
CONSTRAINING 3-D ERT WITH GPR REFLECTION DATA

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ABSTRACT

Surface-based ground penetrating radar (GPR) and electrical resistance tomography (ERT) are common tools for aquifer characterization, because both methods provide data that are sensitive to hydrogeologically relevant quantities. To retrieve bulk subsurface properties at high resolution, we suggest incorporating structural information derived from GPR reflection data when inverting surface ERT data. This reduces resolution limitations, which might hinder quantitative interpretations. Surface-based GPR reflection and ERT data have been recorded on an exposed gravel bar within a restored section of a previously channelized river in northeastern Switzerland to characterize an underlying gravel aquifer. The GPR reflection data acquired over an area of 240×40 m map the aquifer's thickness and two internal sub-horizontal regions with different depositional patterns. The interface between these two regions and the boundary of the aquifer with the underlying clay are incorporated in an unstructured ERT mesh. Subsequent inversions are performed without applying smoothness constraints across these boundaries. Inversion models obtained by using these structural constraints contain subtle resistivity variations within the aquifer that are hardly visible in standard inversion models as a result of strong vertical smearing in the latter. In the upper aquifer region, with high GPR coherency and horizontal layering, the resistivity is moderately high ($>300 \Omega\text{m}$). We suggest that this region consists of sediments that were rearranged during more than a century of channelized flow. In the lower low coherency region, the GPR image reveals fluvial features (e.g., foresets) and generally more heterogeneous deposits. In this region, the resistivity is lower ($\sim 200 \Omega\text{m}$), which we attribute to increased amounts of fines in some of the well-sorted fluvial deposits. We also find elongated conductive anomalies that correspond to the location of river embankments that were removed in 2002.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Near-surface geophysical techniques can be useful in a wide range of hydrogeological applications [Rubin and Hubbard, 2005; Hubbard and Linde, 2011]. Surface-based ground penetrating radar (GPR) and electrical resistance tomography (ERT) are perhaps the most common geophysical methods used, primarily because of the hydrogeological relevance of the respective physical properties and their relative ease of application along profiles ranging from 1 to 10,000 m and surface areas ranging from 1 to 10,000 m^2 . Electrical resistivity in saturated alluvial systems is mostly a function of pore-water salinity, porosity, tortuosity and

the specific surface area of the grains (i.e., the amount of fine materials) [Lesmes and Friedman, 2005]. Unfortunately, surface-based ERT suffers from resolution limitations [Ellis and Oldenburg, 1994] that enhance the inherent non-uniqueness of the resistivity inverse problem [Parker, 1984]. In contrast, GPR reflection data can, under favorable conditions (e.g., for soil and sediments with low clay content and only moderate pore-water salinity), be used to map the 3-D sedimentary structure of the subsurface in great detail down to about 10 m depth [Smith and Jol, 1992; Beres et al., 1995; Beres et al., 1999; Lunt et al., 2004]. Since GPR reflections are mainly sensitive to contrasts in water content, it is often difficult to relate GPR images to the bulk properties of a hydrogeological model. We propose here to incorporate structural information derived from surface GPR reflection data as constraints in the inversion of surface ERT data that provides such bulk properties.

The sedimentary structures of fluvial deposits have been extensively studied using GPR reflection imaging [e.g., Smith and Jol, 1992; Huggenberger, 1993; Beres et al., 1995; Beres et al., 1999]. For example, Lunt et al. [2004] used GPR measurements to develop a model for the evolution of gravelly braided bars. Surface-based ERT has also been widely used for aquifer characterization [e.g., Kosinski and Kelly, 1981; Mazac et al., 1987; Koch et al., 2009]. In a number of studies, surface-based GPR reflection and ERT methods have been combined to improve the characterization of alluvial aquifers [e.g., Sandberg et al., 2002; Bowling et al., 2005; Bowling et al., 2007; Bélanger et al., 2010].

Integration of different geophysical data or models for interpretation purposes can be achieved by the (1) joint interpretation of results from separately processed / inverted data, (2) joint inversion of different data sets and (3) constrained inversion of one data set using information from other geophysical data / models. Joint interpretation of different models is common practice [e.g., Sandberg et al., 2002; Bowling et al., 2005; Bélanger et al., 2010], but becomes ambiguous when the models disagree or their resolution properties differ significantly. These problems can be partly avoided by performing joint inversion, which is becoming increasingly used since the development of structural joint inversion [Haber and Oldenburg, 1997; Gallardo and Meju, 2003]. In crosshole configurations, joint inversion of GPR traveltimes and ERT has been used for aquifer characterization [e.g., Linde et al., 2006a] to provide higher resolution and geometrically similar models that can be used to estimate effective petrophysical parameters (see Chapter 2). Constrained inversion is particularly useful when one wants to combine geophysical data that are mainly sensitive to structure (e.g., seismic and GPR reflection data) with data that are primarily sensitive to bulk properties

(e.g., ERT data). As examples, *Favetto et al.* [2007], *Jegen et al.* [2009] and *Li et al.* [2003] improved the inversion results of gravity and magnetotelluric data by constraining the inversions using interfaces defined in seismic reflection models.

Here, we investigate the extent to which GPR-derived interfaces can improve ERT inversion and subsequent aquifer characterization. The constraints are implemented by conditioning an unstructured inversion mesh to these interfaces and by not imposing any smoothness constraints across these interfaces during the inversion. An unstructured mesh is essential to include surface topography [*Günther et al.*, 2006], arbitrary electrode positions and prior structural information.

We test our methodology (see Figure 5.1 for a flow chart) on data acquired on a gravel bar within a restored section of the Thur River channel in northeastern Switzerland (see inset in Figure 5.2). The primary goals of this study are to (1) map the geometry of the gravel aquifer on the scale of the gravel bar, (2) resolve the sedimentary structure of the aquifer, and (3) determine if any evidence of the old river embankment remains. Other researchers working at the site will use this information and it will serve as a basis for a saline tracer experiment to be monitored with ERT. After introducing our field site, we describe the GPR acquisition and processing, followed by ERT acquisition and inversion, and a joint interpretation of the resulting models.

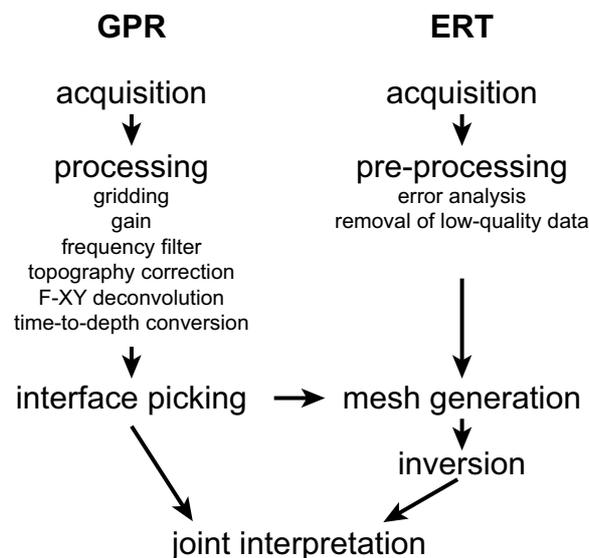


Figure 5.1. Work flow for the combined processing of 3-D GPR and ERT data. The GPR processing is fully independent, but the ERT mesh generation, regularization, and thus the subsequent inversion results are strongly influenced by the GPR-mapped interfaces.

1.2 THUR RIVER FIELD SITE

The Thur River is the largest Swiss river without natural or artificial reservoirs. It is a peri-alpine tributary of the Rhine River with a catchment area of $\sim 1750 \text{ km}^2$. Water level and discharge variations in the Thur River are similar to those of unregulated alpine rivers. Like many other rivers, the meandering Thur River was channelized towards the end of the 19th century for flood protection and to gain arable land. In an attempt to combine flood protection with ecological objectives, a more natural environment was restored along a 2.5 km long reach of the Thur, starting in 2002. The effects of this restoration effort are currently being investigated within the RECORD project [for details see *RECORD*, 2011; *Schneider et al.*, 2011].

While the channelized river was practically flowing along a straight course prior to restoration (Figure 5.2a), the river bed morphology changed substantially once the northern embankment and overbanks were removed. By 2005, a gravel bar had developed on the northern shore of the river (Figure 5.2b) with a surface exposure that strongly depends on the varying river discharge. Under low flow conditions ($20 \text{ m}^3/\text{s}$), a low-lying region with clean gravel is exposed at the surface, whereas under intermediate flow conditions ($100 \text{ m}^3/\text{s}$), this region is flooded and the gravel bar consists mainly of grass-colonized gravel. Under high-flow conditions ($200 \text{ m}^3/\text{s}$), the entire gravel bar is flooded. The frequent flooding of large parts of the gravel bar and the resulting movement of sediments precludes permanent installations, such as monitored boreholes, and thereby increases the importance of geophysics for site characterization. The GPR and ERT data were acquired at low flow conditions. The aquifer below consists of highly permeable fluvial gravel deposits with a varying fraction of fine material.

Ten boreholes instrumented with loggers (temperature, electrical conductivity and pressure) were located on the upper regions of the gravel bar to investigate river-groundwater interactions at the site [*Vogt et al.*, 2010b; *Vogt et al.*; *Schneider et al.*, 2011]. The GPR and ERT data presented here were acquired on the gravel bar to delineate the subsurface aquifer structure for future hydrogeological studies. The surveys were designed to cover as much of the gravel bar as possible; the GPR survey area was limited to the areas of open and grass-colonized gravel, whereas the ERT measurements also covered the *Salix*-populated northern part of the gravel bar (Figure 5.2). The coordinate system used in this paper has its origin at Swiss grid coordinates 272036 / 700218 and is rotated 17° counterclockwise to align the x -axis with the river flow direction.

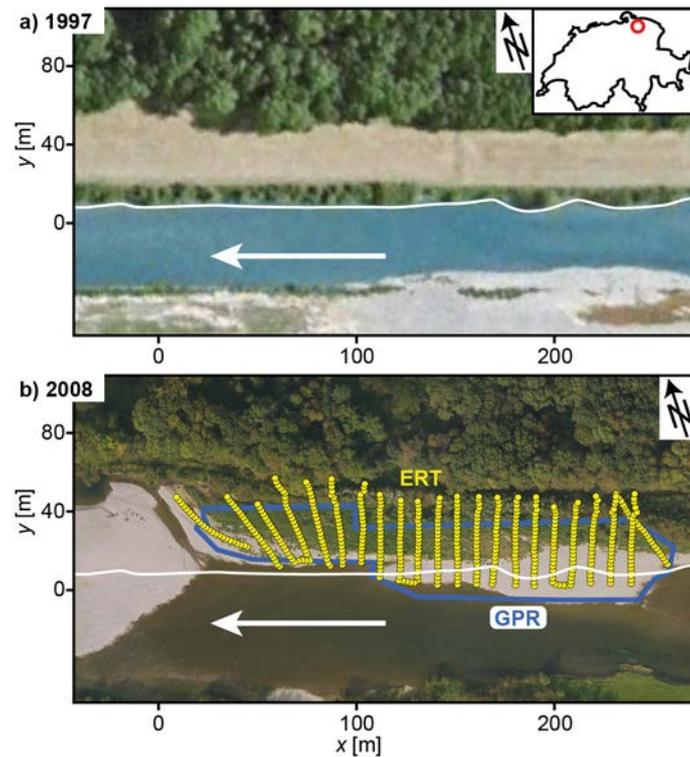


Figure 5.2. Aerial photographs of the Thur River (northeastern Switzerland) (a) before and (b) after restoration. Since the river restoration in 2002, the river bed morphology has been rapidly changing. For reference, the location of the 1997 embankment (shoreline) is highlighted in both photos (white line) and the river flow direction is indicated by a white arrow. Overlain on the 2008 image are the ERT electrode positions and the extent of the 3-D GPR surveys.

1.3 GPR DATA ACQUISITION, PROCESSING AND INTERPRETATION

1.3.1 Data acquisition

The GPR data were acquired in March 2008 (western part at $x < 100$ m in Figure 5.2b) and January 2009 (eastern part at $x > 100$ m). A 100 MHz PulsEkko Pro system was used to collect traces semi-continuously with an internal stacking of 8 and a trace length of 320 ns (trace interval of ~ 5 cm). The measurements were time stamped using a static GPS receiver. An additional mobile GPS receiver attached to the antenna sledge was used to record accurate midpoint positions using differential processing [Streich *et al.*, 2006]. Densely spaced lines (line spacing of 0.5 m) acquired parallel to the river were used to cover the gravel bar. Because the resulting data set had limited crossline resolution, eight complementary 2-D lines were recorded perpendicular to the river. These lines were important to avoid spatial aliasing on the crosslines extracted from the 3-D data.

In addition to the common-offset measurements, 12 common-midpoint (CMP) measurements were made at 9 different positions to determine velocities and velocity variations within the survey area. A representative CMP is presented in Figure 5.3.

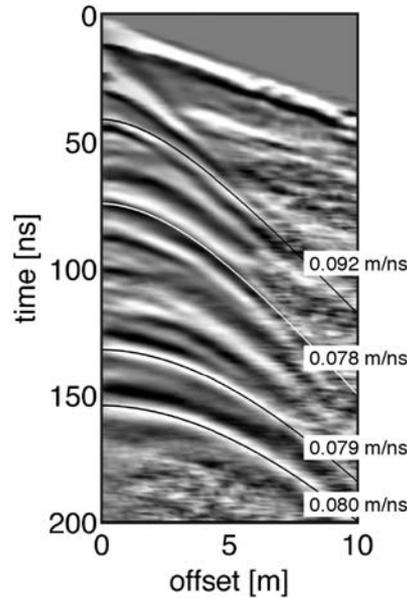


Figure 5.3. Representative common-midpoint (CMP) gather for GPR velocity determination from a high-lying point on the gravel bar.

1.3.2 Processing

Pre-processing of all traces included dewow filtering, alignment of zero times and coordinate assignment based on the differential GPS data. The coordinate assignment was achieved by matching the GPS times of each trace with the time stamps of the GPS attached to the acquisition sledge. The total number of acquired traces for the 3-D surveys was 111,291 (2008) and 245,130 (2009). These traces were summed within regular 0.2 m (in-line) by 0.5 m (crossline) bins. To obtain the best gridding result for the uneven trace spacing, we adapted the natural neighbor gridding algorithm of *Sambridge et al.* [1995]. The two gridded data volumes had a spatial extent of 80×25 m (2008) and 160×36 m (2009) and together covered the full gravel bar over a length of 240 m (Figure 5.2b).

Further data processing included application of a gain function, frequency filtering, topography correction and F-XY deconvolution. The gain function was based on a smoothed inverse of the Hilbert transform of the data with a maximum gain set to 500. The frequency bandpass filter around a center frequency of 80 MHz was cosine tapered with corner frequencies of 15-45-115-145 MHz. In the next step, the data were corrected for topography

using the elevation data obtained from the differential GPS measurements. We used a velocity of 0.09 m/ns for the topography correction (based on the CMP results for the unsaturated gravel; see Figure 5.3). Topography correction and F-XY deconvolution were carried out using commercial software, whereas in-house MATLAB[®] routines were used for the other processing steps. The F-XY deconvolution suppressed laterally incoherent signal and improved the images of coherent features. Migration was not necessary, because the steepest dips observed in the data were <20°. Migration tests confirmed this assertion and showed that migration decreased the signal quality in some areas due to the different in-line and crossline trace spacings.

For interpretation, the vertical axis was converted from time to depth using a two-layer velocity model that represented the unsaturated and saturated gravel. The velocity estimates, based on the analysis of the 12 CMP measurements, were $v_u = 0.09 \text{ m/ns} \pm 10\%$ for the unsaturated gravel and $v_w = 0.075 \text{ m/ns} \pm 10\%$ for the saturated gravel.

1.3.3 GPR interpretation

Figure 5.4 shows a chair plot of the western part of the GPR data volume together with a photograph of fluvial deposits at a gravel pit 10 km from the survey area. The data quality is generally very high within the gravel aquifer, such that coherent reflections can be traced to 5 - 6 m depth. At this level, reflections originate from the boundary between the gravel aquifer and underlying lacustrine clay aquitard (marked in Figure 5.4b).

The GPR image (Figure 5.4b) provides many details about the fluvial deposits. These images are comparable with those obtained across nearby gravel deposits [e.g., *Huggenberger, 1993; Beres et al., 1995; Beres et al., 1999*]. Regions with well-sorted gravels, such as the foresets FO in Figure 5.4b (see also FO' in Figure 5.4a), can be distinguished from sub-horizontal features (GS and GS') that were deposited in a different flow regime. Based on Figure 5.4a, it seems likely that these different depositional units have different hydrogeological properties [*Beres et al., 1995; Beres et al., 1999*]. The foresets (FO and FO') consist of a sequence of open framework gravel and units with a bimodal grain size distribution. The clean gravel zones are expected to have a very high hydraulic conductivity, such that the controlling factor for determining the hydraulic conductivity in this region is the connectivity of these small gravel sub-units. In contrast, the gravel sheets (GS and GS') have a much larger extent, a wider grain size distribution and are poorly sorted. It is expected that the

hydraulic conductivity distribution in the gravel sheets is less heterogeneous than in the foresets [e.g., *Heinz et al.*, 2003].

The same depositional units can be identified in the full GPR volume displayed in Figure 5.5a and b. Three different units are separated by two interfaces that appear as continuous reflections in the GPR image. The lower interface is the gravel-clay boundary, whereas the upper interface separates the different depositional structures (FO and GS in Figure 5.4b) of the gravel aquifer. The two main interfaces were semi-automatically picked throughout the GPR volume (Figure 5.5b) using commercial interpretation software. Simultaneous display of in-line and crossline sections with associated picks allowed consistent 3-D picking. These interfaces were extrapolated short distances outside the GPR survey area for the ERT mesh generation (see Figure 5.2b).

Differences between the two regions of the aquifer are highlighted in the coherency plot of Figure 5.5c. The coherency of the GPR data was calculated using a moving cell [*McClymont et al.*, 2008] with a side-length of 2.5 m in the horizontal and 0.5 m in the vertical direction, with a maximum assumed dip of 20°. The coherency is highest in the upper part of the aquifer with the predominantly horizontal layering and is much reduced in the lower part. This strong horizontal layering is restricted to the region underlying the river channel prior to restoration (Figure 5.2a). Below the region of this pre-restoration channel, the top 3 m of the aquifer are strongly layered (Figure 5.6a), which is not observed outside this region (Figure 5.6b and c). Figure 5.6a also shows a channel-like feature (SC) that corresponds to the location of a side channel mapped in 1811 (Amt für Geoinformatik des Kantons Thurgau, personal communication).

1.4 ERT DATA ACQUISITION AND INVERSION

1.4.1 Acquisition and pre-processing

ERT data covering the entire gravel bar were acquired over a period of two days in March 2009. To survey the full gravel bar, we employed a 3-D roll-along scheme with a total of 22 quasi-parallel lines perpendicular to the river (Figure 5.2b). A total of 528 electrode positions were used, with an electrode spacing of 2 m along the lines and a line separation of ~8 m. Three-dimensional measurements were made on patches covered by electrodes from 6 of the parallel lines. This setup was then moved by 4 lines to have an overlap of 2 lines between the patches (5 of these patches covered the gravel bar). Within each of the patches, dipole-dipole,

equatorial dipole, Wenner and gradient data sets (for details of these configurations, see [Zonge *et al.*, 2005]) were collected both along and across the quasi-parallel lines. The quality of the 35,514 raw measurements was evaluated on the basis of the stacking errors (4-6 stacks) and by comparing the repeated measurements associated with overlapping patches. The data set was reduced by combining the repeated measurements, deleting poor-quality data and removing data with geometrical factors >1000 to yield a final data set of 16,349 values. Most of the eliminated data were not included in the design of the measurement sequence, but were added to optimize the recording on the 10-channel SyscalPro instrument. We included these measurements in the initial processing, but had to remove most of them due to their unfavorable electrode geometry. An overall error level of 3% (estimated from the repeated measurements) was added to the standard deviations estimated from the stacking process; these error estimates were used in the inversions.

The horizontal and vertical positions of the electrodes were measured with a differential GPS system and surface topography was estimated using linear interpolation between the electrode positions.

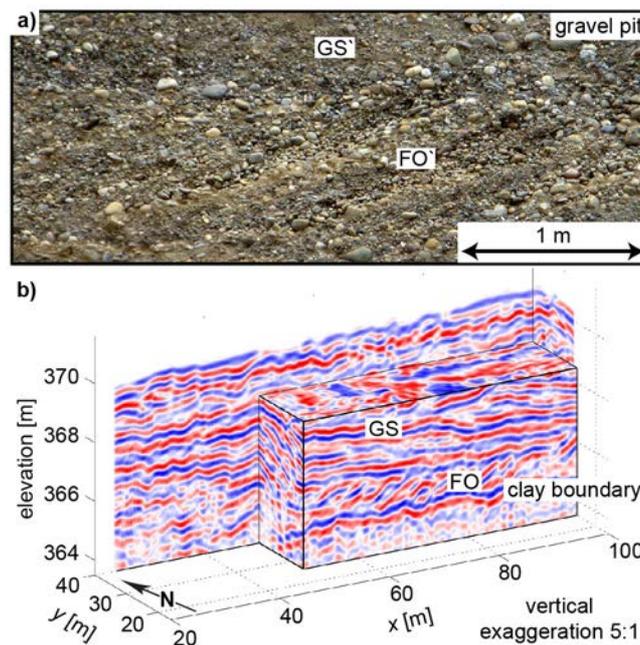


Figure 5.4. (a) Photo of fluvial deposits at a gravel pit (located 10 km away from the survey area) and (b) chair plot of the GPR results for the western (downstream) end of the gravel bar. Foresets (FO in (b) and FO' in (a)) and the subhorizontal layering (GS in (b) and GS' in (a)) illustrate the different sedimentation types of the fluvial system. The strong reflection at 5 - 6 m depth marks the interface between the gravel aquifer and the underlying clay aquitard.

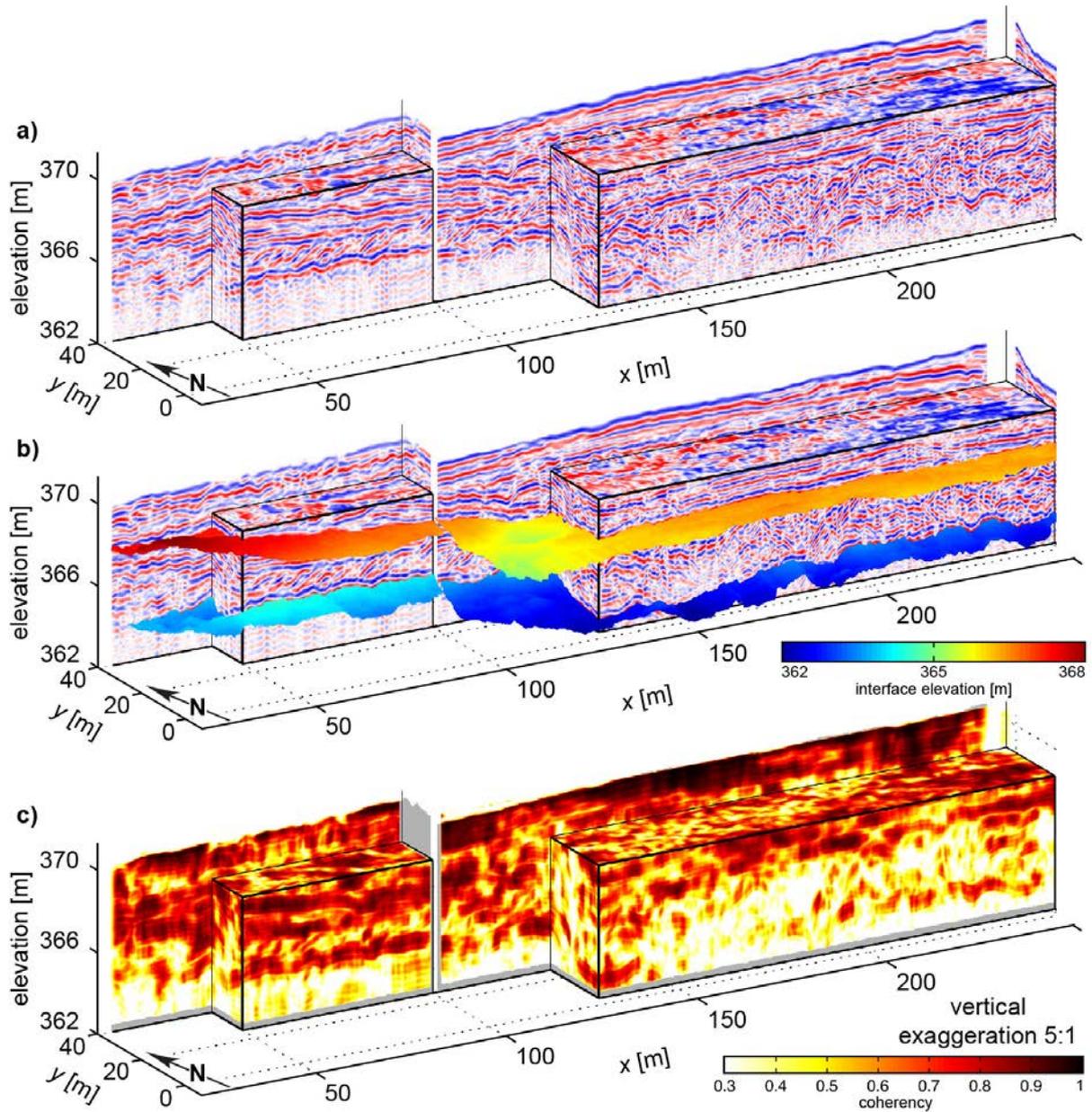


Figure 5.5. GPR results for the entire gravel bar. (a) Chair plot of the fully processed and depth converted data. (b) As in (a), but including the picked interfaces within the GPR volume. (c) Coherency of the GPR signal based on a coherency analysis. The signal coherency is much decreased in the lower part of the gravel aquifer at $x > 150$ m.

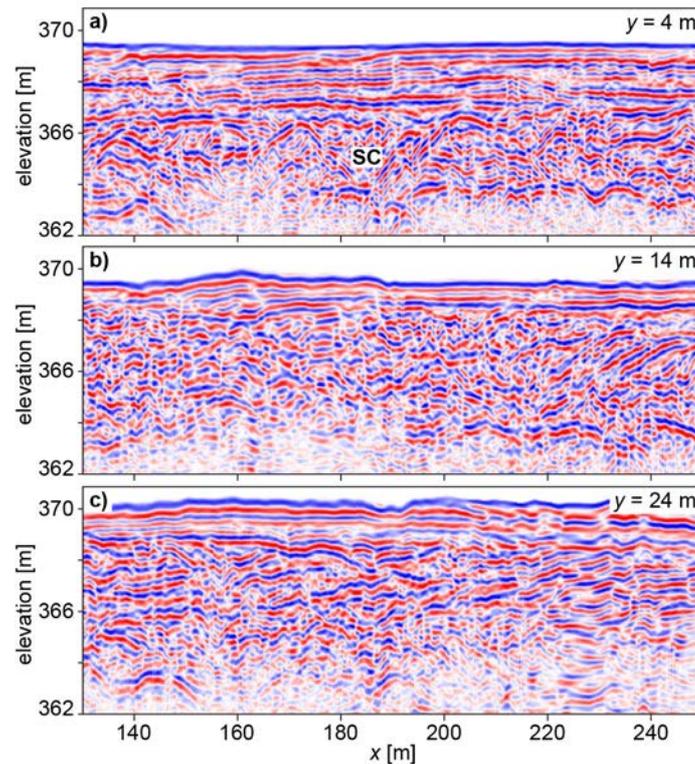


Figure 5.6. Vertical cuts through the GPR volume, parallel to the x -axis at a) $y = 4$ m (corresponding to one of the cuts in Figure 5), (b) 14 m and (c) 24 m. One can observe a clear difference in the depositional pattern in the top 3 m of the aquifer between (a) the pre-restoration river channel and (b) and (c) the outside regions that never experienced channelized river flow. SC marks a channel-like feature, which corresponds to the location of a side channel mapped in 1811.

1.4.2 Mesh generation

The mesh or grid that represents the models plays a critical role in 3-D ERT inversion [Günther *et al.*, 2006]. We use an unstructured tetrahedral mesh that allows us to include arbitrary electrode positions, surface topography and such additional structural information as the water table and GPR-defined interfaces.

The gridding was performed in two steps: (1) mesh the 2-D surfaces and (2) create a 3-D tetrahedral mesh based on the 2-D meshes. In the first step, the 2-D surfaces were represented by a mesh of triangles that included the electrode positions as points. The water table was assumed to be constant at the measured elevation of 371.2 m (the hydraulic gradient is very low due to the high permeability of the aquifer [Vogt *et al.*, 2010b]) and the interfaces within and at the base of the gravel aquifer were interpolated from the horizons shown in Figure 5.5b.

In the second step, the 2-D grids were used as a starting point for the 3-D tetrahedral mesh generation [Rücker *et al.*, 2006]. Three different meshes were created (see Figure 5.7a, c

and e) to evaluate the effects of the GPR-defined structural constraints on the ERT results. The first mesh (Figure 5.7a) only included the surface topography, whereas the second mesh (Figure 5.7c) also included the water table and the gravel-clay boundary, and the third mesh (Figure 5.7e) included all of these interfaces together with the GPR-defined interface within the gravel aquifer. Regions above and below intra-gravel and gravel clay interfaces were treated as separate regions during the inversion (i.e., no smoothing constraints were applied across the interfaces). By comparison, the water table was included in the meshing, but the unsaturated zone was not decoupled from the layer below during the inversion. Each of the three inversion meshes had approximately 100,000 cells and a $270 \times 80 \times 25$ m extent.

For the forward calculations, the inversion mesh was refined by splitting each tetrahedron into eight. The modeling domain was extended 30 m in all directions to reduce boundary effects. The singularity removal technique of Lowry et al. [1989] was used to achieve high accuracy by accounting for the rapid decay of electric potential around each current-source position [Rücker et al., 2006]. Since there is no analytical solution for the primary potentials in the presence of topography, the potential field (for a homogeneous earth) was calculated using a refined mesh around the electrodes before the inversion. For the forward calculations, Neumann (no current flow) boundary conditions were used at the surface and mixed-type boundary conditions were used along the other sides of the mesh [Rücker et al., 2006].

1.4.3 ERT inversion

For each of the three meshes described above, the ERT data were inverted using the electrical resistance tomography program BERT of Günther et al. [2006]. The starting models had a homogeneous resistivity of $200 \Omega\text{m}$ in the aquifer and $40 \Omega\text{m}$ in the clay (for the meshes in Figure 5.7c and e). Tests using uniform resistivities of $20 \Omega\text{m}$, $200 \Omega\text{m}$ and $500 \Omega\text{m}$ throughout the models showed that the features in the aquifer were well-resolved and that the resistivity of the clay layer varies only moderately between $35 \Omega\text{m}$ and $55 \Omega\text{m}$, depending on the starting model. An anisotropy factor of 0.5 was assumed for the smoothness constraints within the aquifer to honor the layered structure imaged by the GPR (for the formulation of these constraints, see Coscia et al., [2011a]). The data were first inverted using the three-region mesh (Figure 5.7e) and the inversion algorithm was allowed to slightly adapt the error model by robust data reweighting [Claerbout and Muir, 1973] from a median of 3.0% to 3.5%. The final error estimates from this inversion were then assigned to each data point and the data were inverted to this error level for all three meshes.

For each of the three meshes, the data were inverted using seven different regularization weights ranging from $\lambda=20$ to $\lambda=300$. For the interpretation, we chose the model with the strongest regularization that explained the data to the specified error model. Inversions using the two- and three-layer meshes (Figure 5.7c and e) reached the data misfit criterion (normalized RMS = 1) in 6 and 5 iterations using a regularization weight of $\lambda=70$ and $\lambda=100$ [Günther *et al.*, 2006], respectively. The lowest data misfit for the standard inversion without any interface decoupling was obtained using $\lambda=50$, but the final normalized RMS after 9 iterations was 1.3 times the assumed data error, with no improvement after additional iterations. The three resulting models are shown in Figures 5.7b, d, f and 5.8 (in this latter figure, the ERT models are shown in the same view and with the same vertical exaggeration (5:1) as the GPR images in Figure 5.5).

Although the inversion parameters are comparable and the three models with roughly the same number of cells fit the data to approximately the same error level, the inversion results (especially at depth) are very different. These results illustrate the inherent limitations of ERT data to determine uniquely subsurface structure with depth [e.g., Parker, 1984]. Standard ERT that only includes surface topography as a structural constraint yields a vertically and horizontally smooth model (Figure 5.7b). Such smoothness is an inherent feature of Occam-type inversions that may hinder interpretations of the models [Ellis and Oldenburg, 1994]. It is possible to identify the low-resistivity clay, as well as the high-resistivity aquifer in Figure 5.7b, but it is difficult to discern a clear boundary between the two layers and interpret features within the aquifer. In the model obtained using the mesh that includes the water table and the gravel-clay boundary (Figure 5.7d), it is possible to differentiate clearly between the gravel aquifer and the clay, thereby creating an image that better matches our prior knowledge. Two effects contribute to the differences between the models in Figure 5.7b and d. First, by including the gravel-clay boundary in the meshing, there are no cells that are partly located in the gravel and partly in the clay, thus allowing the inversion algorithm to define a much sharper boundary. This effect is enhanced by the relatively coarse model discretization of the aquifer, which is a consequence of computational limitations when inverting large-scale 3-D ERT data sets. Second, disconnecting the regularization above and below this interface allows the discrete jump in resistivity from $\sim 200 \Omega\text{m}$ (gravel) to $\sim 30 \Omega\text{m}$ (clay). This is implemented by neglecting cells across the defined interfaces in the roughness operator that penalizes changes between neighboring cells [Günther and Rücker, 2006]. Varying the interface depth within the uncertainty range of $\pm 10\%$ slightly changed the

resistivity model in the vicinity of the interfaces, but did not change the features discussed in the interpretation.

Including the interface within the gravel layer (Figures 5.7e, f and 5.8c) makes it possible to resolve better the resistivity variations within the aquifer that are only hinted at in Figures 5.7d and 5.8b. The model clearly shows that the aquifer at the position marked with A in Figure 5.8c is divided into two zones of distinctly different resistivity. Whereas Figure 5.8b shows resistivities of $\sim 300 \Omega\text{m}$ in this region, Figure 5.8c indicates resistivities of $\sim 400 \Omega\text{m}$ above and $\sim 200 \Omega\text{m}$ below the interface, although both models fit the data to the same error level.

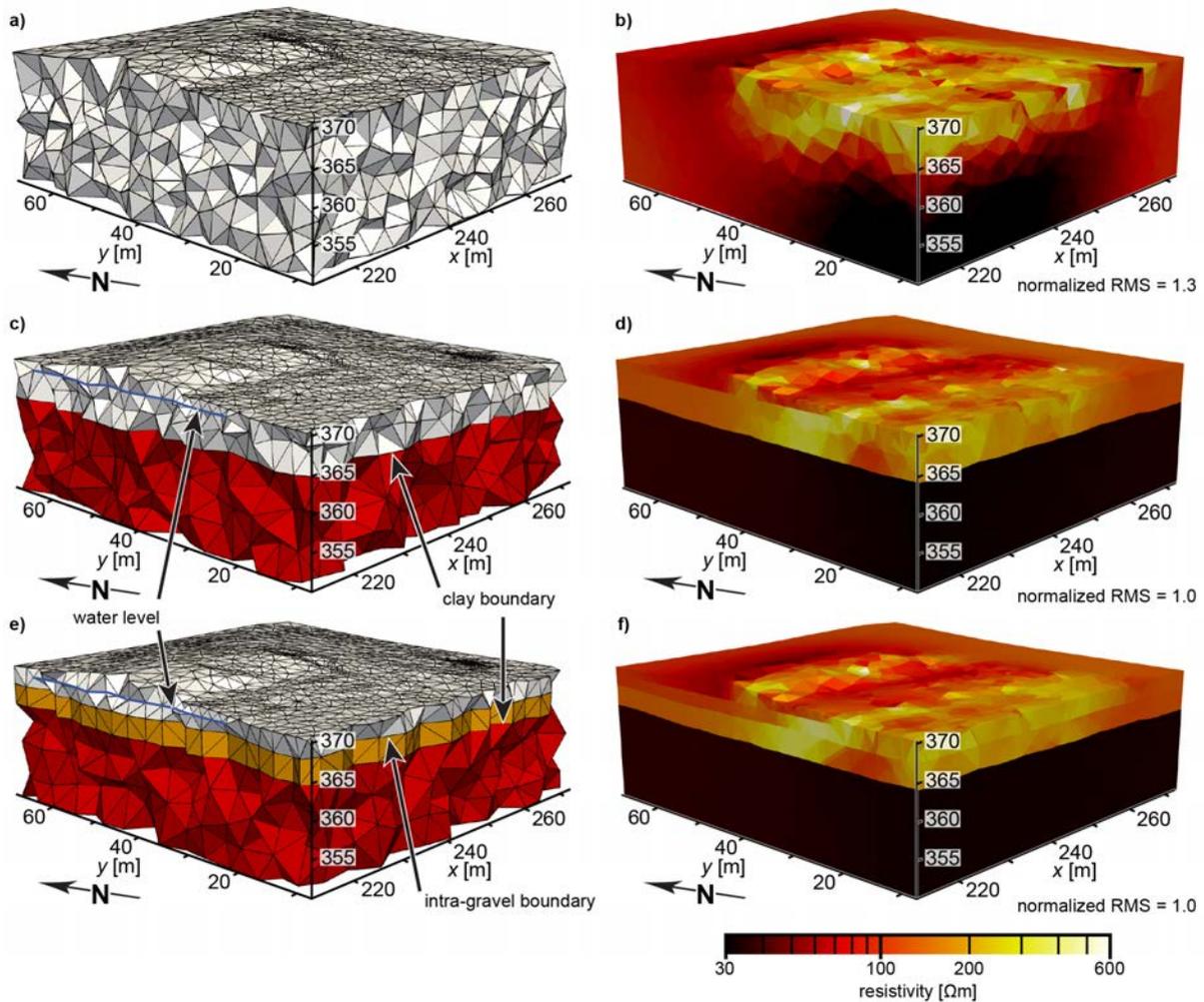


Figure 5.7. Part of the ERT inversion (parameter) mesh for the cases with (a) no interfaces (standard inversion), (c) including the gravel - clay boundary and (e) additionally including the interface within the gravel. Note, that (c) and (e) also incorporate the water table, but without layer decoupling (see text). All three meshes have approximately the same number of cells. (b), (d) and (f) Inversion models for the parts of the three meshes shown in (a), (c) and (e), respectively. More details are visible in (d) and (f), due to reduced vertical smearing over known interfaces.

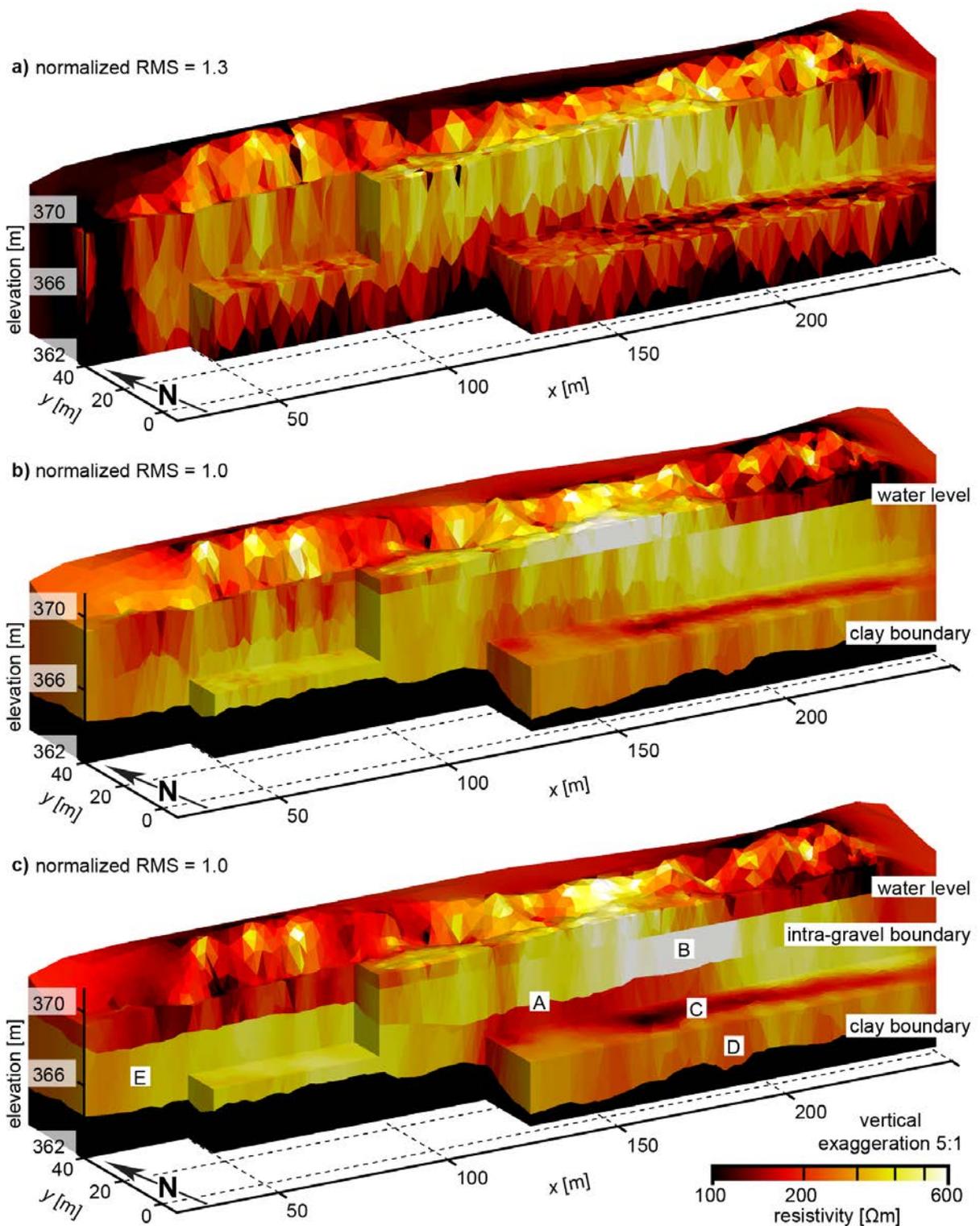


Figure 5.8. ERT models obtained using the inversion meshes shown in (a) Figure 5.7a, (b) Figure 5.7c and (c) Figure 5.7e. The view is the same as in Figure 5.5. Note that the colour scale is saturated at $100 \Omega\text{m}$ to focus on the resistivity variations within the aquifer. The deepest layer in (b) and (c) has a resistivity of $\rho \sim 30 \Omega\text{m}$. For a discussion of A-E, see text.

1.5 INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION

We know from the piezometer installations that the gravel aquifer is underlain by a thick clay aquitard at 5 - 6 m depth [Vogt *et al.*, 2010b]. Our GPR data have allowed us to map this interface throughout the surveyed part of the aquifer (Figure 5.5b). However, depth errors occur as a consequence of the constant GPR velocity model assumed for the aquifer. Velocities within the aquifer vary by about $\pm 10\%$ according to the CMP analyses and crosshole GPR measurements at a neighboring site (Chapter 2), which leads to corresponding relative depth errors in the same range. The aquifer is thickest in the middle of the gravel bar, becoming thinner in the western ($x < 100$ m) part. The interface within the gravel is relatively flat in the eastern ($x > 150$ m) part, deepening towards the middle and approaching the surface at the western end.

The ERT model obtained by incorporating all interfaces in the inversion (Figure 5.8c) allows us to interpret resistivity variations within the aquifer, which is hardly possible otherwise (Figure 5.8a and b). Resistivities in the unsaturated zone are largely controlled by the soil cover. We interpret high resistivities ($\rho > 500 \Omega\text{m}$) as indicative of unsaturated relatively clean gravels and low resistivities (as low as $60 \Omega\text{m}$) as sandy loam. The relatively high resistivity of $\rho > 400 \Omega\text{m}$ in the upper part of the aquifer at B in Figure 5.8c indicates clean gravel with a relatively low porosity of $\sim 20\%$ (Chapter 2). We suspect that this region of the aquifer comprises sediments deposited after channelization of the river. This hypothesis is supported by the GPR data, which maps strong horizontal layering in this region and a lateral change towards more heterogeneous depositional patterns from the old river embankment (Figure 5.2a) towards the north (Figure 5.6). Low resistivities coincide with the old river embankments (C in Figure 5.8c). The source of these low resistivities is unclear, but they may be due to an increased deposition of fines during the period of channelized flow, which may mean that the restored site still has an unnatural flow barrier with implications for hyporheic processes.

The resistivities and GPR coherencies vary in the lower part of the aquifer (Figure 5.8c). Low resistivities ($\sim 200 \Omega\text{m}$) indicating higher porosities and higher clay content are found at the eastern ($x > 150$ m) end (D in Figure 5.8c), whereas intermediate resistivities ($\sim 300 \Omega\text{m}$) are seen at the western end (E in Figure 5.8c). Although these features can be seen in Figure 5.8b, they are imaged more clearly in Figure 5.8c. The low resistivities coincide with low GPR coherency, whereas intermediate and high resistivities coincide with high GPR coherency (compare Figures 5.5c and 5.8c). We interpret regions of high resistivity and high

coherency as clean gravel with strong horizontal layering and low resistivity and low coherency within the aquifer in terms of more heterogeneous deposits consisting of sequences of fine and coarse sediments. The low resistivities are mainly caused by the fine materials found in some of the lower sub-units [Heinz *et al.*, 2003]. We suggest that this region consists of sediments that were deposited before the channelization of the river.

The two regions of the gravel aquifer with differing reflection patterns and resistivity are likely to have different hydrogeological properties. The upper part is expected to be less heterogeneous and to have intermediate hydraulic conductivities compared to the end members of the more heterogeneous units in the deeper part [Heinz *et al.*, 2003]. Even though a quantitative hydrogeological interpretation is not feasible at this stage, our models are useful for developing a conceptual hydrogeological model. We plan to investigate groundwater flow patterns at the site by performing a saline tracer test to be monitored with 3-D ERT.

One important challenge in hydrogeophysics is to create quantitative hydrogeological models at high resolution on scales that are larger than the 5-10 m borehole separation typically employed in quantitative hydrogeophysical studies [Hubbard and Linde, 2011]. We find that the estimated range of resistivities in the aquifer is very similar to those obtained using crosshole ERT within a suite of boreholes located 15 km upstream adjacent to an unrestored section of the river [Chapters 2 and 4; Coscia *et al.*, 2011a]. Since the depositional environments are very similar at the two sites, it is possible that any field-scale relationship between resistivity and porosity/hydraulic conductivity established at the unrestored upstream site could be applicable at the restored site, but for a model volume that is 10-100 times larger.

It appears that the combination of joint inversions of smaller scale crosshole data (Chapter 2) with constrained inversions of larger scale surface-based data is a promising approach for improving the information content extracted from surface-based geophysical data at intermediate scales. The combination of at least two complementary geophysical data types is important. Consider the lower conductive part of the aquifer in the eastern area. The GPR image supplies details on the heterogeneous sedimentary units, whereas the ERT model provides upscaled effective bulk properties.

1.6 CONCLUSIONS

We have acquired surface-based 3-D GPR reflection and ERT data to characterize an alluvial aquifer underlying a gravel bar at a restored river section. The GPR data imaged undulations in the thickness of the aquifer and delineated two layers in the aquifer with different reflection patterns. Whereas the upper part of the gravel aquifer appeared to be only weakly heterogeneous and displays subhorizontal layering, the deeper part is moderately heterogeneous and displays complex fluvial features. By including GPR reflection interfaces corresponding to the base and internal layers of the aquifer in the ERT mesh and by disconnecting the regularization across these interfaces, we were able to improve markedly the resulting ERT models. The standard and constrained inversion results illustrated to what extent ERT data constrain features, particularly at depth, and how important it is to (wherever possible) perform constrained inversions to obtain quantitative information on resistivity structure and properties. Models that incorporated the GPR interfaces revealed resistivity variations within the aquifer that were not resolved in the unconstrained model.

The final GPR-constrained ERT model has moderate resistivities in the upper part of the aquifer indicating rather low porosities and negligible clay content. In the same region, the GPR coherency is very high. In the lower part of the aquifer, the electrical resistivity is significantly lower with values decreasing in the x -direction. The GPR coherency shows a remarkably similar pattern.

The lower part of the aquifer is expected to have a highly variable hydraulic conductivity. The magnitude of the upscaled conductivity in this zone is likely to be dependent on the connectivity of the more permeable deposits. With respect to river restoration, we suggest that the upper part of the aquifer consists of gravel sheets that were probably rearranged by the river as a result of channelization at the end of the 19th century. Furthermore, we find that a low-resistivity feature, probably indicating enhanced clay-content, coincides with the location of the former river embankment. Regardless of origin, it appears that 100 years of a channelized flow regime has had a strong and persistent influence on the aquifer structure.

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