The influence of polarization on NO_2 box air mass factors at 440nm for nadir satellite observations

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Motivation

- DOAS retrievals of atmospheric trace gases yield *slant column densities*.
- Radiative transfer simulations are needed to convert these into easily interpretable *vertical column densities*, via an *air mass factor*.
- The incoming solar irradiation is unpolarized; the radiation becomes polarized by the various scattering processes in the atmosphere before it is being measured by the instrument.
- These scattering processes exhibit a scattering angle polarization dependence.
- Often, polarization effects are not considered in the radiative transfer calculations leading to the *air mass factors*.

Aim

- To quantify the effect of polarization on box air mass factors (BAMF) of NO_2.

Study setup

- NO_2 Box air mass factors (BAMF; indicative of vertical measurement sensitivity) at 440nm are calculated with *SCIATRAN 3.4.5* for both vector (with polarization effects) and scalar (no polarization effects) radiative transfer in spher. geometry.
- From these calcuations, two lookup-tables (vector and scalar cases) are constructed, using the following scenarios:

cos(sza):	0.01, 0.03, 0.05, 0.15, 0.25, 0.3, 0.5, 0.6, 0.7, 0.8, 0.9, 1.0
cos(vza):	0.3, 0.5, 0.7, 0.8, 1.0
rel. azimuth angle:	0°, 15°, 30°, 45°, 60°, 75°, 90°, 105°, 120°, 135°, 150°, 165°, 180°
surface albedo:	0.0, 0.05, 0.1, 0.2, 0.5, 0.8, 1.0
surface altitude:	0, 1, 2, 5, 10 km
altitude:	0..10km (100m), 10..60km (1km), 60..100km (2km)
aerosols:	none

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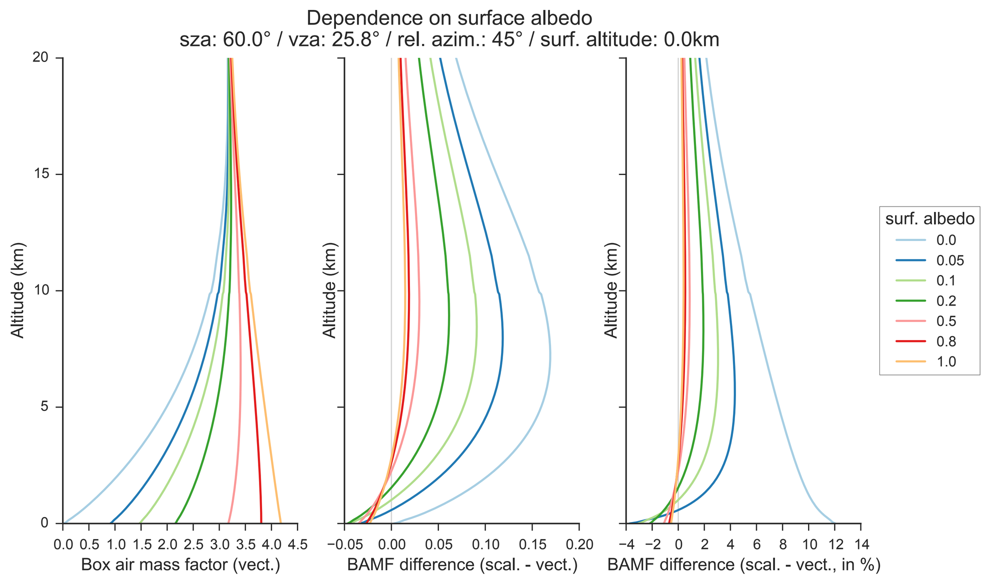
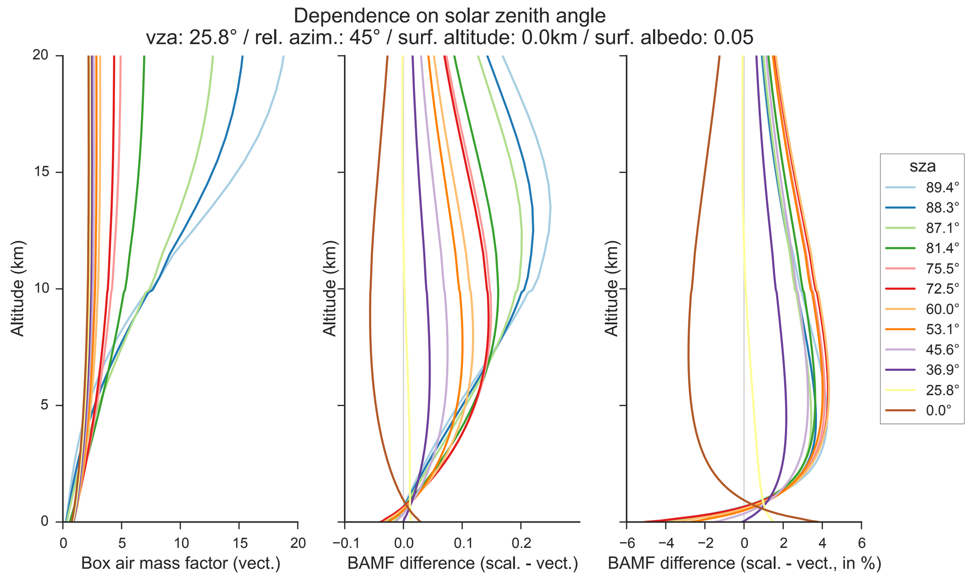
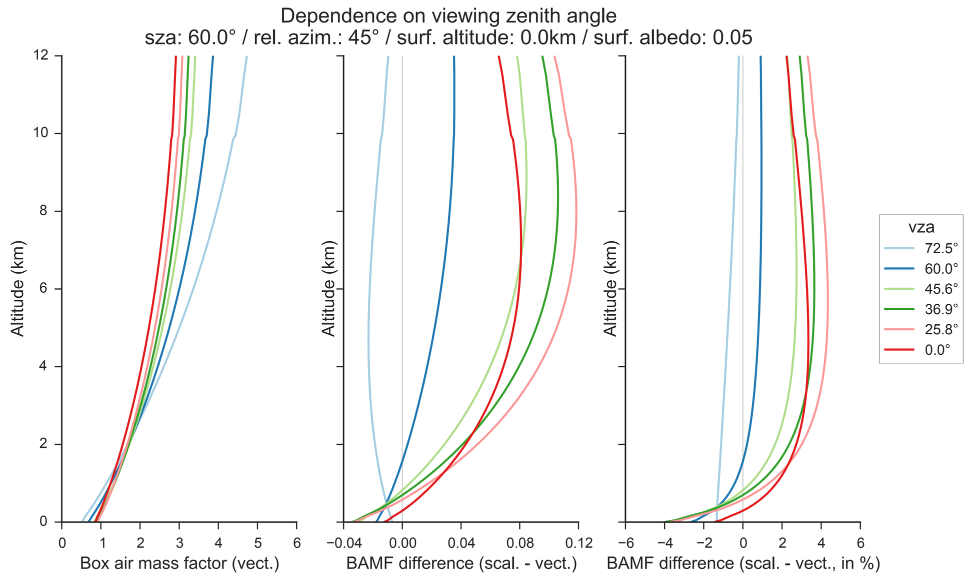
Sensitivity Study



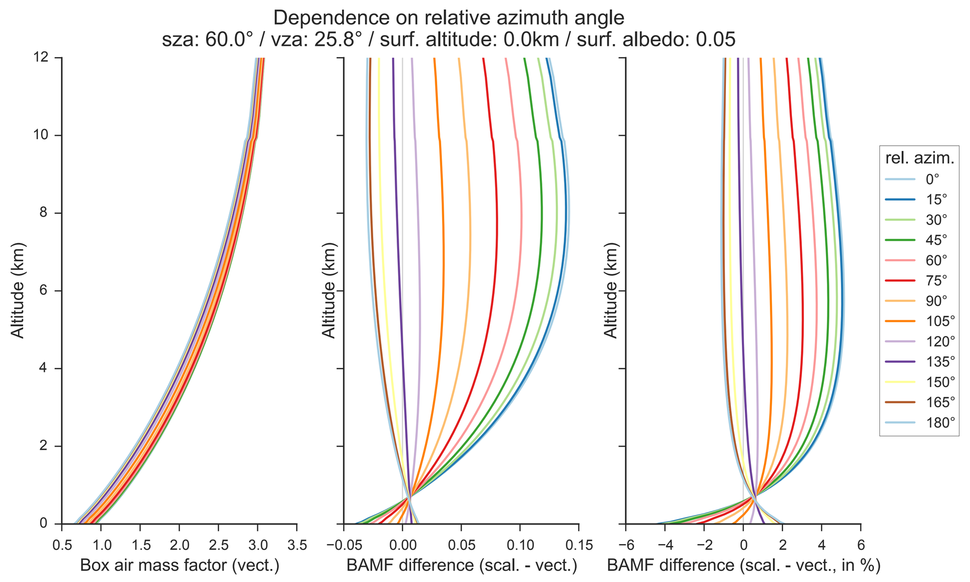
- For a typical GOME-2 scene (sza=60°, vza~26°), not accounting for polarization effects leads to a systematic error having a high-bias in the BAMF for all surface albedos.
- For very dark surfaces, the systematic error can reach >10% at the surface.
- For more realistic albedos of, e.g., 0.05, the systematic error is highest at ~5km and is less than 4% everywhere.
- For bright surfaces, the systematic error is less than 1% everywhere (under-/over-estimation below/above ~3km, respectively).



- For an albedo of 0.05 and a line-of-sight / relative azimuth of ~26°/45°, not accounting for polarization effects leads to an under-/over-estimation of the sensitivity below/above ~1.5km, respectively, for all solar zenith angles >0°.
- For solar zenith angles >0°, the over-estimation is highest at ~4-5km; its maximum varies between ~2% (sza~26°) and ~4.5% (sza~89°).
- For these scenarios, the under-estimation close to the surface varies between 0% (sza~37°) and ~5% (sza~89°).



- For an albedo of 0.05 and a solar zenith / relative azimuth angle of 60°/45°, not accounting for polarization effects leads to an over-/under-estimation of the BAMF above/below ~1-2km, respectively, depending on the line-of-sight.
- The over-estimation is highest at ~4-6km; its maximum varies between ~3-4%, for viewing zenith angles <60°.
- In all cases, the under-estimation close to the surface is below ~4%.



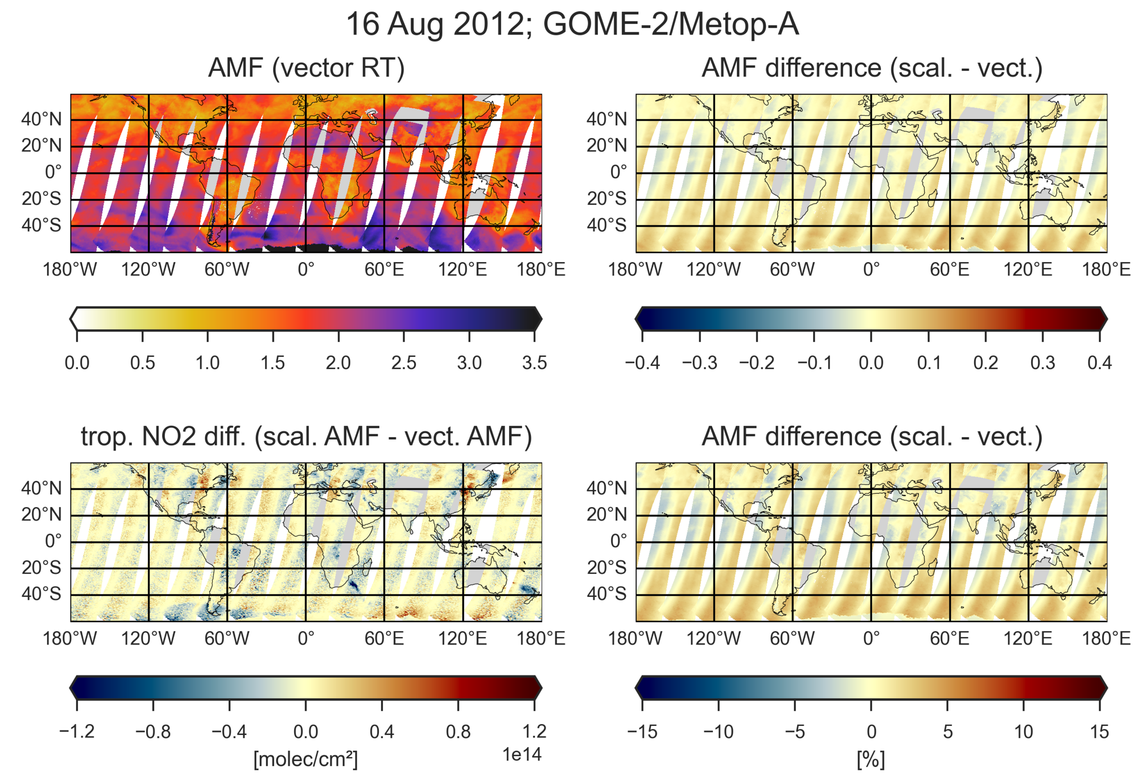
- For an albedo of 0.05 and a solar / viewing zenith angle of 60°/~26°, not accounting for polarization effects leads to an over-/under-estimation of the measurement sensitivity above/below ~1-2km, respectively, for almost all relative azimuth angles.
- The over-estimation is largest (~5%) when looking towards the sun and peaks at ~6km.
- The error becomes smaller with larger rel. azimuth angles, until ~-1% for raa=180°.
- Near the surface, lines-of-sight towards the sun show an under-estimation of up to 4%, and large relative azimuth angles show an over-estimation of up to 2%.

Case Study: GOME-2/Metop-A, August 2012

Study Setup

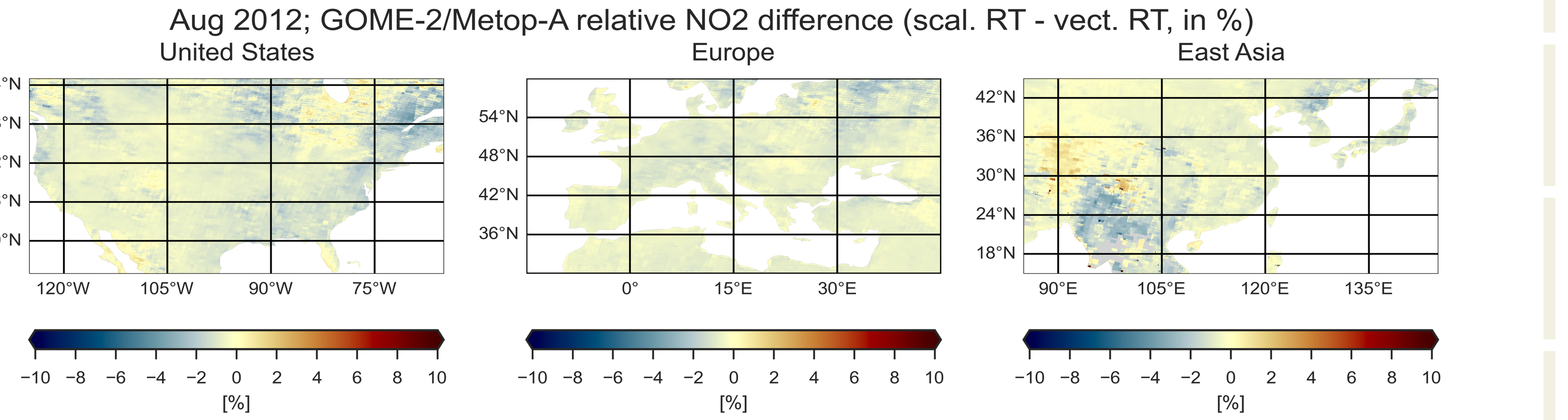
- NO_2 profiles from MACC2 MOZART reanalysis (fbov)
- Surface albedo from OMI climatology (OMLERV003)
- Surface altitude fom Global Multi-resolution Terrain Elevation Data 2010 (GMTED2010)
- Tropopause heights from ECMWF ERA-Interim
- No aerosols

Single day comparison: 16 Aug 2012



- AMF data show signatures of anthropogenic pollution (U.S., EU, China, shipping lanes).
- Clear dependence of polarization effect on viewing geometry (vza/raa).
- This dependence propagates into a systematic error of ±1E14 molec/cm² in the NO_2 trop. VCD over unpolluted regions.

Influence on monthly mean trop. NO_2 vert. column fields



- Under- and overestimations resulting from viewing geometry cancel in monthly aggregates/composites.
- Not accounting for polarization effects in the AMF calculation leads to systematic under-estimation of trop. NO_2 vertical column averages from 1-2% (Europe, China) up to 2-4% (United States).

Conclusions

- Polarization effects have significant impact on NO_2 box air mass factors.
- The impact depends on the measurement scene in a complex way and cannot be easily predicted.
- Sensitivity to NO_2 located near the surface / in the free troposphere can be under-/over-estimated by up to 5% if polarization is not taken into account, depending on the scenario.
- In single orbits of GOME-2 measurements, the bias introduced by not accounting for polarization effects is mostly dependent on the line-of-sight.
- In monthly averages, these geometry-dependent biases mostly cancel out; a systematic low-bias of the tropospheric NO_2 fields of up to 4% remains.
- In realistic scenarios (including aerosols), the effect of polarization is expected to be less pronounced.

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DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.16701

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*EXZELLENT.

This study has been funded by the University of Bremen, DLR in the scope of the Sentinel-5 Precursor verification project (grant 50EE1247), and the EU FP7 project Quality Assurance for Essential Climate Variables (QA4ECV).
Data have been provided by EUMETSAT (GOME-2 lv1b), the MACC project (atmospheric profiles), NASA (surface albedo), USGS (surface altitude), and ECMWF (meteorological data leading to tropopause heights).