CLAIMS

1. A method of encoding a signal in a hierarchy including multiple levels of quality, the method comprising:

producing a rendition of the signal at a first level of quality;

generating at least one set of reconstruction data, the at least one set of reconstruction data specifying how to reconstruct, based on the rendition of the signal at the first level of quality and/or on available reference signals, a rendition of the signal at a second level of quality in the hierarchy, the second level of quality higher than the first level of quality; and

utilizing an entropy encoder to encode different sets of reconstruction data, the entropy encoder producing for each set an encoded value or bit string representative of symbols contained in the reconstruction data, by:.

~~2. The method as in claim 1, wherein utilizing the entropy encoder includes:~~

analyzing each set of reconstruction data to produce one or more decoding parameters with probability distribution information, the probability distribution information indicating a probability of at least one symbol in an alphabet of symbols used by that set of reconstruction data; and

storing the encoded value or bit string and the probability distribution information for subsequent decoding of the encoded value or bit string back into the reconstruction data.

~~3~~2. The method as in claim ~~2~~ 1 further comprising:

implementing an entropy decoder to decode, for each set of reconstruction data, the encoded value or bit string and the probability distribution information into the reconstruction data; and

utilizing the sets of reconstruction data produced by the decoder to reconstruct, based on the rendition of the signal at the first level of quality and/or on available reference signals, the rendition of the signal at the second level of quality.

~~4~~3. The method as in claim 1, wherein one of the sets of reconstruction data includes residual data indicating adjustments to be made after upsampling the rendition of signal at the first level of quality into the rendition of signal at the second level of quality; and

wherein utilizing the entropy encoder includes producing at least one decoding parameter

to be used by a respective entropy decoder to extrapolate a probability distribution for multiple symbols in the residual data.

~~54~~. The method as in claim ~~21~~, wherein the at least one decoding parameter includes a first parameter and additional parameters, the first parameter specifying a percentage of elements in the reconstruction data that are assigned a first symbol, the additional parameters indicating probabilities of multiple additional symbols in the reconstruction data.

~~65~~. The method as in claim ~~21~~, wherein the at least one decoding parameter includes a first parameter and a second parameter, the first parameter specifying a percentage of elements in the reconstruction data that are assigned a first symbol, the second parameter indicating to the decoder how to extrapolate probability distribution values for multiple other symbols in the reconstruction data.

~~76~~. The method as in claim ~~21~~, wherein the at least one decoding parameter includes only a single parameter indicating a probability for a first symbol in the reconstruction data, the entropy decoder extrapolating a probability distribution for multiple other symbols based on a predetermined set of standard parameters known to an entropy decoder that converts the encoded value or bit string back into the reconstruction data.

~~87~~. The method as in claims 1, wherein for one or more sets of reconstruction data utilizing the entropy encoder includes:

parsing each set of reconstruction data into multiple groupings of reconstruction data;

utilizing the entropy encoder to produce respective probability distribution information for the symbols present in each of the multiple groupings; and

utilizing the entropy encoder to encode the multiple groupings of each set of reconstruction data into encoded values or bit strings based on the respective probability distribution information for the groupings.

~~98~~. The method as in claim ~~87~~, wherein each of the multiple groupings of reconstruction data is a tile of residual data elements relative to a specific portion of the signal, each of the residual data elements indicating an adjustment to be made to a corresponding element of the signal after upsampling of the signal from the first level of quality to the second level of quality, the method further comprising:

initiating parallel execution of multiple entropy decoders to reproduce the multiple groupings of reconstruction data using, for each grouping, the specific encoded values or bit strings and probability distribution values.

~~10~~9. The method as in claim 1, wherein the reconstruction data is a first array of sets of reconstruction data, the method further comprising:

generating a second array of sets of reconstruction data, the second array of sets of reconstruction data specifying how to reconstruct, based on the rendition of the signal at the second level of quality, a rendition of the signal at a third level of quality in the hierarchy, the third level of quality higher than the second level of quality; and

analyzing each set of reconstruction data of the second array to produce one or more decoding parameters based on probability distribution information, the probability distribution information indicating a probability of at least one symbol in an alphabet of symbols used by that set of reconstruction data; and

utilizing the entropy encoder to encode the second array of sets of reconstruction data, the entropy encoder producing for each set of reconstruction data an encoded value or bit string representative of the data based on the probability distribution information produced for that set.

~~11~~10. The method as in claim 1, wherein the reconstruction data is a first array of sets of reconstruction data, the method further comprising:

generating a second array of sets of reconstruction data, the second array of sets of reconstruction data specifying how to reconstruct, based on the rendition of the signal at the second level of quality and/or on available reference signals, a rendition of the signal at a third level of quality in the hierarchy, the third level of quality being higher than the second level of quality; and

utilizing the entropy encoder to encode the second array of sets of reconstruction data, the entropy encoder producing for each set of reconstruction data an encoded value or bit string representative of the data based on the probability distribution information of the corresponding set of data in the first array of sets of reconstruction data.

~~12~~11. The method as in claim 1, wherein the reconstruction data is a first array of sets of reconstruction data, the method further comprising:

receiving encoded values or bit strings for a second array of sets of reconstruction data, the array of sets of reconstruction data indicating how to reconstruct, based on the rendition of the signal at the second level of quality and/or on available reference signals, a rendition of the signal at a third level of quality, the third level of quality being higher than the second level of quality;

receiving decoding parameters and identifying probability distributions for symbols in each set of reconstruction data of the second array; and

utilizing the identified probability distributions to decode the encoded values or bit strings for the second array of sets of reconstruction data into the second array of sets of reconstruction data.

~~13~~12. The method as in claim ~~12~~ 11 further comprising:

receiving the encoded values or bit strings representative of the second array of sets of reconstruction data; and

for each set of reconstruction data, in response to detecting that the entropy encoder did not send probability distribution information for one or more sets of data or that the entropy encoder previously specified that it would not send probability distribution parameters for one or more sets of data, utilizing the probability distribution information decoded for the corresponding set(s) in the first array of reconstruction data to entropy decode the encoded value or bit string representative of the set of data.

~~14~~13. The method as in claim ~~3~~ 2 further comprising:

receiving the encoded value or bit string for each set of reconstruction data; and

in response to detecting that the entropy encoder did not send specific information on the probability distribution of symbols in that set of reconstruction data, utilizing a default probability distribution value for symbols to decode the encoded value or bit string into the reconstruction data.

~~15~~14. The method as in claim 1 further comprising:

parsing one or more sets of reconstruction data into multiple groupings including at least a first grouping of reconstruction data and a second grouping of reconstruction data;

populating the first grouping of reconstruction data so that all elements of the generated set of reconstruction data having a value/symbol that falls within a first range of

values/symbols maintain their value/symbol, while all other elements are set to a default value/symbol;

populating the second grouping of reconstruction data so that all elements of the generated set of reconstruction data having a value/symbol that falls within a second range of values/symbols maintain their value/symbol, while all other elements are set to a default value/symbol; and

populating the additional groupings according to the same method, according to additional ranges of values/symbols; and

wherein utilizing the entropy encoder for such sets further comprises individually entropy encoding the first grouping of reconstruction data, the second grouping of reconstruction data and any other additional grouping of reconstruction data.

~~16~~15. The method as in claim ~~15~~14, wherein individually entropy encoding further comprises:

for the first grouping:

analyzing the first grouping of reconstruction data to produce one or more decoding parameters with probability distribution information, the probability distribution information indicating a probability distribution of the symbols in the alphabet used by the first grouping; and

utilizing the entropy encoder to produce a first encoded value or bit string based on the first probability distribution information, the first encoded value or bit string representative of the first grouping of reconstruction data;

for the second grouping:

analyzing the second grouping of reconstruction data to produce one or more decoding parameters with probability distribution information, the probability distribution information indicating a probability distribution of the symbols in the alphabet used by the second grouping; and

utilizing the entropy encoder to produce a second encoded value or bit string based on the second probability distribution information, the second encoded value or bit string representative of the second grouping of reconstruction data; for any other additional grouping:

analyzing the specific grouping of reconstruction data to produce one or more decoding parameters with probability distribution information, the probability distribution information indicating a probability distribution of the symbols in the alphabet used by the specific grouping; and

utilizing the entropy encoder to produce an encoded value or bit string for the grouping based on the respective probability distribution information, the encoded value or bit string representative of the specific grouping of reconstruction data.

~~17~~16. The method as in claim ~~16~~15 further comprising:

for specific sets of reconstruction data, in response to occurrence of an impediment preventing timely entropy decoding of all of the groupings of reconstruction data, initiating entropy decoding of only some of the encoded values or bit strings into the respective groupings of reconstruction data, said entropy decoding of each grouping of reconstruction data based on the respective decoding parameters indicating probability distribution information; and

utilizing, along with the other sets of reconstruction data already decoded, the entropy decoded groupings of reconstruction data to reconstruct, based on the rendition of the signal at the first level of quality and/or on available reference signals, the second level of quality.

~~18~~17. The method as in claim ~~16~~15 further comprising:

for specific sets of reconstruction data, in response to specific needs or to occurrence of an impediment preventing timely entropy encoding or to unavailability of the necessary information bandwidth for the transmission of all of the groupings of reconstruction data, transmission to the decoder of only some of the encoded values or bit strings corresponding to the respective groupings of reconstruction data, along with any decoding parameters indicating probability distribution information.

~~19~~18. The method as in claim 1 further comprising:

generating residual data to reconstruct the signal at a given level of quality in the hierarchy; and

estimating, based on an entropy metric, the number of bits required to entropy encode the residual data; and

applying a quantizer to the residual data to reduce an entropy of the residual data at the given level of quality prior to the entropy encoding, application of the quantizer to the residual data facilitating transmission of the encoded residual data in accordance with a desired bit rate.

~~20~~19. The method as in claim 1 further comprising:

calculating a probability distribution of symbols in residual data used to make adjustments to the signal at multiple levels of quality in the hierarchy;

utilizing the probability distribution to estimate a bit rate of entropy encoding the residual data based on a first quantizer setting;

in response to detecting that the estimated bit rate is above a desired threshold value, applying additional quantization to the residual data to reduce an entropy associated with the residual data; and

utilizing the entropy encoder to encode the quantized residual data.

~~21~~20. The method as in claim 1, wherein the entropy encoder is a range encoder.

~~22~~21. Computer-readable storage hardware having instructions stored thereon, the instructions, when carried out by a processing device, causing the processing device to perform operations of:

producing a rendition of the signal at a first level of quality;

generating at least one set of reconstruction data, the at least one set of reconstruction data specifying how to reconstruct, based on the rendition of the signal at the first level of quality and/or on available reference signals, a rendition of the signal at a second level of quality in the hierarchy, the second level of quality higher than the first level of quality; and

utilizing an entropy encoder to encode different sets of reconstruction data, the entropy encoder producing for each set an encoded value or bit string representative of symbols contained in the reconstruction data, by:

analyzing each set of reconstruction data to produce one or more decoding parameters with probability distribution information, the probability distribution information indicating a probability of at least one symbol in an alphabet of symbols used by that set of reconstruction data; and

storing the encoded value or bit string and the probability distribution information for subsequent decoding of the encoded value or bit string back into the reconstruction data.

~~23~~22. A computer system comprising:

a processor;

a memory unit that stores instructions associated with an application executed by the processor; and

an interconnect coupling the processor and the memory unit, enabling the computer system to execute the application and perform operations of:

producing a rendition of the signal at a first level of quality;

generating at least one set of reconstruction data, the at least one set of reconstruction data specifying how to reconstruct, based on the rendition of the signal at the first level of quality, a rendition of the signal at a second level of quality in the hierarchy, the second level of quality higher than the first level of quality; and

utilizing an entropy encoder to encode different sets of reconstruction data, the entropy encoder producing for each set an encoded value or bit string representative of symbols contained in the reconstruction data, by:

analyzing each set of reconstruction data to produce one or more decoding parameters with probability distribution information, the probability distribution information indicating a probability of at least one symbol in an alphabet of symbols used by that set of reconstruction data; and

storing the encoded value or bit string and the probability distribution information for subsequent decoding of the encoded value or bit string back into the reconstruction data.