Variations in Earth's 1D viscosity structure in different tectonic regimes

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Key Points:

- Distinct regional 1D viscosity structures of the Pacific and Atlantic tectonic mantles
- Subducted oceanic crust with slabs affect strong viscosity interface in the transition zone
- Slabs dehydration from ancient subduction in the Atlantic mantle suggests low viscosity upper mantle

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Abstract

Past estimates of Earth's mantle viscosity profile using the long-wavelength geoid suggest an increase in viscosity from the upper to lower mantle of roughly 2-3 orders of magnitude. We use a spatio-spectral localization technique with the geoid to estimate a series of locally constrained viscosity profiles covering two unique regions, the Pacific and Atlantic hemispheres. The Pacific region exhibits the conventional Earth's 1D rheology with a factor of roughly 80-100 increase in viscosity occurring at transition zone depths. The Atlantic region in contrast does not show significant viscosity jumps with depth, and instead has a near uniform viscosity in the top 1000 km. Our inferred viscosity variations between the two regions could be due to the prevalence of present-day subduction in the Pacific region and the relative infrequence of slabs in the Atlantic, combined with a possible hydrated transition zone and mid-mantle in the Atlantic region by ancient subduction.

Plain Language Summary

The surface and internal structures of Earth move on a time scale of tens to hundreds of million years. The slow motion of continents as shown by satellite observations is dependent on the viscosity of Earth's interior. We use mathematical methods and computer simulations to study viscosity/strength as a function of depth in two regions: the Pacific and Atlantic hemispheres. Our calculations show that the Pacific region of Earth's interior is relatively stronger than the Atlantic region. We interpret these differences as the results of the spatial distribution of subduction, where oceanic lithosphere is recycled into mantle.

1 Introduction

The viscosity of Earth's mantle is fundamental to the operation of convection and plate tectonics, and as a result, it has been extensively studied over the past several decades. Many studies have used the long wavelength (l = 2–3) geoid and mantle flow calculations to explore the radial viscosity and density structures of the mantle (Hager, 1984; M. A. Richards & Hager, 1984; Forte et al., 1994; Panasyuk & Hager, 2000; Steinberger & Calderwood, 2006; Forte et al., 2013). Hager and Richards et al.(Hager & Richards, 1989) showed that about 90% of the observed long-wavelength geoid signal can be explained with a model based on flow driven by seismically derived mantle density. The geoid together with other geophysical processes (post-glacier rebound (Mitrovica & Peltier, 1991; Lau et al., 2016, 2018), dynamic uplift (Kiefer & Hager, 1992), plate motions (Osei Tutu et al., 2018), etc.) have been used to constrain both the relative and absolute viscosities of the mantle.

Most inferences of Earth's long-wavelength mantle viscosity structure rely on a spherically symmetric representation of viscosity [radial variation only] (Richards & Hager, 1988). This assumption permits a regional constrained viscosity-depth profile to be extended and applied over the entire globe. For example, authors have solved for the depth-dependent viscosity structure based on a regional waxing and waning of ice sheets in the past 20,000 years (Peltier, 1996). Such regionally constrained viscosity profiles may at best be representative of the local viscosity-depth variations beneath the glaciated area and immediate surroundings (M. Simons & Hager, 1997), and perhaps not applicable to other areas of the globe.

Here we use a new method to develop the new large-scale regional estimates of the mantle's long-wavelength radial viscosity structure using Earth's static geoid. These estimates illustrate how strong regional mantle heterogeneities (or lack thereof) influence the regional radial viscosity structure. We employ a spatio-spectral localization technique (Slepian basis functions – see Method and data) to study any potential differences that may exist between global and regionally constrained radial viscosity structures. We use a Bayesian inversion approach to solve for local mantle viscosity profiles in two unique regions of the present-day mantle. The first region covers the circum-Pacific, encompassing most of the present-day active subduction systems in and around the Pacific plate (fig. 1a). The second region covers an area with predominately less active or recently active subduction zones centered in the Atlantic-Africa hemisphere. Compared to Kido et al. (1998), we demarcate the mantle into two parts considering slabs locations. Kido et al. (1998) applied genetic algorithm to infer local viscosity considering continental and oceanic mantle regions.

The regional viscosity inversion is used to highlight the importance of local mantle heterogeneities, such as subduction, slabs and other regional geodynamic processes, to mantle radial viscosity characteristics. Large-scale mantle flow studies generally invoke subducted slab structure and rheology to explain lateral viscosity variations (Ghosh et al., 2010; Zhong & Davies, 1999). There is no established relation on the plausible influence of slabs rheology to the radial mantle viscosity structure. Slabs seen in seismic tomography models occupy a low volume of the overall mantle. Rigid slab remnants are mainly concentrated in the upper mantle and the uppermost lower mantle where they make up a relatively larger volume (Christensen, 1988; Fukao et al., 2001; Hayes et al., 2018). The complexity of slabs geometry with the different styles and stages of subduction (Fukao et al., 2001), concentrated in specific regions and depths of the mantle (fig. 1a and Supplementary Information fig. S1b), may suggest local radial viscosity profiles that are unique to regions of the mantle. Mantle viscosity is known to be dependent on both chemical (e.g., major mineral assemblage such as Ferropericlase and Bridgmanite) and physical (e.g., temperature, pressure, deformation mechanism, strain rate, grain size) properties.

2 Method and data

We focus on regional constraints of Earth's 1D viscosity structure in two tectonic regimes, using a convective geoid model based on seismic and slab density models. We analyzed the geoid data in the spectral ranges $l = 2$ to 3 (long-wavelengths) and $l =$ 4 to 9 (intermediate wavelengths). The intermediate range (i.e. $l = 4$–9) of the geoid has been shown to be more sensitive to density variations due to subducted slabs (Hager, 1984), whereas the long wavelength geoid ($l = 2$–3) is sensitivity to lower mantle density structure.

We use local geoid kernels based on Slepian basis functions (Wieczorek & Simons, 2005) for the regional viscosity inversions. In most regional geophysical data analysis based on global data, one of the important issues that often needs further consideration is spectral leakage and/or contamination of the data signal in the region of interest (Wieczorek & Simons, 2005). In our case, it is very important to understand the extent of depth contributions from the local mantle heterogeneities, and explicitly seek to minimize any leakages with respect to depth and lateral influences. For example, considering an iso-viscous mantle, we can test the local sensitivity kernels (L=1-30 in FigS. 1e and L =1-9 in Fig.1b main text) for sensitivity to a sub-surface anomaly in a location of the mantle to show the robustness of our method at depth and lateral extent for different bandwidths.

Local and global geoid kernels: Forward modeling

We constrain local mantle viscosity and density structure for two unique regions (i.e., Pacific and Atlantic hemispheres) using a Bayesian probabilistic inversion with local non-hydrostatic geoid data. We analyze the geoid data in the spectral ranges $l =$ 2 to 3 and $l = 4$ to 9.

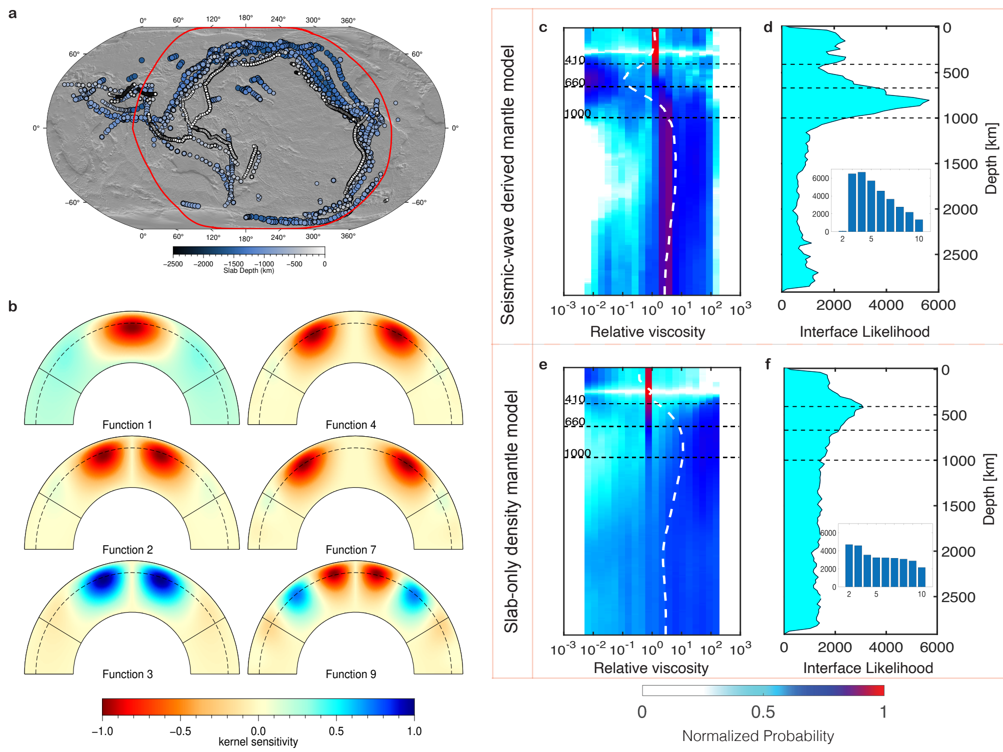

Figure 1. a) An outline (red line) of our Pacific region for the local constrain layered mantle viscosity inversions showing locations and depths of present-day slabs distribution (Lithgow-Bertelloni & Richards, 1998) in the mantle. b) Local sensitivity dynamic geoid kernels with an iso-viscous mantle. Shown is a cross-section along 0° and 180° in the northern hemisphere from the surface to the core mantle boundary. The kernels have azimuthal dependence and as such will have different manifestations at different azimuths. The kernels are localized to a 50° spherical cap, denoted by black lines connecting the surface to the core mantle boundary and the dash lines show the 670 km depth. The bandwidth of the basis is $l = 9$. Functions are ranked by concentration within the region, and shown are functions 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, and 9. Here the kernels are normalized by their maximum absolute value. The kernels can be localized in both regular and irregular (red outline) spherical caps. c) Layered mantle viscosity solutions from global large-scale mantle flow for spherical harmonics degrees $l = 2$ to 3 using a seismically-derived mantle model (French & Romanowicz, 2015) (c-d) with constant scaling and plate reconstruction slab-only mantle model (Steinberger, 2000) (e-f). Panels **c** and **e** show 2D histograms of the posterior probability distributions of viscosity with depths expressed as normalized probability and the white dash lines giving the mean relative viscosity profiles. Panels **d** and **f** show resulting mantle-viscosity interfaces distribution with the corresponding inset histograms giving the number of layers for each solution.

The spectral synthesis of regional geophysical signals from global spherical harmonics coefficients over a local region is often done using a localization technique such as radial basis functions, wavelets (Schmidt et al., 2007), or point masses (Baur & Sneeuw, 2011). Here we use Slepian basis functions (Wieczorek & Simons, 2005) to examine the local geoid in our regions. A number of previous studies have employed Slepian localization analysis, for example, to map Greenland Ice mass balance (e.g., Harig & Simons, 2012; Bevis et al., 2019) or to study earthquake gravitational changes from the GRACE gravity data (e.g., Han & Simons, 2008). Each Slepian basis function constitutes a linear combination of the spherical harmonics on a sphere, with the specific combination determined by an optimization over the local region of interest. A detailed formulation can be found in Wieczorek and Simons (2005) and F. J. Simons et al. (2006) with a practical treatment presented in F. J. Simons (2010).

Our localization procedure combines Slepian basis functions with the non-linear Green's response functions (known as geoid kernels) $\mathcal{G}^l(r, \eta(r))$ representing the dynamic contribution of Earth's mantle to the anomalous geoid at the surface. The global dynamic geoid anomaly is calculated as

$$\delta V_{lm}(\mathbf{S}) = \frac{4\pi GS}{2l+1} \int_c^S \mathcal{G}^l(r, \eta(r)) \delta\rho_{lm}(r) dr \tag{1}$$

where G is the gravitational constant, and l and m are the spherical harmonic degree and order respectively. r denotes the mantle radius between the surface (S) and the core mantle boundary (c). We perform a Bayesian inversion (see Supplementary Information) during which each Markov-chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) step, the proposed relative viscosity structure η is used to derive the geoid response function, which is convolved with the mantle lateral density heterogeneities $\delta\rho_{lm}(r)$ in spherical harmonics to synthesize the global geoid anomaly signal in spectral domain ($\delta V_{lm}(\mathbf{R})$).

To build our Slepian basis (and examine the local geoid signal) we use the outline of the local region of interest R, for example the red outlines in fig. 1a for our Pacific region (see Supplementary Information Fig. S2 and Fig. S3 for Pacific and Atlantic regions) to integrate the products of the spherical harmonics $Y_{lm}(r)$ as

$$\int\limits_R Y_{lm} Y_{l'm'} d\Omega = D_{lm,l'm'}. \tag{2}$$

The 'localization kernel' $\mathbf{D}$ is then decomposed in a matrix eigenvalue equation,

$$\sum_{l'=0}^{L} \sum_{m'=-l'}^{l'} D_{lm,l'm'} g_{l'm'} = \lambda g_{lm}, \tag{3}$$

where the Slepian basis functions g_{lm} are the eigenfunctions, and the eigenvalues $0 \leq \lambda \leq 1$ represent the degree of concentration of each function within the region (F. J. Simons et al., 2006). We show sets of sensitivity maps of the Slepian basis functions of well-concentrated functions for the Pacific (Fig. S2) and Atlantic (Fig. S2) hemispheres with $\lambda \geq 0.5$. We have applied our Slepian localization technique in a joint inversion analysis of postglacial rebound and convection data to study the western shallow and eastern cratonic upper mantle viscosity structures of North America continental area (?, ?).

We use the PREM (Dziewonski & Anderson, 1981) model as our depth-dependent reference density of the mantle with the geoid kernel estimation and neglect mantle compositional variations so not to interfere with any distinct regional viscosity difference we may infer. We consider two different scenarios of the mantle structure. We first derive the mantle density structures from two seismic tomography models [SEMUCB-WM1 (French & Romanowicz, 2015) and S362ANI+M (P. Moulik, 2014)] following the relation $\delta\rho = \frac{\partial ln\rho}{\partial lnV_s}$. We test both single parameter (0.35) and depth-dependent seismic velocity-density scalings (Simmons et al., 2010). We remove density heterogeneities in the top 300 km in oceans and continents due to the complex and compositional origin of continental roots. Our second mantle model scenario employs geodynamically derived slab density model STB00 (Steinberger, 2000), which is based on a tectonic plate reconstruction. Employing a wide range of mantle density models will ensure that our resulting local and global viscosity-depth characteristics are not data dependent or artificial. Forte and Peltier Forte and Peltier (1991) showed the implications on the choice of mantle density structure for large-scale mantle flow viscosity inferences. They concluded that the choice of mantle internal density structure used to infer the radial mantle viscosity structure plays a major role in the resulting viscosity structure due to the sensitive nature of the viscosity profile to the mantle density model. This makes it appropriate to test different density models and also to take advantage of the recent seismic tomography with improved detail and resolution.

3 Results and Discussion

Global constrained radial viscosity solution

To better quantify the significance of regional mantle heterogeneities to radial viscosity, we first infer a series of global constrained viscosity profiles and verify our solutions with recent published studies (Rudolph et al., 2015). In each case we use a probabilistic sampling solution method (see Materials and Methods) to synthesize the global geoid fields and compare with the respective observed time-invariant geoid signal from GRACE (Reigber et al., 2005) satellite data to infer the global viscosity structure. We focus on long ($l = 2$ to 3) and intermediate ($l = 4$ to 9) spherical harmonic wavelengths of the geoid. The posterior distribution of our $l = 2$ to 3 globally constrained relative viscosity solution (fig. 1c) based on seismically derived mantle structure predicts a low-viscosity transition zone with strong upper mantle (i.e. above 410 km) and lower-mantle viscosities. There is roughly a one order of magnitude viscosity increase between the transition zone and the lower mantle. The viscosity increase between 670 km and the lower mantle is supported by a high probability mantle interface (fig. 1d). Our globally constrained long-wavelength (l =2 to 3) viscosity structures, using seismically derived density models, are consistent with past large-scale mantle flow studies (Forte et al., 1994; Steinberger & Calderwood, 2006; Rudolph et al., 2015). The $l = 2$–3 viscosity inversion experiments with other seismic tomography models using either single parameter (Supplementary Information fig. S5a-b) or depth-dependent (Supplementary Information fig. S5e-f) seismic velocity-to-density scaling show similar mantle viscosity-depth characteristics.

For our slab-only mantle density model (Steinberger, 2000), the global $l = 2$–3 viscosity solution, shows a relatively strong transition zone (fig. 1e) compared to the prediction using the seismic-derived mantle model (e.g., fig. 1c). Note that for the slab-only mantle, we are assuming a mantle convection style which depends on only subduction and slab material. Hence, our prediction of a strong transition zone (fig. 1e-f) is not surprising in the absence of hot buoyant mantle material. The large accumulation of rigid slab material within the transition zone and above 1000 km depth (Fukao et al., 2001) may be a contributing factor generating a stiff viscosity interface. This may also suggest a non-negligible long wavelength component of slabs' influence on viscosity-depth variations.

The set of intermediate wavelengths ($l = 4$ to 9) globally constrained viscosity profiles, shows predominately the sensitivity of geoid data to slab remnants (Hager, 1984). Both the seismic-wave derived model and the slab-only mantle density models (Supplementary Information fig. S4a-b and S4c-d) predict a weak asthenosphere channel, followed by a stiff transition zone. Panasyuk and Hager et al.(Panasyuk & Hager, 2000) have suggested a similar layered mantle viscosity structure showing a strong transition zone, using a combination of slab densities in the upper mantle and seismic-based densities for the lower mantle. Our results show a high probability viscosity-and-mantle interface around the 410-km depth with a viscosity jump of more than 2 orders of magnitude between the asthenosphere (upper mantle) and the mid-mantle. Such values of relative viscosity (*ca. 300*) (Hager & Richards, 1989) between the asthenosphere and lower mantle is required to fit the observed slab geoid ($l = 4$ to 9).

Local constrained radial viscosity solution

Using a Slepian localization technique (fig. 1b & fig. S2-S3), we derive local geoid signals (i.e. Pacific and Atlantic hemispheres) and infer a viscosity solution for each region. In each case, we consider the same mantle density models and geoid spectrums (i.e. $l = 2$ to 3 and $l = 4$ to 9) used in the global solutions above. The resulting regional viscosity structures show distinct differences in the top 800 km of the mantle, particularly across the mantle transition zone. By comparing the $l = 2 - 3$ inferred viscosity structures for the Pacific (fig. 2a-b and 2e-f) to the Atlantic (fig. 2c-d and 2g-h) regions, we see the unique influence of the respective local mantle structures.

In the Pacific domain, we find some degree of stiffness in the vicinity of the transition zone (fig. 2a-b and 2e-f). Conversely the Atlantic regional solutions, which have little/no-slab heterogeneities within the top 800 km of mantle, show no such stiff viscosity interface. Rather we infer a relatively low-viscosity transition zone (fig. 2c-d and 2g-h). A similar phenomenon is also observed for the $l = 4 - 9$ regional viscosity inversions shown in fig. 3b for the Pacific (blue lines) and Atlantic (red lines) hemispheres (see also supplementary information fig. S7). Maps showing the respective local geoid anomalies of the Pacific and Atlantic regions for $l = 2 - 3$ and $l = 4 - 9$ are provided in the supplementary information (fig. S9). We employed a second seismic model S362ANI+M (P. Moulik, 2014) and repeat our regional calculations (fig. 3, solid lines), which show similar results for the Pacific and Atlantic local inversions (supplementary information fig. S8).

Localizing around and away from the subduction systems (e.g., Red outline fig. 1a) shows the apparent effect of the local mantle structures. The presences of slab heterogeneities within the Pacific local mantle may be the controlling factor giving rise to the stiff transition zone at long (fig. 3a, green region) and intermediate wavelengths local viscosity solutions (fig. 3, green region). While phase changes and mantle composition predominantly have been proposed to dictate the characteristics of the transition zone viscosity (S.-i. Karato, 2008), our results suggest additional crucial contributions from the local thermal/density structures.

Our understanding and interpretations of the mantle radial viscosity structure are mostly centered on the rheological properties of the global ambient mantle. The new approach used here allows us to explore the potential influence of regional mantle densities/temperatures to viscosity-depth variations, which may be a challenge in large-scale mantle flow studies. The prediction of stiff (Pacific, fig. 3a-b [blue profiles]) and weak (Atlantic, fig. 3a-b [red profiles]) transition zone viscosities, are at first–order due to the presence and absence of slab remnants within each local mantle. This finding illuminate past conclusions (e.g, Forte et al., 1994; King, 1995; Steinberger & Calderwood, 2006; Liu & Zhong, 2016) on mantle transition zone viscosity profiles, which relied on the mantle hot anomalies. The coupled hot mantle and cold slabs with phase transitions may be playing an equal role on the exact amplitude of the transition zone rheology. We would expect to predict similar viscosity profiles for the two regions per our assumption of spherical symmetry of global constrained viscosity profiles. Recently, Mao and Zhong (2021) used plate motion history in a mantle convection model to show how the strength slabs with respect to the surrounding mantle influence the modeled geoid anomalies and observation. Our inferred viscosity-depth differences suggest that slab rheology may be as

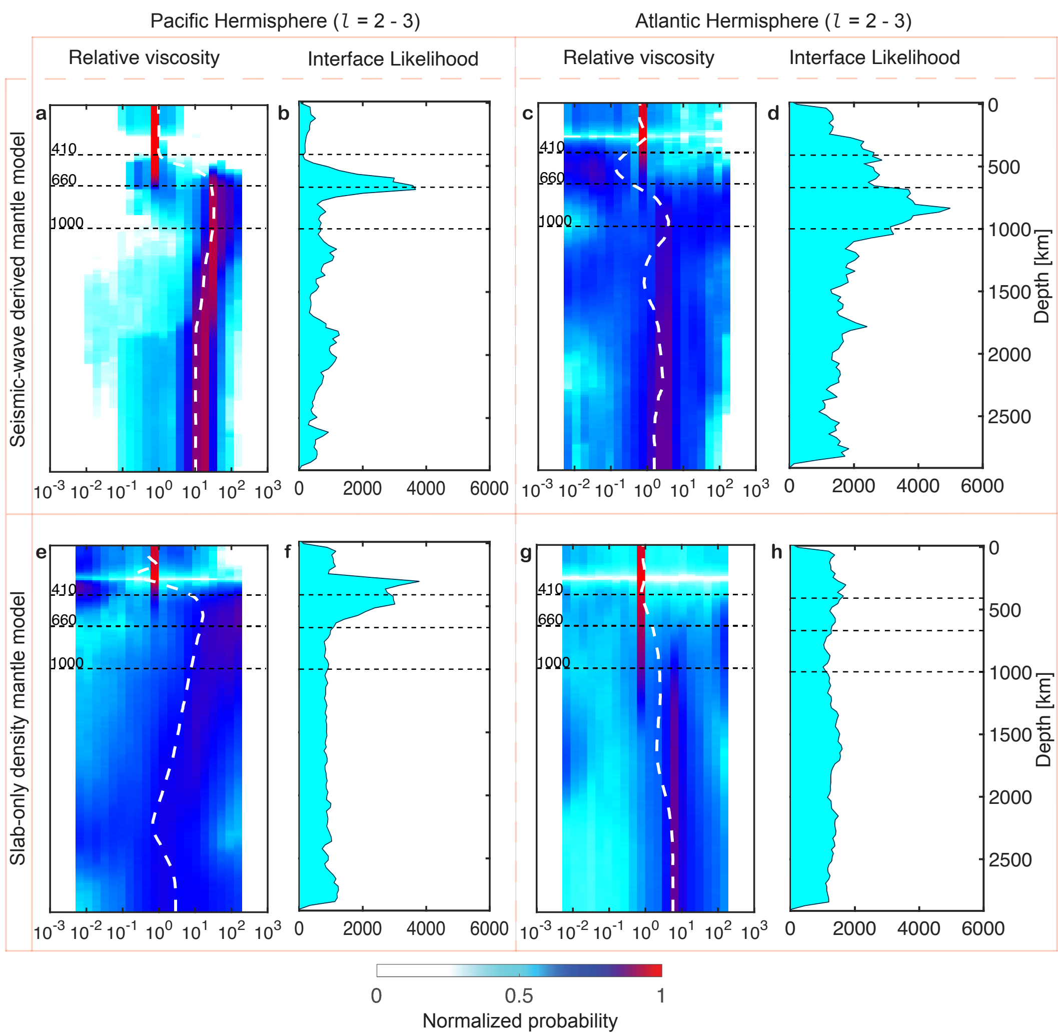

Figure 2. Long-wavelength (l = 2 – 3) local viscosity solutions based on regional mantle models from (a–d) seismically-derived mantle model (French & Romanowicz, 2015) and (e-h) plate reconstruction slab-only mantle model (Steinberger, 2000). Plots a, c, e, and g show 2D histograms of the posterior probability distributions of viscosity with depth, expressed as normalized probability. The white dash lines give the mean relative viscosity profiles. Panels b, d, f, and h show the resulting mantle-viscosity interfaces distributions. The left and right halves of the figure represent the inversion solutions for spherical harmonics degrees l = 2 – 3 for the Pacific and Atlantic regions, respectively.

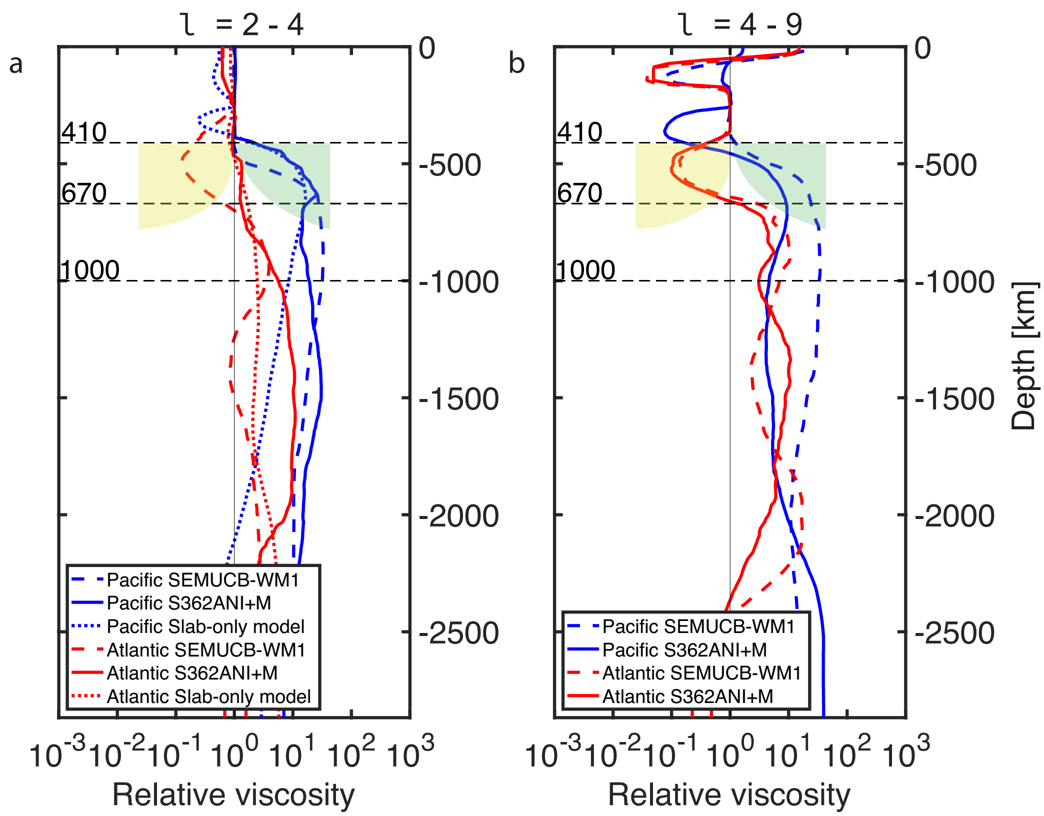

Figure 3. Plots showing a) the averages of long-wavelength (l = 2 – 3) local viscosity solutions based on seismically-derived mantle model SECUMB-WM1(French & Romanowicz, 2015) (dashed), $S362ANI+M$ (P. Moulik, 2014) (solid) and slab-only mantle model (Steinberger, 2000) (dotted) for the Pacific (blue) and Atlantic (red). b) Averages of intermediate-wavelength (l = 4 – 9) local viscosity solutions based on seismically-derived mantle model SECUMB-WM1(French & Romanowicz, 2015) (dashed), S362ANI+M (P. Moulik, 2014) (solid) for the Pacific (blue) and Atlantic (red).The yellow and green shaded regions show the respective Atlantic and Pacific viscosity solutions interface preference in the top mantle.

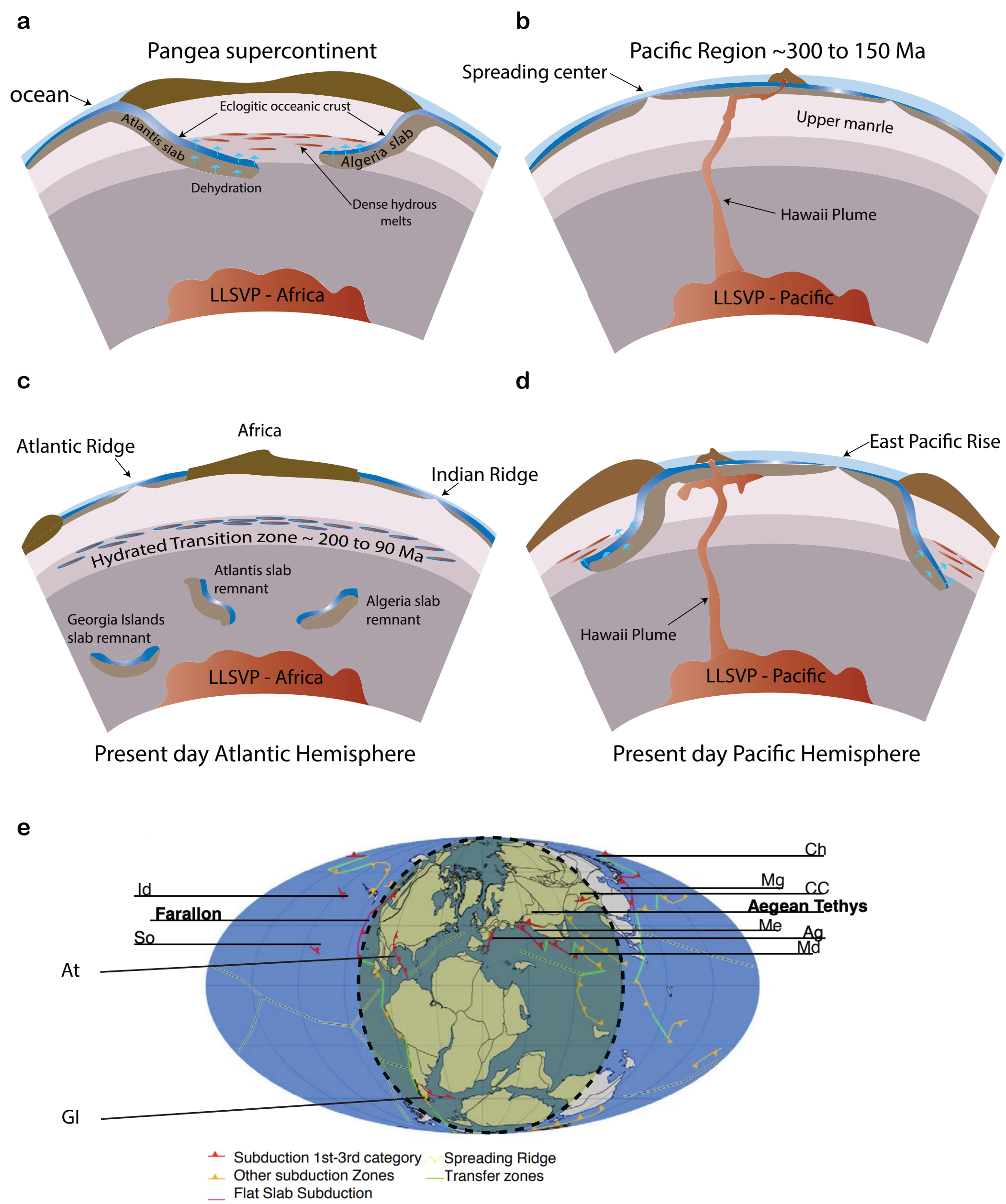

Figure 4. Schematic illustration of a possible hemispheric difference between (a) Atlantic and (b) Pacific regions during the Jurassic and Early Cretaceous eras showing the peripheral subduction of the Pangea supercontinent and spreading centers respectively. (c) Present-day Atlantic hemisphere showing a possible hydrated transition zone and/or top of the lower mantle from past subduction with remnants of the Atlantis, Algeria and Georgia Island slabs in the deep mantle. (d) Pacific region showing present-day subduction systems and the Hawaii plume. c) A Paleo-Geographic map with the longitudinal position of past oceanic subduction zones modifies after van der Meer et al., (van der Meer et al., 2010) depicting the likely position of the Ag – Algeria, CC – Central China, Ch – Chukchi, Id – Idaho, Me – Mesopotamia, At – Atlantis, Mg – Mongolia, GI Georgia Islands, So – Socorro, Md – Maldives slabs. The overlying yellow shade with dash black outline shows the approximate Atlantic region for the local viscosity inversion with our spatiospectral localization technique.

important to the layered mantle viscosity as it is to lateral viscosity variations, especially in the top 800-km of the mantle.

Subducted oceanic crust in the mantle transition zone contains garnet-rich layers (Majorite). These layers have been suggested (S.-I. Karato et al., 1995) as a major contributing factor for the strong transition zone viscosity. The prediction of low-viscosity interfaces with our less/no slabs region (fig. 3 [red]) versus the stiffness obtained with the slabs dominated Pacific local mantle (fig. 3 [blue]) tends to support this observation. The presence of other garnet-rich composition within the mantle transition zone in the form of either pyrolite or piclogite (i.e. peridotite and eclogite) will also influence the Pacific and Atlantic local viscosity profiles. But the high volumetric ratio [about 90% (S.-I. Karato et al., 1995)] of garnet constituents in subducted oceanic crust and cold slabs structures within our Pacific region of the mantle will likely account for most of the extra hardness within the transition zone. The debate surrounding stiff (Ricard et al., 1989; King, 1995) or weak transition zone (Forte et al., 2013) dates back several decades among large-scale mantle flow studies. This discrepancy may be due to the intrinsic deficiencies among the global seismic models used for those studies, since slabs are resolved differently in various seismic models. Our viscosity localization experiments may shed light on the debate of the origins of hard and soft transition zone viscosity.

Our inference of Atlantic region low viscosity interface may have additional influence of a wet transition zone and the top of the lower mantle by slabs dehydration (Ohtani et al., 2018) from the Pangea subduction system. The presence of water in the upper mantle has been shown to affect viscosity and as a source of melting generation (S.-I. Karato et al., 1995). Ohtani et al. (2018) recently showed as slabs descends into the mantle they hydrate the mantle layers above (fig. 4). Their experiment suggest that dense hydrous magma may form at the base of the upper mantle and move upward as slabs dehydrate. As cold hydrated slabs pass the transition zone into the lower mantle either by mantle suction or gravitational collapse fluids/volatile-rich magmas may generate due to the wide variation in water content between mineral composition of the mantle transition zone and the lower mantle. Though this phenomenon is mostly likely to be observed in the Pacific region with the present-day subduction. Paleo-subduction studies (e.g., van der Meer et al., 2010) constraining longitudinal positions of past oceanic subduction zones showed the Atlantic mantle has experienced a period of active subduction comparable to the present-day Pacific subduction systems. van der Meer et al. (2010) mapped out the current locations of slab remnants in the mid and lower mantle using plate reconstruction and seismic model (supplementary information fig. S11). Their analysis showed that most lower mantle slabs materials are concentrated in the Atlantic region, for example the Atlantis, Georgia Island, Algeria, Farallon plates, etc (fig. 4a). It's possible such volatile-rich mantle depths induced by past Pangea subduction may persist over 100 - 200 Myr (fig. 4c), which will affect our Atlantic viscosity inference.

A number of authors have suggested the presence/remnants of distinct heating (or temperatures) within the respective local mantles (Lenardic et al., 2011; Le Pichon et al., 2019; Karlsen et al., 2021) considered in our current study. According to Le Pichon et al. (2019), the assemblage and stationarity of the supercontinent Pangea with peripheral subduction systems led to a thermally insulated mantle. A recent study by Karlsen et al. (2021) of the two hemispheres (Pacific and Atlantic), has suggested a temperature deficit of about 50K with the Pacific region been colder, which will in turn make the Pacific mantle relatively stronger. We explore this by localizing in central Pacific excluding all slab to infer viscosity and compared with inversion focusing on western Pacific (see supplementary information Fig. S10). The central Pacific mantle gave a less stiff upper mantle compared to the western Pacific region with old slabs suggestion this temperature deficit may have less influence on our results compared to subducted oceanic plate.

4 Conclusion

In summary, we suggest that regional mantle structures have a unique control on the local viscosity inference and likely the global viscosity profile. Especially within the top 800 km of the mantle, slabs heterogeneities show non-negligible influence on the viscosity-depths variations in the mantle transition zone. There may be additional contributions from a difference in the regional mantle hydrations. Our findings put a first-order constraint on the long-wavelength lateral viscosity variations within the top half of the mantle. This is characterized by the presence of a strong transition zone in and around predominantly slabs and subducting regions, combined with a comparatively low-viscosity transition zone. The inferred significance of slab rheology to the depth-dependent viscosity structure suggests global profiles created with the assumption of spherically symmetric mantle flow driven only by ambient density should be interpreted cautiously in regional settings, even at large scales.

5 Open Research

Figures were created with GMT and Matlab. The model output and code used for our calculations will be made available at Zenoda (`http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.6585021`) (Osei Tutu et al., 2022) .

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