



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

***DEVELOPMENT OF RIVER WATER LEVEL ESTIMATION FROM
SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS FOR FLOOD MONITORING SYSTEM USING
DEEP LEARNING TECHNIQUES***

NUR 'ATIRAH BINTI MUHADI

FK 2022 90



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By

NUR 'ATIRAH BINTI MUHADI

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra
Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of
Philosophy**

September 2022

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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September 2022

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Around 70% of global disasters are related to hydro-meteorological events such as drought, floods, and cyclones. Therefore, researchers and experts carried out many studies on flood hazards in order to reduce the impact of flood magnitude and flood frequency. In Malaysia, a telemetric forecasting system is currently been used in flood monitoring systems. However, data information obtained from this system is one spatial dimension and one point-based station, thus it cannot represent the dynamics of the surface water extent. Therefore, this study introduces a visual surveillance concept to monitor the flood event in a specific area, based on surveillance cameras and computer vision approaches to obtain instant flood inundation information during flood events. A deep learning approach was proposed for water segmentation so that it can be applied to various water scenarios and backgrounds. However, conventional image segmentation techniques were also carried out to ensure the usage of deep learning is worth it. The conventional segmentation methods used in this work are thresholding, region growing, and hybrid technique known as GeoRegion. The findings demonstrated that these methods are handcrafted and the algorithms need to be changed when applying to different images, which is not practical to be used during flood disasters. Hence, deep learning technique was chosen for water segmentation procedure in this work. Two different networks were applied in this study, namely DeepLabv3+ and SegNet, for detecting water regions before estimating water levels from surveillance images. Water level estimation was predicted based on the elevations from LiDAR data. Based on the experimental results, it was found that the DeepLabv3+ network performed better than the SegNet network by achieving above 93% for overall accuracy and IoU metrics, and approximately 82% for boundary F1 score (BF score). The Spearman's rank correlation obtained between water level measured by the sensor and water level estimated from the proposed framework was 0.92 which indicates a strong relationship. By integrating the estimated water level with a 3D model developed from LiDAR data, flood simulation was performed. Besides,

volume of water was also computed from the 3D model. The findings demonstrate that the water volume increased as water level increased. Lastly, a graphical user interface was developed for water segmentation and water level estimation analysis that could be applied during the flood events. Hence, the proposed work can help in improving the current monitoring and emergency warning abilities against flood events, serving as a complement to the currently used quantitative precipitation forecasts and in-situ water-level measurements.



Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**PEMBANGUNAN ANGGARAN ARAS AIR SUNGAI DARIPADA KAMERA
PENGAWASAN BAGI SISTEM PEMANTAUAN BANJIR MENGGUNAKAN
TEKNIK PEMBELAJARAN MENDALAM**

Oleh

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Sekitar 70% daripada bencana global berkaitan dengan peristiwa hidro-meteorologi seperti kemarau, banjir dan taufan. Oleh itu, penyelidik dan pakar banyak menjalankan kajian tentang bahaya banjir bagi mengurangkan kesan magnitud banjir dan kekerapan banjir. Di Malaysia, sistem ramalan telemetrik kini digunakan dalam sistem pemantauan banjir. Walau bagaimanapun, maklumat data yang diperolehi daripada sistem ini adalah berbentuk satu dimensi spatial dan stesen berasaskan titik, justeru ia tidak dapat mewakili keluasan air permukaan yang dinamik. Oleh itu, kajian ini memperkenalkan konsep pengawasan visual untuk memantau kejadian banjir di kawasan tertentu, berdasarkan kamera pengawasan dan pendekatan penglihatan komputer untuk mendapatkan maklumat banjir segera semasa kejadian banjir. Pendekatan pembelajaran mendalam telah dicadangkan untuk mengenalpasti kawasan berair supaya ia boleh digunakan pada pelbagai senario dan latar belakang. Walau bagaimanapun, teknik pembahagian imej konvensional juga telah dijalankan untuk memastikan penggunaan pembelajaran mendalam berbaloi. Kaedah pembahagian konvensional yang digunakan dalam kerja ini ialah *thresholding*, *region growing* dan teknik hibrid yang dikenali sebagai GeoRegion. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa kaedah ini adalah buatan tangan dan algoritmanya perlu diubah apabila digunakan pada imej yang berbeza, dan ianya tidak praktikal untuk digunakan semasa bencana banjir. Oleh itu, teknik pembelajaran mendalam telah dipilih untuk prosidur pembahagian air dalam kerja ini. Dua rangkaian berbeza telah digunakan dalam kajian ini, iaitu DeepLabv3+ dan SegNet, untuk mengesan kawasan air sebelum menganggar paras air daripada imej pengawasan. Anggaran aras air telah diramalkan berdasarkan ketinggian daripada data LiDAR. Berdasarkan keputusan percubaan, didapati bahawa rangkaian DeepLabv3+ berprestasi lebih baik daripada rangkaian SegNet dengan mencapai melebihi 93% untuk ketepatan keseluruhan dan *intersection-over-union* (IoU), dan kira-kira 82% untuk skor sempadan F1 (*BF score*). Korelasi pangkat Spearman yang diperolehi antara

paras air yang diukur oleh penderia dan paras air yang dianggarkan daripada rangka kerja yang dicadangkan ialah 0.92 yang menunjukkan hubungan yang kukuh. Dengan menggunakan anggaran paras air dan model 3D yang dibangunkan daripada data LiDAR, simulasi banjir telah dilakukan. Selain itu, isipadu air juga dikira daripada model 3D. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa isipadu air meningkat apabila paras air meningkat. Akhir sekali, antara muka grafik pengguna telah dibangunkan untuk pembahagian air dan analisis anggaran paras air yang boleh digunakan semasa kejadian banjir. Oleh itu, kerja yang dicadangkan boleh membantu dalam meningkatkan pemantauan semasa dan kebolehan amaran kecemasan terhadap kejadian banjir, selain daripada berfungsi sebagai pelengkap kepada ramalan hujan kuantitatif yang digunakan pada masa ini dan pengukuran aras air di lapangan.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| ABSTRACT | Page |
| <i>ABSTRAK</i> | i |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | iii |
| APPROVAL | v |
| DECLARATION | vi |
| LIST OF TABLES | viii |
| LIST OF FIGURES | xiii |
| LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS | xiv |
| | xvii |

CHAPTER

| | | |
|----------|---|-----------|
| 1 | INTRODUCTION | 1 |
| 1.1 | Overview | 1 |
| 1.2 | Flood definition | 1 |
| 1.3 | Floods in Malaysia | 2 |
| | 1.3.1 Causes of floods | 3 |
| | 1.3.2 Recent flood events | 5 |
| 1.4 | Flood monitoring system in Malaysia | 5 |
| 1.5 | Problem statement | 6 |
| 1.6 | Research questions | 7 |
| 1.7 | Objectives | 8 |
| 1.8 | Scope and limitation | 8 |
| 1.9 | Thesis outline | 9 |
| 2 | LITERATURE REVIEW | 10 |
| 2.1 | Overview | 10 |
| 2.2 | History of flood disasters in Malaysia | 10 |
| 2.3 | Impacts of floods | 11 |
| 2.4 | Flood warning and monitoring system | 13 |
| 3.5 | Visual sensor applications | 14 |
| 2.6 | Artificial intelligence | 15 |
| | 2.6.1 Computer vision | 16 |
| | 2.6.1.1 Computer vision in flood monitoring | 16 |
| | 2.6.1.2 Image segmentation in computer vision | 17 |
| | 2.6.2 Conventional computer vision-based segmentation methods in flood applications | 18 |
| | 2.6.1.1 Thresholding | 19 |
| | 2.6.1.2 Region-based segmentation | 20 |
| | 2.6.1.2 Hybrid technique | 22 |
| | 2.6.3 Deep learning for computer vision | 23 |
| | 2.6.4 Deep learning-based image segmentation | 24 |
| 2.7 | Extraction of water level information from surveillance image | 27 |
| 2.8 | Data collection for water level measurement | 29 |
| 2.9 | Summary | 30 |

| | | |
|----------|---|-----------|
| 3 | METHODOLOGY | 31 |
| 3.1 | Overview | 31 |
| 3.2 | Study area | 33 |
| 3.3 | Segmentation of water regions from surveillance camera | 35 |
| 3.3.1 | Conventional computer vision-based image segmentation methods for water identification | 36 |
| 3.3.1.1 | Thresholding | 37 |
| 3.3.1.2 | Region growing | 38 |
| 3.3.1.3 | GeoRegion technique | 39 |
| 3.3.2 | Deep learning-based image segmentation for water extraction from surveillance images | 40 |
| 3.3.2.1 | Preparing image dataset | 41 |
| 3.3.2.2 | Semantic segmentation architectures | 43 |
| 3.3.2.3 | Data augmentation | 46 |
| 3.3.2.4 | Hyperparameters configuration | 46 |
| 3.3.3 | Segmentation evaluation metrics | 47 |
| 3.4 | Water level estimation from surveillance images | 49 |
| 3.4.1 | Post-processing operations | 49 |
| 3.4.2 | Extraction of elevation points from LiDAR data | 50 |
| 3.4.3 | Water level assessment | 52 |
| 3.4.4 | Water level observation with a 3D model | 53 |
| 3.5 | Development of a graphical user interface (GUI) for water segmentation and water level estimation | 54 |
| 3.6 | Summary | 57 |
| 4 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION | 58 |
| 4.1 | Overview | 58 |
| 4.2 | Water segmentation from surveillance images | 58 |
| 4.2.1 | A comparison of conventional image segmentation techniques for water segmentation from surveillance | 58 |
| 4.2.1.1 | Quantitative analysis | 59 |
| 4.2.1.2 | Visual assessment | 63 |
| 4.2.2 | Water segmentation using deep learning techniques | 66 |
| 4.2.2.1 | Performance evaluation of water segmentation results | 67 |
| 4.2.2.2 | Visual analysis of the segmentation results | 69 |
| 4.2.2.3 | Application for water segmentation | 73 |
| 4.2.2.4 | Comparison with previous findings | 74 |
| 4.3 | Water level estimation from segmented images and LiDAR data | 75 |

| | | |
|----------|--|------------|
| 4.4 | Water level fluctuation with the 3D model | 78 |
| 4.5 | Practical application for a graphical user interface (GUI) for water segmentation and water level estimation | 80 |
| 4.6 | Summary | 89 |
| 5 | CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH | 90 |
| 5.1 | Conclusions | 90 |
| 5.2 | Recommendations for future work | 92 |
| | REFERENCES | 93 |
| | APPENDICES | 109 |
| | BIODATA OF STUDENT | 130 |
| | LISTS OF PUBLICATIONS | 131 |

LIST OF TABLES

| Table | | Page |
|--------------|---|-------------|
| 2.1 | Different types of flood damages (Table adapted from Hammond et al., 2015; Jonkman et al., 2008; Merz et al., 2004) | 13 |
| 2.2 | Summary of the computer vision techniques applied for flood monitoring | 17 |
| 2.3 | Applications of deep learning in segmenting water features from surveillance data | 26 |
| 3.1 | Hyperparameters configuration for this study | 47 |
| 3.2 | Water level thresholds for Kampung Selisek station | 51 |
| 3.3 | Water level thresholds for Paya Besar | 52 |
| 4.1 | Average IoU result for each segmentation method | 62 |
| 4.2 | IoU results for normal and overflowed conditions | 62 |
| 4.3 | A comparison of segmentation metrics for the entire dataset for both DeepLabv3+ and SegNet. | 67 |
| 4.4 | Per-class metrics of the water segmentation using DeepLabv3+ and SegNet | 68 |
| 4.5 | A comparison between results from different segmentation networks used in this work and the previous study | 74 |
| 4.6 | Volume of water obtained from the 3D model and the estimated water level | 80 |

LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure | | Page |
|--------|--|------|
| 1.1 | Number of occurrences according to disaster types worldwide in 2020 (UNDRR, 2020a) | 2 |
| 1.2 | Distribution of disasters by hazards shows that flood is the most frequent disaster in Malaysia in 2018 (AHA Centre, 2019a) | 3 |
| 1.3 | History of floods from 2017 to 2021 in Malaysia | 5 |
| 2.1 | Main components of AI (Raymond, 2020). | 16 |
| 2.2 | Example of image classification, object detection, and image segmentation | 18 |
| 2.3 | Structure of human neuron brain versus the artificial neuron | 24 |
| 2.4 | Stick gauge that was knocked down after heavy river flow | 27 |
| 2.5 | The interface of the IFA system included the results from image processing system and the existing flood monitoring screen | 29 |
| 3.1 | Overview of research design | 32 |
| 3.2 | The red camera icon in red circle represents the location of the surveillance camera in Hulu Bernam (Image courtesy: Google Earth) | 33 |
| 3.3 | The yellow camera icon in red circle represents the location of the surveillance camera in Kuantan, Pahang (Image courtesy: Google Earth). | 34 |
| 3.4 | Installation of a surveillance camera at Paya Besar. | 35 |
| 3.5 | The original image and the ground truth image were generated using the Image Segmenter app in MATLAB. | 36 |
| 3.6 | The workflow of the comparative study between thresholding, region growing, and hybrid techniques. | 37 |
| 3.7 | The region growing process uses a 4-connected neighborhood. (a) The red circle highlights the seed point of the region of interest. (b,c) The blue color indicates the pixels that are belonged in the same region as the seed point. (d–f) The green color represents pixels that are | 38 |

excluded from the region because the difference is larger than the threshold value.

| | | |
|------|--|----|
| 3.8 | The initial curve in the study area | 40 |
| 3.9 | Deep learning workflow for water extraction in this study | 41 |
| 3.10 | Example of a labeled image. The red region represents the background while the blue region represents waterbodies | 42 |
| 3.11 | An illustration of SegNet architecture (Badrinarayanan et al., 2017) | 44 |
| 3.12 | An illustration of DeepLabv3+ architecture (Chen et al., 2018) | 45 |
| 3.13 | Setup for acquiring LiDAR data using FARO Laser Scanner Focus3D X 130 | 50 |
| 3.14 | The surface volume was calculated between the area below the reference plane and the surface of DEM (shaded area) | 54 |
| 3.15 | The layout of the GUI on the water segmentation tab | 55 |
| 3.16 | The layout of the semi-automated segmentation and estimation procedure on the water level estimation tab. | 56 |
| 4.1 | The comparisons between the segmentation results and the ground truth images during (i) normal condition and (ii) overflow condition, when using (a) thresholding, (b) region growing, and (c) GeoRegion technique | 60 |
| 4.2 | The difference in the color characteristic of the images captured at (a) normal condition and (b) overflow condition | 63 |
| 4.3 | A comparison between (a) thresholding, (b) region growing, and (c) GeoRegion technique for (i) normal and (ii) overflow conditions | 64 |
| 4.4 | Training metrics and validation metrics at every iteration. | 69 |
| 4.5 | Visualization and comparison of two representative results on test data. (a) Original image (b) Ground truth. (c) DeepLabv3+ prediction. (d) SegNet prediction | 70 |
| 4.6 | Comparisons between segmentation results and ground truth data are illustrated by overlay columns. (a) The original images (b) DeepLabv3+ prediction and ground truth (c) SegNet prediction and ground truth | 72 |

| | | |
|------|---|----|
| 4.7 | Visualization and comparison of segmentation results during inference phase. (a) Original image. (b) DeepLabv3+ prediction. (c) SegNet prediction | 73 |
| 4.8 | Comparison between the estimated water level and observed water level measured by the sensor | 76 |
| 4.9 | Failure in water detection during the segmentation process led to an error in water level estimation. (a) The segmentation results overlaid with the original image. (b) The estimated river water level and its water level status | 77 |
| 4.10 | (a) The resulted DEM after combining the raw LiDAR-derived DEM and the width and riverbed information (b) The cross-section of the river from the 3D model. | 78 |
| 4.11 | The 3D model represents (i) the riverbed (ii) the water level during the normal condition (water level at 8.8 meters) (iii) the rising of water at 9.3 meters and (iv) the rising of water at 10.55 meters | 79 |
| 4.12 | A river cross profile with three different water level values. | 79 |
| 4.13 | The screenshot of the execution of the semi-automated segmentation procedure displays (a) the original image loaded by the user (b) the segmentation results | 81 |
| 4.14 | (a) The 'Export Segmentation Image' button allows the user to save the segmentation result in any file directory of the user and (b) Image saved from the semi-automated segmentation procedure | 82 |
| 4.15 | Image saved from the water level estimation procedure that includes the segmented result and water level status | 83 |
| 4.16 | Excel sheet that contains the information of image submitted by the user in terms of locations, date and time as well as the estimated water level values | 84 |
| 4.17 | (a) The original images were captured on different days (b) The segmentation results obtained when using DeepLabv3+ model (c) Results after performing morphological operations | 85 |
| 4.18 | The segmentation results were overlaid with the water level thresholds extracted from LiDAR data to give clear visualization of the rising and falling of water levels during the wet condition | 87 |

- 4.19 The water levels from the Kuantan images (red box) displayed the same values as the estimated water levels that appear in the GUI 88



LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|--------|--|
| NADMA | National Disaster Management Administration |
| MCO | Movement control order |
| GDP | Gross domestic product |
| NSC | National Security Council |
| NDMRC | Natural Disaster Management and Relief Community |
| NSC | National Security Council |
| WHO | World Health Organization |
| DID | Department of Irrigation and Drainage |
| NaFFWS | National Flood Forecasting and Warning System |
| GIS | Geographic Information System |
| UAV | Unmanned aerial vehicles |
| LiDAR | Terrestrial light detection and ranging |
| SMS | short message service |
| MMD | Malaysian Meteorological Department |
| RTUs | Remote telemetry units |
| FCM | Fuzzy c-means |
| AI | Artificial intelligence |
| NLP | Natural language processing |
| HSV | hue, saturation, and value |
| SAR | synthetic aperture radar |
| EM | expectation-maximization |
| MRI | magnetic resonance imaging |
| CNN | convolutional neural network |
| ANN | artificial neural network |

| | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| SVM | support vector machine |
| LBWLE | landmark based water-level estimation |
| DEM | digital elevation model |
| GUI | graphical user interface |
| TLS | terrestrial laser scanning |
| LTE | Long-term Evolution |
| VGG | Visual Geometry Group |
| ReLU | rectified-linear non-linearity |
| ASPP | atrous spatial pyramid pooling |
| IoU | intersection over union |
| BF score | boundary F1 score |
| TP | true positives |
| FP | false positives |
| TN | true negatives |
| FN | false negatives |
| RMSE | root mean square error |
| UI | user interface |
| FCN | fully convolutional network |
| CCTV | closed-circuit television |
| m | metre |
| km ² | kilometres square |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

Flood frequency was increased by 33% in 2020 as compared to the average occurrence for the past 10 years (2010 – 2019) (UNDRR, 2020a). The flood issue has gained global attention with significant efforts made to develop effective flood prevention and monitoring solutions. Researchers and experts around the world have carried out many studies that included the use of modern techniques such as artificial intelligence to reduce the impact of flooding events. This chapter discusses the study background as well as its scope and limitations.

1.2 Flood definition

A flood is defined as a rise in water body and overflowing water into land that is usually dry. Different societies often have different perspectives on the definition of flood. From the ecological perspective, a flood is defined as an unusual discharge that exceeds the riverbanks; hence, inundating the floodplain. On the other hand, a hydrologist defines flood as high discharges that cause a sudden peak in water level and lead to the inundation of land adjacent water bodies. Contrarily, from the social perspective flood is defined as discharge of a water body that causes damage (Havinga et al., 2006). Ward (1978) defined flood as a natural process of overflowing water body into land that is not normally submerged. In 2020, the frequency of floods rose to 61.66% of the total 313 major natural disasters that occurred worldwide (UNDRR, 2020a). Figure 1.1 illustrates the frequency of natural disasters according to disaster types in 2020.

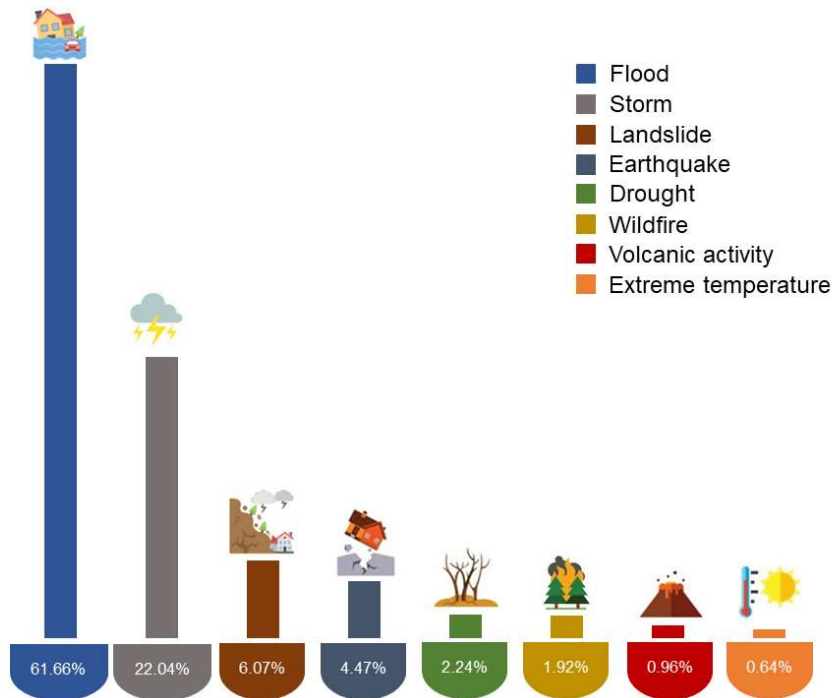


Figure 1.1: Number of occurrences according to disaster types worldwide in 2020 (UNDRR, 2020a)

1.3 Floods in Malaysia

Malaysia is located in Southeast Asia, which is geographically located outside the “Pacific Rim of Fire” (Chan, 2015). Therefore, Malaysia is free from severe natural disasters, such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, and typhoons. Even though Malaysia does not suffer from such extreme disasters, Malaysia still experiences disasters, such as floods, landslides, and drought. Flood is the most common natural disaster in Malaysia due to its geographical location and characteristics. Figure 1.2 illustrates the frequency distribution of disasters in Malaysia for 2018. Furthermore, Malaysia has the highest percentage (67%) of the population exposed to floods amongst ASEAN member states from July 2012 to January 2019, as reported in the ASEAN Risk Monitor and Disaster Management Review (AHA Centre, 2019b).

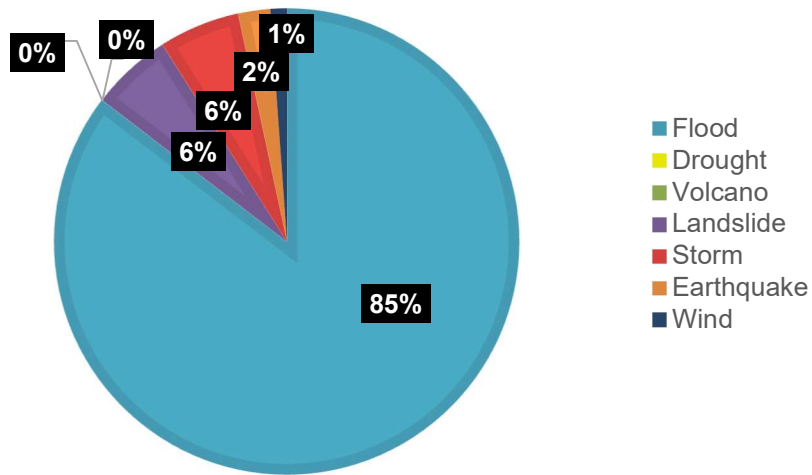


Figure 1.2: Distribution of disasters by hazards shows that flood is the most frequent disaster in Malaysia in 2018 (AHA Centre, 2019a)

Overall, 189 river systems are flowing directly into the sea throughout Malaysia, including Sabah and Sarawak. It was reported that 10.1% or 33, 298 km² of Malaysian land is exposed to flood risk (DID, 2012). Floods in Malaysia can be classified as flash and monsoon floods. Flash flood is a sudden event and it rises and falls rapidly, while monsoon flood lasts for days. Nonetheless, this work focuses only on monsoon floods in Malaysia.

1.3.1 Causes of floods

There are two main causes of flood, which are natural and human-induced. Omran et al. (2018) reported that the massive flood that happened in Kelantan in 2014 was contributed equally by natural and human factors. The basic cause of flood in Malaysia is influenced by monsoon winds, heavy rainfall, and runoff. Malaysia has two monsoon seasons each year, which are the northeast monsoon that occurs from November to March, and the southwest monsoon which occurs from May to September. Since heavy rainfall and strong winds occur during the monsoon season, flood risk is higher during that period. Pahang, Kelantan, and Terengganu often experience floods due to heavy rains during the northeast monsoon.

Other than the monsoon, climate change is another worrying factor that contributes to extreme changes in weather and temperature. These changes indirectly melt glaciers and increase sea levels, which eventually cause an increase in the number of flood disasters. Furthermore, sediments carried by rivers from higher slope areas are deposited and this reduces the river capacity, which contributes to serious flood incidents. Therefore, the water easily overflows the riverbanks during floods. In addition, the topography of an area is one of the major factors that determine its flood susceptibility. A low-level area is highly affected by floods during rainfall, especially if it is located near rivers.

On the other hand, many man-made activities influence the flooding problem. It was revealed that human factors, such as land clearing, unmanaged drainage systems, and uncontrolled development, contributed more weightage to flood events in Sarawak (Abid et al., 2021). Deforestation and land clearing are some development processes that could increase the flood risk. Land clearing for agricultural purposes by irresponsible parties in Kuala Krai, Kelantan had decreased the number of trees and increased the probability of flood occurrence (Omran et al., 2018). Unplanned urban development, uncontrolled construction works, and a major change in land use could also contribute to the flooding problem. In developing countries, urbanisation usually starts from downstream to upstream, which increases the impacts and damages of floods.

Moreover, urban cities like Kuala Lumpur are susceptible to floods due to less storage capacity in the urban basin and more surface runoff. Klang Valley, for instance, experienced an increased runoff with respect to urban development in that area (DID, 2009). Artificial surfaces like cement, concrete and tar could not absorb water as dense vegetation area does; hence, the rainfall immediately ends up in drains and rivers. Therefore, too much water flows into the river which exceeds its discharge capacity, and thus results in flooding events. Unmanaged drainage was one of the factors that contributed to the massive flood in Kuala Krai, Kelantan (Omran et al., 2018). Lack of action from the authorities in cleaning the drainage and widening the drainage systems have worsened the flood situation in 2014.

In addition, exploitation of hill land for rapid housing, uncontrolled agriculture, and other developments damages the hill environment and affect downstream areas (Weng Chan, 1997), which lead to flooding problem. Besides, human-induced flood may occur due to poor designs such as constructions at bridges and culverts. Lastly, low levels of civic consciousness amongst Malaysians who continue to throw rubbish into rivers and drains can contribute to flood incidents.

1.3.2 Recent flood events

In the past five years, Malaysia experienced several natural disasters, including floods. The recent flood struck on 18 December 2021, causing more than 50,000 people to be evacuated and at least 50 deaths. The 11 affected states were Selangor, Pahang, Kelantan, Terengganu, Kuala Lumpur, Perak, Melaka, Negeri Sembilan, Sabah and Sarawak. Two days of torrential rain caused the worst floods in years, which led rivers to overflow and caused floods in towns and villages; hence, major roads were cut off. Many motorists were stranded and trapped in their vehicles for hours. Figure 1.3 illustrates the timeline of flood from 2017 to 2021.

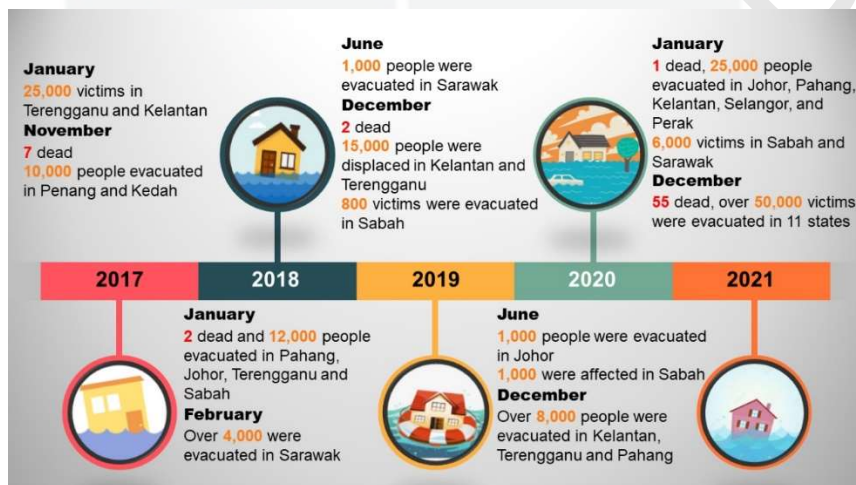


Figure 1.3: History of floods from 2017 to 2021 in Malaysia

Records showed that major floods normally occur at the end of the year and Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang, and Johor were amongst the states that were frequently hit by floods, especially during the monsoonal seasons.

1.4 Flood monitoring system in Malaysia

After the severe flooding events in December 2014, the Malaysian Government established National Disaster Management Agency (NADMA), which allows better coordination between agencies related to natural disasters. NADMA enables the implementation of a new flood forecasting and warning project called the National Flood Forecasting and Warning System (NaFFWS) through the Department of Irrigation and Drainage (DID). NaFFWS is an integrated system for flood forecasting and river monitoring with dissemination of flood warning that uses telemetry data, radar data and forecasts.

NaFFWS can forecast monsoon floods seven days in advance and provide dissemination of flood warnings two days earlier. NaFFWS was successfully developed in three catchments in Malaysia and now it has been broadened to 11 more river basins before the scheme is extended nationwide (Wallington, 2017). The system uses historical rainfall and flow data and then develops models of runoffs, river channels, and flood plains before combining the data with weather forecasts and ground measurements to predict water levels. Lastly, the system is configured to run continuously and operationally, which also automatically generates forecasts and warnings.

Since 2000, DID has adopted a telemetry system to monitor real-time rainfall and water levels from hydrological stations, and the data are transmitted to DID offices for local use. The rainfall and water level data are also published in infobanjir.water.gov.my, which is an Internet-based national flood monitoring system established for the public. However, there are times when the system encountered data transmission problems or the rainfall or water level sensors had technical issues (Bopi et al., 2016).

Besides, DID has already installed several surveillance cameras at different water level monitoring stations in Selangor. The cameras are used to observe the situation on-site and monitor the water level of river. Images from the camera are shared with the public on the official website of InfoBanjir Selangor at <http://infobanjirjps.selangor.gov.my/camera.html> and the images on the website will be updated every 15 minutes.

1.5 Problem statement

In Malaysia, the DID has adopted a telemetry system to monitor real-time water levels using in-situ water level sensors from hydrological stations. These data are used in real-time flood monitoring and can also be used to provide flood forecasting. Nevertheless, the main restriction of this means is the failure of the sensor when the water level exceeds the sensor position during flood events. When it happens, the water level sensors will fail to give accurate readings. Besides, due to high installation and maintenance costs, the installation of the sensors is often neglected in the small-scale river areas, which results in data scarcity to describe the local situation (Lo et al., 2015). Because of the limitations of current practice, a visual sensing technique is proposed as an alternative to obtain real-time flood information. Surveillance camera has become a popular option to be used as the input source for flooding events monitoring, especially in small-scale areas (Filonenko et al., 2015; Lo et al., 2015). Besides, DID has installed surveillance cameras or closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras at several water level monitoring stations, mostly in Selangor, so that the authority can instruct residents to evacuate when water is at the dangerous level. After the massive floods in December 2021, a total of 120 CCTV cameras were installed nationally and will be operational in 2022 (Bernama, 2021). Moreover, Kuala

Lumpur City Hall (DBKL) is planning to install 4,000 surveillance cameras in the city to visually detect floods as well as to help the authorities in flood rescue operations (Jaafar, 2022). Nonetheless, there is no proper discussion on how the authorities would use the technology other than by observing the on-site situation remotely. It will be a waste not to make full use of the existing infrastructure.

Extraction of water regions is an important task in utilising surveillance images in flood studies. The water regions can be identified by using various computer vision techniques. Many studies were conducted on the application of computer vision including deep learning approach in flood disasters by using satellite imagery (Martinis et al., 2015; Silveira & Heleno, 2009; Thayammal et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2020) and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) (Ansari et al., 2021; Gebrehiwot et al., 2019; Popescu et al., 2015, 2017; Rahnemoonfar et al., 2021). However, the usage of computer vision to exploit surveillance images in flood applications is still lacking. Focusing on flood applications in specific, only a few researchers adopted deep learning technique to extract water information from surveillance images. Due to its expensive cost in terms of computational resources and intensive training, deep learning should only be used if the given problem could not be solved by simpler methods to justify the cost of using it. Therefore, this research proposes to apply computer vision techniques, from the conventional computer vision-based to deep learning-based, to find the most reliable method that can be used for water segmentation during flood events. In order to fully utilise the surveillance technology, the potential of estimating water levels from segmented images is investigated. Having to depend on stick gauges or objects present in the fields could limit the practicality of water level estimation from surveillance images. Since LiDAR data offer higher accuracy of digital elevation model (DEM), this present work suggests to use virtual markers extracted from LiDAR data for water level estimation coupled with the segmented surveillance image. Apart from that, the lack of flood data, especially during/after flooding events and limited information on flooded areas in small/local events make it difficult to validate the flood forecasting models (Molinari et al., 2019). A 3D model could help in providing water volume information and describing The ability to capture water level values and record them in a structured database might be useful when there is a problem with the telemetry system. Therefore, a smart flood monitoring system by developing a graphical user interface specifically designed for water segmentation and water level estimation is proposed.

1.6 Research questions

The proposed study aims to address the following research questions:

- i. Can deep learning be used efficiently in extracting water region information by using surveillance images?
- ii. Can water levels be estimated from surveillance images and LiDAR data?

- iii. Can water volume be determined from 3D model generated from LiDAR data? How to extract and record data in a structured manner (database) automatically from the surveillance cameras?

1.7 Objectives

The main aim of this study is to develop a smart flood monitoring system by identifying water regions and estimating water levels from surveillance technology. The specific objectives of this research are as follows:

- i. To investigate the efficiency of conventional image processing and deep learning approaches to segment flooded regions from surveillance images.
- ii. To estimate water levels by exploiting the segmented images coupled with elevation values extracted from light detection and ranging (LiDAR) data.
- iii. To compute water volume from 3D model generated from LiDAR data and to design a graphical user interface (GUI) for segmenting water regions and extracting water levels and status from surveillance images.

The result of this study will be valuable in improving the flood monitoring system as well as reducing the impact of flooding by developing better practices and advanced tools for flood management systems in Malaysia.

1.8 Scope and limitations

The main scope of work for this study is to identify the water regions using several segmentation techniques and estimate water levels by integrating the results with the elevation values extracted from LiDAR data before developing a graphical user interface (GUI) from surveillance technology so that near real-time information could be obtained during the flooding events. This work only covers flood disasters that had happened until December 2021. Besides, it focuses on flood monitoring during the flooding events without discussing the whole flood management cycle. The present study only focuses on river floods and the extent of flood to adjacent areas along the river. As this study uses a single surveillance camera, the study only covers narrow rivers with width of 30 m. It is also assumed that the surveillance camera is fixed and there are no changes in terms of camera angles from time to time.

Another limitation of the proposed study is the limitation of waterbody detection due to the bridge or pier that is present in the image. Therefore, the water region could not be detected accurately if it is located under the bridge or pier. Besides, only daytime images were used since this study used an RGB camera that requires light to produce a good quality image. In this study, the proposed water segmentation approach can be applied to various river images regardless of the image locations. However, the suggested water level estimation was highly dependent on locality. To do the water level estimation, it needs to have prior elevation information; hence, the concept does not apply to all images. Besides, this study did not consider sedimentation issues that may influence the water level of rivers.

1.9 Thesis outline

The thesis is organised into six chapters. Chapter 1 provides an overview of the research with a brief explanation about its relevance. The chapter includes the research questions and objectives, scope and limitations. Chapter 2 consists of a literature review that covers several related topics. Chapter 3 explains the setup for data acquisition by using surveillance cameras, image segmentation methods and deep learning semantic segmentation. It also describes the process of designing a smart data collection by using a graphical user interface (GUI) for extracting water information from surveillance images. Chapter 4 addresses the results and findings for each research objective. Chapter 5 discusses the experimental results and related explanations of the proposed work. Lastly, Chapter 6 summarises conclusions of the proposed work as well as provides recommendations for future studies.

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