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## Environmental Electrokinetics for a sustainable subsurface

**Lima, A.T.; Hofmann, A.; Reynolds, D.R.; Ptacek, C.J.; Van Cappellen, P.; Ottosen, Lisbeth M.; Pamukcu, S.; Alshawabekh, A.; O'Carroll, D.M.; Riis, C.**

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1 **Environmental Electrokinetics for a Sustainable Subsurface**

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26  
27 **Abstract**

28 Soil and groundwater are key components in the sustainable management of the subsurface  
29 environment. Source contamination is one of its main threats and is commonly addressed using  
30 established remediation techniques such as in-situ chemical oxidation (ISCO), in-situ chemical  
31 reduction (ISCR; most notably using zero-valent iron [ZVI]), enhanced in-situ bioremediation (EISB),  
32 phytoremediation, soil-washing, pump-and-treat, soil vapour extraction (SVE), thermal treatment,  
33 and excavation and disposal. Decades of field applications have shown that these techniques can

34 successfully treat or control contaminants in higher permeability subsurface materials such as sands,  
35 but achieve only limited success at sites where low permeability soils, such as silts and clays, prevail.  
36 Electrokinetics (EK), a soil remediation technique mostly recognized in in-situ treatment of low  
37 permeability soils, has, for the last decade, been combined with more conventional techniques and  
38 can significantly enhance the performance of several of these remediation technologies, including  
39 ISCO, ISCR, EISB and phytoremediation. Herein, we discuss the use of emerging EK techniques in  
40 tandem with conventional remediation techniques, to achieve improved remediation performance.  
41 Furthermore, we highlight new EK applications that may come to play a role in the sustainable  
42 treatment of the contaminated subsurface.

43 **Keywords:** electrokinetics, remediation, subsurface contamination, plume migration, phyto-  
44 remediation, bioremediation, ISCO, nano zero valent iron (nZVI), landfill

45

## 46 **1. Introduction**

47 Soils, sediments and aquifers are fundamental bases for global environmental sustainability and  
48 provide essential resources to humans and nature alike (Godfray et al., 2010; Koch et al., 2013;  
49 McBratney et al., 2014). Anthropogenic impacts through land-use changes have affected, to differing  
50 degrees, the capacity of these geological features to maintain their basic functionality. Nutrient  
51 cycling, water retention, provision of physical/chemical stability, storage/filtering/transformation  
52 of compounds and sustaining biodiversity are some of the key functions that are an integral part of  
53 groundwater and food security (Godfray et al., 2010; Seto et al., 2011; United Nations, 2009). Most  
54 fresh water reserves (98-99%) occur in the subsurface; this means that 8-10 million km<sup>3</sup> of  
55 freshwater is contained or in direct contact with rock and soil (Margat, 2008; Shah et al., 2007). In an  
56 increasingly populated and urbanized world, pollution is widely recognized as a significant challenge  
57 to soil and groundwater resources management (FAO, 2003). Efforts to quantify groundwater  
58 pollution (Giuliano et al., 1998; Zaporozec, 2002) are scarce and the actual scale of the problem is not  
59 well known. Point-source pollution (i.e., the source of many groundwater plumes) is often difficult to  
60 accurately locate and address, as depicted in Figure 1. The causes of point-source contamination may  
61 be varied: industrial leakage (Gent et al., 2004; Lima et al., 2012a), backfill in construction works  
62 (Laethem and Legrand, 1993), or overall urbanized environments (Callender and Rice, 2000;  
63 Yongming et al., 2006). Source pollution treatment (A in Figure 1) is key to limiting contaminant  
64 transport to the vadose zone environment (Dresel et al., 2011) and subsequent migration to the  
65 groundwater zone (B in Figure 1). When present, low permeability lenses (Figure 1), initially act as  
66 a sink for contaminants however with time can switch to being a source of long-term contamination.

67 Contamination in low permeability materials remains a significant and unresolved remediation  
68 challenge. A large contaminant source has the potential to generate a significant plume in  
69 groundwater, and presents a risk to potential downgradient receptors (A in Figure 1). A unique form  
70 of contaminant transport occurs with dense non-aqueous phase liquids (DNAPLs), including  
71 chlorinated solvents, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), coal tars etc. since they tend to sink to the  
72 bottom of aquifers due to their density (Macdonald et al., 2000). Contaminants in the context of  
73 groundwater exposure pathways are varied, and can consist of organic molecular compounds, nano-  
74 substances, pharmaceuticals, immiscible liquids, and are often toxic at very low (part per billion)  
75 concentrations. New ingenious approaches are needed for in-situ (and ex-situ) remediation of soils,  
76 sediments and aquifers, particularly when they are comprised of low permeability materials.

77

78 Recent successes in electrokinetic (EK) or EK assisted remediation programs have demonstrated that  
79 the technique may be a viable and versatile remediation tool for low permeability soils and  
80 sediments. EK approaches generally consist of the application of a direct current (DC) electric field  
81 to the subsurface through electrodes to move porewater or migrate contaminants or remediation  
82 amendments. EK approaches have wide applicability, from soil dewatering (Lockhart and Stickland,  
83 1984; Yang et al., 2005) to desalination of built environments (Ottosen and Rorig-Dalgaard, 2009),  
84 removal of soil metal contaminants (Jensen et al., 2007; Ottosen et al., 1997; Pamukcu et al., 1997;  
85 Pamukcu and Wittle, 1992) or degrading/removing soil organic contaminants (Lima et al., 2012a;  
86 Lima et al., 2011; Pamukcu, 1994; Reddy et al., 2011; Saichek and Reddy, 2004, 2003), including  
87 immiscible oil constituents (Ghazanfari and Pamukcu, 2014; Pamukcu et al., 2016). First used at the  
88 beginning of the last century for dewatering and stabilizing clays (Casagrande, 1949; Reuss, 1809),  
89 EK was intensively studied in the 1990s for removing metals from soils (Acar and Alshwabkeh,  
90 1993; Lageman, 1993; Ottosen et al., 1997; Ottosen and Hansen, 1992; Schultz, 1997), as well as  
91 radionuclides and other inorganic species (Acar et al., 1995). More recently EK has been used in  
92 various formulations for the removal of organic contaminants (Lima et al., 2011; Pamukcu, 1994;  
93 Ribeiro et al., 2005). The approach has been highly successful at the laboratory scale for both  
94 inorganic and organic contaminants and in recent field trials for organic contaminants. Field-scale  
95 in-situ applications are becoming more common, and have demonstrated the potential of the  
96 approach. In spite of promising early results at a variety of scales, the technology has not yet  
97 advanced to a commonly-accepted commercial status.

98

99 EK applications in recent years have integrated chemical surfactants, chemical amendments and  
100 chelating agents to enhance metals or organics desorption from soil (Bolan et al., 2014; Lima et al.,  
101 2012b; Ottosen et al., 2012), or to degrade contaminants at their source. Migration of these chemical  
102 enhancers in low permeability soils is possible due to four key phenomena occurring when a direct  
103 current is applied to soil: electromigration (movement of charged ions), electro-osmosis (movement  
104 of pore water), electrophoresis (movement of colloids) and electrolysis (water splitting) (Acar and  
105 Alshawabkeh, 1993). Coupling these phenomena with the aforementioned conventional remediation  
106 techniques has been the focus of recent EK research (Cameselle et al., 2013a; Lageman and  
107 Godschalk, 2007; Pamukcu et al., 2004). In addition to coupling with existing approaches, EK has  
108 been demonstrated to be capable of stripping micropollutants, especially non-polar compounds  
109 including heavy oils, from low permeability soils and sediments, where other treatment methods may  
110 fail (Alcántara et al., 2012; Ghazanfari et al., 2012; Lima et al., 2012b; Pamukcu, 2009; Pazos et al.,  
111 2010). Other EK applications are currently being researched for instance the off-site removal of soil  
112 metals (Jensen et al., 2007; Ottosen et al., 2012) and a stand-alone technique for oil transport and  
113 recovery from geological media including soils, sediments and rock formations (Chilingar et al., 1968;  
114 Ghazanfari et al., 2014; Ghazanfari and Pamukcu, 2014; Ghosh et al., 2012; Pamukcu, 1994; Pamukcu  
115 et al., 2016; Wittle et al., 2011).

116  
117 EK approaches face some unique engineering challenges mainly due to the side effects associated  
118 with this technique, such as alteration of natural pH levels near the electrodes, potential enhanced  
119 weathering of the porous media during long-term applications, hydrogen and chlorine gas generation  
120 at the electrodes and/or other unpredicted redox reactions (Acar and Alshawabkeh, 1993; Ottosen  
121 et al., 2000). Some of these side-effects (Acar and Alshawabkeh, 1993) have been engineered to  
122 advantage as synergistic effects beneficial for other traditional soil techniques, such as ISCO (USEPA,  
123 2006), EISB (Mao et al., 2012; Niqui-Arroyo and Ortega-Calvo, 2007) and phytoremediation  
124 (Aboughalma et al., 2008; Cameselle et al., 2013a; Kubiak et al., 2012). Field scale application of EK-  
125 combined remedies has recently been demonstrated at sites in Denmark and the USA (Mao et al.,  
126 2012; Riis et al., 2012).

127  
128 EK has been the topic of a number of review papers, each of which focused on one facet or another of  
129 this technique. Yeung (Yeung, 2011) takes a historical approach, Cameselle et al. (Cameselle et al.,  
130 2013b) focused on the combination of phytoremediation and EK, Pamukcu (Pamukcu, 2009) on  
131 electrochemical treatise, others on specific contamination (Gomes et al., 2015; Saichek and Reddy,

132 2005). EK is an approach with the capacity of overcoming traditional problems in soil remediation  
133 practices. The technique can be applied in-situ in a manner that avoids soil excavation and minimizes  
134 the disturbance of soil texture, porosity and biodiversity (Saichek and Reddy, 2005; Virkutyte and  
135 Sillanpaa, 2002). Treatment costs are variable depending on the contaminant, approach, and other  
136 site-specific factors, but are in line with other intrusive in-situ approaches (Virkutyte and Sillanpaa,  
137 2002). Due to low soil disturbance, low water and energy usage, EK is often less expensive than other  
138 remedial techniques (Alshawabkeh and Acar, 1992; Gomes et al., 2015; Higgins et al., 2008; Wittle et  
139 al., 2011; Yang et al., 2011). Herein, we discuss the strength of EK as a complement to traditional soil  
140 and groundwater remediation techniques and explore future avenues for EK as a sustainable  
141 subsurface remediation approach.

142

## 143 **2. Conventional soil remediation techniques for source control and their limitations**

144 Commonly practiced technologies for soil and groundwater remediation include permeable reactive  
145 barriers (PRBs) (Benner et al., 2002), bioremediation (Guerin, 1999; Tromp et al., 2012), i.e. the use  
146 of either plants (phytoremediation) or microorganisms (bioremediation) to degrade, accumulate or  
147 reduce/oxidize chemical contaminants, soil-washing (Meuser, 2012), pump-and-treat (Meuser,  
148 2012), in-situ chemical oxidation (ISCO) and in-situ chemical reduction (ISCR), the use of chemicals  
149 to oxidize or reduce redox sensitive contaminants in high porosity soils and sediments, vapour-  
150 technologies to volatilize organic contaminants, thermal approaches to vapourize organic  
151 contaminants and remove them through vacuum extraction, and “dig-and-dump”. The majority of  
152 these approaches (with the exception of thermal and dig-and-dump) have significant limitations  
153 when contaminants to be treated reside in low permeability regions. Table 1 summarizes the main  
154 characteristics and main challenges of bioremediation, phytoremediation, nano-particles, ISCO,  
155 thermal, and landfilling (dig-and-dump). As mentioned previously, a number of these techniques can  
156 be combined with EK to increase their suitability for treatment of contaminants in low permeability  
157 regions. A summary of the techniques that can be enhanced using EK, and a brief synthesis of the  
158 target contaminants and major limitations is presented in the next sections.

159

160 **Bioremediation** is a cost-effective technique for treating a variety of contaminants, including  
161 chlorinated solvents, BTEX, selected inorganic substances (e.g., perchlorate and nitrate) and  
162 polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) (Liebeg and Cutright, 1999; Sturman et al., 1995; Vidali,  
163 2001). Major bioremediation techniques broadly fall into two categories: biostimulation and  
164 bioaugmentation. Biostimulation most commonly refers to the addition of nutrients, such as electron

165 acceptors or electron donors, to promote biodegradation of contaminants by indigenous microbes.  
166 Bioaugmentation most commonly refers to the addition of microbes possessing specific capabilities  
167 to biodegrade contaminants. A number of factors can hinder bioremediation processes, including  
168 limited physical interaction between microorganisms and substances (contaminant bioavailability  
169 and/or bioaccessibility) (Semple et al., 2004); adverse site conditions (temperature, high co-  
170 contamination (Straube et al., 2003), pH, salts, oxygen, etc.) that may be inhibitory or toxic to  
171 microorganisms (Wick et al., 2011); and lastly, absence of bacterial species that can degrade the  
172 target contaminant.

173  
174 **Phytoremediation** is a low-cost and environmentally acceptable solution for the remediation of  
175 shallow soils, soil water and runoff for both metals and organic contaminants e.g., (Chaney et al.,  
176 1997; McCutcheon and Schnoor, 2004; Tromp et al., 2012). Phytoremediation is highly suitable for  
177 metals contamination as plants are capable of concentrating metals and extracting them from soils  
178 (Pilon-Smits, 2005). However, remediation occurs at a shallow soil depth (root zone) and may  
179 require extended remediation time. Solutions may include deep planting of trees in boreholes (tree-  
180 wells), and the use of polluted groundwater for plant irrigation (Pilon-Smits, 2005).

181  
182 **ISCO** for groundwater remediation was first introduced in the 1990s as an aggressive in situ  
183 technique to address groundwater contamination without requiring soil excavation (Innocenti et al.,  
184 2014; Schnarr et al., 1998; Yukselen-Aksoy and Reddy, 2012). Four oxidants have been commonly  
185 used: hydrogen peroxide (Fenton's reagent), ozone, permanganate, and persulfate (USEPA, 2006).  
186 Permanganate and persulfate oxidant stability in the subsurface is high, and natural soil oxidant  
187 demand for these particular oxidants is potentially low, making ISCO an attractive, cost-effective  
188 remediation technique, especially in high hydraulic conductivity material (Ferrarese et al., 2008;  
189 O'Mahony et al., 2006; USEPA, 2006). The major limitations of ISCO are related to the hydrogeological  
190 conditions: ISCO is more effective in medium to high permeability material, while less effective in low  
191 permeability soils (such as clay, loams, glacial tills, hydromorphous soils) as advective transport of  
192 oxidants is dramatically decreased (USEPA, 2006). A high content of reduced substances, such as  
193 Fe(II), in the soils to be treated may trigger oxidant activation before delivery to the contaminant  
194 location (Benner et al., 2002; Petri et al., 2011).

195  
196 **Nano zero valent iron (nZVI)** application is a relatively recent remediation technology (Bennett et  
197 al., 2010; Elliott and Zhang, 2001; He et al., 2010; Johnson et al., 2013; Kocur et al., 2014) suitable for



198 contaminants that can be treated by chemical reduction. Several laboratory-scale experiments have  
199 shown that nZVI can remediate a wide range of contaminants such as nitrate anions (Suzuki et al.,  
200 2012; Yang and Lee, 2005), heavy metals (Boparai et al., 2011), pesticides (Satapanajaru et al., 2008;  
201 Sayles et al., 1997), PCBs (Wang and Zhang, 1997), chlorinated volatile organic compounds (cVOCs)  
202 (Sakulchaicharoen et al., 2010; Song and Carraway, 2005) and radionuclides (Roh et al., 2000). Field-  
203 scale studies have used commercially available nZVI (Henn and Waddill, 2006; Krug et al., 2010; Wei  
204 et al., 2010) or onsite synthesized nZVI (Bennett et al., 2010; Elliott and Zhang, 2001; He et al., 2010;  
205 Kocur et al., 2014; Wei et al., 2010; Zhang, n.d.) that were either unstablized (Elliott and Zhang, 2001;  
206 Zhang, n.d.) or polymer coated (0.10%-0.80%, weight/volume) to increase suspension stability  
207 (Bennett et al., 2010; He et al., 2010; Henn and Waddill, 2006; Kocur et al., 2014; Wei et al., 2010). A  
208 major challenge for nZVI is delivery time: it needs to be delivered to the target treatment zone while  
209 reactive and in suspension (e.g. days to a few weeks) (Kocur et al., 2014, 2013; Sakulchaicharoen et  
210 al., 2010). As with other chemical in-situ remediation techniques, most successful field studies have  
211 been performed in highly permeable soils. Fine grained soils limit nZVI travel distances (Chowdhury  
212 et al., 2012).

213  
214 **Landfilling**, often referred to as a “dig-and-dump” approach, is considered one of the least  
215 sustainable remediation approaches (EEA, 2009). Excavation and landfill disposal of contaminated  
216 soil resolves site problems immediately and can be used widely regardless of pollution type and soil  
217 characteristics. From a sustainability standpoint, landfills should be considered a last resort for  
218 waste. They are expensive in terms of land (area that is allocated for this purpose, with few examples  
219 of rehabilitation post-exploitation); fees for hazardous waste disposal are high (US EPA, 2014); and  
220 the environmental cost is also considerable, since leachate emission poses an additional threat to  
221 groundwater quality. Additionally, landfills constitute a subsurface legacy, transferring waste and  
222 groundwater contamination issues to future generations (Bai and Sutanto, 2002; EEA, 2009).

223  
224 The following section examines how EK approaches can be used to enhance bioremediation,  
225 phytoremediation, ISCO and nZVI, since these are already tried-out combinations. Particular focus is  
226 given to bioremediation enhanced by EK (EK-BIO) which has been demonstrated to be highly  
227 effective in field-scale studies, and ex-situ soil remediation for metals.

### 228 229 **3. EK in combination with conventional techniques: How is EK overcoming limitations?**

230 An electric field is applied to a porous media, including saturated soil or sediment, that (i) drives ions  
231 present in the media towards one of the electrodes – electromigration, (ii) moves pore water when  
232 soil porosity and zeta potential is conducive – electro-osmosis, (iii) mobilizes colloids when soil  
233 macropores are sufficiently large to enable their passage – electrophoresis, and that (iv) instigates  
234 electrolysis, i.e. generation of an acidic front from the anode and alkaline front from the cathode (Acar  
235 and Alshawabkeh, 1993; Lageman, 1993; Mitchell, 1993; Ottosen et al., 2000; Pamukcu and Wittle,  
236 1992). Due to the many different phenomena that may occur during the use of an EK approach, EK  
237 requires sound engineering to control potential side-effects. Early applications of EK technology did  
238 not effectively manage potentially negative processes and hindered early field applications  
239 (Alcántara et al., 2012; Gent et al., 2004; Lima et al., 2012b; Reddy and Cameselle, 2009; Simons,  
240 1984). More recent research and field experience has overcome early difficulties. EK approaches are  
241 significantly favoured over most other in-situ techniques when it comes to low permeability  
242 soils (Cameselle and Reddy, 2012; Ghazanfari et al., 2012; Paillat et al., 2000) due to the increased  
243 ability to drive remediation amendments to the contaminants, extract contaminants directly, and its  
244 limited impacts on soil structure.

245  
246 3.1. Sustainability of EK Approaches  
247 Sustainability principals are being increasingly recognized as important considerations in the  
248 remedy selection process (Hadley and Ellis, 2009). SURF (Sustainable Remediation Forum) defines  
249 sustainable remediation as those practices that reduce global impacts at the same time as minimizing  
250 local atmospheric effects, potential impacts on worker and community safety, and/or the  
251 consumption of natural and energy resources that might be attributable to remediation activities  
252 (Hadley and Ellis, 2009; ITRC (Interstate Technology Regulatory Council), 2011). As presented in  
253 Table 1, even the most promising techniques present limitations.

254  
255 EK inherently uses electrical energy, which can be from fuel sources (Lima et al., 2012a) or from  
256 renewable sources (solar, wind) (Zhang et al., 2015). Despite electric energy being at the base of the  
257 technique, the sustainability score for EK approaches is high, as the consumption of renewable  
258 resources, such as water, is low, use of electricity is small compared to other techniques, it generates  
259 minimal waste, and has limited impact on local surface activities. Recent field applications have used  
260 a closed water circuit for EK, where only groundwater is used and no external water input is  
261 necessary (Mao et al., 2012; Riis et al., 2012).

262

### 263 3.2. EK Enhancement of Traditional Approaches

264 Bioremediation presents a number of limitations, including the need to control abiotic conditions,  
265 mass transfer challenges, bioavailability, bioaugmentation and potentially high operation or long-  
266 term re-application costs (Vidali, 2001) (Table 1). EK has been used to surpass some of these  
267 challenges, such as control of physico-chemical conditions of soil (Niqui-Arroyo et al., 2006),  
268 decrease mass transfer limitations through nutrient transfer and stimulating bioactivity and  
269 controlling bacterial population (Mao et al., 2012; Tyagi et al., 2011). DeFlaun & Condee (DeFlaun and  
270 Condee, 1997) first enhanced migration of bacteria through soil, while Mao et al. (Mao et al., 2012)  
271 applied the same principle as a bioaugmentation tool for the remediation of chlorinated solvents.  
272 Different EK principles have been used: electro-osmosis or electrophoresis to mobilize bacteria  
273 (Figure 2) (DeFlaun and Condee, 1997; Wick et al., 2004) and electromigration to drive nutrients in  
274 low porous materials (Gill et al., 2014; Mao et al., 2012). After successful lab trials, the patented EK-  
275 BIO has been applied in-situ (Luo et al., 2006) with considerable success (Riis et al., 2012). Some  
276 bioremediation drawbacks (primarily challenges with nutrient distribution in low permeability  
277 soils) may thus be addressed remarkably with EK, but evidently target contaminants still need to be  
278 biodegradable. EK-BIO has been used primarily on the degradation of organic contaminants, but can  
279 also be used for biodegradation of nitrates and perchlorate (Mao et al., 2012; Riis et al., 2012).

280  
281 Phytoremediation has shown positive results for the in-situ remediation of both metals and organics.  
282 While promoting the degradation of organic contaminants (Kamath et al., 2004; Pilon-Smits, 2005),  
283 plants can assimilate and bioaccumulate metals (Ali et al., 2013; Chaney et al., 1997; Weis and Weis,  
284 2004). An innovative, however as yet to be field-demonstrated EK combination, is EK-phyto (Figure  
285 2) (Aboughalma et al., 2008; Cameselle et al., 2013a). EK can be used to mobilize and redistribute  
286 metals in situ, and therefore enhance their transport to the plant roots (Aboughalma et al., 2008). In  
287 addition, EK can help stimulate plant growth by mobilizing (micro)nutrients in/to the root zone.  
288 Cameselle et al. (Cameselle et al., 2013a) summarized the state-of-the-art regarding the combination  
289 of phytoremediation and EK and concluded that laboratory studies yielded the best results with the  
290 application of an alternate current (AC) electric field or low direct current (DC) voltage. Therefore,  
291 electromigration is used to transfer ions and metals to the root zone while the development of heat  
292 (AC electric field) may create ideal assimilation conditions for the plant. Since a low DC field  
293 stimulates electroosmosis (Lima et al., 2011), this might explain the improved plant performance  
294 under such conditions (Cameselle et al., 2013a).

295

296 Nano-ZVI shows potential to treat redox sensitive contaminants (i.e. organic contaminants in general,  
297 or redox sensitive metals) but also stable metal ions, such as divalent  $Cd^{2+}$  (Boparai et al., 2011).  
298 Polymer stabilized nZVI particles have a net negative surface charge (zeta potential of -48 to -56 mV)  
299 (Chowdhury et al., 2012; Kocur et al., 2013) and can adsorb positively charged species. EK has the  
300 potential to enhance nZVI transport by electrophoresis. Studies have reported the enhancement of  
301 nZVI delivery through coarse and medium grained soils (Chowdhury et al., 2012) while others found  
302 that electroosmosis can enhance nZVI delivery through clayey soil (Figure 2) (Gomes et al., 2013;  
303 Krishna R. Reddy, 2007). These studies suggest that EK has the potential for enhanced nZVI delivery  
304 throughout a number of different soil types to enable subsequent contaminant degradation resulting  
305 from nZVI oxidation. EK-nZVI laboratory studies have shown great potential, but field trials are  
306 needed.

307  
308 Like the other techniques mentioned in this review, ISCO performance in low permeability or highly  
309 heterogeneous soils is often a significant unresolved challenge. Commonly used chemical oxidants  
310 (permanganate, persulfate) are negatively charged, and highly mobile through electromigration in  
311 low permeability soils (Figure 2) (Alshawabkeh, 2009; Nieto Castillo et al., 2012). Electroosmosis or  
312 electromigration may also help mobilize specific contaminants (non-charged hydrophobic organics  
313 or metals, respectively) by encouraging desorption or transport to different phases (Isosaari et al.,  
314 2007; ITRC, 2001). ISCO is a highly commercialized technology, with many different approaches and  
315 patented techniques (Table 1; see e.g. (Virkytyte and Sillanpaa, 2002)). EK-TAP (thermal activated  
316 persulfate) (Reynolds, 2015) has recently been developed and is currently undergoing field testing  
317 at a number of locations in Europe and the USA (ITRC, 2000; Roach and Reddy, 2006; Siegrist et al.,  
318 2001). EK-TAP uses a standard DC electric field to migrate persulfate into the contaminated region  
319 and then switches to AC to slightly increase the soil and groundwater temperature in the treatment  
320 zone ( $<40^{\circ}C$ ) to activate the persulfate.

321  
322 Remediation of fine grained soils contaminated with metals has historically been performed through  
323 landfilling (Reddy, 2010). Landfilling costs are generally higher and less sustainable in the long-term  
324 than any in-situ soil remediation (Table 1), in addition to the environmental costs and sustainability  
325 considerations addressed elsewhere in this review. When there is no in-situ solution in sight, an  
326 alternative to soil landfilling is off-site treatment of soil. This occurs often where brownfields are  
327 considered, either for metal (Merks et al., 2013) or organic pollutants (Gomes et al., 2015; Lima et al.,  
328 2012a; Pamukcu, 1994). The electrolytic remediation (EDR) method has been proposed as a fast

329 and continuous in-situ or off-site alternative to landfilling for excavated soil. Promising results  
330 through the application of EDR for heavy metal polluted harbour sediment (Nystroem et al., 2005)  
331 have been obtained by treating a stirred suspension instead of a stationary matrix. The stirred system  
332 for EDR was adapted for the soil remediation, and the soil was suspended in water during the  
333 remediation (Gomes et al., 2013; Jensen et al., 2007; Lima et al., 2012b; Ottosen et al., 2012; Sun et  
334 al., 2012). Advantages of off-site EDR treatment involve (i) transient and nonlinear changes during  
335 remediation that are overcome by the continuous mixing; (ii) the removal rate of heavy metals is  
336 faster, as stirring enables mixing and desorption; (iii) easy handling for adding chemical desorbing  
337 solutions; and (iv) stirred EDR can be combined with soil washing for minimizing the volume to be  
338 treated. In this case the clean coarser fraction and the highly polluted fine fraction are separated  
339 during the soil washing and only the fine fraction is treated by EDR. Successful removal rates have  
340 been obtained for both metals (Jensen et al., 2007; Ottosen et al., 2012; Sun et al., 2012) and organics  
341 (Gomes et al., 2013; Lima et al., 2012b).

342

343 Besides aiding traditional technologies, EK has been applied as:

- 344 - landfill liner enhancement tool, for contaminant confinement (Ouhadi et al., 2010)
- 345 - Extraction of nutrients, like phosphorus, from waste materials (Guedes et al., 2014).
- 346 - Radionuclides control in soils/clays (Maes et al., 1999)
- 347 - EK as enhancement technology for oxidation of emerging contaminants and pesticides (Linley  
348 et al., 2014; López-Vizcaíno et al., 2017);
- 349 - And remediating soil by stabilizing/precipitating contaminants in a stable iron-rich band (Cundy  
350 and Hopkinson, 2010)

351

352 Landfill-liner enhancements have undergone developments since its first patent (Wittle and Bell,  
353 2002). Most recent studies aim at combining chemical stabilisers, such as calcium carbonate, to  
354 increase landfill liner contaminant adsorption, with an addition of 28% weight mass of carbonates  
355 (Ouhadi et al., 2010). Clay liners are normally used in landfilling. Combining EK with clay liners has  
356 been the focus of numerous studies, from predicting the behaviour of swelling clays under such  
357 hydro-electric conditions (Lima et al., 2010; Moyné and Murad, 2002) to removing radioactive  
358 elements in clays (Kim et al., 2003; Maes et al., 1999; Valdovinos et al., 2016). The latter approach  
359 focused on radioactive liquid organic waste (Valdovinos et al., 2016),  $^{24}\text{Na}$  (15h) and  $^{99\text{m}}\text{Tc}$  (6h) (with  
360 71.8% and 61% removal rates respectively) (Valdovinos et al., 2016), and Uranium (23% removal  
361 rate) (Kim et al., 2003). Alternatively, more technical aspects have been used regarding EK. For

362 instance, electric fields have been used to generate pH and Eh gradients to induce in situ  
363 precipitation of a stable iron-rich band (Cundy and Hopkinson, 2010), or to engineering stabilise soil  
364 by dewatering/rewatering soils, (Cundy and Hopkinson, 2010).

365

#### 366 **4. Future avenues for environmental EK**

367 In the decades since EK was first applied to soil with the intention of removing pollutants  
368 (Alshawabkeh and Acar, 1992; Hansen et al., 1997; Lageman, 1993; Pamukcu, 1994), EK has  
369 developed into a viable alternative for remediation of source contamination, particularly when  
370 combined with other conventional techniques for application to low permeable soils. EK approaches  
371 have numerous strengths, such as minimizing land disturbance when applied in-situ, reduced costs  
372 in terms of energy and transportation, and as an auxiliary tool to a number of new applications  
373 (section 3).

374

375 Most site remediation initiatives concern point source pollution. However sources of anthropogenic  
376 groundwater pollution are numerous and, many times, diffuse. Plume migration concerns a  
377 challenging issue regarding pollution dispersion (B in Figure 1). While the Permeable Reactive  
378 Barrier (PRB) concept is currently the leading technology to target downstream pollution effects,  
379 previous combination of EK with PRB (EK-PRB) has proven advantageous in terms of treatment, PRB  
380 material longevity and cost reduction (Ramírez et al., 2015). The idea was tested at bench and field  
381 scale in the 1990ies and coined as the Lasagna Technology (Ho et al., 1995; Sa V. Ho et al., 1999a,  
382 1999b). A wealth of experimental studies have been conducted in EK-PRB (Chung and Lee, 2007;  
383 Huang and Cheng, 2012; Moon et al., 2005; Vieira dos Santos et al., 2017; Weng et al., 2007; Zhou et  
384 al., 2016) with a rekindled interest in the last 2-3 years. The older studies showed that standard PRBs,  
385 including zero valent iron filing for the treatment of chlorinated hydrocarbons and chromate in  
386 aquifer settings, can be significantly enhanced by coupling to EK. Recent studies show original  
387 combinations of pollutants and PRB treatment materials. In particular, the development of biological  
388 reactive barriers is proposed (Mena et al., 2016; Ramírez et al., 2015). In these studies bacterial  
389 cultures of active sludge from an urban WWTP and coarse mineral soil (kaolinite, gravels) are used  
390 as biobarriers. Biological growth was observed in the biobarrier, and under the effect of the electric  
391 field, bacteria from the biofilm became detached and were transported through the diesel  
392 contaminated soil in both directions (Ramírez et al., 2015). Added surfactant was transported across  
393 the treatment zone due to electromigration and electroosmosis, which resulted in diesel  
394 emulsification. After two weeks of operation, the combination of biological and EK phenomena

395 resulted in 39% removal of the diesel biodegradable fraction (Ramírez et al., 2015). In fact, EK has  
396 proven great applicability in addressing organic contamination, contrary to the attested regarding its  
397 first applications for metal contamination. Further studies are expected in addressing LNAPL and  
398 DNAPL plumes and exploring solutions for the interface unsaturated-saturated zones (Dresel et al.,  
399 2011). There is a need for sustainable solutions to treat these deep locations and EK-PRB can be the  
400 answer to these groundwater issues.

401  
402 EK techniques are based on the fundamental processes of EM, EO and EP. They had been recognised  
403 all by the middle of the XXth century (Casagrande, 1949; Reuss, 1809), but, as pointed out by Yeung  
404 (Yeung, 2011), research on the understanding of fundamental phenomena is still needed. Variability  
405 in osmotic flow rate, the means of transport of electric current through the soil are still not clearly  
406 understood. Here we stress that aspects of soil-contaminant interaction can benefit from further  
407 understanding when concerning contaminant removal. It has been shown that, under the influence  
408 of an electric field, the phenomena that take place at the interface between matrix and pore fluid are  
409 very complex and give rise not only to the dominating processes of EM, EO and EP but to subtle effects  
410 related to the complex nature of the solid-liquid and liquid-liquid interfaces present in the porous  
411 media. Effects such as diffuse double layer compression, electroosmotic drag or electroosmotically  
412 induced displacement give rise to refined or new strategies for soil extraction and remediation. Some  
413 new developments emerged that brink between laboratory and pilot scale research:

414  
415 - In-situ manipulation of redox-state via EK for redox sensitive metals (e.g. Cr, As, Cu) (Brosky and  
416 Pamukcu, 2013; Pamukcu et al., 2004; Sun et al., 2015)

417 In a porous water saturated material, particles typically carry a surface charge that is compensated  
418 by the Electric Double Layer (EDL). As electric fields are imposed to this material, a faradaic current  
419 is induced which is responsible for electromigration of the unbound aqueous species in the pore  
420 water. However, because a conductivity difference exists between the outer part of the EDL and the  
421 free pore solution, that outer part – the Diffuse Double Layer (DDL) is compressed while the electric  
422 field is applied, leading to a potential difference which adds to the redox potential of the system and  
423 can contribute to its reactivity. This EK induced DDL phenomenon has been explored in a laboratory  
424 study of Cr(VI) reduction in clay. It showed that a 0.6 mA/cm<sup>2</sup> applied current was able to increase  
425 the reduction rate of the system by a factor of 5 (Sun et al., 2015). While only Cr(VI)/Cr(III) and  
426 Cu(II)/Cu(I) redox couples have been studied experimentally up to date (Brosky and Pamukcu,

427 2013; Pamukcu et al., 2004; Sun et al., 2015)), many redox sensitive elements (uranium, selenium,  
428 etc) may be candidates for this treatment method.

429  
430 - Application of EK in the field of oil extraction and oil transport in water wet porous media (Amba  
431 et al., 1964; Chilingar et al., 1968; Ghazanfari et al., 2014, 2012; Ghazanfari and Pamukcu, 2014;  
432 Haroun et al., 2013; Pamukcu et al., 2016; Shalabi et al., 2012; Wittle et al., 2011)

433 Viscous coupling between oil and water phase takes place when an electrical interface, similar to  
434 that of clay electric double layer, develops between the two phases, provided that the oil has polarity  
435 and possesses some functional groups (i.e., O, N, S compounds, carboxylic acids, amides).  
436 Electrokinetic transport of hydrocarbon liquids in water wet porous media is governed by the  
437 principles of two-phase flow. As the water phase moves by electro-osmosis through water wet  
438 porous media, the neighboring oil phase is also transported, to an extent, depending on the strength  
439 of the viscous coupling developed between the two phases. More so, in water wet systems of  
440 clay/saline water/oil, the reactions of the electrolysis products of saline water (i.e., hydroxyl ions)  
441 with the carboxylic acids of oil result in the formation of surfactants at the water/oil interface. This,  
442 in turn, reduces significantly the interfacial tension between oil and water further aiding the oil  
443 transport by electroosmosis (Ghazanfari et al., 2012; Pamukcu et al., 2016). Another interesting  
444 phenomenon is observed when the water and oil phases are strictly immiscible and viscous coupling  
445 does not take place (Pamukcu et al., 2016). Then the electroosmotic flow of the water can pass by  
446 the nonconductive liquid ultimately displacing the oil in opposite direction of flow. This liquid  
447 separation process is shown to be particularly efficient when pore space it restricted. Also it favors  
448 increase of permeability of the porous media.

449  
450 Laboratory and field applications research show EK as capable of separate and recover oil from  
451 water, aqueous sediments and high clay rock formations, advancing EK to be used as a stand-alone  
452 or integrative technique for:

- 453 - remediation of oil contaminated soils and sediments where spills have occurred (i.e., coastal  
454 sediments, coal gasification sites, abandoned oil production or refinery sites);
- 455 - change in physical properties can be triggered via electrokinetic methods as the classic soil  
456 consolidation (Adamson et al., 1966) with the aid of calcium carbonate producing bacteria  
457 (Keykha et al., 2014);
- 458 - product extraction, with special interest for mobilization of crude oil in enhanced oil recovery  
459 (EOR) processes (Al Shalabi et al., 2012; Amba et al., 1964; Haroun et al., 2013; Shalabi et al.,



460 2012; Wittle et al., 2011) from formations where other extraction methods (i.e., drilling) may  
461 not be feasible or environmentally viable.

462  
463 As a final remark, we would like to observe that EK is increasingly used in the remediation of  
464 emerging contaminants such as pesticides (López-Vizcaíno et al., 2017; Vieira dos Santos et al., 2017),  
465 perfluorinated chemicals and radionuclides (control in soils/clays (Maes et al., 1999)). Novel  
466 approaches reside in using new catalytic materials (Linley et al., 2014) or as a means for element  
467 recycling in waste materials such as phosphorous (Guedes et al., 2014). Because EK acts as a  
468 transport tool for dissolved and colloidal particles, as well as solvent through porous media, the  
469 possibilities for futures applications are varied and only limited by inventiveness and possibly  
470 limited research funds. Therefore, we highlight how EK can act as a versatile and manifold tool for  
471 the sustainable treatment of contaminated soil.

472

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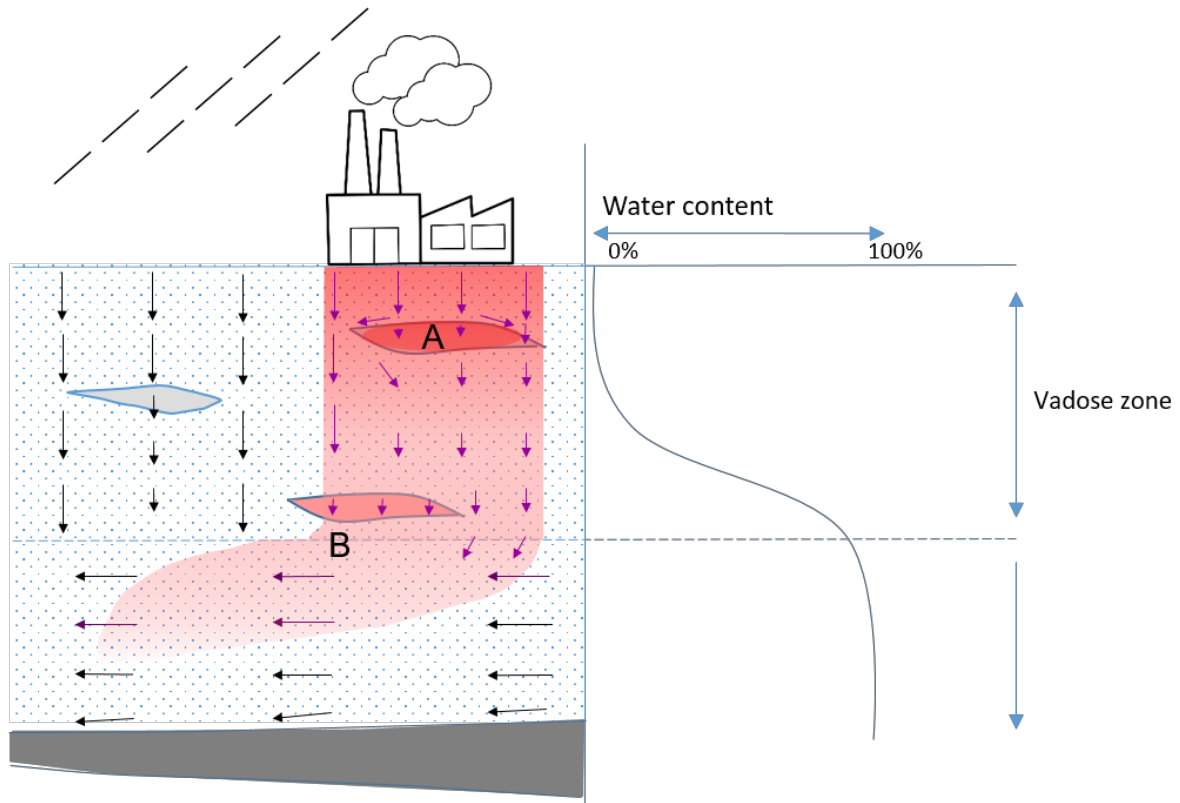
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Legend:

Low permeability layer or lenses

Clay

← Flow direction

Permeable layer

Contamination

945

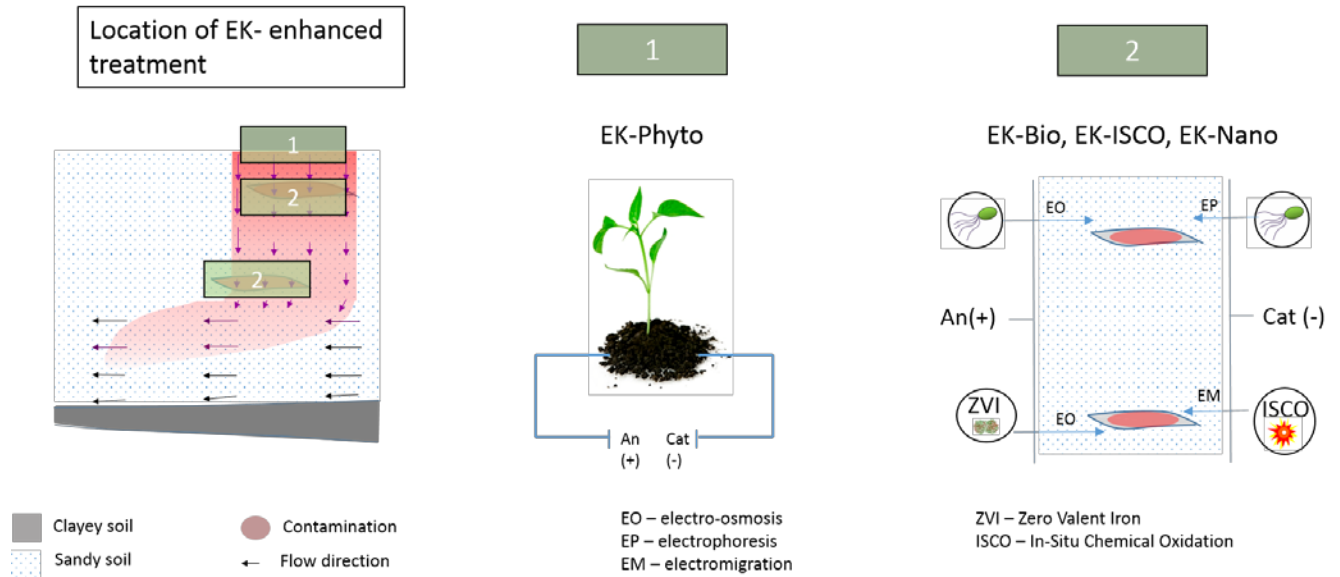
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Figure 1 – Schematics of a plume. A – source pollution; B – plume migration

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950 Figure 2 – Schematic representation of electrokinetically enhanced remediation. The left most scheme  
 951 shows where, within the subsurface or underground, which EK-enhancement would be better suited.  
 952 Scheme 1 (middle frame) represents the combination of EK with phytoremediation. Scheme 2 (right  
 953 frame) summarizes how EK would enhance/transport/aid bioremediation, ISCO and nZVI applications.

954

Table 1 – Summary of the main defining characteristics of soil remediation techniques, the main application challenges and how EK can overcome them

	<b>In-Situ Bioremediation</b>	<b>Phytoremediation</b>	<b>Nano-scale Zero Valent Iron (nZVI)</b>	<b>ISCO</b>	<b>Landfilling</b>	<b>Thermal</b> (Lebrón et al., 2013; McGuire et al., 2016)
Target pollutants	Organic contaminants (chlorinated solvents, BTEX and other aromatic compounds, pesticides); some metals(Vidali, 2001)	Metals, metalloids (Ali et al., 2013) and organic contaminants (Seeger et al., 2013)	Organochlorines, nitroaromatics, dyes, phenols, heavy metals, pesticides, and anions (e.g., NO <sub>3</sub> <sup>-1</sup> )	All oxidizable pollutants like organic pollutants (petroleum hydrocarbons, organochlorines, pesticides) and metals(Boparai et al., 2011; Nieto Castillo et al., 2012)	Metals, hazardous contaminants unamenable to in-situ remediation	Volatile organic compounds
Energy requirements	Low; depends on contaminant, bacteria, and technique. Laboratory scale experiments prior to field applications are often required, as well as treatability studies	Low. Plants are placed in-situ and some maintenance is required. Harvesting and replacement of plants	Low to moderate. It requires pumping and delivery of nano-particles to pollutant	Moderate to high; higher than other in-situ (non-thermal) remediation technologies. Electricity application from <0.22 – 44 kWh/ton of ozone activation; 33.33 kWh/m <sup>3</sup> for persulfate activation (USEPA, 2006; Yan et al.)	Moderate to high. Mainly for excavation and transportation	High. The approach requires heating of impacted soil and groundwater to (at a minimum) the boiling point of water)
Water usage	Low to moderate; depends on nutrient requirements	Low to moderate; depends on vegetative cover.	Moderate. ZVI needs to be diluted in water (e.g. 68 m <sup>3</sup> of water with a concentration of 2 g/L of nZVI(US	Moderate. Oxidant needs to be diluted in water (e.g. 8 – 14.5 m <sup>3</sup> of water for persulfate	Low. Landfill leachate needs to be treated, but does not add to water requirements	Low. Water may be used to increase contact with the soil to

		Continued irrigation is required	EPA and USEPA, 2000)). Intensive at the beginning stages	dilution(Yan et al.)). Intensive at the beginning stages		be treated or to cool electrodes.	
Maintenance requirements	Low to moderate (nutrient additions); pH, oxygen content, nutrient regulation(Vidali, 2001)	Low to moderate. Maintenance requirements	Low	Low to moderate depending on oxidant choice, soil/site conditions	Moderate; landfill maintenance and leachate management	Moderate.	
Duration	Long (can last years); depends on microorganisms, contaminant availability (US EPA and USEPA, 2000), and soil heterogeneity	Long (up to 30 years or more(Kamath et al., 2004))	Short (depends on transport of ZVI to target area). However recent studies suggest that nZVI can stimulate bioremediation (Kocur et al., 2015)	Short to moderate. Variable depending on nature of contaminant (sorbed, free phase, solubility, etc.)	Long. Waste is deposited in landfill, contamination transference	Short. Remediation programs are often on the order of weeks to months.	
Disturbance of the subsurface	Mechanical	Low	Low	Low	Low	High	Moderate. Potential for changes to soil structure.
	Biological/chemical	Moderate	Low	Moderate. Change of geochemical conditions	Moderate. Change of geochemical conditions	High	Moderate. Biological polishing following thermal treatment has been demonstrated as effective
Cost (all values in USD)	Wide range of low to high. From \$30 – 100/m <sup>3</sup> (aerobic degradation field demonstration);	Low. \$15 -25/m <sup>3</sup> (calculated based on the treatment of upper 1 m	High. \$255,000 to \$1,400,000 for 2987 ha (numbers based on a specific site)(Gavaskar et al.,	Moderate. Median cost of \$123/ m <sup>3</sup> based on 33 case studies (Krembs et al., 2010) but can	Low to moderate. Landfill disposal costs between \$250 – 350/m <sup>3</sup> (US EPA, 2014), and with possible total costs	High.	

	\$323,000 for a specific site of 480 m <sup>2</sup> . (based on project costs) (US EPA and USEPA, 2000; USEPA and US EPA, 1998)	layer)(McCutcheon and Schnoor, 2004)	2005). Nano-particles cost is \$50/kg of nZVI	amount to \$527/m <sup>3</sup> (Innocenti et al., 2014)	(excavation, transport, disposal, labour) amounting to \$650/m <sup>3</sup> (personal communication, Geosyntec)	
Main challenge	Limited to biodegradable compounds, where degradation products may be more persistent or toxic than parent compounds. Long remediation times for some compounds (Singh and Ward, 2004)	Long remediation times. Address contaminant mainly at the relatively shallow subsurface (root zone)	nZVI particles need to be delivered to contaminant zone. Limited reactive lifetime of nZVI	Slow mass transfer, transport, and less control over oxidant due to limiting hydrogeological settings (USEPA, 2006). Rapid oxidant reaction rates (esp. H <sub>2</sub> O <sub>2</sub> , Fe <sup>2+</sup> , and O <sub>3</sub> ) where oxidant demand may be high in some soils/aquifers	Contamination transference: environmental issues concerning soil are merely leachate transferred to landfill site	High energy costs and potential difficulties due to surface infrastructure requirements. Not suitable for inorganic contaminants
How EK can help	Electromigration and/or electro-osmosis can deliver nutrients, microorganisms to target zone	Electromigration can bring pollutants to roots for easier phytostabilisation, rhizofiltration or rhizodegradation(A boughalma et al., 2008; Cameselle et al., 2013a)	Electrophoresis (if sandy soil) and/or electro-osmosis (if clayey soil) can enhance nanoparticle delivery to contaminated regions; faster nanoparticle transport than natural hydraulic conductivity	Oxidant delivery to contaminated regions; faster oxidant delivery than natural hydraulic conductivity	Electro-osmosis can be used to dewater soil/sediment/waste and reduce total residue weight/volume for landfilling; metals or organic contaminants can be extracted ex-situ through the electro-dialytic method and avoid landfill all-together (Pernille E. Jensen et al., 2007; Ana T Lima et al., 2012;	Not amenable to improvement through EK approaches

					Nystroem et al., 2005; Ottoen et al., 2012; Sun et al., 2012)	
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