Waterflooding optimization in uncertain geological scenarios - DTU Orbit (09/11/2017)

Waterflooding optimization in uncertain geological scenarios

In conventional waterflooding of an oil field, feedback based optimal control technologies may enable higher oil recovery than with a conventional reactive strategy in which producers are closed based on water breakthrough. To compensate for the inherent geological uncertainties in an oil field, robust optimization has been suggested to improve and robustify optimal control strategies. In robust optimization of an oil reservoir, the water injection and production borehole pressures (bhp) are computed such that the predicted net present value (NPV) of an ensemble of permeability field realizations is maximized. In this paper, we both consider an open-loop optimization scenario, with no feedback, and a closed-loop optimization scenario. The closed-loop scenario is implemented in a moving horizon manner and feedback is obtained using an ensemble Kalman filter for estimation of the permeability field from the production data. For open-loop implementations, previous test case studies presented in the literature, show that a traditional robust optimization strategy (RO) gives a higher expected NPV with lower NPV standard deviation than a conventional reactive strategy. We present and study a test case where the opposite happen: The reactive strategy gives a higher expected NPV with a lower NPV standard deviation than the RO strategy. To improve the RO strategy, we propose a modified robust optimization strategy (modified RO) that can shut in uneconomical producer wells. This strategy inherits the features of both the reactive and the RO strategy. Simulations reveal that the modified RO strategy results in operations with larger returns and less risk than the reactive strategy, the RO strategy, and the certainty equivalent strategy. The returns are measured by the expected NPV and the risk is measured by the standard deviation of the NPV. In closed-loop optimization, we investigate and compare the performance of the RO strategy, the reactive strategy, and the certainty equivalent strategy. The certainty equivalent strategy is based on a single realization of the permeability field. It uses the mean of the ensemble as its permeability field. Simulations reveal that the RO strategy and the certainty equivalent strategy give a higher NPV compared to the reactive strategy. Surprisingly, the RO strategy and the certainty equivalent strategy give similar NPVs. Consequently, the certainty equivalent strategy is preferable in the closed-loop situation as it requires significantly less computational resources than the robust optimization strategy. The similarity of the certainty equivalent and the robust optimization based strategies for the closed-loop situation challenges the intuition of most reservoir engineers. Feedback reduces the uncertainty and this is the reason for the similar performance of the two strategies.

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