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Article

Methodology for determining coordinate points using automated software and aircraft

DZhassulan Kuzbakhov, **D**Shyngys Zharassov^{*}

Department of Civil Engineering, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan *Correspondence: zhshzh95@gmail.com

Abstract. Engineers are currently facing questions about the use of geographic information systems or software to implement projects in a short time. The problem with using geographic information systems in construction is the relevance of the available data. An example is open sources with satellite images. This problem appeared even before satellite-positioning systems emerged. In this connection, the purpose of this article is to find the deviation of source points when performing photogrammetry with marker detection in Agisoft PhotoScan software. This method of determining coordinates using a single point and its correlation on the ground is applicable in the case of rapid calculations, where the volumes of earth masses are large enough and do not require increased accuracy at the stage of approximate calculations. As a result of the comparison of traditional and automated methods of definition of coordinates on the ground has been found an essential distinction, both in total values and in time spent for the definition of points of coordinates. The considerable difference revealed by the results of the comparison of coordinates is presented in the table as a color gradation. The average deviation between known coordinates and coordinates obtained in Agisoft PhotoScan by axes was: X=0.87%, Y=0.45%, Z=0.12%.

Keywords: Agisoft PhotoScan, surveying, automation, photogrammetry, geodesy, topographic mapping.

1. Introduction

The use of digital tools in automating construction processes is rapidly advancing, despite the challenges posed by the complexity and diversity of these processes. There is a growing interest in leveraging geographic information systems and software to streamline project implementation, which raises questions for engineers about how best to apply these tools within tight timeframes. However, integrating such tools can lead to errors and deviations caused by human mistakes or insufficient information on their practical application [1].

When it comes to using geographic information systems in construction, the main challenge is the quality and relevance of the available data. For instance, open sources like satellite images may be of limited use due to their quality, coverage, and the current state of urbanization in the area being assessed. This can make it difficult to accurately evaluate the situation for construction projects [2].

Although surveying a plane with a GPS receiver is relatively straightforward, those who use optical and satellite instruments should be aware of the potential challenges associated with these tools. Attempting to integrate traditional and satellite surveying instruments can lead to several points for consideration [3], including:

- The coordinate system used when taking pictures;
- Relativity surface;
- Scale factor of the projection;
- Correction for projection height, etc.

This issue has been a challenge even prior to the advent of satellite positioning systems. For example, when using high-precision total stations of the Leica series, it was found that the deviation was about 0.2 meters, factoring in the coordinate system adopted in the region being surveyed. This deviation occurs despite considering the installation of the device and the position of the reflector. It's important to note that Leica GPS receivers typically determine the coordinates of points in the WGS-84 geodetic coordinate system. However, in practice, the UTM32 coordinate system is used when converting to plane coordinates, which establishes the relationship between the ellipsoid surface part and the plane coordinates in the projection. Different results can be obtained by using a Leica TPS total station (Figure 1), which determines the coordinates over a peg. Measurements taken with a reflector can also have significant errors if the ellipsoid surface is not taken into account [4].

Figure 1 – Tachymeter accuracy Leica TSO06 [4]

Moreover, there are software programs available that can automate surface breakdowns by correlating points based on surface topography. However, deviations in these measurements can lead to unpredictable consequences, as minimum and maximum values can significantly affect the accuracy of the results [5]. The accuracy of the measuring instrument used, as well as other factors such as image quality, weather conditions, and the skill of the operator flying drones or other aircraft, are critical considerations in automating the surveying process [6].

Therefore, the objective of this article is to determine the deviation of baseline points when conducting photogrammetry using marker detection in the Agisoft PhotoScan software. Agisoft PhotoScan is primarily an autonomous software tool that can conduct photogrammetric processing of digital images and generate three-dimensional spatial data for use in Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Therefore, the authors of this article showcase an example of executing topographic surveys using this software. The example pertains to a ground excavation site, which was utilized for embankment or excavation during the construction of residential complexes [7].

2. Methods

The method used in this study to determine coordinates involves using a single point and its correlation on the ground, which is suitable for quick calculations when the volume of earth masses is sufficiently large and high accuracy is not required at the stage of approximate calculations.

For this study, Agisoft PhotoScan software was utilized. In addition to the advantages previously mentioned, an additional benefit of using stand-alone software is its flexibility and adaptability to various systems for calculations.

The drone used in this study for photogrammetry is the Quadcopter DJI Mini 3 Pro. The selection of this model was based on the manufacturer's specifications, with special emphasis on the matrix size and resolution of the captured frames. Additionally, the number of frames captured and the time of day of shooting are critical factors to consider. A higher number of frames captured enables the accurate construction of a 3D model, while the absence of shadow zones facilitates the calculation of surface relief [8].

The survey process is illustrated in Figure 2 below. The drone's trajectory for mapping the terrain can follow a continuous circular motion around the center or the edge of the surveyed area, or move along a path from the beginning to the end of the polygon within the defined boundaries of the area. The captured images are aligned with a certain degree of accuracy, where the orientation of each image is tied to the angle of view of the drone's camera, resulting in the creation of a point cloud.

Figure 2 – The process of building a point cloud for polygon photogrammetry in Agisoft PhotoScan

The process of creating a model for marker detection involves processing the point cloud, which is a time-consuming task. However, the output is a model of high quality that can be used to detect markers. These markers, which are placed on the boundary of the area being defined, contain the initial coordinates of reference points. In the field, these reference points are determined at the survey site by marking. The markers can take the form of a "+" mark, such as a plus sign, which is easily visible in an aerial survey, or an object with a clear center, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3 – Identification of markers on the territory of the polygon in the Agisoft PhotoScan environment

3. Results and Discussion

After comparing traditional and automated methods of determining ground coordinates, it was discovered that there were notable discrepancies in both the final values and the time taken to determine coordinate points. Previous research exploring comparative deviation analysis, focused on creating point clouds via laser and digital photogrammetry, is discussed in [9]. The accuracy of point positioning by computer programs is analyzed in [10], where the coordinates of points obtained through tachymetric survey are used as the reference system by the authors.

Figure 4 below shows the model subjected to linear transformations.

Figure 4 – Building a vertical leveling profile in Agisoft PhotoScan according to markers

The similarity transformation model is derived from 7 parameters: 3 translation parameters, 3 rotation parameters, 1 stretching and compression parameter). This approach solves only linear distortions while nonlinear distortions which are also present in the model can be the reason for further errors in the model georeferencing and calculations. To reduce influence of nonlinear distortions markers or reference points with known coordinates were used.

Table 1 below shows the deviation between traditional point coordinates (X1, Y1, Z1) and automated (X2, Y2, Z2) methods in Agisoft PhotoScan.

Taviv T Deviation of coordinates												
N_2	X1	X2	Xdiff	Incl%	Y1	Y2	Ydiff	Incl%	Z1	Z2	Zdiff	$Incl\%$
	47.8771	48.8834	1.0063	2.10%	67.5170	68.5548	1.0378	1.54%	356,9000	357.9265	1.0265	0.29%
2	47.8771	48.9085	1.0314	2.15%	67.5170	67.5309	0.0139	0.02%	357.2000	357.2502	0.0502	0.01%
3	47.8771	48.8904	1.0133	2.12%	67.5170	67.5378	0.0209	0.03%	356,5000	356.5235	0.0235	0.01%
4	47.8771	47.9010	0.0240	0.05%	67.5170	67.5509	0.0339	0.05%	356.7000	356.7276	0.0276	0.01%
5	47.8771	47.9171	0.0400	0.08%	67.5170	67.5235	0.0065	0.01%	356,2000	357,2477	1.0477	0.29%
6	47.8771	47,8840	0.0069	0.01%	67.5170	67,5432	0.0262	0.04%	357,0000	357.0320	0.0320	0.01%
	47.8771	47.9259	0.0488	0.10%	67.5170	68.5227	1.0057	1.49%	356,3000	356.3364	0.0364	0.01%
8	47.8771	47.9240	0.0470	0.10%	67.5170	67.5344	0.0174	0.03%	356.8000	357.8267	1.0267	0.29%
9	47.8771	48.9218	1.0447	2.18%	67.5170	67.5628	0.0458	0.07%	356,6000	357.6500	1.0500	0.29%
10	47.8771	48.8881	1.0110	2.11%	67.5170	67.5474	0.0303	0.04%	357.2000	357.2447	0.0447	0.01%

Table 1 – Deviation of coordinates

The Agisoft PhotoScan software capability was evaluated based on a comparison of the data obtained with the Leica TSO06 total station. As noted earlier, the instrument itself has a level of tolerance (Figure 1), so it is worth paying attention to the smallest and largest values. This problem is extensively discussed in [11], where the object of the study is a specific building with right angles and a flat surface. In our case, the ground, which forms the relief of the object on which the survey was carried out, gives a large error, which is visually reflected in the table above. Minimal error in X-axis was 0.0031, in Y-axis 0.0027 and in Z-axis 0.0031 degrees. Maximum values for X axis was 2.0463, Y axis 1.0477 and Z axis 3.0248 degrees. As expected earlier in the construction of points in the plane difficulties were caused by the triangulation angle, because the scheme of building depends on the geometry of the object, which has no clear reference points in nature. At all this sighting error has a higher priority than instrumental origin and ranges between ± 0.3 -0.4" in first-class work and ± 1 " in networks of crowding, which is worth considering when surveying [12]. Similar measurements to confirm the allowable errors were carried out in the article [13] , where the relative error was less than 10%, which corresponds to the real field data. The use of non-metric cameras is quite a serious step for photogravimetry, but correctly chosen software allows to minimize the error range.

A color-coded system was used to indicate the level of difference between the known and obtained coordinates, with green, yellow, and red signifying minimally acceptable, not significant, and maximum critical differences, respectively. The average deviation between the known and Agisoft PhotoScan coordinates was 0.87% in the X-axis, 0.45% in the Y-axis, and 0.12% in the Zaxis. The total station survey took approximately two days to complete for all 122 points, while finding the remaining 121 points only took about three hours due to the process being automated. It should be noted that the time spent working with the software can also be reduced by using a more powerful computer to process the data received from the aircraft.

4. Conclusions

The authors of the article conducted a comparative analysis between traditional and automated processes for determining surveying coordinates. Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions were made:

1. The traditional method allowed for a quick visual estimation of the survey area.

2. The traditional method also allowed for the consideration of terrain peculiarities and existing objects.

3. The automated method provided visualization of the current situation on the construction site.

4. The automated method allowed for an automatic process of coordinate determination using one initial point obtained with a total station.

5. The study revealed some level of inaccuracy in coordinate values when comparing data obtained from the total station and the software.

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Information about authors:

Zhassulan Kuzbakhov – MSc Student, Department of Civil Engineering, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan, zhaaas0613@gmail.com

Shyngys Zharassov – PhD Student, Department of Civil Engineering, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan, zhshzh95@gmail.com

Author Contributions:

Zhassulan Kuzbakhov – concept, methodology, resources, analysis, editing, funding acquisition. *Shyngys Zharassov* – data collection, modeling, testing, visualization, interpretation, drafting.

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