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From Core to Crust: Towards an Integrated Vision of Earth's Interior

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Towards self consistent models of plate tectonics

S. Sobolev
Geoforschungzentrum Potsdam, Germany

Towards internally consistent models of plate tectonics

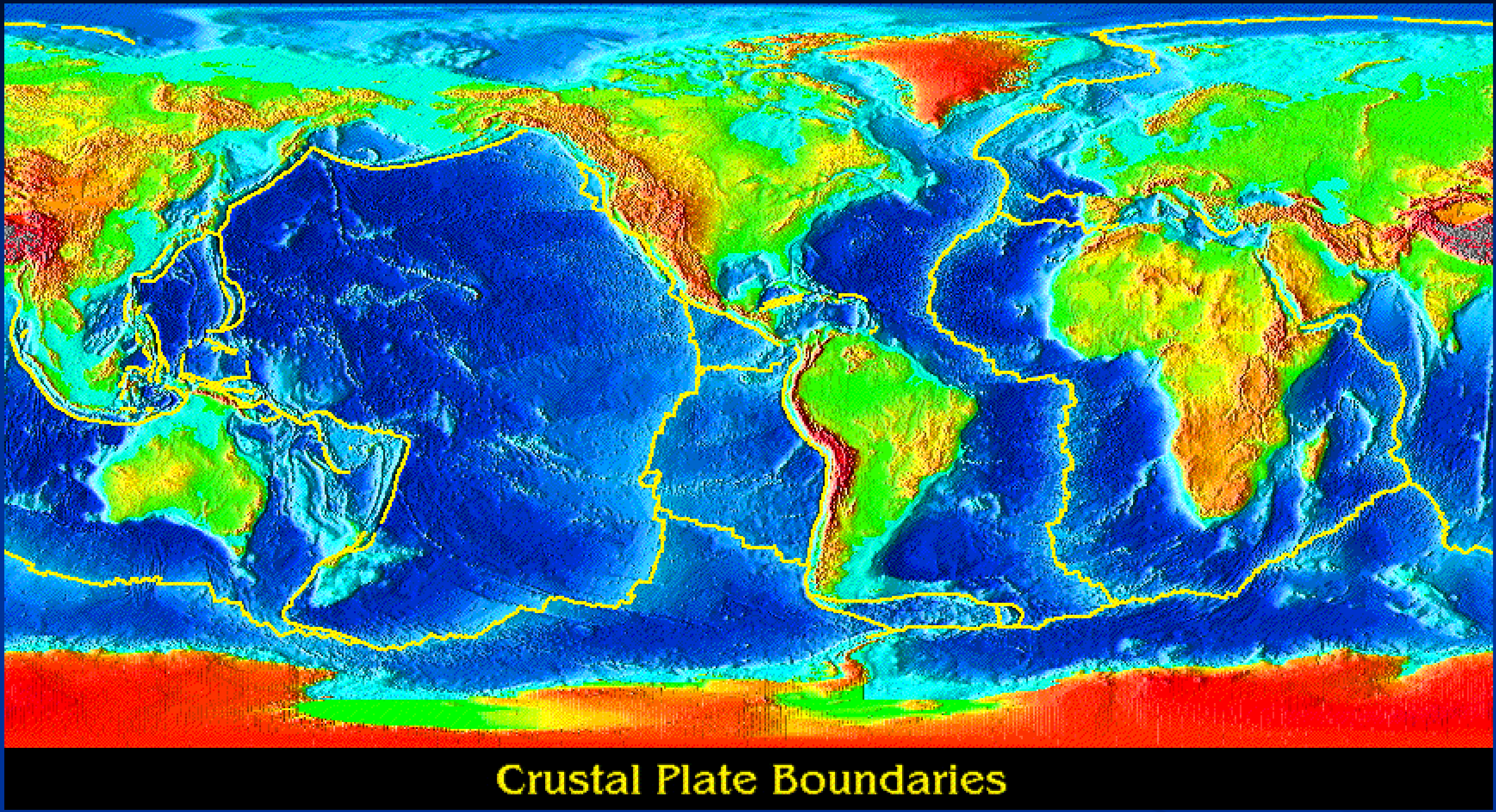
Stephan Sobolev
and
Geodynamic Modeling Section

German Research Centre for Geosciences

Outline

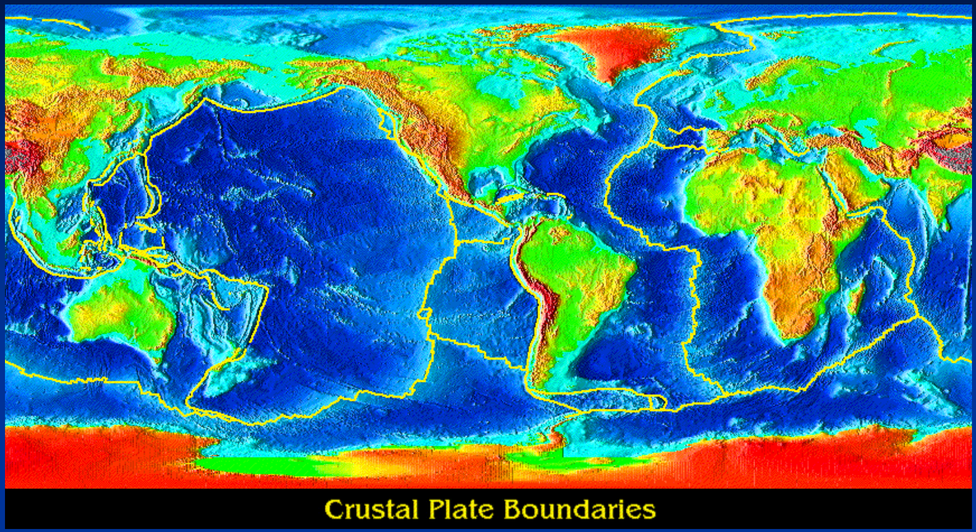
- Ingredients of plate tectonics
- Tools to model 3D deformation at plate boundaries
- Regional scale: Modeling birth and maturation of the plate boundary – *Dead Sea Transform in the Middle East*
- Global scale: Linking mantle convection and lithospheric deformations
  - *How weak are the plate boundaries?*
  - *How weak is asthenosphere?*
  - *Making plate boundaries*

Plates



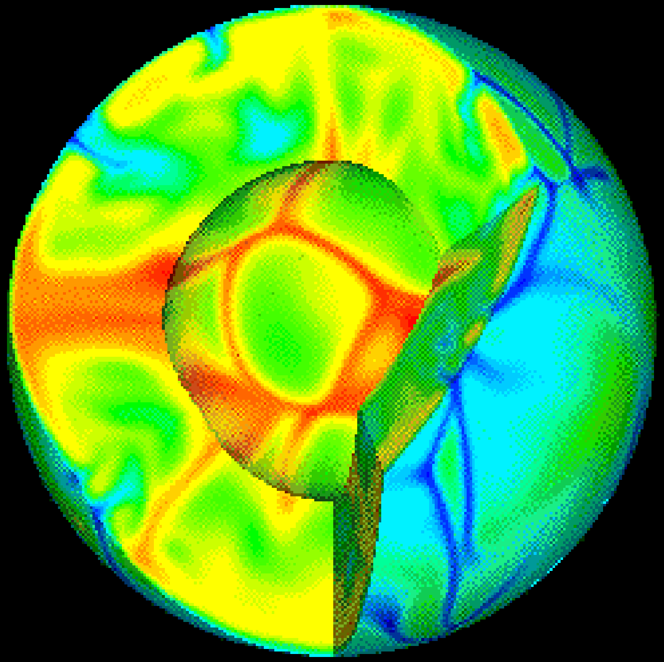
Earth is a plate-tectonics planet, where most of deformation at the lithospheric level goes at the plate boundaries.

Ingredients of plate tectonics



Weak plate boundaries

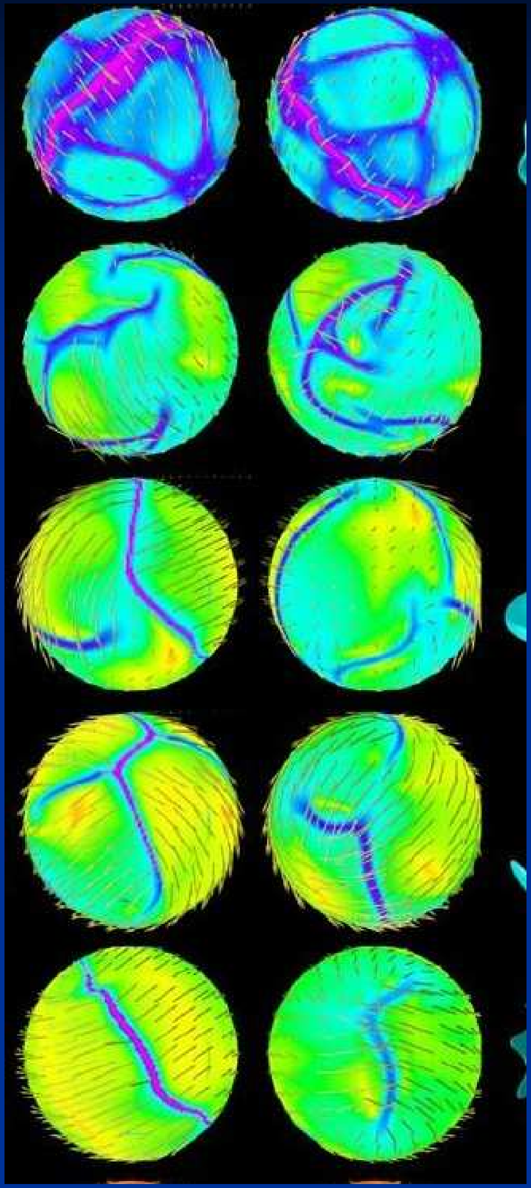
Convection



Ricard and Vigny, 1989; Bercovici, 1993, Bird, 1998; Moresi and Solomatov, 1998;Tackley, 1998, Zhong et al, 1998; Gurnis et al., 2000….

Ingredients of plate tectonics

Increasing yield stress



Generating plate boundaries

Bercovici, 1993,1995, 1996, 1998, 2003; Tackley, 1998, 2000; Moresi and Solomatov, 1998; Zhong et al, 1998; Gurnis et al., 2000…

Tendency: towards more realistic strongly non-linear rheology

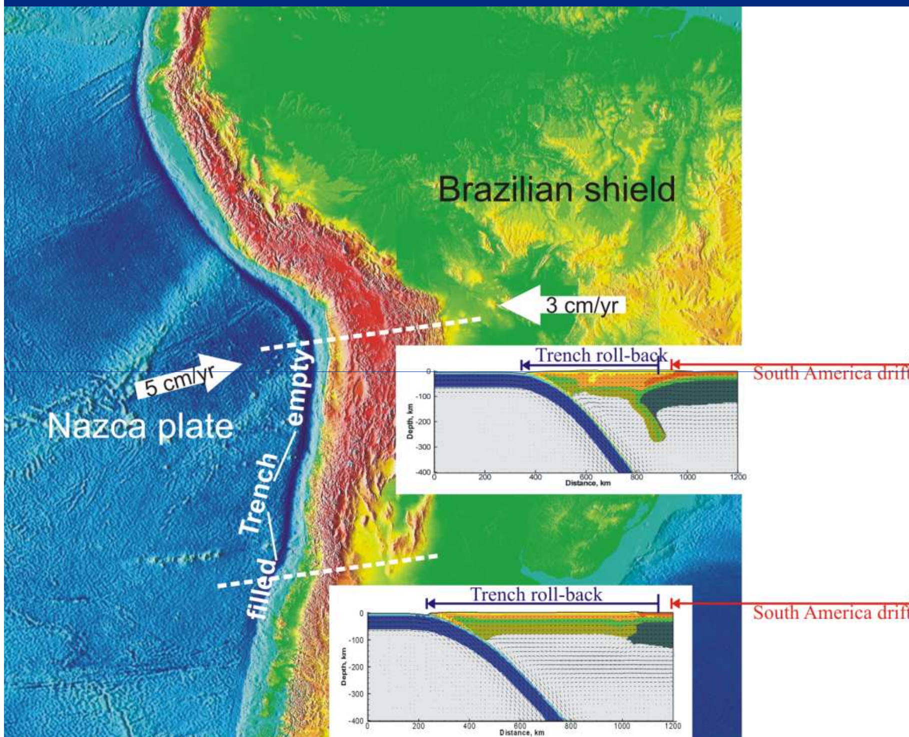
Viscous rheology-only and emulation of brittle failure

van Heck and Tackley, 2008

The present-day global models can not reproduce realistic one-sided subduction and pure transform boundaries

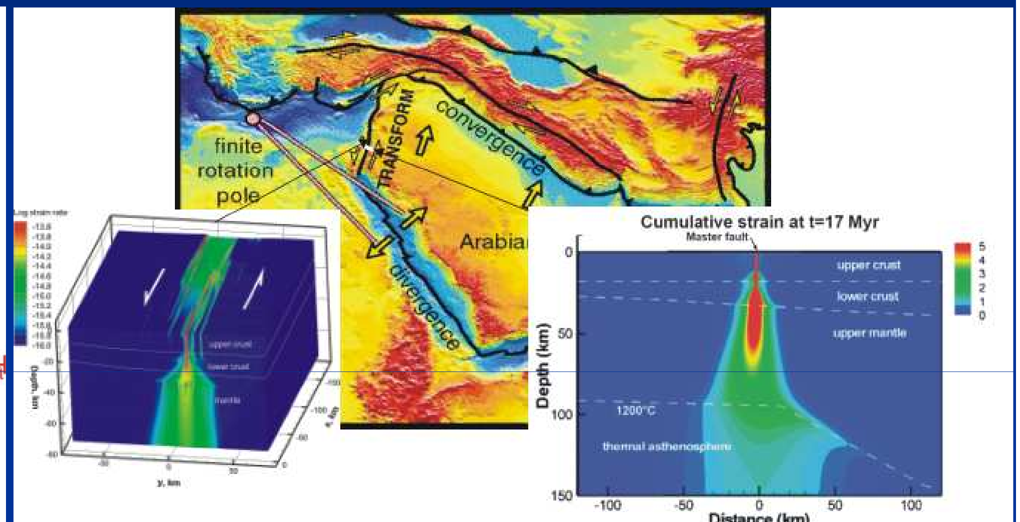
Modeling deformation at plate boundaries

Subduction and orogeny in Andes



Babeyko and Sobolev, *Geology* 2005, Sobolev and Babeyko, *Geology* 2005; Sobolev et al., 2006

Dead Sea Transform

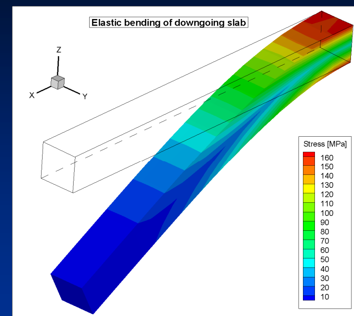


(Sobolev et al., *EPSL* 2005, Petrunin and Sobolev, *Geology* 2006, PEPI, 2008).

„Realistic“ rheology

Balance equations

Momentum:	$\dfrac{\partial \sigma_{ij}}{\partial x_j} + \Delta\rho g\, z_i = 0$
Energy:	$\dfrac{DU}{Dt} = -\dfrac{\partial q_i}{\partial x_i} + r$



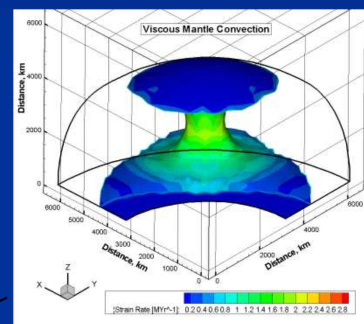
Deformation mechanisms

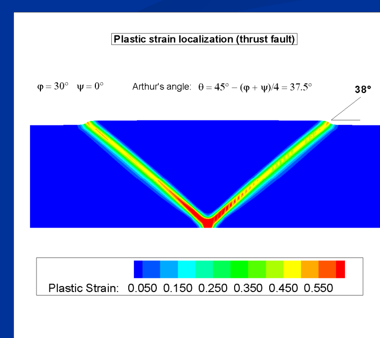
$$\dot{\varepsilon}_{ij} = \dot{\varepsilon}_{ij}^{el} + \dot{\varepsilon}_{ij}^{vs} + \dot{\varepsilon}_{ij}^{pl}$$

Elastic strain: $\dot{\varepsilon}_{ij}^{el} = \dfrac{1}{2G}\hat{\tau}_{ij}$

Viscous strain: $\dot{\varepsilon}_{ij}^{vs} = \dfrac{1}{2\eta_{eff}}\tau_{ij}$

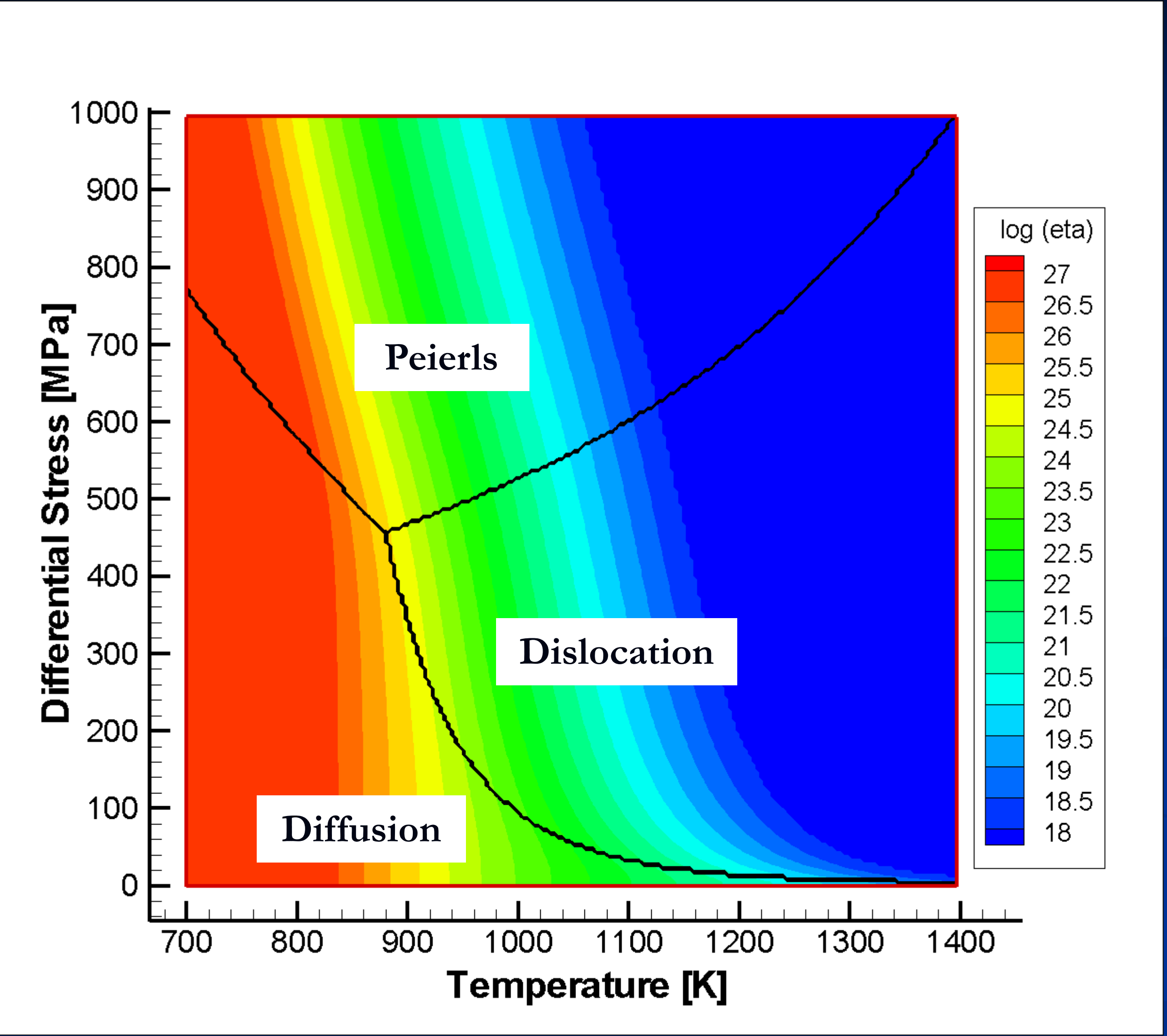
Plastic strain: $\dot{\varepsilon}_{ij}^{pl} = \dot{\gamma}\dfrac{\partial Q}{\partial \tau_{ij}}$
Mohr-Coulomb





Popov and Sobolev (PEPI, 2008)

Three creep processes



$$\eta_{eff} = \tfrac{1}{2}\tau_{II}\left(\dot{\varepsilon}_L + \dot{\varepsilon}_N + \dot{\varepsilon}_P\right)^{-1}$$

Diffusion creep

$$\dot{\varepsilon}_L = B_L\,\tau_{II}\exp\left(-\frac{E_L}{RT}\right)$$

Dislocation creep

$$\dot{\varepsilon}_N = B_N\left(\tau_{II}\right)^n\exp\left(-\frac{E_N}{RT}\right)$$

Peierls creep

$$\dot{\varepsilon}_P = B_P\exp\left[-\frac{E_P}{RT}\left(1-\frac{\tau_{II}}{\tau_P}\right)^2\right]$$

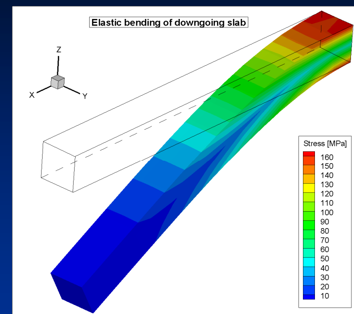
(Kameyama *et al.* 1999)

„Realistic“ rheology

Balance equations

Momentum: $$\frac{\partial \sigma_{ij}}{\partial x_j} + \Delta\rho g\, z_i = 0$$

Energy: $$\frac{DU}{Dt} = -\frac{\partial q_i}{\partial x_i} + r$$



Deformation mechanisms

$$\dot{\varepsilon}_{ij} = \dot{\varepsilon}_{ij}^{el} + \dot{\varepsilon}_{ij}^{vs} + \dot{\varepsilon}_{ij}^{pl}$$

Elastic strain: $$\dot{\varepsilon}_{ij}^{el} = \frac{1}{2G}\hat{\tau}_{ij}$$

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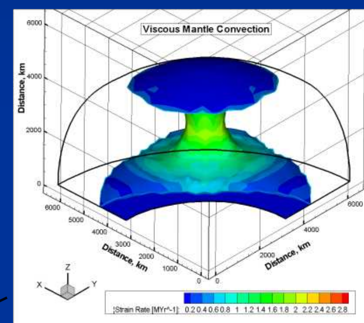
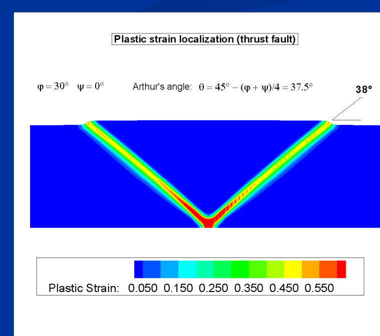
Plastic strain:
Mohr-Coulomb $$\dot{\varepsilon}_{ij}^{pl} = \dot{\gamma}\frac{\partial Q}{\partial \tau_{ij}}$$





Popov and Sobolev (PEPI, 2008)

Plasticity

Mohr-Coulomb plasticity

$$\tau \leq Y = c + \mu_e \cdot \sigma_n$$

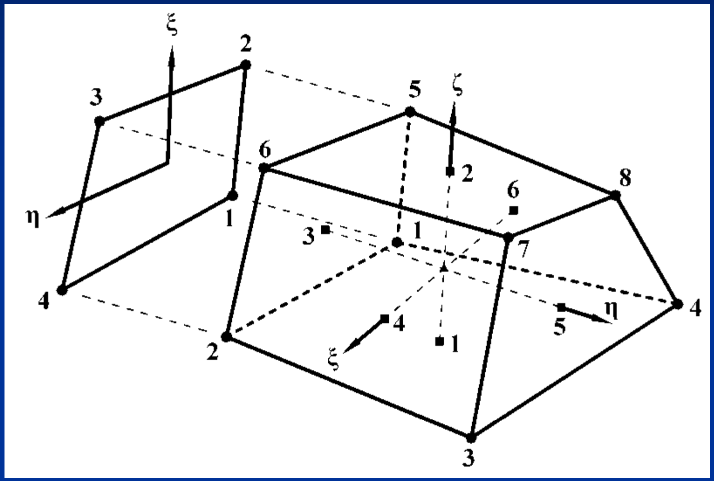
Damage rheology: strain softenimng

$$\mu_e = \max(\mu_e^0(1 - a \cdot \xi), \mu_e^1)$$

$$\frac{d\xi}{dt} = \dot{\gamma} - \xi / \tau \qquad \mu_e^0 = 0.3 - 0.8$$

Numerical background

Discretization by Finite Element Method



Fast implicit time stepping + Newton-Raphson solver

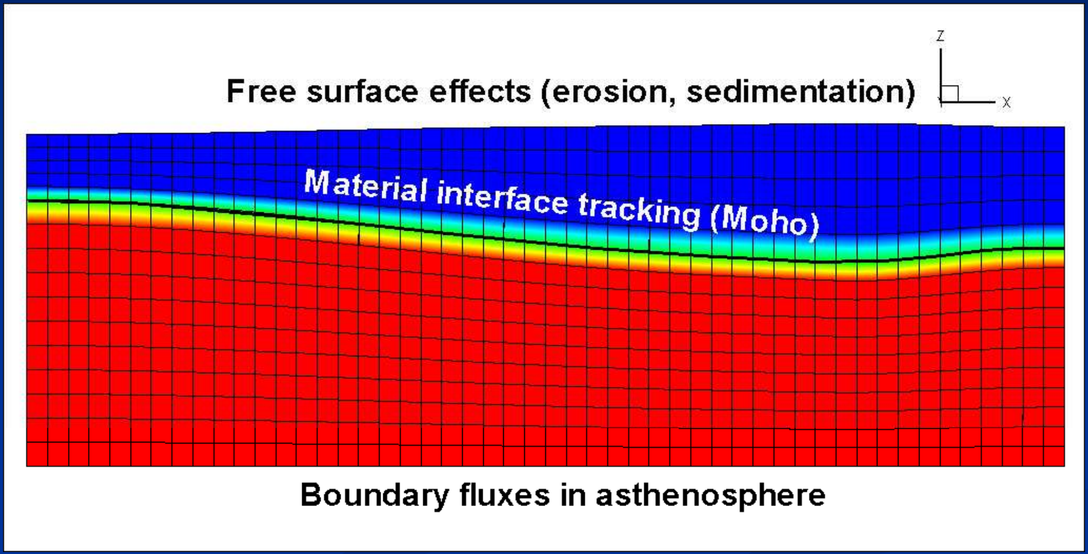
$$\mathbf{u}_{k+1} = \mathbf{u}_k - \mathbf{K}_k^{-1}\mathbf{r}_k$$

$\mathbf{r}$ – **Residual Vector**

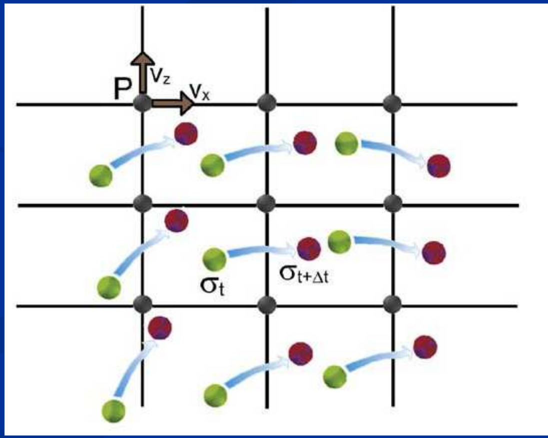
$\mathbf{K} = \dfrac{\partial \mathbf{r}}{\partial \Delta \mathbf{u}}$ – **Tangent Matrix**

Popov and Sobolev (PEPI 2008)

Arbitrary Lagrangian-Eulerian kinematical formulation with free surface

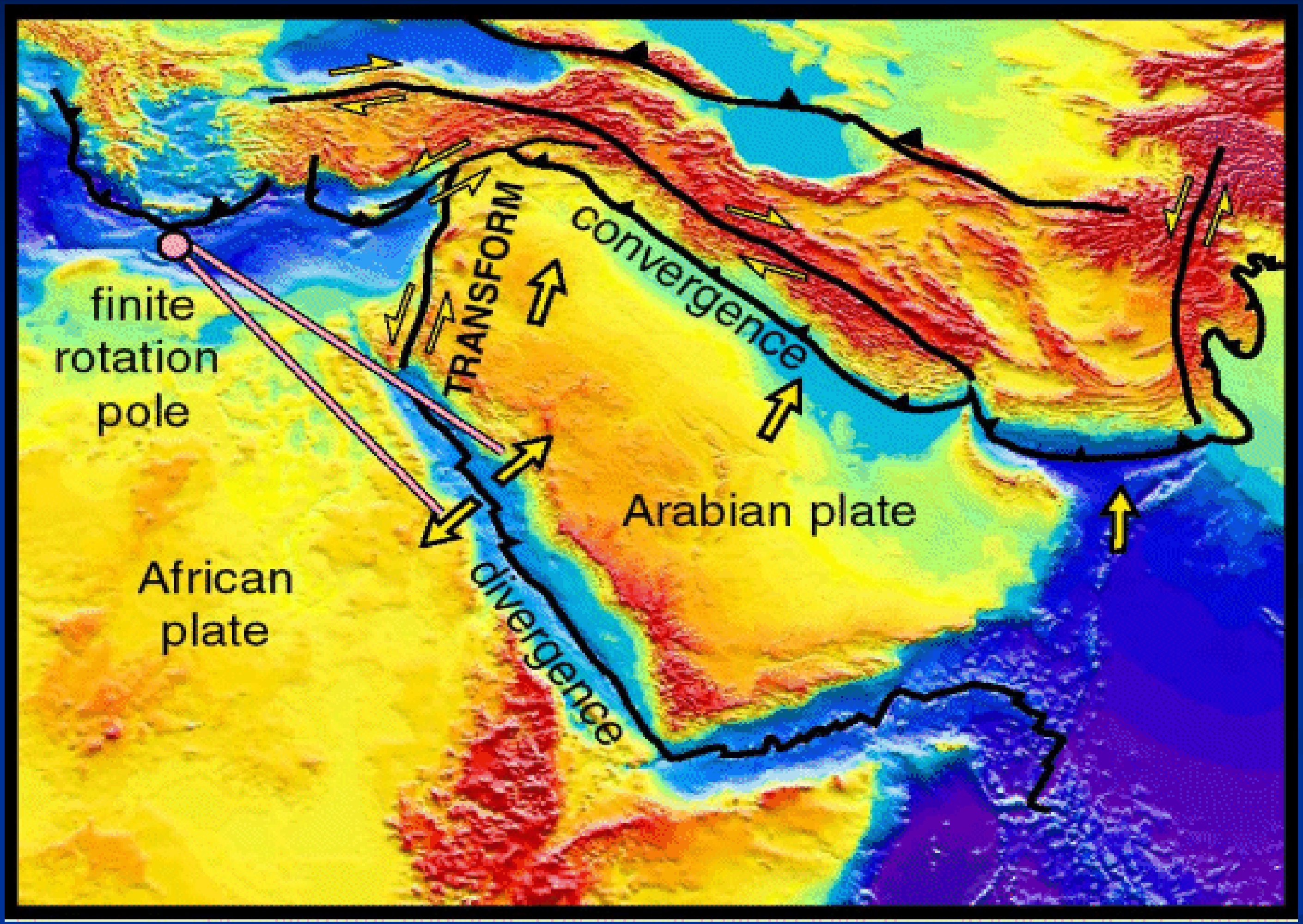


Remapping of entire fields by Particle-In-Cell technique



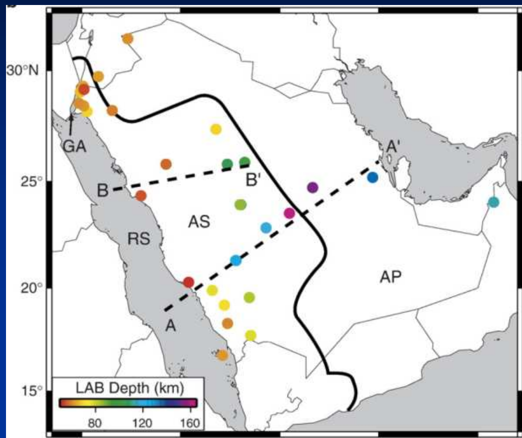
Transform Fault- case Dead Sea Transform

(In cooperation with A. Petrunin)

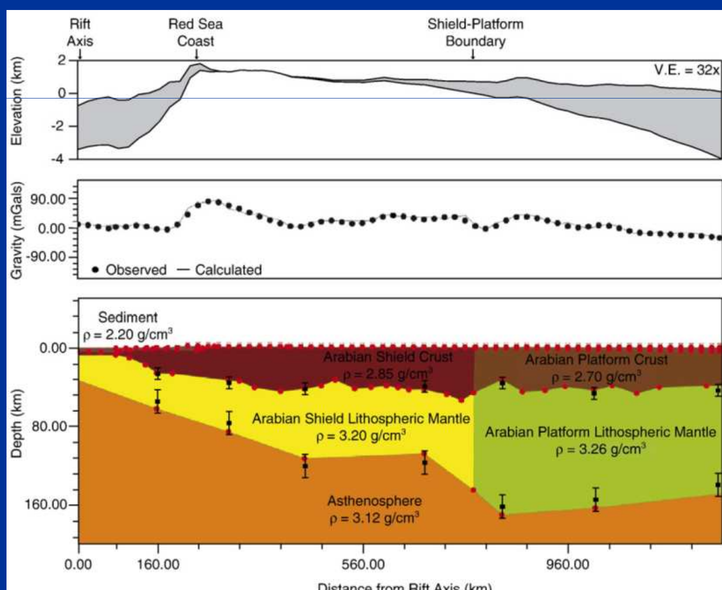


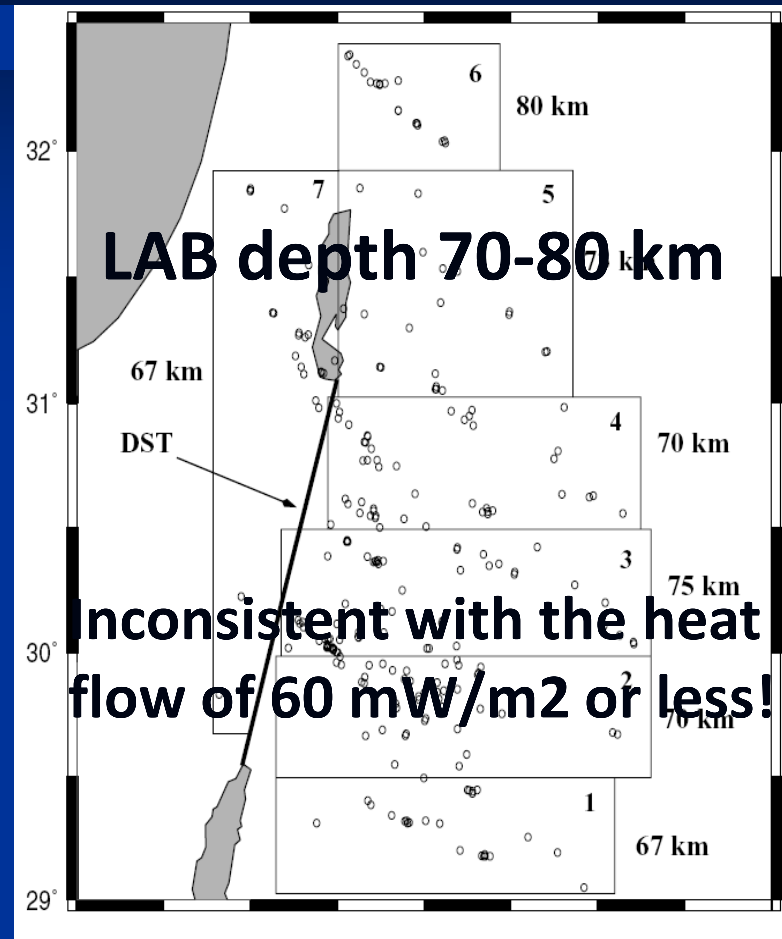
How Dead Sea Transform has been formed?

Present day lithospheric thickness



Hansen et al., *EPSL 2007*





LAB depth 70-80 km

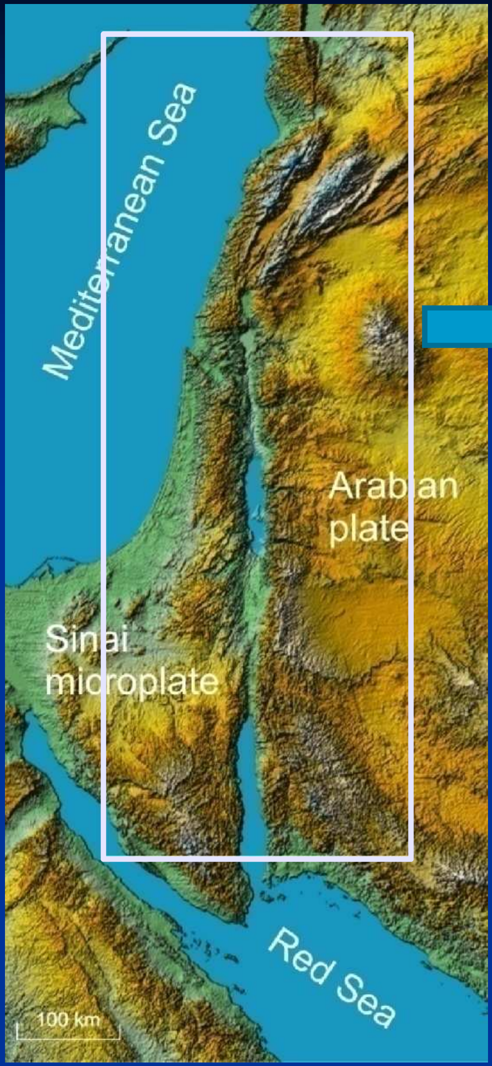
Inconsistent with the heat flow of 60 mW/m2 or less!

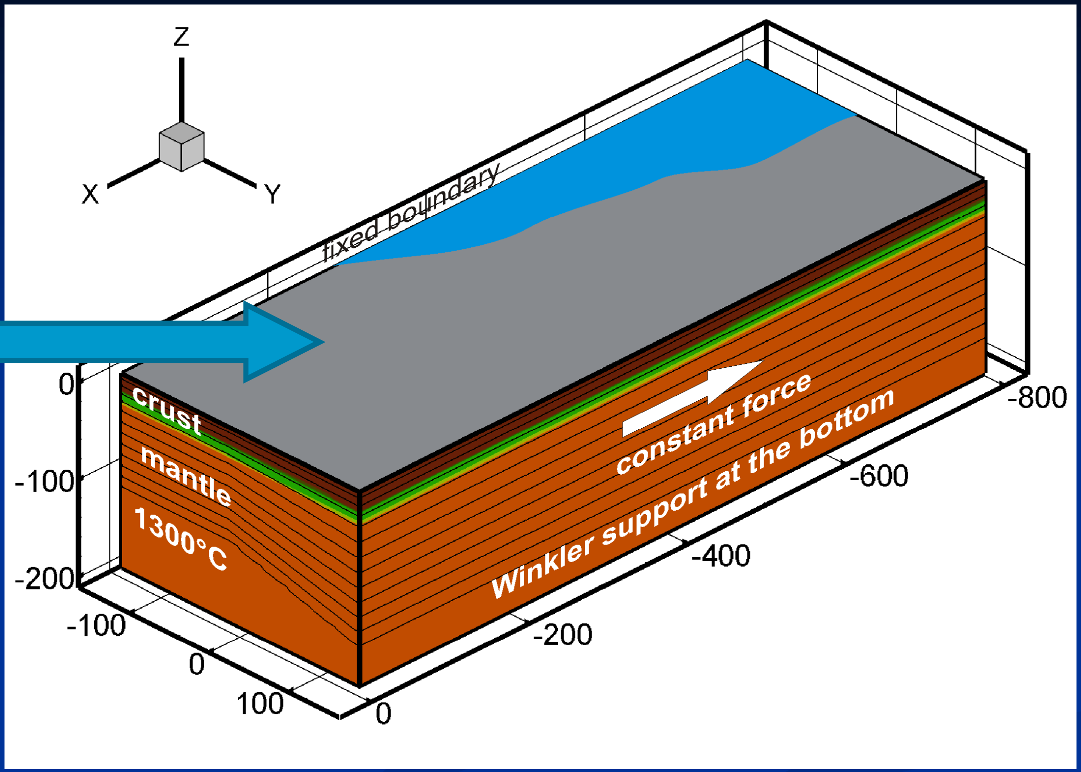
Mohsen et al., *Geophys. J. Int. 2006*

Conclusion

Lithosphere around DST was thinned in the past (between 25-15 Ma), such that related high heat flow had not enough time to reach the surface

Model setup

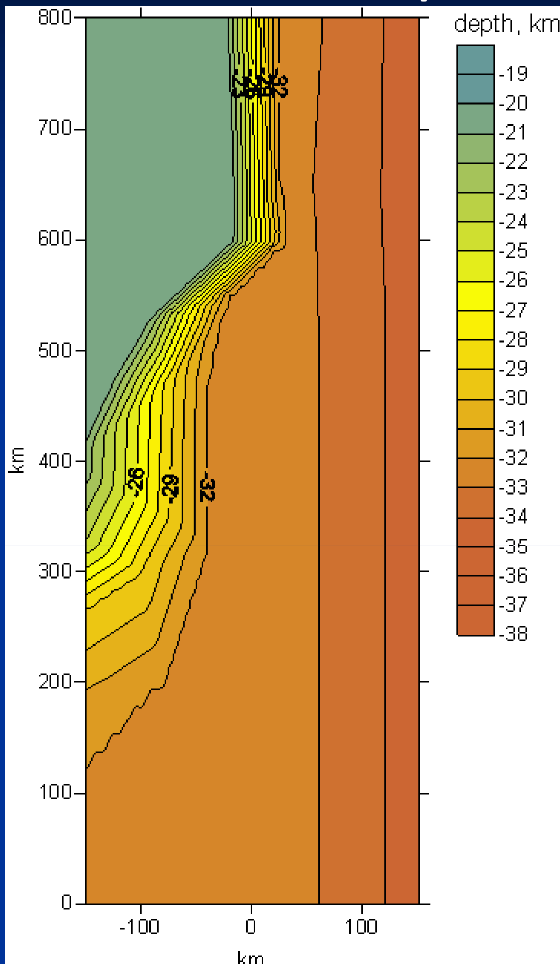




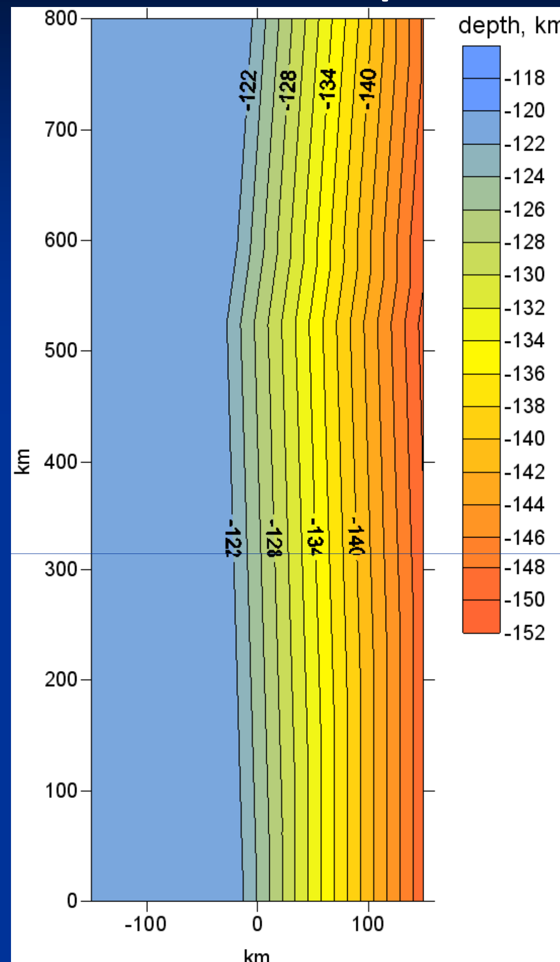
Flat Earth approximation

Initial lithospheric structure:

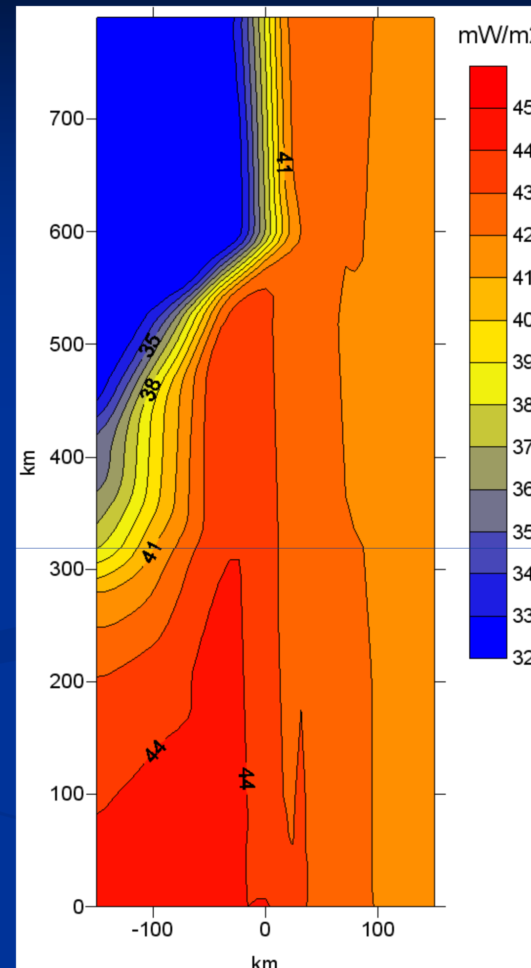
Moho map



LAB map

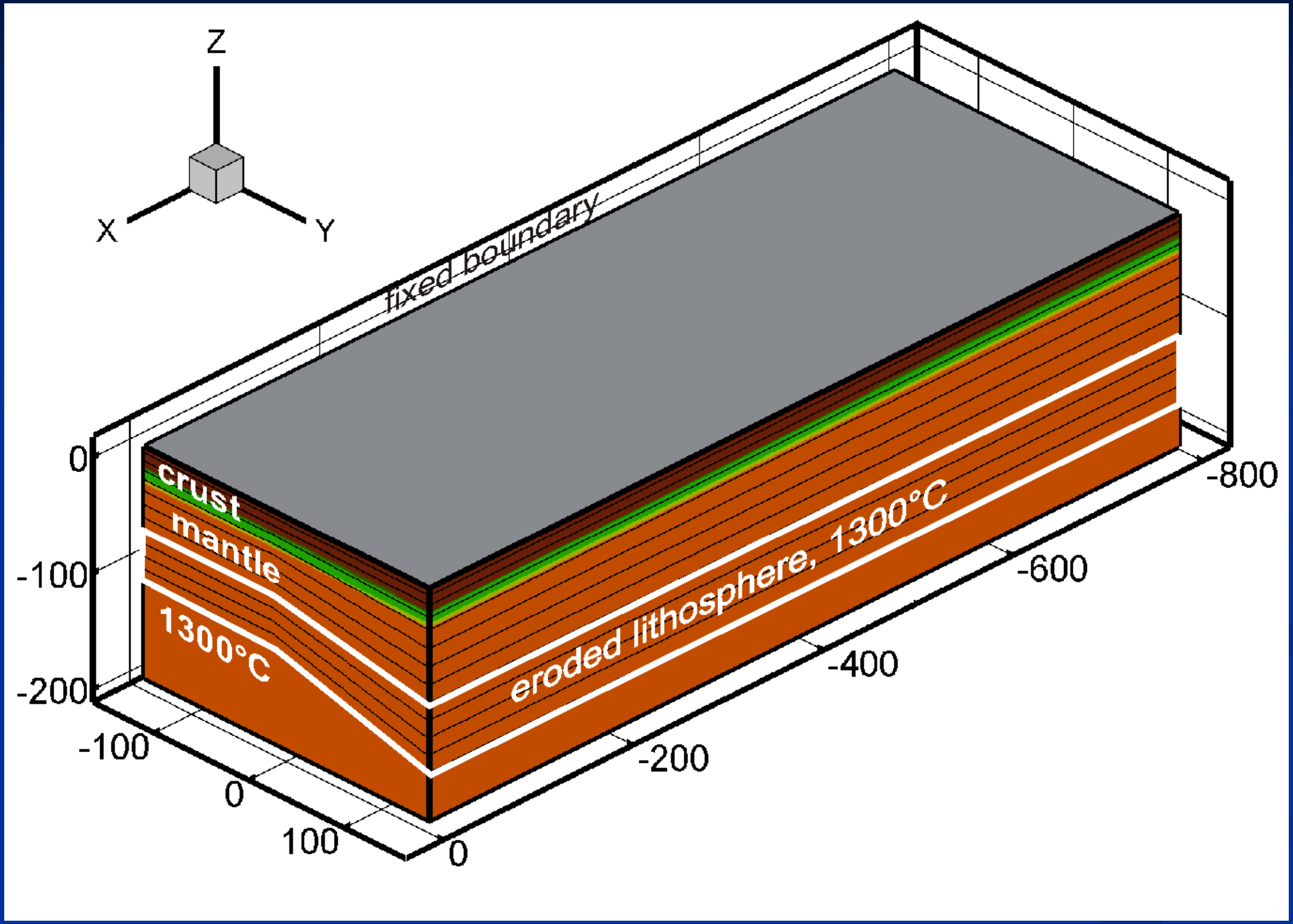


Heat flow

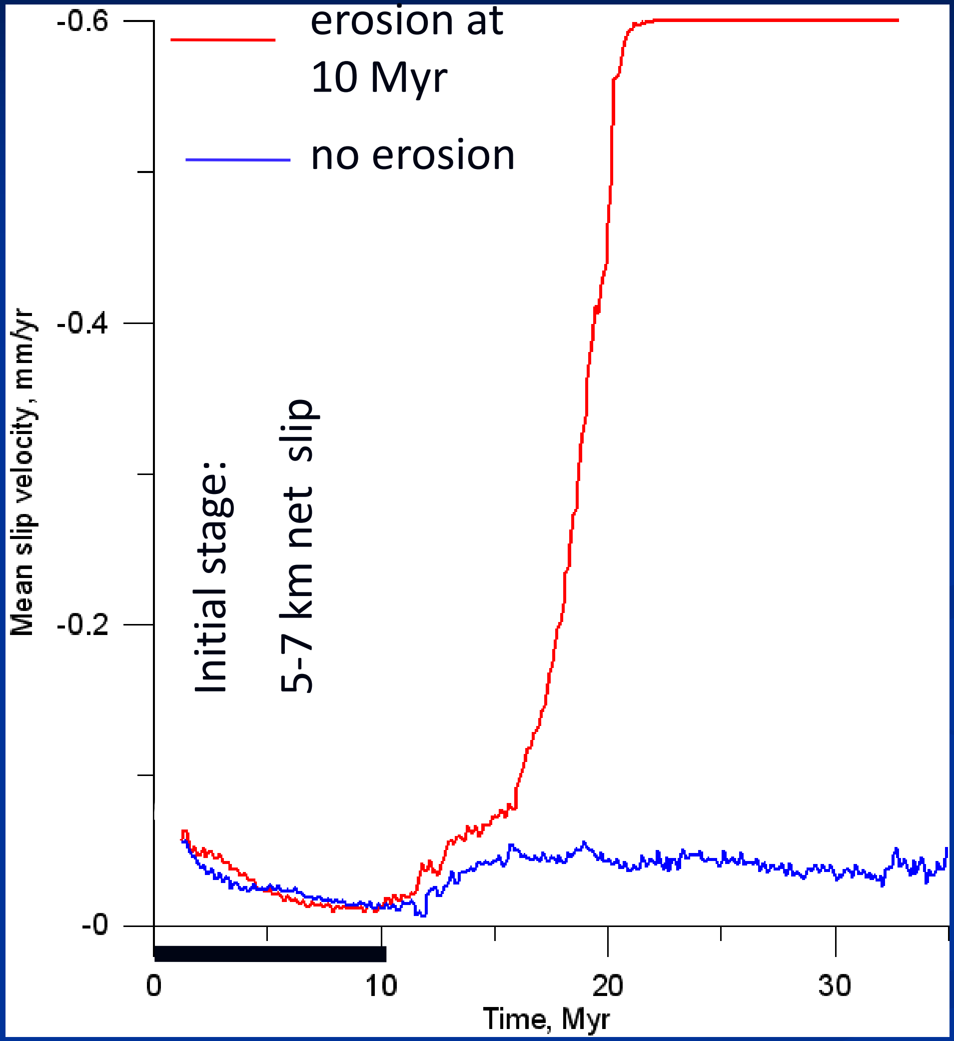


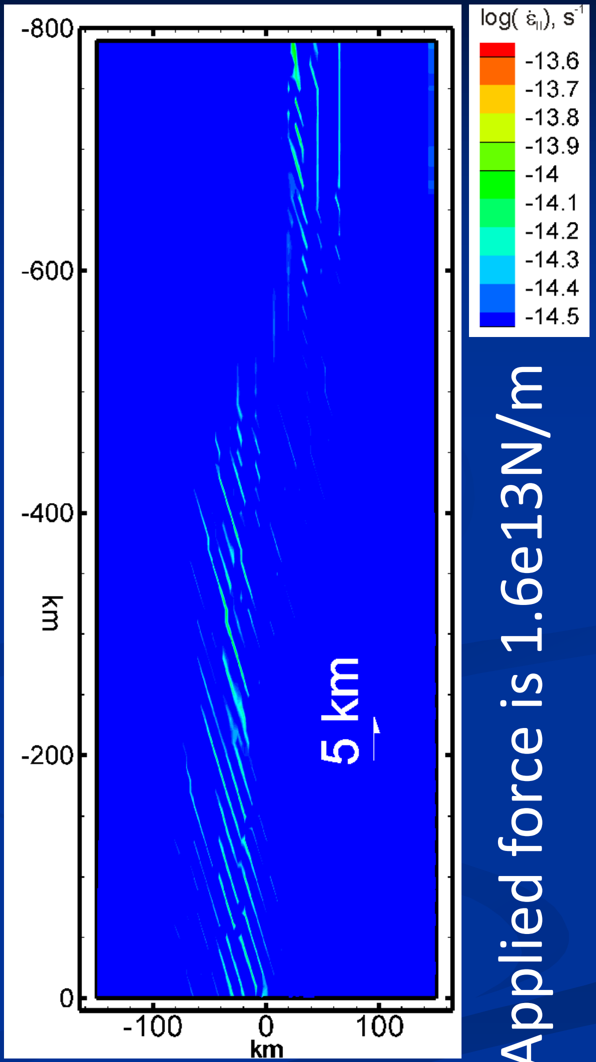
The regian is characterized with the very low heat flow, of less then 55 mW/m2

Assuming thermal erosion of the lithosphere



30-20 Ma rifting and beginning of opening of the Red Sea, thinning of the lithosphere in Saudi Arabia

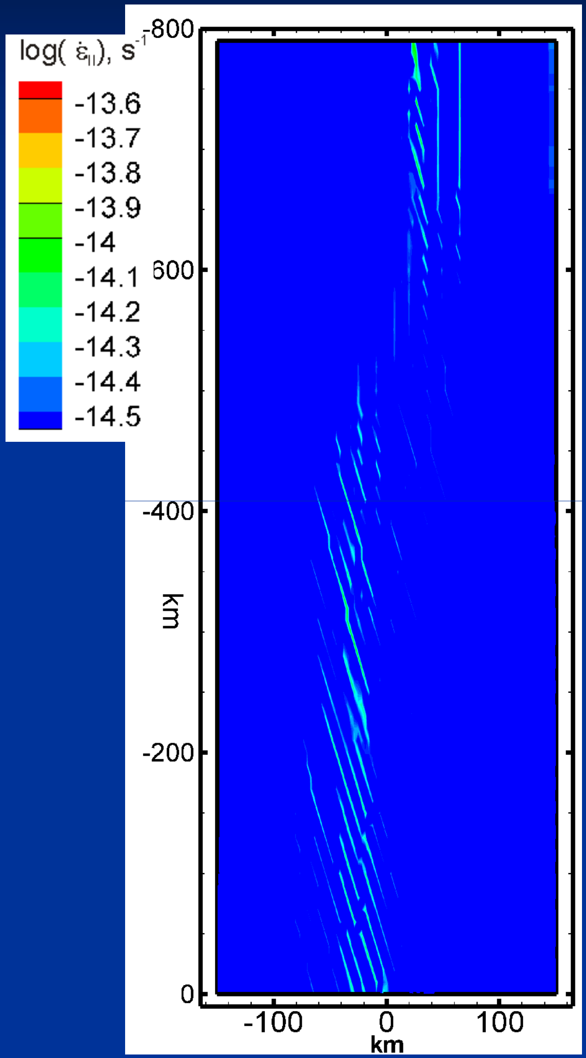




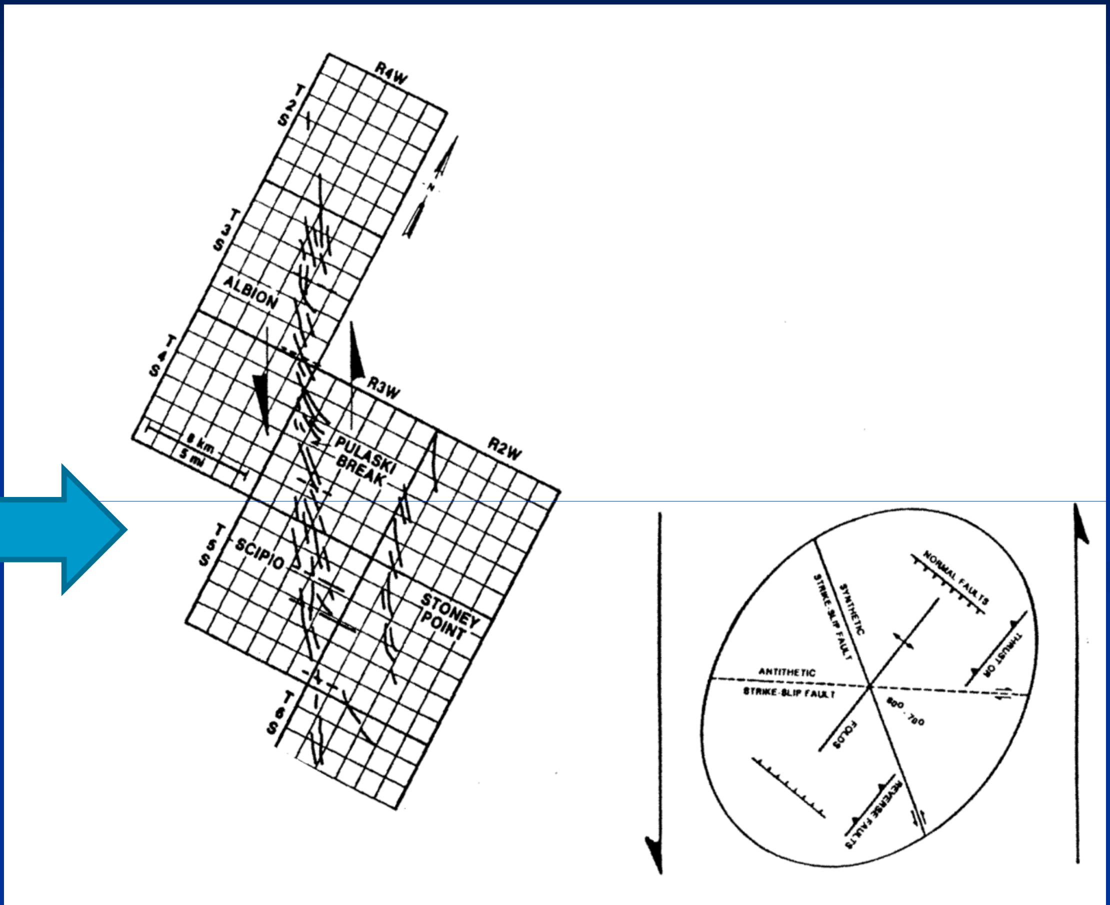
Applied force is 1.6e13N/m

Fault initiation

Model example



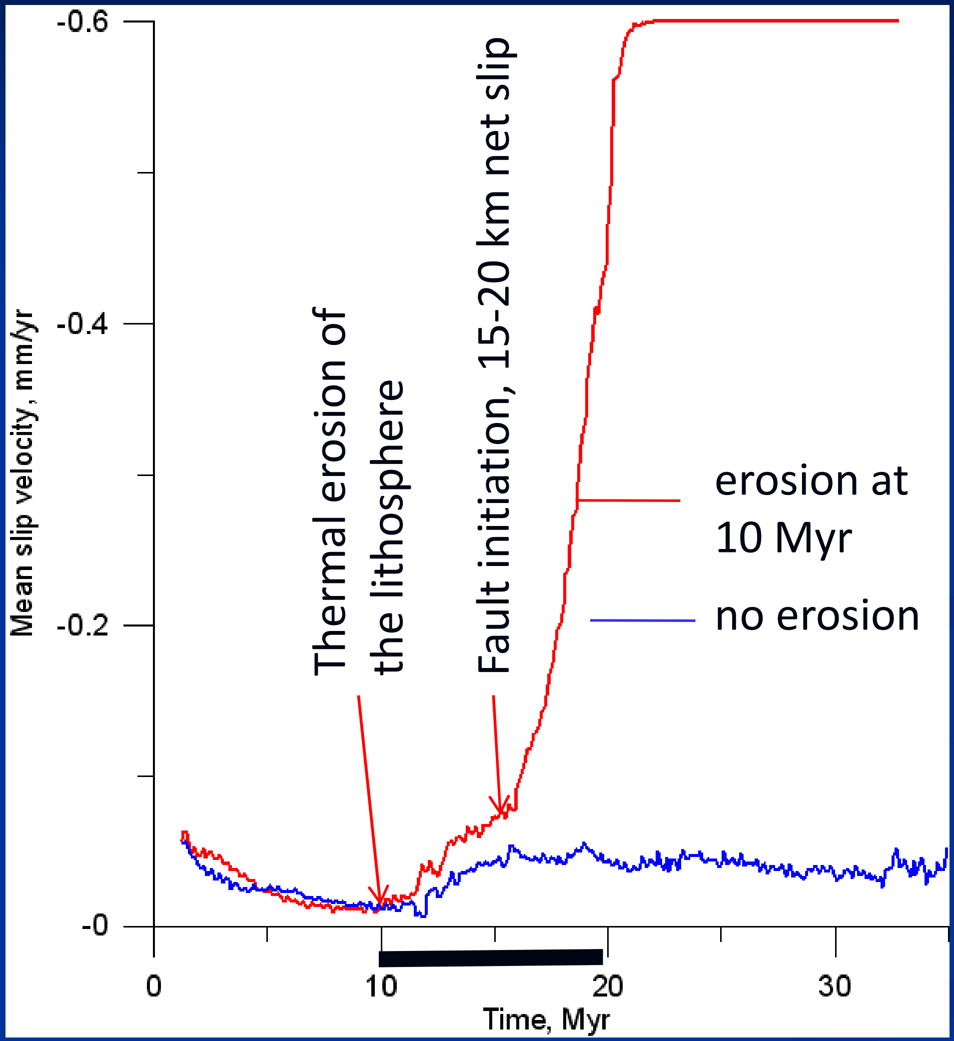
Natural example

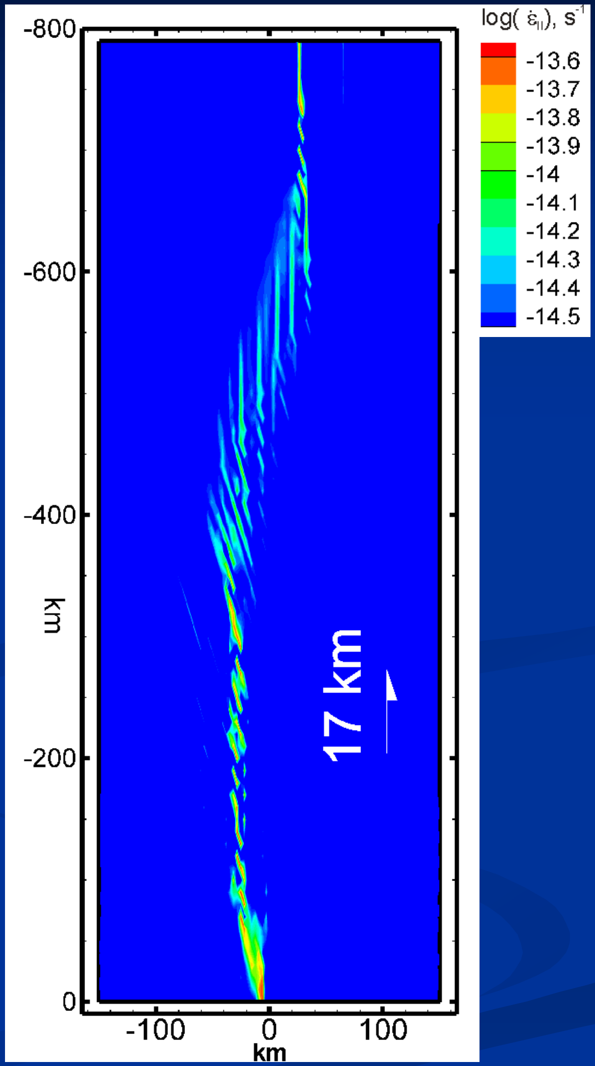


Albion-Scipio and Stoney Point Fields-U.S.A. Michigan Basin,

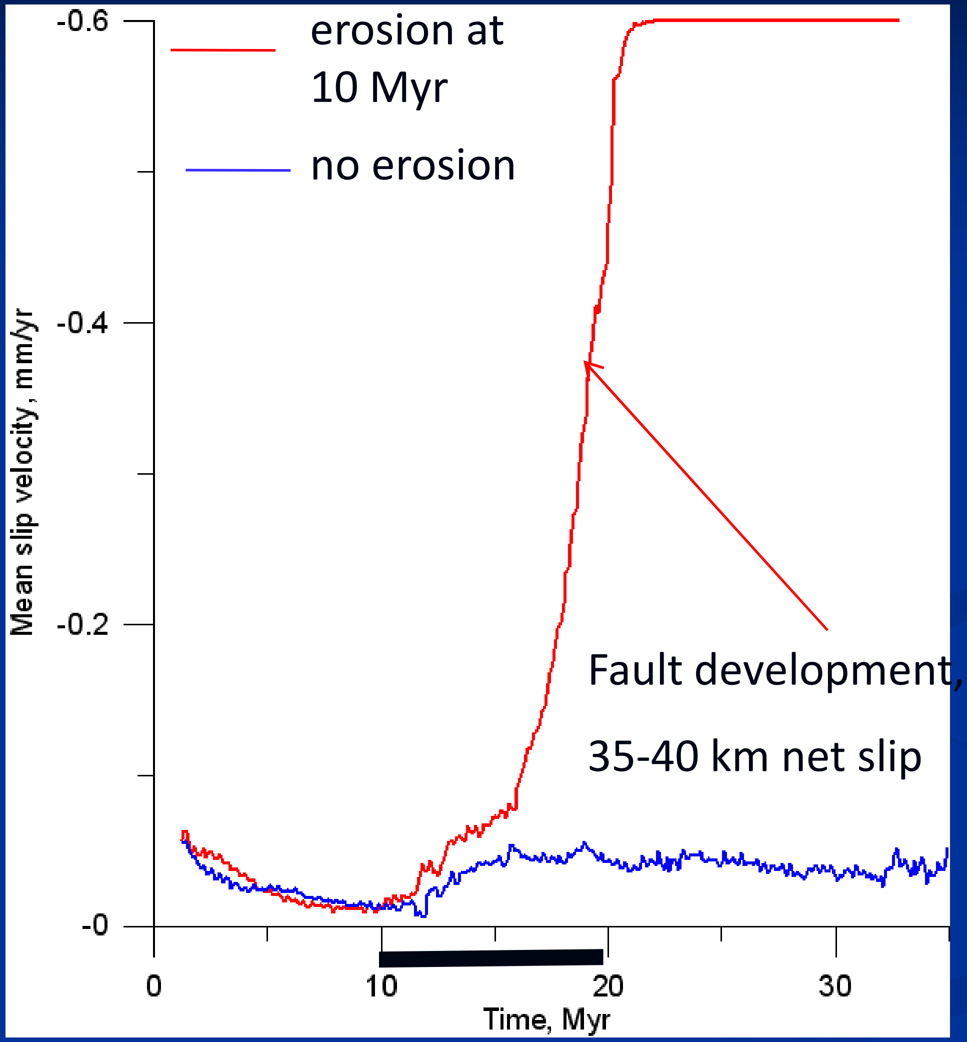
From: Versical, 1991, M.S. Thesis, W.M.U

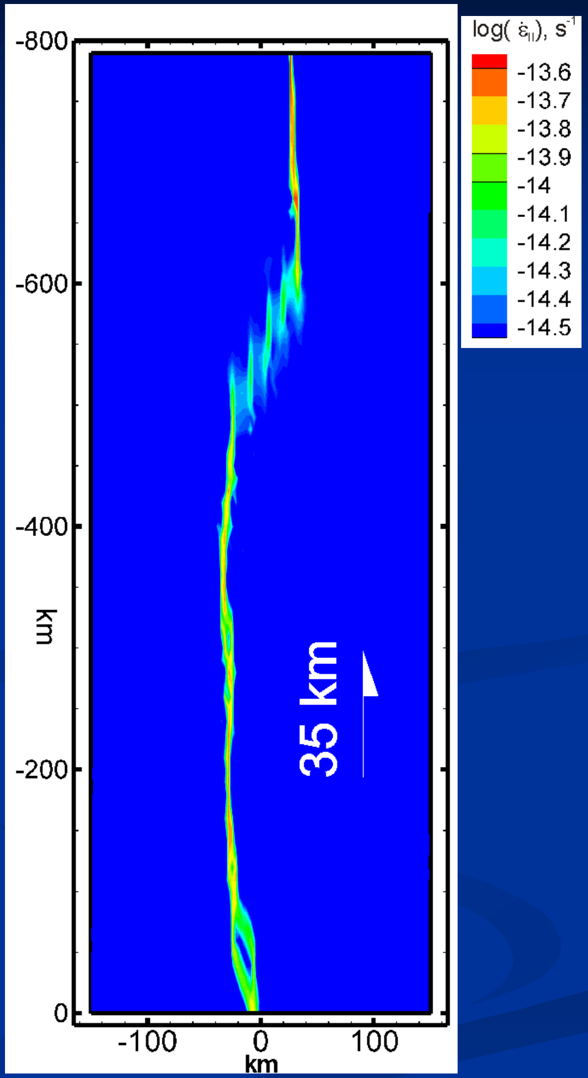
20-10 Ma thinning of the lithosphere around DST and localization of the DST



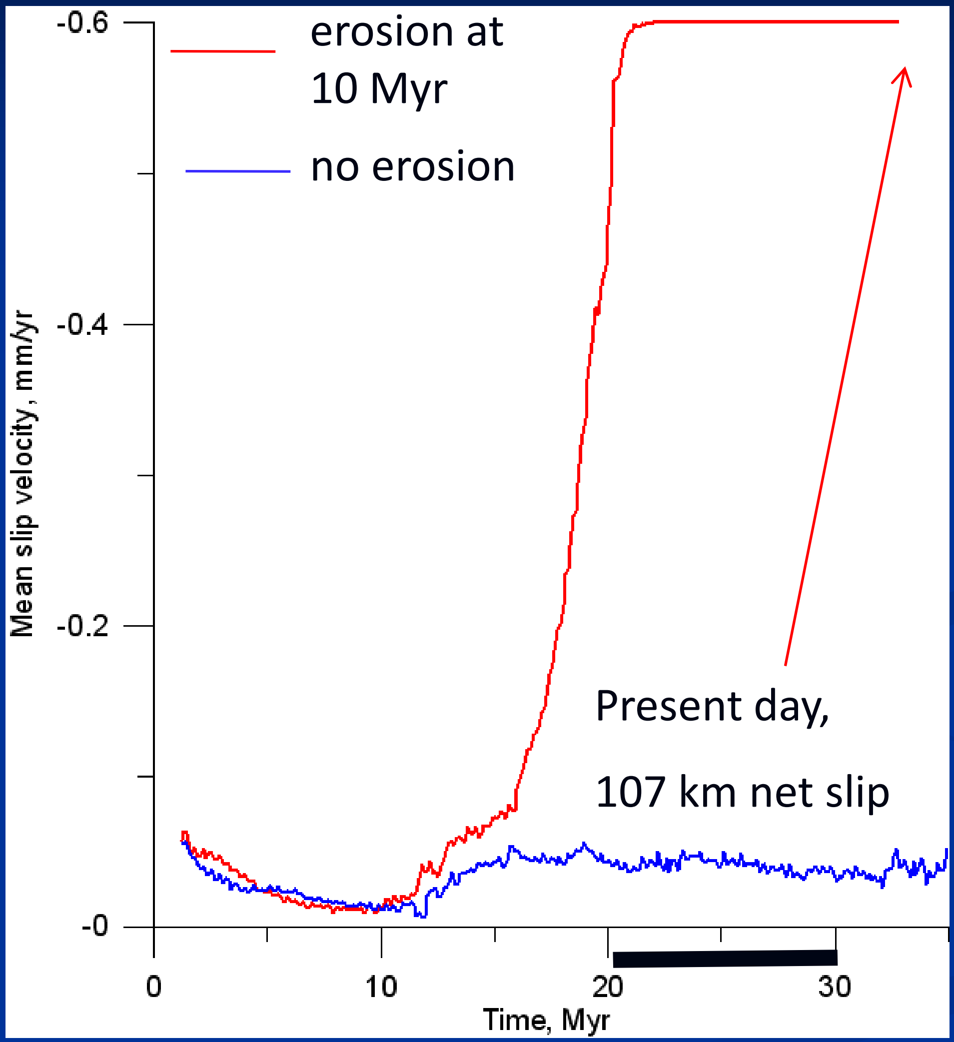


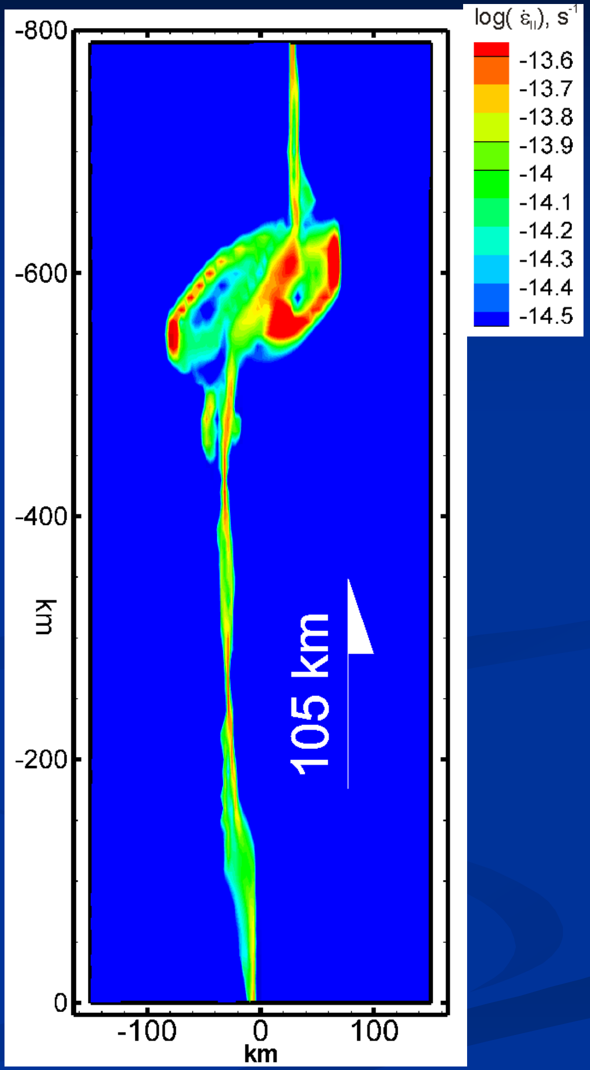
20-10 Ma thinning of the lithosphere around DST and localization of the DST





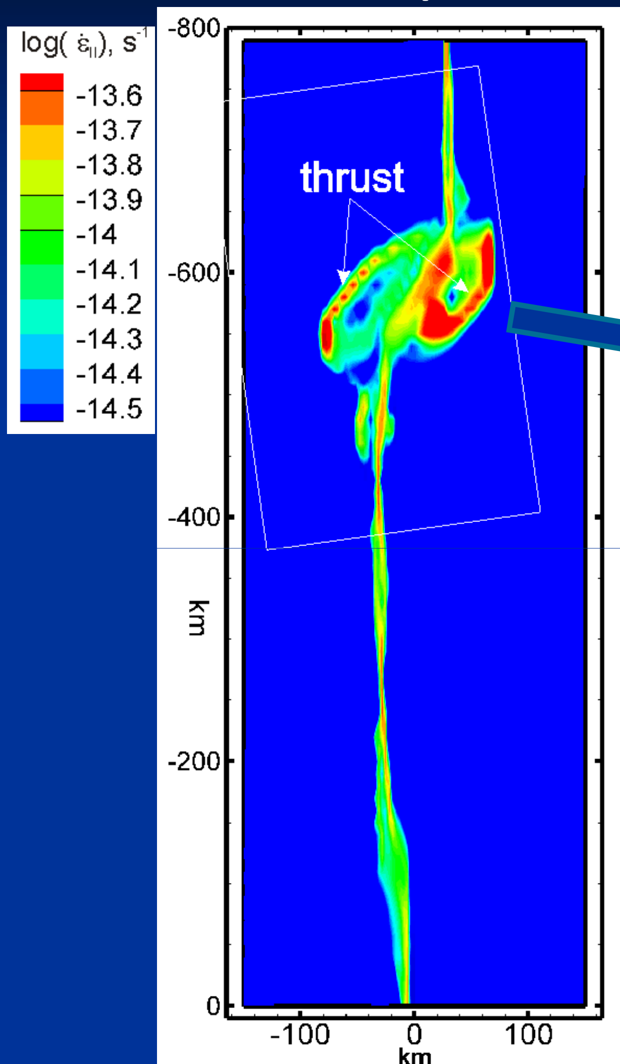
10-0 Ma mature DST, transpression and thrusting in Lebanon



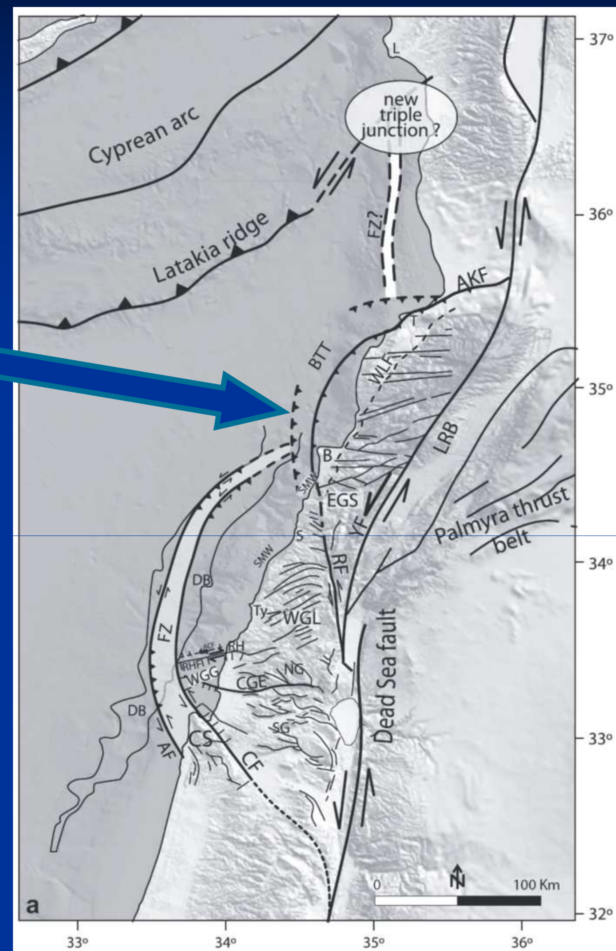


Lebanon Mountains structure

Model example



Natural example



Map summarizing the main tectonic elements

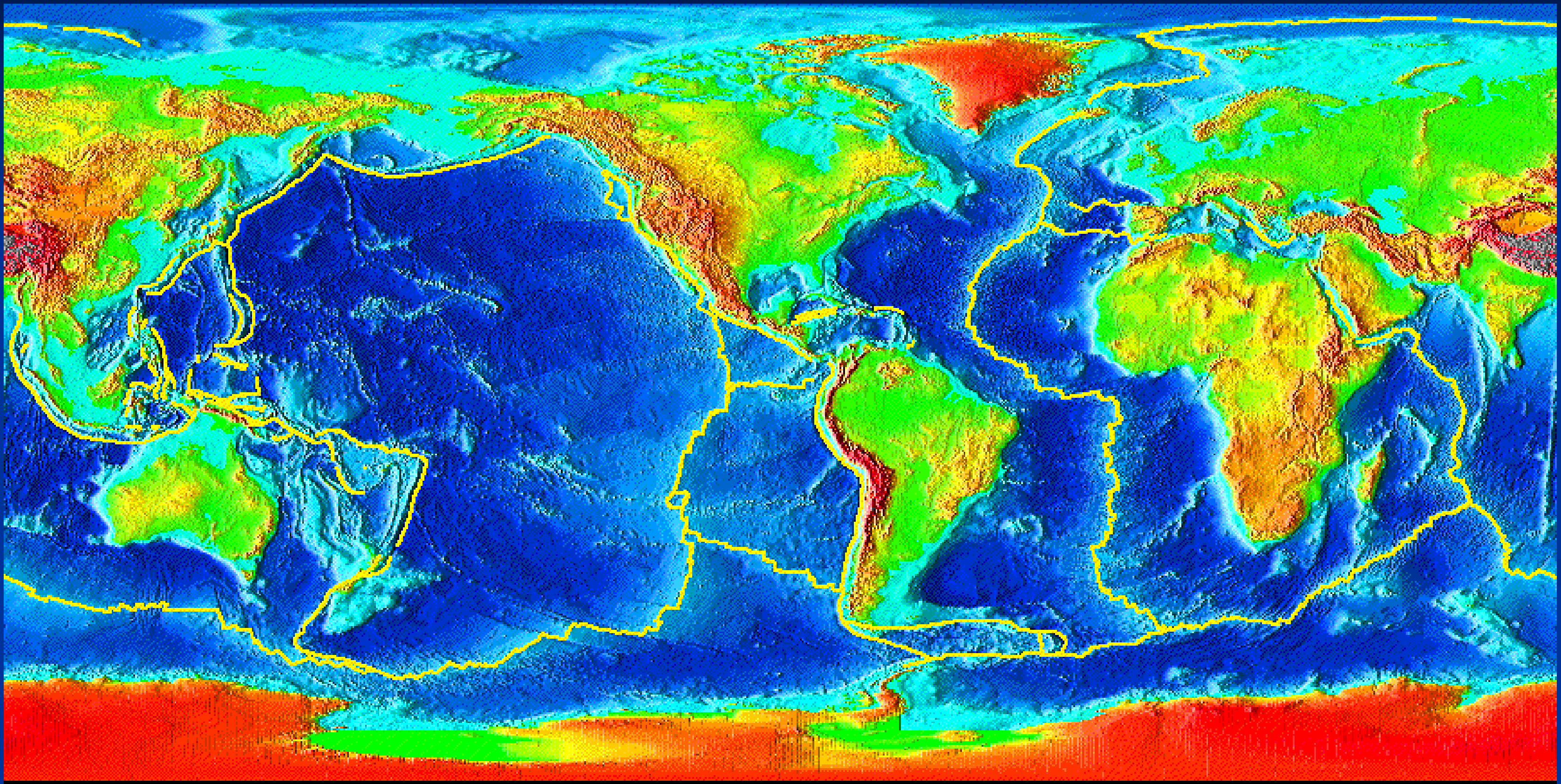
of the Lebanon Mountains (Schattner et al., 2006)

Conclusion

The DST has likely originated through “cooperation” of the plate-tectonic scale forces and Afar plume, which has thinned lithosphere at and around the Red Sea and triggered strain localization at the DST

Modeling Plate Velocities

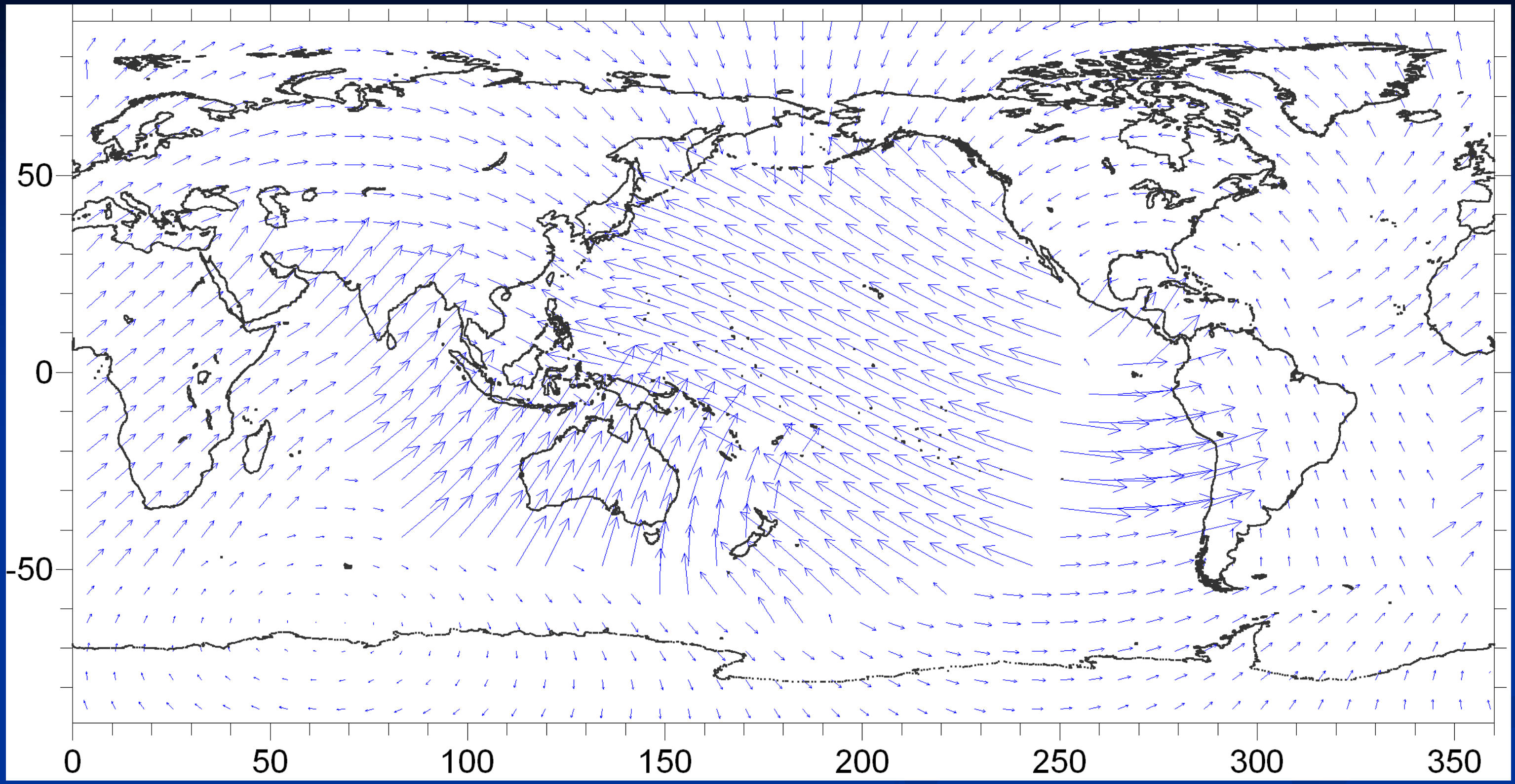
(In cooperation with A. Popov and B. Steinberger)



Crustal Plate Boundaries

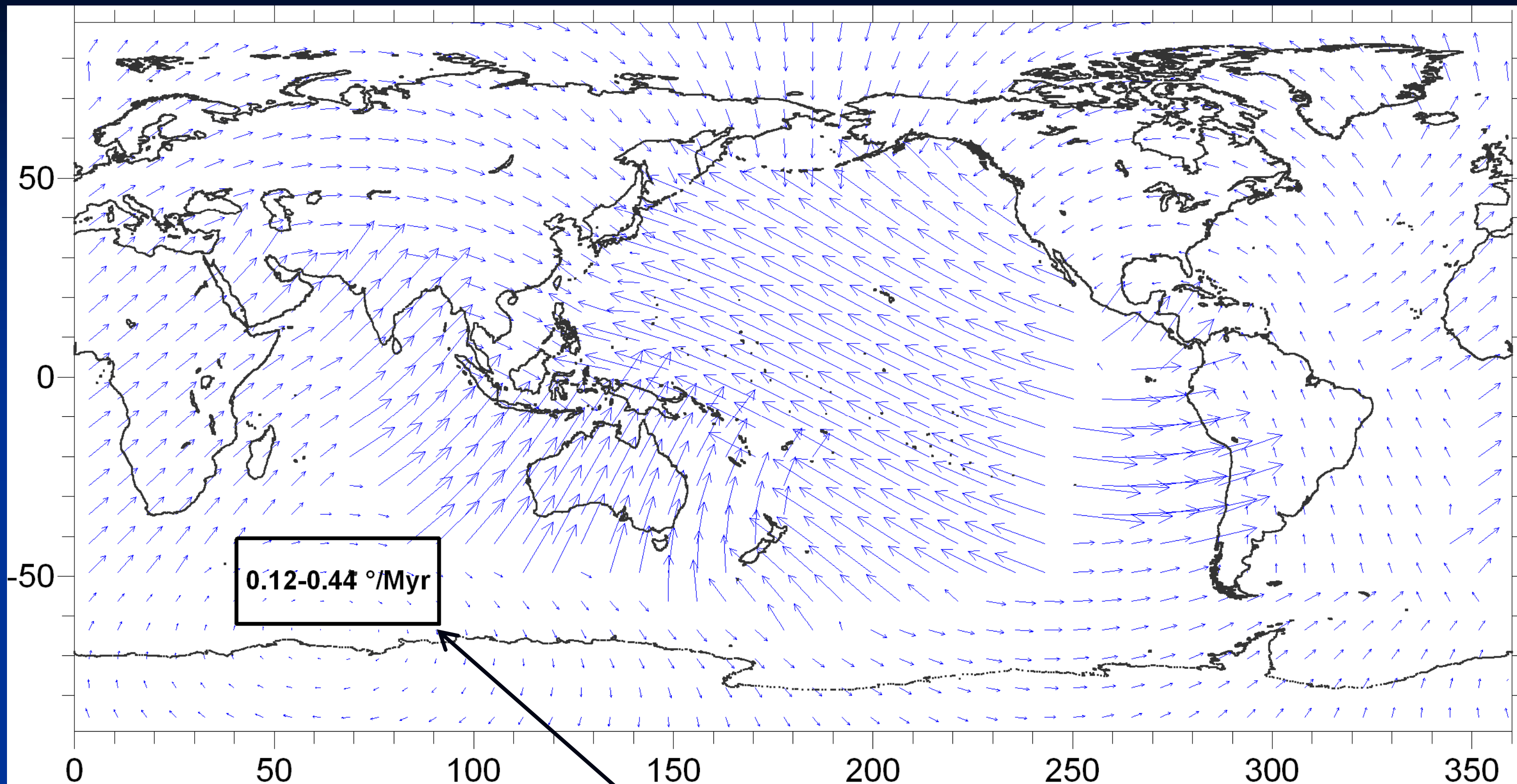
How weak are plate boundaries and how wet is the asthenosphere?

Plate velocities



Observed plate velocities in no-net-rotation (NNR) reference frame

Net rotation

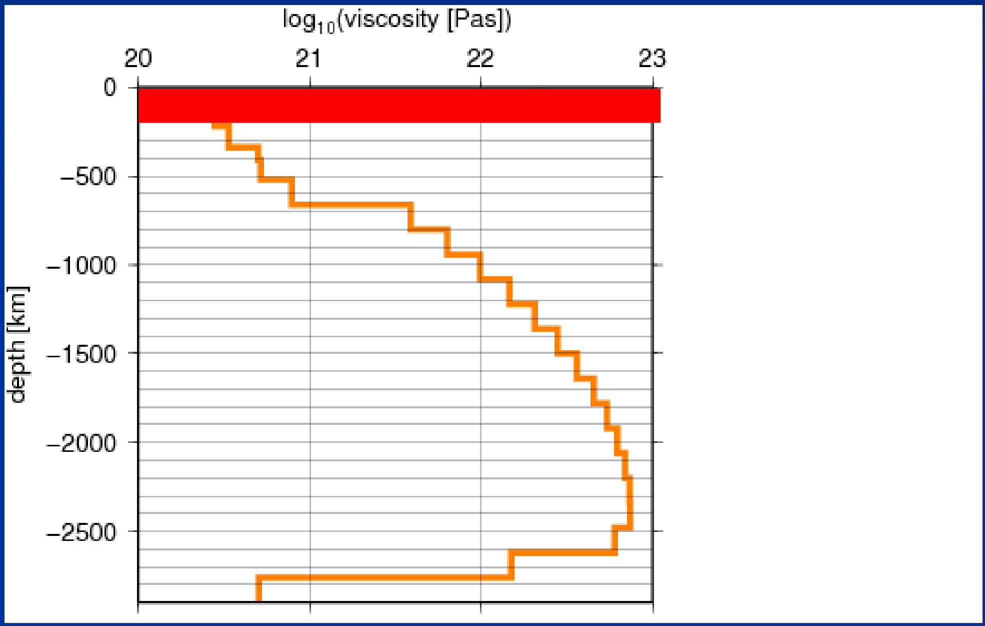


… and observed net-rotation (NR) of the lithosphere

Based on analyses of seismic anisotropy Becker (2008) narrowed possible range of angular NR velocities down to 0.12-0.22 °/Myr

Above 300 km depth

3D temperature and crust, numerical FEM technique (Popov and Sobolev, 2008) with 3D temperature- and stress-dependant visco-elasto-plastic rheology



Below 300 km depth

Spectral method (Hager and O'Connell,1981) with radial viscosity distribution from Steinberger and Calderwood (2006)

and 3D density distributions based on subduction history (Steinberger, 2000)

Mantle rheology

Mantle lithosphere: dry olivine rheology combining diffusion and dislocation creep

$$\dot{\varepsilon}_{II} = Ad^{-m}\sigma_{II}^{n}\exp(-(E_a + PV_a)/RT)$$

Asthenosphere: wet olivine rheology combining diffusion and dislocation creep with water content as model parameter

$$\dot{\varepsilon}_{II} = Ad^{-m}C_{H2O}^{p}\sigma_{II}^{n}\exp(-(E_a + PV_a)/RT)$$

Parameters in reference model by Hirth and Kohlstedt (2003) with **n=3.5 +-0.3** and activation volume from Kawazoe et al. (2009).

Modifications according to

$$\dot{\varepsilon}_{II}(n) = \dot{\varepsilon}_{II}(n_{ref})(\sigma_{II}/100MPa)^{n-n_{ref}}$$

Plate boundaries

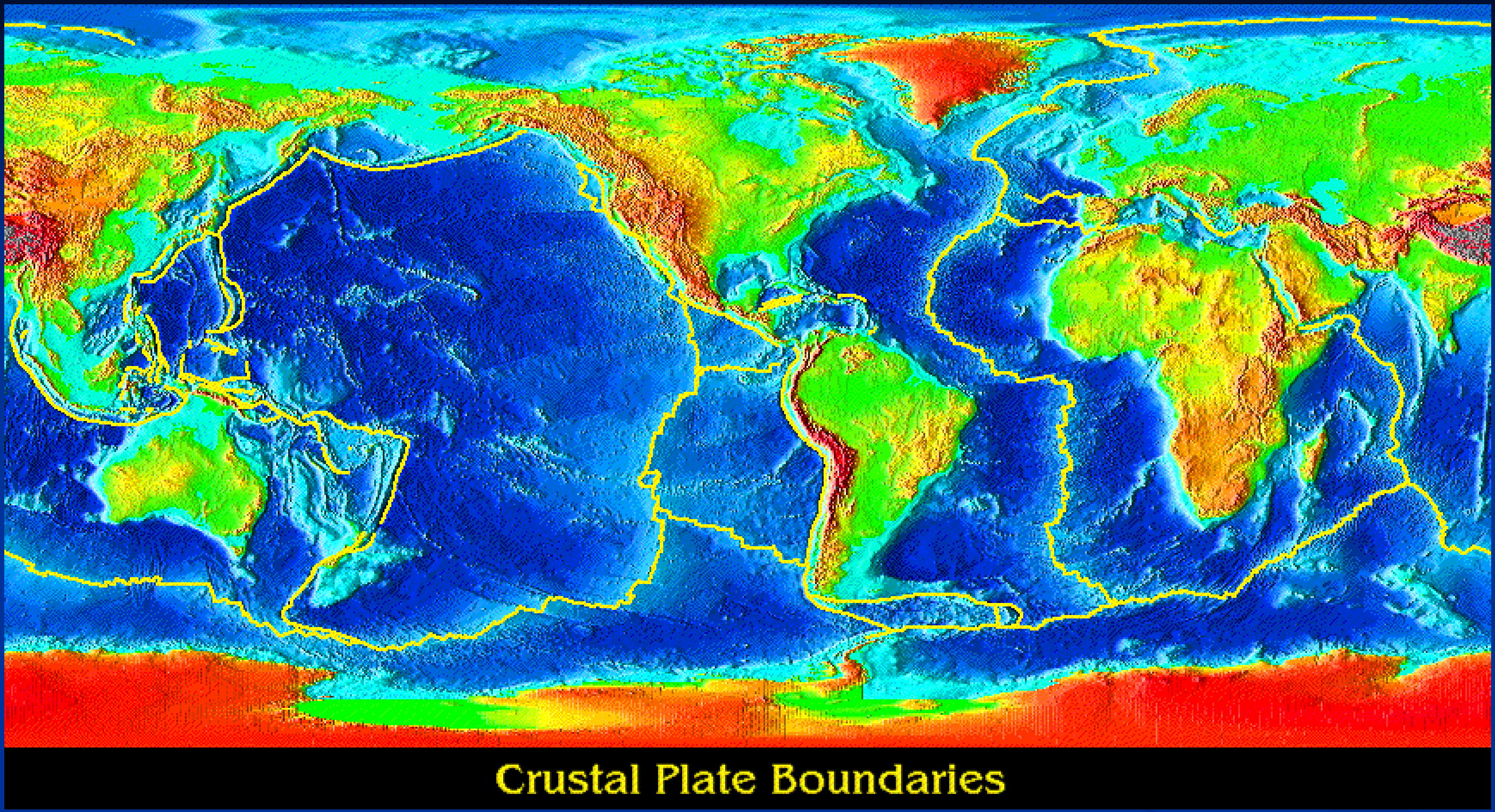
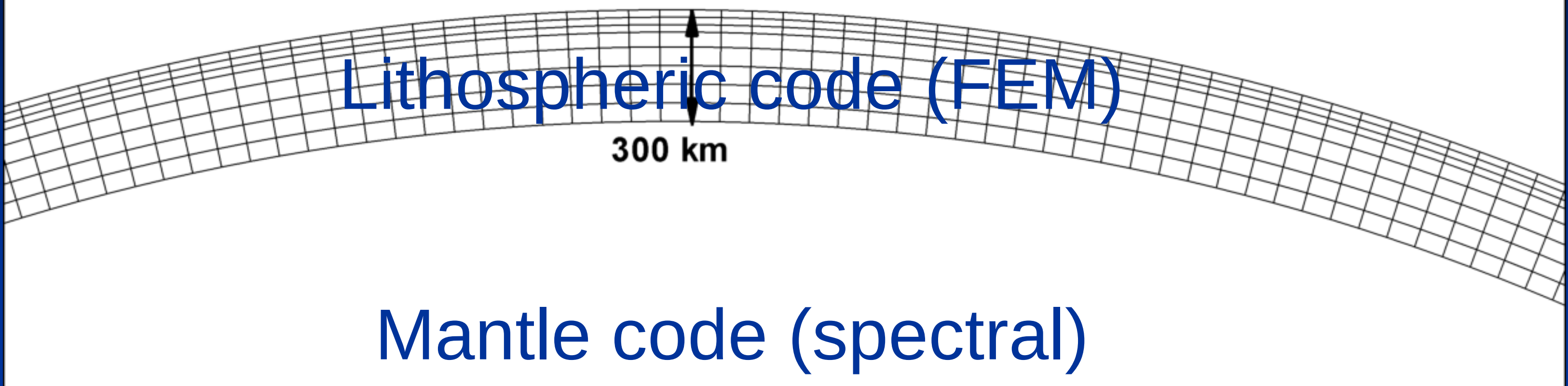


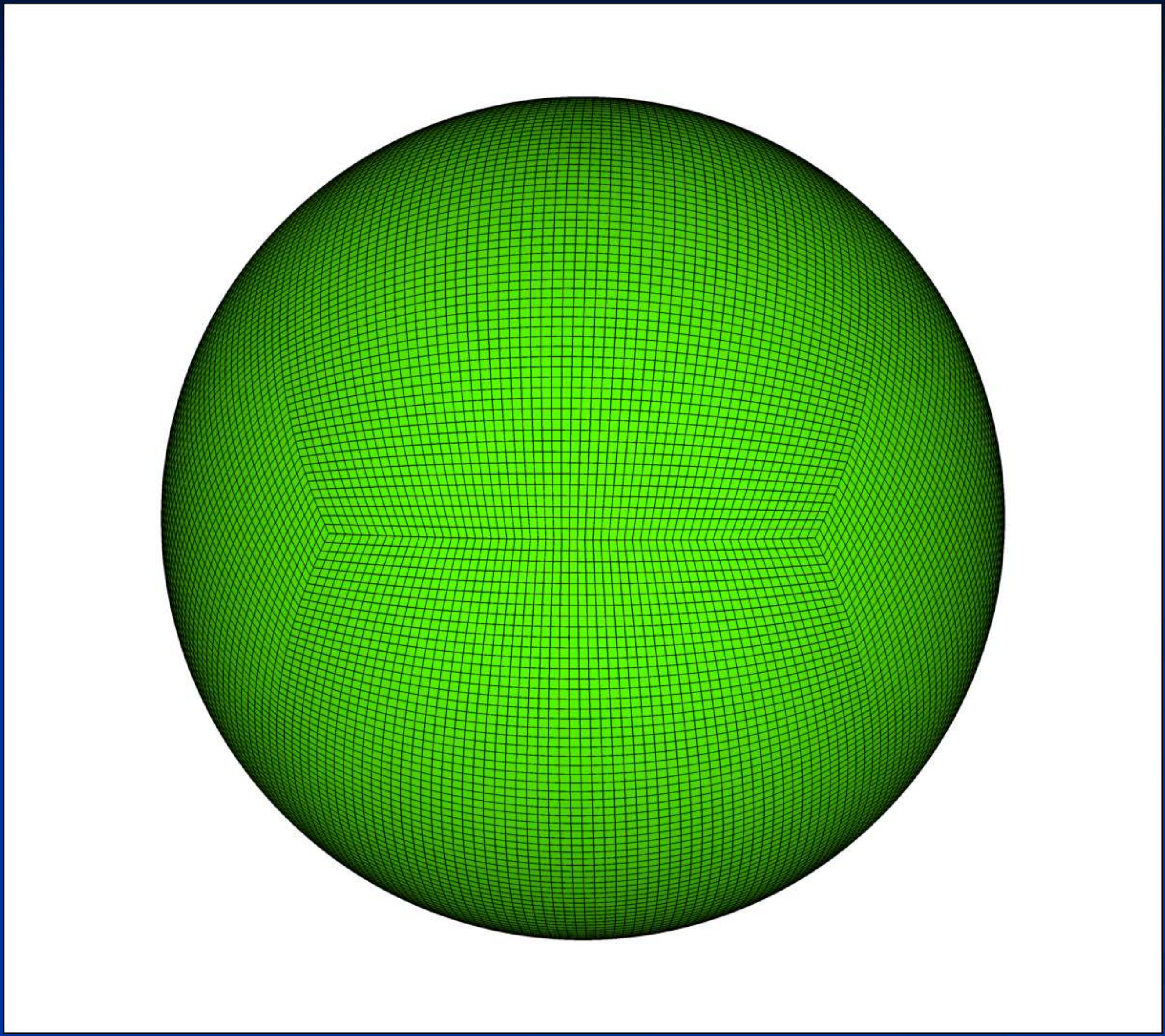
Plate boundaries are defined as narrow zones with visco-plastic rheology where friction coefficient is model parameter



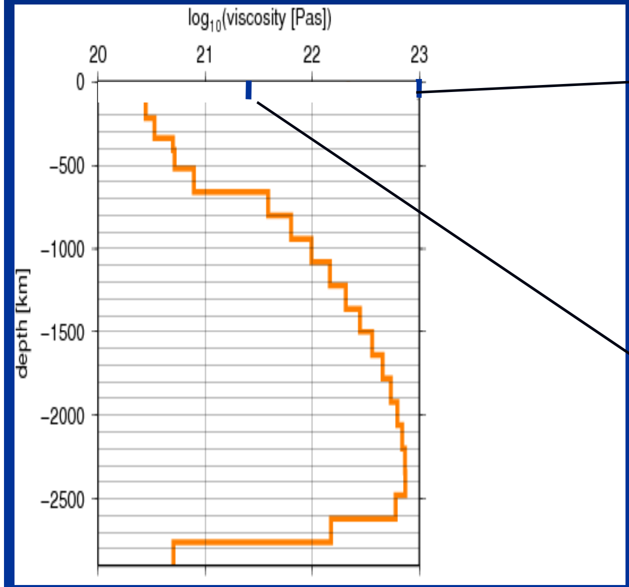
Mantle and lithospheric codes are coupled through continuity of velocities and tractions at 300 km.

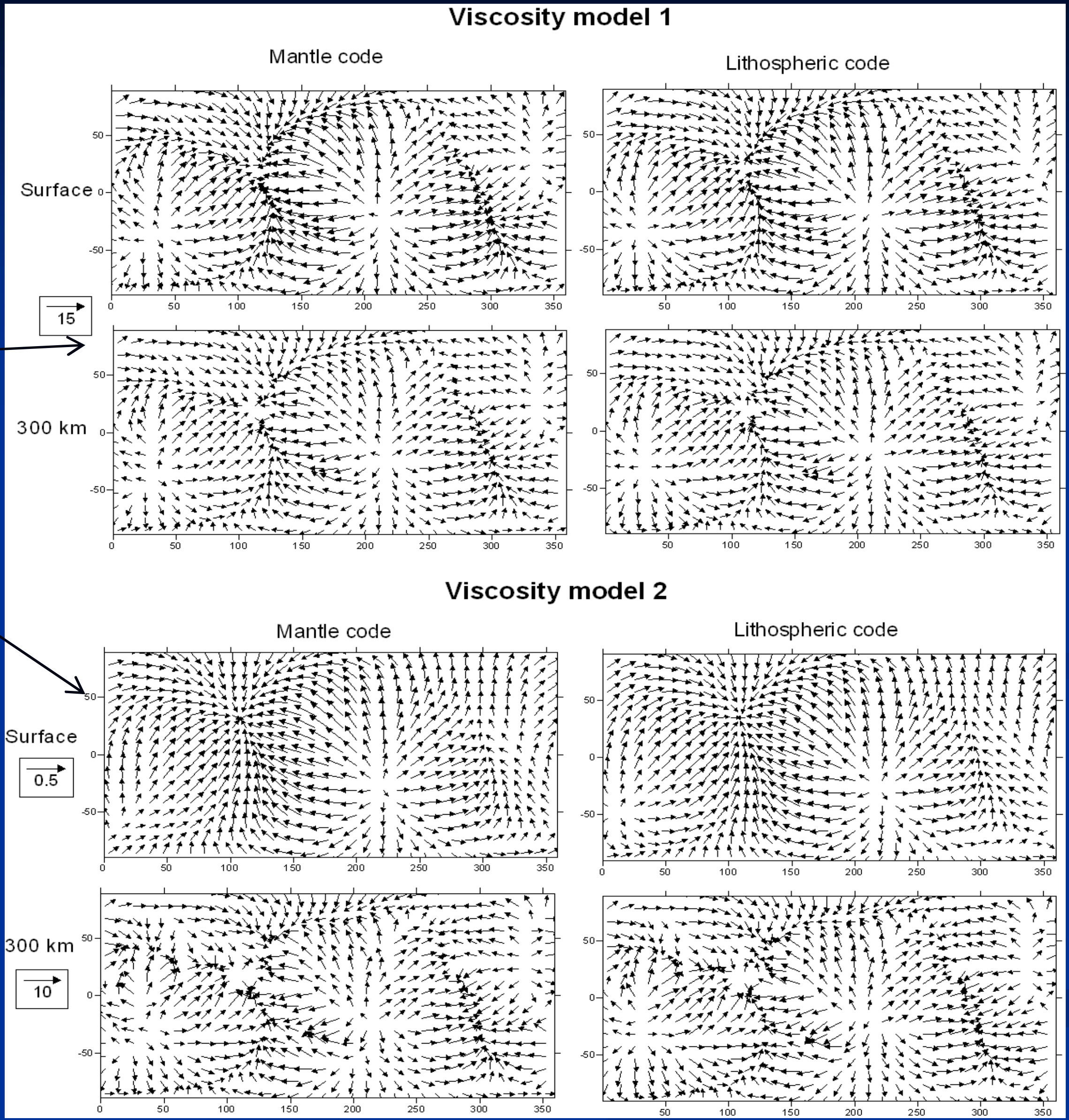
The model has **free surface** and **3D**, strongly **non-linear visco-elastic rheolog**y with **true plasticity** (brittle failure) in upper 300km.

Mesh for low-resolution model

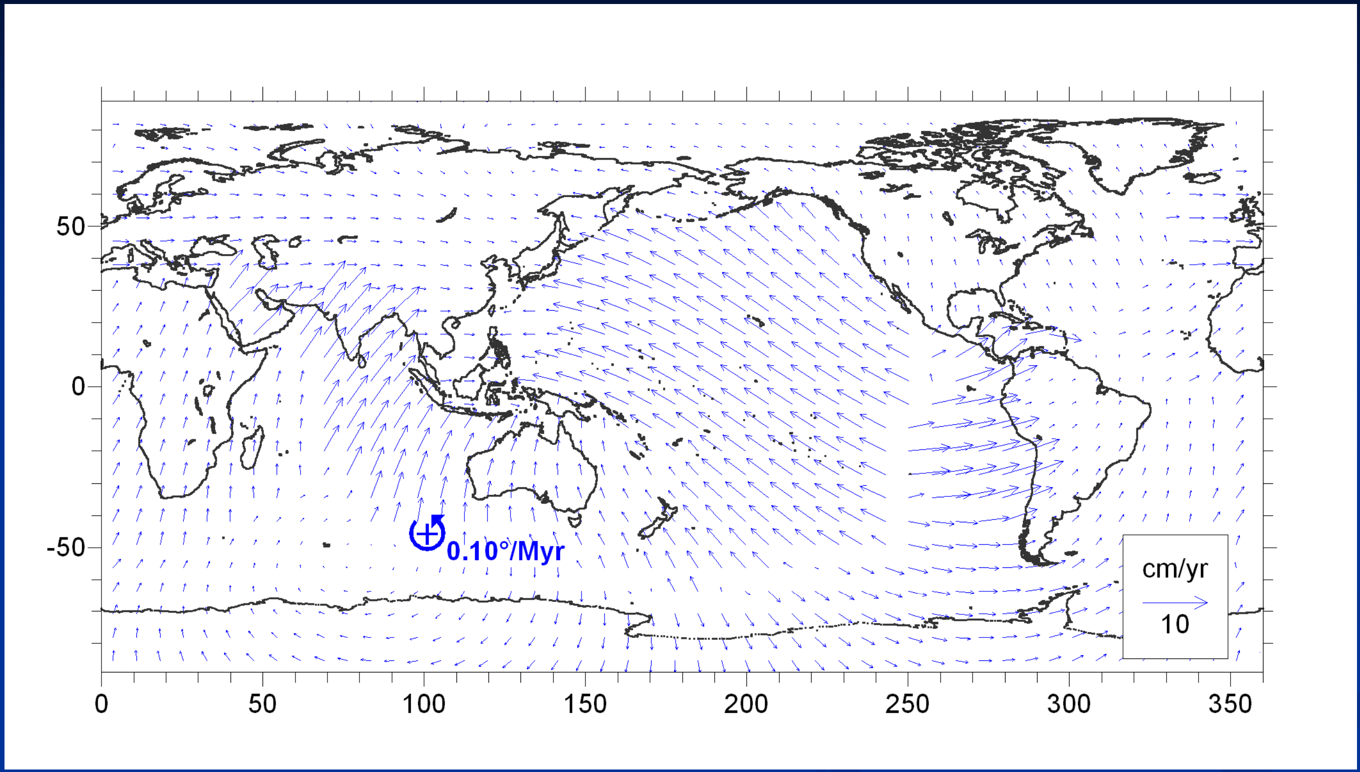


Benchmark test



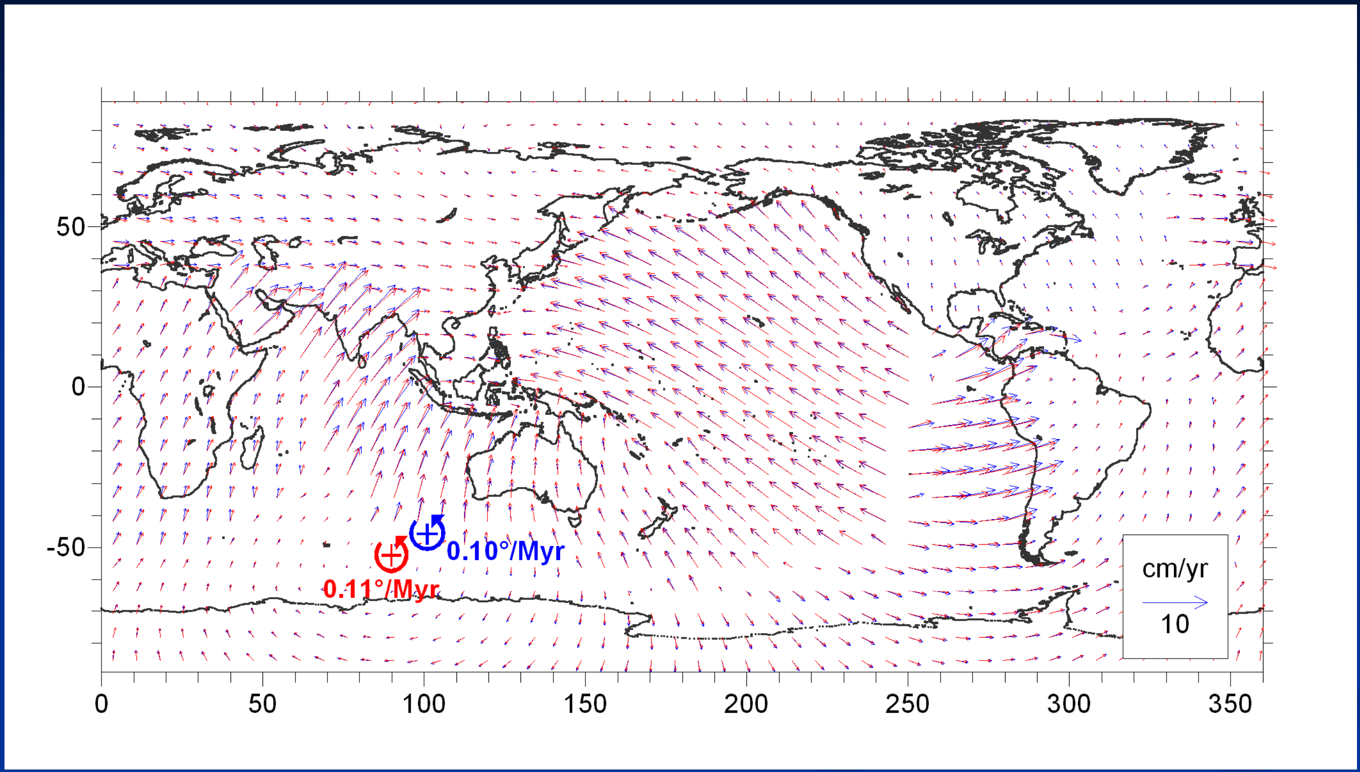


Model by Becker (2006)



CitcomS, 3-D temperature-dependant dislocation+diffusen rheology, **<u>lateral viscosty variations</u>** in the entire mantle, low-viscosty plate boundaries

Our model vrs. model by Becker (2006)



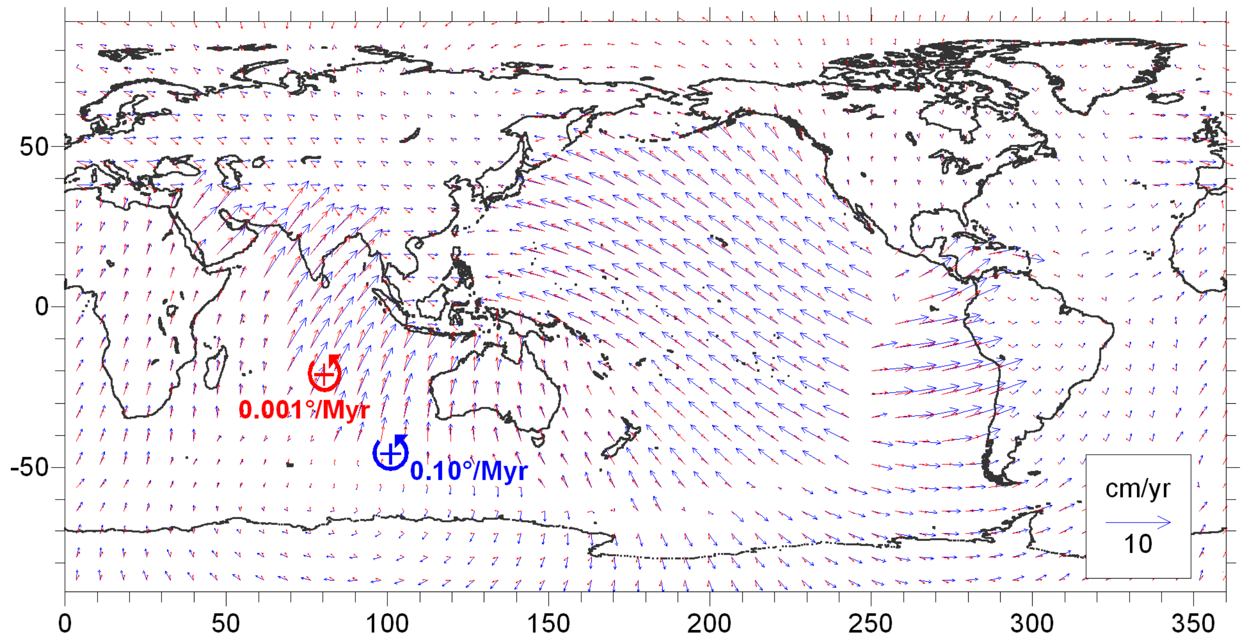
$$\text{Misfit}=\int \left\|\vec{v}_2-\vec{v}_1\right\| / \left\|\vec{v}_1\right\| dS = 0.19$$

Conclusion

Benchmark tests justify our hybrid-codes modeling approach and suggest that lateral viscosity variations **deeper than 300 km** may be ignored in modeling plate velocities

But what about lateral viscosity variations **shallower than 300 km?**

Radial UM viscosity vrs. 3D UM viscosity



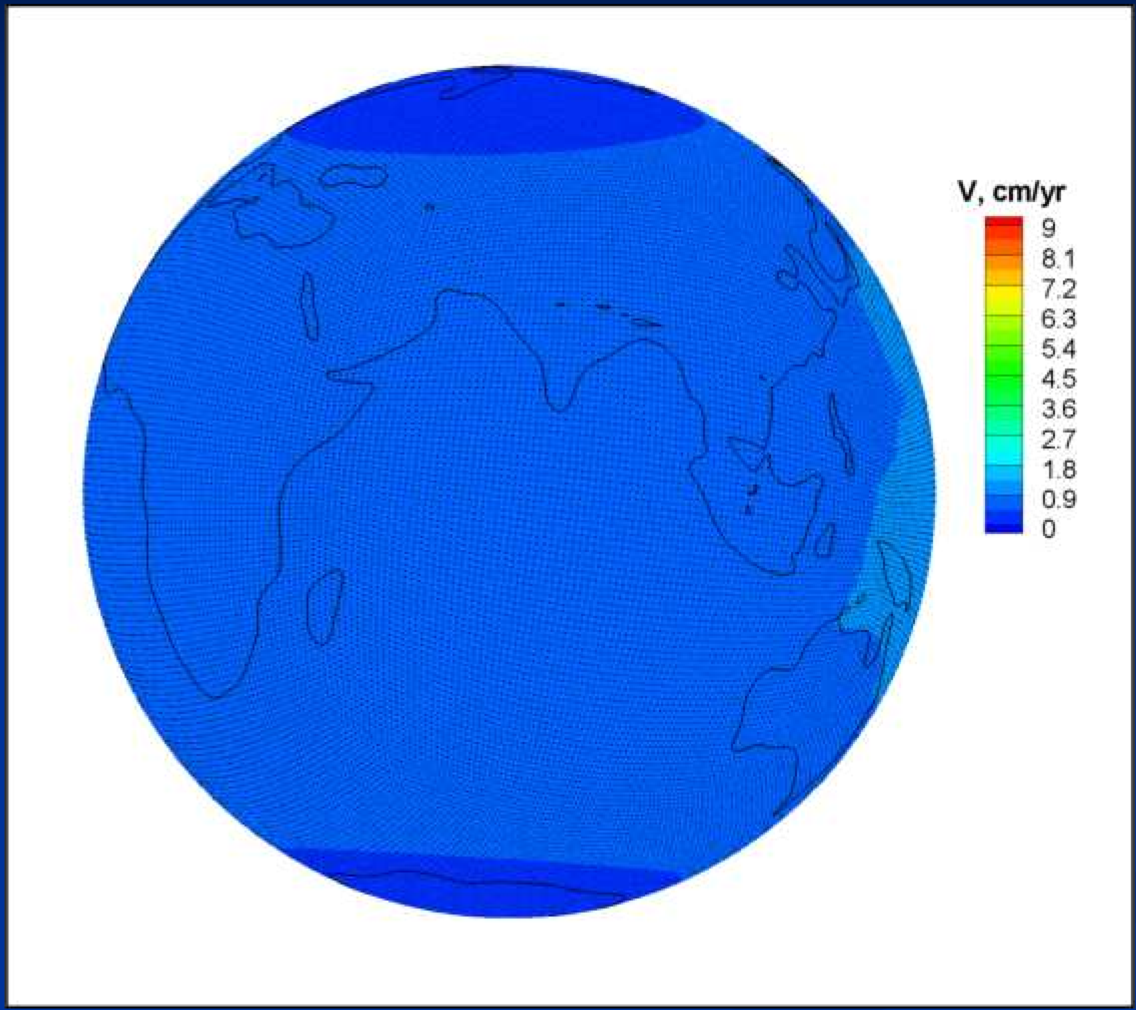
$$\text{Misfit} = \int \left\| \vec{v}_2 - \vec{v}_1 \right\| / \left\| \vec{v}_1 \right\| dS = 0.51$$

Conclusion

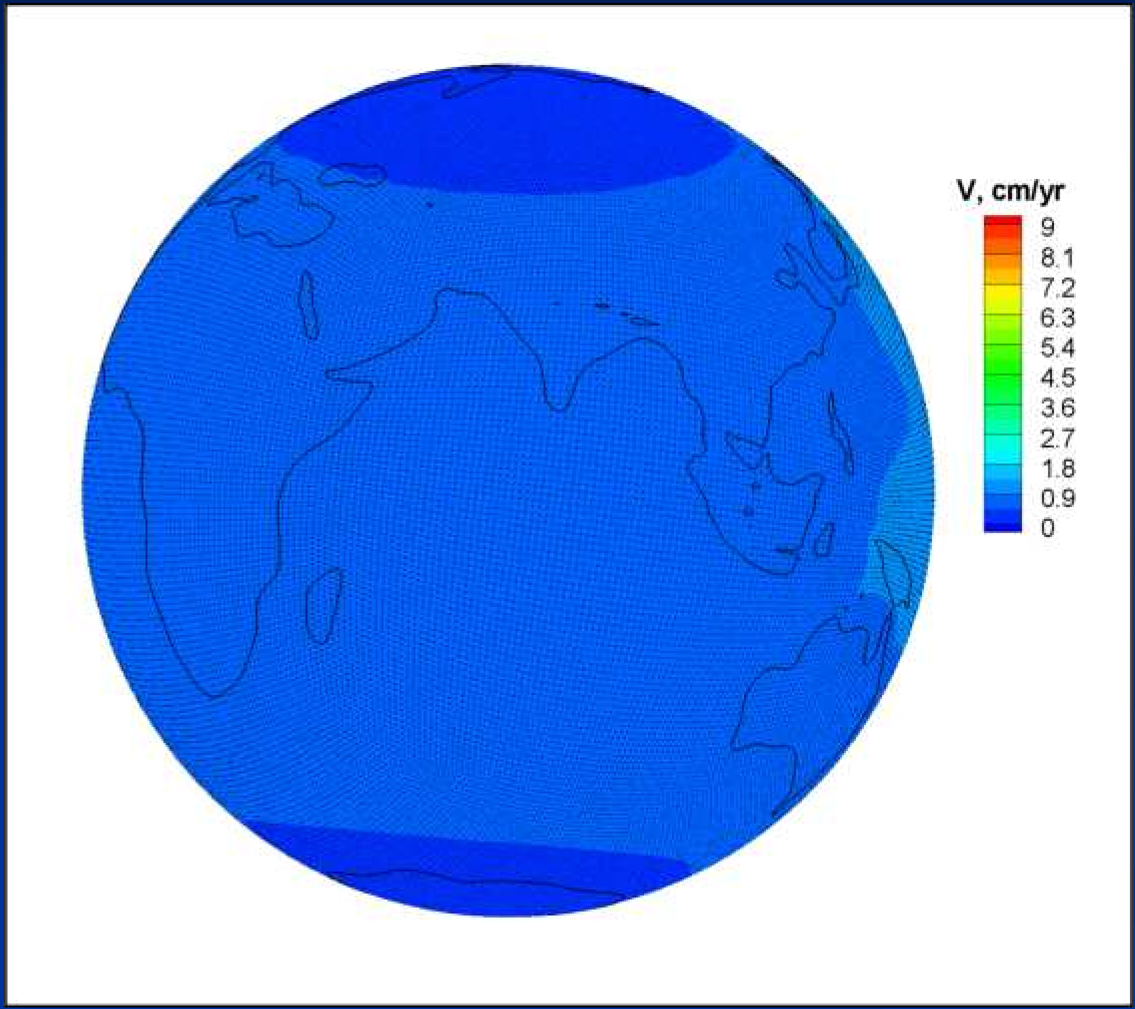
Lateral viscosity variations shallower than 300 km strongly affect magnitudes, but less directions of plate velocities

Effect of strength at plate boundaries

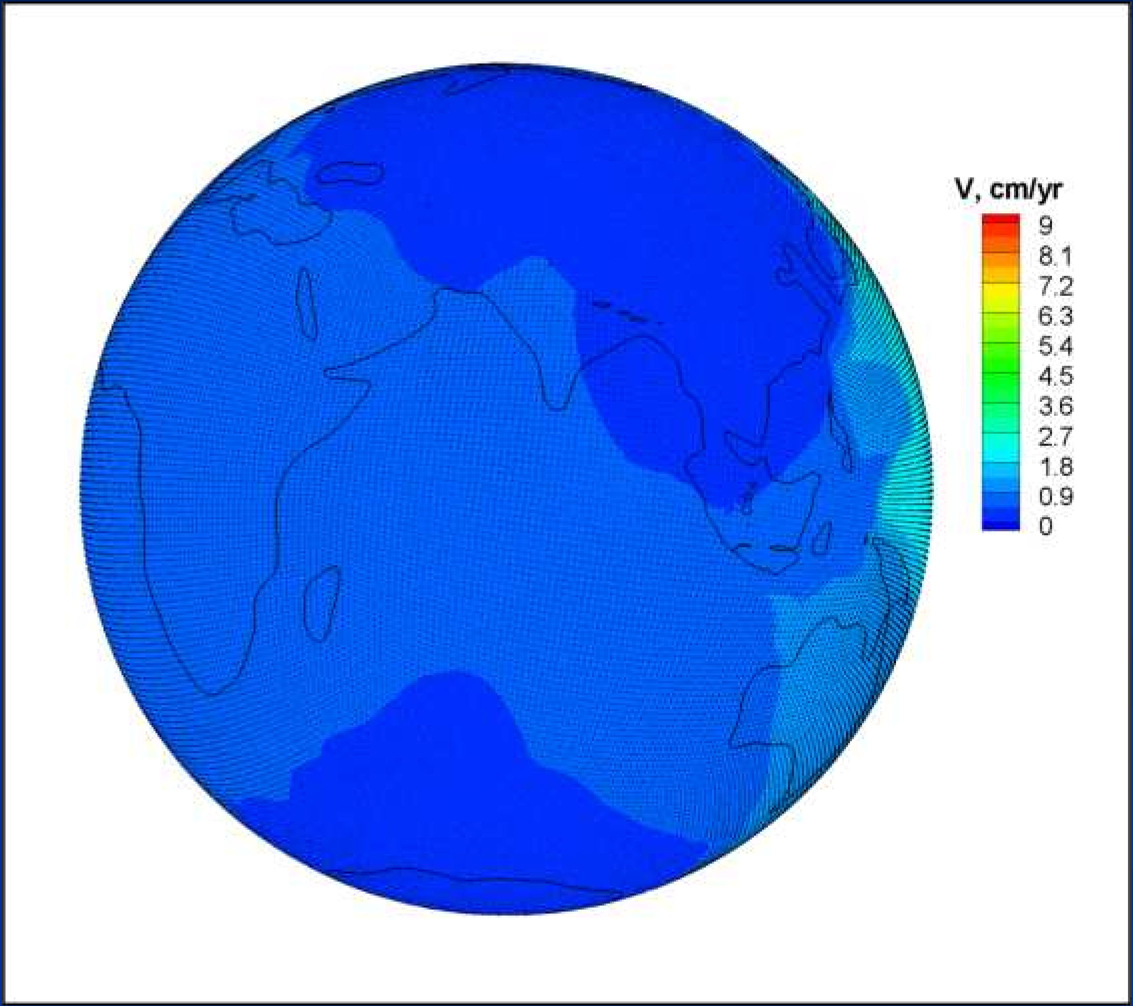
Friction at boundaries 0.4



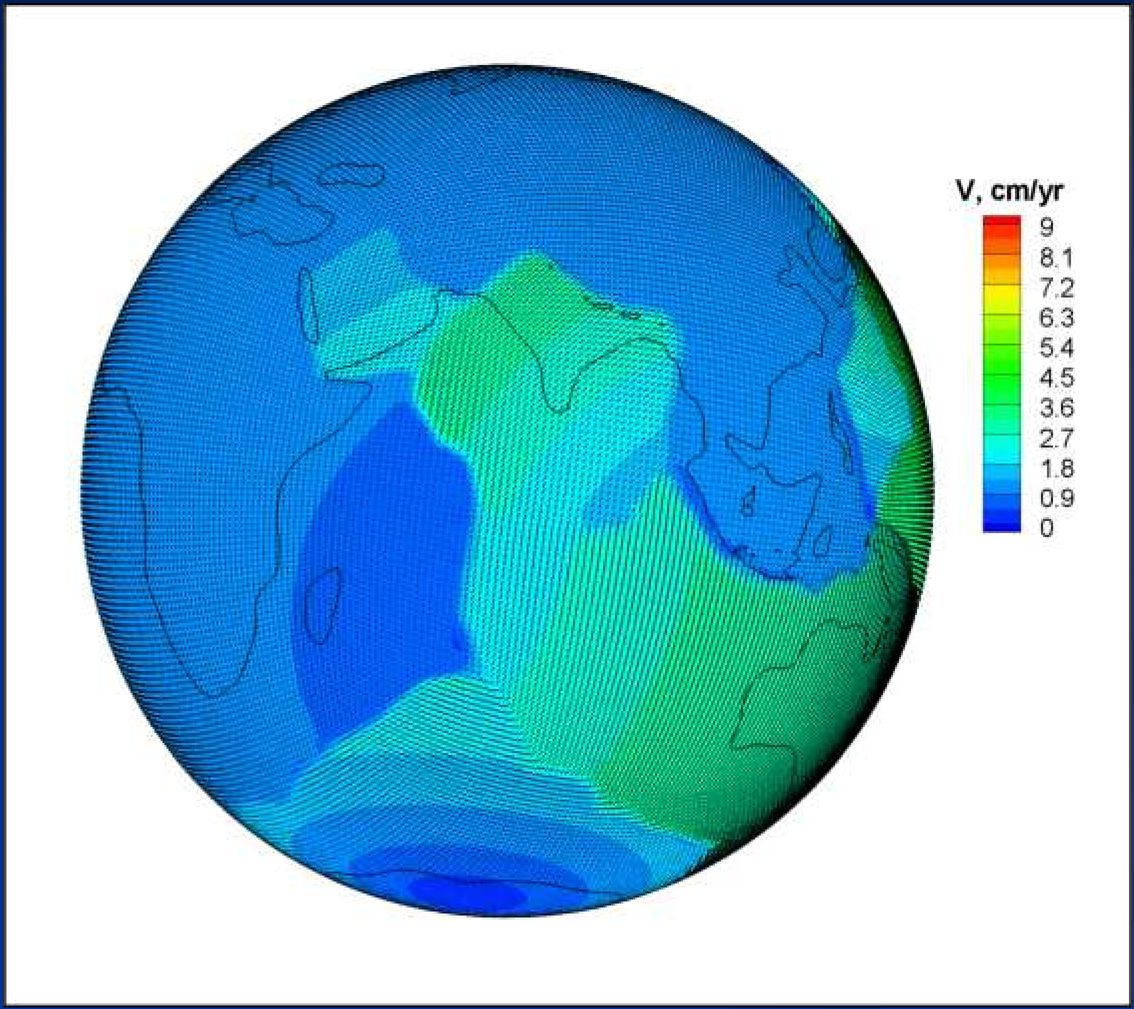
Friction at boundaries 0.2



Friction at boundaries 0.1

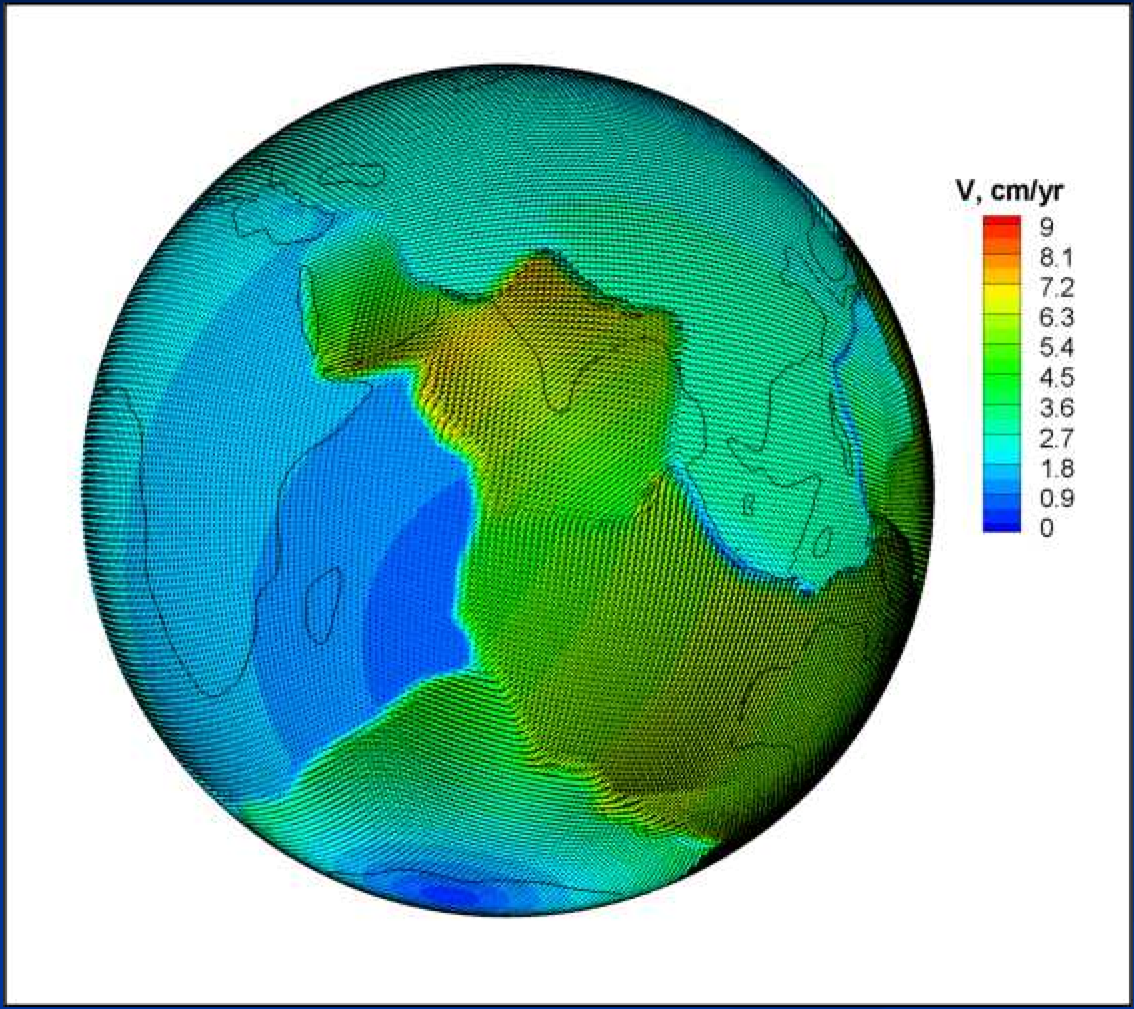


Friction at boundaries 0.05



too low velocities

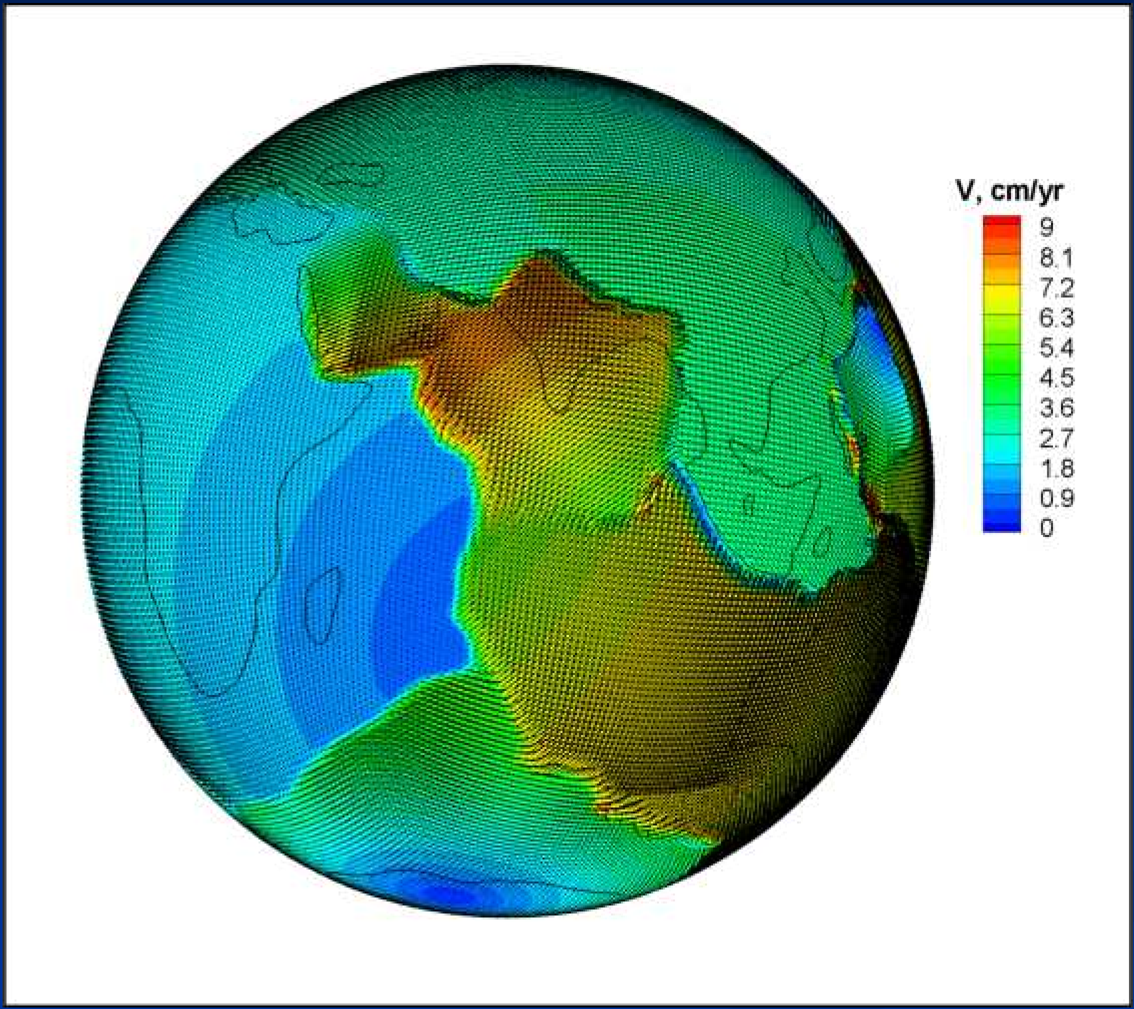
Friction at boundaries 0.02



about right magnitudes of velocities

Plates

Friction at boundaries 0.01

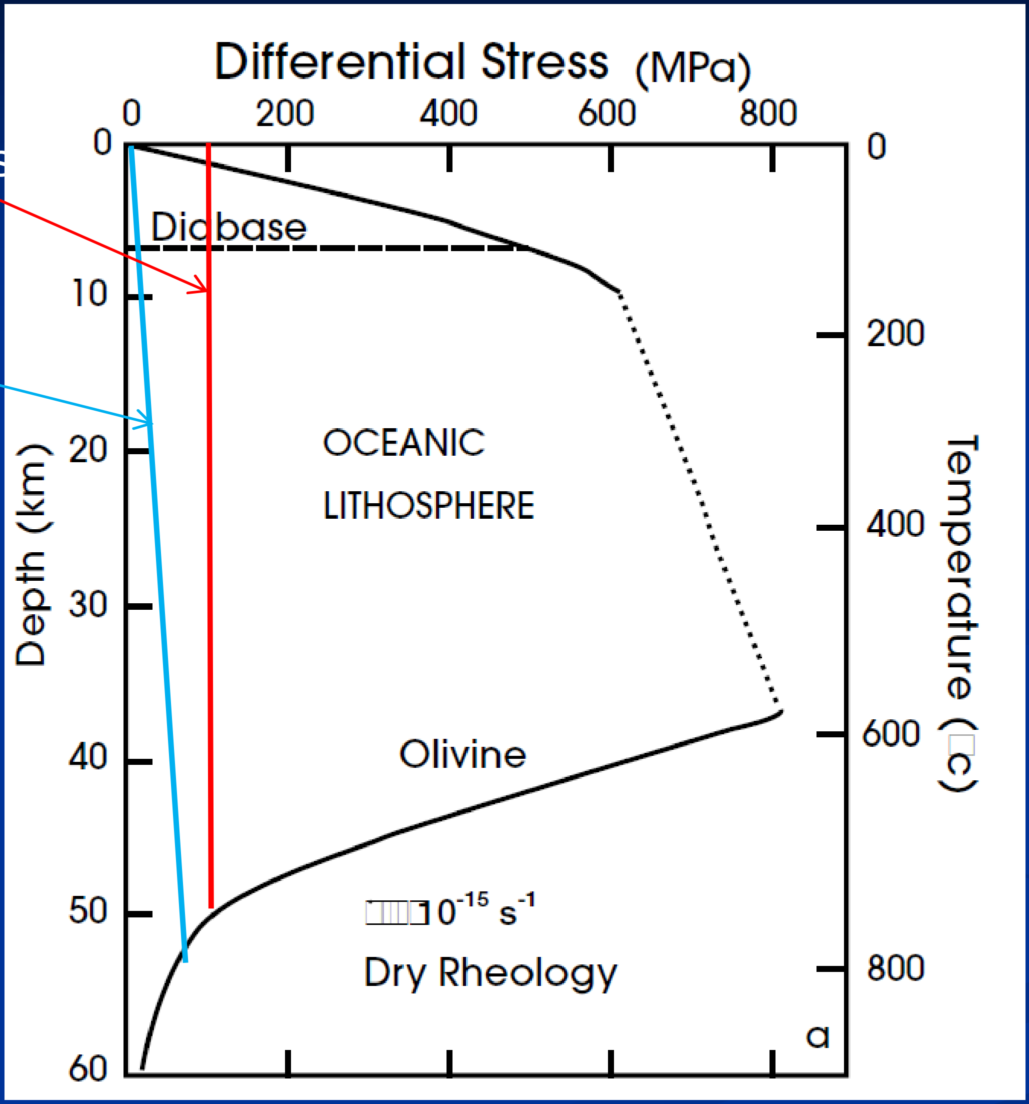


too high velocities

Weakness of the plate boundaries

Plate boundaries Tackley

Plate boundaries this work



Conclusion

Strength (friction) at plate boundaries strongly affect plate velocities and must be very low, much lower than measured for any dry rock

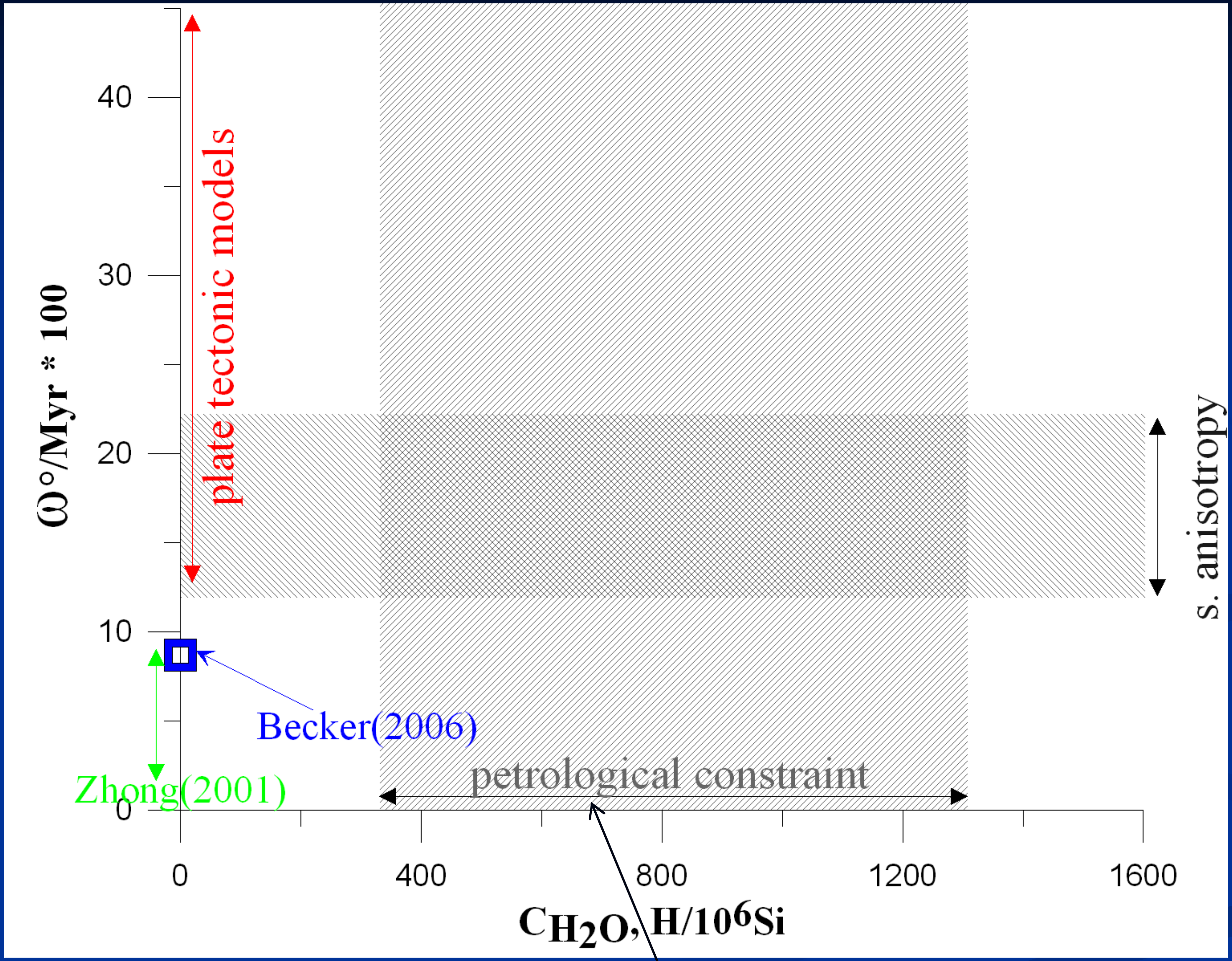
$$\mu_e = \mu \cdot (1 - P_{fl} / \sigma_n)$$

Modeling scheme

For every trial rheology (water content in asthenosphere) we calculate plate velocities for different frictions at plate boundaries, until we get best fit of observed plate velocities in the NNR reference frame

Next, we look how well those optimized models actually fit observations

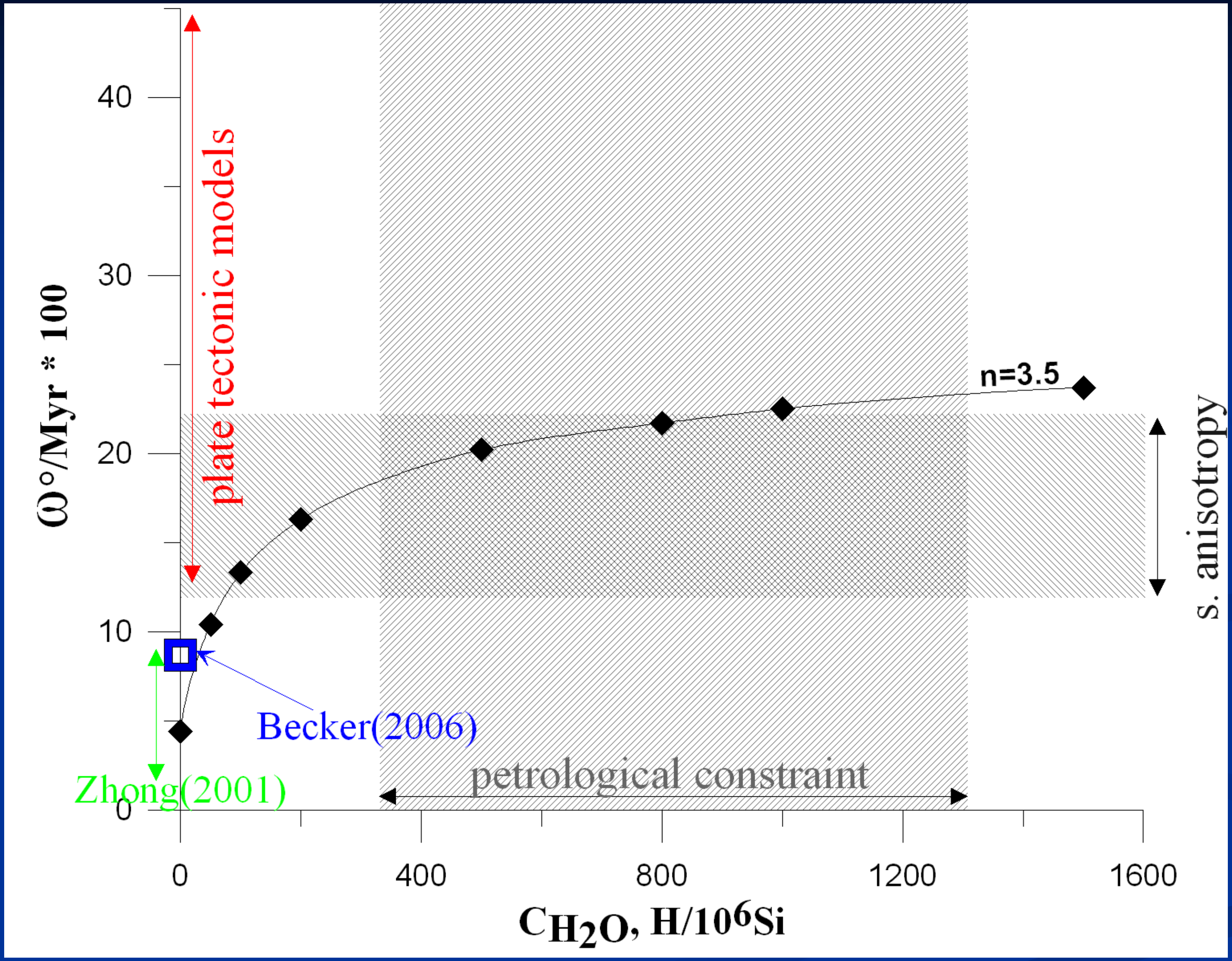
Lithospheric net rotation



Becker (2008)

Hirth and Kohlstedt (1996)

Lithospheric net rotation



Lithospheric net rotation

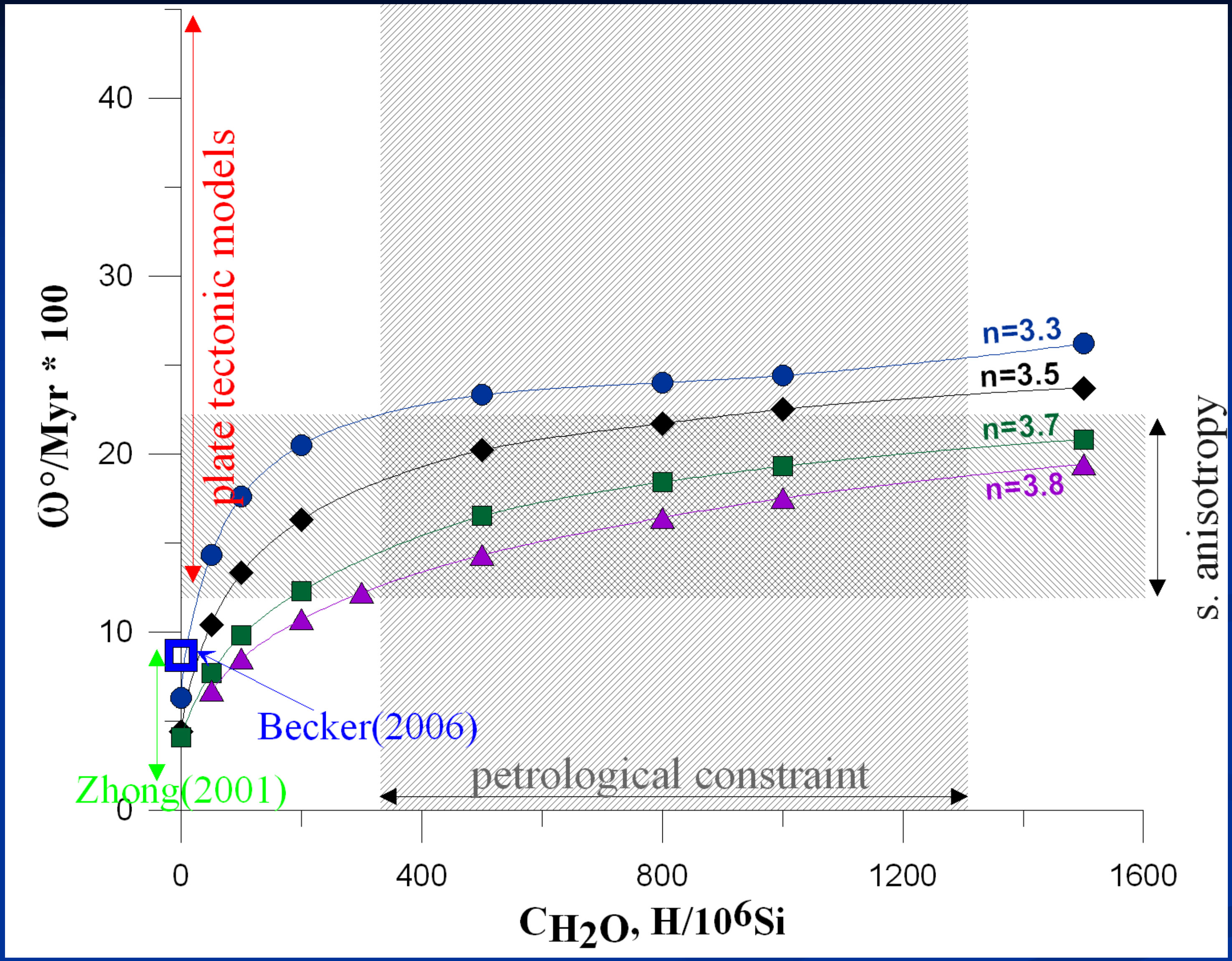
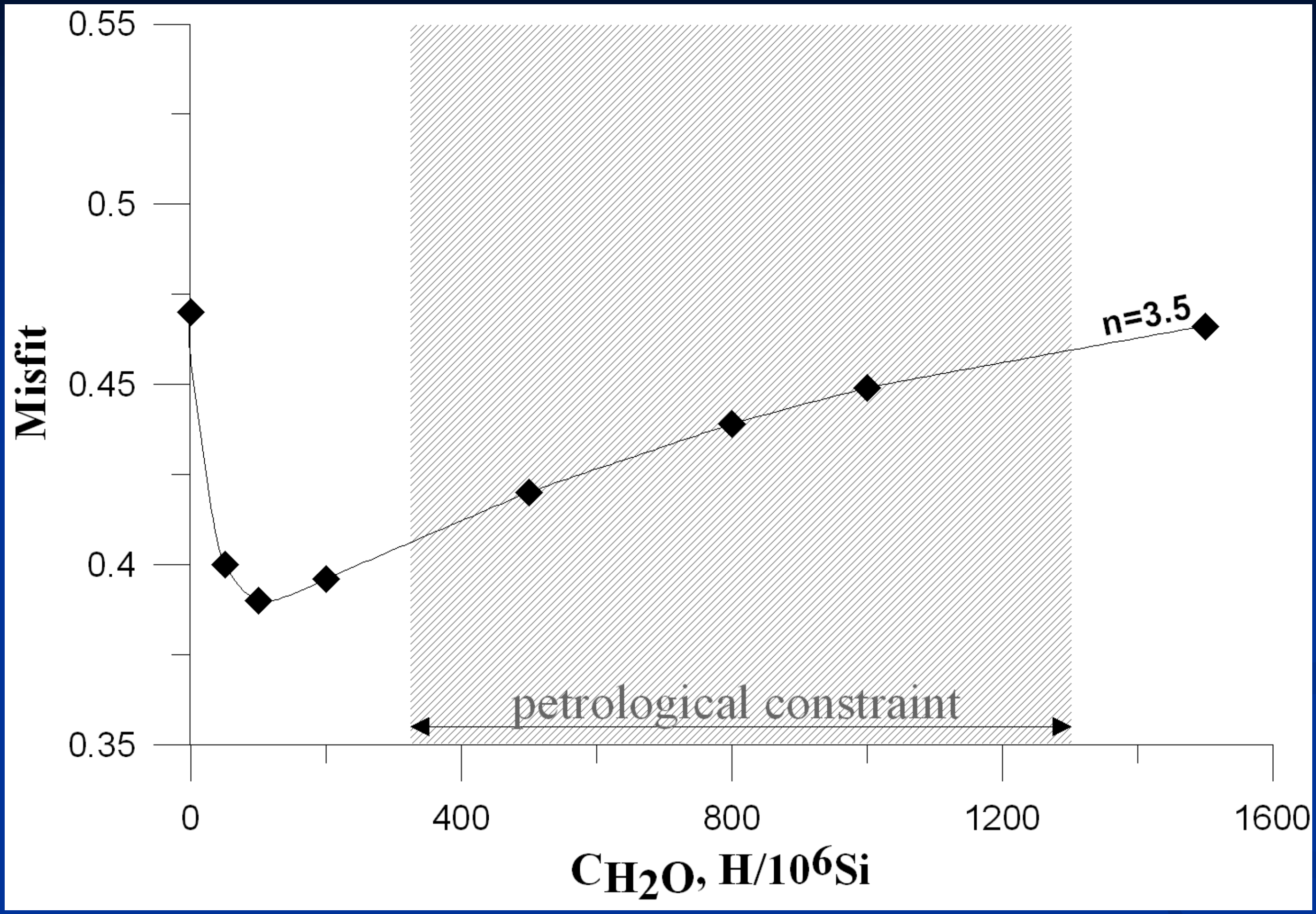
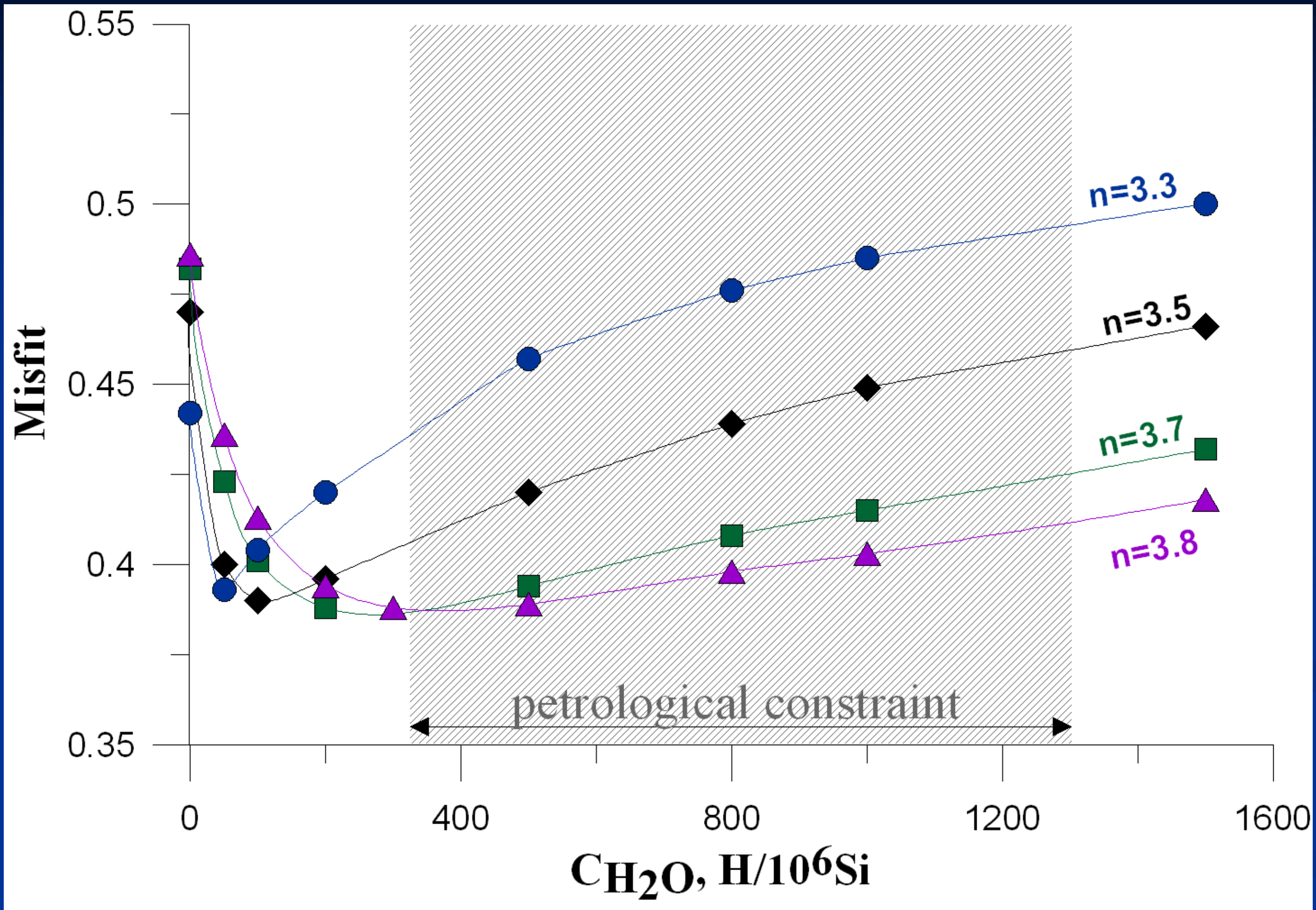


Plate-velocities misfit



$$\text{Misfit} = \int \left\| \vec{v}_2 - \vec{v}_1 \right\| / \left\| \vec{v}_1 \right\| dS$$

Plate-velocities misfit



$$\text{Misfit}=\int \left\| \vec{v}_2 - \vec{v}_1 \right\| / \left\| \vec{v}_1 \right\| dS$$

Plate velocities in NNR reference frame

Model

Tp=1300℃,

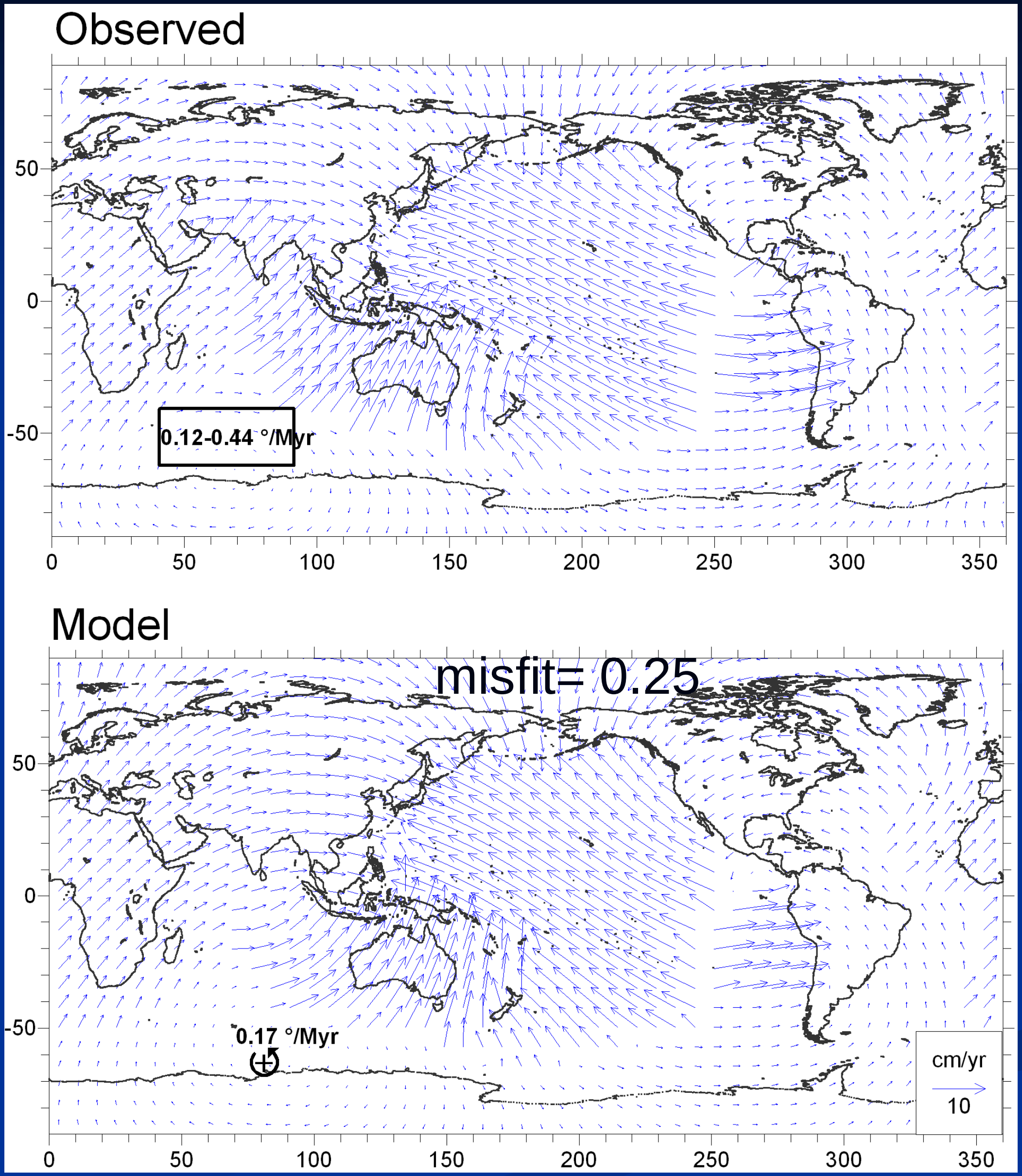
lith: dry olivine;

asth:1000 ppm H/Si in olivine, n=3.8

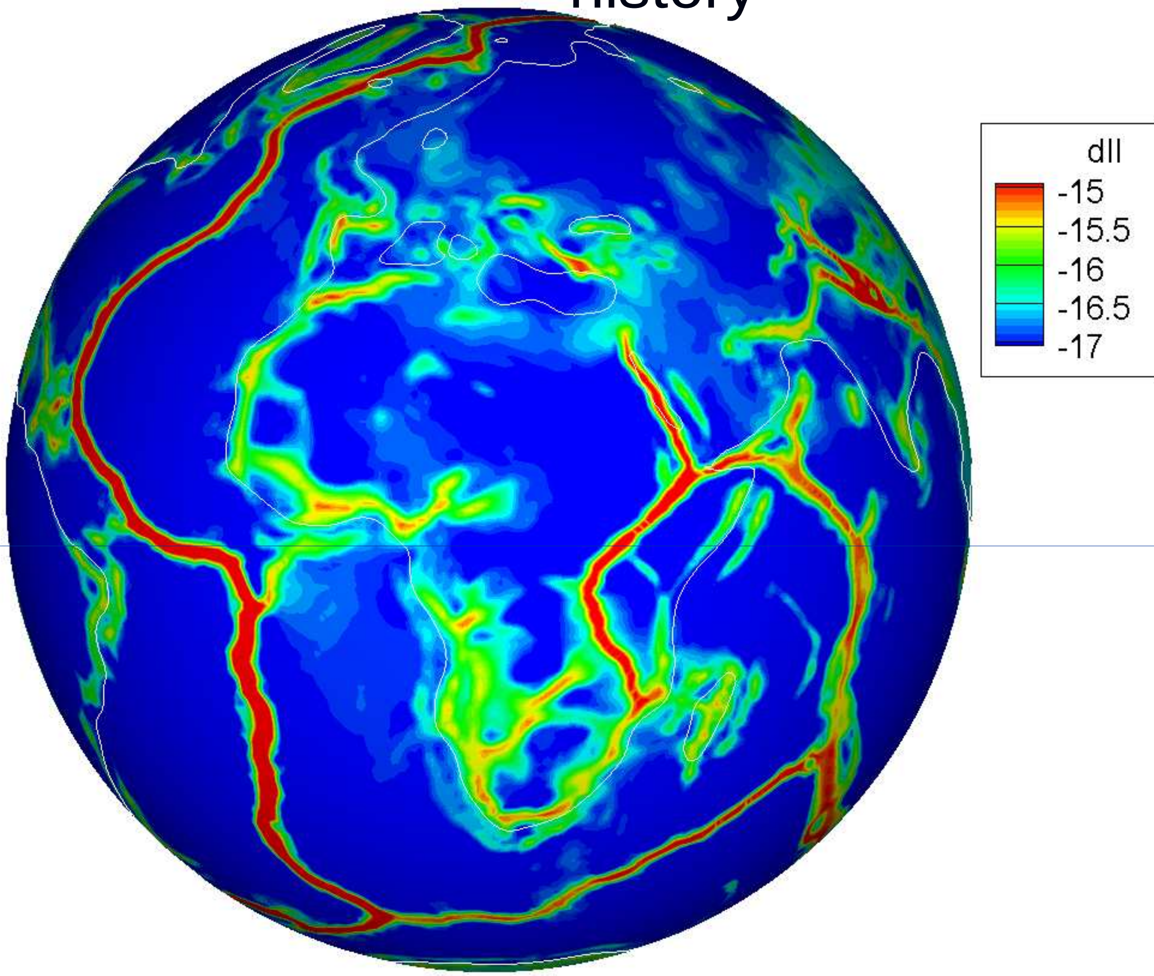
Plate bound. friction:

Subd. zones 0.01-0.03, other 0.05-0.15

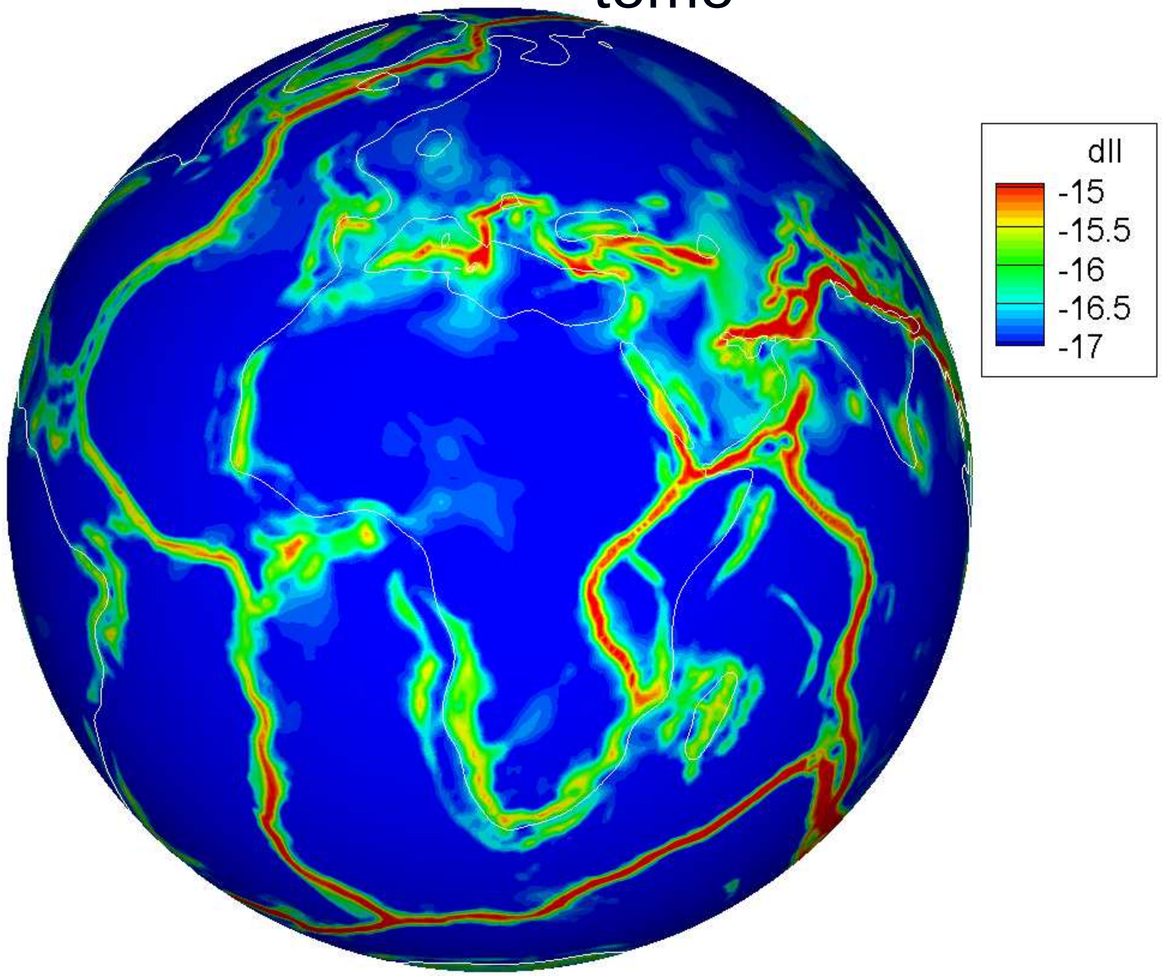
misfit=0.25 (0.36 previous best by Conrad and Lithgow-Bertelloni, 2004)



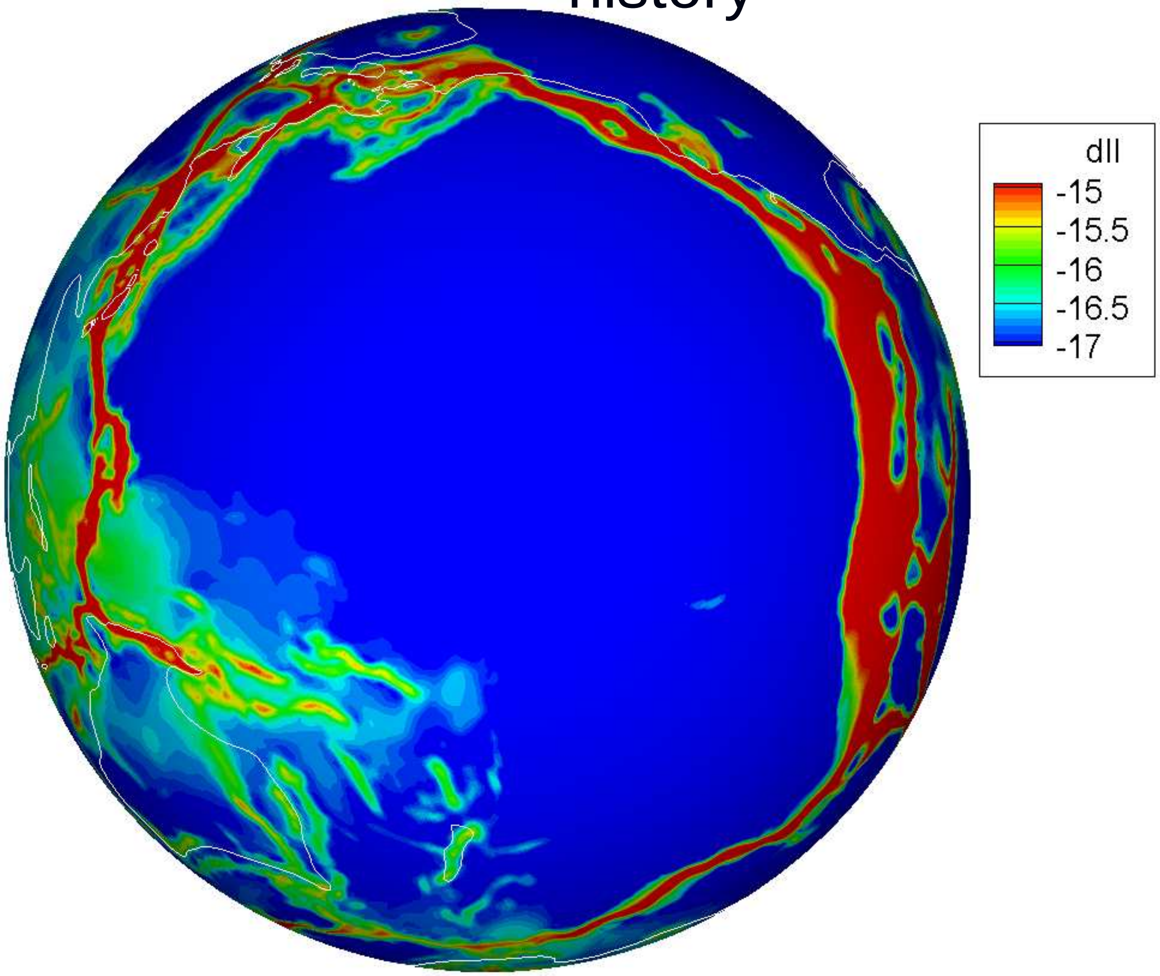
Making plate boundaries: density distr. from subd. history



Making plate boundaries: density distr. from smean tomo



Making plate boundaries: density distr. from subd. history



Conclusions

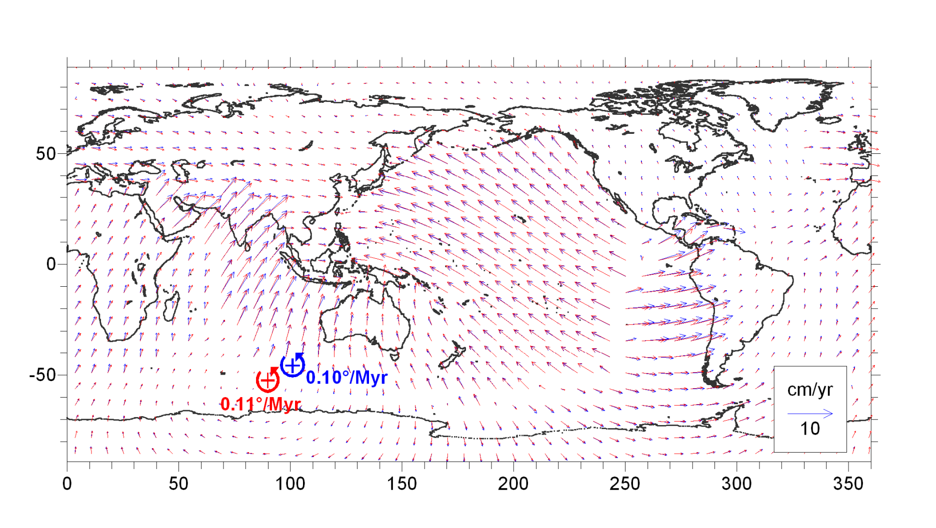
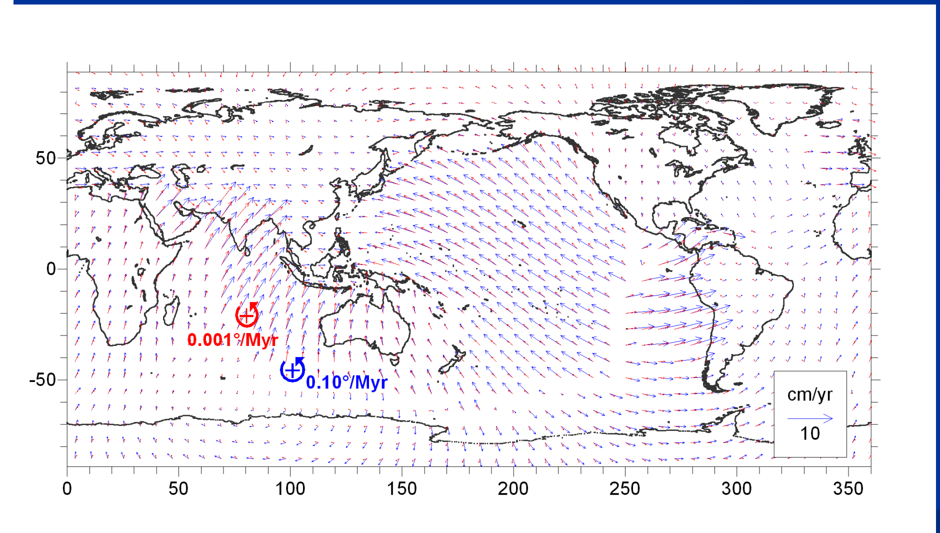
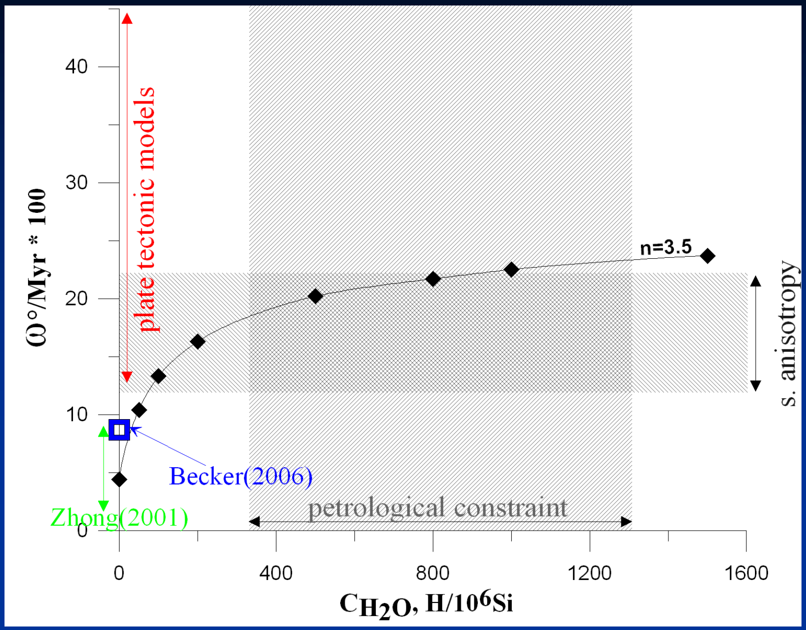


Plate velocities are not sensitive to the lateral viscosity variations deeper than 300 km

But their magnitudes are sensitive to the lateral viscosity variations shallower than 300 km

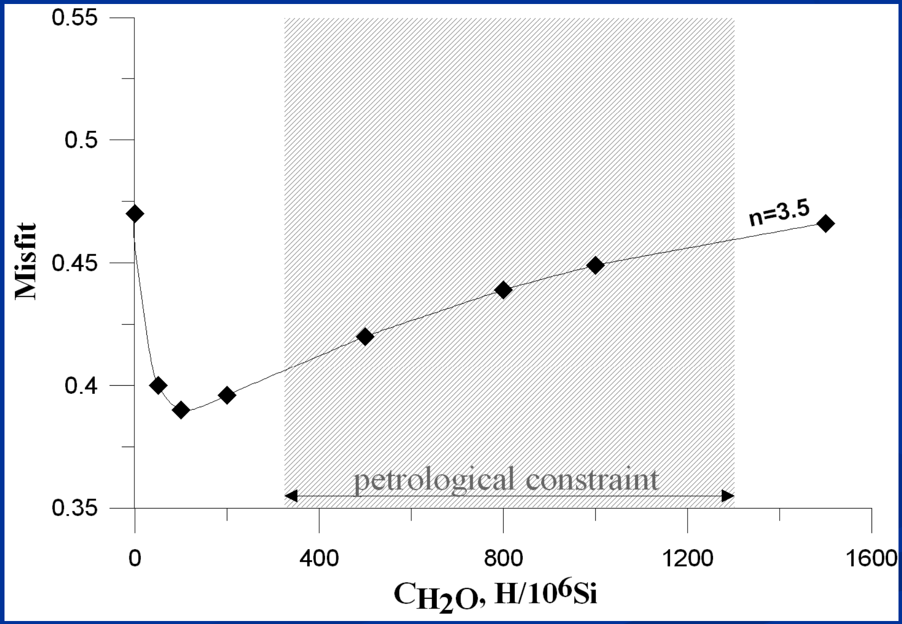


Conclusions

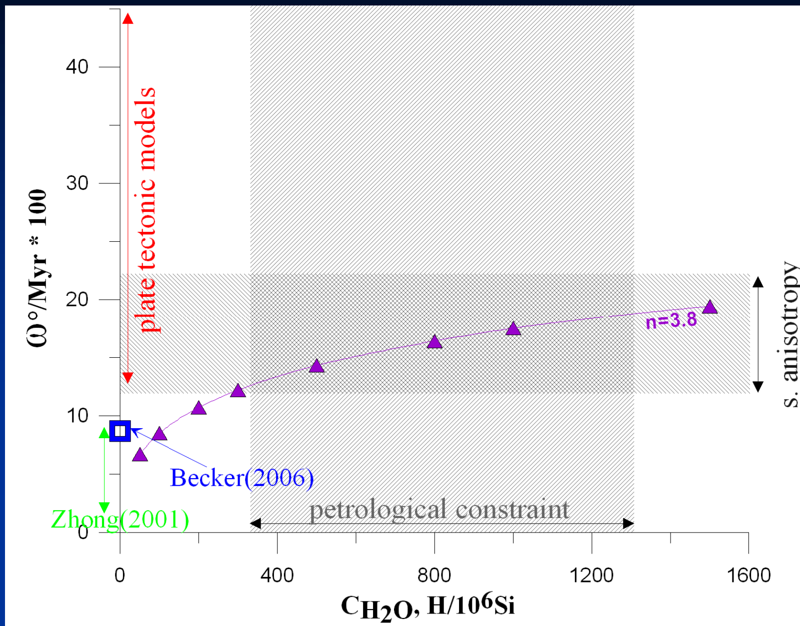


Magnitude of the lithospheric net rotation and quality of fit of plate velocities are sensitive to the water content of the asthenosphere

There is potential of estimating water content in the asthenosphere using plate velocities and net rotation

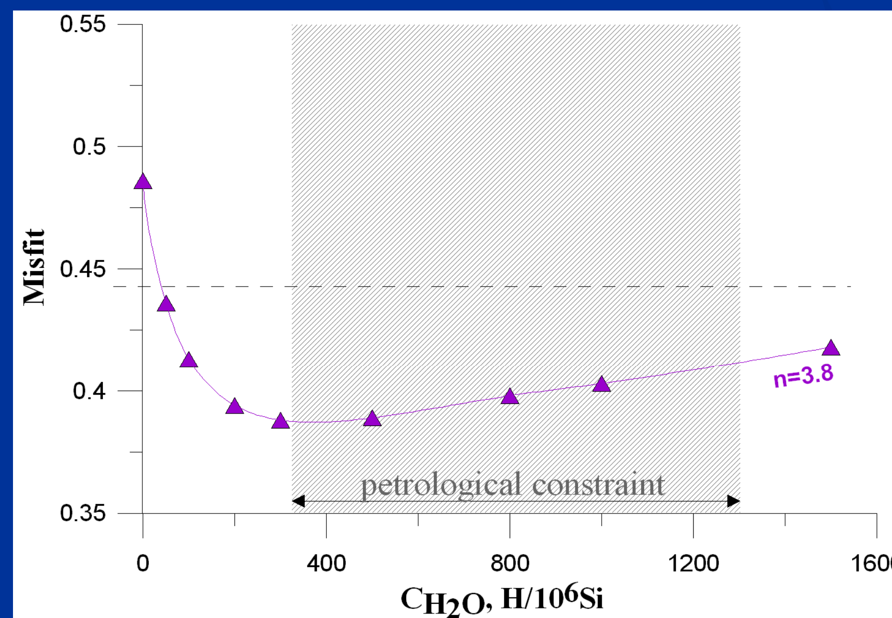


Conclusions



The current views on the rheology and water content in the upper mantle are consistent with the observed plate velocities

if the stress exponent *in wet olivine rheology and activation volume are* pushed to the highest experimentally allowed values of n=3.8, V=14 cc/mol



Conclusions

Distribution of dissipation rate

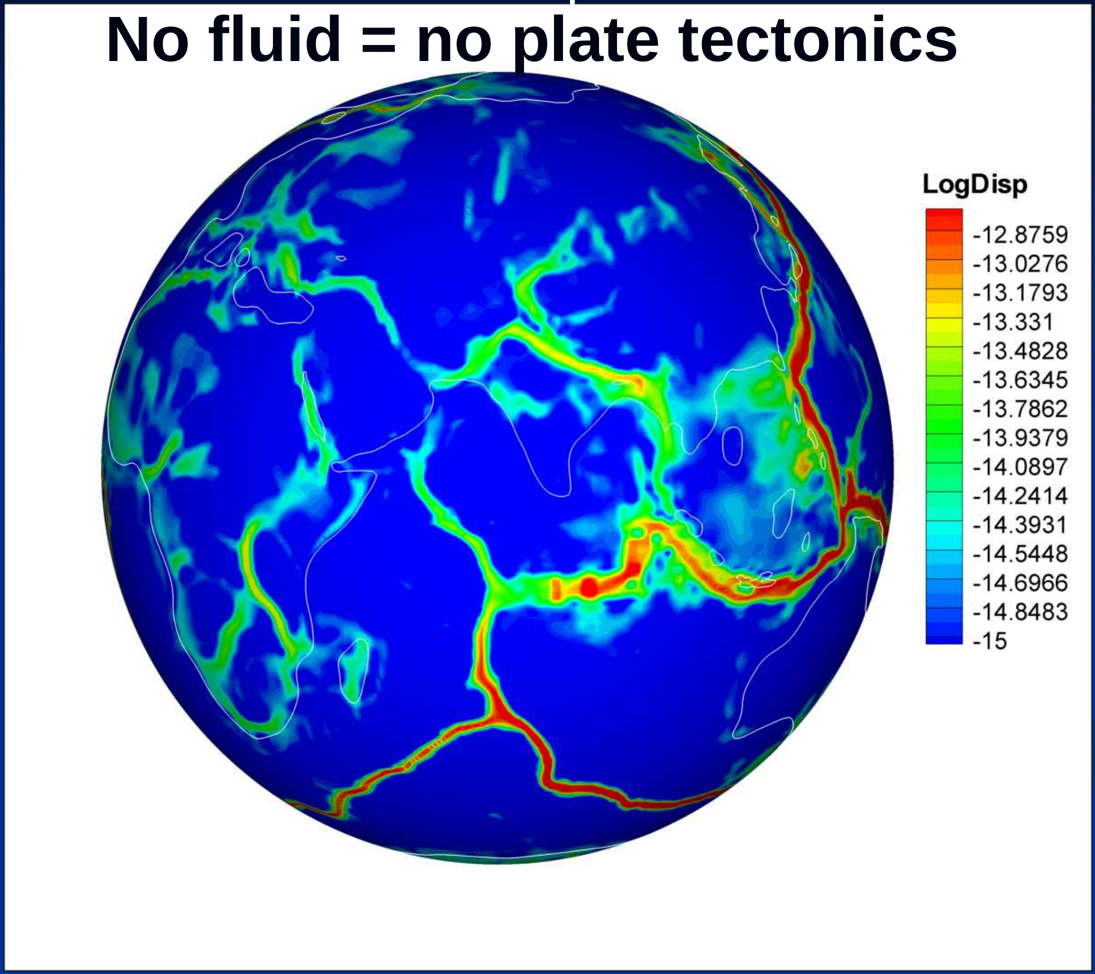
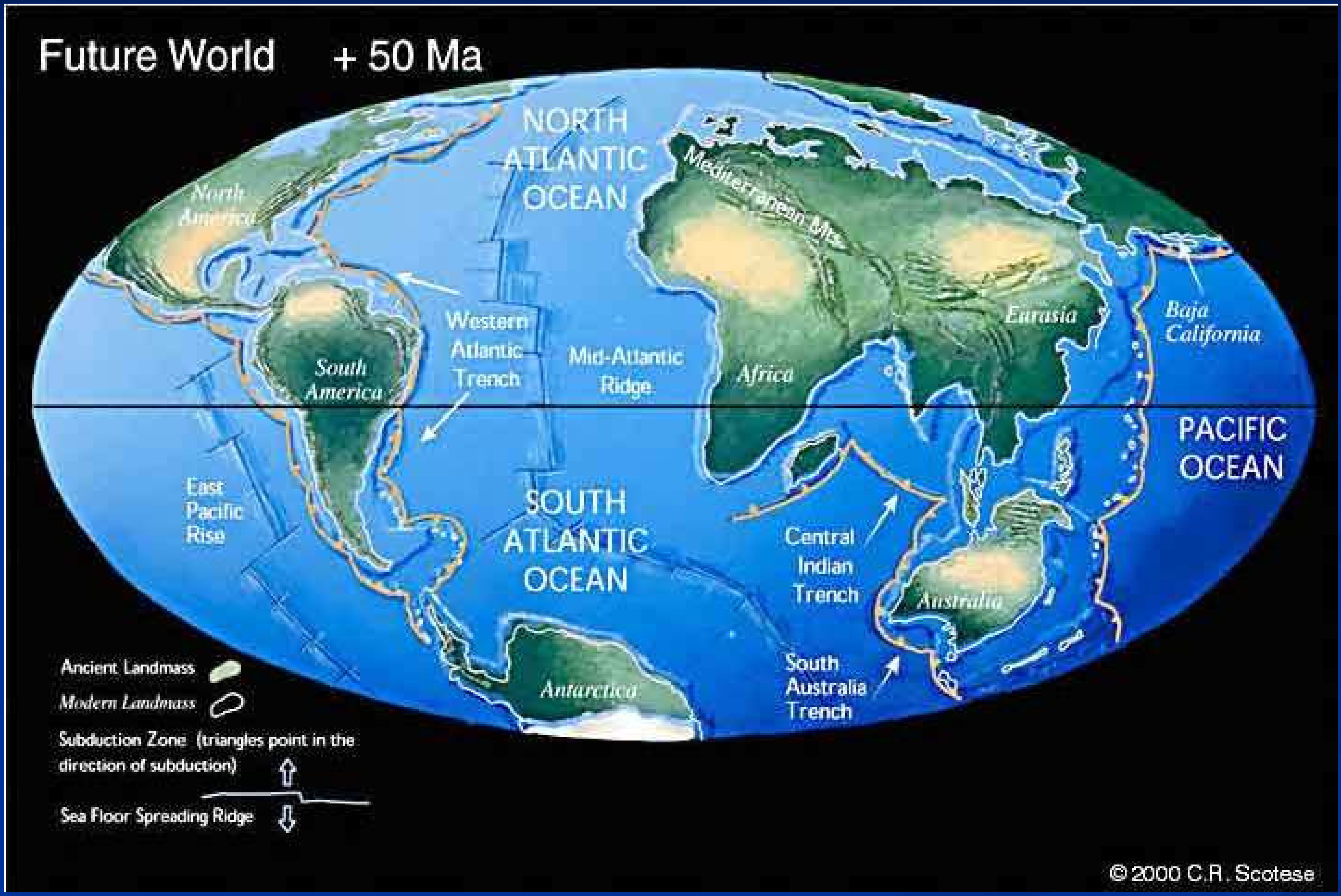


Plate boundaries must be very weak to allow for plate tectonics. Particularly, at subduction zones friction must be < 0.02 on average, just some 1/35 of the dry rock value.

That can be achieved only with high-pressure fluids in subduction channels.

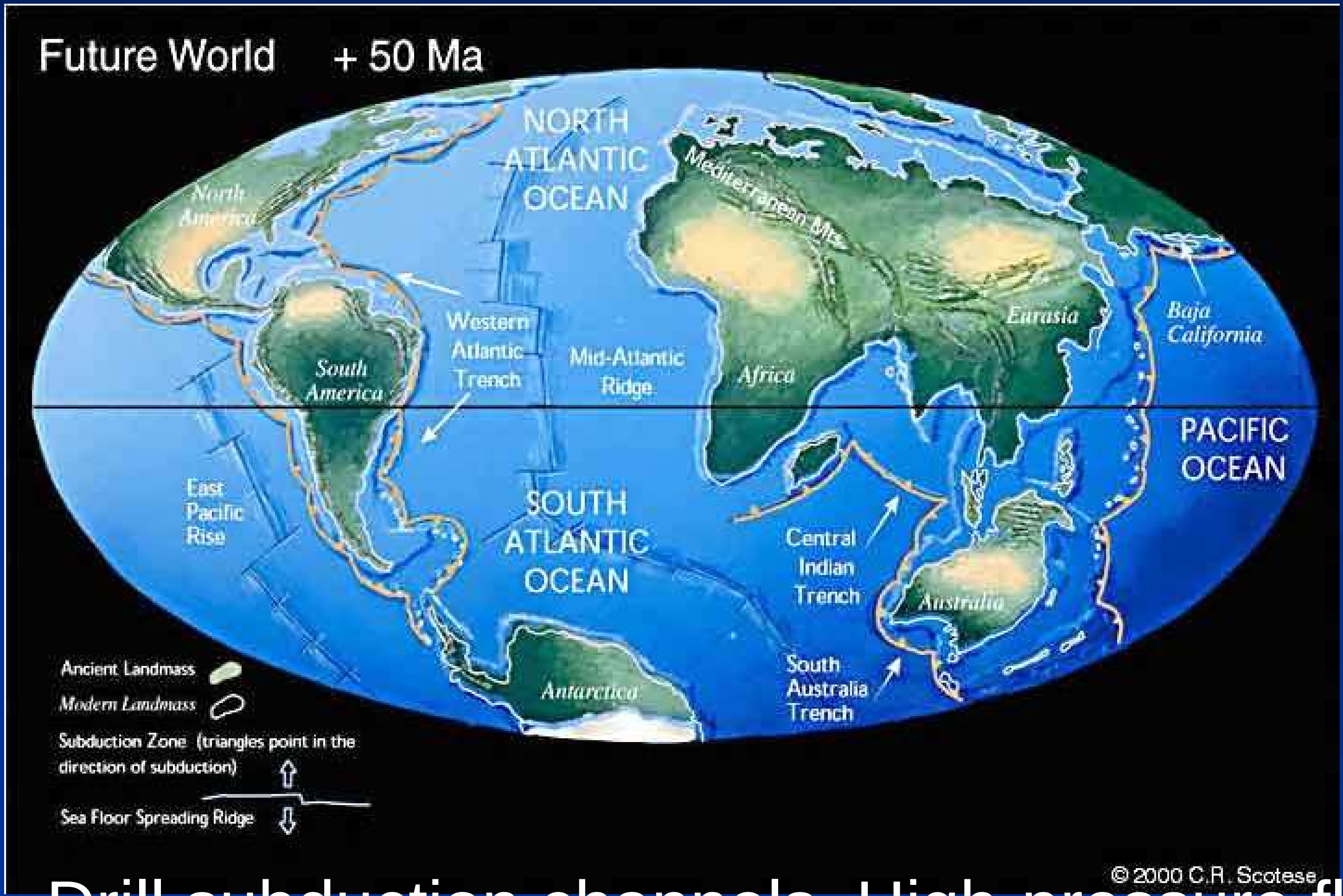
$$\mu_e = \mu \cdot (1 - P_{fl} / \sigma_n)$$

Question for students



How to stop plate tectonics on the Earth?

Question for students



Drill subduction channels. High-pressure fluid will come out and plate tectonics will stop