

# Adjoint Method in PDE-based Image Compression

Thomas Jacumin (joint work with Zakaria Belhachmi)

Laboratoire Jean Alexandre Dieudonné, Université Côte d'Azur

March 20, 2026



# Organization

1 Modeling

2 Analysis

3 Numerical

Goal: Reconstruct a missing part of an image  $f : K \subseteq D \rightarrow [0, 1]$  given.

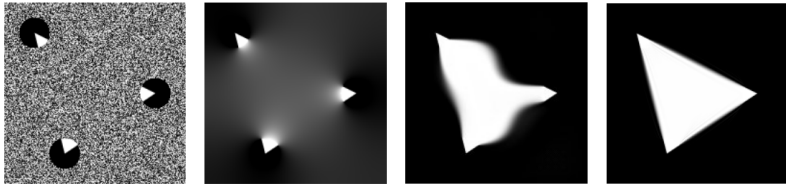
Goal: Reconstruct a missing part of an image  $f : K \subseteq D \rightarrow [0, 1]$  given.

## Inpainting

Find  $u : D \rightarrow [0, 1]$  such that :

$$\begin{cases} A(u) = 0 & \text{in } D \setminus K, \\ u = f & \text{in } K, \\ \frac{\partial u}{\partial n} = 0 & \text{on } \partial D, \end{cases}$$

with  $D$  being the support of the image, and  $A$  an operator (PDE).



Heat equation

Figure: Some examples of image inpainting.

Heat equation:

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{ll} \partial_t u = \Delta u & \text{in } [0, +\infty[ \times D \setminus K, \\ u = f & \text{in } [0, +\infty[ \times K, \\ \frac{\partial u}{\partial n} = 0 & \text{on } [0, +\infty[ \times \partial D, \end{array} \right.$$

Heat equation:

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{ll} \partial_t u = \Delta u & \text{in } [0, +\infty[ \times D \setminus K, \\ u = f & \text{in } [0, +\infty[ \times K, \\ \frac{\partial u}{\partial n} = 0 & \text{on } [0, +\infty[ \times \partial D, \end{array} \right.$$

Time discretization:  $\partial_t u \approx \frac{u_{n+1} - u_n}{\alpha}$ ,

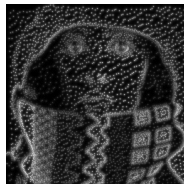
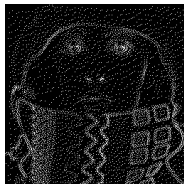
$$\left\{ \begin{array}{ll} u - \alpha \Delta u = u_0 & \text{in } D \setminus K, \\ u = f & \text{in } K, \\ \frac{\partial u}{\partial n} = 0 & \text{on } \partial D. \end{array} \right.$$

Heat equation:

$$\begin{cases} \partial_t u = \Delta u & \text{in } [0, +\infty[ \times D \setminus K, \\ u = f & \text{in } [0, +\infty[ \times K, \\ \frac{\partial u}{\partial n} = 0 & \text{on } [0, +\infty[ \times \partial D, \end{cases}$$

Time discretization:  $\partial_t u \approx \frac{u_{n+1} - u_n}{\alpha}$ ,

$$\begin{cases} u - \alpha \Delta u = u_0 & \text{in } D \setminus K, \\ u = f & \text{in } K, \\ \frac{\partial u}{\partial n} = 0 & \text{on } \partial D. \end{cases}$$

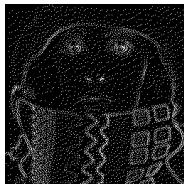


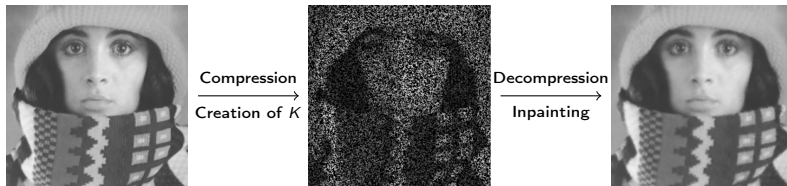
Heat equation:

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{ll} \partial_t u = \Delta u & \text{in } [0, +\infty[ \times D \setminus K, \\ u = f & \text{in } [0, +\infty[ \times K, \\ \frac{\partial u}{\partial n} = 0 & \text{on } [0, +\infty[ \times \partial D, \end{array} \right.$$

Time discretization:  $\partial_t u \approx \frac{u_{n+1} - u_n}{\alpha}$ ,

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{ll} u - \alpha \Delta u = u_0 & \text{in } D \setminus K, \\ u = f & \text{in } K, \\ \frac{\partial u}{\partial n} = 0 & \text{on } \partial D. \end{array} \right.$$



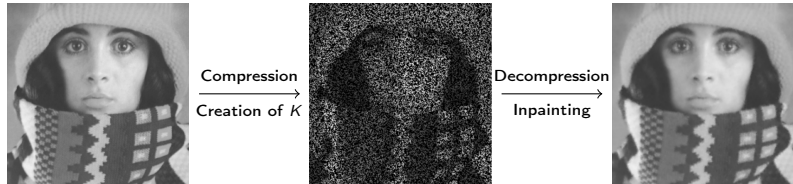


Original image  $f$ .

Compressed image.

Decompressed image  $u$ .

Figure: Compression by inpainting.



Original image  $f$ .

Compressed image.

Decompressed image  $u$ .

Figure: Compression by inpainting.

### Question

Which pixels to keep?

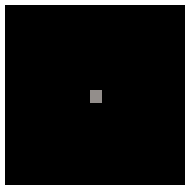
Shape optimization problem:

$$\min_{K \subseteq D, m(K) \leq c} \left\{ \mathcal{E}(u_K) \mid u_K \text{ solution of the inpainting} \right\},$$

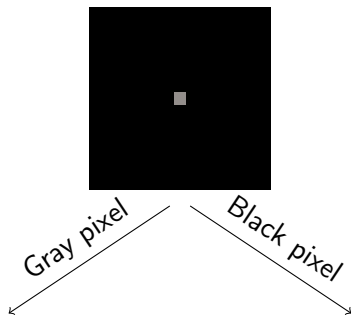
with

- $\mathcal{E}$  the error between the decompressed image and the original image,
- $m$  quantifies the size of  $K$ .

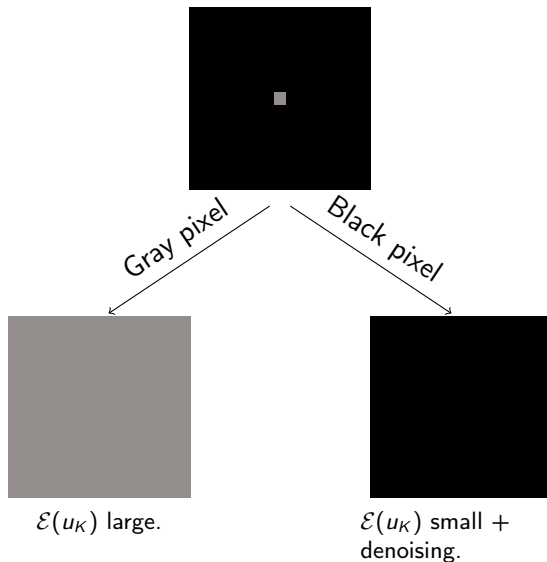
Example of the importance of the choice of  $K$ : Only one pixel.



Example of the importance of the choice of  $K$ : Only one pixel.



Example of the importance of the choice of  $K$ : Only one pixel.



If we consider that the image is noisy, we can remove this noise by compressing.

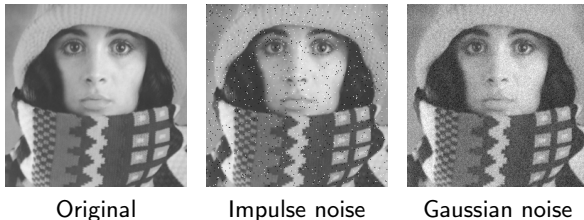


Figure: Example of noise.

If we consider that the image is noisy, we can remove this noise by compressing.

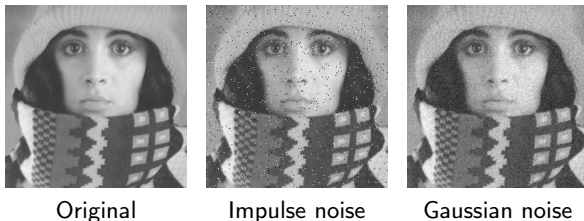


Figure: Example of noise.

Classic in image processing: for  $\alpha > 0$ ,

$$\min_u \{ \mathcal{D}(u, f) + \alpha \mathcal{R}(u) \}.$$

## Compression problem

For  $1 \leq p \leq 2$ ,

$$\min_{K \subseteq D, m(K) \leq c} \left\{ \frac{1}{p} \int_D |u_K - f|^p dx \mid u_K \text{ solution of (1)} \right\},$$

where

$$\begin{cases} u - \alpha \Delta u = u_0 & \text{in } D \setminus K, \\ u = f & \text{in } K, \\ \frac{\partial u}{\partial n} = 0 & \text{on } \partial D. \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

## Compression problem

For  $1 \leq p \leq 2$ ,

$$\min_{K \subseteq D, m(K) \leq c} \left\{ \frac{1}{p} \int_D |u_K - f|^p dx \mid u_K \text{ solution of (1)} \right\},$$

where

$$\begin{cases} u - \alpha \Delta u = u_0 & \text{in } D \setminus K, \\ u = f & \text{in } K, \\ \frac{\partial u}{\partial n} = 0 & \text{on } \partial D. \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

Note:

- compression step:  $u_0 = f$ ,                      decompression step:  $u_0 = 0$ .

# Organization

1 Modeling

2 Analysis

3 Numerical

## Question

How to create  $K$ ?

## Question

How to create  $K$ ?

## Definition (Topological gradient)

Let  $x_0 \in D$  and  $K_\varepsilon = K \cup \overline{B(x_0, \varepsilon)}$ .

$$\mathcal{E}(u_{K_\varepsilon}) - \mathcal{E}(u_K) = \rho(\varepsilon) G(x_0) + o(\rho(\varepsilon)),$$

where

- $\rho$  is a positive function going to zero as  $\varepsilon$  approaches zero,
- $G$  is the so-called topological gradient.

## Question

How to create  $K$ ?

## Definition (Topological gradient)

Let  $x_0 \in D$  and  $K_\varepsilon = K \cup \overline{B(x_0, \varepsilon)}$ .

$$\mathcal{E}(u_{K_\varepsilon}) - \mathcal{E}(u_K) = \rho(\varepsilon) G(x_0) + o(\rho(\varepsilon)),$$

where

- $\rho$  is a positive function going to zero as  $\varepsilon$  approaches zero,
- $G$  is the so-called topological gradient.

To minimize the cost functional, one has to create small holes at the locations  $x_0$  where  $G(x_0)$  is the most negative.

Setting  $\tilde{v}_K = u_K - f$ , we can write equivalently,

### Problem

Find  $\tilde{v}_K$  in  $H^1(D)$  such that

$$\begin{cases} -\alpha\Delta\tilde{v}_K + \tilde{v}_K = \alpha\Delta f & \text{in } D \setminus K, \\ \tilde{v}_K = 0 & \text{in } K, \\ \frac{\partial\tilde{v}_K}{\partial n} = 0 & \text{on } \partial D. \end{cases}$$

For the analysis:  $K_\varepsilon := B(x_0, \varepsilon)$ ,  $\tilde{v}_\varepsilon := \tilde{v}_{K_\varepsilon}$  and  $\tilde{v}_0 := \tilde{v}_\emptyset$ .

Weak formulation: find  $\tilde{v}_\varepsilon$  in  $V_\varepsilon$  such that,

$$a_\varepsilon(\tilde{v}_\varepsilon, \varphi) = I_\varepsilon(\varphi), \quad \forall \varphi \in V_\varepsilon,$$

with

$$V_\varepsilon := \{v \in H^1(D \setminus B_\varepsilon) \mid v = 0 \text{ on } \partial B_\varepsilon\},$$
$$a_\varepsilon(\tilde{v}_\varepsilon, \varphi) := \alpha \int_{D \setminus B_\varepsilon} \nabla \tilde{v}_\varepsilon \cdot \nabla \varphi \, dx + \int_{D \setminus B_\varepsilon} \tilde{v}_\varepsilon \varphi \, dx,$$
$$I_\varepsilon(\varphi) := \int_{D \setminus B_\varepsilon} h \varphi \, dx.$$

we suppose that there exists

- a continuous bilinear form  $\delta a : V \times V \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ ,
- a continuous linear form  $\delta l : V \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ ,
- a function  $\rho : \mathbb{R}_+ \rightarrow \mathbb{R}_+$  such that, for all  $\varepsilon \geq 0$ ,

such that

- $\|a_\varepsilon - a_0 - \rho(\varepsilon) \delta a\|_{\mathcal{L}_2(V)} = o(\rho(\varepsilon))$ ,
- $\|l_\varepsilon - l_0 - \rho(\varepsilon) \delta l\|_{\mathcal{L}(V)} = o(\rho(\varepsilon))$ ,
- $\lim_{\varepsilon \rightarrow 0} \rho(\varepsilon) = 0$ .

## Theorem

Let  $\tilde{v}_\varepsilon \in V$  be the solution of the following problem : find  $\tilde{v} \in V$  such that,

$$a_\varepsilon(\tilde{v}, \varphi) = I_\varepsilon(\varphi), \quad \forall \varphi \in V.$$

Let  $\tilde{w}_0$  be the solution of the so-called adjoint problem: find  $\tilde{w} \in V$  such that

$$a_0(\tilde{w}, \varphi) = -D\mathcal{E}(\tilde{v}_0)\varphi = - \int_D \tilde{v}_0 |\tilde{v}_0|^{p-2} \varphi \, dx, \quad \forall \varphi \in V.$$

Then,

$$\mathcal{E}(\tilde{v}_\varepsilon) - \mathcal{E}(\tilde{v}_0) = \rho(\varepsilon)(\delta a(\tilde{v}_0, \tilde{w}_0) - \delta I(\tilde{w}_0)) + o(\rho(\varepsilon)).$$

## Theorem

Let  $\tilde{v}_\varepsilon \in V$  be the solution of the following problem : find  $\tilde{v} \in V$  such that,

$$a_\varepsilon(\tilde{v}, \varphi) = I_\varepsilon(\varphi), \quad \forall \varphi \in V.$$

Let  $\tilde{w}_0$  be the solution of the so-called adjoint problem: find  $\tilde{w} \in V$  such that

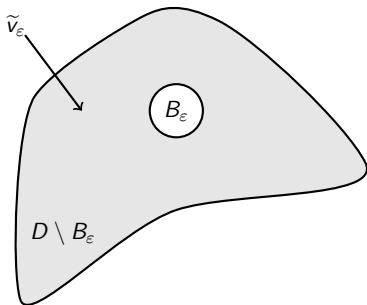
$$a_0(\tilde{w}, \varphi) = -D\mathcal{E}(\tilde{v}_0)\varphi = - \int_D \tilde{v}_0 |\tilde{v}_0|^{p-2} \varphi \, dx, \quad \forall \varphi \in V.$$

Then,

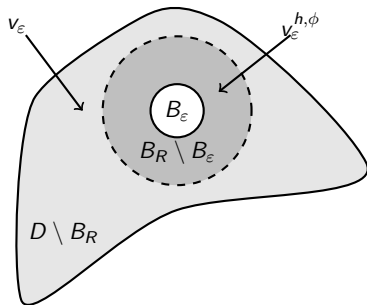
$$\mathcal{E}(\tilde{v}_\varepsilon) - \mathcal{E}(\tilde{v}_0) = \rho(\varepsilon)(\delta a(\tilde{v}_0, \tilde{w}_0) - \delta I(\tilde{w}_0)) + o(\rho(\varepsilon)).$$

Problem: our  $V = V_\varepsilon := \{v \in H^1(D \setminus B_\varepsilon) \mid v = 0 \text{ on } \partial B_\varepsilon\}$  depends on  $\varepsilon$ .

Truncation technique :



Before splitting.



After splitting.

## Proposition

*We have*

$$\tilde{v}_\varepsilon = \begin{cases} v_\varepsilon & \text{in } D \setminus B_R, \\ v_\varepsilon^{h,\phi} & \text{in } B_R \setminus B_\varepsilon. \end{cases}$$

For  $v, \varphi$  in  $V_R := H^1(D \setminus B_R)$ , we define

$$a_\varepsilon(v, \varphi) := \alpha \int_{D \setminus B_R} \nabla v \cdot \nabla \varphi \, dx + \alpha \int_{\partial B_R} \partial_n v_\varepsilon^{0, \phi} \varphi \, d\sigma + \int_{D \setminus B_R} v \varphi \, dx,$$

$$l_\varepsilon(\varphi) := \int_{D \setminus B_R} h \varphi \, dx - \alpha \int_{\partial B_R} \partial_n v_\varepsilon^{h, 0} \varphi \, d\sigma.$$

For  $v, \varphi$  in  $V_R := H^1(D \setminus B_R)$ , we define

$$a_\varepsilon(v, \varphi) := \alpha \int_{D \setminus B_R} \nabla v \cdot \nabla \varphi \, dx + \alpha \int_{\partial B_R} \partial_n v_\varepsilon^{0, \phi} \varphi \, d\sigma + \int_{D \setminus B_R} v \varphi \, dx,$$

$$l_\varepsilon(\varphi) := \int_{D \setminus B_R} h \varphi \, dx - \alpha \int_{\partial B_R} \partial_n v_\varepsilon^{h, 0} \varphi \, d\sigma.$$

Now  $V$  depends no longer on  $\varepsilon$ !

For  $v, \varphi$  in  $V_R := H^1(D \setminus B_R)$ , we define

$$a_\varepsilon(v, \varphi) := \alpha \int_{D \setminus B_R} \nabla v \cdot \nabla \varphi \, dx + \alpha \int_{\partial B_R} \partial_n v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi} \varphi \, d\sigma + \int_{D \setminus B_R} v \varphi \, dx,$$

$$l_\varepsilon(\varphi) := \int_{D \setminus B_R} h \varphi \, dx - \alpha \int_{\partial B_R} \partial_n v_\varepsilon^{h,0} \varphi \, d\sigma.$$

Now  $V$  depends no longer on  $\varepsilon$ !

We need to compute  $\delta a$  and  $\delta l$ .

$$a_\varepsilon(v, \varphi) := \alpha \int_{D \setminus B_R} \nabla v \cdot \nabla \varphi \, dx + \alpha \int_{\partial B_R} \partial_n v_\varepsilon^{0, \phi} \varphi \, d\sigma + \int_{D \setminus B_R} v \varphi \, dx,$$
$$l_\varepsilon(\varphi) := \int_{D \setminus B_R} h \varphi \, dx - \alpha \int_{\partial B_R} \partial_n v_\varepsilon^{h, 0} \varphi \, d\sigma.$$

$$a_\varepsilon(v, \varphi) := \alpha \int_{D \setminus B_R} \nabla v \cdot \nabla \varphi \, dx + \alpha \int_{\partial B_R} \partial_n v_\varepsilon^{0, \phi} \varphi \, d\sigma + \int_{D \setminus B_R} v \varphi \, dx,$$
$$l_\varepsilon(\varphi) := \int_{D \setminus B_R} h \varphi \, dx - \alpha \int_{\partial B_R} \partial_n v_\varepsilon^{h, 0} \varphi \, d\sigma.$$

### $\delta a$ and $\delta l$

$$a_\varepsilon(v, \varphi) - a_0(v, \varphi) = \alpha \int_{\partial B_R} \partial_n (v_\varepsilon^{0, \phi} - v_0^{0, \phi}) \varphi \, d\sigma,$$
$$l_\varepsilon(\varphi) - l_0(\varphi) = -\alpha \int_{\partial B_R} \partial_n (v_\varepsilon^{h, 0} - v_0^{h, 0}) \varphi \, d\sigma.$$

For  $v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi}$ :

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{ll} -\alpha \Delta v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi} + v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi} = 0 & \text{in } B_R \setminus B_\varepsilon, \\ v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi} = 0 & \text{on } \partial B_\varepsilon, \\ v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi} = \phi & \text{on } \partial B_R. \end{array} \right.$$

For  $v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi}$ :

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{ll} -\alpha \Delta v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi} + v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi} = 0 & \text{in } B_R \setminus B_\varepsilon, \\ v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi} = 0 & \text{on } \partial B_\varepsilon, \\ v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi} = \phi & \text{on } \partial B_R. \end{array} \right.$$

Proof.

- Using polar coordinates in  $\mathbb{R}^2$ , we have,

$$v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi}(r, \theta) = \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} c_n(r) e^{in\theta},$$

For  $v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi}$ :

$$\begin{cases} -\alpha \Delta v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi} + v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi} = 0 & \text{in } B_R \setminus B_\varepsilon, \\ v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi} = 0 & \text{on } \partial B_\varepsilon, \\ v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi} = \phi & \text{on } \partial B_R. \end{cases}$$

Proof.

- Using polar coordinates in  $\mathbb{R}^2$ , we have,

$$v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi}(r, \theta) = \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} c_n(r) e^{in\theta},$$

- where  $c_n$  satisfies, for all  $n$  in  $\mathbb{Z}$ , and  $0 < r \leq R$ ,

$$-\alpha r^2 c_n''(r) - \alpha r c_n'(r) + (r^2 + \alpha n^2) c_n(r) = 0.$$

For  $v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi}$ :

$$\begin{cases} -\alpha \Delta v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi} + v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi} = 0 & \text{in } B_R \setminus B_\varepsilon, \\ v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi} = 0 & \text{on } \partial B_\varepsilon, \\ v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi} = \phi & \text{on } \partial B_R. \end{cases}$$

Proof.

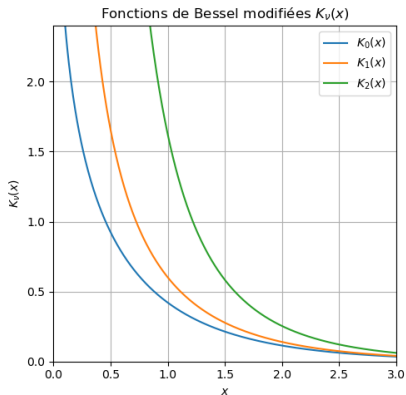
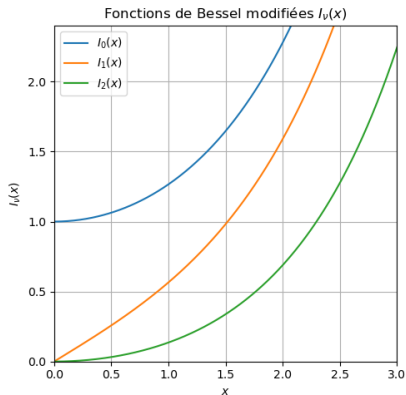
- Using polar coordinates in  $\mathbb{R}^2$ , we have,

$$v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi}(r, \theta) = \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} c_n(r) e^{in\theta},$$

- where  $c_n$  satisfies, for all  $n$  in  $\mathbb{Z}$ , and  $0 < r \leq R$ ,

$$-\alpha r^2 c_n''(r) - \alpha r c_n'(r) + (r^2 + \alpha n^2) c_n(r) = 0.$$

- We solve the equation using Bessel functions. □



## Proposition

For  $\phi$  in  $H^{1/2}(\partial B_R)$ , we set,

$$\delta v^{0,\phi}(r) := -\phi_0 \frac{I_0(\alpha^{-1/2}R)K_0(\alpha^{-1/2}r) - K_0(\alpha^{-1/2}R)I_0(\alpha^{-1/2}r)}{I_0(\alpha^{-1/2}R)^2}.$$

Then, for  $\varepsilon$  sufficiently small, we have the following asymptotic estimation,

$$v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi}(r, \theta) - v_0^{0,\phi}(r, \theta) - \frac{-1}{\ln \varepsilon} \delta v^{0,\phi}(r) = o\left(\frac{-1}{\ln \varepsilon}\right).$$

For  $a_\varepsilon(v, \varphi) - a_0(v, \varphi)$ :

Proof.

$$a_\varepsilon(v, \varphi) - a_0(v, \varphi) = \alpha \int_{\partial B_R} \partial_n(v_\varepsilon^{0,\phi} - v_0^{0,\phi}) \varphi \, d\sigma$$



## Proposition

For  $\phi$  in  $H^{1/2}(\partial B_R)$ , we define,

$$\delta a(v, w) := \alpha v(x_0)w(x_0).$$

Then, for  $\varepsilon$  sufficiently small, we have the following asymptotic estimation,  $\forall v, w \in V_R$ :

$$\left| a_\varepsilon(v, w) - a_0(v, w) - \frac{-2\pi}{\ln \varepsilon} \delta a(v, w) \right| = o\left(\frac{-1}{\ln \varepsilon}\right) \|v\|_{V_R} \|w\|_{V_R}.$$

For  $v_\varepsilon^{h,0}$ :

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{ll} -\alpha \Delta v_\varepsilon^{h,0} + v_\varepsilon^{h,0} = h & \text{in } B_R \setminus B_\varepsilon, \\ v_\varepsilon^{h,0} = 0 & \text{on } \partial B_\varepsilon, \\ v_\varepsilon^{h,0} = 0 & \text{on } \partial B_R. \end{array} \right.$$

For  $v_\varepsilon^{h,0}$ :

$$\begin{cases} -\alpha \Delta v_\varepsilon^{h,0} + v_\varepsilon^{h,0} = h & \text{in } B_R \setminus B_\varepsilon, \\ v_\varepsilon^{h,0} = 0 & \text{on } \partial B_\varepsilon, \\ v_\varepsilon^{h,0} = 0 & \text{on } \partial B_R. \end{cases}$$

Proof.

- Using polar coordinates in  $\mathbb{R}^2$ , we have,

$$v_\varepsilon^{h,0}(r, \theta) = \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} c_n(r) e^{in\theta} \quad \text{and} \quad h(r, \theta) = \sum_{n \in \mathbb{Z}} h_n(r) e^{in\theta},$$

- where  $c_n$  satisfies, for all  $n$  in  $\mathbb{Z}$  and  $0 < r \leq R$ ,

$$-\alpha r^2 c_n''(r) - \alpha r c_n'(r) + (r^2 + \alpha n^2) c_n(r) = r^2 h_n(r).$$

- We solve the equation using Bessel functions. □

## Proposition

For  $\varepsilon$  small enough, we have,

$$\mathcal{E}(K_\varepsilon) - \mathcal{E}(K) = \underbrace{4\pi\alpha \tilde{v}_0(x_0) \tilde{w}_0(x_0)}_{=G(x_0)} \frac{-1}{\ln \varepsilon} + o\left(\frac{-1}{\ln \varepsilon}\right),$$

with

$$\begin{cases} -\alpha\Delta\tilde{v}_0 + \tilde{v}_0 = \alpha\Delta f & \text{in } D, \\ \partial_n\tilde{v}_0 = 0 & \text{on } \partial D, \end{cases}$$

and

$$\begin{cases} -\alpha\Delta\tilde{w}_0 + \tilde{w}_0 = -\tilde{v}_0|\tilde{v}_0|^{p-2} & \text{in } D, \\ \partial_n\tilde{w}_0 = 0 & \text{on } \partial D. \end{cases}$$

## Question

Which pixels to keep?

## Question

Which pixels to keep?

## Answer

We have to keep the pixels  $x_0$  which minimize the product  $v_0(x_0)w_0(x_0)$ .

# Organization

- 1 Modeling
- 2 Analysis
- 3 Numerical**

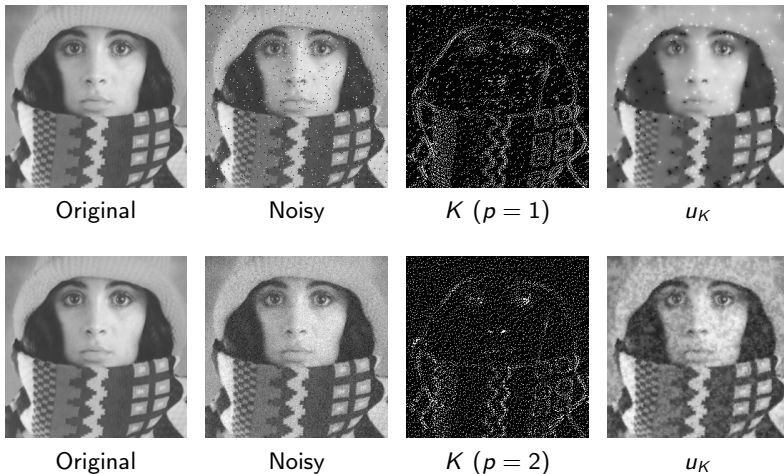


Figure: 10% of the total number of pixels.

Conclusion:

- Another operator,
- Difficulty in saving  $K$  in practice,
- Not great for Gaussian noise (there are empirical techniques).

Thank you for your attention!

- [1] Zakaria Belhachmi and Thomas Jacumin. “Adjoint method in PDE-based image compression”. In: [Asymptotic Analysis](#) (Oct. 2024), pp. 1–28. ISSN: 18758576, 09217134. DOI: 10.3233/ASY-241944.