

Geometric constraints and variational approaches to image analysis

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Abstract

This is the english abstract!

Résumé

Ça c'est le résumé en Français!

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Notation

Domains

\mathbb{B}	$\{0, 1\}$
\mathbb{U}	$[0, 1]$
\mathbb{Z}	Integers
\mathbb{R}	Reals

Vectors and matrices

\mathbf{A}	Matrix
\mathbf{A}_i	i -th column of matrix \mathbf{A}
$\mathbf{A}_{i,j}$	Element in the i th row and j th column of matrix \mathbf{A}
\mathbf{x}	Vector
x_i	i th coefficient of vector \mathbf{x}

Functions

f, g	Functions
x, y, z	Variables
a, b, c	Constants
\hat{f}	Estimation function
E_{θ}	Functional E with parameter vector θ

Sets

A	A set
\mathcal{A}	A family of sets
$\mathbb{1}_A$	Active vector for set A

Digital and continuous shapes

S	Bidimensional Euclidean shape, i.e., $S \subset \mathbb{R}^2$
$D_h(S)$	Digitization of Euclidean shape S using a grid of size h
D	Bidimensional digital shape, i.e., $D \subset \mathbb{Z}^2$

$B_r(p)$	Digital ball of radius r in a grid of size $h = 1$
LocalSearch	
d_D	Signed Euclidean distance transform of shape D
$R_m(D)$	m -ring set of digital set D
$\mathcal{N}_n(D)$	n -neighborhood of shape D
FlipFlow	
$D^{(k)}$	The k -th digital shape in the evolution
$I^{(k)} = I(D^{(k)})$	The inner pixel boundary of the k -th digital shape
$X^{(k)} = X(I(D^{(k)}))$	The k -th set of optimization variables in the evolution
$F^{(k)} = D^{(k)} \setminus I^{(k)}$	The k -th trust foreground
$F_r^{(k)}(p), I_r^{(k)}(p), X_r^{(k)}(p)$	Intersection of k -th sets F,I,X with $B_r(p)$
H_F, H_B	Mixed Gaussian distributions
BalanceFlow	
$O^{(k)}$	Incident pixels (inner,outer) of $\partial D^{(k)}$
$u_r(D, p)$	Balance coefficient for digital shape D centered at p
GraphFlow	
$\mathcal{G}(\mathcal{V}, \mathcal{E})$	Unordered graph with vertex set \mathcal{V} and edge set \mathcal{E}
I	3-channel colored image
O_n	Optimization band of width n

Introduction

Part I

Image Processing and Digital Geometry

Chapter 1

Variational methods in Image Processing

A track should be constructed to connect some point in space A to a lower altitude point B . Which form the track should take if we wish that a ball released at A reaches B in the shortest time? The curve known as brachistochrone or tautochrone is the answer of this puzzle solved by Jean Bernoulli and a classical problem of the *calculus of variations*.

a function whose variable is itself a function

The main object of calculus of variations are called *functionals* or *energies*, and a simple way to describe it is as a function which the variable is itself function. Minimizing functionals is a more intricate problem than minimizing a normal function, as the variable in a functional has infinite dimension. Nonetheless, by means of the so called *variations*, one can model infinitely small variations in the functional and do a rigorous analysis of its extremum, which the main tool is the *Euler-Lagrange* equation.

usual

the main tool of which

The calculus of variations founded in image processing a fertile field of applications, as image themselves can be seen as a function, and image processing tasks can be modeled as being the results of a functional minimization. In this chapter we present some popular variational techniques to approach image processing tasks, with a particular focus to image segmentation.

some
on

1.1 Inverse problems in imaging

An archaeological museum decided to digitize some of its collections and make them available for digital visits over the internet. The chosen method of digitization consists into take a set of pictures for each object, in different camera positions, execute a

	Inverse problem	Forward problem
whose	Projection: Compute vector $v \in \mathbb{R}^3$ which projection is $P(v) \in \mathbb{R}^2$	Compute the projection $P(v) \in \mathbb{R}^2$ of vector $v \in \mathbb{R}^3$
	Parameters inference: Given a set of observations Γ , infer the parameters (μ, σ) of the Gaussian distribution that describes Γ	Given a random variable X following a Gaussian distribution with parameters $(\mu = 0, \sigma = 1)$, compute the probability $P(X \leq 0.42)$
	Image denoising: Given noisy image $\tilde{\mathbf{I}}$, compute the original image \mathbf{I} , i.e., the image without noise	Add some random noise to a given image \mathbf{I} to produce noisy image $\tilde{\mathbf{I}}$
	Image inpainting: Given image $\tilde{\mathbf{I}}$ with a missing patch, reconstruct the removed patch	Remove a patch from image \mathbf{I}
	Image segmentation: Given image I , find the labeled partition \mathcal{I}	Given a labeled partition \mathcal{I} of some image I , assemble the pieces to create image I

Table 1.1: Examples of inverse problems and its direct versions. Inverse problems are characterized by uncertainty and parameter inference.

stereo algorithm to estimate point depths and *reconstruct* finally reconstruct the 3D object. The stereo and reconstruction are examples of *inverse problems* in imaging.

Usually, inverse problems are characterized by a degree of *uncertainty* or *lack of information*. The 2D pictures in the problem above miss depth information, that should be *inferred* by the stereo algorithm. On the other hand, if the shape geometry was known, e.g., the values of mean curvature were known for every infinitesimal point of the shape, then constructing a digital 3D representation would be a *forward problem*.

We can find examples of inverse problems in several branches of mathematics [Kir96], geophysics [Zhd15], natural language processing [SY05], astronomy [Luc94] and the list goes on. The image processing field itself is plenty of them [BB98]. In fact, a great part of real world applications consists into *infer* parameters of some model, i.e., an inverse problem. In [Table 1.1](#) we list some examples of inverse problems and its corresponding forward version.

Another characteristic of inverse problems is that they are usually *ill-posed*. A problem is said to be ill-posed if at least one of the properties below *are* not respected

- 1. A solution exists and it is unique;
- 2. The solution changes continuously with its parameters

is
infering

In order to solve ill-posed problems one should include additional information, i.e., create assumptions over the properties of the **sought** solution. In the museum problem, for example, one may assume that missing patches of the reconstructed surface should be filled by patches of minimal area. The process of including additional information in ill-posed problems is called *regularization* and its goal is to better condition an ill-posed problem and in the best scenario, transform it into a well-posed one.

Next, we describe the image model used in this thesis and give a precise definition of the main image problems discussed further on. **Examples are given in ??**

Examples of what ?

Image model

For matters of simplicity, we limit our discussion to grayscale images, the concepts being **extendable** to multichannel images. It is convenient to have in mind two different representations of an image.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Discrete: } & \mathbf{I} \in \mathbb{F}^{m \times n} \\ \text{Continuous: } & f_{\mathbf{I}} : \Omega \subset \mathbb{R}^2 \rightarrow [0, 1], \end{aligned}$$

where \mathbb{F} is a finite set. In this thesis, we define such set as

$$\mathbb{F} = \left\{ \frac{i}{255} \mid i \in \mathbb{N}, i \leq 255 \right\}. \quad (1.1)$$

The discrete representation is interpreted as a sampling of $m \times n$ elements (pixels) of the continuous representation $f_{\mathbf{I}}$.

Image denoising

Given an image $f_{\tilde{\mathbf{I}}}$ corrupted with some noise from an external source, *image denoising* consists in to find an estimation $f_{\hat{\mathbf{I}}}$ of the original image that respects some quality criteria, usually encoded by the minimum of a functional E .

Given $f_{\tilde{\mathbf{I}}}$, find estimation $f_{\hat{\mathbf{I}}}$ such that

$$f_{\hat{\mathbf{I}}} = \arg \min_f E(f, f_{\tilde{\mathbf{I}}})$$

Applications: **Restauration** of old pictures; enhancement of satellite images.

restoration

Image segmentation

in finding a

Given an image f_I , the *image segmentation* problem consists in to find partition \mathcal{I} of f_I such that each element of \mathcal{I} is identified with some desired property, usually encoded by the minimum of some functional E

Given $f_I : \Omega \rightarrow [0, 1]$ and a positive integer n , find partition $\mathcal{I}^* = \{\Omega_i \subset \Omega \mid i \leq n\}$ such that

$$\mathcal{I}^* = \arg \min_{\mathcal{I}} E(\mathcal{I}, f_I) \quad \text{subject to} \quad \begin{array}{l} \forall i \neq j : \Omega_i \cap \Omega_j = \emptyset \\ \bigcup_i^n \Omega_i = \Omega \end{array}$$

Applications: enhance blood vessels in angiograms; track roads in satellite images; identify objects in a scene.

Image inpainting

Given an image $f_{\tilde{I}}$ with a collection of missing patches \mathcal{P} , *image inpainting* consists in to create an image f_I with the reconstructed missing patches such that a quality criteria, encoded as the minimum of some functional, is respected

Given $f_{\tilde{I}}$ and missing patches \mathcal{P} , find image f_I such that

$$f_I = \arg \min_f E(f, f_{\tilde{I}}) \quad \text{subject to } f(\Omega \setminus \mathcal{P}) = f_{\tilde{I}}(\Omega \setminus \mathcal{P}).$$

Applications: removal of undesired objects in a scene; restauration of old pictures.

I would provide figures/images to illustrate the different applications (and examples of processing methods that provide reasonable results)

1.2 Bayesian rationale and total variation

As remarked in the previous section, inverse problems involve some level of uncertainty about the solution. In order to solve an ill-posed problem we need to regularize it by including additional information, or make assumptions. otherwise said

The maximum a posteriori method was first introduced in the image processing community in the work of [GG84] and we are going to reproduce here the rational for image denoising. We make two assumptions

1. The noisy image \tilde{I} was obtained by addition of a normal Gaussian noise ($\mu = 0, \sigma = 1$) to the original image, i.e.,

$$\tilde{I} = I + N, \tag{A.1}$$



(a) Original image



(b) 10-partition as in [CCP08]



(c) Noisy image



(d) Image denoised with FISTA [BT09]

variation inpainting. Finally we provide a source code for the a
er of a certain energy functional. A method is local if the infor
mation from the known part of the image, usually weighted by
that is, when starting with infinitely many particles, the process i
g limit in some suitable sense. Our limiting object will be a coale
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(e) Inpainting mask



(f) Inpainted image with [FFA15]

Figure 1.1: Imaging problems examples

Good examples : you must reference the figure in the text when you speak of applications

where \mathbf{N} is a $(m \times n)$ matrix of random variables $\mathbf{N}_{i,j}$ and $Pr(\mathbf{N}_{i,j} = n) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} \exp(-\frac{n^2}{2})$.

2. Given some function ρ , a candidate image estimation \mathbf{C} has probability

$$Pr(\mathbf{C}) = \exp(-\rho(\mathbf{C})). \quad \text{\textcolor{blue}{\exp}} \quad (\text{A.2})$$

We estimate the unknown original image \mathbf{I} as the image $\widehat{\mathbf{I}}$ that is more likely to occur. Applying Bayes' theorem we obtain

$$\widehat{\mathbf{I}} = \arg \max_{\mathbf{C}} Pr(\mathbf{C} | \widetilde{\mathbf{I}}) = \arg \max_{\mathbf{C}} \frac{Pr(\widetilde{\mathbf{I}} | \mathbf{C}) Pr(\mathbf{C})}{Pr(\widetilde{\mathbf{I}})}. \quad (\text{1.4})$$

We have already all the elements to expand [Equation \(1.4\)](#). The probability of having the corrupted image $\widetilde{\mathbf{I}}$ given a candidate image \mathbf{C} is derived from [Equation \(A.1\)](#), i.e.,

$$Pr(\widetilde{\mathbf{I}} | \mathbf{C}) = Pr(\mathbf{N} = \widetilde{\mathbf{I}} - \mathbf{C}) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} \exp\left(-\frac{\|\widetilde{\mathbf{I}} - \mathbf{C}\|^2}{2}\right). \quad (\text{1.5})$$

The denominator term is computed as the joint probability

$$Pr(\widetilde{\mathbf{I}}) = \sum_{\mathbf{J} \in \mathbb{F}^{m \times n}} Pr(\widetilde{\mathbf{I}} | \mathbf{J}) Pr(\mathbf{J}) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} \sum_{\mathbf{J} \in \mathbb{F}^{m \times n}} \exp\left(-\frac{1}{2} \|\widetilde{\mathbf{I}} - \mathbf{J}\|^2 - \rho(\mathbf{J})\right). \quad (\text{1.6})$$

Substituting [Equations \(1.5\)](#) and [\(1.6\)](#) in [Equation \(1.4\)](#) we obtain

$$\widehat{\mathbf{I}} = \arg \max_{\mathbf{C}} \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} \frac{\exp\left(-\frac{1}{2} \|\widetilde{\mathbf{I}} - \mathbf{C}\|^2 - \rho(\mathbf{C})\right)}{\sum_{\mathbf{J} \in \mathbb{F}^{m \times n}} \exp\left(-\frac{1}{2} \|\widetilde{\mathbf{I}} - \mathbf{J}\|^2 - \rho(\mathbf{J})\right)} \quad (\text{1.7})$$

Finnaly, solving [Equation \(1.7\)](#) is equivalent to solve

$$\widehat{\mathbf{I}} = \arg \min_{\mathbf{C}} \frac{1}{2} \|\tilde{\mathbf{I}} + \mathbf{C}\|^2 + \rho(\mathbf{C}). \quad (1.8)$$

The first term appears so often in imaging problems that it has a special name: *data fidelity*. In the denoising problem, the data fidelity term appeared as a consequence of the Gaussian noise model assumption. The second term is also a regularization term and it favors images that respect some desirable property for the problem to be solved. Since natural images have a higher spatial dependency, a reasonable guess for ρ would be a function that has lower value for piecewise smooth data, i.e., images composed by closed regions with smooth variations in its interior but possibly strong discontinuities in their boundaries.

Tikhonov regularization

The classical way to optimize Equation (1.8) is to shift it to a continuous setting, analytically derive some optimization properties and then use these properties to solve the problem in a discrete setting. The continuous reformulation of Equation (1.8) consists in to optimize the energy functional below

optimizing

$$f_{\tilde{\mathbf{I}}} = \arg \min_f F(f) = \frac{1}{2} \int_{\Omega} \|f_{\tilde{\mathbf{I}}} - f\|^2 dx + R(f), \quad (1.9)$$

where R is a functional derived from the choice of ρ . A popular choice for R is to define it as the L^2 norm of ∇f , also called the *Tikhonov regularization term*. Equation (1.9) is rewritten as

$$f_{\tilde{\mathbf{I}}} = \arg \min_f F(f) = \frac{1}{2} \int_{\Omega} \|f_{\tilde{\mathbf{I}}} - f\|^2 dx + \int_{\Omega} \|\nabla f\|^2 dx. \quad (1.10)$$

Euler-Lagrange equation

We can establish some necessary optimization conditions for Equation (1.10) by deriving its *Euler-Lagrange equation*. Assume that function g minimizes functional F , i.e.,

$$g = \arg \min_f F(f).$$

Further, assume that there exists a function w that agrees with g at the boundary of f' domain, i.e., $w(x) = 0, \forall x \in \partial\Omega$. Define the function h as

$$h(\epsilon) = F(g + \epsilon w)$$

Therefore, h has a minimum at $\epsilon = 0$. Thus,

$$\begin{aligned} 0 = \frac{dh}{d\epsilon}_{|\epsilon=0} &= \frac{d}{d\epsilon}_{|\epsilon=0} \frac{1}{2} \int_{\Omega} \|f_{\tilde{\mathbf{I}}} - g - \epsilon w\|^2 + \|\nabla(g + \epsilon w)\|^2 \\ &=_{|\epsilon=0} \frac{1}{2} \int_{\Omega} 2\|f_{\tilde{\mathbf{I}}} - g - \epsilon w\| \frac{(f_{\tilde{\mathbf{I}}} - g - \epsilon w)}{\|f_{\tilde{\mathbf{I}}} - g - \epsilon w\|} w + 2\|\nabla(g + \epsilon w)\| \frac{(\nabla g + \epsilon w)}{\|\nabla(g + \epsilon w)\|} \nabla w \\ &= \int_{\Omega} (f_{\tilde{\mathbf{I}}} - g)w + (\nabla g)\nabla w. \end{aligned}$$

Applying integration by parts and using the fact that $w(x) = 0, \forall x \in \partial\Omega$.

$$0 = \int_{\Omega} (f_{\tilde{\mathbf{I}}} - g - \Delta g)w$$

Since w could be any function, we can write

$$f_{\tilde{\mathbf{I}}} - g - \Delta g = 0 \tag{1.11}$$

Therefore, if g is a minimum of [Equation \(1.9\)](#), then it respects the convex [Equation \(1.11\)](#). Hence, given an initial solution f , one can execute a descent method (gradient descent, for example) to find its minimum. In practice, [Equation \(1.9\)](#) is discretized using the samplings $\widehat{\mathbf{I}}, \widetilde{\mathbf{I}}$ of $f_{\widehat{\mathbf{I}}}, f_{\widetilde{\mathbf{I}}}$ and a finite differences scheme is defined to estimate the Laplacian Δ .

The Tikhonov term favors images with smooth variations in color, but the smoothness is not restricted to the interior of regions. Thus, Tikhonov tends to obfuscate the discontinuities that will likely be present in the [edges](#) and we have the impression that the image is blurred (see [Figure 1.2](#)). Nonetheless, Tikhonov term is attractive due to its optimization properties.

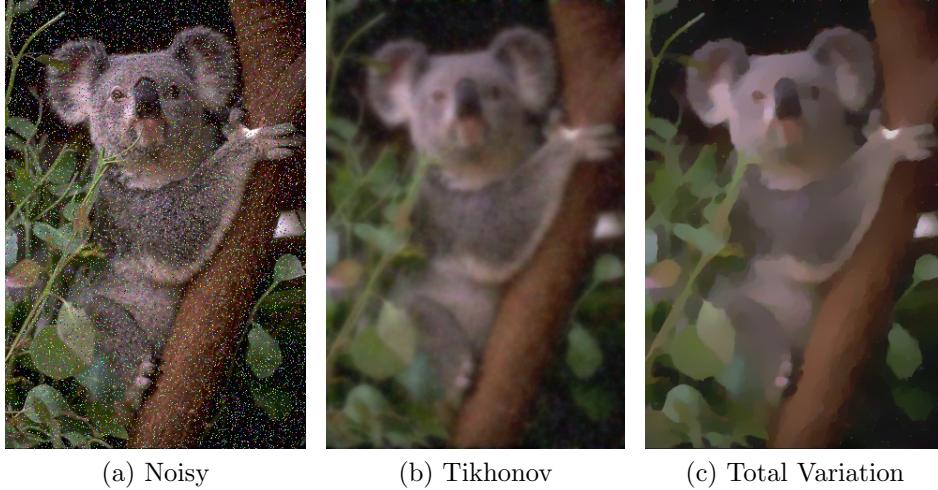


Figure 1.2: Denoising algorithms results for the Tikhonov and Total variation regularization terms.

Total variation regularization

An alternative to Tikhonov regularization is to use the so called *total variation* of the image function. For a smooth function f , its total variation is computed as

$$TV(f) = \int_{\Omega} \|\nabla f\|.$$

For a more general (possibly not differentiable) locally integrable function $f : \Omega \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^n$, its total variation is defined as

$$\begin{aligned} TV(f) &= \sup \left\{ \int_{\Omega} \nabla u \cdot \phi \mid \phi \in C_c^1(\Omega, \mathbb{R}^n) \text{ and } \|\phi\|_{\infty} \leq 1 \right\} \\ &= \sup \left\{ - \int_{\Omega} u \nabla \cdot \phi \mid \phi \in C_c^1(\Omega, \mathbb{R}^n) \text{ and } \|\phi\|_{\infty} \leq 1 \right\}, \end{aligned}$$

where ϕ is vector-valued infinitely differentiable function with compact support. The image denoising total variation model is written as

$$f_{\tilde{I}} = \arg \min_f \frac{\lambda}{2} \int_{\Omega} \|f_{\tilde{I}} - f\|^2 dx + TV(f). \quad (1.12)$$

The ROF model [ROF92] assumes the image representation is smooth, and from the Euler-Lagrange equation of [Equation \(1.12\)](#) the following gradient flow is derived:

$$\frac{df}{dt} = \nabla \cdot \left(\frac{\nabla f}{\|\nabla f\|} \right) - \lambda(f_{\tilde{I}} - f) \quad \text{\textcolor{blue}{\frac{\partial f}{\partial t}}}$$

The left term is not differentiable, and a small $\epsilon > 0$ is added to the denominator in order to avoid numerical instability. However, the calibration of ϵ might be delicate, since a small ϵ might not be sufficient to avoid instability and a larger ϵ may disfigure the model. In [Cha04] the total variation definition is exploited to create a convergent algorithm that works by successive projections and that solves model [Equation \(1.12\)](#). In [BT09] a modified version of the previous algorithm has proven to have faster convergence.

The total variation term is characterized by its smooth properties while partially preserving some discontinuities in the edges. In this sense, total variation models produce results with sharper edges than those produced by the Tikhonov term (see [Figure 1.2](#)).

across

1.3 Standard techniques

In this section we give an overview of the key techniques in variational models for problems in image processing. We start by describing the most influential model in this category.

Mumford-Shah

The L^2 -norm regularization has nice optimization properties, but it does not preserve discontinuities along the object boundaries. This effect is attenuated using a L^1 -norm, but it is not sufficient to avoid blurred edges. The Mumford-Shah functional [MS89] handles this issue by incorporating the edges in its formulation in the form of a set of discontinuities \mathcal{K} and limiting the L^2 -norm regularization to points in the interior of objects, i.e., $\Omega \setminus \mathcal{K}$. Moreover, the set \mathcal{K} itself is compelled to be of small length. The Mumford-Shah model consists in to minimize the following functional minimizing

$$(f_{\tilde{I}}, \hat{\mathcal{K}}) = \arg \min_{f, \mathcal{K}} \alpha \int_{\Omega} \|f_{\tilde{I}} - f\| dx + \beta \int_{\Omega \setminus \mathcal{K}} \|\nabla f\| dx + \lambda Per(\mathcal{K}) \quad (1.13)$$

The functional can be seen as a model for both denoising and segmentation problems. The function $f_{\tilde{I}}$ being the denoising solution and $\hat{\mathcal{K}}$ the segmentation

solution. [Equation \(1.13\)](#) is proven to have a minimizer [DCL89], and in the case \mathcal{K} is fixed, the minimizer is unique (see chapter 25 of [Bar+11]). However, to find a minimizer of [Equation \(1.13\)](#) is a challenging task due to its non-convexity.

Nonetheless, there exist several approximations to the Mumford-Shah functional. We refer to the phase-field model of [AT90]; the finite-differences scheme of [Cha99]; the level-set method of [VC02]; the convex relaxations of [Poc+09; SC14]; and the discrete calculus approach of [FLT17].

1.3.1 Curve evolution

Active contours

Active contours or snakes is a supervised method for doing image segmentation. In the original work [KWT88], an initial parametric curve $C_0(q) \rightarrow (x(q), y(q))$ is evolved towards the local minimum of the snakes energy

$$\begin{aligned} F(C) &= \alpha \text{Length}(C) + \beta \text{Smoothness}(C) + \gamma \text{Edge}(C) \\ F(C) &= \alpha \int_0^1 \left\| \frac{dC}{dq} \right\|^2 dq + \beta \int_0^1 \left\| \frac{d^2C}{dq^2} \right\|^2 dq - \gamma \int_0^1 \|\nabla f_I(C(q))\|^2 dq \end{aligned} \quad (1.14)$$

The length and smoothness regularization term favors curves of smooth variations and small length while the edge term compels the curve to stop at regions of high variation of color intensity.

The snakes method was devised having an interactive framework in mind. First of all, the user must set the initial curve close to the object to be segmented, and besides that, a set of additional tools as anchor points, repulsion and spring forces are available for online modification of the problem. The user can make use of these tools to conveniently perturb the current solution and force the curve to evolve to the expected local optimum.

The active contours is an influential paradigm for image segmentation and it was particularly popular for segmenting medical images [TD96]. Variations of the original model include extension to 3D-segmentation [MT99] and topologically adaptable snakes [MT95].

drawbacks ? Some **minus** in the active contours formulation includes its non-intrinsic definition, i.e., the curve is not defined in terms of its geometric properties and its representation depends on the chosen parametrization; and, partially as consequence of the latter, its inability to change the initial curve topology. One needs to initialize several snakes in order to correctly segment a picture with several holes, for example.

Geometric active contours

Parametric models as snakes are often criticized because of their non-intrinsic definition, i.e., the energy is not defined in terms of the geometric properties of the contours. That makes the theoretical analysis of the snakes model harder, as the evolution of the contour itself depends of the chosen parametrization. In [Cas+93] the authors propose a model based on the mean curvature motion of the level-sets of a C^2 function u .

Let $u : \Omega \subset \mathbb{R}^2 \rightarrow [0, 1]$ be a C^2 function. The curvature at its k -th level set is given by

$$\kappa(x, y) = \nabla \cdot \left(\frac{\nabla u}{\|\nabla u\|} \right), \quad \forall (x, y) \in \{ (x, y) \mid u(x, y) = k \}$$

The *geometric active contour* model consists into **evolve** an extension of u , by including an artificial time parameter t , and compute the steady solution of the flow

$$\begin{aligned} u(0, x, y) &= u(x, y) \\ \frac{du}{dt} &= g(\|\nabla f_I\|) \|\nabla u\| \nabla \cdot \left(\frac{\nabla u}{\|\nabla u\|} + v \right), \end{aligned} \tag{1.15}$$

where g is a non-increasing function that plays the role of an edge-detector, e.g., $g(x) = 1/(1+x)^2$. The function u can be initially defined as a smoothed version of $1 - \chi_C$, where χ_C is the characteristic function of some set $C \in \Omega$ that contains the objects to be segmented.

Following [Equation \(1.15\)](#), the gray level at some point (x, y) changes proportionally to the curvature of its belonging level set. The constant v forces the change in u to be always positive, i.e., pixels gets lighter, never darker. The term $\|\nabla u\|$ allows u to evolve only at some neighborhood of the 0-level-set boundary and the term $g(\|\nabla f_I\|)$ makes the evolution to stop if an edge is reached. At the steady solution of [Equation \(1.15\)](#) the segmented objects of I corresponds to the 0-level set of u .

Differently from the snakes, the geometric active contours handle changes in topology of the initial curve. In figure [Figure 1.3](#), the initial 0-level set of u splits in three disjoint sets at the steady solution of [Equation \(1.15\)](#). However, the geometric active contour models cannot segment objects with holes without including a region-based term [Che+06].

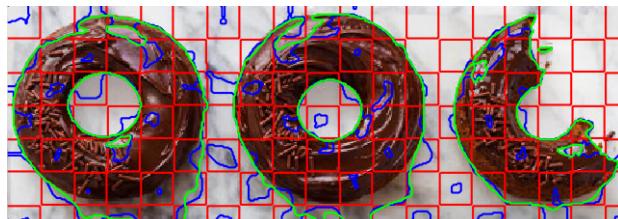
evolving



(a) Active contours



(b) Geometric active contours



(c) Chan-Vese

Figure 1.3: Illustration of evolution curve models. The initial curve (0-level set) is colored in red and the final one is colored in green.

1.3.2 Level set

The active contour and its geometric version are both edge-based methods, a natural strategy for image segmentation but with limitations, e.g., the models may encounter some difficulties to segment objects with holes. The *Chan-Vese* method proposes the inclusion of a region-based term and it generalizes the level-set approach already presented in the **geometric** active contour model.

Let $f_I : \Omega \subset \mathbb{R}^2 \rightarrow \mathbb{U}^2$ a grayscale image and $F \subset \Omega$ an open set such that the pair $(F, \Omega \setminus F)$ is the searched binary partition. Further, assume that there exists a function $\phi : \Omega \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ with bounded first derivative. The image partitions are identified in the following fashion

$$\begin{aligned}\phi(x) &< 0, & \forall x \in F \\ \phi(x) &= 0, & \forall x \in \partial F \\ \phi(x) &> 0, & \forall x \in \Omega \setminus \overline{F}\end{aligned}$$

In possession of the partition descriptor ϕ , the following energy is proposed

$$\begin{aligned}F(\phi, x) &= \mu Length(\phi, x) + \nu Area(\phi, x) + \lambda_1 Foreground(\phi, x) + \lambda_2 Background(\phi, x) \\ &= \mu \int_{\Omega} \delta_0(\phi(x)) \|\nabla \phi(x)\| dx + \nu \int_{\Omega} H(\phi(x)) dx \\ &\quad + \lambda_1 \int_{\Omega} (1 - H(\phi(x))) \|f_I(x) - c_F\|^2 dx + \lambda_2 \int_{\Omega} H(\phi(x)) \|f_I(x) - c_B\|^2 dx,\end{aligned}\tag{1.16}$$

where $H(x)$ is the Heaviside function and δ_0 the standard Dirac delta function, i.e.,

$$H(x) = \begin{cases} 1, & x \geq 0 \\ 0, & \text{otherwise,} \end{cases} \quad \delta_0(x) = \begin{cases} +\infty, & x = 0 \\ 0, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases} \quad \text{and } \int_{-\infty}^{+\infty} \delta_0(x) dx = 1.$$

The parameters c_f, c_b are defined as the average color intensity in the interior of the foreground and background regions, respectively

$$c_F = \frac{\int_{\Omega} (1 - H(\phi(x))) f_I(x) dx}{\int_{\Omega} (1 - H(\phi(x))) dx}, \quad c_B = \frac{\int_{\Omega} H(\phi(x)) f_I(x) dx}{\int_{\Omega} H(\phi(x)) dx}.$$

Next, the Euler-Lagrange equation of [Equation \(1.16\)](#) is calculated and used to define a gradient flow to minimize [Equation \(1.16\)](#), in a similar fashion as done in [Section 1.2](#). In order to be numerically tractable, the Heaviside and Dirac delta function are regularized as

$$H_\epsilon(x) = \frac{1}{2} \left(1 + \frac{2}{\pi} \arctan\left(\frac{x}{\epsilon}\right) \right), \quad \delta_\epsilon(x) = \frac{\epsilon}{\pi(\epsilon^2 + x^2)}.$$

The initial level set function can be set as any function with bounded first derivative, but it is recommended to use the checkerboard function $\phi = \sin(\pi/5x_1)\sin(\pi/5x_2)$ which is reported [\[Get12\]](#) to have fast convergence. In [\[VC02\]](#), the Chan-Vese authors extended their method to contemplate colored images and multisegmentation. An illustration is presented in [Figure 1.3](#)

1.3.3 Minimum path

In a sequel work, the authors of geometric active contours established a link between their geometric model in [\[Cas+93\]](#) and the computation of geodesics in a regular surface [\[CKS97\]](#).

The length of a parametric curve $C(q)$ according to [an isotropic metric](#) of potential $W(C)$ is calculated as

$$L(C) = \int W(C) \|C_q\| dq. \quad (1.17)$$

[Equation \(1.17\)](#) is used to compute shortest paths between two points according to the given metric. By properly setting the potential W , we can make object boundaries in an image f_I to match the curves of shortest length, for example, letting $W = g(\|\nabla f_I\|)$ as in [Equation \(1.15\)](#) we obtain

$$L(C) = \int g(\|\nabla f_I(C(q))\|) \|C_q\| dq. \quad (1.18)$$

In [\[CKS97\]](#) the authors show that the snakes model without the smoothness term ($\beta = 0$) is equivalent to geodesics computations, the metric changing accordingly with the models parameters. The isotropic metric above is equivalent to the case in which the length and image terms of the snakes model are equal.

Given an initial curve $C_0(q)$, a local minimizer for [Equation \(1.18\)](#) can be computed by finding the steady solution of the following flow derived from its Euler-Lagrange equation

$$C(0, q) = C_0(q) \quad (1.19)$$

$$\frac{dC}{dt} = (g\kappa - \nabla g \cdot \mathbf{n})\mathbf{n}, \quad (1.20)$$

where \mathbf{n} is the normal vector to the curve C at (t, q) . One can show that, given an initial function $u \in \mathcal{C}^2$ such that u is negative (positive) in the interior (exterior) of its 0-level set, the solution of [Equation \(1.20\)](#) equals the steady solution of

$$u(0, x, y) = u_0(x, y) \quad (1.21)$$

$$\frac{du}{dt} = g\|\nabla u\|\kappa + \nabla g \cdot \nabla u \quad (1.22)$$

Comparing [Equation \(1.22\)](#) with [Equation \(1.15\)](#) we notice that the $\nabla g \cdot y$ term was included while the v parameter was removed. The geometric active contour stops as soon as an ideal edge is found (a threshold should be set), which is particularly bad for real images segmentation, as it is likely that the flow will stop at the first variation of color intensity. The new term allows the flow to evolve even in those cases. Nonetheless, one can include again the v parameter, as it permits to increase the convergence in some cases.

The relation between segmentation and geodesic computation inspired several works. Elongated and thin objects as blood vessels or roads in satellite images are the global optimum of a geodesic computation in which the minimum path is constrained to lie between two points [CK97]. Further development of this work reduced the initialization to just a single point [BC09]. Anisotropic metrics aligned to the image edges are reported to return improved solutions for blood vessels segmentation [Jba+08; BC11]. Ideas from Chan-Vese and Geodesic models are put together in [Che+06]. Finally, an elucidating review of geodesic methods in computer vision can be found in [Pey+10].

1.3.4 Convex relaxation

A set Ω is convex if for all $a, b \in \Omega$, every element in the line connecting a, b also lie in Ω . A function $f : \Omega \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ is convex if its domain Ω is convex and the following inequality holds

$$f(\alpha x + (1 - \alpha)y) \leq \alpha f(x) + (1 - \alpha)f(y).$$

Convexity is a desirable property in optimization problems because any local minimizer (maximizer) is also a global one. In other words, methods that optimizes f do not depend on its initialization. Therefore, it is of great interest to find convex formulations for image processing problems.

Ideally, one would look for the so called convex envelope of f , which is the tightest convex function \tilde{f} such that $\tilde{f} \leq f$. In fact, one can compute the envelope of a function f by taking its convex biconjugate.

Definition 1(Convex conjugate): Let $f : \Omega \rightarrow \mathbb{R} \cup \{+\infty, -\infty\}$. Its convex conjugate is defined as

$$f^*(y) = \sup_x y^T x - f(x)$$

The biconjugate f^{**} is the convex envelope of f . In fact, if f is convex and lower-semicontinuous, $f^{**} = f$ (Frenchel's inequality). Unfortunately, the computation of the biconjugate is known only for a few functions. Nonetheless, the conjugate is key to prove properties on convex optimization algorithms as those based on the proximal operator [Cha04; BT09].

In order to use tools from convex optimization one needs to define a convex energy. Very often in imaging problems the functionals are defined over a non-convex function space, for example, in the binary denoising or the multilabeling problem, in which the optimization function has a discrete range. A straightforward approach is to simply relax the range to a continuous set and execute a standard optimization method. The discrete solution is then obtained by simple rounding. However, fewer are the cases in which the projected solution is optimum or even meaningful to the original problem. An green technique that gives guarantees with respect to the quality of the back projected solution is *functional lifting*.

Functional lifting

Consider the binary image denoising problem. Let $f_{\tilde{\mathbf{I}}}$ the observed noisy image and consider the total variation model for binary denoising

$$\min_{f_{\mathbf{I}}: \Omega \rightarrow \{0,1\}} E^{2-den}(f_{\mathbf{I}}) = \min_{f_{\mathbf{I}}} \int_{\Omega} \|\nabla f_{\mathbf{I}}\| + \lambda \int_{\Omega} (f_{\mathbf{I}} - f_{\tilde{\mathbf{I}}})^2, \quad (1.23)$$

This model is not convex, as the optimization variable $f_{\mathbf{I}}$ belongs to the non-convex domain of binary functions. The corresponding level-set formulation of Equation (1.23) (in the same spirit of the Chan-Vese model) is given by

$$\min \int_{\Omega} \|\nabla H(\phi(x))\| + \lambda \int_{\Omega} (H(\phi(x)) - f_{\tilde{I}}(x))^2 \quad (1.24)$$

whose

Which a local minimum is a steady solution of

$$\frac{d\phi}{dt} = H'_\epsilon(\phi) \left(\nabla \cdot \left(\frac{\nabla \phi}{\|\nabla \phi\|} \right) + 2\lambda(f_{\tilde{I}}(x) - H_\epsilon(\phi)) \right) \quad (1.25)$$

We reproduce the example given in [CEN06] to illustrate a situation in which the Chan-Vese method returns a local optimum solution. Assume that the observed image is the characteristic function of a ball of radius R , i.e., $f_{\tilde{I}}(x) = \mathbf{1}_{B_R}(x)$. Moreover, we set the initial guess of the level-set function to be precisely the observed image, i.e., $\phi_0(x) = f_{\tilde{I}}(x)$. The evolution given by Equation (1.25) maintains the radial symmetry of ϕ_0 , which means that $\phi^{(t)}$ will represent the characteristic function of some ball of radius r . In other words, for this particular setting, Equation (1.24) is equivalent to

$$\min_r g(r, \lambda) = \min_r 2\pi r + \lambda\pi|R^2 - r^2|, \quad r \geq 0. \quad (1.26)$$

Equation (1.26) has a local minimum at $r = R$ and a local maximum at $r = 1/\lambda$. Depending on the value of λ , its global minimizer will be at $r = 0$ or $r = R$. For a fixed λ , let's consider the case in which $g(0, \lambda) < g(R, \lambda)$.

$$\begin{aligned} g(0, \lambda) &\leq g(R, \lambda) \\ \lambda\pi R^2 &\leq 2\pi R \\ R &\leq \frac{2}{\lambda} \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, for $R \in (1/\lambda, 2/\lambda)$, the flow of Equation (1.25) is going to stop at the local minimum $r = R$, even the global minimum being located at $r = 0$.

The parameter λ is set by the user to calibrate the denoise capabilities of the model. In Figure 1.4 it indicates which ball radius should be considered an object or a noise element. In the illustrated case, with $\lambda = 1$, the optimal solution consists to segment only the ball of larger radius, but Chan-Vese fails to converge to this solution.

je ne comprends pas la phrase

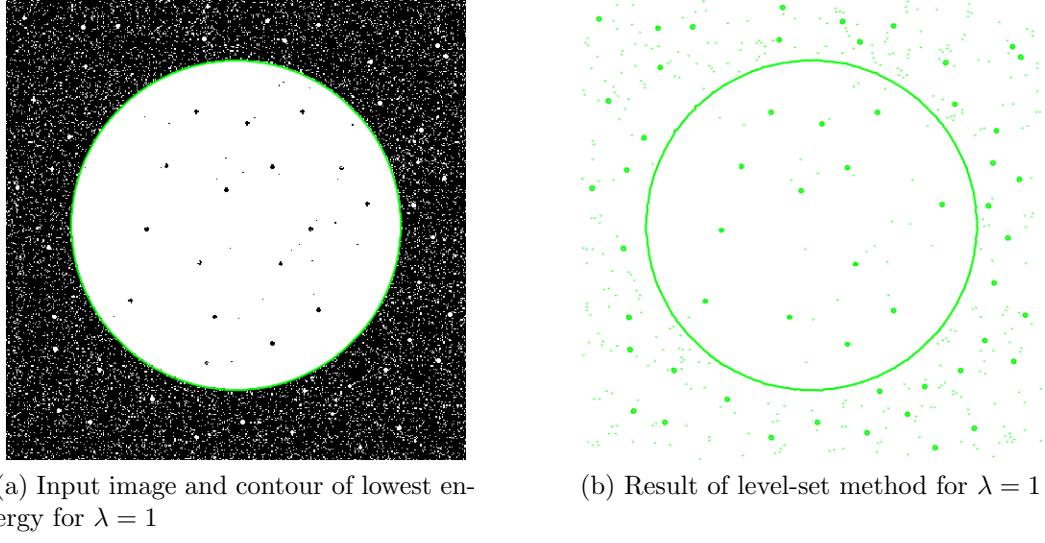


Figure 1.4: Level-set result of [Equation \(1.23\)](#) stops at a local minimum in the right, instead of the green contour in the left.

In [CEN06] the authors use an upper-level set representation to derive an equivalent model to [Equation \(1.23\)](#) but with the particular property that global optimum solution can be recovered by simple thresholding. The function u can be rewritten in terms of its upper level representation as

$$f_I(x) = \int_0^1 \varphi(x, \mu) d\mu,$$

where $\varphi(x, \mu)$ is its μ -th upper level set, i.e.,

$$\varphi(x, \mu) = \mathbf{1}_{\{f_I > \mu\}} = \begin{cases} 1, & f_I(x) > \mu \\ 0, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Using the co-area formula we rewrite the total variation term as

$$\int_{\Omega} \|\nabla f_I\| = \int_{\Omega} \int_0^1 \|\nabla \varphi(x, \mu)\| dx d\mu$$

and we can rewrite [Equation \(1.23\)](#) as

$$\min_{\varphi: \Omega \rightarrow \{0,1\}} E^{2-den} = \min_{\varphi} \int_{\Omega} \int_0^1 \|\varphi(x, \mu)\| + (\mu - f_{\tilde{I}}(x))^2 \delta(f_I(x) - \mu) dx d\mu \quad (1.27)$$

$$= \min_{\varphi} \int_{\Sigma} \|\varphi(x, \mu)\| + (\mu - f_{\tilde{I}}(x))^2 |\partial_{\mu} \varphi(x, \mu)| d\Sigma, \quad (1.28)$$

where $\Sigma = [\Omega \times [0, 1]]$. It happens that in the new formulation [Equation \(1.28\)](#), one can recover a binary solution from simple thresholding. From its relaxation

$$\min_{\varphi: \Omega \rightarrow [0,1]} E^{2-den} \quad (1.29)$$

we can once again rewrite E^{2-den} in terms of the upper level set representation of φ

$$\begin{aligned} E^{2-den} &= \int_{\Sigma} \int_0^1 \|\mathbf{1}_{\{\varphi > \gamma\}}\| + (\mu - f_{\tilde{I}}(x))^2 |\partial_{\mu} \mathbf{1}_{\{\varphi > \gamma\}}| d\Sigma d\gamma \\ E^{2-den} &= \int_0^1 E^{2-den}(\mathbf{1}_{\{\varphi > \gamma\}}) d\gamma \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, if φ^* is the solution of the convex relaxed problem [Equation \(1.29\)](#), $\mathbf{1}_{\{\varphi^* > \gamma\}}$ is also an optimal solution of E^{2-den} for almost every choice of γ .

The functional lifting technique creates an equivalent higher dimensional model with the property that binary solutions can be easily recovered from its relaxed solution. In [\[Poc+08\]](#) this strategy is extended for multilabeling problems and in [\[Poc+09; SCC12\]](#) they are used to create a convex relaxation of the Mumford-Shah model.

To optimize the higher dimensional energy one could regularize the indicator and dirac delta functions in the same spirit of the Chan-Vese method, but it is usually preferable to use a convex optimization method that is suitable for non-differentiable functions as the proximal gradient [\[Cha04\]](#), FISTA [\[BT09\]](#) or the primal-dual [\[CP11\]](#) algorithm. The results are very satisfying, but the running times very high.

Chapter 2

Discrete methods in Image Processing

Chapter 3

Curvature as regularization

1. Motivation

- Curvature properties
- Constraint optimization models
- Combinatorial optimization models
- Continuous models

Chapter 4

Digital Geometry

1. Why a digital geometry?
2. Digitization processes
3. Geometric properties estimation
4. Multigrid convergence
5. Example of multigrid convergent estimators
 - Tangent
 - Perimeter
 - Curvature

Part II

Contribution

Chapter 5

A combinatorial model for digital Elastica shape optimization

In this chapter we review the Elastica energy and some of its properties. Next, we introduce the digital version of the Elastica using multigrid convergent estimators of length and curvature. We present a combinatorial optimization model capable to evolve a shape to another of lower digital Elastica energy. In several occasions, the final shape is indeed the optimal one, which confirms the pertinence of using multigrid convergent estimators to optimize geometric-related energies in digital sets. Finally, we present several attempts to derive a global model to minimize a simplification of the digital Elastica and we discuss why they fail.

5.1 Continuous and digital Elastica

To be further developed...

The Elastica energy of parameters $\Theta = (\alpha \geq 0, \beta \geq 0)$ for some Euclidean shape $S \subset \mathbb{R}^2$ is defined as

$$E_\Theta(S) = \int_{\partial S} \alpha + \beta \kappa(s)^2 ds.$$

Similarly, the digital Elastica \hat{E}_Θ of some digitization $D_h(S)$ of S is defined as

$$\hat{E}_\Theta(D_h(S)) = \sum_{\dot{\mathbf{e}} \in \partial D_h(S)} \hat{s}(\dot{\mathbf{e}}) \left(\alpha + \beta \hat{\kappa}_r^2(D_h(S), \dot{\mathbf{e}}, h) \right), \quad (5.1)$$

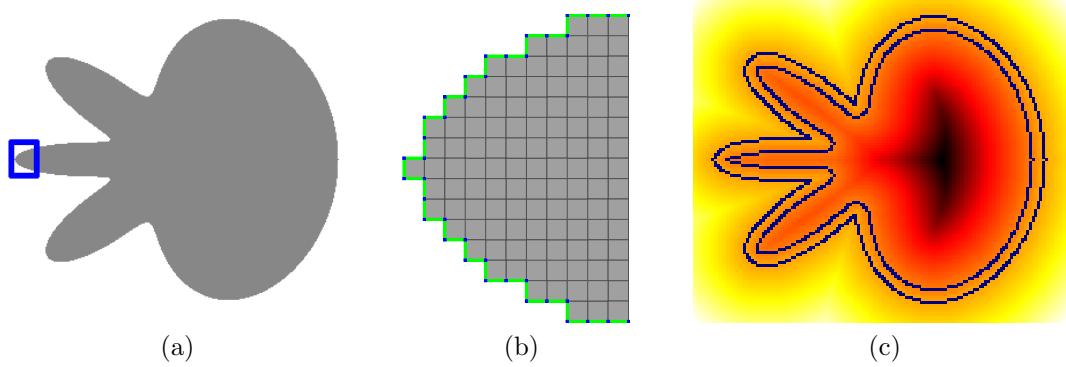


Figure 5.1: The flower shape in figure (a) and the cellular-grid model representation in (b) of the rectangle-bounded region. In figure (b), pixels are colored in gray, linels in green and pointels in blue. In figure (c), the blue pixels denotes a 3-ring set.

where $\dot{\mathbf{e}}$ denotes the center of the linel \mathbf{e} . In the expression above, we will substitute an arbitrary subset D of \mathbb{Z}^2 to $D_h(S)$ since the continuous shape S is unknown. In the following we omit the grid step h to simplify expressions (or, putting it differently, we assume that the shape of interest is rescaled by $1/h$ and we set $h = 1$).

In the next section, we describe a combinatorial scheme whose aim is to optimize the digital Elastica energy [Equation \(5.1\)](#).

5.2 Local combinatorial scheme

Given a digital shape $D^{(0)}$ we describe a process that generates a sequence $D^{(i)}$ of shapes with non-increasing Elastica energy. The idea is to define a neighborhood of shapes $\mathcal{N}^{(i)}$ to the shape $D^{(i)}$ and choose the element of $\mathcal{N}^{(i)}$ with lowest energy. The process is suited for the integral invariant estimator but also for other curvature estimators, for example, MDCA [\[RL11\]](#). As a matter of fact, our experiments have shown that both estimators induce similar results.

Let D be a 2-dimensional digital shape embedded in a domain $\Omega \subset \mathbb{Z}^2$. We adopt the cellular-grid model to represent D , i.e., pixels and its lower dimensional counterparts, linels and pointels, are part of D (see [Figure 5.1](#)). In particular, we denote by ∂D the topological boundary of D , i.e., the connected sequence of linels such that for each linel we have one of its incident pixels in D and the other not in D .

Let $d_D : \Omega \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ be the signed Euclidean distance transformation with respect to shape D . The value $d_D(p)$ gives the Euclidean distance between $p \notin D$ and the closest pixel in D . For points $p \in D$, $d_D(p)$ gives the negative of the distance between p and the closest pixel not in D .

Definition 1(m-Ring Set): Given a digital shape $D \in \Omega$, its signed distance transformation d_D and natural number $m \neq 0$, the m -ring set of D is defined as

$$R_m(D) := L_m \cup L_{-m},$$

where

$$L_m(D) := \begin{cases} \{p \in \Omega \mid m - 1 < d_D(p) \leq m\} & , \quad m > 0 \\ \{p \in \Omega \mid m + 1 > d_D(p) \geq m\} & , \quad m < 0 \end{cases}$$

Consider the following set of neighbor candidates to D :

$$\mathcal{U}(D) = \{Q \mid Q \subset R_1(D) \cup D \text{ and } Q \text{ is connected}\}.$$

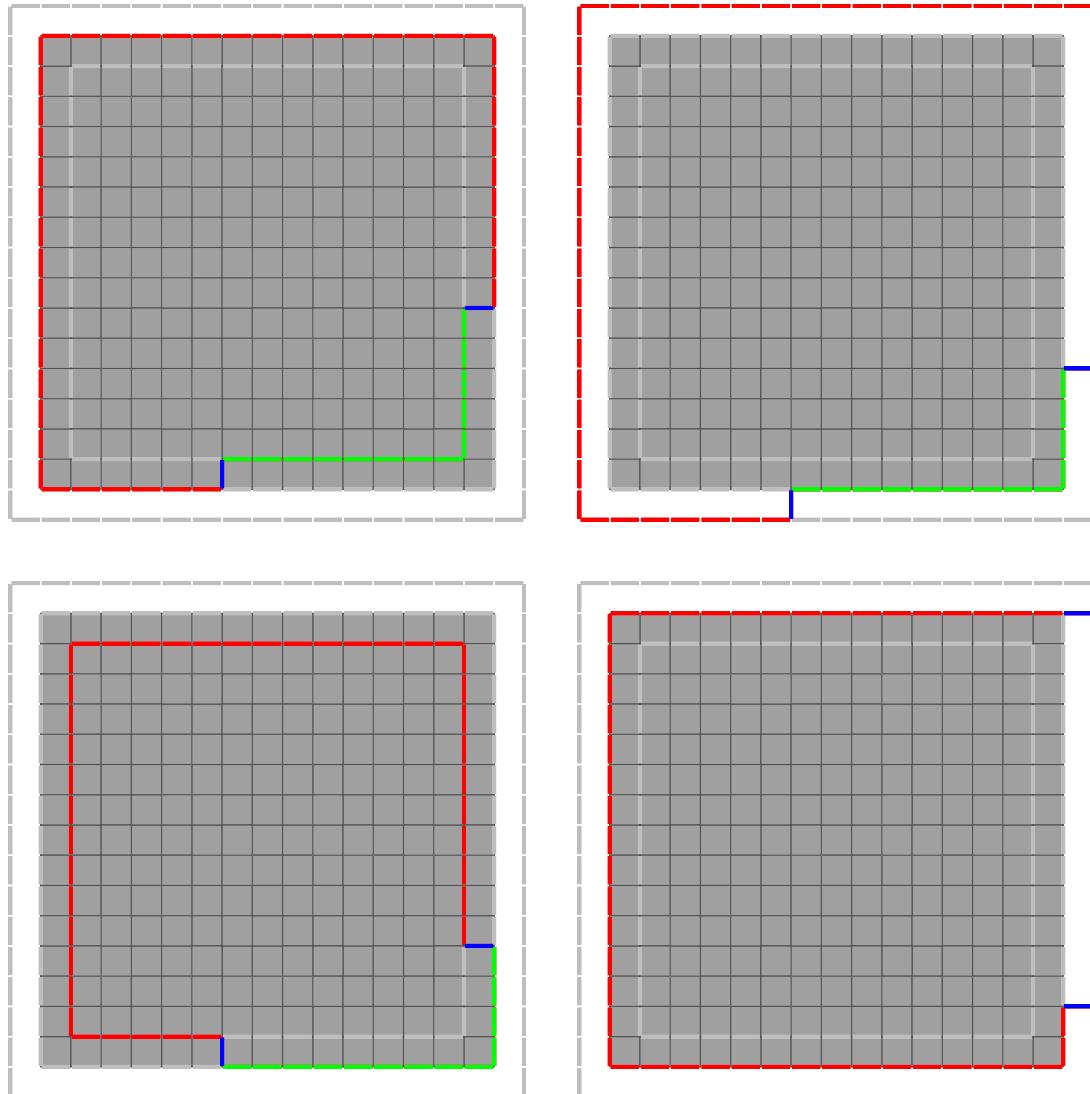
Such set can be extremely large and its complete exhaustion is prohibitively expensive. Instead, we are going to use a subset of it.

Definition 2(n -neighborhood):

Given a digital shape $D \in \Omega$, its n -neighborhood $\mathcal{N}_n(D)$ is defined as the set of digital shapes that can be built from D by adding or removing a sequence of $k \in [0, n]$ connected pixels in $R_1(D)$.

At first glance, we may be tempted to set the local-search neighborhood at the k -th iteration as the union of all n -neighborhood for $1 < n < |\partial D^{(k)}|$. However, that is often unnecessary and time consuming, as the greatest reduction in digital Elastica for a member of \mathcal{N}_n is likely very close to the greatest reduction for a member of \mathcal{N}_{n-1} . Moreover, we can improve running time by implementing a multiscale approach, i.e., we look for reductions in digital Elastica for larger values of n first, and in case of a negative answer we refine our search by choosing a smaller n .

The *LocalSearch Algorithm 1* describes the local combinatorial process and is suitable for any type of digital estimator. To estimate length we use MDSS and to estimate curvature we execute *Algorithm 1* with the MDCA and II- r estimators (r denoting the radius of the estimation ball) to solve the free and constrained Elastica problems.

Figure 5.2: Members of \mathcal{N}_{11} for the square shape.

```

input : A digital set  $D$ ; weight coefficients  $\Theta = (\alpha, \beta)$ ; the number of curve
        segments  $nc$ ; the maximum number of iterations  $\text{maxIt}$ 

 $t \leftarrow 1$ ; // multiscale level
 $k \leftarrow 0$ ; // current iteration
 $D^{(0)} \leftarrow D$ ;
while  $k < \text{maxIt}$  and  $t < \log_2 |\partial D^{(k)}|$  do
     $M^{(k,t)} \leftarrow |\partial D^{(k)}|/2^t$ ; // Maximum  $n$ -neighborhood value.
     $J \leftarrow \{j \cdot \frac{M^{(k,t)}}{nc} \mid 1 \leq j \leq nc\}$ ;
     $\mathcal{N}^{(k,t)} \leftarrow \bigcup_{j \in J} \mathcal{N}_j(D^{(k)})$ ;
    //Find neighbor shape with lowest energy.
     $Q^* \leftarrow D^{(k-1)}$ ;
    for  $Q \in \mathcal{N}^{(k,t)}$  do
        if  $\hat{E}_\Theta(Q) < \hat{E}_\Theta(Q^*)$  then
             $| Q^* \leftarrow Q$ ;
        end
    end
    delta  $\leftarrow \hat{E}_\Theta(D^{(k-1)}) - \hat{E}_\Theta(D^{(k)})$ ;
    if delta  $\leq 0$  then
        //Better solution not found. Refine the scale.
         $t \leftarrow t + 1$ 
    end
    else
        //Better solution found. Set  $D^{(k)}$  and reset to highest
        //scale.
         $t \leftarrow 1$ ;
         $D^{(k)} \leftarrow Q^*$ ;
         $k \leftarrow k + 1$ ;
    end
end

```

Algorithm 1: LocalSearch algorithm for Elastica minimization.

5.2.1 Free digital Elastica

In the free digital Elastica energy we optimize Equation (5.1) without any constraint. We observe that for $\alpha = 0, \beta > 0$ the Elastica becomes the integration of the squared curvature along the shape contour which has the ball of infinite radius as its mini-

mizer. For $\alpha > 0, \beta = 0$, minimize Elastica becomes minimize perimeter (curvature flow). It is easy to see that for $\alpha, \beta > 0$, the optimal shape for the Elastica is a disk of radius r . We can easily find the value of r .

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{d}{dr} \left(\int_{\partial B(r)} (\alpha + \beta \kappa^2) ds \right) &= 0 \\ \frac{d}{dr} (\alpha 2\pi r + \beta 2\pi/r) &= 0 \\ r &= \left(\frac{\beta}{\alpha} \right)^{1/2}. \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the optimal shape for the free digital Elastica is a digital disk of finite radius $(\beta/\alpha)^{1/2}$.

In [Figure 5.3](#) we present the digital Elastica evolution for parameters $\alpha = 0.01, \beta = 1$ and three different curvature estimators in three different scales. The shapes evolution using the II-5 estimator are shown in [Figure 5.5](#). We observe that both II-5 and II-10 evolve the shapes to disks of radius close to the optimum value of 10. The II-3 estimator stops prematurely at a local optimum due its limited sensibility compared to II-5 or II-10, while MDCA encounters some difficulties to evolve in a high resolution setting and it also stops at some local minimum. In fact, the MDCA estimator, although with higher convergence speed, is more sensitive to noise than II, as illustrated in [Figure 5.7](#). Nonetheless, the results can be improved by using a larger neighborhood, as illustrates [Figure 5.6](#).

We have executed the same experiments for different parameters α to confirm the effectiveness of our approach. We observe that the plots for $\alpha = 0.001$ in [Figure 5.4](#) follows a pattern similar to those in [Figure 5.3](#) for $\alpha = 0.01$. In particular, the remarks for the II-3 and MDCA estimator are the same. Further, we point out that II-5 values are slightly farther from the optimum for $\alpha = 0.001$. The reason being that the shapes evolve to a ball of higher radius compared to the case $\alpha = 0.01$. At some point of the evolution for $\alpha = 0.001$, the sensibility of II-5 is not sufficient to escape from local minimum. We remark that the adoption of an automatic selection of the estimation ball radius may attenuate this problem.

5.2.2 Constrained digital Elastica

An important advantage of [Algorithm 1](#) is that constraints can be imposed with minimum effort. We present results for two types of constraints. In the first type, we force some pixels to be part of the final solution and in the second we impose

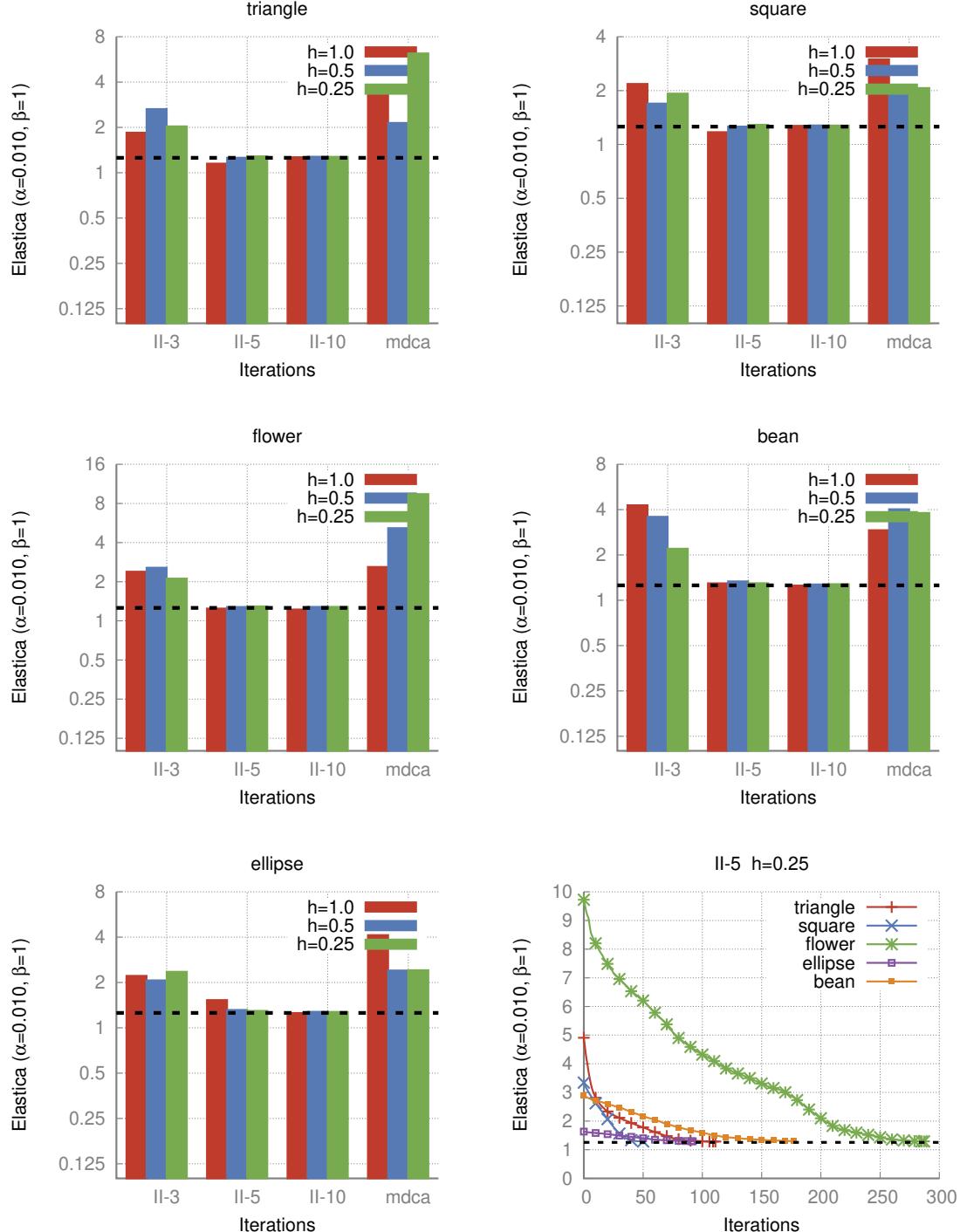


Figure 5.3: Minimum value attained for the digital Elastica ($\alpha = 0.01, \beta = 1$) in comparison with the global optimum (dashed line) for different curvature estimators and in different scales. The last figure summarizes the digital Elastica evolution value for all shapes using grid step $h = 0.25$.

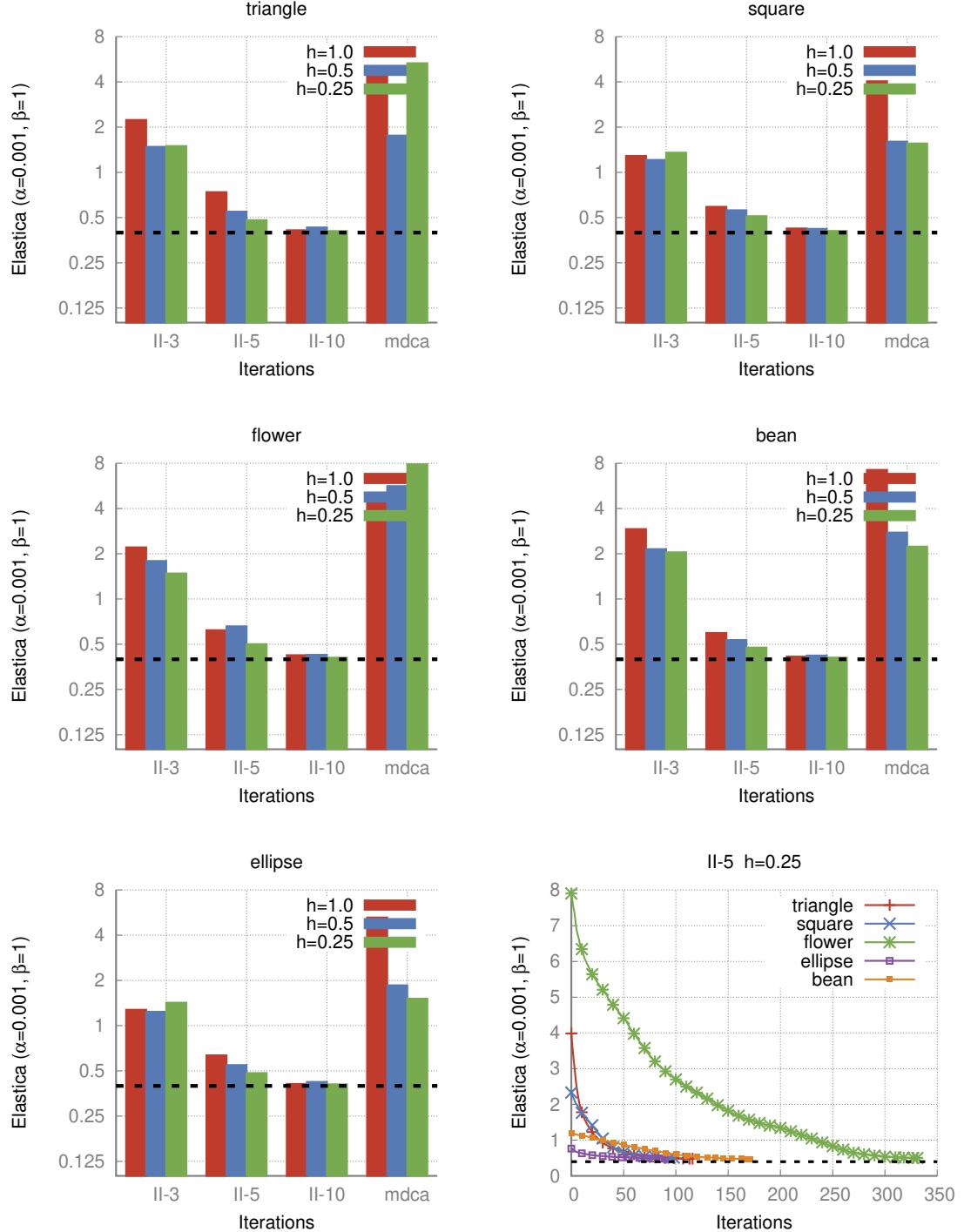


Figure 5.4: Minimum value attained for the digital Elastica ($\alpha = 0.001, \beta = 1$) in comparison with the global optimum (dashed line) for different curvature estimators and in different scales. The last figure summarizes the digital Elastica evolution value for all shapes using grid step $h = 0.25$.

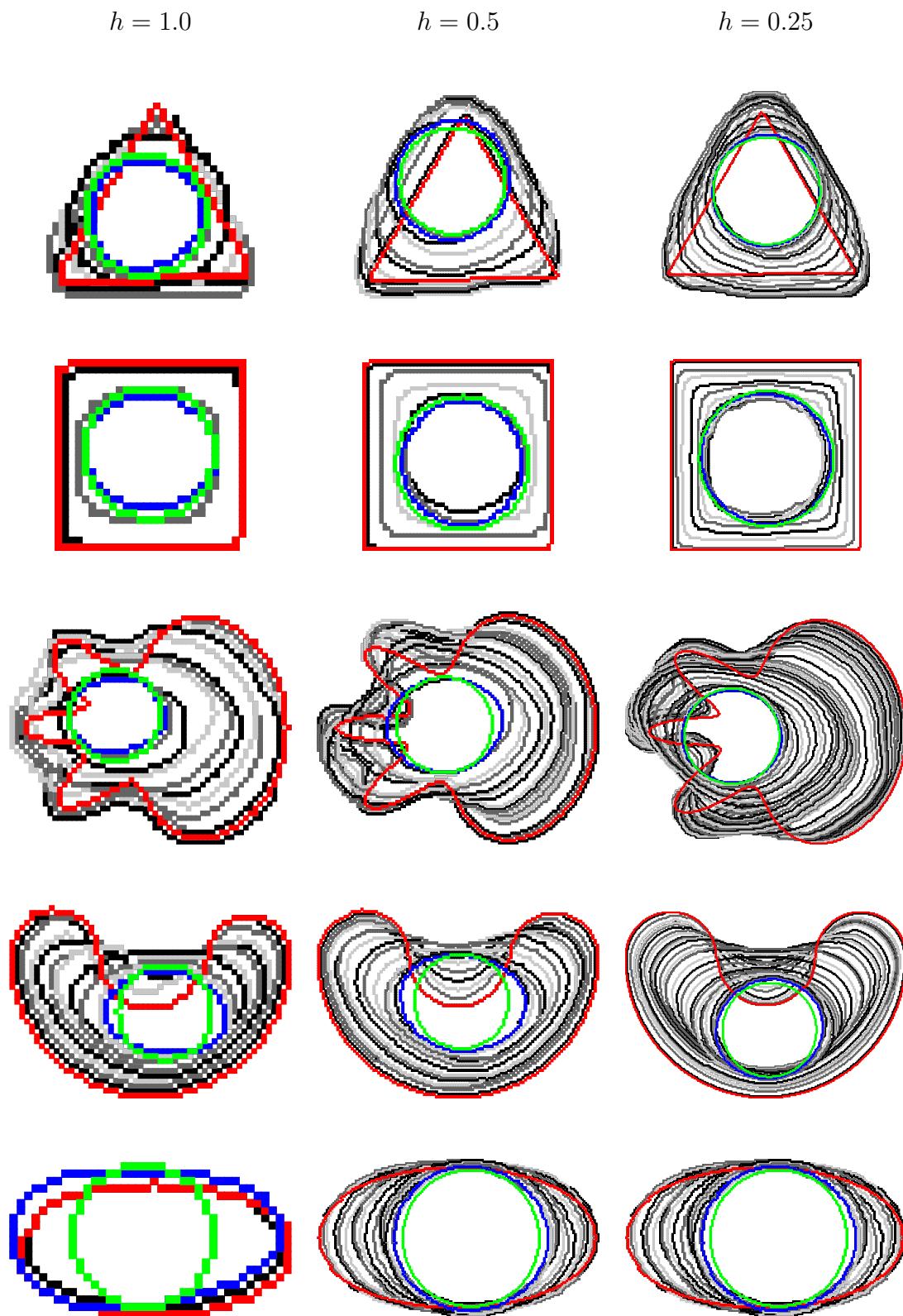


Figure 5.5: LocalSearch algorithm evolutions for several shapes with $\alpha = 0.01, \beta = 1$. The initial contour is colored in red; the final contour is colored in blue; and the optimal contour is colored in green.

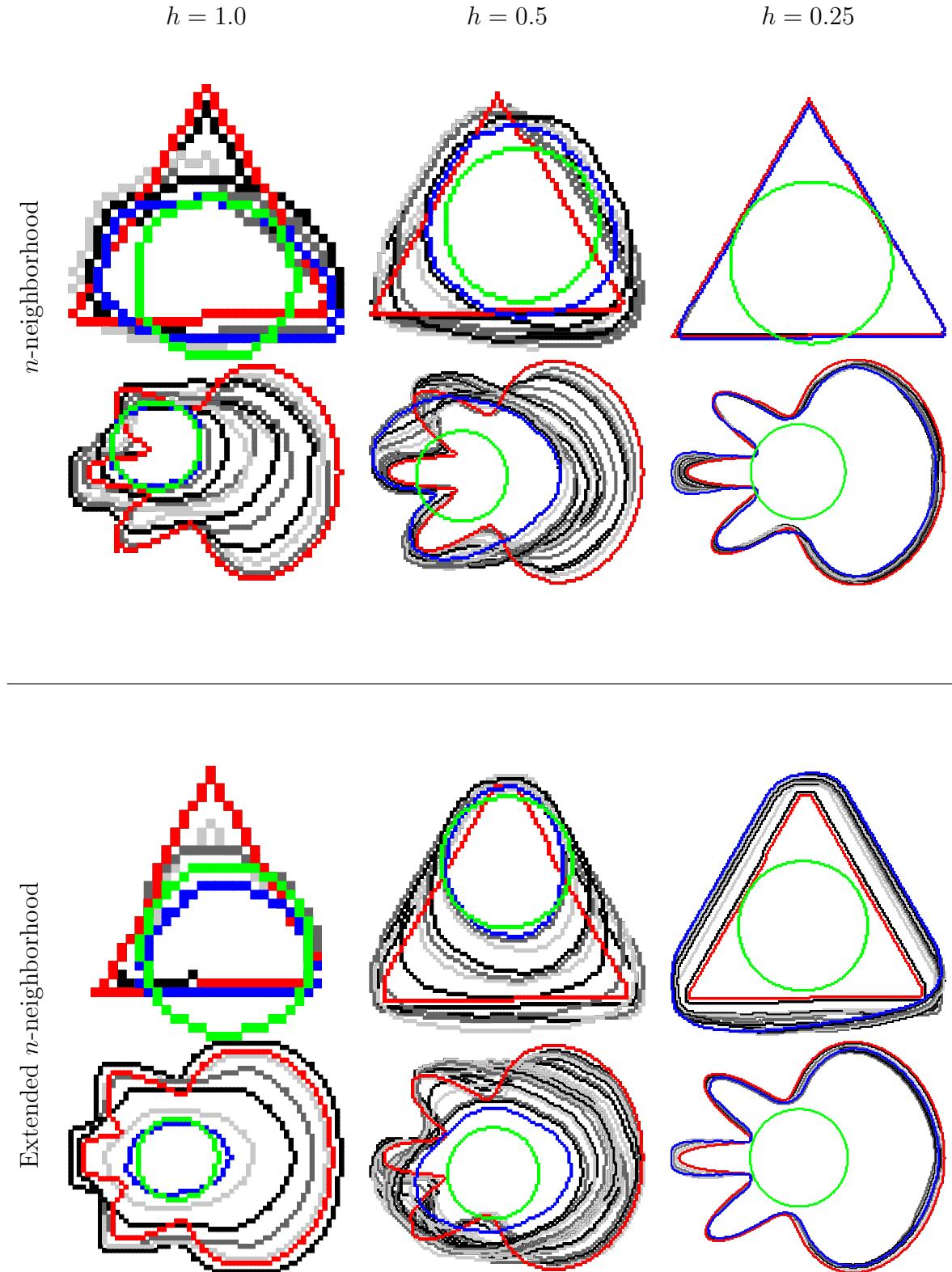


Figure 5.6: In the top row, the MDCA evolution for the neighborhood as presented in [Algorithm 1](#). In the bottom row, the flow using the extended neighborhood. The extended neighborhood additionally includes the n -neighborhood of the dilation and the erosion of the initial shape by a square of side 1.

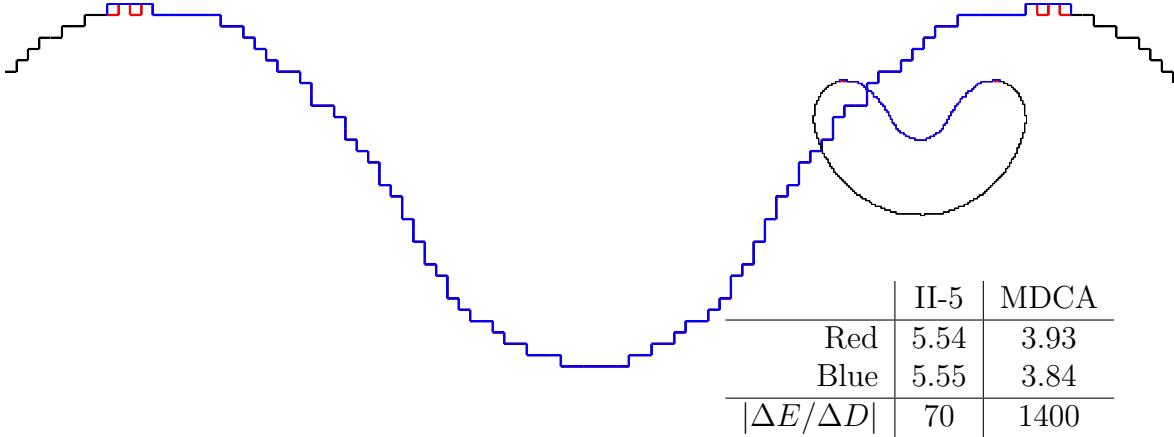


Figure 5.7: A slight variation in the shape boundary (in this example, a 0.07% change or 4 pixels over 5310) inflicts a considerably higher change in the energy value when using MDCA than when using II.

orientations at the endpoints of a curve. In [Figure 5.8](#) we compare the flows for different values of α .

We remark that [Algorithm 1](#) is sensitive to the parameter α . For higher values of α , the shapes tends to shrink and the curves are closer to a straight line. For lower values of α , the shapes tends to grow and the curves make more turns.

5.2.3 Running time

The running time of [Algorithm 1](#) is summarized in table [Table 5.1](#). All the experiments in this thesis were executed on a 32-core 2.4Ghz CPU. Although its use in practical applications is limited, we demonstrated that digital estimators are effective in their measurements and the flows evolve as expected, reaching the global optimum for some shapes. We observe that it is a complete digital approach, and we do not suffer from discretization and rounding problems, a common issue in continuous models. Furthermore we have checked that this approach works indifferently with Integral Invariant curvature estimator and Maximal Digital Circular Arc curvature estimator, given an appropriate neighborhood. So the convergence of the digital curvature estimator seems to be the cornerstone to get a digital curve behaving like a continuous Elastica.

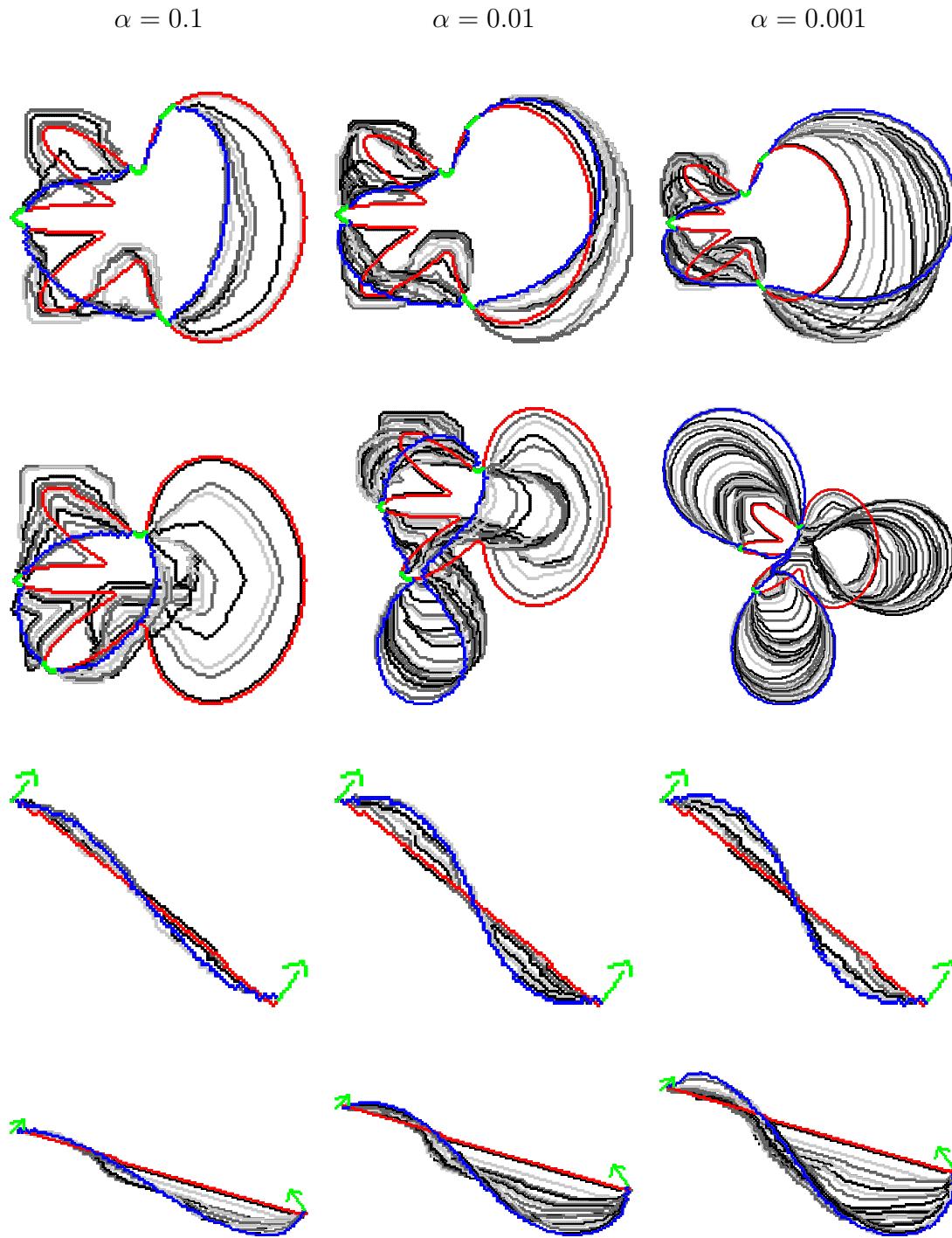


Figure 5.8: In the first and second rows, the flow obtained by forcing the green pixels to be part of the final solution; In the last two rows, the flow obtained by forcing the orientation at the endpoints of the curves.

	$h = 1.0$		$h = 0.5$		$h = 0.25$	
	Pixels	Time	Pixels	Time	Pixels	Time
Triangle	521	2s (0.07s/it)	2080	43s (0.81s/it)	8315	532s(4.8s/it)
Square	841	0.9s (0.09s/it)	3249	8s (0.3s/it)	12769	102s (2s/it)
Flower	1641	13s (0.24s/it)	6577	209s (1.68s/it)	26321	3534s (12.3s/it)
Bean	1574	7s (0.16s/it)	6278	88s (1.08s/it)	25130	1131s (6.4s/it)
Ellipse	626	1s (0.14s/it)	2506	16s (0.44s/it)	10038	286s (3.1s/it)

Table 5.1: Running time of LocalSearch for the free Elastica problem.

5.3 Global optimization

In this section we turn to a global optimization approach. However, instead of minimizing [Equation \(5.1\)](#) we focus on a simplified version of it in which we do not compute the local length estimator. This simplification reduces the order of the energy.

5.3.1 Simplified digital Elastica

The simplified digital Elastica is defined as

$$\hat{E}_{\Theta}^{simp}(D_h(S)) = \sum_{\dot{\mathbf{e}} \in \partial D_h(S)} \alpha + \beta \hat{\kappa}_r^2(D_h(S), \dot{\mathbf{e}}, h). \quad (5.2)$$

We argue that [Equation \(5.2\)](#) is a reasonable approximation of [Equation \(5.1\)](#). Indeed, executing [Algorithm 1](#) to minimize this simplified digital Elastica induces very similar results to those for the digital Elastica (see [Figure 5.9](#)).

5.3.2 Optimization model for simplified digital Elastica

In contrast with the previous section, the model described here is designed for the integral invariant estimator only. Let $D \in \frac{1}{2}\mathbb{Z}^2$ be the digitization of some shape $S \in \mathbb{R}^2$ using grid step h in half-integer coordinates space. We assume that D has m pixels (located at integer coordinates) and n linels (one and only one of its coordinates is $\frac{1}{2}$). Optimization variables are represented as column vectors $\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{B}^m$, $\mathbf{y} \in \mathbb{B}^n$ and its i -th coefficients are denoted $\mathbf{x}_i, \mathbf{y}_i$. Further, let $\mathbf{A} \in \mathbb{B}^{m \times n}$ the matrix defined as

$$\mathbf{A}_{i,j} = \begin{cases} 1, & x_j \in B_r(y_i) \\ 0, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

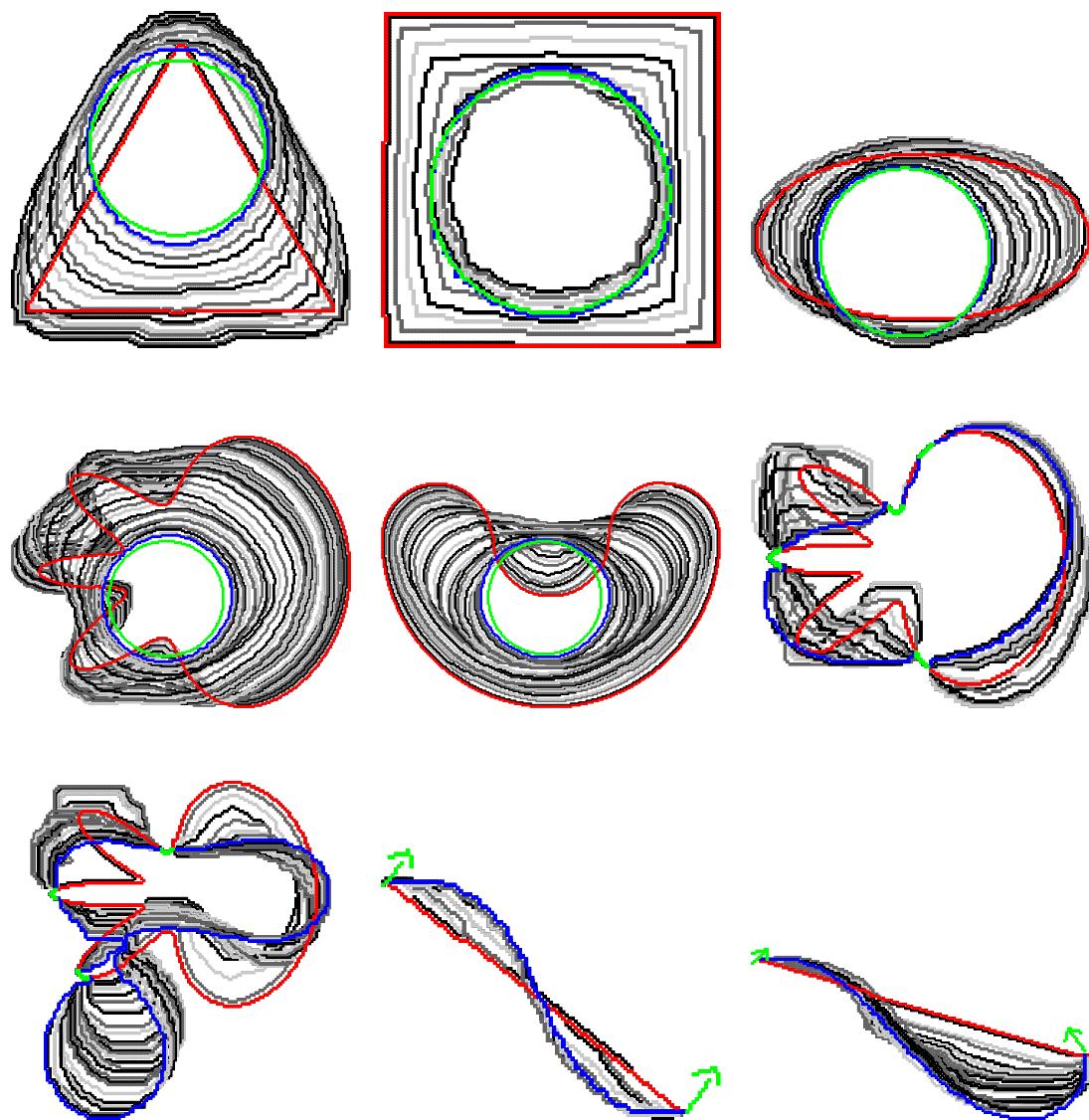


Figure 5.9: Experiments of [Section 5.2](#) for the simplified digital Elastica.

In other words, the column vector \mathbf{A}_i of \mathbf{A} represents the pixels that are in the interior of the disk $B_r(y_i)$ of radius r centered at y_i .

$$\begin{aligned} E_{\Theta}^{simp}(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}) &= \sum_{\mathbf{y}_i \in \mathbf{y}} \mathbf{y}_i \left(\alpha + \beta \hat{\kappa}_r^2(D, \mathbf{y}_i) \right) \\ &= \sum_{\mathbf{y}_i \in \mathbf{y}} \mathbf{y}_i \left(\alpha + \beta \left(\frac{3}{r^3} \left(\frac{\pi}{r^2} - |B_r(\mathbf{y}_i)| \right) \right)^2 \right) \\ &= \sum_{\mathbf{y}_i \in \mathbf{y}} \mathbf{y}_i \left(\alpha + \frac{9}{r^6} \beta (c^2 - 2c \mathbf{A}_i^T \mathbf{x} + \mathbf{x}^T \mathbf{A}_i \mathbf{A}_i^T \mathbf{x}) \right), \end{aligned} \quad (5.3)$$

where $c = \pi r^2/2$. We remark that linels and pixels in the solution must be topologically consistent, i.e., linels must form connected closed curves and the pixels must lie in the interior of those curves. This restriction is encoded in a set of topological constraints $T(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y})$ detailed later. So far we have

$$\min_{\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{B}^{|X|}, \mathbf{y} \in \mathbb{B}^{|Y|}} E_{\Theta}^{simp}(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}), \quad \text{subject to } T(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}). \quad (P0)$$

Additionaly, in real applications involving the minimization of Elastica, we have a set of constraints R that plays the role of regularization. For example, we may force some of the pixels in the original shape to be part of the solution; for imaging problems, we may add a data attachment term, and so on. Finally, we can write the general optimization problem as

$$\min_{\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{B}^{|X|}, \mathbf{y} \in \mathbb{B}^{|Y|}} E_{\Theta}^{simp}(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}), \quad \text{subject to } T(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y}), R(\mathbf{x}) \quad (P1)$$

Formulation $P1$ is a constrained binary non-convex third order problem and likely difficult to be solved optimally. Nonetheless, we can use standard optimization techniques to acquire some intuition on the model.

5.3.3 Topological constraints

The estimation ball should be applied in the digital boundary of the shape, which oblige us to impose topological constraints in the model to avoid inconsistent solutions. In order to accomplish that, we set an arbitrary orientation for the faces

and another for the edges. We choose counter-clockwise for faces; left-to-right for horizontal edges; and bottom-to-up for vertical edges.

We create the vector $\mathbf{z} \in \mathbb{B}^{2n}$. We map each linel identified by variable \mathbf{y}_i to components $\mathbf{z}_{2i}, \mathbf{z}_{2i+1}$, one for each possible orientation the linel may assume. Next, we extend the linel incidence matrix defined in [Appendix B](#) to hold incidence with respect to oriented edges. The new matrix $\mathbf{T} \in \mathbb{B}^{n \times m+2n}$ is defined as

$$0 \leq j < m, \quad \mathbf{T}_{i,j} = \begin{cases} 1, & \text{Pixel } j \text{ is positively incident to linel } i \\ -1, & \text{Pixel } j \text{ is negatively incident to linel } i \\ 0, & \text{otherwise,} \end{cases}$$

$$m \leq j < m + 2n, \quad \mathbf{T}_{i,j} = \begin{cases} 1, & \text{Edge } j \text{ is positively incident to linel } i \\ -1, & \text{Edge } j \text{ is negatively incident to linel } i \\ 0, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

Rewriting formulation (P1)

$$\min \sum_{z_i \in \mathbf{z}} z_i \left(\alpha + \frac{9}{r^6} \beta (c^2 - 2c \mathbf{A}_i^T \mathbf{x} + \mathbf{x}^T \mathbf{A}_i \mathbf{A}_i^T \mathbf{x}) \right)$$

subject to

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{T} \times \begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{x} \\ \mathbf{z} \end{bmatrix} &= 0 \\ R(\mathbf{x}), \\ \mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{B}^m, \mathbf{z} \in \mathbb{B}^{2n}. \end{aligned}$$

We observe that for a linel identified by variable \mathbf{y}_i , constraints \mathbf{T} forces at most one of the variables $\mathbf{z}_{2i}, \mathbf{z}_{2i+1}$ to be evaluated to one.

5.3.4 Linear relaxation of P1

The simplest model we can derive from (P1) consists in the relaxation of the optimization variables, i.e., we impose $\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{U}^m$ and $\mathbf{z} \in \mathbb{U}^{2n}$, and we linearize all second and third order terms.

Consider the summation in (P1). An opt-term is an ordered sequence of optimization variables, e.g., the opt-term $\mathbf{x}_2^2 \mathbf{x}_4$ is encoded as the sequence $(\mathbf{x}_2, \mathbf{x}_2, \mathbf{x}_4)$. Let \mathcal{T} the collection of opt-terms of order two or higher in (P1) and $\mathcal{T}_i \in \mathcal{T}$ a member of this collection. To linearize (P1), we associate a variable \mathbf{u}_i for each term of \mathcal{T} ,

i.e., $\mathbf{u} \in \mathbb{U}^{|\mathcal{T}|}$ and we enforce $|\mathcal{T}_i| + 1$ new constraints. In other words, we add the following set of linearization constraints.

$$L(\mathbf{u}) = \left\{ \left\{ \mathbf{u}_i \leq t, \quad \forall t \in \mathcal{T}_i \right\} \cup \left\{ \mathbf{u}_i \geq \sum_{t \in \mathcal{T}_i} t - |\mathcal{T}_i| + 1 \right\} \mid \forall \mathcal{T}_i \in \mathcal{T} \right\}$$

The linearization of (P1) is written as

$$\min \sum_{z_i \in \mathbf{z}} z_i \left(\alpha + \frac{9}{r^6} \beta (c^2 - 2c \mathbf{A}_i^T \mathbf{x} + \mathbf{x}^T \mathbf{A}_i \mathbf{A}_i^T \mathbf{x}) \right)$$

subject to

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{T} \times \begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{x} \\ \mathbf{z} \end{bmatrix} &= 0 \\ R(\mathbf{x}), \\ L(\mathbf{u}), \\ \mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{U}^m, \mathbf{z} \in \mathbb{U}^{2n}, \mathbf{u} \in \mathbb{U}^{|\mathcal{T}|} \end{aligned}$$

Finally, to obtain a binary vector we round the partial solution vector $\mathbf{x}^\star \in \mathbb{U}^m$. For an instance with m pixels we have about $2m$ linels. After linearization, we can expect to have up to $O(m^3)$ variables, dampening our attempts to solve it globally even for low resolution images. One can also try quadratic formulations by linearizing only the third order terms. Unfortunately, the matrix of quadratic terms is not semi-definite positive, fundamental condition for efficient optimization of the model.

5.3.5 Unconstrained version of P1

We can use the pixel incidence matrix defined in [Appendix B](#) to define an unconstrained version of P1. The pixel incidence vector $\mathbf{q} \in \mathbb{Z}^m$ for pixels $\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{B}^m$ is

$$\mathbf{q} = \mathbf{P}^T \mathbf{P} \mathbf{x}$$

In order to suppress the sign, we define diagonal matrix $\mathbf{Q} \in \mathbb{R}^{m \times m}$ as

$$\mathbf{Q} = \text{diag}(\mathbf{q}) \text{diag}(\mathbf{q})$$

Let $\mathbf{B} \in \mathbb{B}^{m \times m}$ such that column vector \mathbf{B}_j represents the pixels in the interior of a disk of radius R centered at pixel i . Finally, we search for solutions of

$$\min_{\mathbf{x}} \frac{9}{R^6} \sum_j^m \left(\frac{\pi R^2}{2} - \frac{1}{2} \mathbf{1}^T \mathbf{Q} \mathbf{B}_j \right)^2, \quad (5.4)$$

where $\mathbf{1} = (1, 1, \dots, 1)^T \in \mathbb{R}^m$. [Equation \(5.4\)](#) involves the minimization of a fourth order equation and therefore hard to be optimized.

5.4 Conclusion

We gave a historical review of the Elastica and we defined the digital Elastica energy in [Section 5.1](#). The local combinatorial scheme defined in [Section 5.2](#) can evolve different shapes guided by the minimization of digital Elastica energy and it eventually reaches global optimum in the free Elastica problem, justifying the interest for multigrid convergent estimators. The model can also be used to solve the constrained Elastica problem, but its more likely to stop in a local minimum. Finally, we sketch some global optimization models in [Section 5.3](#) for minimizing the simplified Elastica using standard techniques of optimization. The difficulties we pointed out suggest that a practical global optimization model is unlikely to exist. In the next chapter we explore a model that decreases the Elastica energy and that can be used in practice.

Chapter 6

A 2-step evolution model driven by digital Elastica minimization

In the previous chapter we have presented a local combinatorial model using multigrid convergent estimator that proved to be very successful in optimizing the digital Elastica but too slow to be used in practice. We have also attempted to derive a global optimization model, but unfortunately such model is unlikely to be solved in the current state of art of binary optimization techniques. In this chapter we present a second local optimization model that is much faster than [Algorithm 1](#) but with fewer guarantees of optimality.

6.1 FlipFlow model

In this section we describe the FlipFlow model that aims to evolve a initial digital shape D into another of lower digital Elastica value. The FlipFlow algorithm consists into deciding, at each iteration k , which pixels in the *inner boundary* of $D^{(k)}$ are to be removed and which are to be kept.

6.1.1 Definitions

Let D be a digital shape with domain $\Omega \subset \mathbb{Z}^2$. We describe a flow $\{D^{(k)} \mid k \geq 0, D^0 = D\}$ intended to decrease the digital Elastica energy of D .

We assume an ordering in Ω , i.e., there exists a bijective function $\omega : \Omega \rightarrow \{1 \cdots |\Omega|\}$. Moreover, let $X_\omega : \Omega \rightarrow 2^{\{0,1\}}$ be an operator that transforms digital sets in its corresponding set of binary variables, i.e.,

$$X_\omega(\Omega) := \{x_{\omega(p)} \in \{0, 1\} \mid p \in \Omega\}.$$

We will simply write $X(\Omega)$, assuming that exists an underlying ordering function ω .

A $\{0, 1\}$ assignment of the variables in $X(\Omega)$ is denoted $x(\Omega)$. We define the sum of a digital set D and an assignment $x(\Omega)$ as

$$D + x(\Omega) = D \cup \{p \mid p \in P, x_{\omega(p)} = 1\}.$$

Next, we define the set of optimization variables. In order to guarantee connectivity and thus avoid the enforcement of the topological constraints discussed in [Section 5.3.3](#), we limit the optimization region to a subset of Ω , namely the inner pixel boundary of $D^{(k)}$.

Definition 1(Inner pixel boundary):

Given a digital shape D embedded in a domain Ω , we define its inner pixel boundary set $I(D)$ as

$$I(D) := \{p \mid p \in D, |\mathcal{N}_4(x) \cap D| < 4\},$$

where $\mathcal{N}_4(p)$ denotes the 4-adjacent neighbor set of p (without p).

To simplify notation, the inner pixel boundary of $D^{(k)}$ is simply denoted $I^{(k)}$. At each iteration, the set $X^{(k)}$ of optimization variables is defined as

$$X^{(k)} := X(I^{(k)}).$$

In the case we optimize the complement of D , we write $\overline{X}^{(k)}$, i.e., $\overline{X}^{(k)} = X(I(\overline{D}^{(k)}))$.

An assignment of $X^{(k)}$ is simply denoted $x^{(k)}$.

6.1.2 Algorithm

We recall the definition of the II digital curvature estimator:

$$\hat{\kappa}^2(p) = c_1 \left(c_2 - |B_r(p) \cap D^{(k)}| \right)^2, \quad (6.1)$$

where $c_1 = 3/r^6$ and $c_2 = \pi r^2/2$.

The following sets are important in the expansion of [Equation \(6.1\)](#).

$$\begin{aligned} F^{(k)} &:= D^{(k)} \setminus I^{(k)} \\ F_r^{(k)}(p) &:= F^{(k)} \cap B_r(p) \\ I_r^{(k)}(p) &:= I^{(k)} \cap B_r(p) \\ X_r^{(k)}(p) &:= X(I_r^{(k)}(p)). \end{aligned}$$

Expanding [Equation \(6.1\)](#), we get

$$\begin{aligned} \hat{\kappa}^2(p) &= c_1 \left(c_2 - |F_r^{(k)}(p)| - \sum_{x_j \in X_r^{(k)}(p)} x_j \right)^2 \\ &= c_1 \left(C + 2(|F_r^{(k)}(p)| - c_2) \sum_{x_j \in X_r^{(k)}(p)} x_j + \sum_{x_j \in X_r^{(k)}(p)} x_j^2 + \sum_{\substack{x_j, x_l \in X_r^{(k)}(p) \\ j < l}} 2x_j x_l \right), \quad (6.2) \end{aligned}$$

where $C = c_2^2 - 2c_2 \cdot |F_r^{(k)}(p)| + |F_r^{(k)}(p)|^2$ is a constant. As [Equation \(6.2\)](#) is a term to be optimized, we can ignore constants and multiplication factors. Moreover, as we are in a binary optimization setting, we can further simplify [Equation \(6.2\)](#) by exploiting the binary character of variables and eliminating monomials of second order. We define the following family of energies for given parameters $\boldsymbol{\theta} = (\alpha, \beta) \geq 0$

$$\begin{aligned} E_{(\boldsymbol{\theta}, m)}^{flip}(D^{(k)}, X^{(k)}) &= \sum_{x_j \in X^{(k)}} \alpha s(x_j) + \\ &\quad \sum_{\substack{p \in \\ R_m(D^{(k)})}} 2c_1 \beta \left((1/2 + |F_r^{(k)}(p)| - c_2) \cdot \sum_{\substack{x_j \in \\ X_r^{(k)}(p)}} x_j + \sum_{\substack{j < l, \\ x_j, x_l \in \\ X_r^{(k)}(p)}} x_j x_l \right), \quad (6.3) \end{aligned}$$

where $s(\cdot)$ denotes the length penalization term, written as

$$s(x_{w(p)}) = \sum_{q \in \mathcal{N}_4(p)} t(q), \quad \text{where } t(q) = \begin{cases} (x_{w(p)} - x_{w(q)})^2, & \text{if } q \in I^{(k)} \\ (x_{w(p)} - 1)^2, & \text{if } q \in F^{(k)} \\ (x_{w(p)} - 0)^2, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \quad (6.4)$$

We recall that R_m refers to the m -ring defined in [Section 5.2](#). Each choice of m generates a different flow, which is generally described in the *FlipFlow Algorithm 2*. To optimize [Equation \(6.3\)](#) we use the QPBOI algorithm [[Rot+07](#)].

```

input : A digital set  $D$ ; The ring number  $m$ ; Length( $\alpha$ ), curvature( $\beta$ )
grouped in parameter vector  $\theta$ ; the maximum number of iterations
maxIt;

 $D^{(0)} \leftarrow D;$ 
 $k \leftarrow 1;$ 
while  $k < \text{maxIt}$  do
    //Shrinking mode
    if  $k$  is even then
         $x^{(k-1)} \leftarrow \arg \min_{X^{(k-1)}} E_{(\theta,m)}^{\text{flip}}(D^{(k-1)}, 1 - X^{(k-1)});$ 
         $D^{(k)} \leftarrow F^{(k-1)} + x^{(k-1)};$ 
    end
    //Expansion mode
    else
         $\bar{x}^{(k-1)} \leftarrow \arg \min_{\bar{X}^{(k-1)}} E_{(\theta,m)}^{\text{flip}}(D^{(k-1)}, 1 - \bar{X}^{(k-1)});$ 
         $D^{(k)} \leftarrow \frac{\bar{F}^{(k-1)} + \bar{x}^{(k-1)}}{2};$ 
    end
     $k \leftarrow k + 1;$ 
end

```

Algorithm 2: FlipFlow algorithm.

6.1.3 Algorithm discussion

As discussed in [Section 5.3](#), the topological constraints are a fundamental part in a global optimization model for the digital Elastica but the complexity added to it dampens any hope of optimizing it efficiently. In the proposed FlipFlow model, we exclude topological constraints and we end up with the tractable binary second order [Equation \(6.3\)](#). However, due the lack of contour information, the minimization of [Equation \(6.3\)](#) for $D^{(k)}$ results in undesirable shapes of even higher digital Elastica energy values (see [Figure 6.1](#)). Interestingly, by using the inverse of the optimal assignment, we can derive a shape of lower digital Elastica energy. Therefore, the next shape is given by

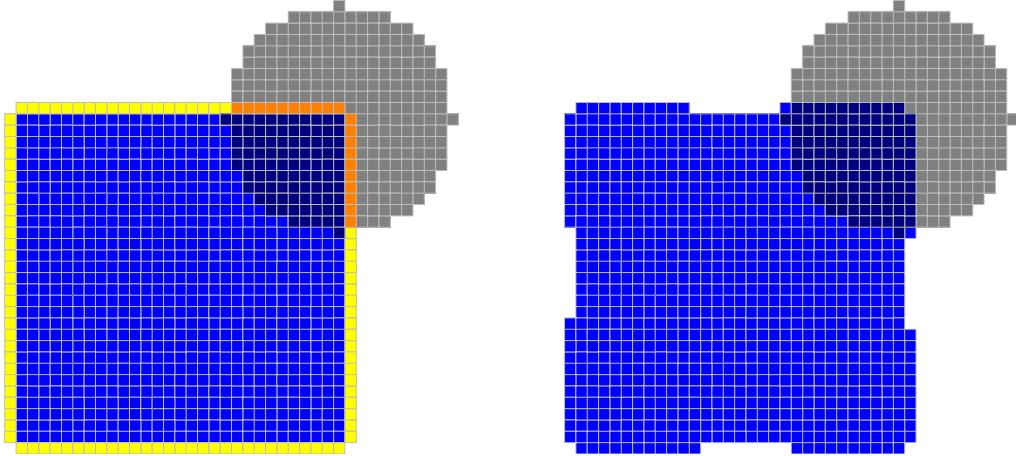


Figure 6.1: Direct use of the optimization result of [Equation \(6.3\)](#) does not decrease squared curvature because contour information is not present in the energy.

$$D^{(k+1)} = D^{(k)} - \arg \min E_{(\theta, m)}^{\text{flip}}(D^{(k)}, 1 - X^{(k)}).$$

Recall that the integral invariant estimator approaches curvature by computing the difference between half of the area of a chosen ball and the area of the intersection of this ball with the shape. In particular, regions of positive curvature have fewer pixels in their intersection set than on its complement w.r.t the estimation ball. This implies that variables in such regions are labeled with 1, as the unbalance grows otherwise. We attenuate curvature if we shift the center of the estimation ball towards the interior of the shape, which means to remove the 1-labeled pixels. That is why we take the complement of the optimization solution.

The explanation above covers the treatment of convex parts, but the way to treat concavities is not much different. Indeed, concave regions are convex in the shape complement. The FlipFlow [Algorithm 2](#) is made of two modes: shrinking and expansion. The shrinking mode handles convexities and its reasoning is explained in the last paragraph. The expansion mode operates exactly in the same way, but at the image complement, and by doing this we are able to handle concavities. It is called expansion mode because the optimization region, in this case, is the outer pixel boundary of the original shape. Table [Table 6.1](#) sums up these arguments.

In [Figure 6.2](#) we show the results of the FlipFlow algorithm for $m = 1, \alpha = 0, \beta = 1$. We observe a global evolution towards rounder shapes, but several artifacts are formed along the boundary. An estimation ball of higher radius evolves the shapes

shrinking mode	$\kappa \gg 0$	$\kappa \geq 0$	$\kappa < 0$
$x^{(k)}$	$x_j = 1$	$x_j \in \{0, 1\}$	$x_j = 0$
$D^{(k+1)} \leftarrow F^{(k)} + x^{(k)}$	eroded	prob. eroded	unchanged
expansion mode	$\bar{\kappa} \gg 0$	$\bar{\kappa} \geq 0$	$\bar{\kappa} < 0$
$\bar{x}^{(k)}$	$\bar{x}_j = 1$	$\bar{x}_j \in \{0, 1\}$	$\bar{x}_j = 0$
$D^{(k+1)} \leftarrow \overline{F^{(k)} + \bar{x}^{(k)}}$	dilated	prob. dilated	unchanged

Table 6.1: Since the curvature is negated when reversing the curve (i.e. $\bar{\kappa} = -\kappa$), this process can only shrink convex parts in shrink mode and expand concave parts in expansion mode.

faster, but the contours become noisier. Setting $\alpha > 0$ attenuates the problem for lower radius but the produced shapes does not match with our intuition of what a flow driven by the squared curvature must be like. In the next section we investigate how the energy properties and optimization method used can explain this behavior.

6.2 Optimization method

Let f be a function of n binary variables with unary and pairwise terms, i.e.

$$f(y_1, \dots, y_n) = \sum_j f_j(y_j) + \sum_{j < k} f_{j,k}(y_j, y_k).$$

The function f is submodular if and only if the following inequality holds for each pairwise term $f_{j,k}$ [KZ04]:

$$f_{j,k}(0, 0) + f_{j,k}(1, 1) \leq f_{j,k}(0, 1) + f_{j,k}(1, 0).$$

The energy $E_{(\theta, m)}^{flip}$ is non-submodular and optimizing it is a difficult problem, which constrains us to use heuristics and approximation algorithms. The QPBO method [HHS84] transforms the original problem in a max-flow/min-cut formulation and yields a full optimal labeling for submodular energies. For non-submodular energies the method is guaranteed to return a partial labeling with the property that

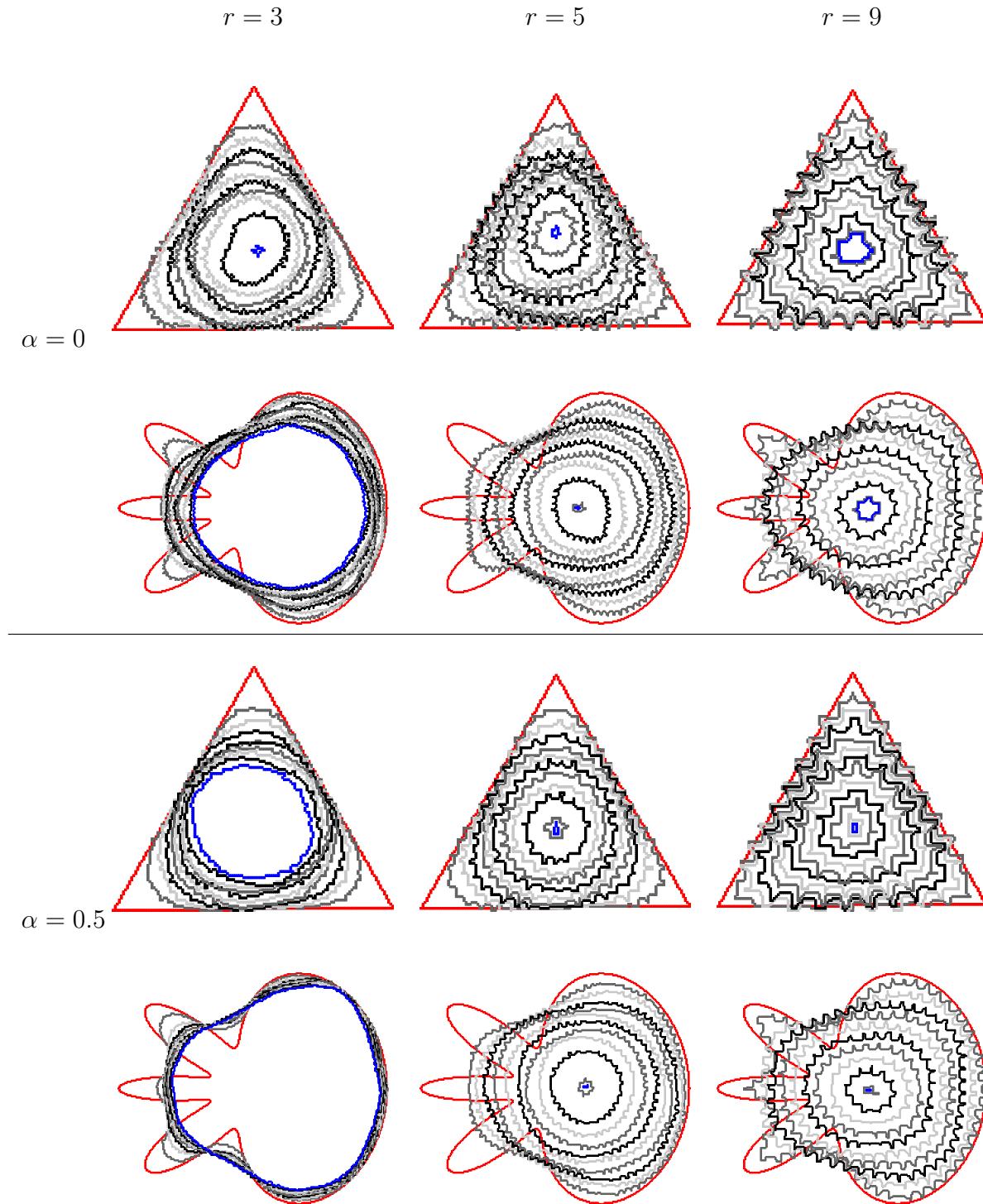


Figure 6.2: The algorithm is very sensitive to the little variations of the estimator, which are particularly important in regions of low squared curvature. Artifacts are somewhat reduced with a length penalization but increases if we use a higher ball radius. For better visualization, curves are displayed every 1/10 of the number of iterations.

the set of labeled variables is part of an optimal solution. That property is called partial optimality.

In practice, QPBO can leave many pixels unlabeled. There exist two extensions to QPBO that alleviate this limitation: QPBOI (improve) and QPBOP (probe) [Rot+07]. The first is an approximation method that is guaranteed to not increase the energy, but loses the property of partial optimality. The second is an exact method which is reported to label more variables than QPBO.

The percentage of unlabeled pixels by QPBOP for $E_{(\theta,m)}^{\text{flip}}$ is quite high, but the percentage decreases to zero as we set m to a value closer to r , the estimation ball radius. Therefore, we are more confident in taking the solution for values of m close to r . However, the way it varies across values of m differs from shape to shape, as is illustrated in [Figure 6.4](#). We also noticed that, for $m = r$, all the pixels were labeled, which indicates that $E_{(\theta,r)-\text{flip}}$ is an easy instance of the general non-submodular energy $E_{(\theta,m)}^{\text{flip}}$, but this remains to be proved. The number of pairwise terms in $E_{(\theta,r)-\text{flip}}$ is roughly half of those in $E_{(\theta,1)-\text{flip}}$ (see [Figure 6.3](#)), which also explains the higher number of labeled variables.

We have used QPBOI to solve $E_{(\theta,m)}^{\text{flip}}$. Naturally, in the case where all pixels are labeled by QPBOP, QPBOI returns the same labeling as QPBOP. In the next section we show that by evaluating the estimation ball at outer rings, we eliminate the artifacts and we produce smoother flows while preserving a qualitative measure of curvature.

6.3 Evaluation across m -rings

The QPBOP method leaves many pixels unlabeled for $m = 0$, but the ratio of unlabeled pixels tends to decrease as we take higher values of m . In this section, we argue that by evaluating the estimation ball along outer rings we obtain smoother evolutions by focusing the optimization process only on regions of high squared curvature value.

In [Figures 6.5](#) and [6.6](#) we evaluate several flows for different energies $E_{(\theta,m)}^{\text{flip}}$. As expected, the number of artifacts decrease as the value of m increases, while the process still tends to shrink the shape to a single point, resembling the curvature flow.

We confirm the stability of the model by looking at the plots of the digital Elastica energy values for the produced shapes. Moreover, the produced flow has no difficulties in handling changes on topology, and it presents different speeds for regions with low and high curvature values, as illustrated in [Figure 6.8](#).

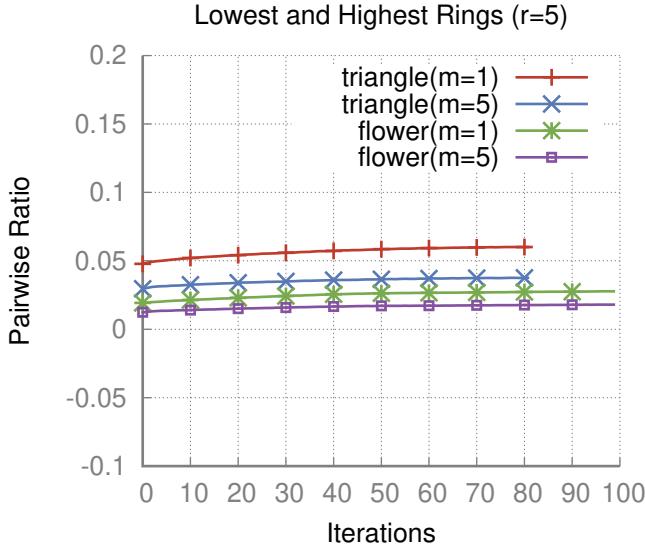


Figure 6.3: We plot the ratio of pairwise terms among all $\binom{|X^{(k)}|}{2}$ combinations. The highest ring has roughly half the number of pairwise terms as the lowest ring.

The computation of estimation balls at outer rings raises the question about its validity as a curvature estimator. In fact, one can estimate the curvature using outer balls (see [Appendix A](#)), but we were not able to prove its multigrid convergence. However, this relation suggests that curvature information is at least qualitatively present in the outer balls computation, and this computation is preferred, as it is easier to optimize accordingly to the experiments illustrated in [Figures 6.4 to 6.7](#).

6.4 Data term and image segmentation

We present an application of the FlipFlow algorithm to supervised image segmentation. The FlipFlow acts as a contour correction method. Here we use a data fidelity term in order to characterize the object of interest. Given foreground and background seeds selected by the user, we derive mixed Gaussian distributions of color intensities H_f, H_b , and we define the data fidelity term as the cross-entropy, i.e.

$$g(x_{w(p)}) = -x_{w(p)} \log H_f(p) - (1 - x_{w(p)}) \log H_b(p) \quad (6.5)$$

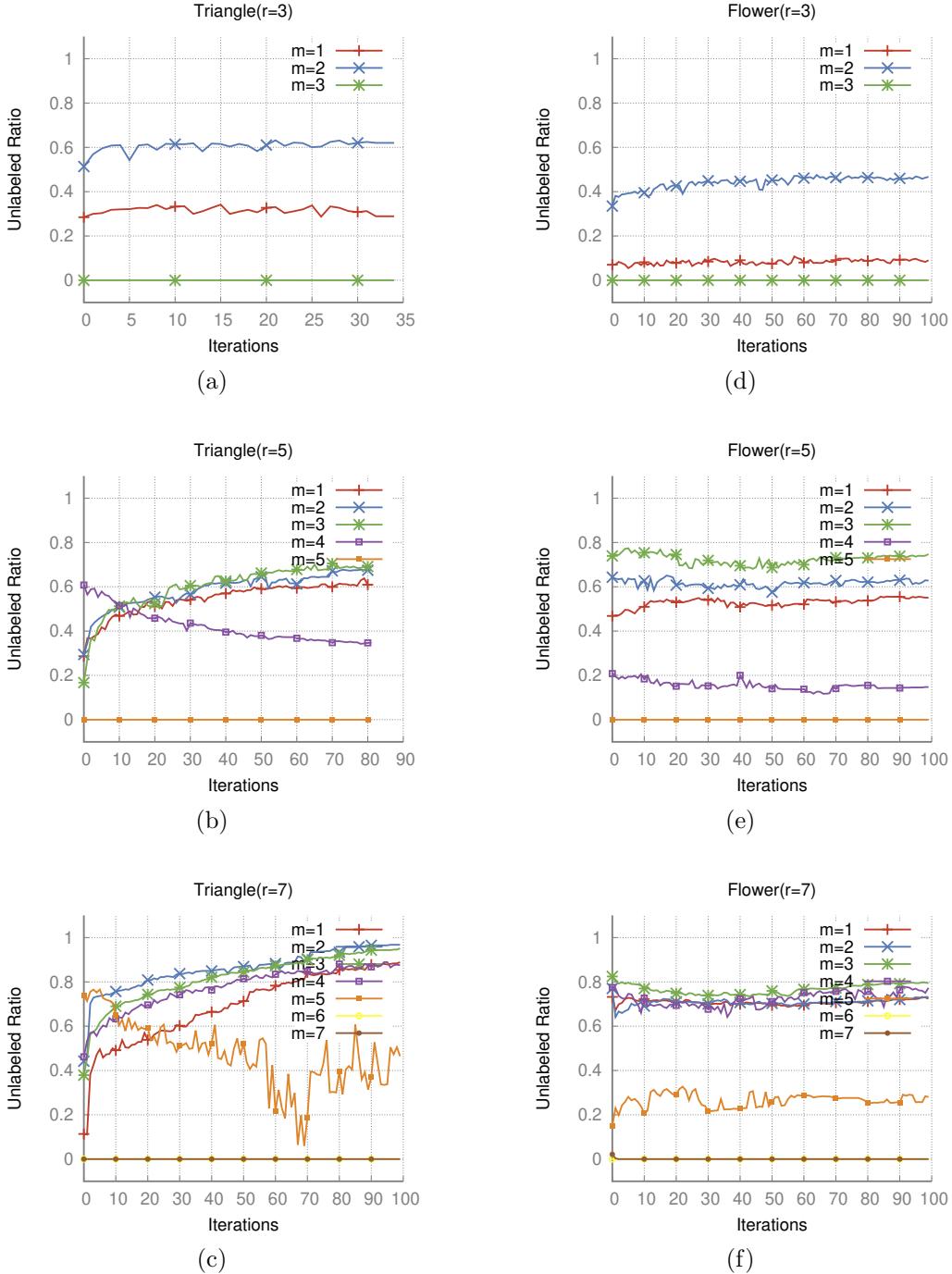


Figure 6.4: For each plot, we first produce the sequence of shapes $\{D^{(k)}\}$ executing FlipFlow with $m = r$. Then, for each shape in $\{D^{(k)}\}$, we execute one iteration of FlipFlow for different values of m and we count the unlabeled pixels. The number of unlabeled pixels by QPBOP remains high for lower values of m , and goes to zero when $m = r$. We observe the same behavior for varying radius values.

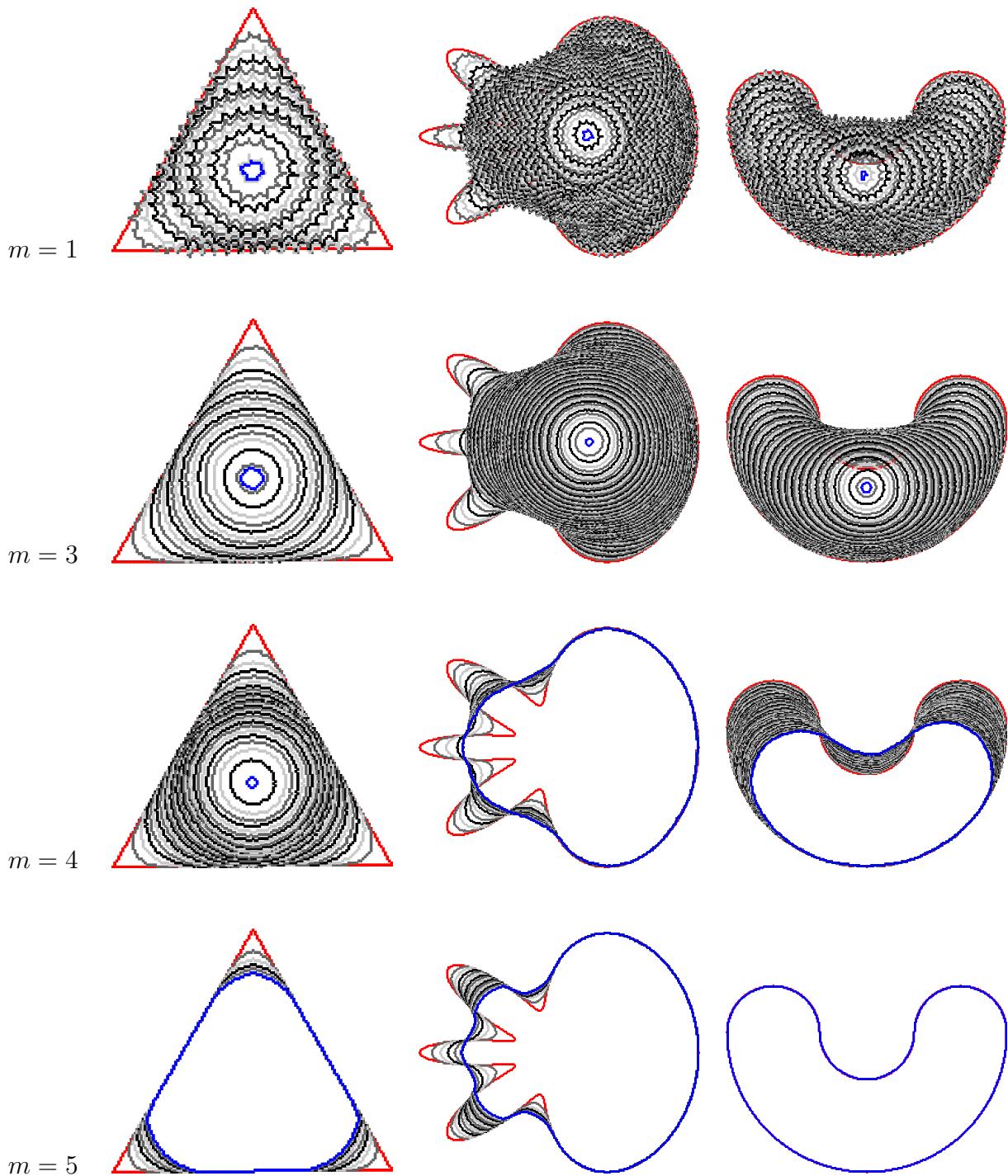


Figure 6.5: By positioning the estimation ball on outer rings, we minimize artifacts creation. The radius of the estimation ball used here equals to 5 and the curves are displayed every 10 iterations.

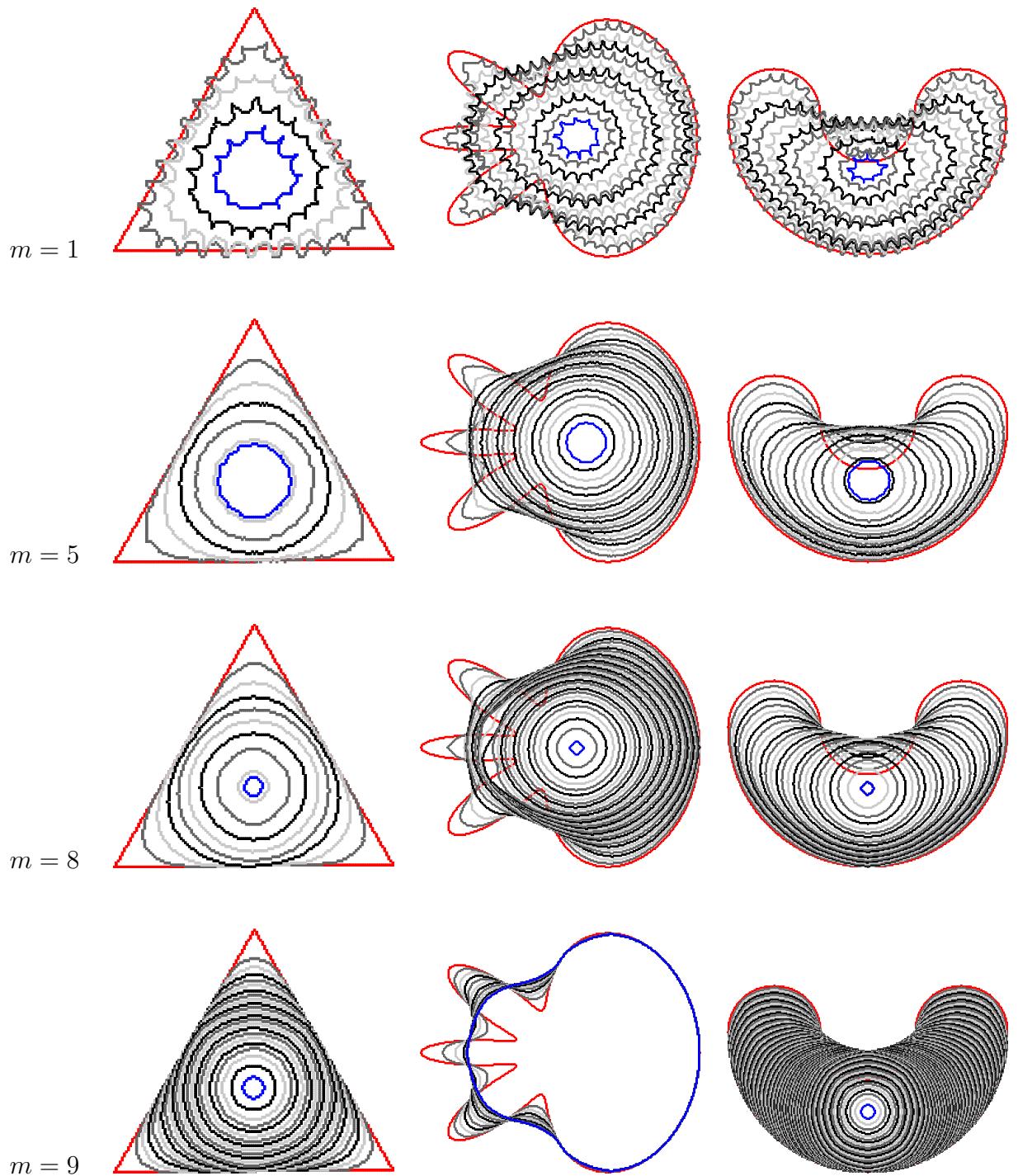


Figure 6.6: By positioning the estimation ball on outer rings, we minimize artifacts creation. The radius of the estimation ball used here equals to 9 and the curves are displayed every 10 iterations.

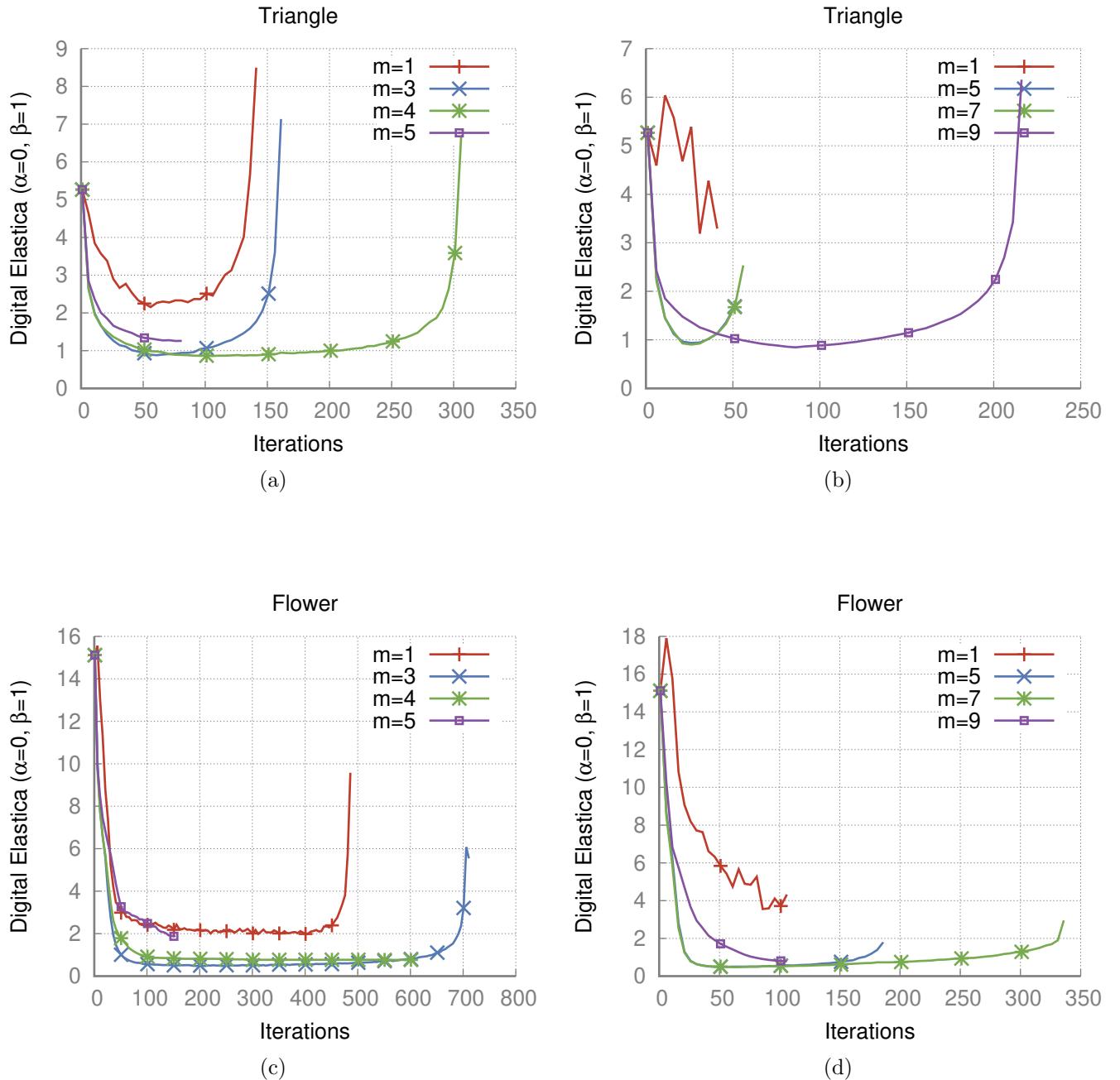


Figure 6.7: Digital Elastica (II-5, $h = 0.25$) evaluation at each iteration for several m -FlipFlow evolutions. In the left column, we use FlipFlow radius 5 and in the right column we use FlipFlow radius 9.

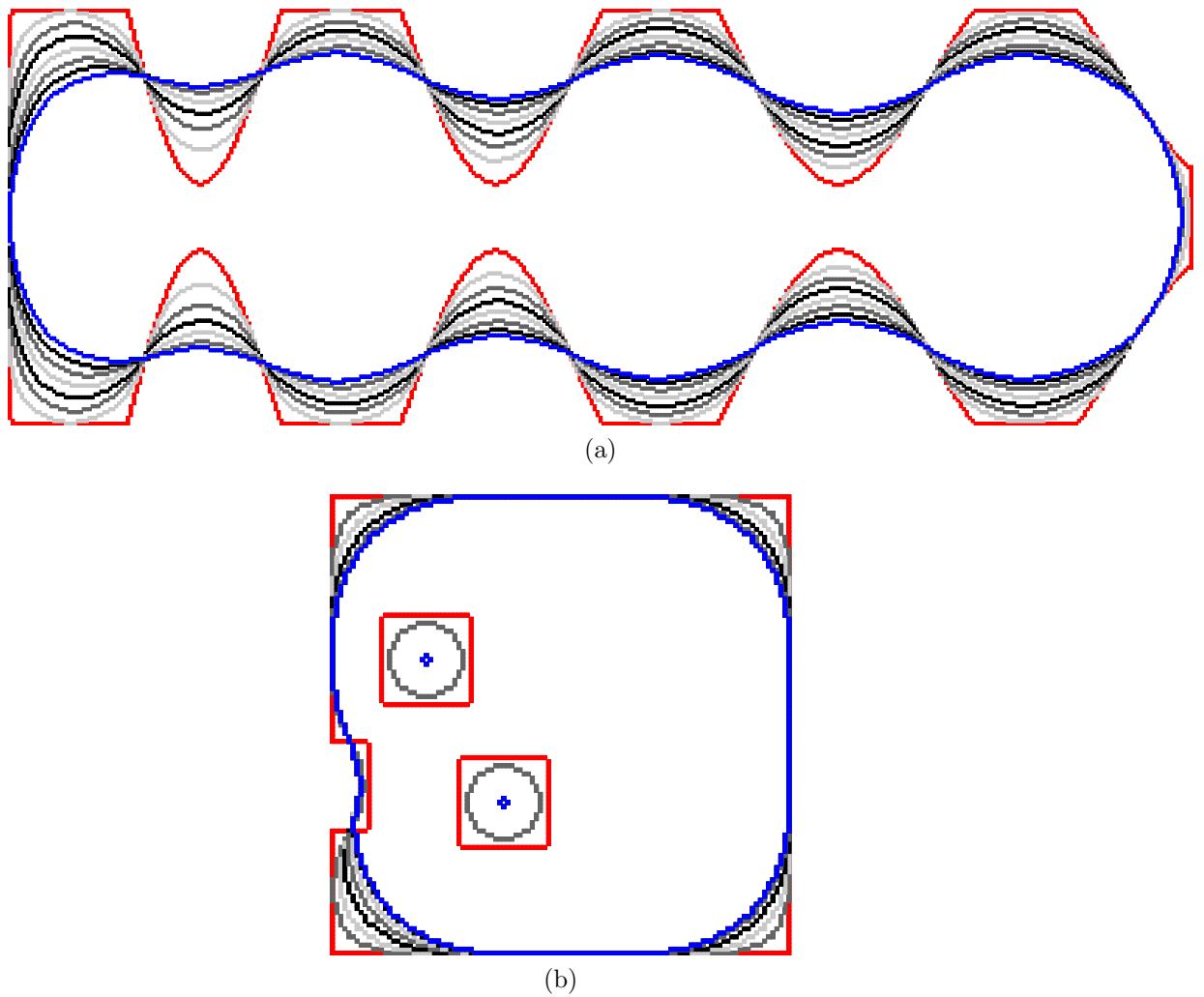


Figure 6.8: The flow evolves regions of high curvature faster, as illustrated in figure (a). Figure (b) illustrates the property of the FlipFlow algorithm to handle changes in topology.

We use the FlipFlow algorithm to regularize an initial contour output by some segmentation algorithm or delineated by the user. In this application, the data term of the FlipFlow is set to the data fidelity term [Equation \(6.5\)](#).

```

input : An image  $I$ ; seeds mask  $M$ ; the estimation ball radius  $r$ ; parameter
vector  $\boldsymbol{\theta} = (\alpha, \beta)$ ; data term weight ( $\gamma$ ) ; initial dilation  $d$ ; stop
condition value tolerance; the maximum number of iterations maxIt;  

 $D \leftarrow \text{GrabCut}(I, M);$   

 $D^{(0)} \leftarrow \text{dilate}(D, d);$   

delta  $\leftarrow +\infty;$   

 $k \leftarrow 0;$   

while  $k < \text{maxIt}$  and  $\text{delta} > \text{tolerance}$  do  

    //Shrinking mode  

    if  $k$  is even then  

         $x^{(k-1)} \leftarrow \arg \min_{X^{(k-1)}} E_{(\boldsymbol{\theta}, m)}^{\text{flip}}(D^{(k-1)}, 1 - X^{(k-1)}) + \gamma g(X^{(k-1)});$   

         $D^{(k)} \leftarrow F^{(k-1)} + x^{(k-1)};$   

    end  

    //Expansion mode  

    else  

         $\bar{x}^{(k-1)} \leftarrow \arg \min_{\bar{X}^{(k-1)}} E_{(\boldsymbol{\theta}, m)}^{\text{flip}}(D^{(k-1)}, 1 - \bar{X}^{(k-1)}) + \gamma g(\bar{X}^{(k-1)});$   

         $D^{(k)} \leftarrow \frac{\bar{F}^{(k-1)}}{\bar{F}^{(k-1)} + \bar{x}^{(k-1)}},$   

    end  

     $\text{delta} \leftarrow |D^{(k)} \setminus D^{(k+1)}|;$   

     $k \leftarrow k + 1;$   

end

```

Algorithm 3: FlipFlow algorithm for segmentation.

The algorithm can be initialized by a collection of compact sets, or with the result of a third-party segmentation algorithm, as GrabCut [\[RKB04\]](#). We include an additional parameter d that dilates the initial sets using a square of side one before executing the flow.

An illustration of the application of the FlipFlow model in image segmentation is presented in [Figure 6.9](#). We present a more exhaustive list of experiments and comparisons with other methods in [Chapter 9](#).

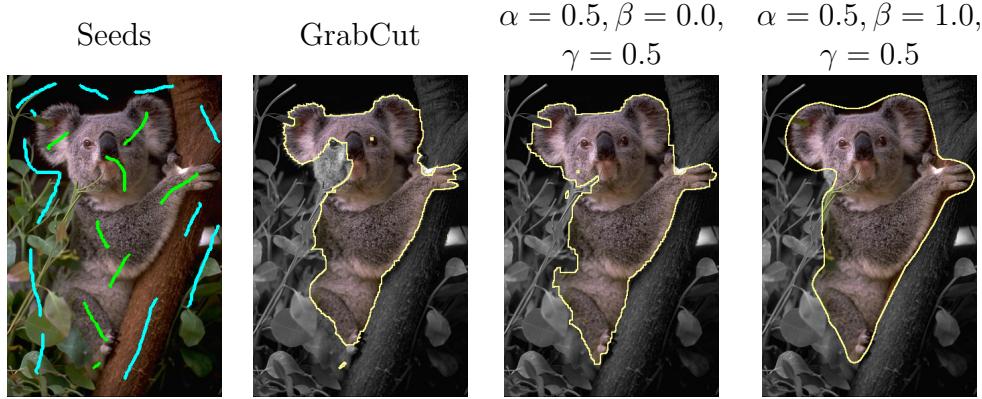


Figure 6.9: Given foreground (green) and background (blue) seeds at picture (a); GrabCut produces picture (b) which is used as input of the Contour Correction algorithm; in pictures (c) and (d) we display the output of Contour Correction algorithm with and without squared curvature regularization.

6.5 Conclusion

We presented the FlipFlow model in [Section 6.1](#), an evolution process that produces shapes of decreasing digital Elastica until a certain inflexion point. [Algorithm 2](#) operates in two distinct modes: the shrinking and the dilation modes. They are responsible for the treatment of convexities and concavities regions, respectively.

[Section 6.2](#) briefly describes some properties of QPBO method and its variants used to solve the quadratic binary problem that appears at every iteration of [Algorithm 2](#). In [Section 6.3](#) we point out the submodularization effect of evaluating the FlipFlow model at outer m -rings. For larger values of m , all pixels are labeled by QPBOP. Finally, we extended [Algorithm 2](#) in order to include a data term regularization and do image segmentation using [Algorithm 3](#).

In the next chapter we identify the key concept behind the FlipFlow model to define a variant of this algorithm which is easier to implement.

Chapter 7

A single step evolution model driven by digital Elastica minimization

In this chapter we introduce the balance coefficient, a value that indicates how far the intersection of some ball and a digital shape is from half of the ball area. This value motivates the definition of a new family of energies to regularize the squared curvature: the m -BalanceFlow. We are going to show that the BalanceFlow is closely related to the FlipFlow energy, but the former has an easier interpretation and leads to a simpler algorithm to implement.

7.1 BalanceFlow model

In Section 6.1.3, we have argued that inverting the solution was necessary to reduce the squared curvature estimation in the next shape of the flow. In this section, we investigate further the reasons involved in this unusual inversion step.

7.1.1 Definitions

In the FlipFlow model no contour information is given, and the strategy there were to label the pixels such that the next shape has a boundary in which the estimation balls were more balanced than in the previous shape, i.e., the difference $|B_r(p) \cap$

$|D| - |B_r(p) \cap \bar{D}|$ is closer to zero for every pixel $p \in \partial D$. We formalize this idea by defining the balance coefficient.

Definition 1(Balance coefficient): Given digital shape $D \in \Omega$, positive number r and point $p \in \Omega$, the *balance coefficient* of D at p is defined as

$$u_r(D, p) = \left(\frac{\pi r^2}{2} - |B_r(p) \cap D| \right)^2.$$

The balance coefficient definition is very similar to the II squared curvature estimator. Nonetheless, we have decided to make a new definition since we do not have the scaling factor $\frac{9}{R^6}$ and that the balance coefficient can be computed everywhere and not only in the digital boundary of the shape. Let $F = B_r(p) \cap D$ and $G = B_r(p) \setminus F$. The balance coefficient is symmetric with respect F and G .

$$u_r(D, p) = \left(\frac{\pi r^2}{2} - |F| \right)^2 = \left(-\frac{\pi r^2}{2} + |G| \right)^2 = \left(\frac{\pi r^2}{2} - |G| \right)^2.$$

The balance coefficient is used to estimate the effect of moving the estimation ball center towards the interior or the exterior of the shape. For example, consider [Figure 7.1](#) in which we plot the balance coefficients of points along the diagonal of a square shape.

The balance coefficient grows if the estimation ball is moved towards the exterior and decreases if the estimation ball is moved towards the interior of the shape. That is an indication that we should remove point p from D to decrease the squared curvature of the shape at point $p \in \partial D$. The same point p may be touched by several balls, each of them contributing with some value for the ultimate decision of keep or remove point p of D .

We are going to consider the inner and outer pixel boundary simultaneously as the optimization variables. We recall that $D^{(k)}$ corresponds to the digital shape D after the k -th iteration of the flow and that $d_{D^{(k)}}$ is its signed distance transform. We list the sets needed to define the new family of energies:

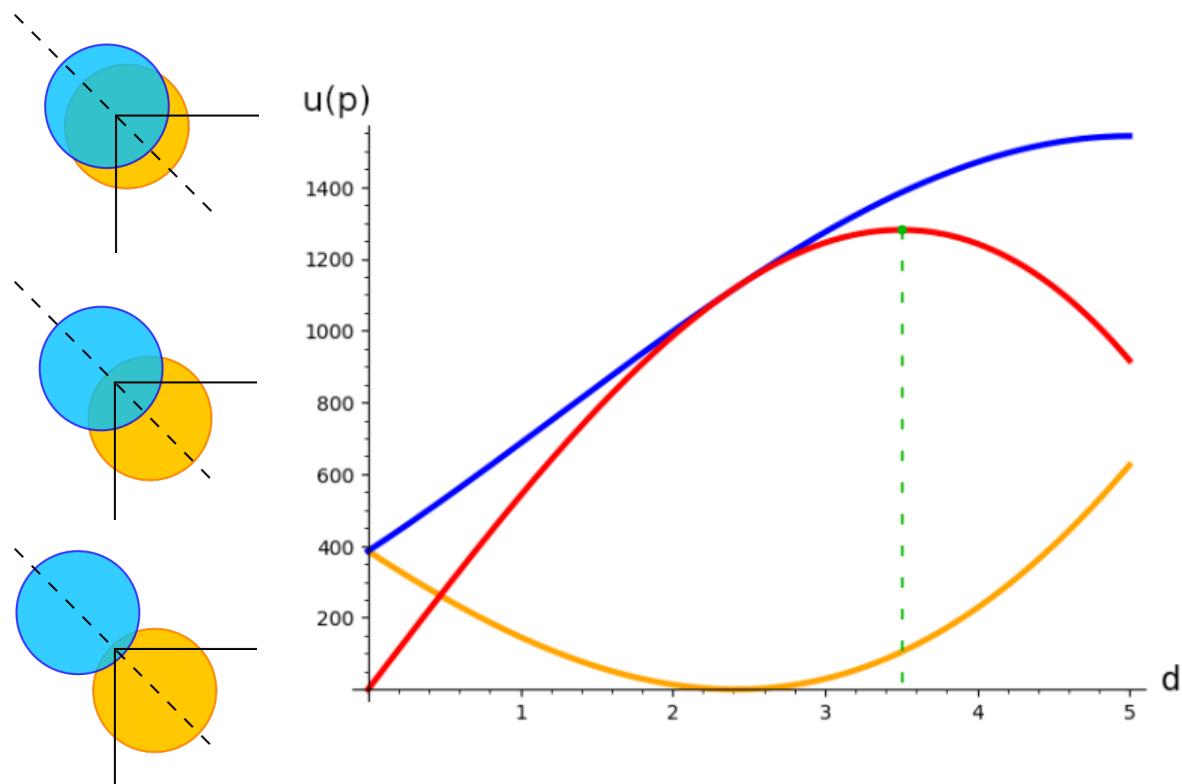


Figure 7.1: The balance coefficient ($r = 5$) of equidistant points from the corner of a square shape contour. The red curve indicates the difference between the blue and the orange curve. The inflexion point in the red curve indicates the point p in which a ball centered at p has balance coefficient equal to zero. The green point marks the point p in which the difference between the balance coefficients is the greatest.

$$\begin{aligned}
O^{(k)} &:= \{p \in \Omega \mid -1 \leq d_{D^{(k)}}(p) \leq 1\} \\
X^{(k)} &:= X(O^{(k)}) \\
F^{(k)} &:= D^{(k)} \setminus O^{(k)} \\
F_r^{(k)}(p) &:= F^{(k)} \cap B_r(p) \\
O_r^{(k)}(p) &:= O^{(k)} \cap B_r(p) \\
X_r^{(k)}(p) &:= X(O_r^{(k)}(p)).
\end{aligned}$$

We recall that an assignment of variables $X(\Omega)$ is denoted $x(\Omega)$. In case the shape is described in terms of a set of variables $X(\Omega)$, i.e., $D = F \cup x(\Omega)$, the balance coefficient is written as

$$u_r(F, X, p) = \left(\frac{\pi r^2}{2} - |F_r(p)| - \sum_{x_j \in X_r(p)} x_j \right)^2.$$

7.1.2 Algorithm

Let $p_i, p_o \in \mathcal{R}_m(D)$ the inner and outer ball centers in the m -ring of D , respectively. We assume $k = 0$ if omitted, i.e., $D = D^{(0)}$. We define the term $T_m^{bal}(D)$ as

$$\begin{aligned}
T_m^{bal}(D, X) &= \sum_{p_i, p_o \in \mathcal{R}_m(D)} u_r(F, 1 - X, p_o) - u_r(F, X, p_i) \\
&= \sum_{p_i, p_o \in \mathcal{R}_m(D)} \left(\frac{\pi R^2}{2} - \left(|F_o| + \sum_{x_j \in X_o} 1 - x_j \right) \right)^2 - \left(\frac{\pi R^2}{2} - \left(|F_i| + \sum_{x_j \in X_i} x_j \right) \right)^2,
\end{aligned} \tag{7.1}$$

where $X_o = X_r(p_o)$, $X_i = X_r(p_i)$, $F_o = F_r(p_o)$, $F_i = F_r(p_i)$.

Equation (7.1) favors configurations of zero difference between the outer and inner ball coefficients, i.e., regions of zero curvature. In regions of positive curvature, the outer (inner) ball has a shortage (excess) of pixels, and minimization of **Equation (7.1)** tends to label variables in these regions to zero (one).

The m -balance energy family is defined as

$$E_{(\theta, m)}^{bal}(D^{(k)}, X^{(k)}) = \sum_{x_j \in X^{(k)}} \alpha s(x_j) + \beta T_m^{bal}(D^{(k)}, X^{(k)}) + \sum_{x_j \in X^{(k)}} \gamma g(D^{(k)}, x_j). \tag{7.2}$$

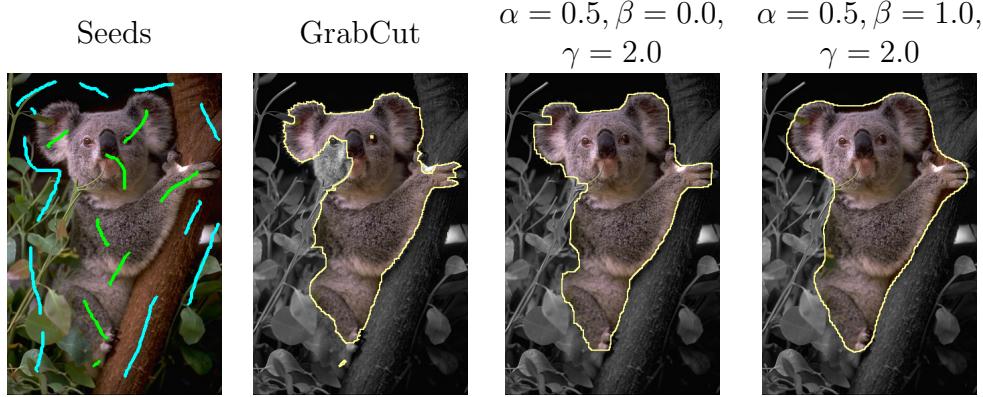


Figure 7.2: Given foreground (green) and background (gray) seeds at picture (a); GrabCut produces picture (b) which is used as input of the BalanceFlow algorithm; in pictures (c) and (d) we display the output of BalanceFlow algorithm with and without squared curvature regularization.

We follow the same notation of [Chapter 6](#) to denote the data term $g(D, x)$ and the length penalization term $s(x)$ that are defined as in [Equations \(6.4\)](#) and [\(6.5\)](#), respectively. The BalanceFlow algorithm is summarized in [Algorithm 4](#) and an illustration is shown in [Figure 7.2](#).

```

input : A digital set  $D$ ; The ring number  $m$ ; parameter vector  $\boldsymbol{\theta} = \alpha, \beta$ ;  

        data term coefficient  $\gamma$ ; the maximum number of iterations maxIt;  

 $D^{(0)} \leftarrow D$ ;  

 $k \leftarrow 1$ ;  

while  $k < \text{maxIt}$  do  

     $x^{(k-1)} \leftarrow \arg \min_{X^{(k-1)}} E_{(\boldsymbol{\theta}, m)}^{\text{bal}}(D^{(k-1)}, X^{(k-1)}) + \gamma g(X^{(k-1)})$ ;  

     $D^{(k)} \leftarrow F^{(k-1)} + x^{(k-1)}$ ;  

     $k \leftarrow k + 1$ ;  

end

```

Algorithm 4: BalanceFlow algorithm.

7.2 Relation with FlipFlow

The BalanceFlow returns similar solutions to the FlipFlow algorithm, as the experiments in [Chapter 9](#) illustrates. Indeed, they are closely related. We recall the

curvature regularization term of the FlipFlow [Equation \(6.3\)](#) for some digital shape D before proving proposition

$$T_m^{flip}(D, X) = \sum_{p_i, p_o \in R_m(D)} \left(\frac{\pi R^2}{2} - F_r(p_o) - \sum_{x_j \in X_r(p_o)} x_j \right)^2 + \left(\frac{\pi R^2}{2} - F_r(p_i) - \sum_{x_j \in X_r(p_i)} x_j \right)^2 \quad (7.3)$$

Proposition 1(FlipFlow and BalanceFlow relation): The curvature terms of FlipFlow and BalanceFlow are related by the equality

$$T_m^{flip}(D, 1 - X) = T_m^{bal}(D) + P_1(X_i) + c,$$

where $P_1(X_i) = (\sum_{X_i} 1 - x_j)^2 + (\sum_{X_i} x_j)^2$ and c is a constant.

Proof:

We replace x_j by $(1 - x_j)$ in [Equation \(7.3\)](#), which corresponds to the complement of the solution in the FlipFlow model. To simplify notation, we are going to omit the radius r and replace points p_i, p_o by underscored i, o , i.e., $F_i := F_r(p_i)$. We rewrite [Equation \(7.3\)](#) as

$$T_m^{flip}(D, 1 - X) = \sum_{p_i, p_o \in R_m(D)} \left(\frac{\pi R^2}{2} - F_o - \sum_{x_j \in X_o} 1 - x_j \right)^2 + \left(\frac{\pi R^2}{2} - F_i - \sum_{x_j \in X_i} 1 - x_j \right)^2 \quad (7.4)$$

Next, let $A_i = \pi R^2 / 2 - |F_i|$. We rewrite the second term of [Equation \(7.4\)](#) as

$$\begin{aligned}
\left(A_i - \sum_{x_j \in X_i} (1 - x_j) \right)^2 &= \left(A_i - |X_i| + \sum_{x_j \in X_i} x_j \right)^2 \\
&= (A_i - |X_i|)^2 + 2(A_i - |X_i|) \sum_{x_j \in X_i} x_j + \left(\sum_{x_j \in X_i} x_j \right)^2 \\
&= A_i^2 - 2A_i|X_i| + |X_i|^2 + 2(A_i - |X_i|) \sum_{x_j \in X_i} x_j + \left(\sum_{x_j \in X_i} x_j \right)^2 \\
&= A_i^2 + 2A_i \sum_{x_j \in X_i} x_j + \left(\sum_{x_j \in X_i} x_j \right)^2 - 2A_i|X_i| + |X_i|^2 - 2|X_i| \sum_{x_j \in X_i} x_j \\
&= 2A_i^2 - \left(A_i - \sum_{x_j \in X_i} x_j \right)^2 + 2 \left(\sum_{x_j \in X_i} x_j \right)^2 - 2A_i|X_i| + |X_i|^2 \\
&\quad - 2|X_i| \sum_{x_j \in X_i} x_j
\end{aligned}$$

We group the constants into the constant term $c = 2A_i^2 - 2A_i|X_i|$ to obtain

$$\begin{aligned}
\left(A_i - \sum_{x_j \in X_i} (1 - x_j) \right)^2 &= - \left(A_i - \sum_{x_j \in X_i} x_j \right)^2 + \left(|X_i| - \sum_{x_j \in X_i} x_j \right)^2 + \left(\sum_{x_j \in X_i} x_j \right)^2 + c \\
&= - \left(A_i - \sum_{x_j \in X_i} x_j \right)^2 + P_1(X_i) + c \\
&= - \left(\frac{\pi R^2}{2} - (|F_i| + \sum_{x_j \in X_i} x_j) \right)^2 + P_1(X_i) + c
\end{aligned}$$

Finnaly, we replace Equation (7.5) in Equation (7.4) to obtain

$$\begin{aligned}
T_m^{flip}(D, 1 - X) &= \left(\frac{\pi R^2}{2} - \left(|F_o| + \sum_{x_j \in X_o} 1 - x_j \right) \right)^2 \\
&\quad - \left(\frac{\pi R^2}{2} - \left(|F_i| + \sum_{x_j \in X_i} x_j \right) \right)^2 + P_1(X_i) + c \\
&= T_m^{bal}(D) + P_1(X_i) + c. \tag{7.5}
\end{aligned}$$

■

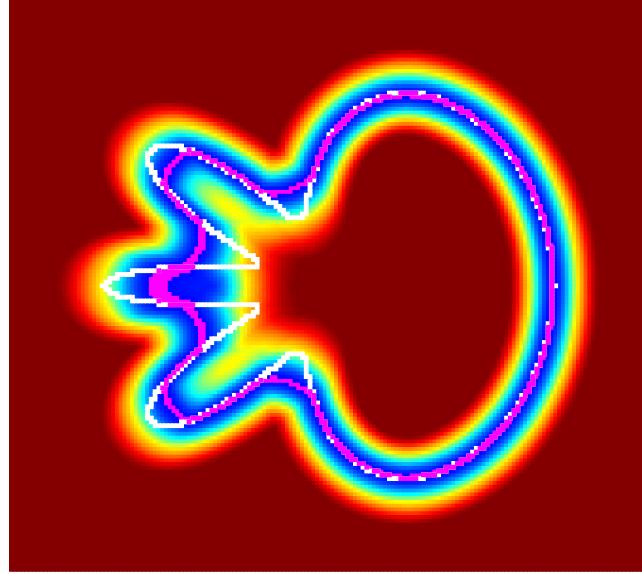


Figure 7.3: Balance coefficient map of radius 12 for the flower shape (contour in white). The pixels in magenta have balance coefficient smaller than 169.

[Proposition 1](#) tell us that, apart from a constant, the two energies differ in the penalty term $P_1(X_i)$. Locally, such term favors solutions in which half of the variables touched by the inner ball are labeled one. Indeed, the FlipFlow and BalanceFlow behave similarly. In the next chapter we make extensive comparisons between them.

7.3 Towards a graph-based formulation

Looking at [Figure 7.1](#) it would be interesting to find the point in which the inner or outer ball reaches the zero balance. In [Figure 7.3](#) each color represents the balance coefficient u_{12} of the closed shape with contour colored in white. We highlighted in magenta the pixels p for which $u_{12}(D, p) \leq 169$. [Figure 7.3](#) suggests that an evolution based on the zero level set of the balance coefficient may decrease the digital Elastica energy. In the next chapter we describe a graph-cut model in which the cost function is given by a function of the balance coefficients.

7.4 Conclusion

The BalanceFlow model is closely related to the FlipFlow but it has a simple implementation and interpretation. The balance coefficient is the link that connects both models and the motivation for the graph-cut model proposed in the next chapter.

Chapter 8

Digital Elastica minimization via graph cuts

In the previous chapter we have defined the concept of balance coefficient that motivates us to introduce the BalanceFlow model. In fact, the balance coefficient is also present in the FlipFlow energy and it seems that its computation is in the core of the evolution processes described so far. We confirm this hypothesis once more in this chapter. We present a graph-based model that converges to the optimum digital shape for the free digital Elastica problem. Moreover, the model is easily adapted to image segmentation tasks.

8.1 Standard graph-cut segmentation

The Grabcut model [RKB04] partitions an image in foreground and background components by computing minimum cuts in a graph. The model is very attractive, as minimum cuts are quickly computed for sparse graphs. We start by giving some necessary definitions from graph theory.

8.1.1 Definitions

Definition 1(Unordered graph): The unordered graph $\mathcal{G}(\mathcal{V}, \mathcal{E})$ is a pair of sets \mathcal{V}, \mathcal{E} such that \mathcal{V} is finite and \mathcal{E} is a collection of unordered pairs of \mathcal{V} , i.e.,

$$\mathcal{E} \subseteq \{ \{x, y\} \mid x, y \in \mathcal{V} \} .$$

Definition 2(Connected graph): The graph $\mathcal{G}(\mathcal{V}, \mathcal{E})$ is connected if for every pair of vertices v, u there exists a path π of length n such that

$$v_1 = v, \quad v_n = u, \quad \pi = \{v_i \mid \{v_{i-1}, v_i\} \subset \mathcal{E}\}, \quad 2 < i < n.$$

A digital set $D \subset \Omega \subset \mathbb{Z}^2$ is naturally represented as a graph $\mathcal{G}(\mathcal{V}, \mathcal{E})$ by letting each pixel $p \in D$ correspond to a vertex $v_p \in \mathcal{V}$. The set of edges is defined according to the application in mind, but it's encodes the pixels connectivity, i.e., 4, 8-adjacency. Moreover, one can define a cost function $w : \mathcal{E} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ on the edge set. In this case, we speak of a weighted graph.

Definition 3(Cut): Let $\mathcal{G}(\mathcal{V}, \mathcal{E})$ a connected graph weighted by cost function $w : \mathcal{E} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$. A cut set is a subset $\mathcal{E}' \subset \mathcal{E}$ such that the graph $\mathcal{G}(\mathcal{V}, \mathcal{E} \setminus \mathcal{E}')$ is disconnected. Moreover, the cut value of \mathcal{E}' is defined as

$$\text{cut}(\mathcal{E}') = \sum_{e \in \mathcal{E}'} w(e).$$

We are interested in (s, t) -cuts, i.e., cuts in which vertices s, t are disconnected after the cut set is removed. We denote s, t as the source and target vertices, respectively.

The Grabcut model consists in a judicious definition of the cost function w in order to segment objects in a digital image according to its color intensity values.

8.1.2 Grabcut binary segmentation model

Let $I : \Omega \rightarrow [0, 1]^3$ be a 3-channel colored image. Consider the graph $\mathcal{G}(\mathcal{V}, \mathcal{E})$ defined as

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{V} &= \{v_p \mid \forall p \in \Omega\} \cup \{s, t\} \\ \mathcal{E} &= \mathcal{E}_{st} \cup \mathcal{E}_{\mathcal{N}}, \end{aligned}$$

where

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{E}_{st} &= \{\{s, v_p\}, \{t, v_p\} \mid \forall p \in \mathcal{V}\} \\ \mathcal{E}_{\mathcal{N}} &= \{\{v_p, v_q\} \mid \forall p, q \in \mathcal{V} \text{ and } q \in \mathcal{N}_4(p)\}. \end{aligned}$$

Next, let sets $\mathcal{V}_F, \mathcal{V}_B \subset \mathcal{V}$ to represent foreground and background seeds input by the user. Vertices in \mathcal{V}_F (\mathcal{V}_B) are forced to be connected to the source (target) after the removal of the minimum cut set.

Consider the functions

$$B(\{v_p, v_q\}) = \exp\left(-\frac{(I(p) - I(q))^2}{2\sigma^2}\right)$$

$$R(v_p, "bg") = -\ln H_B(p)$$

$$R(v_p, "fg") = -\ln H_F(p),$$

where H_B, H_F are mixed Gaussian distributions derived from foreground and background seeds given by the user; and σ is interpreted as a parameter to configure noise level of the input image.

Finally, define the cost function $w : \mathcal{E} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ as

edge e	$\mathbf{w}(e)$	for
$\{v_p, v_q\}$	$B(e)$	$e \in \mathcal{E}_N$
$\{v_p, s\}$	$\lambda_r R(v_p, "bg")$	$p \in \mathcal{V}, p \notin \mathcal{V}_F \cup \mathcal{V}_B$
	M	$p \in \mathcal{V}_F$
	0	$p \in \mathcal{V}_B$
$\{v_p, t\}$	$\lambda_r R(v_p, "fg")$	$p \in \mathcal{V}, p \notin \mathcal{V}_F \cup \mathcal{V}_B$
	0	$p \in \mathcal{V}_F$
	M	$p \in \mathcal{V}_B$

$$\text{where, } M = 1 + \max_{p \in \Omega} \sum_{q \in \mathcal{N}_4(p)} B(\{p, q\}).$$

Let \mathcal{E}' be a minimum cut of \mathcal{G} and C the connected component of \mathcal{G} induced by \mathcal{E}' that contains the source vertex. The grabcut energy value is given by

$$grab_\Lambda(C) = \lambda_r \cdot \left(\sum_{p \in C} R(v_p, "fg") + \sum_{p \in \bar{X}} R(v_p, "bg") \right) + \lambda_b \cdot \sum_{e \in \mathcal{E}'} B(e).$$

The Grabcut segmentation is heavily impacted by the quality of the input image. To attenuate the problem, one could extend the Grabcut model by defining a cost function that takes geometric information into account. Indeed, the work [BK03] describes a cost function in which one could do image segmentation with length regularization. There exist some attempts [Nie+14; EG10] to inject curvature information in a graph-cut framework, but the models present issues on running time and lack precision on the estimation of curvature. In the next section we describe a graph-cut model that uses the balance coefficient to regularize curvature.

8.2 GraphFlow model

Given some energy E , the GraphFlow model is divided into two main steps: candidate selection and validation. At the candidate selection step, a minimum cut is computed for each member of a set of candidate graphs. From the minimum cuts we derive candidate solutions for the minimization of E . The validation step consists in selecting the candidate solution with the lowest value of E .

The GraphFlow model is suitable for the free, constrained Elastica and image segmentation problems. In particular, the GraphFlow model is a simple extension of the Grabcut model for image segmentation that regularizes the squared curvature.

In the next sections, we are going to describe the GraphFlow model that aims to minimize the energy

$$E^{graph} = \hat{E}_{\theta} + grab_{\Lambda}. \quad (8.1)$$

8.2.1 The candidate graph

Let $D \subset \Omega \subset \mathbb{Z}^2$ a digital set. Given $n > 0$, we define the optimization band $O_n(D)$ as

$$O_n(D) := \{p \in \Omega \mid -n \leq d_D(p) \leq n\}.$$

We are going to construct the candidate graph $\mathcal{G}_n(D) = (\mathcal{V}, \mathcal{E})$. The vertex and edge sets are defined as

$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{V} &= \{v_p \mid p \in D \cup O_n\} \cup \{s, t\} \\ \mathcal{E} &= \mathcal{E}_{st} \cup \mathcal{E}_{\mathcal{N}}. \end{aligned}$$

where s, t are the source and target vertices, respectively. As in the previous section, sets $\mathcal{V}_F, \mathcal{V}_B \subset \mathcal{V}$ correspond to foreground and background seeds input by the user. Additionally, we define the sets

$$\begin{aligned}\mathcal{V}_s &= \{v_p \mid p \in D \setminus O_n(D)\} \\ \mathcal{V}_t &= \{v_p \mid p \in \overline{D} \setminus O_n(D)\}.\end{aligned}$$

The sets $\mathcal{V}_s, \mathcal{V}_t$ are forced to be connected to source and target components, respectively. The cost function $w : \mathcal{E} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ is defined as

edge e	$\mathbf{w}(e)$	for
$\{v_p, v_q\}$	$\beta(u(D, p) + u(D, q)) + \lambda_b B(e)$	$p, q \in \mathcal{E}_N$
$\{v_p, s\}$	$\lambda_r R(v_p, \text{"bg"})$ $\lambda_r M_1 \mathbb{1}_{\mathcal{V}_F}(p) + \beta M_2 \mathbb{1}_{\mathcal{V}_s}(p)$	$p \in \mathcal{V}, p \notin \mathcal{V}_F \cup \mathcal{V}_B \cup \mathcal{V}_s \cup \mathcal{V}_t$ otherwise
$\{v_p, t\}$	$\lambda_r R(v_p, \text{"fg"})$ $\lambda_r M_1 \mathbb{1}_{\mathcal{V}_B}(p) + \beta M_2 \mathbb{1}_{\mathcal{V}_t}(p)$	$p \in \mathcal{V}, p \notin \mathcal{V}_F \cup \mathcal{V}_B \cup \mathcal{V}_s \cup \mathcal{V}_t$ otherwise

The constants M_1, M_2 are defined as

$$\begin{aligned}M_1 &= 1 + \max_{p \in \Omega} \sum_{q \in \mathcal{N}_4(p)} B(\{p, q\}) \\ M_2 &= 1 + \max w(p, q).\end{aligned}$$

Let \mathcal{E}' the minimum cut of $\mathcal{G}_n(D)$. Moreover, let $C_n(D)$ be the connected component of the graph $\mathcal{G}_n(D)$ that contains the source vertex s and is restricted to $\mathcal{E} \setminus \mathcal{E}'$. The digital set

$$D' = \{p \mid v_p \in C_n(D)\}$$

is said to be a candidate shape to decrease [Equation \(8.1\)](#). We are going to use $C_n(D)$ interchangeably with D' to denote both the set of vertices and the corresponding points of a digital set. In the next section we describe a local-search algorithm whose neighborhood is defined using a set of candidate graphs.

8.2.2 GraphFlow algorithm

The GraphFlow algorithm implements a local-search strategy to minimize [Equation \(8.1\)](#). Its neighborhood is derived from a set of candidate graphs, called the probe-set. The probe-set of D can be defined as any collection of digital sets, but it makes more sense to define it as a collection of digital shapes that are somehow close to D . For example, we define the a -probe set of shape D as

Definition 1(a -probe set): Let D a digital set and a a natural number. The a -probe set of D is defined as

$$\mathcal{P}_a(D) = D \cup \bigcup_{a' < a} D^{+a} \cup D^{-a},$$

where $D^{+a}(D^{-a})$ denotes a dilation(erosion) by a circle of radius a .

Therefore, we define the local-search neighborhood of digital set D as

$$\mathcal{N}(D) = \{C_n(X) \mid Q \in \mathcal{P}_a(D)\}.$$

Finally, the GraphFlow algorithm is described in [Algorithm 5](#).

```

input : A digital set  $S$ ; the optimization band  $n$ ; the probe set parameter  $a$ ;
        parameter vector  $\theta = (\alpha, \beta)$ ; the maximum number of iterations
        maxIt;
begin
     $D^{(0)} \leftarrow S$ ;
     $k \leftarrow 1$ ;
    while  $k < \text{maxIt}$  do
        //Candidate selection
         $\mathcal{N}^{(k)} \leftarrow \{C_n(Q) \mid Q \in \mathcal{P}_a(D^{(k-1)})\}$ ;
        //Candidate validation
         $D^{(k)} \leftarrow \arg \min_{X \in \mathcal{N}^{(k)}} \hat{E}_{\theta}(X) + grab_{\Lambda}(X)$ ;
         $k \leftarrow k + 1$ ;
    end
```

Algorithm 5: GraphFlow algorithm.

We remark that the GraphFlow algorithm possess two fundamental steps: the candidate selection and the candidate validation. The former can be interpreted as an advanced filter that choses the best candidates for digital Elastica minimization

from the given a -probe set. Among those choices, we chose the one with lower digital Elastica energy in the candidate validation step.

The GraphFlow algorithm can grow or shrink in accordance with the α coefficient in the digital Elastica (see [Figure 8.1](#)). Using a 0-probe set we recover the convergence to a single point behaviour observed in both FlipFlow and BalanceFlow model. Moreover, its solution for the free Elastica problem is very similar to those given by the enumerative process of [Chapter 5](#), i.e., the shapes converge to the expected global optimum. However, for the constrained Elastica problem, the GraphFlow encounters some difficulties to evolve (see [Figure 8.1](#)), in particular for the fixed endpoint orientation instance. We believe that a larger neighborhood, possibly random, could solve this issue. The results are explored in more details in [Chapter 9](#).

Some preliminar results of [Algorithm 5](#) applied to image segmentation is shown in [Figures 8.2](#) and [8.3](#). In particular, we can observe that the GraphFlow presents the completion property, i.e., tends to return segmentation with fewer disconnected components.

8.3 Conclusion

We described a graph-cut model that regularizes the squared curvature, in the free, constrained Elastica and is suitable for image segmentation. The evolution produced by the GraphFlow responds to the length penalization term α , i.e., the shape tends to grow (shrink) for lower (higher) values of α . Moreover, the GraphFlow [Algorithm 5](#) is faster and simpler to implement than the previous models presented in this thesis.

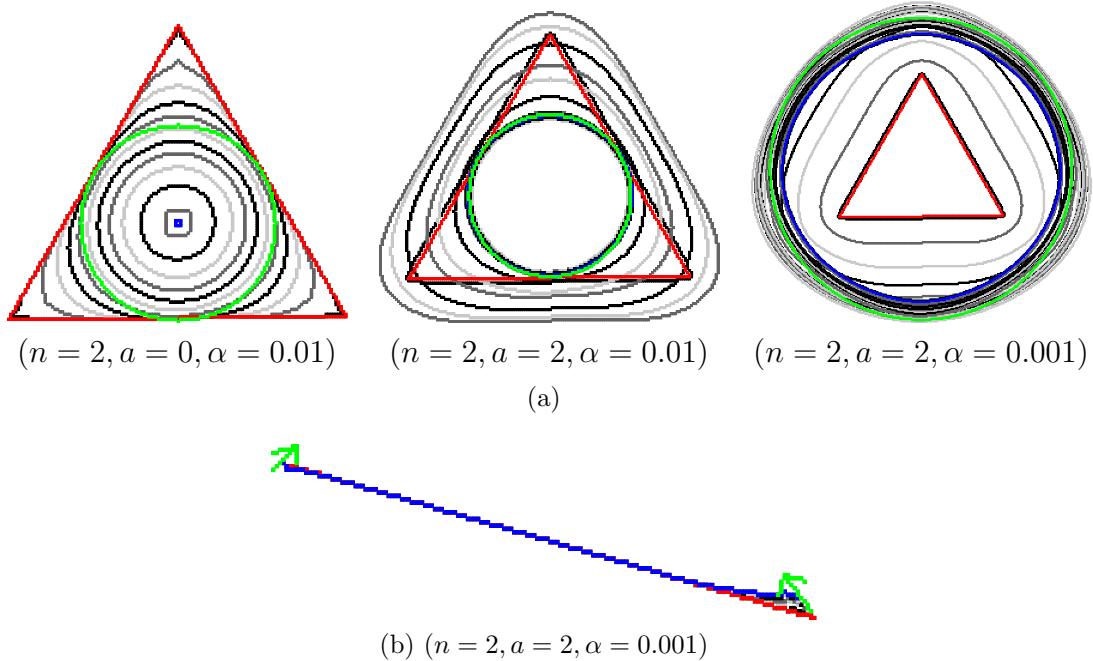


Figure 8.1: The GraphFlow algorithm can shrink and grow in accordance with length penalization and it converges to shape closer to the global optimum (green curve) in the free Elastica problem. In the constrained Elastica, we believe that we can improve the results by using a larger, possibly random, neighborhood. We are using $n = 2, a = 2$ and shapes are displayed at every 10 iterations.

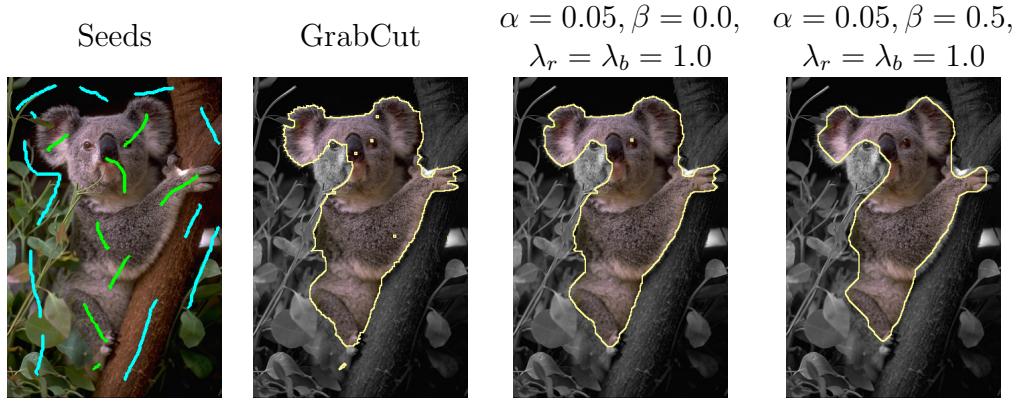


Figure 8.2: Given foreground (green) and background (gray) seeds at picture (a); GrabCut produces picture (b) which is used as input of the GraphFlow algorithm; in pictures (c) and (d) we display the output of GraphFlow algorithm with and without squared curvature regularization.

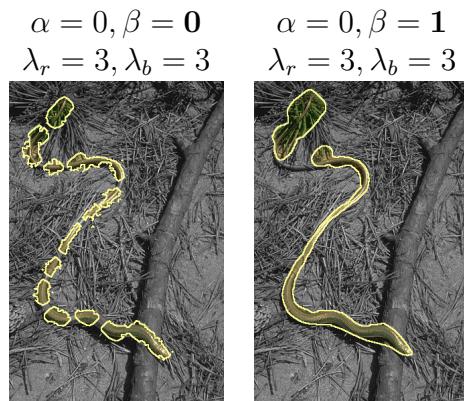


Figure 8.3: Completion property. The oversegmentation picture in the left was obtained with no squared curvature regularization, while the picture in the right was obtained by setting $\beta = 1.0$.

Chapter 9

Results analysis

In this chapter we analyse the results produced by the four models developed in this thesis. We are going to compare its results for each of the three problems considered: free Elastica, constrained Elastica and image segmentation. [Table 9.1](#) summarizes the models properties.

In the image segmentation section, we compare our results with the linear model for curvature regularization of Schoenemann.

Model	Implementation	Running time	Free Ela.	Constrained Ela.	Image Seg.
LocalSearch (LS)	medium	slow	yes(opt)	yes	no
FlipFlow (FF)	hard	acceptable	yes	no	yes
BalanceFlow (BF)	medium	acceptable	yes	no	yes
GraphFlow (GF)	easy	fast	yes(opt)	yes	yes

Table 9.1: Models summary. The qualitative attributes are relative, e.g., the GraphFlow presents the lowest running time while LocalSearch presents the highest.

9.1 Free Elastica

The free Elastica problem consists in finding a shape with the lowest digital Elastica. The approach to solve this problem as well the two others that follow is to iteratively evolve an initial shape to another with lower digital Elastica value. We have ran two experiments, summarized in [Table 9.2](#), to illustrate the evolution process behaviour for each of the models described in this thesis.

We make a distinction between the radius used to compute the balance coefficient ($bRadius$) and the one used to estimate curvature using the II-estimator ($vRadius$)

Experiment	<i>maxIt</i>	<i>vRadius</i>	<i>bRadius</i>	<i>h</i>	α	β	<i>nc</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>ob</i>	LS	FF,BF	GF
Exp-General	400	5	7	0.25	0.01	1	4	5	2	3			
Exp-Radius	400	5	$\frac{7}{12}$	0.25	0.001	1	4	5 10	2	3			

Table 9.2: Parameter settings for the free Elastica experiments. The headers LS,FF,BF,GF identifies parameters that are exclusive for the LocalSearch, FlipFlow, BalanceFlow and GraphFlow models, respectively.

in the validation function of GraphFlow and LocalSearch. In particular, the *vRadius* is the one used to plot the graphs in [Figures 9.2](#) and [9.4](#). Moreover, the *vRadius* is always scaled by the grid step, while the *bRadius* is never scaled.

9.1.1 General experiment

The General experiment executes each model using the listed parameters in [Table 9.2](#) for 5 different parametric shapes. The results for the General experiment is shown in [Figure 9.1](#). One can check in the plots of [Figure 9.2](#) how the digital Elastica value evolves at each iteration. For this experiment we also provide [Table 9.3](#) with the model's respective running times.

We observe that both LocalSearch and GraphFlow evolves the initial shape to another shape closer to the optimal one, i.e., for $\alpha = 0.01$, the disk of radius 10. However, the GraphFlow model is simpler to implement and much faster than LocalSearch (see [Table 9.3](#)). Even with a smaller neighborhood, the GraphFlow achieves its convergence first than LocalSearch in two occasions, one in the square and the other in the flower evolution.

At the first iterations, FlipFlow and BalanceFlow produce shapes with lower digital Elastica energy. However, the models do not stop to evolve even if a shape of smaller perimeter and lower digital Elastica ceases to exist, and starting from this point, the digital Elastica value increases.

9.1.2 Radius choice experiment

In the Exp-Radius experiment, we set the length penalization parameter to $\alpha = 0.001$. Compared to the Exp-General, the expected behaviour is that the shapes will grow till reach the optimal disk of radius $1/0.001^{0.5} \approx 31$. This experiment confirms

	Pixels (initial shape)	LocalSearch	FlipFlow	BalanceFlow	GraphFlow
Triangle	8315	4.8s/it	0.4s/it	0.38s/it	0.14s/it
Square	12769	2s/it	0.51s/it	0.47s/it	0.12s/it
Ellipse	10038	3.1s/it	0.64s/it	0.57s/it	0.1s/it
Flower	26321	12.3s/it	1.23s/it	0.94s/it	0.14s/it
Bean	25130	6.4s/it	1.2s/it	1.17s/it	0.16s/it

Table 9.3: Running time and input size of Exp-General experiment for the free Elastica.

the natural observation that the choice of the *bRadius* parameter is important to the optimal shape achievement.

In the case of FlipFlow and BalanceFlow, the evolution goes faster with a larger radius, but the shape never grows, it only shrinks. On the other hand, LocalSearch and GraphFlow are sensitive to the value of α and they can grow or shrink the shape accordingly. Moreover, the choice of *bRadius* defines how closer the solution will be from the optimum.

We recall that the II estimator measures curvature by using a disk of a given radius. The radius parameter defines the range of values estimated by the estimator. At first glance, a larger radius returns a more precise estimation, but we should be careful in not use a radius larger than the shape reach at the point of estimation.

However, for the Radius-choice experiment, a value *bRadius* = 7 is too small to identify the small variations that a shape growing to a disk of radius 31 suffers. Therefore, when we set *bRadius* = 12 both LocalSearch and GraphFlow return solutions closer to the optimal as we can check in Figures 9.3 and 9.4.

9.2 Constrained Elastica

The constrained Elastica problem consists in finding the shape of minimum digital Elastica that respects some set of constraints. We ran experiments with two different set of constraints. In the first, we impose that a set of pixels in the digital boundary of the initial shape must persist in the final shape. In the second, we evolve a curve whose endpoints are fixed.

For the constrained Elastica, only LocalSearch and GraphFlow were evaluated. We believe that both FlipFlow and BalanceFlow can be modified to evolve the constrained Elastica, but such modifications were not implemented in this thesis. Ta-

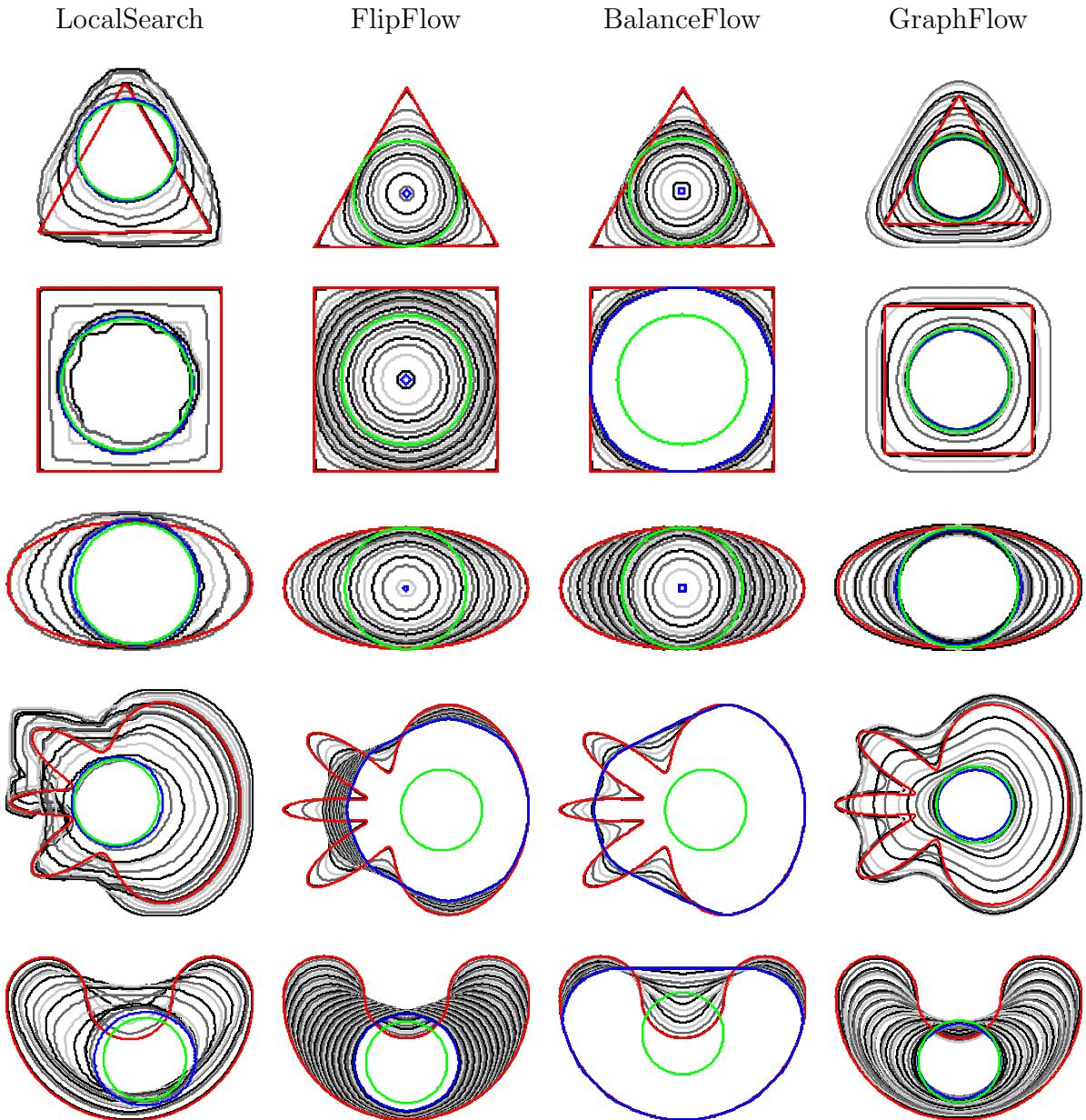


Figure 9.1: Results of Exp-General experiment for the free Elastica. Initial contour is colored in red, final contour is colored in blue and optimal contour is colored in green. Curves are drawn every 10 iterations.

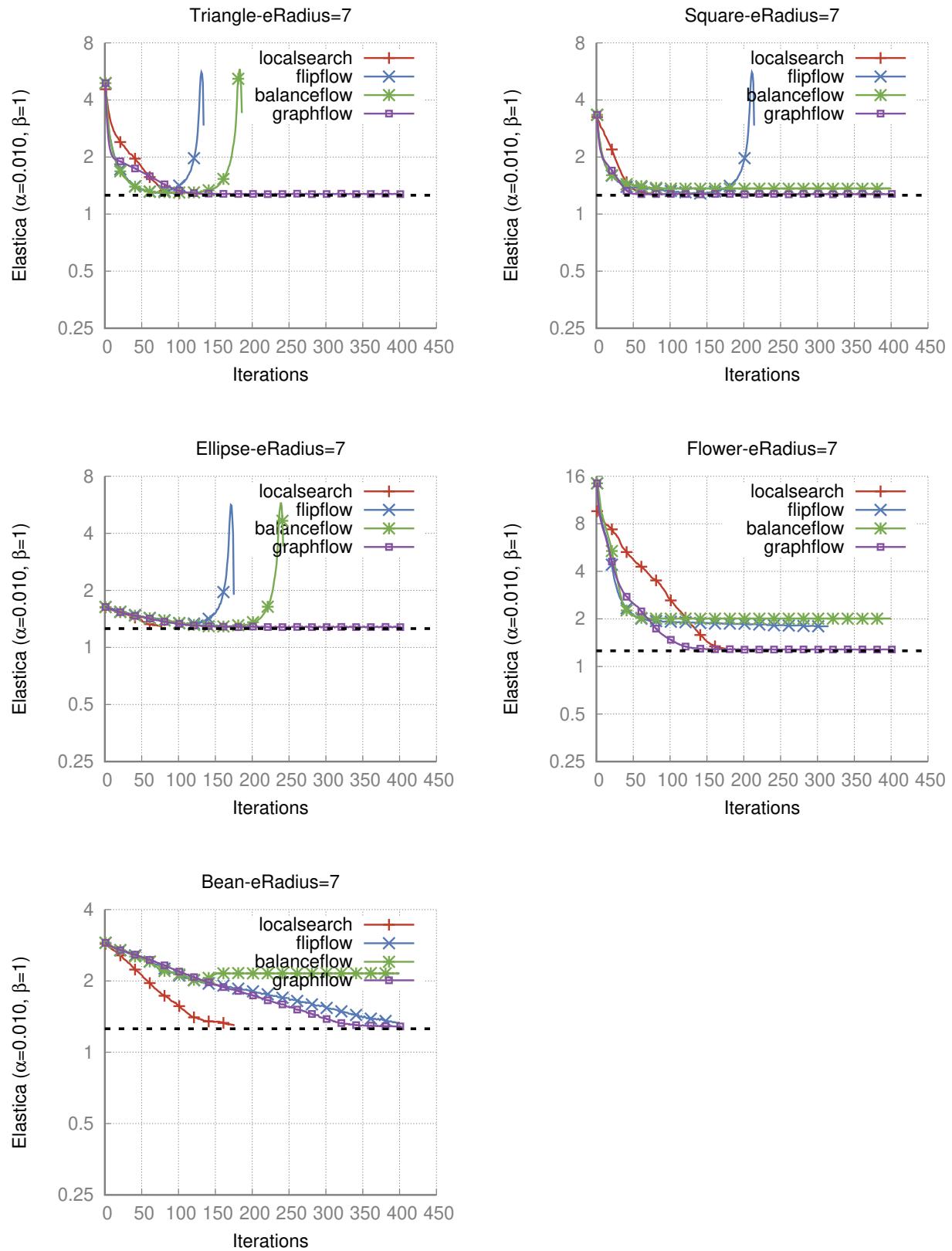


Figure 9.2: Evolution of digital Elastica value per iteration in the Exp-General experiment for the free Elastica. The dashed line marks the optimum value.

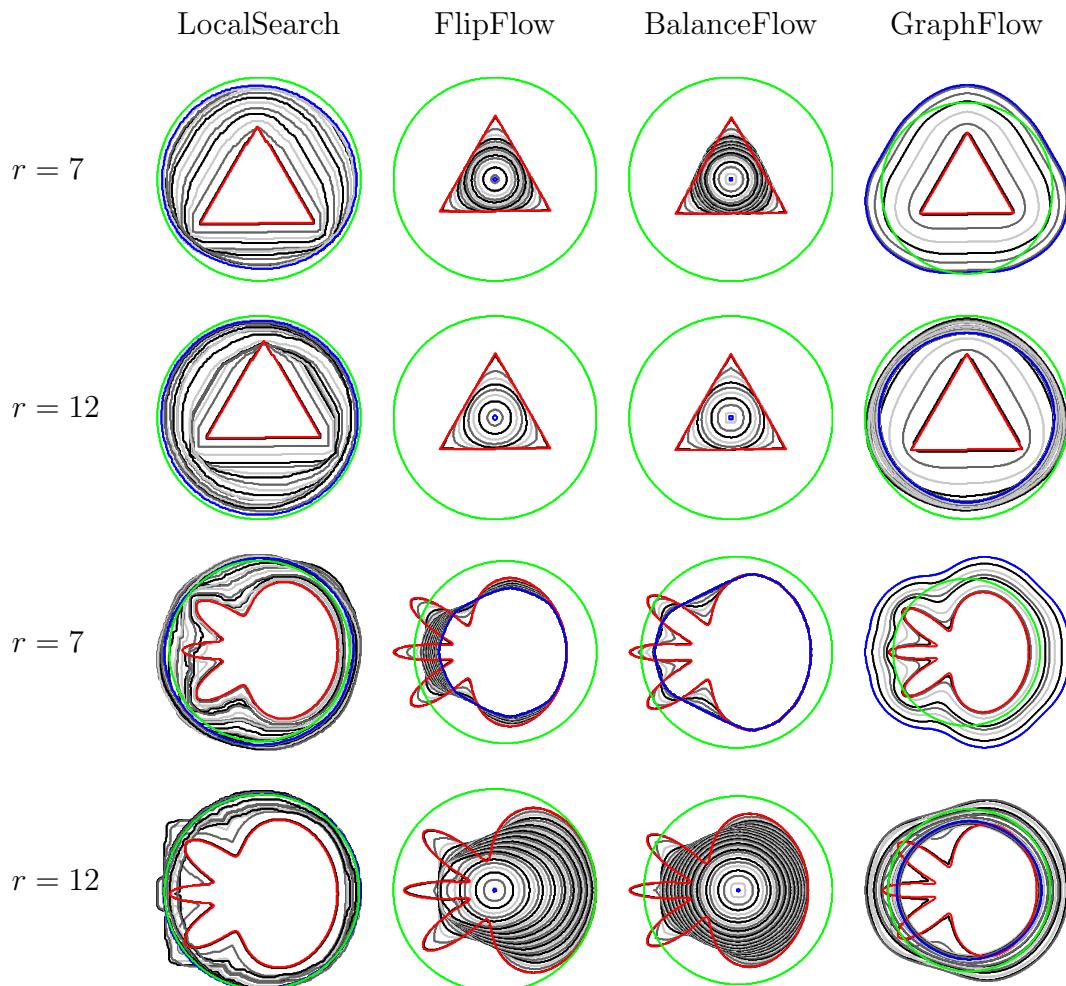


Figure 9.3: Results of Exp-Radius experiment for the free Elastica. Initial contour is colored in red, final contour is colored in blue and optimal contour is colored in green. Curves are drawn every 10 iterations.

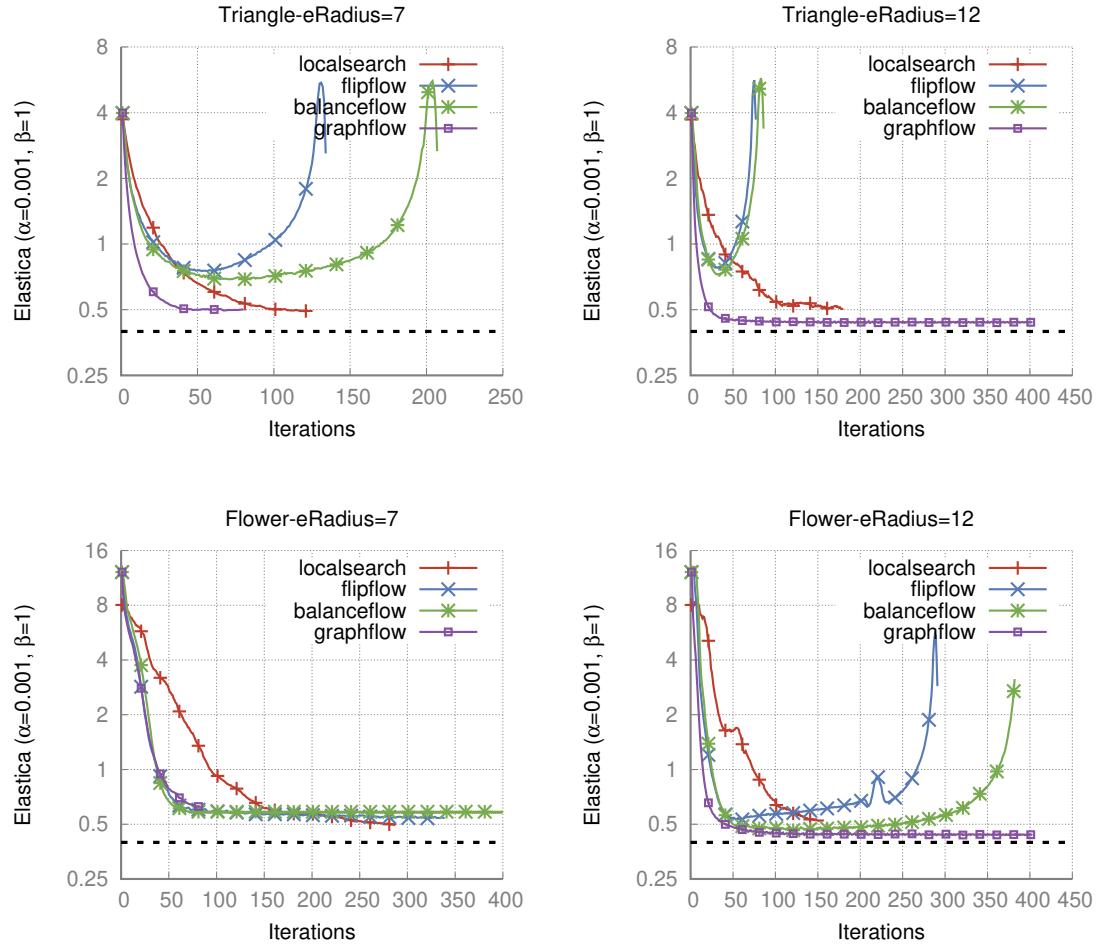


Figure 9.4: Digital Elastica value evolution per iteration of the Radius-choice experiment for the free Elastica.

Experiment	<i>maxIt</i>	<i>vRadius</i>	<i>bRadius</i>	<i>h</i>	α	β	LS			GF	
							<i>nc</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>ob</i>		
Exp- α	400	15	15	1.0	0.002 0.0002	1	4	1	2		
Exp- <i>bRadius</i>	400	7 50	7 50	1.0	0.0002	1	4	1	2		

Table 9.4: Parameter settings for the constrained Elastica experiments. The headers LS, GF identifies parameters that are exclusive for the LocalSearch and GraphFlow models, respectively.

[Table 9.4](#) lists the parameters used in the experiments and [Table 9.5](#) the running time of Exp- α experiment.

We remark that for every experiment in this section the grid step is set to $h = 1.0$, i.e., the Euclidean and digital radius are the same. In opposition with the previous section where all the shapes had a closed parametric formula, some of the tested shapes in this section are ad-hoc and a decision about the grid step in this case becomes arbitrary.

9.2.1 Discussion

Differently from LocalSearch, the GraphFlow model encounters some difficulties to evolve both Curve-1 and Curve-2, as illustrated in [Figure 9.6](#). We recall that the LS model employs a more heterogeneous neighborhood than GF. The probe set of GF is created by applying erosions and dilations in the initial shape, which promotes quite rough transformations, i.e., they do not preserve any part of the contour. We believe that by refining the neighborhood, possibly a random one, we could obtain better results for the GraphFlow. Besides that, the GF evolves the Flower instances, though it stops at a shape of higher digital Elastica value than LS.

In [Figure 9.7](#) displays the results of experiment Exp-*bRadius* in which the models are executed with different values for the radius of the estimation disk. As expected, a larger radius can estimate a larger range of curvature values and it is particularly important in the case where $\alpha = 0.0002$. In this case the shape tends to grow and the estimator should be precise enough to identify small variations in curvature. Otherwise, the shape prematurely stops to evolve. Nonetheless, a too large radius (see [Figure 9.5](#)) may not be appropriated, and the curves do not evolve as expected.

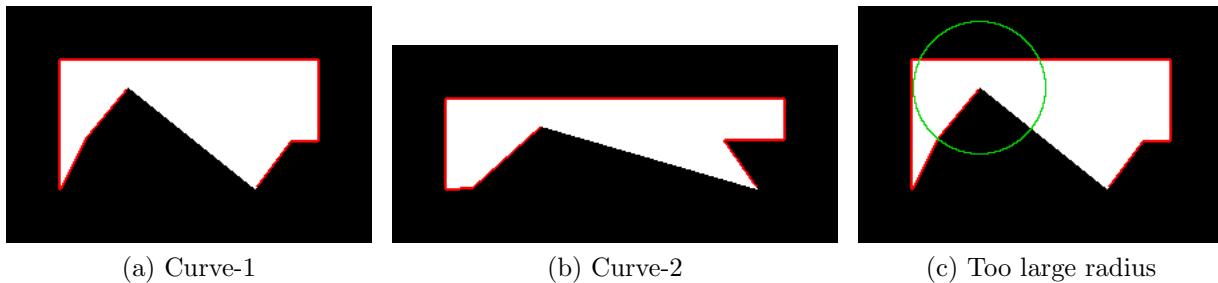


Figure 9.5: The underlying shapes of Curve-1 and Curve-2 for constrained Elastica experiments are shown in figures (a) and (b). Pixels in red are forced to persist in the solution. In figure (c), an example of a too large radius value (50).

9.3 Image segmentation

The FlipFlow, BalanceFlow and GraphFlow can be extended to do image segmentation. In this section we show the results of several experiments that illustrates the influence of each of the the weights parameters (length, curvature, data) and the radius of the estimation ball in the produced segmentation. At the last section we compare our results with the Schoenemann linear curvature regularization (SLCR) [SKC09].

All three models (FF,BF,GF) need a initial segmentation as input. This segmentation is given by a single iteration of the Grabcut algorithm. [Table 9.6](#) lists the parameters configuration for each experiment and [Table 9.8](#) summarizes their running times.

The experiments are divided in two sections. In the first, we study the influence of each parameter in the produced segmentation and in the second we compare our results with those produced by SLCR. For the same reason described in the previous section, the grid step in all experiments is set to $h = 1.0$.

9.3.1 Parameters influence

The models offer parameters to control the relative weight of length (α), curvature (β) and data ($\gamma, \lambda_r, \lambda_b$). We recall that FF and BF accept a single regional parameter γ for data, while GF accepts λ_r to ponderate a regional term and λ_b to weight a boundary term. The Grabcut input and its result are shown in Figure 9.8. The experiment results are displayed in Figures 9.9 to 9.12.

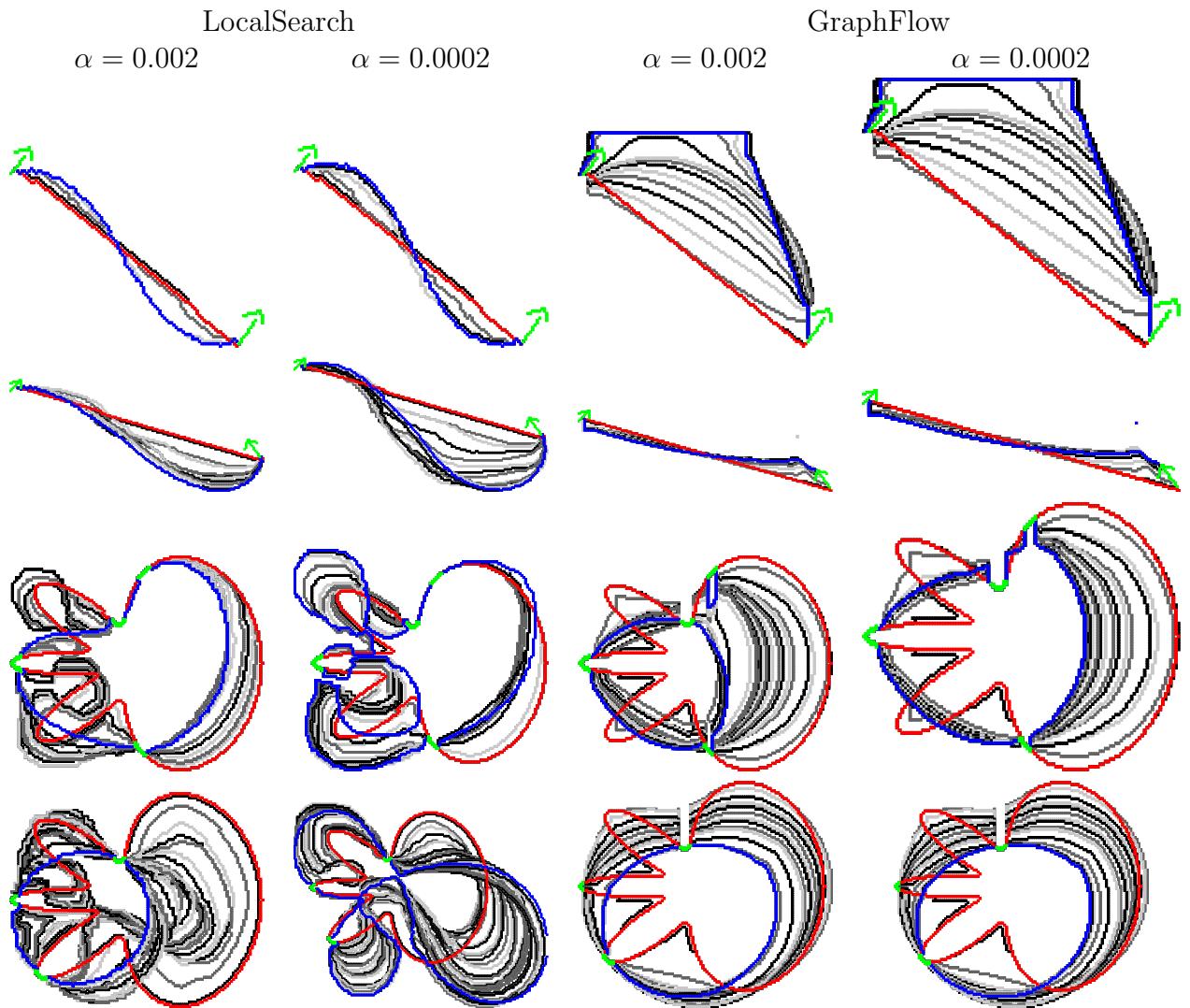


Figure 9.6: Results of Exp- α for the constrained Elastica. Initial contour is colored in red and final contour is colored in blue. The green pixels indicates pixels forced to persist in the final contour, or a forced orientation. Curves are drawn every 10 iterations.

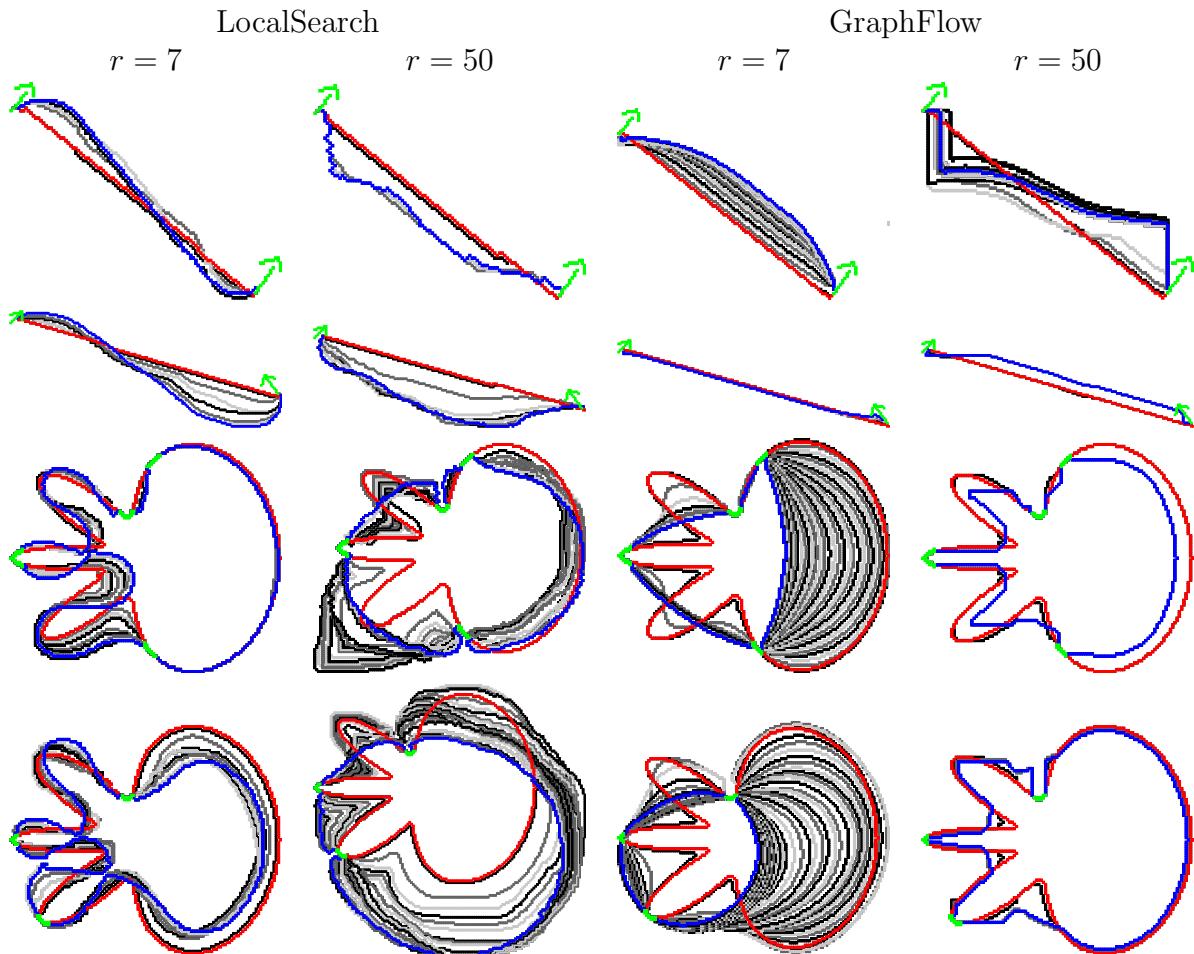


Figure 9.7: Results of $\text{Exp-}b\text{Radius}$ for the constrained Elastica. Initial contour is colored in red and final contour is colored in blue. The green pixels indicates pixels forced to persist in the final contour, or a forced orientation. Curves are drawn every 10 iterations.

	Pixels (initial shape)	LocalSearch	GraphFlow
Curve-1	12306	4.7s/it	1s/it
Curve-2	11527	6.2s/it	1s/it
Flower-1	7481	4.5s/it	0.3s/it
Flower-2	7481	2.5s/it	0.21s/it

Table 9.5: Running time and input size of the Exp- α experiment for the constrained Elastica. The pixels column is with respect to the number of pixels in the shape. In the case of the curves, it is with respect to the underlying shapes of Figure 9.5

Experiment	<i>maxIt</i>	<i>vRadius</i>	<i>bRadius</i>	<i>h</i>	α	β	FF,BF		GF			
							γ	<i>d</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>ob</i>	λ_r	λ_b
Exp- α	200	7	7	1.0	0 0.5 3.0	0	1	0	2	2	1	0
Exp- β	200	7	7	1.0	0	0.1 1 2	1	0	2	2	1	1
Exp- γ	200	7	7	1.0	0	1 2 5	1 2 5	0	2	2	1 2 5	1 2 5
Exp- <i>rbRadius</i>	200	3 7 12	3 7 12	1.0	0	3	1	0	2	2	1	1

Table 9.6: Parameter settings for the image segmentation experiments. The headers FF,BF,GF identifies parameters that are exclusive of FlipFlow, BalanceFlow and GraphFlow models, respectively.

Exp-Comparison												
Model	<i>maxIt</i>	<i>vRadius</i>	<i>bRadius</i>	<i>h</i>	α	$\beta(\lambda)$	γ	<i>d</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>ob</i>	λ_r	λ_b
FF,BF	200	7	7	1.0	0.5	1.0	1.0	0	-	-	-	-
GF	200	7	7	1.0	0.0002	1.0	-	-	2	2	3	3
SCLR	-	-	-	-	-	2.0	1.0	-	-	-	-	-

Table 9.7: Parameter settings for the comparison experiments. The β parameter in FF,BF,GF corresponds to the λ parameter in SCLR.

Exp-Comparison		Running time		
Model		Minimum	Maximum	Average
FlipFlow		60s	297s	156s
BalanceFlow		37s	184s	93.7s
GraphFlow		11s	150s	75s
SLCR		2.87min	52.24min	18.4min

Table 9.8: Running time and input size of Exp- $bRadius$ for the image segmentation problem and $bRadius = 7$.

The FlipFlow and BalanceFlow present similar results for all experiments, as expected. The Exp- α experiment regularizes only length, and we can observe that the segmentations produced by all three models tend to be staircased. We remark that in the GF model, length penalization is not present in the cost function of the candidate graph, but only in the validation function. In particular, we need a a -probe set with $a > 0$ to have length penalization an influence in the produced segmentation.

In experiment Exp- β we vary the squared curvature weight coefficient. We observe in Figure 9.10 that the produced segmentation smooths out for increasing values of β . We recall that the shrink/growing behaviour in the GF is controlled by the value of α . The FF, and BF grow in concavities, but unless a local optimum is found, it tends to shrink.

The models' response for the variation of data term is shown in Figure 9.11. A higher value of γ tends to produce results similar to the initial segmentation given by Grabcut, i.e., with almost no length or curvature regularization.

Finally, Exp- $bRadius$ illustrates how the choice of the estimation ball radius influences the segmentation. In Figure 9.12 we observe that a small radius results in contours with sharp changes of angle (first row), a consequence of the limited number of different estimations that can be given by a ball of small radius. As the radius increase, a richer variation of estimations is possible, and we have smoother contours (second-row). However, a big radius may omit important details of the object, as the coala's ears in the last row of Figure 9.12. That suggests that a multiradius approach may deliver improved segmentations.

9.3.2 Comparison

In Figures 9.13 to 9.16 we show the segmentation results of several images for the three models developed in this thesis and the SLCR model. We opt to set the same



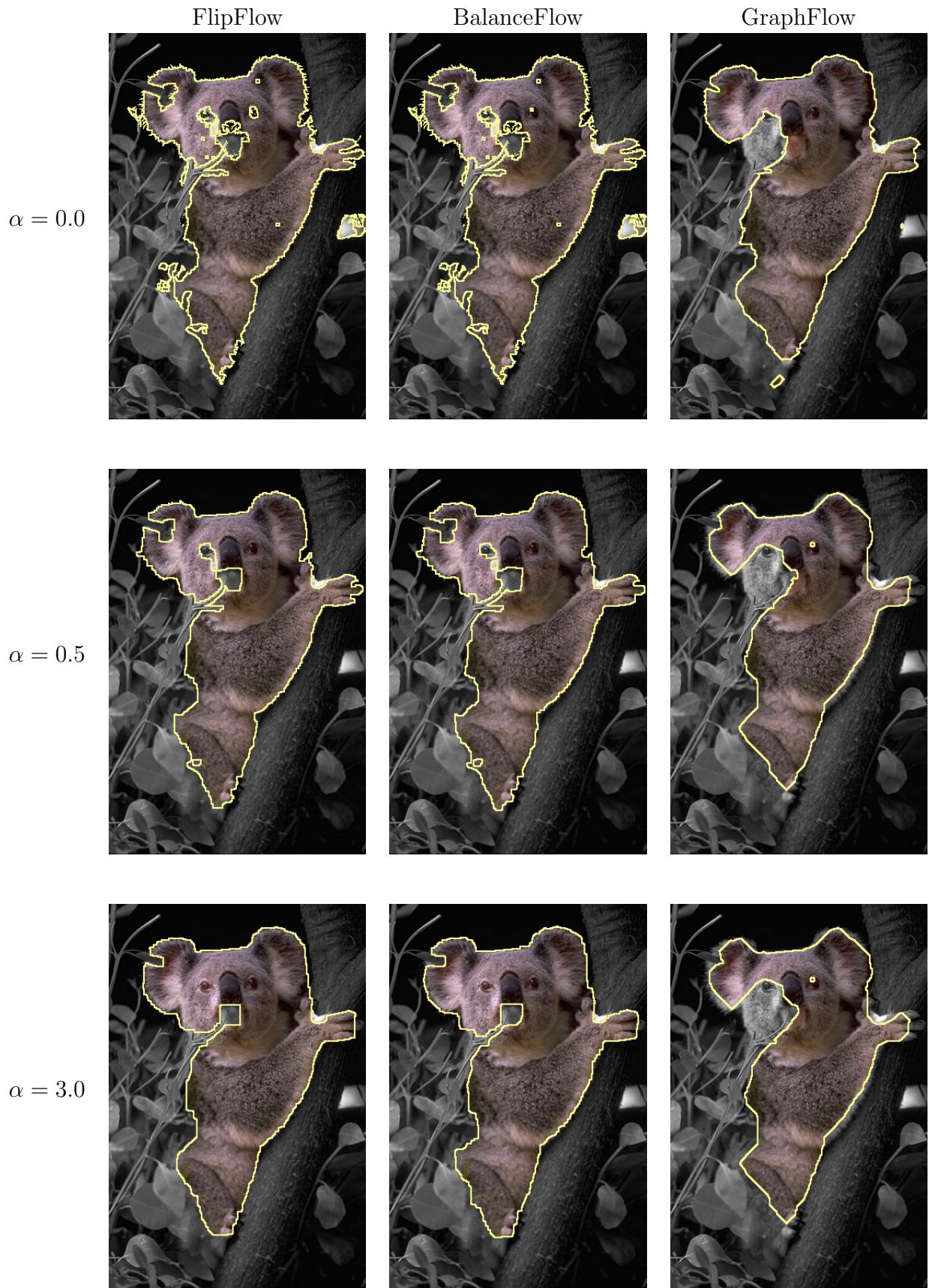
Figure 9.8: Foreground (green) and background (blue) seeds are shown in the left and the resulting Grabcut segmentation int the right.

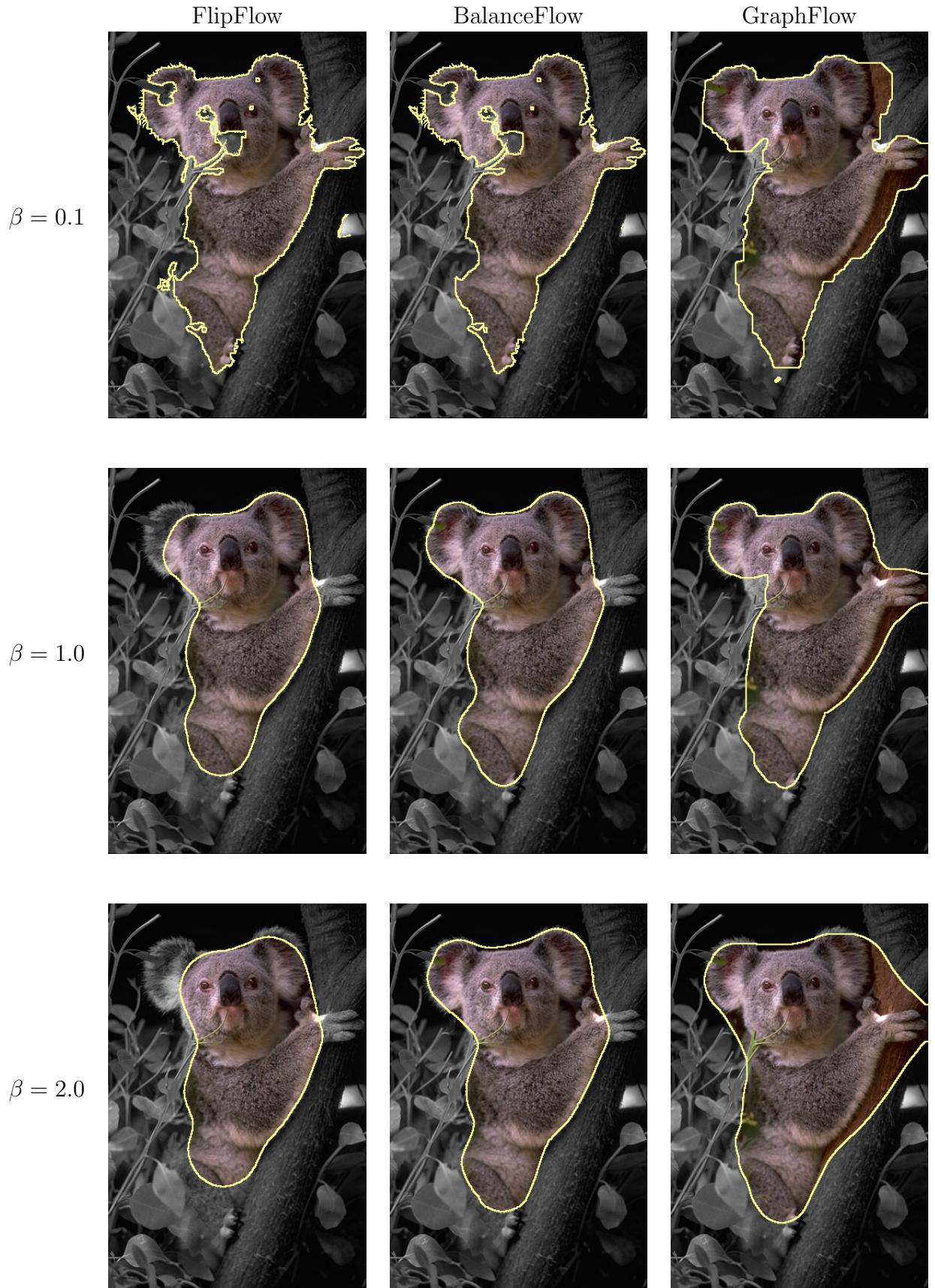
parameters in all instances, although a better segmentation could be obtained by setting them separately.

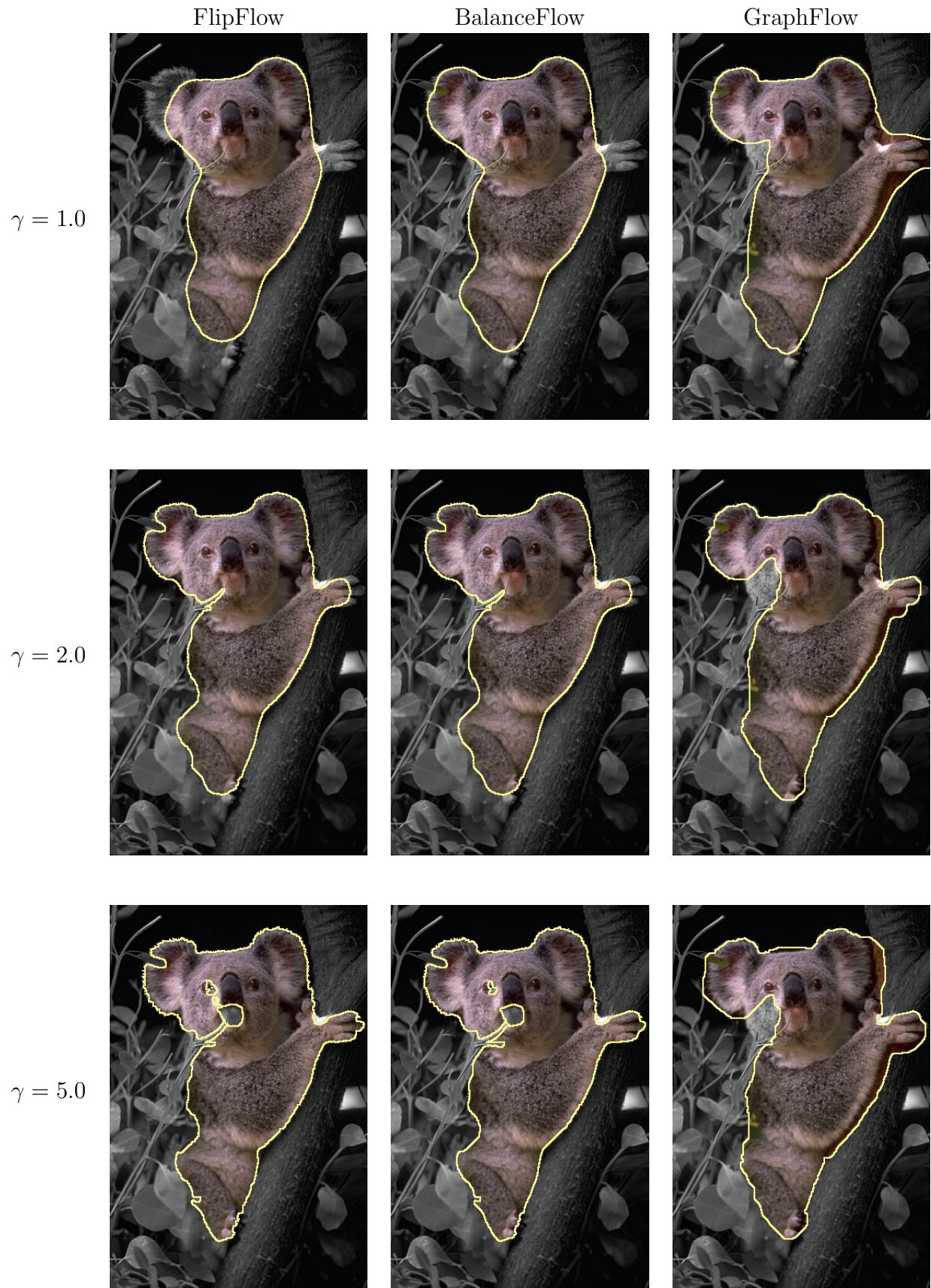
The curvature regularization in the FF,BF models are well perceived in the airplane, camel and man-in-white pictures, but those models are not able to correctly segment the brown-snake in Figure 9.16. They also have a hard time to segment the birds in Figure 9.14 due to the object large curvature range. Nonetheless, they correctly segmented the green-snake in Figure 9.15 while the Grabcut return three disconnected components.

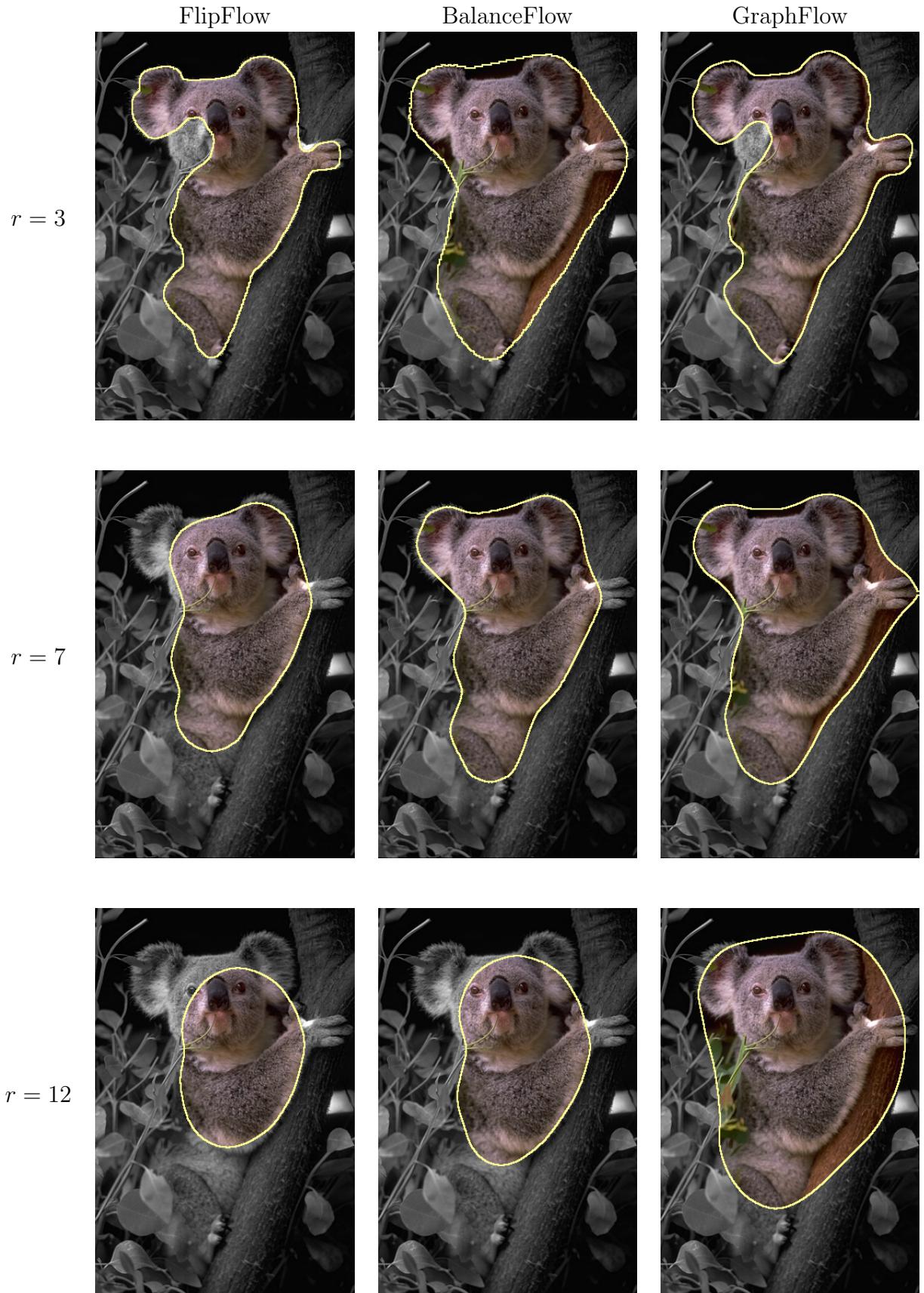
For the chosen parameters, the GraphFlow did not evolve the initial Grabcut segmentation to much, except for the brown-snake in Figure 9.16, for which GF and SLCR presented the best segmentation. However, the GF has the lowest running time among the four models.

The SLCR tends to oversegment, notably in the man-in-white and the camel pictures. We observe that the contours present sharp turns due to the low precision of the curvature estimator. The precision could be improved by increasing the pixels connectivity (set to 8), but is likely to follow an increase in running time, which is already the highest between the models tested.

Figure 9.9: Exp- α

Figure 9.10: Exp- β

Figure 9.11: Exp- γ

Figure 9.12: Exp-*bRadius*

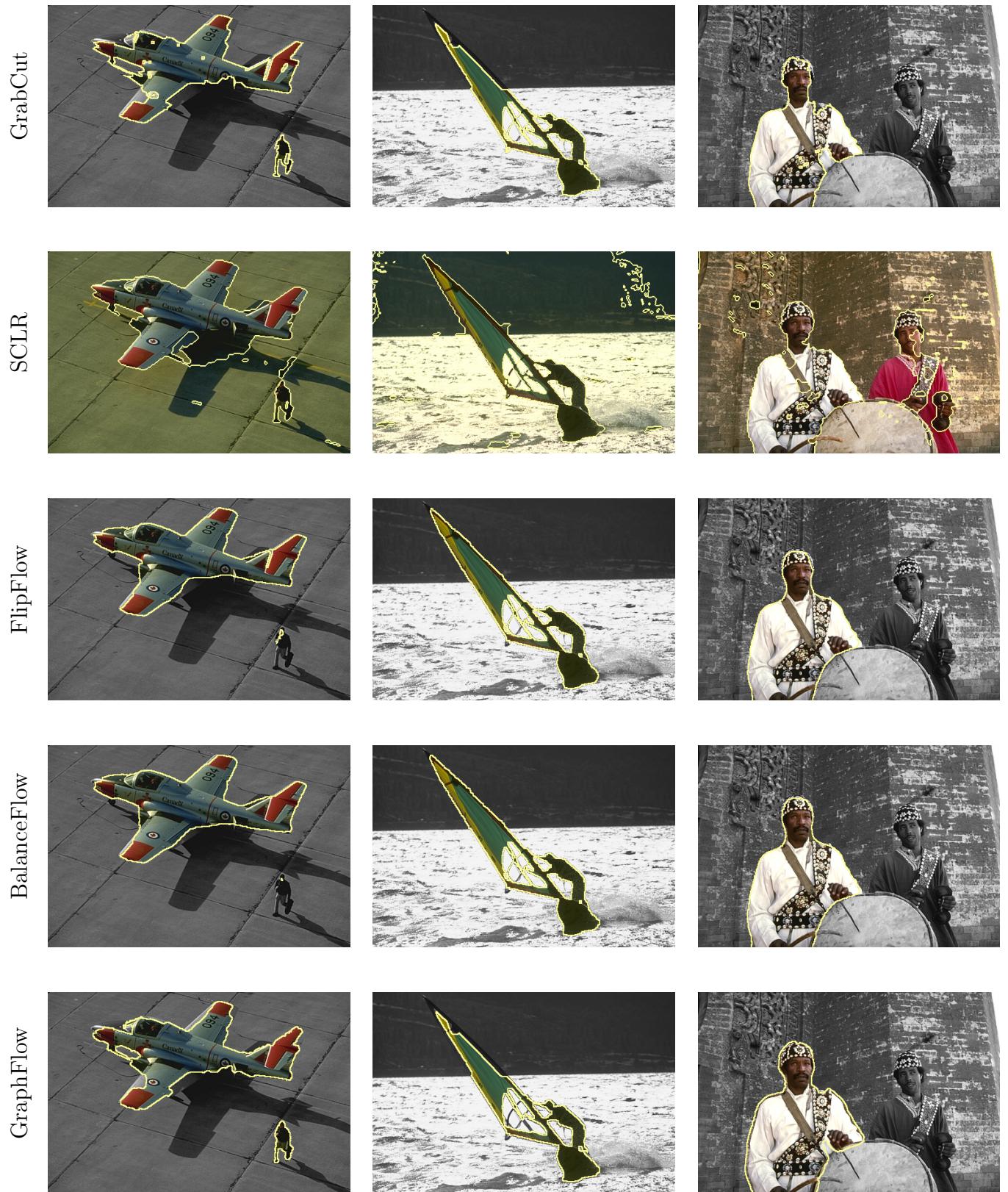


Figure 9.13: Comparison 1

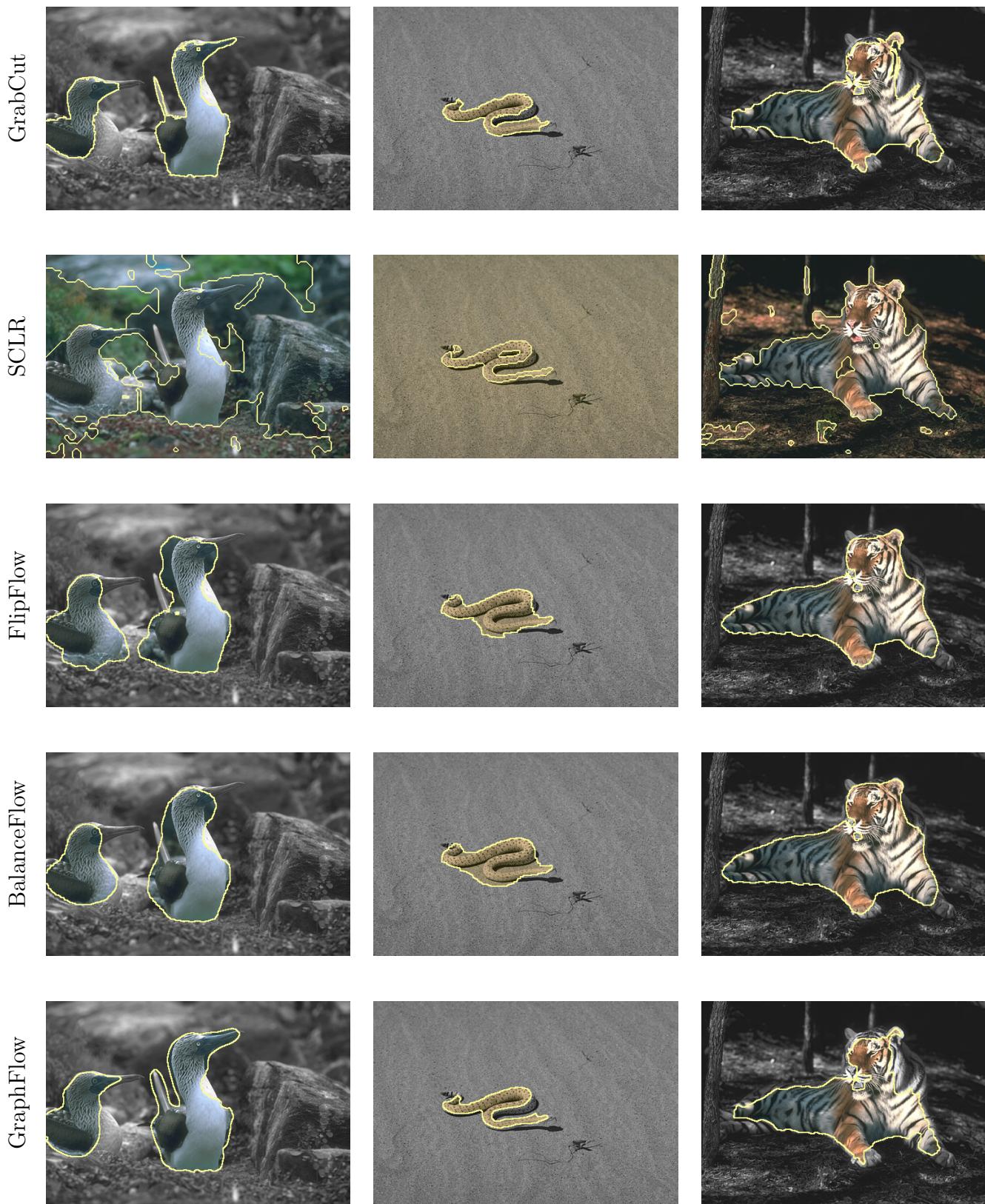
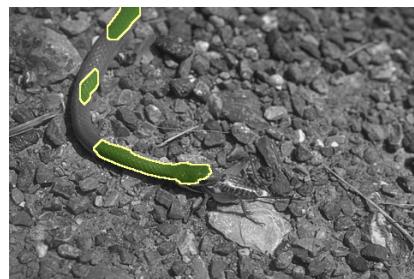


Figure 9.14: Comparison 2

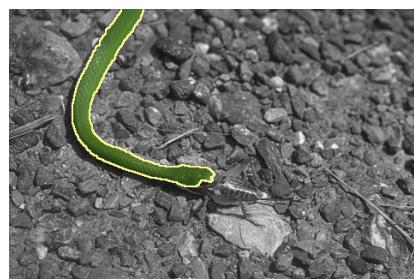
GrabCut



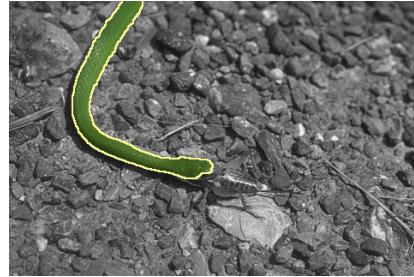
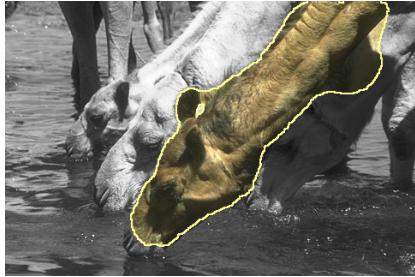
SCLR



FlipFlow



BalanceFlow



GraphFlow

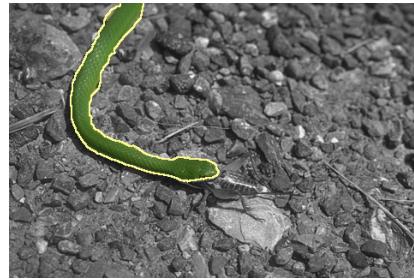
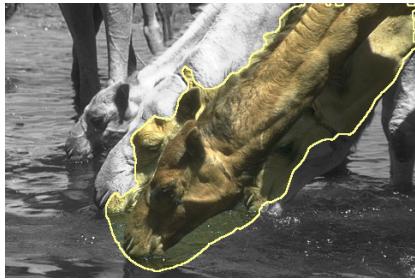


Figure 9.15: Comparison 3

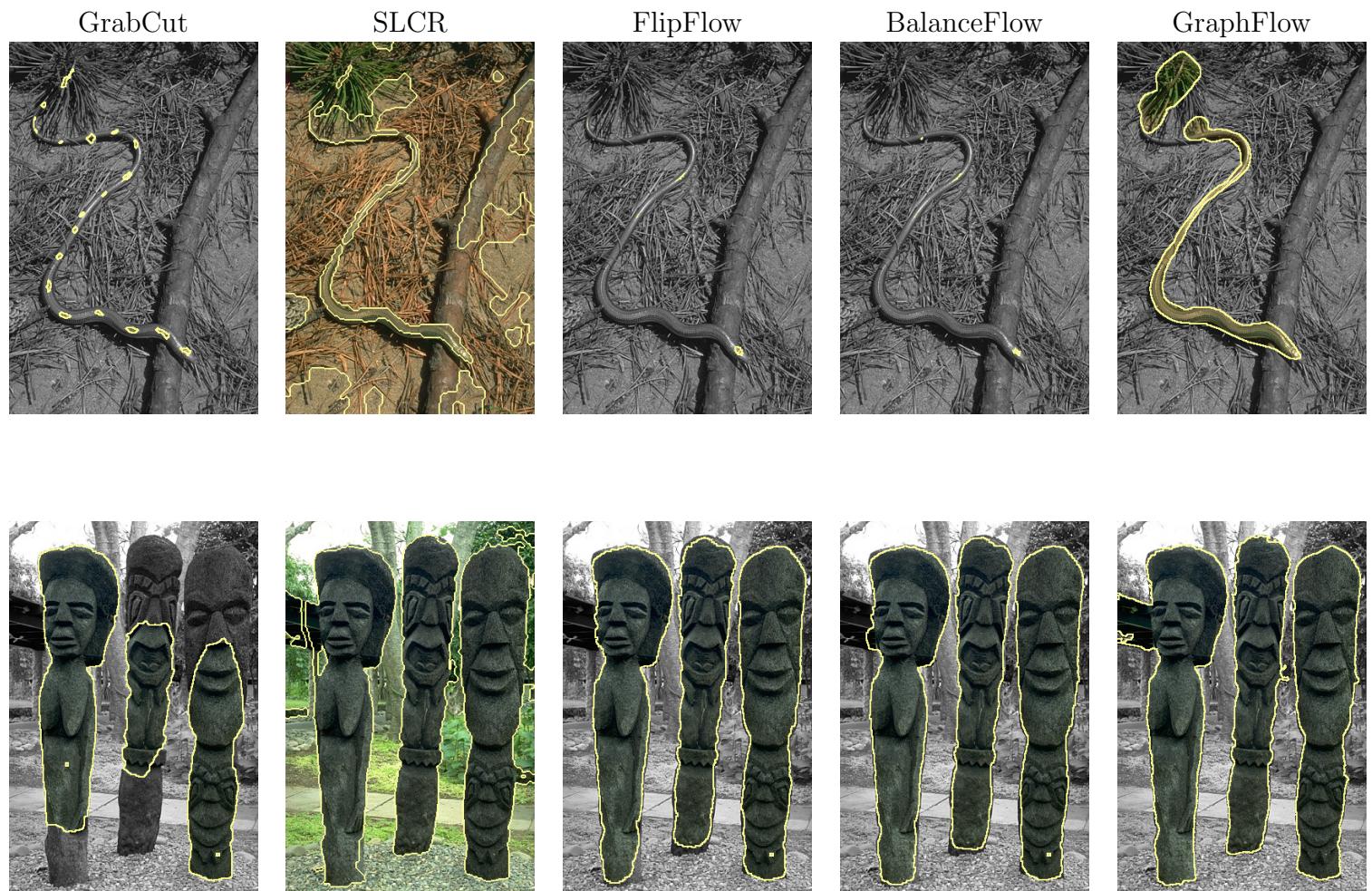


Figure 9.16: Comparison 4

9.4 Conclusion

All the four models described in this thesis can be used to produce shapes of lower digital Elastica. Moreover, the FlipFlow, BalanceFlow and GraphFlow can be extended to do image segmentation with curvature regularization. In particular, the GraphFlow is a straightforward extension of the standard Grabcut model, which originally does not implement geometric regularization, and presents lower running times than FF and BF. Finally, our models have shown to be competitive with the SLCR segmentation algorithm that employs curvature regularization.

Appendices

Appendix A

Curvature and distant disks

In Chapter 6 we present the FlipFlow algorithm and we remark that the choice of the ring number is of fundamental importance in order to derive a smooth flow. This observation lead us to ask if there is any relation between curvature and outer rings. In this appendix we give a positive answer for this question.

A.1 Estimating curvature with outer disks

Let \mathcal{C} an oriented curve in the plane. We center disks B_i and B_o of radius $R + \epsilon$ and its centers aligned with the normal direction of the curve at some point $p \in \mathcal{C}$. Moreover, the distance from disks center to p equals to R .

Let $\Theta_o(\Theta_i)$ to denote the intersection of $B_o(B_i)$ with the inner(outer) region of the curve. We define the function $g_R : \mathcal{R} \times \mathcal{C} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ as

$$g_R(p) = \left(\Theta_i(p) - \Theta_o(p) \right)^2.$$

Claim 1(R-separated disks curvature): Let $\mathcal{C} \in \mathbb{R}^2$ be a curve such that for a point $p \in \mathcal{C}$ its curvature equals to κ . For $\epsilon = R/2$ and for sufficiently small values of R and κ , we can approximate g_R by

$$g_R(p) \approx \frac{125}{144} R^6 k^2 + O(R^8 \kappa^4)$$

Proof: For every point p in C , consider its Frenet frame formed by the tangent vector at p , $T(p)$ and the normal vector at p , $N(p)$. We assume the origin of the

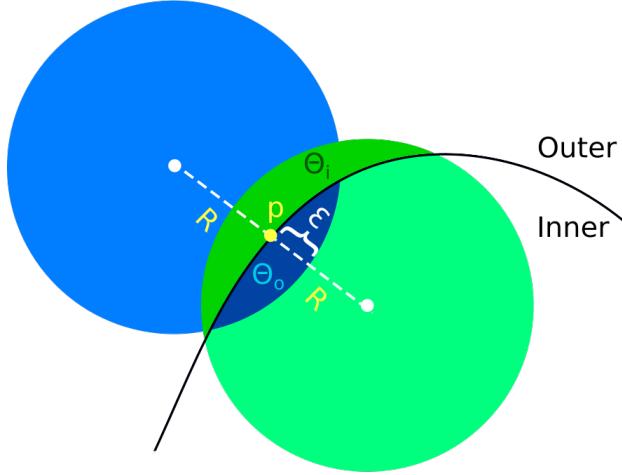


Figure A.1: disks of radius $R + \epsilon$ distant R units from $p \in \mathcal{C}$ in the normal direction.

frame is at point p . Let x be a variable in the axis defined by $T(p)$. Expanding $C(x)$ around the origin we obtain

$$\begin{aligned} C(x) &= C(0) + \frac{dC}{dx}x + \frac{1}{2} \frac{d^2C}{dx^2}x^2 + O(x^3) \\ &= \frac{\kappa}{2}x^2 + O(x^3). \end{aligned}$$

In other words, the second order approximation for the curve C in the Frenet frame is the parabola $f(x) = \kappa/2x^2$ passing at the origin. We are going to use this parabola to estimate Θ_o and Θ_i .

We proceed by computing the intersection area Θ_o .

$$\begin{aligned} h(x) &= R + \epsilon - \sqrt{(R + \epsilon)^2 - x^2} \\ \Theta_o &= 2 \int_0^{x_o} f(x) + \epsilon - h(x) \end{aligned}$$

To compute the intersection point x_o of the parabola with the disk, we use again Pythagoras' theorem.

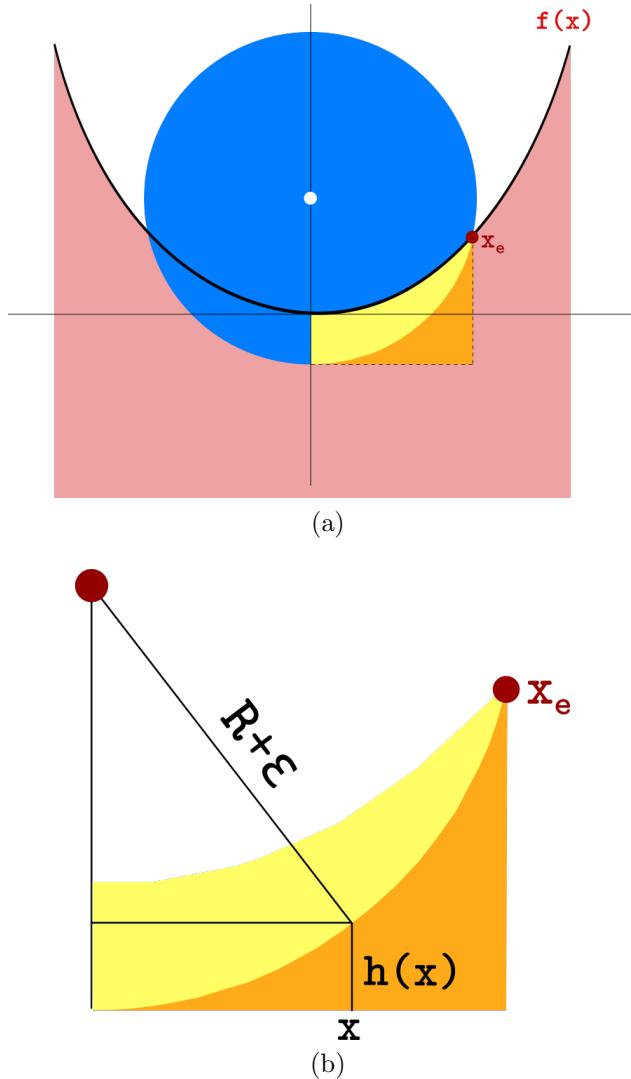


Figure A.2: The yellow area equals $\Theta_o/2$, the same value of the area under the parabola from $x = 0$ until $x = x_o$ minus the orange area $h(x)$.

$$(R + \epsilon)^2 = (R - \frac{\kappa}{2}x_o^2)^2 + x_o^2$$

$$0 = \frac{\kappa^2}{4}x_o^4 + (1 - R\kappa)x_o^2 + R^2 - (R + \epsilon)^2$$

By setting $z_o = x_o^2$

$$\begin{aligned}\Delta_o &= (1 - R\kappa)^2 + \kappa^2(2R\epsilon + \epsilon^2) \\ z_o &= \frac{2}{\kappa^2}(R\kappa - 1 + \sqrt{\Delta_o}) \\ x_o &= \frac{\sqrt{2}}{\kappa} \sqrt{R\kappa - 1 + \sqrt{\Delta_o}}\end{aligned}$$

We proceed similarly for the inner disk.

$$\Theta_i = 2 \int_0^{x_i} \epsilon - f(x) - h(x)$$

The intersection point x_i between the parabola and the inner disk is given by

$$\begin{aligned}(R + \epsilon)^2 &= (R + \frac{\kappa}{2}x_o^2)^2 + x_i^2 \\ 0 &= \frac{\kappa^2}{4}x_i^4 + (1 + R\kappa)x_i^2 + R^2 - (R + \epsilon)^2 \\ \Delta_i &= (1 + R\kappa)^2 + \kappa^2(2R\epsilon + \epsilon^2) \\ x_i &= \frac{\sqrt{2}}{\kappa} \sqrt{-R\kappa - 1 + \sqrt{\Delta_i}}.\end{aligned}$$

The claimed approximation is obtained by expanding g_R with its 6th order Taylor series around $\kappa = 0, R = 0$. ■

Therefore, the squared curvature at point p can be estimated as

$$\hat{\kappa}_{R-sep}^2 = \frac{144}{125R^6}g_R(p).$$

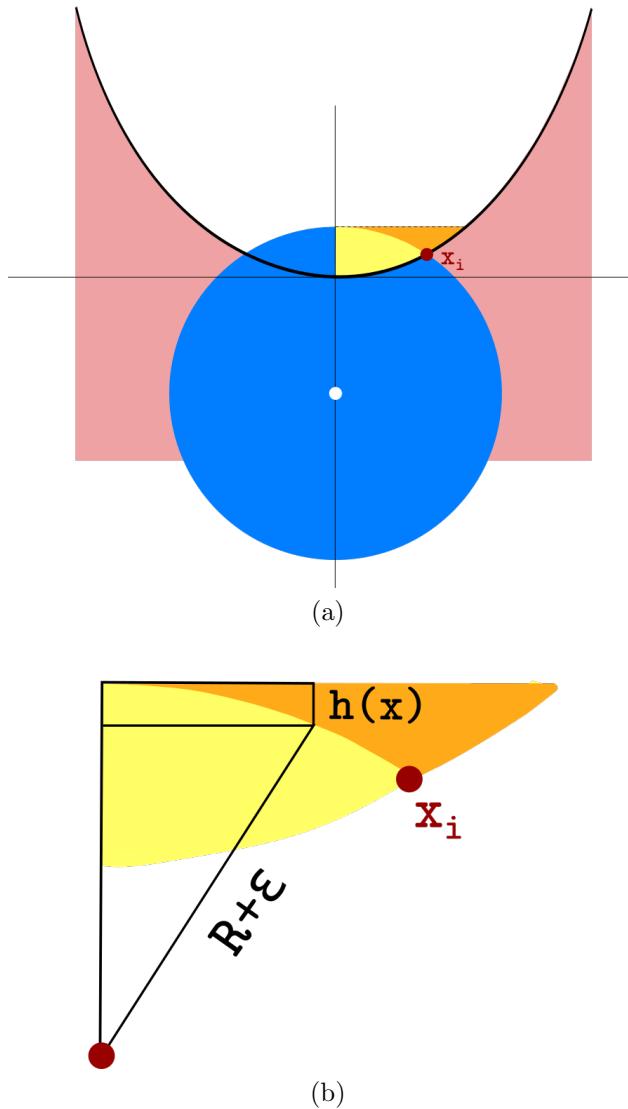


Figure A.3: The yellow area corresponds to Θ_i and it equals the area between the parabola and the disk from $x = 0$ until $x = x_i$.

Appendix B

Pixel incidence matrix

In this chapter we present the pixel incidence matrix defined in the theory of discrete calculus and we propose a curvature-based model using this concept.

B.1 Cellular grid model

We restrict our analysis to the integer plan because it's where theory and application is developped in this thesis, but it can be extended to higher dimensions. In the plan \mathbb{Z}^2 , we identify faces (pixels), edges (linels) and vertices (pointels). An arbitrary (however coherent) orientation is set for faces and edges. For example, we set faces counter-clockwise, vertical edges to point up and horizontal edges to point right (see figure).

Definition 1(Pixel incidence matrix): Let $\Omega \in \mathbb{Z}^2$ be a connected portion of the integer plan with m faces and n edges. The pixel incidence matrix $\mathbf{P} \in \mathbb{Z}^{n \times m}$ is a matrix in which each column \mathbf{P}_j represents the incidence relations between face j and the edges of the domain.

A face is incident to an edge if the edge itself is part of the face's boundary and not incident otherwise. We say it is positive incident to an edge if besides incident, the face orientation agrees with the orientation the edge, and negative incident in the case it doesn't agree.

$$\mathbf{P}_{i,j} = \begin{cases} 1, & \text{face } j \text{ is positive incident to edge } i \\ -1, & \text{face } j \text{ is negative incident to edge } i \\ 0, & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

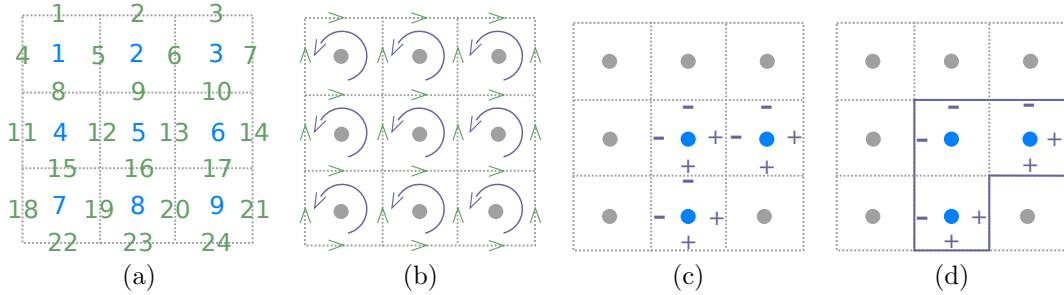


Figure B.1: Figures (a) and (b) illustrates indices assignments and orientation; figure (d) shows the result of applying the pixel incidence matrix for the active pixels in figure (c).

Example 1: Consider a portion Ω of \mathbb{Z}^2 with 9 faces ,24 edges and orientation as depicted in figures B.1a and B.1b. The pixel incidence matrix applied for vector $\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{Z}^9$, representing the active pixels depicted in figure B.1c, results in vector $\mathbf{y} \in \mathbb{Z}^{24}$ representing the active boundary depicted in figure B.1d. The linel incidence matrix is simply defined as the transpose of the pixel incidence matrix. Applying the former to a vector of active linels returns its set of incident pixels. For example, $\mathbf{P}^T \mathbf{P}$ applied to vector x above results in $[0, -1, -1, -1, 2, 3, -1, 3, -2]^T$. Positive coefficients represents inner incident pixels, and negative coefficients outer incident pixels. Moreover, the absolute value of each coefficient represents the number of linels incident to the corresponding pixel. For example, pixel 6 is incident to three linels, namely the linels 10, 14, 17.

$$P = \begin{bmatrix} -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 & -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & -1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & -1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & -1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & -1 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & -1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & -1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & -1 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}, \quad P \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ -1 \\ -1 \\ -1 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 1 \\ 1 \\ 0 \\ 1 \\ 0 \\ 1 \\ 0 \\ 1 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ -1 \\ 1 \\ 1 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 1 \\ 1 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

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