

A variational multiscale framework applied to atmospheric flow over complex environmental terrain

M. Ravensbergen^a, T. Helgedagsrud^b, Y. Bazilevs^c, A. Korobenko^{a,*}

^a*Department of Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering, University of Calgary, Calgary, AB, T2N 1N4*

^b*Department of Structural Engineering, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Richard Birkelands v 1a, Trondheim NO-7491, Norway*

^c*School of Engineering, Brown University, 184 Hope St., Providence, RI 02912, USA*

Abstract

A residual-based variational multi-scale (VMS) modeling framework is applied to simulate atmospheric flow over complex environmental terrain. This stabilized, multi-scale computational fluid dynamics framework is validated on several test cases for use in determining flow patterns over complex environmental terrain using linear finite elements and quadratic non-uniform rational B-splines (NURBS) discretization. For a Gaussian hill (normally distributed surface), stream-wise velocity is compared to published data showing a good agreement. The second validation case is the Bolund hill, for which experimental field study data exists. Simulation results with NURBS discretization compare well in most regions to the measurements.

Keywords: CFD; Complex Terrain; Finite Elements; VMS; NURBS

1. Introduction

Wind energy is a growing source of electricity generation as the world combats climate change. A major knowledge gap in wind energy is the topic of complex (mountainous or hilly) terrain. In such terrain, the wind speed is highly variable based on location. Accurate, site specific prediction of environmental flow over complex terrain is necessary to predict aerodynamic loading which in turn determines annual energy production and turbine lifespan [9, 46, 107, 159, 162]. Although wind energy is the primary application for this work, accurate prediction of local flow field in complex terrain has numerous other engineering applications such as loading on structures such as buildings, bridges, electrical transmission lines, and antenna towers [37, 43, 47, 162]; natural building ventilation and pedestrian wind comfort [91]; airport, power plant, and industrial project siting [79]; pollutant dispersion [3, 4, 48, 51, 52, 101]; soil erosion for agriculture and forestry [37, 72, 106, 152]; and ship manoeuvring in harbours [35].

Full scale experimental field studies give the most accurate description of the flow to understand the physical phenomenon. Some early experimental campaigns from different areas in Scotland in the late 1970's and early 1980's are Askervein Hill [154], Ailsa Craig Island [72], and Blashaval

25 hill [98]. Bradley [37] looked at flow over Black Mountain, a broad hill with uniform slope in
26 Australia. All these cases studied relatively isolated hills with relatively gentle slopes less than
27 30 degrees and measured wind speed upstream and behind the feature using fixed anemometers.
28 Taylor et al. [153] review and categorize some of the most important field studies from this era,
29 including those just mentioned. Sampling concentration of a source dispersed from upstream can
30 also provide insight. Lavery et al. [89] examined dispersion around Cinder Cone Butte in Idaho.
31 Later, Ryan et al. [113] examined dispersion of a sample released upstream of Steptoe Butte in
32 Washington state.

33 Recent field studies include more complex topography. Two coastal examples are Ria de Fer-
34 rol in Spain, a narrow harbour surrounded by hills and valleys instrumented with 5 ultrasonic
35 anemometers [35] and the cliffs on the island of Madeira [107]. In the later, the use of a sonic
36 anemometer revealed that some locations under consideration for a wind turbine were in highly
37 turbulent re-circulation regions with reversed flow. The Askervein hill has long been the most
38 commonly used field campaign for model validation. However since Askervein has a generally 2-
39 D geometry and steepness less than 20 degrees, it may not represent a complex enough test case for
40 validation [110]. As an alternative, the Bolund hill experiment [30] [32] was conducted for express
41 purpose of validating complex terrain models. The topography features a 10 m high cliff facing the
42 incoming wind, resulting in a large region of separated flow which should be difficult for low fi-
43 delity modeling techniques to capture. Flow statistics in the Bolund hill experiment are measured
44 at 10 different mast locations by sonic anemometers. Another recent experiments comes from the
45 New European Wind Atlas near Perdigão in Portugal. The terrain consists of two steep parallel
46 ridges about 1.5 km apart, 4 km long, and 500 m tall, and instrumented with over 50 meteorological
47 towers up to 100 m in height and several scanning lidars [97].

48 Although field studies provide the most accurate information, they are expensive and time in-
49 tensive. A cheaper, faster alternative that can still provide accurate insights into the underlying
50 physical phenomena are wind tunnel experiments. Wind tunnel experiments on idealized geome-
51 tries are simpler than measuring wind profiles in the field and more data can be collected. One
52 early experiment often used for validation is the RUSHIL case with 3 hills of varying steepness
53 [78]. Britter et al. [38] performed a wind tunnel experiment to examine the physical effects that
54 occur within the boundary layer in the prescene of hills. Gaussian (i.e. normally distributed) sur-
55 faces are a common test case for wind tunnel experiments [158]. Another common test case is a
56 terrain with a sinusoidal profile in the stream-wise direction such as the experiment of Gong et al.
57 [56] where turbulent boundary layer flow is measured on slopes up to 0.5 for two different surface
58 roughness values. Ayotte and Hughes [7] later measured flow over a single sinusoidal ridge with
59 varying surface roughnesses and slopes. Wind tunnel experiments have also been performed on
60 scale models of real topography such as the Askervein hill [156] and Bolund hill [45].

61 While on-site wind measurements can be more accurate, numerical models are frequently used.
62 Modeling can supplement experiments by filling gaps between measurement locations, allow in-
63 vestigation into effects of changing parameters, and greatly reduce the cost and time requirement
64 to evaluate a location. Both measurement campaigns in real topography and idealized surfaces in
65 wind tunnels are useful for validating models for flow over complex terrain. Early computational
66 models were based on linearized equations of motion. Field experiments of isolated hill with shal-
67 low slopes (e.g. [37, 72, 98, 154]) helped to validate the analytical linear theories such as the one
68 introduced by Jackson and Hunt [71]. The model of Jackson and Hunt separates the flow into an
69 inner layer, where local shear stress perturbations from the terrain are significant, and an outer layer
70 where they are not. The model solves a linearized form of the governing Navier-Stokes equations,
71 and has formed the basis for many subsequent linear flow models. Such linear models perform
72 better for terrains with gentle slopes (less than 0.2 [6]), with the linearization of the governing
73 equations contributing to error on steeper terrain [36, 39, 55, 107].

74 Fully non-linear, 3D, computational fluid dynamics (CFD) has potential to accurately model
75 more complex terrain with steep slopes and sharp angles [31, 35, 55, 111] as it is capable of includ-
76 ing effects such as flow separation through the non-linear terms. CFD on complex terrain began pri-
77 marily with Reynolds Averaged Navier-Stokes (RANS) solvers. Early examples of RANS solvers
78 being used for complex terrain cases include Hewer [61] who modeled flow over the Blashaval
79 hill, Kim et al. [79] who compared different RANS models for the Cooper’s ridge, Kettles hill,
80 Askervein hill, and Sirhowy valley cases, and Castro et al. [40] who simulated the Askervein hill
81 case. These RANS models are typically compared with results of linear flow theory models and
82 in general researchers found that their RANS computations were better able to predict fluid ve-
83 locities than linear models when comparing both models to measured velocities. RANS has also
84 been applied to the kind of idealized geometry that is often tested in wind tunnel experiments,
85 such as a Gaussian hill [96, 109, 177], the geometry from the RUSHIL experiment [42, 50], and a
86 sinusoidal hill [115]. More recently steady state RANS solvers have been applied to large, more
87 complex domains, often with reasonable results except locally in areas with large flow separation
88 or re-circulation bubbles (see e.g. [35, 41, 55, 107, 108, 110, 111]). Blocken et al. [35] simulated
89 the Ria de Ferrol, Spain experiment using 3D steady RANS with $k - \epsilon$ model and obtained the
90 simulation results deviating by 10–20% from measurements depending on grid quality, resolution
91 and surface roughness parametrisation.

92 Large eddy simulation (LES) is fundamentally superior to RANS in its ability to capture the
93 non-linearities in turbulent flow over highly complex terrain [162]. The increase in fidelity comes
94 with an increased computational cost but recent advances in computing power have made LES
95 solvers more popular for micro-scale studies such as validation against wind tunnel experiments.
96 Some examples include the RUSHIL case [78] which was modeled using LES by Chaudhari [42]

97 and the sinusoidal hill experiment of Gong et al. [56] which was simulated to investigate various
98 sub-grid scale turbulence models and stratified flow models [44, 121, 160]. Flow over a Gaussian
99 hill was modeled with by LES by Kirkil et al. [80]. The Askervein hill case has also been consid-
100 ered using LES [155] and hybrid RANS/LES techniques [116]. Until recently, 3D steady RANS
101 remained the main CFD approach for large areas of complex terrain. Blocken et al. [35] attributes
102 this to two reasons, the first being the increased computational cost and the second being the lack of
103 validation studies and best practice guidelines for cases of complex terrain beyond a single isolated
104 hill. Additional challenges for LES were highlighted in the blind model comparison for Bolund
105 hill [31], where several RANS models predicted velocities and turbulence levels closer to the mea-
106 sured values than the LES models. LES is nevertheless becoming more popular and following the
107 blind study Chaudhari [42] used LES to simulate flow over the Bolund hill with relatively good
108 agreement compared to other modelers attempts. Recently, LES has been successfully applied to
109 larger areas of complex terrain as well, such as the Perdigão region of two parallel ridges [33, 34]
110 and the Sierra Madre wind turbine site [57]. Correctly defining inlet conditions will continue to
111 be a challenge for these very complex regions which do not have a well defined inflow region, but
112 modelers have shown the ability for LES to reproduce at least the main characteristics of the flow
113 even when using periodic boundary conditions [33]. A history of computational modeling for wind
114 energy assessment provided by Ayotte [6] highlights the benefits and drawbacks of linear models,
115 RANS models, and LES.

116 Accurate LES of complex terrain requires turbulent inflow conditions, which is a challenge
117 that has been address in two main ways, synthetic turbulence generation and precursor simula-
118 tions. Stevens et al. [118] proposed a ‘concurrent’ method where data is fed directly into main
119 simulation instead of written to disk. They applied this technique to a wind turbine array. A pres-
120 sure gradient to drive the flow is applied only in the precursor part of the domain. Munters et al.
121 [100] propose a generalization of the precursor method proposed by Stevens et al. [118] that allows
122 for unsteady mean-flow directions. They find that precursor techniques are preferably to synthetic
123 turbulence generation especially for atmospheric boundary layer (ABL) flow. Baba-Ahmadi and
124 Tabor [8] propose and present multiple methods to drive the flow for precursor simulations, based
125 on mapping velocities from a downstream plane of the simulation back to the inlet. They propose
126 to either make corrections to the mapped velocity, such as one to keep the flow rate constant, or
127 introduce a body force to drive the flow while using periodic boundary conditions in the stream-
128 wise direction. This last method was used for a turbulent channel flow precursor simulation by
129 Helgedagsrud et al. [60] with driving pressure gradient and periodic boundary conditions in the
130 stream-wise direction to simulate fluid structure interaction of buffeting on a bridge section. Tabor
131 and Baba-Ahmadi [122] review treatment of inlet conditions for LES simulations including precu-
132 sor simulations and synthetic turbulence generation. Lund et al. [95] and Ferrante and Elghobashi

133 [53] used a ‘recycling’ method where outflow velocity is fed back to the inflow after making ad-
134 justments such as keeping flow rate constant. Li et al. [91] looked at the effect that different inflow
135 conditions have and found that using a pre-simulation of the upstream region gave significantly
136 different results than using an empirical logarithmic law velocity profile.

137 Any LES simulation requires the choice of an appropriate sub-grid scale (SGS) turbulence
138 model and associated constants, to determine parameters such as the eddy viscosity. This eddy
139 viscosity is an ad hoc term with no associated physical property. The variational multi-scale (VMS)
140 residual based concepts for LES [12] do not rely on any ad hoc viscosity terms. The main idea
141 of the VMS formulation, proposed by Hughes et al. [69] and refined in Hughes et al. [70] and
142 Bazilevs et al. [12], is to use variational projections in place of the classical filtered equation
143 approach of LES. Avoidance of filters eliminates the difficulties associated with the use of complex
144 filtered quantities. VMS methods avoid filtering through *a priori* separation of scales. Initially
145 [70] the turbulent eddy viscosity models were used in the small scale equations, in order to have
146 a discrete mathematical representation of all scales. The addition of residual based turbulence
147 modeling to VMS was proposed by Bazilevs et al. [12] who gave a theoretical representation of the
148 fine scales in terms of the coarse scale residuals, removing any reliance on *ad-hoc* parameters such
149 as turbulent eddy viscosity. Additional challenge of the standard LES models is the requirement
150 on a very small mesh resolution near the surface (e.g. on the terrain surface). To address this
151 limitation the mesh relaxation techniques near the wall was proposed in [23] which are based on
152 the weakly enforced essential (Dirichlet) boundary condition.

153 The VMS formulation has been successfully applied to a wide variety of complex engineer-
154 ing problems, including wind turbines [16, 19, 20, 24–26, 29, 62, 63, 81–85, 112, 123, 125,
155 144, 145, 173], aerodynamics of bridge cross-section [58, 59], fluid mechanics for stratified flows
156 [26, 168–170, 174], hydrokinetic turbines [10, 172, 178], cavitating flows [11], bioinspired aero-
157 dynamics and FSI [5, 28, 123, 125, 127–130, 137, 139, 141, 171], hydrodynamics and FSI of a
158 hydraulic arresting gear [161, 163], flow analysis of turbocharger turbines [102–105, 146], ship
159 hydrodynamics with free-surface flow and fluid–object interaction [1, 2], thermo-fluid analysis
160 of ground vehicles and their tires and brakes [86–88, 135, 136, 142, 143], spacecraft aerody-
161 namics [131, 132], ram-air parachutes [147], rotorcrafts [166] and compressible-flow spacecraft
162 parachute aerodynamics [77, 140], patient-specific cardiovascular fluid mechanics and FSI [13–
163 15, 18, 21, 22, 64, 74, 90, 119, 120, 123–126, 133–135, 138, 139, 148–150, 150, 151, 175, 176],
164 biomedical-device FSI [65–67, 75, 76, 92–94, 164, 165, 167].

165 Most RANS and LES simulations use finite volume discretization, whereas the VMS frame-
166 work relies traditionally on the finite element method (FEM). An alternative approach is the con-
167 cept of isogeometric analysis (IGA), proposed in [68]. It has many similarities to the finite element
168 method, but aims to be more geometrically exact and simplify the meshing process by using meth-

ods common in Computer Aided Design (CAD). The approach is based on NURBS (Non-Uniform Rational B-Splines) which are commonly used in CAD software and from which a NURBS mesh can be created. A NURBS mesh has significantly different properties to a FEM mesh, but some useful parallels can be drawn between **control points** in NURBS and nodes in FEM and between **knots** in NURBS and elements in FEM. Full definitions of these terms are presented in Section 2.4. The basis functions of a NURBS patch are C^{p-1} continuous across element boundaries where p is the order of the basis functions. Once a coarse NURBS mesh is defined, it can be refined through knot insertion without changing the underlying geometry it represents, enabling more accurate h-refinement. The use of NURBS can eliminate some approximation of the domain to the physical geometry. Many authors working on atmospheric flow over complex terrain describe a procedure of terrain generation that involves creating a NURBS surface (generally using a CAD software package) to represent the terrain. For example, Makridis [96] in his Ph.D. thesis describes creating a surface to represent the Askervein hill using the NURBS based 3-D modeling software Rhino. Rasouli and Hangan [111] describe a similar process of creating a surface model in a NURBS format. The next step generally taken at this point is to discretize this NURBS surface into finite elements or finite volumes. This effectively reduces the order of the curves describing the surface from cubic or quadratic (depending on the order of NURBS used) to linear. As an alternative, the fluid domain can also be discretized into NURBS elements, eliminating the need for such an approximation of the terrain surface. This approach is used in [17] and [19] for 3D fluid-structure interaction (FSI) simulation of a wind turbine rotor at full scale, where NURBS elements are used for both the rotor structure and the fluid. NURBS have been shown to perform well for these types of fluid simulations. For example, Bazilevs et al. [12] found quadratic NURBS performed significantly better (practically matching direct numerical simulation) than linear elements for turbulent channel flow. In this work, in addition to standard linear FEM we also use NURBS to discretize the domain of complex topography, which we believe represents a novel contribution to flow modeling over complex terrain.

The framework used in this paper does not include effect of thermal stratification, although the Boussinesq approximation has been previously applied to the VMS framework in [174]. We aim to add this capability in future work. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the modeling framework used. Results are presented in Sections 3 and 4. Conclusions are drawn and next steps outlined in Section 5.

2. Modeling framework

The modeling framework is based on the residual based variational multi-scale concept applied to the Navier-Stokes equations for incompressible flows. Bazilevs et al. [12] showed that the sub-grid scale solution variables are driven by the residuals of the large scale problem, allowing the

204 effect of unresolved scales to be modeled only in the equations representing the smallest resolved-
 205 scales, and not in the equations for the large scales. Unlike traditional LES models, the formulation
 206 completely avoids filtering, instead providing a mathematical basis to replace *ad-hoc* turbulence
 207 models.

208 2.1. Governing equations

209 The fluid mechanics governing equations are the Navier-Stokes equations for incompressible
 210 flows composed of conservation of momentum,

$$\rho \left(\frac{\partial \mathbf{u}}{\partial t} + \mathbf{u} \cdot \nabla \mathbf{u} \right) - \mathbf{f} - \nabla \cdot \boldsymbol{\sigma} = 0, \quad (1)$$

211 and continuity,

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{u} = 0. \quad (2)$$

212 In the above equations, ρ is the fluid density, \mathbf{u} is the fluid velocity, and \mathbf{f} is the fluid body
 213 force. The fluid Cauchy stress, $\boldsymbol{\sigma}$, is defined as $-p\mathbf{I} + 2\mu\boldsymbol{\epsilon}(\mathbf{u})$, where p is the pressure, \mathbf{I} is the
 214 identity tensor, μ is the dynamic viscosity, and $\boldsymbol{\epsilon}(\mathbf{u}) = \frac{1}{2}(\nabla \mathbf{u} + \nabla \mathbf{u}^T)$ is the strain rate tensor.

215 The weak form of the set of Navier-Stokes equations for incompressible flows on the domain
 216 Ω , given the trial function space \mathcal{S} and test function space \mathcal{V} is: find the velocity-pressure pair
 217 $\{\mathbf{u}, p\} \in \mathcal{S}$ such that for all test functions $\{\mathbf{w}, q\} \in \mathcal{V}$,

$$\int_{\Omega} \mathbf{w} \cdot \rho \left(\frac{\partial \mathbf{u}}{\partial t} + \mathbf{u} \cdot \nabla \mathbf{u} \right) d\Omega + \int_{\Omega} \boldsymbol{\epsilon}(\mathbf{w}) : \boldsymbol{\sigma}(\mathbf{u}, p) d\Omega + \int_{\Omega} q \nabla \cdot \mathbf{u} d\Omega = \int_{\Omega} \mathbf{w} \cdot \mathbf{f} d\Omega + \int_{\Gamma_h} \mathbf{w} \cdot \mathbf{h} d\Gamma, \quad (3)$$

218 where \mathbf{h} is the traction acting on the Γ_h part of the domain boundary Γ . Notation is from [28].

219 2.2. Residual based Variational multi-scale framework

220 Following the VMS methods of Hughes et al. [69, 70] we decompose the solution and test
 221 function spaces into coarse and fine scale sub-spaces. The coarse scale refers to that which is
 222 resolved by the finite spatial discretization, and the associated spaces and variables are indicated
 223 by a superscript h . The fine scales are those which cannot be represented by the finite spatial
 224 discretization, and the associated spaces and variables are indicated with a prime symbol ($'$).

225 Using the residual based variational multi-scale (RBVMS) formulation of Bazilevs et al. [12]
 226 we decompose the solution variables as $\mathbf{u} = \mathbf{u}^h + \mathbf{u}'$ and $p = p^h + p'$ while choosing for the test
 227 functions to use $\mathbf{w} = \mathbf{w}^h$ and $q = q^h$. An exact expression for the fine scale velocity and pressure
 228 variables can be found [12] by choosing $\mathbf{w} = \mathbf{w}'$ and $q = q'$ as

$$\mathbf{u}' = -\frac{\tau_{\text{SUPS}}}{\rho} \mathbf{r}_M(\mathbf{u}^h, p^h) \quad (4)$$

$$p' = -\rho\nu_{\text{LSIC}}r_C(\mathbf{u}^h) \quad (5)$$

230 where the coarse scale residuals of the momentum and continuity equations are given by

$$\mathbf{r}_M(\mathbf{u}^h, p^h) = \rho \left(\frac{\partial \mathbf{u}^h}{\partial t} + \mathbf{u}^h \cdot \nabla \mathbf{u}^h \right) - \mathbf{f}^h - \nabla \cdot \boldsymbol{\sigma}(\mathbf{u}^h, p^h), \quad \text{and} \quad (6)$$

231

$$r_C(\mathbf{u}^h) = \nabla \cdot \mathbf{u}^h. \quad (7)$$

232 After substituting the solution variable decomposition into Eqn. 3, and using Eqns. 4 and 5 for
 233 the fine scale solution variables, the resulting RBVMS formulation can be stated as follows: find
 234 $\{\mathbf{u}^h, p^h\} \in \mathcal{S}^h$, such that $\forall \{\mathbf{w}^h, q^h\} \in \mathcal{V}^h$

$$\begin{aligned} & \int_{\Omega} \mathbf{w}^h \cdot \rho \left(\frac{\partial \mathbf{u}^h}{\partial t} + \mathbf{u}^h \cdot \nabla \mathbf{u}^h \right) d\Omega + \int_{\Omega} \boldsymbol{\varepsilon}(\mathbf{w}^h) : \boldsymbol{\sigma}(\mathbf{u}^h, p^h) d\Omega + \int_{\Omega} q^h \nabla \cdot \mathbf{u}^h d\Omega \\ & + \sum_{e=1}^{n_{el}} \int_{\Omega^e} \tau_{\text{SUPS}} \left(\mathbf{u}^h \cdot \nabla \mathbf{w}^h + \frac{\nabla q^h}{\rho} \right) \cdot \mathbf{r}_M(\mathbf{u}^h, p^h) d\Omega \\ & + \sum_{e=1}^{n_{el}} \int_{\Omega^e} \rho \nu_{\text{LSIC}} \nabla \cdot \mathbf{w}^h r_C(\mathbf{u}^h) d\Omega \\ & - \sum_{e=1}^{n_{el}} \int_{\Omega^e} \tau_{\text{SUPS}} \mathbf{w}^h \cdot \left(\mathbf{r}_M(\mathbf{u}^h, p^h) \cdot \nabla \mathbf{u}^h \right) d\Omega \\ & - \sum_{e=1}^{n_{el}} \int_{\Omega^e} \frac{\nabla \mathbf{w}^h}{\rho} : \left(\tau_{\text{SUPS}} \mathbf{r}_M(\mathbf{u}^h, p^h) \right) \otimes \left(\tau_{\text{SUPS}} \mathbf{r}_M(\mathbf{u}^h, p^h) \right) d\Omega \\ & = \int_{\Omega} \mathbf{w}^h \cdot \mathbf{f} d\Omega + \int_{\Gamma_h} \mathbf{w}^h \cdot \mathbf{h} d\Gamma. \end{aligned} \quad (8)$$

235 Here Ω is divided into n_{el} spatial finite element subdomains denoted by Ω^e . The stabilization
 236 parameters in Equation 8 are streamline-upwind pressure-stabilizing (SUPS)

$$\tau_{\text{SUPS}} = \left(\frac{4}{\Delta t^2} + \mathbf{u}^h \cdot \mathbf{G} \mathbf{u}^h + C_I \nu^2 \mathbf{G} : \mathbf{G} \right)^{-1/2}, \quad (9)$$

237 where C_I is the constant of the element-wise inverse estimate [28], and least-squares on incom-
 238 pressibility constraint (LSIC)

$$\nu_{\text{LSIC}} = (\text{tr} \mathbf{G} \tau_{\text{SUPS}})^{-1}, \quad (10)$$

239 where $\text{tr} \mathbf{G}$ is the trace of the element metric tensor \mathbf{G} [157]. The element metric tensor is defined

240 as:

$$\mathbf{G} = \frac{\partial \boldsymbol{\xi}^T}{\partial \mathbf{x}} \frac{\partial \boldsymbol{\xi}}{\partial \mathbf{x}}. \quad (11)$$

241 where $\boldsymbol{\xi}$ and \mathbf{x} are the parametric and physical coordinates, respectively, in the context of finite
242 element method [73].

243 2.3. Weakly Enforced Boundary Condition

244 The mesh relaxation techniques near the wall are based on the weakly enforced essential
245 (Dirichlet) boundary condition which is implemented on the terrain surface [23]. Relatively fine
246 mesh resolution near the surface boundary is required for accurate results if the Dirichlet bound-
247 ary condition is strongly imposed [26]. The method, introduced in [23] was shown to essentially
248 relax the grid resolution requirement near the wall. Rather than requiring the solution to exactly
249 satisfy the Dirichlet boundary conditions (“strong satisfaction”), additional terms are added to the
250 VMS formulation (Eqn. 8) to enforce the Dirichlet boundary condition weakly as Euler-Lagrange
251 condition. The additional terms needed to employ the weakly-enforced boundary condition for a
252 prescribed velocity \mathbf{g} on the Γ_g part of the domain boundary Γ are

$$\begin{aligned} & - \sum_{b=1}^{n_{eb}} \int_{\Gamma^b \cap \Gamma_g} \mathbf{w}^h \cdot \boldsymbol{\sigma}(\mathbf{u}^h, p^h) \mathbf{n} d\Gamma \\ & - \sum_{b=1}^{n_{eb}} \int_{\Gamma^b \cap \Gamma_g} (2\mu\epsilon(\mathbf{w}^h) \mathbf{n} + q^h \mathbf{n}) \cdot (\mathbf{u}^h - \mathbf{g}) d\Gamma \\ & - \sum_{b=1}^{n_{eb}} \int_{\Gamma^b \cap \Gamma_g^-} \mathbf{w}^h \cdot \rho(\mathbf{u}^h \cdot \mathbf{n}) (\mathbf{u}^h - \mathbf{g}) d\Gamma \\ & + \sum_{b=1}^{n_{eb}} \int_{\Gamma^b \cap \Gamma_g} \tau_{\text{TAN}} (\mathbf{w}^h - (\mathbf{w}^h \cdot \mathbf{n}) \mathbf{n}) \cdot ((\mathbf{u}^h - \mathbf{g}) ((\mathbf{u}^h - \mathbf{g}) \cdot \mathbf{n}) \mathbf{n}) d\Gamma \\ & + \sum_{b=1}^{n_{eb}} \int_{\Gamma^b \cap \Gamma_g} \tau_{\text{NOR}} (\mathbf{w}^h \cdot \mathbf{n}) ((\mathbf{u}^h - \mathbf{g}) \cdot \mathbf{n}) d\Gamma, \end{aligned} \quad (12)$$

253 where \mathbf{n} is the outward normal vector of boundary Γ_g . The boundary penalty parameters in the
254 tangential and normal directions, respectively are τ_{TAN} and τ_{NOR} . The inflow part of the Dirichlet
255 boundary, Γ_g , is $\Gamma_g^- = \{\mathbf{x} | \mathbf{u}^h \cdot \mathbf{n} < 0, \forall \mathbf{x} \in \Gamma_g\}$. Further details including the stabilization parameters
256 can be found in [27].

257 The additional terms for the weak boundary condition in Eqn. 12 are added to the left-hand
258 side of Eqn. 8.

259 2.4. Discretization Methods

260 In the present work comparison is made between linear FEM and quadratic NURBS [68],
261 which are used for special discretization of Eqn. 8. The 2nd order accurate, implicit, generalized- α
262 time integration scheme is employed for time discretization. At each time step, the resulting non-
263 linear system of equations is solved using Newton-Raphson method. At every non-linear iteration,
264 the linear system of equations is solved using generalized minimum residual (GMRES) method
265 [114].

266 3. Axis-symmetric Gaussian Hill

267 We simulate the three dimensional, axis-symmetric Gaussian hill (normally distributed surface)
268 given by $z = h \cdot \exp(-0.5(r/\sigma)^2)$ where r and z are radial and vertical coordinates, respectively,
269 $h = 700$ m is the height of the hill, and $\sigma = L/1.1774$. $L = 1750$ m is the hill length defined
270 as the value of r where $z = h/2$. Values for L and h , are taken from Prospathopoulos and Politis
271 [109] who simulate the same cases tested here using the in-house RANS solver CRES-flow NS,
272 with $k - \omega$ turbulence model. Our computational domain spans 23 km ($33h$) in the stream-wise
273 direction and span-wise directions. These dimensions are found necessary to ensure independence
274 of the solution from wall or outflow effects. The domain height is 5000 m ($7h$). An isometric view
275 of the Gaussian hill is shown in Figures 1.

276 A logarithmic velocity profile,

$$U = U_{ref} \frac{u_*}{\kappa} \ln \frac{z}{z_0}, \quad (13)$$

277 is applied at the inlet, where $\kappa = 0.41$ is von-Karman constant, $z_0 = 2.29 \times 10^{-7}$ m is the rough-
278 ness length, and $u_* = \frac{\kappa}{\ln \delta/z_0}$ is friction velocity, where $\delta = 500$ m is the chosen atmospheric bound-
279 ary layer thickness. The reference velocity $U_{ref} = 10.9 \text{ ms}^{-1}$ is chosen such that the velocity at
280 90 m elevation $U_{90} = 10 \text{ ms}^{-1}$. The no-slip boundary condition is enforced on the terrain surface.
281 Grid convergence analysis is performed using the strongly enforced no-slip boundary condition
282 which is followed by comparison to the weakly enforced no-slip boundary condition. No fluid
283 penetration is allowed on the sides of the domain. The outflow boundary uses the naturally im-
284 posed traction free condition.

285 3.1. Gauss Hill with Linear Finite Elements

286 The computational domain is discretized into structured, hexahedral elements. The time step
287 of $dt = 1.0$ s is used for 11×10^3 s before flow quantities are averaged for another 6×10^3 s, cor-
288 responding to approximately 63 and 32 advection hill lengths, respectively. This gives the statis-
289 tically stationary flow behaviour. Three different mesh resolutions are used, referred to as coarse,

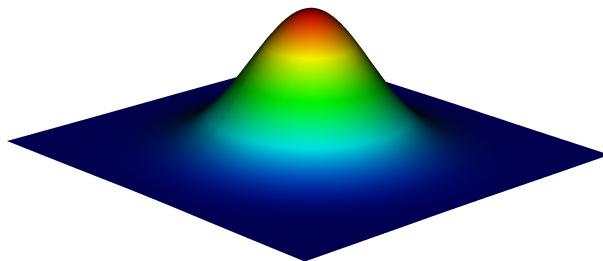


Figure 1: Isometric view of the Gaussian hill. The vertical coordinate is scaled 5x for visibility and the domain is cropped in the horizontal direction with respect to the simulation domain.

290 medium, and fine. The same time-step is used for all mesh resolutions. The number of ele-
 291 ments used in the stream-wise, span-wise, and wall normal directions is show in Table 1. Table
 292 1 also shows the grid convergence index (GCI) based on Richardson extrapolation [54] which is
 293 computed for the minimum stream-wise velocity downstream of the hill at 90 m elevation and is
 294 less than 5% for coarse to medium and medium to fine meshes. In the stream-wise and span-
 295 wise directions the grid is uniformly spaced with the exception of a refinement region between
 296 $x \in [-1140, 5700]$ (i.e. $x \in [-1.6h, 8h]$) in the stream-wise direction and $y \in [-684, 684]$ (i.e.
 297 $y \in [-h, h]$) in the span-wise direction. In the vertical direction the grid spacing increases with
 298 elevation from 6 m ($0.008h$) at the terrain surface to 342 m ($0.5h$) at the upper far field boundary.
 299 A cross-section of the computational domain down the centreline along the stream-wise direction
 300 for the medium mesh is shown in Figure 2.

Table 1: Mesh Resolution and GCI (FEM)

	Elements	Refinement Ratio	Velocity [m/s]	GCI (%)
Coarse	108x102x25	-	8.43	-
Medium	120x132x50	1.42	8.51	3.2
Fine	144x192x100	1.52	8.65	4.5

301 Stream-wise velocity 90 m above the terrain surface, for the three different mesh resolutions,
 302 is plotted along the length of the domain (x) in Figure 3. All three mesh resolutions show similar
 303 maximum velocity over the top of the hill at $x=0$, with a value about 2% larger than that predicted
 304 by Prospathopoulos and Politis [109] (note the non-zero origin on the vertical axis). A slight
 305 discrepancy is seen at around the location of the minimum velocity on the downstream side of the
 306 hill with the current simulation predicting slightly more slow down in stream-wise velocity.

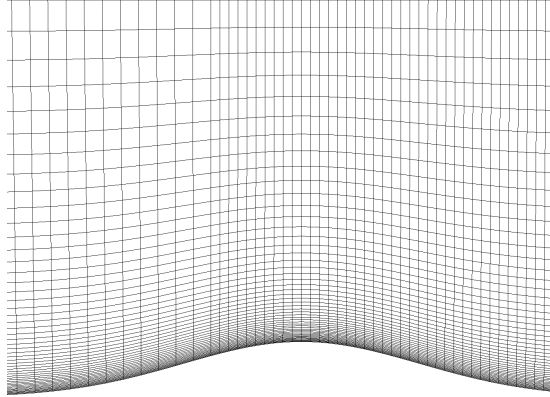


Figure 2: Cross-section of the domain with hexahedral mesh along centreline of Gaussian hill

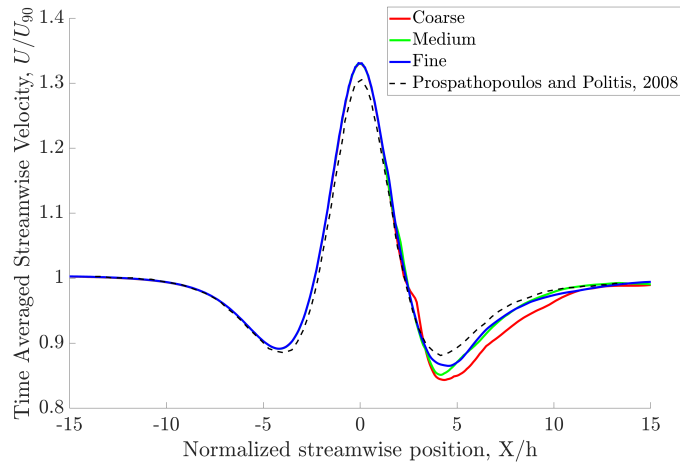


Figure 3: Normalized stream-wise velocity 90 m above Gaussian hill for three grid resolutions with linear FEM

307 3.2. Gaussian Hill with Quadratic NURBS

308 We next simulate the Gaussian hill using isogeometric analysis based on NURBS. A NURBS
 309 surface is constructed to represent the surface of the Gaussian hill using a NURBS based CAD
 310 software. This surface is used as a ‘coarse’ mesh, and successive refinement is performed without
 311 altering the geometry by knot insertion. This process is actually a simplification from the linear
 312 finite element approach of the previous section, as for that process the Gaussian hill is initially
 313 constructed as a NURBS surface, which is then approximated by bi-linear quadrilateral surface
 314 elements during meshing. The same boundary conditions and time-step as described above for the
 315 FEM case are used. The number of NURBS elements, defined as knot spans as in Hughes et al.
 316 [68], is chosen to be the same as for the finite element meshes.

317 Stream-wise velocity 90 m above the terrain surface is plotted in Figure 4 for simulations using
 318 quadratic NURBS. The maximum velocity predicted by the NURBS simulation for the fine resolu-

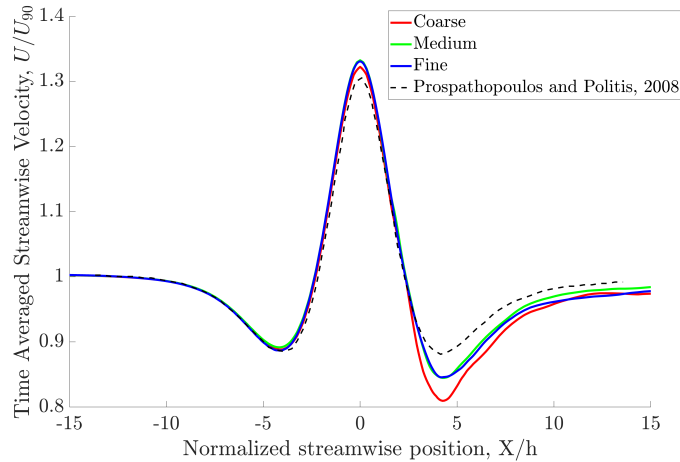


Figure 4: Normalized stream-wise velocity 90 m above Gaussian hill for three grid resolutions with quadratic NURBS

319 tion is again about 2% higher than the data from Prospathopoulos and Politis [109]. The minimum
 320 velocity on the downstream side of the hill is about 4% lower for the fine resolution than the pub-
 321 lished data. The medium and fine resolutions agree very closely over this region indicating the
 322 medium resolution would likely be sufficiently fine in this case. Figure 5 shows an isometric view
 323 of the Gaussian surface along with the U component of velocity down the centre of the domain.

324 The GCI for the minimum velocity behind the hill at 90 m elevation is 0.14% for the coarse
 325 to medium mesh and 0.002% for the medium to fine mesh, which, as expected due to the higher
 326 order of the shape functions, is much better than the GCI for the linear finite element case.

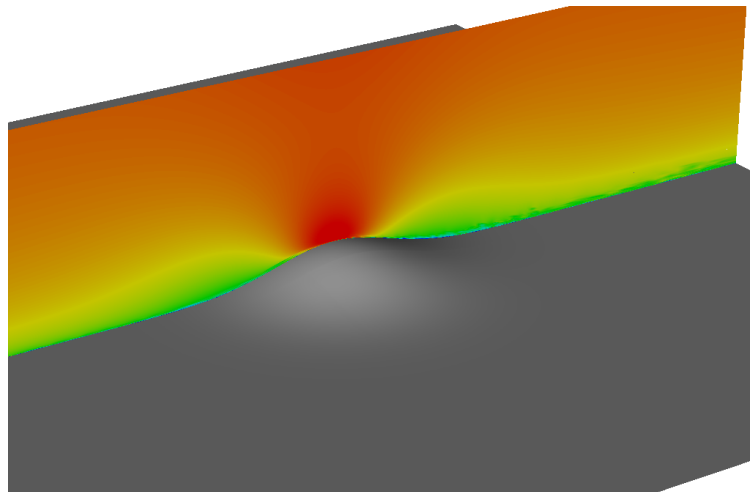


Figure 5: Time averaged stream-wise velocity component for the fine mesh resolution Gaussian hill using NURBS

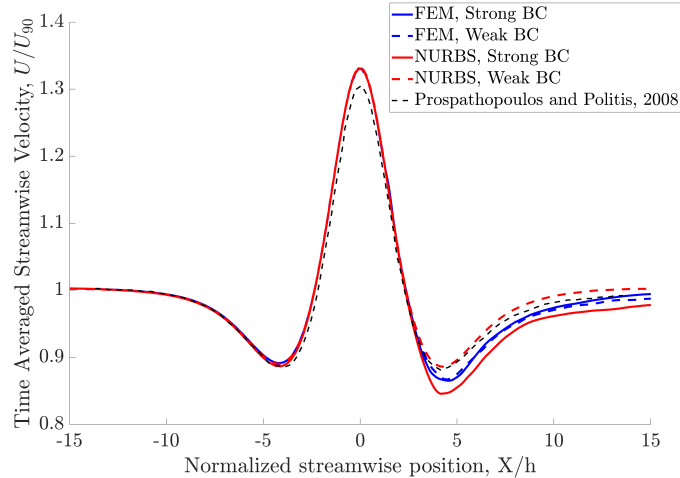


Figure 6: Gaussian hill stream-wise velocity using strong and weak enforcement of the Dirichlet (no-slip) boundary condition. All simulations are for the fine mesh resolution.

327 3.3. Gaussian Hill with weakly-enforced no-slip boundary condition on the terrain surface

328 The benefit of employing the weakly-enforced no-slip boundary condition on the terrain sur-
 329 face, as presented in Section 2.3 is investigated next. We compare the usual no-slip boundary
 330 condition (strongly enforced) to the weakly-enforced boundary condition for the fine mesh using
 331 both FEM and NURBS. The comparison of stream-wise velocity 90 m above the terrain surface
 332 is shown in Figure 6 for the fine resolution FEM and NURBS simulations. The simulation using
 333 the weak enforcement of the no-slip condition shows less slow down after the hill, more closely
 334 matching the published data from [109]. The combination of the relaxation of the no-slip boundary
 335 and the higher order of the NURBS basis functions allow the simulation to more accurately capture
 336 the flow profile in the re-circulation region, which is dominated by non-linearities.

337 Comparison of finite element results to the NURBS results is shown in Figure 7 where we
 338 compare the medium and fine resolutions using the weakly-enforced boundary condition. The
 339 downstream side of the hill again highlights differences in the discretization methods used. The
 340 largest slow down is seen with the medium resolution linear FEM simulation. The fine FEM
 341 and medium NURBS simulations show fairly similar results, highlighting the increased resolution
 342 necessary for FEM given the lower order basis functions. The fine resolution NURBS simulation
 343 shows results very similar to the published data with the higher order basis functions better able to
 344 capture the sharp velocity gradients in this region.

345 4. Bolund Hill

346 The Bolund hill (Figure 8) is a coastal geographical feature in Denmark that was the subject
 347 of a field experiment and blind modeling study. The Bolund field campaign provides new dataset

348 for validation of micro-scale LES codes for wind energy applications. This feature is considered
 349 a difficult modeling problem due to the nearly vertical escarpment on the upwind side of the hill
 350 which produces complex 3-D flow. Data was collected and used to validate models predicting flow
 351 in complex terrain [30, 32]. The hill is approximately 12 m high, 130 m long and 75 m wide and is
 352 surrounded by water on three sides. The remaining side (on the downstream side for the case con-
 353 sidered here) comprises relatively flat terrain. The incoming flow travels over the ocean, making
 354 the inflow boundary condition well defined. Measurements are taken at various heights for each of
 355 10 mast locations over 10 min periods, with one mast located far upstream of the hill to quantify
 356 the free stream velocity profile and turbulent kinetic energy to provide inflow boundary conditions
 357 for simulations. The mast locations are shown in Figure 9. Additionally, limited effects from strat-
 358 ification are expected due to the small hill height relative to boundary layer depth, therefore the
 359 approximation of neutral stratification may be considered as valid.

360 The domain constructed around Bolund hill stretches 390 m across, 800 m long (300 m up-
 361 stream and downstream of the hill) and 120 m high. This domain size was recommended by Bech-
 362 mann et al. [31].

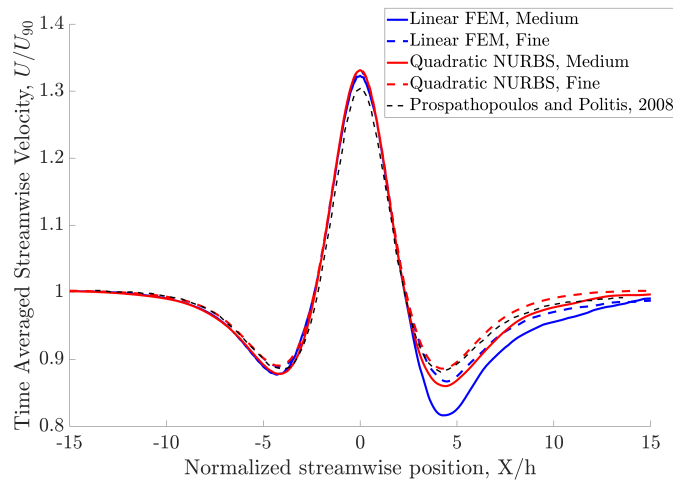


Figure 7: Normalized stream-wise velocity 90 m above the Gaussian hill for linear FEM and quadratic NURBS



Figure 8: Bolund hill (picture from Bechmann et al. [31])

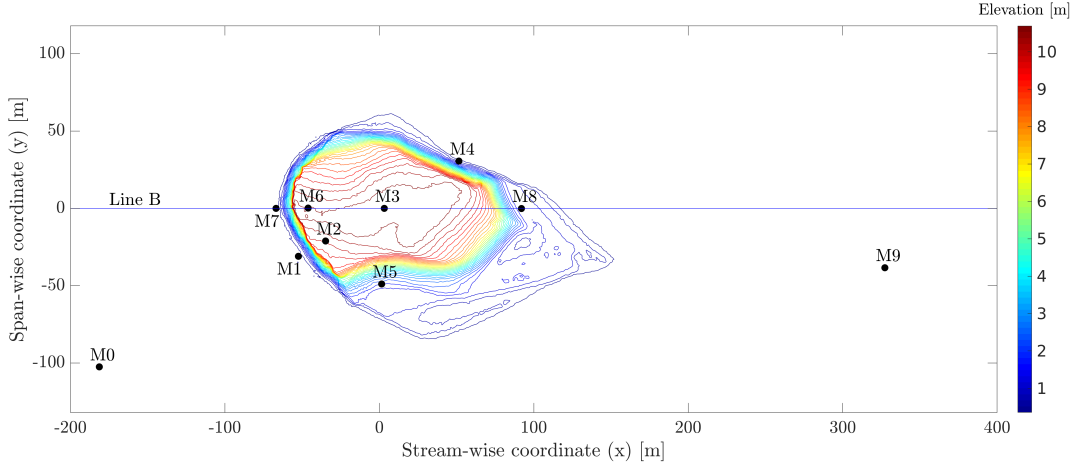


Figure 9: Bolund hill elevation contours and mast locations. Flow is from left to right in the case considered.

363 4.1. Precursor Simulation

364 To generate a realistic (turbulent) inflow condition for the Bolund hill simulation, a pressure
 365 driven NURBS precursor simulation of flow over a flat plate is used and sequential planes are fed
 366 into the main simulation. The method is the same as that described in Helgedagsrud et al. [60]
 367 except that we use a half-channel since the no-slip boundary is only on the lower surface of the
 368 domain for ABL flow. Periodic boundary conditions are used in the stream-wise and span-wise
 369 direction and the no-slip condition is weakly-enforced on the lower boundary. The symmetry con-
 370 dition is employed at the upper boundary. The precursor simulation uses a rectangular domain
 371 with span-wise and vertical dimensions equal to those of the main simulation domain (390 m and
 372 120 m respectively). In the stream-wise direction, the domain extends 750 m. 192, 64, and 32 ele-
 373 ments are used in the stream-wise, span-wise, and wall-normal directions respectively. The initial
 374 condition is a parabolic mean velocity profile based on the bulk velocity with superposed random
 375 velocity fluctuations to promote transition to turbulent flow. The flow is driven by a volumetric
 376 forcing, f , equal to $3.73 \times 10^{-3} \text{ ms}^{-2}$. The forcing is calculated based on a desired friction velocity
 377 Reynolds number, $\text{Re}_\tau = u^* D / \nu = 395$, and bulk velocity, $\bar{U}_b = 11.893 \text{ ms}^{-1}$. The bulk velocity is
 378 the mean velocity based on the suggested logarithmic inflow velocity profile [31],

$$u = \frac{u_0^*}{\kappa} \ln\left(\frac{z_{agl}}{z_0}\right), \quad (14)$$

379 where (z_{agl}) is the height above the ground, $u_0^* = 0.4 \text{ ms}^{-1}$ is the reference friction velocity
 380 measured during the experiment (not to be confused with that used for the precursor simulation),
 381 $z_0 = 3 \times 10^{-4} \text{ m}$ is the surface roughness length, and $\kappa = 0.4$ is the von-Karman constant. The
 382 friction velocity and surface roughness are set for 4 different cases in [31] based on fits to ex-

383 perimental data from the upstream mast. The values given refer to case 1 of [31] with 270° flow
 384 direction which is the case simulated in this work. The friction velocity Reynolds number is cho-
 385 sen for two reasons. First, similar simulations and experiments performed at this Reynolds number
 386 provide data for validation [60, 99]. Secondly, these researchers reported turbulence intensities
 387 (TI) of approximately 4.4% for this Re_τ , which is similar to the turbulence level recommended by
 388 Bechmann et al. [31], who recommended modellers specify a turbulence kinetic energy value of
 389 $TKE = 5.8(u_0^*)^2 = 0.928 \text{ m}^2/\text{s}^2$, constant with elevation. Since both measures of turbulence are
 390 based on RMS fluctuations of the diagonal terms of the Reynolds stress tensor, the relation,

$$TI = \frac{\sqrt{\frac{2}{3}TKE}}{\bar{U}_b} = 6.6\%, \quad (15)$$

391 can be used. With Re_τ and \bar{U}_b determined, the volumetric forcing f can be found by balancing the
 392 volumetric forcing with the wall shear force, giving the expression:

$$f = \frac{u^{*2}}{D}, \quad (16)$$

393 where D is the domain (half-channel) height, and the friction velocity u^* is found through
 394 the equation system formed by Spalding's parameterization for the law of the wall [117], Dean's
 395 correlation relating the bulk and center line (\bar{U}_{cl}) velocities [49], and the definition of Re_τ . The
 396 equations

$$\bar{U}_{cl} = u^* g^{-1}(Re_\tau), \quad (17)$$

$$\bar{U}_{cl} = 1.28 \bar{U}_b \left(\frac{2\bar{U}_b D}{\nu} \right)^{-0.0116} = 1.28 \bar{U}_b Re_b^{-0.0116}, \quad (18)$$

$$\nu = \frac{u^* D}{Re_\tau}, \quad (19)$$

397 are solved for \bar{U}_{cl} , u^* , and ν simultaneously. Re_τ , \bar{U}_b and D are known and g^{-1} is the inverse of
 398 Spalding's parameterization,

$$g(u^+) = u^+ + e^{-\chi B} \left(e^{\chi u^+} - 1 - \chi u^+ - \frac{(\chi u^+)^2}{2!} - \frac{(\chi u^+)^3}{3!} \right) \quad (20)$$

399 where $\chi = 0.4$ and $B = 5.5$.

400 *4.1.1. Precursor simulation results*

401 The simulation is run for 17,000 steps with a time step $dt = 0.2$ s, corresponding to the flow
 402 travelling over 50 times the domain length. The mean velocity profile was seen to converge to DNS
 403 results prior to this point. The simulation was performed on 256 compute cores and take approxi-
 404 mately 15 s per time step. Figure 10 shows the domain of the precursor simulation with the periodic
 405 and no-penetration boundaries coloured by the instantaneous stream-wise velocity component.

Time averaged velocity and turbulence profiles are presented in terms of non-dimensional wall distance (y^+) and velocity (u^+),

$$y^+ = \frac{yu^*}{\nu} = \frac{y\text{Re}_\tau}{D}, \quad (21)$$

$$u^+ = \frac{u}{u^*} = \frac{uD}{\text{Re}_\tau \nu}. \quad (22)$$

406 Profiles are shown in Figures 11 and 12. Results are very close to published results. DNS data
 407 for both is from Moser et al. [99]. The RMS fluctuations are calculated as

$$RMS = \frac{(u'^2 + v'^2 + w'^2)^{1/2}}{u^*}, \quad (23)$$

408 where $u' = u - \bar{u}$, $v' = v - \bar{v}$, and $w' = w - \bar{w}$ are the stream-wise, span-wise and wall-normal
 409 fluctuating components, respectively.

410 Comparing the results of the pressure driven, periodic, half-channel precursor simulation with
 411 the inflow boundary conditions suggested by Bechmann et al. [31] (Figure 13), there is slight
 412 deviation in the mean velocity profile from the log-law profile recommended, but generally good
 413 overall agreement. The recommendation of setting turbulence kinetic energy to a constant value

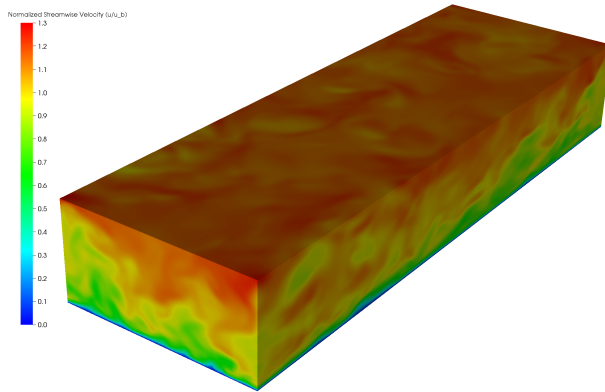


Figure 10: Instantaneous stream-wise velocity component normalized by the bulk velocity for the precursor simulation. The no slip wall is on the bottom (out of sight).

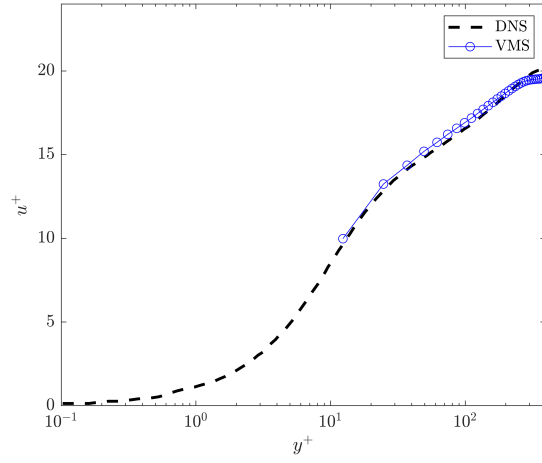


Figure 11: Mean stream-wise velocity of precursor simulation with distance from wall in non-dimensional units. DNS data from Moser et al. [99].

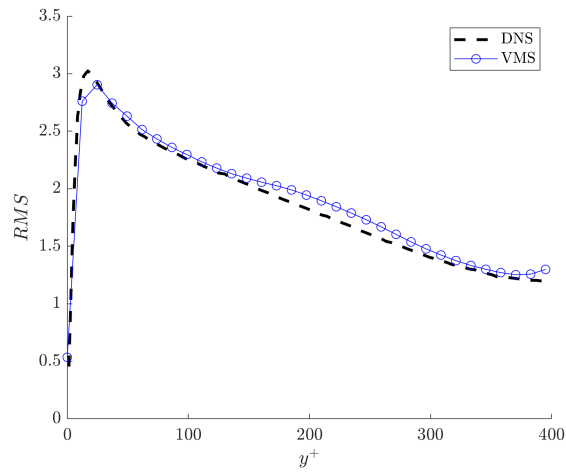


Figure 12: Root mean square of velocity fluctuations $((u'^2 + v'^2 + w'^2)^{1/2} / u^*)$ of precursor simulation with distance from wall in non-dimensional units. DNS data from Moser et al. [99].

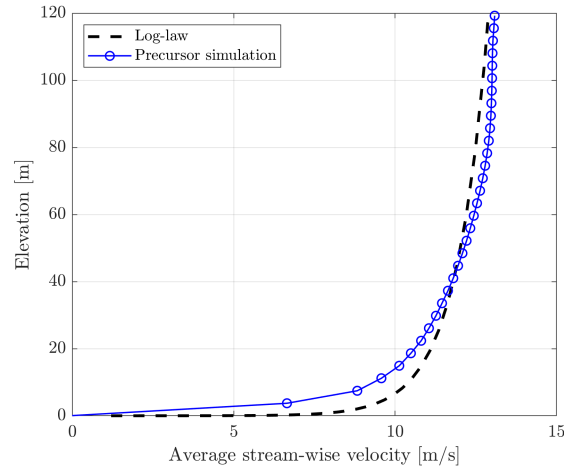


Figure 13: Time averaged stream-wise velocity profile compared with log-law profile proposed at inlet condition by Bechmann et al. [31].

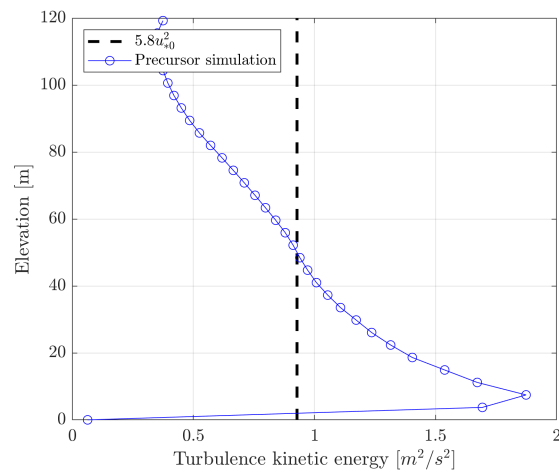


Figure 14: Turbulence kinetic energy $((u'^2 + v'^2 + w'^2)/2)$ profile compared with constant value proposed as inlet condition by Bechmann et al. [31].

414 with elevation is not physical and does not agree with the result of the precursor simulation (Figure
 415 14), but the value is in a similar range.

416 4.1.2. Bolund hill precursor coupling

417 Data transfer from the precursor simulation to the inflow of the Bolund hill simulation is done
 418 using the method described in Helgedagsrud et al. [60] based on weakly enforced boundary con-
 419 ditions for Bolund hill NURBS simulation.

420 After the simulation reached a statistically stationary flow as described in the results section
 421 above, successive (in time) planes of the inflow/outflow precursor boundary are fed into the main
 422 Bolund hill simulation. As the precursor and Bolund hill mesh do not match one-to-one at the inlet

423 plane, a coupling method is needed to transfer the data. The velocities from the precursor simu-
424 lation are output (written to disk) at the locations of the integration points of the main simulation.
425 These values are read by the main simulation and enforced in a weak sense on the inflow boundary
426 by setting them equal to the inflow boundary velocity \mathbf{g} from Equation 12.

427 4.2. Bolund Hill with quadratic NURBS

428 The Bolund hill domain is discretized using quadratic NURBS elements. We decided not to use
429 FEM discretization based on the superior performance of NURBS-based simulations for Gaussian
430 hill in Section 3. To capture the sharp terrain gradient at the upwind side of the hill, the mesh
431 is refined in the stream-wise direction over a distance of 18 m. A cross section of the mesh is
432 shown in Figures 15. Two mesh resolutions are considered, referred to as ‘medium’ and ‘fine’.
433 The fine resolution uses $311 \times 195 \times 82$ elements (4.97 million in total) and the medium resolution
434 uses $275 \times 161 \times 57$ elements (2.52 million in total) in the stream-wise, span-wise, and vertical
435 directions respectively for a horizontal grid spacing of 2 m in the unrefined section for the fine
436 case. The first element in the vertical direction is located at 0.15 m for the fine mesh and 0.5 m for
437 the medium mesh.

438 The inlet condition at each time step is taken from the precursor simulation, which is run with
439 the same time step as the main simulation. The precursor simulation has the same span-wise and
440 vertical dimensions as the main simulation but different mesh resolution. On the side boundaries
441 no fluid penetration is enforced and the outlet is naturally imposed traction free with a stabilization
442 term to ensure any fluid re-circulation (i.e. negative stream-wise velocity at the outlet) does not
443 result in non-physical effects. On the terrain surface the no-slip boundary condition is enforced
444 weakly. The initial condition is set based on a logarithmic velocity profile with elevation over the
445 entire domain, as in Equation 14.

446 Figure 16 shows instantaneous stream-wise velocity contours along the $y = 0$ plane for the
447 simulation using NURBS with medium resolution, while Figure 17 show the same quantity time-
448 averaged. Figure 18 shows time averaged velocity streamlines over the upwind slope of the hill. A
449 re-circulation region is seen just behind the edge of the upwind slope.

450 Results of the simulations are compared to measured data by plotting vertical profiles at each
451 mast location (locations shown in Figure 9). Profiles of velocity magnitude, S , are compared with
452 data points showing measured values in Figures 19 and 20. Results are non-dimensionalized by
453 the reference friction velocity, $u_0^* = 0.4 \text{ ms}^{-1}$, from Equation 14. The simulation using quadratic
454 NURBS elements with medium mesh resolution match the experimental data quite well. The
455 location of specific masts can provide insight into the aspects of the flow that are best captured by
456 the simulation. Masts 1 and 7 are located just in front of the hill. Masts 2 and 6 are located at the
457 top of hill just behind the steep slope on the upstream side. Masts 4, 5, and 8 are located at the

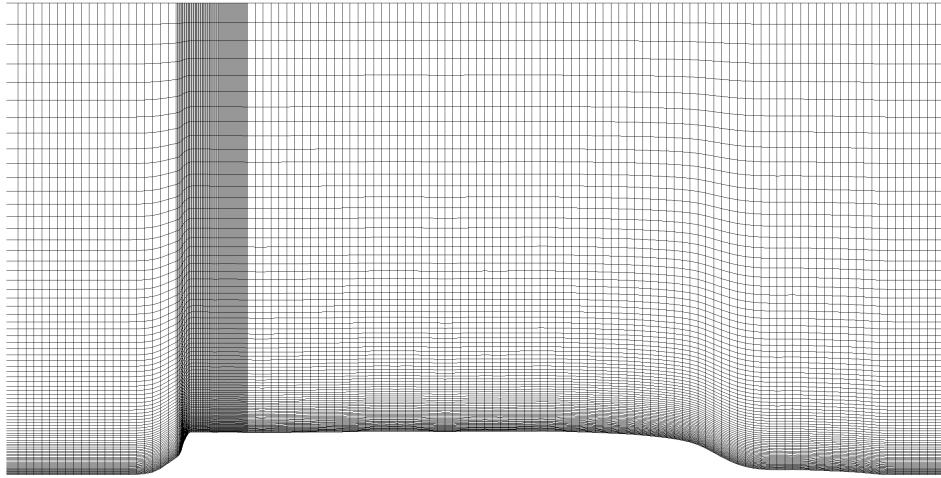


Figure 15: Cross-section of the computational domain for the Bolund hill

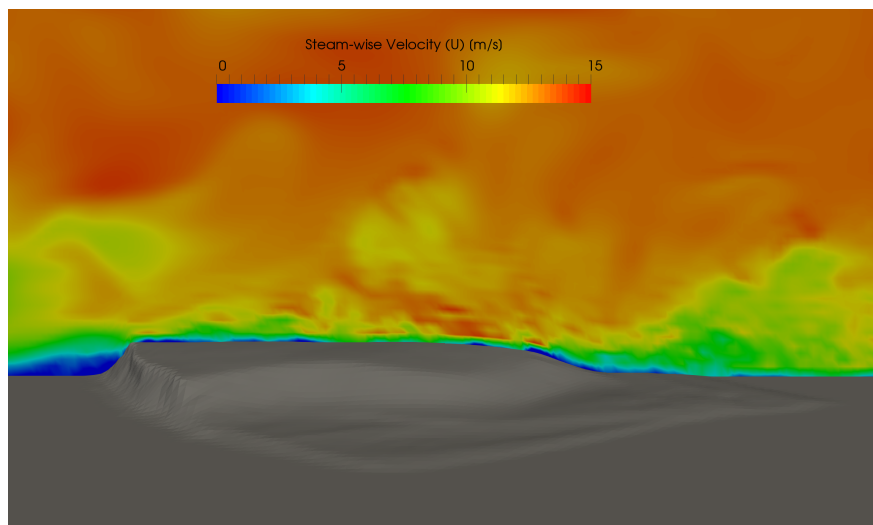


Figure 16: Cross-section of the instantaneous stream-wise velocity component for a medium mesh resolution.

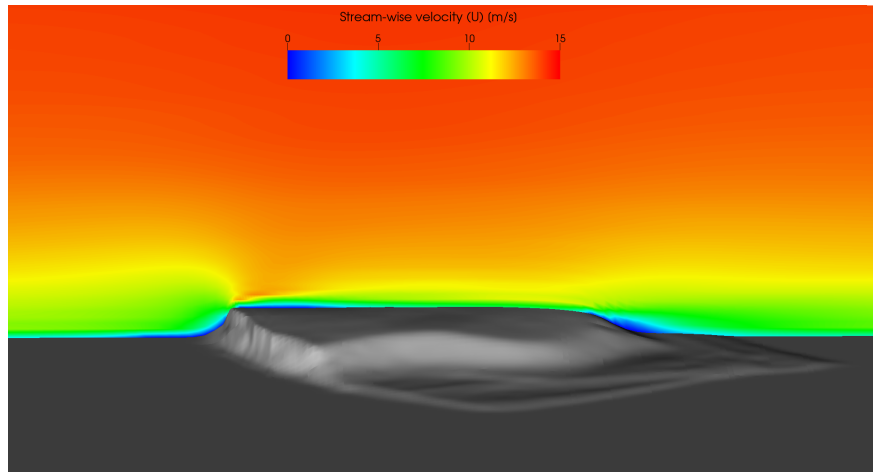


Figure 17: Cross-section of the time averaged stream-wise velocity component for a medium mesh resolution.

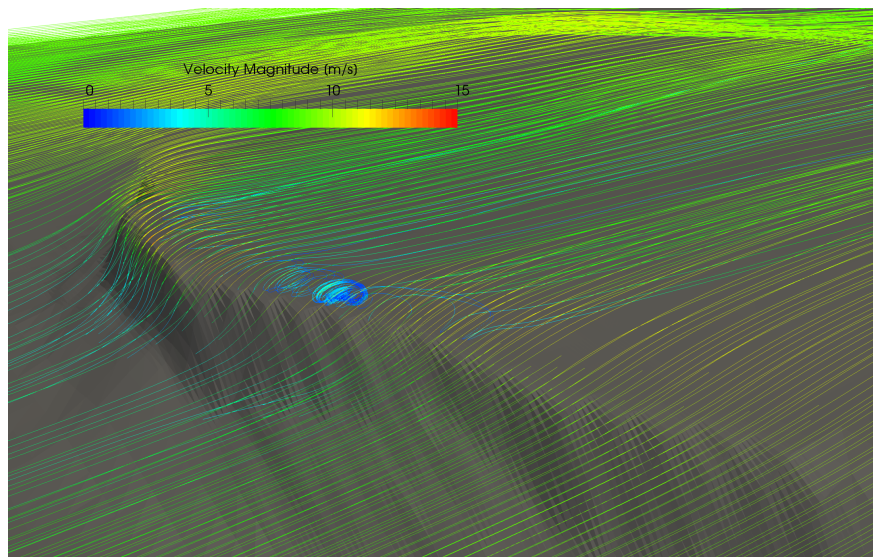


Figure 18: Time averaged velocity streamlines coloured by velocity magnitude for the NURBS simulation with fine resolution

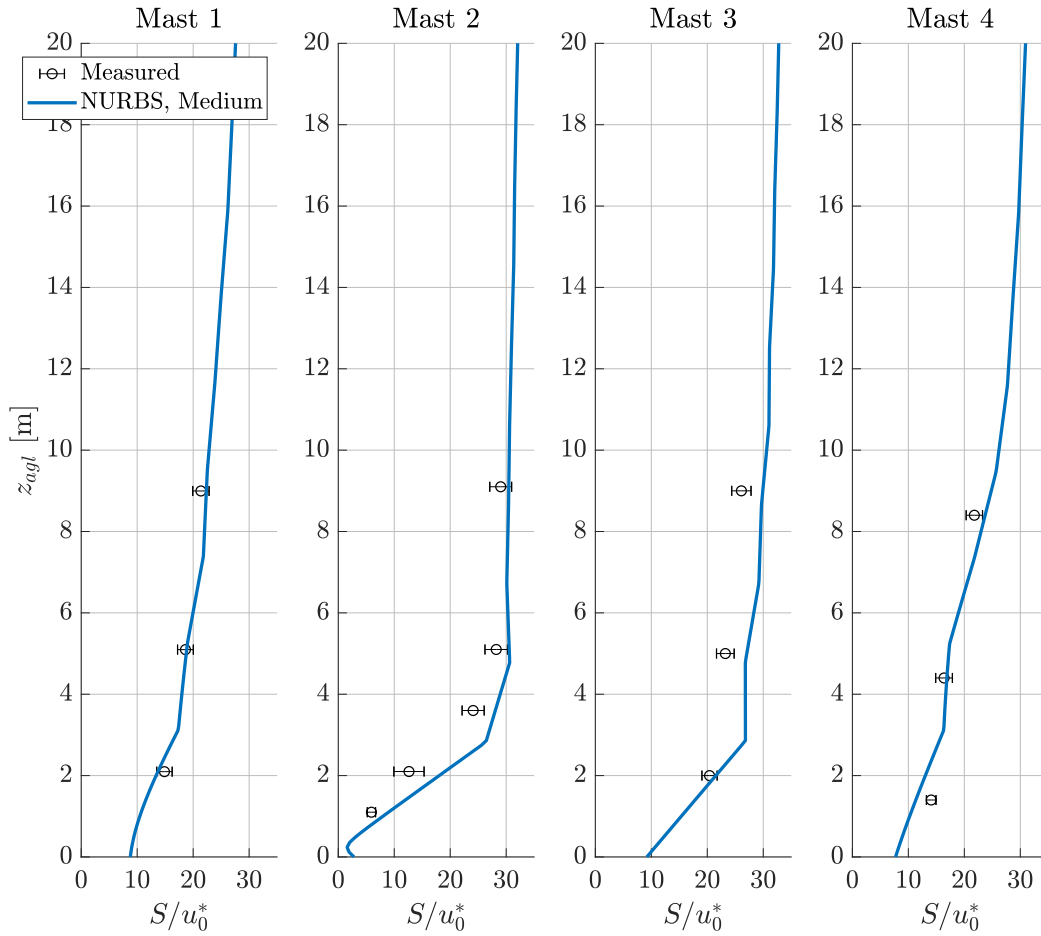


Figure 19: Mean velocity magnitude profiles comparing NURBS simulations with measured data

458 base of the hill on the downstream side, and mast 3 is located in the middle of the broad, nearly
 459 flat expanse on top of the hill. The simulations show very good match to the experimental data at
 460 masts 1 and 7, i.e. correctly capturing the velocity slowdown in front of the hill. Mast 2 and mast
 461 5, located in recirculated regions just after the upstream slope and just after the downstream slope
 462 respectively, show slight over-prediction of the velocity close to the surface (below 5 m elevation).
 463 The simulations also show good agreement with the experimental measurements near the ground
 464 where velocity gradients are high, which is normally hard to capture with traditional discretization
 465 schemes.

466 Comparison of simulation results with measurements for the Bolund hill case is typically done
 467 in terms of velocity increase or decrease from an upstream reference location rather than in ab-
 468 solute values. Figure 21 plots the velocity speed-up along a horizontal line 5 m above the ground
 469 along the transect ‘line B’ (Figure 9). The velocity speed-up (non-dimensional increase in velocity

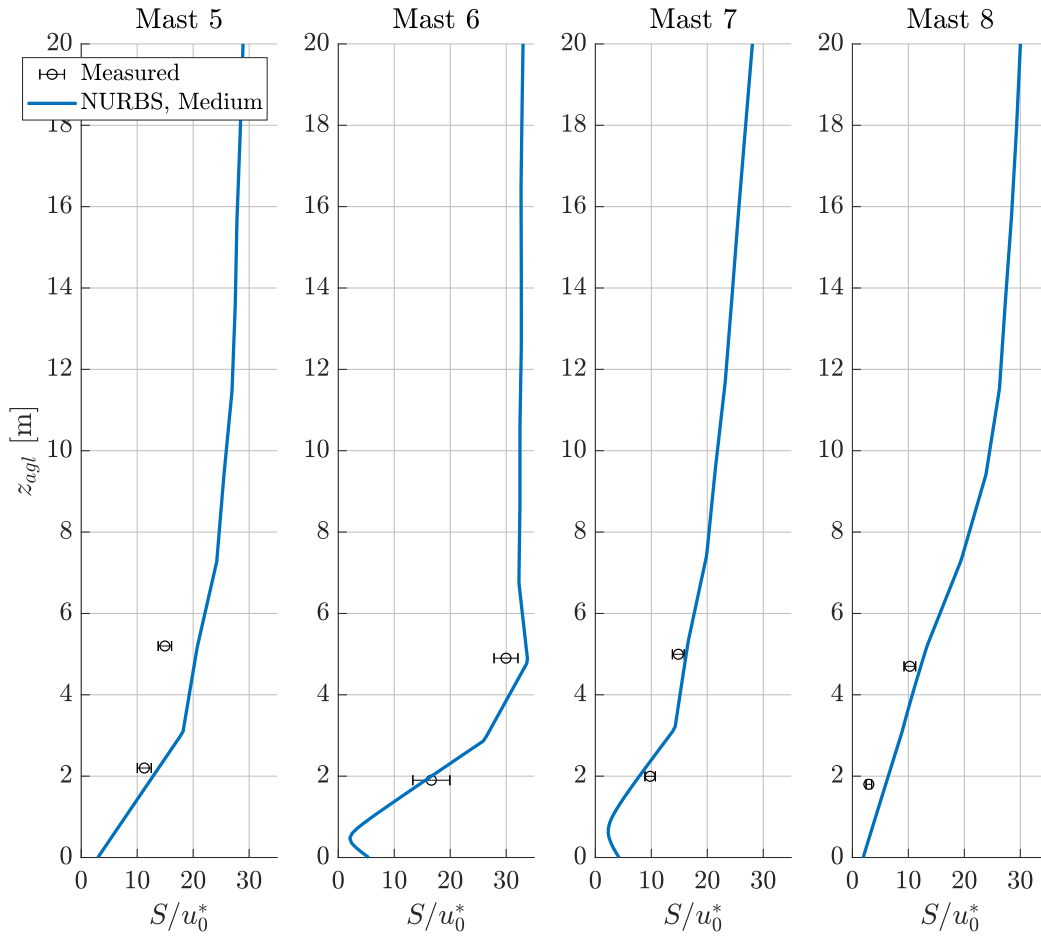


Figure 20: Mean velocity magnitude profiles comparing NURBS simulations with measured data

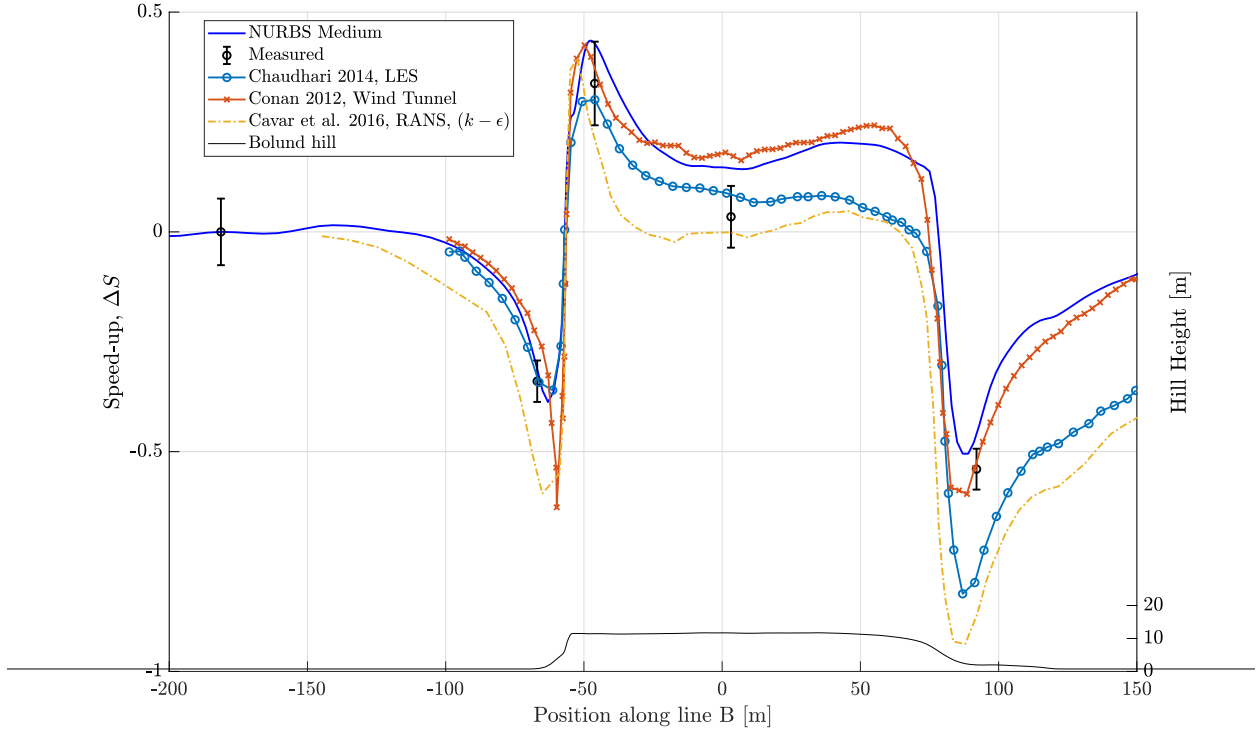


Figure 21: Velocity speed-up 5 m above ground level along line B

470 magnitude relative to the reference mast), defined as

$$\Delta S = \frac{\overline{s_{z_{agl}}} - \overline{s_{0z_{agl}}}}{\overline{s_{0z_{agl}}}} \quad (24)$$

471 where the over-bar indicates a time average and the reference velocity magnitude, s_0 , is calculated
 472 5 m above the ground at the location of Mast 0 (Figure 9) in the inflow region of the domain. The
 473 measured data points are shown with open circle markers and the terrain profile is plotted near
 474 the bottom of the figure with the elevation corresponding to the vertical axis on the right-hand
 475 side. The simulations accurately predict the velocity slowdown just in front of the hill, and are
 476 also within one standard deviation of the measured value at the tower just after the top of the hill.
 477 The simulations, however, slightly over-predict the velocity magnitude in the middle of the broad
 478 flat area on top of the hill. The velocity slowdown on the lee side of the hill is well captured.
 479 Results of previously published studies on Bolund hill are also plotted in Figure 21, including LES
 480 from Chaudhari [42], a wind tunnel experiment by Conan et al. [46], and RANS simulation from
 481 Cavar et al. [41]. The NURBS simulation shows an overall better match to the measured data when
 482 compared to those studies.

483 5. Conclusion and future work

484 Accurate prediction of local flow field in complex terrain is critical for many engineering ap-
485 plications, including wind energy, which require the development of a high-fidelity framework to
486 model atmospheric flows over complex geographical terrain. In this paper we applied a variational
487 multi-scale model to representative areas of complex terrain to establish such a framework. We
488 adopted two special discretization techniques, linear finite elements and quadratic non-uniform
489 rational B-splines (NURBS). We also highlighted the needs for special treatment of the no-slip
490 boundary condition at the terrain surface. The weakly-enforced formulation of the no-slip bound-
491 ary condition was used to relax grid resolution requirements near the wall. It consistently gave
492 more accurate results on even coarser meshes when compared to a standard strong imposition ap-
493 proach. The model was validated against two well documented cases of airflow over complex
494 terrain, the Gaussian and Bolund hills. We find that VMS formulation shows excellent agreement
495 with published data for both cases, without the use of any *ah-hoc* turbulent eddy-viscosity models.
496 The simulations with NURBS-based discretization showed better accuracy for the Gaussian hill
497 even on a coarser meshes. Simulations using quadratic NURBS discretization was performed for
498 the Bolund hill showing excellent agreement with the measured data. These results indicate the
499 potential of the variational multi-scale formulation combined with a NURBS approach to predict
500 airflow over complex terrain.

501 Future work will continue to examine cases of highly complex terrain such as the Perdigão
502 location. The Perdigão location was recently the subject of a large scale field study, part of the
503 New European Wind Atlas, to investigate flow in complex terrain, including the interaction of
504 wind turbine wakes with the terrain. We will also perform numerical simulations using NURBS
505 discretization for ABL flow with different stratification regimes, which has a significant impact on
506 the flow behaviour over the terrain and especially when interacting with wind turbines. Finally, we
507 will perform the simulation of the entire wind farm under the realistic turbulent, stratified inflow
508 condition in a complex terrain.

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