Title
Stereo Vision Aided Navigation for Robotic Boats (MAS 10)

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Authors
Arvind Menezes Pereira
Gabriel Sibley
Gaurav Sukhatme
et al.

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Stereo Vision-aided Navigation for Robotic Boats
Arvind Menezes Pereira, Gabriel Sibley, Gaurav Sukhatme, Amit Dhariwal, Bin Zhang, Carl Oberg, Beth Stauffer, Stefanie Moorthi and David Caron.
Robotic Embedded Systems Lab, University of Southern California – http://www-robotics.usc.edu/~namos

Why Stereo? Isn’t GPS enough?

- Satellites can drop out of sight resulting in a loss of a GPS fix. Stereo ranging can be used as a localization aide.
- Range information can be used for obstacle avoidance.
- The vision system can be used to help in autonomous boat docking.
- Simultaneous Localization and Mapping (SLAM) of lakes may be possible.

Can it even work?

- Visual Odometry on the Mars Exploration Rovers used Stereo feature tracking quite successfully.
- Previous work [1] indicates long range stereo can work in Marine Environments.
- Improvements in cameras and efficient computation will make real-time implementation possible.

Stereo for Navigation

Hardware
- Mini-ITX form factor, Linux Computer
- GPS
- 3DMG IMU
- Videre Stereo Head
- Micropix Color camera

System Block Diagram

Challenges

- Light intensity variations result in large, possibly non-linear swings in image intensities. This adversely affects stereo estimates.
- Lower light exposure and boat movements result in motion blur which also hampers good stereo feature matching.
- Error in depth estimates goes up as a square of the range. Here ‘r’ is range, b is the baseline, f is the focal length and d is the pixel disparity.

\[ \Delta r = \left( \frac{r^2}{bf} \right) \Delta d \]

Ongoing and Future Work

- Stereo bias removal and configurations with larger stereo base-lines, Higher resolutions are being explored.
- A Kalman filter to estimate boat state and a particle filter for landmark tracking is planned.
- Stereo vision produces range maps which are useful for obstacle avoidance. This will be implemented to give navigation and actuator outputs.
- A docking system for a robotic boat using stereo vision for positioning and alignment.

Methodology

- Segment buoy using color blob and edge-detection.
- Use this information to identify buoy in stereo images.
- Compute average distance to buoy.
- Use heading information and global location to compute global estimate for boat position.
- Use a statistical filter to deal robustly with errors in estimating stereo distances.

Preliminary Design and Initial Results