EBERHARD KARLS
UNIVERSITÄT
TÜBINGEN

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A Comparison of Synthetic-to-Real Domain Adaptation Techniques

Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen
Mathematisch-Naturwissenschaftliche Fakultät
Wilhelm-Schickard-Institut für Informatik
Lernbasierte Computer Vision
Peter Trost, peter.trost@student.uni-tuebingen.de, 2019

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Betreuer/Gutachter: Prof. Dr. Andreas Geiger, Universität Tübingen

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Peter Trost (Matrikelnummer 4039682), August 5, 2019

Abstract

Template

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1. Introduction

With autonomous driving being highly popular these days and the need for large amounts of labeled data to train the deep neural networks running the autonomous cars, methods have been developed to generate that data. Real datasets like Cityscapes [COR+16] or the Berkley Deep Drive [YXC+18] are expensive to assemble and even more expensive to label. Especially pixel-level annotations require a lot of working hours and can be inaccurate. In contrast synthetic approaches like the GTAV [RVRK16] or SYNTHIA datasets [RSM+16] enable to create vast amounts of image data automatically and make the annotation process much faster and more accurate and therefore cheaper than their real counterparts. The drawback of using synthetic data to train models that are ran in autonomous cars is that these models don't perform well in real environments. This can result in wrong predictions, which must be avoided in order to make autonomous driving possible. The drop in performance stems from the domain shift, i.e. changes in appearance, texture lighting and others of objects in the synthetic images compared to objects in the real world seen through the car's cameras. An approach to create models to perform better in this scenario is domain adaptation. The idea behind domain adaptation is to adapt a specific domain to another domain (e.g. synthetic to real, image taken at night to image taken at daytime, images of an object taken from one perspective to another perspective, ...). For autonomous driving this means making the synthetic image look more like an image of a real scene taken with a real camera. There are many techniques for adapting images from a synthetic to a realistic domain. Each having different approaches and using different methods. This work compares three current approaches on synthetic-to-real domain adaptation, namely CycleGAN [ZPIE17], CyCADA [HTP+17] and SG-GAN/Grad-GAN [LLJX18], all three of which are based on Generative Adversarial Networks as first proposed in [GPAM+14]. And tries to show their strengths and weaknesses when using them to translate images from the GTAV dataset, a large scale synthetic dataset of images from a street view in the game Grand Theft Auto V [RVRK16] to images looking like the ones in Cityscapes, a large scale dataset of real street view images of european cities [COR+16]. In order to evaluate the resulting images, a pre-trained deeplabv3 [CPSA17] model (code: [DLR]) is used to predict semantic segmentation maps and the cityscapes evaluation code [CSR] yields Intersection over Union (IoU) results for these, comparing predicted pixels with ground truth pixels.

2. Foundations

This chapter will show and explain the foundations necessary for this work. The term **Domain Adaptation** aswell as what **synthetic** and **real** means in the context of this work, will be defined and some examples shown. Furthermore the relevant **Neural Network** architectures will be shown and explained. Specifically **Convolutional Neural Networks** and **Generative Adversarial Networks**.

2.1. Domain Adaptation

As described in [Csu17], Domain Adaptation is the task of transfering a machine learning model that is working well on a source data distribution to a related target data distribution. In this work we will focus on the adaptation from synthetic to real images. When talking about a synthetic image we are implying it was rendered from a virtual scene through a rendering engine like for example blender's "Cycles" [Cycc] or graphics engine like Unity [Uni]. We define real images as taken from a real-world scene through some kind of camera. See Figure 2.1 for an example of synthetic and real images. Other examples of domains are an image of a painting in the style of a particular artist, images of an object from different viewpoints, and many more.

Figure 2.1.: Example images for the the two domains relevant for this work. A real image from the cityscapes dataset [COR+16] (left) and a synthetic image from the GTA5 dataset [RVRK16] (right)

2.2. Neural Networks

2.2.1. Convolutional Neural Networks

see [Wu17] (Introduction to CNNs) Convolutional Neural Networks (CNNs) are Deep Neural Networks mostly used with images as input, consisting of convolutional layers, that extract features from input data (e.g. edges, curves, circles), pooling layers, commonly using max-pooling (mapping a subregion of the input to its maxium value) or average pooling (mapping the subregion to the average of the values) and a fully connected network often used for classification. **TODO: add more description and example images**

Convolutional Layer. In this layer a so called kernel iterates over the input. The kernel is a matrix of fixed size depending on the method used. A 3x3 kernel is commonly used. These kernels are used to extract features like diagonal lines, horizontal lines, curves and more. For example to extract a diagonal line a kernel could look like this:

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

Pooling Layer This layer reduces the size of the image by mapping an area to its maximum or average value in order to focus on the important features and save computing time.

Fully Connected Layer The last type of layers is a standard feed forward network that has one output node for each class the net has to be able to predict. It is used to classify the input of the net given the features exracted by the preceeding layers.

TODO: example architectures VGG16, AlexNet,..?

2.2.2. Generative Adversarial Networks

Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) implement a two-player-game:
A Discriminator learns from a given data distribution what is “real”. The Generator generates data. The goal of the generator is to fool the discriminator into believing the generated data is “real” i.e. tries to create samples coming from the same distribution as the “real” data. The discriminator will label anything as “fake” that doesn’t resemble the learned “real” data distribution. This can be described as a 2 classes classification, with classes real and fake). This way GANs can learn to generate realistically looking images of faces, translate images of art from one style to another and improve semantic segmentation. The generative model generally uses *maximum likelihood estimation*. In [Goo17] it is described in the following way:

> The basic idea of maximum likelihood is to define a model that provides an estimate of probability distribituion, parametereized by parameters θ. We then refer to the **likelihood** as the probability that the model assigns to the training data: $\prod_{i=1}^{m} p_{\text{model}}(x^{(i)}; \theta)$

The parameter θ that maximizes the likelihood of the data is better found in log space

$$\theta^* = \arg\max_{\theta} \prod_{i=1}^{m} p_{\text{model}}(x^{(i)}; \theta) \tag{2.1}$$

$$= \arg\max_{\theta} \log \prod_{i=1}^{m} p_{\text{model}}(x^{(i)}; \theta) \tag{2.2}$$

$$= \arg\max_{\theta} \sum_{i=1}^{m} \log p_{\text{model}}(x^{(i)}; \theta) \tag{2.3}$$

as the maximum of the function is at the same θ value and we now have a sum which aswell eliminates the possibility of having underflow by multiplying multiple very small probabilities together. Formally GANs are a structured probabilistic model (more info: Chapter 16 of Goodfellow et al. 2016) containing latent variables z and observed variables x. The generator is defined by a function G that takes **z** as input and uses $\theta^{(G)}$ as parameters, the discriminator by a function D that takes **x** as input and uses $\theta^{(D)}$ as parameters. Both players have cost functions that are defined in terms of both players' parameters. The discriminator wishes to minimize $J^{(D)}(\theta^{(D)}, \theta^{(G)})$ and must do so by controlling only $\theta^{(D)}$. This is analogous for the generator: he tries to minimize $J^{(G)}(\theta^{(D)}, \theta^{(G)})$ while controlling only $\theta^{(G)}$. In contrast to an optimization problem that has a solution that is the (local) minimum (a point in parameter space where all neighboring points have greater or equal cost), the GAN objective is a game. The solution to a game is a Nash equilibrium [Nas50], meaning that each player chooses the best possible option or strategy in respect to what the other player(s) choose. Here the Nash equilibrium is a tuple $(\theta^{(D)}, \theta^{(G)})$ that is a local minimum of $J^{(D)}$ with respect to $\theta^{(D)}$ and a local minimum $J^{(G)}$ with respect to $\theta^{(G)}$.
The generator is simply a differentiable function G. When **z** is sampled from some simple prior distribution, G(z) yields a sample of **x** drawn from p_{model}. Typically a deep neural network is used to represent G.
The game plays out in two scenarios. The first is where the discriminator D is given random training examples **x** from the training set. The goal of the discriminator here is for $D(\mathbf{x})$ to be near 1. In the second scenario, random noise **z** is input to the generator. The discriminator then receives input $G(\mathbf{z})$, a fake sample by the generator. The discriminator strives to make $D(G(\mathbf{z}))$ approach 0 while the generator tries to make that approach 1. The games Nash equilibrium corresponds to $G(\mathbf{z})$ being drawn from the same distribution as the training data. Under the assumption that the inputs to the discriminator are half real and half fake, this corresponds to $D(\mathbf{x}) = \frac{1}{2}$ for all **x**.

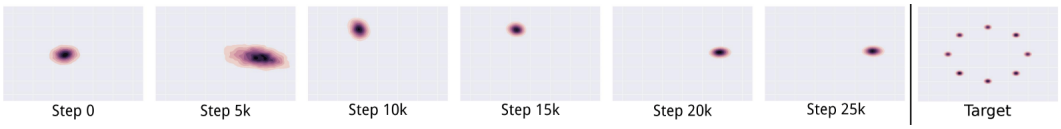

Figure 2.2.: target data distribution of a toy dataset (right) and the data distribution of generated samples. Mind that the generated sample distribution hops from one mode to the next as the discriminator learns to recognize each mode as fake. Image from [MPPS16]

Training On each step, two minibatches are sampled: a minibatch of $\mathbf{x}$ values from the dataset and one of random noise $\mathbf{z}$. Then two gradient steps are made simultaneously (simultaneous SGD): one updating $\theta^{(D)}$ to reduce $J^{(D)}$ and one updating $\theta^{(G)}$ to reduce $J^{(G)}$.

Cost functions There are many different cost functions that can be used for GANs. See chapter 4 for the ones that the techniques in this work use.

Advantages and Disandvantages

non-convergence When training GANs, while updating one player so that he makes the best possible current move and goes downhill the loss curve it is possible that the counterfeit player gets updated into going uphill the loss curve. This is in contrast to optimization problems where one tries to find a (local) minimum of the loss curve for example through stochastic gradient decent (SGD). Because there is only one gradient instead of the two in GAN objectives, the model generally makes reliable downhill progress during training. The result is that GANs often oscillate in practice due to the nature of having two players playing against each other, each trying to achieve the optimal outcome for themselves.

mode collapse happens when the generator learns to map different inputs to the same output. This results in generated data that is missing diversity. A solution is proposed in **TODO: cite the right paper**: Using a batch history of 50 images so that the discriminator also learns the distribution of images of the training data and can therefore make sure that the generator can't just generate the same small set of images. Partial mode collapse refers to scenarios in which the generator makes multiple images containing the same color or texture themes, or multiple images containing different views of the same dog. See Figure 2.2 for an example.

3. Related Work

There are many approaches of adapting images from one domain to a different one. This chapter will show some of those techniques and compare them to the ones focused on in this work.

3.1. section

4. Domain Adaptation Techniques

This chapter will give an overview over the three **Domain Adaptation Techniques** that will be compared in this work, namely **CycleGAN** [ZPIE17], **CyCADA** [HTP+17] and **SG-GAN** [LLJX18]. It will explain how these techniques work, what kind of Network Architecture they use and how training these Nets was approached.

All of the methods compared in this work are based on Generative Adversarial Networks which were initially proposed in [GPAM+14] and are explained in Section 2. **CycleGAN** [ZPIE17] adds a cycle-consistency loss which consists of an additional generator/discriminator pair with the idea that translating a previously translated image back to the source domain should yield the original image again. Formally: let $G : X \to Y$ be the mapping function of the Generator translating an image from the source X to the target domain Y. Now add mapping function $F : Y \to X$ for the second generator's translation from target back to source domain. The goal of cycle-consistency is that for any image $x \in X$ from the source domain, $F(G(x)) \approx x$ holds. This analogously also has to hold for any image $y \in Y$ of the target domain with $G(F(y)) \approx y$. As described in chapter 2, GANs implement a two player game. The loss function of this game for CycleGAN is described as

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{GAN}}(G, D_Y, X, Y) = \mathbb{E}_{y \sim p_{\text{data}}(y)}[\log D_Y(y)] + \mathbb{E}_{x \sim p_{\text{data}}(x)}[1 - \log D_Y(G(x))] \tag{4.1}$$

with D_Y being the discriminator that classifies samples $y \in Y$ as real or fake. This loss function is analogous for generator F and discriminator D_X. The cycle-consistency loss is defined as follow:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{cyc}}(G, F) = \mathbb{E}_{x \sim p_{\text{data}}(x)}[\|F(G(x)) - x\|_1] + \mathbb{E}_{y \sim p_{\text{data}}(y)}[\|G(F(y)) - y\|_1] \tag{4.2}$$

with $\|\cdot\|_1$ being the L1-norm, which is the sum of absolute deviations between x and $F(G(x))$ and y and $G(F(y))$ with $x \in X$ and $y \in Y$, respectively. The full objective for the CycleGAN method is therefore:

$$\mathcal{L}(G, F, D_X, D_Y) = \mathcal{L}_{\text{GAN}}(G, D_Y, X, Y) + \mathcal{L}_{\text{GAN}}(F, D_X, Y, X) + \lambda \mathcal{L}_{\text{cyc}}(G, F) \tag{4.3}$$

The discriminators' goal is to label the samples generated by the generators as fake while the generator tries to generate samples that the discriminator will label as real. This results in the goal of discriminators to maximize equation 4.2 and generators to minimize it. This leads to the goal for CycleGAN:

$$G^*, F^* = \arg\min_{G,F} \max_{D_X, D_Y} \mathcal{L}(G, F, D_X, D_Y) \tag{4.4}$$

CyCADA [HTP+17] adds a semantic loss to the CycleGAN approach to enforce semantic consistency (no more translating cats to dogs or drawing trees into the sky). This is achieved by doing semantic segmentation on the source image, then translating that image and doing semantic segmentation on the target image. The loss describes the difference between the two resulting label maps. Formally they begin by learning a source model f_X that does semantic segmentation on the source data. For K-way classification with cross-entropy loss this results in following loss for the classification with L_X being the source labels:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{task}}(f_X, X, L_X) = -\mathbb{E}_{(x,l_X)\sim(X,L_X)} \sum_{k=1}^{K} \mathbb{1}_{[k=l_X]} \log\Big(\sigma(f_X^{(k)}(x))\Big) \tag{4.5}$$

With this the semantic loss is defined as:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{L}_{\text{sem}}(G, F, X, Y, f_X) &= \mathcal{L}_{\text{task}}(f_X, F(Y), p(f_X, Y)) && (4.6)\\ &+ \mathcal{L}_{\text{task}}(f_X, G(X), p(f_X, X)) && (4.7) \end{aligned}$$

with $p(f_X, x)$ being the label predicted by source semantic segmentation model f_X on a sample $x \in X$. Together with Equation 4.3 this results in the full objective of the CyCADA approach:

$$\begin{aligned} &\mathcal{L}_{\text{CyCADA}}(f_Y, X, Y, L_X, G, F, D_X, D_Y) && (4.8)\\ &= \mathcal{L}_{\text{task}}(f_Y, G(X), L_X) && (4.9)\\ &+ \mathcal{L}_{\text{GAN}}(G, D_Y, X, Y) + \mathcal{L}_{\text{GAN}}(F, D_X, Y, X) && (4.10)\\ &+ \mathcal{L}_{\text{cyc}}(G, F, X, Y) + \mathcal{L}_{\text{sem}}(G, F, X, Y, f_X) && (4.11) \end{aligned}$$

And ultimately optimizing for a target model f_Y with:

$$f_Y^* = \arg\min_{f_Y} \min_{F,G} \max_{D_X, D_Y} \mathcal{L}_{\text{CyCADA}}(f_X, X, Y, L_X, G, F, D_X, D_Y) \tag{4.12}$$

SG-GAN [LLJX18] expands this by including a gradient-sensitive objective that emphasizes semantic boundaries by regularizing the generator to render distinct color/texture for each semantic region, and a patch-level discriminator that better understands differences in appearance distributions of different semantic regions (e.g. coarse texture of asphalt vs smooth and reflective of a vehicle). Prior to [ZPIE17] some works used paired images of the source and the target domain to train the networks. For example edgedrawings of shoes with a picture of the same shoe (see [IZZE16]). The cycle-consistency loss of CycleGAN makes it possible to use datasets without paired images. This makes data acquisition easier and reduces costs which results in more training data and therefore makes better models possible. As CyCADA and SG-GAN are both based on CycleGAN they aswell don't require paired images.

5. Experiments

In this chapter the three Domain Adaptation Techniques *Cycle-consistent Generative Adversarial Network* [ZPIE17], *Cycle Consistent Adversarial Domain Adaptation* [HTP+17] and *Semantic-aware Grad-GAN for Virtual-to-Real Urban Scene Adaption* [LLJX18] will be compared by analysing similarities and differences. Furthermore pretrained models of each architecture were used to generate translated images on which a pretrained deeplabv3 model then was used to perform semantic segmentation and the results will be compared on their Intersection over Union scores.

5.1. Datasets

5.1.1. Synthetic dataset: Playing for Data: Ground Truth from Computer Games

The GTA5 (Grand Theft Auto V) dataset is proposed in [RVRK16]. It contains 24966 images taken from a street view in the game Grand Theft Auto V by Rockstar Games [GTA]. The images are provided with 1914×1052 pixels and are containing moving cars, objects, pedestrians, bikes, have changing lighting and weather conditions aswell as day and night scenes. For all of these images the authors provide label images that are compatible with those of the Cityscapes dataset [COR+16]. Detouring, i.e. injecting a wrapper between the game and the graphics hardware to log function calls and reconstruct the 3D scene is used to create the images. This also enables a faster labeling process as objects in a scene can be assigned an object ID through which assigned labels are propagated to other images containing this same object. Due to being more realistic than other existing synthetic street view datasets (e.g. SYNTHIA [RSM+16]) the GTA5 dataset is very popular for training machine learning models related to autonomous driving and is therefore used in this work.

5.1.2. Real dataset: The Cityscapes Dataset for Semantic Urban Scene Understanding

The Cityscapes dataset [COR+16] is a large scale dataset containing car dashcam view images from 50 european cities. It includes 30 classes relevant for autonomous driving. The images include scenes in spring, summer and fall seasons and under different weather conditions. There are 5000 images provided together with fine annotations and 20000 together with coarse annotations. Due to the large amount of

labeled data from a dashcam view and the inclusion of scenes with different weather and lighting conditions this dataset is often used to train deep neural networks that are related to autonomous driving. Due to the popularity and the GTA5 dataset containing compatible labeling maps, this work uses Cityscapes as the real dataset for the experiments.

5.2. Comparison Benchmark

5.2.1. Intersection over Union (IoU)

The Intersection over Union is a metric often used to compare semantic segmentation methods. All of the compared techniques were evaluated using IoU. It follows the following formula:

$$\frac{\text{predicted Pixels} \cap \text{ground truth Pixels}}{\text{predicted Pixels} \cup \text{ground truth Pixels}}$$

where predicted Pixels are the pixels predicted for a specific class by the semantic segmentation model and ground truth Pixels are the Pixels containing the ground truth for that image. Usually there are multiple different classes to predict and therefore it is common to calculate the mean IoU (mIoU) over all images that have predictions. To compare how well classes themselves are predicted by a model, one can also calculate the class IoU (cIoU).

5.3. Methodology

For the comparison each technique was used to translate a sample of 500 images from the GTA dataset to the Cityscapes domain. For CycleGAN and SG-GAN each, the authors provided pre-trained models. For CyCADA pretranslated images are provided in the project repository [CyCa]. Due to CyCADA only providing 22k translated images instead of the full 25k images provided in the GTA dataset, from the randomly chosen 500 images only 450 are available here. This has to be regarded in the following comparison. To translate images with SG-GAN and CycleGAN the provided code [SG],[Cycb] and for the semantic segmentation task an implementation [DLR] of deeplabv3 [CPSA17] was used. To compute the IoU values the deeplabv3 implementation uses the benchmark code provided by Cityscapes [CSR]. All computations were run on Ubuntu 18.04 using CPU only in VirtualBox on a Windows Machine due to issues with dependencies while running the code on the tcml cluster of the university of tuebingen [tcm], a cluster for machine learning applications.

5.4. Results

The results are not as expected. As seen in Table 5.1 semantic segmentation on CyCADA-translated images is just approximately 0.9 % points more accurate than untranslated GTA images. SG-GAN is around 10 % points less accurate than CyCADA and GTA5. It worsened semantic segmentation of the Deeplabv3 model.

	Methods		
	GTA5	CyCADA	SG-GAN
category Scores			
construction	**0.740**	0.719	0.651
flat	0.709	**0.894**	0.639
human	**0.522**	0.438	0.475
nature	0.606	**0.617**	0.584
object	**0.100**	0.077	0.085
sky	**0.894**	0.841	0.518
vehicle	0.661	**0.694**	0.641
average	0.604	**0.611**	0.513
class Scores			
bicycle	**0.127**	0.055	0.062
building	**0.732**	0.669	0.608
bus	0.224	**0.345**	0.276
car	0.652	**0.665**	0.620
fence	**0.201**	0.186	0.169
motorcycle	0.304	0.365	**0.383**
person	**0.501**	0.419	0.455
pole	0.0	0.0	0.0
rider	**0.460**	0.314	0.366
road	0.657	**0.781**	0.582
sidewalk	**0.370**	0.314	0.315
sky	**0.894**	0.841	0.518
terrain	**0.304**	0.299	0.260
traffic light	**0.197**	0.174	0.181
traffic sign	**0.156**	0.108	0.143
train	0.013	0.002	**0.024**
truck	0.267	**0.364**	0.286
vegetation	0.657	0.606	**0.663**
wall	0.222	**0.298**	0.260
average	**0.365**	0.358	0.325

Table 5.1.: Intersection over Union results for evaluation on untranslated GTA5 images and translated images by CyCADA and SG-GAN respectively. Rounded to 3 decimal places

6. Conclusion

To conclude...

A. Blub

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