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Validation of GRACE-derived Terrestrial Water Storage from a regional approach over South America

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Abstract : We propose to validate regional solutions consisting of 2° surface tiles of surface mass concentration over South America (90°W - 30°W ; 60°S - 20°N) computed using accurate Level-1 GRACE measurements, by confronting them to other GRACE products (i.e., global GRGS and ICA-400 km GFZ/CSR/JPL combined solutions) and independent *in situ* river level and discharge datasets. For this purpose, Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was applied to all these types of the GRACE-based solutions to extract the corresponding main orthogonal spatial and temporal modes of variability to be compared for 2003-2010. For the first three spatial modes, regional solutions provide a better geographical localization of hydrological structures, especially indicating major surface and groundwater systems of South America. Over hydrological patterns, records of river level versus time are particularly consistent with the GRACE temporal modes, especially for our regional solutions (i.e., correlations generally greater than 0.7). Interannual variations of GRACE-based Terrestrial Water Storage (TWS) clearly exhibit the signatures of extreme climatic events as the recent droughts and floods that affected South America. Very significant agreement is also found at interannual time-scale between TWS and discharges in drainage basins dominated by the surface reservoir (more than 0.9 of correlation in the Amazon basin).

Keywords : GRACE; surface water; groundwater, water levels; discharges

25

26 **1. Introduction**

27

28 Continental water storage is a key component of the global hydrological cycle which plays a
29 major role in the Earth's climate system that controls over water, energy and biogeochemical
30 fluxes. In spite of its importance, the total continental water storage is not well-known at regional
31 and global scales because of the disparity of *in situ* observations and systematic monitoring of the
32 terrestrial water reservoirs, especially the groundwater component (Alsdorf and Lettenmaier,
33 2003).

34 The Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment (GRACE) mission provides a global mapping of
35 the time-variations of the gravity field at an unprecedented resolution of ~400 km and a
36 centimetric precision in terms of geoid height. Tiny variations of gravity measured by GRACE
37 are mainly due to redistribution of mass inside the fluid envelopes of the Earth (*i.e.*, atmosphere,
38 oceans and continental water storage) from monthly to decadal timescales (Tapley et al., 2004).

39 Since its launch in March 2002, the GRACE terrestrial water storage anomalies have been
40 increasingly used for large-scale hydrological applications (see Ramillien et al., 2008a; Schmidt
41 et al., 2008 for reviews). These studies demonstrated a great potential to monitor extreme
42 hydrological events (Andersen et al., 2005; Seitz et al., 2008; Chen et al., 2009; Frappart et al., in
43 press), to monitor aquifer storage (Rodell et al., 2007; Strassberg et al., 2007; Leblanc et al.,
44 2009) and snowpack (Frappart et al., 2011a) variations, and to estimate hydrological fluxes, such
45 as basin-scale evapotranspiration rate (Rodell et al., 2004; Ramillien et al. , 2006) and discharge
46 (Syed et al., 2009).

47 Unfortunately, GRACE Level-2 solutions suffer from the presence of important north-south
48 striping when determining Stokes coefficients (*i.e.*, spherical harmonics of the geopotential

49 corrected from known gravitational accelerations using *a priori* models for atmosphere, ocean
50 mass, and tides) which are geophysically unrealistic, and aliasing of short-time phenomena.
51 Because of these effects of striping that limits further interpretation, different post-processing
52 approaches for filtering these residual GRACE geoid solutions have been proposed to extract
53 useful hydrological signals (see Ramillien et al., 2008a; Schmidt et al., 2008 for reviews) with the
54 risk of losing energy in the short wavelengths domain, and thus missing details (*i.e.*, loss of
55 resolution).

56 To overcome this problem, local determination of the time variations of the surface water storage
57 has been developed (Rowlands et al., 2005; Eicker, 2008). They are of great interest for regions
58 where very localized important mass variations occur, such as flood and glaciers fields. Mascons
59 consist of adjusting regional heights of individual surface elements by using scaling factors of
60 spherical harmonics. However, they remain equivalent to classical global solutions (Rowlands et
61 al., 2010). Another type of regional approach has been more recently proposed by directly
62 adjusting the surface mass density distribution at the surface of the Earth from the Level-1
63 GRACE data, especially the accurate satellite-to-satellite velocity variations or K-Band Range
64 Rate (KBRR) measurements (Ramillien et al., 2011), and taking spatial correlations versus the
65 geographical distance between juxtaposed surface elements into account (Ramillien et al., 2012).

66 In particular, power spectral density reveals that the regional solutions computed over South
67 America are more energetic than the bandlimited global Level-2 solutions at short and medium
68 spatial wavelengths (<4,000 km) (Ramillien et al., 2012). In the present study, our goal is to
69 demonstrate that the excess of energy present at short wavelengths (between 400 and 1000 km) in
70 the regional solutions compared to the global solutions can be related to realistic geophysical
71 signals corresponding to hydrological events such as floods, melt of glaciers, or groundwater
72 variations. To verify this assumption, a Principal Component Analysis (PCA) was first applied to

73 the GRACE-based regional and global solutions. The resulting spatial and temporal modes were
74 compared to spatial distribution of surface and ground waters and correlated to water levels
75 variations from *in situ* gauges located close to the mouth of the major river basins and sub-basins
76 of South America respectively. Then, basin-averaged anomalies of TWS from this regional
77 approach are compared with changes of *in situ* surface water discharges in the largest drainage
78 basins of South America (*i.e.*, Amazon, La Plata, Orinoco, and Tocantins), as well as basin-
79 averaged anomalies of TWS from global GRACE solutions.

80 To our knowledge, there is no large area in the world covered with a sufficient density of *in situ*
81 measurements of all the hydrological reservoirs to directly validate GRACE data. Most of the
82 previous studies dealing with the validation of the data present comparisons between GRACE-
83 based TWS and hydrological outputs, and/or comparisons with external hydrological datasets
84 such as gridded rainfall and *in situ* water levels and discharges (see Ramillien et al., 2008a;
85 Schmidt et al., 2008 for reviews). Here, we have chosen to compare the GRACE-based TWS
86 from our regional approach to other global available solutions and to, according to your opinion,
87 a profound and extensive datasets of *in situ* water levels. We decided not to compare to
88 hydrological model outputs because most of the hydrological models do not simulate the slow
89 reservoirs such as the floodplains and the groundwater.

90

91 **2. Datasets & Methods**

92

93 2.1 Water mass variations from GRACE solutions

94

95 2.1.1 Constrained regional solutions

96 An alternative regional approach to the ones based on spherical harmonics has been recently
97 proposed to improve geographical localization of hydrological structures and to reduce leakage

98 and aliasing errors. Our regional approach consists of determining water mass variations over juxtaposed
99 surface elements in a given continental region from GRACE residuals potential differences anomalies, in
100 terms of equivalent-water heights. According to the energy integral approach, these latter along-track
101 anomalies correspond mainly to the contribution of the continental hydrology to the gravity field changes
102 measured by GRACE, they are obtained from KBR range velocities differences between the two GRACE
103 satellites after a priori (*i.e.*, de-aliasing) corrections of mass variations occurring in the oceans and the
104 atmosphere, are made by pre-processing of GRACE observations. By assuming the conservation of
105 energy along the GRACE groundtracks, it consists of recovering equivalent-water thicknesses of
106 juxtaposed 2 by 2-degree geographical tiles by inverting GRACE inter-satellite KBR Range
107 (KBRR) residuals (see Ramillien et al.; 2011, 2012). These KBRR residuals were obtained by
108 correcting the raw GRACE observations from the *a priori* gravitational accelerations of known
109 large-scale mass variations (*i.e.*, atmosphere and oceanic mass variations, polar movements, as
110 well as solid and oceanic tides) during the iterative least-squares orbit adjustment made using the
111 GRGS GINS software (Lemoine et al., 2007; Bruinsma et al., 2010). The effects of non-
112 conservative forces measured by on-board GRACE accelerometers are also removed from the
113 along-track observations, in order to extract the contributions of the remaining not modelled
114 phenomena, thus mainly water mass changes in continental hydrology. Since classical
115 gravimetric inversion does not provide a unique solution and to reduce the spurious effects of the
116 noise in the observations, regularization strategies have been proposed to find numerically stable
117 regional solutions, either based on Singular Value Decomposition (SVD) and L-curve analysis
118 (Ramillien et al., 2011), or by introducing spatial constraints (Ramillien et al., 2012). Time series
119 of successive 10-day regional solutions of water mass have been produced over the whole South
120 America (90°W-30°W; 60°S-20°N) following this regional approach for 2002-2010, and these
121 2°-by-2° maps revealed realistic amplitudes, for spatial wavelengths lesser than the dimensions of

122 the region itself by construction (*i.e.*, < 6500 - 8000 km, or equivalently harmonic degrees less
123 than 5-6 for South America). Numerical estimations show us that the predicted regional solutions
124 need to be completed by long wavelength components before being compared with other data
125 sets, when the geographical region is not large enough to contain these long gravity undulations.
126 Over South America, we complemented each regional solution with short and medium
127 wavelengths up to degree 5 from the corresponding GRGS solution (for more details see
128 Ramillien et al., 2012).

129 2.1.2 ICA-filtered solutions

130 A post-processing method based on Independent Component Analysis (ICA) was applied to the
131 Level-2 GRACE solutions from different official providers (*i.e.*, UTCSR, JPL and GFZ), after
132 pre-filtering with 400-km-radius Gaussian filters. This approach does not require any *a priori*
133 information, except the assumption of statistical independence between the elementary sources
134 that compose the measured signals (*i.e.*, useful geophysical signals plus noise). Separation
135 consists of finding the independent sources by solving a linear system relating the GRACE
136 solutions provided for a given month, to the unknown independent components. The contributors
137 to the observed gravity field are forced to be uncorrelated numerically by imposing diagonal
138 cross-correlation matrices. For a given month, the ICA-filtered solutions only differ to each other
139 from a scaling factor, so that the GFZ-derived ICA-filtered solutions are only considered. The
140 efficiency of the ICA in separating gravity signals from noise by combining Level-2 GRACE
141 solutions has previously been demonstrated over land (Frappart et al. 2010, 2011b) and ice caps
142 (Bergmann et al., 2012). These monthly ICA solutions are available at: <http://grgs.obs-mip.fr>.
143 They correspond to what is referred to the first ICA mode (whereas the second and third mode
144 corresponds to the noise) in Frappart et al. (2011b). Time series of ICA-based global maps of

145 continental water mass changes from combined UTCSR, JPL and GFZ GRACE solutions,
146 computed over the period 08/2002–12/2010, are used in this study. More details about the post-
147 processing can be found in Frappart et al. (2010, 2011b).

148

149 2.1.3 GRGS solutions

150 As for the global Level-2 solutions computed by official providers (CSR, GFZ, and JPL), The
151 Level-2 GRGS-EIGEN-GL04 models are derived from Level-1 GRACE measurements including
152 KBRR, and from LAGEOS-1/2 SLR data for enhancement of lower harmonic degrees (Lemoine
153 et al., 2007; Bruinsma et al., 2010). These gravity fields are expressed in terms of normalized
154 spherical harmonic coefficients of the geopotential (*i.e.*, Stokes coefficients) from degree 2 up to
155 degree 50-60 using an empirical stabilization approach without any smoothing or filtering. This
156 stabilization approach consists in adding empirically-determined degree and order-dependent
157 coefficients to minimize the time variations of the signal measured by GRACE over ocean and
158 desert without significantly affecting the amplitude of the signal over continents. 10-day
159 (Release-2) Total Water Storage (TWS) grids of 1-degree spatial resolution available at
160 <http://grgs.obs-mip.fr> are used over 2003-2010.

161 2.2 *In situ* water levels and discharge

162 Time series of daily water levels from *in situ* gauges located in the largest drainage basins of
163 South America (Amazon, La Plata, Orinoco, Tocantins, São Francisco, Negro) and their
164 tributaries (Fig. 1 and Table 1) and monthly discharges in Obidos (Amazon), Ciudad Bolivar
165 (Orinoco), Tucurui (Tocantins), and Chapeton (La Plata) were used for comparisons to 10-day
166 and monthly anomalies of GRACE-based TWS over 2003-2010. These *in situ* records were
167 downloaded either from the Environmental Research Observatory (ORE) HYBAM website

168 (<http://www.ore-hybam.org/>) for the Orinoco basin and some gauges located in the Amazon
169 basin, and from the hydrological information system Hidroweb (<http://hidroweb.ana.gov.br/>) of
170 the Brazilian water agency (Agência Nacional de Aguas - ANA) for some gauges located in the
171 Amazon and the Tocantins basins, as well as from the Argentinian water agency (Instituto
172 Nacional del Agua –INA) through the online database Base de Datos Hidrológica Integrada
173 (BDHI - <http://www.hidricosargentina.gov.ar/>) over the period 2002 – 2011. The seasonal
174 amplitude was removed using a 13-month sliding window on each time-serie of daily *in situ*
175 water levels and monthly discharge.

176 2.3 Maps of water resources

177 2.3.1 Floodplains, wetlands and lakes database

178 The Global Land and Wetlands Database (GLWD) based on the combination of different
179 available cartographic sources is a comprehensive database of global lakes with an area greater
180 than 1 km² and provides a good representation of the maximum global wetland extent (Lehner
181 and Döll, 2004). We used the GLWD-3 product with a spatial resolution of 30' to locate the
182 surface waters (*i.e.*, large-scale wetland distributions and important wetland complexes) over
183 South America.

184 2.3.2 Groundwater resources map

186 The Worldwide Hydrological Mapping and Assessment Programme (WHYMAP) made available
187 a 1:25,000,000 map of groundwater resources through the website of the German Federal
188 Institute for Geosciences and Natural Resources (Bundesanstalt für Geowissenschaften un
189 Rohstoffe - BGR): <http://www.whymap.org>. This map presents the geographical extent of the
190 aquifers and their environmental characteristics: large and rather uniform groundwater basins,
191 complex hydrogeological structures, and limited groundwater resources in local and shallow

192 aquifers (Richts et al., 2011). The groundwater recharge information originates from WGHM
 193 model outputs (Döll and Fiedler, 2008).

194 2.4 Time-series of TWS expressed in terms of equivalent sea level at basin-scale

195 For a given month t , regional average of TWS expressed in terms of mm of equivalent-water
 196 height ($\Delta h_{TWS}(t)$) over a given river basin of area S is computed from the TWS anomaly grid
 197 ($\Delta h(\lambda_j, \varphi_j, t)$) at time t of the pixel of longitude and latitude (λ_j, φ_j) with $j=1, 2, \dots$ inside S , and the
 198 elementary surface $R_e^2 \Delta\lambda \Delta\varphi \cos \varphi_j$ (Ramillien et al., 2005; Frappart et al., 2011a):

$$199 \quad \Delta h_{TWS}(t) = \frac{R_e^2}{S} \sum_{j \in S} \Delta h(\lambda_j, \varphi_j, t) \cos(\varphi_j) \Delta\lambda \Delta\varphi \quad (1)$$

200 where R_e is the mean radius of the Earth (6378 km) and $\Delta\lambda$ and $\Delta\varphi$ are the grid steps in longitude
 201 and latitude respectively (generally $\Delta\lambda = \Delta\varphi$).

202 The time-series of TWS expressed in EWH for the four largest South American drainage basins
 203 are then converted into Equivalent Sea Level (ESL) ($\Delta h_{TWS_ESL}(t)$) (Ramillien et al., 2008b):

$$204 \quad \Delta h_{TWS_ESL}(t) = \frac{\rho_{SW} S_{basin}}{\rho_{ocean} S_{ocean}} \Delta h_{TWS}(t) \quad (2)$$

205 where ρ_{SW} and ρ_{ocean} are the densities of soil water and ocean (with the respective values of 1,000
 206 and 1,030 kg.m⁻³), and S_{basin} and S_{ocean} the surfaces of the considered basin and the global ocean
 207 ($S_{ocean} = 360$ millions of km²) respectively.

208

209 3. Results

210

211 3.1 PCA modes of TWS at interannual time-scale

212 A Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was applied to the series of GRACE-based TWS from
 213 Regional, ICA, and GRGS solutions over South America (-90° - -30°; -60° - 20°) for the period

214 2003-2010, after removal of the dominant seasonal amplitude using a 13-month sliding window.
215 The sum of the explained variances (σ^2) of the four first PCA modes represents 0.87 for the
216 regional, 0.82 for the ICA-GFZ-400km (0.83 for both ICA-CSR-400km and ICA-JPL-400km),
217 and 0.92 for the GRGS solutions (Table 2). The explained variance by a mode corresponds to the
218 variance in the dataset explained by a PC, the sum of the variances or total variance equals 100%.
219 Most of the seasonally corrected signal present in the GRACE-derived land water solutions is
220 mostly concentrated in these four modes that will be analyzed in detail in the following.

221 The resulting 4 first modes are respectively presented in Fig. 2, 4, 6, and 8 for the spatial
222 components and in Fig. 3, 5, 7, 9 for the temporal components. Spatial components of the 4 first
223 modes exhibit similar patterns for the different GRACE solutions. Correlations between pairs of
224 GRACE solutions for each spatial mode can be found in Table 3. They are generally higher
225 between regional and ICA solutions than between regional and GRGS solutions (*i.e.*, $R_{(\text{regional}; \text{ICA})}$
226 - $R_{(\text{regional}; \text{GRGS})} > 0.23$), except for the fourth mode. The major difference between the regional
227 and the global solutions is the complete absence in the regional solutions of spurious meridional
228 undulations materialized as north-south stripes, and unfortunately polluting the spatial patterns of
229 the global ones. These north-south stripes appear as one the major features in the 1st spatial mode
230 of the GRGS solutions (Fig. 2c), and can also be identified in the 2nd spatial mode of the GRGS
231 (Fig. 4c), as well as in the 1st and 4th spatial modes of the ICA solutions (Fig. 2b and Fig. 8b
232 respectively) but with a lower intensity. The presence of these stripes account for the lower
233 agreement between the 1st mode of GRGS and regional (but also ICA) solutions (Table 3).
234 Besides, for the 2nd and 3rd modes, this lower agreement results from the different geographical
235 locations of the extrema.

236 The large negative pattern located above the Equator in the 2nd mode of the regional and ICA
237 solutions (Fig. 4a and b respectively) is centered on the Equator in the 2nd mode of the GRGS
238 solutions (Fig. 4c). The two maxima centered around -70° of longitude and -5° of latitude, and -
239 70° of longitude and -5° of latitude (Fig. 4a and b respectively), in the 2nd mode of the regional
240 and ICA solutions, are absent from the 2nd mode of the GRGS solutions (Fig. 4c). Accordingly,
241 the maximum and minimum located on the right and left banks of the Amazon have a different
242 shape in the 3rd mode of the regional and ICA solutions (Fig. 6a and b respectively), and in the 3rd
243 mode of the GRGS solutions (Fig. 6c). This different behavior of the GRGS products compared
244 with other regional and global solutions has already been reported by Klees et al. (2008) over
245 different large continental areas and river basins, and lately by Awange et al. (2011) over
246 Australia. It was attributed to leakage effect (Klees et al., 2008) caused by the low cut-off degree
247 applied to GRGS solutions (*i.e.*, $n=50$ or spatial resolution of 400 km) compared to the one
248 applied to other global solutions (*i.e.*, $n=60$ for CSR and $n=120$ for GFZ and JPL, or spatial
249 resolutions of 333 km and 167 km respectively), and moreover to the north-south striping largely
250 affecting these global solutions (Awange et al., 2011). For the 4th mode, the lower agreement
251 between regional and ICA solutions can be attributed to the smoothness of these solutions that are
252 twice filtered using a Gaussian filter of 400 km of radius before being separated by ICA.

253 Temporal components of the four 1st modes of the PCA of the GRACE solutions also present
254 quite similar profiles. Cross-correlations between pairs of GRACE solutions for each temporal
255 mode were also computed for time-lag (Δt) varying between ± 6 months. Results are presented in
256 Table 4 for $\Delta t=0$ and Δt maximizing the cross-correlation into the one-year window. Similarly to
257 what was earlier revealed for the spatial components, greater correlations are found between the
258 regional and the ICA solutions than between the regional and the GRGS solutions for smaller

259 time-delays, except for the 4th mode (Table 4). Similar large time-shifts between GRGS and other
260 types of GRACE solutions were already observed over Australia and attributed to the large
261 impact of degrading north-south striping on the restitution of the hydrological signals, especially
262 at interannual time-scales (Awange et al., 2011).

263 3.2 Relationships between main TWS modes and hydrological features of South America

264

265 3.2.1 First mode of variability

266 South America is covered by large drainage basins where surface waters represent a large part of
267 the TWS measured by GRACE (Frappart et al., 2008; 2011c; 2012; Han et al., 2009; Kim et al.,
268 2009). So, the spatial and temporal components of the PCA of the GRACE-based TWS are
269 respectively compared to the spatial distribution of lakes and reservoirs, rivers and associated
270 floodplains, and wetlands from GLWD (Lehner and Döll, 2004), and the interannual variations of
271 water levels at the mouth of the South America's major rivers and tributaries (see the location of
272 the selected *in situ* gauges in Fig. 1). We deliberately limited our analysis to the *in situ* gauges at
273 located at (or close to) the mouth of a (sub-)basin, to be representative of a sufficiently large
274 drainage area, to remain compatible with the spatial resolution of the GRACE-based hydrological
275 products (*i.e.*, 300-400 km).

276 The spatial component of the PCA first mode is presented in Fig. 2a-c for respectively regional
277 ($\sigma^2=0.43$), ICA-CSR-400 km ($\sigma^2=0.44$), noted ICA in the followings, and GRGS ($\sigma^2=0.6$) land
278 water solutions. In spite of the coarse spatial resolution of the GRACE data, it agrees well with
279 the distribution of surface water from GLWD (Fig. 2d). The strongest amplitudes of the first
280 mode are located in the Altiplano region, area of inland in the Central Andes encompassing
281 Titicaca and Poopó lakes, along the Solimões-Amazon corridor (including the south of the
282 Amazonian and the Negro basins), in the delta of La Plata, upstream the mouth of the Tocantins,

283 and in the region covered with Pindare and Parnacaiba basins (Fig. 2d). Some secondary extrema
284 are also seen at the mouth of the Orinoco basin, the region of the sources of the Parana (La Plata)
285 and São Francisco rivers, and in the Deseado basin in Patagonia and over Patagonia Icefield (Fig.
286 2d). These hydrological structures are better concentrated on the regional (Fig. 2a) than on the
287 global spherical harmonics solutions (Fig. 2b and c). One of the main advantages in considering
288 regional solutions is to concentrate the starting GRACE information in a chosen portion of the
289 terrestrial surface (*i.e.*, better spatial localization), instead of dealing with global spectral
290 coefficients (*i.e.*, best frequency localization) (see Freeden and Schreiner, 2008). In the latter
291 case, by construction, the satellite signals are diluated over all the terrestrial sphere, consequently
292 any sharp surface detail should be reconstructed by a quasi-infinite sum of spherical harmonic
293 coefficients, which remains impossible in practice as GRGS and ICA solutions are limited up to
294 degree 50-60. The associated temporal component for each GRACE solutions is presented in Fig.
295 3a. The three time-series appear very similar, however the GRGS one being smoother. The
296 regional and the ICA solutions exhibit larger negative peaks in 2005 and 2010, and positive in
297 2009, corresponding to the extreme droughts and flood which strongly affected the Amazon basin
298 (Chen et al., 2009; 2010a; Marengo et al., 2011; Tomasella et al., 2011; Frappart et al., 2012; in
299 press), and to the 2009 drought that affected La Plata Basin (Chen et al., 2010b; Pereira and
300 Pacino, 2012), than the GRGS solutions. Regional and ICA solutions are almost in phase except
301 for the 2009 extreme flood when the ICA peak is located in the beginning of the year whereas it
302 occurs later (April-May) in the regional solutions, close to the flood peak in the Amazon basin.

303 Comparisons to *in situ* gauges highly (anti)correlated to mode 1 are presented in Fig. 3b and
304 Table 5. Please note that anti-correlations come from the arbitrary sign given to both the spatial

305 and temporal components. In all cases, the anti-correlation corresponds to region where the
306 spatial mode has a negative sign.

307 Mode 1 represents the larger part of the variability observed over South America in the GRACE
308 solutions. It is logically correlated to the largest number of *in situ* stations used in this study (9
309 among 18 or 50% with $|R|>0.65$ for the regional solutions), and to *in situ* stations (Fig. 1) located
310 in a neighborhood of an extremum or a secondary extremum in the spatial component.
311 Correlations are generally higher for the regional solutions, than for the ICA and GRGS
312 solutions, even if the values are quite high for all type of solutions. High correlation (>0.8) is
313 observed in Obidos located at ~1500 km upstream to the mouth of the Amazon, for all type of
314 solutions with different time-delays between the GRACE solutions and the *in situ* measurements:
315 -20/30/-120 days between regional/ICA/GRGS solutions and water levels in Obidos respectively
316 (Table 5). The zero time-lag corresponds to the region of maximum of signal located between
317 Jatuarana and Obidos (see Fig. 1), in the centre of the downstream Amazon along its mainstem.
318 The opposition of phase between the hydrological signals in the Orinoco and the Amazon basins
319 clearly appears in the time lags for Obidos and Ciudad Bolivar in the regional and ICA solutions.
320 A higher delay is observed upstream in the Madeira tributary at Fazenda Vista Alegre, a much
321 higher one in Manaus, due to the control of the Negro river flow by the Solimões or backwater
322 effect (Meade et al., 1991). On the contrary, negative time-lag is found for the Xingu river, in the
323 regional, and mostly, in the ICA solutions (except for Itaituba and Manaus).

324 This confirms that the Regional solutions are more accurate as they are both spatially and
325 temporally better localized than the global solutions. A large decrease of mass can be identified
326 in the Patagonian Icefield between 2003 and 2009, as a positive trend in the temporal component

327 is multiplied by negative values in the spatial component. This confirms what was already
328 observed by Chen et al. (2007) using GRACE data.

329 3.2.2 Second mode of variability

330 The spatial components of the second mode of PCA are presented in Fig. 4a-c for Regional
331 ($\sigma^2=0.2$), ICA ($\sigma^2=0.15$), and GRGS ($\sigma^2=0.14$) land water solutions, respectively. The extrema
332 present in the Regional (Fig. 4a) and ICA (Fig. 4b) are centred on the Orinoco and the Negro
333 basins (*i.e.*, negative patterns in the northern part of South America), the southern bank of the
334 Solimões, the region covered with both Pindare and Parnacaiba basins, and the downstream part
335 and the delta of La Plata basin (positive patterns in the western, eastern, and south eastern parts of
336 the continent respectively). These structures are in good agreement with the distribution of
337 surface water from GLWD (Fig. 4d). The spatial patterns of the 2nd mode of PCA for the GRGS
338 is quite different, as a large negative pattern appears on the central corridor of the Amazon, at the
339 junction between the Solimões, Negro and Madeira rivers, and no positive pattern over the
340 southern bank of the Solimões, and neither in the region covered with Pindare and Parnacaiba
341 basins.

342 Four *in situ* stations (~20%) were found to have high correlations with the 2nd mode temporal
343 mode of the PCA of the GRACE-derived TWS (Table 5). Three of them are located in the
344 Amazon basin: one in the Branco basin, sub-basin of the Negro basin, northern Amazon where
345 high correlations are obtained ($|R|>0.8$), especially for the regional and the ICA solutions, and
346 two in the Solimões basin, at its entrance (Tabatinga) and its mouth (Manacapuru). For these two
347 latter stations, high correlations are found between *in situ* water levels and GRACE-based TWS
348 from regional and ICA solutions, but not from GRGS ($R<0.5$) (Table 5). The last one is located
349 in La Plata basin and better agreement is found between these water level records and GRGS-

350 derived solutions than regional-derived and ICA-derived solutions. This appears clearly on Fig. 5
351 presenting the temporal component of the 2nd PCA mode for each set of GRACE solutions (Fig.
352 5a) and the time-series of *in situ* water levels for these 4 four stations (Fig. 5b). A time lag of nine
353 months clearly separate the maxima of regional and ICA solutions (*i.e.*, northern hemisphere
354 summer 2009) to the maximum of GRGS solutions (*i.e.*, northern hemisphere winter 2010). They
355 respectively correspond to the extreme flood that affected the Amazon basin in 2009 (Marengo et
356 al., 2011) and to a flooding event occurring in La Plata basin from December 2009 to April 2010
357 (Salvia et al., 2011).

358 3.2.3 Third mode of variability

359 The spatial component of the third PCA mode is presented in Fig. 6a-c for regional ($\sigma^2=0.13$),
360 ICA ($\sigma^2=0.14$), and GRGS ($\sigma^2=0.1$) land water solutions respectively (Table 2). As for mode 2, a
361 better agreement is found between regional and ICA solutions than between regional and GRGS
362 solutions, with correlation coefficients equal to 0.69 and 0.46 respectively (Table 3). The maxima
363 in the regional (Fig. 6a) and ICA (Fig. 6b) are located in the southern bank of the Solimões and
364 the central corridor of the Amazon river up to its junction with the Tapajos river, and the
365 upstream part of the Tocantins basin. Once again, this structure is in good agreement with the
366 distribution of surface water from GLWD (Fig. 6d). Some secondary extrema can also be
367 observed in the Negro basin in Argentina, over the Patagonia Icefield and Deseado basin in
368 Patagonia in the south. In the north, extrema are centred over the Essequibo (Guyana), Suriname
369 (Suriname), Oyapok and Maroni (French Guiana) basins (negative). GRGS solutions show that
370 the extrema are located around the central corridor of the Amazon river: negative in the north
371 (northern tributaries and Orinoco). Positive extrema appear in the south and over the Tocantins,
372 Pindare, and Parnacaiba basins for the GRGS solutions.

373 Its temporal component was found to be correlated ($|R| > 0.7$) to the time-variations of three in
374 situ stations (~15%) located in the Tocantins (Tucuruí) and the eastern and southern parts of La
375 Plata (Chapeton and Pepiri Mini), for the regional and ICA solutions. However, the temporal
376 mode for the GRGS solutions is not correlated to *in situ* records (Table 5).

377 3.2.4 Fourth mode of variability

378 The spatial component of the fourth PCA mode is presented in Fig. 8a-c for regional ($\sigma^2=0.11$),
379 ICA ($\sigma^2=0.1$), and GRGS ($\sigma^2=0.08$) land water solutions respectively (Table 2). Correlation is
380 much higher between regional and GRGS solutions ($R=0.86$) than between regional and ICA
381 solutions ($R=0.46$) (Table 3). North-south stripes clearly appear for the ICA solutions (Fig. 8b).
382 Patterns of TWS seem to be related to the spatial distribution of groundwater recharge from
383 WHYMAP (Fig. 8d). Positive and negative extrema of TWS are located over regions where
384 recharge is maximum: the central corridor of the Amazon river, the downstream part of the
385 Tocantins, the Pindare and the Parnaíba, and the eastern part of La Plata basin (Fig. 8d). They
386 correspond to the locations of the largest aquifers of South America: Amazonas and Maranhão
387 basins, Guarani Aquifer System respectively (Margat, 2007), and to a region of high to very high
388 recharge according to WHYMAP, located between the two latter basins, which makes part of the
389 groundwater footprint (*i.e.*, the area required to sustain groundwater use and groundwater-
390 dependent ecosystem services of a region of interest, such as an aquifer, watershed or
391 community) of the Maranhão according to Gleeson et al. (2012) (see Fig. 1 of this paper). The
392 temporal component of the fourth mode is highly correlated to the time-series of water levels of
393 two *in situ* stations (~10%) located in the São Francisco and the Negro (in Argentina) basins.

394

395 3.3 Contribution to the major South American drainage basins to sea level

396

397 3.3.1 Time series of equivalent sea level in large drainage basins

398 By dividing the water volume variations by the total ocean surface (~360 millions of km²), the
399 Equivalent Sea Level (ESL) time series are simply obtained (Fig. 10). They correspond to the
400 water mass contributions of these drainage basins to the actual measured sea level. The ESL time
401 series of regional, GRGS and ICA-400 km solutions remain very close to each other. However,
402 GRGS-based solutions present slightly greater amplitudes when they are averaged over the South
403 American basins. In general, the ESL time series are dominated by a strong seasonal cycle, as
404 previous shown by Ramillien et al. (2008b) while using 3-year GRACE data, that reaches +/-2
405 mm for the Amazon river basin. This latter river basin appears as the largest contributor of water
406 mass to the oceans at annual time scale, while the three others have amplitudes of +/-0.5 mm
407 ESL. Besides, these series exhibit clear multi-year variations and modulations of the dominant
408 seasonal cycle: in the case of the Amazon, the maxima are important (up to 4 mm ESL) in 2006,
409 2008 and 2009 only, whereas the curve for La Plata basin contains short wavelengths with
410 maxima of seasonal cycle in 2003, 2007 and 2010. As both time-series of 10-day solutions (*i.e.*,
411 regional and GRGS) exhibit important “high-frequency” variations, their origin seems to be
412 related to sub-monthly hydrological events. Analysis of daily water levels over 37 years (1961-
413 1997) at Corrientes, the closest station to the mouth of La Plata basin, shows larger standard
414 deviations for a lower annual cycle than a similar analysis performed in Obidos (over 27 years),
415 the closest station to the mouth of La Plata basin (Clarke et al., 2000). This suggests important
416 short-term hydrological variations in the surface reservoir that can account for the rapid
417 variations observed in Fig. 10d.

418

419 3.3.2 Interannual variations of TWS and discharges in large drainage basins

420 The contribution to sea level variations at interannual time-scale of the largest drainage basins of
421 South America (*i.e.*, Amazon, Orinoco, and Tocantins) is presented on Fig. 11. If the 12-month
422 cycle is removed by applying a 13-month average sliding window on each ESL time-series, it is
423 clear the inter-annual residuals will not be explained by a simple linear trend for the considered
424 2003-2010 period (Fig. 11). The signatures of the extreme and sudden climatic events that
425 recently affected the Amazon basin as the droughts of 2005 and 2010 and the flood of 2009 (Fig.
426 11a), and La Plata such as the drought of 2009 and the flood of 2010 (Fig. 11d) can be clearly
427 identified. This is in contradiction with the self-made idea that continents would provide (or
428 retain) water mass to the oceans continuously, by suggesting multi-year variations do not permit
429 to establish a definitive water mass balance. Moreover, errors in the determination of the long-
430 term mass balance remain comparable to the fitted linear trend values themselves (~ 0.03 mm/yr),
431 according to Ramillien et al. (2008b). In the case of spherical harmonics representation (*i.e.*,
432 GRGS and ICA solutions), most of uncertainty (up to 0.05 mm ESL) is due to spectral leakage
433 (*i.e.*, pollution of signals from other parts of the globe) because of truncation at degree 50-60
434 (Frappart et al., 2011b). This motivates us to compare the inter-annual variations to independent
435 datasets such as discharge change measurements versus time, to confirm the quality of our water
436 mass estimates computed from the different GRACE datasets. The interannual variations of TWS
437 are compared to the interannual variations of river discharges for these large drainage basins of
438 South America. They exhibit similar patterns as already observed in the Amazon basin and its
439 sub-basins using the ICA solutions (Frappart et al., 2012; in press). High correlations ($R \geq 0.9$)
440 were found in the Amazon basin with one month of delay between TWS and discharge (Table 6).
441 This delay can be accounted for the presence of extensive floodplains along the central corridor
442 of the Amazon-Solimões, and over Negro (northern tributary of the Amazon) and Mamoré
443 basins, that cover more than 300,000 km² of the surface of the basin (Diegues, 1994; Junk, 1997).

444 The presence of floodplains delays the transit of surface water. As a consequence, TWS is
445 dominated by surface water causing a time-shift between TWS and discharge. On the contrary,
446 for basins less densely covered with floodplains as the Orinoco and La Plata, correlation in time
447 between TWS and discharge remains high ($R \sim 0.7$ except for the ICA solutions with $R \sim 0.6$ and
448 $R > 0.75$ except for the ICA solutions with $R \sim 0.6$ respectively), however the time shift is negative:
449 maximum of discharge occurs one or two months before the maximum of TWS (Table 6). In the
450 Tocantins basin, correlation between TWS and discharge is much lower ($R < 0.6$) most likely
451 because the interannual variations of TWS are more influenced by the groundwater storage, as
452 the region is characterized by the presence of a large aquifer system (Maranhão basin).

453

454 **4. Conclusion**

455 2-by-2 degree regional water mass solutions over South America were compared to GRACE-
456 based global products (GRGS and ICA-400) for the period 2003-2010, and it is shown that they
457 offer a better geographical location of hydrological structures by construction than global
458 solutions. As a consequence, the higher power spectral density present in the regional solution at
459 at smaller spatial scales can be attributed to a better determination of these wavelengths in the
460 regional solutions. Besides, the global GRGS solutions suffer from the presence of residuals
461 North-South striping from aliasing, this effect masks the hydrological structures, and
462 consequently degrades the water mass balance estimates. Principal Component Decomposition of
463 all the GRACE datasets permitted us to unravel modes of variability from observed signals
464 observed by GRACE, and then identify geographical locations of inter-annual water mass
465 variations of individual groundwater unit over the continent, and correlate them to climatology.
466 Robust validation of these GRACE datasets consists of comparing them to time variations of *in*
467 *situ* water level and discharge measurements. Correlations between GRACE solutions and river

468 level records are significant for the four first PCA modes suggesting these modes represent water
469 mass changes at the surface of the Earth. In particular, signature of the melt of the Patagonian
470 IceField in the gravity field is found in temporal modes 1 and 3 while its location is well
471 identified in the corresponding spatial modes. Temporal mode number 4 seems to be mostly
472 related to slower groundwater variations, as the corresponding spatial mode clearly coincides
473 with the geographical limits of groundwater unit. High correlations are also found between TWS
474 and river discharges at interannual time-scale in the Amazon and Orinoco basins where TWS is
475 dominated by the surface reservoir due to the presence of extensive floodplains, whereas low
476 correlation is found for the Tocantins, likely because the measured gravity signal is dominated by
477 groundwater changes in this basin. Our study, based on the use of PCA, demonstrated the ability
478 of GRACE satellite gravimetry to distinguish efficiently real hydrological signals in different
479 reservoirs (surface waters, groundwater, glaciers) especially through such a regional approach.

480

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484

485 **6. References**

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681

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 706 CSR ($\sigma^2=0.44$), and c) GRGS ($\sigma^2=0.6$) solutions over 2003-2010. d) GLWD map of surface water
 707 over South America. In the dashed blue rectangles, regions of maximum or minimum of TWS
 708 signal: 1 – Altiplano, 2 – Solimões-Amazon corridor (including the south of the Amazonian
 709 Negro basin) + mouth of the Tocantins, 3 - Pindare and Parnacaiba, 4 – La Plata delta. In the
 710 dashed green rectangles, secondary extrema of TWS: 1 – Mouth of the Orinoco, 2 – Sources of
 711 Parana (La Plata) and São Francisco rivers, 3 – Patagonia Icefield and Deseado basin.

712 **Figure 3 :** a) Temporal component of the 1st PCA mode of TWS for Regional (black), ICA-CSR
 713 (red), and GRGS (blue) solutions over 2003-2010. b) Time variations of normalized water levels
 714 correlated with the 1st PCA mode: Ciudad Bolivar (black), Serrinha (red), Manaus (blue),
 715 Fazenda Vista Alegre (light green), Jatuarana (grey), Obidos (orange), Itaituba (yellow), Porto de
 716 Moz (dark green), Batallon 601 (light blue).

717 **Figure 4 :** Spatial component of the 2nd PCA mode of TWS for a) Regional ($\sigma^2=0.2$), b) ICA-
 718 CSR ($\sigma^2=0.15$), and c) GRGS ($\sigma^2=0.14$) solutions over 2003-2010. d) GLWD map of surface
 719 water over South America. In the dashed blue rectangles, regions of maximum or minimum of
 720 TWS signal: 1 – Orinoco and the Negro basins, 2 - the southern bank of the Solimões, 3 - the
 721 region covered with Pindare and Parnacaiba basins, 4 – the downstream part and the delta of La
 722 Plata basin.

723 **Figure 5 :** a) Temporal component of the 2nd PCA mode of TWS for Regional (black), ICA-CSR
 724 (red), and GRGS (blue) solutions over 2003-2010. b) Time variations of normalized water levels
 725 correlated with the 2nd PCA mode: Caracarai (black), Tabatinga (red), Manacapuru (blue),
 726 Corrientes (green).

727 **Figure 6 :** Spatial component of the 3rd PCA mode of TWS for a) Regional ($\sigma^2=0.13$), b) ICA-
 728 CSR ($\sigma^2=0.14$), and c) GRGS ($\sigma^2=0.1$) solutions over 2003-2010. d) GLWD map of surface water
 729 over South America. In the dashed blue rectangles, regions of maximum or minimum of TWS
 730 signal: 1 – southern bank of the Solimões and the central corridor of the Amazon until the
 731 junction with the Tapajos river 2 – upstream part of the Tocantins. In the dashed green rectangles,
 732 secondary extrema of TWS: 1 – Negro basin, 2 – Patagonia Icefield and Deseado basin, 3 –
 733 Essequibo (Guyana), Suriname (Suriname), Oyapok and Maroni (French Guiana) basins.

734 **Figure 7 :** a) Temporal component of the 3rd PCA mode of TWS for Regional (black), ICA-CSR
735 (red), and GRGS (blue) solutions over 2003-2010. b) Time variations of normalized water levels
736 correlated with the 3rd PCA mode: Tucuruí (black), Pepiri Mini (red), Chapeton (blue).

737 **Figure 8 :** Spatial component of the 4th PCA mode of TWS for a) Regional ($\sigma^2=0.11$), b) ICA-
738 CSR ($\sigma^2=0.1$), and c) GRGS ($\sigma^2=0.08$) solutions over 2003-2010. d) WHYMAP map of
739 groundwater recharge over South America. In the dashed black rectangles, regions of maximum
740 or minimum of TWS signal: 1 – Amazonas, 2 – Maranhão, 3 – Guarani aquifer systems (adapted
741 from Margat (2007)).

742 **Figure 9 :** a) Temporal component of the 4th PCA mode of TWS for Regional (black), ICA-CSR
743 (red), and GRGS (blue) solutions over 2003-2010. b) Time variations of normalized water levels
744 correlated with the 4th PCA mode: Piranhas (black), Primera Angostura (red).

745 **Figure 10 :** Time-series of GRACE-based TWS over 2003-2010 from Regional (black), ICA
746 CSR 400 km (red), GRGS (blue) expressed in mm of ESL for the a) Amazon, b) Orinoco, c)
747 Tocantins, and d) La Plata basins.

748 **Figure 11 :** Time-series of GRACE-based interannual TWS over 2003-2010 from Regional
749 (black), ICA CSR 400 km (red), GRGS (blue) expressed in mm of ESL and of interannual
750 discharge (grey) for the a) Amazon, b) Orinoco, c) Tocantins, and d) La Plata basins.

Table 1 : List of *the in situ* stations used for comparisons with GRACE-derived TWS over the largest river basins South America (Amazon, La Plata, Orinoco, Tocantins, São Francisco, Negro) and their tributaries.

Station	Basin	Lon (°)	Lat (°)	Source
Ciudad Bolivar	Orinoco	-63.608	8.439	HYBAM
Caracarai	Branco (Amazon)	-61.124	1.814	HYBAM
Serrinha	Negro (Amazon)	-64.289	-0.485	HYBAM
Manaus	Negro (Amazon)	-60.035	-3.149	ANA
Tabatinga	Solimões (Amazon)	-69.952	-4.253	HYBAM
Manacapuru	Solimões (Amazon)	-60.609	-3.316	HYBAM
Fazenda Vista Alegre	Madeira (Amazon)	-60.026	-4.898	HYBAM
Jatuarana	Amazon	-59.643	-3.062	ANA
Obidos	Amazon	-55.657	-1.923	HYBAM
Itaituba	Tapajos (Amazon)	-55.982	-4.278	HYBAM
Porto de Moz	Xingu (Amazon)	-52.240	-1.753	ANA
Tucuruí	Tocantins	-49.683	-3.783	ANA
Piranhas	São Francisco	-37.756	-9.626	ANA
Corrientes	Parana (La Plata)	-58.833	-27.475	INA
Pepiri Mini	Uruguay (La Plata)	-53.933	-27.154	INA
Batallon 601	Coronda (La Plata)	-60.746	-31.694	INA
Chapeton	Parana (La Plata)	-60.283	-31.574	INA
Primera Angostura	Negro	-63.790	-40.456	INA

Table 2 : Explained variances for the four first modes of the Principal Components Analysis (PCA) of centred and deseasonalized TWS from GRACE for the regional solutions, the ICA-filtered solutions from CSR, GFZ, and JPL, and the GRGS solutions over the 2003-2010 time-period.

Explained variance (%)	mode 1	mode 2	mode 3	mode 4	sum
regional	43	20	13	11	87
ICA CSR	44	15	14	10	83
ICA GFZ	42	17	13	10	82
ICA JPL	41	21	13	8	83
GRGS	60	14	10	8	92

Table 3 : Correlation between the spatial component of the different GRACE solutions (regional, ICA-CSR-400km, and GRGS) for each PCA mode.

R PCA mode	GRACE solutions		
	regional vs. ICA-CSR-400km	regional vs. GRGS	ICA-CSR-400km vs. GRGS
mode 1	0.84	0.6	0.67
mode 2	0.67	0.43	-0.04
mode 3	0.69	0.46	0.38
mode 4	0.46	0.86	0.39

Table 4: Correlation between the temporal component of the different GRACE solutions (regional, ICA-CSR-400km, and GRGS), and maximum correlation and associated time-lag for each PCA mode.

R PCA mode	GRACE solutions			
	regional vs. ICA-CSR-400km	regional vs. GRGS	ICA-CSR-400km vs. GRGS	
mode 1	R($\Delta t=0$)	0.95	0.82	0.81
	Rmax (Δt in days)	0.96 (30)	0.84 (80)	0.86 (180)
mode 2	R($\Delta t=0$)	0.79	0.52	0.08
	Rmax (Δt in days)	0.91 (-120)	0.80 (-160)	0.58 (-180)
mode 3	R($\Delta t=0$)	0.79	0.56	0.17
	Rmax (Δt in days)	0.79 (0)	0.61 (-60)	0.21 (60)
mode 4	R($\Delta t=0$)	0.62	0.96	0.47
	Rmax (Δt in days)	0.7 (-120)	0.96 (0)	0.57 (180)

Table 5 : Correlation value corresponding to maximum of module of correlation and associated time-lag (days) between interannual variations of *in situ* water levels and GRACE-based TWS for regional, ICA (CSR), and GRGS solutions.

Station	PCA Mode	regional		ICA		GRGS	
		R max(R)	Δt (days)	R max(R)	Δt (days)	R max(R)	Δt (days)
Ciudad Bolivar	1	-0.80	180	-0.73	180	-0.63	170
Caracarai	2	-0.86	-40	-0.83	30	-0.66	-120
Serrinha	1	0.66	-160	0.62	-150	0.62	-180
Manaus	1	0.65	120	0.65	60	0.50	-180
Tabatinga	2	0.81	-160	0.83	-90	0.39	-180
Manacapuru	2	0.91	-180	0.83	-90	0.47	-180
Fazenda Vista Alegre	1	0.80	50	0.84	90	0.75	-160
Jatuarana	1	0.70	30	0.70	60	0.58	-180
Obidos	1	0.88	-20	0.87	30	0.81	-120
Itaituba	1	0.96	0	0.83	-110	0.94	30
Porto de Moz	1	0.88	-90	0.82	0	0.71	-160
Tucuruí	3	0.74	-30	0.73	30	0.31	-30
Piranhas	4	0.68	-30	0.71	-30	0.71	-30
Pepiri Mini	3	-0.70	-150	-0.80	-120	-0.16	-180
Corrientes	2	0.71	70	0.52	60	0.90	-100
Batallón 601	1	-0.67	-110	-0.62	-90	0.25	180
Chapeton	3	-0.77	-160	-0.72	-150	-0.39	-180
Primera Angostura	4	-0.70	-150	-0.52	180	-0.77	-150

Table 6 : Maximum correlation and associated time-lag (months) between interannual variations of GRACE-based TWS (expressed in ESL) for regional, ICA (CSR), and GRGS solutions of *in situ* river discharge in Obidos – Amazon, Ciudad Bolivar – Orinoco, Tucurui – Tocantins, and Chapeton – La Plata.

Discharge station	TWS regional		TWS ICA		TWS GRGS	
	Rmax	Δt (months)	Rmax	Δt (months)	Rmax	Δt (months)
Obidos (Amazon)	0.9	1	0.93	1	0.92	1
Ciudad Bolivar (Orinoco)	0.69	-1	0.58	-1	0.69	-2
Tucurui (Tocantins)	0.46	2	0.63	1	0.37	2
Chapeton (La Plata)	0.86	-3	0.61	-3	0.75	-3

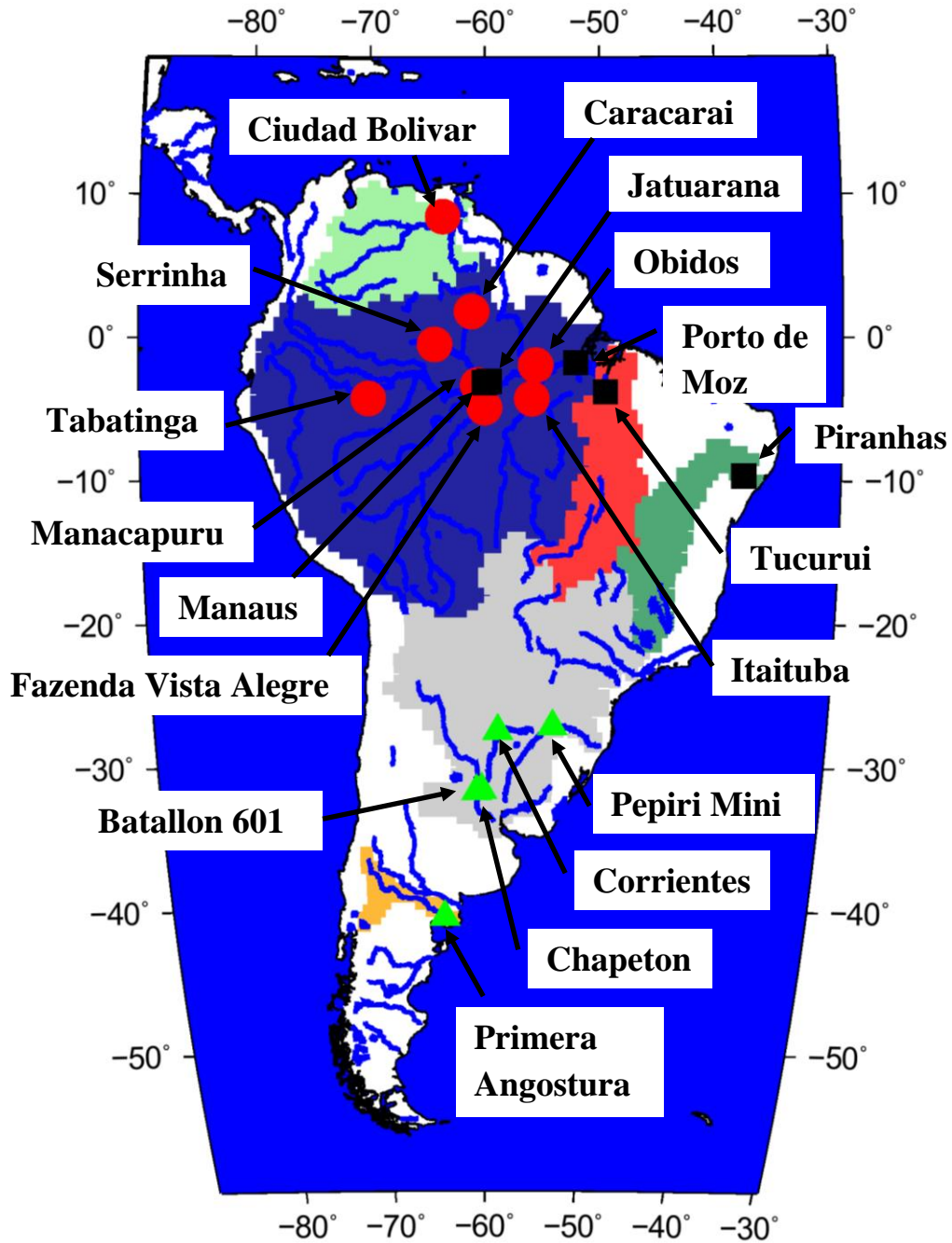


Figure 1 : Major drainage basins of South America: Orinoco (light green), Amazon (dark blue), Tocantins (red), São Francisco (dark green), La Plata (grey), Negro (orange). *In situ* gauge stations are represented with red circles (HYBAM), black squares (ANA), and green triangles (INA).

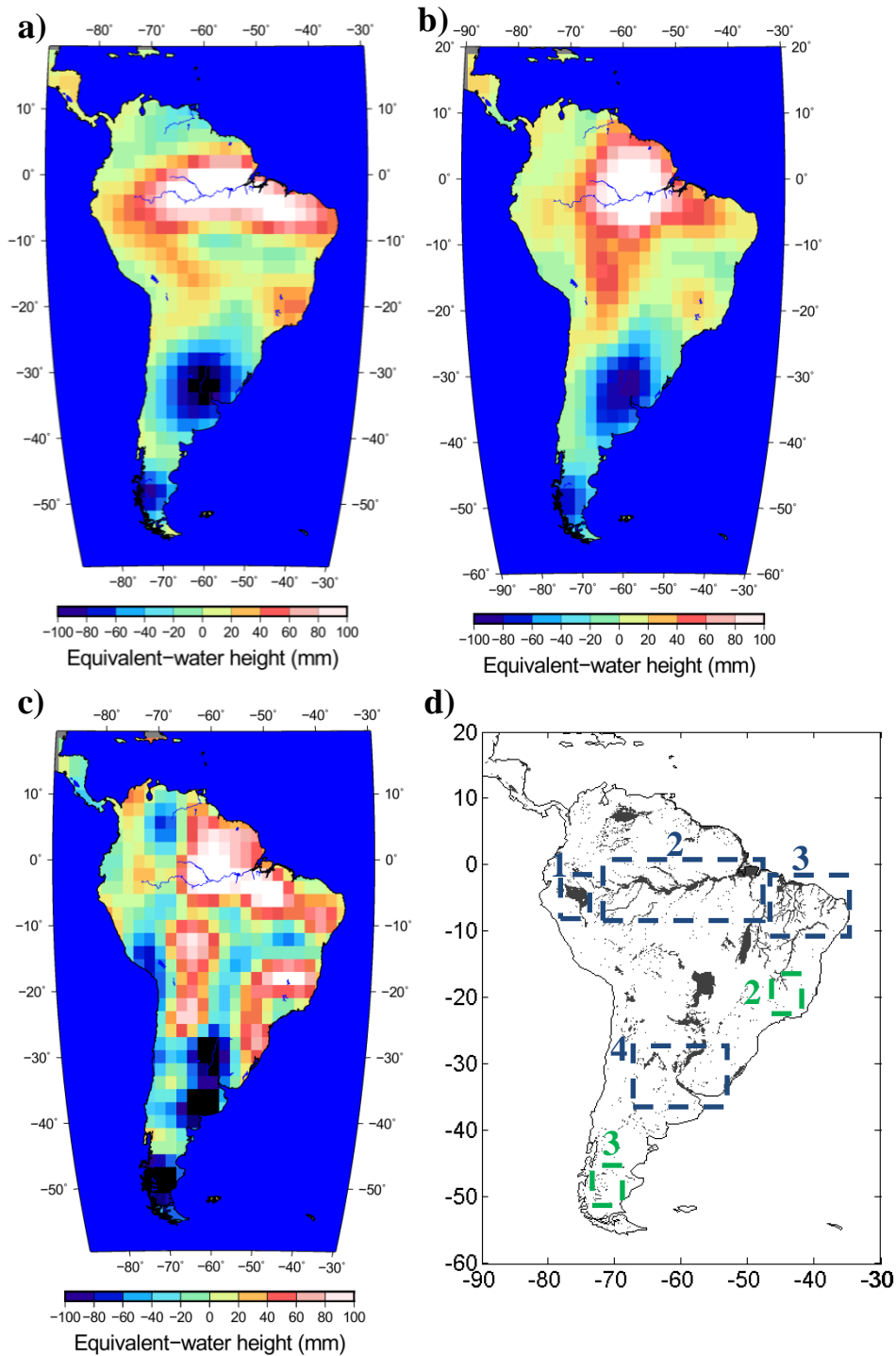


Figure 2 : Spatial component of the 1st PCA mode of TWS for a) Regional ($\sigma^2=0.43$), b) ICA-CSR ($\sigma^2=0.44$), and c) GRGS ($\sigma^2=0.6$) solutions over 2003-2010. d) GLWD map of surface water over South America. In the dashed blue rectangles, regions of maximum or minimum of TWS signal: 1 – Altiplano, 2 – Solimões-Amazon corridor (including the south of the Amazonian Negro basin) + mouth of the Tocantins, 3 - Pindare and Parnaíba, 4 – La Plata delta. In the dashed green rectangles, secondary extrema of TWS: 1 – Mouth of the Orinoco, 2 – Sources of Parana (La Plata) and São Francisco rivers, 3 – Patagonia Icefield and Deseado basin.

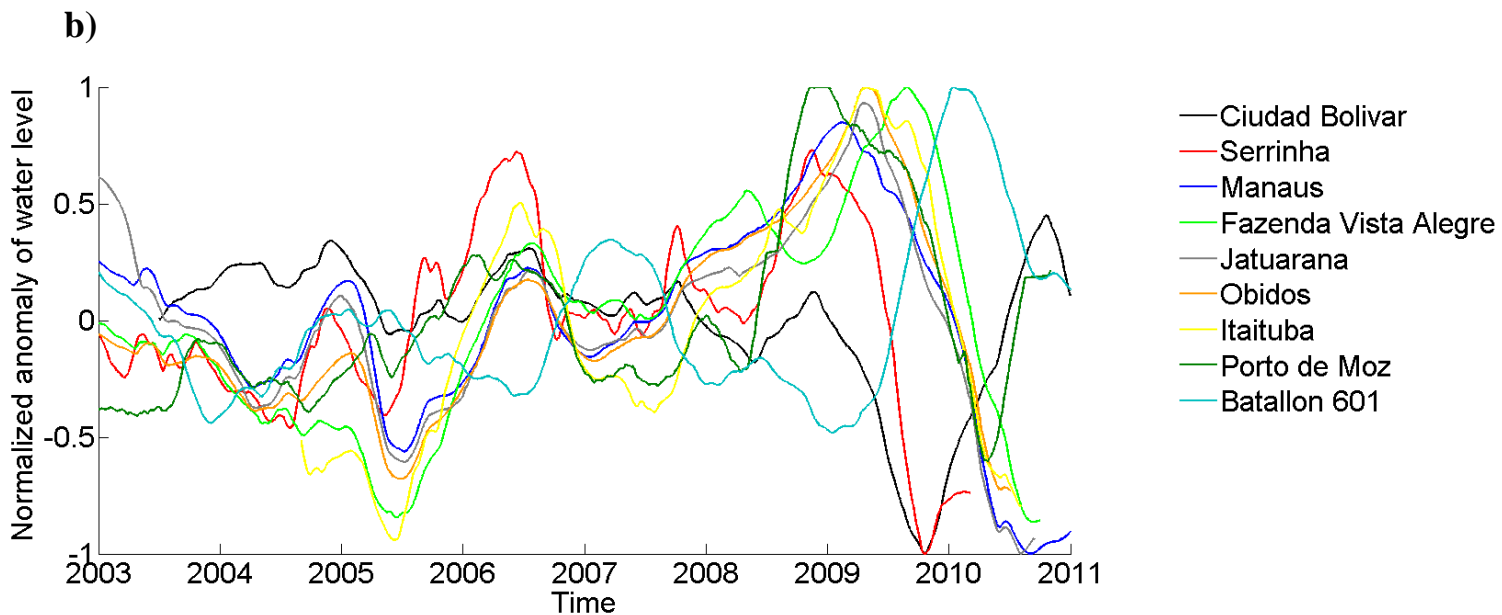
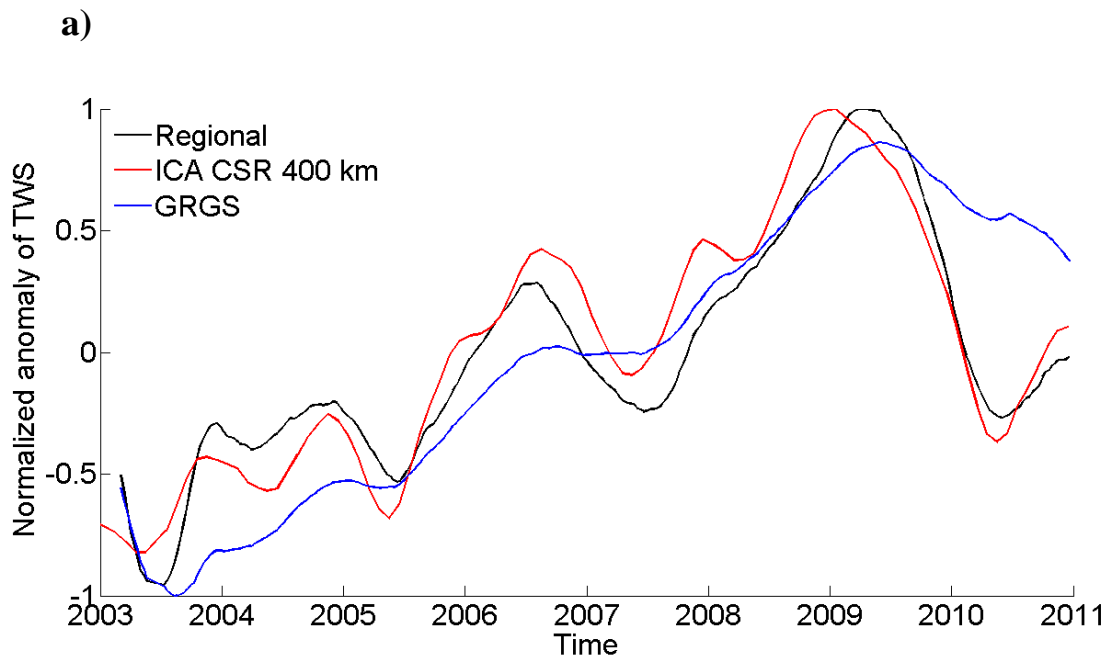


Figure 3 : a) Temporal component of the 1st PCA mode of TWS for Regional (black), ICA-CSR (red), and GRGS (blue) solutions over 2003-2010. b) Time variations of normalized water levels correlated with the 1st PCA mode: Ciudad Bolivar (black), Serrinha (red), Manaus (blue), Fazenda Vista Alegre (light green), Jatuarana (grey), Obidos (orange), Itaituba (yellow), Porto de Moz (dark green), Batallon 601 (light blue).

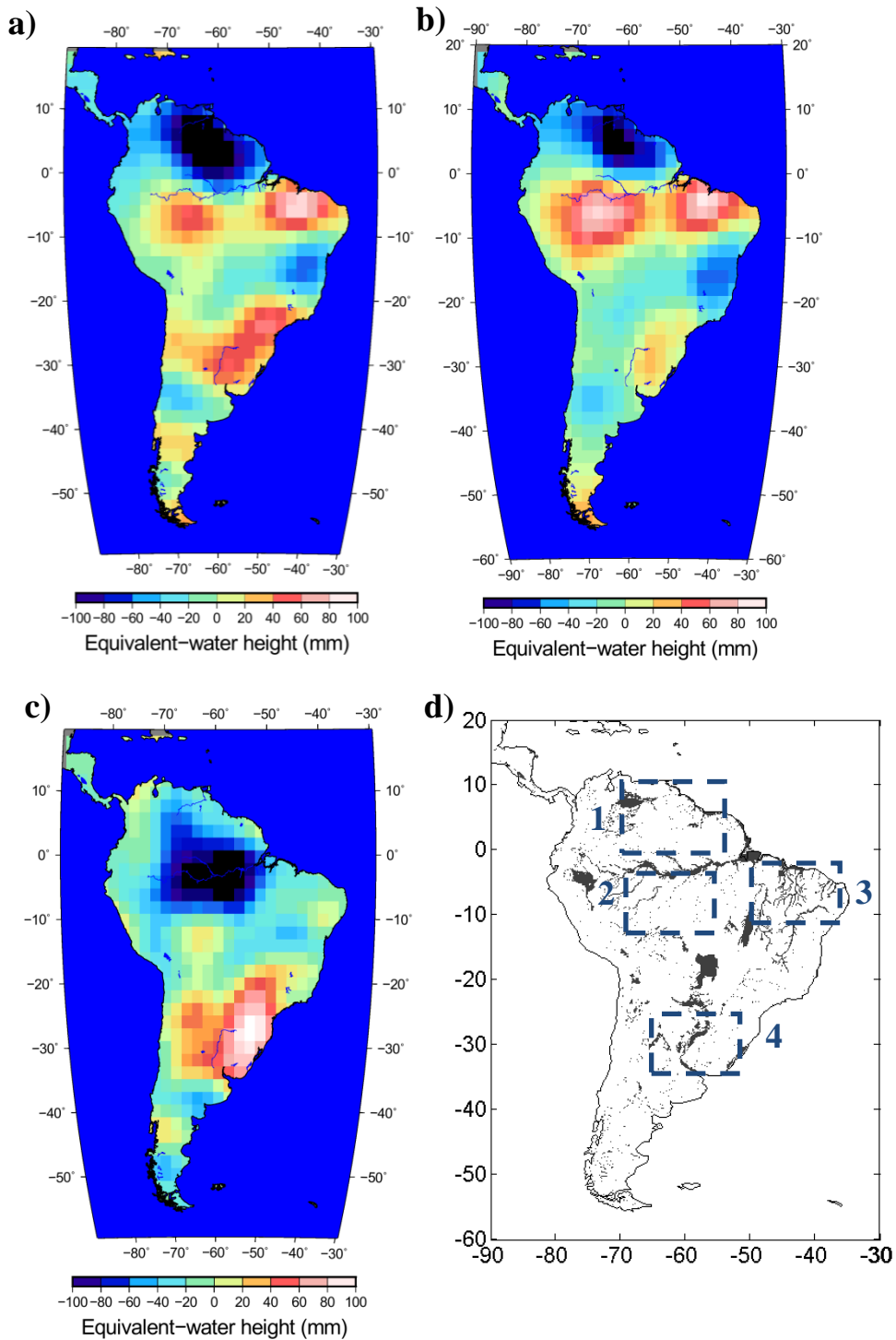


Figure 4 : Spatial component of the 2nd PCA mode of TWS for a) Regional ($\sigma^2=0.2$), b) ICA-CSR ($\sigma^2=0.15$), and c) GRGS ($\sigma^2=0.14$) solutions over 2003-2010. d) GLWD map of surface water over South America. In the dashed blue rectangles, regions of maximum or minimum of TWS signal: 1 – Orinoco and the Negro basins, 2 - the southern bank of the Solimões, 3 - the region covered with Pindare and Parnaíba basins, 4 – the downstream part and the delta of La Plata basin.

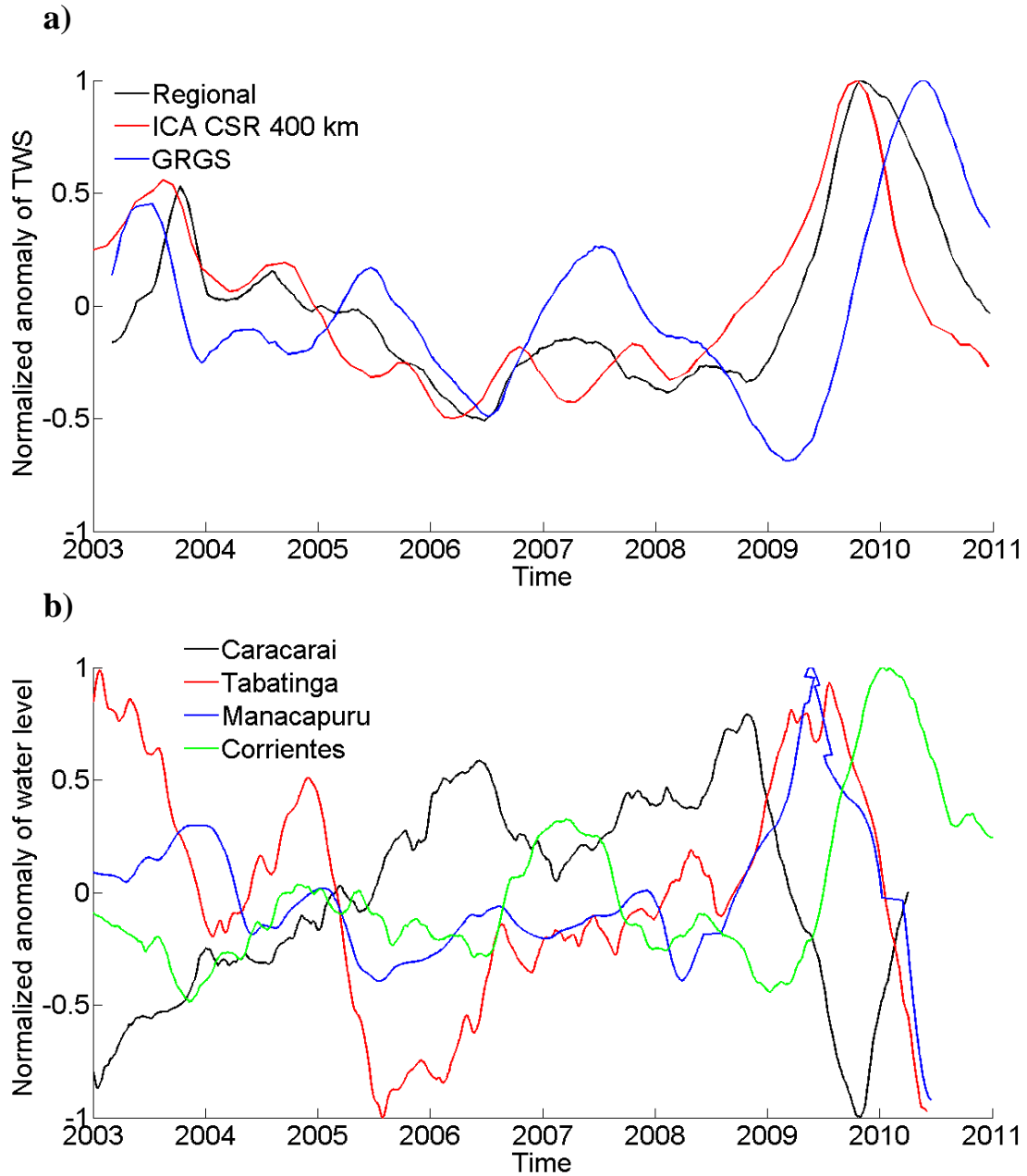


Figure 5 : a) Temporal component of the 2nd PCA mode of TWS for Regional (black), ICA-CSR (red), and GRGS (blue) solutions over 2003-2010. b) Time variations of normalized water levels correlated with the 2nd PCA mode: Caracarai (black), Tabatinga (red), Manacapuru (blue), Corrientes (green).

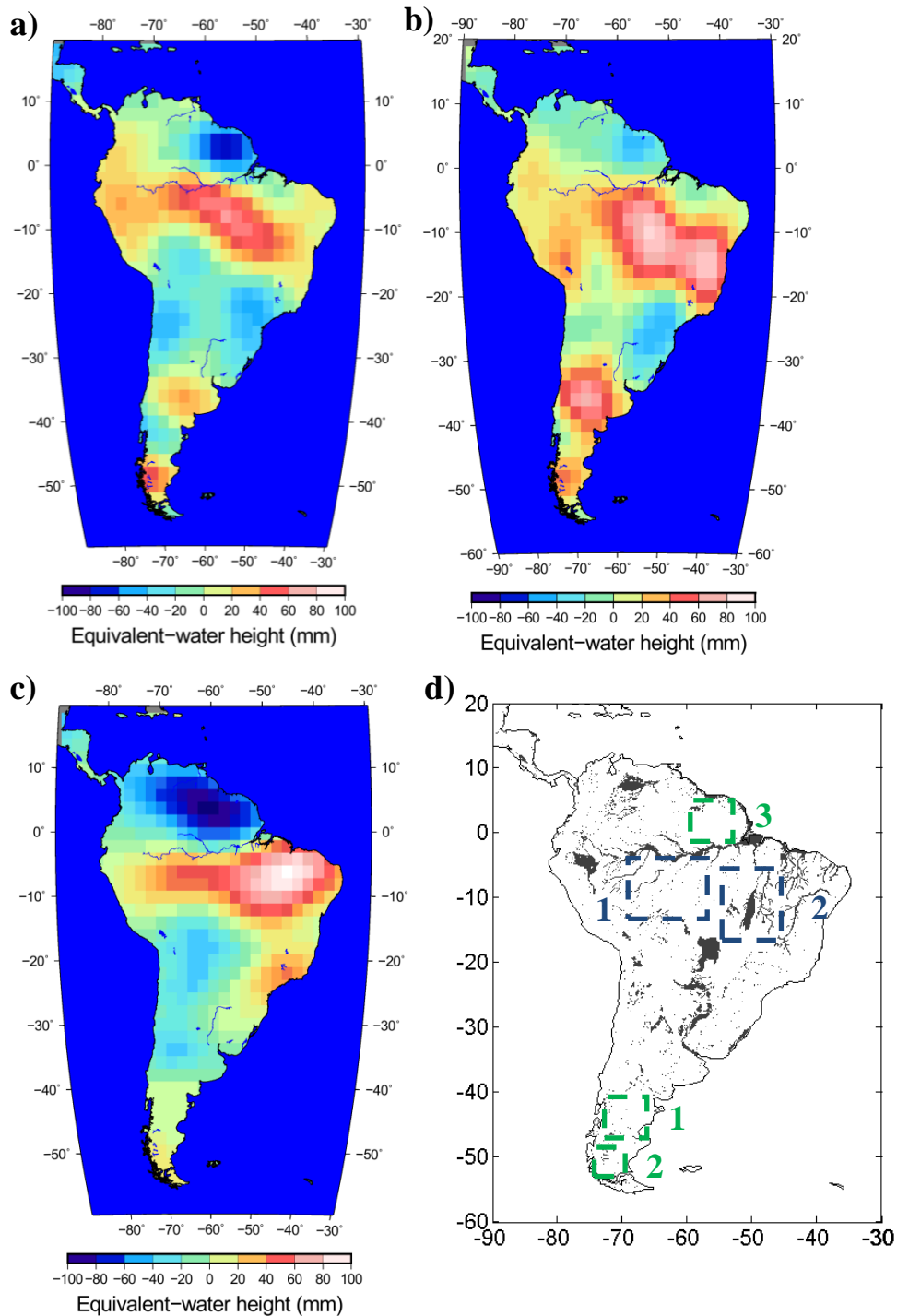


Figure 6 : Spatial component of the 3rd PCA mode of TWS for a) Regional ($\sigma^2=0.13$), b) ICA-CSR ($\sigma^2=0.14$), and c) GRGS ($\sigma^2=0.1$) solutions over 2003-2010. d) GLWD map of surface water over South America. In the dashed blue rectangles, regions of maximum or minimum of TWS signal: 1 – southern bank of the Solimões and the central corridor of the Amazon until the junction with the Tapajós river 2 – upstream part of the Tocantins. In the dashed green rectangles, secondary extrema of TWS: 1 – Negro basin, 2 – Patagonia Icefield and Deseado basin, 3 – Essequibo (Guyana), Suriname (Suriname), Oyapok and Maroni (French Guiana) basins.

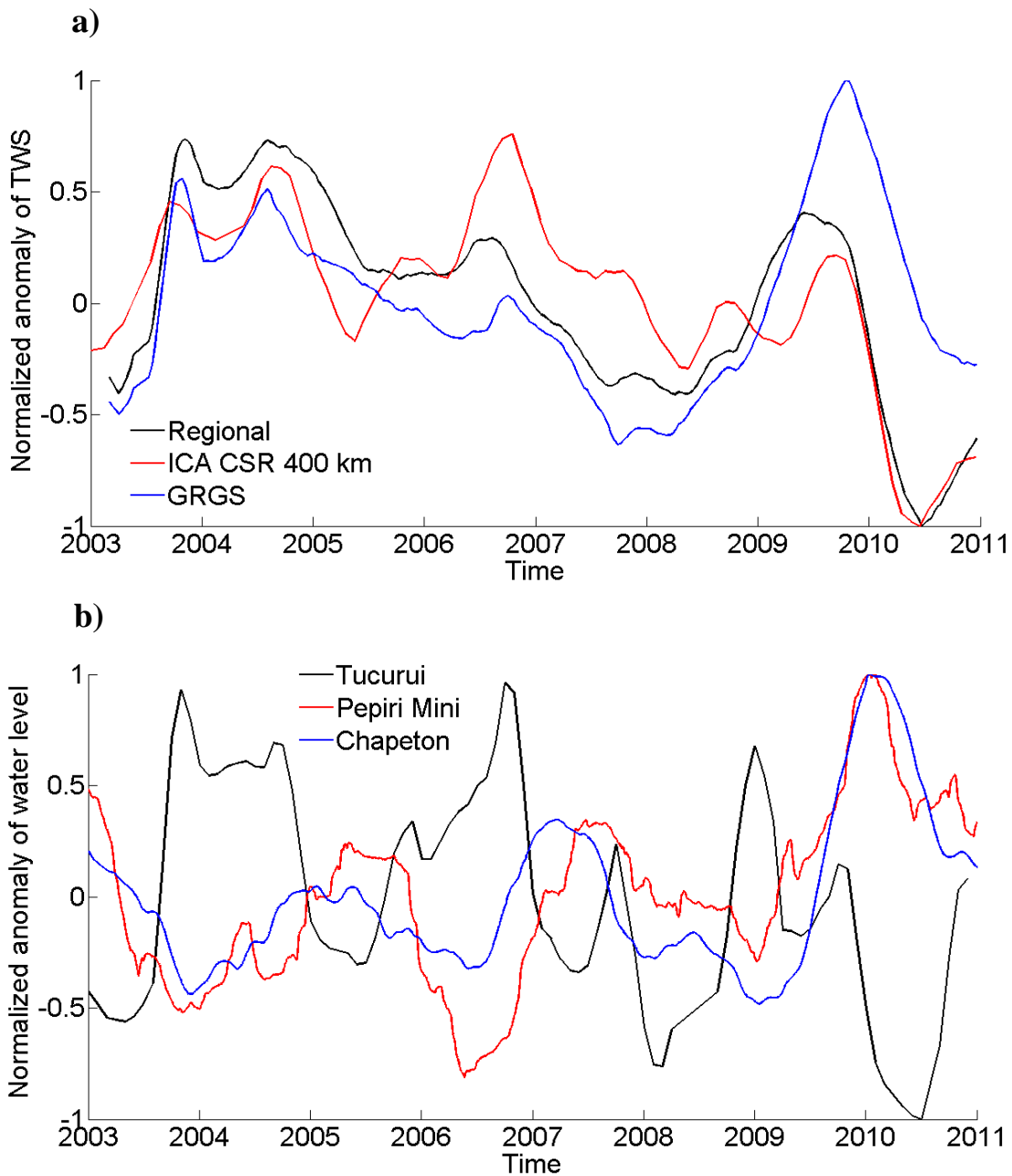


Figure 7 : a) Temporal component of the 3rd PCA mode of TWS for Regional (black), ICA-CSR (red), and GRGS (blue) solutions over 2003-2010. b) Time variations of normalized water levels correlated with the 3rd PCA mode: Tucurui (black), Pepiri Mini (red), Chapeton (blue).

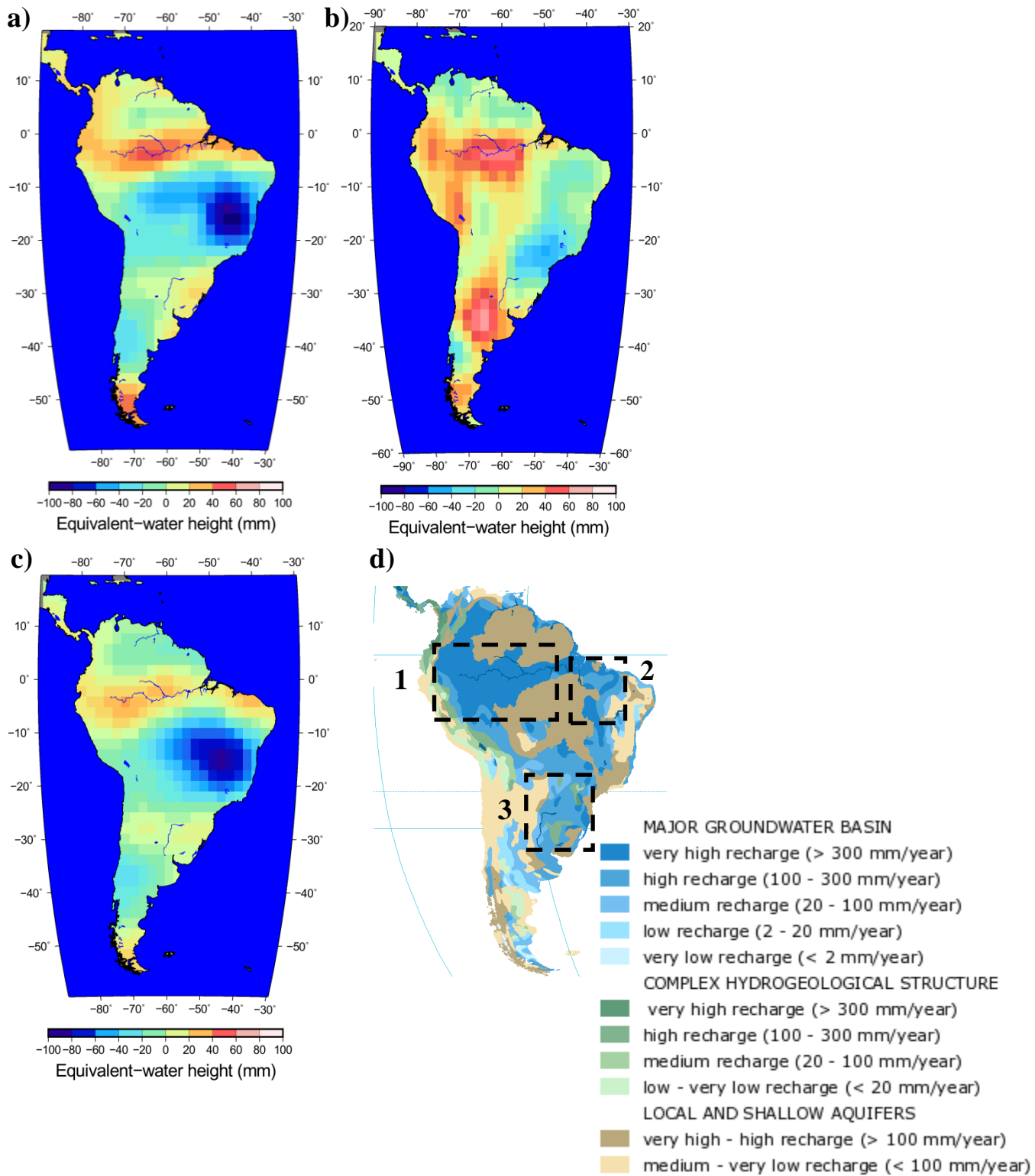


Figure 8 : Spatial component of the 4th PCA mode of TWS for a) Regional ($\sigma^2=0.11$), b) ICA-CSR ($\sigma^2=0.1$), and c) GRGS ($\sigma^2=0.08$) solutions over 2003-2010. d) WHYMAP map of groundwater recharge over South America. In the dashed black rectangles, regions of maximum or minimum of TWS signal: 1 – Amazonas, 2 – Maranhão, 3 – Guarani aquifer systems (adapted from Margat (2007)).

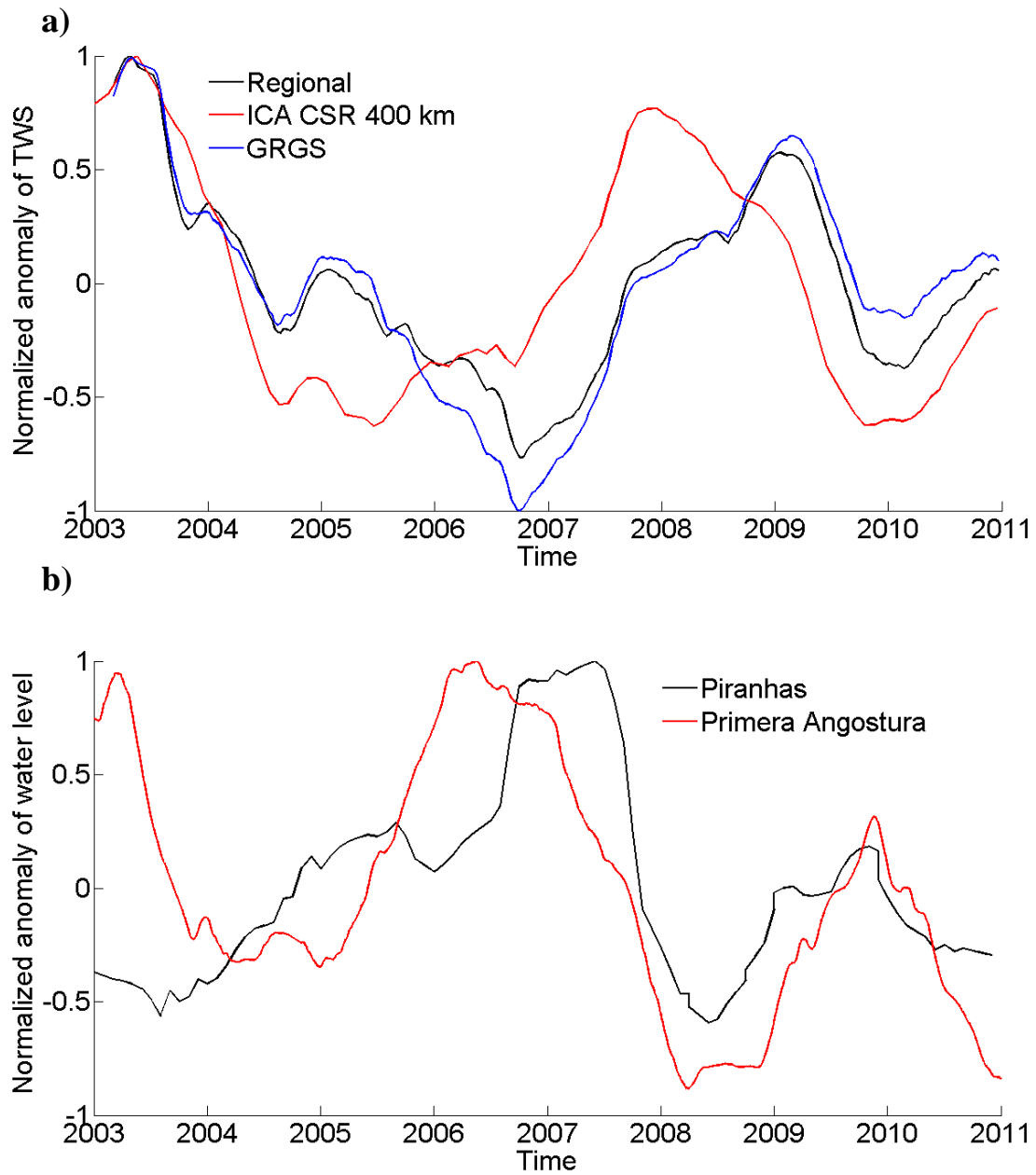


Figure 9 : a) Temporal component of the 4th PCA mode of TWS for Regional (black), ICA-CSR (red), and GRGS (blue) solutions over 2003-2010. b) Time variations of normalized water levels correlated with the 4th PCA mode: Piranhas (black), Primera Angostura (red).

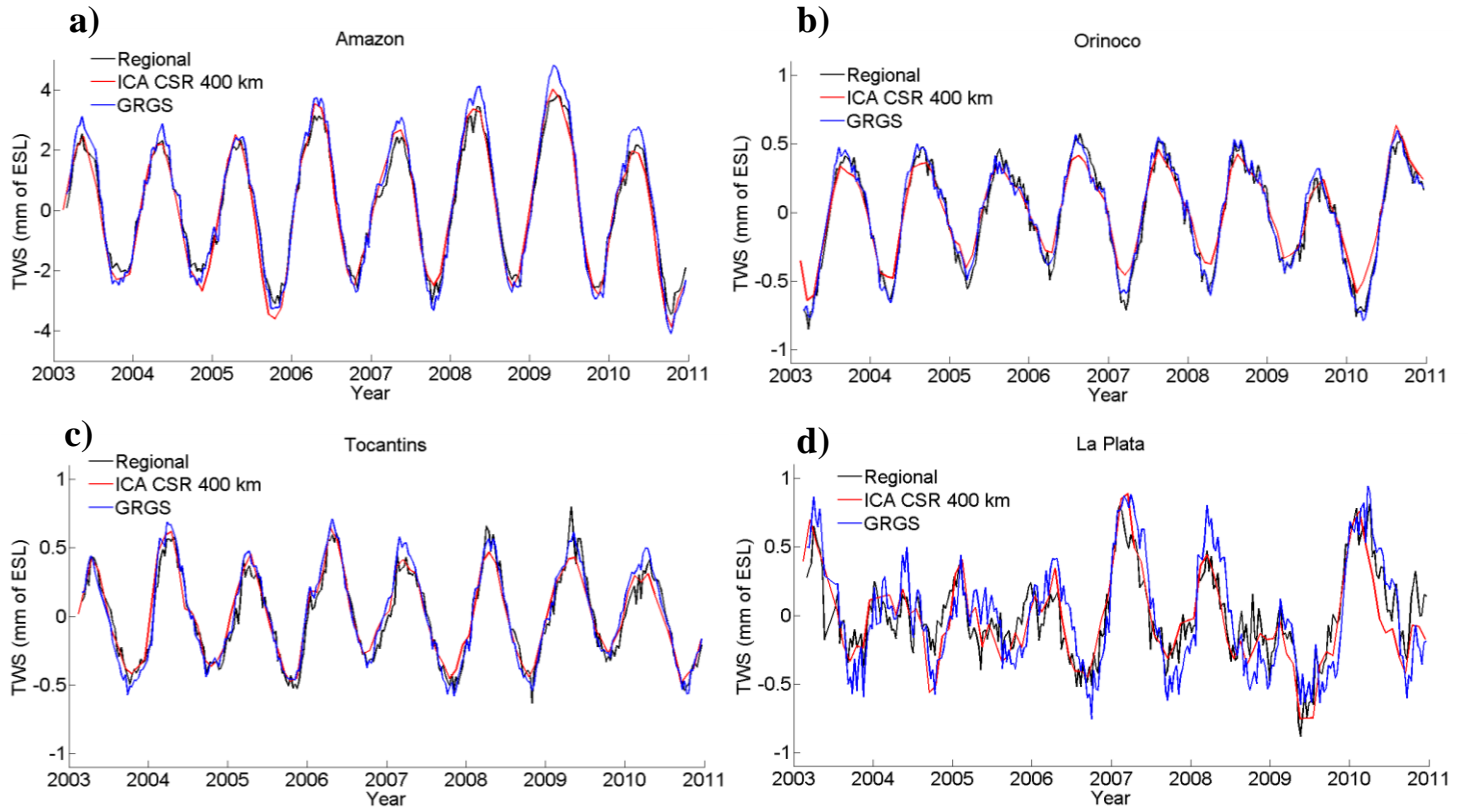


Figure 10 : Time-series of GRACE-based TWS over 2003-2010 from Regional (black), ICA CSR 400 km (red), GRGS (blue) expressed in mm of ESL for the a) Amazon, b) Orinoco, c) Tocantins, and d) La Plata basins.

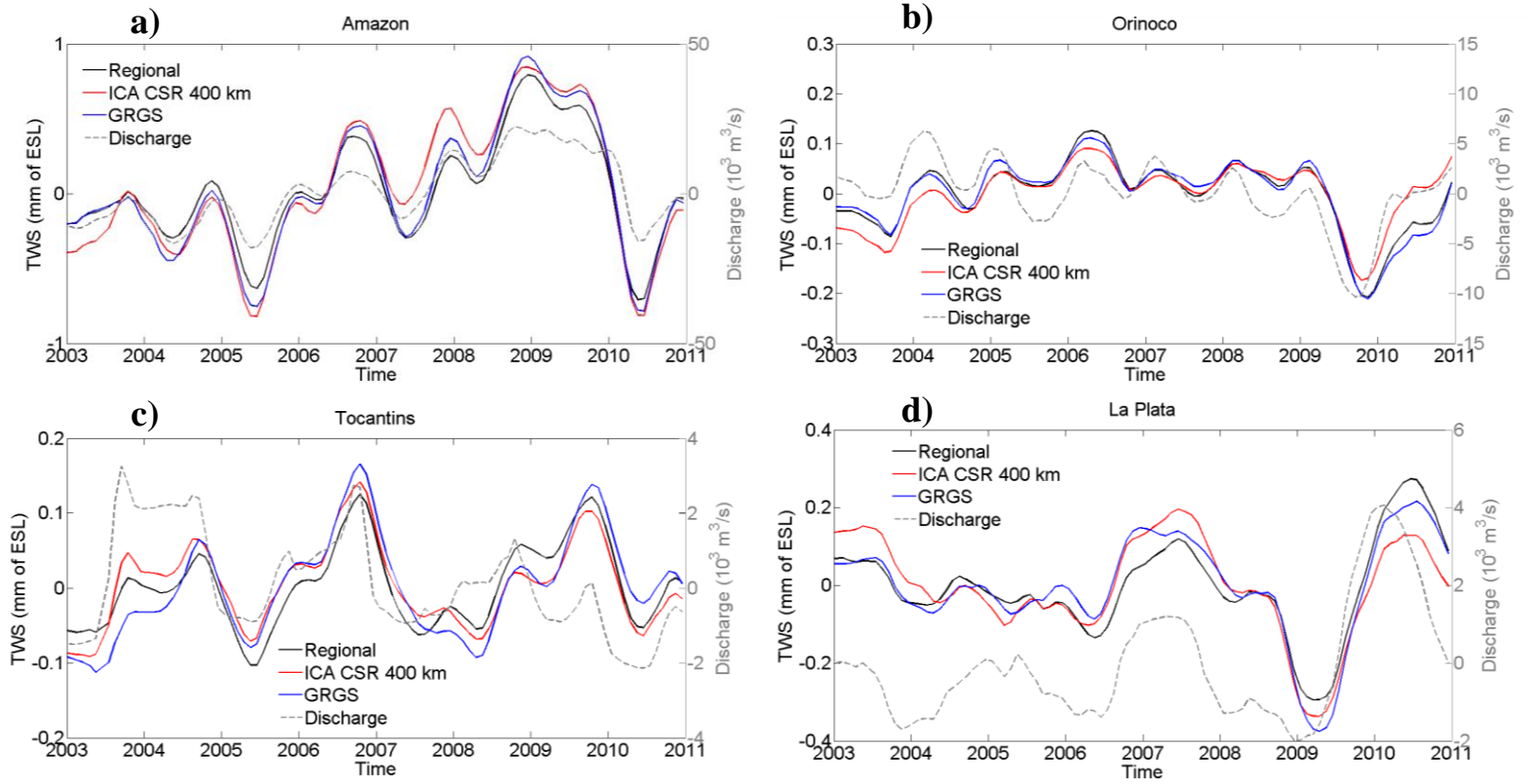


Figure 11 : Time-series of GRACE-based interannual TWS over 2003-2010 from Regional (black), ICA CSR 400 km (red), GRGS (blue) expressed in mm of ESL and of interannual discharge (grey) for the a) Amazon, b) Orinoco, c) Tocantins, and d) La Plata basins.