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Patent Public Search | Text View

United States Patent Application Publication

20250260840

Kind Code

A1

Publication Date

August 14, 2025

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VIDEO CODEC ALLOWING SUB-PICTURE OR REGION WISE RANDOM ACCESS AND CONCEPT FOR VIDEO COMPOSITION USING THE SAME

Abstract

Video codec concepts which allows more effective video composition/merging and/or a more effective implementation of gradual decoding refresh are described along with concepts of allowing video composition/merging being more effective, for instance, in terms of complexity of the composition/merging task.

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Family ID: 65278279

Appl. No.: 19/192511

Filed: April 29, 2025

Foreign Application Priority Data

EP	19155162.1	Feb. 01, 2019
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Related U.S. Application Data

parent US continuation 18597002 20240306 parent-grant-document US 12309431 child US 19192511

parent US continuation 17386329 20210727 parent-grant-document US 11968399 child US 18597002

parent WO continuation PCT/EP2020/052451 20200131 PENDING child US 17386329

Publication Classification

Int. Cl.: **H04N19/70** (20140101); **H04N19/119** (20140101); **H04N19/184** (20140101);
H04N19/44 (20140101)

U.S. Cl.:

CPC **H04N19/70** (20141101); **H04N19/119** (20141101); **H04N19/184** (20141101);
H04N19/44 (20141101);

Background/Summary

CROSS-REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS [0001] This application is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 18/597,002, filed Mar. 6, 2024, which is a continuation of U.S. application Ser. No. 17/386,329, filed Jul. 27, 2021 (now U.S. Pat. No. 11,968,399), which is a continuation of International Application No. PCT/EP2020/052451, filed Jan. 31, 2020, which claims priority from European Application No. EP 19 155 162.1, filed Feb. 1, 2019, the entire contents of each of which are incorporated herein by reference in this application. [0002] The present application is concerned with video coding and video composition.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Various applications make use of sub-pictures, i.e., a sub-divisioning of the video pictures into sub-pictures for sake of separate encoding and decoding. Among these applications, there is 360° video and gradual decoding refresh.

[0004] In case of 360° video, sub-pictures (tiles in case of HEVC) are offered separately at different resolutions as shown on the left side of FIG. 1. Users select some tiles at high-resolution and some a low-resolution depending on their viewing orientation as shown in the middle of FIG. 1 and is merged into a common bitstream as shown on the right side of FIG. 10. Whenever, the user changes its viewing orientation the set of tiles at high-resolution and low-resolution change. However, not all tiles of high-resolution turn to low-resolution tiles and vice versa. This means that only for the subset of tiles that change their resolution, a switching point may be used, which typically is a Random Access Point (RAP) for that specific sub-picture bitstream.

[0005] Gradual decoding refresh (GDR) is a mechanism to start decoding a bitstream at non RAPs and be able after decoding a given number of pictures to show the video at the same quality as if the decoding process would have been started at a RAP as illustrated in FIG. 11

[0006] In FIG. 11, for instance, illustrates four consecutive non-RAP pictures (consecutive in coding order 900) as being equally sub-divided into three tile groups tile_group0, tile_group1 and tile_group2, i.e., into regions of the respective pictures. The picture of the video 902 are indicated by reference signs 904a to 904d and the regions into which they are sub-divided are indicated using reference 906. Each region 906 is indicated as either being coded in a self-contained manner, i.e., in a manner forming a random access point, namely by having an “IRAP” inscribed therein, or not, i.e. as coded in a manner referencing other pictures, by having an “inter” inscribed therein. None of the four pictures 904a to 904d shown in FIG. 11 has all regions 906 coded as random access points. Rather, in the example of FIG. 11, merely one of its regions is a random access point, but in the example of FIG. 11, the random access point regions of three consecutive pictures, such as pictures 904a to 904c, spatially completely cover the picture area of the pictures of video 902 and accordingly, after such triplet of pictures, the last picture of such triplet, here picture 904c, is available at the decoder free of artifacts provided that the encoder took care that the non-RAP regions of that picture 904c merely referenced—for sake of prediction and/or entropy context

derivation, for instance, i.e., in terms of coding interdependencies-regions being RAP regions or non-RAP regions which, themselves, directly or indirectly having coding dependencies on RAP regions only. That is, a clean decoded picture is not achieved instantaneously as when the decoding starts with a RAP but after a while, after the decoded pictures have been gradually refreshed to get rid of the artifacts of missing references. Here, this is picture **904c**. Typically, GDR can be achieved by dividing the content in regions (e.g. tiles) and encoding them with non-aligned sub-picture RAPs.

[0007] As a consequence of any of the two mentioned scenarios, references across the different sub-bitstreams vary. Also RAP marking, for the different sub-pictures, is not clearly done as such sub-pictures are only signaled as I_SLICES types (no prediction to previous decoded picture applied) and breaking prediction for consecutive sub-pictures of the same sub-picture bitstream is only done by not including sub-pictures previous to the pictures with I_SLICE type in reference picture lists.

[0008] Despite the above existing video coding concepts, there is still a need for video coding environment allowing for a more effective video composition, for instance, and/or a more effective implementation of a gradual decoding refresh.

[0009] It is, thus, the object of the present invention to provide a video codec which allows more effective video composition/merging and/or a more effective implementation of gradual decoding refresh and/or a concept of allowing video composition/merging being more effective, for instance, in terms of complexity of the composition/merging task.

SUMMARY

[0010] An embodiment may have a video decoder for decoding a video of pictures from a data stream, the data stream having the video encoded therein in a manner according to which sub-pictures into which the pictures are spatially sub-divided are encoded independently from each other, the video decoder configured to: decode from the data stream, for each sub-picture of each picture of a set of one or more pictures of the video, a sub-picture related information which, when assuming a first state, identifies the respective sub-picture as being coded in a random access point manner and, when assuming a second state, identifies the respective sub-picture as not being coded in the random access point manner, decode from the data stream, for the set of one or more pictures, a random access point signaling granularity indication which, when assuming a first granularity, indicates that, for each picture of the set of one or more pictures, the sub-picture related information assumes a common state for all sub-pictures of the respective picture, and when assuming a second granularity, indicates that, for each picture of the set of one or more pictures, the sub-picture related information is allowed to assume different states for the sub-pictures of the respective picture.

[0011] Another embodiment may have a video composition apparatus configured to compose a composed data stream out of a plurality of sub-streams, the composed video data stream having a composed video of composed pictures encoded therein which are subdivided into sub-pictures, wherein the sub-streams have encoded therein the sub-pictures of the composed pictures of the composed video in a manner so that for each composed picture, each sub-picture of the respective composed picture, is encoded into one of the sub-streams independent from other sub-pictures of the respective composed video which are encoded into the other of the sub-streams, the video composition apparatus configured to: compose the composed data stream by putting together the sub-streams with, for each sub-stream, taking over from the respective sub-stream into the composed data stream, for each sub-picture encoded into the respective sub-stream, a sub-picture related information which identifies, when assuming a first state, the respective sub-picture as being coded in a random access point manner and, when assuming a second state, identifies the respective sub-picture as not being coded in a random access point manner, set in the composed data stream, for a sequence of composed pictures, a random access point signaling granularity indication so as to assume a first granularity, thereby indicating that, for each composed picture of

the sequence of composed pictures, the sub-picture related information is allowed to assume different states for the sub-pictures of the respective composed picture.

[0012] Another embodiment may have a data stream having a video of pictures encoded thereinto in a manner according to which sub-pictures into which the pictures are spatially sub-divided are encoded independently from each other, the data stream including: for each sub-picture of each picture of a set of one or more pictures of the video, a sub-picture related information which, when assuming a first state, identifies the respective sub-picture as being coded in a random access point manner and, when assuming a second state, identifies the respective sub-picture as not being coded in the random access point manner, for the set of one or more pictures, a random access point signaling granularity indication which, when assuming a first granularity, indicates that, for each picture of the set of one or more pictures, the sub-picture related information assumes a common state for all sub-pictures of the respective picture, and when assuming a second granularity, indicates that, for each picture of the set of one or more pictures, the sub-picture related information is allowed to assume different states for the sub-pictures of the respective picture.

[0013] Another embodiment may have a method for decoding a video of pictures from a data stream, the data stream having the video encoded thereinto in a manner according to which sub-pictures into which the pictures are spatially sub-divided are encoded independently from each other, the method including: decode from the data stream, for each sub-picture of each picture of a set of one or more pictures of the video, a sub-picture related information which, when assuming a first state, identifies the respective sub-picture as being coded in a random access point manner and, when assuming a second state, identifies the respective sub-picture as not being coded in the random access point manner, decode from the data stream, for the set of one or more pictures, a random access point signaling granularity indication which, when assuming a first granularity, indicates that, for each picture of the set of one or more pictures, the sub-picture related information assumes a common state for all sub-pictures of the respective picture, and when assuming a second granularity, indicates that, for each picture of the set of one or more pictures, the sub-picture related information is allowed to assume different states for the sub-pictures of the respective picture.

[0014] A first aspect of the present application aims at rendering video composition/merging and/or the implementation of gradual decoding refresh in a video codec more effective by introducing a random access point signaling granularity indication which indicates to a video decoder at which granularity a sub-picture related information is allowed to vary spatially within pictures of the video. The sub-picture related information identifies respective sub-pictures as being coded in a random access point manner or not being coded in a random access point manner. Namely, if the random access point signaling granularity indication which is signaled in the data stream separate from, or in addition to, the sub-picture related information, assumes a first granularity, this indicates that, for each picture of a set of one or more pictures which forms a scope of the random access point signaling granularity indication, the sub-picture related information assumes a common state for all sub-pictures of the respective picture. That is, all sub-pictures then either assume the first state signaling a random access point coding of the associated sub-picture, or a second state signaling a non-random access point coding of the associated sub-picture. If, however, the random access point signaling granularity indication assumes a second granularity, this indicates that, for each picture of the set of one or more pictures, the sub-picture related information is allowed to assume different states for the sub-pictures of the respective picture. As a consequence of the introduction of such a random access point signaling granularity indication, the task of composing such a data stream having a video encoded there into in a manner according to which its pictures are sub-divided into sub-pictures, is alleviated in terms of requirements posed onto the reservoir of one or more input video streams, sometimes called sub-streams herein, which have the sub-pictures coded there into. In particular, these input video streams need not to be coded in an mutually dependent manner where, if one sub-picture in one sub-stream is RAP coded,

temporally aligned sub-pictures of other substreams are coded in a RAP manner as well. If some substreams are coded in one common input video stream same may be coded in the usual manner where each picture of the respective input video data stream is coded in a manner where all sub-pictures of the respective picture have a sub-picture related information associated therewith in the input video data stream, which is either the first state for all sub-pictures of the respective picture or the second state for all sub-pictures of the respective picture. But temporally aligned sub-pictures in other substreams may not be coded in a RAP manner. In composing the video data stream comprising the random access point signaling granularity indication, the composer/merger is free to compose pictures of the video coded into the composed data stream in a manner so that there are pictures sub-divided into sub-pictures, the sub-picture related information of which has been adopted, or taken over, from the respective input video data stream despite at least one being a RAP while at least another is not. Thus, there is no need to introduce, for instance, one or more new states for the sub-picture related information present in the composed data stream for each sub-picture. In other words, the sub-picture related information may simply be taken over from the respective reservoir of one or more input video data streams.

[0015] The sub-pictures may be tiles or groups of tiles, i.e., sub-pictures may be independently coded from other sub-pictures of the same picture. Sub-pictures may, alternatively, be tiles or groups of tiles forming an MCTS, i.e., a motion constrained tile set, meaning that sub-pictures may, beyond this, be independently coded from sub-pictures of other pictures, which are spatially offset, wherein the pictures may, in that case, be sub-divided into the sub-pictures in a constant manner so that sub-pictures of different pictures are co-aligned or spatially aligned with the sub-picture boundaries spatially coinciding. Such a data stream including such a random access point signaling granularity indication, would thus be able to signal the sub-picture related information by way of using the same alphabet as used in the reservoir of substreams which might have been coded in the picture granularity regime. The sub-picture related information may, for instance, comprise an integer-valued syntax element discriminating between a plurality of types such as NAL unit types. Each sub-picture may be coded in one or more NAL units, each NAL unit having, for instance, such an integer-valued syntax element. Accordingly, irrespective of whether the random access point signaling granularity indication would indicate the first or second granularity, a first subset of one or more NAL unit types of the plurality of NAL unit types discriminated between by the integer-valued syntax element, would correspond to the first state of the sub-picture related information, while a second subset of one or more NAL unit types would correspond to the second state thereof.

[0016] The random access point signaling granularity indication could be contained in an SPS or VPS of the data stream with the set of one or more pictures forming the scope of the random access point signaling granularity indication comprising a sequence of picture of the video or covering the whole video. Alternatively, the random access point signaling granularity indication could be conveyed in the data stream per access unit, with the set of one or more pictures forming the scope of the random access point signaling granularity indication comprising one picture only.

[0017] Video decoders not being able to parse the random access point signaling granularity indication might identify the data stream as a non-conforming data stream in case of the sub-picture related information assuming, for any picture, different states for different sub-pictures of this picture. The other video decoders, being able to parse and decode the random access signaling granularity indication, could adapt the decoding behavior depending on this indication: they could identify the data stream as a non-conforming data stream in case of the random access point signaling granularity indication assuming the first granularity and the sub-picture related information assuming, for any picture of the set of one or more pictures forming the scope of the random access point signaling granularity indication, different states for different sub-pictures of this picture.

[0018] Additionally or alternatively, more functionalities of the video decoder could be activated in

case of the random access point signaling granularity indication assuming the second granularity, i.e., the sub-picture granularity, with the same being discussed subsequently with respect to the further aspects of the present application as these functionalities may likewise be advantageously used to achieve more effective video codecs irrespective of using the juxtaposition of sub-picture related information on the one hand and random access point signaling granularity indication on the other hand. That is, decoders according to the following aspects could only operate in the subpicture granularity regime without any need to signal the use of this regime.

[0019] In accordance with a second aspect of the present application, it is the aim to render a video codec more flexible in terms of its use with respect to sub-picture-wise coding and, for instance, with respect to its use for representing composed videos. The pictures thereof are sub-divided into sub-pictures. The aim is achieved by rendering video decoders responsive to an evaluation of the sub-picture related information conveyed in the data stream for each sub-picture. In particular, in accordance with the second aspect, the data stream having such a video encoded there into, comprises for each sub-picture of each picture sub-picture related information which, when assuming a first state, identifies the respective sub-picture as being coded in a random access point manner, and when assuming a second state, identifies the respective sub-picture as not being coded in a random access point manner. The video decoder inspects the pictures with respect to the sub-picture related information of its sub-pictures. If the sub-picture related information assumes, for any picture, the first state for all sub-pictures of the predetermined picture, i.e., all its sub-pictures represent random access points, the video decoder flushes its decoded picture buffer. Similar to the first aspect, such concept allows for composing a data stream out of sub-streams which have actually been generated for a different video codec domain where sub-pictures within one picture were obliged to coincide in sub-picture related information, i.e., all sub-picture of one picture would have to assume the same state. Nevertheless, when composing such data stream, the states of the sub-picture related information for the various sub-pictures used to compose the data stream may simply be adopted or taken over therefrom. Further, video decoder is able to, nevertheless, identify true random access points in that the whole picture may be recovered artifact-free by identifying pictures where the sub-picture related information assumes the first state for all sub-pictures of the respective picture. In combination with the first aspect, the video decoder may apply this functionality of identifying random access point pictures where the decoded picture buffer may be flushed responsive to seeing that the sub-picture related information for such pictures assumes the first state for all sub-pictures of the respective picture, if the random access point signaling granularity indication assumes the second granularity, i.e., the sub-picture granularity. Combined with the first aspect, such a video decoder may even change its scheduling in flushing the decoded picture buffer: in case of the random access point signaling granularity indication assuming the first granularity, i.e., picture-wise granularity, the video decoder could flush the decoded picture buffer responsive to the sub-picture related information assuming the first state for a first sub-picture of a certain picture in accordance with a decoding/coding order among the sub-pictures as the sub-picture related information relating to the other sub-pictures may be used to assume the same state, i.e., first state, anyway. The flushing of the decoded picture buffer responsive to the sub-picture related information assuming, for a certain picture, the first state for all sub-pictures of the predetermined picture in case of the random access point signaling granularity indication assuming the second granularity, i.e., sub-picture granularity, in turn, could be scheduled to take place when decoding the last sub-picture of that picture.

[0020] The third and fourth aspects of the present application concern the decoded picture buffer management on the side of the decoder. These aspects of the present application may be combined with any of the first and second aspects and have a similar aim as outlined above with respect to aspects 1 and 2. That is, the third and fourth aspects of the present application aim at providing a video codec which allows a composed data stream to be composed out of sub-picture related sub-streams in a manner so that the composer/merger needs not to harmonize or unify the reference

picture buffer descriptions describing the set of reference pictures ought to remain in the DPB which are signaled in the various sub-streams contributing to the composed data stream so that the composed data stream would signal, right away, at the beginning of each picture as to which pictures form, for a current picture, the set of reference pictures so that the decoder may remove all other pictures from the decoded picture buffer at the beginning of this current picture. Rather, in accordance with the third and fourth aspects, the video codec allows for the data stream to signal the reference picture buffer description which provides information on a set of reference pictures needed for decoding a current picture or for decoding at a next picture for each sub-picture of a currently coded/decoded picture individually, so that the reference picture buffer descriptions may differ between sub-pictures of a current picture. Such a reference picture buffer description describes for a current sub-picture of a current picture, pictures containing sub-pictures serving as a reference for the current sub-picture or a sub-picture of a following picture which is associated with the current reference picture by way of their origin, for instance, as there relate to one sub-video, for instance. When coded as separate sub-videos, the sub-pictures' buffer descriptions are actually indicative of reference pictures which contain sub-pictures which are of the same sub-video and are to maintained in the DPB as the sub-pictures serve as reference for the current sub-picture or following sub-pictures of that sub-video. In accordance with the third aspect of the present application, the decoder has the functionality of forming a union of the sets of reference pictures for the sub-pictures of this current picture ought to remain in the DPB according to the sub-pictures' reference picture buffer descriptions in order to mark those pictures in the decoded picture buffer, which are to remain therein, while the other pictures are removed from the decoded picture buffer such as at the end of decoding the current picture. In accordance with the fourth aspect of the present application, the decoder is capable of performing the emptying of the decoded picture in units of sub-pictures rather than complete pictures. The marking and removal of sub-pictures is performed separately for each sub-picture. Even other words, in accordance with the fourth aspect, the decoded picture buffer is managed in units of one sub-picture decoded picture buffer per sub-picture of a currently decoded picture and the marking of sub-pictures ought to remain in the respective sub-picture decoded picture buffer while the other ought to be removed therefrom is performed on the basis of the reference picture buffer description submitted in the data stream for the respective sub-picture of the currently decoded picture. As already mentioned above, the latter third and fourth aspects may be combined, for instance, with the first aspect so that the decoder may have the functionalities just-described with respect to the third and fourth aspects, for instance, in case of the random access point signaling granularity indication assuming the second granularity, while managing/emptying the decoded picture buffer in units of pictures in case of the random access point signaling granularity indication assuming the first granularity, i.e., picture granularity, in which case the decoder may be configured to perform the decoded picture buffer emptying and marking based on the first encountered reference picture buffer description for a currently decoded picture, i.e. based on the reference picture buffer description signaled first for the current picture.

[0021] A fifth aspect of the present application is concerned with POC handling. Similar to the third and fourth aspects, the fifth aspect aims at providing a video codec which allows a data stream to be composed of sub-streams having been coded separately such as using different random access point period, groups of pictures or even using different frame rates, thereby resulting in temporally co-aligned sub-pictures ought to contribute to the compose data stream which are, in fact, signaled in the various sub-streams with different POC values. The fifth aspect of the present application is combinable with any of the previous ones and aims at alleviating such a composition/merging procedure by freeing the composer/merger from having to harmonize POC values of sub-streams associated with different sub-pictures and having different origins. Rather, the video codec allows the data stream to signal different POC values for sub-pictures actually belonging the same picture of the data stream, with the decoder being configured to derive, for each sub-picture of a currently decoded picture, a final POC value for the respective sub-picture based on the decoded POC value

for that sub-picture and one or more inter-sub-picture POC compensation parameters associated with a respective sub-picture and kept updated by the decoder so that, for each picture, the final POC values of the sub-pictures are equal to each other for each picture of the video. The one or more inter-sub-picture POC compensation parameters may compensate for frame rate differences between the contributing sub-streams, different sizes of groups of pictures, different POC minimum numbers and the like. The one or more inter-sub-picture POC compensation parameters may comprise a POC offset value and POC step size difference. Some parameters may be determined by the decoder itself such as the POC offset value at random access point sub-pictures on the basis of a difference between their signaled POC values and the final POC values of at least one other sub-picture of the same picture not forming a random access point. Hints on POC step size differences may, in turn, be conveyed in the data stream so as to guide the decoder and alleviate the determination of these POC step size differences. These hints may be inserted into the data stream by the composer/merger which has access to this knowledge based on high level parameters in the contributing sub-streams.

[0022] A sixth aspect of the present application is concerned with the idea of a video codec implementing gradual decoding refresh in a manner where the decoder is aware of the gradual decoding refresh not only in terms of the point in time or in terms of the picture from which onwards the gradual decoding refresh is completed, but also in terms of meeting certain constraints on performing prediction derivation on the basis of coding parameters conveyed in the data stream during the gradual decoding refresh. In particular, in accordance with the sixth aspect of the present application, the video decoder is configured to log, for each of reference pictures of the video, a sub-division of the reference pictures into a refreshed picture region and a non-refreshed picture region. The decoder decodes from the data stream an information on a refresh renewal region within a currently decoded picture and decodes the refresh renewal region from the data stream using inter-prediction. Further, the decoder determines a first region of the currently decoded picture, disjoint to the refresh renewal region and to be coded/decoded independent from the non-refreshed picture region of the reference pictures and decodes the first region from the data stream by deriving, based on the coding parameters the signal in the data stream for the first region, the prediction for the first region from the reference pictures in a manner dependent on a location of the refreshed picture region of the reference pictures so that the prediction is independent from the non-refreshed picture region of the reference pictures. For instance, motion vectors may be clipped so as to reach out into the non-refreshed picture region, and/or padding may be used in order to fill-in portions of motion-compensated predicted blocks in reference pictures exceeding the refreshed picture region into the non-refreshed picture region. Alternatively, motion vector candidate list construction may exclude motion vectors stemming from outside the refreshed picture region. A second region may be treated by the decoder differently. The second region is disjoint to the first region and the refresh renewal region and may be decoded by the decoder including predictions from the refreshed picture region as well as the non-refreshed picture region. By this measure, the refreshed picture region continuously grows from picture to picture. The decoder is aware of the growth as the decoder has to even keep track of the growth of the refreshed picture region and has to perform the prediction derivation with respect to the first region accordingly. Rendering the decoder aware of the gradual decoding refresh has several advantages: the decoder is aware of the current refreshing situation, possible random access periods and so forth. The efforts associated with the prediction derivation and the necessity to render this derivation dependent on the location of the refreshed picture region of the reference pictures comes at almost no cost as a decoder may need to implement similar measures, for instance, at the outer boundary of pictures or the outer boundary of independently coded picture tiles. The encoder, in turn, is able to encode the coding parameters in a wider range of values as the decoder redirects some signalable states of the coding parameters from predictions which would lead to a dependency on non-refreshed picture regions of reference pictures to predictions solely depending on refreshed picture regions. Enlarging the

coding parameter signalable states, however, may lead to higher compression efficiency with respect to the coding of these coding parameters.

Description

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0023] Embodiments of the present invention will be detailed subsequently referring to the appended drawings, in which:

[0024] FIG. 1 shows a schematic diagram illustrating an environment for composing a data stream on the basis of several input sub-streams or merging sub-streams into a composed data stream, wherein a decoder decodes that composed data stream; corresponding encoders for forming the sub-streams as well as the composer/merger itself are also shown; the embodiments described with respect to FIGS. 2 to 8 are used to describe favorable functionalities and concepts which could be applied by a composer/merger and/or the decoder;

[0025] FIG. 2 shows a schematic diagram illustrating a video codec concept allowing an indication whether sub-picture granularity or picture granularity is used for random access point signalization;

[0026] FIG. 3 shows a schematic flow diagram illustrating a possible functionality of a decoder for flushing its decoded picture buffer;

[0027] FIG. 4 shows a schematic flow diagram for illustrating a favorable functionality for a decoder in performing decoded picture buffer emptying;

[0028] FIG. 5 shows a schematic diagram illustrating a decoder configured to perform decoded picture buffer emptying a units of sub-pictures;

[0029] FIG. 6 shows a schematic diagram illustrating possible measures for addressing sub-picture rearrangement of sub-pictures belonging to continuous sub-videos within the pictures of a composed video data stream;

[0030] FIG. 7 shows a schematic diagram illustrating favorable measures for a video decoder in order to handle different POC domains for different sub-pictures of the video.

[0031] FIG. 8 shows a schematic diagram illustrating the concept of FIG. 7 with respect to POC offset compensation at random access point sub-pictures in accordance with an embodiment;

[0032] FIG. 9 shows a schematic diagram illustrating an embodiment for encoder and decoder allowing for efficient gradual decoding refresh;

[0033] FIG. 10 shows a schematic diagram illustrating an example for a 360° streaming example where a video data stream is composed of sub-streams relating to different MCTS of a panoramic scene; and

[0034] FIG. 11 shows a schematic diagram illustrating a gradual decoding refresh.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0035] With respect to FIG. 1, a task of composing a data stream out of a reservoir of sub-streams is explained. This is done to explain the problems associated therewith, namely associated with the different origins of the sub-streams and the difference in, for instance, random access point positioning, associated POC values, different GOP structure and so forth just to mention a few. These problems are then solved in accordance with the embodiments described subsequently. These embodiments relate to different aspects of the present application and they may be combined mutually in order to result into further embodiments as it will also be explained further below. It should be noted, however, that some of the assumptions made in FIG. 1 are not necessary for embodiments described later on or, differently speaking, that some of the features explained and discussed with respect to FIG. 1 may be left off with respect to embodiments describes subsequently with nevertheless achieving advantages from the aspects which the respective embodiment deals with. Such circumstances will also be discussed below.

[0036] FIG. 1 shows a scenario where a data stream 10 is generated by composing same on the

basis of a plurality of, or a reservoir of, sub-streams **12**. This process of composing or merging is done by a composer/merger **14**. In particular, the data stream **10** is generated in such a manner that same has a video **16** of pictures **18** encoded there into. Arrows **20** in FIG. **1** shall illustrate the presentation time order defined among the pictures **18** of video **16**, i.e., the order at which the pictures **18** are output by a decoder **22** when the latter decodes video **16** from data stream **10**. The pictures **18** are spatially sub-divided into sub-pictures **24** as illustrated by dashed lines **26** in FIG. **1** which, thus, represent the sub-pictures' borders. In particular, the data stream **10** has the video **16** encoded there into in a manner according to which the sub-pictures **24** are encoded independently from each other. The independent encoding of sub-pictures into data stream **10** and consequently, the possibility of decoding the sub-pictures **24** from data stream **10** in a manner independently from each other, relates, at least, to sub-pictures within one picture **18**, i.e., picture-internally. For instance, in FIG. **1**, pictures **18** are illustrated as being sub-divided into sub-pictures **24** so that each picture **18** comprises six sub-pictures which are enumerated in FIG. **1** by having respective digits inscribed therein. Accordingly, sub-picture 3, for instance, is encoded into data stream **10** in a manner independent from any other sub-picture of the same picture **18**. Accordingly, the sub-picture 3 such as the one shown hatched in FIG. **1** may be decoded from data stream **10** by decoder **22** in a manner independent from the other sub-pictures 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 of the same picture **18**, i.e., the ones shown also hatched. A further characteristic of data stream **10** according to FIG. **1** is, however, that the pictures **18** of video **16** are spatially sub-divided into the sub-pictures **24** in a manner constant over the sequence of pictures. That is, their boundaries **26** spatially coincide when comparing different pictures. Beyond this, collocated or spatially aligned sub-pictures, i.e., the sub-pictures **24** in FIG. **1** having the same digit inscribed therein, form one sub-video in that each sub-picture **24** is encoded independently not only from the other sub-pictures of the same picture, but also of sub-pictures of other pictures which are spatially offset relative to the respective sub-picture, i.e., all sub-pictures belonging to another sub-video or having another digit inscribed therein in FIG. **1**. Speaking in terminology of HEVC, for instance, each sub-picture **24** of FIG. **1** may be an MCTS. Without the latter characteristic of coding independency or spatially offset sub-pictures of even different pictures of video **16**, sub-pictures **24** may be, using the terminology of HEVC, for instance, as one or more tiles.

[0037] The individual sub-videos formed by spatially co-aligned sub-pictures **24** of video **16** are shown in FIG. **1** at **28** again. All these sub-videos are, thus, composed of sequences of sub-pictures **24**. An encoder **30** encodes these sub-videos **28** independently into a plurality of, or a reservoir of, sub-streams **32**. In fact, the sub-videos **28** may be treated by encoder **30** in groups. A group of sub-videos **28** may be coded into one input data stream, so as to have a video encoded there into which is composed of the group of the sub-videos **28** in a manner coded independently from each other so that such an input video data stream is composed of a sub-stream **32** for each sub-video **28**. The sub-streams **32** are received by the composer/merger **14** which, in turn, composes data stream **10** on the basis of the sub-streams **32**. Depending on the application, merely a subset of the sub-videos **28** or merely a subset of the sub-streams **32** may, in fact, contribute to the data stream **10** and this subset may, beyond this, change or vary among the pictures **18** of video **16**.

[0038] The aim of such a composition/emerging task as done by composer/merger **14** is to perform the task in the encoded domain. That is, re-quantization of prediction residuals or re-performing motion compensation is avoided by composer/merger **14**. Each sub-picture **24** of the sub-videos **28** is, for instance, coded into one or more NAL units **34** of the corresponding sub-stream **32** and if the sub-picture **24** belongs to those ought to contribute to video **16** of the composed data stream **10**, then composer/merger **14** inserts the respective one or more NAL units into the data stream **10** as shown using the same reference sign, namely 34, but with an apostrophe in order indicate that, nevertheless, composer/merger **14** may have to adapt other coding parameters in these NAL units, other than motion vector information or prediction residual data. In accordance with the embodiments set out herein below, the composer/merger **14** is given the opportunity to lessen

portions of the sub-streams **32** which have to be adapted when forming data stream **10** on the basis of the sub-streams **32**. This also relates to parameter sets of the sub-streams **32** or the input video data streams the sub-streams are part of, when the composer/merger **14** aims at forming a corresponding parameter set **36** in data stream **10**.

[0039] The situation of FIG. **1** may be illustrated by additionally making reference to FIG. **10**. FIG. **10** shows a case where the reservoir of sub-videos **28** form sub-sections of a 360° video. In the example of FIG. **10**, the whole scene was sub-divided into 24 sub-video. Many sub-videos were offered in the example of FIG. **10**: 24 sub-videos showed this scene at high resolution and were encoded by encoder **30** into two input video data streams **38a** and **38b**, one time more efficiently using a larger RAP distance, and the other time, such as with respect to input video data stream **38b**, using a lower RAP distance, thereby leading to a less efficient compression. Likewise, two further input video data streams were offered, each of which also had the complete scene with 24 sub-videos encoded there into, again, one **38c** having a higher RAP distance, and the other, **38d**, having a lower RAP distance. The pictures **16** of the composed video data stream were illustrated as showing the complete scene. In particular, each picture **16** is composed of 12 mutually temporally aligned sub-pictures of the sub-videos coded into data streams **38a** and **38b**, and 12 sub-pictures mutually temporally aligned and temporally aligned to the high resolution sub-pictures, which are taken from data streams **38c** and **38d**. That is, the viewport was assumed in the example of FIG. **10** to be 12 sub-pictures or tiles wide. In the middle of FIG. **10**, hatching shows the selection of sub-pictures **24** within pictures **16** of the composed data stream, which contribute to the pictures **16** of the composed video at high resolution and which in low resolution. Another choice is made with respect to the different RAP distance versions. For each high resolution sub-picture **24** and for each low resolution sub-picture **24**, for a certain picture time instance, there are one or more NAL units in data stream **38a** and **38c**, respectively, being coded more efficiently using a higher RAP distance, and another **38b** and **38d**, respectively, coded using a lower RAP distance. Preferably, the composed data stream **10** is composed using the NAL units of the more efficiently coded data streams **38a** and **38c**. All of data streams **38a** to **38d** may have the sub-streams **38** encoded there into using synchronous random access points within each data stream **38a** to **38d**, individually. That is, the pictures of the video coded in each of data streams **38a** to **38d**, are subdivided into 24 sub-pictures **24** each, and for each such picture, either all or none of the sub-pictures are coded in a random access point manner into the respective input video data stream **38a** to **38d**.

[0040] Problems occur whenever the viewport changes. That is, the selection of the contributing sub-streams which contribute to the composition/merging of data stream **10** changes. In the example of FIG. **8**, 96 sub-streams are available, but only 24 contribute to the composed data stream **10** with respect to a certain picture. Assume, for instance, the viewport changes by two sub-pictures or tiles **24**. Accordingly, four of the sub-pictures **24** of picture **16** change their originating sub-streams: two of these four which stem from the high resolution data stream **38a** are now taken from one of the low resolution data streams **38c** and **38d**, and the other two sub-pictures **24** which originated from the low resolution data stream **38c**, are now taken from of the low resolution data stream **38d**. In particular, in order to reduce the time for encountering the next random access point, the low RAP distance version data stream **38b** and **38d**, respectively, is preliminarily used for these four sub-pictures **24**. The four sub-pictures mentioned change their position within picture **16**. All the other sub-pictures **24**, however, remain being downloaded in the respective more efficient version of data stream **38a** and **38c**, respectively. They do not need and random access point. As a variant, it is noted that it might be that the composer/merger **14** would be allowed to insert into a data stream **10** for those sub-pictures **24** changing from high resolution to low resolution, the corresponding NAL units of the more efficiently coded input video data stream **38c** with using down sampling from high resolution to low resolution in order to derive the reference pictures of the corresponding non-RAP sub-pictures of lower resolution.

[0041] That is, in this scenario example just-illustrated with respect to FIG. 1 in combination with FIG. 10, the following problem associated with 360° streaming has been illustrated. In particular, when a user joins a service, i.e., tunes-in into a service, i.e., seeks to see the panoramic video, a random access point picture is needed. That is, without the embodiments described later on, the compiled data stream 10 would involve that each sub-picture within the starting picture would be coded in a random access point manner. That is, all NAL units of that picture would have to be coded in a random access point manner. Speaking in HEVC language, they would have to be of the NAL unit type IDR, CRA or BLA, for instance. That is, without the embodiments described further below, the decoder would be obliged to encounter an RAP picture so as to start decoding. However, when a user switches the view port, as outlined before with respect to FIG. 10, since only some sub-bitstreams 32 are newly added to the subset of bitstreams 32 contributing to, or merged into, data stream 10, it would be very ineffective to involve all sub-bitstreams 32, i.e., even those remaining within the subset of contributing bitstreams, to have its sub-picture 24 in the starting picture coded in a random access point manner. Rather, as just-outlined with respect to FIG. 10, it would be advantageous if only some sub-picture bitstreams 32 had effectively a RAP and others didn't. This means, however, the following: the NAL unit types indicated in the NAL units 34' within data stream 10 would then have to be changed relative to their setting in the underlying NAL units 34. In particular, the NAL types of NAL units 34 of sub-pictures 24 of the starting picture which are set to IDR, CRA or BLA may not be associated with the same NAL unit type in the corresponding version 34' and data stream 10 as it would be a requirement of the data stream that if one of the sub-picture bitstreams has one of these NAL unit types, all others would have to have the same NAL unit type. In particular, decoders defined so far would, when they find an IDR or CRA (with EOS NALU before) NAL unit for a certain access unit of data stream 10, i.e., for a certain picture 18 of video 16, restart the decoding process and flush its decoder picture buffer (DPB) as any picture there cannot or is not used for reference. This means that if, for example, the scenario described before, would be implemented by using HEVC for the data stream 10 in its current version, in merging sub-bitstreams 32 together, measures would have to be taken if for some picture 18 of video 16, not all contributing sub-bitstreams 32 contained a NAL unit type corresponding to a random access point coding, but merely a fraction thereof. Rather, in that case, the RAP NAL unit(s) within such a picture 18 would have to be rewritten into a non-RAP NAL unit which process also may use a change of other headers such as slice, tile and/or tile group headers as their content is dependent on whether the NAL unit in question is an RAP or not.

[0042] Therefore, the embodiment described next with respect to FIG. 2 seeks to improve the signaling of sub-picture RAPs beyond the technologies at hand so far. For instance, there are already proposals to move away from the just-outlined obligation to assign NAL unit types to the NAL units of a data stream in a manner so that the NAL type into which sub-pictures are coded, are constant within each picture. For instance, WO 2015/059194 already proposes to use a per NAL unit based signaling, e.g., in the NALU header, more specifically a dedicated NALU type to indicate a sub-picture random access point type or a recovering point SEI message containing substitutional information substituting all parameters needed to obtain an HEVC conformant data stream. However, solving the above-outlined problem in the manner proposed in the latter document still expects the composer/merger 14 to do cumbersome tasks of “stream translations” and accordingly, the embodiments outlined below seek to overcome this issue and seek to avoid the necessity for the composer/merger 14 to spend signaling overhead of additional RAP types.

[0043] FIG. 2 shows a concept for a video codec in accordance with an embodiment of the present application concerning the first aspect of the present application. FIG. 2 shows, insofar, an embodiment for a corresponding data stream 10 and a video decoder 22 which may conform to such a corresponding new video codec. The reference sign 10 of FIG. 1 has been re-used as the data stream 10 of FIG. 1 may correspond to the description now brought forward with respect to FIG. 2 with, consequently, allowing the problems outlined above to be addressed at least partially.

[0044] That is, the video decoder **22** of FIG. **2** receives a data stream **10** having a video of pictures encoded there into. The data stream **10** has the video encoded there into in a manner according to which sub-pictures into which the video pictures are spatially sub-divided, are encoded independently from each other. Each sub-picture is coded into respective one or more NAL units **34'** of the data stream **10**. That is, the NAL units **34'** carry, inter alia, motion information and prediction residual information. It should be submitted that other than the description brought forward above with respect to FIG. **1**, the sub-picture coding independency may only relate to sub-pictures within one picture **18** of the video coded into data stream **10**. Accordingly, FIG. **2** shows exemplarily one picture **18**, its subdivision into sub-pictures **24** and the corresponding NAL units **34'** into which the sub-pictures **24** are coded within data stream **10**. Naturally, the coding may also be done to yield separately coded sub-videos as outlined above with respect to FIG. **1**.

[0045] The decoder **22** decodes from the data stream **10**, for each sub-picture **24** of each picture **18**, a sub-picture related information **40**. The sub-picture related information for a certain sub-picture **24** may, for instance, be the syntax element indicating the NAL unit type of the one or more NAL units **34'** into which the respective sub-picture **24** is coded. When assuming a first state, the sub-picture related information **40** identifies its sub-picture **24** as being coded into its one or more NAL units **34'** in a random access point manner. That is, it forms a sub-picture random access. That is, the sub-picture would be coded into its one or more NAL units **34'** in a self-contained manner without reference to any other sub-block. When assuming a second state, the sub-picture related information would identify its sub-picture **24** as not being coded in the random access point manner. That is, NAL units **34'** having such sub-picture related information **40** may have its associated sub-block **24** coded therein using coding dependencies on other sub-blocks. In particular, the sub-picture related information **40** may comprise an integer-valued syntax element for each sub-picture **24** which discriminates between a plurality of NAL unit types a first subset of one or more NAL unit types of which corresponds to the first state, i.e., the sub-picture RAP state, and a second subset of one or more NAL unit types of which correspond to the second state, i.e., the non-RAP state.

[0046] However, the decoder **22** of FIG. **2** is further configured to read from data stream **10** with respect to a set **42** of one or more pictures, a random access point signaling granularity indication **44**. It may be conveyed in data stream **10** as a sort of higher level signaling relating to more than just one picture. That is, in that case, the set **42** of one or more pictures **18** would comprise a sequence of pictures such as a GOP or the like or even the whole video **16**. Indication **44** could be, for instance, comprised by a sequence parameter set or video parameter set of data stream **10**. On the other hand, indication **44** could relate to one access unit, i.e., one picture **18** of video **16**, only. In other words, set **42** could comprise one picture. Such a per-access unit signaling could be contained in a PPS, picture parameter set, of data stream **10** or an access unit delimiter or the like. This indication **44** would have at least two signalable states/granularities. When assuming or signaling a first granularity, indication **44** would indicate that, for each picture **18** of the set **42** of one or more pictures, the sub-picture related information **40** assumes a common state for all sub-picture **24** of the respective picture **18**. In other words, the sub-picture related information **40** would assume a state equal for all sub-pictures **24** within one picture **18** within set **42**. The equality may even hold true when considering the level of NAL unit types. That is, the NAL unit type of NAL units **34'** belonging to the sub-pictures **24** of one picture **18** may be expected to be the same, i.e., equal to each other, in case of the indication **44** signaling the first granularity, i.e., picture granularity.

[0047] If, however, indication **44** indicates a second granularity, which may be called a sub-picture granularity, this indicates that, for each picture **18** of set **42**, the sub-picture related information **40** is allowed to assume different states for the sub-pictures **24** of the respective picture **18**.

[0048] That is, the decoder of FIG. **2** would be able to decode from the data stream an indication **44** and decide, based thereon, as to whether the data stream **10** is of a type where the sub-picture

related information **40** is expected to be the same within each picture **18**, or whether the data stream **10** is of a type where the latter restriction is not the case. The decoder **22** may act differently depending on indication **44** in terms of one or more of the decoding tasks described in more detail below.

[0049] In any case, however, the aforementioned composer/merger **14** is able to exploit the possibility of setting indication **44** to the sub-picture granularity in the following manner: it may compose access units of data stream **10** by putting together NAL units **34** of a reservoir of coded sub-streams **32** which relate to temporally co-aligned sub-pictures **24** of the current picture which this access unit, such as **46** in FIG. 2, refers to and may, in doing so, take over or adopt or leave unamended the NAL unit's NAL unit types so that the NAL unit **34'** in data stream **10** within this access unit **46** coincide, in the sub-picture related information **40**, with the NAL units which were put together.

[0050] In the following, some embodiments are described which describe the functionality of the decoder **22** of FIG. 2 for the case that indication **44** indicates the sub-picture granularity. All these embodiments and the description thereof shall be understood, however, to also apply the decoders not configured to read or decode indication **44** from data stream **10**. In other words, the subsequently explained embodiments shall not be restricted to the case that indication **44** is present in the data stream and that the decoder **22** is configured to read same from data stream **10**. Rather, the subsequently explained embodiments of further aspects of the present application shall concurrently be interpreted as descriptions of decoders capable of treating with the fact that certain settings, such as the random access point coding or non-random access point coding of sub-pictures, varies within one picture. These decoders may, however, not have any specific alternative functionality as it is true with respect to the decoder **22** of FIG. 2 which acts differently depending on indication **44**.

[0051] Briefly summarizing as to what has been described so far, FIG. 2 shows a concept where an additional indication **44** in data stream **10** such as a higher level signaling such as a signaling on coded video sequence level or even at bitstream level, i.e., for concatenation of coded video sequences, CVS, enables to reinterpret NAL unit level signaling such as the NAL unit type signaling as sub-picture random access indication. For instance, indication **44** could be signaled in form of a flag which could be called `sub_picture_random_access_process_enabled_flag`. When this flag would be equal to zero, for instance, the NAL unit types indicating random access functionality would be interpreted by decoder **22** as full-picture level random access. When the value of the flag would be equal to one, however, the respective NAL unit types would be interpreted as sub-picture random access points.

[0052] As an alternative, the indication **44** could be embodied as a per-access unit signaling. For instance, the access unit delimiter NAL unit could be used to indicate as to which type of random access is allowed in the access unit starting at that access unit delimiter NAL unit. A syntax element could be added to such access unit delimiter NAL unit that indicates one of the following states: 1) all sub-pictures **24** of the picture of the access unit to which the delimiter belongs contain a random access picture (IRAP), 2) some sub-pictures **24** may contain a random access picture (IRAP), 3) none of the sub-pictures **24** contain a random access picture (IRAP).

[0053] Using indication **44**, a decoder can easily identify which kind of random access functionality can be applied to the picture(s) **18** of the set **42** which defines the scope of indication **44**, i.e., the scope to which indication **44** relates, and whether one of the following processes described with respect to the following embodiments is to be carried out by the decoder **22** or not.

[0054] Before resuming the description of as to what decoder **22** does if indication **44** signals the sub-picture granularity, it should be noted that decoder **22** of FIG. 2 may be configured to identify the data stream **10** as a non-conforming data stream, i.e., one not conforming to the video codec, if the indication **44** indicates picture granularity and the sub-picture related information **40** assumes, for any picture **18** of set **42** to which indication **44** belongs, different states for different sub-

pictures **24** of that picture.

[0055] FIG. **3** shows an embodiment for a behavior of decoder **22** with respect to flushing its decoded picture buffer, i.e., the buffer within which reference pictures are buffered on the basis of which pictures yet to be decoded may be predicted. With continuous lines, FIG. **3** illustrates the functionality of decoder **22** for the sub-picture granularity case, while dashed lines show the corresponding functionality for the picture granularity case. Again, it should be noted that FIG. **3** shall, insofar, be treated as a description of both, an extension of the functionalities described with respect to the decoder described with respect to FIG. **2** which is able to decode indication **44** and act according to either modes depicted in FIG. **3**, or a description of an alternative decoder **22** for the case where data stream **10** does not comprise indication **44** and where the decoder **22** acts according to the sub-picture granularity mode inevitably.

[0056] As shown in FIG. **3**, a decoder **22** in accordance with the embodiment of FIG. **3** is configured to check, for a certain access unit or for a certain picture **18**, whether the sub-picture related information **40** assumes the random access point state for all sub-pictures **24** of that picture as shown at **50**. If yes, i.e., responsive thereto, the decoder flushes its decoded picture buffer **48** at **52**. Again, decoder **22** may apply this functionality of steps **50** and **52** for pictures **18** for which indication **44** indicates the sub-picture granularity, while applying the alternative approach illustrated by dashed lines in FIG. **3** in case of indication **44** indicating the picture granularity. In accordance with this alternative approach, decoder **22** checked, for a certain access unit or picture **18**, whether the sub-picture related information **40** for the first encountered sub-picture **24** in the access unit or for the respective picture, a random access point coding at **54**, and if yes, i.e., responsive thereto, the decoder flushes **56** the decoded picture buffer **48**. The different behaviors of decoder **22** for flushing the decoded picture buffer **48** in case of indication **44** indicating the sub-picture granularity on the one hand and the picture-granularity on the other hand, may consequently also manifest itself in a different scheduling of the flushing of the decoded picture buffer at **52** or **56** relative to the times the decoder **22** starts decoding the individual NAL units **34'** of that access unit **46** such as relative to the times the decoder **22** retrieves the NAL units **34'** of access unit **46** from a coded picture buffer. While the flushing of the decoded picture buffer **48** in step **52**, i.e., at sub-picture granularity domain, may take place at the time of decoding the last sub-picture's **24** one or more NAL units **34'** in decoding order **58**, when it is clear that all sub-pictures of the current access unit are random access points, flushing the decoded picture buffer **48** in case of step **56**, i.e., in the picture granularity domain, may take place when decoding the first sub-picture's **24** one or more NAL units **34'** in coding/decoding order **58**, namely when it is clear that the sub-picture related information **40** present in the data stream for that sub-picture indicates random access point coding, i.e., even before decoding the second sub-picture **24** of the current picture or access unit in coding/decoding order **58**. Again the functionalities explained with respect to FIG. **3** relating to the picture granularity mode may, in accordance with an alternative embodiment wherein indication **44** doesn't exist, not be implemented in the decoder **22**.

[0057] That is, FIG. **3** explained an embodiment where the decoding process is changed to flush a decoded picture buffer **48** of the decoder **22** and perform random access point operations only when it is clear that all sub-pictures **24** in the data stream **10** for a certain picture are sub-picture random access points and therefore the whole picture is a random access point itself. Accordingly, the decoder **22** may be configured to decode up to the last NAL unit **34'** in the current access unit to determine whether this access unit is a full random access point or not.

[0058] The embodiment for decoders described next with respect to FIG. **4** concentrates on a functionality/mode of operation of the decoder relating to the removal of individual reference pictures or pictures stored in the decoded picture buffer **48** no longer needed for pictures yet to be decoded. That is, while FIG. **3** concentrated on the flushing of the decoded picture buffer **48**, i.e., the removal of all pictures currently buffered in the respective decoded picture buffer, FIG. **4** concentrates on another aspect where the data stream **10** may convey reference picture buffer

description, i.e. information on reference pictures which are to remain in the decoded picture buffer **48** so as to serve as a possible basis for inter-prediction for pictures yet to be decoded. To this end, the data stream **10** conveys information on a set of reference pictures which information is updated on a per picture or per access unit basis. Similar to the sub-picture related information **40**, this information on reference picture sets to be maintained in the decoded picture buffer for future use, namely the reference picture buffer description, is something which is signaled in the data stream **10** for each sub-picture **24**, namely in its corresponding one or more NAL units **34'**. In accordance with a variant depicted in FIG. **4** by use of continuous and dashed lines, this reference picture buffer description may be an information subject to similar constraints depending on indication **44** as has been described till now with respect to the sub-picture related information **40** which was for indicating RAP and non-RAP coding. Accordingly, the reference picture buffer description as indicated in FIG. **2** using reference sign **40'** to illustrate the similarity in terms of restrictions depending on indication **44** or an similar indication which might be present alternative to or in addition to indication **44**. In particular, the set of reference pictures indicated by buffer description **40'** for the first sub-picture **24** of a certain picture **18** may be expected to be equal to the set of reference pictures indicated by buffer description **40'** for any other sub-picture **24** of the same picture **18** or to at least include all reference pictures indicated by the reference picture buffer description **40'** for the second and following sub-pictures of that picture **18** in coding/decoding order **58**. In case of indication **44** (or the corresponding indication for reference picture buffering handling) indicating sub-picture granularity, the sets of reference picture sets indicated by the buffer description **40'** for the various sub-pictures **24** of one picture **18** may be free to be different from each other in any manner, i.e. may indicate mutually different sets of reference pictures. Mutual difference means that the sub-pictures within one picture and their corresponding successor sub-pictures in the following pictures may use different reference pictures, i.e. different set of reference pictures, because of, for instance, their corresponding predecessor sub-pictures which are from the prediction references are contained in mutually different sets of reference pictures. Mutual correspondence of sub-pictures results from, for instance, their origin, i.e. they might have been separately coded into a corresponding sub-stream **32** as a sub-video **28**. The latter freedom enables a composer/merger to compose a data stream **10** on the basis of NAL units **34** of a reservoir of sub-streams **32** by, in putting together such NAL units to form one access unit of data stream **10**, simply taking over, without any modification, the reference picture buffer description **40'** which would, thus, be equal among the NAL units **34'** in the final data stream **10** on the one hand and the NAL units **34** in the reservoir of sub-streams **32** on the other hand.

[0059] Thus, before resuming the description of FIG. **4**, this means that the data stream for embodiments of Fig. does not necessarily comprise the sub-picture related information **40**. The embodiment described with respect to FIG. **2**, may include the reference picture buffer description **40'** or may not. Then, similar to the statement made above with respect to FIG. **3**, the description of FIG. **4** may be interpreted as describing possible extensions/modifications of the embodiments described so far with respect to FIGS. **2** and **3** as well as self-contained embodiment where the decoder merely implements the functionality illustrated in FIG. **4** using the continuous lines. That is, in particular, an indication **44** may be not present in the data stream.

[0060] In accordance with FIG. **4**, a decoder **22** is configured to perform picture removal from the decoded picture buffer **48** as follows. In particular, the decoder marks pictures in the decoded picture buffer **48** which are to remain in the decoded picture buffer **48** to serve as a prediction reference for pictures yet to be decoded at step **60** and removes **62** non-marked reference pictures in the decoded picture buffer **48** which are not marked and which are not needed for future display/output by the decoder, by cyclically performing these steps **60** and **62** for each picture. In order to perform the marking **60**, however, the decoder decodes **64** for each sub-picture *i* of the current access unit or current picture buffer description **40'** indicative of a reference picture set RefP.sub.*i*. The pictures in the decoded buffer **48** to be marked in step **60** are then identified **66** by

forming the union of sets RefP.sub.i for all sub-pictures of the current access unit or picture. As illustrated in FIG. 4, the removal of non-marked reference pictures in the decoded picture buffer at step 62 may, accordingly, take place at decoding the last-sub-picture 24 of the current access unit or picture in coding/decoding order 58. That is, the removal 62 may take place after parsing or after decoding all sub-pictures 24 of the current picture or at least after fetching all sub-pictures 28 or, to be more precise, all the NAL units 34' from the decoded picture buffer. Naturally, pictures not-marked are only removed if they are not needed for output, either because they are not output pictures or because they have already been output.

[0061] In case of a decoder 22 capable of operating in the sub-picture granularity mode described with respect to steps 60 to 66 as well as the picture granularity mode illustrated by dashed lines in FIG. 4, between which the decoder 22 may switch depending on indication 44, the decoder 22 may alternatively act as follows in removing pictures from the decoded picture buffer. In particular, when the picture granularity mode is active, the decoder 22 may still perform the marking 68 of reference pictures to be maintained in the decoded picture buffer 48 and the removal of non-marked reference pictures from the decoded picture buffer 48 in step 70 access unit/picture-wise but for sake of determining the reference pictures to be marked, and with respect to the scheduling of the removal 70, a different behavior may apply. In particular, the decoder may, in step 72, decode the buffer description informing on the set of reference pictures for the sub-picture 28 encountered first in coding/decoding order 58 and identify 74 the reference pictures to be marked in step 68 as that set, i.e., RefP.sub.1 in case of the indices corresponding to the decoding/coding order. Naturally, the decoder 22 may also read/decode the reference picture buffer description 40' from the data stream 10 for other sub-pictures of the current access unit or of the current picture than the first in coding/decoding order 58, but this information is not used for the marking in step 68. Further, the removal of non-marked reference pictures at step 70 may take place before decoding the second sub-picture in coding/decoding order 58 or, differently speaking, after parsing or after decoding the first sub-picture in coding/decoding order 58. Naturally, pictures not-marked are only removed if they are not needed for output, either because they are not output pictures or because they have already been output.

[0062] If, in accordance with the just-mentioned possibility, the decoder 22 also reads the reference picture buffer description with respect to sub-pictures 28 other than the first one in coding/decoding order 58 for a certain access unit, the decoder 22 may be configured to identify the data stream 10 as a non-conforming data stream in case of the set of reference pictures indicated by buffer description 40' for any sub-picture 28 other than the first one in coding/decoding order 58 comprises a reference picture which is not comprised by the set of reference pictures indicated by buffer description 40' for the first sub-picture 24 of that picture.

[0063] FIG. 5 illustrates an alternative with respect to the concept outlined above with respect to FIG. 4. In accordance with FIG. 4, the decoded picture buffer 48 has been emptied in units of pictures. Measures have been taken in accordance with the sub-picture granularity mode, to remove only pictures not needed anymore, neither for output nor as a reference with respect to any of its sub-pictures. In accordance with the embodiment of FIG. 5, the decoder 22 is capable of performing the emptying of the decoded picture buffer 48 in units of sub-pictures 24. With respect to the possible combination of this embodiment with respect to the embodiments described before, the same mode as provided above with respect to FIG. 4 applies. That is, the embodiment described next with respect to FIG. 5 may be combined with the description of a decoder of FIG. 2 or FIG. 3, and accordingly, a decoder implemented according to FIG. 5 may, or may not, be configured to alternatively operate in a picture granularity mode such as, for instance, responsive to indication 44.

[0064] The concept according to FIG. 5 is as follows. In particular, the data stream 10 decoded by decoder 22 has the video 16 encoded there into in a manner so that the video pictures 18 are constantly sub-divided into co-aligned sub-pictures 24 coded in a manner so that spatially non-

overlapping sub-pictures **24**, or sub-picture belonging to different sub-videos, are coded independently from each other. Thus, the coding took place in sub-videos **28**, thereby leading to reservoir of sub-streams **32**. As explained above with respect to FIG. **1**, each sub-stream **32** has a respective sub-video **28** encoded there into, each sub-video **28** comprising a certain sub-picture, i.e., a possible candidate for the sub-pictures **24** in pictures **18** of video **16** of data stream **10**. The sub-streams **32** are encoded independently from each other. They contain, per sub-picture, **24**, one or more NAL units **34**. As part of the encoding process, the NAL unit **34** may already have been provided with a sub-picture identifier **80**. That is, each NAL unit **34** may be tagged with such a sub-picture identifier **80** so as to enable a discrimination between the reservoir of sub-streams **32**. As explained with respect to FIG. **1**, merely a subset or, to be more precise, a proper subset of the reservoir of sub-streams **32** may have been elected in order to use their NAL units **34** which have a corresponding sub-picture of a current time stamp encoded there into, so as to form, by putting them together, an access unit **46** of data stream **10**. In putting them together, the NAL unit **34'** resulting in data stream **10** still have the sub-picture identifier **80** in there. In FIG. **5** this is illustrated in the following manner: the identifiers **80** of the reservoir of bitstreams **32** are discriminated by integers $1 \dots N$. The pictures **18** of video **16** coded into data stream **10**, have each six sub-pictures **24**. For each sub-picture **24** within one picture **18**, data stream **10** has, in the corresponding access unit **46**, one or more NAL units **34'** which are tagged using a sub-picture identifier **80A.sub.i** with $i=1 \dots 6$, with $A.sub.i \in \{1 \dots N\}$. Which sub-videos **28** or which sub-streams **32** are chosen for composing data stream **10** may depend on the application and may be constant or vary in time. In addition, each NAL unit **34** and their versions **34'** by way of which data stream **10** is put together, is indicated as comprising the above-described reference picture buffer description **40'**. As is clear owing to the separate encoding of sub-streams **32**, this information **40'** is different for different sub-streams **32**.

[0065] In performing the emptying of the decoded picture buffer **48** in units of sub-pictures **24**, decoder **22** acts as follows. Generally speaking, the decoder **22** decodes from the data stream **10**, for a currently decoded picture **18**, buffer description **40'** on the set of reference pictures for each sub-picture **24** of the currently decoded picture **18**. For each sub-picture **24** of the currently decoded picture **18**, the decoder uses then the reference picture buffer description for the respective sub-picture **24** to identify those sub-pictures and the decoded picture buffer **48** ought to remain in the decoded picture buffer **48** which are spatially collocated to the respective sub-picture, i.e., belong to the same sub-video **28**. The other sub-pictures are removed. The removal is, accordingly, done sub-picture-wise.

[0066] As depicted in FIG. **5**, the video decoder may, to this end, split the decoder picture buffer **48** logically into sub-picture DPBs **481** to **486**, one for each sub-picture **24** into which the pictures **18** of video **16** are spatially sub-divided currently. As a side, it shall be noted that the pictures **18** are illustrated in the figures of the present application to be sub-divided into six sub-pictures for illustration purposes only. Any other number may be feasible as well. Each of the sub-picture DPBs **48**; is used to buffer the sub-pictures **24** of the pictures **18** emerging from NAL unit **34'** in data stream **10** tagged with a certain sub-picture identifier **80** which is associated with the respective sub-picture DPB. In other words, the decoder **22** associates each sub-picture DPB **48**; with a certain predetermined sub-picture identifier **A.sub.i** and accordingly, each sub-picture DPB **48**; is used, exclusively, for buffering sub-pictures of previously coded pictures **18** coded by NAL units **34'** tagged with a sub-picture identifier **80** equal to that predetermined sub-picture identifier **A.sub.i**. For a currently decoded picture, the decoder **22** does the following: for each sub-picture DPB **48i**, the decoder **22** inspects whether the currently decoded picture **18** contains a corresponding sub-picture **24** the sub-picture identifier **80** of which equals the predetermined sub-picture identifier **A.sub.i** associated with the respective sub-picture DPB **48**; and, if so, uses the set of reference pictures indicated for the corresponding sub-picture by the latter's buffer description **40'** to identify those sub-pictures in the respective sub-picture DPB **48**; ought to remain in that sub-picture DPB

48; and the decoded picture buffer **48**, respectively. All of these sub-pictures which are in that sub-picture DPB **48**; belong to the same sub-video **28** by virtue of collecting in that sub-picture DPB **48**; merely those sub-pictures coded into NAL units **34'** tagged with a certain distinguishable sub-picture identifier. If, however, for a certain sub-picture DPB **48i**, no NAL unit **34'** is present in the current access unit and, accordingly, no corresponding sub-picture **24** is contained in the current picture **18**, then the decoder **22** flushes the corresponding sub-picture DPB **48**; and reassigns the respective sub-picture DPB **48**; to another predetermined sub-picture identifier of a non-corresponding sub-picture **24** of the currently decoded picture **18** which is unequal to the predetermine sub-picture identifiers of all sub-picture DPBs **481** to **486**. Instead of flushing, depending on the application, the decoder might, instead of flushing reassigned sub-picture DPBs, subject the sub-pictures contained therein to a sub-sampling or the like in order to reuse the reference sub-pictures contained therein as reference sub-pictures for the sub-pictures **24** of the predetermined sub-picture identifier to which the sub-picture DPB has been reassigned.

[0067] Before proceeding with the description of the present application with a description of further embodiments, the embodiments outlined above with respect to FIGS. **4** and **5** shall briefly be summarized again in other words. In particular, while FIG. **4** presented a concept of full picture dumping, FIG. **5** represented an embodiment for partial picture dumping. Both embodiments have in common that they deal with situations where decoded picture buffer emptying is performed not responsive to random access points, but responsive to reference picture buffer descriptions, i.e. information on reference pictures/sub-pictures no longer needed for reference. As explained above, random access points are not the only case where picture information is determined not be required any longer for reference and therefore can be (if already output) removed from the respective decoded picture buffer. In AVC or HEVC, pictures in the decoded picture buffer are marked as “used for reference” or “not used for reference” during the decoding process. In HEVC, for instance, there is signaling for what is called reference picture set (RPS). The RPS indicates which pictures in the decoded picture buffer are used for reference for the current pictures or for pictures following in decoding order, i.e., RPS (RefP) signals which picture to mark as used for reference. Those, not appearing in the RPS are marked as “not used for reference” and therefore can be removed from the decoded picture buffer if it is not needed for output (e.g., already output).

[0068] As discussed above, for 360° where only some tiles/sub-pictures are switched from high to low-resolution or vice versa, a random access point may be aligned as reference pictures might be different.

[0069] As for the RAP case, in cases where several bitstreams were stitched together, i.e., converted into sub-picture bitstreams of a new bitstream **10**, the RPS would be needed to be rewritten which process would lead to an increased complexity for such an operation to be performed by composer/merger **14**.

[0070] New video codecs might have different ways of marking reference pictures, but the problem will always apply: different references may apply for different sub-pictures within the bitstreams and if the marking processes done for the first slice/tile of an access unit as shown using dashed lines in FIG. **4**, and this needs to convey all the information for all slices/tiles in the access unit, then the rewriting of the headers would be needed when the streams are merged together.

[0071] The idea of the embodiments of FIGS. **4** and **5** is, therefore, to change the process of reference picture marking in order to allow sub-picture random access or sub-picture feeding and removal with respect to the decoded picture buffer.

[0072] In accordance with the embodiment of FIG. **4**, the decoded picture buffer removal is still done in units of pictures, but sub-picture random access is still allowed. In accordance with a possibility of implementing the embodiment of FIG. **4**, a signaling on sequence or picture level, such as indication **44**, defines whether the marking process is carried out in the picture granularity manner illustrated using dashed lines in FIG. **4**, or whether it is carried out only after the last sub-picture in the current access unit, such as after parsing or after decoding the last sub-picture's NAL

unit or slice or tile in the current access unit. The signaling switching between both methods could be included at a parameter set such as an SPS or PPS in form of a `sub_picture_management_process_enabled_flag`.

[0073] In case of the sub-picture handling, which, as outlined above, could be the only mode with a switching between both mode being left off, the process could, in accordance with an implementation example, comprise generating a temporal marked picture list for each sub-picture **24** of the current picture **18** wherein, at the end, it is checked which one is marked as “not used for reference”. For example, using the RPS signaling **40'** from HEVC as an example for reference picture indication, one could use the following pseudo code in order to identify the pictures that ought to remain in the decoded picture buffer:

TABLE-US-00001 N=number of pic in DPB. Mark N pics as “not used for reference” For
i=0...NumSubPicBitstream { If Pic in active RPS => mark that picture as “as used for reference”
}

[0074] When all sub-picture bitstreams are decoded for the current access unit remove from the DPB all pictures marked as “not used for reference” and already output.

[0075] In comparison with the approach of rewriting all RPS information, this approach may use, however, more memory in the decoded picture buffer.

[0076] In an alternative implementation of the embodiment of FIG. **4** with respect to the sub-picture DPB removal mode, a first process is carried out at each picture start, i.e., when processing the first slice/tile or sub-picture, by marking all pictures as “not used for reference” while, in addition, for each slice/tile/sub-picture parsed, another process is carried out marking slice/tile/sub-picture-wise indicated pictures as “used for reference”. Reference picture dumping according the final result, i.e., at parsing/decoding the last slice/tile/sub-picture is carried out after the reference picture was already output and all slices/tiles/sub-pictures of the current picture are passed/received.

[0077] FIG. **5** pertains to the case where the content is encoded with motion-constraint tiles, i.e., MCTS, or, more generally speaking, sub-pictures independently coded from spatially offset sub-pictures or sub-pictures belonging to different sub-videos, which sub-pictures comprises not only ones of the same picture but also ones of other pictures. In such cases, it is possible to mark sub-picture specific regions using a sub-picture identifier so that they can be removed from the decoded picture buffer. A MCTS encoded bitstream can only reference itself.

[0078] In FIG. **5**, use has been made of the possibility to mark the sub-picture regions of the pictures **18** separately. If a sub-picture was marked as “not used for reference” and that picture was already output, that region could be removed from the decoded picture buffer. Thus, it would be possible to run the process of marking separately for each sub-picture while parsing the NAL unit type and RPS at the slice/tile group or sub-picture header without having to wait until parsing all NAL units of an access unit.

[0079] This is done in accordance with FIG. **5**, by initializing multiple sub-picture DPBs **48**; based on information in e.g., some parameter set conveyed in the data stream, or by re-assignment of sub-picture DPBs or by allocating DPB space for each newly occurring sub-picture identifier (for each new sub-video). After initialization, pictures (meaning reconstructed samples and corresponding referenceable data for prediction such as motion vectors) would be stored in the sub-picture DPBs **48**; corresponding to the sub-picture identifier A.sub.i. The sub-picture identifier A.sub.i could, for instance, be one tile group ID.

[0080] Then, the reference picture set, i.e., a list that indicates which pictures need to be kept for prediction in the decoded picture buffer **48** together with a corresponding ID would be parsed and it would influence whether a sub-picture in its corresponding sub-picture DPB could be removed. Obviously, in some scenarios, the tile setup within a picture might change. E.g., in sub-picture bitstream merging scenarios, it could happen that for some time sub-picture with ID 0 and 1 are merged together and afterwards sub-pictures with ID 1 and 2 are merged together. In such a case,

the sub-picture DPBs are flushed based on the parameter set indication. Whenever the parameter set that is activated does not contain a previous sub-picture ID, the sub-picture DPB corresponding to that sub-picture is flushed. Obviously, the removing of pictures is only done if the pictures are not intended for output, i.e., they have been already output or they are not needed anymore for output.

[0081] Several notes shall be made with respect to FIGS. 4 and 5. For instance, other than described above with respect to FIG. 5, it could be that the management of the sub-picture DPBs could be varied to the extent that the number of sub-picture DPBs managed concurrently exceeds the number of sub-pictures 24 in pictures 18 of video 16. For instance, for each sub-pictures identifier 80 encountered in the reservoir of sub-streams 32 or, to be more precise, encountered in data stream 10, decoder 22 could provide a separate sub-pictures DPB.

[0082] Further, it is noted that the description of FIG. 5 concentrated on the sub-picture granularity handling with respect decoded picture buffer emptying. However, while FIG. 5, thus, describes a decoder which could act accordingly, FIG. 5 is also to be seen as a description of a decoder which is capable of acting in the manner shown in FIG. 5, i.e., in a sub-picture handling mode, as well as in a picture wise handling mode such as responsive to an indication 44 shown in FIG. 2 or some equivalent signalization. In that case, the decoder 22 of FIG. 5 could manage the decoded picture buffer 48 picture-wise in the manner depicted in FIG. 4 using dashed lines.

[0083] As to the buffer descriptions 40' mentioned above, it should be noted that they might indicate the reference pictures ought to remain in the DPB in any manner such as in form of a list, in from of an analytical term indicating corresponding reference pictures such as by way of their POCs or the like. The buffer descriptions 40' may positively cite these pictures or may cite those pictures out to be removed from the DPB.

[0084] Further, FIGS. 4 and 5 concentrated on the emptying of the decoded picture buffer, but it is clear that decoder 22 of these figures fills the decoded picture buffer using just-decoded picture content. For instance, the filling of the decoded picture buffer 48 in case of FIG. 4 could be done picture-wise in case of sub-picture handling or in both cases, sub-picture handling and picture-wise handling. In FIG. 5, which concentrates on the sub-picture-wise DBP emptying, the filling could be done also sub-picture-wise, as soon as a certain sub-picture has been decoded, it is inserted into its corresponding sub-picture DPB. Naturally, an alternative approach could be that the filling of the decoded picture buffer 48 would be done picture-by-picture, i.e., the decoded sub-pictures 24 of the currently decoded picture 18 would be inserted into their corresponding sub-picture DPBs concurrently at the end of decoding the current picture 18. In case of the picture-wise DPB emptying mode, the decoder of FIG. 5 could act as the one being in the corresponding mode of FIG. 4 (i.e. es shown in dashed lines in FIG. 4).

[0085] Further, some brief notes shall be made with respect to the above-described embodiments relating to decoded picture buffer handling. In particular, till now, it has been mentioned that sub-pictures 24 of pictures 18 of video 16 may be coded like sub-videos in a manner so that sub-pictures may depend on other sub-pictures of other pictures as long as they belong to the same sub-video, but independent from any other sub-pictures, i.e., other sub-pictures of the same picture 18 and sub-pictures of other pictures 18 which belong to different sub-videos. It might be that such sub-pictures belonging to the same sub-video change the sub-picture position within the pictures 18 of video 16 in time. FIG. 6 illustrates this case. Different possibilities exist in order to deal with such a circumstance. In FIG. 6, two pictures 18 of video 16 are exemplarily shown. In one picture 18, sub-pictures 24 belonging to the sub-video with sub-picture ID 2, 7, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are present. In a subsequent picture, it is visible that sub-pictures 24 of sub-videos with sub-picture ID 2, 7, 4 and 5 are still present, but at different sub-picture positions. Instead of sub-pictures 24 with sub-picture ID 3 and 6, two new sub-pictures or, to be more precise, sub-pictures of a new sub-picture ID, namely 9 and 12, are present in the latter picture.

[0086] Let's now assume that the sub-pictures 24 of the latter picture 18b which belong to those

sub-picture identifiers which also occur in the previous picture **18a**, are not coded in a random access point manner and, additionally, reference the sub-pictures of picture **18a**. That is, the correct sub-pictures **24** of picture **18a** would be present in the decoded picture buffer **48** of the decoder **28** at the time of decoding picture **18b**, but measures need to be taken in order to perform the referencing, i.e. the motion compensated prediction, correctly for performing the prediction with respect to the decoding of the sub-pictures **24** of picture **18b** of these sub-picture identifiers.

[0087] One possibility in order to solve this issue could be that the composer/merger **14** attends to such circumstances. He could use the technique presented in WO 2016/026526 according to which no-output pictures **18c** are inserted into the data stream **10** by the composer/merger **14** which, by use of a motion vector field which is piece-wise constant, namely constant within each sub-picture position, rearranges the picture content of such a picture **18a** so that the sub-pictures **24** still needed in a subsequent picture **18b** are arranged at their new sub-picture positions which they assume in this subsequent picture **18b**. Further, the composer/merge **14** takes care that, for such picture **18b**, the referencing of picture **18a** as a reference picture is redirected so as to declare picture **18c** as the reference picture, instead. Further, motion vector prediction should be prohibited for the sub-pictures **24** of picture **18b** which belong to these sub-videos the sub-pictures of which, which were present in picture **18a**, were redirected by the no-output picture **18c**.

[0088] Another possibility would be that the decoder **22** rearranges its pictures in the decoded picture buffer in order to generate new rearranged reference pictures as sub-pictures change their sub-picture position such as the sub-pictures of picture **18b** of sub-picture ID 2, 7, 4 and 5 in FIG. **6**. According to such a procedure, reference pictures in the decoded picture buffer would be spatially divided into their sub-pictures and the sub-pictures would be rescrambled. As outlined above with respect to FIG. **1**, such handling could also involve a spatial resampling in case certain sub-pictures **24** in picture **18b** are indicated to belong to the same picture content, with having, however, reduced spatial resolution compared to sub-pictures of previous pictures such as picture **18a**. In this manner, the transition from a sub-picture layout in a picture **18a** to a sub-picture layout in a new picture **18b** could be taken into account without the insertion of output pictures **18c**.

[0089] And an even further alternative could be that the decoder **22** redirects the motion vectors used to code the sub-pictures of picture **18b**. The decoder **22** could generate motion vector offsets for the motion vectors of the rearranged sub-pictures in picture **18b** to compensate for the sub-picture position change relative to the reference picture **18a**. The motion vector offset is, in motion compensated prediction involved in decoding sub-pictures **24** of picture **18b**, added to the coded motion vectors of the sub-streams belonging to sub-pictures **24** of picture **18b** or, to be more precise, of those sub-streams the sub-pictures of which are also present in picture **18a**. Thereby, the correct predictor of the inter-predicted blocks of these sub-pictures in picture **18a** are derived which point to the correct position in the reference picture **18a**, namely correct positions within sub-pictures belonging to those sub-videos shown in both pictures **18a** and **18b**, but at different sub-picture positions.

[0090] The sub-picture rearranging in the decoded picture buffer with respect to reference pictures and the motion vector redirection possibly performed by decoder **22** could be triggered by an observed change in the sub-picture identifier association to the individual sub-picture positions within the pictures **18** of video **16** which association describes the sub-picture rearrangement of the reference pictures and their sub-pictures in the data stream **10** accordingly. Alternatively, these processes could be triggered by an explicit data stream indication in data stream **10** written into the data stream by the composer/merger **14**, for instance such as within the PPS.

[0091] The embodiment described next with respect to FIG. **7** aims at describing a video codec environment which alleviates applications such as those described above with respect to FIG. **1**, in terms of POC (picture order count) handling. FIG. **7**, thus, describes a possible functionality of a decoder for treating data streams having a video encoded there into where the pictures **18** are subdivided into sub-pictures **24** and where the sub-pictures **24** are coded as parts of sub-videos **28**

separate from each other as it was described with respect to the above figures such as with respect to FIG. 5. The functionalities described with respect to FIG. 7 may be a certain mode of the decoder 22 which is triggered, for instance, by a sub-picture indication such as by indication 44 described with respect to FIG. 2. In particular, FIG. 7 allows for different POC values to be transmitted in the data stream 10 for the sub-pictures 24 of pictures 18 so that different POC values occur even within one picture 18. If the functionality of FIG. 7 would only represent one mode of the decoder 22, the other mode could be that only one POC value is allowed for one picture 18. [0092] If a data stream 10 is composed on the basis of a reservoir of sub-streams 32 as described above with respect to FIG. 1, for instance, it may happen that the picture order count development of the sub-pictures 24 within the corresponding sub-videos 28 in presentation time order 20 differs. For instance, the difference may stem from a different frame rate between the sub-videos 24. The video 16 would, naturally, have the minimum frame rate of sub-videos 28 contributing to video 16. Accordingly, corresponding pictures of a higher-frame rate sub-video 28 would have to be skipped by the composer/merger 14 in composing data stream 10. In encoding such a higher-frame rate sub-video 28 into its corresponding sub-stream 32, the encoding process would, naturally, have to take care that such pictures are not needed as reference pictures for other P or B pictures ought to remain and contribute to the composition of video 16 along with the sub-pictures 24 of the lower frame rate sub-videos 28. Additionally or alternatively, such difference in temporal development of the picture order count values of sub-pictures 24 in the various sub-videos 28 and the corresponding sub-streams 32, respectively, may stem from different GOP structures underlying these sub-streams 32. For instance, a different GOP length, i.e., a different number of sub-pictures 24 per GOP may apply for different sub-streams 32. Naturally, the generation/encoding process for yielding sub-streams 32 should be done in such a manner that, at least as far as those sub-pictures 24 of the corresponding sub-videos 28 are concerned, which contribute to the composition of pictures 18 of video 16, coincide in their sequential order within its respective sub-video 28 and sub-stream 32, respectively, in terms of both presentation time order 20 as well as coding/decoding order 58.

[0093] FIG. 7, thus, shows that the one or more NAL units 34 having sub-pictures 24 of the sub-videos 28 encoded there into, which are elected by the composer/merger 14 so as to be used to participate in a corresponding access unit 46 of data stream 10, by putting them together, are provided with a POC value 90. The POC value orders the sub-pictures 24 within its respective sub-video 28 in presentation time order 20 on, for instance, a GOP (group of pictures) basis. That is, it might be that the GOP values 90 within the NAL units 34 start the order anew every time a new GOP is started. Preferably, the concept of FIG. 7 allows for a composer/merger 14 to simply take over, without modification, the POC values 90 when putting together the NAL units 34 of the contributing sub-streams 32 to result into corresponding NAL units 34' in the access units 46 of data stream 10. By hatching, FIG. 7 illustrates sub-pictures 24 of the various sub-videos 28 and their corresponding NAL units 34 within the corresponding sub-streams 32 which correspond to one common time instant and one common coding/decoding rank in terms of coding/decoding order 58 so as to form together a corresponding access unit 46 in stream 10. In order to account for the differences in POC values 90 between the NAL units 34' corresponding to different sub-pictures of a currently decoded picture 18 or a currently decoded access unit 46, the decoder 22 acts as follows. In particular, the decoder 22 decodes from the data stream, for each sub-picture 24 of a currently decoded picture 18, the POC values 90 contained in the NAL unit 34'. Further, the decoder 22 manages, for each sub-picture 24 of the currently decoded picture 18 or, to be more precise, for each sub-video 28 which the pictures 24 in the currently decoded picture 18 stem from, one or more inter-sub-picture POC compensation parameters 92 ought to parameterize a POC correction function 94 which, when applied to the POC values 90 of the corresponding sub-video 28, yield final POC values 96 which are the same for each picture 18 of video 16. In accordance with an example, it might be that POC values 90 carried by NAL units 34' within one access unit

46 of data stream differ because of a different GOP length used for the coding of the sub-videos to which the sub-pictures **24** belong which are coded into these NAL units **34'**. In that case, as long as the contributing sub-videos **28** and sub-streams **32** are not changed during the composition/merging, the mutual offset between POC values **90** within one access unit **46** tends to be constant over consecutive access units **46** and data stream **10** as long as none of the contributing sub-streams' **32** GOPs starts a new GOP. The inter-sub-picture POC compensation parameters **92** may comprise, for instance, a POC compensation offset which is added by function **94** to the POC value **90** of the corresponding sub-video in order to account for the difference among the various sub-streams **32** of the current sub-picture **24** of the corresponding sub-video **28** to the most recent start of the GOP, i.e., the IRAP sub-picture **24** within its sub-video **28**. Whenever a new sub-video **28** starts contributing to pictures **18** of video **16** or one of the running sub-videos **28** starts a new GOP by having a sub-picture for which the information **40** signals a RAP, decoder **22** updates or computes or resets the POC compensation offset of that sub-video or sub-stream **32**, respectively, based on a comparison, i.e., by computing a difference, with any of the final POC value **96** of any sub-video **28** or sub-stream **32** still maintained in video **16** at that point in time, i.e. in the same access unit **46**, and not having any random access point coding there. Owing to a frame rate difference between sub-streams **32**, the inter-sub-picture POC compensation parameters **92** may also comprise a factor by which the POC values **90** are scaled using function **94** to yield the final POC values **96**. Owing to such frame rate difference, the mutual difference between the POC values **90** within the access units **46** of data stream **10** tends to, after being offset compensated using the aforementioned POC compensation offsets, be related by a mutual difference of the POC values **90** which temporally scales according to a POC step size difference. This scaled difference is compensated by inverse scaling these POC values. The decoder **22** may derive such scaling factors as part of parameters **92** from the data stream **10** which may have been written there into by composer/merger **14** on the basis of an evaluation of the frame rates underlying sub-videos **28** and the corresponding sub-streams **32**, respectively.

[0094] Thus, briefly summarizing, the decoder **22** may manage POC compensation parameters **92** to parameterize functions **94**. Thus, parameterized, the functions **94** yield, when applied to the POC value **90** corresponding to a certain sub-picture **24** of a current picture **18**, a final POC value **96**. The final POC values **96** obtained in this manner, are equal to each other for each picture **18** of video **16**. The offsets among parameters **92** may be updated by decoder **22** at random access point sub-pictures **24** in the manner described above, provided that a non-RAP sub-picture **24** is present in that picture **18** or access unit **46**, respectively. If all sub-pictures **24** of a current picture **18** are random access point coded, then decoder **22** may set the offsets to any default value equal for the sub-pictures **24**. Additionally or alternatively, RAP sub-pictures may, per se, such as by appropriately parametrizing the encoder **30**, set to the same default POC value. This value may be zero. The decoder wouldn't have to do anything under this encoder constraint. It might be, however, that the encoder **30** would be free to set POCs of RAP sub-pictures **24** of one picture **18** to different values, and for such cases, the decoder might be configured to set the POC values of these RAP sub-pictures to a default POC value such as zero or to a value equaling the POC value **90** signaled for the first encountered RAP sub-picture. The scaling factors among parameters **92** may be determined by decoder **22** each time a sub-video **28** newly contributes to the composition of video **16**.

[0095] As further outlined below, the decoder **22** may have to take care that motion vector predictor scaling performed by decoder **22** so as to hold the sub-pictures **24** from the corresponding NAL units **34'** is performed correctly. Motion predictor scaling is done when a motion vector predictor relating to a reference picture A having a POC distance a to the picture comprising the block for which the respective motion vector predictor has been used, is scaled to refer to some need POC distance b for a currently predicted block of a current picture. As the scaling is ought to be performed with respect to the POC distance relating to the POC definition of the respective sub-

stream **32**, this scaling might have to be done by decoder **22** still on the basis of the individual sub-stream's POC values **90**. In accordance with the HEVC motion vector predictor scaling, for instance, a different motion vector scaling may, otherwise, result if the frame rate scale factor among parameters **92** was not a power of two.

[0096] As already mentioned above, the embodiments described above may be combined with each other. This is not only true by combining each of the embodiment described with respect to FIGS. **3**, **4**, **5** and **7** with the embodiment of FIG. **2**, but also with respect to a combination among the embodiments described with respect to FIGS. **3**, **4**, **5** and **7** among each other in pairs, triplets or all of them. Each of these concepts alleviate the usage of the resulting video codec concept in fulfilling the task of video composition/merging outlined with respect to FIG. **1**. Naturally, the example outlined in FIG. **1** should not be treated as being limiting for the video coding codec examples set out in the above embodiments.

[0097] Before starting with the description of a further embodiment of the present application which is concerned with a further aspect of the present application which relates to a slightly different topic, namely gradual decoding refresh, the embodiment of FIG. **7** shall again be described and motivated in other words. In particular, as already outlined above, the embodiment of FIG. **7** relates to POC delta derivation. As described, sub-pictures **24**, each sub-picture may, for instance, be one tile or a set of tiles (that conform to a joint bitstream **10**) may have non-aligned random access points or different reference structures or GOP structures. As outlined above, such a use case might happen, for example when initially separately encoded bitstreams **32** are merged together into the single data stream **10**.

[0098] In such cases, the POC (picture order count) that is indicated within the sub-bitstreams **32** of each sub-picture **24** might be different although relating to one common time instant or contributing to one common access unit **46** in the merged data stream **10**. When this is the case, this leads to the burden that POC values signaled within the bitstreams **32**, namely within the NAL units **34**, will have to be rewritten by the composer/merger so that they could be merged into the resulting composed data stream so as to yield one POC value for one access unit. The embodiment of FIG. **7** lessens this burden and allows merging of such sub-picture sub-streams **32** without adjusting the POC values coded into the NAL units such as the header of each sub-picture **24**, i.e., tile group header.

[0099] A POC is used for derivation of access unit boundaries. That is, usually, a POC is used to associate a group of slices or tile groups or NAL units to an access unit **46**. This could be the alternative behavior of the decoder **22** of FIG. **7** in case of being combined with the embodiment of FIG. **2**: the concept described in FIG. **7** would be applied by the decoder **22** in case of the indication **44** indicating the sub-picture granularity, while the decoder **22** would expect each access unit **46** to have merely one POC value which is equal within the access unit **46** in case of the indication **44** indicating the picture granularity. The decoder **22** would, in case of the picture granularity, responsive to a POC value change from one NAL unit to another identify the start of a next access unit **46**. Identification of access unit interfaces separating consecutive access units **46** in data stream **10** in case of the sub-picture granularity functionality described in FIG. **7** could take place by the decoder **22** on the basis, for instance, of access unit delimiters inserted into data stream **10** by the composer/merger **14**, for instance.

[0100] Among the different processes that POC values are used for in the decoding process, there are picture output, i.e., pictures are output in an increasing or order of POC, for picture referencing, i.e., to determine which pictures are used for reference, either short term reference pictures or long term reference pictures.

[0101] The embodiment described with respect to FIG. **7** allows different signaled values of POC in the NAL units **34'** of each of the sub-pictures **24** within the same access unit **46**, while still allowing a correct derivation of the POC values **96** finally used for the just-mentioned tasks of picture output and picture referencing, when the several sub-pictures **24** are decoded from the same

data stream **10**. Random access points typically lead to a reset of the POC value with which a decoder starts a decoding process at the beginning of a bitstream. When the decoder finds an IDR, it typically assigns a POC value of 0 to that picture and derives the POC value of following pictures based on that. The following access units or NAL units within the access unit contain information such as a (tile group) header bit, signaling the POC of the access unit they belong to. Typically, the POC is signaled with LSB bits in the header of slices/tile groups and the MSB bits are derived by the decoder. This process would, if applied in the scenario outlined in FIG. 7, lead to wrong derivation of access unit boundaries, reference pictures and output order when sub-pictures of an access unit contains different POC LSB values or different POC LSB length within one access unit.

[0102] The embodiment described with respect to FIG. 7 used a per sub-picture deltaPOC computation that keeps track of the difference among different sub-picture bitstreams **32**. For instance, when the decoding process of decoder **22** starts at a regular full picture IRAP, all NAL units **34'** of access unit **46** carry the same POC value (NAL POC LSB). The POC MSB is set to 0 at this instance and the newly introduced deltaPOC. Now, in the course of the CVS, a sub-picture RAP may occur and carries a different NAL POC LSB e.g., a zero value, while other NAL POC LSBs in the access unit remain unchanged (unequal to 0). Whenever a sub-picture RAP is recognized as described above or through the state of the art signaling such as by way of a NAL unit type or an SEI message, a deltaPOC is derived for this sub-picture as the difference between the sub-picture IRAP NALU POC LSB and the other NALU POC LSBs in the access unit. A full-picture POC **96** is derived for all NALUs as a basis for the above functionalities of picture output, picture referencing and so forth. When handling the sub-picture IRAP NALUs, the full picture POC **96** incorporates the non-zero deltaPOC, while for the remaining non-sub-picture IRAP NALU, incorporated the respective 0 deltaPOC into calculation of the full picture POC **96** results in the same full-picture POC value **96** for all NALU for an access unit **46**. FIG. 8 illustrates the POC compensation according to FIG. 7 using an example, where four consecutive pictures **18a** to **18d** of the video **16** are shown, each one subdivided into three sub-pictures **24** wherein the first picture **18a** is an IRAP picture, i.e., all its sub-pictures **24** are random access points, while the second picture **18b** and the fourth picture **18d** have all their sub-pictures **24** non-RAP coded. The third picture **18c** has one sub-picture **24**, namely the upper one in FIG. 8, coded in a random access point manner, while the other are not coded in such a manner. As can be seen, FIG. 8 illustrates an easy example of function **94**, namely an addition with a constant which represents the POC compensation parameter, namely the second addend in the summations inscribed in the individual sub-pictures **24**. The first addend represents the signaled POC value, i.e. the input to the parametrizable function, while the resulting sum corresponds to the final POC value **96**. As illustrated in FIG. 8, the decoder obtained the POC compensation offset by a subtraction **98** of the final POC value for one of the non-RAP sub-pictures **24** of picture **18c** with the transmitted POC value of the RAP sub-picture **24**.

[0103] The introduction of the described full picture POC scheme may be gated through an SPS/PPS level flag. Alternatively, instead of implicit derivation of the deltaPOC value, i.e., the POC compensation offset, a parameter set within data stream **10** may indicate the deltaPOC that should be subtracted/added by way of function **94** to each sub-picture POC value **90** so that the resulting full-picture POC **96** is aligned for each sub-picture **24** of a currently decoded picture **18** or a current access unit **46** in data stream **10**. For the case that sub-picture IRAP NALUs are in an access unit **46**, additional constraints may be needed for the full-picture POC to be derivable.

[0104] For instance, it could be made a requirement of data stream **10**, i.e., a requirement of bitstream conformance, that at least one sub-picture non-IRAP NALU is present in the access unit **46**, i.e., at least one sub-picture **24** of each picture **18** is coded in a non-RAP manner, to allow derivation of the current full picture POC **96** according to which the deltaPOCs, i.e., the POC compensation offsets, of all sub-picture IRAP NALUs are to be derived. In other words, when the

sub-RAP is signaled with a new NAL unit type, with a flag and not by allowing different NAL unit types. In such a case, such signaling can only be used if one of the NAL units is not indicated that the NAL unit is a sub-RAP.

[0105] A different solution may be the following. When all sub-pictures in an access **46** are recognized to be sub-picture IRAPs, the POC MSB is reset and deltaPOCs per sub-picture **24** are calculated so that all sub-pictures result in the same full-picture POCs. For instance, the first sub-picture deltaPOC in this case is set to 0 and all other sub-picture deltaPOCs are set accordingly to result in the full-picture POC **96** then for the first sub-picture IRAP NALU in the access unit.

[0106] As has also been described above, it is possible that the sub-streams **32** participating in composing data stream **10** are of different POC step size. This could happen for instance, in a conferencing scenario. One stream could be coded at 30 FPS and the other sub-stream **32** at 60 FPS. In such a case, as has been described above, it is one option to merge at the lowest common framerate, i.e., 30 FPS. For this purpose, the highest temporal layer of the 60 FPS sub-stream **32** could be dropped, thereby reducing the framerate to 30 FPS. However, the POC step size between temporally adjacent pictures in the two streams will be different, as the 60 FPS encoder has to accommodate the higher amount of frames with using a comparatively bigger POC step size with respect to the 30 FPS encoder. In a scenario as described above where streams are to be merged together into a common bitstream, care has to be taken to ensure correct POC derivation. When POCs of sub-picture bitstreams have different step size, the embodiment of FIG. 7 allows to enforce a scaling of the POC values **90** of individual sub-pictures **24** within a coded video sequence **10**. For instance, a merger/composer **14** would be informed of or derives itself the difference in POC step size from the input sub-picture bitstreams **32** and write a respective POC scaling factor into a parameter set for all sub-picture bitstreams contributing to the composition of data stream **10** in order to align all full picture POCs.

[0107] A further notice has been made above, namely that the scaled full picture POC is used for reference picture derivation and output order, while motion vector scaling may remain to be done according to unscaled POC differences. By doing so, correct motion vector scaling as envisaged by the initial encoder is carried out.

[0108] Alternatively to keeping track of all the POC values **90** of individual sub-pictures **24**, i.e. the unscaled POC, on decoder side, a decoder can derive POC value differences used on encoder side to perform motion vector candidate scaling also from scaled POC values by using the respective POC scaling factor in deriving POC differences for the motion vector scaling.

[0109] Further, although POC offset values among parameters **92** were described to be automatically determined by the decoder, it could alternatively or additionally be, that the POC offset values are inserted into the data stream **10** by the composer/merger **14** just as it had been described above with respect to the POC scaling factors.

[0110] With respect to FIG. 9, the present application proceeds with the description of an example for a video codec allowing for gradual decoding refresh. FIG. 9 illustrates the concept underlying this embodiment.

[0111] In particular, FIG. 9 illustrates consecutive pictures **100** of a video **102**, namely four consecutive pictures ordered along their coding/decoding order **58**. FIG. 9 illustrates an encoder which encodes video **102** into a data stream **106** and a decoder **108** which decodes or reconstructs the video **102** from data stream **106**. The concept is as follows. In order to enable gradual decoding refresh, the video decoder **108** logs, for each of reference pictures of the video **102**, a subdivision of the respective reference picture into a refreshed picture region and non-refreshed picture region. In particular, reference pictures are those pictures preceding a currently decoded picture in decoding order **58** available for use as a prediction reference for the currently decoded picture or any following picture. The refreshed picture and the non-refreshed picture region just-mentioned will become clear from the following description. In particular, the decoder **108** decodes from the data stream **106** for a certain picture **100a** an information on a refresh renewal region **110** which is

shown cross hatched in FIG. 9. In the example of FIG. 9, it encompasses the left hand side third of picture **100a**. The encoder encodes, for instance, each picture **100a** to **100d** into a respective access unit **112a** to **112d** and signals in the access unit **112a** for picture **100a** the information **114** which locates the refresh renewal region **110** within picture **100a**. The indication of refresh renewal region **114** may initiate the gradual decoding refresh which causes special measures for the coding and decoding of pictures **100a** and some following pictures up to complete gradual decoding refresh on both sides, the encoder **104** and the decoder **108** as will explained in more detail below.

[0112] In particular, the region **110** located by information **114** is encoded by intra-coding only by the encoder **104**, i.e., represents a region coding in a random access point manner, and the decoder **108**, accordingly, decodes the refresh renewal region **110** accordingly, namely using intra-prediction. The coding of the other region, i.e., the remaining region **116**, of picture **100a** is not further restricted and may be encoded by encoder **104** and accordingly decoded by decoder **108** using intra-prediction and/or inter-prediction based on previous pictures.

[0113] For the next picture **100b** in coding/decoding order **58**, the gradual decoding refresh has not yet been completed. The encoder **104** encodes this picture **100b** into the corresponding access unit **112b** and signals therein, again, the information **114** on a refresh renewal region **110** within that picture **100b**. In the example of FIG. 9, the refresh renewal region of picture **100b** covers the horizontal mid third of picture **100b** and, accordingly, spatially adjoins the refresh renewal region **110** of the previous picture **100a**. While information **114** within access unit **112a** initiated the gradual decoding refresh, information **114** with respect to picture **112b** represents a continuation of this initiated gradual decoding refresh. The region **110** of picture **100b** is, again, encoded by encoder **104** by intra-prediction only and decoded by decoder **108** accordingly. As part of the initiated gradual decoding refresh, however, decoder **108** as well as encoder **104** perform the following tasks: firstly, encoder **104** and decoder **108** perform the aforementioned logging of refreshed pictures regions of reference pictures. As a gradual decoding refresh has been initiated at picture **100a**, and picture **100a** forms a reference picture with respect to the succeeding picture **100b**, the refresh renewal region **110** of picture **100a** represents a refreshed picture region of picture **100a** while the other region **116** is a non-refreshed picture region. Refreshed picture regions are indicated in FIG. 9 by being encircled by a continuous line **118**. Secondly, decoder **108** and encoder **104** determine within the currently encoded/decoded picture, namely in the current description picture **100b**, a first region **120** which is disjointed to the refresh renewal region **110** of the same picture **100b** and to be coded and to be decoded independent from the non-refreshed picture region of the reference pictures, here picture **100a**. Encoder **104** may code explicit signaling on where region **120** is, or, more advantageously, encoder **104** and decoder **108** determine region **120** as that region of picture **100b** which is collocated to the refreshed picture region **118** of picture **100a**, i.e., the immediately preceding picture in coding/decoding order **58**. In order to differentiate region **120** from the refresh renewal regions **110**, refresh renewal regions **110** are illustrated in FIG. 9 using cross hatching, while simple hatching is used for region **120**.

[0114] Both, encoder and decoder take special measures in order to encode/decode region **120** into/from the corresponding access unit **112b**. In particular, the encoder **104** does, for instance, not restrict the signalable domain of coding parameters based on which the prediction of region **120** is to be derived by encoder and decoder. In other words, encoder **104** encodes the pictures into the corresponding access units using coding parameters which determine a prediction of these pictures from previous pictures such as using motion-compensated-prediction, and using prediction residual information describing the prediction residual using which this prediction is to be corrected. Coding parameters and prediction residual information are coded into the access units so as to describe the corresponding pictures. Within the refresh renewal regions **110**, however, the encoder **104** exclusively uses intra-prediction, i.e., no prediction from any other picture is used. With respect to region **120**, the encoder **104** uses inter-prediction and does not restrict, for instance, the signalable domain of the coding parameters, but a different way of deriving the prediction of region

120 based on the signaled coding parameters is used by encoder **104** and decoder **108** compared to other regions such as region **116**. In particular, the location of the refresh picture region **110** of the respective reference picture, here picture **100a**, is taken into account. For instance, the encoder **104** is free to encode into the data stream **106** motion vectors for region **120** which would, if the prediction derivation would not be varied, lead to a dependency of region **120** on region **116**, i.e., motion vectors which actually point to portions of the reference picture **100a** reaching out into region **116**. Similarly, the encoder **104** may use motion vector prediction for coding the motion vectors for region **120**, but in construing corresponding motion vector prediction lists of motion vector predictor candidates formed by the motion vectors used for coding picture **100a**, the encoder **104** exclusively populates these motion vector predictor candidate lists using motion vectors used for blocks within the refreshed picture region **110** exclusively. The possibility, that the encoder **104** may use signalable states which are, in fact, redirected to prediction derivation results for region **120** which would actually also have been signalable by other states of the coding parameters for region **120** provides the encoder **104** with an increased possibility of increasing the compression efficiency as, for instance, sometimes those coding parameter states which are later on redirected by encoder **104** and decoder **108** to other states leading to a prediction solely depending on the renewed picture region **110** may be one which is encodable using less bits than the coding parameter state which would describe this prediction right away without any redirection by encoder **104** and decoder **108**. That is, encoder **104** and decoder **108** could, for instance, clip motion vectors actually signaled in the data stream **106** for region **120** so as to not reach-out beyond the borders of the refresh picture region **110** of the reference picture **100a**. Alternatively or additionally, encoder and decoder **108** could use padding for portions of reference picture **108** pointed to by motion vectors signaled in the data stream **106** for region **120**, which exceed the borders of the refreshed picture region **110**. Even alternatively or additionally, the motion vector candidate list construction done by encoder **104** and decoder **108** could be done in a manner so as to exclude motion vectors from populating such lists which lie outside the refreshed picture region **110** within the reference picture **100a**. The encoder **104** may, for instance, signal to the decoder **108** the chosen motion vector predictor by signaling within data stream **106** and index into such a motion vector candidate list construed accordingly. The remaining region of picture **100b**, in case of FIG. 9, the right-hand third of picture **100b**, represents a region **116** disjoined to the first region **120** and the refresh renewal region **110** of this picture **100b** and a region coded by encoder **104** including inter-prediction without any restriction to the refresh picture region **110** of picture **100a**. That is, region **116** of picture **100b** is an inter-predicted region without any restrictions.

[0115] The subsequently coded/decoded picture **100c** represents, in the example of FIG. 9, the completion of the gradual decoding refresh initiated at picture **100a**. The encoder **104** codes for this picture **100c** into the corresponding access unit **112c** the information **114** indicating the location of the refresh renewal region **110** of picture **100c** which, in case of FIG. 9 covers the right-hand third of picture **100c**. That is, FIG. 9 shows that the refresh renewal regions **110** of the consecutive pictures **100a** to **100c** starting at picture **100a** which represents the start of the gradual decoding refresh, assume mutually disjointed portions of the picture area of the pictures of video **102**. This picture **110** is, again, intra-coded by encoder **104** and decoded by decoder **108** accordingly.

[0116] For picture **100c**, picture **100b** also represents a reference picture. Its refreshed picture region **118** is determined by encoder and decoder as the union of the first region **120** and the refresh renewal region **110** of picture **100b**. This, in turn, means that during the gradual decoding refresh, the refreshed picture region **118** continuously grows. Again encoder **104** and decoder **108** determine the first region **120** of picture **100c** such as, for instance, so as to be the region spatially overlapping the refreshed picture region **110** of the immediately preceding picture, namely picture **100b**. This region **120** is coded/decoded as previously described with respect to region **120** of picture **100b**, the difference being that region **120** has to two reference picture candidates, namely picture **100a** with refreshed picture region **118**, and picture **100b** with its refreshed picture region

118. Inter-prediction is used for region **120**, i.e., is an allowed coding mode besides inter-prediction mode, but the coding parameters for region **120** of picture **100c** are redirected to states so that the resulting predictions do not incur any dependencies of the coding/decoding of region **120** from the non-refreshed regions **116** of pictures **100a** and **100b**.

[0117] From picture **100c** onward, the gradual decoding refresh initiated by encoder **104** at picture **100a** is completed and the refreshed picture region **118** covers, from that picture **100c** onwards, the complete picture are of the pictures of video **102**. Intermittently, or periodically, the encoder **104** may initiate another gradual decoding refresh and the refresh picture region would collapse to correspond to the refresh renewal region **110** of the first initiating picture of that following gradual decoding refresh.

[0118] Gradual decoding refresh as described with respect to FIG. **9** may be described as sub-picture intra-refresh padding. It could be implemented using tiles or tile groups or could be implemented without use of tiles. In the embodiment of FIG. **9**, some parts of the pictures, which could be called sub-pictures, are refreshed, namely the regions **110**, by applying intra-coding, while following pictures are inter-coded and inter-decoded in a constrained way. In accordance with the example of FIG. **9**, the pictures were sub-divided into columns, here exemplarily into $N=3$ columns, but it should be clear that the number of columns N could be chosen differently, and that even a different form of growth of the refreshed picture region **118** during such gradual decoding refresh could be chosen such as a growth in units of blocks rather than columns of the pictures. As explained with respect to FIG. **9**, at the first sub-picture RAP, i.e., the picture at access unit 0, picture **100a** in the case of FIG. **9**, the first column, let it be $\text{colldx}=0$ is encoded only within intra-blocks.

[0119] At the next access unit, $\text{AU}=1$, that is the second picture encoding/decoding order **58**, **100b** in FIG. **9**, the second column, i.e. $\text{colldx}=1$, is encoded only with intra-blocks and the first column is encoded with inter-coded blocks that can only reference samples that have been decoded in the previous picture at the column $\text{colldx}=0$. Instead of constraining the motion vectors that the encoder is able to encode in the data stream, however, the embodiment of FIG. **9** is free to also encode motion vectors which would actually lead to a dependency on other regions when column $\text{colldx}=0$. In particular, in accordance with the embodiments of FIG. **9**, the intra-refresh region is indicated, i.e. the first column in this example, and padding such as orthogonal extrapolation of the outermost pixel line, is used for referenced blocks of inter-coded blocks that exceed the column $\text{colldx}=0$ of the picture of access unit 1 if the motion vectors point out. Motion vector clipping based on the indication of the region could alternatively or additionally be applied to ensure that motion vectors of refreshed regions do not rely on non-refreshed regions. As the pictures are consecutively decoded, the refreshed region **118** increases and therefore a per-picture refreshed region **110** is indicated.

[0120] It should be noted that an alternative to FIG. **9** would be that the encoder **104** signals the consecutive location of renewal refresh regions **110** of the consecutive pictures **100a** to **100c**, i.e. of the sequence of pictures forming the gradually coding refresh, by indicating a pattern of these regions **110**. This pattern would describe the refreshing. A region per sequence could be indicated as well. Thus, this sort of information could be signaled once for picture **100a**, i.e. the starting picture of the GDR sequence **100a-100c**, thereby signaling the GDR start and the regions **110** for pictures **100a-c**. The former indication could be something that could be indicated in the PPS. Alternatively, a GDR start indication could be signaled for picture **100a**, such as in the PPS thereof, while the pattern of positions of regions **110** in GDR picture sequences starting at such GDR start picture could be something which is signaled at a higher level such as in the SPS.

[0121] With respect to above embodiments, the following is additionally noted. The above embodiments present advantageous video codec concepts. Many of them allow for advantageous video composition as outlined above. However, it should be noted that an encoder may form any of the inventive data streams **10** described above directly, i.e. without a composition of pre-encoded

sub-streams. An encoder may, in such task, exploit the advantageous characteristics of the data stream **10** present above such as the possibility of choosing RAP time instances and reference picture buffer descriptions sub-picture wise instead of picture globally.

[0122] Thus, above embodiments also relate to a video decoder—and correspond video encoder and data stream—for decoding a video **16** of pictures **18** from a data stream **10** which has the video encoded thereinto in a manner according to which sub-pictures **24** into which the pictures are spatially sub-divided are encoded independently from each other. The video decoder is configured to decode from the data stream, for each sub-picture of each picture of a set **42** of one or more pictures of the video, a sub-picture related information **40** such as a syntax element `nal_unit_type` which, when assuming a first state, identifies the respective sub-picture as being coded in a random access point manner such as when assuming state `IDR_N_LP` and, when assuming a second state such as when assuming state `TRAIL_NUT`, identifies the respective sub-picture as not being coded in the random access point manner. The decoder decodes from the data stream, for the set **42** of one or more pictures such as one for which a syntax element `mixed_nalu_types_in_pic_flag` is contained in their PPS, a random access point signaling granularity indication **44** which could be named `mixed_nalu_types_in_pic_flag` which, when assuming a first granularity or first state such as 0, indicates that, for each picture of the set of one or more pictures, the sub-picture related information assumes a common state such as `IDR_N_LP` for all sub-pictures of the respective picture, and when assuming a second granularity or second state such as 1, indicates that, for each picture of the set of one or more pictures, the sub-picture related information is allowed to assume different states for the sub-pictures of the respective picture such as `IDR_N_LP` for at least one sub-picture and `TRAIL_NUT` for at least one other sub-picture within the same picture. In other words, `mixed_nalu_types_in_pic_flag` assuming a first state such as being equal to 0, could indicate that the value of `nal_unit_type` shall be the same for all coded slice NAL units of a picture and, thus, for all sub-pictures within one picture. Otherwise, however, if `mixed_nalu_types_in_pic_flag` assumes the other state, e.g. is equal to 1, this may indicate that the VCL NAL units of one or more subpictures of the picture all have a particular value of `nal_unit_type` such as one out of a NAL unit type set consisting of one or more of `STSA_NUT`, `RADL_NUT`, `RASL_NUT`, `IDR_W_RADL`, `IDR_N_LP`, and `CRA_NUT`, while the other VCL NAL units in the picture all have a different particular value of `nal_unit_type`, namely one out of a further set consisting of one or more of `TRAIL_NUT`, `RADL_NUT`, and `RASL_NUT`. In even other words, `mixed_nalu_types_in_pic_flag` assuming the second state such as 1 may specify that each picture referring to the PPS which includes `mixed_nalu_types_in_pic_flag` has more than one VCL NAL unit, the VCL NAL units do not have the same value of `nal_unit_type`, and the picture is not an IRAP picture, while `mixed_nalu_types_in_pic_flag` assuming the other state such as 0 may indicate that each picture referring to that PPS has one or more VCL NAL units and the VCL NAL units of each picture referring to the PPS have the same value of `nal_unit_type`. By this means, `mixed_nalu_types_in_pic_flag` may be set to the first state such as 1 so as to indicate for pictures referring to the PPS such as ones originating from a subpicture bitstream merging operation that they contain slices with different NAL unit types.

[0123] Although some aspects have been described in the context of an apparatus, it is clear that these aspects also represent a description of the corresponding method, where a block or device corresponds to a method step or a feature of a method step. Analogously, aspects described in the context of a method step also represent a description of a corresponding block or item or feature of a corresponding apparatus. Some or all of the method steps may be executed by (or using) a hardware apparatus, like for example, a microprocessor, a programmable computer or an electronic circuit. In some embodiments, one or more of the most important method steps may be executed by such an apparatus.

[0124] Depending on certain implementation requirements, embodiments of the invention can be implemented in hardware or in software. The implementation can be performed using a digital

storage medium, for example a floppy disk, a DVD, a Blu-Ray, a CD, a ROM, a PROM, an EPROM, an EEPROM or a FLASH memory, having electronically readable control signals stored thereon, which cooperate (or are capable of cooperating) with a programmable computer system such that the respective method is performed. Therefore, the digital storage medium may be computer readable.

[0125] Some embodiments according to the invention comprise a data carrier having electronically readable control signals, which are capable of cooperating with a programmable computer system, such that one of the methods described herein is performed.

[0126] The inventive encoded video signal or data stream, respectively, can be stored on a digital storage medium or can be transmitted on a transmission medium such as a wireless transmission medium or a wired transmission medium such as the Internet.

[0127] Generally, embodiments of the present invention can be implemented as a computer program product with a program code, the program code being operative for performing one of the methods when the computer program product runs on a computer. The program code may for example be stored on a machine readable carrier.

[0128] Other embodiments comprise the computer program for performing one of the methods described herein, stored on a machine readable carrier.

[0129] In other words, an embodiment of the inventive method is, therefore, a computer program having a program code for performing one of the methods described herein, when the computer program runs on a computer.

[0130] A further embodiment of the inventive methods is, therefore, a data carrier (or a digital storage medium, or a computer-readable medium) comprising, recorded thereon, the computer program for performing one of the methods described herein. The data carrier, the digital storage medium or the recorded medium are typically tangible and/or non-transitory.

[0131] A further embodiment of the inventive method is, therefore, a data stream or a sequence of signals representing the computer program for performing one of the methods described herein. The data stream or the sequence of signals may for example be configured to be transferred via a data communication connection, for example via the Internet.

[0132] A further embodiment comprises a processing means, for example a computer, or a programmable logic device, configured to or adapted to perform one of the methods described herein.

[0133] A further embodiment comprises a computer having installed thereon the computer program for performing one of the methods described herein.

[0134] A further embodiment according to the invention comprises an apparatus or a system configured to transfer (for example, electronically or optically) a computer program for performing one of the methods described herein to a receiver. The receiver may, for example, be a computer, a mobile device, a memory device or the like. The apparatus or system may, for example, comprise a file server for transferring the computer program to the receiver.

[0135] In some embodiments, a programmable logic device (for example a field programmable gate array) may be used to perform some or all of the functionalities of the methods described herein. In some embodiments, a field programmable gate array may cooperate with a microprocessor in order to perform one of the methods described herein. Generally, the methods may be performed by any hardware apparatus.

[0136] The apparatus described herein may be implemented using a hardware apparatus, or using a computer, or using a combination of a hardware apparatus and a computer.

[0137] The apparatus described herein, or any components of the apparatus described herein, may be implemented at least partially in hardware and/or in software.

[0138] The methods described herein may be performed using a hardware apparatus, or using a computer, or using a combination of a hardware apparatus and a computer.

[0139] The methods described herein, or any components of the apparatus described herein, may be

performed at least partially by hardware and/or by software.

[0140] While this invention has been described in terms of several embodiments, there are alterations, permutations, and equivalents which fall within the scope of this invention. It should also be noted that there are many alternative ways of implementing the methods and compositions of the present invention. It is therefore intended that the following appended claims be interpreted as including all such alterations, permutations and equivalents as fall within the true spirit and scope of the present invention.

Claims

1. A method for decoding a set of pictures from a data stream, the method comprising: decoding, from the data stream, a flag and sub-picture related information, the flag indicating whether the sub-picture related information varies between subpictures of a picture from the set of pictures, the sub-picture related information indicating an NAL unit type of the subpictures; in response to the flag indicating a first granularity, determining that the NAL unit type is the same for all of the subpictures of the picture; in response to the flag indicating a second granularity, determining that the NAL unit type changes between at least two of the subpictures of the picture; in response to the sub-picture related information indicating a first state, determining that at least one of the subpictures is coded in a random access point manner; and in response to the sub-picture related information indicating a second state, determining that at least one of the subpictures is not coded in a random access point manner.
