Population Estimation Using Geographic Information System and Remote Sensing for Unorganized Areas

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Abstract: Population estimation using remotely sensed data had been largely discussed in the literature relative to human geography. However, the previously established models can be applied to organized areas (mainly urban areas), but they are not suitable for unorganized areas that already suffer from a lack of population data. So, this study aims to establish a statistical model for population estimation based on remote sensing data and suitable for unorganized areas. To do so, the morphological characteristics have been studied and bivariate analysis was carried out to determine factors having a strong relationship with population data as a first step. Second, factors with the strongest correlations have been chosen to establish the required model. As a result, an equation has been generated, which relates the population data to building volume, the density of roads, number of nodes, actual urban areas, and urban trend.

1. INTRODUCTION

Population estimation using remotely sensed data is a relevant data source for geographers and urban planners as it allows a huge range of applications. The roots of population estimation in urban geography are the simple gravitational population density model, which can also be called "social physics" (Stewart & Warnzt, 1958). In this context, Clark (1951) is the first to associate the population estimation with a mathematical equation (Liu, 2003). This equation was valid for many cities of the United States (Weiss, 1961) and outside the U.S. (Newling, 1966). After that, several equations have been proposed to estimate populations such as the Gaussian and the parabolic forms (Sutton, 1997), the inverse power functions, and the negative exponential functions (Parr, 1985). Those equations were efficient in describing population distribution, but they can’t be used for population estimation. For that, aerial interpolation might be used to transform data from one spatial unit (source zone) to another (target zone) and it may be done with or without ancillary information (Lam, 1983).

Aerial interpolation without ancillary information is divided into two sets of methods: Point-based methods, which consist of representing each zone by a control point, then using those points to estimate grid point values. The accuracy of those methods depends on the chosen method of interpolation and their major disadvantage is their inability to conserve total value within each source zone. The area-based methods can be done through several methods, but the simplest one is an overlay operation between the target zone and the source zone, where the proportion becomes a weight for the linear function of source zones. This approach assumes homogeneity within each source zone, and this consists of its major limitation. Aerial interpolation with ancillary information consists of assessing population interpolation by relating it to other information such as land use and transportation networks. The most well-known method is the dasymetric method, developed by Wright (1936), and aims at using the locality’s knowledge to identify areas within
zones with different population densities in order to adjust the estimation procedure (Fisher & Langford, 1995).

Moreover, the development of GIS technologies facilitates the application of this method by using the overlay process in GIS and the integration of different types of ancillary spatial data such as the classified land use land uses, as shown by Monmonier & Schnell (1984). In the 1950s, Another approach has been used to estimate population, which consists a combination between the remotely sensed data and the statistical modeling, considering that population distribution in urban areas is affected by morphological factors (such as distance to the central business district (CBD), distance to roads, etc.) and those factors can be extracted from remotely sensed data (Sutton, 1997; Batty & Longley, 1994; Parr, 1985).

However, this approach can be used to estimate population count rather than population density. Statistical modeling for population estimation was initiated as an alternative to population census characterized by several problems such as the lack of data caused by the low frequency of census (Kraus et al., 1974) as well as to check the reliability of census enumeration (Clayton & JE, 1980) and the effect of socioeconomic characteristics (Forster, 1983). Generally, there are five categories of methods according to the relation between population and urban areas (Lo & Welch, 1977; Lee, 1989), land use (Weber, 1994; Kraus et al., 1974), dwelling units (Green, 1956; Porter, 1956; Kraus et al., 1974; Sun, 1971; Lo & Chan, 1980), image pixel characteristics (Hsu, 1973; Lo, 1986; isaka & Hegedus, 1982; Webster, 1996) and other physical or socioeconomic characteristics (Dobson et al., 2000; Liu & Clarke, 2002; Green, 1957; Green & Monier, 1959). In the literature, several statistical models have been constructed to estimate population from remotely sensed data such as Kaimaris & Patias (2016) who used an empirical equation to determine the people living in a building, Karume et al. (2017) who adopted a dasymetric mapping approach to derive land use data using two GeoEye images and Dong et al. (2010) who evaluated a small area population estimation using LiDAR, Landsat TM and parcel data.

The previously presented methods might be accurate in structured urban areas. However, those methods are not compatible with unorganized areas where finding a pattern seems to be difficult. For that, it is essential to find a method to be accurate and useful for unorganized areas. In this context, Lebanon, as the majority of third world countries, witnessed a rapid and uncontrolled urban sprawl as a result of the corruption and the limited planning regulations (Council for Development and Reconstruction, 2005). As a result, the establishment of plans to handle this situation faces huge challenges since it is difficult to obtain the required data related to constructed areas and its population data. For that, this situation imposes the elaboration of precise methods to provide researchers and specialists in urban planning with the necessary information about the built-up and population characteristics. Consequently, the aim of this study is to construct a model for population estimation in unorganized areas using only remotely sensed data.

2. DATA AND METHODS

2.1. Case Study

The Lebanese Republic, occupying an area of 10452 square kilometers, is located in western Asia on the eastern shore of the Mediterranean Sea between latitudes 33° and 35° N and longitudes 35° and 37° E. It borders the Sea in the west, Syria in the north and east, and Occupied Palestine in the south. In order to extract the necessary data for this study, a sample of 30 villages (e.g., unorganized areas) have been chosen. Those municipalities are arbitrarily chosen and geographically well distributed throughout the country (Figure 1).
2.2. Methodology and Data

2.2.1. Process

The used methodology was divided into 3 phases: Data collection, bivariate analysis, and multivariate analysis. During the first phase, the population data for each municipality has been determined as a product of the residential units and the mean residents per unit. Moreover, each one of the chosen factors has been studied independently. The second phase consists of evaluating the relationship between each factor and the population data using simple regression. The factors which show a strong relationship with population data were chosen to construct the statistical model. During the third phase, a multiple regression was done to generate an equation relating the population data to each one of the factors.

2.2.2. Data Collection

1. Building volume

The determination of buildings’ volumes for each municipality required the determination of the number of buildings, the average area, and the mean height of buildings. To do so, the RGB image has been transformed into HSI image using ERDAS Imagine software and the band I have been transformed into shapefile using ArcGIS software. The convex hull tool in ArcGIS has been used to determine the polygons representing buildings. Based on statistical data, residential buildings have been extracted, and the total area of buildings has been determined. In order to determine the height of buildings, the RGB image has been transformed into LAB format and using Otsu’s method. The image has been divided into several categories according to brightness value. The shadows have been specified on the image and the height of buildings has been determined using the relation between the azimuth of the sun, the dimension of shadow, and the height of the building. In the end, the volume of buildings has been determined using the following equation (Allaw et al., 2019) (Eq 1). The results have been summarized in Table 1.

\[
\text{Built – up volume} = \text{Mean area} \times \text{number of buildings} \times \text{mean height} \quad (\text{Eq. 1})
\]
### Table 1. The number, area, and volume of buildings

| Municipality         | Total number of building | Mean area (m²) | Buildings area (m²) | Building Volume (m³) |
|----------------------|--------------------------|----------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| Aabba                | 1080                     | 144            | 155520              | 544320               |
| Aain Baalbek         | 1003                     | 171            | 171513              | 600295.5             |
| Aakkar El-Aatiqa     | 909                      | 265            | 240885              | 963540               |
| Aaytanit             | 54                       | 203            | 10962               | 43848                |
| Amioun               | 656                      | 280            | 183680              | 642880               |
| Babliyé              | 540                      | 185            | 99900               | 349650               |
| Baskinta             | 824                      | 204            | 168096              | 588336               |
| Beit Chabab          | 813                      | 178            | 144714              | 578856               |
| Beit Meri            | 1080                     | 288            | 311040              | 1244160              |
| Bikfaya              | 440                      | 298            | 131120              | 458920               |
| Blida                | 617                      | 240            | 148080              | 518280               |
| Bqerzla              | 233                      | 197            | 45901               | 137703               |
| Deir Ez-Zahrani       | 942                      | 241            | 227022              | 908088               |
| Dibbabiyé            | 187                      | 140            | 26180               | 78540                |
| Ehden                | 904                      | 310            | 280240              | 1120960              |
| Jbal El-Botm         | 417                      | 199            | 82983               | 248949               |
| Jebaa                | 46                       | 203            | 9338                | 28014                |
| Joun                 | 489                      | 198            | 96822               | 338877               |
| Khirbet Rouha        | 602                      | 251            | 151102              | 528857               |
| Laboué               | 1438                     | 165            | 237270              | 949080               |
| Majdel Aanjar        | 1266                     | 263            | 332958              | 1331832              |
| Markaba              | 433                      | 219            | 94827               | 331894.5             |
| Michmich Jbayl       | 264                      | 208            | 54912               | 192192               |
| Nabatieh El-Faouka   | 1104                     | 210            | 231840              | 927360               |
| Qaa Baalbek          | 844                      | 175            | 147700              | 516950               |
| Qalamoun             | 568                      | 225            | 127800              | 511200               |
| Ras El Matn          | 351                      | 198            | 69498               | 277992               |
| Roum                 | 251                      | 226            | 56726               | 170178               |
| Saksakiyé            | 1042                     | 161            | 167762              | 587167               |
| Terbol Zahlé         | 533                      | 261            | 139113              | 486895.5             |

2. Road network characteristics

a. Length of roads: The length of primary roads, secondary roads, and the total length of roads have been determined using the data available at https://extract.bbike.org. However, many roads were not available in this data, so the digitalization of roads on satellite images has been used to cover the missing data.

b. The density of roads: The density of roads' network has been calculated, using ArcGIS, by dividing the total length of the roads by the built-up area of each municipality (it is expressed in kilometer per kilometer square).

c. The number of nodes: The number of nodes has been determined using the following method: The intersect tool has been used to determine intersection points between roads. However, this will generate many points on the same location, so, using the dissolve tool (according to points' coordinates), those points can be replaced by a unique node. Then, the number of nodes for each municipality has been calculated.

The results have been summarized in the following Table 2.
Table 2. Road network elements for each municipality

| Municipalities         | Length of primary roads (km) | Length of secondary roads (km) | Total length of roads (km) | Density of roads (km²/km²) | Number of nodes |
|------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Aabba                  | 4511.99                      | 47339.03                       | 51851.02                  | 7.00                       | 331             |
| Aain Baalbek           | 2489.34                      | 62923.81                       | 65413.15                  | 7.45                       | 380             |
| Aakkar El-Aatiqa       | 5177.72                      | 128869.59                      | 134047.30                 | 6.00                       | 402             |
| Aaytanit               | 3306.35                      | 32420.58                       | 35726.93                  | 2.59                       | 101             |
| Amioun                 | 4789.66                      | 76987.78                       | 81777.44                  | 7.18                       | 329             |
| Babiliyé               | 11630.99                     | 44018.25                       | 55649.24                  | 5.80                       | 205             |
| Baskinta               | 27028.84                     | 64205.41                       | 91234.25                  | 4.67                       | 422             |
| Beit Chabab            | 1589.58                      | 70301.84                       | 74554.67                  | 8.74                       | 267             |
| Beit Merí              | 4252.83                      | 45177.91                       | 46514.92                  | 6.10                       | 258             |
| Bikfaya                | 1337.00                      | 114370.58                      | 125707.37                 | 7.21                       | 528             |
| Blida                  | 5223.25                      | 78362.46                       | 83585.71                  | 6.29                       | 316             |
| Bqerzla                | 4955.98                      | 39493.44                       | 44449.42                  | 5.44                       | 145             |
| Deir Ez-Zahrani         | 10363.79                     | 77518.40                       | 87882.20                  | 7.27                       | 497             |
| Dibbabiyyé             | 2137.68                      | 13830.91                       | 15696.59                  | 4.12                       | 52              |
| Ehden                  | 7299.78                      | 114370.58                      | 121670.37                 | 7.21                       | 528             |
| Jbal El-Botm           | 3371.57                      | 63785.64                       | 67157.21                  | 4.64                       | 223             |
| Jebaa                  | 443.42                       | 7239.93                        | 7683.35                   | 1.16                       | 20              |
| Joun                   | 6523.03                      | 56044.80                       | 62657.83                  | 5.24                       | 235             |
| Khirbet Rouha          | 2332.14                      | 66320.06                       | 68652.20                  | 5.60                       | 236             |
| Laboué                 | 3773.60                      | 98874.65                       | 102648.25                 | 6.24                       | 550             |
| Majdel Aanjar          | 18935.54                     | 121078.75                      | 140014.29                 | 5.53                       | 509             |
| Markaba                | 9582.24                      | 46024.56                       | 55606.80                  | 6.88                       | 355             |
| Michmich Jbail         | 5432.31                      | 56538.86                       | 61971.17                  | 4.52                       | 178             |
| Nabatiyeh El-Faouka    | 8874.45                      | 75827.76                       | 84702.21                  | 8.20                       | 430             |
| Qaa Baalbek            | 5648.52                      | 54640.73                       | 60289.25                  | 6.30                       | 400             |
| Qalamoun               | 4112.17                      | 36042.06                       | 40154.23                  | 6.20                       | 234             |
| Ras El Matn            | 5934.13                      | 63132.26                       | 69066.38                  | 5.46                       | 259             |
| Roum                   | 3232.61                      | 29939.44                       | 33172.06                  | 2.78                       | 104             |
| Saksakiyé              | 1830.96                      | 46812.80                       | 48643.77                  | 7.10                       | 408             |
| Terbol Zahlé           | 4182.47                      | 72842.06                       | 77024.53                  | 5.50                       | 266             |

3. Spatial dynamics

a. Urban trend: The evolution of urban areas is usually correlated with population growth. For that, the digitalization of built-up areas has been done using Google Earth. For each municipality, the built-up areas have been determined for the period (2005-2018). The urban trend is the amount of urban areas evolution over the chosen period.

b. Distance to the capital and distance to the governorate’s center: Administratively, Lebanon is divided into 8 governorates (mohafazas) and the capital city is Beirut. For each municipality, the distance to the Lebanese capital and the distance to the governorate’s center has been determined using Google maps.
Table 3. Spatial dynamics factors for each municipality

| Municipalities          | Urban areas “2018” (m²) | Urban trend “2005-2018” (m²) | Distance to the capital (Km) | Distance to the governorate’s center (Km) |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Aabba                   | 152489                  | 3456                         | 12                          | 84                                       |
| Aain Baalbek            | 183269.1                | 3764.456                     | 24                          | 120                                      |
| Aakkar El-Aatiqa        | 155425                  | 3547                         | 49.4                        | 132                                      |
| Aaytanit                | 62458.89                | 1760.097                     | 45                          | 80                                       |
| Amioun                  | 211860.1                | 2936.779                     | 24.9                        | 73                                       |
| Babliyé                 | 117399.4                | 3211.295                     | 1.9                         | 64                                       |
| Baskinta                | 150503.9                | 3397.768                     | 30.3                        | 43                                       |
| Beit Chabab             | 212645                  | 3945                         | 23                          | 23                                       |
| Beit Meri               | 164432.7                | 3945                         | 18                          | 18                                       |
| Bikfaya                 | 152347                  | 3154                         | 24                          | 24                                       |
| Blida                   | 105024.6                | 3674.234                     | 40.3                        | 117                                      |
| Bqerzla                 | 105630.3                | 2145                         | 25.6                        | 108                                      |
| Deir Ez-Zahrani          | 182758.1                | 4047.427                     | 8.7                         | 69                                       |
| Dibbabiyyé              | 57275.97                | 1471.368                     | 46                          | 129                                      |
| Ehden                   | 244288.3                | 4621                         | 38                          | 100                                      |
| Jbal El-Botm            | 103840.9                | 2546                         | 17                          | 99                                       |
| Jebaa                   | 95231                   | 2654                         | 22                          | 79                                       |
| Joun                    | 102992                  | 2361.767                     | 14                          | 49                                       |
| Khirbet Rouha           | 120548                  | 3465.15                      | 36                          | 84                                       |
| Laboué                  | 188433.2                | 4132                         | 29                          | 116                                      |
| Majdel Aanjar           | 145654                  | 4586                         | 19.7                        | 65                                       |
| Markaba                 | 1504036                 | 3147.25                      | 29                          | 103                                      |
| Michmich Jbayl          | 71239.48                | 2582.913                     | 21                          | 59                                       |
| Nabatiyeh El-Faouka     | 194941.2                | 4256                         | 1.9                         | 76                                       |
| Qaa Baalbek             | 214486.8                | 3125                         | 50                          | 137                                      |
| Qalamoun                | 160865.7                | 3356                         | 8.5                         | 74                                       |
| Ras El Matn             | 163830.2                | 2387.586                     | 30                          | 30                                       |
| Roum                    | 77409.68                | 2339.347                     | 23                          | 63                                       |
| Saksakiyyé              | 173248                  | 4628.2                       | 20                          | 64                                       |
| Terbol Zahlé            | 109769.7                | 3971.101                     | 11.6                        | 67                                       |

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Simple regression

The relation between each one of the dependent variables and the population has been evaluated using linear regression (Figure 2-11). The results have been summarized as follows:
Figure 2. The relationship between building volumes and population data

Figure 3. The relationship between the total length of roads and population data

Figure 4. The relationship between the number of nodes and population data

Figure 5. The relationship between population data and the length of secondary roads

Figure 6. The relationship between the density of roads and population data

Figure 7. The relationship between the length of secondary roads and population data
Those graphs affirm that the factors with the highest correlation with population are: Building volume, the density of roads, number of nodes, actual urban areas, and urban trend.

3.2. Model: Multiple Regression

Multiple regression is an extension of simple linear regression. The general purpose of multiple regression is to learn more about the relationship between several independent or predictor variables and a dependent variable. Multiple regression estimates the $\beta$’s in the equation

$$y_j = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * x_{1j} + \beta_2 * x_{2j} + \cdots + \beta_p * x_{pj} + \epsilon_j$$

The X’s are the independent variables (IV’s). Y is the dependent variable. The subscript j represents the population (row) number. The $\beta$’s are the unknown regression coefficients. The $\epsilon_j$ is the error (residual) of observation j and p is the number of predictor variables. The sample multiple regression equation is

$$\hat{y}_j = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * x_{1j} + \beta_2 * x_{2j} + \cdots + \beta_p * x_{pj}$$

The basic regression model is

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 * X_1 + \beta_2 * X_2 + \cdots + \beta_p * X_p + \epsilon$$

For the measure of the goodness-of-fit of the regression model to the data. We use the coefficient of determination $R^2$, which is defined as the sum of squares due to the regression divided by the adjusted
total sum of squares of Y. \( R^2 \) varies between zero (no linear relationship) and one (perfect linear relationship). The formula for \( R^2 \) is

\[
R^2 = \frac{SS_{\text{Model}}}{SS_{\text{Total}}} = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^{p}(\hat{y}_j - \bar{y})^2}{\sum_{j=1}^{p}(y_j - \bar{y})^2}
\]

For our application, a multiple regression has been done to establish the equation relating the chosen factors to population data, which results in a strong relationship (\( R^2 = 0.82 \)) between the independent and dependent variables. Figure 12 shows the results of the predicted population by multiple regression against real populations. The obtained equation is as follows:

\[
Y = 0.0154 \times X_1 - 289.6425 \times X_2 - 9.2800 \times X_3 + 0.0365 \times X_4 - 0.2678 \times X_5
\]

Where

\( Y = \text{Population} \)

\( X_1 = \text{Building volume} \)

\( X_2 = \text{Roads' density} \)

\( X_3 = \text{Number of nodes} \)

\( X_4 = \text{Urban areas} \)

\( X_5 = \text{Urban trend} \)

Figure 12. Results (Population & predicted population) by multiple regression model the evaluation by the determination coefficient \( R^2 \)
3.3. Results’ validation

In order to validate the obtained results, a sample of five villages was chosen by chance. For each village, we have evaluated the elements composing our model: Building volume, roads’ density, number of nodes, urban areas, and urban trend. Then, we applied the obtained equation to estimate the population of each village. Then, we calculated the residuals, which are the differences between the real values and the estimated ones. The calculated residuals have been used to calculate the root mean squared error using the following equation:

$$RMSE = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{N} (Y' - Y)^2}{N}}$$

Where

N = Sample size

The value of RMSE shows that this model has an estimation error of 249, which means that the estimated population will be greater or less than the real value by 249 people might be considered as acceptable since it constitutes only 2.5% of the difference for a village of 10,000 inhabitants. Moreover, this error may be explained by other factors affecting the population.

Research conducted by Kaimaris & Patias (2016), Karume et al. (2017), and Dong et al. (2010) show the results of population estimation using GIS and remote sensing. However, these researches can only be carried out in structured urban areas. This study accurately shows the results of population estimates in Lebanon, a country with rapid and uncontrolled urban expansion.

4. CONCLUSION

Population estimation is a largely studied topic and an important application of human geography. Several approaches have been discussed and applied to estimate population density or population count. In this study, the remotely sensed data treated using GIS combined with statistical modeling are relevant for population estimation through the construction of a robust and accurate model for population estimation in unorganized areas. As a result, an equation relating the count of the population to building volume, the density of roads, number of nodes, actual urban areas, and the urban trend has been generated.

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