

Determining Position and Speed through Pixel Tracking and 2D Coordinate Transformation in a 3D Environment

2016-01-1478 Published 04/05/2016

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CITATION: Neale, W., Hessel, D., and Koch, D., "Determining Position and Speed through Pixel Tracking and 2D Coordinate Transformation in a 3D Environment," SAE Technical Paper 2016-01-1478, 2016, doi:10.4271/2016-01-1478.

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Abstract

This paper presents a methodology for determining the position and speed of objects such as vehicles, pedestrians, or cyclists that are visible in video footage captured with only one camera. Objects are tracked in the video footage based on the change in pixels that represent the object moving. Commercially available programs such as PFTracktm and Adobe After Effectstm contain automated pixel tracking features that record the position of the pixel, over time, two dimensionally using the video's resolution as a Cartesian coordinate system. The coordinate data of the pixel over time can then be transformed to three dimensional data by ray tracing the pixel coordinates onto three dimensional geometry of the same scene that is visible in the video footage background. This paper explains the automated process of first tracking pixels in the video footage, and then remapping the 2D coordinates onto three dimensional geometry using previously published projection mapping and photogrammetry techniques. The results of this process are then compared to VBOX recordings of the objects seen in the video to evaluate the accuracy of the method. Some beneficial aspects of this process include the time reduced in tracking the object, since it is automated, and also that the shape and size of the object being tracked does not need to be known since it is a pixel being tracked, rather than the geometry of the object itself.

Introduction

Camera matching photogrammetry is an established technique for determining where, in a scaled three dimensional environment, an object is located that is visually represented in a two dimensional photograph $[1,2,3,4]$ $[1,2,3,4]$ $[1,2,3,4]$ $[1,2,3,4]$ $[1,2,3,4]$. Though a photograph is only a two dimensional image, it visually represents a three dimensional world, and techniques of camera matching photogrammetry allow the position, orientation and scale of objects visible in the photograph to be located in a three dimensional environment through laws of perspective. The camera characteristics of the camera used to photograph a scene can be rectified through a reverse camera projection process $[1,2,3,4]$ $[1,2,3,4]$ $[1,2,3,4]$ $[1,2,3,4]$ $[1,2,3,4]$ $[1,2,3,4]$ $[1,2,3,4]$. When this camera is used to view the digital photograph against the background of a three dimensional computer environment that

represents the same geometry as that seen in the photograph, objects that appear in the photograph, that are not present in the computer model, can be "matched" in the camera, and subsequently its location and orientation can also be matched in the computer environment. Video is a series of still images, captured at a rate that when played back, appears to show motion of objects. Since camera matching has been validated for a single image, it is also valid for a series of single images. In other words, camera matching an object in one image is the same process as camera matching the position of an object over several images, though the result of matching several images is that the change in position can also be determined. Previous literature has developed the technique of tracking video in this manner [\[5,](#page-7-4)[6](#page-8-0),[7](#page-8-1)]. However, to track an object in a video using camera matching photogrammetry, the location of the object must be manually matched at each frame that is being analyzed, which can be time consuming. Additionally, for tracking objects through camera matching photogrammetry, the size and shape of the vehicle is often also needed, since the size and shape of the object is relied upon to get good position and orientation of the object. Coleman, et. al. [[2](#page-7-1)] validate a technique of camera matching that utilizes three dimensional scan data to both assist in determining the camera characteristics of the photograph that took the image, as well as locating objects in the photograph that are no longer in the scene. In an effort to develop a technique that can help automate the process of tracking an object in video, this paper uses the same concepts of camera matching photogrammetry, (i.e. matching the camera characteristics in a scanned three dimensional scene). However, rather than tracking an object by matching its three dimensional position through multiple frames of the video, which can be time intensive, this paper examines the use of automated pixel tracking, and ray trace projection to automatically locate the object in three dimensional space.

Concept of 2D Coordinate Transformation

The tracking of objects in video, also called motion tracking, can be a manual or automated process where, in an x and y coordinate system determined by the video's resolution, a discrete pixel, or series of

pixels are located at various frames. [Figure 1](#page-1-0) shows the coordinate grid of a standard high definition image, with lines at intervals of 64 pixels.

Figure 1. Coordinate grid for a video frame

The top left pixel would be considered 0,0, and the bottom right pixel 1920,1080. In this manner, each pixel has a unique location in the video frame. As the object moves in the video, the object will be represented by different pixels that occupy different position in the video frame over time. [Figure 2](#page-1-1) demonstrates this concept of an object moving across the video frame, and the tracking concept that continually determines the position of the pixels representing this object over time. The chart in [Figure 3](#page-1-2) is an example of the x and y coordinates that would be recorded from the pixel tracking process.

Figure 2. Concept of pixel tracking

Figure 3. Matrix coordinates resulting from tracking a pixel

In this paper's research, automatic tracking of pixels in video was performed using PFTracktm and Adobe After Effects programs, though there are several other programs designed for this same specific purpose $[8]$ $[8]$. PFTracktm is one of several available professional match moving software applications. This software is designed primarily to track the movement of a camera through a video shot so that the same motion observed in the video shot can be duplicated but with a virtual camera. PFTracktm performs this analysis by tracking pixels of common characteristics, and using principles of photogrammetry and parallax to solve the location of the camera. Likewise, PFTracktm pixel tracking modules can be used to track pixel and determine the location of the pixel as it appears in the frame of the video. Because each pixel has a signature between 0 and 256 (for 8 bit images which includes most video) and each pixel is usually surrounded by other pixels with a different value, however subtle, a program can automatically track the location of the pixels that are representing an object in the video. Where the pixel changes its value or position dramatically, most programs allow checking and adjusting of its tracking to ensure its accuracy. Because the video image has a set resolution, the width and height of the image can be determined. These dimensions are in pixels, denoting length and width that the pixel is from the top left position of the image. As the tacking software determined the location of the pixel in the video image, its two dimensional coordinate can be determined as Cartesian x and y values.

Having tracked the position of a pixel in a video, and converted the coordinates to a matrix of x and y values, principles of camera matching photogrammetry are utilized to determine the positon of the camera in three dimensional space. $[1,2,7]$ $[1,2,7]$ $[1,2,7]$ $[1,2,7]$. This requires creating geometry, from scanning, surveying or other methods, of the scene represented in the video. Next PFTrack was used to solve for the location of the camera buy selecting known points visible in the video and assigning them a 3D point in the LIDAR scan data. In this process of camera matching, once at least 4 points have been assigned the software can automatically solve the 3D camera location and camera characteristics.

To transform the 2D coordinates from the tracking on to the three dimension geometry of the scene, ray tracing and projection mapping technology is used to essentially "fire" a point from the camera, at an angle laterally and vertically relative to the cameras orientation that is determined by the pixels coordinate. The firing of this ray through the determined angles transforms the two dimensional location into the three dimensional environment. [Figure 4](#page-2-0) is a graphical depiction of this concept. Note the corresponding dots on the 2D image that are transformed to a position on the roadway.

Several things about the scene represented in the video must be either known or estimated, in order for the transformation to occur. For instance, the geometry of the scene must be known and recorded in a 3D computer environment. Also, some assumptions or determinations must be made about the object being tracked. Specifically, the height off the ground is needed. The reason for this, is that the ray fired from the camera is a straight line headed to the computer environment's background geometry, which is typically a roadway or walkway or ground of some sort. The object being tracked is rarely at ground level, but rather several feet above it. In order to place the object in

3D space correctly, the point along the line will need to match the height off the ground of the actual object being recorded. [Figure 5](#page-2-1) demonstrates this concept. In this figure, a ray is traced from the camera to the ground, and the height of a tail lamp (the object being tracked in this demonstration) is shown in contact with this line, therefore determining where along the ray trace line the point being transformed into the 3D world should be located. Knowing, or estimating the height of the headlamp, for these purposes, would be needed, otherwise the point when transformed to the 3D world would end up on the ground.

Figure 4. Concept of 2D to 3D transformation

Figure 5. Concept of determining where, along the ray trace line, a point will be located in 3D space

Testing Scenarios

In order to demonstrate this process, and evaluate how accurately the process tracks movement of an object in video, three different testing scenarios were performed. The testing scenarios have different modes of movement, different speeds, and different movement patterns so that the tracking process can be evaluated for a variety of objects being tracked and a variety of path and speeds. [Table 1](#page-2-2) lists the scenarios that were videotaped and the Resulting data collected through this process.

To evaluate the accuracy at which the 2D transformation process tracks speed and position, the results of the process were compared to a RaceLogic VBOX Data Acquisition Unit that was also tracking the position of the vehicles used in each of the scenarios.

Table 1. Test scenarios and objects to be tracked

Testing Scenario	Processed Results
1-Baby Stroller	Baby Stroller Speed
2-Bicycle Going Straight	Bicycle Path and Speed
3-Bicycle Turning	Bicycle Path and Speed
4-Car Constant Speed	Car Path and Speed
5-Car Starting From Stop	Car Path and Speed
6-Car Turning	Car Path and Speed
7-Pedestrian Walking	Pedestrian Speed

To simplify the camera matching process, and reduce the number of geometry scenes that needed to be created, a single site was utilized for all six of the testing scenarios. Figure 6 is an aerial image that shows the testing intersection, and the location of the camera, denoted in an orange circle, used to record video. [Figure 7](#page-2-4) shows the same aerial with the path of travel for each of the scenarios denoted. The pedestrian path is in white, the bicycle path is in orange, and the passenger car path is in red. In addition to the mode of travel and the speed, the paths of travel vary in their horizontal and vertical movement as observed in the video, whereby some scenarios have travel paths that go from right to left, some from left to right, and some from top to bottom. This variety is to provide a full range of scenario conditions to evaluate.

Figure 6. Aerial of intersection with camera locations denoted

Figure 7. Same aerial with travel paths and scenarios

Procedure

Describe the steps of the procedure, listing them:

- 1. Collection of geometry of the scene
- 2. Collection of video footage
- 3. Collecting VBOX data for comparison
- 4. Camera Matching Photogrammetry
- 5. Auto tracking of pixels
- 6. Transformation of 2D points to 3D environment
- 7. Adjusting the position along the ray trace
- 8. Comparison to VBOX tracking

1. Collection of Geometry of the Scene

The area depicted in the image in [Figure 6](#page-2-3) was digitally mapped using a Sokkia Total station and a Faro Focus 3D Laser scanner so that objects such as the roadway, traffic lights, signs and other objects that would help result in a successful camera match could be recorded. [Figure 8](#page-3-0) is image of the scan data that resulted from the Faro scan of the scene, and **Figure 9** is the scan and survey data processed into surface geometry to be used in camera matching and 3D coordinate transformation.

Figure 8. Results of the scan of the scene

Figure 9. Processed scan data into surface geometry for camera matching and 3D transformation

2. Collection of Video Footage

A total of six scenarios were performed using three different modes of movement. The first run was the slowest, and included a pedestrian walking a baby stroller. The stroller was used in conjunction with the

VBOX to obtain a smooth signal at a walking pace. The bicycle represented a faster mode of travel, and two paths of travel were used in this scenario. In one, the cyclist went straight across the intersection, and in the other the cyclist made a turn through the intersection. A passenger car made up the remaining runs, and included three speed changes driving straight through the intersection, and one path of travel that was a turn through the intersection. [Figure 10](#page-3-2) shows three video frames from each of the six scenarios tested.

Figure 10. Still frames from video collected for each scenario

3. Collection of VBOX Data for Comparison

Velocity data was collected for each scenario using a Racelogic VBOX VB20SL3 data logger. This data logger measures speed and position through the use of a global positioning system (GPS). The data logger recorded data at 20Hz, and received a GPS signal through a single antenna. The VBOX calculates velocity with an accuracy of 0.1Km/h and resolution of 0.01Km/h. The VBOX calculates velocity from the recorded positions and the VBOX software automatically converts this data to miles per hour for final analysis. The VBOX data was filtered using a five point moving average. This removed the recorded noise at low speeds. The filtering was unnecessary for the tests with the car, but it was used for consistency. [Figure 11](#page-4-0) shows the mounting of the VBOX unit in a stroller, on the bike and in the car respectively. The Video and VBOX data were linked together by use of a high intensity LED that was mechanically connected to the start button on the VBOX. When the start button for the VBOX was released the LED would turn off at that same moment, thus being a visible point in the video when the run had started in the VBOX.

Figure 11. Photos of VBOX unit mounted in the test scenarios

4. Camera Matching Photogrammetry

The step of Camera Matching Photogrammetry determines the position of the camera with in the 3D environment. The camera's location relative to the stationery background objects in the scene, is determined through this process and [Figure 12](#page-4-1) and [Figure 13](#page-4-2) show the results of the camera matching process.

Figure 12. Image and view of the actual camera that was used in the camera matching process.

Figure 13. Camera Matched Camera viewing the computer scene geometry from the same location as actual camera

5. Auto Tracking of Pixels

Each of the video files was imported into the PFTracktm and Adobe After Effects video editing and tracking programs. As part of the tracking process, the video sequence is displayed as a background, and a pixel is selected for tracking. The program allows for the tracking process to analyze three parameters, and these parameters can be selected for best results. Each parameters is one of three deformation properties including skew, scale, and rotate. Scale allows for changes in the size of the pattern, rotate allows for rotation of the pattern and skew allows for deformation of the pattern consistent with changes in perspective. When enabling all three parameters, the auto tracking has the best opportunity to continue tracking the pixel as it changes size and shape throughout the video frames. When the

Auto tacking is completed, the results can be visually verified against the actual video [Figure 14](#page-4-3) shows a still frame of the video capturing the scenario with the bicycle run. A path of points trailing the bicycle denotes the tracking process.

Figure 14. Pixel designated for Auto track

For each scenario, a specific object on each mode of movement was tracked. [Table 2](#page-4-4) lists the specific pixel object that was tracked in the video, along with the height off the ground that is estimated or determined for that object. If an estimate is required for the height of the object being tracked, getting the estimate as close as possible yields the best results, since estimating a height higher or lower than the object actually is off the ground, will result in a varying positions on the ground. How much the estimate is off, and the effect this would have on the final results depends on several factors including the height of the camera above the object being tracked. This is because a triangle is formed between the camera position, the object being tracked and the resulting position on the ground (see [figure 5](#page-2-1)). In general, estimates that are a few inches off did not have a significant effect on the final results. As an example, in our analysis, changing the height of the estimated positions by a 6 inches resulted in a difference in speed of up to 13 percent. Since the camera is higher than the tracking point making the tracking point higher moves the points closer to the camera. Closer to camera makes the whole path smaller so speed decreases. Moving the point down would have the opposite affect and the speed would increase. The further the point is away from the camera the more it will be affected by changes in height as well. [Appendix A](#page-9-0) has been included to show the matrix of the coordinates that resulted from the tracking process for the bicyclist's helmet.

Table 2. Scenarios and objects to be tracked

6. Transformation of 2D Points to 3D Environment

Using the pixel coordinates determined through the tracking process, and in conjunction with the location, vertical and horizontal orientation of the camera relative to the background, and its field of view, ray traces were projected through the coordinates to create points on the ground for each tracked position. This geometrical relationship of the pixel location in the video relative to the corresponding point on the ground is represented in the following:

$$
TM = [Xx, Yx, Zx, Px]
$$

\n
$$
[Xy, Yy, Zy, Py]
$$

\n
$$
[Xz, Yz, Zz, Pz]
$$

\n
$$
[0 \quad ,0 \quad ,0 \quad ,1]
$$

\n
$$
X = Px - \frac{W}{2}
$$

\n
$$
Y = Py - \frac{H}{2}
$$

\n
$$
Z = \frac{-W * FL}{9}
$$

\n
$$
Pg = [X, Y, Z, 1] * TM
$$

\n
$$
(eq. 01)
$$

Where W is the width of the image, H is the height of the image, Px / Py are the 2D coordinates of the object being tracked, FL is the focal length of the camera and TM is the 4x4 transform matrix of the 3D camera. It is comprised of 4 components, 3 vectors representing the X, Y and Z axis of the camera and a 4th component for the position of the camera. These are denoted as X, Y, Z and P in the matrix above. Pg is multiplied by TM yielding the transformed 3D position of the tracked pixel in the computer environment a ray is generated at the origin of the 3D camera with a direction pointing from the camera origin through the solved location of the tracked pixel. That ray is traced through the scene until it intersects with the geometry of the ground resulting in a 3D point at that location.

7. Adjusting the Position Along the Ray Trace

Since the ray trace produces a point on the ground, this point must be adjusted to properly reflect were along the line the actual object being tracked would be located. In the case of the bicycle, the height of the rider's head of the ground was measured at 5.3' feet. Using the following equation, the actual transformed position of the tracked pixel was adjusted along the line and properly located in the 3D environment.

$$
P = V \cdot \left(\frac{H}{V \cdot N}\right) + \text{Pg}
$$
\n
$$
(eq. 02)
$$

Where Pg is the ground point, V is the normalized vector from Pg to the camera, N is the normalized surface normal off the ground at Pg and H is the height of the object off the ground.

8. Comparison to VBOX Tacking

Since the pixel coordinates are transformed to a 3D environment, a matrix can be created for each position at each frame, and the velocity and acceleration of the object in 3D space then plotted. [Figure 15](#page-5-0) is a graph of the velocity of the car as it makes a turn through the intersection. Velocity is represented in the Y axis in miles per hour, and the X axis represents time in seconds. In this figure, the tracking from the 2D transformation process is overlaid on the VBOX data. Since the VBOX recorded more movement of the car than is represented in the video frames, the start and end of the 2D tracked velocities are shorter than the VBOX. The 2D tracked velocity closely matches the VBOX velocity. As shown in this figure the speeds calculated have at the highest, a difference of about 0.8 mph.

Figure 15. Graph of velocity from the tracking of #6 passenger car turning

The velocities for each of the 2D tracked runs were compared to their respective VBOX recordings. [Figures 16](#page-5-1), [17,](#page-6-0) [18](#page-6-1), [19,](#page-6-2) [20](#page-6-3), [21](#page-6-4) show comparisons of the other 5 scenarios. In [Figure 16,](#page-5-1) one particular section shows misalignment between the tracked velocity and the VBOX data. This is discussed further in the results and summary sections, but worth pointing out as an anomaly. In the video, a bump can be seen occurring at this point in time for the back end of the baby stroller. This bump was not recorded in the VBOX, but manifested as an increase in velocity for the 2D tracked pixel. Since the anomaly is visible in the video, this short section can be ignored by visually analyzing the video and comparing what is observed relative to the output of velocities in the graphs. This area is circled in orange.

Figure 16. Graph of velocity from #1-baby stroller

Figure 17. Graph of velocity from #2-bicycle straight

Figure 18. Graph of velocity from #3-bicycle turning

Figure 19. Graph of velocity from #4-car constant speed

Figure 20. Graph of velocity from #5-car starting from a stop

Figure 21. Graph of velocity from #7-pedestrian walking

Results

The speeds of walking, biking, and driving from both the VBOX and the video were compared directly to one another. This was done by outputting the numerical values of the speeds for each scenario and then calculating the acceleration between every two adjacent data points. If this acceleration was larger than one G (32.2 ft/sec²) the data was excluded. The one G limit was chosen because accelerations larger than one G for the given scenarios are highly unlikely. The sample rate of the Video data was 60Hz and the VBOX was 20Hz, this allowed for a direct comparison of every third sample of the Video Data. This method developed speeds with close representation to the VBOX recorded speed. [Table 3](#page-7-5) shows the calculated error range for each scenario at any given speed.

Table 3. Error in speed

Summary

While the results of the process described in this paper aligned well with the VBOX data, a visual analysis of the video in relation to the data should also be undertaken, since some anomalies observed in the tracking process can easily be explained when watching the video. Large changes in velocity over short times caused by bumps in the surface of the walking/biking/driving path can, through common sense, be found to be unreasonable for use in calculating overall speeds and should be excluded. These bumps are not reflected in the GPS data because of the small changes in the vertical direction over a short time. Making these exclusions reduces the possible difference in speeds from a possible 50% (in the pedestrian tests) to the reported values in [Table 3](#page-7-5). These values reflect the greatest difference in speed compared to the VBOX and are examining steady state motion of the object being tracked.

Aside from these results, there were some issues related to performing this process. Because the 2D transformation component of this process requires their be an angle between the camera, object being tracked and the ground behind the object, this process is best suited to cameras that are elevated, such as surveillance cameras or in dash cameras on taller vehicles. If for instance, the object being tracked is the same height off the ground as the camera, since there is no ground upon which to trace a ray from the camera, there could be no solution for determining the pixels location. A stationery camera is certainly the easiest condition for tracking objects in video, though a moving camera, such as mounted on a vehicle, or a rotating surveillance camera, could still work in this process assuming that the cameras position and orientation are properly camera matched for each position that the camera changes. This is, again, because video is a series of single frames, and for each frame that is camera matched the position of the target can then be tracked as described in this paper. For accident reconstruction purposes, there are errors present in digital video such as lens distortion, and potential errors from these sources have been discussed and quantified in other publications [\[9\]](#page-8-3), though accounting for these potential errors is important to ensure the most accurate results.

Another issue that arose, and was represented in slight acceleration and deceleration shifts as seen in [Figures 16,](#page-5-1) occurred when the stroller wheels hit a bump in the road. In this event the 2D tracked pixel would appear to move rapidly up and down for a short period of time (about 1 second). When transformed to the 3D scene, this bump would translate in a lateral position on the road, that would increase

and decrease speed. For this reason, it is important to visually review the video when applying the tracking process. If, when the data is output from the track, a sudden, and unexpected acceleration or deceleration is observed, the video should also be analyzed. Looking closely at the frames, it can be determined if this shift is explained by an artifact such as a bump in the road, rather than an actual acceleration or deceleration in real life. If it is an artifact of a bump, this particular section of the data could be modified to better transition between the other sections of the data where there is higher confidence in the velocity that resulted from the tracking.

The same process discussed in this paper would be valid for any instance of digital video, provided an analysis of the frame rate and playback rate of the digital video was considered, and other potential distortion or artifacts that might be inherit in the camera system are also analyzed [[9](#page-8-3)].

Because the tracking of the pixel relies on the ability of the program to distinguish the selected pixel from other pixels, the contrast between the pixel of interest and the surrounding pixels must be maintained. If the contrast of the pixel being tracked is not distinguishable from other pixels, there would be gaps in the tracking. These gaps could be accounted for by assuming a constant change between tracked areas in the absence of other information, but the length of the gap would have an increasing effect on the ramifications of such an assumption.

The tracking process focuses on recording the position of only one pixel. For situations where the speed and position is required of an object in the video that is not rigid, multiple pixels would likely need to be tracked. For instance, in the movement of a person in video, where arms swing, and legs move, individual parts could be tracked to obtain the results needed. Likewise, if the operator of a vehicle moves independent of the vehicle itself, care needs to be taken in which pixel is being tracked to ensure the speed and position is being reported for the correct object of interest.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A

The Engineering Meetings Board has approved this paper for publication. It has successfully completed SAE's peer review process under the supervision of the session organizer. The process requires a minimum of three (3) reviews by industry experts.

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ISSN 0148-7191