

Evaluation of landfill disposal boundary by means of electrical resistivity imaging

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Abstract This paper deals with an employment of electrical resistivity imaging (ERI) for survey of leachate content on the waste disposal site in Northern Israel. The research consisted of conducting ten ERI lines and drilling investigation wells. Data simulation used a 2D EarthImager inversion program. Analysis of 2D ERI interpretation results shows that determination of the boundary between the landfill body bottom intensively saturated with leachates and underlying layers of highly water saturated fat non-consolidated clays presents a challenge. However, statistical analysis of ERI data indicates that standard deviation and confidence interval of a set of resistivity data measured in the landfill body are significantly larger than those in underlying clays. Moreover, maximum changes of these parameters are found on the boundary between landfill body and underlying soil, thus reflecting natural differences in scattering of resistivity data measured in these two objects.

Keywords Waste landfill · Electrical imaging survey · Electrical resistivity tomography

Introduction

Monitoring of water contamination induced by municipal landfills usually includes leachate and water sampling from drilled well network, and chemical analysis of samples taken from and around the landfill disposal under investi-

gation (Martinho and Almeida 2006; Abu-Zeid et al. 2004). This investigation method provides a discontinuous sub-surface picture and can be a very tedious and expensive procedure (Zume et al. 2006). That is the reason why an interest in applying nondestructive and noninvasive surface geophysical methods has increased. Electrical resistivity imaging (ERI) is a modified direct current method (Khesin et al. 1996) and is based on the dependence of electrical resistivity of different materials on the content of moisture and high conductive elements, porosity, temperature, etc. (Aristodemou and Thomas-Betts 2000; Gawande et al. 2003; Guerin et al. 2004).

Electrical resistivity imaging has been enjoying wide application (Sharma 1997; Takahashi 2004; Khesin 2005; Takahashi et al. 2006) since the end of the twentieth century when rapid progress of geophysical equipment based on computer technique allowed the use of 2D/3D observation schemes (Loke and Barker 1995, 1996a, b; Dahlin and Loke 1998; Storz et al. 2000; Dahlin 2001; Hunt et al. 2001; Dahlin and Zhou 2002, 2004; Wu et al. 2003; Cardarelli and Fischanger 2006). It has been frequently employed for material characterization in various geoenvironmental applications: aquifer investigations (Chandra et al. 2006; Froese et al. 2005; Loke 2000; Nassir et al. 2000; Storz et al. 2000; Bowling et al. 2005; Porsani et al. 2005; Hamzah et al. 2006; Sherif et al. 2006), archeological surveys (Cardarelli and Bernabini 1997; Vafidis et al. 2005; DeDominico et al. 2006; Dogan and Papamarinopoulos 2006), land- and rock slide characterizations (Grandjean et al. 2006; Loke 2000; Drahor et al. 2006; Godio et al. 2006), karst and fracturing mapping (Leucci 2006; Gibert et al. 2006; Recelli-Snyder et al. 1997; Loke 2000), fault imaging (Rizzo et al. 2004; Nguyen et al. 2005), and agricultural study (Loke 2000; Pannisod et al. 2001; Rey et al. 2006).

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Application of ERI method to waste landfill characterization is very popular because electrical resistivity of waste in landfill disposal varies considerably with time during waste decomposition and leachate formation (Cardarelli and Bernabini 1997; Aristodemou and Thomas-Betts 2000; Bernstone et al. 2000; Gawande et al. 2003; Abu-Zeid et al. 2004; Guerin et al. 2004; Batayneh and Barjous 2004; Depountis et al. 2005; Martinho and Almeida 2006; Zume et al. 2006).

Study area and aim

Our study area is known as “Har HaAshpaa” (“Waste Hill” in English translation), it was started by British Army in 1944. It is located in the coastline part of Haifa city (with a population of about 267,800 as of May 2006) in Northern Israel about 100 km away from the Tel Aviv downtown (Fig. 1). During 1944–1949, the site was uncontrollably and exclusively filled by the British Army waste. All topographic records of the site prior to the disposal are unknown because all documents of British Army were lost. Haifa municipality used the site for domestic waste dis-

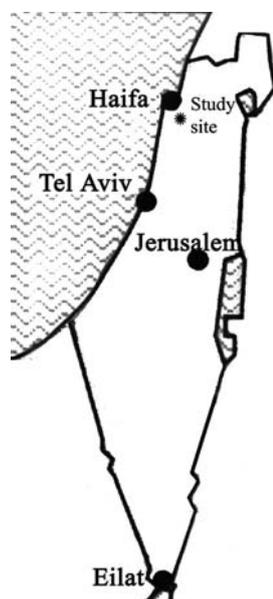


Fig. 1 Scheme of the study site location

posal from 1949 till the end of 1999. In the last operation year, waste input rate reached about 300–400 ton of domestic waste per day (Gurion and Novik 2003).

The soils overlapped by the landfill body are mainly clays of recent or pre-recent (Holocene) age. Three lithological facies are derived: (1) brownish soft fat clays, (2) grey very soft fat clays, and (3) rarely soft clayey sand. The last named facia occurs in the upper part of the soil column and is frequently interbedded with clay varieties. Total thickness of both clay varieties is about 12 m. The mechanism for the soil formation is sedimentation under shallow marine (lagoon) conditions without being overburdened by younger sediments, which causes low-density soil (900–1,000 kg/m³), its high water saturation (45–60%) and low consolidation (typical overconsolidation ratio of about 0.2). Being not absolutely isolated from the open sea, soils on the site under investigation exhibit moderately high sand content in the clays and hence low values of Atterberg limits and free swelling.

Electrical resistivity of clays is known to be in the range 3–150 ohm m (Table 1), while electrical resistivity of water (from sea to salted or brackish water) changes between 0.1 and 5 ohm m (Bernstone et al. 2000; Guerin et al. 2004). As is known, electrical resistivity of two component medium ρ depends on values of electrical resistivities of both components $\rho=f(\rho_s, \rho_l)$, where ρ_s and ρ_l are electrical resistivities of solid and liquid components of liquid saturated medium, respectively. Therefore, electrical resistivity of water-saturated clay (1.5–30 ohm m) is very similar to that of leachate (0.9–5 ohm m, Table 1), with the result that determination of a boundary between leachate-saturated waste and water-saturated clay is difficult.

This research was motivated by the necessity to estimate the degree of impact of waste landfill body on regional environment where the top challenge was an accurate defining of the boundary between waste disposal and underlying soil.

Equipment and method

Our multidisciplinary research consisted of conducting ten ERI lines. The programmable Sting R1–Swift system

Table 1 Electrical resistivity for different materials

Soil/material	Resistivity, ohm m	References
Clay	3–150	Guerin et al. (2004); Hack (2000); Kneisel (2006)
Salt water saturated clay	1.5–2	Abu-Zeid and Santarato (2004)
Leachate	0.9–5	Guerin et al. (2004); Zume et al. (2006)
Domestic garbage	12–30	Hack (2000)
Scrap metal	1–12	Hack (2000)

manufactured by the Advanced Geoscience, Inc. (Austin, TX, USA) was used for data collection in our ERI investigation. It comprised Sting R1 resistivity meter, the Swift automatic multielectrode switching box, cables, and special electrode assemblages including stainless steel switches attached to grounded stainless steel rods. Thirty of such smart electrodes arranged in Schlumberger configuration were utilized along each ERI line. Ten ERI lines were conducted in the area under investigation, their length varied in the range from 150 to 420 m, while the inter-electrode spacing varied between 5 and 6 m. Lines longer than 150–180 m were carried out in the roll-along manner.

The AGI Earth Imager 2D software (version 2.1.2) was employed for smooth apparent resistivity inversion to produce 2D model of the estimated true subsurface resistivity. This procedure uses Gauss–Newton least squares method (Loke and Dahlin 2002) based on the initiation of a finite-element model of the underground surface. The finite element model of electrical resistivities are automatically modified through an iterative process, so that the model response converges towards the measured data (Loke and Barker 1996b). The mean residual value (RMS) is a measure of fit between measured apparent resistivities and the apparent resistivities of the model response from the inverted resistivity (Bernstone et al. 2000). Stabilizing and damping factors, needed to balance data misfit and to speed up the convergence inversion process in early stages, were considered to be 10. Cholesky decomposition forward equation solver and mixed boundary conditions were employed to produce proper inversion of ERI data by the AGI’s recommendations and our own experience.

Results of EIS investigation and their discussion

Figure 2 shows the examples of vertical inverted resistivity section and the cross plot of measured versus predicted apparent resistivity. As seen, RMS error in Fig. 2b is about 3%, implying a good fit between them and hence reasonable accuracy of inverted resistivity section. Note that RMS of all ten conducted lines varied from 2.5 to 5% suggesting fair accuracy of inverted sections.

The scatter of the electrical resistivities of all data sets measured is very wide, from 0.1 up to 10,000 ohm m. Nevertheless, 95% of the whole data set offers electrical resistivity less than 450 ohm m and electrical resistivities corresponding to leachates (0.9–5 ohm m, Guerin et al. 2004; Zume et al. 2006) or water saturated clays are between 3 and 30 ohm m depending on measurement depth. Analysis of Fig. 2a shows that vertical section can be roughly divided into about two equal parts. The upper part of the vertical section comprises materials characterized by electrical resistivity between 5 and 30 ohm m (see color

scale at the right side of Fig. 2a). This range of electrical resistivity corresponds to the existence of domestic garbage (Table 1) and clays on the waste site. As we noted above, the waste landfill was mainly used for domestic garbage disposal from 1949 to 1999, and hence this observation seemed self-consistent to us. The lower part of the vertical section consists of materials whose electrical resistivity is in the range of 0.9–5 ohm m implying the existence of leachate or salt water saturated clay there (Table 1). Analysis of Fig. 2a demonstrates that the boundary between the bottom part of the landfill body and underlying water-saturated fat clays cannot be found accurately due to their similar resistivities.

Figure 3 shows changes of volume and area of “wet zones” (where electrical resistivity was measured to be in the range of 0.9–5 ohm m) at different depths of the waste landfill body. As can be seen, the volume and the area of “wet zones” increase with the depth of the landfill body below 20 m above the sea level and tend to decrease below the depth of 0 to –2 m.

Statistical analysis of the whole data set of electrical resistivity values measured on the site showed that standard deviation alteration (and those of confidence interval at the 95% level) with the depth of the waste landfill body can be divided into three main intervals: upper 25–31 m depth, intermediate –2 to 25 m depth, and lower –2 to –21 m depth. Note that confidence level was calculated as follows $\pm 1.96\sigma/\sqrt{n}$, where ± 1.96 is the area under the standard normal curve corresponding to confidence level 95%, σ is the standard deviation, n is the sample size while only positive values of confidence interval were taken into consideration.

Standard deviation values (and confidence interval values) are relatively low in the lower interval. Intermediate interval shows an increase in their values. Standard deviation (and confidence interval) peaks at the depth of –1 to –2 m, followed by a sharp decrease (Fig. 4a). To quantify standard deviation and confidence level changes, we calculated two new parameters as follows and termed them as standard deviation rate (SDR) and confidence level rate (CLR):

$SDR = (SD_i - SD_{i+1}) / (H_i - H_{i+1})$ and $CLR = (CL_i - CL_{i+1}) / (H_i - H_{i+1})$, where SD_i (CL_i) and SD_{i+1} (CL_{i+1}) are the standard deviation (confidence level) of two consequent layers of landfill disposal. H_i and H_{i+1} are the depths of two consequent layers of landfill disposal ($H_i > H_{i+1}$). Figure 4b shows that maximum values of SDR and CLR are at the depth of –2.5 m implying probably maximum differences in the data spread on the boundary between artificially (landfill disposal) and naturally (underlying soil) formed objects. Two investigation wells drilled through the entire waste body down to the bottom boundary of the waste landfill indeed confirmed the assumption: the

Fig. 2 a An example of inverted resistivity section. **b** Cross plot of measured versus predicted apparent resistivity. See explanation in the text

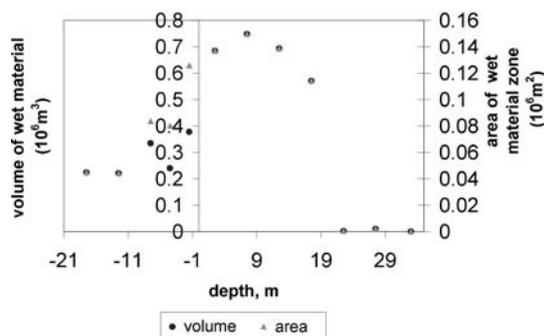
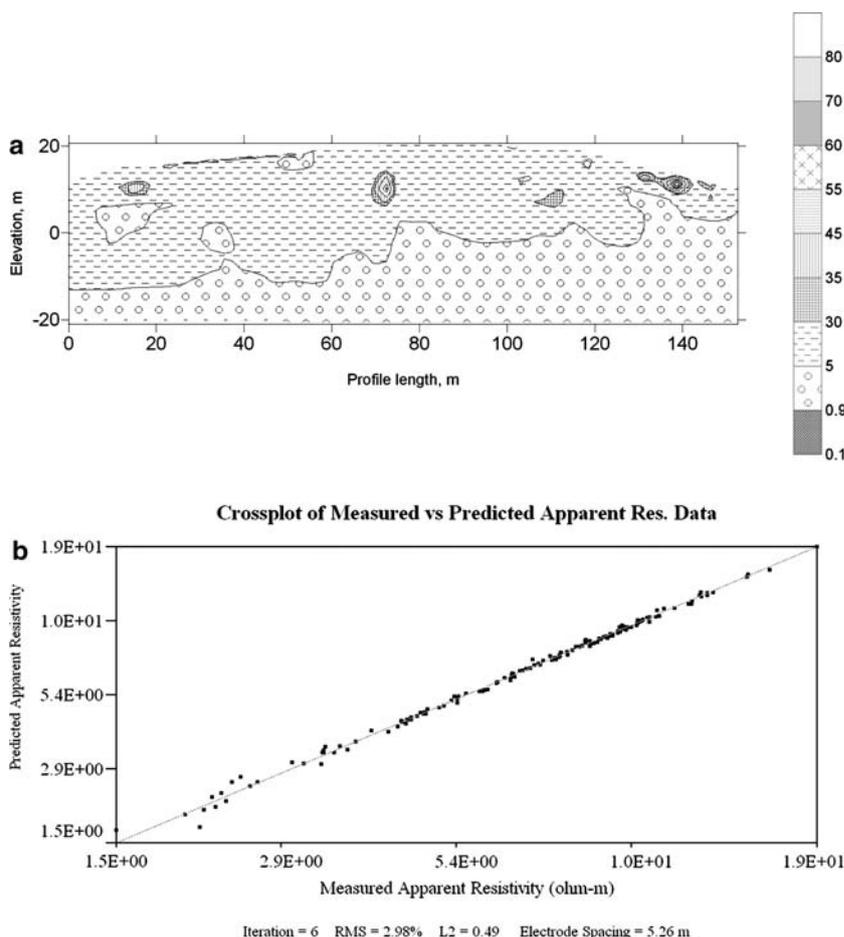


Fig. 3 Changes of volume and area of the “wet zone” versus depth of the waste body. “Wet zone” was defined as the zone with the resistivity between 0.9 and 5 ohm m

boundary between the waste disposal and underlying fat clays was found at the depth of -2 to -3 m below the sea level.

A self-consistency of our results seems to be understandable because dissimilarity in the spreads of two data sets originates from the difference in their genesis. The spread of electrical resistivity measured in the waste disposal, which is a heterogeneous object of artificial origin,

must be much larger than that measured in naturally formed object such as the soil underlying the waste body. Therefore, the transition from the waste disposal to the underlying soil is marked by a “jump” in the spread of electrical resistivity measured.

Our results show that total volume of “wet zones” (Fig. 3) in and under the waste disposal is estimated to be of about 3.5 million m^3 . Our method enables us to distinguish between “wet zones” in and under the waste disposal, the total volumes of which were estimated to about 2.5 million m^3 and 1 million m^3 , respectively (Fig. 3). Analysis of Fig. 4 shows that oscillations of standard deviation (confidence interval) and their rate gradually decrease in amplitude down to the depth of -11 m below the ground surface. Lack of their oscillations below the depth of -11 m shows data homogeneity in this region that could be associated with homogenous character of soil in this region and hence the absence of soil contamination there. That is why values of “wet zone” below the depth of -11 m could be related with “background values”—values caused by saturated clays or wet salted clayey sands. Figure 3 shows that such background value is similar to 0.25 million m^3 . Note the existence of small

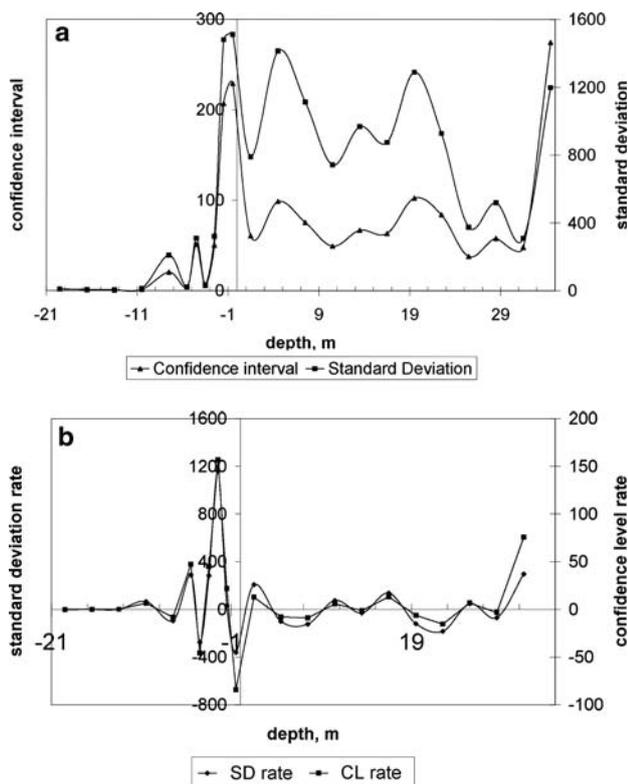


Fig. 4 **a** Changes of standard deviation and confidence interval versus depth of the waste body. **b** Changes of standard deviation rate and confidence interval rate versus depth of the waste body

“jump” of “wet zone” value (0.35 million m³) at the depth of -7 m below the ground surface. Taking background value (0.25) away from this value (0.35) yields the “wet zone” value at this depth to be 0.05 million m³ implying a decrease in estimated volume of soil contamination by factor 50: from 1 million m³ down to 0.2 million m³.

As we noted above, two lithological facies of clays interbedded with clayey sand underlay the bottom boundary of the waste disposal. Permeability coefficient of fat clays in this region is of the order of 10⁻⁸ cm/s, while one of clayey sand has 10⁻⁴ to 10⁻⁵ cm/s (Liskevich et al. 2003). Hence, contaminant penetration through the bottom boundary of the waste disposal could be associated with the existence of clayey sand lenses there.

Conclusions

Electrical resistivity imaging is a commercially available method intensively applied for characterization of natural and artificial materials in different geo-engineering situations. Its application to waste disposal investigations, where leachates accumulated inside a waste body are an

extreme environmental hazard, frequently allows not only a continuous study into a waste disposal but also a significant cost reduction as compared to conventional drilling method. However, in the special case that electrical resistivity of underlying soil is similar to that of leachate, accurate observation of the boundary between waste disposal and soil presents a challenge. Our investigation has shown that application of simple statistical procedure allows us to determine this boundary accurately on the basis of changes of standard deviation (and confidence interval). Differences in standard deviation (and confidence interval) result from different geneses of artificial (waste disposal) and natural (underlying soil) objects.

Moreover, our approach enables us to estimate the volume of contaminant penetration into the soil under the bottom boundary of waste disposal and hence more accurately assess the impact of the waste disposal on environment in the region.

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