We claim:

1. A method comprising:

examining availability of a depth block co-located with a texture block;

performing one of the following on the basis of availability of the co-located depth block:

determining a prediction method for a texture block on the basis of availability of the co-located depth block, the prediction method using the co-located depth block if the co-located depth block is available and the prediction method not using the co-located depth block if the co-located depth block is not available; or

on the basis of a co-located depth sample within the co-located depth block being unavailable in said examining, padding or interpolating the co-located depth sample on the basis of one or more available depth samples and treating the co-located depth block as available and determining the prediction method to use the co-located depth block;

deriving a prediction block for the texture block on the basis of the prediction method.

2. The method according to claim 1 further comprising one of the following:

encoding the texture block on the basis of the derived prediction block to a bitstream, wherein the bitstream is being formed for comprising one or more encoded texture views and one or more encoded depth views;

decoding the texture block on the basis of the derived prediction block from a bitstream comprising one or more encoded texture views and one or more encoded depth views.

3. The method according to claim 2 comprising:

determining the prediction method for the derivation of the prediction block on the basis of one or more of the following:

the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded texture views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded depth views,

view component order of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views,

presence of a depth view component having a same sampling or output time as a texture view component including the texture block.

4. The method according to claim 2 comprising:

determining the availability of the co-located depth block on the basis of one or more of the following:

the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded texture views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded depth views,

view component order of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views,

presence of a depth view component having a same sampling or output time as a texture view component including the texture block,

a texture sampling grid for the texture block and a depth sampling grid for the depth block,

a position of the texture sampling grid and a position of the depth sampling grid,

a first spatial area covered by a texture view containing the texture block and a second spatial area covered by a depth view containing the depth block,

a location and area covered by the texture block within the second spatial area.

5. The method according to any of the claims 2 to 4 comprising:

receiving one or more input texture views and one or more input depth views;

determining which input texture views and input depth views are to be encoded; and

encoding one or more indications of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views.

6. The method according to any of the claims 2 to 4 comprising:

receiving in a bitstream one or more indications of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views; and

using the one or more indications to determine which input texture views and input depth views have been encoded in the bitstream.

7. An apparatus comprising at least one processor and at least one memory including computer program code, the at least one memory and the computer program code configured to, with the at least one processor, cause the apparatus to:

examine availability of a depth block co-located with a texture block;

perform one of the following on the basis of availability of the co-located depth block:

determine a prediction method for a texture block on the basis of availability of the co-located depth block, the prediction method using the co-located depth block if the co-located depth block is available and the prediction method not using the co-located depth block if the co-located depth block is not available; or

on the basis of a co-located depth sample within the co-located depth block being unavailable in said examining, pad or interpolate the co-located depth sample on the basis of one or more available depth samples and treat the co-located depth block as available and determine the prediction method to use the co-located depth block;

derive a prediction block for the texture block on the basis of the prediction method.

8. The apparatus according to claim 7, said at least one memory stored with code thereon, which when executed by said at least one processor, further causes the apparatus to perform at least one of the following:

encode the texture block on the basis of the derived prediction block to a bitstream, wherein the bitstream is being formed for comprising one or more encoded texture views and one or more encoded depth views;

decode the texture block on the basis of the derived prediction block from a bitstream comprising one or more encoded texture views and one or more encoded depth views.

9. The apparatus according to claim 8, said at least one memory stored with code thereon, which when executed by said at least one processor, further causes the apparatus to:

determine the prediction method for the derivation of the prediction block on the basis of one or more of the following:

the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded texture views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded depth views,

view component order of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views.

10. The apparatus according to claim 8, said at least one memory stored with code thereon, which when executed by said at least one processor, further causes the apparatus to:

determine the availability of the co-located depth block on the basis of one or more of the following:

the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded texture views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded depth views,

view component order of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views,

a texture sampling grid for a texture block and a depth sampling grid for a depth block,

a position of the texture sampling grid and a position of the depth sampling grid,

a spatial area covered by a texture view containing the texture block and a spatial area covered by a depth view containing the depth block.

11. The apparatus according to any of the claims 8 to 10, said at least one memory stored with code thereon, which when executed by said at least one processor, further causes the apparatus to:

receive one or more input texture views and one or more input depth views;

determine which input texture views and input depth views are to be encoded; and

encode one or more indications of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views.

12. The apparatus according to any of the claims 8 to 10, said at least one memory stored with code thereon, which when executed by said at least one processor, further causes the apparatus to:

receive in a bitstream one or more indications of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views; and

use the one or more indications to determine which input texture views and input depth views have been encoded in the bitstream.

13. An apparatus comprising:

means for examining availability of a depth block co-located with a texture block;

means for performing one of the following on the basis of availability of the co-located depth block:

determining a prediction method for a texture block on the basis of availability of the co-located depth block, the prediction method using the co-located depth block if the co-located depth block is available and the prediction method not using the co-located depth block if the co-located depth block is not available; or

on the basis of a co-located depth sample within the co-located depth block being unavailable in said examining, padding or interpolating the co-located depth sample on the basis of one or more available depth samples and treating the co-located depth block as available and determining the prediction method to use the co-located depth block;

means for deriving a prediction block for the texture block on the basis of the prediction method.

14. A computer program product including one or more sequences of one or more instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, cause an apparatus to at least perform the following:

examine availability of a depth block co-located with a texture block;

perform one of the following on the basis of availability of the co-located depth block:

determine a prediction method for a texture block on the basis of availability of the co-located depth block, the prediction method using the co-located depth block if the co-located depth block is available and the prediction method not using the co-located depth block if the co-located depth block is not available; or

on the basis of a co-located depth sample within the co-located depth block being unavailable in said examining, pad or interpolate the co-located depth sample on the basis of one or more available depth samples and treat the co-located depth block as available and determine the prediction method to use the co-located depth block;

derive a prediction block for the texture block on the basis of the prediction method.

15. The computer program product according to claim 14 further comprising one or more sequences of one or more instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, cause the apparatus to perform at least one of the following:

encode the texture block on the basis of the derived prediction block to a bitstream, wherein the bitstream is being formed for comprising one or more encoded texture views and one or more encoded depth views;

decode the texture block on the basis of the derived prediction block from a bitstream comprising one or more encoded texture views and one or more encoded depth views.

16. The computer program product according to claim 15 further comprising one or more sequences of one or more instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, cause the apparatus to:

determine the prediction method for the derivation of the prediction block on the basis of one or more of the following:

the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded texture views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded depth views,

view component order of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views.

17. The computer program product according to claim 15 further comprising one or more sequences of one or more instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, cause the apparatus to:

determine the availability of the co-located depth block on the basis of one or more of the following:

the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded texture views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded depth views,

view component order of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views,

a texture sampling grid for a texture block and a depth sampling grid for a depth block,

a position of the texture sampling grid and a position of the depth sampling grid,

a spatial area covered by a texture view containing the texture block and a spatial area covered by a depth view containing the depth block.

18. The computer program product according to any of the claims further comprising one or more sequences of one or more instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, cause the apparatus to:

receive one or more input texture views and one or more input depth views;

determine which input texture views and input depth views are to be encoded; and

encode one or more indications of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views.

We claim:

1. A method comprising:

receiving one or more encoded texture views and one or more encoded depth views;

decoding one or more indications of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views to determine which input texture views and input depth views have been encoded; and

decoding the encoded texture views and the encoded depth views from a bitstream, wherein the encoded texture views and the encoded depth views have one or more of the following characteristics:

- an encoded depth view represents a viewpoint that is not represented by any encoded texture view of the bitstream;
- two or more encoded depth views represent a same viewpoint;
- a first encoded depth view comprises depth view components of a first depth map type and a second encoded depth view comprises depth view components of a second depth map type, the first depth map type and the second depth map type being different;
- an encoded depth view and an encoded texture view represent a same viewpoint, a first sampling grid being used for depth view components of the encoded depth view and a second sampling grid being used for texture view component of the encoded texture view, and the first sampling grid and the second sampling grid having one or more of the following characteristics:
    - o a ratio of a horizontal or vertical sample dimension of the first sampling grid and a horizontal or vertical sample dimension, respectively, of the second sampling grid may not be an integer;
    - o the first sampling grid does not cover the same sampling area as the second sampling grid.

2. An apparatus comprising at least one processor and at least one memory including computer program code, the at least one memory and the computer program code configured to, with the at least one processor, cause the apparatus to:

receive one or more encoded texture views and one or more encoded depth views;

decode one or more indications of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views to determine which input texture views and input depth views have been encoded; and

decode the encoded texture views and the encoded depth views from a bitstream, wherein the encoded texture views and the encoded depth views have one or more of the following characteristics:

- an encoded depth view represents a viewpoint that is not represented by any encoded texture view of the bitstream;
- two or more encoded depth views represent a same viewpoint;
- a first encoded depth view comprises depth view components of a first depth map type and a second encoded depth view comprises depth view components of a second depth map type, the first depth map type and the second depth map type being different;
- an encoded depth view and an encoded texture view represent a same viewpoint, a first sampling grid being used for depth view components of the encoded depth view and a second sampling grid being used for texture view component of the encoded texture view, and the first sampling grid and the second sampling grid having one or more of the following characteristics:
    - o a ratio of a horizontal or vertical sample dimension of the first sampling grid and a horizontal or vertical sample dimension, respectively, of the second sampling grid may not be an integer;
    - o the first sampling grid does not cover the same sampling area as the second sampling grid.

3. A method comprising:

receiving, capturing, or deriving one or more input texture views and one or more input depth views;

determining which input texture views and input depth views are to be encoded;

encoding one or more indications of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views; and

encoding the input texture views and the input depth views determined to be encoded into a bitstream, wherein the encoded texture views and the encoded depth views have one or more of the following characteristics:

- an encoded depth view represents a viewpoint that is not represented by any encoded texture view of the bitstream;
- two or more encoded depth views represent a same viewpoint;
- a first encoded depth view comprises depth view components of a first depth map type and a second encoded depth view comprises depth view components of a second depth map type, the first depth map type and the second depth map type being different;
- an encoded depth view and an encoded texture view represent a same viewpoint, a first sampling grid being used for depth view components of the encoded depth view and a second sampling grid being used for texture view component of the encoded texture view, and the first sampling grid and the second sampling grid having one or more of the following characteristics:
    - o a ratio of a horizontal or vertical sample dimension of the first sampling grid and a horizontal or vertical sample dimension, respectively, of the second sampling grid may not be an integer;
    - o the first sampling grid does not cover the same sampling area as the second sampling grid.

4. A method according to claim 3, the determining comprising one or more of the following:

- o concluding if input depth views are needed for prediction of any of the one or more encoded texture views, and determining that depth views needed for prediction of any of the one or more encoded texture views are encoded, while depth views not needed for prediction of any of the one or more encoded texture views are not encoded;
- o receiving information which texture views are expected or known to be output on the basis of the bitstream and determining the encoded texture and depth views to facilitate decoding or view synthesis of said texture views expected or known to be output.

5. An apparatus comprising at least one processor and at least one memory including computer program code, the at least one memory and the computer program code configured to, with the at least one processor, cause the apparatus to:

receive, capture, or derive one or more input texture views and one or more input depth views;

determine which input texture views and input depth views are to be encoded;

encode one or more indications of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views; and

encode the input texture views and the input depth views determined to be encoded into a bitstream, wherein the encoded texture views and the encoded depth views have one or more of the following characteristics:

- an encoded depth view represents a viewpoint that is not represented by any encoded texture view of the bitstream;
- two or more encoded depth views represent a same viewpoint;
- a first encoded depth view comprises depth view components of a first depth map type and a second encoded depth view comprises depth view components of a second depth map type, the first depth map type and the second depth map type being different;
- an encoded depth view and an encoded texture view represent a same viewpoint, a first sampling grid being used for depth view components of the encoded depth view and a second sampling grid being used for texture view component of the encoded texture view, and the first sampling grid and the second sampling grid having one or more of the following characteristics:
    - o a ratio of a horizontal or vertical sample dimension of the first sampling grid and a horizontal or vertical sample dimension, respectively, of the second sampling grid may not be an integer;
    - o the first sampling grid does not cover the same sampling area as the second sampling grid.

6. The apparatus according to claim 5, wherein the determination comprises one or more of the following:

- conclude if input depth views are needed for prediction of any of the one or more encoded texture views, and determine that depth views needed for prediction of any of the one or more encoded texture views are encoded, while depth views not needed for prediction of any of the one or more encoded texture views are not encoded;
- receive information which texture views are expected or known to be output on the basis of the bitstream and determine the encoded texture and depth views to facilitate decoding or view synthesis of said texture views expected or known to be output;

encode the input texture views and the input depth views determined to be encoded into a bitstream; and

encode one or more indications of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views.

7. A method comprising:

examining availability of a depth block co-located with a texture block;

performing one of the following on the basis of availability of the co-located depth block:

determining a prediction method for a texture block on the basis of availability of the co-located depth block, the prediction method using the co-located depth block if the co-located depth block is available and the prediction method not using the co-located depth block if the co-located depth block is not available; or

on the basis of a co-located depth sample within the co-located depth block being unavailable in said examining, padding or interpolating the co-located depth sample on the basis of one or more available depth samples and treating the co-located depth block as available and determining the prediction method to use the co-located depth block;

deriving a prediction block for the texture block on the basis of the prediction method.

8. The method according to claim 7 further comprising one of the following:

encoding the texture block on the basis of the derived prediction block to a bitstream, wherein the bitstream is being formed for comprising one or more encoded texture views and one or more encoded depth views;

decoding the texture block on the basis of the derived prediction block from a bitstream comprising one or more encoded texture views and one or more encoded depth views.

9. The method according to claim 8 comprising:

determining the prediction method for the derivation of the prediction block on the basis of one or more of the following:

the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded texture views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded depth views,

view component order of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views,

presence of a depth view component having a same sampling or output time as a texture view component including the texture block.

10. The method according to claim 8 comprising:

determining the availability of the co-located depth block on the basis of one or more of the following:

the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded texture views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded depth views,

view component order of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views,

presence of a depth view component having a same sampling or output time as a texture view component including the texture block,

a texture sampling grid for the texture block and a depth sampling grid for the depth block,

a position of the texture sampling grid and a position of the depth sampling grid,

a first spatial area covered by a texture view containing the texture block and a second spatial area covered by a depth view containing the depth block,

a location and area covered by the texture block within the second spatial area.

11. An apparatus comprising at least one processor and at least one memory including computer program code, the at least one memory and the computer program code configured to, with the at least one processor, cause the apparatus to:

examine availability of a depth block co-located with a texture block;

perform one of the following on the basis of availability of the co-located depth block:

determine a prediction method for a texture block on the basis of availability of the co-located depth block, the prediction method using the co-located depth block if the co-located depth block is available and the prediction method not using the co-located depth block if the co-located depth block is not available; or

on the basis of a co-located depth sample within the co-located depth block being unavailable in said examining, pad or interpolate the co-located depth sample on the basis of one or more available depth samples and treat the co-located depth block as available and determine the prediction method to use the co-located depth block;

derive a prediction block for the texture block on the basis of the prediction method.

12. The apparatus according to claim 11, said at least one memory stored with code thereon, which when executed by said at least one processor, further causes the apparatus to perform at least one of the following:

encode the texture block on the basis of the derived prediction block to a bitstream, wherein the bitstream is being formed for comprising one or more encoded texture views and one or more encoded depth views;

decode the texture block on the basis of the derived prediction block from a bitstream comprising one or more encoded texture views and one or more encoded depth views.

13. The apparatus according to claim 12, said at least one memory stored with code thereon, which when executed by said at least one processor, further causes the apparatus to:

determine the prediction method for the derivation of the prediction block on the basis of one or more of the following:

the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded texture views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded depth views,
view component order of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views.

14. The apparatus according to claim 12, said at least one memory stored with code thereon, which when executed by said at least one processor, further causes the apparatus to:

determine the availability of the co-located depth block on the basis of one or more of the following:

the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views,
inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded texture views,
inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded depth views,
view component order of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views,
a texture sampling grid for a texture block and a depth sampling grid for a depth block,
a position of the texture sampling grid and a position of the depth sampling grid,
a spatial area covered by a texture view containing the texture block and a spatial area covered by a depth view containing the depth block.

15. An apparatus comprising:

means for examining availability of a depth block co-located with a texture block;

means for performing one of the following on the basis of availability of the co-located depth block:

determining a prediction method for a texture block on the basis of availability of the co-located depth block, the prediction method using the co-located depth block if the co-located depth block is available and the prediction method not using the co-located depth block if the co-located depth block is not available; or

on the basis of a co-located depth sample within the co-located depth block being unavailable in said examining, padding or interpolating the co-located depth sample on the basis

of one or more available depth samples and treating the co-located depth block as available and determining the prediction method to use the co-located depth block;

means for deriving a prediction block for the texture block on the basis of the prediction method.

16. A computer program product including one or more sequences of one or more instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, cause an apparatus to at least perform the following:

examine availability of a depth block co-located with a texture block;

perform one of the following on the basis of availability of the co-located depth block:

determine a prediction method for a texture block on the basis of availability of the co-located depth block, the prediction method using the co-located depth block if the co-located depth block is available and the prediction method not using the co-located depth block if the co-located depth block is not available; or

on the basis of a co-located depth sample within the co-located depth block being unavailable in said examining, pad or interpolate the co-located depth sample on the basis of one or more available depth samples and treat the co-located depth block as available and determine the prediction method to use the co-located depth block;

derive a prediction block for the texture block on the basis of the prediction method.

17. The computer program product according to claim 16 further comprising one or more sequences of one or more instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, cause the apparatus to perform at least one of the following:

encode the texture block on the basis of the derived prediction block to a bitstream, wherein the bitstream is being formed for comprising one or more encoded texture views and one or more encoded depth views;

decode the texture block on the basis of the derived prediction block from a bitstream comprising one or more encoded texture views and one or more encoded depth views.

18. The computer program product according to claim 17 further comprising one or more sequences of one or more instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, cause the apparatus to:

determine the prediction method for the derivation of the prediction block on the basis of one or more of the following:

the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded texture views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded depth views,

view component order of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views.

19. The computer program product according to claim 17 further comprising one or more sequences of one or more instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, cause the apparatus to:

determine the availability of the co-located depth block on the basis of one or more of the following:

the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded texture views,

inter-view prediction dependencies of the one or more encoded depth views,

view component order of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views,

a texture sampling grid for a texture block and a depth sampling grid for a depth block,

a position of the texture sampling grid and a position of the depth sampling grid,

a spatial area covered by a texture view containing the texture block and a spatial area covered by a depth view containing the depth block.

20. The computer program product according to claim 16 further comprising one or more sequences of one or more instructions which, when executed by one or more processors, cause the apparatus to:

receive one or more input texture views and one or more input depth views;

determine which input texture views and input depth views are to be encoded; and

encode one or more indications of the one or more encoded texture views and the one or more encoded depth views.