



# 1 **TemDeep: A Self-Supervised Framework for Temporal Downscaling** 2 **of Atmospheric Fields at Arbitrary Time Resolutions**

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## 7 **Abstract**

8 Numerical forecast products with high temporal resolution are crucial tools in atmospheric studies,  
9 allowing for accurate identification of rapid transitions and subtle changes that may be missed by lower-resolution  
10 data. However, the acquisition of high-resolution data is limited due to excessive computational demands and  
11 substantial storage needs in numerical models. Current deep learning methods for statistical downscaling still require  
12 massive ground truth with high temporal resolution for model training. In this paper, we present a self-supervised  
13 framework for downscaling atmospheric variables at arbitrary time resolutions by imposing a temporal coherence  
14 constraint. Firstly, we construct an encoder-decoder structured temporal downscaling network, and then pretrain this  
15 downscaling network on a subset of data that exhibits rapid transitions and is filtered out based on a composite  
16 index. Subsequently, this pretrained network is utilized to downscale the fields from adjacent time periods and  
17 generate the field at the middle time point. By leveraging the temporal coherence inherent in meteorological  
18 variables, the network is further trained based on the difference between the generated field and the actual middle  
19 field. To track the evolving trends in meteorological system movements, a flow estimation module is designed to  
20 assist with generating interpolated fields. Results show that our method can accurately recover evolution details  
21 superior to other methods, reaching 53.7% in the restoration rate on the test set. In addition, to avoid generating  
22 abnormal values and guide the model out of local optima, two regularization terms are integrated into the loss  
23 function to enforce spatial and temporal continuity, which further improves the performance by 7.6%.

## 24 **1 Introduction**

25 In the field of meteorology, temporal downscaling refers to the enrichment of time-series data by filling in  
26 the time gaps in observations or numerical products, which can provide a more continuous and comprehensive  
27 understanding of geophysical phenomena. Temporal downscaling in atmospheric fields holds considerable  
28 importance, given its extensive applications across a wide range of domains. In climate research, precise temporal  
29 interpolation plays a vital role in understanding long-term climate variations and assessing the impacts of climate  
30 change (Hawkins and Sutton, 2011; Michel et al., 2021; Papalexiou et al., 2018). By enriching historical climate  
31 records with temporally enhanced data, researchers gain a more detailed depiction of past climatic events (Barboza  
32 et al., 2022; Neukom et al., 2019). For example, the analysis of high-resolution data has revealed the relationship  
33 between global temperature rise and the frequency and intensity of extreme weather events, such as heatwaves and  
34 heavy rainfall (Kajbaf et al., 2022; Seneviratne et al., 2012). In the field of weather forecasting, accurate temporal  
35 downscaling significantly enhances the quality of short-term weather predictions (McGovern et al., 2017; Requena  
36 et al., 2021). Filling gaps between discrete atmospheric observations allows for precise tracking and prediction of  
37 various meteorological phenomena (Dong et al., 2013). For instance, the ability to capture rapid changes in wind  
38 patterns using high-resolution temporal data enables more accurate forecasting of severe storms, hurricanes, and  
39 their paths. This information is critical for issuing timely warnings, facilitating evacuations, and minimizing the  
40 potential damage caused by such weather events (Raymond et al., 2017). Furthermore, high-resolution time-series  
41 data aids in optimizing agricultural practices, optimizing energy production from renewable sources, and improving  
42 transportation planning by considering detailed weather patterns (Lawrimore et al., 2011; Lobell and Asseng, 2017).

43 Current methods for temporally downscaling atmospheric fields mainly fall into two categories: dynamical  
44 downscaling and statistical downscaling. Starting from a specific initial condition, dynamical downscaling methods  
45 can interpolate or extrapolate atmospheric fields to a finer time scale by integrating governing equations over time.  
46 Early pioneering work by Lorenz (1963) established the basic framework of using governing equations of fluid

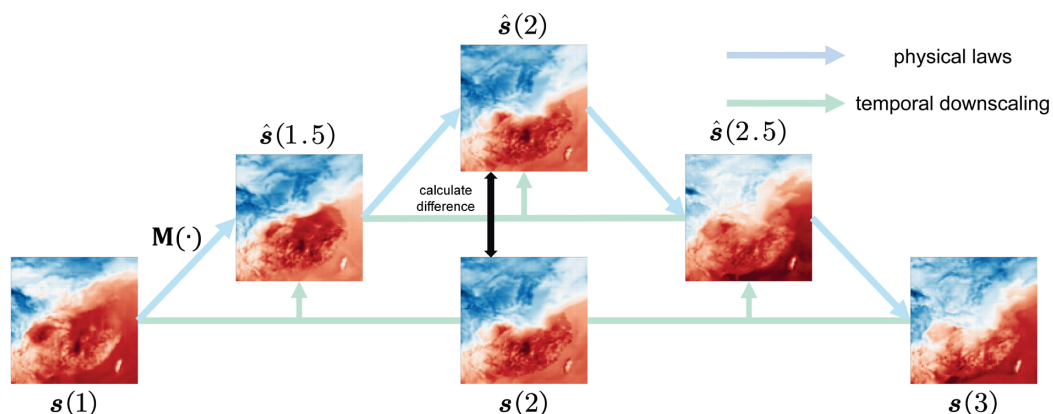


47 dynamics and thermodynamics to predict future atmospheric states. Since then, models such as the Weather  
48 Research and Forecasting (WRF) model (Skamarock et al., 2008) and the Community Earth System Model (CESM)  
49 (Hurrell et al., 2013) have been developed, incorporating advanced physical parameterizations and data assimilation  
50 techniques. These models have been widely used in producing high-temporal-resolution datasets, such as the  
51 European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts' Integrated Forecast System (ECMWF IFS) updates (Bauer  
52 et al., 2015) and the High-Resolution Rapid Refresh (HRRR) forecasts (Benjamin et al., 2016). However, the  
53 computational expense of these models is a significant barrier, especially for high-resolution, long-term, or global-  
54 scale studies (Maraun, 2010). In addition, these models require highly accurate initial conditions. Studies by Lorenz  
55 (1969) and Palmer et al. (2005) demonstrate how uncertainties in initial conditions and model parameters can lead to  
56 significant prediction errors over time, referred to as the 'butterfly effect'. Most reanalysis products provide  
57 temporal resolution on the order of hours to days, which may not be sufficient for applications requiring finer details  
58 (Dee et al., 2011).

59 The limitations of dynamical downscaling methods have prompted research into statistical alternatives, as  
60 they are computationally less expensive and can be easily applied across different spatial and temporal scales  
61 (Fowler et al., 2007). These methods, often employing regression techniques or machine learning algorithms, aim to  
62 identify and exploit statistical relationships between low-resolution and high-resolution data, such as weather  
63 generators (Gutmann et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2012), naïve (Chen et al., 2011; Jia-hong, 2006) and autocorrelation  
64 (Mendes and Marengo, 2010). However, as discussed by Maraun (2010), these methods often assume linear or local  
65 relationships in consecutive fields and may oversimplify complex atmospheric dynamics.

66 In recent years, deep learning has been widely applied to meteorology for their potentials to extract  
67 complex patterns from large amounts of data (Reichstein et al., 2019). For example, Kajbaf et al. (2022) conducted  
68 temporal downscaling with artificial neural networks on precipitation time-series with a 3-hour time step. However,  
69 deep learning applications in meteorology so far have generally relied on supervised learning, requiring large  
70 amounts of high-resolution ground truth data for training, which could be difficult to acquire due to limited  
71 observation intervals, excessive computational demands and high cost of data restoration (Bolton and Zanna, 2019).

72 In summary, although advancements have been made in temporal downscaling, there still exists significant  
73 demands for methods that can provide high temporal resolution with better physical consistency, improved  
74 computational efficiency and most importantly, less reliance on high-resolution ground truth data. This motivates  
75 our study, which aims to explore self-supervised learning as a potential solution to these challenges. As a form of  
76 unsupervised learning, self-supervised learning is a machine learning method that does not rely on supervision but  
77 leverages supervisory signals from the structure or properties inherent in data to train deep neural networks (Liu et  
78 al., 2020). This approach can leverage vast amounts of unlabeled data for training, thereby significantly enhancing  
79 the model's generalization capabilities. It has been applied in diverse fields, including meteorology science (Eldele  
80 et al., 2022; Pang et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022).



81  $s(1)$   $s(2)$   $s(3)$   
82 **Figure 1. Illustration of time-evolving atmospheric fields.** The green arrows represent the evolutions of an  
83 atmospheric field guided by physical laws with temporal coherence. The blue arrows represent the outputs of a  
84 temporal downscaling model, which seeks to approximate the physics-guided evolutions.



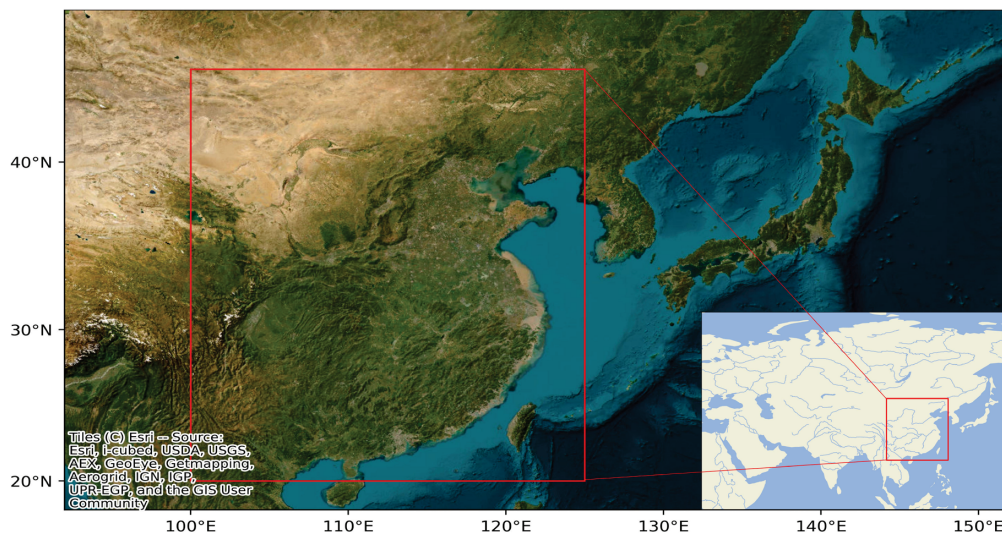
85 In fact, although atmospheric variables do not change linearly at different time steps, it is commonly  
86 believed that their evolutions are consistently guided by the same physical laws and thus exhibit temporal coherence  
87 over time (Lorenz, 1969). In other words, for the state  $\mathbf{s}(t)$  of any atmospheric variable at any time  $t$ , it will  
88 transition from  $\mathbf{s}(t-1)$  to  $\mathbf{s}(t)$  following the mapping  $\mathbf{P}$  guided by a set of physical laws, expressed as  
89  $\mathbf{P}:\mathbf{s}(t-1) \rightarrow \mathbf{s}(t)$ . Based on this invariant mapping constraint, time-series data themselves can be used as  
90 supervision information to train the deep learning model. To be specific, at any moment  $t$ ,  $\mathbf{s}(t)$  can be taken as the  
91 truth value to train the mapping relationship from  $\mathbf{s}(t-1)$  to  $\mathbf{s}(t)$ . As shown in the example in Fig. 1, for three  
92 consecutive fields  $\mathbf{s}(1)$ ,  $\mathbf{s}(2)$  and  $\mathbf{s}(3)$  with an interval of 1 hour, if the goal is to train a downscaling model  $\mathbf{M}$   
93 to fill the gaps at 1.5h and 2.5h and obtain  $\hat{\mathbf{s}}(1.5) = \mathbf{M}(\mathbf{s}(1), \mathbf{s}(2))$ ,  $\hat{\mathbf{s}}(2.5) = \mathbf{M}(\mathbf{s}(2), \mathbf{s}(3))$ , after  
94 generating  $\hat{\mathbf{s}}(2) = \mathbf{M}(\hat{\mathbf{s}}(1.5), \hat{\mathbf{s}}(2.5))$ , the existing  $\mathbf{s}(2)$  can serve as supervision and the errors between  
95  $\hat{\mathbf{s}}(2)$  and  $\mathbf{s}(2)$  be utilized as loss to train  $\mathbf{M}$ . Therefore, it is clear that continuous atmospheric variables  
96 inherently contain sufficient information, which can be utilized as supervision for self-supervised temporal  
97 downscaling.

98 In light of this consideration, we present TemDeep, the first self-supervised framework for downscaling  
99 atmospheric fields at arbitrary Temporal resolutions based on Deep learning. This framework addresses this issue by  
100 imposing a temporal coherence constraint across time-series fields, which means multiple consecutive fields  
101 themselves are leveraged as supervision information to train the model. Firstly, we construct an encoder-decoder  
102 structured temporal downscaling network, which is capable of performing interpolation at any resolution (see  
103 Section 3.5), and pretrain this downscaling network by designing a composite index to filter out a subset of data with  
104 rapid changes (see Section 3.2). The pretraining stage allows the model to initially capture general patterns and  
105 features present in the atmospheric data. In the next step, we utilize this pretrained model to downscale the fields  
106 from adjacent time periods and subsequently infer the field at the middle time point (see Section 3.3). Then, the  
107 model is further trained based on the difference between the inferred field and the actual middle field, according to  
108 the temporal coherence inherent in atmospheric variables. To effectively track the evolving trends in meteorological  
109 system movements, the network adopts a flow estimation module to assist with synthesizing fields. We have also  
110 designed a module to process terrain data, which enables the model to better perceive the prior information of the  
111 underlying surface. In experiments, our method demonstrates effectiveness in accurate downscaling various  
112 atmospheric variables at different temporal resolutions, reaching over 53.7% in the restoration rate, superior to other  
113 existing unsupervised methods.

114 The structure of this paper is as follows: Section 2 presents the details of the study area and data sources  
115 used in our study. In Section 3, we explain our methodology, specifically detailing the entire training process and  
116 network architecture. In Section 4, we conduct extensive experiments to assess the model's effectiveness. Finally,  
117 Section 5 summarizes the methods and contributions made in this study and points out possible future works and  
118 applications.

## 119 2 Study area and dataset

120 Our study focuses on the geographic area bounded by longitude 100°E to 125°E and latitude 20°N to 45°N  
121 with a spatial resolution of 0.25°×0.25° (see Fig. 2), and data for this region was downloaded from the European  
122 Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) ERA5 reanalysis dataset. The dataset comprising 87,660  
123 two-hour-interval samples from 2001 to 2020 is used as the training dataset. The testing dataset consists of 8,760  
124 one-hour-interval samples in 2021. To evaluate the generalization performance of the TemDeep method,  
125 experiments were conducted on three atmospheric variables: 2-meter air temperature ( $t2m$ ), 850hPa geopotential  
126 height ( $z$ ) and 850hPa relative humidity ( $rh$ ). Horizontal and vertical wind volumes are utilized to calculate wind  
127 speed as part of a composite index (see Section 3.2). Recognizing the influence of topography on local climate and  
128 weather patterns, we have also included terrain data with a resolution of 15km, sourced from NASA's Shuttle Radar  
129 Topography Mission (Hennig et al., 2001).

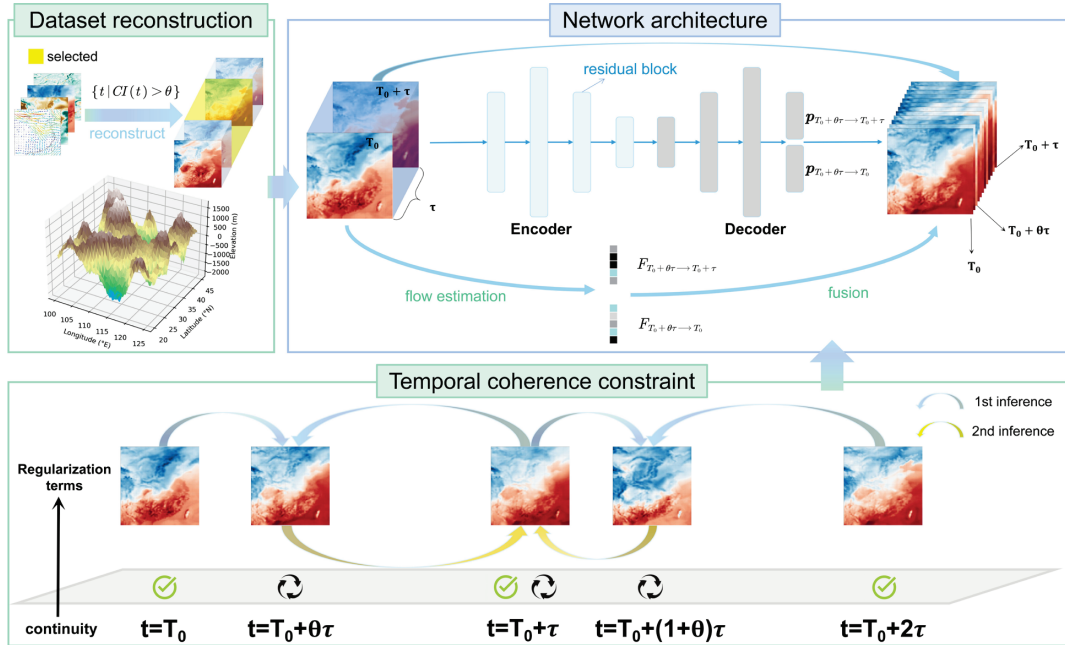


130  
131 **Figure 2. Satellite image of the study area.** The study area is outlined by the red rectangle. This area lies in a zone  
132 of climatic transition, including subtropical, temperate and cold temperate climate zones, and therefore is highly  
133 representative for climate change studies (base map imagery provided by Esri WorldImagery).

### 134 3 Methods

#### 135 3.1 Problem definition and overview

136 Given the initial atmospheric fields  $\{\mathbf{p}\}_T (\mathbf{p} \in \mathbb{R}^{n_x \times n_y})$  represented as a continuous gridded dataset with a  
137 temporal resolution of  $\tau$ , our goal is to achieve temporal downscaling at any resolution  $\theta\tau (\theta \in (0, 1), \mathbf{R}^+)$ .  
138 Here,  $n_x$  and  $n_y$  denote the number of grid points in the horizontal and vertical directions, respectively. That is, for  
139 a given period of weather process occurring between the interval  $[T_0, T_0 + \tau]$ , we aim to accurately generate the  
140 interpolated field at any time point  $T_0 + \theta\tau$ . To achieve this goal, a self-supervised framework is presented for  
141 temporal downscaling (see Fig. 3), in which the training procedure consists of two primary stages. In the first stage,  
142 we pretrain our model on a subset of data to simulate the training process on a real high-resolution dataset by  
143 selecting scenarios with rapid transitions. Then, the model is further trained under guidance of a temporal coherence  
144 constraint, leveraging supervision information inherent in the low-temporal-resolution time-series. In addition, two  
145 regularization terms are utilized in the loss function to guide the model out of local optima and prevent abnormal  
146 values.



147

148 **Figure 3. Overview of the proposed TemDeep framework for self-supervised temporal downscaling.** The  
 149 overall network structure for temporal downscaling is depicted in the top right portion of the figure, which is  
 150 composed of an encoder-decoder structured field prediction network and a flow estimation module, taking  
 151 consecutive fields and terrain data as input. Firstly, we pretrain the downscaling network on scenarios that exhibit  
 152 rapid transitions. Then, we conduct self-supervised learning based on the temporal coherence constraint. After two  
 153 rounds of inference, we compare the generated field at the time of  $T_0 + \tau$  with the original field and calculate the  
 154 loss to further train the network. In the bottom half of the figure, the green checkmark denotes the original data  
 155 point, while the black cycle represents the interpolated results.

### 156 3.2 Reconstructing a pretraining dataset through self-similarity

157 It is easily understood that scenarios with rapid transitions could reflect a condensed evolution of  
 158 atmospheric processes, where changes that might typically occur over longer durations are instead experienced in a  
 159 compressed time period. Therefore, these scenarios occurring within shorter time intervals in low-temporal-  
 160 resolution data can potentially serve as ‘pseudo labels’ for scenarios within longer time intervals in high-temporal-  
 161 resolution data.

162 Based on this kind of self-similarity across time scales, we propose to reconstruct a pretraining dataset by  
 163 establishing a composite index to filter out scenarios with rapid transitions. This composite index is designed based  
 164 on four physical variables that are indicative of weather system transformations, respectively  $rh$ ,  $t2m$ ,  $850hPa$  wind  
 165 speed ( $v$ ) and  $850hPa$  vertical velocity ( $w$ ). Rapid changes in wind speed can indicate major weather phenomena,  
 166 and similarly, humidity changes are key to atmospheric stability and sudden shifts can trigger severe convection.  
 167  $t2m$  gradients drive atmospheric circulation, with steep gradients signifying developing weather fronts. Lastly,  
 168 vertical velocity indicates vertical air movement and can signal cloud formation or precipitation.

169 Given an atmospheric variable  $a$ , the normalized change for each time step  $t$  is defined as  
 170  $\Delta a(t) = (a(t+1) - a(t))/\sigma(a)$ , where  $\sigma(a)$  represents the standard deviation of the variable  $a$  over  
 171 the entire period. Let  $V(t) = [\Delta rh(t), \Delta t2m(t), v(t), w(t)]$  denote the vector of normalized changes,  
 172 and  $W = [w1, w2, w3, w4]$  be the respective weight vector, the composite index  $CI$  can be expressed as



$$173 \quad CI(t) = W^T \cdot V(t) + \eta \sum_{i < j} (w_{ij} \cdot V_i(t) \cdot V_j(t)). \quad (1)$$

174 Here, the superscript  $T$  denotes vector transposition, and the summation extends over all unique pairs of variables  
 175 ( $i < j$ ). The parameter  $\eta$  is a scaling factor set at 0.02, which can be adjusted to regulate the influence of the  
 176 interaction terms.  $w_{ij}$  represents the weights linked with the interaction terms, ensuring that each variable has the  
 177 same magnitude before multiplication. The first component  $W^T \cdot V(t)$  is a linear combination of normalized  
 178 changes to quantify individual influence of each variable, while  $\sum_{i < j} (w_{ij} \cdot V_i(t) \cdot V_j(t))$  is introduced to  
 179 account for synergistic effects among variables by measuring the product of changes between pairs of variables.  
 180 Finally, we empirically set a threshold  $\theta$  for the composite index at 0.75, and scenarios with a  $CI$  value above the  
 181 threshold are considered to exhibit rapid transitions:

$$182 \quad \mathbf{T} = \{t \mid CI(t) > \theta\}, \quad (2)$$

183 where  $\mathbf{T}$  denotes scenarios with rapid transitions. Finally, we obtain a collection of 1,391 scenarios with 12,531  
 184 consecutive fields and group these samples every 3 fields into 4,177 sets. During the pretraining process, we train  
 185 the model by providing the model with the two adjacent fields as input and tasking it to generate a result that is close  
 186 to the middle field in the sequence.

### 187 3.3 Self-supervised training leveraging temporal coherence

188 In our approach, we propose a self-supervised training process, which leverages temporal coherence within  
 189 continuous atmospheric fields to generate interpolated fields at arbitrary time resolutions. Taking inspiration from  
 190 the success of unpaired data to data translation in a variety of fields (Gao et al., 2022; Reda et al., 2019; Zhou et al.,  
 191 2016; Zhu et al., 2017), we define a time-domain temporal coherence constraint, ensuring that the interpolated data  
 192 point  $\hat{\mathbf{p}}_{T_0+\tau}$  created at time  $T_0 + \tau$  right between  $\mathbf{p}_{T_0}$  and  $\mathbf{p}_{T_0+2\tau}$  must consist with the original middle data  
 193 point  $\mathbf{p}_{T_0+\tau}$ . That is, as illustrated in Fig. 3, for a given triplet of consecutive data fields, we generate two  
 194 intermediate data points in the first inference: one between the first two data points  
 195  $\hat{\mathbf{p}}_{T_0+\theta\tau} = \mathbf{M}(\mathbf{p}_{T_0}, \mathbf{p}_{T_0+\tau}, \theta\tau)$ , where  $\mathbf{M}$  is our downscaling network (see Section 3.5), and the other between  
 196 the last two data points  $\hat{\mathbf{p}}_{T_0+(1+\theta)\tau} = \mathbf{M}(\mathbf{p}_{T_0+\tau}, \mathbf{p}_{T_0+2\tau}, \theta\tau)$ . Then in the second inference, we generate an  
 197 interpolated data point between these newly created intermediate data points,  
 198  $\hat{\mathbf{p}}_{T_0+\tau} = \mathbf{M}(\hat{\mathbf{p}}_{T_0+\theta\tau}, \hat{\mathbf{p}}_{T_0+(1+\theta)\tau}, (1-\theta)\tau)$ . In this case,  $\hat{\mathbf{p}}_{T_0+\tau}$  should match the original middle input data  
 199 point  $\mathbf{p}_{T_0+\tau}$ , illustrating the concept of temporal coherence. By changing the time parameter  
 200  $t = \theta\tau$  ( $\theta \in (0, 1)$ ), our method is capable of generating an array of interpolated data points that maintain  
 201 temporal coherence over time, effectively enriching the temporal resolution of the atmospheric dataset. To enforce  
 202 temporal coherence, we aim to minimize the difference between  $\hat{\mathbf{p}}_{T_0+\tau}$  and  $\mathbf{p}_{T_0+\tau}$ , expressed as  
 203  $\arg \min_{\Phi(M)} \|\hat{\mathbf{p}}_{T_0+\tau} - \mathbf{p}_{T_0+\tau}\|_1$ , then the coherence loss  $L_c(\Phi)$  can be defined in the form of  $L_1$  loss:

$$204 \quad \mathcal{L}_c(\Phi) = \|\hat{\mathbf{p}}_{T_0+\tau} - \mathbf{p}_{T_0+\tau}\|_1. \quad (3)$$

### 205 3.4 Spatio-temporal continuity regularization

206 Despite the application of the temporal coherence constraint to train the model, which allows for the  
 207 simulation of evolving weather systems, it is still necessary to regulate the model to prevent it from local optima and  
 208 avoid generating abnormal values. To address this concern, our approach leverages the inherent continuity of



209 atmospheric fields in space and time, which is integrated into our model training process as a regularization term in  
 210 the loss function. An example of spatial and temporal gradients in  $t2m$  fields is provided in Fig. 4, and Fig. 5  
 211 indicates that 99.59% of the horizontal gradients and 99.31% of the vertical gradients are lower than  $3K$   
 212 respectively. Similarly, in the continuously varying fields, 99.55% of the temporal gradients are lower than  $3K$ .  
 213 Therefore, it can be assumed that the majority of grid points in  $t2m$  fields exhibit strong spatial and temporal  
 214 continuity, as well as other densely distributed atmospheric variables, such as geopotential height and relative  
 215 humidity. Here, spatial continuity implies that nearby locations should share similar atmospheric conditions and our  
 216 model incorporates a spatial continuity loss term to ensure smoothness in both horizontal and vertical directions:

$$217 \quad \mathcal{L}_s = \frac{1}{2} \left( \sum_{(x,y) \subset \Omega} \|\hat{z}(t,x+1,y) - \hat{z}(t,x,y)\|_1 + \sum_{(x,y) \subset \Omega} \|\hat{z}(t,x,y+1) - \hat{z}(t,x,y)\|_1 \right),$$

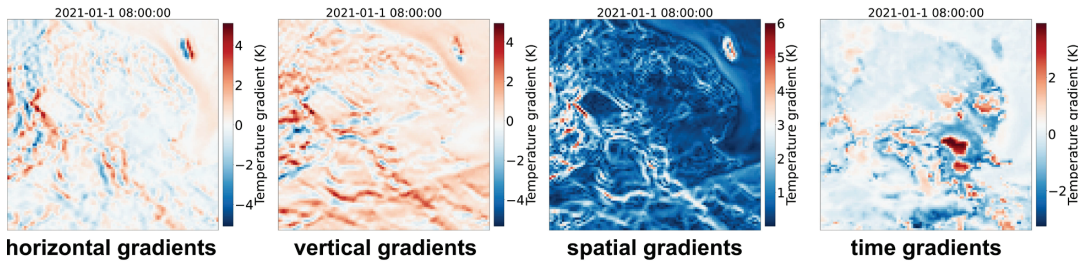
218 (4)

219 where  $\hat{z}(t,x,y)$  represents the model's prediction at time  $t$  and location  $(x,y)$ . Meanwhile, temporal continuity  
 220 assumes that the atmospheric conditions do not change abruptly over short periods, and accordingly, our loss  
 221 function includes a temporal continuity term that penalizes substantial differences between the model's predictions at  
 222 three consecutive time steps:

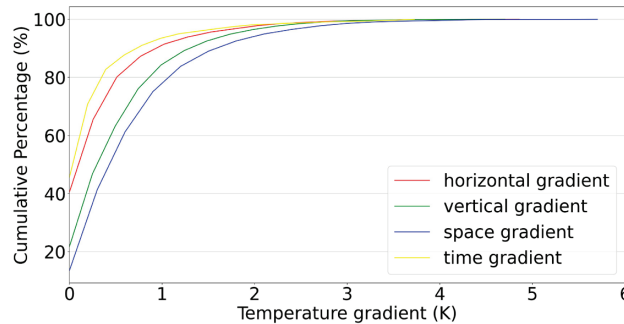
$$223 \quad \mathcal{L}_t = \lambda (\|\hat{z}(t+1) - \hat{z}(t)\|_1 + \|\hat{z}(t) - \hat{z}(t-1)\|_1),$$

224 (5)

224 where  $\hat{z}(t)$  denotes the model's prediction at time  $t$ , and  $\lambda$  is a parameter set at 0.35 to control the weight of  
 225 temporal continuity in the loss function.



227 **Figure 4. Spatial and temporal gradients in  $t2m$  fields.**



228  
 229 **Figure 5. Cumulative percentage of spatial and temporal gradients.**

### 230 3.5 Network architecture

231 In this section, we will introduce the network architecture of TemDeep for generating interpolated fields.  
 232 As illustrated in Fig. 3, the field prediction network, serving as the backbone network, adopts an encoder-decoder



233 structure to generate intermediate fields (see Fig. 6, Section 3.5.1). Meanwhile, the flow estimation module adopts a  
 234 unique combination of larger convolutional kernels and Leaky ReLU activations to capture long-range motions (see  
 235 Fig. 7, Section 3.5.2). Finally, intermediate fields and estimated flow are fused to synthesize interpolated fields  
 236 (Section 3.5.3).

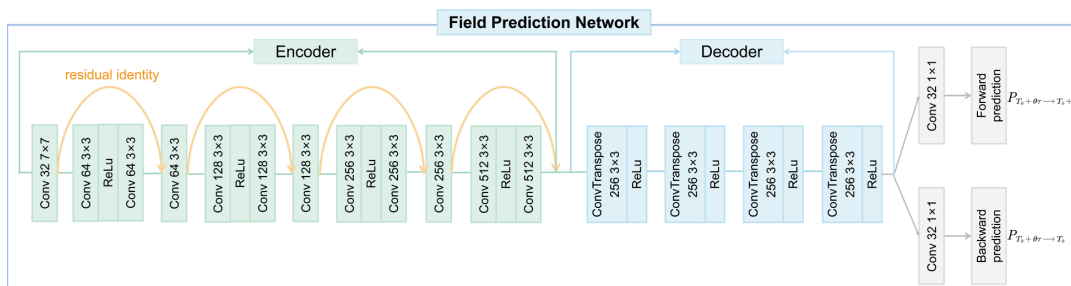
### 237 3.5.1 Field prediction network

238 The field prediction network is composed of an encoder-decoder architecture with the inclusion of residual  
 239 blocks. It takes consecutive single-element fields and terrain data as input and outputs intermediate fields.

240 The encoder part includes four primary components, each comprised of a convolutional layer and a  
 241 subsequent residual block. These convolutional layers, coupled with ReLU activation functions, process input data  
 242 through multiple filter sizes (64, 128, 256, and 512 filters respectively). Notably, the first convolutional layer  
 243 incorporates a  $7 \times 7$  kernel with a stride of 2 and padding of 3, enabling more robust feature extraction at the initial  
 244 stage, while subsequent layers employ  $3 \times 3$  kernels with a stride of 1 and padding of 1. After each convolutional  
 245 layer, a corresponding residual block follows, with in-channels and out-channels matching the corresponding  
 246 convolutional layer's filter size. These residual blocks consist of two convolutional layers and ReLU activation  
 247 functions, which helps in preserving the identity function and facilitates deeper model learning without the problem  
 248 of vanishing gradients.

249 The decoder part is designed to upsample and reconstruct the encoded field back to its original resolution.  
 250 It consists of four deconvolutional layers, each applying the ConvTranspose2d function for upsampling, and these  
 251 layers upsample the data from 512 filters back to 2 filters, which corresponds to the output flow. Notably, the kernel  
 252 size used in these layers is 4 with a stride of 2 and padding of 1, which efficiently enlarges the spatial dimensions  
 253 back to the original size. After a convolutional layer, we obtain forward and backward prediction results:  $\vec{p}$  and  $\vec{p}$ .

254 Additionally, to process topographic information and integrate it into input, we introduce a Convolutional  
 255 Terrain Integration Module (CTIM). The CTIM employs a convolutional layer with  $3 \times 3$  kernels, to create an  
 256 intermediate feature map topographic information. Subsequent to the convolution operation, batch normalization is  
 257 applied to accelerate the training process, followed by a ReLU activation function to introduce non-linearity. This  
 258 output then passes through a second convolutional layer with  $3 \times 3$  kernels to further refine the feature representation.  
 259 Once again, we apply batch normalization and ReLU activation to this output. The resulting output from the CTIM  
 260 is a set of terrain feature maps, ready to be fed into the prediction network.



261  
 262 **Figure 6. Field prediction network.**

### 263 3.5.2 Flow estimation module

264 The flow estimation module aims to estimate motion information and calculate forward and backward flow,  
 265 which is then fused with the intermediate fields from the field prediction network to assist with generating  
 266 interpolated fields. Fig. 8 provides an example of calculated flow in  $t2m$  fields.

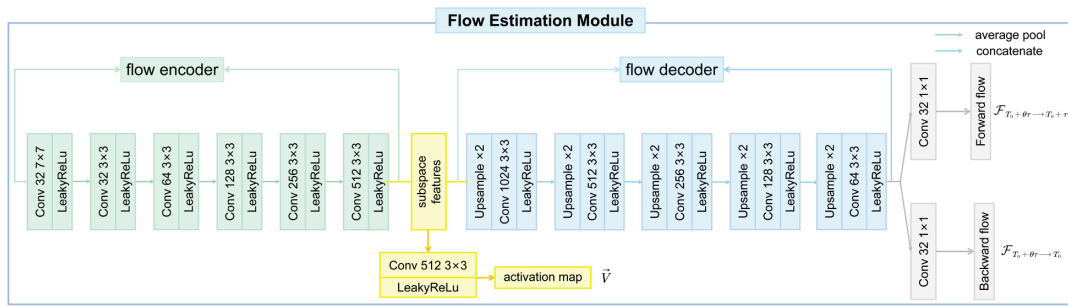
267 The flow encoder is structured similarly to the encoder of the field prediction network, which comprises  
 268 four convolutional layers, each followed by a Leaky ReLU activation function. The initial layer utilizes a  $7 \times 7$   
 269 convolutional kernel to extract features from the input, stepping down to a stride of 2 and padding of 3. Following  
 270 this, the subsequent layers use  $3 \times 3$  convolutional kernels with a stride of 1 and padding of 1, moving from 64 to



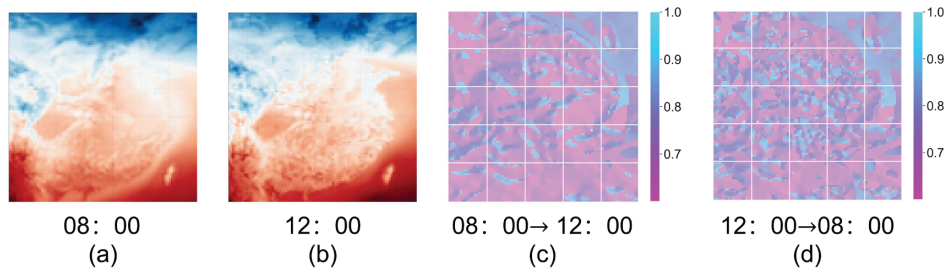


271 128, 256, and finally to 512 filters for a more detailed and intricate feature extraction. The subspace features  
 272 obtained at this layer, after undergoing convolution and ReLU, yield an activation map  $\vec{V}$  (see Eq. 6).

273 The flow decoder includes five deconvolution layers that upscale the downsampled encoder outputs. Each  
 274 layer employs a bilinear upsampling technique to double the spatial dimension, followed by two convolutional  
 275 layers and a Leaky ReLU activation. Finally, we obtain forward flow  $\mathcal{F}_{T_0+\theta\tau \rightarrow T_0+\tau}$  and backward flow  
 276  $\mathcal{F}_{T_0+\theta\tau \rightarrow T_0}$  after two convolutional layers.



277  
 278 **Figure 7. Flow estimation module.**



279  
 280 **Figure 8. Forward and backward flow visualization.** **a** and **b** represent the  $t2m$  fields at 08:00 and 12:00 on  
 281 January 1, 2021, while **c** and **d** represent the forward flow from 08:00 to 12:00 and backward flow from 12:00 to  
 282 08:00, respectively.

### 283 3.5.3 Fusion and loss function

284 We can synthesize the target field  $\hat{\mathbf{p}}_{T_0+\theta\tau}$  by fusing the outputs from the field prediction network and the  
 285 flow estimation module as follows:

$$286 \quad \hat{\mathbf{p}}_{T_0+\theta\tau} = (1 - \theta) \vec{V} \odot g(\vec{\mathbf{p}}, \mathcal{F}_{T_0+\theta\tau \rightarrow T_0}) + \theta \vec{V} \odot g(\vec{\mathbf{p}}, \mathcal{F}_{T_0+\theta\tau \rightarrow T_0+\tau}), \quad (6)$$

287 where  $g(\cdot)$  is a warping function (Jiang et al., 2017).  $\vec{V}$  represents the activation map, referring to whether pixels  
 288 remain activated when moving forward from  $t = T_0$  to  $t = T_0 + \theta\tau$  and  $\vec{V}$  is calculated by

$$289 \quad \vec{V} = [1 - \vec{V}(i, j)].$$

290 In order to make the estimated flow more closely resemble the actual flow, we utilize it as motion  
 291 information to further assist in enhancing the quality of field reconstruction, and accordingly, the flow estimation  
 292 loss can be defined as



$$\mathcal{L}_{\mathcal{F}} = \left\| \mathbf{p}_{T_0} - g(\tilde{\mathbf{p}}, \mathcal{F}_{T_0+\theta\tau \rightarrow T_0}) \right\|_1 + \left\| \mathbf{p}_{T_0+\tau} - g(\tilde{\mathbf{p}}, \mathcal{F}_{T_0+\theta\tau \rightarrow T_0+\theta\tau}) \right\|_1 \quad (7)$$

Finally, the loss function to train the model can be expressed by combing the coherence loss  $\mathcal{L}_c$  (Section 3.3), flow estimation loss  $\mathcal{L}_{\mathcal{F}}$  (Section 3.5.3), and continuity loss  $\mathcal{L}_s + \mathcal{L}_t$  (Section 3.4) as

$$\mathcal{L} = \mathcal{L}_c + \mathcal{L}_{\mathcal{F}} + \alpha(\mathcal{L}_s + \mathcal{L}_t), \quad (8)$$

where  $\alpha$  is a parameter set at 0.35 to adjust the weight of continuity regularization.

#### 4 Results and discussion

We conduct experiments on an Ubuntu 20.04 system equipped with eight A100 GPUs. The TemDeep model is trained using the adam optimizer (Kingma and Ba, 2014) with an initial learning rate of 1e-5, and a mini-batch size of 256. Downscaling results of *t2m*, *z* and *rh* fields at different time resolutions, respectively 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 hours, into 1-hour time intervals, are shown in Table 1.

##### 4.1 Evaluation metrics

In order to evaluate the performance of our model, we propose three metrics: restoration rate (*Re*), consistency degree (*CS*), and continuity degree (*CT*). Among them, *Re* is primarily utilized for the evaluation of the discrepancy between the downscaled results and the true values, while *CS* and *CT* are auxiliary metrics for the analysis and comparison of different methods.

The restoration rate measures the degree to which our model recovers lost information compared to simple linear interpolation, and a larger *Re* indicates a better downscaling performance. Let the restoration rate of linear interpolation as zero, then the formula for calculating *Re* is as follows:

$$Re = 1 - \frac{\frac{1}{\Omega} \sum_{(x,y) \subset \Omega} |D^{truth}(x,y) - D(x,y)|^2}{\frac{1}{\Omega} \sum_{(x,y) \subset \Omega} |D^{truth}(x,y) - D^{lin}(x,y)|^2}. \quad (9)$$

In this formula,  $D^{truth}$  is the ground truth,  $D$  is the data generated by our model,  $D^{lin}$  is calculated through linear interpolation and  $\Omega$  represents all pixels in the field.

The consistency degree is a metric used to evaluate the level of consistency in generated fields, and a larger *CS* indicates a smaller discrepancy between the estimated flow  $\hat{F}_{T_0 \rightarrow T_0+\theta\tau}$  and the true flow  $F_{T_0 \rightarrow T_0+\theta\tau}$ . It is calculated based on the flow estimation module and can be expressed as

$$CS = 1 - \frac{\left\| \mathcal{F}_{T_0 \rightarrow T_0+\theta\tau} - \hat{\mathcal{F}}_{T_0 \rightarrow T_0+\theta\tau} \right\|_1}{\left\| \mathcal{F}_{T_0 \rightarrow T_0+\theta\tau} \right\|_1}. \quad (10)$$

The continuity degree measures how smoothly the preceding field transitions to the next, and a larger *CT* indicates more smoothness. The mathematical representation is

$$CT = 1 - \frac{\left| \left\| \mathbf{p}_{T_0+\theta\tau} - \mathbf{p}_{T_0} \right\|_1 - \left\| \hat{\mathbf{p}}_{T_0+\theta\tau} - \mathbf{p}_{T_0} \right\|_1 \right|}{\left\| \mathbf{p}_{T_0+\theta\tau} - \mathbf{p}_{T_0} \right\|_1}, \quad (11)$$

where  $\hat{\mathbf{p}}_{T_0+\theta\tau}$  is the interpolated field and  $\mathbf{p}_{T_0}$  is the preceding field.

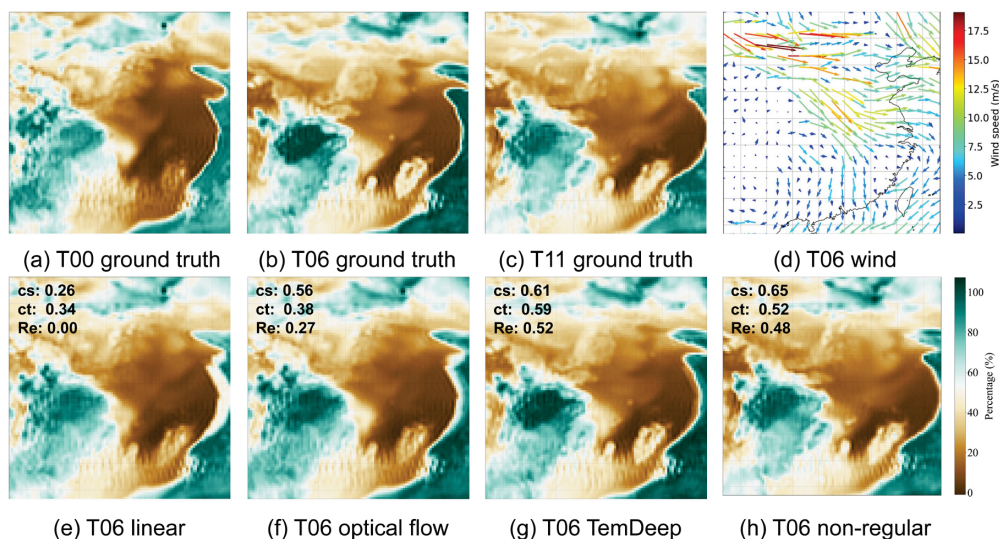


322 **Table 1 Performance comparison among different methods based on  $Re$ .** According to Eq. 9, the result of linear  
 323 interpolation is set to 0 as the basis for comparing other methods. Among all unsupervised comparison methods,  
 324 TemDeep achieved the best performance, closely approaching the supervised TemDeep\*.

Methods	$t2m$ (2h→1)	$t2m$ (3h→1)	$t2m$ (4h→1)	$t2m$ (5h→1)	$z$ (2h→1)	$rh$ (2h→1)
Linear	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
Cubic spline	0.102	0.041	0.019	0.018	0.135	0.074
Optical flow	0.219	0.188	0.102	0.059	0.342	0.236
non-flow	0.462	0.431	0.359	0.307	0.505	0.417
non-regular	0.499	0.470	0.397	0.325	0.525	0.488
non-pretrain	0.528	0.501	0.433	0.372	0.568	0.489
TemDeep	0.537	0.508	0.442	0.376	0.576	0.498
TemDeep*	0.682	0.641	0.579	0.430	0.701	0.553

325 4.2 Quantitative analysis

326 In order to evaluate the effectiveness of our proposed method on temporal downscaling, we select several  
 327 methods that do not require supervision information for comparison, namely linear interpolation, cubic spline  
 328 interpolation and optical flow-based interpolation. The linear interpolation method computes the average value  
 329 between adjacent fields, while cubic spline interpolation, using four data fields, achieves a smooth curve with cubic  
 330 polynomials. Additionally, optical flow-based interpolation estimates pixel motion between fields to predict their  
 331 state at a desired time point. As illustrated in Table 1, for the six tasks of  $t2m$  (2h→1),  $t2m$  (3h→1),  $t2m$  (4h→1),  
 332  $t2m$  (5h→1),  $z$  (2h→1), and  $rh$  (2h→1), the TemDeep method scores 0.537, 0.508, 0.442, 0.376, 0.576, and 0.498 in  
 333  $Re$ , respectively, all considerably higher than the scores achieved by other methods under unsupervised conditions.  
 334 Without the pretraining stage,  $Re$  is relatively lower on all tasks, suggesting that this stage is important in initially  
 335 capturing general patterns in atmospheric data. The supervised training condition TemDeep\* method scores the  
 336 highest, implying that supervised training can further enhance the downscaling performance of the TemDeep  
 337 method.

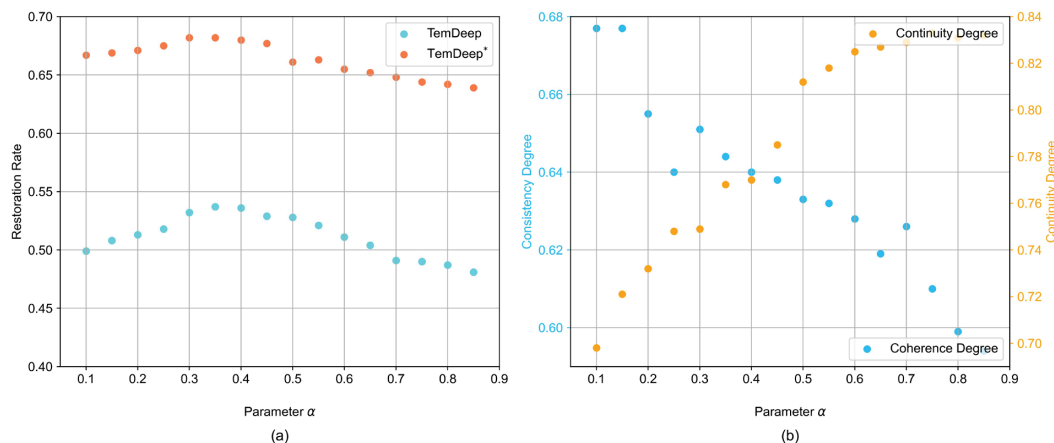


338 (e) T06 linear (f) T06 optical flow (g) T06 TemDeep (h) T06 non-regular  
 339 **Figure 9. Visualized comparison.** a, b, and c respectively represent the true values of  $rh$  fields on January 1, 2021.  
 340 d represents the wind direction and speed at 850 hPa at 06:00, where the wind in the central region points towards



341 the southeast, driving the dry air mass in the same direction, resulting in the expansion of the dry area towards the  
 342 southeast. **e**, **f**, and **g** display the interpolation results at 06:00 obtained through different methods. **h** represents the  
 343 result from TemDeep when the spatio-temporal continuity regularization is removed.

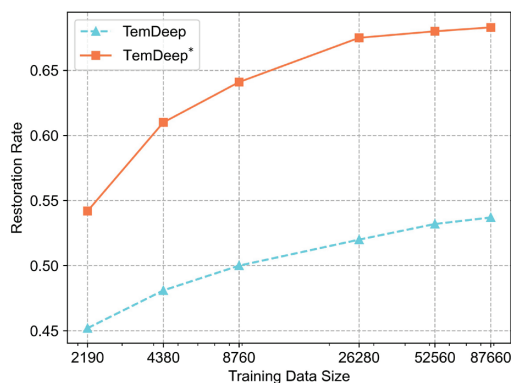
344 The flow estimation module provides an improvement of 0.075 in  $Re$  by guiding the model to learn the  
 345 movement of weather systems, and the result demonstrates more consistency with the trends of weather system  
 346 movements, as illustrated in Fig. 9g. In contrast, if completely ignoring the motion of weather systems, the result of  
 347 time interpolation would simply be an average of the preceding and succeeding fields, leading to significant errors  
 348 compared to the ground truth, as shown in Fig. 9e. The spatio-temporal continuity regularization also provides an  
 349 improvement of 7.6% from 0.499 to 0.537 in  $Re$  by ensuring the generated fields be consistent with the observed  
 350 patterns in the input data. As depicted in Fig. 9h, without this regularization, the model occasionally produces  
 351 erroneous estimates of the intensity and direction of motion. Nevertheless, with the inclusion of the regularization  
 352 term, the results are inevitably constrained to linear changes to a certain degree, which has conflicts with the actual  
 353 non-linear evolutions.



354 **Figure 10. Model performance under the enforcement of spatio-temporal continuity with varying weights. a**  
 355 **shows  $Re$  of TemDeep trained under self-supervised conditions and supervised conditions (denoted as**  
 356 **TemDeep\*) at different  $\alpha$ . b shows consistency degree and continuity degree of TemDeep at different  $\alpha$ .**

358 To strike a balance between the spatio-temporal continuity regularization and actual non-linear evolutions,  
 359 we introduce a parameter  $\alpha$  in the loss function to adjust the weight for regularization and conduct ablation studies,  
 360 with the results shown in Fig. 10. A larger  $\alpha$  implies that the model emphasizes on regularization, and thus CT  
 361 increases while CS decreases. Finally,  $\alpha$  is set at 0.35 and  $Re$  reaches a maximum of 0.537.

362 Fig. 11 shows the restoration rate of the test set in these experiments. Increasing the training dataset size  
 363 consistently improves model performance, but the impact diminishes gradually. Once the amount of training data  
 364 reaches a critical value (e.g., 8,760), further increases no longer result in significant improvements, suggesting the  
 365 model is reaching its performance limits. When the data volume reaches 26,280, doubling the data leads to only a  
 366 modest 1-2% improvement.



367

368 **Figure 11. Average test loss on  $t2m$  fields.**

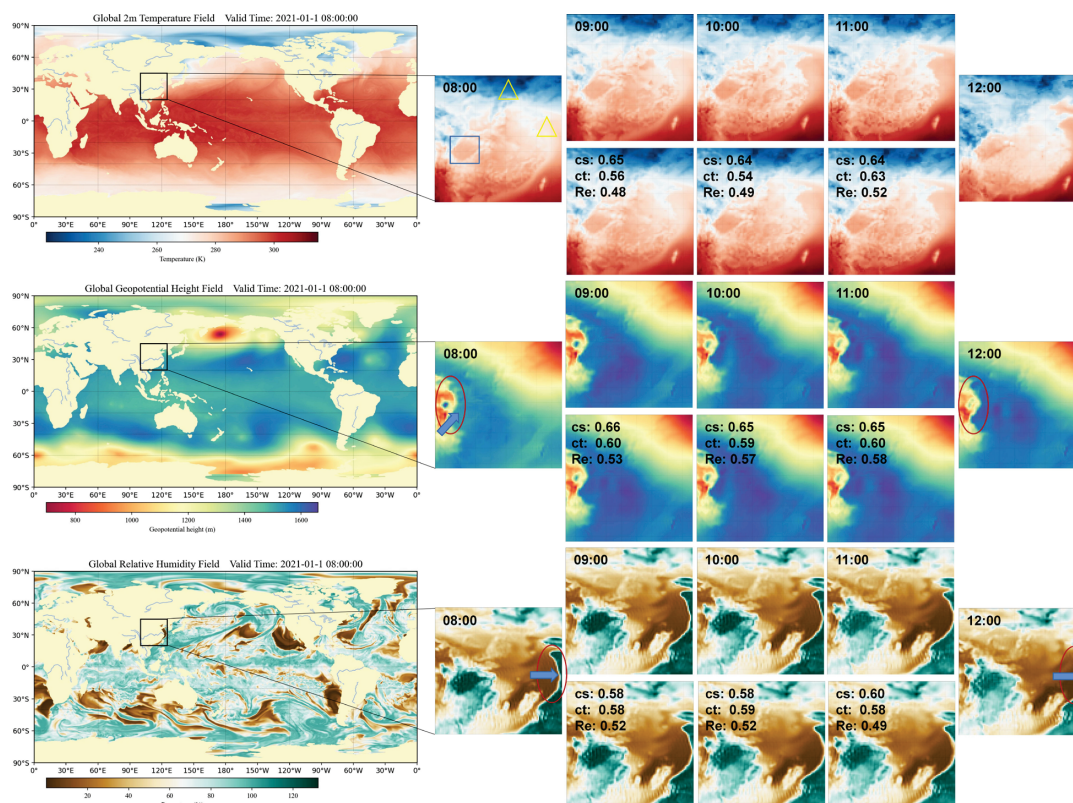
369 4.3 Case study

370 In this section, a case study is employed to explore TemDeep’s ability in recovering evolving details of  
371  $t2m$ ,  $z$  and  $rh$  fields, as shown in Fig. 12. Hourly interpolation is conducted between 08:00 and 12:00 on January 1,  
372 2021, to obtain three interpolated fields at 09:00, 10:00 and 11:00.

373 In the temporal interpolation of  $t2m$  fields, the selected area in January exhibits a noticeable temperature  
374 difference between the sea and the land at 12:00 compared to 08:00, and the gradual changes occurring at 09:00,  
375 10:00, and 11:00 are clearly reproduced by the TemDeep method. Due to the sensitivity of  $t2m$  to altitude, the  
376 temperature gradient near the Sichuan Basin is clearly depicted, exactly aligning with the contour of the actual  
377 altitude gradient, as marked by the rectangle. Most importantly, at 10:00, regions marked by the triangles exhibit  
378 large surrounding gradients and non-linear abrupt changes, resulting in a lower continuity degree of 0.54. In this  
379 case, the TemDeep method still achieves a high precision in reproducing the field, with a restoration rate of 0.49,  
380 reaching 0.48 and 0.52 at the preceding and following field, respectively. Hence, it can be concluded that the  
381 TemDeep method effectively captures non-linear transitions during the downscaling process.

382 For the 850hPa  $z$  fields, their variations are relatively simpler compared to the  $t2m$  fields, making  
383 downscaling easier and leading to less precision fluctuation. The average  $Re$  over the three-hour period reaches 0.56.  
384 At 08:00, there exists a high-pressure region on the western edge, surrounded by low pressure, resulting in a  
385 significant gradient. In the generated  $z$  fields, this gradient gradually diminishes from 09:00 to 11:00, and the central  
386 high-pressure region moves northeastward and eventually dissipates, as marked by the ellipse and arrow, which  
387 evolves exactly in accordance with the ground truth.

388 Similarly, in the three generated  $rh$  fields, the drier region on the eastern edge can be observed slowly  
389 moving eastward, consistent with the ground truth. At 08:00, the drier region is still located some distance away  
390 from the 125°E line, but after four hours of continuous changes, the easternmost part of the dry region has already  
391 crossed the 125°E line, and TemDeep has reproduced this movement of dry air mass, rather than simply averaging  
392 the fields.



393

394 **Fig. 12. Case study.**

## 395 5 Conclusions

396 This paper proposes a self-supervised model for downscaling atmospheric fields at arbitrary time  
397 resolutions by leveraging temporal coherence. This model combines an encoder-decoder structured field prediction  
398 network with a flow estimation module, fuses intermediate fields and motion information of weather systems and  
399 finally synthesizes fields at desired time points. We first pretrain the model based on a reconstructed dataset to  
400 initially capture data patterns, and then further utilizes existing consecutive fields as supervision for model training.  
401 Experiments on three variables ( $t2m$ ,  $z$ ,  $rh$ ) indicate that the proposed TemDeep model can accurately reconstruct the  
402 evolutionary process of atmospheric variables to a finer time scale, superior to other unsupervised methods.

403 As for future research, we will explore multi-modal data fusion to leverage complementary information  
404 from various sources. Further, we plan to extend our downscaling model based on previous work of self-supervised  
405 weather system classification (Wang et al., 2022), that is, to downscale temporal and spatial data by referring to  
406 similar types of weather systems through similarity search in the historical dataset.

407 *Code and Data Availability Statement.* All data necessary to reproduce the results of this work could be downloaded  
408 at <https://doi.org/10.24381/cds.bd0915c6> and <https://doi.org/10.24381/cds.adbb2d47>. The scripts used for  
409 downscaling are freely available at <https://github.com/GeoSciLab/TemDeep>.

410 *Author contributions.* Liwen Wang was primarily responsible for the design of the model and conducting the  
411 experiments. Qian Li prepared the experimental datasets and organized the entire research project. Qi Lv, Xuan  
412 Peng, and Wei You contributed to the optimization of the experimental code.

413 *Competing interests.* The contact author has declared that none of the authors has any competing interests.



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