



# ACTRIS

## CCRES Cloud Radar Calibration Strategy

*CCRES Workshop – September 21, 2021*



This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreements No 871115

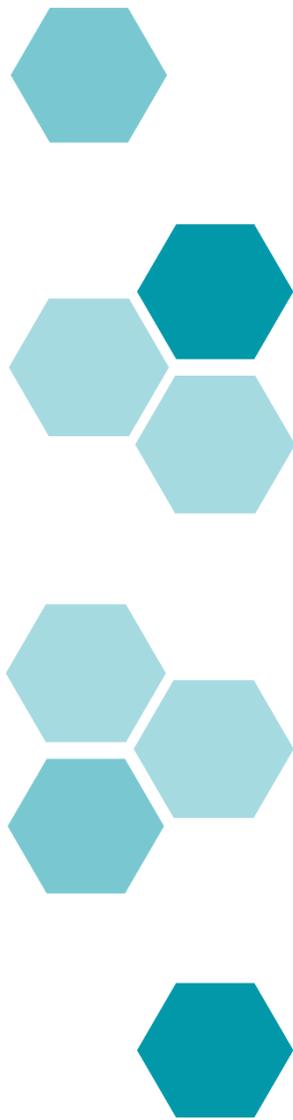
# Introduction

- One of CCRES objectives is to guarantee the quality of all cloud radar measurements in the ACTRIS network
- However, cloud radars are complex instruments with intensive calibration needs
- Hence, it is necessary to develop a strategy to:
  - Calibrate the Cloud Radars of the ACTRIS infrastructure
  - Track the measurement quality of every instrument in the network
  - Manage the resources available for these tasks
- This presentation reviews recently developed calibration methodologies and proposes a first strategy that could be implemented in the ACTRIS network



# Contents

- Calibration tracking based on disdrometer measurements
- Absolute calibration method based on corner reflectors
- Calibration transfer by simultaneous sampling of clouds
- Calibration strategy proposal
- Research and perspectives
- Calendar



Calibration tracking based on  
disdrometer measurements

# Disdrometer calibration tracking

- **Objective** : develop a method to compare reflectivity ( $Z_e$ ) (1) measured by the Doppler Cloud Radar (DCR) with (2) derived from disdrometers to frequently monitor in time shifts, drifts and deviations of the DCR Calibration Constant (CC)
- **Instrumental setup** :



**Disdrometer (DD)** : measure the rain drop size distribution and fall velocity to derive the reflectivity ( $Z_e$ ) at the surface



**Rain-Gauge (RG)** : check the DD measurement and detect start/end of the rain event



**Doppler Cloud Radar (DCR)** : measure profile of  $Z_e$  (between some tens of meters and several km) with an « a-priori » Calibration Constant that will be checked

— : already analyze with python code developed by MA. Drouin  
- - - : to be done

# Disdrometer calibration tracking

- Questions and assumptions

- **Disdrometer representativity compared to the Doppler Cloud radar**

- Delay between DCR Ze sampling and the DD retrievals : use of the DCR fall velocity ;
- Volume sampling/Heterogeneity of the precipitation : use of a long lasting rain event and of the first reliable gate of DCR (<200m) ;
- Heterogeneity of sensors and DSD uncertainty / truncation : compare consistency between sensors (DD vs RG and DD vs DD), use specific rain event (RR range, cumulated rain)

- **Doppler Cloud radar assumptions/corrections**

- Rain attenuation correction along the vertical : parametrical correction can be applied
- To be considered when defining “closest” reliable DCR gate for comparison : near field effects, overlap corrections, Transmitter-Receiver interferences (cross-talk)
- Wet radome attenuation correction : use a very efficient blower until a certain rain rate to have a dry radome... but how to validate?, or use parametrical correction to account for the drop on the radome

# Disdrometer calibration tracking

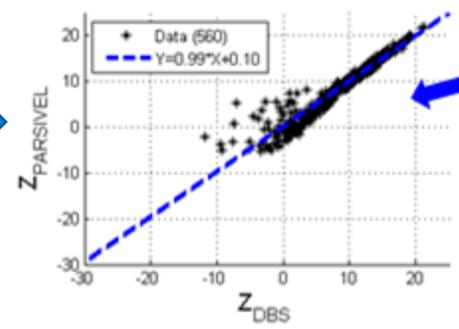
- Method**

Select precipitation event (RR range, cumul., duration,  $T_{a_{min}}$ , min and max WS etc.)

SPEED_MEAN_MAX	7 m/s
SPEED_MAX	10 m/s
TEMPERATURE_MIN	2 °C

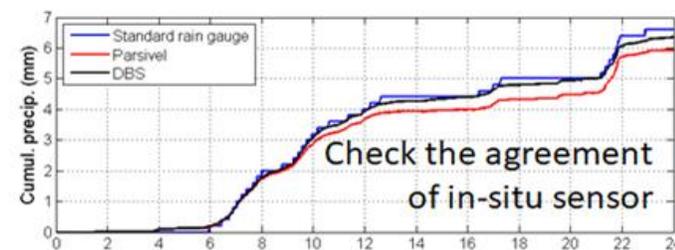
	Minimum time between two events	Minimum rain sum	Number_of_events
31	1 hour	0 mm	390
32	1 hour	1 mm	140
33	1 hour	1.5 mm	101
34	1 hour	2 mm	83
35	1 hour	2.5 mm	68
36	1 hour	3 mm	59
37	1 hour	3.5 mm	50
38	1 hour	4 mm	48
39	1 hour	4.5 mm	39
40	1 hour	5 mm	38

Validate the DD measurement (relation fall velocity vs size, DD vs RG, DD vs DD)



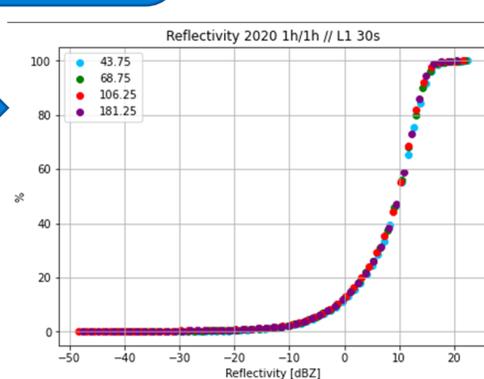
Check the agreement of DD

Ze processing with DSD (generic Python code dev. by MA. Drouin, raw data -> netcdf, data & metadata)



Check the agreement of in-situ sensor

Closest and reliable gate for DCR



Comparison for each "good" Rain event (median, mean, slode,  $R^2$ , RMSE)

$$Z = \frac{\lambda^4}{|K_w|^2 \pi^5} 10^{18} \int N(D) \sigma_{bsc}(\lambda, D, \rho) dD$$

Drop size distribution  $N(D)$  is derived from **DBS2** and **Parsivel** measurements

Backscatter coefficients are derived with different assumptions:

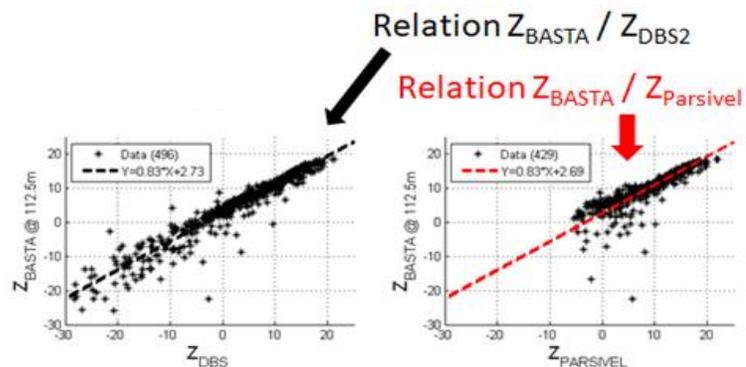
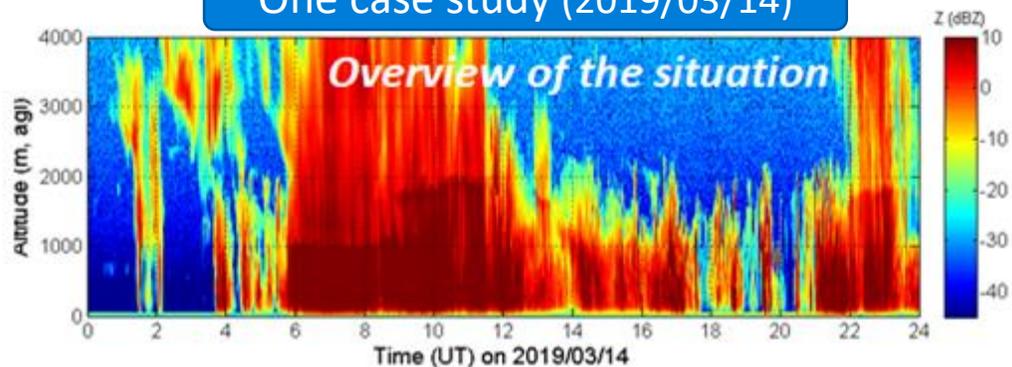
- Rayleigh (not valid @ 95GHz)
- Mie (consider drops as sphere)
- **T-Matrix** (oriented spheroid, flatness information)

Leinonen, J., Python code for T-matrix scattering calculations  
 Mishchenko, M. I. and L. D. Travis, T-matrix computations of light scattering by large spheroidal particles, *Opt. Commun.*, vol. 109, 16-21 (1994)

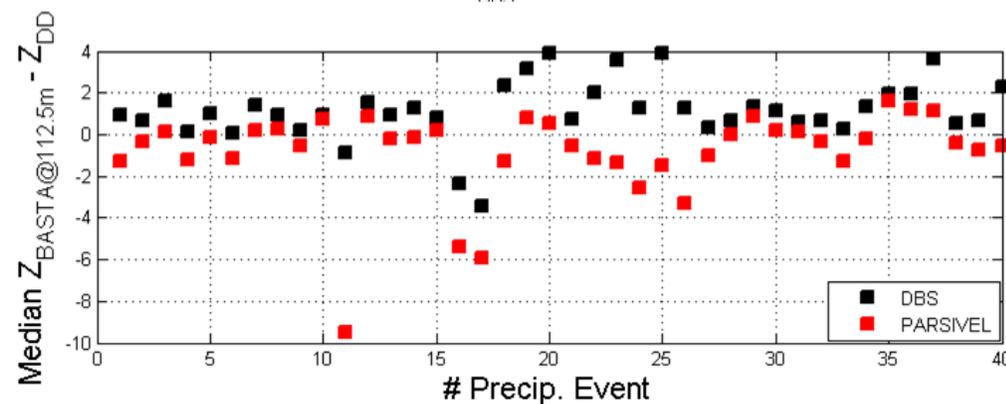
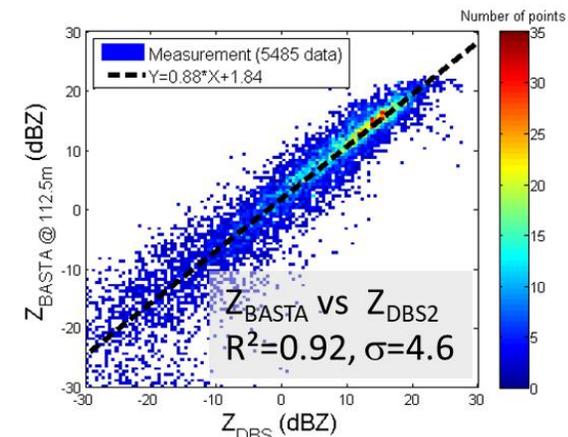
# Disdrometer calibration tracking

- Results**

One case study (2019/03/14)



Statistical results for 2019

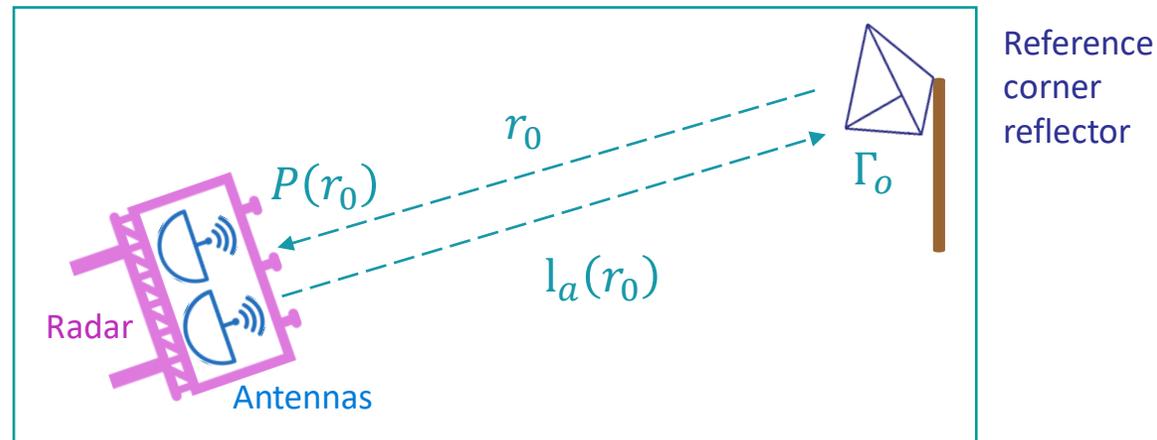


Absolute calibration method  
based on corner reflectors

# Absolute calibration using corner reflectors

- Method developed during 2017, 2018 and 2019 cloud radar calibration campaigns
- Uses **corner reflectors as absolute references** to retrieve the radar calibration constant
- Current version of the method enables the **identification and quantification** of most **bias and uncertainty** sources

Calibration setup



Calibration constant (C.C.) retrieval based on an absolute reference

$$C.C. = \frac{8 \ln 2 \lambda^4 10^{18}}{\theta^2 \pi^6 K^2 \delta r} \frac{\Gamma_0}{l_a^2 r_0^4 P_r(r_0)}$$

Radar Parameters
Calibration variables

# Absolute calibration using corner reflectors

- A typical setup involves the installation of a low cross-sectional mast several hundred meters away from the radar
- Relatively controlled conditions enable the quantification and estimation of bias and uncertainty sources



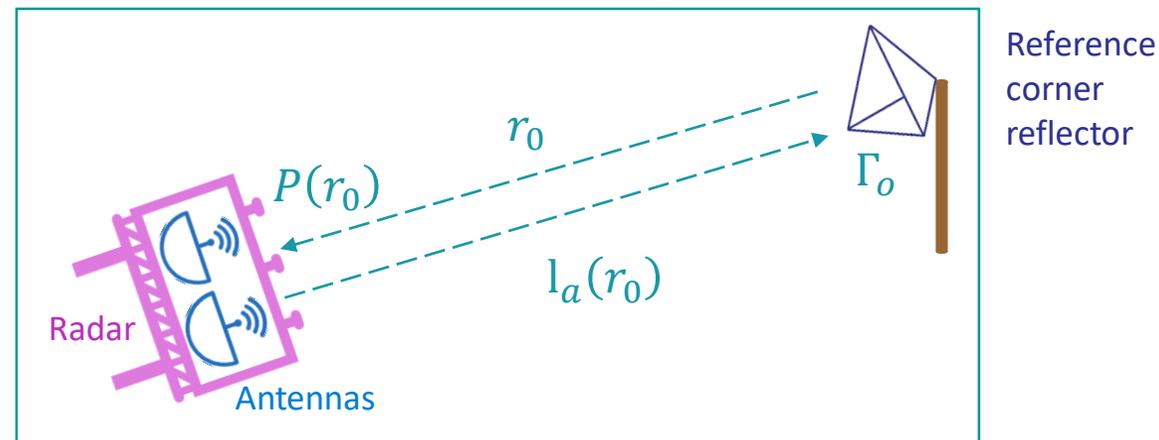
# Absolute calibration using corner reflectors

## Uncertainty sources

$$C = \frac{8 \ln 2 \lambda^4 10^{18}}{\theta^2 \pi^6 K^2 \delta r} \frac{\Gamma_0}{l_a^2 r_0^4 P_r(r_0)}$$

Radar Parameters
Calibration variables

## Calibration setup



## Uncertainty sources:

### Antennas properties

- Beam lobe shape
- Beam overlap
- Beam width

### Radar

Radar gain variations

- Impact of temperature
- Non ideal IF filters

$P(r)$ : Sampled power

- Receiver compression

### Reference corner reflector

$\Gamma_0$ : Reference target Radar Cross Section (RCS)

- Theoretical value
- Clutter
- Alignment

# Calibration using corner reflectors: Uncertainty Characterization



**BASTA-mini  
Cloud Radar**

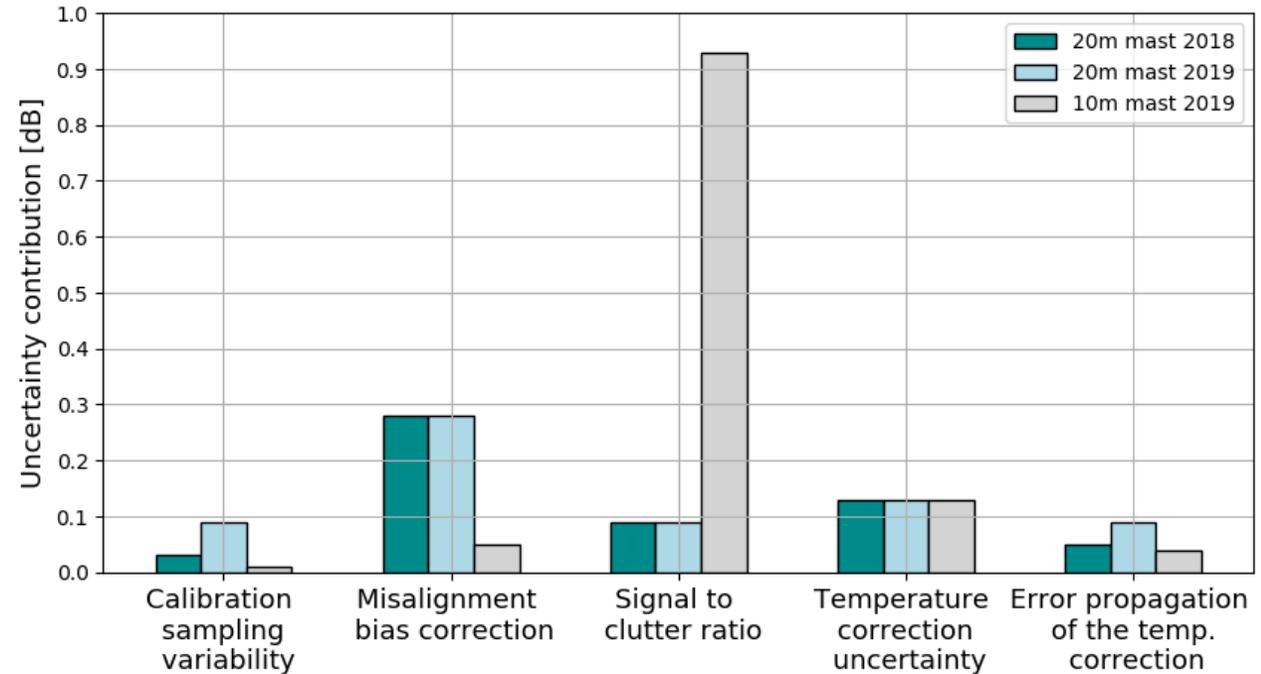


**10 m mast  
+  
10 cm corner  
reflector**



**20 m mast  
+  
20 cm corner  
reflector**

## Uncertainty budget for three different experiments



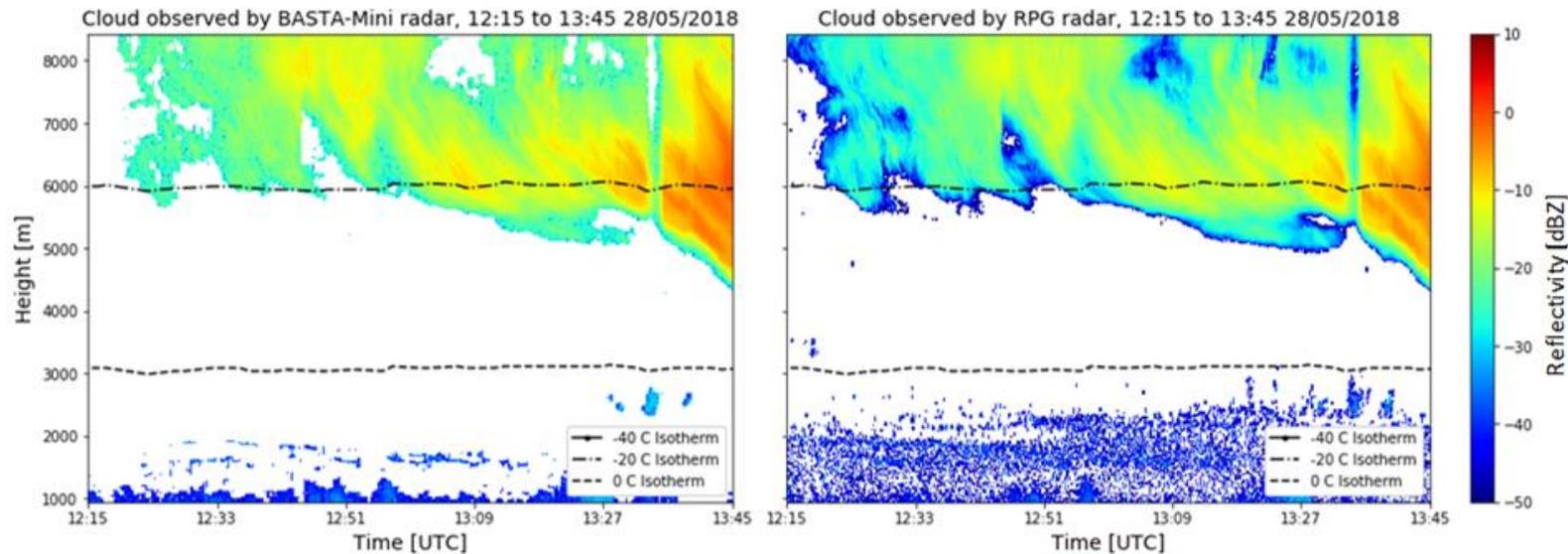
Calibration transfer by  
simultaneous sampling of clouds

# Calibration Transfer

- Objective: To correct the measurements of a cloud radar based on a reference instrument:

$$\mathbf{Z}^{uncalib}(\mathbf{r}) + \mathbf{K} = \mathbf{Z}^{corrected}(\mathbf{r})$$

- Method: The comparison of simultaneous cloud measurements



In this example:

Reference radar: 95 GHz BASTA-Mini

Uncalibrated radar: 94 GHz RPG



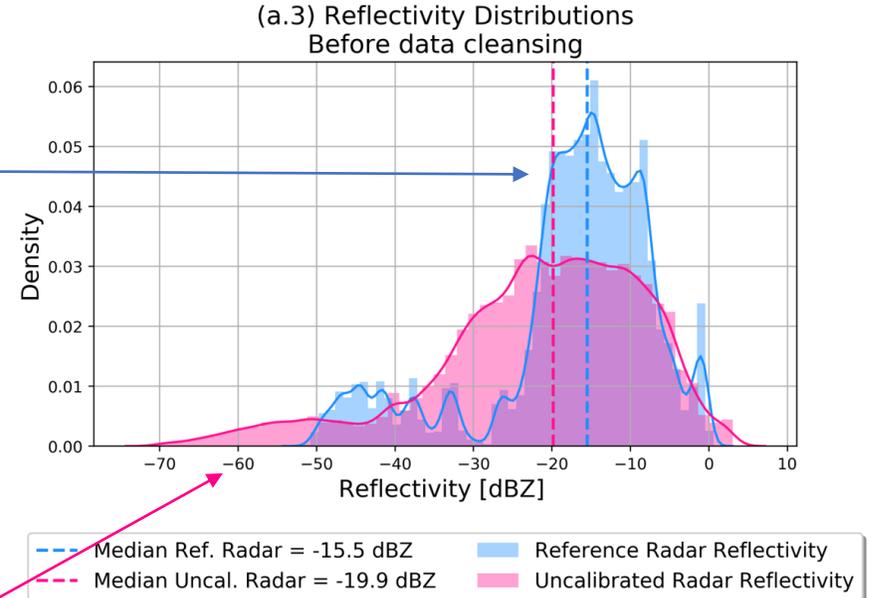
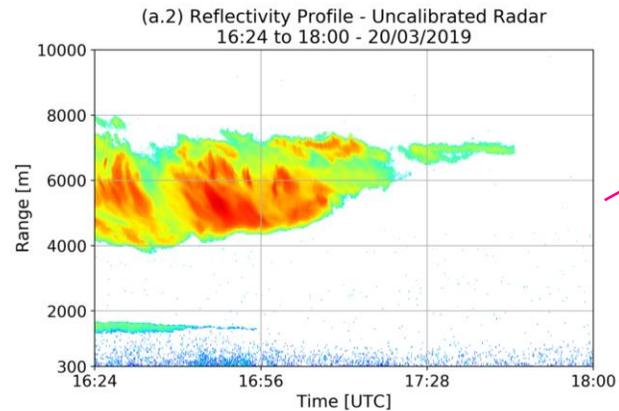
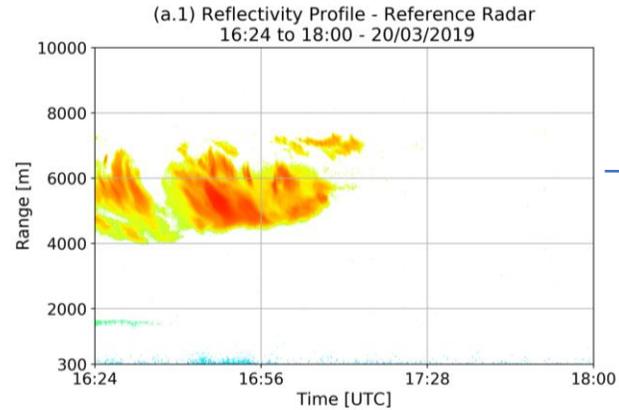
Reference  
radar



Uncalibrated  
radar

# Calibration Transfer

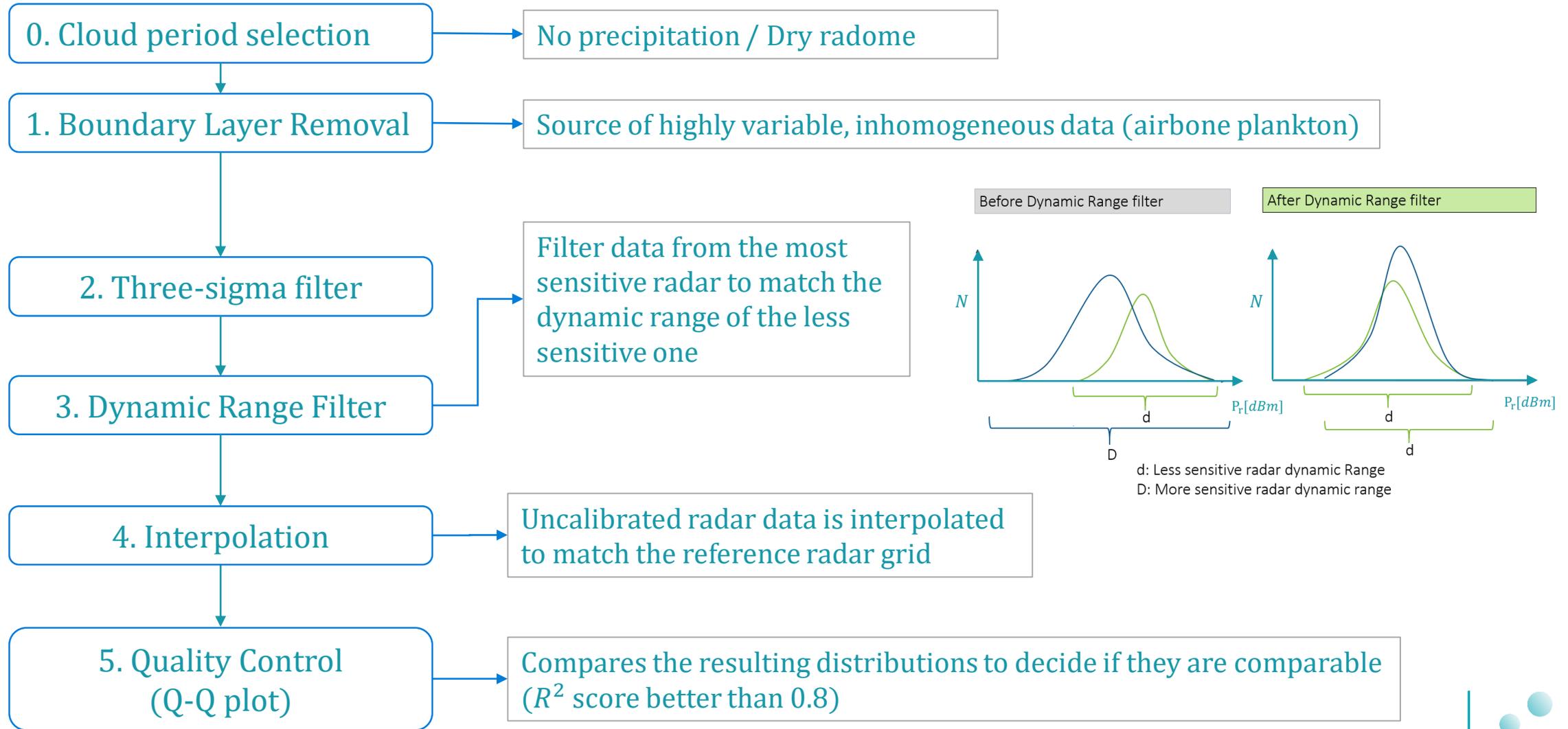
- When radars do not have the same sensitivity, data comparison is not straightforward



Differences between the instruments  
→ Reflectivity distributions do not have the same shape

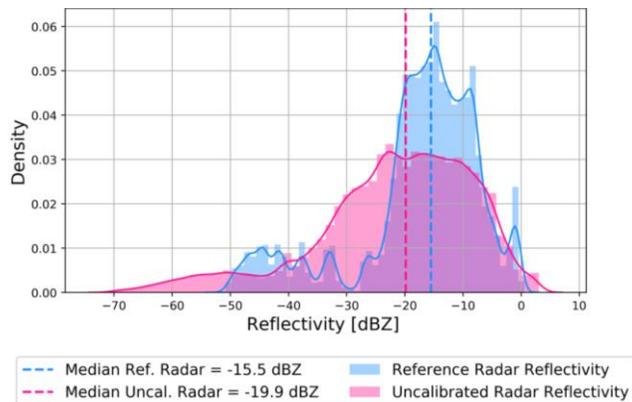
Reflectivity distributions cannot be directly compared, data must be processed

# Calibration Transfer: Methodology

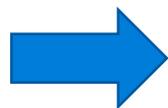


# Calibration Transfer: Methodology

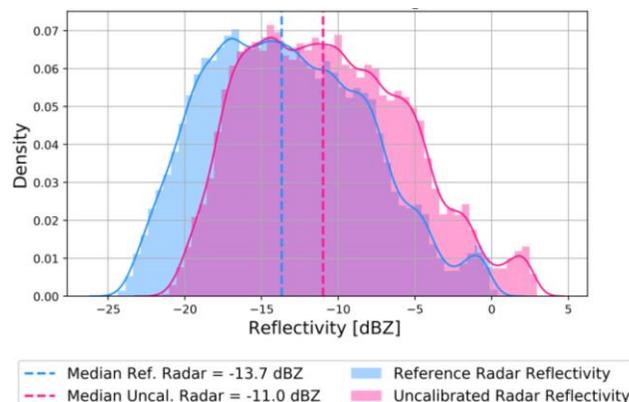
Original reflectivity distributions (different shape)



Data processing to remove non comparable measurements



Reflectivity distributions are now comparable



$= K_i \pm \sigma_{K_i}$  correction coefficient sample

$$\text{median}(Z^{ref}) - \text{median}(Z^{uncal}) = 4.4 \text{ dB}$$

$$\text{median}(Z^{ref}) - \text{median}(Z^{uncal}) = -2.7 \pm 0.6 \text{ dB}$$

Using N cloud periods

$$\text{Correction coefficient } K = \overline{K_i} \pm \delta K$$

$$Z^{corrected}(r) = Z^{uncalib}(r) + K$$

Standard error      Error propagation from each  $K_i$       Reference radar calibration uncertainty

$$\delta K = \sqrt{\frac{\sigma_{\overline{K_i}}^2}{N} + \left( \frac{1}{N^2} \sum_{i=1}^N \sigma_{K_i}^2 \right) + \sigma_r^2}$$

# Calibration Strategy

## Central facilities

- Absolute calibration of a portable **reference radar**
- **Transportation of the reference radar to the NFs**, to calibrate their instruments using the **calibration transfer** method

## All facilities

- **Calibration tracking** using disdrometers on site
- Provide infrastructure to install the reference radar close to their instruments
- Implementation of absolute calibration methods is optional

Research and perspectives

# Research and perspectives

Some limitations have been identified from the results of our calibration experiments:

- There is a need for an absolute characterization of the reference reflector, **to reduce the uncertainty of the reference radar**
- Calibration transfer works between radars on the same frequency band:
  - Need for calibration transfer methodologies for radars in different frequency bands (Ka to W band and vice-versa), **to calibrate all radar types**
- Need for new absolute calibration methods with lower infrastructure requirements, **to enable absolute calibration experiments at NFs**
- Antenna pointing and alignment characterization must be improved

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# Reference Reflector Characterization

- Corner reflectors have an RCS that depends on the beam incidence angle and the signal frequency
- At present, calibration experiments use its theoretical value, calculated using geometric equations

10 cm corner reflector used in the calibration experiments

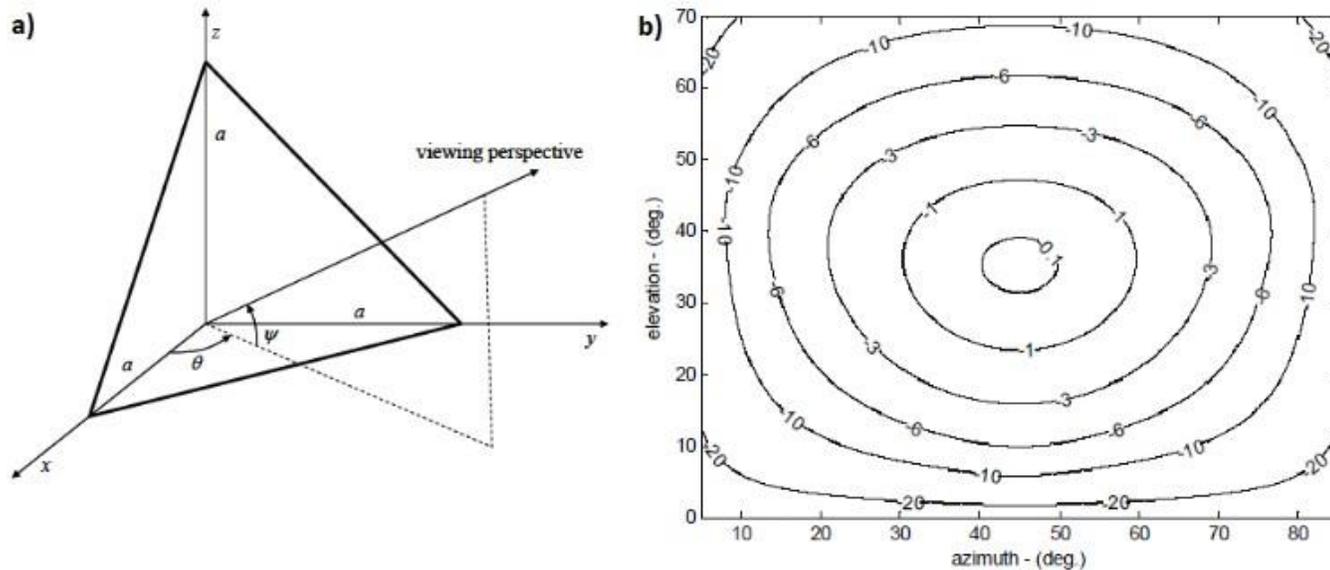
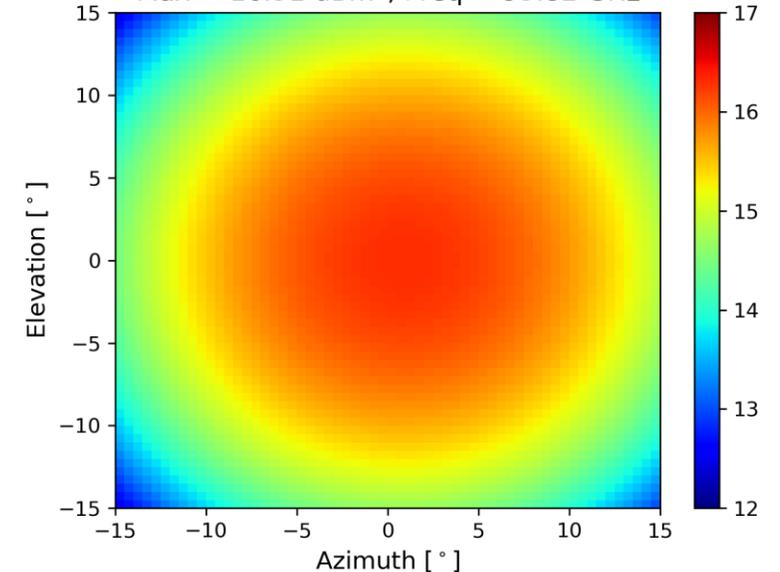


Figure 2.7: a) Viewing geometry of a trihedral CR at boresight. b) The RCS response of a triangular trihedral CR as a function of azimuth ( $\theta$ ) and elevation ( $\psi$ ) angle relative to the peak RCS.  $a$  is known as the inner leg dimension. After Doerry and Brock [2009].

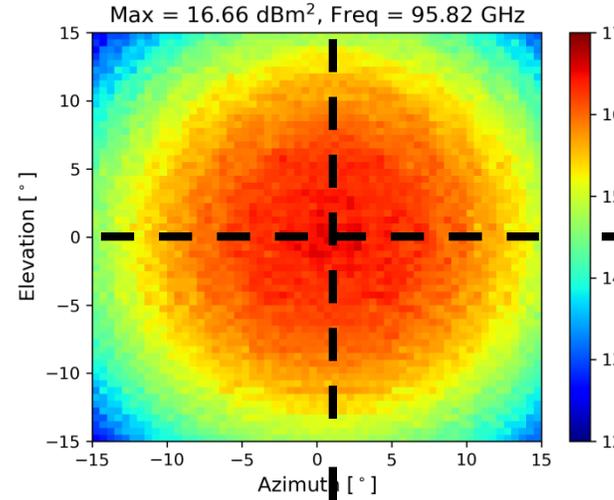
Theoretical RCS. Angles with respect to the boresight  
Max = 16.31 dBm<sup>2</sup>, Freq = 95.82 GHz



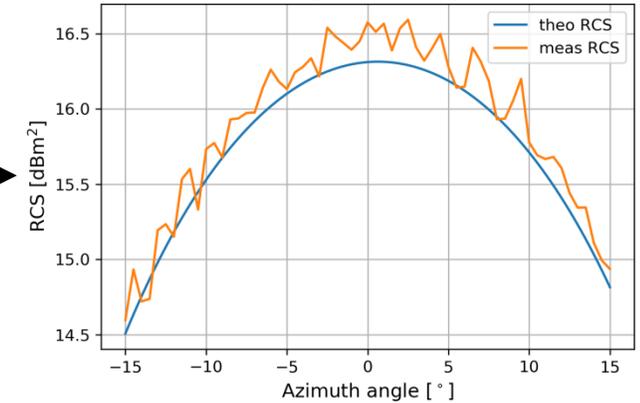


- First characterization of the 10 cm corner reflector in an anechoic chamber (University of Rennes)
- Identified a slight misalignment of  $0.6^\circ$  corrected using the theoretical model
- Measured RCS is  $\sim 0.4$  dB above the theoretical value
- The measured curve shape matches the theoretical RCS with an RMSE of 0.2 dB
- The difference between the measured and theoretical RCS is within the  $[-0.25, 0.43]$  dB range

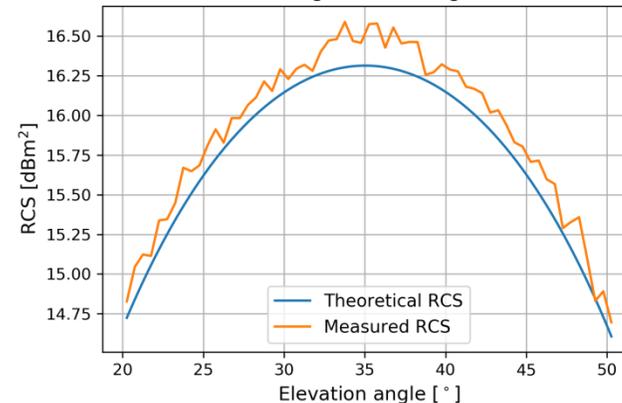
## Measured RCS



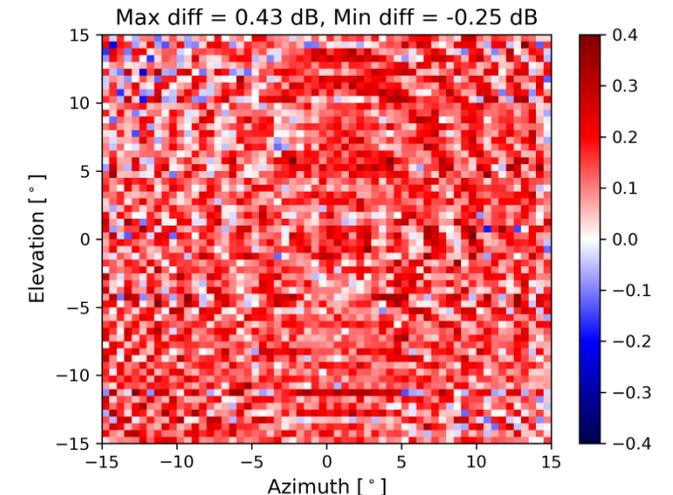
RCS measurement: azimuth cut passing through the boresight



RCS measurement: elevation cut passing through the boresight



## Measured - Theoretical RCS



# Research and perspectives

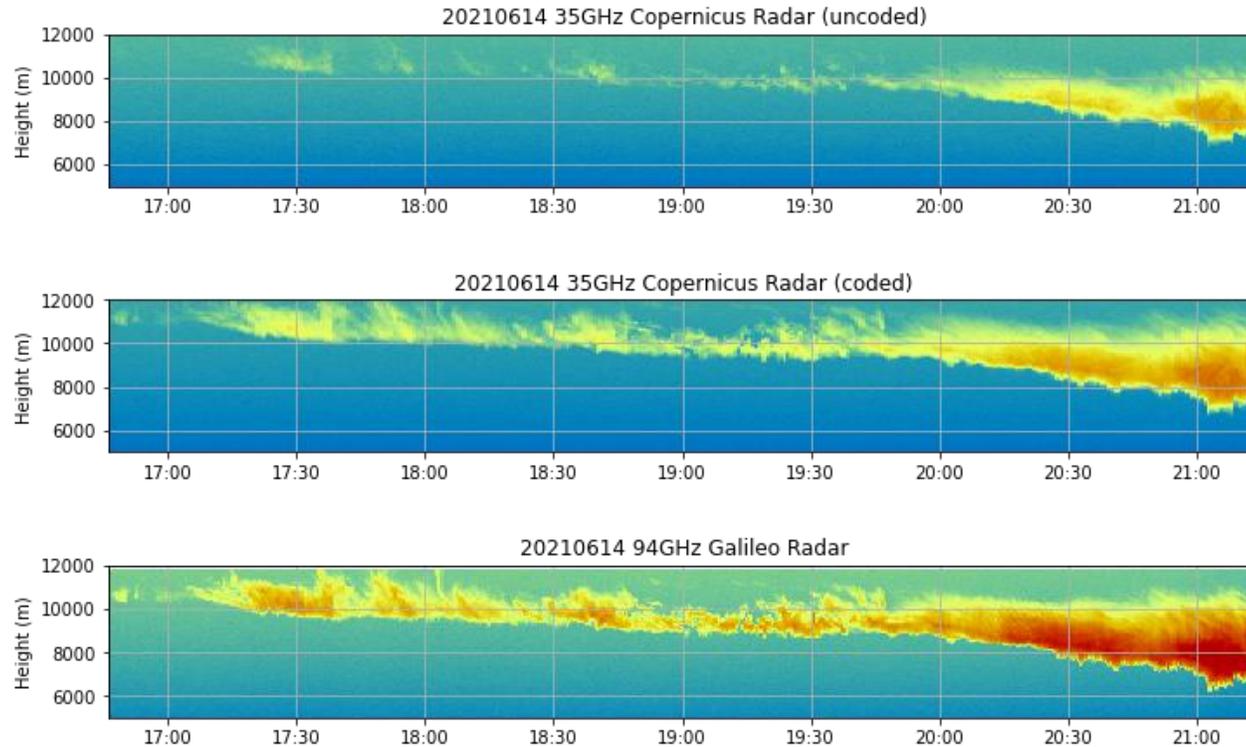
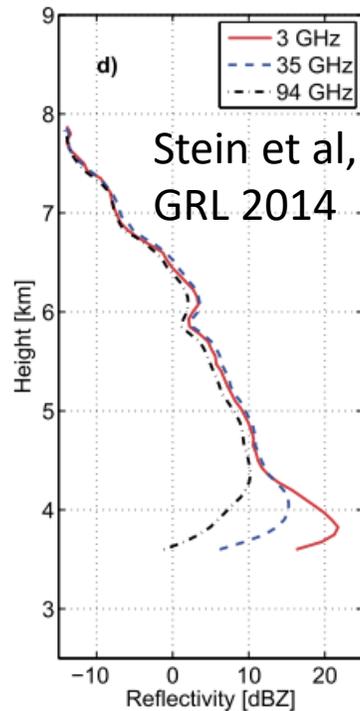
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# 35-94 GHz calibration transfer

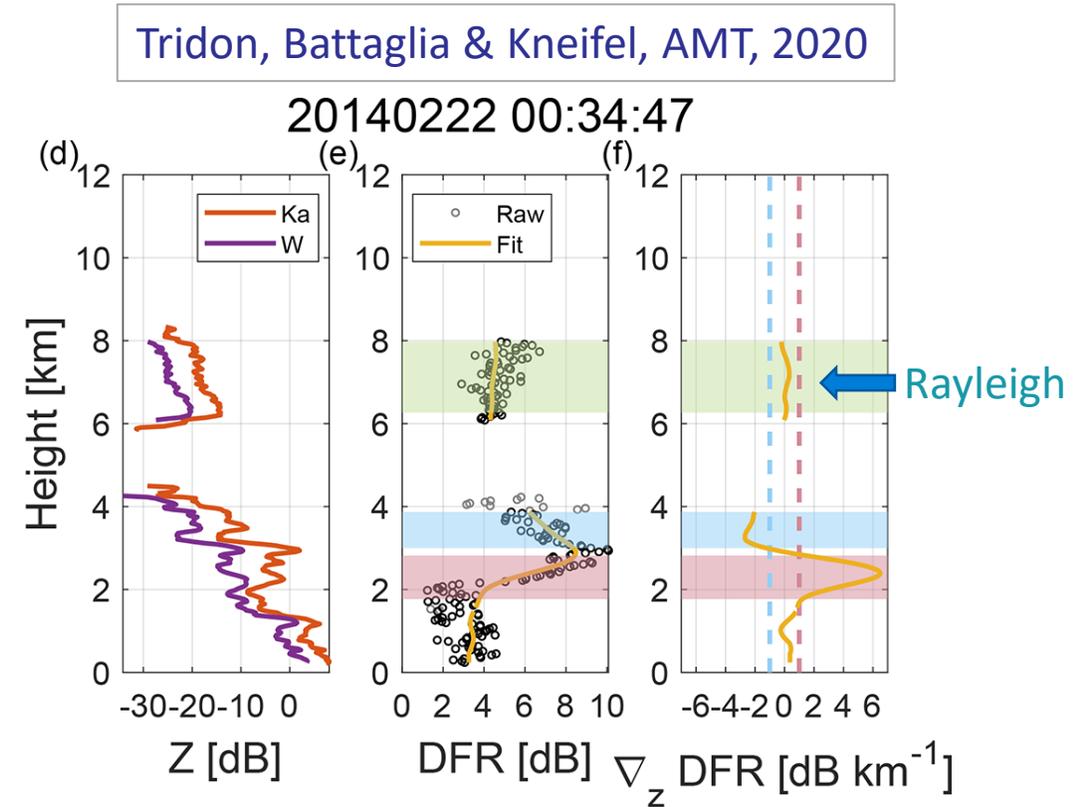
## Work in progress

- Methodology based on matching reflectivity for Rayleigh scattering particles near the top of ice clouds.
- Chilbolton work draws on previous calibration transfer methods (S-band to Ka- and W-band) developed at University of Reading [Nicol, Westbrook, Stein, Illingworth]



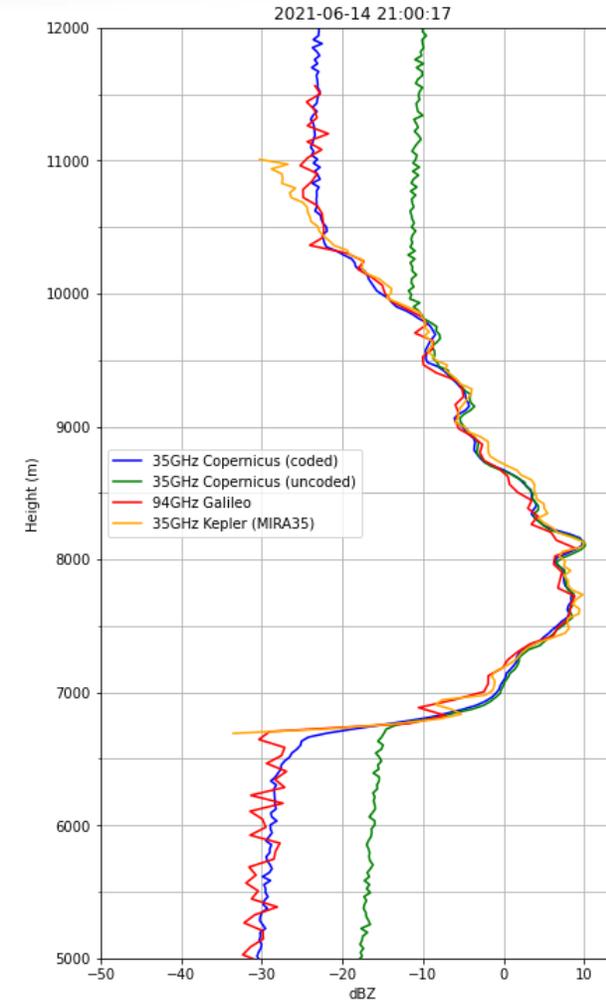
## • Points for attention:

- How to identify Rayleigh scatterers?
  - Simple reflectivity thresholding (such as  $-10 < \text{dBZ}_{94} < 5$ ) can be problematic – e.g. low concentrations of larger particles can give similar reflectivity.
  - Use of velocities to assist in identifying the slowly falling smallest particles requires accurate zenith alignment to avoid bias from horizontal winds.  
**Ties in with antenna pointing calibration work.**
  - Potential to explore use of Dual Frequency Ratio (DFR) plateau method (Tridon et. al, AMT, 2020) for selection of Rayleigh regions.



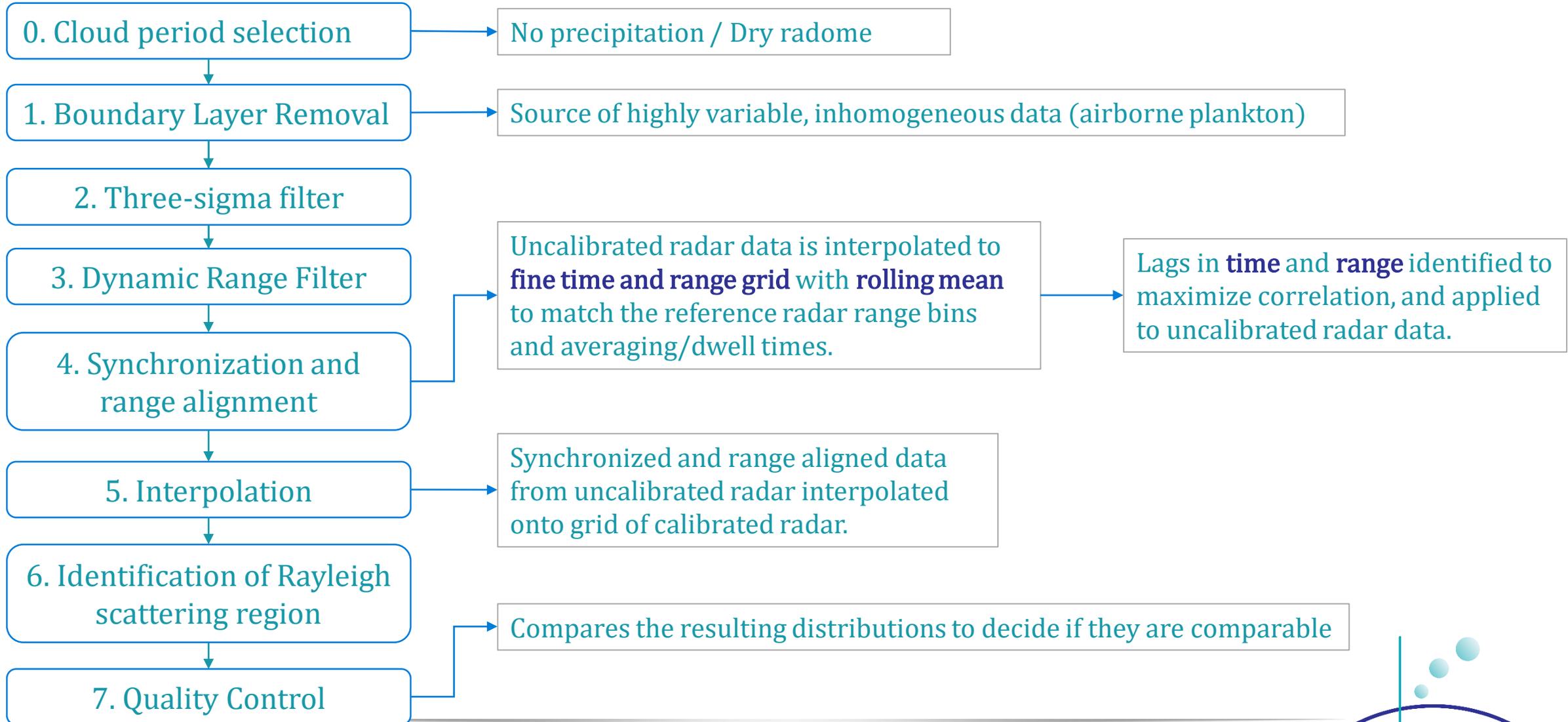
## • Points for attention:

- Need to account for two-way attenuation from liquid water and water vapour which differs for each frequency.
  - Standardization – Draw on CCRES experience with MWR and code base development in CLU.
- Need to consider spatial separation of radars and determine time lags to synchronize cloud returns.
  - Ideally radars will be close together.
- Need to consider dwell time and averaging times.
- Need to consider relative sensitivity of the radars.



# 35-94/95-GHz Calibration Transfer

## Workflow to be evaluated



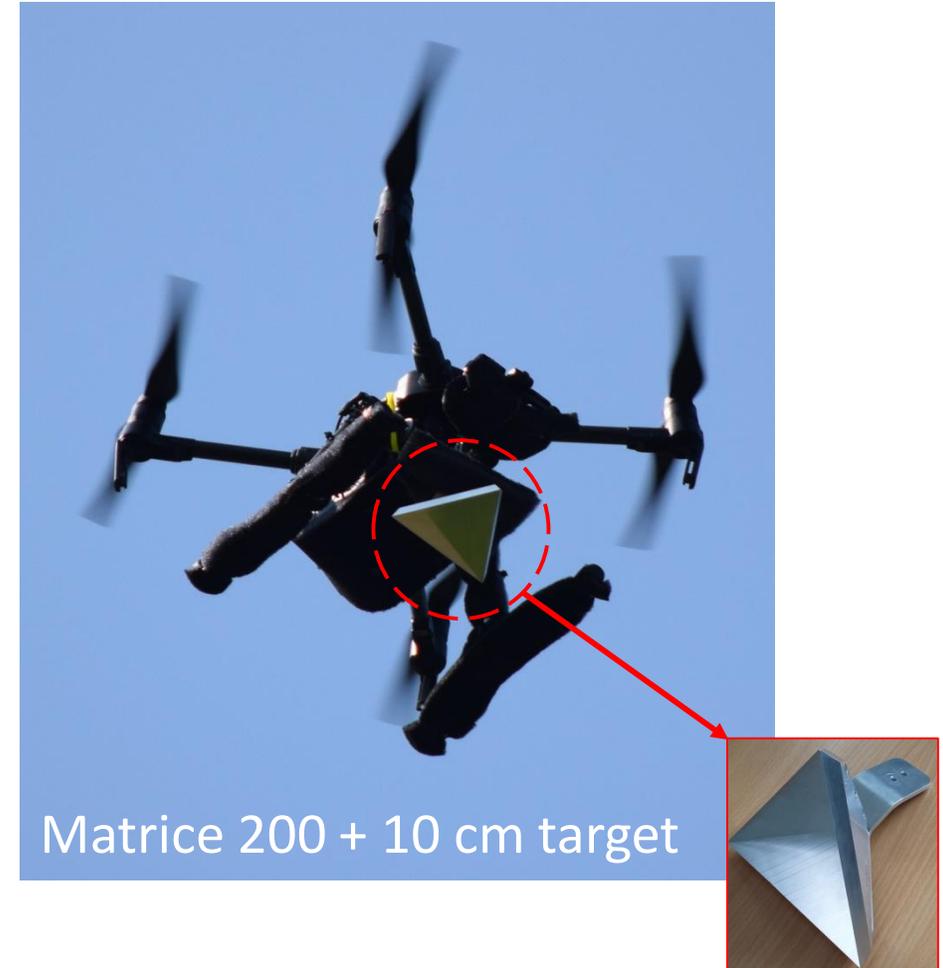
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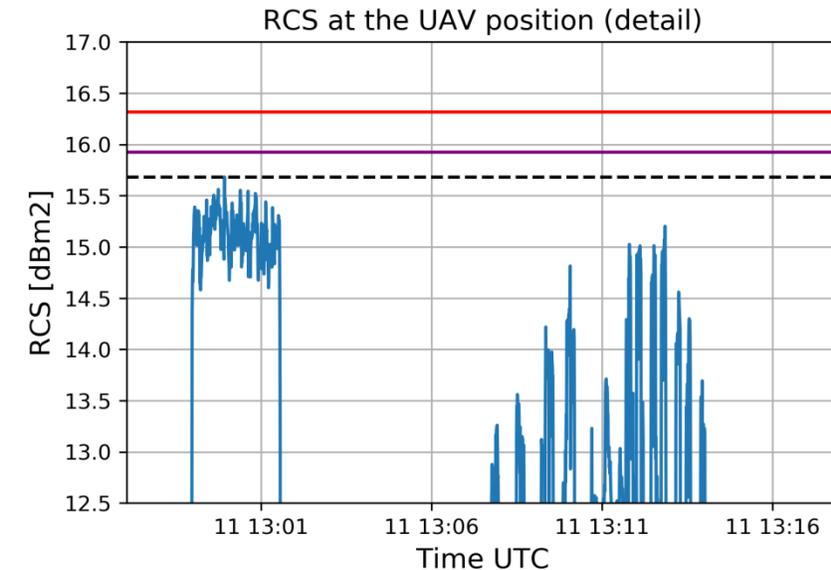
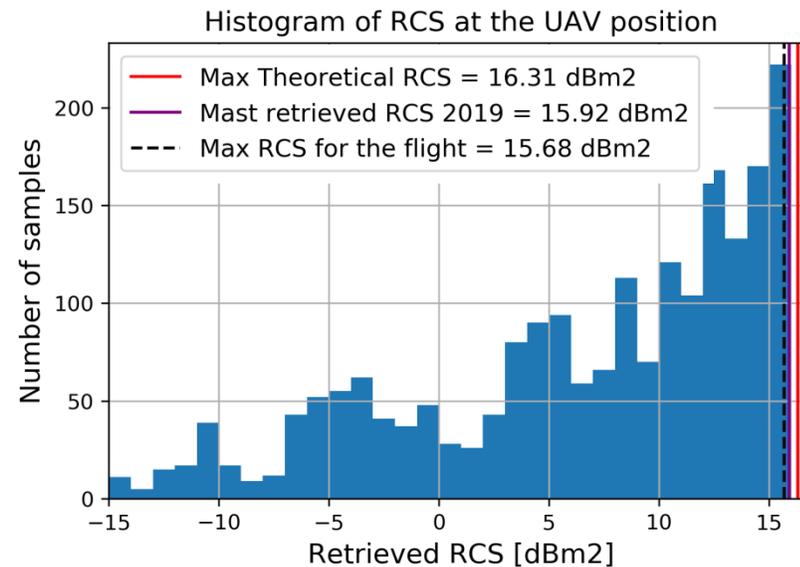
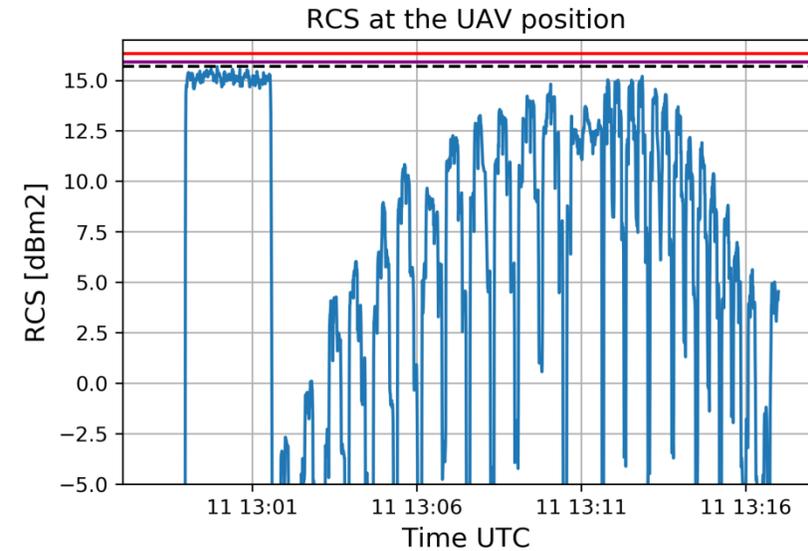
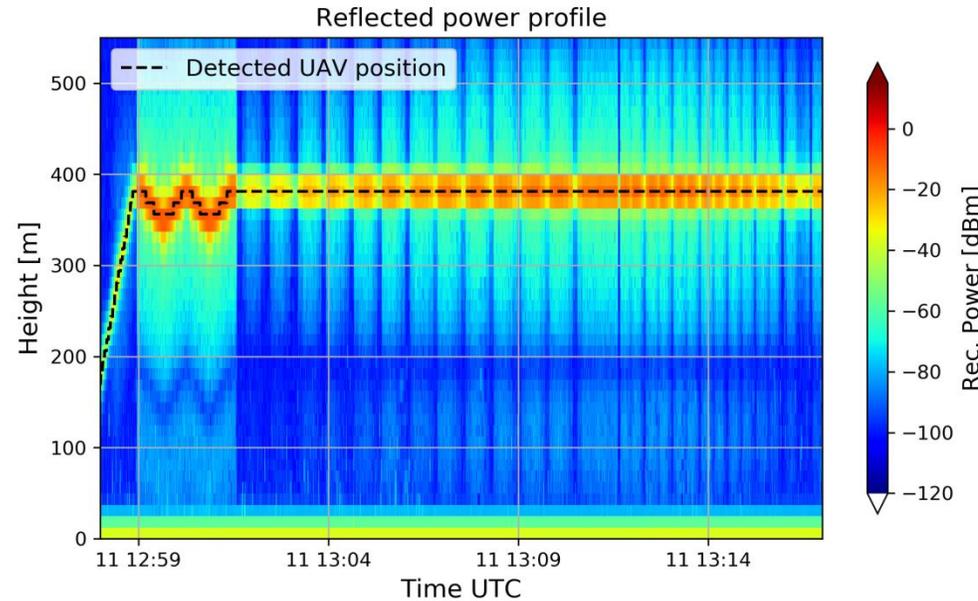
# Calibration with UAV and corner reflectors

- UAV flies with the corner reflector above a vertically pointing radar
- Tested with the BASTA-mini radar in 2019 calibration campaign
- Main constrain: minimum distance to the radar.
  - Saturation
  - Antenna overlap
  - Antenna near field
- The UAV flew ~400 m above the radar to avoid these issues (safe distance)



# RCS sampling of the 10 cm target: UAV flying 400 m above the radar

- RCS is retrieved using the 20 m mast calibration (best)
- Measured **RCS for the 10 cm target on the 10 m mast =  $15.9 \pm 0.9$  dBm<sup>2</sup>**
- **7 flights** provided a maximum observed **RCS =  $15.4 \pm 0.2$  dBm<sup>2</sup>** (range [15.1, 15.7])
- The method enables a consistent retrieval of the target RCS -> the setup can be used for calibration



## RCS sampling of the 10 cm target: Clutter

- Signal to clutter ratio (SCR) indicated the uncertainty introduced by reflections on objects other than the target
- The drone base was covered with absorbing material to reduce its RCS (clutter)
- SCR without absorber = 13.8 dB
  - Introduces  $[-2, +1.6]$  dB of uncertainty
- SCR with absorber = 19.0 dB
  - Introduces  $[-1.0, +0.9]$  dB of uncertainty



# UAV calibration with corner reflectors: conclusions

- The sampling of the 10 cm target on the UAV matches previous observations done on top of the 10 m mast
- The repeatability of the result indicates that this is a feasible calibration method
- Signal to clutter ratio (SCR) should be improved by a few dB.
  - 3 more dB of SCR would reduce uncertainty contrib. to  $\pm 0.7$  dB
  - Absorbing material shows promising results.
  - Bigger targets at farther distances are also an option



# Research and perspectives

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- Antenna pointing and alignment characterization must be improved (presentations of Lukas Pfitzenmaier et al., Matthias Bauer et al.)

# Cabauw Cloud Radar Calibration Campaign 2021

To be held in Cabauw, The Netherlands on October 2021

## Topics:

- Calibration tracking using disdrometers
- Testing of the Corner Reflector calibration technique on RPG Cloud Radars
- Closure study between corner reflector and calibration transfer methods
- Calibration transfer between different radar frequencies:
  - 1 RPG W band
  - 1 RPG W/Ka band
  - 1 BASTA-mini W band



Calendar of future activities

# Calendar

- Cabauw cloud radar calibration campaign 2021
- Implement disdrometer calibration tracking by 2022
  - Communicate disdrometer data by 2022
- Operational proof of concept of the calibration strategy by 2022
  - Calibrate 1-2 NF other than CCRES centers
- Calibrate ~5 NF per year by ~2024 (continuous operation)





## CCRES Calibration Strategy



# ACTRIS

## Microwave radiometer calibration

Bernhard Pospichal,  
Tobias Böck

*CCRES Workshop – September 21, 2021*



This project receives funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreements No 871115

# Ground-based microwave radiometry

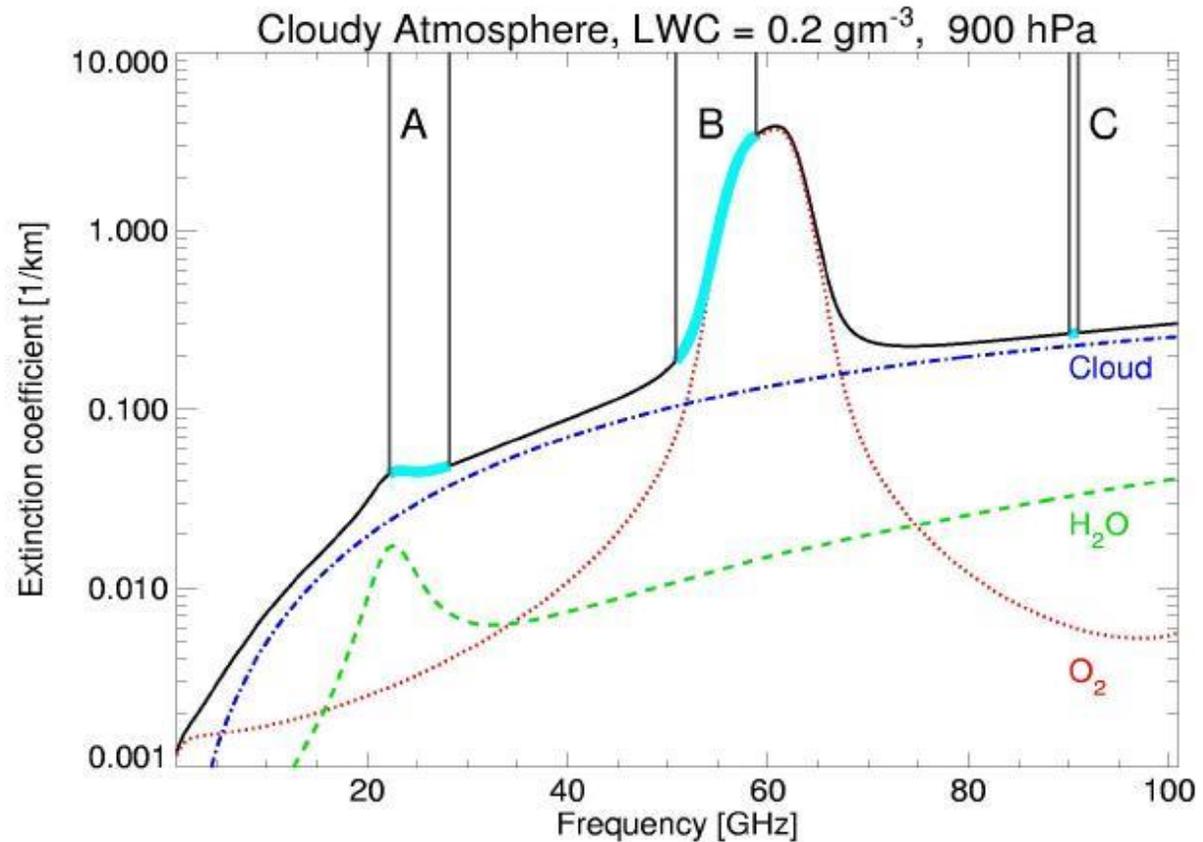


- Overview
- Microwave radiometer (MWR) introduction
- MWR calibration
- Calibration campaign Lindenberg May 2021

# What does a MWR „see“?

Measurement of downwelling radiation usually in one to three frequency ranges between 20-100 GHz (example RPG-HATPRO)

- A: 22.235 – 31.4 GHz, 7 channels on the upper wing of the water vapor line as well as window channels
- B: 51.26 – 58.0 GHz, 7 channels along the 60 GHz oxygen absorption complex
- Some radiometers have only one band, some measure also at higher frequencies (for low-humidity conditions)

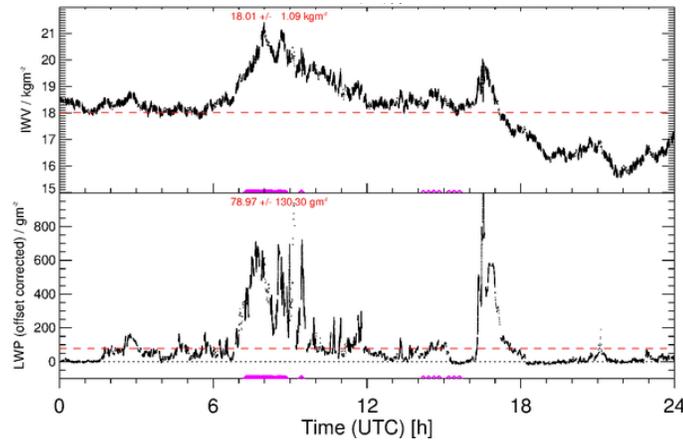


Measured radiances are expressed in „brightness temperature“



# What do we want to get from a MWR?

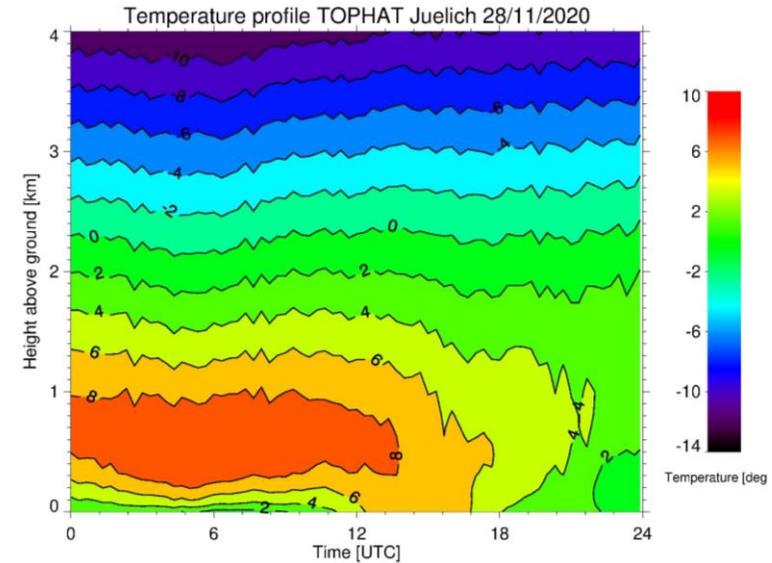
path-integrated **cloud liquid water (LWP)** and **water vapor (IWV)**



continuous data: resolution of seconds to minutes

low resolution **water vapor profile**, but excellent path-integrated values

**temperature profile** of the PBL, low resolution profile above



- level1: brightness temperatures (TB) → calibration dependent
- level2: atmospheric products → forward model and retrieval dependent

## Benefits

- Continuous long-term, unmanned observations on temporal scales down to seconds → fill gaps between radiosondes
- Measurements during both cloudy and clear air
- Commercial availability

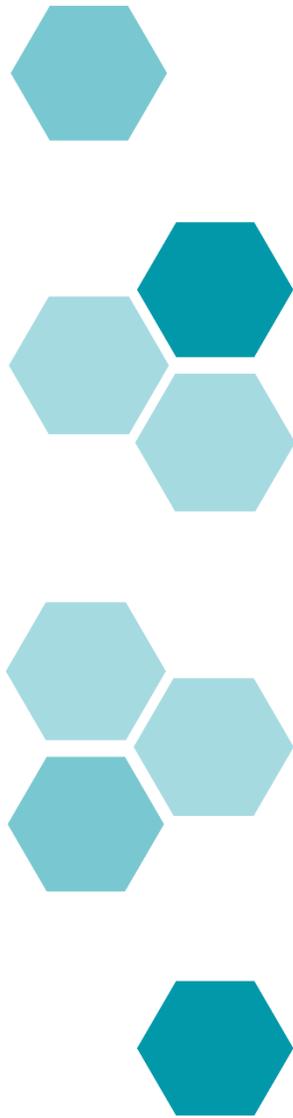
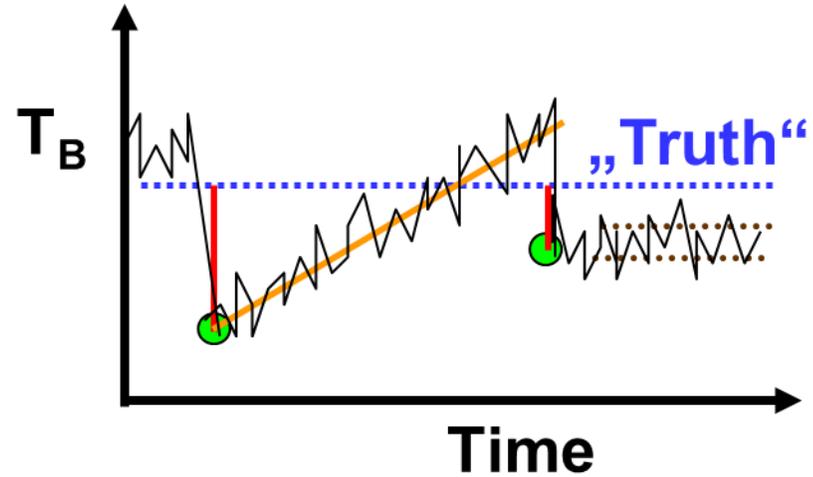
## Limitations/Challenges

- Limited vertical resolution (2-4 deg. of freedom), declines with height
- Coordinated networks
- Calibration
- Absorption modeling
- Automatic data quality control (QC) systems

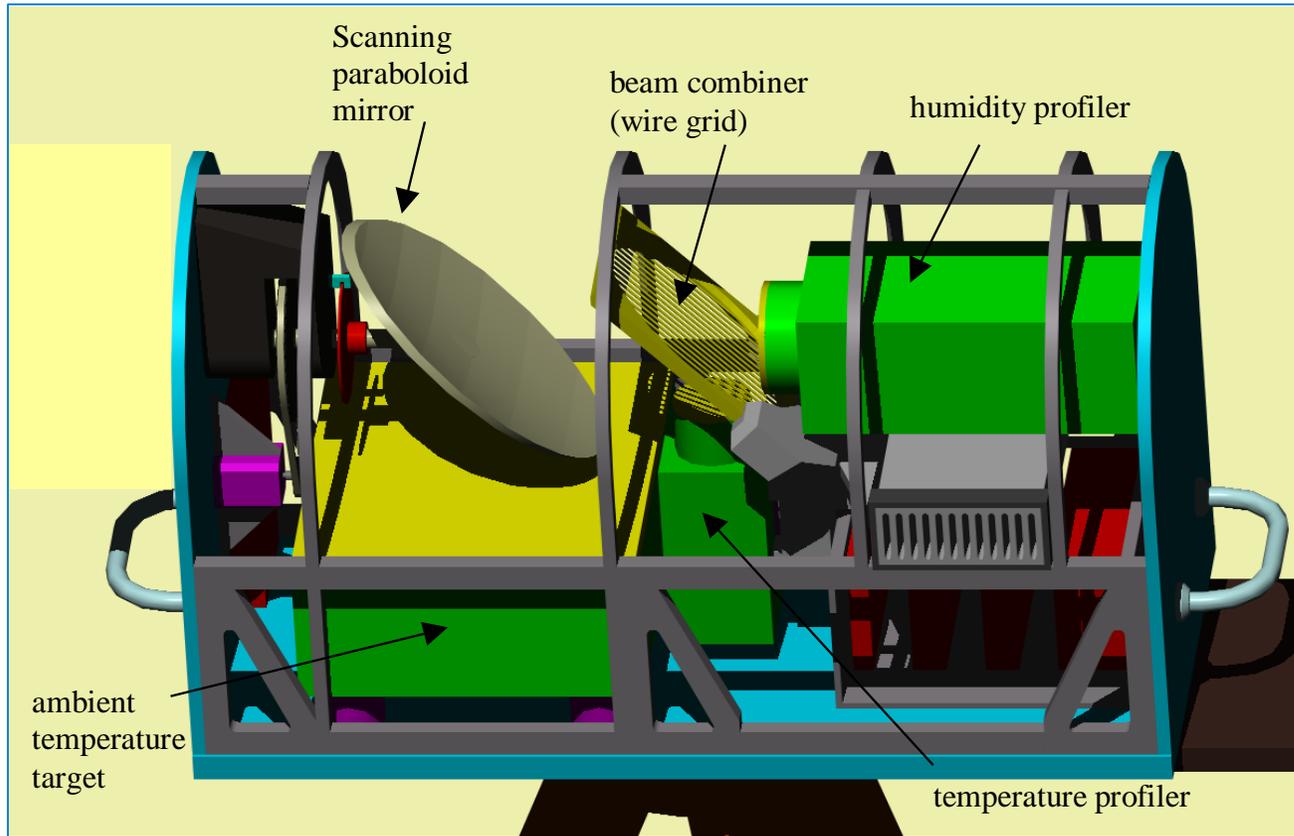
# Radiometer calibration

Sources for measurement uncertainties:

- Random errors:
  - Instrument sensitivity (signal-noise ratio, detection limit)
- Systematic errors:
  - Instrument stability (drifts in signals)
  - Absolute accuracy
- Retrieval uncertainties:
  - Non-representative data for retrieval training
  - Measurement process not modelled correctly (noise levels, etc.)
  - Forward model uncertainties



# MWR components (HATPRO)



# Radiometer formula

Detected receiver voltage has to be „translated“ into a brightness temperature. Relationship has to be determined with a calibration.

$$U_D = G \cdot T_{sys}^\alpha = G(T_R + T_A)^\alpha$$

$T_{sys}$  System “noise“ temperature

$T_R$  Receiver noise temperature (all instrumental noise sources combined)

$T_A$  antenna temperature  
(atmospheric source)

$G$  Gain [V/K] (proportionality factor)

$\alpha$  Non-linearity factor



For calibration purposes, a stable noise diode can be switched on to provide a constant additional signal ( $T_N$ )

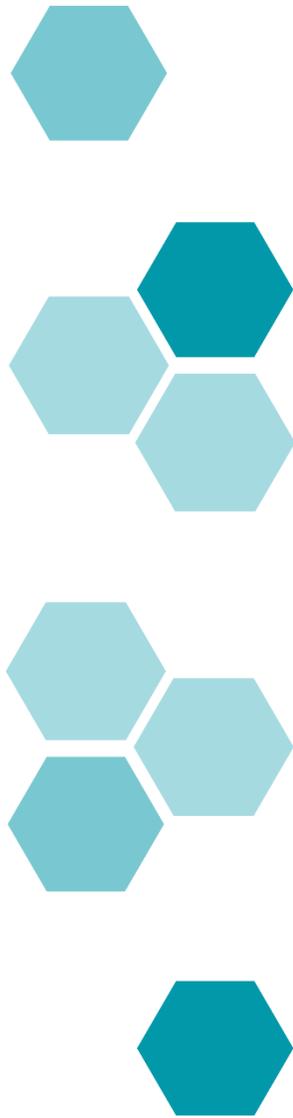
# Radiometer formula / automatic calibration

$$U_D = G \cdot T_{sys}^\alpha = G(T_R + T_A)^\alpha$$

## Unknowns:

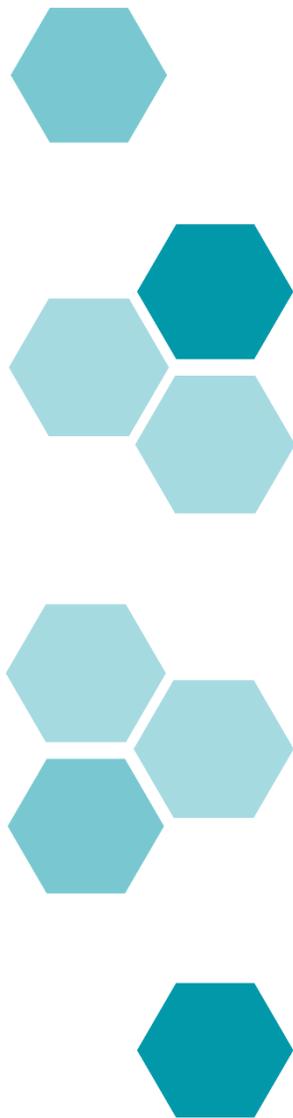
- G (Gain factor),
- $T_R$  (system noise = contribution to signal by components),
- $\alpha$  (non-linearity factor)

- G, and  $T_{sys}$  have to be regularly calibrated (minutes to seconds)
- For most radiometers, G is updated by looking at a blackbody at ambient temperature or using a noise diode signal ( $T_N$ ). For HATPRO G5, a stable noise diode is used that switches with a frequency of 50 Hz.
- $T_{sys}$  is updated by looking at blackbody targets at ambient temperature (every 5-10 minutes)
- The frequency and integration time for automatic calibrations can be determined when defining a measurement (part of MWR SOPs in ACTRIS)
- $\alpha$ , and  $T_N$  are stable over long-term (months) and are only updated during absolute calibrations



# Absolute radiometer calibration

- Absolute calibrations using liquid nitrogen ( $\text{LN}_2$ ) have to be performed every 6 months or after relocation of the instrument
- If possible, perform calibrations at low relative humidity conditions ( $\text{RH} < 70\%$ ) to reduce the likelihood of condensation
- Before and after a calibration take a short measurement sample at cold load in order to estimate the drift/offset since the last calibration
- Do not refill liquid nitrogen too often, in order to avoid oxygen to be mixed into  $\text{LN}_2$  > causes change in boiling temperature and a wrong calibration. Same is valid for using non-pure  $\text{LN}_2$



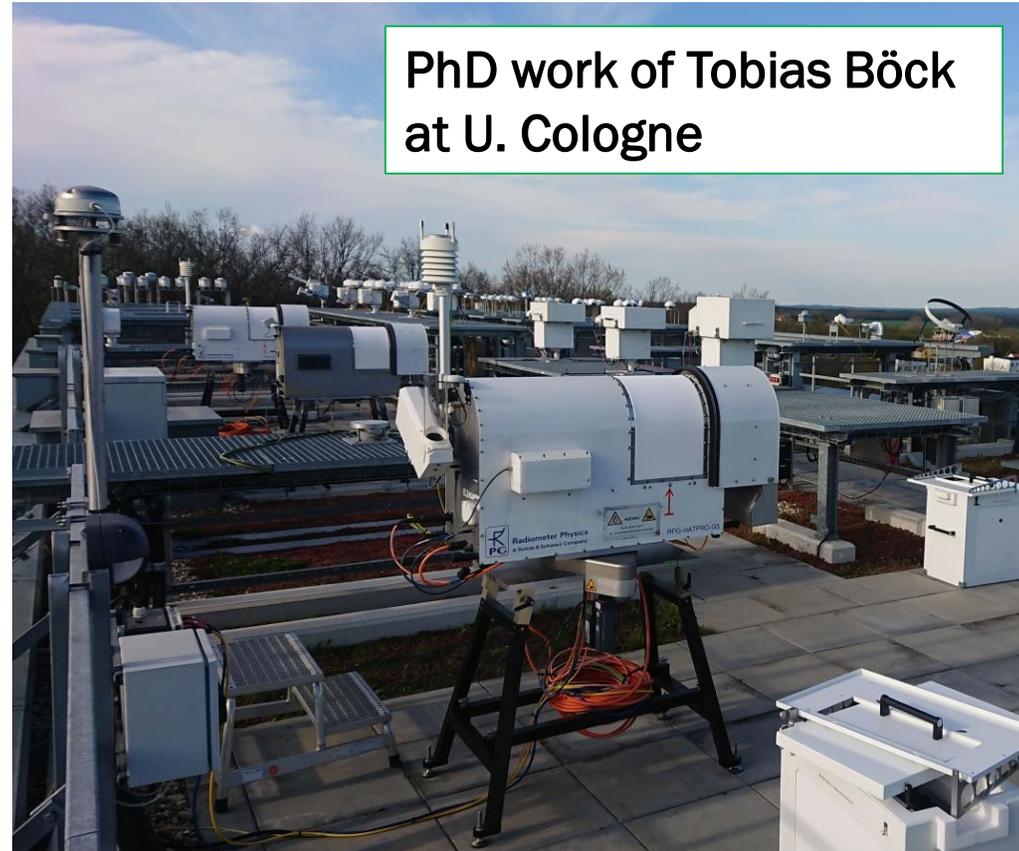
# Absolute radiometer calibration

- Impressions from different calibration intercomparison campaigns  
Lindenberg 2014, 2021  
Meckenheim 2015  
Jülich 2019

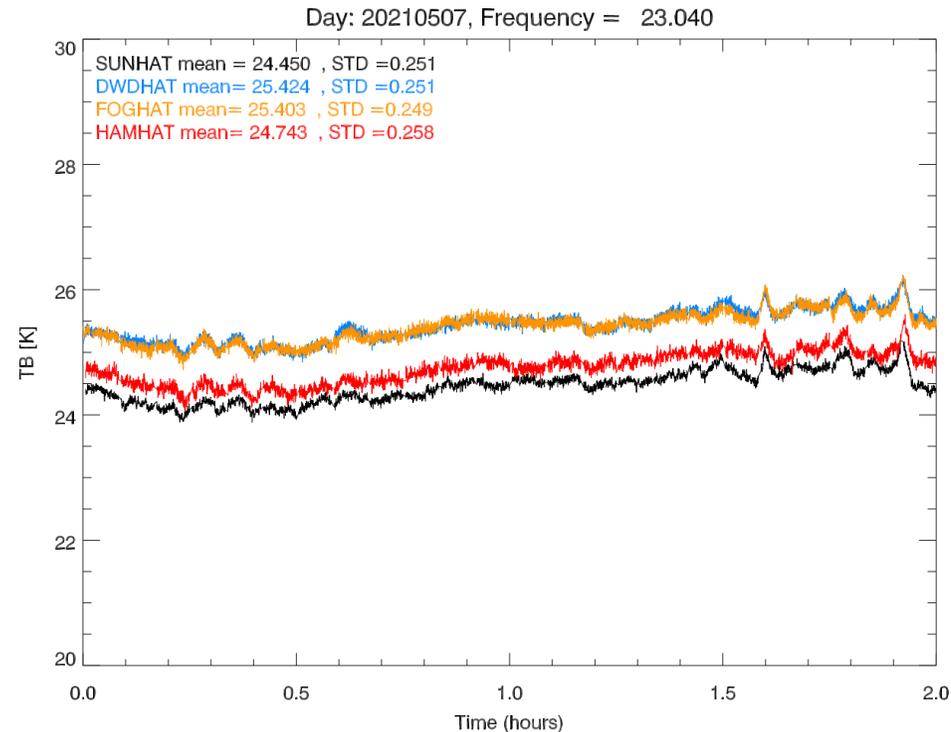
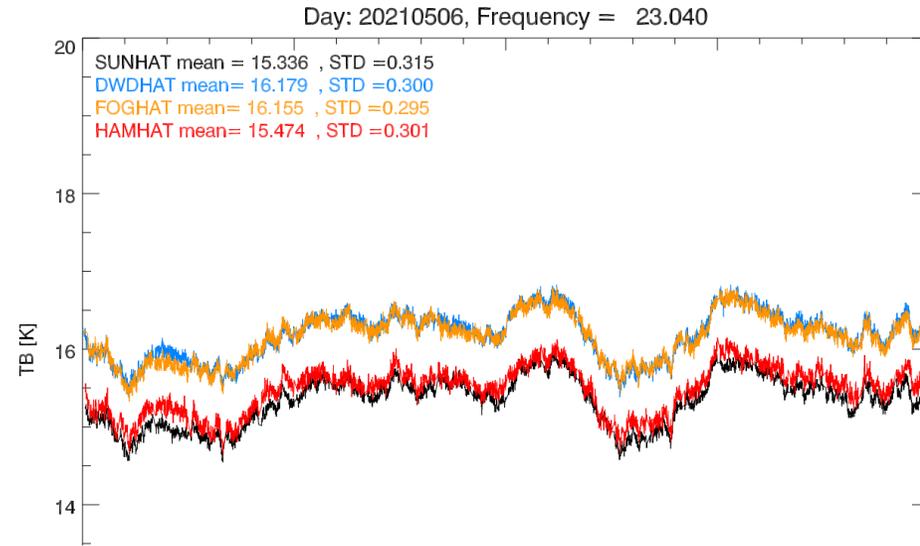
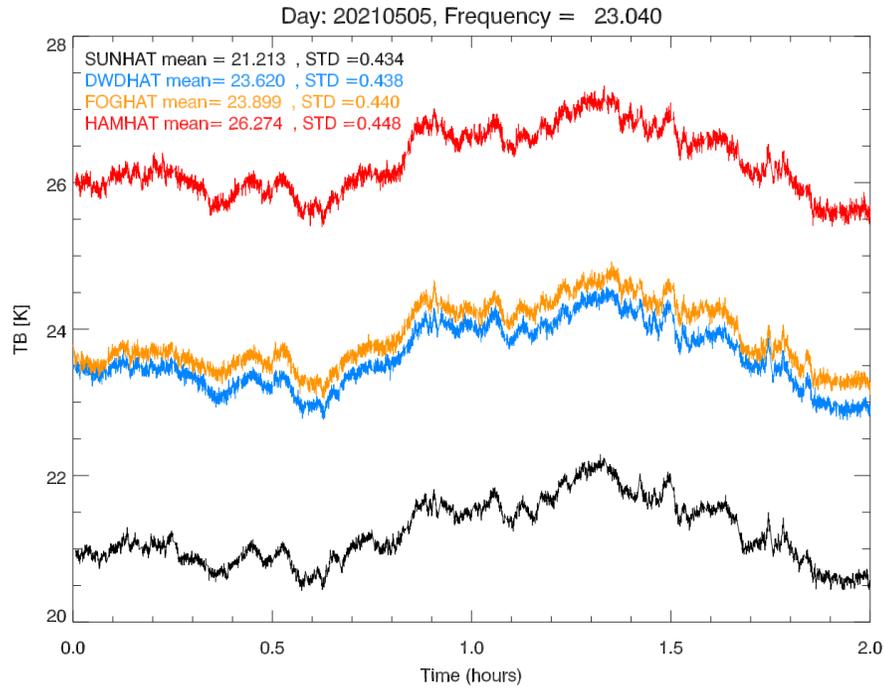


# New results from calibration Campaign in Lindenberg

- 4 HATPROs (FOGHAT G5, DWDHAT G5, SUNHAT G2, HAMHAT G2)
- Calibration campaign:
  - Calibrate all 3 HATPROs on the roof in a row for **three times** each with the standard procedure
  - **Zenith** measurements in between
  - 4<sup>th</sup> HATPRO nearby gets calibrated only once and then always measures zenith; is used as a reference later
    - First calibration round: May 5, 2021
    - Second and third calibration round: May 6, 2021
- Comparisons of zenith and blackbody measurements (to find out **biases, drifts/leaps, noise levels, repeatability**)

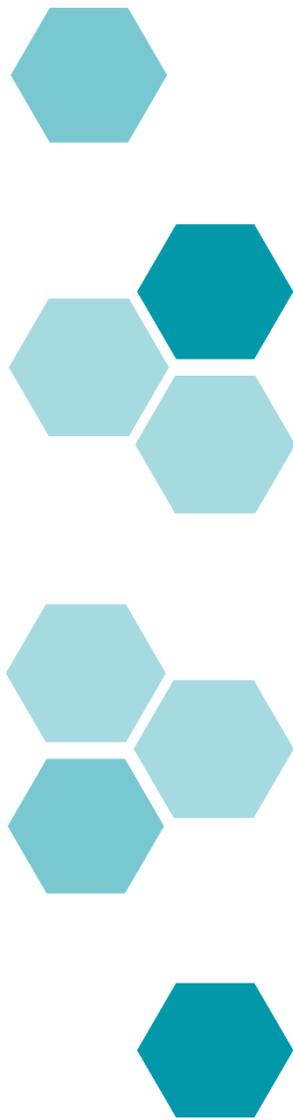


# Zenith $T_B$ comparisons before/after calibration



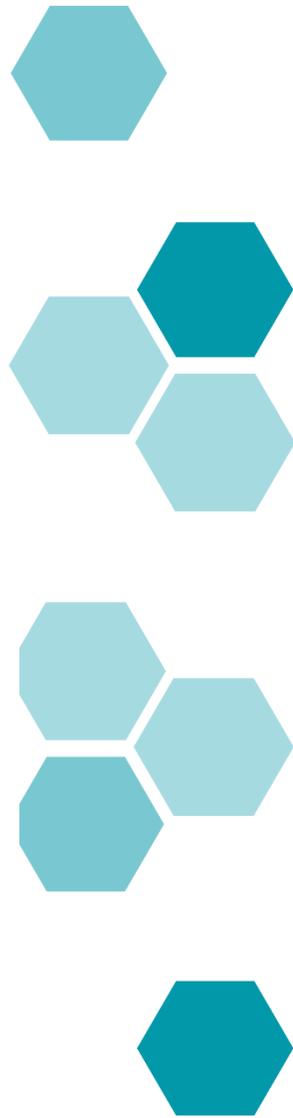
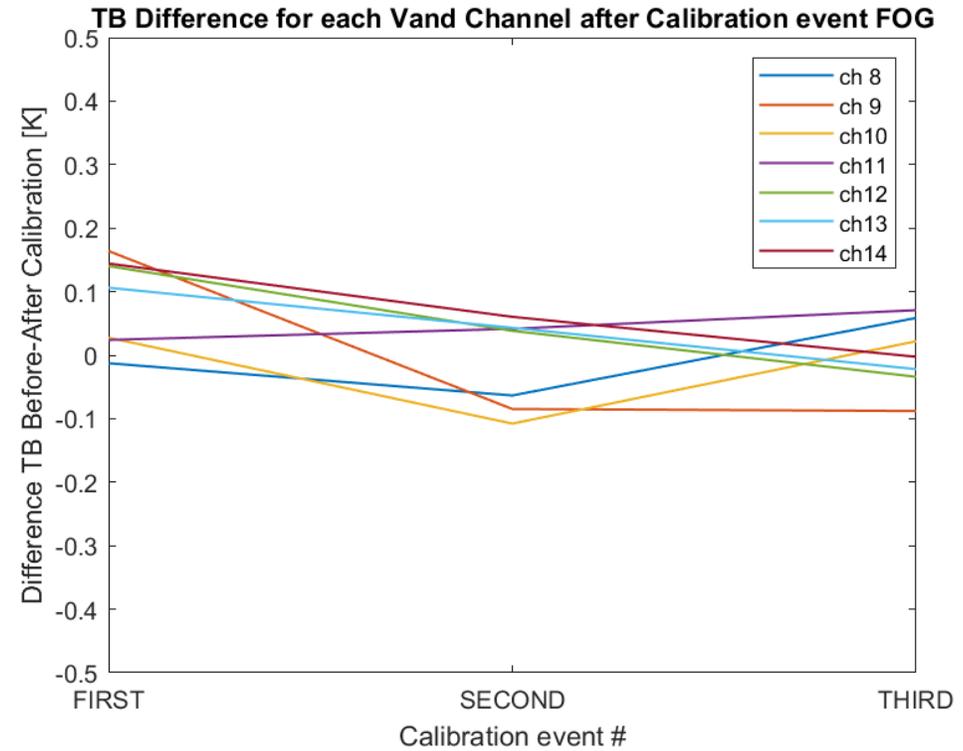
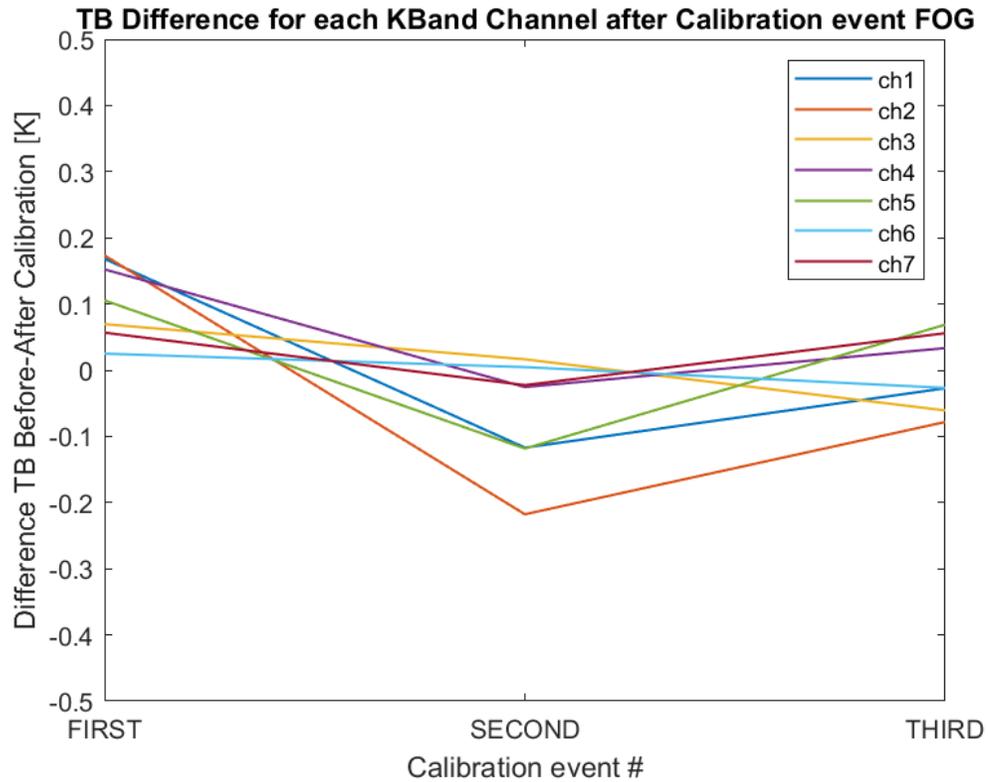
2 hours of clear sky zenith observations before the first calibration (left) and after calibrations (right).

Blue and yellow: G5 (new generation) HATPROs, red and black G1/G2 (>10 years old)

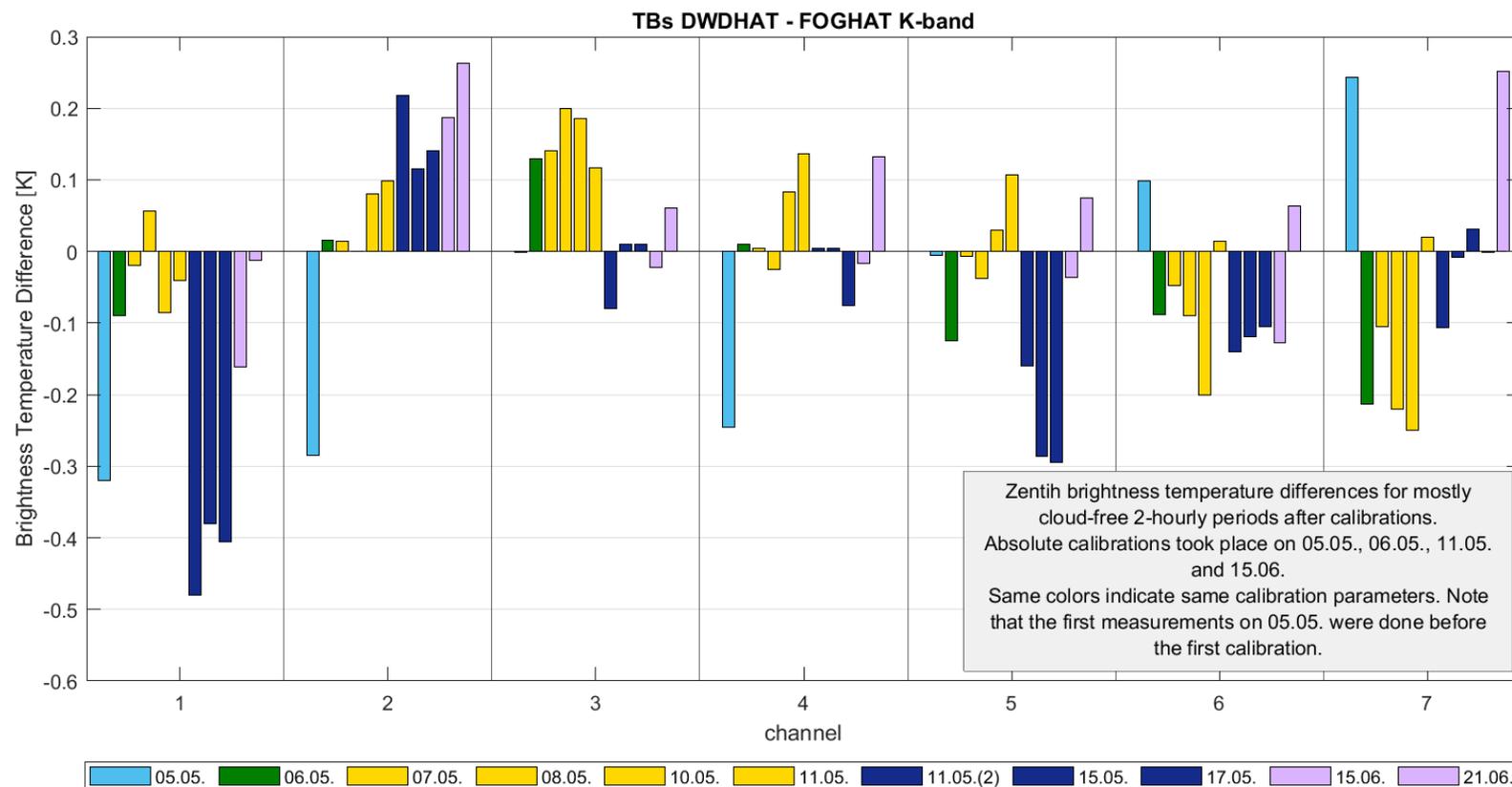


# Repeatability of absolute calibrations

- Look at cold calibration target before and after calibration and determine difference (mean of 3 min observations)

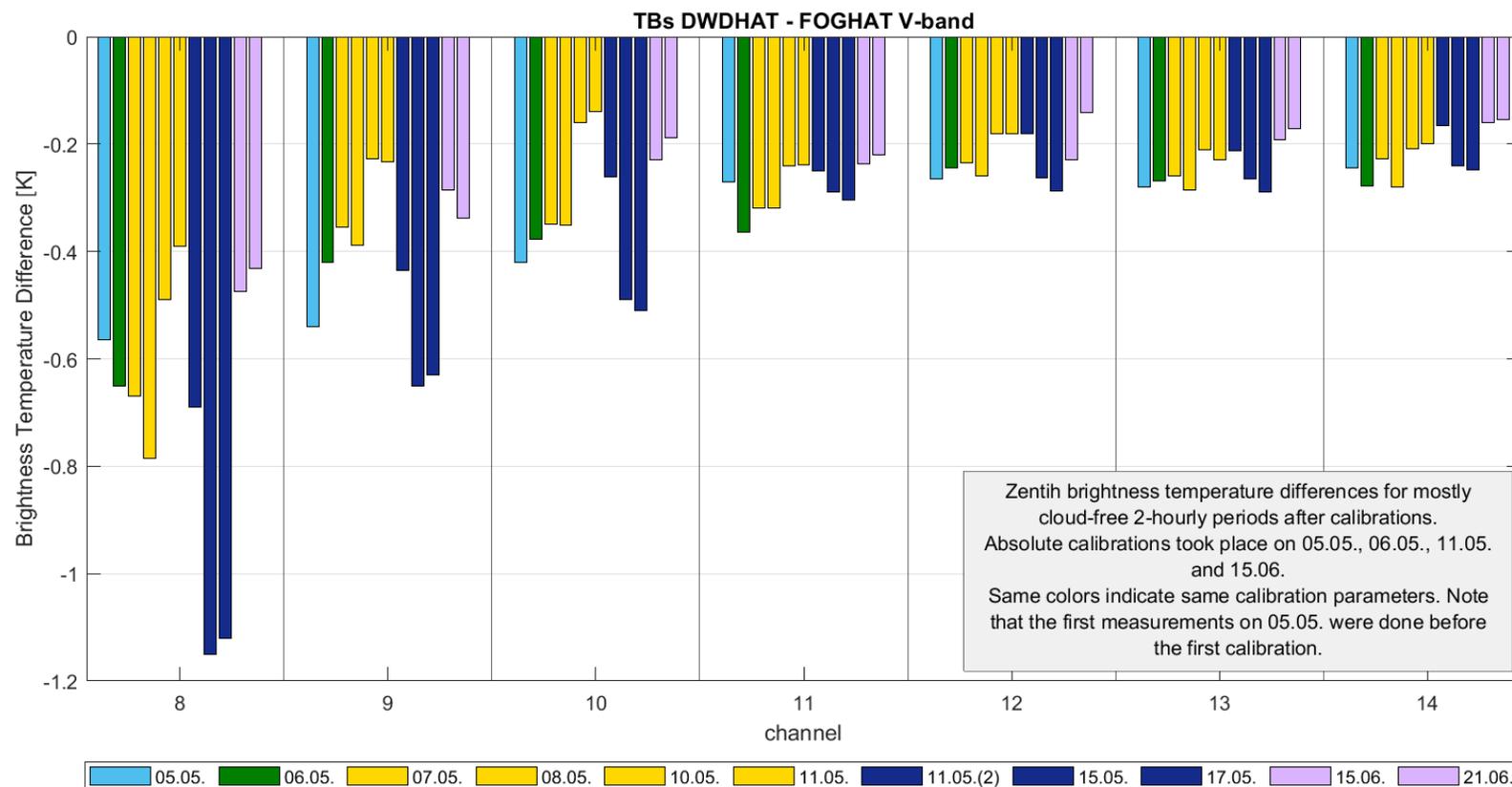


# T<sub>B</sub> Biases/Offsets via zenith comparisons



→ Two co-located G5 HATPROs looking zenith during several 2 hour clear-sky periods

# $T_B$ Biases/Offsets via zenith comparisons

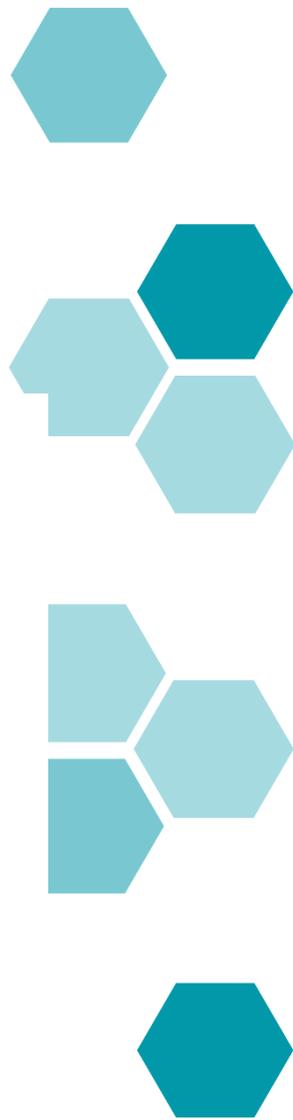
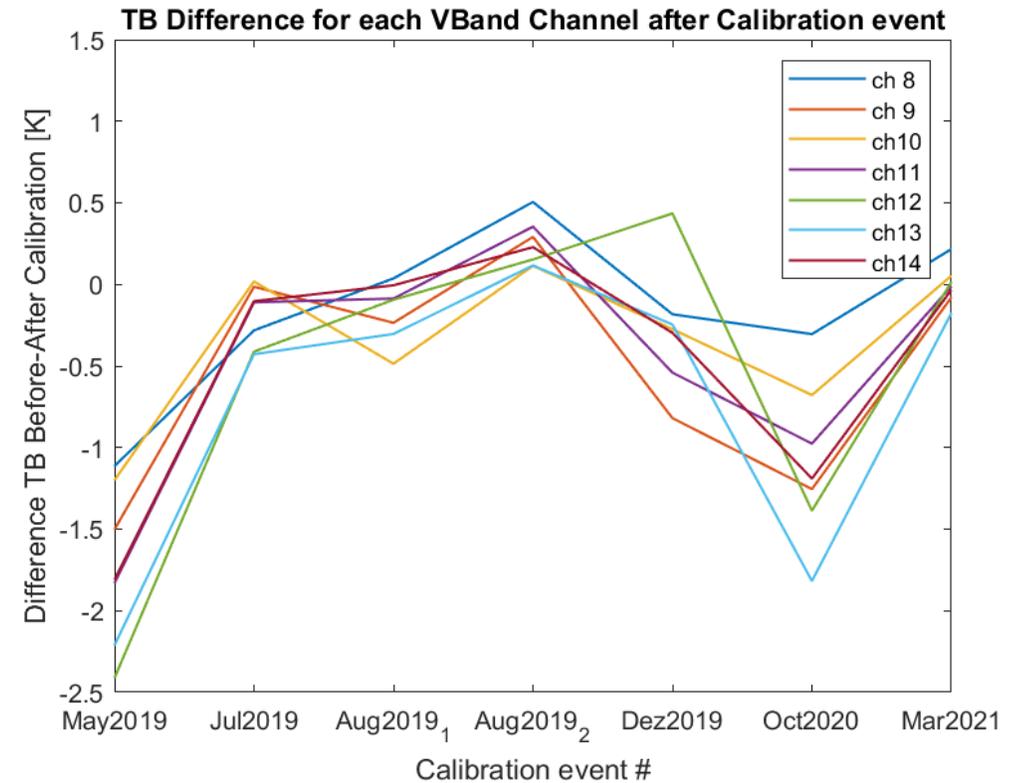
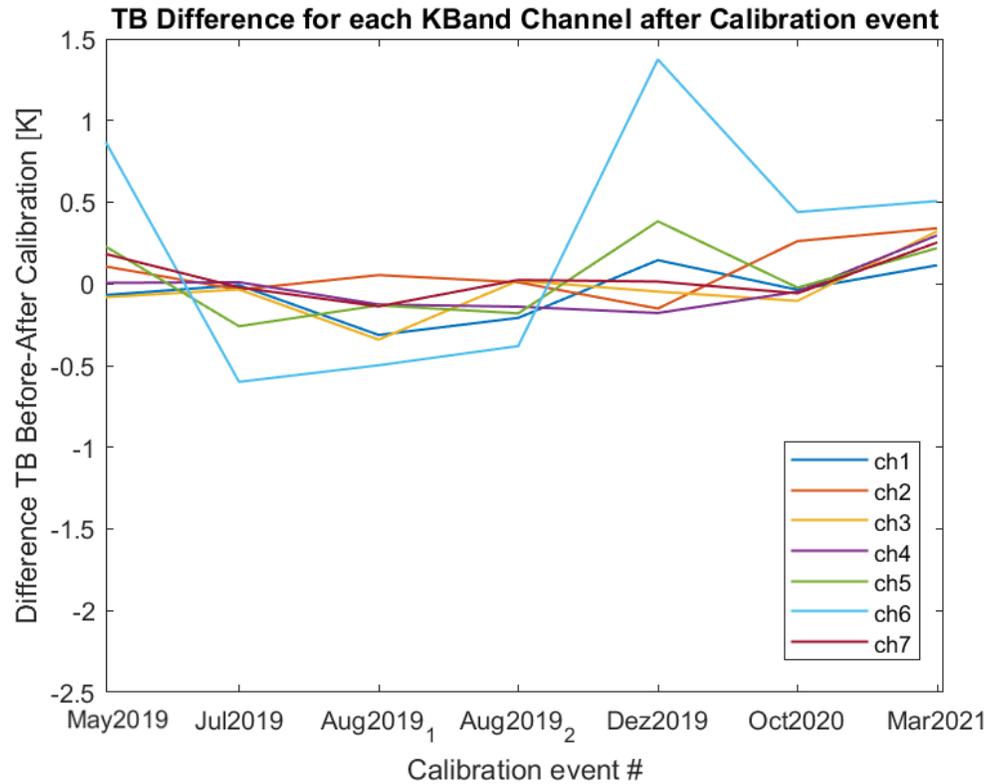


→ Biases/Offsets can be reduced by better LN2 calibrations, however some systematic differences remain, especially in V-Band

→ All errors are relative, there is no perfect absolute reference

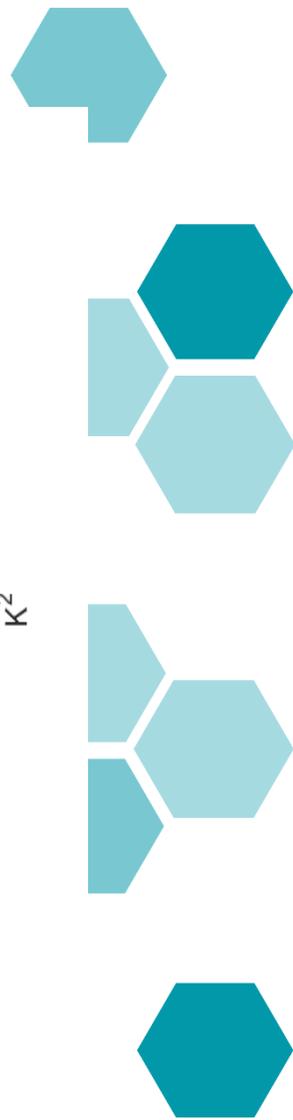
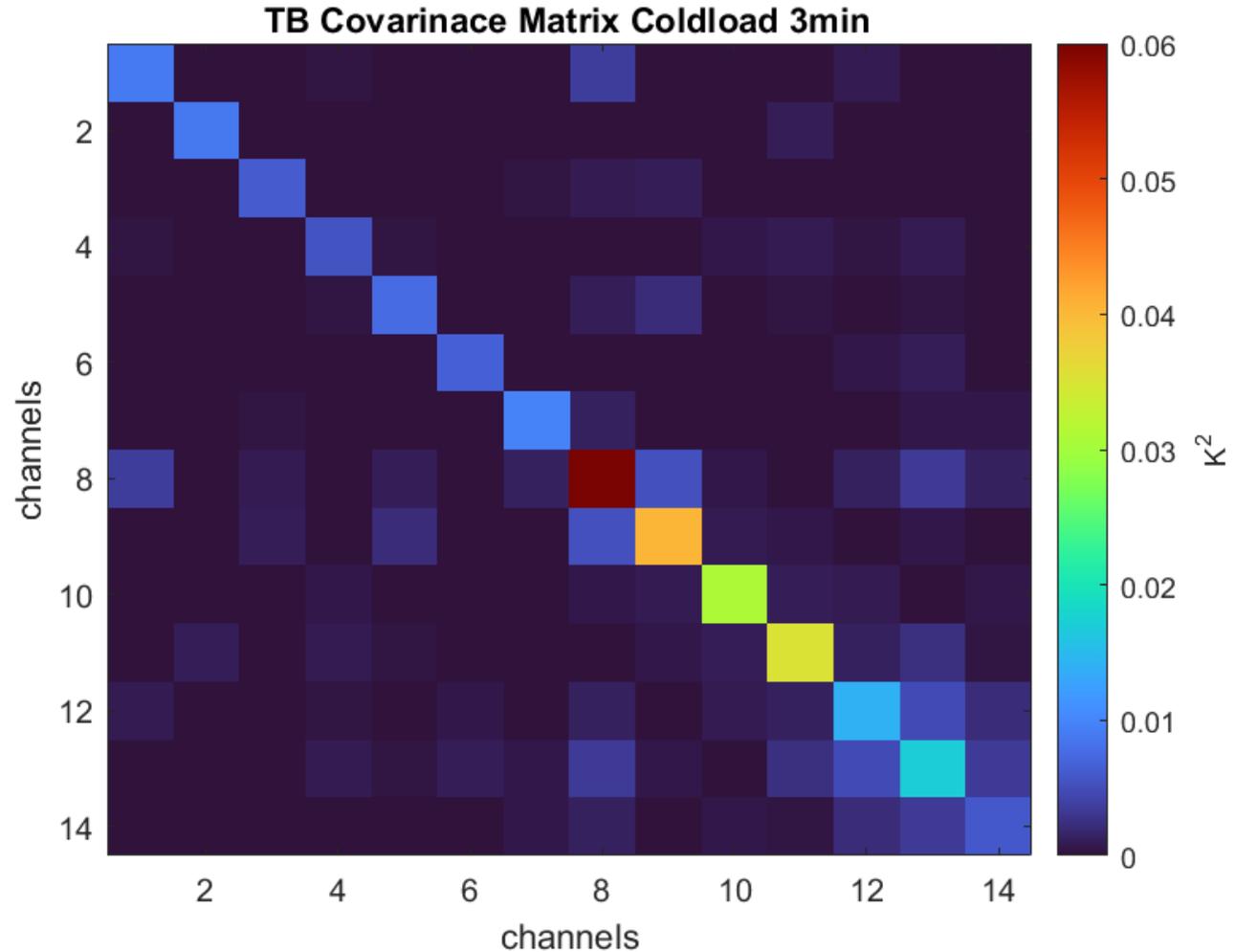
# Long-term drifts

- Calculated by looking at brightness temperature differences at one radiometer (TOPHAT) at JOYCE. Calibration frequency between 2 and 10 months. Can be determined at every LN2 calibration > will be monitored in ACTRIS



# Channel covariances

- **Correlated radiometric noise** for all 14 channels (shows dependency of these channels)
- The radiometric noise for a single channel can be determined by calculating the variance when looking on a stable blackbody target
- Highly correlated channels are of little use for retrievals and data assimilations as they don't contain additional information



# Summary of uncertainties

Type of Error	Typical Error Values K-band	Typical Error Values V-band	Determined via	Error influenced by handling?	How to reduce error?
Biases/Offsets	usually $\leq 0.3$ K (up to 0.48 K)	usually $\leq 0.5$ K (up to 1.1 K)	Zenith measurement differences between two MWRs	yes	Quality of calibration
Drifts (over 6 months)	usually $\leq 0.3$ K (up to 0.6 K)	usually $\leq 0.8$ K (up to 1.3 K)	Leaps at coldload after calibration	no	Frequency of calibration
Calibration Repeatability	$\leq 0.12$ K	$\leq 0.24$ K	Leaps to zenith reference measurements after two immediate consecutive calibrations	yes	Quality of calibration
Noise Levels (coldload – hotload) (1s)	$\leq 0.11$ K – 0.18 K	$\leq 0.27$ K – 0.35 K	Standard deviation of hot/coldload observations	no	Not possible, instrument specific



# HATPRO calibration strategy in ACTRIS

- Common standards for automatic calibration depending on instrument type and generation (MWR SOPs)
- Absolute calibration to be performed every 6 months
- Continuous performance monitoring at ACTRIS data centre
  - housekeeping parameters
  - calibration log-files
  - O-B statistics with model
  - spectral consistency checks



may determine and change  
calibration intervals

- HATPRO software will provide files with brightness temperatures during calibration, as well as covariance matrices for calibration and performance monitoring
- New generation of calibration targets for HATPRO (since 2016) allows more accurate calibration > new further developments at RPG





# ACTRIS

**Thanks for your attention!**

*CCRES Workshop – September 21, 2021*



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