

# Imaging seismic and aseismic plate coupling with interferometric radar (InSAR) in the Hikurangi subduction zone

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## Abstract

The coupling at the interface between tectonic plates is a key geophysical parameter to capture the frictional locking across plate boundaries, and provides a means to estimate where tectonic strain is accumulating through time. Here, we use both interferometric radar (InSAR) and GNSS data to investigate the plate coupling of the Hikurangi subduction zone beneath the North Island of New Zealand, where multiple slow slip cycles are superimposed on the long-term loading. We estimate the plate coupling across the subduction zone over different observational periods (2, 4, and 10 years) targeting different stages of the slow slip cycles. Our results highlight the importance of the observational period when interpreting coupling maps, notably highlighting the temporal dependence of plate coupling. Through our analysis of multiple geodetic datasets, we demonstrate how InSAR provides powerful constraints on the spatial resolution of plate coupling, even in a region where a dense GNSS network exists.



## Abstract

The coupling at the interface between tectonic plates is a key geophysical parameter to capture the frictional locking across plate boundaries, and provides a means to estimate where tectonic strain is accumulating through time. Here, we use both interferometric radar (InSAR) and GNSS data to investigate the plate coupling of the Hikurangi subduction zone beneath the North Island of New Zealand, where multiple slow slip cycles are superimposed on the long-term loading. We estimate the plate coupling across the subduction zone over different observational periods (2, 4, and 10 years) targeting different stages of the slow slip cycles. Our results highlight the importance of the observational period when interpreting coupling maps, notably highlighting the temporal dependence of plate coupling. Through our analysis of multiple geodetic datasets, we demonstrate how InSAR provides powerful constraints on the spatial resolution of plate coupling, even in a region where a dense GNSS network exists.

## Plain Language Summary

Plate coupling as a concept describes to what degree the boundaries between tectonic plates are frictionally locked and building up stress. Such accumulated stress (over many hundreds to thousands of years) will eventually be released in earthquakes, and therefore provides important information about the potential for future earthquakes. Our study uses satellite data to investigate how coupling between the plates along the Hikurangi subduction zone (New Zealand's largest and most dangerous plate boundary fault) changes with time. We analyzed Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar (InSAR) and Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) data to create maps showing the areas where the plates are stuck together (coupled) and where they move past each other (uncoupled). We show that the locations of plate coupling vary significantly for 2, 4 and 10-year timeframes, highlighting the importance of carefully considering the observation period when interpreting and comparing coupling maps.

## 1 Introduction

The coupling of tectonic plates describes to what degree the interfaces between them are frictionally locked and building up stress. This tectonic stress will eventually be released episodically once the strength of the fault is surpassed, with the style of slip depending on the

48 fault rheology. Driven by far-field plate motion with a constant velocity  $V_0$ , the deformation  
 49 rate along the plate interface between transient slip events is typically some fraction of the  
 50 long-term plate motion rate (usually called the slip deficit rate,  $V$ ). We quantify the degree  
 51 of plate coupling  $\gamma$  (or the "coupling coefficient") as:

$$\gamma = \frac{V_0 - V}{V_0}. \quad (1)$$

52 The coupling coefficient varies between 0 and 1, where 1 implies a fully coupled plate in-  
 53 terface and 0 suggests continuous motion at the long-term plate rate of one plate relative  
 54 to the other. By utilizing surface velocity fields estimated from geodetic data, it is possible  
 55 to recover the distribution of slip deficit rate (or backslip) and interplate coupling across a  
 56 given fault geometry at depth (Savage, 1983).

57 The discovery of slow slip more than two decades ago (Dragert et al., 2001) has upended  
 58 this simple conceptual model of a stationary (e.g., constant slip deficit rate) interseismic  
 59 phase (e.g., Frank, 2016; Saux et al., 2022; Maubant et al., 2022; Mouchon et al., 2023).  
 60 Geodetic observations across many tectonic plate boundaries have demonstrated how these  
 61 transient slip events, which do not radiate seismic waves, can episodically release as much  
 62 accumulated tectonic stress as major earthquakes ( $>M7$ ) (e.g., Wallace, 2020; Graham et al.,  
 63 2016; Maubant et al., 2020). Often (but not always) observed downdip of the seismogenic  
 64 fault region, past work has highlighted how slow slip can interact with earthquakes by  
 65 transferring stress onto seismogenically locked portions of the fault (Mazzotti & Adams,  
 66 2004; Ito et al., 2013; Kato, 2004; Kaneko et al., 2018).

67 To assess coupling along subduction zones, surface velocities are typically estimated  
 68 from campaign or continuous GNSS (Global Navigation Satellite System) surface motion  
 69 at a given point in space. It follows that the density of the GNSS network then directly  
 70 informs the potential spatial resolution of the recovered map of plate coupling. Modern SAR  
 71 (Synthetic Aperture Radar) constellations directly tackle this issue of spatial resolution by  
 72 measuring ground displacement over hundreds of kilometers with repeat times  $<24d$  through  
 73 Interferometric Synthetic Aperture Radar (InSAR) analysis. With each pixel of the radar  
 74 images acting as its own geodetic sensor, this allows for dense spatial coverage of the surface  
 75 velocity field that complements GNSS (Maubant et al., 2020). The precision of InSAR  
 76 ground displacement is however much lower than that of GNSS, making it challenging to  
 77 measure the displacement due to relatively small fault motions, such as a slow slip event.

78 Thanks to methodological improvements to InSAR processing, we can now constrain small  
79 velocities in the InSAR time series with amplitudes of mm/yr (Daout et al., 2019).

80 Here, we seek to quantify how plate coupling evolves in time and space across the  
81 Hikurangi subduction zone beneath New Zealand to capture the interplay between seismic  
82 and aseismic regions of frictional locking using both InSAR and GNSS observations. We  
83 focus on the Hikurangi margin, which accommodates the oblique subduction of the Pacific  
84 plate beneath Australian plate (Nicol et al., 2007), because it hosts multiple regions of slow  
85 slip across a range of depths (Wallace & Beavan, 2010; Wallace, 2020; Bartlow et al., 2014)  
86 and interact with both local and regional earthquakes (Wallace et al., 2017; Koulali et al.,  
87 2017). We consider the deep regions of slow slip to the south west that host major M7  
88 slow slip events lasting 1-2 years, at depths of 25-50 km with a recurrence time of 4-5 years  
89 (Figure 1). We also take into account the northern Hikurangi margin’s East Coast slow  
90 slip events that rupture the shallow, offshore plate interface (Wallace et al., 2016), and are  
91 associated with tectonic tremor and increased earthquake activity (Wallace, Beavan, et al.,  
92 2012; Delahaye et al., 2009; Todd & Schwartz, 2016). We demonstrate how InSAR can  
93 provide high-resolution constraints on the spatial distribution of both aseismic and seismic  
94 locking considering different observational time periods during which surface velocities are  
95 estimated. With such an approach, we are able to capture the dynamic behavior of a  
96 subduction plate interface through time.

## 97 **2 Geodetic data and analysis**

98 We use the three components of daily positions of 155 continuous GNSS (Global Navi-  
99 gation Satellite System) stations, available between 2006 and 2022 and shown in Figure 1.  
100 The data are processed by GeoNet <https://www.geonet.org.nz> with GAMIT software  
101 (Herring et al., 2010). To focus on the interseismic geodetic signal, we corrected for co-  
102 seismic displacements caused by a March 2021 M7.3 intraslab event located 100 km off the  
103 northeast coast in the East Cape area (Figure 1) (Okuwaki et al., 2021). After correction of  
104 the co-seismic offset, we observe a post-seismic signal at a few stations that we did not cor-  
105 rect (i.e, station WMAT in Figure 1), because the earthquake far from the coast generates  
106 a measureable signal at very few stations.

107 In addition to GNSS data, we use SAR imagery from the Sentinel-1 constellation op-  
108 erated by the European Space Agency. InSAR observations capture surface deformation

109 across large continuous swaths, providing the means to estimate the surface velocity at each  
110 of the pixels that make up every radar image; the images analyzed here have a swath width  
111 of about 250 km and a length of 400-500 km. Our analysis covers two tracks shown in  
112 Figure 1, A081 (ascending, with 183 images) and D175 (descending, with 154 images) that  
113 together cover a significant portion of the North Island of New Zealand from October 2014  
114 to January 2022 with repeat times between 6-24 days; we show in Table S1 the number of  
115 images and interferograms analyzed in each track.

116 We use the NSBAS (New Small BASeline Subset) processing chain to process the in-  
117 terferograms that are then unwrapped and inverted to obtain a time series and capture the  
118 evolution of surface displacement (Thollard et al., 2021). To ensure robust estimates of  
119 the surface displacement time series and minimize potential biases linked to soil moisture  
120 and agricultural vegetation, we construct the interferogram network using a combination of  
121 short and long-temporal baselines (Mathey et al., 2022; Dodds et al., 2022). To enhance  
122 the signal-to-noise ratio, we filter the interferograms using a complex multi-looking with a  
123 window size of 64 pixels in range and 16 pixels in azimuth, resulting in a spatial resolution of  
124 approximately  $160 \text{ m} \times 240 \text{ m}$ . Tropospheric signals are corrected using the ERA-5 reanal-  
125 ysis weather model before unwrapping. Once unwrapped, the interferograms are inverted  
126 to obtain the surface displacement time series at each pixel (Doin et al., 2015; López-Quiroz  
127 et al., 2009).

### 128 **3 Estimation of the surface velocity field during over three different time** 129 **scales**

130 Our objective is to quantify how the plate coupling, inferred from the surface velocity  
131 field estimated from the geodetic data, evolves during the interseismic period and superim-  
132 posed slow slip event cycles. To achieve this, we investigate three different observational  
133 time periods (2006-2016, 2018-2022, and 2019.4-2021.3) spanning different portions of the  
134 slow slip cycles that occur at the Hikurangi subduction zone. The GNSS dataset covers  
135 more than 15 years (2006-2022), while our InSAR dataset covers only the 2014-2022 period.  
136 Wallace, Barnes, et al. (2012) utilized campaign GNSS velocities to estimate an average  
137 interseismic coupling between 1995-2008. Another study Wallace and Beavan (2010) inves-  
138 tigated the coupling between slow slip events for the 2002-2010 period using the horizontal  
139 GNSS displacements corrected for observed slow slip. The geodetic data we use here covers  
140 a more recent time period with denser spatial coverage that also includes vertical motion,

141 sampling multiple (2-, 4-, and 10-year) time periods to investigate how plate coupling evolves  
 142 in time.

143 The continuous GNSS time series from 2006-2022 capture multiple slow slip events at  
 144 a range of spatiotemporal scales with minimal impact from seasonal environmental signals.  
 145 Slow slip signals are also evident in our InSAR time series, including events from the Man-  
 146 awatu and Kapiti regions between 2014 and 2015. Because our InSAR time series does not  
 147 record the beginning of the 2014-2015 deep slow slip event (Wallace, 2020), we are unable  
 148 to accurately constrain this event with InSAR. We also avoid including the postseismic se-  
 149 quence of the 2016 Kaikōura earthquake and the margin-wide slow slip it triggered (Wallace  
 150 et al., 2018; Jiang et al., 2018) within the time period of our velocity estimates. We thus  
 151 use only the InSAR time series between 2018 and 2022 and April 2019 - March 2022. With  
 152 these data considerations in mind, we estimate the surface velocities from GNSS and InSAR  
 153 datasets over three different time periods:

- 154 • 10-year period between 2006 and 2016 constrained by GNSS displacements,
- 155 • 4-year period between 2018 and 2022 constrained by both GNSS and InSAR surface  
 156 displacements, and
- 157 • 2-year period between April 2019 and March 2021 constrained by both GNSS and  
 158 InSAR surface displacements.

159 The 2006-2016 period represents the time period before a major neighboring earthquake  
 160 (the 2016 M7.8 Kaikōura earthquake), 2018-2022 represents the time between deep slow  
 161 events that recur every four to five years, and April 2019 - March 2022 spans a time period  
 162 between the major shallow slow events that occur every one to two years.

163 For each of the above time periods, we estimate a linear velocity  $V$  by fitting the  
 164 following equation with a simple least-squares approach:

$$u(t) = Vt + u_0, \quad (2)$$

165 where  $u$  is the observed displacement,  $t$  is time, and  $u_0$  is the static offset of the displacement  
 166 time series. We estimate the three-component (North, East, and vertical) linear velocity  $V$   
 167 at each GNSS station. The velocities are projected into an upper plate reference frame using  
 168 tectonic block Euler poles relative to the ITRF2014 (2014 International Terrestrial Reference  
 169 Frame) from an elastic block model of the North Island and northern South Island Wallace,

170 Barnes, et al. (2012). Using velocities in a reference frame relative to the upper plate blocks  
 171 allows us to invert for slip deficit on the plate interface without simultaneously inverting for  
 172 tectonic rotation of the forearc which is a clear feature of the North Island GNSS velocity  
 173 field (Wallace et al., 2004).

174 For each InSAR track, we generate a map of the surface velocity  $V$  at each pixel in  
 175 the satellite’s line-of-sight (LOS) (Figure 3). The initial InSAR data is referenced to the  
 176 ITRF14 reference frame (Stephenson et al., 2022), and we subsequently transform it to the  
 177 upper plate reference frame used for the GNSS data (as described in the previous paragraph;  
 178 Figure S2 and S3). To verify that our two datasets are in agreement, we compare the velocity  
 179 obtained from GNSS data projected into the InSAR LOS direction to the InSAR-derived  
 180 velocities. The datasets agree well with one another, exhibiting a correlation coefficient of  
 181 0.9 (Figure S5).

182 For the two shorter time periods, we observe higher vertical velocities during the 4-year  
 183 and 2-year time periods compared to the 10-year period. This difference can be attributed  
 184 to the larger slip deficit rates between slow slip events during the shorter time periods  
 185 considered. Comparing the GNSS velocities over the 4-years and 2-year time periods, the  
 186 only differences we observe are in the region of shallow slow slip events on the East Coast  
 187 (Figure 2). This region hosts slow slip events that recur every 1-2 years, notably shorter  
 188 than the 4-year time period. We do not however see a similar difference when comparing  
 189 the InSAR-derived velocity maps at 2 and 4 years (Figure S6). This is likely because the  
 190 amplitude of these events in the InSAR are small, InSAR data are more sensitive to the  
 191 vertical component, and the signal can be hidden in the noise. Because of this observation,  
 192 the insufficient number of acquisitions during the 2-year observation (maximum 50 dates),  
 193 and the noise in our time series, we opted to use the 4-year InSAR velocities to constrain  
 194 both our 2- and 4-years plate coupling models, while still using the 2- and 4-year GNSS  
 195 velocities for the two respective models (Figure 2).

196 We estimate the associated error  $e$  of our linear velocities for both the GNSS and InSAR  
 197 datasets as the root-mean-square between the model (Eq. 2) and the time series using the  
 198 following:

$$e = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{t=1}^N (u(t) - (Vt + u_0))^2}{N}} \quad (3)$$

199 where  $N$  is the number of observation epochs (eq. 2).

## 4 Geodetic inversion for the plate coupling

To retrieve the distribution of coupling on the Hikurangi subduction interface at depth, we utilize the linear velocities estimated during our three observational time periods to infer the slip rate along the subduction plate interface. We use the velocities estimated at all GNSS stations except those that are influenced by volcanic deformation within the Taupo Volcanic Zone of the central North Island, and volcanic-driven deformation at Whakaari/White Island. We now briefly describe our approach to invert for the slip velocity at depth; further details of our inversion are described in the Supplementary Information (Text S3).

We define the model *a priori* ( $m_0$ ) as a plate interface coupled between 0 and 20 km depth (decreasing with the depth) and uncoupled further below. The poor data resolution near the trench with our terrestrial datasets cannot constrain the coupling near the trench. Consequently the chosen model *a priori* controls the recovered near-trench plate coupling (Figure S11, S12). We do not enforce positivity of the recovered slip velocity: a positive slip rate represents slip deficit (motion in the down-dip direction), while negative slip rates represent forward slip (slip in the updip direction as during a slow slip event). This allows us to obtain a model of the velocity field that accounts for elastic strain accumulation (or release) along the subduction interface for the three observational time periods considered (10, 4, and 2 years).

We invert for the slip rates along a 3D model geometry of the subduction interface (Williams et al., 2013) discretized into a triangle mesh (1746 patches). We use a linear least-squares algorithm with the regularization scheme of Radiguet et al. (2011) to perform the inversion, where two parameters, a damping coefficient ( $\sigma_{m0}$ ) and a correlation length ( $\lambda$ ), respectively control the stability and spatial smoothness of the recovered solution.

We then introduce a relative weight  $\alpha$  to manage the influence of the two geodetic datasets, GNSS and InSAR, where  $\alpha$  weights the relative contributions as captured by the covariance matrix of the data (Text S1). To evaluate the impact of each dataset, we separately inverted for the modeled plate coupling using either only GNSS or InSAR displacements (corresponding respectively to  $\alpha$  values of 0.001 and 0.999 (Figure S8)). A comparison of the two inverted plate coupling maps shows that the spatial resolving power of InSAR is greater than that of the GNSS data, complementing the higher temporal resolution and lower uncertainties of the GNSS timeseries. We explore different  $\alpha$  values to evaluate the best compromise, using a goodness-of-fit  $\chi^2$  metric (Figure S10). We choose  $\alpha = 0.4$ , as it

232 results in the lowest value of the cumulative misfit (sum of  $\chi^2$  values for InSAR and GNSS as  
 233 described in Text S2). After determining the optimal weight, we explore different damping  
 234 values ( $\sigma_{m0}$ ) and correlation length values ( $\lambda$ ) to assess the sensitivity of our model to the  
 235 regularization (see Text S3). With the optimal  $\alpha$  value determined, we find the compromise  
 236 between the misfit of the model ( $\chi^2$ ) and its roughness, which was quantified using the L2  
 237 norm for these parameters (Figure S13).

238 Because the results of our inversion are expressed as slip deficits, we finally divide each  
 239 patch with the associated value of  $V_{plate}$  (2-6 cm/yr; Figure S7) to estimate the coupling  
 240 coefficient across the subduction zone. Undertaking a least-squares inversion of the surface  
 241 displacement observations for slip on the plate interface, we obtain estimates of interplate  
 242 coupling for each of three time periods that we investigate. The predicted surface velocities  
 243 from the best-fitting slip models compare well with the observed surface velocity fields  
 244 (Figure S9) for all three time periods.

## 245 **5 Results and discussion**

246 The recovered plate coupling map for each time period we investigate here are presented  
 247 in Figure 4. Our 10-year coupling model most representative of the long-term interseismic  
 248 phase is in good agreement with the model published by Wallace, Barnes, et al. (2012),  
 249 which used campaign GNSS velocities estimated between 1995 and 2008. We observe low  
 250 coupling values ( $\gamma < 0.25$ ) depths  $> 25$  km across the margin and an along-strike transition  
 251 from high coupling coefficients beneath the southern North Island to a largely uncoupled  
 252 interface beneath the northern and central margin. Such similar long-term coupling over  
 253 more than two decades (1995-2022) suggests the interseismic phase is relatively stable over  
 254 long time scales.

255 The observed surface velocities, which are generally towards the West corresponding to  
 256 locking at depth, above the deep region of slow slip over the 2006-2016 period are slower  
 257 relative to the upper plate than the 4- and 2-year velocities estimated at over periods shorter  
 258 than the regional 4-5 year slow slip recurrence interval. This is not surprising as it is the  
 259 signature of elastic strain accumulation observed between deep slow slip events in the Kapiti  
 260 and Manawatu regions (Figure 1). This is captured in our 4- and 2-year coupling models,  
 261 which aligns closely with past work Wallace and Beavan (2010) that examined coupling  
 262 between slow slip events during the 2002-2010 period and highlights the stability of the

263 coupling between slow slip events through time. Compared to our 10-year coupling map,  
264 this region of coupling extends further downdip (Figure 4), corresponding well with the  
265 Kapiti and Manawatu slow slip events that happen at depth (Figure 4). This deep source  
266 region of slow slip however appears uncoupled with a null coupling coefficient once we  
267 consider our 10-year observational time period, suggesting that all of the accumulated slip  
268 deficit is fully relieved by deep slow slip during the 2006-2016 period; this period includes  
269 the 2008 Kapiti, the 2010-2011 Manawatu (Wallace & Beavan, 2010), the 2013 Kapiti, and  
270 the 2014-2016 Manawatu (Wallace et al., 2014) events.

271 We observe a difference in coupling within the deep slow slip region of Kapiti and  
272 Manawatu between the joint GNSS-InSAR models and those solely constrained by GNSS  
273 data at both 4 and 2 years. The joint model reveals a broad coupled region between 30  
274 and 50 km depth, which corresponds to the Manawatu and Kapiti slow slip regions that  
275 were constrained previously by estimates of displacements during slow slip (Wallace, 2020)  
276 (Figure 4, S11). We note that our plate coupling model based only on GNSS data fails to  
277 capture this locked patch with the same level of spatial accuracy. This improved spatial  
278 resolution afforded by InSAR is particularly noticeable in areas where the GNSS network  
279 is sparse due to the exclusion of stations affected by volcanic signals. Our results thus  
280 demonstrate how InSAR can provide high-resolution constraints on plate coupling across  
281 a subduction zone, allowing for detailed identification of slow slip source regions (Figure  
282 S12). Despite the spatial resolving power of InSAR, the near-trench area of the Hikurangi  
283 subduction zone remains poorly resolved (Figure S11, S12). This suggests the importance  
284 of offshore geodetic instrumentation in accurately capturing the slip behavior within the  
285 tsunamigenic zone near the trench.

286 We remark that regions of slow slip are typically identified through inversion of static  
287 displacements during the slow slip event itself (Frank et al., 2015; Wallace, 2020). The  
288 estimation of surface velocities is however a more well constrained problem compare to  
289 measuring the displacement between two epochs, allowing us to take full advantage of the  
290 InSAR observations. While still possible for the largest slow slip events (Maubant et al.,  
291 2020), it would otherwise be challenging to identify where slow slip happens if we solely  
292 relied on measuring static displacements with InSAR data. Here we instead identify where  
293 slow slip occurs by constraining the slip deficit between slow slip events and comparing this  
294 with the longer-term interseismic coupling (Figure 4 and S14); this supposes that the slow  
295 slip source region is fully locked in between events. As an example, we map the cumulative

296 slip over one cycle in the deep slow slip region by differencing the predicted slip velocities of  
297 our 10-year and 4-year models, shown in Figure 4. We observe that the spatial distribution  
298 and maximum slip of about 18 cm corresponds well to past models of slow slip in this region  
299 (Williams & Wallace, 2015; Bartlow et al., 2014).

300 We also observe a difference in coupling over our three observational time periods in the  
301 East Coast region of shallow slow slip (Figure 4). During our shortest observational period,  
302 we see that the East Coast source region exhibits spatially variable plate coupling, with  
303 strong coupling only in the North and the South. Looking at the displacement captured at  
304 the coast in Figure 1 (e.g, MAKO), there are multiple slow slip events occurring at  $<1$  yr  
305 time scales evident in the GNSS time series. These slow slip events are present within  
306 our three observational time periods and thus reduce the recovered coupling in all of our  
307 models, explaining this spatially variable coupling within the shallow slow slip source region.  
308 At longer time scales (10- and 4-year estimates of plate coupling), this region appears to be  
309 fully uncoupled, due to the fact that multiple, shallow east coast SSEs occurred during that  
310 period. Unsurprisingly, the East Coast region has a lower coupling ( $\gamma < 0.30$ ) over 10 years  
311 compared to the 2-year and 4-year periods of observation, due to the relatively frequent  
312 (every 1-2 years) shallow SSEs.

313 We observe in Figure 4 an area of negative coupling near the trench in the East Coast  
314 region during the 4-year observation period. While the fact that we did not take into account  
315 the slow events in the area during this period would explain low or null coupling, it cannot  
316 explain negative coupling (more slip than slip deficit during the observational time period).  
317 Furthermore, we observe a relatively small coupled patch downdip of this negative coupling  
318 that is only present in the 4-year coupling map and not in the 2-year coupling map. We  
319 attribute this pair of coupled and uncoupled patches to deformation in the GNSS network  
320 due to an earthquake sequence in the neighboring Kermadec subduction zone in March 2021,  
321 where we were unable to correct the associated postseismic signal due to the relatively small  
322 geodetic signal of the earthquakes far from the geodetic network.

## 323 **6 Conclusion**

324 We demonstrate here how InSAR data together with GNSS positioning enables us to  
325 capture the spatiotemporal evolution of plate coupling in the Hikurangi subduction zone.  
326 We show how surface velocities estimated from InSAR time series significantly improves

327 the resolution of slip (deficit) at depth, especially in regions where GNSS coverage is sparse  
328 (Figure S8). We highlight that near-trench coupling remains poorly resolved, emphasizing  
329 the need for integration of offshore geodetic data (Figure S12). Our plate coupling models  
330 estimated over three different time periods (10, 4, and 2 years) are similar to past estimates  
331 of coupling constrained solely by GNSS (Wallace & Beavan, 2010; Wallace, Barnes, et al.,  
332 2012), but we highlight stark differences with increased spatial resolution of the deep slow  
333 slip source region and spatially varying coupling in the East Coast region that depends on  
334 the observational time period (Figure S14).

335 Our results suggest that the interseismic phase is not stationary due to the interplay of  
336 multiple slow slip cycles superimposed on the long-term, and likely seismic, coupling (Jolivet  
337 & Frank, 2020). This highlights that any estimate of plate coupling, derived from a given  
338 time period, is a snapshot of a continuously evolving plate interface (Frank, 2016; Mouchon  
339 et al., 2023). We note that the observed agreement between our 10-year model, which most  
340 likely represents the long-term interseismic phase, and a previously published interseismic  
341 coupling model suggests a relative stability of plate coupling over the past several decades.  
342 An advantage of considering several plate coupling models that span different slow slip  
343 cycles is that we are able to map out slow slip source regions with robust estimates of  
344 surface velocities, rather than noisier measurements of displacement offsets. This allows us  
345 to take full advantage of the InSAR dataset and its high spatial resolution, which otherwise  
346 lacks the signal-to-noise necessary to estimate the surface displacement offsets during slow  
347 slip events. Today, long-term coupling maps ( $\geq 20$  years) can only be produced using GNSS  
348 data. With the increasing duration of current and future SAR constellations, it will be  
349 possible to integrate InSAR data into these estimates of long-term coupling to map slip at  
350 depth in high resolution. Even with current data limitations, we demonstrate how to resolve  
351 in high resolution the interplay of aseismic and seismic regions of coupling across the scale  
352 of a subduction zone.

## 353 **7 Open Research**

354 The GNSS data are in open access on [https://www.geonet.org.nz/data/types/  
355 geodetic](https://www.geonet.org.nz/data/types/geodetic). Sentinel-1 data are available online <https://scihub.copernicus.eu>, we pro-  
356 vide the results of the coupling maps, and InSAR and GNSS velocities ([https://zenodo  
357 .org/record/8124888](https://zenodo.org/record/8124888)).

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Figure 1: Tectonic setting of the Hikurangi subduction zone. The blue and red contours are 100mm contour slip intervals of slow slip events for 2002-2014 period (Wallace, 2020). The blue contours represent deep (25-40 km) and long-term (1-2 years) slow slip events that occurred in the Kapiti and Manawatu regions, while the red contours represent shallow (<15 km) and short-term (a few to several weeks) slow slip events that occurred offshore the East Coast. Black lines: crustal faults, Red dots: continuous GNSS stations (GeoNet network). Dashed dark black lines indicate the depths to the Hikurangi subduction interface in kilometers below sea level (Williams et al., 2013). The black boxes represent the footprint of the two tracks used in this study (Asc081 and Desc175). Beach balls is the moment tensor of the East Cape (Mw 7.3, 03/04/21). Below: Several GNSS time series from our study region (KAPT, TAKP, CKID, MAKO, and WMAT). The east displacement on TAKP and KAPT exhibits long-term transient events, including slow slip and afterslip following the Kaikōura earthquake in the Kapiti region. The east displacement on WMAT, MAKO, and CKID illustrates the interplay of multiple slow slip cycles. The red lines denote the Kaikōura (2016/11/14) and Kermadec (2021/03/04) earthquakes.

Figure 2: GNSS velocities over different time periods. a) Velocities between 2006 and 2016 (10 years). b) Velocities between 2018 and 2022 (between), corresponding to the period between deep a slow slip events. c) Velocities between April 2019 and March 2021, corresponding to the period between major slow slip events. The color scale indicates the magnitude of the velocities in millimeters per year for the vertical component. d) Difference between the 10-year (a) and 2-year (b) velocities.

Figure 3: Surface velocities over 2018-2022 between deep slow slip events. Top: a) and b) InSAR velocity maps for the respective ascending and descending tracks. The red dots on the ascending map represent the GNSS locations of TAKP and LEYL stations, which are shown below. Bottom: c) and d) East displacement time series respectively at TAKP and LEYL. The dashed red lines in c and d represent the estimated velocities over 2018-2022 (TAKP) and over the period April 2019 - March 2021 (LEYL). e) and f) Comparison of the A081 track displacements (blue dots) and the GNSS projected into Line-Of-Sight (LOS) (black dots). g) and h) Comparison of the D175 track displacements (blue dots) and the GNSS projected into LOS (black dots). The blue lines in these four panels represent a smoothing of the InSAR displacements over three epochs.

Figure 4: Plate coupling maps of the Hikurangi subduction zone for the three analyzed time periods. a) Coupling between deep slow slip events estimated over 4 years using InSAR and GNSS. b) Coupling between major deep and shallow slow slip events estimated over 2 years using InSAR and GNSS. c) Coupling representative of the interseismic period over 10 years using only GNSS data. The blue lines are the slip contour of the SSEs between 2002 and 2014, black lines are the footprint of the two InSAR tracks. d) Profiles of the coupling coefficient as a function of depth along the AA' and BB' profiles shown in c. The orange, blue and red lines are respectively the coupling over the 10-, 4-, 2-year periods. Red squares are the slow slip events regions e) Difference in coupling over 4 years between the InSAR-only and the GNSS-only models. f) Difference of slip deficit over 4 years, corresponding to one deep slow slip cycle, using the velocities predicted by our 10- and 4-year models. Unresolved patches are transparent using the resolution matrix of the 10-yr model.

Figure 1.

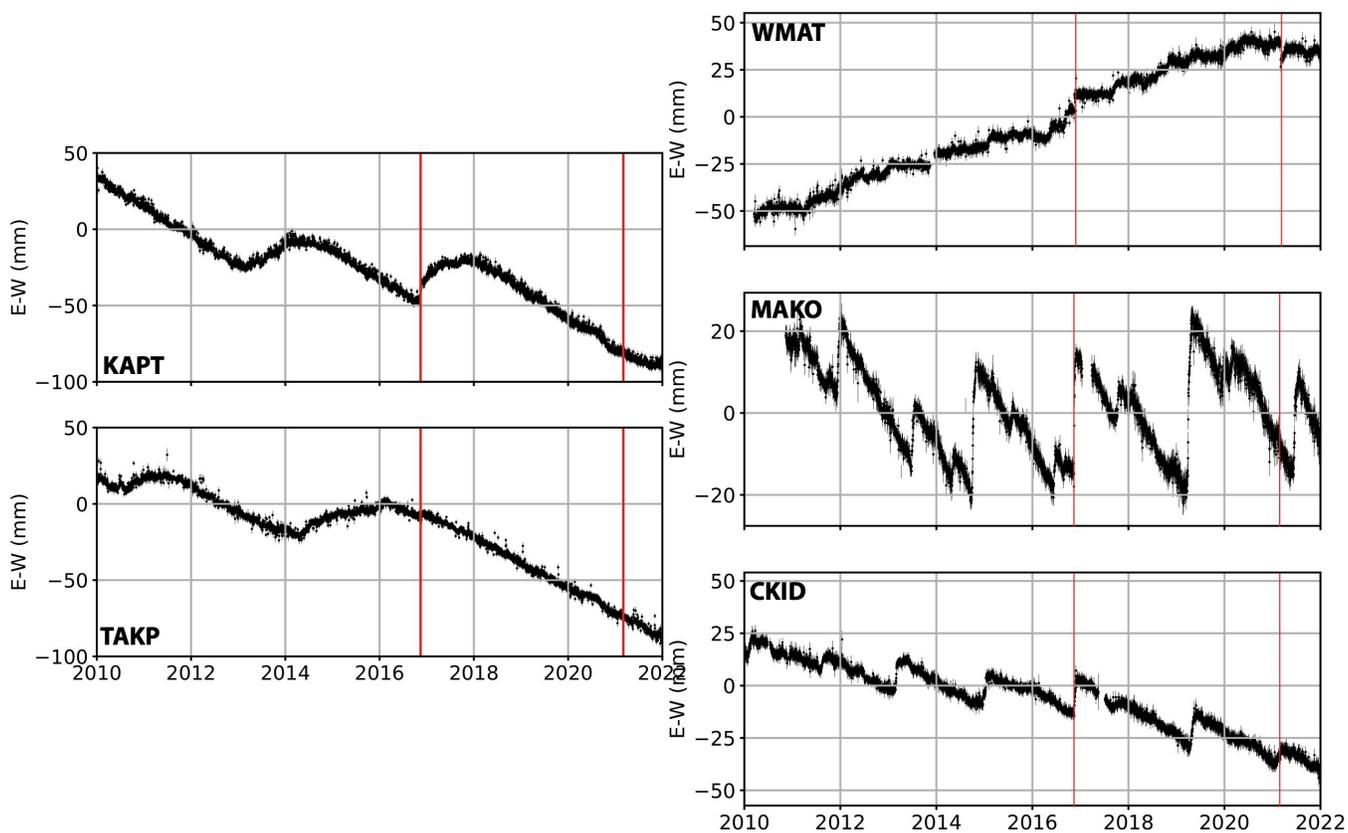
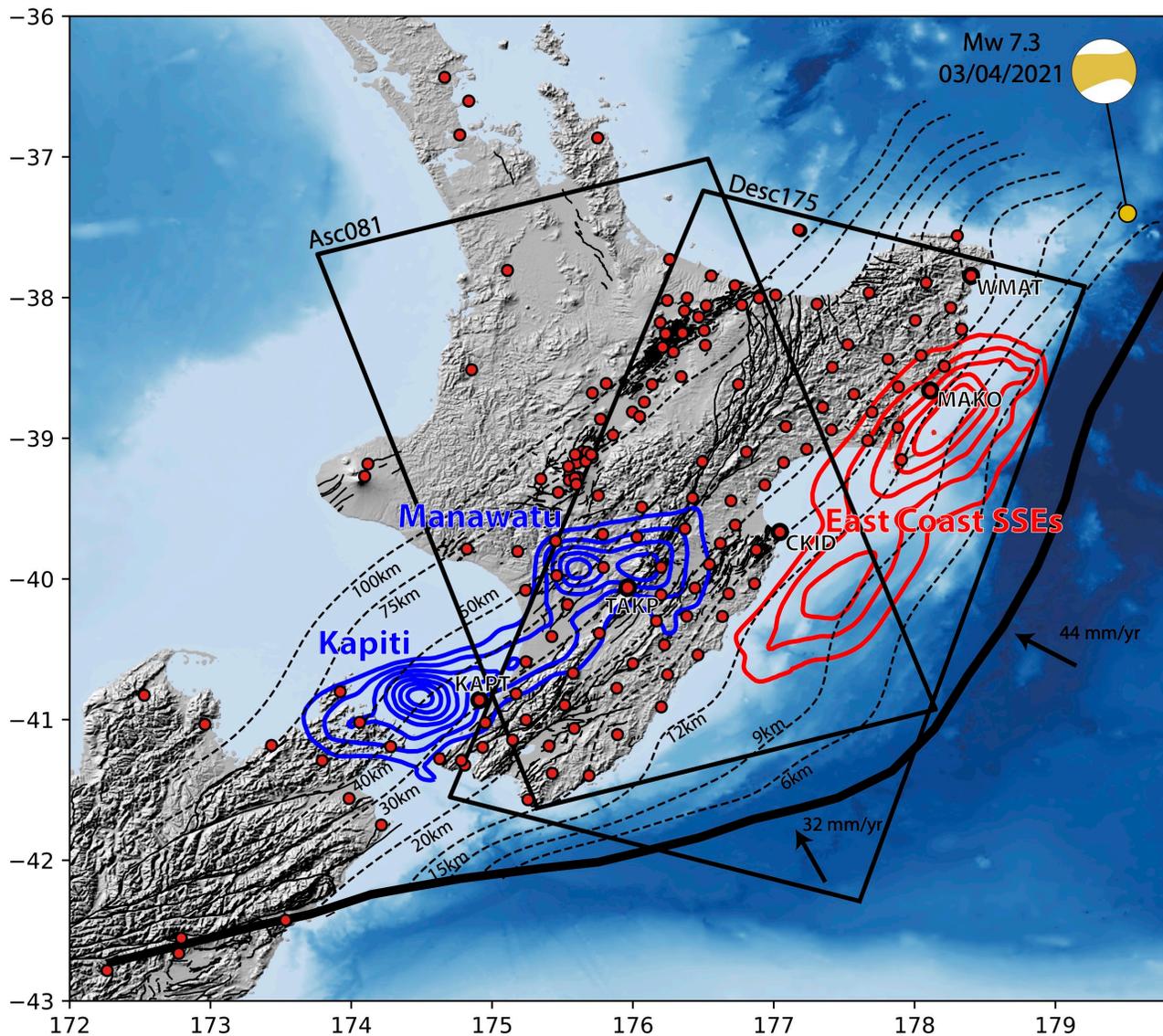


Figure 2.

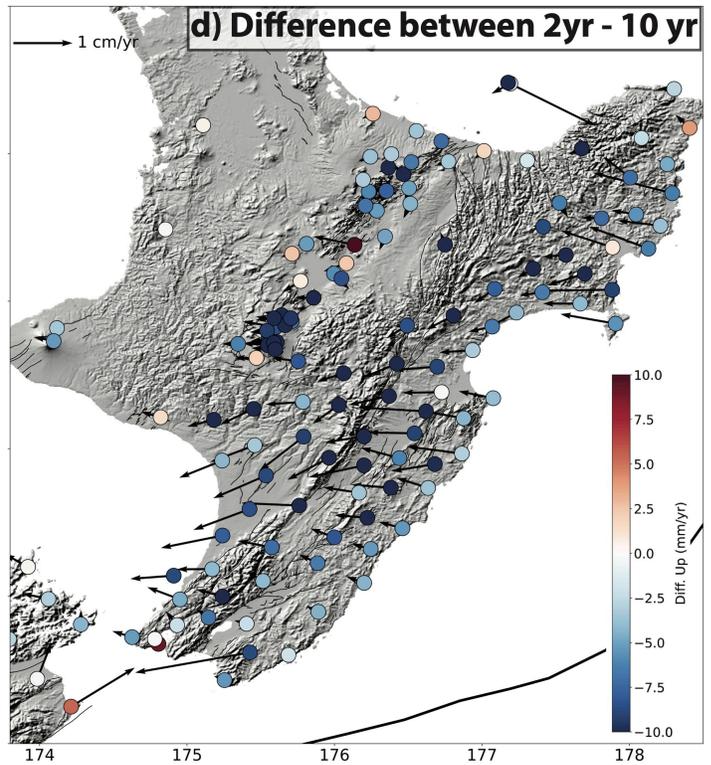
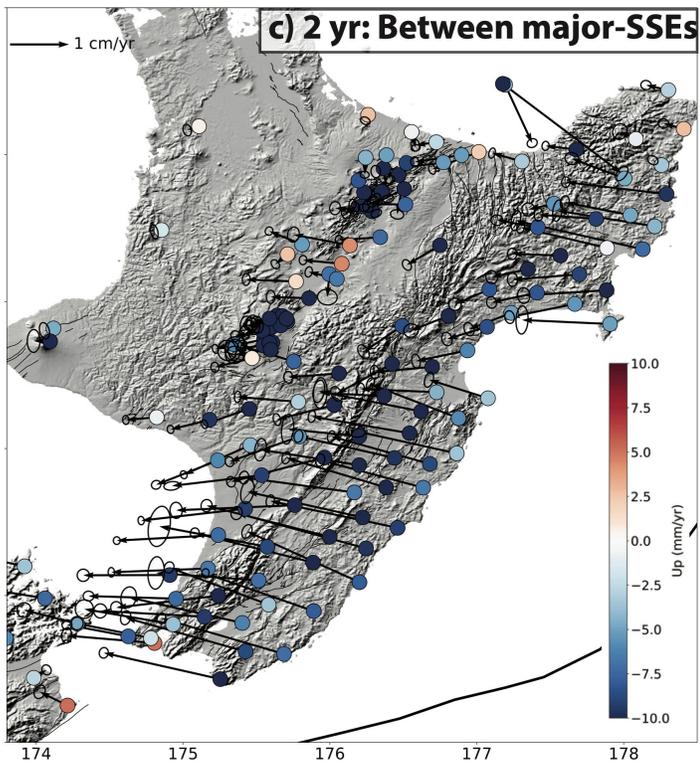
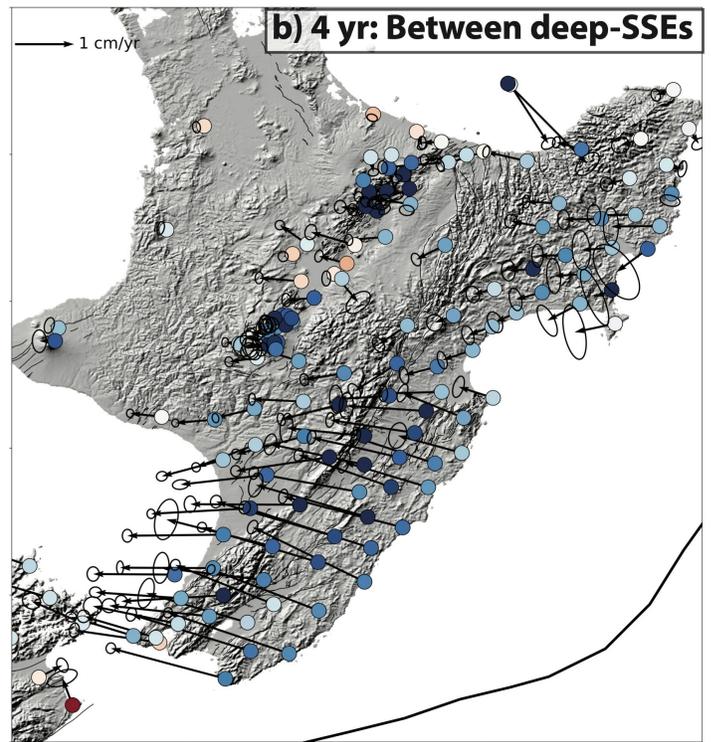
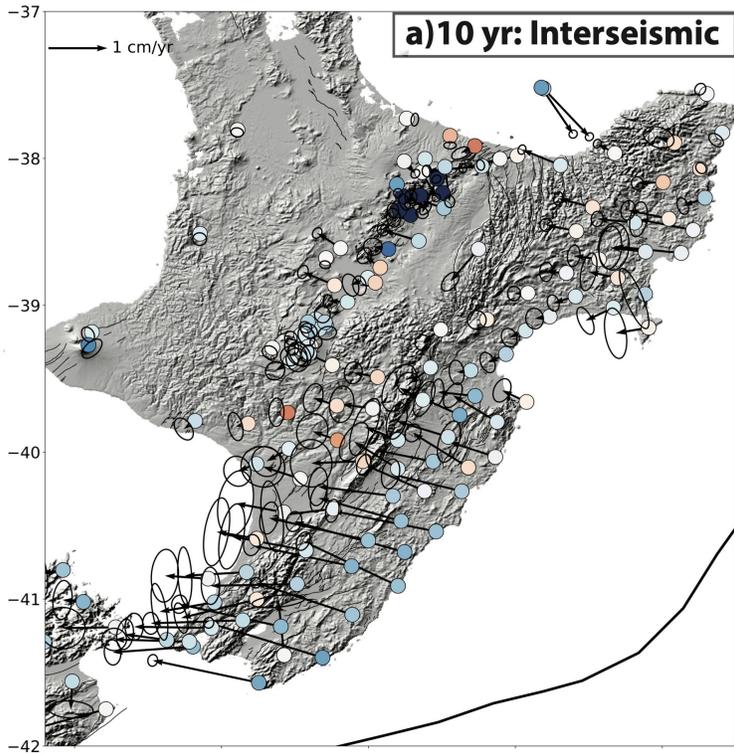


Figure 3.

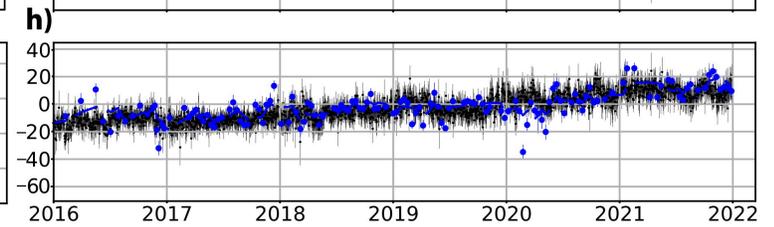
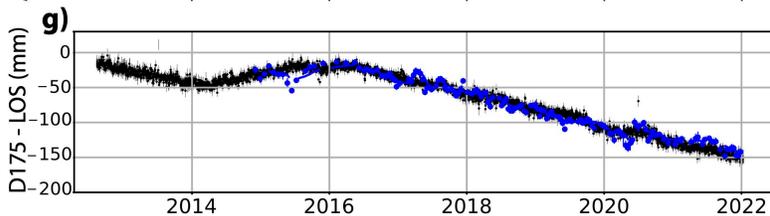
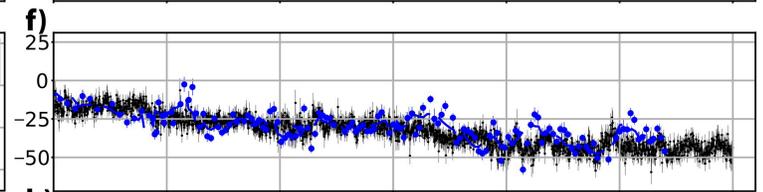
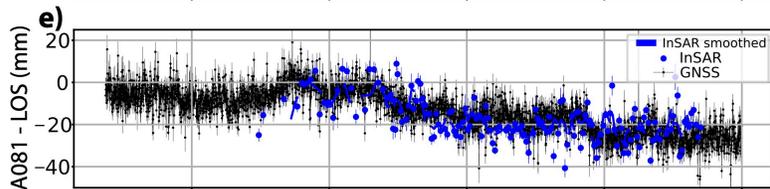
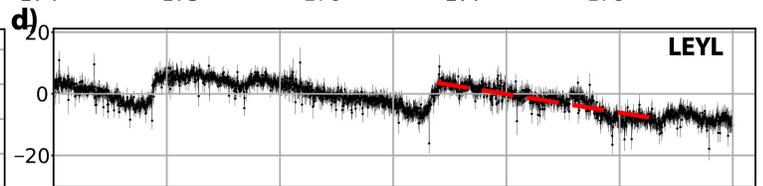
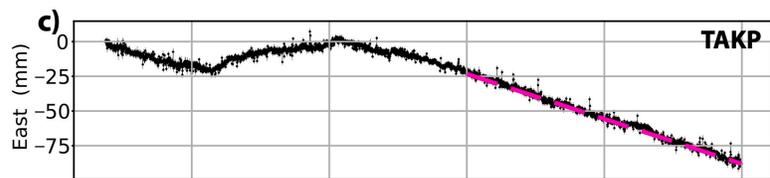
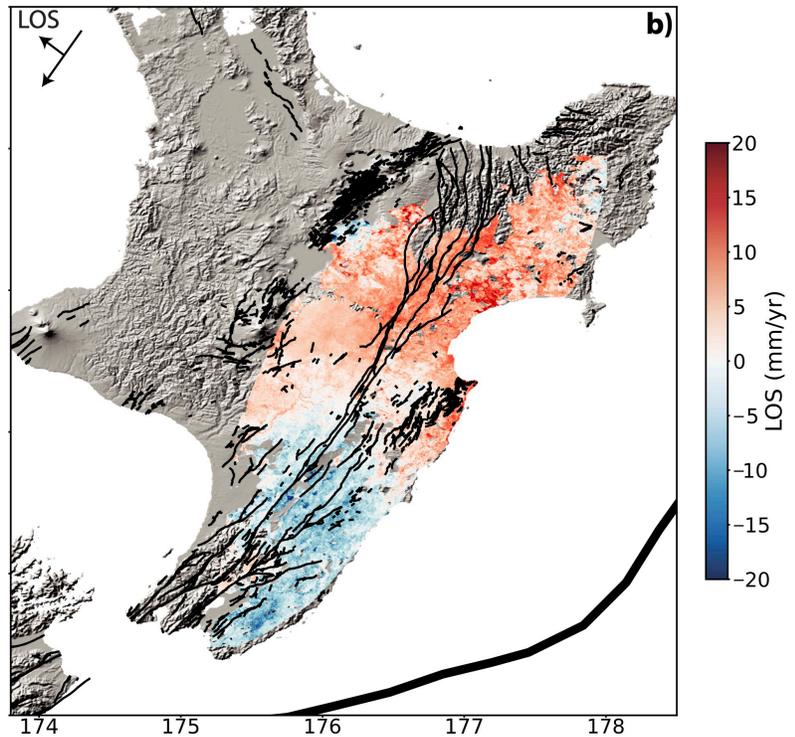
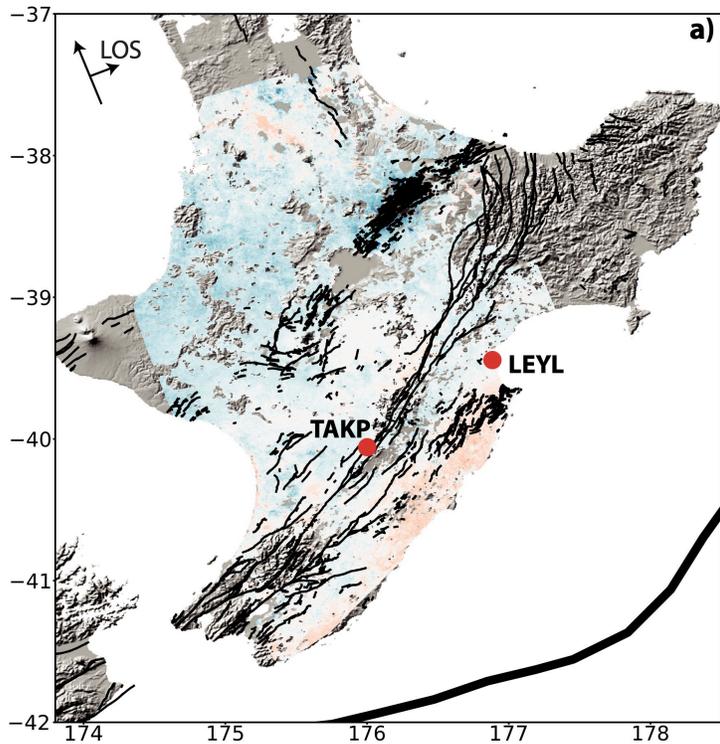
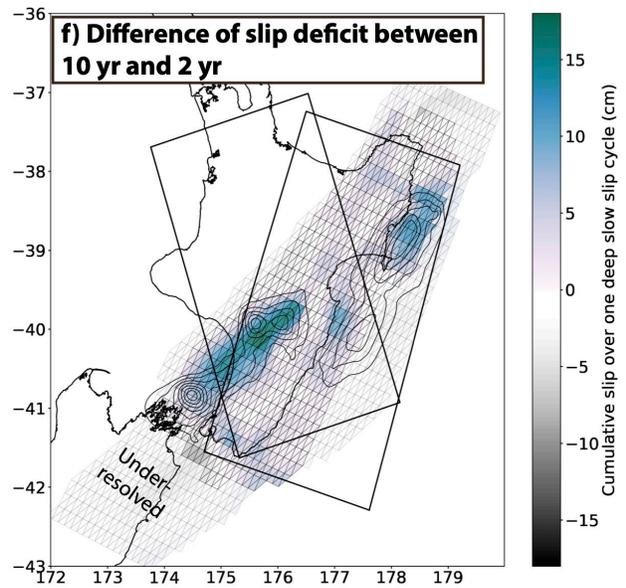
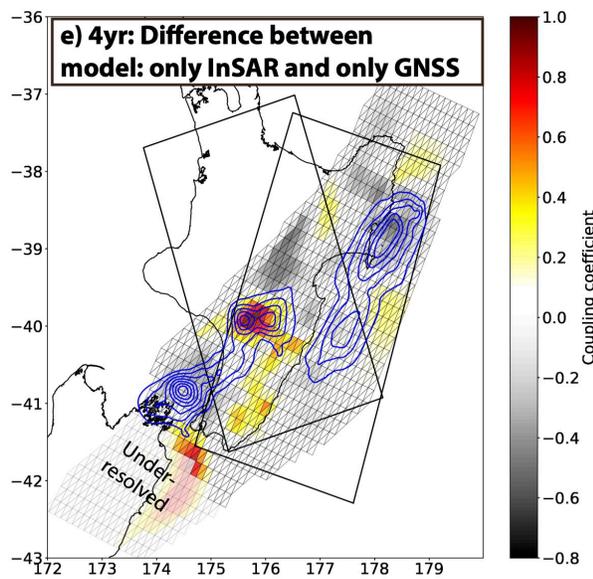
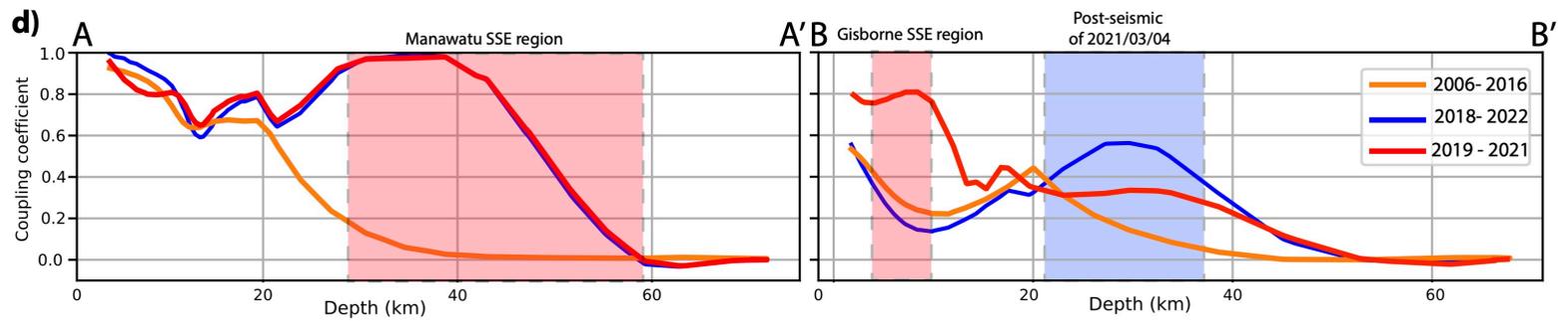
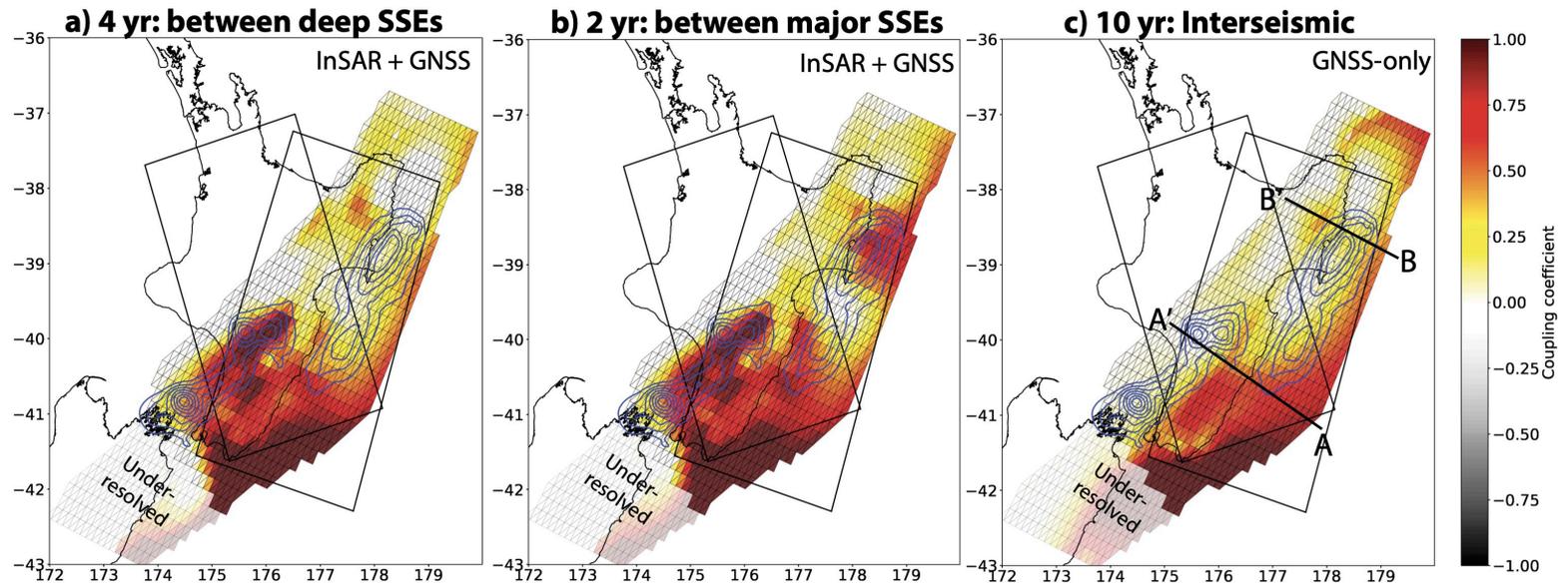


Figure 4.



# Supporting Information for ”Imaging seismic and aseismic plate coupling with interferometric radar (InSAR) in the Hikurangi subduction zone”

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## Contents of this file

1. Text S1 to S3
2. Figures S1 to S14
3. Tables S1

### **Text S1. Definition of the dataset weighting coefficient**

The relative weight between the two datasets is introduced by a weighting factor of the data covariance matrix,  $C_d$ :

$$C_d = \begin{bmatrix} \alpha^2 C_{dInSAR} & 0 \\ 0 & (1 - \alpha)^2 C_{dGNSS} \end{bmatrix} \quad (1)$$

where  $C_{dGNSS}$  is the covariance of the GNSS data,  $C_{dInSAR}$  is the covariance of the InSAR data and  $\alpha$  is the weighting coefficient. If  $\alpha = 0$  the weight of the InSAR data is null, if  $\alpha=1$  the weight of the GNSS data is null.

### **Text S2. Choice of weighting coefficient**

We evaluate a range of values of  $\alpha$ , the weighting coefficient between the GNSS and InSAR datasets, between 0.2 and 0.9. We observe that the goodness-of-fit  $\chi^2$  value of each dataset is less than 0.4 and does not change significantly with  $\alpha$ . This suggests that this range of  $\alpha$  values is a reasonable, with both datasets fitting well the predictions. Models with different weights within this broad range are all quite similar to one another. However, if the weight exceeds  $\alpha=0.6$ , we are not able to resolve the plate coupling in the North of the subduction, because we do not have InSAR data in this region. We chose a value of 0.4 because it is a reasonable balance between the two datasets and produces a model with a low  $\chi^2$  value.

### **Text S3. Inversion method**

We used a static inversion method to estimate the slip deficit rates on the subduction interface based on the observed displacement rates on the surface (Savage, 1983). The map of predicted velocities on the plate interface recovered using this inversion represents the estimated slip deficit rate. To obtain the coupling coefficient we need to divide each

patch result by the loading velocity:

$$\gamma = \frac{V_{backslip}}{V_0}. \quad (2)$$

We use the model of Wallace and Beavan (2010) to estimate  $V_0$  (Figure S6). Plate coupling ( $\gamma$ ), where the subducting plate is assumed to be frictionally locked to the upper plate, is typically  $<1$ , with 1 designating a fully locked interface. A negative or null value of coupling corresponds to slip on the interface during the observational period; values of slip are typically higher than  $V_0$ , producing coupling values  $< -1$ .

In our forward model, the Green's functions are computed for a homogeneous elastic half-space using the analytical formulation of Okada (1992). To alleviate the inversion's computational cost, we reduce the number of InSAR velocity measurements in each track by performing a uniform downsampling pixel values with a  $10 \times 10 \text{ km}^2$  window. The associated InSAR uncertainties are computed from the errors associated with each pixel (Figure S5) using the same downsampling method. We neglect the covariance between pixels, and covariance terms between our GNSS and InSAR datasets in this inversion to reduce the computational cost. We note that considering the covariance between pixels and the covariance terms between our GNSS and InSAR datasets in the inversion would lead to excessive downweighting of the InSAR data, likely undervaluing InSAR's contribution to the overall analysis (Bekaert et al., 2016). The slip direction is fixed in the inversion using the rake of the block model that defines our upper plate reference frame (Wallace & Beavan, 2010), where the rake of each fault patch is the projection of the plate velocity vectors from the block model (Figure S6). Finally to calculate our model  $m$ , we perform a linear inversion:

$$m^* = m_0 + C_m G^t (G C_m G^t + C_d)^{-1} (d - G m_0) \quad (3)$$

where  $m_0$  is the model *a priori* (Tarantola, 2005), and  $C_d$  and  $C_m$  are respectively the covariance matrices of the data and the model.

The purpose of utilizing the model covariance matrix  $C_m$  is to incorporate correlation between adjacent parameters, which is known as spatial smoothing. The value at position (i, j) in  $C_m$  is determined by the following equation:

$$C_m(i, j) = (\sigma_{m0} \frac{\lambda_0}{\lambda})^2 \exp(-\frac{d(i, j)}{\lambda}) \quad (4)$$

We explore the optimal values of  $\sigma_{m0}$  and  $\lambda$  for each time periods. For the 2- and 4-years, we first explore the optimal value of  $\log_{10}(\sigma_{m0}) = -2.6$  for a fixed  $\lambda=50$  km. Once the optimal value is found (Figure S13) we then search for the optimal  $\lambda$  value which we fix to  $\lambda=30$  km. The optimal model has a  $\chi^2 = 0.21$  (2-year) and  $\chi^2 = 0.25$  (4-year). For the 10-year observational period where we only use GNSS data, we search for different optimal values (Figure S11,  $\log_{10}(\sigma_{m0}) = -1$  and  $\lambda = 30$ km).

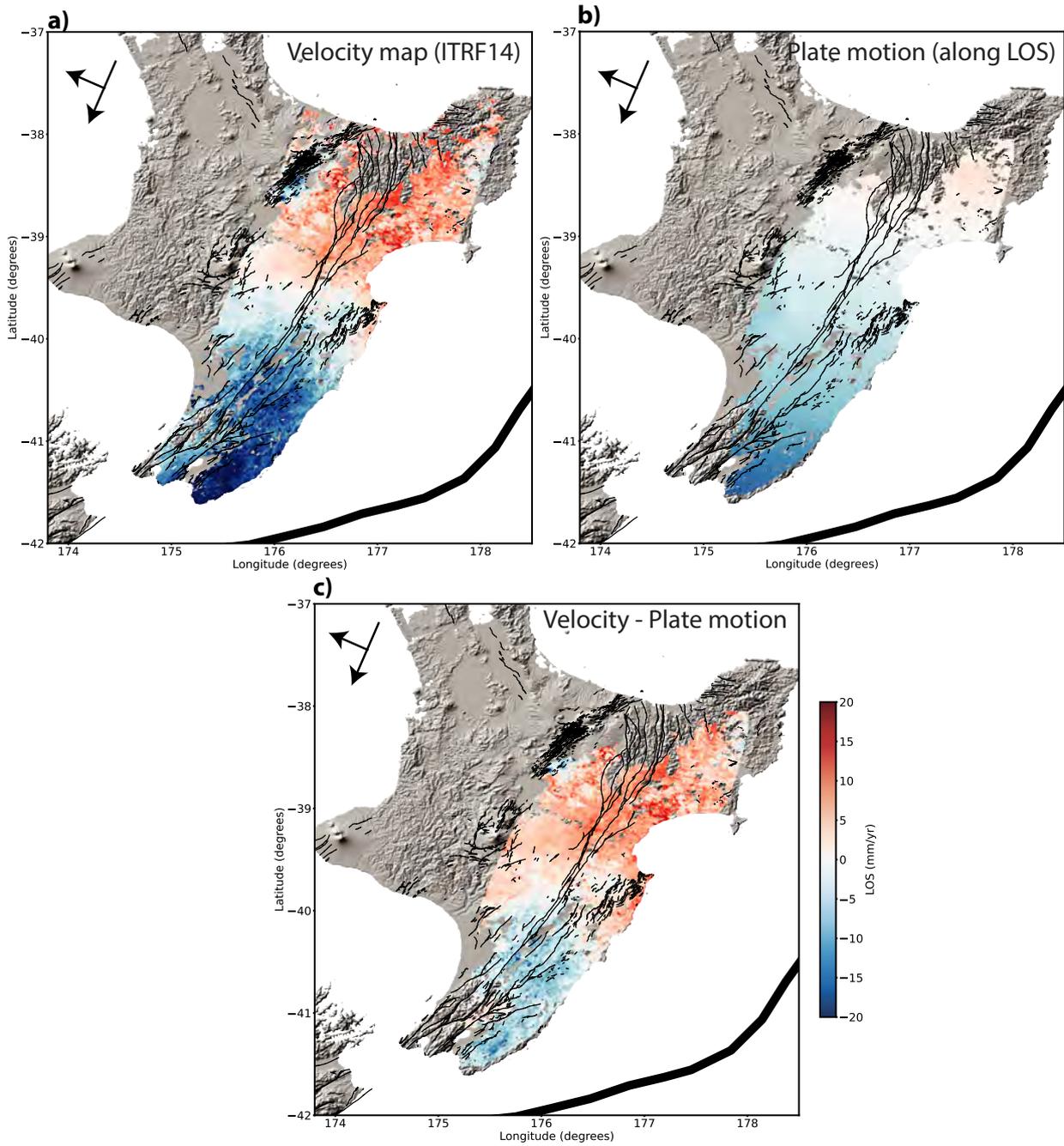
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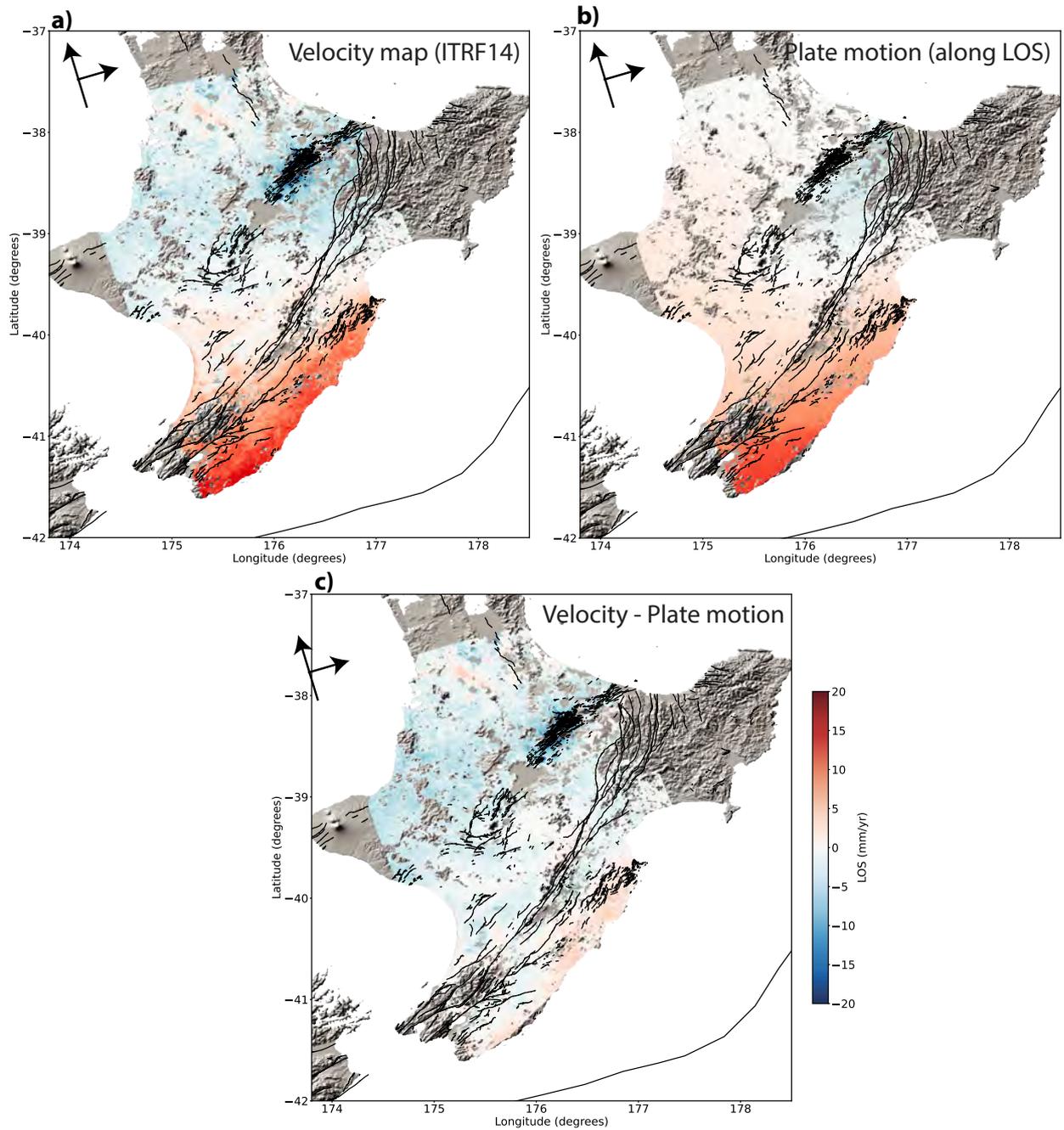
**Table S1.** Table of the number of images and interferograms for two Sentinel-1 tracks used in this study.

<b>Track Name</b>	<b>Number of Images</b>	<b>Number of Interferograms</b>
A081	183	1376
D175	154	1281



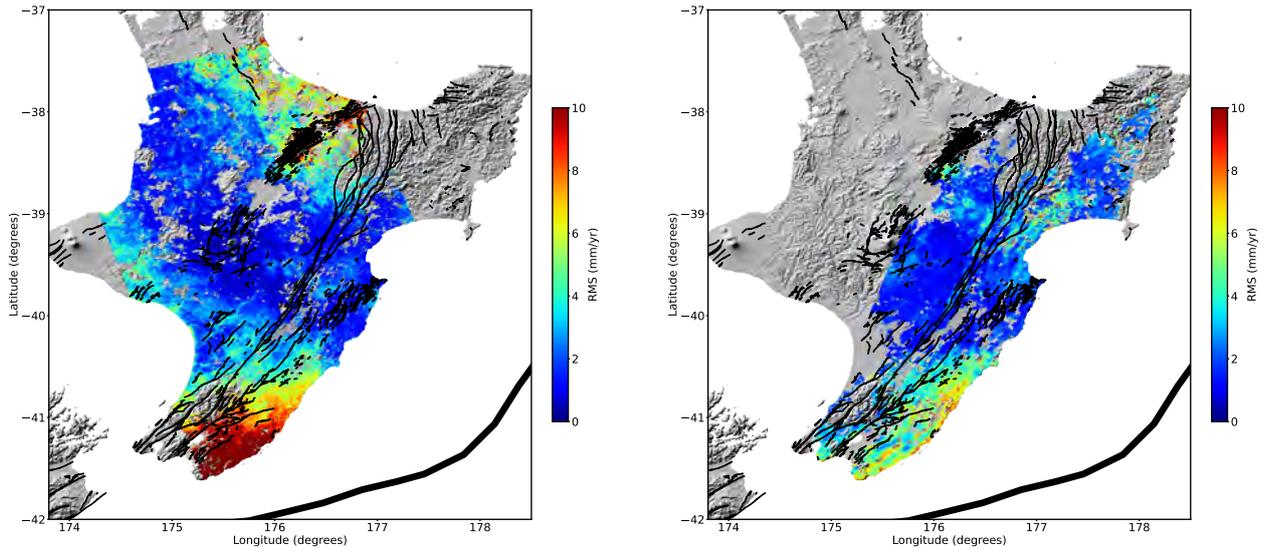


**Figure S2.** D175 velocity maps. a) Velocity map in ITRF14 reference frame, b) Plate motion in Line-Of-Sight of the satellite. c) Velocity map corrected from the plate motion

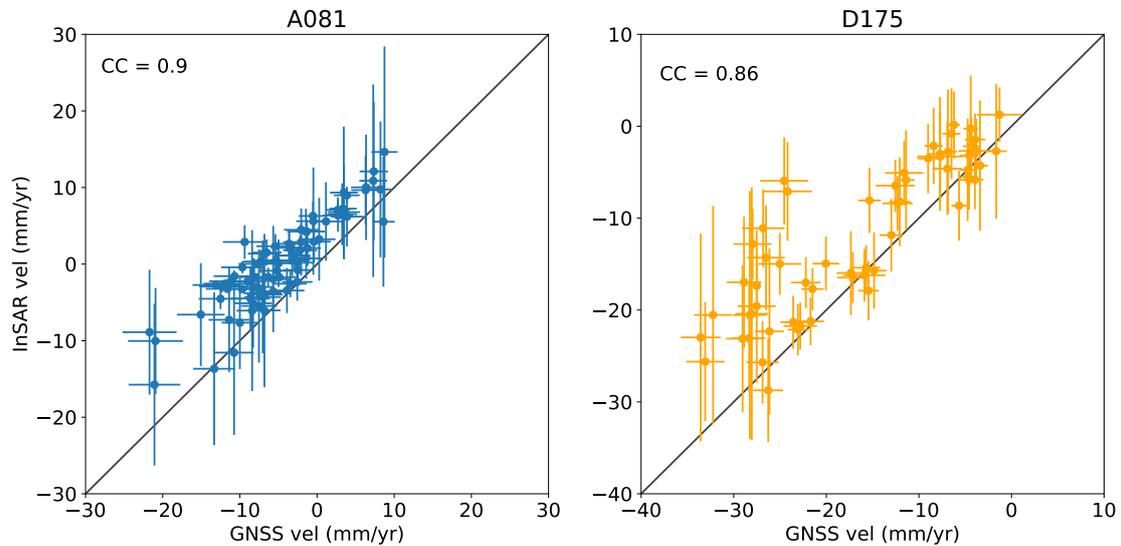


**Figure S3.** A081 velocity maps. a) Velocity map in ITRF14 reference frame, b) Plate motion in Line-Of-Sight of the satellite. c) Velocity map corrected from the plate motion

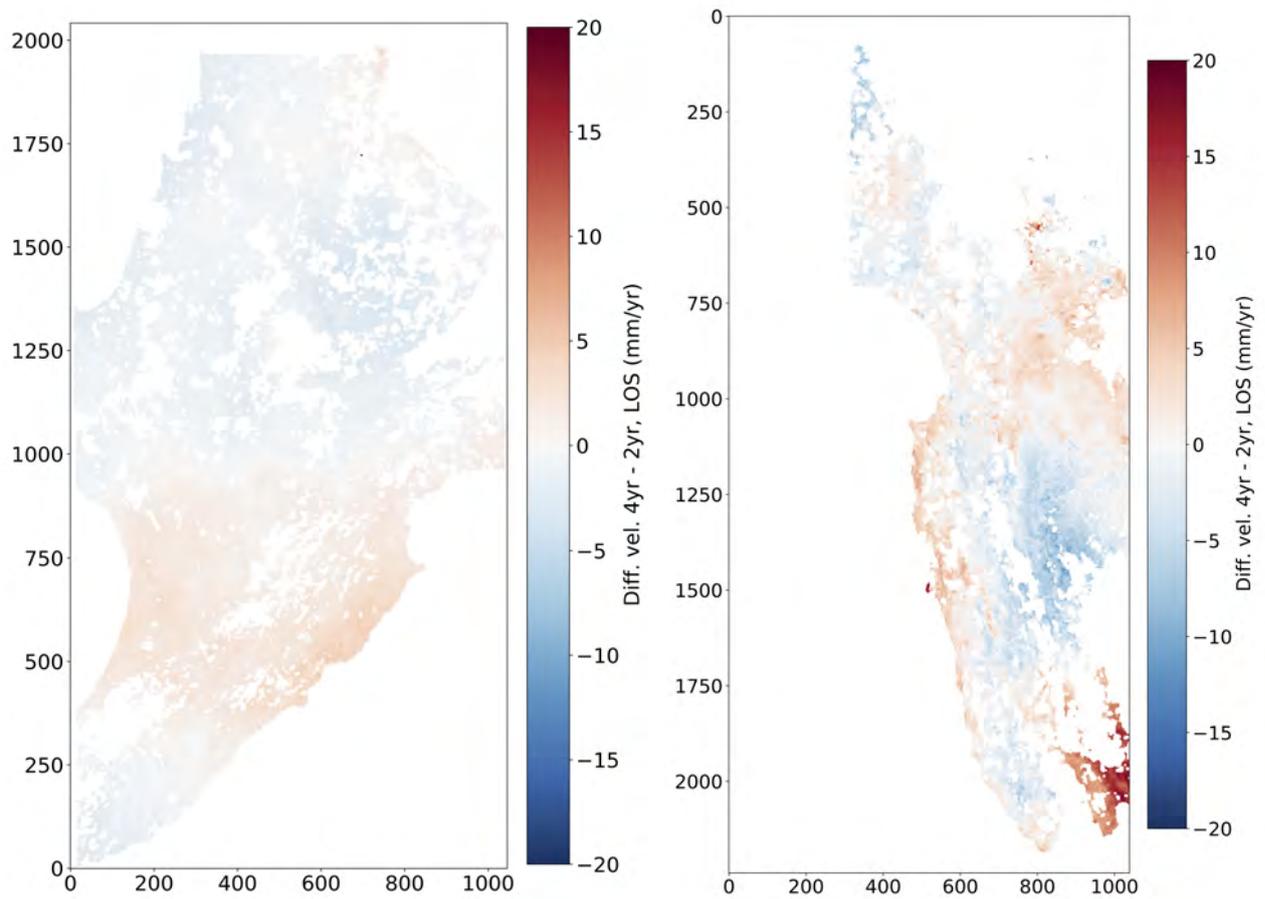
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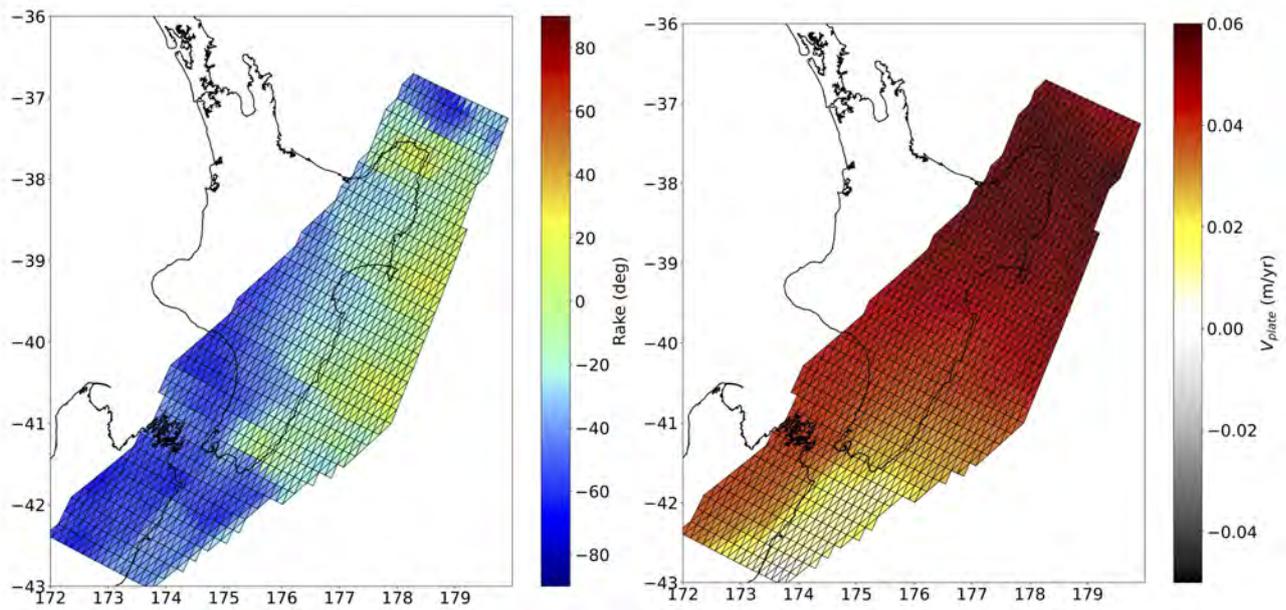
**Figure S4.** Errors associated to each pixel for InSAR velocity maps. Left: RMSE of A081 track. Right: RMSE of D175 track.



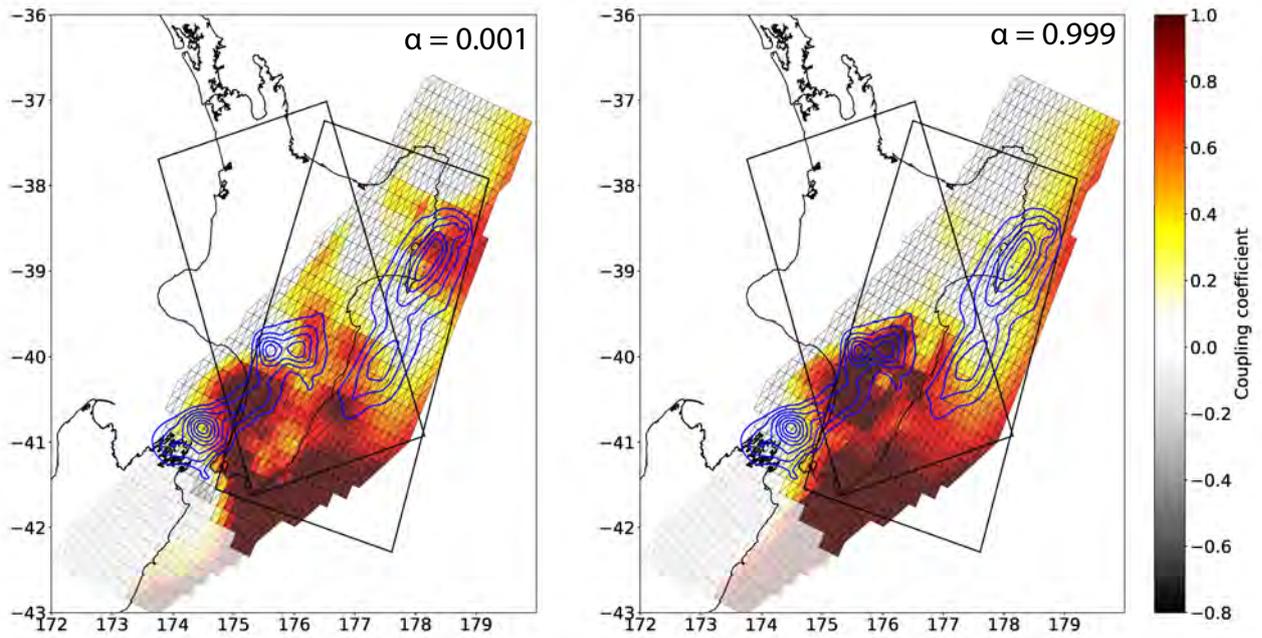
**Figure S5.** Comparison between InSAR and GNSS velocities (converted in LOS). Left: comparison for the ascending track. Right: comparison for the D175 track.



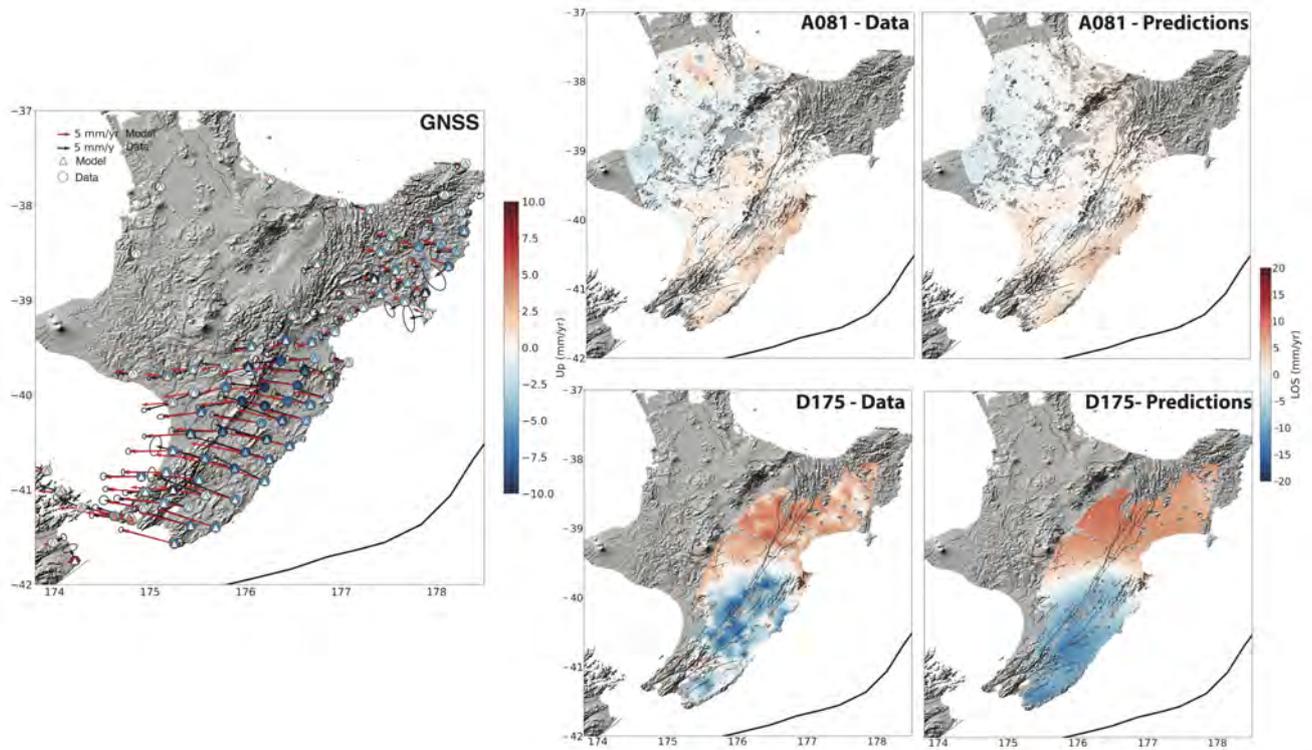
**Figure S6.** Difference between InSAR velocities maps calculated on a period of 4 years and a period of 2 years. Left: ascending track, right: descending track.



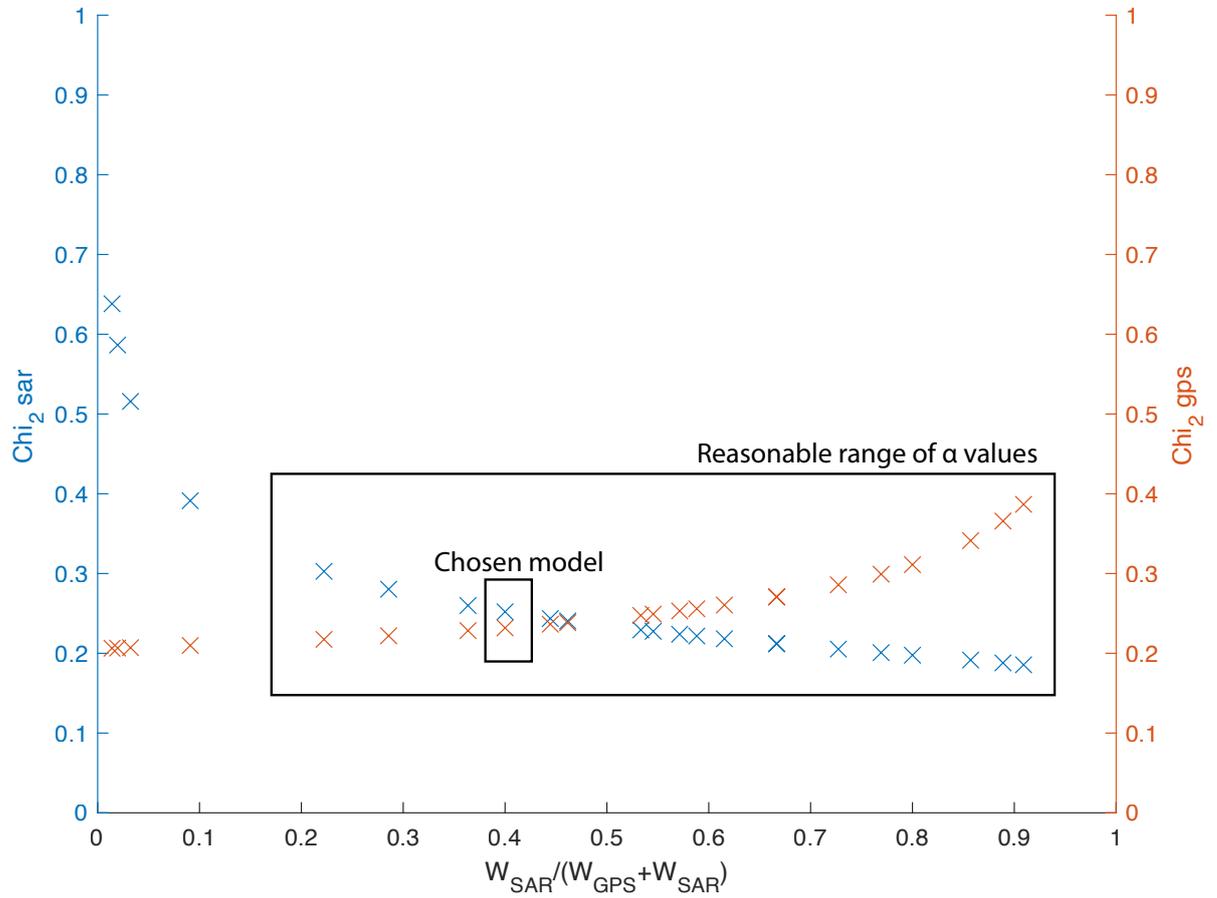
**Figure S7.** Rake (left) and velocity plate (right) model of the Hikurangi subduction zone from (Wallace & Beavan, 2010).



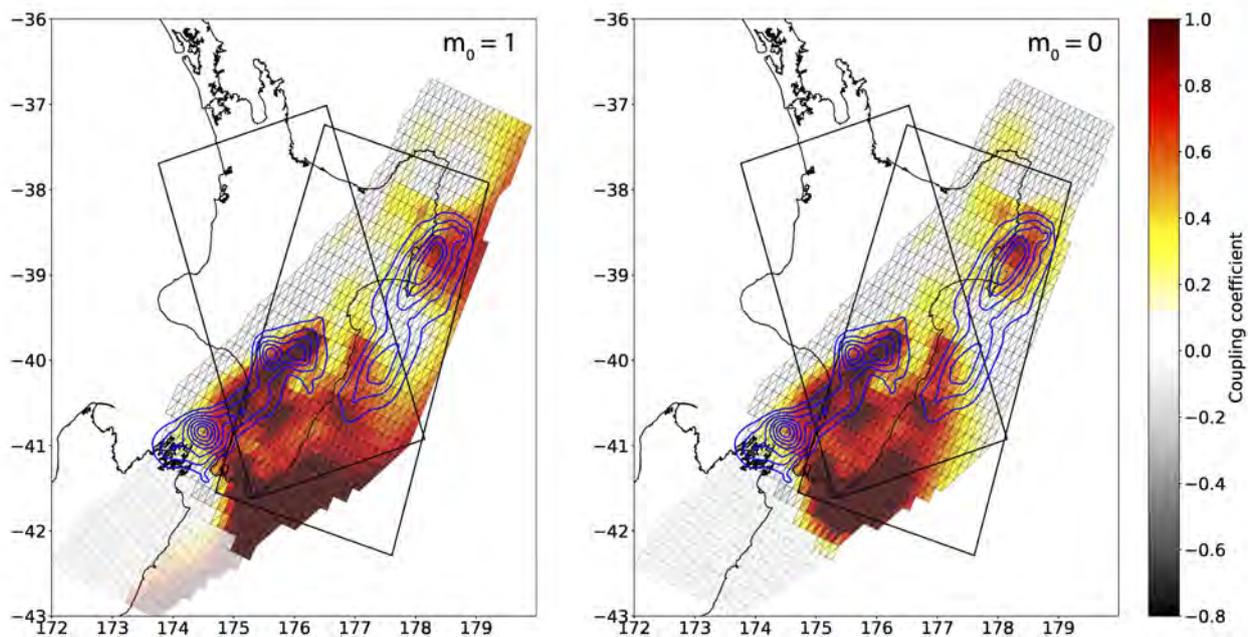
**Figure S8.** Model of coupling between deep slow slip events (2-years) using only GNSS data on the left ( $\alpha = 0.001$ ) or only InSAR data on the right ( $\alpha = 0.999$ ). The blue lines represent the slow slip events. The black rectangles are the footprint of the InSAR tracks.



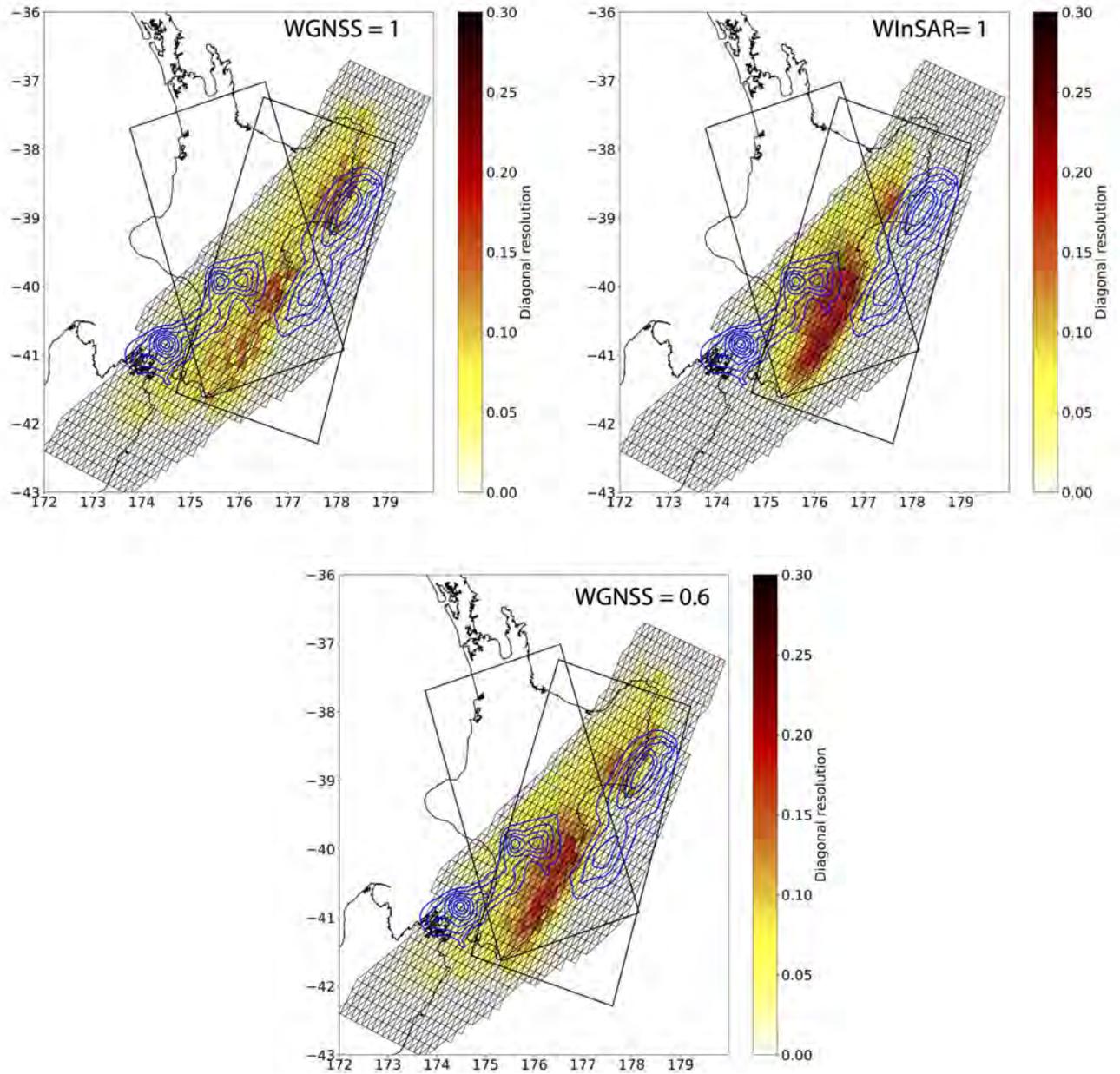
**Figure S9.** Comparison between data and predictions of the model for the inversions of 2-years of observational period. The Left panel is the GNSS data (black arrows and circles) and prediction (red arrows and triangles). The right panels are data and predictions for InSAR data (A081 on up line, D175 on bottom line).



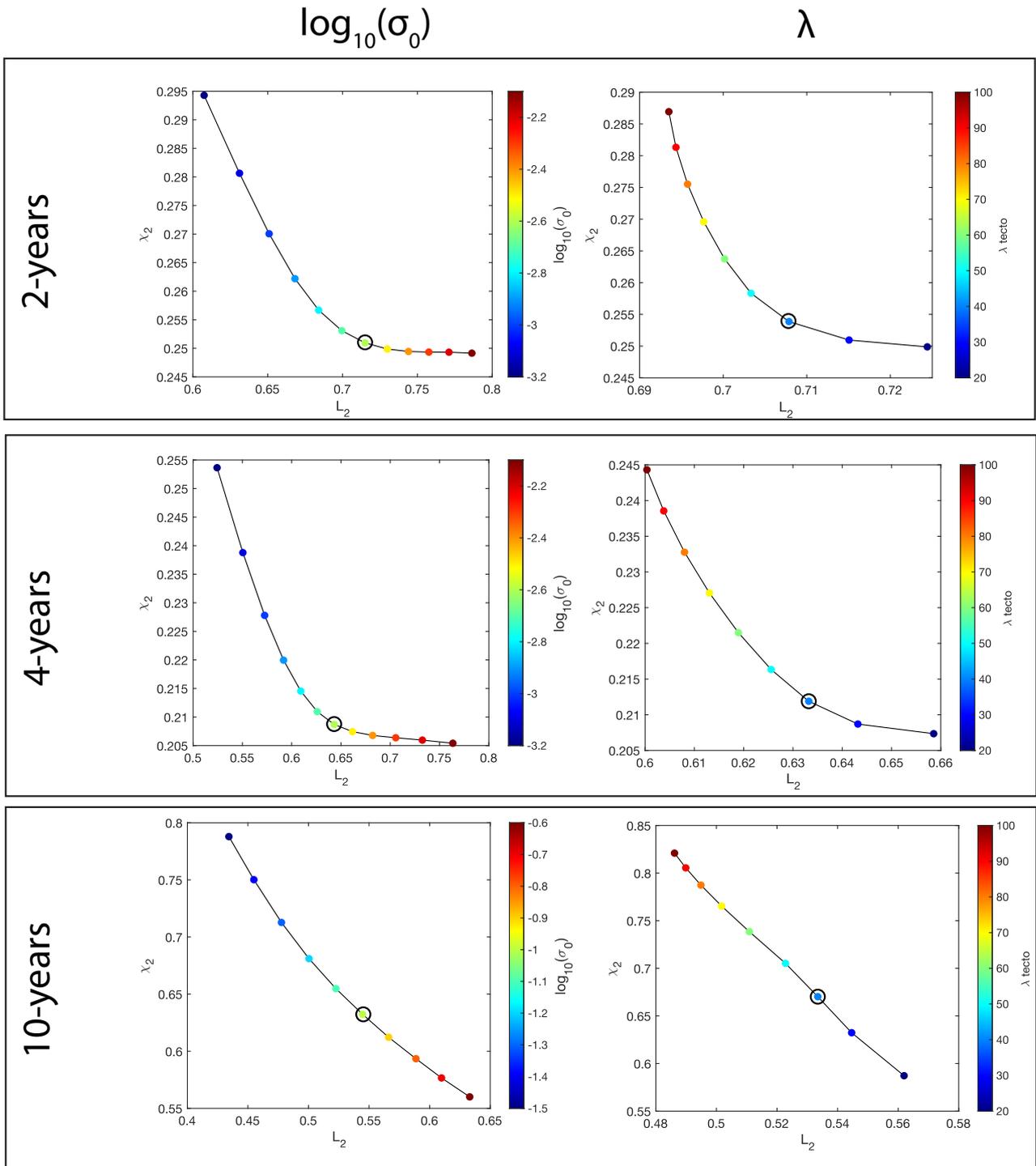
**Figure S10.**  $\chi^2$  values for InSAR (in blue) and GNSS (in orange) as function of the weight ( $\alpha$ ). The chosen model is framed in black (small rectangle).



**Figure S11.** Model of coupling between deep slow slip events (2-years) using a model a priori coupled (left) or uncoupled (right). The blue lines represent the slow slip events. The black rectangles are the footprint of the InSAR tracks.

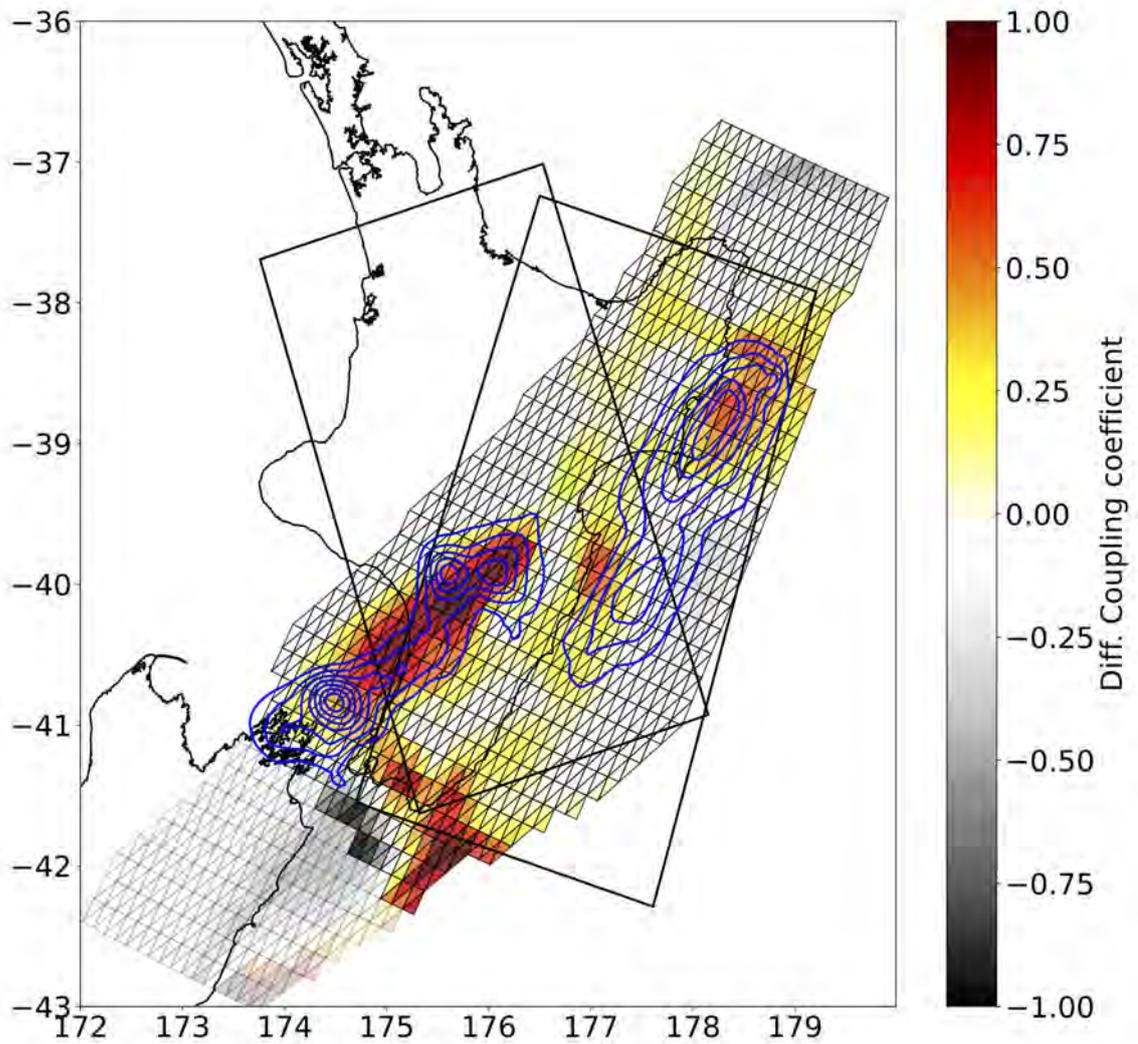


**Figure S12.** Diagonal of the matrix of resolution for: (right) a model with an  $\alpha$  0.001 (GNSS only); (left) a model with an  $\alpha$  0.999 (InSAR only) and (bottom) our chosen model ( $\alpha=0.4$ ). The model a priori  $m_0$  is coupled.



**Figure S13.** Parameters value optimization, data misfit (Chi-square  $\chi^2$ ) in function of the regularized solution ( $L_2$  norm) for different damping values (left) and  $\lambda$  values (in km). On the left column is the damping value  $\sigma_{m0}$  for a  $\lambda = 50$ km for the different period of observation. On the right column is the along strike correlation length ( $\lambda$ ) for a  $\sigma_{m0} = 10^{-2.6}$ . The selected optimal model is circled in black.

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**Figure S14.** Difference of coupling coefficient between a coupling map over 2-years and 10-years. a positive value represent a region where the stress have been more accumulated during the short period than during the long period.

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