

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL (HOWARD  
COLLEGE)

MASTERS THESIS

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# Discrete Energy Minimisation Optimisation using Graph Cuts for Fluorescence Microscopy

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*A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Science in Engineering*

*in the*

Department of Electrical, Electronic and Computer Engineering  
School of Engineering

September 9, 2016

## Declaration of Authorship

I, Ryan NAIDOO, declare that this thesis titled, “Discrete Energy Minimisation Optimisation using Graph Cuts for Fluorescence Microscopy” and the work presented in it are my own. I confirm that:

- This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University.
- Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated.
- Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed.
- Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work.
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help.
- Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself.

Signed:

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Date:

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*"Thanks to my solid academic training, today I can write hundreds of words on virtually any topic without possessing a shred of information, which is how I got a good job in journalism."*

Dave Barry

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL (HOWARD COLLEGE)

# *Abstract*

Faculty of Engineering  
School of Engineering

Master of Science in Engineering

**Discrete Energy Minimisation Optimisation using Graph Cuts for Fluorescence  
Microscopy**

by Ryan NAIDOO

The Thesis Abstract is written here (and usually kept to just this page). The page is kept centered vertically so can expand into the blank space above the title too...

## *Acknowledgements*

The acknowledgments and the people to thank go here, don't forget to include your project advisor. . .

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# List of Algorithms

# List of Abbreviations

<b>ACWE</b>	<b>Active Contours Without Edges</b>
<b>AOD</b>	<b>Average Optical Density</b>
<b>BCC</b>	<b>Boundary Chain Code</b>
<b>CED</b>	<b>Coherence Enhancing Diffusion</b>
<b>CCD</b>	<b>Charge-Coupled Device</b>
<b>CLSM</b>	<b>Confocal Laser Scanning Microscopy</b>
<b>CRF</b>	<b>Conditional Random Field</b>
<b>DCC</b>	<b>Differential CChain Code</b>
<b>DNA</b>	<b>Deoxyribonucleic Acid</b>
<b>DT</b>	<b>Delaunay Triangulation</b>
<b>EGFP</b>	<b>Enhanced Green Fluorescent Protein</b>
<b>EM</b>	<b>Expectation Maximisation</b>
<b>FCS</b>	<b>Fluorescence Correlation Spectroscopy</b>
<b>FIFO</b>	<b>First-In First-Out</b>
<b>FISH</b>	<b>Fluorescence in-situ Hybridisation</b>
<b>FLIM</b>	<b>Fluorescence Lifetime Imaging Microscopy</b>
<b>FRAP</b>	<b>Fluorescence Recovery After Photobleaching</b>
<b>FRET</b>	<b>Fluorescence Resonance Energy Transfer</b>
<b>GFP</b>	<b>Green Fluorescent Protein</b>
<b>GLCM</b>	<b>Gray Level Co-occurrence Matrix</b>
<b>GMM</b>	<b>Gaussian Mixture Modelling</b>
<b>ICC</b>	<b>Immunocytochemistry</b>
<b>ICF</b>	<b>Immunocytofluorescence</b>
<b>IHC</b>	<b>Immunohistochemistry</b>
<b>IHF</b>	<b>Immunohistofluorescence</b>
<b>IOD</b>	<b>Integrated Optical Density</b>
<b>Laser</b>	<b>Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation</b>
<b>LED</b>	<b>Light Emitting Diode</b>
<b>MAP</b>	<b>Maximum A Posteriori</b>
<b>MIS</b>	<b>Medical Image Segmentation</b>
<b>MLP</b>	<b>Multi-Layered Perceptron</b>
<b>MRF</b>	<b>Markov Random Field</b>
<b>MST</b>	<b>Minimum Spanning Tree</b>
<b>NA</b>	<b>Numerical Aperture</b>
<b>ORI</b>	<b>Optimised Rotational Invariance</b>
<b>PSF</b>	<b>Point Spread Function</b>
<b>RNA</b>	<b>Ribonucleic Acid</b>
<b>TV</b>	<b>Total Variation</b>
<b>UV</b>	<b>Ultraviolet</b>

# Physical Constants

Speed of Light  $c_0 = 2.997\,924\,58 \times 10^8 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  (exact)

# List of Symbols

$a$	distance	m
$P$	power	W ( $\text{J s}^{-1}$ )
$\omega$	angular frequency	rad

*For/Dedicated to/To my...*

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Outline and Contributions

The introduction is here.

### 1.2 Thesis Overview

The remainder of the thesis outline.

**Chapter 2** is where we cover the mathematical foundation to Graph Cut image segmentation.

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**Chapter ??** concludes the thesis with suggestions for further work.

## Chapter 2

# Fluorescence Microscopy

[1] [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8] [9] [10] [11] [12] [13] [14] [15]

What is fluorescence microscopy? What's its purpose in the thesis? Photoluminescence -> fluorescence and phosphorescence. Discovery of fluorescence: Brief history and evolution. Brief discussion on the remainder of the chapter. Fluorescence microscopy has become an essential tool in diverse fields, such as petrology, semiconductors, etc, and has especially been established as a choice imaging technique in cellular and molecular biology for visualisation of cells and tissues [16–20]. In this thesis we confine our attention to its use in cellular biology.

Certain substances emit radiation when irradiated with a higher intensity light, such as ultraviolet (UV), blue or green, which is of a longer wavelength than that of the exciting light, this is known as *Stokes' Law*. This phenomenon is known as *photoluminescence* [21–24]. There are two types of photoluminescence. If emission persists at an appreciable level after the exciting light is turned off, then we call this *phosphorescence*. If emission persists only so long as the exciting light is on, then we call this *fluorescence* [21, 25].

The first observance and publishing of fluorescence is credited to Sir John Frederick William Herschel around 1852. In 1852, Sir John George Stokes published a 100 page treatise about this luminescent phenomenon and coined the term *fluorescence*, over Herschel's *dispersive reflection*, when he observed that the mineral *fluorite* emitted red light when irradiated by ultraviolet (UV) light [17, 26].

In the remainder of this chapter we present the underlying principles of fluorescence, how specimens are fluorescently marked, the optical principles of microscope design, image acquisition, image processing and common analysis in cellular biology. We only go so far in depth as to present a rudimentary understanding of fluorescence microscopy as is necessary for the comprehension of this thesis.

## 2.1 Physics of Fluorescence

Excitation and Emission, Fluorophores, Jablonski Diagram, Electronic States, Stoke's Shift

## 2.2 Specimen Labelling

Why do specimens have to be stained? What is staining? Many of the components of interest, such as cell nuclei, cytoplasm, genes, chromosomes, proteins, do not possess a high degree of, if not any, autofluorescence. In this scenario, these components can

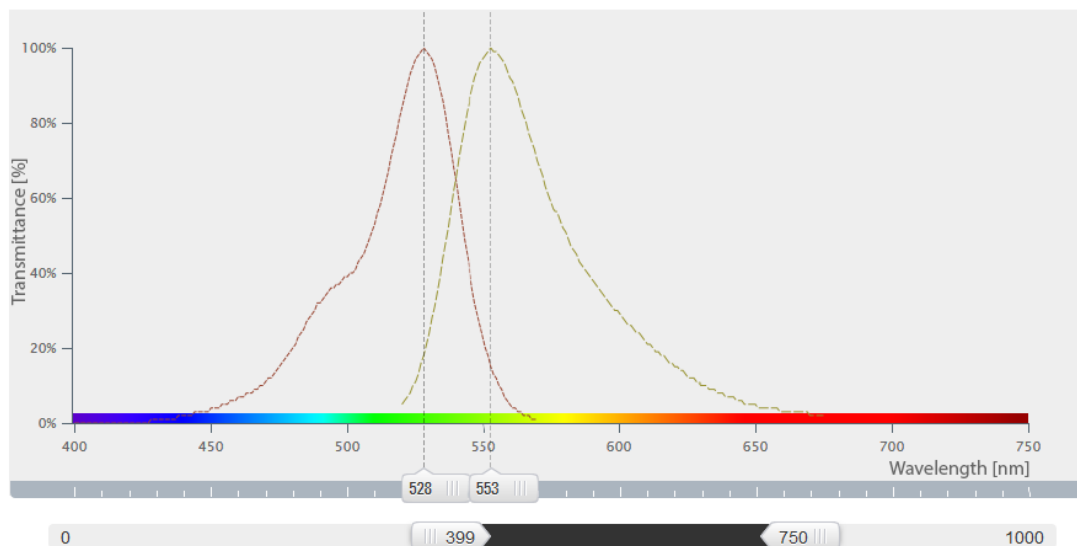


FIGURE 2.1: Normalised Excitation and Emission Spectra of the Alexa Fluor 532 fluorophore. The emission maximum is at  $553\text{nm}$  which is a more yellow-green than excitation maximum at  $528\text{nm}$ . This image was generated using FluoScout™ web application by Leica Microsystems for determining the optimal fluorescence filter cube set.

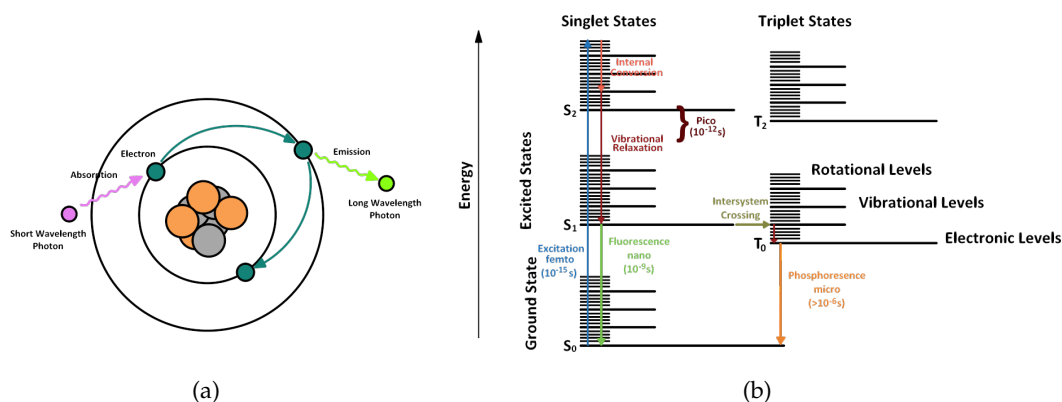


FIGURE 2.2: (a) Simplified fluorescence process. (b) The Jablonski diagram depicting the electronics states from photon absorption to photo emission.

be marked with a fluorescent dye [27], also known as a fluorophore or fluorochrome, a substance that can bind to a specific target whose excitation and emission spectra are well known. This is known as staining [17, 18, 26]. Once the specimen is stained it can be indirectly observed using a fluorescence microscope.

**What are the most common staining protocols?** The most prevalent staining techniques are fluorescence in-situ hybridisation (FISH) and immunostaining [17, 19, 28, 29].

**FISH staining** **What is FISH? What is the FISH staining techniques used for?** FISH is a molecular cytogenetic technique that uses fluorophores that bind to selected regions in nucleic acids [17, 19]. FISH is the most frequently used staining technique used



primarily for visualisation and localisation of nucleic acid sequences, chromosomes, cytoplasm or organelles which contain those acids [18]. This makes FISH highly attractive for finding specific features in DNA and RNA used in genetic diagnosis and research, medicine and species identification [19, 30]. Figure 2.3(a) is a capture of mouse chromosomes using the FISH staining technique.

**Immunostaining** What is Immunofluorescence and the two main types, what is the difference between the two, and which is more common? What is the Immunofluorescence staining techniques used for? Immunofluorescence is the detection method where an antibody is used to detect an antigen in a tissue or a cell using fluorescence. Fluorophores are usually conjugated onto antibodies, which are proteins that are designed bind to specific antigens, target proteins, on a cell [31]. The two types of immunofluorescent detection are immunocytofluorescence (ICF) and immunohystofluorescence (IHF). It must not be confused with immunocytochemistry (ICC) and immunohistochemistry (IHC). *Immuno* refers to the immunological technique, i.e. the binding of antibodies to antigens. *Cyto* refers to cells, i.e. cells without the extracellular membrane. *Histo* refers to tissue i.e. cells with the extracellular membrane. *Chemistry* refers to the chemical method of detection, e.g. a change in colour. *Fluorescence* detection by emission of light [32]. Figure 2.3(b) shows the detection of the p53 Binding Protein 1 in perfusion fixed frozen sections of rat kidney.

**Live-cell staining** FISH and IHC cannot stain live cells. Why? How can we stain live cells? The previously discussed staining techniques are not suitable to observe living cells. The fluorescent dyes used are phototoxic and cause cells to die. The circumvent this problem an elegant solution has been devised. Instead of staining, the cells are modified to produce a fluorescent substance in the target structures. Derivatives of the *green fluorescent protein* (GFP), isolated from the *Aequorea victoria* jellyfish [19, 27, 33], are used as it generates a strong photon emission and is non-toxic to living cells [17, 18, 26].

Important notes about fluorophores and the impact on image quality?

## 2.3 The Epifluorescence Microscope and Image Acquisition

What is a fluorescent microscope? Schematic layout of a fluorescence microscope? Function and purpose of each component in the fluorescent microscope? A fluorescence microscope is an optical microscope that is designed specifically to exploit the principle of fluorescence to allow for the observation of fluorescently labelled specimens [18, 19, 23, 26, 34]. There are many types of fluorescent microscopes available but the favoured type among many biologists and geneticists is the epifluorescent microscope [24, 35]. The schematic of the epifluorescent microscope is illustrated in Figure 2.4.

**Light Source** What sort of light needs to be generated? What sort of lamps are used? Advantages and disadvantages of certain lamps. The light source is typically a high-luminance light source e.g. Mercury or Xenon arc lamps, LEDs, lasers, etc [17, 18, 35–37]. The primary criterion for choosing a light source is that its characteristic peaks

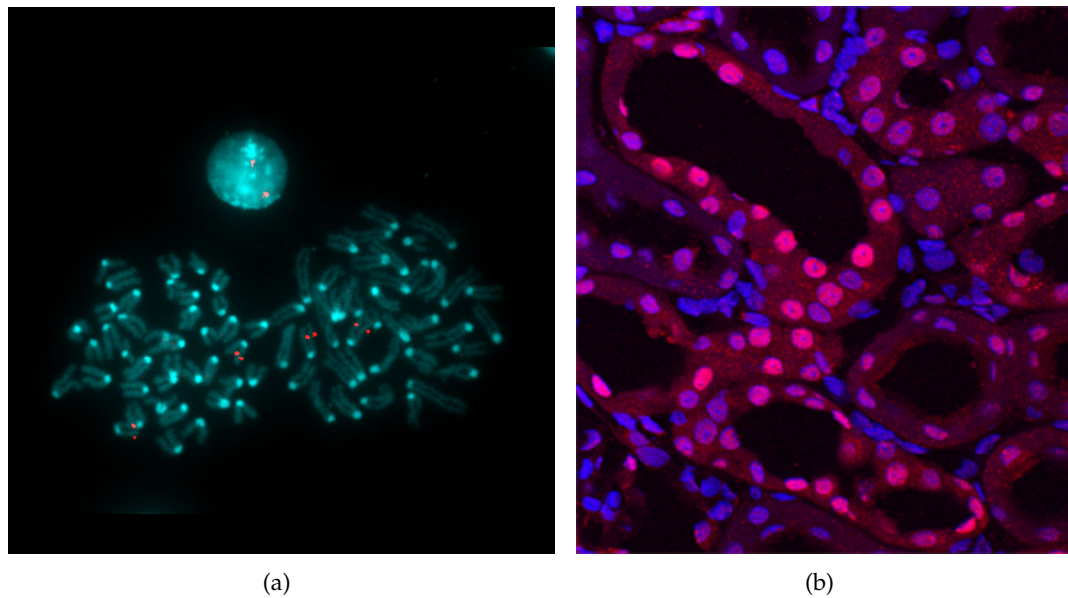


FIGURE 2.3: **(a)** FISH (Fluorescent 'in-situ' Hybridization) in mouse chromosomes using a BAC clone labeled with Spectrum Orange. The picture shows two metaphases and one interphase with two signals in each exemplifying a homozygous mouse for a transgenic clone. Image Source: "All About the Human Genome Project" Genetic and Genomic Image and Illustration Database. **(b)** p53 Binding Protein 1 (53BP1) was detected in perfusion fixed frozen sections of rat kidney using Goat Anti-Human 53BP1 Antigen Affinity-purified Polyclonal Antibody (Catalog # AF1877) at 15  $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$  overnight at 4°C. Tissue was stained using the NorthernLights<sup>TM</sup>557-conjugated Anti-Goat IgG Secondary Antibody (red; Catalog # NL001) and counterstained with DAPI (blue). Specific staining was localized to nuclei of epithelial cells in convoluted tubules. Image Source: R&D Systems' IHC image database.

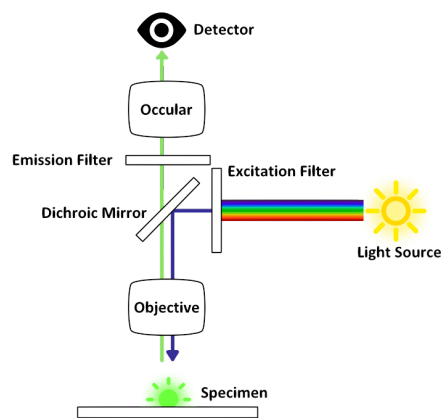


FIGURE 2.4: The schematic of the epifluorescence microscope.

must coincide with the excitation spectrum of the fluorophores being used [16, 19, 33]. Wavelength coverage spans from near infra-red to UV. Mercury and Xenon arc lamps are expensive, an inexpensive and lightweight alternative is bright LEDs [19, 21, 26, 36].

**Excitation Filter** What is an excitation filter? Why is it needed? The incoming light

from the light source is typically multispectral [25]. The excitation filter is a wavelength selection filter which is placed in the path of the incoming light and filters through only those wavelengths in the absorption spectrum of the fluorescent dye [16–19, 26, 31, 33, 37].

**Dichroic Mirror** *What is a dichroic mirror? Why is it needed?* Also known as a *dichroic beam splitter*. This is placed at a 45° angle and reflects the short-wavelength light filtered through the excitation filter at a 90° angle towards the specimen [16–18, 31] and allows the long-wavelength light from the fluorescing specimen to pass through to the detector [21, 33], thus serving as a separation filter between the absorption and emission light [19, 26].

**Objective** *What is the objective? Why is it needed?* The incoming light reflected of the dichroic mirror passes through the objective lens before reaching the specimen [16–18, 33]. Emission light from the fluorescing specimen is gathered in the objective lens and passed through to the dichroic mirror.

**Specimen** *Say something about the specimen, for wholeness sake.* The specimen is irradiated by the incoming light from the objective and emits long-wavelength light in all directions. The specimen is stained with a fluorophore whose absorption and emission curves are well known. This is important since the light source and the interference filters are chosen using the peaks of these curves.

**Emission Filter** *What is an emission filter? Why is it needed?* Also known as a *barrier filter* [16, 21, 33]. The light coming from the specimen contains multiple wavelengths and the dichroic mirror is used to filter out the shorter wavelength light. The emission filter is further used to filter out the wavelengths that correspond to the emission wavelengths of the fluorophore [17, 18, 25, 31, 37].

**Detector** *What is the detector why is it needed?* The detector is used to capture the emission light and can further digital form the image. The detector is usually a CCD (charge-coupled device) camera or a photomultiplier tube [16–18, 33, 38]. It is vital that an appropriate detector be chosen as this has direct influence of image quality [19].

*Other Types of Fluorescence Microscopes: Confocal, TIRF, Epifluorescence, Acquisition: CCD, Hardware setup effect on image quality, Numerical Aperture, Sub-diffraction*

## 2.4 Image Processing in FM

Limitations in Fluorescence Imaging  
Preprocessing: Point Spread Function deconvolution, etc  
Segmentation

## 2.5 Object Measurement and Analysis

*What is the purpose of object analysis in FM? What is measured?* The aim in fluorescence image analysis is to measure specific properties of interest which enable higher

level decision making. Typically, these properties are quantitative measures. In this section we review some of the important quantitative measurements in digital image analysis. It is important to note that for some of the properties of interest, the accuracy of the measurements depend heavily on the accuracy on the segmentation. The properties of interest are application dependent, one might require just the object morphology of structure and hence properties like perimeter, area, shape, intensity, colour, etc are of significance. Alternatively, if one requires the colocalisation of cells, then distance discriminants, such as Euclidean distance, Manhattan distance, chessboard distance, etc, are of significance [17, 39].

Object measures can be loosely classified into four categories: geometric measures, histogram-based measures, intensity based measures and temporal measures. One can also argue a fifth category statistical classifiers although this is generally used in higher level analysis.

**Size measures** Perimeter, area and volume are common measures to describe the size of objects. Area and volume are suitable measures to describe the general size of an object. The perimeter of an object is distinctly useful in discriminating its shape complexity. Complex and irregular shapes need a larger perimeter to enclose its area.

**Pose measures** This measure is defines an objects location and orientation. The centroid is used as an objects' locale and its orientation is the measure of the angle subtended by its major axis.

**Shape measures** Shape features are used to distinguish objects from one another. These measures are generally translationally, rotationally and scale invariant and can be used independent of, or in conjunction with, the size measures. Commonly assessed shape parameters are thinness ratio to describe the regularity of an object, rectangularity, circularity, Euler number, moments, central moments, object dispersion, rotationally invariant moments, Zernike moments and elongation.

**Shape descriptors** Shapes descriptors provide a more wholesome way of describing an object's shape than compared to the single parameter shape measures. Differential chain codes, and its two most common descriptors boundary chain code (BCC) and differential chain code (DCC), are used to represent the distance around an object. Fourier descriptors is another object distance measure that exploits the periodicity of BCC. There are also graph representations of which the two most common are minimum spanning tree (MST) [40, 41] and Delaunay triangulation (DT) [42, 43].

**Distance measures** There are many ways to compute the separation between objects. The most commonly assessed distance measures are Euclidean distance, Manhattan distance (also known as the City-block distance or absolute value metric), which is a more computationally efficient approximation of Euclidean distance, and the Chessboard distance (also known as the maximum value metric) [44, 45].

**Intensity measures** Images are segmented generally into region with low intra-region intensity distribution and high inter-region intensity distribution [46, 47]. Common intensity measures are integrated optical density (IOD) [48, 49], is simply the sum of all the gray levels that compose the object, its a reflection of the object's "mass" or "weight", average optical density (AOD), is the IOD divided by the objects area, and contrast.

**Histogram measures** These measures provide a measure of an object's intensity distribution. Common histogram-based measures are mean, standard deviation, skew, entropy and energy [50, 51].

**Texture measures** In image analysis texture refers to the spatial arrangement of gray level values [52] and hence a texture feature quantifies some characteristic of the intensity variation within an object. Common texture measures are statistical texture measures, gray-level co-occurrence matrix (GLCM) [53, 54] and power spectrum features [55, 56].

**Temporal measures** Considering the time domain, many interesting properties can be observed. Commonly computed properties of interest are motility [57–59], like velocity and acceleration, rate of growth, rate of change of colour, etc.

These measures are used in higher decision making processes such as the evaluation of a hypothesis to detect the presence of a certain disease. They are also used to aid in the understanding of biological mechanisms, events and interactions [17].

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