

Review 1: R. D. Mueller (Referee)

dietmar.muller@sydney.edu.au

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This paper is topical in the sense that there is a definitive need in the community to develop shared workflows to generate new paleogeographic boundary conditions for paleoclimate models in a re-usable, iterative fashion. I am sure that the entire paleoclimate and -ocean modelling community welcomes efforts such as Baatsen et al.'s to move in this direction.

Combined continental and oceanic paleo-elevation models have been constructed for some time, and even though Baatsen et al. provide a new workflow, workflows not too dissimilar to the one employed here have been used previously.

AC: The statement above is true, but the authors believe that the use of masks directly exported from a plate-tectonic reconstruction with the ability to alter the latter should make such workflows easier and more up-to-date.

A comment on this has been added to the introduction.

A paper worthwhile citing in this context would be Markwick and Valdes (2004) who constructed a Maastrichtian digital global elevation model - however, neither their workflow nor their model was made publicly available. Next Herold et al. (2008) published a mid-Miocene global elevation model; this paper should be referenced as well, seeing that their workflow was also somewhat similar to that of Baatsen et al. They made their digital elevation model publicly available, and the main reason why their workflow was not explicitly published was that it included many manual steps, which are hard to automate.

AC: The workflow is indeed similar with respect to the plate-tectonic reconstruction, albeit that the treatment of shorelines, continental shelves and shallows is slightly different. Furthermore, the period considered has a geography that is very similar to that of the present day and the extension towards other periods or rotational frames is not made. However, the workflow in aforementioned papers does have important similarities to the one used by the authors. Both these are now mentioned in the introduction and their references are added.

This is clearly what motivates the Baatsen et al. paper, ie the desire to publish a streamlined, easy-to-use workflow that can easily be re-used for different plate reconstructions and different times, and their advance is therefore expected to be in this area.

The critical test to the innovation presented in this paper is therefore in assessing to what extent their workflow is usable and re-usable.

AC: this part of the paper was still lacking and thus the biggest changes were made here. A new extended set of source files has been added along with the code and a ReadMe that covers the entire procedure in detail. Notifications on this part have been added to the text.

Firstly, the authors use the Seton et al. (2012) reconstruction (in a different reference frame), but the Mueller et al. (2008) paleo-age grids (and convert for the different reference frames). But the paleo-age grids differ between the 2008 and 2012 model, e.g. in the Pacific since the Seton et al. model incorporates the Ontong-Java-Manihiki-Hikurangi plateau break-up. So the age grid and subsequent bathymetry are inconsistent with the tectonic reconstruction. Paleo-age grids that are compatible with the Seton et al. reconstruction were published by Mueller et al. (2013) and are freely downloadable: <http://www.earthbyte.org/seawater-chemistry-driven-by-supercontinent-assembly-breakup-and-dispersal/>

AC: The age grid from Mueller et al. (2008) was indeed used in combination with a reconstruction based on the one presented by Seton et al. (2012). For this part, only the

present day age grid was used in combination with the plate-tectonic reconstruction to create a grid that is compatible with the latter, but leaving out gaps where oceanic crust has undergone subduction. This was not clear in the original text and has now been clarified. The bathymetry grids used to fill in these gaps are adopted from Mueller et al. (2008), as this is the latest available palaeo-bathymetry grid. In addition, oceanic plateaus and ridges were treated separately and thus no paleo-age or -depth grid was used.

In order to edit the rotated continental topography to reflect the topography at 38 Ma the authors manually edit regions for paleo-topography (e.g. Andes) - to use this workflow to make paleotopography grids through time in an automated fashion is extremely tedious.

AC: An important note here is the fact that the masks used for this are attached to the corresponding plate ID's in the reconstruction. This greatly facilitates the procedure when making another paleotopography for a period that is similar to the one considered previously. Only some minor change to the extent of the masks and the corresponding manipulations may be needed. An extra discussion on this was added to the text.

As an aside, GPlates 1.5 can export a reconstructed netcdf grid, which completely eliminates the necessity to convert image files into a gridded format, so a semi-automated workflow should utilise this functionality.

AC: The masks exported here are not imported as netcdf files but polygons in the reconstruction. In GPlates 1.4, the only way to export these is by taking a screenshot. Here, a PNG was chosen because it is already a gridded format and easy to read by most computational software. If a new feature exists in GPlates 1.5 or later versions, that allows the user to export polygons drawn within GPlates as netcdf grids, this should certainly be considered and updated. A comment on this was added to the text.

The authors write (lines 1-6, pg4929) that 'The primary focus was to use a plate tectonics model not originally designed to create numerical grids as output, that can be altered afterwards without having to run through the entire process again (only some of the masks may need to be redefined). Creating a new grid for a different point in time or a new configuration (e.g. using a different rotation framework) should allow the user to make multiple reconstructions in a few days' time.' I would argue that to make new grids through time using this approach, e.g. to test different rotation frameworks, would take MUCH longer than a few days, since one would need to manually edit the paleo-topography for each time slice.

AC: Most of the masks used for manual adjustments are fixed to plates in the reconstruction. Therefore, it takes only some small adaptations when a different rotational framework is adopted, since the masks are automatically moved and rotated by the latter.

I tried to run the matlab script the authors provide, but note the following severe obstacles: the authors haven't provided any of the files needed for it to run, such as any of their masks (such as their land-ocean mask, which is needed for the regions they manipulate in Asi, for instance), nor do I have their 'corrected' bathymetry grid.

AC: This was indeed problematic for anyone trying to replicate the procedure. Most of the files not included were omitted because of their large file. The newly added ReadMe and source files contain all of the information needed to go through the workflow and instructions on how to download or create additional files that are not included (such as the present day topography grids).

It looks like they extract land/shallow seas/oceans etc based on the rgb values of a png file. In contrast, a generalised, re-usable workflow should be based on digital netcdf-type grids only (which, as I mentioned above, can be imported, rotated, and exported by the community GPlates software, eliminating the need to use any conversion between image rgb values and elevations).

AC: As stated above, PNG files were only used where an export as netcdf was not possible. The use of polygons in GPlates instead of grid also avoids problems with changing rotations or any other grid-interpolation issues.

A complete example with working files would be essential for such a community workflow, and I cannot say that I find the current workflow either usable or easily re-usable. I hope the authors will be able to revise their workflow to make it usable.

AC: *This was improved in the final version, providing more of the required files and detailed instructions. It is also not the intention of the authors to provide a fully-working software package for any user to use in the exact same way (apart from the case where the exact same reconstruction is carried out). The aim is mainly to present the workflow and make it reproducible for anyone using the same procedure, but leaving some freedom to the latter in their exact implementation.*

Other small corrections needed: - Is Hinsbergen meant to be referenced as 'van Hinsbergen' or without the 'van'? It occurs without the 'van' on line 10 of pg 4921.

AC: *has been corrected in the references; all now state 'van Hinsbergen'.*

extra 'a' in line 23 on pg 4921

AC: *has been removed.*

What does a.s.l. Mean (line 3 of pg 4924)

AC: *above sea level; this abbreviation was not used in the original manuscript and seems to be part of the editing process. It is again stated as 'above sea level' in the latest version.*

Review 2: M. Huber (Referee)

matthew.huber@unh.edu

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This is a review of "A Generalised Approach to Reconstructing geographical Boundary Conditions for Palaeoclimate Modelling" whose aim is to "provide a new method to efficiently generate global geographical reconstructions that are suitable for palaeoclimate modelling." I have some experience with the onerous task of generating paleogeographic boundary conditions suitable for inputting into climate models and I can say that an easier and more accurate approach would be helpful to the community. Nevertheless, this is a somewhat hard review to write: am I reviewing the actual reconstruction for 38Ma or am I reviewing the code and data sets and workflow necessary to generate it? Are either really appropriate for a journal about paleoclimate, rather than say, a Earth System Science Data or GMD? I'll let the editor answer that question and simply review the manuscript as it is.

AC: The aim of this paper is to present the workflow by discussing a palaeo-geographic reconstruction for 38Ma, while stressing on the ability to use the same methodology for other time periods. In the final version there is more focus on the 38Ma reconstruction as its presentation is new, but also leaving room for an in-depth discussion of the workflow used.

The method involves cobbling together gridded paleobathymetry from Mueller and modern topography from ETOPO2 and then applying ad hoc corrections mostly derived from raster images, most of which are not from the peer reviewed original literature.

AC: The changes to the topography are indeed made manually but both the extent and effects of all these changes are based on peer reviewed literature. An extra discussion on how these masks are made and the way their effects take place was added to the text.

Then some infilling and smoothing. In between are a set of rotations to a common reference frame and then re-rotations into a specific frame that the authors prefer. Much of the data and code for doing these steps is not provided in the supplement so I can not actually review the workflow, which greatly hampers a meaningful review. Some matlab code is provided, although being that matlab is not "free" nor open-source and I do not own or use it, the code itself is only marginally useful to me.

AC: the paper was indeed falling short on this matter. A new, more complete set of source files is now provided in addition to the code, along with a detailed Readme file covering the entire procedure. It also contains instructions on how to run the code and to download or create additional files that are needed.

Having written (<http://www.geosci-model-dev.net/7/2077/2014/gmd-7-2077-2014.html>) and made available a similar set of tools (<http://www.geosci-model-dev.net/7/2077/2014/gmd-7-2077-2014-supplement.zip>) which are both more complete and using open source and freely available codes/languages/applications I am finding it hard to see what is novel or better about the Baatsen et al approach. That does not mean it is not a good approach in and of itself, but that brings up the general issue of how to review a submission like this. Is it science or a description of a product? And if the latter, do we compare how well it works compared to other products?

AC: the stress is now more on the 38Ma reconstruction, which is entirely new. In addition, detailed information on the procedure is provided for other users to create other similar geographies with possibly a different set of preferences (e.g. time frame, specific adjustments, rotational framework).

One problem I see is that the code (perhaps I am not reading it right; as I said, I don't use matlab) does not seem to deal properly with moving objects around in an area preserving way. Movement of a raster/gridded object by more than a couple of

degrees requires resizing it to maintain constant area. This is normally handled by a coordinate transformation before moving an object (lets say you move Australia ten degrees of latitude, it's "size" changes in lat/lon coordinates) or it can be handled transparently in a tool such as GMT (this is how we do it in our source code above). When cobbling together a bunch of different gridded and rasterized datasets, all for different time periods and all according to different projections/rotations one then has to take care to conserve area on a sphere when getting them to mesh together and then when rotating them to different periods of Earth's history. Maybe I missed it in the code, but this important step seems to be missing. My apologies if I just missed it, but if I'm right, this is a major technical flaw.

AC: This is not an issue since all of the rotations and movements are carried out using GPlates. This software takes into account all of the appropriate changes when moving around objects on a sphere. Only afterwards, the different fields and masks are projected onto a rectangular grid and processed to make the final palaeogeography. No more changes to the position of any of the features are in this gridded framework. A note of clarification on this matter was added to the text.

As mentioned in the other review, much of what this script has already been incorporated in the latest version of the freely available GPlates, which does somewhat cut down on the novelty and utility of this approach, and I not sure that has been done here has been done correctly.

AC: later versions can indeed replace some of the steps in the workflow but this would only further facilitate its reproducibility. Furthermore, some potentially problematic actions (such as moving around topography)are already performed within GPlates because of its nice capabilities and transparency.

At the least, all parts necessary to test the workflow should be provided previous to submission, since in this case the workflow is what we are reviewing.

AC: These are all provided now along with additional instructions and clarifications.

A Generalised Approach to Reconstructing geographical Boundary Conditions for Palaeoclimate Modelling

Michiel Baatsen¹, Douwe J.J. van Hinsbergen², Anna S. von der Heydt¹, Henk A. Dijkstra¹, Appy Sluijs², Hemmo A. Abels², and Peter K. Bijl²

¹IMAU, Utrecht University, Princetonplein 5, 3584CC Utrecht, Netherlands

²Departement of Earth Sciences, Utrecht University, Heidelberglaan 8, 3584 CS Utrecht, Netherlands

³Department of Geosciences and Engineering, Delft University of Technology, Stevinweg 1, 2628 CN Delft, Netherlands

Correspondence to: Michiel Baatsen (m.l.j.baatsen@uu.nl)

Abstract. Studies on the palaeoclimate and palaeoceanography using numerical model simulations may be considerably dependent on the implemented geographical reconstruction. Because building the palaeogeographic datasets for these models is often a time-consuming and elaborate exercise, palaeoclimate models frequently use reconstructions in which the latest state-of-the-art of plate tectonic reconstructions, palaeotopography and -bathymetry, or vegetation have not yet been incorporated. In this paper, we therefore provide a new method to efficiently generate global geographical reconstructions that are a global geographical reconstruction for the middle-late Eocene. The generalised procedure is also reusable to create reconstructions for other time slices, suitable for palaeoclimate modelling. We use a plate-tectonic model to make global masks containing the distribution of land, continental shelves, shallow basins and deep ocean. The use of depth-age relationships for oceanic crust together with adjusted present-day topography gives a first estimate of the global geography at a chosen time frame. This estimate subsequently needs manual editing of areas where existing geological data indicates that the altimetry has changed significantly over time. Certain generic changes (e.g. lowering mountain ranges) can be made relatively easily by defining a set of masks while other features may require a more specific treatment. Since the discussion regarding many of these regions is still ongoing, it is crucial to make it easy for changes to be incorporated without having to redo the entire procedure. In this manner, a complete reconstruction can be made that suffices as a boundary condition for numerical models with a limited effort. This facilitates the interaction between experts in geology and palaeoclimate modelling, keeping the reconstructions up to date and improving the consistency between different studies. Moreover, it facilitates model inter-comparison studies and sensitivity tests regarding certain geographical features as newly generated boundary conditions can

be easily more easily be incorporated in different model simulations. An example is presented, covering a late The workflow is presented covering a middle-late Eocene reconstruction (38 Ma), using a MatLab script used to perform the procedure is and a complete set of source files that are 25 provided in the supplementary material.

1 Introduction

As the interest grows in assessing how the climate may change under increasing anthropogenic forcing, the field of climate modelling is steadily growing and improving. These models are mainly tested by making hindcasts of the present day and pre-industrial climate. Anthropogenic forcing may 30 lead to future climate states that are beyond the range for which models can be validated with observations. Reconstructing the palaeoclimate may help to increase the confidence in predictions by simulating episodes in Earth's history with climatic conditions that were drastically different to that of today. While the number of measurements is generally much more limited than for the present day, a considerable amount of proxies is available to constrain the conditions of several such periods(e.g. 35 like the Paleocene-Eocene thermal maximum, Mid-Eocene climatic optimum, Eocene-Oligocene transition, Oligocene-Mioeocene Boundary and Eemian)and Eemian. The equitable climate problem (Huber and Caballero, 2011) is one nice good example showing that models may still be lacking still 40 lack some essential dynamics to explain how the meridional atmospheric (or sea surface; Bijl et al. (2009)) temperature gradient can become so small flat in a greenhouse climate. It is therefore essential to try and simulate the past climate with a similar amount of detail as is done for the present to really expand our understanding of better understand the climate system when it is forced far beyond its present state.

Setting appropriate boundary conditions for deep time palaeoclimate simulations is challenging, 45 as these are often poorly constrained and/or in agreement. Next to the atmospheric composition, solar insolation and land surface properties, the global geography can also be of great importance (Barron and Washington, 1984). The breakup and collision of continents likely caused drove major climate transitions in the past. For example, the India-Eurasia collision caused a large scale uplift that resulted in regional climate changes but also affected the global circulation and hydrological 50 cycle (Ramstein et al., 1997; Dupont-Nivet et al., 2007, 2008; Caves et al., 2014). Furthermore, the opening of ocean gateways such as the Tasman-Gateway impacted the Tasmanian Gateway impacted ocean circulation and thus the redistribution of heat, resulting in both changed surface and deep ocean temperatures (Bijl et al., 2013; Sijp et al., 2014). Many of these themes are the subject of ongoing studies and the continuous acquisition of new data, either of palaeo-altimetry/bathymetry 55 or from tectonic reconstructions. It is therefore crucial that new relevant insights can be incorporated easily and swiftly in into boundary conditions used for palaeoclimate modelling.

Implementing different geographies into climate models is not without issues; the increasing but limited model resolution obscures certain potentially critical features (such as narrow ridges, mountain ranges and straits) and may require some additional manual changes. Additionally, plate-tectonic reconstructions have their own uncertainties and are continuously being expanded and improved. This causes large discrepancies between model simulations because different studies use reconstructions of varying age and approach. A simple but striking example is given by Gasson et al. (2014), who used the output of several coupled global atmosphere-ocean models to force an ice sheet model simulating the Antarctic glaciation during the Eocene-Oligocene transition-Transition (~34 Ma). Their main conclusion states that it is almost-nearly impossible to determine the CO₂ threshold for the inception of ice sheets since the models use such different topographies. Geographical reconstructions used in palaeoclimate modelling are often based on older reconstructions (such as Markwick (1998); Sewall et al. (2000)) that are adjusted for a specific case. These reconstructions may thus be based partially on information that is outdated and are usually only made for a specific unique set of time frames, which greatly limits their application in other studies . Additionally Since small-scale features can be crucial in the climate system, they always need to be considered and may require additional manual changes. Finally, developments in coding and computer hardware allow for model simulations with a significantly higher resolution that in turn require more detailed boundary conditions.

This calls for a new approach where the latest geological reconstructions can directly be incorporated together with improving constraints on palaeoaltimetry (e.g. Dupont-Nivet et al. (2008)) and translated into a gridded topography and bathymetry map. In this paper, a method is presented that allows for the creation of geographical reconstructions based on the most recent geological insights with relative ease. The various steps and methods are demonstrated through a specific example for the late Eocene (Since there is a relative scarcity in middle and late Eocene reconstructions, the composition of a 38Ma palaeogeography will be presented and serve as an example of the general workflow. The set of files (and downloads) required to reproduce this procedure for 38Ma, as well as other time frames, is provided in the supplementary material along with a Readme for guidelines. Although somewhat similar workflows have been presented in the past (Markwick and Valdes, 2004; Herold et al., 2008), the innovative aspects here are the approach of directly incorporating a plate-tectonic reconstruction, the freedom of choosing a different plate-tectonic model framework and the ability to consider multiple time frames.

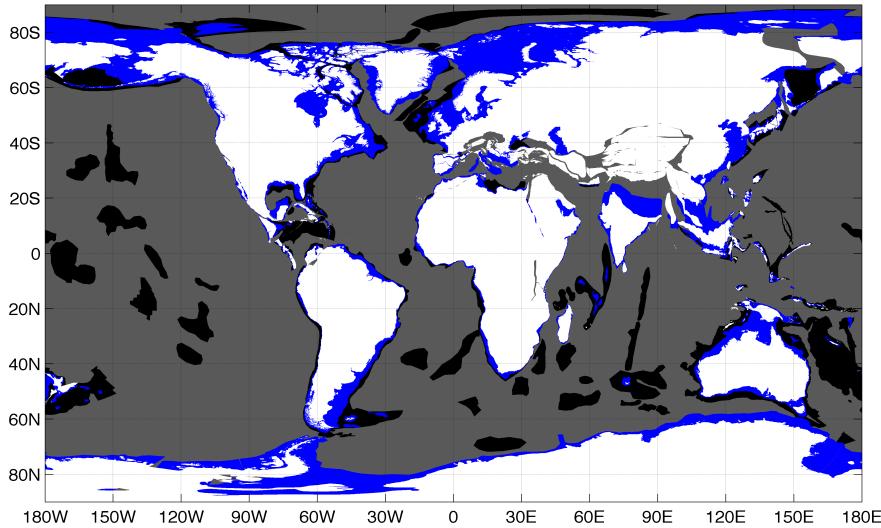


Figure 1. Earth reconstruction from the plate tectonic model at 38 Ma showing shifted present day land surface (white), continental shelves (blue) and relatively shallow ocean regions (black). Remaining in grey are then the deep ocean and zones that are yet unidentified in the plate-tectonic reconstruction model.

90 2 Plate tectonic reconstruction

The backbone of our method is a plate-tectonic model that provides a first-order reconstruction of palaeogeography for the Phanerozoic (Seton et al., 2012). This model is provided in the free plate reconstruction software GPlates (www.gplates.org, Boyden et al. (2011)), which is widely used in tectonic research. The reconstruction of Seton et al. (2012) serves as a basis, and can be updated when

95 new reconstructions become available. Because we aim to study palaeoclimate, we place our reconstruction in a palaeomagnetic reference frame (Torsvik et al., 2008; van Hinsbergen et al., 2015) (Torsvik et al., 2012; van Hinsbergen et al., 2015). Starting from the present-day topography, the outlines of land, continental shelves and shallower regions such as intra-oceanic ridges and plateaus are defined. Using the reconstruction model, these features are then shifted towards their positions at a chosen time frame (here: 38 Ma) and exported 100 as a png image (Figure 1) to create a rectangular coloured grid with a sufficiently high resolution to satisfy the intended grid of the final reconstruction. The image can be imported by a computational program such as MatLab for easy manipulation and conversion into a numerical grid. A [png format was chosen here because of its gridded structure and the current unavailability of exporting polygon outlines as a NetCDF file in GPlates](#). This last step will become unnecessary if such a possibility is 105 [added in future versions of GPlates](#)

For its application as a climate model boundary condition, the final geographical reconstruction should be stored as a gridded (latitude-longitude) topography-bathymetry dataset. To start with, ocean bathymetry is estimated using the [present day](#) ocean floor age grid provided by Müller et al.

110 (2008a) in combination with the plate tectonic model. Using the latter, the agegrid is shifted into its
position at the considered time frame (38Ma here) to be compatible with the rest of the reconstruction.
The position and age (corrected for the plate motions that have occurred since then) of oceanic plates
in the model is then translated into a bathymetry map using the general depth-age relationship for
oceanic crust. Here, we use ~~a~~ an average of the relations given for the main ocean basins (Atlantic,
115 Pacific and Indian Ocean) treated by Crosby et al. (2006):

$$\begin{cases} Z_{A<90\text{Ma}} = 2620 + 330 \sqrt{A}, \\ Z_{A>90\text{Ma}} = 5750, \end{cases} \quad (1)$$

where Z is the basin depth in m and A the ocean floor age in millions of years.

120 The method above can only be applied to regions where the ocean floor is still preserved today,
leaving large gaps where oceanic crust has subducted since the reconstruction time (e.g. the western
and southeastern Pacific Ocean). An estimated palaeo-age grid was already translated into a rastered
georeferenced bathymetry dataset by Müller et al. (2008a). This grid is, however, provided in a
hotspot reference frame and thus needs to be converted to the palaeomagnetic reference frame used
here in the scope of climate modelling (van Hinsbergen et al., 2015). We applied this conversion by
125 fixing the entire bathymetry grid to Africa which is the central pole in both of the reconstruction
frameworks. First, the movement of Africa in the past 38Ma is reversed by using an adapted version
of the Seton et al. (2012) rotation file such that it moves back to its present position starting from
where it was at 38Ma instead of the opposite. The bathymetry map (defined at 38Ma) is then shifted
to the configuration it would have at the present day, disregarding the individual plate movements
130 relative to Africa. Finally, the same is done using the (unaltered) rotation file of the (Torsvik et al.,
2008) palaeomagnetic framework, moving the bathymetry grid back to its configuration at 38Ma as
if it were made using this reconstruction model. After doing so, the adapted Müller et al. (2008a)
depth grid fits within the continental margins of the plate-tectonic reconstruction. In addition to the
deep ocean, shallow basins and plateaus are adjusted to their present-day depth at the according
135 38Ma positions, using the same plate movements of which the resulting boundary masks are shown
in Figure 1. Finally, all of the defined continental shelves are put to a fixed depth (200m is taken here,
values between 50 and 500m are found in literature) as they mark the outer margins of continental
crust, which are quite robust over time. It is important to consider here that the shape and depth
of continental shelves may be subject to change, depending on the considered time frame (Sømme
140 et al., 2009). Since the ~~late Eocene is middle-late Eocene had~~ a greenhouse climate, a flat and rela-
tively shallow shelf is implemented here but this can easily be done differently for other periods.

The next, more challenging step is creating a realistic land topography for a chosen time frame.
Good estimates of altimetry are only available for a limited number of locations and time intervals,

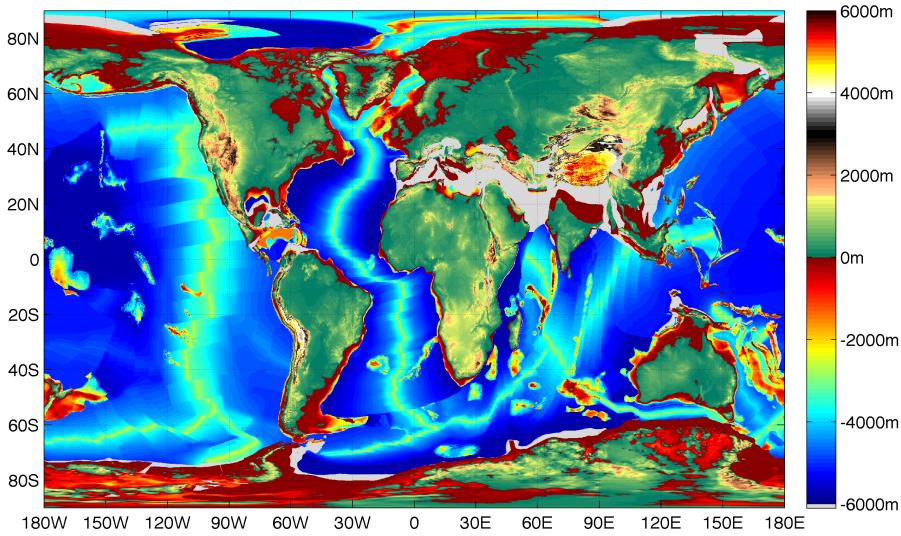


Figure 2. Reconstructed First stage of the reconstruction: global geography at 38 Ma using the depth-age relationship, the Müller et al. (2008a) reconstruction, shallow basins, continental shelves and the present-day topography. The areas shaded in light grey are gaps which still have to be addressed.

145 making the reconstruction of palaeotopography a difficult task that requires a lot of manual input. For example, the global Eocene topography by Markwick (1998) is still used and referred to regularly in palaeoclimate modelling. Our approach here is to first consider the present day topography (using the [ETOPO2v2 dataset](http://www.ngdc.noaa.gov/mgg/global/relief/ETOPO1), [ETOPO1 dataset](http://www.ngdc.noaa.gov/mgg/global/relief/ETOPO1), <http://www.ngdc.noaa.gov/mgg/global/relief/ETOPO1>) and adjust it to the 38Ma configuration using the plate tectonic model and the land mask shown in Figure 1. Later on, specific topographical features can be corrected manually, depending on the specific demands of the application and the amount of information that is available. [Since the topography is coupled to the plates and shifted within GPlates, there are no issues of area preservation or distortion.](#) The resulting first stage of the reconstruction is given in Figure 2.

155 3 Generic adjustments

The geography obtained at this stage (Figure 2) is not yet accurate and contains a number of gaps that remain to be filled (mainly collision zones and transition regions between continental and oceanic crust). Especially the land topography needs to be adjusted so that it better matches palaeoaltimetry estimates for the considered time frame (38 Ma). Although glaciers possibly existed on Antarctica (Scher et al., 2014) and Greenland (Eldrett et al., 2007), the presence of continental-scale ice sheets in the Eocene is unlikely (Deconto et al., 2008). Therefore, to correct for the effect of isostasy the present-day bedrock topography is raised by 1/3 of the current ice thickness. The changes mainly affect Greenland and Antarctica, although for the time window chosen [in our example here](#)

165 a highly detailed palaeotopography of Antarctica ~~is made by Wilson et al. (2012) was derived by~~
~~Wilson et al. (2012), considering both isostatic rebound and sediment restoration with respect to the~~
~~present-day topography.~~ The latter, however, assumes the Antarctic continent to be at its present-day
location which does not fit into ~~our~~this reconstruction. Similar to how the topography was treated
above, the reconstructed Antarctic palaeotopography is fixed to the ~~plates~~plate polygons defined
in the plate-tectonic model and adjusted towards its 38Ma configuration. In practice, only the area
170 above sea level is incorporated in the reconstruction and combined with the previously determined
bathymetry. This is done to ~~avoid~~minimise possible discrepancies between regions of the ocean
floor that are reconstructed using different methods.

175 Although most of the ocean floor has been reconstructed, a large gap is still present in the Neotethyan
region between Africa, Eurasia, India and Indochina ~~at 38~~Ma. While in the circum-Pacific area the
crust lost to subduction was entirely oceanic, the former was characterised by multiple continental
collision and subduction episodes (Stampfli and Borel, 2002). The ~~Neotethys~~Neotethyan Ocean is
introduced manually, based on the incorporation of GPlates reconstructions covering the Mediter-
ranean region by van Hinsbergen et al. (2012, 2014), the Arabia-Eurasia collision zone by McQuar-
180 rie and van Hinsbergen (2013), the Arabia-India plate boundary zone by Gaina et al. (2015) and the
India-Asia collision zone by van Hinsbergen et al. (2011, 2012). A deep ocean basin with a depth
of 4500m is assumed, which is close to the value used in Müller et al. (2008a), representing the
~~Neotethys~~Neotethyan Ocean at 38Ma.

185 Next, we adjust the elevation of several mountain ranges towards values that are more representative
for the considered time frame. Since most of the current elevated regions underwent a consider-
able part of their uplift after the late Eocene (such as the Andes, Himalayas and East African Rift)
they will have to be lowered, while eroded regions may require some uplifting (for instance large
river catchments). More specific changes for the example considered here will be discussed in more
190 detail in Section 4, the result of the generic changes is first shown Figure 3. ~~As this is clearly the~~
~~most tedious part of the procedure, it will consume a large part of the time required to acquire a~~
~~palaeogeography for another time frame. However, time-specific adjustment masks are created as~~
~~polygons within GPlates and fixed to the plate movements. Consequently, only their extents and~~
~~effects will need to be adjusted and some masks may need to be removed or added, which facilitates~~
195 ~~this step significantly. When available, the incorporation of a digital palaeo-elevation model, such as~~
~~the one presented by Markwick and Valdes (2004) can replace the present day topography so that no~~
~~further adjustments are needed.~~

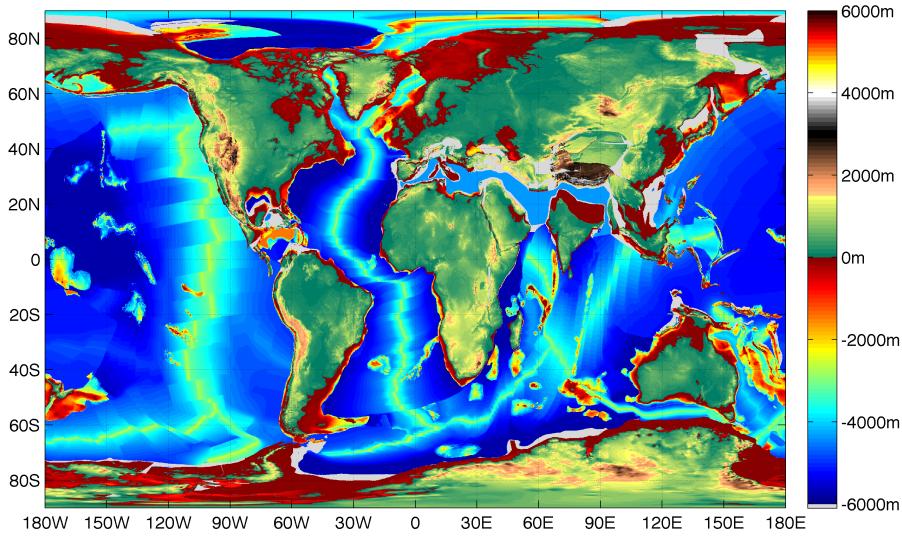


Figure 3. Reconstructed Second stage of the reconstruction: topography and bathymetry with adjustments to polar regions and a lowering of several mountain ranges. Changes can be noted mainly in Greenland, Antarctica, the *Neotethys*-*Neotethyan* Ocean, the Andes and the Himalayas.

4 Specific adjustments for the *late-middle-late* Eocene

200 The example shown thus far is largely representative for the *late-middle-late* Eocene (38Ma) geography, but now a number of time-frame specific adjustments are made that have not yet been treated in the previous sections. Several major tectonic events took place prior to and during the Eocene-Oligocene transition that had an impact on the global climate. A brief overview of these events and how their potential impacts are implemented specifically is given below and a map of the masks used
 205 to apply the various changes is provided in Figure 4. The combined effect of these adjustments is indicated by the highlighted areas in Figure 5, note that the effects of the land mask shown (in white) in Figure 4 have not yet been implemented. The latter is used to correct the land boundaries after the manipulations discussed in Section 5.

210 The collision between Greater India and Eurasia is causing profound changes to the surrounding geography (van Hinsbergen et al., 2012). The *Neotethys*-*Neotethyan* Ocean narrows due to the combined northward propagation of Africa and India, leaving the Mediterranean Sea and the northern Indian Ocean. Further north, a major intra-continental seaway known as the Paratethys covered much of central Europe and a considerable part of western Asia. This was mainly a shallow basin except for
 215 the South Caspian and Black Sea areas, as it was mostly underlain by unextended continental crust. The extent of the Paratethys as well as the distribution of the surrounding continents is determined using the GPlates reconstructions mentioned in Section 3. The Neotethyan subduction-collision systems also create a large-scale uplift in southern Asia with primarily the formation of the Himalaya

mountain range and the Tibetan Plateau. To the north and west, this uplift forces the westward retreat
220 of the relatively shallow Paratethys leaving several isolated basins (Meulenkamp and Sissingh, 2003;
Bosboom et al., 2014a). In addition, the formation of a rift between Antarctica and South America
causes the opening of the Drake Passage with the first formation of oceanic crust at around 35 Ma
(Livermore et al., 2005). A similar process is taking place south of Australia with the formation of
225 the Tasmanian Gateway. While its opening already occurs around 50Ma, the Tasmanian Gateway
initially remains shallow. Coincident with the transition from a slip-boundary towards North-South
spreading between Australia and East Antarctica (Bijl et al., 2013), a profound deepening phase
occurs from 35.5Ma onwards. The deepening and widening of the Tasmanian gateway is further
complicated by a northward extension of the Antarctic shelf and an elevated Tasman Rise which
both sank over time (Stickley et al., 2004; Close et al., 2009). Dependent on which absolute plate
230 reconstruction frame is used, the opening of the Tasmanian Gateway can occur either to the north
or south of 60°S paleolatitude. This can have important consequences for the direction of a possible
initial throughflow and again stresses the importance of correct paleogeographies in paleoclimate
modelling. The related northward motion of Australia combined with the rotation and rifting taking
place around Indochina also causes a gradual blocking of the Indonesian Throughflow during the
235 Oligocene (Hall, 2002).

As was pointed out before, some smaller geographical features have also been treated individually. Mountain ranges that are believed to have experienced major uplifts since the ~~late~~-Eocene are
240 mainly the Andes, Himalayas, Sierra Nevada (USA), East African Rift and Middle East, which are
all lowered significantly. The southern Tibetan Plateau was lowered more than the Himalayas since a
narrow yet high ridge was already present while the adjacent plateau was still much lower (van Hins-
bergen et al., 2012). The northern part of the Tibetan Plateau is changed into lowland that surrounds
the retreating Paratethys in the Tarim Basin (Dupont-Nivet et al., 2008; Bosboom et al., 2014b; So-
bel et al., 2013). Related to the changes in Eurasia mentioned above, the narrow Tethys is drawn
245 as a deep ocean while the Paratethys consists mainly of shallow seas with the Turgai Strait almost
closed (Bosboom et al., 2014a). The latter forms the connection between the Arctic Ocean and the
Paratethys and is an important contributor to the water budget in Central Asia. During the ~~Early~~early
Eocene, the Arctic Ocean may have been ~~completely~~geographically isolated as indicated by freshen-
ing reported in Brinkhuis et al. (2006). No such events have yet been documented for the ~~Late~~middle
250 and late Eocene so here we assumed several relatively narrow and shallow channels to be open. The
western part of the Amazon basin was still flooded during the ~~Late~~middle Eocene (Hoorn et al.,
2010). A kinematic reconstruction of the Caribbean region by Boschman et al. (2014) is adopted to
treat the Panama Seaway. This gateway connecting the tropical Pacific with the Atlantic Ocean is
still open but only with shallow waters (similar to the Indonesian Throughflow today), as it consists
255 of an intra-oceanic volcanic arc since the late Cretaceous (Boschman et al., 2014). The Ninety-East

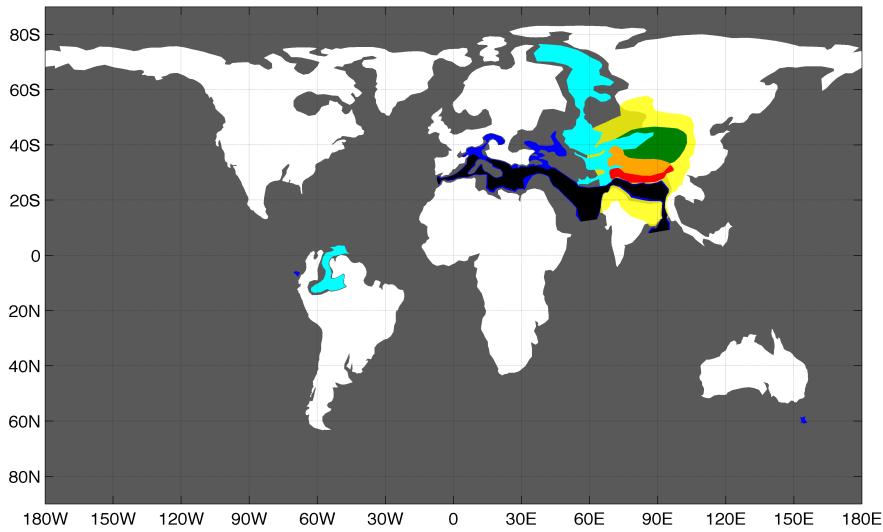


Figure 4. Masks used for manipulation of the reconstruction; white represents land, cyan shallow water, blue sea and black ocean. In southern Asia, green, yellow, orange and red indicate areas that are lowered manually by different ratios.

Ridge (Slotnick et al., 2015) was also enhanced (made wider and higher) as it is a pronounced yet narrow feature in the eastern Indian Ocean that would otherwise be obscured by smoothing later on. Regarding the areas discussed above, three masks are applied defining ocean (deep oceanic), sea (deep continental) and shallow basins (shallow continental) implying a depth of 4500m, 1000m and 260 100m, respectively.

5 Final modifications and smoothing

All major features of the geological reconstruction are now present but before it can be used as a numerical grid for a climate model simulation, some additional modifications still need to be made. Firstly, to estimate the remaining gaps where the altimetry or bathymetry is still unknown, an in-265 terpolation is performed using the *inpaintn* algorithm developed [in-by](#) Garcia (2010) and Wang et al. (2012). An additional land mask was made (shown in white in Figure 4) containing regions that should be above sea level to avoid creating artificial basins with this technique. The land mask is based on several global reconstructions such as those made by Dr. R. Blakey (<https://www2.nau.edu/rcb7/globaltext2.html>) and Dr. C. R. Scotese (<http://www.scotese.com/earth.htm>)[,](#) 270 assuming that large alluvial plains were not entirely flooded and glacial basins had not yet formed.

Secondly, during most of the past climate periods sea level was different from today due to changes in ocean water volume, as influenced by ice sheet volume and steric effects, as well as varying global ocean basin volume, related to the average ocean floor age, shelf depth and continental distribution.

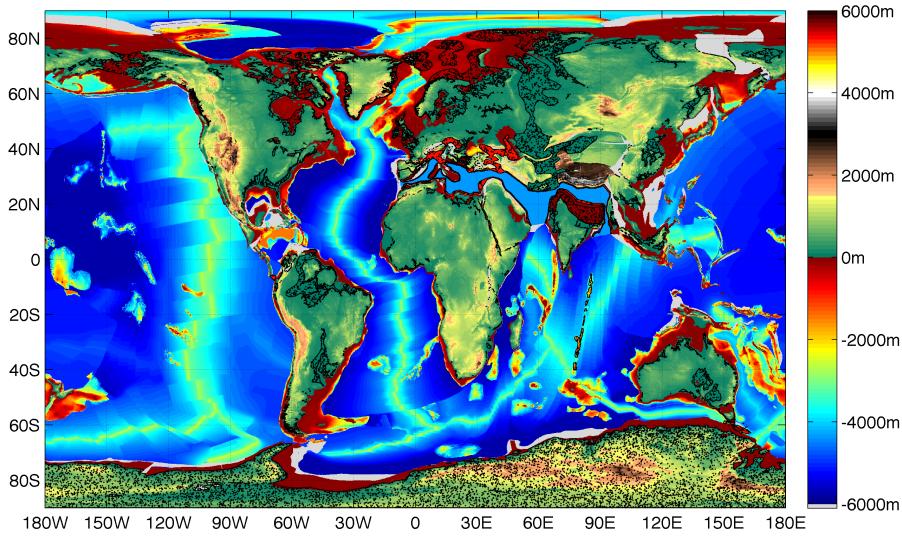


Figure 5. Reconstructed topography and bathymetry with specific adjustments indicated by black dotted areas, these include mainly Antarctica, southern Panama, the Amazon and several other river basins, the Hudson Bay and Great Lakes, [Tethys-Neotethyan Ocean](#) and Paratethys [Seaway](#), the Ninety-East Ridge and the Tasman Rise.

275 In the [late-middle-late](#) Eocene, mean sea level was about 100m above that of today (Müller et al., 2008b), so we decrease the elevation (and similarly increase the depth) of all data points by 100m to correct for this. The depths that were implemented before, using the masks shown in Figure 4, were initially corrected so they end up being the actual values stated above after changing the global sea level (such that an area assigned to be e.g. 1000m deep does not end up being 1100m instead). Again, 280 the land mask is used to correct the elevation of certain inundated regions back to sea level where land is believed to be present at the considered time. For instance, river basins such as the Amazon, Rio de la Plata, Congo and Mississippi were just carved out deeper after the sea level dropped and other depressions were only created during glacial periods (e.g. the Great Lakes).

285 Finally, the application of the geographical reconstruction will usually be at a lower resolution than the one used until now (0.1°) and the high level of detail in the present-day topography may be misleading with respect to how precise palaeotopography is actually known. The last step is then to apply a squared smoothing mask, performing a 2-dimensional running mean with a 1° width for the example, of which the result is shown in Figure 6. The mask size can be chosen differently and after 290 smoothing, the global geography data is extrapolated onto the desired output grid (e.g., longitude-latitude) to be stored as a NetCDF file.

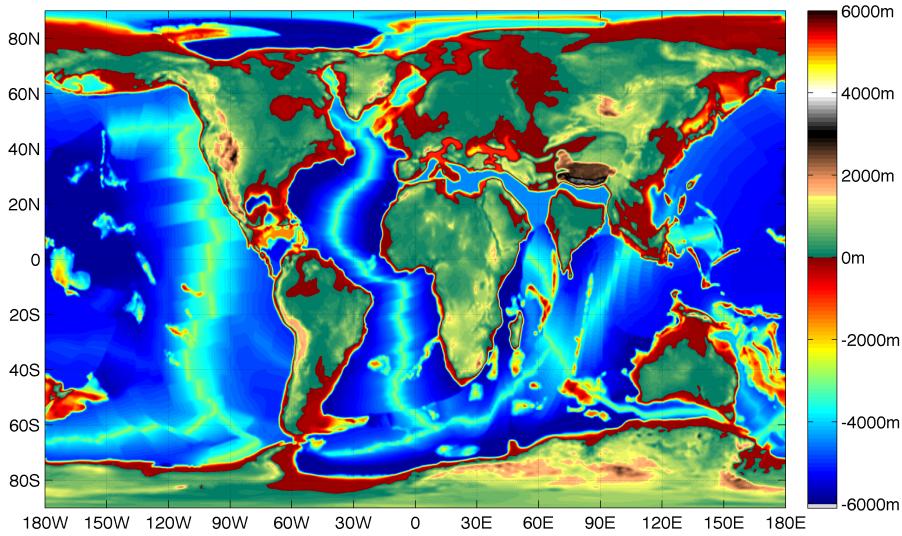


Figure 6. Final smoothed global topography and bathymetry reconstruction for the [late-middle-late](#) Eocene at 38 Ma.

6 Conclusions

We have presented a new method to create global geographical reconstructions that can be used
 295 as boundary conditions in palaeoclimate model simulations. Starting from a plate-tectonic reconstruction, the depth of the ocean floor was estimated and combined with a reconfigured present day topography. An overview of the different steps making up the procedure is given in Fig. 7. Reconstructed plate trajectories, a background rotational frame and a set of boundary lines are fed into GPlates to make a global plate-tectonic reconstruction for a particular time frame. Within the same
 300 setup, present day topography and ocean floor data are manipulated and shifted to fit the same geographical configuration as the rest of the output. The latter is then used in a MatLab script together with some external input (mostly from literature) to create a global gridded altimetry-bathymetry dataset that is stored as a NetCDF file. This results in a highly detailed dataset that needs some time-specific changes, after which it is smoothed and extrapolated onto the desired computational grid.

305

Even though we performed a number of manual adjustments, interfacing GPlates with our MatLab script allows for the development of global geographical reconstructions with limited effort. The primary focus was to use a plate tectonics model not originally designed to create numerical grids as output ([but it can use and manipulate them](#)), that can be altered afterwards without having to run
 310 through the entire process again (only some of the masks may need to be redefined). Creating a new grid for a different point in time or a new configuration (e.g. using a different rotation framework) should allow the user to make multiple reconstructions in a few days' time. In case of a time slice experiment, one can also create appropriate boundary conditions for each time frame instead of mak-

315 ing some minor adjustments to an average geography, to really try and catch the effect of gradual but global changes. The amount of manual handling depends on the demands of a specific application and can consequently be very limited, but the procedure does not inhibit additional adjustments for further detail and correctness. In the example ~~above~~treated here, the output grid is defined as having a 0.1° resolution but can easily be extrapolated onto a coarser grid, which may require some more elaborate smoothing.

320

As the procedure starts from a plate tectonic model, most of the features important for modelling applications are quite realistic. The width and depth of ocean basins, presence of oceanic ridges and plateaus, position of continents and opening or closing of gateways are all directly incorporated in the final result. The set of boundaries shown in Figure 1 are coupled to individual plates and can easily be linked to a different reconstruction framework. When comparing the result (Figure 6) to other recent reconstructions used in palaeoclimate modelling, several differences quickly become evident. For instance, the global geography used in Ladant et al. (2014) is coarser and contains less detail in both land topography and ocean bathymetry. The Southern Ocean gateways are also much wider, which is probably a result of both the large grid spacing used for the climate model and the difference 330 in time frame considered as this reconstruction is based on an Oligocene geography Lefebvre et al. (2012). Herold et al. (2014) have manually added a lot of detail to both the land surface and ocean floor in their reconstruction but here the problem remains that there can be considerable differences in continental positions as the geography is bound to a specific time frame. Details within the contours of an older reconstruction can still be added but changing the relative positions of various land 335 masses is not straightforward.

In summary, the reconstruction method presented here can provide detailed palaeogeographical datasets with relative ease for climate model studies and permits users to customise the result to their specific needs. This should facilitate the communication between geologists and climate mod- 340 ellers in their efforts to improve the quality and consistency of future palaeoclimate simulations.

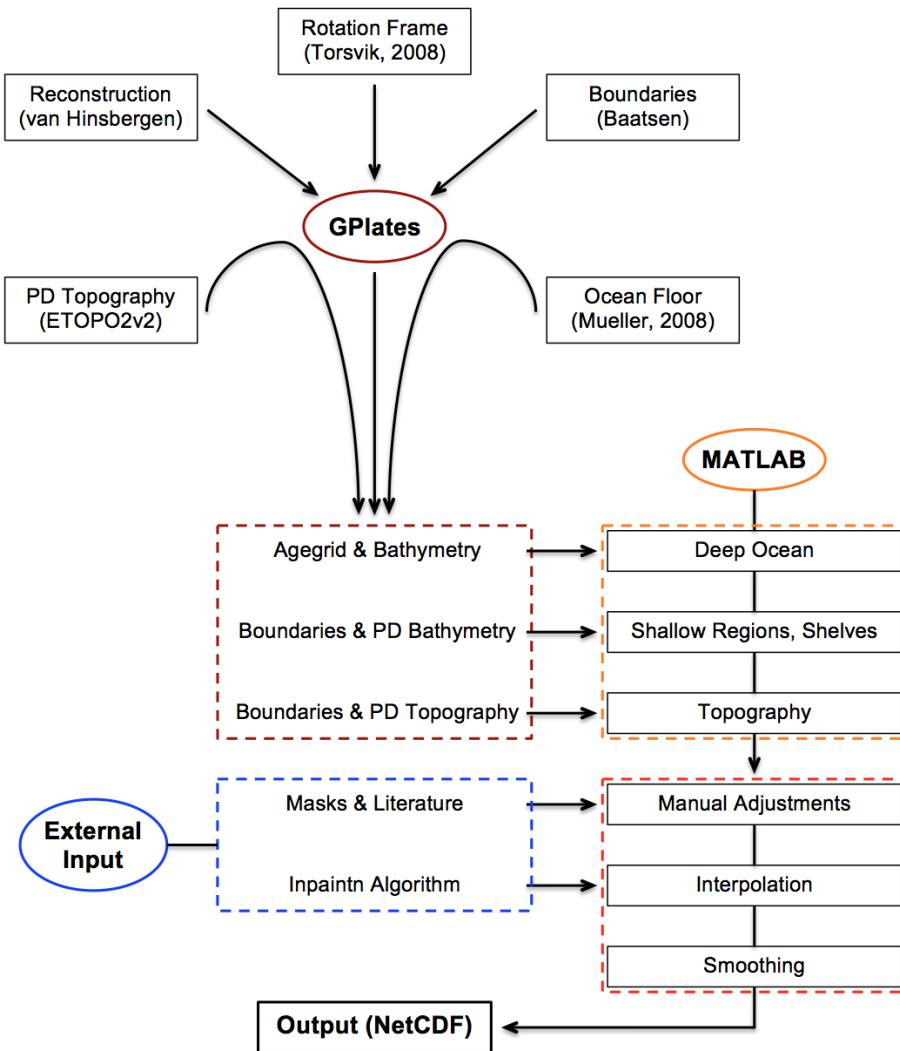


Figure 7. Flowchart of the procedure; the plate-tectonic reconstruction is made with GPlates, using a set of reconstructed plate trajectories (Seton et al., 2012; van Hinsbergen et al., 2015), a reference rotational frame (Torsvik et al., 2008) and a set of boundary masks delimiting present day coastlines, continental shelf breaks, shallow ocean regions and some regions that need manual adjustments (see Figures 1 and 4). In addition to the reconstruction, present day (PD) topography and bathymetry base files are manipulated using the same rotational frame and adjusted to the configuration at the aimed time frame. The resulting output files as well as some external input are then fed into a MATLAB script which builds up a global geography dataset through several consecutive steps and stores it as a NetCDF file.

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345

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