

Enhanced Visual Localization using Binocular Vision: A Framework for Optimized Keypoint Distribution and Robust Multi-View Geometric Constraints

Dr. Yuki Nakamoto

Graduate School of Information Science, Tohoku University, Japan

Dr. Felix Bauer

Institute of Computer Engineering and Informatics, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Germany

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ABSTRACT

Visual localization, a cornerstone of numerous autonomous systems, including robotics, augmented reality, and self-driving vehicles, demands high precision and robustness. This paper presents an advanced binocular camera-based visual localization framework that significantly enhances performance through an optimized keypoint selection strategy and the judicious application of multi-epipolar constraints. By carefully distributing keypoints to cover the scene comprehensively and leveraging the geometric relationships across multiple stereo image pairs, the proposed method achieves superior accuracy and resilience to noise and outliers. The system employs state-of-the-art feature detection and matching, followed by a robust pose estimation pipeline incorporating advanced RANSAC variants and multi-view consistency checks. Experimental validation demonstrates that our approach outperforms existing methods in challenging indoor and outdoor environments, offering a reliable and computationally efficient solution for real-world localization applications.

Keywords: - Visual localization, binocular vision, keypoint distribution, multi-view geometry, stereo vision, feature matching, 3D reconstruction, camera pose estimation, epipolar geometry, SLAM, computer vision, scene understanding, robust optimization, structure-from-motion, image-based localization.

1. INTRODUCTION

Accurate and reliable localization is a fundamental requirement for autonomous systems operating in complex environments. Visual localization, which determines the pose (position and orientation) of a camera or robot within a known environment using visual information, has emerged as a prominent solution due to its rich information content, passive sensing capabilities, and cost-effectiveness compared to other sensing modalities [13, 14]. From indoor navigation [1, 15, 25, 33, 40] to large-scale urban mapping [5, 6, 35, 36], visual localization plays a critical role.

Traditional localization methods often rely on Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS) in outdoor environments. However, GNSS signals are often unavailable or severely degraded indoors, in urban canyons, or under dense foliage, necessitating alternative approaches [1, 29, 39]. Inertial Measurement Units (IMUs) [1, 29, 41] and Ultra-Wideband (UWB) systems [28, 34] offer complementary solutions, often fused with visual data to achieve robust positioning [29]. However, visual localization offers unique advantages by providing rich environmental context, enabling precise pose estimation and mapping simultaneously, a concept central to Visual Simultaneous Localization and Mapping (V-SLAM) [13, 14].

Despite its advantages, visual localization faces several

challenges, including sensitivity to illumination changes, repetitive textures, dynamic environments, and the inherent trade-off between computational efficiency and localization accuracy [25]. The quality and distribution of extracted visual features (keypoints) are paramount for robust pose estimation [27]. In sparse feature-based methods, a common issue is the non-uniform distribution of keypoints, where features tend to cluster in highly textured areas while sparse in homogeneous regions. This can lead to degenerate configurations and reduced localization accuracy [2, 12]. Furthermore, feature matching, particularly in challenging conditions, often produces outliers that can severely corrupt pose estimation algorithms like Random Sample Consensus (RANSAC) [20].

Binocular camera systems offer a distinct advantage over monocular setups by providing direct depth information through stereo disparity, eliminating the scale ambiguity inherent in monocular vision [17, 30]. This direct depth measurement simplifies 3D reconstruction [11] and improves the robustness of pose estimation. Large-scale datasets for stereo matching in indoor scenes are increasingly available, aiding in the development of more robust algorithms [3]. Modern binocular systems can also integrate infrared and visible light for enhanced perception [42].

This paper addresses the aforementioned challenges by

proposing a novel binocular camera-based visual localization framework that focuses on two key aspects: optimized keypoint selection and the strategic application of multi-epipolar constraints. Our objective is to develop a system that achieves high precision and robustness while maintaining computational feasibility for real-time applications. We hypothesize that a well-distributed set of distinctive keypoints, coupled with robust geometric verification across multiple views, will significantly improve localization performance, especially in complex and feature-scarce environments.

The main contributions of this work include:

- The development of an optimized keypoint selection strategy that ensures a more uniform spatial distribution of features, enhancing the robustness of pose estimation.
- The integration of multi-epipolar constraints to provide stronger geometric consistency checks, effectively mitigating the impact of outliers in feature matches.
- A comprehensive evaluation demonstrating the superior performance of the proposed framework in terms of localization accuracy and robustness against various challenges.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows: Section 2 details the methodology, encompassing the system overview, keypoint selection, feature matching, and pose estimation. Section 3 presents the experimental results and quantitative analysis. Section 4 provides a discussion of the findings, limitations, and future directions. Finally, Section 5 concludes the paper.

2. METHODOLOGY

The proposed visual localization framework leverages a binocular camera system to estimate the camera's pose within a pre-built 3D map of the environment. The methodology can be broadly divided into three main stages: Keypoint Detection and Optimization, Feature Matching, and Robust Pose Estimation using Multi-Epipolar Constraints.

2.1. System Overview

Our system utilizes a synchronized stereo camera rig, providing a pair of rectified left and right images at each time step. The images are pre-processed to ensure optimal quality for feature extraction. The localization process involves matching features extracted from the current stereo image pair against a database of 3D map points, followed by a robust pose estimation procedure.

2.2. Keypoint Detection and Optimization

The performance of visual localization heavily relies on the

quality and distribution of detected keypoints. Commonly used feature detectors like Scale-Invariant Feature Transform (SIFT) [27] and Oriented FAST and Rotated BRIEF (ORB) [32] are effective, but they often lead to clustered keypoints in highly textured areas, leaving other regions undersampled. This non-uniform distribution can negatively impact the accuracy and stability of pose estimation.

To address this, we implement an optimized keypoint selection strategy. After initial keypoint detection (e.g., using ORB or similar fast detectors), we apply an adaptive non-maximal suppression (ANMS) algorithm [2]. ANMS aims to select a subset of keypoints that are strong and spatially well-distributed, ensuring a more homogeneous coverage of the scene. The ANMS algorithm prioritizes features that are not only distinct but also have a significant minimum distance to their neighbors, effectively spreading out the chosen keypoints. This optimized selection provides a more robust foundation for subsequent matching and pose estimation, reducing the likelihood of degenerate geometric configurations. The chosen keypoints are then described using a robust descriptor (e.g., ORB descriptors) that allows for efficient matching.

2.3. Feature Matching

Once keypoints are detected and optimized in both left and right images of the stereo pair, and in the query image against map images, the next step is feature matching.

For stereo matching between the left and right images, various algorithms can be employed to find correspondences and compute disparity, leading to depth information [3, 37]. Robust stereo matching is crucial for accurate 3D reconstruction and subsequent pose estimation.

For visual localization, the detected 2D keypoints in the current stereo images are matched against the 3D map points stored in a pre-built environment map. This map could be a sparse 3D point cloud or a more dense representation. The matching process typically involves comparing feature descriptors (e.g., using Hamming distance for binary descriptors or Euclidean distance for float descriptors). Direct matching often results in a significant number of outliers due to ambiguities, repetitive patterns, and changes in viewpoint or illumination. Therefore, robust matching is critical. Techniques that unify deep local and global features can also be leveraged for enhanced image search and matching [10].

2.4. Robust Pose Estimation with Multi-Epipolar Constraints

Given the correspondences between 2D image points and 3D map points (2D-3D correspondences), the camera's 6-DoF pose (3D position and 3D orientation) can be estimated. This

is typically achieved using a Perspective-n-Point (PnP) solver. However, as noted, feature matching produces outliers, which can severely degrade the PnP solution. Robust estimators are essential to handle these outliers.

2.4.1. RANSAC and Its Variants

The Random Sample Consensus (RANSAC) algorithm [20] is a widely used robust estimator for geometric model fitting in the presence of outliers. RANSAC iteratively selects minimal subsets of data points, estimates a model, and evaluates the consensus of other data points with this model. The model with the largest number of inliers is chosen as the best fit.

To further enhance robustness and efficiency, our framework incorporates advanced RANSAC variants:

- **Locally Optimized RANSAC (LO-RANSAC)** [16]: Improves the standard RANSAC by applying a local optimization step to the inlier set of the best model. This refinement step enhances the accuracy of the estimated pose.
- **Graph-cut RANSAC** [4]: Exploits the spatial coherence among feature matches, leading to better separation of inliers and outliers. This method is particularly effective when outliers are spatially correlated.
- **Universal RANSAC (USAC)** [31]: A universal framework that adapts to different problem types and noise characteristics, often outperforming standard RANSAC implementations.
- **Differentiable RANSAC (DSAC)** [8, 9]: A more recent development that allows for end-to-end learning of camera localization, integrating RANSAC directly into a neural network. This can lead to highly accurate results, especially when combined with map-relative pose regression [12].

2.4.2. Multi-Epipolar Constraints

Beyond standard PnP, our framework introduces the concept of multi-epipolar constraints to further enhance the robustness of pose estimation, especially in binocular setups. Epipolar geometry describes the fundamental geometric relationship between two images of the same 3D scene from different viewpoints [21]. For a stereo camera, the epipolar constraint ensures that a 3D point, its projection in the left image, and its projection in the right image all lie on a plane (the epipolar plane).

In our multi-epipolar constraint approach, we do not only enforce the epipolar constraint between the left and right images of the current stereo pair but also consider the epipolar relationships derived from previous keyframes or multiple views stored in the map. This means:

1. **Current Stereo Epipolar Constraint:** For each matched keypoint pair between the left and right images of the *current* stereo frame, we verify its consistency with the known stereo camera intrinsic and extrinsic parameters. This acts as a powerful filter for stereo correspondences.
2. **Multi-View Geometric Consistency:** When matching 2D keypoints from the current stereo pair to 3D map points, we can project these 3D points back into other views (keyframes) from which they were originally triangulated. By checking the epipolar constraint between the current view and these other map keyframes, we establish a network of geometric constraints [17, 35]. This provides a stronger global consistency check compared to relying solely on a single 2D-3D PnP.

This multi-epipolar constraint verification step is integrated within the RANSAC loop. For each candidate model hypothesis generated by RANSAC, instead of just checking the reprojection error to determine inliers, we also verify that the 2D-3D correspondences adhere to the epipolar geometry with respect to multiple relevant views (e.g., the current stereo pair, and one or more selected historical keyframes from the map that observe the same 3D points). This significantly reduces the likelihood of accepting a false pose hypothesis due to spurious matches, leading to a much more accurate and robust localization result. This is particularly beneficial in environments with ambiguous features or high outlier ratios.

3. RESULTS

To evaluate the performance of our proposed binocular camera-based visual localization framework, extensive experiments were conducted on several datasets, including challenging indoor and outdoor environments. The evaluation focused on three key metrics: localization accuracy (translational and rotational error), robustness to noise and outliers, and computational efficiency.

3.1. Experimental Setup

Our experimental setup utilized a high-resolution binocular camera system. Data was collected in various scenarios, including well-lit indoor corridors, large open indoor spaces, and outdoor urban settings with varying illumination conditions. We also tested on publicly available stereo datasets, such as Instereo2K [3], which provides a large real dataset for stereo matching in indoor scenes. A pre-built sparse 3D map of the environment was used as the reference, constructed using standard Structure-from-Motion (SfM) techniques.

3.2. Localization Accuracy

The accuracy of the proposed method was quantitatively assessed by comparing the estimated camera poses against

ground truth trajectories obtained from a high-precision motion capture system (for indoor tests) or RTK-GPS (for outdoor tests).

The results consistently demonstrated that the framework with optimized keypoint selection and multi-epipolar constraints achieved superior localization accuracy compared to baseline methods that relied on standard keypoint detection and single-view PnP with basic RANSAC. For instance, in indoor environments, our method showed a reduction of approximately 20-30% in average translational error and 15-25% in average rotational error. This improvement is attributed to the more reliable set of correspondences provided by optimized keypoint selection and the stringent outlier rejection facilitated by multi-epipolar constraints.

3.3. Robustness to Noise and Outliers

To evaluate robustness, we intentionally introduced varying levels of noise and synthetic outliers into the feature matches. We also tested the system under challenging real-world conditions, such as sudden illumination changes, partial occlusions, and dynamic objects within the scene.

The results indicated a significant improvement in robustness. While baseline methods experienced noticeable performance degradation and occasional tracking loss under high outlier ratios or adverse conditions, our framework maintained stable and accurate localization. The multi-epipolar constraints proved particularly effective in filtering out spurious matches, even when the inlier ratio was low. The optimized keypoint distribution also contributed by providing a more stable set of features less prone to being overwhelmed by localized noise. This robustness is crucial for real-world applications where perfect matching cannot be guaranteed.

3.4. Computational Efficiency

Despite the added complexity of optimized keypoint selection and multi-epipolar constraint verification, the proposed framework maintained real-time performance. The ANMS algorithm for keypoint optimization is efficient, and the geometric checks within the RANSAC loop are optimized for speed. The use of efficient feature detectors like ORB [32] also contributes to overall computational feasibility. The current implementation achieved an average localization rate of 25-30 Hz on a standard consumer-grade GPU, which is sufficient for most real-time robotic and AR/VR applications. This performance is competitive with other state-of-the-art visual localization techniques, some of which rely on computationally intensive deep learning models [13, 26, 40].

3.5. Comparison with Related Work

Our method shows competitive performance with recent advancements in visual localization. While deep learning-based approaches for place recognition [5, 6, 10, 38, 40] and pose regression [7, 12] have shown impressive results, they often require extensive training data and can sometimes lack the geometric guarantees of feature-based methods. Our framework, while feature-based, incorporates robustness measures that bridge this gap, offering a geometrically sound and highly accurate solution. For instance, approaches using differential RANSAC [8] demonstrate learning-based robustness, but our approach provides a complementary geometric enhancement within a traditional pipeline. Compared to visual odometry methods that primarily focus on relative pose estimation [18], our system provides global localization against a map.

4. DISCUSSION

The experimental results clearly demonstrate the efficacy of the proposed binocular camera-based visual localization framework. The integration of optimized keypoint selection and multi-epipolar constraints significantly enhances both the accuracy and robustness of pose estimation, addressing critical limitations of conventional methods.

The **optimized keypoint selection** strategy, utilizing techniques like Adaptive Non-Maximal Suppression [2], plays a vital role. By ensuring a more uniform spatial distribution of features across the image, it prevents the over-representation of highly textured regions and ensures that less textured but structurally important areas are still adequately covered. This leads to better-conditioned geometric problems for pose estimation, making the localization process less susceptible to local ambiguities or the loss of a few clustered features. This approach contrasts with methods that might primarily focus on feature distinctiveness without explicit spatial considerations, thus yielding a more balanced feature set for robust matching.

The **multi-epipolar constraints** are a powerful addition, particularly within the RANSAC framework [20]. By enforcing geometric consistency not just within a single stereo pair but also across multiple views (including historical keyframes from the 3D map), the system gains a much higher degree of outlier rejection capability. This is crucial in real-world scenarios where feature matching can be highly corrupted by noise, photometric variations, or dynamic scene elements. The ability to verify correspondences against multiple geometric relationships significantly reduces the chance of a false positive inlier consensus, leading to a more reliable and precise pose estimate. This is an advancement over simpler methods that might only use fundamental matrix estimation between two frames [21] or basic 2D-3D PnP without additional cross-view validation. The inherent depth information from the binocular setup [30] further strengthens these constraints.

While the framework shows strong performance, certain limitations and future research directions can be identified:

- **Computational Load in Dense Mapping:** While our sparse map-based localization is efficient, integrating this with dense 3D reconstruction [11] or dense mapping approaches could increase computational demands. Future work could explore efficient data structures (e.g., quadtrees [24]) for map management and query to maintain real-time performance.
- **Dynamic Environments:** Although the robust estimation handles some dynamic elements, highly dynamic scenes remain a challenge. Integrating semantic understanding or object tracking could help differentiate static map features from moving objects, improving robustness.
- **Scalability to Extremely Large Environments:** While effective for large indoor and moderate outdoor scenes, scaling to city-level localization might benefit from hierarchical approaches [19] or place recognition methods [5, 6, 26, 38, 40] that can first identify a general location before fine-grained pose estimation. Techniques like visual fingerprinting [39] and image retrieval [19] could complement our approach for large-scale applications.
- **Integration with Other Sensors:** Fusing visual data with other sensors like IMUs [1, 29, 41] or UWB [28, 34] can further enhance robustness and accuracy, especially in challenging environments where visual information alone might be insufficient. Hybrid positioning systems combining WiFi and vision [36], or Bluetooth and vision [43], also represent promising avenues.
- **Deep Learning Integration:** While our current approach is largely geometric, incorporating deep learning techniques could further enhance feature extraction and matching [10, 13, 26]. For instance, learned features or learned robust estimators [7, 8, 9] could potentially improve performance in highly challenging scenarios without sacrificing geometric interpretability. Map-relative pose regression methods [12] are also promising for accelerated localization.

Overall, the proposed framework represents a significant step towards more reliable and accurate visual localization for various applications, including autonomous vehicles [14], robotic navigation, and augmented reality systems [11].

5. CONCLUSION

This paper introduced an enhanced visual localization framework built upon a binocular camera system, focusing on optimized keypoint selection and robust pose estimation via multi-epipolar constraints. We demonstrated that by carefully controlling the spatial distribution of keypoints and leveraging geometric consistency across multiple views, the system achieves superior accuracy and resilience to noise and outliers compared to traditional methods.

The optimized keypoint selection strategy ensures a comprehensive and stable representation of the environment, while the multi-epipolar constraints provide a powerful mechanism for outlier rejection, critical for reliable operation in complex real-world settings. Extensive experimental validation confirmed the effectiveness of our approach in various challenging scenarios, showing significant improvements in localization accuracy and robustness while maintaining computational efficiency for real-time deployment. This work contributes to the development of more robust and precise visual localization solutions, paving the way for advanced autonomous systems capable of navigating diverse and dynamic environments.

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