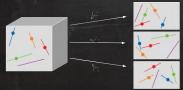
Nonlinear Algebra & Minimal Problems in Computer Vision

Kathlén Kohn















Linear algebra

All undergraduate students learn about Gaussian elimination, a general method for solving linear systems of algebraic equations:

Input:

$$x + 2y + 3z = 5$$

 $7x + 11y + 13z = 17$
 $19x + 23y + 29z = 31$

Output:

$$x = -35/18$$

 $y = 2/9$
 $z = 13/6$

Solving very large linear systems is central to applied mathematics.

Nonlinear algebra

Lucky students also learn about Gröbner bases, a general method for non-linear systems of algebraic equations:

Input:

$$x^{2} + y^{2} + z^{2} = 2$$

 $x^{3} + y^{3} + z^{3} = 3$
 $x^{4} + y^{4} + z^{4} = 4$

Output:

$$3z^{12} - 12z^{10} - 12z^9 + 12z^8 + 72z^7 - 66z^6 - 12z^4 + 12z^3 - 1 = 0$$

$$4y^{2} + (36z^{11} + 54z^{10} - 69z^{9} - 252z^{8} - 216z^{7} + 573z^{6} + 72z^{5} -12z^{4} - 99z^{3} + 10z + 3)$$
 $y + 36z^{11} + 48z^{10} - 72z^{9} -234z^{8} - 192z^{7} + 564z^{6} - 48z^{5} + 96z^{4} - 96z^{3} + 10z^{2} + 8 = 0$

$$4x + 4y + 36z^{11} + 54z^{10} - 69z^9 - 252z^8 - 216z^7 + 573z^6 + 72z^5 - 12z^4 - 99z^3 + 10z + 3 = 0$$

This is very hard for large systems, but . . .

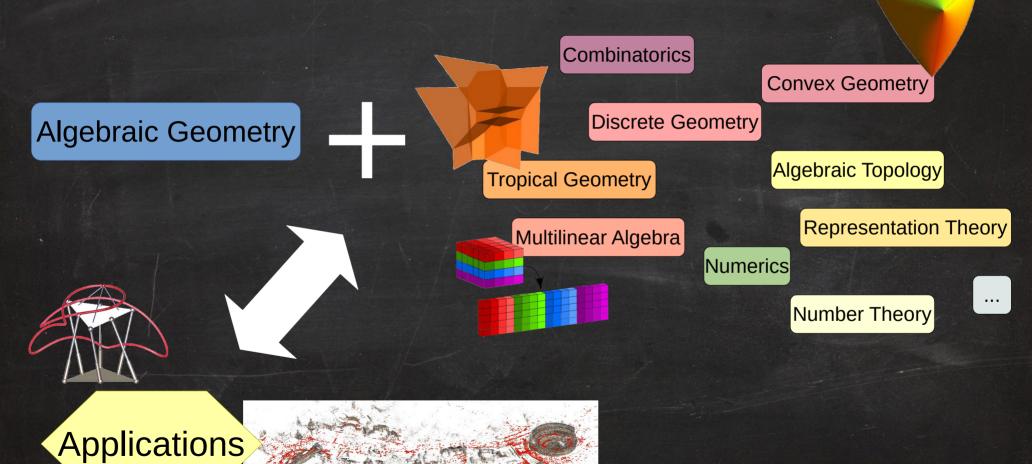
The world is non-linear!

Many models in the sciences and engineering are characterized by polynomial equations. Such a set is an algebraic variety.

- Algebraic statistics
- Machine learning
- Optimization
- Computer vision
- Robotics
- Complexity theory
- Cryptography
- Biology
- Economics
- • • •



Nonlinear Algebra



3D reconstruction



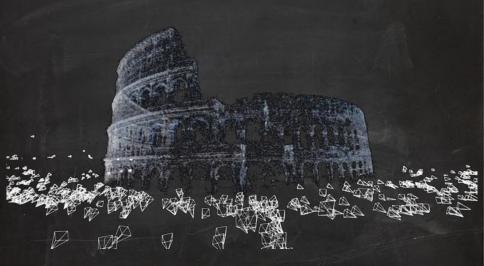
2d pictures

given images taken by unknown cameras, want to recover



3d modell

Reconstruct 3D scenes and camera poses from 2D images



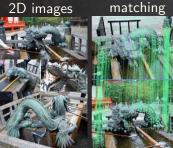
Rome in a Day: S. Agarwal, Y. Furukawa, N. Snavely, I. Simon, S. Seitz, R. Szeliski

Input: 2D images



Output: 3D scene & cameras

Input: 2D images



Identify common points and lines on given images

Image

Output: 3D scene & cameras

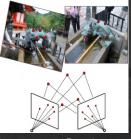
Input: 2D images



Image

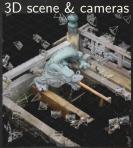
Identify common points and lines on given images

Algebraic reconstruction



Reconstruct 3D points and lines & camera poses

Output:
) scene & cameras



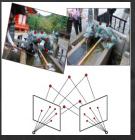
Input: 2D images



Image

Identify common points and lines on given images

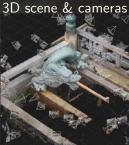
Algebraic reconstruction



Reconstruct 3D points and lines & camera poses \$\psi\$

nonlinear inverse problem

Output:



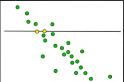
Measurements are noisy, and often corrupted with outliers.

RANSAC (RANdom SAmple Consensus) provides robust estimation!

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- 1) Randomly select a subset of the data
- 2) Fit a model to the selected subset
- 3) Determine the number of outliers
- 4) Repeat steps 1-3 to find a consensus (& outliers)

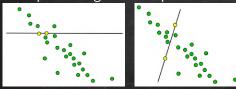
Example: fitting a line to points



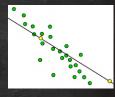
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Example: fitting a line to points







few outliers!

Observations are often noisy, and can even be corrupted with outliers. RANSAC (RANdom SAmple Consensus) provides robust estimation!

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2d pictures



3d modell

for general algebraic inverse problems, step 2) means to solve a system of polynomial equations!

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2d pictures



3d modell

for general algebraic inverse problems, step 2) means to solve a system of polynomial equations!

need to do this very fast, say in < 1 ms! (due to step 4))

Which polynomial systems can be solved fast?

Typically, the systems of polynomial equations we can solve the fastest are those whose solution sets are generically 0-dimensional (i.e., non-empty and finite)

- these are called **minimal problems** in computer vision-

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Typically, the systems of polynomial equations we can solve the fastest are those whose solution sets are generically 0-dimensional (i.e., non-empty and finite)

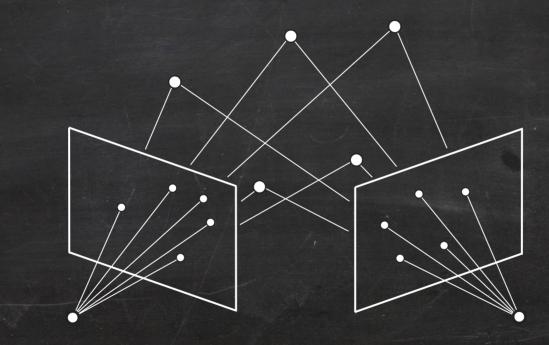
- these are called **minimal problems** in computer vision-

and whose solutions sets have small cardinality.

- known as the **degree** of the minimal problem

Example: The 5-Point Problem

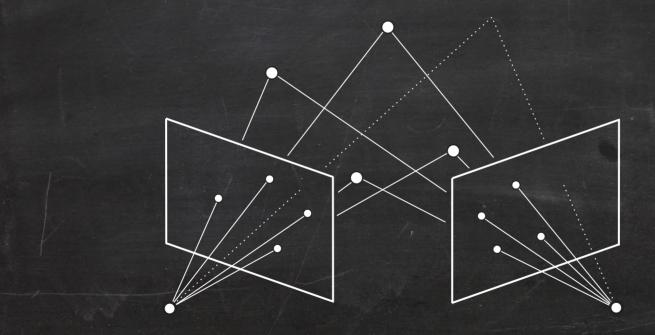
- Given: 2 images showing 5 points
- Goal: recover 5 points in 3D, and both (relative) camera poses



This problem has 20 solutions for generic input images (counted over the complex numbers).

An Underconstrained Problem

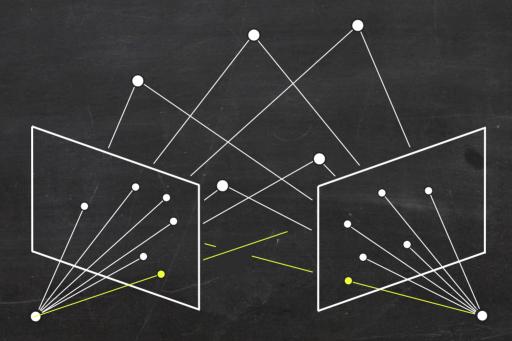
- Given: 2 images showing 4 points
- Goal: recover 4 points in 3D, and both (relative) camera poses



This problem has infinitely many solutions for generic input images.

An Overconstrained Problem

- Given: 2 images showing 6 points
- Goal: recover 6 points in 3D, and both (relative) camera poses



This problem has 0 solutions for generic input images.

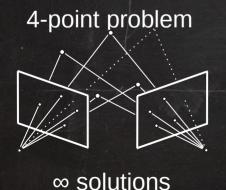
Some input images have solutions, but they are **not stable under noise** in the input images!

Minimal Problems

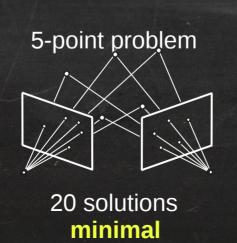
Definition: A 3D reconstruction problem is minimal if

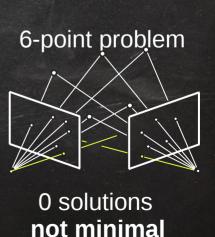
0 < # solutions $< \infty$

for generic (random) input images.



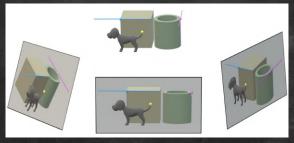
not minimal





another minimal problem

Given: point, point on line & point on line on each 2d-image Goal: compute point, point on line & point on line in 3-space, and the three (relative) camera poses



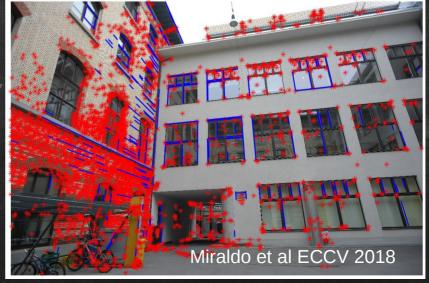
Generally has 312 complex solutions.

Fundamental Research Questions

- 1. Can we list all minimal problems?
- 2. How many solutions do they have?

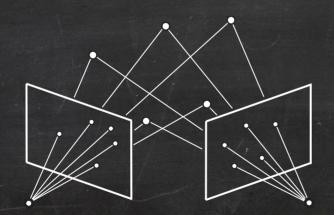
We do not only want to work with points, but also with lines and their incidences!



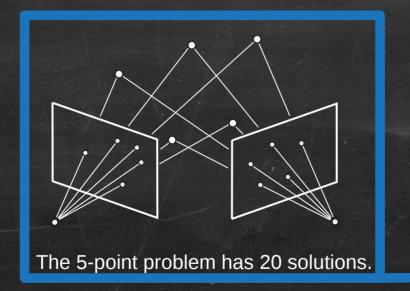


We provide the first complete classification of all minimal problems when all points and lines are visible in each given image. for who rated cameras.



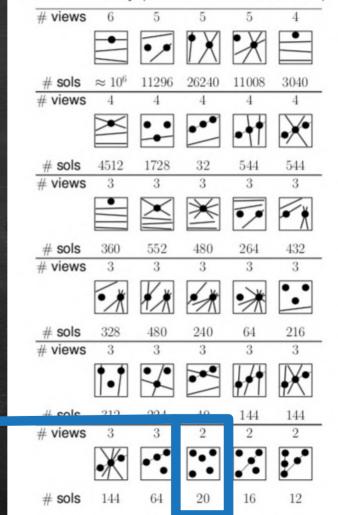


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RESULT

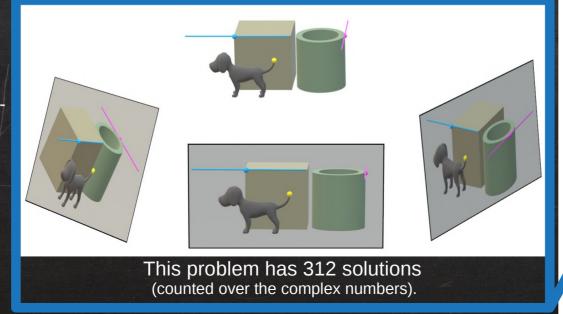
There are **exactly 30 minimal problems** for *complete multi-view visibility* (modulo extra lines in 2 views).



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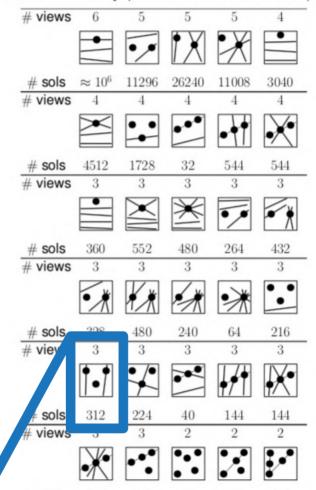
First solver for such a high-degree problem based on state-of-the-art algorithms from numerical algebraic geometry:

TRPLP – Trifocal Relative Pose from Lines at Points, Fabbri et. al., CVPR 2020



RESULT

There are **exactly 30 minimal problems** for *complete multi-view visibility* (modulo extra lines in 2 views).



sols

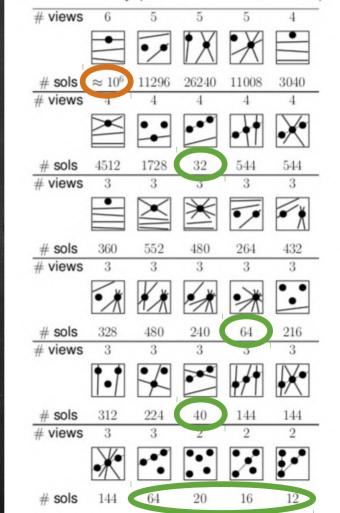
We provide the **first complete classification of all minimal problems**when all points and lines are visible in each given image.

We measure the complexity of each minimal problem by computing its number of solutions

(counted over the complex numbers).

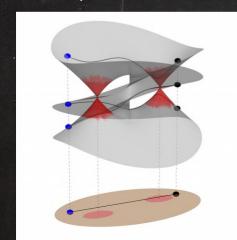
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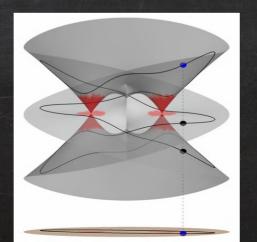
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Our Tools: Nonlinear Algebra

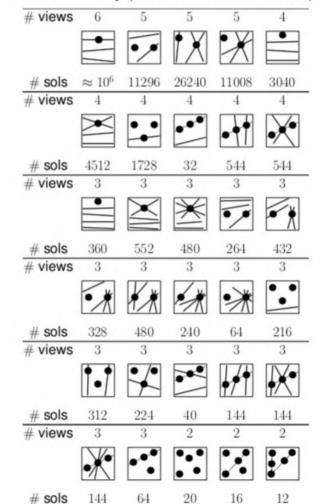
- → Algebraic geometry for proof of classification
- → Gröbner bases symbolic computation of #sols for 2 & 3 views
- → Homotopy continuation & monodromy numerical computation of #sols for 4, 5 & 6 views





RESULT

There are **exactly 30 minimal problems** for *complete multi-view visibility* (modulo extra lines in 2 views).



The joint camera map is

$$\Phi: \mathcal{C}_m \times \mathcal{X} \longrightarrow \mathcal{Y}^m,$$

where

- C_m is the variety of m cameras,
- \mathcal{X} is the variety of 3D arrangements of p points & ℓ lines satisfying some prescribed incidences, and
- ullet ${\cal Y}$ is the analog variety of 2D arrangements.

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3D reconstruction = given
$$(\operatorname{pic}_1,\ldots,\operatorname{pic}_m)\in\mathcal{Y}^m$$
, compute the preimage $\Phi^{-1}(\operatorname{pic}_1,\ldots,\operatorname{pic}_m)$

Fact 1 from algebraic geometry:

If a 3D reconstruction problem is minimal, then its joint camera map

$$\Phi: \mathcal{C}_m \times \mathcal{X} \longrightarrow \mathcal{Y}^m,$$

satisfies $\dim \mathcal{C}_m + \dim \mathcal{X} = m \dim \mathcal{Y}$.

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There are exactly 39 reconstruction problems satisfying this dimension count:

m views	6	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
$p^{\mathrm{f}}p^{\mathrm{d}}l^{\mathrm{f}}l_{\alpha}^{\mathrm{a}}$	1021_{1}	1013_{3}	1005_{5}	2011_{1}	2003_{2}	2003_{3}	1030_{0}	1022_{2}	1014_{4}	1006_{6}	3001_{1}	2110_{0}	2102_{1}
(p, l, \mathcal{I})		\times	\divideontimes	•,*	İΧ	*			\divideontimes	\divideontimes	••	•••	-\†
Minimal	Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y
Degree	$> 450k^*$			11306*	26240*	11008*	3040*	4524*			1728*	32*	544*
m views		3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
$p^{\mathrm{f}}p^{\mathrm{d}}l^{\mathrm{f}}l_{\alpha}^{\mathrm{a}}$	2102_{2}	1040_{0}	1032_{2}	1024_{4}	1016_{6}	1008_{8}	2021_{1}	2013_{2}	2013_{3}	2005_{3}	2005_{4}	2005_{5}	3010_0
(p, l, \mathcal{I})	*		\bowtie	$ \overset{*}{=} $	\divideontimes	\divideontimes	• • •	**	•	**	**	•**	∴
Minimal	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Degree	544*	360	552	480			264	432	328	480	240	64	216
m views	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2
$p^{\mathrm{f}}p^{\mathrm{d}}l^{\mathrm{f}}l_{\alpha}^{\mathrm{a}}$	3002_1	3002_{2}	2111_{1}	2103_{1}	2103_{2}	2103_{3}	3100_{0}	2201_{1}	5000_{2}	4100_{3}	3200_{3}	3200_{4}	2300_{5}
(p, l, \mathcal{I})	1-1	• /•	% \	1/1	 X•	*	•••	••	•••		•••		
Minimal	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y		
Degree	312	224	40	144	144	144	64		20	16	12		

Fact 2 from algebraic geometry:

A reconstruction problem with $\dim \mathcal{C}_m + \dim \mathcal{X} = m \dim \mathcal{Y}$ is minimal if and only if its joint camera map $\Phi: \mathcal{C}_m \times \mathcal{X} \longrightarrow \mathcal{Y}^m$ is **dominant**.

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Definition

A map $\varphi: A \to B$ is surjective if for every $b \in B$ there is an $a \in A$ such that $\varphi(a) = b$.

Definition

A map $\varphi: A \to B$ is **dominant** if for almost every $b \in B$ there is an $a \in A$ such that $\varphi(a) = b$.

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Fact 3 from algebraic geometry:

The joint camera map $\Phi: \mathcal{C}_m \times \mathcal{X} \longrightarrow \mathcal{Y}^m$ is dominant if and only if its derivative at a generic point in the domain is surjective.

proof idea

Fact 2 from algebraic geometry:

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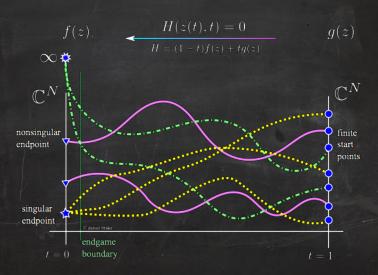
The joint camera map $\Phi: \mathcal{C}_m \times \mathcal{X} \longrightarrow \mathcal{Y}^m$ is dominant if and only if its derivative at a generic point in the domain is surjective.

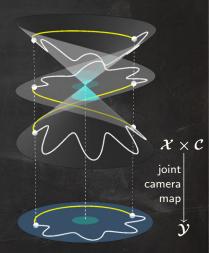
Can check this computationally! It is only linear algebra!

m views	6	6	6	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
$p^{\mathrm{f}}p^{\mathrm{d}}l^{\mathrm{f}}l_{\alpha}^{\mathrm{a}}$	1021_{1}	1013_{3}	1005_{5}	2011_{1}	2003_{2}	2003_{3}	1030_{0}	1022_{2}	1014_{4}	1006_{6}	3001_{1}	2110_{0}	2102_1
(p,l,\mathcal{I})		\times	\divideontimes	• ,*	$^{\dagger} \times$	X		\times	\times	\divideontimes	••	•••	-++
Minimal	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y
Degree	$> 450k^*$			11306^*	26240^*	11008*	3040*	4524^*			1728*	32*	544*
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(p,l,\mathcal{I})	*	•	\times	<u>*</u>	$\frac{\mathbb{X}}{\mathbb{X}}$	\divideontimes	• •	√	•*	**	**	•**	
Minimal	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Degree	544*	360	552	480			264	432	328	480	240	64	216
m views	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	2
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(p,l,\mathcal{I})	•	*/*	*/	 //	\	*	•••	••	•••	••	•••	•••	
Minimal	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N
Degree	312	224	40	144	144	144	64		20	16	12		

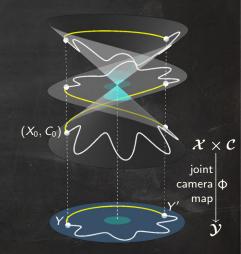
Now that we have a complete list of minimal problems, we can find their solutions symbolically with Gröbner bases or numerically . . .

homotopy continuation

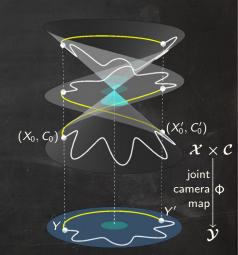




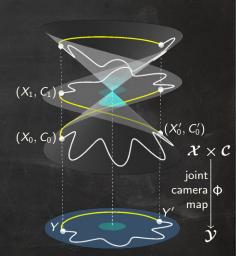
- Pick random $(X_0, C_0) \in \mathcal{X} \times \mathcal{C}$
- Set $Y = \Phi(X_0, C_0)$
- ♦ Pick $Y' \in \mathcal{Y}$



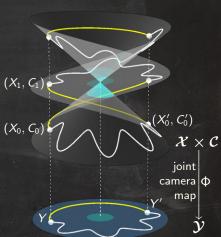
- Pick random $(X_0, C_0) \in \mathcal{X} \times \mathcal{C}$
- Set $Y = \Phi(X_0, C_0)$
- Pick $Y' \in \mathcal{Y}$
- ◆ Along a random path from Y to Y' track the solution (X₀, C₀) for Y to a solution (X'₀, C'₀) for Y'
 via homotopy continuation



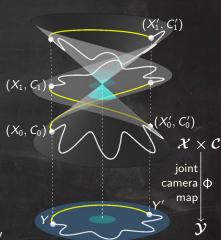
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 via homotopy continuation
- ◆ Along a random path from Y' to Y track the solution (X'₀, C'₀) for Y' to a solution (X₁, C₁) for Y via homotopy continuation



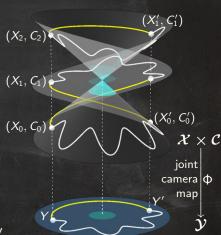
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- ◆ Along a random path from Y to Y' track the solution (X₀, C₀) for Y to a solution (X'₀, C'₀) for Y'
 via homotopy continuation
- ◆ Along a random path from Y' to Y track the solution (X'₀, C'₀) for Y' to a solution (X₁, C₁) for Y via homotopy continuation
- Keep on circulating between Y and Y' until no more solutions for Y are found



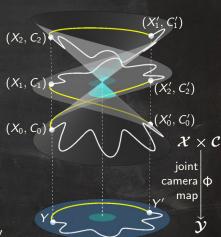
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 via homotopy continuation
- ◆ Along a random path from Y' to Y track the solution (X'₀, C'₀) for Y' to a solution (X₁, C₁) for Y via homotopy continuation
- Keep on circulating between Y and Y' until no more solutions for Y are found



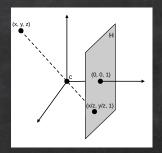
- Pick random $(X_0, C_0) \in \mathcal{X} \times \mathcal{C}$
- Set $Y = \Phi(X_0, C_0)$
- Pick $Y' \in \mathcal{Y}$
- ◆ Along a random path from Y to Y' track the solution (X₀, C₀) for Y to a solution (X'₀, C'₀) for Y'
 via homotopy continuation
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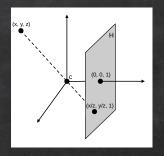
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The shown classification of minimal problems was for **calibrated pinhole cameras**. This camera model is a linear projection and assumes the internal camera parameters to be known (and normalized).



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The unknown camera parameters are its center position and its orientation. They are modeled as a $3\times 4~\text{matrix}$

$$[R \mid t]$$
, where $R \in SO(3)$, $t \in \mathbb{R}^3$,

that takes a picture of a point $X \in \mathbb{R}^3$ via $[R \mid t] \cdot [X \mid t] = RX + t$.

When the internal camera parameters are not known, the **uncalibrated pinhole camera** is an arbitrary full-rank 3×4 matrix.

When the internal camera parameters are not known, the **uncalibrated pinhole camera** is an arbitrary full-rank 3×4 matrix.

Classifying all their minimal problems turns out to be more complicated ...

Uncalibrated minimal problems

Theorem (K. Kiehn, A. Ahlbäck, K. Kohn; ICCV 2025):

For uncalibrated cameras, all minimal problems involving points and lines are:

- a) 2 cameras viewing one of the point-line arrangements in Table 1, plus arbitrarily many additional lines;
- b) at least 2 cameras observing one of the 2 right-most pointline arrangements in Table 1;
- c) one of the 285 PLPs in SM Section E (with 3–9 views).

Their degrees are given in Table 1 and SM Section E.

• • •	• • •	•		•	
• •	o o o	o o o	•	0	•
3	2	2	1	1	1

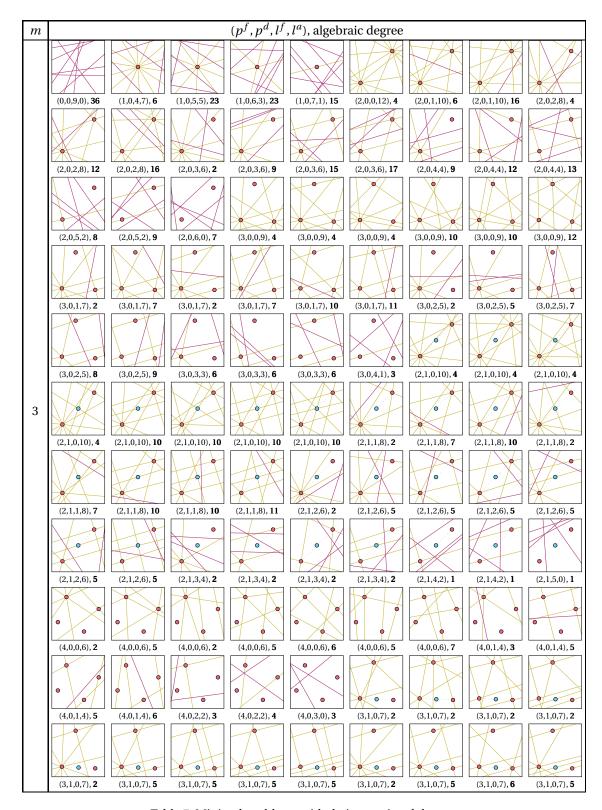


Table 7: Minimal problems with their associated degree.

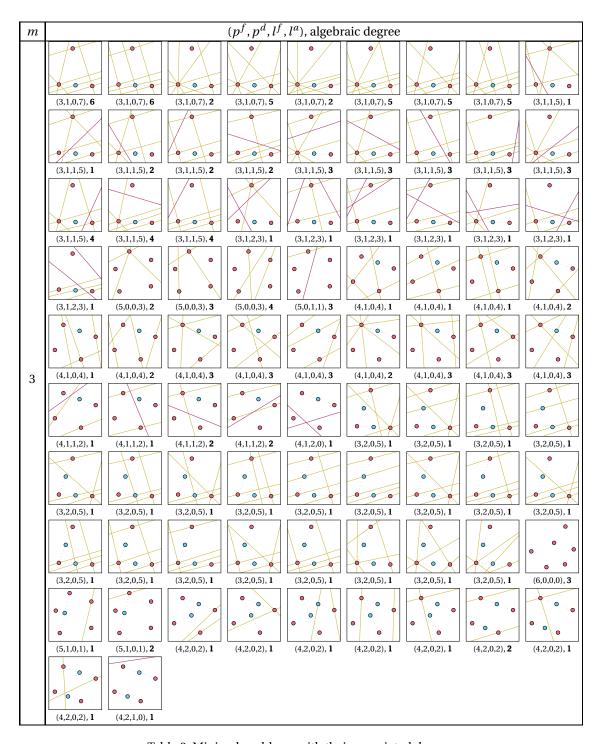


Table 8: Minimal problems with their associated degree.

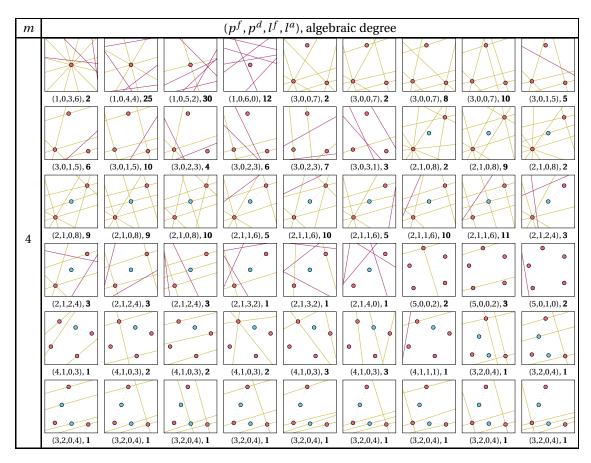


Table 9: Minimal problems with their associated degree.

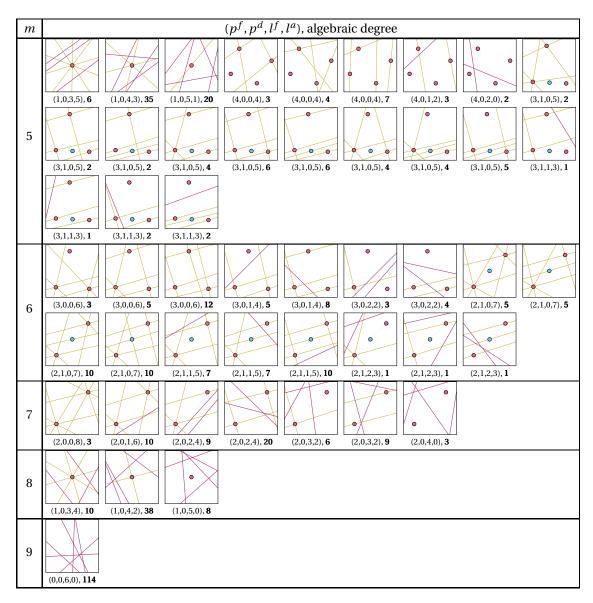


Table 10: Minimal problems with their associated degree.

rolling-shutter cameras that are the vast majority of today's cameras: take pictures by scanning across the scene, capturing the image row by row

important challenge: algebra-geometry foundations of

rolling-shutter cameras that are the vast majority of today's cameras: take pictures by scanning across the scene, capturing the image row by row

important challenge: algebra-geometry foundations of



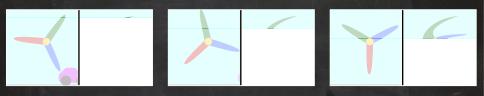
important challenge: algebra-geometry foundations of rolling-shutter cameras that are the vast majority of today's cameras:

rolling-shutter cameras that are the vast majority of today's cameras: take pictures by scanning across the scene, capturing the image row by row

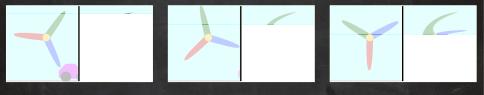


important challenge: algebra-geometry foundations of rolling-shutter cameras that are the vast majority of today's cameras:

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rolling-shutter cameras that are the vast majority of today's cameras: take pictures by scanning across the scene, capturing the image row by row



Algebraically:

• The image of a line is typically a higher-degree curve.

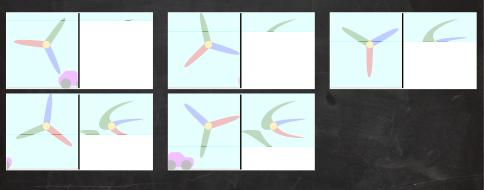
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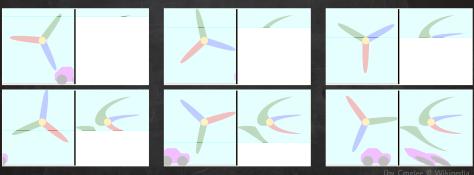
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rolling-shutter cameras that are the vast majority of today's cameras: take pictures by scanning across the scene, capturing the image row by row



https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-5a/3.0/deed.er changes: added black separating line

Algebraically:

The image of a line is typically a higher-degree curve.

rolling-shutter cameras that are the vast majority of today's cameras: take pictures by scanning across the scene, capturing the image row by row



Algebraically:

- The image of a line is typically a higher-degree curve. A 3D point can appear more than once in the image.