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Signal Decomposition Using Masked Proximal Operators

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Signal Decomposition Using Masked Proximal Operators

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ABSTRACT

We consider the well-studied problem of decomposing a vector time series signal into components with different characteristics, such as smooth, periodic, nonnegative, or sparse. We describe a simple and general framework in which the components are defined by loss functions (which include constraints), and the signal decomposition is carried out by minimizing the sum of losses of the components (subject to the constraints). When each loss function is the negative log-likelihood of a density for the signal component, this framework coincides with maximum a posteriori probability (MAP) estimation; but it also includes many other interesting cases. Summarizing and clarifying prior results, we give two distributed optimization methods for computing the decomposition, which find the optimal decomposition when the component class loss functions are convex, and are good heuristics when they are not. Both methods require only the masked proximal operator of each of the component loss functions, a generalization of the well-known proximal operator that handles missing entries in its argument. Both methods are distributed, *i.e.*, handle each component separately. We derive tractable methods for evaluating the

masked proximal operators of some loss functions that, to our knowledge, have not appeared in the literature.

1

Introduction

The decomposition of a time series signal into components is an age old problem, with many different approaches proposed, including traditional filtering and smoothing, seasonal-trend decomposition, Fourier and other decompositions, PCA and newer variants such as nonnegative matrix factorization, various statistical methods, and many heuristic methods. It is believed that ancient Babylonian mathematicians used harmonic analysis to understand astronomical observations as collections of ‘periodic phenomena’ [58].

As we will discuss in detail in §3, formulating the problem of decomposing a time series signal into components as an optimization problem has a long history. We introduce a simple framework that unifies many existing approaches, where components are described by their loss functions. Once the component class loss functions are chosen, we minimize the total loss subject to replicating the given signal with the components. We give a simple unified algorithm, based on variations of well-known algorithms, for carrying out this decomposition, which is guaranteed to find the globally optimal decomposition when the loss functions are all convex, and is a good heuristic when they are not. The method accesses the component loss functions only through a modified

proximal operator interface, which takes into account that some data in the original signal may be missing. The method is distributed, in that each component class is handled separately, with the algorithm coordinating them.

Handling of missing data. The methods discussed in this monograph are designed to handle missing data in the original signal to be decomposed, a common situation in many practical settings. The signal components in the decomposition, however, do not have any missing data; by summing the components in the decomposition, we obtain a guess or estimate of the missing values in the original signal. This means that signal decomposition can be used as a sophisticated method for guessing or imputing or interpolating missing or unknown entries in a signal. This allows us to carry out a kind of validation or self-consistency check on a decomposition, by pretending that some known entries are missing, and comparing the imputed values to the known ones.

Expressivity and interpretability. The general framework described here includes many well-known problems as specific instances, and it enables the design of newer, more complex components classes than traditional simple ones such as a periodic signal, a trend, a smooth signal, and so on. For example we can define a signal component class that consists of periodic, smooth, and nonnegative signals, or piecewise constant signals that have no more than some specified number of jumps. The resulting decomposition is always interpretable, since we specify the component classes.

Outline. We describe the signal decomposition framework in §2, where we pose signal decomposition as an optimization problem, concluding with an illustrative simple example in §2.9. In §3 we cover related and previous work and methods. Two distributed methods for solving the signal decomposition problem, based on variations of well established algorithms, are described in §4. The next two sections concern loss functions for signal component classes: general attributes are described in §5 and some example classes in §6. The topic of how to fit component class

losses given archetypal examples is discussed in §6.3. We conclude the monograph with examples using real data: Weekly CO₂ measurements at Mauna Loa in §7.1, hourly traffic over a New York bridge in §7.2, and 1-minute power output for a group (fleet) of seven photo-voltaic (PV) installations in §7.3.

Software. Our monograph is accompanied by an open-source software implementation called **OSD**, short for ‘Optimization(-based) Signal Decomposition’, available at:

<https://github.com/cvxgrp/signal-decomposition>.

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