

# **VULNERABILITY ANALYSIS OF REGIONAL FLOOD HAZARD BASED ON MODIS IMAGERY AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA IN THE HUAIIHE RIVER BASIN, CHINA**

Nanshan Zheng<sup>1</sup>, Kaoru Takara<sup>2</sup>, Yasuto Tachikawa<sup>3</sup> and Osamu Koza<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Student, Department of Urban and Environmental Engineering, Kyoto University  
Kyoto, 615-8540, Japan, e-mail: zhengnanshan@z05rcl.mbox.media.kyoto-u.ac.jp

<sup>2</sup> Professor, Disaster Prevention Research Institute, Kyoto University, Uji, 611-0011, Japan

<sup>3</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Urban and Environmental Engineering, Kyoto University  
Kyoto, 615-8540, Japan

<sup>4</sup> Assistant Professor, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, Kyoto University, Japan

## **ABSTRACT**

Information on spatial distribution of potential flood extent, land use and land cover as well as population is significant to analyze vulnerability to flood hazard. Taking the typical flood event of the year 2003 occurred in the Huaihe River basin, China, this paper analyses the spatial extent and temporal pattern of flood inundation with the application of time-series Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) composite data products with the spatial resolution of 250m. Meanwhile land use classification generated by multi-temporal MODIS NDVI 16-day composite data is presented. Based on the resultant MODIS-derived flood inundation mapping, a method to identify the people at risk vulnerable to flooding is proposed, and the distribution of population affected by flooding is derived. Finally the flood hazard vulnerability is analyzed by a spatial analysis method, which is helpful to assess flood hazard vulnerability in the further study.

*Keywords:* vulnerability, flood hazard, MODIS, NDVI, spatial analysis

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Floods are known as frequent and most devastating events worldwide. Asia continent is much affected by floods and the countries like China, India, and Bangladesh are extremely vulnerable (WWAP, 2006). The impacts of hazardous events are often exacerbated by the interactions with other hazards or by occurring in areas with a high density population and/or social vulnerability. Thus the need for a spatially oriented vulnerability assessment is highlighted. For example, Birkmann (2006) stressed the need for a paradigm shift from the quantification and analysis of the hazard to the identification, assessment and ranking of vulnerability. In this regard, vulnerability has emerged as the most critical research field in disaster studies. Although vulnerability is a multidimensional and multivariate concept associated with high uncertainty in measurement and classification, land use and population are the key components of exposure for flood hazard vulnerability analysis. Large scale flooding due to heavy rainfall and drainage congestion has been regularly experiencing in the floodplain area of the Huaihe River basin, China. The summer dominant rainfall and special topographic conditions make the region highly vulnerable to flooding. In this research, taking the Huaihe River basin as case study, the main objective is to study the vulnerability based on land use and land cover as well as demographic data.

Geo-referenced land use and land cover (LULC) data sets are primary inputs for

environmental modeling and monitoring, natural resource management, and policy development. Over the past decade, the science of large-area LULC mapping has made considerable strides as remotely sensed data and computing resources have improved and advanced classification techniques have emerged (DeFries and Belward, 2000).

Furthermore the identification of potential hazard is essential in describing biophysical vulnerability. Thus a typical historical flood event is taken to supply the prerequisite information. For detecting large flooded areas, satellite remote sensing provides powerful techniques. Many studies have been undertaken in these research fields with the application of a range of satellite data sources, such as Landsat, IKONOS, SPOT, NOAA-AVHRR and RADARSAT SAR data. However large-area mapping using for example Landsat data has been limited by the considerable costs of acquiring and processing the large data volumes that are required. For a severe flood occurring in a large area, MODIS data products (Huete et al., 1999) offer a great opportunity to acquire the expected information.

In the paper, some research points are addressed: (1) The identification of regional scale flood and the classification of land use and land cover with the application of time-series MODIS NDVI composite imagery; (2) Estimation of the population distribution at flood risk based on flood event analysis; and (3) Brief analysis of flood hazard vulnerability. It is hypothesized that regional differences in flood hazard vulnerability are best explained by the exposure components such as land use and population.

## 2. STUDY AREA

The Huaihe River basin (HRB) is situated in eastern China, which is one of the seven major river basins in China (Fig. 1). Geographically, it locates between the latitude  $31^{\circ}\text{N}$ - $36^{\circ}\text{N}$  and longitude  $112^{\circ}\text{E}$ - $121^{\circ}\text{E}$ , covering an area of  $270,000\text{km}^2$ . HRB is composed of two water systems, which are the Huaihe River to the south of the old Yellow River and the Yishusi River to the north. The catchment area of the Huaihe River water system is  $190,000\text{km}^2$ , accounting for about 70% of the total area of the basin. The Huaihe River originates from the Tongbo Mountain, and flows into the Yangtze River with the length of approximately 1000 km. A large amount of area is plain area (Fujiyoshi and Yihui, 2006).

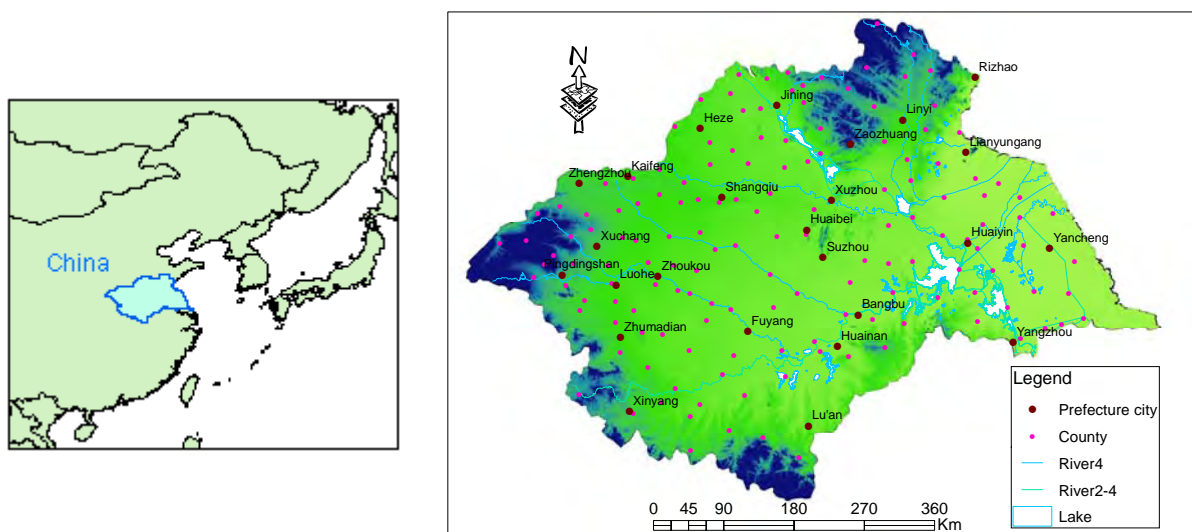


Fig. 1 The location of the Huaihe River basin (The left small figure shows the location of study area in China.)

Climatologically, it lies in the warm semi-humid monsoon region. Precipitation mainly occurs in the period from mid-May to mid-October. Because of anomalies of the Meiyu front during the rainy season, which is influenced by the South Asian monsoon and the unique topography, the basin has been known for its frequent disasters.

Moreover, this region is populous with the population density of 663 capita per km<sup>2</sup> in 2003, where the population accounts for 13% of the nation's population and there is 17% of the country's cultivated land (Anhui Statistical Yearbook, 2004). Therefore it is of great socio-economic importance.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The goal of this study is to analyze the vulnerability to flood hazard in terms of land use and demographic data. In order to acquire the spatial information for large area about flood inundation as well as land use and land cover, the MODIS composite products have been utilized. The fundamental methodology is shown in figure 2.

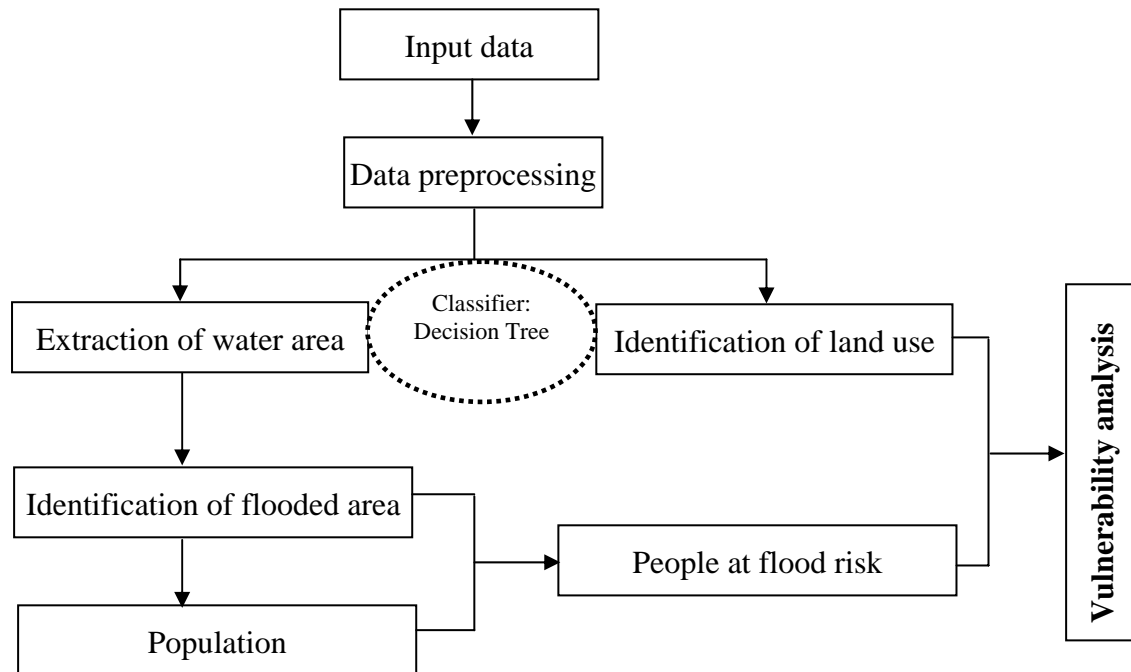


Fig. 2 The flowchart to study on the flood hazard vulnerability

#### MODIS image data

NASA's Earth Observing System (EOS) has supplied a suite of standard MODIS data products to the users, in this research the "MOD13Q1 V004" MODIS satellite products are adopted, which are the 16-day composite 250-m Vegetation index (VI) data downloaded from NASA MODIS website (<http://modis.gsfc.nasa.gov/data>). The MODIS VIs provide a consistent spatial and temporal coverage of vegetation conditions and complement each other for vegetation studies (Huete et al., 2002). The time series per year is composed of 23 images, each of which covers an area of 1200 km by 1200 km. Two tiles (h27v05, h28v05) of the MODIS data are required for the study area. The NDVI and EVI MODIS products were geometrically, atmospherically and bidirectional reflectance distribution fraction (BRDF) corrected, validated and quality assured through the EOS program (Huete et al. 2002). For each composite data, the VI data are extracted by tile, mosaicked, and reprojected from the

Sinusoidal (SIN) to Albers Equal Area Conic projection according to a nearest neighbour re-sampling routine, and finally combined into a multilayer image stack with the spatial resolution of 250 m.

Due to the lack of field observations, Google Earth images across the study area are adopted to supply ground truth points. Time-series VI data are sampled and analyzed from the sites of specific land use classifications in the study area.

### Multi-temporal NDVI profiles

The VI profiles represent the temporal plant canopy responses to soil, plant and water regime combinations within the study area for each period. The multi-temporal VI profile of a specific land use and land cover type is applied to analyze and compare to each other in order to determine the classification. In additions, regional variations in each kind of land use type are also considered.

Thus, in this study the index such as NDVI, EVI and resultant NDWI sampled dispersedly from composite imagery data have been shown in figure 2, where six categories of land use and land cover have been considered according to the research requirement and biophysical conditions. Each general land use category has unique multi-temporal NDVI and EVI profiles.

This study mainly relies on the NDVI profiles to detect the land use and land cover classification because both NDVI and EVI show the similar characteristic for each land use as demonstrated in Fig. 3.

### Data pre-processing for NDVI time series

Many analysis methods have been developed to detect land use classification with the application of NDVI time-series data. After NASA launched the MODIS, a variety of time-series data have been available. However, these time-series data inevitably contain disturbances caused by cloud presence, atmospheric variability and snow. Noise has bad effect on the analysis. A couple of automated methods for de-noising have been proposed to reconstruct high quality NDVI time-series data, such as the best index slope extraction (BISE) algorithm (Viovy et al., 1992; Kozan et al., 2004), the Savitzky-Golay filter approach (Savitzky et al., 1964), wavelet method and some other interpolation methods.

In this research, an adaptive Savitzky-Golay filter has been tested, which is one way of smoothing data and suppressing disturbances. The filtering equation is shown as below (William et al., 1992).

$$g_i = \sum_{n=-n_L}^{n_R} c_n f_{i+n} \quad (1)$$

Here  $n_L$  is the number of points used “to the left” of a data point  $i$ , i.e., earlier than it, while  $n_R$  is the number used to the right, i.e., later.  $f_i$  is the time series.  $c_n$  is the filter coefficient.  $g_i$  is the result.

After sampling VI data from some positions, the quality analysis of multi-temporal MODIS composite imagery has been performed, and some noise in the data at the period of 33 and 353 has been found. With the application of the Savitzky-Golay filtering method, the filtered time profiles of NDVI, EVI and some other derived data are obtained from MOD13 16-day composite time-series data with 250-m spatial resolution. The smoothed results indicate that the method is effective, especially can keep the peak value of NDVI in the growing season (Fig. 3). It also is helpful to select reasonable threshold for classifying land use.

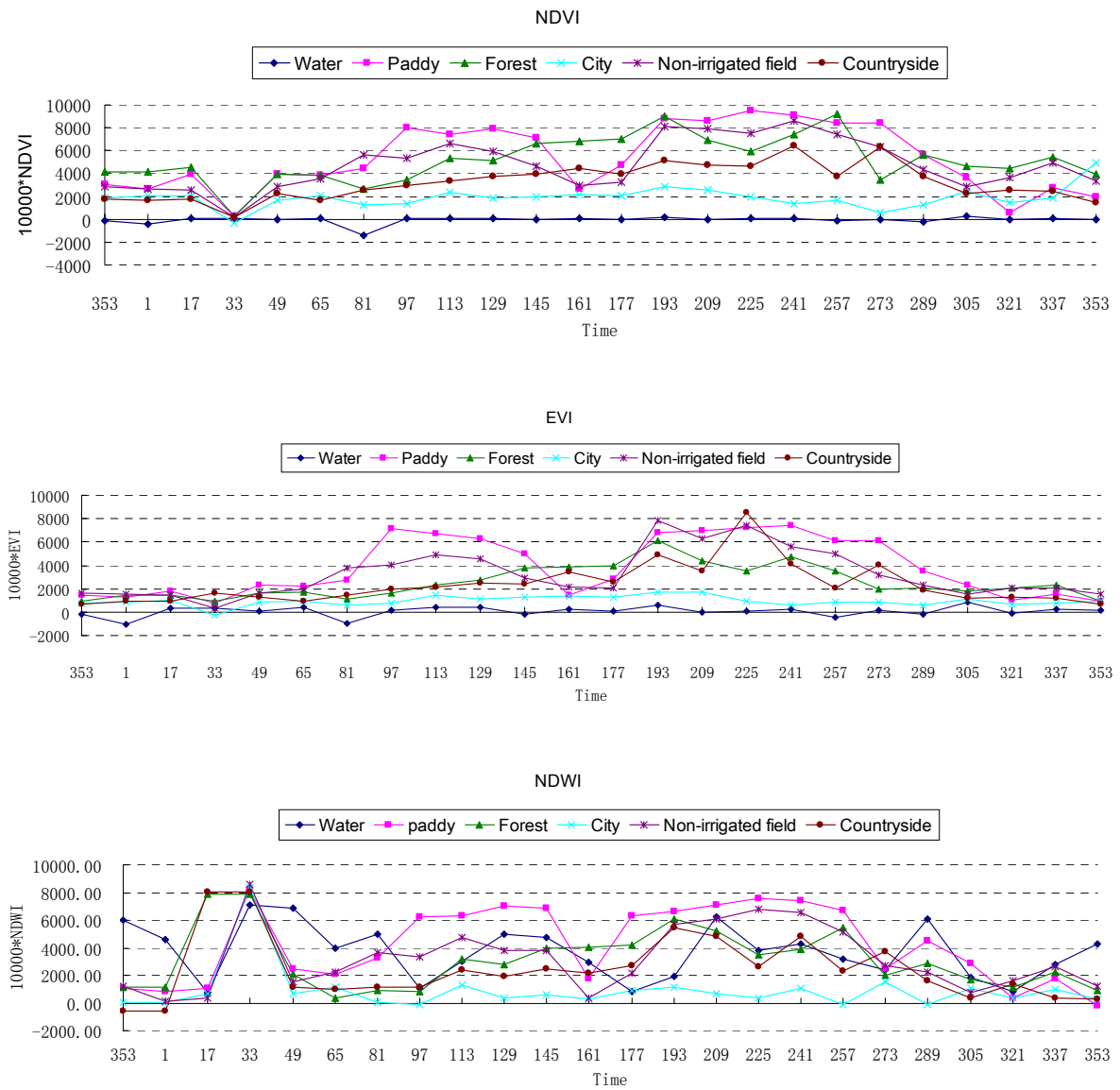


Fig. 3 Multi-temporal NDVI, EVI and NDWI profiles of the major land use types

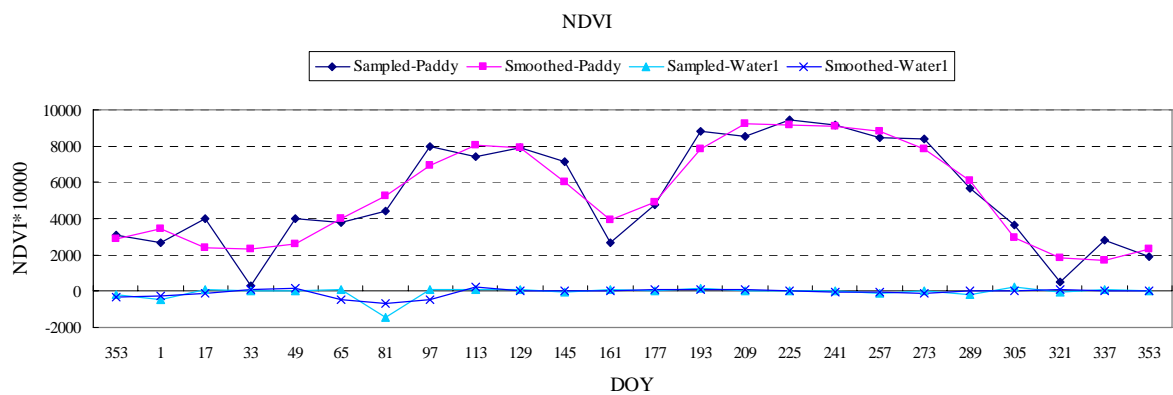


Fig. 4 The comparison of smoothed NDVI data and sampled NDVI data

## The identification of flooded area

Flooding is equivalent to an increase in water-covered area through time. As such, it can be detected as a change in the water covered area. To study the extent of flood inundation, the extraction of spatial information based on the multi-temporal images is conducted by the Decision Tree classifier, which is defined as a classification procedure that recursively partitions a data set into more uniform subdivisions based on tests defined at each node in the tree (Chandra and Clinton, 2005). It is obvious that the change of index value sampled from water area is very gentle and the value is the lowest compared with that sampled from other kind of land use (Fig. 3). Therefore to extract the water area, the key is to determine the dynamic threshold. Because it is hard to distinguish between water areas and urban, the background data of lake and reservoirs have been taken as auxiliary data. According to multi-temporal data analysis, the water distribution in the Huaihe River basin is identified in terms of the flood event in the year 2003. The flood occurred from the end of June to the beginning of August, around that time the temporal change of water information is demonstrated, where the blue color area stands for water area (Fig. 5). With the application of spatial analysis, the water covered area is synthesized. After the elimination of background water body, the flooded area marked by red color is mapped (Fig. 6). The total area affected is 2575.75 km<sup>2</sup>, which mainly spreads around flood detention areas.

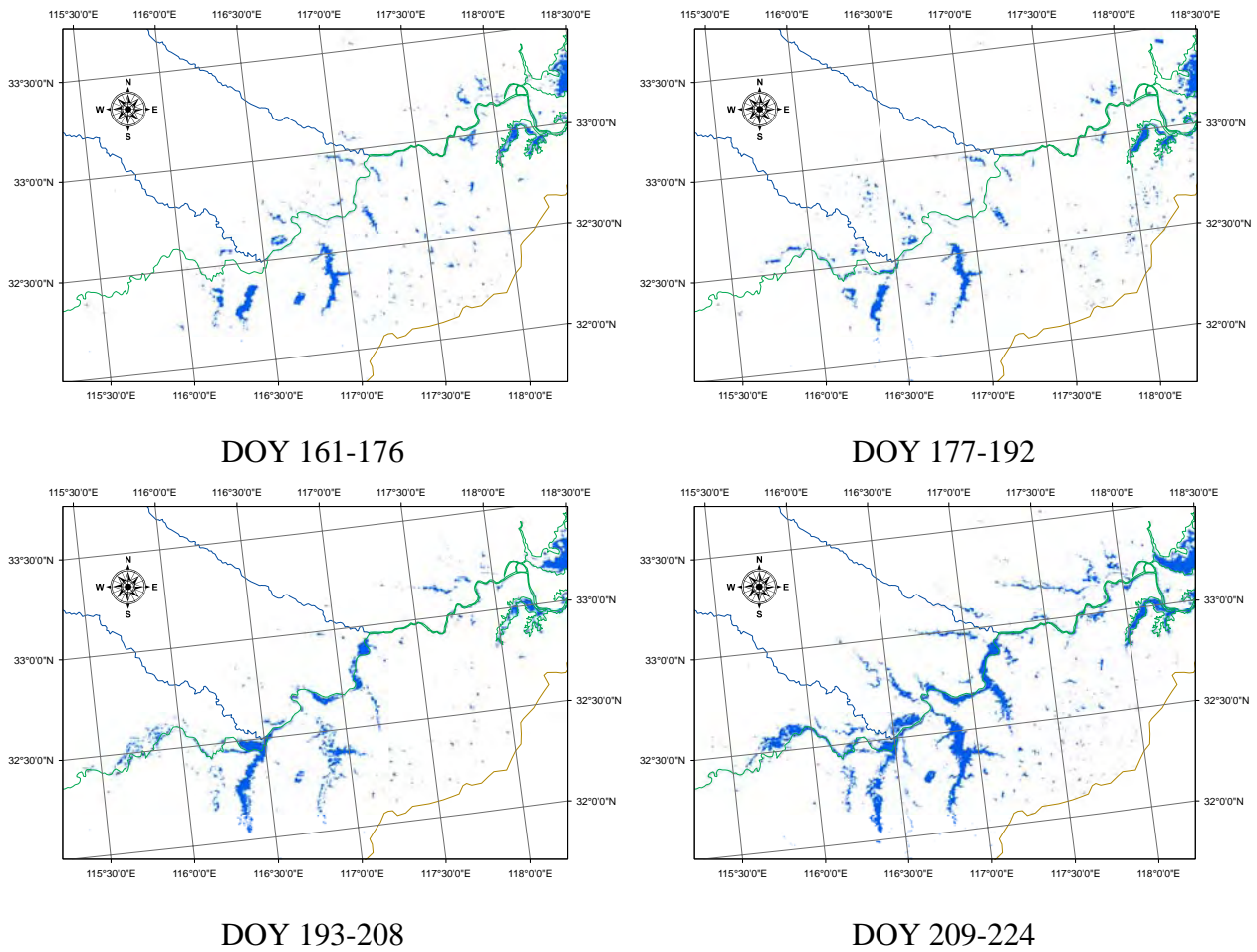


Fig. 5 The temporal change of flood inundation area



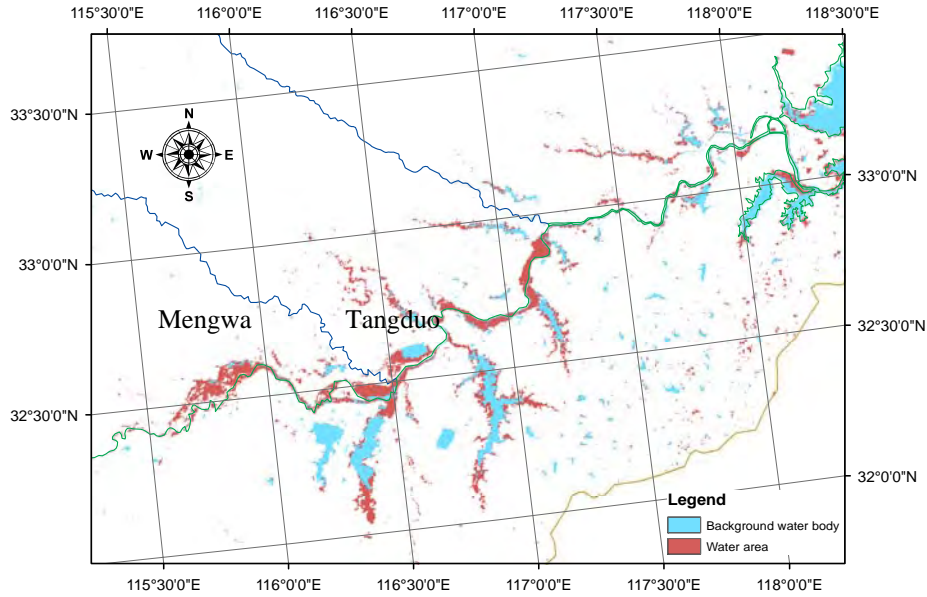


Fig. 6 The identification of flood distribution along the Huaihe River

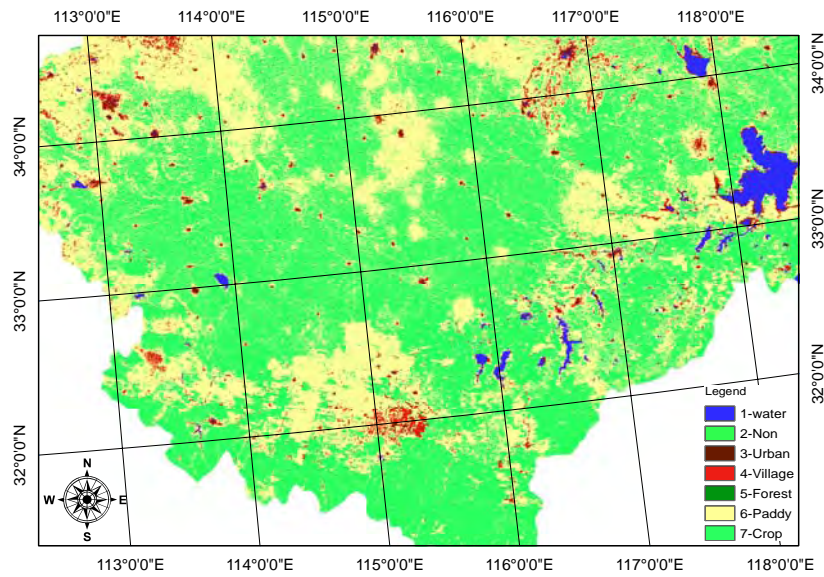


Fig. 7 The extraction of land use and land cover in the year 2003

### Land use classification

Due to the occurrence of great land use and land cover change in developing country, the MODIS composite data are adopted to extract land use and land cover, which have higher spatial resolution than AVHRR.

To implement the extraction of land use and land cover in larger area is challenging, as many factors could have effects on the dynamics of VI data. However each general land use has clear multi-temporal NDVI and EVI profiles, the Decision Tree method is still applied to classify the land use. Firstly with the application of quality control flags for cloud, some masks for cloud cover have been generated to eliminate the area affected by cloud. Then based on the features of land use, the dynamic thresholds to determine the land use

classification are specified elaborately. The distribution of different land use is shown in figure 7.

### The distribution of population at flood risk

The population distribution is the key factor to make mitigation plan as well as hazard analysis. To obtain the potential people at flood risk, the census (2002) is applied. In GIS platform, the affected population distribution is mapped (Fig. 8). Accordingly the populations at flood risk in the whole basin are estimated.

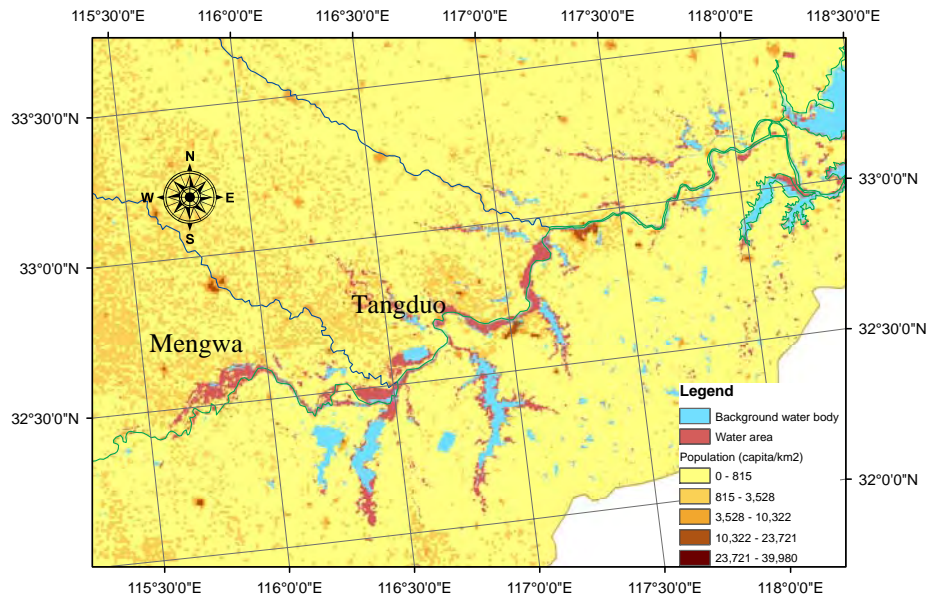


Fig. 8 The location of population affected by flood

## 4. VULNERABILITY ANALYSIS

The conceptual ‘‘hazards-of-place’’ model of vulnerability was presented by Cutter (1996), which combines biophysical and social determinants. It provides geographers with a powerful tool for manipulating numerous and varied demographic and physical data (Cutter 1996; Cutter et al., 2003; Boruff et al., 2005). The hazards of place framework focuses on the integration of social and physical data. The social and biophysical elements interpenetrate and shape the overall vulnerability of the place.

Little work on vulnerability in general has been studied in the Huaihe River basin. In the study a methodology is put forth, which combines aerial layers representing hazard zones and layers to examine the distribution and relative concentration of groups who are vulnerable to hazard. Simply place vulnerability can be viewed as biophysical vulnerability and social vulnerability, in which biophysical vulnerability relies on hydro-geological characteristics. As a result, the biophysical vulnerability can be shown by the vulnerable area (Fig. 6). Moreover social vulnerability relies on the exposure, the susceptibility of social groups to the impacts of hazards as well as their resilience. The creation of the social layer of vulnerability is demographically driven, relying on data from Census Bureau.

In a general sense, social vulnerability is determined by the presence of a human population at risk to a particular hazard. In this research the key determinants of exposure, such as land use and population are taken into consideration. Combining with demographic



data, spatial distribution of people at risk to flood hazard is derived based on overlay analysis and buffer analysis (Fig. 8). The result indicates that the people at flood detention areas such as Mengwa, Lake Tangduo, etc. are much more vulnerable to flood. For example, at Mengwa community, there are 152,598 people estimated to have been affected and 377.9 km<sup>2</sup> land vulnerable to flooding (except water area) (Table 1). Because this area locates at the floodplain and is populous, it is relative vulnerable to flood hazard. The analysis result shows the methodology is effective and applicable to identify the flood vulnerable area. Accordingly in the whole basin, the amount of farmland and population vulnerable to waterlogging can be estimated.

Table 1 The area of land vulnerable to flood at Mengwa

Land use	Crop	Paddy	Village	Forest	Urban	Water
Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	298.2	76.8	2.3	0.3	0.3	14.2

Vulnerability is conceptualized as a function of exposure to a stressor, sensitivity to associated impacts, and the ability of a system to adapt to the stressor's impacts (Turner et al., 2003). In exploring vulnerability as a concept, three determinants of vulnerability can be identified that influence the spatial distribution and the level of impact, which can be listed as exposure, susceptibility and resilience. Therefore besides the exposure, some other factors should be taken into consideration.

## 5. CONCLUSION AND REMARKS

This study attempts to analyze the flood hazard vulnerability in the Huaihe River basin, China. The proposed methodology is applied to produce time-series inundation maps for the analysis of typical flood event of the year 2003. Meanwhile integrated with demographic data, spatial analysis of vulnerability to flood hazard at a regional scale is put forth. In this study, it pays more attention on the method to estimate the flooded area, which is applicable to large area flood with long duration.

(1) The proposed approach is effective to extract the flooded area for large scale flooding, although the temporal resolution is relatively poor. The benefit of using this data is the availability of water area observations. In addition, accuracy assessment should be taken into consideration.

(2) Meanwhile taking advantage of the results from typical flood event, brief analysis of flood vulnerability at a regional scale is introduced. In this study, it proposes the method to estimate the populations and land use vulnerable to flood hazard.

(3) However, the degree to which populations are vulnerable to flood hazard is not only dependent upon proximity to the flood threat or the exposure determinant, social factors related to susceptibility and resilience also play a significant role in vulnerability measurement. In the further study the holistic vulnerability can be assessed in detail.

## REFERENCES

- Birkmann, J. (2006), Measuring vulnerability to natural hazards: Towards disaster resilient societies, United Nations University.
- Boruff, B. J., et al. (2005), Erosion Hazard Vulnerability of US Coastal Counties, *Journal of Coastal Research*, Vol. 21, No. 5, pp. 932-942

- Chandra, G. and Clinton, J. (2005), Land cover mapping of Greater Mesoamerica using MODIS data, *Can. J. Remote Sensing*, Vol. 31, No. 4, pp. 274–282.
- Cutter S. L., Boruff B. J., & Shirley, W. L. (2003), Social vulnerability to environmental hazards. *Social Science Quarterly*, 84(2), pp. 242–261.
- Cutter, S.L. (1996), Societal Vulnerability to Environmental Hazards, *International Social Science Journal* 47 (4), pp. 525-536.
- DeFries, R. S., and Belward, A. S. (2000), Global and regional land cover characterization from satellite data: An introduction to the special issue. *International Journal of Remote Sensing*, 21(6-7), pp. 1083-1092.
- Fujiyoshi, Y. and Yihui, D. (2006), Final Report of GAME/HUBEX-GEWEX Asian Monsoon Experiment/ Huaihe River Basin Experiment, pp. 497-514.
- Huete, A., Didan, K., Miura, T., Rodriguez, E. P., Gao, X., & Ferreira, L. G. (2002), Overview of the radiometric and biophysical performance of the MODIS vegetation indices. *Remote Sensing of Environment*, 83, pp. 195-213.
- Huete, A., Justice C., and Leeuwen, W. (1999), MODIS Vegetation Index (MOD 13): Algorithm Theoretical Basis Document (version 3), [http://modis.gsfc.nasa.gov/data/atbd/atbd\\_mod13.pdf](http://modis.gsfc.nasa.gov/data/atbd/atbd_mod13.pdf), accessed 20 Oct. 2007.
- Kozan, O., Tanaka, K., Ikebuchi, S. and Qian M. (2004), Landuse and cropping pattern classification using satellite derived vegetation indices in the Huaihe River basin, *Proc. of the 2nd International Conference on Hydrology and Water Resources in Asia Pacific Region*, Vol.2, pp.732-740.
- Savitzky, A., and Golay, M. J. E. (1964), Smoothing and differentiation of data by simplified least squares procedures. *Analytical Chemistry*, 36, pp. 1627– 1639.
- Statistic Bureau of Anhui Province. Anhui Statistical Yearbook (Section of 1995-2004), China Statistics Press.
- Turner B.L., Kasperson R.E., et al. (2003), A framework for vulnerability analysis in sustainability science. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 100, No. 14, pp. 8074-8079.
- Viovy, N., Arino, O., and Belward A. (1992), The best index slope extraction (BISE): A method for reducing noise in NDVI time-series, *International Journal of Remote Sensing*, 13 (8), pp. 1585-1590.
- William H. Press, Saul A. Teukosky, William T. Vetterling, and Brian P. Flannery (1992), Numerical recipes in C, *The Art of Scientific Computing, Second Edition*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 650-655.
- WWAP. (2006), UN World Water Development Report, *World Water Assessment Programme-WWAP*, Paris.