LETTER • OPEN ACCESS

Recent changes in extreme floods across multiple continents

To cite this article: Wouter R Berghuijs et al 2017 Environ. Res. Lett. 12 114035

View the article online for updates and enhancements.

Related content
- Rising floodwaters: mapping impacts and perceptions of flooding in Indonesian Borneo Jessie A Wells, Kerrie A Wilson, Nicola K Abram et al.
- The role of climate variability in extreme floods in Europe G Guimarães Nobre, B Jongman, J Aerts et al.
- Determining tropical cyclone inland flooding loss on a large scale through a new flood peak ratio-based methodology Jeffrey Czajkowski, Gabriele Villarini, Erwann Michel-Kerjan et al.
Recent changes in extreme floods across multiple continents

Wouter R Berghuijs\textsuperscript{1,7,8} , Emma E Aalbers\textsuperscript{2,3} , Joshua R Larsen\textsuperscript{4,5} , Ralph Trancoso\textsuperscript{4,6} and Ross A Woods\textsuperscript{1}

\textsuperscript{1} Department of Civil Engineering, University of Bristol, University Walk, Bristol, United Kingdom
\textsuperscript{2} Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute (KNMI), De Bilt, Netherlands
\textsuperscript{3} Institute for Environmental Studies, VU University Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Netherlands
\textsuperscript{4} School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia
\textsuperscript{5} Institute of Earth Surface Dynamics, University of Lausanne, Lausanne, Switzerland
\textsuperscript{6} Global Change Institute, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia
\textsuperscript{7} Department of Environmental Systems Science, ETH Zurich, 8092 Zürich, Switzerland
\textsuperscript{8} Author to whom any correspondence should be addressed.

E-mail: wouter.berghuijs@usys.ethz.ch

Keywords: flood, global hydrology, natural hazard, hydro-climate

Abstract
Analyzes of trends in observed floods often focus on relatively frequent events, whereas changes in rare floods are only studied for a small number of locations that have exceptionally long observational records. Understanding changes in rare floods is especially relevant as these events are often most damaging and influence the design of major structures. Here, we provide an assessment of changes in the largest flood events ($\sim 0.033$ annual exceedance probability) observed during the period 1980–2009 for 1744 catchments located in Australia, Brazil, Europe and the United States. The occurrence of rare floods in spatial aggregate shows strong temporal variability and peaked around 1995. During the 30 year period, there are overall increases in both the frequency and magnitude of extreme floods. These increases are strongest in Europe and the United States, and weakest in Brazil and Australia. Physical causes of the reported short-term variability and longer-term changes in extreme floods currently remain elusive, because the key drivers vary between catchments. Nonetheless, this approach provides the basis for a more spatially representative assessment of changes in extreme flood occurrence.

1. Introduction
Increasing greenhouse gas concentrations generally result in a warmer atmosphere able to hold more moisture at saturation, leading to increasing observed and predicted rainfall extremes [1–4]. It is therefore expected that the magnitude and frequency of flooding will increase with a warming climate [5–7]. However, the sign, magnitude and spatial manifestation of regional and global flood changes in both past and future decades remain largely unknown as there is profound disagreement between predicted flood trends, which are uncertain but generally increasing [8–12], and the large variability in observed global flood trends in recent decades, which can be either increasing or decreasing [6, 7, 13–16]. This apparent mismatch suggests purely relying on uncertain model predictions [17], or superimposing extreme precipitation trends onto floods, is invalidated by several confounding factors, such as: (i) changes in other climatic factors that control flood conditions (e.g. evaporation and snowmelt) [18, 19], (ii) the dependence on antecedent conditions, which themselves are not always extreme [20], and (iii) the impact of changing catchment templates (e.g. river channels and land use) on which climate-driven changes in flood behavior may occur [5, 6, 21]. Closely monitoring runoff observations, which integrates all these factors, is therefore of key importance to understanding the changing nature of floods.

Studies of observed trends generally focus on flood events with some regularity over time (e.g. annual or bi-annual peaks) [14, 22–25]. Understanding changes in frequently occurring maximum river flows is useful. However, this does not necessarily provide information on extreme and infrequent floods that can be far more...
destructive. Our ability to examine changes in extreme floods (e.g. annual exceedance probability < 0.05) is currently confined to locations with exceptionally long flow records and pre-instrumental flow estimates [26]. Long records are necessary to allow a sufficient number of extreme events for trend analysis. Consequently, it is unclear if findings from this small number of rivers, such as no increasing trends in extreme floods in Europe [27] or a high sensitivity of flood magnitude to changes in climate [28, 29], are representative of the majority of river systems around the world. Thus, the nature of regional and global changes in extreme floods is mostly unknown.

If mostly unidirectional changes in the frequency and magnitude of extreme floods exist (e.g. as predicted [8–12]), it should be possible to detect such changes using observational records that, despite having limited temporal coverage, encompass a much greater spatial footprint of many rivers across the globe. Although the changing characteristics of extreme floods for individual rivers cannot be determined given the limited number of extreme events per catchment, aggregating the data over a large number of locations can provide robust information on the changing nature of extremes across larger regions or a large number of catchments [30]. Such a regional approach is needed given that a systematic test of recent changes in extreme floods across multiple continents is currently not available. Aiming to fill this knowledge gap, we assess changes in the frequency and magnitude of extreme flood events, defined here as the largest observed daily flow rate during the period 1980–2009 (i.e. ∼0.033 annual exceedance probability) for catchments located in diverse landscapes and climates in Australia, Brazil, Europe, and the United States.

2. Methods

2.1. Data

Daily streamflow observations for the period 1980–2009 are used from 309 catchments located in eastern Australia, 671 catchments in the continental United States, 244 catchments in Brazil, and 520 catchments located in Europe (figure 1). The extreme events we studied (i.e. the maximum flood in a 30 year period) are orders of magnitude larger than mean flow rates, and, on average 3.9 times larger than the mean annual flood peaks (figure 1). These catchments range in size from ∼1–100 000 km², and do not have any major dams affecting river flow, although some catchments in Brazil may have a higher degree of regulation. More information can be found in previous studies that used these catchments [31–34]. Catchments with more than 15% missing data are removed from the data set.

2.2. Quantifying changes in floods

For each catchment, we determined the time of occurrence of the single largest daily flow rate in the 30 year period. In order to consider independent extreme events only (i.e. not consider multiple floods driven by the same synoptic system), extreme flows from neighboring catchments (gauges less than 100 km apart) within a 7 day period are counted only once. Modifying this distance (50–250 km) did not change the results significantly. We then split the data into two periods
of equal length ($t_1 = 1980–1994$, $t_2 = 1995–2009$) and counted the total number of occurrences ($n_1$, $n_2$) of the maximum flood per period per continent and for all catchments. The change in flood occurrence is:

$$\Delta n = \left(\frac{n_2}{n_1} - 1\right) \cdot 100\%.$$  \hfill (1)

The probability that floods have increased is calculated using a chi-square test where the null hypothesis, $H_0$, is no change in the likelihood of flood occurrences (i.e. $n_1 = n_2$):

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(n_2 - (n_1 + n_2)/2)^2}{(n_1 + n_2)/2}. \hfill (2)$$

The likelihood of accepting $H_0$ (indicating the likelihood of no increase in maximum flow occurrence) is calculated as the $p$-value.

To quantify how flood size changed over time, we compared per catchment the magnitude of the maximum daily flow rate of period $t_1$ ($Q_1$), with the magnitude of the maximum daily flow rate for the period $t_2$ ($Q_2$):

$$\Delta Q_2 = \left(\frac{Q_2}{Q_1} - 1\right) \cdot 100\%$$ \hfill (3)

and its reciprocal form indicating the increase of $Q_1$ compared to $Q_2$:

$$\Delta Q_1 = \left(\frac{Q_1}{Q_2} - 1\right) \cdot 100\%.$$ \hfill (4)

A Kolmogorov–Smirnov test rejects at a $p = 0.05$ significance level that the population of all catchments (and per continent) $\Delta Q$ is normally distributed, suggesting a non-parametric statistical test is needed to determine whether $\Delta Q_1$ and $\Delta Q_2$ originate from the same distribution (which implies no change in flood magnitude) or from different distributions (which implies a change in flood magnitude). The two distributions are compared to one another, because a single $\Delta Q$ distribution is skewed towards a flood increase, because it has a (theoretical) lower limit of zero and a (theoretical) upper limit of infinity. We therefore used a two-sided Wilcoxon signed rank-test \cite{35} (which makes no prior assumptions on the shape of studied distributions) to quantify the likelihood that the median of $\Delta Q_1$ is equivalent to the median of $\Delta Q_2$ to assess whether changes in flood magnitude are significant.

3. Results and discussion

We display the 5 year moving average of overall and continental extreme flood occurrence rates (figure 2(a)) based on the timing of the largest daily flow event of each catchment during the 30 years of observations (figures 2(b)–(e)). Overall, and per continent, the frequency of extreme floods, i.e. the fraction of catchments experiencing their maximum flood at a certain moment, shows considerable temporal variability. If these extreme floods were fully independent both spatially and temporally, the expected frequency would be $0.033 \text{ yr}^{-1}$. Yet, all regions have flood occurrence rates that differ substantially from this mean rate (figure 2(a)), indicating extreme flooding is clustering in time at regional scales. The overall occurrence rate shows substantial temporal variations, with a notable peak in extreme flood occurrence rates.
around 1995. Such identification of flood-rich and flood-poor periods has been used before to understand the dynamics of flood regimes \[e.g. 7, 16, 27, 36–38\]. A simple linear trend suggests this multi-continental rate has also increased over time (figure 2(a)). This means more catchments have experienced their most extreme floods more recently. To further test this apparent non-stationarity in flood occurrences, we split the data into two periods of equal length \((t_1 = 1980–1994, \ t_2 = 1995–2009)\) and calculate the relative difference in flood occurrences between the two periods. The total number of occurrences of extreme floods increased by 26.6% across all catchments (equation (1), figure 2), where a chi-squared significance test rejects \((p < 0.001)\) the null-hypothesis of no change in flood probability (equation (2)). This indicates that across multiple continents the frequency of extreme floods has increased, with the caveat that the significance level and percentages of this increase will change when other temporal or spatial intervals are used given the strong temporal and regional variability (figure 2). For example, the relative occurrence of maximum floods in the three consecutive 10 year periods between 1980–2009 is 28.9%, 36.6% and 34.5%, which is consistent with the overall increase of floods during the 30 year period and a peak in the 1990s.

The relative increases in the occurrence of extreme floods are strongest in the Northern Hemisphere regions. In Europe, the flood occurrence rate increased by 44.4% \((p < 0.001)\), whereby the most recent 15 years have many more floods than in the period before 1995. Flood occurrences in the United States increased by 21.4% \((p = 0.030)\), but temporal variations are much stronger, with the flood occurrence rate peaking around halfway through the 1990s. Flood occurrence increases are smaller and less significant within the Southern Hemisphere, with increases of 11.6% in Australia \((p = 0.335)\), and 14.0% in Brazil \((p = 0.301)\) (equations (1) and (2)). Both Australia and Brazil also have less pronounced increases in flood occurrence compared to the flood increases in Europe, with a much larger influence from temporal variability on the regional pictures of extreme flooding. The regional percentages and significance levels of these increases may also change when data are aggregated into alternative time intervals.

Given these changes in the frequency of extreme floods, we next ask whether these increases in frequency are also associated with a significant increase in the magnitudes of extreme events. A comparison of the maximum daily flow rate of both \(t_1\) and \(t_2\) within each catchment can indicate the percentage increase (or decrease) of flood magnitudes between the two periods. Applying equation (3) to all catchments, we find that the multi-continental aggregated extreme floods \((\Delta Q_2)\) have a median increase of 6.77% in magnitude (figure 3(a)). A two-sided non-parametric Wilcoxon signed rank-test indicates the median flood increase of \(\Delta Q_2\) is significantly larger than the median of \(\Delta Q_1\) \((p < 0.001)\). This means that peak flows for the largest floods were significantly higher in the period 1995–2009 than they were in the previous 15 years. Again, hemispheric differences in these changing extreme flood magnitudes exist \((\Delta Q_2\) figures 3(b)–(e)); with flood magnitudes increasing relatively strongly in the United States \(+8.4%, \ p < 0.001\) and Europe \(+9.9%, \ p < 0.001\), while increases for the other continents are less strong or not significant: Australia \(+2.4%, \ p = 0.753\) and Brazil \(+1.4%, \ p = 0.456\).
While the above analyses do not inform the magnitude of change expected within individual catchments, they do indicate that at continental and multi-continental scales there is strong temporal variability as well as increasing trends in both the magnitude and frequency of extreme flood events. This regional picture of extreme flooding is important since it is rarely assessed, because measures of extreme floods are usually obtained by extrapolating the rating curves and therefore are likely to contain uncertainties [39]. However, our spatially aggregated approach looks at relative differences, which reduces the influence of the observation uncertainty of extreme floods. The extreme events we studied are orders of magnitude larger than mean flow rates, and, on average 3.9 times larger than the mean annual flood peaks. Although these extreme events will have been implicitly contained within previous studies that focused on annual flood peaks, or peaks over threshold analyses, trends in these more frequent flood peaks do not necessarily correspond with changes in the behavior of extreme floods. For Europe, our reported increases in extreme flood occurrence rates and magnitudes are consistent with the observed increase in the inundated area and news coverage on rare floods over the past decades [40]. In contrast, there is no clear overall trend of observed annual flood peaks across Europe [23] For the United States, the most recent decade had lower extreme flood occurrence rates than midway through the 1990s. Trends in annual flood peaks are highly variable [13, 14], and only very frequently occurring (i.e. bi-annual) flood peaks in the Midwest have been identified to show a clear increasing frequency in recent decades [24]. For Australia, we observe a clear increase in extreme floods from ~2004 onwards (figure 2), although this begins prior to the end of overall drought conditions around 2009 [41]. Therefore, the smaller increase in extreme flood events in Australia may be influenced by the lower likelihood of flood conditions during the prolonged multiyear drought. Importantly, while extreme floods for individual river basins have been studied in Brazil [42−44], our study also provides the first assessment of extreme flood changes over multiple catchments in South America. These results therefore highlight the need for more regional-based assessments of changes in extreme flooding, since this is the scale at which the impacts of these changes will be managed and mitigated against.

Understanding the physical causes behind these recent changes in extreme floods is a crucial next step before we can assess the degree to which our findings are representative of other regions and future conditions [45, 46]. The hydrological time-series we used is relatively short and catchments (with some exceptions, e.g. in Brazil) have minimal human influence. Consequently, we consider it unlikely that engineering and land-cover changes are the dominant cause of the changes in the flood signal. Both climatic variability and long-term shifts in climatic conditions can be considered more viable drivers of the observed evolution in extreme flood occurrence rates and changes in flood magnitude. Changes in flood magnitudes in individual rivers [29, 47], as well as across larger regions [48, 49] have been linked to climate variability. Although we cannot yet provide attribution for the observed recent changes in extreme floods, an overarching causality is likely to remain elusive as flood-generating mechanisms vary strongly between catchments [20], and there are many potential causes of flood change that will also vary between catchments and time periods. The difficulty in attributing physical causes is also compounded by the fact that changing characteristics of extreme floods for individual rivers cannot be determined, and the mechanisms generating more frequently occurring (e.g. annual) flood peaks are likely to differ from those that generate the most extreme events. When simulation models are used, attribution can also be challenging, because of the substantial uncertainty in model simulations of floods [6−11, 17], especially the most extreme ones.

4. Conclusions

For the first time, we are able to quantify multi-continental changes in the frequency and magnitude of extreme floods. The spatially aggregated approach does not allow for determining changes at individual catchments, but the data suggest that in addition to strong temporal variability there have been increases during 1980−2009 in both the magnitude and frequency of regional extreme floods. These increases have been strongest in Europe and the United States, and weaker in Australia and Brazil. Such flood changes have significant societal relevance as these extreme events are often most damaging [50], influence the design of major structures [46], and shape the riparian environment [51]. Moreover, impacts at the regional scales assessed here are more relevant for extreme flood management and mitigation, but are usually not captured by traditional flood analysis. The studied catchments cover many regions, but due to data limitations do not include some of the most flood-prone regions of the world (e.g. Southeast Asia [50]), and are not necessarily representative of future conditions. However, the approach provided here can easily be extended to these regions as data become available. Future research focused on understanding the cause of these changes will allow more reliable predictions of the future extreme floods, especially for the large areas of the globe that remain poorly monitored.

Acknowledgments

The National Water Agency of Brazil (Agencia Nacional de Aguas) provided streamflow data of the Brazilian catchments (www.snirh.gov.br/hidroweb). The State government water monitoring agencies...
of Queensland (www.dnrm.qld.gov.au/water/water-monitoring-and-dataportal), New South Wales (http://realtimedata.water.nsw.gov.au/water.stm), Victoria (http://data.water.vic.gov.au/monitoring.htm), and Tasmania (http://wrt.tas.gov.au/wisti/ui#opt) provided streamflow data for the Australian catchments. Andrew Newman (NCAR) provided data for the US catchments (http://ral.ucar.edu/projects/hap/flowpredict/subpages/modelvar.php). Most of the European records are part of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization’s (UNESCO) European Water Archive, which includes data provided by the European sub-network (EURO-Flow Regime from International Experiment and Network Data (FRIEND)). Comments by two anonymous reviewers helped us to improve this manuscript.

**ORCID iDs**

Wouter R Berghuijs 🌐 https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7447-0051

**References**

[1] Min S K, Zhang X, Zwiers F W and Hegerl G C 2011 Human contribution to more-intense precipitation extremes Nature 470 378–81

[2] Fischer E M, Beyerle U and Knutti R 2013 Robust spatially aggregated projections of climate extremes Nat. Clim. Change 3 1033–8

[3] Westra S, Fowler H J, Evans J P, Alexander L V, Berg P, Johnson F, Kendon E J, Lenderink G and Roberts N M 2014 Future changes to the intensity and frequency of short-duration extreme rainfall Rev. Geophys. 52 522–55

[4] Donat M G, Lowry A L, Alexander L V, O’Gorman P A and Maher N 2016 More extreme precipitation in the world’s dry and wet regions Nat. Clim. Change 6 508–15

[5] Seneviratne S I et al 2012 Changes in climate extremes and their impacts on the natural physical environment Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation. A Special Report of Working Groups I and II of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) pp 109–230

[6] Kundzewicz Z W, Kanae S, Seneviratne S I, Handmer J, Nicholls N, Peduzzi P and Muir-Wood R 2014 Flood risk and climate change: global and regional perspectives Hydrolog. Sci. J. 59 1–28

[7] Böschl G, Gaal L, Hall J, Kiss A, Komma J, Nester T and Scherrer S 2015 Increasing river floods: fiction or reality? Wiley Interdiscip. Rev.: Water 2 329–44

[8] Millar P C D, Wetherald R T, Dunne K A and Delworth T L 2002 Rising risk of great floods in a changing climate Nature 415 514–7

[9] Hirabayashi Y, Mahendran R, Koirala S, Konoshima L, Yamasaki D, Watanabe S and Kanae S 2013 Global flood risk under climate change Nat. Clim. Change 3 816–21

[10] Dankers R, Arnell N W, Clark D B, Fafonov P D, Fekete B M, Gosling S N and Stacke T 2014 First look at changes in flood hazard in the inter-sectoral impact model intercomparison project ensemble Proc. Natl Acad. Sci. 111 3257–61

[11] Alﬁeri L, Burek P, Feyen L and Forzieri G 2015 Global warming increases the frequency of river ﬂoods in Europe Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. 19 2247–60

[12] Arnell N W and Gosling S N 2016 The impacts of climate change on river flood risk at the global scale Clim. Change 134 387–401

[13] Archﬁeld S A, Hirsch R M, Vigilone A and Bloschl G 2016 Fragmented patterns of flood change across the United States Geophys. Res. Lett. 43 232–9

[14] Hirsch R M and Ryberg K R 2012 Has the magnitude of ﬂoods across the USA changed with global CO2 levels? Hydrol. Sci. J. 57 1–9

[15] Slater L J and Villarini G 2016 Recent trends in US ﬂood risk Geophys. Res. Lett. 43 12428–36

[16] Hall J, Arheimer B, Boga M, Brázdil R, Claps P, Kiss A and Llasat M C 2014 Understanding ﬂood regime changes in Europe: a state of the art assessment Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. 18 2735–72

[17] Trigg M A, Birch C F, Neal J C, Bates P D, Smith A, Sampson C C and Ward P J 2016 The credibility challenge for global ﬂuvial ﬂood risk analysis Environ. Res. Lett. 11 094014

[18] Regonda S K, Rajagopalan B, Clark M and Pinter J 2005 Seasonal cycle shifts in hydroclimatology over the western United States J. Clim. 18 372–84

[19] Roderick M L and Farquhar G D 2002 The cause of decreased pan evaporation over the past 50 years Science 298 1410–1

[20] Berghuijs W R, Woods R A, Hutton C J and Sivapalan M 2016 Dominant ﬂood generating mechanisms across the United States Geophys. Res. Lett. 43 438–9

[21] Slater L J, Singer M B and Kirchner J W 2015 Hydrologic versus geomorphic drivers of trends in ﬂood hazard Geophys. Res. Lett. 42 570–7

[22] Ishak E H, Rahman A, Westra S, Sharma A and Kuczera G 2013 Evaluating the non-stationarity of Australian annual maximum ﬂood Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. 17 508–12

[23] Madsen H, Lawrence D, Lang M, Martinikova M and Kjeldsen T R 2014 Review of trend analysis and climate change projections of extreme precipitation and ﬂoods in Europe J. Hydrol. 519 3634–50

[24] Mallakpour I and Villarini G 2015 The changing nature of ﬂooding across the central United States Nat. Clim. Change 5 250–4

[25] Petrov T and Meier B 2009 Trends in ﬂood magnitude, frequency and seasonality in Germany in the period 1951–2002 J. Hydrol. 379 129–41

[26] Benito G, Lang M, Barriendos M, Llasat M C, Francis F, Ouazza T and Bobée B 2004 Use of systematic, palaeoflood and historical data for the improvement of ﬂood risk estimation. Review of scientiﬁc methods Nat. Hazards 31 623–43

[27] Muddele B, Borrgen M, Tetzlaff G and Grinevald U 2003 No upward trends in the occurrence of extreme ﬂoods in central Europe Nature 425 166–9

[28] Knox J C 1993 Large increases in ﬂood magnitude in response to modest changes in climate Nat. Geosci. 1 378–81

[29] Knox J C 2000 Sensitivity of modern and Holocene ﬂoods to climate change Rev. Geophys. 38 370–41

[30] Muddele B, Borrgen M, Tetzlaff G and Grinevald U 2003 No upward trends in the occurrence of extreme ﬂoods in central Europe Nature 425 166–9

[31] Knox J C 1993 Large increases in ﬂood magnitude in response to modest changes in climate Nat. Geosci. 1 379–81

[32] Stahle K, Hisdal H, Hannaford J, Tallaksen L, Van Lanen H, Sahuquet E and Jorgar T 2010 Streamﬂow trends in water storage changes across Europe Geophys. Res. Lett. 37 623–43

[33] Fischer E M and Knutti R 2014 Detection of spatially aggregated changes in temperature and precipitation extremes Geophys. Res. Lett. 41 547–54

[34] Berghuijs W R, Hartmann A and Woods R A 2016 Streamﬂow sensitivity to water storage changes across Europe Geophys. Res. Lett. 43 1980–7

[35] Stahle K, Hisdal H, Hannaford J, Tallaksen L, Van Lanen H, Sauquett E and Jorgar T 2010 Streamlow trends in Europe: evidence from a dataset of near-natural catchments Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. 14 2567–82

[36] Trancoso R, Larsen J R, McAlpine C, McVicar T R and Phinn S 2016 Linking the Budyko framework and the Dunne diagram J. Hydrol. 535 581–97

[37] Newman A J, Clark M P, Sampson K, Wood A, Hay L E, Bock A and Hopson T 2015 Development of a large-sample watershed-scale hydrometeorological data set for the contiguous USA: data set characteristics and assessment of regional variability in hydrologic model performance Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. 19 2247–60

[38] Wiltbank F 1949 Individual comparisons by ranking methods Biometrics Bull. 1 80–3
[36] Mediero L. et al. 2015 Identification of coherent flood regions across Europe by using the longest streamflow records J. Hydrol. 528 341–60
[37] Schmocker-Fackel P and Naef F 2010 Changes in flood frequencies in Switzerland since 1900 Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. 14 1581–94
[38] Merz B, Nguyen V D and Vorogushyn S 2016 Temporal clustering of floods in Germany: do flood-rich and flood-poor periods exist? J. Hydrol. 541 824–38
[39] Di Baldassarre G and Montanari A 2009 Uncertainty in river discharge observations: a quantitative analysis Hydrol. Earth Syst. Sci. 13 913–21
[40] Kundzewicz Z W, Prinskwar I and Brakenridge G R 2013 Large floods in Europe, 1985–2009 Hydrol. Sci. J. 58 1–7
[41] Van Dijk A I, Beck H E, Crosbie R S, Jeu R A, Liu Y Y, Podger G M and Viney N R 2013 The millennium drought in southeast Australia 2001–2009: natural and human causes and implications for water resources, ecosystems, economy, and society Water Resour. Res. 49 1040–57
[42] Espinoza J C, Ronchail J, Frappart F, Lavado W, Santini W and Guyot J L 2013 The major floods in the Amazonas river and Tributaries (western Amazon basin) during the 1970-2012 period: a focus on the 2012 flood J. Hydrometeorol. 14 1000–8
[43] Espinoza J C, Marengo J A, Ronchail J, Carpio J M, Flores L N and Guyot J L 2014 The extreme 2014 flood in south-western Amazon basin: the role of tropical–subtropical South Atlantic SST gradient Environ. Res. Lett. 9 124007
[44] Filizola N, Latrubesse E M, Fraizy P, Souza R, Guimarães V and Guyot J L 2014 Was the 2009 flood the most hazardous or the largest ever recorded in the Amazon? Geomorphology 215 99–105
[45] Cohn T A and Lins H F 2005 Nature’s style: naturally trendy Geophys. Res. Lett. 32 12302
[46] Milly P C D et al. 2008 Stationarity is dead: whither water management Science 319 573–4
[47] Redmond K T, Enzel Y, House P K and Biondi F 2002 Climate Variability and Flood Frequency at Decadal to Millennial Time Scales, in Ancient Floods, Modern Hazards ed P K House, R H Webb, V R Baker and D R Levish (Washington, DC: American Geophysical Union)
[48] Hamlet A F and Lettenmaier D P 2007 Effects of 20th century warming and climate variability on flood risk in the western US Water Resour. Res. 43 W06427
[49] Mallakpour I and Villarini G 2016 Investigating the relationship between the frequency of flooding over the central United States and large-scale climate Adv. Water Resour. 92 159–71
[50] Winsemius H C, Aerts J C, van Beek L P, Bierkens M F, Bouwman A, Jongman B and Ward P J 2015 Global drivers of future river flood risk Nat. Clim. Change 6 381–5
[51] Naiman R J and Décamp H 1997 The ecology of interfaces: riparian zones Annu. Rev. Ecol. Syst. 28 621–58