Change detection in polarimetric SAR images using complex Wishart distributed matrices

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In surveillance it is important to be able to detect natural or man-made changes e.g. based on sequences of satellite or air borne images of the same area taken at different times, The mapping capability of synthetic aperture radar (SAR) is independent of e.g. cloud cover, and thus this technology holds a strong potential for change detection studies in remote sensing. In polarimetric synthetic aperture radar we measure the amplitude and phase of backscattered signals in four combinations of the linear horizontal and vertical receive and transmit polarizations. These signals form a complex scattering matrix, and after suitable preprocessing the outcome at each picture element (pixel) may be represented as a 3 by 3 Hermitian matrix following a complex Wishart distribution.

One approach to solving the change detection problem based on SAR images is therefore to apply suitable statistical tests in the complex Wishart distribution. We propose a set-up for a systematic solution to the (practical) problems using the likelihood ratio test statistics. We show some examples based on a time series of images with 1024 by 1024 pixels.

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