

Replies to the comments and suggestions

Dear editor and Anonymous Referee #1:

Thank you for your letter and for the reviewers' comments concerning our manuscript entitled "Recognition of spatial framework for water quality and its relation with land use/cover types from a new perspective: A case study of Jinghe Oasis in Xinjiang, China". Those comments are all valuable and very helpful for revising and improving our paper, as well as important guiding sense to our researches. The authors have studied comments carefully and have made correction which we hope meet with approval. Revised portions are marked in red in the paper and authors have tried our best to revise the manuscript based on their suggestions. The point-by-point responses to each of the comments are presented as follows.

Anonymous Referee #1

Q: The abstract should not only include the methodology, but also the novelty of this paper, so the authors should add innovation clearly in the Abstract.

Reply: Thanks to Reviewers for their suggestions in improving the manuscript. Authors have taken reviewers' comments and suggestions seriously. The abstract is revised by authors. Modified parts have been marked in red in the revised paper. Please see the article on page 1, lines to 9-29 in revised manuscript with obviously marked. Please see as follows:

To understand the relation between spatial water quality patterns and changes in land use/cover types in the Jinghe Oasis, this study divided 47 water sampling sites, which were measured in May and October 2015, into 6 cluster layers using the self-organizing map (SOM) method based on non-hierarchical *k*-means classification. Next, it determined the distribution characteristics of water quality indices for the time sequence. The water quality indices included the chemical oxygen demand (COD), biological oxygen demand (BOD), suspended solids (SS), total phosphorus (TP), total nitrogen (TN), ammonia nitrogen (NH₃-N), chromaticity (SD), and turbidity (NUT). Based on the results, we collected data on the changes in the farmland, forest-grass land, water body, salinized land, and other land types during the wet and dry seasons and combined these data with the classification results of the GF-1 remote sensing satellite data obtained in May and October 2015. We then discussed the influences of land use/cover type on water quality for different layers and seasons. The results indicate that Clusters 1 to 3 included monitoring samples from the wet season (May 2015), whereas Clusters 4 to 6 included monitoring samples from the dry season (October 2015). In general, the COD, SS, NUT, TN, and NH₃-N values were high in Clusters 1 and 2. The SD values for Clusters 1, 4, and 6 were high. Moreover, high BOD and TP values were mainly concentrated in Clusters 4 and 6. In the discussion on the relation between the different water quality

parameters and land use/cover type changes, we determined that farmland, forest-grassland, and salinized land significantly influenced the water quality parameters in the Jinghe Oasis. In Clusters 1, 2, and 6, the size of the water area, to a certain extent, also influenced changes in the water quality parameters. In addition, the influences of various land use/cover types on the water quality parameters in the research zone during the different seasons exhibited the following descending order of magnitude: farmland → forest-grass land → salinized land → water body → others. Moreover, their influences were lower during the wet season than the dry season. In conclusion, developing research on the relation between the spatial framework of the water quality in the Jinghe Oasis and land use/cover type changes is significant for the time sequence distribution of water quality in arid regions from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

Q: It is noted that your manuscript needs careful editing by someone with expertise in technical English editing, paying particular attention to English grammar, spelling, and sentence structure so that the goals and results of the study are clear to the reader.

Reply: Thanks to Revivers for encouraging Authors to revise the manuscript. Thanks to Reviewers for their suggestions in improving the manuscript. Authors have taken reviewers' comments and suggestions seriously. Authors have answered and have addressed all the concerns and questions mentioned by the reviewer. Professor Hsiang-te Kung (University of Memphis) has helped us improve the grammar and edit the manuscript carefully. Please see the revised version of the paper.

Q: In my opinion, maybe the "Discussions" as an independent part is better. Also, the authors should improve the Discussions in the section "conclusions and discussions" The subject is interesting and meaningful. I think it can be published after minor revision.

Reply: The authors have revised in the section "conclusions and discussions" based on Revivers suggestion, the "Discussions" as an independent part, and it's impovered by authors. Modified parts have been marked in red in the revised paper. Please see the article on page 9-10, lines to 339-389 in revised manuscript with obviously marked. Please see as follows:

3 Discussion

Given the seasonal differences, the unbalanced distribution of precipitation resulted in an apparent variation in the surface runoff and further imbalanced the spatial distribution of the water quality in the research zone (Fan et al.,2012; Prathumratana et al.,2008; Li et al.,2015). During the wet season (May) in the Jinghe Oasis, melted water from mountain ice and snow promote the flow in the Jing River, thereby resulting in a significant increase in surface runoff leading to an improved water quality in the rainy season compared to the dry season. During the

dry season, the aquatic plants in rivers and lakes grow as the temperature rises, which can, to a certain degree, absorb and purify part of the water quality parameters. Therefore, significant and seasonal changes in the surface runoff at the research zone are important factors resulting in noticeable differences in the spatial distribution of water quality characteristics during the wet and dry seasons. Another major factor that causes differences in the spatial distribution of water quality is the change in land use/cover, especially farmland. During the dry season, farmland areas have a greater influence on more water quality variables than they do during the rainy season because of their intensive fertilization and agricultural runoff from soil erosion (Ngoye et al, 2004;Li et al., 2009; Tran et al., 2010). Multiple factors threaten the ecological safety of the Jinghe Oasis system. Especially in recent years, the lakeside desertification zone has rapidly expanded because of the decrease in the Ebinur Lake area and the degradation of lakeside vegetation under influence of the strong winds in Alashankou. In the current overall situation, the human activities influencing land use/cover changes are directly related to the development of the vulnerable ecological area that surrounds Ebinur Lake.

Recent statistics indicate that the annual growth rate of the population in the Jinghe Oasis is approximately 2.49%, which is slightly higher than previous growth rates (Li, 2006). Under the stress of a large population, the amount of inappropriate activities that negatively impact land use/cover in the Jinghe Oasis will increase. For the last 30 years, cotton has been the major crop in the Jinghe Oasis. The results of the current study indicate that the sampling points surrounding the farmland in the research zone have lower water quality values than the other studied regions. The primary livelihoods of the urban residents around the Ebinur Lake area are agricultural and animal husbandry industries. Pollutants that result in high TP and $\text{NH}_3\text{-N}$ contents in water include the excessive application of chemical fertilizers on farmlands, the production of livestock manure in rural villages, randomly stocked garbage, and domestic wastewater. The improper application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides to a vast area leads to high water nitrogen and phosphorus contents, resulting in the spread of algae in river sections. Consequently, the amount of dissolved oxygen in the river may decrease, the water quality may deteriorate, and eutrophication may occur. Furthermore, this scenario poses a serious salinization problem. Certain measures have been implemented for the ecological protection of Ebinur Lake, such as returning farmland to forest, cultivating ecological forests, and promoting efficient irrigation and water-saving technologies. However, these measures promote the gradual expansion of the lake area and result in different degrees of negative consequences. The most apparent result has been the rise of the underground water level, which has aggravated land salinization in the lowland areas and resulted in vast expanses of uncultivated former agricultural lands. Statistics indicate that soil salinization in the Ebinur Lake area mainly occurs in Bortala River, Jing River, the villages and towns surrounding Ebinur Lake, areas downstream of the Daheyanzi River, and areas north of Bole City (Mi et al.,2010). Severe soil

salinization has seriously affected the farming of crops; therefore, some farmers have increased the amount of chemical fertilizers they apply to increase yield, which also increases the pollution of the water and soil. Others have even abandoned their land, thereby causing land use/cover change.

Most rivers in Xinjiang are characterized by a low water yield, short flow, small water environmental capacity, poor self-cleaning capability, and low tolerance to pollution. Hence, an artificial change in the land use and exploration of resources in lake regions lead to an evident correlation between land use/cover types and water quality. In addition, the scientific utilization and protection of the water resources of Ebinur Lake and the scientific application of chemical fertilizers and improvement of their application rates are important actions and should be addressed to achieve sustainable development in the agricultural irrigation zones of the Jinghe Oasis and rivers of Xinjiang.

In addition, authors have revised the figures and tables as well as words expression in the entire manuscript, please see the text.

Authors tried our best to improve the manuscript and made some changes in the manuscript. Authors appreciate for Editors/Reviewers' warm work earnestly, and hope that the correction will meet with approval. Once again, thank you very much for your comments and suggestions.

All in all, if you have any questions about our paper, please contact with me as follow address:

E-mail:zhangfei3s@163.com

Thanks very much.

Best wishes and warmly regards for you.

Sincerely yours Fei ZHANG

11th, Jan., 2017

1 Recognizing spatial patterns in water quality and their relation with 2 land use/cover types: A case study of the Jinghe Oasis in Xinjiang, 3 China

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9 **Abstract:** To understand the relation between spatial water quality patterns and changes in land use/cover types in the Jinghe
10 Oasis, this study divided 47 water sampling sites, which were measured in May and October 2015, into 6 cluster layers using
11 the self-organizing map (SOM) method based on non-hierarchical *k*-means classification. Next, it determined the distribution
12 characteristics of water quality indices for the time sequence. The water quality indices included the chemical oxygen
13 demand (COD), biological oxygen demand (BOD), suspended solids (SS), total phosphorus (TP), total nitrogen (TN),
14 ammonia nitrogen (NH₃-N), chromaticity (SD), and turbidity (NUT). Based on the results, we collected data on the changes
15 in the farmland, forest-grass land, water body, salinized land, and other land types during the wet and dry seasons and
16 combined these data with the classification results of the GF-1 remote sensing satellite data obtained in May and October
17 2015. We then discussed the influences of land use/cover type on water quality for different layers and seasons. The results
18 indicate that Clusters 1 to 3 included monitoring samples from the wet season (May 2015), whereas Clusters 4 to 6 included
19 monitoring samples from the dry season (October 2015). In general, the COD, SS, NUT, TN, and NH₃-N values were high
20 in Clusters 1 and 2. The SD values for Clusters 1, 4, and 6 were high. Moreover, high BOD and TP values were mainly
21 concentrated in Clusters 4 and 6. In the discussion on the relation between the different water quality parameters and land
22 use/cover type changes, we determined that farmland, forest-grassland, and salinized land significantly influenced the water
23 quality parameters in the Jinghe Oasis. In Clusters 1, 2, and 6, the size of the water area, to a certain extent, also influenced
24 changes in the water quality parameters. In addition, the influences of various land use/cover types on the water quality
25 parameters in the research zone during the different seasons exhibited the following descending order of magnitude:
26 farmland → forest-grass land → salinized land → water body → others. Moreover, their influences were lower during the
27 wet season than the dry season. In conclusion, developing research on the relation between the spatial framework of the
28 water quality in the Jinghe Oasis and land use/cover type changes is significant for the time sequence distribution of water
29 quality in arid regions from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

30 **Key words:** SOM; Water quality spatial distribution; Land use/cover; Correlation analysis; GIS

31 0 Introduction

32 Water quality is of great importance to the study of water resources in arid regions. Accurate
33 information on the spatial distribution of surface water quality is imperative for assessing environmental
34 monitoring, land-surface water management and watershed changes (NRC, 2008; Sun et al., 2012). Land
35 use/cover changes in drainage basins significantly influence the water quality of rivers, lakes, river mouths,
36 and coastal areas (Huang et al., 2013a; Bu et al., 2014; Hur et al., 2014). Surface water resources, through
37 runoff or infiltration, will always carry a large amount of pollutants (Swaney et al., 2012). Therefore, the
38 spatial allocation of land use and land cover changes in drainage basins frequently influences or even

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39 endangers water quality through non-point source pollution (Swaney et al., 2012). However, the regional
40 differences and complexity of land use/cover types result in various relations between land use/cover and
41 water quality in different regions (Yang et al., 2016). Therefore, it is very important to explore the
42 relationship between land use/cover types and water quality for the development and management of the
43 basin. (Uemaa et al., 2005; Xiao et al., 2007; Wan et al., 2014). At present, numerous scholars have
44 extensively applied statistical methods to determine the mutual relations between land use/cover changes
45 and water quality in various research zones (Céréghino et al., 2009; Bierman et al., 2011; Huang et
46 al.,2013b). These methods include correlation analysis (Lee et al., 2009; Li et al., 2015), multiple
47 regression (Park et al.,2014), and redundancy analysis (De et al.,2008; Shen et al.,2015).

48 A self-organizing map (SOM) is a type of artificial neural network algorithm; it is a self-organizing
49 and self-learning network visual method that can express multi-dimensional spatial data in
50 low-dimensional points through non-linear mapping (Kohonen., 2001). A SOM is an all-purpose
51 classification tool that can connect samples with variables (Kohonen., 2013; Zhou et al., 2016). In recent
52 years, SOMs have become increasingly popular in environmental research because of their capacity to
53 address non-linear relations. Kalteh (2008) and Céréghino (2009) discussed the application of the SOM
54 method in environmental science, particularly in water resource classification. Chon (2011) evaluated the
55 application of SOM technology in the field of ecology. The high-dimensional, non-linear, and uncertain
56 features of water quality monitoring data result in a certain complexity during the analysis and evaluation
57 of surface water quality data. Therefore, data mining and the modern mode recognition method have been
58 introduced to analyse and explain water quality monitoring data, which can, to a certain extent, offset the
59 deficiency of the traditional method (Li et al.,2013). The Jinghe Oasis, which comprises an oasis and a
60 desert, is a typical mountainous zone in an arid region and an important part of the northern slope of the
61 Tianshan Mountains. Under the influences of the drainage basin climate and human activities, the pollution
62 of the regional ecological environment, which results from agricultural and domestic wastewater sources
63 around the Jinghe Oasis that are directly discharged or discharged through the river, has become an urgent
64 problem related to sustainable socioeconomic development in Xinjiang. Therefore, a typical section of the
65 Jinghe Oasis in the plain area of the arid region was selected as the research object of this study. The SOM
66 method was applied to recognize the spatial distribution of water quality in the Jinghe Oasis. Based on the
67 result, this study offers a tentative exploration of the relation between water quality and land use/cover
68 changes in different clusters and provides new insights on controlling, managing, and protecting the
69 ecological environment in the Jinghe Oasis.

70 The main objectives of this study were to (1) analyse the spatial framework of water quality using the
71 self-organizing map (SOM) method based on non-hierarchical k-means classification; (2) explore the
72 relationship between the water quality parameters and land use/cover types in different clusters; and (3)
73 analyse the relationship between water quality parameters and land use/cover types in different stages.

74 **1 Materials and methods**

75 **1.1 Study area**

76 The Jinghe Oasis is in the centre of Eurasia in the northwest Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region at
77 44°02'~45°10'N and 81°46'~83°51'E. The Jinghe Oasis is composed of wetland and desert oasis
78 vegetation and wildlife and is a national desert ecological reserve. The study area has a unique wetland
79 ecological environment, and it has been listed as the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region "wetland nature
80 reserve". The region has 385 kinds of desert plants, approximately 64% of the vast amount of desert plants

81 in China. The Jinghe Oasis was once fed by 12 river branches belonging to three major river systems, the
82 Bortala River, Jing River and Kuytun River, which were mainly rivers connected with Ebinur Lake. Due to
83 natural environmental changes and human activities (i.e., modern oasis agricultural development), many
84 rivers gradually lost their hydraulic connections with Ebinur Lake, and only Bortala River and Jing River
85 currently supply water to the lake. The climate in the Jinghe Oasis is a typical continental arid climate,
86 with an annual average temperature of 7.36 °C, an average precipitation of 100~200 mm, and an average
87 evaporation of 1500~2000 mm (Zhang et al., 2015). In recent years, under the dual influence of natural and
88 human factors, the water resources of the Jinghe Oasis have degraded seriously, causing an extreme
89 decrease in the natural oasis and water area, desertification of the land, salinization of the farmland, serious
90 grassland degradation, and water quality salinization (Jilil et al.,2002). At the same time, under the effect of
91 the strong winds in Alashankou, the region has become a main source of dust; this affects the ecological
92 environment of northern Xinjiang. This study, by using actual data mining, established the research area
93 shown in Figure 1.

94
95 **Fig. 1** Location of the study area
96

97 **1.2 Data acquisition and processing**

98 (1) We applied GF-1 remote sensing images obtained in May and October 2015 as the data sources
99 (see <http://www.cresda.com/CN/>). These images were not influenced by clouds, fog, or snow cover, and
100 their quality was good. We conducted radiation and orthographic corrections for the remote sensing image
101 data combined with 1:50,000 scale digital elevation model (DEM) data. We established five land use/cover
102 types by using the Environment for Visualizing Images software (ENVI Version 5.0), namely, farmland,
103 forest-grassland, water body, salinized land, and others, based on the actual conditions of the research zone.
104 Finally, we generated a vector data map of the land use/cover types for two stages of the research zones.

105 (2) The pillar industries in the Jinghe Oasis include salt production and *Artemia* breeding. No heavy
106 industry is present; thus, point source pollution from industrial wastewater was not considered in the
107 research zone. Research samples were collected from agricultural land in Jinghe County and Tuotuo
108 Village, which surround Ebinur Lake, a national ecological zone in Ebinur Lake Bird Isle, and the Ganjia
109 Lake *Haloxylon* natural conservation area. In total, we collected 47 water samples, with 23 collected in
110 May and 24 collected in October 2015. The monitoring indices used included chemical oxygen demand
111 (COD), five-day biological oxygen demand (BOD₅), suspended solids (SS), total phosphorus (TP), total
112 nitrogen (TN), ammonia nitrogen (NH₃-N), chromaticity (SD), and turbidity (NUT). All polyethylene
113 bottles were used to store the samples. The bottles were cleaned, dried, and sealed with deionized water
114 before sampling. The samples were taken to the laboratory for the measurements and analyses after
115 collection. We applied dichromate titration, dilution and inoculation, gravimetry, ammonium molybdate
116 spectrophotometry, alkaline potassium persulfate decomposition UV spectrophotometry, and Nessler
117 reagent spectrophotometry to measure the COD, BOD₅, SS, TP, TN, and NH₃-N, respectively. The
118 analyses of all the samples were entrusted to and completed by Urumqi Jincheng Measurement Technology
119 Co., Ltd.

120 **1.3 Recognition of water quality spatial characteristics based on the SOM method with** 121 **non-hierarchical *k*-means classification**

122 At present, classifications based on the SOM neural network are mainly unsupervised and applied to

123 fault analyses, text clustering, and water quality evaluations. The method, which does not require a
124 consistent data distribution, is simple and can address detailed information without the influence of minor
125 local problems. The results are the distribution features of the input mode and topological structures (Li et
126 al.,2010). A typical SOM network generally consists of input and output clusters. All the nerve cells in the
127 input cluster and the weight vectors in the output cluster are connected and classified as typed data using
128 the SOM via a learning process. Accordingly, the *k*-means algorithm is applied to keep each cluster
129 compact and to separate the clusters from each other as much as possible. **The Davies-Bouldin clustering
130 index was used to determine the optimal number of clusters for the dataset (An et al., 2016; Park et al.,
131 2014). The lower the Davies–Bouldin index value is, the better the clusters are differentiated. The K-means
132 cluster analysis was combined with the Davies–Bouldin index (DBI) to select the clustering number.** (Zhou
133 et al., 2016).

134 The SOM method based on non-hierarchical *k*-means classification was applied to the spatial
135 framework of the water quality in the research zone by implementing the following steps. (1) We input the
136 water sample data for clustering from May and October 2015 to the SOM network. We applied the
137 topological values for calculating the network size to select the quantity of nerve cells and determine the
138 output results based on the minimum values of the Quantization Error (QE) and Topological Error (TE).
139 The QE was used to determine the capacity of the established neural network in distinguishing the original
140 input data, whereas the TE was used to measure the neural network quality, i.e., to evaluate whether the
141 network was applicable for training (Kohonen, 2001). After determining the network size, we conducted
142 network training and obtained a set of weight values. (2) The weight value obtained from the SOM
143 clustering results was considered the initial cluster centre, and the *k*-means algorithm was initialized to
144 execute this algorithm and, combined with the DBI index, select the clustering number. This clustering
145 combination algorithm maintains the self-organizing features of the SOM network, inherits the high
146 efficiency of the *k*-means algorithm, and offsets the poor clustering effects that result from the excessive
147 convergence time of the SOM network and the inappropriate selection of the initial clustering centre for
148 the *k*-means algorithm. The SOM requires a SOM toolbox and some basic functions in Matrix Laboratory
149 (MATLAB) (Zhang,2015). This study used MATLAB 2013a as the calculation platform.

150 **1.4 Spatial analysis of the influences of land use/cover change on water quality**

151 As an artificial system disturbance, land use/cover type is the second major boundary condition that
152 directly or indirectly influences hydrologic processes and exerts a considerable effect on the drainage water
153 environment. First, we obtained information on the land use/cover types within the 1 km buffer zone of the
154 water quality sampling points in the research area using the spatial analysis function of ArcGIS 9.3. Based
155 on the results, we then discussed and analysed the correlation between water quality and land use/cover
156 type changes at different levels and periods. For different levels, we established the correlation between
157 water quality and land use/cover types in each layer and discussed the influence of land use/cover type
158 changes on water quality. For different periods, analysed the land use/cover type information and eight
159 types of water quality indices during the dry and wet seasons. The land use/cover type information and
160 eight water quality indices were imported into Canoco 4.5 (Ter Braak and Smilauer, 2002) to test the DCA
161 gradient axis. **The results showed that the DCA gradient shaft length was less than 3. Based on the results
162 of Wang et al (2017), when the DCA gradient shaft length is less than 3, the redundancy analysis (RDA)
163 method can explore the relationship; therefore, the redundancy analysis (RDA) method was applied to
164 determine the influence trend of land use/cover changes on the water quality within the Ebinur Lake buffer
165 area.** This method indicates the contribution rate of a single land use/cover variable on water quality and

166 can directly demonstrate the correlation between land use/cover type and water quality parameters via a 2D
167 ordination graph. The methodology is explained in the following section, and a conceptual flow chart
168 describing the methodology is shown in Figure 2.

169 **Fig. 2** Conceptual model of the methodology

170

171 **2 Results and analysis**

172 **2.1 Spatial framework of water quality in the Jinghe Oasis**

173 Regarding the network structure selection, neural networks with a more complicated structure
174 generally have a better capability to address complicated non-linear problems but require a longer training
175 time (Kohonen, 2013). Increasing the number of water quality indices can provide more abundant
176 information; however, the correlations among indices will also increase. The topological values were
177 selected to determine the grid size in this study, and the *k*-means clustering method was adopted to obtain
178 the results. Overall, after the standard processing of the water quality data, the best network training effect
179 was obtained from 35 (7×5) nerve cells, and the QE and TE values were 1.033 and 0.001, respectively.

180 When the average variance values are less than 5% for different clusters, the DBI is low; thus, the
181 corresponding clustering number can be regarded as the best clustering result. Therefore, this study input
182 the trained weights of the neuron nodes through the K-means cluster analysis combined with the DBI to
183 select the clustering number. The results are shown in Figure 3a. **Six clusters were formed because this
184 number yielded the minimum DBI value (Figure 3a).**

185

186 **Fig. 3** (a) Davies–Bouldin index plot. (b) Results of the SOM clustering of the cells on the map plane (distribution of
187 the sampling sites on the SOM according to the eight water quality parameters and clustering of the trained SOM).

188

189 Figure 3b presents the results of the SOM clustering of the cells on the map plane, which exhibited
190 similarities among the different monitoring stations. In particular, Cluster 1 included the sampling points
191 around the Ganjia Lake *Haloxylon* natural conservation area in the southern Ebinur Lake region and points
192 east of Ebinur Lake and around the Kuitun River during the wet season. Cluster 2 included the monitoring
193 stations in the Jing River and around the agricultural ditch in the western Ebinur Lake region. Cluster 3
194 comprised samples of water from melted ice in the southern–western corner of the research zone, which
195 were grouped into only one type. Cluster 4 included the sampling points within the Ganjia Lake *Haloxylon*
196 natural conservation area during the dry season. Cluster 5 included the sampling points in the Jing River,
197 the agricultural ditch and around Ebinur Lake. Cluster 6 contained points located around the Kuitun River
198 and Ebinur Lake Bird Isle, which had more pools. In general, although individual points may interfere with
199 the explanation of the results, the classification results can identify the time sequence features in the
200 research zone. Clusters 1 to 3 entirely included samples from the wet season (May 2015), whereas Clusters
201 4 to 6 contained the monitoring samples from the dry season (October 2015). To further observe the
202 information on the water quality parameters of the Jinghe Oasis based on the response of different nerve
203 cells, the water quality information from the various cluster groups was visualized. The results are shown
204 in Figure 4.

205 **Fig. 4** The patterning results for the water quality parameters on the SOM plane

206

207 Figure 4 shows the distribution of different water quality parameters on the SOM. High COD, TN,
208 NH₃-N, and SD values were recorded in the right corner of the SOM network, thereby indicating a
209 declining trend in the southern Ebinur Lake region and the surrounding Kuitun River. The values during
210 the wet season were higher than those during the dry season. High values of SS and NUT were observed in
211 the left corner of the SOM network, which falls within the scope of the agricultural ditch and the Jing
212 River areas during the dry season. This region is mainly distributed around the agricultural land area and is
213 significantly influenced by human activities. High TP values were observed within the scope of the lower
214 left corner, which mainly focuses on the agricultural ditch and Jing River during the dry season. Crops
215 were mature during the dry season, and the farmland area was increased, which thereby increased the TP
216 value. In contrast, the distribution of the BOD₅ was different, indicating a declining trend from the centre
217 to the surrounding area. High BOD₅ values were mainly observed downstream of the Ganjia Lake
218 *Haloxylon* natural conservation zone, which is surrounded by a salt field, thereby exerting a certain
219 influence on the surrounding water quality. The regional change in the water quality of the Jinghe Oasis
220 was reflected clearly and directly through the SOM. To observe the distribution of the water quality
221 parameters directly, we collected different values of the water quality parameters at various layers (Figure
222 5).

223 **Fig. 5** Average values for the water quality parameters

224
225 Figure 5 shows that the distribution of water quality parameters varies in different clustering layers.
226 Among the six clusters, water quality was generally relatively better in Cluster 3. However, Cluster 3 only
227 had one sampling point, which comprised ice and snow water. Therefore, its water quality was not
228 considered. In addition, the COD, SS, NUT, TN, and NH₃-N contents were high in Clusters 1 and 2, which
229 indicates a relatively lower water quality compared with the water downstream of the Ganjia Lake
230 *Haloxylon* natural conservation zone, the surrounding Ebinur Lake region, and the agricultural land. The
231 SD values were high in Clusters 1, 4, and 6. Meanwhile, high BOD₅ values were mainly concentrated in
232 Clusters 4 and 6, around the Ganjia Lake *Haloxylon* natural conservation zone and Ebinur Lake Bird Isle.
233 Many pools in these clusters are, to a certain extent, influenced by the water area. The concentration
234 difference in the TP of each layer was minimal and considerably influenced by human activities,
235 particularly changes in the agricultural land area. Based on these results and Chinese Environmental
236 Quality Standards for Surface Water (GB3838-2002), we evaluated the grades of the water quality
237 parameters, including the COD, BOD₅, TN, NH₃-N, and TP, at different layers (Table 1).

238 **Table 1** The classes of water quality parameters in each cluster

239 As shown in Table 1, according to Chinese Environmental Quality Standards for Surface Water (GB
240 3838-2002), clusters 1 to 6 did not satisfy the potable water quality level. Clusters 1 and 2 had an identical
241 water quality classification level, and their COD and TN contents were higher than the standard values. In
242 particular, the COD content exceeded level V. Meanwhile, the BOD₅ and COD contents were excessive in
243 Clusters 4 and 5, respectively. In Cluster 6, both the COD and BOD₅ contents were excessive, but the COD
244 content was higher.

245 **2.2 Analysis of land use/cover type and its relation to water quality at different layers**

246 In this study, historical data, high-resolution Google Earth images, and field survey data were selected
247 to verify that more than 100 pixels of each land cover type were used for the training data, and the
248 confusion matrix was used to verify the classification results. For the classification results obtained in May

249 and October 2015 (Figure 6), precision increased to 89.9750% and 86.2848%, respectively, and the kappa
250 coefficients were 0.8681 and 0.8184, respectively, based on the confusion matrix (Table 2), which indicates
251 an accurate classification result that satisfies the research requirements. Accordingly, ArcGIS was used to
252 establish a 1 km buffer zone around the water sampling points. The composition of land use/cover at
253 different layers was analysed according to the hierarchical results of the water quality parameters, and the
254 results are presented in Figure 7.

255 **Fig. 6** The change in land use/cover of the Ebinur Lake area during the rainy (May) and dry (October) seasons in 2015 (a:
256 May; b: October)

257 **Fig. 7** The area of land use/cover for each cluster

258
259 **Table 2** The confusion matrix calculation with a maximum likelihood supervised classification

260

261 Figure 7 shows the land use/cover mode at different layers. In general, the salinization phenomenon
262 was serious across the entire research zone. Among the six clusters, Cluster 1 mainly included the sampling
263 points around the Ganjia Lake *Haloxylon* natural conservation area, the eastern Ebinur Lake region, and
264 the Kuitun River. The major land type in this cluster was forest-grass land. The monitoring site in Cluster 2
265 was in the irrigation ditch of the Jinghe Oasis and in the Jing River. In May, crops do not grow abundantly
266 in the research zone, and the major land type in this cluster was forest-grass land. Cluster 4 mainly
267 included the Ganjia Lake *Haloxylon* natural conservation area and the sampling points in Tuotuo Village
268 during the dry season, which include farmland and forest-grassland. The sampling points in Cluster 5 were
269 in the agricultural ditch, the Jing River, and the surrounding Ebinur Lake. The land types mainly included
270 forest-grassland and farmland, which was larger than the other land type. Cluster 6 was mainly located in
271 the Kuitun River and the surrounding Ebinur Lake Bird Isle. A considerable number of plants, such as reed,
272 grow in some of its pools. The percentages of the forest-grass land and salinized land within the 1 km
273 buffer were large, based on the actual conditions in the research zone and the distribution of the sampling
274 points. Based on these results, the correlation between land use/cover type and water quality parameters
275 from Clusters 1 to 6 was analysed. The results are presented in Table 3.

276 **Table 3** The correlation coefficients between the land use/cover and water quality parameters in each cluster

277 In Cluster 1, the forest–grass land exhibited a negative correlation with the SS and NUT under the
278 significance level of 0.01, with coefficients reaching up to -0.710 and -0.724 , respectively. At a
279 significance level of 0.05, the water body type exhibited an obvious positive correlation with the COD and
280 a negative correlation with the TN, with coefficients of 0.986 and -0.721 , respectively. At a confidence
281 level of 0.01, the salinized land demonstrated a positive correlation with the NUT, with a coefficient of
282 0.756 . In Cluster 2, the farmland presented a negative correlation with the COD and a positive correlation
283 with the NUT at a confidence level of 0.05, and the coefficients were -0.581 and 0.639 , respectively.
284 Under the same conditions, the forest–grass land exhibited a positive correlation with the COD, and the
285 coefficient was 0.613 . At a confidence level of 0.01, the water body type exhibited an evident negative
286 correlation with the SS and NUT, and the correlation coefficients were -0.983 and -0.990 , respectively. In
287 Cluster 4, several water quality parameters were mainly influenced by the farmland, forest-grass land, and
288 salinized land types. At a confidence level of 0.05, the farmland exhibited a negative correlation with the
289 COD, with a coefficient of -0.652 . At a confidence level of 0.01, the farmland demonstrated an evident
290 positive correlation with TP, and the coefficient is 0.872 . At a confidence level of 0.05, salinized land
291 shows a clear negative correlation with TP and NUT, and the coefficients were -0.791 and -0.819 ,
292 respectively. In this layer, the others land type exhibited a positive correlation with the TP, with a

293 coefficient of 0.868. The sampling points in this layer were mainly located around Tuotuo Village, where
294 the influences of human activities are considerable; therefore, in Cluster 4, the correlation percentage of
295 the others land type with TP was high. In Cluster 5, farmland demonstrated an evident negative correlation
296 with the BOD₅ at a 0.01 confidence level, with a correlation coefficient reaching up to -0.881. At a
297 confidence level of 0.05, the salinized land showed a positive correlation with the BOD₅, with a correlation
298 coefficient of 0.774. In Cluster 6, the forest-grass land showed a clear negative correlation at a confidence
299 level of 0.01, and the correlation coefficient reached -0.884. At a confidence level of 0.05, the water area
300 exhibited a positive correlation, with a correlation coefficient of 0.980.

301 From the results of the comprehensive analysis, the farmland, forest-grass land, and salinized land
302 types have a considerable influence on the water quality parameters in the Jinghe Oasis. In Clusters 1, 2,
303 and 6, the size of the water area, to a certain extent, also influenced changes in the water quality parameters.
304 Given the unbalanced distribution of the sampling points at different layers, the effect of the land use/cover
305 composition on the water quality in the research zone varied, so it can only indicate influences to a certain
306 extent. Therefore, considering the actual conditions in Ebinur Lake, different land use/cover types and
307 water quality influences must be understood as a whole, and the correlation between the land use/cover
308 types and water quality in the Jinghe Oasis at different periods is further discussed.

309 **2.3 Analysis of land use/cover changes in the Jinghe Oasis and their correlation with** 310 **water quality at different seasons**

311 The constituents of the land use/cover types at different seasons exerted diverse influences on the
312 water quality. Therefore, an analysis of the influences of land use/cover type changes on water quality was
313 conducted. The results are presented in Figure 8.

314 **Fig. 8** RDA analyses of comprehensive land use/cover and water quality (a: wet season; b: dry season)

315 As shown in Figure 8, the farmland exhibited a negative correlation with the COD at a confidence
316 level of 0.01 during the wet season, with a correlation coefficient of -0.543. In contrast, it showed a
317 positive correlation with the NUT, with a correlation coefficient of 0.555. At a confidence level of 0.05, the
318 farmland demonstrated a negative correlation with the NH₃-N, and the correlation coefficient was -0.461.
319 At a confidence level of 0.05, the forest-grass land showed a positive correlation with the BOD₅ and TP,
320 with correlation coefficients of 0.470 and 0.518, respectively. They exhibited a negative correlation with
321 the SS and NUT, with correlation coefficients of -0.529 and -0.498, respectively. At a confidence level of
322 0.05, the salinized land demonstrated a positive correlation with the BOD₅ and TP, with correlation
323 coefficients of -0.503 and 0.518, respectively. In contrast, it presented a negative correlation with the SS
324 and NUT, with correlation coefficients of 0.449 and 0.449, respectively. During the dry season, the
325 influence of the farmland on various water quality parameters evidently increased because of crop growth.
326 At a confidence level of 0.01, the farmland presented a clear negative correlation with the COD and an
327 evident positive correlation with the TP, with correlation coefficients of -0.620 and 0.616, respectively. At
328 a confidence level of 0.05, the farmland showed a positive correlation with the TN and a negative
329 correlation with the BOD₅, NH₃-N and SD, with correlation coefficients of 0.543, -0.495, -0.522, and
330 -0.526 for TN, BOD₅, NH₃-N and SD, respectively. At a confidence level of 0.01, the salinized land
331 demonstrated a negative correlation with the NUT and TP, and the correlation coefficients were -0.543 and
332 -0.603, respectively. In contrast, it presented a positive correlation with the BOD₅ at a confidence level of
333 0.05 and a correlation coefficient of 0.522. Similarly, during the wet and dry seasons, the correlation
334 between the water body and others land types with the water quality parameters was small. Based on these

335 results, the influences of the various land use/cover types in the research zone on the water quality
336 parameters exhibited the following order, in descending order of influence: farmland → forest–grass land
337 → salinized land → water body → others. Moreover, the influence was lower during the wet season than
338 during the dry season.

339 **3 Discussion**

340 Given the seasonal differences, the unbalanced distribution of precipitation resulted in an apparent
341 variation in the surface runoff and further imbalanced the spatial distribution of the water quality in the
342 research zone (Fan et al.,2012; Prathumratana et al.,2008; Li et al.,2015). During the wet season (May) in
343 the Jinghe Oasis, melted water from mountain ice and snow promote the flow in the Jing River, thereby
344 resulting in a significant increase in surface runoff leading to an improved water quality in the rainy season
345 compared to the dry season. During the dry season, the aquatic plants in rivers and lakes grow as the
346 temperature rises, which can, to a certain degree, absorb and purify part of the water quality parameters.
347 Therefore, significant and seasonal changes in the surface runoff at the research zone are important factors
348 resulting in noticeable differences in the spatial distribution of water quality characteristics during the wet
349 and dry seasons. Another major factor that causes differences in the spatial distribution of water quality is
350 the change in land use/cover, especially farmland. During the dry season, farmland areas have a greater
351 influence on more water quality variables than they do during the rainy season because of their intensive
352 fertilization and agricultural runoff from soil erosion (Ngoye et al, 2004;Li et al., 2009; Tran et al., 2010).
353 Multiple factors threaten the ecological safety of the Jinghe Oasis system. Especially in recent years, the
354 lakeside desertification zone has rapidly expanded because of the decrease in the Ebinur Lake area and the
355 degradation of lakeside vegetation under influence of the strong winds in Alashankou. In the current
356 overall situation, the human activities influencing land use/cover changes are directly related to the
357 development of the vulnerable ecological area that surrounds Ebinur Lake.

358 Recent statistics indicate that the annual growth rate of the population in the Jinghe Oasis is
359 approximately 2.49%, which is slightly higher than previous growth rates (Li, 2006). Under the stress of a
360 large population, the amount of inappropriate activities that negatively impact land use/cover in the Jinghe
361 Oasis will increase. For the last 30 years, cotton has been the major crop in the Jinghe Oasis. The results of
362 the current study indicate that the sampling points surrounding the farmland in the research zone have
363 lower water quality values than the other studied regions. The primary livelihoods of the urban residents
364 around the Ebinur Lake area are agricultural and animal husbandry industries. Pollutants that result in high
365 TP and NH₃-N contents in water include the excessive application of chemical fertilizers on farmlands, the
366 production of livestock manure in rural villages, randomly stocked garbage, and domestic wastewater. The
367 improper application of chemical fertilizers and pesticides to a vast area leads to high water nitrogen and
368 phosphorus contents, resulting in the spread of algae in river sections. Consequently, the amount of
369 dissolved oxygen in the river may decrease, the water quality may deteriorate, and eutrophication may
370 occur. Furthermore, this scenario poses a serious salinization problem. Certain measures have been
371 implemented for the ecological protection of Ebinur Lake, such as returning farmland to forest, cultivating
372 ecological forests, and promoting efficient irrigation and water-saving technologies. However, these
373 measures promote the gradual expansion of the lake area and result in different degrees of negative
374 consequences. The most apparent result has been the rise of the underground water level, which has
375 aggravated land salinization in the lowland areas and resulted in vast expanses of uncultivated former
376 agricultural lands. Statistics indicate that soil salinization in the Ebinur Lake area mainly occurs in Bortala
377 River, Jing River, the villages and towns surrounding Ebinur Lake, areas downstream of the Daheyanzi

378 River, and areas north of Bole City (Mi et al.,2010). Severe soil salinization has seriously affected the
379 farming of crops; therefore, some farmers have increased the amount of chemical fertilizers they apply to
380 increase yield, which also increases the pollution of the water and soil. Others have even abandoned their
381 land, thereby causing land use/cover change.

382 Most rivers in Xinjiang are characterized by a low water yield, short flow, small water environmental
383 capacity, poor self-cleaning capability, and low tolerance to pollution. Hence, an artificial change in the
384 land use and exploration of resources in lake regions lead to an evident correlation between land use/cover
385 types and water quality. In addition, the scientific utilization and protection of the water resources of
386 Ebinur Lake and the scientific application of chemical fertilizers and improvement of their application
387 rates are important actions and should be addressed to achieve sustainable development in the agricultural
388 irrigation zones of the Jinghe Oasis and rivers of Xinjiang.

389 **4 Conclusions**

390 The spatial distribution characteristics of water quality in the Jinghe Oasis and their correlation with
391 land use/cover types were analysed, and the following conclusions were drawn.

392 (1) Using the SOM method based on non-hierarchical *k*-means classification, 47 water quality
393 sampling points were divided into 6 types, and the time sequence characteristics of the research zone were
394 better recognized in the classification results. Clusters 1 to 3 comprised samples from the wet season (May
395 2015), whereas Clusters 4 to 6 comprised monitoring samples from the dry season (October 2015). In
396 general, the COD, SS, NUT, TN, and NH₃-N contents were high. The SD value was high in Clusters 1, 4,
397 and 6. In addition, high BOD and TP values were mainly concentrated in Clusters 4 and 6. Based on these
398 findings, the water quality at different layers of the research zone was further evaluated. The results show
399 that Clusters 1 to 6 do not satisfy potable water quality standards.

400 (2) The correlations between the land use/cover types and water quality parameters for Clusters 1 to 6
401 were analysed according to the hierarchical results of the water quality parameters. The comprehensive
402 analysis indicates that the farmland, forest–grass land, and salinized land exerted significant influences on
403 the water quality parameters of the Jinghe Oasis. In Clusters 1, 2, and 6, the size of the water area, to a
404 certain extent, also influenced changes in the water quality parameters.

405 (3) During the wet and dry seasons, the influences that various land use/cover types in the research
406 zone had on the water quality parameters exhibited the following order, in descending order of influence:
407 farmland → forest–grass land → salinized land → water body → others. Moreover, the influences were
408 lower during the wet season than during the dry season.

409 In general, the land use/cover type, area percentage, and water quality in the Jinghe Oasis
410 demonstrated apparent correlations. The results of this study can tentatively explain the relationship
411 between water quality and land use/cover types in different clusters by the SOM method. This work
412 provides new insight for further studies on the correlation between land use/cover and water quality in the
413 Jinghe Oasis, as well as a scientific reference for formulating regulations and control policies for the
414 spatial development and water environmental protection of the Jinghe Oasis.

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500 shrinking of the Ebinur Lake, Xinjiang, China, during the 1972–2013 period. *Environmental Monitoring and
501 Assessment*, 187(1): 1-14.

502

Figure captions

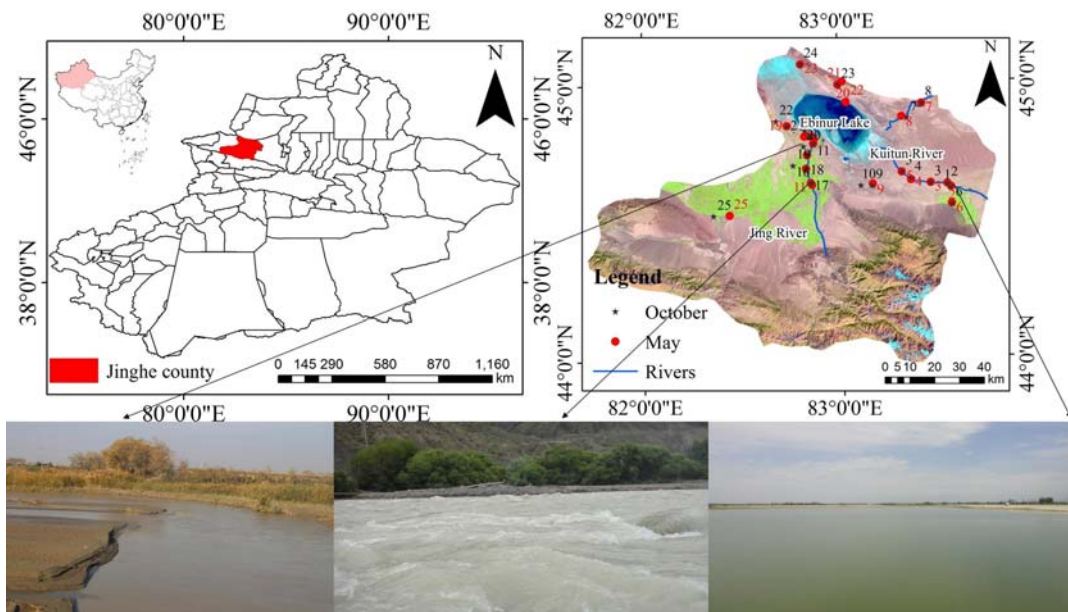


Fig. 1 Location of the study area

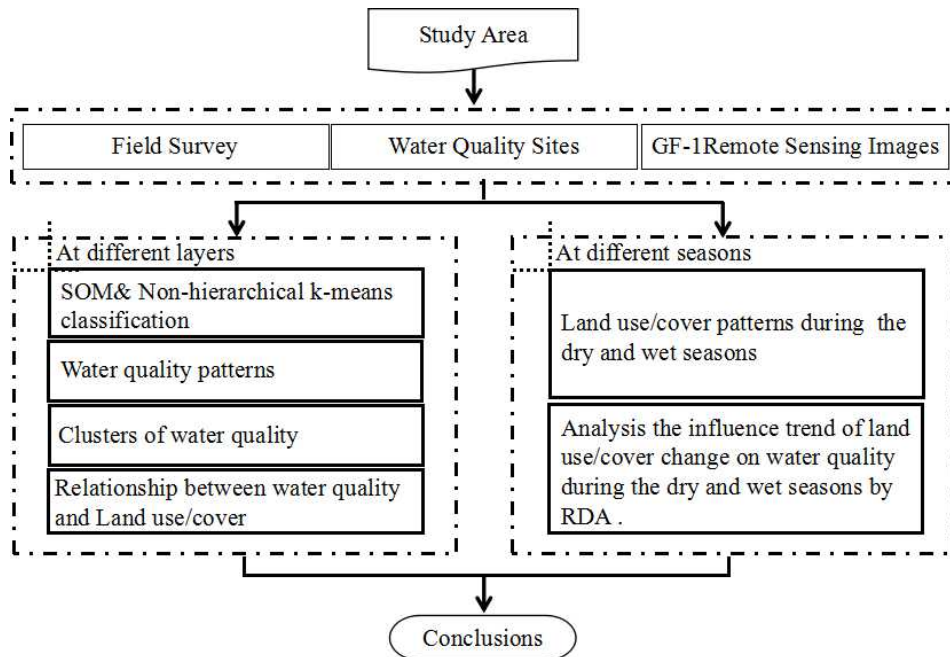


Fig. 2 Conceptual model of the methodology

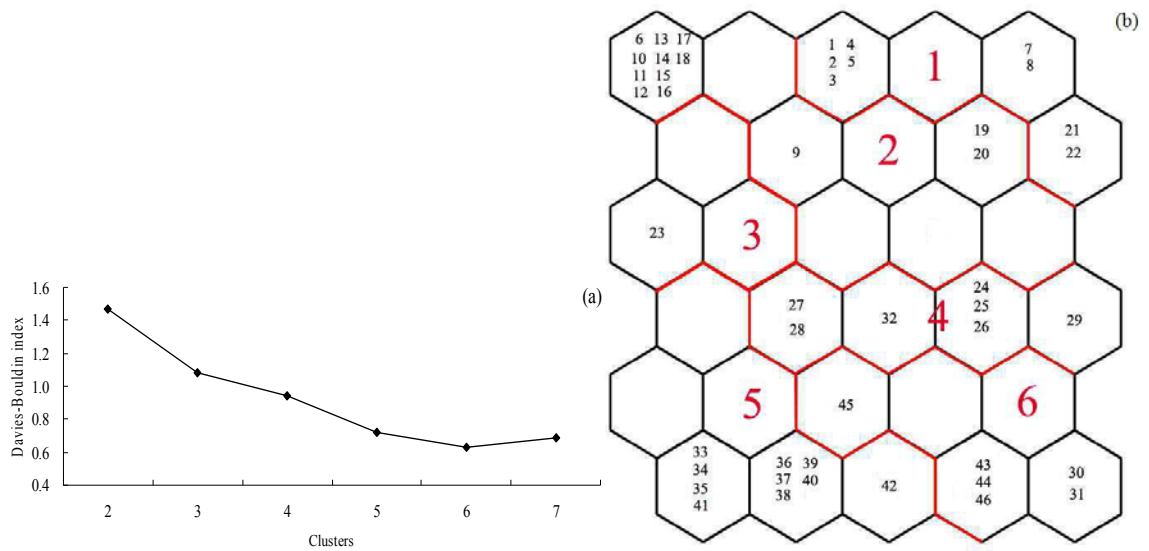


Fig. 3 (a) Davies–Bouldin index plot. (b) Results of the SOM clustering of the cells on the map plane (distribution of the sampling sites on the SOM according to the eight water quality parameters and clustering of the trained SOM).

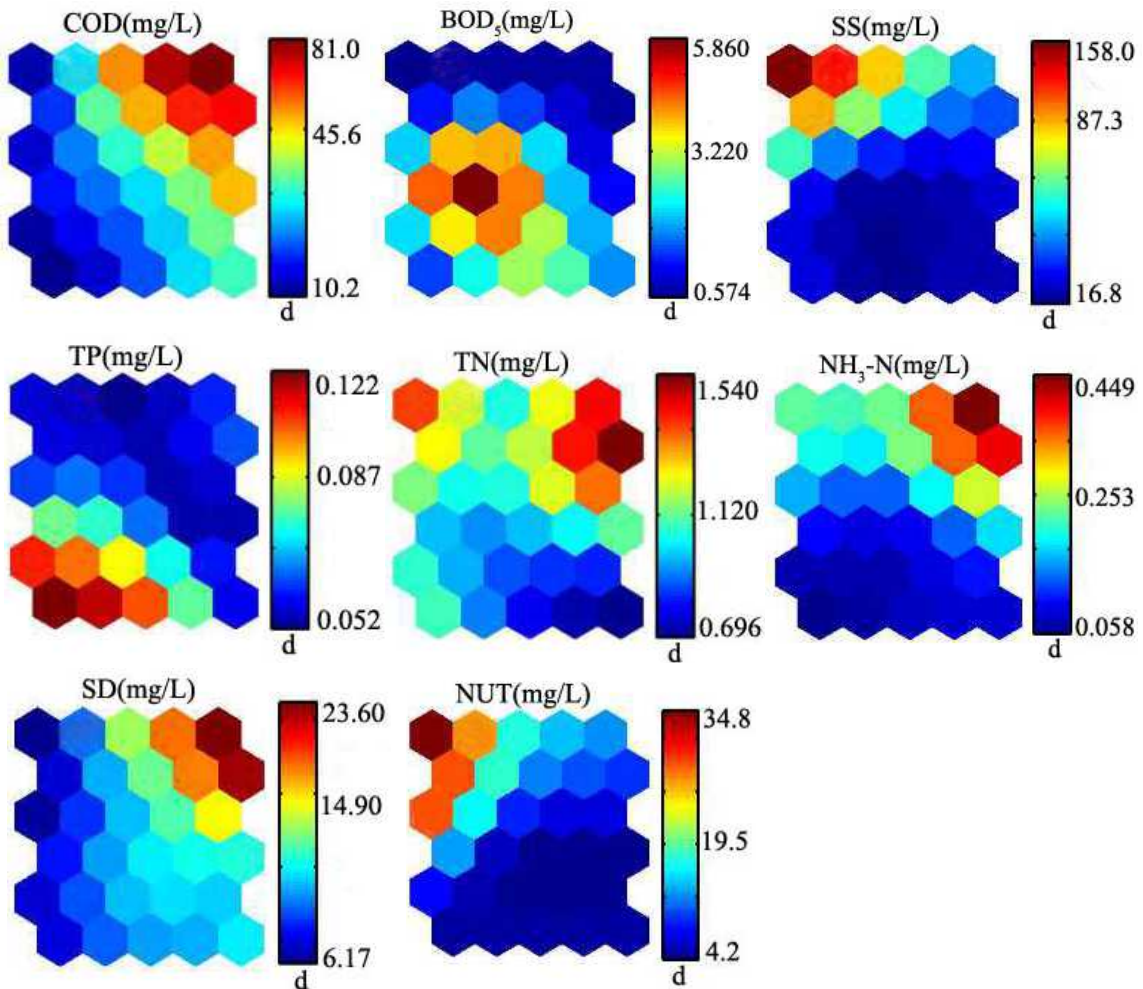


Fig. 4 The patterning results for the water quality parameters on the SOM plane

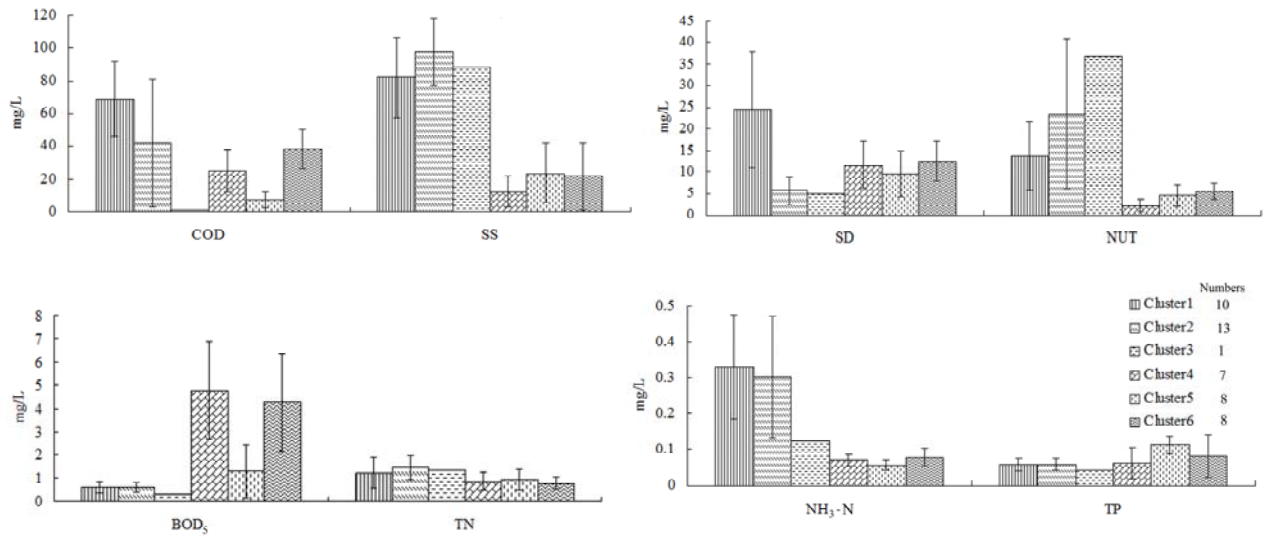


Fig. 5 Average values for the water quality parameters

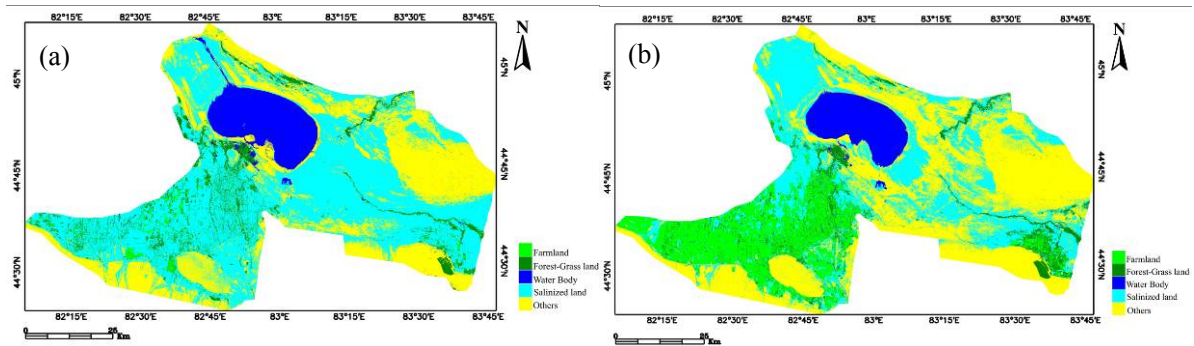


Fig. 6 The change in land use/cover of the Ebinur Lake area during the rainy (May) and dry (October) seasons in 2015 (a: May; b: October)

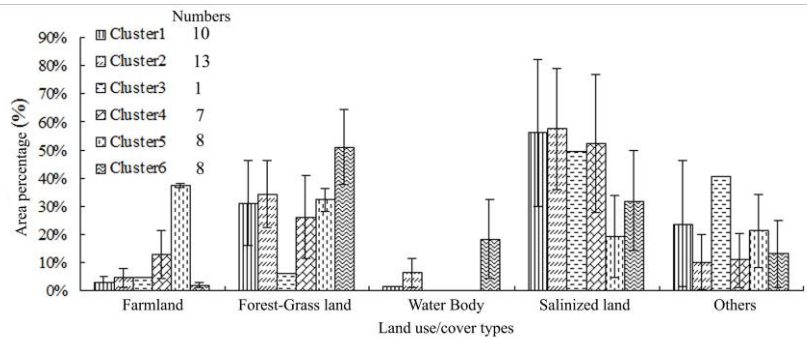


Fig. 7 The area of land use/cover for each cluster

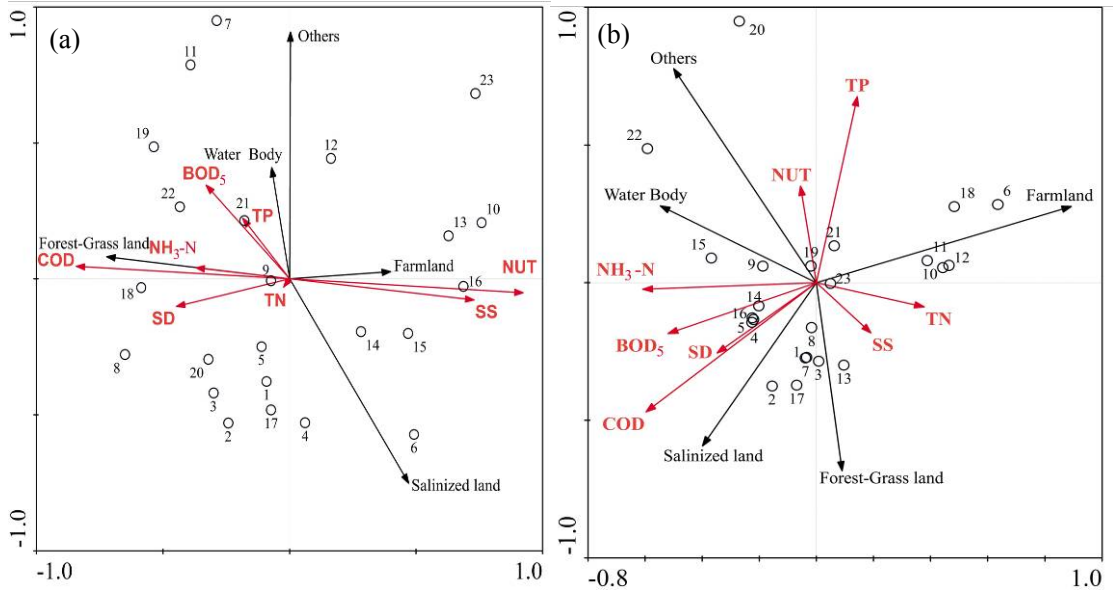


Fig. 8 RDA analyses of comprehensive land use/cover and water quality (a: wet season; b: dry season)

Tables caption

Table 1 The classes of water quality parameter in each cluster

	Cluster1	Cluster2	Cluster4	Cluster5	Cluster6
COD	Exceed V	Exceed V	I	IV	V
BOD ₅	I	I	IV	I	IV
TN	IV	IV	III	III	III
NH ₃ -N	II	II	I	I	I
TP	II	II	II	III	II

Table 2 The calculation of a confusion matrix by a maximum likelihood supervised classification

	LULC	Water body	Saline land	Farmland	Forest grassland	Other land	Total	User's accuracy (%)
May	Water body	144	0	0	0	0	144	100
	Saline land	0	77	0	0	16	93	82.79
	Farmland	0	36	101	0	0	137	73.72
	Forest-Grass land	0	36	0	101	0	137	73.72
	Other land types	1	0	0	0	87	88	98.96
	Total	145	149	101	101	103	Overall=89.9750%	
	Producer's accuracy (%)	99.31	51.67	100	100	84.46	Kappa=0.8681	
October	Water body	144	0	0	0	0	144	100
	Saline land	0	57	0	0	26	83	86.67
	Farmland	0	16	101	0	0	117	86.32
	Forest-Grass land	4	16	0	101	0	117	86.32
	Other land types	0	0	0	0	77	77	100
	Total	148	89	101	101	103	Overall=86.2848%	
	Producer's accuracy (%)	97.29	64	100	100	74.75	Kappa=0.8184	

Table 3 The correlation coefficients between land use/cover and water quality parameters in each cluster

	Parameters	Farmland	Forest-Grass land	Water Body	Salinized land	Others
Cluster1	COD	-0.161	0.240	0.986*	-0.110	-0.361
	BOD ₅	0.074	0.492	-0.439	-0.613	0.552
	SS	-0.271	-0.710**	0.801	0.619	-0.384
	TP	-0.195	0.453	0.371	0.444	0.623
	TN	0.464	0.524	-0.721*	-0.224	0.121
	NH ₃ -N	-0.491	0.039	0.071	-0.066	0.291
	SD	-0.296	0.448	0.415	-0.426	0.396
	NUT	-0.261	-0.724**	0.550	0.756**	-0.612
Cluster2	COD	-0.581*	0.613*	0.916	-0.693**	0.442
	BOD ₅	-0.004	0.455	0.055	-0.545	0.242
	SS	0.493	-0.512	-0.983**	0.386	0.047
	TP	-0.222	0.531	0.850	-0.129	0.382

	TN	0.351	0.415	-0.867	-0.356	-0.311
	NH ₃ -N	-0.467	0.121	0.122	-0.269	0.284
	SD	-0.226	-0.073	-0.051	-0.217	0.473
	NUT	0.639*	-0.446	-0.990**	0.513	-0.236
Cluster4	COD	-0.652*	0.484	/	0.375	-0.048
	BOD ₅	-0.482	-0.402	/	0.505	0.688
	SS	-0.155	0.658	/	-0.179	-0.167
	TP	0.872**	-0.398	/	-0.791*	0.868*
	TN	0.336	0.468	/	-0.571	-0.124
	NH ₃ -N	-0.202	-0.540	/	0.398	0.352
	SD	-0.543	0.825*	/	0.214	-0.549
	NUT	0.578	0.469	/	-0.819*	-0.129
Cluster5	COD	0.094	-0.372	/	0.325	-0.400
	BOD ₅	-0.881**	0.503	/	0.774*	-0.044
	SS	0.621	-0.533	/	-0.284	-0.380
	TP	0.587	-0.702	/	-0.565	0.136
	TN	0.735	-0.588	/	-0.184	-0.604
	NH ₃ -N	-0.675	0.108	/	0.487	0.308
	SD	-0.632	0.330	/	0.208	0.576
	NUT	0.311	0.076	/	-0.459	0.154
Cluster6	COD	0.489	0.401	0.980*	-0.454	0.289
	BOD ₅	-0.256	-0.884**	-0.660	0.367	0.327
	SS	-0.481	0.194	0.341	-0.150	-0.062
	TP	-0.545	-0.656	0.269	-0.060	0.206
	TN	-0.158	-0.364	-0.022	0.516	0.313
	NH ₃ -N	-0.553	-0.366	0.517	-0.090	0.603
	SD	0.811	-0.037	-0.857	0.249	-0.282
	NUT	0.450	0.165	0.764	-0.497	0.636

*p<0.05(2-tailed) ** p<0.01(2-tailed)