

Urban Flood Mapping using Sentinel-1: Coherence Changes

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Overview

Flood in Central Java, Indonesia on March 2024

- Extreme weather and heavy rainfall caused floods and flash floods in Central Java, which overwhelmed river systems and hydrological infrastructure (dam failures) across the northern coast region.
- In some areas, heavy rainfall has started since February and continues until mid to the end of March.
- Affected areas include Kota Semarang, Kota Jepara, Pekalongan, Kendal, Demak, Rembang, Blora, Pati, Kudus, and Grobogan (*BPBD Jateng*).
- Damages to public infrastructure and hundreds of thousands of residents were affected by the floods.



Kecamatan Karanganyar, Kebupaten Demak, Jawa Tengah, Sunday (17/3/2024)

- Sentinel Asia was activated on 20 March 2024 at the request of the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN).
- Archive and crisis images were obtained from multiple sources, including ALOS-2 from the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), FORMOSAT-5 from the Taiwan Space Agency (TASA), TelEOS-1 from the Centre for Remote Imaging Sensing and Processing (CRISP), and Resourcesat-2 from the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO).

Overview

Flood in Central Java, Indonesia on March 2024



BANJIR & LONGSOR JAWA TENGAH

Hujan dengan intensitas sedang hingga tinggi mengguyur di wilayah Jawa Tengah. Hujan mengakibatkan banjir dan longsor yang terjadi pada Rabu dan Kamis (10,13 & 14/3). Banjir dan longsor melanda di 10 Kabupaten/kota terdampak yang terjadi pada hari minggu (10/3) di Kab. Blora, kejadian di hari rabu (13/3) yaitu Grobogan, Jepara, Demak, Pati, Kendal Pekalongan dan Kota Semarang, sedangkan Kudus dan Rembang terjadi pada Kamis (14/3). Bencana tersebut menyebabkan dampak korban dan kerusakan serta fasilitas umum. Sebagian wilayah terdampak banjir mulai surut.

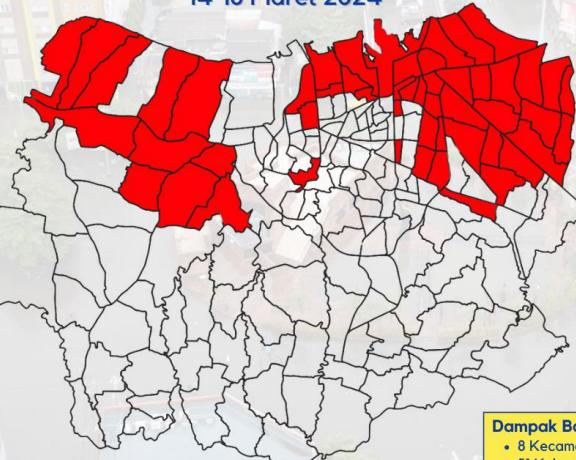


UPDATE
19 MARET 2024
PKL. 22.00 WIB



Daerah Terdampak Banjir Kota Semarang

14-18 Maret 2024



Dampak Banjir

- 8 Kecamatan
- 51 Kelurahan
- 58.455 KK
- 189.936 Jiwa

Wilayah Tidak Terdampak Banjir
Wilayah Terdampak Banjir

Sumber : BPBD Kota Semarang

Overview

Objective

The objective of this exercise is to generate an urban flood map by analyzing coherence changes derived from pre- and post-event Sentinel-1 SLC (Single Look Complex) data.

This exercise aims to detect areas affected by flooding based on significant coherence loss, supporting rapid disaster response and impact assessment in urban environments.

***Note:** The exercise is adapted from the UN-SPIDER Recommended Practice for Flood Mapping with Sentinel-1 Interferometric Coherence*

Overview

Data and Software

In this exercise, we will use SNAP software and Google Earth Engine (GEE).

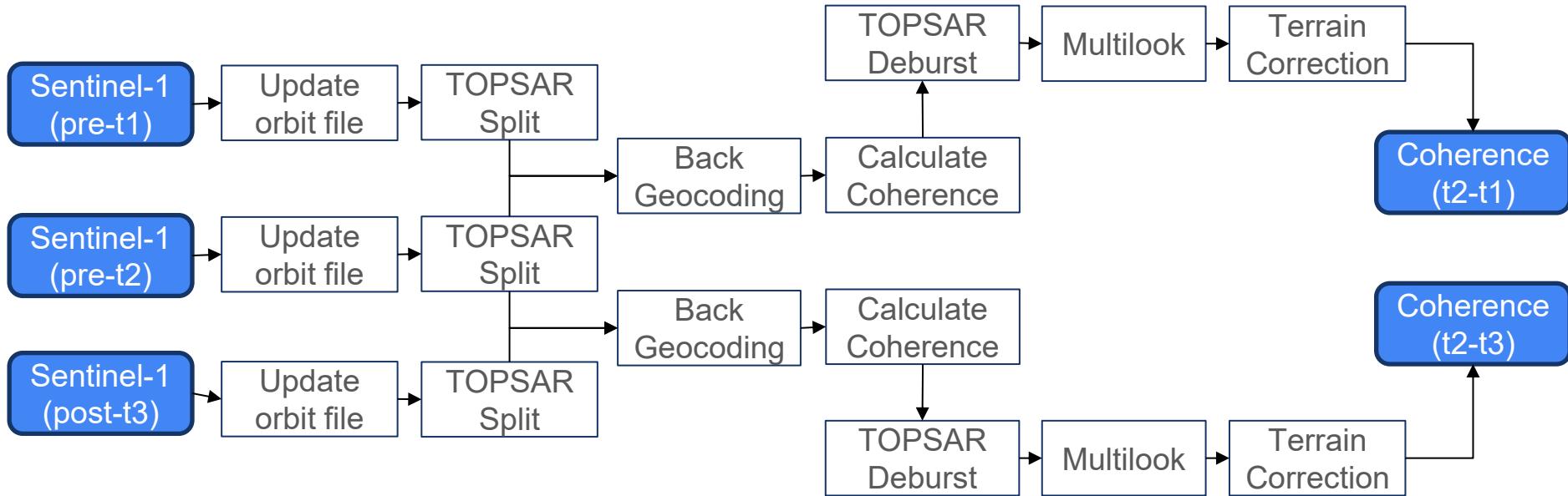
The following data are available:

- **Sentinel-1 SLC (Single Look Complex)**
 - Contain magnitude and phase information represented by complex I and Q numbers. Range coordinate is in slant range.
 - Sentinel-1 Terrain Observation by Progressive Scans SAR (TOPS) captures data in bursts, which are segments of radar echoes acquired by cyclically switching the antenna beam across multiple sub-swaths. Sentinel-1 SLC data are split into bursts per sub-swath.
 - Observation mode: Interferometric Wide (IW).
 - Dual Polarization (VH and VV), Data format: SAFE structure
 - Date: 15 March 2024 (observe), 10 and 22 December 2023 (archive)

Methodology

Urban flood mapping using Sentinel-1 coherence changes

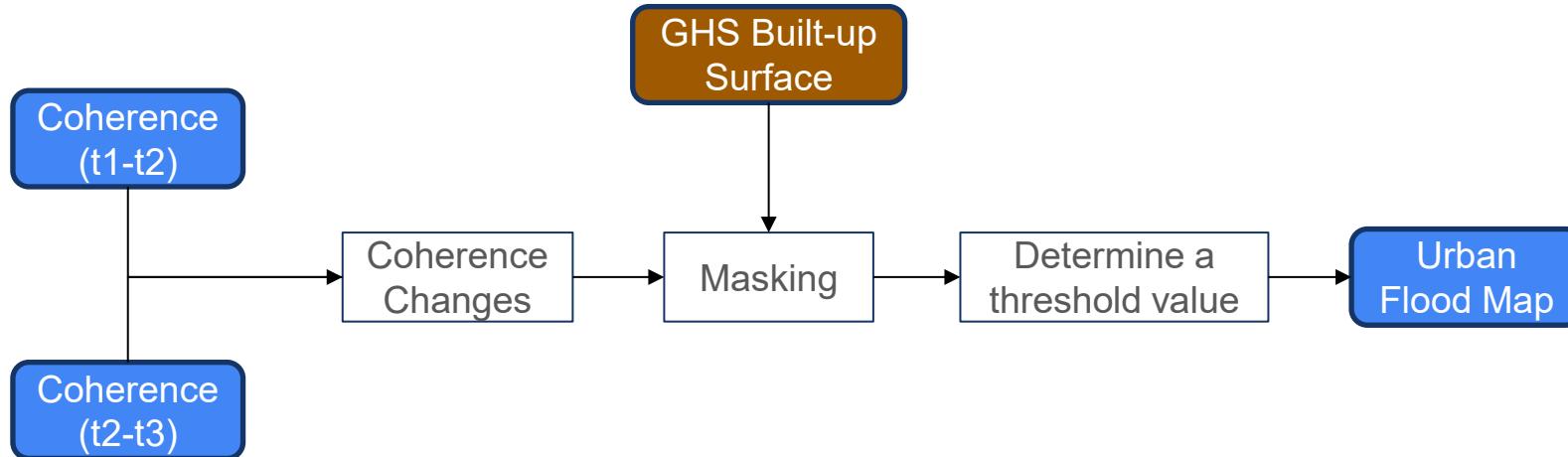
Processing using SNAP



Methodology

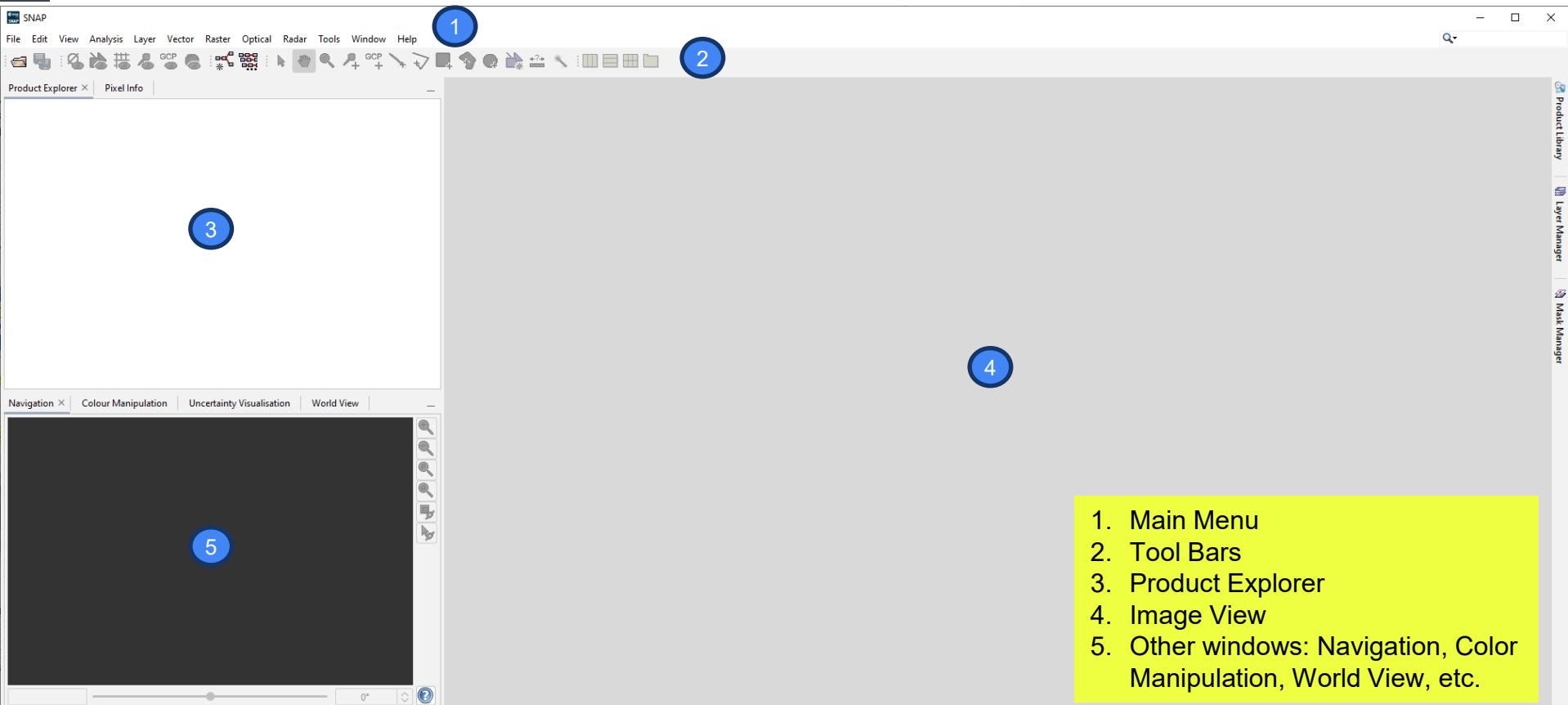
Urban flood mapping using Sentinel-1 coherence changes

Processing using Google Earth Engine (GEE)



Data Exploration in SNAP

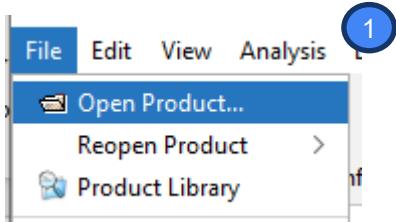
Open the SNAP software



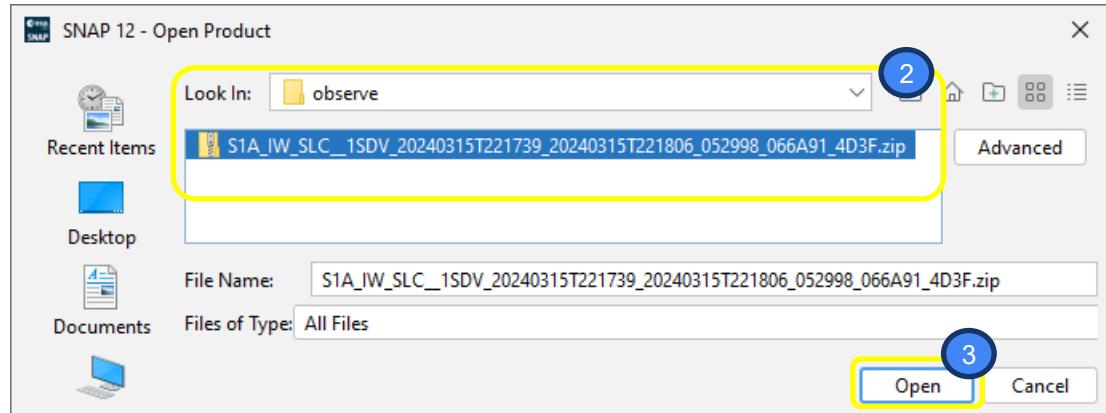
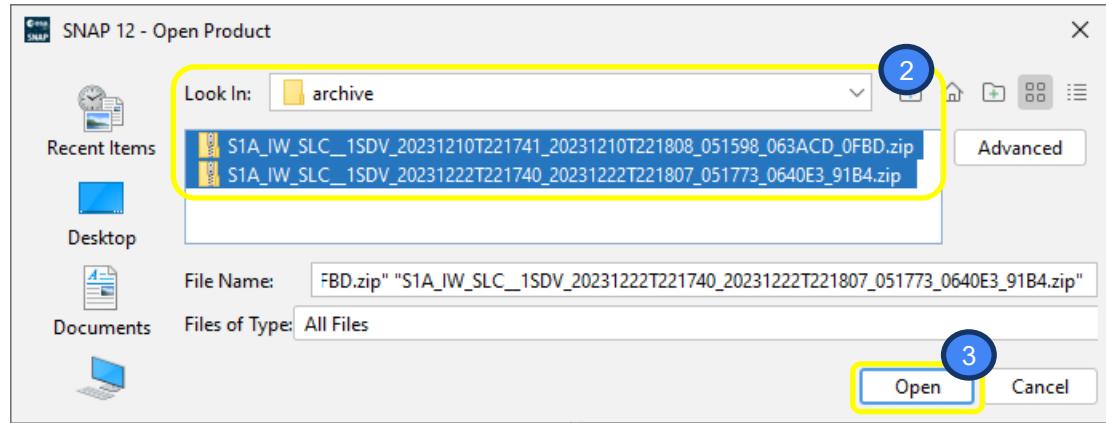
1. Main Menu
2. Tool Bars
3. Product Explorer
4. Image View
5. Other windows: Navigation, Color Manipulation, World View, etc.

Data Exploration in SNAP

Open Sentinel-1 Data

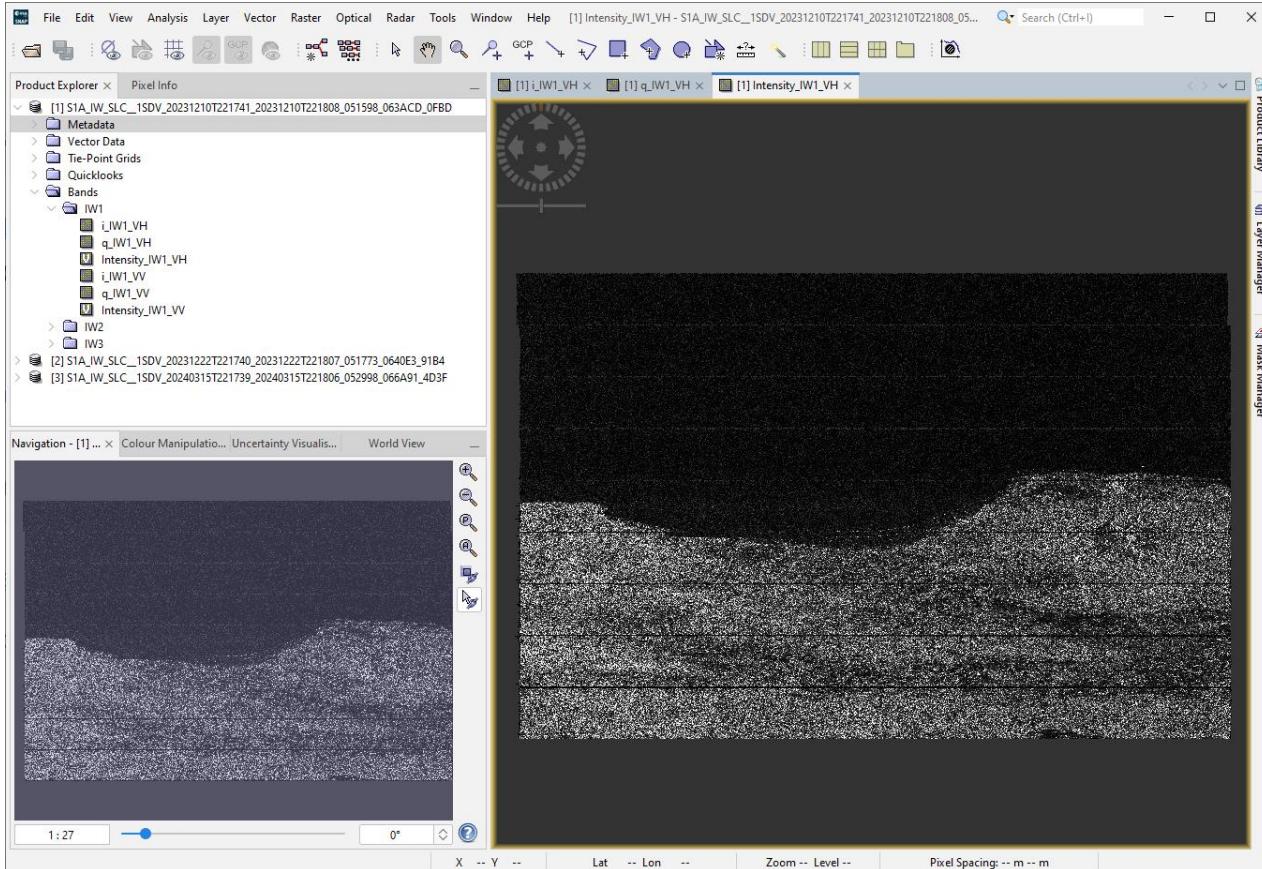


1. In the Main Menu, go to [File](#) → [Open Product...](#)
2. Browse to the location of the data. Then select all Sentinel-1 data in both archive and observe folders. Each file refers to a different acquisition date.
3. Click [Open](#)



Data Exploration in SNAP

Explore the Sentinel-1 Data



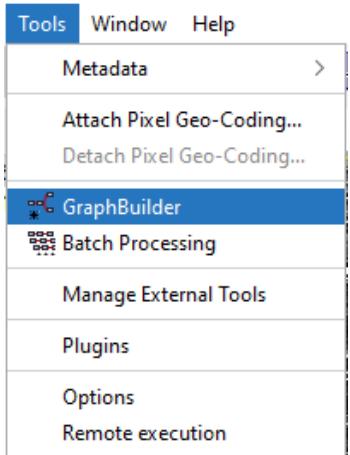
The opened products will appear in the Product Explorer window.

1. Click > to expand the contents of the product [1], then expand the Bands folder. You can see three sub-swaths (IW1, IW2, IW3). Expand one of the folder and you will see the complex data and intensity for each VH and VV polarizations.
2. Double-click on the **i_IW1_VH**, **q_IW1_VH** (complex data), and **Intensity_IW1_VH** band to visualize it. Notice there are 9 burst for each sub-swath.

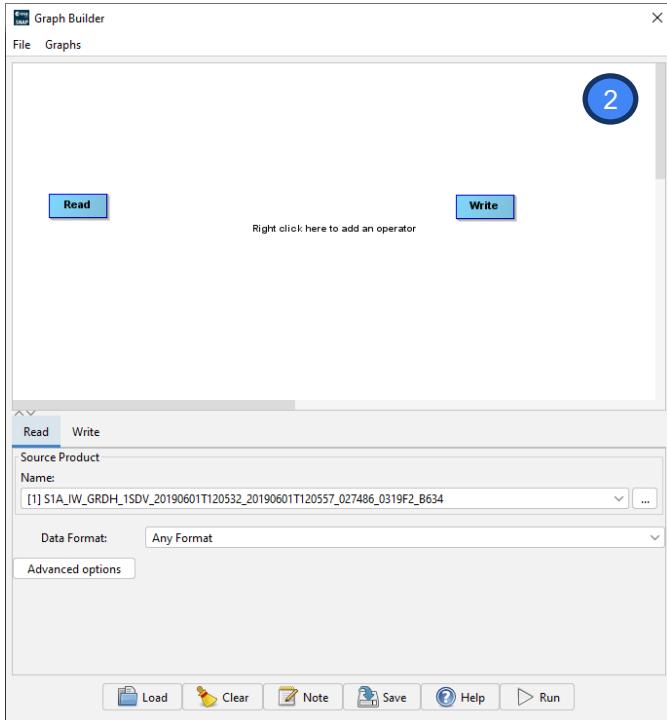
Data Processing in SNAP

Open Graph Builder

We will use the **Batch Processing** tool available in SNAP to apply all steps to both images in one go (this also saves disk space as only the final product is physically saved).



1. In the Main Menu, go to Tools → GraphBuilder



2. The **Graph Builder** window will show up.

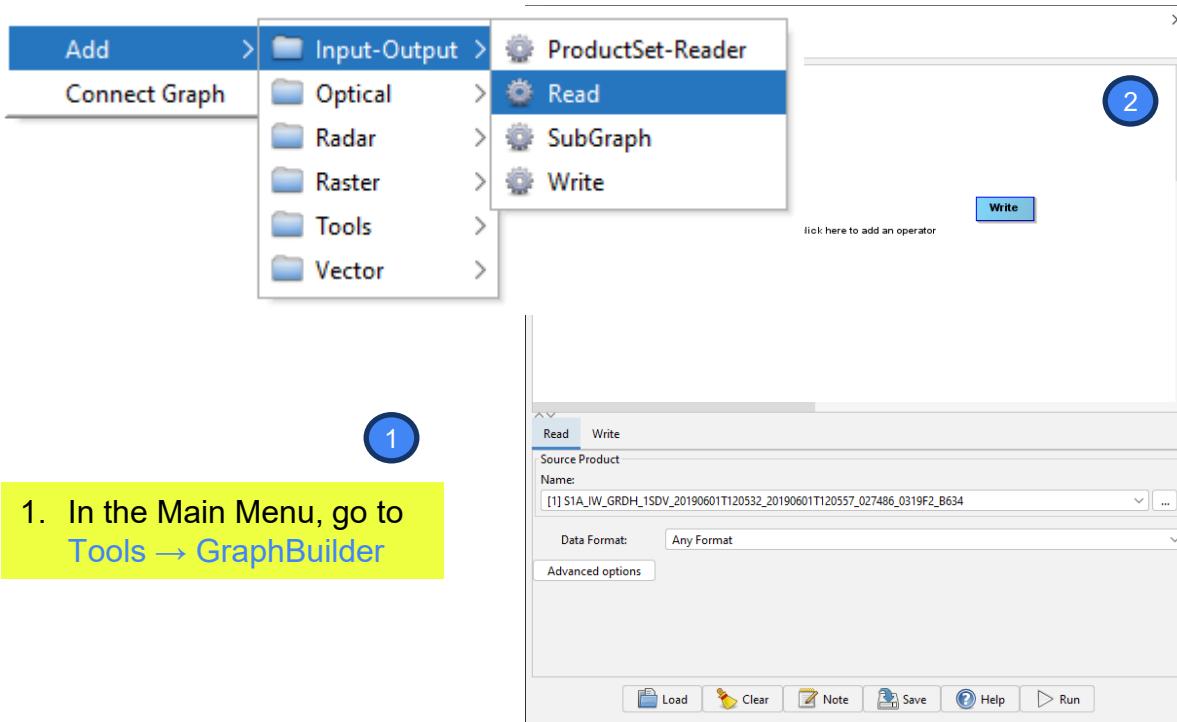
In the beginning, the graph has only two operators: **Read** (to read the input) and **Write** (to write the output). We will create a step-by-step workflow to apply identical pre-processing steps to both of our scenes.

You can delete the **Write** operator for now (Right-click on the operator and select **Delete**).

Data Processing in SNAP

Prepare Read operators

We will create two more Read operators in addition to the default one because we have three input data.



1. In the Main Menu, go to Tools → GraphBuilder

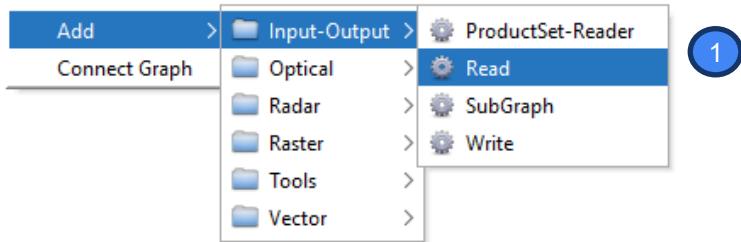
2. The **Graph Builder** window will show up.

In the beginning, the graph has only two operators: **Read** (to read the input) and **Write** (to write the output). We will create a step-by-step workflow to apply identical pre-processing steps to both of our scenes.

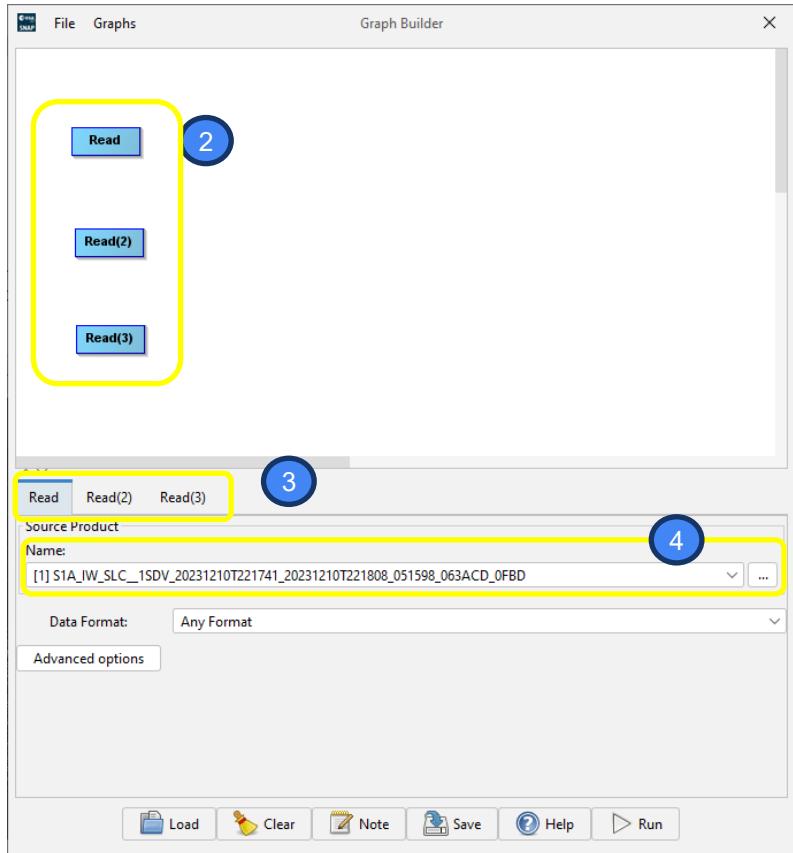
You can delete the **Write** operator for now (Right-click on the operator and select **Delete**).

Data Processing in SNAP

Prepare Read operators



1. To add the operator right-click the white space between the existing operators and go to **Add** → **Input-Output** → **Read**
2. A new **Read** operator rectangle appeared in our graph. Add one more **Read** operator.
3. Notice that a new tab also appeared below the graph.
4. In each **Read** tabs, select the scenes in the right order.
 - **Read** = **Pre-event 1 (20231210)**
 - **Read(2)** = **Post-event (20241222)**
 - **Read(3)** = **Pre-event 2 (20231222)**



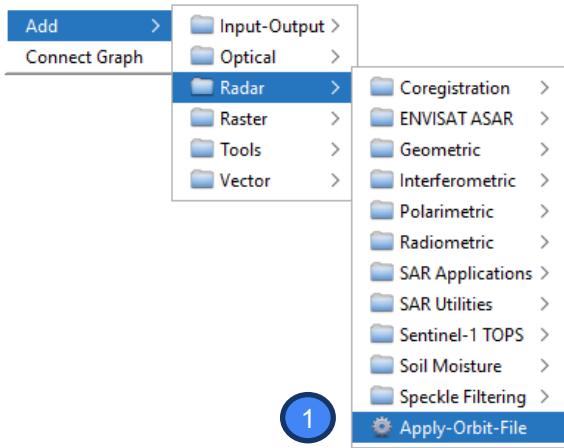
Data Processing in SNAP

Update the orbit metadata

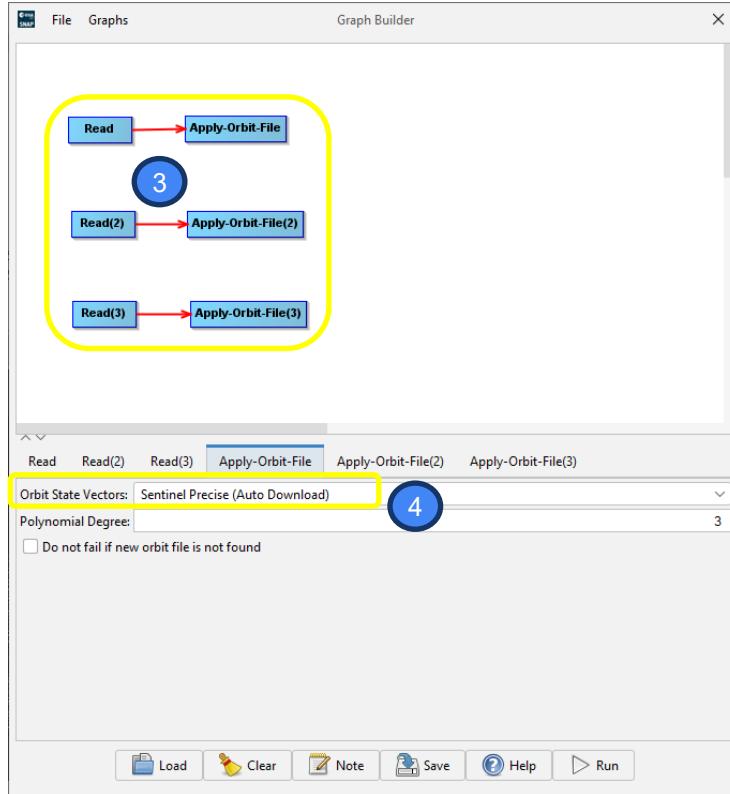
- The orbit state vectors provided in the metadata of a SAR product are generally not accurate and can be refined with the precise orbit files which are available days-to-weeks after the generation of the product.
- The orbit file provides accurate satellite position and velocity information. Based on this information, the orbit state vectors in the abstract metadata of the product are updated.

Data Processing in SNAP

Update the orbit metadata



1. Right-click the white space between the existing operators and go to **Add** → **Radar** → **Apply-Orbit-File**.



3. Now connect the new **Apply-Orbit-File** operator with the **Read** operator by clicking to the right side of the **Read** operator and dragging the red arrow towards the **Apply-Orbit-File** operator. Do the same to all.
4. Check that the new tabs appear below the graph. Choose **Sentinel Precise (Auto Download)**.

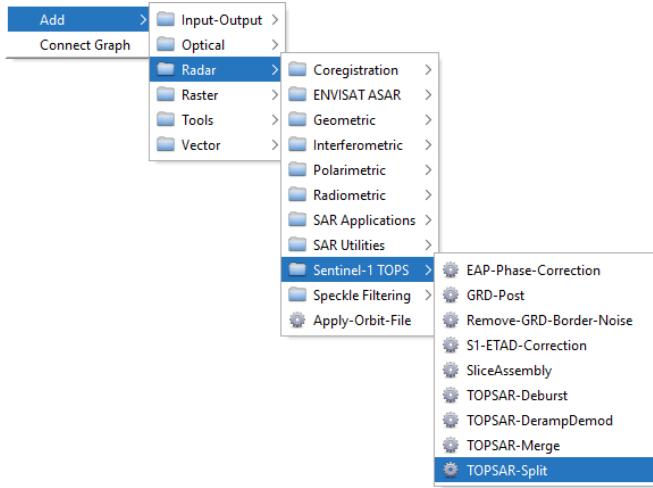
Data Processing in SNAP

TOPSAR Split

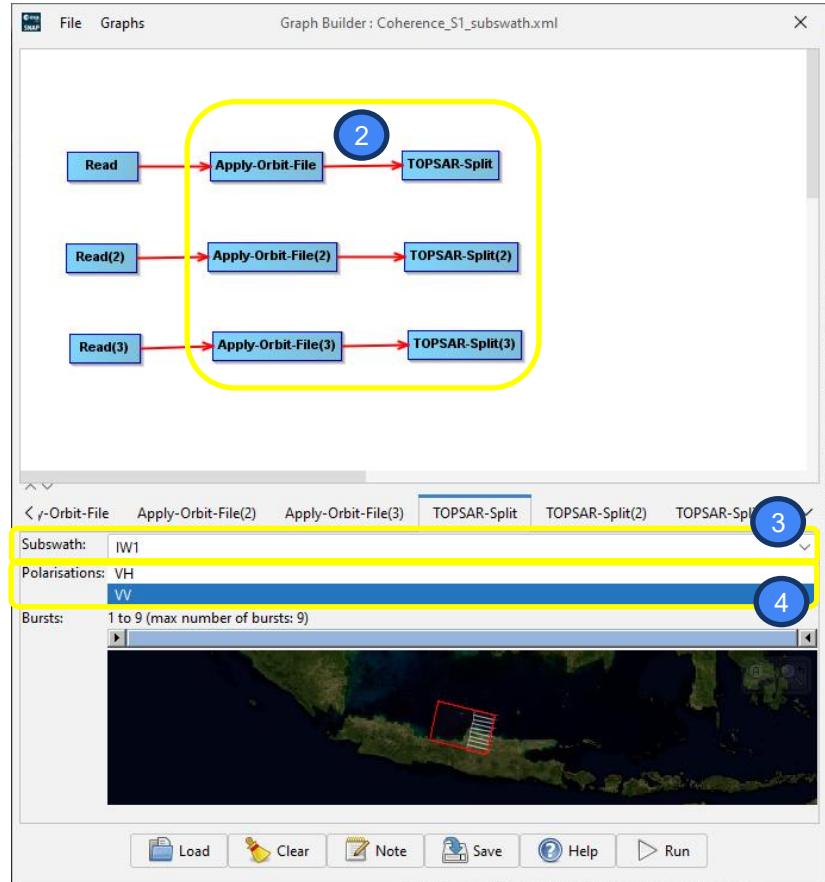
- Sentinel-1 SLC images in Interferometric Wide (IW) mode typically consist of 3 sub-swaths (IW1, IW2, IW3) — each composed of multiple bursts.
- The TOPSAR Split operator provides a convenient way to split each sub-swath with selected bursts into a separate product.
- The user may select the desired sub-swath with desired bursts and polarizations.

Data Processing in SNAP

TOPSAR Split



1. Right-click the white space between the existing operators and go to **Add** → **Radar** → **Sentinel-1 TOPS** → **TOPSAR-Split**.
2. Connect the new operator with the **Apply-Orbit-File** operators.
3. Select the Subswath: **IW1**. The positioning of the subsets is visible in the bottom map.
4. Select **VV** polarization.



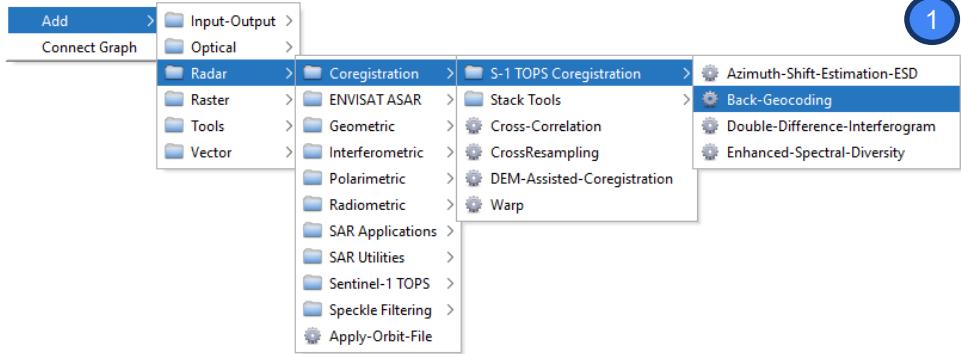
Data Processing in SNAP

Back Geocoding

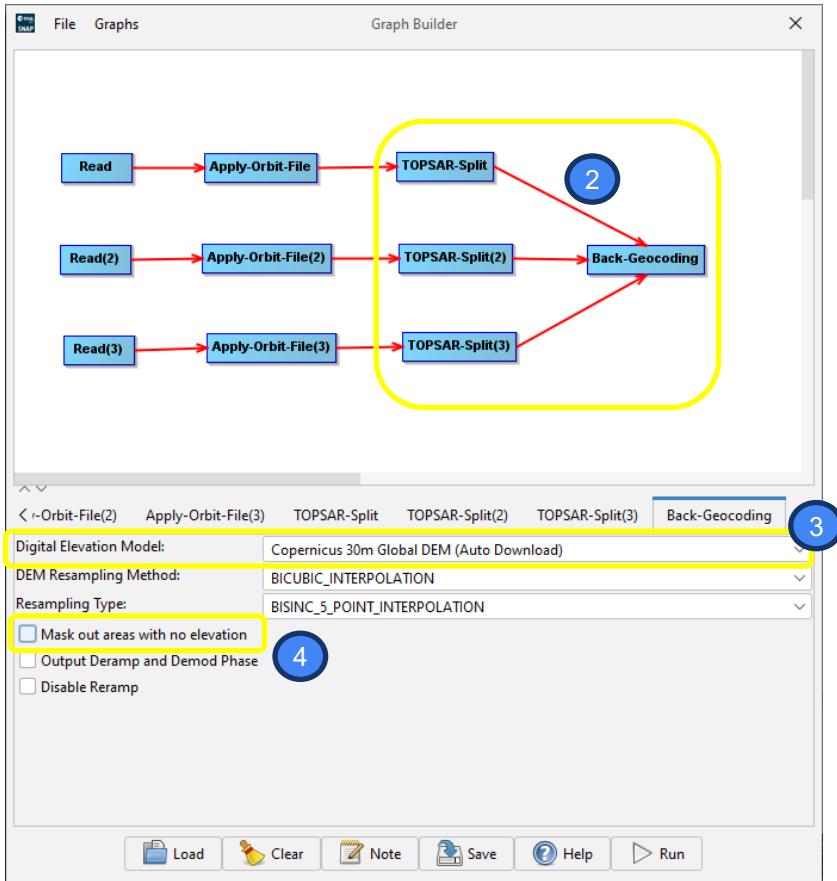
- Due to satellite movement, orbital drift, and acquisition differences, reference and secondary SLC images need to be geometrically matched.
- This operator co-registers two S-1 SLC split products (reference and secondary) of the same sub-swath using the orbits of the two products and a Digital Elevation Model (DEM).

Data Processing in SNAP

Back Geocoding



1. Right-click the white space between the existing operators and go to **Add** → **Radar** → **Coregistration** → **S1-TOPS Coregistration** → **Back Geocoding**
2. Connect the new operator with all TOPSAR-Split operators.
3. Select DEM: **Copernicus 30m**.
4. Uncheck “**Mask out areas with no elevation**”. It is recommended to avoid artefacts along the coast in the co-registered images.



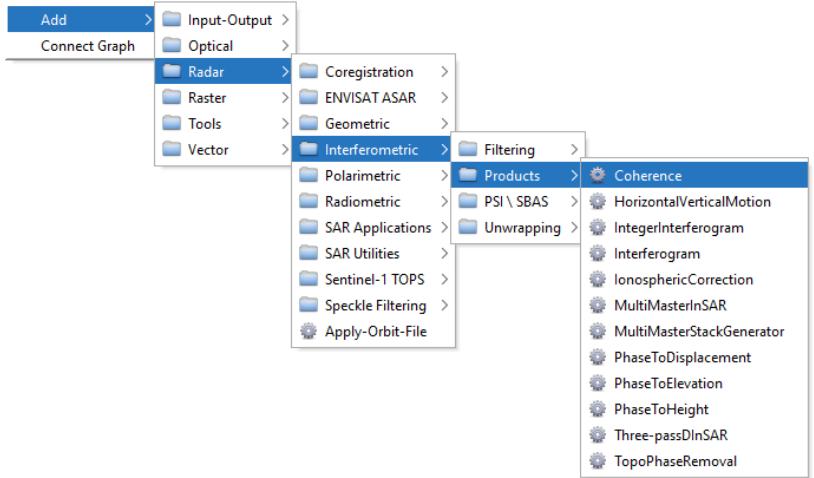
Data Processing in SNAP

Coherence Estimation

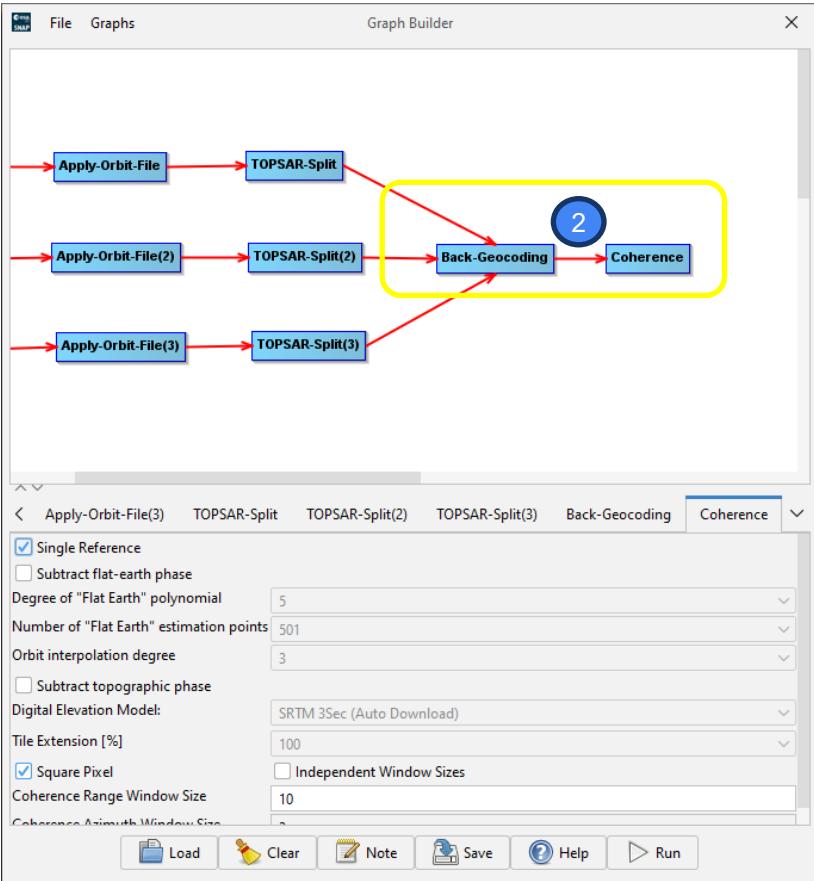
- Coherence is a measure of the similarity in radar signal phase and amplitude between two SAR images acquired at different times, for the same location.
- The Coherence Estimation operator in SNAP calculates the interferometric coherence between a pair of co-registered Sentinel-1 SLC images (reference and secondary).

Data Processing in SNAP

Coherence Estimation



1. Right-click the white space between the existing operators and go to **Add** → **Radar** → **Interferometric** → **Products** → **Coherence**
2. Connect the new operator with Back-Geocoding operator.
3. Keep the default settings.



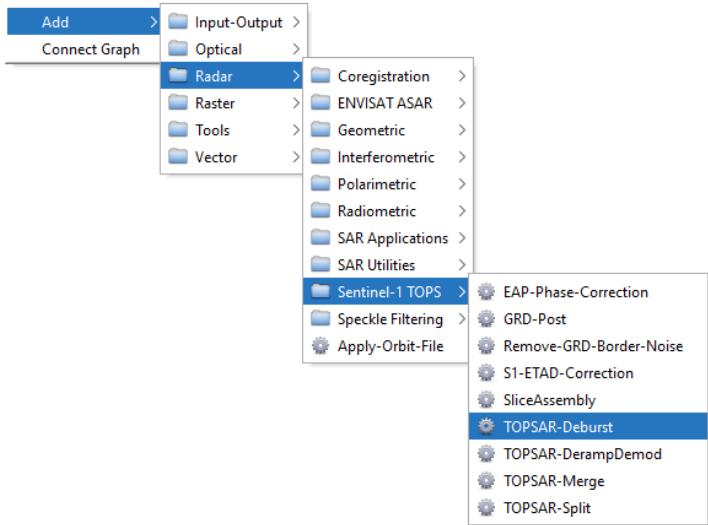
Data Processing in SNAP

TOPSAR Deburst

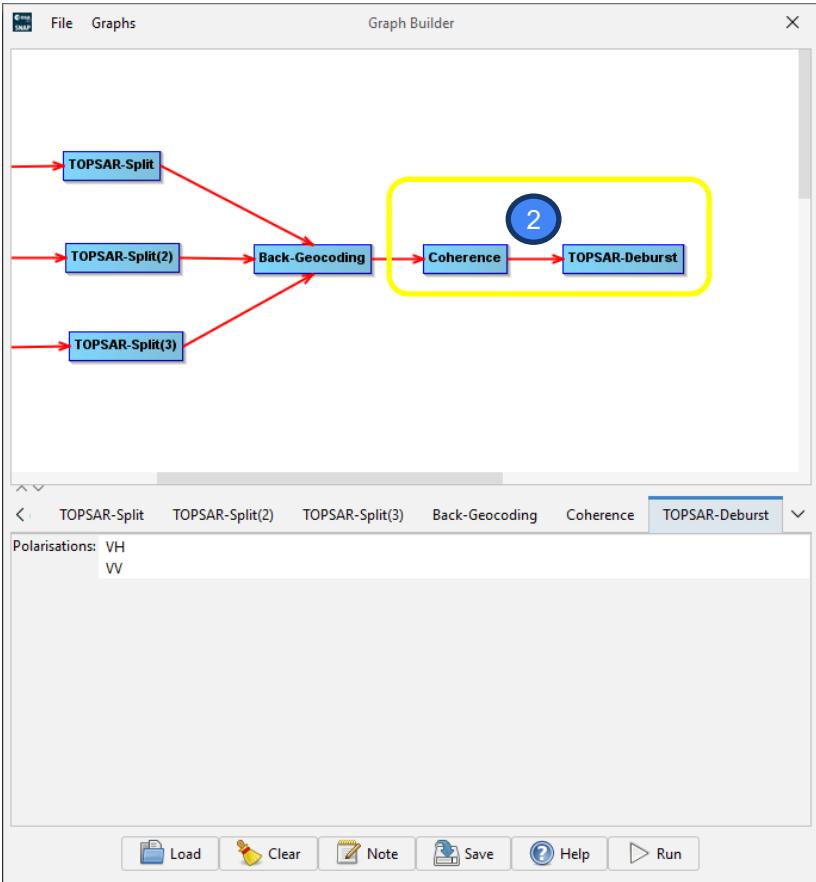
- Each sub-swath consists of a series of adjacent but slightly overlapping bursts, which can cause visible discontinuities (burst gaps) in the interferogram.
- Debursting removes those discontinuities and stitches the bursts together to create a continuous, seamless image for each sub-swath.

Data Processing in SNAP

TOPSAR Deburst



1. Right-click the white space between the existing operators and go to **Add → Radar → Sentinel-1 TOPS → TOPSAR-Deburst**
2. Connect the new operator with the Coherence operator.
3. Keep the default settings.



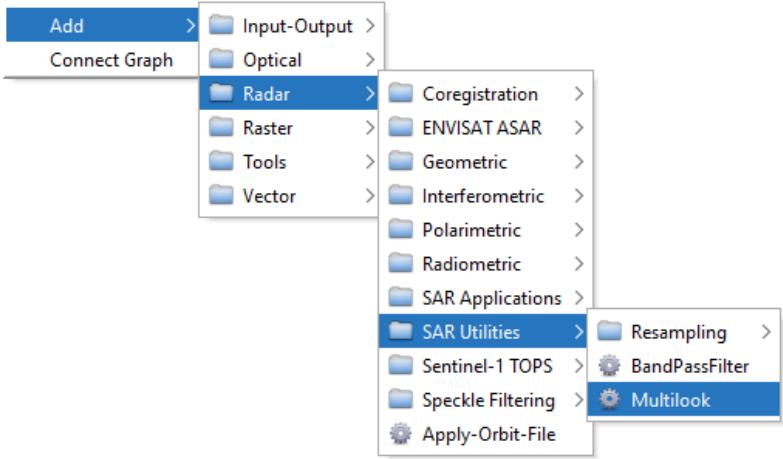
Data Processing in SNAP

Multilook

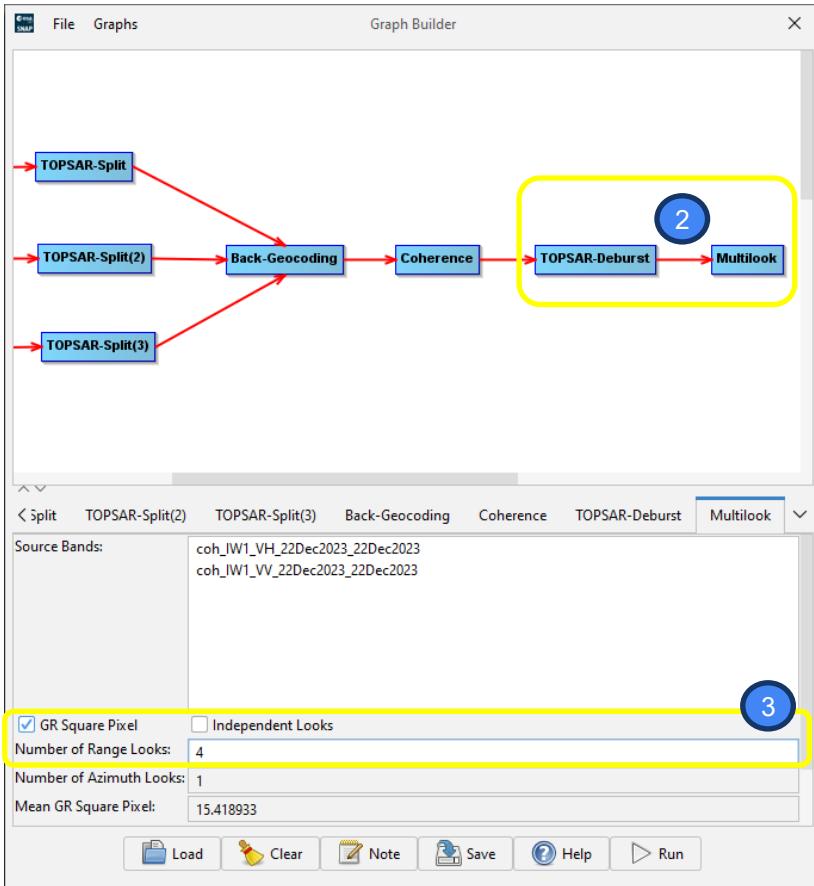
- Multilook is a SAR image processing technique used to reduce speckle noise and improve the visual appearance and radiometric quality of SAR images by averaging neighboring pixels in range and azimuth directions.
- It can be produced by space-domain averaging of a single look image or by a frequency-domain method using the sub-spectral band width.
- Additionally, multi-look processing can be used to reduce the image pixel size.

Data Processing in SNAP

Multilook



1. Right-click the white space between the existing operators and go to [Add](#) → [Radar](#) → [SAR Utilities](#) → [Multilook](#)
2. Connect the new operator with the TOPSAR-Deburst operator.
3. Specify the Number of Range Looks: **4**. If you check the GR Square Pixel option, the range and azimuth spacings are approximately the same in the multilooked image.



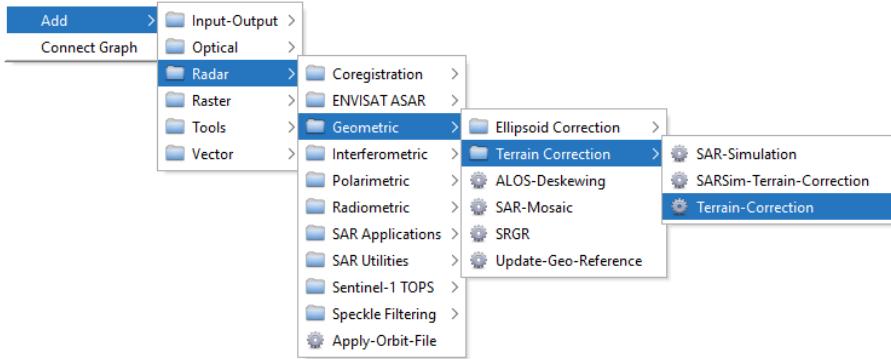
Data Processing in SNAP

Terrain Correction

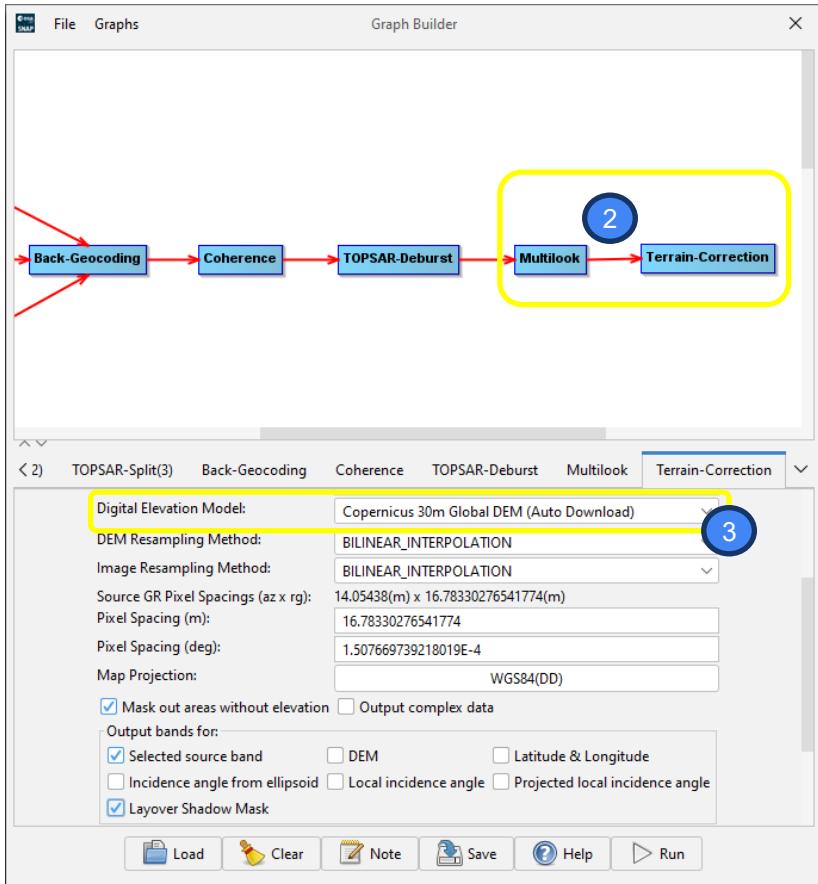
- Due to topographical variations of a scene and the tilt of the satellite sensor, distances can be distorted in the SAR images.
- Image data not directly at the sensor's Nadir location will have some distortion.
- Terrain corrections are intended to compensate for these distortions so that the geometric representation of the image will be as close as possible to the real world.
- The Range Doppler Terrain Correction Operator implements the Range Doppler orthorectification method for geocoding SAR images from a single 2D raster radar geometry.

Data Processing in SNAP

Terrain Correction

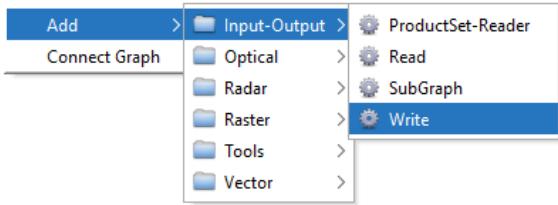


1. Right-click the white space between the existing operators and go to [Add](#) → [Radar](#) → [Geometric](#) → [Terrain Correction](#) → [Terrain-Correction](#)
2. Connect the new operator with the Multilook operator.
3. Select DEM: [Copernicus 30m](#).

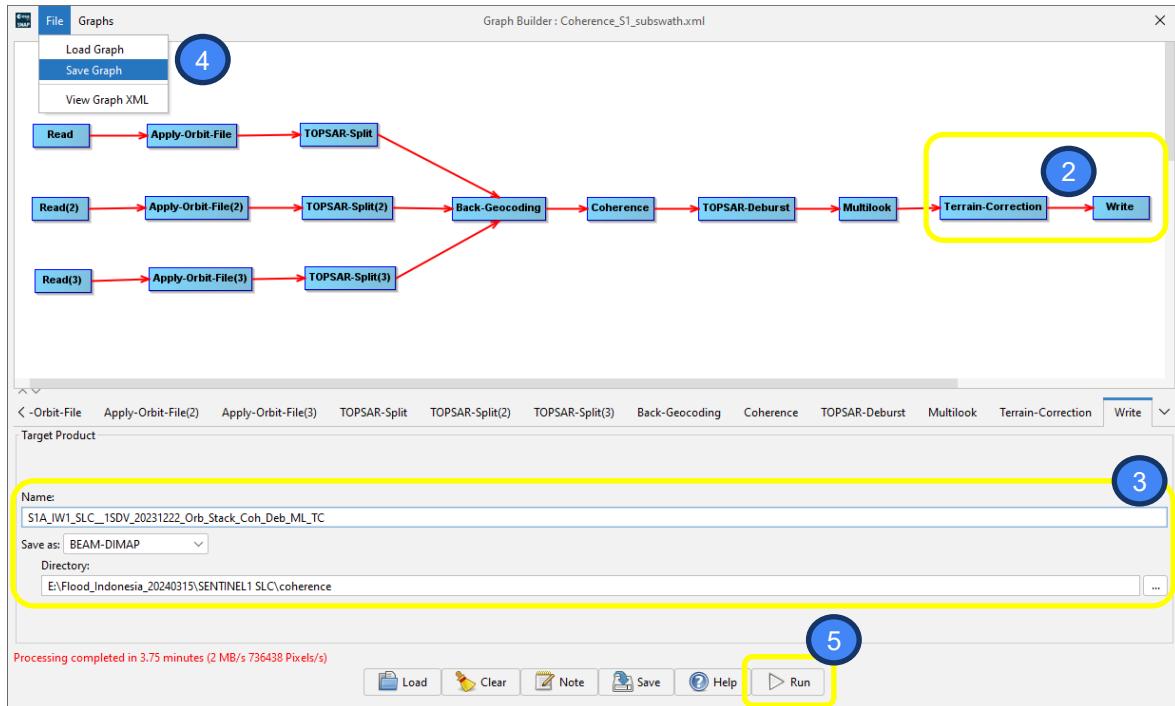


Data Processing in SNAP

Terrain Correction



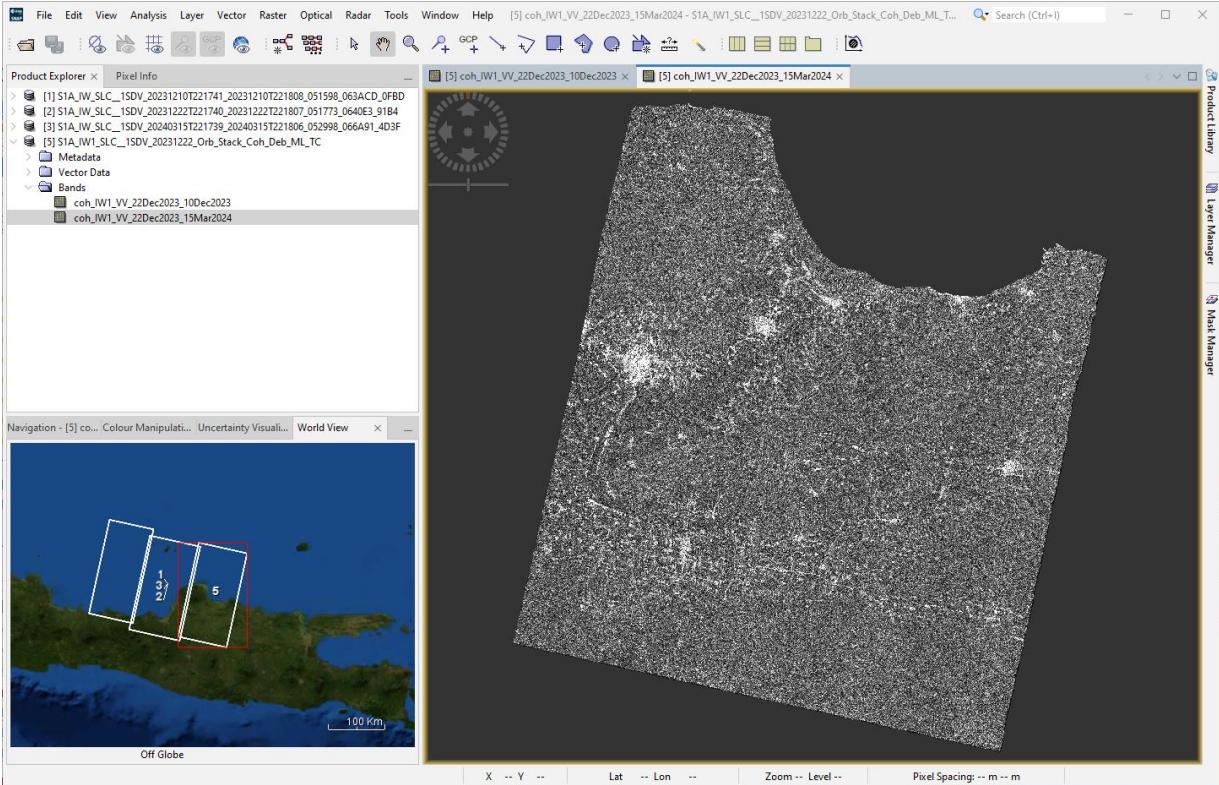
1. Let's complete the graph with the output. Right-click the white space between the existing operators and go to [Add → Input-Output → Write](#)
2. Connect the new operator with the Terrain-Correction operator.
3. Save and change the output directory: [S1A_IW1_SLC_1SDV_20231222_Orb_Stack_Coh_Deb_ML_TC](#)
4. Save the graph, go to [File → Save Graph](#) in the Graph Builder Main Menu: [Coherence_S1_subswath.xml](#)
5. Now that all settings are completed. [Run](#) the Graph.



Here, the processing completed in **~3-4 minutes** (depending on your PC/laptop)

Data Processing in SNAP

Output: Coherence



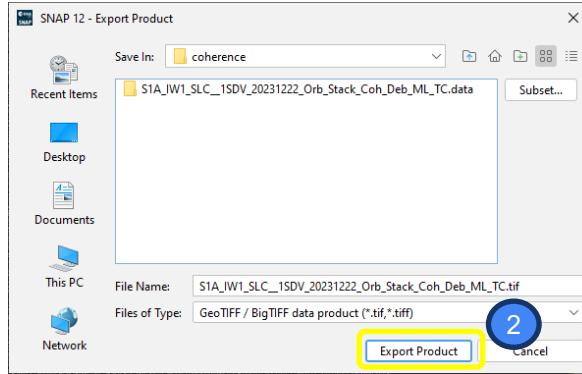
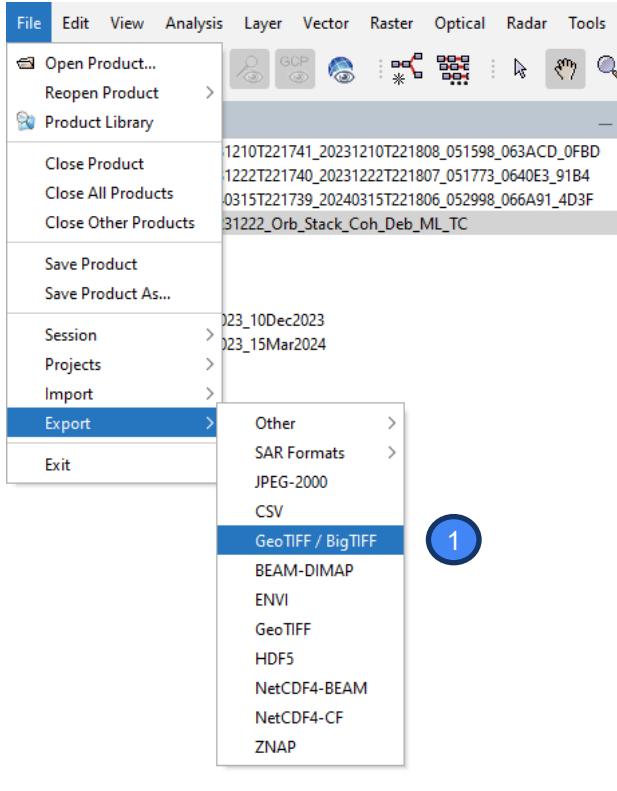
The coherence products will appear in the Product Explorer window.

1. Click $>$ to expand the contents of the product [1], then expand the Bands folder. You can see the coherence of pre-event (t_2-t_1) and post-event (t_2-t_3). Make sure the combinations are correct.
2. Double-click on both coherence bands to visualize them.

Note: If you have time, you can run the Graph again to process coherence for sub-swath IW2. This sub-swath covers the Semarang area.

Data Processing in SNAP

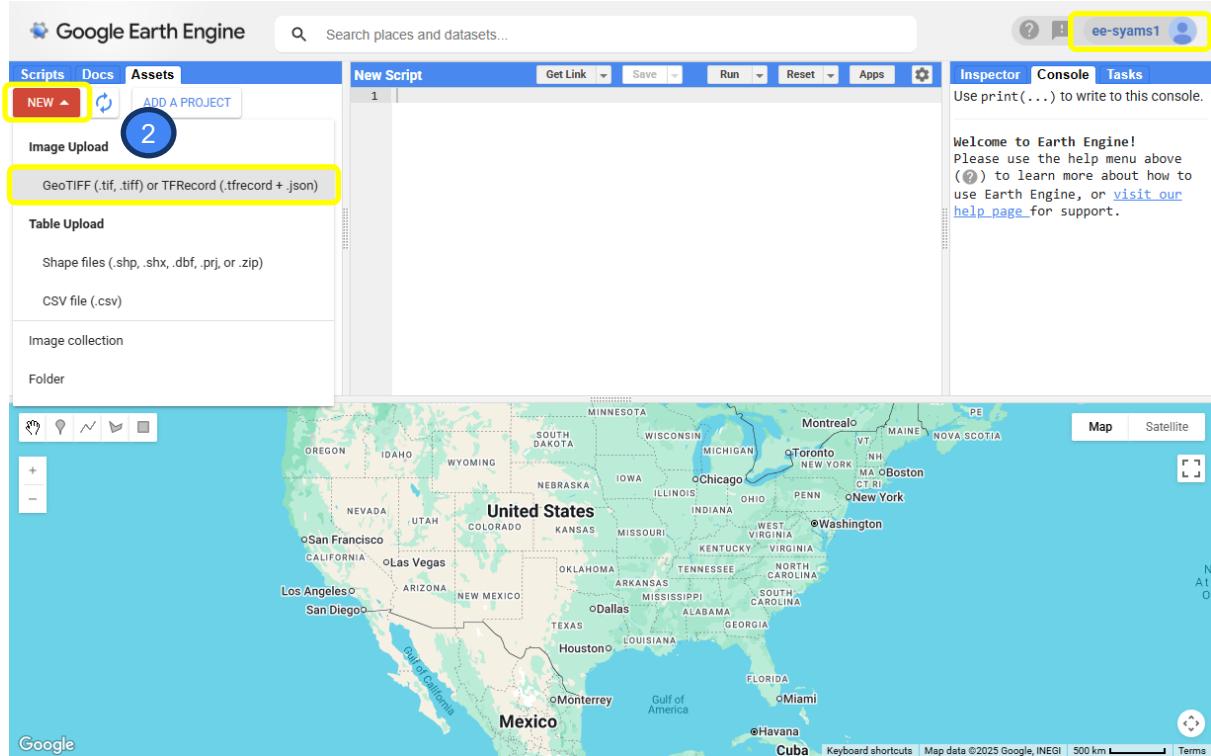
Save the output to GeoTIFF



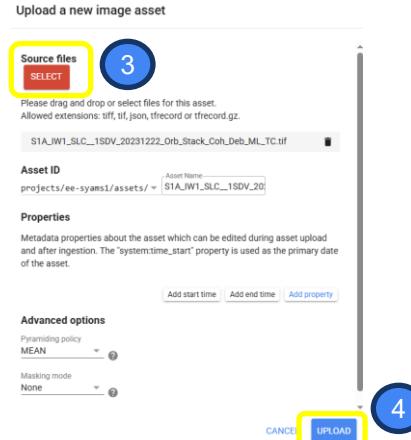
1. While the output layer is selected, go to **File → Export → GeoTIFF/BigTIFF**.
2. Click **Export Product** to save the output.

Data Processing in Google Earth Engine (GEE)

Load the coherence product to the GEE assets



The screenshot shows the Google Earth Engine interface. On the left, the 'Assets' tab is selected, with a 'NEW' button highlighted by a yellow box and a blue circle labeled '1'. The 'Image Upload' section is also highlighted with a yellow box and a blue circle labeled '2'. The central area shows a 'New Script' editor with a 'GeoTIFF (.tif, .tiff) or TFRecord (.tfrecord + .json)' input field highlighted with a yellow box and a blue circle labeled '3'. The right side shows the 'Inspector' tab with a 'Welcome to Earth Engine!' message and a map of the United States. A yellow box highlights the 'ee-syams1' user profile in the top right corner.

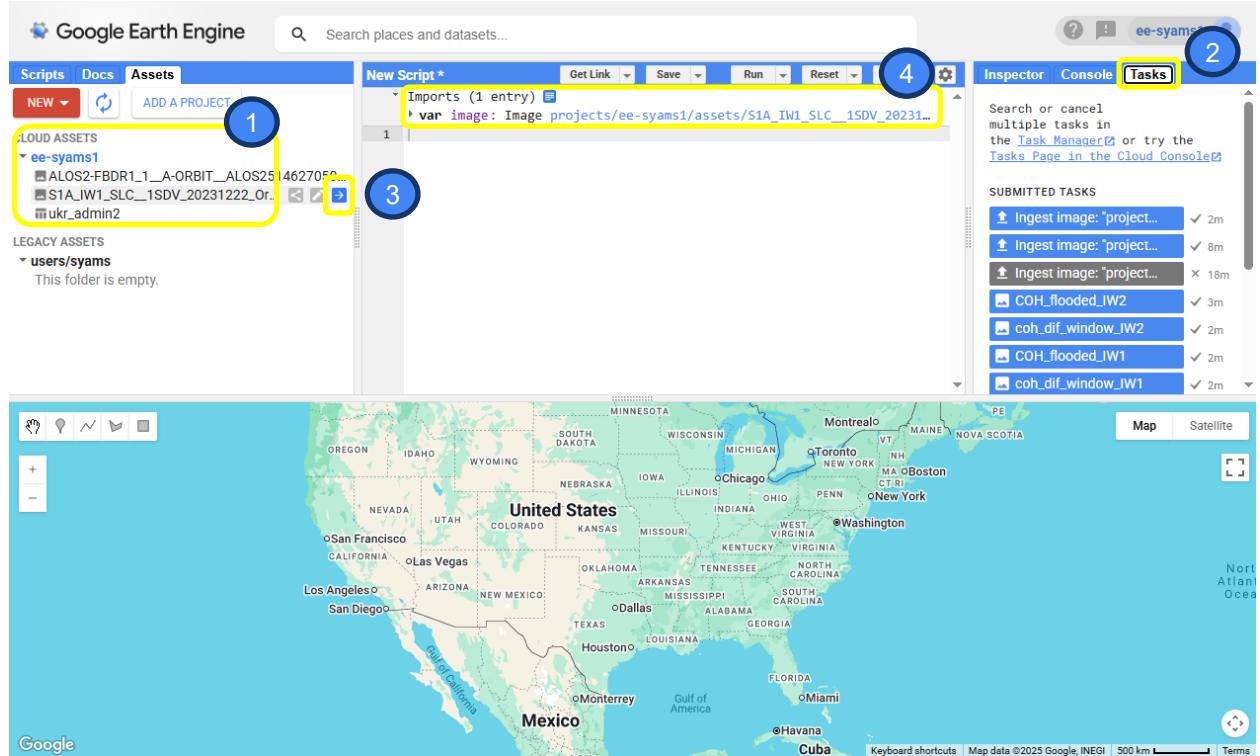


The screenshot shows the 'Upload a new image asset' dialog box. It includes a 'Source files' section with a 'SELECT' button highlighted with a yellow box and a blue circle labeled '3'. The 'Asset ID' section shows 'projects/ee-syams1/assets/' and the file 'S1A_IW1_SLC_1SDV_20231222_Orb_Stack_Coh_Deb_ML_TC.tif'. The 'Properties' section includes 'Advanced options' for 'Parametric policy' (set to 'MEAN') and 'Masking mode' (set to 'None'). A yellow box highlights the 'UPLOAD' button in the bottom right corner, which is labeled with a blue circle labeled '4'.

1. Login to your GEE account.
2. Go to the [Assets](#) tab, then click [NEW](#) and [GeoTIFF](#).
3. Click [SELECT](#) and upload the [GeoTIFF](#) coherence product from SNAP.
4. Click [UPLOAD](#).

Data Processing in Google Earth Engine (GEE)

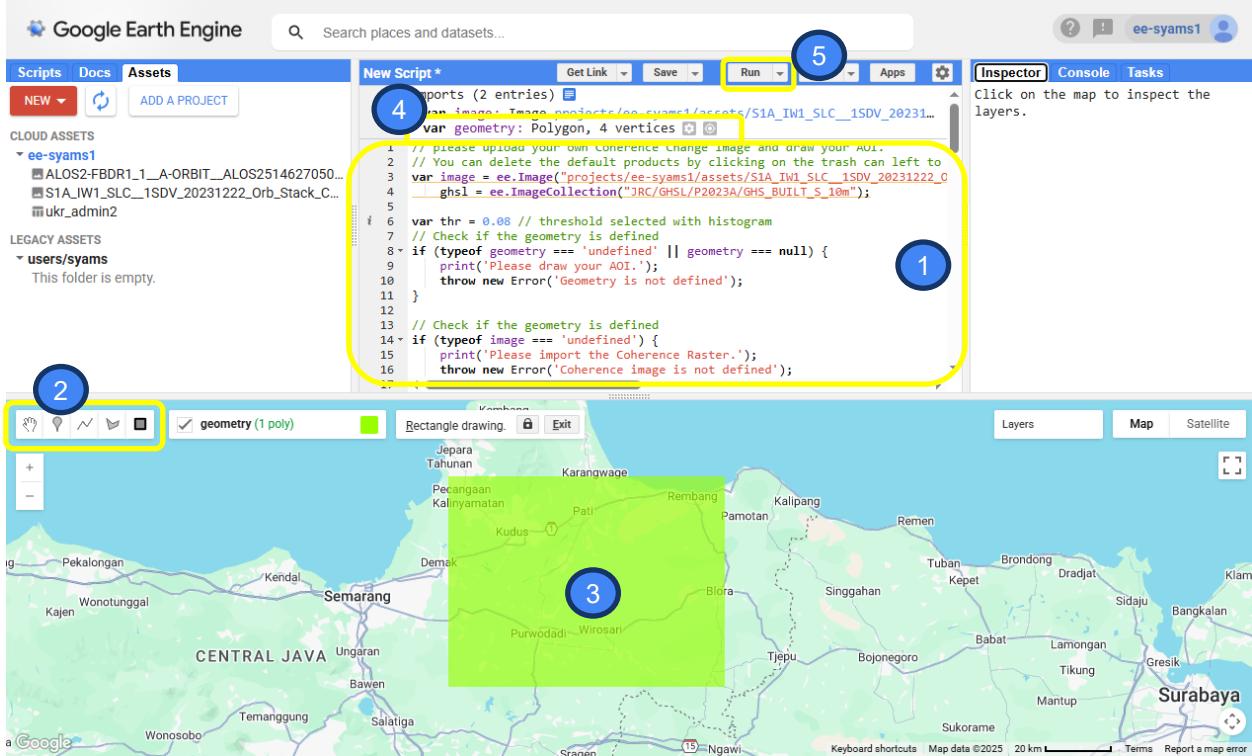
Import the coherence product to the GEE script window



- Once uploading is complete, it will be available as **Cloud Assets**. You may have to click restart  to see the product on the **Assets** tab.
- Check the **Tasks** tab to check the uploading status.
- Import into the script by clicking .
- You see the image imported into the script window.

Data Processing in Google Earth Engine (GEE)

Copy the script and create an AOI



1. Copy the prepared script to the Script window.
2. We can create the area of interest using the tools available on the top-left Map window.
3. Draw a polygon on the Map window.
4. The created area of interest will be visible in the Script window.
5. Run the script.

Data Processing in Google Earth Engine (GEE)

Script description



```
// please upload your own Coherence Change Image and draw your AOI.  
// You can delete the default products by clicking on the trash can left to the import.  
var image = ee.Image("projects/ee-syams1/assets/S1A_IW1_SLC_1SDV_20231222_Orb_Stack_Coh_Deb_ML_TC"),  
    ghsl = ee.ImageCollection("JRC/GHSL/P2023A/GHS_BUILT_S_10m");
```

The script imports two datasets:

- A **coherence change image** from Sentinel-1 SAR, uploaded as an Earth Engine asset. Change the path accordingly to the location of your coherence product.
- The **Global Human Settlement Layer (GHSL)** 2023 built-up area dataset at 10-meter resolution from the JRC, representing global built-up surfaces.

```
var thr = 0.08 // threshold selected with histogram
```

This line of code defines a threshold value, which was selected based on inspecting a histogram of the image's pixel values. It will be used later in the script to classify or mask areas, identifying areas with coherence values above 0.08 as changed (flooded) and those below as unchanged. You can change the **number** accordingly.

Data Processing in Google Earth Engine (GEE)

Script description



```
// Check if the geometry is defined
if (typeof geometry === 'undefined' || geometry === null) {
  print('Please draw your AOI.');
  throw new Error('Geometry is not defined');
}

// Check if the geometry is defined
if (typeof image === 'undefined') {
  print('Please import the Coherence Raster.');
  throw new Error('Coherence image is not defined');
}

var built_total = ghsl.select('built_surface');
var ccd_vis = {min: 0, max: 1, bands: ['b1', 'b2', 'b2']}; // RGB Visualization
var builtup_vis = {min: 0.0, max: 100.0, palette: ['000000', 'FFFFFF']};
var populationCountVis = {
  min: 0.0,
  max: 100.0,
  palette:
    ['000004', '320A5A', '781B6C', 'BB3654', 'EC6824', 'FBB41A', 'FCFFA4']
};

Map.addLayer(image, ccd_vis, 'Coherence Change detection', 1);
Map.addLayer(built_total.first().clip(geometry), builtup_vis, 'Built-up surface [m^2], 2018', 0);
```

The script sets up error handling for missing inputs and defines color palettes for displaying raster data layers. It also adds the coherence change image and built-up surface layers to the map display in Earth Engine

Data Processing in Google Earth Engine (GEE)

Script description



```
// create Mask from Built up layer with buffer

var built_up = built_total.first().clip(geometry).gte(1);
var builtup_res = built_up.reduceResolution({
  reducer:ee.Reducer.mean(),
  maxPixels: 1024
})
.reproject({
  crs: image.projection()
})

var coh_dif = image.select('b1').subtract(image.select('b2'))
coh_dif = coh_dif.updateMask(builtup_res)

Map.addLayer(coh_dif, {min: -0.3, max: 0.3, palette:['blue', 'white', 'red']}, 'Coherence Difference', 0)

var coh_dif_window = coh_dif.reduceNeighborhood({
  reducer: ee.Reducer.median(), // potentially other statistic
  kernel: ee.Kernel.square(10) // is this in pixels?
});
Map.addLayer(coh_dif_window, {min: -0.4, max: 0.4, palette:['blue', 'white', 'red']}, 'Coherence Difference in Moving window', 1)
```

This script focuses on analyzing coherence differences within built-up areas, visualizing raw differences, and a smoothed version using a moving window to highlight local patterns of change.

Data Processing in Google Earth Engine (GEE)

Script description



```
// Plot Value Distribution
var chart =
  ui.Chart.image.histogram({image: coh_dif_window, region: geometry, scale: 50,
  minBucketWidth: 0.002, maxBuckets: 100})
  .setOptions({
    title: 'Histogram',
    hAxis: {
      title: 'Coherence Difference',
      titleTextStyle: {italic: false, bold: true},
    },
    vAxis: {
      title: 'Count', titleTextStyle: {italic: false, bold: true}},
    colors: ['cf513e']
  });
print(chart);

var flooded = coh_dif_window.gte(ee.Image.constant(thr))
Map.addLayer(flooded, {min: 0, max: 1, palette:['white', 'blue']}, 'Flooded')
```

This section visualizes the distribution of coherence differences in a histogram and maps areas likely affected by flooding based on a threshold applied to the smoothed coherence difference layer.

Data Processing in Google Earth Engine (GEE)

Script description



```
// Mask urban density layer JRC with Flood Layer
// Or some how multiply the two layers
var pop2025 = ee.Image('JRC/GHSL/P2023A/GHS_POP/2020');
// pop2025 = pop2025.clip(geometry).updateMask(flooded)
pop2025 = built_total.first().updateMask(flooded) // higher accuracy in dense urban areas?

Map.addLayer(pop2025, populationCountVis, 'Population count in affected Areas', 0);
```

This section overlays the flood extent on built-up areas to visualize where built-up (and likely populated) areas are affected by flooding — serving as a proxy for estimating population exposure within flooded urban zones.

Data Processing in Google Earth Engine (GEE)

Script description



```
// Exports
// Moving Window
Export.image.toDrive({
  image: coh_dif_window,
  description: 'coh_dif_window',
  fileNamePrefix: 'coh_dif_window',
  region: geometry,
  folder: 'UrbanFloods_COH',
  scale: 20,
  maxPixels: 1e13
});
// Moving Window
Export.image.toDrive({
  image: flooded,
  description: 'COH_flooded',
  fileNamePrefix: 'COH_flooded',
  region: geometry,
  folder: 'UrbanFloods_COH',
  scale: 20,
  maxPixels: 1e13
});
```

This final section saves the final processed flood and coherence difference results as GeoTIFF images to Google Drive for external use.

THANK YOU

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