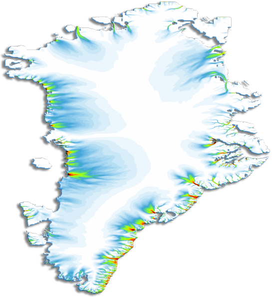
Using observations to validate ice sheet models

Andy Aschwanden



Outline

Sea Level Response to Ice Sheet Evolution

- “SeaRISE” led by Bob Bindschadler
- national and international unfunded participants

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Ice-sheet model sensitivities to environmental forcing and their use in projecting future sea level (the SeaRISE project)

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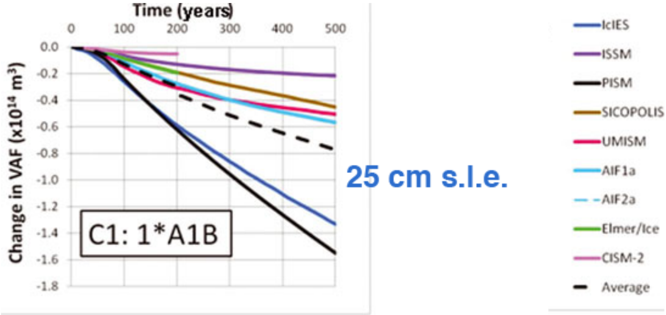
“SeaRISE”



Bindschadler et al. (2013), mod.

Would you rather trust

- a particular model
- the ensemble average
- none

$\Rightarrow$ let’s look behind the scenes

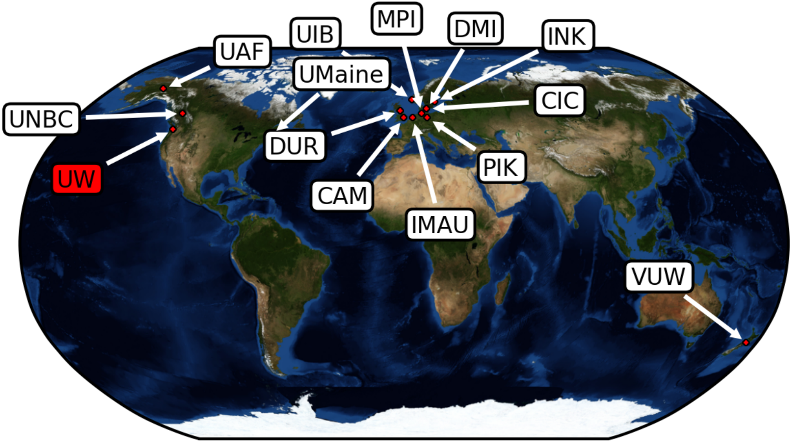
Parallel Ice Sheet Model

Documentation: `www.pism-docs.org`
Source code: `https://github.com/pism/pism`

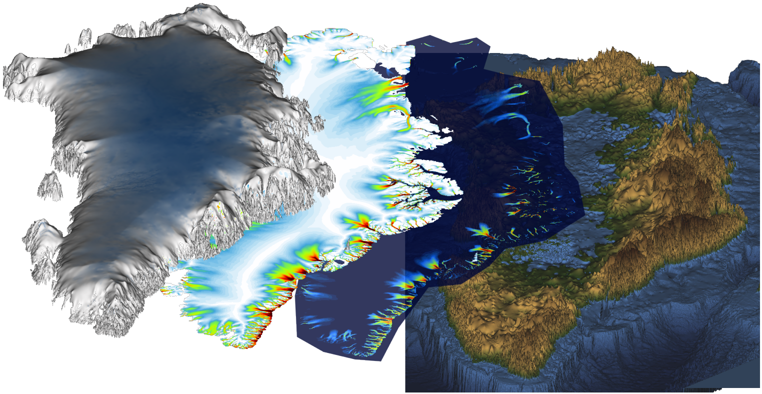
- open-source
- parallel
- high-resolution

- led by PI Ed Bueler, UAF
- jointly developed by UAF and Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research
- main software engineer: Constantine Khroulev, UAF
- $>$ 20 contributors and users worldwide
- funded by

Users worldwide

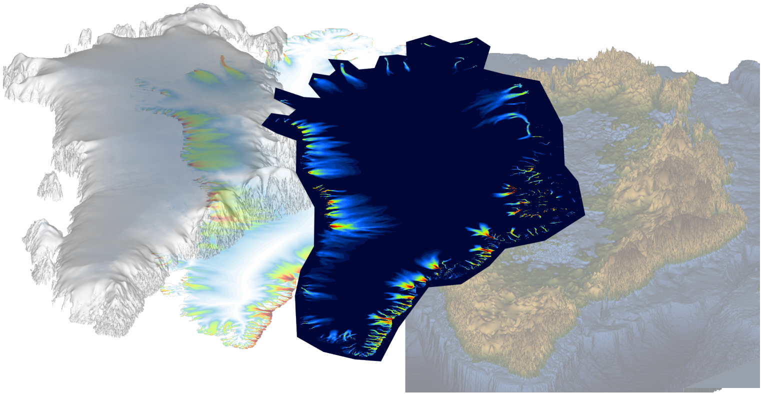


Ice sheet system



- ice dynamics
- thermodynamics
- surface processes
- boundary conditions
- hydrology
- ice-ocean interaction (e.g. calving)

Ice sheet system



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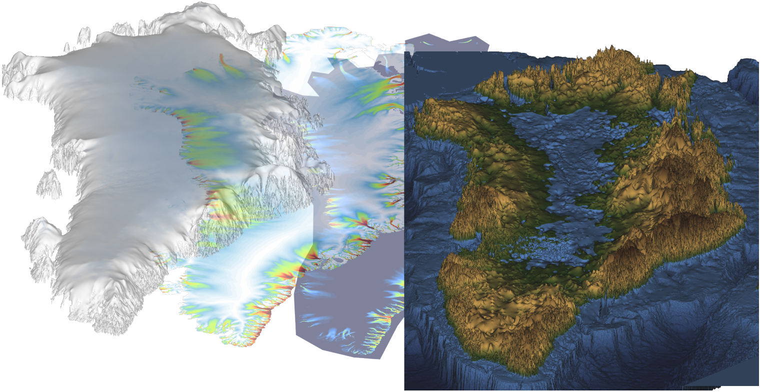

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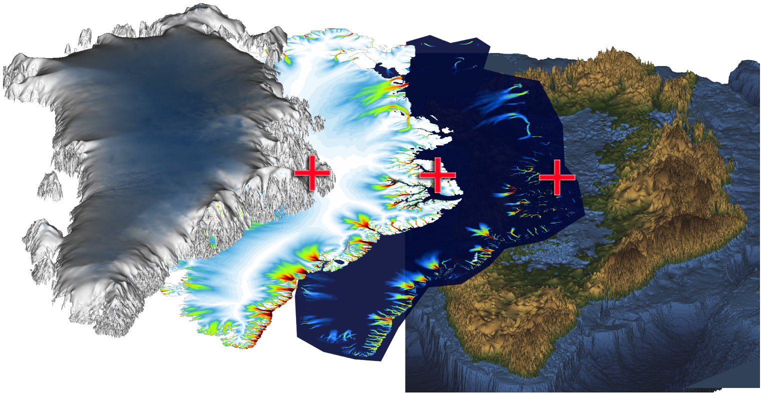

- ice dynamics
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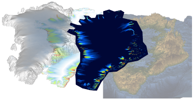
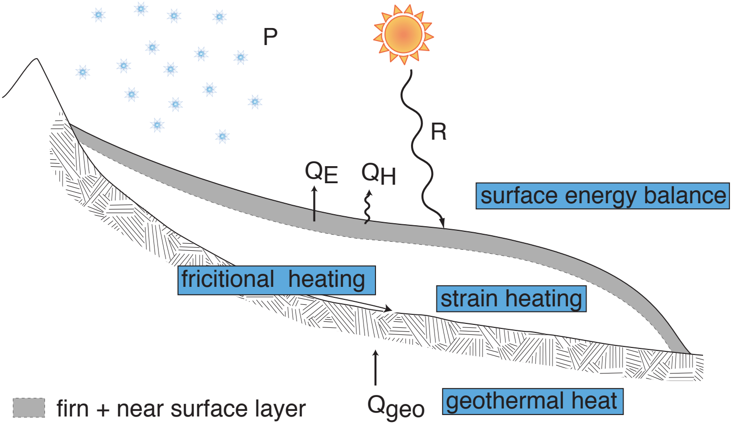
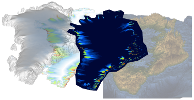
Outline

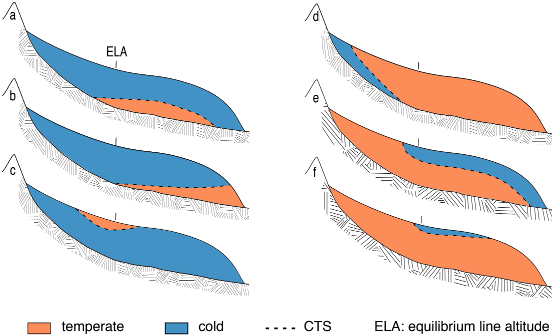
Heat sources





Polythermal glaciers





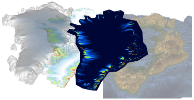
Cold ice

- below pressure melting point

Temperate ice

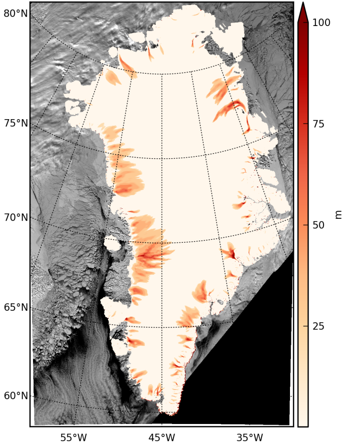
- at pressure melting point

Temperate ice in Greenland



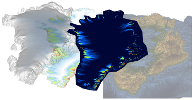
- ≈ 35 % of the base is temperate (by area)
- ≈ 0.5 % of ice is temperate (by volume)
- but temperate where strain rates are already high

temperate ice layer thickness



Aschwanden et al. (2012, modified)

Thermodynamics



Cold ice

- below pressure melting point
- solid phase only
- no liquid water content

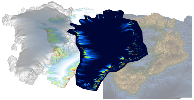
Temperate ice

- at pressure melting point
- binary mixture of solid and liquid phase
- up to 5 % liquid water within the ice matrix

Viscosity of ice depends on

- temperature
- liquid water fraction
- effective strain rate
- crystal orientation, impurities, etc.

Enthalpy equation



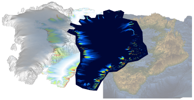
- Conventional firn and glacier models are not energy conserving
- We replace the advection-diffusion-production equation for temperature with a similar equation for enthalpy (i.e. inner energy)

$$\rho \frac{\partial \cancelto{H}{T}}{\partial t} + \mathbf{v} \cdot \nabla \cancelto{H}{T} = -\nabla \cdot \mathbf{q} + Q$$

- Same PDE $\Rightarrow$ relatively easy to implement

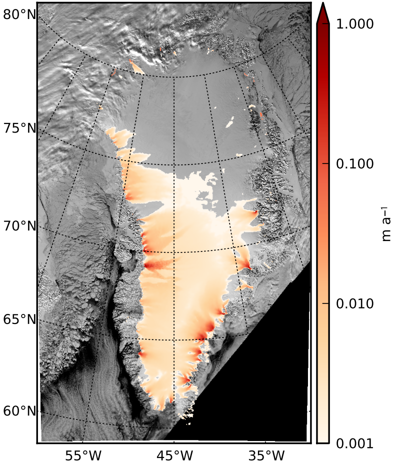
Aschwanden and Blatter (2009), Aschwanden et al. (2012)

Basal melt rates

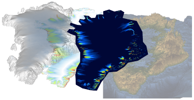


- conservation of energy
- more realistic basal melt rates
- more realistic ice streams

temperature equation



Aschwanden et al. (2012, modified)



Basal melt rates

- conservation of energy
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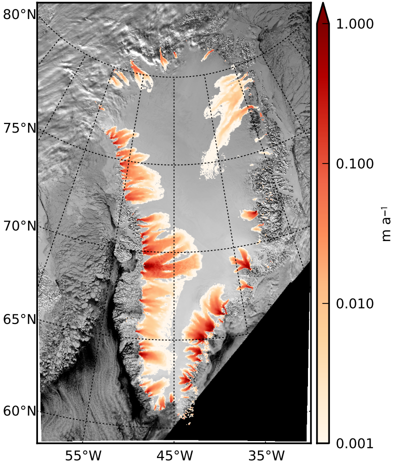
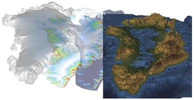
enthalpy equation

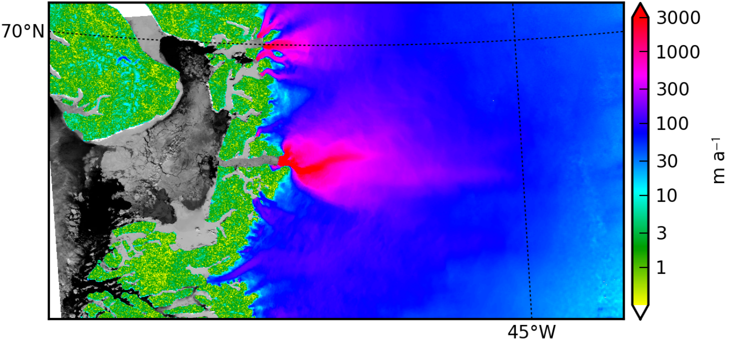


Aschwanden et al. (2012, modified)

Outline

Jakobshavn flows fast





Joughin et al. (2010)

- Why does Jakobshavn flow so fast?
- not super exciting from above

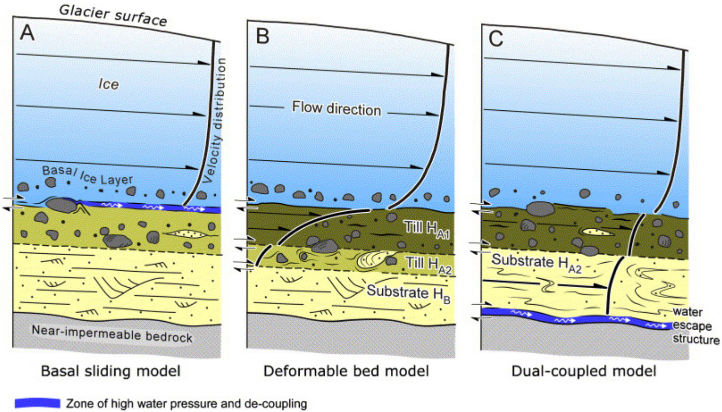
Jakobshavn flows fast

- Why does Jakobshavn flow so fast?
- not super exciting from above

Ice flow

$\mathbf{v}_{\text{deformation}}$

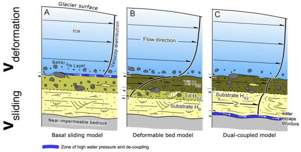
$\mathbf{v}_{\text{sliding}}$



Kjær et al., (2006, modified)

$$\mathbf{v} = \mathbf{v}_{\text{deformation}} + \mathbf{v}_{\text{sliding}}, \qquad \mathbf{v} : \text{velocity}$$

Ice flow



scaling arguments tell us:

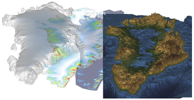
$$\mathbf{v}_{\text{deformation}} \sim (\sin\alpha)^3\,(H)^4$$

H: ice thickness
α: surface slope

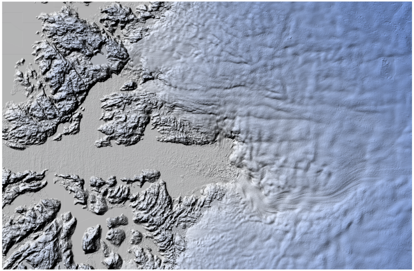
Example

$$\frac{\delta H = 100\,\text{m}}{H = 1000\,\text{m}} = 10\,\% \quad \Rightarrow \quad \frac{\delta \mathbf{v}}{\mathbf{v}} = 40\,\%$$

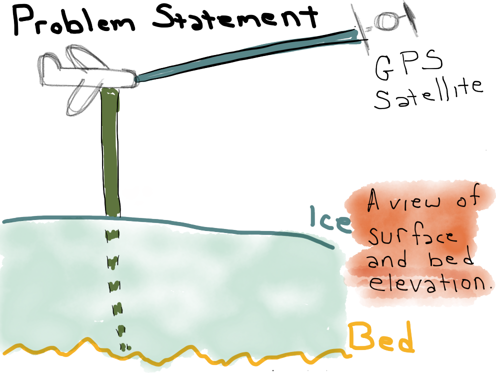
Surface slope & ice thickness



surface elevation (slope)

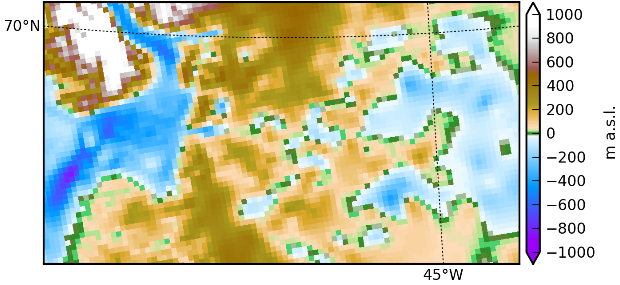


GIMP DEM (Howat et al.)



credit: Jesse Johnson

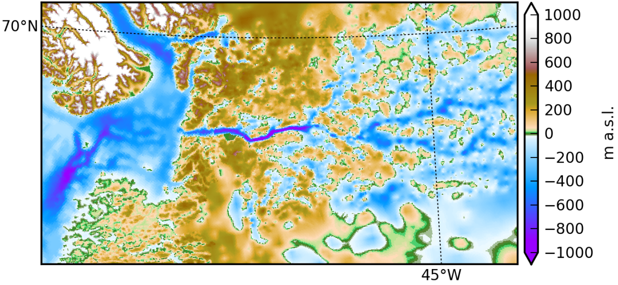
Basal topography



Bamber et al. (2001)

- Operation Ice Bridge Mission since 2009
- Center for Remote Sensing (CReSIS) radar
- huge progress between 2001 and 2012

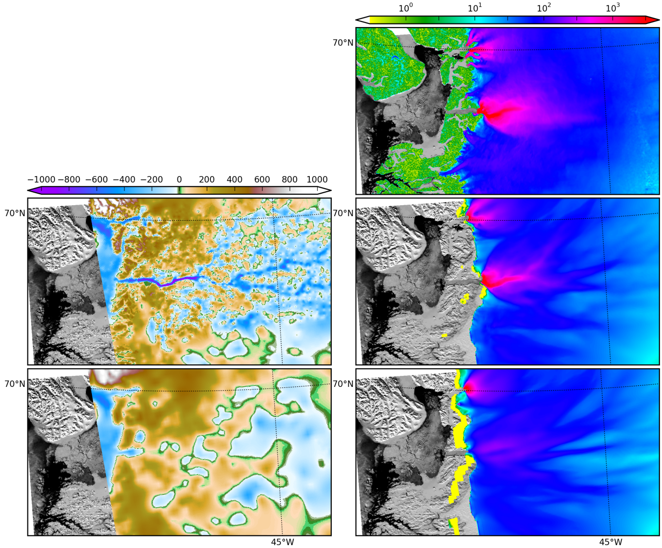
Basal topography



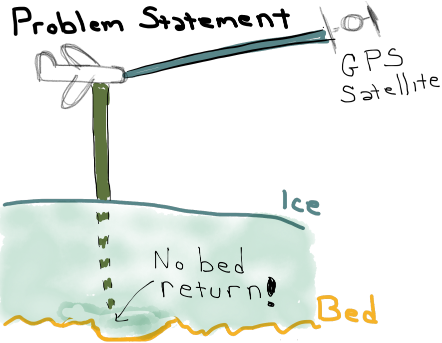
Griggs et al. (2012)

- Operation Ice Bridge Mission since 2009
- Center for Remote Sensing (CReSIS) radar
- huge progress between 2001 and 2012

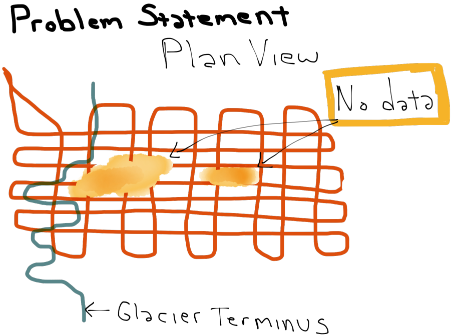
It makes a difference



Ice thickness

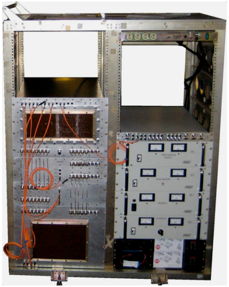


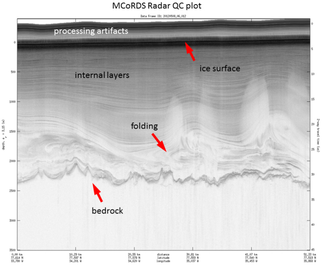
credit: Jesse Johnson



credit: Jesse Johnson

A new depth sounder



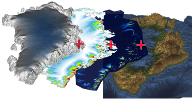


MRI

Development of a high power, large-antenna array for a Basler for sounding and imaging of fast-flowing glaciers and ultra wideband radars to map near-surface internal layers. PI: Rick Hale, University of Kansas. NSF. Current support 2012–2014.

Outline

Ice sheet model validation



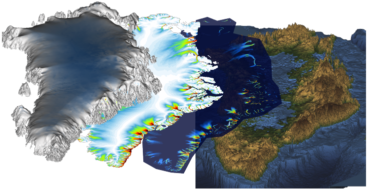
- comparing model results to a set of observations adequate to falsify a model

Direct validation

of substantial sub-systems such as

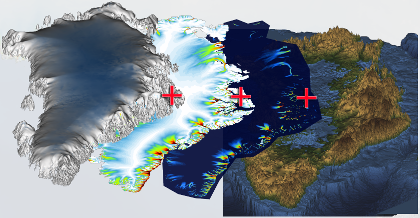
- basal hydrology
- thermodynamics
- ice dynamics

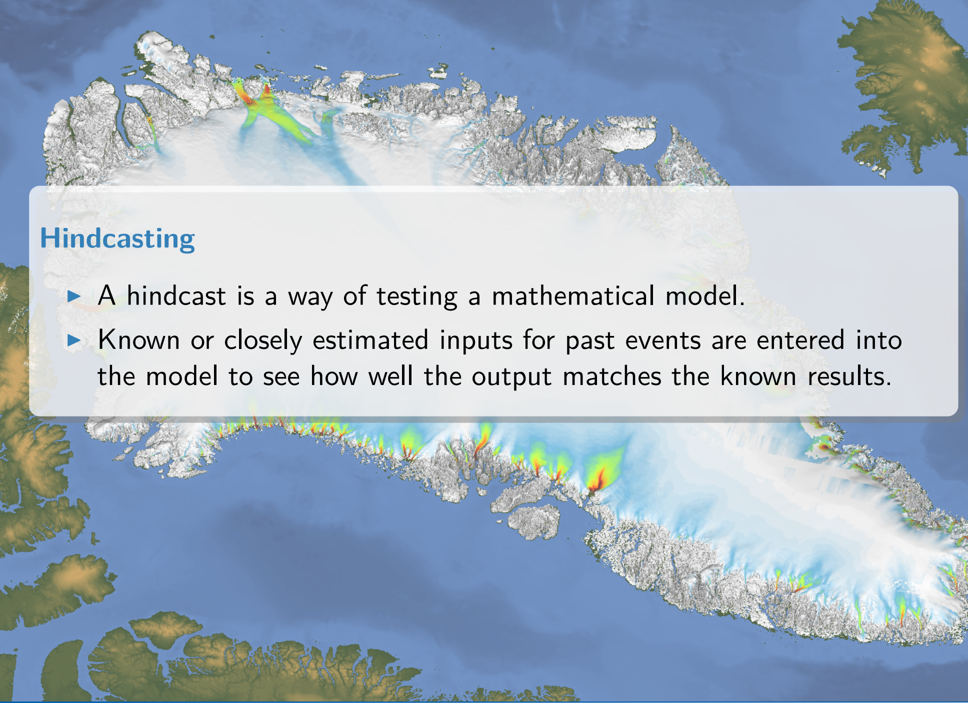
is difficult or impossible



View as part of an earth system model

- we evaluate how the *system* responds to a given forcing
- "How successful is a state-of-the art ice sheet system model (i.e. the combination of physical models, their numerical approximations and implementations, and particular choices of boundary forcing and initial states) in reproducing observations of quantities such as ice thickness, and their temporal changes?"





Hindcasting

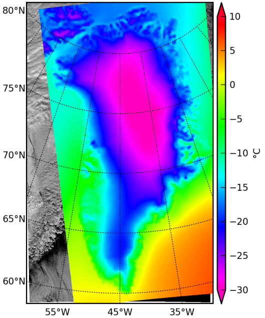
- A hindcast is a way of testing a mathematical model.
- Known or closely estimated inputs for past events are entered into the model to see how well the output matches the known results.

Initialization

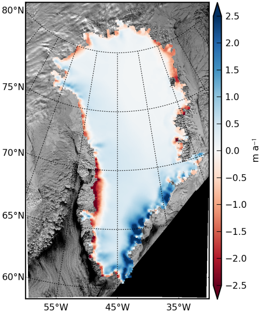
initialization → hindcast → forecast

- RACMO2/GR driven by
  - ERA-reanalysis from 1961-2004
  - HadGEM2 from 1971-2004
- PISM driven by mean values of:

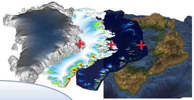
2 m air temperature



climatic mass balance



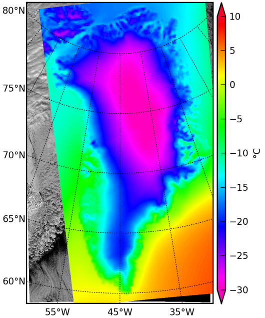
Hindcast



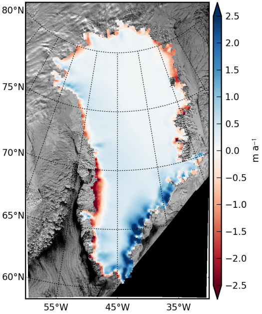
initialization → hindcast → forecast

- RACMO2/GR driven by
  - ERA-reanalysis from 1961-2004
  - HadGEM2 from 1971-2004
- PISM driven by monthly time-series of:

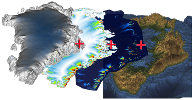
2 m air temperature



climatic mass balance

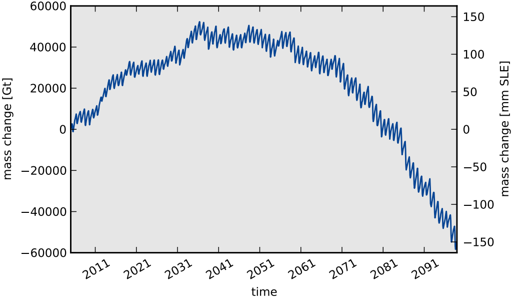


Forecast

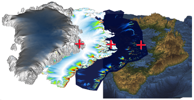


initialization → hindcast → forecast

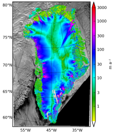
- Not the topic of this talk



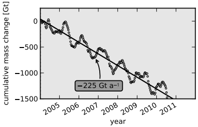
Comparison with observations



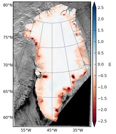
Hindcasts cover an era where we have a variety of in-situ and remotely-sensed observations such as:



- mean flow speed from 2000,2006–2008 (SAR) from *Joughin et al.* (2010)

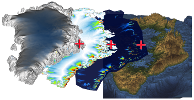


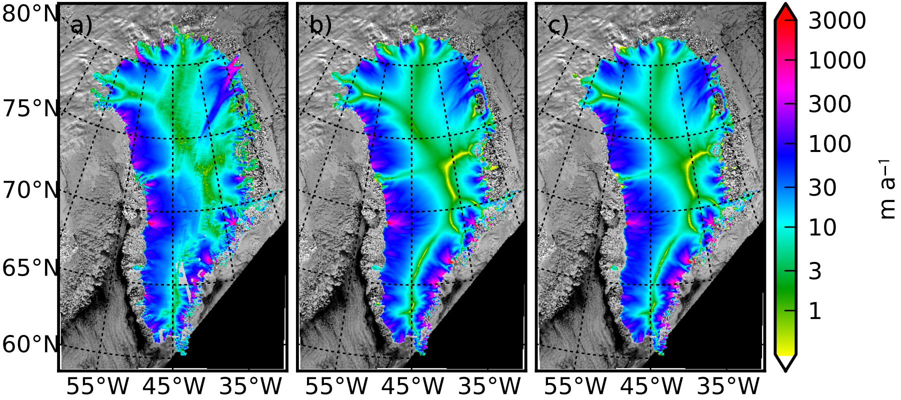
- cumulative mass change from 2003–2011 (GRACE) from *Luthcke et al.* (under review)



- elevation change from 2003–2009 (ICESat) from *Sørensen et al.* (2011)

Flow speed





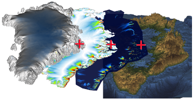
(a) SAR
(Joughin et al, 2010)

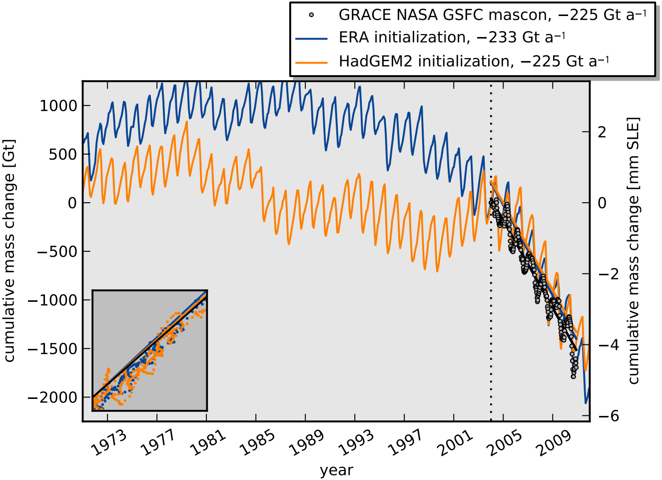
(b) ERA init.

(c) HadGEM2 init.

- reasonable agreement with observations

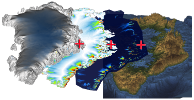
Mass changes

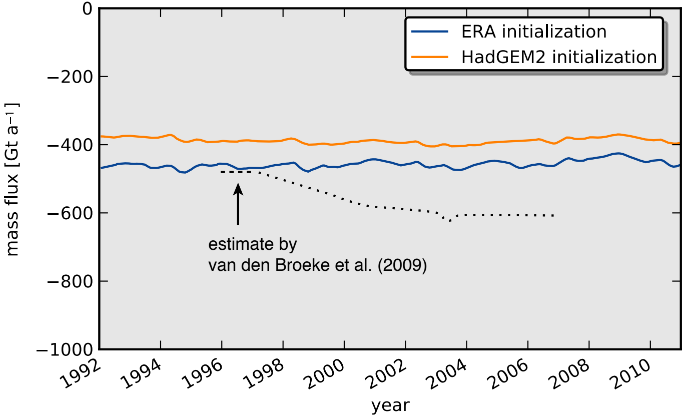




- an almost perfect fit (?)

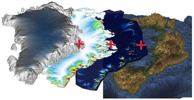
Ice discharge at ice/ocean interface



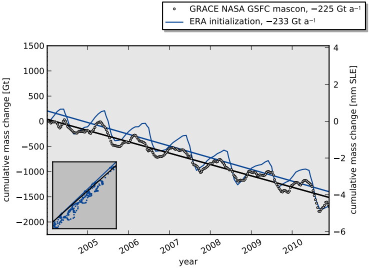


- simulated ice discharge remains nearly constant
- observed increase not simulated

Wait a minute...

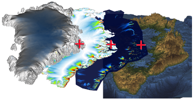


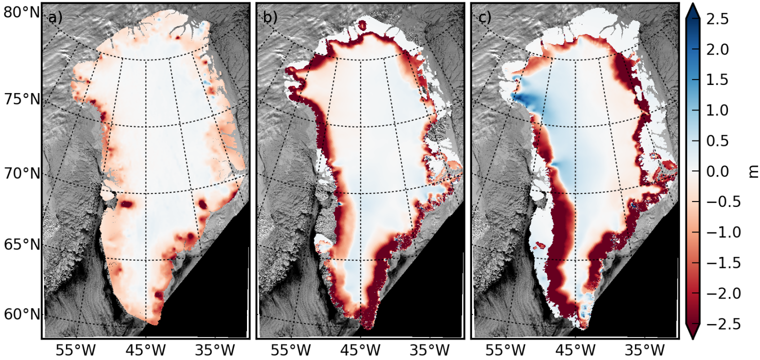
- 2000–2008 mass changes equally split between changes in surface mass balance and ice discharge (van den Broeke et al, 2009)
- but simulated ice discharge is nearly constant
- why do we get such a good agreement with observed mass loss?



We can get "the right result" for the "wrong reason"

Surface elevation changes 2003–2009





(a) ICESat (Sørensen et al, 2011)

(b) ERA init.

(c) HadGEM2 init.

spatially-rich time-series are needed!

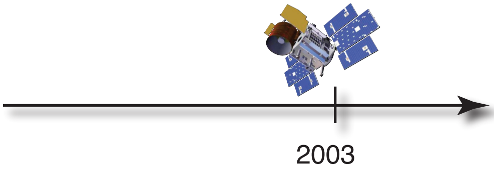
Limitations of hindcasting

Theoretical

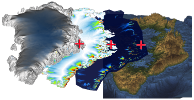
- The appropriate time-scale for hindcasting is unknown
- Hindcasts are short (decades) compared to the time-scale associated with changes in energy (thousands of years)
- Even a hindcast showing good agreement with all available observations may not capture the system's true behavior

Practical

- Duration of hindcasts is limited by the length of observational records

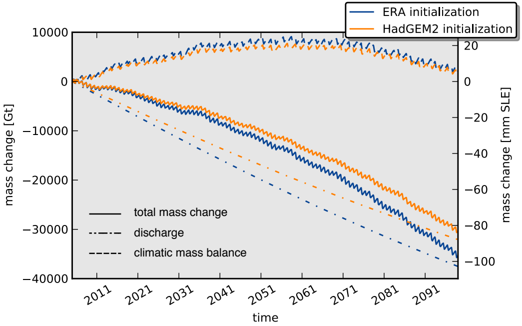


Forecast

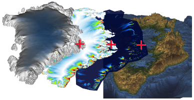


initialization → hindcast → forecast

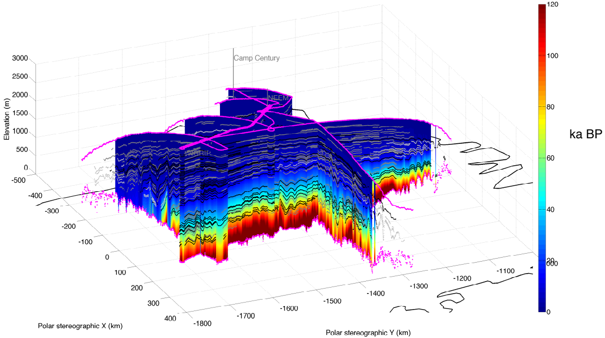
- only if we're happy with the hindcast



Outlook: isochrones



- distribution of energy within an ice sheet cannot be measured directly
- age field has similar time-scales



credit: J. MacGregor

Outlook: isochrones

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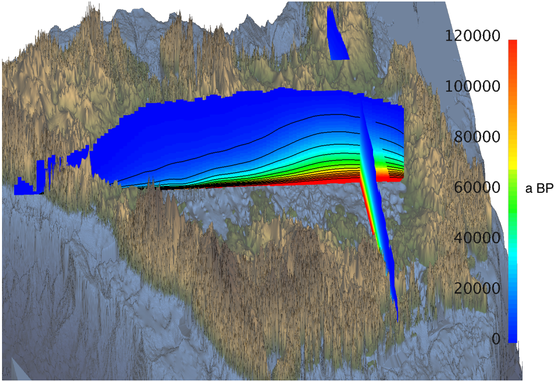
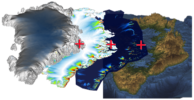


Outlook: internal variability



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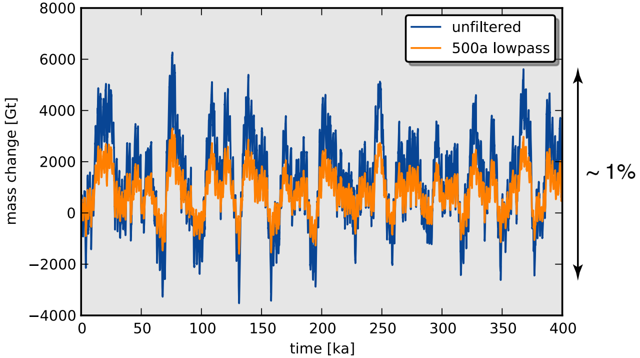
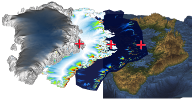


Outlook: statistical frameworks



- hindcasting may be integrated into comprehensive statistical frameworks to quantify uncertainties in ice sheet evolution due to different sources of model and observation uncertainty

NASA ROSES Cryosphere

Challenging the Parallel Ice Sheet Model with reproducing the present-day mass loss signal from the Jakobshavn basin, Greenland. PI A. Aschwanden, 2013–2016.