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► **To cite this version:**

Charles-Alban Deledalle, Loïc Denis, Florence Tupin, Andreas Reigber, Marc Jäger. Additional illustrations of NL-SAR method for resolution-preserving (Pol)(In)SAR denoising. 2014. hal-00955194v1

**HAL Id: hal-00955194**

**<https://hal.science/hal-00955194v1>**

Preprint submitted on 4 Mar 2014 (v1), last revised 17 Jul 2014 (v4)

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# Additional illustrations of NL-SAR method for resolution-preserving (Pol)(In)SAR denoising

Charles-Alban Deledalle, Loïc Denis, Florence Tupin, Andreas Reigber, and Marc Jäger

## — About this document —

This document provides additional information and results of the method NL-SAR described in our paper: “NL-SAR: a unified Non-Local framework for resolution-preserving (Pol)(In)SAR denoising” submitted to *IEEE Trans. on Geoscience and Remote Sensing* [Deledalle et al., 2013]. NL-SAR is a fully automatic method for speckle reduction that handles amplitude, polarimetric and/or interferometric SAR data. It can process single look and multi-look images. The source code of the method is freely available at:

<http://www.math.u-bordeaux1.fr/~cdeledal/nlsar.php>.

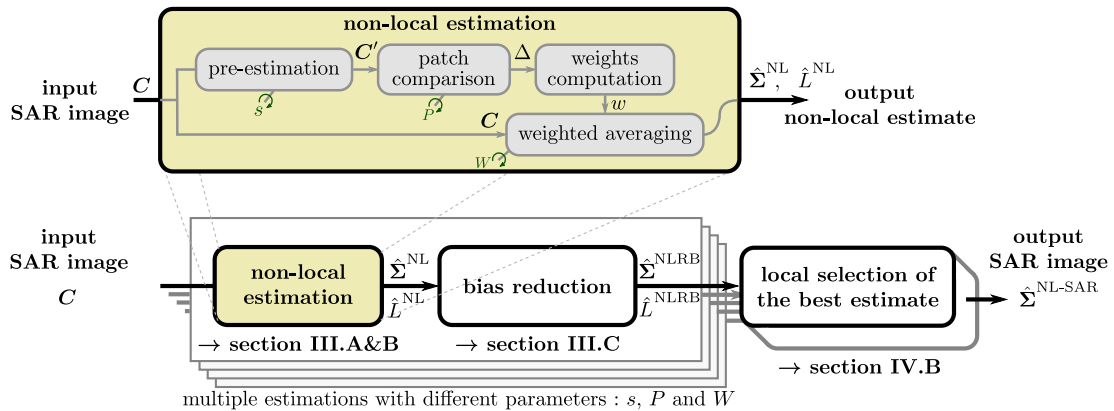
## — Structure of the document —

The first part of the document provides some justifications for the design choices done in NL-SAR. The second part gives numerous results of NL-SAR on both simulated and real SAR images.

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## 1. Justification of some design choices

This document cannot substitute for the full description of NL-SAR method given in the paper “NL-SAR: a unified Non-Local framework for resolution-preserving (Pol)(In)SAR denoising”. We only recall here the general scheme of the method before illustrating some of the steps:



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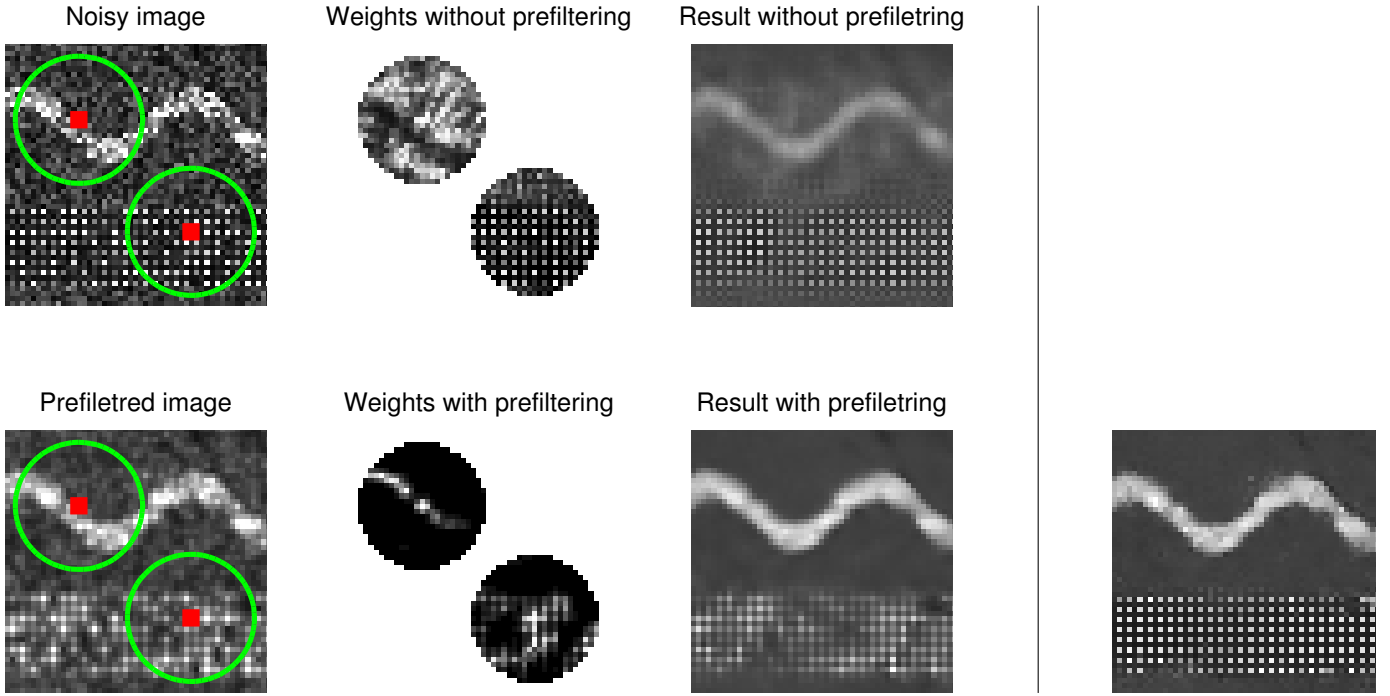


Fig. 1. (a) Top: non local means result by comparing  $7 \times 7$  patches extracted from the noisy image. (Bottom) Same except patches are extracted in a prefiltered image. Two pixels of interest (in red) are focused and their associated weights in the circle searching window (in green) are displayed. (b) NL-SAR result that is an aggregation of several non local means results obtained for different prefiltering strengths, patch sizes and search window sizes.

### 1.1. Pre-estimation

Pre-filtering<sup>1</sup> can help to better discriminate between similar and dissimilar patches. However, since it introduces some blurring, it is not beneficial to high frequency structures/point-like objects. A rather coarse pre-filtering method can be used in NL-SAR because the final result of the method is obtained after local selection of the best amount of smoothing. Figure 1 illustrates that the local selection step successfully chooses the results obtained with weights computed on the pre-filtered image in regions where it improves the discrimination, and relies on the results without pre-filtering in other regions. Note that pre-filtering impacts only the computation of weights and that the weighted combination is performed on the original data.

### 1.2. Patch comparison

Estimation of the similarity between two empirical covariance matrices  $C_1$  and  $C_2$  is difficult when the matrix dimension  $D$  is larger than the number of looks  $L$ . Matrices  $C_1$  and  $C_2$  are then singular and their probability density function is no more given by Wishart distribution.

The similarity criterion given by the generalized likelihood ratio under Wishart likelihood is defined as a ratio of determinants:

$$\mathcal{L}_G(C'_1, C'_2) = \frac{|C'_1|^{L'} \cdot |C'_2|^{L'}}{|\frac{1}{2}(C'_1 + C'_2)|^{2L'}}. \quad (1)$$

This criterion must be adapted in the case of  $D > L$ . A satisfying similarity criterion should be sensitive to changes in intensities, interferometric phase or polarimetric properties.

We illustrate in the case of interferometry (i.e.,  $D = 2$ ) that the criterion we use in NL-SAR is better behaved than some alternate solutions, namely the computation of the determinants in equation (1) using only the largest eigenvalue, or skipping null eigenvalues.

The empirical covariance matrix estimated from a pair of single look complex images is given by:

$$\hat{\Sigma}_p = C_p = \begin{pmatrix} I_p & \sqrt{I_p I'_p} e^{j\phi_p} \\ \sqrt{I_p I'_p} e^{-j\phi_p} & I'_p \end{pmatrix} \quad (2)$$

where the two complex values at pixel  $p$  are  $\sqrt{I_p} e^{j(\psi_p + \phi_p)}$  and  $\sqrt{I'_p} e^{j\psi_p}$ . The first eigenvalue of this rank-one covariance matrix is:

$$\lambda_{p1} = I_p + I'_p. \quad (3)$$

<sup>1</sup>in NL-SAR, pre-filtering is just a simple convolution with a truncated Gaussian kernel

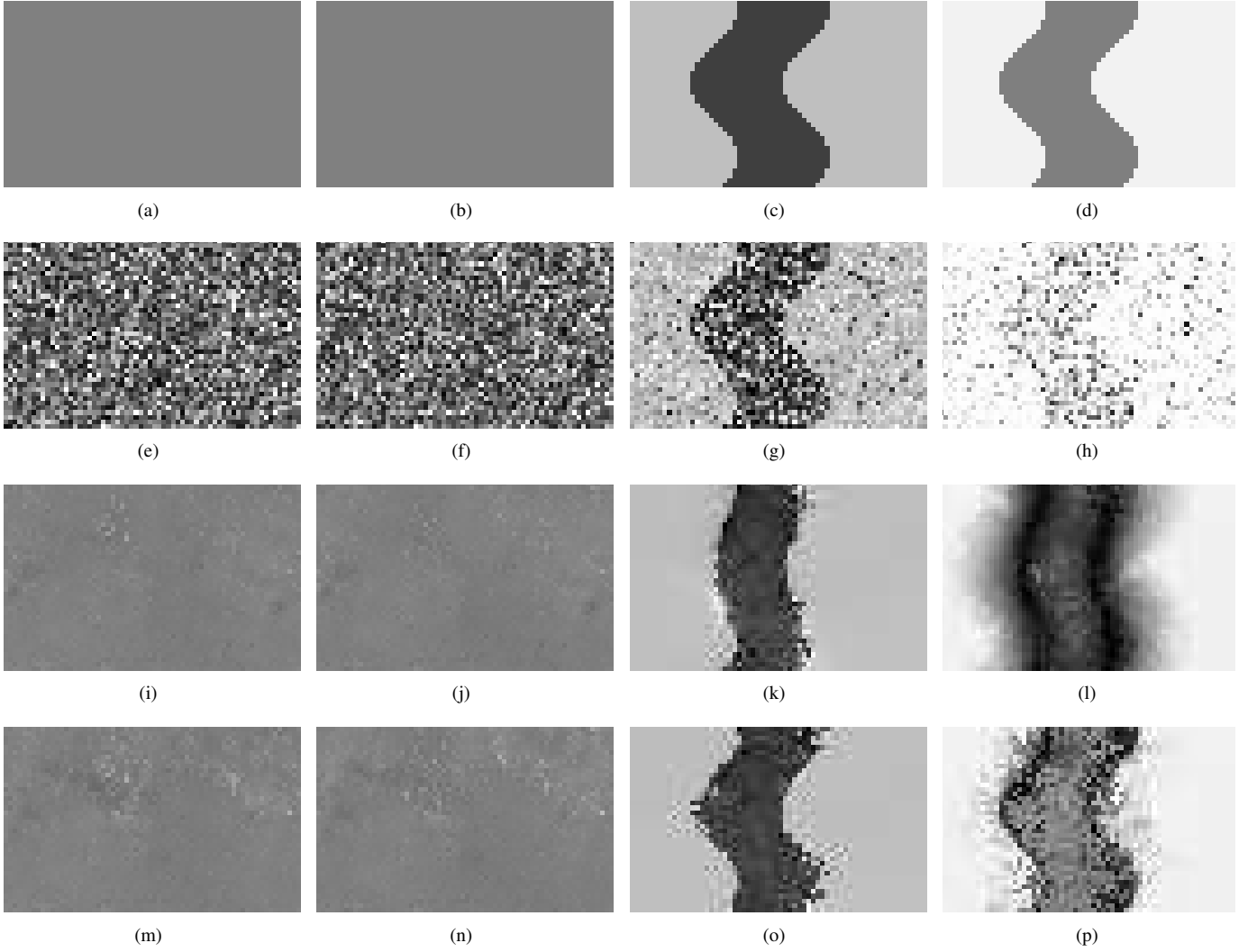


Fig. 2. Results on a simulated image with  $2 \times 2$  covariance matrices in 1 look (case where  $L < D$ ). From top to bottom: underlying information, noisy version, restoration with  $\gamma = 0$ , restoration with the proposed  $\gamma^* = (L/D)^{1/3} \approx 0.8$ .

The empirical covariance matrix estimated from the two locations 1 and 2 is:

$$\hat{\Sigma}_{12} = \frac{1}{2}(C_1 + C_2) = \frac{1}{2} \begin{pmatrix} I_1 + I_2 & \sqrt{I_1 I_1'} e^{j\phi_1} + \sqrt{I_2 I_2'} e^{j\phi_2} \\ \sqrt{I_1 I_1'} e^{-j\phi_1} + \sqrt{I_2 I_2'} e^{-j\phi_2} & I_1' + I_2' \end{pmatrix} \quad (4)$$

whose eigenvalues are roots of  $\lambda^2 - \text{Tr}(\hat{\Sigma}_{12})\lambda + |\hat{\Sigma}_{12}|$ , hence, its 1st eigenvalue is

$$(\lambda_{12})_1 = \frac{\text{Tr}(\hat{\Sigma}_{12}) + \sqrt{\text{Tr}(\hat{\Sigma}_{12})^2 - 4|\hat{\Sigma}_{12}|}}{2}. \quad (5)$$

If only the largest eigenvalue is used in place of the determinants in equation (1), the similarity criterion writes:

$$c(\mathbf{C}_1, \mathbf{C}_2) = \frac{(\lambda_1)_1^2 (\lambda_2)_1^2}{|(\lambda_{12})_1|^2}. \quad (6)$$

Since the determinant  $|\hat{\Sigma}_{12}|$  can be expanded as

$$|\hat{\Sigma}_{12}| = \frac{I_1 I_2' + I_2 I_1' - 2\sqrt{I_1 I_1' I_2 I_2'} \cos(\phi_1 - \phi_2)}{4}, \quad (7)$$

for given values of  $I_1$ ,  $I_1'$ ,  $I_2$  and  $I_2'$ , the determinant decreases when  $\phi_1$  and  $\phi_2$  become closer. Hence, the similarity criterion (6) mistakenly indicates that covariance matrices at locations 1 and 2 are more dissimilar when the interferometric phases  $\phi_1$  and  $\phi_2$  are actually getting closer.

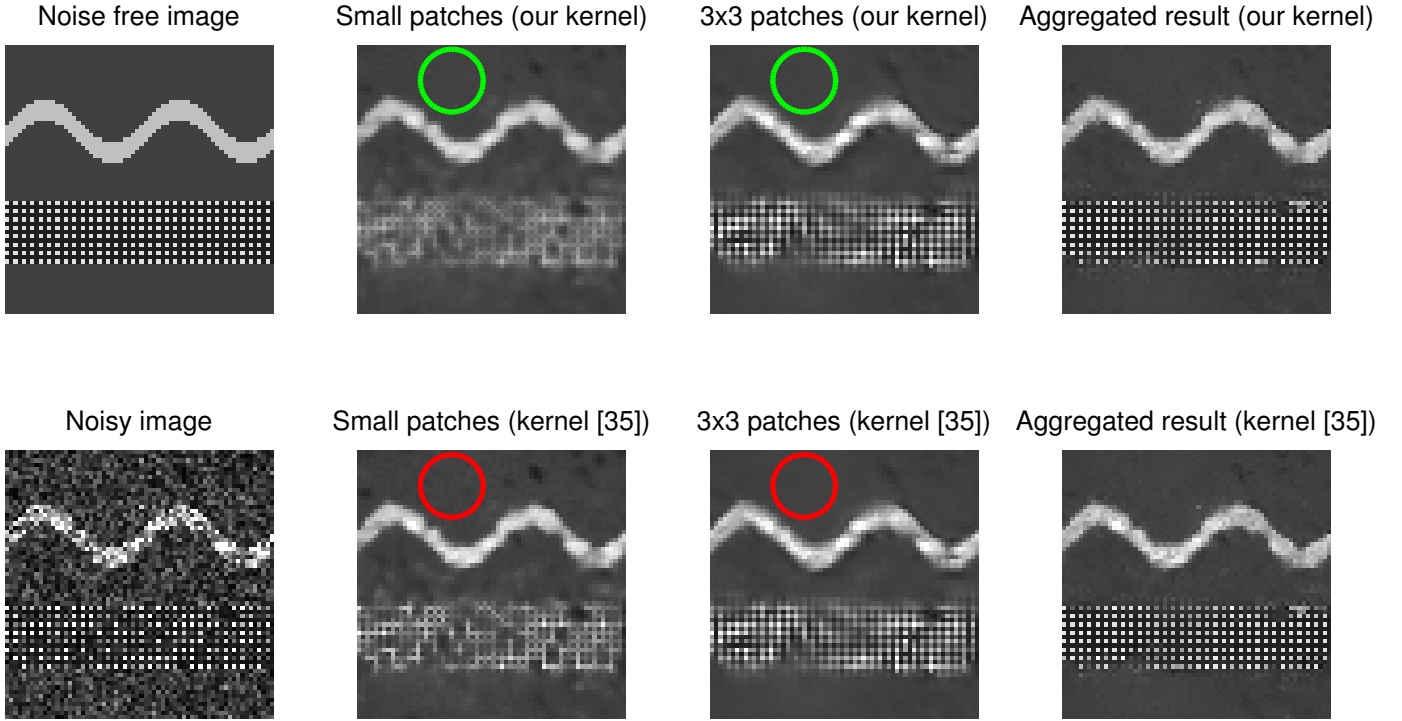


Fig. 3. Comparisons between kernels that adapt to the distribution of the criterion versus kernel based on moments of the criterion only (similar to the one of [35]). Green circles illustrates that the first kernels ensure a same level of noise reduction in homogeneous regions, while red kernels illustrates that the second kernel does not.

The following alternative similarity criterion suffers from insensibility to some intensity changes:

$$c(\mathbf{C}_1, \mathbf{C}_2) = \frac{(\lambda_1)_1^2 (\lambda_2)_1^2}{|\hat{\Sigma}_{12}|^2} = \frac{16(I_1 + I'_1)^2 (I_2 + I'_2)^2}{(I_1 I'_2 + I_2 I'_1 - 2\sqrt{I_1 I'_1 I_2 I'_2} \cos(\phi_1 - \phi_2))^2}. \quad (8)$$

Indeed, for all  $\alpha > 0$ ,

$$c(\mathbf{C}_1, \mathbf{C}_2) = c(\mathbf{C}_1, \alpha \mathbf{C}_2). \quad (9)$$

The similarity criterion used in NL-SAR behaves in a more favorable way. Indeed, by weighting off-diagonal terms of the covariance matrices by  $\gamma$ , the similarity criterion becomes:

$$\mathcal{L}_G(\mathbf{C}_1, \mathbf{C}_2) \propto \frac{|\hat{\mathbf{C}}'_1| |\hat{\mathbf{C}}'_2|}{|\hat{\mathbf{C}}'_1 + \hat{\mathbf{C}}'_2|^2} = \frac{(I_1 I'_1 I_2 I'_2) (1 - \gamma^2)}{(I_1 I'_2 + I_2 I'_1 + (1 - \gamma^2)(I_1 I'_1 + I_2 I'_2) - 2\gamma^2 \sqrt{I_1 I'_1 I_2 I'_2} \cos(\phi_1 - \phi_2))^2} \quad (10)$$

Note that when  $\gamma \rightarrow 1$ , we have, for any  $\alpha > 0$ :

$$\frac{\mathcal{L}_G(\mathbf{C}_1, \mathbf{C}_2)}{1 - \gamma^2} \rightarrow \frac{\mathcal{L}_G(\mathbf{C}_1, \alpha \mathbf{C}_2)}{1 - \gamma^2} \quad (11)$$

meaning that we are no more discriminant in intensities. When  $\gamma \rightarrow 0$ , we are obviously no more discriminant in phase. For  $0 < \gamma < 1$ , we have

$$-\log \mathcal{L}_G(\mathbf{C}_1, \mathbf{C}_2) \propto \log \left( \frac{I_1 I'_2 + I_2 I'_1 + (1 - \gamma^2)(I_1 I'_1 + I_2 I'_2) - 2\gamma^2 \sqrt{I_1 I'_1 I_2 I'_2} \cos(\phi_1 - \phi_2)}{\sqrt{I_1 I'_1 I_2 I'_2}} \right) \quad (12)$$

$$\propto \log \left( \underbrace{\left( \sqrt{\frac{I_1}{I_2}} + \sqrt{\frac{I_2}{I_1}} \right) \left( \sqrt{\frac{I'_1}{I'_2}} + \sqrt{\frac{I'_2}{I'_1}} \right)}_{\text{intensity dissimilarity}} - \gamma^2 \underbrace{\left( \sqrt{\frac{I_1 I'_1}{I_2 I'_2}} + \sqrt{\frac{I_2 I'_2}{I_1 I'_1}} \right)}_{\text{correction}} + 2\gamma^2 \underbrace{(-\cos(\phi_1 - \phi_2))}_{\text{phase dissimilarity}} \right) \quad (13)$$

The first term decreases when intensities  $I_1$  and  $I'_1$  gets closer to  $I_2$  and  $I'_2$  respectively. The second term seems to compensate for inter-channel correlations. The last term decreases when phases  $\phi_1$  and  $\phi_2$  get closer. This criterion clearly measures both the dissimilarity in intensity and in interferometric phase. Figure 2 illustrates that the criterion used in NL-SAR can discriminate changes in interferometric phase even if no change occur in amplitude compared to an intensity-only criterion.

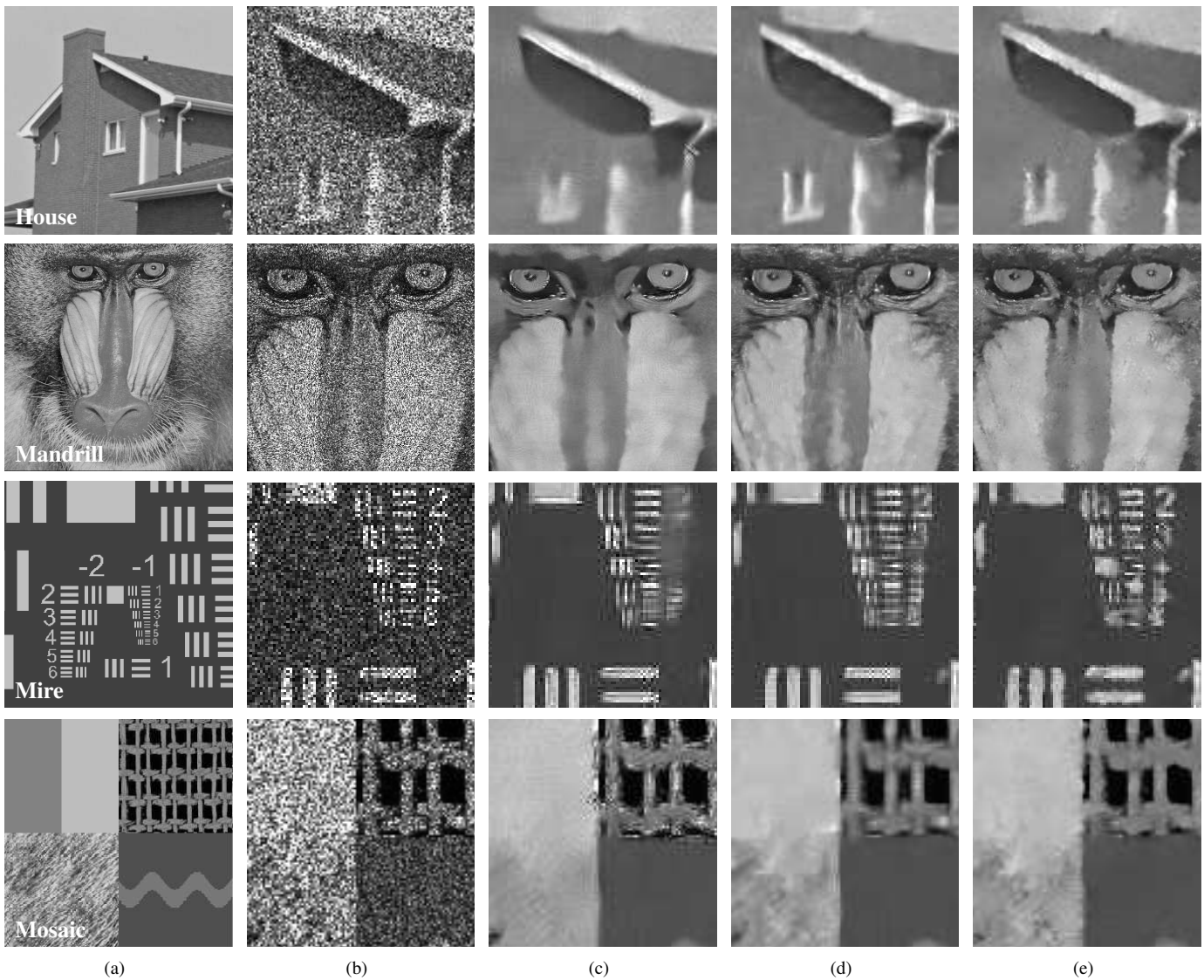


Fig. 4. Illustration on denoising scalar (intensity) simulated images. (a) True image. (b) Noisy image ( $L=1$ ). (c) It. PPB filter. (d) Our result. (e) SAR-BM3D.

### 1.3. Weights computation

Fig. 3 gives an illustration that kernels adapted to the distribution can preserve a same level of noise reduction in homogeneous areas compared to other kernels. The smoothness level in the aggregated result is then controlled.

We can observe that the resulting aggregated results are however not that much different. The most significant advantage of our kernel is that no manual tuning is required. In comparison, the kernel of [35] is parameterized and this parameter has been set by hand, and should be tuned for different level of noise.

## 2. Additional results

### 2.1. Amplitude images

We give some additional illustrations of how NL-SAR compares to state-of-the-art speckle reduction methods when applied to amplitude images.

*a) Qualitative and quantitative performance on some reference images:*

Figure 4 and 5 compare the results of NL-SAR with iterative PPB [Deledalle et al., 2009] and SAR-BM3D [Parrilli et al., 2012] in the case of low signal-to-noise ratio (single look images, figure 4) and good signal-to-noise ratio (16 looks images, figure 5). The performance of each method is compared in terms of PSNR and SSIM in table I. These images can help identify what kind of artifact is introduced by each method.

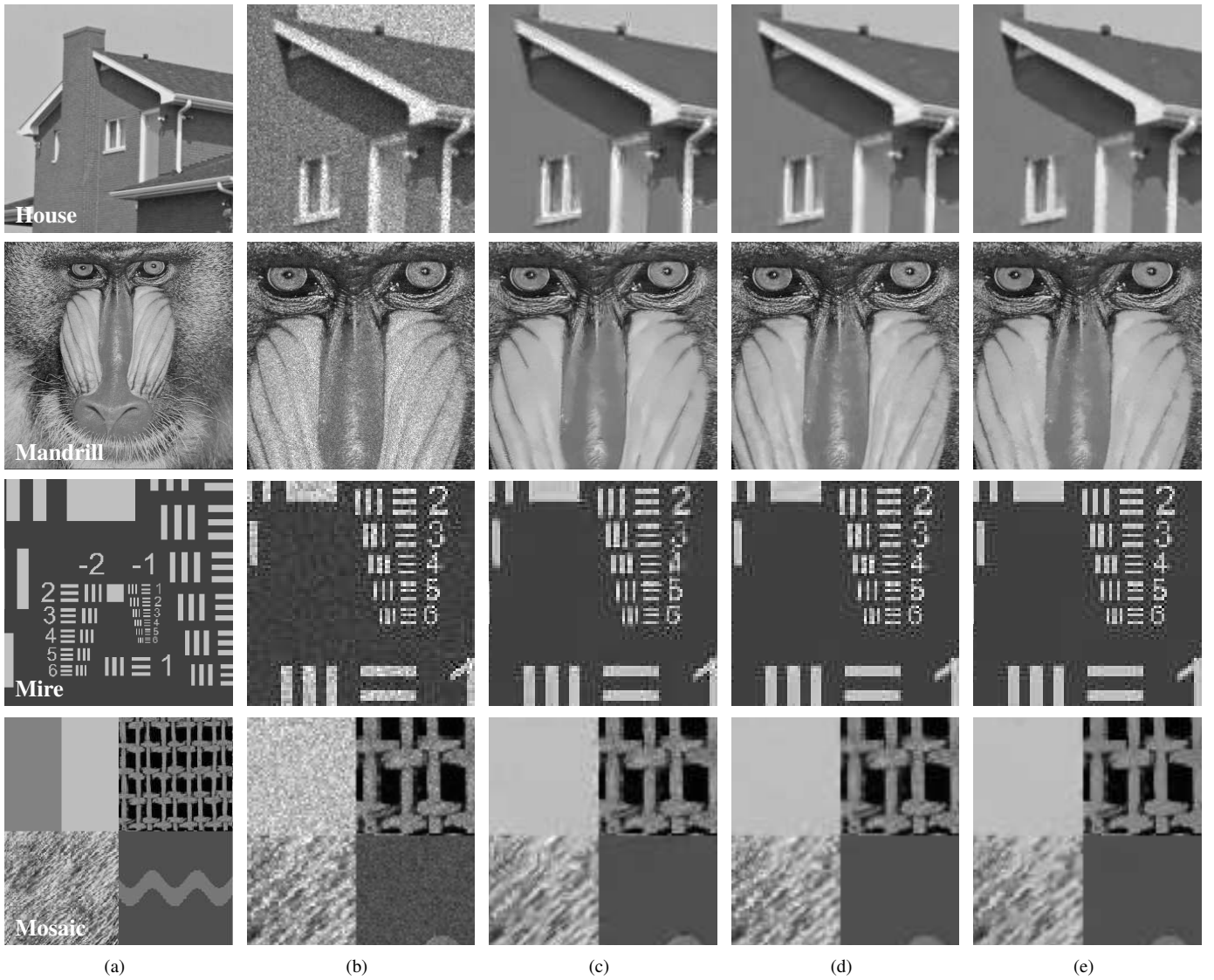


Fig. 5. Illustration on denoising scalar (intensity) simulated images. (a) True image. (b) Noisy image (L=16). (c) It. PPB filter. (d) Our result. (e) SAR-BM3D.

TABLE I  
PSNR / SSIM

Method	L = 1	L = 2	L = 4	L = 16	L = 1	L = 2	L = 4	L = 16
	House				Mandrill			
Noisy	-3.54 / 0.098	-0.78 / 0.157	2.13 / 0.229	8.13 / 0.437	-3.72 / 0.422	-0.93 / 0.552	1.99 / 0.675	7.94 / 0.862
Pretest	9.02 / 0.613	11.50 / 0.724	13.86 / 0.793	17.62 / 0.858	4.89 / 0.514	6.03 / 0.629	7.11 / 0.748	10.47 / 0.900
PPB	10.30 / 0.647	12.78 / 0.727	14.47 / 0.782	17.34 / 0.853	4.99 / 0.500	6.11 / 0.623	7.61 / 0.754	10.40 / 0.900
NL-SAR	11.05 / 0.690	12.77 / 0.749	14.70 / 0.799	18.24 / 0.862	5.45 / 0.594	6.57 / 0.692	7.97 / 0.778	11.83 / 0.913
SARBM3D	<b>12.29 / 0.746</b>	<b>14.42 / 0.794</b>	<b>16.09 / 0.828</b>	<b>19.37 / 0.883</b>	<b>6.06 / 0.649</b>	<b>7.33 / 0.749</b>	<b>8.83 / 0.832</b>	<b>12.09 / 0.929</b>
	Mire				Mosaic			
Noisy	0.37 / 0.536	3.17 / 0.646	6.05 / 0.745	12.04 / 0.899	-1.56 / 0.240	1.25 / 0.322	4.11 / 0.412	10.10 / 0.604
Pretest	9.07 / 0.928	12.23 / 0.974	14.64 / 0.988	19.59 / 0.996	6.61 / 0.605	7.92 / 0.711	9.62 / 0.810	13.16 / 0.925
PPB	10.56 / 0.953	12.45 / 0.973	14.40 / 0.984	18.81 / 0.994	7.03 / 0.614	8.40 / 0.697	9.99 / 0.785	12.73 / 0.898
NL-SAR	11.25 / 0.957	15.39 / 0.984	<b>19.87 / 0.994</b>	<b>25.77 / 0.999</b>	8.53 / 0.691	9.88 / 0.769	11.67 / 0.846	<b>15.82 / 0.947</b>
SARBM3D	<b>12.98 / 0.969</b>	<b>15.79 / 0.986</b>	18.14 / 0.992	22.61 / 0.998	<b>8.80 / 0.720</b>	<b>10.06 / 0.791</b>	<b>11.75 / 0.863</b>	15.26 / 0.946

b) Results obtained with the benchmark methodology of [Di Martino et al., 2013]:

Figure 6 and table II give the result of NL-SAR on the 5 test cases proposed in [Di Martino et al., 2013] to evaluate the performance of speckle reduction methods. We invite the interested reader to refer to [Di Martino et al., 2013] for a detailed description of each criterion. Even though NL-SAR does not perform best on this benchmark, it is in a par with other state-

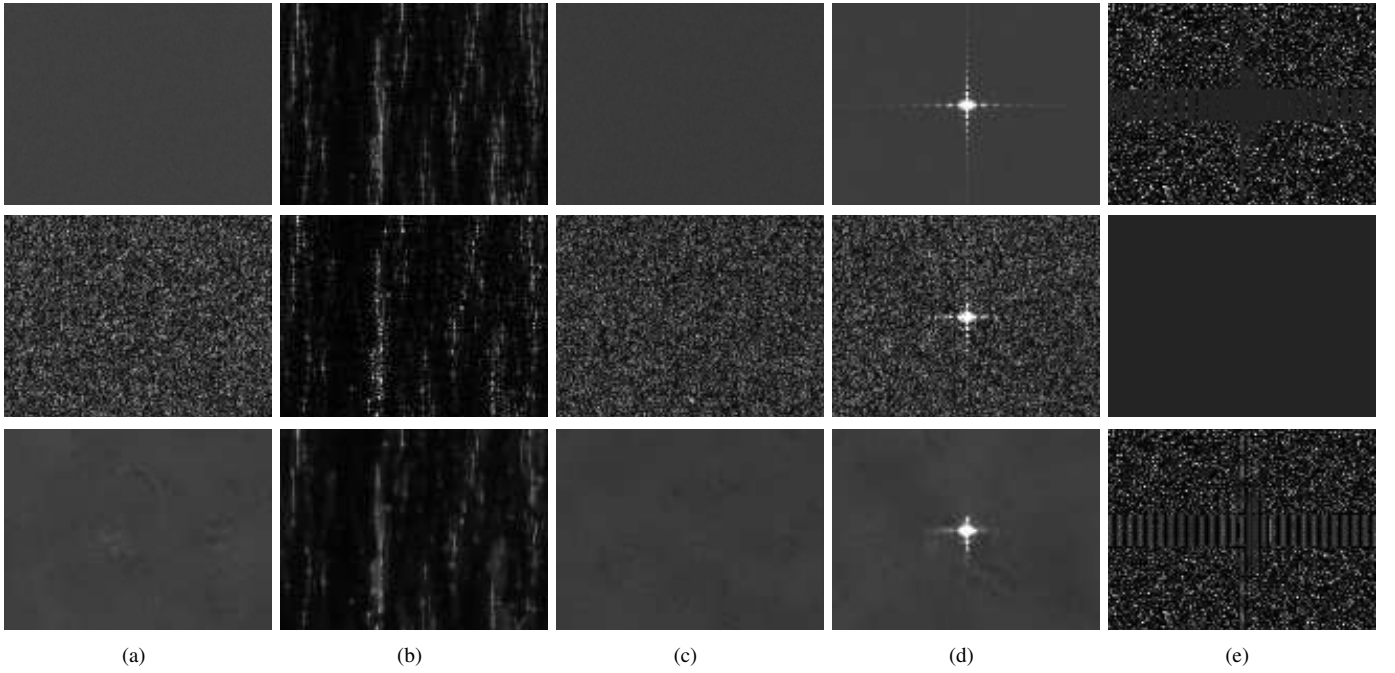


Fig. 6. Restoration of 5 test cases proposed in [Di Martino et al., 2013]: (a) homogeneous region; (b) texture (image of a synthetic fractal DEM); (c) squares image; (d) point target; (e) building.

TABLE II  
QUANTITATIVE EVALUATION OF [DI MARTINO ET AL., 2013] WITH COMPARISONS BETWEEN THE PPB FILTER, THE SAR-BM3D FILTER AND OUR APPROACH. FOR EACH CRITERIA, THE TWO BEST APPROACHES ARE HIGHLIGHT IN BOLD.

Measures for Homogeneous						
	MoI	MoR	VoR	ENL	ENL*	DG
Clean	1.000	1.003	1.011	445.77	515.57	
Noisy	1.003				0.99	0
PPB	<b>1.005</b>	0.956	<b>0.824</b>	<b>118.81</b>	<b>124.46</b>	<b>20.12</b>
SAR-BMD3D	0.985	<b>0.975</b>	0.813	90.69	93.65	19.16
NL-SAR	<b>0.989</b>	<b>0.990</b>	<b>0.907</b>	<b>152.19</b>	<b>167.82</b>	<b>20.82</b>

Measures for DEM					Measures for Squares			
	MoI	MoR	VoR	Cx	DG	ES (up)	ES (down)	FOM
Clean	1.000	0.984	0.967	2.40				0.932
Noisy	0.987			3.55	0	0.021	0.105	0.708
PPB	<b>0.984</b>	<b>0.911</b>	<b>0.558</b>	2.71	3.63	0.080	0.334	<b>0.800</b>
SAR-BMD3D	<b>0.953</b>	0.833	0.418	<b>2.45</b>	<b>5.19</b>	<b>0.059</b>	<b>0.221</b>	<b>0.826</b>
NL-SAR	0.917	<b>0.851</b>	<b>0.553</b>	<b>2.18</b>	<b>4.91</b>	<b>0.079</b>	<b>0.234</b>	0.677

Measures for Corner			Measures for Building	
	CNN	CBG	CDR	BS
Clean	7.18	30.54	59.88	
Noisy	7.19	30.52	59.87	0.12
PPB	<b>5.70</b>	27.29	<b>58.84</b>	<b>5.99</b>
SAR-BMD3D	<b>6.83</b>	<b>29.55</b>	<b>59.86</b>	<b>1.47</b>
NL-SAR	5.57	<b>33.59</b>	63.90	11.74

of-the-art methods (namely PPB and SARBM3D), often belonging in the top two ranked methods.

### c) Results on a satellite SAR image:

In figure 7, NL-SAR and IDAN [Vasile et al., 2006] are applied to a TerraSAR-X image to compare their performance for speckle reduction.

## 2.2. PolSAR images

Figures 9 to 15 compare the performance of NL-SAR with IDAN [Vasile et al., 2006] and refined Lee [Lee et al., 2003] filters on PolSAR data. A wide diversity of images are considered, from high-resolution aerial data (figure 9, 8, 10, 11) to low-resolution aerial data (figure 12), with vegetation areas and urban areas. In order to provide some insight into estimated polarimetric properties, figures 14 and 15 display the  $H/\alpha$  polarimetric decompositions.



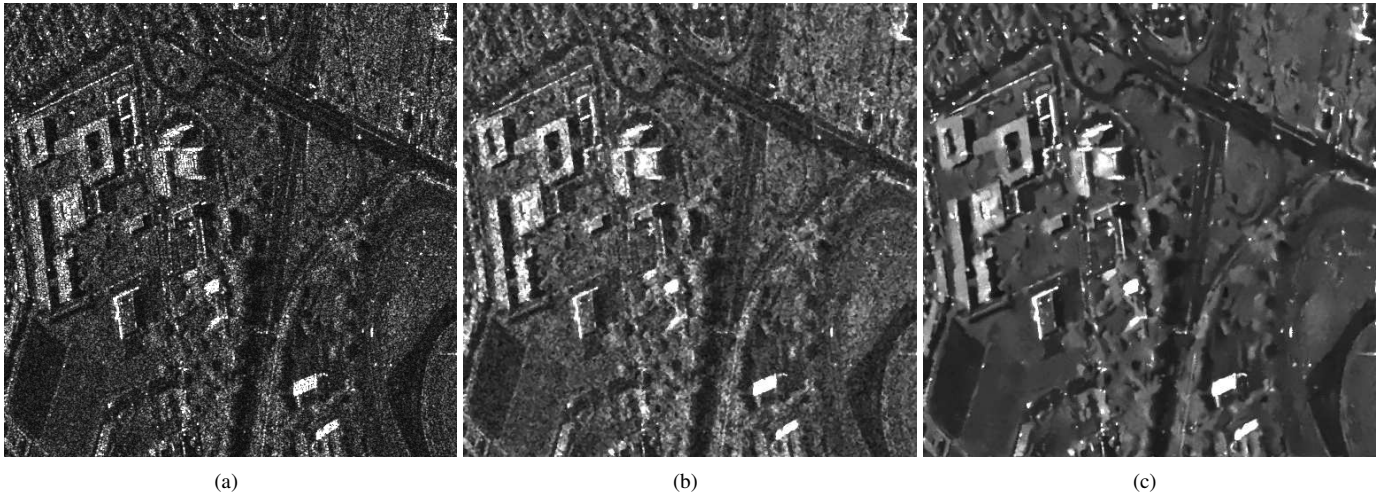


Fig. 7. Restoration of a TerraSAR-X image near Toulouse (France) ©DLR: (a) original image; (b) speckle reduction with IDAN; (c) speckle reduction with NL-SAR.

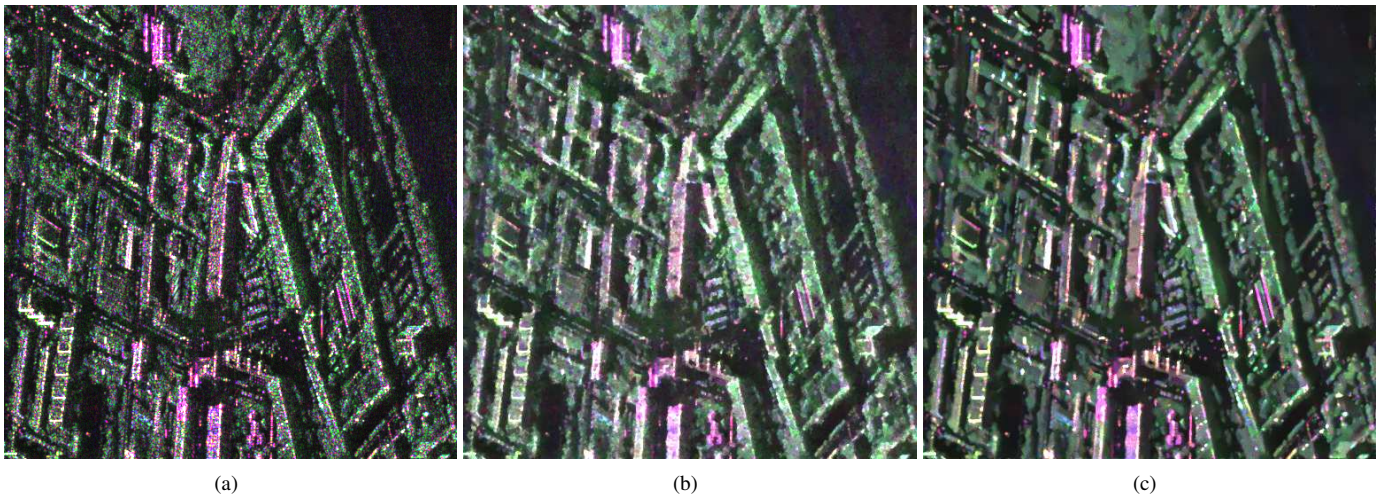


Fig. 8. Restoration of a polarimetric E-SAR image of Dresden ©DLR: (a) original image; (b) speckle reduction with IDAN; (c) speckle reduction with NL-SAR.

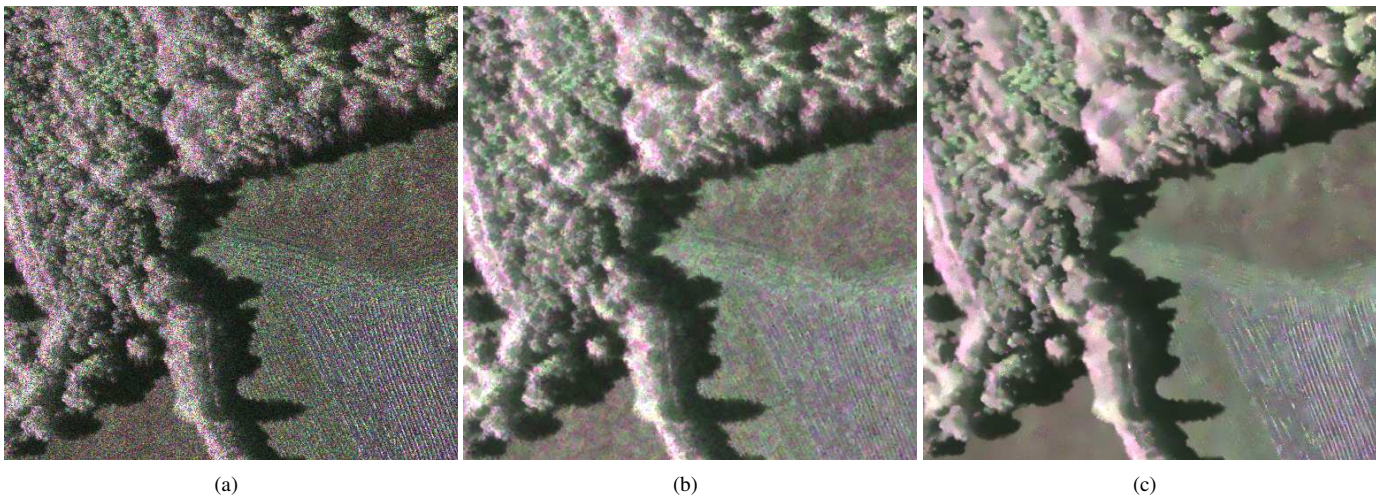


Fig. 9. Restoration of a polarimetric F-SAR image near Kaufbeuren (Germany) with complex information (vegetation and fields) ©DLR: (a) original image; (b) speckle reduction with IDAN; (c) speckle reduction with NL-SAR.

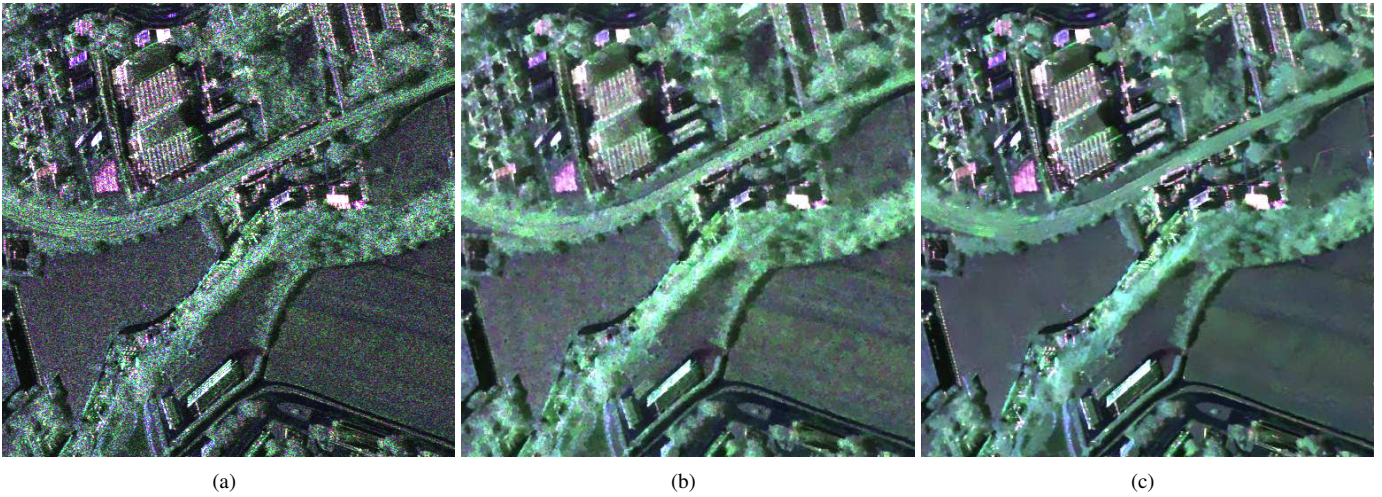


Fig. 10. Restoration of a polarimetric F-SAR image near Kaufbeuren (Germany) ©DLR: (a) original image; (b) speckle reduction with IDAN; (c) speckle reduction with NL-SAR.

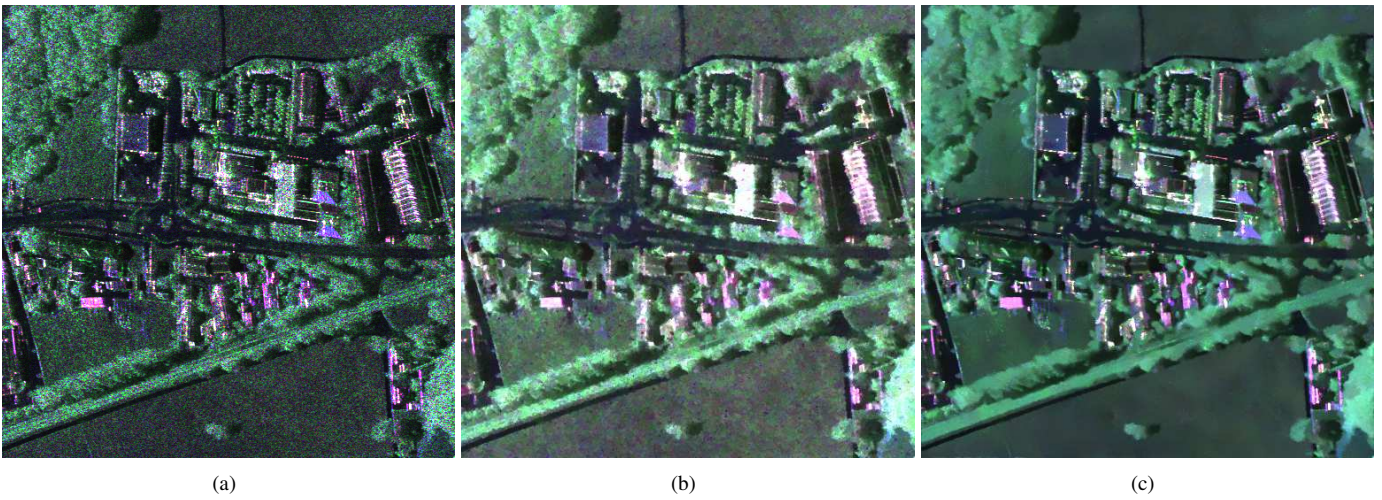


Fig. 11. Restoration of a polarimetric F-SAR image near Kaufbeuren (Germany) ©DLR: (a) original image; (b) speckle reduction with IDAN; (c) speckle reduction with NL-SAR.

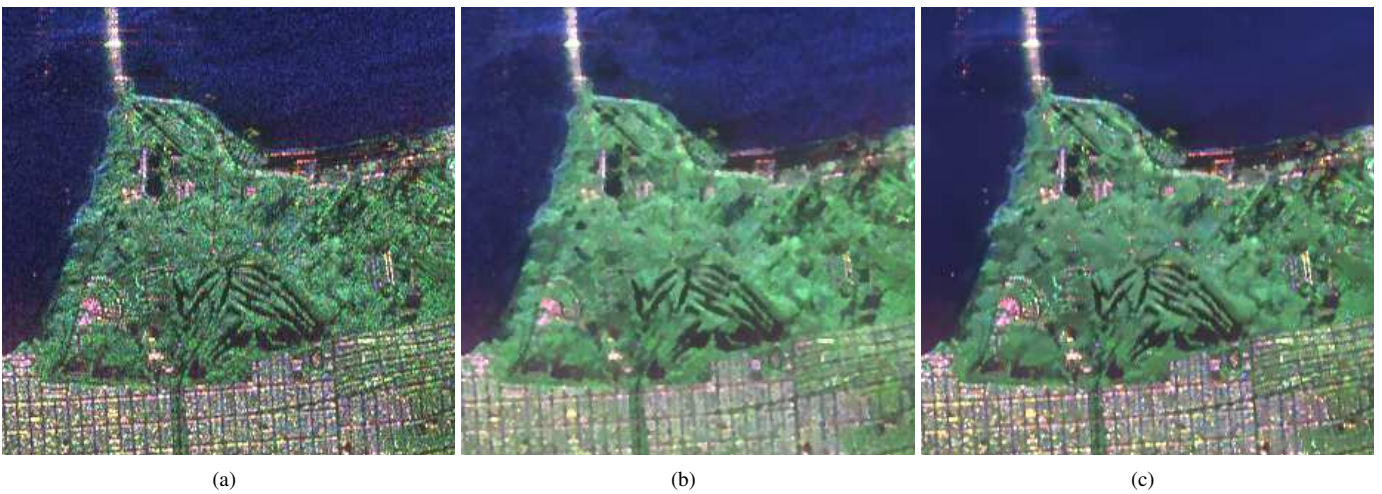


Fig. 12. Restoration of a polarimetric AIRSAR image in L-band of San Francisco (California) ©NASA-JPL-Caltech: (a) original image; (b) speckle reduction with IDAN; (c) speckle reduction with NL-SAR.

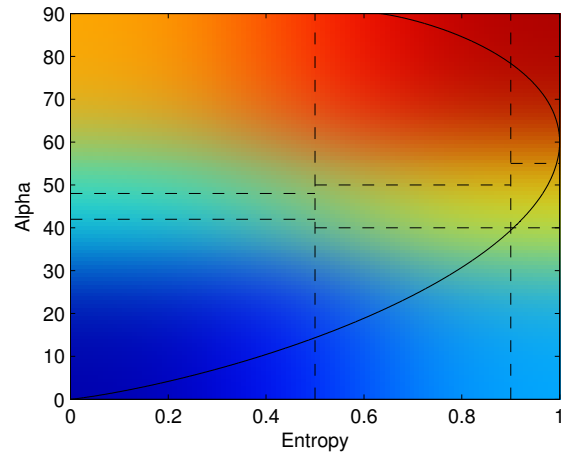


Fig. 13. Colormap used in the  $H/\alpha$  based classification

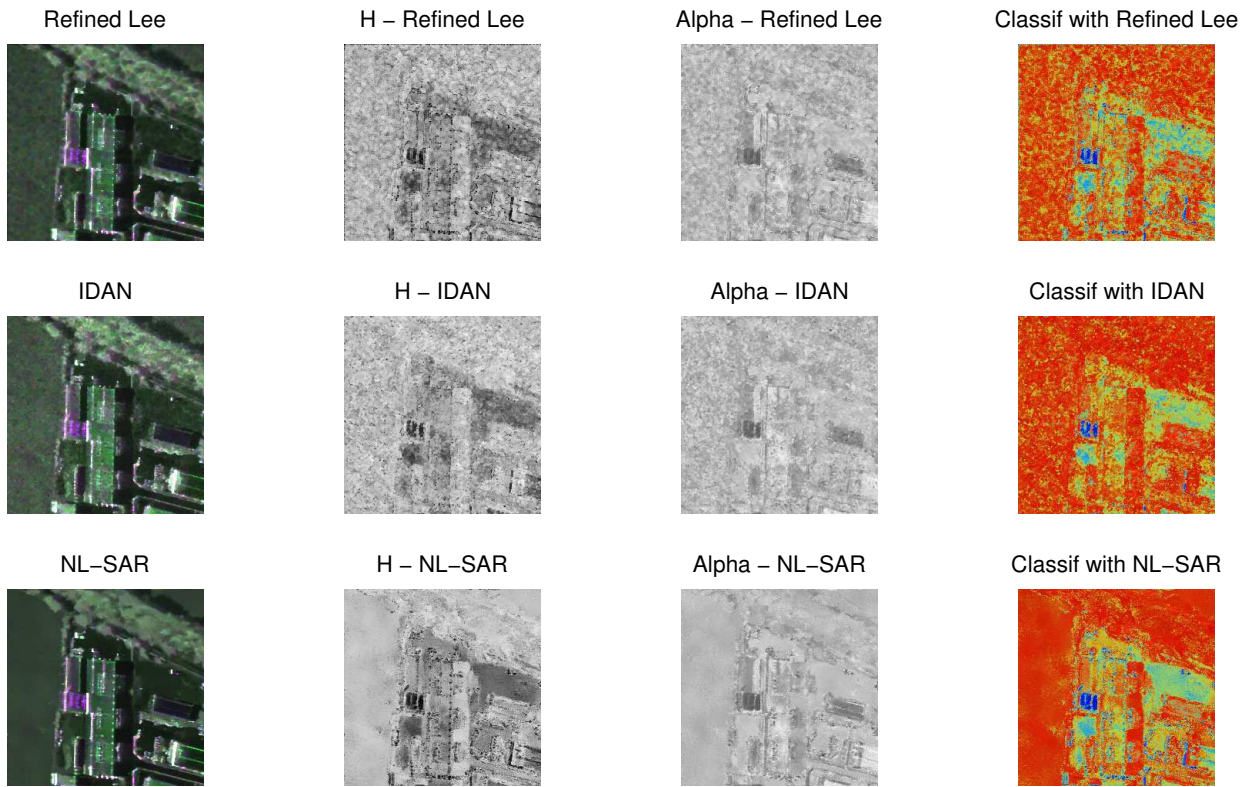


Fig. 14. Classification based on  $H/\alpha$  decomposition of an image of Kaufbeuren (Germany) sensed by F-SAR ©DLR. Color labels are given by Fig. 13

### 2.3. InSAR images

Figures 16 and 17 compare IDAN [Vasile et al., 2006] and NL-SAR on aerial interferometric SAR images. Figure 18 give results obtained with IDAN, refined Lee [Lee et al., 2003] and NL-SAR on satellite interferometric SAR images

### Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the Centre National d'Études Spatiales, the Office Nationale d'Études et de Recherches Aérospatiales and the Délégation Générale pour l'Armement for providing the RAMSES data, and the German Aerospace Center (DLR) for providing the F-SAR data.

Experiments presented in this paper were carried out using the PlaFRIM experimental testbed, being developed under the INRIA PlaFRIM development action with support from LABRI and IMB and other entities: Conseil Régional d'Aquitaine, FeDER, Université de Bordeaux and CNRS (see <https://plafrim.bordeaux.inria.fr/>).

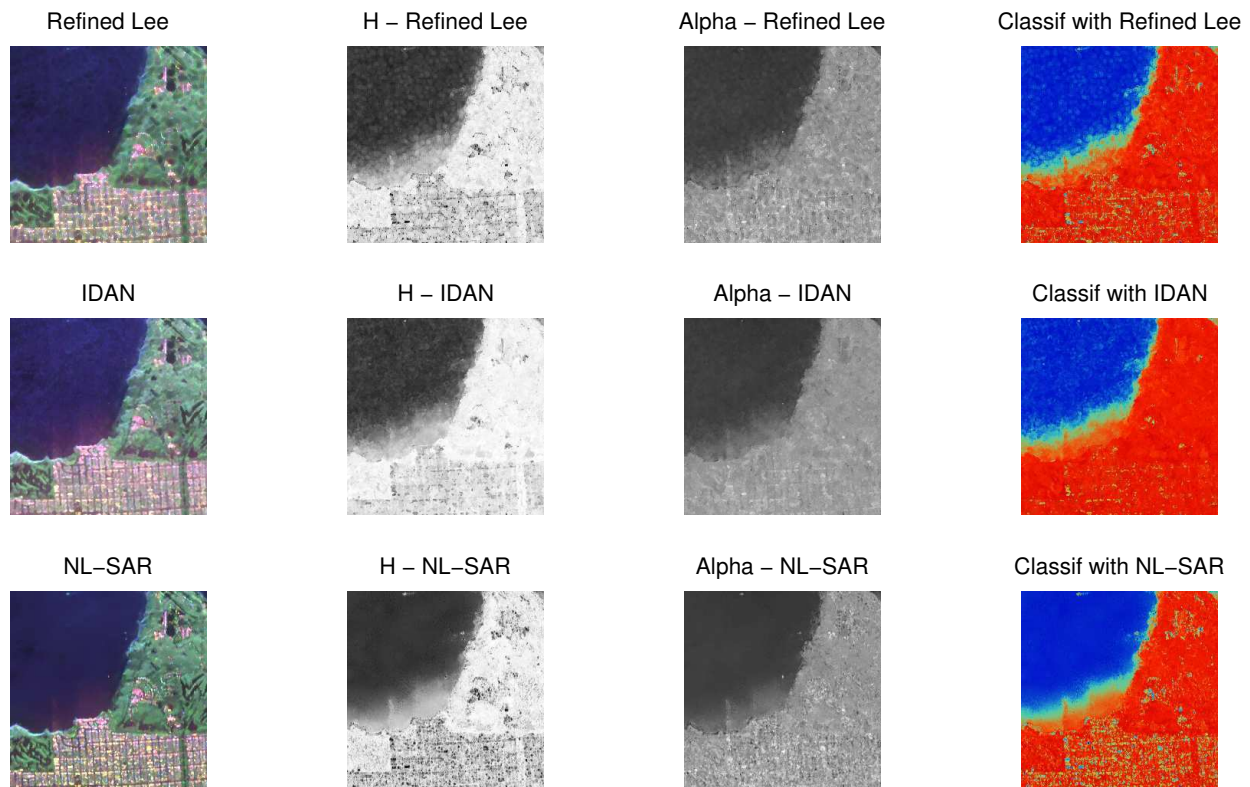


Fig. 15. Classification based on  $H/\alpha$  decomposition of an image of San Francisco (USA) sensed by AIRSAR ©NASA-JPL-Caltech. Color labels are given by Fig. 13

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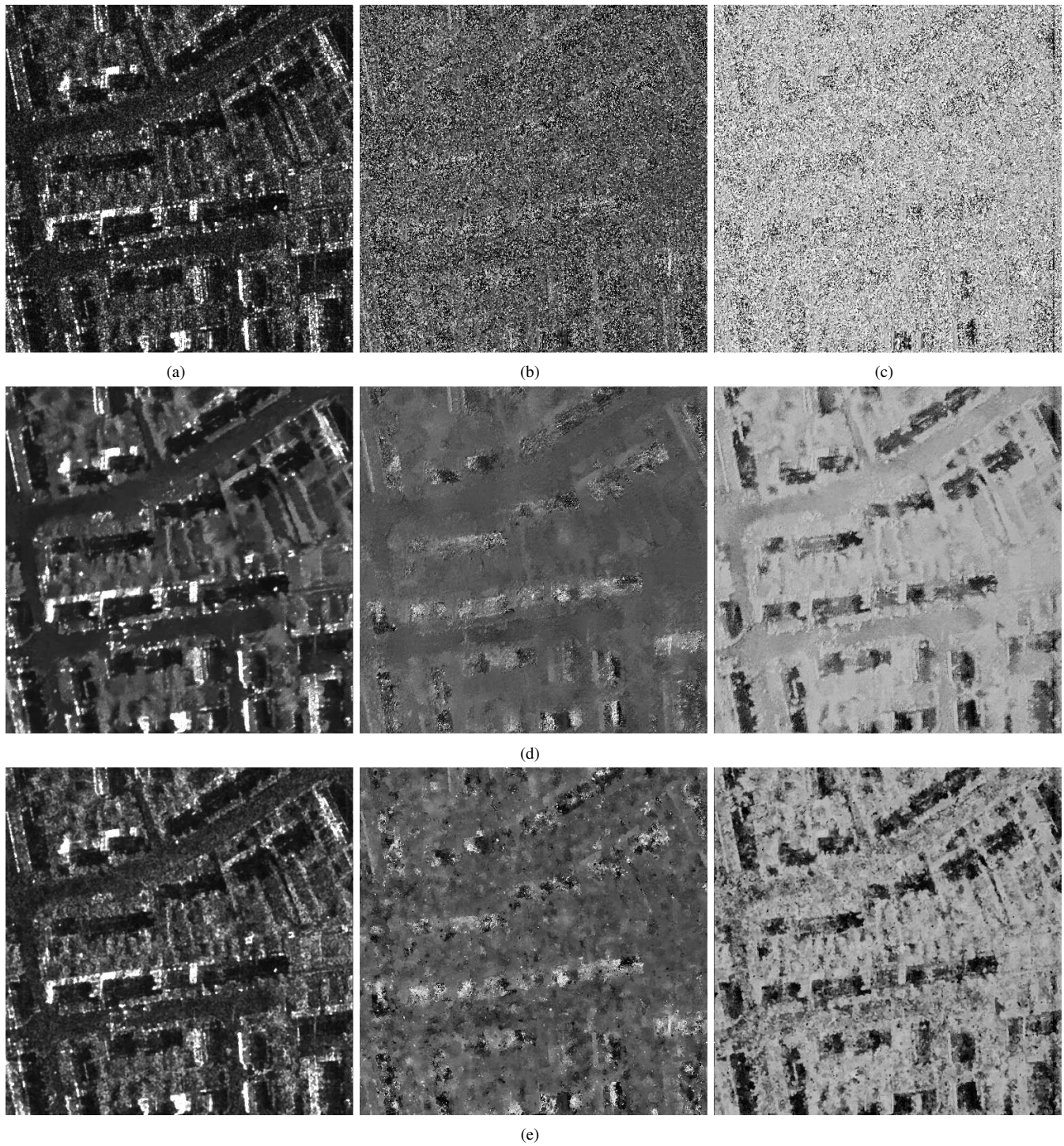


Fig. 16. Restoration of an interferometric RAMSES image of Cheminot (France) ©ONERA: (a,b,c) original amplitude, phase and coherence images; (d) estimation with IDAN; (e) estimation with NL-SAR.

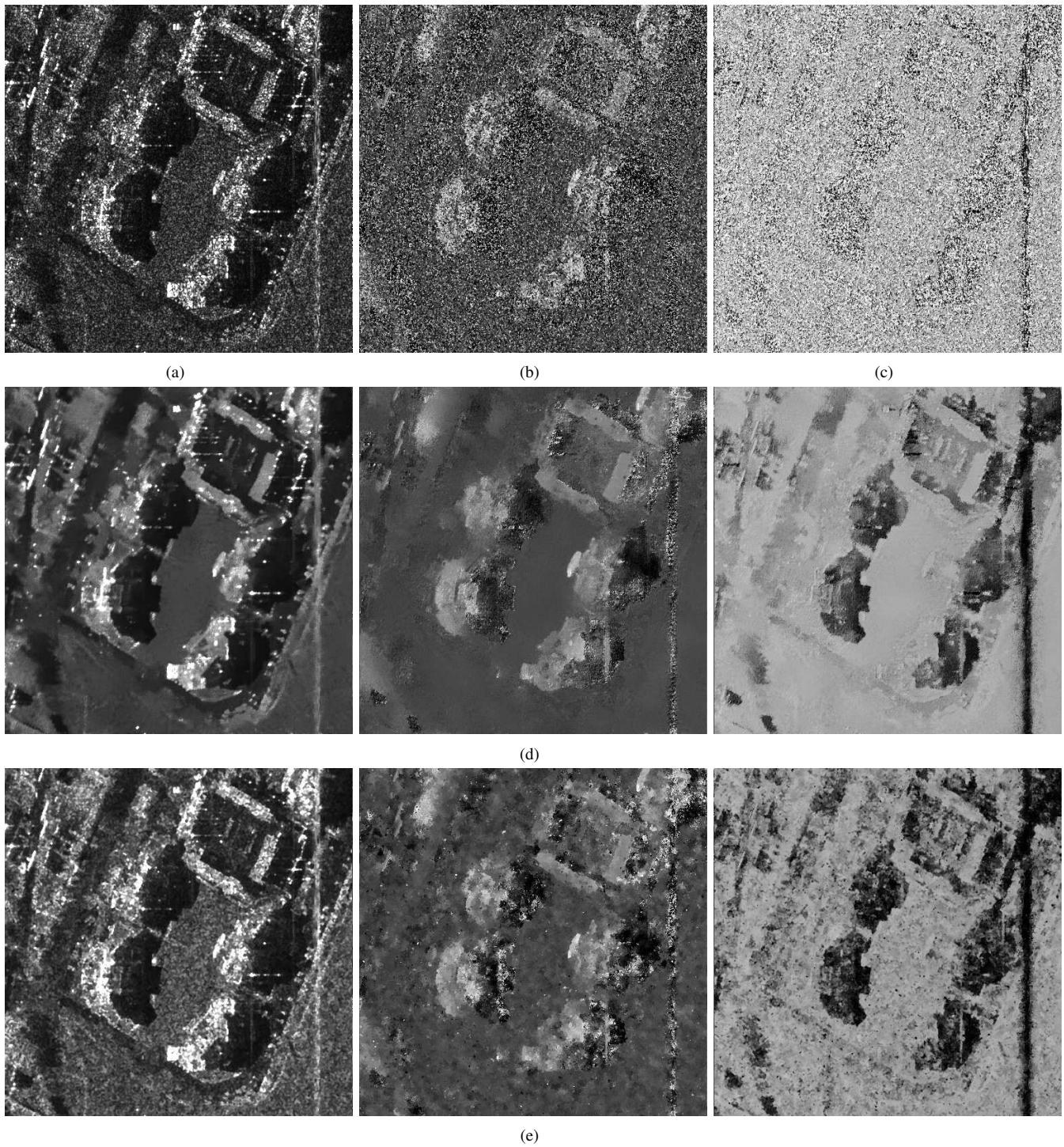


Fig. 17. Restoration of an interferometric RAMSES image of Bayard (France) ©ONERA: (a,b,c) original amplitude, phase and coherence images; (d) estimation with IDAN; (e) estimation with NL-SAR.

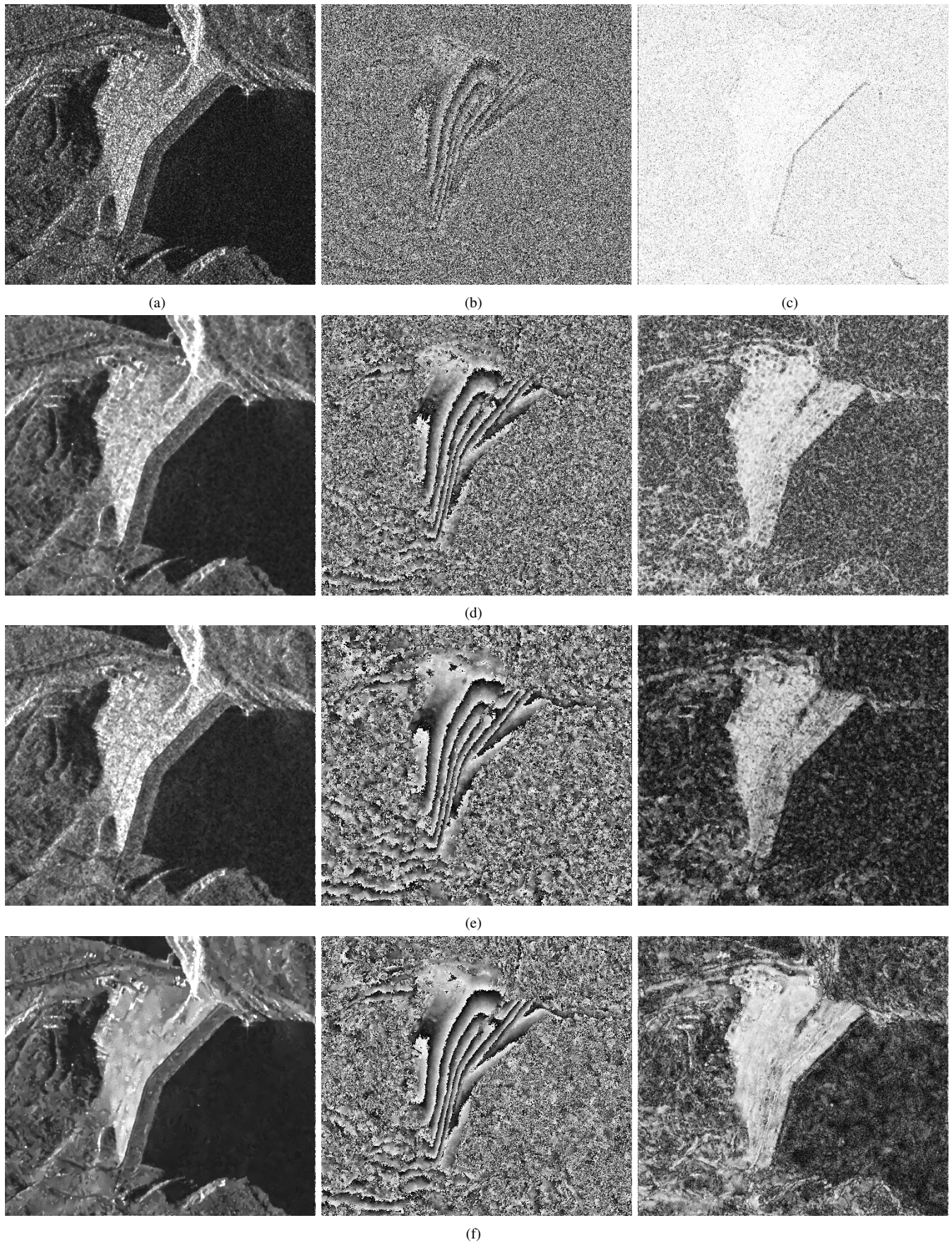


Fig. 18. Restoration of an interferometric TerraSAR-X image of the Serre-Ponçon dam (France) ©Astrium: (a,b,c) original amplitude, phase and coherence images; (d) with the refined Lee filter; (e) estimation with IDAN; (f) with NL-SAR.