

# Sea-ice emulator in the Arctic region

Flavia Porro

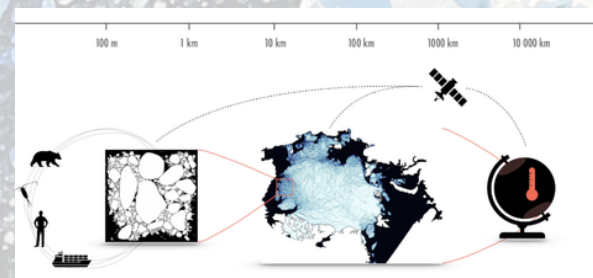
C. Durand, G. De Cillis, T. Finn, M. Bocquet, A. Carrassi

April 14th, 2026 - Bologna

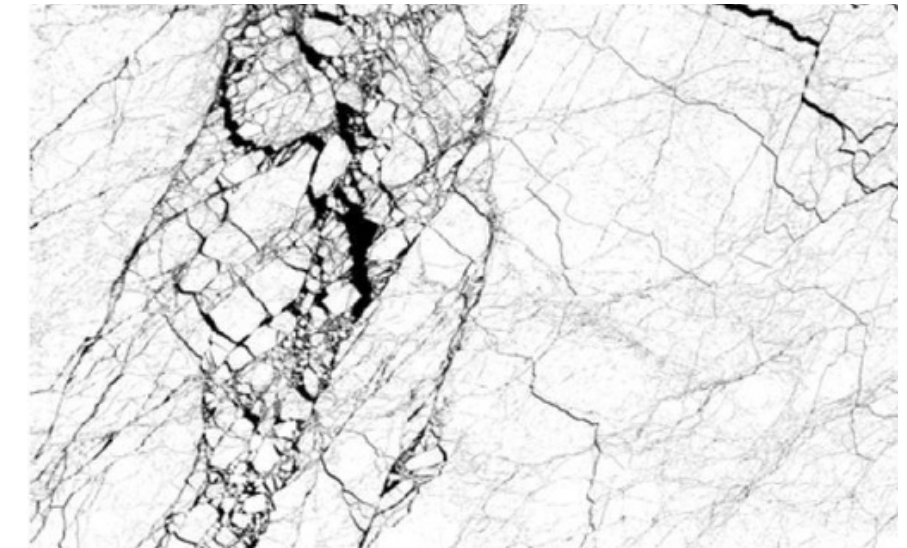
ECMWF - ESA workshop



This project is supported by Schmidt Sciences, LLC

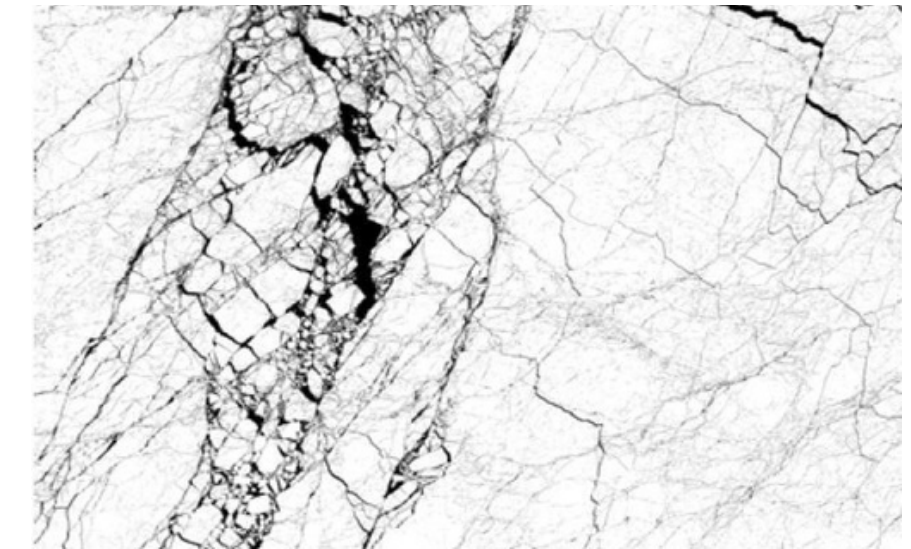


# Where we stand



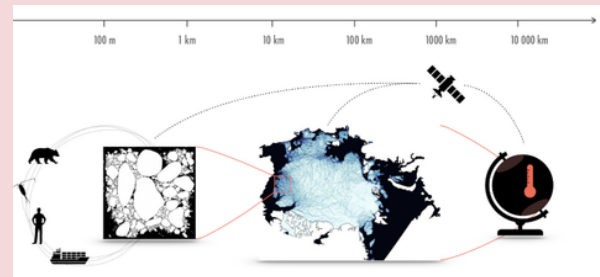
# Where we stand

What kind of model can capture the complexity of such system?



## neXtSIM

- **Dynamical and thermodynamical** sea ice model, fully Lagrangian coupled with ocean (Rampal et al. 2016)
- **Brittle Bingham-Maxwell** rheology (Olason, 2021).



The Scale-Aware Sea Ice Project  
**SASIP**

The Cryosphere, 10, 1055–1073, 2016  
www.the-cryosphere.net/10/1055/2016/  
doi:10.5194/tc-10-1055-2016  
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### neXtSIM: a new Lagrangian sea ice model

Pierre Rampal<sup>1</sup>, Sylvain Bouillon<sup>1</sup>, Einar Ólason<sup>1</sup>, and Mathieu Morlighem<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Nansen Environmental and Remote Sensing Center and Bjerknes Centre for Climate Research, Bergen, Norway

<sup>2</sup>Department of Earth System Science, University of California, Irvine, California, USA

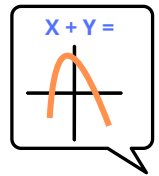
Correspondence to: Pierre Rampal (pierre.rampal@nersc.no)

Received: 18 September 2015 – Published in The Cryosphere Discuss.: 30 October 2015  
Revised: 22 April 2016 – Accepted: 3 May 2016 – Published: 20 May 2016

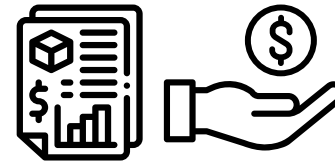
Symbol	Name	Meaning	Unit
$h$	sea ice thickness	volume of ice per unit area	$m$
$h_s$	snow thickness	volume of snow per unit area	$m$
$A$	sea ice concentration	surface of ice per unit area	–
$d$	sea ice damage	0 = undamaged; 1 = completely damaged	–
$u, v$	sea ice velocity	horizontal sea ice velocities	$ms^{-1}$
$\sigma$	sea ice internal stress	planer internal stress	$Nm^{-2}$

# Motivation for my contribution

Physical based models, describe with great details some of the many complex processes occurring in the sea-ice.



However, these models are computationally very costly.



We aim to emulate sea-ice process with **data-driven model**.



Starting from



The Cryosphere, 18, 1791–1815, 2024  
<https://doi.org/10.5194/tc-18-1791-2024>  
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The Cryosphere  Open Access

## Data-driven surrogate modeling of high-resolution sea-ice thickness in the Arctic

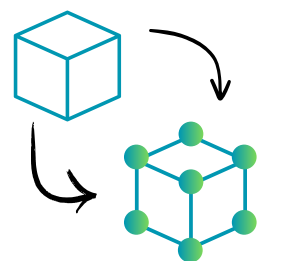
Charlotte Durand<sup>1</sup>, Tobias Sebastian Finn<sup>1</sup>, Alban Farchi<sup>1</sup>, Marc Bocquet<sup>1</sup>, Guillaume Boutin<sup>2</sup>, and Einar Ólason<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>CEREA, École des Ponts and EDF R&D, Île-de-France, France

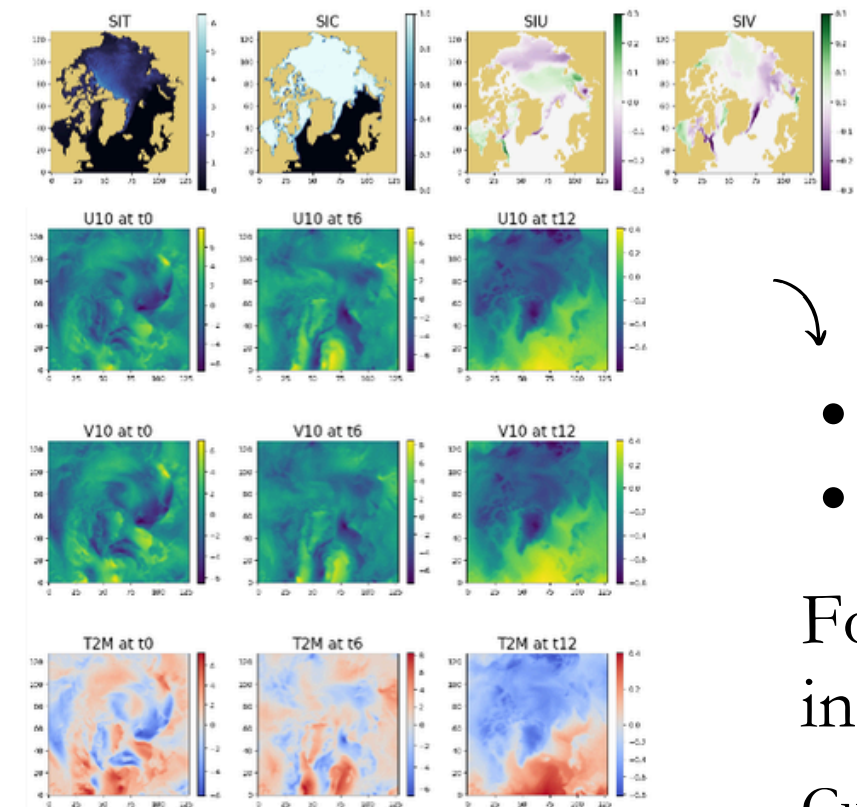
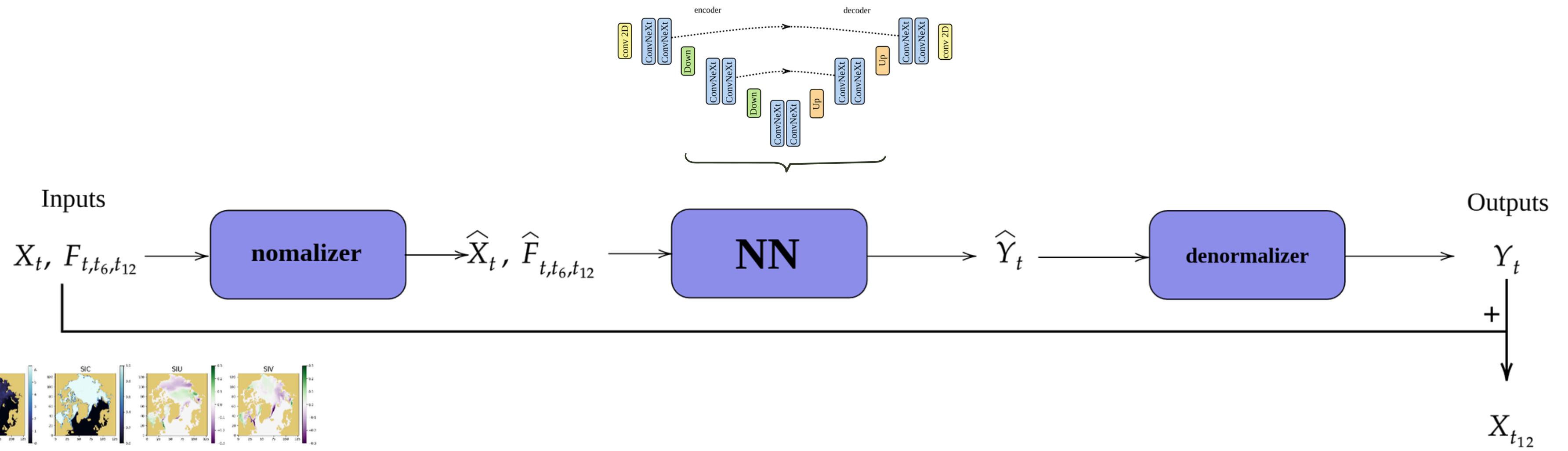
<sup>2</sup>Nansen Environmental and Remote Sensing Center, 5007 Bergen, Norway

We now build a **multi-variate emulator** including also sea-ice concentration (**SIC**) and sea-ice velocities (**SIU**, **SIV**).

Final goal: **create an emulator for sea-ice system** that can be a useful tool for faster simulation and data assimilation application.



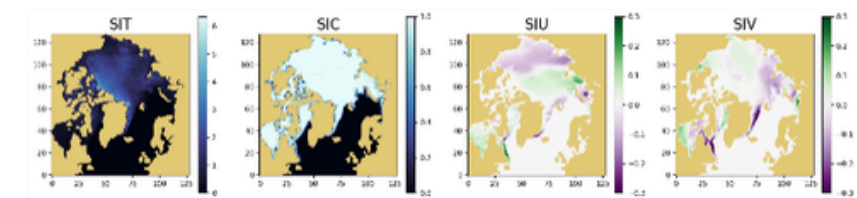
# Neural network architecture and training setup



- neXtSIM outputs,
- atmospheric forcing from ERA5 reanalysis

Forcing are given at different times, and they are interpolated from ERA5 grid to neXtSIM grid.

Current resolution: 48 km



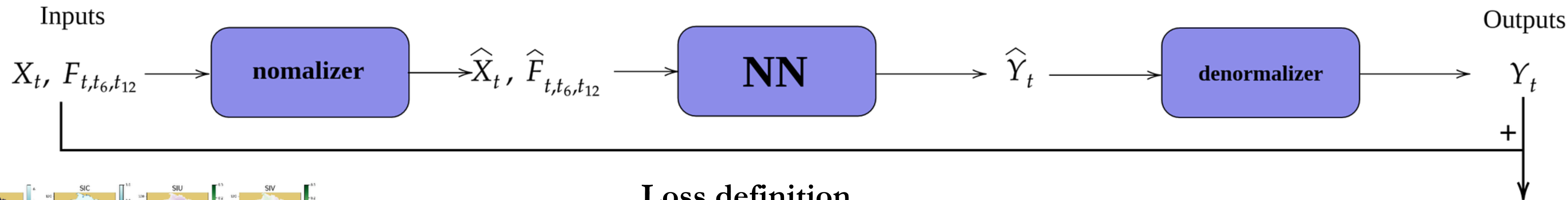
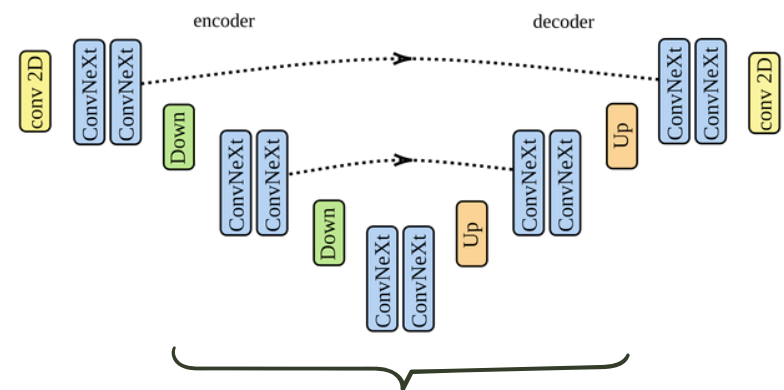
## Dataset

Training: from 2001 to 2014

Validation: 2015

Test: form 2016 to 2018

# Neural network architecture and training setup



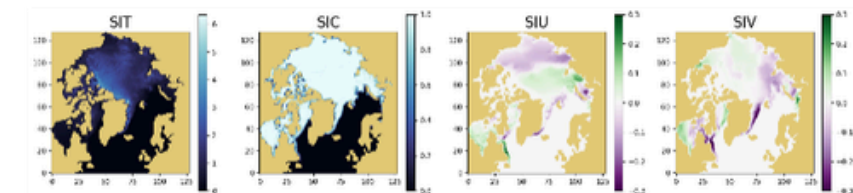
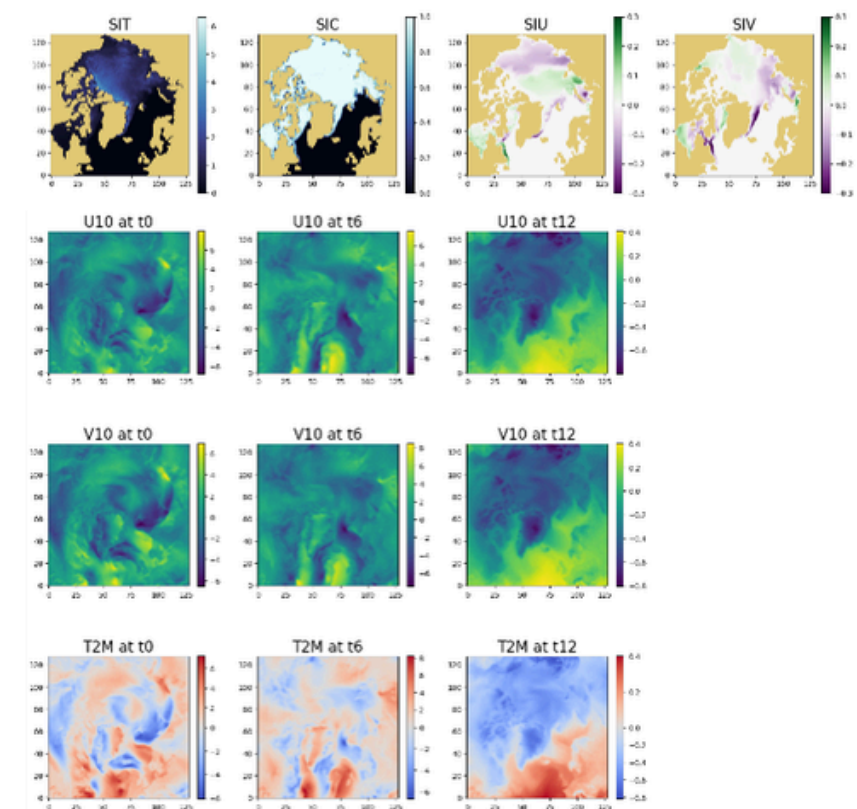
## Loss definition

$$\mathcal{L} = \frac{1}{N_{var}} \sum_i \frac{1}{\sigma_i} (loss_i)$$

$\sigma$  = std of each variable

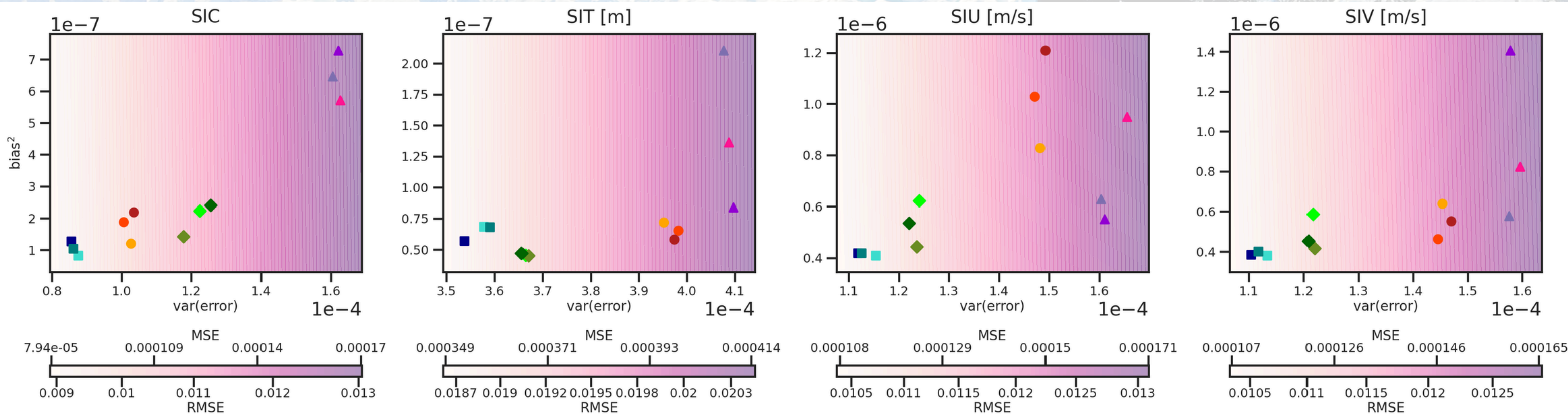
## Models

- A, MSE : SIC, SIT, SIU, SIV; MSE loss
- A, MAE : SIC, SIT, SIU, SIV; MAE loss
- B, MSE : Vol, SIT, SIU, SIV; MSE loss
- B, MAE : Vol, SIT, SIU, SIV; MAE loss



# Robustness of the training

12h



All configurations show **stable optimization**.

The effect of the **loss-variable choice** is most relevant.

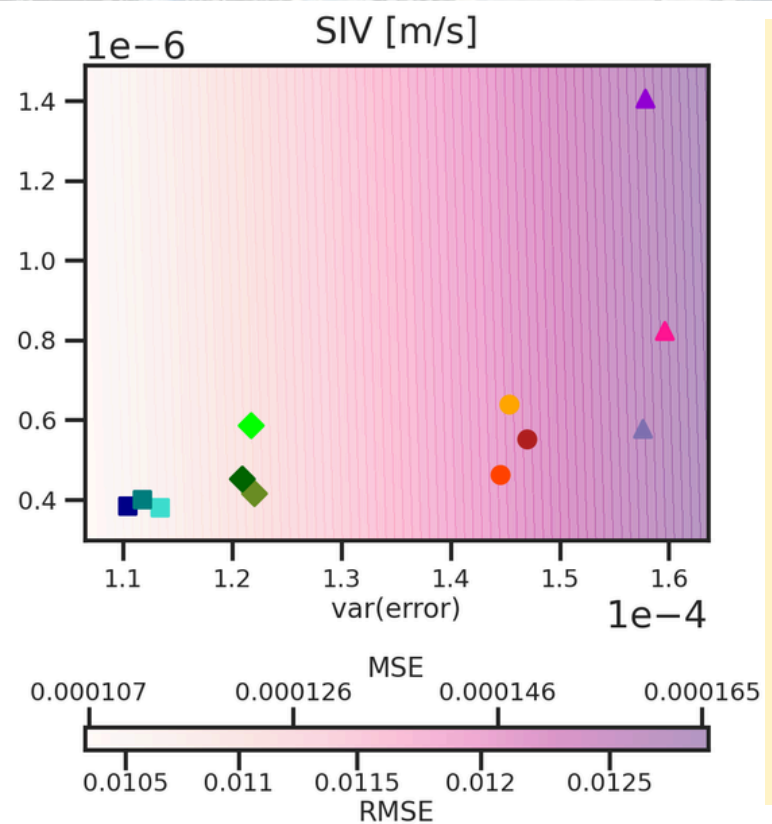
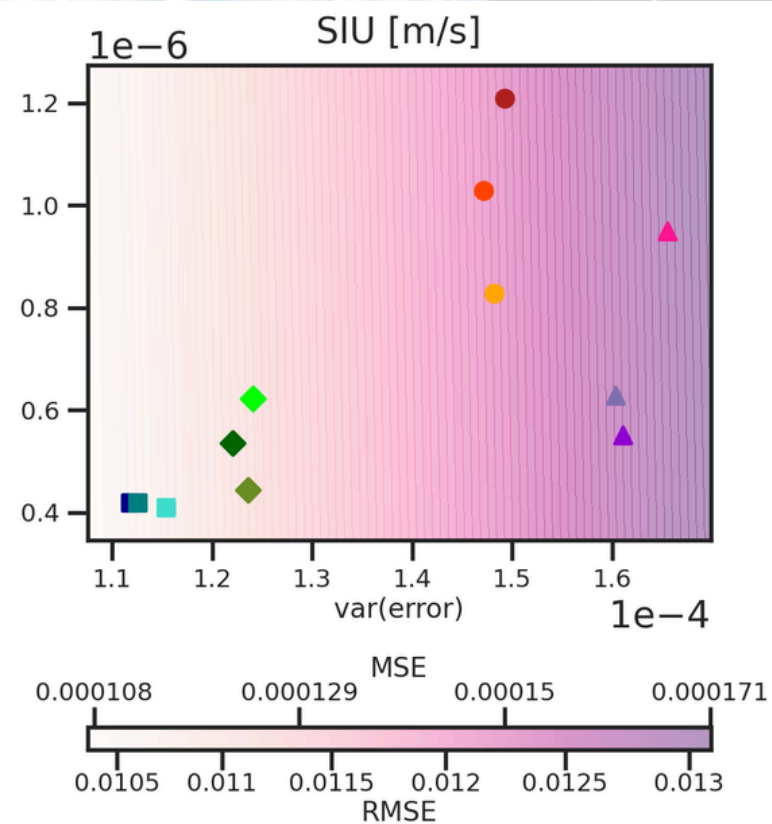
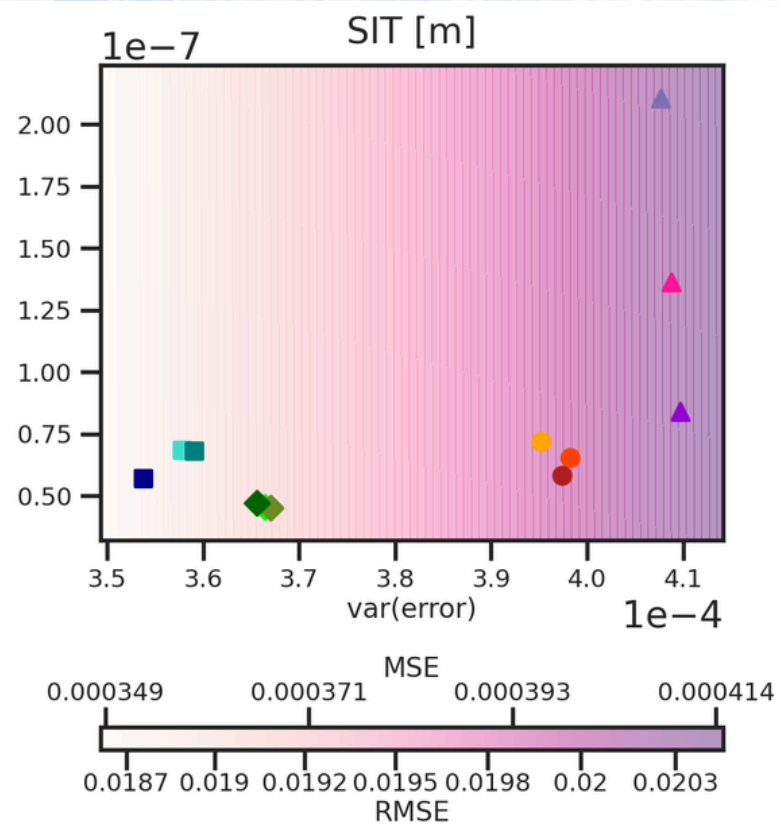
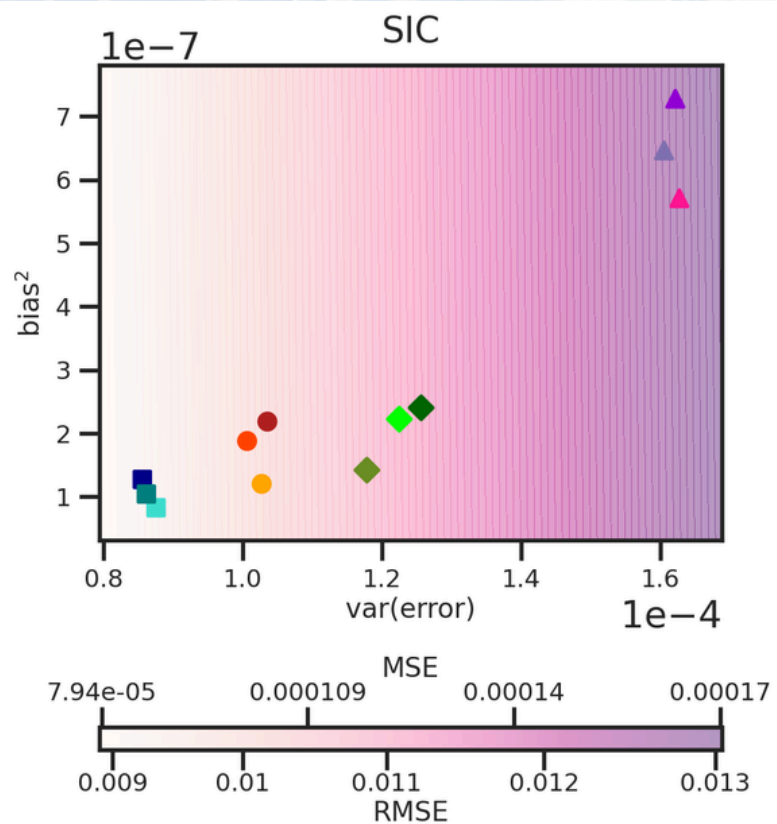
The **bias** represents a subtle but structurally more complex component of the error.



A, MSE : SIC, SIT, SIU, SIV; MSE loss  
 A, MAE : SIC, SIT, SIU, SIV; MAE loss  
 B, MSE : Vol, SIT, SIU, SIV; MSE loss  
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# Robustness of the training

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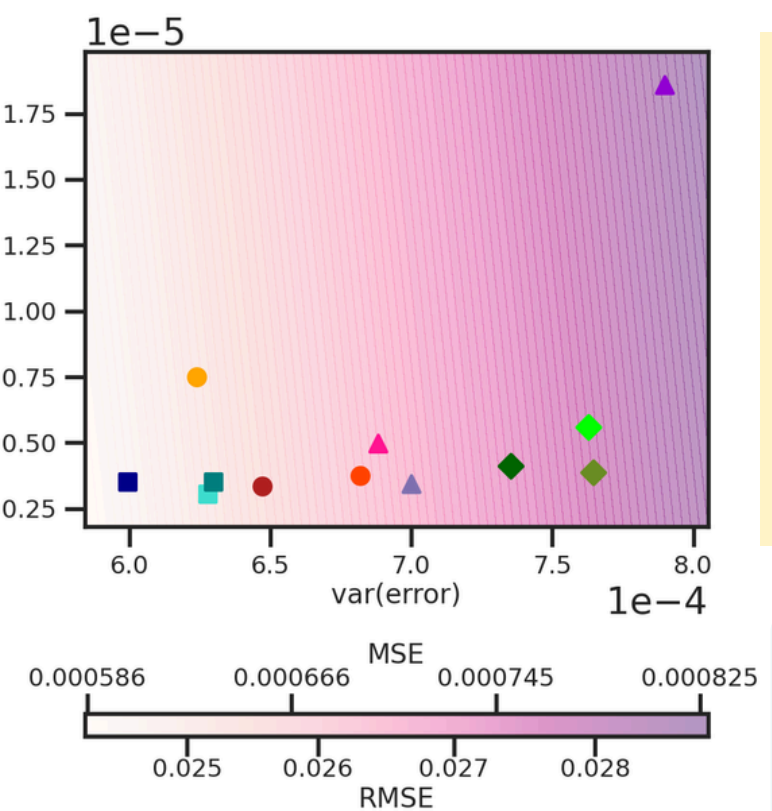
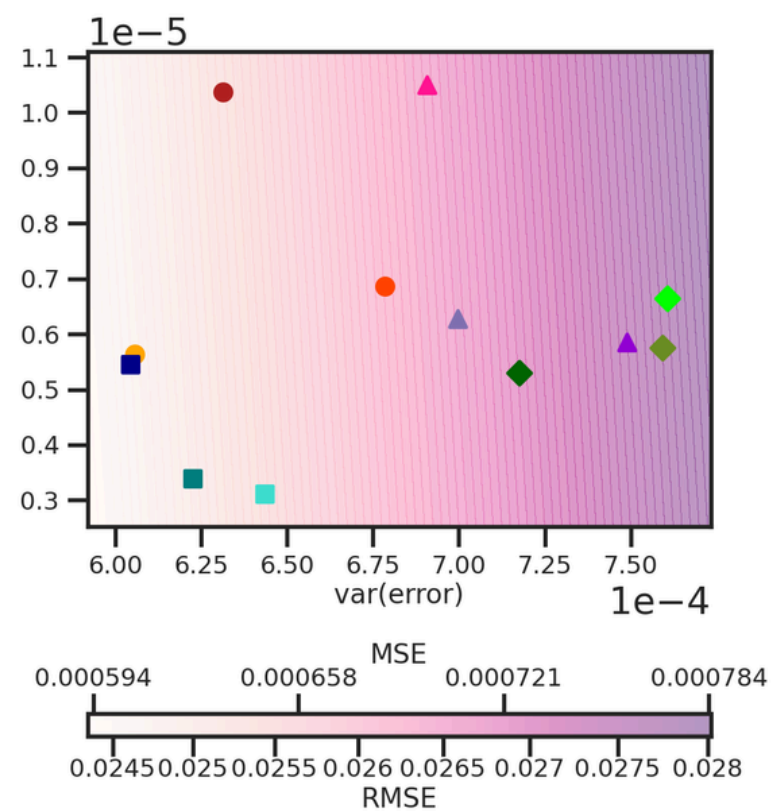
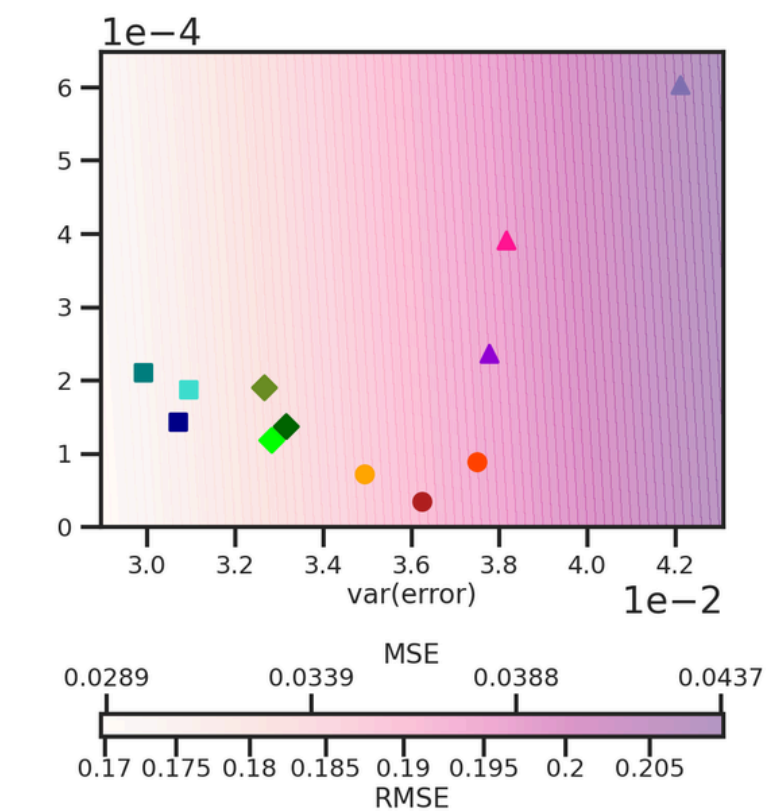
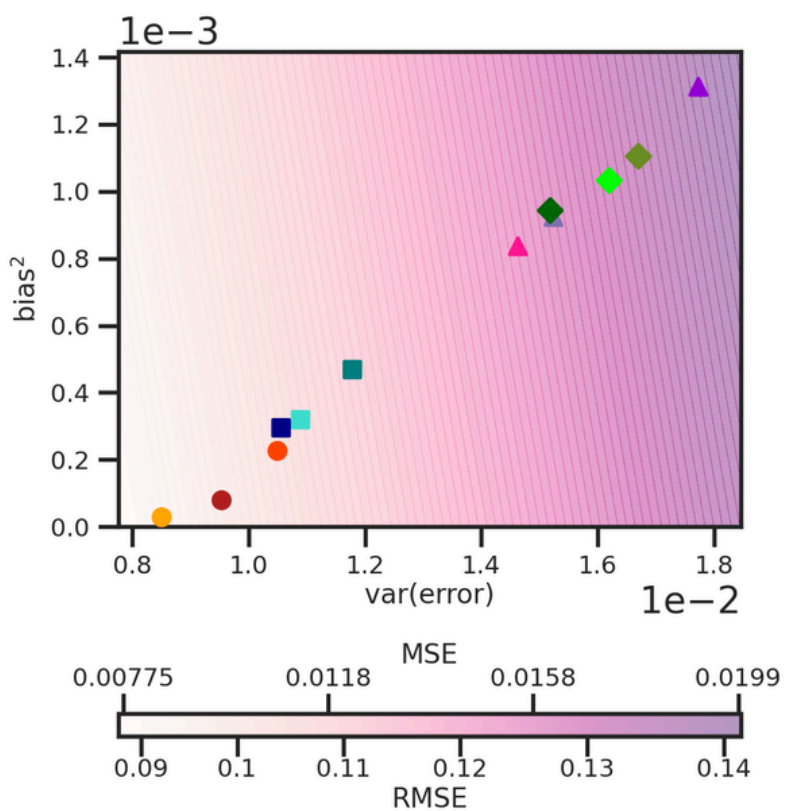


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30d

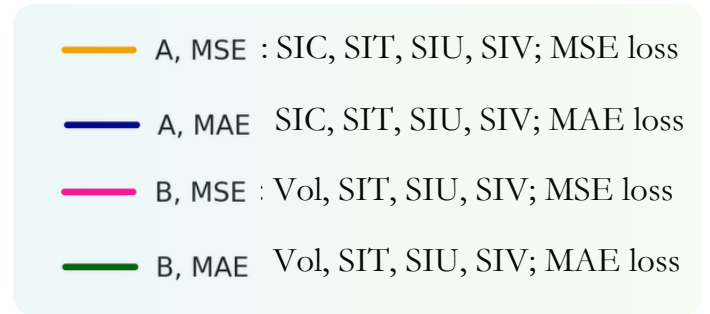
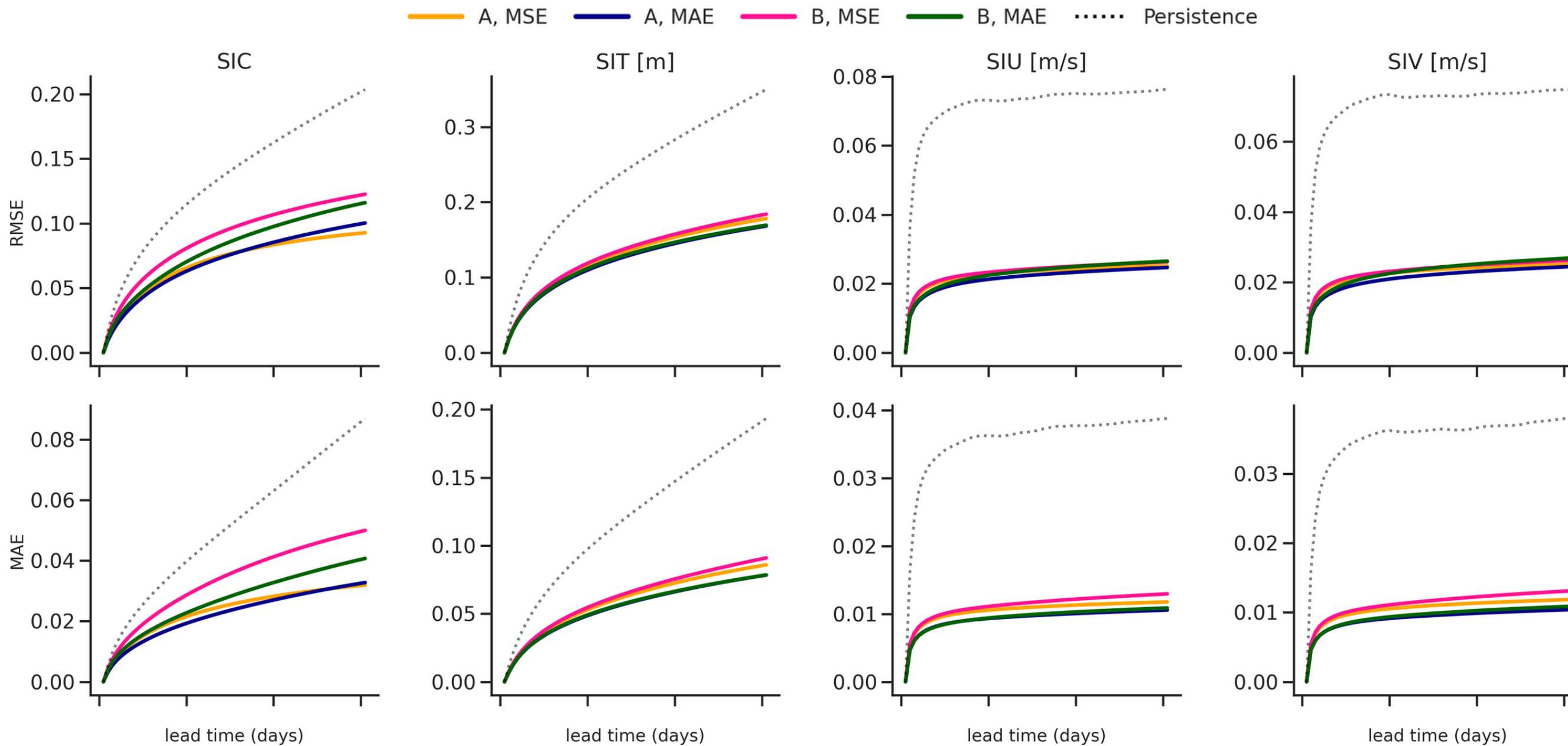


The **autoregressive error accumulation** progressively **dominates** the forecast error. At 30 days, it is more difficult to distinguish between model configuration.

- A - MSE: Seed 1    ■ A - MAE: Seed 1    ▲ B - MSE: Seed 1    ◆ B - MAE: Seed 1
- A - MSE: Seed 2    ■ A - MAE: Seed 2    ▲ B - MSE: Seed 2    ◆ B - MAE: Seed 2
- A - MSE: Seed 3    ■ A - MAE: Seed 3    ▲ B - MSE: Seed 3    ◆ B - MAE: Seed 3

- A, MSE : SIC, SIT, SIU, SIV; MSE loss
- A, MAE : SIC, SIT, SIU, SIV; MAE loss
- B, MSE : Vol, SIT, SIU, SIV; MSE loss
- B, MAE : Vol, SIT, SIU, SIV; MAE loss

# Emulator forecasting performances



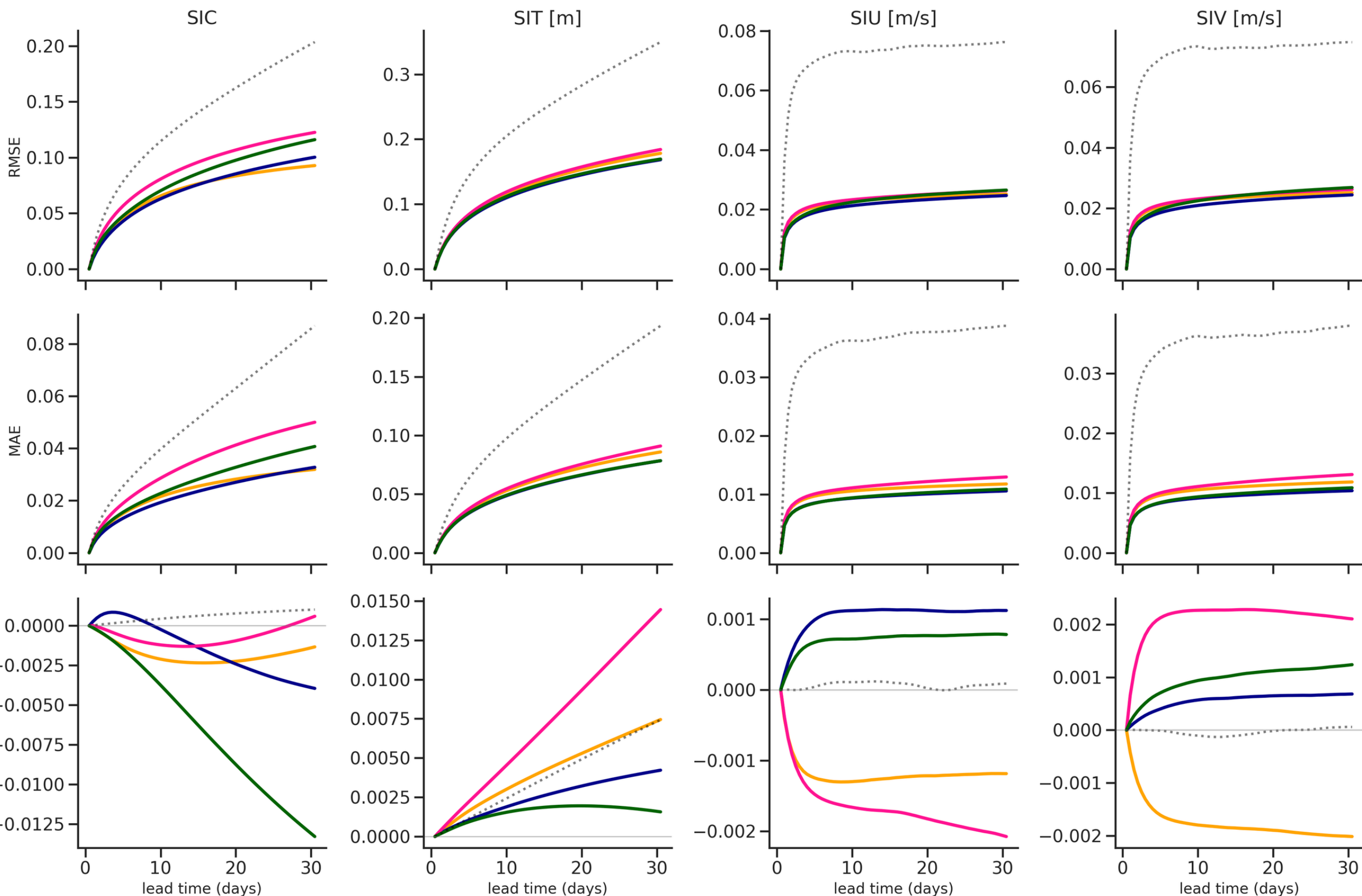
**30 days forecast skills,**  
averaged over the whole testing  
period.

The model performs **better**  
**than persistence** model in  
terms of the RMSE and MAE  
evaluation metrics.

Explicitly **supervising sea-ice**  
**concentration** is critical for  
accurate forecasts.

# Emulator forecasting performances

— A, MSE — A, MAE — B, MSE — B, MAE ..... Persistence



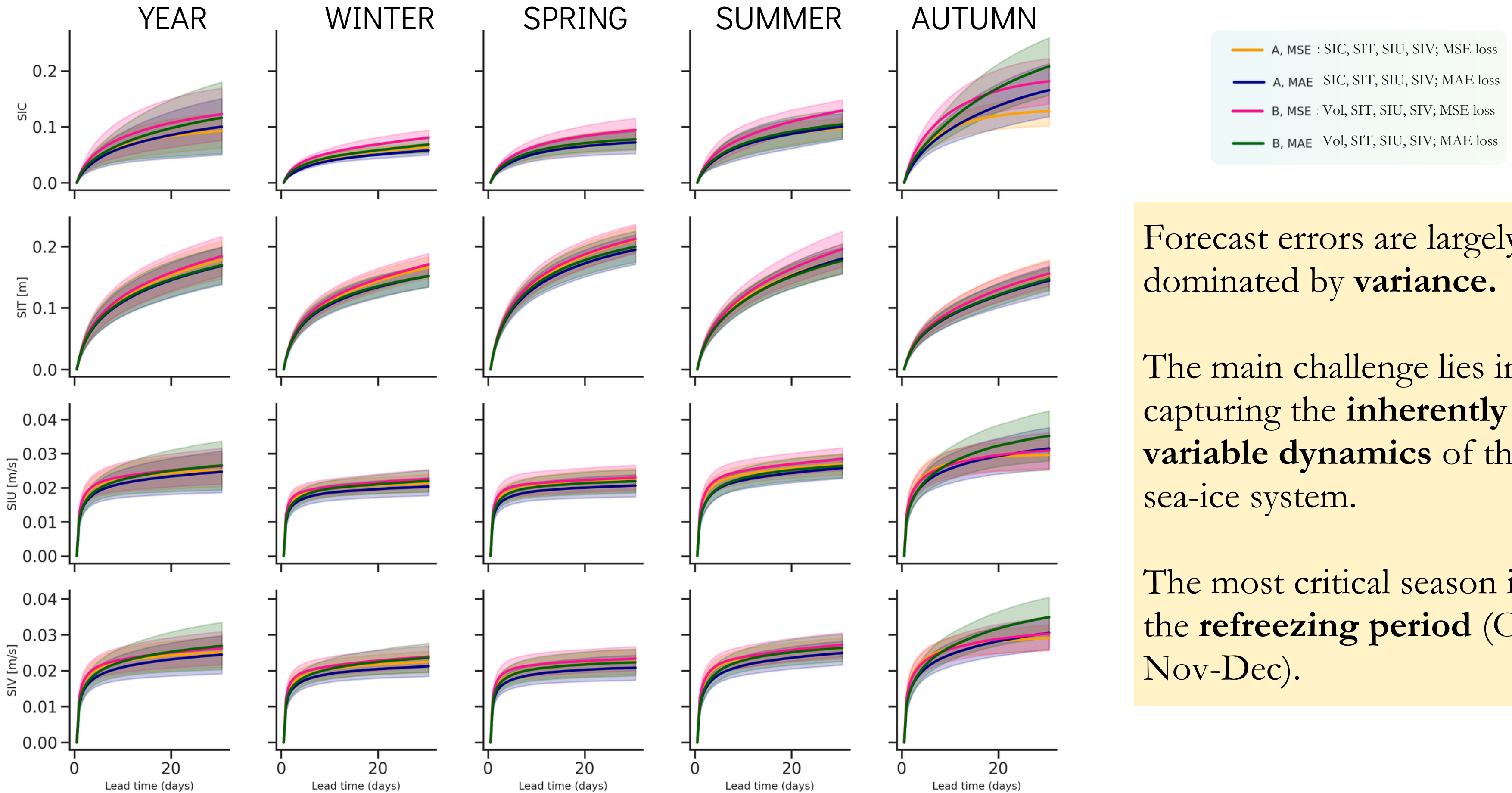
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# Emulator forecasting performances over seasons - RMSE

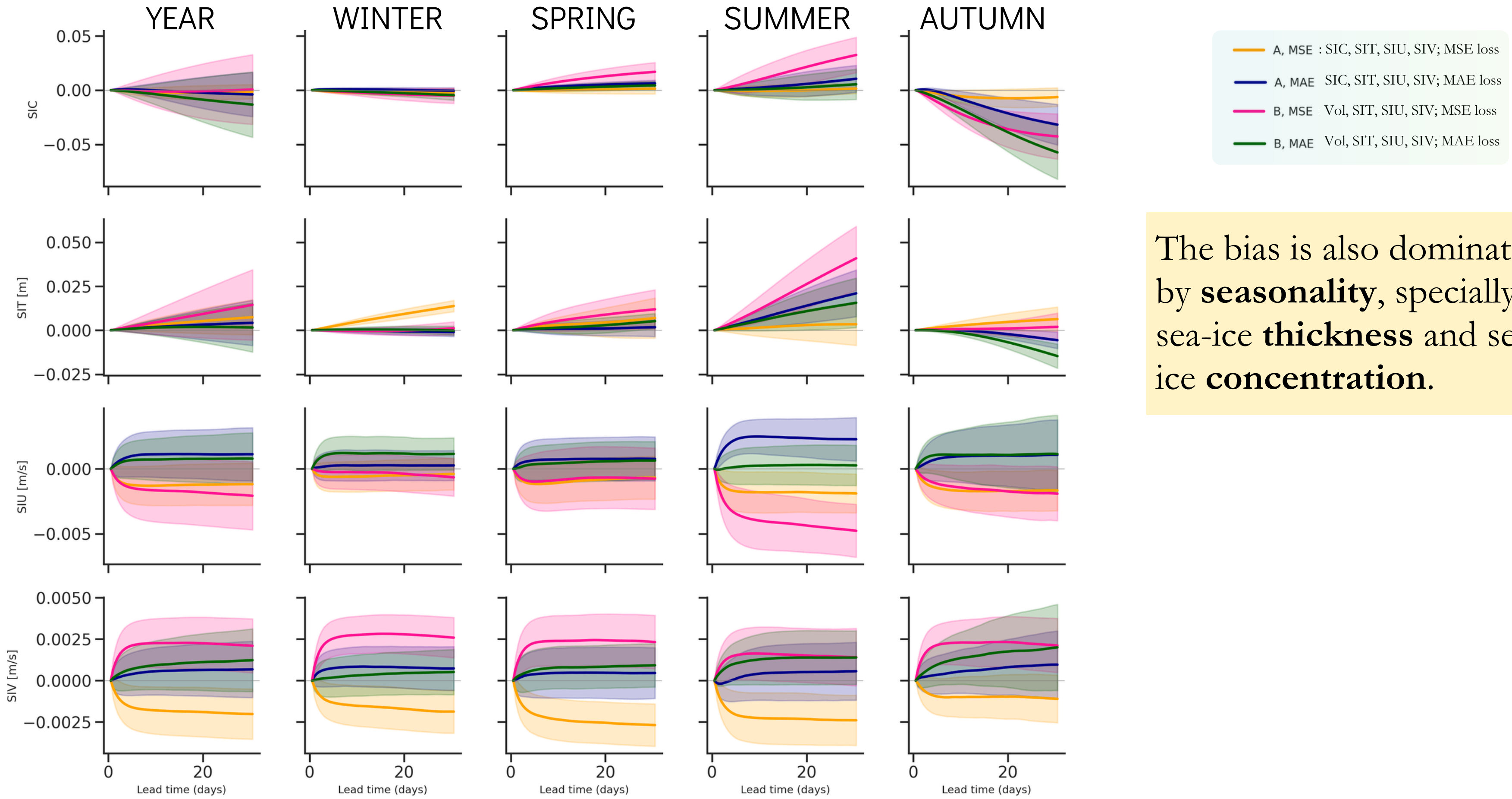


Forecast errors are largely dominated by **variance**.

The main challenge lies in capturing the **inherently variable dynamics** of the sea-ice system.

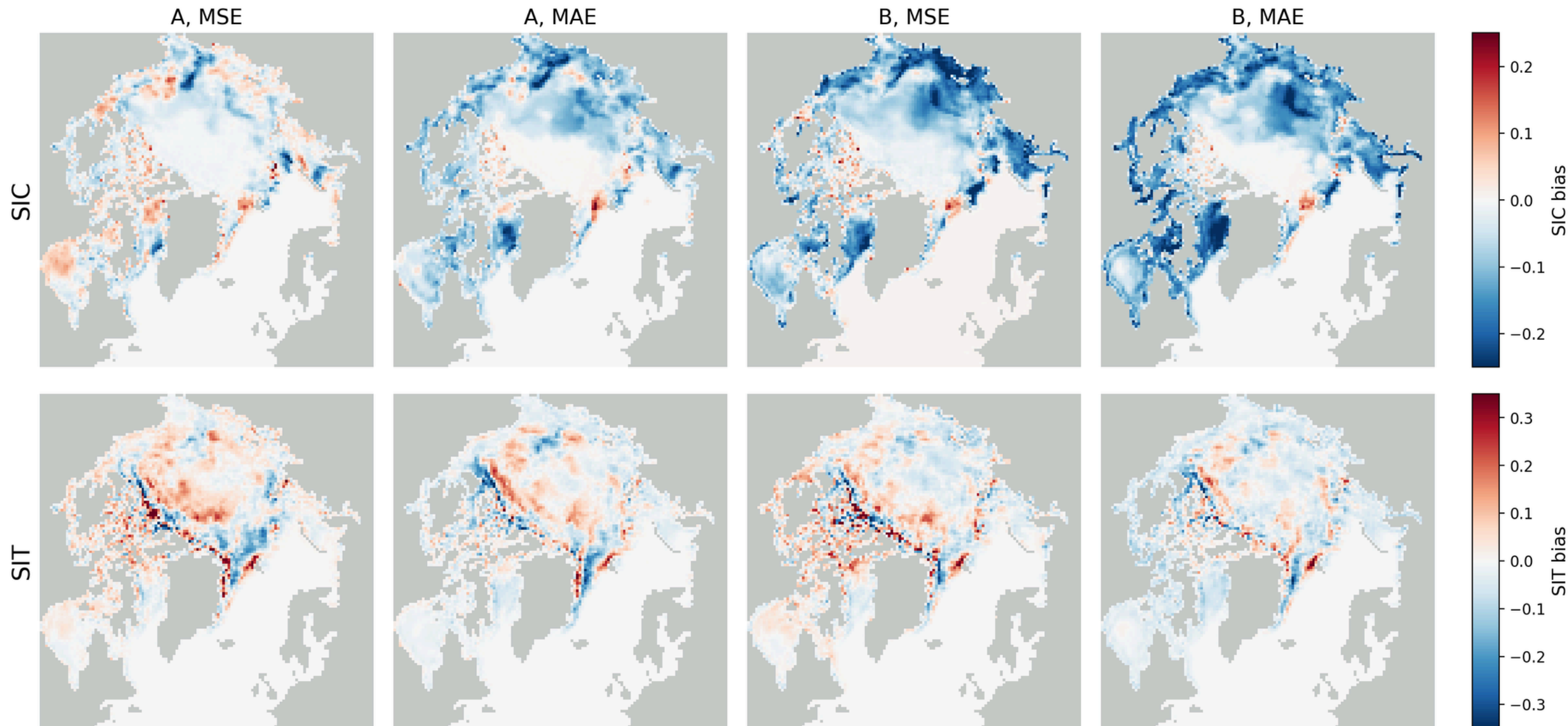
The most critical season is the **refreezing period** (Oct-Nov-Dec).

# Emulator forecasting performances over seasons - bias



The bias is also dominated by **seasonality**, specially for sea-ice **thickness** and sea-ice **concentration**.

# Sea-ice concentration at 30-day lead time during Oct-Nov-Dec



Bias computed as  
(surrogate - neXtSIM)

- **blue**: underestimation of the surrogate (in central pack and marginal zone for SIC);
- **red**: overestimation of the surrogate (boundary with land for SIT for both SIT and SIC).

A, MSE : SIC, SIT, SIU, SIV; MSE loss

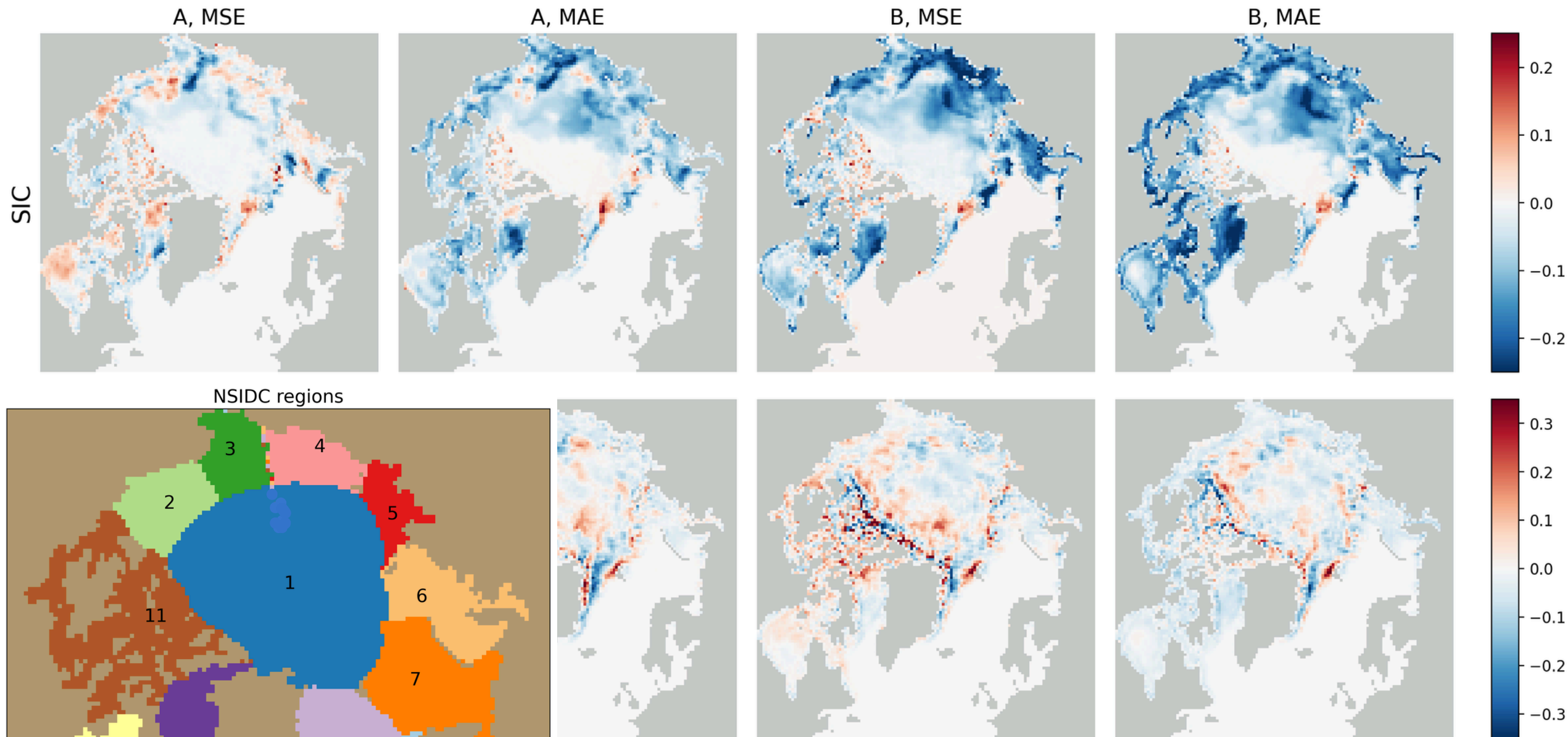
A, MAE : SIC, SIT, SIU, SIV; MAE loss

B, MSE : Vol, SIT, SIU, SIV; MSE loss

B, MAE : Vol, SIT, SIU, SIV; MAE loss

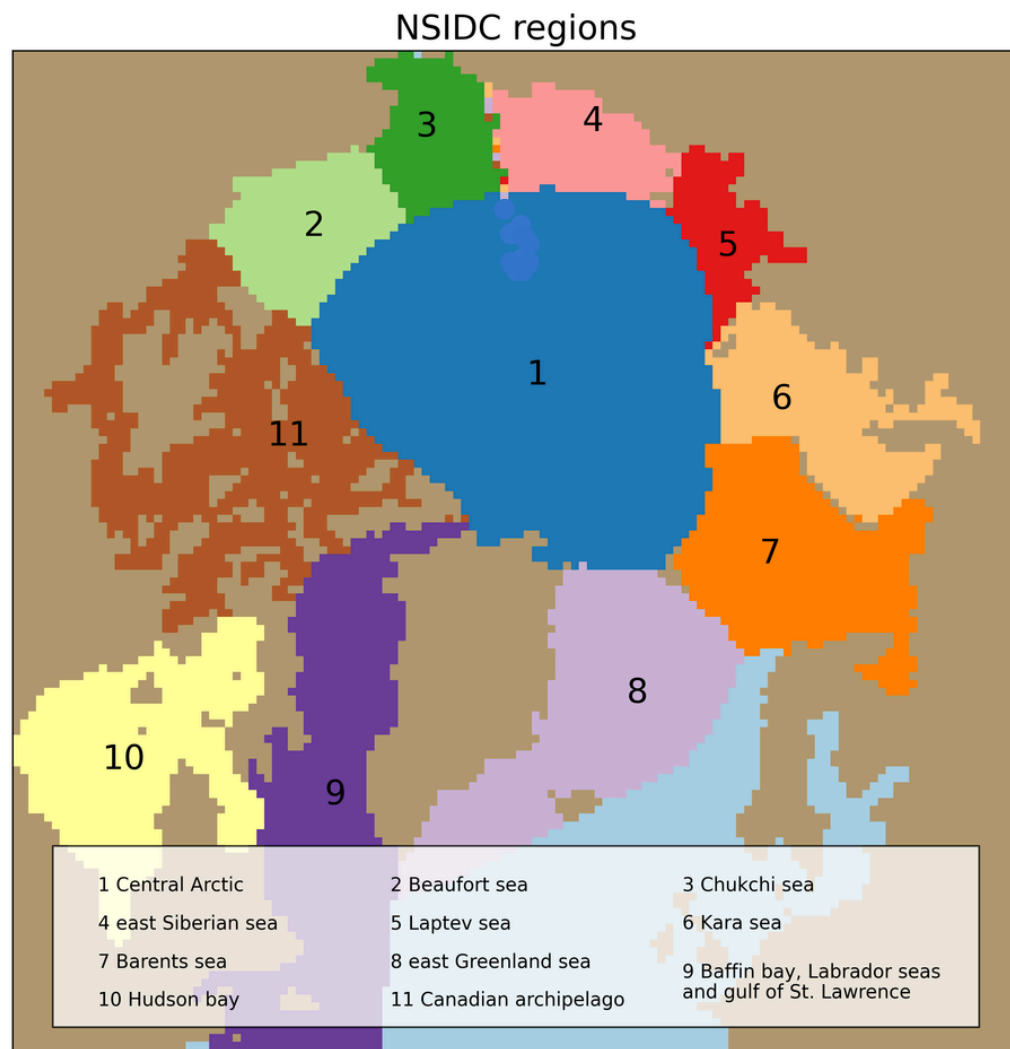
The bias for SIC and SIT show high locals values (up to 20% for SIC).

# Sea-ice concentration at 30-day lead time during Oct-Nov-Dec



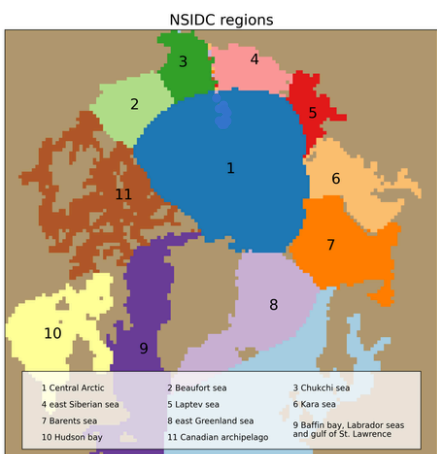
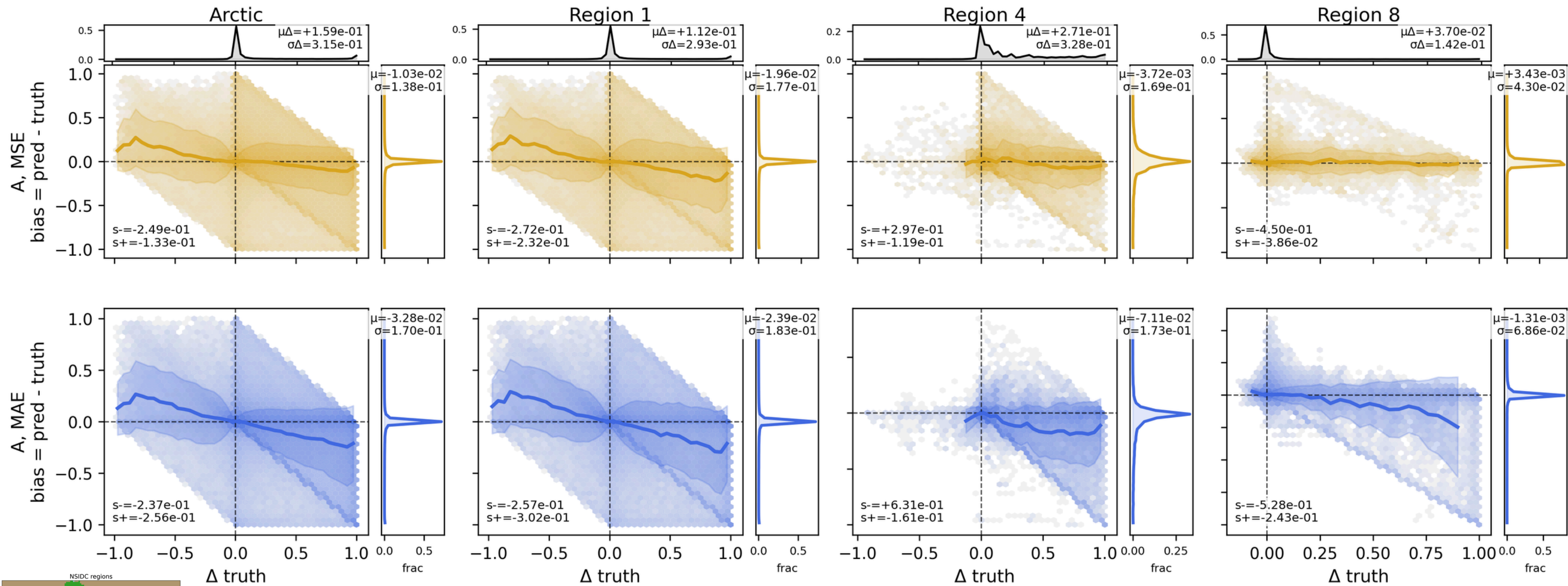
Bias computed as  
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- **blue**: underestimation of the surrogate (in central pack and marginal zone for SIC);
- **red**: overestimation of the surrogate (boundary with land for SIT for both SIT and SIC).



Let's focus on the models with configuration A (SIC, SIT, SIU, SIV). Let's look at the whole Arctic domain, and at the central Arctic (reg 1), the east Siberian sea (reg 4), and the east Greenland sea (reg 8) regions.

# Does the bias correlate with the temporal variability?



The central Arctic regions show a stronger correlation, for both models. The model A, MAE is generally slower than A, MSE in representing the refreezing process.

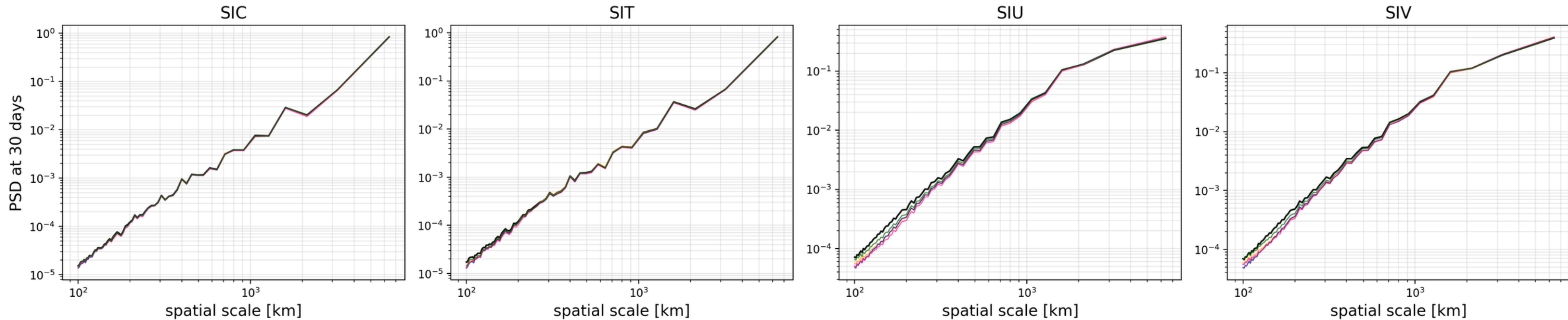
filter  
 $\Delta \neq 0$

# Power spectrum density

The **predicted fields are smoothed** compared with ground truth, due to the minimization of the MSE/MAE during training. This effect is measured with the **power spectrum density** analysis.

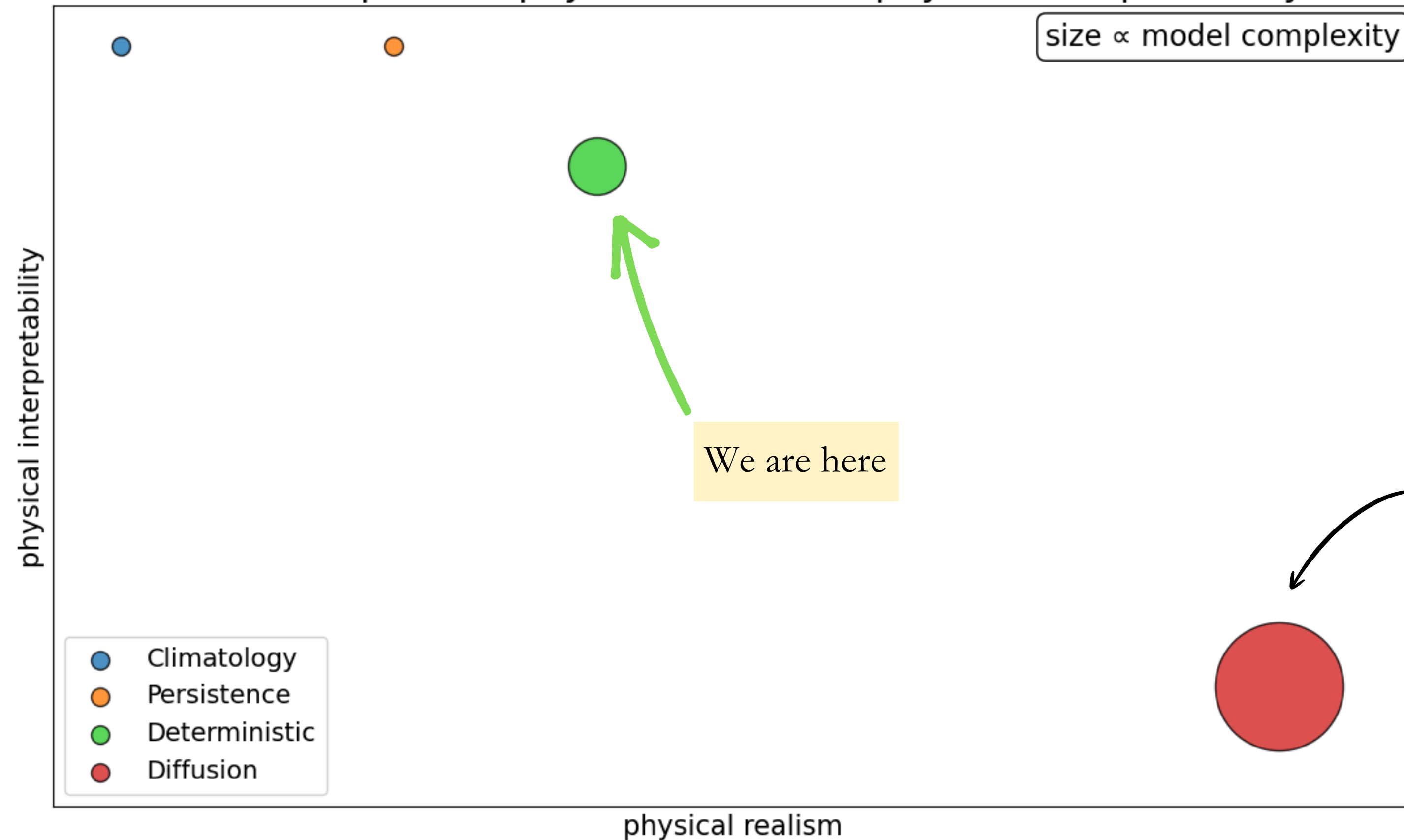
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- B, MAE : Vol, SIT, SIU, SIV; MAE loss

Here, the PSD is averaged over all the forecast cycles.



# Where we are

## Model comparison: physical realism vs physical interpretability



Generative AI models enable efficient and physically consistent sea-ice simulations

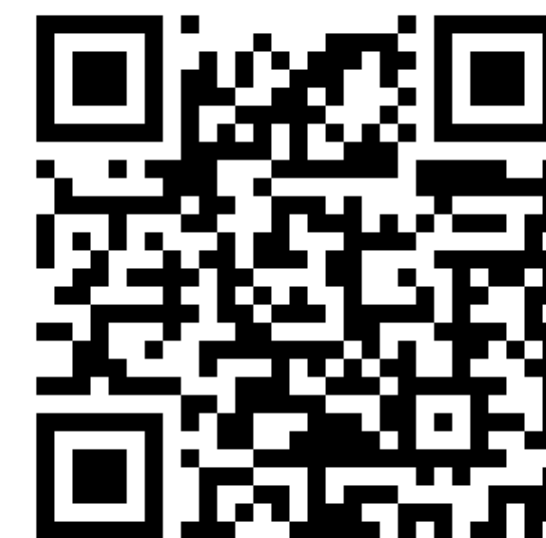
Tobias Sebastian Finn<sup>1\*</sup>, Marc Bocquet<sup>1</sup>, Pierre Rampal<sup>2</sup>,  
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Alberto Carrassi<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>CEREA, ENPC, EDF R&D, Institut Polytechnique de Paris,  
6-8 avenue Blaise Pascal, Cité Descartes, Champs-sur-Marne,  
Marne-la-Vallée, 77455, France.

<sup>2</sup>Institut des Geosciences de l'Environnement/CNRS, Grenoble, France.

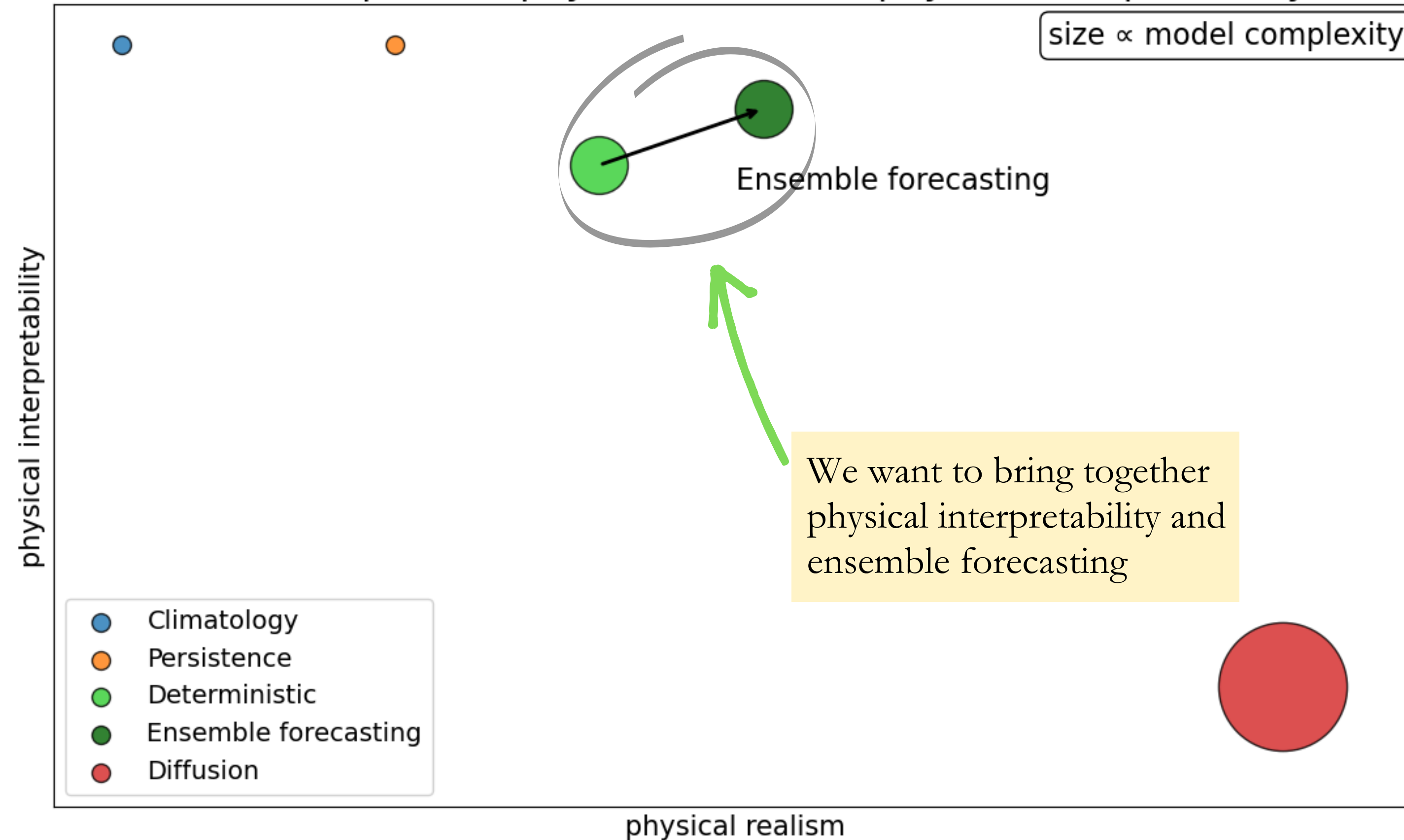
<sup>3</sup>Dept. of Physics and Astronomy "Augusto Righi",  
University of Bologna, Bologna, Italy.

<sup>4</sup>ECMWF, European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecast,  
Reading, RG2 9AX, United Kingdom.



# Future prospective: towards probabilistic model

Model comparison: physical realism vs physical interpretability



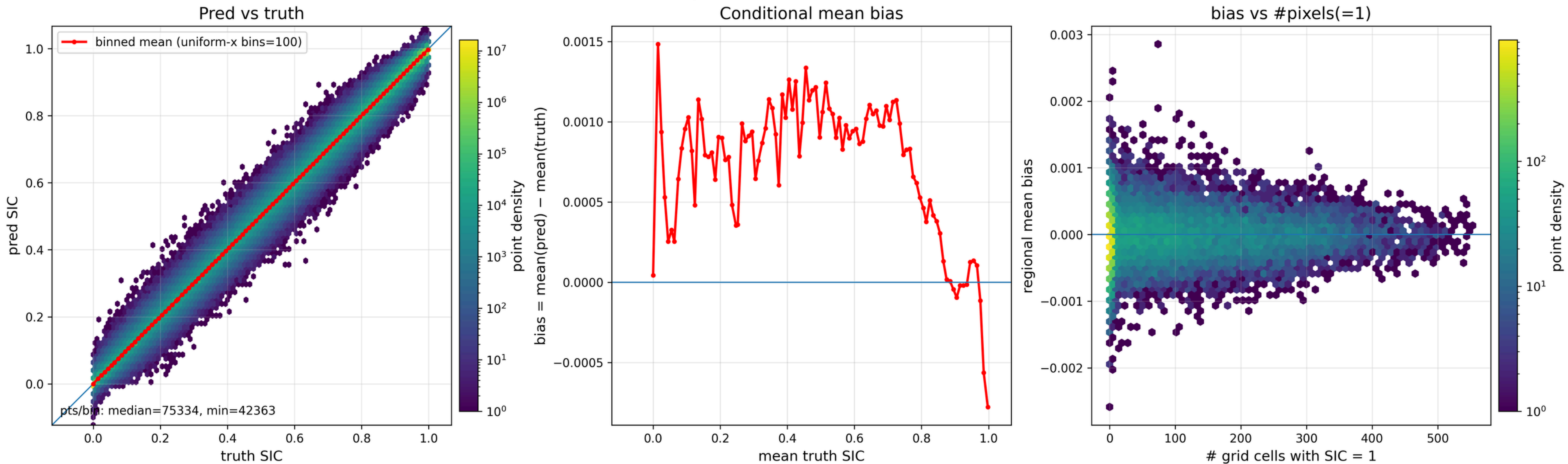
An aerial photograph of a frozen river. The left side of the image shows a large, continuous sheet of ice with a cracked, textured surface. The right side shows a narrower channel filled with numerous smaller, irregular ice floes and chunks of ice. The water between the ice is a dark, muted blue-grey color. The overall scene is a winter landscape of a frozen waterway.

**Thank you!**

# Does the bounded nature of SIC induce bias?

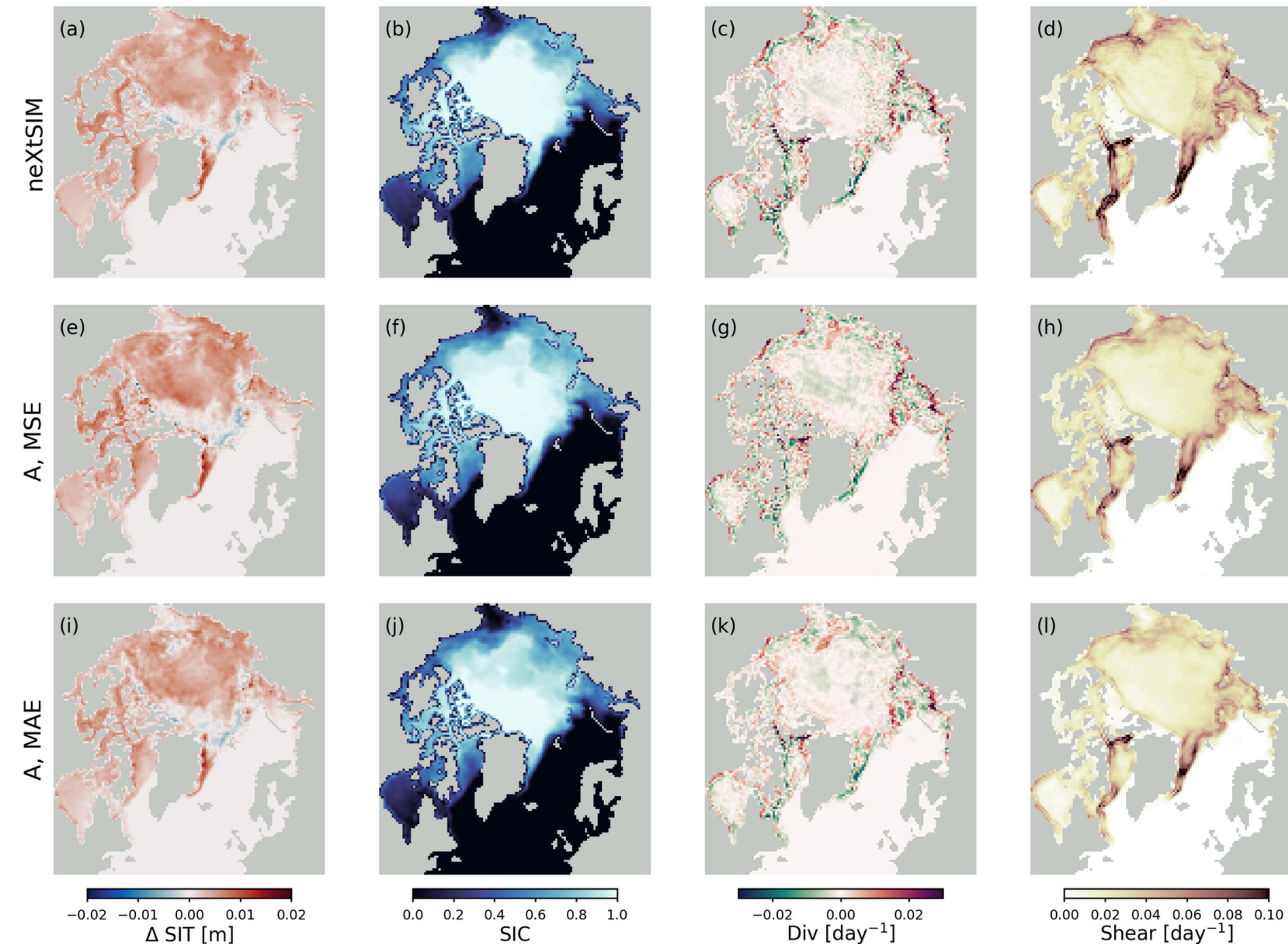
Towards diffusion models for large-scale sea-ice modelling

Tobias Sebastian Finn<sup>1</sup> Charlotte Durand<sup>1</sup> Alban Farchi<sup>1</sup> Marc Bocquet<sup>1</sup> Julien Brajard<sup>2</sup>



We do not observe a significant underestimation of the SIC at the upper bound.

# Sea-ice deformation Oct-Nov-Dec



**Sea ice deforms** where sea-ice is weaker.

Convergence leads to ridging and divergence to further thinning of sea ice.

Yet, the surrogate shows **loss of small-scale information**.

The divergence and shear show fewer pixels with weak and strong deformation.