

APPLICATION OF POLARIMETRIC ECHO CLASSIFIER TO MITIGATE SEA CLUTTER AND OTHER NON-METEOROLOGICAL SIGNAL IN WEATHER RADAR OBSERVATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Quality considerations are vital in applications of weather radar data. Polarimetric weather radar has an enhanced capability of echo identification, and this capability is well suited to data quality considerations, such as mitigation of non-meteorological echoes.

The capability can be made operationally available by extending the software of radar operation and signal processing. Using an echo classification algorithm in the fuzzy logic approach, a continuous quality index is associated with gate level moment data. The polarimetric quality index is a measure of consistency of the gate signal with expectations from precipitation, mapped against the alternative hypothesis of non-meteorological origin. It can subsequently be applied to remove undesired bin data at a strength that is tunable to operating conditions and typical applications. The procedure can be activated simultaneously with the similar quality indices of Doppler clutter filtering, optimized to mitigate stationary ground echo. The combination of Doppler filtering, the set of Doppler and polarimetric quality indices allows high suppression of stationary and non-stationary non-meteorological echoes. This simplifies subsequent applications of radar data, significantly.

We report here on implementation of such a tool set and typical use cases. Data quality is considered in cases of significant sea-clutter and other non-stationary non-precipitation echoes which tend to remain after applying ground clutter filters alone.

1. INTRODUCTION

Echoes of non-meteorological origin are often a limiting factor in operational applications of weather radar. Initially, radar echoes are strongly contaminated by signals other than precipitation. Ground clutter mitigation by Doppler radar is a classic example of substantial automated improvement in radar data quality. There are several other echo sources, at land and at sea, that remain in radar data after suppression of static ground echo with Doppler filtering. General and site specific knowledge allows identifying them through interactive analyses, for restoring the usefulness of observations. Echoes of non-meteorological origin may have value themselves in specific applications. Automated radar products of precipitation prefer more stringent quality of the data input. Continued improvements in data quality considerations are thus called for.

Polarimetric weather radar has an enhanced capability of echo identification. This capability is well suited to data quality considerations, such as mitigation of non-meteorological echoes. It builds on the accumulated common knowledge of polarimetric echo identification, compiled into automated decision methods (Straka and Zrníc 1993, Liu and Chandrasekar 2000, Lim et al. 2005, Park et al. 2008). Given that automated fuzzy methods are made operationally available as part of real-time signal processing, such as HydroClass™ (Keränen et al. 2007), the identification capability can be utilized at the gate level, promptly. Being a gate level functionality, it is robust to choices of scanning strategy.

The hypothesis of bulk precipitation can be tested against the one of non-meteorological signal by

using a continuous smooth metric called the polarimetric meteorological index (PMI), derived from corresponding fuzzy rule strengths. The moment data is flagged and can be removed, bin-by-bin, when PMI is below a configurable threshold (thresholded, for short), accordingly. This greatly simplifies down stream data applications. The procedure is available simultaneously with the Doppler clutter filtering which is optimized to mitigate significant stationary ground echo. Their combination allows high suppression of stationary and non-stationary non-meteorological echoes.

We report here on implementation of such a tool set and typical use cases. Data quality is considered in cases of significant sea-clutter and other non-stationary non-precipitation echoes that pass through Doppler filtering.

2. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLARIMETRIC QUALITY INDEX

In the current case, the polarimetric quality index utilizes the classification outcomes of the HydroClass™ pre-classifier modeled from the field tested method of the JPOLE campaign (Ryzhkov et al. 2005). The classifier has been implemented with a high degree of configurability. Major parts of the current application are independent of the algorithm choice. Formally, any classifier with quantitative continuous output(s) could be used. The JPOLE method originally considered data in view of three categories: 1) precipitation, 2) bio-scatter, 3) ground clutter/anomalous propagation. It was chosen as subsequent applications to a broad variety of radar data have revealed that the method is suitable for separating precipitation from many kinds of echoes of non-meteorological origin, at varied site conditions, climates, and radar wave lengths with minor tuning of parameters.

This generality is not accidental. It is based on using the micro-physical characteristics of precipitation: relatively high co-polar correlation and relatively smooth radial behavior of co-polar differential phase and of echo power, accompanied with specific relations between reflectivity (Z_h) and differential reflectivity (Z_{dr}). The signals of varied non-meteorological origins may have wildly different characteristics but share the following: they exhibit no propagation effects, their co-polar correlation and signal power does not match with precipitation, generally. As net outcome the chosen classifier performs well beyond its original context: locally significant bio-scatter and ground echo. Other polarimetric quality considerations for exclusive identification of precipitation utilize similar criteria; see (Wang and Chandrasekar 2009). To reiterate, the classifiers' performance is due their consistency with general principles.

2.1 Interpretation of fuzzy rule strengths as the polarimetric quality index

The rule strength sets (RS) of the fuzzy approach can be combined into a smooth continuous quality index, PMI. An empirical transformation is convenient of the type

$$PMI = 1 - 1 / [1 + RS("meteorological signal") / \max\{ RS("other") \}] \quad (1)$$

where $RS("meteorological signal")$ is the rule strength for 'precipitation' and $RS("other")$ refer to the class hypotheses of non-meteorological origin. Alternatively, a choice of likelihood ratio for statistical rigor can be considered

$$PMI = RS("meteorological signal") / \sum\{RS_i\} \quad (2)$$

where the sum of rule strength is made over all classes in the hypothesis set. Both relations lead to PMI values in the range (0, 1), while the empirical one appears occupying the range more optimally. The empirical value $PMI=0.5$ coincides with the maximum rule strength inference for 'precipitation'. The primary objective of the construction is to select for 'precipitation'. Formally, the construction can be rotated to favor any of the classes in the underlying classifier - to filter the radar data for 'bio scatter', for example.

2.2 Polarimetric quality index as a part of common radar data quality considerations

Quality considerations of modern Doppler signal processing are a viable model to implement PMI. As a general rule, the gate data from relevant echoes are stored. Data are set null when no signal (noise). Data of unambiguously fake origin (e.g. static ground clutter, second range echo) are either filtered (signal recovered) or set null (thresholded), as correction. The uncorrected data can be preserved in selected cases - duplication of data to preserve intermediate states of data is not a general rule, however. Information about the quality settings, such as Doppler filter parameters and thresholding criteria, are accompanied in the data headers. Selected quality indicators may accompany the moment data, bin-by-bin.

Typically, valid moment data are required to meet a non-vanishing level of signal-to-noise ratio (LOG). In addition, data with very high clutter to signal ratio (CSR) are to be thresholded at a level matching the radar clutter cancellation performance. Good pulse-to-pulse coherence (SQI) is required for a valid Doppler velocity estimate. A fair ratio of meteorological signal to noise (SIG) can be required for spectral widths. These quality indicators are computed simultaneously to the actual moments. Advanced radar operating systems, such as IRIS/RDA™, allow operators to configure moment specific quality requirements as logic tables of LOG, CSR, SQI and SIG thresholds. They build on each other i.e. if configured in logical "AND", a threshold applied earlier in the stream is respected. The threshold levels and their decision logic can be configured in each task of scanning strategy, for optimal application performance.

The PMI quality consideration is implemented as a consistent extension to the existing Doppler quality considerations. PMI is computed and used for thresholding in the actual data processing, analogously to other auxiliary quality measurands LOG, CSR, SQI and SIG. PMI is activated and tuned by the common graphical user interface to radar operation, as illustrated in Figure 1. Data headers have been enhanced such that they carry the information on the PMI settings.

File			Menus			Commands			Help		
Description: An operational task											
ANTENNA /RADAR CONTROL											
Scan Mode	PPI Full	Resolution	1.000	Pulse Width	2.30						
Azimuth	Full Circle			Gain Control	Fixed						
Elevation	4 angles from 0.5 to 6.0			Polarization	H+V						
Scan Speed	36.00 deg/sec										
PROCESSOR CONFIGURATION											
Data	ZZ T V W ZDR Kdp P			Start Range	1.00 km	Vel Unfold	None				
Z&T are	Reflectivity			Bin Spacing	125.0 m	High PRF	1000 Hz				
Samples	32			Range Avg/Smth	None	Low PRF	1000 Hz				
Filter Dop	2			Max Range	149.00 km	Unamb Vel	13.4 m/s				
Input Bins	1185			Unamb Range	149.90 km	Proc Mode	PPP				
Output Bins	1185			Playback	N:C Z:C	Phase Code	Fixed				
DATA CORRECTIONS											
Clutter Map Z	<input type="checkbox"/>			Beam Blockage Zc	<input type="checkbox"/>			Z-Based Attenuation Zc	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Target Detect Zc	<input type="checkbox"/>			Unfold Vc	<input type="checkbox"/>			Remove Fallspeed in Vc	<input type="checkbox"/>		
						Storm Relative Vel Vc	<input type="checkbox"/>				
DATA QUALITY THRESHOLDING											
T	All Pass			LOG	SIG	CSR	SQI	PMI	Default		
Z	LOG & CSR & PMI			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	PntClk <input type="checkbox"/>		
V	LOG & CSR			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Thresh 0		
W	LOG & SQI & SIG			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Speckle		
ZDR	LOG & CSR			<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Z <input type="checkbox"/> V		
				1.06dB	5 dB	25 dB	0.20	0.50			

Figure 1. An instance of user interface to radar task configuration, with a handle to the PMI threshold levels (bottom right) and to the activation as part of the logic table for reflectivity "Z" data (bottom left). PMI can be configured to any other moment data group shown, independently.

3. EXAMPLES OF POLARIMETRIC QUALITY CONSIDERATION

3.1 Ground, sea clutter and precipitation in tropical oceanic climate

The PMI tool was applied on IRIS/RDA™ data obtained in tropical oceanic conditions. Samples acquired by the S-band Kwajalein Polarimetric radar (KPOL) located at Kwajalein Atoll, Marshall Islands were analyzed (see Schumacher et al, 2000 for description of KPOL radar). The site is surrounded by open sea; with noted ground targets at distances up to 40 km. Sea clutter returns are common in low elevation data. No Doppler filtering is applied in this specific example, while SQI is used to suppress significant second range echoes. Echo power must exceed the noise by 1.2 dB.

Typical low elevation sweep data of reflectivity with significant precipitation is displayed in Figure 2. Closer to the radar, the sweep data exhibit sea echoes as well as distinct ground clutter on the islands' shores. These are highly suppressed by PMI thresholding while no precipitation is lost. Optimal ground clutter suppression and weather signal recovery would be achieved by combination with Doppler filtering.

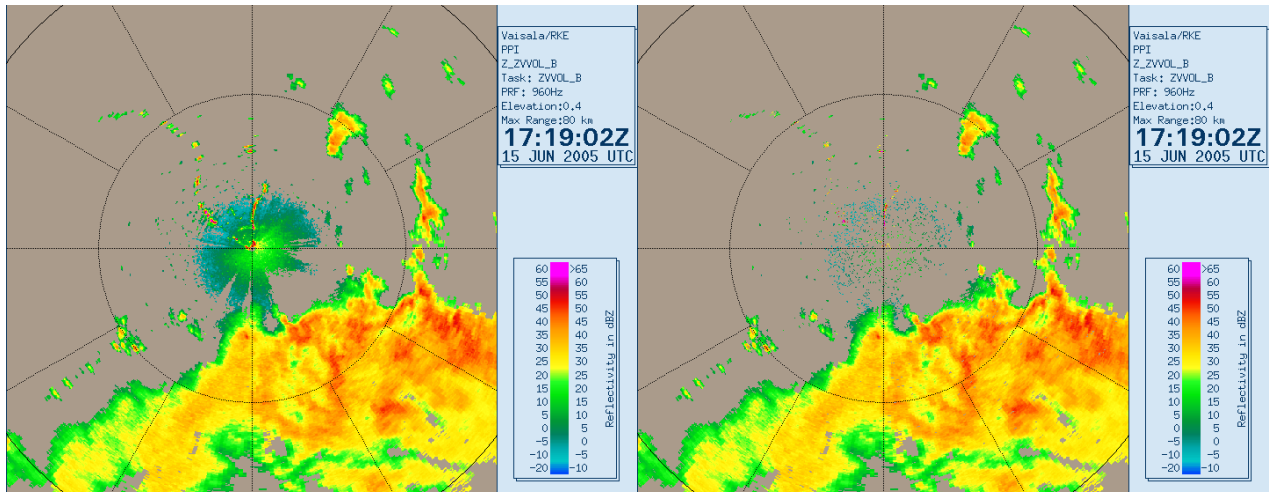


Figure 2. Left: a single sweep field of unfiltered reflectivity. Right: reflectivity field after additional PMI>0.5 thresholding.

3.2 Performance in presence of ship echoes, urban signal, bio-scatter and radio interference

As a real-time evaluation, the IRIS/RDA™ radar and signal processing software enhanced with the functionality of PMI quality consideration, was installed at the Vaisala C-band polarimetric weather radar at Kumpula campus, University of Helsinki, Finland (Puhakka et al. 2006). The site is challenged by the open view to Gulf of Finland which may generate variety of non-meteorological signals, including anomalous propagation of ground echo from the Estonian coast at some 80 km south. The site is subject to significant urban clutter (traffic) as well as frequent sea traffic (ships). Man-made radio frequency interferences (un-coordinated RLAN) are not uncommon in the region. Vaisala operates a C-band polarimetric radar (WRM200) at Kerava facility some 30 km north from Kumpula, which is used here as a reference as the impacts of sea and urban environment seen at Kumpula.

The radar scanning strategy included tasks that resemble operational settings (32 pulses, pulse widths of 2 μs, pulse repetition frequency of 1 kHz). Volume scans at pulse width 2 μs, low elevations 0.3 to 3 degrees, with and without PMI thresholding, and were made consecutively - thus allowing nearly coincident performance evaluation of the PMI functionality. The reflectivity data were subject to Doppler filtering, the echo power must exceed the noise by 1.2 dB (LOG). Bins with clutter power exceeding the weather signal by 25 dB were thresholded (CSR).

A warm season period of 24 hours in Helsinki region from 29th to 30th June 2010 was selected for analysis, see reference radar data and satellite imagery in Figure 3. The evaluation spanned over period of mostly fair weather, with significant precipitation occurring at distances of 100 km south-east, at the end of the period.

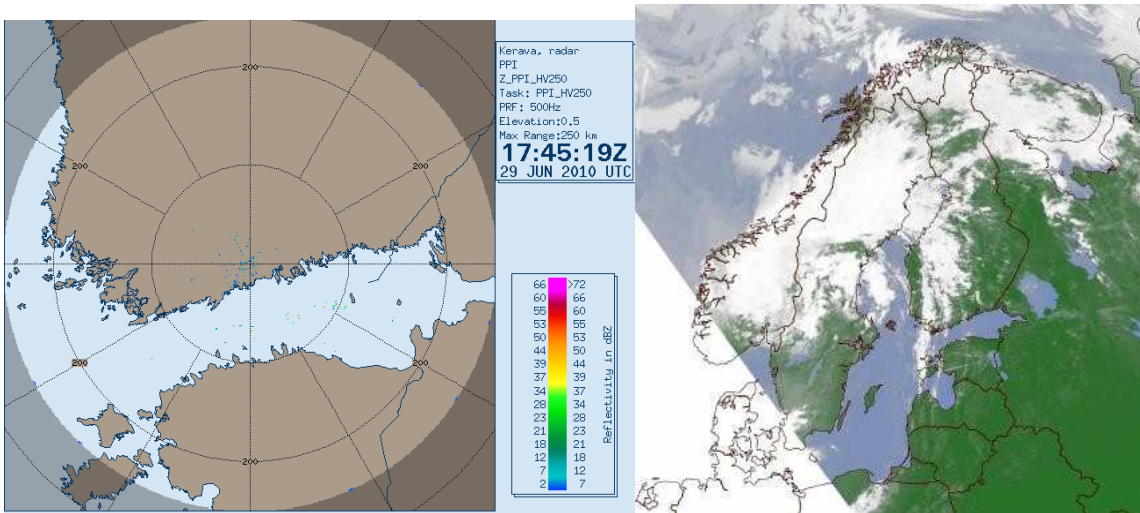


Figure 3. Surveillance of the large scale weather in the evaluation period. Left: reflectivity field up to 250 km, from the Kerava WRM00 radar at beginning of the 24 evaluation period. Right: NOAA infrared imagery in the middle of the evaluation period 2010-06-30 UT 14:54. Precipitation took place in Baltic and at Gulf of Finland later in the evening.

The reflectivity fields of a typical volume scan at Kumpula radar, at elevation 0.5 degrees are shown in Figure 4. After standard quality considerations several sources of non-precipitating echo are present in the reflectivity data:

1. large areas of weak echo are left at distances less than 50 km, plausibly from warm season bio-scatter,
2. specific single radial signal from south, plausible radio interference, and
3. strong point-like echoes at sea, surviving through the speckle filters of signal processing.

All these anomalies are suppressed by high degrees after applying PMI (threshold level 0.6), see Figure 4 (right).

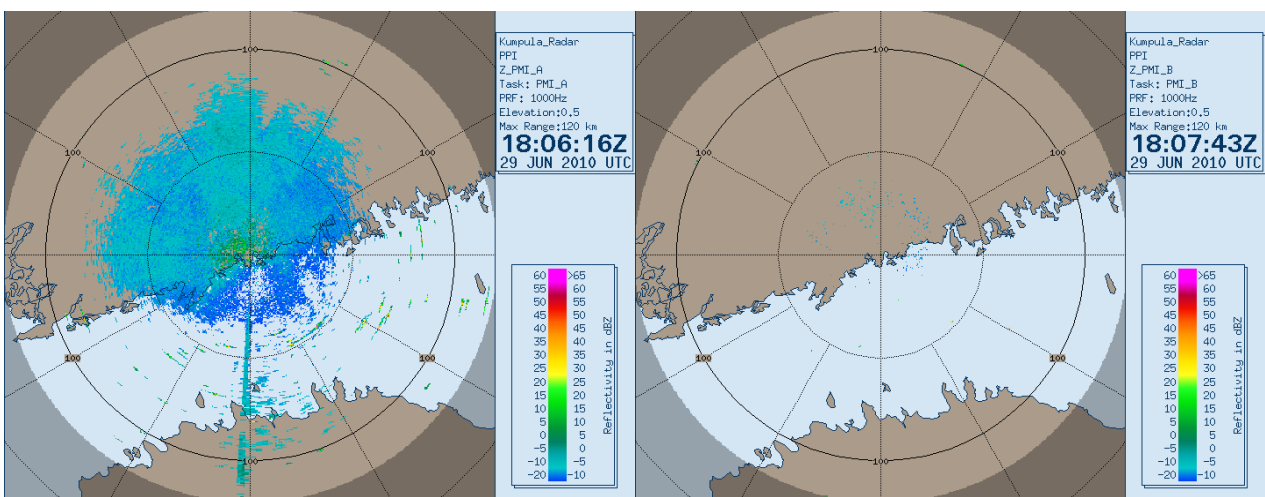


Figure 4. Left: a single sweep field of reflectivity acquired at the Kumpula C-band weather radar, using Doppler filtering and related quality considerations (LOG, CSR). Right: the reflectivity field after additional PMI>0.6 thresholding.

The operational impact of these non-precipitating signals was inspected by computing accumulated rain fall estimates over the period of 24 hours. The RAINN products were obtained from reflectivity data converted first into momentary "Surface Rainfall Intensities", then collected into hourly rain

fall estimates and eventually into 24 hour accumulated rain fall. The outcomes are shown in Figure 5. The attention was focussed on significant rain ($R > 1$ mm) of operational interest. There are two distinct features:

1. the sources of short distant urban clutter, which accumulate into visible accumulated rain fall > 1 mm in 24 hours - these are likely marginal for most short term applications, but complicate applications of longer integration (hydrology, climatology);
2. the point-like echoes at sea accumulate into a regular pattern that reveals their origin to be in the regular ship traffic at Gulf of Finland. The signals generate fake rain fall that approaches and occasionally exceeds 10 mm in 24 hours. Such fake accumulations are harmful to many applications, and may bring the off-shore rainfall data unusable.

Both of these anomalies are suppressed to a high degree, by applying the PMI threshold. As comparison, true rain fall accumulated at end of the evaluation period is fully preserved up to far distances, see Figure 6.

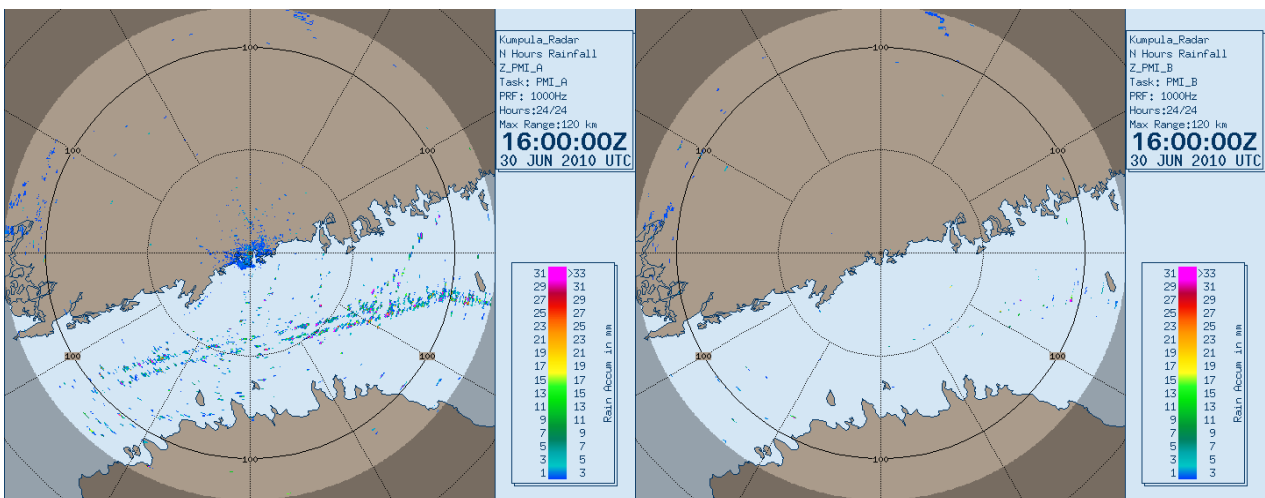


Figure 5. Estimates of non-negligible rain fall (>1 mm) accumulated over a period of 24 hours in the Helsinki region. Left: rain fall integrated from reflectivity data that are subject to Doppler filtering and quality considerations of (LOG, CSR). Right: as left, but reflectivity data are subject to additional threshold $PMI > 0.6$.

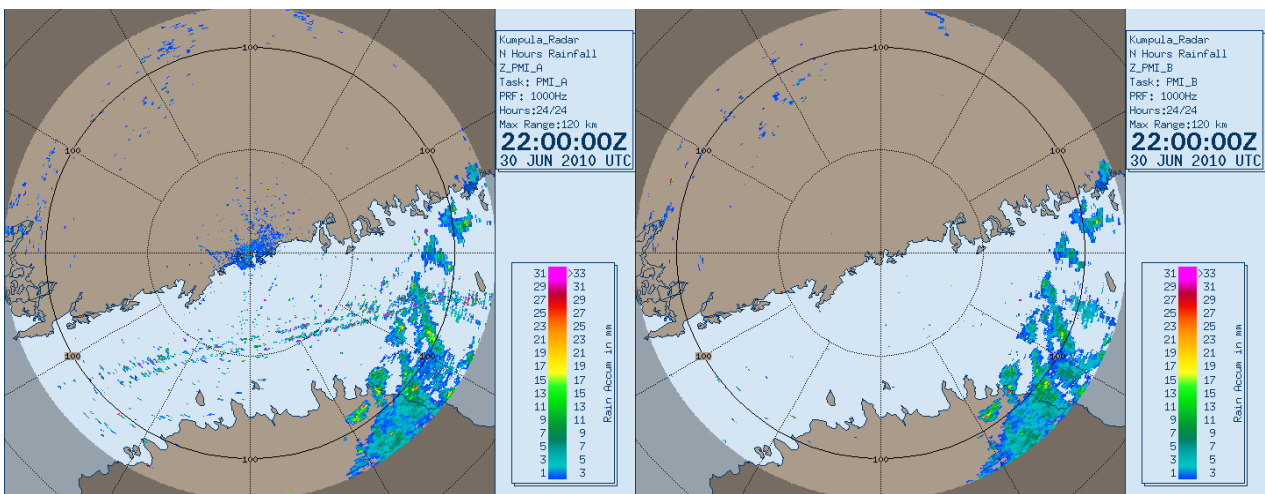


Figure 6. As Figure 5 but the 24h data accumulation extended to include a period of precipitation in south-east.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The echo identification capability of the polarimetric weather radar offers strong tools for improved data quality considerations. Given the general purpose identification methods available in real-time signal processing, the identification results can be applied, promptly, to consider the quality of moment data, bin-by-bin.

There is generality in polarimetric echo classifier methods in the sense that the separation power of bulk precipitation from other echoes is mostly based on the unique features of precipitation - not on details of non-precipitating signals of varied kind. Echo classifiers are robust in this sense. As soon as conceived reasonably, polarimetric classifiers are well suited for selecting precipitation from a variety of non-precipitating radar echoes, such as sea clutter, urban clutter, chaff, and bio-scatter and radio interference. Depending on local conditions a specific source of non-precipitating signal may dominate, such as persistent sea echo. A general purpose classifier is readily addressing that particular source - the high configurability of the tool will enable further optimization.

The polarimetric meteorological index (PMI) is now implemented as an enhancement to legacy data quality considerations within the RVP8 and RVP900 signal processors. It is a complementary, promising approach to mitigate non-stationary non-precipitating signals in weather radar, in favor of high quality radar based precipitation fields.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Authors wish to acknowledge the radar operators at University of Helsinki, at Kwajalein, and at Vaisala for acquiring the case data. The NOAA satellite image data are made available by the Finnish Meteorological Institute. Part of the development has been made under support of the CLEEN program, the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation.

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