How uncertain are precipitation and peakflow estimates for the July 2021 flooding event?

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Abstract. The disastrous July 2021 flooding events made us question the ability of current hydrometeorological tools in providing timely and reliable flood forecasts for unprecedented events. This is an urgent concern since extreme events are increasing due to global warming, and existing methods are usually limited to more frequently observed events with usual flood generation processes. For the July 2021 events, we simulated the hourly streamflows of seven catchments in western Germany, by combining seven five, partly polarimetric, radar-based quantitative precipitation estimates (QPE) with two hydrological models: a conceptual lumped model (GR4H) and a physically-based, 3D distributed model (ParFlowCLM). GR4H parameters were calibrated with emphasis on high flows using historical discharge observations, whereas ParFlowCLM parameters were estimated based on landscape and soil properties. The key results are as follows: (1) All rWith no correction of the vertical profiles of radar variables, radar-based QPE products underestimated the total precipitation depth relatively to rain gauges due to intense collision-coalescence processes near the surface, i.e. below the height levels monitored by the radars. (2) The use ofCorrecting the vertical profiles of polarimetric radar variables led to clear substantial improvements compared to reflectivity-based QPE products. (3) The probability of exceeding the highest measured peakflow before July 2021 was highly impacted by the QPE product, and depended on the catchment for both models. (4) The estimation of model parameters had a larger impact than the choice of QPE product, but simulated peakflows of ParFlowCLM agreed with those of GR4H for five of the seven catchments. This study highlights the need for the correction of vertical profiles of reflectivity and other polarimetric variables near the surface to improve radar-based QPE for extreme floods. It also underlines the large uncertainty in peakflow estimates due to model parameter estimation.

1 Introduction

1.1 Old questions in the light of new extremes

Many parts of the world will face an increase in the frequency and intensity of heavy summer precipitations under a warmer climate, as a result of the enhanced moisture-holding capacity of the atmosphere (Fowler et al., 2021; Kendon et al., 2014; Trenberth, 2011). This implies more frequent and flashier flood events (Dougherty and Rasmussen, 2020), hence increasing damages to infrastructures and human losses (Dottori et al., 2018; Nissen and Ulbrich, 2017). The flooding events of July 2021 in Europe resulted in more than 220 deaths (Deutsche Welle, 2021), large-scale damages to infrastructure (Koks et al., 2021) and costed costs of up to €5.5 8.2 billion in insured losses (2021 teuerstes Naturgefahrenjahr für die Versicherer, Gesamtverband der Deutschen Versicherungswirtschaft (GDV), Berlin, Germany, 2021 2) and up to €32.05 billion in total losses in Germany alone (BMI, 2022), making them the most severe natural disaster caused by heavy rain and flooding in Germany (Mohr et al., 2022) (GDV, 2021). Predicting such never-seen-before extremes challenges our forecasting chains (Hapuarachchi et al., 2011) and gives a new opportunity to re-examine persistent questions: how accurate are new, state-of-the-art radar-based precipitation estimates for this event? Given the recent developments in radar-based precipitation estimation and hydrological modeling, which of these sources of uncertainty is prevalent predominant in extreme peakflow estimation?

1.2 Precipitation estimates and hydrological modeling approaches

Rain gauges are often used as a reference source of quantitative precipitation estimates (QPE; Boushaki et al., 2009; Derin et al., 2019; Dumont et al., 2022; Schleiss et al., 2020). However, they are sparse and may miss the spatial variability of precipitation, especially of convective precipitation fields that can generate extreme flooding events in high-elevation, complex terrain configurations (Anquetin et al., 2005; Emmanuel et al., 2017; Sokol et al., 2021; Tetzlaff and Uhlenbrook, 2005). Alternatively, operational radar-based QPE provide better coverage and characterization of precipitation dynamics with higher spatial and temporal resolutions, which is particularly useful for flooding events (Anagnostou et al., 2010; Zhou et al., 2017). Traditionally, radar-based QPE are derived from horizontal reflectivity (Z_h) using Marshall-Palmer-type formulae (Marshall and Palmer, 1948). However, they are highly sensitive to the variability of the raindrop size distribution, and in some cases, QPE based on Z_h only tend to underestimate heavy precipitation (Harrison et al., 2000; Park et al., 2019; Schleiss et al., 2020). In addition, they are affected by radar calibration, attenuation, partial beam blockage, and radome effect (Berne and Krajewski, 2013; Borga et al., 2007; Chen et al., 2021; Diederich et al., 2015a, b; Ryzhkov et al., 2014). These limitations can be overcome by using additional variables from dual-polarimetric radars, which provide a better characterization of the shape and the concentration of hydrometeors and are less sensitive to raindrop size distribution (Gourley et al., 2010; Ryzhkov et al., 2005). Phase-based observables from polarimetric radars, such as specific differential phase (K_{DP}) and specific attenuation at horizontal or vertical polarization (A_{HV}), help improve QPE especially for heavy, convective and hail-contaminated rainfall events (Anagnostou et al., 2018; Berne and Krajewski, 2013; Chen et al., 2021;

Ryzhkov et al., 2014, 2022). However, including these variables may only lead to better spatial correlations with limited improvements in biases (Cunha et al., 2015). Improving these biases may require to account for the vertical gradients in radar variables/precipitation and their evolution near the ground (Chen et al., 2020; Reinoso-Rondinel and Schleiss, 2021), especially when the rain formation is dominated by strong collision-coalescence processes that lead to changes in the vertical precipitation intensity (Porcacchia et al., 2017). (Chen et al., Submitted)(Chen et al., 2022)These improvementsThe evaluation of in radar-based QPE have been commonly evaluated done with regards to point-scale ground-based measurements, but when the ultimate goal is to provide an accurate estimation of flood severity, a catchment-scale hydrological evaluation is needed.

Precipitation is the main driving factor of land-surface hydrological processes at the event-scale. Consequently, uncertainties in the input QPE strongly control the uncertainties of hydrological model outputs (Oudin et al., 2006; Renard et al., 2011), and are found to be larger than structural uncertainties of the models (Kuczera et al., 2006; Zappa et al., 2011). Previous studies evaluated the added value of improved spatial and temporal resolutions of QPE using hydrological models. Cole and Moore (2009) showed the benefits of gauge-corrected radar-based QPE for ungauged locations using a distributed hydrological model. Lobligeois et al. (2014) found that using high-resolution, spatially-distributed precipitation was mainly beneficial in regions with high spatial variability of precipitation and topography fields. For flash flood applications, several studies (e.g., Borga et al., 2007; Braud et al., 2010; Emmanuel et al., 2017; Lin et al., 2018) concluded that QPE are the major controlling factor of flash flood dynamics and of hydrological model performances. However, they found that the extent to which uncertainties in QPE impacted model outputs is dependent on the strength of the storage behavior of the catchment, which may hide the benefit of using high-resolution QPE (Pokhrel and Gupta, 2011). Yet, fewer studies (e.g., Gourley et al., 2010; He et al., 2018) assessed the added- value of polarimetric radar measurements to predicting hydrological extremes. Additionally, the reliability of calibrated models for predicting unprecedented extreme hydrological events is questionable as they depend on historical observations (Poméon et al., 2020). In this respect, little attention has been drawn to how highly contrasted model formulations (lumped, conceptual vs. distributed, physically-based) are affected by uncertainties in QPE inputs for the case of extreme precipitation events.

1.3 Insights from the disastrous July 2021 events in western Germany

This study investigated the influence of improved QPE and different representations of hydrological processes on the uncertainties in simulating extreme flooding events. The novelties of our study consist in: (1) using new QPE products from vertical-profile corrected, phase-based observables of C-band and X-band radars, (2) contrasting hydrological modeling approaches (conceptual vs. partial differential equations (PDE)-based model), and (3) proposing an evaluation framework of the hydrometeorological prediction chain for unprecedented extreme events with unavailable discharge measurements. Since no peakflow measurements are available (partly due to destroyed monitoring systems), our analysis focused on the probability that the simulated peakflow exceeds the highest historically observed peakflow. This is relevant because

hydrological models are often evaluated based on their ability to detect the probability of flows exceeding catchment-specific, critical thresholds for flood warning applications (Anctil and Ramos, 2017).

This paper is structured as follows: Sect. 2 presents the studied region, Sect. 3 explains the methodology, Sect. 4 and 5 show and discuss our results, and Sect. 6 summarizes our conclusions.

2 Study region

Our study focused on a set of seven catchments located in western Germany (Fig. 1a), draining parts of the Eifel low-mountain range, with areas ranging between ~~144~~ 140 and 1670 km^2 (Table 1). Four of the seven stream gauges are located on the Ahr and the Kyll rivers in the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate. The remaining three stream gauges are located on the Erft and Rur rivers in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia. Their hypsometry shows a rolling plateau at mild elevations (300 m a.s.l. to 700 m a.s.l.) except for the catchments drained by the Erft river (Fig. 1b). The region is characterized by sedimentary rocks interbedded with volcanic rocks, with relatively shallow soils characterized by low water-holding capacity (Kreienkamp et al., 2021) and dominated by sand (catchment averages: 34%-41%) and silt (catchment averages 29%-38%; (Panagos, 2006). Their land cover of the catchments is dominated by agricultural and forest areas, with relatively small proportion of artificial areas (Table 1). Average precipitation depths range from 700 mm yr^{-1} to 1080 mm yr^{-1} and corresponding aridity indices are between 0.5-0.9, which reflects a region with temperate climate under oceanic influence.

3 Methodology

3.1 The lumped conceptual hydrological modeling approach

We selected GR4H (Ficchì et al., 2019) as a representative of the lumped, conceptual modeling approach. GR4H inputs consist of catchment-average precipitation and potential evapotranspiration at the hourly timestep. Potential evapotranspiration was estimated using a formula based on catchment-average temperature (Oudin et al., 2005). GR4H estimates net precipitation from input precipitation using an interception with a soil-moisture accounting reservoir. Then, the net precipitation is split into 10 % routed through the quick-flow routing branch (via a unit hydrograph) and 90 % routed through the slow-flow branch (via a unit hydrograph and a nonlinear routing reservoir). On both branches, exchanges between surface water and groundwater are enabled. Detailed equations can be found in Ficchì et al. (2019) and Perrin et al. (2003).

We calibrated GR4H parameters using historical observations of discharge and a gradient-descent based algorithm (Coron et al., 2017; Edijatno et al., 1999). Since hourly discharge values for all stream gauges were unavailable, hourly model simulations were aggregated into daily time steps to be compared to the daily discharge observations. Because we are

interested in simulating high discharge values, we looked for optimal parameters θ_{opt} that maximized the following objective function $\cancel{F}OF(\theta)$:

$$O\cancel{F}F\cancel{\theta}(\theta) = \frac{1}{4}C(Q_{sim}(\theta), Q_{obs}) + \frac{3}{4}C(Q_{sim}(\theta), Q_{obs}|Q_{obs} \geq Q_{obs,th}) \tag{1}$$

where θ are model parameters, $Q_{sim}(\theta), Q_{obs}$ are respectively simulated and observed discharges, $C(Q_{sim}(\theta), Q_{obs})$ is a calculated error criterion over the whole period of calibration, and $C(Q_{sim}(\theta), Q_{obs}|Q_{obs} \geq Q_{obs,th})$ is the same error criterion calculated only for periods when the observed discharge is above the threshold $Q_{obs,th}$, which emphasizes high flows. To account for the uncertainties in parameter estimation, we split the available time series into two distinct and length-equivalent sub-periods (2007-2013 and 2014-2020), over which we calibrated the model with regards to two criteria C: the Nash-Sutcliffe Efficiency (Nash and Sutcliffe, 1970) and the Kling-Gupta Efficiency (Gupta et al., 2009). For the threshold $Q_{obs,th}$, we chose three values: the minimum discharge value (i.e., no ~~particular~~ explicit emphasis on high flows), the 90th percentile, and the 99th percentile of daily discharge values. Combining these choices yielded 12 ~~*2*3 = 12~~ optimal parameter sets (from 2 periods of calibration*2 evaluation criteria*3 discharge thresholds) for each catchment. During calibration, the first year of records (2006) was used for model spin-up to minimize the impact of model initialization on model calibration and simulation results.

3.2 The distributed PDE-based hydrological modeling approach

In addition to GR4H, we used the hydrological model ParFlow with its internal land-surface module CLM (Common Land Model), hereafter ParFlowCLM (Kollet and Maxwell, 2006; Kuffour et al., 2020; Maxwell, 2013), implemented on a 611-m resolution grid with 15 depth layers down to 60 m below the surface, with geometrically increased thickness. CLM resolves the energy budget at the land surface as well as the water exchange at the atmosphere-land-soil interface, which helps discern the net precipitation from interception, soil evaporation, plant transpiration, and infiltration. ParFlow resolves the 3D Richards' equation for variably saturated subsurface and groundwater flow, coupled with the kinematic wave model for the overland flow routing. Assuming the continuity of pressure at the ground surface, the boundary fluxes for Richards' equation are estimated from the kinematic wave model, and vice versa (Kollet and Maxwell, 2006). The model represents both the Hortonian and the Dunne runoff processes, and it accounts for exfiltration and re-infiltration at the downstream hydraulic pathway.

ParFlowCLM was forced at the hourly time step with a spin-up period starting from 2007. Slopes were estimated from the ASTER (Advanced Spaceborne Thermal Emission and Reflection Radiometer; https://lpdaac.usgs.gov/products/astgtmv003) DEM (digital elevation model) combined with the hydrologically-enhanced DEM MERIT (Multi-Error-Removed Improved-Terrain) Hydro (Yamazaki et al., 2019). Soil and subsoil types are defined from the SoilGrids250m (Hengl et al., 2017) reclassified into 12 USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) texture types. The hydraulic parameters for each soil type (hydraulic conductivity, residual and saturated water content, and van Genuchten parameters) were obtained from the ROSETTA model (Schaap et al., 2001). Below the depth to bedrock, given

by SoilGrids250m, the typology of the International Hydrogeological Map of Europe IHME1500 (scale 1:1500000) was
used (Duscher et al., 2015). Land cover was characterized using the CORINE Land Cover database of the Copernicus Land
Monitoring Service for the year 2018 (Langanke et al., 2016), whose land cover classification was converted into the 18
IGBP (International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme) categories. To account for the uncertainty in Manning's roughness
coefficient, which highly impacts the peakflow simulations (Lumbroso and Gaume, 2012), different scenario simulations
with spatially homogeneous and distributed roughness values were performed. In total, tthree uniformly distributedspatially
homogeneous values were tested for the whole domain: a default value of 0.2 s m$^{-1/3}$ (HMann, i.e. high roughness, from
Schalge et al., 2019), and two additional values of 0.1 s m$^{-1/3}$ (MMann, medium roughness) and 0.03 0.02 s m$^{-1/3}$ (LMann, i.e.
low roughness). These three values cover the whole range of Manning's coefficient values reported by Lumbroso and
Gaume (2012), but adopting a uniform spatial distribution (although simple to implement and to interpret) is unrealistic
given the differences in roughness values between land-cover types-. Therefore, a fourth simulation was performed using
distributed Manning's coefficients (DMann) based on land cover types (and following Table 2 in (Asante et al., 2008), with
low values for water bodies (0.02 s m$^{-1/3}$) and urban and barren surfaces (0.03 s m$^{-1/3}$), mild values for croplands (0.033 s m$^{-1/3}$), natural vegetation mosaics (0.037 s m$^{-1/3}$), shrublands, grasslands, snow/ice, and permanent wetlands (0.05 s m$^{-1/3}$), and
high values for forests (0.1-0.12 s m$^{-1/3}$).

3.3 Atmospheric forcing and streamflow data

Eight atmospheric variables were needed for the runs of ParFlowCLM, namely 2-m air temperature, precipitation, surface
pressure, downward solar and thermal radiation, specific humidity, and eastward and northward components of the 10-m
wind. Precipitation was obtained from the operational radar-based RADOLAN product of the DWD (*Deutsche Wetterdienst*,
German Weather Service; (Winterrath et al., 2018)), which is gauge--adjusted and available at 1-km resolution. The
remaining atmospheric variables were obtained from the ERA5-Land dataset (Muñoz-Sabater et al., 2021), available at 9-km
resolution. All variables were regridded to the model resolution using a bicubic interpolation. For GR4H, data demand is
limited to precipitation and 2-m air temperature, which were catchment-averaged using the Thiessen polygon method, and
discharge data for model calibration, which were obtained for the period 2007-2021 from the state offices for environment of
North Rhine-Westphalia (LANUV, https://www.elwasweb.nrw.de) and Rhineland-Palatinate (https://wasserportal.rlp-umwelt.de).

3.4 Evaluation of QPE products and modeling choices for the July 2021 events

For the 14 July 2021, we tested five seven radar-based, 1-km gridded QPE products as detailed in Table 2. In addition to
gauge-adjusted RADOLAN, three products These products were derived from the measurements of four polarimetric, C-
band radars operated by the DWD (located in Essen, Flechtdorf, Neuheilenbach, and Offenthal; Fig. 1a). These using state-
of-the-art algorithms thatproducts were derived using exploit algorithms that exploit horizontal reflectivity (Z_h), specific
differential phase (K_{DP}), and specific attenuation at horizontal (A_H) and vertical (A_V) polarization (A; see (Chen et al., 2021),

without correction of vertical profiles (RZ, RZKDP, and RAKDP). Three similar products (RZ-VPC, RZKDP-VPC, and RAKDP-VPC) were derived by exploiting information on the vertical variability of the radar variables, namely through (Chen et al., Submitted):

    (1) the inclusion of the observations from an X-band radar located near Jülich (JuXPol, Fig. 1a) of the Laboratory for Clouds and Precipitation Exploration (CPEX-LAB, http://www.cpex-lab.de) to provide lower-altitude observation and fill the gaps between the C-band radars located at Essen and Neuheilenbach,

    (2) the derivation of new rainfall relations at the lowest altitudes from the simulated radar variables based on raindrop size distributions (DSDs) observed by the two Micro Rain Radars (MRR) located at Bonn and Bergheim (Fig. 1a), and

    (3) the application of a vertical profile correction (VPC) to Z and K_{DP} based on the approach by (Chen et al. (, 2020) using real-time Range-Defined Quasi-Vertical Profiles (RD-QVP; (Tobin and Kumjian, 2017) as a vertical profile reference. Note that the specific attenuation A was not included in this procedure. ~~We evaluated the radar-based QPE first with respect to their agreement with rain gauges both at the point scale and at the catchment scale, and then with respect to their effect on simulated peakflows by GR4H and ParFlowCLM.~~

We evaluated the radar-based QPE first with respect to their agreement with rain gauges both at the point scale and at the catchment scale, and then with respect to their effect on simulated peakflows by GR4H and ParFlowCLM. First, total rainfall depths for the 14 July 2021 (between 14-07-2021 00:00 UTC and 15-07-2021 00:00 UTC) of the radar-based QPE are compared at the point scale with the rain gauges using the normalized root-mean-square error ($nRMSE$), the normalized mean bias (NMB), and the Pearson's correlation coefficient (CC), expressed as:

$$\begin{cases} nRMSE(\%) = 100 \cdot \dfrac{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{N}(P_{radar,i} - P_{RG,i})^2}}{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{N}(\overline{P_{RG}} - P_{RG,i})^2}} \\[4mm] NMB(\%) = 100 \cdot \dfrac{\sum_{i=1}^{N}(P_{radar,i} - P_{RG,i})}{\sum_{i=1}^{N} P_{RG,i}} \\[4mm] CC = \dfrac{\sum_{i=1}^{N}(P_{RG,i} - \overline{P_{RG}})(P_{radar,i} - \overline{P_{radar}})}{\sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^{N}(P_{RG,i} - \overline{P_{RG}})^2 \sum_{ji=1}^{N}(P_{radar,ji} - \overline{P_{radar}})^2}} \end{cases} \qquad (2)$$

where $P_{RG,i}$ is the total rainfall depth for the 14 July 2021 measured at the ith rain gauge, $P_{radar,ii}$ is the total rainfall depth given by the radar-based QPE $radar$ (Table 2) and averaged over the raster cell containing the ith rain gauge and its 8 ~~neighbouring~~neighboring cells. This averaging was applied to account for differences in location between radar cells and rain gauges due to wind, motion, and vertical variability (Schleiss et al., 2020; Dai and Han, 2014). ~~, and~~ $\overline{P_{RG}}$~~,~~ and $\overline{P_{radar}}$ are the averages of total rainfall depths of the considered N rain gauges and their corresponding N averages from neighbouring raster cells of the radar-based QPE, respectively. $nRMSE$ and NMB have both a perfect score of 0, and CC has a perfect score of 1. Positive NMB values indicate that the radar-based QPE overestimates the total rainfall depth for the 14 July 2021 compared to rain gauges, and vice versa.

At the catchment scale, the spatial average QPE from radar for the 14 July 2021 is compared with that from rain gauges (based on Thiessen polygons) using the relative error:

$$\Delta_{rel}(P_{radar}, P_{RG})(\%) = 100 \cdot \frac{P_{radar} - P_{RG}}{P_{RG}} \tag{3}$$

215 which is positive (respectively negative) when radar-based QPE overestimates (respectively underestimates) the total catchment-average precipitation depth with respect to rain gauges, and equals zero for a perfect match. Acknowledging the uncertainties that may arise from using Thiessen polygons to compute catchment-scale precipitation depths, we compared these to catchment-scale precipitation estimates from the daily gridded product REGNIE (1-km resolution), which accounts for the position, the height, the exposition and the slope of the gauge stations in the interpolation of the precipitation fields 220 from rain gauges (Rauthe et al., 2013).

Second, we examined the effect of QPE on the frequency of exceeding the highest historically observed peakflow for each catchment (Table 1) by simulated peakflows. Both GR4H and ParFlowCLM were initialized using a long spin-up period starting from 2006 for GR4H and 2007 for ParFlowCLM. This allowed for exploiting the whole available record period of climatic forcing to yield the best estimates of antecedent soil moisture conditions. Then, each radar-based QPE 225 was used as input to both models to obtain which consist of 12 twelve peakflow simulations of from GR4H in addition toand three four peakflow simulations of from ParFlowCLM. These peakflows are compared with the highest historically measured peakflow. Although GR4H simulations predominate, this will still illustrate the effect of QPE input on how well a model can issue a warning of an upcoming event that has never been seen before.

Third, for each catchment and for each model, we analyzed the effect of the choice of QPE input is analyzed using the 230 relative error in simulated peakflows attributed to replacing RADOLAN with another QPE product, such as:

$$\Delta_{rel}Q_{p,sim}(QPE, RADOLAN)(\%) = 100 \cdot \frac{Q_{p,sim}(QPE) - Q_{p,sim}(RADOLAN)}{Q_{p,sim}(RADOLAN)} \tag{4}$$

which is positive (respectively negative) if using QPE products other than RADOLAN leads to higher (respectively lower) simulated peakflows. Similarly, agreement across all QPE products between GR4H and ParFlowCLM is estimated using:

$$\Delta_{rel}Q_{p,sim}(GR4H, ParFlowCLM)(\%) = 100 \cdot \frac{Q_{p,sim,GR4H} - Q_{p,sim,ParFlowCLM}}{Q_{p,sim,ParFlowCLM}} \tag{5}$$

where $Q_{p,sim,GR4H}$ and $Q_{p,sim,ParFlowCLM}$ are simulated peakflows by GR4H and ParFlowCLM, respectively. Perfect agreement is obtained with a relative error equal to zero, whereas positive (respectively negative) values indicate that GR4H 235 overestimates (respectively underestimates) peakflows compared to ParFlowCLM. This relative error is estimated using all possible combinations of the 12 estimated peakflows of GR4H and the three four estimated peakflows of ParFlowCLM.

4 Results

4.1 Point-scale and catchment-scale differences between the QPE products

The different radar-based QPE show a relatively similar spatial pattern to rain gauges and REGNIE, as can be seen in Fig. 2. 240 Heavy precipitation depths have fallen over the highest altitudes, namely the Eifel range on the left bank of the Rhine river

and the Bergisches Land on the right bank. These rainfall depths were a result of long-lasting intense stratiform rain connected to a cut-off low pressure system (Junghänel et al., 2021), which locally broke historical precipitation records (Kreienkamp et al., 2021). For the rain gauge measurements, precipitation depths reached up to 162 mm, which is equivalent to what would fall in 2-3 months on average (i.e., by assuming a uniform distribution of rainfall, and dividing 162 mm by the annual averages in Table 1). Conversely, the radar products significantly differ in terms of total precipitation depth for the 14 July. QPE with vertical profiles correction and gap-filling (RAKDP-VPC, RZKDP-VPC and RZ-VPC) showed higher precipitation depths compared to gauge-adjusted RADOLAN, especially when specific attenuation is used (RAKDP-VPC). Without vertical profile correction, radar-based QPE (RAKDP, RZKDP and RZ) ~~QPE based on specific attenuation (RAHKDP and RAVKDP) showed higher precipitation depths compared to RADOLAN, whereas QPE based on horizontal reflectivity (RZH and RZHKDP)~~ showed quite low precipitation depths.

At the point scale, the comparison with $N = 63$~~7~~ rain gauges over the region shows that the ~~RADOLAN to be the~~ radar-based QPE with vertical profile correction and gap-filling are the ones that agree~~d~~s most with the rain gauges (Fig. 3). Values of $nRMSE$ varied from ~~32~~ 18 % for ~~RADOLAN~~ RAKDP-VPC to ~~37~~32-35~~39~~ % for RADOLAN and the two products based on ~~specific attenuation~~horizontal reflectivity with a vertical profile correction and gap-filling (~~RAHKDP~~ RZKDP-VPC and R~~AV~~ZKDP-VPC), ~~and~~ then jumped to ~~47~~60-81~~49~~ % for the remaining radar-based QPE without vertical profile correction (RAKDP, RZ~~KDP, and H~~KDP and ~~R~~RZ~~ZH~~). The negative NMB values show that ~~all~~ QPE products underestimated the precipitation amounts compared to rain gauges when the vertical gradients of the radar variables were not accounted for~~, but this underestimation remains below 15 % for RADOLAN, RAVKDP and RAHKDP~~. Thanks to the vertical profile correction, NMB values were kept between -10% and +3% (RAKDP-VPC, RZKDP-VPC and RZ-VPC). ~~NMB values confirm the relatively high biases obtained with RZHKDP and RZH, for which underestimation was over 20 %.~~ Nevertheless, the high CC values confirm that all products captured well the spatial pattern of the ground-based precipitation measurements.

Conclusions about the agreement between QPE products and rain gauges ~~change~~ are similar when we look at the catchment-scale evaluation. Specifically, ~~Specifically,~~ QPE based on specific attenuation (A) with corrected vertical profiles for K_{DP} (RAKDP-VPC) outperformed RADOLAN in reproducing estimates from rain gauges (using Thiessen polygons) across the seven catchments (Fig. 4), and reduced relative error from a median of -18 % for RADOLAN to ~~-6~~+2 % ~~for RAHKDP~~. With the exception of RAKDP-VPC~~Nevertheless~~, ~~all~~ radar-based QPE products tended to underestimate~~d~~ catchment-scale precipitation with respect to rain gauges in most cases, confirming the point-scale results (see NMB scores in Fig. 3). However, T~~t~~his comparison underlines the fact that the assessment of QPE products is catchment-dependent. ~~QPE based on specific attenuation~~ RAKDP-VPC outperformed RADOLAN (with respect to rain gauges) for the catchments drained by the Ahr and~~,~~ the Kyll~~, and the Erft at Bliesheim~~, whereas they both agreed for ~~RADOLAN was the only product that agreed with rain gauges for~~ the Rur at Monschau. For the catchments drained by the Erft, RAKDP-VPC overestimated precipitation depths with respect to rain gauges, whereas RADOLAN underestimated the total precipitation depth. Finally, using the Thiessen polygon method led to similar catchment-scale precipitation depths compared to the regionalized

275 REGNIE product, except for the Erft at Bliesheim where the Thiessen polygon method underestimated the total precipitation depth with respect to REGNIE. However, all radar-based QPE underestimated the precipitation depth obtained on rain gauges for the largest catchment, the Erft at Neubrueck.

4.2 Effect of QPE and modeling choices on simulated peakflows

The QPE inputs significantly impacted both GR4H and ParFlowCLM model simulations, as illustrated in Fig. 5 for the Ahr

280 at Altenahr. Changing from RADOLAN to RAVKDP RAKDP-VPC led to increased peakflow simulations, which is in line with the catchment-scale comparison (Fig. 4). For this catchment, a relative agreement was reached between the two models as GR4H simulations bracketed ParFlowCLM peakflow simulations from ParFlowCLM, except for the case when the Manning's coefficient was the lowest (LMann). Both the choices of GR4H calibration and Manning's coefficient for ParFlowCLM led to high uncertainty of peakflow simulations. With a high Manning's coefficient, ParFlowCLM succeeded

285 in estimating both the timing and the magnitude of the last recorded peakflow at the catchment outlet (~330 m^3 s^{-1} at ~19:00 of the 14 July), whereas the median simulation of GR4H was quite delayed with respect to ParFlowCLM simulated hydrographs by ParFlowCLM. Using a distributed Manning's coefficient (DMann) led to similar ParFlowCLM simulations as when using uniformly distributed, median Manning's value (MMann) for the Ahr at Altenahr. Finally, all model simulations with both RADOLAN and RAVKDP-VPC illustrate that how the heavy precipitation event resulted in a record-

290 breaking flood for the Ahr at Altenahr.

Overall, the ranking of QPE products with respect to the total precipitation depth for the 14 July event was preserved by model simulations for all catchments, as shown in Fig. 6. Specifically, the distributed approach by ParFlowCLM reflected the relative differences between catchment-average QPE. Model simulations with RADOLAN as input barely reached reported estimates by Mohr et al. (2022) based on relationships between water level and streamflow (red dashed lines in Fig.

295 6). Using RAKDP-VPC as input, simulations of ParFlowCLM bracketed well the estimates based on hydraulic approaches, with the best estimates obtained with median or distributed Manning's coefficient (MMann and DMann). GR4H also succeeded in bracketing these estimates except for the Erft at Bliesheim, but most of GR4H peakflow estimates for this catchment were lower than the ones based on hydraulic approaches. Comparing both models, ParFlowCLM simulations with high, and medium, and (to a lesser extent) distributed Manning's values were bracketed by those of GR4H except for the

300 largest catchment (Erft at Neubrueck) and the smallest catchment (Rur at Monschau). However, both the distributions of simulated peakflows by GR4H and ParFlowCLM revealed a large uncertainty due to model parameter estimation. For instance, simulated peakflows by GR4H for the Ahr at Altenahr varied between 15070 420850 m^3 s^{-1} using RZH as input, whereas they varied between 330390 1360 1500 m^3 s^{-1} using RAHKDP-VPC as input. For GR4H, analyzing the effect of calibration choices (not shown here) showed that the choice of the calibration period had the greatest impact on the

305 simulated peakflows across the catchments, with higher peakflows obtained when the latest period in time is used for calibration.(Mohr et al., 2022)(Roggenkamp and Herget, 2022)

The ~~exceedance frequency~~probability of exceeding ~~of~~ the highest peakflow ever measured (orange dashed lines in Fig. 6) by model simulations was impacted by QPE inputs ~~depending~~ for all~~on the~~ catchment~~s~~ (Fig. 7). ~~The first subset of catchments, including t~~The Ahr catchments and the Erft at Bliesheim~~,~~ showed high ~~chances~~ probabilities of breaking the records ~~with little or no impact of QPE inputs~~except when using QPE products based on horizontal reflectivity or specific differential phase with no correction of vertical profiles (RZKDP and RZ). Conversely ~~Similarly, f~~for the Rur at Monschau, all model simulations from the different QPE products agreed that the event was not heavy enough to surpass the highest measured peakflow. ~~The second subset (Erft at Neubrueck and Kyll)~~The Kyll catchments and the Erft at Neubrueck showed ~~different~~ more conflicting answers to whether there was a high ~~chance~~ probability (i.e., more than 50 %) that the event peakflow will overpass the highest measured peakflow before the event. ~~In particular, simulations with the operational RADOLAN product for the Kyll at Kordel gave lower chances than 50 % compared to rain gauges and products based on specific attenuation.~~ This subset of catchments underlines the crucial impact of the input QPE on our interpretation of the severity of the event.

In general, the differences between simulated peakflows ~~seemed~~ appeared to be more influenced by the ~~model parametrization~~choice of the hydrological model than the choice of the QPE input, as suggested by Fig. 8. GR4H tended to ~~tended to~~systematically underestimate the event peakflow relatively to ParFlowCLM, and both models disagreed most in the Erft at Neubrueck and the Rur at Monschau. The differences between GR4H and ParFlowCLM were generally independent of the QPE input (Fig. 8a). Conversely, replacing RADOLAN with any other QPE led to ~~systematic~~ increases in simulated peakflows for all catchments ~~(~~except for the Rur at Monschau and the catchments drained by the Kyll,~~)~~ with median ~~errors~~error distributions less far from zero compared to the distributions of errors between GR4H and ParFlowCLM (Fig. 8b). Both hydrological models showed similar median errors due to differences between RADOLAN and the other QPE products, with a larger variability in peakflows estimated by GR4H compared to ParFlowCLM, except for the Erft at Neubrueck. ~~GR4H showed higher sensitivity to QPE products compared to ParFlowCLM, which suggests that the distributed model smoothed more the differences between QPE products.~~

5 Discussion

5.1 Importance of hydrological, catchment-scale evaluation of QPE products

Our evaluation shows that the radar-based QPE agreed with rain gauges in terms of spatial pattern (Fig. 2, CC values in Fig. 3), which endorses that their use for a denser spatial characterization of precipitation fields is ~~needed~~useful. Conversely, all radar-based QPE still suffer from important underestimation of heavy precipitation relative to rain gauges when no vertical profile correction is applied, in particular for QPE relying only on horizontal reflectivity Z~~.~~. In a study over four countries, Schleiss et al. (2020) found that radar-based QPE ~~products underestimated heavy rain compared to rain gauges by up to 44%, and Park et al. (2019) found that the pan-European radar composites OPERA systematically underestimated daily precipitation compared to rain gauges. For the 14 July 2021 event, this underestimation may be explained by intense

collision-coalescence processes taking place close to the surface, i.e. mostly below the height levels monitored by the radars. With increasing distance from the site, radars scan at increasing heights. As a consequence, a nearly complete vertical profile of radar-measured variables is available in the vicinity of the different radar sites, but not area-wide. Exploiting the spatiotemporal variability of radar profiles using additional information from MRRs, methods of vertical profile correction, and gap-filling observations from an X-band radar helped ~~To~~ overcome the ~~resulting~~ deficiencies ~~for~~ of radar-based QPE for our case study, as can be seen in Fig~~, the spatiotemporal variability of radar profiles available at the different sites needs to be exploited for an area-wide correction of the vertical profiles in further steps~~. 2, 3 and 4.

Apart from the need for the correction of vertical profiles, Fig. 2 and Fig. 4 demonstrate the benefit of using polarimetric radar variables, such as specific attenuation and specific differential phase, to improve the QPE with respect to rain gauges, especially in extreme rainfall events (Gourley et al., 2010). ~~However, the improvements relative to RADOLAN, which is based on reflectivity and rain-gauges adjusted, could only be demonstrated at the catchment scale.~~ Model simulations by GR4H and especially by the distributed ParFlowCLM (Fig. 4-8) are coherent with the catchment-scale evaluation of Fig. 3, which ~~suggests~~ agreed in our case with~~that~~ the widely applied point-scale evaluation (e.g., Chen et al., 2021; Derin et al., 2019; Schleiss et al., 2020) ~~may not be thorough enough for hydrological applications~~.

The sensitivity of model simulations confirms the dominant impact of QPE on hydrological model performances (Braud et al., 2010; Oudin et al., 2006), underlining the need for reliable precipitation estimates especially for extreme flooding events. However, the effect of QPE ~~was~~ seemed relatively smaller (but still important) than that of ~~parameter estimation~~model parameterizations (Fig. 8)~~,~~ and it was variable from one catchment to another for the 14 July event (Fig. 6-7). The large differences between model estimates for a single QPE input reflect how uncertain peakflow estimates can be for such an extreme event (see Table 2 for the Ahr at Altenahr in ~~(~~Kreienkamp et al., 2021). The stronger effect of model parameterizations with respect to QPE may be due to the inclusiveness of our approach that did not exclude ill-performing parameterizations, especially in the case of ParFlowCLM. Removing these would lead to lower differences due to hydrological models, but this removal needs streamflow measurements for the event, which are unavailable or highly uncertain for our catchment set. The variability of the impact of errors in the QPE on peakflow simulations~~This~~ indicates that the differences (particularly the improvements) may be filtered out depending on the catchment properties (size and shape), the spatial variability of antecedent moisture conditions and the precipitation fields (Lin et al., 2018; Pechlivanidis et al., 2016; Pokhrel and Gupta, 2011; Saulnier and Le Lay, 2009). Antecedent soil moisture conditions may indeed be a high factor in the variability of the impact of QPE on the severity of the floods from one catchment to another, as the 10-day (respectively 5-day) antecedent precipitations varied from 40 to 66 mm (respectively 20 to 44 mm) over the seven catchments. High enough antecedent soil moisture conditions can indeed lead to extreme flooding events even when the precipitation amount is not relatively extreme (with respect to historical events), as shown by ~~(~~Schröter et al. (~~,~~ 2015) for the exceptional June 2013 flooding event in Germany.

5.2 (Dis)agreement of contrasting modeling approaches

Earlier studies focused on the difference between a distributed and a lumped approach while retaining the same complexity of process representation (e.g., Cole and Moore, 2009; Huang et al., 2019; Lobligeois et al., 2014). Our study compared contrasting modeling approaches both in terms of spatial and process representation. This follows the study of Poméon et al. (2020) that compared the 3D distributed ParFlow with the calibrated HBV model for flash flood events in Germany. Poméon et al. (2020) found that parameter estimation of HBV was highly dependent on extreme flooding events in the calibration period to achieve similar performances to ParFlow. In our study, all previous extreme floods were kept in the calibration time-series, but the strongest peakflow obtained with ParFlowCLM was still higher than the range of peakflows simulated with GR4H. The non-bracketed, high ParFlowCLM simulations associated with a low Manning's coefficient (LMann) may suggest that the tested value is ~~perhaps~~ too low, but it is still within the range of Manning's values from guidance documents (Lumbroso and Gaume, 2012). In addition, using a coarse model resolution should be compensated by lower Manning's coefficient values (Schalge et al., 2019). The large uncertainty due to the Manning's coefficient is perhaps accentuated by the nature of the relationship between the coefficient and the discharge, but it is still here a lower bound since uncertainty to other parameters (hydraulic conductivity, van Genuchten parameters) was not included. This underlines that even the physically-based approach does not completely overcome the issue of parameter estimation, particularly for extreme and record-breaking floods. Finally, the use of distributed Manning's roughness led to simulations that were all bracketed by the ParFlowCLM simulations with uniformly distributed values.

GR4H peakflows were delayed compared to the ones simulated by ParFlowCLM, which is perhaps related to the delaying effect of the unit hydrographs of GR4H. The base time of these unit hydrographs is lumped (i.e., catchment-averaged) and calibrated on long-term discharge records, which implies that it reflects a smoother response than the exceptional July 2021 flood development. Moreover, GR4H significantly underestimated peakflow relative to ParFlowCLM for the Erft at Neubrueck and the Rur at Monschau. In the case of the Erft at Neubrueck, we suspect that these differences are related to the strong anthropogenic intervention (flood protection systems, dominant agricultural activity, or the existence of large mining pits with significant water-holding capacity; see Table 1 and Staatliches Umweltamt Köln, 2005) which could be learned by GR4H from the calibration process on historical observations, in contrast to ParFlowCLM that does not explicitly account for such anthropogenic effects. For the Rur at Monschau, the differences between simulated hydrographs by ParFlowCLM and GR4H may be due to the existence of small reservoirs at the upstream. These differences would be better understood if GR4H parameters have been estimated using information from hourly discharge measurements. Finally, the analysis of the effect of the calibration choices on GR4H simulations (not shown here) highlighted the effect of the hydroclimatic specificities of the calibration period on the model simulations for an unprecedented or future events (Brigode et al., 2013).

Accounting for the 3D, soil and subsoil heterogeneities in the representation of hydrological processes allows for ParFlowCLM to well represent the runoff generation by overland flow and increased interflow in the upstream steep part of

the study catchments, but it would be improved by including anthropogenic effects on hydrological processes that had a large impact on the flood generation mechanisms for this event (Mohr et al., 2022). The structure of ParFlowCLM allows for coupling the complex hydrological and morphodynamical processes (sediment and debris transport, bank erosion, and developing landslides) that non-linearly interacted with the flood propagation and river morphology increasing the destructiveness of the event.

Due to the low computational cost of the GR4H implementation, estimating the uncertainty of its peakflow simulations was less demanding than with ParFlowCLM. However, using the extreme, physically possible values of Manning's parameter allowed ParFlowCLM to simulate higher peakflows than the calibrated model, suggesting that it could provide a more accurate range of possible values of unprecedented events, unlike the calibrated GR4H. One could combine both models by running a few ParFlowCLM simulations, use GR4H with various calibration approaches to map the uncertainty in peakflow estimation from different ~~behavioural~~behavioral model parameters and different climatic inputs, and then transfer this uncertainty to ParFlowCLM simulations. This would, however, require exhaustive analysis of the agreement between ParFlowCLM and GR4H for a wide variety of catchments.

5.3 Study limitations

First, focusing on only one event for a few catchments makes our conclusions event- and location-dependent. A large sample approach (such as in Raimonet et al., 2017; Singh and Reza Najafi, 2020) would help analyze the interplay between QPE and contrasting modeling philosophies not only for extreme event purposes, but also for overall long-term hydrological needs. Second, the absence of reliable discharge measurements for the catastrophic event limits our model evaluation, but our model simulations could be used as estimates of the severity of the flooding event, despite the large uncertainty in simulated peakflows. Third, our study overlooked the effect of distributed antecedent saturation on the evaluation of QPE, which would help explain the differences between the catchments under humid antecedent conditions. Fourth, the accuracy of the parameter estimation in our study could be improved by ~~adopting a distributed Manning's value for the ParFlowCLM setup,~~ investigating the uncertainty related to other distributed parameters (such as hydraulic conductivity; Poméon et al., 2020), or using hourly discharge streamflows for the GR4H calibration.

6 Conclusions and future work

The July 2021 events in western Germany questioned the ability of our current methods of precipitation estimation and hydrological modeling of correctly anticipating the severity of the floods. We ~~evaluated~~ compared state-of-the-art radar-based QPE and two contrasting hydrological models, the conceptual and lumped GR4H with the 3D-distributed and physically-based ParFlowCLM, to analyze how the choices of QPE or hydrological modeling approach impacted the simulated peakflows. We concluded that:

1. Better characterization of the vertical profiles of radar variables led to significant improvements of radar-based QPE for the extreme event of 14 July 2021 with respect to rain gauges. These improvements were confirmed at both the point scale and the catchment scale. ~~The different radar-based QPE products underestimated the total precipitation depth for the 14 July 2021 relatively to rain gauges, due to high variability of the vertical structure of precipitation.~~

2. ~~Using phase-based variables from polarimetric radar retrievals helped improve the QPE, especially by including the specific differential phase (K_{DP}) combined with specific attenuation at horizontal/vertical polarization ($A_{H/A}$). These improvements were best highlighted at the catchment scale using the hydrological models, which suggests that a point-scale evaluation may not be enough for hydrological applications.~~

3.2. ~~The~~Errors in the QPE impacted both GR4H and ParFlowCLM peakflow estimates~~simulations~~, but their impact on the severity of the flood (i.e., surpassing the highest historically measured peakflow) varied from one catchment to another.

4.3. A large uncertainty characterized the peakflow simulations by both GR4H and ParFlowCLM, but they agreed in detecting the historical threshold~~s~~ in most catchments with low anthropogenic influence.~~.~~

As future work, a larger timespan with more extreme events are to be considered to confirm these conclusions. A correction of vertical profiles of radar variables is to be implemented for further improvements of the accuracy of the QPE products. A modeling framework that combines ParFlowCLM and GR4H to better anticipate never-seen-before events is to be designed to benefit from the advantages of both modeling philosophies.

Author contributions. Conceptualization: MS, CFP, and SK; Data curation: MS and JYC; Formal analysis: MS; Funding acquisition: CFP, SK, and ST; Investigation: MS and CFP; Methodology: MS, CFP, and AB; Project administration: CFP, ST, and SK; Software: MS and AB; Supervision: CFP and SK; Visualization: MS; Writing – original draft: MS; Writing – review and editing: MS, CFP, AB, JYC, and ST.

Competing interests. The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Funding. This study is part of the RealPEP (Near-Realtime Quantitative Precipitation Estimation and Prediction https://www2.meteo.uni-bonn.de/realpep/doku.php) P4 project (Evaluation of QPE and QPN improvements in a flash flood nowcasting framework with data assimilation), funded by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (German Research Foundation). The authors gratefully acknowledge the Earth System Modelling Project (ESM) for funding this work by providing computing time for ParFlowCLM runs on the ESM partition of the supercomputer JUWELS at the Jülich Supercomputing Centre (JSC)~~Computing resources for ParFlowCLM were provided by the Jülich Supercomputing Center (JSC)~~.

Code and data availability. Both ParFlowCLM (https://parflow.org/) and GR4H (https://github.com/cran/airGR) codes are available in public repositories. All original data are public, except for the QPE products generated for the study, which can be made available upon reasonable request from the authors.

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Table 1: Hydroclimatic and landscape characteristics of the seven studied catchments. Data sources are detailed in Sect. 3.3.

River[a]	Area (km^2)	Mean precipitation (mm yr^{-1})	Aridity index (-)	Mean discharge (mm yr^{-1})	Artificial[b] (%)	Agricultural[b] (%)	Forest[b] (%)	Water bodies[b] (%)	Highest measured peakflow before July 2021 (m^3 s^{-1})
Ahr at Muesch	350	790	0.75	280	4.0	52.9	43.1	0.0	132
Ahr at Altenahr	760	760	0.78	280	3.5	39.5	57.0	0.0	236
Kyll at Densborn	470	890	0.65	450	4.0	47.7	48.2	0.0	180
Kyll at Kordel	840	830	0.71	370	5.4	51.9	42.7	0.0	218
Erft at Bliesheim	550	700	0.89	130	12.6	59.1	28.2	0.0	55.8
Erft at Neubrueck	1670	740	0.86	180	17.7	64.3	17.8	0.2	46.6
Rur at Monschau	144	1080	0.52	760	6.1	25.4	62.9	5.6	109.6

[a]All catchments are regulated, i.e. contain at least one reservoir or dam at the upstream of the catchment outlet, according to the non-exhaustive database at: https://dewiki.de/Lexikon/Liste_von_Talsperren_in_Deutschland (in German, last access: 16 September 2022).
[b]These percentages were computed based on the CORINE Land Cover classification of the Copernicus Land Monitoring Service (Langanke et al. 2016). They correspond to the proportion of the catchment that is occupied by the classes belonging to (1) "Artificial Surfaces" for Artificial, (2) "Agricultural areas" for Agricultural, (3) "Forest and seminatural areas" for Forest, and (4) "Wetlands" and "Water bodies" for Water bodies. See https://land.copernicus.eu/user-corner/technical-library/corine-land-cover-nomenclature-guidelines/html (last access: 16 September 2022).

Table 2: Summary of QPE products tested used for the 14 July 2021 for the study region. MRR refers to Micro Rain Radar. JuXPol is an X-band radar located near Jülich (Fig. 1a).

QPE abbreviation	Description	Source	Run with
REGNIE[a] (for *REgionalisierte NIEderschlagshöhe*)	Daily gridded precipitation product based on linearly interpolated measurements from rain gauges using their location, height, exposition, and local mountain slopes	(Rauthe et al. (, 2013) and DWD (https://opendata.dwd.de, last access: 16 September 2022)	
Rain gauges	Hourly Pprecipitation measurements from rain gauges. The average value for each catchment was estimated using Thiessen polygons	(Kaspar et al. (, 2013); Winterrath et al. (, 2018) and DWD (https://opendata.dwd.de)	GR4H
RADOLAN (*Radar-Online-Aneichung*)	*Radar-Online-Aneichung*, tThe hourly operational QPE product of the DWD, adjusted to rain gauges (RADOLAN-RW)	DWD (https://opendata.dwd.de (Winterrath et al., 2018), last access: 16 September 2022)	
RZH	Precipitation estimation based on horizontal reflectivity (Z_h): $R(Z_h)$		
RZHKDP	Precipitation estimation based on horizontal reflectivity (Z_h) when $Z_h \leq$ 40 dBZ and specific differential phase (K_{DP}) when $Z_h >$ 40 dBZ: $R(Z_h)/R(K_{DP})$	Chen et al. (2021)	
RAHKDP	Precipitation estimation based on specific attenuation at horizontal polarization (A_h) and specific differential phase (K_{DP}) when $Z_h >$ 40 dBZ: $R(A_h)/R(K_{DP})$		GR4H, ParFlowCLM
RZ-VPC	Improved RZ product using MRR measurements and a vertical profile correction (VPC) of Z. JuXPol is used as a gap filler		
RZKDP-VPC	Improved RZKDP product using MRR measurements and a vertical profile correction of Z and K_{DP}. JuXPol is used as a gap filler	(Chen et al. (, Submitted)	
RAKDP-VPC	Improved RAKDP product using MRR measurements and a vertical profile correction of K_{DP}. JuXPol is used as a gap filler		

[a]REGNIE covers most of the studied catchments, except for the Rur at Monschau, where it covers only ~50% of its area. Only the covered area is used to estimate the average precipitation for this catchment.

Figure 1: (a) Location of study region, catchment polygons and the four C-band radars operated by the German Weather Service (DWD) in Essen, Neuheilenbach, Offenthal, and Flechtdorf (top-right panel), and (b) hypsometric curves of the seven catchments. Negative elevations are due to open-pit mines in the region.

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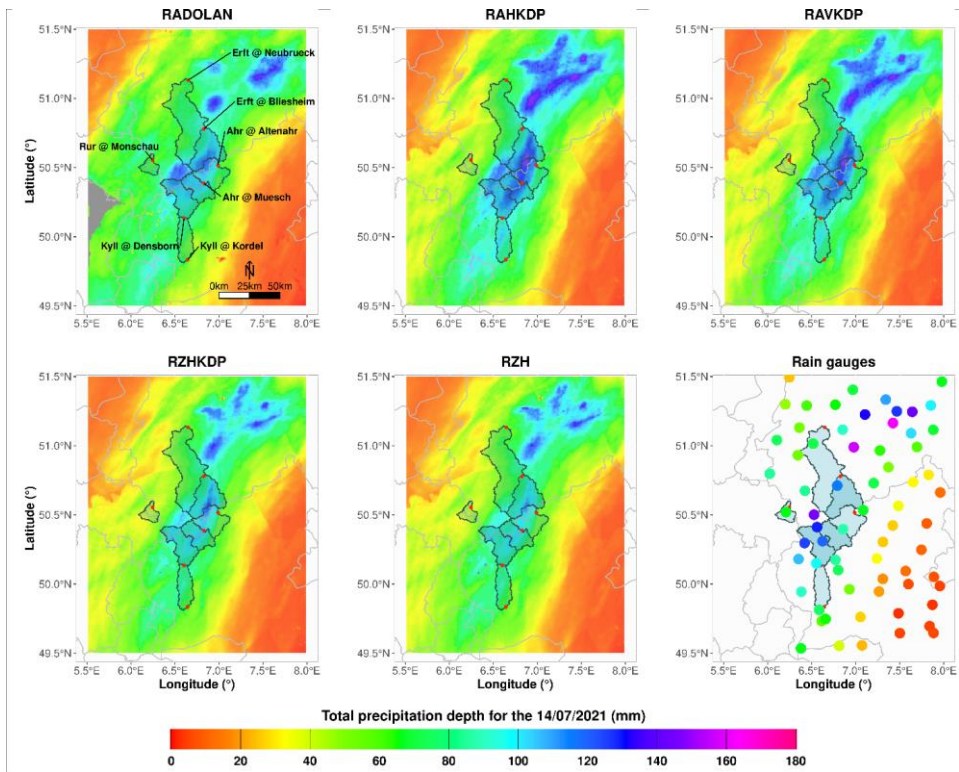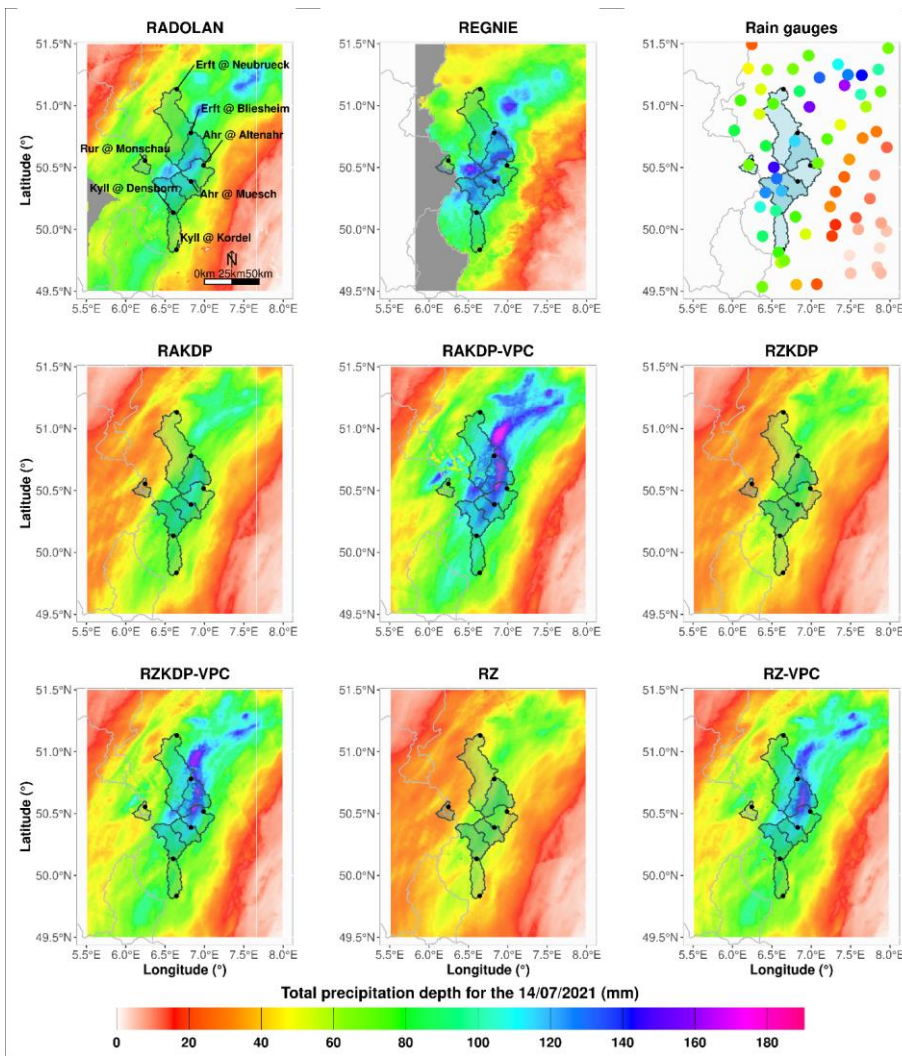
Figure 2: Total precipitation depths for the 14 July 2021 (between 14-07-2021 00:00 UTC and 15-07-2021 00:00 UTC) from ~~the six~~nine QPE products (Table 2) over the study region. Note that REGNIE is available only at the daily time step and that it covers only ~50% of the area of the catchment drained by the Rur at Monschau.

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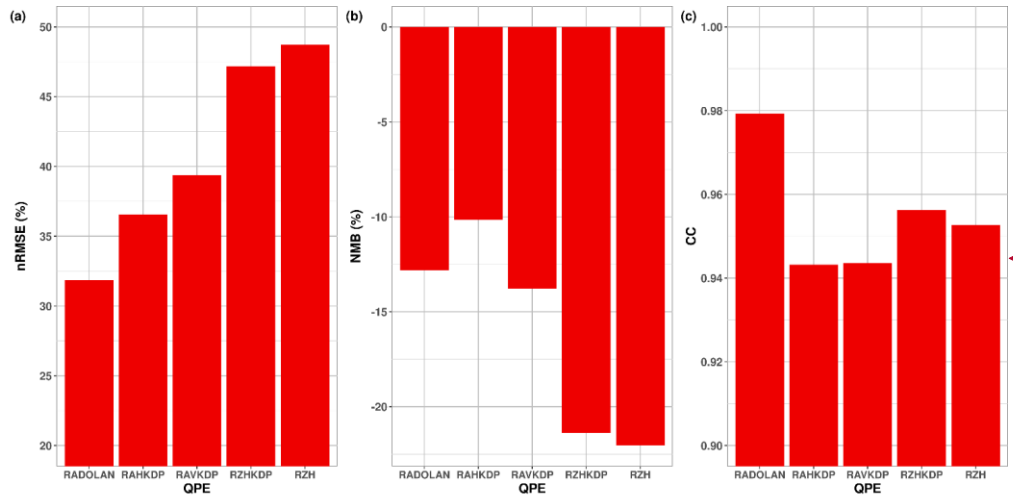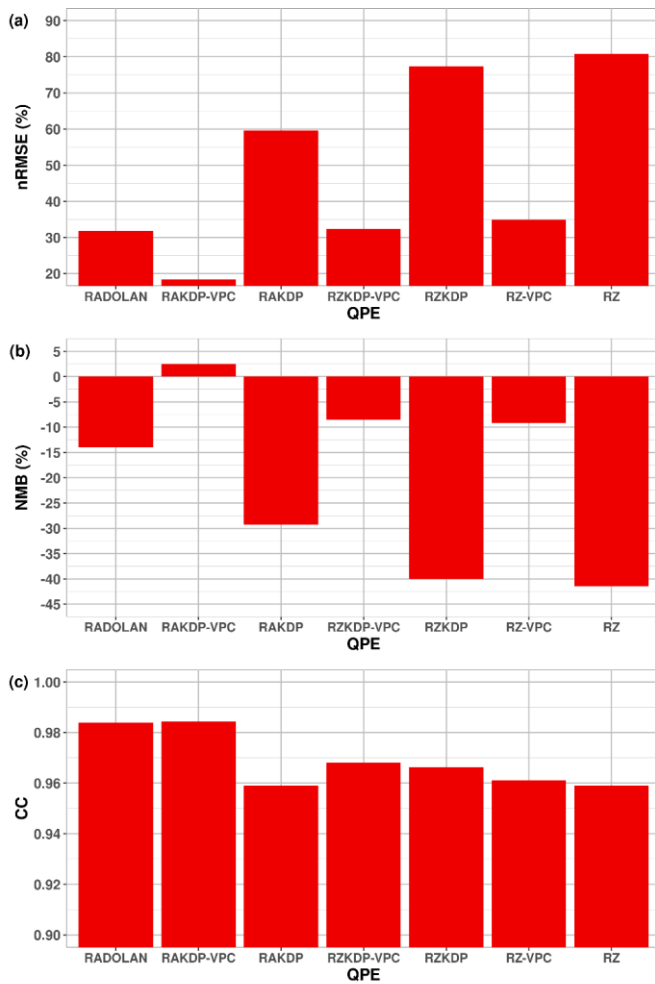
Figure 3: Point-scale evaluation scores of radar-based QPE with respect to ~~ground-based~~ measurements from 63 rain gauges (Figure 2) of total precipitation depth of the 14 July 2021.
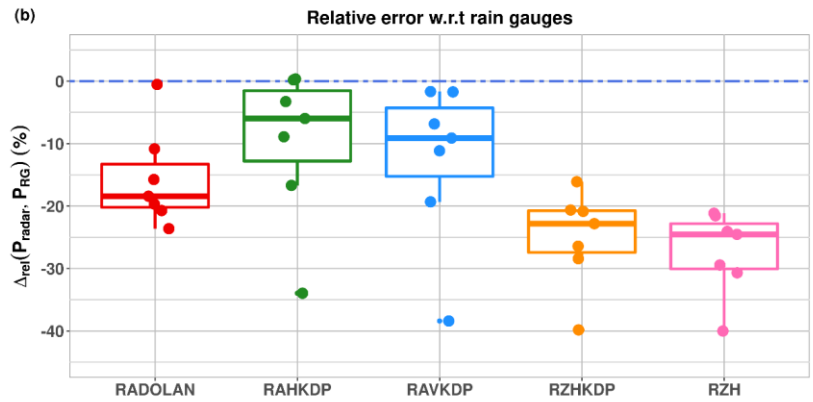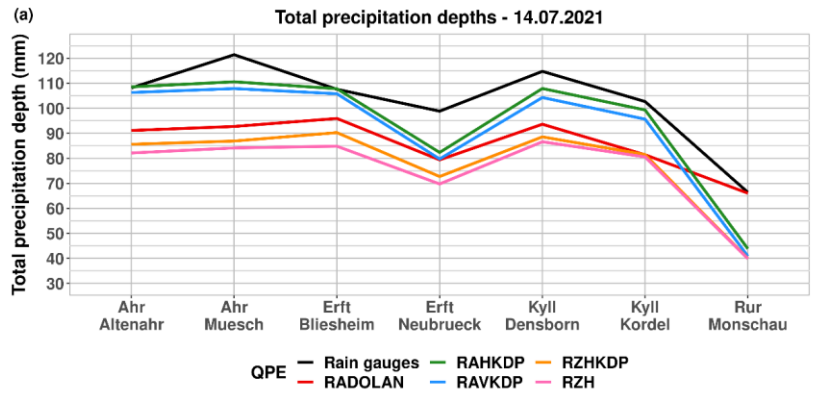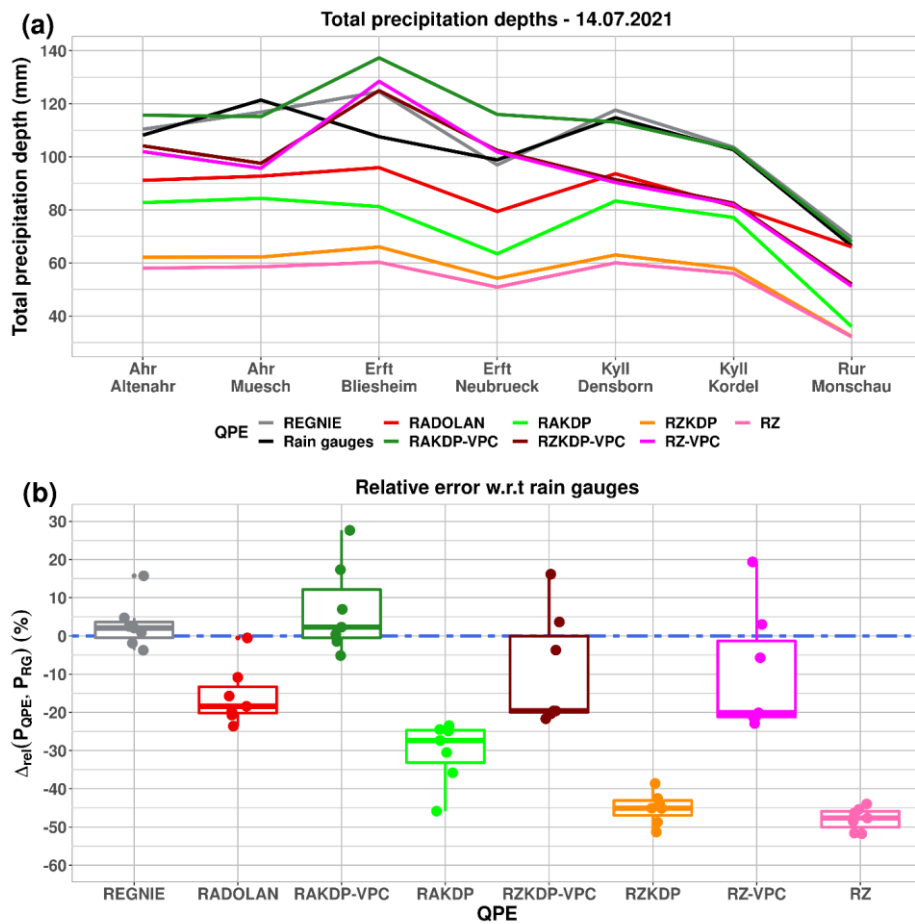
Figure 4: (a) Total precipitation depths for the 14 July 2021 estimated by rain gauges, REGNIE and radar-based QPE products. (b) ~~Catchment-scale evaluation scores of~~Relative errors in REGNIE and radar-based QPE ~~-~~with respect ~~to~~ to ~~ground-based measurements of total precipitation depth of the 14 July 2021.~~estimates from rain gauges using Thiessen polygons of the total catchment-scale precipitation depth for the 14 July 2021.
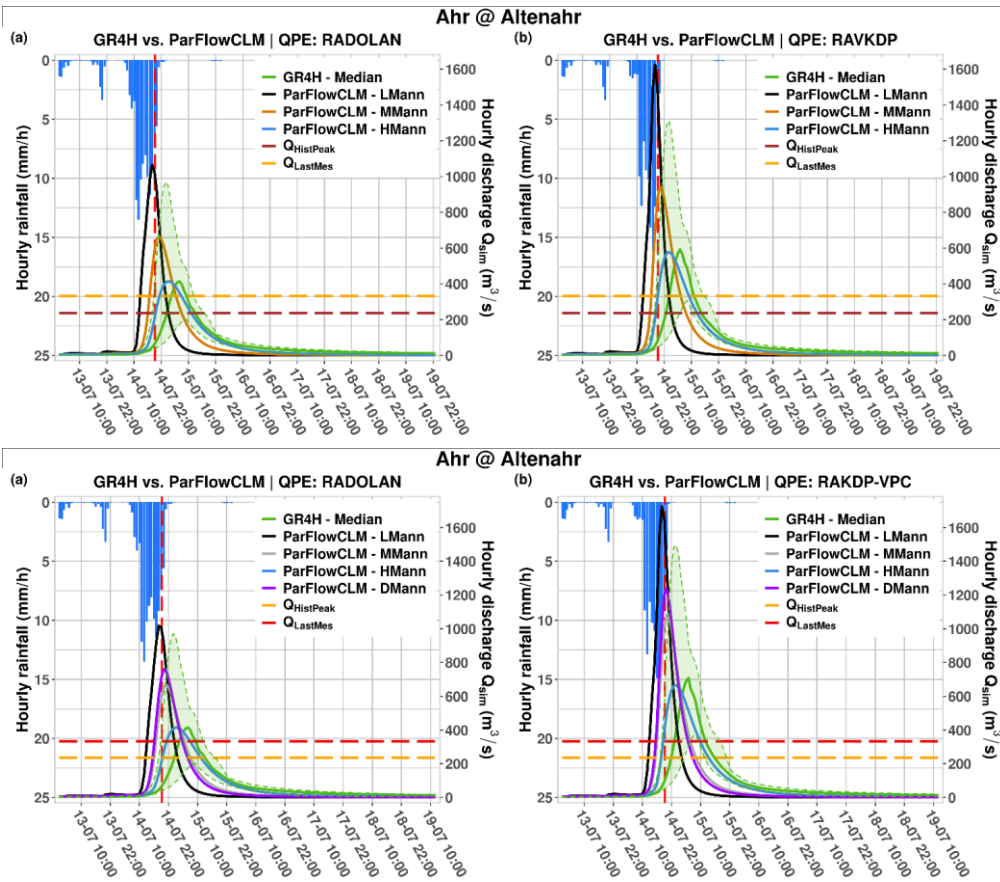
Figure 5: Simulated hydrographs by GR4H (in green) and ParFlowCLM (with low Manning's coefficient ~~LMann~~ in black, medium Manning's ~~MMann~~ coefficient in ~~dark orange~~grey, ~~and~~ high Manning's ~~HMann~~ coefficient in blue, and distributed Manning's coefficient DMann in violet) using (a) RADOLAN and (b) ~~RAVKDP~~VPC as precipitation input for the Ahr at Altenahr. The green shaded area is delimited by the minimum and maximum values of estimated discharge by GR4H for each time step. The ~~orange~~dark red dashed line indicates the highest measured peakflow before July 2021. The ~~orange~~ horizontal red dashed line indicates the last measured flow before measurement devices became unavailable, and the vertical red dashed line its timing.
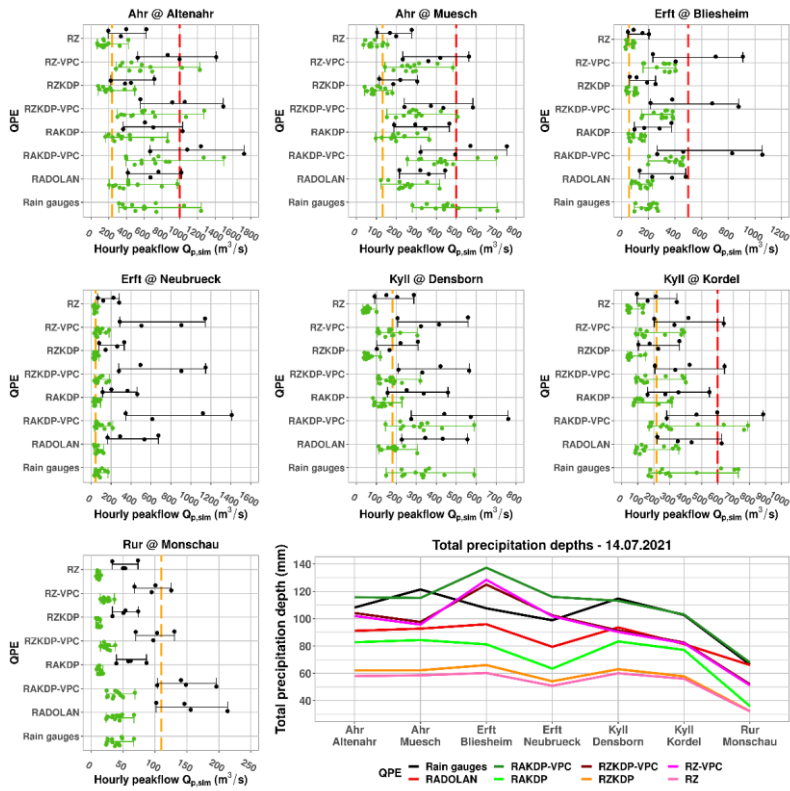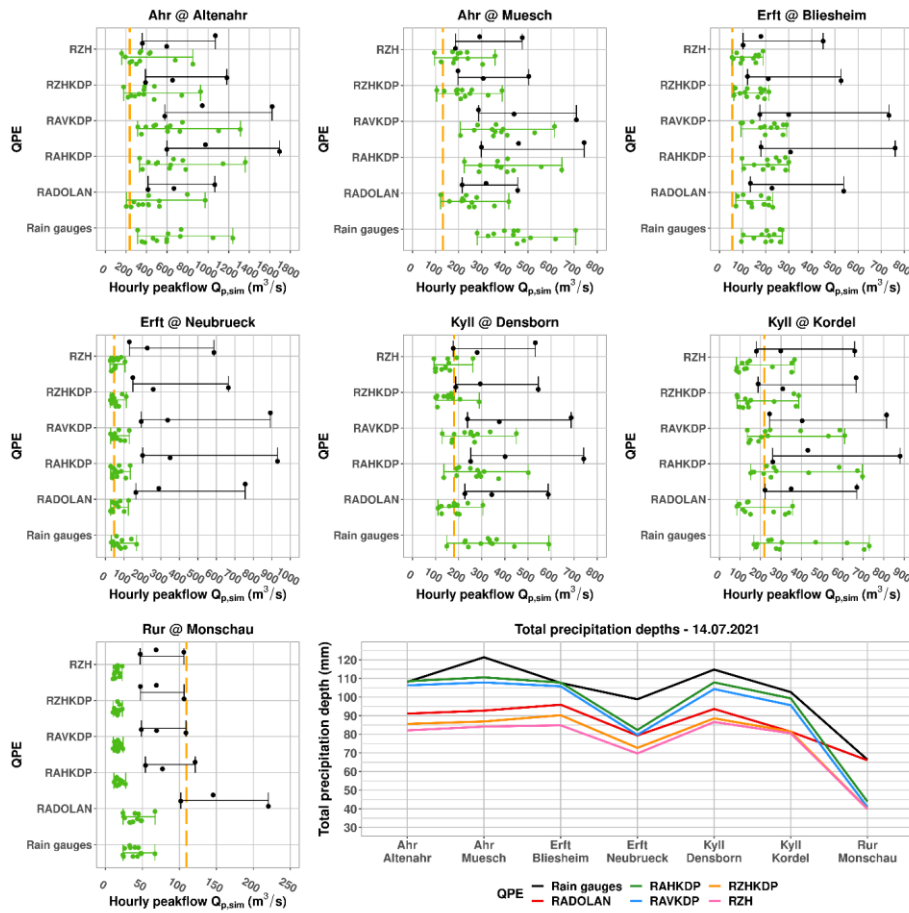
Figure 6: Distributions of simulated peakflows by GR4H (in green) and ParFlowCLM (in black) using ~~six~~ eight QPE inputs (on y-axis) for the seven catchments. Orange dashed lines indicate the highest measured peakflow before July 2021. When available, red dashed lines indicate the peakflow estimates based on relationships between water-level depths and discharge from (Mohr et al. (, 2022).

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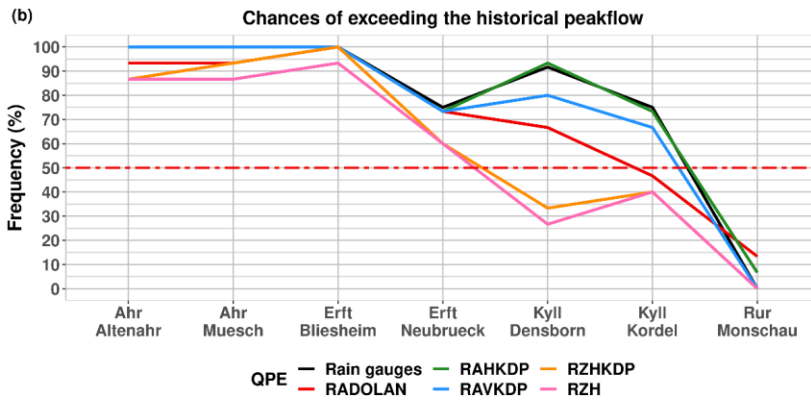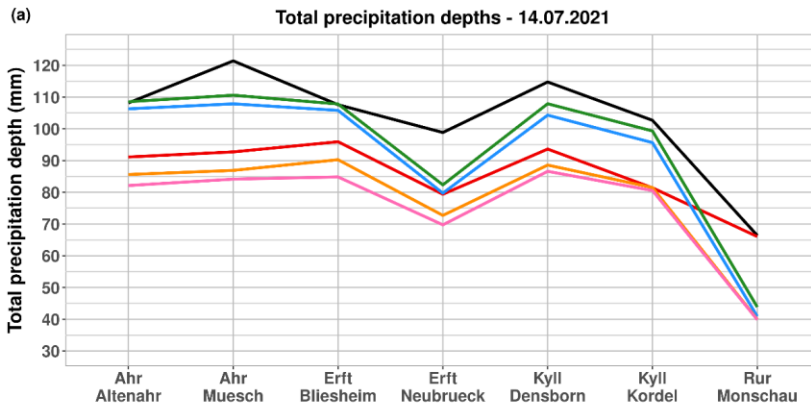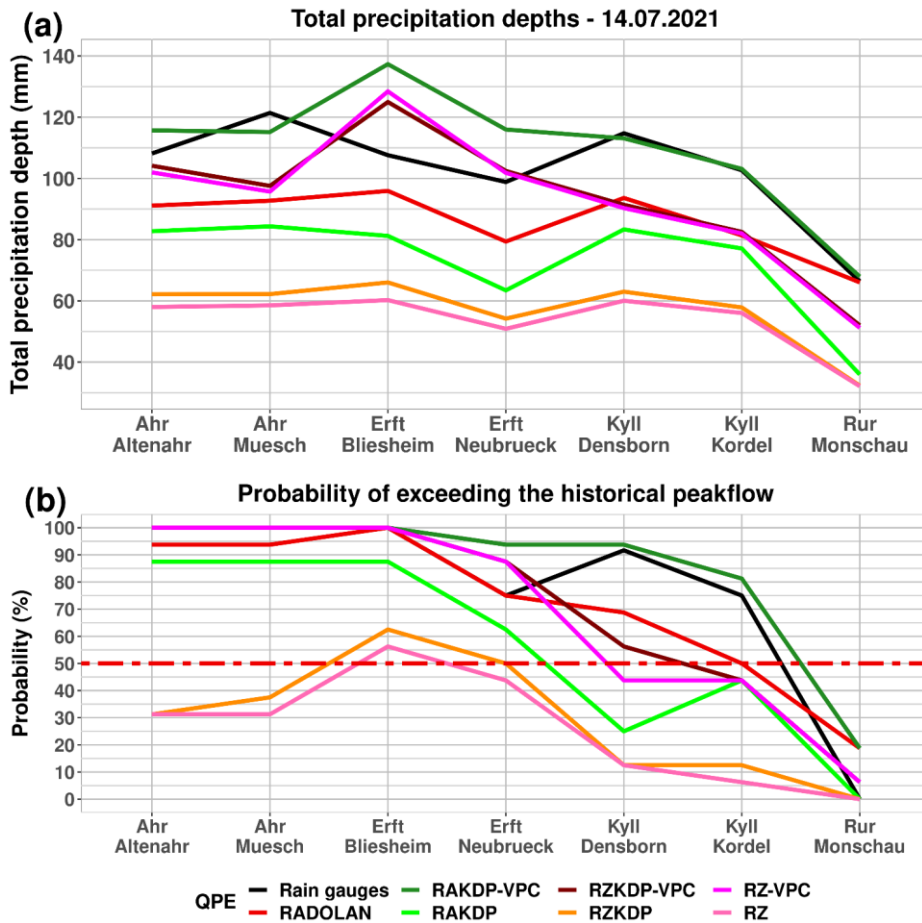
Figure 7: (a) Total precipitation depth for the 14 July 2021 from the ~~six~~ eight QPE products for each of the seven catchments and (b) resulting ~~chance~~probabilities of overpassing the highest measured peakflow prior to July 2021.
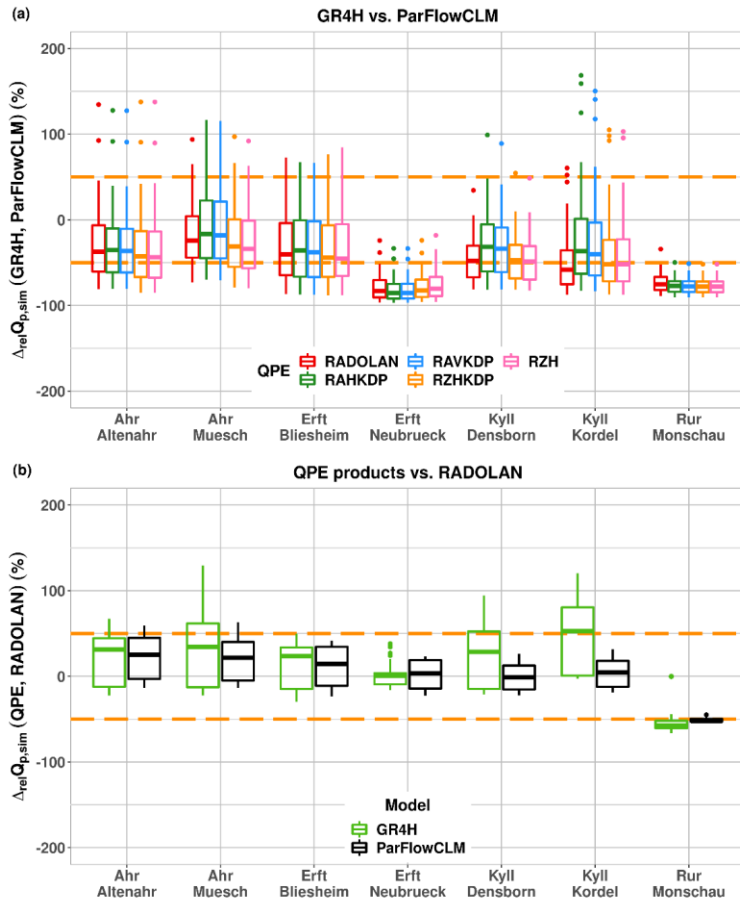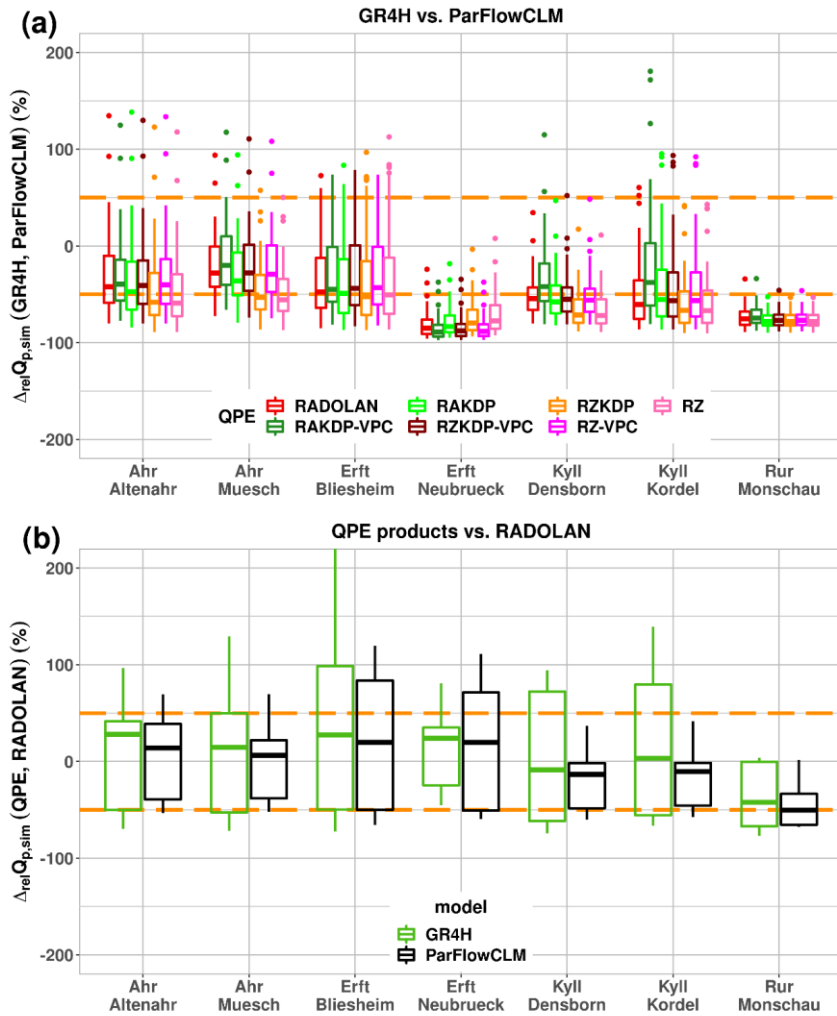
Figure 8: Relative errors in simulated peakflow due to (a) applying GR4H instead of ParFlowCLM across all ~~radar-based~~ QPE products, and to (b) replacing RADOLAN by any of the remaining ~~five~~ seven (or six for ParFlowCLM) hourly QPE products (Table 2) as precipitation input for the July 2021 event. Orange dashed lines limit the 50% relative error region.

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