Optimal Nonlocal means algorithm for denoising ultrasound image

Md. Motiur Rahman[1] mm73rahman@gmail.com

Md. Gauhar Arefin[1] rochi_001@yahoo.com

Mithun Kumar PK.[1] mithun24bd@gmail.com

Dr. Md. Shorif Uddin[2] shorif@yahoo.com

[1] Dept. of Computer Science & Engineering
Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology
University, Tangail-1902
Dhaka, Bangladesh

[2] Dept. of Computer Science & Engineering
Jahangirnagar University
Savar, Dhaka-1342
Dhaka, Bangladesh

***Abstract*— We propose a new measure for denoising image by calculating mean distance of all pixels in an image in non-local means (NL-means) algorithm. We compute and analyze the original NL-means algorithm which averaging all the pixels of the image but, proposed algorithm calculates the mean distance of all pixels in an image. Our proposed algorithm exhibit better result with comparison of the existing NL-means algorithm.**

Keywords : NL-means, Average, Mean,Measurement Matrix

I. Introduction

Non-local means algorithm systematically use all possible self-predictions that an image can be provided [1]. But local filters or frequency domain filters are not avail to do that. Non-Local means (NL-means) approach introduced by Buades et al. to denoise 2D natural images corrupted by an additive white Gaussian noise [2]. NL-means filter normally calculate the average pixel value of an image and denoise the image [1][3]. We propose a method that could denoise the image by calculating mean distance of all pixels of the image and denoise the image better than previous filter.

The aim is to recover the original image from a noisy measurement,

$$v(i) = u(i) + n(i) \qquad (1)$$

where, $v(i)$ is the result value, $u(i)$ is the "original" value and $n(i)$ is the noise perturbation at a pixel i. The best way to model the effect of noise on a digital image is to add some gaussian white noise. In that case, $n(i)$ are i.i.d. Gaussian values with zero mean and variance σ^2 [2].

The denoising methods must not change the original image. But, for the better understanding of an image those method allows to loss data to reduce the noise from the image [4]. Human vision can only understand the better recognition of the intensity of the pixel value of an image [5][6]. That's why, the propose method is allows calculate mean distances, avoiding the average distances.

Section II. gives the introduction of the NL-means algorithm. Section III. discuses the NL-means algorithm with mean distance calculation of pixel neighborhoods [7]. Section IV. compare the performance of the NL-means algorithm and proposed NL-mean algorithm.

II. Non-Local Means Algrithm

A. Non local means

Recently, a new patch-based non local recovery paradigm has been proposed by Buades et al [2]. This new paradigm replaces the local comparison of pixels by the non local comparison of patches. The current pixel does not depend on the distance between neither spatial distances nor in intensity distance. NL-means filter analyzes the patterns around the pixels.

B. Algorithm

In the actual NL-means algorithm filter the restored intensity $NL(u)(x_i)$ of pixel $x_i \in \Omega^{dim}$, is the weighted average of all the pixel intensities $u(x_i)$ in the image Ω^{dim} (a bounded domain $\Omega^{dim} \subset \mathrm{R}^{dim}$):

$$NL(u)(x) = \sum_{x_j \in \Omega^{\dim}} W(x_i, x_j) u(x_j) \qquad (2)$$

where the family of weights $\{w(x_i,x_j)\}_j$ depend on the similarity between the pixels x_i and x_j, and satisfy the usual conditions

$0 \le w(x_i, x_j) \le 1$ and $w(x_i,x_j)=1$. The weight evaluates the similarity between the intensities of the local neighborhoods (patches) N_i and N_j centered on pixels x_i and x_j.

For each pixel x_j in Δ_i, the Gaussian-weighted Euclidean distance $\|\cdot\|_{2,a}^2$ is computed between the two patches $\mathbf{u}(N_j)$ and $\mathbf{u}(N_i)$ of image as explained in [8]. This distance is the traditional L_2-norm convolved with a Gaussian kernel of standard deviation a. The kernel is used to assign spatial weights to the patch elements. The central pixels in the patch contribute more to the distance than the pixels surrounded of the central pixel.

The weights $w(x_i, x_j)$ are then computed as follows:

$$W(x_i, x_j) = \frac{1}{Z_i} \exp - \frac{\|u(N_i) - u(N_j)\|^2_{2,a}}{h^2} \qquad (3)$$

where Z_i is the normalizing constant and h acts as a filtering parameter controlling the decay of the exponential function.

$$Z_i = \sum_j e^{-\frac{\|u(N_i) - u(N_j)\|^2_{2,a}}{h^2}} \qquad (4)$$

The NL-means not only compares the gray level in a single point but also the geometrical configuration in whole neighborhoods [4]. Fig. 1 showing this fact, the pixel $q3$ has the same gray level value of pixel p, but the neighborhoods are much different and therefore the weight $w(p, q3)$ is nearly zero[9][10].

III. NL-MEANS ALGORITHM WITH MEAN CALCULATION

In previous section we discuss about the original algorithm of NL-means. In the equation (2) it estimated value $NL(u)(x_i)$, for a pixel x_i, is computed as a weighted average of all the pixels in the image. In this proposed algorithm of NL-means we determinate the value $NL(u)(x_i)$, for a pixel x_i, is calculate weighted mean distance of all the pixels in the image. The proposed algorithm is only compute the mean distances of the neighborhoods and then it averaged all the weights of neighborhoods.

In NL-means the current pixel does not depend on the distance between neither spatial distances nor in intensity distance. This filter analyzes the patterns around the pixels. The similarity between two pixels x_i and x_j depends on the similarity of the intensity gray level vectors $u(N_i)$ and $u(N_j)$, where N_k denotes a square neighborhood of fixed size and centered at a pixel k [3]. This similarity is determinate as a decreasing function of the weighted Euclidean distance, of equation (3), where a> 0 is the standard deviation of the Gaussian kernel. In the distance calculation we compute mean distance of all neighborhoods.

$$\text{Mean} \left(\|u(N_i) - u(N_j)\|^2_{2,a} \right)$$

After calculating the mean distance of the intensities of the local neighborhoods (patches) N_i and N_j centered on pixels x_i and x_j, it need to multiply with the size of local neighborhood, because it need to have actual distances of all neighborhoods.

From Fig. 2 we can read the pixel q4 has the same gray level value of pixel p, but it's neighborhoods make the w(p,q4) is smaller weighted. Here our propose NL-means algorithm turn the q4 pixel intensity less and q3 pixel intensity high [11]. That's why visually the image is more readable and it makes the noise removed.

The original NL-means algorithm donoises an image by smoothing and calculating the average weight of neighborhoods [4]. It improves the visibility of an image than local filters. But the propose algorithm compute the mean weight of neighborhoods and makes the image more visible and more easily edge detectable [10].

IV. PERFORMANCE AND ANALYSIS

In this section we will compare NL-means algorithm and proposed algorithm under three well defined criteria: the noise removing, the visual quality of the restored image and the mean square error, that is, the Euclidean difference between the restored and original images [5][12].

For programming and calculation purposes of the NL-means algorithm, in a larger "search window" of size S×S pixels we restrict the search of similar windows [13]. In all the

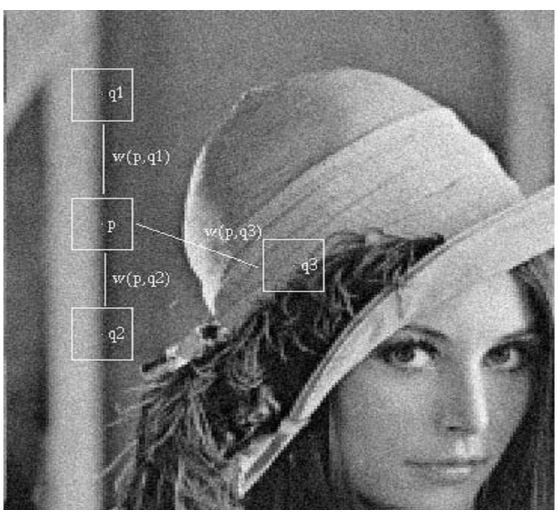


Figure 1. Similar neighborhoods pixels give a large weight, w(p,q1) and w(p,q2), while much different neighborhoods give a small weight w(p,q3).

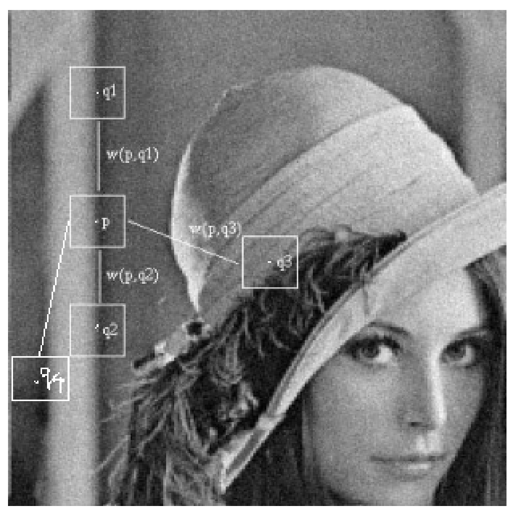


Figure 2. Similar neighborhoods pixels w(p,q1) and w(p,q2) give a large weights, while much different neighborhoods w(p,q3) and w(p,q4) give a small weight.

experimentation we have fixed a similarity square neighborhood N_i of 5×5 pixels and a search window of 11×11 pixels. If N^2 is the number of pixels of the image, then the final complexity of the algorithm is about $25 \times 121 \times N^2$ [3].

Large Euclidean distances lead to nearly zero weights acting as an automatic threshold because the fast decay of the exponential kernel.

a) The speckle noisy image(512×512)

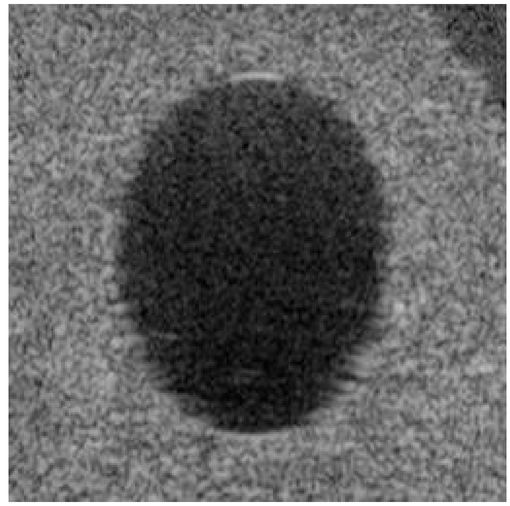
b) Original NL-means filtered image in left and Proposed filtered image in right(h=10)

c) Original NL-means filtered image in left and Proposed filtered image in right(h=2.5)

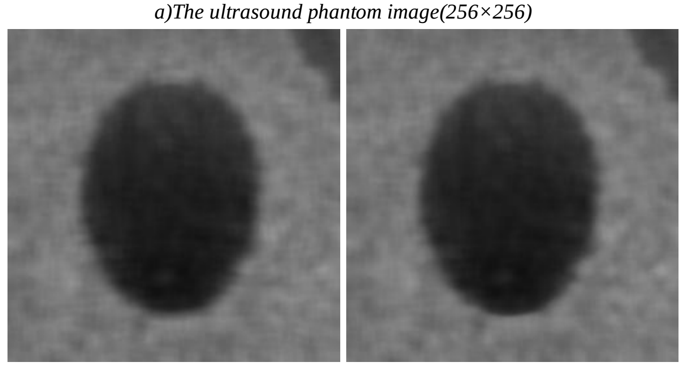
Figure 3. (a) .02 speckle noise is add to the lean image
(b) NL-means filtered image using degree of filter, h =10
(c)Proposed filtered image using degree of filter, h =2.5

These formulas are corroborated by the visual experiments of Fig 3. This figure displays the visual different between those methods for the standard image Lena. In this figure we can identify the NL-means filter reduce the noise and blur the image and the propose filter reduce the noise [4], blur the image and deceted some edges of the image.

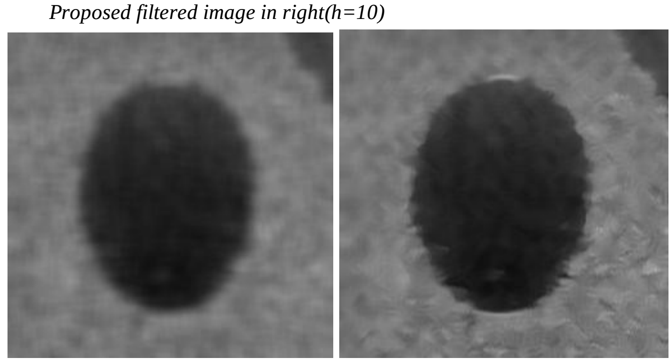
Let, see the improvement of ultra sound phantom image (256×256).



a)The ultrasound phantom image(256×256)

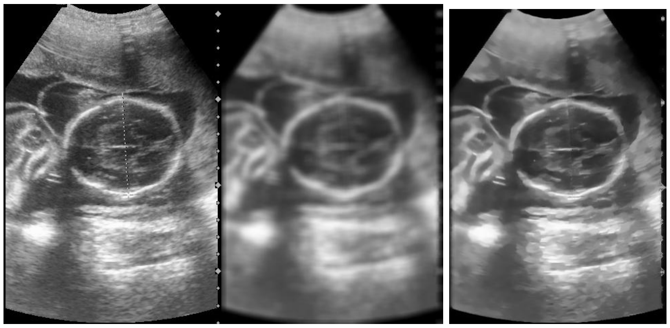


b)Original NL-means filtered image in left and Proposed filtered image in right(h=10)



c) Original NL-means filtered image in left and Proposed filtered image in right(h=1)

Figure 4. (a) ultrasound phantom image
(b) NL-means filtered image using degree of filter, h =10
(c)Proposed filtered image using degree of filter, h =1



(a) (b) (c)

Figure 5. (a) Normal ultrasound image
(b)NL-means filtered image using degree of filter, h =10
(c)Proposed filtered image using degree of filter, h =1

Table 1. displaying the improvement of the signal-to-noise ratio (SNR),root mean square errors (RMSE) and peak signal to noise ratio (PSNR) of two ultrasound noisy images.

TABLE I. MEASUREMENT MATRIX

Image name	Degree of filter	Filter	SNR	RMSE	PSNR
Phantom (Figure 4)	10	NL-means	8.31	15.74	24.23
		Proposed	8.55	15.35	24.44
	1	NL-means	8.35	15.67	24.26
		Proposed	**9.64**	**13.58**	**25.51**
Normal Ultra sound (Figure 5)	10	NL-means	9.91	19.61	22.32
		Proposed	11.16	17.24	23.43
	1	NL-means	10.37	18.71	22.73
		Proposed	**13.30**	**14.00**	**25.24**

Since, we can measure from Fig 4 and Fig 5 it does not rely on any visual interpretation this numerical Measurement is the most objective one. A small root mean square error does not assure a high visual quality, the high SNR assure high visual quality of image. From the above discussion it can measure that the NL-means calculation with mean distance is better method to denoise image.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Human vision is very sensitive to high-frequency information. Image details (e.g., corners and lines) have high frequency contents and carry very important information for visual perception. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to determine the preference of filter of NL-means algorithm and for image enhancement in a clinical soft-copy display setting and to establish a promising set of algorithm for use with various ultrasound image.

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