

FlowVelo: An image-based tool to automatically measure flow velocities

This program tracks flow velocities using image or frame sequences. It includes measuring the camera position and orientation (camera pose), automatic extraction of the water area for feature searching, particle detection and filtering, particle tracking and filtering and scaling the tracks to get flow velocities. Furthermore, a function is included to automatically co-register frames in case of camera movements.

Source code:

https://github.com/AnetteEltner/FlowVeloTool/python3_version

Requirements:

Python 3.6

Additional libraries:

- scipy 1.4.1
- scikit-learn 0.22.2
- scikit-image 0.16.2
- shapely 1.7.0
- imageio 2.8.0
- opencv-python 4.1.1.26
- seaborn 0.10.0
- matplotlib 3.2.0
- pytk 0.3.2
- pandas 1.0.1
- numpy 1.18.1

Running FlowVelo on Windows

- Install PyCharm
- In PyCharm:
 - Go to *File* → *Create New Project...*
 - Choose location to folder you like
 - Set Base interpreter to Python 3.6
 - Go to *File* → *Settings*
 - Go to *Project: "your chosen folder"*
 - Go to *Project Interpreter*
 - Go to *+*
 - Install libraries mentioned in requirements
- Download source code of FlowVeloTool from GitHub
- Unpack FlowVeloTool.zip and put all scripts including the tutorial folder into chosen location folder
- Open *GUL_FeatureDetectionTracking.py*
- There might be an issue with the screen resolution, hindering the visibility of the entire window. If this is the case, please lower the screen resolution.

Input data:

- Interior geometry of the camera. Minimum information needed is focal length in mm, sensor size in mm and sensor resolution in pixels. There is an example file *interiorGeometry.txt* in the tutorial data and corresponding explanation of parameters in *interiorGeometry_explained.txt*.
- Image coordinates (id,x,y) of Ground Control Points (GCPs used to estimate camera pose in pixels, starting at the top left corner of the image. There is an example file *markersGCPimg.txt* in the tutorial data. Locations of GCPs in the image are illustrated in *locationGCPs_frame3.jpg*. This information is not necessary if the exterior camera geometry is provided directly.
- Object space coordinates (ID,X,Y,Z) of GCPs used to estimate camera pose. There is an example file *markersGCPobj.txt* in the tutorial data. If no GCPs are given it is possible to set the exterior camera geometry directly, if it is known.
- 3D point cloud (X,Y,Z) of area of interest to define search area. There is an example file *3DmodelPointCloud.txt* in the tutorial data. If no point cloud is given, it is also possible to import a file containing the image coordinates of the search mask.
- Water level
- Folder with the image/frame sequence

Tutorial data:

FlowVeloTool.zip available at

<https://cloudstore.zih.tu-dresden.de/index.php/s/2XWTnzqCkoOJvkF>

For questions please contact: Anette.Eltner@tu-dresden.de

Short Guideline to estimate flow velocities:

1. Perform co-registration (stabilization) of frames, if camera has been moved during data acquisition:

Image-based flow velocity estimation

co-registration | flow velocity (I) | flow velocity (II) | flow velocity (III) | flow velocity (IV)

Perform co-registration of frames

Maximum number of keypoints (ORB): 1000

Octave level (AKAZE): 0.005

☐ Matching with ORB ☒ Feature matching 2sided

☒ Matching with AKAZE ☒ Register to first frame

Co-register frames

Accuracy co-registration

Template size for co-registration accuracy: 30

Accuracy co-registration

- “Maximum number of keypoints”; parameter to choose, when ORB option set as matching variant
- “Octave level”; parameter to choose, when AKAZE option is set as matching variant (mostly values between 0.02 to 0.005, the lower the value the more features are detected and the longer computation time will be)
- “Matching with ORB” if checked, uses ORB feature descriptor
- “Matching with AKAZE” if checked, uses AKAZE feature descriptor
- “Feature matching 2sided” check to increase robustness of matching, but also increases computation time
- “Register to first frame” if checked registers all frames of sequence to first frame of that sequence, if unchecked registers every new frame to previous frame of that sequence

2. Set parameters for flow velocity measurement

Image-based flow velocity estimation

co-registration flow velocity (I) flow velocity (II) flow velocity (III) flow velocity (IV)

Save parameter settings:

Load parameter settings:

☐ Test run?

Data input

Output directory:

Images directory:

GCP file (object space):

GCP file (image space):

Interior orientation file:

3D point cloud file:

Image file (for visualisation):

☐ Stay in image space

Exterior orientation

☒ Estimate exterior orientation

☒ Use RANSAC for exterior estimation

Approximate position:

Approximate orientation [rad]:

Unit GCPs [mm]:

- “Save parameter settings” / “Load parameter settings”: All parameters settings of the flow velocity tool can be saved and loaded (this can be for instance helpful if different parameter choices are tested to find the optimal one for tracking)
- “Convert video to frames”: If video file is available instead of single frames, video has to be converted first into frames, which can be done with the built-in option
- “GCP file (object space)”: ascii (txt-) file containing point id, X coordinate, Y coordinate, Z coordinate
- “GCP file (image space)”: ascii (txt-) file containing point id, x image coordinate (in pixels), y image coordinate (in pixels)
- “Interior orientation file”: ascii (txt-) file containing focal length, principle point, radial distortion parameters, tangential distortion parameters, affinity and shear parameters, sensor size and image resolution
- “3D point cloud file”: ascii (txt-) file containing coordinate X, coordinate Y, coordinate Z
- “Image file (for visualisation)”: Select image file (.img) in which results of feature detection and tracking will be displayed.

3. Set parameters for camera pose estimation:

- “Stay in image space”: if unscaled tracking results are sufficient, this option can be checked and therefore no information regarding the exterior orientation, water level and 3D point cloud file is needed
- “Unit GCPs”: Define the unit of the GCPs because all measurements in the FlowVelo-Tool are performed in mm (e.g. therefore also the interior camera geometry has to be provided in mm)
- “Estimate exterior orientation”: This parameter has to be checked if the camera pose estimation has to be performed using GCP coordinates measured in object space (e.g. with a total station) and measured in the images
- “Use RANSAC for exterior estimation”: To estimate the camera pose via spatial resection some approximate values of the camera orientation and position are needed. If this information is not provided, check “Use RANSAC for exterior estimation”. This option will also test if there might be outliers in the GCPs and if so, they will not be used for the pose estimation. If “Use RANSAC for exterior estimation” is not checked, you need to type in approximate values of the camera pose (“Approximate position” in X,Y,Z and “Approximate orientation” in omega,phi,kappa).
- Furthermore, it is possible to use a-priori known information of the camera pose only instead of using GCPs to define the exterior orientation. If this is the case, uncheck both “Estimate exterior orientation” and “Use RANSAC for exterior estimation” and type the exterior orientation parameters in the approximate position/orientation fields.

4. Set parameters for feature detection:

Image-based flow velocity estimation

co-registration flow velocity (I) flow velocity (II) flow velocity (III) flow velocity (IV)

Feature detection

☐ LSPIV ☒ PTV

Maximum number features: 1000

Minimum feature brightness: 70

Neighbor search radius: 30

Maximum number neighbors: 5

Sensitivity feature detection: 0.02

PIV cell width: 200

PIV cell height: 200

Feature tracking

☐ LK ☐ Initial Estimates LK ☒ NCC

Template width: 7

Template height: 7

Search area size x direction: 24

Search area size y direction: 24

Shift search area in x: 0

Shift search area in y: 8

☒ Subpix ☐ LSM ☒ Plot results ☒ Save gif

Iterations

FD every nth frame: 10

Track for n frames: 20

Track every nth frame: 2

- “LSPIV”: defines interrogation areas in a raster pattern, whose content is then tracked
- “PIV cell width”: define distance between center points of interrogation areas along x-axis, option for LSPIV
- “PIV cell height”: define distance between center points of interrogation areas along y-axis, option for LSPIV
- “PTV”: individual particles are detected, who are then tracked
- “Maximum number features”: Define maximum total number of detected good features to track, which will be kept for subsequent filtering steps
- “Minimum feature brightness”: Define the threshold for minimum brightness of a feature to be considered as particle for tracking. The higher the value is chosen, the brighter the feature has to be. Thus increasing this value leads to a decrease of detected features. Option for PTV.
- “Neighbor search radius”: Define the threshold for the radius (in pixels), in which nearest neighbours are searched for to perform the subsequent cluster filtering. The higher the value, the more features will be filtered as more features will be included in the next filtering step. Option for PTV.
- “Maximum number neighbors”: Define the threshold for how many neighbors are allowed within the previously defined neighbor search radius. The higher the value, the more features are kept. Option for PTV.
- “Sensitivity feature detection”: Define the quality level for features to be kept. It considers the quality measure defined by the minimal eigenvalue (corner score). The defined value will be multiplied with the corner score of the best feature and all features with scores below this product will be excluded. The higher the value is chosen, the less features will be detected. Option for PTV.

5. Set parameters for feature tracking:

Image-based flow velocity estimation

co-registration flow velocity (I) flow velocity (II) flow velocity (III) flow velocity (IV)

Feature detection

☐ LSPIV ☒ PTV

Maximum number features: 1000

Minimum feature brightness: 70

Neighbor search radius: 30

Maximum number neighbors: 5

Sensitivity feature detection: 0.02

PIV cell width: 200

PIV cell height: 200

Feature tracking

☐ LK ☐ Initial Estimates LK ☒ NCC

Template width: 7

Template height: 7

Search area size x direction: 24

Search area size y direction: 24

Shift search area in x: 0

Shift search area in y: 8

☒ Subpix ☐ LSM ☒ Plot results ☒ Save gif

Iterations

FD every nth frame: 10

Track for n frames: 20

Track every nth frame: 2

- “NCC”: Feature matching is performed with Normalized Cross Correlation.
- “LK”: Feature matching is performed with Lucas-Kanade approach.
- “Initial Estimate LK”: Check this option if LK should use the tracked position as approximate values for the matching in the next frame.
- “Template width”: Define the template width (length in x direction of the image). The size has to be odd and is defined in pixels. The wider the template, the longer the processing time but the smaller the chances for ambiguities.
- “Template height”: Define the template height (length in y direction of the image). The size has to be odd and is defined in pixels. The higher the template, the longer the processing time but the smaller the chances for ambiguities.
- “Search area size x direction”: Define the width of the search area (size in x direction) within which the template is moved to find the corresponding region (e.g. particle). The size is defined in pixels. The higher the value the longer the processing time and the higher the chances for ambiguities.
- “Search area size y direction”: Define the height of the search area (size in y direction) within which the template is moved to find the corresponding region (e.g. particle). The size is defined in pixels. The higher the value the longer the processing time and the higher the chances for ambiguities.
- “Shift search area in x”: Define the approximate flow speed (in pixels) in the x direction to improve matching chances. The higher the flow velocities are, the larger the shifts will be.
- “Shift search area in y”: Define the approximate flow speed (in pixels) in the y direction to improve matching chances. The higher the flow velocities are, the larger the shifts will be.
- “Subpixel”: Check this option if matching results refined to subpixel accurate positions are aimed for. This step comprises a weighted centroid fit to find the peak location.
- “LSM”: This option is still under development. Instead of NCC or LK, matching is performed via least square adjustment. Results are subpixel accurate positions.
- “Plot results”: Decide whether results will be plotted.
- “Save gif”: Decide whether tracking results will be saved in an animation.

6. Set parameters for repetition of feature detections and duration of feature tracking

Image-based flow velocity estimation

co-registration flow velocity (I) flow velocity (II) flow velocity (III) flow velocity (IV)

Feature detection		Feature tracking	
<input type="checkbox"/> LSPIV	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PTV	<input type="checkbox"/> LK	<input type="checkbox"/> Initial Estimates LK
Maximum number features:	1000	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NCC	
Minimum feature brightness:	70	Template width:	7
Neighbor search radius:	30	Template height:	7
Maximum number neighbors:	5	Search area size x direction:	24
Sensitivity feature detection:	0.02	Search area size y direction:	24
PIV cell width:	200	Shift search area in x:	0
PIV cell height:	200	Shift search area in y:	8
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Subpix	<input type="checkbox"/> LSM
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Plot results	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Save gif

Iterations

FD every nth frame:	10
Track for n frames:	20
Track every nth frame:	2

- “FD every nth frame”: Define after how many frames new features are detected.
- “Track for n frames”: Define across how many frames features are tracked.
- “Track every nth frame”: Define how many frames are to be skipped before next matching. For instance, to track features in every frame the value has to be 1, in every second frame 2, every third frame 3), and so on.

7. Set parameters for track filtering:

Image-based flow velocity estimation

co-registration flow velocity (I) flow velocity (II) flow velocity (III) flow velocity (IV)

☒ Only filter and scale tracks

Filtering tracks

Minimum count features [%]: 0

Minimum track distance [px]: 2

Maximum track distance [px]: 50

Steadiness [deg]: 25

Range track directions [deg]: 90

Bin nbr main flow direction: 0

Buffer main flow [deg]: 10

setValue velocity threshold: 1.5

setValue filter radius [pix]: 0

- “Only filter and scale tracks”: Choose this option if tracking has already been performed successfully and you want to re-adjust filtering options. If option is checked, press “Estimate flow velocity” button (frame “flow velocity (IV)”) and load “Tracking_FT_nbrFrames_*_FD_nbrFrames_*.txt” file.
- “Minimum count features”: Define across how many images a feature has to be tracked minimally to be considered as reliable track. The value is defined in percentage of the total traceable number (i.e. the “Track for n frames” value).
- “Minimum track distance”: Define the minimum distance (in pixels), which features have to move between consecutive frames (corresponding to the needed minimum length of a sub-track), thus the track will be considered as reliable track if all sub-tracks are above this threshold.
- “Maximum track distance”: Define the maximum distance (in pixels), which features have to move between consecutive frames (corresponding to the allowed maximum length of a sub-track), thus the track will be considered as reliable track if all sub-tracks are below this threshold.
- “Steadiness”: Define how strong features can change their direction (in degrees) from one frame to the next (value corresponds to maximum allowed standard deviation of directional changes of all sub-tracks of one track).
- “Range track directions”: Define the maximum range (in degrees) within sub-tracks of a track can change their direction.
- “Bin nbr main flow direction”: To be tested. Should be 0.
- “Buffer main flow”: Define how strong an entire track can deviate from the main flow direction (in degrees), which is calculated as average direction of all track directions.
- “setValue velocity threshold”: A statistical outlier filter; $threshold = mean + setValue * standard\ deviation$. Define the setValue to calculate a threshold above and below which features are removed. The higher the value, the more tracks are kept.
- “setValue filter radius [pix]”: for local outlier filter choose maximum radius within which features are considered for statistical filtering.

8. Set parameter to scale velocities:

Image-based flow velocity estimation

co-registration | flow velocity (I) | flow velocity (II) | flow velocity (III) | flow velocity (IV)

Scaling

Frame rate:

Define feature search area and set water level

Water level [m]: Buffer [m]:

☐ Import search area file ...

[Estimate Flow Velocity](#)

- “Frame rate”: Define the frame rate (in seconds) with which videos or images were captured.

9. Set parameters to define water area (feature search area) and set water level to correctly retrieve 3D coordinates of tracked features:

Image-based flow velocity estimation

co-registration | flow velocity (I) | flow velocity (II) | flow velocity (III) | flow velocity (IV)

Scaling

Frame rate:

Define feature search area and set water level

Water level [m]: Buffer [m]:

☐ Import search area file ...

[Estimate Flow Velocity](#)

- “Water level”: Define the water level (in m).
- “Buffer”: Define the buffer for the water level, which is needed in very complex terrain or when camera pose estimation is not very accurate to buffer the water-shore borders.
- “Import search area file”: If the feature search area is defined manually (e.g. in GIMP), provide a (e.g. binary) mask image of masked water area. The tool automatically derives the corresponding contour containing the image coordinates of the border of the mask (which is also saved as result).