

Answer to the Report of Reviewer 2 of How biased are our models? – A Case Study of the Alpine Region

Thank you very much for your report of our paper. Your remarks and comments helped us to improve our paper. All changes are marked in red in the manuscript. Please, find below a detailed answer to the individual remarks.

General Comments:

This paper is a well-designed and thoroughly referenced analysis of the biases introduced by applying poorly distributed measurements to the assessment of geothermal models and of the sensitivity of the influence of two model parameters (thermal conductivity and radiogenic heat production) on the modeled subsurface temperature. The problem being addressed is adequately described. However, it becomes difficult to determine if the authors have made their case effectively, since the sequence of the evidence being presented is often confusing and the density of the information discussed becomes rather high. For example, several figures are presented out of numerical order and Figure 12 is not described in the text at all. There are 114 histogram boxes in Figure 10 alone and 90 boxes in Figure 13. It is suggested that the manuscript would benefit and would more clearly communicate its message if there were fewer figures, if the figures were discussed in their numerical order, and if some of the figures were simplified. In addition, there are numerous grammatical lapses that are detailed in the technical comments and must be addressed before publication. The conclusions of this paper will be a worthwhile contribution to the literature, but publication is recommended only after major revisions to the text and figures are completed.

Specific (Scientific) Comments:

1 Introduction

Page 2, Line 28: This section reads such that the first and second problems listed both relate to the issue of data density with one directed in the vertical and the other related to horizontal data scarcity. If an additional distinction was intended, please clarify.

Thank you for your comment. That was indeed the intended meaning. To clarify this, we rephrased “related to density” to “also related to data density”.

Page 2, Line 45: It might be helpful for the authors to clarify that by “global sensitivity analysis” they are referring to examining the entire parameter domain within the spatial extent of their model and are not referring to examining the parameters over the entire Earth.

We added a clarification on page 2 in line 44.

2 Materials and Methods

Page 3, Line 77: It’s not clear what is meant by “...only the vicinity of the input parameters is explored”. Please clarify.

We clarified the meaning of “vicinity of the input parameters” on page 3 in line 78.

Page 5, Line 117: The data described are for the “southern foreland” of the Alps?

Yes, the data is for the southern foreland of the Alps. We added a clarification on page 5 in line 118.

Page 5, Line 130: Do the temperature databases provide some criteria or indicator of data quality, or if not, what basis or method was used to establish the data quality to inform the data filtering and weighting?

Unfortunately, the database does not include an indicator of the data quality. Therefore, the weighting scheme is mainly based on the unequal data distribution. For the regions of the Upper Rhine Graben and Alps, we used an expertise-driven approach that is based on the extensive knowledge of the authors from previous studies in these regions.

Page 6, Line 135: The number of measurements for the four regions adds to 2,391 data points, but the previous sentence identifies 2,388 total data points. Please explain or correct the difference.

The difference has been corrected.

Page 7, Line 142: The rationale for the weighting factor of 0.5 for the Upper Rhine Graben and Alps data points is not obvious. Please elaborate.

As mentioned above this factor is determined based on the experience of the authors. The value can be updated if quantitative measures of the data quality become available. Note that the study aims to illustrate the effect of the bias induced by the measurements rather than providing an optimal weighting scheme. A clarification has been added to lines 146-149 (page 7).

3 Alpine Region

Page 11, Line 217: What is the difference between Figures 6 and 9? In general, it is good practice in a manuscript to clearly describe each figure within the text and to introduce them in numerical order. Presenting the figures out of numerical sequence creates unnecessary confusion for the reader.

The difference is that the analysis in Figure 6 focuses on the entirety of the model combining several layers with equal thermal properties, whereas the analysis of Figure 9 focuses on the Upper Crust layers only. Therefore, it further differentiates within the Upper Crust layers which are combined into one parameter in the analysis presented in Figure 6. A clarification has been added to lines 219-223 (page 9/10). Furthermore, we revised the entire manuscript to ensure that all Figures are introduced and mentioned in their numerical order.

Page 11, Line 234: The sentence that begins "Note that we do not present the results..." is confusing on several points. First, the text should introduce what is presented in Figure 8 prior to this sentence (and prior to introducing Figure 9). Also, Figure 7 does present a sensitivity of thermal conductivity for the Upper Crust in the Po Basin, and Figure 8 does present a sensitivity of thermal conductivity for the Lower Crust in Saxothuringia, which conflict with the statement in the referenced sentence. Please clarify.

That seems to be a misunderstanding. The results of Figures 7 and 8 are considered and presented in this section. However, we exclude the Upper crust property (λ_{22} in Figure 7) and the Lower Crust property (λ_{26} in Figure 8). These two properties are directly taken from the top-level analysis and required to ensure compatibility between the top- and low-level analyses. A clarification has been added to lines 253-256 (page 12).

Furthermore, as mentioned above we revised the manuscript with respect to the numerical order of the figures.

Page 12, Line 251: The organization and description of the figures discussed in this section are confusing, and Figure 12 is not introduced in the text at all. The reader should be provided a clear motivation and description for each figure in the manuscript.

As mentioned above the Section has been revised with respect to the mentioning and ordering of the Figures. Furthermore, we added a clarification for Figure 12 on page 12 in line 264.

4 Discussion

Page 15, Line 280: The sentence that begins “This might be a bias introduced...” is confusing. The number of data points (755) is the same for the Unconsolidated Sediments in URG (I_1) and for the rest (I_3)?

That was a mistake, we meant λ_1 and not λ_3 . We corrected and specified the sentence on page 17 in line 315.

Page 17, Line 317: It seems like an overstatement to claim that “Hence, the bias...can be removed”. The weighting procedure is not creating new information, it’s simply rebalancing existing information. It would be more appropriate to say that the bias can be “reduced”, especially in the context of the later statement that the paper does not aim to provide the ideal weighting scheme for the Alpine Region.

We changed the term “removed” to “reduced”.

Tables and Figures

Figure 6: What is the purpose of the thick horizontal black line? Remove if not needed. Same comment for Figures 10, 15, and 16.

The purpose of the black line is to indicate the threshold of what we consider as sensitive in this paper. An explanation has been added to the caption of Figure 6, 10, 15, and 16.

Technical Corrections:

All technical corrections regarding the text have been incorporated into the manuscript.

Tables and Figures

Figure 10: Due to the high information density, it’s recommended to orient the boxes consistently (for example, hatched, colored, slanted) in all cases. This will make it easier for the reader to distinguish the sections of histograms. Also, this figure could be made somewhat wider to add some white space between the model parameter sections. Same comment for Figure 13.

The boxes have been updated and are now oriented consistently. Furthermore, the whitespace between the parameters has been increased. The updates have been performed for Figures 10-13.