Methods for simulation of weather and climate (mobility).

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Abstract—In this paper we discuss about different methods for simulating weather and climate. These methods are STEP, OpenWeatherMap, Meteomatics, ClimaX, and GraphCast. We discuss about their advantages and disadvantages, and their motivation.

I. INTRODUCTION

To simulate both mobility and energy use, realistic modeling of the weather is necessary. In this paper, we will discuss ways in which we can do this. Considering the effect of the position of the virtual city, seasons, and the ability to represent specific phenomena (storms, snow, heat waves).

II. TOPICS

A. Data sources

Before we start talking about the different methods we can use to predict the weather, we first need to know where we can get the data from or where the data is coming from that we use to train our models.

There are a lot of different sources for weather data, some of them are free, some of them are paid, and because the methods we will look at in this paper make use of similar data, we will talk a bit about it here.

Some of the data sources we will look at are:
- ECMWF
- IoT
- etc.

There are a lot more sources that some of the methods we will look at use, but we will only look at the ones that are widely used.

1) ECMWF: The European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) is an independent intergovernmental organisation supported by most of the nations of Europe and is based at Shinfield Park, Reading, United Kingdom. The center's operational forecasts are produced from its "Forecast System" (sometimes informally known in the United States as the "European model") which is run every twelve hours and forecasts out to ten days [6]. ECMWF is also developing their own digital twin, to predict weather and climate change [7].

ECMWF makes wide range os data available to the public. The data that are becoming available are based on a range of high-resolution forecasts (HRES 9 km horizontal resolution) and ensemble forecasts (ENS 18 km horizontal resolution). They will be made accessible at a resolution of 0.4 x 0.4 degrees [22].

An overview of what kinds of data are available is given on the ECMWF website. More detailed explanations of how to access the data are also available [22].

2) IoT: The Internet of Things (IoT) plays a significant role in collecting data for weather forecasting services. Here's how it works:

- **Sensors**: IoT uses a network of sensors to collect real-time data on various weather parameters such as temperature, pressure, humidity, wind speed, and light intensity [23], [26]. These sensors can be embedded in various devices and locations, including weather stations, agricultural fields, and even moving vehicles [23], [26].
- **Data Transmission**: The data collected by these sensors is then transmitted over the internet to a central monitoring system or cloud-based servers [23], [25]. This allows for real-time monitoring and accessibility of data from anywhere in the world [23].
- **Data Analysis**: The collected data is analyzed and processed using advanced algorithms and machine learning techniques. This helps in predicting weather patterns and changes more accurately [23], [25].
- **Alerts and Notifications**: IoT systems can also be programmed to send alerts and notifications based on the data collected. For instance, they can warn about sudden and drastic weather changes [23].
- **Integration with Weather Models**: The data collected through IoT is often integrated with other weather forecasting models to improve their accuracy and reliability [25].

In summary, IoT brings a new era of weather forecasting by enabling the collection of real-time, hyper-local data, which significantly enhances the accuracy of weather predictions [26].

B. Algorithms

The first method we will look at is based on algorithms, more specifically, ensemble forecasting algorithms. An interesting algorithm to look at is the STEPS (short-term ensemble prediction system) computation algorithm. It is widely used in the industry of forecasting weather and climate, and is used by the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) [1], [6].

1) What is ensemble forecasting?:
Ensemble forecasting is a method used in or within numerical weather prediction. Instead of making a single forecast of the most likely weather, a set (or ensemble) of forecasts is produced. This set of forecasts aims to give an indication of the range of possible future states of the atmosphere. Ensemble forecasting is a form of Monte Carlo analysis. The multiple simulations are conducted to account for the two usual sources of uncertainty in forecast models:

- The errors introduced by the use of imperfect initial conditions, amplified by the chaotic nature of the evolution equations of the atmosphere, which is often referred to as sensitive dependence on initial conditions;
- The errors introduced because of imperfections in the model formulation, such as the approximate mathematical methods to solve the equations.

Ideally, the verified future atmospheric state should fall within the predicted ensemble spread, and the amount of spread should be related to the uncertainty (error) of the forecast. In general, this approach can be used to make probabilistic forecasts of any dynamical system, and not just for weather prediction [1].

Today ensemble predictions are commonly made at most of the major operational weather prediction facilities worldwide, including

- National Centers for Environmental Prediction (NCEP of the US)
- European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF)
- Météo-France

[1]

2) What is STEPS?:
An ensemble-based probabilistic precipitation forecasting scheme has been developed that blends an extrapolation nowcast with a downscaled NWP (Numerical Weather Prediction) forecast, known as STEPS: Short-Term Ensemble Prediction System. The uncertainties in the motion and evolution of radar-inferred precipitation fields are quantified, and the uncertainty in the evolution of the precipitation pattern is shown to be the more important.

The use of ensembles allows the scheme to be used for applications that require forecasts of the probability density function of areal and temporal averages of precipitation, such as fluvial flood forecasting — a capability that has not been provided by previous probabilistic precipitation nowcast schemes.

The output from a NWP forecast model is downscaled so that the small scales not represented accurately by the model are injected into the forecast using stochastic noise. This allows the scheme to better represent the distribution of precipitation rate at spatial scales finer than those adequately resolved by operational NWP.

3) How does STEPS work?:
Key Components of Ensemble Prediction Systems:

- Base Models: Ensemble systems typically consist of multiple base models, each trained independently on the same or different datasets.
- Diversity: The effectiveness of ensemble methods relies on the diversity among the base models. If the models are too similar, the ensemble may not provide significant improvements.
- Combination Method: Ensemble methods employ a combination or aggregation method to merge the predictions of individual models into a single, more accurate prediction.
- Weighting: In weighted averaging, each base model's prediction is assigned a weight, and the final prediction is a weighted sum of individual predictions.
- Training and Validation: Base models are trained on historical data, and the ensemble system is validated and calibrated using separate datasets to ensure its accuracy

4) How it can be used?:
In our case, we can use STEPS to train a weather forecasting model. We can use the data from reputable weather forecasting agencies, such as the ECMWF, for the training.

5) Advantages of STEPS:

- Improved Accuracy: Ensemble forecasting often provides more accurate predictions than individual models by leveraging the collective knowledge of diverse models.
- Quantifying Uncertainty: Ensemble systems offer a way to estimate the uncertainty associated with predictions. The spread or variability among ensemble members provides a measure of prediction confidence.
- Reduced Overfitting: By combining multiple models with different training data or parameters, ensemble methods reduce the risk of overfitting to a particular dataset.
- Enhanced Generalization: Ensemble methods can generalize well to different scenarios and datasets, making them versatile for various applications.
- Flexibility: Ensemble systems can incorporate a variety of models and data sources, making them adaptable to different prediction tasks and domains.

6) Disadvantages of STEPS:

- Difficulty in Model Selection: Selecting appropriate models for the ensemble requires careful consideration, and the effectiveness of the ensemble may be sensitive to the choice of models.
- Potential for Redundancy: If the base models in the ensemble are too similar, there might be limited diversity, reducing the effectiveness of the ensemble approach.

- Overemphasis on Certain Models: In some cases, if a particular model consistently outperforms others, that dominant model might heavily influence the ensemble's performance.
- Increased Training Time: Training multiple models requires additional time and computational resources compared to training a single model.

C. APIs

Next are APIs, which stands for Application Programming Interface. APIs are a way for applications to communicate with each other, and there are a lot of APIs that provide weather data. Some we will look at are OpenWeatherMap and Meteomatics.

1) How does it work?: In general, APIs work by sending a request to a server, and the server will then send a response back. In our case we will provide some extra information in the request to specify what kind of data we want to receive. The data we receive will be configured in different formats, such as JSON, XML, etc.

2) OpenWeatherMap: OpenWeatherMap is a weather application programming interface (API) that provides weather data for any location on the globe. It uses machine learning (ML) to significantly advance both the accuracy and computing speed of global assemble forecasting models, a practice that was impossible only a few years ago [3].

OpenWeatherMap offers a variety of APIs, including the One Call API 3.0, which provides current weather and forecasts, minute forecast for 1 hour, hourly forecast for 48 hours, daily forecast for 8 days, and government weather alerts [3]. The API also provides weather data for any timestamp for 40+ years historical archive and 4 days ahead forecast, daily aggregation of weather data for 40+ years archive and 1.5 years ahead forecast, hourly forecast for 4 days, 16 days forecast, and climatic forecast for 30 days [3].

In addition, OpenWeatherMap provides beautiful multi-layer maps that create the visual perception of weather. You can choose from a set of OpenWeather Model layers such as wind, temperature, pressure, and others, or select radar data for a detailed precipitation picture [3].

3) Meteomatics: Meteomatics is a global leader in weather intelligence [9]. It specializes in high-resolution commercial weather forecasting, power output forecasting for wind, solar and hydro, weather data gathering from the lower atmosphere using Meteodrones, and weather data delivery via the Weather API [11].

Not only that meteomatics provides a lot of different connectors to different program languages, for instance Python (that is free of charge) [9]. It also has a pre-made python package that can be used to make API calls [13].

4) Meteomatics vs OpenWeatherMap: There are some differences between Meteomatics and OpenWeatherMap. First of all Meteomatics offers more features in its free plan, such as historical data of the past 24 hours, but the free plan is limited to 500 calls per day [9]. OpenWeatherMap on the other hand offers a free plan that allows 60 calls per minute, one million calls per month, and 5-day forecast, but it does not include historical data [3].

Another advantage that Meteomatics provides is that they provide pre-made connectors, this makes it easier to implement the API in our application. The data that they use are mostly the same, but like mentioned above, Meteomatics also makes use of Meteodrones to gather data from the lower atmosphere [11]. If this makes their data more accurate is not known, but it is extra data that OpenWeatherMap does not have.

Also, the response time of Meteomatics is faster than OpenWeatherMap. While it is not directly stated how fast Openweathermap response time is, it is known that it takes at most 1s, while Meteomatics is around 30ms [9].

5) How it can be used?: We can make use of API calls to get weather data from different APIs. Some interesting use cases are:

- **Self made historical data**: We can use the data from the APIs to create our own historical data. This is useful because not all models or APIs provide historical data.
- **Model training**: We can use the data from the APIs to train our models.
- **Prediction**: We can use the data from the APIs to make predictions.
- etc.

In general there are many use cases for APIs, and they are very versatile.

6) Advantages of APIs: Here are some of the advantages of APIs

- **Accuracy and speed** - OpenWeatherMap and Meteomatics uses machine learning to significantly advance both the accuracy and computing speed of global assemble forecasting models, a practice that was impossible only a few years ago.
- **Global coverage** - OpenWeatherMap and Meteomatics provides weather data for any location on the globe.
- **No computing power needed** - OpenWeatherMap and Meteomatics does not require any computing power from our side. What we mean by that, is that the data is already processed and ready to use to make predictions.
- **Multi-layer maps** - OpenWeatherMap and Meteomatics provides beautiful multi-layer maps that create the visual perception of weather.
- **Easy to use** - OpenWeatherMap and Meteomatics are both easy to use, and provide a lot of different current and historical data.

7) Disadvantages of APIs: Here are some of the disadvantages of APIs

- **Limited free plan** - OpenWeatherMap offers a free plan that allows 60 calls per minute, one million calls

per month, and 5-day forecast, but it does not include historical data. Meteomatics offers a free plan that offers more features than OpenWeatherMap, but it is limited to 500 calls per day.

- **No control over the data** - OpenWeatherMap and Meteomatics does not give us any control over the data. We can only use the data that they provide.
- **No control over the model** - OpenWeatherMap and Meteomatics does not give us any control over the model. We can only make API calls to get the data, from the models they compute.

These disadvantages are not that big of a deal, because we can make use of the free plan, and we can make use of the data to train our own models.

D. Machine learning models (pretrained)

Last but not least, we will look at machine learning models. These are models that are already trained on a lot of data, and can then be used to predict the weather. So the hassle of training is already done for us (also in the case of APIs).

1) How does it work?: These are machine learning models that are already trained on a lot of data. They are ready to use, and can be used to predict the weather.

2) ClimaX:
ClimaX is the first foundation model designed to perform a wide variety of weather and climate modeling tasks. For weather, these tasks include standard forecasting tasks of relevant weather variables like temperature, humidity, etc. with various lead-times at various resolutions, both globally and regionally. For climate, ClimaX can help to make better long-term projections, or to downscale lower resolution model outputs to higher resolutions. At its core, ClimaX is a multidimensional image-to-image translation architecture based on Vision Transformers (ViT). ViT-based architectures are especially well suited for modeling weather and climate phenomena since they naturally tokenize the spatial nature of multiscale data akin to different spatial-temporal inputs. Additionally, they offer the opportunity to extend tokenization towards a wide range of multichannel features [14].

Results highlights:
Forecasting the future values of key weather variables at different temporal horizons is critical to ensuring the safety of communities and infrastructure around the world. ERA5 is the latest climate reanalysis produced by ECMWF, providing hourly data on many atmospheric, land-surface and sea-state parameters together with estimates of uncertainty [15]. ERA5 reanalysis data from the ECMWF underlies as the key source of data for training and evaluating machine learning models on this task with performance of Operation IFS being the current state-of-the art numerical weather prediction baseline. ClimaX when fine-tuned on the same ERA5 data, even at medium resolutions 1.40625°already performs comparably, if not better than IFS on short and medium-range predictions, while being substantially better at longer horizon predictions [14].
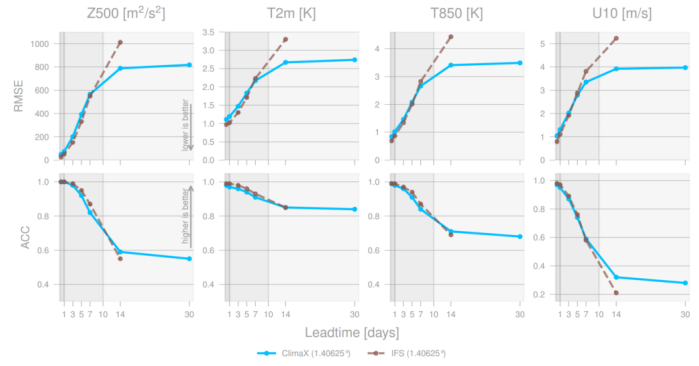

Fig. 1. ClimaX vs IFS on global forecasting of key weather variables at different lead time horizons

In figure 1, we compare the performance of ClimaX vs IFS on global forecasting of key weather variables at different lead time horizons:

- Temperature T2M (2m above ground)
- Temperature T850 (850hPa)
- Wind speed U10M (10m above ground)
- Geo-potential height Z500 (500hPa)

In short, we can see that ClimaX performs somewhat comparably to IFS on short and medium-range predictions, while being substantially better at longer horizon predictions (in most of these graphs, 14 days and above).

3) GraphCast: GraphCast is a machine learning-based method developed by Google DeepMind for medium-range global weather forecasting. It is an autoregressive model based on graph neural networks and a novel high-resolution multiscale mesh representation. It is a mesh representation used to represent the Earth's surface and atmosphere. The mesh is a grid of points that are connected by lines to form triangles. The mesh is multiscale, meaning that it has different resolutions at different levels. The mesh is high-resolution, meaning that it has a high density of points, which allows for more accurate predictions. GraphCast is trained on historical weather data from the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF)'s ERA5 reanalysis archive [17].

It starts with the current state of Earth's weather and data about the weather six hours ago. Then, it makes a prediction about what the weather will look like six hours from now.
GraphCast then feeds those predictions back into the model, performs the same calculation, and spits out longer-term forecasts [17].

GraphCast's multiscale mesh representation.
A) First, we insert the data into the model. B) Then we perform GraphCast to predict data, we feed this data back into the model. C) We perform GraphCast again to predict data, we feed this data back into the model and do this repeatedly. D) The encoder component maps local regions
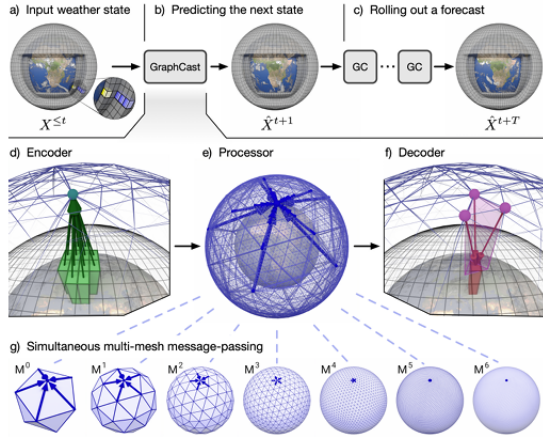
Fig. 2. Steps of GraphCast

of the input (the green boxes) into nodes of the multi-mesh graph representation. E) The processor component performs a series of graph neural network (GNN) message passing steps to update the node features. F) The decoder component maps the updated node features back to the output (the purple boxes). G) The multi-mesh is a set of icosahedral meshes of increasing resolution, from the base mesh (M^0, 12 nodes) to the finest resolution (M^6, 40, 962 nodes), which has uniform resolution across the globe. Each node belongs to a particular mesh resolution, and is connected to all neighboring nodes at the same resolution, as well as higher resolutions. The learned message-passing over the different meshes' edges happens simultaneously, so that each node is updated by all of its incoming edges.

The package contains example code to run and train GraphCast. It also provides three pretrained models: GraphCast, the high-resolution model used in the GraphCast paper (0.25 degree resolution, 37 pressure levels), trained on ERA5 data from 1979 to 2017, Grap_Cast_small, a smaller, low-resolution version of GraphCast (1 degree resolution, 13 pressure levels, and a smaller mesh), trained on ERA5 data from 1979 to 2015, useful to run a model with lower memory and compute constraints, GraphCast_operational, a high-resolution model (0.25 degree resolution, 13 pressure levels) pretrained on ERA5 data from 1979 to 2017 and fine-tuned on HRES data from 2016 to 2021 [18].

4) ClimaX vs GraphCast:
ClimaX and GraphCast are both tools used in the field of weather and climate modeling, but they serve different purposes and have different features.
ClimaX is a foundation model designed for a wide variety of weather and climate modeling tasks. It is based on Vision Transformers (ViT) and is capable of performing standard forecasting tasks of relevant weather variables like temperature, humidity, etc. with various lead-times at various resolutions, both globally and regionally. It can also help to make better long-term projections, or to downscale lower resolution

model outputs to higher resolutions.

On the other hand, GraphCast is a machine learning-based method developed by Google DeepMind for medium-range global weather forecasting. It uses graph neural networks and a novel high-resolution multiscale mesh representation to make weather predictions. It is an autoregressive model that starts with the current state of Earth's weather and data about the weather six hours ago, then makes a prediction about what the weather will look like six hours from now. This process is repeated to generate longer-term forecasts.

In summary, while ClimaX is a foundation model used for a wide range of weather and climate modeling tasks, GraphCast is a machine learning-based method specifically designed for medium-range global weather forecasting.

5) How can they be used?: For our project, we can use these pre-trained models to make accurate predictions about the weather. We can use them to predict the weather for the next few days, weeks, or even months. The predictions that will be useful for our project are: precipitation, temperature, wind speed, and humidity.

6) Advantages of ML: There are many advantages to using a pre-trained model, but we will discuss the advantages relevant to our project.

- **Versatility:** ClimaX is designed to perform a wide variety of weather and climate modeling tasks. It can help make better long-term projections or downscale lower resolution model outputs to higher resolution [14].
- **Fine-tuning:** The model can be fine-tuned to address a wide variety of climate and weather tasks, including those that involve atmospheric variables and spatio-temporal granularity unseen during pretraining [14]
- **Speed and Accuracy:** GraphCast delivers 10-day weather predictions at unprecedented accuracy in under one minute. It predicts weather conditions up to 10 days in advance more accurately and much faster than the industry gold-standard weather simulation system [21].

7) Disadvantages of ML: Alongside the advantages, there are also disadvantages to using a pre-trained model, specifically ClimaX and GraphCast.

- **Limitations in Prediction:** While ClimaX outperforms baselines in terms of temperature prediction, it underperforms in terms of precipitation prediction [16].
- **Data Dependency:** GraphCast is trained on decades of historical weather data to learn a model of the cause and effect relationships that govern how Earth's weather evolves. This means its performance is heavily dependent on the quality and comprehensiveness of the training data [21].

III. CONCLUSION

We have looked at a variety of different methods for simulating weather and climate. We have looked at STEP, OpenWeatherMap, Meteomatics, ClimaX, and GraphCast, but what is the best method for our application?

So if we look at the algorithms, we can see that this is not a good choice for our application. We want an easy-to-use method, and this is not the case for algorithms, because we have to implement the algorithm ourselves and make sure that it works.

Now let's look at the APIs. Both OpenWeatherMap and Meteomatics are easy to use, and provide a lot of different current and historical data. The biggest downside of these APIs is that they are very limited in their free plan, in case we want to make more than 500 calls per day (1000 for OpenWeatherMap), we have to upgrade to a paid plan. Not only that having access to deep historical data is not possible with these APIs, if we don't want to pay for it.

Now let's look at the machine learning models. Both ClimaX and GraphCast are very accurate, and very fast. Both are pretrained and easy to implement in our application. The biggest downside of these models is that they are black box models, meaning that it is not possible or hard to understand how they work. (Not a downside that affects our application)

In general, the combination of an API and a machine learning model is the best option for our application. We can make use of the API to get the current weather data and slowly build up our historical data. In case the amount of API calls is not enough, we can make use of the machine learning model to predict the weather. Also, in case we want concurrent weather data, we can make use of the machine learning model.

A good combination would be OpenWeatherMap and ClimaX. This is because OpenWeatherMap has a free plan with 1000 calls per day (usually enough) and ClimaX is a well tested and accurate model. A good alternative would be Meteomatics and ClimaX, this is because Meteomatics has premade connectors to different program languages, which makes it easier to implement in our application. Also, it has a python package that can be used to make API calls. So in regard to implementation, Meteomatics is a better choice than OpenWeatherMap.

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