

Environmental Science

Joseph L. Awange
John B. Kyalo Kiema

Environmental Geoinformatics

Monitoring and Management

 Springer

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Environmental Geoinformatics

Monitoring and Management

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ISSN 1431-6250

ISBN 978-3-642-34084-0

ISBN 978-3-642-34085-7 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-3-642-34085-7

Springer Heidelberg New York Dordrecht London

Library of Congress Control Number: 2013934385

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Foreword



The title and subtitle of this textbook convey a distinct message. Monitoring—the passive part in the subtitle—refers to *observation* and *data acquisition*, whereas management—the active component—stands for *operation* and *performance*. The topic is our environment, which is intimately related to geoinformatics. The overall message is: all the mentioned elements do interact and must not be separated.

There are still other aspects which must not be separated: *theory* and *practice* of geoinformatics. The book presents an excellent balance of both fields. Technology is introduced from the Geodest's view including; Reference Systems, Positioning Systems, Remote Sensing, Photogrammetry, and Geographic Information Systems. Applications range from Climate, Water, and Land Management to Vegetation, Disaster, and Pollution. Today, many textbooks are written by specialists from these particular fields. However, in the applications there are many common technical elements in space and time, like impact from scale, regionalization, time series, data fusion, visualization, etc.—just to mention but a few. An advanced prospect for environmental management requires system-based thinking and interdisciplinary approaches. Furthermore, technology may be a common denominator for better understanding our environment.

Finally, geoinformatics is a modern tool for location-based decision making. Most decisions in public administration and economy are directly or indirectly related to space. Today, advanced models and digital spatial data may make decisions more transparent than ever before. Very often, in geoprospects a lot of money is involved, and the risk of manipulation in decision making inevitably increases. Quantitative analysis and restitution of the results may, however, reduce this risk.

Both authors, Joseph L. Awange and John B. Kyalo Kiema, are experienced researchers and lecturers with a strong international background acquired from different parts of the world. During research fellowships in Germany, they got the picture that “geodesy” is a global concept beyond measuring just the figure of the Earth.

Germany, January 2013

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Dr.h.c.,
Hans-Peter Bähr
Karlsruhe Institute of Technology

Preface

There is no doubt that today, perhaps more than ever before, humanity faces a myriad of complex and demanding challenges. This has been propelled by the ever increasing global population and intense pressure being exerted on the Earth's resources. The resulting consequences are severe changes in land cover (e.g., forests giving way to settlements), diminishing biodiversity and natural habitats, dwindling fresh water supplies, and the degradation in the quality of the little that is available, and changing weather and climatic patterns, especially global warming with its associated predicted catastrophes such as rising sea level and increased numbers of extreme weather events.

These *human-induced* and *natural impacts* on the environment need to be well understood in order to develop *informed policies, decisions, and remedial measures* to mitigate current and future negative impacts. This can be achieved through continuous monitoring of the environment to acquire data that can be soundly and rigorously analyzed to provide information about the current state of the environment and its changing patterns, and to enable predictions of possible future impacts. Environmental monitoring techniques that may provide such information are under scrutiny from an increasingly environmentally conscious society that demands the efficient delivery of such information at a minimal cost. In addition, it is the nature of environmental changes that they vary both spatially and temporally, thereby putting pressure on traditional methods of data acquisition, some of which are very labor intensive, such as tracking animals for conservation purposes. With these challenges, conventional monitoring techniques, particularly those that record spatial changes, call for more sophisticated approaches that deliver the necessary information at an affordable cost.

Developing pragmatic and sustainable solutions to address these and many other similar challenges requires the use of geodata and the application of geoinformatics. Geoinformatics, defined by Ehlers (2003) as “the art, science or technology dealing with the acquisition, storage, processing, production, presentation and dissemination of geoinformation”, is a multidisciplinary field. It has at its core different technologies that support the acquisition, analysis, and visualization of geodata. The geodata is usually acquired from Earth observation sensors as remotely sensed images, analyzed by geographic information systems (GIS), and visualized on paper or on computer screens. Furthermore, it combines

geospatial analysis and modeling, development of geospatial databases, information systems design, human–computer interaction, and both wired and wireless networking technologies. Geoinformatics uses geocomputation and geovisualization for analyzing geoinformation. Typical branches of geoinformatics include: *cartography, geodesy, geographic information systems, global navigation satellite systems (GNSS), photogrammetry, remote sensing, and web mapping.*

For example, a typical application of geoinformatics to environmental monitoring and management is the *GNSS-based radio telemetry*, which is a modern method for observing animal movements. This method moves the burden of making observations from the observer (i.e., researcher) to the observed (i.e., animal), and in so doing alleviates the difficulties associated with personal bias, animal reactions to human presence, and animal habits that make most of them secretive and unseen (Cagnacci et al. 2010). The method provides large, continuous, high-frequency data about animal movement, data which, if complemented by other information dealing with animal behavior, physiology, and the environment itself, contributes significantly to our knowledge of the behavior and ecological effects of animals, allowing the promotion of quantitative and mechanistic analysis (Cagnacci et al. 2010).

This book presents the concepts and applications of geoinformatics in environmental monitoring and management. We depart from the 4D to the 5D data paradigm, which defines geodata accurately, consistently, rapidly, and completely, in order to be useful without any restrictions in space, time, or scale to represent a truly global dimension of the digital Earth. The book also features the state-of-the-art discussion of Web GIS and mapping, an invited chapter written by Prof. Bert Veenendaal of the Department of Spatial Sciences, Curtin University (Australia).

The concepts and applications of geoinformatics presented in this book will be of benefit to decision makers across a wide range of fields, including those working in environmental management agencies, in the emergency services, public health and epidemiology, crime mapping, tourism industry, market analysis and e-commerce, or mineral exploration, among many others.

This is a TIGeR publication No 442.

Perth (Australia), Karlsruhe (Germany)
Nairobi (Kenya), Musanze (Rwanda)

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Acknowledgments

Several figures in this book have been generously provided by various authors. In this regard, the first author (Joseph) would like to thank D. Rieser (Graz University of Technology), M. Motagh (GFZ), M. Jia (Geoscience Australia), F. Urbano (RICENRA, Edmund Mach Foundation, Italy), and R. Mikosz (Federal University of Pernambuco, Brazil). Some figures and materials also came from the work undertaken jointly with colleagues B. Heck (Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Germany), W. Featherstone, M. Kuhn, K. Fleming, and I. Anjasmara (Curtin University), M. Sharifi (Tehran University), A. Hunegnaw (University of Edinburgh), O. Baur (Space Research Institute, Austrian Academy of Science), E. Forootan (Bonn University), J. Wickert, T. Schmidt (GFZ, Germany), J. B. K. Kiema (University of Nairobi), and students N. Wallace, Khandu, G. Schloderer, M. Bingham, and T. Opande. To you all, “arigato gozaimasu” (Japanese for thank you very much). To all his Curtin University 3rd year (Satellite and Space Geodesy unit), and 2nd year (Civil Engineering) students who used materials from the draft book and provided feedback, Joseph would like to say “Danke sehr” (German for thank you very much).

Joseph also wishes to express his sincere thanks to Prof. B. Heck of the Department of Physical Geodesy (Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), Germany) for hosting him during the period of his Alexander von Humboldt Fellowship (2008–2011) when part of this book was written. In particular, his ideas, suggestions, and motivation on [Chaps. 20–22](#) have enriched the book considerably. Joseph is also grateful to Prof. B. Veenendaal (Head of Department, Spatial Sciences, Curtin University, Australia) for the support and motivation that enabled the preparation of this edition. He also wishes to acknowledge the support of *Curtin Research Fellowship*, while his stay at KIT was supported by a *Alexander von Humboldt’s Ludwig Leichhardts Memorial Fellowship*. To all, he says, “ahsante sana” (Swahili for thank you very much). Last, but not least, he wishes to thank his wife Naomi Awange and daughters Lucy and Ruth Awange for their patience and support, especially the hard times they endured when he was away in Germany.

On the other hand, the second author (Kiema) wishes to thank staff and students at the Department of Geospatial and Space Technology, University of Nairobi. In particular, he wishes to acknowledge G. C. Mulaku, R. S. Rostom, J. N. Mwenda,

and S. M. Musyoka for support and motivation, along with D. N. Siriba who graciously proof read this work. He wishes to also express sincere thanks to among others G. Konecny (University of Hannover), S. Murai (University of Tokyo), J. L. Awange (Curtin University), Q. Weng (Indiana State University), E. Nyadimo (Oakar Sevices Ltd., Kenya), B. Kumi-Boateng (University of Mines and Technology, Ghana), G. Eshiamwata (Birdlife International, Kenya), J. M. Mwangi, and M. A. Dangana (University of Nairobi) for material used in the book.

Kiema is also indebted to Prof. H.-P. Bähr of KIT for first, mentorship through the years and secondly, for agreeing to write the foreword for this book. Gratitude is also accorded to the Institut d'Enseignement Supérieur (INES)—Ruhengeri where the second author was stationed for the duration of his sabbatical leave, during which period this monogram was completed. Special regards to Rev. Fr. Dr. F. Hagenimana, Vice Rector Academics at INES for his kind support. Finally, Kiema also wishes to acknowledge his wife Joy and children Abigail and Jayden for their patience and understanding during the long spell when he was away from home.

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