**Tunneled vision reveals signatures of closed-loop vision**

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**Visual perception is based on continuous eye movements, typically yielding abrupt switching between regions of interest (ROIs), using saccades, and scanning of these ROIs, using drifts 1-3. Whereas saccades are commonly considered to result in part from closed-loop dynamics related to scene analysis, drifts are commonly considered to function in an open-loop scheme – their kinematics are assumed independent of the visual input 1,4. We tested this dependency in human subjects perceiving basic geometrical shapes. We modulated the spatial information that is available to them by changing stimulus size and by changing the effective retinal size – the latter was achieved by real-time tunneling of the gaze to a limited window around its center. The subjects’ scanning trajectories demonstrated clear closed-loop dynamics of saccades and drifts. First, the eyes often scanned the borders of the images, in a manner that necessitated relying on concurrent sensory data. Second, when challenged the visual system maintained acquisition parameters by modifying saccade and drift kinematics. Third, the system converged to its target kinematics anew during each fixational pause (henceforth “pause”), converging to significantly different kinematics depending on the viewing condition and the visual input. Overall, these results reveal clear indications for vision being based on closed-loop mechanisms through which the kinematics of saccades and drifts are adapted on-line to the characteristics of available external information.**

Five participants were asked to identify an image on a screen as one of five options (square, rectangle, circle, triangle and a parallelogram) after viewing it either naturally or through tunneled vision, during which spatial information was exposed only around the center of their continuously-tracked gaze. Two image sizes were presented (Large, 10.80x10.80 deg; Small, 0.90x0.90 deg) and two tunneling windows were used (2.90x1.90 deg for Large images and 0.24x0.16 deg for Small images).

Limiting the available spatial information had a dramatic effect on the distribution of gaze centers5, visualized by their visit rates (the fraction of time spent in each pixel of the image during each trial) (**Fig. 1**). During natural viewing of Large shapes, the gaze was typically directed to the center of the shape (**Fig. 1a**). In contrast, during tunneled viewing of Large shapes the gaze was typically directed to the edges of the shapes (**Fig. 1b**). Limiting spatial information by size reduction yielded patchy distribution of gaze centers, typically closer to shape borders (**Fig. 1c**). Tunneled viewing of Small shapes yielded more focused distributions, clearly preferring borders (**Fig. 1d**). Interestingly, during tunneled viewing of the Small shapes, none of the participants was aware of their tendency to focus on borders, although they all reported awareness to the challenge in gaze direction.

The overall statistics of saccade rate and drift speed showed that both increased in tunneled conditions compared to natural viewing, for both image sizes (**Fig. 2a,b; Supp\_Table1).** Such changes may reflect reactions to input changes, as may be expected in open-loop systems, or may reflect active changes of the visual system, if operating in a closed-loop framework and trying to adapt to the environmental changes. Closed-loop adaptation must involve a set of variables, “controlled variables”, whose values are maintained by the loop within a certain range that allows the current functioning of the system 6-8. Open-loop systems do not have this capacity.

If visual information is acquired during a pause, then the mean rate of acquisition would be proportional to the mean speed of the drift during the pause (Sp) 3,9 and the total spatial information sampled during a pause would be proportional to the total scanning distance (the length of the gaze trajectory) of a pause (Xp). Mean pause duration (Tp) is inversely proportional to the saccade rate, which reflects the number of ROIs sampled per time unit. The increased saccade rate observed here in tunneled conditions is consistent with its dependency on task difficulty 10. Importantly, however, the tunneling-induced changes in saccade rate and drift speed compensated each other, on average, keeping the total distance scanned by the eye per pause unchanged for each stimulus size (Large shapes: 1.33±0.04 versus 1.40±0.04 deg, p=0.4; Small shapes: 1.77±0.08 versus 1.63±0.08 deg, p=0.2, for natural and tunneled vision, respectively). Thus, when tunneled, the visual system appears to increase the ROI sampling rate while maintaining Xp and compromising Sp. Interestingly, a different strategy appeared with size changes. When viewing small sized images, the visual system decreased the ROI sampling rate and here preferred maintaining Sp while compromising Xp (**Fig. 2a,b**).

If the visual system indeed controls the drift speed in a closed-loop manner then it should exhibit a convergence dynamics. Indeed, analyzing the mean within-pause dynamics of drift speed showed that the eye converged to its target drifting speed during the first 50 – 150 ms of the pause, following an initial increase and a gradual decrease of the speed. While starting the pause with speeds ~7 deg/sec on average, the eye then converged to ~5 deg/sec in natural viewing and to ~6 deg/sec in tunneled viewing (**Fig. 2c**).

If the visual system maintains Sp across image sizes and compromises it when challenged with tunneling, then the trial-to-trial variability of Sp should reflect that. Indeed, while Sp exhibited relatively little variance during natural viewing ( for Large and Small, respectively), its variance increased significantly when tunneled ( for Large and Small, respectively; **Fig. 2d; Supp\_Table1).** Saccadic kinematics obeyed a main-sequence pattern to the same extent in natural and tunneled conditions for low saccadic amplitudes, amplitudes that scaled with the image size (up to 7.5 deg for Large and 3 deg for Small images); beyond these amplitudes the main-sequence showed higher variations in tunneled vision (**Supp\_Fig. 1**).

The analysis thus far suggests that drift kinematics are controlled in a closed-loop manner, in which the amount of the available visual information affects Sp and Xp, which in turn determine the acquisition of visual information. This loop appears to be influenced by the saccadic rate, which may be determined in another control module or loop (e.g., 11). To analyze the interactions between saccades and drift kinematics in more detail we examined the spatiotemporal trajectories of eye movements during individual trials (**Fig. 3**). Tunneled vision of Large images induced a novel saccadic pattern - border-following (**Fig. 3a**). Most (55±7%) of the saccades made by all participants in all Large-tunneled trials were border-following, and as a result most (62±4%) of the pauses were on borders, compared with 16±5% and 12±8%, respectively, in all other conditions (**Fig. 3b**; see **Methods**). During pauses close to borders drift trajectories scanned differently if vision was challenged or not. When challenged by tunneling or viewing small-size images, the eye tended to drift in a curvier pattern, remaining closer to their starting location (**Fig. 3c;** see **Methods**). The curvature index differed between border and non-border drifts in all conditions (0.52+0.01 vs. 0.48+0.01, respectively, for Large-Tunneled; 0.65+0.05 vs. 0.55+0.02 for Small-Natural; 0.60+0.03 vs. 0.53+0.01 for Small-Tunneled; p<0.05, t-test) except for the Large-Natural condition (0.48±0.04 vs. 0.49±0.01, p=0.7). Drift speed was also affected by the concurrently-scanned visual details - Sp was significantly lower when drifting along borders than otherwise (4.48±0.07 deg/sec versus 5.00±0.07 deg/sec in Large and 3.99±0.10 deg/sec versus 4.92±0.02 deg/sec in Small images, p<0.05).

Whether ocular drifts are controlled by the brain had been a source of enduring debate 1,11-15. Our results demonstrate clearly that ocular drifts are actively controlled by the visual system - drift kinematics depended on the amount of available visual information and on the concurrently-scanned image patterns. Moreover, drift kinematics were converging to their target values, a reliable signature of closed-loop dynamics. Our data suggest that under normal conditions the visual system controls its drift speed such as to maintain it within a specific range. One reason for such a control is to maintain temporal coding relatively constant at a range suitable for neural processing 11,16. When viewing small-size images the visual system does not compromise this control and even tightens it. However, when challenged with tunneled viewing the system compromises drift speed for maintaining constant scanning distances under an increased rate of ROI switching. In this scheme, ROI switching seems to be controlled at another level, influenced by scene- and task-related factors 5,17-21, and to influence the functioning of the drift control loop(s) 11. Overall, these data support two major postulations. One is that the fixational pauses are used for visual acquisition, as if they were not then there was no sense in wasting energy for controlling the drift kinematics. The second is that vision is based on closed-loop mechanisms, as both saccades and drift, the two kinematic variables dominating visual acquisition, are controlled by the visual system in an environment-dependent manner.

**Methods:**

*Participants*. 5 healthy participants with normal vision at the ages 21-28 participated in the experiment (3 females, 2 right-handed with right dominant eye, 3 right-handed with left dominant eye). All participants were given detailed explanation about the eye tracker device and the behavioral task, and were paid for their participation. Informed consents were obtained from all participants, in accordance with the approved Declaration of Helsinki for this project.

*Experimental Setup*. The experiment took place in a dark and quiet room where participants sat in front of a high-resolution, fast computer screen (VPixx, 1920x1080, 120Hz). The movements of the dominant eye were recorded at 100Hz (EyeLink II) while the other eye was blindfolded. Participants sat 1 meter away from the screen and placed their chin on a chinrest to reduce head movements.

*Stimuli and gaze windows*. Two kinds of images were created: ‘Large’ and ‘Small’, and each was associated with a specific gaze window – a horizontal rectangle centered on the participant’s gaze at each sample and through which the image was exposed. The Large shapes occupied 10.80±0.15x10.80±0.15 deg (720±10x720±10 pixels), and the Large gaze window was 2.90±0.15x1.90±0.15 deg (190±10x130±10 pixels). The Small shapes occupied 0.90±0.03x0.90±0.03 deg (60±2x60±2 pixels) with a gaze window of 0.24±0.03x0.16±0.03 deg (13±2x9±2 pixels). The ratio between image and window size was the same for both image sizes.

*Experimental Design*. We tested the performance of participants in a five forced choice shapes recognition tasks. In each trial, one out of 5 images of basic shapes (square, rectangle, circle, triangle and a parallelogram; see **Fig. 1** for their outlines) was presented – filled gray shape against a black background. These images were presented in two forms, Large and Small, as described above. Participants were tested during 5 days. During days 1-3 they performed 2 tunneled vision sessions, the first one with Large images and the second one with Small images. On day 4 they performed two tunneled vision sessions, both with Small images. On day 5 they performed 4 sessions of natural viewing, 2 repetitions with each image size: Large, Small, Large, and Small. Each trial lasted up to 30 s (except trials with natural viewing which lasted 3 s, hence all comparative analyses were further verified using only the first 3 s of all tunneled trials, to control for trial length confounds**, Supp\_Table1**), there were at least 2 repetitions of each shape in each session (10-12 trials per session, only the first two repetitions of each shape were used for analysis), and hence each session lasted up to 12 minutes. At the end of each trial participants reported which of the 5 shapes was presented, received a ‘correct/wrong’ feedback. Success rates were 0.94±0.06 for the Large shapes and 0.60±0.02 for the Small shapes. Only correct trials were used for the analysis. In the tunneled vision sessions, participants had to identify a shape that was “hidden” on the screen and exposed only through the gaze window (see above). In the natural vision sessions, participants had to identify the same shapes, naturally viewing them with no constrains.

*Eye movement processing*. A velocity based algorithm (modified from Bonneh et al. 22) was used for detecting all saccades and drift. We used the following threshold parameters for saccades detection: 16 deg/sec minimal peak velocity and 0.3 deg minimal amplitude. Each detected saccade was visually examined to verify the quality of saccadic detection. Fixation periods between saccades were labeled drift only if they exceeded 3 samples, a 30 ms minimum duration.

*Borders analysis*. Saccades or drift pauses that started and ended close to a border (<1.8 deg for Large, <0.15 deg for Small) were classified as “border saccade” or “border drift”, respectively.

*Curvature index*. We defined an index for drift curvature, where Xp equals the length of the drift trajectory, and Dp equals the linear distance between its starting and ending points. Hence, C=0 represents a straight line and C=1 represents a closed curve.

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**Figure Legends**

**Figure 1. Gaze visit rates.** The distribution of gaze locations, normalized (min-max) per trial and averaged across trials and subjects, for Large shapes with Natural viewing (**a**; 5 participants x 4 trials); Large shapes with Tunneled viewing (**b**; 5 participants x 6 trials); Small shapes with Natural viewing (**c**; 5 participants x 4 trials) and Small shapes with Tunneled viewing (**d**; 5 participants x 10 trials). Color maps were normalized for each panel.

**Figure 2. Kinematics of saccades and drifts.** **(a)** Changes in mean saccadic rates between Natural and Tunneled viewing for Large (blue) and Small (magenta) image sizes. Data for each participant (left) and their mean (right most) are presented (\*, p<0.05, t-test). **(b)** Distributions of mean drift speeds per trial in the four experimental conditions; data as in (a) (\*, p<0.05, Wilcoxon rank sum tests). **(c)** Mean within-trial instantaneous drift speeds presented in two time scales, each in a pair of panels. Color code as in (b); error-bars denote SEMs. **(d)** Mean drifts speeds versus pause durations in the four experimental conditions (variances and SEMs: in the right most figures).

**Figure 3. Eye trajectories. (a)** Example of eye trajectories in single trials with Natural (left) and Tunneled viewing. Saccades, lighter blue; fixational pauses, dark blue; traces, horizontal and vertical components as a function of time next to each example. Movies of these examples are in **Supp\_Video1-5**). **(b)** Fractions of border-following saccades in the four experimental conditions in each subject (small dots) and their means (large colored dots). **(c)** Distributions of curvature indices (see Methods) of border drift trajectories (brown) and non-border drifts, in the four experimental conditions ().

**Supplementary Figure 1. Variations of the saccadic main sequence.** The maximum velocity of a saccade linearly depends on its amplitude in all experimental conditions (R2 = 0.66 (Large-Natural); 0.69 (Small-Natural); 0.70 (Large-Tunneled) and 0.74 (Small-Tunneled). The figure shows the residuals of the linear fit of the main sequence in each condition. Dashed line denotes the saccade amplitude above which the difference was significant. Shaded areas represent the SEMs.

**Supplementary Table 1. Control for trial duration differences.** The analyses described in Fig. 2a,b,d were repeated for the first 3 s of the tunneled conditions, a time period equal to the duration of natural viewing trials. P values represent the probability that the values measured in the relevant tunneled condition were drawn from the same distribution as those measured in the natural viewing conditions.

**Supplementary Movies 1-5. Demonstrations of the eye trajectories presented in Fig. 3.** Movies are slowed down by 2.4.

**Extra Figure 1. Instantaneous drift speed. (a)** Autocorrelations of the instantaneous drift velocity (horizontal and vertical) in Natural vision tasks. The upper row shows the sum of significant correlation values for each time step. The lower row shows trial by trial significant correlation values. The percent of single periodic trials (higher significant correlation at 100ms compared with earlier and later time steps) is presented above the lower row. **(b)** Same as (a) for the Tunneled vision tasks. A peak in the autocorrelation can be seen in 100ms time step for both horizontal and vertical movements in both Large and Small conditions, as well as the presence of many more single periodic trials. **(c)** Autocorrelations of the distance traveled by each drift (horizontal and vertical) in the Natural (black) and Tunneled (blue and magenta) tasks. The decay of the sum of significant correlations is faster for both horizontal and vertical movements in both Large and Small conditions, as indicated by the Tau decay of the exponential fit presented.