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Systematic lossy error protection based on H.264/AVC redundant slices and flexible macroblock ordering^{*}

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Abstract: The authors propose a scheme for Systematic Lossy Error Protection (SLEP) of an H.264/AVC compressed video bit stream, using standard compatible features such as redundant slices, and flexible macroblock ordering. The systematic portion consists of a conventional H.264/AVC bit stream. For error resilience, an additional Wyner-Ziv bit stream is also transmitted. The Wyner-Ziv bit stream allows the decoding of a coarsely quantized description of the original video signal, and is efficiently generated by using H.264/AVC redundant slices in conjunction with Reed-Solomon coding. The Wyner-Ziv bit stream is decoded in order to recover the redundant video descriptions, which are used in lieu of portions lost from the original video signal due to channel errors. SLEP allows the video quality to degrade gracefully with worsening channel conditions, and provides a flexible trade-off between the achieved error resilience and the coarseness of the redundant description. The performance can be improved especially for low motion video sequences, by applying SLEP to a region-of-interest in the video frame, using flexible macroblock ordering (FMO). Experimental results provided for two video transmission scenarios, demonstrate the advantages of SLEP over forward error correction (FEC) as an error resilience scheme.

Key words: Wyner-Ziv coding, Distributed video coding, Side information, Systematic source-channel coding, Redundant slices, Flexible macroblock ordering (FMO)

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INTRODUCTION

In typical video transmission systems, a video signal is compressed, and the resulting bit stream is transmitted over an error-prone channel. The errors may consist of symbol errors caused by fading, as observed for wireless channels, or packet erasures caused by congestion, as observed in the Internet. If a received video packet contains errors, then the portion of the video signal contained in the packet is lost and must be concealed. Error concealment schemes alone cannot guarantee acceptable video quality at the error probabilities encountered in video transmission systems. Hence, a combination of application layer

forward error correction (FEC) and feedback (if permissible for the given application) is used to protect the video packets, in exchange for an increase in latency and a small expansion of the transmitted bit rate. For example, MPEG-2 transport uses a (204, 188) Reed-Solomon (RS) code to protect the packets in the broadcast stream. This code can correct a maximum of 8 byte errors or 16 byte erasures, but at high error probability, the number of erroneous or erased packets overwhelms the RS code and this results in rapid degradation of the picture quality, a phenomenon commonly referred to as the “cliff” effect.

In our recent work (Girod *et al.*, 2005; Rane *et al.*, 2004; Rane and Girod, 2004), we proposed an error-resilient scheme called Systematic Lossy Error Protection (SLEP), which uses Wyner-Ziv coding concepts to achieve error resilience. This scheme achieves a graceful trade-off between the decoded

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video quality and the resilience to channel errors, effectively mitigating the cliff effect of FEC. In this work, we present an implementation of the SLEP scheme for H.264/AVC video transmission. In particular, we leverage H.264/AVC features such as redundant slices and flexible macroblock ordering in order to construct the Wyner-Ziv bit stream. We provide a detailed experimental comparison between SLEP and FEC for two scenarios, viz., transmission of video in IP packets over a wireless link where the application sees symbol errors as a result of wireless fading, and transmission of video over the Internet, where the application sees packet erasures due to congestion.

SLEP is based on the theoretical framework of systematic lossy source-channel coding, in which a signal without coding is transmitted over an error-prone analog channel. On a separate channel, an encoded version of the signal is transmitted as digital enhancement information. The receiver decodes this enhancement information, using the received error-prone output of the analog channel as side-information. Information theoretical optimality conditions for this lossy source channel coding scenario were derived by Shamai *et al.* (1998). Of particular interest is the fact that the encoding of digital enhancement information falls under the category of lossy source coding with decoder side information, namely the Wyner-Ziv coding problem (Wyner and Ziv, 1976). In deriving the set of achievable rates for this problem, Wyner and Ziv showed that the minimum encoding rate for a source sequence given side information only at the decoder, is lower bounded by the encoding rate given side information at both the encoder and the decoder. With the emergence of new applications in low complexity video encoding, and error-resilient video compression, Wyner-Ziv coding and related ideas are

attracting significant interest in the video coding community (Girod *et al.*, 2005; Aaron *et al.*, 2004; Puri and Ramchandran, 2002; Jagmohan *et al.*, 2002).

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews the principle of Systematic Lossy Error Protection. In Section 3, the H.264/AVC standard support for redundant slices and flexible macroblock ordering is discussed, followed by an implementation of the SLEP system using these tools. Section 4 presents results of experimental simulation of two video transmission scenarios, in which the error resilience of FEC is compared with that of SLEP. Concluding remarks are presented in Section 5.

SYSTEMATIC LOSSY ERROR PROTECTION

We now describe the concept of Systematic Lossy Error Protection for transmission of compressed video signals. As shown in Fig.1, consider a compressed video bit stream which is transmitted across an error-prone channel without channel coding, comprising the systematic part of the transmission. For error resilience, a second independent bit stream is generated using Wyner-Ziv encoding of the video signal. The Wyner-Ziv bit stream allows the decoding of a coarsely quantized description of the original video signal. Since the video bit stream is generated without consideration of the error resilience provided by the Wyner-Ziv coder, we refer to the overall scheme as systematic source-channel coding.

The receiver decodes the compressed video signal, and conceals erroneous or lost portions. Even after concealment, some portions of the recovered video signal may contain unacceptably large errors. These errors are corrected up to a certain residual distortion by the Wyner-Ziv decoder. The Wyner-Ziv bits allow

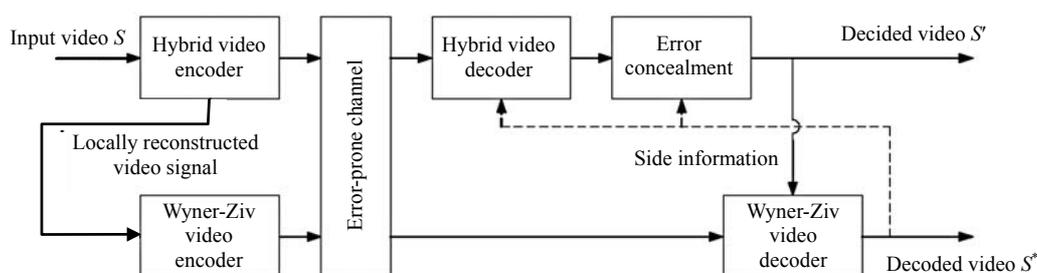


Fig.1 A Wyner-Ziv decoder uses the decoded error-concealed video waveform as side information in a systematic lossy source-channel setup

error-free reconstruction of the coarser second description, employing the decoded video signal S' as side information. The coarser second description and side information S' are then combined to yield an improved decoded video signal S^* . In portions where the waveform S' is not affected by transmission errors, S^* is essentially identical to S' . However, in portions of the waveform where S' is substantially degraded by transmission errors, the second coarser representation transmitted at very low bit rate in the Wyner-Ziv bit stream limits the maximum degradation that can occur. Instead of the error-concealed decoded signal S' , the signal S^* at the output of the Wyner-Ziv encoder is fed back to the video decoder to serve as a more accurate reference frame for decoding of the future frames.

SLEP BASED ON H.264/AVC REDUNDANT SLICES

Redundant slices and FMO standard support

The standard specification for H.264/AVC (JVT of ISO/IEC MPEG & ITU-T VCEG, 2003) provides several error resilience tools (Stockhammer *et al.*, 2003). In our scheme, we exploit Flexible macroblock ordering (FMO) and Redundant Slices, both available in the "Baseline" and "Extended" profiles. Using the slice group concept, every coded picture may be divided into several macroblock partitions, defined by means of a "macroblock to slice group map" function. Then, a slice is defined as a sequence of macroblocks from one slice group, taken in raster scan order. The parameters that control the mapping functions are included in a Picture Parameter Set (PPS) which is sent to the receiver. Seven predefined mapping functions have been provided in the standard.

In our proposal, we exploit the FMO Type 2 mapping, also called Foreground with Left-Over, that allows us to define a maximum of seven slice groups for the foreground, plus one for the background. To activate these slice groups, 7 sets of macroblock coordinates are included in the PPS, signaling the upper-left and bottom-right corners of each rectangle. Macroblocks belonging to overlapping slice groups are assigned to the one with lowest identifier. This FMO mapping allows us to distinguish the foreground region of the image from the background,

thus enabling the underlying transmission layers to adopt different protection policies for the two regions.

In order to construct the Wyner-Ziv description, as explained in Section 2, we exploit redundant slices. The H.264/AVC standard introduces support for redundant slices by defining the access unit concept. An access unit is one Primary Coded Picture (PCP) with some optional additional information, that may include one or more redundant pictures or Sequence Enhancement Information. The specification poses some constraints about the content of these redundant slices: (1) the redundant representations must follow the corresponding PCP in the same access unit, (2) the redundant picture cannot present a sampling structure (frame/field) different from the primary one and (3) the reference picture list for the redundant picture must contain the same set of images as those of the PCP.

Much freedom is left to the encoder in regard to the data transported in the redundant slices. For example, an encoder can use coding modes and quantization parameters different from the ones used for the corresponding PCP. Redundant slices can have shapes different from those in the PCP. They may contain a different number of macroblocks and, more relevant to this work, decoded slices within the same redundant picture need not cover the entire picture area. Furthermore, redundant pictures are allowed to make use of different Picture Parameter Sets, and different FMO mapping functions, provided that the Picture Order Count (i.e., the timing information necessary for ordering the list of reference pictures) of the primary coded picture is preserved.

Wyner-Ziv encoding

The implementation of the SLEP scheme is shown in Fig.2. The following operations are performed on the encoder side.

1. Region of Interest (ROI) determination

The image is analyzed to check for the existence of an ROI. In practice, we determine the portions that do not need protection because decoder-based error concealment would reconstruct them with an acceptable distortion. This process is described in detail in Section 3.4 and may result in the generation of a PPS that specifies the FMO mapping for encoding the redundant slices.

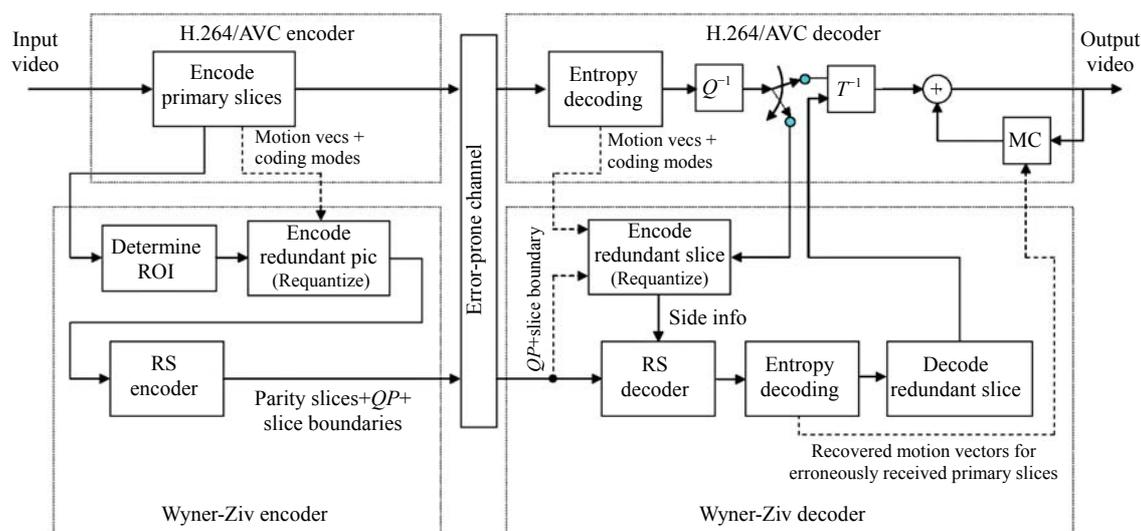


Fig.2 Implementation of a SLEP system using H.264/AVC redundant slices and FMO-based region-of-interest determination. Reed-Solomon codes applied across the redundant slices play the role of Slepian-Wolf codes in distributed source coding. At the receiver, the Wyner-Ziv decoder obtains the correct redundant slices using the error-prone primary coded slices as side information. The redundant description is used in lieu of the lost portions of the primary (systematic) signal

2. Generation of redundant slices

Each macroblock belonging to the redundant description is encoded with the same coding mode, motion vectors and reference pictures of the corresponding primary-coded macroblock.

3. Reed-Solomon encoding

Reed-Solomon (RS) codes perform the role of Slepian-Wolf coding in this system. A byte-long Reed-Solomon code is applied across the redundant slices, to generate parity slices, as shown in Fig.3. The number of parity slices generated per frame depends upon the allowable error resilience bit rate, and can vary slightly from frame to frame. The redundant slices are then discarded and only the parity slices are included for transmission in the Wyner-Ziv bit stream.

4. Wyner-Ziv bit stream generation

In addition to the parity slices resulting from the previous step, we encode for each slice (1) the number of the first macroblock, (2) the number of macroblocks in a redundant slice and (3) the QP difference. This latter parameter could be also specified per macroblock instead of per slice, if the rate control is enabled to change it on a macroblock-by-macroblock basis.

Wyner-Ziv encoding

The Wyner-Ziv decoding process is activated

only when transmission errors result in the loss of one or more slices from the bit stream of the primary coded picture. Wyner-Ziv decoding consists of the following operations.

1. Requantization to obtain redundant slices

This step involves the requantization of the prediction residual signal of the primary coded picture, followed by entropy coding. This generates the redundant slices used as side information for the Wyner-Ziv decoder. Note that redundant slices can only be generated for those portions of the frame, where the primary bit stream has not experienced channel errors. The redundant slices corresponding to the error-prone portions are treated as erasures. Since the coding modes for the redundant macroblocks are identical to those in the primary bit stream, the requantization procedure is straightforward. Note that this simplification is a slight departure from the conceptual SLEP system of Section 3, which required a full re-encoding of the error-concealed primary video signal. This system would incur a large decoder complexity because motion estimation has to be carried out at the decoder also. The requantization process sacrifices a small amount of coding efficiency, but requires very low complexity. Further, since Wyner-Ziv coding is applied to the prediction residual of the current frame, this method is robust to

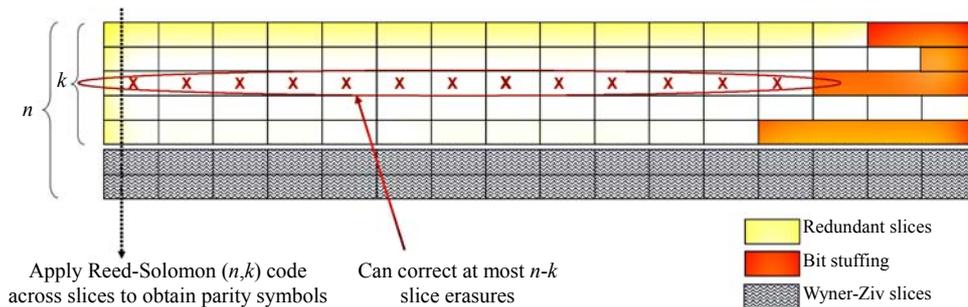


Fig.3 During Wyner-Ziv encoding, RS codes are applied across the redundant slices and only the parity slices are transmitted. At the decoder, the redundant slices can be recovered, possibly with a few erasures. During Wyner-Ziv decoding, the received parity slices are used to correct the erasures and recover redundant slices corresponding to the lost portions of the original video signal

Wyner-Ziv decoder failure which could otherwise occur due to error propagation from the previous frame.

2. Reed-Solomon Slepian-Wolf decoding

The parity slices received in the Wyner-Ziv bit stream are now combined with the redundant slices and erasure decoding is performed to recover the slices which were erased from the redundant bit stream, as shown in Fig.3. In the language of distributed video coding, the RS decoder functions as a Slepian-Wolf decoder, and recovers the correct redundant bit stream using the error-prone redundant bit stream as side information.

3. Concealment of lost primary slices

If Wyner-Ziv decoding succeeds, the lost portions of the prediction residual from the primary (systematic) signal, are replaced by the quantized redundant prediction error signal. The H.264/AVC decoder then performs motion compensation in the conventional manner, using the redundant prediction error signal and the motion vectors recovered from Wyner-Ziv decoding. The coarse fall-back operation results in a quantization mismatch which can propagate to future frames, but a drastic reduction in picture quality is avoided.

ROI signalling and coding

SLEP is essentially based on a tradeoff between error robustness and distortion introduced by the Wyner-Ziv decoded signal used to replace the original video. For error resilience at high error rates, it is usually desirable to generate redundant descriptions with a very coarse quantization step. In these cases, the distortion introduced by the Wyner-Ziv description

can be large, especially for intra-coded macroblocks. We try to limit this effect by avoiding redundant encoding of “unimportant” regions of the image. This allows better management of the bit rate budget by encoding only the macroblocks belonging to the ROI with a finer quantizer.

In order to determine the ROI, we follow the process shown in Fig.4. First, we evaluate the impact of the loss of each slice, simulating the error concealment process at the encoder. The error signal, obtained as the difference between the encoded frame and the concealed frame, provides a measure of the expected distortion in case of losses. For each macroblock, we compute the “Mean Absolute Error” (MAE), thus producing a Significance Map for the whole image. This solution is a simple but effective compromise between the extra computational complexity and the effectiveness in determining the perceptual significance of the region-of-interest.

After constructing a matrix that essentially captures the perceptual significance of each macroblock, the ROI is obtained by thresholding the MAE. Then, it is necessary to cover the ROI with up to seven rectangles (slice groups) that could be signalled by means of FMO Type 2. In practice, FMO 2 specifies the area not covered by any of the seven rectangles (usually the background) by placing it into an eighth slice group. Therefore, we attempt to cover the greatest possible number of “unimportant” macroblocks with the first seven rectangles, leaving the relevant macroblocks in the background. This is performed by means of a dichotomic search in the space of possible rectangles. A list of rectangles is constructed, and the largest one is sub-divided into two. Then the MAE of

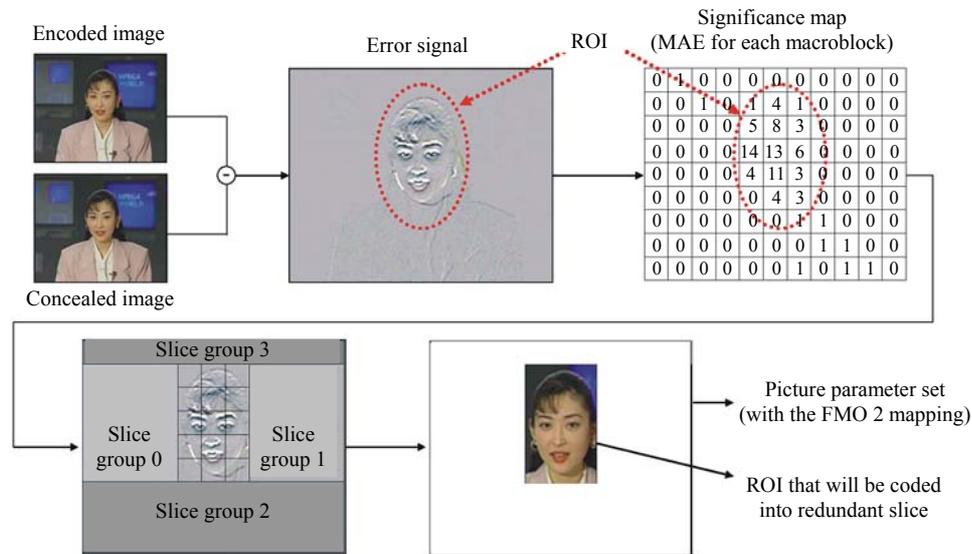


Fig.4 A Region of Interest (ROI) is determined at the encoder by finding the mean absolute error between the current image and its locally error concealed version. The error image is then thresholded to obtain the ROI

the contained macroblocks is compared to a threshold, to determine whether the rectangle contains a portion of the ROI. This procedure is iterated until 7 slice groups covering the greatest possible number of unimportant macroblocks are found. The procedure for determining the ROI is detailed in (Baccichet and Chimienti, 2006).

EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

In this section, we describe simulation results demonstrating the error resilience of the proposed SLEP scheme. We investigate two scenarios, viz, video transmission over a wireless link, and video transmission over the Internet. The following settings are common for both experiments:

(1) We use the JVT version JM 10.1 (<http://iphome.hhi.de/suehring/tml/>) of the H.264/AVC video codec for our simulations. The experiments are carried out on CIF resolution sequences and all the graphs in this section contain results averaged over 30 channel realizations. The GOP structure used is I-P-P-P... and the sequences are encoded at 15 frames per second.

(2) We use two high-motion sequences, Foreman encoded at 1 Mbps, and Bus encoded at 1.5 Mbps, and one low-motion sequence, Akiyo encoded at 400 kbps.

(3) We use redundant descriptions encoded at 100%, 50%, 25% and 10% of the bit rate of the primary stream. In the following sections, schemes using these redundant descriptions will be referred to as FEC, SLEP50, SLEP25 and SLEP10 respectively. Note that these numbers refer to the bit rate of the redundant description and not to the transmitted Wyner-Ziv bit rate. The transmitted Wyner-Ziv bit rate will be specified and will be identical for all the schemes in a given experiment.

(4) To avoid the delay incurred for buffering an I-frame, and to ensure that the bit rate profile does not fluctuate drastically over time, we use Intra macroblock line-refresh in all our simulations, i.e., one row in each frame is encoded using the intra macroblocks, thus generating a complete frame-refresh every 18 frames for a CIF resolution sequence.

(5) The rate control method specified in the standard codec (JVT of ISO/IEC MPEG & ITU-T VCEG, 2003) is used at the encoder to determine the modulation of the quantization parameters while encoding the macroblocks in the video sequence. Once the encoding rates for the primary and redundant slices have been decided, the rate control algorithm for the primary picture proceeds independently of that for the redundant picture.

(6) The slices of the primary picture, i.e., the systematic transmission are constrained to be 400

bytes long. To this, we add the RTP, UDP and IP headers which occupy a total of $12+8+20=40$ bytes per slice. Since each video slice travels inside an IP packet, the words “slice” and “packet” will be used interchangeably. Thus, unlike our previous experiments with the MPEG-2 codec (Rane *et al.*, 2004; 2005a), the slices are no longer constrained to contain the same number of macroblocks. The packetization for the slices in the Wyner-Ziv bit stream will differ according to the experiment and will be described below.

(7) At very high error probabilities, the number of erased redundant slices is too large and Wyner-Ziv decoding fails for some or all video frames. In this case, the non-normative error concealment scheme (Wang *et al.*, 2002) included in the reference JVT codec, is used to conceal the lost portions of the systematic transmission.

Video transmission over a wireless link

We now discuss the simulation results for a communication scenario in which a video sequence is transmitted over a wireless link. In this case, the transmission experiences symbol errors. For this scenario, we constrain each redundant slice to contain the same number of macroblocks as the corresponding primary slice. The rationale for this is as follows: For a given symbol error rate p_s , the probability that the packet arrives erroneously, is proportional to its length l , since $1-(1-p_s)^l \approx lp_s$ for small p_s . Further, for the same number of macroblocks, a redundant slice is smaller than a primary coded slice, since the redundant slice in SLEP uses coarser quantization. Thus a redundant slice containing the same number of macroblocks as the primary slice is less likely to be lost. Of course, if there are many small redundant slices,

then the bit rate overhead corresponding to the slice headers is quite large. However, since the redundant slices themselves are not transmitted to the decoder in SLEP, this overhead is restricted only to the parity slices in the Wyner-Ziv stream, and is not very large. Note that applying RS codes across the redundant slices dictates that the length of the Wyner-Ziv slices in a frame is equal to the length of the largest redundant slice in that frame.

Fig.5 shows a plot of average video quality versus symbol error probability for the Bus sequence. The error resilience bit rate is chosen to be 10% of the systematic bit rate, i.e., 10% of 1.5 Mbps=150 kbps. The cases compared are SLEP with redundant description bit rates of 1.5 Mbps (FEC), 750 kbps (SLEP50), 375 kbps (SLEP25), and 150 kbps (SLEP10). It is clear that the error resilience of FEC is poor at high symbol error probabilities, while that of SLEP increases as the redundant picture quality becomes coarser. Thus, SLEP10 has the highest error resilience at high symbol error rates. The curves also highlight the trade-off between the error resilience of a SLEP scheme and the picture quality after Wyner-Ziv decoding. Specifically, SLEP10 experiences the highest quantization mismatch after Wyner-Ziv decoding, and hence at low symbol error rates, it pays the price of slightly reduced picture quality. The performance of SLEP50 and SLEP25 is in between that of FEC and SLEP10, in keeping with this trade-off. As expected, the error resilience of each scheme improves when the Wyner-Ziv bit rate is increased from 10% (150 kbps) to 20% (300 kbps) of the source bit rate of the primary picture, as shown in Fig.6. Interestingly, at high error rates, SLEP25 with only 150 kbps Wyner-Ziv bit rate outperforms the scheme with 300 kbps FEC.

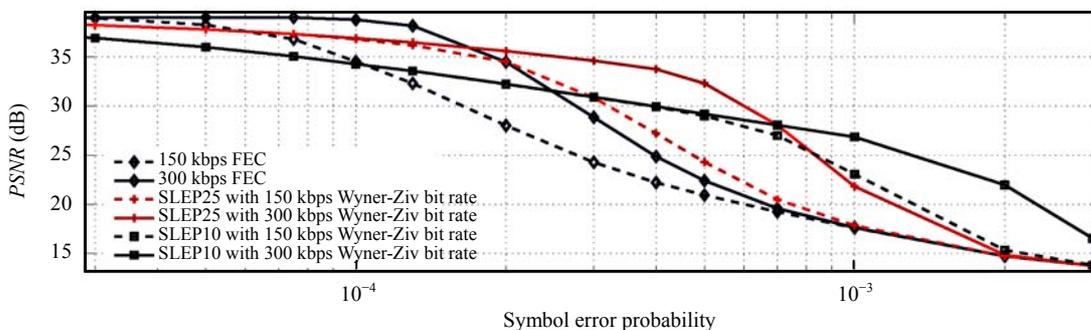


Fig.5 Improvement in the error-resilience of SLEP when the Wyner-Ziv bit rate is increased from 10% to 20% of the bit rate of the systematic transmission, which consists of the Bus sequence encoded at 1.5 Mbps

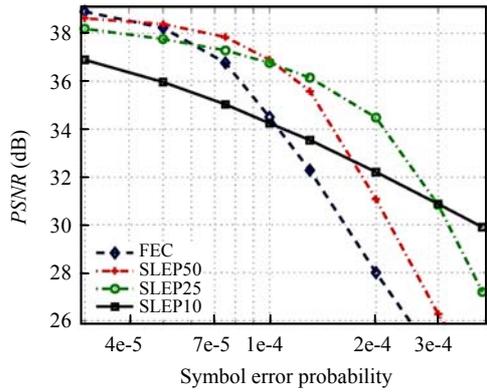


Fig.6 SLEP provides a graceful fall-off in decoded picture quality as the symbol error probability increases. In addition, it allows for a flexible trade-off between the error resilience provided by a redundant description and the residual distortion that can be tolerated after Wyner-Ziv decoding. The plot is for the Bus sequence with the Wyner-Ziv bit rate being 150 kbps, which is 10% of the rate of the systematic transmission

Fig.7 shows the improvement in visual quality for a frame of the Foreman sequence, when the error concealment artifacts resulting from the failure of FEC are avoided in the SLEP system.

Fig.8 compares FEC with the SLEP10 scheme for the Akiyo sequence, with 10 % error resilience bit rate, with and without ROI estimation. Since Akiyo is a low motion sequence, it is beneficial to use ROI estimation before applying Wyner-Ziv coding, and this is borne out by the experiments which show about 1~2 dB improvement in average picture quality when ROI estimation is used before encoding the redundant slices. The reason for the improvement is that, while generating the redundant description in SLEP10, the entire redundant description bit rate (10% of 400 kbps=40 kbps), is reserved for encoding the ROI instead of the whole frame, resulting in better picture quality for the ROI. The improvement can be better



Fig.7 Decoded frames from the Foreman sequence at a symbol error probability of 10^{-4} . 100 kbps of FEC fails to correct the channel errors, reducing the picture quality. At the same bit rate, SLEP replaces the lost portions by their Wyner-Ziv decoded redundant counterparts and ensures acceptable picture quality. The 2 dB difference between the error-free picture and the picture decoded by SLEP is due to the quantization mismatch from Wyner-Ziv decoding. (a) Error-free: 41.10 dB; (b) FEC: 28.03 dB; (c) SLEP25: 39.12 dB

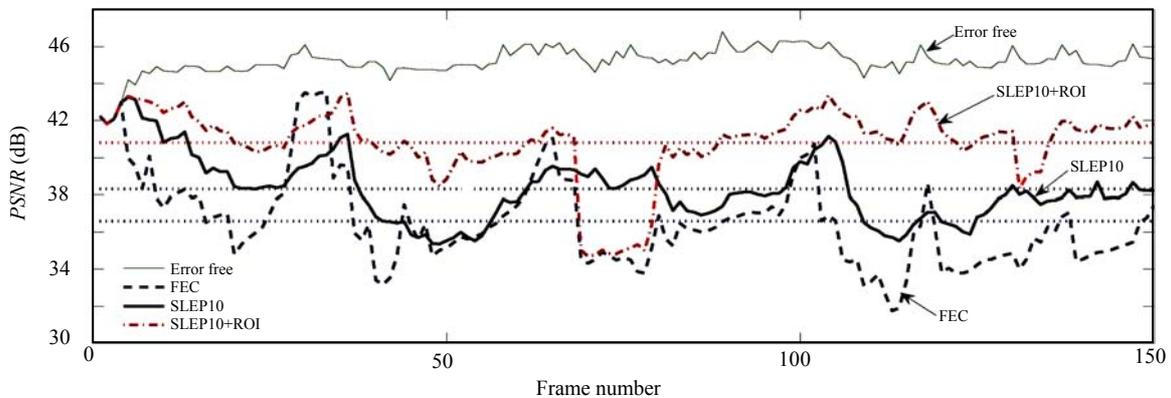


Fig.8 A video sequence (Akiyo) decoded at an error probability of 4×10^{-4} . The Wyner-Ziv bit rate is 10% of the source coding bit rate of 400 kbps. Both the SLEP10 plots have the same bit rate allocated to the redundant slices, however, superior quality is observed when the redundant encoding is restricted to the ROI. The dotted lines represent the average PSNR for the video sequence

appreciated by observing the instantaneous variation of video quality over time, as shown in Fig.9. Besides providing a higher average video quality, redundant encoding of the ROI also lowers the fluctuation in video quality, since the distortion in the ROI is now closer to that in the original picture.

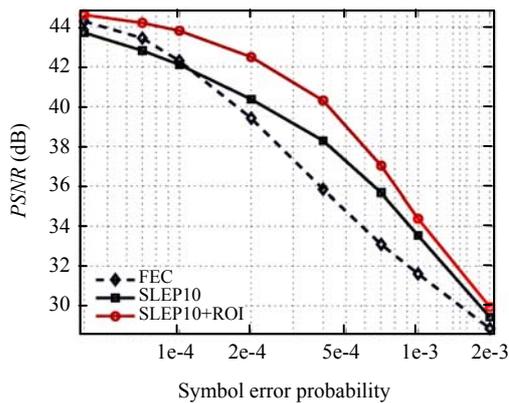


Fig.9 For a sequence with low-motion (Akiyo), SLEP is only performed on the region of interest. This significantly reduces the residual distortion resulting from Wyner-Ziv decoding, and improves the overall picture quality

Video transmission over Internet

For the Internet video transmission experiment, we note that the losses are only due to congestion at the network routers. Thus the receiver sees an erasure channel, in which video packets are lost with a certain probability that does not directly depend on the length of the packet. It would appear then, that it is beneficial to use the same packet length for the primary and the Wyner-Ziv slices. This would require that the redundant slices are also 400 bytes long. Since the redundant description is coarsely quantized, a redundant slice contains more macroblocks than a primary slice of the same length. Since redundant and primary pictures are encoded independently, it can happen that the loss of one primary slice results in the loss of two redundant slices. This is clearly undesirable and hampers the performance of SLEP, as shown in Fig.10. To prevent this, we again impose the restriction that primary and redundant slices contain the same number of macroblocks, as in the wireless scenario. Thus, the length of the transmitted Wyner-Ziv slices will again be equal to the length of the largest redundant slice in a given frame. Unlike the wireless scenario however, since losses are due to congestion, and not

symbol errors, the error probability experienced by all the packets is kept the same irrespective of their length. By preventing Wyner-Ziv decoding failure due to loss of synchronization between the primary and redundant slices, the performance of SLEP improves as shown in Fig.10. Note that for FEC, the performance in both cases is identical, since primary and redundant slices are identical by construction.

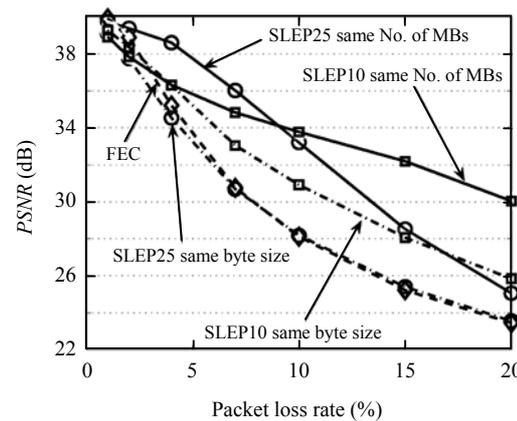


Fig.10 Effect of the method of packetization on the performance of SLEP for the Foreman sequence. Using the same packet length as the primary slices results in poor performance due to loss of synchronization between the primary and redundant slices. Using the same number of macroblocks in the primary and redundant slices dramatically improves the performance of SLEP, and trends similar to the wireless case are observed even though all packets experience the same loss rate

CONCLUSION AND ONGOING WORK

The Systematic Lossy Error Protection scheme uses a Wyner-Ziv bit stream to provide error resilience in a systematic lossy source-channel coding configuration. The Wyner-Ziv bit stream is generated efficiently by using H.264/AVC redundant slices in conjunction with Reed-Solomon coding. Wyner-Ziv protection can be enhanced by restricting the encoding of redundant slices to the high-motion regions of the video sequence by specifying a region-of-interest to the SLEP scheme, using standard-compliant flexible macroblock ordering (FMO 2). Experimental simulations show that SLEP provides graceful degradation of video quality when the channel error probability increases, without using scalable video representations. Further, the quality of the redundant

description can be used to trade off the amount of error resilience desired with the amount of degradation tolerable after Wyner-Ziv decoding.

The bit rate/quality of the redundant descriptions used in SLEP results in an extra degree of freedom in the optimization of a SLEP system, compared to the optimization of traditional FEC-based systems. Parallel to the present work, a model has been developed (Rane *et al.*, 2005b) to study the end-to-end behavior of the SLEP system and to find the bit rates for encoding the primary and redundant pictures, as well as the Wyner-Ziv bit rate that optimizes the received picture quality given the channel capacity, channel model and the error probability.

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