

Novel algorithms for efficiently accumulating, analysing and visualising full-waveform LiDAR in a volumetric representation with applications to forestry

submitted by

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for the degree of Doctor of Engineering

of the

University of Bath

Centre for Digital Entertainment

and of the

Plymouth Marine Laboratory

NERC Airborne Research Facility

December 2016

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Milto Miltiadou

Abstract

no more than 300 words

NOTES:

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Purple colour: addition/corrections according to Mike's comments

Red colour: notes

Gray colour: text that is going to be modified

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Abstract

This study focuses on enhancing the visualisations and classifications of forested areas using coincident full-waveform (fw) LiDAR data and hyperspectral images. The ultimate aim is use both datasets to derive information about forests and show the results on a 3D virtual, interactive environment. Influenced by Persson et al (2005), voxelisation is an integral part of this research. The intensity profile of each full-waveform pulse is accumulated into a voxel array, building up a 3D density volume. The correlation between multiple pulses into a voxel representation produces a more accurate representation, which confers greater noise resistance and it further opens up possibilities of vertical interpretation of the data. The 3D density volume is then aligned with the hyperspectral images using a 2D grid similar to Warren et al (2014) and both datasets are used in visualisations and classifications.

Previous work in visualising fw LiDAR has used transparent objects and point clouds, while the output of this system is a coloured 3D-polygon representation, showing well-separated structures such as individual trees and greenhouses. The 3D density volume, generated from the fw LiDAR data, is polygonised using functional representation of object (FReps) and the marching cubes algorithm (Pasko and Savchenko, 1994) (Lorensen and Cline, 1987). Further, an optimisation algorithm is introduced that uses integral volumes (Crow, 1984) to speed up the process of polygonising the volume. This optimisation approach not only works on non-manifold object, but also a speed up of up to 51% was achieved. The polygon representation is also textured by projecting the hyperspectral images into the mesh. In addition, the output is suitable for direct rendering with commodity 3D-accelerated hardware, allowing smooth visualisation.

In future work, the effects of combining both hyperspectral imagery and fw LiDAR in classifications and visualisations are examined. At first, two pixel wise classifiers, a support vector machine and a Bayesian probabilistic model, will be used for testing the effects of the combination in generating tree coverage maps. Higher accuracy classification results are expected when metrics from both datasets are used together. Regarding the visualisations, the differences of applying surface reconstruction versus direct volumetric rendering will be discussed and an ordered tree structure with integral sums of the node values will be used for speeding up the ray-tracing of direct volumetric rendering and improving memory management of aforementioned optimisation algorithm with integral volumes. Further, deferred rendering is suggested for testing the visual human perception of projecting multiple bands of the hyperspectral images on the FW LiDAR

polygon representations. At the end of this project the combination of the datasets will be used along with the watershed algorithm for tree segmentation, which is useful for measuring the stem density of a forest and for tree species classifications.

from EDE:

Firstly, a new and fast way of aligning the FW LiDAR with Remotely Sensed Images has been developed in DASOS and by generating tree coverage maps it was shown that the combination of those datasets confers better remote survey results. This work was presented at the 36th ISRSE International Conference.

Secondly, automated detection of dead trees in native Australian forests has a significant role in protecting animals, which live in those trees and are close to extinction. DASOS allow the generation of 3D signatures characterising dead trees. A comparison between the discrete and FW LiDAR is performed to demonstrate the increased survey accuracy obtained when the FW LiDAR are used.

Finally, the last application is for improving visualisations for foresters. Foresters have a great knowledge about forests and can derive a wealth of information directly from visualisations of the remotely sensed data. This reduces the travelling time and cost of getting into the forests. This research optimises visualisations by using the new FW LiDAR representations and a speed of up to 51% has been achieved.

FW LiDAR has great potentials in forestry and this research has already started to have an impact in the FW LiDAR community by making those huge datasets easier to handle. DASOS is now used at Interpine Group Ltd, a world leading Forestry Company in New Zealand and it has been tested from a PhD student at Bournemouth University who looks into estimating bird distribution in the New Forest. In the future, it is expected that DASOS will be widely used in remote forest surveys (i.e. estimating the commercial value of a forest and detecting infected trees at early stages for treatment).

Acknowledgements

Above all, I would like to express my great gratitude to my industrial supervisors Dr. Michael Grant who had supported me continuously during my research and gave me the freedom to create a project of my own interest.

Then, I would like to thanks Dr. Matthew Brown, who helped me during my first years of my studies by giving me valuable and informative feedback. He was always there to keep me working on the right track.

Equally important is my current supervisor Dr. Neil D.F. Campbell and he is not to be missed from the acknowledgements.

Furthermore, special thanks are given to Dr. Mark Warren, Dr. Darren Cosker, MSc Susana Gonzalez Aracil and Dr. Ross Hill who occasionally advised me during my studies.

It further worth giving credits to my data providers, the Natural Environment Research Council's Airborne Research Facility (NERC ARF) and Interpine Group Ltd.

Last but not least, I am extremely grateful to my funding organisations, the Centre for Digital Entertainment and Plymouth Marine Laboratory, who supported financially and consequently made this research possible.

Abbreviations and Glossary

AGC	Automatic Gain Controller
ALS	Airborne Laser Scanning
APL	Airborne Processing Library
ARF	Airborne Research Facility
CG	Computer Graphics
CUDA	parallel computing platform available on nvidia graphic cards (=forest in Greek), the open source software implemented
DASOS	for managing FW LiDAR data
DEM	Digital Elevation Model
DTM	Digital Terrain Model (DTM)
FW	Full-Waveform
GB	Gigabyte
GPU	Graphics Processing Unit
LiDAR	Light Detection And Ranging
MRI	Magnetic Resonance Imaging
NASA	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
NDVI	Normalised Difference Vegetation Index
NERC	Natural Environment Research Council
NIR	Near-Infrared Region of the electromagnetic spectrum
TB	Terabyte
VIS	Visual Spectrum
VLR	Variable Length Records
WPDF	Waveform Packet Descriptor Format
UK	United Kingdom

Publications

DASOS-User Guide, M. Miltiadou, N.D.F Campbell, M. Brown, S.C. Aracil, M.A. Warren, D. Clewley, D.Cosker, and M. Grant, Full-waveform LiDAR workshop at Interpine Group Ltd, Rotorua NZ, 2016

Alignment of Hyperspectral Imagery and Full-Waveform LiDAR data for visualisation and classification purposes, M. Miltiadou, M. A. Warren, M. Grant, and M. Brown, *The International Archives of Photogrammetry, Remote Sensing and Spatial Information Sciences*, vol. 40, no. 7, p. 1257, 2015.

Reconstruction of a 3D Polygon Representation from Full-Wavefrom LiDAR data, M. Miltiadou, M. Grant, M. Brown, M. Warren, and E. Carolan,*RSPSoc Annual Conference, New Sensors for a Changing World*, 2014.

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Computer Graphics & Visual Computing (CGVC), Bournemouth, United Kingdom, 2016 - Poster Presentation

Silvilaser, La Grant Motte, France, 2015 - Oral Presentation

International Symposium of Remote Sensing of the Environment (ISRSE), 2015 - Oral Presentation

RSPSoc Conference, New Sensors for a Changing world, Aberystwyth, United Kingdom, 2014 - Oral Presentation

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Forest Monitoring: Importance and Applications

Forest monitoring involves checking and observing the changes in the structure of the forests and their foliage over the years. It has a significant value in both sustainable and commercial forests, because it contributes to managing biodiversity, maintaining forest health and optimising wood trade procedures as explained below:

- **Biodiversity** plays a substantial role in ecosystem resilience [1] while various human activities affect biological communities by altering their composition and leading species to extinction [2]. For example, in Australian native forests many arboreal mammals and birds rely on hollow trees for shelters [3]. Hollow trees are trees that have hollows, which are semi-enclosed cavities on trunks and branches. They are formed by natural forces, like bacteria, fungi and insects and may take tens to hundreds of years to become suitable for animal/bird shelters. Unfortunately recent studies shown that there us likely to be a shortage of hollows available for colonisation in the near future [4] [5]. Therefore monitoring and protecting hollow trees has a positive impact in preserving biodiversity.
- **Forest Health:** Protecting vegetation from pests and diseases. An example of pests are the Brushtail Possums, which were initially brought to New Zealand for fur trade, but they have escaped and become a threat to native forests and vegetation [6]. In addition, anthropogenic factors have a negative impact to nature. For instance, acid rain is responsible for the freezing decease at red bruces because it reduces the membrane-associated calcium, which is important for tolerating cold [7]. Those changes in nature need to be monitor in order to preserve a healthy and resilience ecosystem.

- **Wood Trade:** Measuring stem volume and basal areas of trees contributes to forest planning and management [8]. For example, measuring stocking and wood quality would help into estimating the cost of harvesting the trees in relation to the stocking [9].

item **Scientific study:** Forests cover approximately 25 percent of the world's land area [Mike's source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_countries_by_forest_area; but use the wikipedia article's primary source!], with temperate areas such as Europe tending towards 35 percent. Developments that allow more accurate, more complete or more detailed studies of these areas can contribute to better management.

Traditionally, forest monitoring involves field work such as travelling into the area of interest and taking manual measurements. Regarding the need to monitor hollows, tree climbing with ladders and ropes gives very accurate results but is dangerous, expensive, time consuming, and cannot easily scale into surveying large forested areas [10] [11]. Therefore, automated ways of monitoring forests are essential and this is why Remote Sensing has a significantly positive impact in forestry.

1.2 Background Information about Remote Sensing and Airborne Laser Scanning Systems

Remote sensing refers to the acquisition of information about objects, for example vegetation and archaeological monuments, without physical contact and the subsequent interpretation of that information. The sensors used to capture the information are divided into passive and active. For example satellite photography is passive because information are collected from the reflected natural sun light, while Airborne Laser Scanners (ALS) are active because they emit laser beams and collects information from the backscattered laser energy [12].

According to Wanger et al, Airborne Laser Scanning (ALS) is a growing technology used in environmental research to collect information about the Earth, such as vegetation and tree species. Comparing ALS with traditional photography, **ALS is not influenced by light and it is therefore less dependent on weather conditions (ie. it collects information from below the clouds, or at night).** The laser beam also partially penetrates the tree canopies allowing it to record information about the forest structure below the canopy, as well as the ground [13]. **ALS methods are divided into pulse systems, which repeatedly emit pulses, and continuous wavelength systems that continuously emit light.** They both acquire information from the backscattered laser

intensity over time, but continuous wavelength systems are more complicated because they obtain one extra physical parameter, the frequency of the ranging signal. Further, according to Wehr and Lohr, continuous wavelength systems are 85 times less accurate than pulse systems [14].

LiDAR (Light Detection And Ranging) systems are passive (MGGR: eh? they're surely active?) and pulse laser scanning systems [14]. They are divided into two groups according to the diameter of the footprint left by the laser beam on the ground, which is primarily dependent on the distance between the sensor and the target (altitude, in most remote sensing) and the beam divergence. The small-footprint group has a 0.2-3m diameter, is widely commercialised and the sensors are mostly carried on planes (ALS systems). In contrast, the large-footprint systems have a wider diameter (10-70m) and during experiments they were mostly mounted on satellites. Small-footprint systems record at higher resolution but cannot guarantee that every pulse will reach the ground due to the small diameter of their footprint, making topographic measurements difficult, and are limited to smaller survey areas due to the cost and availability of aircraft. In contrast, large-footprint scanners have wider diameters and can therefore scan wider areas with the likelihood of recording the ground to be higher [15].

In addition, there are two types of LiDAR data: discrete and full-waveform (FW). Discrete LiDAR records a few peaks of the reflected laser intensity, while FW LiDAR stores the entire backscattered signal. The discrete LiDAR has been widely used and a 40% reduction of fieldwork has been achieved at Interpine Ltd Group, New Zealand, with that technology. Regarding the newer FW LiDAR, scientists understand their concepts and potentials but due to the shortage of available tools able to handle these large datasets, there are very few uses of FW LiDAR [16].

The design of the first FW LiDAR system was introduced in 1980s, but the first operational system was developed by NASA in 1999 [17]. The vastly increased amount of information recorded within the FW LiDAR suggests many new possibilities and problems from the point of view of image understanding, remote surveying and visualisation. As an indication, a 9.3GB discrete LiDAR from New Forest, UK, corresponds to 55.7GB of FW LiDAR.

This research is focused on the representation and efficient use of FW LiDAR data and contributes both to forestry visualisations and classifications. Two datasets are used for testing and evaluation: the New Forest and the RedGum dataset. An in-depth explanation of LiDAR systems and the specifications, differences and challenges of the two datasets are given in Section 2. An overview of the specific aims, objectives and contributions of this thesis, set in the context of these datasets, is then given at Section 3.

Chapter 2

Acquire Data

The aim of this section is to give a practical and scientific insight into the acquisition of data, because a good knowledge of these methods and their limitations is essential for understanding the related research undertaken. The relations between the two main datasets used in this project are depicted on Figure 2-1 and briefly explained here:

- The **New Forest dataset** from the UK was provided by the Natural Environment Research Council's Airborne Research Facility (NERC ARF). Measurements were collected simultaneously a Leica ALS50-II LiDAR and AISA Eagle/Hawk hyperspectral radiometers on the 8th of April in 2010. It contains Discrete LiDAR, FW LiDAR and hyperspectral images.
- The **RedGum dataset** was acquired in Australia using a Trimble AX60 integrated LiDAR/Camera instrument over the time period from the 6th of March in 2015 until the 31st of March in 2015. It was provided by the RPS Australia East Pty Ltd. Only the FW LiDAR data are used here.

The ALS data are explained first, because they are the main focus of this research, and hyperspectral imagery is towards the end of the chapter. In Section 2.1, an in-depth description of ALS systems and the differences between discrete and FW LiDAR data is given. Section 2.2 briefly discusses the binary file format of the acquired LiDAR data and Section 2.3 is a discussion on the limitations, the differences and the advantages of two LiDAR instruments; the Leica and Trimble. The essential information about the hyperspectral imagery, which is only associated with the New Forest dataset, is then covered in Section 2.4.

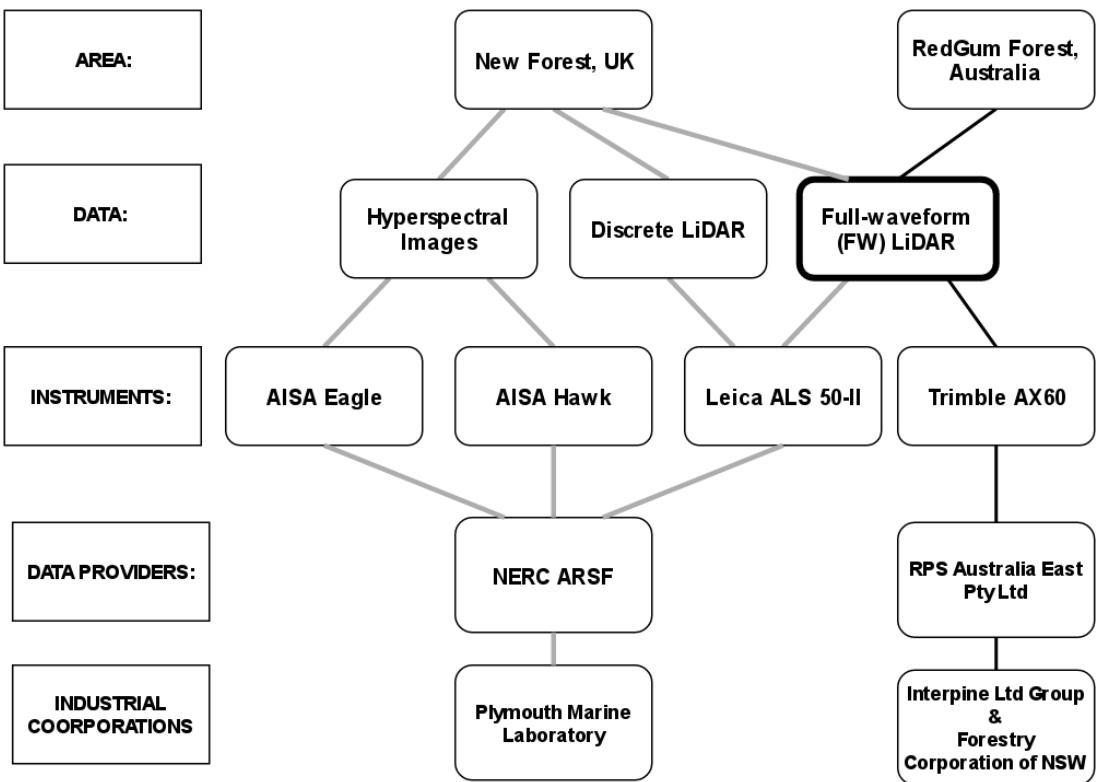


Figure 2-1: Data and Instruments

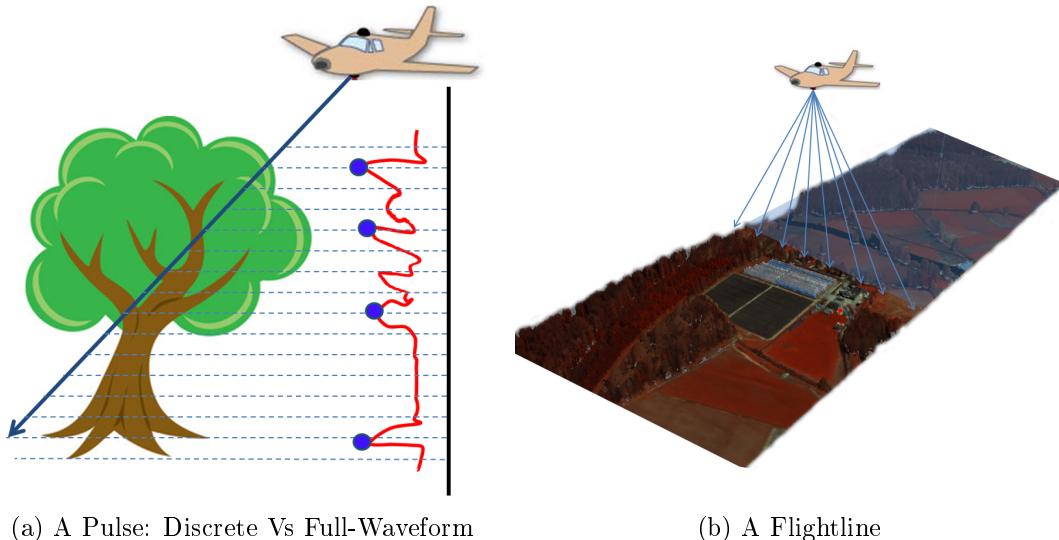


Figure 2-2: Airborne Laser Scanning System

2.1 Airborne LiDAR systems: An in-depth Explanation

The ALS systems emit laser pulses from sensor mounted in a plane and collects information from the time-of-flight and the returned laser intensity. By the time the pulse has travelled the approximately 1-3km from the aircraft to the ground, it is roughly 20cm in width due to beam divergence. When the pulse hits an object (e.g. the forest canopy), then some of it reflects back while the rest penetrates through holes between leaves and branches. The laser pulse continues to hit structures, scattering and partially returning to the sensor until it reaches a solid barrier such as the ground and is fully blocked from further progress. The LiDAR systems record information from the backscattered laser pulse, measuring its round trip time and the returned intensity.

As mentioned at Section 1.2, there are two types of LiDAR data, discrete and FW. The discrete LiDAR observes the returned intensity signals and identifies and [records a few peak intensity returns of the signal](#), while the FW LiDAR system digitises and stores the entire backscattered signal into equally spaced time intervals (Figure 2-2a). The delivered data for the discrete LiDAR is a set of hit points ("returns"), which are associated with laser intensities. The world position of every return is calculated by measuring the round trip time of the laser return, giving a distance from the sensor, which is combined with the precisely known position and orientation of the aircraft/sensor (from GPS, an inertial measurement unit and precise shot direction of the laser pulse). The waveform recordings are triggered by and attached to first returns of discrete LiDAR data (to avoid sampling the uninteresting time period while the pulse travels through the atmosphere) and they are a list of intensities that correspond to the laser intensity returned over time. There is also an offset vector which defines the distance and direction between each wave sample (effectively a compression mechanism, by avoid recording the world position of every sample, replacing it with the location of the first return and this vector).

As shown in Figure 2-2b, the pulses are scanned back and forth across the landscape below (by a rotating mirror) as the plane travels forward. The scanned data has a limited maximum width according to the flight height and the field of view scan angle. During processing the track of the plane is divided into easier-to-handle pieces (flightlines) and saved into separate binary files. In this project the LAS1.3 file format is used for both datasets.

2.2 Brief Description of the LAS1.3 File Format

There are a few LiDAR file formats but the LAS1.3 was the first format to contain FW data and it is the one used to store the data for both New Forest and RedGum datasets. According to the LAS1.3 file specifications [18], a .LAS file contains information about both discrete and FW LiDAR data, with the waveform packets attached to discrete returns and saved either internally at the end of the .LAS file or externally in a .WVS file.

As shown at (Figure 2-3) the .LAS file is divided into four sections and a brief explanation of each section is given here:

1. The **Header** contains general information about the entire flightline. For example, it includes the maximum scan angle used during the flight, whether the waveform packets are recorded internally or externally and the number of **Variable Length Records** (VLR).
2. Regarding the **VLR**, which contain arbitrary "extension" data blocks, the most important information given is the waveform packet descriptors that contain essential information on how to read the waveform packets (i.e. an ID, the number of wave samples and the size of each intensity in bits).
3. The **Point Data Records** are the discrete points and the waveforms are associated with first return discrete points. Each Point Data Record has a spatial location, an intensity and optionally a pointer to a waveform packet as well as the ID of the corresponding waveform packet descriptor.
4. The waveform packets is a list of intensities and they are either saved internally into the **Extended Variable Length Records** section of the .LAS file or inside an external .WVS file. Starting from the associated first return point, the spatial locations of the waveform packet (wave sample intensity) are calculated by adding an offset defined in the associated Point Data Record.

2.3 Leica Vs Trimble Instruments: Limitations, Differences and Advantages

As shown in Figure 2-1, the Leica ALS 50-II instrument was used to capture the LiDAR data of New Forest dataset and the Trimble AX60 for collecting the RedGum Forest FW LiDAR data. It is therefore important to clarify the differences, the limitations and the advantages of each instrument.

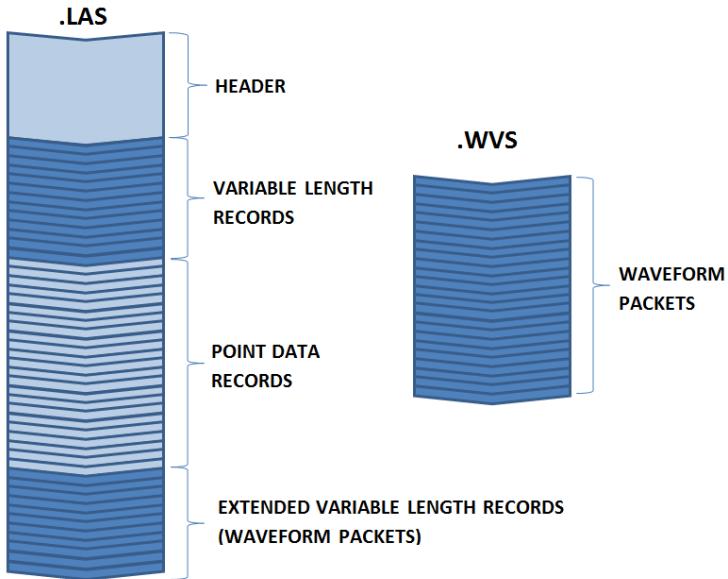


Figure 2-3: How the FW LiDAR data are stored into a binary file, according to the LAS1.3 file format specification

The Trimble performs at a pulse frequency of 400kHz, while the Leica's maximum pulse frequency is 120kHz. Nevertheless, during experiments there were occasions when the Leica discarded every other waveform due to I/O limitations despite being at or below the maximum pulse frequency [19]. The New Forest dataset has been affected by this and, on average, one third of the saved pulses only contain discrete data. We should therefore be extremely careful when comparing Discrete with FW LiDAR data. While [16] concludes that FW LiDAR data worth the extra processing because they have a better vertical profile, [20] states that extra information (the echo-width) from the FW LiDAR data are relatively unimportant. But the New Forest datasets were used for the comparison at [20] and there is no mention about the significantly less waveforms recorded in comparison to the discrete data. It is therefore suspected that their results has been affected by the missing waveforms.

Another problem with the Leica sysyem is the small dynamic range of intensities due to the number of bits used for recording them; the Leica system uses 8-bit integers (0-255 range) while the Trimble uses 16-bit integers (0-16385 range). For increased dynamic range and finer intensities without doubling storage costs, Leica introduced an Automatic Gain Controller (AGC). The AGC is an 8-bit number that defines how the recorded intensity range is shifted across a wider range of intensities. The AGC value is adjusted according to the reflected laser intensity of the previous 64 pulses and it therefore varies across a flightline. Consequently, the raw intensities are incomparable

to each other and, since the relation between AGC and the intensities is not linear, the range normalisation is complicated [21] [22]. In this thesis, the intensities of the Leica system are used as boolean values (whether something existed or not, using a user-defined threshold) to quickly overcome that issue and focus on the major research objectives. Regarding the Trimble instrument, there is no AGC value because the intensities are saved into a 16bit integer and as long as the flight height is constant no normalisation is required. In a few words, the raw intensities recorded using the Leica system are not normalised and therefore not comparable to each other, while the intensities of the Trimble instrument are more meaningful.

The footprint of the laser on the ground depends on the scanning pattern of the instruments and the field of view. The sinusoidal scanning pattern of the Leica system results in a higher density of returns at the edges of the flightline. The footprint of the Trimble instrument is more equally spaced because they are scanned using a rotating polygon. The uneven density pattern of the Leica system is resolved by normalisation during the voxelisation process, but the Trimble's equally spaced pulse pattern is more prone to aliasing when voxelised. Regarding the field of view, the Leica is wider but both systems avoid large angles because otherwise data look deformed at edges of the flightlines.

Last but not least, the Trimble instrument is a native full-waveform sensor; the discrete LiDAR are produced by extracting peak points in post-processing. Therefore one of the purported advantages of a FW system, the concept of extracting a denser point clouds using Gaussian decomposition [13], does not apply in the Trimble's case. This was proven by extracting peak points from Trimble FW LiDAR data using the pulseextract from LAStools [23]; the number of points extracted was exactly the same as the number of points saved into the associated discrete LiDAR files. Therefore discrete data from the Trimble instrument are the same as those generated by echo decomposition and peak points extraction from the FW samples.

To sum up, the Trimble AX60 instrument is a newer sensor and therefore has less problems or design compromises in comparison to the Leica ALS50-II instrument. Table 2.1 summarises the differences between the two sensors.

2.4 Hyperspectral Imagery

Hyperspectral imagery has a positive impact in remote sensing because it contains information beyond human visibility. The human eye receives light from the visual spectrum into three bands (red, green and blue). The hyperspectral sensors captures a larger spectrum and divides its light components into hundreds of bands, recording

Table 2.1: Specifications of the LiDAR instruments used

Instrument Name:	Leica ALS550-II	Trimble Ax60
Scanned Area	New Forest, UK	RedGum, Australia
Year of Introduction:	Discrete LiDAR 2009 & FW LiDAR 2010	2013
Max Scan Frequency (kHz):	120	400
Recorded Intensity (bits):	8	16
AGC:	Yes	No
Scanning Pattern:	Sinusoidal	The footprints are more equally spaced on the ground
Max field of view (degrees):	75	60

this way more information than a human eye can receive [12].

Nevertheless, there are other compromises - for example, the time taken to integrate incoming light as the aircraft carrying the sensors moves. This means the raw airborne images appear deformed because the pixel length varies across the flightline. NERC-ARF geo-corrects the data using the Airborne Processing Library (APL) [24]. The processing levels are numbered. At ‘level 3’ (world coordinate system) the pixels are equally spaced and sized, which requires resampling and thus may look slightly blurred. The ‘level 1’ data (what the sensor saw) are non geo-corrected but they are associated with a file that defines the spatial location of each pixel. In this thesis, the ‘level 1’ data are used to preserve the highest possible quality.

In practise, the level 1 data are held in two files, the ‘.bil’ and the ‘.igm’. The ‘.bil’ file contains the hyperspectral cube (Figure 2-4), all the pixel values at different wavelengths, and the .igm file gives the x, y, z coordinates of each pixel.

The number of bands and the spectrum range captured depends on the hyperspectral sensor. The data from New Forest were collected using the following instruments:

- the Eagle, which captures the visible and near infra-red spectrum (400-970nm)
- the Hawk, which covers short wave infra-red wavelengths (970-2450nm)

Both sensors divide their spectral range into 252 bands (programmable) and each band is a 2D vector as shown in Figure 2-4).

The hyperspectral images also come with a number of drawbacks. A few are mentioned here but since hyperspectral imagery is not the main focus of the thesis there are not addressed:

- System faults sometimes occurs and the affected areas are masked out. This results in blank areas.

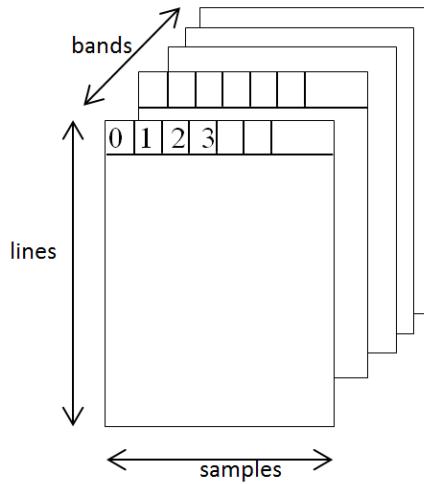


Figure 2-4: This figure shows the order of the hyperspectral pixels saved into the the binary .bil file.

- As a passive sensor, it is dependent on the sun for illumination and thus vulnerable to poor weather conditions
- Due to the high refraction of light at some wavelengths, some bands are highly influenced by humidity (i.e. wavelength 1898.33nm).

To sum up, hyperpsectral images contain information beyond the visible and they are delivered in two files, one contains the hyperspectral cube and the other one the geo-locations of each pixel. In this project, they are used in chapter (Chapter 7), where it is shown that the combination of Remote Sensing data confers better results for generating tree coverage maps.

Chapter 3

Overview of Thesis

Chapter 4

The open source software DASOS and the Voxelisation Approach

Chapter 5

Surface Reconstruction from Voxelised FW LiDAR Data

5.1 Introduction

To briefly summarise the previous sections, FW LiDAR data (Section 2) are laser scanning data particularly useful in Forestry, but the huge amount of information recorded make handling of the data difficult. The open source software DASOS (Section ??) was developed along with this thesis to ease the usage of the data. DASOS voxelises (Section ??) the data before interpretation and this approach is fundamentally different from the related, state-of-art software packages. The output of the voxelisation is a 3D discrete density volume.

In order to visualise a voxel volume, it must be rendered in some form. This chapter explains the process of reconstructing the surface of the scanned area from the 3D voxelised FW LiDAR. At first, volumetric rendering¹ approaches are briefly explained in Section 5.2. Section 5.3 gives a mathematical definition to the voxelised data, while Section 5.4 describes the actual algorithm used to extract a surface. Finally, the results are given in Section 5.5.

5.2 Rendering Approaches of Volumetric Data

Even though the concept of visualising 3D discrete density volumes (Volumetric Visualisations) is new in forestry and remote sensing, it has been widely researched in medical imaging and visual effects. There are two approaches to visualising volumetric data.

¹Volumetric rendering refers the process of visualising 3D Volumes.

The first approach is direct rendering, which repeatedly generates 2D images according to the view point (the camera). It is like "taking photos" *** Neill: Not sure about the analogy? Can you include a diagram from a paper or textbook to show what you mean? from a camera and putting them in a sequence to produce an interactive video. An example of direct rendering approach is ray-tracing. Ray-tracing generates images by "taking photos"; rays are cast from the view point, passing through each pixel on a screen and carrying on into the volume. Intensity values are assigned to the pixels according to the nearest intersections [25]. Ray-tracing can be time expensive depending on the complexity of the scene and, for that reason, some of the literature focuses on parallelising the ray-casting process. By introducing parallelisation, real time rendering of small volumetric data (256^3) was achieved by Pfister et al. in 1999 [26]. Also, after the release of the CUDA hardware [27] (which is a parallel computing platform on recent nvidia graphics cards), Crassin et al. achieved real-time rendering of billions of voxels in 2009 [28].

The second approach is rasterisation, which is a method that maps primitive polygons (typically triangles) to pixels. It is widely used in computer games, supported directly by common hardware acceleration systems and it is significantly faster than ray-tracing. Furthermore, interactive operations (e.g. measuring the distance between two trees) are trivial calculations on primitives/polygonal meshes and they are easy to implement. In order to use this approach with volumes, they must be first converted to primitives. This is commonly accomplished by surface reconstruction, referring to the extraction of a polygonal mesh, which is a set of primitives like triangles, from the volumetric data. Constructing a surface may take several minutes, but real time visualisations of polygonal meshes are supported by free animation packages (like Blender and Meshlab), in addition to being easy to implement. So, even though it is possible to implement real-time interactive environments using direct rendering of the big voxel data, volumetric visualisation of FW LiDAR data is a new concept in remote sensing and, for simplicity, this thesis uses surface reconstruction.

5.3 Algebraic Definition of the Volume

In computer graphics, objects can be defined using a function rather than being constructed from primitives. Those objects are called either implicit or algebraic. Implicit representation of objects enables a mathematical definition of the 3D discrete density volume generated from the FW LiDAR data (Section ??).

Algebraic objects were firstly introduced in computer graphics by Blinn in 1982 [29] to enable the definition of complex objects without saving a large amount of primitives;

in some cases, primitives cannot accurately represent a shape (e.g. a sphere cannot be represented fully by a triangle mesh). Each object is defined by a function $f(X)$ and the iso-surface value α . The iso-surface value (iso-level) defines the boundaries of the object; for an object $[f(x), a]$ every n-dimensional point X that lies on the surface of the object satisfies the condition $f(X) = \alpha$. To be more accurate, the following rules apply according to Pasko et al. [30]:

- $f(X) = \alpha$, when X lies on the surface of the algebraic object
- $f(X) > \alpha$, when X lies inside the algebraic object and
- $f(X) < \alpha$, when X lies outside the algebraic object

Regarding the algebraic representation of the 3D voxelised FW LiDAR data, X is a three dimensional point (x, y, z) representing the longitude, latitude and height respectively and $f(X)$ is a function that takes X as input and returns the accumulated intensity value of the voxel that X lies inside. Also, the iso-surface value α is a user defined parameter. Even though it is closely related to the noise threshold used for filtering during voxelisation (Section ??), it is different. The noise threshold filters low intensity samples before the volume is constructed, while the iso-surface value defines the boundaries of the object and it can be modified after the voxelisation because it doesn't affect the intensity values of the 3D voxelised FW LiDAR. Figure 5-5 demonstrates how the iso-level parameter affects the output of the surface reconstruction of the voxelised FW LiDAR data in comparison to the noise filtering.

5.4 Surface Reconstruction with the Marching Cubes Algorithm

Even though numerical implicitisation is beneficial in reducing storage memory, visualising implicit objects is not straight forward, since they contain no discrete values. As described above in rendering volumes, this problem can be addressed either by direct rendering or surface reconstruction (Section 5.2).

The Marching Cubes algorithm is an algorithm that polygonises implicit objects using a look up table. Let's assume that $f(X)$ defines an implicit object. At first the space is divided into cubes. Each cube is defined by eight corner points and each corner point lies either inside or outside the implicit object. By enumerating all the possible cases and linearly interpolating the intersections along the edges, the surface of the implicit iso-surface is constructed [31]. The output is a polygonal mesh, a number of

adjacent triangles constructed according to the user-defined iso-surface value α of the implicit object.

The normals² are calculated afterwards. According to Lorensen and Cline [31], the normal of each vertex is calculated by measuring the local gradient change. Even though this work well on smooth object (e.g. a sphere defined by its equation), because of the high gradient changes in the voxelised FW LiDAR data this algorithm results into normals pointing into inconsistent directions. This is a problem because when the normals are not consistent, the surface of the object appears rough. For that reason, in DASOS the normal of each vertex is derived by the average normal of its adjacent triangles.

Additionally it is worth highlighting that the sampling of the Marching cubes is independent from the sampling of the 3D density volume. But consistency between the two is required to avoid artefacts. Let's assume the discrete volume has $(n \times m \times k)$ voxels, then the suggested sampling of Marching Cubes is $((n+1) \times (m+1) \times (k+1))$, as shown on Figure 5-1; the black grid represents a 2D density grid and the blue grid represents the suggested sampling of the polygonisation. Please note that every point that lies outside the volume is considered to be outside the implicit object. Figure 5-1b shows the effects of oversampling on a low resolution 3D density volume. On the right image the sampling of the volume appears as linear lines and squares on the forested areas because of the Marching Cubes' oversampling. Even though the right polygonal mesh looks blurred, it has been correctly sampled and the blur is because of the low resolution of the volume. Nevertheless there are no geometrical shapes on forested areas and once the resolution is increased then blur will disappear.

5.5 Results

The output of DASOS is a polygonal mesh exported as an .obj file, which is a standard graphics format. The .obj files can be loaded into various animation software tools like Maya and Meshlab (Figure 5-2). Figure 5-3 shows polygonal meshes generated using NERC-ARF data from three different areas in the UK. The region of interest is also user defined. The user defines whether an entire flightline or selected area is polygonised (Figure 5-4).

Furthermore, there are three main user-defined parameters and Figure 5-5 shows how the results are affected once modified:

²A normal is a vector that is perpendicular to the surface of a polygonal mesh. In graphics, the normals are important for calculating light illumination and each vertex is associated with one for smooth rendering of surfaces.

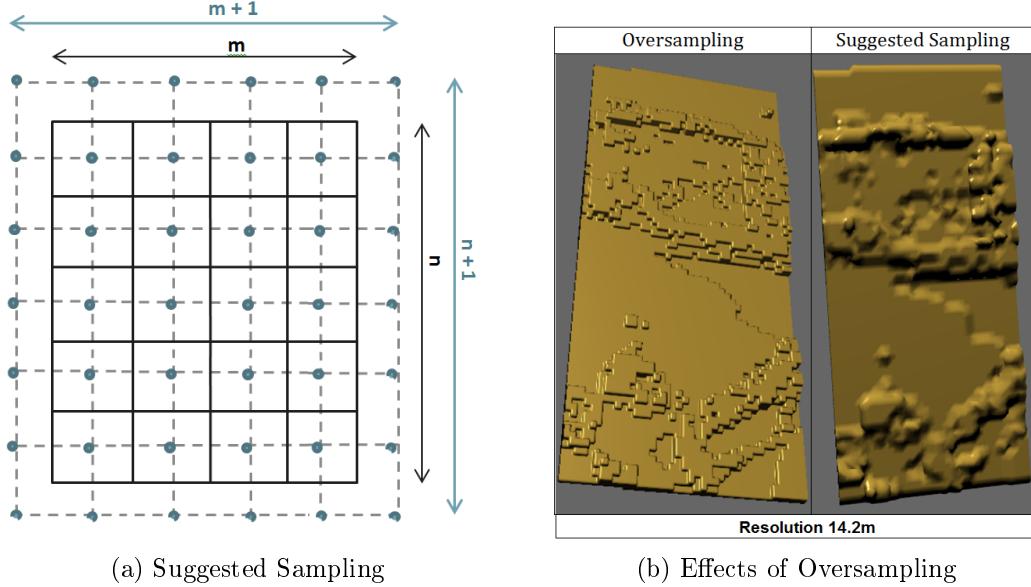


Figure 5-1: The suggested sampling during polygonisation using the Marching Cubes Algorithm

1. The voxel length controls the resolution of the output; the bigger the voxel length is the lower the resolution and the number of cubes are.
2. The iso-level is the boundary that defines whether a voxel is inside or outside the implicit object. When the iso-level is increased, the number of voxels that are considered inside the implicit object decreases. For that reason, when it is too high most of the voxels are outside the boundary and the object seems to disappear.
3. The noise level is the threshold of the low level filtering applied during voxelisation (Section ??). If the noise level is too low, then the noise covers significant features of the data and when it is too high important information are discarded and the object seems to disappear again.

Aside from computer-based visualisation, it is even possible to 3D print the meshes using something like MakerBot. There are some difficulties as the meshes are not manifold³ (figure 5-6). Simplification of the mesh would have eased the processing of the .obj file in MakerBot.

³A non-manifold polygonal object may have triangle below the outside surface of the object

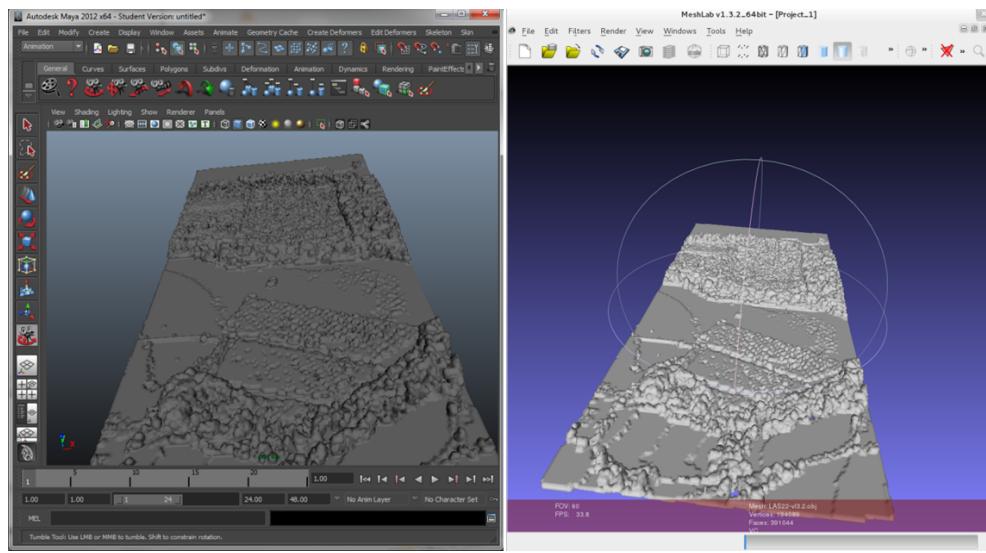


Figure 5-2: Visualising the output of DASOS into animation software packages (Maya and Meshlab)

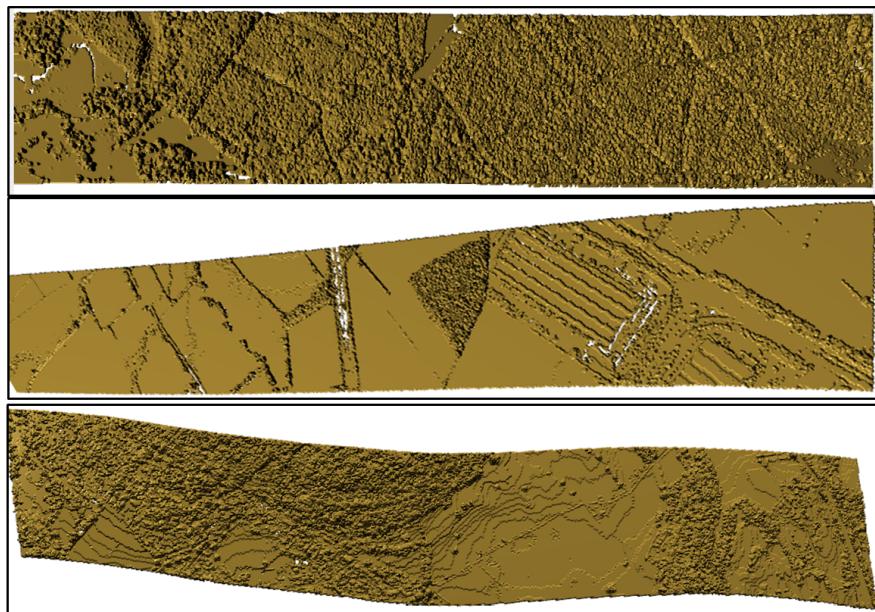


Figure 5-3: Polygonising NERC-ARF FW LiDAR data captured at different areas (New Forest, Milton Keynes and Eaves Wood)

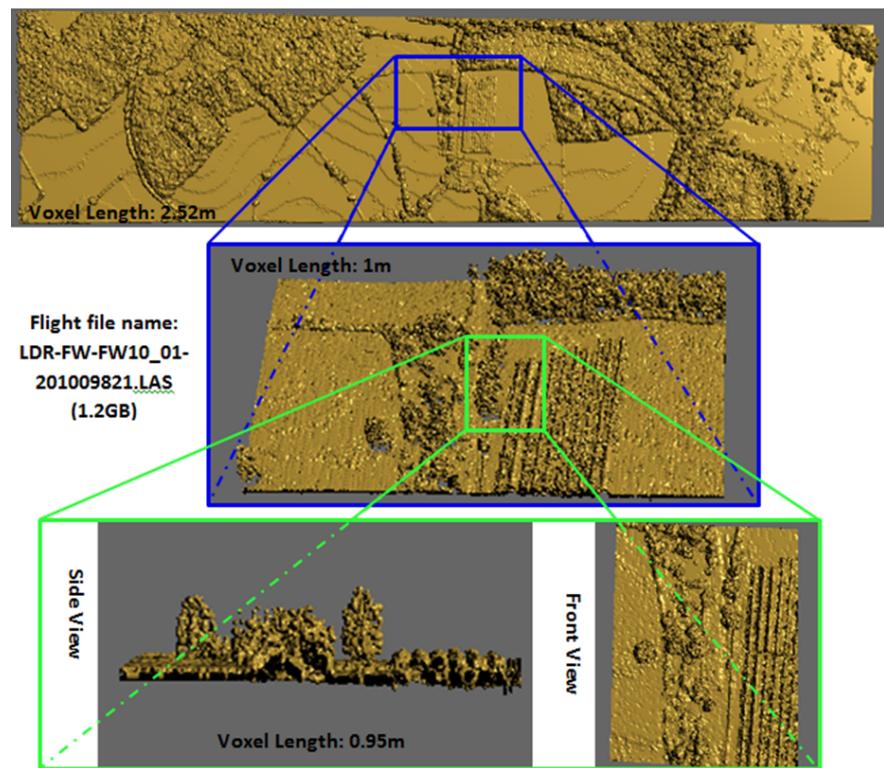


Figure 5-4: Selecting Region of Interest

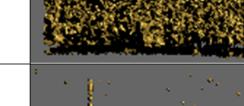
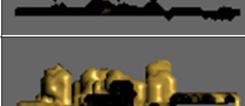
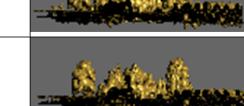
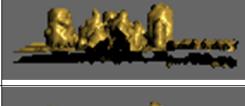
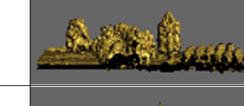
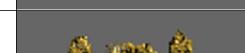
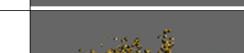
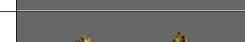
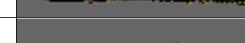
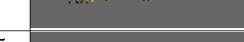
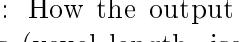
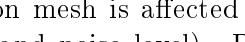
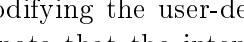
Voxel Length	Visualisation with different voxel lengths	Iso-level *	Visualisations with various isolevels	Noise Level	Visualisations with various noise levels
16.67 m		60		0	
10.0m		45		5	
7.14m		30		10	
5.7m		15		15	
4.44m		0		17	
3.33m		-15		20	
2.5m		-30		25	
2.0m		-45		30	
1.43m		-60		40	
1.2m		-75		60	
1.0m		-85		75	
0.8m		-95		100	
0.67m		-100		135	

Figure 5-5: How the output polygon mesh is affected by modifying the user-defined parameters (voxel length, isolevel⁴ and noise level). Please note that the intensities were scaled to be within the range [-100,100] and that the currently released version of DASOS does not scale the intensities.

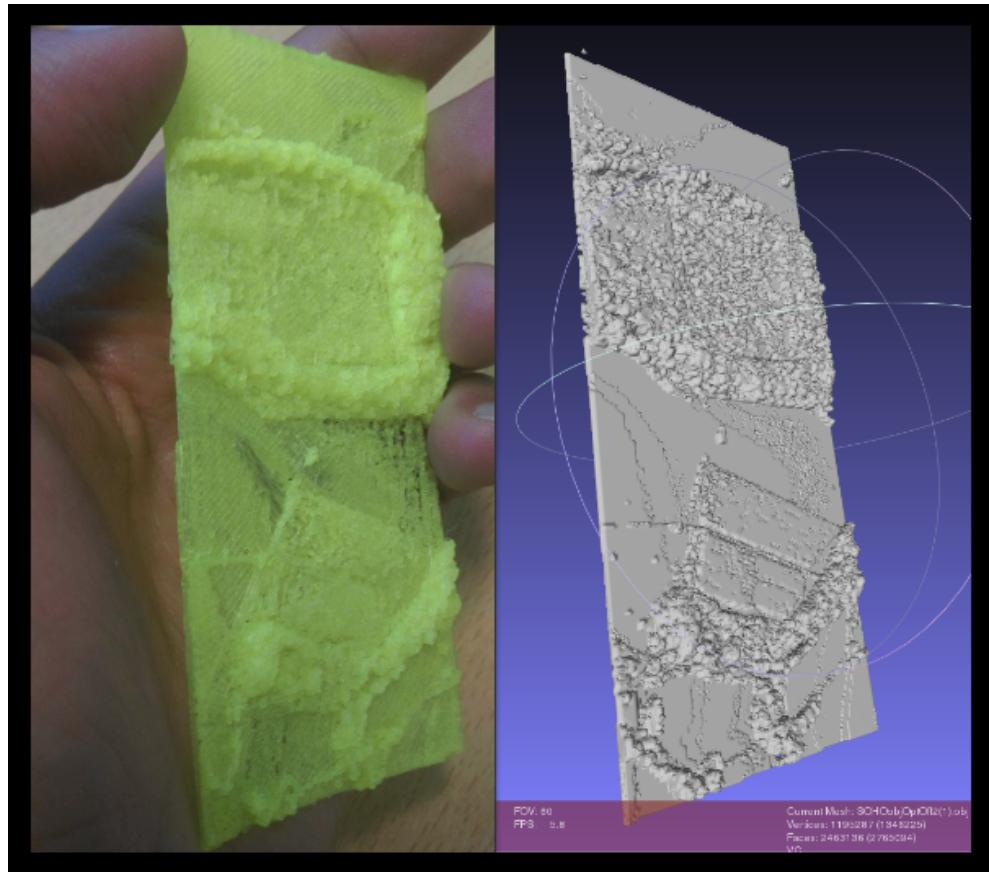


Figure 5-6: 3D printing of New Forest FW LiDAR data

Chapter 6

Optimisation Attempts for the Surface Reconstruction

Chapter 7

Alignment with Hyperspectral Imagery

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the hyperspectral images are introduced to improve the visual output of the polygonal meshes derived from the FW LiDAR data (Chapter 5) and it is also investigated how the combination of NERC-ARF data from New Forest (Figure 2-1) performs for generating tree coverage maps.

Please note that definitions (i.e. bands and level-1) are used in this chapter and if you are not familiar with these terms it is highly recommended to read again Section 2.4, which explains everything about hyperspectral imagery.

7.2 Previous Work

Regarding the integration of FW LiDAR and hyperspectral data in remote forest surveying, there are diverse opinions on whether the integration of multi-sensor data improves remote forest surveying. Clark et al. attempted to estimate forest biomass but no better results were observed after the integration [32], while the outcomes of Aderson et al. for observing tree species abundances structures were improved after the integration of the data [33].

Buddenbaum et al. [34], and Heinzel and Koch [35], used a combination of multi-sensor data for tree classifications. Buddenbaum et al. use fusion of data to generate RGB images from a combination of FW LiDAR and hyperspectral features, although the fusion reduces the dimensionality of a classifier [34]. In that study, three different classifiers were implemented and the Support Vector Machines (SVMs) returned the

best results. SVMs were also used in [35] to handle the high dimensionality of the metrics (464 metrics). In that research a combination of FW LiDAR, discrete LiDAR, hyperspectral and colour infrared (CIR) images are used. Each of the 125 hyperspectral bands was directly used as a feature in the classifier, contributing to the high dimensionality.

7.3 Spatial Representation of Hyperspectral Pixels for Quick Search

For the New Forest Dataset (Figure 2-1), there are both FW LiDAR and hyperspectral data. The data are collected from two independent instruments and each instrument has a different view point. Therefore the data collected are not aligned to each other (e.g. for each waveform there is no trivial corresponding spectrum). To integrate the data geo-spatially, alignment of the data is required. As mentioned at Section 2.4, in order to preserve the highest possible quality and reduce blurring that occurs during geo-rectification, data in original sense of geometry (level-1) are used.

In Anderson et al. [33], an inverse distance weighted algorithm is used to raster the hyperspectral images and the pixel size is constant, 15.8m, while in this study an approach similar to Warren el [24] is used and the resolution is changeable. The main concept of our geo-rectification algorithm is to be able to find the nearest hyperspectral pixel to a point in the fastest possible way. For that reason, a spatial representation of the hyperspectral pixels is created by importing the pixels into a 2D grid, similar to [24]. The dimensions of the grid in meters are constant, but the dimensions of the grid in number of squares (n_x, n_y) can be varied according to the chosen average number of pixels per square (A_{ps}):

$$n_x = \sqrt{\frac{n_s^2}{A_{ps}}} \quad n_y = \sqrt{\frac{n_l^2}{A_{ps}}} \quad (7.1)$$

Where n_s is the number of samples and n_l is the number of lines of the hyperspectral cube (figure 2-4).

Furthermore, while Warren et al. [24], here a structure similar to hash tables is used to spatially represent the pixels, while speeding up searching. As shown in Figure 7-1, for each cell there is a bucket containing all the points that lie inside it. The hash function takes as input the unique key of the cell and returns the memory location of the corresponding bucket. The key of a cell with coordinates (x_s, y_s) is equal to $(x_s + y_s * n_x)$ where n_x is the number of pixels in the x-axis.

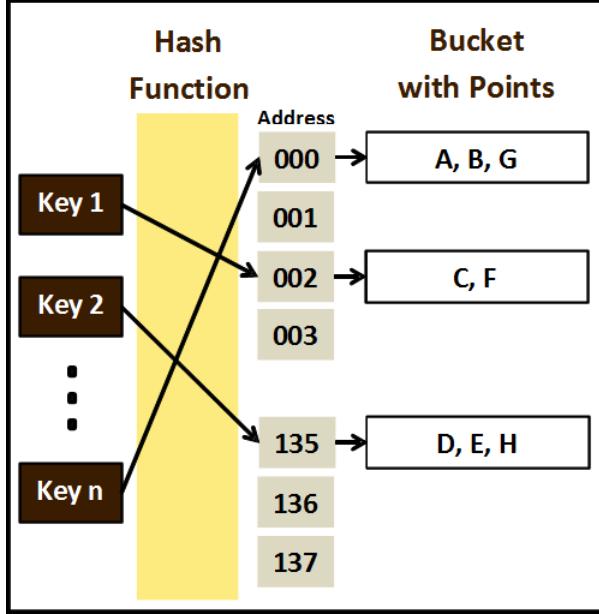


Figure 7-1: The hash table of the spatial representation of the hyperspectral pixels; each bucket contains all the pixels of a square and has a unique key derived from the location of its square. The hash function takes as input the key and returns the address in memory of the corresponding bucket.

The next step is for a point (x_v, y_v, z_v) to find the pixel whose geolocation is the closest to it. First we project the point into 2D by dropping the z coordinate and then we find the square (x_s, y_s) that the projected point $\mathbf{v}(x_v, y_v)$ lies inside, as follow:

$$x_s = \frac{x_v - X_{min}}{X_{max} - X_{min}} * n_x \quad (7.2)$$

$$y_s = \frac{y_v - Y_{min}}{Y_{max} - Y_{min}} * n_y \quad (7.3)$$

Where X_{max} , X_{min} , Y_{max} , Y_{min} are the geospatial boundaries of all the hyperspectral image and n_x, n_y are the number of pixels in the x and y axis accordingly.

From the square (x_s, y_s) we can get the set of pixels that lie inside the same square with the point of our interest. Let's assume that the geospatial locations of these pixels are the vectors $\mathbf{g}_1, \mathbf{g}_2, \mathbf{g}_3, \dots, \mathbf{g}_n$ respectively. Then, by looping through that set of pixels, we can find the pixel i that is most likely to be the closest pixel to the point

$\mathbf{v}(x_v, y_v)$:

$$i = \arg \min |\mathbf{v} - \mathbf{g}_i|^2. \quad (7.4)$$

Finally, there is the case of the closest point to be within an adjacent square and this occurs when the point is very close to the edges of the square. Even though this was not implemented in DASOS when the paper [36] was published, it can be done by checking the distance between the edges of the square and the point. If this distance is smaller than the distance between pixel i then we can loop through the points of the corresponding adjacent square and check whether there is another pixel closer to point \mathbf{v} than pixel i . Similarly, by checking the distance between the point \mathbf{v} and the corners of the square (x_s, y_s) , the case of the closest point to exist inside a diagonal adjacent square is also covered.

7.4 Projecting Hyperspectral Images into Polygon Meshes generated using FW LiDAR data

This section focuses on projecting the (level-1) hyperspectral Images onto the polygonal meshes reconstructed from the FW LiDAR data as explained in Section 5.4. As shown at Figure 7-2 the result is a coloured polygon mesh. That mesh is saved into two files:

- the .obj file that contains the 3D geometry and
- the .png file that contains the 2D texture image

The (level-1) hyperspectral images look deformed because the pixel size is not consistent. ([Figure 7-2 shows that inconsistency](#). DASOS resolves this problem by adjusting the texture coordinates of the polygonal mesh according to the geolocation of the pixels. The texture coordinates (u, v) of each vertex lies inside the range $[0, 1]$ and if they are multiplied by the height/width of the texture, then the position of the corresponding pixel of the texture is given. In order to calculate the texture coordinates of each vertex (x_v, y_v, z_v) , the spatial representation of the hyperspectral pixels (explained at Section 7.3) is used for quickly detecting the pixel (x_p, y_p) , whose geolocation is the closest to a vertex. By dividing the pixel position with the number of samples (n_s) and lines (n_l) in the hyperspectral image, the texture coordinates (u, v) of each vertex $v(x_v, y_v)$ are calculated:

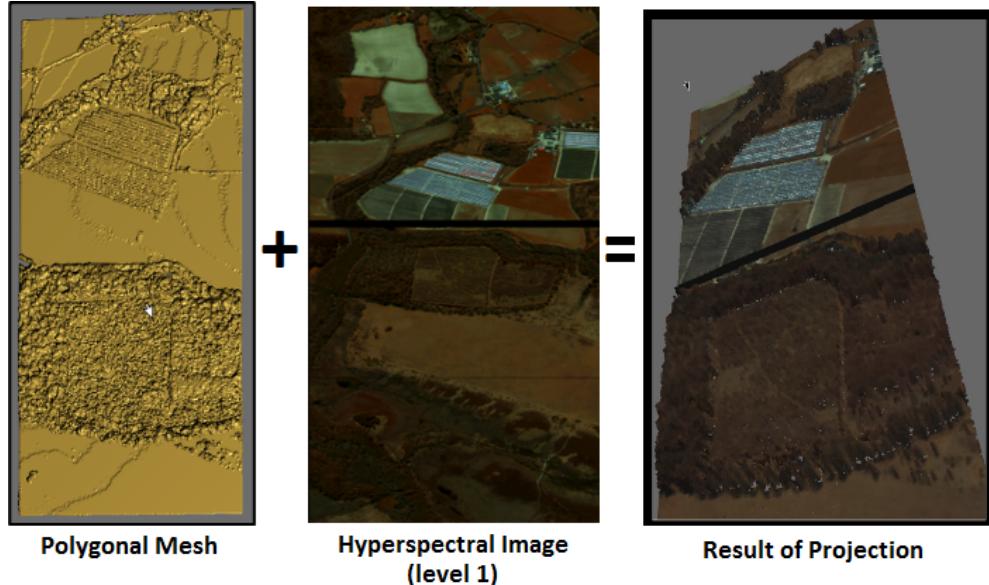


Figure 7-2: Projecting hyperspectral images into the polygonal meshes

$$u = \frac{x_p}{n_s} \quad v = \frac{y_p}{n_l} \quad (7.5)$$

Regarding the outputs the texture coordinates of the polygonal mesh are added into the .obj file, while the 2D texture is simply an image generated from three user-selected bands for the RGB colours. The width of the image is equal to the number of hyperspectral samples per line while its height is equal to the number of lines.

7.4.1 Results

The results of the projection are coloured polygonal meshes. Each coloured polygonal mesh is exported into two files:

1. the .obj file contains the 3D geometry with all the information about the vertices, edges, faces, normals and texture coordinates, and
2. the .png is the 2D texture (an RGB image) and it is aligned with the texture coordinates of the polygonal mesh.

Figure 7-3 shows how the visual output is affected by projecting hyperspectral data from different sensors and by changing the selected bands.

Bands	150th, 60th, 23rd	137th, 75th, 38th	Bands	137th, 75th, 38th	23rd, 120th, 201st
EAGLE INSTRUMENT (Visible and Near Infra-red)			HAWK INSTRUMENT (Short Wave Infra-red)		

Figure 7-3: Results of Alignment; the left table shows the results of projecting hyperspectral images from the Eagle Instrument onto the polygonal meshes generated using FW LiDAR data and the right hand side table shows results using the Hawk instrument.

7.5 Tree Coverage Maps

As mentioned before, there are diverse opinions on whether or not integration of remotely sensed data improves forest monitoring [32] [33]. For that reason, a simple pixelwise classifier was implemented to test how the integration of NERC-ARF data, using metrics generated from DASOS, performs for generating tree coverage maps.

The metrics generated from both hyperspectral and FW LiDAR data are 2D aligned images (Table ??). In other words, the pixel (x, y) has the same geospatial coordinates in every metric. Further the resolution of the metrics depends on the resolution of the 3D voxelised FW LiDAR data (Section ??). If the dimensions of the volume are (x, y, z) then the dimensions of the metrics are (x, y) . For the LiDAR metrics, each pixel is coloured according to the information derived from the corresponding column. Regarding the Hyperspectral metrics, (level-1) data are used to preserve the highest possible quality. The method in Section 7.3 was used for finding the pixel from the hyperspectral data with the closest geospatial location to the centre of each column of the 3D voxelised FW LiDAR.

The metrics used for generating tree coverage maps are grouped into two categories (FW LiDAR and hyperspectral metrics):

- FW LiDAR: Height (L0), Thickness (L1), Density (L2) and First Patch (L3)
- Hyperspectral: Mean (H0), NDVI (H1), Standard Deviation (H2) and Spectral Signature (H3)

For more descriptive information and examples of the metrics please look at Table ??,

where all the functionalities of DASOS are listed.

7.5.1 Testing and Results

In this case, the total accuracy was increased with the integration of FW LiDAR data and hyperspectral images. A Naïve Bayesian classifier using a multi-variance Gaussian model is applied for distinguishing tree covered areas from the ground. The main idea is for each pixel/column to find the class that is more likely to belong to Tree or Ground. Ground truth data were hand painted using 3D models generated with DASOS and they were divided into training and testing data. Further there are three test cases and for each test case the following metrics are used:

- 1st test case uses the L0-L3 metrics that are generated from the FW LiDAR data.
- 2nd test case uses the H0-H3 metrics that are generated from the hyperspectral imagery.
- 3rd test case uses L0-L3 & H0-H3 which is a combination of metrics generated from either FW LiDAR data or hyperspectral imagery.

For each test case, an error matrix is generated to indicate the accuracy of the classification results as verified on the ground truth data (Tables 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3) [37]. Each row shows the number of pixels assigned to each class relative to their actual class. For example, the first row of Table 7.1 shows that 130445 pixels were classified as trees, where 125375 were actual trees and the rest 5070 were ground. From the error matrices the classification accuracy of each test case was calculated and it is presented in Table 7.4.

Figure 7-4 depicts the coverage maps generated for each test case. Three areas are marked for comparison. In Area 1 there is low vegetation, in Area 2 there are short trees and in Area 3 warehouses. Area 1 has been wrongly classified when only the hyperspectral data were used; nevertheless when the height information of the LiDAR data was included into the classifier, area 1 was correctly classified. Similarly, Area 2 was wrongly classified when using the only FW LiDAR metrics because the height of the trees was less than the average training samples. But since features from the hyperspectral data are not height dependant, the classification results of test case 1 (with hyperspectral metrics) was better at Area 2. By the end Area 3 seems to confuse the first two classifiers in different ways, while the combination improved the results.

Finally, to demonstrate the usefulness of DASOS's polygonal meshes, the results of the tree coverage maps were projected into the polygon representations as shown in the following Figure 7-5.

		Ground truth data		
Results		Tree	Ground	Row Total
	Tree	125375	5070	130445
	Ground	45093	228495	273588
	Total	170468	233565	404033

Table 7.1: Error Matrix showing the pixel-wise classification results of the 1st test case that only uses Hyperspectral data.

		Ground truth data		
Results		Tree	Ground	Row Total
	Tree	154768	39504	194272
	Ground	15700	194061	209761
	Total	170468	233565	404033

Table 7.2: Error Matrix showing the pixel-wise classification results of the 2nd test case that only uses FW LiDAR data.

		Ground truth data		
Results		Tree	Ground	Row Total
	Tree	152597	10548	163145
	Ground	17871	223017	240888
	Total	170468	233565	404033

Table 7.3: Error Matrix showing the pixel-wise classification results of the 3rd test case that uses both hyperspectral and FW LiDAR data.

	FW LiDAR	Hyperspectral Imagery	Both
Tree	73.55%	90.79%	89.52%
Ground	97.83%	83.09%	95.48%
Mean Average Precision	87.58%	86.34%	92.97%

Table 7.4: Classification accuracy of each test case

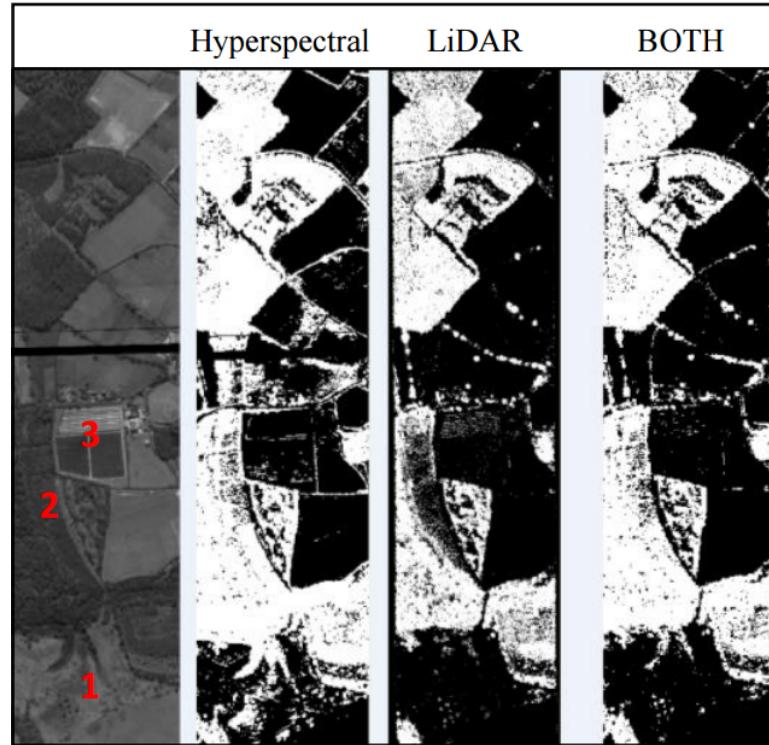


Figure 7-4: Visual Comparison of the Results of the Coverage Maps

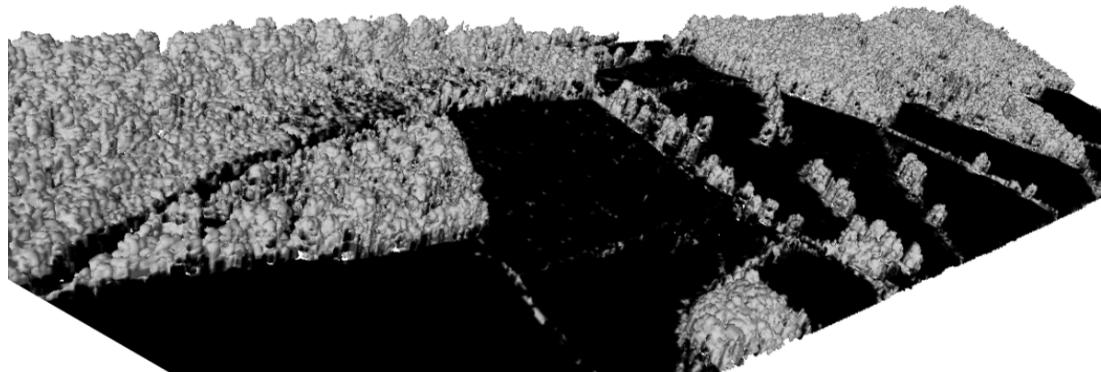


Figure 7-5: 3D Coverage Model, generated by Projecting the Results of the Tree Coverage Classification into a Polygonal Mesh.

7.6 Summary and Conclusions

In conclusion, this chapter describes an efficient way of aligning the FW LiDAR data and hyperspectral images using a spatial representation of hyperspectral pixels. The voxelisation of the FW LiDAR data also eases the generation of aligned metrics from both datasets. Furthermore, the resolution of the metrics is changeable and depends on the user-defined resolution of the voxelised FW LiDAR data. Additionally, since the closest pixel is always selected, regardless the distance from the point of interest, the problem of having data at different resolution is automatically resolved.

Regarding the results, coloured polygonal meshes were generated using the alignment and the result demonstrated that the integration of this specific data has potential in remote forest surveying. This was shown using a simple classifier for generating tree coverage maps. The results were positive; the classification accuracy was improved by 5.39% when both datasets were used.

Chapter 8

Classifications using 3D Prior Models

This talk presents the new features of DASOS, which is an open source software for managing full-waveform LiDAR data and those features are used for detecting dead standing Eucalypt.

The value of dead standing Eucalypt trees from a biodiversity management perspective is large. In Australia, many arboreal mammals and birds that are close to extinct inhabit hollows [5]. Nevertheless, studies predict shortage of hollows in the near future due to tree harvesting and the decades required for a tree to be mature enough to develop a hollow [3] [4]. Dead standing eucalypt trees are more likely to be aged and have hollows, therefore automated detection of them plays a significant role in protecting animals that rely on hollows.

DASOS ($= \delta\alpha\sigma\omega\varsigma$) means forest in Greek and it is an open source software aiming to ease the way of handling FW LiDAR data in forestry [36]. Traditional ways of interpreting FW LiDAR data, suggests extraction of a denser points cloud using Gaussian decomposition [38] [39]. Nevertheless DASOS was influenced by Persson et al, 2005, who used voxelisation to visualise the waveforms [40]. But, DASOS do not only uses voxelisation for visualisations but also for extracting metrics useful in classification. It further normalises the intensities so that equal pulse length exists inside each voxel, making intensities more meaningful. It is further seems that the literature is moving towards voxelisation with the good results obtained at recent publication on tree species classification [41].

The new features of DASOS: New features of DASOS which enables observation at tree level: i.e. distribution of intensities at specific area

The data, provided by RPS Australia East Pty Ltd, were collected in March 2015

from the Riegl (LMS-Q780 or LMS-Q680i?) sensor at an Australian native Forest with eucalyptus. The fieldplots has been provided by (Interprine Group Ltd or Forest Corporation?).

examined with Random Forest

The new features of DASOS are presented and used for generating 3D signatures characterising dead standing trees and a comparison between the discrete and FW LiDAR data is performed to demonstrate the increased survey accuracy obtained with the FW LiDAR.

This paper presents a new feature of DASOS, which is an open source software for managing full-waveform (FW) LiDAR data and that feature is used for detecting dead standing Eucalypt trees in native Australian forests.

The value of dead standing Eucalypt trees from a biodiversity management perspective is large. In Australia, many arboreal mammals and birds, which are close to extinct, inhabit hollows [5]. Nevertheless, studies predict shortage of hollows in the near future due to tree harvesting and the decades required for a tree to develop a hollow [3] [4]. Dead standing eucalypt trees are more likely to be aged and have hollows, therefore automated detection of them plays a significant role in protecting animals that rely on hollows.

The LiDAR data used for this project are provided by RPS Australia East Pty Ltd and they were collected in March 2015 using the Riegl (LMS-Q780 or LMS-Q680i?) sensor. The Riegl LMS-Q??? is a native full-waveform sensor and the LiDAR point clouds were generated from the waveform instrument data during post processing. In addition, the field plots used for the classifications are provided by (Interprine Group Ltd or Forest Corporation?) and contain around 1000 Eucalypt trees while 10% of them are dead.

The new feature of DASOS calculates forestry metrics within a radius relevant to canopy height and exports all metrics into a single vector for fast interpretation in advanced statistical tools. Traditional ways of interpreting FW LiDAR data, suggests extraction of a denser points cloud [38] [39], but as mentioned before with the Riegl system this is done at post processing. Nevertheless DASOS was influenced by Persson et al, 2005, who used voxelisation to visualise the waveforms [40], but DASOS also uses it for generating metrics. It further normalises the intensities so that equal pulse length exists inside each voxel, making intensities more meaningful. Further, recent publication on tree species classification showed that voxelisation could confer good results while interpreting FW LiDAR data [41].

Previous work on dead standing trees detection, suggests single tree segmentation before dead trees identification [42] [43] but in case of Eucalypt trees single tree de-

tection is a challenge on its own due to their irregular structure and multiple trunk splits.

In this project, the new feature of DASOS is used for generating 3D signatures characterising dead standing Eucalypt trees and a comparison between the LiDAR point cloud and FW LiDAR data is performed using Random Forest to demonstrate the increased survey accuracy obtained with voxelisation.

Chapter 9

Comparison with Discrete Data

Furthermore, DASOS allows the user to choose whether the waveform samples or the discrete returns are inserted into the 3D density volume. Each sample or each return has a hit point and an intensity value. So, in both case the space is divided into 3D voxels and the intensity of each return or sample is inserted into the voxel it lies inside.

In general the results of discrete returns contain less information compared to the results from the FW LiDAR, even though the FW LiDAR contain information from about half of the emitted pulses (Section 3). As shown on the 1st example of table 3 the polygon mesh generated from the FW LiDAR contains more details comparing to the one created from the discrete LiDAR. The forest on the top is more detailed, the warehouses in the middle have a clearer shape and the fence on the right lower corner is continuous while in the discrete data it is disconnected and merged with the aliasing.

FW LiDAR polygons, compared to the discrete LiDAR ones, contain more geometry below the outlined surface of the trees. On the one hand this is positive because they include much information about the tree branches but on the other hand the complexity of the objects generated is high. A potential use of the polygon representations is in movie productions: instead of creating a 3D virtual city or forest from scratch, the area of interest can be scanned and then polygonised using our system.

But for efficiency purposes in both animation and rendering, polygonal objects should be closed and their faces should be connected. Hence, in movie productions, polygons generated from the FW LiDAR will require more post-processing in comparison with object generated from the discrete LiDAR.

Example 2 in table 3 shows the differences in the geometry complexity of the discrete and FW polygons using the x-ray shader of Meshlab. The brighter the surface appears the more geometry exists below the top surface. The brightness difference between area 1 and area 2 appears less in the discrete polygon.

Nevertheless, the trees in area 2 are much taller than in area 1, therefore more geometry should have existed in area 2 and sequentially be brighter. But the two areas are only well-distinguished in the FW LiDAR. On average the FW polygon is brighter than the discrete polygon, which implies higher geometry complexity in the FW polygon.

The comparison example 3 is rendered using the Radiance Scaling shader of Meshlab (Vergne et al, 2010). The shader highlights the details of the mesh, making the comparison easier. Not only the FW polygons are more detailed but also holes appear on the discrete polygons. The resolution of the voxels of those examples is 1.7m³ is, the bigger the holes are, while the full-waveform can be polygonised at a resolution of 1m³ without any significant holes. Figure 4 shows an example of rendering the same flightline of examples 3 at the resolution of 1m³ LiDAR data.

The last two examples (4 and 5) compare the side views of small regions. On the one hand the top of the trees are better-shaped in the discrete data. This may occur either because the discrete data contain information from double pulses than the FW data (Section 3) or because the noise threshold of the waveforms is not accurate and the top of the trees appear noisier on the FW LiDAR data. On the other hand more details appear close to the ground on the FW LiDAR data.

*** left during copying :s (and the higher the resolution, using FW)

Chapter 10

Overall Results

Chapter 11

Conclusions

11.1 Contributions

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Chapter 12

Appendices

12.1 Birds and Mammals Catalogue

12.1.0.1 Introduction

12.1.0.2 Australian arboreal Mammals

12.1.0.3 Australian Birds

The Forestry Corporation, Australia, provided a list of bird species that rely on hollows. But species are not limited to that list and more species rely uses hollows for shelters.

The provided list of the birds is divided into three groups:

1. Categorised as threatened species according to the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act, 1999

Corella Eastern Rosella Superb Parrot Barking Owl Masked Owl

2. All the above species are included to the Action Plan for Australian Birds, 2000, as well as the following once:

Powerful Owl Sooty Owl

3. The rest:

Kookaburra Sulphur Crested Cockatoo Crimson Rosella Rainbow Lorikeet Musk Lorikeet Little Lorikeet Red-winged Parrot Cockatiel Australian Ringneck (Parrot) Red-rumped Parrot Powerful Owl Sooty Owl Barn Owl White-throated Treecreeper

12.1.0.4 Web-links of Photos

Mammals · Brush-tailed Possum - protected wildlife (Hollow: <http://www.cavershamwildlife.com.au/comm-brushtail-possum/>) (<http://www.rymich.com/girraween/photos/animals/mammals/possums/trichosurus-macdonaldi/>) .

Birds · Kookaburra (<http://tenrandomfacts.com/blue-winged-kookaburra/>) .

Sulphur Crested Cockatoo (<http://aussiegal7.deviantart.com/art/Sulphur-Crested-Cockatoo-08-111111>) .

- Corella (<http://www.theparrotplace.co.nz/all-about-parrots/long-billed-corella/>)
- Crimson Rosella (http://25.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_m3mo89c40r1r4t9h1o1_1280.jpg)
- Eastern Rosella (http://2.bp.blogspot.com/-pYxw51WjSOY/UB-LEFgd2KI/AAAAAAAAGw/9z60PUWE6TE/s1600/_GJS6601-as-Smart-Object-1.jpg)
- Galah (<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/537546905498955709/>)
- Rainbow Lorikeet (https://www.reddit.com/r/pics/comments/328fvc/a_rainbow lorikeet_found_in_coastal_regions/)
- Musk Lorikeet (http://www.rymich.com/girraween/photos/animals/birds/medium/glossopsitta concinna/glossopsitta_concinna_001.jpg)
- Little Lorikeet (<http://www.pbase.com/sjmurray/psittacidae>)
- Red-winged Parrot (<https://www.pinterest.com/pin/395894623469889727/>)
- Superb Parrot (<http://www.davidkphotography.com/?showimage=637>)
- Cockatiel (<http://up.parsipet.ir/uploads/Cockatiels-for-sale.jpg>)
- Australian Ringneck (Parrot) (<http://ontheroadmagazine.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Twenty-eight-parrot-2.jpg>)
- Red-rumped Parrot (<http://parrotfacts.net/wp-content/uploads/Red-Rumped-Parrot-on-a-jpg>)
- Powerful Owl (http://farm1.staticflickr.com/219/495796536_f78dac04c1.jpg)
- Sooty Owl (hollow: http://www.mariewinn.com/marieblog/uploaded_images/screech2-738532.jpg) (http://www.owlpages.com/owls/species/images/greater_sooty_owl_richard_jackson-1.jpg)
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- Masked Owl (http://www.survival.org.au/images/birds/masked_owl_2_600.jpg)
- Barn Owl (Hollow: http://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Barn_Owl_hollow_tree-wallpaper.jpg) (https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c6/Tyto_alba_-British_Wildlife_Centre,_Surrey,_England-8a_%281%29.jpg)
- White-throated Treecreeper (<http://www.birdlifemelbourne.org.au/bird-lists/47-Treecreepers/White-throated-Treecreeper/White-throated%20Treecreeper%2020JB.jpg>) (hollow: <https://geoffpark.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/female-white-throated-treecreeper-1.jpg>)
- Hollow Owl : http://www.mariewinn.com/marieblog/uploaded_images/screech2-738532.jpg