Shock waves and two phase porous media flows

Models for porous media flow with multiple fluids (water and oil, for example) are important for studying techniques such as geological storage of CO₂ and water driven oil recovery. These models consist of conservation laws and often contain nonlinearities that preclude the existence of classical solutions. Hans van Duijn and Sorin Pop discuss important aspects of the theory of hyperbolic conservation laws, in particular existence and uniqueness of weak solutions, admissibility conditions and shock solutions. This theory explains saturation overshoots occurring in porous media flows under non-equilibrium conditions.

Mathematical models and simulation tools are essential for an optimal exploitation of geological resources. In many cases, for instance groundwater flow, water driven oil recovery, or geological CO₂ storage [1, 7, 12], the underlying mathematical models consist of conservation laws. These are nonlinear evolution equations having either a hyperbolic or a parabolic character. The nonlinearities and data appearing in the models allow for the existence of so-called weak solutions, i.e. discontinuous solutions. The weak solutions are defined based on test functions and partial integration. Natural questions arising in this context are existence, uniqueness, and regularity of these solutions. For parabolic problems, uniqueness generally holds. This is not the case of hyperbolic problems, where uniqueness requires additional admissibility conditions, leading to so-called entropy solutions.

In this paper we discuss two admissibility concepts. They are based on the observation that hyperbolic equations arise from evolution equations involving higher order derivatives, by letting such terms vanish. In porous media models, this is similar to vanishing capillarity.

For each fluid, $\alpha$, the averaged velocity, $v_{\alpha}$, the dynamic viscosity and $p_{\alpha}$ the pressure in fluid $\alpha$. Furthermore, $k_{r\alpha}$ denotes the relative permeability of fluid $\alpha$. Experiments show that it is an increasing function of the corresponding fluid saturation, i.e.

$$k_{r\alpha} = k_{r\alpha}(S_{\alpha}).$$  (3)

One can insert (2) into (1) to reduce the system to two equations, involving, however, four unknowns, two saturations and two pressures. To close the system one assumes the pores are occupied completely by the two fluids (thus no other fluid or void is present), implying

$$S_{\alpha} + S_{n} = 1.$$  (4)

The difference of the fluid pressures, called capillary pressure, depends on the CO₂ saturation $S_{\alpha}$. In standard models it is given by

$$p_{n} - p_{w} = P_{c}(S_{\alpha}),$$  (5)

where $P_{c}$ is strictly increasing.

From (1) and (4) one concludes that the sum of the fluid velocities, $v = v_{n} + v_{w}$, is constant in space. It remains constant in time too if the injection process is at constant flow rate. Introducing reference quantities the model reduces to one scalar equation

$$\partial_{t} u + \partial_{x} f(u) = \varepsilon \left( H(u) \partial_{x} p \right)$$  (6)

for all $t > 0$ and $x \in \Omega$.
ber \( \varepsilon \), the **capillary number**. This is related to the ratio of viscous forces and surface tension acting across the interface between the two fluids.

In (6) \( u \) denotes the CO\(_2\) saturation, \( u = S_n \), \( P \) is the dimensionless capillary pressure and \( \Omega \) is the dimensionless interval of interest. Below we consider \( \Omega = \mathbb{R} \). The nonlinear functions are:

\[
\begin{align*}
 f(u) &= \frac{k_u(u)}{k_o(u) + M k_w(u)}, \\
 H(u) &= k_w(u) f(u).
\end{align*}
\]

Typically, the function \( f \) has a convex-concave profile.

In view of (5) one has

\[
P = P(u).
\]

Common choices in the porous media literature are

\[
k_o(u) = u^p, \quad k_w(u) = (1 - u)^q \quad \text{and} \quad P(u) = (1 - u)^{\frac{\lambda}{2}},
\]

where \( p, q > 0, \lambda > 1 \) and \( M > 0 \) are model specific, [1].

**Non-equilibrium models**

The above-mentioned model is based on permeability — saturation and capillary pressure — saturation functions under so-called 'equilibrium conditions'. In this case, measurements are performed after achieving a static distribution of the fluids inside the pores. However, capillary pressure functions measured under non-equilibrium conditions, when the fluids do not reach a steady state, are different from those under equilibrium ones. Further, unexpected saturation profiles have been measured in [2] for infiltration in a thin and long column filled by homogeneous sand. As shown in Figure 1, the saturation profiles for a low flux at the inflow are monotone, as predicted by equilibrium models (see e.g. [10]). For higher fluxes, so-called 'saturation overshoots' are observed: at the infiltration front, the saturation values are higher than the ones at the inflow. As the flux increases, this profile becomes even more intriguing: a saturation plateau that is higher than the inflow saturation appears between an infiltration front and a drainage front.

Such non-monotonic saturation profiles are ruled out by equilibrium models, therefore non-equilibrium ones are required. A model incorporating dynamic effects in the capillary pressure is proposed in [6], where (5) becomes

\[
 P_c = P_c^e(S_n) + \tau \varepsilon \partial_t S_n.
\]

\( P_c^e \) is the capillary pressure-saturation function determined under equilibrium. The second term accounts for the non-equilibrium effects. The parameter \( \tau \) is assumed constant for simplicity; generally it may depend on \( S_n \).

In the simplified, dimensionless setting considered here, the capillary pressure becomes

\[
P = P(u) + \varepsilon \tau \partial_t u,
\]

with the dimensionless **dynamic number** \( \tau \). Then (6) reads

\[
\partial_t u + \varepsilon \partial_x f(u) = \varepsilon \left( H(u) \partial_x P(u) + \tau \varepsilon \partial_t u \right),
\]

for all \( t > 0 \) and \( x \in \mathbb{R} \).

**Remark.** Both dimensionless numbers \( \varepsilon \) and \( \tau \) depend on the reference quantities, see [11]. In particular, the dynamic number is proportional to the square of the reference velocity. In other words, a higher flux at the inflow results in a higher value for \( \tau \). This is a key observation for explaining the occurrence of saturation overshoots.

**Admissible shocks**

Formally, when letting \( \varepsilon \) tend to 0, both (6) or (11) become

\[
\partial_t u + \partial_x f(u) = 0 \quad \text{for} \quad t > 0, \quad x \in \mathbb{R}.
\]

This equation is hyperbolic. We consider Riemann initial data,

\[
u(0, x) = u_0(x) = \begin{cases} u_f & \text{if} \ x < 0, \\ u_r & \text{if} \ x > 0, \end{cases}
\]

with given states \( u_f, u_r \in \mathbb{R} \). We only consider bounded solutions, satisfying

\[
\lim_{t \to \infty} u(t, x) = u_f \quad \text{and} \quad \lim_{x \to \infty} u(t, x) = u_r
\]

for all \( t > 0 \). Moreover, since \( u \) is the CO\(_2\) saturation, we only consider states satisfying \( 0 \leq u_f, u_r \leq 1 \).

Having formulated the initial value problem (12)–(13), a natural question arising is the existence and uniqueness of solutions. Without entering into details, we mention that classical solutions fail to exist. Alternatively, one can multiply the original equation by a test function \( \varphi \) and integrate the resulting equation over the time-space domain. After integration by parts, a **weak solution** is defined as a bounded, measurable function satisfying

\[
\int_0^\infty \int_{\mathbb{R}} u \partial_t \varphi + f(u) \partial_x \varphi \, dx \, dt = 0
\]

for all \( \varphi \in C_0^1([0, \infty) \times \mathbb{R}) \), the space of continuously differentiable functions that vanish uniformly for large \( t \) and \( x \). Clearly, any classical solution is also a weak solution, but the latter class is much wider. In particular, a weak solution may even be discontinuous.

The existence of a solution can be proved in the context above. However, uniqueness remains an open question, as this does not hold generally. For example, consider the **Burgers equation**,

\[
\partial_t u + \partial_x \left( \frac{1}{2} u^2 \right) = 0 \quad \text{for} \quad t > 0, \quad x \in \mathbb{R}.
\]

Let the initial condition in (13) with \( u_0 = 0 \) and \( u_r = 1 \). One can verify that both functions given below are weak solutions:

\[
u_a(t, x) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if} \ x \leq 0, \\ \frac{x}{T} & \text{if} \ 0 < x < t, \\ 1 & \text{if} \ x \geq t, \end{cases}
\]

\[
u_b(t, x) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if} \ x < \frac{1}{2} t, \\ \frac{x}{t} & \text{if} \ x > \frac{1}{2} t. \end{cases}
\]
Note that $u_\ell$ is a continuous transition from the left state $u_\ell = 0$ to the right state $u_r = 1$. These states are connected by a fan that becomes wider in time; such solutions are called rarefaction waves. At the same time, $u_b$ is a shock, a jump from $u_\ell$ to $u_r$. This shock is located at $x(t) = \frac{b}{c}t$ and travels with a fixed speed $s = x'(t) = \frac{b}{c}$, which satisfies the general Rankine–Hugoniot condition relating the shock speed to the states at its left and right sides,

$$s = \frac{f(u_\ell) - f(u_r)}{u_\ell - u_r},$$

where $f$ is the flux function in the conservation law (12). In general, one can prove that functions having discontinuities travelling with a velocity that respects (17), and satisfying the equation in classical sense away from the shock, are weak solutions (see e.g. [5]). This raises another question: which solution is relevant? In other words, additional criteria are required for selecting the weak solution of interest.

A natural approach is to use underlying physics and to investigate which structure has the capillary pressure in (8). This deviates slightly for the standard approach, where the segment connecting the points $(u_\ell, f(u_\ell))$ and $(u_r, f(u_r))$ is above the graph of $f$ and has no interior intersection points with the graph. For example, a shock $(1, 0)$ is not admissible in this case. A general feature of admissible shocks (according to this criterion) is that characteristics from the left and right sides of a shock converge into the shock (as time is increasing).

### Non-classical shocks

Oleinik’s approach uses a parabolic regularization of the hyperbolic equation (12), which corresponds to the equilibrium capillary pressure model (6). The weak solutions discussed before remain monotone. As mentioned, there are experimental results contradicting this monotonicity, which justifies non-equilibrium models as (31). In this respect, one question is whether such models can justify non-classical shock solutions to (12), which violate Oleinik’s admissibility condition (25). We refer to [9], where ‘connectable’ left and right states, or admissible shocks $(u_\ell, u_r)$, are defined based on a predefined kinetic function. Similarly, in [4] admissible shocks $(u_\ell, u_r)$ are defined as the limit $\varepsilon \to 0$ of TW solutions to (12), and satisfying (22).

From a physical point of view, such shocks are obtained in the vanishing capillary pressure limit of two-phase porous media flow models, when dynamic effects are included in the capillary pressure. Clearly, such shocks depend on $\tau$; for $\tau = 0$ one obtains the classical shocks in the previous subsection. Although formally the limit equation (12) rem-
Case b of the theorem provides TW solutions connecting \( u_\ell = \bar{u}(\tau) > \alpha \) to \( u_r \). Letting \( \varepsilon \to 0 \), this TW justifies a shock solution \( \{ u_\ell, u_r \} \) to (12) that violates (25), which states that shocks \( \{ u_\ell, u_r \} \) are admissible only if \( u_\ell \in (u_r, \alpha) \). If the choice of \( u_r \), \( u_\ell \) and \( \tau \) places us the case f, the solution of the Riemann problem (12)–(13) combines two shocks: one upwards \( \{ \bar{u}(\tau), u_\ell \} \) and one downwards \( \{ u(\tau), u_r \} \). This is again a non-classical construction, where the solution is a shock down to \( u_r \), possibly preceded by a rarefaction wave from \( u_\ell \) to \( \alpha \) if \( u_\ell > \alpha \). This behaviour is displayed in Figure 4, presenting two numerical solutions computed for the regularized models with \( \tau > \tau_* \), respectively \( \tau = 0 \). The former presents two fronts corresponding to the shocks mentioned before, the latter only one front connecting \( \alpha \) to \( u_r = 0 \).

### Saturation overshoot

The travelling wave analysis in the previous section provides the mathematical framework for explaining the occurrence of non-monotonic saturation profiles during infiltration. As observed in Figure 1, at low fluxes the saturation has a monotone profile. In this case, dynamic effects are negligible. The situation is changing as the flux is increasing; as mentioned before in a remark, a higher flux translates into a higher value of the parameter \( \tau \) in the dimensionless setting. To relate the TW construction with the experiments, we mention that the left state \( u_\ell \) represents the saturation at the inflow, whereas the right state \( u_r \) is nothing but the initial saturation (clearly, satisfying \( u_r < u_\ell \)). Then, as follows from the theorem, whenever \( \tau < \tau_* \), if \( u_r < \alpha \), TW connecting \( u_\ell \) to \( u_r \) are possible, also providing a monotonic saturation profile.

Increasing the flux at inflow has two implications in the dimensionless model: an increase of \( \tau \), as well as of \( u_\ell \). In this case, the theorem rules out the possibility of TW connecting \( u_\ell \) directly to \( u_r \). Instead, two fronts are encountered: an infiltration front from \( \bar{u}(\tau) \) down to \( u_r \), and a drainage front from \( \bar{u}(\tau) \) to \( u_\ell \). Between the two fronts, the saturation has a constant, plateau value \( \bar{u}(\tau) \). These are also the saturation profiles in Figure 1, determined experimentally at high fluxes.

The present discussion is restricted to homogeneous media in one spatial dimension. Of course, realistic situations require two- or three-dimensional models, and heterogeneous media. One interesting phenomenon in the multi-dimensional case appears during infiltration in homogeneous media, when preferential flow is encountered in some parts of the medium. This leads to the development of fingers, which are thin regions of high saturation embedded into regions of low saturation. Such profiles are again ruled out by standard, equilibrium models, but permitted in the non-equilibrium case. Figure 5 presents such profiles, computed for the model (12) by a heterogeneous multiscale scheme (see [8]).

From practical point of view, the occurrence of preferential flow paths impacts the performance of the system. For example, in water driven oil recovery, when injecting water to displace oil, a water saturation overshoot implies that less oil is left in the reservoir. However, as seen above such overshoots are associated with the formation of fingers: inside fingers a high water saturation is encountered, whereas outside the saturation remains low. Water will prefer flowing through the fingers, leaving much oil unminimized outside fingers. This reduces significantly the oil production. Similarly, when injecting super-critical \( \text{CO}_2 \) in the sub-surface, having fingers
Figure 5. Fingers developed during infiltration in a heterogeneous medium (courtesy of F. Kissling). Note that even along a finger the saturation profile is non-monotone.

and preferential flow paths means that much of the storage reservoir is not reached by the CO$_2$ and therefore left unused. A proper management of such systems is based on the thorough understanding of the processes at various scales. This includes taking into account dynamic effects in controlling the flow regimes, so that the global efficiency is not depleted.

Conclusion

We discussed two mathematical models for two-phase flows in porous media. The difference between the two models is in the capillary pressure-saturation dependency. In standard (equilibrium) models this is a nonlinear, monotone function, whereas non-equilibrium models also include the time derivative of the saturation. In both approaches, we let the capillary effects tend to zero to obtain admissibility conditions for shock solutions of the limit hyperbolic equation. These conditions depend on the parameter $\tau$ appearing in the dynamic capillarity term. We also discuss how non-equilibrium models can explain the saturation overshoot in the infiltration profiles, which are measured experimentally, but ruled out by the equilibrium theory.

References