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Total energy norm in NWP closure parameter optimization

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Abstract

We explore the use of total energy norm in improving numerical weather prediction (NWP) model forecast skill. The Ensemble Prediction and Parameter Estimation System (EPPES) is utilized to estimate ECHAM5 atmospheric GCM closure parameters related to clouds and precipitation. The target criterion in the optimization is the total energy norm of three-day forecast error with respect to the ECMWF operational analyses. The results are summarized as follows: (i) forecast error growth in terms of energy norm is slower in the optimized than in the default model up to day ten forecasts (and beyond), (ii) headline forecast skill scores are improved in the training sample as well as in independent samples, (iii) the decrease of the forecast error energy norm at day three is mainly because of smaller kinetic energy error in the tropics, and (iv) this impact is spread into mid-latitudes at longer ranges and appears as smaller forecast error of potential energy. The interpretation of these results is that the parameter optimization has reduced the model error so that the forecasts remain longer in the vicinity of the analyzed state.

1 Introduction

Tuning of closure parameters in atmospheric modeling is a recurring topic. In research, the aim is to improve physical realism of sub-grid scale physical processes and to maintain or improve the general model behavior, such as reproduction of observed variability. In operational applications, such as numerical weather prediction (NWP), the aim is also to increase predictive skill. Tuning procedures in modeling are predominantly manual and there are no generally applicable or accepted algorithmic tools in everyday use. One reason is that in multi-scale and multi-phase systems the model response to closure parameter variations is very non-linear and general non-stationary inverse problem tools can fail. Therefore results may be promising in idealized cases but this does not seem to carry-on to more demanding real-world estimation cases.

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This difficulty is nicely illustrated in Schirber et al. (2013) where the inverse problem realism is gradually increased from synthetic to fully realistic estimation in case of an atmospheric general circulation model. The parameter-augmented state filter works well in an idealized setup but is less successful in realistic estimation cases.

The aim of this paper is by no means to declare that a final solution has been found to this generic problem. Some success has nevertheless been obtained by applying the so-called Ensemble Prediction and Parameter Estimation System (EPPES; Järvinen et al., 2012; Laine et al., 2012). We have reported earlier (Ollinaho et al., 2013) that the EPPES algorithm is able to recognize models with superior performance with respect to a given target criterion, even in case of a highly tuned system of full complexity, such as the Integrated Forecasting System of the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (IFS of ECMWF). EPPES is thus clearly a good candidate for a general-purpose tuning algorithm. The remaining key question is the definition of a proper target, the optimization of which can lead to a univocal improvement of the model performance. This paper presents atmospheric total energy norm as a target for model optimization. In recent years, various energy norms have appeared in NWP literature mainly in the context of seeking the fastest growing structures to be used as initial state perturbations in ensemble prediction systems (e.g. Farrel, 1988; Palmer et al., 1994; Errico, 2000). Here we apply the total energy norm in the opposite sense: we seek a model which tends to have the slowest possible forecast error growth in terms of total energy norm. As the energy norm is computed as an integral over the entire model atmosphere, it is not selective to any particular model variable, level, or geographical region. It is thus a potentially powerful target.

2 Experiment configuration

The ECHAM5.4 atmospheric general circulation model (Roeckner et al., 2003) is used here with a coarse horizontal resolution of T42 and 31 vertical layers, the model top being at 10 hPa. We consider the same four closure parameters (Table 1) that were

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estimated in Ollinaho et al. (2012), and studied in Järvinen et al. (2010). These influence parametrized clouds and precipitation, and, even though considered here only from the NWP viewpoint, they are also of great interest when considering the model climatology.

5 A more complete description of the ensemble prediction system (ENS) emulator, and that of the EPPES method, is given in detail in Ollinaho et al. (2012) and Laine et al. (2012), respectively; here we present a concise overview.

The operational ensemble of initial states produced by ECMWF ENS has been used to generate initial uncertainties. 50 perturbed initial states, as well as the control state, 10 are used for twice-daily (00:00 and 12:00 UTC) forecasts over a period of three months (January to March 2011). The initial-time parameter variations, sampled via the EPPES algorithm, represent the model error.

The EPPES algorithm approaches the problem of estimating model parameters θ by assuming them to be a realization from a background parameter uncertainty distribution that is approximated by a multivariate Gaussian distribution, with a mean vector μ 15 (of dimension p) and a $p \times p$ covariance matrix Σ . For each time window i , the optimal parameters, θ_i , are a sample from this distribution as

$$\theta_i \sim N(\mu, \Sigma), \quad i = 1, 2, \dots \quad (1)$$

The estimation problem is thus shifted to estimating these unknown, but static in time, distribution parameters (or, hyper-parameters). The mean of the distribution μ 20 corresponds to parameter values that perform best on average considering all weather types, seasons, etc., and Σ indicates how much these values vary between time windows due to inaccurate parametrization schemes and other modelling errors.

The initial distribution is defined according to expert knowledge (“Prior” in Table 2). Parameter bounds are also set to prevent the selection of unrealistic parameter values 25 (Table 2). A sample is then drawn from the initial distribution, and these parameter values are used in an ensemble of forecasts. The likelihood of each forecast is then evaluated with respect to given criteria, and each parameter vector is weighted by

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the likelihood. A re-sample is drawn from the weighted parameter sample, favouring parameter values associated with high likelihood (known as importance sampling). Finally, the hyper-parameters $\boldsymbol{\mu}$ and $\boldsymbol{\Sigma}$ are updated with the weighted sample. A new sample is then drawn for the next time window from the updated distribution.

3 Total energy norm

3.1 Target criterion

The total energy norm in discretized form can be written as

$$\Delta E = \frac{1}{2} \sum_{p_0}^{p_1} \sum_A \left((\Delta u)^2 + (\Delta v)^2 + \frac{c_p}{T_r} (\Delta T)^2 \right) dA + \frac{1}{2} R_d T_r p_r \sum_A (\Delta \ln p_{\text{sfc}})^2 dA. \quad (2)$$

Here, u and v denote the zonal and meridional wind components, T the temperature, and $\ln p_{\text{sfc}}$ the logarithmic surface pressure. ΔS indicates difference between two atmospheric states, i.e. $\Delta S = S_{\text{an}} - S_{\text{fc}}$, where subscripts denote analysis (an) and model forecast (fc). c_p is the specific heat at constant pressure, R_d gas constant of (dry) air, T_r a reference temperature (280 K), p_r a reference surface pressure (1000 hPa) and dA areal element of the model grid.

The first two terms in r.h.s of Eq. (2) (u and v) are identifiable as kinetic energy, and the third (T) and fourth ($\ln p_{\text{sfc}}$) terms as available potential energy (Lorenz, 1955, 1960). Equation (2) can also be extended to include a term related to the latent energy. We have restricted this study to the so-called dry total energy norm. Optimal inclusion of the latent energy term requires defining a vertically changing weighting term (see Barkmeijer et al., 2001).

The ECMWF operational analyses are used in computation of Eq. (2). The target criterion, or cost function, for the EPPES estimation is then the forecast error from analysis, the norm being the total energy norm.

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$$J(\boldsymbol{\theta}) = w\Delta E^{72}(\boldsymbol{\theta}), \quad (3)$$

where ΔE^{72} denotes the energy state difference between analysis and a 72 h forecast, and w is an ad hoc weighting term which guarantees that the likelihood has enough spread. $\boldsymbol{\theta}$ indicates the dependency on sampled parameter values. The 72 h forecast range is selected because it is beyond the tangent-linear regime of the system and not seriously affected by spin-up/down of model hydrology, but not yet affected by the non-linear forecast error saturation.

3.2 Model sensitivity

We first study (i) how the model performs in terms of energy norm, and (ii) how much impact the initial state and parameter perturbations have on forecasts with respect to the energy norm. Figure 1 illustrates the ensemble spread of zonal mean energy norm at 72 h forecast range, averaged over 15 dates (1–15 January 2011). Total energy norm (dark blue), and surface pressure (light blue), temperature (dark green) and kinetic energy (light green) terms are shown. The division of available potential energy into surface pressure and temperature terms is performed to better understand the respective contributions to total energy norm variability. The width of the coloured area represents \pm two standard deviations from the mean, i.e. thus indicating the impact of initial state and parameter perturbations on the system. Moreover, the mean (continuous black lines) indicates how far the forecast is from the analyses in general.

The largest mean forecast error of the total energy is in the mid-latitudes, especially so in the Northern Hemisphere (30° N to 60° N), where all three energy norm terms also reach their individual maximum values. There is also an increased ensemble spread associated with both of the hemispheric maxima, as well as in the tropics (shifted slightly towards the summer hemisphere). The impact of initial state and parameter perturbations separately to the spread of total energy norm was also tested by running the model with only one perturbation type active at a time (not shown). The

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individual contributions are as follows: parameter variations dominate in the tropics, initial state perturbations dominate in the Southern Hemisphere, and both sources are approximately equal in the Northern Hemisphere.

The surface pressure term has three mean error maxima, two in the Southern Hemisphere (22° S and 60° S) and a broader one in the Northern Hemisphere (35° N to 57° N). The peaks at 22° S and 35° N, namely the Andes and the Himalayas regions, are caused by orographical differences between ECHAM5 and the originally higher resolution analysis data. Ensemble spread is the largest within the peak areas of 60° S and 40° N to 57° N. The southern hemispheric maximum is dominated by initial state perturbations, whereas in the Northern Hemisphere both perturbations have an equal effect.

The temperature term has the least spread. The mean is quite flat with respect to latitude, but at higher latitudes the model deficiencies start to appear, especially in the Northern Hemisphere. Ensemble spread of the temperature term remains relatively small at all latitudes, and is governed by the initial state perturbations in the extra-tropics and by parameter variations in the tropics.

The mean error in the kinetic energy term has also multiple maxima; one in the mid-latitudes in each hemisphere, and one in the tropics. The ensemble spread is large at all latitudes. Parameter perturbations dominate the spread in the tropics and extra-tropics, while initial state perturbations dominate in the southern mid-latitudes. In the northern mid-latitudes, initial state and parameter perturbations generate roughly the same amount of ensemble spread.

4 Results

4.1 Parameter evolution

The evolution of the parameter subset during 1 January to 31 March 2011 (2011JFM) is shown in Fig. 2. The parameter perturbation distribution mean μ (continuous line),

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width (\pm two times standard deviation, thin dashed lines), and default parameter values (thick dashed line) are presented. A vertical column of markers represents a set of 50 parameter values evaluated at the corresponding date, and the marker shading is indicative of the importance weight in the distribution update. Two of the parameters (CAULOC and CPRCON) shift fairly quickly to higher parameter values, followed by saturation. CMFCTOP and ENTRSCV on the other hand change more conservatively throughout the evaluation period. The posterior distribution mean μ and standard deviation after the final iteration are given in Table 2.

4.2 Validation

4.2.1 Skill scores

To validate the parameter distributions, the model is run applying the parameter posterior mean values. Three time periods are covered: (i) the dependent period of 2011JFM, (ii) an independent period of April 2011 (2011A), and (iii) an independent period of January to March 2010 (2010JFM). We first study how the optimized model compares with respect to the target criterion. Figure 3 represent the energy norm differences between the default and optimized model for the three time periods and up to forecast day 10. Mean difference (continuous line) and the 95 % confidence interval of the mean (grey vertical bars; the bar width is two times the standard deviation of the differences divided by the square root of number of cases) are shown. The first thing to note is that the energy norm at forecast day three for 2011JFM is improved at the 95 % confidence level, implying that the EPPES algorithm is able to find a model that is improved with respect to the target criterion. In fact, there is an improvement at all ranges. The energy norm improvement is statistically significant also for forecast ranges beyond two days in the independent sample 2011A, and beyond five days in the three-month sample 2010JFM.

Next, the model is validated against the standard headline score of 500 hPa geopotential height. In addition to RMSE, also Anomaly Correlation Coefficient (ACC) is

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shown. ACC is a verification quantity which is sensitive to the forecast patterns. Notation is the same in Figs. 3 and 4. Positive values for both RMSE and ACC indicate where the optimized model is performing better than the default one. The RMSE scores for all three datasets are improved at the 95 % confidence level for all forecast ranges.

5 Interestingly, the mean RMSE scores of the independent sample of 2011A are improved more than in the dependent sample. ACC scores in the dependent sample are improved for forecast range longer than two days, statistically significantly at forecast ranges 2.5–8 and 9.5–10 days. The ACC scores are also improved from forecast day five onwards for the independent sample of 2011A, although this does not hold at the 10 95 % confidence level. For the second independent sample the ACC is mostly neutral with some statistically insignificant improvements for forecast range beyond seven days.

4.2.2 Scorecard

A more general validation of the model changes with the optimized parameters is provided by a scorecard (Fig. 5). It is a concise but comprehensive presentation of 15 a large number of scores for various geographical regions, variables, levels, and forecast ranges. The notation is such that green (red) colours indicate the optimized model scoring better (worse) than the default model. Small and large arrow heads up (down) indicate the result is significant at 95 % or 99 % confidence level, respectively, for the 20 optimized (default) model to score better. White boxes indicate the models performing equally well.

The main features of Fig. 5 are as follows. First, RMSE scores of all forecast fields (with exception of temperature at 100 hPa) in the Northern Hemisphere are improved beyond a forecast range of two days. In the Southern Hemisphere the same holds 25 at forecast ranges longer than three and a half days. ACC scores in the Northern Hemisphere closely follow those of RMSE, whereas, in the Southern Hemisphere, wind fields at 2.5–4.5 day range and cloud cover at upper levels differ from their respective RMSE improvements. There is a general tropical improvement in RMSE scores, with

the exception of geopotential height at forecast range 3–7 days at 1000 and 850 hPa levels, temperature at 100 hPa level, and surface temperature. The tropical ACC scores are affected similarly to the RMSE scores, the exception being cloud fraction, which is negatively affected at nearly all forecast ranges.

5 4.2.3 Geographical validation

Next, the geographical distribution of the energy norm differences between the optimized and default model are presented. The kinetic energy mean forecast difference for day three forecasts from 2011JFM is shown in Fig. 6. Positive values indicate where the optimized model is better than the default model. The main improvements are concentrated in the tropics (South-East Asia, the western coasts of Africa and South America). A weakly positive region is close to the Atlantic storm track. The Atlantic and Indian Oceans around 40° S are somewhat degraded.

Figure 7 illustrates the zonally-averaged mean energy norm difference in the dependent sample (2011JFM) for forecast ranges of three, six, and ten days (Fig. 7a–c, respectively). Total energy norm (dark blue), and surface pressure (light blue), temperature (dark green) and kinetic energy (light green) terms are presented. Mean error (continuous black line), and the 95% confidence interval of the mean (width of the coloured area) are also shown.

At forecast day three (Fig. 7a), most of the improvements in the total energy take place in the tropical belt, but there is also a favourable impact on the northern mid-latitudes (north of 45° N). A forecast degradation is seen in the Southern Hemisphere (25° S to 50° S). In the tropics, the surface pressure term displays oscillations arising from orographically-induced noise as the analysis data is at higher resolution than the forecasts, and the term stays negative excluding the high latitudes (south of 55° S and north of 45° N). The temperature term displays a broad positive signal for all latitudes. Improvements in the tropics are dominated by the kinetic energy, with positive impacts for all latitudes expect 25° S to 50° S.

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At longer forecast ranges, the improvements are spread from the tropics to the mid-latitudes and they grow larger. By the forecast day six (Fig. 7b), the largest values are at mid-latitudes and are dominated by the kinetic energy term, and later by the surface pressure term (Fig. 7c). Note the different scale in the panels of Fig. 7.

5 Discussion

The EPPES methodology was able to find a parameter set corresponding to an improved model with respect to the target criterion, and thus demonstrates that the algorithm works as intended. This improvement is not confined to the sampling period, as it is also present in the independent sample 2011A, and to some extent also in the 2010JFM sample.

Figure 3 illustrates how the optimized model stays closer to the verifying analyses than the default model. The energy norm is optimized at day three but the improvements are maintained at longer forecast ranges, too, and the optimized model seems to outperform the default model the longer is the forecast lead time. This indicates that the optimization procedure has managed to reduce the model error since the forecasts are launched from the same initial conditions. Figure 7a indicates that the model error reduction primarily affects the evolution of kinetic energy in the tropical region in the forecasts up to three days. This is likely to be because the set of four parameters optimized here mostly impact convective circulation in the tropics. After the three day optimization period, the tropical kinetic energy improvements spread by non-linear model dynamics into mid-latitudes (Fig. 7b), and begin also to appear as improvements in the distribution of potential energy via the surface pressure term. Note, that there is a tropical maximum in the kinetic energy distribution at day six (Fig. 7b). The interpretation of this maximum is that the reduced model error continues to operate in the tropics and feeds more realistic kinetic energy evolution via better tropical circulation throughout the 10 day forecast range.

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Ollinaho et al. (2012) estimated the same ECHAM5 model parameters as here with the EPPES methodology but using mean-squared forecast error of the 500 hPa geopotential height at forecast day three and ten as a target criterion. Those experiments showed that the EPPES methodology is capable of optimizing a given target in an atmospheric GCM of full complexity. The posterior mean parameter values of Ollinaho et al. (2012) are within two standard deviations of the values found here. In particular, the posterior mean of the parameter CAULOC assumes a very similar value using either of the two targets, while the parameter CPRCON results in a value almost 1.8 times higher using 500 hPa height rather than energy norm as a target. However, the 500 hPa skill optimized model developed a significant bias above the 500 hPa level, visible for instance as inferior 100 hPa height skill scores compared with the default model. A detailed comparison of these two optimized models (not shown), reveal that the version optimized using the energy norm is superior in nearly all respects (headline skill scores and scorecard). One reason for this result is the ambiguity of 500 hPa skill as a target: the upper troposphere and lower stratosphere circulation is not properly constrained and there are many model realizations (i.e. the same model structure but different closure parameter values) that fulfill the target. The question now arises whether the norm used here is ambiguous, too, in some sense. The energy norm is basically computed as a sum over the model atmosphere of squared analysis minus forecast differences of component winds, temperature, and surface pressure. Let us consider a model bias that changes sign somewhere in the domain. It could be, for instance, temperature bias changing sign in vertical, or surface pressure bias changing sign in latitude. The square-terms of the norm make it insensitive to the sign of the model bias, and thus the norm is ambiguous. A simple remedy could be developed by splitting the norm into systematic and random components. This route is however not elaborated here.

6 Conclusions

This article explores the use of atmospheric dry total energy norm in improving NWP model forecast skill. The Ensemble Prediction and Parameter Estimation System (EPPE; Järvinen et al., 2012; Laine et al., 2012) is utilized to estimate four ECHAM5 model parametrization closure parameters related to clouds and precipitation. The ensemble runs are generated using the ECHAM5 model to evolve the perturbed initial states generated by the ECMWF for their ensemble prediction system. Here, model error is represented (and thus ensuring sufficient spread of the ensembles) by perturbing the ECHAM5 closure parameters which are being estimated. The twice-daily 50 member ensembles are generated over a period of three months and each ensemble member is used in the sequential parameter distribution update according to their respective weights obtained by calculating the total energy norm of the three day forecast error against the ECMWF analyses.

We first study the impact of initial state and parameter perturbations on the ensemble spread in terms of energy norm of three day forecast error in a sample of 30 forecasts using the default model. On average, the forecast departures from the analyses are largest at the northern (winter) hemisphere mid-latitudes. In the tropics, the ensemble spread is mostly due to parameter variations whereas at higher latitudes initial state perturbations either dominate or are equally important as parameter perturbations.

The optimization is performed in a 3 month period (January–March 2011), and the optimized model is validated with respect to the optimization criterion, typical head-line scores, and a comprehensive scorecard. First, the optimized model is an improvement with respect to the target criterion. Moreover, the improvement is propagated to three to ten day forecasts. Second, head-line scores are improved in dependent and independent samples. Third, the scorecard shows improvements on a broad range of individual scores, such as clearly improved tropical winds. The improvements of the energy norm are found to stem from better representation of tropical kinetic energy in short (up to three day) forecasts. This improvement spreads in three to six day forecasts

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to mid-latitudes and starts to appear as better representation of the potential energy distribution.

We conclude that the EPPES algorithm is a viable option in optimization of atmospheric GCMs of full complexity. The optimization target of the algorithm can be selected rather freely. The total energy norm seems promising in this respect. Please note that the EPPES codes used here and some examples are available on-line at <http://helios.fmi.fi/~lainema/eppes/>.

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Table 1. ECHAM5 closure parameter subset used in model optimization.

Parameter	Description
CAULOC	A parameter influencing the accretion of cloud droplets by precipitation (rain formation in stratiform clouds)
CMFCTOP	Relative cloud mass flux at the level above non-buoyancy (in cumulus mass flux scheme)
CPRCON	A coefficient for determining conversion from cloud water to rain (in convective clouds)
ENTRSCV	Entrainment rate for shallow convection

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Table 2. Parameter values for ECHAM5 (T42L31) in EPPES tests.

Parameter	Prior		Bounds	Posterior	
	mean	std. dev.		mean	std. dev.
CAULOC	2.0	7.0	0–30	10.79	4.29
CMFCTOP	0.3	0.2	0–1.0	0.42	0.12
CPRCON	1.5×10^{-4}	4.0×10^{-3}	$0-1.5 \times 10^{-2}$	3.63×10^{-3}	1.43×10^{-3}
ENTRSCV	3.0×10^{-4}	1.0×10^{-3}	$0-5.0 \times 10^{-3}$	2.12×10^{-4}	0.91×10^{-4}

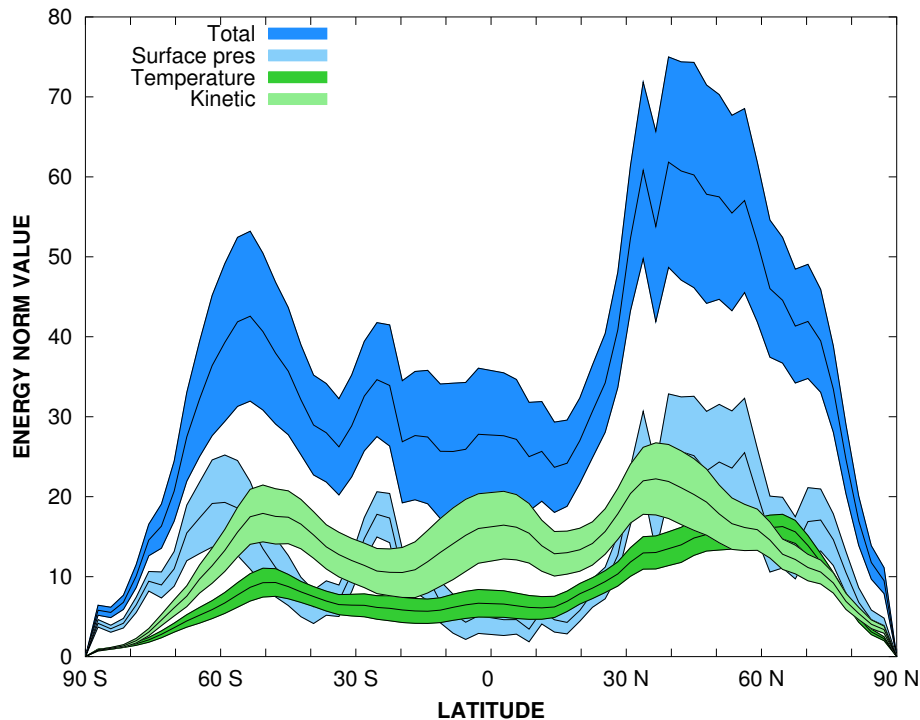


Fig. 1. Ensemble spread of zonally-averaged and areal-weighted energy norm for 15 days (1–15 January 2011) from +72h forecast. Total energy norm (dark blue), and individual terms; surface pressure (light blue), temperature (dark green) and kinetic energy (light green). Continuous black line indicates the mean model error. Width of the coloured area represents \pm two standard deviations from the mean.

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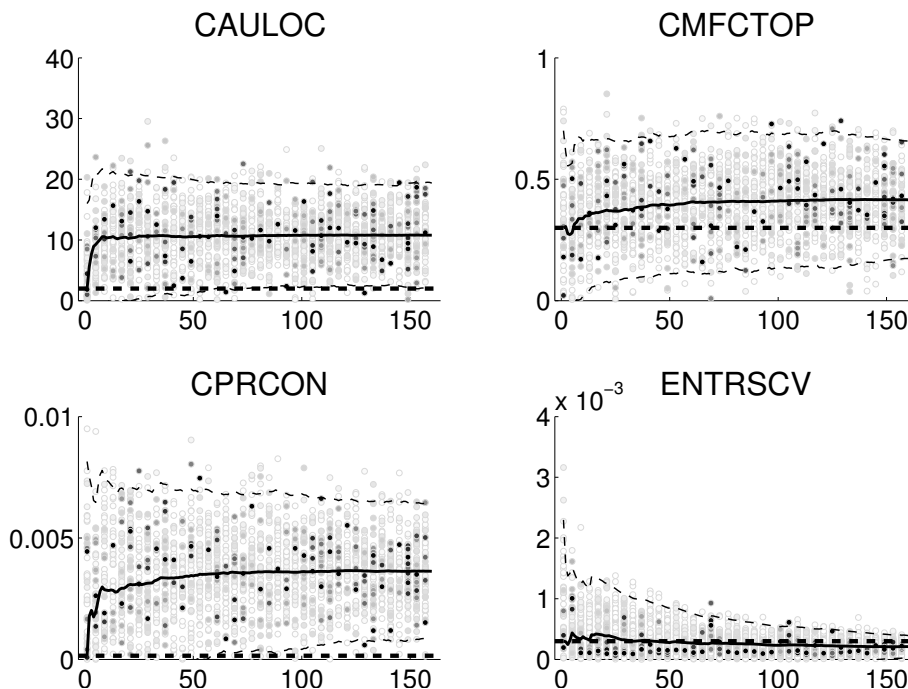


Fig. 2. Evolution of parameter subset during 1 January 2011 to 31 March 2011. The distribution mean μ (continuous line), $\pm 2 \times$ standard deviations (thin dashed lines), and default parameter value (thick dashed line). A vertical column of markers represents parameter values evaluated at the corresponding date, the marker shading is indicative of the weighting in the distribution update. For clarity only every fourth ensemble is plotted.

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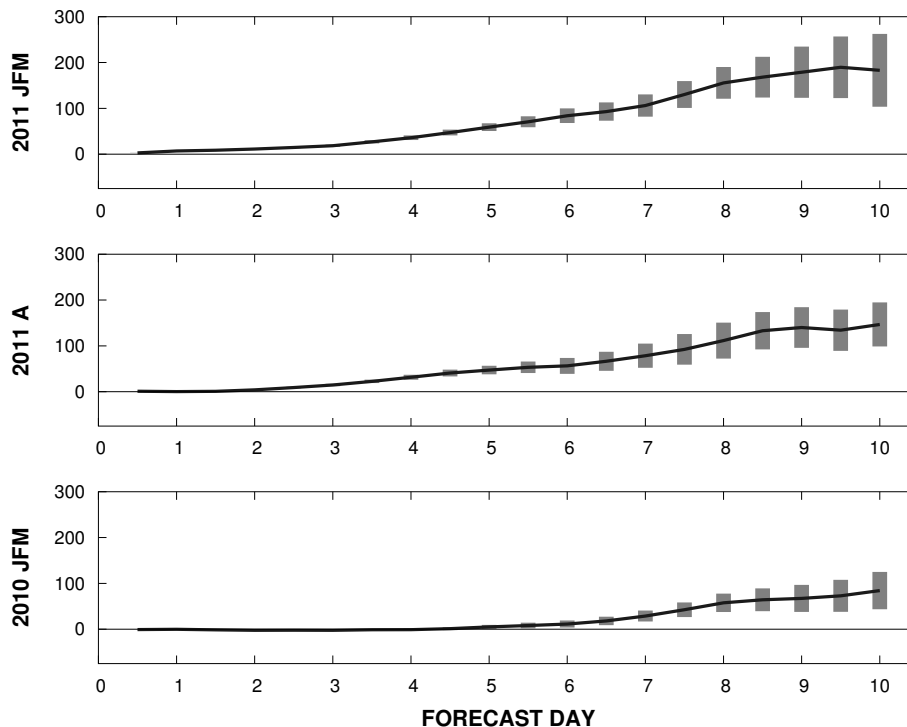


Fig. 3. Energy norm differences between default and optimized model. Top row: dependent sample (January to March 2011), middle row: independent sample of April 2011, bottom row: independent sample of January to March 2010. Mean difference (continuous line) and 95 % confidence interval of the mean (grey bars).

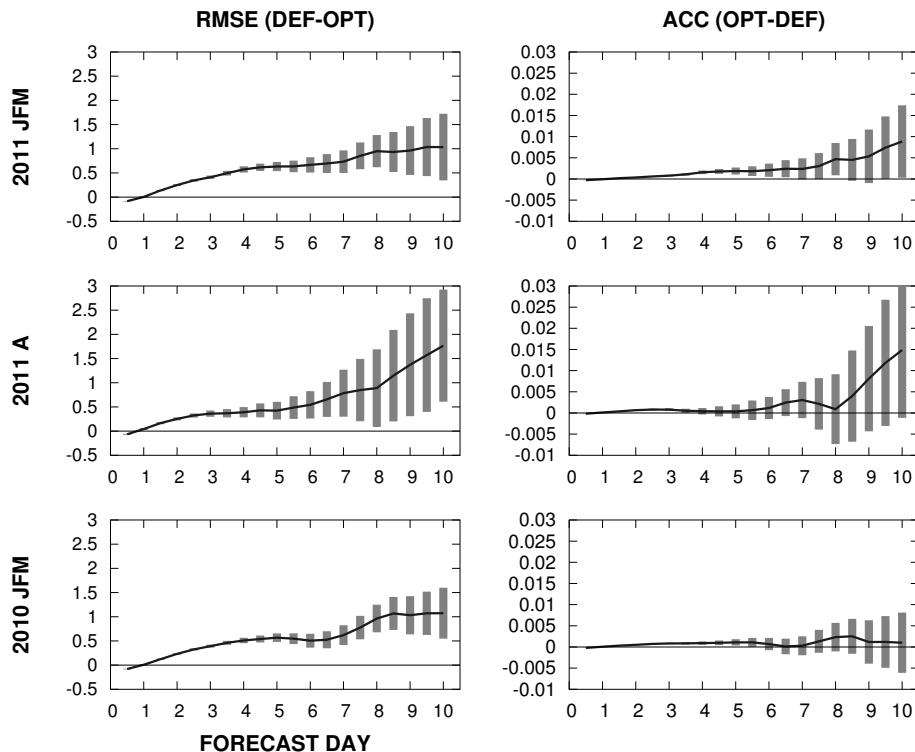


Fig. 4. 500 hPa geopotential height difference. Left column: RMSE (default minus optimized model), right column: ACC (optimized minus default model). Top row: dependent sample (January to March 2011), middle row: independent sample of April 2011, bottom row: independent sample of January to March 2010. Mean difference (continuous line) and 95 % confidence interval of the mean (grey bars).

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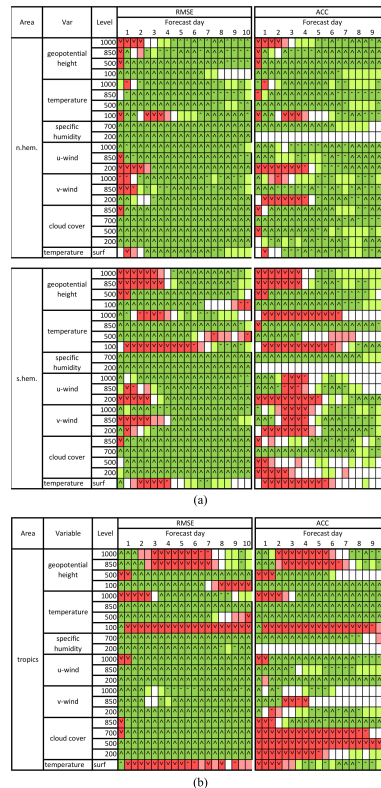


Fig. 5. A forecast validation score card for 180 forecast cases between 1 January and 31 March 2011 for **(a)** Northern and Southern Hemispheres, and **(b)** the tropics. Forecast performance is colour coded as: green is good for the optimized model while red is good for the default model. Small (large) arrow head indicates 95 % (99 %) level of statistical significance of the score difference. The 1st column indicates the area, 2nd variable, 3rd pressure level, and 4th and 5th columns RMSE and ACC score for forecast days 1–10.

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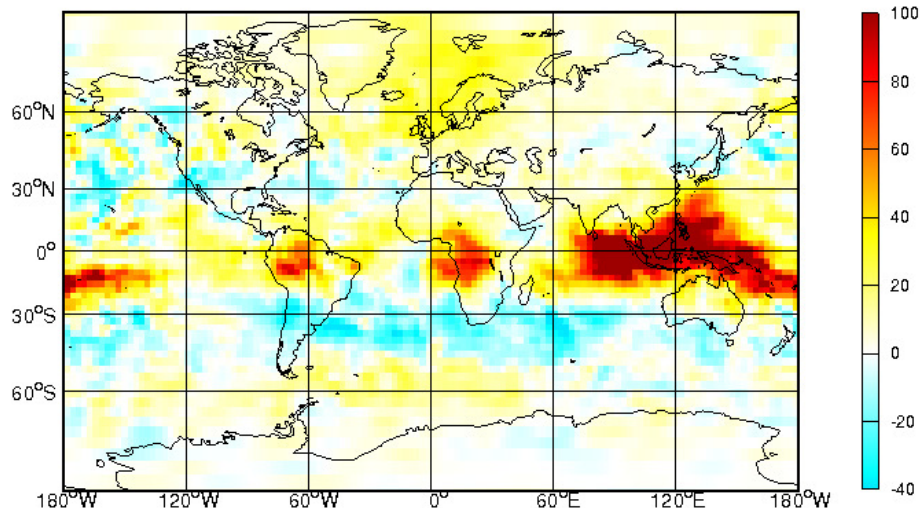


Fig. 6. Forecast day three kinetic energy mean difference of the optimized and default model from January to March 2011. Positive values indicate improved day-three forecasts after parameter optimization.

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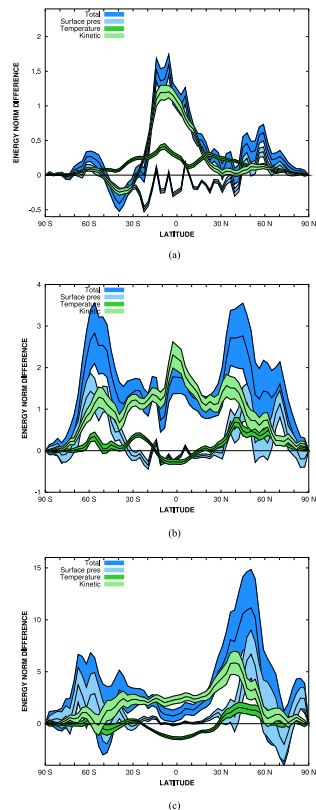


Fig. 7. Zonally-averaged and areal-weighted energy norm difference between default and optimized model from January to March 2011. **(a)** Forecast day three, **(b)** forecast day six, and **(c)** forecast day 10. Total energy norm (dark blue), and surface pressure (light blue), temperature (dark green) and kinetic energy (light green) terms individually. Continuous black line indicates the mean error, and width of the coloured area represents the 95 % confidence interval of the mean.

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