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Reservoir heterogeneity and its role in long-term CO₂ storage performance: A case study of Air Benakat formation

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia's strategy for attaining net-zero emissions by 2050 is contingent upon carbon capture and storage (CCS). The long-term CO₂ storage performance of Air Benakat formation in the South Sumatra Basin was assessed in this study, with a particular emphasis on the influence of reservoir heterogeneity. We compared the behavior of CO₂ (trapping mechanisms and migration) under homogeneous and heterogeneous conditions by utilizing reservoir modeling. Sequential Gaussian simulation (SGS) was implemented to represent spatial variability in porosity and permeability. Increased degrees of heterogeneity are quantified by Lorenz coefficients of permeability (*Lk*) of 0.0, 0.2, 0.4, and 0.6. The simulation results over a 1000-year period indicate that pressure accumulation during the 30-year injection phase is reduced, and pressure dissipation is enhanced post-injection as a consequence of increased heterogeneity. The distribution of permeability substantially impacts the trapping mechanisms for CO₂, including free-phase (supercritical), residual (trapped), and dissolved. Heterogeneous models exhibit greater long-term dissolution as a result of flow redistribution, whereas homogeneous models retain a larger amount of free-phase and trapped CO₂. Moreover, the consequences of heterogeneity are further illustrated by plume migration patterns. With the increase in *Lk* values, lateral migration becomes more asymmetric and fragmented, and the plume area expands by up to 23.4% in comparison to the homogeneous case. Heterogeneity redirects CO₂ into additional strata without altering the maximal height, as evidenced by vertical plume analysis, with occupancy differences reaching up to 9.2%. Overall, results highlight that ignoring heterogeneity leads to overestimations in CO₂ storage efficiency, particularly in trapped CO₂ capacity.

1. Introduction

The global urgency to address climate change and transition towards sustainable, low-carbon energy systems has reached an unprecedented level [1–3]. In response to this challenge, Indonesia, a country rich in natural resources and one of the world's largest carbon emitters, has set ambitious energy transition goals aimed at achieving a zero-carbon energy system by 2050 [4–6]. Reaching these targets requires active engagement across all sectors, especially within the energy and environmental domains, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions [7–9].

A key component of Indonesia's pathway toward a sustainable,

carbon-neutral future is the reduction of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions through geological carbon capture and storage (CCS) technologies [10–12]. CCS is a globally recognized and widely implemented approach that involves capturing CO₂ emissions from industrial and power generation sources and storing them in deep geological formations to prevent their release into the atmosphere [13–15]. Among the various geological storage options, the injection of CO₂ into depleted hydrocarbon reservoirs is considered one of the most practical and effective strategies for emission reduction [16–19]. This is particularly relevant for Indonesia, given its vast hydrocarbon reserves [20–23].

This study focuses on evaluating CO₂ sequestration potential within a

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specific geological setting: a depleted light oil reservoir located in South Sumatra Basin, as shown in Fig. 1. The basin, known for its geological complexity and substantial hydrocarbon resources, presents an excellent opportunity for implementing CCS initiatives [24–27].

Understanding the role of permeability heterogeneity is crucial, as it greatly affects the efficiency and viability of CCS projects [28–30]. Variations in permeability significantly influence how CO₂ behaves during injection and long-term storage containment [31–33]. To investigate this, we employed static reservoir simulation models designed to replicate homogeneous and heterogeneous reservoir conditions within South Sumatra Basin, specifically targeting Air Benakat formation.

Understanding how reservoir heterogeneity controls CO₂ storage processes is essential for designing effective injection strategies and ensuring long-term containment. Table 1 delineates the impact of several forms of reservoir physical heterogeneity on CO₂ storage. Variations in porosity and permeability, influenced by differing Lorenz coefficients, layered contrasts and overall heterogeneity, modify storage capacity, injectivity, plume migration patterns, and the equilibrium between dissolution and residual trapping [29,34,35]. Small-scale capillary pressure variability accelerates lateral plume movement and can triple capillary trapping [36,37]. Wettability heterogeneity enhances vertical plume penetration and dissolution while shifting trapping towards solubility [38]. In depleted gas reservoirs, increased permeability contrast and anisotropy enhance dispersion and channeling, with geological heterogeneity across lithologies broadening the range of volumetric displacement efficiency, albeit with only a modest effect on microscopic sweep.

2. Numerical model description

The middle Miocene Air Benakat Formation, located in the onshore South Sumatra Basin, is made up of interbedded volcanoclastic and clastic facies, including fine- to medium-grained sandstones, shales, siltstones, claystones, and coal streaks [24,27,42]. These types of rocks were deposited in fluviodeltaic to marginal marine environments [43]. Large pore volume for storage and high injectivity for effective CO₂ injection are provided by reservoir sands, which have typical porosities of about ~25 %, and permeabilities of up to ~1 D [44]. While structural compartmentalization by faulting defines distinct storage traps that make plume management and leakage monitoring easier, the Gumai shale and intraformational mudstones that lie on top act as regionally extensive cap and baffle seals [45]. Long-term seal integrity is confirmed by proven hydrocarbon containment in these same sandstones, and high-density storage is ensured by burial depths compatible with supercritical CO₂ conditions, making the Air-Benakat formation an ideal target for large-scale geological CCS.

The Air Benakat formation was selected as a representative site to

evaluate the feasibility of CCS in Indonesia. Fig. 2 illustrates the relative permeability curves of Air Benakat formation, while Table 2 provides a detailed summary of the key reservoir properties used in our numerical models. To resolve both lateral plume migration and fine-scale vertical heterogeneity, we defined a $5 \times 5 \text{ mi}^2$ ($\approx 8.05 \times 8.05 \text{ km}^2$) domain and discretized it into a $100 \times 100 \times 60$ Cartesian grid (600,000 cells), yielding block sizes of $\approx 80.5 \text{ m} \times 80.5 \text{ m} \times 3.3 \text{ m}$, with the injection well set in the center of reservoir. The formation lies at a depth of 1300–1500 m [46–48]. It covers a thickness of 200 m, where the upper 10 layers (Sw ranges from 63 % to 97 %) were set to be the oil zone [46] and the remaining net thickness serves as the underlying aquifer. Predominantly composed of sandstone [42], the formation exhibits a porosity of 0.247, which provides favorable conditions for CO₂ injection and migration. The anisotropy ratio (kV/kH) was set to 0.1, following the common rule of thumb in layered clastic reservoirs that thin shale baffles typically reduce vertical permeability by an order of magnitude while still allowing some cross-bedding connectivity, and initial reservoir conditions correspond to a depleted pressure of 1278 psi ($\approx 8.8 \text{ MPa}$) and temperature of 150 °F ($\approx 66 \text{ °C}$). Due to the scarcity of field-scale data, the reservoir boundary is considered a closed, no-flow system.

To address spatial uncertainty in reservoir properties that are critical to CO₂ storage performance, we employed sequential Gaussian simulation (SGS) with a normal transform [49,50]. We generated an equiprobable realizations of porosity (ϕ) and multiple permeabilities (k), offering an uncertainty propagation depiction of heterogeneity within Air Benakat formation. These realizations provided the foundation for evaluating flow pathways, pressure distribution, and plume dispersion under different geological scenarios. To further characterize the reservoir's flow behavior, we conducted a linear regression analysis to quantify the empirical relationship between porosity and permeability. The spatial patterns derived from SGS, along with the observed porosity distribution, are illustrated in Fig. 3.

In this study, we used Lorenz coefficients (Lk) [51] to quantify and represent reservoir heterogeneity, as shown in Fig. 4. A Lorenz coefficient of 0.2 reflects moderate permeability variation, with values ranging from 100 to 500 millidarcies (mD). In contrast, a coefficient of 0.6 indicates a much higher degree of heterogeneity, with permeability values ranging from 10 to 2000 mD. This level of variation suggests that geological formation contains a wide distribution of both high- and low-permeability zones. We also compared the heterogeneous models with a homogeneous model (where it has 0.0 Lk) in the next sections. Detailed equations for Lk heterogeneity model is discussed in section S4.

In our study, Fig. 5 visually presents the permeability distribution for different Lorenz coefficients. It illustrates the variations in permeability corresponding to Lk values of 0.2, 0.4, and 0.6, effectively demonstrating how the reservoir's permeability heterogeneity changes under



Fig. 1. Location map of Air Benakat formation in South Sumatra Basin.

Table 1
Impact of reservoir physical heterogeneity on CO₂ storage dynamics.

Heterogeneity of reservoir properties	CO ₂ storage behavior observed
Porosity & permeability	<p>Rasheed et al. used numerical simulations with varying Lorenz coefficients to show that increasing heterogeneity reduces overall storage capacity and residual trapping while dissolution trapping dominates, that highly heterogeneous aquifers end injection at lower pressures with shorter injection-rate stability, and that low to medium heterogeneity combined with good porosity delivers the most favorable pressure behavior and injectivity [35]. Fang et al. showed that in randomly multilayered saline formations, permeability heterogeneity governs CO₂ plume mobility by driving it laterally along high-permeability layers with little vertical migration, and that this heterogeneity is the primary factor determining overall CO₂ dissolution efficiency [29]. Al-Khdheawi et al. reported that CO₂ plumes achieve greater vertical migration in homogeneous reservoirs than in heterogeneous ones [31]. Gershenson et al. examined how small-scale heterogeneity in deep saline aquifers affects CO₂ trapping and found that variations in capillary entry pressures among different materials enhance CO₂ immobilization in heterogeneous media. They concluded that capillary trapping in highly heterogeneous reservoirs far surpass that in more uniform ones [39]. Rezk and Ibrahim applied a field-scale compositional model of the Sleipner Utsira aquifer with varied Dykstra–Parsons coefficients and found that increasing geological heterogeneity only slightly changes structural trapping but substantially shifts storage toward solubility trapping at the expense of residual trapping by generating more and longer density fingers, while also promoting wider lateral plume spread and restricting upward migration [34]. Myshakin et al. used numerical simulations in geostatistically heterogeneous reservoir models across various lithologies and depositional environments to show that geological heterogeneity strongly influences volumetric displacement efficiency, widening its variability, while having only a modest impact on microscopic displacement efficiency, and that higher pressure, temperature, and injection rates tend to boost volumetric efficiency whereas greater permeability anisotropy reduces both efficiency metrics [40]. Mawa et al. used 2D and 3D stochastic models of depleted gas reservoirs to show that higher permeability heterogeneity (VDP) and larger vertical-to-horizontal permeability ratios boost CO₂ dispersion and channeling, while water saturation and gas solubility control the mixing zone size and Peclet number [41].</p>
Capillary pressure	<p>Jackson and Krevor investigated how small-scale capillary heterogeneities affect plume migration and showed that layering can boost lateral migration rates by up to 200 % [37]. Harris et al. investigated how variability in capillary pressure influences residual trapping and found that greater heterogeneity can boost capillary trapping by up to threefold [36].</p>
Wettability	<p>Al-Khdheawi et al. found that wettability heterogeneity significantly increases vertical CO₂ plume migration, which enhances dissolution, and that it alters trapping behavior by reducing residual trapping while boosting solubility trapping, ultimately raising the volume of transportable CO₂ [38].</p>

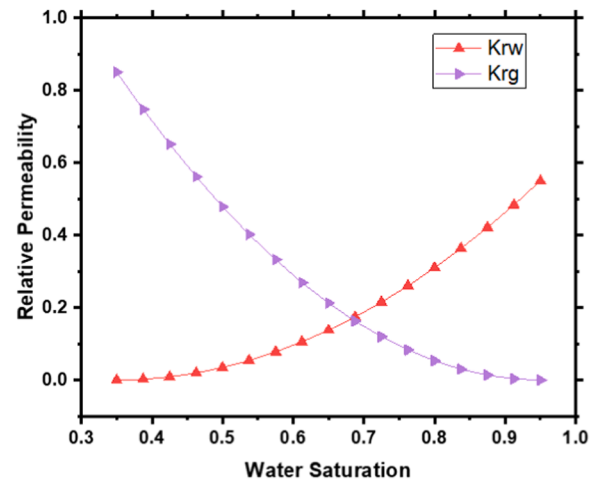


Fig. 2. Relative permeability curves of Air Benakat formation.

Table 2
Summary of reservoir properties.

Property	Value
Top depth (m)	1300
Grid dimension	100 × 100 × 60
Reservoir size (mile)	5 × 5
Thickness (m)	200
Rock type	Sandstone
Porosity (%)	24.7
kV/kH	0.1
Reservoir pressure (psi)	1278
Reservoir temperature (°F)	150
Sw (%)	63 – 97 %

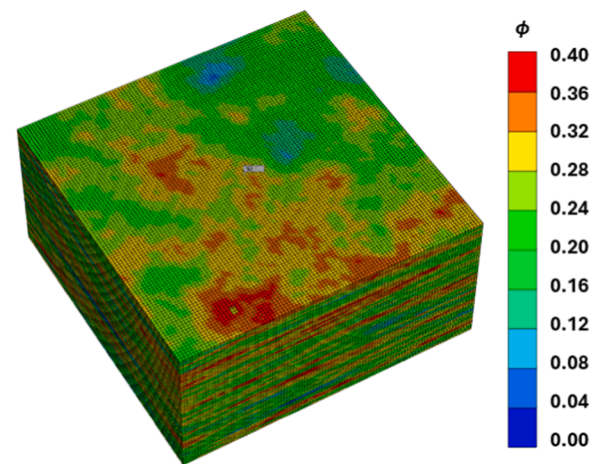


Fig. 3. Porosity distribution of Air Benakat formation.

different scenarios. The permeability distributions at *Lk* values of 0.2, 0.4, and 0.6 [51–53] were each generated with an average permeability of 150 mD. For homogeneous case, the porosity and permeability were set to the average value as in Table 2.

The fluid model used in this study is based on the composition of

light oil from Air Benakat formation, as presented in Fig. 6. We began by using WINPROP to characterize the reservoir fluid. Next, we imported the detailed fluid model into CMG-GEM for further simulation [8]. To model the CO₂ trapping mechanisms, we applied a generalized Peng-Robinson equation of state (EoS) [54] within CMG-GEM to predict and analyze phase behavior, solubility, and thermodynamic properties of CO₂ under subsurface temperature and pressure conditions during the injection phase, see Table 3. We used the Jossi, Stiel, and Thodos correlation to estimate fluid viscosity. For water properties, we calculated density using the Rowe and Chou correlation [55] and viscosity using the Kestin et al. correlation [56]. To account for gas dissolution in the

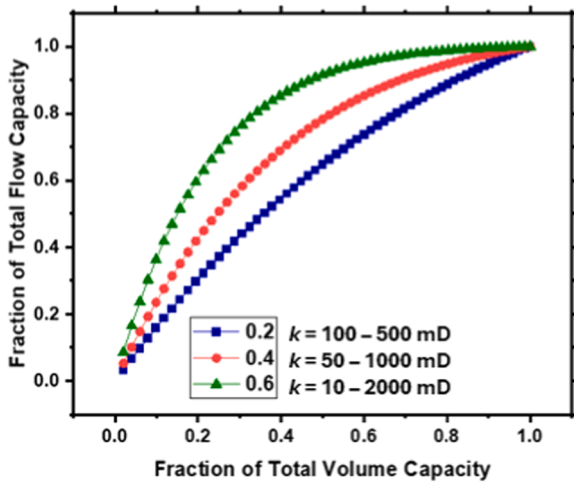


Fig. 4. Lorenz coefficient of the permeability distribution.

aqueous phase during injection and long-term migration, we applied Henry’s law [57,58]. The governing equations used for the simulation is presented in section (S1) – (S3).

The injection rate was set to 1 Mtpa of CO₂ a period of 30 years, and we continued to run the simulation to 1000 years to see how plume migrates in the formation under different permeability heterogeneity scenarios. Note that geochemical reactions (e.g. mineral trapping) and geomechanical coupling were not included in this study.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Pressure

Fig. 7 and Table 4 illustrate that all realizations demonstrate a fast increase in pressure during the 30-year CO₂ injection phase, after by a gradual decrease and stabilization over the next 970 years. Commencing with the initial diminished reservoir pressure of 1278 psi, the homogeneous model ($Lk = 0$) attains a maximum of around 1707 psi by the thirtieth year. The systematic introduction of permeability heterogeneity reduces the maximum values: examples with $Lk = 0.2, 0.4,$ and 0.6 stabilize at roughly 1684 psi, 1665 psi, and 1644 psi, respectively. Increased permeability contrasts create preferential flow paths, reducing overall resistance and thus limiting pressure buildup for the same injection rate.

Once injection stops at year 30, pressure in the well region relaxes as fluids redistribute. All cases exhibit a 10–20 psi drop over the next 70 years. The more heterogeneous models ($Lk \geq 0.4$) show slightly faster decline, reflecting enhanced connectivity to lower-pressure regions. Pressures in all realizations approach a steady-state plateau beyond the year 100. The residual overpressure is highest in the homogeneous case,

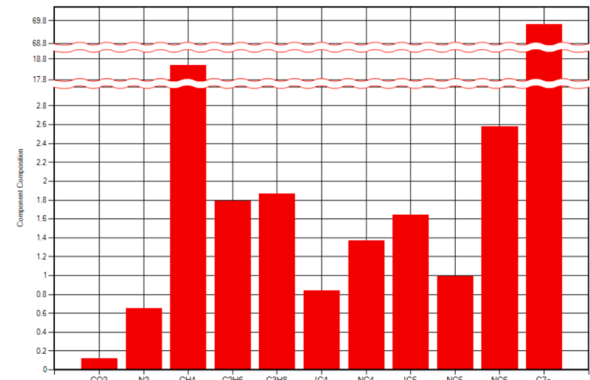


Fig. 6. Reservoir fluid composition [59].

Table 3

Compositional data calculated by Peng-Robinson EoS.

Component	Pc (atm)	Tc (K)	Acentric Factor	MW	Vc (l/mol)
CO ₂	72.8	304.2	0.225	44.010	0.094
N ₂	33.5	126.2	0.040	28.013	0.090
CH ₄	45.4	190.6	0.008	16.043	0.099
C ₂ H ₆	48.2	305.4	0.098	30.070	0.148
C ₃ H ₈	41.9	369.8	0.152	44.097	0.203
IC ₄	36.0	408.1	0.176	58.124	0.263
NC ₄	37.5	425.2	0.193	58.124	0.255
IC ₅	33.4	460.4	0.227	72.151	0.306
NC ₅	33.3	469.6	0.251	72.151	0.304
NC ₆	29.3	507.4	0.296	86.178	0.370
C ₇₊	25.3	663.8	0.401	142.730	0.543

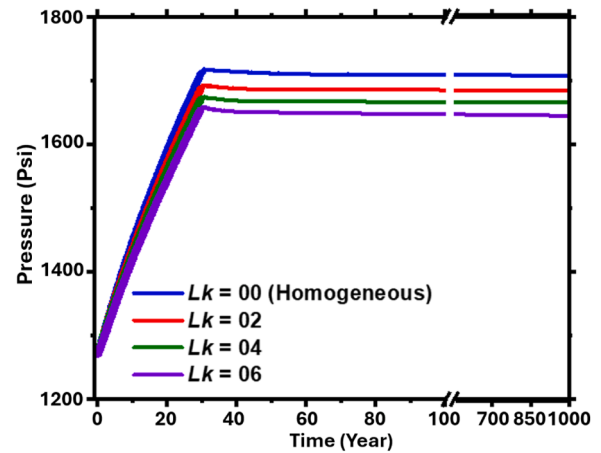


Fig. 7. Temporal pressure variation for homogeneous and heterogeneous permeability scenarios.

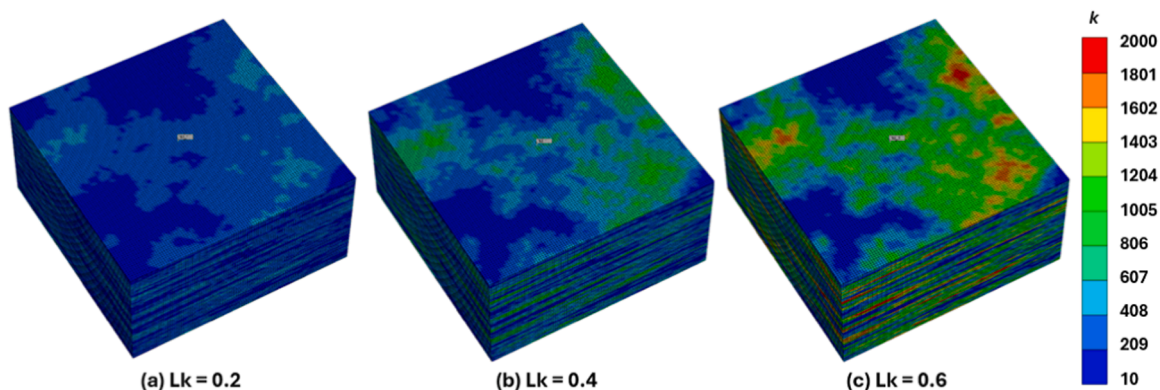


Fig. 5. Permeability distribution of Air Benakat formation: (a) $Lk = 0.2$; (b) $Lk = 0.4$; and (c) $Lk = 0.6$.

Table 4
Comparison of pressure drop due to permeability heterogeneity.

Case Comparison	Peak Pressure (psi)	ΔP (psi)	% Reduction
0.0 vs 0.2	1707 vs 1684	23	1.35 %
0.0 vs 0.4	1707 vs 1665	42	2.46 %
0.0 vs 0.6	1707 vs 1644	63	3.69 %

with the final well-block pressures remaining above the original 1278 psi by ~ 370 psi ($Lk = 0$) to ~ 330 psi ($Lk = 0.6$).

Rasheed et al. (2020) assert that permeability heterogeneity, as measured by the Lorenz coefficient (0.1 = low, 0.5 = medium, 0.78 = high), significantly influences pressure accumulation during CO₂ injection. After 30 years of uninterrupted injection, both low- and medium-heterogeneity scenarios attain comparable peak pressures (~ 479 bar), while the highly heterogeneous scenario demonstrates a markedly lower peak pressure [35].

3.2. CO₂ Trapping mechanisms

The evolution of the supercritical CO₂ over a 1,000-year period is depicted in Fig. 8 and Table 5 for four permeability heterogeneity scenarios. As the injection rate remains constant, all cases exhibit a nearly linear increase in free-phase CO₂ during the 30-year injection phase. The homogeneous model ($Lk = 0$) accumulates the most CO₂, with an estimated value of 5.88×10^{11} mol by year 30. Peak CO₂ accumulation experiences a modest decrease as the permeability contrast increases. The $Lk = 0.2$ case reaches a peak at $\sim 5.86 \times 10^{11}$ mol, whereas the most heterogeneous scenario ($Lk = 0.6$) only reaches $\sim 5.83 \times 10^{11}$ mol. This initial divergence is indicative of the more efficient dissolution of CO₂ into adjacent low- k regions and the enhanced distribution of CO₂ into high-permeability pathways under heterogeneous conditions.

As the system transitions from forced injection to natural pressure equilibration and dissolution trapping, the free-phase CO₂ accumulation begins to decrease upon shut-in at year 30. The CO₂ accumulation of the homogeneous model decreases by $\sim 0.21 \times 10^{11}$ mol from year 30 to 1000, from $\sim 5.88 \times 10^{11}$ to $\sim 5.67 \times 10^{11}$ mol. The declines in heterogeneous cases are marginally more pronounced: $Lk = 0.2$ decreases from $\sim 5.86 \times 10^{11}$ to $\sim 5.63 \times 10^{11}$ mol, $Lk = 0.4$ from $\sim 5.86 \times 10^{11}$ to $\sim 5.59 \times 10^{11}$ mol, and $Lk = 0.6$ from $\sim 5.83 \times 10^{11}$ to $\sim 5.55 \times 10^{11}$ mol.

The long-term free-phase CO₂ retention is still influenced by even moderate permeability contrasts, as evidenced by the ~ 1.7 percent variance between the homogeneous and most heterogeneous models. Ignoring heterogeneity in reservoir-scale assessments can result in overestimates of free-phase storage capacity, despite the fact that the

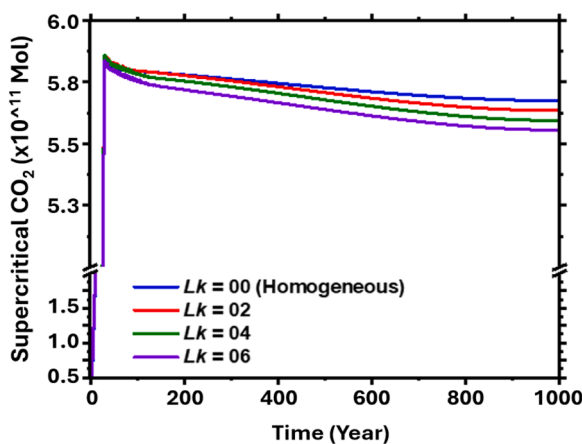


Fig. 8. Temporal dynamics of supercritical CO₂ for homogeneous and heterogeneous permeability scenarios.

Table 5
Comparison of free-phase CO₂ accumulation due to permeability heterogeneity.

Lk	CO ₂ accumulation ($\times 10^{11}$ mol)			% Decrease
	Year 30	Year 1000	Drop	
0.0	5.88	5.67	0.21	3.57 %
0.2	5.86	5.63	0.23	3.93 %
0.4	5.86	5.59	0.27	4.61 %
0.6	5.83	5.55	0.28	4.80 %

absolute differences are still modest—on the order of 1–2 percent by year 1000.

Fig. 9 and Table 6 illustrate the temporal progression of entrapped CO₂ across the four cases of permeability heterogeneity. The advancing buoyant plume displaces saline and leaves behind residual saturations, resulting in the rapid accumulation of confined CO₂ during the 30-year injection phase. The homogeneous model ($Lk = 0$) achieves the highest confined volume, which reaches a peak of $\sim 1.22 \times 10^{11}$ mol by year ~ 80 , whereas heterogeneity systematically diminishes this peak. The $Lk = 0.2$ case has a value of $\sim 1.05 \times 10^{11}$ mol, $Lk = 0.4$ is $\sim 0.96 \times 10^{11}$ mol, and $Lk = 0.6$ is only $\sim 0.86 \times 10^{11}$ mol. This trend is the result of the fact that high-permeability channels in heterogeneous models concentrate flow and bypass low-permeability regions, where residual entrapment is most effective.

Diffusional dissolution becomes the predominant process from the year 100–1000, resulting in the flattening of the confined CO₂ curves as concentration gradients decrease. The homogeneous model stabilizes at $\sim 1.09 \times 10^{11}$ mol of sequestered CO₂ by the end of the millennium, while the $Lk = 0.2, 0.4,$ and 0.6 cases resolve at $\sim 0.86, \sim 0.72,$ and $\sim 0.56 \times 10^{11}$ mol, respectively. The permeability heterogeneity can significantly reduce the long-term efficacy of trapped CO₂, as evidenced by the increasing spread, up to $\sim 0.53 \times 10^{11}$ mol ($\sim 49\%$) between the homogeneous ($Lk = 0.0$) and most heterogeneous of the cases ($Lk = 0.6$). Therefore, disregarding the heterogeneity may result in overestimations of the amount of CO₂ immobilized by capillary forces.

Fig. 10 and Table 7 show the evolution of dissolved CO₂ over a 1000-year period. Dissolved CO₂ accumulates swiftly during the 30-year injection phase as supercritical CO₂ interacts with saline. The heterogeneous cases achieve slightly lower values, $\sim 0.52, \sim 0.51,$ and $\sim 0.50 \times 10^{11}$ mol for $Lk = 0.2, 0.4,$ and $0.6,$ respectively, while the homogeneous model ($Lk = 0$) reaches $\sim 0.54 \times 10^{11}$ mol by year 30.

The disparities in dissolved CO₂ between the permeability scenarios are most apparent at year 1000. The most heterogeneous case ($Lk = 0.6$) achieves the highest value, $\sim 0.86 \times 10^{11}$ mol. Followed by $Lk = 0.4$ at $\sim 0.83 \times 10^{11}$ mol, $Lk = 0.2$ at $\sim 0.79 \times 10^{11}$ mol, and the homogeneous case ($Lk = 0.0$) at $\sim 0.77 \times 10^{11}$ mol.

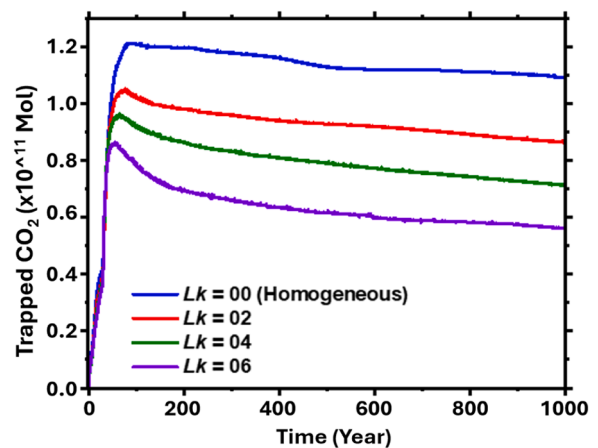


Fig. 9. Temporal dynamics of trapped CO₂ for homogeneous and heterogeneous permeability scenarios.

Table 6
Comparison of trapped CO₂ accumulation due to permeability heterogeneity.

Lk	CO ₂ accumulation ($\times 10^{11}$ mol)			% Decrease
	Year 80	Year 1000	Drop	
0.0	1.22	1.09	0.13	10.70 %
0.2	1.05	0.86	0.19	18.10 %
0.4	0.96	0.72	0.24	25.00 %
0.6	0.86	0.56	0.3	34.90 %

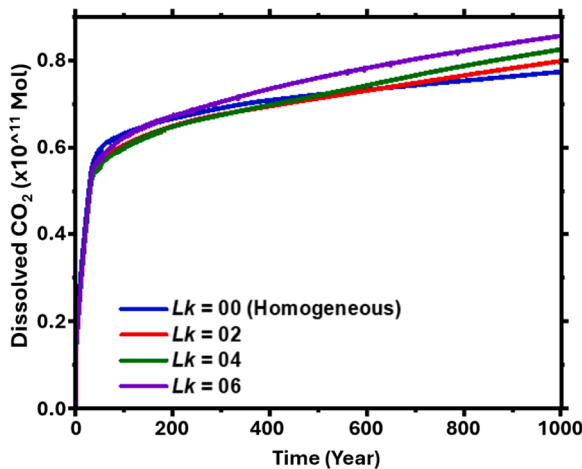


Fig. 10. Temporal dynamics of dissolved CO₂ for homogeneous and heterogeneous permeability scenarios.

Table 7
Comparison of dissolved CO₂ accumulation due to permeability heterogeneity.

Lk	CO ₂ accumulation ($\times 10^{11}$ mol)			% Increase
	Year 30	Year 1000	Rise	
0.0	0.54	0.77	0.23	42.60 %
0.2	0.52	0.79	0.27	51.90 %
0.4	0.51	0.83	0.32	62.70 %
0.6	0.50	0.86	0.36	72.00 %

The more heterogeneous systems progressively surpass the homogeneous case in dissolved CO₂ mass, as they benefit from enhanced fluid mixing and prolonged convective circulation, despite the homogeneous model initially leading during the injection phase. The heterogeneity of the $Lk = 0.6$ and $Lk = 0.0$ scenarios results in an increase of $\sim 12\%$ by the year 1000, with a difference of $\sim 0.09 \times 10^{11}$ mol.

3.3. Plume migration

3.3.1. Lateral migration

The lateral migration of the CO₂ plume is compared in Fig. 11 for four degrees of permeability heterogeneity at 30, 100, 500, and 1000 years. The plume remains essentially circular throughout the simulation for the homogeneous case ($Lk = 0.0$; Fig. 11a). At 30 years (the end of injection), it displays a smooth, radially symmetric front. The radius is marginally reduced by minor capillary-driven polishing over a period of 100 years, while circularity is maintained. Diffusion and capillary forces induce only a slight contraction, even at 500 and 1000 years.

At 30 years, the plume edge remains nearly uniform, with only incipient expansion into higher-permeability zones, for mild heterogeneity ($Lk = 0.2$; Fig. 11b). This elongation becomes more pronounced after 100 years, as the plume advances preferentially in one direction while the opposite flank delays. The homogeneous case is surpassed by the lateral spread along the more permeable pathway at 500 years. From

the end of the injection, asymmetry is the predominant characteristic at moderate heterogeneity ($Lk = 0.4$; Fig. 11c). The 30-year plume has already been extended along high-permeability corridors, and its leading edge swiftly advances to form a prominent lobe over the next 70 years, while the trailing edge remains virtually stationary. The plume is highly distorted with considerable variability in thickness by 1000 years.

Lateral migration is uneven and rapid in the presence of strong heterogeneity ($Lk = 0.6$; Fig. 11d). The centroid of the plume has a significant shift toward the most permeable pathways even at the year 30, and by the year of 100, the leading front has advanced nearly twice as far as the opposite edge. The injected CO₂ front breaks into multiple isolated pockets linked by narrow channels by year 500, and by year 1000 it's nearly completely scattered into tiny, disconnected fragments.

Fig. 12a illustrates that a narrow band of excess plume area of ~ 875 cells (8.8 %) develop on the high-permeability side by 30 years when $Lk = 0.2$. During the subsequent 70 years, this band contracts to ~ 674 cells (6.7 %) at 100 years, and then widens again to ~ 844 cells (8.4 %) at 500 years. The added footprint reaches 669 cells (6.7 %) after 1000 years, suggesting a persistent but fluctuating deviation from the homogeneous case.

Two broad lobes of excess emerge immediately with moderate heterogeneity ($Lk = 0.4$; Fig. 12b). The plume experiences a ~ 1246 cell increase (12.5 %) at the 30-year mark, and this surplus remains essentially unchanged at the 100-year mark (~ 1248 cells; 12.6 %). The additional area increases to ~ 1522 cells (15.2 %) as the lobes extend into slender, finger-like protrusions over the course of 500 years. The lobes, which retain a distinctly oblate imprint, slightly retract to ~ 1259 cells (12.6 %) at 1000 years.

The plume's excess area is both the largest and most complex when the highest heterogeneity is present ($Lk = 0.6$; Fig. 12c). By the year of 30, a broad crescent of ~ 1673 cells (16.7 %) is visible, which expands into pronounced lobes of ~ 1909 cells (19.1 %) by the year of 100. At 500 years, the lobes of the CO₂ plume break up into many thin, elongated strands, with a maximum of ~ 2339 cells (23.4 %). The excess area decreases to ~ 1789 cells (17.9 %) over a period of 1000 years, but the footprint remains highly irregular and compartmentalized.

Prior research in 2015, by Gershenson et al. shown that clusters of open-framework gravel within small-scale fluvial architecture create laterally interconnected "thief-zones" that direct injected CO₂ onto branching paths, significantly augmenting the plume's lateral migration via high-permeability channels [60]. Another study by Sohal et al. (2021) described that permeability contrasts and facies architecture create preferential pathways that enhance lateral plume spread while also producing additional trapping in lower-permeability zones [61].

3.3.2. Vertical migration

The CO₂ plume's vertical extent remains essentially similar across all heterogeneity levels at 30 years. However, subtle distinctions are observed when comparing each case to the homogeneous baseline ($Lk = 0.0$). The overall shape and apex height of the plume remain approximately equal for $Lk = 0.2$, as illustrated in Fig. 13 (saturation cross-sections). However, the finer-scale fingers enter high-permeability layers slightly deeper. This is quantified in Fig. 14a: A modest but detectable shift in vertical migration paths is indicated by the fact that ~ 205 (3.4 %) grid cells differ between the $Lk = 0.0$ and $Lk = 0.2$ occupancy maps, out of 6000.

Fig. 13 displays more prominent vertical lobes and undulations along permeability lines, despite moderate heterogeneity ($Lk = 0.4$). Fig. 14b captures ~ 362 distinct cells (6.0 % of 6000), demonstrating that a greater proportion of CO₂ is directed to preferential layers as a result of increased heterogeneity, despite the fact that the maximal plume height remains consistent. The plume cross-section in Fig. 13 indicates the most irregular base and side-wall incursion when heterogeneity is strong ($Lk = 0.6$). In year 30, Fig. 14c confirms that up to nearly one-tenth of the vertical plume footprint transitions into new strata as Lk increases, with

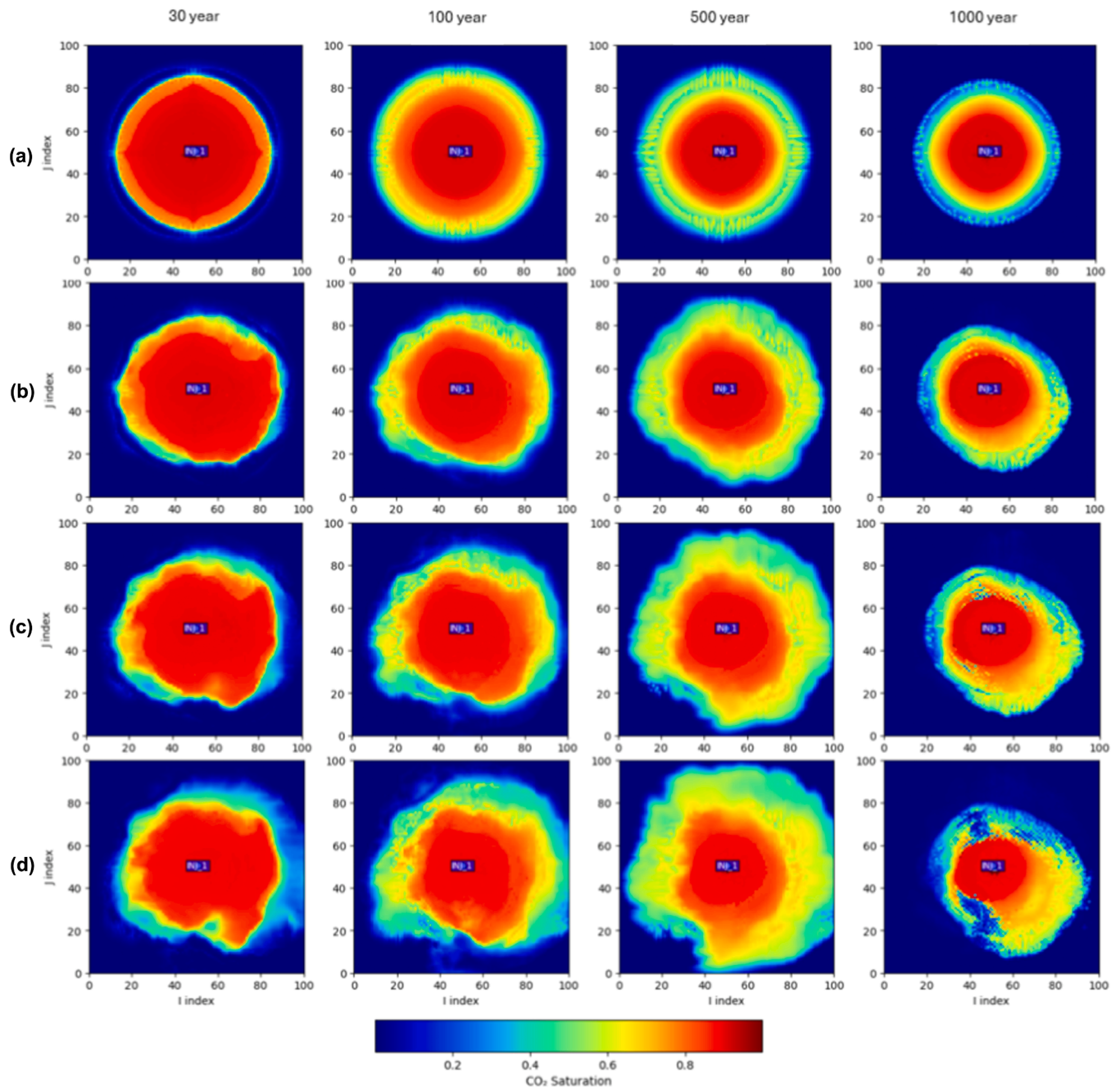


Fig. 11. Temporal evolution of CO₂ plume lateral migration at 30, 100, 500, and 1000 years for varying permeability heterogeneity: (a) $Lk=0.0$; (b) $Lk=0.2$; (c) $Lk=0.4$; and (d) $Lk=0.6$.

~550 distinct cells (9.2%), the comparison of homogeneous against each case of heterogeneous is summarized in Table 8.

3.4. Implications for CCS site selection and risk assessment

Our findings indicate that the selection of CCS sites and risk assessments must explicitly consider reservoir heterogeneity, as characterized by porosity and permeability distributions determined from well data and SGS realizations. Dynamic 3D models derived from this data produce more conservative estimates of storage capacity by accounting for diminished trapped CO₂ and improved dissolution. They assist in planning injection pressure to manage compartmentalization and prevent overpressure, while also defining an expanded Area of Review (AoR) for full-scale injection. This is crucial as asymmetric, fragmented plume footprints in heterogeneous systems can extend

further than those in homogeneous counterparts. Consequently, these models facilitate optimal placement of monitoring wells along predicted high-permeability corridors and inform the sizing of post-injection seismic surveys to encompass the actual dispersion of the CO₂ plume.

This heterogeneity-induced plume behavior has two significant practical implications. Initially, monitoring must be more spatially comprehensive and focused: asymmetric, fragmented CO₂ footprints necessitate the deployment of pressure and saturation sensors along anticipated high-permeability corridors and up-dip extents, rather than in a simplistic, symmetric arrangement, and the monitoring network should be expanded to encompass the enlarged AoR identified by SGS-based plume realizations. Secondly, storage-capacity estimation should progress beyond singular, uniform forecasts: by executing ensembles of realizations, each characterized by unique porosity and

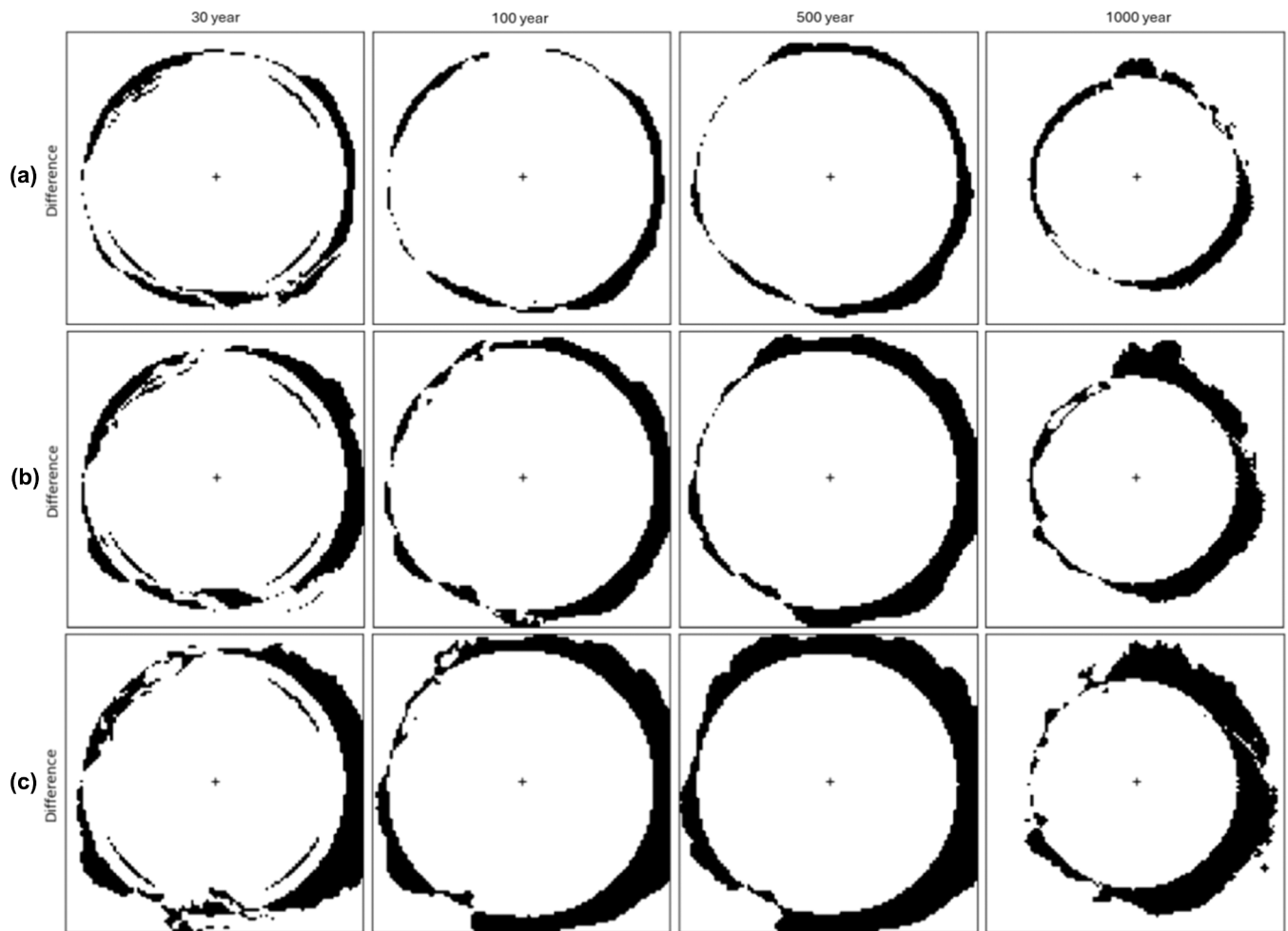


Fig. 12. Spatial difference maps of the CO₂ plume footprint relative to the homogeneous case ($Lk = 0.0$) at 30, 100, 500, and 1000 years for heterogeneity levels: (a) $Lk = 0.2$; (b) $Lk = 0.4$; and (c) $Lk = 0.6$.

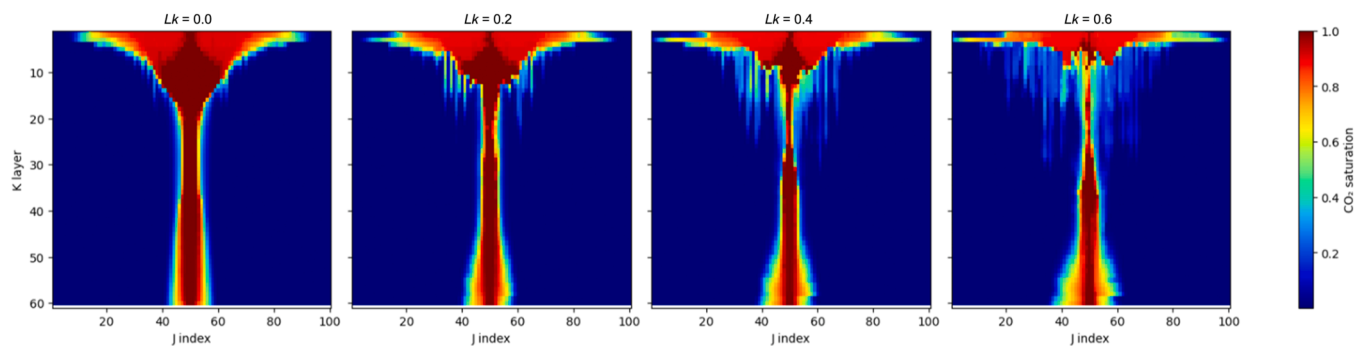


Fig. 13. Vertical cross-sections of CO₂ saturation in the J-K plane for increasing permeability heterogeneity at year-30.

permeability fields, operators can produce probabilistic CO₂ retention curves (free-phase, trapped, and dissolved), encompassing the spectrum of probable capacities and guaranteeing conservative designs, given that models neglecting heterogeneity generally overestimate trapped CO₂ and underestimate long-term dissolution.

4. Conclusion

- (1) In comparison to the homogeneous scenario (1707 psi), the introduction of permeability heterogeneity results in a decrease in peak pressure of 23 psi (1.35 %) for $Lk = 0.2$, 42 psi (2.46 %) for $Lk = 0.4$, and 67 psi (3.92 %) for $Lk = 0.6$.

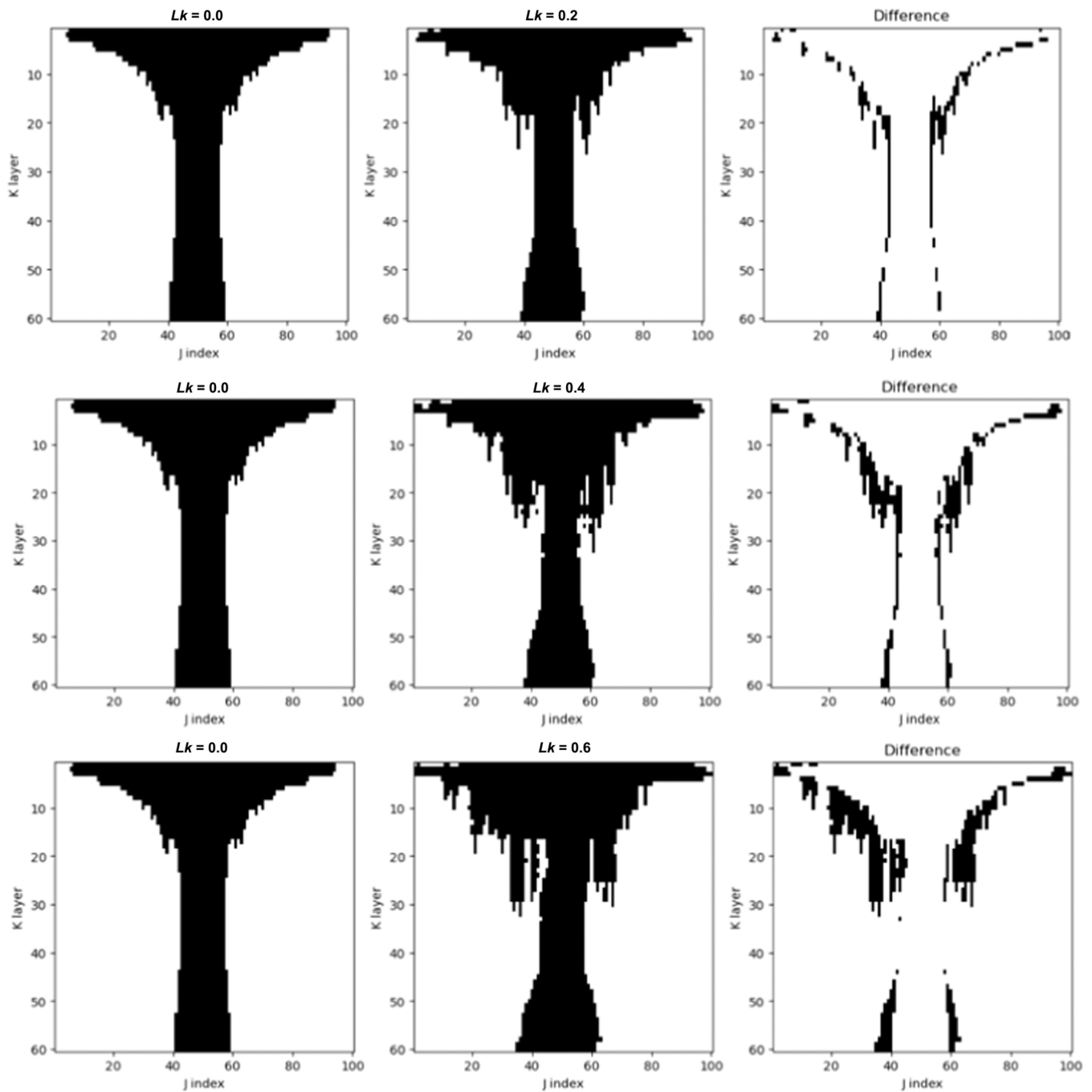


Fig. 14. Binary occupancy maps and their differences relative to the homogeneous case in the J-K plane, shown for each heterogeneity at year 30.

Table 8
Comparison for vertical CO₂ migration.

Comparison	Differing Cells	Percentage
Lk 0.0 vs 0.2	205	3.40 %
Lk 0.0 vs 0.4	362	6.00 %
Lk 0.0 vs 0.6	550	9.20 %

for $Lk = 0.4$, and 63 psi (3.69 %) for $Lk = 0.6$. This trend indicates that greater heterogeneity progressively restricts pressure buildup during injection.

(2) Permeability heterogeneity leads to a gradual transition of CO₂ from free and trapped phases into the dissolved phase. An increase in Lk from 0.0 to 0.6 results in a reduction of free-phase

accumulation at year 1000 from 3.57 % to 4.80 % and trapped accumulation from 10.7 % to 34.9 %, while dissolved CO₂ increases from 42.6 % to 72.0 %.

(3) As permeability heterogeneity intensified, the spatial deviation from the uniform baseline significantly enlarged. The quantity of distinct cells increases from ~205 (3.4 %) at $Lk = 0.2$ to ~550 (9.2 %) at $Lk = 0.6$, indicating that greater heterogeneity results in significantly enhanced model variety.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Romal Ramadhan: Writing – original draft, Visualization, Software, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Muslim Abdurrahman:** Writing – review & editing,

Validation, Supervision, Methodology. **Agus Arsad:** Writing – review & editing, Validation, Supervision. **Anis Farhana Abdul Rahman:** Writing – review & editing, Validation, Supervision. **Veridatus Napitupulu:** Validation, Data curation. **Witta Kartika Restu:** Writing – review & editing, Validation, Supervision.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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Appendix A. Supporting information

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found in the online version at [doi:10.1016/j.deepr.2025.100209](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.deepr.2025.100209).

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