

Generalised curvilinear coordinates, vertical discretisations, and moving mesh adaptivity in atmospheric numerical models

Christian Kühnlein

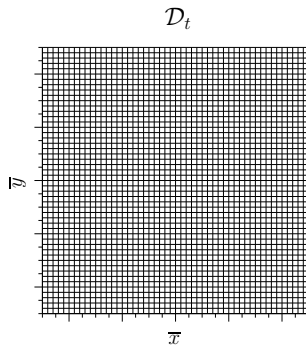
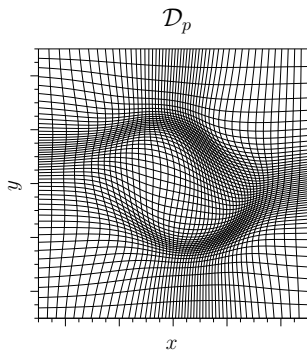


Main topics of this lecture:

1. Governing PDEs of atmospheric dynamics in generalised curvilinear coordinates
2. Vertical coordinates/discretisation in some atmospheric models
3. Adaptive (moving) meshes

- ...transform governing PDEs to more convenient coordinates for solution
- ...accommodate complex boundaries
- ...apply a variable-resolution mesh
- ...apply dynamic mesh adaptivity

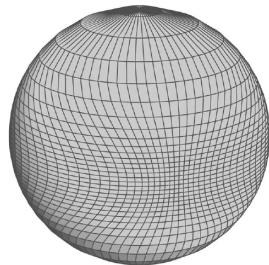
$$(\bar{x}, \bar{y}) = (E(x, y), D(x, y)) : \mathcal{D}_p \rightarrow \mathcal{D}_t$$



General bijective coordinate mapping:

$$(\bar{t}, \bar{\mathbf{x}}) = (t, \mathcal{F}(t, \mathbf{x})) : \mathcal{D}_p \rightarrow \mathcal{D}_t$$

- \mathcal{D}_p is subdomain of the physical space \mathbf{S}_p – with coordinates $(t, \mathbf{x}) \equiv (t, x, y, z)$ and metric tensor g_{kj} – where the physical problem is posed. It is convenient to assume the physical system \mathbf{S}_p to be a stationary and orthogonal (e.g. Cartesian, geospherical, spheroidal,..)
- \mathcal{D}_t is subdomain of transformed computational space \mathbf{S}_t – with generalised coordinates $(\bar{t}, \bar{\mathbf{x}}) \equiv (\bar{t}, \bar{x}, \bar{y}, \bar{z})$ and metric tensor \bar{g}_{rs} – where the problem is solved



Symbolic vector-form of basic adiabatic governing PDEs:

$$\frac{D\mathbf{u}}{Dt} = -c_p\theta\nabla\pi + \mathbf{g} + \mathbf{M}$$

$$\frac{D\theta}{Dt} = 0$$

$$\frac{D\rho}{Dt} = -\rho\nabla \cdot \mathbf{u}$$

with

$$\mathbf{u} = (u^1, u^2, u^3), \quad \mathbf{g} = (0, 0, -g)$$

Transformed governing PDEs in \mathbf{S}_t (e.g. Clark JCP 1977, Prusa et al. JCP 2003):

$$\frac{du^j}{d\bar{t}} = -c_p \theta \tilde{G}_j^k \frac{\partial \pi}{\partial \bar{x}^k} - g \delta_3^j + M^j \quad j = 1, 2, 3$$

$$\frac{d\theta}{d\bar{t}} = 0$$

$$\frac{d\rho}{d\bar{t}} = -\frac{\rho}{\bar{G}} \left(\frac{\partial \bar{G} \bar{v}^{s^k}}{\partial \bar{x}^k} \right)$$

with

$$\frac{d}{d\bar{t}} = \frac{\partial}{\partial \bar{t}} + \bar{v}^{*k} \frac{\partial}{\partial \bar{x}^k}, \quad \tilde{G}_j^k := \sqrt{g^{jj}} \frac{\partial \bar{x}^k}{\partial x^j}, \quad \bar{G} = |\bar{g}_{jk}|^{1/2}$$

$$\bar{v}^{*j} = \frac{d\bar{x}^j}{d\bar{t}} = \bar{v}^{sj} + \frac{\partial \bar{x}^j}{\partial \bar{t}}, \quad \bar{v}^{sj} = \frac{\partial \bar{x}^j}{\partial x^k} u^{*k}, \quad \bar{v}^k = \sqrt{g_{kk}} u^{*k}$$

→ see e.g. textbook by Zdunkowski and Bott 2003 for fundamentals

Transformed governing PDEs in \mathbf{S}_t :

$$\frac{\partial \rho^* u^j}{\partial \bar{t}} + \bar{\nabla} \cdot (\bar{\mathbf{v}}^* \rho^* u^j) = -\rho^* c_p \theta \tilde{G}_j^k \frac{\partial \pi}{\partial \bar{x}^k} - \rho^* g \delta_3^j + \rho^* M^j \quad j = 1, 2, 3$$

$$\frac{\partial \rho^* \theta}{\partial \bar{t}} + \bar{\nabla} \cdot (\bar{\mathbf{v}}^* \rho^* \theta) = 0$$

$$\frac{\partial \rho^*}{\partial \bar{t}} + \bar{\nabla} \cdot (\bar{\mathbf{v}}^* \rho^*) = 0$$

with

$$\bar{\nabla} \equiv \left(\frac{\partial}{\partial \bar{x}}, \frac{\partial}{\partial \bar{y}}, \frac{\partial}{\partial \bar{z}} \right), \quad \bar{\mathbf{v}}^* \equiv (\bar{v}^{*1}, \bar{v}^{*2}, \bar{v}^{*3}), \quad \rho^* \equiv \bar{G} \rho$$

1. Divergence in generalised coordinates:

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{A} = \frac{1}{\overline{G}} \frac{\partial}{\partial \overline{x}^k} \left(\overline{G} \overline{A}^k \right) - \overline{A}^j \left[\frac{G}{\overline{G}} \frac{\partial}{\partial \overline{x}^k} \left(\frac{\overline{G}}{G} \frac{\partial \overline{x}^k}{\partial x^j} \right) \right]$$

Invariance of divergence uses multi-component geometric conservation law (GCL):

$$\frac{G}{\overline{G}} \frac{\partial}{\partial \overline{x}^k} \left(\frac{\overline{G}}{G} \frac{\partial \overline{x}^k}{\partial x^j} \right) \equiv 0$$

2. Reciprocity of covariant and contravariant base vectors:

$$\overline{\mathbf{q}}^r \cdot \overline{\mathbf{q}}_s = \frac{\partial \overline{x}^r}{\partial x^q} \frac{\partial x^q}{\partial \overline{x}^s} = \delta_s^r$$

→ Discrete model should respect these identities ! (see e.g. Thomas and Lombard 1979, Prusa and Gutowski IJNMF 2006, Kühnlein et al. JCP 2012)

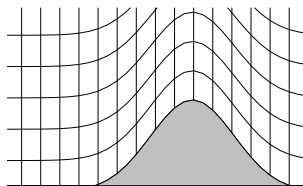
→ Independent vertical variable ζ

$$(\bar{x}, \bar{y}, \zeta) = (x, y, \zeta(t, x, y, z))$$

- height z
- (hydrostatic) pressure p
- potential temperature θ
- ...

→ Terrain-following coordinates

- + levels do not intersect the earth's surface
- + specification of the lower boundary condition
- + uniform vertical mesh spacing near the surface
- + stretching easily allows higher resolution towards the surface
- + long time steps
- (-) potential errors in pressure gradient term
- (-) mesh quality for steep orography



Terrain-following coordinate of Gal-Chen and Somerville (1975):

$$\bar{z} = \bar{z}(x, y, z) = H \frac{z - h(x, y)}{H - h(x, y)}$$

with inverse mapping

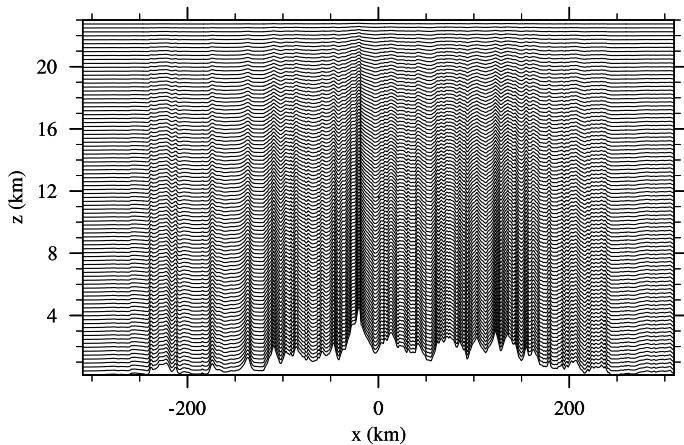
$$z = z(x, y, \bar{z}) = \bar{z} + \left(1 - \frac{\bar{z}}{H}\right) h = \bar{z} + b(\bar{z})h(x, y)$$

H : height of model top

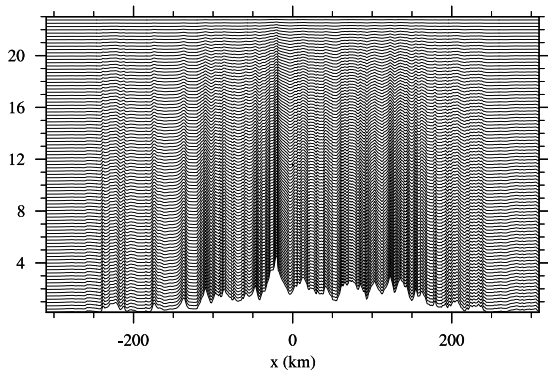
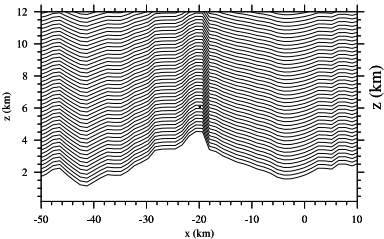
$h(x, y)$: local height of orography

$b(\bar{z})$: vertical decay function of orography

West-east cross section through the Alps ($\Delta_h \sim 1.2$ km)



Gal-Chen and Somerville terrain-following vertical coordinate

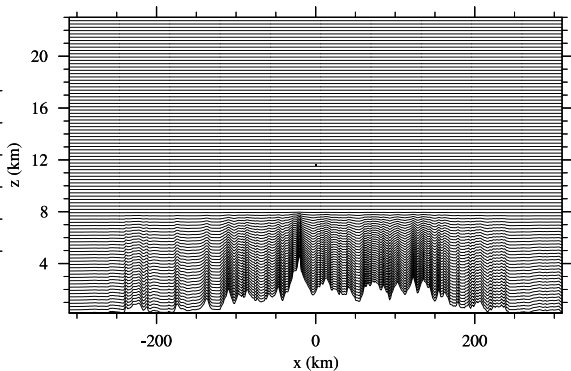
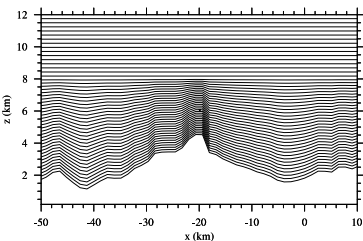


Hybrid specification:

$$z(x, y, \bar{z}) = \bar{z} + b(\bar{z})h(x, y)$$

where

$$b(\bar{z}) = \begin{cases} (1 - \bar{z}/H_r) & : \bar{z} \leq H_r \\ 0 & : \bar{z} > H_r \end{cases}$$



Smoothed coordinate – SLEVE (Schär et al. MWR 2002, Leuenberger et al. MWR 2010):

$$z(x, y, \bar{z}) = \bar{z} + b_s h_s(x, y) + b_r h_r(x, y)$$

h_s : smoothed terrain

$h_r = h - h_s$: residual containing small-scale variations of terrain

b_s : vertical decay function for h_s

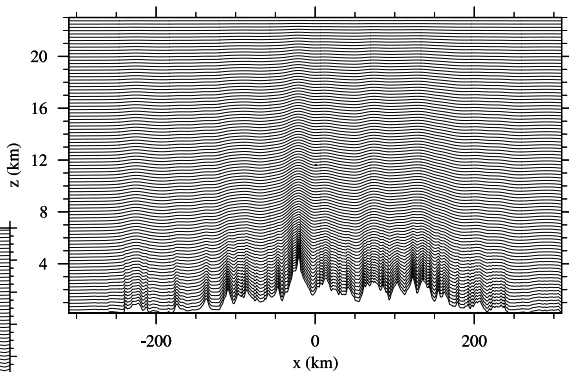
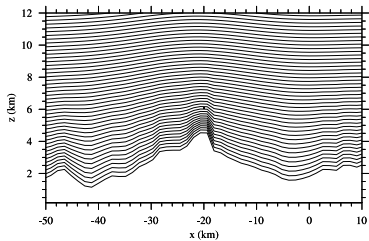
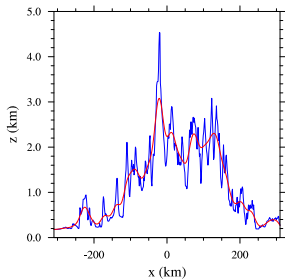
b_r : vertical decay function for h_r

with

$$b_i(\bar{z}) = \frac{\sinh [(H/s_i)^n - (\bar{z}/s_i)^n]}{\sinh [(H/s_i)^n]}$$

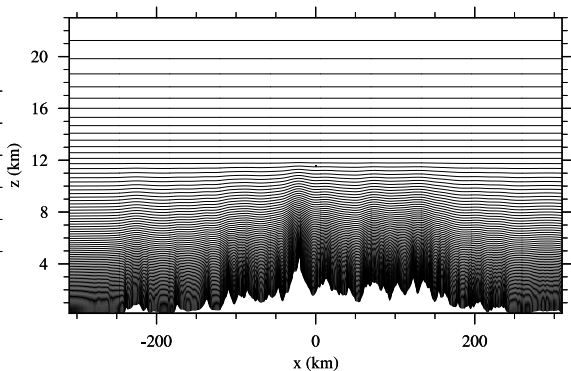
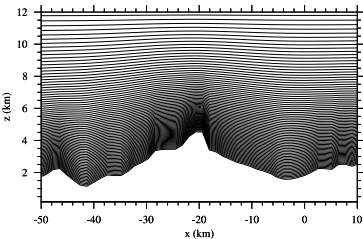
⇒ Faster decay for b_r versus b_s by defining smaller scale-height s_i

See also: Zängl MWR 2003, Klemp MWR 2011



SLEVE in hybrid setting with vertical stretching:

$$\tilde{z} = C^{-1}(\bar{z}) \rightarrow z = z(x, y, \tilde{z})$$



Pressure-based terrain-following vertical coordinate η of the form:

$$(\bar{x}, \bar{y}, \eta) \equiv (x, y, \eta(p, p_s))$$

with $\eta_s = \eta(p_s, p_s) \equiv 1$ $\eta_t = \eta(p_t, p_s) \equiv 0$

$p(t, x, y, z)$: pressure, $p_s(t, x, y)$: surface pressure, p_t : top pressure
→ bijective mapping between p and η for a given p_s .

One example is (Phillips JM 1957 “A coordinate system having some special advantages for numerical forecasting”, Mintz 1965)

$$\sigma = \eta = \frac{p - p_t}{p_s - p_t}$$

commonly named as the σ -coordinate.

Hybrid σ - p vertical coordinate (Simmons and Burridge MWR 1981) employed in ECMWF's operational IFS model (with $p_t \equiv 0$):

$$p(t, x, y, z) = A(\eta) + B(\eta)p_s(t, x, y)$$

with

$$A(\eta_t) = 0, \quad B(\eta_t) = 0, \quad A(\eta_s) = 0, \quad B(\eta_s) = 1$$

- terrain-following σ -like levels near the earth's surface with transition to pressure levels in the upper troposphere and stratosphere
- different approaches to specify A and B coefficients (see e.g. Eckermann MWR 2009)
- similar in non-hydrostatic models (Laprise MWR 1992, Bubnova et al. MWR 1995)

Evolution of hybrid $\sigma - p$ levels of IFS over a 10 day T255/L91 forecast
(Zonal section at $\sim 60^\circ N$)

Potential temperature θ as independent vertical coordinate:

- for inviscid adiabatic flow $D\theta/Dt = 0$ isentropes represent material surfaces
- more accurate representation of vertical transport
- adaptive vertical mesh spacing proportional to thermal stratification
- implemented as hybrid terrain-following- θ coordinate
- becomes more complicated for high resolution due to small-scale θ variations
- regularisation of coordinate required to ensure monotonicity

→ see e.g. Hsu and Arakawa, MWR 1990; Konor and Arakawa, MWR 1997; Benjamin et al. MWR 2004; Toy and Randall MWR 2009

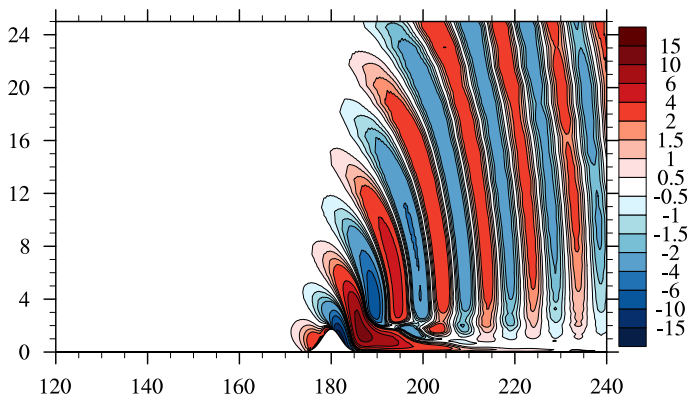
⇒ horizontal pressure gradient

$$-c_p \theta \frac{\partial \pi}{\partial x} = -c_p \theta \left(\frac{\partial \pi}{\partial \bar{x}} + \frac{\partial \bar{z}}{\partial x} \frac{\partial \pi}{\partial \bar{z}} \right)$$

susceptible to errors

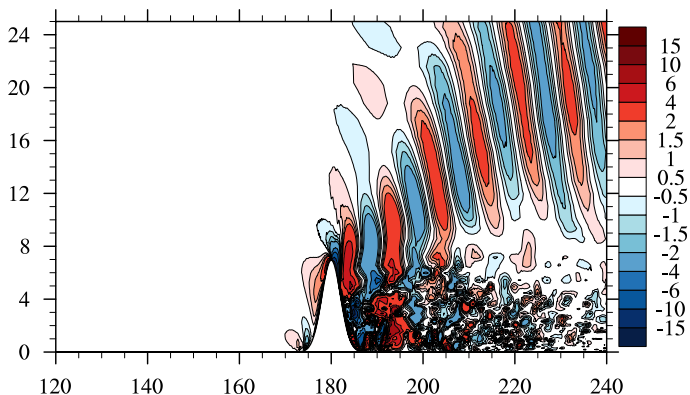
- + subtraction of balanced state
- + satisfy tensor identities, consistency of discrete metrics and dynamics (see e.g. Prusa and Gutowski IJNMF 2006; Klemp et al. MWR 2003)
- + boundary conditions (e.g. Smolarkiewicz et al. JCP 2007)
- + smoothed coordinate levels
- + truly horizontal evaluation of horizontal components of the pressure gradient and horizontal diffusion using reconstructed quantities on Cartesian mesh (Zängl MWR 2012, and references therein)
- + see also Lin QJ 1996, Weller and Shahrokhi MWR 2014

Stratified flow past isolated mountain with FVM (max. slope $\sim 37^\circ$)



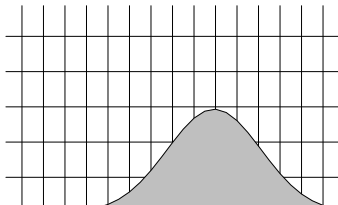
→ Basic terrain-following coordinate, semi-implicit integration of Euler equations (Smolarkiewicz et al. 2014), finite-volume MPDATA scheme (Kühnlein and Smolarkiewicz 2017), no explicit diffusion

Stratified flow past isolated mountain with FVM (max. slope $\sim 71^\circ$)

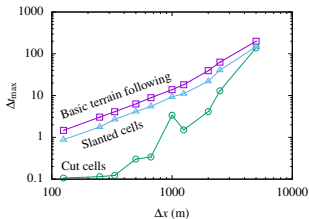
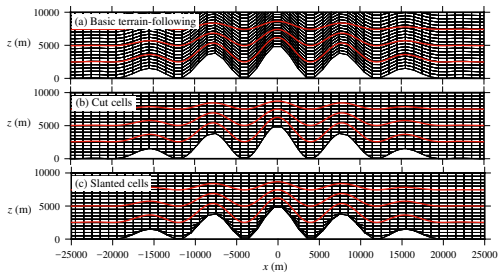


→ Basic terrain-following coordinate, semi-implicit integration of Euler equations (Smolarkiewicz et al. 2014), finite-volume MPDATA scheme (Kühnlein and Smolarkiewicz 2017), no explicit diffusion

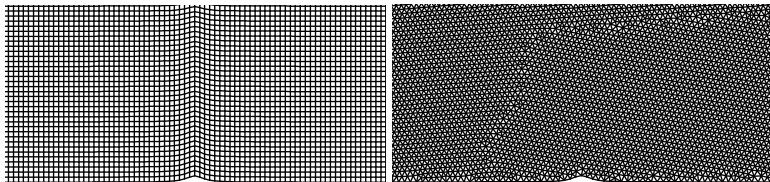
- Cut-cell method (e.g. Steppeler et al. 2002, Klein et al. 2009, Lock et al. 2012)

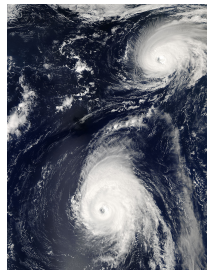
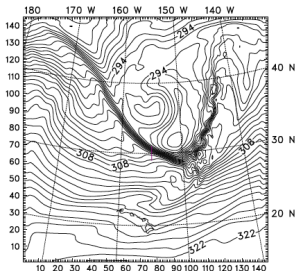


→ Slanted cell approach (Shaw and Weller MWR 2016, Shaw et al. 2017)



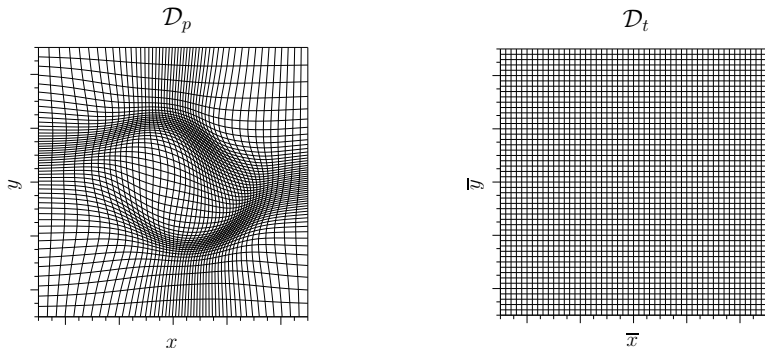
→ 3D unstructured mesh discretisation → see J. Szmelter's lecture





- Extremely different local scales in atmospheric flows
- Standard approach in atmospheric solvers of uniform mesh not optimal
- Variable mesh applying locally finer/coarser spacing more efficient
- Solution-adaptive mesh is able to conform to flow evolution

$$(\bar{x}, \bar{y}) = (E(t, x, y), D(t, x, y)) : \mathcal{D}_p \rightarrow \mathcal{D}_t$$



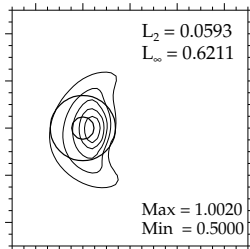
→ moving mesh or r-adaptive technique (see Budd et al. AN 2009 for comprehensive discussion)

Time-dependent deformational shear flow (Blossey and Durran, JCP 2008) using advection scheme MPDATA (Smolarkiewicz IJNMF 2006) with moving meshes (Kühnlein et al. JCP 2012):

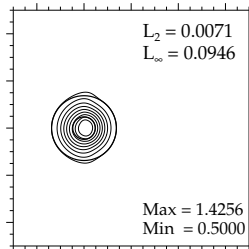
→ mesh refinement indicator: $\Phi = \|\nabla\psi\|$

Scalar advection experiment

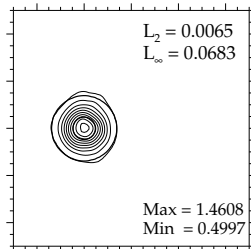
uniform mesh - 50^2 , $T_{rw} = 1$



uniform mesh - 250^2 , $T_{rw} = 133$



adaptive mesh - 50^2 , $T_{rw} = 5.5$



→ T_{rw} is relative wall clock time to uniform mesh run with 50^2 mesh cells
(leftmost panel)

MMPDEs (Huang JCP 2001) govern time-dependent mapping (here 2D) from computational to physical space:

$$P(\mathbf{x}_h, M) \frac{\partial \mathbf{x}_h}{\partial \bar{t}} = \sum_{i,j=1,2} D_{ij}(\mathbf{x}_h, M) \frac{\partial^2 \mathbf{x}_h}{\partial \bar{x}^i \partial \bar{x}^j} + \sum_{i=1,2} C_i(\mathbf{x}_h, M) \frac{\partial \mathbf{x}_h}{\partial \bar{x}^i}$$

with coefficients

$$D_{ij}(\mathbf{x}_h, M) = \nabla_h \bar{x}^i \cdot M^{-1} \nabla_h \bar{x}^j, \quad C_i(\mathbf{x}_h, M) = -\nabla_h \bar{x}^i \cdot \left(\sum_{k=1,2} \frac{\partial M^{-1}}{\partial \bar{x}^k} \nabla_h \bar{x}^k \right),$$

$$P(\mathbf{x}_h, M) = \mathcal{T} \sqrt{(D_{11})^2 + (D_{22})^2 + (C_1)^2 + (C_2)^2}$$

⇒ MMPDEs are derived from variational principles as a minimiser of mapping functional

$$\mathcal{I}[\bar{\mathbf{x}}] = \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathcal{D}_p} \sum_{k=1}^2 (\nabla \bar{x}^k)^T M^{-1} \nabla \bar{x}^k dx$$

One-dimensional stationary view on the MMPDE:

$$\mathcal{I}[\bar{x}] = \frac{1}{2} \int_{\mathcal{D}_p} \frac{1}{m} \left(\frac{\partial \bar{x}}{\partial x} \right)^2 dx$$

with Euler-Lagrange equation

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial \bar{x}} \left(m(x) \frac{\partial x}{\partial \bar{x}} \right) = 0 + \text{BCs}$$

$m(x) : \mathbf{S}_p \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^+$ is monitor function to control local mesh spacing

- Example:

$$x(0) = 0, \quad x(1) = 1$$

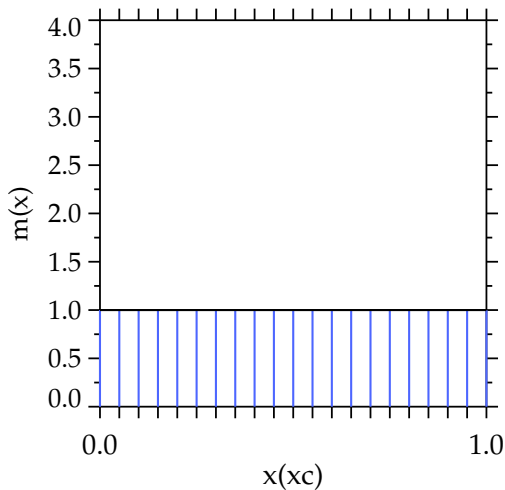
$$\bar{x}(0) = 0, \quad \bar{x}(1) = 1$$

$$m(x) = 1$$

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial \bar{x}} \left(m(x) \frac{\partial x}{\partial \bar{x}} \right) = 0$$

$$\Rightarrow x = x(\bar{x})$$

Number of grid increments: $N = 20$



- Example:

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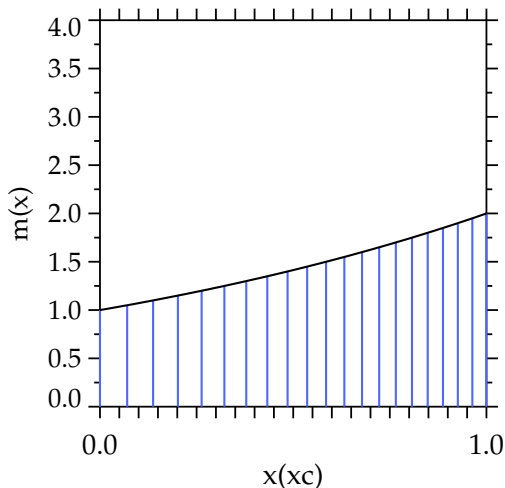
$$\bar{x}(0) = 0, \quad \bar{x}(1) = 1$$

$$m(x) = \exp(x \ln 2)$$

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial \bar{x}} \left(m(x) \frac{\partial x}{\partial \bar{x}} \right) = 0$$

$$\Rightarrow x = x(\bar{x})$$

Number of grid increments: $N = 20$



- Example:

$$x(0) = 0, \quad x(1) = 1$$

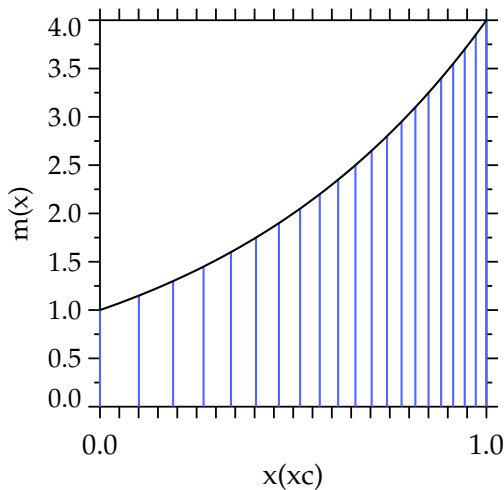
$$\bar{x}(0) = 0, \quad \bar{x}(1) = 1$$

$$m(x) = \exp(x \ln 4)$$

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial \bar{x}} \left(m(x) \frac{\partial x}{\partial \bar{x}} \right) = 0$$

$$\Rightarrow x = x(\bar{x})$$

Number of grid increments: $N = 20$



→ Monitor function M (2×2 matrix in 2D):

$$M = I q$$

with scalar weighting function

$$q(t, \mathbf{x}_h) = 1 + \frac{\beta}{1 - \beta} \frac{\Phi}{\langle \Phi \rangle_h}, \quad I \text{ is identity matrix}$$

→ Φ is mesh refinement indicator; $\langle \Phi \rangle_h$ denotes its horizontal average

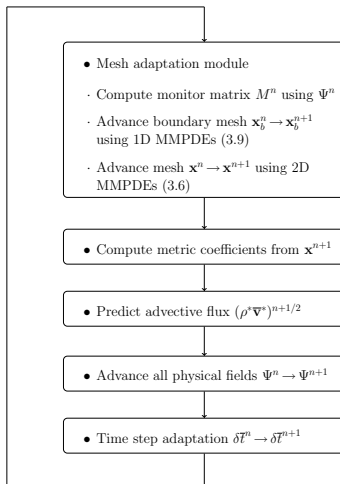
→ $0 \leq \beta < 1$ controls strength of adaptation

→ q is filtered to obtain good quality mesh

→ boundary conditions of 2D MMPDEs are either of Dirichlet-type for \mathbf{x}_h found by means of 1D MMPDEs

$$\rho(s, \mu) \frac{\partial s}{\partial \bar{t}} = \mu \frac{\partial^2 s}{\partial \bar{s}^2} + \frac{\partial \mu}{\partial \bar{s}} \frac{\partial s}{\partial \bar{s}}$$

along boundary segments or are assumed periodic, depending on BC of the model



• In framework of two-time-level flow solver EULAG (Prusa et al. CF 2008, Kühnlein et al. JCP 2012)

Combining the soundproof and compressible PDE solver (Smolarkiewicz et al. JCP 2014) with adaptive moving meshes:

$$(\bar{x}, \bar{z}) = (E(t, x, z), D(t, x, z)) : \mathcal{D}_p \rightarrow \mathcal{D}_t$$

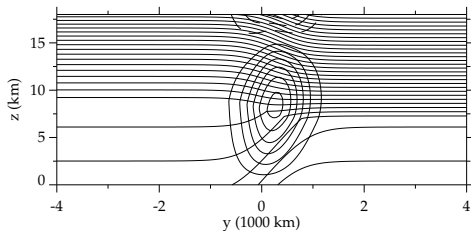
Durran SI

compressible SI

→ mesh refinement indicator: $\Phi = \|\nabla\theta\|$

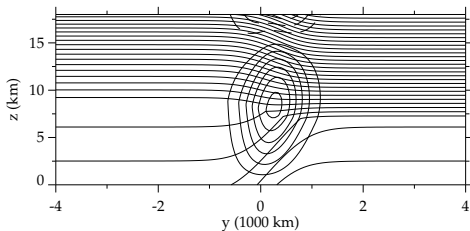
- zonally-periodic channel
10000 km × 8000 km ×
18 km
- baroclinically unstable jet
flow (Bush and Peltier, JAS
1994)
- perturb initial state by local
 θ -anomaly at tropopause
- integrate for 12 days
- Coordinate mapping:

$$(\bar{x}, \bar{y}, \bar{z}) = (E(t, x, y), D(t, x, y), C(t, x, y, z)) : \mathcal{D}_p \rightarrow \mathcal{D}_t$$



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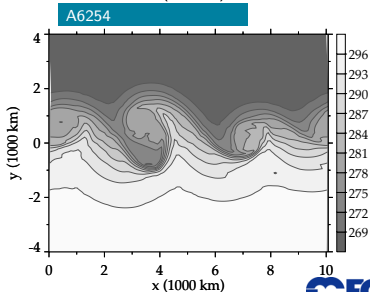
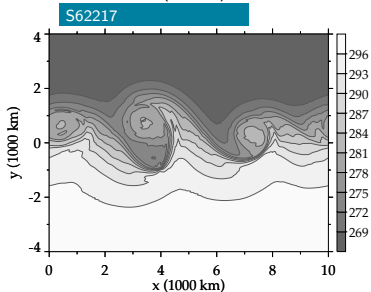
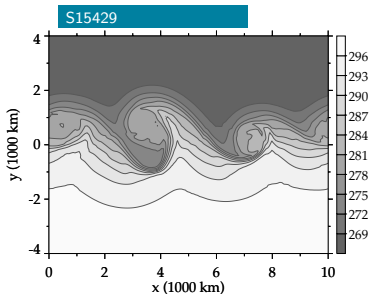
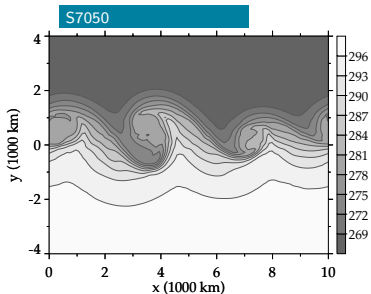
$$(\bar{x}, \bar{y}, \bar{z}) = (E(t, x, y), D(t, x, y), C(t, x, y, z)) : \mathcal{D}_p \rightarrow \mathcal{D}_t$$



(Kühnlein et al. JCP 2012)

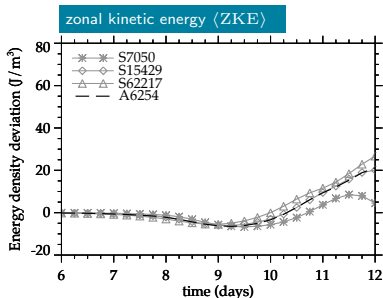
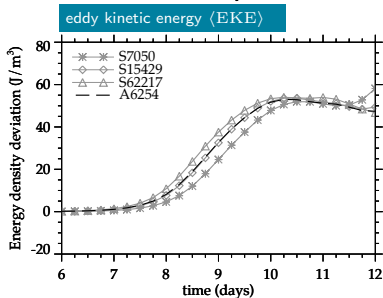
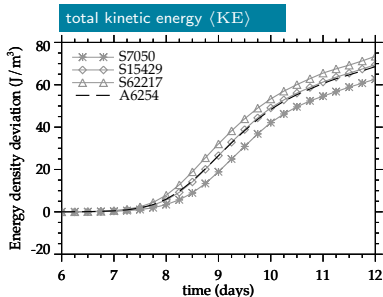
→ mesh refinement indicator: $\Phi = \|\nabla_h \theta(z=600 \text{ m})\|$

Baroclinic wave life cycle experiments with adaptive moving meshes



temperature field at $z = 2$ km and $t = 234$ h

Domain-averaged kinetic energetics with integration time



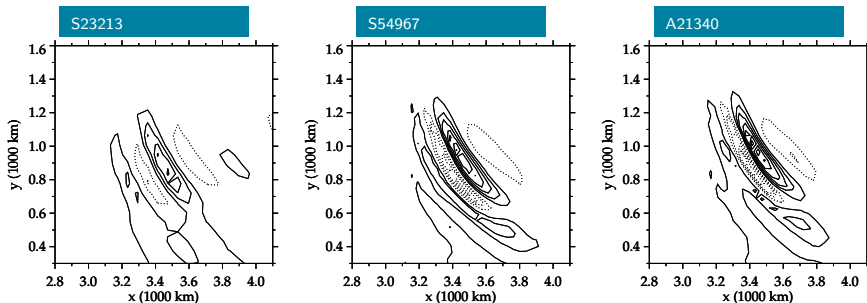
Simulation	Refinement indicator $\Phi(t, x, y)$	$\mathcal{E}_{\langle \text{KE} \rangle}$	$\mathcal{E}_{\langle \text{ZKE} \rangle}$	$\mathcal{E}_{\langle \text{EKE} \rangle}$
S7050	-	6.43	4.99	4.84
S15429	-	2.58	1.66	1.90
A6254a	$\frac{1}{H} \int_0^H \ \nabla_h \theta\ dz$	2.82	1.67	1.80
A6254b	$\ \nabla_h \theta(z=600 \text{ m})\ $	3.75	2.64	2.28
A6254c	$\ \nabla_h \theta(z=3000 \text{ m})\ $	2.91	1.57	1.92
A6254d	$\ \nabla_h \theta(z=5100 \text{ m})\ $	2.98	2.43	1.98
A6254e	$\frac{1}{H} \int_0^H \ \nabla \times \mathbf{v}\ dz$	2.90	2.10	1.83
A6254f	$\frac{1}{H} \int_0^H PV dz$	3.81	2.31	2.45
A6254g	$ PV(z=5100 \text{ m}) $	4.65	2.48	2.97
A6254h	$ PV(z=9000 \text{ m}) $	4.22	2.62	2.64
A6254i	$\frac{1}{H} \int_0^H \ \nabla_h PV\ dz$	3.82	2.36	2.65
A6254j	$\frac{1}{H} \int_0^H PV dz, \frac{1}{H} \int_0^H \ \nabla_h PV\ dz$	3.84	2.27	2.52
A6254k	$\frac{1}{H} \int_0^H EPV dz$	10.77	5.43	8.57
A6254l	$ EPV(z=5100 \text{ m}) $	9.50	4.60	7.56

$$\mathcal{E}_{\vartheta} = \left(\frac{1}{N_o} \sum_{i=1}^{N_o} (\vartheta_i - \vartheta_i^R)^2 \right)^{1/2} \quad \forall \quad \vartheta = \langle \text{KE} \rangle, \langle \text{ZKE} \rangle, \langle \text{EKE} \rangle$$

→ ϑ^R is high-resolution reference simulation S62217 with static uniform mesh

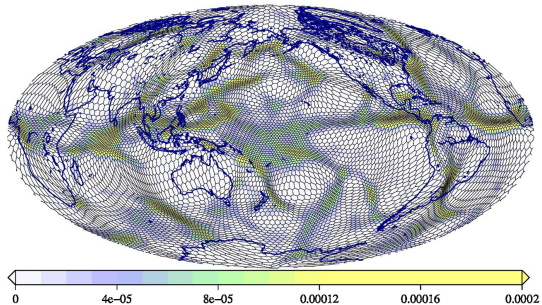
→ $N_o = 48$ is number of 6-hourly model outputs over integration period of 12 days

→ Representation of internal gravity waves occurring in response to imbalances in the evolving baroclinic wave flow:



vertical velocity field at $z = 12$ km and $t = 246$ h

→ Mesh generation using optimal transport (Weller et al. JCP 2016):



Adaptive moving meshes:

- + efficient way of employing mesh adaptivity
 - + keeps grid/data structure
 - less flexible than h- or hr-adaptive techniques
- Mesh refinement criteria ?
- Subgrid-scale parameterisations ?
- ...
- Behrens, “Adaptive atmospheric modeling”, Springer 2006
 - Weller et al. BAMS 2010
- ⇒ [Workshop on moving and adaptive meshes for global atmospheric modelling, 3-5 Sep 2018, University of Reading](#)