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Description

[0001] The present invention relates to coding schemes for two-dimensionally sampled information signals such as videos or still pictures.

[0002] In image and video coding, the pictures or particular sets of sample arrays for the pictures are usually decomposed into blocks, which are associated with particular coding parameters. The pictures usually consist of multiple sample arrays. In addition, a picture may also be associated with additional auxiliary samples arrays, which may, for example, specify transparency information or depth maps. The sample arrays of a picture (including auxiliary sample arrays) can be grouped into one or more so-called plane groups, where each plane group consists of one or more sample arrays. The plane groups of a picture can be coded independently or, if the picture is associated with more than one plane group, with prediction from other plane groups of the same picture. Each plane group is usually decomposed into blocks. The blocks (or the corresponding blocks of sample arrays) are predicted by either inter-picture prediction or intra-picture prediction. The blocks can have different sizes and can be either quadratic or rectangular. The partitioning of a picture into blocks can be either fixed by the syntax, or it can be (at least partly) signaled inside the bitstream. Often syntax elements are transmitted that signal the subdivision for blocks of predefined sizes. Such syntax elements may specify whether and how a block is subdivided into smaller blocks and associated coding parameters, e.g. for the purpose of prediction. For all samples of a block (or the corresponding blocks of sample arrays) the decoding of the associated coding parameters is specified in a certain way. In the example, all samples in a block are predicted using the same set of prediction parameters, such as reference indices (identifying a reference picture in the set of already coded pictures), motion parameters (specifying a measure for the movement of a blocks between a reference picture and the current picture), parameters for specifying the interpolation filter, intra prediction modes, etc. The motion parameters can be represented by displacement vectors with a horizontal and vertical component or by higher order motion parameters such as affine motion parameters consisting of six components. It is also possible that more than one set of particular prediction parameters (such as reference indices and motion parameters) are associated with a single block. In that case, for each set of these particular prediction parameters, a single intermediate prediction signal for the block (or the corresponding blocks of sample arrays) is generated, and the final prediction signal is build by a combination including superimposing the intermediate prediction signals. The corresponding weighting parameters and potentially also a constant offset (which is added to the weighted sum) can either be fixed for a picture, or a reference picture, or a set of reference pictures, or they can be included in the set of prediction parameters for the

corresponding block. The difference between the original blocks (or the corresponding blocks of sample arrays) and their prediction signals, also referred to as the residual signal, is usually transformed and quantized. Often, a two-dimensional transform is applied to the residual signal (or the corresponding sample arrays for the residual block). For transform coding, the blocks (or the corresponding blocks of sample arrays), for which a particular set of prediction parameters has been used, can be further split before applying the transform. The transform blocks can be equal to or smaller than the blocks that are used for prediction. It is also possible that a transform block includes more than one of the blocks that are used for prediction. Different transform blocks can have different sizes and the transform blocks can represent quadratic or rectangular blocks. After transform, the resulting transform coefficients are quantized and so-called transform coefficient levels are obtained. The transform coefficient levels as well as the prediction parameters and, if present, the subdivision information is entropy coded.

[0003] In image and video coding standards, the possibilities for sub-dividing a picture (or a plane group) into blocks that are provided by the syntax are very limited. Usually, it can only be specified whether and (potentially how) a block of a predefined size can be sub-divided into smaller blocks. As an example, the largest block size in H.264 is 16x16. The 16x16 blocks are also referred to as macroblocks and each picture is partitioned into macroblocks in a first step. For each 16x16 macroblock, it can be signaled whether it is coded as 16x16 block, or as two 16x8 blocks, or as two 8x16 blocks, or as four 8x8 blocks. If a 16x16 block is sub-divided into four 8x8 block, each of these 8x8 blocks can be either coded as one 8x8 block, or as two 8x4 blocks, or as two 4x8 blocks, or as four 4x4 blocks. The small set of possibilities for specifying the partitioning into blocks in state-of-the-art image and video coding standards has the advantage that the side information rate for signaling the sub-division information can be kept small, but it has the disadvantage that the bit rate required for transmitting the prediction parameters for the blocks can become significant as explained in the following. The side information rate for signaling the prediction information does usually represent a significant amount of the overall bit rate for a block. And the coding efficiency could be increased when this side information is reduced, which, for instance, could be achieved by using larger block sizes. Real images or pictures of a video sequence consist of arbitrarily shaped objects with specific properties. As an example, such objects or parts of the objects are characterized by a unique texture or a unique motion. And usually, the same set of prediction parameters can be applied for such an object or part of an object. But the object boundaries usually don't coincide with the possible block boundaries for large prediction blocks (e.g., 16x16 macroblocks in H.264).

[0004] An encoder usually determines the sub-division (among the limited set of possibilities) that results in the

minimum of a particular rate-distortion cost measure. For arbitrarily shaped objects this can result in a large number of small blocks. And since each of these small blocks is associated with a set of prediction parameters, which need to be transmitted, the side information rate can become a significant part of the overall bit rate. But since several of the small blocks still represent areas of the same object or part of an object, the prediction parameters for a number of the obtained blocks are the same or very similar.

[0005] That is, the sub-division or tiling of a picture into smaller portions or tiles or blocks substantially influences the coding efficiency and coding complexity. As outlined above, a sub-division of a picture into a higher number of smaller blocks enables a spatial finer setting of the coding parameters, whereby enabling a better adaptivity of these coding parameters to the picture/video material. On the other hand, setting the coding parameters at a finer granularity poses a higher burden onto the amount of side information necessary in order to inform the decoder on the necessary settings. Even further, it should be noted that any freedom for the encoder to (further) sub-divide the picture/video spatially into blocks tremendously increases the amount of possible coding parameter settings and thereby generally renders the search for the coding parameter setting leading to the best rate/distortion compromise even more difficult.

[0006] WO 2008/127597 A2 describes a context dependent merging for SKIP-DIRECT modes for video encoding and decoding. This document describes the advantages resulting from using a merge flag in order to merge partitions resulting from a tree-structured partitioning of pictures. The document seeks to optimize the combination of the merging technique with the usage of SKIP and DIRECT modes which are considered as involving an implicit merging operation. To this end, document D1 suggests the following procedure in order to encode a certain block. Firstly, it is checked as to whether any block is already merged to the current block by way of the SKIP/DIRECT mode. If yes, it is checked as to whether there is any possible block to be merged to the current block and if this is the case, a merge/no-merge flag is coded. If there are more than one possible blocks, a merge direction is coded, too. By this measure, SKIP/DIRECT modes are efficiently co-used with merge indicators.

[0007] XP 10851189 describes leaf merging in quad-tree motion models and suggests allowing merging in leaf blocks with immediate neighboring leaves of larger size or of the same size but with a different parent. In particular, it is described that for a leaf block a set of possible merge targets is determined. If same is empty then nothing is done, but otherwise a binary merge flag indicates whether or not any of the merge targets is selected. The merge flag is coded using one or two contexts maintained by an adaptive binary arithmetic coder, where the selected context depends on whether any of the leaf's neighbors have already been coded as merged. If the

leaf is to be merged, 0, 1 or 2 bits are sent to identify the specific merge target out of the set of possible merge targets. No bits are required if there is only one possible merge target, while 2 bits are required if the number of possible merge targets exceeds two.

[0008] WO 2008/156548 A1 describes a multi-pass video syntax structure for slice data. In the embodiment of Figs. 6 and 7 three passes are used. In the first pass, macroblock and subblock coding modes are transmitted for each macroblock. In the second pass, macroblock and sub-block merging syntax is explicitly or implicitly coded based on the mode information from a casual and or non-casual neighborhood with respect to the current macroblock. In a third pass, motion data is explicitly or implicitly coded conditioned on macroblock and sub-block modes and macroblock and sub-block merging syntax from casual and/or non-casual neighborhood and residual coding.

[0009] US20080310504 describes technique for scanning coefficients of video blocks. In particular, the techniques of this disclosure adapt a scan order used to scan a two-dimensional block of coefficients into a one-dimensional coefficient vector based on statistics associated with one or more previously coded blocks. For example, statistics that indicate the likelihood that a given coefficient value in each position of a two-dimensional block is zero or non-zero may be collected for one or more previously coded blocks. At some point, an adjustment to the scan order can be made in order to better ensure that non-zero coefficients are grouped together near the front of the one-dimensional coefficient vector, which can improve the effectiveness of entropy coding. The collection of statistics and adjustment of scan order may be made separately for each possible prediction mode.

[0010] It is an object to provide a coding scheme for coding an array of information samples representing a spatially sampled two-dimensional information signal, such as, but not restricted to, pictures of a video or still pictures, which enables to achieve a better compromise between encoding complexity and achievable rate distortion ratio, and/or to achieve a better rate distortion ratio.

[0011] This object is achieved by a decoder according to claim 1, a decoding method according to claim 6 and a computer readable digital storage medium according to claim 7.

[0012] Preferred embodiments of the present invention are described in the following with respect to the following Figs., among which

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| 50 | Fig. 1 | shows a block diagram of an encoder according to an embodiment of the present application; |
| 55 | Fig. 2 | shows a block diagram of a decoder according to an embodiment of the present application; |

Figs. 3a-c	schematically show an illustrative example for a quadtree sub-division, wherein Fig. 3a shows a first hierarchy level, Fig. 3b shows a second hierarchy level and Fig. 3c shows a third hierarchy level;	5	Fig. 12c and 12d	schematically illustrate a subtree structure in order to illustrate the inheritance scheme with adoption and prediction, respectively, in accordance with embodiments;
Fig. 4	schematically shows a tree structure for the illustrative quadtree sub-division of Figs. 3a to 3c according to an embodiment;	10	Fig. 13	shows a flow chart showing the steps performed by an encoder realizing an inheritance scheme in accordance with an embodiment;
Figs. 5a,b	schematically illustrate the quadtree sub-division of Figs. 3a to 3c and the tree structure with indices indexing the individual leaf blocks;	15	Fig. 14a and 14b	show a primary sub-division and a subordinate sub-division in order to illustrate a possibility to implement an inheritance scheme in connection with inter-prediction in accordance with an embodiment;
Figs. 6a,b	schematically show binary strings or sequences of flags representing the tree structure of Fig. 4 and the quadtree sub-division of Fig. 3a to 3c, respectively in accordance with different embodiments;	20	Fig. 15	shows a block diagram illustrating a decoding process in connection with the inheritance scheme in accordance with an embodiment;
Fig. 7	shows a flow chart showing the steps performed by a data stream extractor in accordance with an embodiment;	25	Fig. 17	shows a block diagram of a decoder according to an embodiment;
Fig. 8	shows a flow chart illustrating the functionality of a data stream extractor in accordance with a further embodiment;	30	Fig. 18a-c	show a schematic diagrams illustrating different possibilities of sub-divisions in accordance with further embodiments;
Fig. 9a, b	show schematic diagrams of illustrative quadtree sub-divisions with neighboring candidate blocks for a predetermined block being highlighted in accordance with an embodiment;	35	Fig. 19	shows a block diagram of an encoder according to an embodiment;
Fig. 10	shows a flow chart of a functionality of a data stream extractor in accordance with a further embodiment;	40	Fig. 20	shows a block diagram of a decoder according to a further embodiment; and
Fig. 11	schematically shows a composition of a picture out of planes and plane groups and illustrates a coding using inter plane adaptation/prediction in accordance with an embodiment;	45	Fig. 21	shows a block diagram of an encoder according to a further embodiment.
Fig. 12a and 12b	schematically illustrate a subtree structure and the corresponding sub-division in order to illustrate the inheritance scheme in accordance with an embodiment;	50	[0013] In the following description of the Figs., elements occurring in several of these Figs. are indicated by common reference numbers and a repeated explanation of these elements is avoided. Rather, explanations with respect to an element presented within one Fig. shall also apply to other Figs. in which the respective element occurs as long as the explanation presented with these other Figs. indicate deviations therefrom. [0014] Further, the following description starts with embodiments of an encoder and decoder which are explained with respect to Figs. 1 to 11. The embodiments described with respect to these Figs. combine many aspects of the present application which, however, would also be advantageous if implemented individually within a coding scheme and accordingly, with respect to the subsequent Figs., embodiments are briefly discussed which exploit just-mentioned aspects individually with	
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each of these embodiments representing an abstraction of the embodiments described with respect to Figs. 1 and 11 in a different sense.

[0015] Fig. 1 shows an encoder according to an embodiment of the present invention. The encoder 10 of Fig. 1 comprises a predictor 12, a residual precoder 14, a residual reconstructor 16, a data stream inserter 18 and a block divider 20. The encoder 10 is for coding a temporal spatially sampled information signal into a data stream 22. The temporal spatially sampled information signal may be, for example, a video, i.e., a sequence of pictures. Each picture represents an array of image samples. Other examples of temporal spatially information signals comprise, for example, depth images captured by, for example, time-of-light cameras. Further, it should be noted that a spatially sampled information signal may comprise more than one array per frame or time stamp such as in the case of a color video which comprises, for example, an array of luma samples along with two arrays of chroma samples per frame. It may also be possible that the temporal sampling rate for the different components of the information signal, i.e., luma and chroma may be different. The same applies to the spatial resolution. A video may also be accompanied by further spatially sampled information such as depth or transparency information. The following description, however, will focus on the processing of one of these arrays for the sake of a better understanding of the main issues of the present application first with then turning to the handling of more than one plane.

[0016] The encoder 10 of Fig. 1 is configured to create the data stream 22 such that the syntax elements of the data stream 22 describe the pictures in a granularity lying between whole pictures and individual image samples. To this end, the divider 20 is configured to sub-divide each picture 24 into simply connected regions of different sizes 26. In the following these regions will simply be called blocks or sub-regions 26.

[0017] As will be outlined in more detail below, the divider 20 uses a multi-tree sub-division in order to sub-divide the picture 24 into the blocks 26 of different sizes. To be even more precise, the specific embodiments outlined below with respect to Figs. 1 to 11 mostly use a quadtree sub-division. As will also be explained in more detail below, the divider 20 may, internally, comprise a concatenation of a sub-divider 28 for sub-dividing the pictures 24 into the just-mentioned blocks 26 followed by a merger 30 which enables combining groups of these blocks 26 in order to obtain an effective sub-division or granularity which lies between the non-sub-division of the pictures 24 and the sub-division defined by sub-divider 28.

[0018] As illustrated by dashed lines in Fig. 1, the predictor 12, the residual precoder 14, the residual reconstructor 16 and the data stream inserter 18 operate on picture sub-divisions defined by divider 20. For example, as will be outlined in more detail below, predictor 12 uses a prediction sub-division defined by divider 20 in order

to determine for the individual sub-regions of the prediction sub-division as to whether the respective sub-region should be subject to intra picture prediction or inter picture prediction with setting the corresponding prediction parameters for the respective sub-region in accordance with the chosen prediction mode.

[0019] The residual pre-coder 14, in turn, may use a residual sub-division of the pictures 24 in order to encode the residual of the prediction of the pictures 24 provided by predictor 12. As the residual reconstructor 16 reconstructs the residual from the syntax elements output by residual pre-coder 14, residual reconstructor 16 also operates on the just-mentioned residual sub-division. The data stream inserter 18 may exploit the divisions just-mentioned, i.e., the prediction and residual sub-divisions, in order to determine insertion orders and neighborhoods among the syntax elements for the insertion of the syntax elements output by residual pre-coder 14 and predictor 12 into the data stream 22 by means of, for example, entropy encoding.

[0020] As shown in Fig. 1, encoder 10 comprises an input 32 where the original information signal enters encoder 10. A subtractor 34, the residual pre-coder 14 and the data stream inserter 18 are connected in series in the order mentioned between input 32 and the output of data stream inserter 18 at which the coded data stream 22 is output. Subtractor 34 and residual precoder 14 are part of a prediction loop which is closed by the residual constructor 16, an adder 36 and predictor 12 which are connected in series in the order mentioned between the output of residual precoder 14 and the inverting input of subtractor 34. The output of predictor 12 is also connected to a further input of adder 36. Additionally, predictor 12 comprises an input directly connected to input 32 and may comprise an even further input also connected to the output of adder 36 via an optional in-loop filter 38. Further, predictor 12 generates side information during operation and, therefore, an output of predictor 12 is also coupled to data stream inserter 18. Similarly, divider 20 comprises an output which is connected to another input of data stream inserter 18.

[0021] Having described the structure of encoder 10, the mode of operation is described in more detail in the following.

[0022] As described above, divider 20 decides for each picture 24 how to sub-divide same into sub-regions 26. In accordance with a sub-division of the picture 24 to be used for prediction, predictor 12 decides for each sub-region corresponding to this sub-division, how to predict the respective sub-region. Predictor 12 outputs the prediction of the sub-region to the inverting input of subtractor 34 and to the further input of adder 36 and outputs prediction information reflecting the way how predictor 12 obtained this prediction from previously encoded portions of the video, to data stream inserter 18.

[0023] At the output of subtractor 34, the prediction residual is thus obtained wherein residual pre-coder 14 processes this prediction residual in accordance with a

residual sub-division also prescribed by divider 20. As described in further detail below with respect to Figs. 3 to 10, the residual sub-division of picture 24 used by residual precoder 14 may be related to the prediction sub-division used by predictor 12 such that each prediction sub-region is adopted as residual sub-region or further sub-divided into smaller residual sub-regions. However, totally independent prediction and residual sub-divisions would also be possible.

[0024] Residual precoder 14 subjects each residual sub-region to a transformation from spatial to spectral domain by a two-dimensional transform followed by, or inherently involving, a quantization of the resulting transform coefficients of the resulting transform blocks whereby distortion results from the quantization noise. The data stream inserter 18 may, for example, losslessly encode syntax elements describing the afore-mentioned transform coefficients into the data stream 22 by use of, for example, entropy encoding. #

[0025] The residual reconstructor 16, in turn, reconverts, by use of a re-quantization followed by a re-transformation, the transform coefficients into a residual signal wherein the residual signal is combined within adder 36 with the prediction used by subtractor 34 for obtaining the prediction residual, thereby obtaining a reconstructed portion or subregion of a current picture at the output of adder 36. Predictor 12 may use the reconstructed picture subregion for intra prediction directly, that is for predicting a certain prediction sub-region by extrapolation from previously reconstructed prediction sub-regions in the neighborhood. However, an intra prediction performed within the spectral domain by predicting the spectrum of the current subregion from that of a neighboring one, directly would theoretically also be possible.

[0026] For inter prediction, predictor 12 may use previously encoded and reconstructed pictures in a version according to which same have been filtered by an optional in-loop filter 38. In-loop filter 38 may, for example, comprise a de-blocking filter and/or an adaptive filter having a transfer function adapted to advantageously form the quantization noise mentioned before.

[0027] Predictor 12 chooses the prediction parameters revealing the way of predicting a certain prediction sub-region by use of a comparison with the original samples within picture 24.

[0028] The prediction parameters may, as outlined in more detail below, comprise for each prediction sub-region an indication of the prediction mode, such as intra picture prediction and inter picture prediction. In case of intra picture prediction, the prediction parameters may also comprise an indication of an angle along which edges within the prediction sub-region to be intra predicted mainly extend, and in case of inter picture prediction, motion vectors, motion picture indices and, eventually, higher order motion transformation parameters and, in case of both intra and/or inter picture prediction, optional filter information for filtering the reconstructed image samples based on which the current prediction sub-re-

gion is predicted.

[0029] As will be outlined in more detail below, the aforementioned sub-divisions defined by a divider 20 substantially influence the rate/distortion ratio maximally achievable by residual precoder 14, predictor 12 and data stream inserter 18. In case of a too fine sub-division, the prediction parameters 40 output by predictor 12 to be inserted into data stream 22 necessitate a too large coding rate although the prediction obtained by predictor 12 might be better and the residual signal to be coded by residual precoder 14 might be smaller so that same might be coded by less bits. In case, of a too coarse sub-division, the opposite applies. Further, the just-mentioned thought also applies for the residual sub-division in a similar manner: a transformation of a picture using a finer granularity of the individual transformation blocks leads to a lower complexity for computing the transformations and an increased spatial resolution of the resulting transformation. That is, smaller residual sub-regions enable the spectral distribution of the content within individual residual sub-regions to be more consistent. However, the spectral resolution is reduced and the ratio between significant and insignificant, i.e. quantized to zero, coefficients gets worse. That is, the granularity of the transform should be adapted to the picture content locally. Additionally, independent from the positive effect of a finer granularity, a finer granularity regularly increases the amount of side information necessary in order to indicate the subdivision chosen to the decoder. As will be outlined in more detail below, the embodiments described below provide the encoder 10 with the ability to adapt the sub-divisions very effectively to the content of the information signal to be encoded and to signal the sub-divisions to be used to the decoding side by instructing the data stream inserter 18 to insert the sub-division information into the coded data stream 22. Details are presented below.

[0030] However, before defining the sub-division of divider 20 in more detail, a decoder in accordance with an embodiment of the present application is described in more detail with respect to Fig. 2.

[0031] The decoder of Fig. 2 is indicated by reference sign 100 and comprises an extractor 102, a divider 104, a residual reconstructor 106, an adder 108, a predictor 110, an optional in-loop filter 112 and an optional post-filter 114. The extractor 102 receives the coded data stream at an input 116 of decoder 100 and extracts from the coded data stream sub-division information 118, prediction parameters 120 and residual data 122 which the extractor 102 outputs to picture divider 104, predictor 110 and residual reconstructor 106, respectively. Residual reconstructor 106 has an output connected to a first input of adder 108. The other input of adder 108 and the output thereof are connected into a prediction loop into which the optional in-loop filter 112 and predictor 110 are connected in series in the order mentioned with a by-pass path leading from the output of adder 108 to predictor 110 directly similar to the above-mentioned connections

between adder 36 and predictor 12 in Fig. 1, namely one for intra picture prediction and the other one for inter picture prediction. Either the output of adder 108 or the output of in-loop filter 112 may be connected to an output 124 of decoder 100 where the reconstructed information signal is output to a reproduction device, for example. An optional post-filter 114 may be connected into the path leading to output 124 in order to improve the visual quality of visual impression of the reconstructed signal at output 124.

[0032] Generally speaking, the residual reconstructor 106, the adder 108 and predictor 110 act like elements 16, 36 and 12 in Fig. 1. In other words, same emulate the operation of the afore-mentioned elements of Fig. 1. To this end, residual reconstructor 106 and predictor 110 are controlled by the prediction parameters 120 and the sub-division prescribed by picture divider 104 in accordance with a sub-division information 118 from extractor 102, respectively, in order to predict the prediction sub-regions the same way as predictor 12 did or decided to do, and to retransform the transform coefficients received at the same granularity as residual precoder 14 did. The picture divider 104, in turn, rebuilds the sub-divisions chosen by divider 20 of Fig. 1 in a synchronized way by relying on the sub-division information 118. The extractor may use, in turn, the subdivision information in order to control the data extraction such as in terms of context selection, neighborhood determination, probability estimation, parsing the syntax of the data stream etc.

[0033] Several deviations may be performed on the above embodiments. Some are mentioned within the following detailed description with respect to the sub-division performed by sub-divider 28 and the merging performed by merger 30 and others are described with respect to the subsequent Figs. 12 to 16. In the absence of any obstacles, all these deviations may be individually or in subsets applied to the afore-mentioned description of Fig. 1 and Fig. 2, respectively. For example, dividers 20 and 104 may not determine a prediction sub-division and residual sub-division per picture only. Rather, they may also determine a filter sub-division for the optional in-loop filter 38 and 112, respectively, Either independent from or dependent from the other sub-divisions for prediction or residual coding, respectively. Moreover, a determination of the sub-division or sub-divisions by these elements may not be performed on a frame by frame basis. Rather, a sub-division or sub-divisions determined for a certain frame may be reused or adopted for a certain number of following frames with merely then transferring a new sub-division.

[0034] In providing further details regarding the division of the pictures into sub-regions, the following description firstly focuses on the sub-division part which sub-divider 28 and 104a assume responsibility for. Then the merging process which merger 30 and merger 104b assume responsibility for, is described. Lastly, inter plane adaptation/prediction is described.

[0035] The way, sub-divider 28 and 104a divide the

pictures is such that a picture is dividable into a number of blocks of possibly different sizes for the purpose of predictive and residual coding of the image or video data. As mentioned before, a picture 24 may be available as one or more arrays of image sample values. In case of YUV/YCbCr color space, for example, the first array may represent the luma channel while the other two arrays represent chroma channels. These arrays may have differing dimensions. All arrays may be grouped into one or more plane groups with each plane group consisting of one or more consecutive planes such that each plane is contained in one and only one plane group. For each plane group the following applies. The first array of a particular plane group may be called the primary array of this plane group. The possibly following arrays are subordinate arrays. The block division of the primary array may be done based on a quadtree approach best described below. The block division of the subordinate arrays may be derived based on the division of primary array.

[0036] In accordance with the embodiments described below, sub-dividers 28 and 104a are configured to divide the primary array into a number of square blocks of equal size, so-called treeblocks in the following. The edge length of the treeblocks is typically a power of two such as 16, 32 or 64 when quadtrees are used. For sake of completeness, however, it is noted that the use of other tree types would be possible as well such as binary trees or trees with any number of leaves. Moreover, the number of children of the tree may be varied depending on the level of the tree and depending on what signal the tree is representing.

[0037] Beside this, as mentioned above, the array of samples may also represent other information than video sequences such as depth maps or lightfields, respectively. For simplicity, the following description focuses on quadtrees as a representative example for multi-trees.

[0038] Quadtrees are trees that have exactly four children at each internal node. Each of the treeblocks constitutes a primary quadtree together with subordinate quadtrees at each of the leaves of the primary quadtree. The primary quadtree determines the sub-division of a given treeblock for prediction while a subordinate quadtree determines the sub-division of a given prediction block for the purpose of residual coding.

[0039] The root node of the primary quadtree corresponds to the full treeblock. For example, Fig. 3a shows a treeblock 150. It should be recalled that each picture is divided into a regular grid of lines and columns of such treeblocks 150 so that same, for example, gaplessly cover the array of samples. However, it should be noted that for all block subdivisions shown hereinafter, the seamless subdivision without overlap is not critical. Rather, neighboring block may overlap each other as long as no leaf block is a proper subportion of a neighboring leaf block.

[0040] Along the quadtree structure for treeblock 150, each node can be further divided onto four child nodes,

which in the case of the primary quadtree means that each treeblock 150 can be split into four sub-blocks with half the width and half the height of the treeblock 150. In Fig. 3a, these sub-blocks are indicated with reference signs 152a to 152d. In the same manner, each of these sub-blocks can further be divided into four smaller sub-blocks with half the width and half the height of the original sub-blocks. In Fig. 3d this is shown exemplary for sub-block 152c which is sub-divided into four small sub-blocks 154a to 154d. Insofar, Figs. 3a to 3c show exemplary how a treeblock 150 is first divided into its four sub-blocks 152a to 152d, then the lower left sub-block 152c is further divided into four small sub-blocks 154a to 154d and finally, as shown in Fig. 3c, the upper right block 154b of these smaller sub-blocks is once more divided into four blocks of one eighth the width and height of the original treeblock 150, with these even smaller blocks being denoted with 156a to 156d.

[0041] Fig. 4 shows the underlying tree structure for the exemplary quadtree-based division as shown in Figs. 3a-3d. The numbers beside the tree nodes are the values of a so-called sub-division flag, which will be explained in much detail later when discussing the signaling of the quadtree structure. The root node of the quadtree is depicted on top of the figure (labeled "Level 0"). The four branches at level 1 of this root node correspond to the four sub-blocks as shown in Fig. 3a. As the third of these sub-blocks is further sub-divided into its four sub-blocks in Fig. 3b, the third node at level 1 in Fig. 4 also has four branches. Again, corresponding to the sub-division of the second (top right) child node in Fig. 3c, there are four sub-branches connected with the second node at level 2 of the quadtree hierarchy. The nodes at level 3 are not sub-divided any further.

[0042] Each leaf of the primary quadtree corresponds to a variable-sized block for which individual prediction parameters can be specified (i.e., intra or inter, prediction mode, motion parameters, etc.). In the following, these blocks are called prediction blocks. In particular, these leaf blocks are the blocks shown in Fig. 3c. With briefly referring back to the description of Figs. 1 and 2, divider 20 or sub-divider 28 determines the quadtree sub-division as just-explained. The sub-divider 152a-d performs the decision which of the treeblocks 150, sub-blocks 152a-d, small sub-blocks 154a-d and so on, to sub-divide or partition further, with the aim to find an optimum trade-off between a too fine prediction sub-division and a too coarse prediction sub-division as already indicate above. The predictor 12, in turn, uses the prescribed prediction sub-division in order to determine the prediction parameters mentioned above at a granularity depending on the prediction sub-division or for each of the prediction sub-regions represented by the blocks shown in Fig. 3c, for example.

[0043] The prediction blocks shown in Fig. 3c can be further divided into smaller blocks for the purpose of residual coding. For each prediction block, i.e., for each leaf node of the primary quadtree, the corresponding sub-

division is determined by one or more subordinate quadtree(s) for residual coding. For example, when allowing a maximum residual block size of 16×16 , a given 32×32 prediction block could be divided into four 16×16 blocks, each of which being determined by a subordinate quadtree for residual coding. Each 16×16 block in this example corresponds to the root node of a subordinate quadtree.

[0044] Just as described for the case of the sub-division of a given treeblock into prediction blocks, each prediction block can be divided into a number of residual blocks by usage of subordinate quadtree decomposition(s). Each leaf of a subordinate quadtree corresponds to a residual block for which individual residual coding parameters can be specified (i.e., transform mode, transform coefficients, etc.) by residual precoder 14 which residual coding parameters control, in turn, residual reconstructors 16 and 106, respectively.

[0045] In other words, sub-divider 28 may be configured to determine for each picture or for each group of pictures a prediction sub-division and a subordinate residual sub-division by firstly dividing the picture into a regular arrangement of treeblocks 150, recursively partitioning a subset of these treeblocks by quadtree sub-division in order to obtain the prediction sub-division into prediction blocks - which may be treeblocks if no partitioning took place at the respective treeblock, or the leaf blocks of the quadtree sub-division - with then further sub-dividing a subset of these prediction blocks in a similar way, by, if a prediction block is greater than the maximum size of the subordinate residual sub-division, firstly dividing the respective prediction block into a regular arrangement of sub-treeblocks with then sub-dividing a subset of these sub-treeblocks in accordance with the quadtree sub-division procedure in order to obtain the residual blocks - which may be prediction blocks if no division into sub-treeblocks took place at the respective prediction block, sub-treeblocks if no division into even smaller regions took place at the respective sub-treeblock, or the leaf blocks of the residual quadtree sub-division.

[0046] As briefly outlined above, the sub-divisions chosen for a primary array may be mapped onto subordinate arrays. This is easy when considering subordinate arrays of the same dimension as the primary array. However, special measures have to be taken when the dimensions of the subordinate arrays differ from the dimension of the primary array. Generally speaking, the mapping of the primary array sub-division onto the subordinate arrays in case of different dimensions could be done by spatially mapping, i.e., by spatially mapping the block borders of the primary array sub-division onto the subordinate arrays. In particular, for each subordinate array, there may be a scaling factor in horizontal and vertical direction that determines the ratio of the dimension of the primary array to the subordinate array. The division of the subordinate array into sub-blocks for prediction and residual coding may be determined by the primary quadtree and the sub-

ordinate quadtree(s) of each of the collocated treeblocks of the primary array, respectively, with the resulting treeblocks of the subordinate array being scaled by the relative scaling factor. In case the scaling factors in horizontal and vertical directions differ (e.g., as in 4:2:2 chroma sub-sampling), the resulting prediction and residual blocks of the subordinate array would not be squares anymore. In this case, it is possible to either predetermine or select adaptively (either for the whole sequence, one picture out of the sequence or for each single prediction or residual block) whether the non-square residual block shall be split into square blocks. In the first case, for example, encoder and decoder could agree onto a sub-division into square blocks each time a mapped block is not squared. In the second case, the sub-divider 28 could signal the selection via data stream inserter 18 and data stream 22 to sub-divider 104a. For example, in case of 4:2:2 chroma sub-sampling, where the subordinate arrays have half the width but the same height as the primary array, the residual blocks would be twice as high as wide. By vertically splitting this block, one would obtain two square blocks again.

[0047] As mentioned above, the sub-divider 28 or divider 20, respectively, signals the quadtree-based division via data stream 22 to sub-divider 104a. To this end, sub-divider 28 informs data stream inserter 18 about the sub-divisions chosen for pictures 24. The data stream inserter, in turn, transmits the structure of the primary and secondary quadtree, and, therefore, the division of the picture array into variable-size blocks for prediction or residual coding within the data stream or bit stream 22, respectively, to the decoding side.

[0048] The minimum and maximum admissible block sizes are transmitted as side information and may change from picture to picture. Or the minimum and maximum admissible block sizes can be fixed in encoder and decoder. These minimum and maximum block size can be different for prediction and residual blocks. For the signaling of the quadtree structure, the quadtree has to be traversed and for each node it has to be specified whether this particular node is a leaf node of the quadtree (i.e., the corresponding block is not sub-divided any further) or if it branches into its four child nodes (i.e., the corresponding block is divided into four sub-blocks with half the size).

[0049] The signaling within one picture is done treeblock by treeblock in a raster scan order such as from left to right and top to down as illustrated in Fig. 5a at 140. This scan order could also be different, like from bottom right to top left or in a checkerboard sense. In a preferred embodiment, each treeblock and therefore each quadtree is traversed in depth-first order for signaling the sub-division information.

[0050] In a preferred embodiment, not only the sub-division information, i.e., the structure of the tree, but also the prediction data etc., i.e. the payload associated with the leaf nodes of the tree, are transmitted/processed in depth-first order. This is done because depth-first traversal

has big advantages over breadth-first order. In Fig. 5b, a quadtree structure is presented with the leaf nodes labeled as a,b,...,j. Fig. 5a shows the resulting block division. If the blocks/leaf nodes are traversed in breadth-first order, we obtain the following order: abjchidefg. In depth-first order, however, the order is abc...ij. As can be seen from Fig. 5a, in depth-first order, the left neighbour block and the top neighbour block are always transmitted/processed before the current block. Thus, motion vector prediction and context modeling can always use the parameters specified for the left and top neighbouring block in order to achieve an improved coding performance. For breadth-first order, this would not be the case, since block j is transmitted before blocks e, g, and i, for example.

[0051] Consequently, the signaling for each treeblock is done recursively along the quadtree structure of the primary quadtree such that for each node, a flag is transmitted, specifying whether the corresponding block is split into four sub-blocks. If this flag has the value "1" (for "true"), then this signaling process is repeated recursively for all four child nodes, i.e., sub-blocks in raster scan order (top left, top right, bottom left, bottom right) until the leaf node of the primary quadtree is reached. Note that a leaf node is characterized by having a sub-division flag with a value of "0". For the case that a node resides on the lowest hierarchy level of the primary quadtree and thus corresponds to the smallest admissible prediction block size, no sub-division flag has to be transmitted. For the example in Fig. 3a-c, one would first transmit "1", as shown at 190 in Fig. 6a, specifying that the treeblock 150 is split into its four sub-blocks 152a-d. Then, one would recursively encode the sub-division information of all the four sub-blocks 152a-d in raster scan order 200. For the first two sub-blocks 152a, b one would transmit "0", specifying that they are not sub-divided (see 202 in Fig 6a). For the third sub-block 152c (bottom left), one would transmit "1", specifying that this block is sub-divided (see 204 in Fig. 6a). Now, according to the recursive approach, the four sub-blocks 154a-d of this block would be processed. Here, one would transmit "0" for the first (206) and "1" for the second (top right) sub-block (208). Now, the four blocks of the smallest block size 156a-d in Fig. 3c would be processed. In case, we already reached the smallest allowed block size in this example, no more data would have to be transmitted, since a further sub-division is not possible. Otherwise "0000", specifying that none of these blocks is further divided, would be transmitted as indicated in Fig. 6a at 210. After this, one would transmit "00" for the lower two blocks in Fig. 3b (see 212 in Fig. 6a), and finally "0" for the bottom right block in Fig. 3a (see 214). So the complete binary string representing the quadtree structure would be the one shown in Fig. 6a.

[0052] The different background shadings in this binary string representation of Fig. 6a correspond to different levels in the hierarchy of the quadtree-based sub-division. Shading 216 represents level 0 (corresponding to a block size equal to the original treeblock size), shading

218 represents level 1 (corresponding to a block size equal to half the original treeblock size), shading 220 represents level 2 (corresponding to a block size equal to one quarter of the original treeblock size), and shading 222 represents level 3 (corresponding to a block size equal to one eighth of the original treeblock size). All the sub-division flags of the same hierarchy level (corresponding to the same block size and the same color in the example binary string representation) may be entropy coded using one and the same probability model by inserter 18, for example.

[0053] Note, that for the case of a breadth-first traversal, the sub-division information would be transmitted in a different order, shown in Fig. 6b.

[0054] Similar to the sub-division of each treeblock for the purpose of prediction, the division of each resulting prediction block into residual blocks has to be transmitted in the bitstream. Also, there may be a maximum and minimum block size for residual coding which is transmitted as side information and which may change from picture to picture. Or the maximum and minimum block size for residual coding can be fixed in encoder and decoder. At each leaf node of the primary quadtree, as those shown in Fig. 3c, the corresponding prediction block may be divided into residual blocks of the maximum admissible size. These blocks are the constituent root nodes of the subordinate quadtree structure for residual coding. For example, if the maximum residual block size for the picture is 64×64 and the prediction block is of size 32×32 , then the whole prediction block would correspond to one subordinate (residual) quadtree root node of size 32×32 . On the other hand, if the maximum residual block size for the picture is 16×16 , then the 32×32 prediction block would consist of four residual quadtree root nodes, each of size 16×16 . Within each prediction block, the signaling of the subordinate quadtree structure is done root node by root node in raster scan order (left to right, top to down). Like in the case of the primary (prediction) quadtree structure, for each node a flag is coded, specifying whether this particular node is split into its four child nodes. Then, if this flag has a value of "1", this procedure is repeated recursively for all the four corresponding child nodes and its corresponding sub-blocks in raster scan order (top left, top right, bottom left, bottom right) until a leaf node of the subordinate quadtree is reached. As in the case of the primary quadtree, no signaling is required for nodes on the lowest hierarchy level of the subordinate quadtree, since those nodes correspond to blocks of the smallest possible residual block size, which cannot be divided any further.

[0055] For entropy coding, residual block sub-division flags belonging to residual blocks of the same block size may be encoded using one and the same probability model.

[0056] Thus, in accordance with the example presented above with respect to Figs. 3a to 6a, sub-divider 28 defined a primary sub-division for prediction purposes and a subordinate sub-division of the blocks of different

sizes of the primary sub-division for residual coding purposes. The data stream inserter 18 coded the primary sub-division by signaling for each treeblock in a zigzag scan order, a bit sequence built in accordance with Fig. 6a along with coding the maximum primary block size and the maximum hierarchy level of the primary sub-division. For each thus defined prediction block, associated prediction parameters have been included into the data stream. Additionally, a coding of similar information, i.e., maximum size, maximum hierarchy level and bit sequence in accordance with Fig. 6a, took place for each prediction block the size of which was equal to or smaller than the maximum size for the residual sub-division and for each residual tree root block into which prediction blocks have been pre-divided the size of which exceeded the maximum size defined for residual blocks. For each thus defined residual block, residual data is inserted into the data stream.

[0057] The extractor 102 extracts the respective bit sequences from the data stream at input 116 and informs divider 104 about the sub-division information thus obtained. Besides this, data stream inserter 18 and extractor 102 may use the afore-mentioned order among the prediction blocks and residual blocks to transmit further syntax elements such as residual data output by residual precoder 14 and prediction parameters output by predictor 12. Using this order has advantages in that adequate contexts for encoding the individual syntax elements for a certain block may be chosen by exploiting already coded/decoded syntax elements of neighboring blocks. Moreover, similarly, residual pre-coder 14 and predictor 12 as well as residual reconstructor 106 and pre-coder 110 may process the individual prediction and residual blocks in the order outlined above.

[0058] Fig. 7 shows a flow diagram of steps, which may be performed by extractor 102 in order to extract the sub-division information from the data stream 22 when encoded in the way as outlined above. In a first step, extractor 102 divides the picture 24 into tree root blocks 150. This step is indicated as step 300 in Fig. 7. Step 300 may involve extractor 102 extracting the maximum prediction block size from the data stream 22. Additionally or alternatively, step 300 may involve extractor 102 extracting the maximum hierarchy level from the data stream 22.

[0059] Next, in a step 302, extractor 102 decodes a flag or bit from the data stream. The first time step 302 is performed, the extractor 102 knows that the respective flag is the first flag of the bit sequence belonging to the first tree root block 150 in tree root block scan order 140. As this flag is a flag of hierarchy level 0, extractor 102 may use a context modeling associated with that hierarchy level 0 in step 302 in order to determine a context. Each context may have a respective probability estimation for entropy decoding the flag associated therewith. The probability estimation of the contexts may context-individually be adapted to the respective context symbol statistic. For example, in order to determine an appropri-

ate context for decoding the flag of hierarchy level 0 in step 302, extractor 102 may select one context of a set of contexts, which is associated with that hierarchy level 0 depending on the hierarchy level 0 flag of neighboring treeblocks, or even further, depending on information contained within the bit strings defining the quadtree sub-division of neighboring treeblocks of the currently-processed treeblock, such as the top and left neighbor treeblock.

[0060] In the next step, namely step 304, extractor 102 checks as to whether the recently-decoded flag suggests a partitioning. If this is the case, extractor 102 partitions the current block - presently a treeblock - or indicates this partitioning to sub-divider 104a in step 306 and checks, in step 308, as to whether the current hierarchy level was equal to the maximum hierarchy level minus one. For example, extractor 102 could, for example, also have the maximum hierarchy level extracted from the data stream in step 300. If the current hierarchy level is unequal to the maximum hierarchy level minus one, extractor 102 increases the current hierarchy level by 1 in step 310 and steps back to step 302 to decode the next flag from the data stream. This time, the flags to be decoded in step 302 belongs to another hierarchy level and, therefore, in accordance with an embodiment, extractor 102 may select one of a different set of contexts, the set belonging to the current hierarchy level. The selection may be based also on sub-division bit sequences according to Fig. 6a of neighboring treeblocks already having been decoded.

[0061] If a flag is decoded, and the check in step 304 reveals that this flag does not suggest a partitioning of the current block, the extractor 102 proceeds with step 312 to check as to whether the current hierarchy level is 0. If this is the case, extractor 102 proceeds processing with respect to the next tree root block in the scan order 140 in step 314 or stops processing extracting the sub-division information if there is no tree root block to be processed left.

[0062] It should be noted that the description of Fig. 7 focuses on the decoding of the sub-division indication flags of the prediction sub-division only, so that, in fact, step 314 could involve the decoding of further bins or syntax elements pertaining, for example to the current treeblock. In any case, if a further or next tree root block exists, extractor 102 proceeds from step 314 to step 302 to decode the next flag from the sub-division information, namely, the first flag of the flag sequence regarding the new tree root block.

[0063] If, in step 312 the hierarchy level turns out to be unequal to 0, the operation proceeds in step 316 with a check as to whether further child nodes pertaining the current node exist. That is, when extractor 102 performs the check in step 316, it has already been checked in step 312 that the current hierarchy level is a hierarchy level other than 0 hierarchy level. This, in turn, means that a parent node exists, which belongs to a tree root block 150 or one of the smaller blocks 152a-d, or even smaller blocks 152a-d, and so on. The node of the tree

structure, which the recently-decoded flag belongs to, has a parent node, which is common to three further nodes of the current tree structure. The scan order among such child nodes having a common parent node has been illustrated exemplarily in Fig. 3a for hierarchy level 0 with reference sign 200. Thus, in step 316, extractor 102 checks as to whether all of these four child nodes have already been visited within the process of Fig. 7. If this is not the case, i.e. if there are further child nodes with the current parent node, the process of Fig. 7 proceeds with step 318, where the next child node in accordance with a zigzag scan order 200 within the current hierarchy level is visited, so that its corresponding sub-block now represents the current block of process 7 and, thereafter, a flag is decoded in step 302 from the data stream regarding the current block or current node. If, however, there are no further child nodes for the current parent node in step 316, the process of Fig. 7 proceeds to step 320 where the current hierarchy level is decreased by 1 wherein after the process proceeds with step 312.

[0064] By performing the steps shown in Fig. 7, extractor 102 and sub-divider 104a cooperate to retrieve the sub-division chosen at the encoder side from the data stream. The process of Fig. 7 is concentrated on the above-described case of the prediction sub-division. Fig. 8 shows, in combination with the flow diagram of Fig. 7, how extractor 102 and sub-divider 104a cooperate to retrieve the residual sub-division from the data stream.

[0065] In particular, Fig. 8 shows the steps performed by extractor 102 and sub-divider 104a, respectively, for each of the prediction blocks resulting from the prediction sub-division. These prediction blocks are traversed, as mentioned above, in accordance with a zigzag scan order 140 among the treeblocks 150 of the prediction sub-division and using a depth-first traversal order within each treeblock 150 currently visited for traversing the leaf blocks as shown, for example, in Fig. 3c. According to the depth-first traversal order, the leaf blocks of partitioned primary treeblocks are visited in the depth-first traversal order with visiting sub-blocks of a certain hierarchy level having a common current node in the zigzag scan order 200 and with primarily scanning the sub-division of each of these sub-blocks first before proceeding to the next sub-block in this zigzag scan order 200.

[0066] For the example in Fig. 3c, the resulting scan order among the leaf nodes of treeblock 150 is shown with reference sign 350.

[0067] For a currently-visited prediction block, the process of Fig. 8 starts at step 400. In step 400, an internal parameter denoting the current size of the current block is set equal to the size of hierarchy level 0 of the residual sub-division, i.e. the maximum block size of the residual sub-division. It should be recalled that the maximum residual block size may be lower than the smallest block size of the prediction sub-division or may be equal to or greater than the latter. In other words, according to an embodiment, the encoder is free to chose any of the just-mentioned possibilities.

[0068] In the next step, namely step 402, a check is performed as to whether the prediction block size of the currently-visited block is greater than the internal parameter denoting the current size. If this is the case, the currently-visited prediction block, which may be a leaf block of the prediction sub-division or a treeblock of the prediction sub-division, which has not been partitioned any further, is greater than the maximum residual block size and in this case, the process of Fig. 8 proceeds with step 300 of Fig. 7. That is, the currently-visited prediction block is divided into residual tree-root blocks and the first flag of the flag sequence of the first residual treeblock within this currently-visited prediction block is decoded in step 302, and so on.

[0069] If, however, the currently-visited prediction block has a size equal to or smaller than the internal parameter indicating the current size, the process of Fig. 8 proceeds to step 404 where the prediction block size is checked to determine as to whether same is equal to the internal parameter indicating the current size. If this is the case, the division step 300 may be skipped and the process proceeds directly with step 302 of Fig. 7.

[0070] If, however, the prediction block size of the currently-visited prediction block is smaller than the internal parameter indicating the current size, the process of Fig. 8 proceeds with step 406 where the hierarchy level is increased by 1 and the current size is set to the size of the new hierarchy level such as divided by 2 (in both axis directions in case of quadtree subdivision). Thereafter, the check of step 404 is performed again. The effect of the loop formed by steps 404 and 406 is that the hierarchy level always corresponds to the size of the corresponding blocks to be partitioned, independent from the respective prediction block having been smaller than or equal to/greater than the maximum residual block size. Thus, when decoding the flags in step 302, the context modeling performed depends on the hierarchy level and the size of the block to which the flag refers to, concurrently. The use of different contexts for flags of different hierarchy levels or block sizes, respectively, is advantageous in that the probability estimation may well fit the actual probability distribution among the flag value occurrences with, on the other hand, having a relative moderate number of contexts to be managed, thereby reducing the context managing overhead as well as increasing the context adaptation to the actual symbol statistics.

[0071] As already noted above, there may be more than one array of samples and these arrays of samples may be grouped into one or more plane groups. The input signal to be encoded, entering input 32, for example, may be one picture of a video sequence or a still image. The picture may, thus, be given in the form of one or more sample arrays. In the context of the coding of a picture of a video sequence or a still image, the sample arrays might refer to the three color planes, such as red, green and blue or to luma and chroma planes, such in color representations of YUV or YCbCr. Additionally, sample arrays representing alpha, i.e. transparency, and/or

depth information for 3-D video material might be present as well. A number of these sample arrays may be grouped together as a so-called plane group. For example, luma (Y) might be one plane group with only one sample array and chroma, such as CbCr, might be another plane group with two sample arrays or, in another example, YUV might be one plane group with three matrices and a depth information for 3-D video material might be a different plane group with only one sample array. For every plane group, one primary quadtree structure may be coded within the data stream 22 for representing the division into prediction blocks and for each prediction block, a secondary quadtree structure representing the division into residual blocks. Thus, in accordance with a first example just mentioned where the luma component is one plane group, whereas the chroma component forms the other plane group, there would be one quadtree structure for the prediction blocks of the luma plane, one quadtree structure for the residual blocks of the luma plane, one quadtree structure for the prediction block of the chroma plane and one quadtree structure for the residual blocks of the chroma plane. In the second example mentioned before, however, there would be one quadtree structure for the prediction blocks of luma and chroma together (YUV), one quadtree structure for the residual blocks of luma and chroma together (YUV), one quadtree structure for the prediction blocks of the depth information for 3-D video material and one quadtree structure for the residual blocks of the depth information for 3-D video material.

[0072] Further, in the foregoing description, the input signal was divided into prediction blocks using a primary quadtree structure and it was described how these prediction blocks were further sub-divided into residual blocks using a subordinate quadtree structure. In accordance with an alternative embodiment, the sub-division might not end at the subordinate quadtree stage. That is, the blocks obtained from a division using the subordinate quadtree structure might be further sub-divided using a tertiary quadtree structure. This division, in turn, might be used for the purpose of using further coding tools that might facilitate encoding the residual signal.

[0073] The foregoing description concentrated on the sub-division performed by sub-divider 28 and sub-divider 104a, respectively. As mentioned above, the sub-division defined by sub-divider 28 and 104a, respectively, may control the processing granularity of the afore-mentioned modules of encoder 10 and decoder 100. However, in accordance with the embodiments described in the following, the sub-dividers 228 and 104a, respectively, are followed by a merger 30 and merger 104b, respectively. It should be noted, however, that the mergers 30 and 104b are optional and may be left away.

[0074] In effect, however, and as will be outlined in more detail below, the merger provides the encoder with the opportunity of combining some of the prediction blocks or residual blocks to groups or clusters, so that the other, or at least some of the other modules may treat

these groups of blocks together. For example, the predictor 12 may sacrifice the small deviations between the prediction parameters of some prediction blocks as determined by optimization using the subdivision of subdivider 28 and use prediction parameters common to all these prediction blocks instead if the signalling of the grouping of the prediction blocks along with a common parameter transmission for all the blocks belonging to this group is more promising in rate/distortion ratio sense than individually signaling the prediction parameters for all these prediction blocks. The processing for retrieving the prediction in predictors 12 and 110, itself, based on these common prediction parameters, may, however, still take place prediction-block wise. However, it is also possible that predictors 12 and 110 even perform the prediction process once for the whole group of prediction blocks.

[0075] As will be outlined in more detail below, it is also possible that the grouping of prediction blocks is not only for using the same or common prediction parameters for a group of prediction blocks, but, alternatively, or additionally, enables the encoder 10 to send one prediction parameter for this group along with prediction residuals for prediction blocks belonging to this group, so that the signaling overhead for signalling the prediction parameters for this group may be reduced. In the latter case, the merging process may merely influence the data stream inserter 18 rather than the decisions made by residual pre-coder 14 and predictor 12. However, more details are presented below. For completeness, however, it should be noted that the just-mentioned aspect also applies to the other sub-divisions, such as the residual sub-division or the filter sub-division mentioned above.

[0076] Firstly, the merging of sets of samples, such as the aforementioned prediction and residual blocks, is motivated in a more general sense, i.e. not restricted to the above-mentioned multi-tree sub-division. Subsequently, however, the description focuses on the merging of blocks resulting from multi-tree sub-division for which embodiments have just been described above.

[0077] Generally speaking, merging the syntax elements associated with particular sets of samples for the purpose of transmitting associated coding parameters enables reducing the side information rate in image and video coding applications. For example, the sample arrays of the signal to be encoded are usually partitioned into particular sets of samples or sample sets, which may represent rectangular or quadratic blocks, or any other collection of samples, including arbitrarily-shaped regions, triangles or other shapes. In the aforescribed embodiments, the simply-connected regions were the prediction blocks and the residual blocks resulting from the multi-tree sub-division. The sub-division of sample arrays may be fixed by the syntax or, as described above, the sub-division may be, at least partially, signaled inside the bit stream. To keep the side information rate for signalling the sub-division information small, the syntax usually allows only a limited number of choices resulting in

simple partitioning, such as the sub-division of blocks to smaller blocks. The sample sets are associated with particular coding parameters, which may specify prediction information or residual coding modes, etc. Details regarding this issue have been described above. For each sample set, individual coding parameters, such as for specifying the prediction and/or residual coding may be transmitted. In order to achieve an improved coding efficiency, the aspect of merging described hereinafter, namely the merging of two or more sample sets into so-called groups of sample sets, enables some advantages, which are described further below. For example, sample sets may be merged such that all sample sets of such a group share the same coding parameters, which can be transmitted together with one of the sample sets in the group. By doing so, the coding parameters do not have to be transmitted for each sample set of the group of sample sets individually, but, instead, the coding parameters are transmitted only once for the whole group of sample sets. As a result, the side information rate for transmitting the coding parameters may be reduced and the overall coding efficiency may be improved. As an alternative approach, an additional refinement for one or more of the coding parameters can be transmitted for one or more of the sample sets of a group of sample sets. The refinement can either be applied to all sample sets of a group or only to the sample set for which it is transmitted.

[0078] The merging aspect further described below also provides the encoder with a greater freedom in creating the bit stream 22, since the merging approach significantly increases the number of possibilities for selecting a partitioning for the sample arrays of a picture. Since the encoder can choose between more options, such as, for minimizing a particular rate/distortion measure, the coding efficiency can be improved. There are several possibilities of operating an encoder. In a simple approach, the encoder could firstly determine the best sub-division of the sample arrays. Briefly referring to Fig. 1, sub-divider 28 could determine the optimal sub-division in a first stage. Afterwards, it could be checked, for each sample set, whether a merging with another sample set or another group of sample sets, reduces a particular rate/distortion cost measure. At this, the prediction parameters associated with a merged group of sample sets can be re-estimated, such as by performing a new motion search or the prediction parameters that have already been determined for the common sample set and the candidate sample set or group of sample sets for merging could be evaluated for the considered group of sample sets. In a more extensive approach, a particular rate/distortion cost measure could be evaluated for additional candidate groups of sample sets.

[0079] It should be noted that the merging approach described hereinafter does not change the processing order of the sample sets. That is, the merging concept can be implemented in a way so that the delay is not increased, i.e. each sample set remains decodable at the same time instant as without using the merging ap-

proach.

[0080] If, for example, the bit rate that is saved by reducing the number of coded prediction parameters is larger than the bit rate that is to be additionally spent for coding merging information for indicating the merging to the decoding side, the merging approach further to be described below results in an increased coding efficiency. It should further be mentioned that the described syntax extension for the merging provides the encoder with the additional freedom in selecting the partitioning of a picture or plane group into blocks. In other words, the encoder is not restricted to do the sub-division first and then to check whether some of the resulting blocks have the same set or a similar set of prediction parameters. As one simple alternative, the encoder could first determine the sub-division in accordance with a rate-distortion cost measure and then the encoder could check, for each block, whether a merging with one of its neighbor blocks or the associated already-determined group of blocks reduces a rate-distortion cost measure. At this, the prediction parameters associated with the new group of blocks can be re-estimated, such as by performing a new motion search or the prediction parameters that have already been determined for the current block and the neighboring block or groups of blocks could be evaluated for the new group of blocks. The merging information can be signaled on a block basis. Effectively, the merging could also be interpreted as inference of the prediction parameters for a current block, wherein the inferred prediction parameters are set equal to the prediction parameters of one of the neighboring blocks. Alternatively, residuals may be transmitted for blocks within a group of blocks.

[0081] Thus, the basic idea underlying the merging concept further described below is to reduce the bit rate that is required for transmitting the prediction parameters or other coding parameters by merging neighboring blocks into a group of blocks, where each group of blocks is associated with a unique set of coding parameters, such as prediction parameters or residual coding parameters. The merging information is signaled inside the bit stream in addition to the sub-division information, if present. The advantage of the merging concept is an increased coding efficiency resulting from a decreased side information rate for the coding parameters. It should be noted that the merging processes described here could also extend to other dimensions than the spatial dimensions. For example, a group of sets of samples or blocks, respectively, lying within several different video pictures, could be merged into one group of blocks. Merging could also be applied to 4-D compression and light-field coding.

[0082] Thus, briefly returning to the previous description of Figs. 1 to 8, it is noted that the merging process subsequent to the sub-division is advantageous independent from the specific way sub-dividers 28 and 104a, respectively, sub-divide the pictures. To be more precise, the latter could also sub-divide the pictures in a way similar to, for example, H.264, i.e. by sub-dividing each pic-

ture into a regular arrangement of rectangular or quadratic macro blocks of a predetermined size, such as 16 x 16 luma samples or a size signaled within the data stream, each macro block having certain coding parameters associated therewith comprising, inter alia, partitioning parameters defining, for each macroblock, a partitioning into a regular sub-grid of 1, 2, 4 or some other number of partitions serving as a granularity for prediction and the corresponding prediction parameters in the data stream as well as for defining the partitioning for the residual and the corresponding residual transformation granularity.

[0083] In any case, merging provides the above-mentioned briefly discussed advantages, such as reducing the side information rate bit in image and video coding applications. Particular sets of samples, which may represent the rectangular or quadratic blocks or arbitrarily-shaped regions or any other collection of samples, such as any simply-connected region or samples are usually connected with a particular set of coding parameters and for each of the sample sets, the coding parameters are included in the bit stream, the coding parameters representing, for example, prediction parameters, which specify how the corresponding set of samples is predicted using already-coded samples. The partitioning of the sample arrays of a picture into sample sets may be fixed by the syntax or may be signaled by the corresponding sub-division information inside the bit stream. The coding parameters for the sample set may be transmitted in a predefined order, which is given by the syntax. According to the merging functionality, merger 30 is able to signal, for a common set of samples or a current block, such as a prediction block or a residual block that it is merged with one or more other sample sets, into a group of sample sets. The coding parameters for a group of sample sets, therefore, needs to be transmitted only once. In a particular embodiment, the coding parameters of a current sample set are not transmitted if the current sample set is merged with a sample set or an already-existing group of sample sets for which the coding parameters have already been transmitted. Instead, the coding parameters for the current set of samples are set equal to the coding parameters of the sample set or group of sample sets with which the current set of samples is merged. As an alternative approach, an additional refinement for one or more of the coding parameters can be transmitted for a current sample set. The refinement can either be applied to all sample sets of a group or only to the sample set for which it is transmitted.

[0084] In accordance with an embodiment, for each set of samples such as a prediction block as mentioned above, a residual block as mentioned above, or a leaf block of a multitree subdivision as mentioned above, the set of all previously coded/decoded sample sets is called the "set of causal sample sets". See, for example, Fig. 3c. All the blocks shown in this Fig. are the result of a certain sub-division, such as a prediction sub-division or a residual sub-division or of any multitree subdivision, or

the like, and the coding/decoding order defined among these blocks is defined by arrow 350. Considering a certain block among these blocks as being the current sample set or current simply-connected region, its set of causal sample sets is made of all the blocks preceding the current block along order 350. However, it is, again, recalled that another sub-division not using multi-tree sub-division would be possible as well as far as the following discussion of the merging principles are concerned.

[0085] The sets of samples that can be used for the merging with a current set of samples is called the "set of candidate sample sets" in the following and is always a subset of the "set of causal sample sets". The way how the subset is formed can either be known to the decoder or it can be specified inside the data stream or bit stream from the encoder to the decoder. If a particular current set of samples is coded/decoded and its set of candidate sample sets is not empty, it is signaled within the data stream at the encoder or derived from the data stream at the decoder whether the common set of samples is merged with one sample set out of this set of candidate sample sets and, if so, with which of them. Otherwise, the merging cannot be used for this block, since the set of candidate sample sets is empty anyway.

[0086] There are different ways how to determine the subset of the set of causal sample sets, which shall represent the set of candidate sample sets. For example, the determination of candidate sample sets may be based on a sample inside the current set of samples, which is uniquely geometrically-defined, such as the upper-left image sample of a rectangular or quadratic block. Starting from this uniquely geometrically-defined sample, a particular non-zero number of samples is determined, which represent direct spatial neighbors of this uniquely geometrically-defined sample. For example, this particular, non-zero number of samples comprises the top neighbor and the left neighbor of the uniquely geometrically-defined sample of the current set of samples, so that the non-zero number of neighboring samples may be, at the maximum, two, one if one of the top or left neighbors is not available or lies outside the picture, or zero in case of both neighbors missing.

[0087] The set of candidate sample sets could then be determined to encompass those sample sets that contain at least one of the non-zero number of the just-mentioned neighboring samples. See, for example, Fig. 9a. The current sample set currently under consideration as merging object, shall be block X and its geometrically uniquely-defined sample, shall exemplarily be the top-left sample indicated at 400. The top and left neighbor samples of sample 400 are indicated at 402 and 404. The set of causal sample sets or set of causal blocks is highlighted in a shaded manner. Among these blocks, blocks A and B comprise one of the neighboring samples 402 and 404 and, therefore, these blocks form the set of candidate blocks or the set of candidate sample sets.

[0088] In accordance with another embodiment, the set of candidate sample sets determined for the sake of

merging may additionally or exclusively include sets of samples that contain a particular non-zero number of samples, which may be one or two that have the same spatial location, but are contained in a different picture, namely, for example, a previously coded/decoded picture. For example, in addition to blocks A and B in Fig. 9a, a block of a previously coded picture could be used, which comprises the sample at the same position as sample 400. By the way, it is noted that merely the top neighboring sample 404 or merely the left neighboring sample 402 could be used to define the afore-mentioned non-zero number of neighboring samples. Generally, the set of candidate sample sets may be derived from previously-processed data within the current picture or in other pictures. The derivation may include spatial directional information, such as transform coefficients associated with a particular direction and image gradients of the current picture or it may include temporal directional information, such as neighboring motion representations. From such data available at the receiver/decoder and other data and side information within the data stream, if present, the set of candidate sample sets may be derived.

[0089] It should be noted that the derivation of the candidate sample sets is performed in parallel by both merger 30 at the encoder side and merger 104b at the decoder side. As just mentioned, both may determine the set of candidate sample sets independent from each other based on a predefined way known to both or the encoder may signal hints within the bit stream, which bring merger 104b into a position to perform the derivation of these candidate sample sets in a way equal to the way merger 30 at the encoder side determined the set of candidate sample sets.

[0090] As will be described in more detail below, merger 30 and data stream inserter 18 cooperate in order to transmit one or more syntax elements for each set of samples, which specify whether the set of samples is merged with another sample set, which, in turn, may be part of an already-merged group of sample sets and which of the set of candidate sample sets is employed for merging. The extractor 102, in turn, extracts these syntax elements and informs merger 104b accordingly. In particular, in accordance with the specific embodiment described later on, one or two syntax elements are transmitted for specifying the merging information for a specific set of samples. The first syntax element specifies whether the current set of samples is merged with another sample set. The second syntax element, which is only transmitted if the first syntax element specifies that the current set of samples is merged with another set of samples, specifies which of the sets of candidate sample sets is employed for merging. The transmission of the first syntax element may be suppressed if a derived set of candidate sample sets is empty. In other words, the first syntax element may only be transmitted if a derived set of candidate sample sets is not empty. The second syntax element may only be transmitted if a derived set

of candidate sample sets contains more than one sample set, since if only one sample set is contained in the set of candidate sample sets, a further selection is not possible anyway. Even further, the transmission of the second syntax element may be suppressed if the set of candidate sample sets comprises more than one sample set, but if all of the sample sets of the set of candidate sample sets are associated with the same coding parameter. In other words, the second syntax element may only be transmitted if at least two sample sets of a derived set of candidate sample sets are associated with different coding parameters.

[0091] Within the bit stream, the merging information for a set of samples may be coded before the prediction parameters or other particular coding parameters that are associated with that sample set. The prediction or coding parameters may only be transmitted if the merging information signals that the current set of samples is not to be merged with any other set of samples.

[0092] The merging information for a certain set of samples, i.e. a block, for example, may be coded after a proper subset of the prediction parameters or, in a more general sense, coding parameters that are associated with the respective sample set, has been transmitted. The subset of prediction/coding parameters may consist of one or more reference picture indices or one or more components of a motion parameter vector or a reference index and one or more components of a motion parameter vector, etc. The already-transmitted subset of prediction or coding parameters can be used for deriving a set of candidate sample sets out of a greater provisional set of candidate sample sets, which may have been derived as just described above. As an example, a difference measure or distance according to a predetermined distance measure, between the already-coded prediction and coding parameters of the current set of samples and the corresponding prediction or coding parameters of the preliminary set of candidate sample sets can be calculated. Then, only those sample sets for which the calculated difference measure, or distance, is smaller than or equal to a predefined or derived threshold, are included in the final, i.e. reduced set of candidate sample sets. See, for example, Fig. 9a. The current set of samples shall be block X. A subset of the coding parameters pertaining this block shall have already been inserted into the data stream 22. Imagine, for example, block X was a prediction block, in which case the proper subset of the coding parameters could be a subset of the prediction parameters for this block X, such as a subset out of a set comprising a picture reference index and motion-mapping information, such as a motion vector. If block X was a residual block, the subset of coding parameters is a subset of residual information, such as transform coefficients or a map indicating the positions of the significant transform coefficients within block X. Based on this information, both data stream inserter 18 and extractor 102 are able to use this information in order to determine a subset out of blocks A and B, which form, in this specific

embodiment, the previously-mentioned preliminary set of candidate sample sets. In particular, since blocks A and B belong to the set of causal sample sets, the coding parameters thereof are available to both encoder and decoder at the time the coding parameters of block X are currently coded/decoded. Therefore, the afore-mentioned comparison using the difference measure may be used to exclude any number of blocks of the preliminary set of candidate sample sets A and B. The resulting-reduced set of candidate sample sets may then be used as described above, namely in order to determine as to whether a merge indicator indicating a merging is to be transmitted within or is to be extracted from the data stream depending on the number of sample sets within the reduced set of candidate sample sets and as to whether a second syntax element has to be transmitted within, or has to be extracted from the data stream with a second syntax element indicating which of the sample sets within the reduced set of candidate sample sets shall be the partner block for merging. That is, the merge decision or transmittal of respective merge syntax elements for a predetermined simply connected region may depend on the number of simply connected regions having the predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region, and, concurrently, having coding parameters associated therewith which fulfill the predetermined relationship to the first subset of the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region, and the adoption or prediction with extracting the prediction residual may be performed on the second subset of the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region. That is, merely a subset of the coding parameters of the one or the identified one of the number of simply connected regions having the predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region, and, concurrently, having coding parameters associated therewith which fulfill the predetermined relationship to the first subset of the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region, may be adopted to from the second subset of the predetermined simply connected region, or may be used for predicting the second subset of the predetermined simply connected region, respectively.

[0093] The afore-mentioned threshold against which the afore-mentioned distances are compared may be fixed and known to both encoder and decoder or may be derived based on the calculated distances such as the median of the difference values, or some other central tendency or the like. In this case, the reduced set of candidate sample sets would unavoidably be a proper subset of the preliminary set of candidate sample sets. Alternatively, only those sets of samples are selected out of the preliminary set of candidate sample sets for which the distance according to the distance measure is minimized. Alternatively, exactly one set of samples is selected out of the preliminary set of candidate sample sets using the afore-mentioned distance measure. In the latter case,

the merging information would only need to specify whether the current set of samples is to be merged with a single candidate set of samples or not.

[0094] Thus, the set of candidate blocks could be formed or derived as described in the following with respect to Fig. 9a. Starting from the top-left sample position 400 of the current block X in Fig. 9a, its left neighboring sample 402 position and its top neighboring sample 404 position is derived - at its encoder and decoder sides. The set of candidate blocks can, thus, have only up to two elements, namely those blocks out of the shaded set of causal blocks in Fig. 9a that contain one of the two sample positions, which in the case of Fig. 9a, are blocks B and A. Thus, the set of candidate blocks can only have the two directly neighboring blocks of the top-left sample position of the current block as its elements. According to another embodiment, the set of candidate blocks could be given by all blocks that have been coded before the current block and contain one or more samples that represent direct spatial neighbors of any sample of the current block. The direct spatial neighborhood may be restricted to direct left neighbors and/or direct top neighbors and/or direct right neighbors and/or direct bottom neighbors of any sample of the current block. See, for example, Fig. 9b showing another block sub-division. In this case, the candidate blocks comprise four blocks, namely blocks A, B, C and D.

[0095] Alternatively, the set of candidate blocks, additionally, or exclusively, may include blocks that contain one or more samples that are located at the same position as any of the samples of the current block, but are contained in a different, i.e. already coded/decoded picture.

[0096] Even alternatively, the candidate set of blocks represents a subset of the above-described sets of blocks, which were determined by the neighborhood in spatial or time direction. The subset of candidate blocks may be fixed, signaled or derived. The derivation of the subset of candidate blocks may consider decisions made for other blocks in the picture or in other pictures. As an example, blocks that are associated with the same or very similar coding parameters than other candidate blocks might not be included in the candidate set of blocks.

[0097] The following description of an embodiment applies for the case where only two blocks that contain the left and top neighbor sample of the top-left sample of the current block are considered as potential candidate at the maximum.

[0098] If the set of candidate blocks is not empty, one flag called `merge_flag` is signaled, specifying whether the current block is merged with any of the candidate blocks. If the `merge_flag` is equal to 0 (for "false"), this block is not merged with one of its candidate blocks and all coding parameters are transmitted ordinarily. If the `merge_flag` is equal to 1 (for "true"), the following applies. If the set of candidate blocks contains one and only one block, this candidate block is used for merging. Otherwise, the set of candidate blocks contains exactly two

blocks. If the prediction parameters of these two blocks are identical, these prediction parameters are used for the current block. Otherwise (the two blocks have different prediction parameters), a flag called `merge_left_flag` is signaled. If `merge_left_flag` is equal to 1 (for "true"), the block containing the left neighboring sample position of the top-left sample position of the current block is selected out of the set of candidate blocks. If `merge_left_flag` is equal to 0 (for "false"), the other (i.e., top neighboring) block out of the set of candidate blocks is selected. The prediction parameters of the selected block are used for the current block.

[0099] In summarizing some of the above-described embodiments with respect to merging, reference is made to Fig. 10 showing steps performed by extractor 102 to extract the merging information from the data stream 22 entering input 116.

[0100] The process starts at 450 with identifying the candidate blocks or sample sets for a current sample set or block. It should be recalled that the coding parameters for the blocks are transmitted within the data stream 22 in a certain one-dimensional order and accordingly, Fig. 10 refers to the process of retrieving the merge information for a currently visited sample set or block.

[0101] As mentioned before, the identification and step 450 may comprise the identification among previously decoded blocks, i.e. the causal set of blocks, based on neighborhood aspects. For example, those neighboring blocks may be appointed candidate, which include certain neighboring samples neighboring one or more geometrically predetermined samples of the current block X in space or time. Further, the step of identifying may comprise two stages, namely a first stage involving an identification as just-mentioned, namely based on the neighborhood, leading to a preliminary set of candidate blocks, and a second stage according to which merely those blocks are appointed candidates the already transmitted coding parameters of which fulfill a certain relationship to the a proper subset of the coding parameters of the current block X, which has already been decoded from the data stream before step 450.

[0102] Next, the process steps to step 452 where it is determined as to whether the number of candidate blocks is greater than zero. If this is the case, a `merge_flag` is extracted from the data stream in step 454. The step of extracting 454 may involve entropy decoding. The context for entropy decoding the `merge_flag` in step 454 may be determined based on syntax elements belonging to, for example, the set of candidate blocks or the preliminary set of candidate blocks, wherein the dependency on the syntax elements may be restricted to the information whether the blocks belonging to the set of interest has been subject to merging or not. The probability estimation of the selected context may be adapted.

[0103] If, however, the number of candidate blocks is determined to be zero instead 452, the process Fig. 10 proceeds with step 456 where the coding parameters of the current block are extracted from the bitstream or, in

case of the above-mentioned two-stage identification alternative, the remaining coding parameters thereof wherein after the extractor 102 proceeds with processing the next block in the block scan order such as order 350 shown in Fig. 3c.

[0104] Returning to step 454, the process proceeds after extraction in step 454, with step 458 with a check as to whether the extracted merge_flag suggests the occurrence or absence of a merging of the current block. If no merging shall take place, the process proceeds with afore-mentioned step 456. Otherwise, the process proceeds with step 460, including a check as to whether the number of candidate blocks is equal to one. If this is the case, the transmission of an indication of a certain candidate block among the candidate blocks was not necessary and therefore, the process of Fig. 10 proceeds with step 462 according to which the merging partner of the current block is set to be the only candidate block wherein after in step 464 the coding parameters of the merged partner block is used for adaption or prediction of the coding parameters or the remaining coding parameters of the current block. In case of adaption, the missing coding parameters of the current block are merely copied from the merge partner block. In the other case, namely the case of prediction, step 464 may involve a further extraction of residual data from the data stream the residual data pertaining the prediction residual of the missing coding parameters of the current block and a combination of this residual data with the prediction of these missing coding parameters obtained from the merge partner block.

[0105] If, however, the number of candidate blocks is determined to be greater than one in step 460, the process of Fig. 10 steps forward to step 466 where a check is performed as to whether the coding parameters or the interesting part of the coding parameters - namely the subpart thereof relating to the part not yet having been transferred within the data stream for the current block - are identical to each other. If this is the case, these common coding parameters are set as merge reference or the candidate blocks are set as merge partners in step 468 and the respective interesting coding parameters are used for adaption or prediction in step 464.

[0106] It should be noted that the merge partner itself may have been a block for which merging was signaled. In this case, the adopted or predictively obtained coding parameters of that merging partner are used in step 464.

[0107] Otherwise, however, i.e. in case the coding parameters are not identical, the process of Fig. 10 proceeds to step 470, where a further syntax element is extracted from the data stream, namely this merge_left_flag. A separate set of contexts may be used for entropy-decoding this flag. The set of contexts used for entropy-decoding the merge_left_flag may also comprise merely one context. After step 470, the candidate block indicated by merge_left_flag is set to be the merge partner in step 472 and used for adaption or prediction in step 464. After step 464, extractor 102 proceeds with

handling the next block in block order.

[0108] Of course, there exist many alternatives. For example, a combined syntax element may be transmitted within the data stream instead of the separate syntax elements merge_flag and merge_left_flag described before, the combined syntax elements signaling the merging process. Further, the afore-mentioned merge_left_flag may be transmitted within the data stream irrespective of whether the two candidate blocks have the same prediction parameters or not, thereby reducing the computational overhead for performing process of Fig. 10.

[0109] As was already denoted with respect to, for example, Fig. 9b, more than two blocks may be included in the set of candidate blocks. Further, the merging information, i.e. the information signaling whether a block is merged and, if yes, with which candidate block it is to be merged, may be signaled by one or more syntax elements. One syntax element could specify whether the block is merged with any of the candidate blocks such as the merge_flag described above. The flag may only be transmitted if the set of candidate blocks is not empty. A second syntax element may signal which of the candidate blocks is employed for merging such as the afore-mentioned merge_left_flag, but in general indicating a selection among two or more than two candidate blocks. The second syntax element may be transmitted only if the first syntax element signals that the current block is to be merged with one of the candidate blocks. The second syntax element may further only be transmitted if the set of candidate blocks contains more than one candidate block and/or if any of the candidate blocks have different prediction parameters than any other of the candidate blocks. The syntax can be depending on how many candidate blocks are given and/or on how different prediction parameters are associated with the candidate blocks.

[0110] The syntax for signaling which of the blocks of the candidate blocks to be used, may be set simultaneously and/or parallel at the encoder and decoder side. For example, if there are three choices for candidate blocks identified in step 450, the syntax is chosen such that only these three choices are available and are considered for entropy coding, for example, in step 470. In other words, the syntax element is chosen such that its symbol alphabet has merely as many elements as choices of candidate blocks exist. The probabilities for all other choices may be considered to be zero and the entropy-coding/decoding may be adjusted simultaneously at encoder and decoder.

[0111] Further, as has already been noted with respect to step 464, the prediction parameters that are inferred as a consequence of the merging process may represent the complete set of prediction parameters that are associated with the current block or they may represent a subset of these prediction parameters such as the prediction parameters for one hypothesis of a block for which multi-hypothesis prediction is used.

[0112] As noted above, the syntax elements related to

the merging information could be entropy-coded using context modeling. The syntax elements may consist of the merge_flag and the merge_left_flag described above (or similar syntax elements). In a concrete example, one out of three context models or contexts could be used for coding/decoding the merge_flag in step 454, for example. The used context model index merge_flag_ctx may be derived as follows: if the set of candidate blocks contains two elements, the value of merge_flag_ctx is equal to the sum of the values of the merge_flag of the two candidate blocks. If the set of candidate blocks contains one element, however, the value of merge_flag_ctx may be equal to two times the value of merge_flag of this one candidate block. As each merge_flag of the neighboring candidate blocks may either be one or zero, three contexts are available for merge_flag. The merge_left_flag may be coded using merely a single probability model.

[0113] However, according to an alternative embodiment, different context models might be used. For example, non-binary syntax elements may be mapped onto a sequence of binary symbols, so-called bins. The context models for some syntax elements or bins of syntax elements defining the merging information may be derived based on already transmitted syntax elements of neighboring blocks or the number of candidate blocks or other measures while other syntax elements or bins of the syntax elements may be coded with a fixed context model.

[0114] Regarding the above description of the merging of blocks, it is noted that the set of candidate blocks may also be derived the same way as for any of the embodiments described above with the following amendment: candidate blocks are restricted to blocks using motion-compensated prediction or interprediction, respectively. Only those can be elements of the set of candidate blocks. The signaling and context modeling of the merging information could be done as described above.

[0115] Returning to the combination of the multitree subdivision embodiments described above and the merging aspect described now, if the picture is divided into square blocks of variable size by use of a quadtree-based subdivision structure, for example, the merge_flag and merge_left_flag or other syntax elements specifying the merging could be interleaved with the prediction parameters that are transmitted for each leaf node of the quadtree structure. Consider again, for example, Fig. 9a. Fig. 9a shows an example for a quadtree-based subdivision of a picture into prediction blocks of variable size. The top two blocks of the largest size are so-called treeblocks, i.e., they are prediction blocks of the maximum possible size. The other blocks in this figure are obtained as a subdivision of their corresponding treeblock. The current block is marked with an "X". All the shaded blocks are en/decoded before the current block, so they form the set of causal blocks. As explicated in the description of the derivation of the set of candidate blocks for one of the embodiments, only the blocks containing the direct (i.e., top or left) neighboring samples of the top-left sam-

ple position of the current block can be members of the set of candidate blocks. Thus the current block can be merged with either block "A" or block "B". If merge_flag is equal to 0 (for "false"), the current block "X" is not merged with any of the two blocks. If blocks "A" and "B" have identical prediction parameters, no distinction needs to be made, since merging with any of the two blocks will lead to the same result. So, in this case, the merge_left_flag is not transmitted. Otherwise, if blocks "A" and "B" have different prediction parameters, merge_left_flag equal to 1 (for "true") will merge blocks "X" and "B", whereas merge_left_flag equal to 0 (for "false") will merge blocks "X" and "A". In another preferred embodiment, additional neighboring (already transmitted) blocks represent candidates for the merging.

[0116] In Fig. 9b another example is shown. Here the current block "X" and the left neighbor block "B" are treeblocks, i.e. they have the maximum allowed block size. The size of the top neighbor block "A" is one quarter of the treeblock size. The blocks which are element of the set of causal blocks are shaded. Note that according to one of the preferred embodiment, the current block "X" can only be merged with the two blocks "A" or "B", not with any of the other top neighboring blocks. In other preferred embodiment, additional neighboring (already transmitted) blocks represent candidates for the merging.

[0117] Before proceeding with the description with regard to the aspect how to handle different sample arrays of a picture in accordance with embodiments of the present application, it is noted that the above discussion regarding the multitree subdivision and the signaling on the one hand and the merging aspect on the other hand made clear that these aspects provide advantages which may be exploited independent from each other. That is, as has already been explained above, a combination of a multitree subdivision with merging has specific advantages but advantages result also from alternatives where, for example, the merging feature is embodied with, however, the subdivision performed by subdividers 30 and 104a not being based on a quadtree or multitree subdivision, but rather corresponding to a macroblock subdivision with regular partitioning of these macroblocks into smaller partitions. On the other hand, in turn, the combination of the multitree subdividing along with the transmission of the maximum treeblock size indication within the bitstream, and the use of the multitree subdivision along with the use of the depth-first traversal order transporting the corresponding coding parameters of the blocks is advantageous independent from the merging feature being used concurrently or not. Generally, the advantages of merging can be understood, when considering that, intuitively, coding efficiency may be increased when the syntax of sample array codings is extended in a way that it does not only allow to subdivide a block, but also to merge two or more of the blocks that are obtained after subdivision. As a result, one obtains

a group of blocks that are coded with the same prediction parameters. The prediction parameters for such a group of blocks need to be coded only once. Further, with respect to the merging of sets of samples, it should again be noted that the considered sets of samples may be rectangular or quadratic blocks, in which case the merged sets of samples represent a collection of rectangular and/or quadratic blocks. Alternatively, however, the considered sets of samples are arbitrarily shaped picture regions and the merged sets of samples represent a collection of arbitrarily shaped picture regions.

[0118] The following description focuses on the handling of different sample arrays of a picture in case there are more than one sample arrays per picture, and some aspects outlined in the following sub-description are advantageous independent from the kind of subdivision used, i.e. independent from the subdivision being based on multitree subdivision or not, and independent from merging being used or not. Before starting with describing specific embodiments regarding the handling of different sample arrays of a picture, the main issue of these embodiments is motivated by way of a short introduction into the field of the handling of different sample arrays per picture.

[0119] The following discussion focuses on coding parameters between blocks of different sample arrays of a picture in an image or video coding application, and, in particular, a way of adaptively predicting coding parameters between different sample arrays of a picture in, for example, but not exclusively the encoder and decoder of Figs. 1 and 2, respectively, or another image or video coding environment. The sample arrays can, as noted above, represent sample arrays that are related to different color components or sample arrays that associate a picture with additional information such as transparency data or depth maps. Sample arrays that are related to color components of a picture are also referred to as color planes. The technique described in the following is also referred to as inter-plane adoption/prediction and it can be used in block-based image and video encoders and decoders, whereby the processing order of the blocks of the sample arrays for a picture can be arbitrary.

[0120] Image and video coders are typically designed for coding color pictures (either still images or pictures of a video sequence). A color picture consists of multiple color planes, which represent sample arrays for different color components. Often, color pictures are coded as a set of sample arrays consisting of a luma plane and two chroma planes, where the latter ones specify color difference components. In some application areas, it is also common that the set of coded sample arrays consists of three color planes representing sample arrays for the three primary colors red, green, and blue. In addition, for an improved color representation, a color picture may consist of more than three color planes. Furthermore, a picture can be associated with auxiliary sample arrays that specify additional information for the picture. For instance, such auxiliary sample arrays can be sample ar-

rays that specify the transparency (suitable for specific display purposes) for the associated color sample arrays or sample arrays that specify a depth map (suitable for rendering multiple views, e.g., for 3-D displays).

[0121] In the conventional image and video coding standards (such as H.264), the color planes are usually coded together, whereby particular coding parameters such as macroblock and sub-macroblock prediction modes, reference indices, and motion vectors are used for all color components of a block. The luma plane can be considered as the primary color plane for which the particular coding parameters are specified in the bit-stream, and the chroma planes can be considered as secondary planes, for which the corresponding coding parameters are inferred from the primary luma plane. Each luma block is associated with two chroma blocks representing the same area in a picture. Depending on the used chroma sampling format, the chroma sample arrays can be smaller than the luma sample array for a block. For each macroblock consisting of a luma and two chroma components, the same partitioning into smaller blocks is used (if the macroblock is subdivided). For each block consisting of a block of luma samples and two blocks of chroma samples (which may be the macroblock itself or a subblock of the macroblock), the same set of prediction parameters such as reference indices, motion parameters, and sometimes intra prediction modes are employed. In specific profiles of conventional video coding standards (such as the 4:4:4 profiles in H.264), it is also possible to code the different color planes of a picture independently. In that configuration, the macroblock partitioning, the prediction modes, reference indices, and motion parameters can be separately chosen for a color component of a macroblock or subblock. Conventional coding standards either all color planes are coded together using the same set of particular coding parameters (such as subdivision information and prediction parameters) or all color planes are coded completely independently of each other.

[0122] If the color planes are coded together, one set of subdivision and prediction parameters must be used for all color components of a block. This ensures that the side information is kept small, but it can result in a reduction of the coding efficiency compared to an independent coding, since the usage of different block decompositions and prediction parameters for different color components can result in a smaller rate-distortion cost. As an example, the usage of a different motion vector or reference frame for the chroma components can significantly reduce the energy of the residual signal for the chroma components and increase their overall coding efficiency. If the color planes are coded independently, the coding parameters such as the block partitioning, the reference indices, and the motion parameters can be selected for each color component separately in order to optimize the coding efficiency for each color component. But it is not possible, to employ the redundancy between the color components. The multiple transmissions of particular coding pa-

rameters does result in an increased side information rate (compared to the combined coding) and this increased side information rate can have a negative impact on the overall coding efficiency. Also, the support for auxiliary sample arrays in the state-of-the-art video coding standards (such as H.264) is restricted to the case that the auxiliary sample arrays are coded using their own set of coding parameters.

[0123] Thus, in all embodiments described so far, the picture planes could be handled as described above, but as also discussed above, the overall coding efficiency for the coding of multiple sample arrays (which may be related to different color planes and/or auxiliary sample arrays) can be increased, when it would be possible to decide on a block basis, for example, whether all sample arrays for a block are coded with the same coding parameters or whether different coding parameters are used. The basic idea of the following inter-plane prediction is to allow such an adaptive decision on a block basis, for example. The encoder can choose, for example based on a rate-distortion criterion, whether all or some of the sample arrays for a particular block are coded using the same coding parameters or whether different coding parameters are used for different sample arrays. This selection can also be achieved by signaling for a particular block of a sample array whether specific coding parameters are inferred from an already coded co-located block of a different sample array. It is also possible to arrange different sample arrays for a picture in groups, which are also referred to as sample array groups or plane groups. Each plane group can contain one or more sample arrays of a picture. Then, the blocks of the sample arrays inside a plane group share the same selected coding parameters such as subdivision information, prediction modes, and residual coding modes, whereas other coding parameters such as transform coefficient levels are separately transmitted for each sample arrays inside the plane group. One plane group is coded as primary plane group, i.e., none of the coding parameters is inferred or predicted from other plane groups. For each block of a secondary plane group, it can be adaptively chosen whether a new set of selected coding parameters is transmitted or whether the selected coding parameters are inferred or predicted from the primary or another secondary plane group. The decisions of whether selected coding parameters for a particular block are inferred or predicted are included in the bitstream. The inter-plane prediction allows a greater freedom in selecting the trade-off between the side information rate and prediction quality relative to the state-of-the-art coding of pictures consisting of multiple sample arrays. The advantage is an improved coding efficiency relative to the conventional coding of pictures consisting of multiple sample arrays.

[0124] Intra-plane adoption/prediction may extend an image or video coder, such as those of the above embodiments, in a way that it can be adaptively chosen for a block of a color sample array or an auxiliary sample array or a set of color sample arrays and/or auxiliary sam-

ple arrays whether a selected set of coding parameters is inferred or predicted from already coded co-located blocks of other sample arrays in the same picture or whether the selected set of coding parameters for the block is independently coded without referring to co-located blocks of other sample arrays in the same picture. The decisions of whether the selected set of coding parameters is inferred or predicted for a block of a sample array or a block of multiple sample arrays may be included in the bitstream. The different sample arrays that are associated with a picture don't need to have the same size.

[0125] As described above, the sample arrays that are associated with a picture (the sample arrays can represent color components and/or auxiliary sample arrays) may be arranged into two or more so-called plane groups, where each plane group consists of one or more sample arrays. The sample arrays that are contained in a particular plane group don't need to have the same size. Note that this arrangement into plane group includes the case that each sample array is coded separately.

[0126] To be more precise, in accordance with an embodiment, it is adaptively chosen, for each block of a plane group, whether the coding parameters specifying how a block is predicted are inferred or predicted from an already coded co-located block of a different plane group for the same picture or whether these coding parameters are separately coded for the block. The coding parameters that specify how a block is predicted include one or more of the following coding parameters: block prediction modes specifying what prediction is used for the block (intra prediction, inter prediction using a single motion vector and reference picture, inter prediction using two motion vectors and reference pictures, inter prediction using a higher-order, i.e., non-translational motion model and a single reference picture, inter prediction using multiple motion models and reference pictures), intra prediction modes specifying how an intra prediction signal is generated, an identifier specifying how many prediction signals are combined for generating the final prediction signal for the block, reference indices specifying which reference picture(s) is/are employed for motion-compensated prediction, motion parameters (such as displacement vectors or affine motion parameters) specifying how the prediction signal(s) is/are generated using the reference picture(s), an identifier specifying how the reference picture(s) is/are filtered for generating motion-compensated prediction signals. Note that in general, a block can be associated with only a subset of the mentioned coding parameters. For instance, if the block prediction mode specifies that a block is intra predicted, the coding parameters for a block can additionally include intra prediction modes, but coding parameters such as reference indices and motion parameters that specify how an inter prediction signal is generated are not specified; or if the block prediction mode specifies inter prediction, the associated coding parameters can additionally include reference indices and motion parameters,

but intra prediction modes are not specified.

[0127] One of the two or more plane groups may be coded or indicated within the bitstream as the primary plane group. For all blocks of this primary plane group, the coding parameters specifying how the prediction signal is generated are transmitted without referring to other plane groups of the same picture. The remaining plane groups are coded as secondary plane groups. For each block of the secondary plane groups, one or more syntax elements are transmitted that signal whether the coding parameters for specifying how the block is predicted are inferred or predicted from a co-located block of other plane groups or whether a new set of these coding parameters is transmitted for the block. One of the one or more syntax elements may be referred to as inter-plane prediction flag or inter-plane prediction parameter. If the syntax elements signal that the corresponding coding parameters are not inferred or predicted, a new set of the corresponding coding parameters for the block are transmitted in the bitstream. If the syntax elements signal that the corresponding coding parameters are inferred or predicted, the co-located block in a so-called reference plane group is determined. The assignment of the reference plane group for the block can be configured in multiple ways. In one embodiment, a particular reference plane group is assigned to each secondary plane group; this assignment can be fixed or it can be signaled in high-level syntax structures such as parameter sets, access unit header, picture header, or slice header.

[0128] In a second embodiment, the assignment of the reference plane group is coded inside the bitstream and signaled by the one or more syntax elements that are coded for a block in order to specify whether the selected coding parameters are inferred or predicted or separately coded.

[0129] In order to ease the just-mentioned possibilities in connection with inter-plane prediction and the following detailed embodiments, reference is made to Fig. 11, which shows illustratively a picture 500 composed of three sample arrays 502, 504 and 506. For the sake of easier understanding, merely sub-portions of the sample arrays 502-506 are shown in Fig. 11. The sample arrays are shown as if they were registered against each other spatially, so that the sample arrays 502-506 overlay each other along a direction 508 and so that a projection of the samples of the sample arrays 502-506 along the direction 508 results in the samples of all these sample arrays 502-506 to be correctly spatially located to each other. In yet other words, the planes 502 and 506 have been spread along the horizontal and vertical direction in order to adapt their spatial resolution to each other and to register them to each other.

[0130] In accordance with an embodiment, all sample arrays of a picture belong to the same portion of a spatial scene wherein the resolution along the vertical and horizontal direction may differ between the individual sample arrays 502-506. Further, for illustration purposes, the sample arrays 502 and 504 are considered to belong to

one plane group 510, whereas the sample array 506 is considered to belong to another plane group 512. Further, Fig. 11 illustrates the exemplary case where the spatial resolution along the horizontal axis of sample array 504 is twice the resolution in the horizontal direction of sample array 502.

[0131] Moreover, sample array 504 is considered to form the primary array relative to sample array 502, which forms a subordinate array relative to primary array 504. As explained earlier, in this case, the subdivision of sample array 504 into blocks as decided by subdivider 30 of Fig. 1 is adopted by subordinate array 502 wherein, in accordance with the example of Fig. 11, due to the vertical resolution of sample array 502 being half the resolution in the vertical direction of primary array 504, each block has been halved into two horizontally juxtapositioned blocks, which, due to the halving are quadratic blocks again when measured in units of the sample positions within sample array 502.

[0132] As is exemplarily shown in Fig. 11, the subdivision chosen for sample array 506 is different from the subdivision of the other plane group 510. As described before, subdivider 30 may select the subdivision of pixel array 506 separately or independent from the subdivision for plane group 510. Of course, the resolution of sample array 506 may also differ from the resolutions of the planes 502 and 504 of plane group 510.

[0133] Now, when encoding the individual sample arrays 502-506, the encoder 10 may begin with coding the primary array 504 of plane group 510 in, for example, the manner described above. The blocks shown in Fig. 11 may, for example, be the prediction blocks mentioned above. Alternatively, the blocks are residual blocks or other blocks defining the granularity for defining certain coding parameters. The inter-plane prediction is not restricted to quadtree or multitrue subdivision, although this is illustrated in Fig. 11.

[0134] After the transmission of the syntax element for primary array 504, encoder 10 may decide to declare primary array 504 to be the reference plane for subordinate plane 502. Encoder 10 and extractor 30, respectively, may signal this decision via the bitstream 22 while the association may be clear from the fact that sample array 504 forms the primary array of plane group 510 which information, in turn, may also be part of the bitstream 22. In any case, for each block within sample array 502 inserter 18 or any other module of encoder 10 along with inserter 18 may decide to either suppress a transfer of the coding parameters of this block within the bitstream and to signal within the bitstream for that block instead that the coding parameters of a co-located block within the primary array 504 shall be used instead, or that the coding parameters of the co-located block within the primary array 504 shall be used as a prediction for the coding parameters of the current block of sample array 502 with merely transferring the residual data thereof for the current block of the sample array 502 within the bitstream. In case of a negative decision, the coding pa-

rameters are transferred within the data stream as usual. The decision is signaled within the data stream 22 for each block. At the decoder side, the extractor 102 uses this inter-plane prediction information for each block in order to gain the coding parameters of the respective block of the sample array 502 accordingly, namely by inferring the coding parameters of the co-located block of the primary array 504 or, alternatively, extracting residual data for that block from the data stream and combining this residual data with a prediction obtained from the coding parameters of the co-located block of the primary array 504 if the inter-plane adoption/prediction information suggests inter-plane adoption/prediction, or extracting the coding parameters of the current block of the sample array 502 as usual independent from the primary array 504.

[0135] As also described before, reference planes are not restricted to reside within the same plane group as the block for which inter-plane prediction is currently of interest. Therefore, as described above, plane group 510 may represent the primary plane group or reference plane group for the secondary plane group 512. In this case, the bitstream might contain a syntax element indicating for each block of sample array 506 as to whether the afore-mentioned adoption/prediction of coding parameters of co-located macroblocks of any of the planes 502 and 504 of the primary plane group or reference plane group 510 shall be performed or not wherein in the latter case the coding parameters of the current block of sample array 506 are transmitted as usual.

[0136] It should be noted that the subdivision and/or prediction parameters for the planes inside a plane group can be the same, i.e., because they are only coded once for a plane group (all secondary planes of a plane group infer the subdivision information and/or prediction parameters from the primary plane inside the same plane group), and the adaptive prediction or inference of the subdivision information and/or prediction parameters is done between plane groups.

[0137] It should be noted that the reference plane group can be a primary plane group, or a secondary plane group.

[0138] The co-location between blocks of different planes within a plane group is readily understandable as the subdivision of the primary sample array 504 is spatially adopted by the subordinate sample array 502, except the just-described sub-partitioning of the blocks in order to render the adopted leaf blocks into quadratic blocks. In case of inter-plane adoption/prediction between different plane groups, the co-location might be defined in a way so as to allow for a greater freedom between the subdivisions of these plane groups. Given the reference plane group, the co-located block inside the reference plane group is determined. The derivation of the co-located block and the reference plane group can be done by a process similar to the following. A particular sample 514 in the current block 516 of one of the sample arrays 506 of the secondary plane group 512 is

selected. Same may be the top-left sample of the current block 516 as shown at 514 in Fig. 11 for illustrative purposes or, a sample in the current block 516 close to the middle of the current block 516 or any other sample inside the current block, which is geometrically uniquely defined. The location of this selected sample 515 inside a sample array 502 and 504 of the reference plane group 510 is calculated. The positions of the sample 514 within the sample arrays 502 and 504 are indicated in Fig. 11 at 518 and 520, respectively. Which of the planes 502 and 504 within the reference plane group 510 is actually used may be predetermined or may be signaled within the bitstream. The sample within the corresponding sample array 502 or 504 of the reference plane group 510, being closest to the positions 518 and 520, respectively, is determined and the block that contains this sample is chosen as the co-located block within the respective sample array 502 and 504, respectively. In case of Fig. 11, these are blocks 522 and 524, respectively. An alternative approach for determining co-located block in other planes is described later.

[0139] In an embodiment, the coding parameters specifying the prediction for the current block 516 are completely inferred using the corresponding prediction parameters of the co-located block 522/524 in a different plane group 510 of the same picture 500, without transmitting additional side information. The inference can consist of a simply copying of the corresponding coding parameters or an adaptation of the coding parameters taken into account differences between the current 512 and the reference plane group 510. As an example, this adaptation may consist of adding a motion parameter correction (e.g., a displacement vector correction) for taking into account the phase difference between luma and chroma sample arrays; or the adaptation may consist of modifying the precision of the motion parameters (e.g., modifying the precision of displacement vectors) for taking into account the different resolution of luma and chroma sample arrays. In a further embodiment, one or more of the inferred coding parameters for specifying the prediction signal generation are not directly used for the current block 516, but are used as a prediction for the corresponding coding parameters for the current block 516 and a refinement of these coding parameters for the current block 516 is transmitted in the bitstream 22. As an example, the inferred motion parameters are not directly used, but motion parameter differences (such as a displacement vector difference) specifying the deviation between the motion parameters that are used for the current block 516 and the inferred motion parameters are coded in the bitstream; at the decoder side, the actual used motion parameters are obtained by combining the inferred motion parameters and the transmitted motion parameter differences.

[0140] In another embodiment, the subdivision of a block, such as the treeblocks of the aforementioned prediction subdivision into prediction blocks (i.e., blocks of samples for which the same set of prediction parameters

is used) is adaptively inferred or predicted from an already coded co-located block of a different plane group for the same picture, i.e. the bit sequence according to Fig. 6a or 6b. In an embodiment, one of the two or more plane groups is coded as primary plane group. For all blocks of this primary plane group, the subdivision information is transmitted without referring to other plane groups of the same picture. The remaining plane groups are coded as secondary plane groups. For blocks of the secondary plane groups, one or more syntax elements are transmitted that signal whether the subdivision information is inferred or predicted from a co-located block of other plane groups or whether the subdivision information is transmitted in the bitstream. One of the one or more syntax elements may be referred to as inter-plane prediction flag or inter-plane prediction parameter. If the syntax elements signal that the subdivision information is not inferred or predicted, the subdivision information for the block is transmitted in the bitstream without referring to other plane groups of the same picture. If the syntax elements signal that the subdivision information is inferred or predicted, the co-located block in a so-called reference plane group is determined. The assignment of the reference plane group for the block can be configured in multiple ways. In one embodiment, a particular reference plane group is assigned to each secondary plane group; this assignment can be fixed or it can be signaled in high-level syntax structures as parameter sets, access unit header, picture header, or slice header. In a second embodiment, the assignment of the reference plane group is coded inside the bitstream and signaled by the one or more syntax elements that are coded for a block in order to specify whether the subdivision information is inferred or predicted or separately coded. The reference plane group can be the primary plane group or another secondary plane group. Given the reference plane group, the co-located block inside the reference plane group is determined. The co-located block is the block in the reference plane group that corresponds to the same image area as the current block, or the block that represents the block inside the reference plane group that shares the largest portion of the image area with the current block. The co-located block can be partitioned into smaller prediction blocks.

[0141] In a further embodiment, the subdivision information for the current block, such as the quadtree-based subdivision info according to Figs. 6a or 6b, is completely inferred using the subdivision information of the co-located block in a different plane group of the same picture, without transmitting additional side information. As a particular example, if the co-located block is partitioned into two or four prediction blocks, the current block is also partitioned into two or four subblocks for the purpose of prediction. As another particular example, if the co-located block is partitioned into four subblocks and one of these subblocks is further partitioned into four smaller subblocks, the current block is also partitioned into four subblocks and one of these subblocks (the one corre-

sponding to the subblock of the co-located block that is further decomposed) is also partitioned into four smaller subblocks. In a further preferred embodiment, the inferred subdivision information is not directly used for the current block, but it is used as a prediction for the actual subdivision information for the current block, and the corresponding refinement information is transmitted in the bitstream. As an example, the subdivision information that is inferred from the co-located block may be further refined. For each subblock that corresponds to a subblock in the co-located block that is not partitioned into smaller blocks, a syntax element can be coded in the bitstream, which specifies if the subblock is further decomposed in the current plane group. The transmission of such a syntax element can be conditioned on the size of the subblock. Or it can be signaled in the bitstream that a subblock that is further partitioned in the reference plane group is not partitioned into smaller blocks in the current plane group.

[0142] In a further embodiment, both the subdivision of a block into prediction blocks and the coding parameters specifying how that subblocks are predicted are adaptively inferred or predicted from an already coded co-located block of a different plane group for the same picture. In a preferred embodiment of the invention, one of the two or more plane groups is coded as primary plane group. For all blocks of this primary plane group, the subdivision information and the prediction parameters are transmitted without referring to other plane groups of the same picture. The remaining plane groups are coded as secondary plane groups. For blocks of the secondary plane groups, one or more syntax elements are transmitted that signal whether the subdivision information and the prediction parameters are inferred or predicted from a co-located block of other plane groups or whether the subdivision information and the prediction parameters are transmitted in the bitstream. One of the one or more syntax elements may be referred to as inter-plane prediction flag or inter-plane prediction parameter. If the syntax elements signal that the subdivision information and the prediction parameters are not inferred or predicted, the subdivision information for the block and the prediction parameters for the resulting subblocks are transmitted in the bitstream without referring to other plane groups of the same picture. If the syntax elements signal that the subdivision information and the prediction parameters for the subblock are inferred or predicted, the co-located block in a so-called reference plane group is determined. The assignment of the reference plane group for the block can be configured in multiple ways. In one embodiment, a particular reference plane group is assigned to each secondary plane group; this assignment can be fixed or it can be signaled in high-level syntax structures such as parameter sets, access unit header, picture header, or slice header. In a second embodiment, the assignment of the reference plane group is coded inside the bitstream and signaled by the one or more syntax elements that are coded for a block in order to

specify whether the subdivision information and the prediction parameters are inferred or predicted or separately coded. The reference plane group can be the primary plane group or another secondary plane group. Given the reference plane group, the co-located block inside the reference plane group is determined. The co-located block may be the block in the reference plane group that corresponds to the same image area as the current block, or the block that represents the block inside the reference plane group that shares the largest portion of the image area with the current block. The co-located block can be partitioned into smaller prediction blocks. In a preferred embodiment, the subdivision information for the current block as well as the prediction parameters for the resulting subblocks are completely inferred using the subdivision information of the co-located block in a different plane group of the same picture and the prediction parameters of the corresponding subblocks, without transmitting additional side information. As a particular example, if the co-located block is partitioned into two or four prediction blocks, the current block is also partitioned into two or four subblocks for the purpose of prediction and the prediction parameters for the subblocks of the current block are derived as described above. As another particular example, if the co-located block is partitioned into four subblocks and one of these subblocks is further partitioned into four smaller subblocks, the current block is also partitioned into four subblocks and one of these subblocks (the one corresponding to the subblock of the co-located block that is further decomposed) is also partitioned into four smaller subblocks and the prediction parameters for all not further partitioned subblocks are inferred as described above. In a further preferred embodiment, the subdivision information is completely inferred based on the subdivision information of the co-located block in the reference plane group, but the inferred prediction parameters for the subblocks are only used as prediction for the actual prediction parameters of the subblocks. The deviations between the actual prediction parameters and the inferred prediction parameters are coded in the bitstream. In a further embodiment, the inferred subdivision information is used as a prediction for the actual subdivision information for the current block and the difference is transmitted in the bitstream (as described above), but the prediction parameters are completely inferred. In another embodiment, both the inferred subdivision information and the inferred prediction parameters are used as prediction and the differences between the actual subdivision information and prediction parameters and their inferred values are transmitted in the bitstream.

[0143] In another embodiment, it is adaptively chosen, for a block of a plane group, whether the residual coding modes (such as the transform type) are inferred or predicted from an already coded co-located block of a different plane group for the same picture or whether the residual coding modes are separately coded for the block. This embodiment is similar to the embodiment for

the adaptive inference/prediction of the prediction parameters described above.

[0144] In another embodiment, the subdivision of a block (e.g., a prediction block) into transform blocks (i.e., blocks of samples to which a two-dimensional transform is applied) is adaptively inferred or predicted from an already coded co-located block of a different plane group for the same picture. This embodiment is similar to the embodiment for the adaptive inference/prediction of the subdivision into prediction blocks described above.

[0145] In another embodiment, the subdivision of a block into transform blocks and the residual coding modes (e.g., transform types) for the resulting transform blocks are adaptively inferred or predicted from an already coded co-located block of a different plane group for the same picture. This embodiment is similar to the embodiment for the adaptive inference/prediction of the subdivision into prediction blocks and the prediction parameters for the resulting prediction blocks described above.

[0146] In another embodiment, the subdivision of a block into prediction blocks, the associated prediction parameters, the subdivision information of the prediction blocks, and the residual coding modes for the transform blocks are adaptively inferred or predicted from an already coded co-located block of a different plane group for the same picture. This embodiment represents a combination of the embodiments described above. It is also possible that only some of the mentioned coding parameters are inferred or predicted.

[0147] Thus, the inter-plane adoption/prediction may increase the coding efficiency described previously. However, the coding efficiency gain by way of inter-plane adoption/prediction is also available in case of other block subdivisions being used than multitree-based subdivisions and independent from block merging being implemented or not.

[0148] The above-outlined embodiments with respect to inter plane adaptation/prediction are applicable to image and video encoders and decoders that divide the color planes of a picture and, if present, the auxiliary sample arrays associated with a picture into blocks and associate these blocks with coding parameters. For each block, a set of coding parameters may be included in the bitstream. For instance, these coding parameters can be parameters that describe how a block is predicted or decoded at the decoder side. As particular examples, the coding parameters can represent macroblock or block prediction modes, sub-division information, intra prediction modes, reference indices used for motion-compensated prediction, motion parameters such as displacement vectors, residual coding modes, transform coefficients, etc. The different sample arrays that are associated with a picture can have different sizes.

[0149] Next, a scheme for enhanced signaling of coding parameters within a tree-based partitioning scheme as, for example, those described above with respect to Fig. 1 to 8 is described. As with the other schemes, name-

ly merging and inter plane adoption/prediction, the effects and advantages of the enhanced signaling schemes, in the following often called inheritance, are described independent from the above embodiments, although the below described schemes are combinable with any of the above embodiments, either alone or in combination.

[0150] Generally, the improved coding scheme for coding side information within a tree-based partitioning scheme, called inheritance, described next enables the following advantages relative to conventional schemes of coding parameter treatment.

[0151] In conventional image and video coding, the pictures or particular sets of sample arrays for the pictures are usually decomposed into blocks, which are associated with particular coding parameters. The pictures usually consist of multiple sample arrays. In addition, a picture may also be associated with additional auxiliary samples arrays, which may, for example, specify transparency information or depth maps. The sample arrays of a picture (including auxiliary sample arrays) can be grouped into one or more so-called plane groups, where each plane group consists of one or more sample arrays. The plane groups of a picture can be coded independently or, if the picture is associated with more than one plane group, with prediction from other plane groups of the same picture. Each plane group is usually decomposed into blocks. The blocks (or the corresponding blocks of sample arrays) are predicted by either inter-picture prediction or intra-picture prediction. The blocks can have different sizes and can be either quadratic or rectangular. The partitioning of a picture into blocks can be either fixed by the syntax, or it can be (at least partly) signaled inside the bitstream. Often syntax elements are transmitted that signal the subdivision for blocks of predefined sizes. Such syntax elements may specify whether and how a block is subdivided into smaller blocks and being associated coding parameters, e.g. for the purpose of prediction. For all samples of a block (or the corresponding blocks of sample arrays) the decoding of the associated coding parameters is specified in a certain way. In the example, all samples in a block are predicted using the same set of prediction parameters, such as reference indices (identifying a reference picture in the set of already coded pictures), motion parameters (specifying a measure for the movement of a blocks between a reference picture and the current picture), parameters for specifying the interpolation filter, intra prediction modes, etc. The motion parameters can be represented by displacement vectors with a horizontal and vertical component or by higher order motion parameters such as affine motion parameters consisting of six components. It is also possible that more than one set of particular prediction parameters (such as reference indices and motion parameters) are associated with a single block. In that case, for each set of these particular prediction parameters, a single intermediate prediction signal for the block (or the corresponding blocks of sample arrays) is generated, and the final prediction signal is

build by a combination including superimposing the intermediate prediction signals. The corresponding weighting parameters and potentially also a constant offset (which is added to the weighted sum) can either be fixed for a picture, or a reference picture, or a set of reference pictures, or they can be included in the set of prediction parameters for the corresponding block. The difference between the original blocks (or the corresponding blocks of sample arrays) and their prediction signals, also referred to as the residual signal, is usually transformed and quantized. Often, a two-dimensional transform is applied to the residual signal (or the corresponding sample arrays for the residual block). For transform coding, the blocks (or the corresponding blocks of sample arrays), for which a particular set of prediction parameters has been used, can be further split before applying the transform. The transform blocks can be equal to or smaller than the blocks that are used for prediction. It is also possible that a transform block includes more than one of the blocks that are used for prediction. Different transform blocks can have different sizes and the transform blocks can represent quadratic or rectangular blocks. After transform, the resulting transform coefficients are quantized and so-called transform coefficient levels are obtained. The transform coefficient levels as well as the prediction parameters and, if present, the subdivision information is entropy coded.

[0152] In some image and video coding standards, the possibilities for subdividing a picture (or a plane group) into blocks that are provided by the syntax are very limited. Usually, it can only be specified whether and (potentially how) a block of a predefined size can be subdivided into smaller blocks. As an example, the largest block size in H.264 is 16x16. The 16x16 blocks are also referred to as macroblocks and each picture is partitioned into macroblocks in a first step. For each 16x16 macroblock, it can be signaled whether it is coded as 16x16 block, or as two 16x8 blocks, or as two 8x16 blocks, or as four 8x8 blocks. If a 16x16 block is subdivided into four 8x8 block, each of these 8x8 blocks can be either coded as one 8x8 block, or as two 8x4 blocks, or as two 4x8 blocks, or as four 4x4 blocks. The small set of possibilities for specifying the partitioning into blocks in state-of-the-art image and video coding standards has the advantage that the side information rate for signaling the subdivision information can be kept small, but it has the disadvantage that the bit rate required for transmitting the prediction parameters for the blocks can become significant as explained in the following. The side information rate for signaling the prediction information does usually represent a significant amount of the overall bit rate for a block. And the coding efficiency could be increased when this side information is reduced, which, for instance, could be achieved by using larger block sizes. Real images or pictures of a video sequence consist of arbitrarily shaped objects with specific properties. As an example, such objects or parts of the objects are characterized by a unique texture or a unique motion. And

usually, the same set of prediction parameters can be applied for such an object or part of an object. But the object boundaries usually don't coincide with the possible block boundaries for large prediction blocks (e.g., 16x16 macroblocks in H.264). An encoder usually determines the subdivision (among the limited set of possibilities) that results in the minimum of a particular rate-distortion cost measure. For arbitrarily shaped objects this can result in a large number of small blocks. And since each of these small blocks is associated with a set of prediction parameters, which need to be transmitted, the side information rate can become a significant part of the overall bit rate. But since several of the small blocks still represent areas of the same object or part of an object, the prediction parameters for a number of the obtained blocks are the same or very similar. Intuitively, the coding efficiency could be increased when the syntax is extended in a way that it does not only allow to subdivide a block, but also to share coding parameters between the blocks that are obtained after subdivision. In a tree-based subdivision, sharing of coding parameters for a given set of blocks can be achieved by assigning the coding parameters or parts thereof to one or more parent nodes in the tree-based hierarchy. As a result, the shared parameters or parts thereof can be used in order to reduce the side information that is necessary to signal the actual choice of coding parameters for the blocks obtained after subdivision. Reduction can be achieved by omitting the signaling of parameters for subsequent blocks or by using the shared parameter(s) for prediction and/or context modeling of the parameters for subsequent blocks.

[0153] The basic idea of the inheritance scheme described below is to reduce the bit rate that is required for transmitting the coding parameters by sharing information along the tree-based hierarchy of blocks. The shared information is signaled inside the bitstream (in addition to the subdivision information). The advantage of the inheritance scheme is an increased coding efficiency resulting from a decreased side information rate for the coding parameters.

[0154] In order to reduce the side information rate, in accordance with the embodiments described below, the respective coding parameters for particular sets of samples, i.e. simply connected regions, which may represent rectangular or quadratic blocks or arbitrarily shaped regions or any other collection of samples, of a multitree subdivision are signaled within the data stream in an efficient way. The inheritance scheme described below enables that the coding parameters don't have to be explicitly included in the bitstream for each of these sample sets in full. The coding parameters may represent prediction parameters, which specify how the corresponding set of samples is predicted using already coded samples. Many possibilities and examples have been described above and do also apply here. As has also been indicated above, and will be described further below, as far as the following inheritance scheme is concerned, the tree-based partitioning of the sample arrays of a picture into

sample sets may be fixed by the syntax or may be signaled by corresponding subdivision information inside the bitstream. The coding parameters for the sample sets may, as described above, be transmitted in a predefined order, which is given by the syntax.

[0155] In accordance with the inheritance scheme, the decoder or extractor 102 of the decoder is configured to derive the information on the coding parameters of the individual simply connected region or sample sets in a specific way. In particular, coding parameters or parts thereof such as those parameters serving for the purpose of prediction, are shared between blocks along the given tree-based partitioning scheme with the sharing group along the tree structure being decided by the encoder or inserter 18, respectively. In a particular embodiment, sharing of the coding parameters for all child nodes of a given internal node of the partitioning tree is indicated by using a specific binary-valued sharing flag. As an alternative approach, refinements of the coding parameters can be transmitted for each node such that the accumulated refinements of parameters along the tree-based hierarchy of blocks can be applied to all sample sets of the block at a given leaf node. In another embodiment, parts of the coding parameters that are transmitted for internal nodes along the tree-based hierarchy of blocks can be used for context-adaptive entropy encoding and decoding of the coding parameter or parts thereof for the block at a given leaf node.

[0156] Fig. 12a and 12b illustrate the basis idea of inheritance for the specific case of using a quadtree-based partitioning. However, as indicated several times above, other multitree subdivision schemes may be used as well. The tree structure is shown in Fig. 12a whereas the corresponding spatial partitioning corresponding to the tree structure of Fig. 12a is shown in Fig. 12b. The partitioning shown therein is similar to that shown with respect to Figs. 3a to 3c. Generally speaking, the inheritance scheme will allow side information to be assigned to nodes at different non-leaf layers within the tree structure. Depending on the assignment of side information to nodes at the different layers in the tree, such as the internal nodes in the tree of Fig. 12a or the root node thereof, different degrees of sharing side information can be achieved within the tree hierarchy of blocks shown in Fig. 12b. For example, if it is decided that all the leaf nodes in layer 4, which, in case of Fig. 12a all have the same parent node, shall share side information, virtually, this means that the smallest blocks in Fig. 12b indicated with 156a to 156d share this side information and it is no longer necessary to transmit the side information for all these small blocks 156a to 156d in full, i.e. four times, although this is kept as an option for the encoder. However, it would also be possible to decide that a whole region of hierarchy level 1 (layer 2) of Fig. 12a, namely the quarter portion at the top right hand corner of tree block 150 including the subblocks 154a, 154b and 154d as well as the even smaller subblock 156a to 156d just-mentioned, serves as a region wherein coding parameters are shared. Thus,

the area sharing side information is increased. The next level of increase would be to sum-up all the subblocks of layer 1, namely subblocks 152a, 152c and 152d and the afore-mentioned smaller blocks. In other words, in this case, the whole tree block would have side information assigned thereto with all the subblocks of this tree block 150 sharing the side information.

[0157] In the following description of inheritance, the following notation is used for describing the embodiments:

- a. Reconstructed samples of current leaf node: r
- b. Reconstructed samples of neighboring leaves: r'
- c. Predictor of the current leaf node: p
- d. Residual of the current leaf node: $Re\ s$
- e. Reconstructed residual of the current leaf node: $Re\ c\ Re\ s$
- f. Scaling and Inverse transform : SIT
- g. Sharing flag: f

[0158] As a first example of inheritance, the intra-prediction signalization at internal nodes may be described. To be more precise, it is described how to signalize intra-prediction modes at internal nodes of a tree-based block partitioning for the purpose of prediction. By traversing the tree from the root node to the leaf nodes, internal nodes (including the root node) may convey parts of side information that will be exploited by its corresponding child nodes. To be more specific, a sharing flag f is transmitted for internal nodes with the following meaning:

- If f has a value of 1 ("true"), all child nodes of the given internal node share the same intra-prediction mode. In addition to the sharing flag f with a value of 1, the internal node also signals the intra-prediction mode parameter to be used for all child nodes. Consequently, all subsequent child nodes do not carry any prediction mode information as well as any sharing flags. For the reconstruction of all related leaf nodes, the decoder applies the intra-prediction mode from the corresponding internal node.
- If f has a value of 0 ("false"), the child nodes of the corresponding internal node do not share the same intra-prediction mode and each child node that is an internal node carries a separate sharing flag.

[0159] Fig. 12c illustrates the intra-prediction signalization at internal nodes as described above. The internal node in layer 1 conveys the sharing flag and the side information which is given by the intra-prediction mode information and the child nodes are not carrying any side information.

[0160] As a second example of inheritance, the inter-prediction refinement may be described. To be more precise, it is described how to signalize side information of inter-prediction modes at internal nodes of a tree-based block partitioning for the purpose of refinement of motion parameters, as e.g., given by motion vectors. By travers-

ing the tree from the root node to the leaf nodes, internal nodes (including the root node) may convey parts of side information that will be refined by its corresponding child nodes. To be more specific, a sharing flag f is transmitted for internal nodes with the following meaning:

- If f has a value of 1 ("true"), all child nodes of the given internal node share the same motion vector reference. In addition to the sharing flag f with a value of 1, the internal node also signals the motion vector and the reference index. Consequently, all subsequent child nodes carry no further sharing flags but may carry a refinement of this inherited motion vector reference. For the reconstruction of all related leaf nodes, the decoder adds the motion vector refinement at the given leaf node to the inherited motion vector reference belonging to its corresponding internal parent node that has a sharing flag f with a value of 1. This means that the motion vector refinement at a given leaf node is the difference between the actual motion vector to be applied for motion-compensated prediction at this leaf node and the motion vector reference of its corresponding internal parent node.
- If f has a value of 0 ("false"), the child nodes of the corresponding internal node do not necessarily share the same inter-prediction mode and no refinement of the motion parameters is performed at the child nodes by using the motion parameters from the corresponding internal node and each child node that is an internal node carries a separate sharing flag.

[0161] Fig. 12d illustrates the motion parameter refinement as described above. The internal node in layer 1 is conveying the sharing flag and side information. The child nodes which are leaf nodes carry only the motion parameter refinements and, e.g., the internal child node in layer 2 carries no side information.

[0162] Reference is made now to Fig. 13. Fig. 13 shows a flow diagram illustrating the mode of operation of a decoder such as the decoder of Fig. 2 in reconstructing an array of information samples representing a spatial example information signal, which is subdivided into leaf regions of different sizes by multi-tree subdivision, from a data stream. As has been described above, each leaf region has associated therewith a hierarchy level out of a sequence of hierarchy levels of the multi-tree subdivision. For example, all blocks shown in Fig. 12b are leaf regions. Leaf region 156c, for example, is associated with hierarchy layer 4 (or level 3). Each leaf region has associated therewith coding parameters. Examples of these coding parameters have been described above. The coding parameters are, for each leaf region, represented by a respective set of syntax elements. Each syntax element is of a respective syntax element type out of a set of syntax element types. Such syntax element type is, for example, a prediction mode, a motion vector component,

an indication of an intra-prediction mode or the like. According to Fig. 13, the decoder performs the following steps.

[0163] In step 550, an inheritance information is extracted from the data stream. In case of Fig. 2, the extractor 102 is responsible for step 550. The inheritance information indicates as to whether inheritance is used or not for the current array of information samples. The following description will reveal that there are several possibilities for the inheritance information such as, inter alias, the sharing flag *f* and the signaling of a multitree structure divided into a primary and secondary part.

[0164] The array of information samples may already be a subpart of a picture, such as a treeblock, namely the treeblock 150 of Fig. 12b, for example. Thus, the inheritance information indicates as to whether inheritance is used or not for the specific treeblock 150. Such inheritance information may be inserted into the data stream for all tree blocks of the prediction subdivision, for example.

[0165] Further, the inheritance information indicates, if inheritance is indicated to be used, at least one inheritance region of the array of information samples, which is composed of a set of leaf regions and corresponds to an hierarchy level of the sequence of hierarchy levels of the multi-tree subdivision, being lower than each of the hierarchy levels with which the set of leaf regions are associated. In other words, the inheritance information indicates as to whether inheritance is to be used or not for the current sample array such as the treeblock 150. If yes, it denotes at least one inheritance region or sub-region of this treeblock 150, within which the leaf regions share coding parameters. Thus, the inheritance region may not be a leaf region. In the example of Fig. 12b, this inheritance region may, for example, be the region formed by subblocks 156a to 156b. Alternatively, the inheritance region may be larger and may encompass also additionally the subblocks 154a,b and d, and even alternatively, the inheritance region may be the treeblock 150 itself with all the leaf blocks thereof sharing coding parameters associated with that inheritance region.

[0166] It should be noted, however, that more than one inheritance region may be defined within one sample array or treeblock 150, respectively. Imagine, for example, the bottom left subblock 152c was also partitioned into smaller blocks. In this case, subblock 152c could also form an inheritance region.

[0167] In step 552, the inheritance information is checked as to whether inheritance is to be used or not. If yes, the process of Fig. 13 proceeds with step 554 where an inheritance subset including at least one syntax element of a predetermined syntax element type is extracted from the data stream per inter-inheritance region. In the following step 556, this inheritance subset is then copied into, or used as a prediction for, a corresponding inheritance subset of syntax elements within the set of syntax elements representing the coding parameters associated with the set of leaf regions which the respective

at least one inheritance region is composed of. In other words, for each inheritance region indicated within the inheritance information, the data stream comprises an inheritance subset of syntax elements. In even other words, the inheritance pertains to at least one certain syntax element type or syntax element category which is available for inheritance. For example, the prediction mode or inter-prediction mode or intra-prediction mode syntax element may be subject to inheritance. For example, the inheritance subset contained within the data stream for the inheritance region may comprise an inter-prediction mode syntax element. The inheritance subset may also comprise further syntax elements the syntax element types of which depend on the value of the aforementioned fixed syntax element type associated with the inheritance scheme. For example, in case of the inter-prediction mode being a fixed component of the inheritance subset, the syntax elements defining the motion compensation, such as the motion-vector components, may or may not be included in the inheritance subset by syntax. Imagine, for example, the top right quarter of treeblock 150, namely subblock 152b, was the inheritance region, then either the inter-prediction mode alone could be indicated for this inheritance region or the inter-prediction mode along with motion vectors and motion vector indices.

[0168] All the syntax elements contained in the inheritance subset is copied into or used as a prediction for the corresponding coding parameters of the leaf blocks within that inheritance region, i.e. leaf blocks 154a,b,d and 156a to 156d. In case of prediction being used, residuals are transmitted for the individual leaf blocks.

[0169] One possibility of transmitting the inheritance information for the treeblock 150 is the afore-mentioned transmission of a sharing flag *f*. The extraction of the inheritance information in step 550 could, in this case, comprise the following. In particular, the decoder could be configured to extract and check, for non-leaf regions corresponding to any of an inheritance set of at least one hierarchy level of the multi-tree subdivision, using an hierarchy level order from lower hierarchy level to higher hierarchy level, the sharing flag *f* from the data stream, as to whether the respective inheritance flag or share flag prescribes inheritance or not. For example, the inheritance set of hierarchy levels could be formed by hierarchy layers 1 to 3 in Fig. 12a. Thus, for any of the nodes of the subtree structure not being a leaf node and lying within any of layers 1 to 3 could have a sharing flag associated therewith within the data stream. The decoder extracts these sharing flags in the order from layer 1 to layer 3, such as in a depth-first or breadth first traversal order. As soon as one of the sharing flags equals 1, the decoder knows that the leaf blocks contained in a corresponding inheritance region share the inheritance subset subsequently extracted in step 554. For the child nodes of the current node, a checking of inheritance flags is no longer necessary. In other words, inheritance flags for these child nodes are not transmitted within the data

stream, since it is clear that the area of these nodes already belongs to the inheritance region within which the inheritance subset of syntax elements is shared.

[0170] The sharing flags f could be interleaved with the afore-mentioned bits signaling the quadtree sub-division. For example, an interleave bit sequence including both sub-division flags as well as sharing flags could be:

100011101(0000)000,

which is the same sub-division information as illustrated in Fig. 6a with two interspersed sharing flags, which are highlighted by underlining, in order to indicate that in Fig. 3c all the sub-blocks within the bottom left hand quarter of tree block 150 share coding parameters.

[0171] Another way to define the inheritance information indicating the inheritance region would be the use of two sub-divisions defined in a subordinate manner to each other as explained above with respect to the prediction and residual sub-division, respectively. Generally speaking, the leaf blocks of the primary sub-division could form the inheritance region defining the regions within which inheritance subsets of syntax elements are shared while the subordinate sub-division defines the blocks within these inheritance regions for which the inheritance subset of syntax elements are copied or used as a prediction.

[0172] Consider, for example, the residual tree as an extension of the prediction tree. Further, consider the case where prediction blocks can be further divided into smaller blocks for the purpose of residual coding. For each prediction block that corresponds to a leaf node of the prediction-related quadtree, the corresponding sub-division for residual coding is determined by one or more subordinate quadtree(s).

[0173] In this case, rather than using any prediction signalization at internal nodes, we consider the residual tree as being interpreted in such a way that it also specifies a refinement of the prediction tree in the sense of using a constant prediction mode (signaled by the corresponding leaf node of the prediction-related tree) but with refined reference samples. The following example illustrates this case.

[0174] For example, Fig. 14a and 14b show a quadtree partitioning for intra prediction with neighboring reference samples being highlighted for one specific leaf node of the primary sub-division, while Fig. 14b shows the residual quadtree sub-division for the same prediction leaf node with refined reference samples. All the subblocks shown in Fig. 14b share the same inter-prediction parameters contained within the data stream for the respective leaf block highlighted in Fig. 14a. Thus, Fig. 14a shows an example for the conventional quadtree partitioning for intra prediction, where the reference samples for one specific leaf node are depicted. In our preferred embodiment, however, a separate intra prediction signal

is calculated for each leaf node in the residual tree by using neighboring samples of already reconstructed leaf nodes in the residual tree, e.g., as indicated by the grey shaded stripes in Fig. 4(b). Then, the reconstructed signal of a given residual leaf node is obtained in the ordinary way by adding the quantized residual signal to this prediction signal. This reconstructed signal is then used as a reference signal for the following prediction process. Note that the decoding order for prediction is the same as the residual decoding order.

[0175] In the decoding process, as shown in Figure 15, for each residual leaf node, the prediction signal p is calculated according to the actual intra-prediction mode (as indicated by the prediction-related quadtree leaf node) by using the reference samples r' .

[0176] After the SIT process,

$$RecRes = SIT(Res)$$

the reconstructed signal r is calculated and stored for the next prediction calculation process:

$$r = RecRes + p$$

[0177] The decoding order for prediction is the same as the residual decoding order, which is illustrated in Figure 16.

[0178] Each residual leaf node is decoded as described in the previous paragraph. The reconstructed signal r is stored in a buffer as shown in Figure 16. Out of this buffer, the reference samples r' will be taken for the next prediction and decoding process.

[0179] After having described specific embodiments with respect to Figs. 1 to 16 with combined distinct subsets of the above-outlined aspects, further embodiments of the present application are described which focus on certain aspects already described above, but which embodiments represent generalizations of some of the embodiments described above.

[0180] In particular, the embodiments described above with respect to the framework of Figs. 1 and 2 mainly combined many aspects of the present application, which would also be advantageous when employed in other applications or other coding fields. As frequently mentioned during the above discussion, the multitree subdivision, for example, may be used without merging and/or without inter-plane adoption/prediction and/or without inheritance. For example, the transmission of the maximum block size, the use of the depth-first traversal order, the context adaptation depending on the hierarchy level of the respective subdivision flag and the transmission of the maximum hierarchy level within the bitstream in order to save side information bitrate, all these aspects are advantageous independent from each other. This is also true when considering the merging scheme. Merging

is advantageously independent from the exact way a picture is subdivided into simply connected regions and is advantageously independent from the existence of more than one sample array or the use of inter-plane adoption/prediction and/or inheritance. The same applies for the advantages involved with inter-plane adoption/prediction and inheritance.

[0181] Accordingly, the embodiments outlined in the following generalize the afore-mentioned embodiments regarding aspects pertaining to the merging. As the following embodiments represent generalizations of the embodiments described above, many of the above described details may be regarded as being combinable with the embodiments described in the following.

[0182] Fig. 17 shows a decoder in accordance with an embodiment of the present application. The decoder of Fig. 17 comprises an extractor 600 and a reconstructor 602. The extractor 600 is configured to extract, for each of a plurality of simply connected regions into which an array of information samples representing a spatially sampled information signal is subdivided, payload data from a data stream 604. As described above, the simply connected regions into which the array of information samples is subdivided may stem from a multitree-subdivision and may be quadratic or rectangular shaped. Further, the specifically described embodiments for subdividing a sample array are merely specific embodiments and other subdivisions may be used as well. Some possibilities are shown in Fig. 18a-c. Fig. 18a, for example, shows the subdivision of a sample array 606 into a regular two-dimensional arrangement of non-overlapping tree-blocks 608 abutting each other with some of which being subdivided in accordance with a multitree structure into subblocks 610 of different sizes. As mentioned above, although a quadtree subdivision is illustrated in Fig. 18a, a partitioning of each parent node in any other number of child nodes is also possible. Fig. 18b shows an embodiment according to which a sample array 606 is subdivided into subblocks of different sizes by applying a multitree subdivision directly onto the whole pixel array 606. That is, the whole pixel array 606 is treated as the treeblock. Fig. 18c shows another embodiment. According to this embodiment, the sample array is structured into a regular two-dimensional arrangement of macroblocks of quadratic or rectangular shapes which abut to each other and each of these macroblocks 612 is individually associated with partitioning information according to which a macroblock 612 is left unpartitioned or is partitioned into a regular two-dimensional arrangement of blocks of a size indicated by the partitioning information. As can be seen, all of the subdivisions of Figs. 13a-13c lead to a subdivision of the sample array 606 into simply connected regions which are exemplarily, in accordance with the embodiments of Figs. 18a-18c, non-overlapping. However, several alternatives are possible. For example, the blocks may overlap each other. The overlapping may, however, be restricted to such an extent that each block has a portion not overlapped by any

neighboring block, or such that each sample of the blocks is overlapped by, at the maximum, one block among the neighboring blocks arranged in juxtaposition to the current block along a predetermined direction. That latter would mean that the left and right hand neighbor blocks may overlap the current block so as to fully cover the current block but they may not overlay each other, and the same applies for the neighbors in vertical and diagonal direction.

[0183] As described above with respect to Figs. 1 to 16, the array of information samples do not necessarily represent a picture of a video or a still picture. The sample array 606 could also represent a depth map or a transparency map of some scene.

[0184] The payload data associated with each of the plurality of simply connected regions may, as already discussed above, comprise residual data in spatial domain or in a transform domain such as transform coefficients and a significance map identifying the positions of significant transform coefficients within a transform block corresponding to a residual block. Generally speaking, the payload data extracted by extractor 600 for each simply connected region from the data stream 604 is data which spatially describes its associated simply connected region either in the spatial domain or in a spectral domain and either directly or as a residual to some sort of prediction thereof, for example.

[0185] The reconstructor 602 is configured to reconstruct the array of information samples from the payload data for the simply connected regions of the array of information samples by processing, for each simply connected region, the payload data for the respective simply connected regions in a way prescribed by coding parameters associated with the respective simply connected regions. Similar to the above discussion, the coding parameters may be prediction parameters and accordingly, the simply connected regions shown in Figs. 18a-18b may correspond to the prediction blocks mentioned above, i.e. blocks in units of which the data stream 604 defines prediction details for predicting the individual simply connected regions. However, the coding parameters are not restricted to prediction parameters. The coding parameters could indicate a transform used for transforming the payload data or could define a filter to be used in reconstructing the individual simply connected regions when reconstructing the array of information samples.

[0186] The extractor 600 is configured to identify, for a predetermined simply connected region, simply connected regions within the plurality of simply connected regions which have a predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region. Details with regard to this step have been described above with respect to step 450. That is, in addition to the predetermined relative locational relationship, the identification may depend on a subset of the coding parameters associated with the predetermined simply connected region. After the identification, the extractor 600 ex-

tracts a merge indicator for the predetermined simply connected region from the data stream 604. If the number of simply connected regions having the predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region is greater than zero. This corresponds to the above description of steps 452 and 454. If the merge indicator suggests as a merge processing of the predetermined block, the extractor 600 is configured to check if the number of simply connected regions having the predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region is one, or if the number of simply connected regions having the predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region is greater than one with, however, the coding parameters thereof being identical to each other. If one of both alternatives applies, the extractor adopts the coding parameters or uses them for a prediction of the coding parameters of the predetermined simply connected region or the remaining subset thereof, just as described above with respect to steps 458-468. As was described above with respect to Fig. 10, a further indicator may be extracted by extractor 600 from the data stream 604 in case the latter checks reveal that the number of simply connected regions having the predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region is greater than one and have different coding parameters to each other.

[0187] By use of the latter checks, the transmission of a further indicator indicating one or a subset of the candidate simply connected regions may be suppressed thereby reducing the side information overhead.

[0188] Fig. 19 shows the general structure of an encoder for generating a data stream decodable by the decoder of Fig. 17. The encoder of Fig. 19 comprises a data generator 650 and an inserter 652. The data generator 650 is configured to code the array of information samples into payload data for each of a plurality of interconnected regions into which the array of information samples is sub-divided, along with associated coding parameters associated with the respective simply connected regions in order to indicate how the payload data for the respective simply connected region is to be reconstructed. The inserter 652 performs the identification and checks as the extractor 600 of the decoder of Fig. 12 did, but performs an insertion of the merge indicator instead of its extraction, and suppresses an insertion of coding parameters into the data stream or replaces an insertion of the coding parameters into the data stream in full by an insertion of the respective prediction residual instead of the adoption/prediction described above with respect to Fig. 12 and Fig. 10, respectively.

[0189] Further, it should be noted that the structure of the encoder of Fig. 19 is rather schematic and in fact, the determination of the payload data, the coding parameters and the merge indicator may be an iterative process. For example, if the coding parameters of neighboring simply connected regions are similar, but not identical to each other, an iterative process may determine that giving up

the small differences between these coding parameters may be preferred over signaling these difference to the decoder when considering that the merge indicator enables to suppress the coding parameters of one of the simply connected regions completely and to replace the submission of these coding parameters in full by the submission of a residual only.

[0190] Fig. 20 shows a further embodiment for a decoder. The decoder of Fig. 20 comprises a subdivider 700, a merger 702 and a reconstructor 704. The subdivider is configured to spatially subdivide, depending on whether the subset of syntax elements contained in the data stream, an array of samples representing a spatially sampling of the two-dimensional information signal into a plurality of non-overlapping simply connected regions of different sizes by recursively multi-partitioning. Thus, the multi-partitioning may correspond to the embodiments outlined above with respect to Figs. 1-16 or Fig. 18a, respectively, or to Fig. 18b. The syntax element contained in the data stream for indicating the subdivision, may be defined as indicated above with respect to Figs. 6a and 6b or in an alternative way.

[0191] The merger 702 is configured to combine, depending on a second subset of syntax elements in the data stream, being disjoint from the first subset, spatially neighboring simply connected regions of the plurality of simply connected regions to obtain an intermediate subdivision of the array of sampled into disjoint sets of simply connected regions, the union of which has the plurality of simply connected regions. In other words, merger 702 combines the simply connected regions and assigns them in a unique manner to merging groups of simply connected regions. The second subset of syntax elements just-mentioned, indicating the merging information may be defined in the way presented above with respect to Fig. 19 and Fig. 10, respectively, or in some other way. The ability, however, for the encoder to indicate a subdivision by use of a subset disjoint from the subset by which the merging is indicated, increases the freedom of the encoder to adapt the sample array subdivision to the actual sample array content so that coding efficiency may be increased. The reconstructor 704 is configured to reconstruct the array of samples from the data stream using the intermediate subdivision. As indicated above, the reconstructor may exploit the intermediate subdivision by the adoption/prediction of coding parameters of merge partners for a current simply connected region. Alternatively, reconstructor 704 may even apply a transformation or a prediction process to the combined region of the merged group of simply connected regions.

[0192] Fig. 21 shows a possible encoder for generating a data stream decodable by the decoder of Fig. 15. The encoder comprises a subdivision/merge stage 750 and a data stream generator 752. The subdivision/merge stage is configured to determine an intermediate subdivision of an array of information samples representing a spatially sampling of a two-dimensional information signal and two disjoint sets of simply connected regions, the

union of which is the plurality of simply connected regions, with defining this intermediate subdivision by means of a first subset of syntax elements according to which the array of information samples is subdivided into a plurality of non-overlapping simply connected regions of different sizes by recursively multi-partitioning, and a second subset of syntax elements being disjoint from the first subset according to which spatially neighboring simply connected regions of the plurality of simply connected regions are combined to obtain the intermediate subdivision. The data stream generator 752 uses the intermediate subdivision in order to code the array of information samples into the data stream. The subdivision/merge stage 750 inserts the first and second subsets into the data stream also.

[0193] Again, as in the case of Fig. 14, the process of determining the first and second subsets and the syntax elements generated by the data stream generator 752 may be a process which operates iteratively. For example, the subdivision/merge stage 750 may preliminarily determine an optimal subdivision wherein after the data stream generator 752 determines a corresponding optimal set of syntax elements for coding the sample array using the sample subdivision with the subdivision/merger stage then setting the syntax element describing the merging such that the side information overhead is reduced. However, the process of encoding may not stop here. Rather, subdivision/merge stage 750 along with data stream generator 752 may cooperate to try to deviate from optimal settings of the subdivision and the syntax elements previously determined by the data stream generator 752 in order to determine as to whether a better rate/distortion ratio is achieved by exploiting the positive properties of the merging.

[0194] As described before, the embodiments described with respect to Figs. 17-21 represent generalizations of the embodiments described before with respect to Figs. 1-16 and accordingly, it is possible to uniquely associate elements of Figs. 1-16 to the elements shown in Figs. 17-21. For example, the extractor 102 along with subdivider 104a and merger 104b assumes responsibility for the tasks to be performed by extractor 600 of Fig. 17. The subdivider is responsible for the subdivision and the managing of the neighborhood relationships between the individual simply connected regions. Merger 104b, in turn, manages the merging of simply connected regions into a group and locates the correct coding parameters to be copied or to be used as a prediction for the current simply connected regions in case of a merging event being indicated by a currently decoded merging information. The extractor 102 assumes responsibility for the actual data extraction from the data stream using the correct context in case of using entropy decoding for the data extraction. The remaining elements of Fig. 2 are an example for the reconstructor 602. Of course, reconstructor 602 may be differently embodied than shown in Fig. 2. For example, reconstructor 602 may not use motion-compensated prediction and/or intra-prediction. Rather,

other possibilities could also apply.

[0195] Further, as mentioned above, the simply connected regions mentioned in connection with the description of Fig. 17, corresponds, as already indicated above, either to the prediction blocks mentioned above or to any of the other subdivisions mentioned above, like the residual subdivision or the filter subdivision.

[0196] When comparing the encoder of Fig. 19 with the example of Fig. 1, the data generator 650 would encompass all elements besides data stream inserter 18 while the latter would correspond to inserter 652 of Fig. 19. Again, the data generator 650 could use another coding approach than the hybrid coding approach shown in Fig. 1.

[0197] When comparing the decoder of Fig. 20 with the example shown in Fig. 2, subdividers 104a and merger 104b would correspond to subdivider 100 and merger 102 of Fig. 20, respectively, while elements 106 and 114 would correspond to the reconstructor 704. The extractor 102 would commonly participate in the functionality of all the elements shown in Fig. 20.

[0198] As far as the encoder of Fig. 21 is concerned, subdivision/merge stage 750 would correspond to subdivider 28 and merger 30, while data stream generator 752 would encompass all the other elements shown in Fig. 10.

Although some aspects have been described in the context of an apparatus, it is clear that these aspects also represent a description of the corresponding method, where a block or device corresponds to a method step or a feature of a method step. Analogously, aspects described in the context of a method step also represent a description of a corresponding block or item or feature of a corresponding apparatus. Some or all of the method steps may be executed by (or using) a hardware apparatus, like for example, a microprocessor, a programmable computer or an electronic circuit. In some embodiments, some one or more of the most important method steps may be executed by such an apparatus.

[0199] The inventive encoded/compressed signals can be stored on a digital storage medium or can be transmitted on a transmission medium such as a wireless transmission medium or a wired transmission medium such as the Internet.

[0200] Depending on certain implementation requirements, embodiments of the invention can be implemented in hardware or in software. The implementation can be performed using a digital storage medium, for example a floppy disk, a DVD, a Blu-Ray, a CD, a ROM, a PROM, an EPROM, an EEPROM or a FLASH memory, having electronically readable control signals stored thereon, which cooperate (or are capable of cooperating) with a programmable computer system such that the respective method is performed. Therefore, the digital storage medium may be computer readable.

[0201] Some embodiments according to the invention comprise a data carrier having electronically readable control signals, which are capable of cooperating with a

programmable computer system, such that one of the methods described herein is performed.

[0202] Generally, embodiments of the present invention can be implemented as a computer program product with a program code, the program code being operative for performing one of the methods when the computer program product runs on a computer. The program code may for example be stored on a machine readable carrier.

[0203] Other embodiments comprise the computer program for performing one of the methods described herein, stored on a machine readable carrier.

[0204] In other words, an embodiment of the inventive method is, therefore, a computer program having a program code for performing one of the methods described herein, when the computer program runs on a computer.

[0205] A further embodiment of the inventive methods is, therefore, a data carrier (or a digital storage medium, or a computer-readable medium) comprising, recorded thereon, the computer program for performing one of the methods described herein.

[0206] A further embodiment of the inventive method is, therefore, a data stream or a sequence of signals representing the computer program for performing one of the methods described herein. The data stream or the sequence of signals may for example be configured to be transferred via a data communication connection, for example via the Internet.

[0207] A further embodiment comprises a processing means, for example a computer, or a programmable logic device, configured to or adapted to perform one of the methods described herein.

[0208] A further embodiment comprises a computer having installed thereon the computer program for performing one of the methods described herein.

[0209] In some embodiments, a programmable logic device (for example a field programmable gate array) may be used to perform some or all of the functionalities of the methods described herein. In some embodiments, a field programmable gate array may cooperate with a microprocessor in order to perform one of the methods described herein. Generally, the methods are preferably performed by any hardware apparatus.

[0210] The above described embodiments are merely illustrative for the principles of the present invention. It is understood that modifications and variations of the arrangements and the details described herein will be apparent to others skilled in the art. It is the intent, therefore, to be limited only by the scope of the impending patent claims and not by the specific details presented by way of description and explanation of the embodiments herein.

Claims

1. Decoder comprising:

an extractor (600) configured to extract, for each

of a plurality of simply connected regions into which an array of information samples representing a spatially sampled information signal is sub-divided, payload data from a data stream (22); and

a reconstructor (602) configured to reconstruct the array of information samples from the payload data for the simply connected regions of the array of information samples, by processing, for each simply connected region, the payload data for the respective simply connected region in a way prescribed by coding parameters associated with the respective simply connected region,

wherein the decoder further comprises a subdivider (104) configured to spatially subdivide, using a multi-tree subdivision, the array of information samples into the simply connected regions by recursively multi-partitioning such that the simply connected regions have different sizes, wherein the extractor is configured to process the simply connected regions in a depth-first traversal order, and

wherein the coding parameters associated with the number of simply connected regions are transmitted within the data stream (22) in the depth-first traversal order,

characterized in that the extractor is further configured to

extract a first subset of coding parameters for a predetermined simply connected region from the data stream (22);

calculate a distance, according to a predetermined distance measure, between the first subset of the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region and corresponding coding parameters of the simply connected regions which have the predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region;

identify (450), for the predetermined simply connected region, simply connected regions within the plurality of simply connected regions which have a predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region, and, concurrently, have coding parameters associated therewith which fulfill a predetermined relationship to the first subset of the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region, the predetermined relationship being fulfilled merely for those simply connected regions the corresponding coding parameters associated with which have the distance, according to the predetermined distance measure, from the first subset of the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region which is smaller than or equal to a predefined threshold,

if the number of simply connected regions having the predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region and, concurrently, having coding parameters associated therewith which fulfill the predetermined relationship to the first subset of the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region, is greater than zero, extract (454) a merge indicator for the predetermined simply connected region from the data stream (22),
if the merge indicator suggests a merged processing of the predetermined block,

if the number of simply connected regions having the predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region and, concurrently, having coding parameters associated therewith which fulfill the predetermined relationship to the first subset of the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region, is one, adopting (462) a second subset of the coding parameters of the simply connected region having the predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region and, concurrently, having coding parameters associated therewith which fulfill the predetermined relationship to the first subset of the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region as a second subset of the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region, or predicting the second subset of the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region from the second subset of the coding parameters of the simply connected regions having the predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region and, concurrently, having coding parameters associated therewith which fulfill the predetermined relationship to the first subset of the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region with extracting a prediction residual for the predetermined simply connected region from the data stream (22).

2. Decoder according to claim 1, wherein the extractor (600) is further configured to if the number of simply connected regions having

the predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region is greater than 1, check (466) as to whether the coding parameters associated with the simply connected regions are identical to each other and, if so, adopting the coding parameters of the simply connected regions as the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region or predicting the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region from the coding parameters of the number of simply connected regions having the predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region, with extracting the prediction residual from the data stream (22).

3. Decoder according to any of claims 1 to 2, wherein the sub-divider (104) is configured to spatially divide the array of information samples into tree root regions of a maximum region size and subdividing, in accordance with a multi-tree subdivision information, at least a subset of the tree root regions into smaller simply connected regions of different sizes by recursively multi-partitioning the subset of tree root regions, the tree root regions not partitioned according to the multi-tree subdivision information, and the smaller simply connected regions forming the plurality of simply connected regions.
4. Decoder according to any of claims 1 to 3, wherein the extractor (600) is configured to, in identifying the simply connected regions which have the predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region, identify those simply connected regions within which, if any, information samples adjacent to an information sample at a border of the predetermined simply connected region are.
5. Decoder according to any of claims 1 to 4, wherein the extractor (600) is configured to extract, if the coding parameters associated with the number of simply connected regions having the predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region are unequal to each other, a reference neighbor identifier from the data stream (22), identifying a proper subset of the number of simply connected regions having the predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region and adopting the coding parameters of this proper subset as the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region or predicting the coding parameters of the predetermined simply connected region from the proper subset, with extracting a prediction residual from the data stream (22).
6. Decoding method comprising:

extracting, for each of a plurality of simply connected regions into which an array of information samples representing a spatially sampled information signal is sub-divided, payload data from a data stream (22); and
 5
 reconstructing the array of information samples from the payload data for the simply connected regions of the array of information samples, by processing, for each simply connected region, the payload data for the respective simply connected region in a way prescribed by coding parameters associated with the respective simply connected region,
 10
 wherein the method further comprises spatially subdividing, using a multi-tree subdivision, the array of information samples into the simply connected regions by recursively multi-partitioning such that the simply connected regions have different sizes, wherein the extracting is performed so that the simply connected regions are processed in a depth-first traversal order,
 15
 wherein the coding parameters associated with the number of simply connected regions are transmitted within the data stream (22) in the depth-first traversal order,
 20
characterized in that the extracting comprises extracting a first subset of coding parameters for a predetermined simply connected region from the data stream (22);
 25
 calculate a distance, according to a predetermined distance measure, between the first subset of the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region and corresponding coding parameters of the simply connected regions which have the predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region;
 30
 identifying, for a predetermined simply connected region, simply connected regions within the plurality of simply connected regions which have a predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region, ,
 35
 and, concurrently, have coding parameters associated therewith which fulfill a predetermined relationship to the first subset of the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region, the predetermined relationship being fulfilled merely for those simply connected regions the corresponding coding parameters associated with which have the distance, according to the predetermined distance measure, from the first subset of the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region which is smaller than or equal to a predefined threshold,
 40
 45
 50
 55

if the number of simply connected regions having the predetermined relative location-

al relationship to the predetermined simply connected region and, concurrently, having coding parameters associated therewith which fulfill the predetermined relationship to the first subset of the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region, is greater than zero, extracting a merge indicator for the predetermined simply connected region from the data stream (22),
 if the merge indicator suggests a merged processing of the predetermined block,

if the number of simply connected regions having the predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region and, concurrently, having coding parameters associated therewith which fulfill the predetermined relationship to the first subset of the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region, is one, adopting a second subset of the coding parameters of the simply connected region and, concurrently, having coding parameters associated therewith which fulfill the predetermined relationship to the first subset of the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region as the second subset of the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region, or predicting the second subset of the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region from the second subset of the coding parameters of the simply connected regions having the predetermined relative locational relationship to the predetermined simply connected region and, concurrently, having coding parameters associated therewith which fulfill the predetermined relationship to the first subset of the coding parameters for the predetermined simply connected region with extracting a prediction residual for the predetermined simply connected region from the data stream (22).

7. Computer readable digital storage medium having stored thereon a computer program having a program code for performing, when running on a computer, a method according to claim 6.

Patentansprüche

1. Decodierer, der folgende Merkmale aufweist:

einen Extrahierer (600), der ausgebildet ist, für
jede einer Mehrzahl von einfach verbundenen
Regionen, in die ein Array von Informationsab-
tastwerten, die ein räumlich abgetastetes Infor-
mationssignal darstellen, unterteilt ist, Nutzda-
ten aus einem Datenstrom (22) zu extrahieren;
und
einen Rekonstruierer (602), der ausgebildet ist,
das Array von Informationsabtastwerten aus
den Nutzdaten für die einfach verbundenen Re-
gionen des Arrays von Informationsabtastwerten
zu rekonstruieren, durch Verarbeiten, für je-
de einfach verbundene Region, der Nutzdaten
für die jeweilige einfach verbundene Region auf
eine Weise, die durch Codierparameter vorge-
schrieben ist, die der jeweiligen einfach verbun-
denen Region zugeordnet sind,
wobei der Decodierer ferner einen Unterteiler
(104) aufweist, der ausgebildet ist, unter Ver-
wendung einer Multibaum-Unterteilung, das Ar-
ray von Informationsabtastwerten in die einfach
verbundenen Regionen durch rekursives Multi-
Partitionieren räumlich zu unterteilen, so dass
die einfach verbundenen Regionen verschiede-
ne Größen aufweisen, wobei der Extrahierer
ausgebildet ist, die einfach verbundenen Regi-
onen in einer Tiefensuche-Traversalreihenfolge
zu verarbeiten, und
wobei die Codierparameter, die der Anzahl von
einfach verbundenen Regionen zugeordnet
sind, innerhalb des Datenstroms (22) in der Tie-
fensuche-Traversalreihenfolge übertragen wer-
den,
dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass der Extrahie-
rer ferner ausgebildet ist zum
Extrahieren eines ersten Teilsatzes von Codier-
parametern für eine vorbestimmte einfach ver-
bundene Region aus dem Datenstrom (22);
Berechnen eines Abstands gemäß einem vor-
bestimmten Abstandsmaß zwischen dem ers-
ten Teilsatz der Codierparameter für die vorbe-
stimmte einfach verbundene Region und ent-
sprechenden Codierparametern der einfach
verbundenen Regionen, die die vorbestimmte
relative Lagebeziehung zu der vorbestimmten
einfach verbundenen Region aufweisen;
Identifizieren (450), für die vorbestimmte ein-
fach verbundene Region, einfach verbundener
Regionen innerhalb der Mehrzahl von einfach
verbundenen Regionen, die eine vorbestimmte
relative Lagebeziehung zu der vorbestimmten
einfach verbundenen Region aufweisen und
gleichzeitig denselben zugeordnete Codierpa-
rameter aufweisen, die eine vorbestimmte Be-

ziehung zu dem ersten Teilsatz der Codierpa-
rameter für die vorbestimmte einfach verbunde-
ne Region erfüllen, wobei die vorbestimmte Be-
ziehung lediglich für diejenigen einfach verbun-
denen Regionen erfüllt ist, deren entsprechende
denselben zugeordnete Codierparameter den
Abstand gemäß dem vorbestimmten Abstands-
maß von dem ersten Teilsatz der Codierpara-
meter für die vorbestimmte einfach verbundene
Region aufweisen, der kleiner als oder gleich
einem vordefinierten Schwellenwert ist,

falls die Anzahl von einfach verbundenen
Regionen, die die vorbestimmte relative La-
gebeziehung zu der vorbestimmten einfach
verbundenen Region aufweisen und gleich-
zeitig denselben zugeordnete Codierpara-
meter aufweisen, die die vorbestimmte Be-
ziehung zu dem ersten Teilsatz der Codier-
parameter für die vorbestimmte einfach verbun-
dene Region erfüllen, größer als null ist,
Extrahieren eines Zusammenführen-Indi-
kators für die vorbestimmte einfach verbun-
dene Region aus dem Datenstrom (22),
falls der Zusammenführen-Indikator ein zu-
sammengeführtes Verarbeiten des vorbe-
stimmten Blocks nahelegt,

falls die Anzahl von einfach verbunde-
nen Regionen, die die vorbestimmte re-
lative Lagebeziehung zu der vorbe-
stimmten einfach verbundenen Region
aufweisen und gleichzeitig denselben
zugeordnete Codierparameter aufwei-
sen, die die vorbestimmte Beziehung
zu dem ersten Teilsatz der Codierpa-
rameter für die vorbestimmte einfach
verbundene Region erfüllen, eins ist,
Übernehmen (462) eines zweiten Teil-
satzes der Codierparameter der ein-
fach verbundenen Region, die die vor-
bestimmte relative Lagebeziehung zu
der vorbestimmten einfach verbunde-
nen Region aufweist und gleichzeitig
derselben zugeordnete Codierpara-
meter aufweist, die die vorbestimmte
Beziehung zu dem ersten Teilsatz der
Codierparameter für die vorbestimmte
einfach verbundene Region erfüllen,
als einen zweiten Teilsatz der Codier-
parameter für die vorbestimmte einfach
verbundene Region oder Vorhersagen
des zweiten Teilsatzes der Codierpa-
rameter für die vorbestimmte einfach
verbundene Region aus dem zweiten
Teilsatz der Codierparameter der ein-
fach verbundenen Regionen, die die
vorbestimmte relative Lagebeziehung

zu der vorbestimmten einfach verbundenen Region aufweisen und gleichzeitig denselben zugeordnete Codierparameter aufweisen, die die vorbestimmte Beziehung zu dem ersten Teilsatz der Codierparameter für die vorbestimmte einfach verbundene Region erfüllen, mit Extrahieren eines Vorhersagerests für die vorbestimmte einfach verbundene Region aus dem Datenstrom (22).

2. Decodierer gemäß Anspruch 1, bei dem der Extrahierer (600) ferner ausgebildet ist, falls die Anzahl von einfach verbundenen Regionen, die die vorbestimmte relative Lagebeziehung zu der vorbestimmten einfach verbundenen Region aufweisen, größer als 1 ist, zu prüfen (466), ob die den einfach verbundenen Regionen zugeordneten Codierparameter identisch zueinander sind und, falls dies der Fall ist, die Codierparameter der einfach verbundenen Regionen als die Codierparameter für die vorbestimmte einfach verbundene Region zu übernehmen oder die Codierparameter für die vorbestimmte einfach verbundene Region aus den Codierparametern der Anzahl von einfach verbundenen Regionen, die die vorbestimmte relative Lagebeziehung zu der vorbestimmten einfach verbundenen Region aufweisen, vorherzusagen, mit Extrahieren des Vorhersagerests aus dem Datenstrom (22).
3. Decodierer gemäß einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 2, bei dem der Unterteiler (104) ausgebildet ist, das Array von Informationsabtabstwerten in Baumwurzelregionen mit einer maximalen Regionsgröße räumlich zu teilen und gemäß einer Multibaum-Unterteilung-Information zumindest einen Teilsatz der Baumwurzelregionen durch rekursives Multi-Partitionieren des Teilsatzes von Baumwurzelregionen in kleinere einfach verbundene Regionen mit verschiedenen Größen zu unterteilen, wobei die Baumwurzelregionen nicht gemäß der Multibaum-Unterteilung-Information partitioniert sind und die kleineren einfach verbundenen Regionen die Mehrzahl von einfach verbundenen Regionen bilden.
4. Decodierer gemäß einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 3, bei dem der Extrahierer (600) ausgebildet ist, beim Identifizieren der einfach verbundenen Regionen, die die vorbestimmte relative Lagebeziehung zu der vorbestimmten einfach verbundenen Region aufweisen, diejenigen einfach verbundenen Regionen zu identifizieren, innerhalb derer, falls vorhanden, Informationsabtabstwerte benachbart zu einem Informationsabtabstwert an einer Grenze der vorbestimmten einfach verbundenen Region vorliegen.

5. Decodierer gemäß einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 4, bei dem der Extrahierer (600) ausgebildet ist, falls die Codierparameter, die der Anzahl von einfach verbundenen Regionen, die die vorbestimmte relative Lagebeziehung zu der vorbestimmten einfach verbundenen Region aufweisen, zugeordnet sind, ungleich zueinander sind, einen Referenz-Nachbar-Identifizierer aus dem Datenstrom (22) zu extrahieren, wobei ein ordnungsgemäßer Teilsatz der Anzahl von einfach verbundenen Regionen, die die vorbestimmte relative Lagebeziehung zu der vorbestimmten einfach verbundenen Region aufweisen, identifiziert wird und die Codierparameter dieses ordnungsgemäßen Teilsatzes als die Codierparameter für die vorbestimmte einfach verbundene Region übernommen werden oder die Codierparameter der vorbestimmten einfach verbundenen Region aus dem ordnungsgemäßen Teilsatz vorhergesagt werden, mit Extrahieren eines Vorhersagerests aus dem Datenstrom (22).

6. Decodierverfahren, das folgende Schritte aufweist:

Extrahieren von Nutzdaten aus einem Datenstrom (22) für jede einer Mehrzahl von einfach verbundenen Regionen, in die ein Array von Informationsabtabstwerten, die ein räumlich abgetastetes Informationssignal darstellen, unterteilt ist; und

Rekonstruieren des Arrays von Informationsabtabstwerten aus den Nutzdaten für die einfach verbundenen Regionen des Arrays von Informationsabtabstwerten, durch Verarbeiten, für jede einfach verbundene Region, der Nutzdaten für die jeweilige einfach verbundene Region auf eine Weise, die durch Codierparameter vorgeschrieben ist, die der jeweiligen einfach verbundenen Region zugeordnet sind, wobei das Verfahren ferner das räumliche Unterteilen, unter Verwendung einer Multibaum-Unterteilung, des Arrays von Informationsabtabstwerten in die einfach verbundenen Regionen durch rekursives Multi-Partitionieren aufweist, so dass die einfach verbundenen Regionen verschiedene Größen aufweisen, wobei das Extrahieren so durchgeführt wird, dass die einfach verbundenen Regionen in einer Tiefensuche-Traversalreihenfolge verarbeitet werden, wobei die Codierparameter, die der Anzahl von einfach verbundenen Regionen zugeordnet sind, innerhalb des Datenstroms (22) in der Tiefensuche-Traversalreihenfolge übertragen werden, **dadurch gekennzeichnet, dass** das Extrahieren folgende Schritte aufweist:

Extrahieren eines ersten Teilsatzes von Co-

dierparametern für eine vorbestimmte einfach verbundene Region aus dem Datenstrom (22);

Berechnen eines Abstands gemäß einem vorbestimmten Abstandsmaß zwischen dem ersten Teilsatz der Codierparameter für die vorbestimmte einfach verbundene Region und entsprechenden Codierparametern der einfach verbundenen Regionen, die die vorbestimmte relative Lagebeziehung zu der vorbestimmten einfach verbundenen Region aufweisen;
Identifizieren, für eine vorbestimmte einfach verbundene Region, einfach verbundener Regionen innerhalb der Mehrzahl von einfach verbundenen Regionen, die eine vorbestimmte relative Lagebeziehung zu der vorbestimmten einfach verbundenen Region aufweisen und gleichzeitig denselben zugeordnete Codierparameter aufweisen, die eine vorbestimmte Beziehung zu dem ersten Teilsatz der Codierparameter für die vorbestimmte einfach verbundene Region erfüllen, wobei die vorbestimmte Beziehung lediglich für diejenigen einfach verbundenen Regionen erfüllt ist, deren entsprechende denselben zugeordnete Codierparameter den Abstand gemäß dem vorbestimmten Abstandsmaß von dem ersten Teilsatz der Codierparameter für die vorbestimmte einfach verbundene Region aufweisen, der kleiner als oder gleich einem vorbestimmten Schwellenwert ist,

falls die Anzahl von einfach verbundenen Regionen, die die vorbestimmte relative Lagebeziehung zu der vorbestimmten einfach verbundenen Region aufweisen und gleichzeitig denselben zugeordnete Codierparameter aufweisen, die die vorbestimmte Beziehung zu dem ersten Teilsatz der Codierparameter für die vorbestimmte einfach verbundene Region erfüllen, größer als null ist, Extrahieren eines Zusammenführen-Indikators für die vorbestimmte einfach verbundene Region aus dem Datenstrom (22),

falls der Zusammenführen-Indikator ein zusammengeführtes Verarbeiten des vorbestimmten Blocks nahelegt,

falls die Anzahl von einfach verbundenen Regionen, die die vorbestimmte relative Lagebeziehung zu der vorbestimmten einfach verbundenen Region aufweisen und gleichzeitig derselben zugeordnete

te Codierparameter aufweisen, die die vorbestimmte Beziehung zu dem ersten Teilsatz der Codierparameter für die vorbestimmte einfach verbundene Region erfüllen, eins ist, Übernehmen eines zweiten Teilsatzes der Codierparameter der einfach verbundenen Region und gleichzeitig derselben zugeordnete Codierparameter, die die vorbestimmte Beziehung zu dem ersten Teilsatz der Codierparameter für die vorbestimmte einfach verbundene Region erfüllen, als den zweiten Teilsatz der Codierparameter für die vorbestimmte einfach verbundene Region oder Vorhersagen des zweiten Teilsatzes der Codierparameter für die vorbestimmte einfach verbundene Region aus dem zweiten Teilsatz der Codierparameter der einfach verbundenen Regionen, die die vorbestimmte relative Lagebeziehung zu der vorbestimmten einfach verbundenen Region aufweisen und gleichzeitig denselben zugeordnete Codierparameter aufweisen, die die vorbestimmte Beziehung zu dem ersten Teilsatz der Codierparameter für die vorbestimmte einfach verbundene Region erfüllen, mit Extrahieren eines Vorhersagerests für die vorbestimmte einfach verbundene Region aus dem Datenstrom (22).

7. Computerlesbares digitales Speichermedium mit einem darauf gespeicherten Computerprogramm, das einen Programmcode zum Durchführen eines Verfahrens gemäß Anspruch 6 aufweist, wenn dasselbe auf einem Computer abläuft.

Revendications

1. Décodeur, comprenant:

un extracteur (600) configuré pour extraire, pour chacune d'une pluralité de régions connectées simplement en lesquelles est subdivisé un réseau d'échantillons d'information représentant un signal d'information échantillonné spatialement, des données de charge utile d'un flux de données (22); et

un reconstituteur (602) configuré pour reconstruire le réseau d'échantillons d'information à partir des données de charge utile pour les ré-

gions connectées simplement du réseau d'échantillons d'information, en traitant, pour chaque région connectée simplement, les données de charge utile pour la région connectée simplement respective de manière prescrite par les paramètres de codage associés à la région connectée simplement respective, dans lequel le décodeur comprend par ailleurs un subdiviseur (104) configuré pour subdiviser spatialement, à l'aide d'une subdivision multi-arbre, le réseau d'échantillons d'information en régions connectées simplement par multi-division récursive de sorte que les régions connectées simplement présentent des grandeurs différentes, où l'extracteur est configuré pour traiter les régions connectées simplement dans un ordre transversal en profondeur, et dans lequel les paramètres de codage associés au nombre de régions connectées simplement sont transmis dans le flux de données (22) dans l'ordre transversal en profondeur, **caractérisé par le fait que** l'extracteur est par ailleurs configuré pour extraire un premier sous-ensemble de paramètres de codage pour une région connectée simplement prédéterminée du flux de données (22); calculer une distance, en fonction d'une mesure de distance prédéterminée, entre le premier sous-ensemble des paramètres de codage pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée et les paramètres de codage correspondants des régions connectées simplement qui présentent le rapport de localisation relatif prédéterminé avec la région connectée simplement prédéterminée; identifier (450), pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée, les régions connectées simplement dans la pluralité de régions connectées simplement qui présentent un rapport de localisation relatif prédéterminé avec la région connectée simplement prédéterminée et présentent, en même temps, des paramètres de codage y associés qui remplissent un rapport prédéterminé avec le premier sous-ensemble des paramètres de codage pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée, le rapport prédéterminé étant rempli uniquement pour les régions simplement connectées auxquelles sont associés les paramètres de codage correspondants qui présentent la distance, selon la mesure de distance prédéterminée, par rapport au premier sous-ensemble des paramètres de codage pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée qui est inférieure ou égale à un seuil prédéfini,

si le nombre de régions connectées simplement présentant le rapport de localisation

relatif prédéterminé avec la région connectée simplement prédéterminée et présentant, en même temps, des paramètres de codage y associés qui remplissent le rapport prédéterminé avec le premier sous-ensemble des paramètres de codage pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée, est supérieur à zéro, extraire (454) un indicateur de fusion pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée du flux de données (22), si l'indicateur de fusion suggère un traitement fusionné du bloc prédéterminé, si le nombre de régions connectées simplement présentant le rapport de localisation relatif prédéterminé avec la région connectée simplement prédéterminée et présentant, en même temps, des paramètres de codage y associés qui remplissent le rapport prédéterminé avec le premier sous-ensemble des paramètres de codage pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée est un, adopter (462) un deuxième sous-ensemble des paramètres de codage de la région connectée simplement présentant le rapport de localisation relatif prédéterminé avec la région connectée simplement prédéterminée et présentant, en même temps, des paramètres de codage y associés qui remplissent le rapport prédéterminé avec le premier sous-ensemble de paramètres de codage pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée comme deuxième sous-ensemble des paramètres de codage pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée, ou prédire le deuxième sous-ensemble des paramètres de codage pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée à partir du deuxième sous-ensemble de paramètres de codage des régions connectées simplement présentant le rapport de localisation relatif prédéterminé avec la région connectée simplement prédéterminée et présentant, en même temps, des paramètres de codage y associés qui remplissent le rapport prédéterminé avec le premier sous-ensemble des paramètres de codage pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée avec extraction d'un résidu de prédiction pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée du flux de données (22).

2. Décodeur selon la revendication 1, dans lequel l'extracteur (600) est par ailleurs configuré pour vérifier (466), si le nombre de régions connectées simplement présentant le rapport de localisation relatif prédéterminé avec la région connectée simplement pré-

déterminée est supérieur à 1, si les paramètres de codage associés aux régions connectées simplement sont identiques entre eux et, dans l'affirmative, adopter les paramètres de codage des régions connectées simplement comme paramètres de codage pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée ou prédire les paramètres de codage pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée à partir des paramètres de codage du nombre de régions connectées simplement présentant le rapport de localisation relatif prédéterminé avec la région connectée simplement prédéterminée, avec extraction du résidu de prédiction du flux de données (22).

3. Décodeur selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 2, dans lequel le subdiviseur (104) est configuré pour diviser spatialement le réseau d'échantillons d'information en régions de racine d'arbre d'une grandeur de zone maximale et subdiviser, selon une information de subdivision multi-arbre, au moins un sous-ensemble des régions de racine d'arbre en régions connectées simplement plus petites de différentes grandeurs par division multiple récursive du sous-ensemble des régions de racine d'arbre, les régions de racine d'arbre non divisées selon les informations de subdivision multi-arbre, et les régions connectées simplement plus petites formant la pluralité de régions connectées simplement. 5 10
4. Décodeur selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 3, dans lequel l'extracteur (600) est configuré pour identifier, lors de l'identification des régions connectées simplement qui présentent le rapport de localisation relatif prédéterminé avec la région connectée simplement prédéterminée, les régions connectées simplement dans lesquelles, le cas échéant, se trouvent des échantillons d'information adjacents à un échantillon d'information à la limite de la région connectée simplement prédéterminée. 20 25 30 35 40
5. Décodeur selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 4, dans lequel l'extracteur (600) est configuré pour extraire, si les paramètres de codage associés au nombre de régions connectées simplement présentant le rapport de localisation relatif prédéterminé avec la région connectée simplement prédéterminée sont différents l'un de l'autre, un identificateur voisin de référence du flux de données (22), identifier un sous-ensemble approprié du nombre de régions connectées simplement présentant le rapport de localisation relatif prédéterminé avec la région connectée simplement prédéterminée et adopter les paramètres de codage de ce sous-ensemble approprié comme paramètres de codage pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée ou prédire les paramètres de codage de la région connectée simplement prédéterminée à partir du sous-en- 45 50 55

semble approprié, avec extraction d'un résidu de prédiction du flux de données (22).

6. Procédé de décodage, comprenant le fait de:

extraire, pour chacune d'une pluralité de régions connectées simplement en lesquelles est subdivisé un réseau d'échantillons d'information représentant un signal d'information échantillonné spatialement, les données de charge utile d'un flux de données (22); et reconstruire le réseau d'échantillons d'information à partir des données de charge utile pour les régions connectées simplement du réseau d'échantillons d'information, en traitant, pour chaque région connectée simplement, les données de charge utile pour la région connectée simplement respective de manière prescrite par les paramètres de codage associés à la région connectée simplement respective, dans lequel le procédé comprend par ailleurs le fait de subdiviser spatialement, à l'aide d'une subdivision multi-arbre, le réseau d'échantillons d'information en les régions connectées simplement par multi-division récursive de sorte que les régions connectées simplement présentent des grandeurs différentes, dans lequel l'extraction est réalisée de sorte que les régions connectées simplement soient traitées dans un ordre transversal en profondeur, dans lequel les paramètres de codage associés au nombre de régions connectées simplement sont transmis dans le flux de données (22) dans l'ordre transversal en profondeur, **caractérisé par le fait que** l'extraction comprend le fait de extraire un premier sous-ensemble de paramètres de codage pour une région connectée simplement prédéterminée du flux de données (22); calculer une distance, en fonction d'une mesure de distance prédéterminée, entre le premier sous-ensemble des paramètres de codage pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée et les paramètres de codage correspondants des régions connectées simplement qui présentent le rapport de localisation relatif prédéterminé avec la région connectée prédéterminée simplement; identifier, pour une région connectée simplement prédéterminée, les régions connectées simplement dans la pluralité de régions connectées simplement qui présentent un rapport de localisation relatif prédéterminé avec la région connectée simplement prédéterminée et présentent, en même temps, des paramètres de codage y associés qui remplissent un rapport prédéterminé avec le premier sous-ensemble des paramètres de codage pour la région con-

nectée simplement prédéterminée, le rapport prédéterminé étant rempli uniquement pour les régions connectées simplement auxquelles sont associés les paramètres de codage correspondants qui présentent la distance, selon la mesure de distance prédéterminée, par rapport au premier sous-ensemble des paramètres de codage pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée qui est inférieure ou égale à un seuil prédéfini,

si le nombre de régions connectées simplement présentant le rapport de localisation relatif prédéterminé avec la région connectée simplement prédéterminée et présentant, en même temps, des paramètres de codage y associés qui remplissent le rapport prédéterminé avec le premier sous-ensemble des paramètres de codage pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée, est supérieur à zéro, extraire un indicateur de fusion pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée du flux de données (22), si l'indicateur de fusion suggère un traitement fusionné du bloc prédéterminé,

si le nombre de régions connectées simplement présentant le rapport de localisation relatif prédéterminé avec la région connectée simplement prédéterminée et présentant, en même temps, des paramètres de codage y associés qui remplissent le rapport prédéterminé avec le premier sous-ensemble des paramètres de codage pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée est un, adopter un deuxième sous-ensemble des paramètres de codage de la région connectée simplement présentant le rapport de localisation relatif prédéterminé avec la région connectée simplement prédéterminée et présentant, en même temps, des paramètres de codage y associés qui remplissent le rapport prédéterminé avec le premier sous-ensemble de paramètres de codage pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée comme deuxième sous-ensemble des paramètres de codage pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée, ou prédire le deuxième sous-ensemble des paramètres de codage pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée à partir du deuxième sous-ensemble de paramètres de codage des régions connectées simplement présentant le rapport de localisation relatif prédéterminée avec la région connectée simplement prédéterminée et présentant, en même temps, des paramètres de codage y associés qui remplissent le rapport prédéterminé avec le premier sous-ensemble des paramètres de co-

dage pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée avec extraction d'un résidu de prédiction pour la région connectée simplement prédéterminée du flux de données (22).

7. Support de mémorisation numérique lisible par ordinateur présentant, y mémorisé, un programme d'ordinateur présentant un code de programme pour réaliser, lorsqu'il est exécuté sur un ordinateur, un procédé selon la revendication 6.

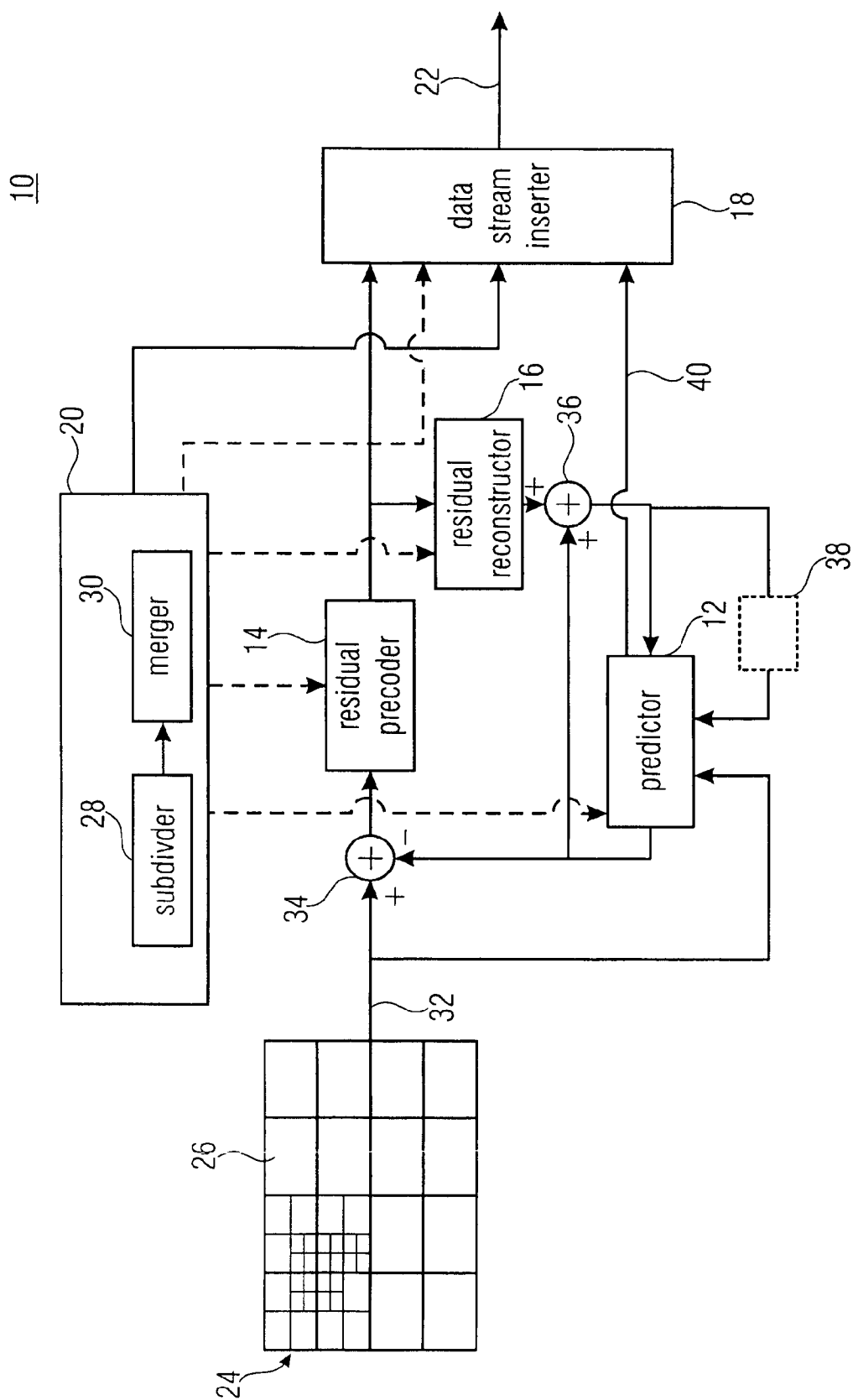


FIGURE 1

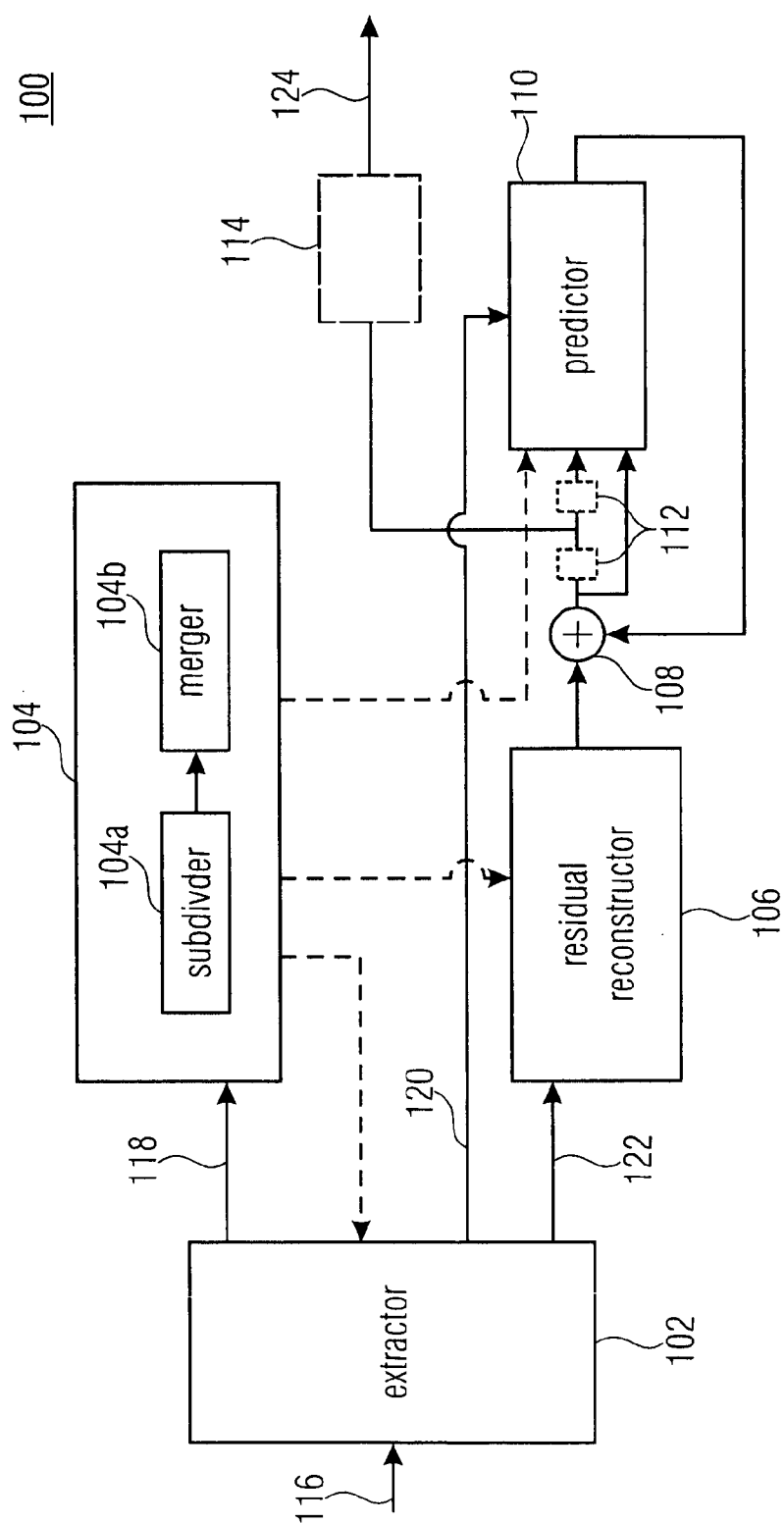


FIGURE 2

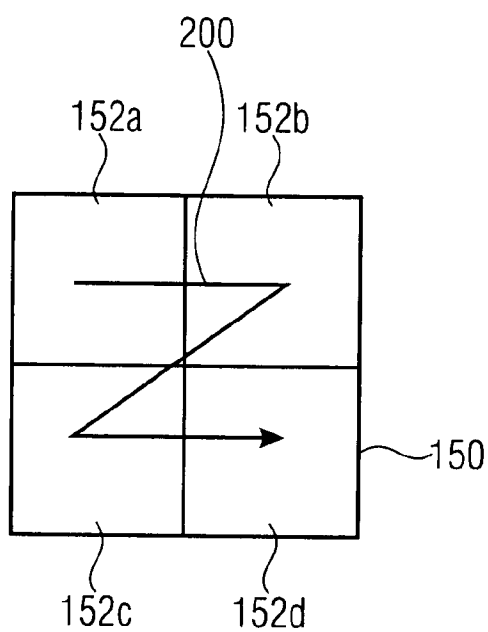


FIGURE 3A

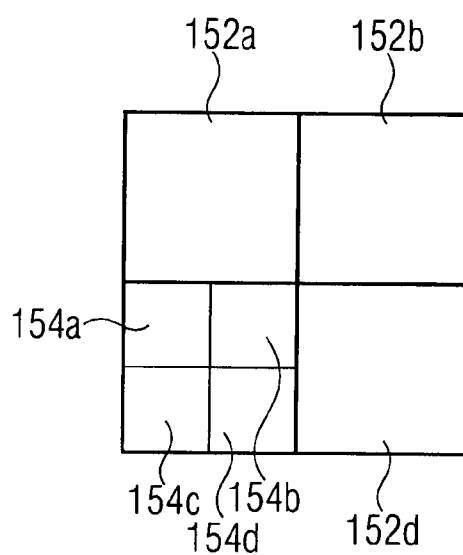


FIGURE 3B

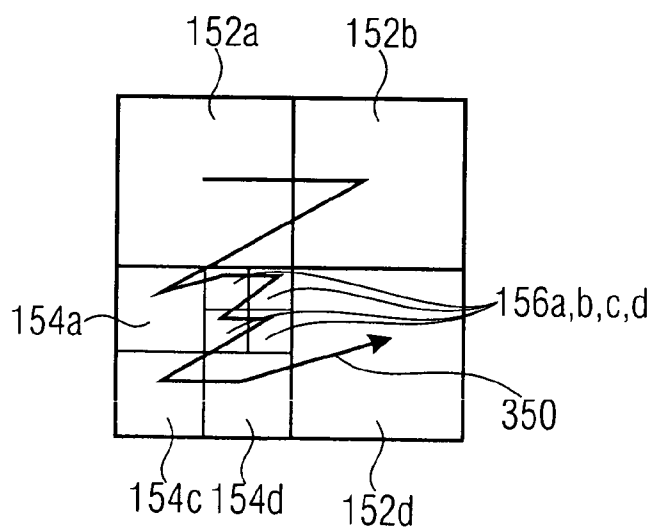


FIGURE 3C

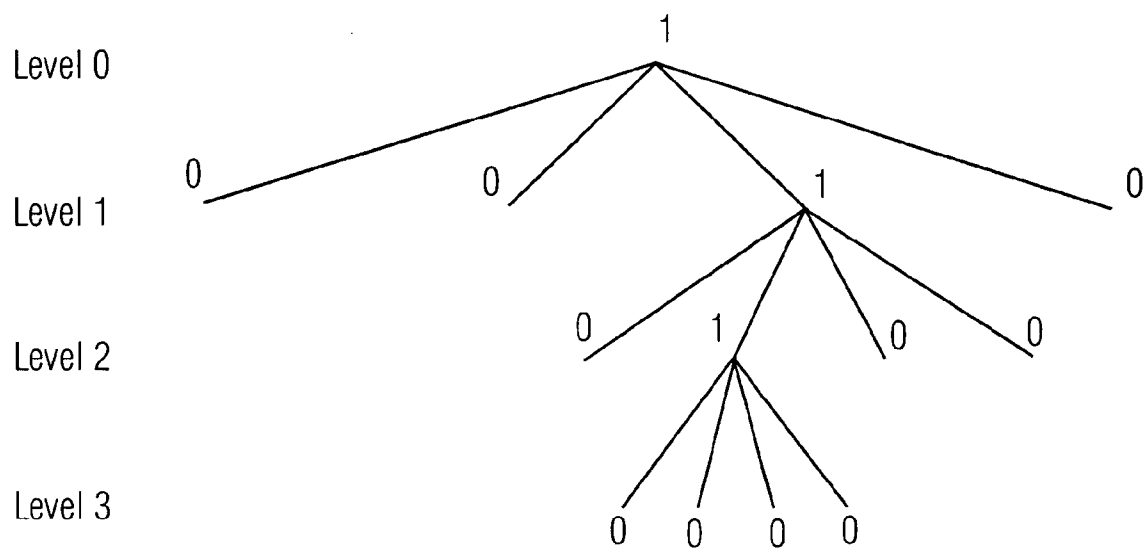


FIGURE 4

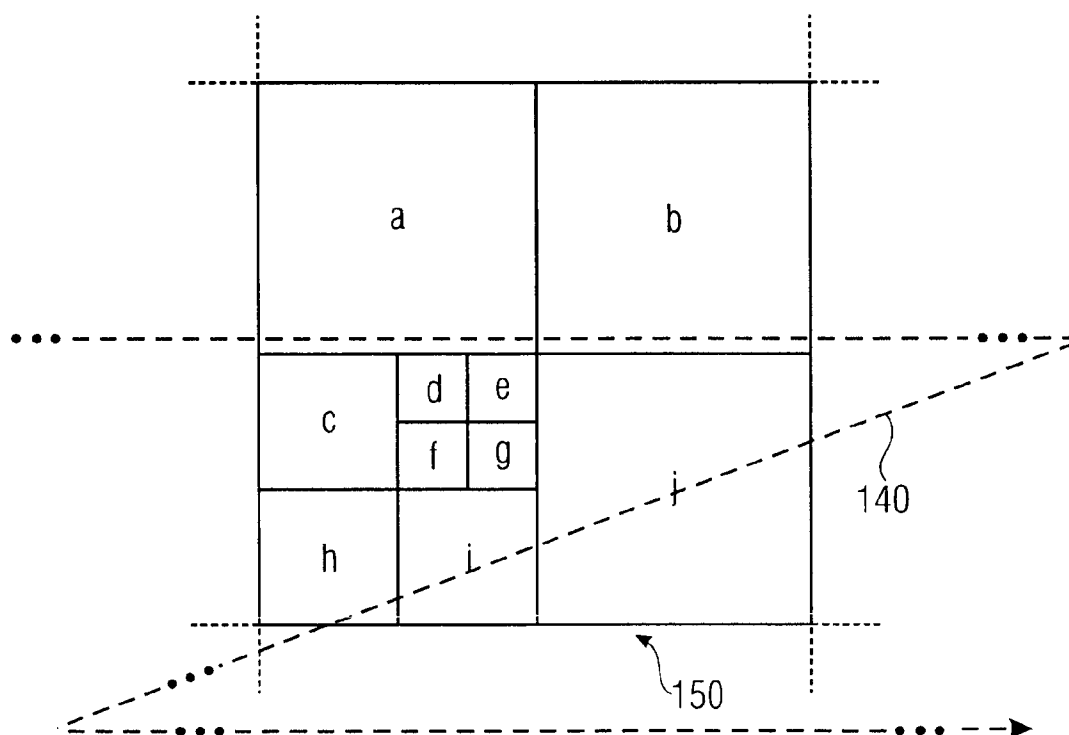


FIGURE 5A

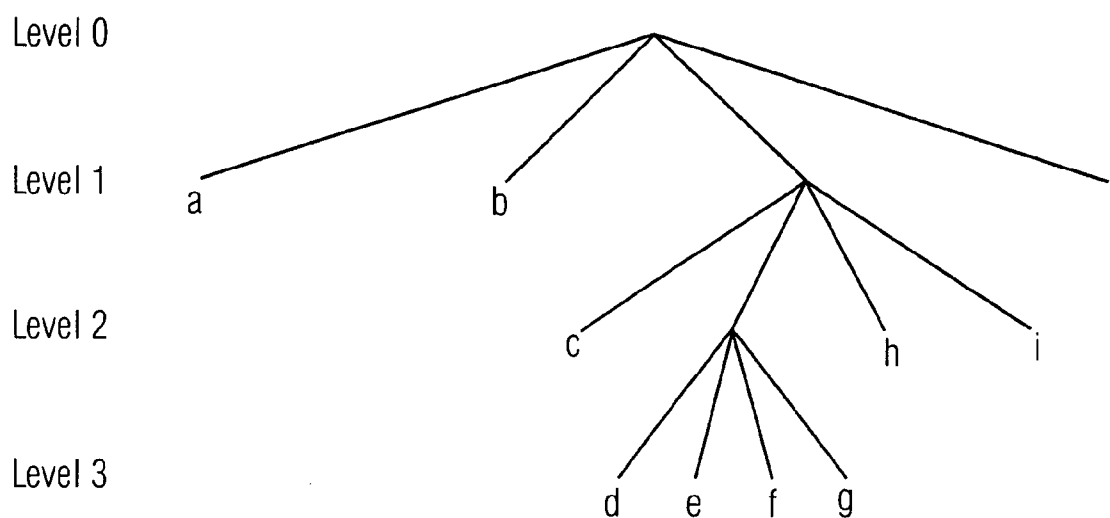


FIGURE 5B

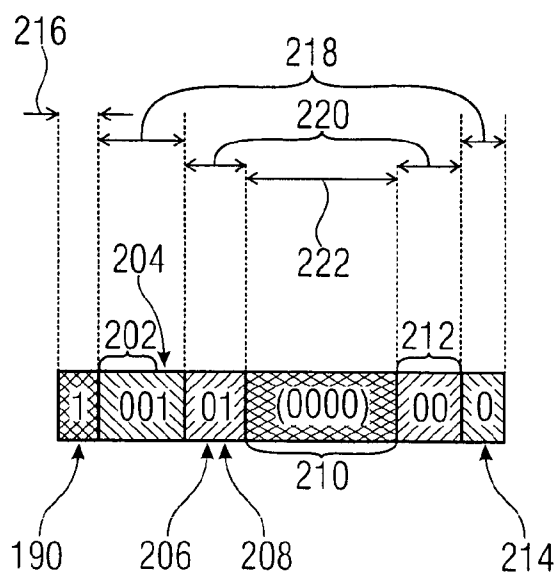


FIGURE 6A

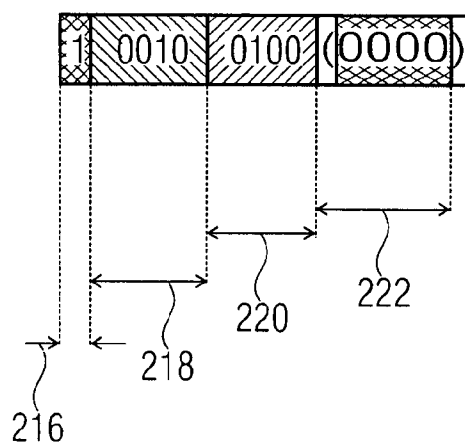


FIGURE 6B

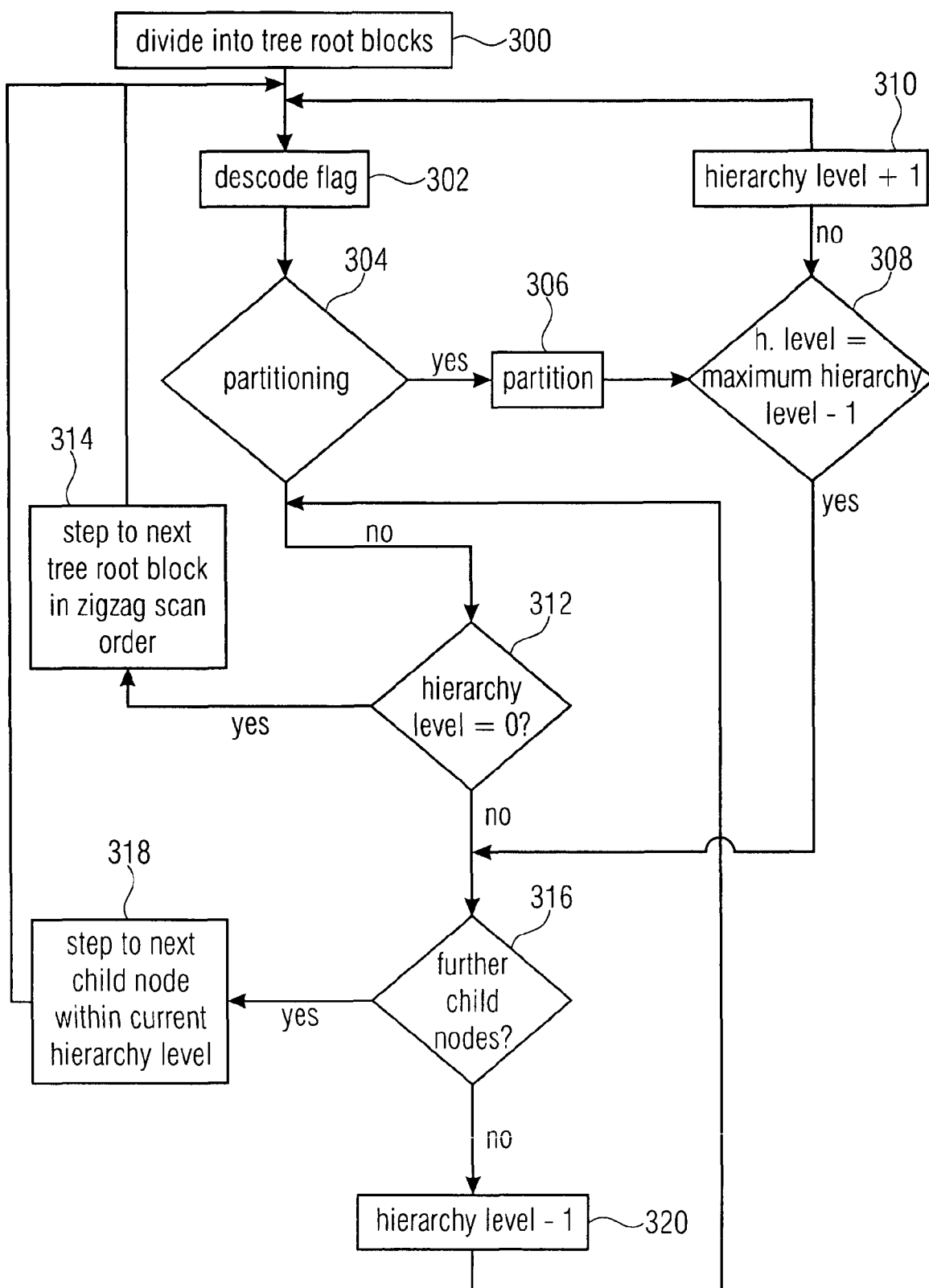


FIGURE 7

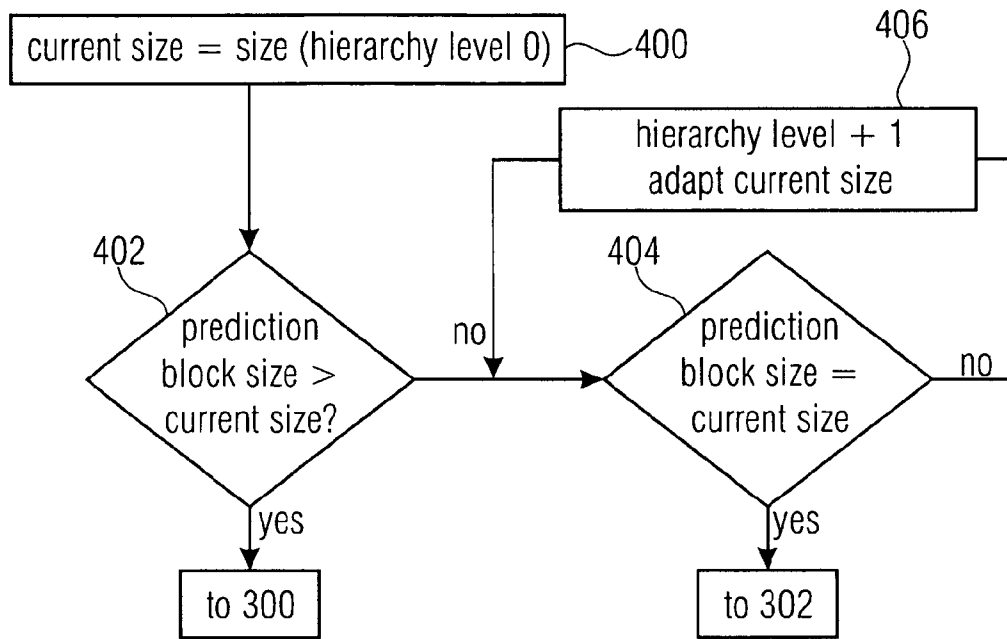


FIGURE 8

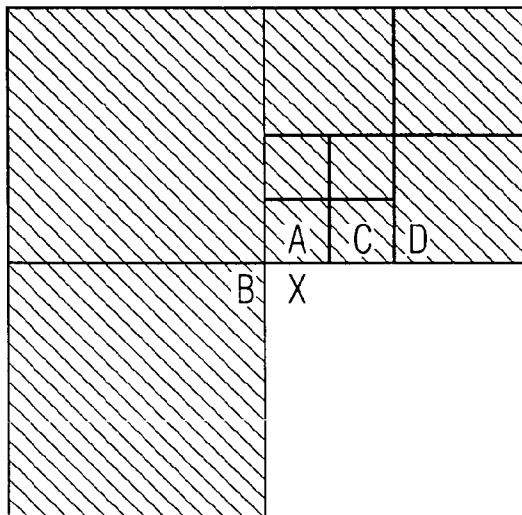


FIGURE 9B

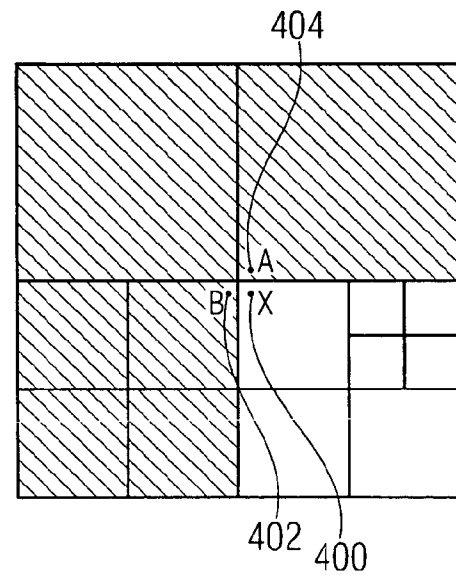


FIGURE 9A

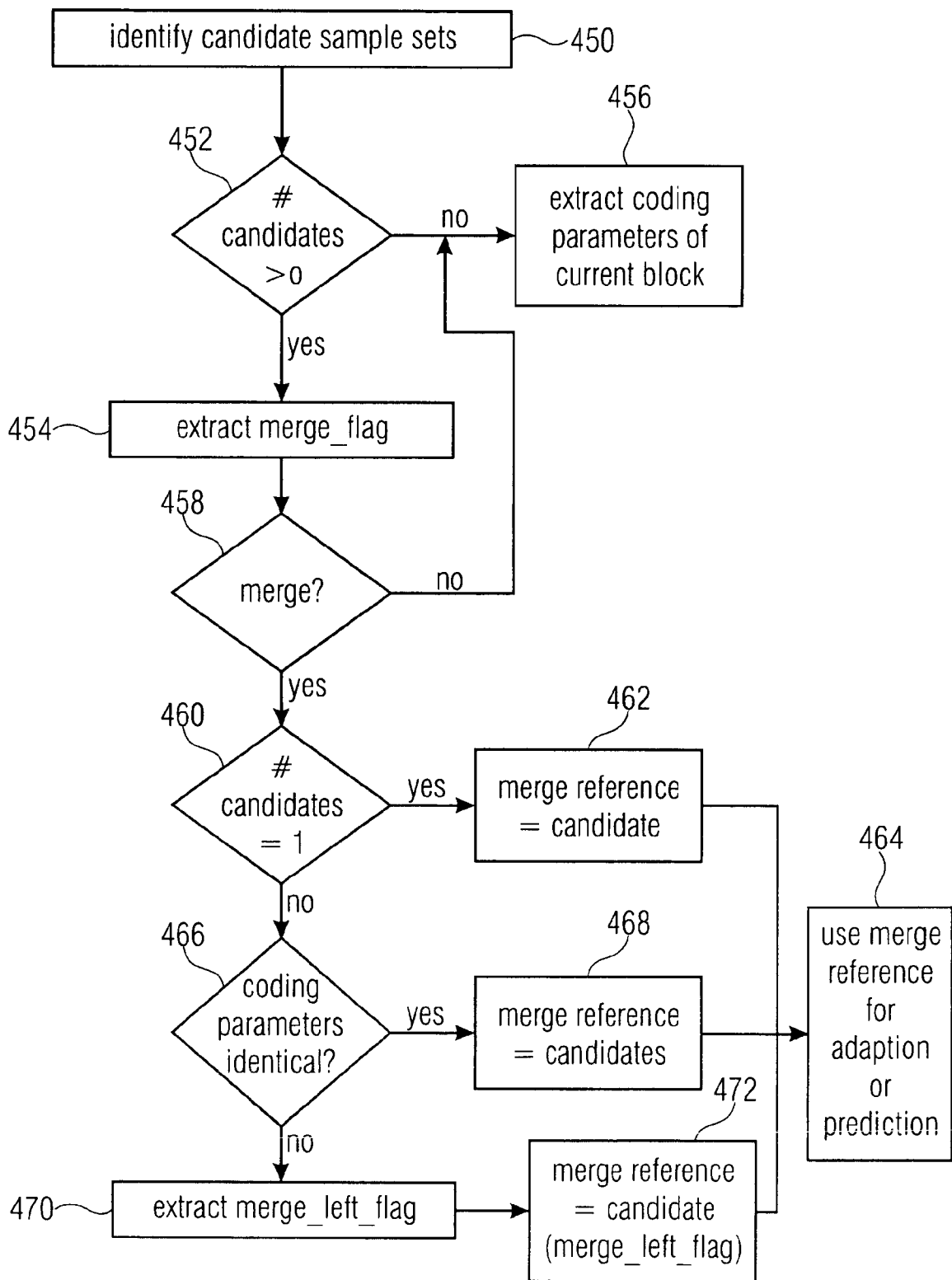


FIGURE 10

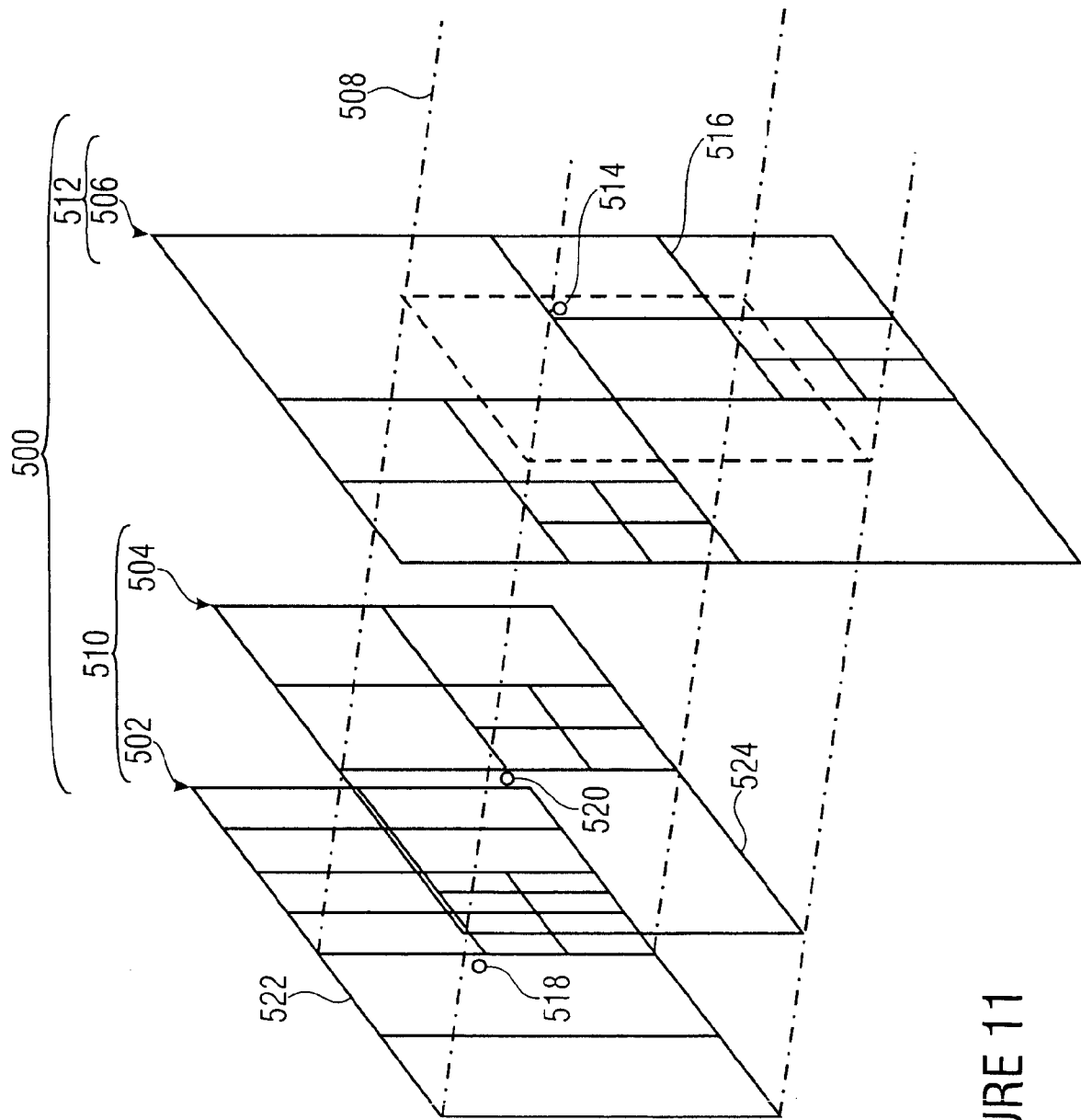


FIGURE 11

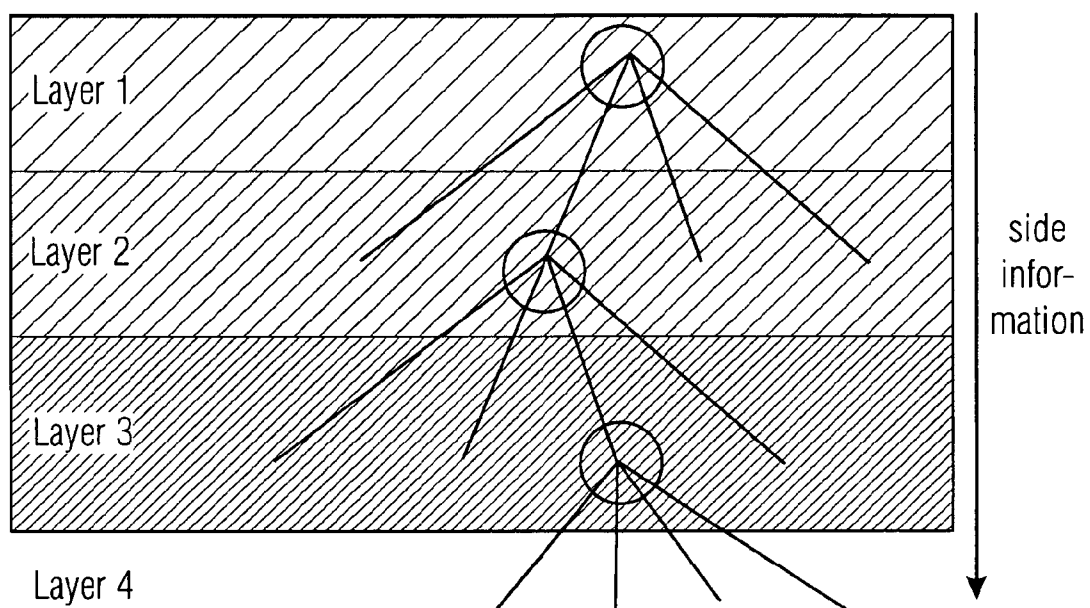


FIGURE 12A

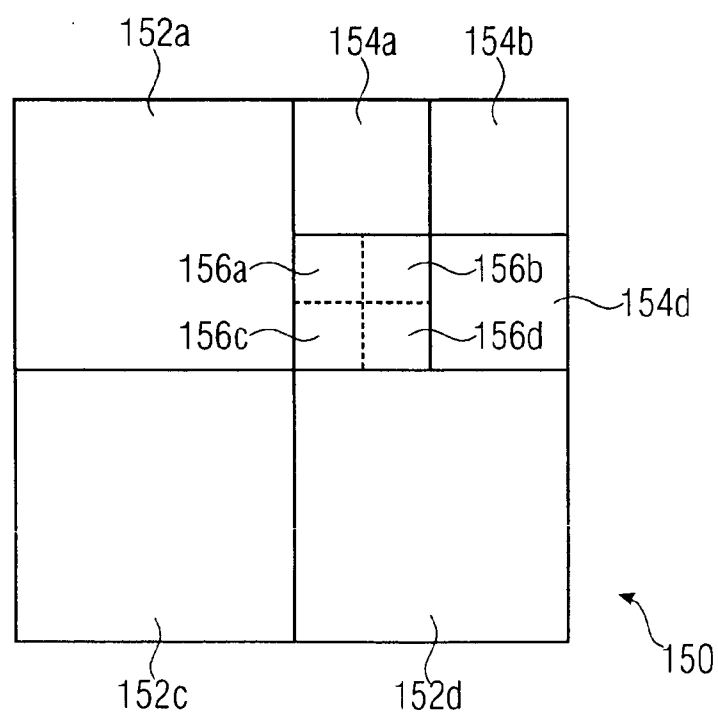


FIGURE 12B

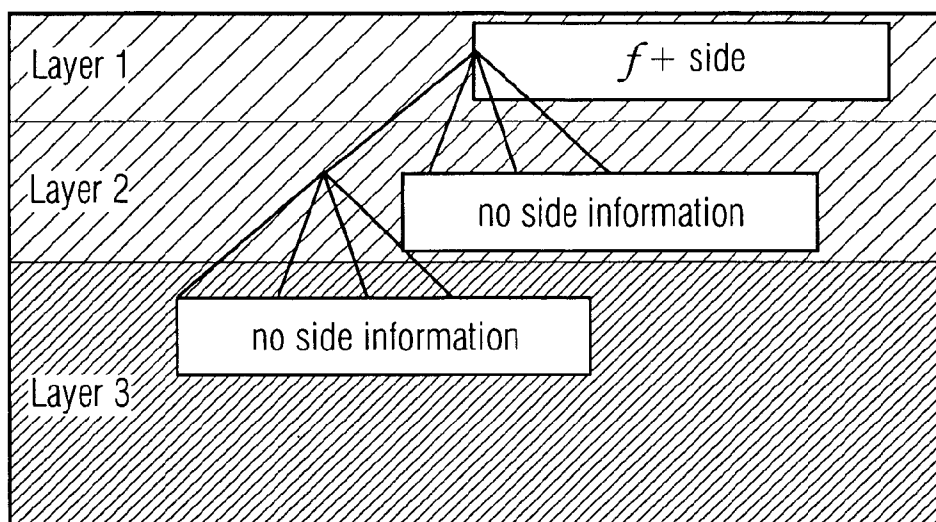


FIGURE 12C

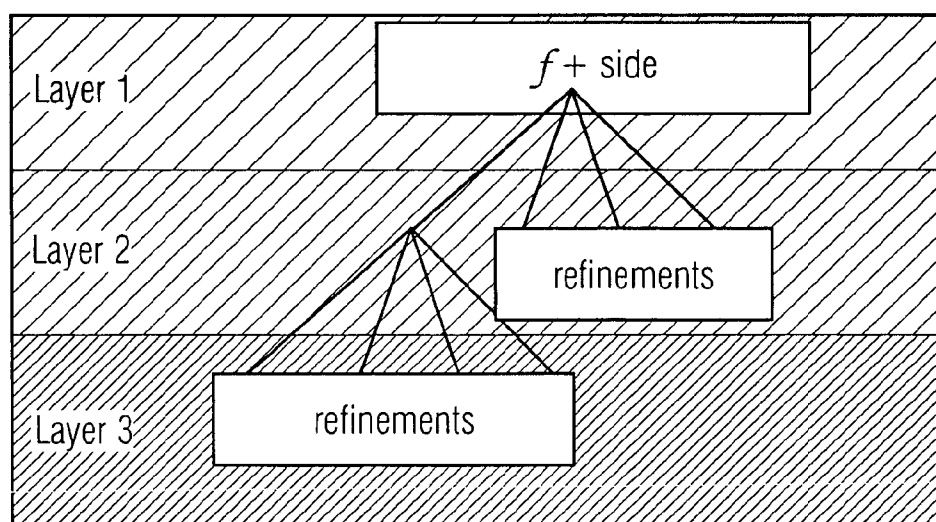


FIGURE 12D

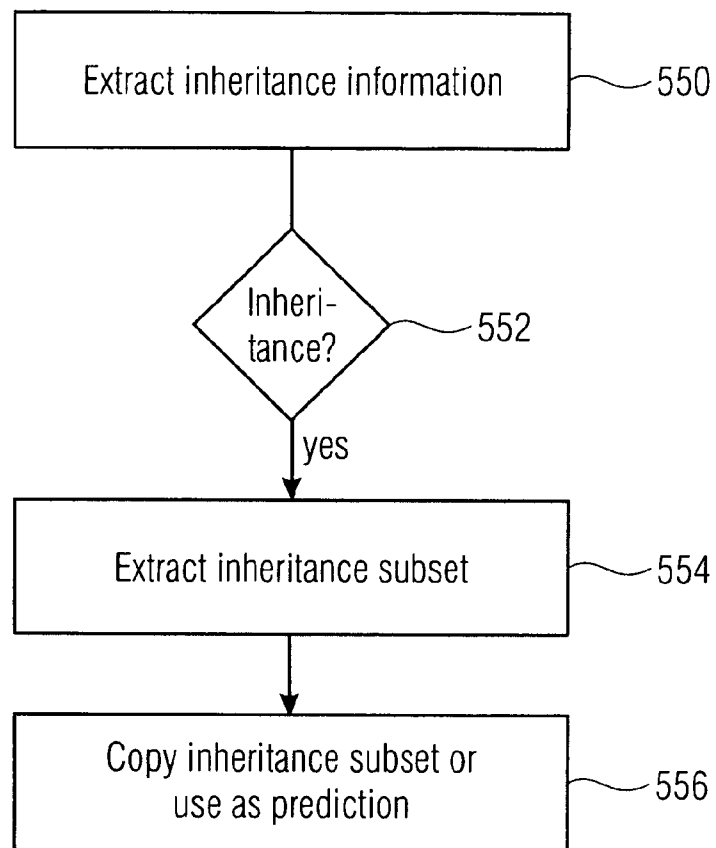


FIGURE 13

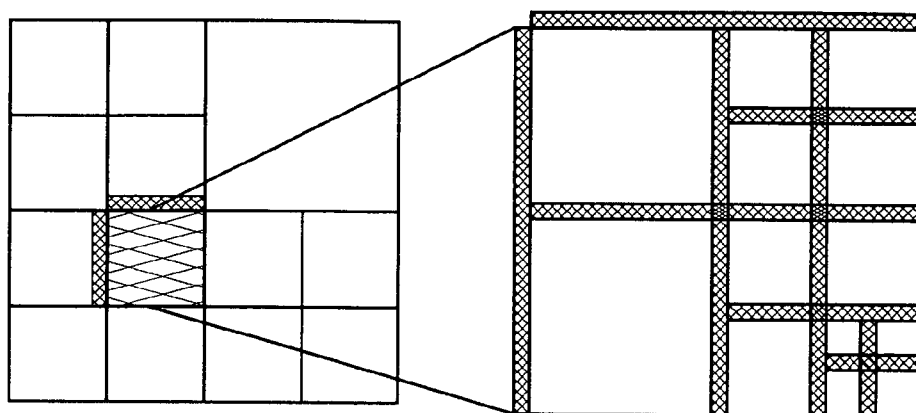


FIGURE 14A

FIGURE 14B

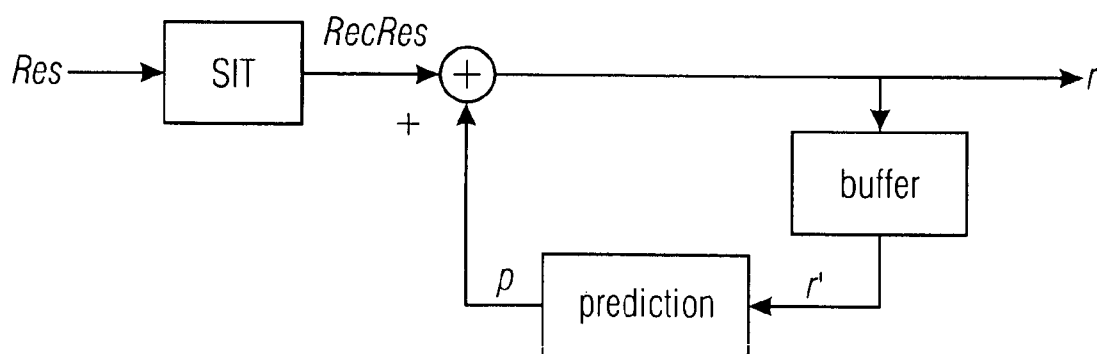


FIGURE 15

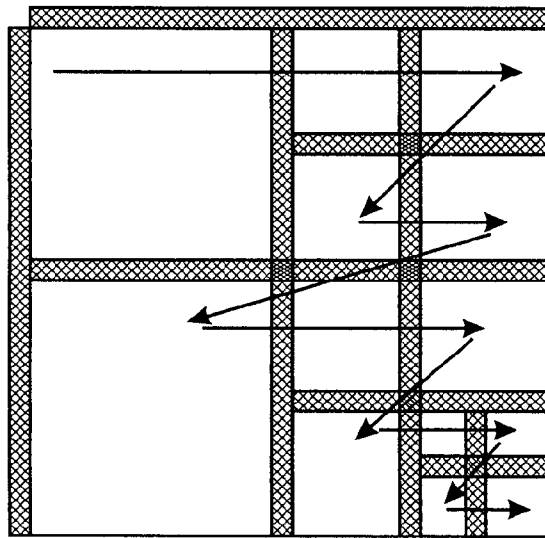


FIGURE 16

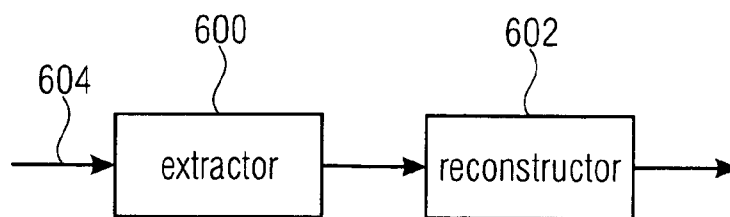


FIGURE 17

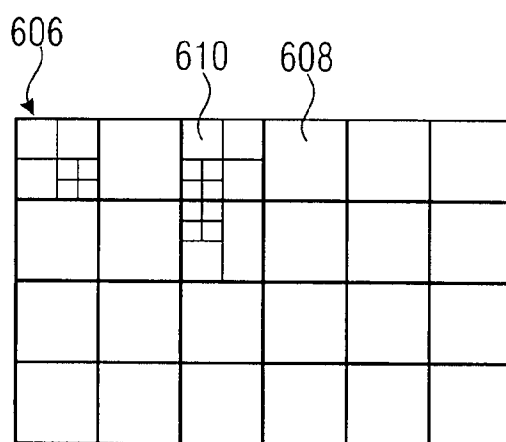


FIGURE 18A

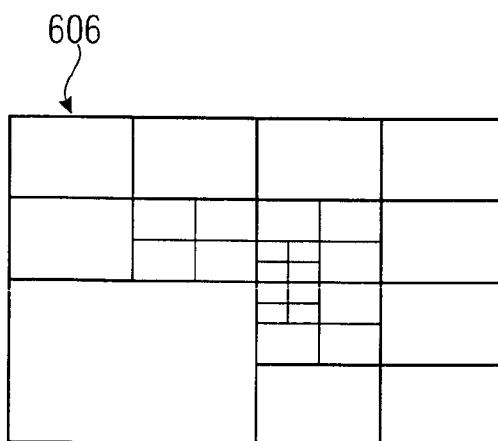


FIGURE 18B

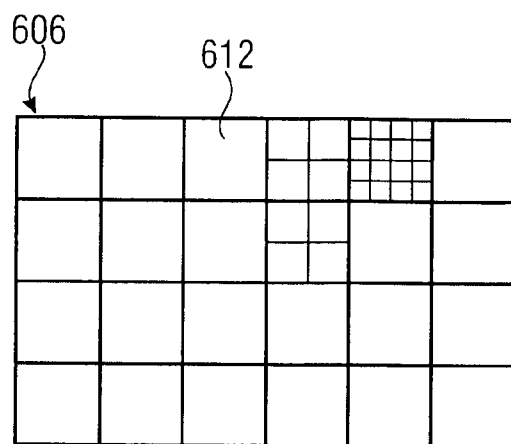


FIGURE 18C

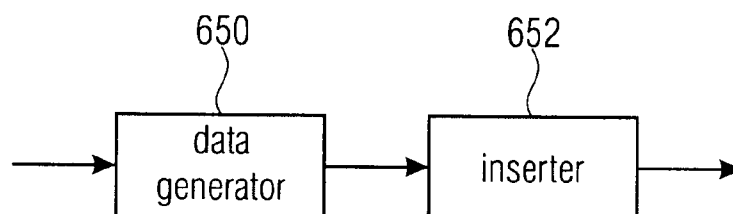


FIGURE 19

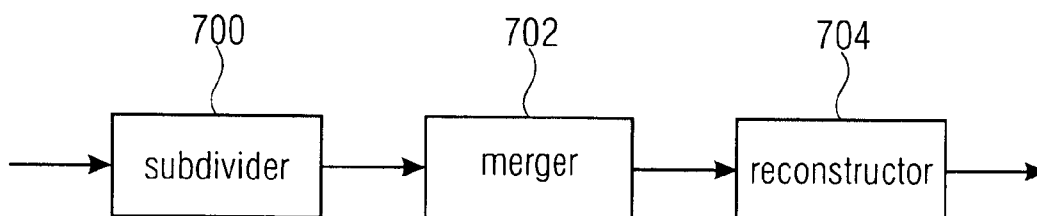


FIGURE 20

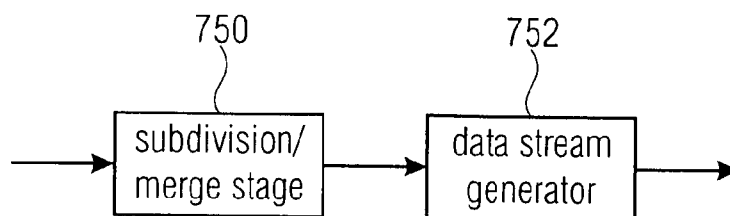


FIGURE 21

REFERENCES CITED IN THE DESCRIPTION

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Patent documents cited in the description

- WO 2008127597 A2 [0006]
- WO 2008156548 A1 [0008]
- US 20080310504 A [0009]

Minta terület összevonás

Szabadalmi igénypontok

1. Dekóder, amely tartalmaz:

egy adatkinyerőt (600), amely úgy van konfigurálva, hogy minden egyes olyan egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület számára, amelyekre egy térbeli mintavételezett információ jelet képviselő információminta tömb fel van osztva, hasznos adatot vonjon ki egy adatfolyamból (22); és

egy helyreállítót (602), amely úgy van konfigurálva, hogy a hasznos adatból helyreállítsa az információminta tömböt az információminta tömb egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területei számára, úgy, hogy minden egyes egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület vonatkozásában feldolgozza a hasznos adatot az egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület számára, a vonatkozó egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területtel társított kódolási paraméterek által előírt módon,

ahol a dekóder továbbá egy al-osztót (104) tartalmaz, amely úgy van konfigurálva, hogy egy többszörös fa al-osztást alkalmazva térben az információminta tömböt az egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területekre al-osztja rekurzívan végzett többszörös particionálás útján, úgy, hogy az egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területek különböző méretűek, ahol az adatkinyerő úgy van konfigurálva, hogy az egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területeket mélységi bejárás sorrendben dolgozza fel, és

ahol az egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területek számával társított kódolási paraméterek átvitele az adatfolyamon (22) belül a mélységi bejárás sorrendben történik,

azzal jellemezve, hogy az adatkinyerő úgy van továbbá konfigurálva, hogy

az adatfolyamból (22) egy előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület számára első kódolási paraméter alkészletet vonjon ki;

egy előre meghatározott távolság mérték szerint kiszámítson egy távolságot az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területéhez tartozó kódolási paraméterek első alkészlete és azon egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területek, amelyek előre meghatározott viszonylagos helyi viszonylatúak az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területéhez képest, azokhoz tartozó kódolási paraméterei között;

az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület számára azonosítsa (450) az egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területeket azon egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területeken belül, amelyek előre meghatározott viszonylagos helyi viszonylatúak az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területéhez képest, egyidejűleg olyan társított kódolási paraméterekkel rendelkeznek, amelyek teljesítenek egy előre meghatározott kapcsolatot az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területekhez tartozó kódolási paraméterek első alkészletével, ahol az előre meghatározott kapcsolat kizárólag azon egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területek vonatkozásában teljesül, amelyekkel társított hozzá tartozó kódolási paraméterek az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területéhez tartozó kódolási paraméterek első alkészletétől az előre meghatározott távolság mérték szerint olyan távolságúak, amely kisebb, mint egy előre meghatározott küszöbérték, vagy egyenlő egy előre meghatározott küszöbértékkel,

ha azon egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területek száma, amelyek előre meghatározott viszonylagos helyi kapcsolatúak az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területtel és egyidejűleg olyan

társított kódolási paraméterekkel rendelkeznek, amelyek teljesítik az előre meghatározott kapcsolatot a kódolási paraméterek első alkészletével az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület számára, nagyobb, mint nulla, akkor az adatfolyamból (22) kinyer (454) egy összevonási indikátort az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület számára,

ha az összevonás indikátor az előre meghatározott blokk egy összevont feldolgozását javasolja,

ha azon egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területek száma, amelyek előre meghatározott viszonylagos helyi kapcsolatúak az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területtel és egyidejűleg olyan társított kódolási paraméterekkel rendelkeznek, amelyek teljesítik az előre meghatározott kapcsolatot a kódolási paraméterek első alkészletével az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület számára, egy, akkor alkalmazza (462) azon egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület kódolási paramétereinek egy második alkészletét, amely előre meghatározott viszonylagos helyi kapcsolatú az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területtel, és egyidejűleg amelynek vele társított paraméterei teljesítik az előre meghatározott kapcsolatot a kódolási paraméterek első alkészletével az előre meghatározott egyszerűen összekötött terület számára az előre meghatározott egyszerűen összekötött területhez tartozó kódolási paraméterek egy második alkészleteként, vagy előrebecsüli az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területhez tartozó kódolási paraméterek második alkészletét azon egyszerűen összekötött területek kódolási paramétereinek a második alkészletéből, amelyek előre meghatározott viszonylagos helyi kapcsolatúak az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területtel, és egyidejűleg, olyan velük társított kódolási paramétereket tartalmaznak, amelyek az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület számára teljesítik az előre meghatározott kapcsolatot a kódolási paraméterek első alkészletével, egy előrebecslési maradvány extrahálásával az adatfolyamból (22) az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület számára.

2. Az 1. igénypont szerinti dekóder,

ahol az adatkinyerő (600) úgy van továbbá konfigurálva, hogy ha az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területtel előre meghatározott viszonylagos helyi kapcsolattal rendelkező egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területek száma nagyobb, mint 1, úgy megvizsgálja (466), hogy az egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területekkel társított kódolási paraméterek azonosak-e egymással, és ha igen, úgy az egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területek kódolási paramétereit alkalmazza az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területek kódolási paramétereiként, vagy előrebecsüli a kódolási paramétereket az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület számára azon egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területek számának kódolási paramétereiből, amelyek előre meghatározott viszonylagos helyi kapcsolatúak az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területtel, úgy, hogy az előrebecslési maradványt az adatfolyamból (22) nyeri ki.

3. Az 1. vagy 2. igénypont bármelyike szerinti dekóder, ahol az al-osztó (104) úgy van konfigurálva, hogy térben ossza az információminta tömböt egy legnagyobb területi méret három gyökér területére, és egy többszörös fa al-osztási információ szerint legalább egy fa gyökér terület alkészletet kisebb, különböző méretű egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területre al-osszon, úgy, hogy rekurzív módon többszörösen particionálja a fa

gyökér területek alkészletét, a fa gyökér területek nincsenek a többszörös fa al-osztás információ szerint particionálva, és a kisebb egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területek képezik a több egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területet.

4. Az 1-3. igénypont bármelyike szerinti dekóder, ahol az adatkinyerő (600) úgy van konfigurálva, hogy azon egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területek azonosítása során, amelyek előre meghatározott viszonylagos helyi kapcsolataik az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területtel, azonosítsa azokat az egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területeket, amelyeken belül, ha egyáltalán, az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület határán egy információmintával szomszédos információminták találhatók.

5. Az 1-4. igénypont bármelyike szerinti dekóder, ahol az adatkinyerő (600) úgy van konfigurálva, hogy ha az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területtel előre meghatározott viszonylagos helyi kapcsolata egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területek számával társított kódolási paraméterek nem azonosak, akkor az adatfolyamból (22) egy referencia szomszéd azonosítót nyerjen ki, azonosítsa azon előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területek számának megfelelő alkészletét, amelyek előre meghatározott viszonylagos helyi kapcsolataik az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területtel, és ennek a megfelelő alkészletnek a kódolási paramétereit az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület kódolási paramétereiként alkalmazza, vagy előrebecsülje a megfelelő alkészletből az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület kódolási paramétereit, az adatfolyamból (22) egy előrebecsülési maradvány kivonása után.

6. Dekódoló eljárás, amely tartalmazza:

minden egyes olyan egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület számára, amelyekre egy térbeli mintavételezett információ jelet képviselő információminta tömb fel van osztva, hasznos adat kivonását egy adatfolyamból (22); és

a hasznos adatból az információminta tömb helyreállítását az információminta tömb egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területei számára minden egyes egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület vonatkozásában a hasznos adat az egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület számára történő feldolgozásával, a vonatkozó egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területtel társított kódolási paraméterek által előírt módon,

ahol az eljárás tartalmazza továbbá egy többszörös fa al-osztás alkalmazásával az információminta tömb térben az egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területekre al-osztását rekurzívan végzett többszörös particionálás útján, úgy, hogy az egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területek különböző méretűek, ahol az adatkinyerést úgy végezzük, hogy az egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területeket mélységi bejárásai sorrendben dolgozzuk fel,

ahol az egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területek számával társított kódolási paramétereket az adatfolyamon (22) belül a mélységi bejárásai sorrendben vesszük át,

azzal jellemezve, hogy az adatkinyerés magában foglalja

az adatfolyamból (22) egy előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület számára első kódolási paraméter alkészletet kivonását;

egy előre meghatározott távolság mérték szerint egy távolság kiszámítását az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területhez tartozó kódolási paraméterek első alkészlete és azon egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területek, amelyek előre meghatározott viszonylagos helyi viszonylatúak az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területhez képest, azokhoz tartozó kódolási paraméterei között;

az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület számára az egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területek azonosítását azon egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területeken belül, amelyek előre meghatározott viszonylagos helyi kapcsolatúak az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területtel, egyidejűleg olyan társított kódolási paraméterekkel rendelkeznek, amelyek teljesítenek egy előre meghatározott kapcsolatot az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területekhez tartozó kódolási paraméterek első alkészletével, ahol az előre meghatározott kapcsolat kizárólag azon egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területek vonatkozásában teljesül, amelyekkel társított hozzá tartozó kódolási paraméterek az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területhez tartozó kódolási paraméterek első alkészletétől az előre meghatározott távolság mérték szerint olyan távolságúak, amely kisebb, mint egy előre meghatározott küszöbérték, vagy egyenlő egy előre meghatározott küszöbértékkel,

ha azon egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területek száma, amelyek előre meghatározott viszonylagos helyi kapcsolatúak az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területtel és egyidejűleg olyan társított kódolási paraméterekkel rendelkeznek, amelyek teljesítik az előre meghatározott kapcsolatot a kódolási paraméterek első alkészletével az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület számára, nagyobb, mint nulla, akkor az adatfolyamból (22) egy összevonási indikátori nyertünk ki az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület számára,

ha az összevonás indikátor az előre meghatározott blokk egy összevont feldolgozását javasolja,

ha azon egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területek száma, amelyek előre meghatározott viszonylagos helyi kapcsolatúak az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területtel és egyidejűleg olyan társított kódolási paraméterekkel rendelkeznek, amelyek teljesítik az előre meghatározott kapcsolatot a kódolási paraméterek első alkészletével az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület számára, egy, akkor azon egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület kódolási paramétereinek egy második alkészletét alkalmazzuk, amely előre meghatározott viszonylagos helyi kapcsolatú az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területtel, és egyidejűleg amelynek vele társított paraméterei teljesítik az előre meghatározott kapcsolatot a kódolási paraméterek első alkészletével az előre meghatározott egyszerűen összekötött terület számára az előre meghatározott egyszerűen összekötött területhez tartozó kódolási paraméterek egy második alkészleteként, vagy előrebecsüljük az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területhez tartozó kódolási paraméterek második alkészletét azon egyszerűen összekötött területek kódolási paramétereinek a második alkészletéből, amelyek előre meghatározott viszonylagos helyi kapcsolatúak az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó területtel, és egyidejűleg, olyan velük társított kódolási paramétereket tartalmaznak, amelyek az előre meghatározott egyszerűen egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület számára teljesítik az előre meghatározott kapcsolatot a kódolási paraméterek első alkészletével, az adatfolyamból (22) egy előrebecslési maradvány extrahálása útján az előre meghatározott egyszerűen

egymáshoz kapcsolódó terület számára.

7. Számítógéppel olvasható digitális tárolóközeg, amely rajta tárolt számítógépi programot tartalmaz, amely olyan programkódot tartalmaz, amely egy számítógépen futtatva egy a 6. igénypont szerinti eljárás hajt végre.