

Trust-Region Methods for Nonconvex Sparse Recovery Optimization

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Abstract—We solve the ℓ_2 - ℓ_p sparse recovery problem by transforming the objective function into an unconstrained differentiable function and apply a limited-memory trust-region method. Unlike gradient projection-type methods, which uses only the current gradient, our approach uses gradients from previous iterations to obtain a more accurate Hessian approximation. Preliminary numerical experiments with simulated compressive sensing 1D data are provided to illustrate that our proposed approach eliminates spurious solutions more effectively while improving the computational time to converge in comparison to standard approaches.

I. INTRODUCTION

Sparse signal recovery methods form a ubiquitous component of modern compressed sensing technology. Compressed sensing is essentially based on the fact that most signals and images contain only a small amount of crucial information. By intelligently discarding or ignoring unnecessary data by software or physical sensors, one can reduce the data set size while retaining sufficient information to faithfully reconstruct the original signal or image. Basically, one can design an efficient sensing or sampling scheme by capturing the useful information in a sparse signal and compressing it into a small amount of data. This leads to the need for solving a highly underdetermined inverse problem by appropriate optimization methods for recovering the signal. Much of the early mathematical work on sparse signal recovery can be found in papers such as those involving Candes, Gehr, Fowler, Marcia, Romberg, Tao, Willett, Zhang, etc., see e.g., [1], [2], [3], [4], [5], to name just a few. Much of this work was based on the use of the ℓ_1 norm in solving the resulting constrained optimization problem. Our interest here is in applying algorithms based on trust-region methods to sparse signal recovery using an ℓ_p regularization norm, $0 < p < 1$, where the objective function is nonconvex, thus extending our work in [6].

Currently, there is much interest in both image reconstruction methods from applying random projections for sparsifying image data, and in developing methods for signal recovery from compressively sensed data using physical cameras or sensors. In the first case, the random projection problem is a linear inverse problem stated as, $y = Af$, where $f \in \mathbb{R}^n$ is the true signal to recover, $A \in \mathbb{R}^{k \times n}$ is the projection matrix, with independent and identically distributed (i.i.d.) random entries, and $y \in \mathbb{R}^k$ is the observed signal. Sometimes rows of A

can be orthogonalized and normalized, see e.g., [7], [8], [9]. A theorem by Candès, Romberg and Tao [1] states that if $k \geq cm \log n$, where c is a constant and m is the number of nonzeros in f , then f is the unique solution to the convex optimization problem,

$$\min \|f\|_1 \quad \text{subject to } \|Af - y\|_2^2 < \epsilon, \quad (1)$$

for an overwhelming percentage of row vector sets for A with cardinality k . A standard way to approach solving (1) is to solve the ℓ_1 regularized convex optimization problem

$$\underset{f \in \mathbb{R}^n}{\text{minimize}} \quad \frac{1}{2} \|Af - y\|_2^2 + \tau \|f\|_1. \quad (2)$$

In this paper we replace the ℓ_1 norm by the ℓ_p norm, $0 < p < 1$, which has been shown to have advantages in recovering sparse signals in compressive sensing, see, e.g., [10].

In the compressive imaging literature, there have been efforts on applying random projection methods based on physical sensors with coded apertures, see e.g., Marcia and Willett [4]. Also, the double-disperser coded-aperture snapshot imager (DD-CASSI) [2], and the single-disperser coded-aperture snapshot imager (SD-CASSI) [5], [11], can snapshot a hyperspectral image 3D dataset, and both systems can be formulated as inverse problems for recovering sparse signals or images. In addition, Zhang, Prasad and Plemmons [12] have processed compressive sensing data obtained with the use of spatial light modulator (SLM) data encoders for 4D spectro-polarimetric data. Such data will be used in our future tests.

The paper is organized as follows. In Section II, we present the sparse recovery problem defined by the nondifferentiable p -norm regularization, and formulate the original problem as a differentiable unconstrained optimization problem. In Section III, we describe a quasi-Newton trust-region method to solve problem. Numerical results on simulated 1D sparse signal recovery data are provided to illustrate the effectiveness of the proposed method are in Section IV. Finally, there are conclusions and directions of future research in Section V.

II. PROBLEM FORMULATION

This paper concerns solving the sparse recovery problem

$$\underset{f \in \mathbb{R}^n}{\text{minimize}} \quad \frac{1}{2} \|Af - y\|_2^2 + \tau \|f\|_p^p, \quad (3)$$

and L_k is the strictly lower triangular part, U_k is the strictly upper triangular part, and D_k is the diagonal part of

$$S_k^T Y_k = L_k + D_k + U_k.$$

It is important to note that $S_k^T Y_k$ is a small matrix in the limited-memory setting, i.e., $S_k^T Y_k \in \mathbb{R}^{(k+1) \times (k+1)}$ with $k \ll n$. The compact representation for an L-BFGS matrix will be used in the trust-region method for solving (5).

B. Trust-Region Methods

Trust-region methods are one of two important classes of methods for unconstrained optimization (see, e.g., [27], [28]). Basic trust-region methods generate a sequence of iterates $\{x_k\}$ by the relation $x_{k+1} = x_k + p_k$, where p_k is an approximate solution to the *trust-region subproblem* given by

$$p_k = \arg \min_{p \in \mathbb{R}^n} q_k(p) \triangleq g_k^T p + \frac{1}{2} p^T B_k p \quad (7)$$

subject to $\|p\|_2 \leq \delta_k$,

where $g_k \triangleq \nabla \Phi(x_k)$, B_k is an approximation to $\nabla^2 \Phi(x_k)$, and δ_k is a given positive constant. At the end of each trust-region iteration, the *trust-region radius* δ_k is used to update δ_{k+1} ; depending on how well the quadratic model predicted actual decreases in the function $\Psi(x)$ from x_k to x_{k+1} , the trust-region radius is possibly increased or decreased for the next iteration. To solve (5), B_k is taken to be an L-BFGS matrix.

Generally speaking, computing an approximate solution to the trust-region subproblem is the computational bottleneck for most trust-region methods. While trust-region subproblems can be defined using any norm, there is an important advantage in using the Euclidean two-norm: There are well-known optimality conditions for a global solution to (7) (see [29], [30]). These optimality conditions allow one to monitor how close iterates for solving the subproblem are to a global solution; they have also inspired algorithms that solve (7) by explicitly trying to satisfy the optimality conditions. There are two important advantages in taking B_k to be an L-BFGS matrix: (i) the trust-region subproblem is convex and (ii) B_k has structure that can be exploited to solve (7) efficiently.

C. Solving the Trust-Region Subproblem

To solve the trust-region subproblem when B_k is an L-BFGS matrix, we use the method described in [6]. This method solves each trust-region subproblem to high accuracy using the optimality conditions for a global solution to (7). Tailored to the case when B_k is positive definite, the optimality conditions in [29] and [30] are given in the following theorem:

Theorem 1. *Let δ be a positive constant. A vector p^* is the unique global solution of the trust-region subproblem (7) if and only if $\|p^*\|_2 \leq \delta$ and there exists a unique $\sigma^* \geq 0$ such that*

$$(B + \sigma^* I)p^* = -g \quad \text{and} \quad \sigma^*(\delta - \|p^*\|_2) = 0. \quad (8)$$

We begin by transforming the optimality equations (8) using the spectral decomposition of B_k . As shown in [6], the spectral

decomposition of B_k can be obtained efficiently using the compact formulation of B_k . We briefly review this here; for more details, see [6]. If $B_k = B_0 + \Psi M \Psi^T$ and $\Psi = QR$ is the “thin” QR factorization of Ψ , then

$$B_k = \gamma I + Q R M R^T Q^T,$$

when $B_0 = \gamma I$ and $\gamma > 0$. Since $R M R^T$ is a small $2k \times 2k$ matrix, its spectral decomposition $V \hat{\Lambda} V^T$ can be quickly computed. Then, letting $P \triangleq [QV \quad (QV)^\perp] \in \mathbb{R}^{n \times n}$ such that $P^T P = P P^T = I$, the spectral decomposition of B_k is given by

$$B_k = P \Lambda P^T, \quad \text{where } \Lambda \triangleq \begin{bmatrix} \Lambda_1 & 0 \\ 0 & \Lambda_2 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} \hat{\Lambda} + \gamma I & 0 \\ 0 & \gamma I \end{bmatrix}, \quad (9)$$

where $\Lambda_1 \in \mathbb{R}^{2k \times 2k}$, and $\Lambda_2 = \gamma I_{n-2k}$. Using the spectral decomposition of B_k , the optimality equations (8) become

$$(\Lambda + \sigma^* I)v^* = -\tilde{g} \quad (10)$$

$$\sigma^*(\|v^*\|_2 - \delta) = 0 \quad (11)$$

$$\|v^*\|_2 \leq \delta, \quad (12)$$

for some scalar $\sigma^* \geq 0$ and $v^* = P^T p^*$, where p^* is the global solution to (7).

For practical considerations, it is important to order the eigenvalues found in $\hat{\Lambda}$ (and their associated eigenvectors in QU) in increasing order. In [6], it is shown how to compute the solution v^* to (10) and p^* the solution to (7) *by formula* once σ^* is known. In the worst-case scenario, σ^* can be efficiently found using Newton’s method applied to a special function such that starting from $\sigma^{(0)} = 0$ the Newton iterates $\{\sigma^{(i)}\}$ converge monotonically and quadratically to σ^* ; in the other scenario, $\sigma^* = 0$ is optimal. (For details regarding the Newton iteration to find σ^* and then computing p^* see [6].)

Algorithm 1 details the quasi-Newton trust-region method. For details on the subproblem solver, see [6, Algorithm 1].

ALGORITHM 1: TrustSpa- ℓ_p

Define parameters: m , $0 < \tau_1 < 0.5$, $0 < \varepsilon$;

Initialize $x_0 \in \mathbb{R}^n$ and compute $g_0 = \nabla \Phi(x_0)$;

Let $k = 0$;

while not converged

if $\|g_k\|_2 \leq \varepsilon$ **then done**

 Find p_k that solves (7) using [6, Algorithm 1];

 Compute $\rho_k = (\Psi(x_k + p_k) - \Psi(x_k))/q_k(p_k)$;

 Compute g_{k+1} and update B_{k+1} ;

if $\rho_k \geq \tau_1$ **then**

$x_{k+1} = x_k + p_k$;

else

$x_{k+1} = x_k$;

end if

 Compute trust-region radius δ_{k+1} ;

$k \leftarrow k + 1$;

end while

IV. NUMERICAL RESULTS

We demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed method, called TrustSpa- ℓ_p , by reconstructing a sparse signal (in the canonical basis) of size 4,096 with 160 randomly assigned nonzeros with maximum amplitude ± 1 (see Fig. 1(a)). The system matrix (A) is randomly generated with samples from a standard Gaussian distribution, which linearly projects the true signal (f^*) to the low-dimensional observations y (see Fig. 1(b)). These observations are corrupted by 5% of Gaussian noise, where the noise level (%) = $100 \cdot \|Af^* - y\|_2 / \|y\|_2$.

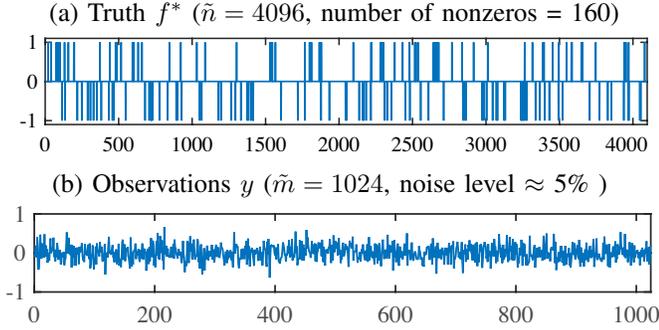


Fig. 1. Experimental setup: (a) True signal f^* of size 4,096 with $160 \pm$ spikes, (b) low-dimensional observations y with 5% Gaussian noise. Noise level (%) = $100 \cdot \|Af^* - y\|_2 / \|y\|_2$.

We implemented the proposed TrustSpa- ℓ_p method in MATLAB R2015a using a PC with Intel Core i7 2.8GHz processor with 16GB memory. The results are compared with the widely-used Gradient Projection for Sparse Reconstruction (GPSR) method [31] without the debiasing option and the more recent TrustSpa- ℓ_1 method [6]. In these experiments, all the methods are initialized at the same starting point, i.e., zero and terminate if the relative objective values do not significantly change, i.e., $|\Phi(x_{k+1}) - \Phi(x_k)| / |\Phi(x_k)| \leq 10^{-8}$. The regularization parameter τ in (3) is tuned for the minimum mean-squared error (MSE = $\frac{1}{n} \|\hat{f} - f^*\|_2^2$, where \hat{f} is an estimate of f^*).

Analysis. Using the compressive measurements y (see Fig. 1(b)), a single-trial optimal reconstruction using the proposed TrustSpa- ℓ_p for $p = 0.7$ is given by Fig. 2(a). The TrustSpa- ℓ_p reconstruction, $\hat{f}_{\text{TS-}\ell_p}$, has MSE 1.403×10^{-5} , while the TrustSpa- ℓ_1 , $\hat{f}_{\text{TS-}\ell_1}$ (see Fig. 2(c) for a zoomed region of $\hat{f}_{\text{TS-}\ell_1}$) has MSE 9.347×10^{-5} , and the GPSR reconstruction (see [6] for the reconstruction) has MSE 1.624×10^{-4} . Specifically, notice that the $\hat{f}_{\text{TS-}\ell_1}$ has more spurious artifacts (shown in black in Fig. 2(c)) than the artifacts in $\hat{f}_{\text{TS-}\ell_p}$ (see black spikes in Fig. 2(b)). Quantitatively, $\hat{f}_{\text{TS-}\ell_p}$ has only 263 nonzero components greater than 10^{-6} in absolute value, while $\hat{f}_{\text{TS-}\ell_1}$ has 579 nonzeros.

In addition, we analyzed the discrepancy between the true and approximated amplitudes from each method using magnitude error plots (see Fig. 3). In particular, the magnitude of error of the $\hat{f}_{\text{TS-}\ell_p}$ is much closer to zero (see the red color spikes in Fig. 3(a) and (b)) than the magnitude of error of the GPSR reconstruction \hat{f}_{GPSR} (see blue spikes in Fig. 3(a)) and

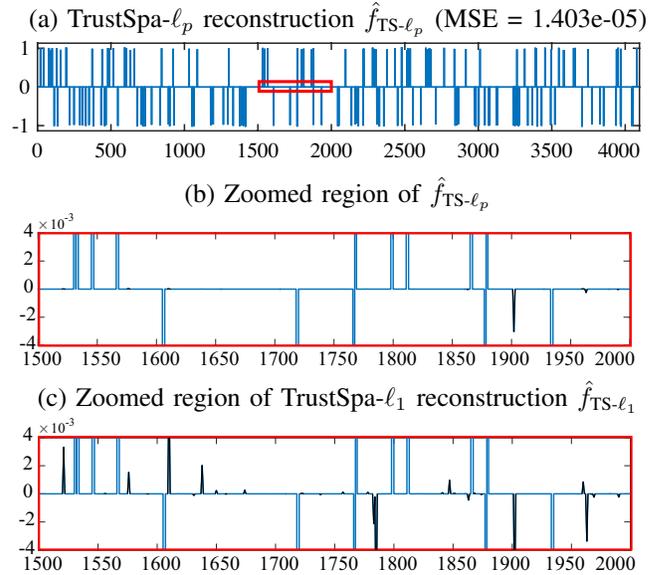


Fig. 2. (a) TrustSpa- ℓ_p reconstruction, $\hat{f}_{\text{TS-}\ell_p}$, with $p = 0.7$, (b) a zoomed region of $\hat{f}_{\text{TS-}\ell_p}$, (c) the corresponding zoomed region of TrustSpa- ℓ_1 reconstruction, $\hat{f}_{\text{TS-}\ell_1}$. MSE = $(1/n) \|\hat{f} - f^*\|_2^2$. Note the presence of artifacts (represented in black spikes) in the TrustSpa- ℓ_1 reconstruction that are rarely present in the TrustSpa- ℓ_p reconstruction.

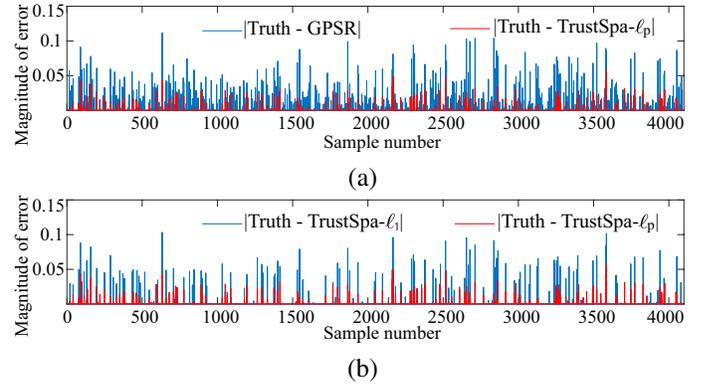


Fig. 3. Magnitude of error between the true signal f^* and reconstructions: (a) magnitude of error of the GPSR reconstruction \hat{f}_{GPSR} vs. magnitude of error of $\hat{f}_{\text{TS-}\ell_p}$, (b) magnitude of error of $\hat{f}_{\text{TS-}\ell_1}$ vs. magnitude of error of $\hat{f}_{\text{TS-}\ell_p}$. Note the lower error for the proposed TrustSpa- ℓ_p when $p = 0.7$ (represented in red), whose values are more closer to zero.

the $\hat{f}_{\text{TS-}\ell_1}$ (see blue spikes in Fig. 3(b)). These results indicate that the TrustSpa- ℓ_p method better approximates the truth in terms of signal amplitude.

Furthermore, ten-trial average MSE values and average computational times for each method are reported in Table I, showing that the above single trial claims are robust with different Gaussian noise realizations.

Discussion. In our experience with this 5% Gaussian noise corrupted dataset, there is no any significant improvement in MSE value for p -values less than 0.7. Therefore, we have used the TrustSpa- ℓ_p reconstruction with $p = 0.7$ as a representative for the TrustSpa- ℓ_p method.

TABLE I
RECONSTRUCTION MSE AND COMPUTATIONAL TIME FOR THE RESULTS
AVERAGED OVER TEN-TRIALS. MSE = $(1/n)\|\hat{f} - f^*\|_2^2$.

Method	Ten-trial average	
	MSE	Time (seconds)
GPSR	1.758×10^{-4}	4.45
TrustSpa- ℓ_1	9.827×10^{-5}	3.52
TrustSpa- ℓ_p	1.791×10^{-5}	1.57

V. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In this paper, we proposed a quasi-Newton trust-region method for solving a non-convex penalized sparsity recovery problem. We formulate the minimization problem as a smooth unconstrained optimization problem using a change of variables. We bridge the commonly-used convex ℓ_1 norm with the ℓ_0 quasi-norm using a non-convex ℓ_p norm. Numerical results show that the proposed TrustSpa- ℓ_p approach eliminates spurious solutions more effectively than using an ℓ_1 -regularization term. Furthermore, the proposed method converges faster over the 10-trial average.

Future work includes applications of our method to sparse recovery in higher dimensional data. In particular, we plan extensions of the tests from 1D in the current paper (sparse signal recovery) to 2D images, 3D hyperspectral datacubes, and 4D spectro-polarimetric data. Some real data developed for our work in [4], [5], [7], [8], [9], [12], [32] will be used.

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