

Periodic Homogenization of Permeability for Upscaling Topography in Ocean Models

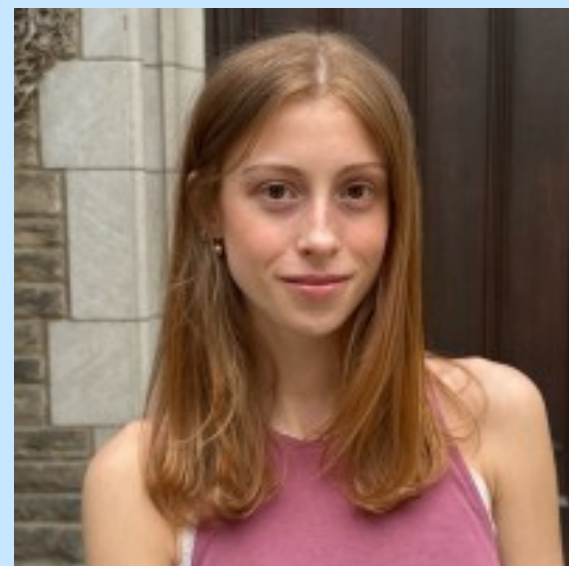
4th COMMODORE Workshop, Trieste, September 2026

Nicholas Kevlahan
Department of Mathematics and Statistics, McMaster University

SCIENCE
Department of
Mathematics & Statistics



Collaborators



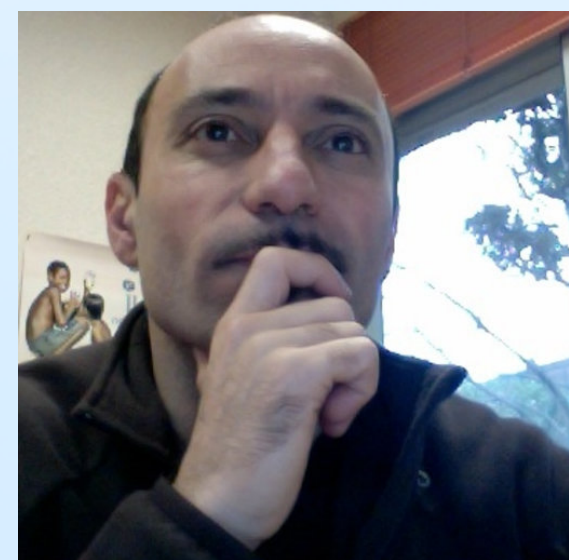
Lisa Patrascu

*Institute for Aerospace Studies, University of Toronto, Canada
former MSc student at McMaster University*



Laurent Debreu

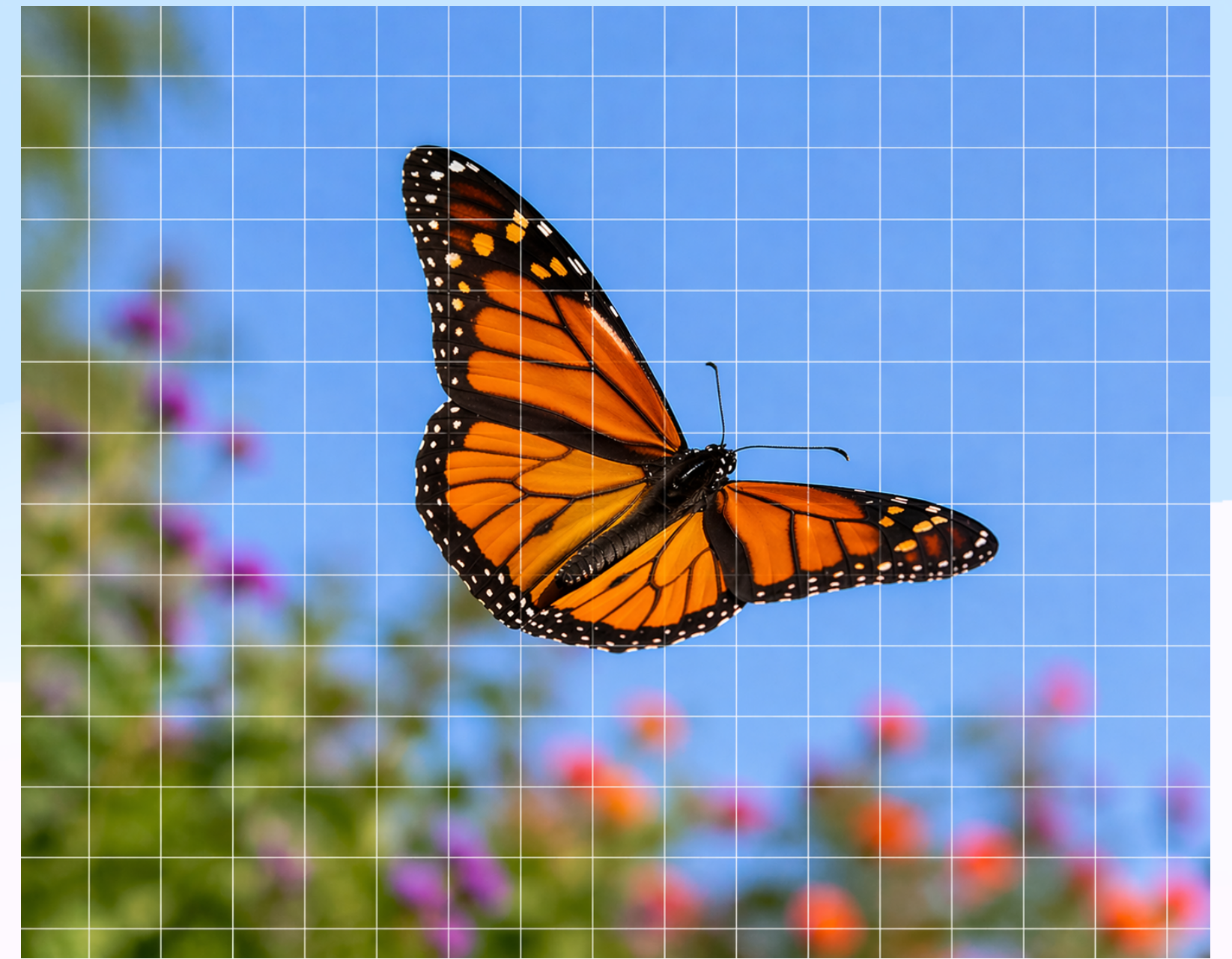
INRIA, Université Grenoble-Alpes, France



Patrick Marchesiello

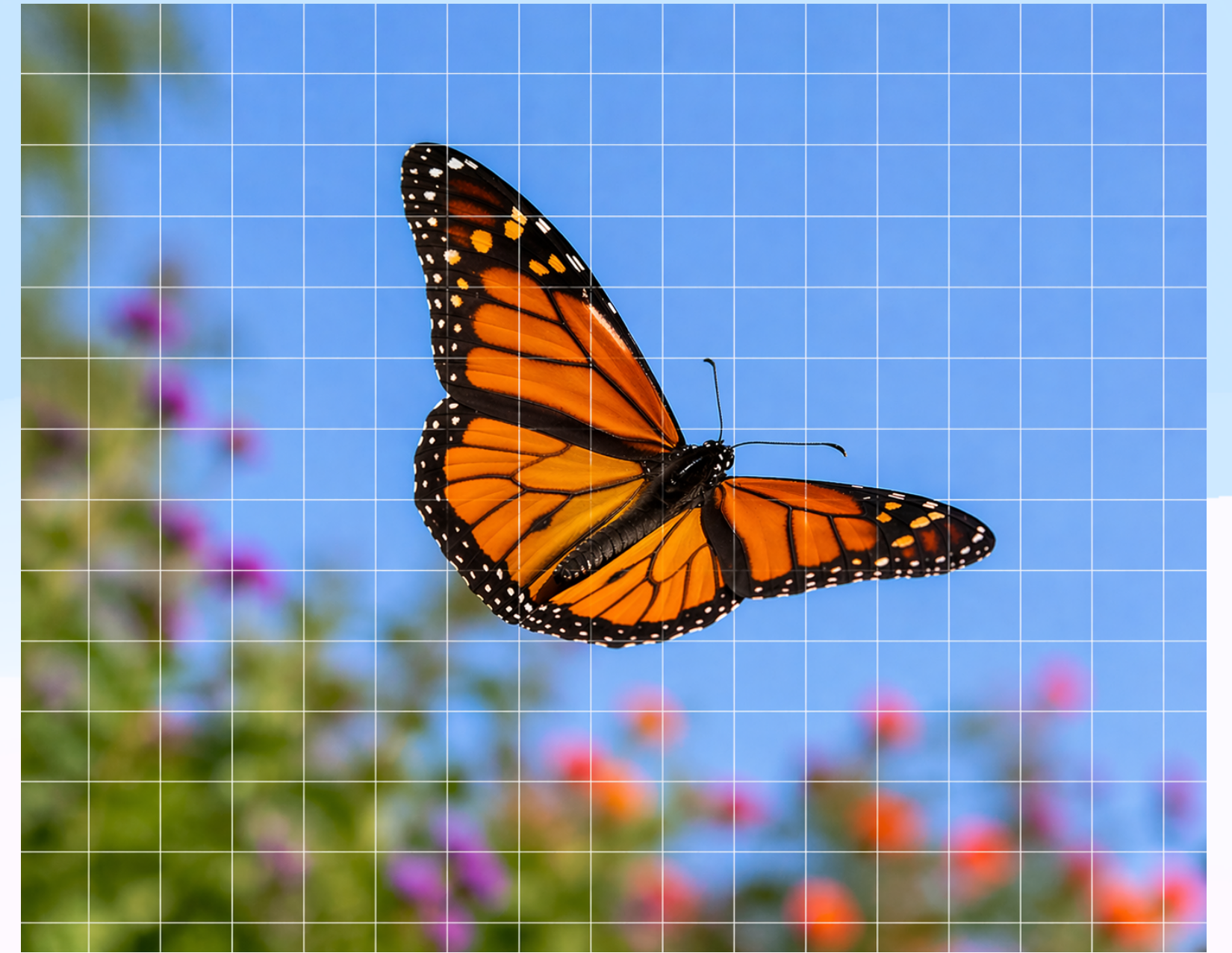
LEGOS, IRD, Toulouse, France

The challenge of complex geometries



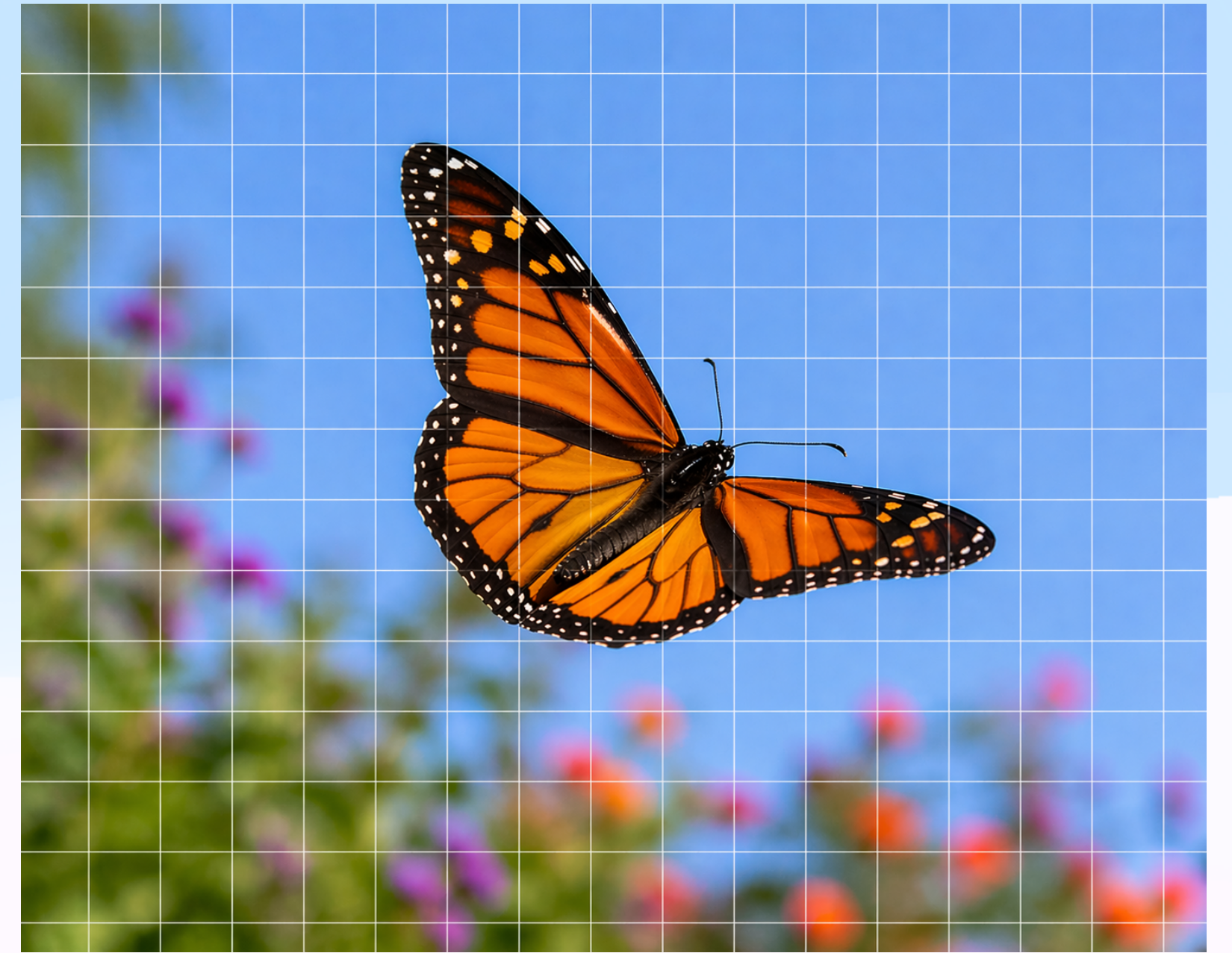
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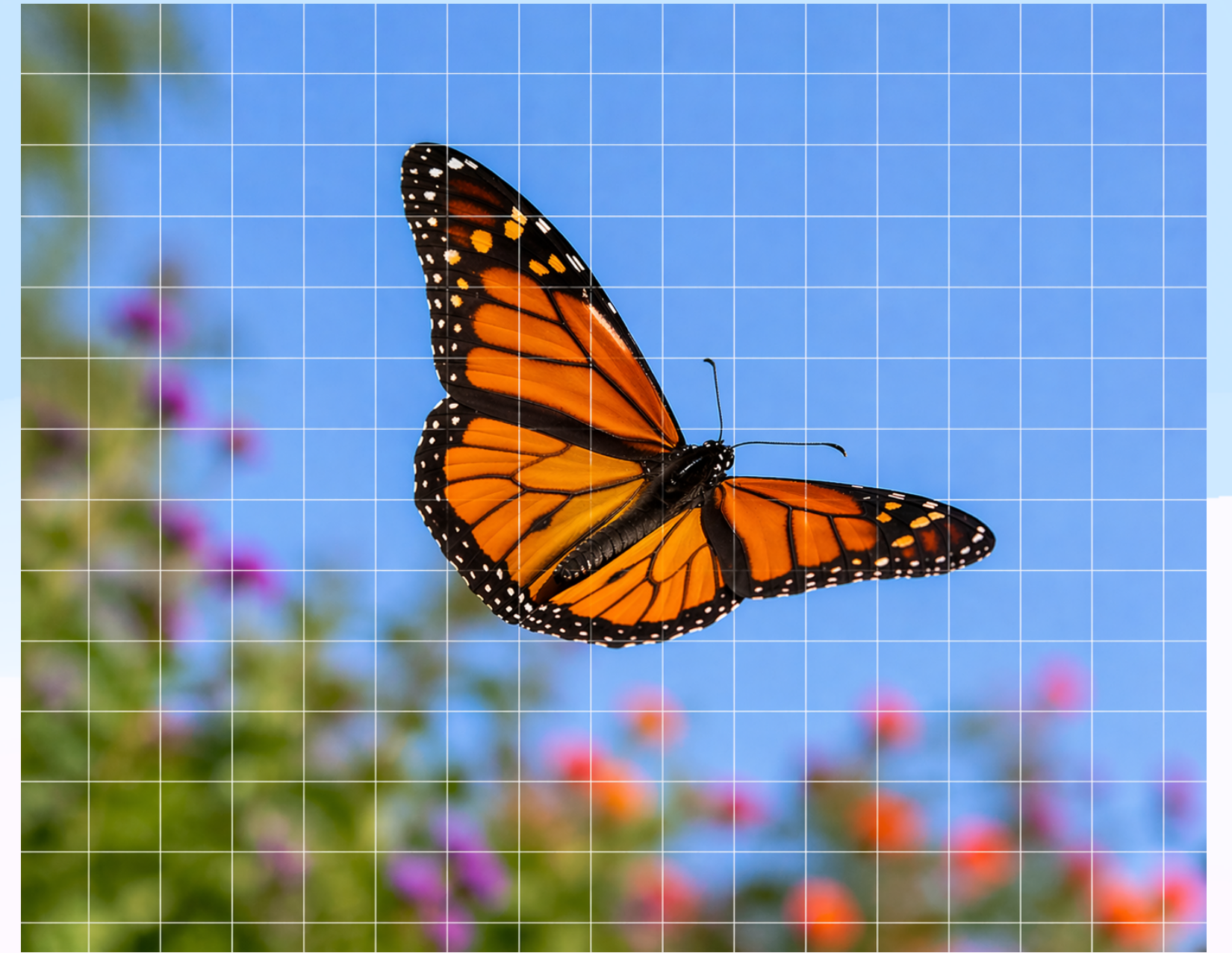
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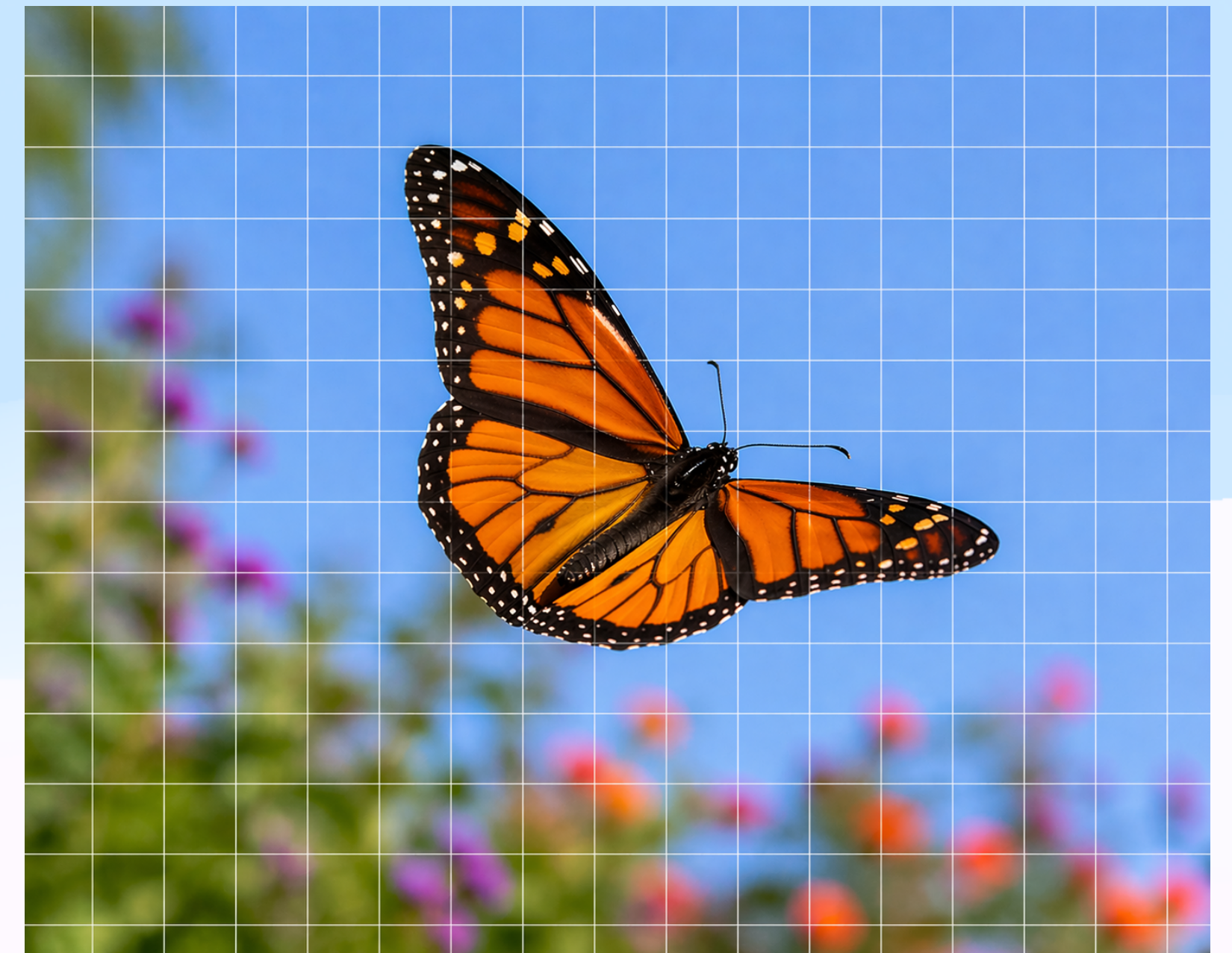
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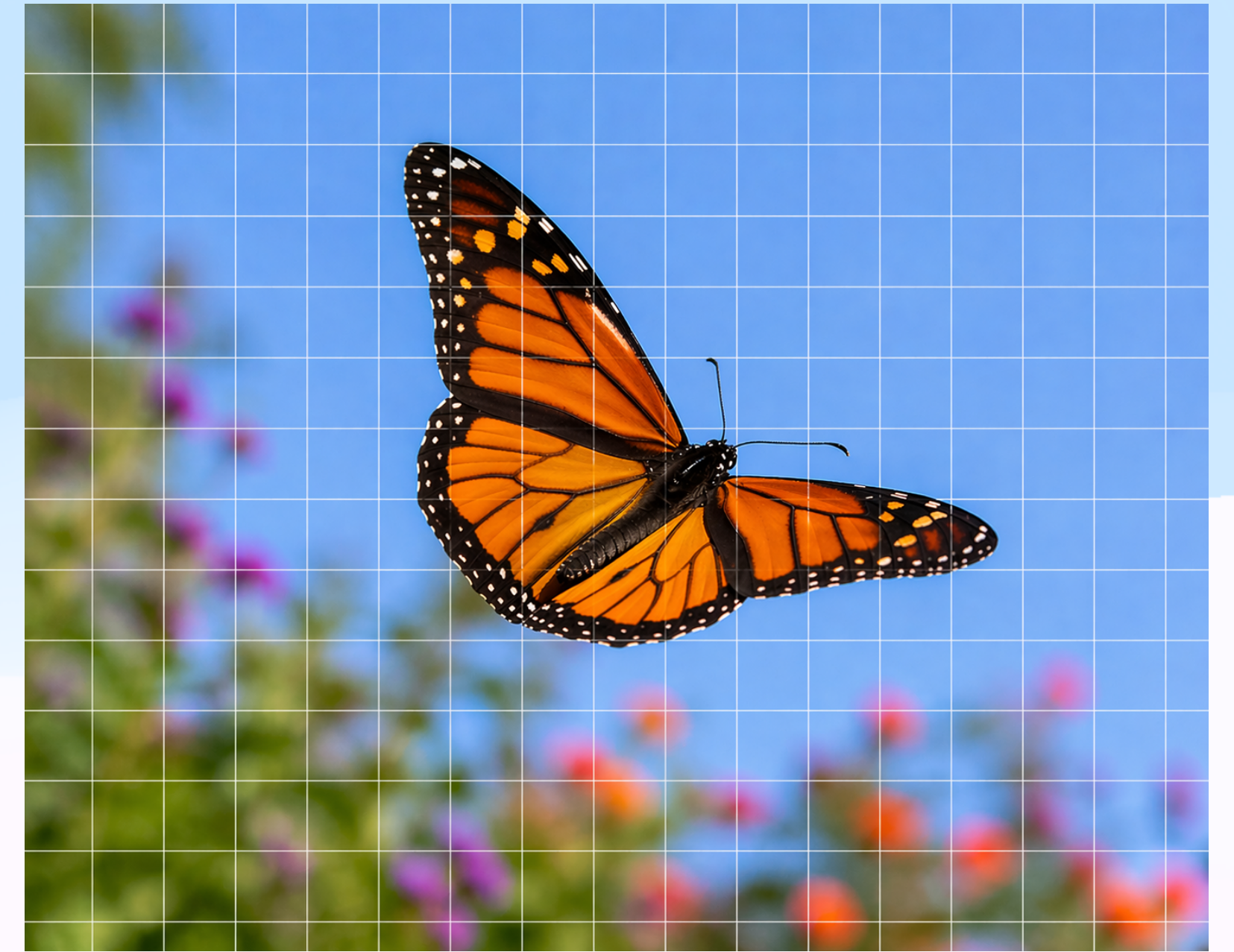
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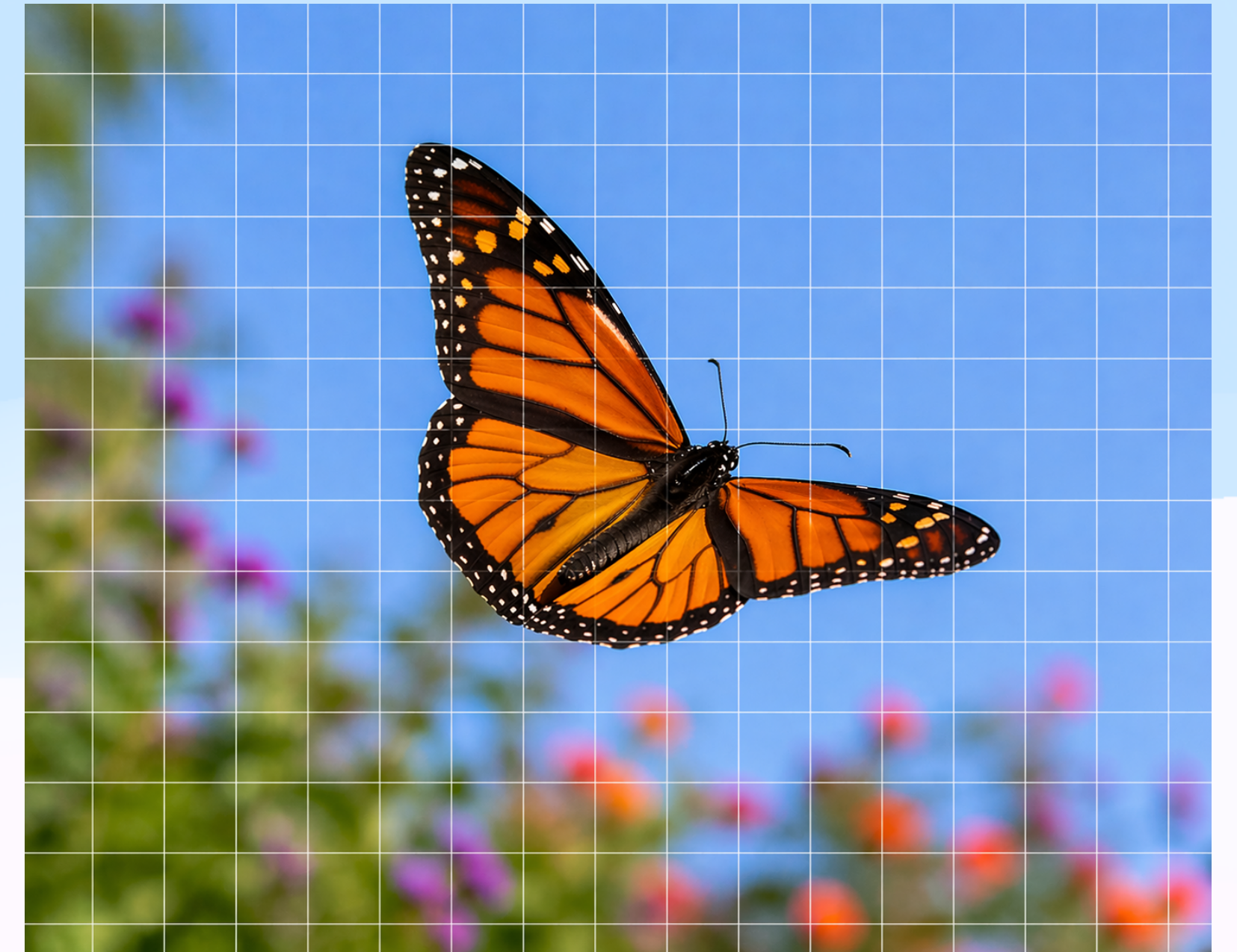
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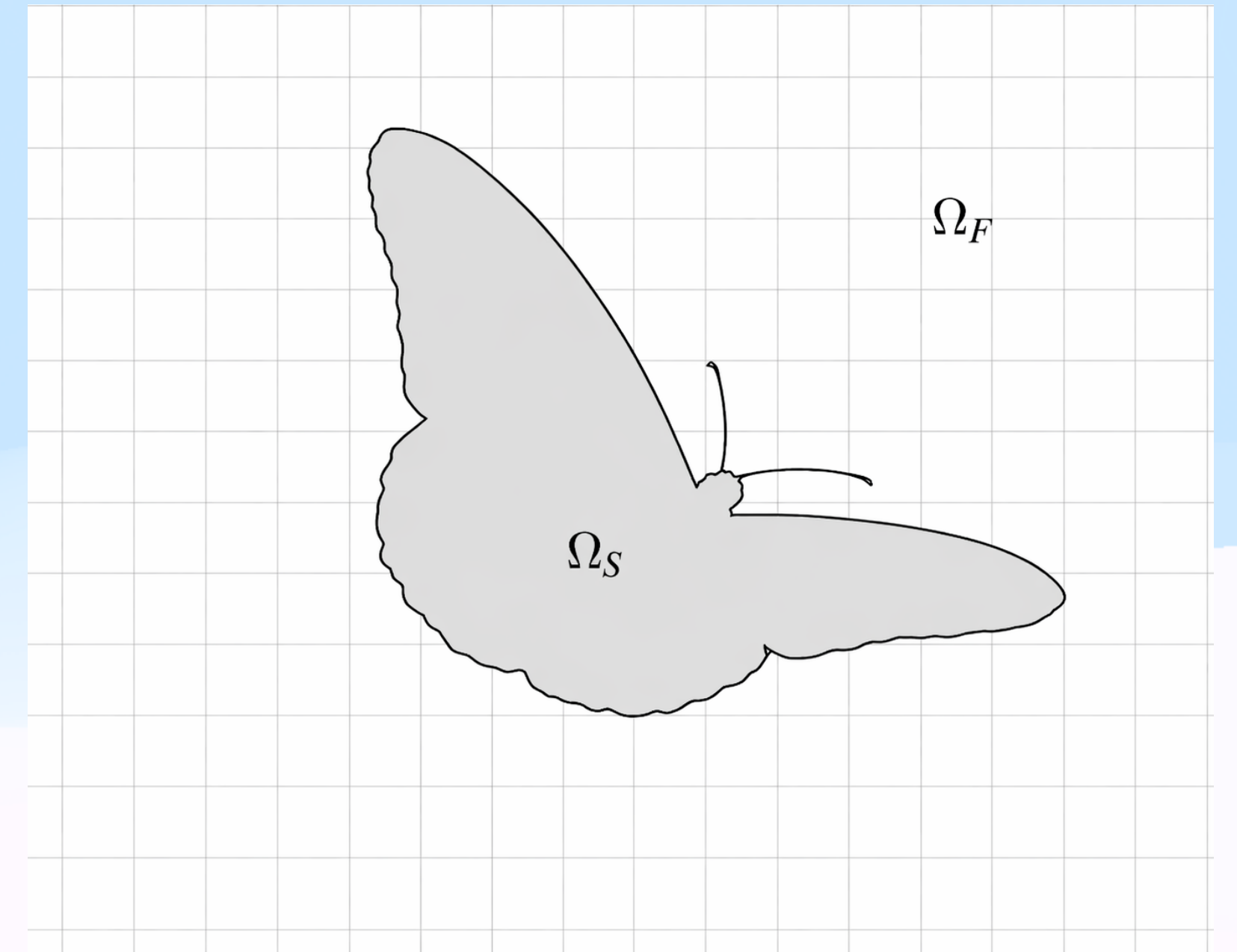
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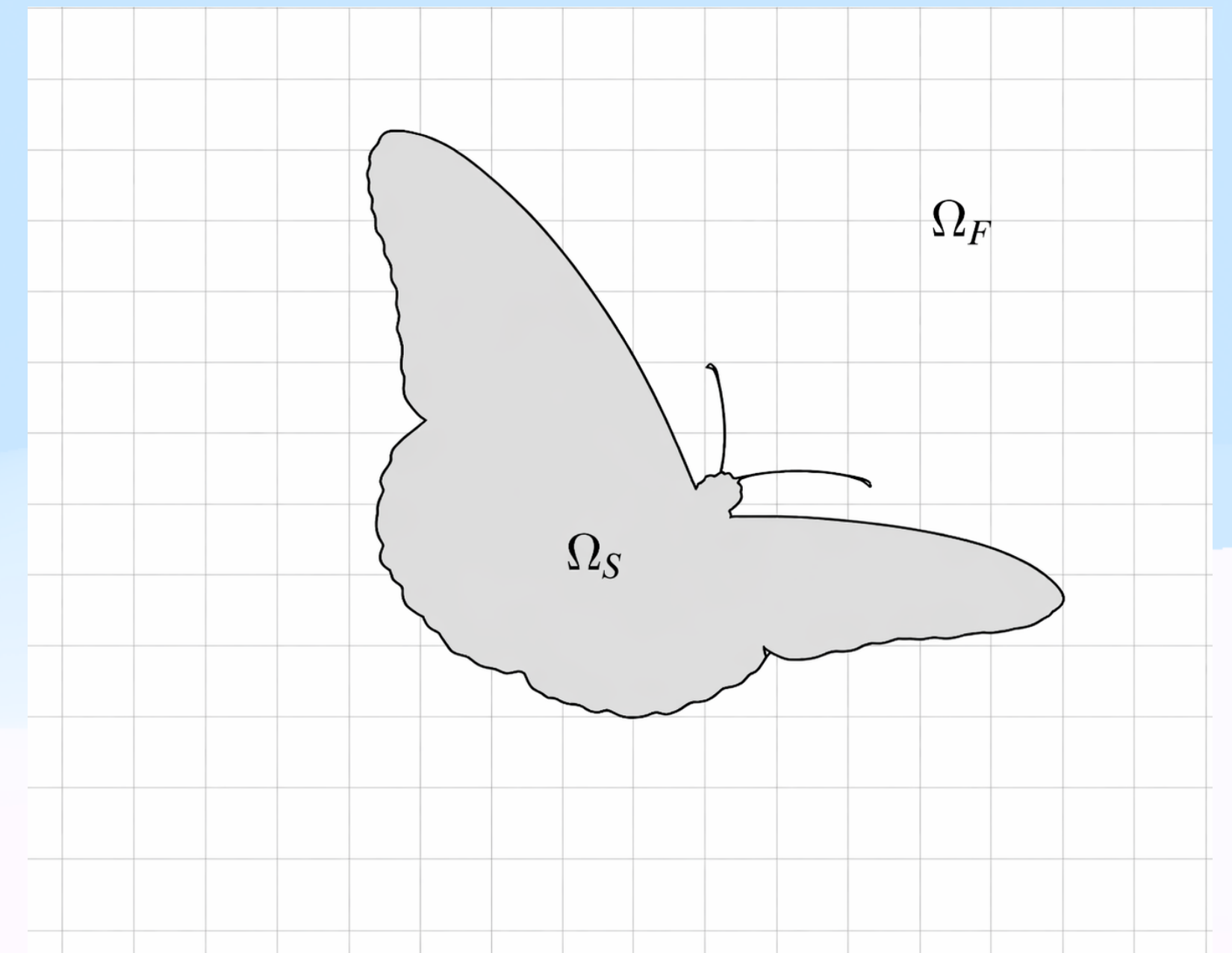
Hard!

Solution: change equations, not geometry!



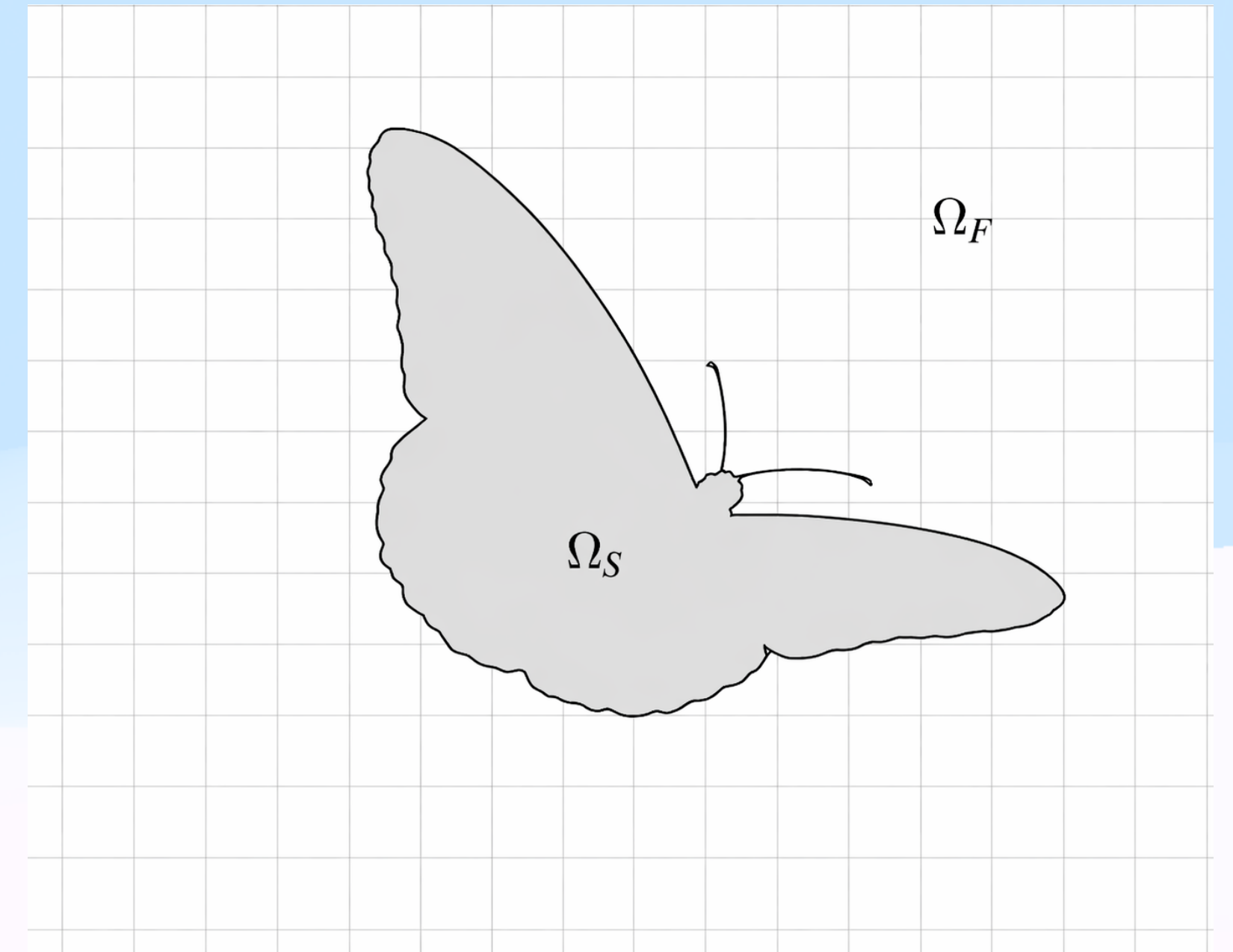
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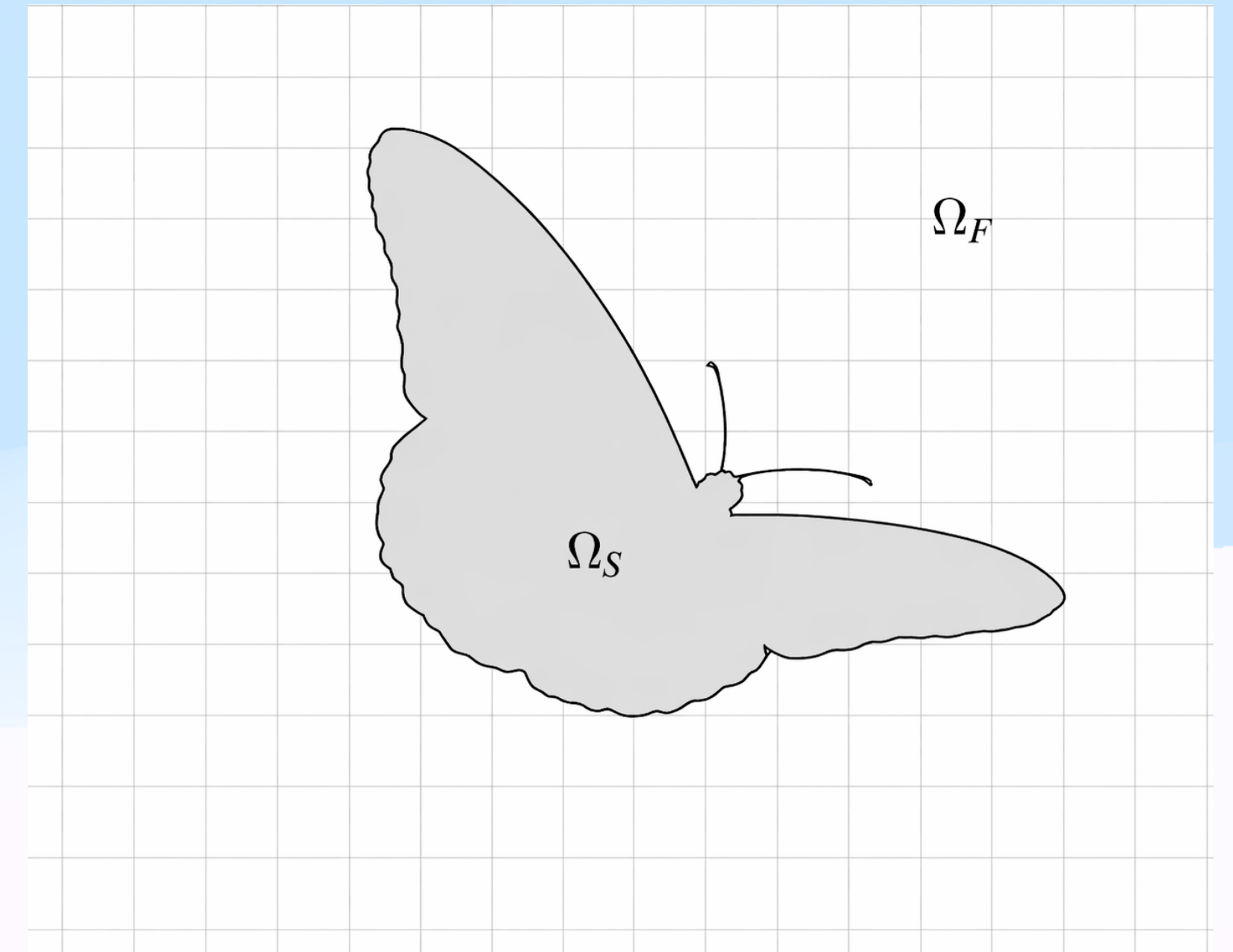
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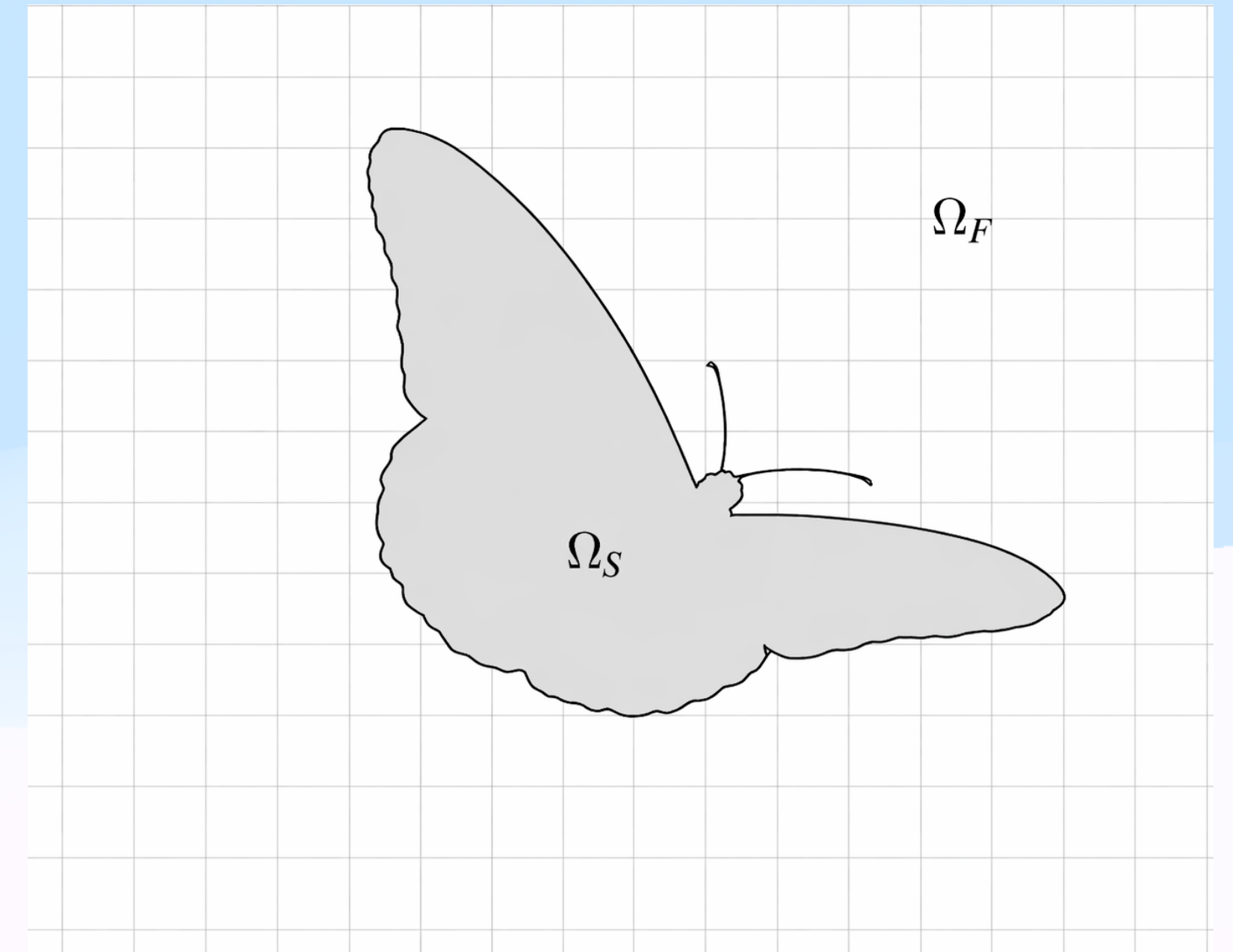
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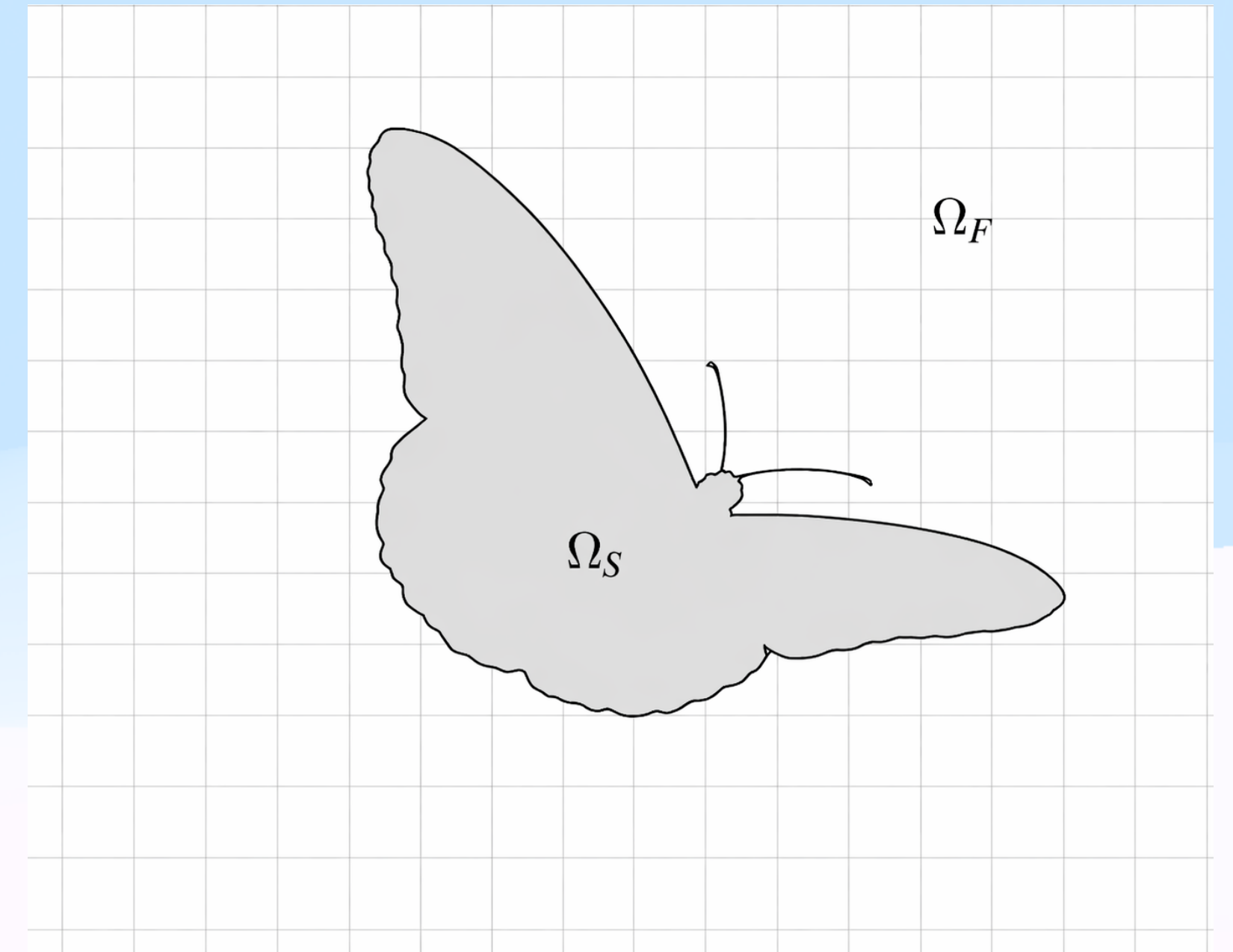
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Example: Brinkman volume penalization.



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- **Navier-Stokes equations:** vortex induced vibration of cylinder
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Examples of Brinkman volume penalization

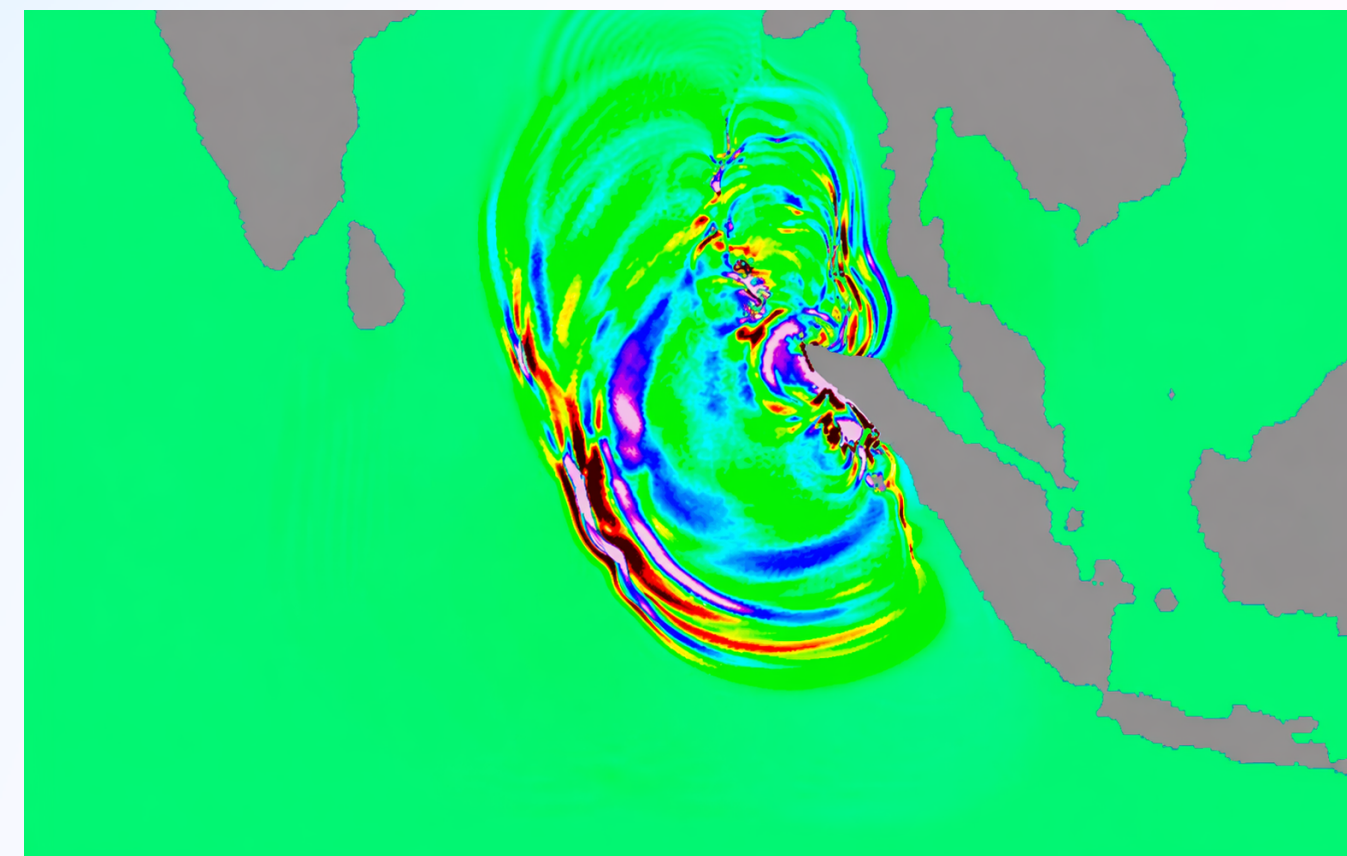
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- **Shallow water equations:** tsunami propagation

Kevlahan, Dubos, Aechtner (2015)



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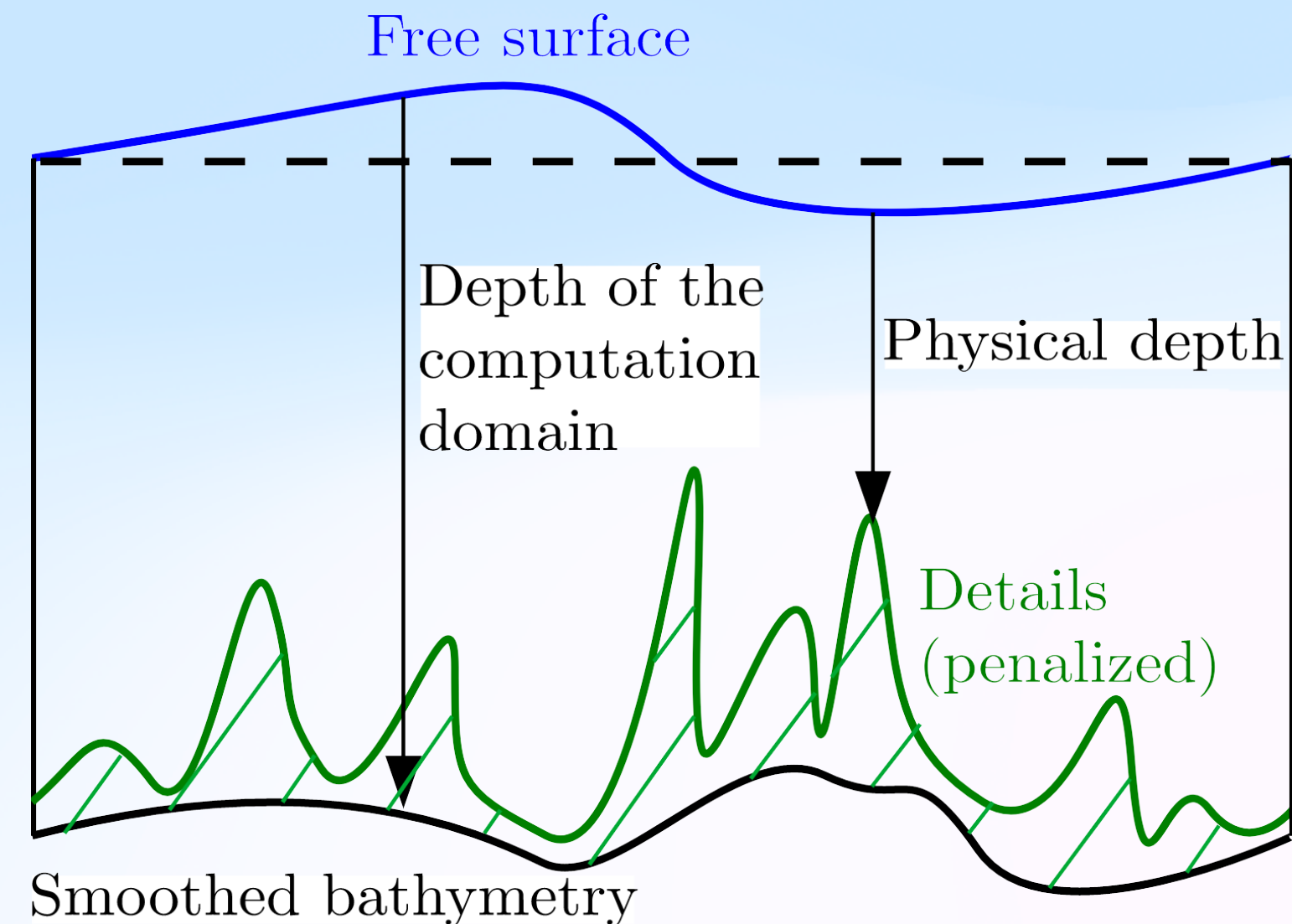
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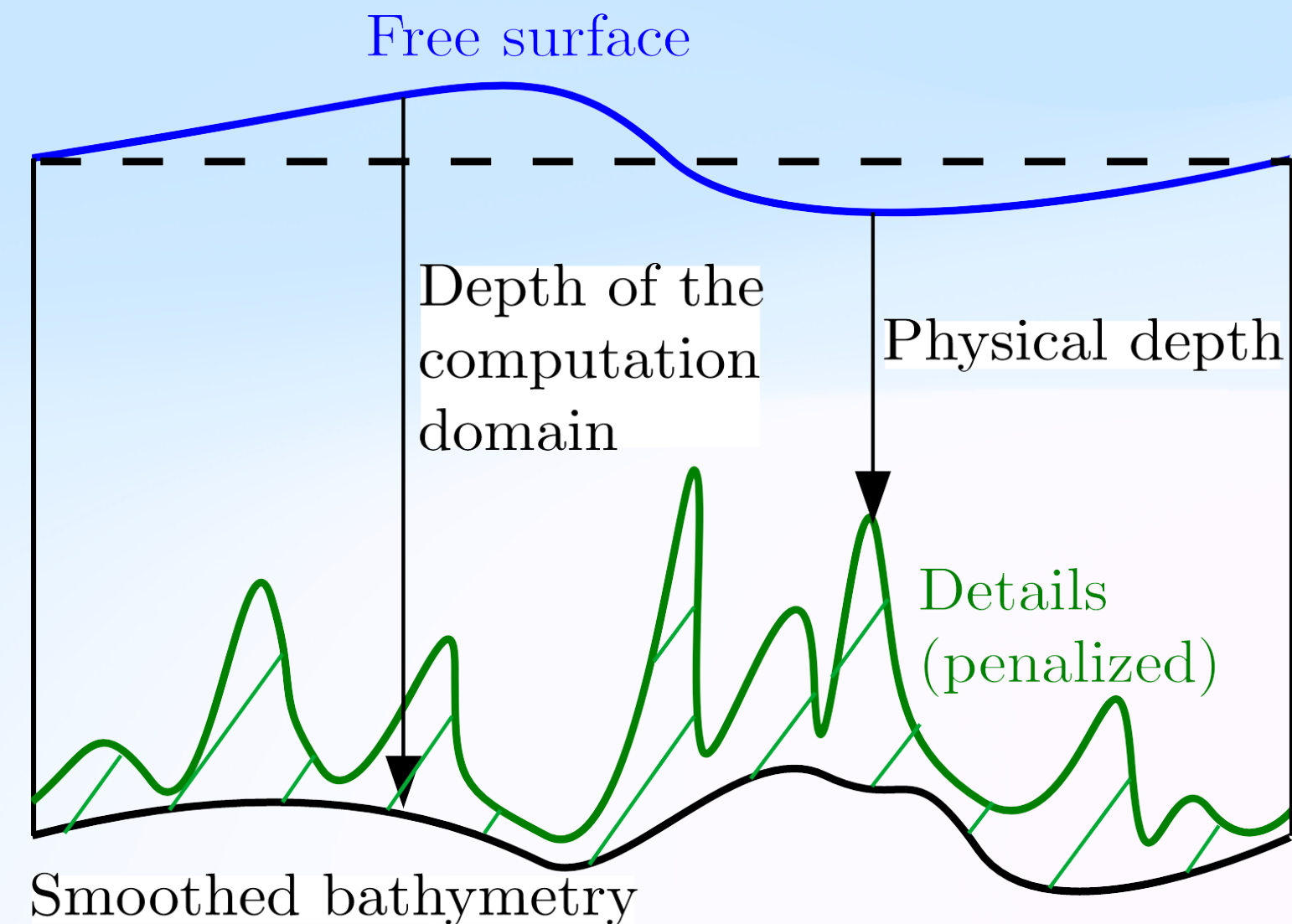
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Penalized small scale bathymetry does not affect stability limit!



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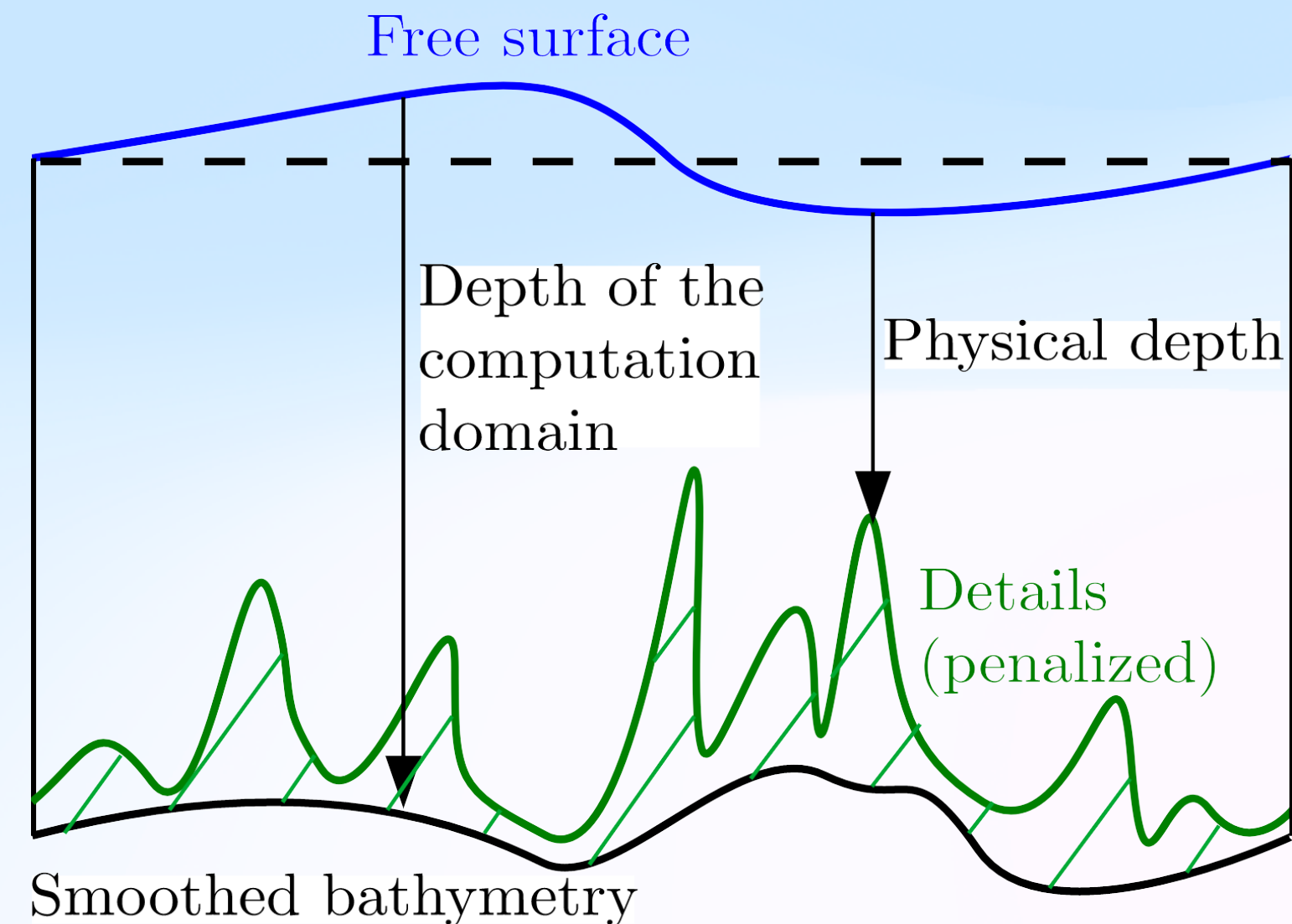
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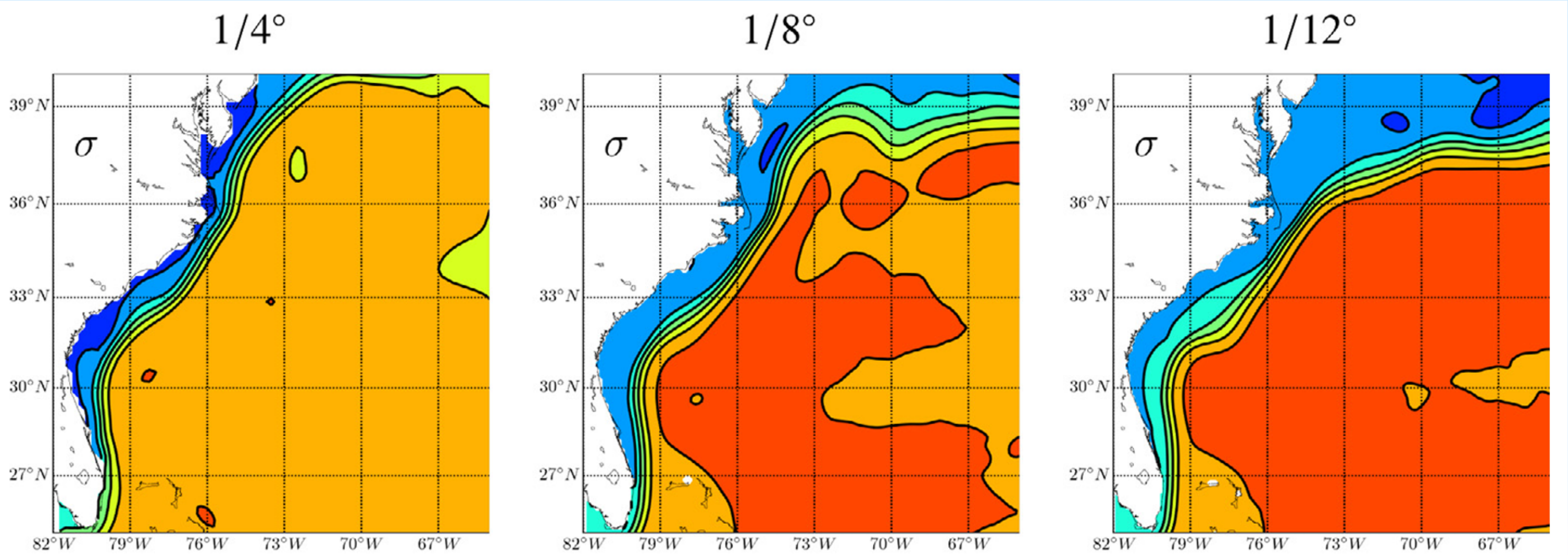
- Physical model is **porous shallow water equation flow** (*pSWE*).
- Control parameters for enforcing **no-slip boundary conditions** are **porosity** $\phi \ll 1$ and **permeability** $k \ll 1$.
Error $O(\phi k^{1/2})$.

Brinkman volume penalization for Gulf Stream

Multilayer shallow water ocean model (CROCO) *(Debreu, Kevlahan & Marchesiello 2020, 2022)*

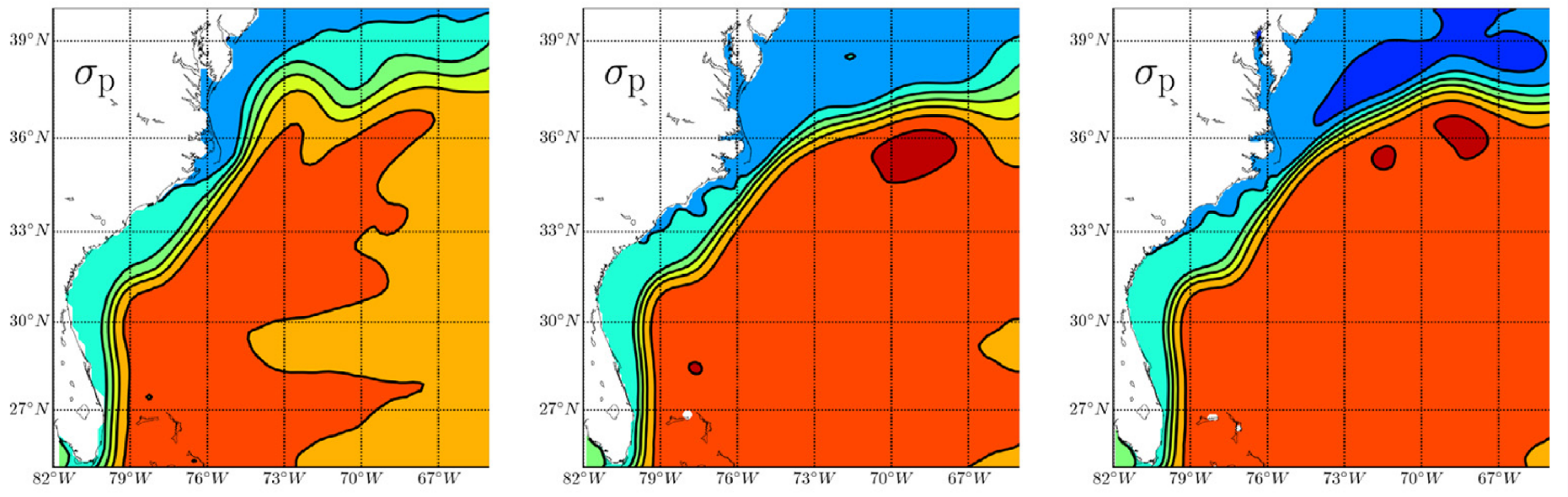
Non-penalized

σ

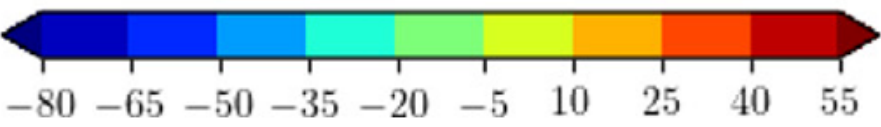
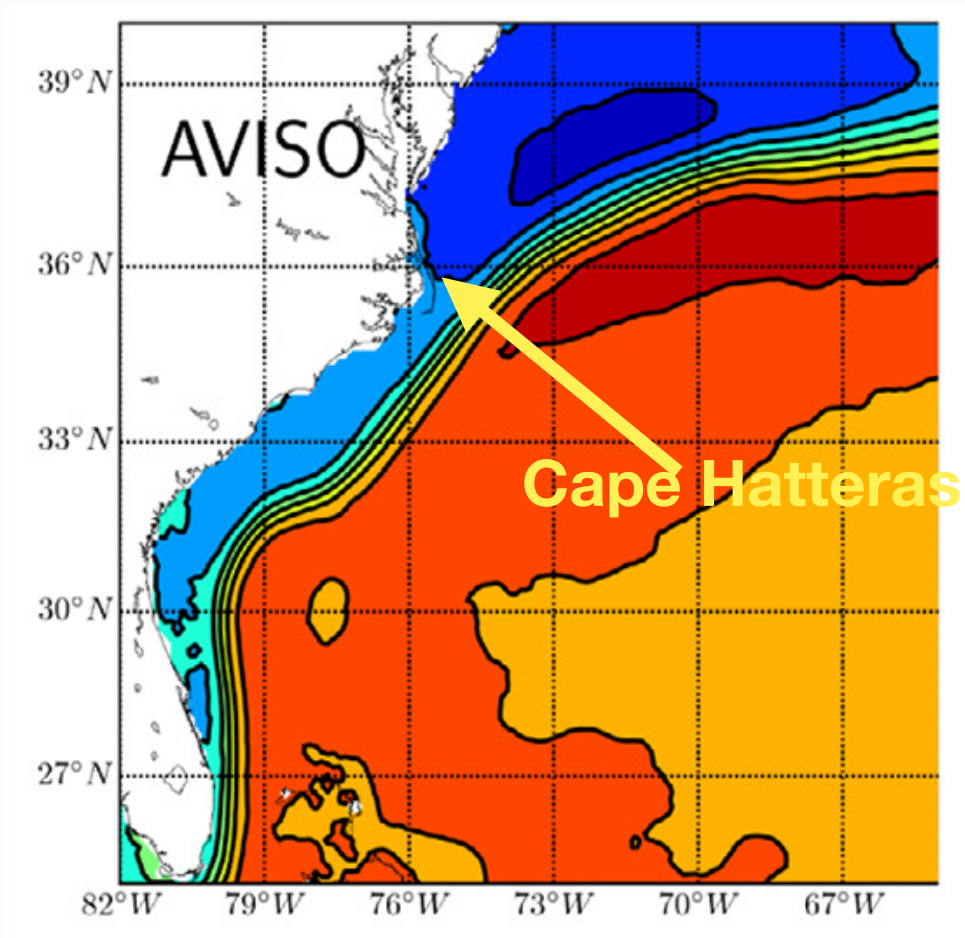


Penalized

σ_p



Observations



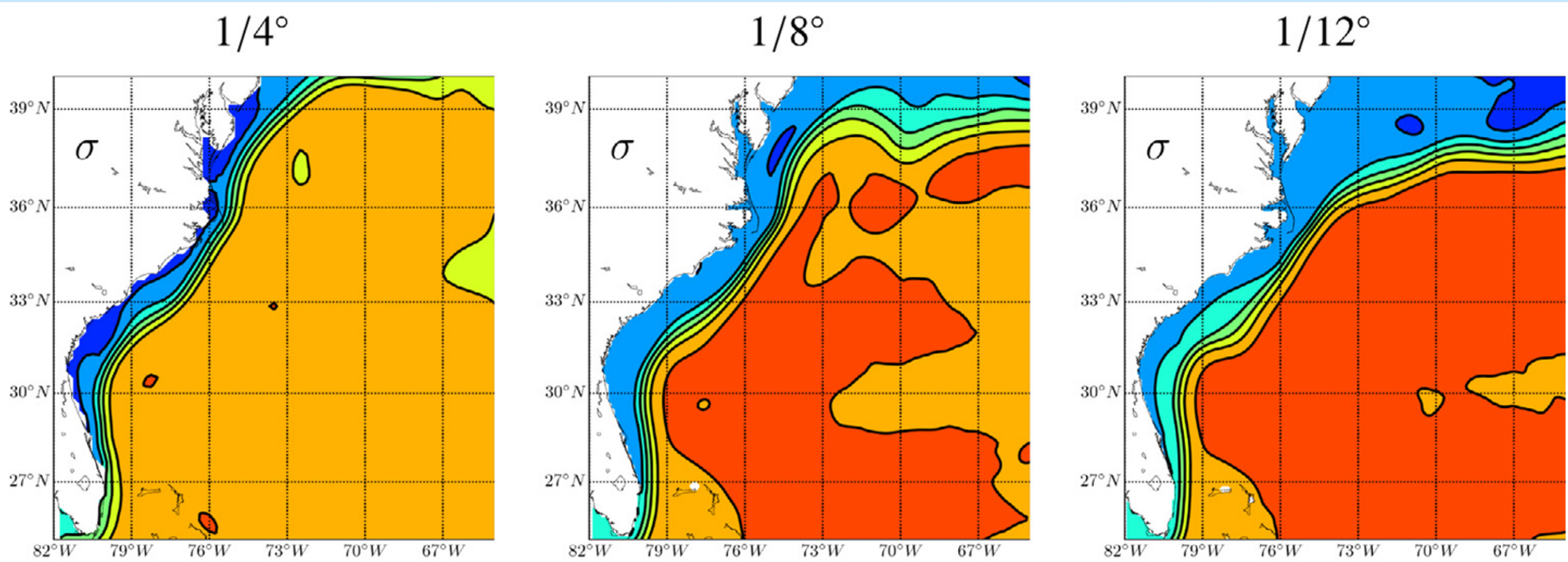
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- $1/8^\circ$ σ solution separation *too far north.*

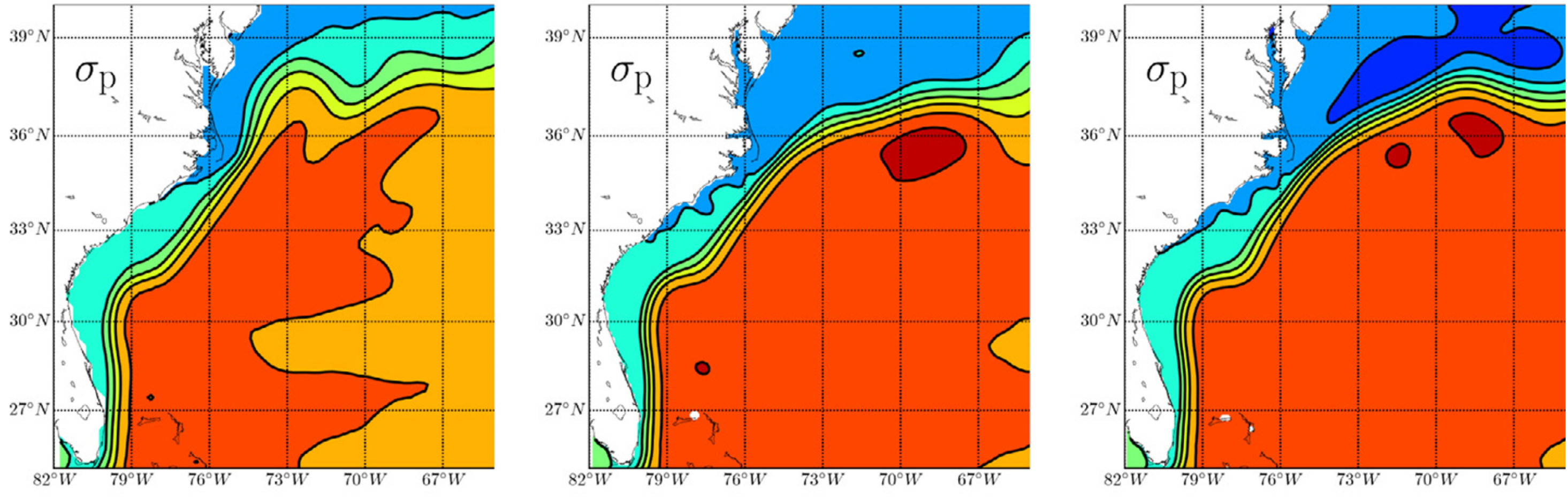
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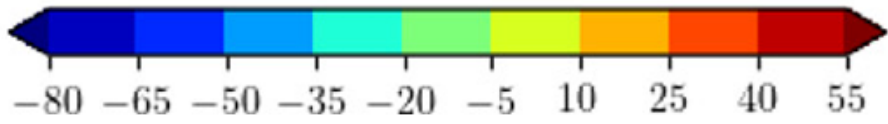
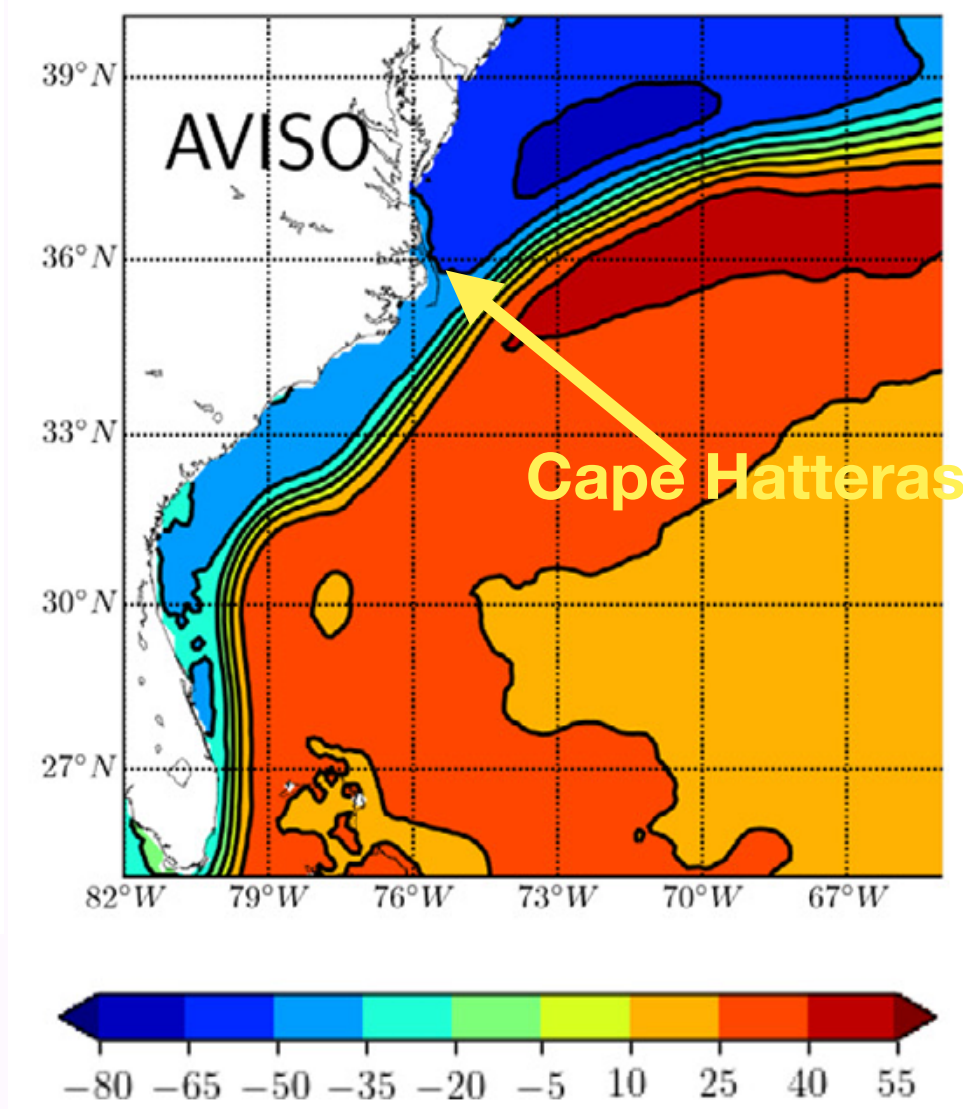


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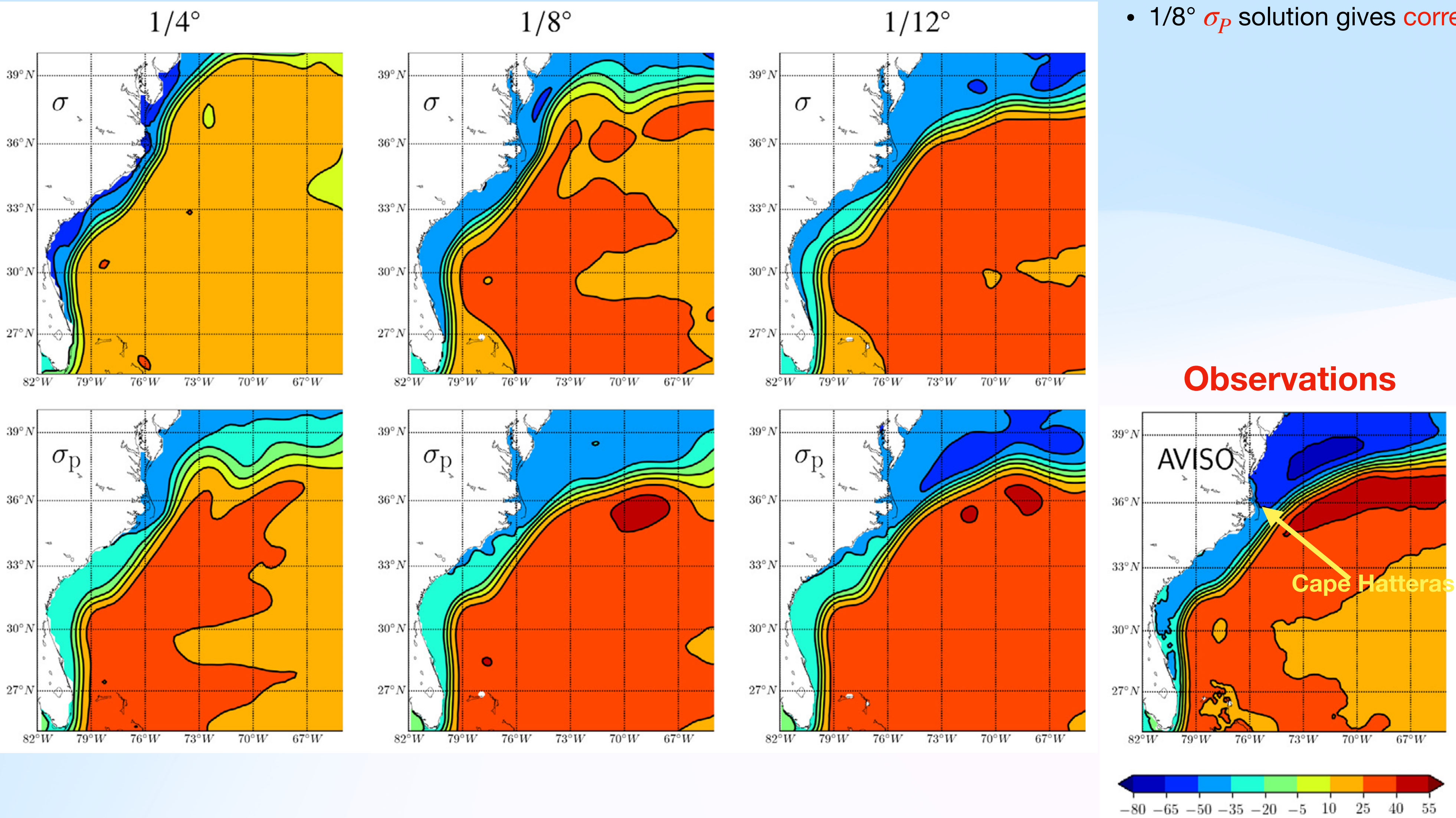
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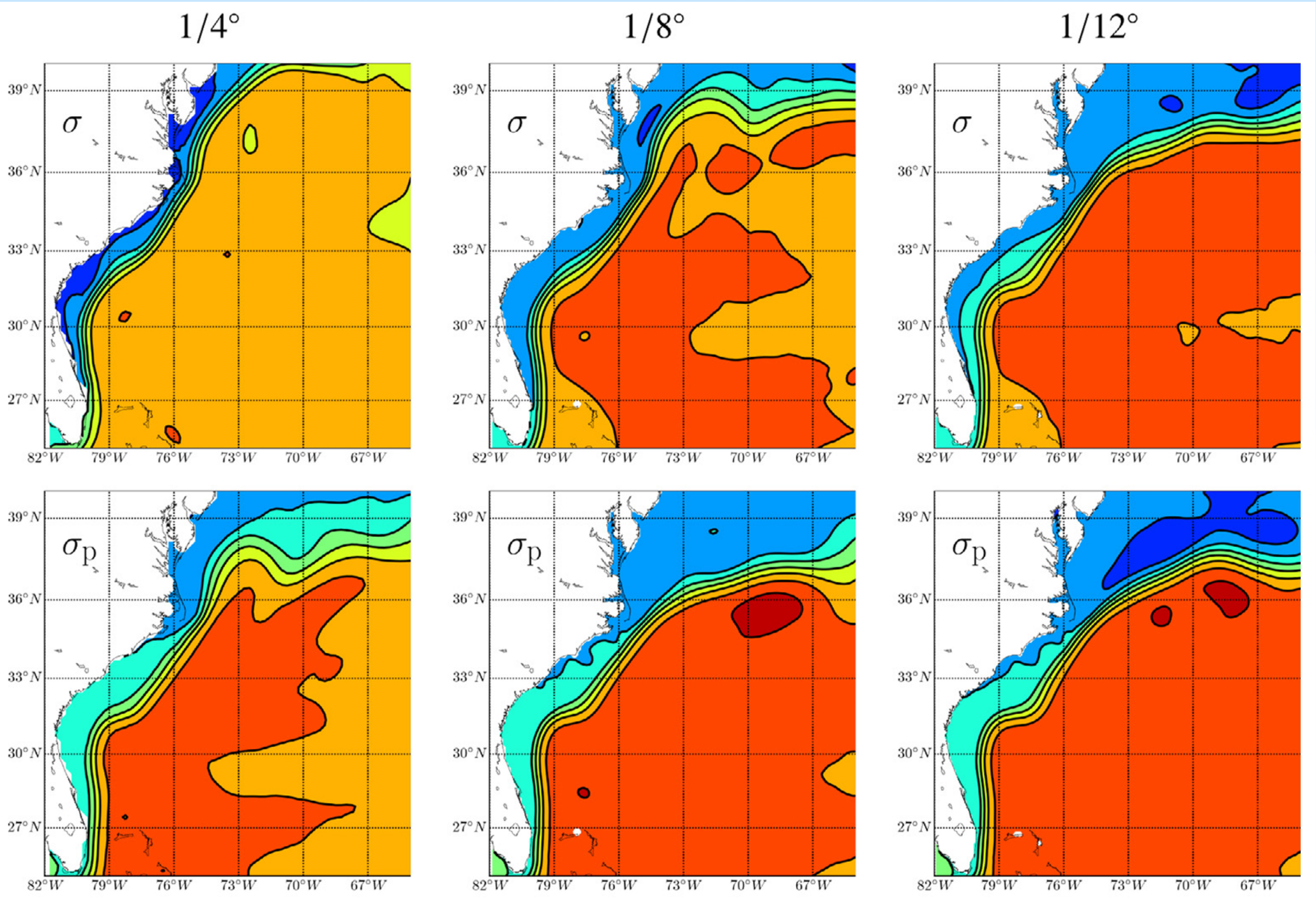


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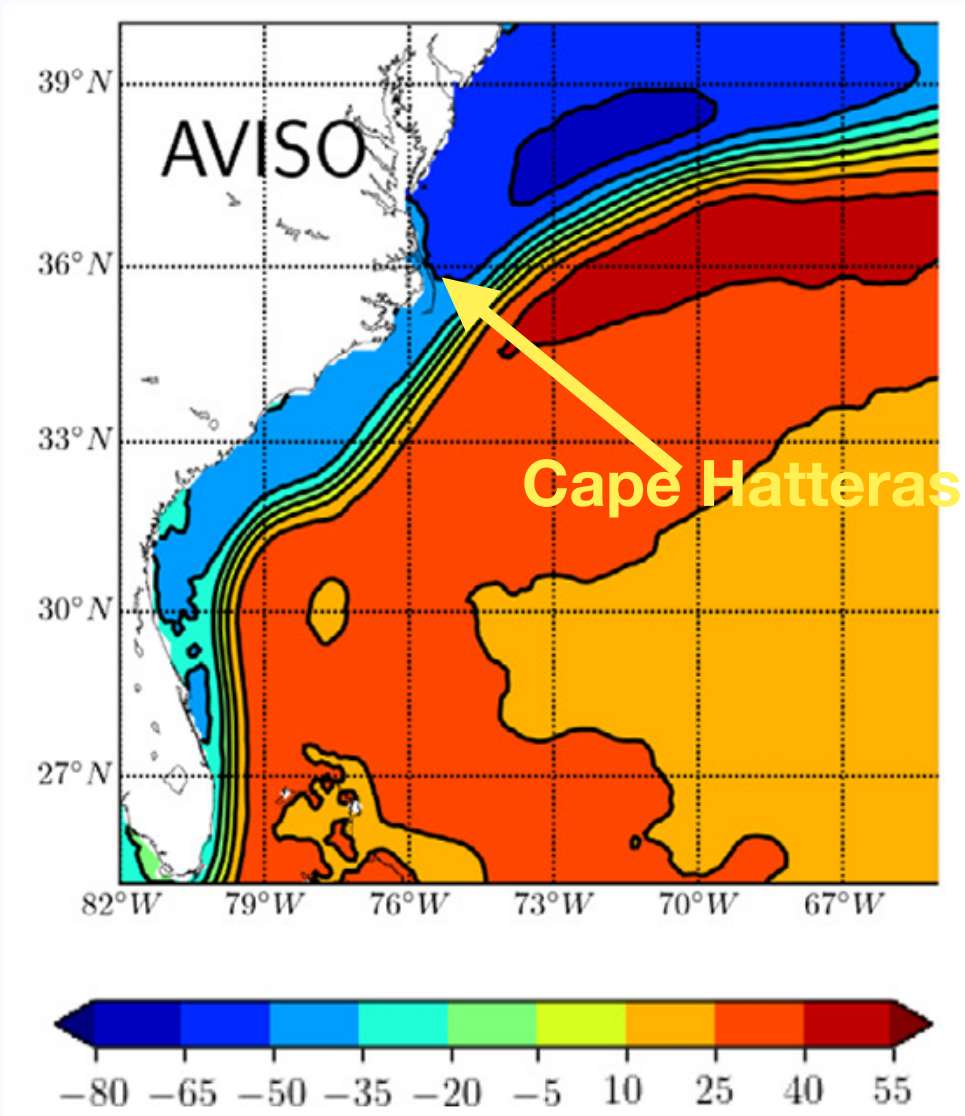


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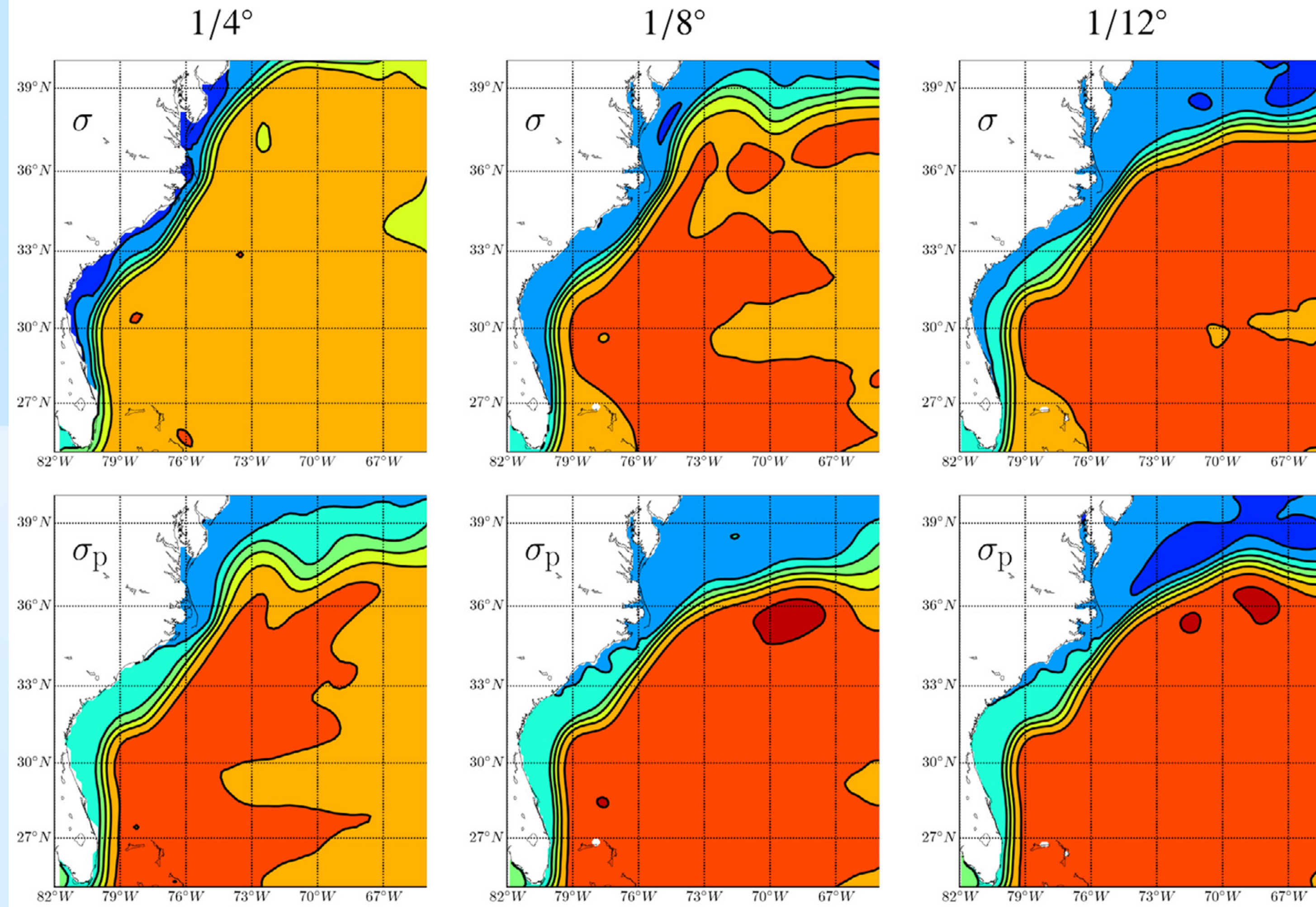


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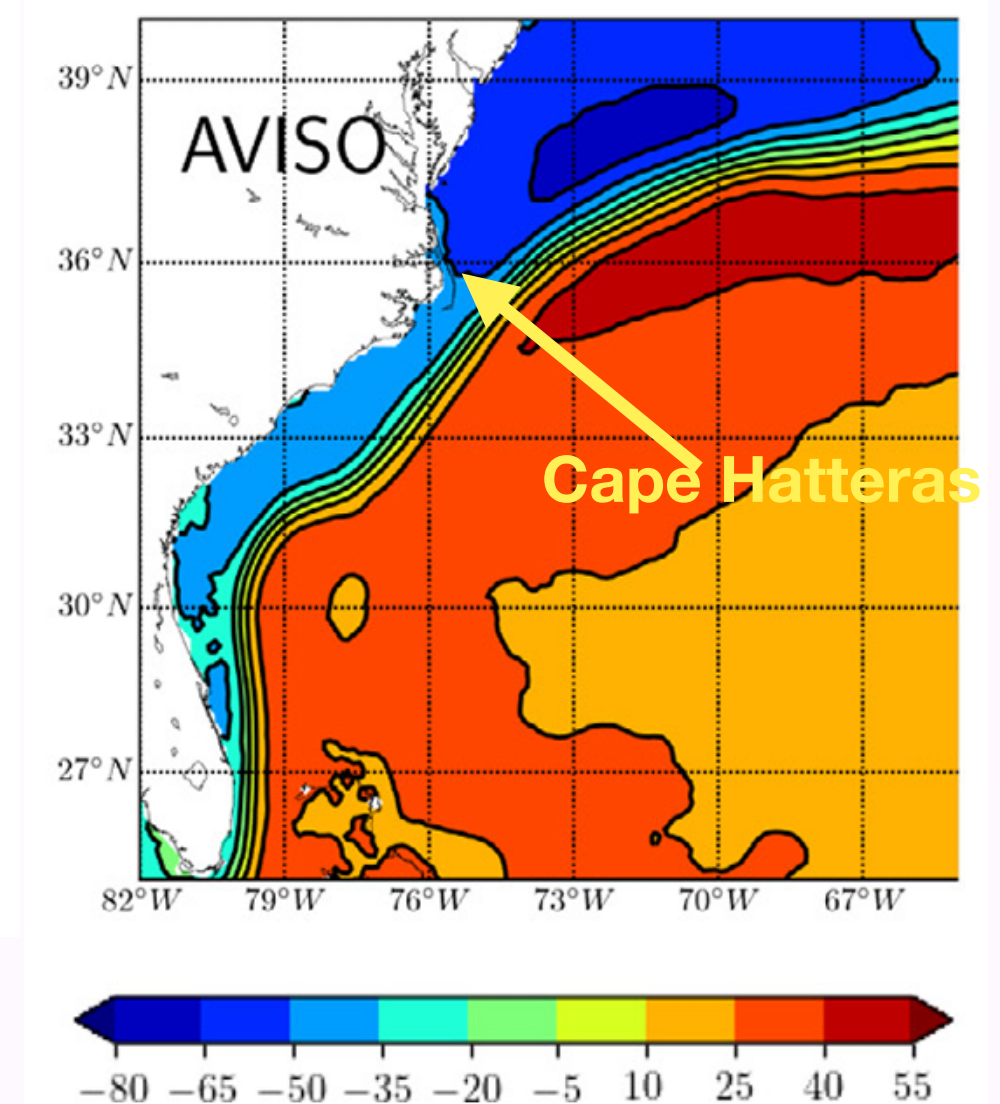


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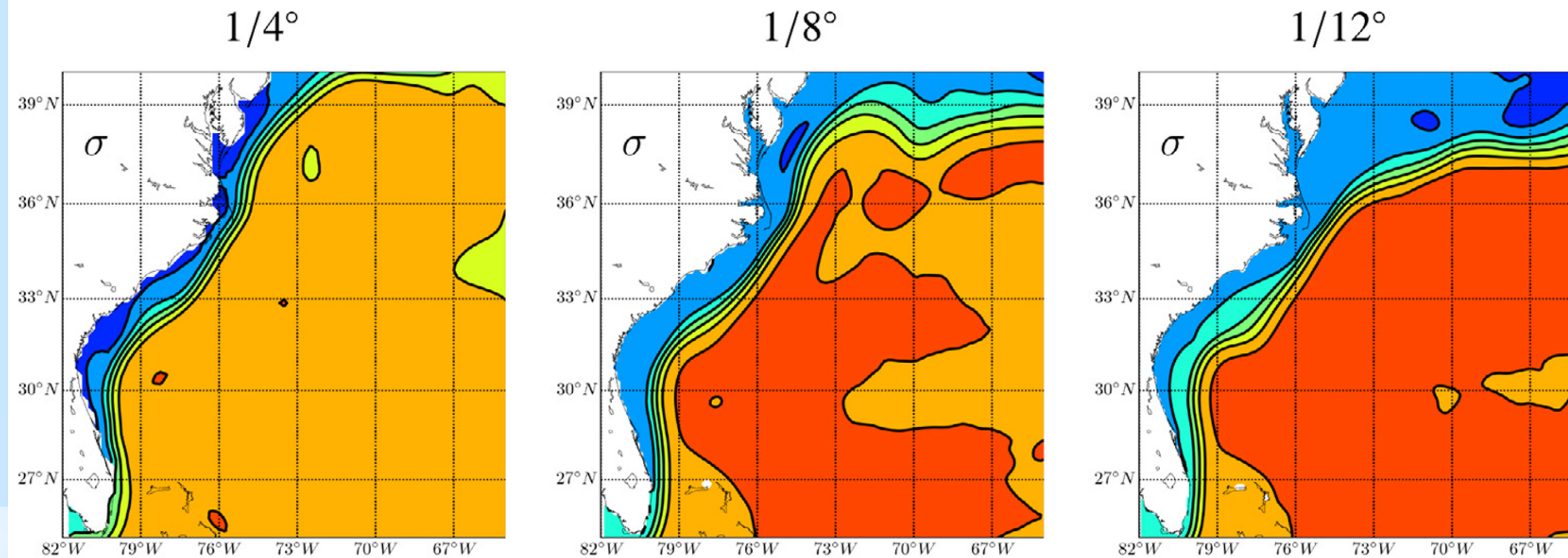


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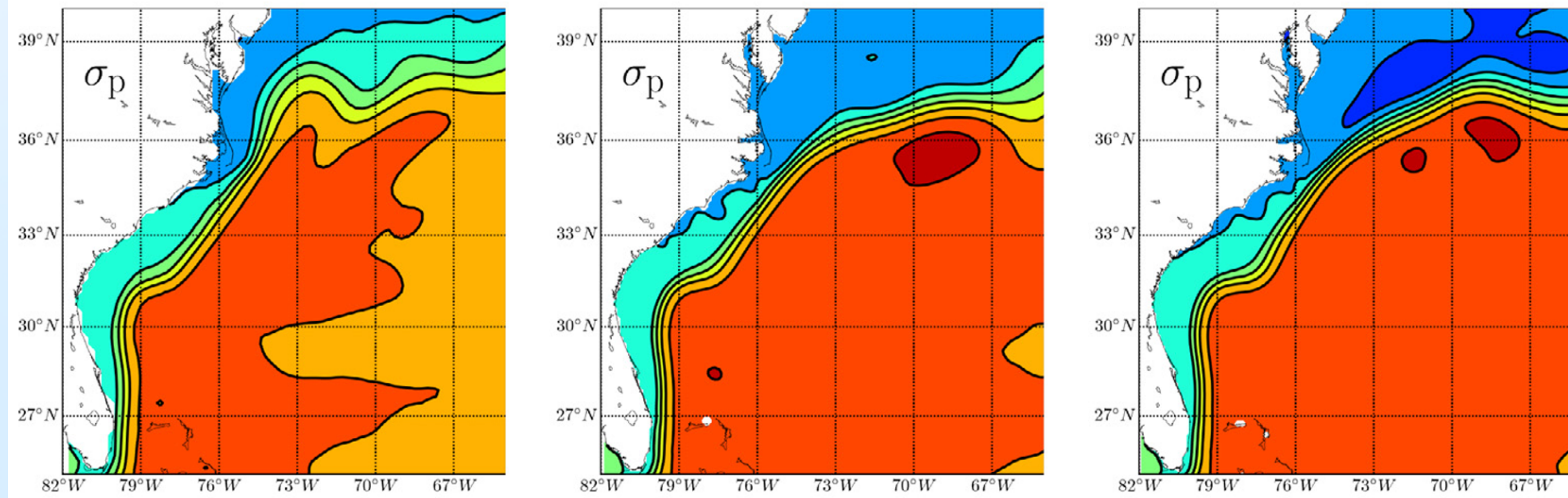
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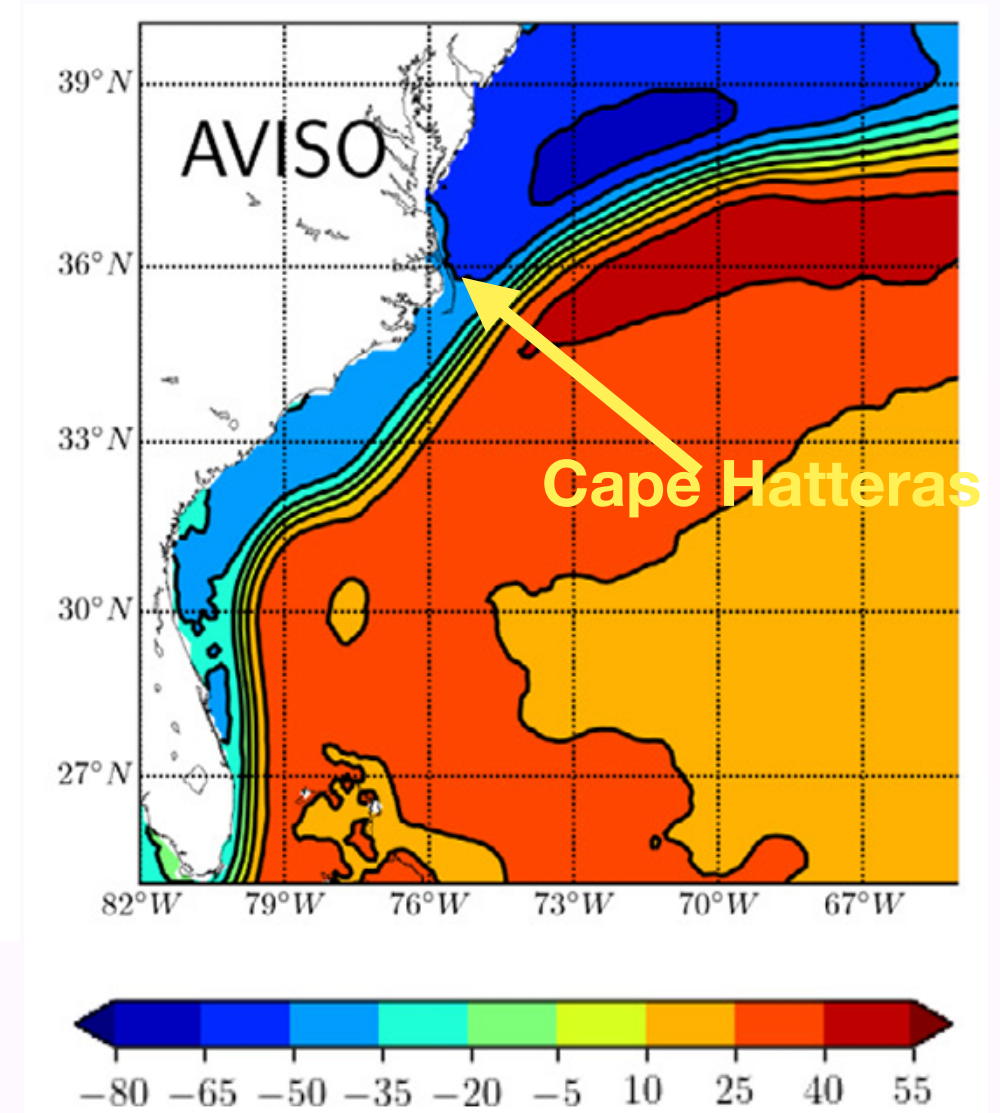
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Conclusion *penalized* coordinates give more *realistic results* at lower resolutions than non-penalized coordinates.

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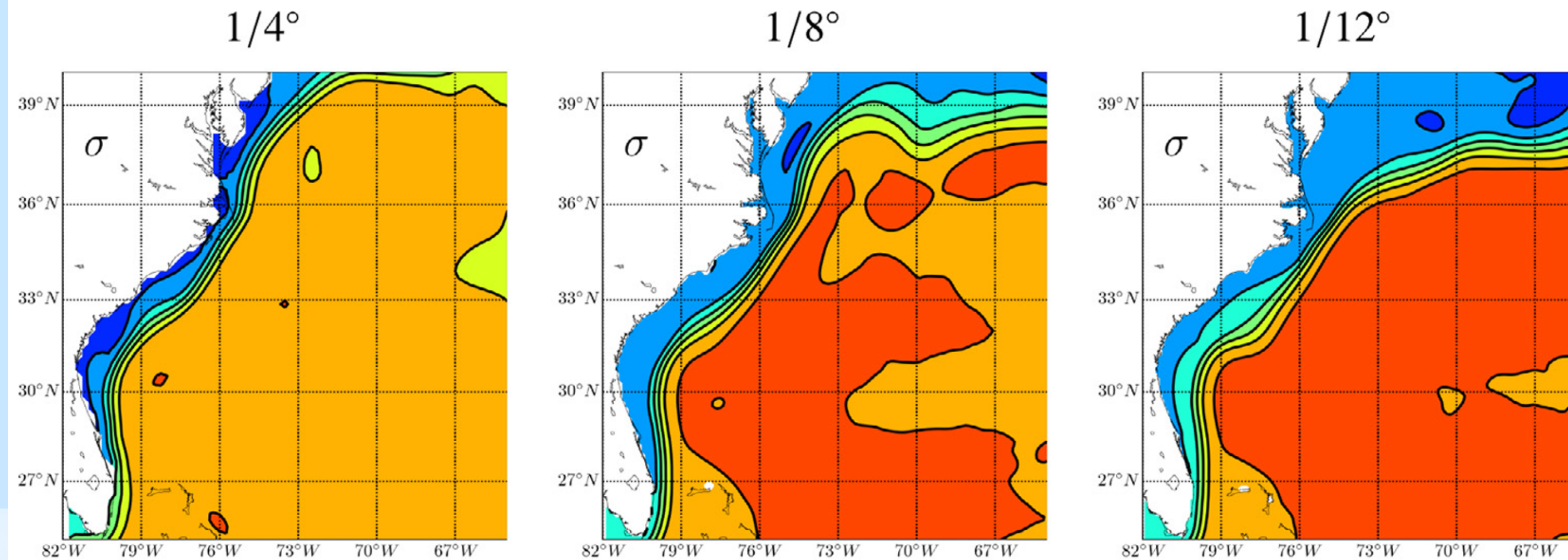


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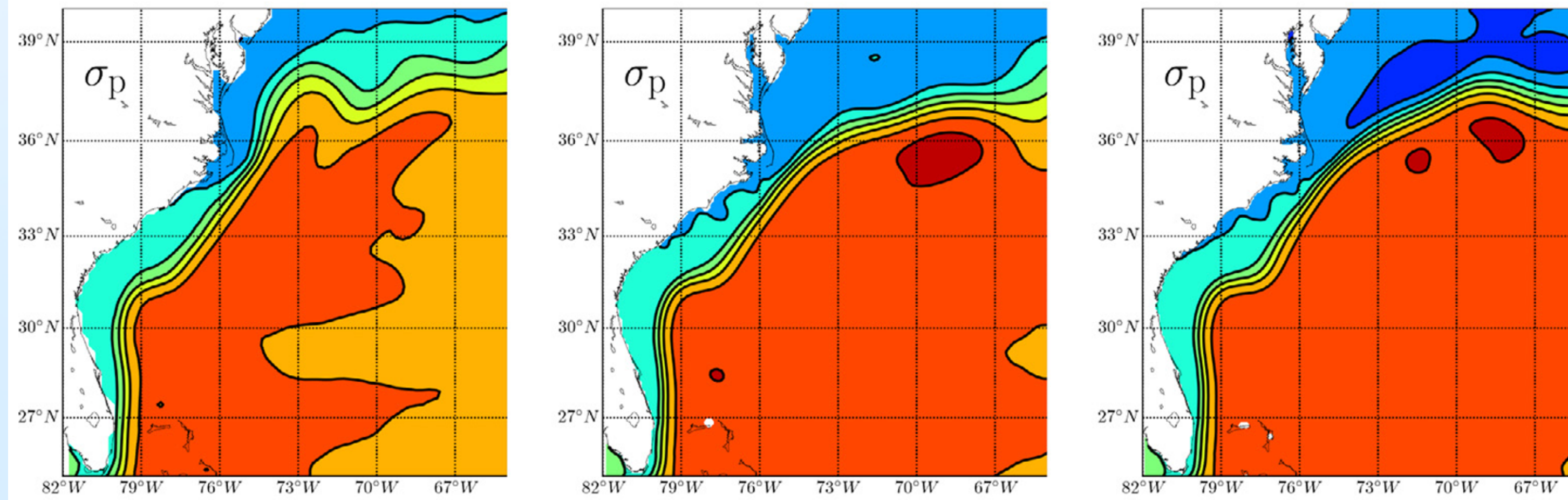
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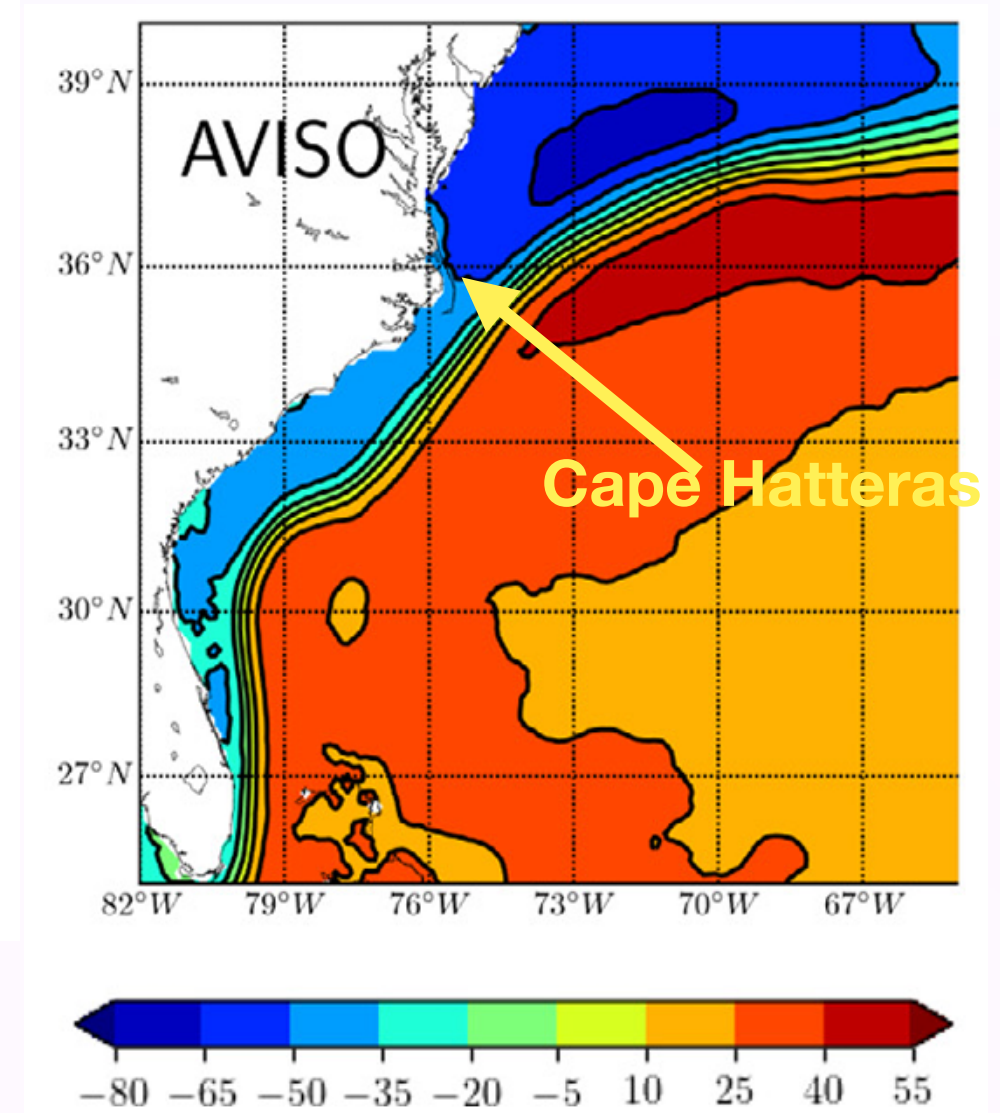
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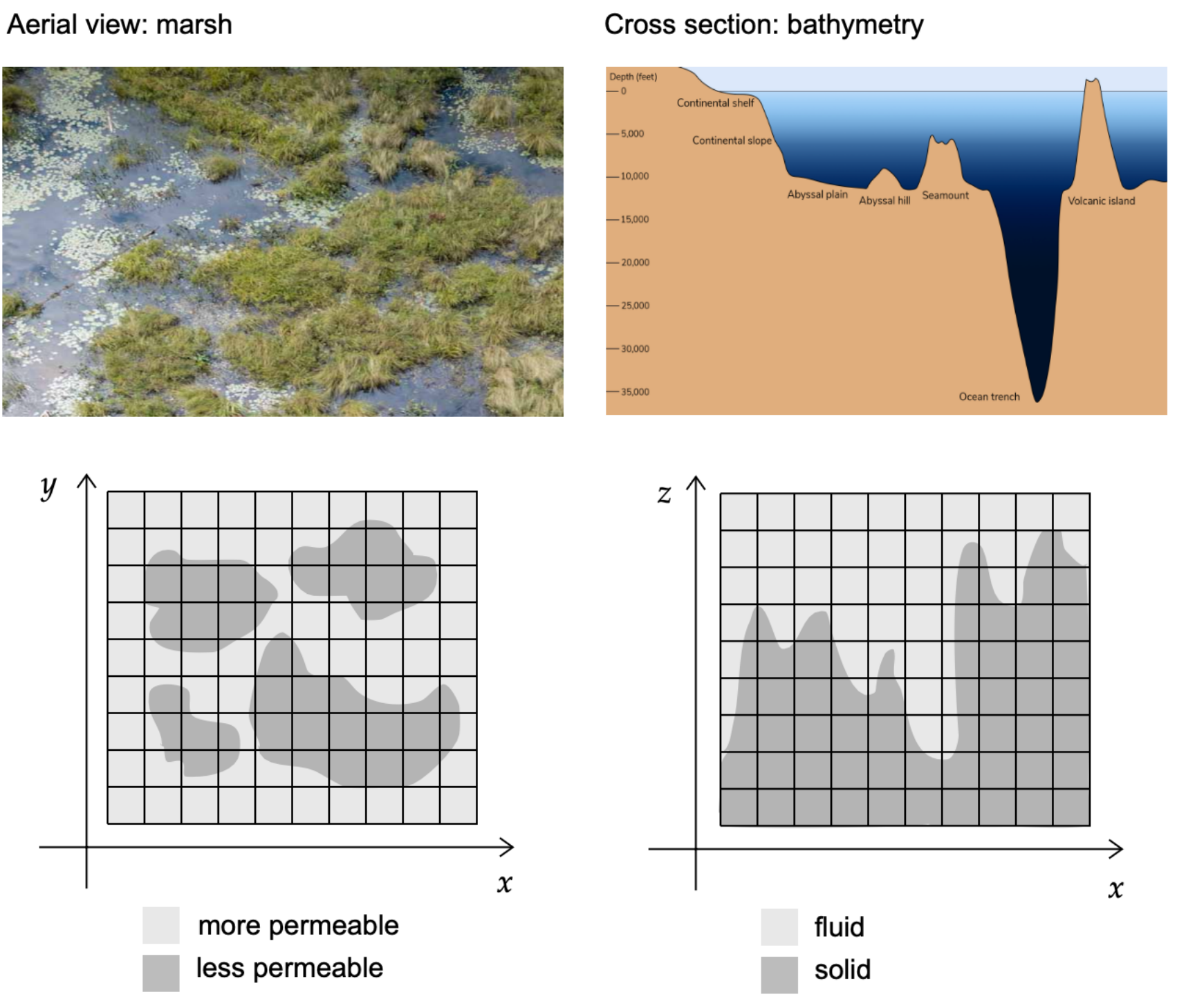
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New idea: use porous flow model for *upscaling* topography



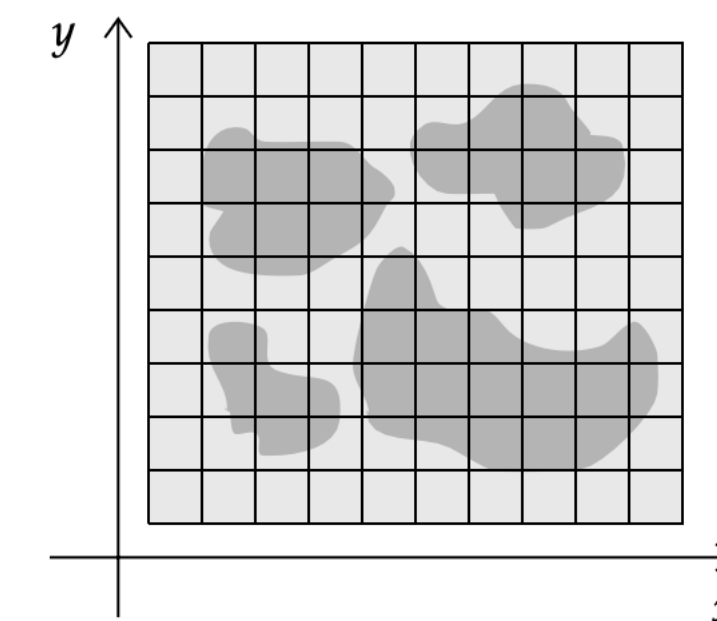
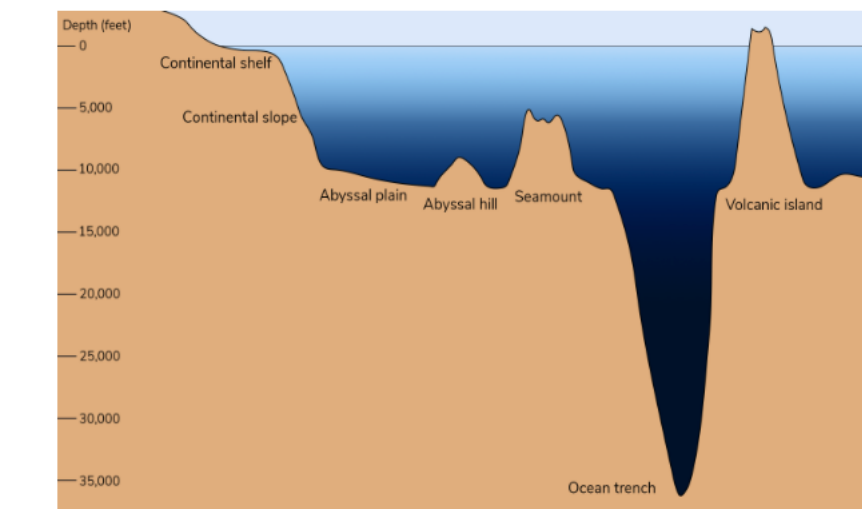
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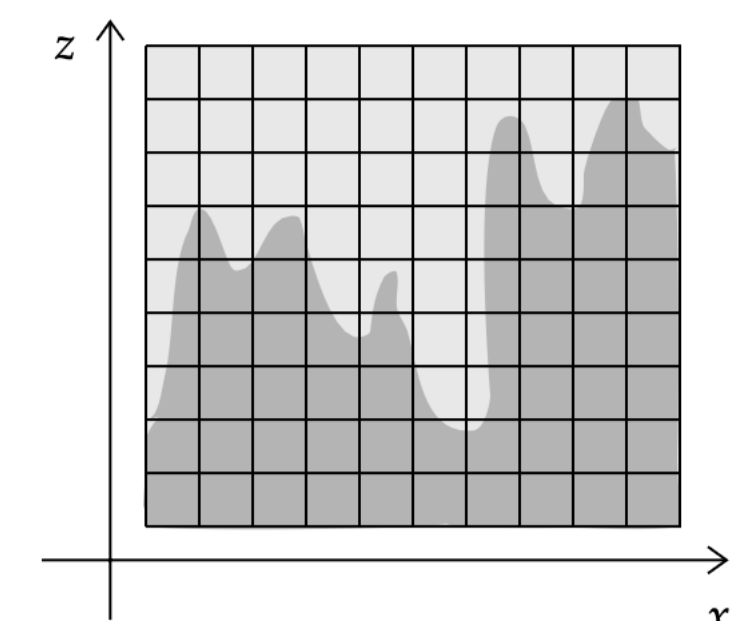
Aerial view: marsh



Cross section: bathymetry



more permeable
less permeable



fluid
solid

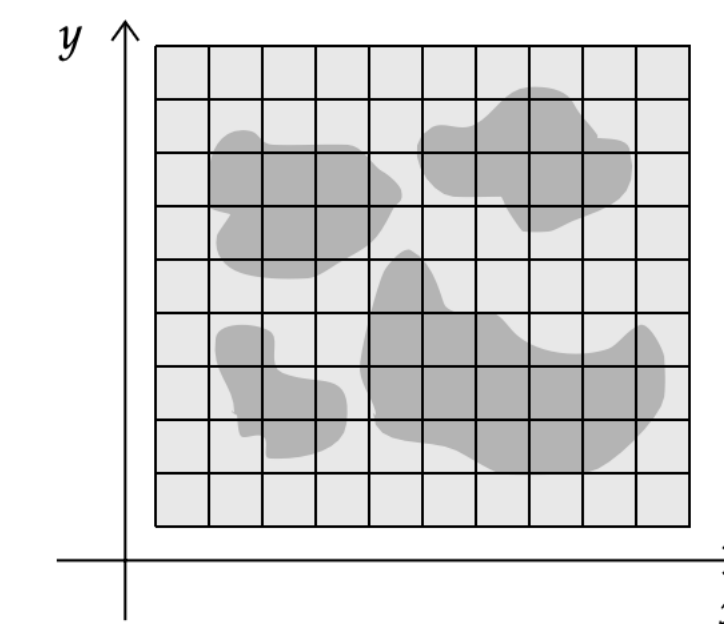
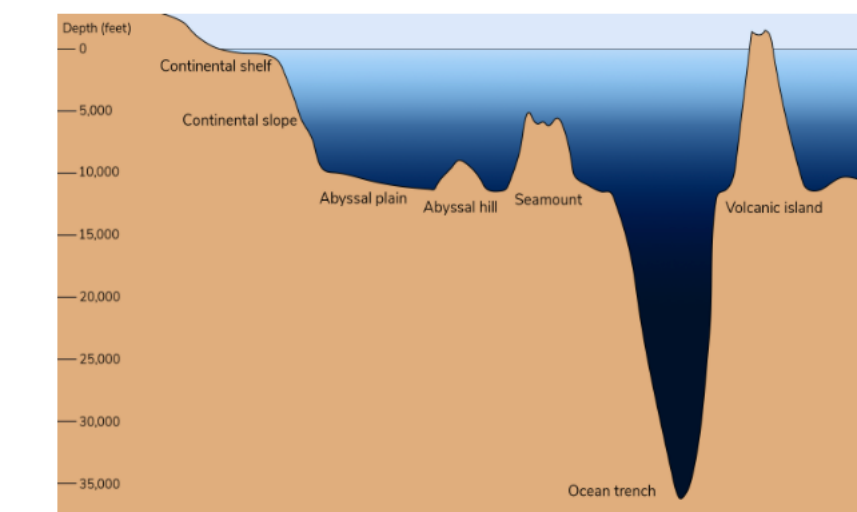
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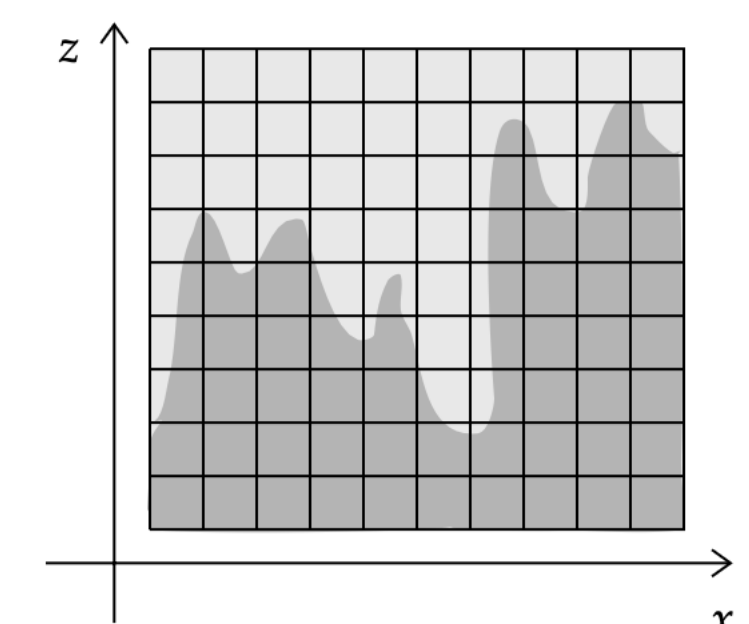
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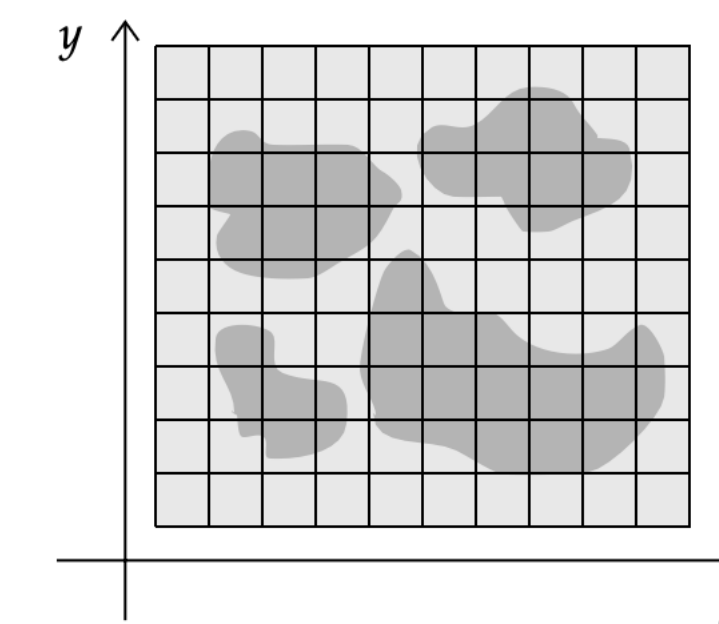
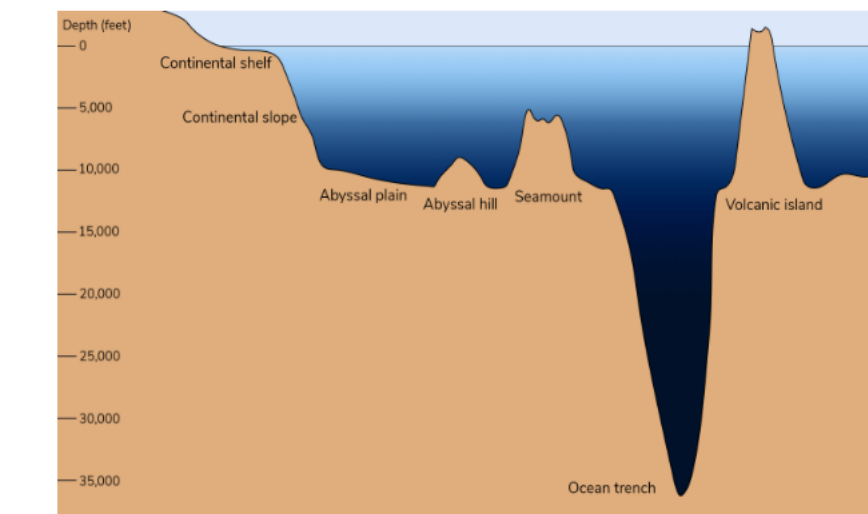
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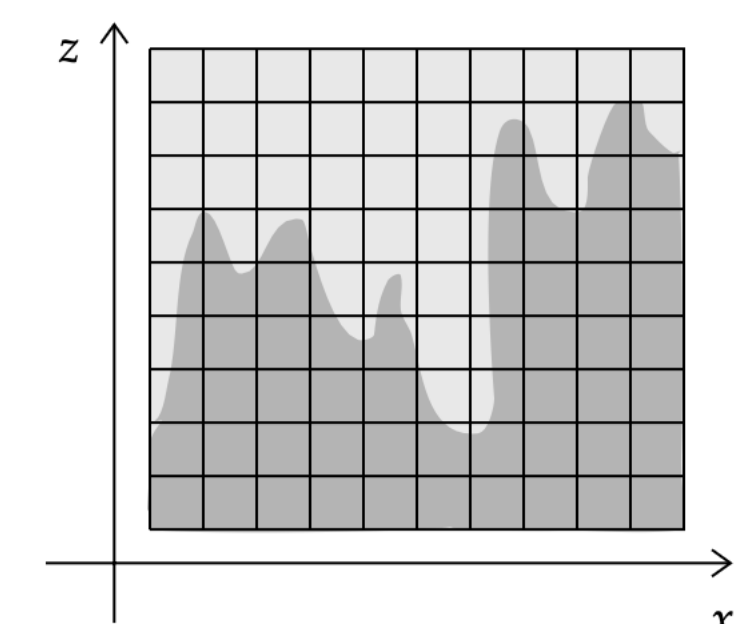
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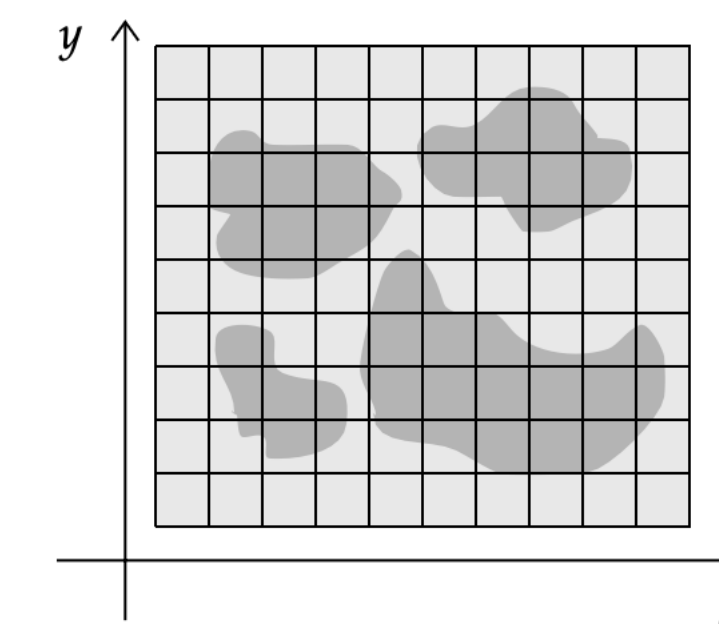
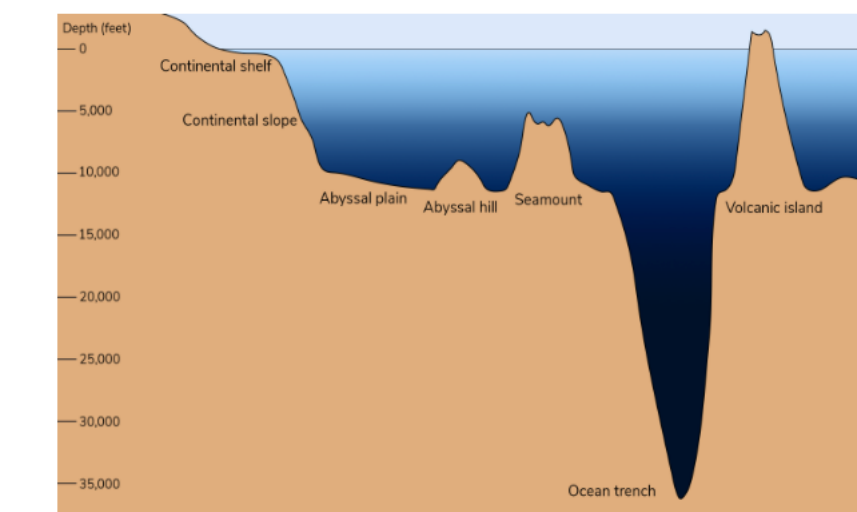
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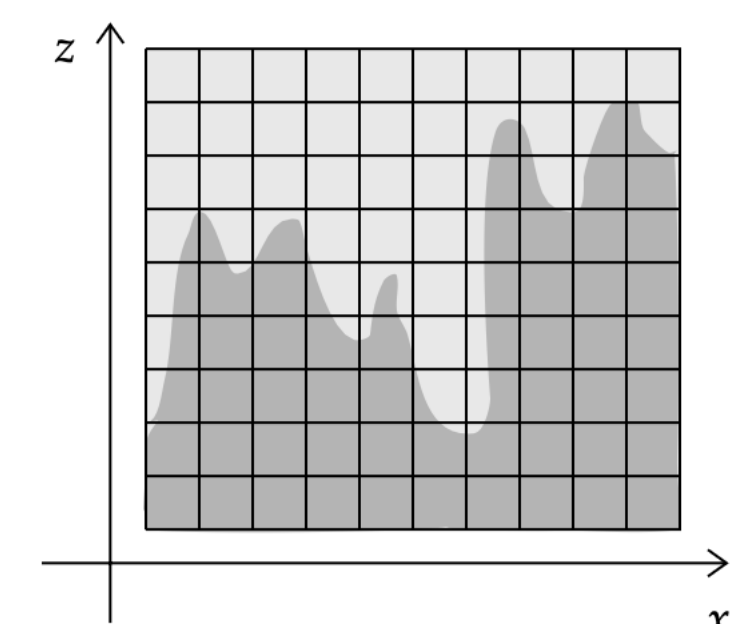
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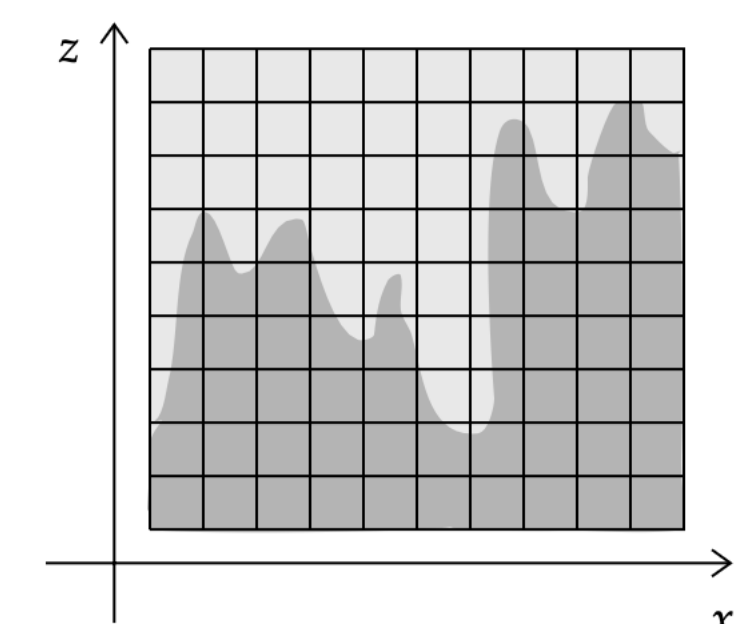
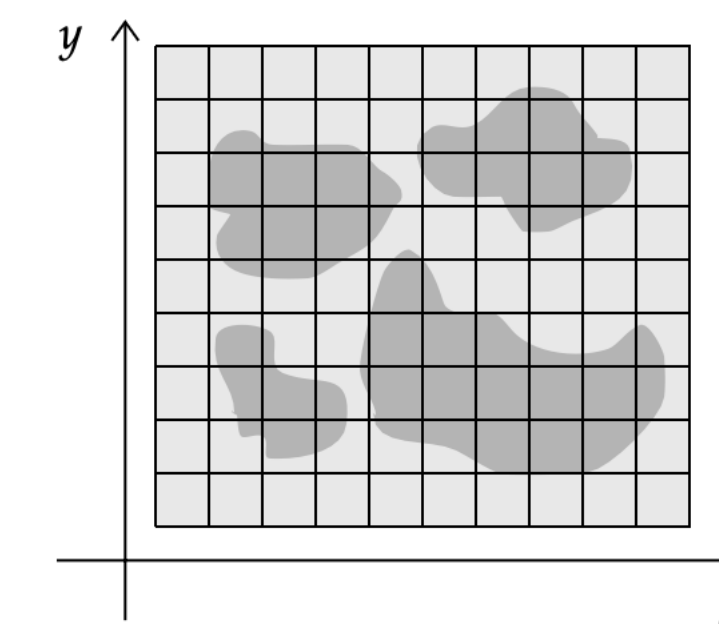
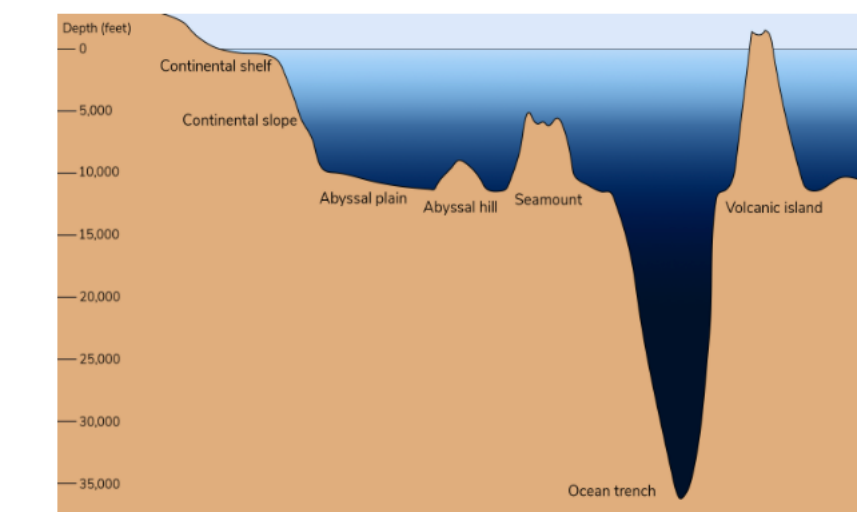
Fluid cells Ω_ϵ have diagonal **permeability** I , solid cells Ω_ϵ have diagonal permeability **permeability** ϵI with $\epsilon \ll 1$.

- **Marsh or estuary**
Porosity and permeability of SGS cells given by data.

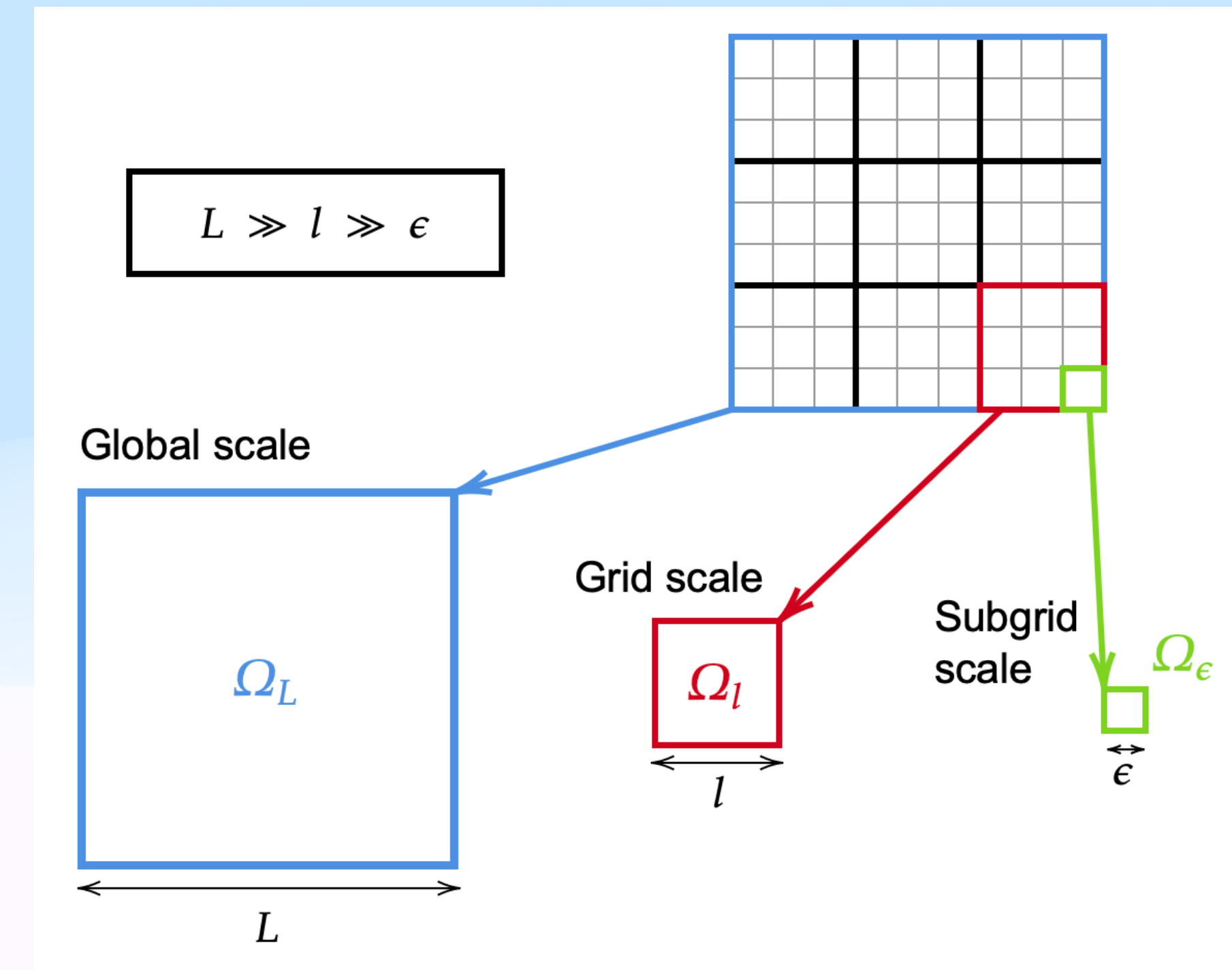
Aerial view: marsh



Cross section: bathymetry

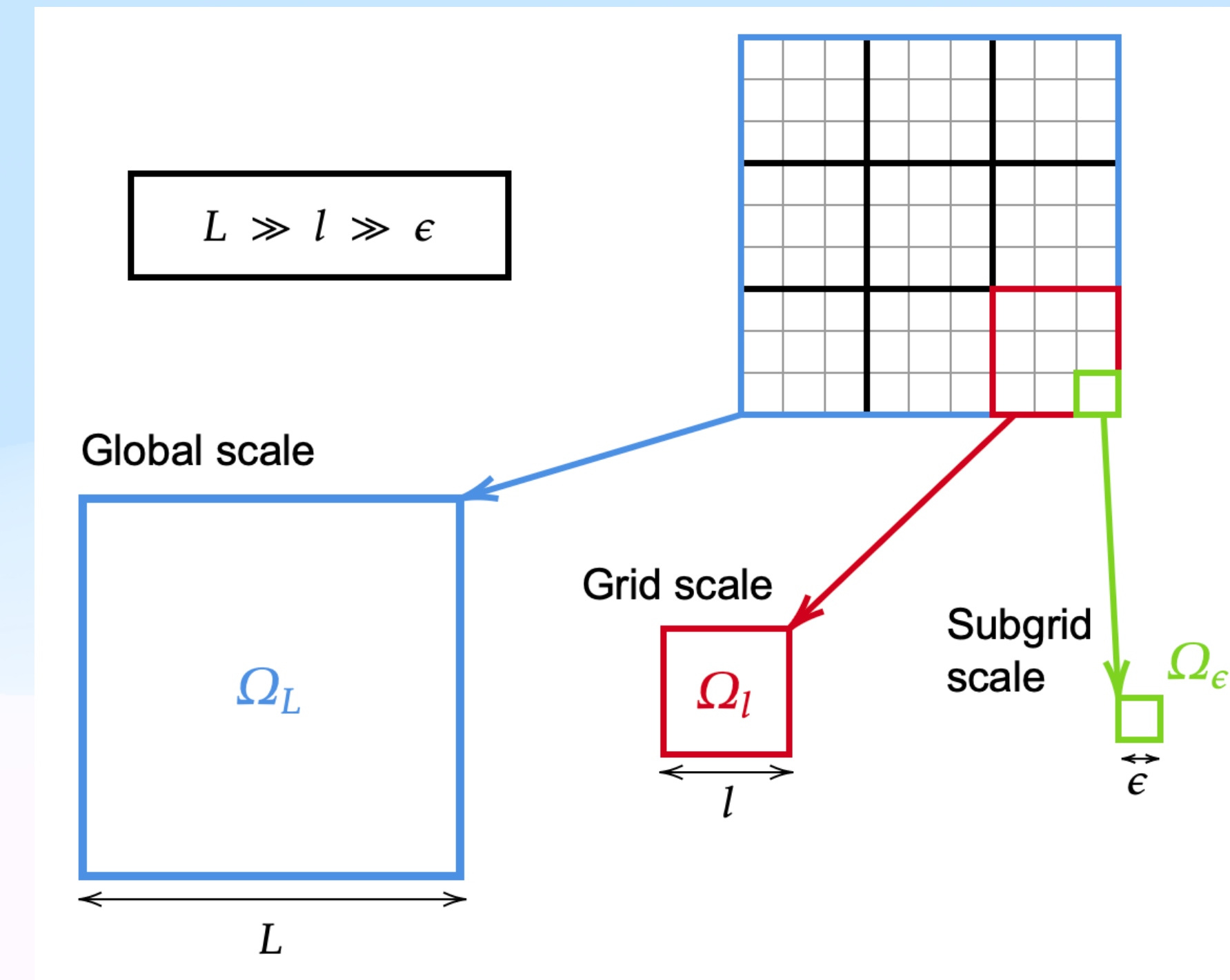


Upscaling topography: separation of scales



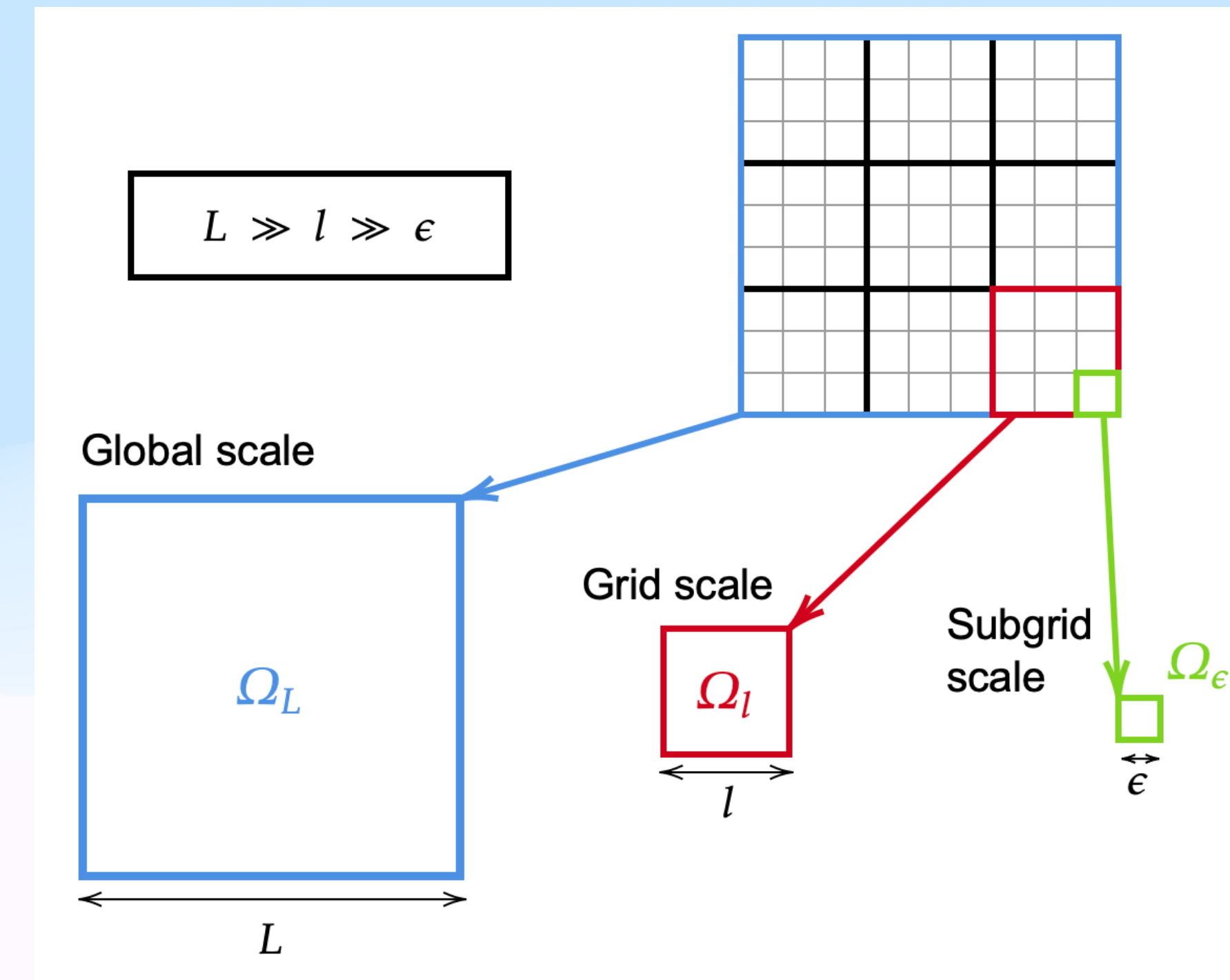
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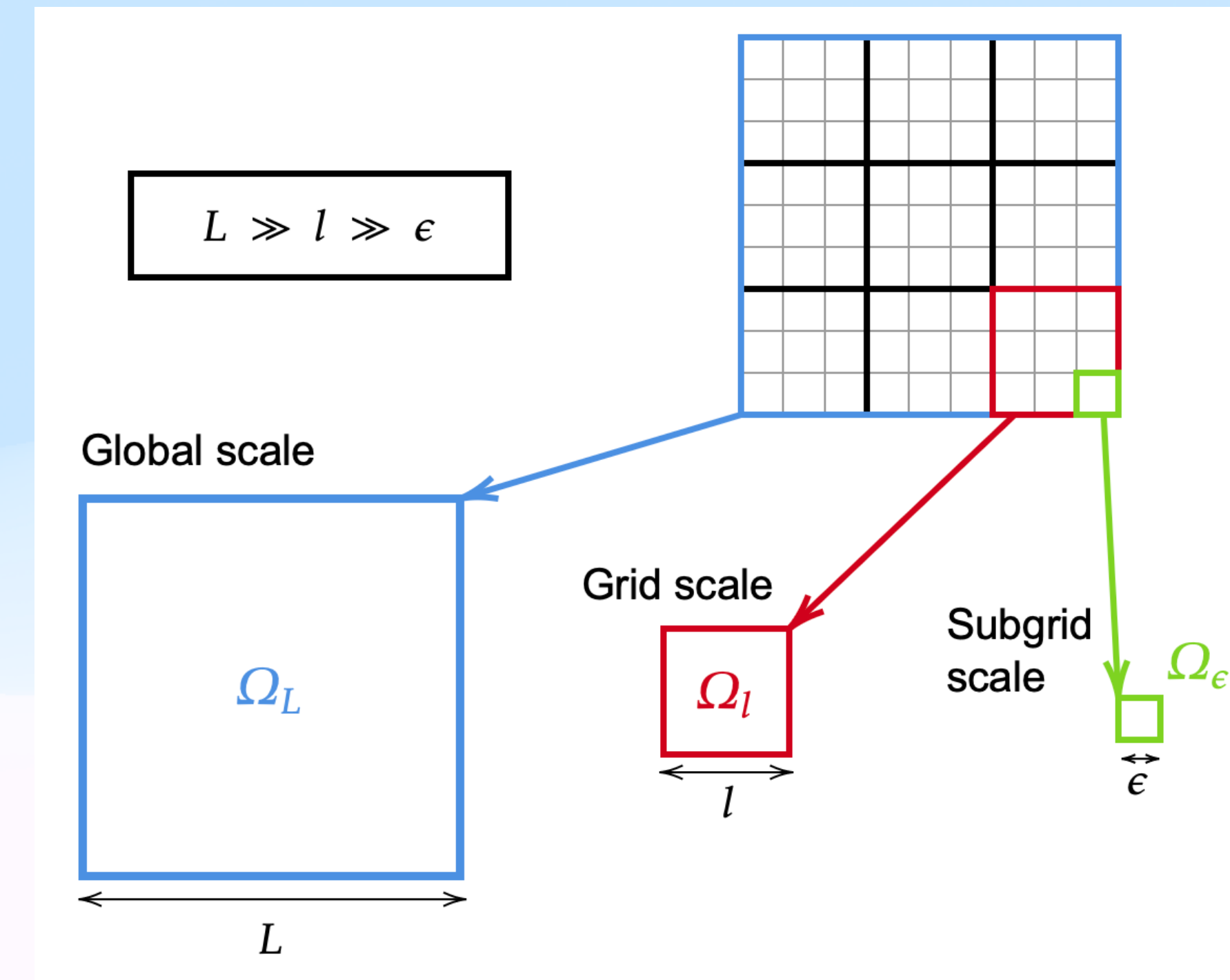
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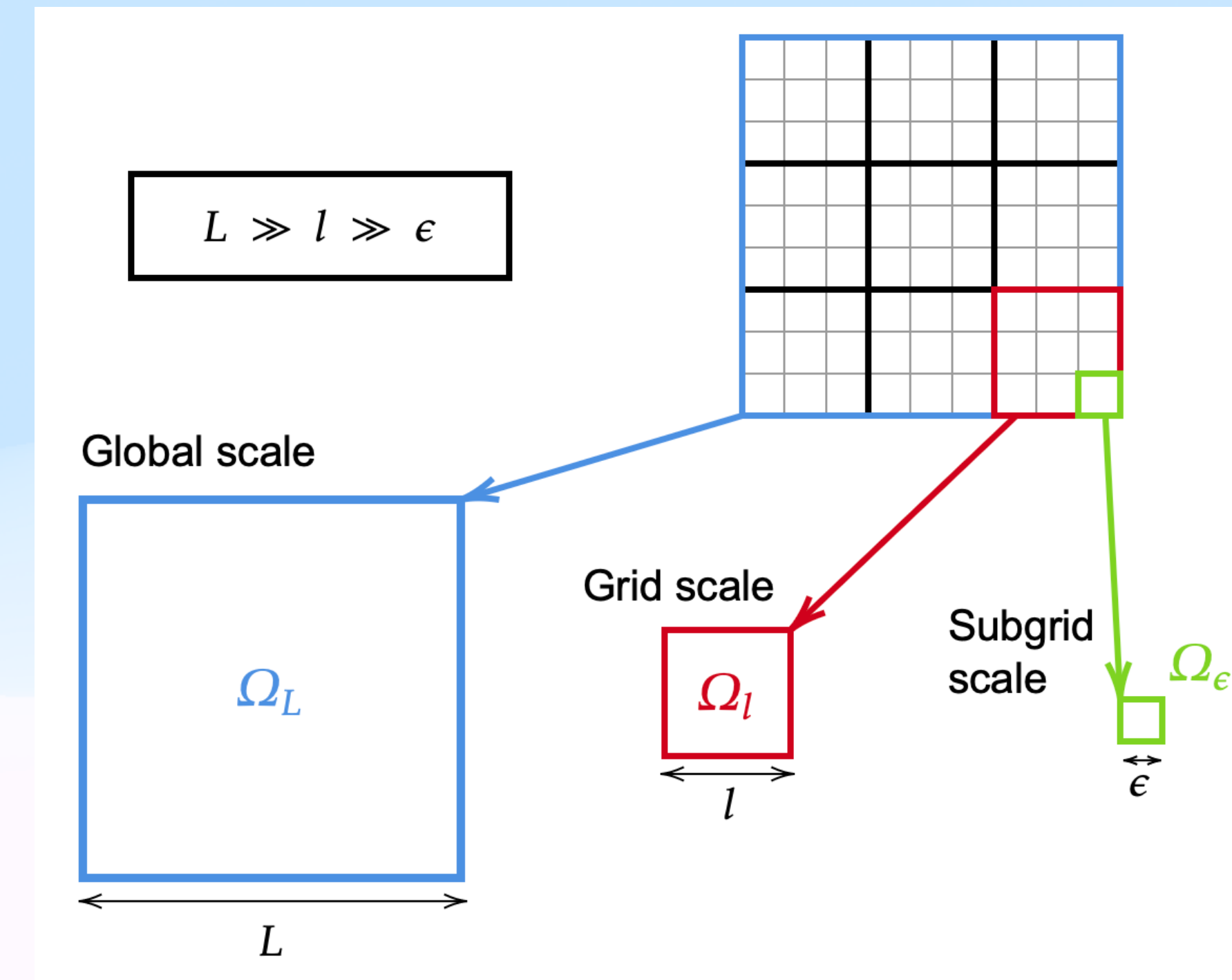
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$$L \gg l \gg \epsilon$$



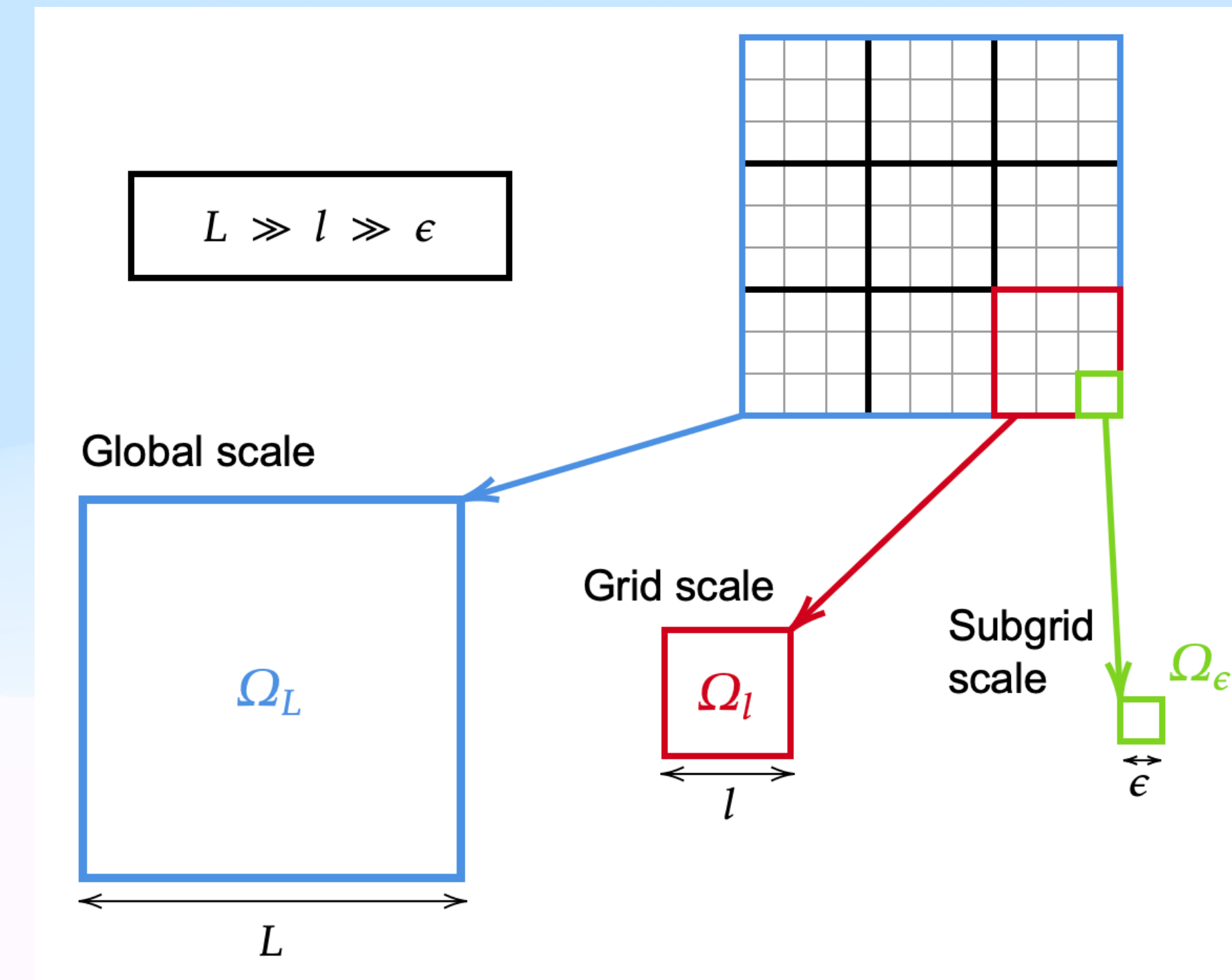
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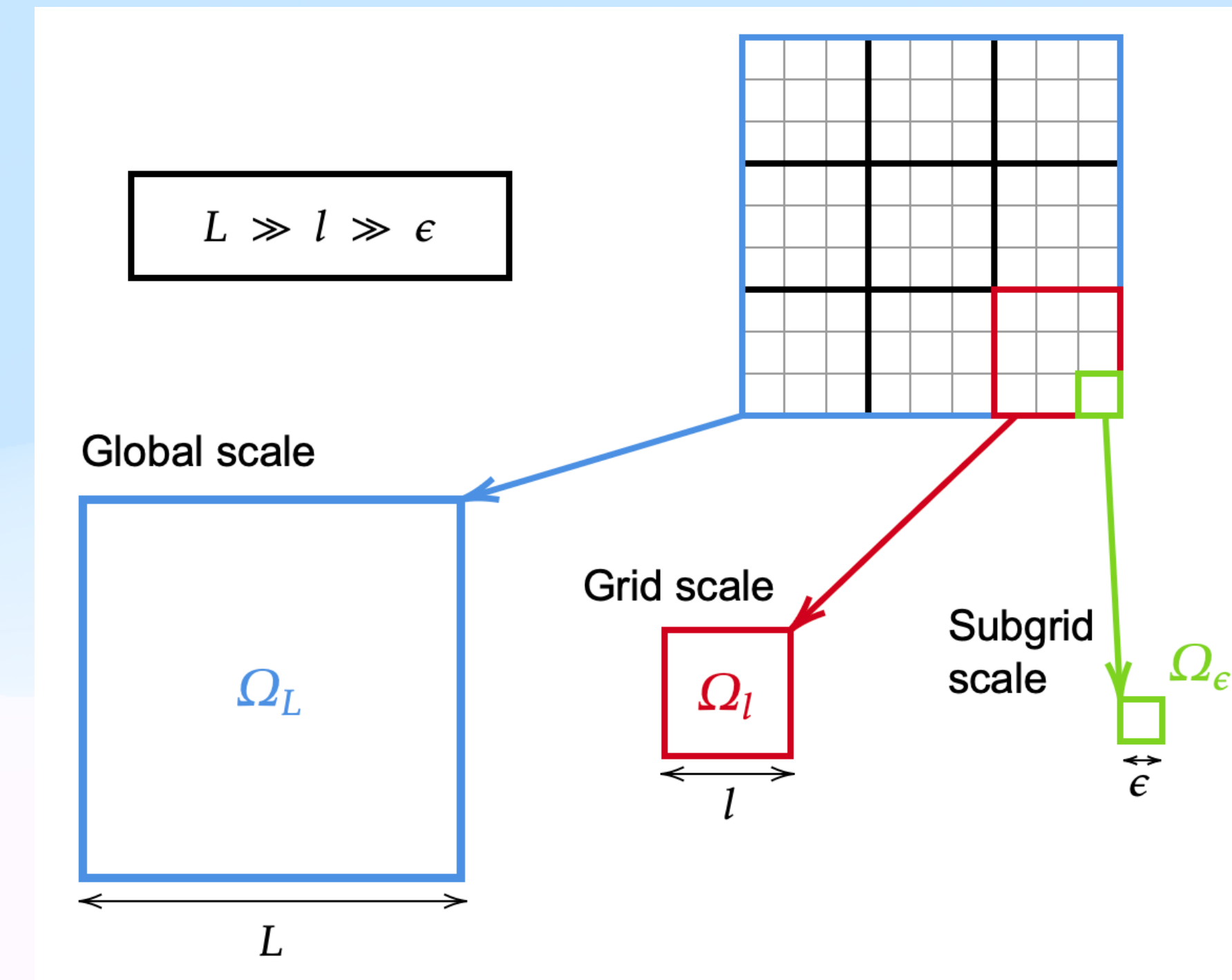
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How to *upscale permeability* data from Ω_ϵ to Ω_l ?

Upscaling algorithm: periodic homogenization

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- SGS flow approximated by [Darcy's law](#)

$$\nabla \cdot (-\mathbf{K} \nabla P) = 0$$

Linear elliptic PDE for porous media flow.

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Linear elliptic PDE for porous media flow.

- Separation of scales and periodic microstructure:
Allow us to pass to Lippmann–Schwinger (1950) limit.
Proven to converge!

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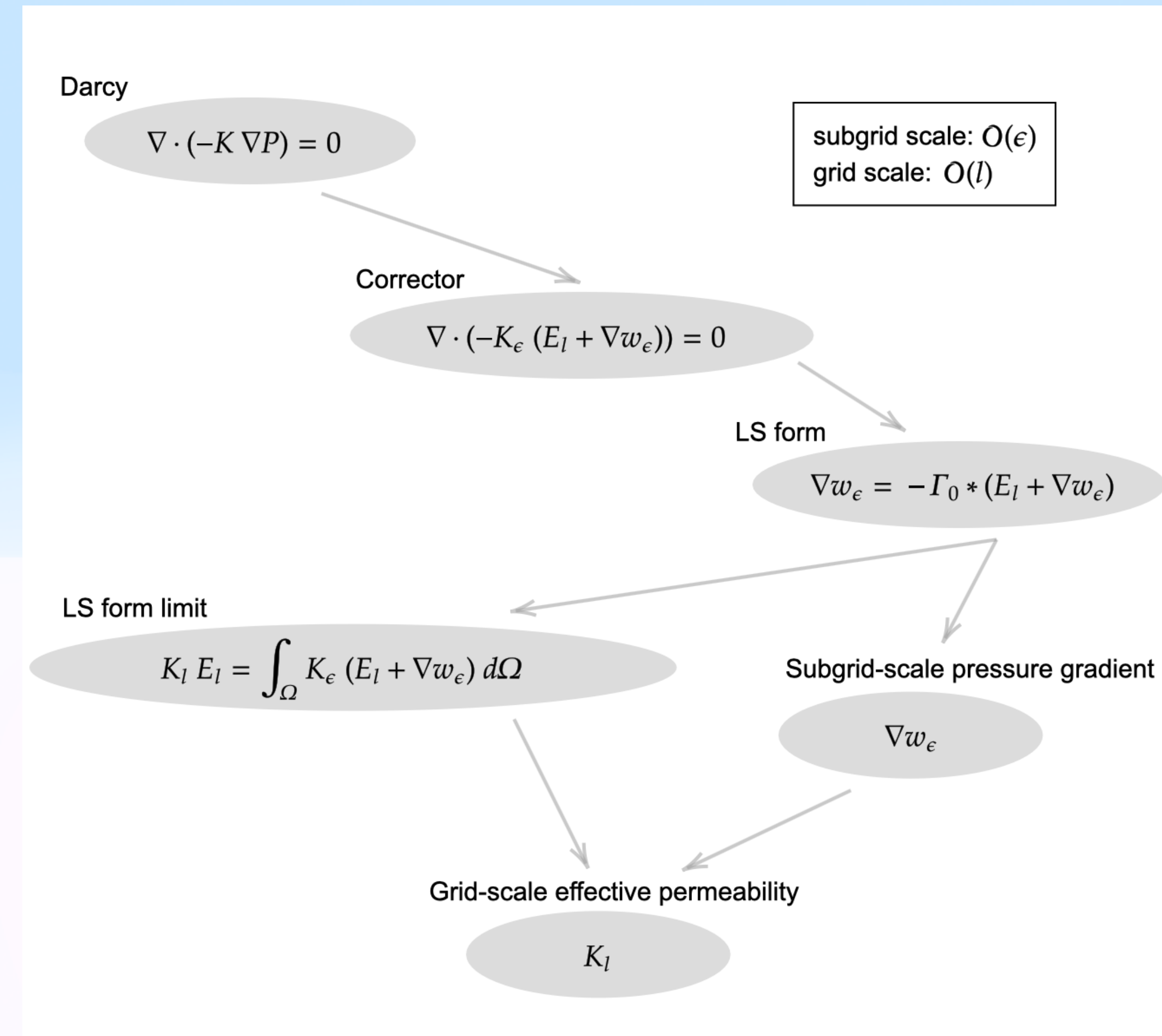
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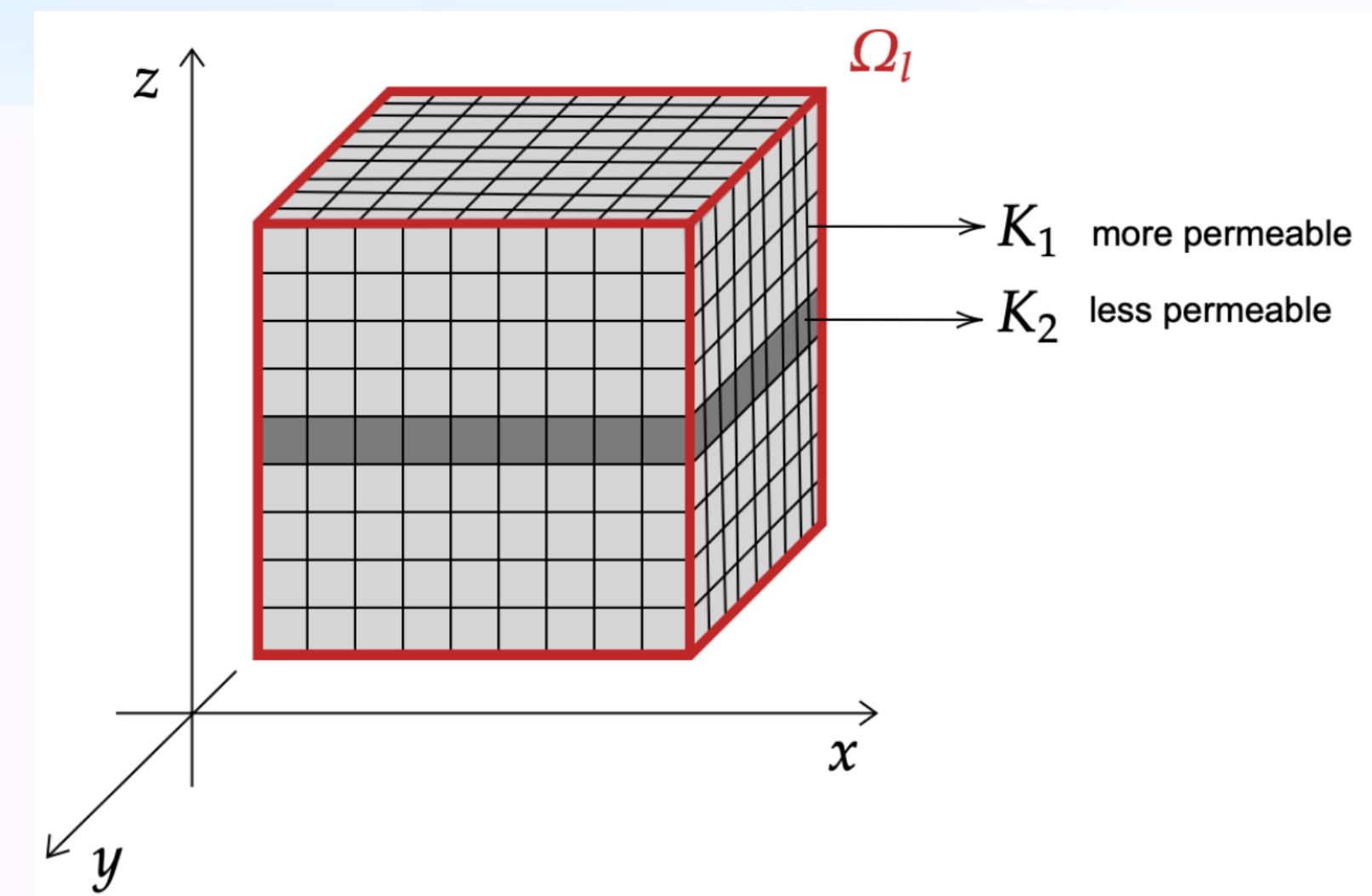
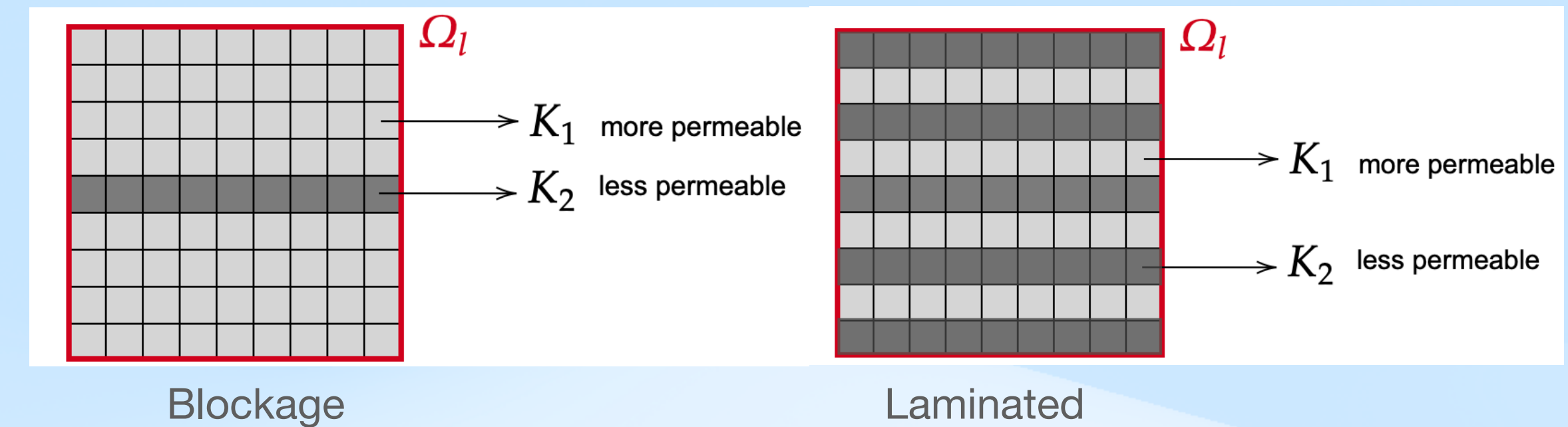
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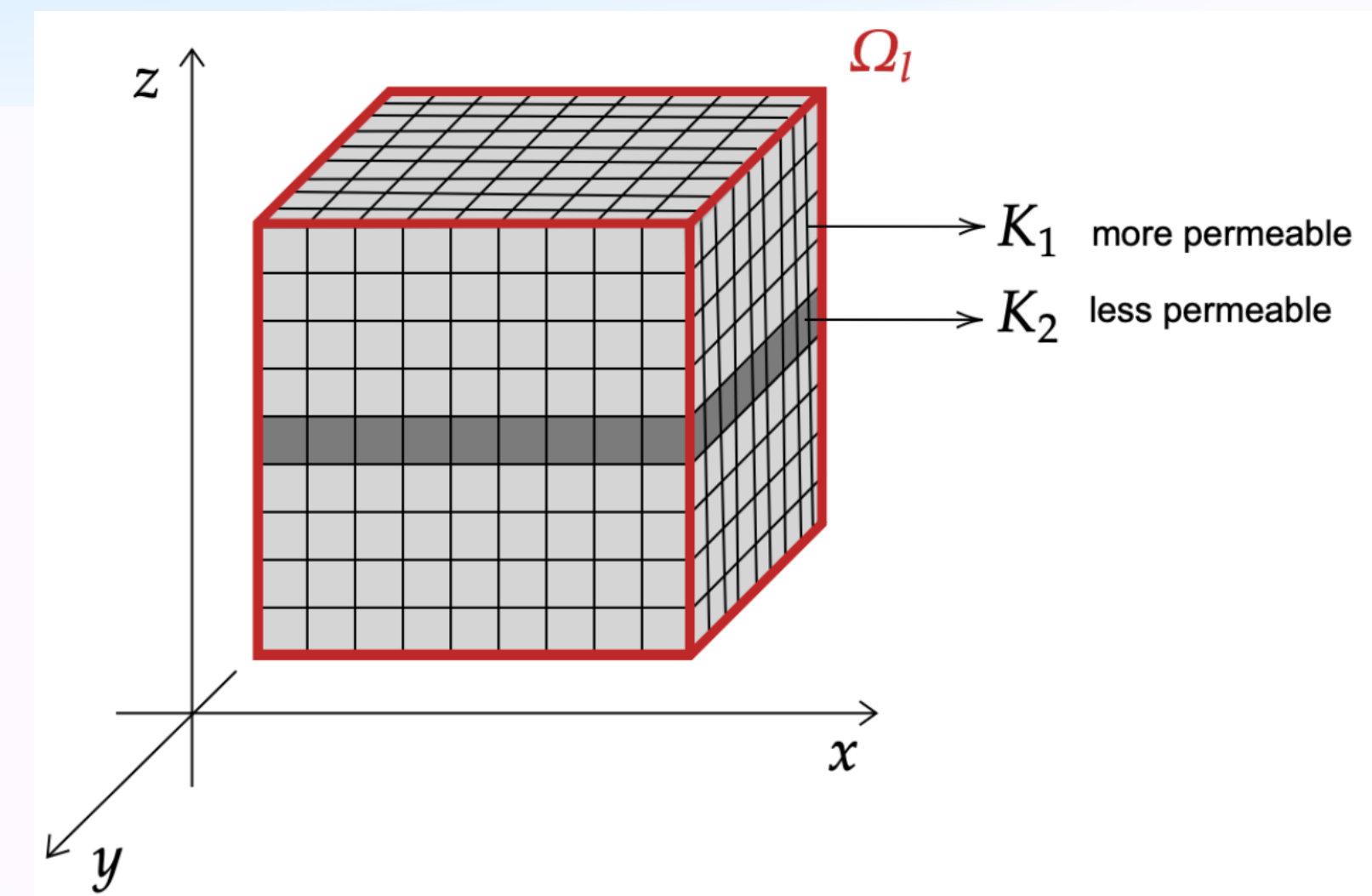
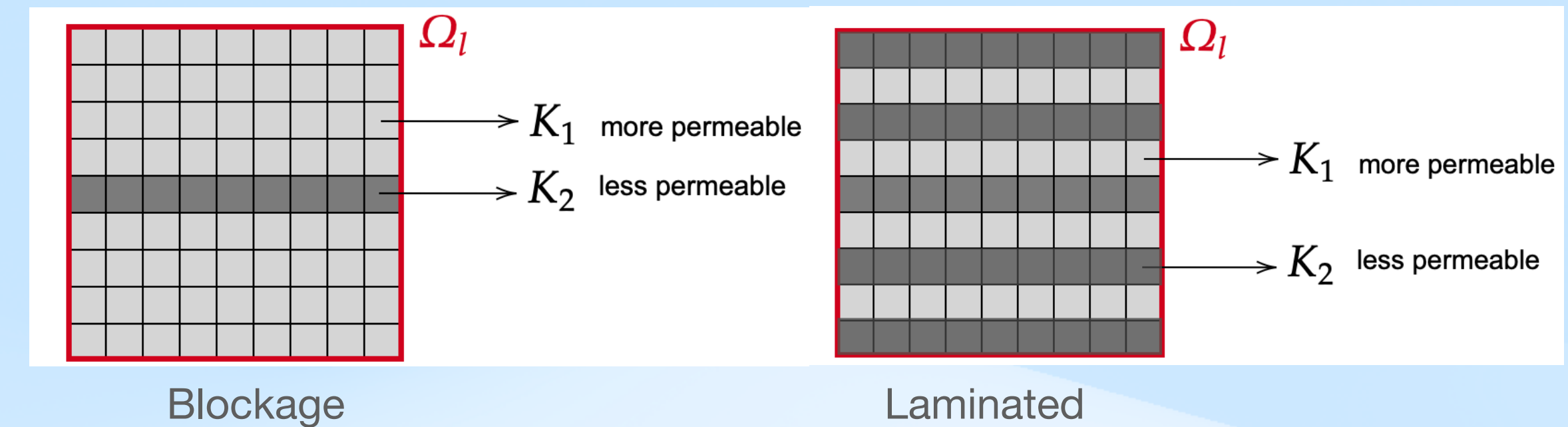
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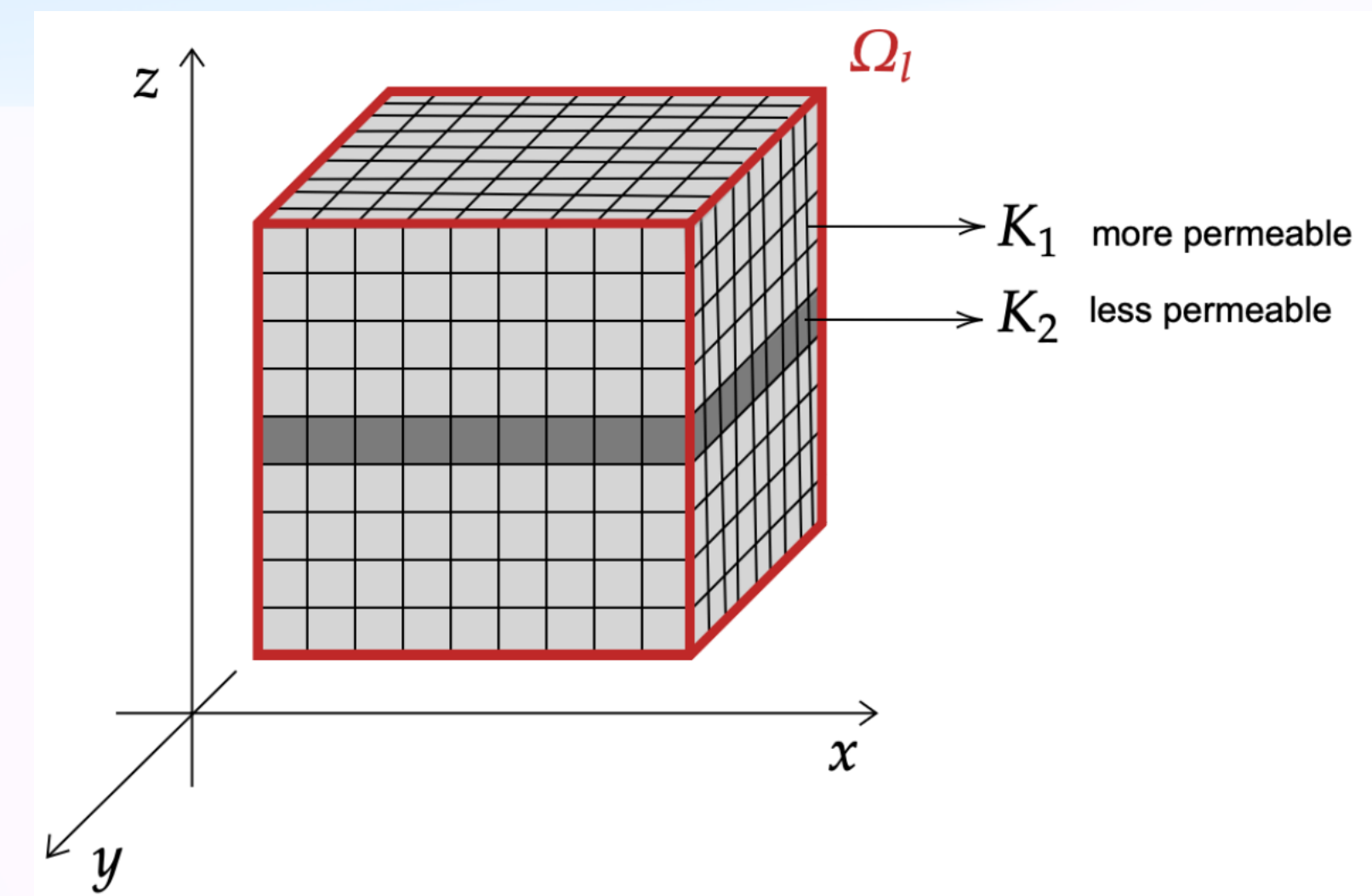
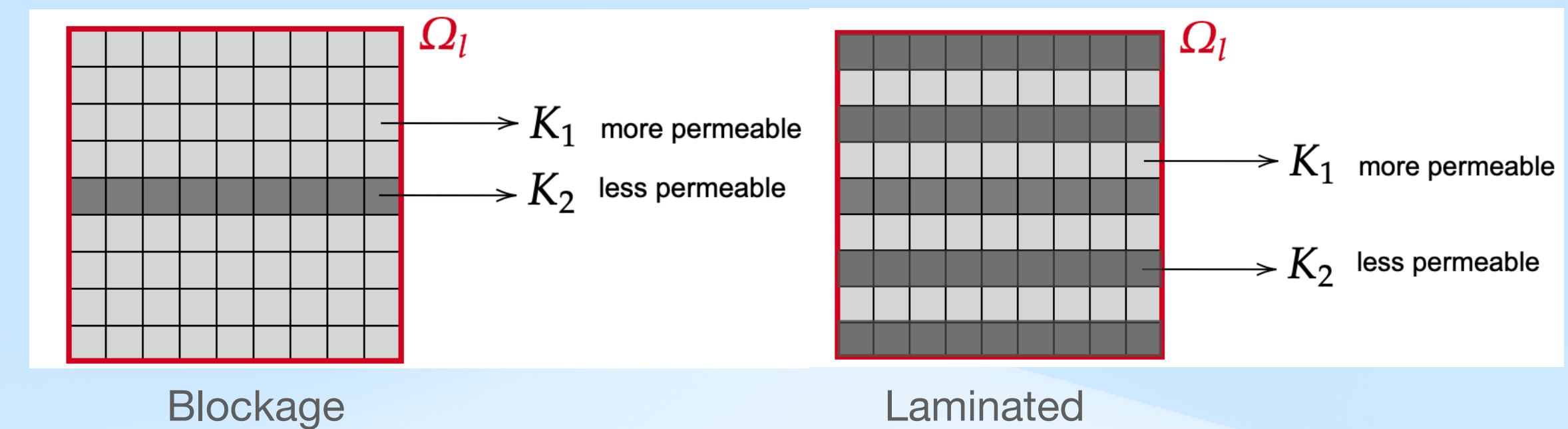
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(Renard & Ababou & 2022)



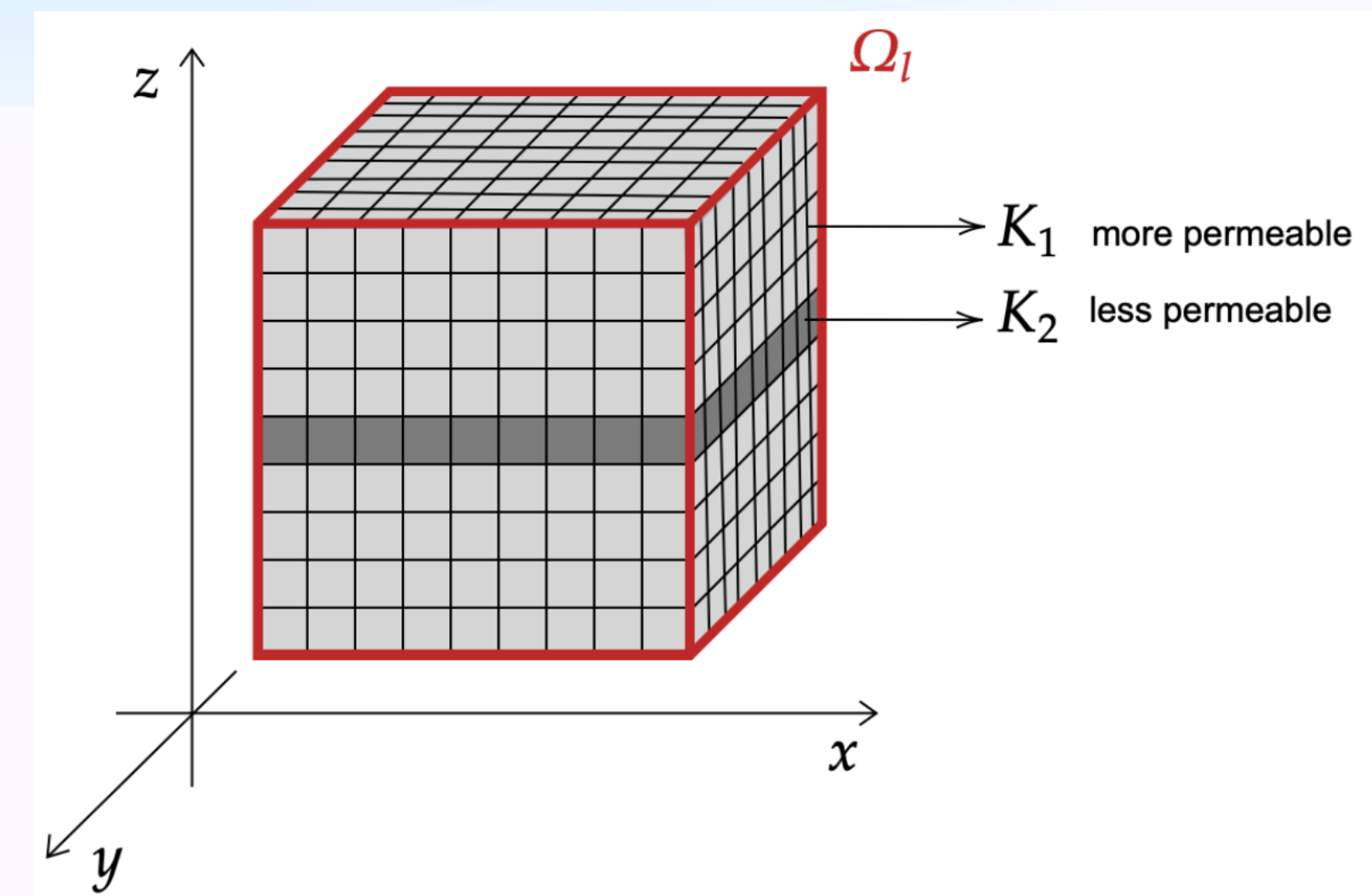
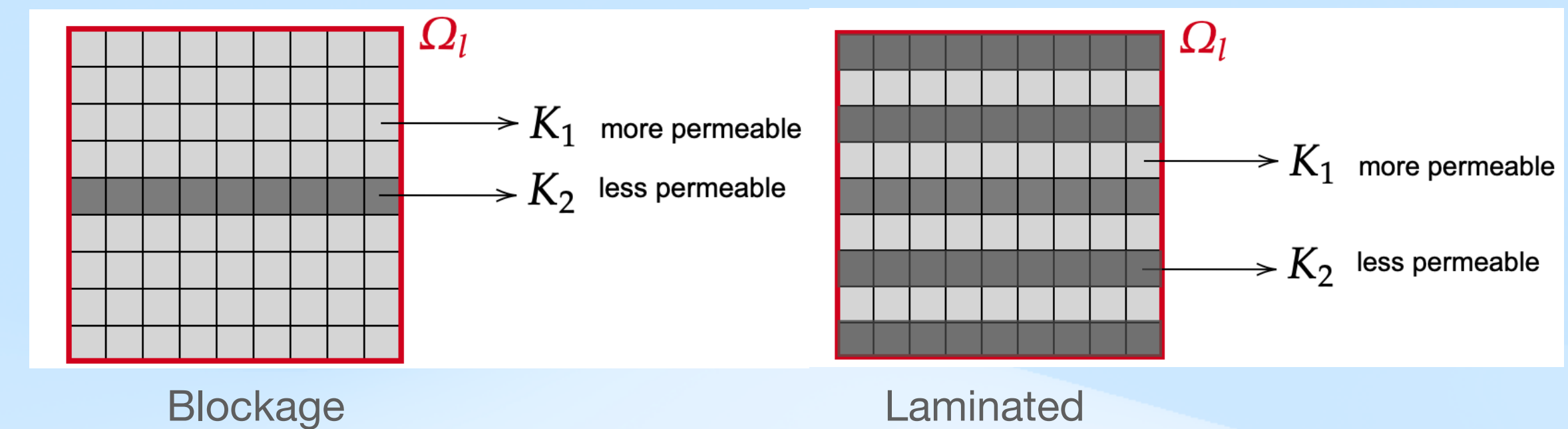
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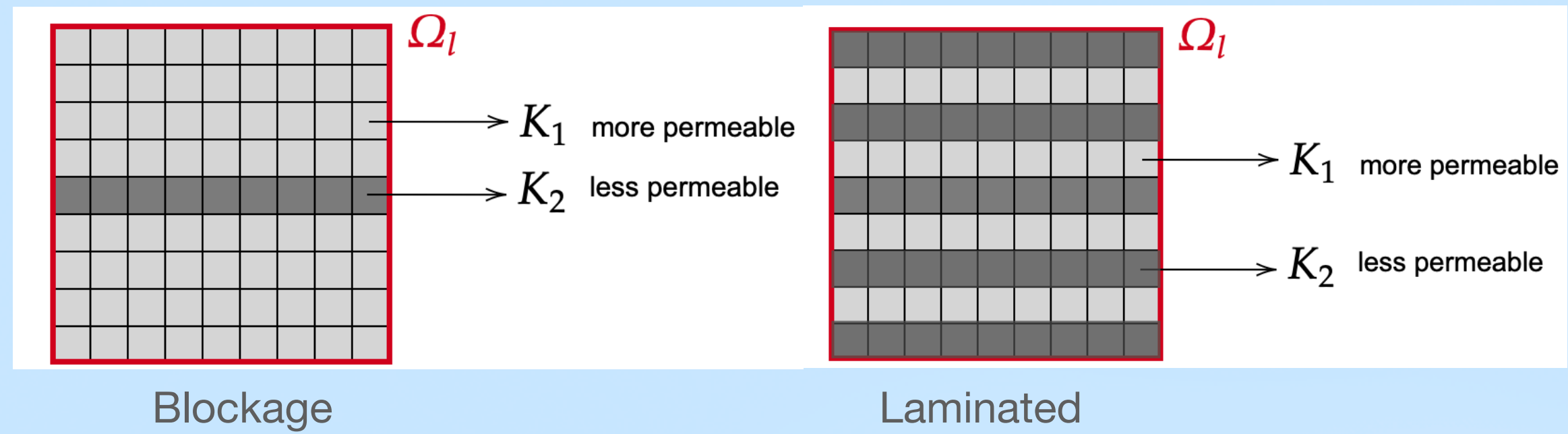
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- Consider both diagonal and non-diagonal SGS permeability matrices.

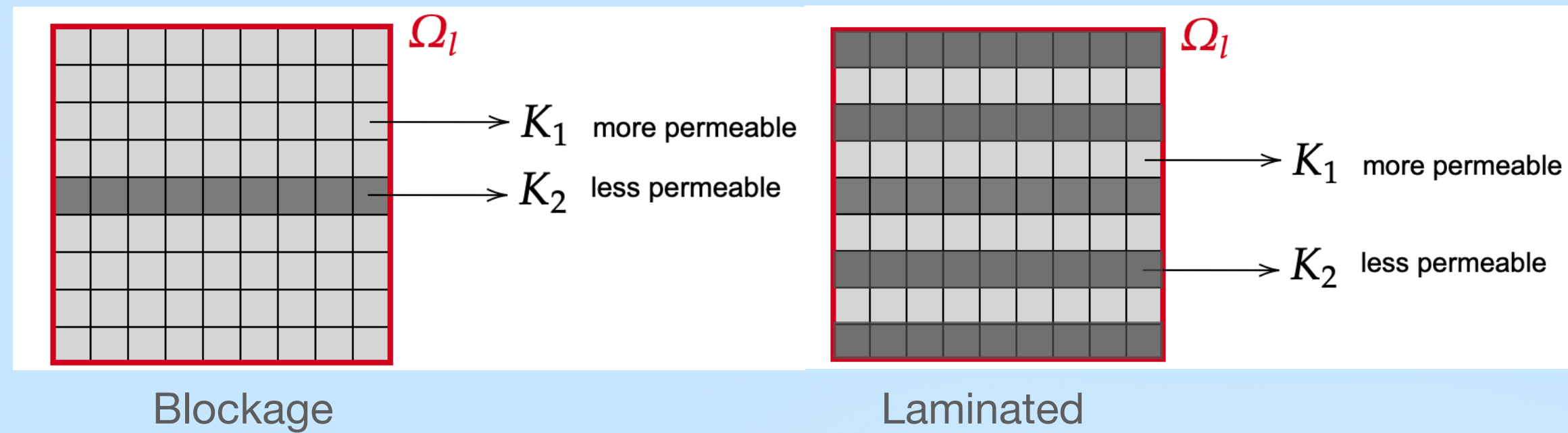


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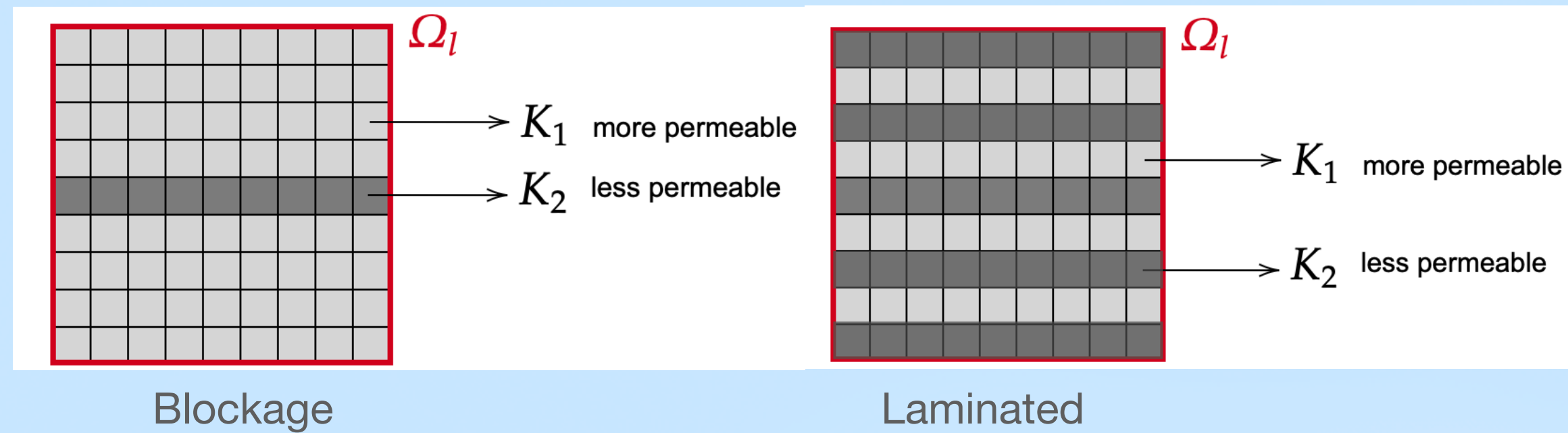


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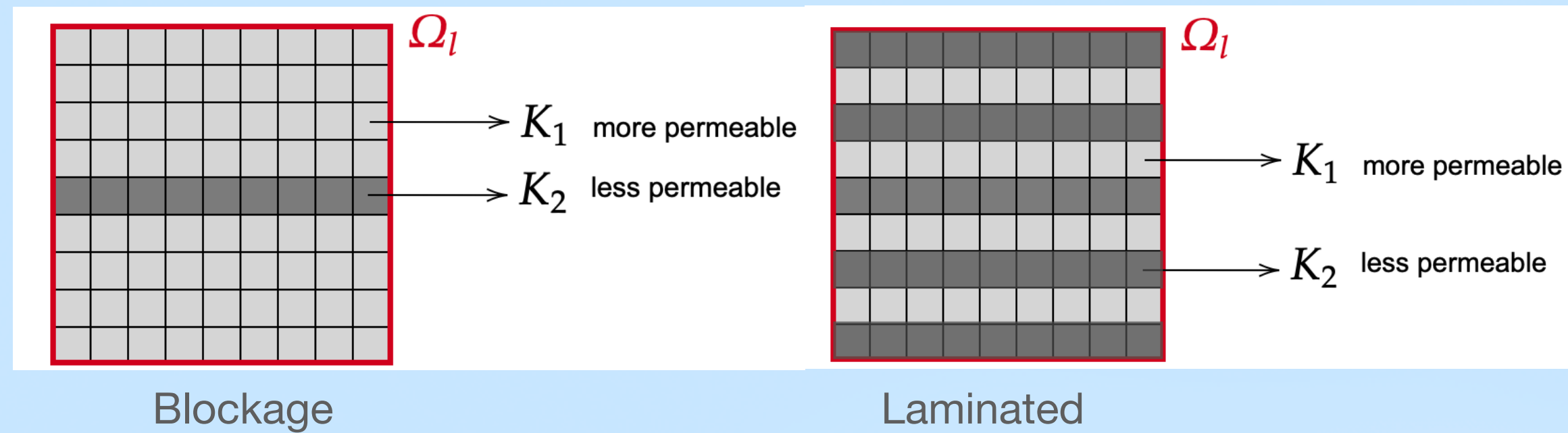
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Harmonic or arithmetic mean.

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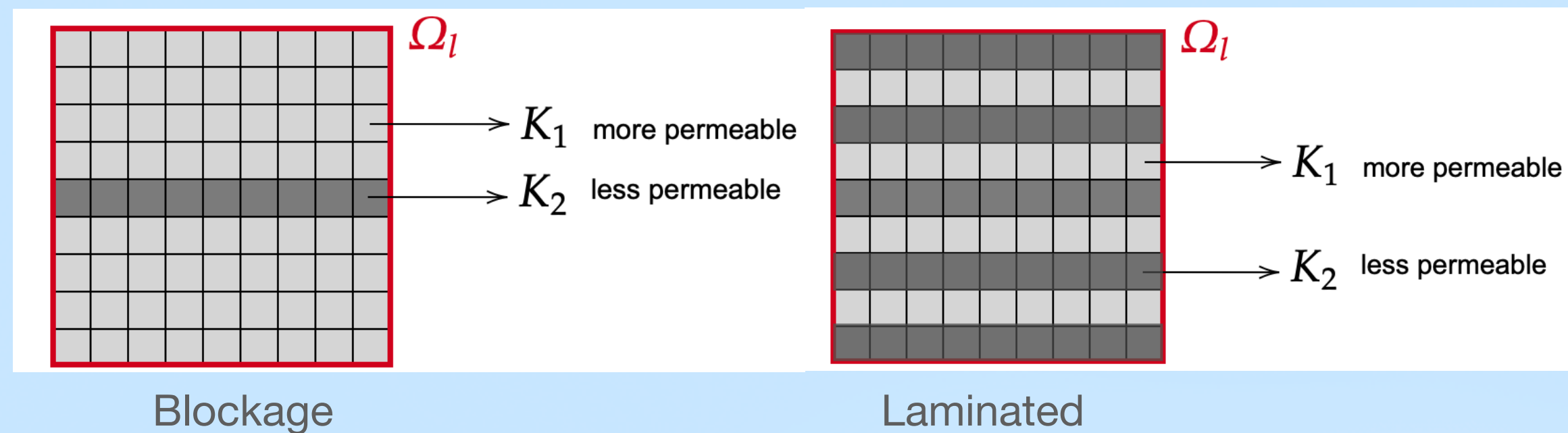
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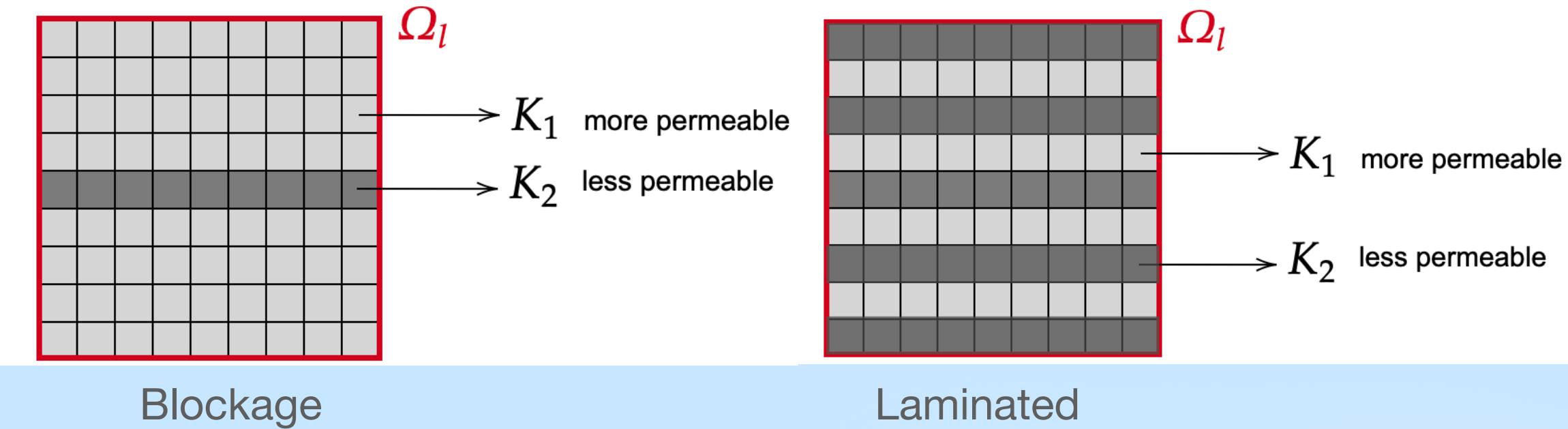
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Method	Run Time	K_1		K_2		K_l		
11 × 11 Blockage								
PH	0.00212 s	0.7226 0	0 0.2667	0.1473 0	0 0.4958	0.6703 0	0 0.2784	😊
VA	1.4901 s	"		"		0.5943 0.0758	0.0758 0.2038	😐
PH	0.00145 s	0.7226 0.4338	0.4338 0.2667	0.1473 0.1253	0.1253 0.4958	0.6537 0.4181	0.4181 0.2784	😊
VA	2.0687 s	"		"		2.6477 2.7776	2.7776 2.9138	😞

Blockage permeability: PH reproduces exact results.

31x31 Laminated								
PH	0.00935 s	0.7226	0	0.1473	0	0.4256	0	😊
		0	0.2667	0	0.4958	0	0.3502	
VA	1.440 s	"		"		0.3984	0.0635	😐
						0.0635	0.2908	
PH	0.00681 s	0.7226	0.4338	0.1473	0.1253	0.3627	0.3212	😊
		0.4338	0.2667	0.1253	0.4958	0.3213	0.3502	
VA	7.469 s	"		"		5.6020	7.2797	😞
						7.2797	17.312	

Laminated permeability: PH reproduces exact results.

31x31 Homogenous								
PH	0.00707 s	0.7226	0	N/A		0.7226	0	😊
		0	0.2667			0	0.2667	
VA	1.5966 s	"		"		0.6532	0.0694	😞
						0.0694	0.1974	
PH	0.00798 s	0.7226	0.4338	N/A		0.7226	0.4338	😊
		0.4338	0.2667			0.4338	0.2667	
VA	7.637 s	"		"		15.615	10.065	😞
						10.065	6.4875	

Homogeneous case: upscaled permeability is same as fine scale permeability!

Application to 2D shallow water equations

$$\frac{\partial \tilde{h}}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot \tilde{\mathbf{m}} = 0$$

$$\frac{\partial \tilde{\mathbf{m}}}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot (\tilde{\mathbf{m}} \otimes \mathbf{u}) + \phi \nabla \left(\frac{1}{2} g h^2 \right) = \nu_e \nabla (\tilde{h} \cdot \nabla \mathbf{u}) - \mathbb{1}(\mathbf{x}) \nu \mathbf{k}^{-1} \tilde{\mathbf{m}} + \tilde{h} \mathbf{F}$$

Porous shallow water equations (pSWE) in conservation form

Dropped constant density factor ρ_0 .

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$$\mathbb{1}(\mathbf{x}) = \begin{cases} 1, & \text{if } \phi(\mathbf{x}) < 1, \\ 0, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases} \text{ is } \mathbf{mask} \text{ defining fluid/non-fluid regions.}$$

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- **Numerical stability:** globally **rescale** friction matrix $\mathbf{K}_l^{-1}$ so maximum eigenvalue is $\leq 1/\Delta t_l$.
Solid permeability $K_l^{solid} = \Delta t_l$: value that enforces no-slip boundary conditions at solid interfaces.

Periodic homogenization for pSWE

$$\frac{\partial \tilde{h}}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot \tilde{\mathbf{m}} = 0$$

$$\frac{\partial \tilde{\mathbf{m}}}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot (\tilde{\mathbf{m}} \otimes \mathbf{u}) + \phi \nabla \left(\frac{1}{2} g h^2 \right) = \nu \nabla (\tilde{h} \cdot \nabla \mathbf{u}) - \mathbb{1}(\mathbf{x}) \mathbf{K}^{-1} \tilde{\mathbf{m}} + \tilde{h} \mathbf{F}$$

Porous shallow water equations (pSWE) in conservation form

- Upscaled porosity ϕ_l is simply average of SGS porosity ϕ_ϵ (0 or 1) over grid cells Ω_l .
No adjustable parameters!
- Upscaled permeability matrices $\mathbf{K}_l$ computed by PH where $\mathbf{K}_\epsilon^{fluid} / \mathbf{K}_\epsilon^{solid} = 10$.
Upscaled permeability depends only on ratio of fine scale permeabilities.
- Numerical stability: globally rescale friction matrix $\mathbf{K}_l^{-1}$ so maximum eigenvalue is $\leq 1/\Delta t_l$.
Solid permeability $K_l^{solid} = \Delta t_l$: value that enforces no-slip boundary conditions at solid interfaces.
- Set solid porosity to $\phi_{min} = 0.05$.

Numerical model

$$\frac{\partial \tilde{h}}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot \tilde{\mathbf{m}} = 0$$

$$\frac{\partial \tilde{\mathbf{m}}}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot (\tilde{\mathbf{m}} \otimes \mathbf{u}) + \phi \nabla \left(\frac{1}{2} g h^2 \right) = \nu \nabla (\tilde{h} \cdot \nabla \mathbf{u}) - \mathbb{1}(\mathbf{x}) \mathbf{K}^{-1} \tilde{\mathbf{m}} + \tilde{h} \mathbf{F}$$

Porous shallow water equations (*pSWE*) in conservation form

Numerical model

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Porous shallow water equations (*pSWE*) in conservation form

- Second order **finite volume/finite difference** method on Arakawa C-grid (*staggered grid*).

Numerical model

$$\frac{\partial \tilde{h}}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot \tilde{\mathbf{m}} = 0$$

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Porous shallow water equations (*pSWE*) **in conservation form**

- Second order **finite volume/finite difference** method on Arakawa C-grid (*staggered grid*).
- **Periodic** inflow/outflow boundary conditions.

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$$\frac{\partial \tilde{h}}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot \tilde{\mathbf{m}} = 0$$

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Porous shallow water equations (*pSWE*) in conservation form

- Second order **finite volume/finite difference** method on Arakawa C-grid (*staggered grid*).
- **Periodic** inflow/outflow boundary conditions.
- **Free-slip** lateral boundary conditions.

Numerical model

$$\frac{\partial \tilde{h}}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot \tilde{\mathbf{m}} = 0$$

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Porous shallow water equations (*pSWE*) in conservation form

- Second order **finite volume/finite difference** method on Arakawa C-grid (*staggered grid*).
- **Periodic** inflow/outflow boundary conditions.
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- RK4 in time.

Numerical model

$$\frac{\partial \tilde{h}}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot \tilde{\mathbf{m}} = 0$$

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Porous shallow water equations (*pSWE*) in conservation form

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- **Masking** for solid **no-slip boundary conditions** for non-porous SWE (*reference fine scale Ω_ϵ simulation*).

Numerical model

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- **Cell-edge permeability** is the **harmonic mean** of porosities of adjacent cells.

Numerical model

$$\frac{\partial \tilde{h}}{\partial t} + \nabla \cdot \tilde{\mathbf{m}} = 0$$

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- **Cell-edge permeability** is the **harmonic mean** of porosities of adjacent cells.
- **Cell-edge friction** (*inverse permeability matrix*) is **arithmetic mean** of adjacent cell resistivity matrices.

Numerical model

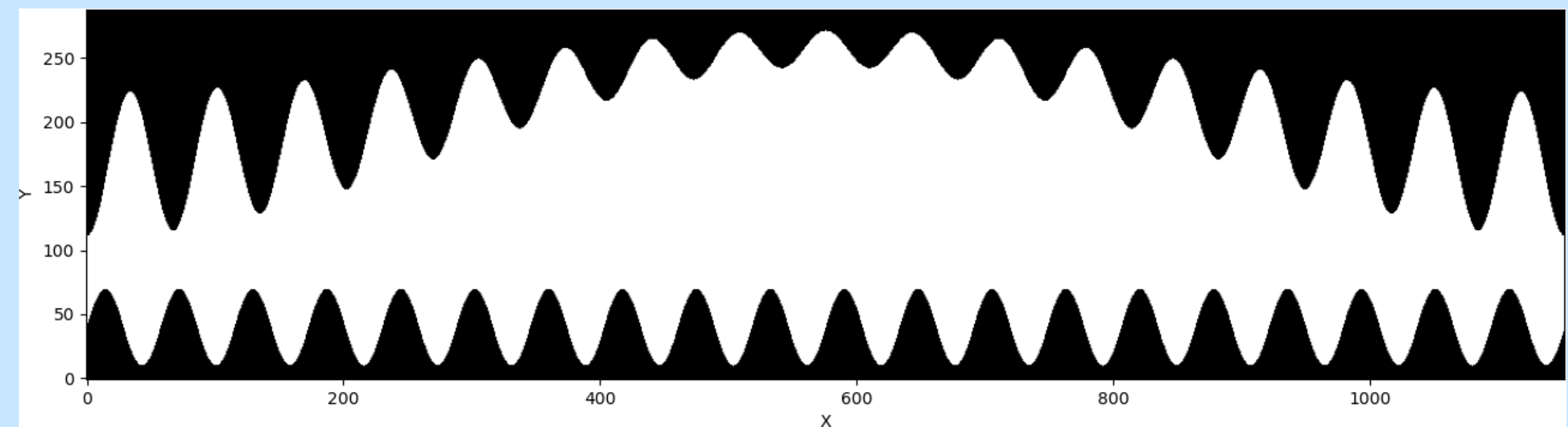
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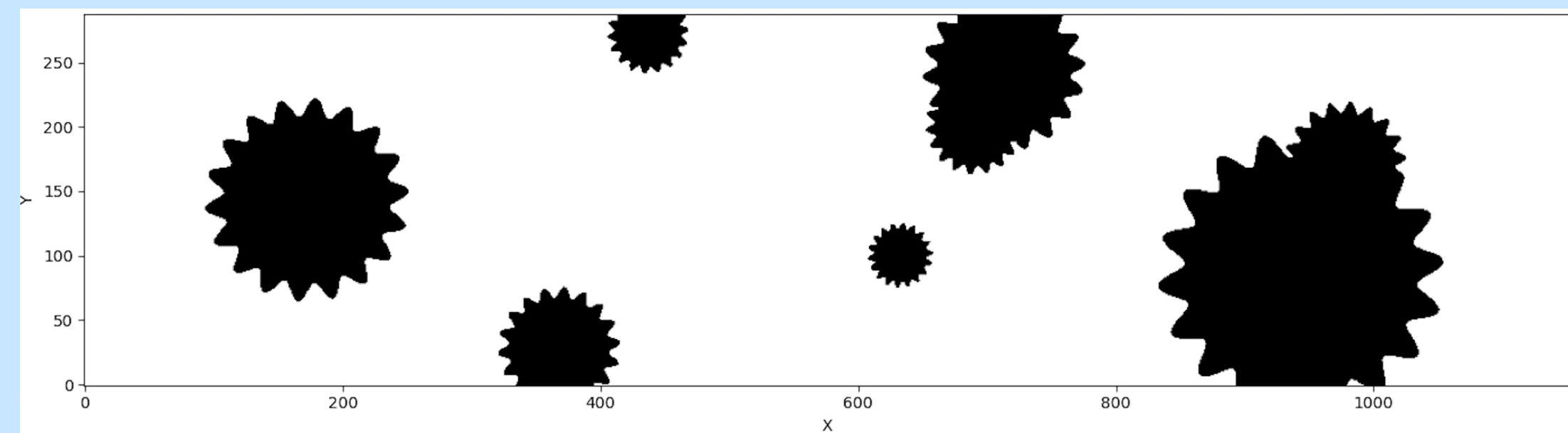
Porous shallow water equations (pSWE) in conservation form

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- **Masking** for solid **no-slip boundary conditions** for non-porous SWE (*reference fine scale Ω_ϵ simulation*).
- **Cell-edge permeability** is the **harmonic mean** of porosities of adjacent cells.
- **Cell-edge friction** (*inverse permeability matrix*) is **arithmetic mean** of adjacent cell resistivity matrices.
- Impose **constant body force** in x —direction (*simple model of large scale internal tides*).

Topography test cases

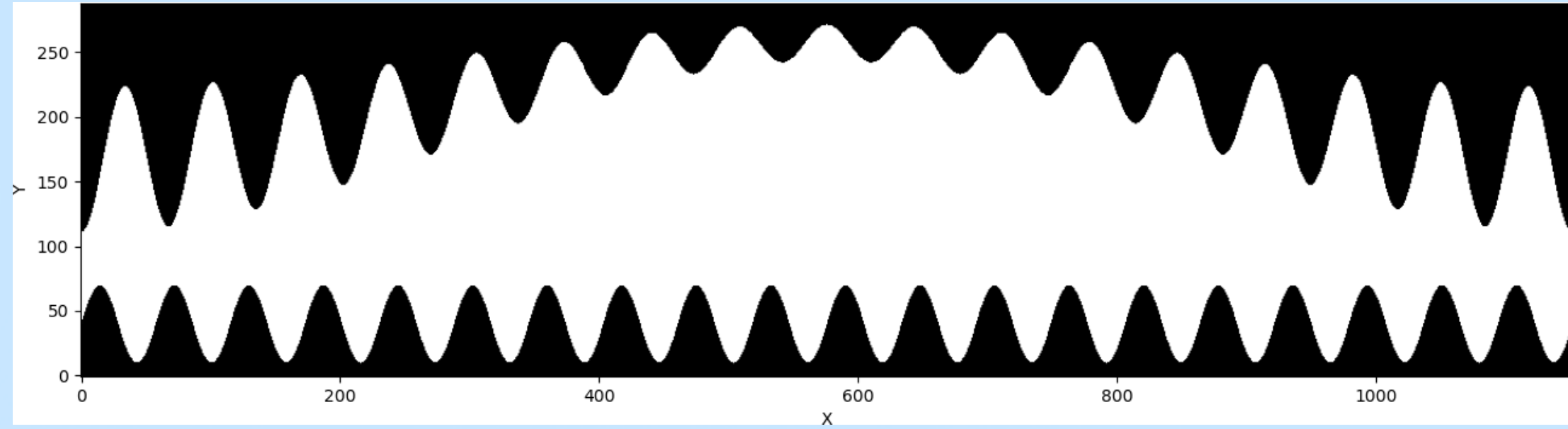


Asymmetric channel (CH)



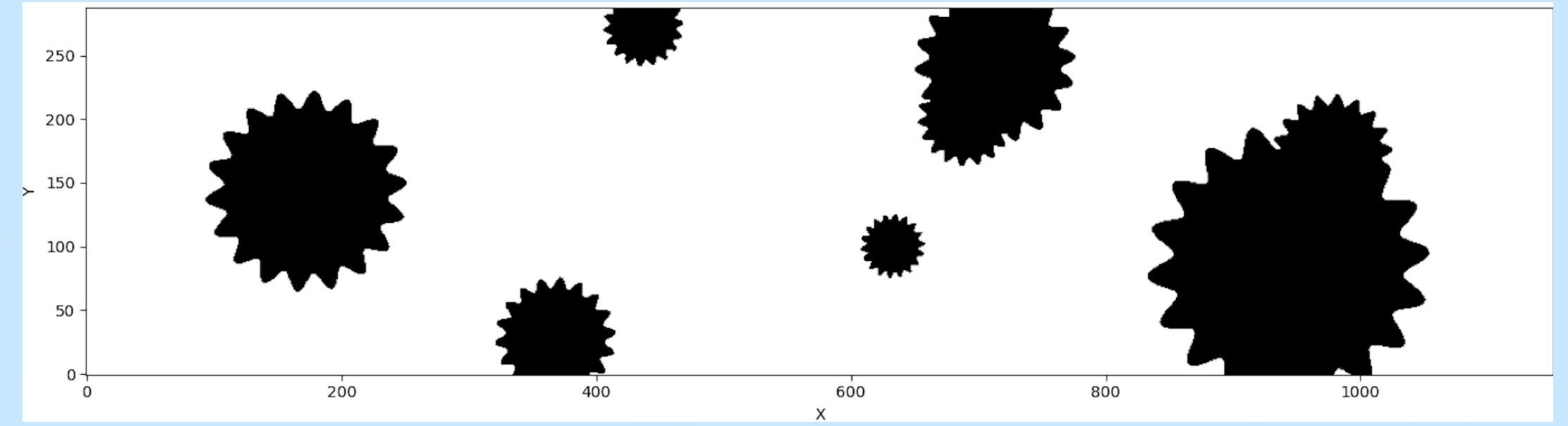
Islands (IS)

Topography test cases



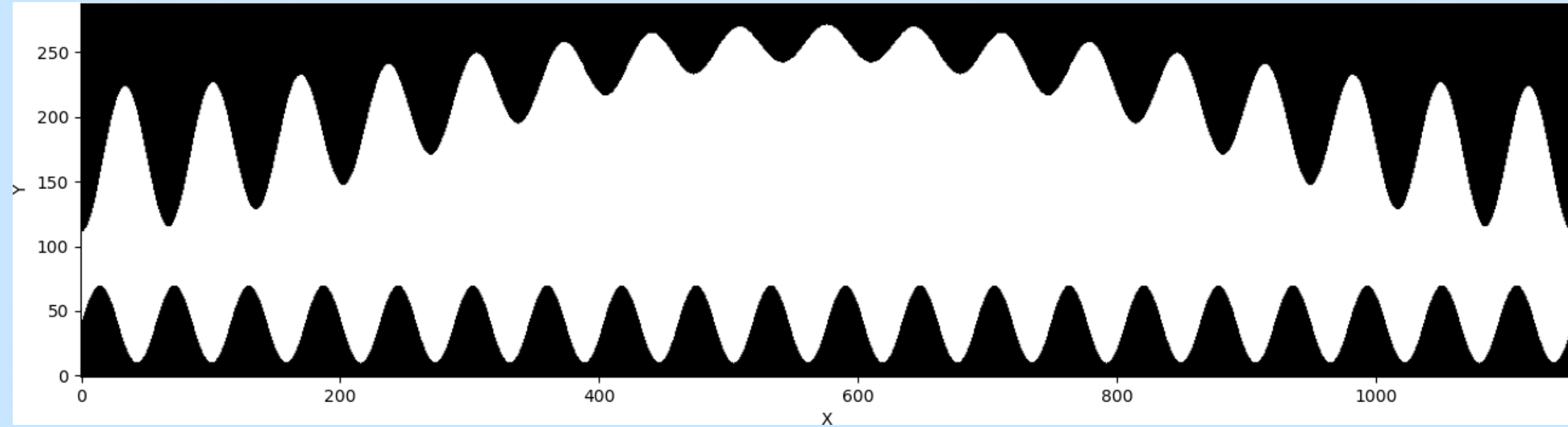
Asymmetric channel (CH)

- **Constant body force.** *Mean speed $O(1)$.*

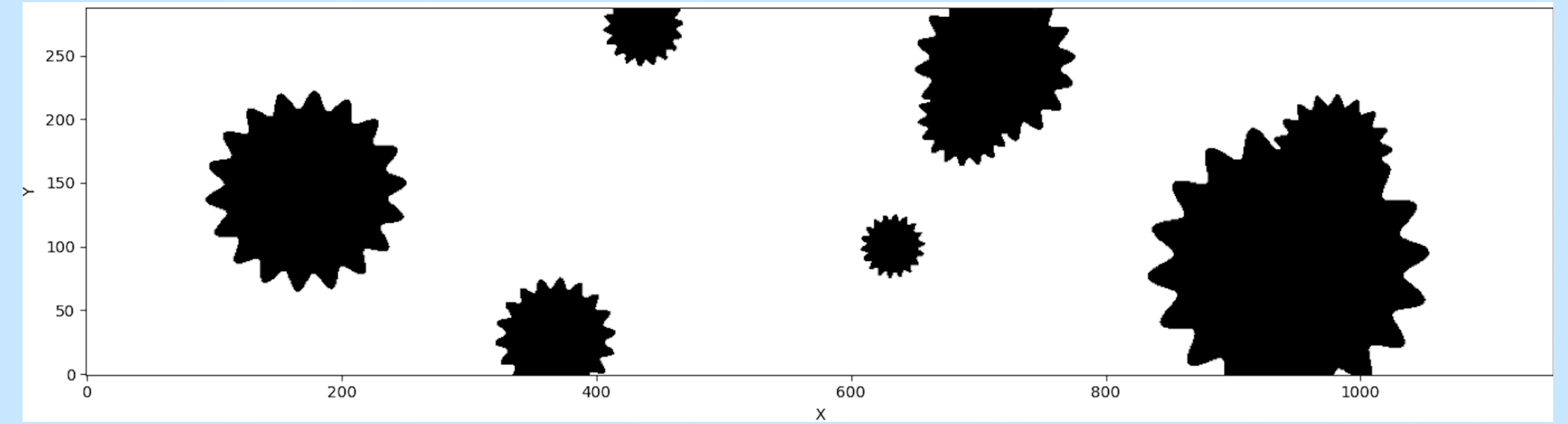


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Topography test cases



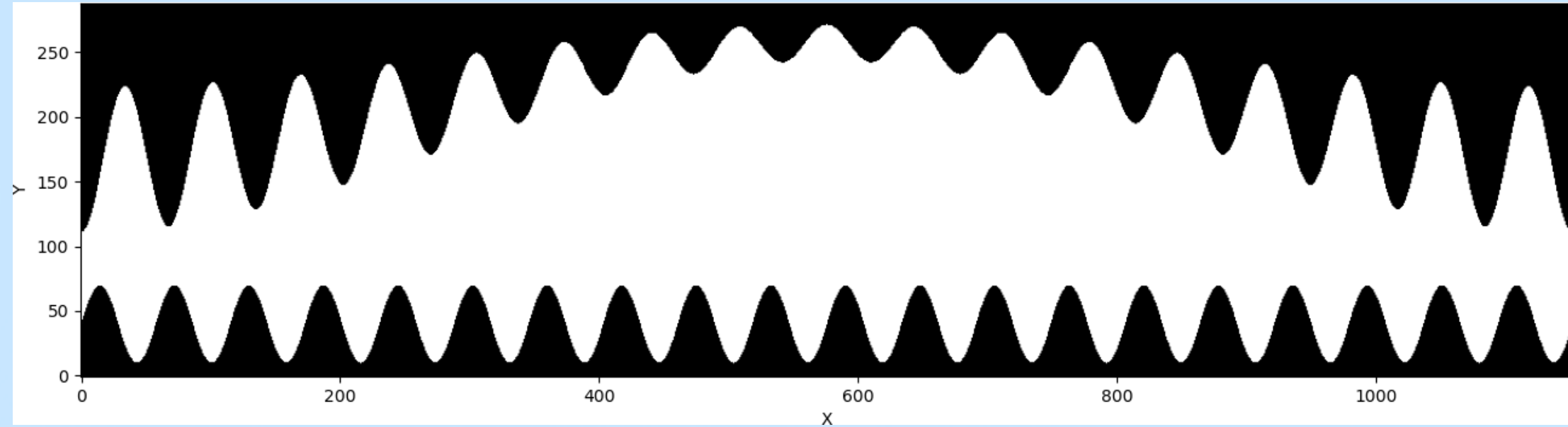
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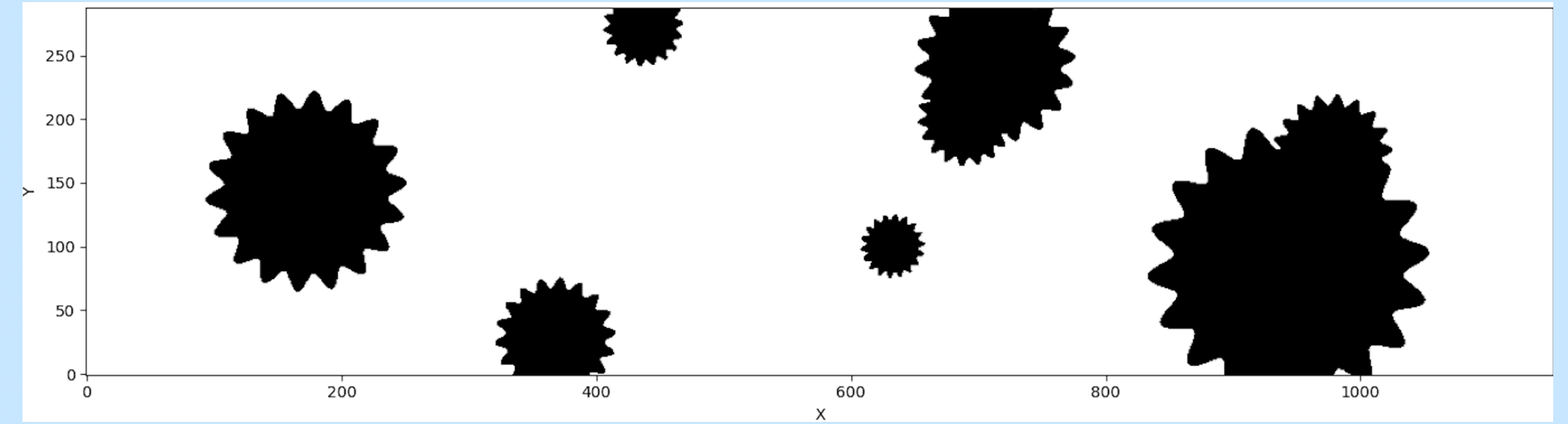
Islands (IS)

- **Constant body force.** *Mean speed $O(1)$.*
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- Clean test: separates topography upscaling errors from SGS turbulence errors.*

Topography test cases



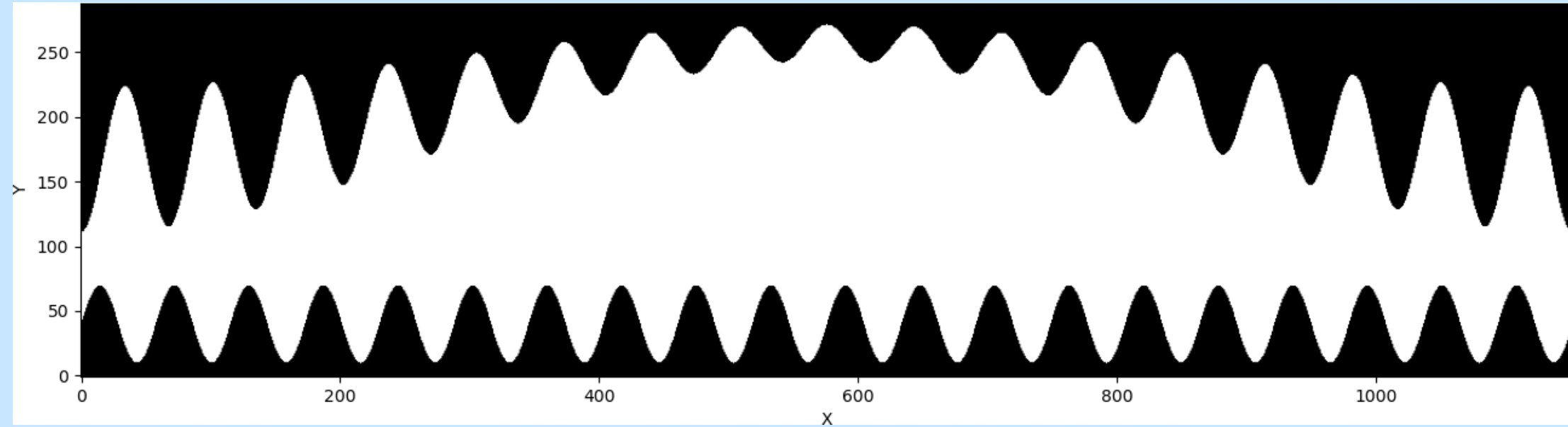
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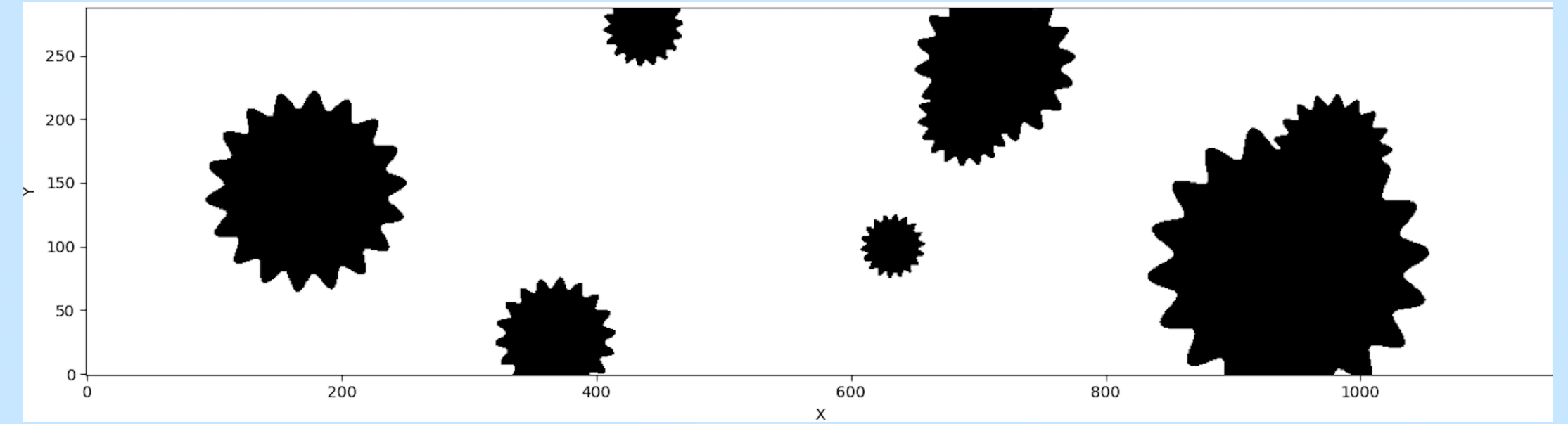
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Topography test cases



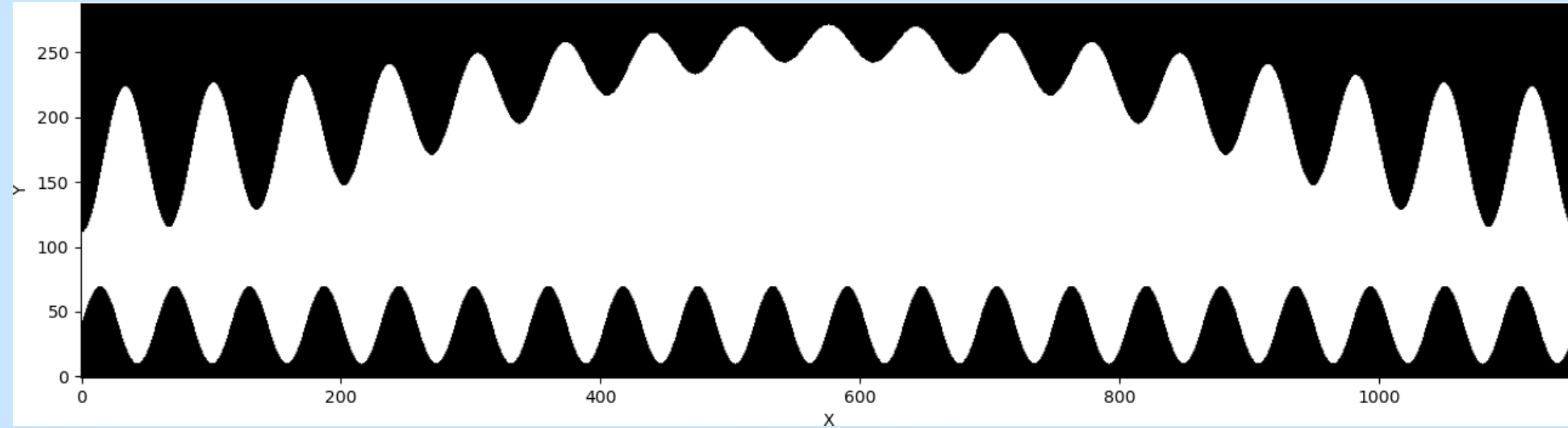
Asymmetric channel (CH)



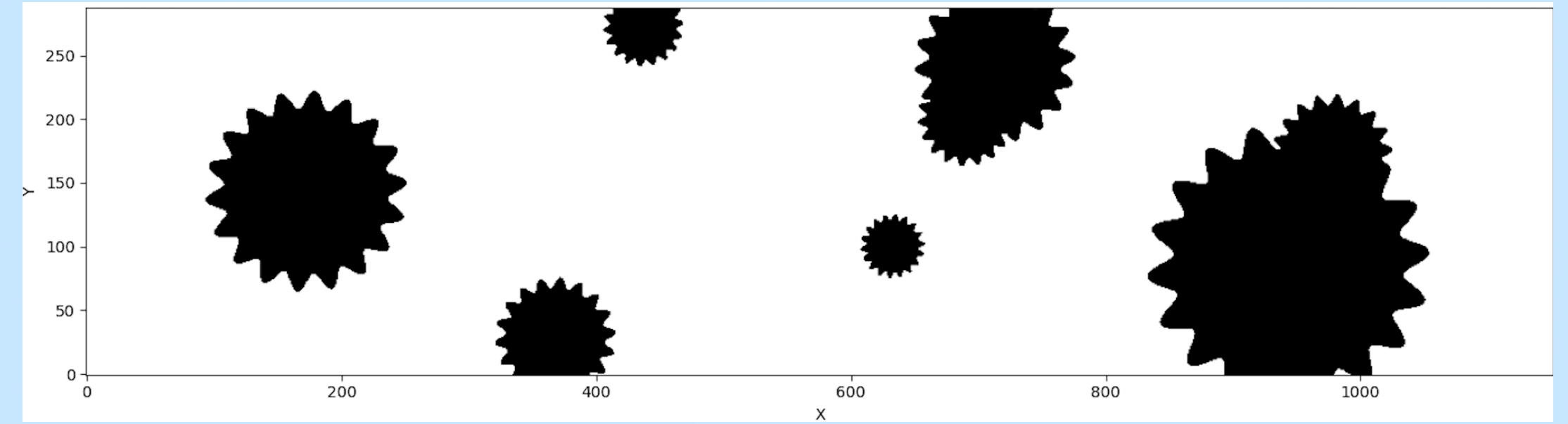
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Topography test cases



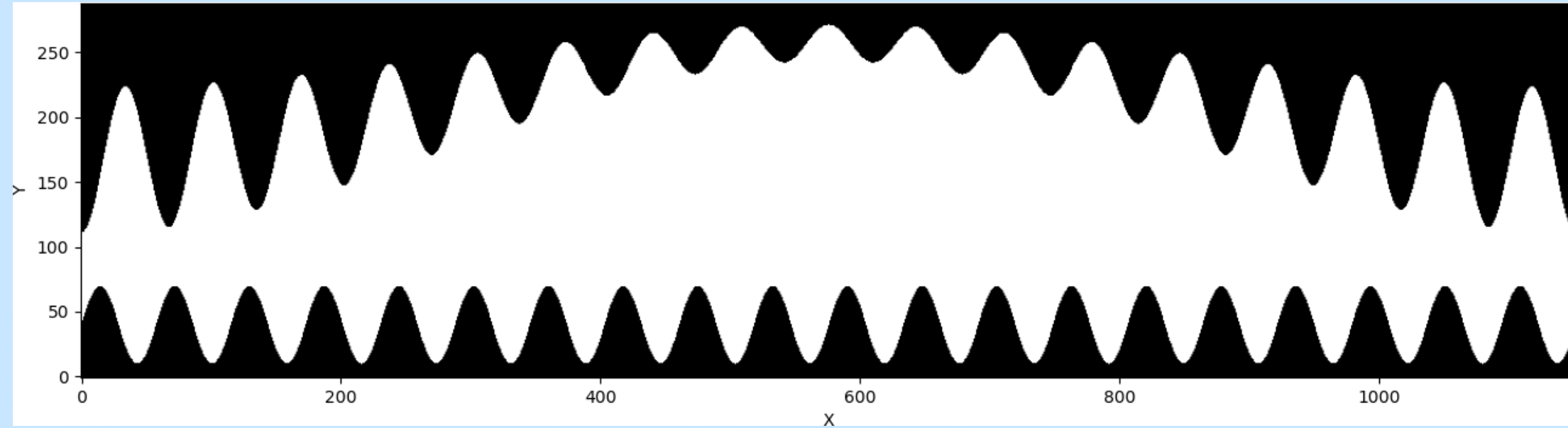
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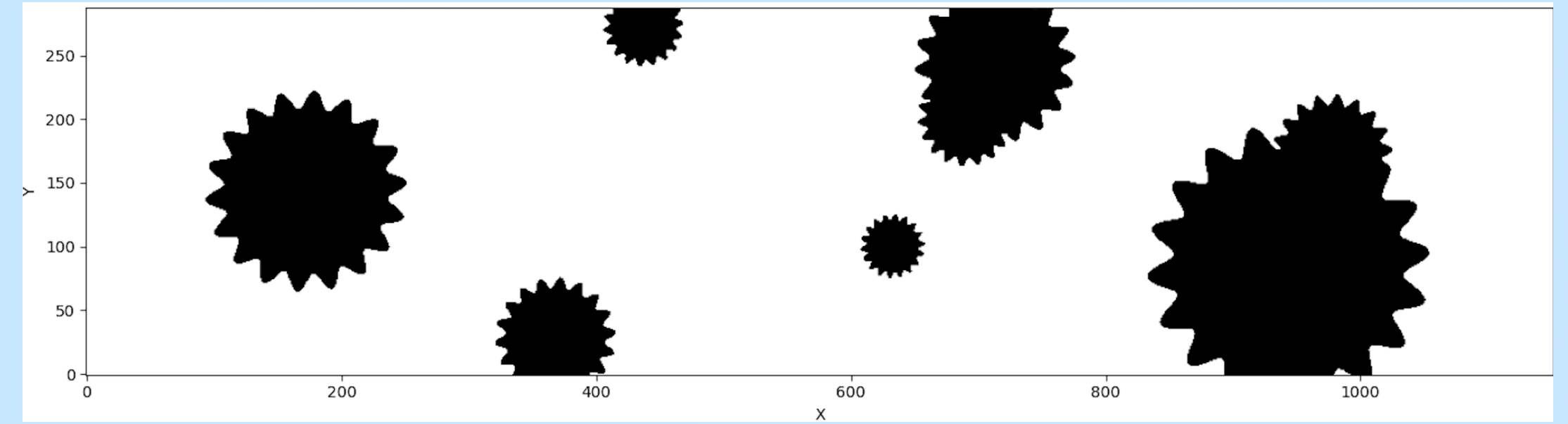
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Topography test cases



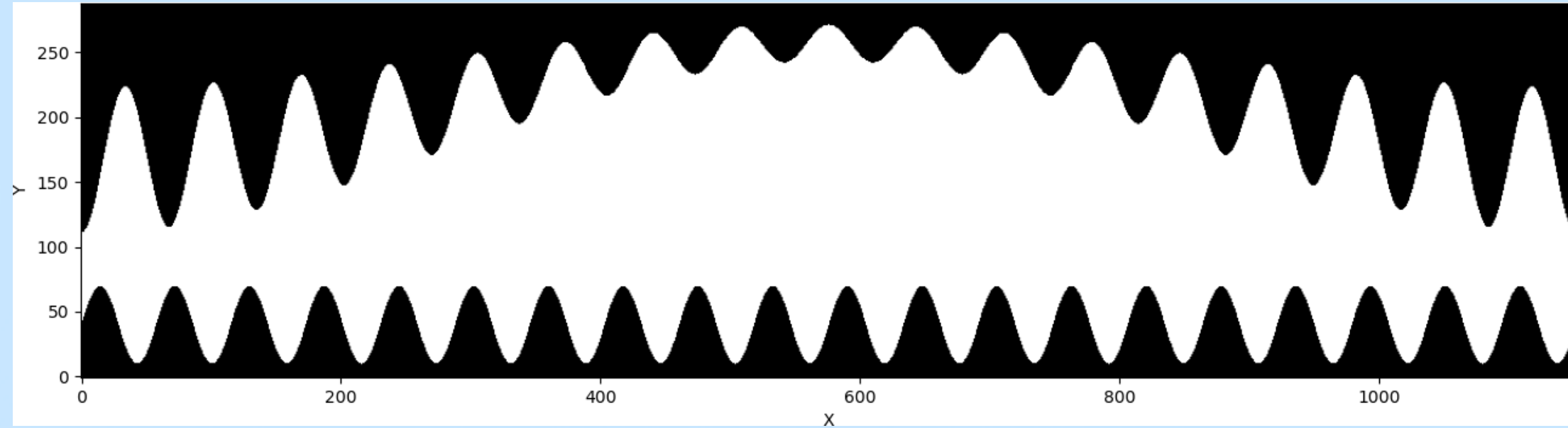
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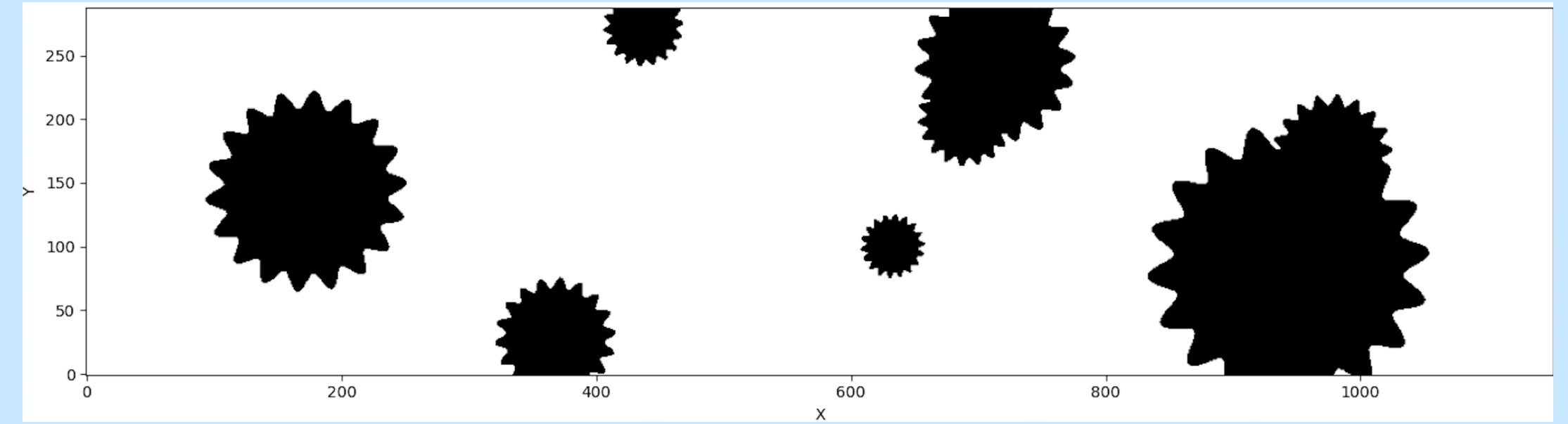
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- Consider **upscaling ratios** 5, 7, $\dots$, 21, 23.

Topography test cases



Asymmetric channel (CH)

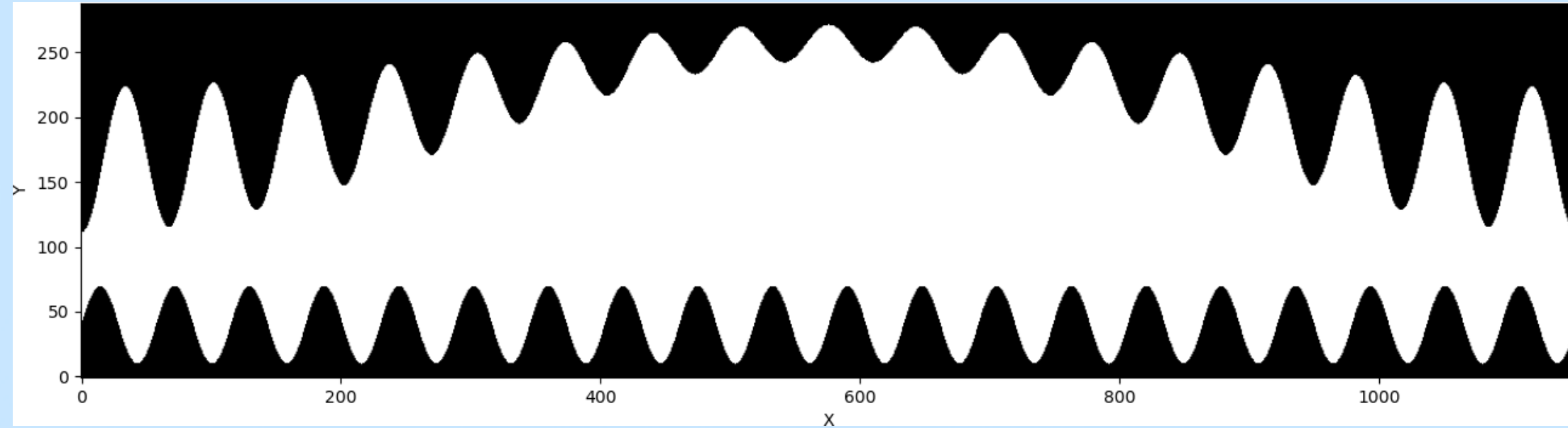


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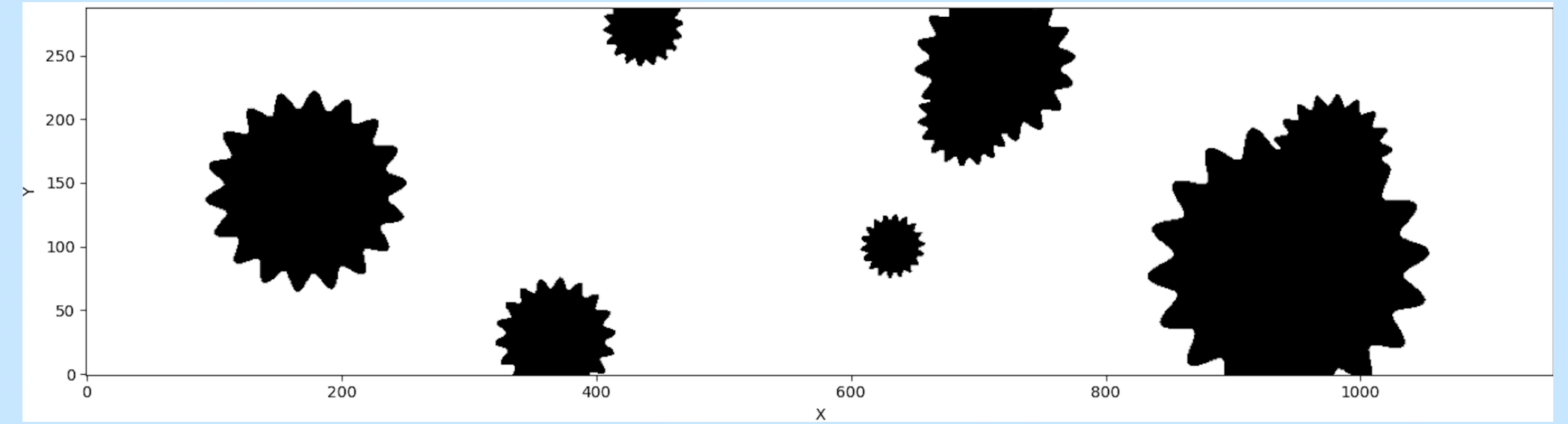
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Diagnostics

Topography test cases



Asymmetric channel (CH)



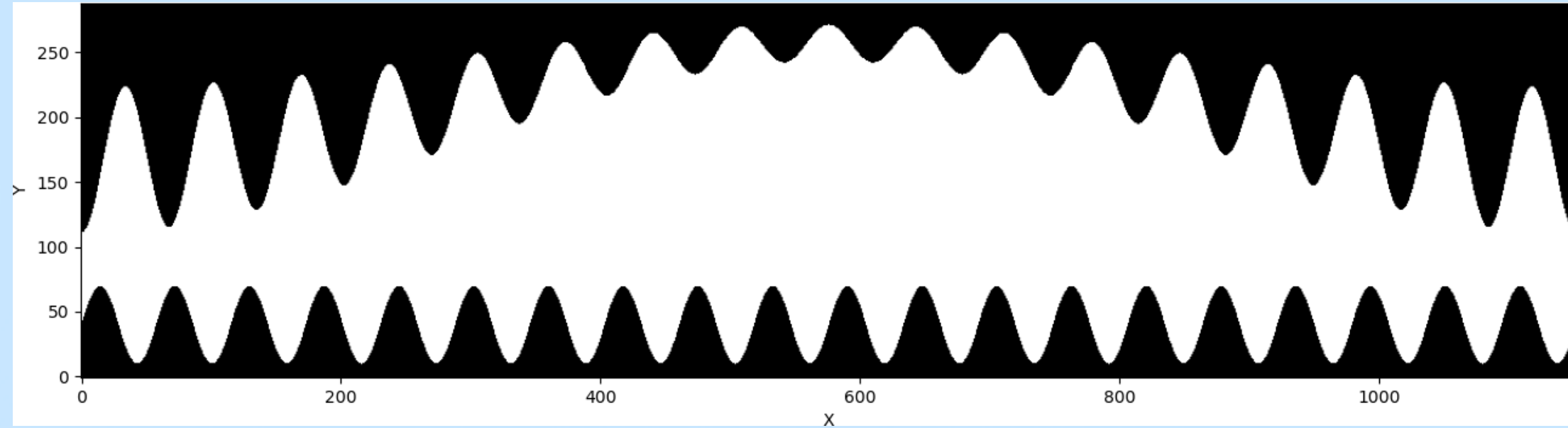
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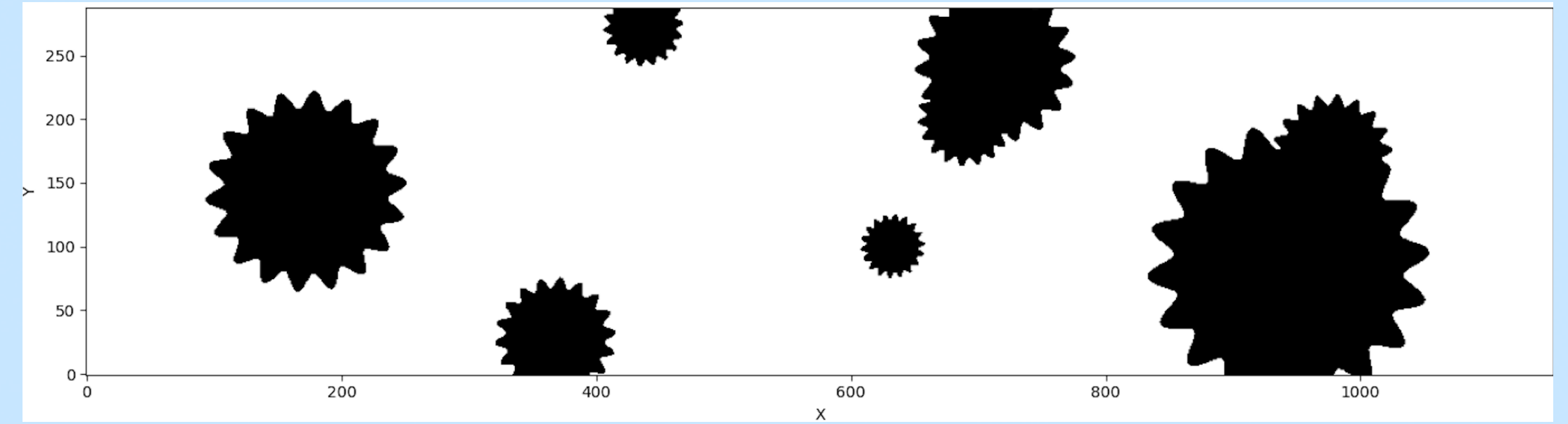
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- **Mean speed** of coarse simulations compared to mean speed of fine simulation averaged to coarse grid.

Topography test cases



Asymmetric channel (CH)



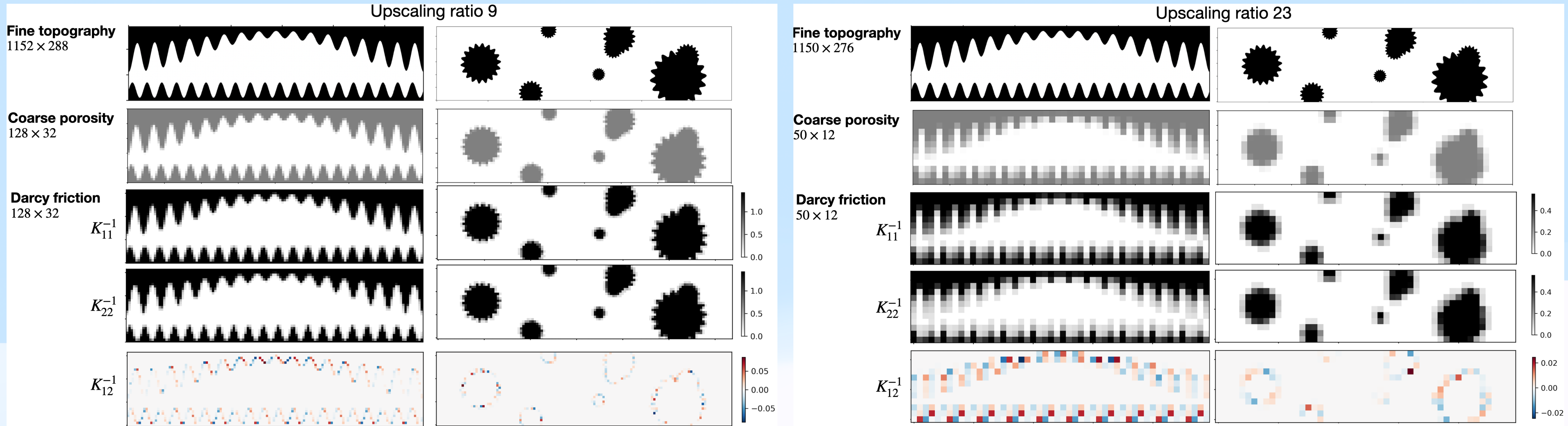
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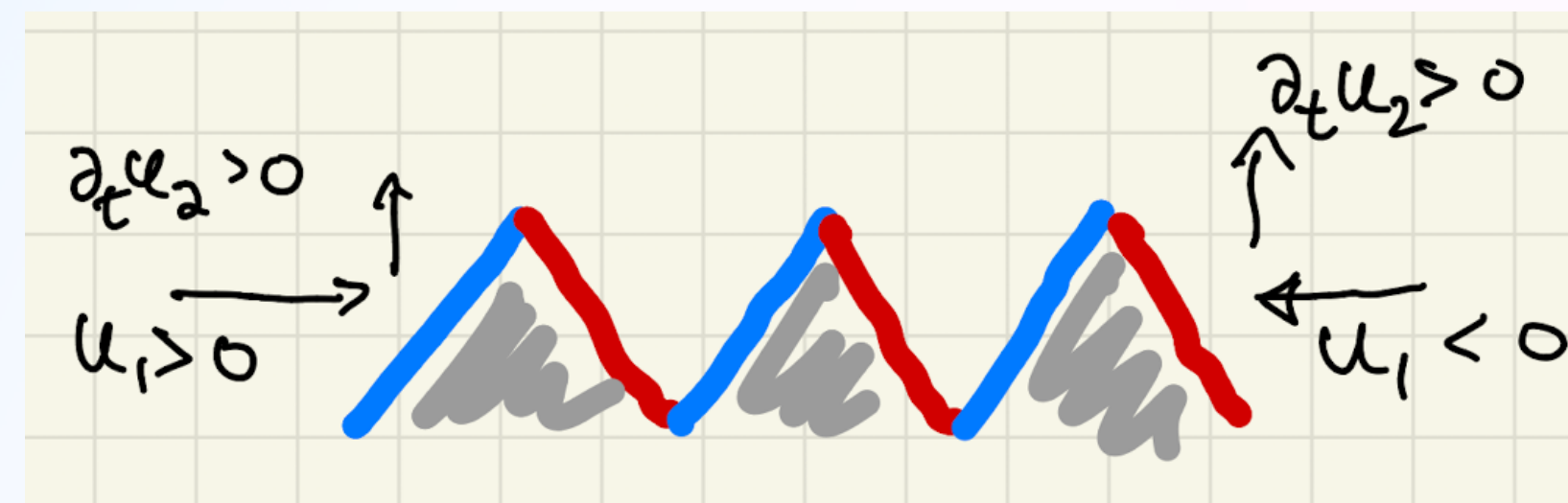
Diagnostics

- **Mean speed** of coarse simulations compared to mean speed of fine simulation averaged to coarse grid.
- **Total dissipated power** (TDP) of coarse simulations compared to fine simulation averaged to coarse grid.

Results: upscaled topography

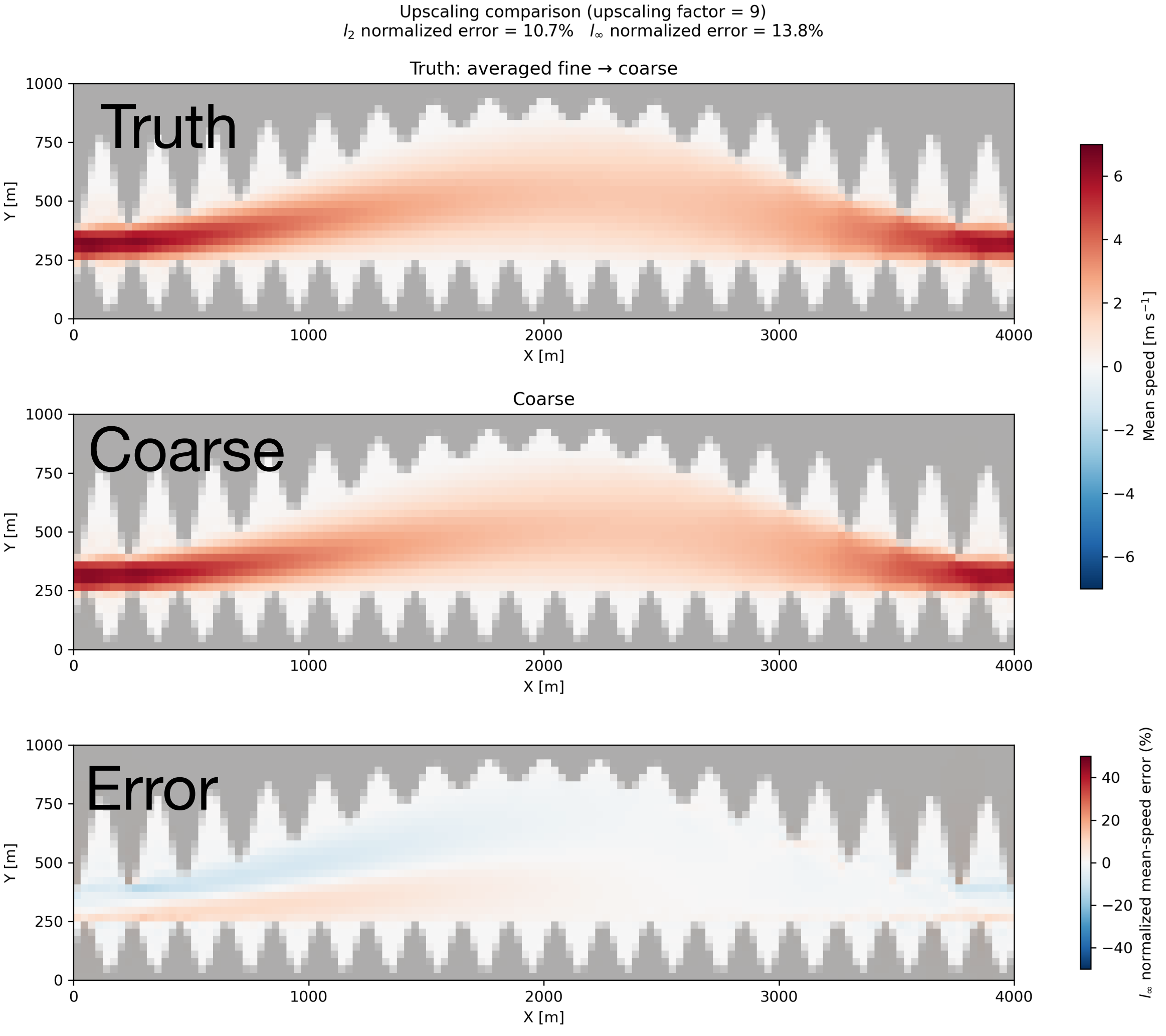


Off-diagonal Darcy friction matrix entries K_{12}^{-1} represent flow deflection by SGS topography:

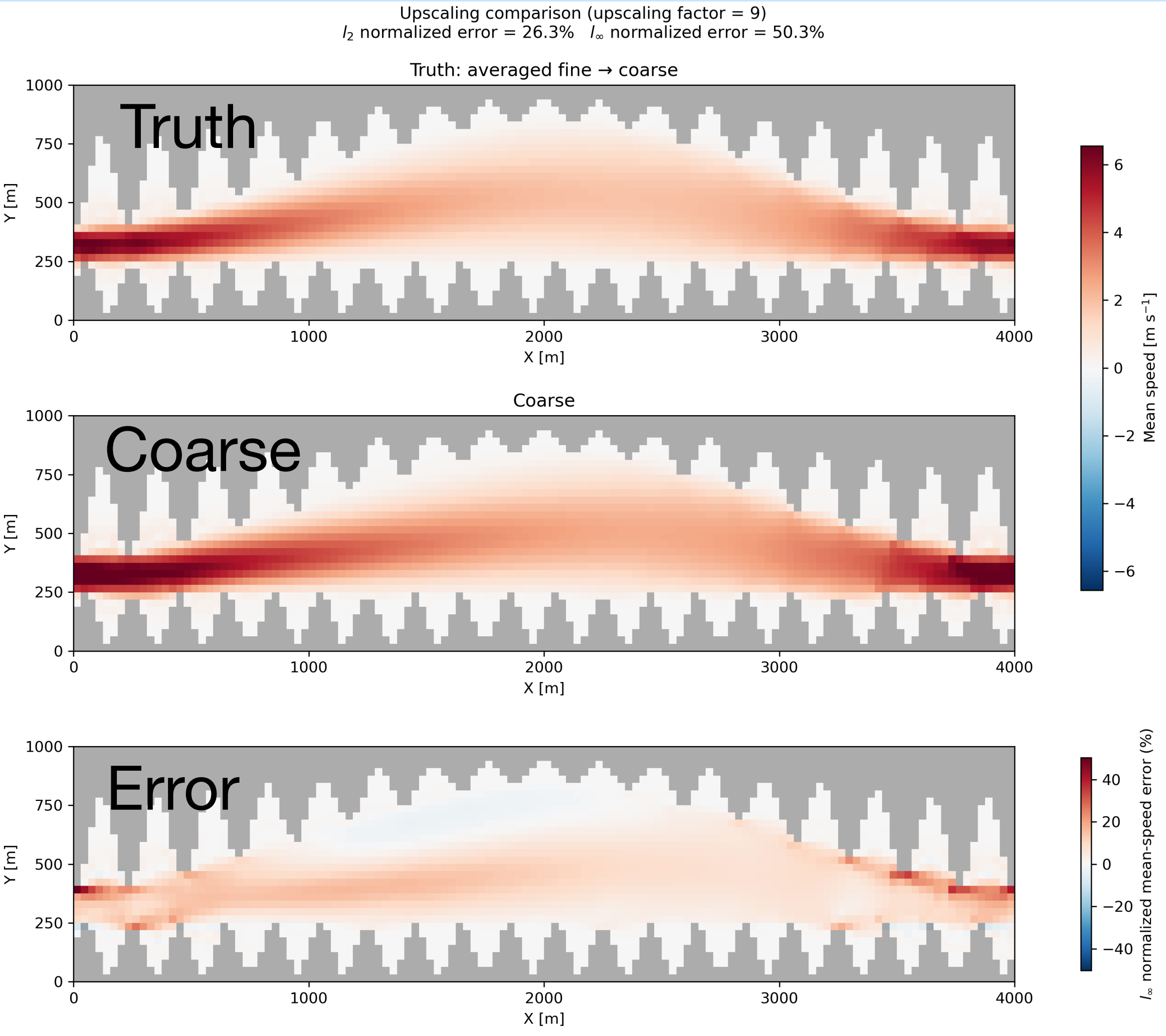


Upscale ratio 9: mean speed for $Re \approx 40$

Upscaled (UP)

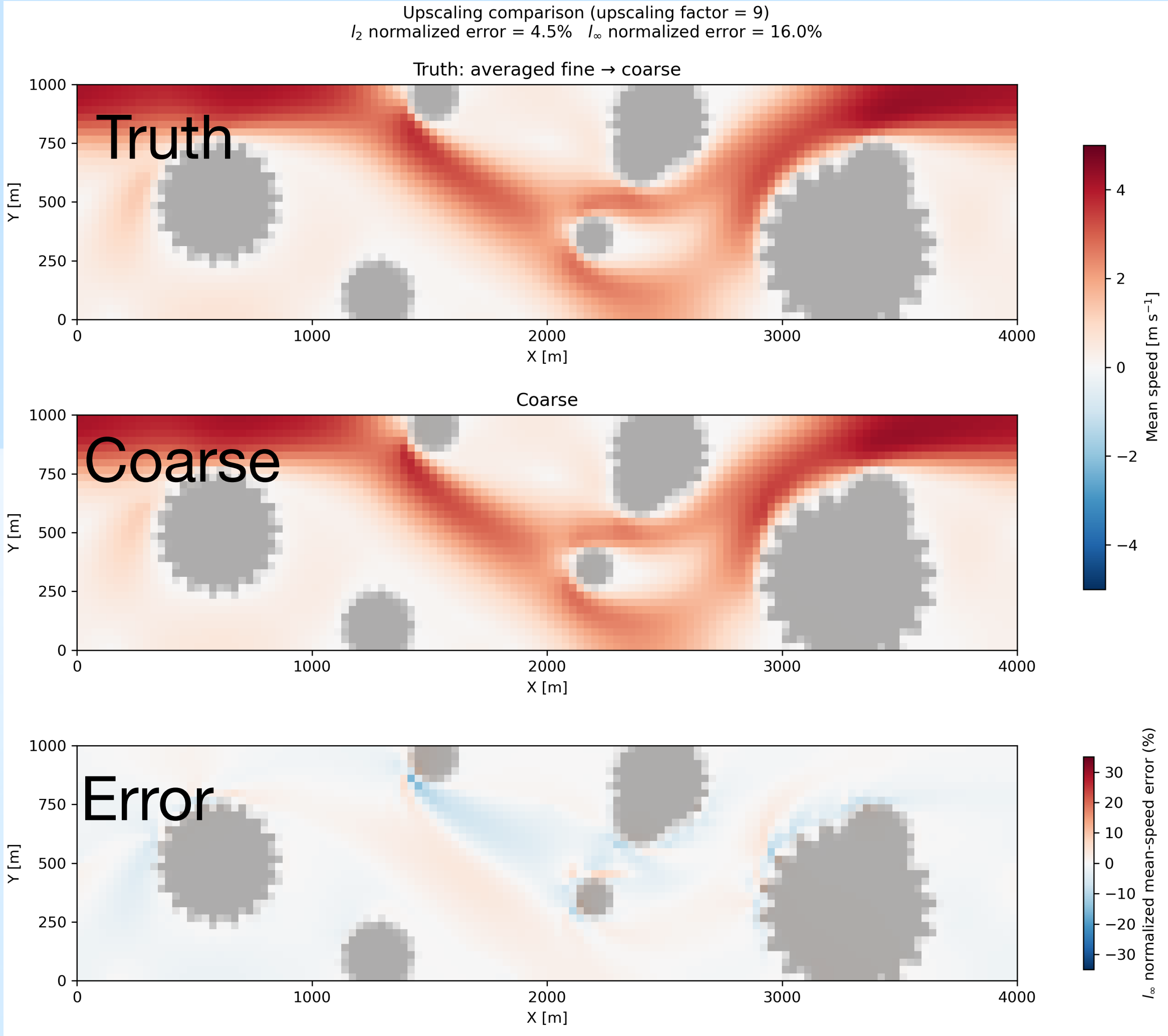


Averaged (AV)

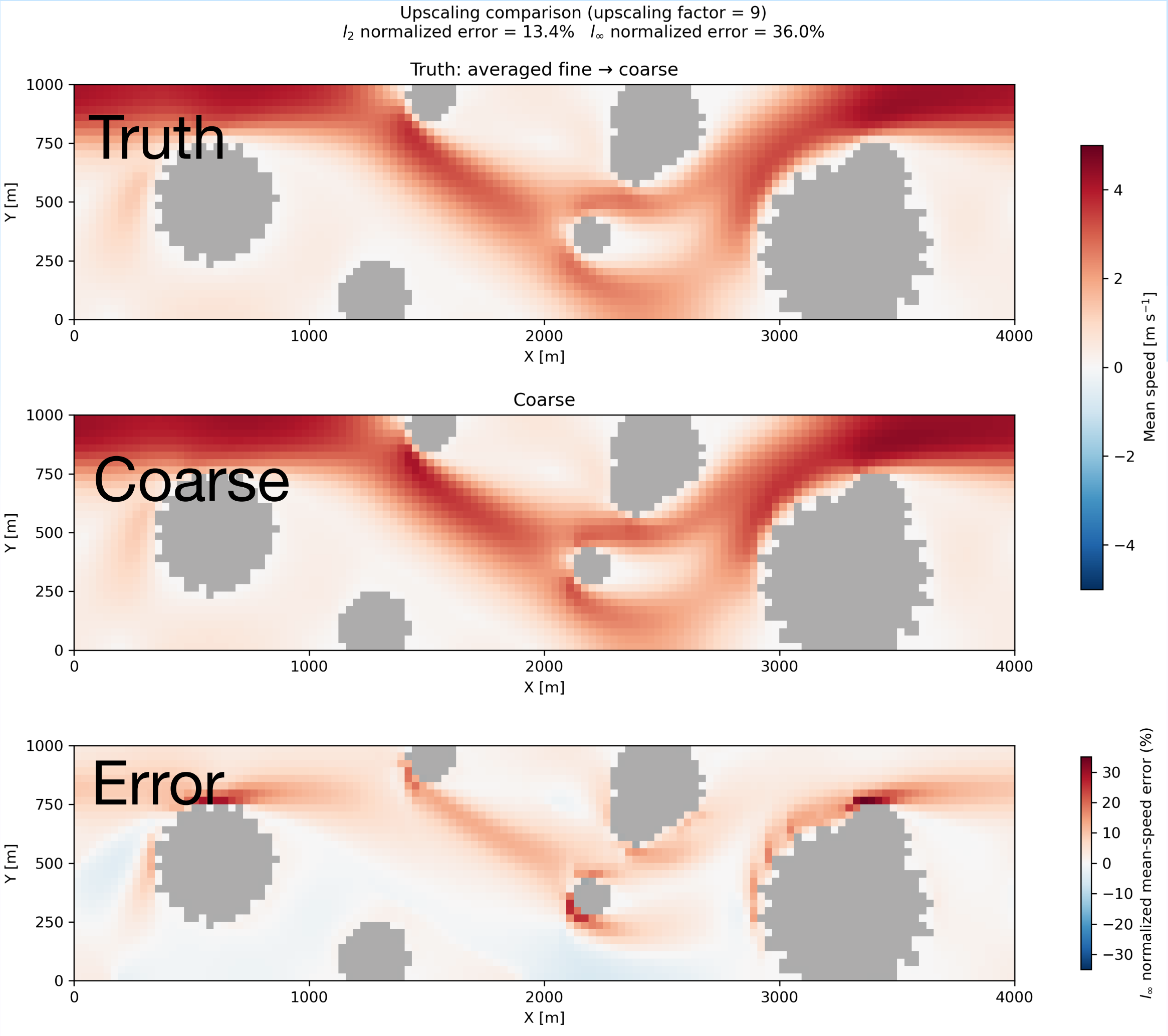


Upscale ratio 9: mean speed for $Re \approx 175$

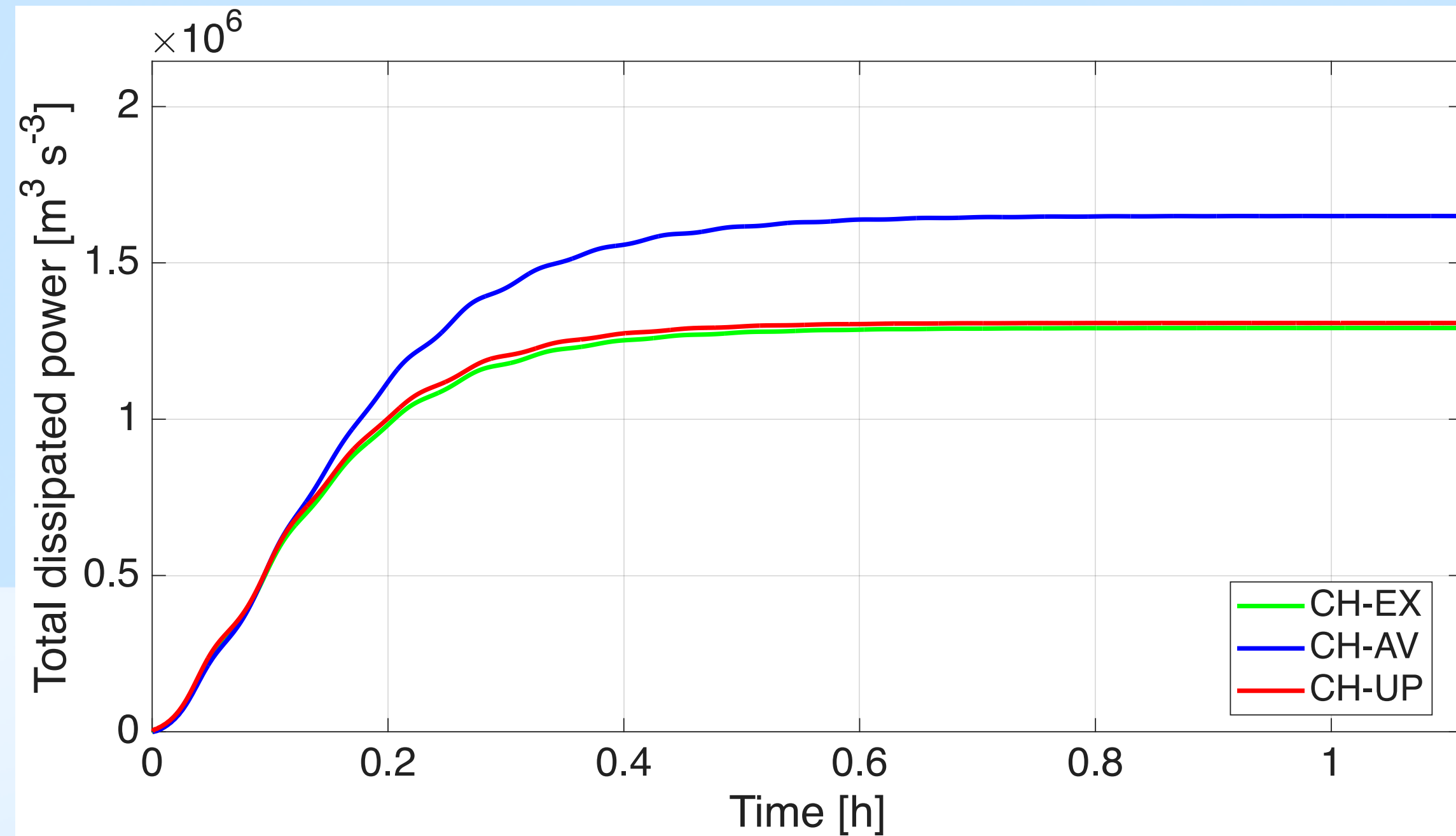
Upscaled (UP)



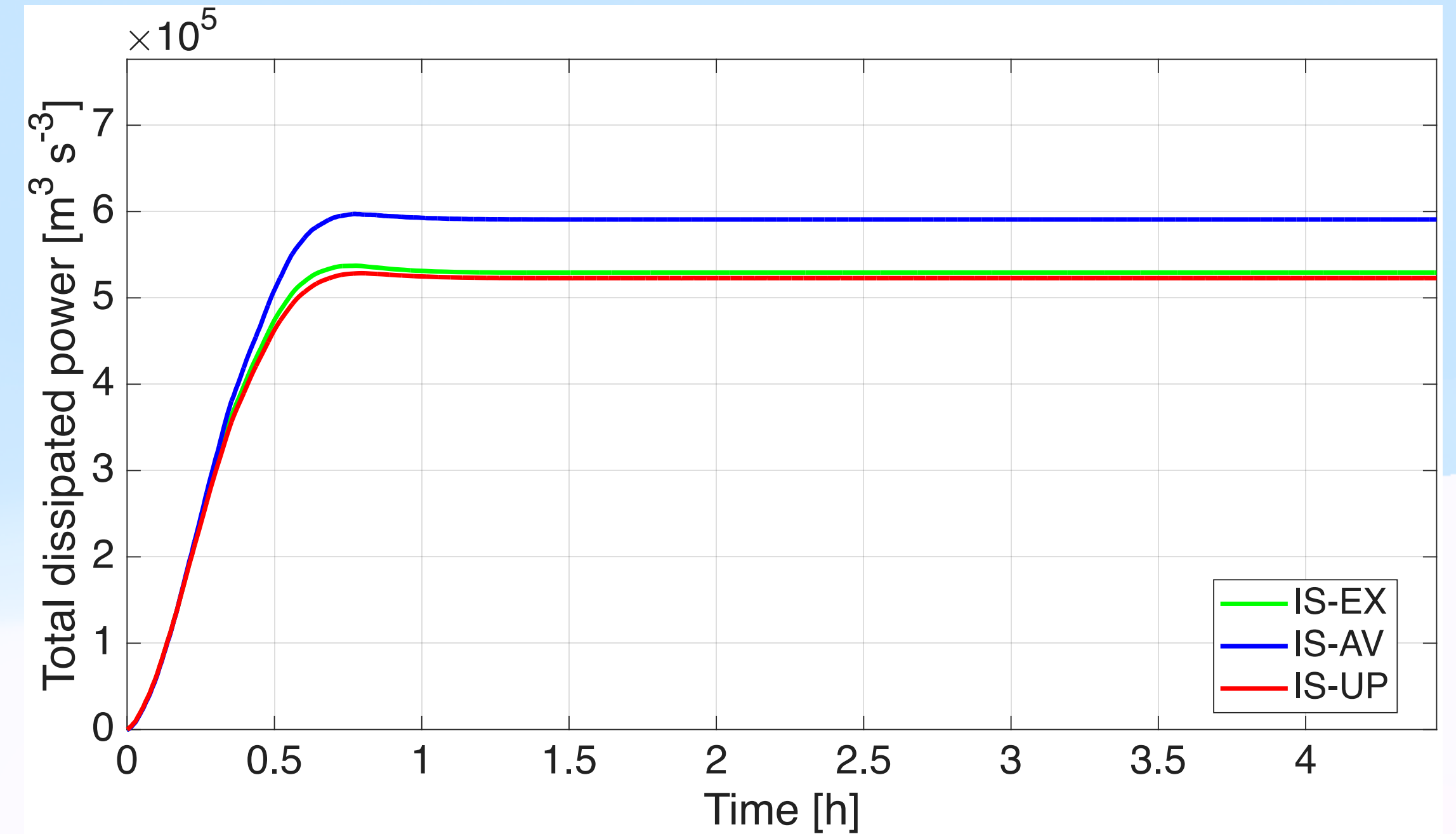
Averaged (AV)



Upscale ratio 9: total dissipated power



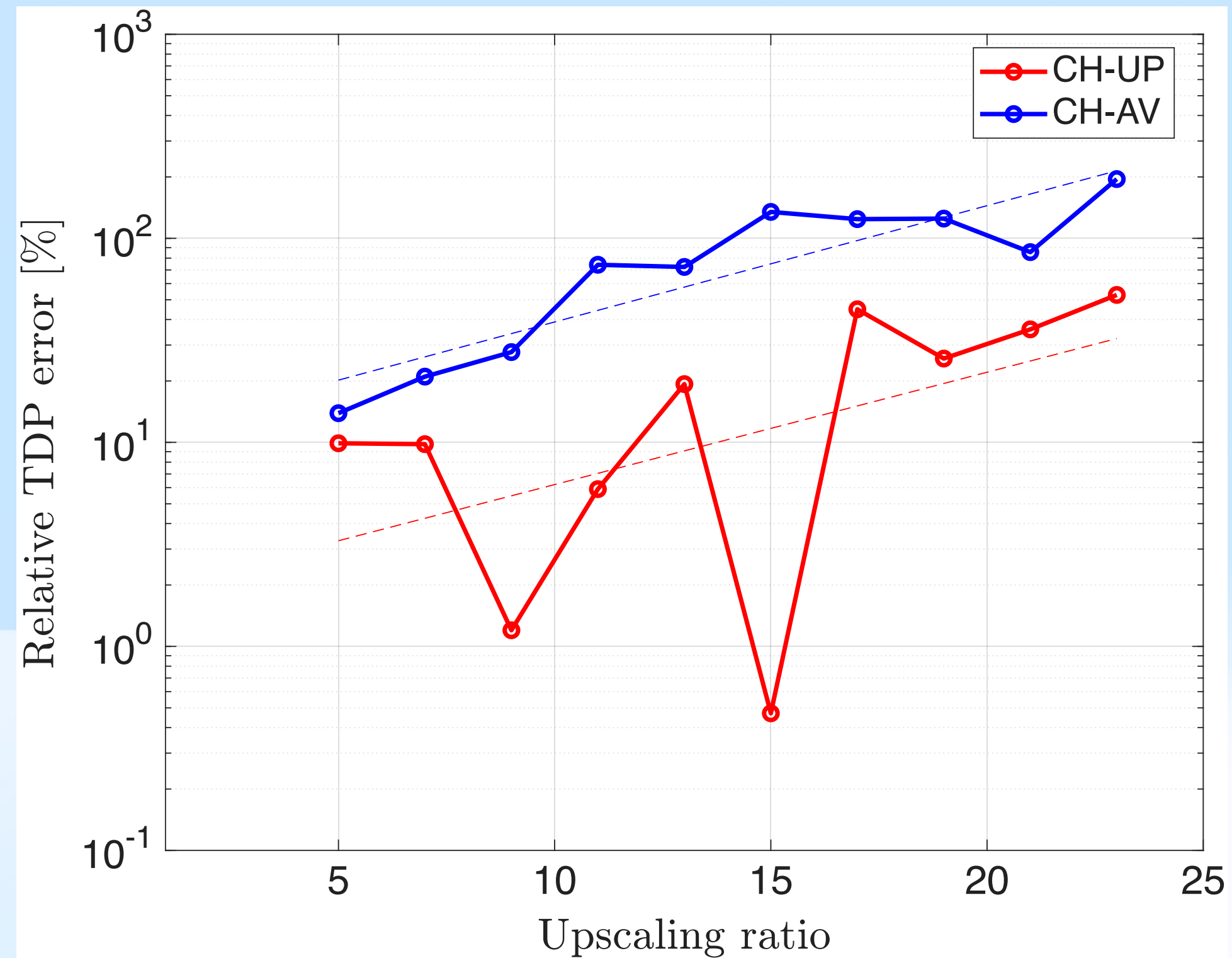
Channel configuration, $Re \approx 40$



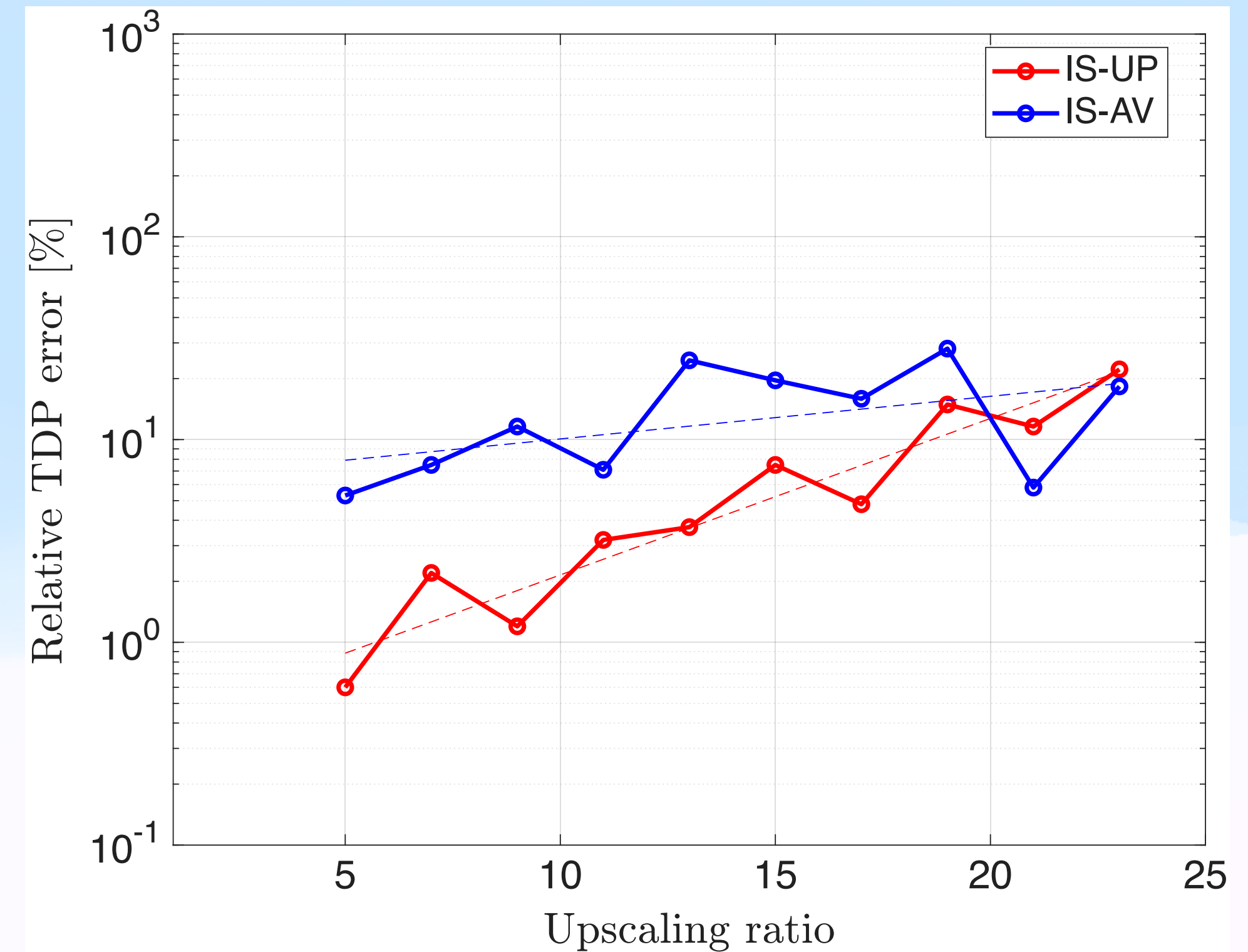
Islands configuration, $Re \approx 175$

EX = exact UP = periodic homogenization (*lower error*) AV = averaged

Scaling of TDP error with upscaling ratio



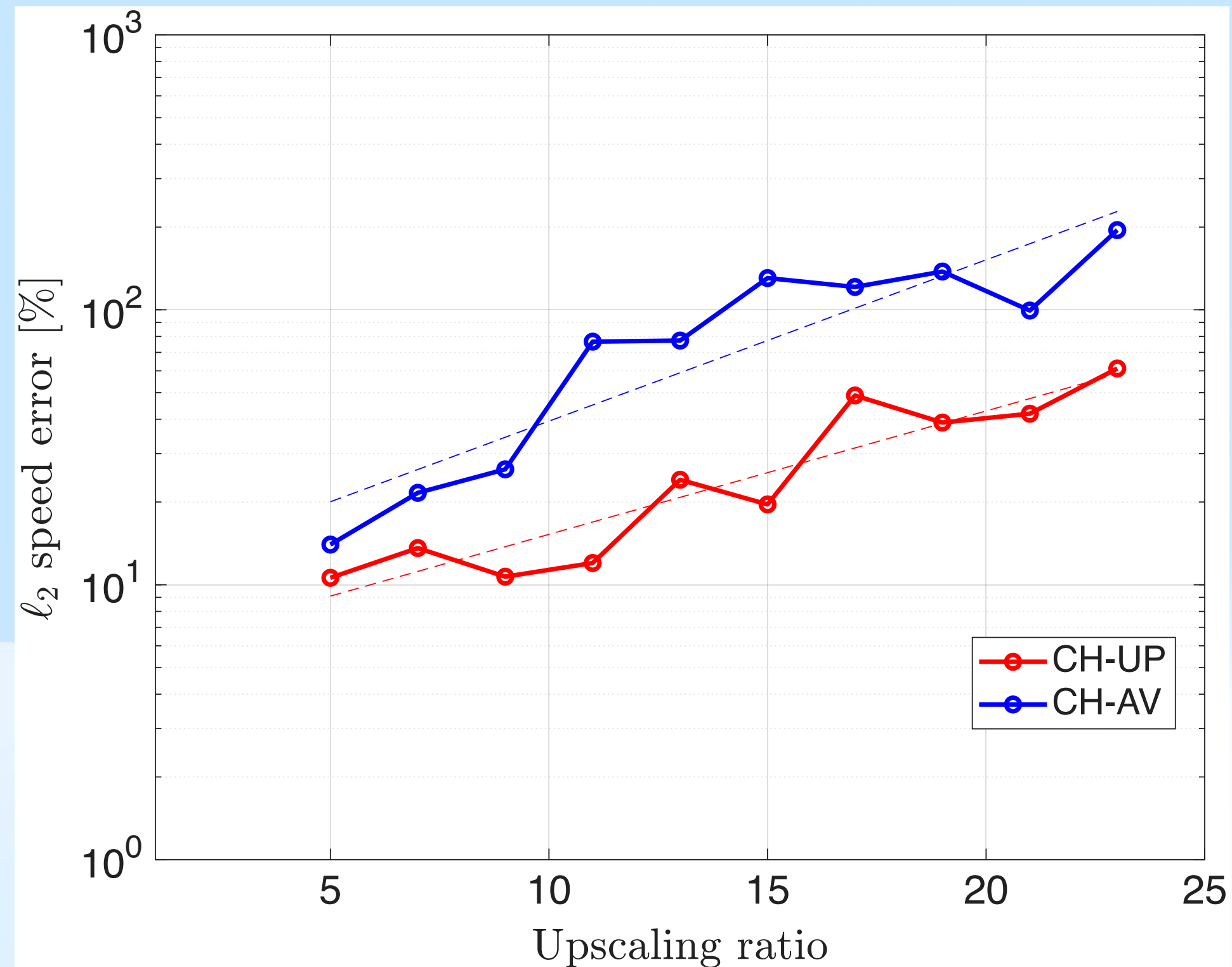
Channel configuration



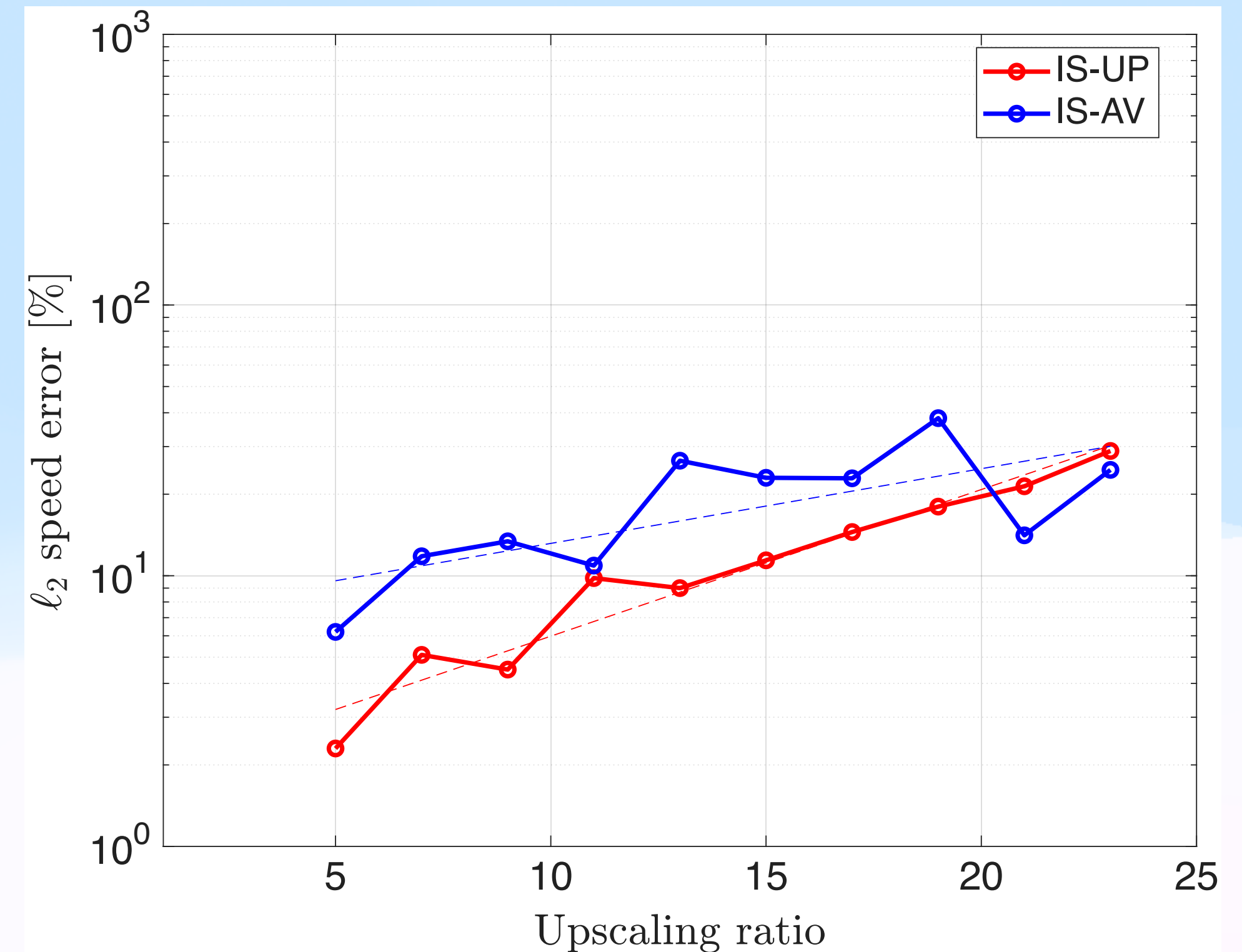
Islands configuration

UP = periodic homogenization (*lower error*) AV = averaged (*higher error*)

Scaling of speed error with upscaling ratio



Channel configuration



Islands configuration

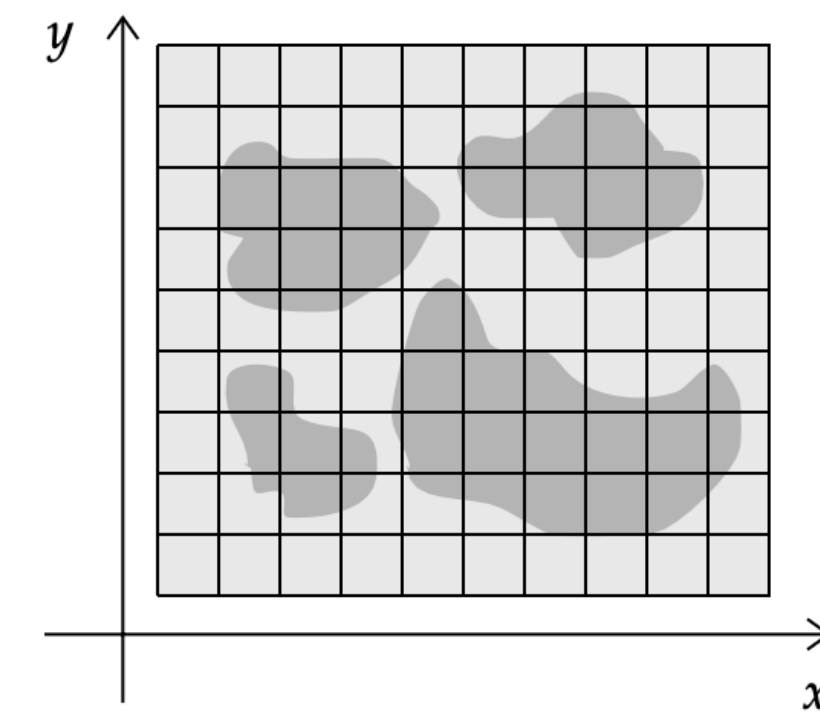
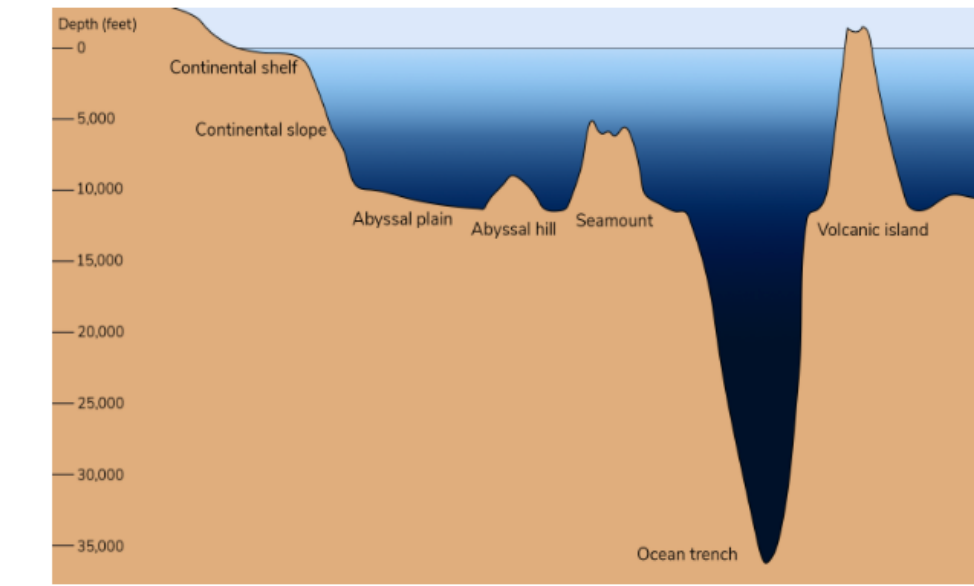
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Summary and conclusions

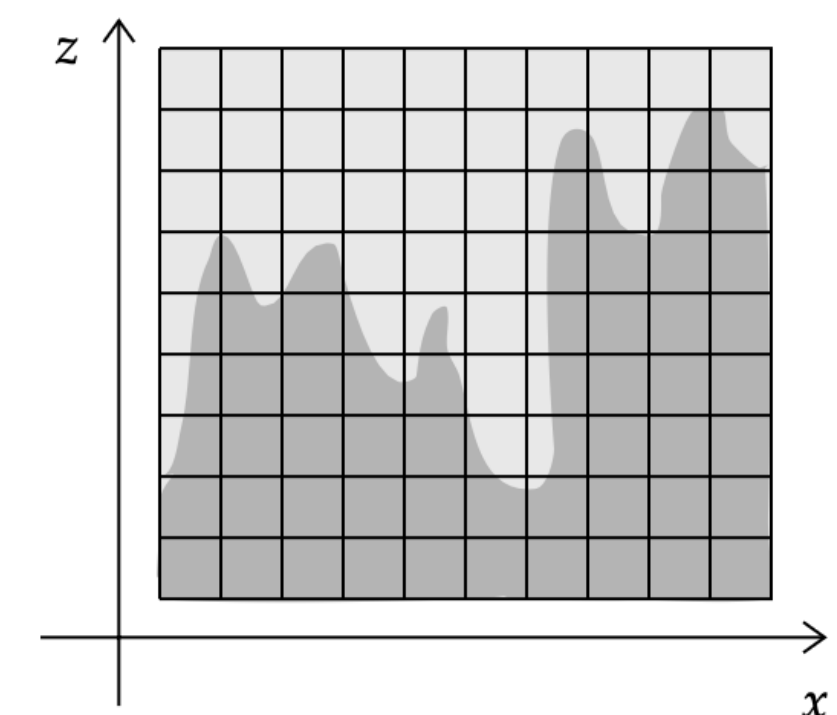
Aerial view: marsh



Cross section: bathymetry



more permeable
less permeable



fluid
solid

Summary and conclusions

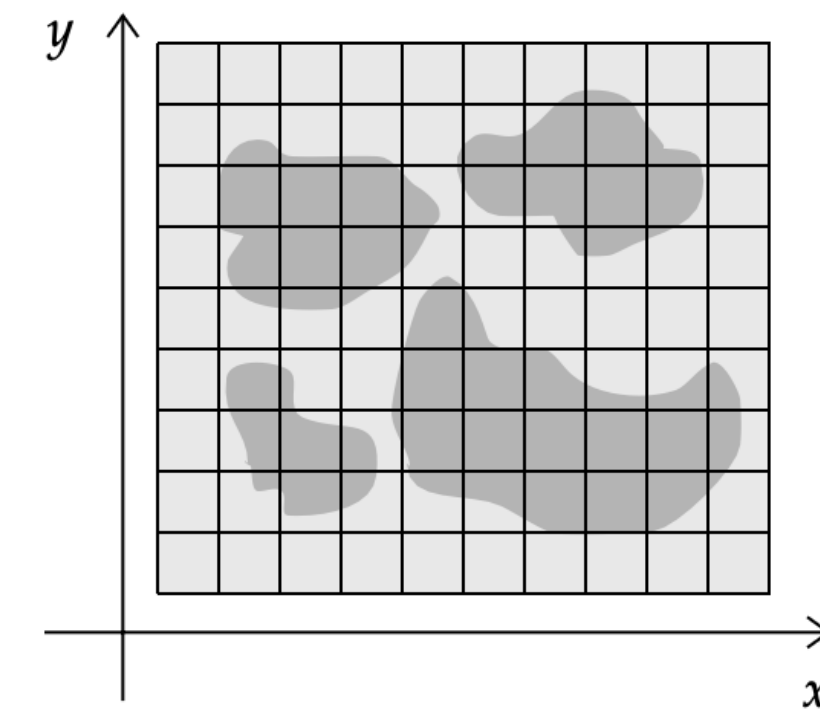
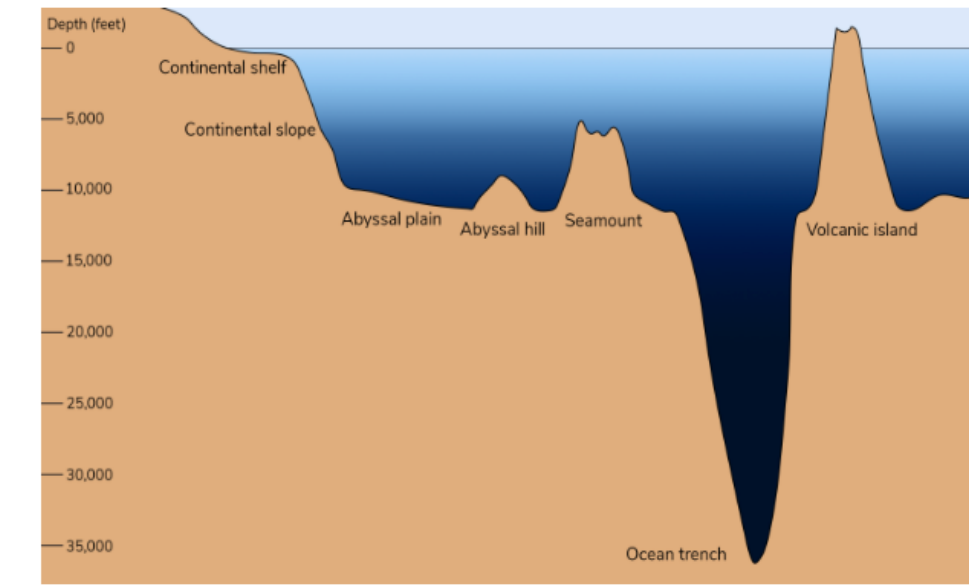
- New method for upscaling subgrid scale (SGS) topography based on porous medium flow model.

Porous SWE upscaled topography.

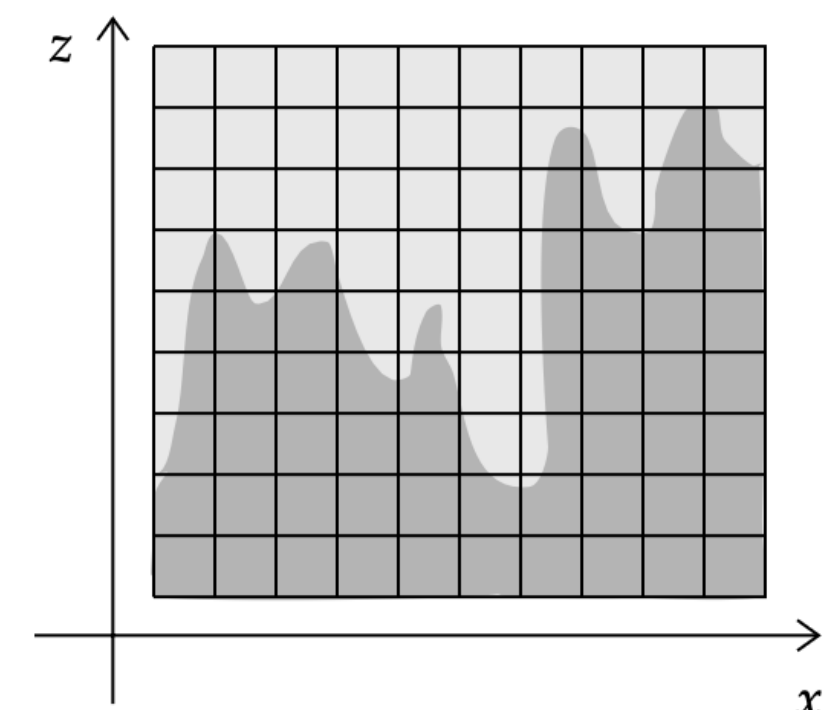
Aerial view: marsh



Cross section: bathymetry



more permeable
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fluid
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Summary and conclusions

- New method for upscaling subgrid scale (SGS) topography based on porous medium flow model.

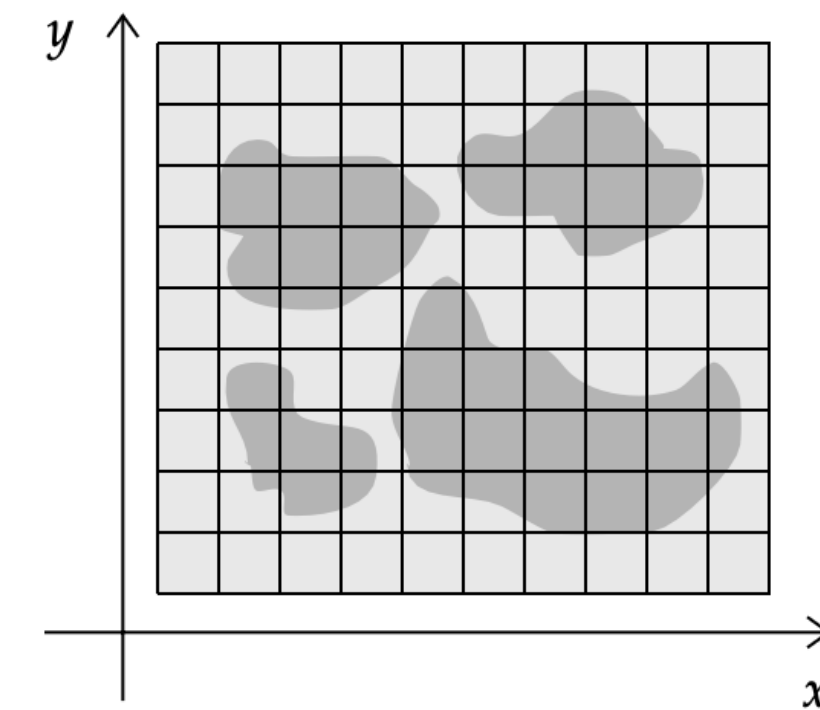
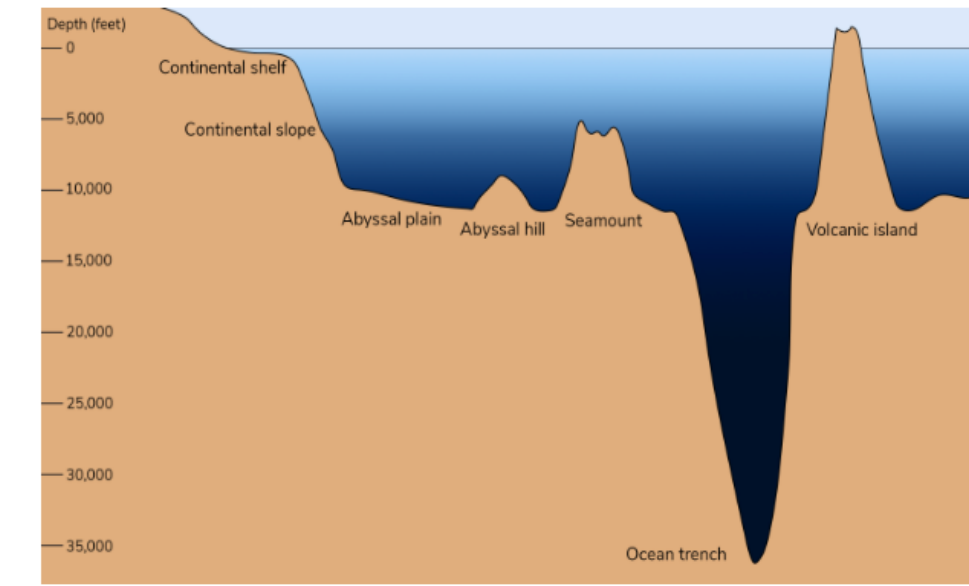
Porous SWE upscaled topography.

- SGS topography represented by effective porosity $\phi(\mathbf{x})$ and permeability $\mathbf{K}(\mathbf{x})$.

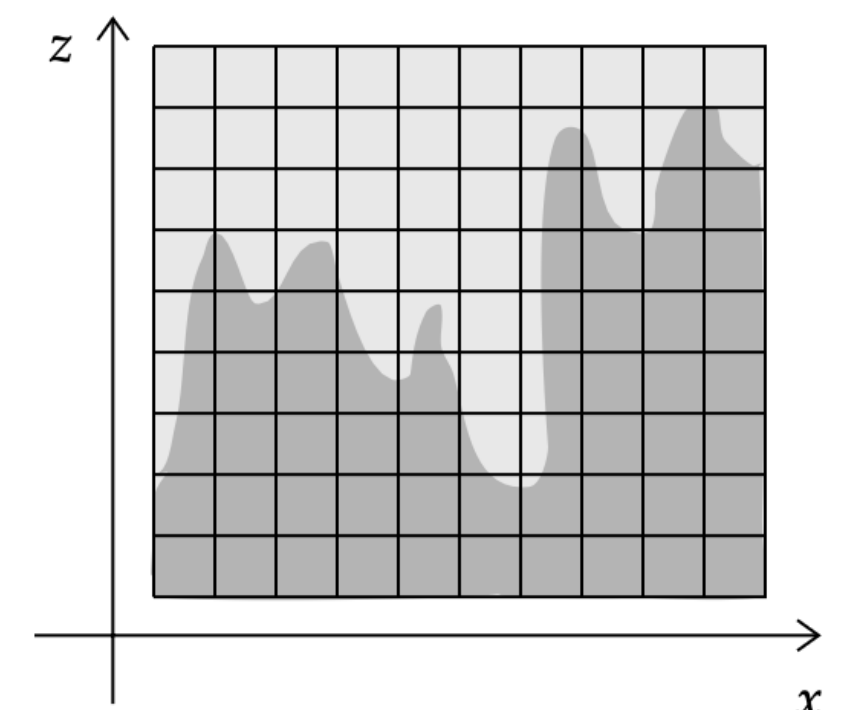
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more permeable
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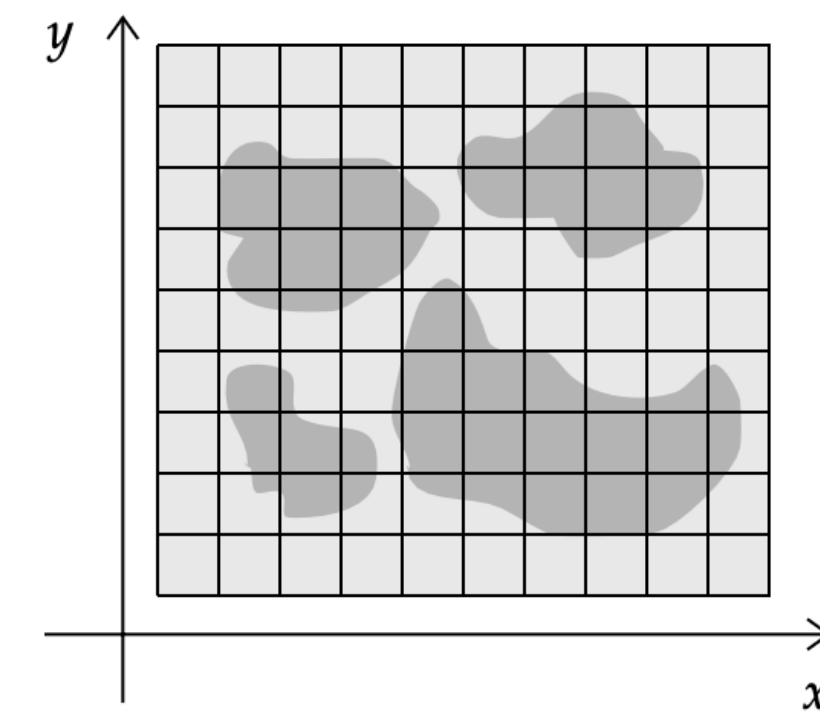
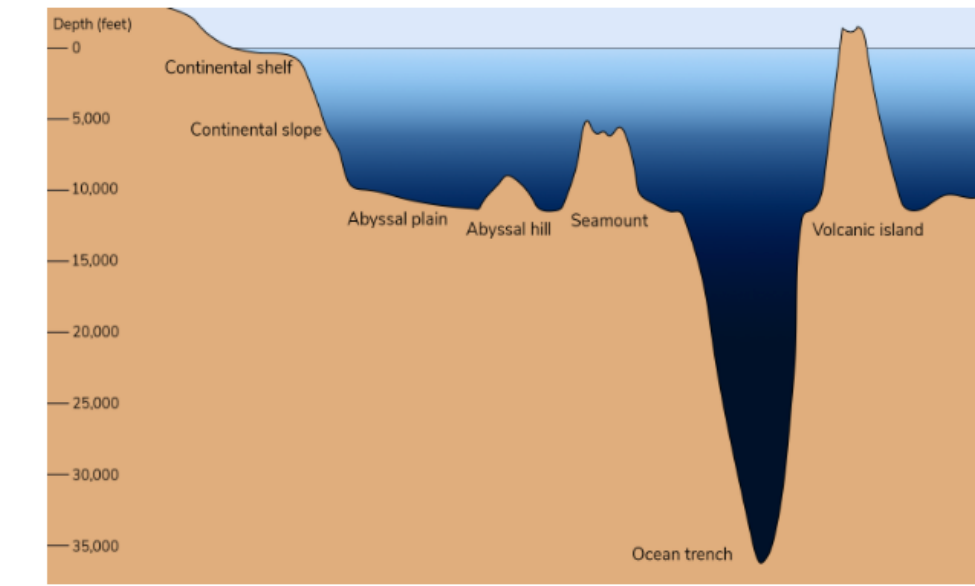
Summary and conclusions

- New method for upscaling subgrid scale (SGS) topography based on porous medium flow model.
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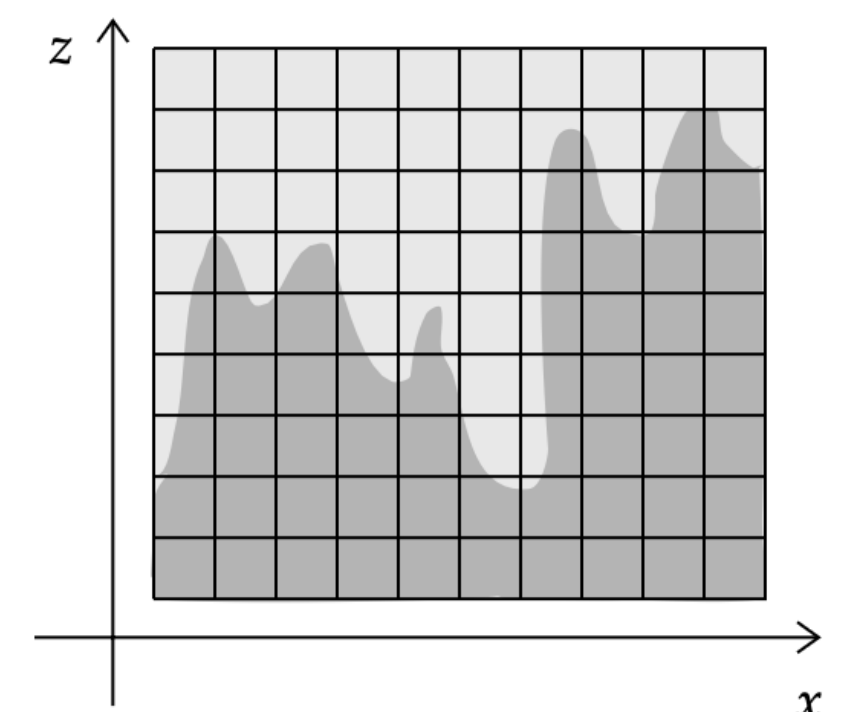
Aerial view: marsh



Cross section: bathymetry



more permeable
less permeable



fluid
solid

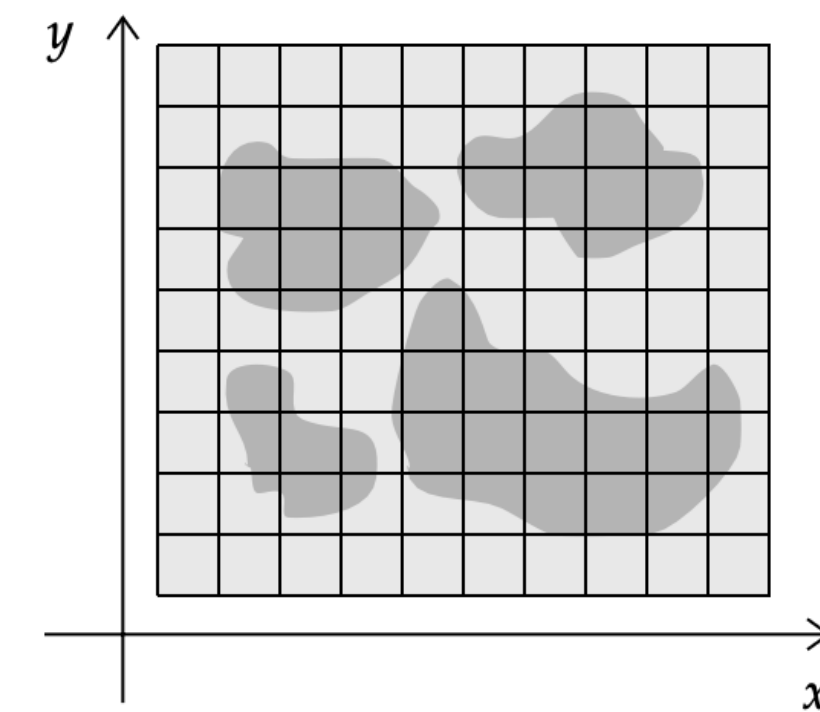
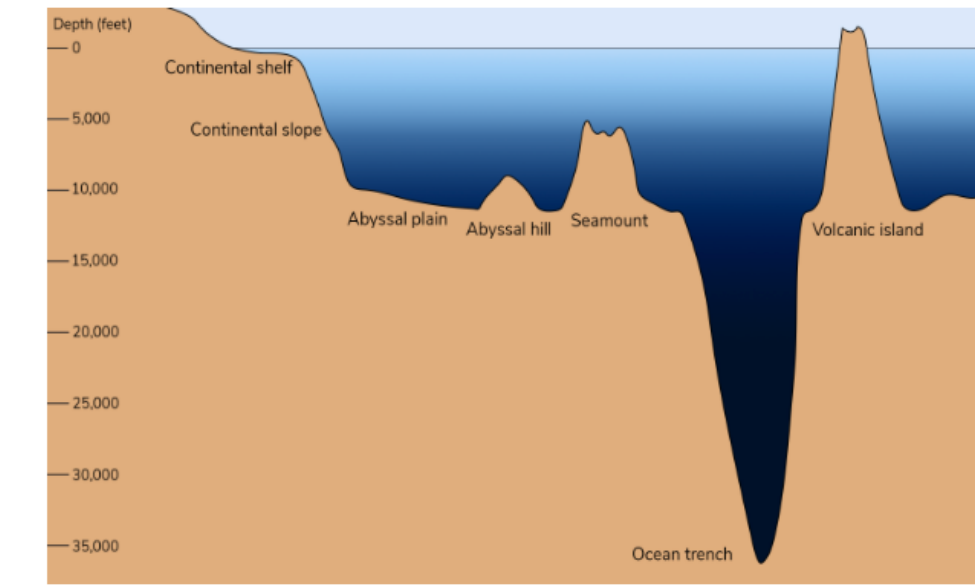
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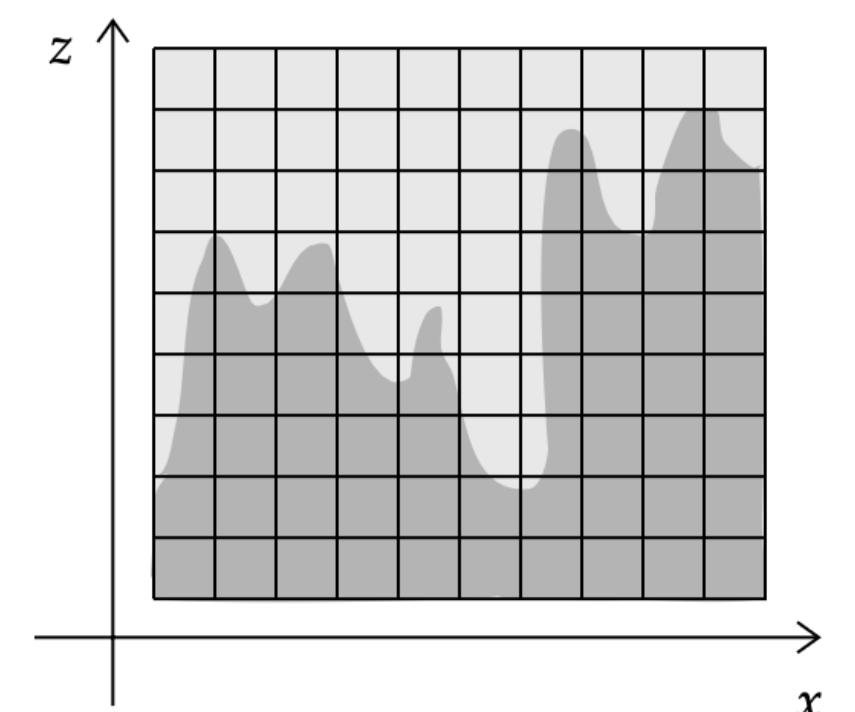
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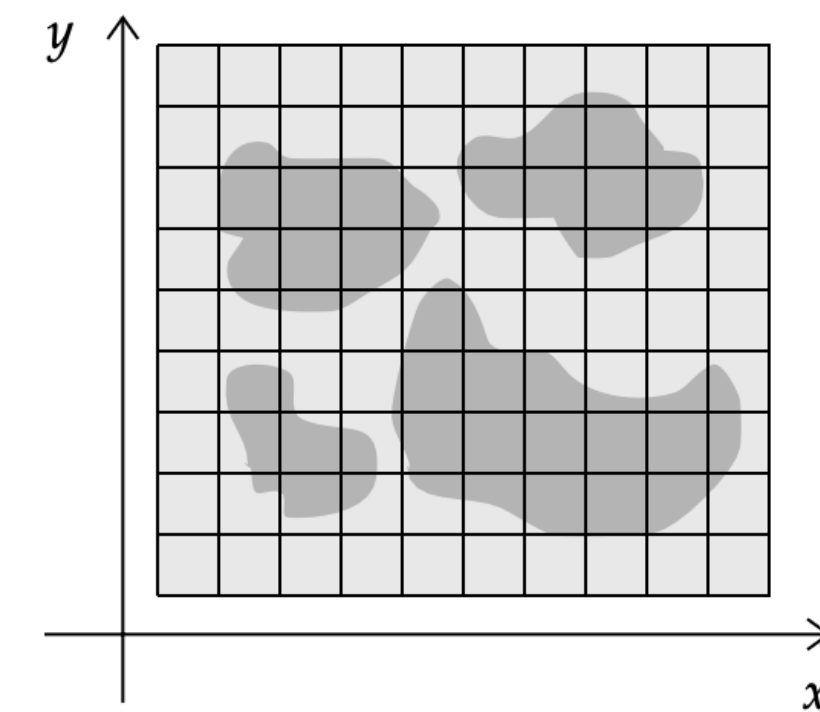
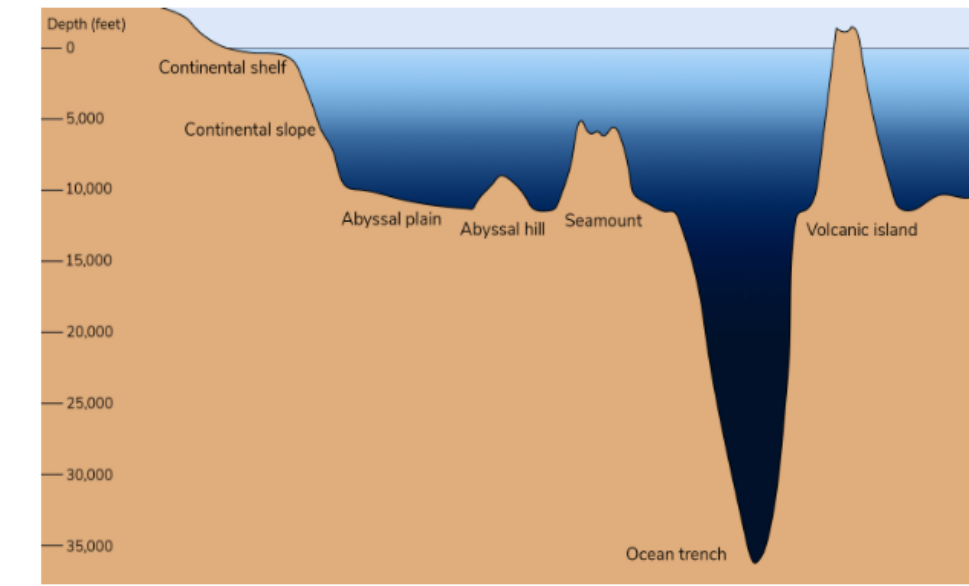
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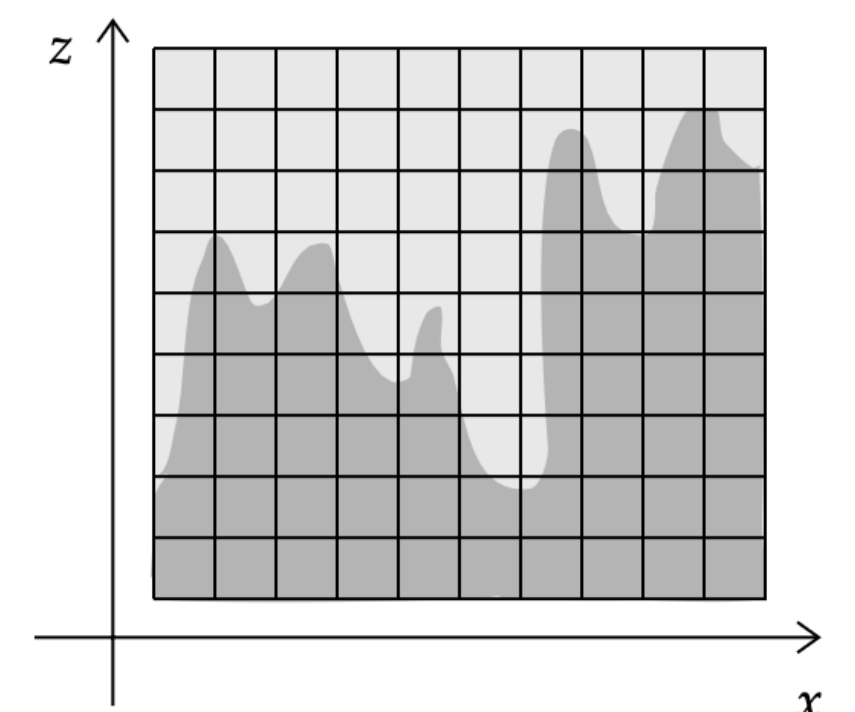
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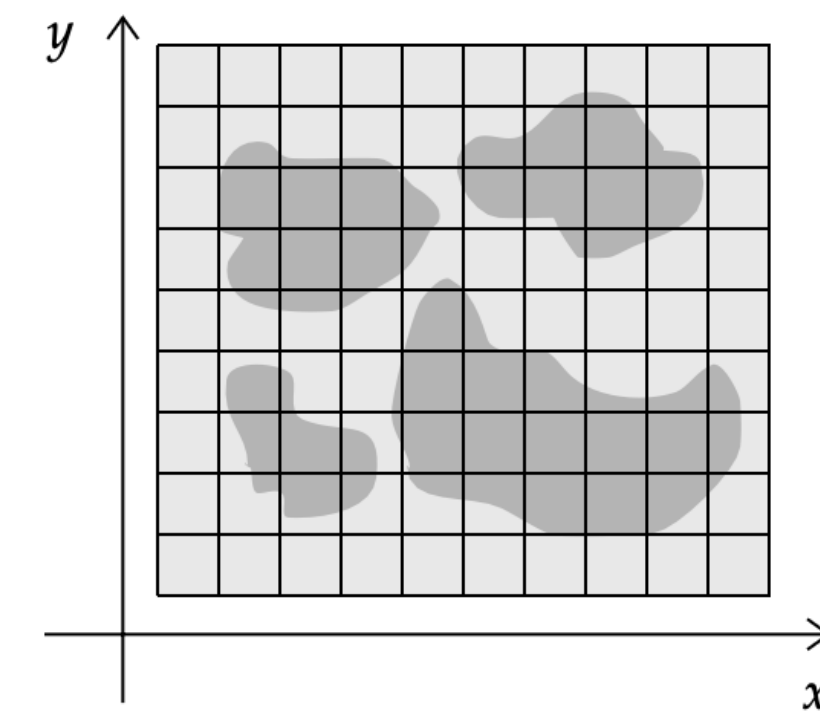
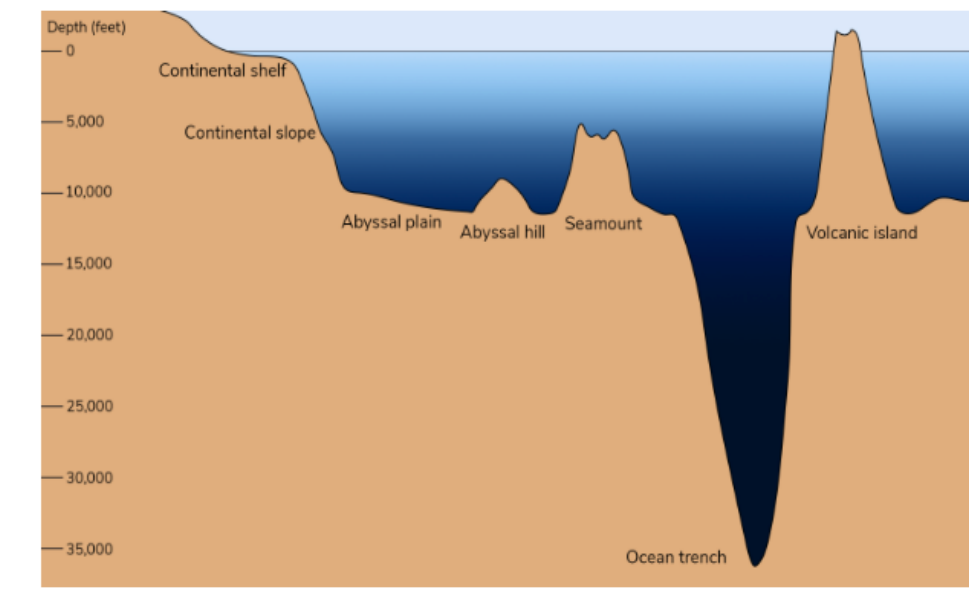
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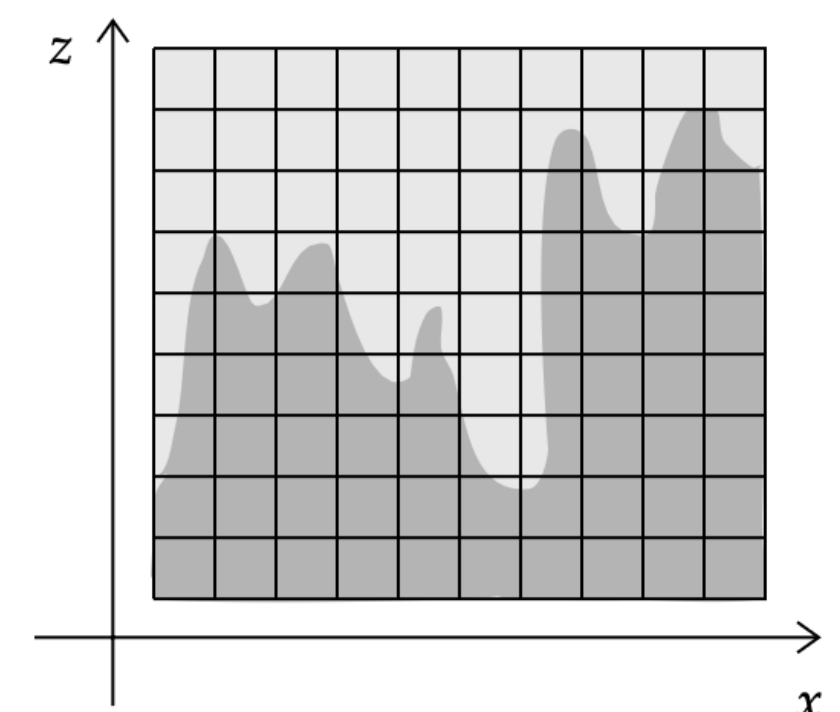


Cross section: bathymetry



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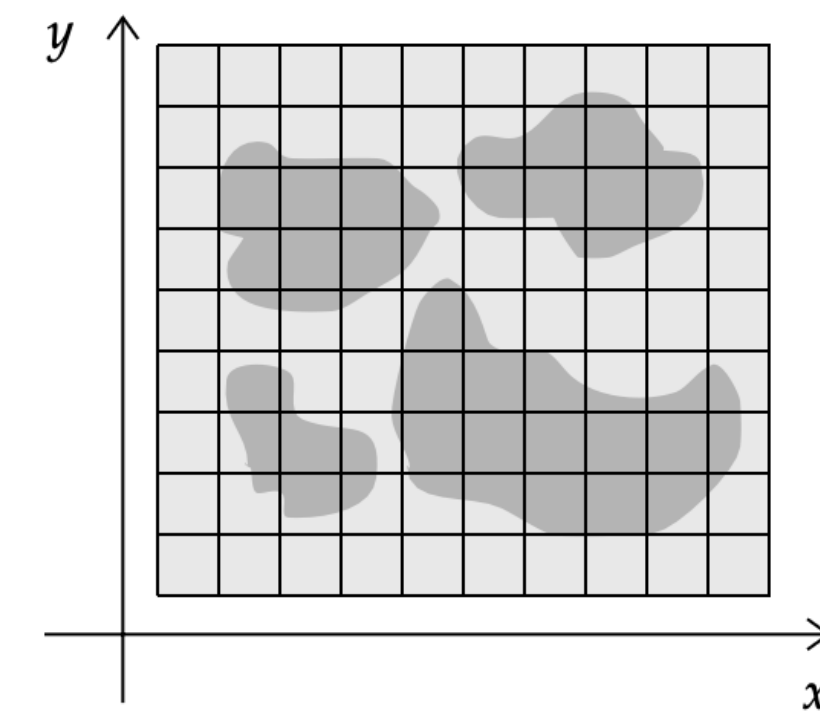
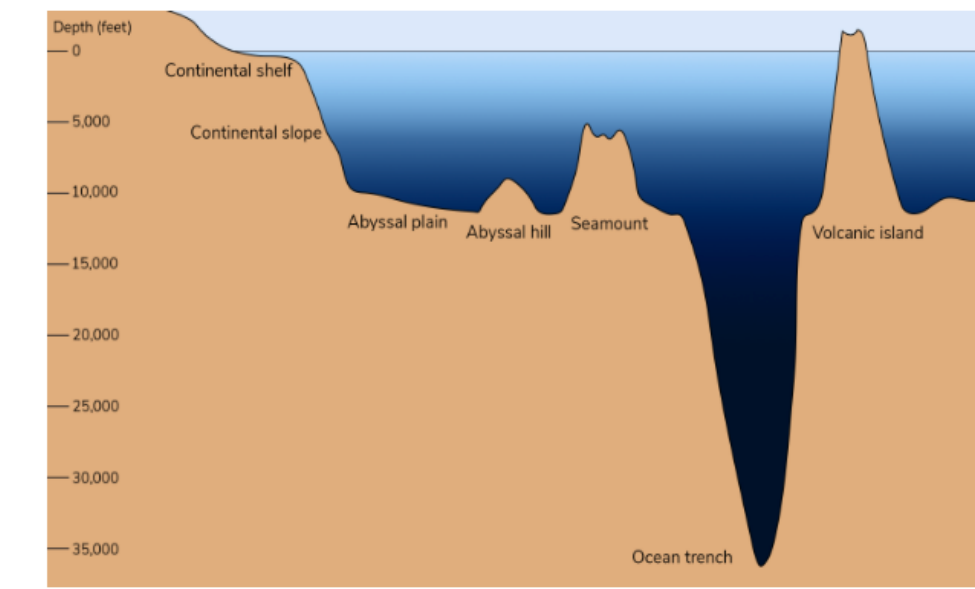
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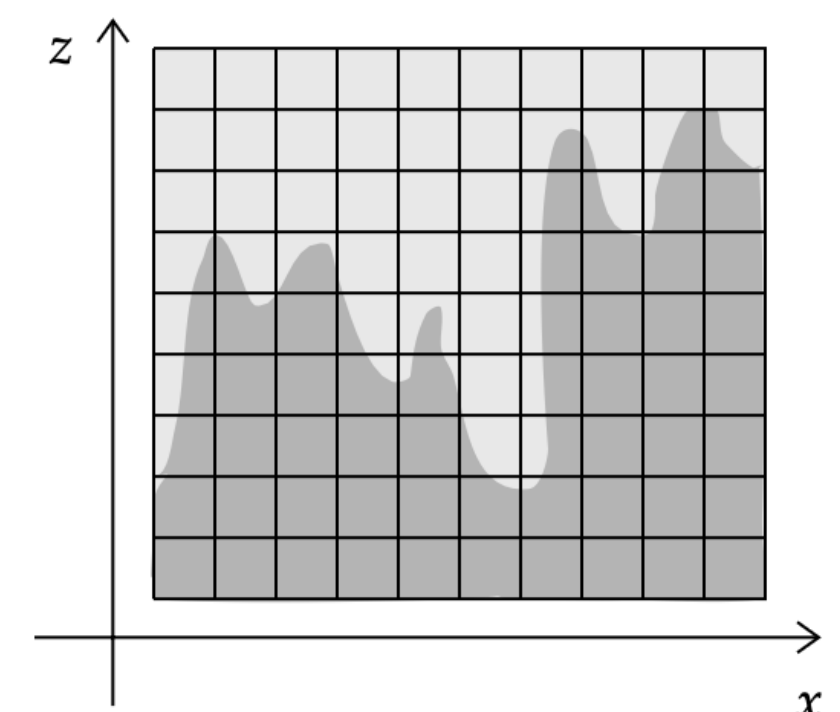
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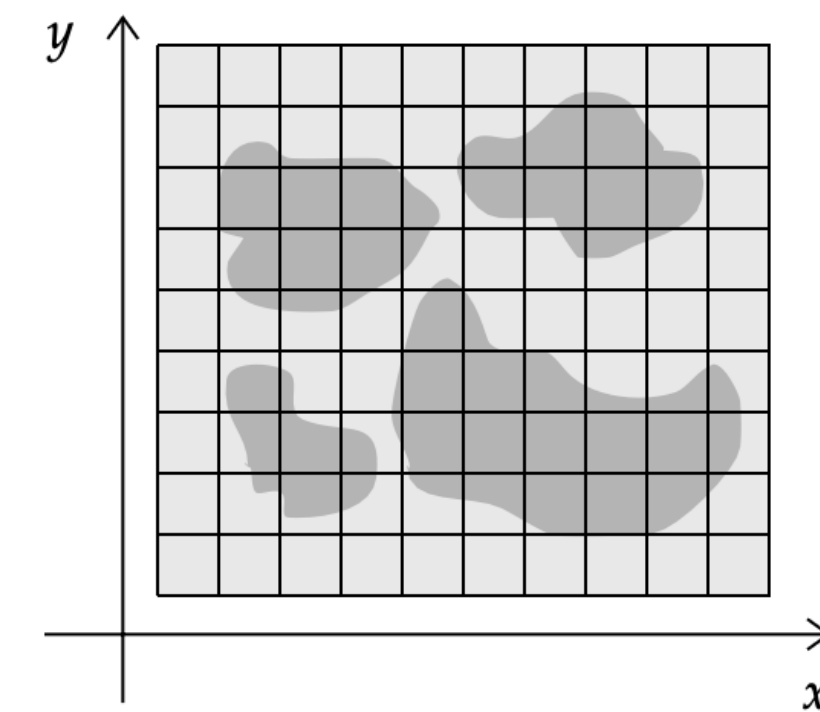
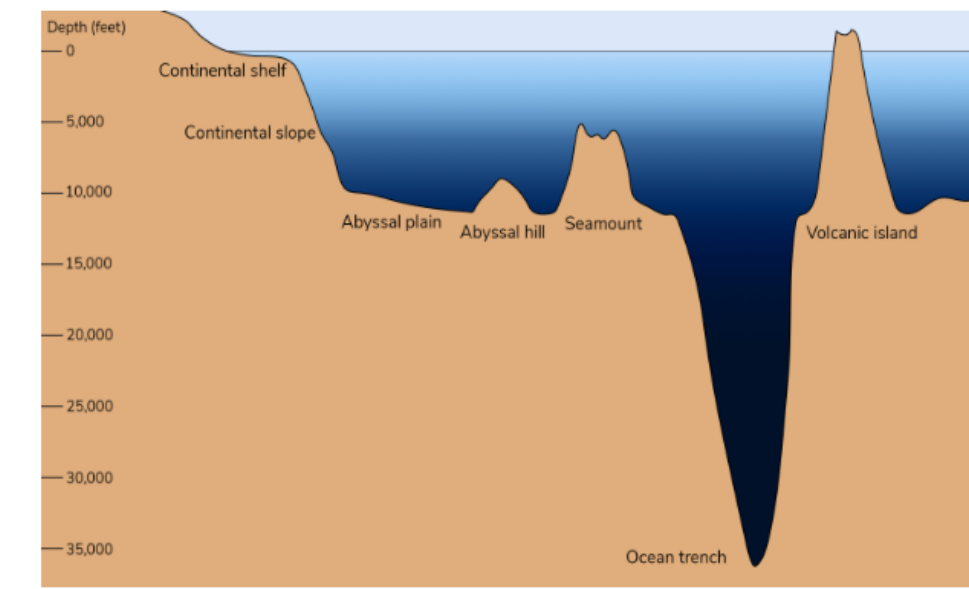
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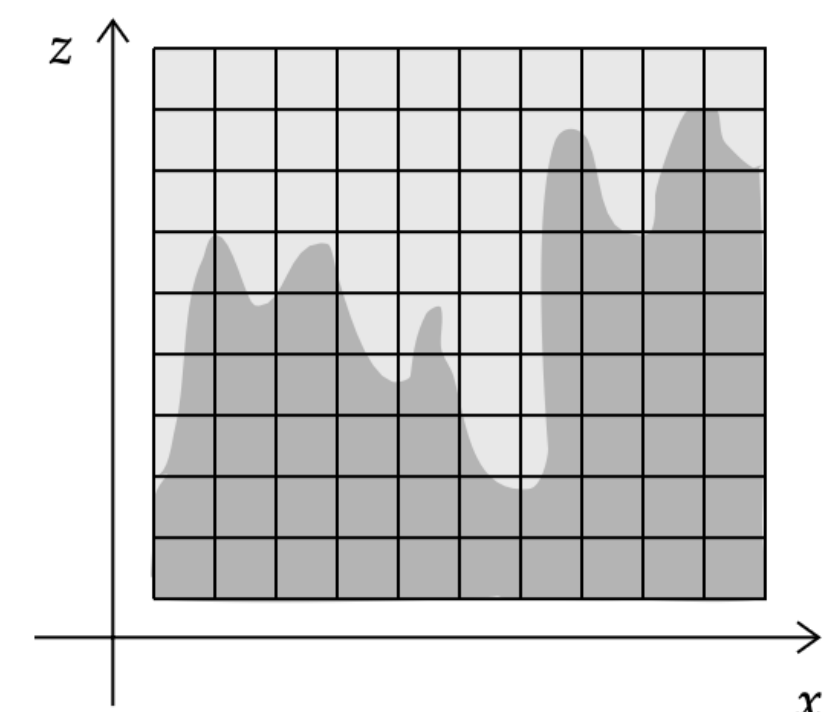
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