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# ABSTRACT

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Keywords:

Concrete crack detection Intelligent mobile communications Support vector machine Unmanned aerial vehicle Cracks in constructions may result in negative consequences in terms of expenditure and safety. This in turn highlights the importance of finding ways to detect these cracks easily and effectively. Hence, technological advances play significant role in enabling effective and innovative ideas, such as the use of autonomous drones and artificial intelligence solutions. In this research, we utilise a type of drone called an unmanned aerial vehicle, equipped with a high-speed camera that can capture images of cracks in buildings, and pass the information to the system. We utilised a dataset that has images collected from different Middle East Technical University (METU) campus buildings with various concrete surfaces (with and without cracks). The crack detection approach uses statistical measures and a support vector machine that prevents overfitting, attains a good rate of accuracy, tackles problems in real-time, and can train a model when a small dataset exists. The combination of an unmanned aerial vehicle, artificial intelligence, and digital image processing gives excellent results. Performance metrics reported for seven rounds of experiments showed rates of accuracy in detection ranging from 83.3–100% (with 100% achieved in two rounds). This demonstrates the effectiveness of our proposed detection system in detecting cracks in constructions.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Fractures or breaks in concrete can lead to separation, which is called a crack. Cracks can occur in many different surfaces, such as buildings, roads, bridges, railway tracks, pavements, automobiles, tunnels, and aircraft. In addition, cracks can be active or dormant. The depth, direction, and width of a dormant crack do not propagate or extend over time, unlike an active crack. There are various types of active crack: longitudinal, miscellaneous, transverse, reflection, and crocodile. There are also various types of dormant crack: micro, sealed, thin, line-like, tiny, mixed, medium, large, minor, and complex crack [1]. Information on cracks, such as length, width, and number of cracks is collected to ensure safety and for structural maintenance. Visible damage of a concrete surface can be measured to evaluate its structural health. Although a visual inspection can detect apparent damage in concrete and is a basic method for detecting cracks, it can be dangerous, even for

specialists. A visual inspection of a large structure is difficult, as there can be areas that are hard to reach, such as the underside of a bridge [2]. Moreover, the method is not accurate, and it is costly and time-consuming. The cost of repairing and maintaining concrete structures is very high. In addition, there are costs associated with traffic disruption. For these reasons, sensors can be embedded in structures to detect the initiation of corrosion or changes in structural stiffness. Such sensors include optical fibres [3] and vibrating wires [4]. These monitoring systems can detect damage in concrete. Alternatives to visual inspection for crack assessment are digital image processing. The techniques overcome some of the disadvantages and limitations of a visual inspection. Cracks can be detected and recognised automatically by utilising image processing techniques, such as morphological operations, clustering, least squares, gradient descent, histogram equalisation, maximum entropy, particle filter, wavelet transform, and Sobel edge detection. Many companies use unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for visual inspections of concrete structures. UAVs are reliable and easy to use. They can collect a huge amount of data, which can be cumbersome and time-consuming to process. Thus, the time saved in collecting data from a structure is spent on data analysis.

Image processing based on artificial intelligence (AI) can help with detecting cracks. Supervised learning methods are used for image classification, including support vector machines (SVMs), K-nearest neighbours, extreme learning machines, random forests, and AdaBoost. In this paper, a UAV and digital image processing based on an SVM are utilised for a crack detection system. The main contributions of this paper are summarised as shwon in: An UAV-mounted high-speed camera is used to capture images and pass them to processor. A detection system is proposed using a UAV and digital image processing. A SVM is used in the training phase of the detection system.

The proposed system will be applied after the integration of the UAV and digital image processing. SVM will be used to distinguish between samples with and without cracks. The remainder of this paper is organised is being as. Section 2 presents related works. The proposed detection system is described in section 3. Section 4 explains the methodology of this system. The performance measurements are in section 5. The results of simulation experiments are in section 6. Finally, section 7 presents conclusions and future directions.

#### 2. RELATED WORKS

A variety of digital image processing techniques have been proposed for crack detection. In 2015, the authors used a UAV and digital image processing to detect cracks in structures. A simulation verified the accuracy of the proposed method [2]. A prototype of a UAV that utilised image processing techniques was proposed to identify cracks in concrete. To evaluate the proposed system, tests were conducted with walls of different sizes and shapes. The calculated crack widths were similar to the actual widths measured using a crack gauge [5]. Using thresholds, cracks that looked different were assessed. Hence, the results showed that the proposed method is efficient and works, even with degraded images [6]. In addition, a crack identification method used a UAV and hybrid image processing. The authors used an ultrasonic displacement sensor, a camera, and a Wi-Fi module to collect images of cracks. The method successfully measured the width of cracks had collected some information on their length. AI can overcome the limitations in crack detection methods based on image processing [7]. A genetic algorithm was used in a system based on image processing, the percolation model, and genetic programming. The proposed algorithm can effectively and accurately detect cracks in concrete [8]. Furthermore, a method based on a convolutional neural networks (CNNs) was proposed to detect cracks in concrete. Although the proposed algorithm can identify an area with cracks, it did not extract information about the cracks [9]. Zhang et al. [10] used a CNNs to detect cracks in a road. Simulation results showed it had an accuracy of more than 85%, but there were errors in identifying the edges of cracks. Furthermore, random forests were proposed for a novel framework to detect cracks in roads. Simulation results show that the proposed algorithm has a good detection rate [11]. The existing similar works have been summarised in Table 1.

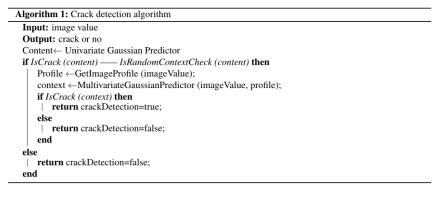
Our proposed crack detection system differs from the other works shown in Table 1 as it combines a UAV, digital image processing, and SVM. As the name suggested, SVM capable of advancing the prediction accuracy as well as avoiding data overfitting. In addition, SVM has been applied to tackle various real-time problems such as in hypertext categorisation [12], image classification [13], hand-written recognition [14] face detection [15], object detection [16], fall detection [17], plant species classification [18], credit card fraud classification [19], bioinformatics [20], [21], intrusion detection in smart homes [22], and financial time series forecasting [23]. Hence, these various applications has denoted the effectiveness of SVM, particularly when

having small training sample [24].

Table 1. Some existing similar works				
The title	The utilised technologies	Characteristics	Assessment meth- ods	Results
Development of crack detection system with unmanned aerial vehi- cles and digital image processing [2]	UAV, Image processing (MorphLink-C algorithm)	Measuring crack width	Comparing actual width of a crack with the proposed method	Only five locations were detected, and the error rate was (3-50%)
Unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV)-powered concrete crack detection based on digital image processing [5]	UAV (fitted with Rasp- berry Pi, ultrasonic displacement sensor, and camera), Image process- ing (image processing strategies involved: me- dian filtering, Sauvola's binarization method, and image revision algorithm)	Measuring crack width	Comparing actual width of a crack with the proposed method	Only two locations were detected, and the error rate was (0-2.7%)
Concrete crack identifica- tion using a UAV incorpo- rating hybrid image pro- cessing [7]	UAV (fitted with Wi-Fi module, ultrasonic dis- placement sensor, and camera), Hybrid image processing	Measuring crack width and height	Cost function (for optimal width, and height)	The error rate was (0.9-7.3%)
The algorithm of con- crete surface crack detec- tion based on the genetic programming and perco- lation model [8]	Genetic algorithm and percolation model	Concrete crack de- tection	Confusion matrix and run time	<ul> <li>Precision: 92- 99.9%</li> <li>Recall: 80-99.2%</li> <li>F1 score: 86- 99.3%</li> <li>Noise rate: 0.04- 8%</li> <li>False positive rate: 0.002-0.4%</li> </ul>
Deep learning-based crack damage detec- tion using convolutional neural networks [9]	CNNs and sliding window technique	Concrete crack de- tection	Confusion matrix	<ul> <li>Precision: 50- 100%</li> <li>Recall: 71-100%</li> <li>F1 score: 66-98%</li> <li>Accuracy: 93- 100%</li> </ul>
Road crack detection using deep convolutional neural network [10]	CNNs (discriminative fea- tures)	Roads crack detec- tion	Confusion matrix	<ul> <li>Precision- 87%</li> <li>Recall: 93%</li> <li>F1 score: 90%</li> </ul>
Automatic road crack detection using random structured forests [11]	Random forests	Roads cracks detec- tion	Confusion matrix	The errors are in identify- ing the cracks edges. – Precision: 82% – Recall: 89% – F1 score: 86%

# 3. METHODOLOGY OF THE PROPOSED DETECTION SYSTEM

The proposed system utilises UAV and digital image processing to detect cracks in concrete based on a trained SVM. The steps of the proposed crack detection algorithm are presented as shown in. The life-cycle of the proposed system is illustrated in the algorithm 1. The algorithm started from collecting images to making decision whether the concrete surface has/has no crack. On the other hand, to build the proposed system, these four main phases should be fulfilled: Collecting an image dataset. Converting the images to numeric values. Training phase. Testing phase. The architecture of the proposed detection system is presented in Figure 1. Details of each phase are given in the following sections.



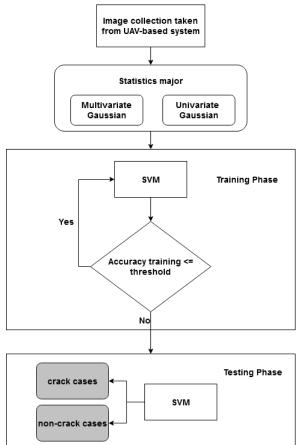


Figure 1. Proposed detection system

## 3.1. Image dataset

The dataset consists of photographs of a variety of different concrete samples from mild cracks to deep and strong cracks. The photographs were captured with an eBee Plus UAV which is provided with a GPS correction system. The latter system applies post-processed kinematic and real-time kinematic technology. The eBee Plus UAV is shown in Figure 2 [25]. The UAV is equipped with a camera designed specifically for drone applications. The camera is fully configurable, ultra-light, dustproof, shockproof, and has 20 megapixel RGB sensor. In addition, the flight plans developed to achieve images with the resolution of 3 cm. For achieving this resolution, the UAV requires to fly 123 m above the target. The dataset has images of different concrete surfaces with and without cracks (Table 2). They were collected from different METU Campus Buildings. There are 20,000 images of size  $227 \times 227$  pixels with RGB channels. The dataset is divided into two folders, one for images classified as positive (with a crack) and the other for negative images (without cracks) [26]. The

dataset used in this study was divided into three groups: the training set, the validation set, and the test set. Table 1 shows examples of images of concrete surfaces with and without cracks.



Figure 2. An eBee plus unmanned aerial vehicle

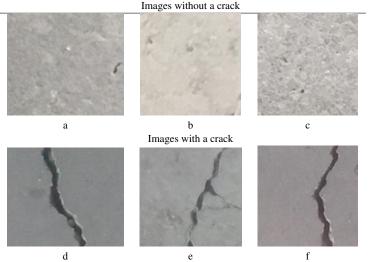


Table 2. Examples of images of concrete surfaces with and without cracks

### **3.2.** Converting image to numeric values

A statistics major required to transfer the images to numeric values since SVM can work only with numeric values. Most of the advanced sensors (cameras), after the acquisition step, convert the two dimensional signal (image) into digital form using embedded ADC that is suitable to processing.

### **3.3.** Training phase

In this research, an SVM is trained as the proposed detection system. An SVM is a classification algorithm based on machine learning concepts. SVM is utilised for processing between the input image and the output images (a classification of the input image). It maximises the accuracy of predictions while avoiding overfitting to the data. SVM is robust, accurate, and effective, even with a small training sample [24]. Therefore, this research aims to employ SVM to improve detection rate and reduce false alarm rate of the proposed detection system. It is worth noting that the threshold was identified to be 99% in the training phase.

#### 3.4. Testing phase

In the testing phase, the confusion matrix, accuracy rate, and error rate were calculated to measure the efficiency of the system. In addition, surveying related works showed that some works did the testing for five positions or less such as in [2] (five locations) and [7]. Hence, we determined to do seven rounds of testing.

#### 4. PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

In this paper, the efficiency of the proposed system was assessed using performance metrics, such as confusion matrix, the accuracy, and error rate [27]. To calculate the confusion matrix, four alarms were

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calculated:

$$TP_{Rate(sensitivity)} = \frac{TP}{TP + FN} \tag{1}$$

$$TN_{Rate(specificity)} = \frac{TN}{TN + FP}$$
(2)

$$FN_{Rate(1-sensitivity)} = \frac{FN}{FN + TP}$$
(3)

$$FP_{Rate(1-specificity)} = \frac{FP}{FP + TN}$$
(4)

Where:

- True positives (TP): the number of images of concrete samples correctly classified as having a crack.
- False positives (FP): the number of images of concrete samples incorrectly classified as having a crack.
- True negatives (TN): the number of images of concrete samples correctly classified as not having a crack.
- False negatives (FN): the number of images of concrete samples incorrectly classified as not having a crack.

In addition, the accuracy rate can be calculated as the ratio of correctly classified patterns to the total number of patterns.

$$AccuracyRate(AR) = \frac{TP + TN}{TP + FP + TN + FN}$$
(5)

$$ErrorRate(ER) = 1 - Accuracy$$
(6)

# 5. EXPERIMENTAL RESULTS

The confusion matrices, accuracy rates, and error rates are given in Tables 3–9 for rounds 1 to 7, respectively. As can be shown in the seven tables, the accuracy witness variations amongst the tables (83.3%-100%) due to the size of the image dataset, and the situation and stability of the round. Hence, the number of iterations can be increased by a larger dataset size to achieve more accurate results. The best accuracy rate for the seven iterations was achieved in the fifth and sixth rounds where the accuracy rate reached 100%. The reason behind this achievement may belong to the reality that these rounds have reached saturation states.

Confu	sion matrix	Accuracy rate	Error rate
TP	80%	99%	1%
TN	100%		
FN	20%		
FP	0%		

Table 4. Performance metrics of the second round

Confu	sion matrix	Accuracy rate	Error rate
TP	60%	88.5%	12.5%
TN	80%		
FN	40%		
FP	20%		

## Table 5. Performance metrics of the third round

Confu	sion matrix	Accuracy rate	Error rate
TP	60%	88.5%	12.5%
TN	80%		
FN	40%		
FP	20%		

Table 6. Performance metrics of the forth round

Confu	sion matrix	Accuracy rate	Error rate
TP	80%	100%	0%
TN	80%		
FN	20%		
FP	20%		

Table 7	Performance	metrics of	f the	fifth round	1
	1 CHOIMance	metrics of	unc	inful round	JL.

Confu	sion matrix	Accuracy rate	Error rate
TP	60%	100%	0%
TN	60%		
FN	40%		
FP	40%		

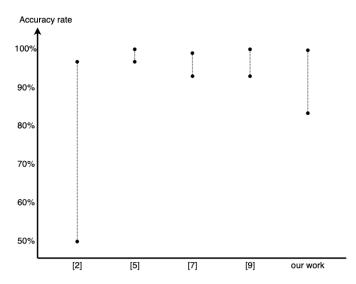
Table 8. Performance metrics of the sixth round

Confu	sion matrix	Accuracy rate	Error rate
TP	83.3%	91.44%	8.33%
TN	100%		
FN	16.7%		
FP	0%		

Table 9. Pe	erformance	metrics of	f the	seventl	1 round
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Confusion matrix		Accuracy rate	Error rate
TP	66.6%	83.3%	16.67%
TN	100%		
FN	33.4%		
FP	0%		

Comparing these outcomes with the related works' outcomes, which was summarized in Table 1, indicating that an acceptable accuracy rate has been achieved. In addition, Figure 3 compares four experiments [2], [5], [7], [9] with our work in terms of accuracy rates. The comparison shows that we achieved the same high rate of accuracy that was achieved in some previous work (numbers [5], [9]). This in turns indicates the usefulness of our proposed detection method, particularly when the dataset is small, or when avoiding overfitting is intended (thanks to SVM).





### 6. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE DIRECTION

Detecting cracks in concrete is a hot topic, which is being studied by many researchers. Various AI and image processing techniques have been utilised to recognise and detect cracks autonomously. Moreover, some researchers have used UAVs to capture images of cracks in concrete structures, and the outcomes have been promising. Therefore, this paper presented a system for detecting cracks in concrete based on integrating a UAV and digital image processing using an SVM. The performance metrics included confusion matrices, accuracy rates, and error rates to verify the performance and efficiency of the proposed detection system. The simulation results showed that the best accuracy rate for seven iterations was 100% with an error rate of 0%.

In future work, the detection system would be expanded to detect cracks on bridge, pavement, automobile, road, railway track, aircraft, and tunnel. Moreover, the detection system could utilise other AI tools, such as a fuzzy Petri net or linear discrimination analysis. In addition, a better communications system could be integrated into the overall system.

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