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Impact of lithosphere deformation on stratigraphic architecture of passive margin basins.

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The aim of this study is to revise our view of the long-term stratigraphic trends of passive margins to include the impact of the coupling between the lithosphere deformation and the surface processes. To do this, we developed a new numerical procedure simulating interactions between lithosphere deformation and (un)loading effects of surface processes (erosion/sedimentation) in 3D with a special attention to the stratigraphic architecture of the associated sedimentary basins. We first simulate the syn-rift phase of lithosphere stretching by thermo-mechanical modeling. We then use the resulting lithosphere geometry as input of a 3D flexural modeling including coupling with surface processes to simulate the post-rift evolution of the margin. We then use the resulting accumulation and subsidence histories as input of the stratigraphic simulation to model the detailed stratigraphic architecture of the basin.

We tested this procedure using synthetic examples of lithosphere stretching based on different rheologies of the lithosphere (i.e. strength of the lower crust) in the cases of narrow or ultrawide rifting. We determined the stratigraphic expression of the conjugate margins and show that they differ in terms of long-term stratigraphic trends, erosion/accumulation and lithological distribution in space and time.

In all cases, uplift/subisdence rates decrease with time while the flexure wavelength increases as isotherms are re-equilibrated. Some areas show displacement inversion over time from uplift to subsidence (or vice-versa). As expected, the amplitude of vertical motion of the wide margin cases is very limited with respect to the narrow margin case. Vertical motions are very asymetric on conjugate margins. Accordingly, the stratigraphic architectures and the sedimentation/erosion patterns of the conjugate simulated margins are significantly different mostly because the duration and length of progradation and retrogradation differ. We evaluated the sensitivity of the simulations to parameters controlling (i) the lithosphere deformation, (ii) the continental drainage erosivity (climate) or (iii) erodability (lithology) as well as (iv) base level (eustasy).