

Deep Scene Understanding from Images

Matteo Poggi, Fabio Tosi, Pierluigi Zama Ramirez
Computer Vision Lab (CVLab), University of Bologna



6- Multiple Views and Motion

Summary of contents:

- **Multi-View Stereo depth estimation:**
basic concepts of Multi-View Stereo (MVS), plane-sweep algorithm, modern approaches (CNNs)
- **Estimating pixels motion (optical flow):**
introduction to optical flow, some classical algorithms, modern approaches (CNNs), supervised vs unsupervised optical flow networks

These slides contains a mini-survey on the two topics.

We will focus on the most important methods over which all the others are built upon, with these latter being reported for completeness



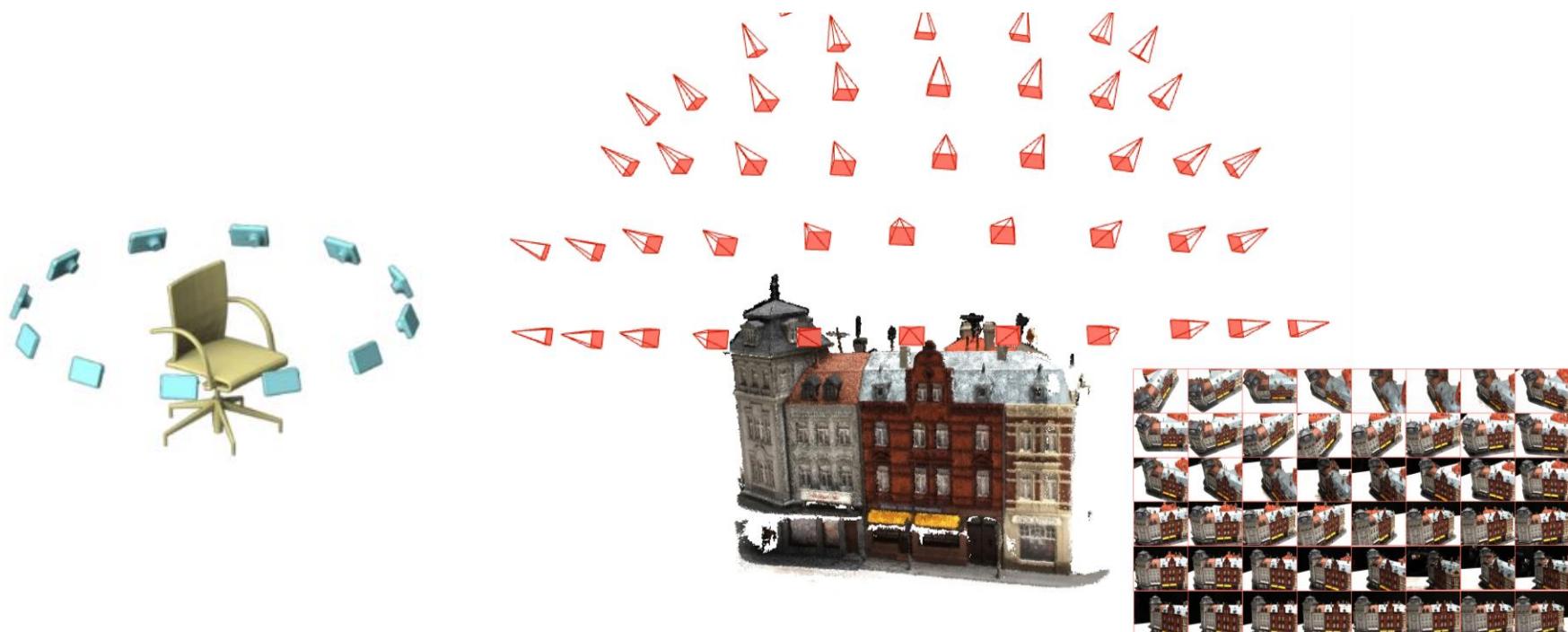
Student: "*What are the three most important problems in computer vision?*"

Takeo Kanade: "*Correspondence, correspondence, correspondence!*"

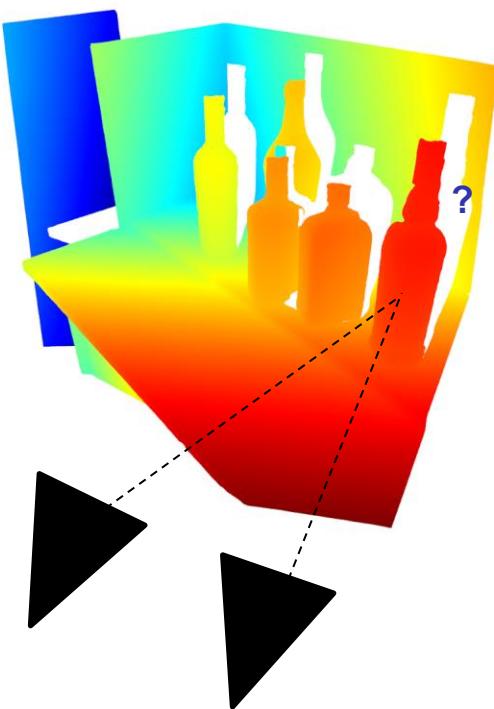
6.1- Multi-View Stereo

Multi-View depth estimation

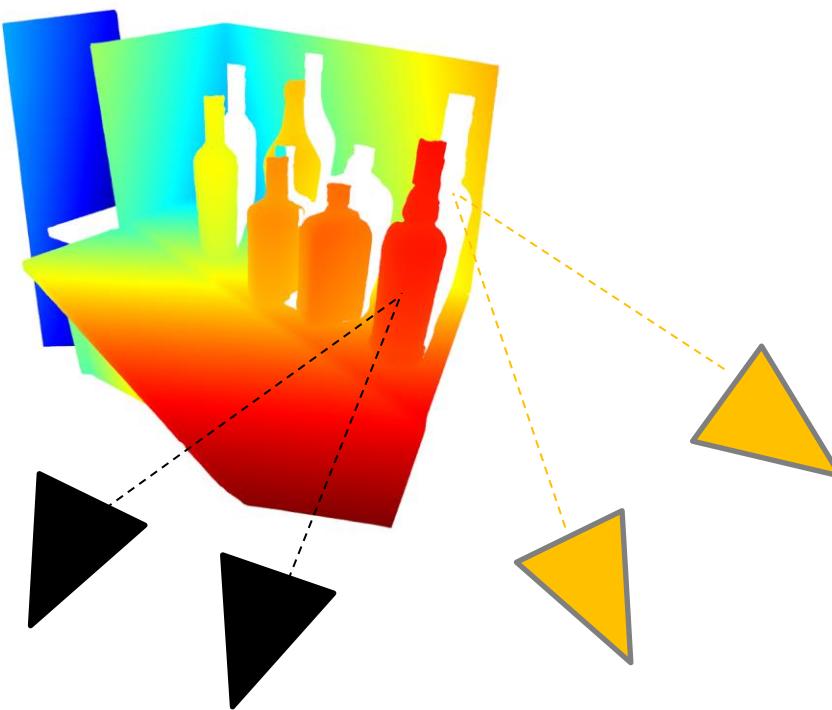
Collecting N images around the scene ($N \gg 2$), we can aim at full **3D reconstruction**.
This would not be possible with binocular stereo matching (no visibility behind objects, etc)



Multi-View depth estimation



Multi-View depth estimation



Multi-View depth estimation

Multi-View Geometry (MVG) is a wide research area in computer vision.

Given N images, we deal with different tasks according to what we already know:

- **Structure-from-Motion (SfM)**

We do not know either the camera position or the 3D structure of the scene. We aim at estimating both

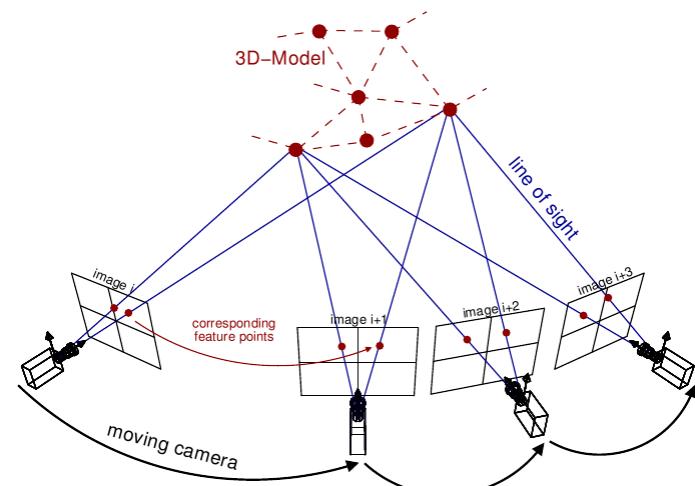
- **Multi-View Stereo (MVS)**

We know camera positions. We aim at estimating the 3D structure of the scene

- **Simultaneous Localization And Mapping (SLAM)**

We do not know either the camera position or the 3D structure of the scene. We aim at estimating both **in real-time**

- ...

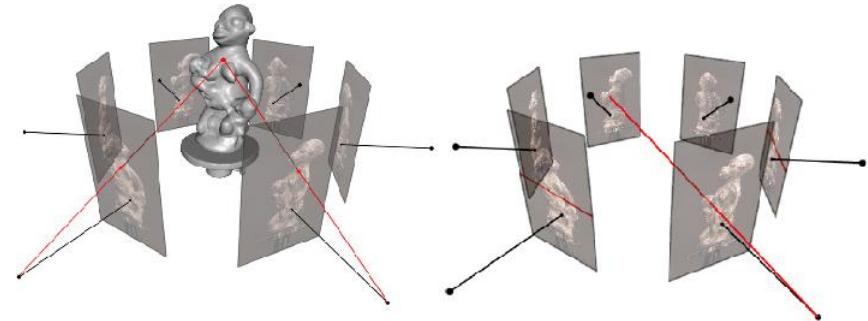


Multi-View depth estimation

We focus on **Multi-View Stereo** which is, on its own, a vast topic as well

In general, when dealing with MVS 3D reconstruction, three main categories of approaches exist:

- Direct point cloud reconstructions (3D points)
- Volumetric reconstructions (voxels)
- Depth map reconstructions



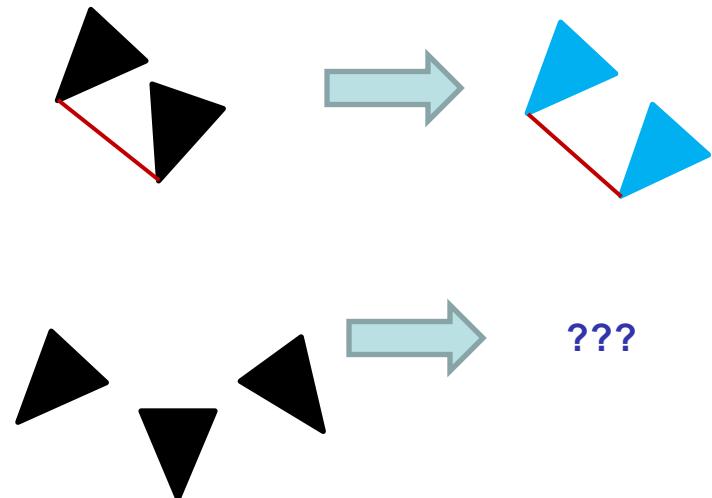
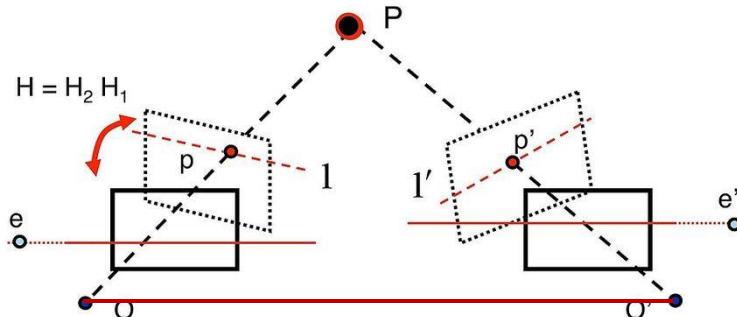
The latter consists into estimating N depth maps, one for each image in the set being assumed as **reference image**, and then fusing them for the final 3D reconstruction.

This results as the most scalable approach in terms of computational efforts – and closests to the others we have seen previously ☺

Multi-View depth estimation

Multi-View stereo depth estimation leverages **epipolar geometry** as well

However, in this case we cannot rectify images to obtain **horizontal epipolar lines**



Multi-View depth estimation

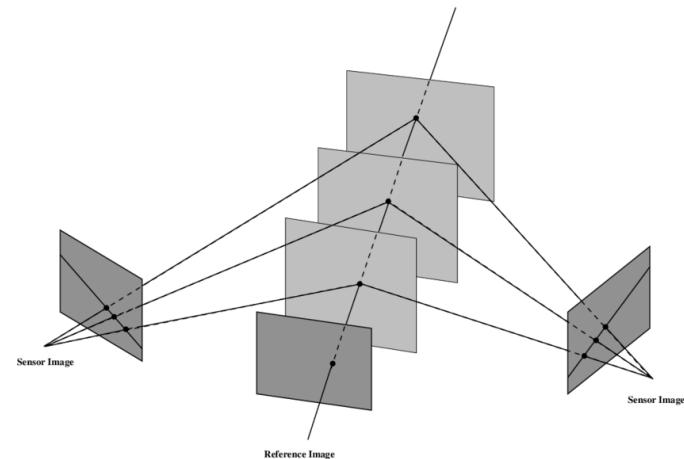
Why using **multiple** views ($N > 2$)? To reduce **ambiguity** and **occlusions** (when possible)



Multi-View depth estimation

Plane-sweep algorithm: by assuming that any 3D point in the scene lays on a plane distant d from the camera, we look for **correspondences** between pixels in the reference image and those along the **epipolar lines** in the target images

Stereo Matching algorithms are a particular case of the plane-sweep approach, for which epipolar lines are **horizontal**



A basic Multi-View Stereo algorithm can be implemented applying plane-sweep principles within the Semi-Global Matching pipeline (see [OpenMVS](#))

Multi-View depth estimation

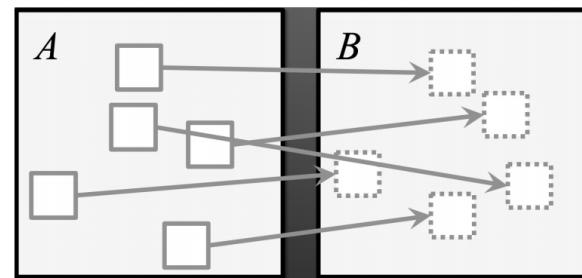
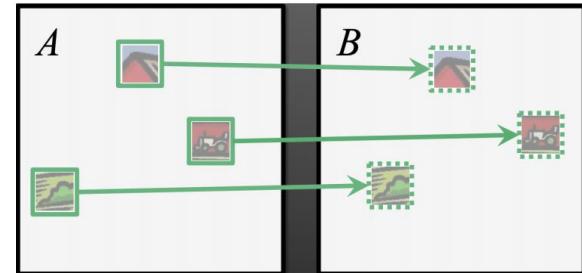
PatchMatch: randomized algorithm for matching patches across two images

According go the **law of large numbers**, a non-trivial subset of all the possible random assignments will be correct

Three steps:

- **Initialization** – assign random patches (**offsets**)
- **Propagation** – using spatial coherence (nearby patches in one image should match with nearby patches on the second one)
- **Random search** – search for a random offset near the best patch

Repeat steps 2, 3 until **convergence**



How can this work? Given M patches, chance of selecting correct patch $1/M$. Chance of selecting atleast one correct patch $p=1-(1-1/M)^M$ (for 100K patches, $p=\sim 0.74$). If we relax this to top C nearest neighbors, we get $1-(1-C/M)M$ (for $C=2$, $p=\sim 0.86$. For $C=3$, $p=\sim 0.95$)

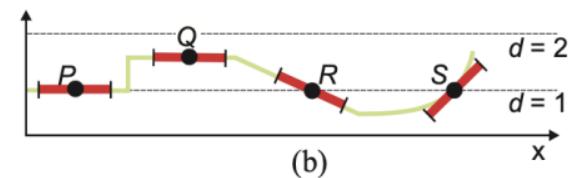
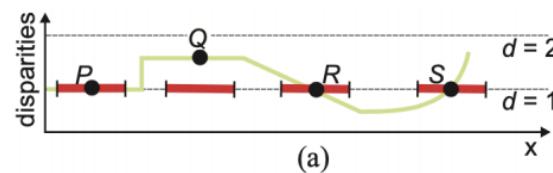
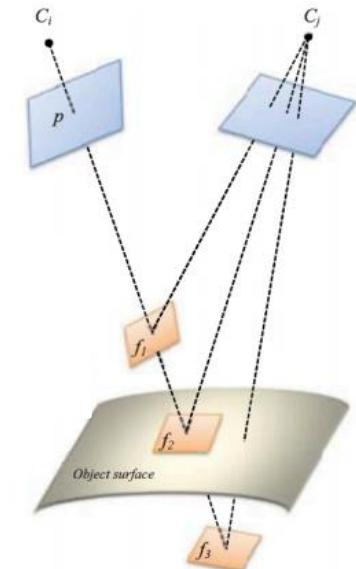
Multi-View depth estimation

PatchMatch Stereo: based on patchmatch.
Offset replaced by **depth** and **normals**

Assumption: the world is mostly made of **almost planar surfaces**

Three steps:

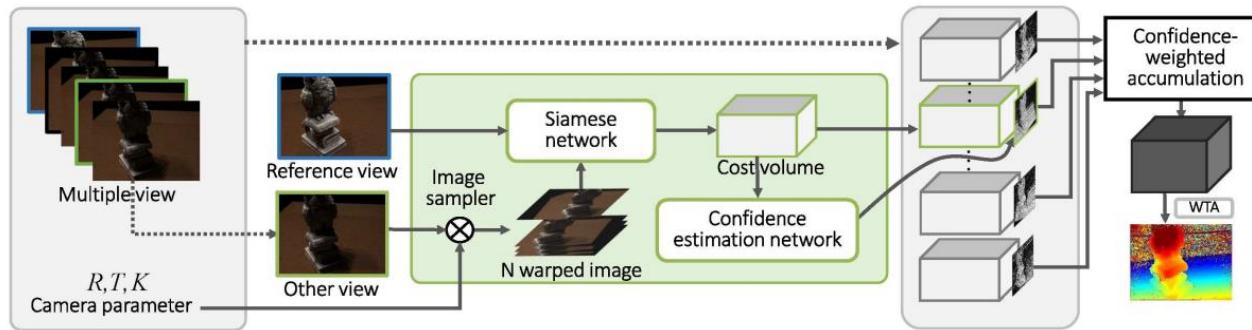
- **Initialization** – assign random depths and normals
- **Propagation** – using spatial coherence
- **Random search** – sample new random **depths** and **normals**,
refine initial estimate



Multi-View depth estimation

Given the analogies with binocular stereo, we may expect a similar trend in the literature :)

Early attempts aimed at learning how to match patches [1] across N views



Picture from [1]

For each image patch in the reference image, a number of patches are sampled from the N-1 remaining views along the **epipolar line**.

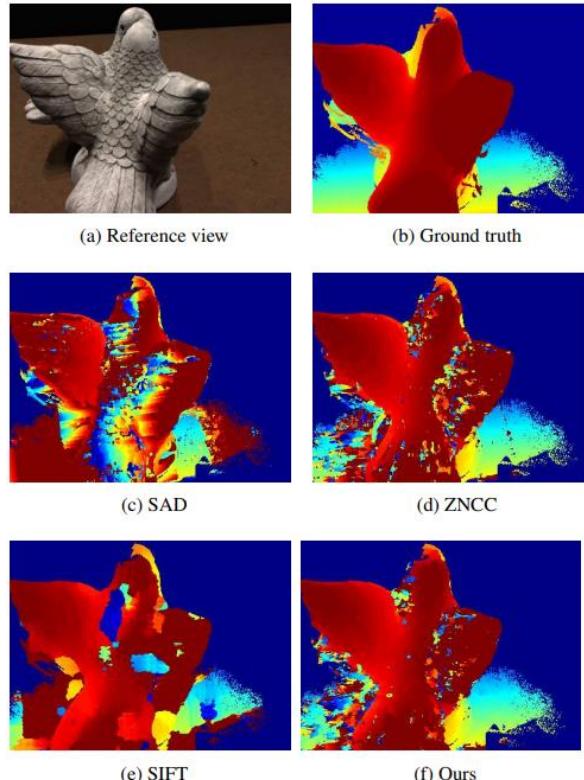
Two-view volumes are built from the reference image and any single remaining view. The N-1 volumes are accumulated by means of a weighted sum. The weights is given by the **confidence** estimated by a specific submodule.

Multi-View depth estimation

The learned matching function results more robust than hand-crafted alternatives

However, some outliers still remains, due to the high ambiguities which cannot be explained withing a local patch

To solve this, larger image content needs to be taken into account. Solution: **end-to-end networks!**

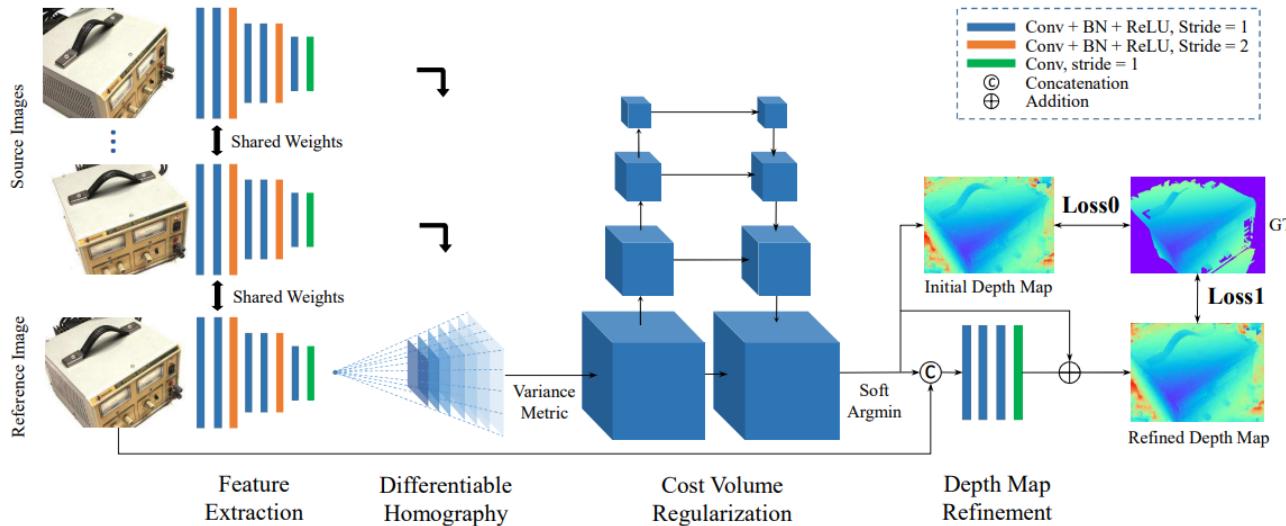


Picture from [1]

MVSNet [2]

First end-to-end multi-view depth estimation network. Very similar to **GCNet**. Four main modules:

- 1) Feature Extractor
- 2) Homography-based Cost Volume
- 3) Cost Volume Regularization
- 4) Depth Map Refinement

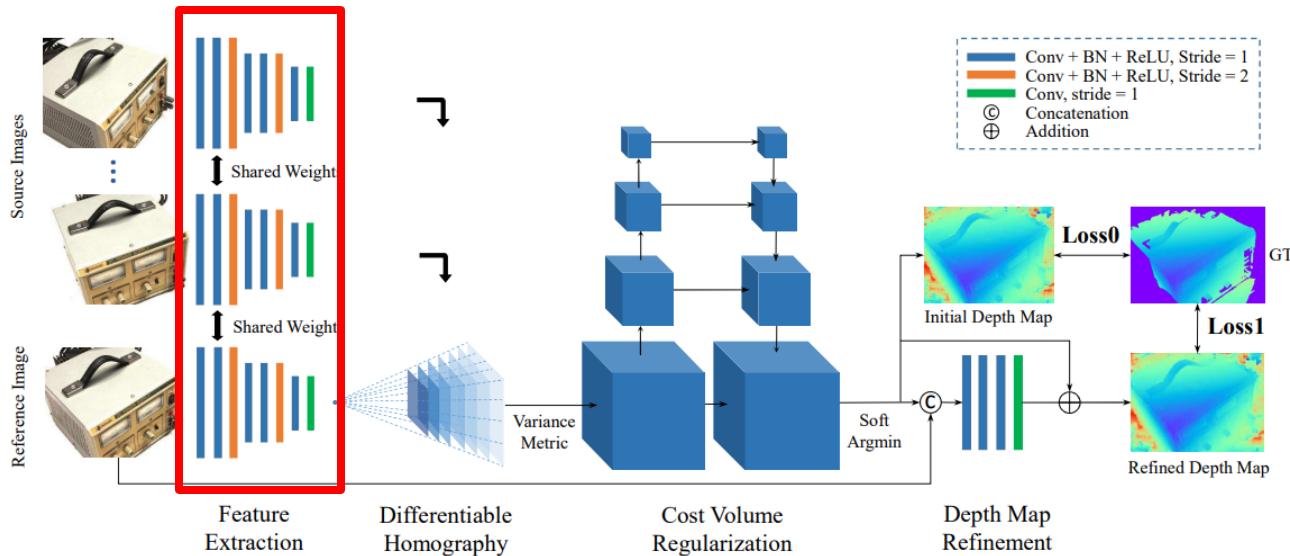


Picture from [2]

MVSNet [2]

Feature extractor

A 2D convNet extracting deep features at lower resolution (quarter), which will be used to measure pixels similarity. N instances are built to process N images (sharing the weights).

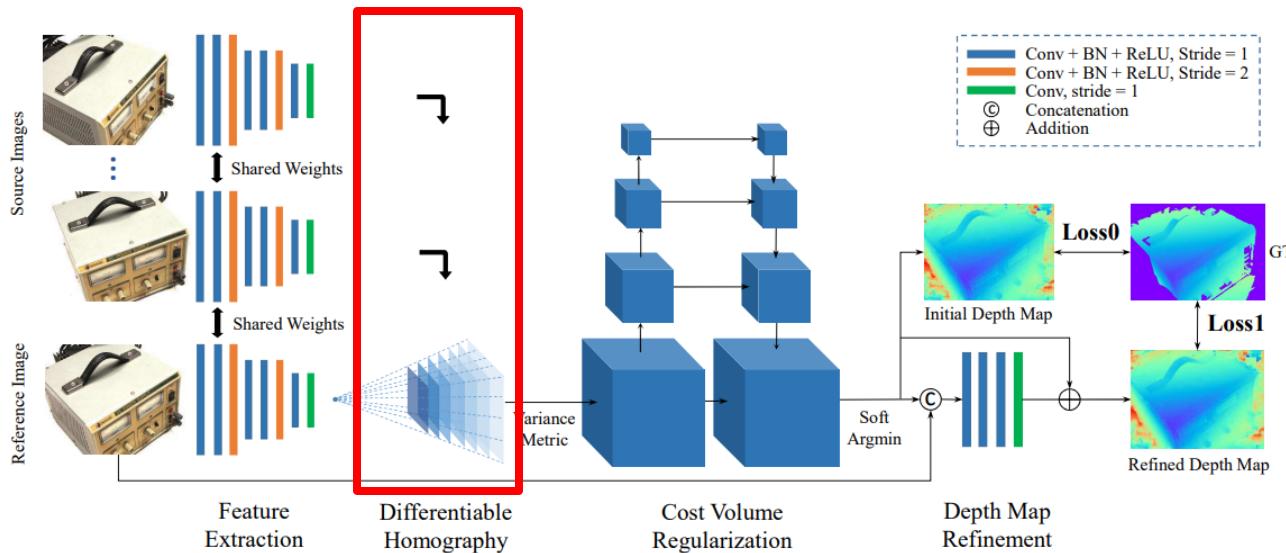


Picture from [2]

MVSNet [2]

Homography-based Cost Volume

A cost volume is built to measure pixels similarity. A single pixel in the reference image is compared to pixels in N-1 target views. Cost function: **features variance**



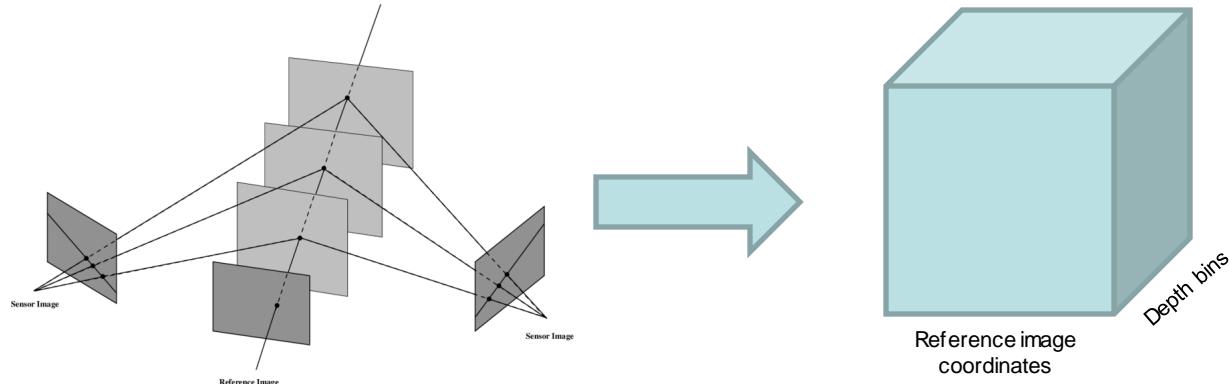
Picture from [2]

Multi-View depth estimation

By dividing the depth range into D **bins**, for any pixel in the reference image we recovered its corresponding pixels in the N-1 target views.

This can be done by applying D **homographies** to warp the target views (i.e., assuming pixels to lay on a set of D planes, defined by the depth bins themselves). This is equivalent to searching for corresponding pixels along **epipolar lines** in the target views. To measure the similarity between the pixel in the reference image and its D tuples of N-1 candidates, the **variance** on the N pixels is performed at any bin.

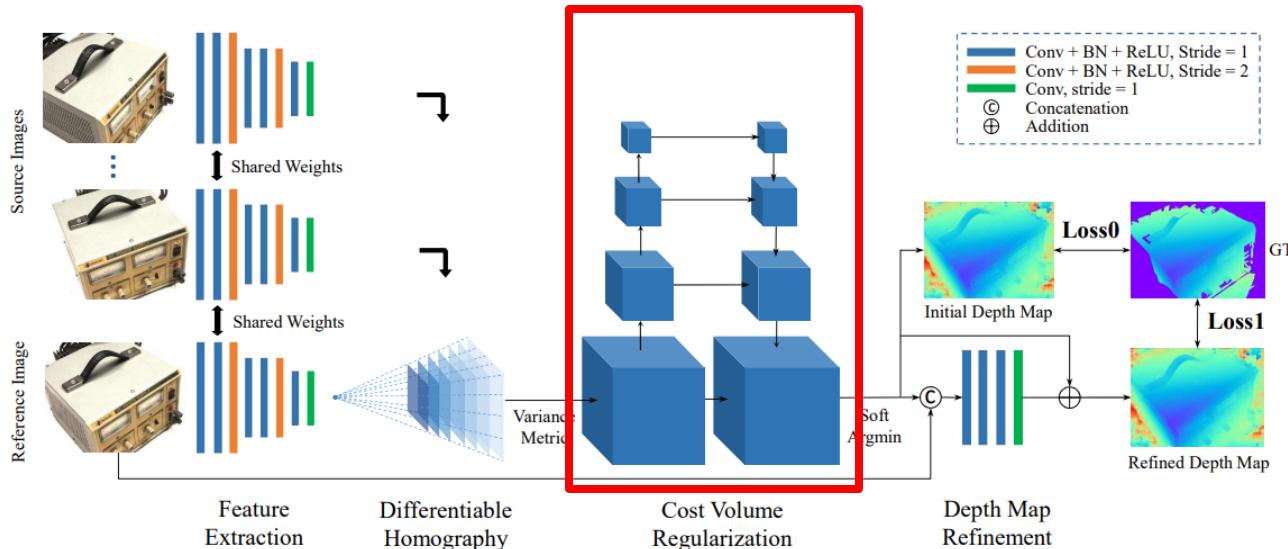
The bin with the lowest variance corresponds to the depth hypothesis being most likely to be correct.



MVSNet [2]

Cost Volume Regularization

A 3D convNet used to refine the cost volume, following UNet design. It requires **high** memory consumption and runtime. From the final output, an initial depth map is obtained through **soft argmin** (at quarter the input resolution)

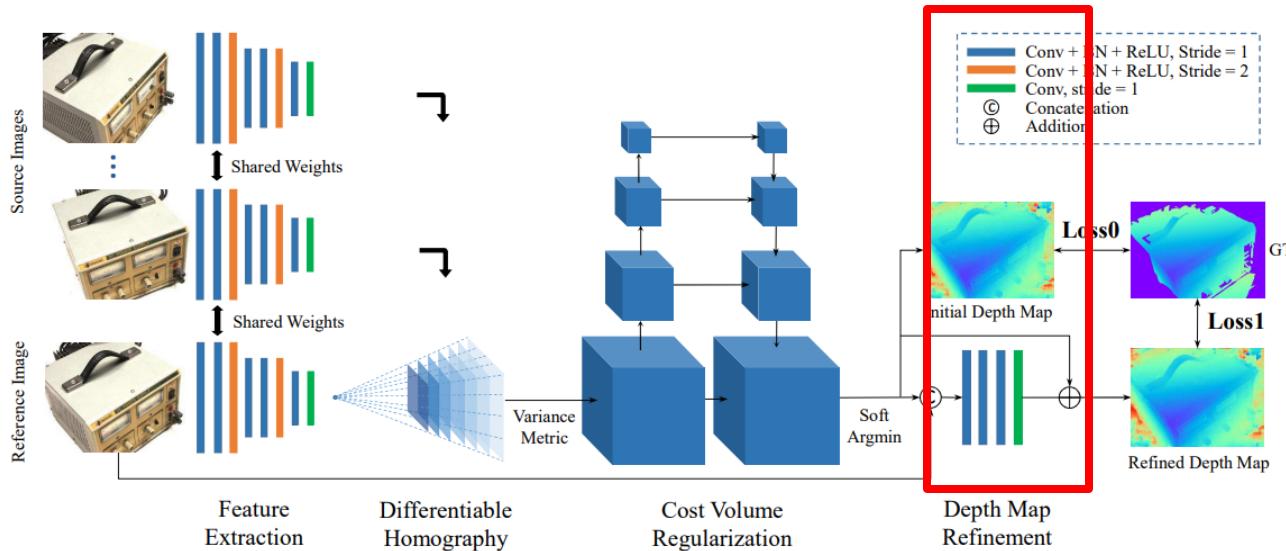


Picture from [2]

MVSNet [1]

Depth Map Refinement

A 2D convNet used to refine the initial depth map, by predicting a **residual** to be summed to the initial prediction.



Picture from [2]

MVSNet [2]

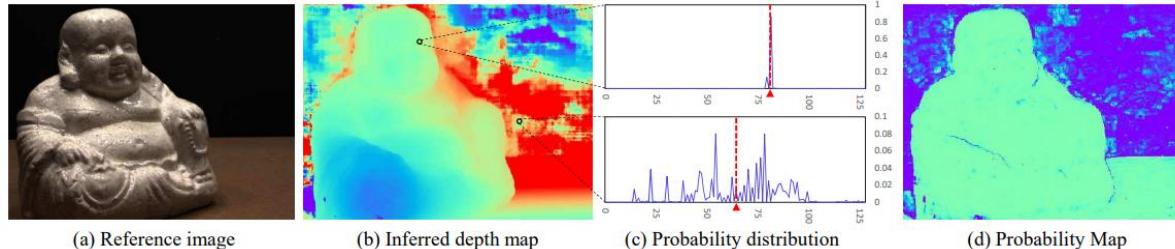
Loss function

The network is trained by minimizing both the difference between the initial and refined depth maps with respect to the ground-truth

$$Loss = \sum_{p \in \mathbf{p}_{valid}} \underbrace{\|d(p) - \hat{d}_i(p)\|_1}_{Loss0} + \lambda \cdot \underbrace{\|d(p) - \hat{d}_r(p)\|_1}_{Loss1}$$

Probability map (aka confidence)

From the 3D convNet output, a confidence map can be obtained by computing the **entropy** over the probability distribution used to obtain the initial depth map

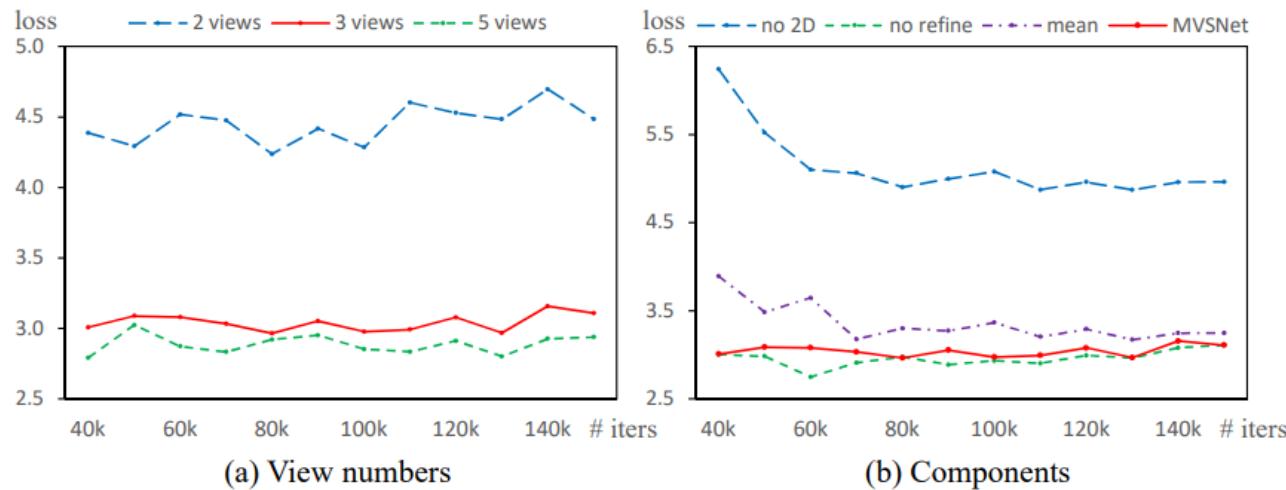


Picture from [2]

Multi-View depth estimation

Ablation experiments

- Left: Varying the number of input images has impact on the performance
- Right: The variance-based cost volume results better than possible alternatives such as patches mean. The refinement network has limited impact

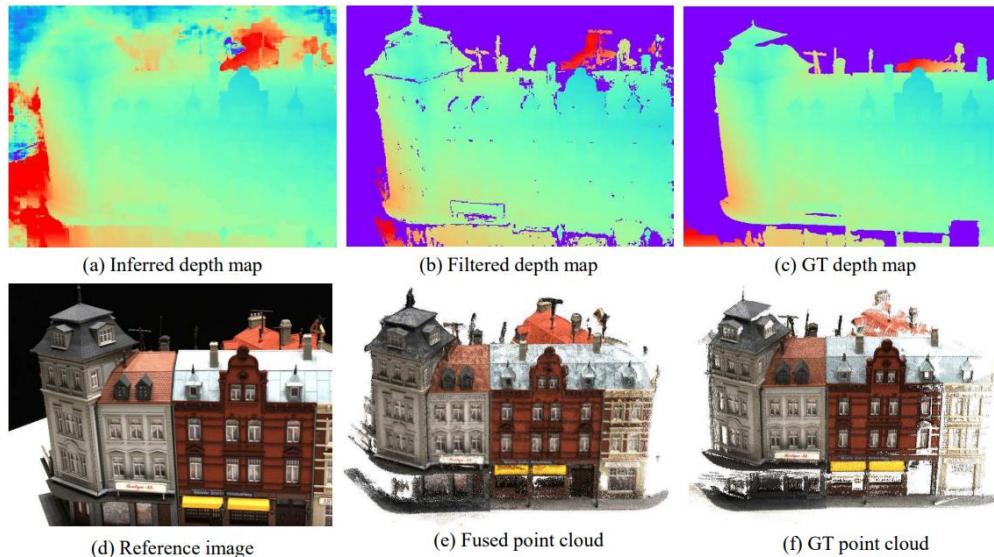


Picture from [2]

Multi-View depth estimation

Point cloud fusion

Once a depth map has been on any image assumed as reference, they can be fused to obtain a 3D point cloud by reasoning on **visibility** and **occlusions** [3]



Picture from [2]

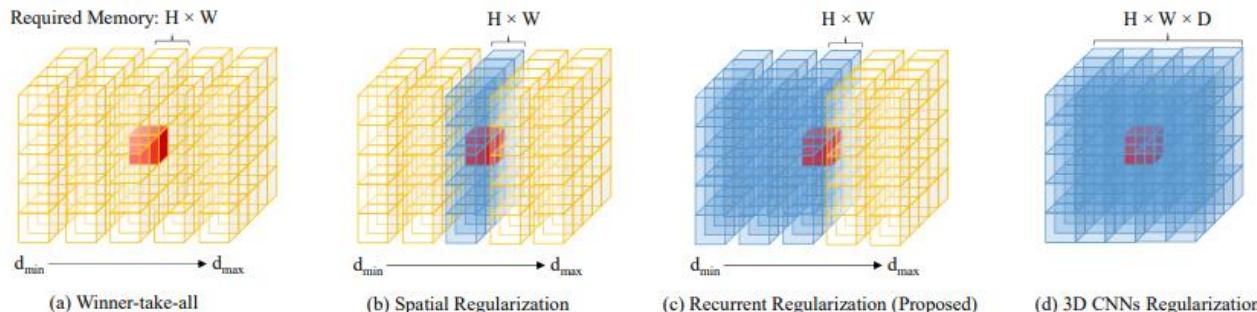
Recurrent cost-volume processing

Problem:

3D convolutions are extremely high memory consuming. Using 2D convolutions would reduce the receptive field to a single slice of the cost volume along depth dimension

Possible Solution:

Use a recurrent 2D convNet to process the cost volume



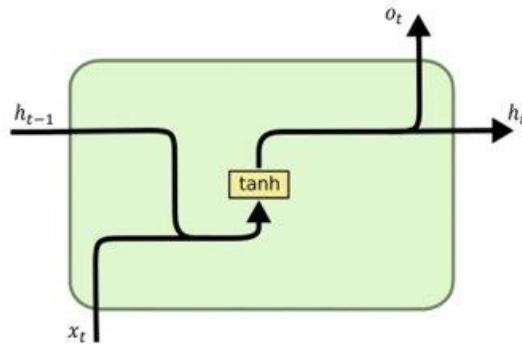
Picture from [4]

Recurrent cost-volume processing

Recurrent layers:

nodes processing data **sequentially**, by maintaining an internal **memory** (or **state**)

Recurrent NN (RNN)



x_t : input vector ($m \times 1$).

h_t : hidden layer vector ($n \times 1$).

o_t : output vector ($n \times 1$).

b_h : bias vector ($n \times 1$).

U, W : parameter matrices ($n \times m$).

V : parameter matrix ($n \times n$).

σ_h, σ_y : activation functions.

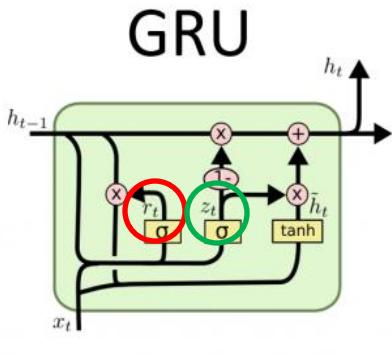
$$h_t = \sigma_h(i_t) = \sigma_h(U_h x_t + V_h h_{t-1} + b_h)$$

$$o_t = \sigma_y(a_t) = \sigma_y(W_y h_t + b_y)$$

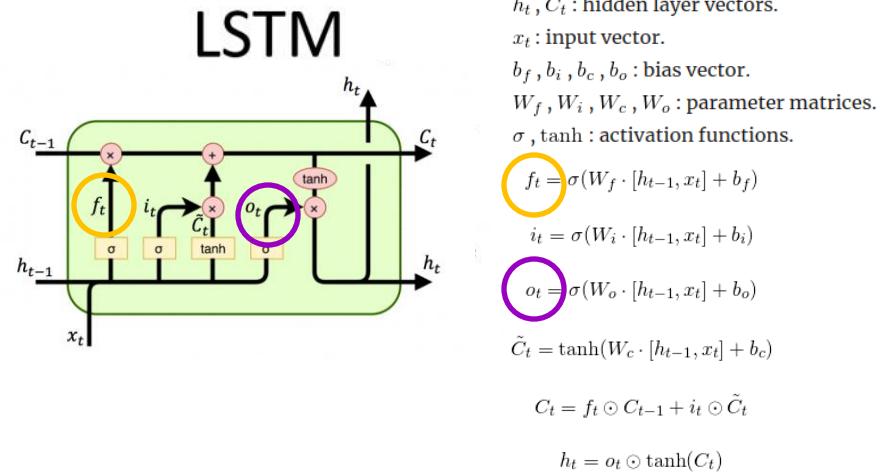
short-term memory (suffers of **vanishing gradients** over longer sequences)

Recurrent cost-volume processing

Gated Recurrent Unit (GRU) and Long-Short Term Memories (LSTM) are thought to overcome the vanishing gradients problem



GRU adds **reset** and **update** gates



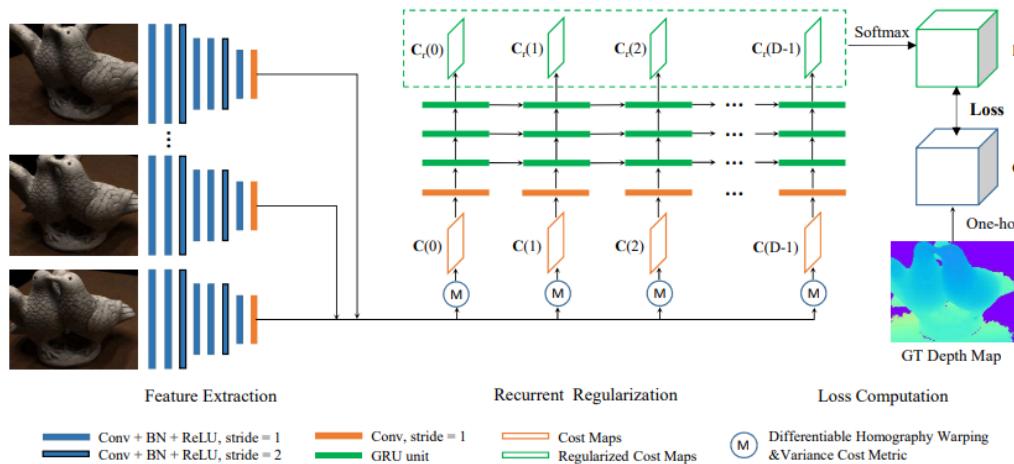
LSTM also adds **forget** and **output** gates

R-MVSNet [4]

Architecture similar to MVSNet. The 3D networks used to regularize the cost volume is replaced by a recurrent 2D network.

Other minor differences:

pixels sampled in inverse depth space, network trained for multi-class classification followed by variational refinement



Picture from [4]

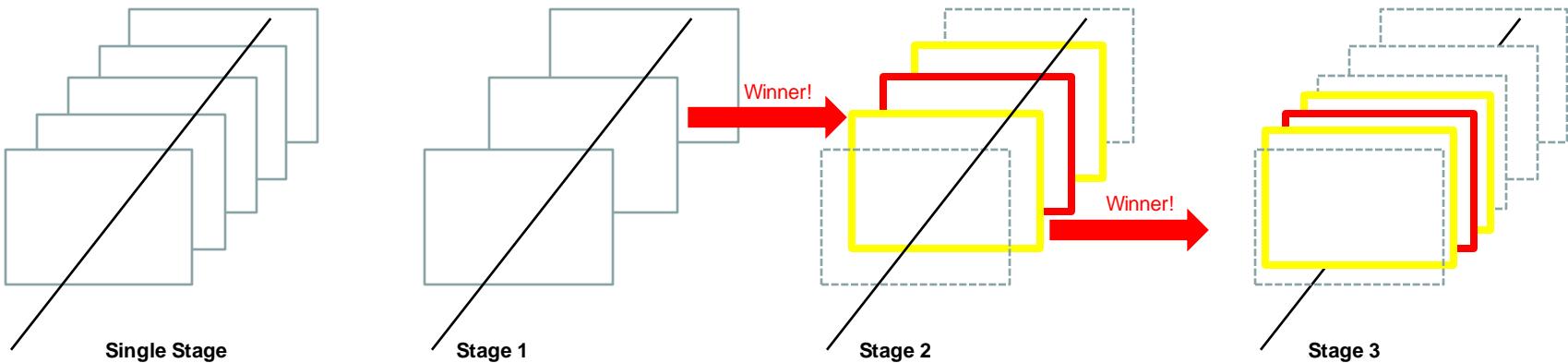
Coarse-to-fine processing

Problem:

3D convolutions are extremely high memory consuming.

Possible Solution:

Coarse-to-fine strategy to build smaller cost volumes



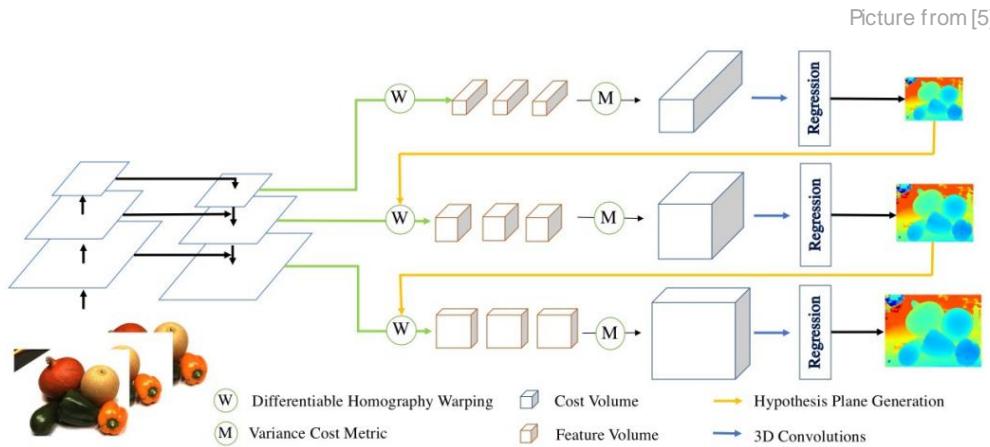
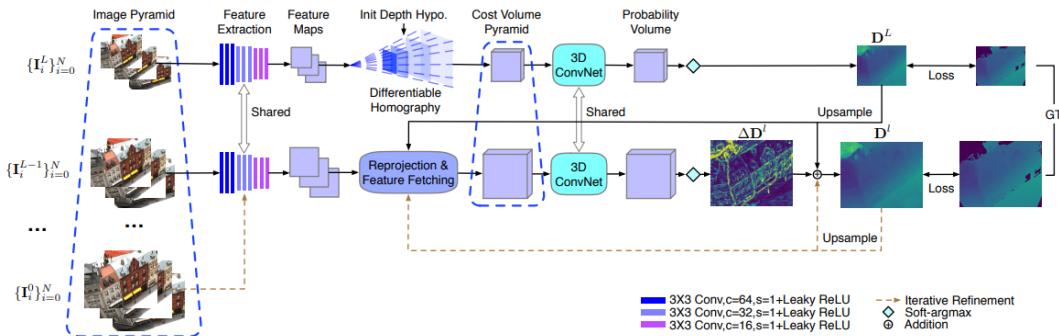
CVP-MVSNet [5], CAS-MVSNet [6]

The feature extractor is designed to output several sets of features at **different resolutions** (from coarser to finer).

Starting from the finest, a cost volume is built and processed by the 3D convNet to output an initial depth map.

Such depth map is upsampled and used to guide cost-volume building at the higher resolutions, until depth is estimated at the highest resolution.

This sequential protocol allows for **smaller** cost volumes, which are sequentially built at **finer** levels.



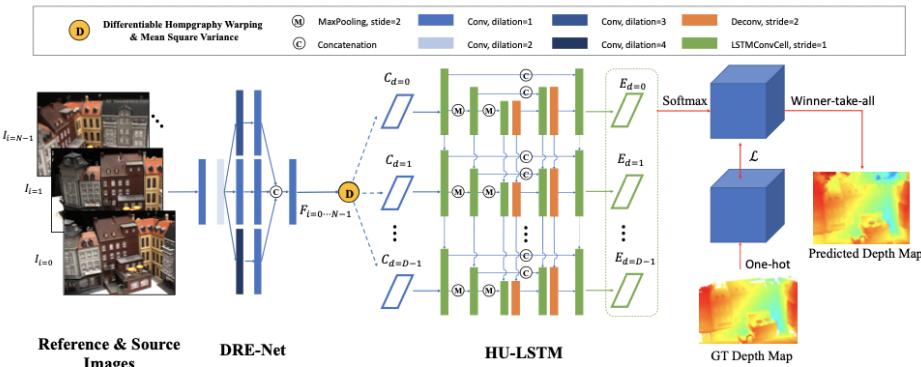
Picture from [6]

Follow-ups

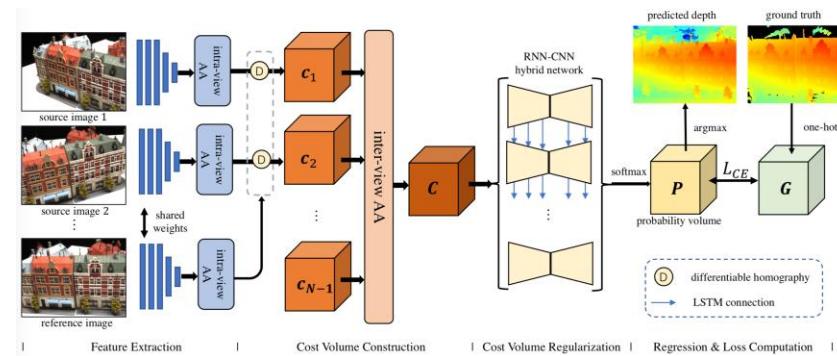
Several architectures have been built on the two, aforementioned strategies. Among them:

Recurrent cost-volume processing

D2HC-RMVSNet [7], AA-RMVSNet [8], ...



Picture from [7]



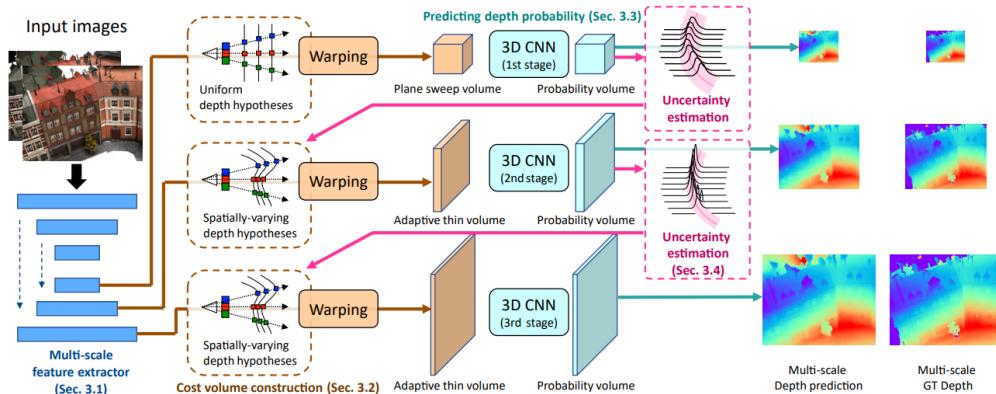
Picture from [8]

Follow-ups

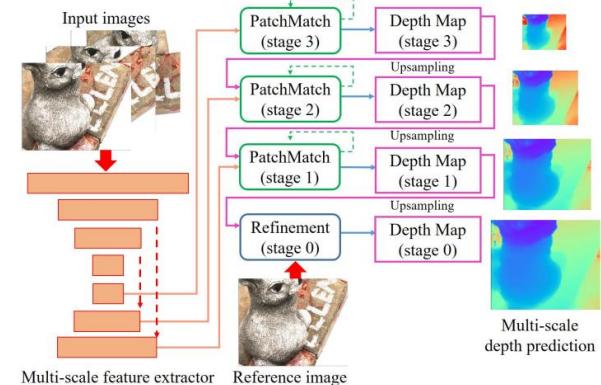
Several architectures have been built on the two, aforementioned strategies. Among them:

Coarse-to-fine strategies

UCSNet [9], PatchMatchNet [10], ...



Picture from [9]



Picture from [10]

In the interest of time, we won't see them in detail – good candidates for the **final assignment** :)

Self-supervised MVS

As for other depth-related tasks (stereo and mono), some works deal with self-supervised strategies. However, occlusions are much more severe in this setting. Then, most approaches design some **self-training** mechanism to improve supervision in occluded regions.

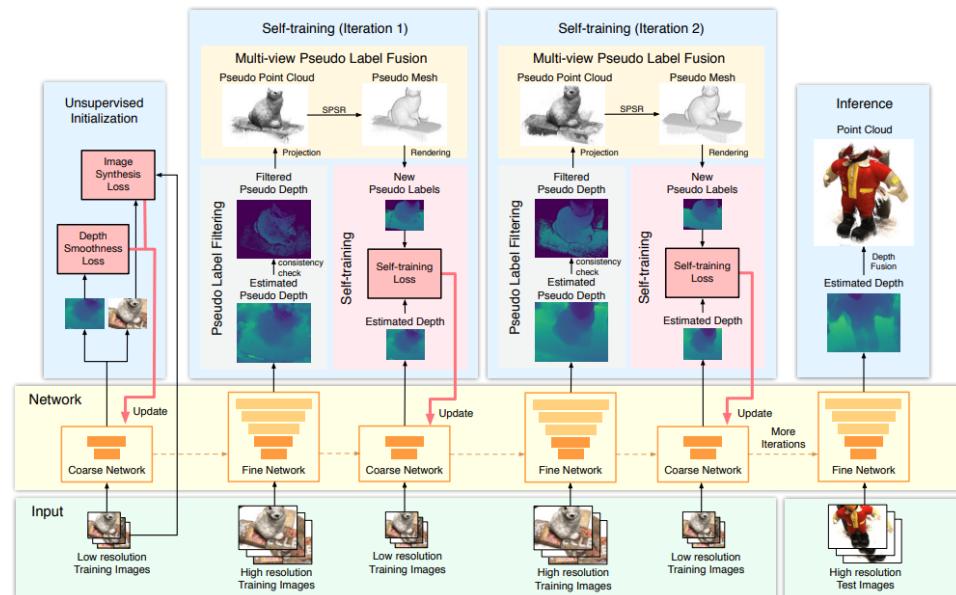
SS-CVP-MVSNet [11]

A framework built on top of CVP-MVSNet [5]

A 2-levels CVP-MVSNet is first trained with image synthesis losses (similarly to monodepth).

Then, the model is extended to 5 levels and used to distill pseudo-labels, fused across the entire scene to render filtered labels. A 2-level instance of CVP-MVSNet is fine-tuned on such labels.

This is repeated for a few iterations.



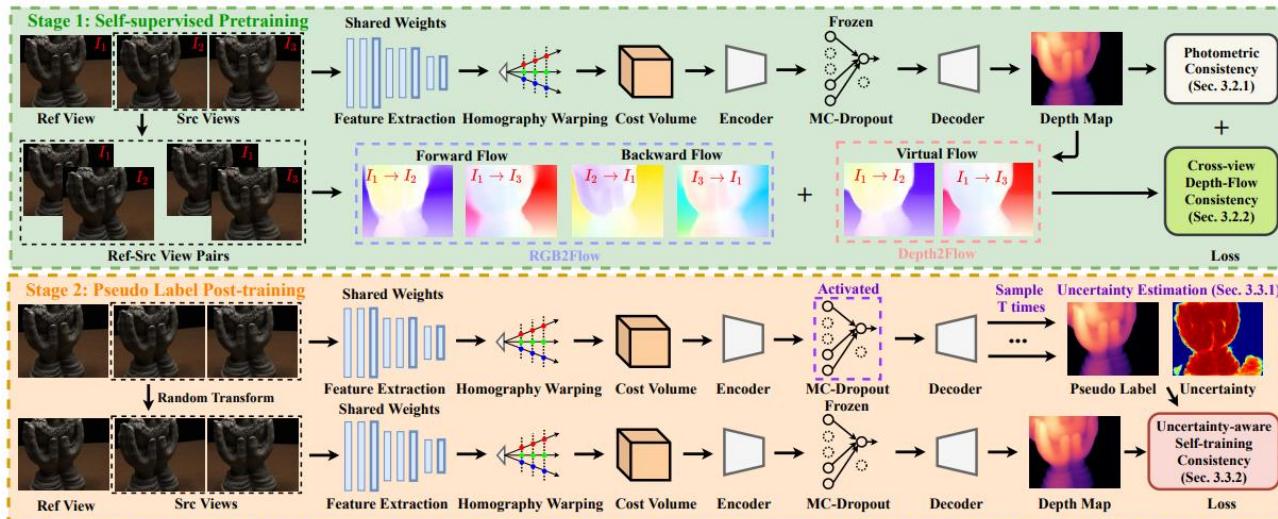
Picture from [11]

Self-supervised MVS

U-MVSNet [12]

A first instance of a MVSNet is trained with image synthesis losses + depth-flow consistency.

Then, a second stage is performed by self-training on the pseudo-labels produced by the model itself, by taking into account the **uncertainty** modeled with Monte-Carlo Dropout.

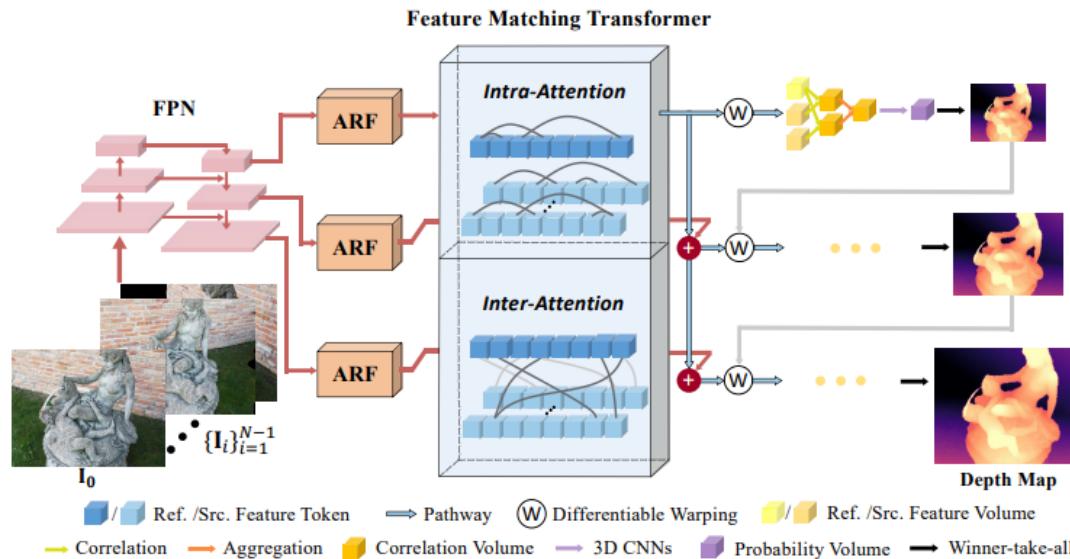


Picture from [12]

Multi-View Stereo with Transformers

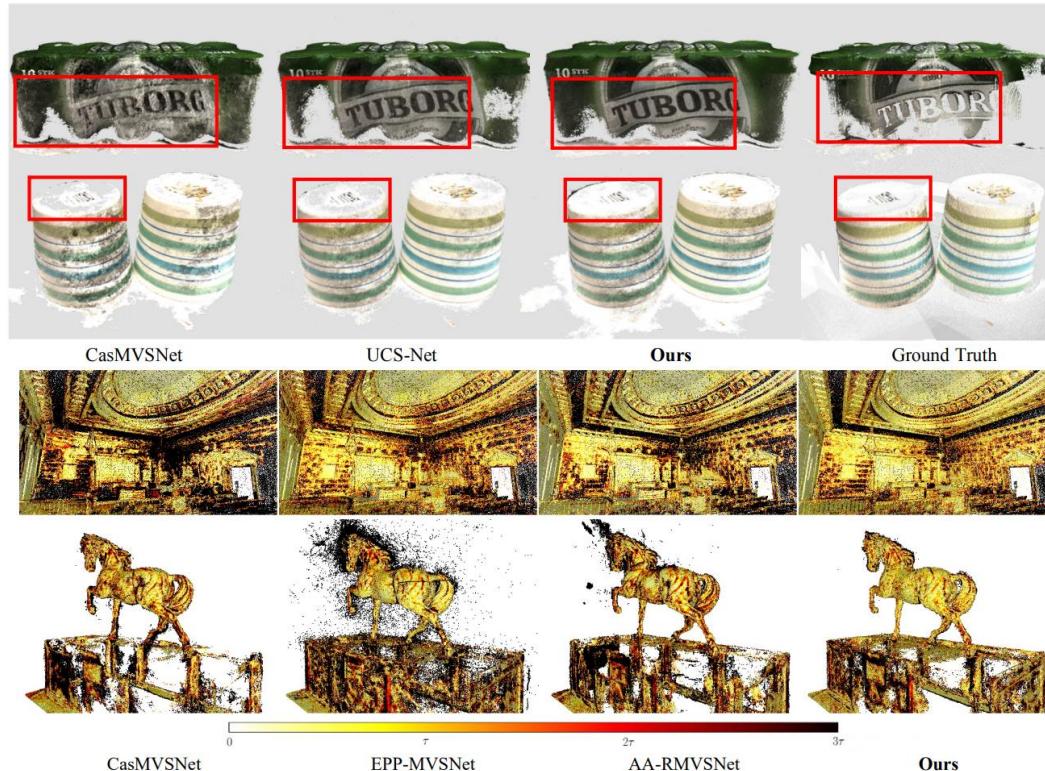
TransMVSNet [13] applies principles from Transformers (intra and inter attention across features) to build a coarse-to-fine architecture.

Cost volumes are built by **pair-wise features correlations**, then combined as a weighted sum according to each pair-wise highest per-pixel correlation.



Picture from [13]

Multi-View Stereo with Transformers



Picture from [13]

6.2- Optical Flow

Optical Flow

With optical flow, we usually refer to the motion vectors connecting pixels coordinates in one image to the corresponding coordinates in a second (usually subsequent) one.

Motion field: projection of 3D motion into an image (**real motion**)

Optical Flow: motion of pixels in the image caused by brightness changes (**apparent motion**)



Ideally, the two are **the same**. In practice: shadows, brightness consistency violation, etc.

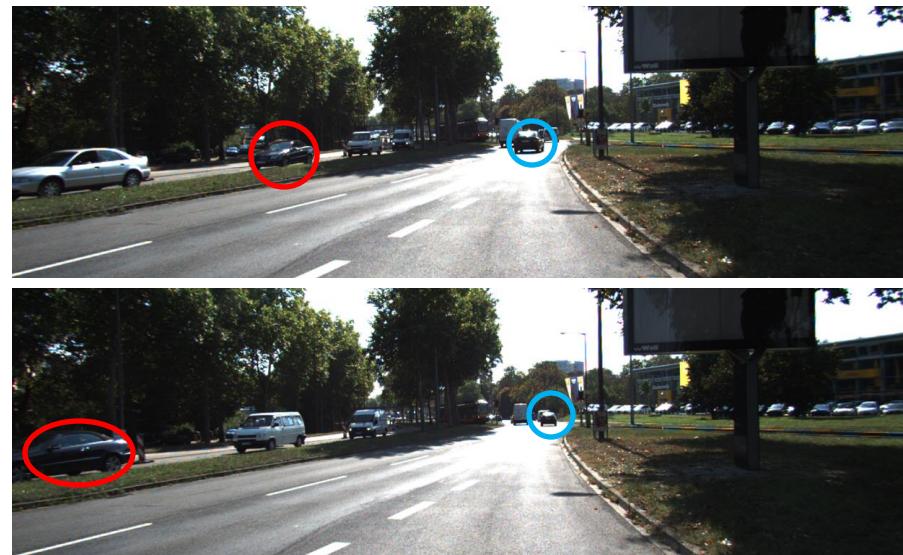


Optical Flow

Let's focus on **motion field**

Optical flow as motion field is consequence of two kinds of motion:
camera motion (ego-motion) and **independent motions** (objects motion)

In both cases, the magnitude of flow vectors is also consequence of the **distance** from the camera (with a given speed, an object closer to the camera will produce flow vectors with higher magnitude)



Challenges of Optical Flow

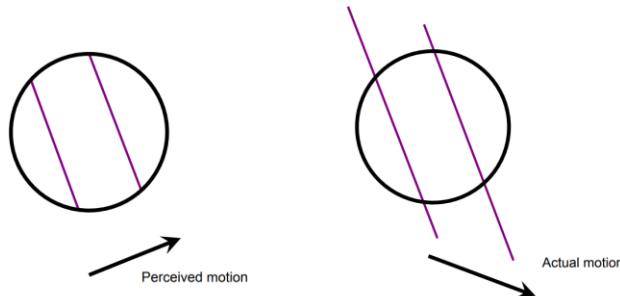
What makes optical flow hard as a **matching problem**?

Search range: 2D, potentially very large search space

Solution: coarse-to-fine strategies

Aperture problem: the lack of context can result in wrong motion estimation (consequence of 2D search)

Solution: wider context + spatial coherence (nearby pixels share the same motion)



Occlusions: pixels disappearing because of objects motion itself

Motion blur: blurring artefacts caused by high-speed motion

...

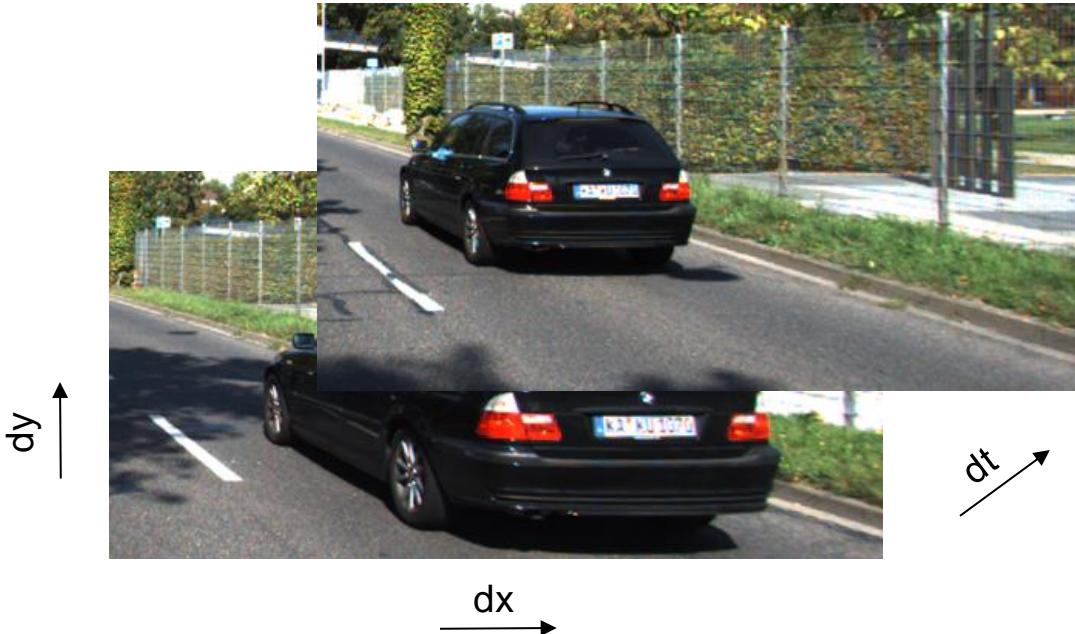
MPI-Sintel dataset

Optical flow in unconstrained conditions is extremely hard!



Optical Flow

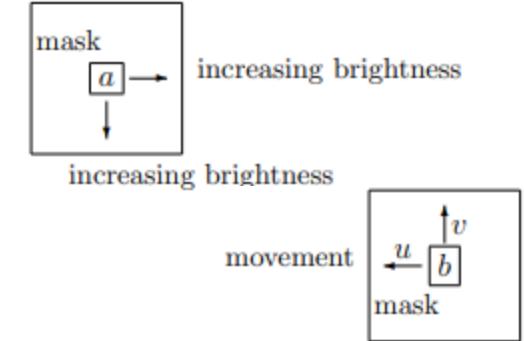
Image derivatives



Optical Flow

Lucas-Kanade algorithm is a **differential method**.

Let's assume we look at the scene through a square patch. At a certain time frame, its **intensity is a**. After moving, its intensity **increases to b**.



$$I_x(x, y) \cdot u + I_y(x, y) \cdot v = -I_t(x, y)$$

We can apply this relationship to all pixels in the patch

$$I_x(q_1)V_x + I_y(q_1)V_y = -I_t(q_1)$$

$$I_x(q_2)V_x + I_y(q_2)V_y = -I_t(q_2)$$

⋮

$$I_x(q_n)V_x + I_y(q_n)V_y = -I_t(q_n)$$



$$Av = b$$

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} I_x(q_1) & I_y(q_1) \\ I_x(q_2) & I_y(q_2) \\ \vdots & \vdots \\ I_x(q_n) & I_y(q_n) \end{bmatrix}, \quad v = \begin{bmatrix} V_x \\ V_y \end{bmatrix}, \quad b = \begin{bmatrix} -I_t(q_1) \\ -I_t(q_2) \\ \vdots \\ -I_t(q_n) \end{bmatrix}$$

We get a system with variables << equations. A compromise solution is obtained by solving the following 2x2 system with **least square principle**

$$A^T Av = A^T b \text{ or} \\ v = (A^T A)^{-1} A^T b$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} V_x \\ V_y \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \sum_i I_x(q_i)^2 & \sum_i I_x(q_i)I_y(q_i) \\ \sum_i I_y(q_i)I_x(q_i) & \sum_i I_y(q_i)^2 \end{bmatrix}^{-1} \begin{bmatrix} -\sum_i I_x(q_i)I_t(q_i) \\ -\sum_i I_y(q_i)I_t(q_i) \end{bmatrix}$$

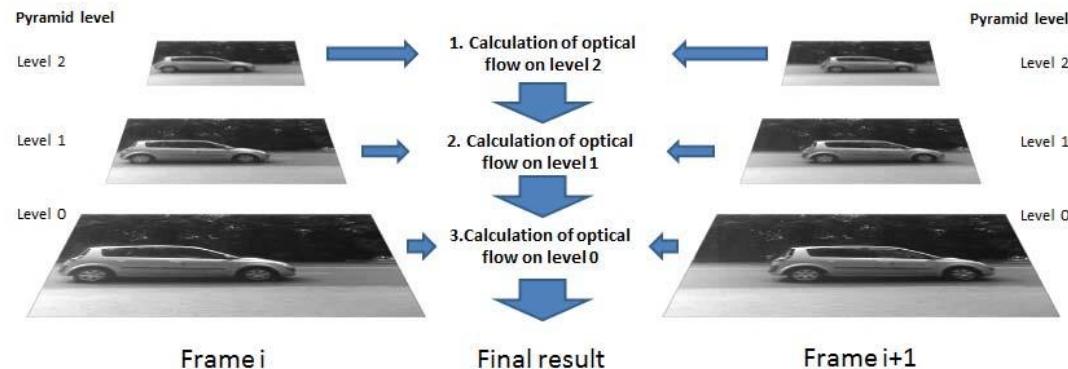
Optical Flow

Pre deep-learning methods (just a list, in the interest of time...)

Some classical algorithms: **Lucas-Kanade** (1981), **Horn and Schunck** (1981)

More recent methods: **DeepFlow** (2013), **EpicFlow** (2015), **CPM** (2016 – PatchMatch!), **RICFlow** (2017)

Most of them run coarse-to-fine estimation



The advent of deep learning revolutionized this field, both in terms of **accuracy** and **speed**

Optical Flow

Cost volume search

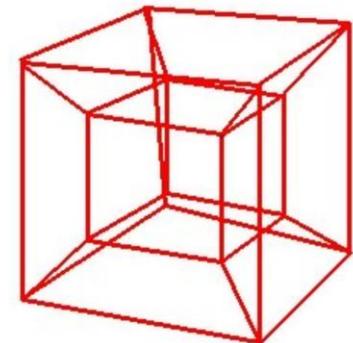
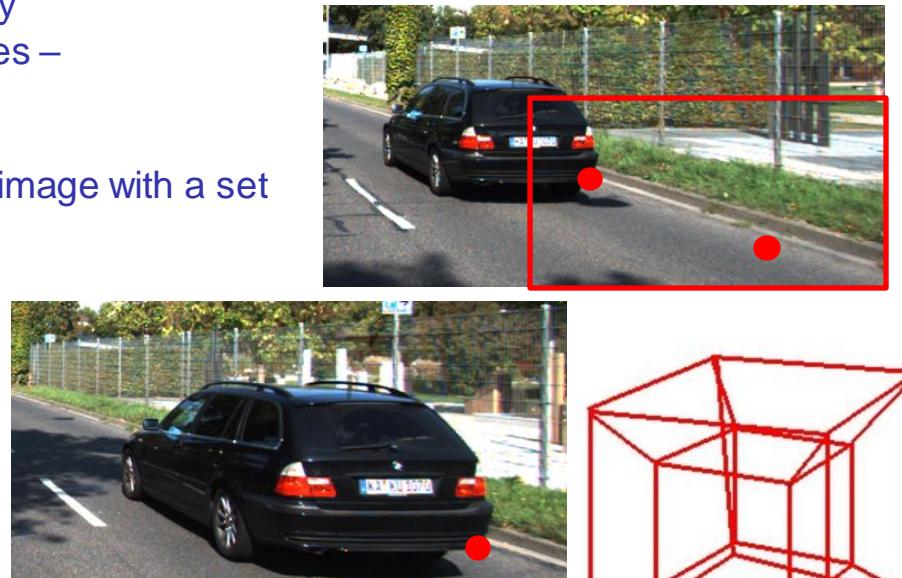
As for stereo matching (and MVS), we can directly search for correspondences across the two images – with **deep learning**, maybe? :)

We can compare each pixel (or patch) in the first image with a set of candidates in the second one

Unfortunately, this time our search domain is 2D and can possibly be **huge**!

This would lead to a **4D cost volume** ($H \times W \times d \times H \times d \times W$, with $d \times d \times W$ being the 2D search range)

Such a data structure cannot be handled on full resolution images (**coarse-to-fine strategies**)



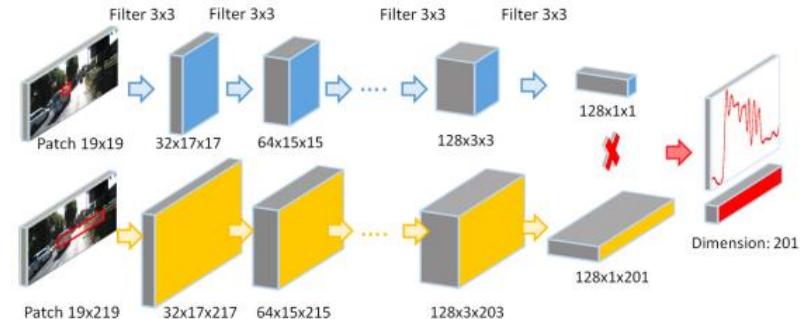
Optical Flow

Semantic Information and Deep Matching [14]

This work follows the trend started by Zbontar and LeCun with MC-CNN.

A siamese network processes 19×19 patches extracted from the two images. Since optical flow demands much more complexity (a single patch in the first image should be compared with $R \times R$ patches in the second, in a 2D search range), a few heuristic are introduced:

- At training time, patches are matched along a single axis (vertical or horizontal)
- At test time, only top-K scores are kept ($K=30$) to save memory

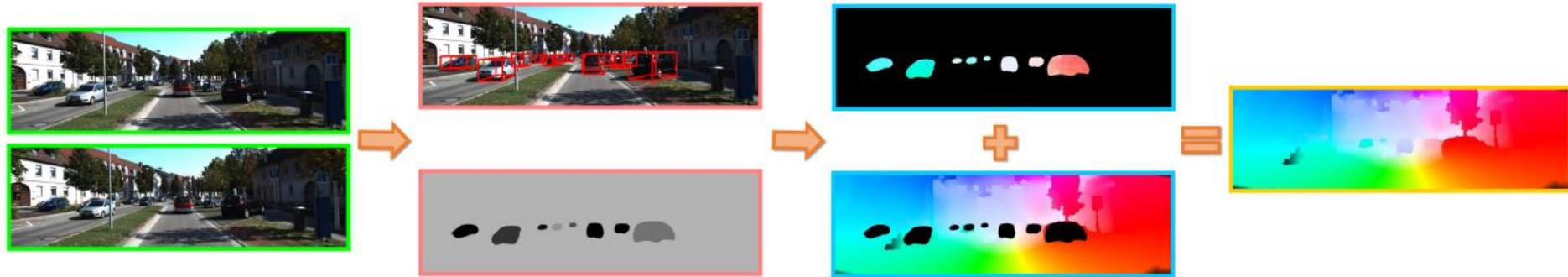


Picture from [14]

Then, the top-K costs are refined through iterative local aggregation (box-filtering like).

Optical Flow

Semantic Information and Deep Matching [14]



Picture from [14]

Then, objects are detected and segmented by means of a CNN, to distinguish **moving vehicles** from the **static background**.

Finally, the optical flow initially estimated by the network is **refined** by means of hand-crafted algorithms modeling the motion of the scene for **static** and **dynamic** agents independently**

**based on a pipeline combining RANSAC (to get fundamental matrices), SGM (to perform matching along epipolar lines) and more...

Optical Flow

Direct Cost volume optimization – **DC-Flow** [15]

A siamese network processes 9x9 patches extracted from the two (**downsampled** by a factor 3) images

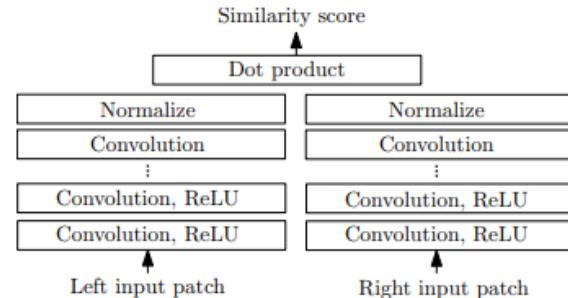
It computes similarity scores between a single patch on the first frame and RxR patches in the second frame (2D search range)

A 4D cost-volume is built and then refined by a variant of Semi-Global Matching (SGM) specifically designed to deal with 4D volumes, **Flow-SGM**. The downsampling factor allows to reduce the memory requirements by a factor 3⁴!

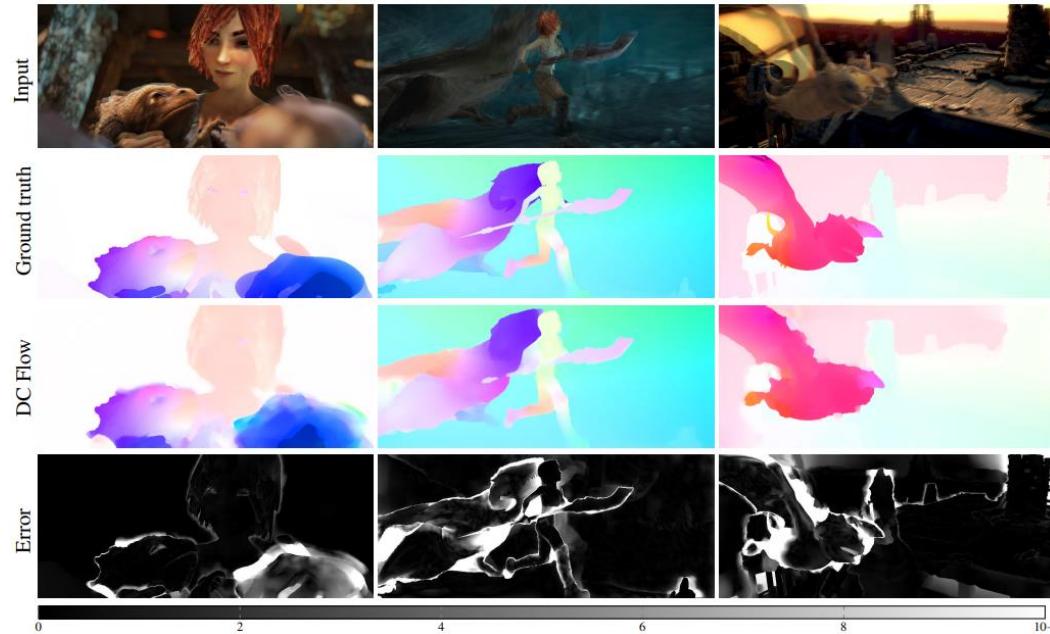
$$E(\mathbf{V}) = \sum_p \left(\sum_{q \in \mathcal{N}(p)} P_1 [\|\mathbf{V}_p - \mathbf{V}_q\|_1 = 1] + \sum_{q \in \mathcal{N}(p)} P_2^{p,q} [\|\mathbf{V}_p - \mathbf{V}_q\|_1 > 1] + \mathbf{C}(p, \mathbf{V}_p) \right)$$

With $\mathbf{V}_p, \mathbf{V}_q$ being flow vectors hypotheses

The final flow is obtained through **WTA** and **upsampled** by a factor 3



Optical Flow



Results looks good, yet showing limitations in occlusions, large motions, ...

... all aspects that can be dealt with an **end-to-end model!**

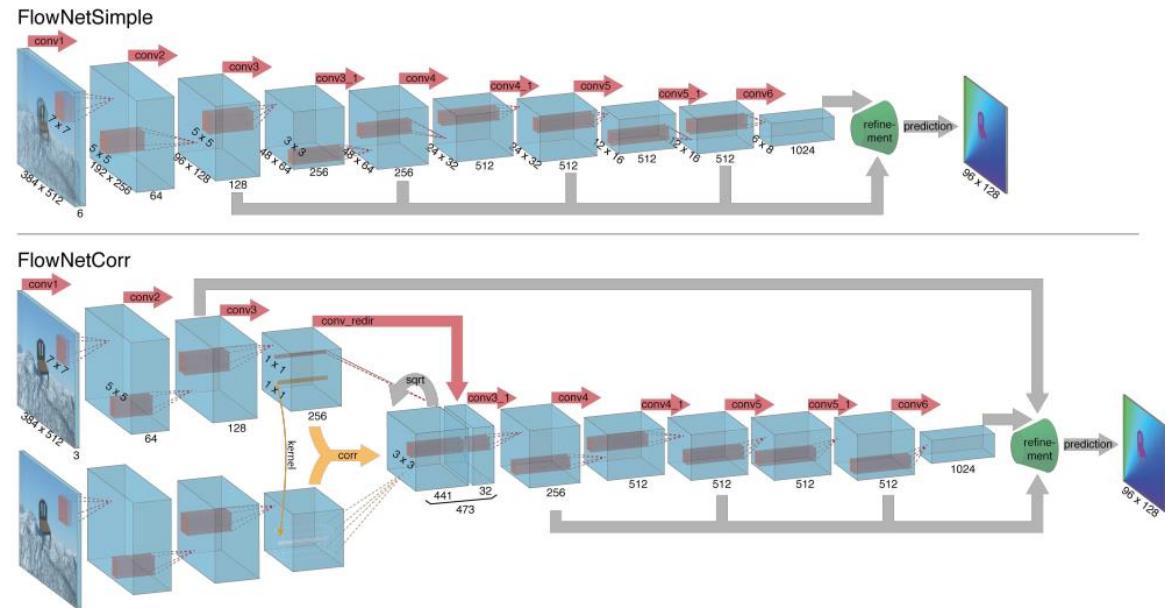
FlowNet [16]

First end-to-end optical flow estimation network. Two main components:

- 1) Features extractor (encoder)
- 2) Refinement module (decoder)

Two variants:

- 1) FlowNetS
- 2) FlowNetC (Correlation)



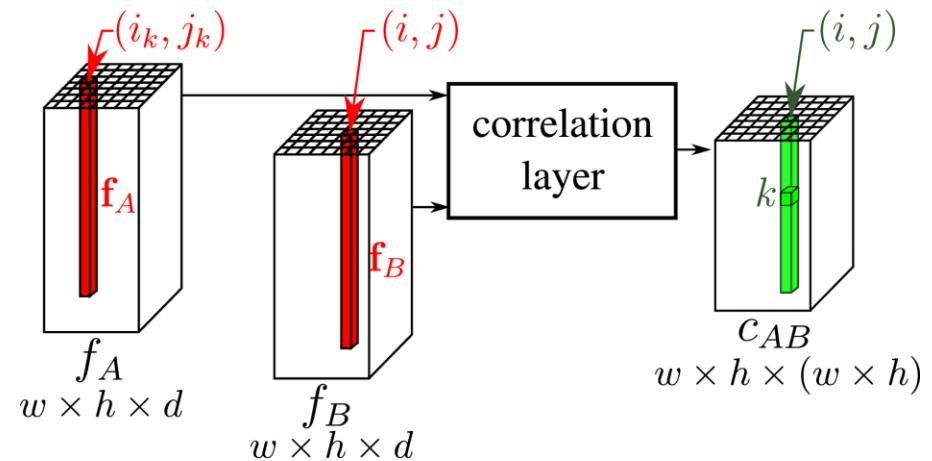
Picture from [16]

FlowNet [16]

Correlation Layer: a module computing the correlation scores between features extracted from two different images.

For a given pixel (i,j) in f_B , this layer computes correlation between it and k pixels in f_A in a neighborhood around (i,j) .

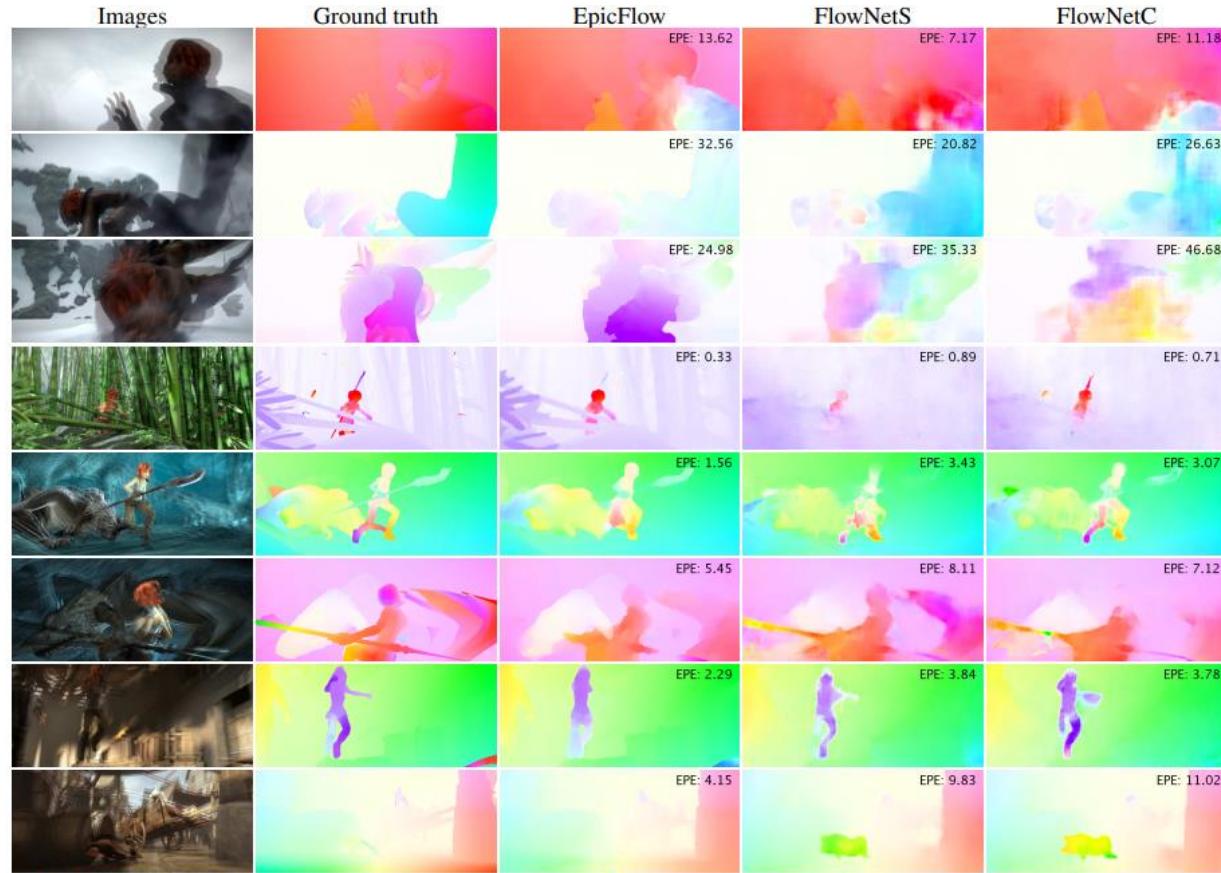
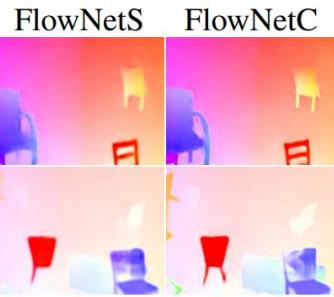
The results are stored in a new features map C_{AB} (the k scores are encoded along the channels dimension)



Picture from [17]

FlowNet [16]

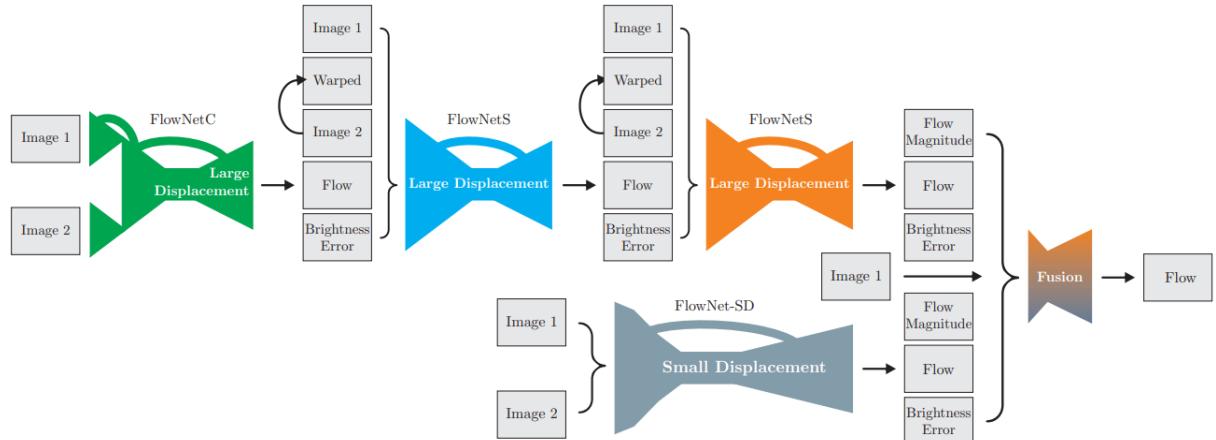
Still less effective than existing solutions...



Improving the accuracy with residual refinement

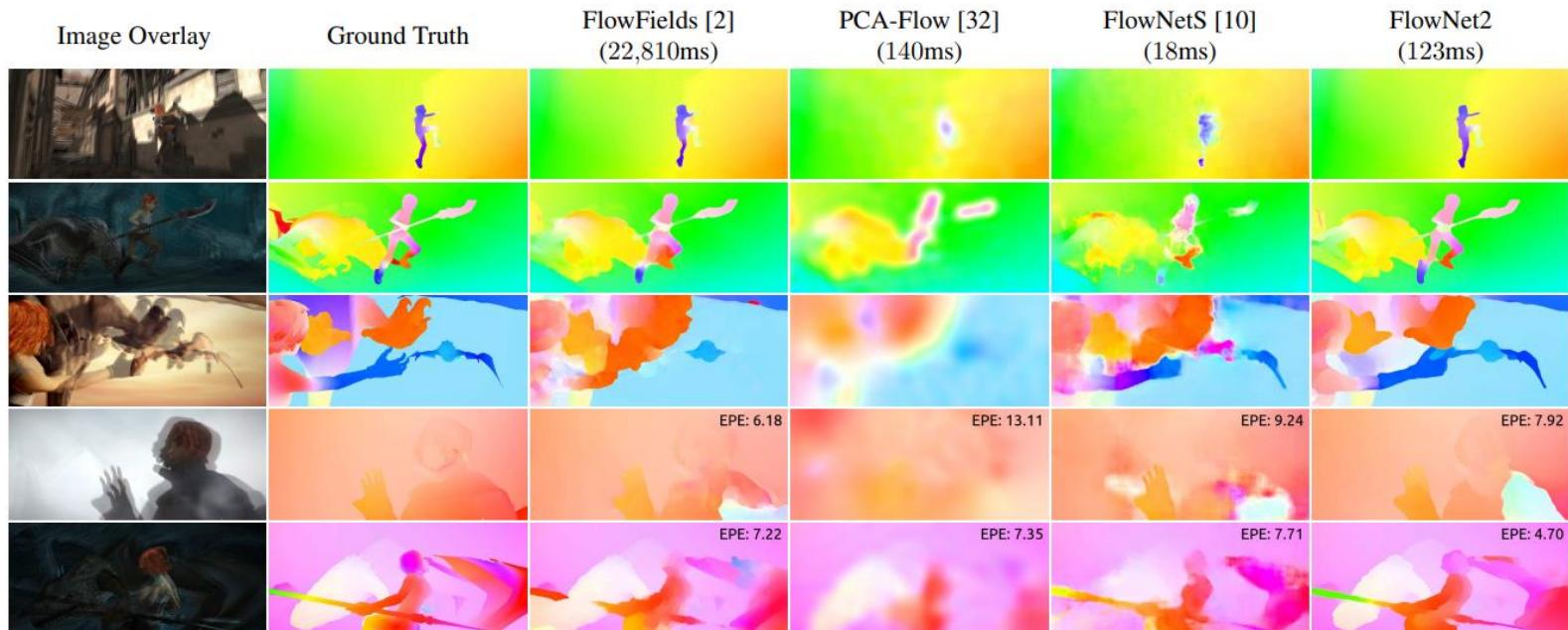
FlowNet2 [18], made of several instances of FlowNetC/S

- 1) A first FlowNetC, for large displacements
- 2) Two FlowNetS, to compute residual flow given the two images and the first estimate by FlowNetC
- 3) A further FlowNet for small displacements (SD)
- 4) A final fusion module



Picture from [18]

Improving the accuracy with residual refinement



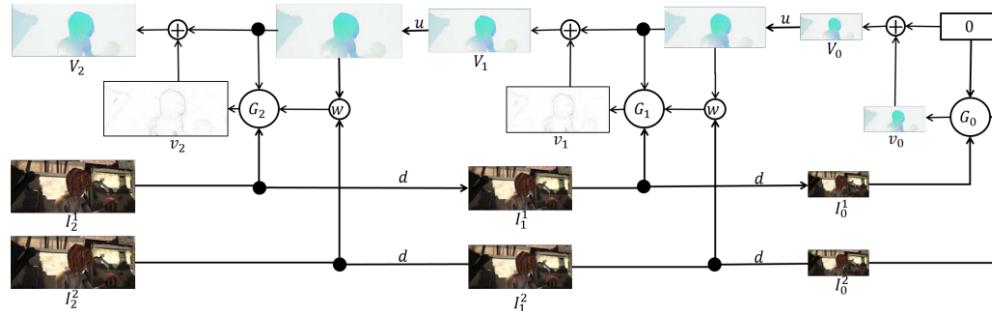
Picture from [15]

Coarse-to-fine processing

Problem: processing full-resolution images is expensive

Possible solution: coarse-to-fine processing!

SpyNet [19] computes optical flow on an **image pyramid**, starting from coarse resolution and going up until reaching full resolution. **No explicit correlation** between pixels is computed.



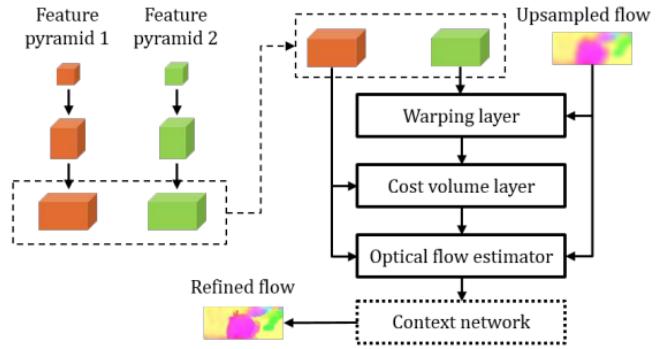
Picture from [19]

Coarse-to-fine processing

PWCNet [20], LiteFlowNet[21]

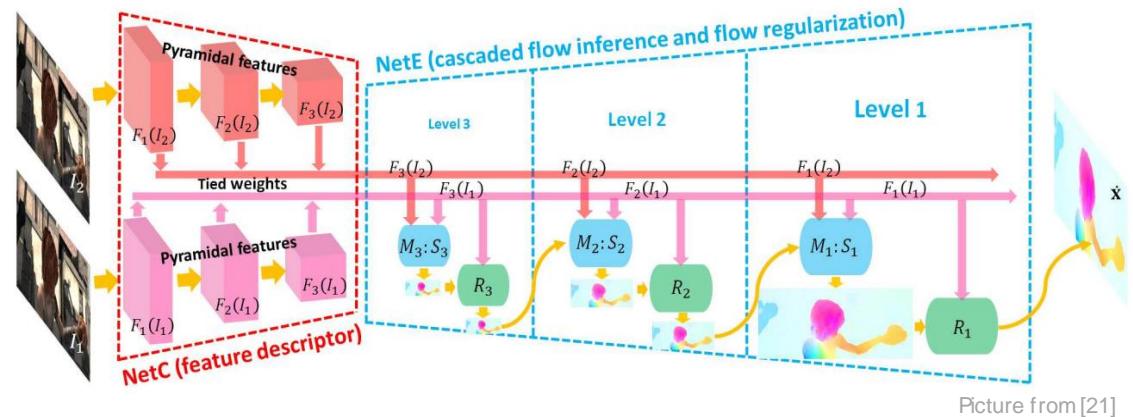
Combine established design strategies:

- Pyramidal features extraction
- Cost-volume computation (correlation layer)
- Coarse-to-fine estimation
- Refinement



Picture from [20]

More: LiteFlowNet2 [22],
IRR-PWCNet[23], LiteFlowNet3 [24],
... – good candidates for the
final assignment :



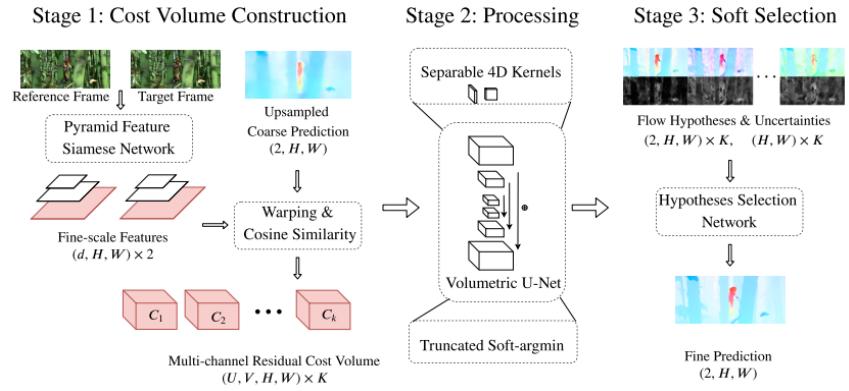
Picture from [21]

Volumetric representation

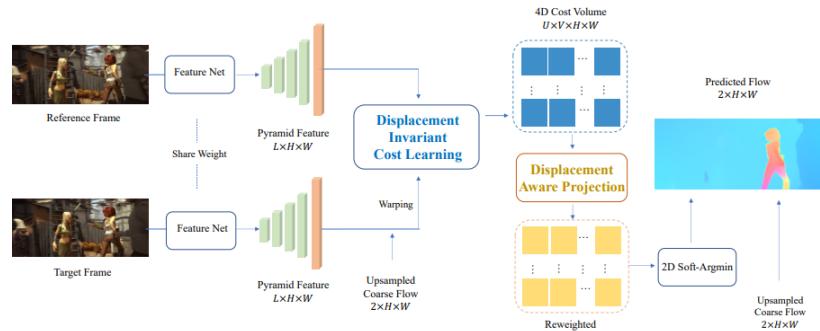
VCN [25], DICL [26]

A volumetric representation of the matching costs is more powerful (offset invariance, more general in terms of search windows size). However, for optical flow the cost volume would be a 5D features tensor and require 4D convolutions! So, some **efficient strategies** to avoid 4D convolutions are necessary:

- **VCN: Separable 4D conv**
splits a 4D conv into a 2D conv + 2D WTA
- **DICL: 2D matching cost net**
a 2D network processes each «slice» of the 4D volume separately



Picture from [25]



Picture from [26]

RAFT [27]

Iterative optimization, inspired by traditional methods for estimating optical flow

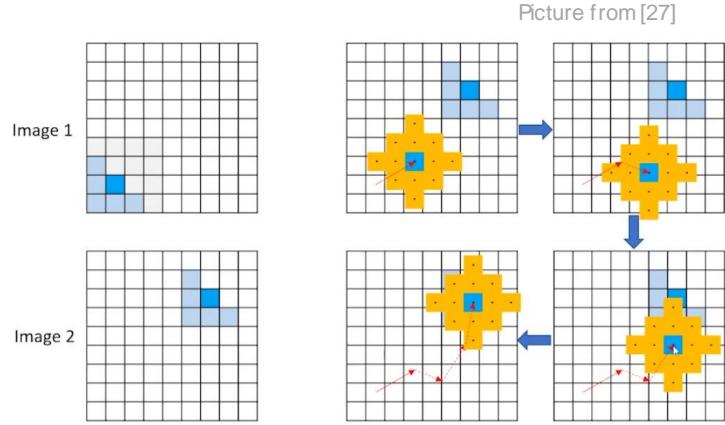
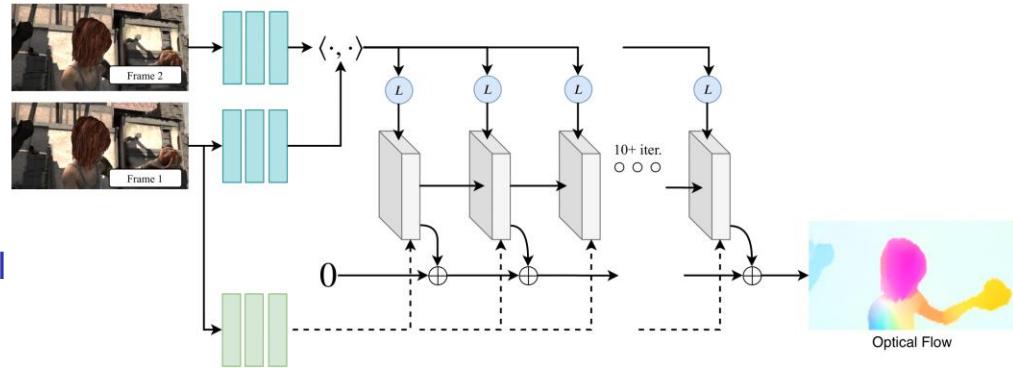
After extracting features from both images, a **correlation look-up table** (LUT) is built, storing the correlation scores among all across the two images ($H \times W \times H \times W$)

Then, optical flow is iteratively estimated by looking at the look-up table and to some context features

For pixel (i,j) with an initial flow estimate of (u,v) , the look-up table is queried at $(i+u, j+v)$ at multiple scales

An updated flow vector (u',v') is estimated, to access to the LUT again and refine it again and again...

LUT scores and context features are processed by **GRUs**



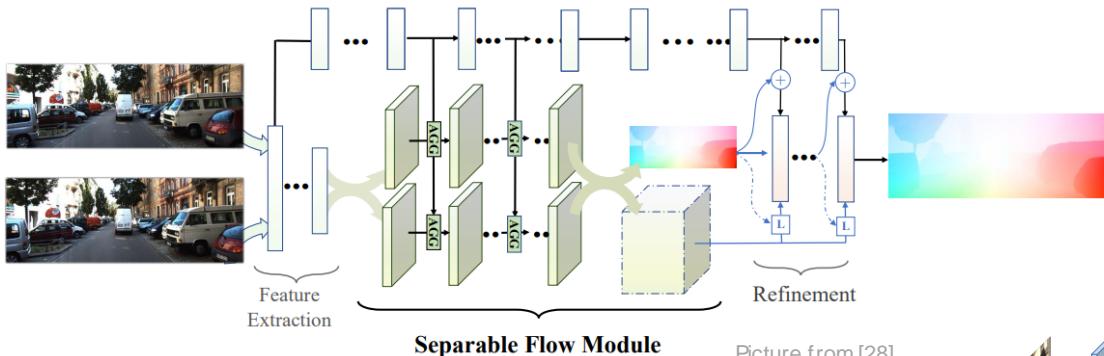
Picture from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r3ZtW30exoo]

Decomposing 2D flow into 1D flows

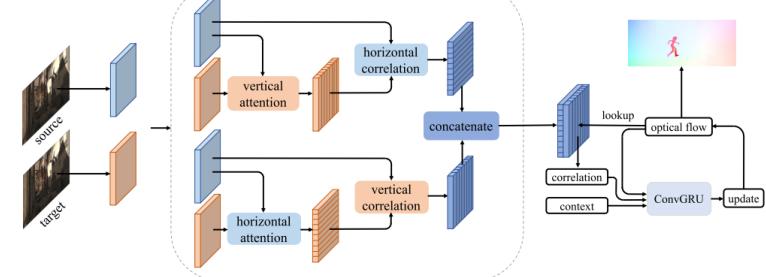
SeparableFlow [28], Flow1D [29]

Using a 4D representation while reducing complexity (see VCN and DILC).

In the interest of time, we won't see them in detail – good candidates for the **final assignment** :)



Picture from [28]

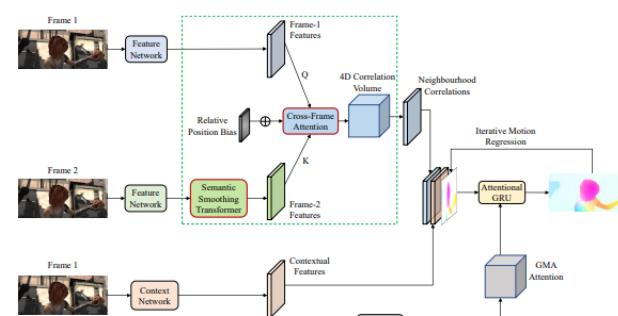
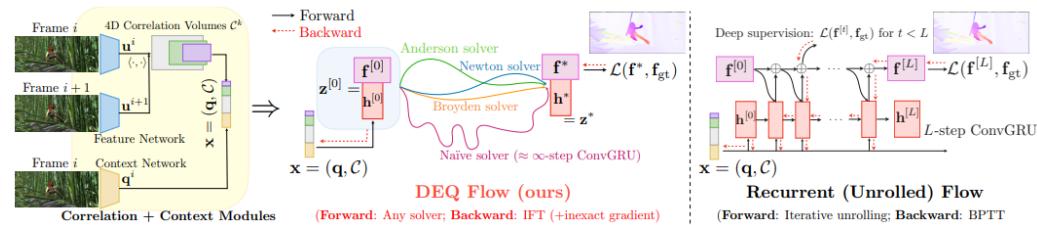
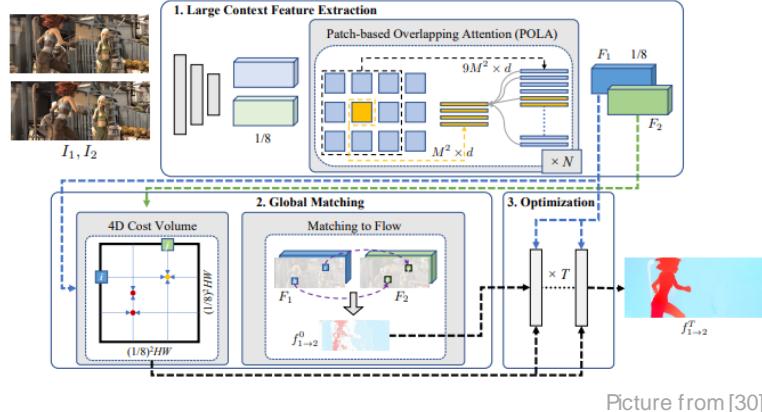


Picture from [29]

Follow-ups

More recent architectures:

GMFlowNet [30], DEQ [31], CRAFT [32], ...



In the interest of time, we won't see them in detail – good candidates for the **final assignment :)**

Self-supervised Optical Flow

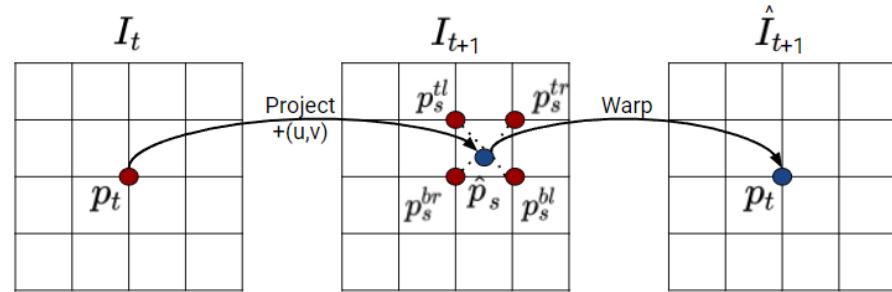
As for other matching-based tasks (stereo and MVS), some works deal with self-supervised strategies.

Optical flow estimation as an image reconstruction task, by using estimated flow to reconstruct I_t from I_{t+1} (as seen with stereo)

Challenges: occlusions, light changes, shadows from moving objects, ...

Best practices: [33]

State-of-the-art: [34]



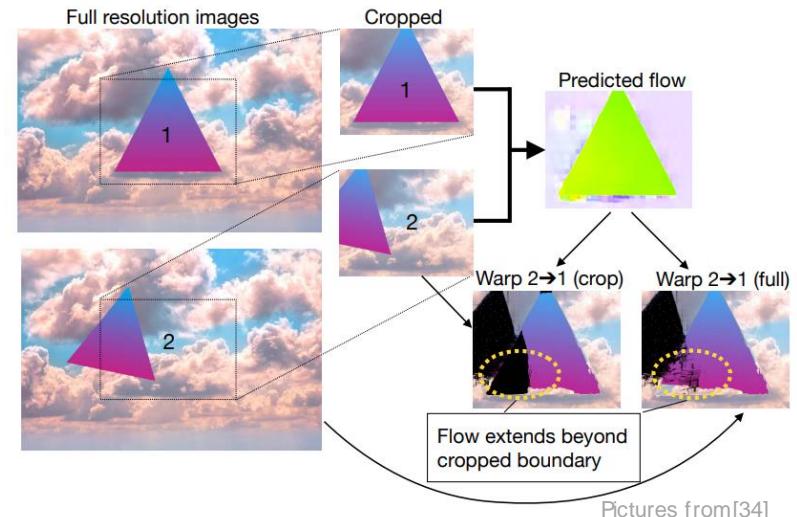
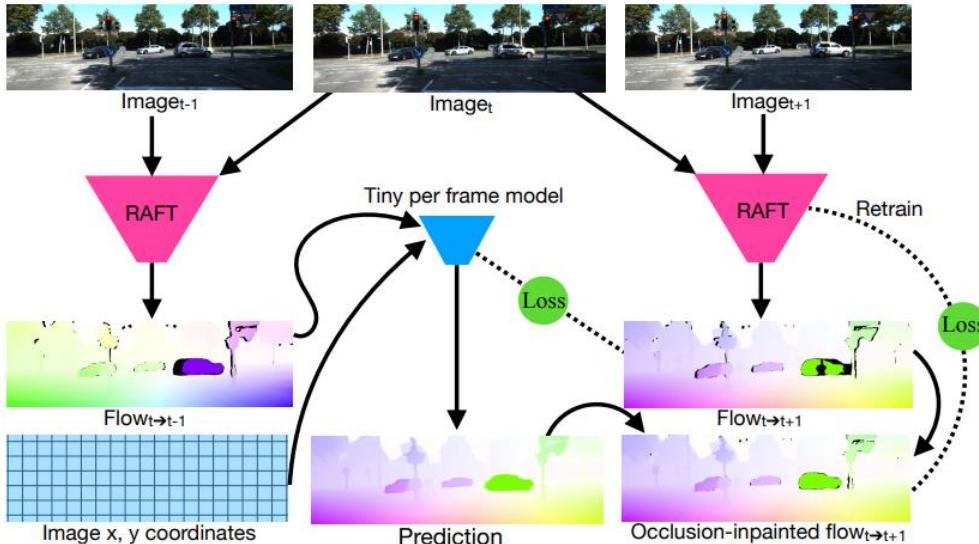
Picture from [34]

Self-supervised Optical Flow

SMURF [34]: RAFT variant designed for self-supervised optical flow

Two main factors:

- **Crop augmentation** – warping performed on full resolution images (handling out of image content)
- **Occlusions inpainting** – a dedicated, per-frame model si trained to inpaint occlusions (generating proxy labels) by inverting the backward flow



Pictures from [34]

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