

## Special issue on autonomous unmanned aerial/ground vehicles and their applications

Recently, research on autonomous mobility control has been actively and widely conducted for various applications. In particular, autonomous mobility control for unmanned aerial and ground vehicles has been our research interest because it has considerable challenges, such as time-consuming and high-delay computations, complicated functionalities, and dangerous tasks that were previously performed by humans. Furthermore, fully autonomous unmanned aerial and ground vehicles are barely practical and have various operational limitations, such as high-precision sensing, high computational complexity, low autonomy, and restricted mobility. To develop the required technologies to overcome these limitations and achieve full autonomy for unmanned aerial and ground vehicles, various studies have addressed aspects such as precise pose estimation, environment mapping, path planning, trajectory optimization, and 2D/3D object tracking and detection.

With fully autonomous operation and functionalities for unmanned aerial and ground vehicles, emerging applications will become more diverse and include autonomous artificial-intelligence-based surveillance, autonomous disaster prevention broadcasting and control, mobile autonomous aerial and ground wireless/cellular access service provisioning, autonomous multirobot coordination, and cooperation for smart factory management in smart city applications, for which a skilled human operator must currently intervene throughout operation.

For this special issue, we selected 11 key studies on (1) communication, networks, and mobility [1–5] and (2) object detection and tracking in autonomous driving [6–11].

In [1], surveys and discussions are presented on recent deep-learning-based developments to achieve autonomous mobility control and efficient resource management of autonomous vehicles including unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs). The developments include multiagent reinforcement learning and neural Myerson auction. We believe that integrating multiagent reinforcement learning and neural Myerson auction will be

critical for efficient and trustworthy autonomous mobility services.

In [2], a safe landing algorithm is introduced for urban drone delivery. The proposed algorithm generates a safe and efficient vertical landing path for drones, allowing them to avoid obstacles commonly found in urban environments, such as trees, streetlights, utility poles, and wires. To this end, landing-angle control is implemented to land vertically, and a rapidly-exploring random tree (RRT) is used in a collision avoidance algorithm. This combination of methods enables precise and reliable drone delivery in urban settings.

In [3], a loosely coupled relative position estimation method is proposed based on a decentralized ultrawideband global navigation support system and inertial navigation system for flight controllers. Key obstacles to multi-drone collaboration are noted and include relative positional errors and the absence of communication devices. To address such problems, an extended Kalman filter (EKF) is adopted to correct distance errors by fusing ultrawideband data acquired through random communications using a novel UWB communication module.

Unmanned vehicles are being increasingly used for time-consuming, complicated, and dangerous tasks that were previously performed by humans. However, they have limitations for applications like establishing high-speed wireless networks. In [4], a 3D geometry-based stochastic model for UAV multiple-input multiple-output (MIMO) channels is presented. The UAV flying direction and location have a significant impact on MIMO performance. This innovative model of 3D navigation and scattering environments is closely related to the scope of this special issue.

In [5], UAVs are considered essential components in non-terrestrial networks, especially in 5G-and-beyond communication systems. Employing UAVs operated in conjunction with a 4G/5G base station has proven to be a practical solution for providing cellular network services in areas where conventional communication infrastructures are unavailable. This paper introduces the

uncrewed aerial vehicle–base station system that utilizes a high-capacity wireless backhaul operating in millimeter wave frequency bands.

In [6], advanced video analytics for tasks such as moving object detection and segmentation are presented, thereby increasing the demand for such methods in unmanned aerial and ground vehicle applications. A novel zero-shot video object segmentation is introduced to focus on the discovery of moving objects in challenging scenarios. This method employs a background memory model for training from sparse annotations over time by using temporal modeling of the background to accurately detect moving objects. In addition, the method addresses the limitations of existing state-of-the-art solutions for detecting salient objects within images regardless of their motion.

In [7], an adaptive UAV-assisted object-recognition algorithm is introduced for urban surveillance scenarios. In a UAV-assisted surveillance system, UAVs are equipped with learning-based object recognition models and can collect surveillance images. Owing to UAV limitations (for example, limited battery and computational capabilities), adaptive control considering these limitations is devised to maximize the time-averaged recognition performance subject to stability through Lyapunov optimization.

In [8], modern semantic segmentation frameworks combining low- and high-level context information are used to improve performance. In addition, post-level context information is considered in a context refinement network (CRFNet). Training for improving the semantic segmentation predictions proceeds through an encoder–decoder structure. This study directly considers the relation between spatially neighboring pixels of a label map using methods such as Markov and conditional random fields.

In [9], real-time accurate 3D multi-pedestrian detection and tracking are achieved using 3D LiDAR point clouds from crowded environments. Pedestrian detection segments a sparse 3D point cloud into individual pedestrians using a lightweight convolutional autoencoder and connected component labeling. Multi-pedestrian tracking associates the same pedestrians by considering motion and appearance cues in continuous frames. In addition, the dynamic movements of pedestrians are estimated with various patterns by adaptively mixing heterogeneous motion models.

In [10], sensor-fusion-based object detection and classification are presented. The proposed method operates in real time, rendering it suitable for integration into autonomous vehicles. It performs well on a custom dataset and publicly available datasets, demonstrating its effectiveness in real-world road environments. In addition, a 3D

moving object detection dataset called ETRI 3D MOD, is constructed.

In [11], three techniques for combining information from multiple cameras are proposed, namely, feature, early, and late fusion techniques. Extensive experiments were conducted on pedestrian-view intersection classification. The proposed model with feature fusion provides an area under the curve and an F1-score of 82.00 and 46.48, respectively, outperforming a model trained using only real three-camera data and one-camera models by a large margin.

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## CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

## KEYWORDS

drones, UAV, unmanned autonomous vehicles, unmanned ground vehicles

Joongheon Kim<sup>1</sup>  
 Yu-Cheol Lee<sup>2</sup>  
 Jun Hwan Lee<sup>3</sup>  
 Jin Seek Choi<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Korea University, Seoul, Republic of Korea

<sup>2</sup>Department of Information and Communication Engineering, Dongguk University, Seoul, Republic of Korea

<sup>3</sup>Satellite Communication Research Division, Electronics and Telecommunication Research Institute, Daejeon, Republic of Korea

<sup>4</sup>Division of Computer Science and Engineering, Hanyang University, Seoul, Republic of Korea

## Correspondence

Joongheon Kim, Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Korea University, Seoul, Republic of Korea.

Email: [joongheon@korea.ac.kr](mailto:joongheon@korea.ac.kr)

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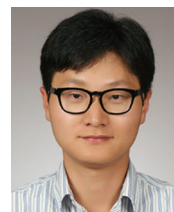
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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES



**Joongheon Kim** has been with Korea University, Seoul, Republic of Korea, since 2019, where he is currently an Associate Professor at the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering and an Adjunct Professor at the Department of Communications Engineering (cooperated by Samsung Electronics) and the Department of Semiconductor Engineering (cooperated by SK Hynix). He received the BS and MS degrees in Computer Science and Engineering from Korea University, Seoul, Republic of Korea, in 2004 and 2006, respectively, and the PhD degree in Computer Science from the University of Southern California (USC), Los Angeles, CA, USA, in 2014. Before joining Korea University, he was a Research Engineer with LG Electronics (Seoul, Republic of Korea, 2006–2009), Systems Engineer

with the Intel Corporation Headquarters (Santa Clara in Silicon Valley, CA, USA, 2013–2016), and Assistant Professor of Computer Science and Engineering with Chung-Ang University (Seoul, Republic of Korea, 2016–2019). He serves as an Editor and Guest Editor for IEEE Transactions on Vehicular Technology, IEEE Transactions on Machine Learning in Communications and Networking, IEEE Communications Standards Magazine, Computer Networks (Elsevier), and ICT Express (Elsevier). He is also a Distinguished Lecturer for the IEEE Communications Society (ComSoc) and IEEE Systems Council. He is an Executive Director of the Korea Institute of Communication and Information Sciences (KICS). He received an Annenberg Graduate Fellowship with his PhD admission from USC (2009), Intel Corporation Next Generation and Standards (NGS) Division Recognition Award (2015), IEEE Systems Journal Best Paper Award (2020), IEEE ComSoc Multimedia Communications Technical Committee (MMTC) Outstanding Young Researcher Award (2020), IEEE ComSoc MMTC Best Journal Paper Award (2021), Best Special Issue Guest Editor Award by ICT Express (2022), and Best Editor Award by ICT Express (2023). He also received several awards from IEEE conferences including IEEE ICOIN Best Paper Award (2021), IEEE Vehicular Technology Society (VTS) Seoul Chapter Awards (2019, 2021, and 2022), and IEEE ICTC Best Paper Award (2022).



**Yu-Cheol Lee** received BS degrees from the School of Mechanical Engineering and School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering, Yonsei University, Seoul, Republic of Korea, in 2004, the MS degree from the Department of Mechanical Engineering, POSTECH, Pohang, Republic of Korea, in 2006, and PhD degree in Robotics Programming from KAIST, Daejeon, Republic of Korea, in 2020. He was a Principal Researcher at the Artificial Intelligence Laboratory in Electronics and Telecommunications Research Institute, Daejeon, Republic of Korea, from 2006 to 2022. He participated as a Visiting Researcher at the Department of Computer Science, Stony Brook University, New York, USA, from 2021 to 2022. Since 2023, he has joined as an Assistant Professor at the Department of Information and Communication Engineering, Dongguk University, Seoul, Republic of Korea. He has participated in numerous large-scale research projects performing a leading role as a Researcher and Manager. His research achievements

have been presented at prominent international conferences and journals including various published by IEEE, ASME, RSJ, and KRoS, from which he received outstanding research awards. His research interests include the localization and mapping of buildings for intelligent vehicles and navigation technologies for pedestrians in indoor and outdoor environments.



**Jun Hwan Lee** received the PhD degree in Information & Computer Science from Keio University, Yokohama, Japan in 2009. He was a Project Research Associate with Keio University from 2005 to 2006.

He has been working with Electronics and Telecommunications Research Institute, Daejeon, Republic of Korea since 2000 and 3GPP standardization more than 10 years, currently serving as a Section Director leading the 5G Standardization Group. He is also a Section Director of the Spatial Wireless Transmission Research Section with the Satellite Communication Research Division, where he covers aerial communications like UAS, UAM, and satellite communications. He is also a Deputy Team Leader of Strategy & Global Collaboration of the 6G Forum. Through global activities, he has experienced global projects in collaborations including Korea–European Union, Korea–Japan, Korea–China, and Korea–Finland. Digital & wireless communication systems and physical layer design issues on millimeter-wave/terahertz transmission schemes are his key areas of interest. In addition, he works on establishing global joint projects with neighbor countries to promote 5G/6G research and development activities.



**Jin Seek Choi** received the BSEE degree from Sogang University, Seoul, Republic of Korea, in 1985, and MSEE and PhD degrees from the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST), Daejeon, Republic of Korea, in 1987 and 1995,

respectively. He was with Gold Star Information and Communication, Co., from 1987 to 1991, where he worked on the development of Ethernet, FDDI bridges, and ISDN systems. He worked with Kongju National University, Republic of Korea from 1995 to 2001 and with the National Institute of Science and Technology (NIST), Washington, DC, USA, as a Visiting Researcher from September 1998 to August 2000. He also worked at the School of Engineering, Information and Communications University (now merged into KAIST) from 2001 to 2004. Since 2004, he has been working with Hanyang University, Seoul, Republic of Korea. In 2016 and 2022, he received awards from the Minister of Commerce and the Prime Minister of Industry and Energy of the Republic of Korea, respectively. His research interests include path computation elements, control and management frameworks, software-defined networking, energy and IoT networking, optical internet, routing and wavelength assignment, QoS-guaranteed high-speed switching and routing, and location and mobility management protocols for next-generation wired and wireless networks.