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Some practical applications of the horizontal gradients Txz and Tyz

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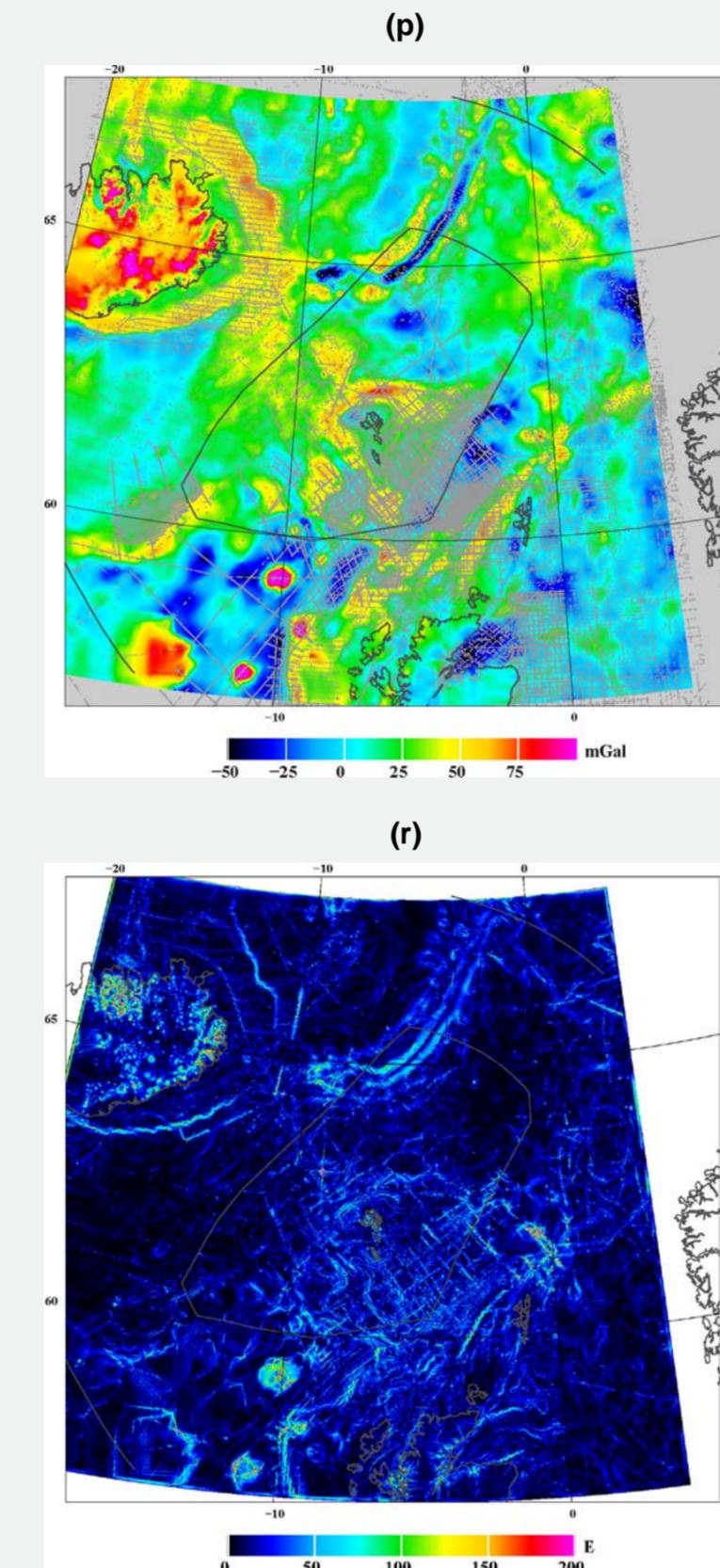
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Introduction

In the classical paper by Nettleton (1939) the visible topography (the source geometry) is used to constrain the bulk density of the topographic masses ρ from the gravitational attraction T_z without the direct density measurements (density=mass/volume). In the 19th century the same idea of decoupling the source geometry from the source strength (the mass density) led to the discovery of the hypothesis of isostasy by the findings of The Survey of India. The deflection of the plumb-line caused by the Himalayas was much less than the calculated; i.e. the gravitational effect of the visible mass surplus (the topography) must be compensated by the (invisible) mass deficit in the subsurface. In other words, if the hypothesis of mass deficit was not valid, the mass density of the visible mountains that could explain the plumb-line deflection would be geophysically unrealistic (too small)!

In this contribution we demonstrate how the available information about the source geometry for a large marine area in the North Atlantic around the Faroe Islands, and the geophysically plausible mass density values, can be used to constrain the geophysical information without any assumptions about the possible compensating sources. We show that the use of the horizontal surface gradients T_{xz} and T_{yz} is valuable, because, compared to T_z , the relative weight of the gravitational signal from a shallow source is much higher than that of the deep sources.

Two specific applications of the horizontal gradients T_{xz} and T_{yz} will be demonstrated: (i) constraining of the mass density of the bedrock; (ii) positively identifying the errors in the marine gravity data.



The numerical example

The challenge here is to constrain the (scalar) parameters α_i , $i=1,2,3$ from the available information. The meaning of these parameters is intuitively clear; the number equivalents the bulk mass density (in g/cm³). For the sea water we can therefore safely assume that $\alpha_1=1.03$. Assume initially that $\alpha_2=\alpha_3$ (the gravitational effect of the sediments is minor).

If T_z , unknown, T_{xz} , unknown and T_{yz} , unknown is correlated (negatively) with, respectively, T_z , known, T_{xz} , known and T_{yz} , known it translates to the apparent parameters $\alpha_{app,z}$ (for T_z), $\alpha_{app,xz}$ (for T_{xz}) and $\alpha_{app,yz}$ (for T_{yz}), each of which is less than α_{true} ($=\alpha_2=\alpha_3$ for known sources), and each of which will minimize the standard deviation of the residuals for the respective field. In general: $\alpha_{app}=\alpha_{true}+\Delta\alpha$, where $\Delta\alpha$ is a parameter linking the surface signal from unknown sources with the signal generated by the known sources, e.g. T_{xz} , known = $\Delta\alpha \cdot T_{xz}$, unknown, and which is negative if the two surface signals (known/unknown) are negatively correlated. $\Delta\alpha$ depends on the geometrical factor of the unknown source, i.e. whether the geometry of the unknown source can be approximated by a constant time known source, the factor related to the depth of burial (upward continuation) and the density of the unknown source. The only factor that differ between T_z and T_{xz}, T_{yz} is associated with the upward continuation. Even though $\Delta\alpha$ is unknown, the relative difference in the upward continuation part can be quantified for reasonable depths of burial between 4 km and 10 km by a parameter w (see below). $\alpha_2=\alpha_3$ were changed in steps of 0.05 from 2.67 to 1.1. The following apparent parameters we found: $\alpha_{app,z}=1.20$ and $\alpha_{app,xz}=\alpha_{app,yz}=1.60$.

$$\begin{aligned} T_z: & 1.20 = \alpha_{true} + w \cdot \Delta\alpha \\ T_{xz} \text{ and } T_{yz}: & 1.60 = \alpha_{true} + \Delta\alpha \end{aligned}$$

The upward continuation tests for the seawater signals from depths between 4 km and 10 km yields factor w between 0.7 (shallow source) and 2 (deep source). This gives α_{true} ($=\alpha_2=\alpha_3$) between 2.0 and 2.6. Knowledge of the depth of burial of the unknown source will further constrain α_{true} .

Theory

Some elements of the method used have been published in the past (Strykowski and Forsberg, 1998; Strykowski, 1998, 1999, 2000):

- Information about the source geometry is translated to the surface gravitational signal $T_{z,i}$ for the source i (where $i=1,2,3$ corresponds to 1: sea water, 2: sediments, 3: bedrock to a depth of 6000 m). $T_{z,i}$ is computed using a unit mass density ($\rho_0=1000 \text{ kg/m}^3$) space-domain prism integration technique on a spherical Earth. Each surface signal is centred (i.e. a zero mean over the area), see figs. (g),(j) and (m), corresponding to that the mean density value in each depth has been subtracted.
- The geometry of "known geology" in 3D can be viewed as pieces of a jigsaw-puzzle forming a 6000 m thick part of a spherical shell bounded by the parallels and meridians bounding the area. Similarly, the sum of the gravitational signals $T_{z,i}$ is zero.
- The contribution of the known geology (assuming a constant mass density ρ_i , $\rho_i=\alpha_i \rho_u$ for each unit i) $T_{z,known}$ to the surface signal T_z is:

$$T_{z,known} = \sum \alpha_i T_{z,i} \quad \text{and} \quad T_z = T_{z,known} + T_{z,unknown}$$

The new aspect is to differentiate the "source base functions" $T_{z,i}$ with respect to x - and y yielding $T_{xz,i}$ and $T_{yz,i}$, see figs (h)-(i), (k)-(l) and (n)-(o). Partial differentiation is a linear operator translating the above to:

$$\begin{aligned} T_{xz,known} &= \sum \alpha_i T_{xz,i} \quad \text{and} \quad T_{xz} = T_{xz,known} + T_{xz,unknown} \\ T_{yz,known} &= \sum \alpha_i T_{yz,i} \quad \text{and} \quad T_{yz} = T_{yz,known} + T_{yz,unknown} \end{aligned}$$

Problem:

What can be learned about the mass density of the geological units and the residual signal from T_z , T_{yz} and T_{xz} in the above setup?

Results and Conclusions

In this work, in an extended method of Nettleton for correlated sources, we have shown, for a marine area in the North Atlantic around Faroe Islands, that the use of the horizontal gradients T_{xz} and T_{yz} together with T_z , and without other assumptions except that the unknown sources are buried in depths between 4 km and 10 km, can constrain the density of the bedrock to between 2000 kg/m³ to 2600 kg/m³. This result seem not to be very impressive as the same constraints (and better) could be drawn from the knowledge of the realistic mass density values for the bedrock. However, if additional information about the depth of burial of the compensating sources was included (e.g. one seismogram), it could narrow (through a specific factor w , see above) the mass density of the bedrock considerably.

One other related result and conclusion about the use of T_{xz} and T_{yz} (not discussed here) is the positive detection of the errors in marine data for a gravity map compiled from some 1.6 mill data in the area (Strykowski and Kasenda, 2008). Fig (p) shows the free-air gravity map compiled from these data. Fig (r) shows the data transformed to $(Txz^2 + Tyz^2)^{1/2}$. Assuming no sources between sea floor and the surface (which is obvious) the signal correlating with the location of the ship tracks must be an error.

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