to one, i.e. $\|q_0\|^2 = 1$.

Our camera parameterization can now be written as

$$\begin{bmatrix} u' \\ v' \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \|q\|^2 & k'_{12} & k'_{13} \\ 0 & k'_{22} & k'_{23} \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x(1 + \rho_1 \|d\|^2 + \rho_2 \|d\|^4) \\ y(1 + \rho_1 \|d\|^2 + \rho_2 \|d\|^4) \\ 1 \end{bmatrix} \quad (11)$$

with

$$d = \begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} s_1^\top (X-C) \\ s_2^\top (X-C) \\ s_3^\top (X-C) \end{bmatrix} \quad (12)$$

where s_i are given by Eq. 5 and ρ_1 and ρ_2 are coefficients of the radial distortion model used in (Snively, 2011). For a typical consumer camera we will get $k'_{12}, \approx 0$ and $k'_{22} \approx 1$.

3 EXPERIMENTS

We tested the different parameterizations on various real datasets. As a baseline, we used the publicly available datasets from (Agarwal et al., 2010). These datasets consist of individual stages of incremental SfM reconstruction for four different scenarios. In order to speed up the experiments, we limited the amount of datasets while preserving the variety of data. We also added six additional datasets from our own database.

The solver used to perform BA was Ceres from Google (Google, 2012), which is freely available and implements the state of the art BA techniques to achieve optimal performance.

We compared our new parameterization proposed in section 2.3 to four commonly used parameterizations mentioned in section 2.2. In order to be able to compare how parameterizations converge, we forced all the optimizations to run for 30 iterations. No changes have been observed in additional iterations.

Two versions of experiments were performed. First, without any prior image coordinate normalization and second, using the image normalization described by Eq.(9) and (10). In our case, as in (Snively, 2011; Agarwal et al., 2010), we assumed square pixels, zero skew and the image center to be at $[0, 0]^\top$. Therefore, the matrix K reduces to

$$K'_0 = \begin{bmatrix} k_{11} & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & k_{11} & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \quad (13)$$

We then optimize only k_{11} , i.e. the focal length, which is in our parameterization replaced by $\|q\|^2$. The

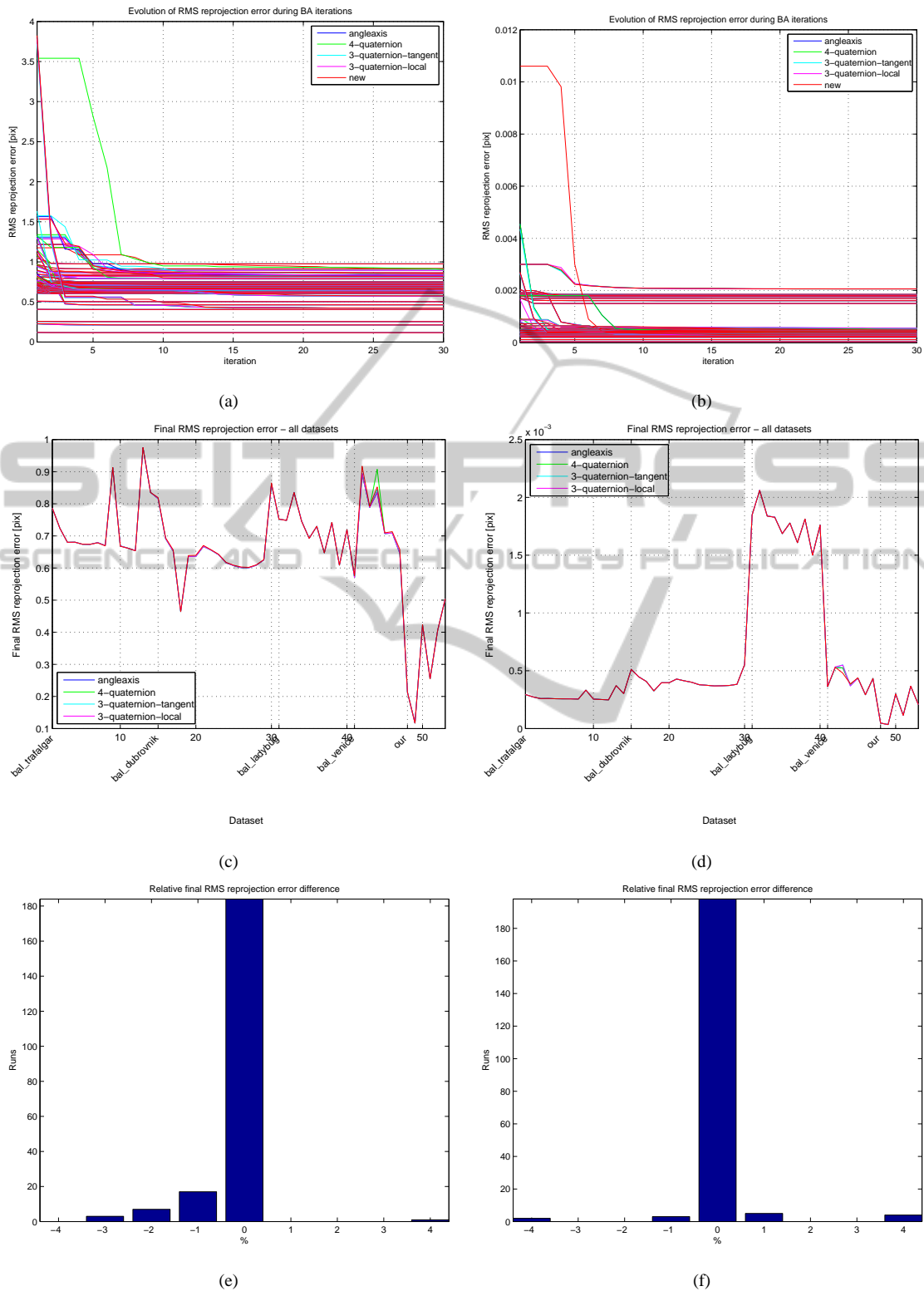


Figure 2: Results using non-normalized (a,c,e) and normalized (b,d,f) data for all datasets. Figures (a) and (b) show the evolution of the reprojection error over the BA iterations for all datasets. Figures (c) and (d) show the final reprojection error over all the datasets. Different data sets are denoted by their name. Figures (e) and (f) contain histograms of the relative difference of the final reprojection error for the new parameterization compared to all other parameterizations.

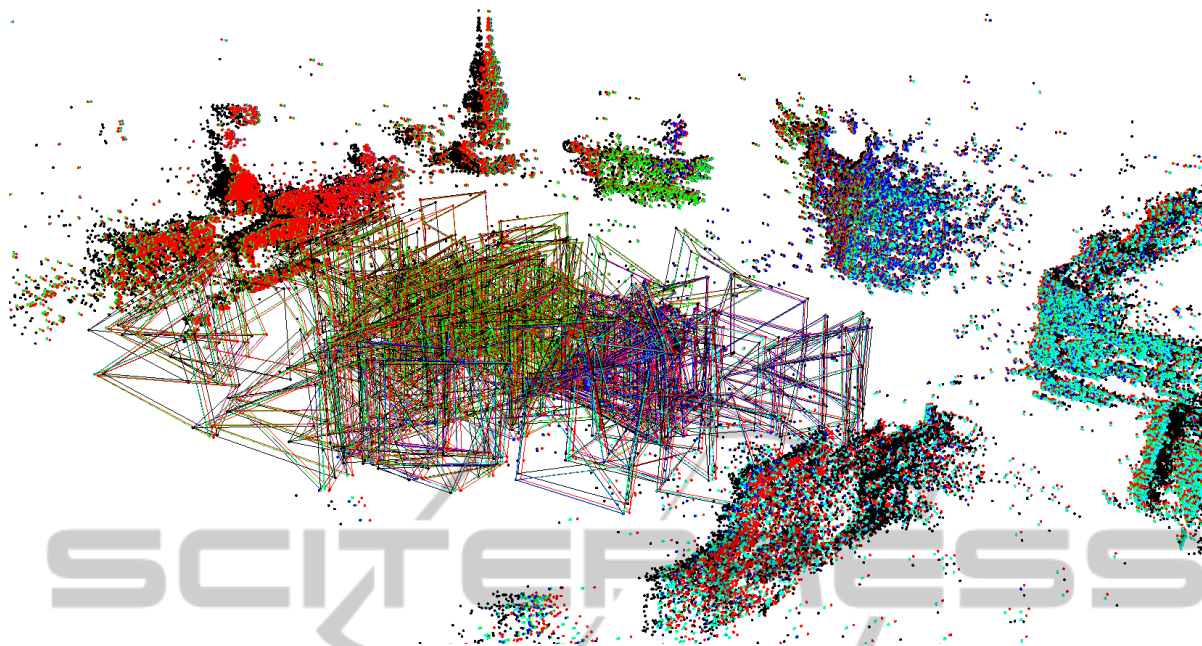


Figure 3: A visualization of a sample from the Trafalgar dataset with 126 cameras after BA using different parameterizations. The original data is labeled by black color. Results obtained for other parameterizations are colored as in the previous figures.

Table 1: Parameterizations used in experiments.

Parameterization	Parameters	No. par.
<i>Angleaxis</i>	k_{11}, a, C	7
<i>4-quaternion</i>	k_{11}, q, C	8
<i>3-quaternion-tangent</i>	k_{11}, v, C	7
<i>3-quaternion-local</i>	k_{11}, q_2, q_3, q_4, C	7
<i>New</i>	q, C	7

summary of the parameterizations can be found in table 1.

3.1 Results

The results for both normalized and non-normalized data are shown in Figure 2. We compared the evolution of the reprojection error over each iteration as well as its final value. One can see in Figures 2(c) and 2(d) that the new parameterization is converging to the same value of reprojection error as all the other parameterizations. The numbers on the x-axis denote the index of a dataset and the labels separate different datasets. The same behaviour is observed for all the parameterizations, with the exception of several outliers.

The convergence curves are not always identical for different parameterizations, Figures 2(a) and 2(b). We have found that the normalized data are slightly

better suited for BA, as suggested in (Wheeler and Ikeuchi, 1995), judging from the convergence which was slightly faster and also more correlated between different parameterizations.

The histograms in Figures 2(e) and 2(f) show the relative difference in reprojection error achieved by our parameterization compared to all other parameterizations on all datasets, where by a run we denote a result of one parameterization on one of the datasets. In vast majority of cases our parameterization achieved exactly the same final reprojection error value.

In absence of ground truth data, we compared the resulting parameters of cameras, i.e. the focal lengths, camera centers and orientations only among the tested parameterizations. As in the case of reprojection error, the resulting parameters after BA were exactly the same for all parameterizations. The parameters sometimes differed by a similarity transformation and after registering them, they were the same. Since the quantitative results would not be interesting, we show at least the final reconstruction of one of the datasets using all parameterizations in Figure 3. Original data is labeled by black color and the results using different parameterizations are colored accordingly to previous figures. The results are almost indistinguishable, which was also the case for the rest of the datasets.

4 CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, we proposed a new, global, and non-redundant (i.e. minimal) parameterization of a perspective camera for the Bundle Adjustment. We discussed the advantages of this parameterization in comparison to other commonly used parameterizations. Experiments evaluating the performance in terms of reducing the reprojection error were conducted on real datasets. The results showed that the proposed parameterization is achieving the same performance as the other investigated parameterizations and therefore we conclude that the new parameterization is a viable and practical option in BA.

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