

WEIGHTED GUIDED IMAGE FILTERING FRAMEWORK FOR HALO ARTIFACTS REDUCTION BY PRESERVING GRADIENT VALUES

P.Srikavya, Email id: srikavya.bhagya@gmail.com

S.Saida Rao, M.Tech,Asst.Professor, Email id: samudralasaidarao@gmail.com

Newtons Institute Of Engineering ,Allugurajupalli(V),Macherla(M),Guntur. PIN: 522426

Abstract

We present a weighted guided image filter (WGIF) to improve filtering and avoid halo artifacts. We know that the previously used local filtering-based edge preserving smoothing technique suffers from halo artifacts and also some drawbacks. To overcome this problem we are introducing an extension method called WGIF method .Actually this method is introduced by incorporating an edge-aware weighted into an existing guided image filter (GIF).It has two advantages of both global and local smoothing filter in the sense-(1) Its complexity is 0,(2)Avoid halo artifacts The output of WGIF results in better visual quality and avoid halo artifacts. In future, similar ideas can be used to improve the visual quality of anisotropic diffusion and Poisson image editing.

KEYWORDS: Edge-preserving smoothing, weighted guided image filter, edge aware weighting, detail enhancement, haze removal, exposure fusion

1. INTRODUCTION

In human visual perception, edges provide an effective and expressive stimulation which is important for neural interpretation of a scene. In the fields of image processing and in many computational photography employ smoothing techniques which could preserve edges better. In smoothing process an image to be filtered is typically decomposed into two layers: a base layer composed

by homogeneous regions with sharp edges and a detail layer formed by either noise, e.g., a random pattern with zero mean, or texture, e.g, a repeated pattern with usual arrangement. There are two types of edge-preserving image smoothing techniques: global filters such as the weighted least squares (WLS) filter and local filters such as bilateral filter (BF), trilateral filter, and their accelerated versions, as well as guided image filter (GIF).Though the global optimization based filters frequently yield excellent quality, they have high computational cost. Comparing with the global optimization based filters, the local filters are generally simpler. However, the local filters cannot conserve sharp edges like the global optimization based filters.

Halo artifacts were usually produced by the local filters when they were adopted to smooth edges. Major reason that the BF/GIF produces halo artifacts was both spatial similarity parameter and range similarity parameter in the BF were fixed. But both the spatial similarity and the range similarity parameters of the BF could be adaptive to the content of the image to be filtered. Unfortunately as pointed out, problem with adaptation of the parameters will destroy the 3D convolution form. We introduce in present paper, an edge-aware weighting technique and incorporated into the GIF to form a weighted GIF (WGIF). Local variance in 3×3 window of pixel in a

guidance image is applied to calculate the edge-aware weighting. The local variance of a pixel is normalized by the local variance of all pixels in guidance image. The normalized weighting is then adopted to design the WGIF. As a result, halo artifacts can be avoided by using the WGIF. Similar to the GIF, the WGIF also avoids gradient reversal. In addition, the intricacy of the WGIF is $O(N)$ for an image with N pixels which is the same as that of the GIF. These features allow many applications of the WGIF for single image detail enhancement, single image mist removal, and fusion of differently exposed images.

2. EDGE PRESERVING SMOOTHING TECHNIQUES

The task of edge-preserving smoothing is to crumble an image X into two parts as follows:

$$X(p) = \hat{J}(p) + r(p)$$

where \hat{J} is a reconstructed image formed by uniform regions with sharp edges, e is noise or texture, and $p=(x,y)$ is a position. \hat{J} and e are called base layer and detail layer, respectively. One of edge-preserving smoothing techniques is based on local filtering. Bilateral filter(BF) is widely used due to its simplicity but suffer from “gradient reversal” artifacts usually observed in detail enhancement of conventional LDR images. Then GIF was introduced to overcome this problem. In this GIF, a guidance image G was used which could be similar to the image X which is to be filtered.

\hat{J} is a linear transform of G in the window $\Omega_\zeta(p')$. To determine the linear coefficients (ap', bp') , a constraint is added to X and \hat{J} as in Equation (1). The values of ap' and bp' are then obtained by minimizing a cost function $E(ap',bp')$ which is defined as

$$E = \sum_{p \in \Omega_\zeta} [(ap'G(p) + bp' - X(p))^2 + \lambda ap'^2] \quad (2)$$

where λ is a regularization parameter.

Another type of edge-preserving smoothing techniques was based on global optimization. The Weighted Least Square filter was a typical example and it was derived by minimizing the following quadratic cost function:

$$E = \sum_{p=1}^N [(j(p) - X(p))^2 + \lambda(p) \|\nabla j(p)\|^2] \quad (3)$$

where N is the total number of pixels in an image.

The two major differences between the WLS filter and the GIF

1) The GIF is based on local optimization while the WLS filter is based on global optimization. As such, the difficulty of the GIF is $O(N)$ for an image with N number of pixels and the Weighted Least Square filter is more complicated than the GIF.

2) The value of λ is fixed in the GIF while it is adaptive to local gradients in the WLS filter. One possible problem for the GIF is halos which could be reduced by the WLS filter. The spatial varying image gradients aware weighting $\lambda_x(p)$ and $\lambda_y(p)$ are very important for the WLS filter to avoid halo artifacts.



Figure 1(a): Input image



Figure 1(b): Edge of input image

3. EXISTING METHODS

a) Bilateral Filter

The bilateral filter was perhaps the simplest which computed the filtering output at each pixel as the average of near-by pixels, weighted by the Gaussian of both range and spatial distance. The bilateral filter smooth's the image while preserving edges. Constraint of the bilateral filter was it endure from "gradient reversal" artifacts. The reason was that when a pixel (often on an edge) has few similar pixels around it, the Gaussian weighted average is unstable. Efficiency was another problem regarding the bilateral filter.

b) Non-average Filter

Edge-preserving filtering could also be achieved by non average filters. The median filter was a familiar edge-aware operator, and was a special case of local histogram filters. Histogram filters had $O(N)$ time implementations in a way as the bilateral grid. The non-average filters were often computationally expensive.

c) Guided Image Filter

A general linear translation-variant filtering process, which involved a guidance image I , an filtering input

image p , and an output image q . The filtering output at a pixel I was expressed as a weighted average:

$$q_i = \sum_j W_{ij}(I)p_j \quad (4)$$

where i and j were pixel indexes. The filter kernel W_{ij} was a function of the guidance image I and independent of p . This filter was linear with respect to p .

d) Adaptive Bilateral Filter

Both range similarity parameter and spatial similarity parameter were adaptive to the content of filtered image. However, adaptation of the parameters destroyed the 3-D convolution form. It was time consuming to extract fine details from a set of differently exposed images by the content adaptive bilateral filters because each input image needed to be decomposed individually. A content adaptive bilateral filter was proposed in gradient domain by taking the characteristics of the human visual systems into consideration. The proposed bilateral filter could be applied to extract fine details from a set of images simultaneously. Similar to the content adaptive bilateral filters the acceleration of the proposed filter could be an issue. Fortunately, the idea in might be borrowed to accelerate the proposed filter

e) Adaptive Guided Image Filter

An adaptive guided image filtering (AGF) able to perform halo-free edge slope enhancement and noise reduction simultaneously. The intensity range domain of BLF and kernel function of GIF were similar in principle, because each of them takes the intensity value of center pixel p , local neighbors q and a smoothing parameter (σ in BLF, ϵ in GIF) in the computation process. This was based on the shifting technique of ABF, in which the offset ξp was added to the intensity value of center pixel p in the intensity

range domain of BLF. The same strategy was applied to AGF - the offset is added to the intensity value of

4. PROPOSED METHOD

In this, an edge-aware weighting is first proposed and it is incorporated into the GIF to form the WGIF.

A) An Edge-Aware Weighting

Let G be a guidance image and be the variance of G in the 3×3 window,. An edge-aware weighting is defined by using local variances of 3×3 windows of all pixels as follows

$$\Gamma_G(p') = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{p=1}^N \frac{\sigma_{G,1}^2(p') + \varepsilon}{\sigma_{G,1}^2(p) + \varepsilon} \quad (5)$$

Where ε is a small constant and its value is selected while L is the dynamic range of the input image.

In addition, the weighting $\Gamma_G(p')$ measures the importance of pixel p' with respect to the whole guidance image. Due to the box filter, the complexity of $\Gamma_G(p')$ is $O(N)$ for an image with N pixels. The value of $\Gamma_G(p')$ is usually larger than 1 if p' is at an edge and smaller than 1 if p' is in a smooth area. Clearly, larger weights are assigned to pixels at edges than those pixels in flat areas by using the weight $\Gamma_G(p')$ in Equation (5).

By applying this edge-aware weighting, there might be blocking artifacts in final images. To prevent possible blocking artifacts from appearing in the final image, the value of $\Gamma_G(p')$ is smoothed by a Gaussian filter. The smoothed weights of all pixels in Fig. 2(a) are shown in Fig. 2(b). Clearly, larger weights are assigned to pixels at edges than those pixels in flat areas. The proposed weighting matches' one feature of human visual system, i.e., pixels at sharp edges are usually more efficient than those in flat areas.

B) The Proposed Filter

center pixel pin the kernel weights function of GIF.

Same as the GIF, the key assumption of the WGIF is a local linear model between the guidance image G and the filtering output \hat{Z} as in Equation (2). The model ensures that the output \hat{Z} has an edge only if the guidance image G has an edge. The proposed weighting $G(p)$ in Equation (5) is incorporated into the cost function $E(a, p, b, p)$ in Equation (3). As such, the solution is obtained by minimizing the difference between the image to be filtered X and the filtering output \hat{Z} while maintaining the linear model (2), i.e., by minimizing a cost function $E(a_{p'}, b_{p'})$ which is defined as

$$E = \sum_{p \in \Omega_{\zeta_1}(p')} \left[(a_{p'} G(p) + b_{p'} - X(p))^2 + \frac{\lambda}{\Gamma_G(p')} a_{p'}^2 \right] \quad (6)$$

The optimal values of $a_{p'}$ and $b_{p'}$ are computed as

$$a_{p'} = \frac{\mu_{G \odot X, \zeta_1}(p') - \mu_{G, \zeta_1}(p') \mu_{X, \zeta_1}(p')}{\sigma_{G, \zeta_1}^2(p') + \frac{\lambda}{\Gamma_G(p')}} \quad (7)$$

$$b_{p'} = \mu_{X, \zeta_1}(p') - a_{p'} \mu_{G, \zeta_1}(p') \quad (8)$$

where \odot is the element-by-element product of two matrices. $\mu_{G \odot X, \zeta_1}(p')$, $\mu_{G, \zeta_1}(p')$ and $\mu_{X, \zeta_1}(p')$ are the mean values of $G \odot X$, G and X , respectively.

The final value of $Z^{\wedge}(p)$ is given as follows:

$$\hat{Z}(p) = \bar{a}_p G(p) + \bar{b}_p \quad (9)$$

Where \bar{a}_p and \bar{b}_p are the mean values of and in the window computed as

$$\bar{a}_p = \frac{1}{|\Omega_{\zeta_1}(p)|} \sum_{p' \in \Omega_{\zeta_1}(p)} a_{p'} ; \bar{b}_p = \frac{1}{|\Omega_{\zeta_1}(p)|} \sum_{p' \in \Omega_{\zeta_1}(p)} b_{p'} \quad (10)$$

And $|\Omega_{\zeta_1}(p')|$ is the cardinality of $\Omega_{\zeta_1}(p')$.

For easy analysis, the images X and G are assumed to be the same. Consider the case that the pixel p' is at an edge. The value of $\Gamma_X(p')$ is usually much larger than 1. $a_{p'}$ in the WGIF is closer to 1 than $a_{p'}$ in the GIF. This implies that sharp edges are preserved better by the WGIF than the GIF. As

shown in Fig. 3, edges are indeed preserved much better by the WGIF. In addition, the complexity of the WGIF is $O(N)$ for an image with N pixels which is the same as that of the GIF. Edges are also preserved well by the ABF while the complexity of the ABF is an issue

C. Single Image Haze Removal

Images of outdoor scenes could be degraded by haze, fog, and smoke in the atmosphere. The degraded images lose the contrast and color fidelity. Haze removal is thus highly desired in both computational photography and computer vision applications. The model adopted to describe the formulation of a haze image is given as

$$X_c(p) = \hat{Z}_c(p)t(p) + A_c(1 - t(p)) \quad (10)$$

When the atmosphere is homogenous, the transmission $t(p)$ can be expressed as:

$$t(p) = e^{-ad(p)} \quad (11)$$

Let $\phi_c(\cdot)$ be a minimal operation along the color channel $\{r, g, b\}$ and it is defined as

$$\begin{aligned} A_{\min} &= \phi_c(A_c) = \min\{A_r, A_g, A_b\} \quad (12) \\ X_{\min}(p) &= \phi_c(X_c(p)) \\ &= \min\{X_r(p), X_g(p), X_b(p)\} \quad (13) \\ \hat{Z}_{\min}(p) &= \phi_c(\hat{Z}_c(p)) \\ &= \min\{\hat{Z}_r(p), \hat{Z}_g(p), \hat{Z}_b(p)\} \quad (14) \end{aligned}$$

it can be derived from the haze image model in Equation (15) that

$$\begin{aligned} X_{\min}(p) &= \hat{Z}_{\min}(p)t(p) \\ &+ A_{\min}(1 - t(p)) \quad (15) \end{aligned}$$

Let $\psi_{\zeta_2}(\cdot)$ be a minimal operation in the neighborhood $\psi_{\zeta_2}(p)$ and it is defined as

$$\psi_{\zeta_2}(z(p)) = \min_{p' \in \Omega_{\zeta_2}(p)} \{z(p')\} \quad (16)$$

It is shown that the complexity of $\psi_{\zeta_2}(\cdot)$ is $O(N)$ for an image with N pixels. The dark channel is defined as

$$J_{dark}^{\hat{Z}}(p) = \phi_c(\psi_{\zeta_2}(\hat{Z}_c(p))) \quad (17)$$

where the value of ζ_2 is 7. Even though the complexity of $\psi_{\zeta_2}(\cdot)$ is $O(N)$ for an image with N pixels, three minimal operations $\psi_{\zeta_2}(\cdot)$ and one minimal operation $\Phi_c(\cdot)$ are required to compute $J_{dark}^{\hat{Z}}(p)$ for the pixel p . simplified dark channel is defined as

$$\hat{J}_{dark}^{\hat{Z}}(p) = \psi_{\zeta_2}(\phi_c(\hat{Z}_c(p))) \quad (18)$$

The value of $t(p)$ is assumed to be constant in the neighborhood $\Omega_{\zeta_1}(p')$. It can be derived from Equation (20) that

$$\begin{aligned} \hat{J}_{dark}^X(p) &= \hat{J}_{dark}^{\hat{Z}}(p) t(p) \\ &+ A_{\min}(1 - t(p)) \quad (19) \end{aligned}$$

Since $\hat{J}_{dark}^{\hat{Z}}(p) \approx 0$, the value of $t(p)$ can be initially estimated as

$$t(p) = 1 - \frac{\hat{J}_{dark}^X(p)}{A_{\min}} \quad (20)$$

It is worth noting that the initial value of $t(p)$ is given as

$$t(p) = 1 - \phi_c\left(\psi_{\zeta_2}\left(\frac{\hat{Z}_c(p)}{A_c}\right)\right) \quad (21)$$

The initial value of $t(p)$ is then computed as

$$t(p) = 1 - \frac{31}{32} \frac{\hat{J}_{dark}^X(p)}{A_{\min}} \quad (22)$$

The value of λ is set to $1/1000$ and the value of ζ_1 to 60. The value of the transmission map $t(p)$ is further adjusted as

$$t(p) = t^{1+\lambda}(p) \quad (23)$$

where the value of ζ is adaptive to the haze level of the input image. Its value is 0/0.03125/0.0625 if the input image is with light/normal/heavy haze.

Finally, the scene radiance $\hat{Z}(p)$ is recovered by

$$\hat{Z}_c(p) = \frac{X_c(p) - A_c}{t(p)} + A_c; c \in \{r, g, b\} \quad (24)$$

Equation (29) is equivalent to

$$\begin{aligned} \hat{Z}_c(p) = & X_c(p) \\ & + \left(\frac{1}{t(p)} - 1 \right) (X_c(p) \\ & - A_c) \end{aligned} \quad (25)$$

Since the color of the sky is usually very similar to the atmospheric light A_c in a haze image, it can be shown that

$$\frac{\hat{f}_{dark}^X(p)}{A_{min}} \rightarrow 1, \text{ and, } \frac{1}{t(p)} - 1 \rightarrow 31 \quad (26)$$

5. SIMULATION RESULTS

D. Fusion of Differently Exposed Images

One of the challenges in digital image processing research is the rendering of a HDR natural scene on a conventional LDR display. This challenge can be addressed by capturing multiple LDR images at different exposure levels. Each LDR image only records a small portion of the dynamic range and partial scene details but the whole set of LDR images collectively contain all scene details. All the differently exposed images can be fused together to produce a LDR image by an exposure fusion algorithm. Similar to the detail enhancement of a LDR image, halo artifacts, gradient reversal artifacts and amplification of noise in smooth regions are three major problems to be addressed for the fusion of differently exposed images.

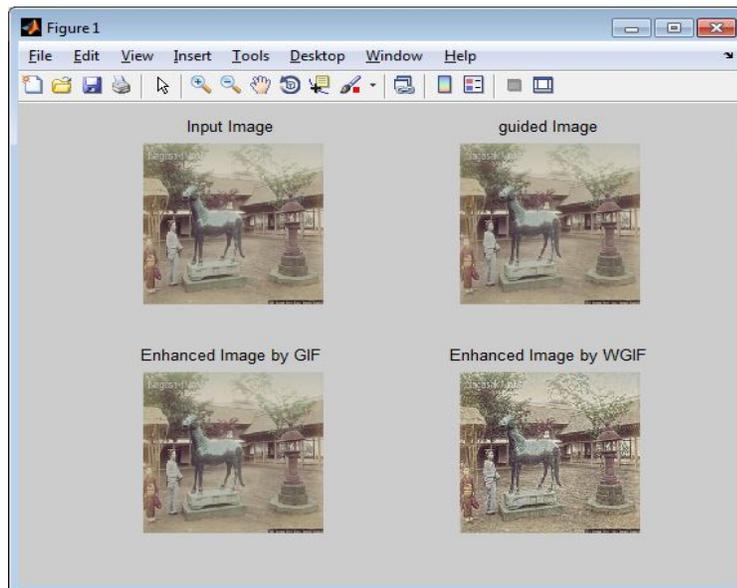


Figure 2: (a) Input image (b) Guided image (c) Enhanced image by GIF (d) Enhanced image by WGIF

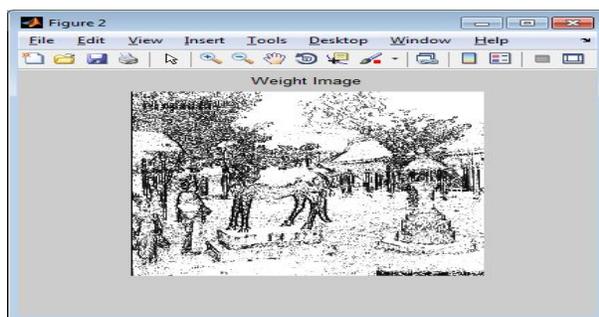


Figure 3: Weighted image

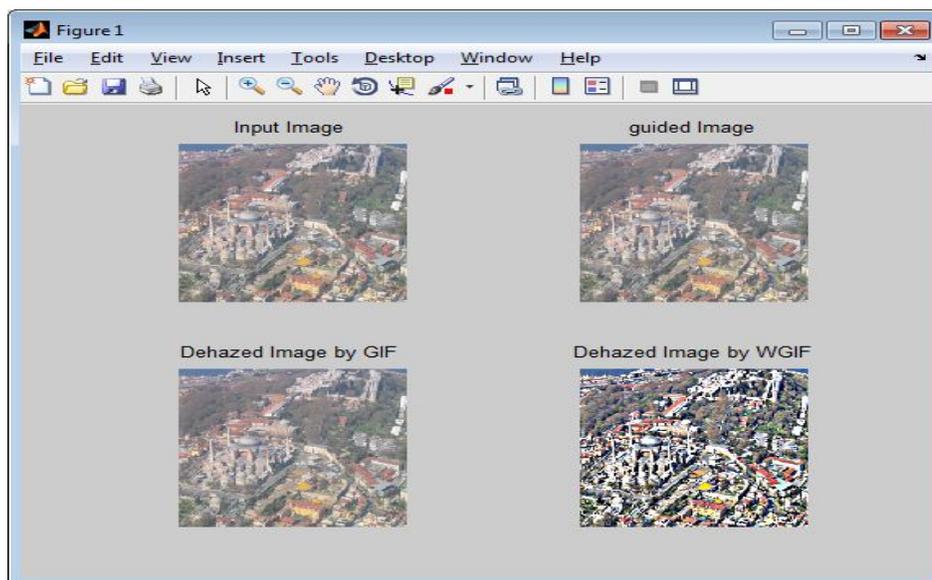


Figure 4: (a) Input image (b) Guided image (c) Dehazed image by GIF (d) Dehazed image by WGIF

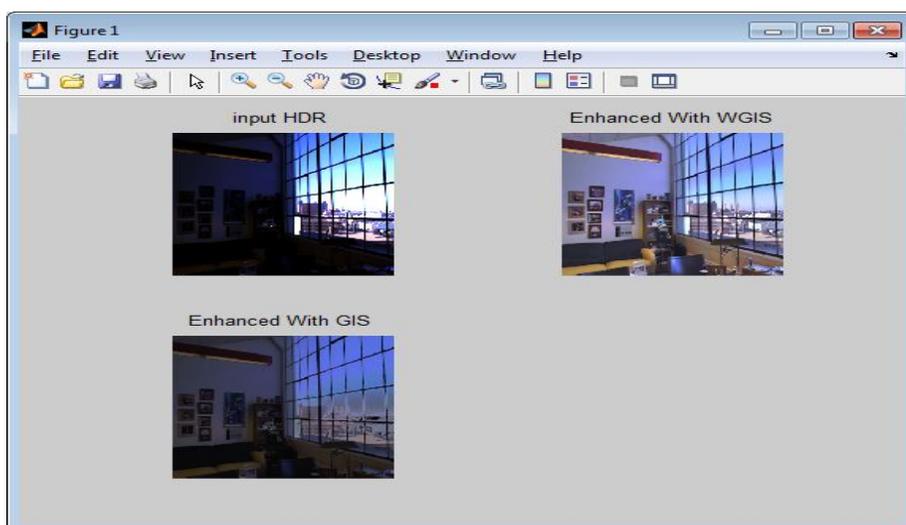


Figure 5: (a) Input HDR (b) Enhanced with WGIS (c) Enhanced with GIS

6. CONCLUSION

This method is introduced by incorporating an edge-aware weighted into an existing guided image filter (GIF). It has two advantages of both global and local smoothening filter in the sense-(1) Its complexity is 0,(2)Avoid halo artifacts The output of WGIF results in better visual quality and avoid halo artifacts. , it has many applications in the fields of computational photography and image processing. Particularly, it is applied to study single image detail enhancement, single image haze removal, and fusion of differently exposed images. Experimental results show that the resultant algorithms can produce images with excellent visual quality as those of global filters, and at the same time the running times of the proposed algorithms are comparable to the GIF based algorithms. It is noting that the WGIF can also be adopted to design a fast local tone mapping algorithm for high dynamic range images, joint up sampling, flash/no-flash de-noising, and etc. In addition, similar idea can be used to improve the anisotropic diffusion, Poisson image editing, etc. All these research problems will be studied in our future research.

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Mr. S.SAIDARAO was born Guntur,AP, on November 02 1987. He graduated from the Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University,Hyderabad. Presently He is working as a Asst Prof in Newton’s Institute of Engineering, Macherla. So far he is having 7 Years of Teaching Experience in various reputed engineering colleges. His special fields of interest included Microprocessors and

microcontrollers, Embedded Systems, Digital Signal Processing & communication Systems.



Ms. P.SRIKAVYA was born on 29th June 1991 in Visakhapatnam . She graduated from the Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University,Kakinada. . Her special fields of interest included Embeded systems & VLSI. Presently She is studying M.Tech in Newton’s Institute of Engineering, Macherla.