

Persistent Urban Heat

Dan Li^{1,2*}, Linying Wang¹, Weilin Liao³, Ting Sun⁴, Gabriel Katul⁵, Elie Bou-Zeid⁶, Björn Maronga^{7,8}

Affiliations:

¹Department of Earth and Environment, Boston University, Boston, USA

²Department of Mechanical Engineering, Boston University, Boston, USA

³Guangdong Key Laboratory for Urbanization and Geo-simulation, School of Geography and Planning, Sun Yat-sen University, Guangzhou, China

⁴Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction, University College London, London, UK

⁵Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Duke University, Durham, USA

⁶Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Princeton University, Princeton, USA

⁷Institute of Meteorology and Climatology, Leibniz University Hannover, Hannover, Germany

⁸Geophysical Institute, University of Bergen, Bergen, Norway

*Corresponding author. Email: lidan@bu.edu

Abstract: Urban surface and near-surface air temperatures are known to be often higher than their rural counterparts, a phenomenon now labeled as the urban heat island (UHI) effect.

However, whether the elevated urban temperatures are more persistent than rural temperatures at time scales commensurate to heat waves has not been addressed despite its importance for human health. Combining numerical simulations by a global climate model with a surface energy balance theory, it is demonstrated here that urban surface and near-surface air temperatures are significantly more persistent than their rural counterparts in cities dominated by impervious materials with large thermal inertia. Further use of these materials will result in even stronger urban temperature persistence, especially for tropical cities. The present findings help pinpoint mitigation strategies that can simultaneously ameliorate the larger magnitude and stronger persistence of urban temperatures.

One-Sentence Summary: The thermal memory of urban materials prolongs extreme temperature hazards in cities.

Introduction

Urbanization is arguably one of the most profound human-induced land cover changes (1, 2) and its imprints on the climate system are a subject of inquiry and debate (3-5). Most cities experience an urban heat island (UHI) effect with higher temperatures recorded compared to surrounding rural areas. Much attention has been dedicated to the magnitude and diurnal/seasonal variations of UHIs (6). However, the difference between urban and rural land in terms of temperature persistence (i.e., the tendency for temperature anomalies to continue for an extended period) remains unexplored. Moreover, a mechanistic link between how urbanization alters surface properties and the persistence of temperatures in cities continues to be elusive.

Addressing these research gaps at time scales of heat waves (i.e., multi-day extreme temperature events) is of particular significance. Heat is one of the most important drivers of weather-related mortality (7, 8). Studies have reported that heat waves are associated with mortality rates that exceed the anticipated impacts from single hot days (9, 10). Every 1-day increase in heat wave duration is found to be associated with an increase of mortality risk by 0.38% in the United States and such increases of mortality risk are even higher (2.50%) in the Northeastern United States (11). Understanding how urban surface characteristics modify the temperature persistence is thus a prerequisite for quantifying health risks associated with urban heat waves and developing interventions to reduce heat-related illnesses in cities.

Results

Quantifying temperature persistence in a global climate model

The persistence of daily temperature can be quantified using autocorrelation and spectral analyses (Materials and Methods). In this study, we use the near-surface air temperature and radiative surface temperature (hereafter referred to as surface temperature) simulated by the Community Earth System Model during the period of 1991-2010 (Materials and Methods). Prior to applying autocorrelation and spectral analyses, the long-term linear trend and the mean annual cycle of temperature are removed (see Materials and Methods), yielding daily temperature anomalies. Figure 1A and 1D feature the globally averaged temporal autocorrelation for near-surface air temperature and surface temperature, respectively. Results suggest that both urban and rural near-surface air temperature and surface anomalies have signatures of a ‘red-noise’ process (i.e., the autocorrelation decays exponentially), consistent with Hasselmann's stochastic climate model (12, 13) and the meteorological literature (14, 15). The spectral results are shown in Figure S1, where signatures of a red-noise process are again observed: the spectra of both

near-surface air temperature and surface temperature approach f^{-2} (f indicates frequency) at high frequencies. The computed autocorrelation and spectra are broadly consistent with results from prior studies (16, 17), which nonetheless did not examine the urban-rural contrasts.

For a red-noise process, the decay rate of the temporal autocorrelation (Figure 1A and 1D) and the peak of the pre-multiplied spectra (Figure S1A and S1B) can be used to define a characteristic time scale (Γ) that quantifies temperature persistence (see Materials and Methods). In the following, the time scale (Γ) characterizing the decay rate of the temporal autocorrelation, which is estimated from lag-1 autocorrelation (see Materials and Methods), will be used (called the persistence time scale hereafter).

The global averaging of urban and rural results (Figures 1A and 1D) leads to small urban-rural differences that may indicate similar temperature persistence between urban and rural land. However, this does not imply that urban and rural persistence time scales are similar at regional and local scales. Figures 1B and 1E show the results for Central America where the urban autocorrelation decays slower than the rural autocorrelation, implying stronger urban temperature persistence. The reason for the stronger urban temperature persistence in this region will be discussed later.

To examine temperature persistence at local scales, urban and rural persistence time scales are estimated at the grid cell level. Before discussing the spatial pattern of urban-rural difference in the persistence time scale (Figure 2), we highlight that the majority of Γ values, both for urban and rural areas, ranges between 2 to 6 days (Figures 1C and 1F), which is commensurate with the time scale of synoptic weather variability. Furthermore, Figures 1C and 1F demonstrate the importance of Γ in the context of heat waves by showing that the average length of heat events, which are defined as periods when the daily temperature anomaly is positive and larger than one standard deviation (16), is well correlated with Γ .

Red noise or, equivalently, a first-order autoregressive/Markov model, is only an approximation for the full dynamics of daily temperature anomalies (18). Figure 1 shows that the autocorrelation does not experience a zero-crossing at large lags, indicating the existence of long-term memory in the temperature time series (19, 20). However, at the time scales of interest (on the order of a few days), the red-noise approximation reasonably describes the autocorrelation and spectra (Figures 1 and S1) consistent with many meteorological studies on daily fluctuations (21, 22). Further tests (see Materials and Methods) indicate that the primary

findings of this study remain unaltered when employing a decorrelation (or integral) time scale (23, 24), which is free of the red-noise approximation.

Fig. 1. Daily urban and rural near-surface air (A, B, C) and surface (D, E, F) temperature anomalies exhibiting red-noise behaviors. (A, D) The global average temporal autocorrelation (AC) as a function of lag (τ) for urban (red) and rural (blue) temperature anomalies. The average is performed over all grid cells that have urban fractions larger than 0.1% (4241 in total). The black line is the theoretical result for a red-noise process (an exponential decay with a decay rate of $1/\Gamma$). (B, E) Similar to (A, D) but for averages over Central America (Latitude: 7°N to 18°N, Longitude: 82°W to 118°W). (C, F) Relation between Γ and the average length of heat events, which are defined as periods when the daily temperature anomaly is positive and larger than one standard deviation during the study period (1991-2010). Data in C and F include both urban and rural results and are for all grid cells that have urban fractions larger than 0.1%. The color in C and F indicates data density. The upper and lower bounds in A, B, D, E represent the 95% confidence intervals for the spatial mean AC values. The 95% confidence intervals are small due to the very large sample size.

Urban-rural contrasts of temperature persistence

To quantify the local urban-rural difference in temperature persistence, the fractional difference of Γ between urban and rural land within the same grid cell (i.e., the urban-rural difference in Γ normalized by the rural Γ , or $\delta\Gamma/\Gamma$ where δ indicates the urban-rural difference) is computed (Figure 2A and 2B). Comparing Figure 2A to 2B (see also Figure 2D), it can be concluded that the urban-rural contrast of surface temperature persistence (Figure 2B) is larger in terms of magnitude than its near-surface air temperature counterpart (Figure 2A). This finding is expected as surface temperature is directly affected by surface radiative and biophysical properties. Any differences in surface radiative and biophysical properties between urban and rural land are reflected in the surface temperature. On the other hand, the mixing power of atmospheric turbulence tends to smear out or blend the effect of surface changes on the near-surface air temperature.

Globally, the urban-rural difference in temperature persistence can be either positive or negative. The negative $\delta\Gamma/\Gamma$ values for near-surface air temperature (Figure 2A) are mostly insignificant. In places where $\delta\Gamma$ is significant for both near-surface air temperature (Figure 2A) and surface temperature (Figure 2B), urban near-surface air temperatures exhibit 10-40% higher persistence than their rural counterparts, and that number rises to 100-200% for urban surface temperatures. Central America, West Africa and India experience the largest increases in urban near-surface air temperature persistence compared to their rural surroundings. This pattern is consistently observed across different seasons (Figure S2).

Why do Central America, West Africa and India show the strongest urban-rural difference in terms of near-surface air temperature persistence? This is because the climate model prescribes large thermal inertia or thermal effusivity (μ , unit: $10^4 \text{ J m}^{-2} \text{ K}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1/2}$) for urban impervious materials over these regions (Figure 2C). The strong correlations between $\delta\Gamma/\Gamma$ and thermal inertia of urban impervious materials are evidenced by Figure 2D (coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.86$ and 0.63 for near-surface air temperature and surface temperature, respectively). In particular, the roofs in these tropical regions (Central America, West Africa and India) are treated by the climate model as corrugated metal roofs with little or no insulation (25), which have exceptionally large thermal inertia (Figure S3). Known for their affordability, durability, weather resistance, ease of installation, and low maintenance, metal roofs are extensively used in tropical regions. Consequently, their impact on the urban-rural difference of temperature persistence is particularly evident in areas like Central America, West Africa, and India.

Fig. 2. The urban-rural differences of near-surface air temperature and surface temperature persistence time scales and their relations with urban thermal inertia. (A) The urban-rural difference of near-surface air temperature persistence quantified by $\delta\Gamma/\Gamma$ (the urban-rural difference in the persistence time scale normalized by the rural persistence time scale, where δ represents the urban-rural difference, namely urban minus rural). The stippled regions are those with significant urban-rural differences of lag-1 autocorrelation at the 95% confidence level. (B) The urban-rural difference of surface temperature persistence quantified by $\delta\Gamma/\Gamma$. The stippled regions are those with significant urban-rural differences of lag-1 autocorrelation at the 95% confidence level. (C) The thermal inertia of urban impervious materials (μ , unit: $10^4 \text{ J m}^{-2} \text{ K}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1/2}$) as used in the climate model. (D) The urban-rural differences of temperature persistence ($\delta\Gamma/\Gamma$) as a function of the thermal inertia of urban impervious materials (μ , unit: $10^4 \text{ J m}^{-2} \text{ K}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-1/2}$) in grid cells with significant urban-rural differences of lag-1 autocorrelation at the 95% confidence level. The large dots/circles in D are bin averages and the shading indicates the standard deviation in each bin.

A surface energy balance theory

The positive correlations between $\delta\Gamma/\Gamma$ and the thermal inertia of urban impervious materials are physically intuitive and can be explained by a one-dimensional surface energy balance theory (see Materials and Methods). The surface energy balance model yields

$$\Gamma = \frac{\Omega}{1 + \Omega} \Gamma_f,$$

where Γ_f is a forcing time scale and the non-dimensional Ω parameter represents the importance of thermal inertia relative to energy dissipative mechanisms including sensible heat transfer, latent heat transfer, and radiative heat transfer. While the forcing time scale is identical for both urban and rural areas, the Ω parameter differs between urban and rural areas. Even without a priori defining the exact magnitude of Γ_f , the surface energy balance theory predicts that as the thermal inertia of cities increases (e.g., using materials such as steel and dense concrete), the urban Ω parameter increases, leading to stronger urban surface temperature (and near-surface air temperature) persistence. This is in qualitative agreement with results shown in Figure 2D.

Within the confines of the surface energy balance theory, the thickness of the urban impervious material that determines its extrinsic thermal mass plays a secondary role relative to that of the material's intrinsic thermal inertia. This is also consistent with the climate model results. An examination of the relation between the climate model simulated $\delta\Gamma/\Gamma$ values and the thickness of impervious material prescribed by the climate model suggests that the simulated $\delta\Gamma/\Gamma$ shows negative correlations with the thickness of roofs. This counterintuitive and unphysical result is because the corrugated metal roofs, which give rise to the large $\delta\Gamma/\Gamma$ values, are relatively thin; this correlation is therefore not indicative of a causative link. Furthermore, the climate model simulated $\delta\Gamma/\Gamma$ shows no correlations with the thermal mass of roofs, which takes the material thickness into account. This finding shows that thermal inertia (rather than thermal mass) is the key control of daily temperature persistence.

The surface energy balance theory further provides a framework for analyzing how various environmental and meteorological factors such as urban morphology, vegetation fraction, wind speed, and air temperature might affect Γ (e.g., through altering energy dissipative mechanisms like sensible, latent, and radiative heat transfer). The fact that we focus on the role of thermal inertia in the analysis of climate model results does not imply that other factors do not play a role. However, since climate models inevitably have uncertainties in their inputs and parameterizations, comprehensively exploring the role of all possible factors affecting $\delta\Gamma/\Gamma$ goes beyond the scope of this work. Nevertheless, two important points are highlighted here: (i) some uncertainties in the climate model may be partially compensated for when analyzing differences between urban and rural areas within the same grid cell; (ii) the linkage between larger thermal inertia of urban impervious materials and stronger urban surface (and near-surface air) temperature persistence, which is simulated by the climate model, can be elucidated through the

surface energy balance analysis. The agreement between the climate model results and the surface energy balance theory provides credibility to the findings reported here.

Further increases in urban near-surface air temperature persistence

How urban Γ will change if the thermal inertia of cities is further increased due to the continuing replacement of vegetation with impervious materials with large thermal inertia, such as steel and dense concrete, is now explored. The fractional increase in Γ or $\Delta\Gamma/\Gamma$ (the increase in Γ normalized by the baseline Γ) is computed. Here Δ refers to a change over the urban land due to increased urbanization and is different from δ that indicates the urban-rural difference. From the surface energy balance theory, it can be shown that $\Delta\Gamma/\Gamma$ is independent of Γ_f due to the normalization, increases with $\Delta\Omega/\Omega$ when $\Delta\Omega/\Omega$ is small (with stronger increasing trends in places with smaller Ω values), and approaches a constant when $\Delta\Omega/\Omega$ is large (see Materials and Methods).

These behaviors are shown in Figure 3, which depicts how further increases in thermal inertia of cities cause increases in Γ for the urban near-surface air temperature. In this analysis, cities are made of uniform building morphology and thermal properties globally to circumvent any uncertainties in the input data of these properties in the climate model, and the thermal inertia of impervious materials over urban land is gradually increased (see Materials and Methods). As predicted by the surface energy balance theory, the computed $\Delta\Gamma/\Gamma$ first increases with $\Delta\Omega/\Omega$ and then approaches a plateau. The increasing trend and concomitantly the plateau value are higher in the tropics (20 S to 20 N), compared to the extratropics (20 to 65 degrees) in both Northern Hemisphere (NH) and Southern Hemisphere (SH).

The fact that the increase of $\Delta\Gamma/\Gamma$ with $\Delta\Omega/\Omega$ is not spatially uniform in simulations with globally uniform buildings is an important result. It demonstrates that urban thermal inertia (or more broadly urban morphologies and properties) is not the only factor affecting $\Delta\Gamma/\Gamma$, confirming an earlier point. Here it is clear that the background climate also plays a role. The stronger increase of $\Delta\Gamma/\Gamma$ with $\Delta\Omega/\Omega$ in tropical regions implies that the baseline Ω values are smaller in the tropics than other regions (Eq. 17). A plausible explanation is that the latent heat transfer efficiency is larger in the tropics with abundant rainfall (26), which leads to smaller baseline Ω values. This stronger increase of $\Delta\Gamma/\Gamma$ with $\Delta\Omega/\Omega$ in tropical regions also explains the significantly positive $\delta\Gamma/\Gamma$ values in southeastern Asia in the control simulation (Figures 2A and 2B), even though the thermal inertia of urban impervious materials in this region is not

particularly large when compared to hotspots like Central America, West Africa, and India (Figure 2C). Overall, these results suggest that the much stronger urban temperature persistence in the tropics compared to rural surroundings (Figures 2A and 2B) is not only related to the large thermal inertia of urban impervious materials prescribed by the input data (e.g., in regions like Central America, West Africa, and India), but also caused by the inherent stronger sensitivity of Γ to changes in thermal inertia in the tropics.

With a 9-fold increase in Ω (e.g., from light wood to dense concrete, or from asphalt to steel), Γ increases by 18-20% in the extratropical region (Figure 3). To put these numbers in context, a linear relation between Γ and heat wave lengths as suggested by Figure 1C would imply that heat wave lengths are also increased by 18-20%, which amounts to about 0.36 to 0.6 d since most heat waves are on the order of 2-3 days (11). This corresponds to an increase of mortality risk by 0.14-0.23% based on data for the United States (11). In the tropical region, the increase of mortality risk is even higher (0.34-0.51%) due to the much larger increase in Γ (45% for a 9-fold increase of Ω , see Figure 3). More worryingly, the longest heat waves will be extended the most.

Fig. 3. The relation between $\Delta\Gamma/\Gamma$ with $\Delta\Omega/\Omega$ in the uniform city simulations. NH and SH stand for the Northern Hemisphere and the Southern Hemisphere, respectively. Only grid cells with significant changes in lag-1 autocorrelation are considered. The large dots are bin averages and the error bars indicate the standard deviations.

Discussion

With the climatological UHIs (6) and potential synergistic interactions between heat waves and UHIs (27), it is already understood that urban temperatures will be much higher than rural temperatures during heat waves. Here, it is demonstrated that the large thermal inertia of urban impervious materials also leads to more persistent daily temperature anomalies in cities. Further increases in urban thermal inertia associated with continuing urbanization will cause even stronger urban temperature persistence. Cities in the tropical region are particularly prone to the effect of increasing thermal inertia when quantified by the fractional increase in the persistence time scale.

Urban heat mitigation often focuses on reducing the magnitude of temperature, especially the daytime maximum temperature. If so, it may appear plausible that increasing thermal inertia

would reduce the daytime maximum temperature by storing more heat in the impervious materials (3-5). But the consequence of increasing the thermal inertia is two-fold: an increase in the nighttime minimum temperature (3-5) and an increase in the temperature persistence as shown here. The former effect of increasing thermal inertia at the diurnal scale has long been recognized (6), but the latter effect of increasing thermal inertia at the multi-day time scale is the key finding offered here. Heat mitigation strategies that can simultaneously reduce the daytime maximum temperature and the thermal inertia should be considered. In light of these findings, replacing roofs that have exceptionally high thermal inertia such as non-insulated steel or dense concrete roofs with white roofs made of materials with lower thermal inertia is recommended.

Other solutions that may ameliorate urban temperature persistence include shading approaches (by trees or other means) that intercept solar radiation and release most of it rapidly into the air rather than storing it. A similar effect can be attained by solar panels, but only if they are separated from the underlying roofs with an open-air space to reduce conductive storage. Roofs that enhance the latent heat transfer efficiency, such as blue and green roofs, are also possible but more costly alternatives. Water and wet soils also have large thermal inertia and thus blue and green roofs need to be properly designed to prevent any potential prolongation of temperature hazards. When achieving both goals (reducing the daytime maximum temperature and thermal inertia) is not possible, city planners need to quantify the benefits and penalties of proposed urban heat mitigation strategies not only at the diurnal time scale, but also at longer (weather) time scales.

Materials and Methods

Numerical simulations

The numerical experiments are conducted using the Community Earth System Model (CESM) version 2.0.1 (28). The land component of CESM2.0.1 is the Community Land Model (CLM) version 5 (29). Within each land grid cell, CLM allows for multiple land units including vegetated, crop, urban, glacier, and lake. The processes over the urban land unit are parameterized by the urban surface scheme of the Community Land Model, called the Community Land Model - Urban (CLMU). The CLMU conceptualizes the urban environment as a two-dimensional canyon that includes five facets (roof, sun-shaded wall, sun-lit wall, pervious ground, and impervious ground), of which four are impervious (roof, sun-shaded and sun-lit walls, and impervious ground). The CLMU parameterizes radiative, turbulent, and land surface processes within the canyon and aggregates the fluxes from different facets. Details about the CLMU model can be found elsewhere (28, 30-34). The CLMU inputs, including building morphology and thermal properties, are supplied by a global dataset (25).

We use CESM to conduct global land-only (uncoupled from the atmospheric model) simulations. Based on an initial condition provided by CESM (that has been spun up), we run the CLM model at 0.9 latitude by 1.25 longitude for another 84 years of spin up by recycling the 1990-2010 Global Soil Wetness Project Phase 3 atmospheric forcing (29) four times. We finally conduct multiple 21-year runs using the same atmospheric forcing from 1990 to 2010, initialized by the 84-year spin up run, and our analysis focuses on the 20-year period from 1991 to 2010 from these final runs.

Two such sets of final simulations are conducted here. In the first set (called the control simulation), we do not alter any CLMU inputs but simply output all needed variables at the daily scale. The control simulation results are used for Figures 1-2 and S1-S4. In the second set (called the uniform city simulations), we modify the CLMU input data so that all urban grid cells globally have the same building morphological and thermal properties representing those of the northeastern United States. Within the second set of simulations, we conduct a baseline run and five additional sensitivity runs with increased urban thermal inertia (by multiplying the heat capacity and thermal conductivity of all impervious facets by factors of 2, 5, 10, 20, and 50, respectively). The $\Delta\Gamma/\Gamma$ and $\Delta\Omega/\Omega$ in Figure 3 are computed as the differences between the sensitivity runs and the baseline run normalized by the results in the baseline run.

There are two reasons that the building morphological and thermal properties data are taken to be those representing the northeastern United States. First, the mortality numbers used here are from the United States, including the northeastern United States. Second, regardless of where these properties are taken from, the uniform city simulations are idealized simulations that are not meant to represent the real world but to test causal connections predicted by the surface energy balance theory. We expect that results from such simulations with other building properties agree with the theory.

Near-surface air temperature and surface temperature

Both urban and rural near-surface air temperatures (sometimes also termed surface air temperature or 2-m air temperature) are direct outputs from CLM. Within each grid cell where the urban fraction exceeds 0.1%, the urban near-surface air temperature is computed by CLMU for the urban land unit. For each land grid cell, the rural near-surface air temperature is an average for the vegetated and crop land units. The vegetated land unit might contain up to 15 different plant functional types and bare soil.

Urban and rural surface temperatures are inferred from the incoming longwave radiation (LW_{in} , $W m^{-2}$) and outgoing longwave radiation (LW_{out} , $W m^{-2}$) as $T_s = \left(\frac{LW_{out} - (1 - \varepsilon)LW_{in}}{\varepsilon\sigma} \right)^{1/4}$, where ε is the surface emissivity and σ is the Stefan-Boltzmann constant ($5.67 \times 10^{-8} W m^{-2} K^{-4}$). For consistency with prior work (3), the urban and rural surface emissivity values are set to be 0.88 and 0.96, respectively.

Autocorrelation

The autocorrelation (AC) is computed as

$$AC(\tau) = \frac{\overline{T'(t)T'(t+\tau)}}{\sigma_T^2},$$

where T' is the daily temperature anomaly computed with the long-term linear trend and the mean annual cycle subtracted, the overbar denotes the time mean, τ denotes the time lag (unit: d), and σ_T^2 is the variance of T' . The mean annual cycle is the variation of temperature as a function of the day of the year but independent of the year and is computed as the average over 1991-2000. Sensitivity tests are conducted by only subtracting the mean annual cycle (but keeping the long-term linear trend) and the findings are not altered.

Spectrum

The spectrum is computed using Welch's method with segments of length 2^9 days and 50% overlap between different segments.

Spatial averaging

The spatially averaged AC values in Figure 1 are calculated using Fisher z-transformation. We transform AC values to their respective z-values, compute the mean (and the 95% confidence intervals) of the z-values, and then back-transform the mean (and the 95% confidence intervals) of the z-values to obtain the mean (and the 95% confidence intervals) of the AC values, following prior work (16). The 95% confidence intervals are generally small due to the very large sample size.

A surface energy balance theory for daily temperature persistence

The surface energy balance equation provides a theoretical basis for understanding how thermal inertia and various heat transfer mechanisms affect the persistence of surface temperature anomalies. It offers a direct physical connection between land surface properties and temperature persistence across different climatic zones.

The one-dimensional surface energy balance equation can be written as (35, 36):

$$SW_{in}(1 - \alpha) + \varepsilon LW_{in} = H + LE + G + \varepsilon \sigma T_s^4 \quad (1)$$

where SW_{in} and LW_{in} are the incoming shortwave and longwave radiation (W m^{-2}), respectively; α and ε are the surface albedo and emissivity (unitless), respectively. The right-hand-side of Eq. 1 includes four dissipative or energy loss terms (viewed from the surface perspective): the sensible heat flux (H , W m^{-2}), the latent heat flux (LE , W m^{-2}), the ground heat flux or heat storage (G , W m^{-2}), and the emitted longwave radiation by the surface ($\varepsilon \sigma T_s^4$, W m^{-2}), which is expressed using the Stefan-Boltzmann law where σ is the Stefan-Boltzmann constant ($5.67 \times 10^{-8} \text{ W m}^{-2} \text{ K}^{-4}$) and T_s is the surface temperature (K). Here, the emitted longwave radiation is rearranged to the right-hand-side of the surface energy balance equation, instead of the left-hand-side as in textbooks (35, 36). This re-formulation emphasizes that each term on the right-hand-side of Eq. 1 is a function of T_s . In contrast, the terms on the left-hand-side of Eq. 1 are assumed to be external (atmospheric) forcing onto the land surface and are not directly affected by T_s .

To proceed, each term on the right-hand-side of Eq. 1 is written as a linear function of T_s . For example, a bulk parameterization is used for the sensible heat flux (35) given by

$$H = \frac{\rho c_p (T_s - T_a)}{r_a}, \quad (2)$$

where ρ is the air density (kg m^{-3}), c_p is the heat capacity of dry air at constant pressure ($\text{J kg}^{-1} \text{ K}^{-1}$), T_a is the air temperature (K), and r_a is the aerodynamic resistance to convective heat

transfer (s m^{-1}) that depends on a range of factors such as the wind speed and thermal stratification of the near-surface atmosphere, etc. This bulk parameterization for sensible heat flux can thus be written as follows:

$$H = \lambda_H T_s + C_H, \quad (3)$$

where $\lambda_H = \rho c_p / r_a$ and $C_H = -\lambda_H T_a$ represent the slope and the intercept of the linear relation between H and T_s , respectively.

Likewise, for latent heat flux, the parameterization used is given by (37, 38):

$$LE = \beta \frac{\rho L_v (q^*(T_s) - q_a)}{r_a}, \quad (4)$$

where L_v is the latent heat of vaporization (J kg^{-1}), $q^*(T_s)$ is the saturated specific humidity (kg kg^{-1}) at the surface temperature and can be linked to the saturated water vapor pressure (Pa) at the surface temperature, or $e^*(T_s)$, through $q^*(T_s) = 0.622 e^*(T_s) / P$, P is the mean air pressure (Pa) at the surface, q_a is the air specific humidity (kg kg^{-1}) and similarly can be linked to the air water vapor pressure, or e_a , through $q_a = 0.622 e_a / P$. The β parameter is a dimensionless quantity (varying between 0 and 1) that reduces the actual evapotranspiration value from its potential value due to either dry soils or stressed vegetation. Clearly the latent heat flux as expressed in Eq. 4 is a function of T_s . However, the relation is not linear since the saturated water vapor pressure (e^*) is related to T_s exponentially through the Clausius-Clapeyron relation. Nonetheless, the Clausius-Clapeyron relation can be linearized to yield

$$LE = \lambda_{LE} T_s + C_{LE}, \quad (5)$$

where $\lambda_{LE} = \lambda_H \frac{\beta}{\gamma} \Delta_a$, $C_{LE} = \lambda_{LE} \left[-T_a + \frac{e^*(T_a) - e_a}{\Delta_a} \right]$, $\gamma = \frac{P c_p}{0.622 L_v}$ is the psychrometric constant, $\Delta_a = \left. \frac{de^*}{dT} \right|_{T_a}$ is the derivative of e^* with respect to temperature evaluated at the air temperature, and $e^*(T_a)$ is the saturated water vapor pressure at the air temperature.

For ground heat flux, the force-restore model (39-41) is used, linking G to T_s through

$$G = \frac{\mu}{\sqrt{2\omega}} \left[\frac{dT_s}{dt} + \omega (T_s - T_{deep}) \right], \quad (6)$$

where μ is the thermal inertia or thermal effusivity ($\text{J m}^{-2} \text{K}^{-1} \text{s}^{-1/2}$) and can be computed as $\mu = \sqrt{k C_{hp}}$, where k is the thermal conductivity ($\text{J m}^{-1} \text{K}^{-1} \text{s}^{-1}$) and C_{hp} is the ground volumetric heat capacity ($\text{J m}^{-3} \text{K}^{-1}$); ω is the angular frequency of the forcing (e.g., $\omega = 2\pi / (24 \times 3600) = 7.27 \times 10^{-5} \text{ rad s}^{-1}$ for diurnal forcing and $\omega = 2\pi / 365 = 0.0172 \text{ rad d}^{-1}$ for annual forcing) and thus ω^{-1} represents a forcing time scale; T_{deep} is the deep ground

temperature taken at a depth that is unaffected by the thermal wave at the forcing time scale. The force-restore model was originally developed for soil/vegetated surfaces with stable T_{deep} at a sufficient depth. For building surfaces such as roofs and walls, application of the force-restore model assumes that energy storage over the time scale of interest is limited more severely by the thermal properties (volumetric heat capacity and thermal conductivity) than by the thickness and that the building interior temperature varies at a much slower rate than the surface temperature.

Here, the forcing time scale is assumed to be identical for both urban and rural areas. However, the exact magnitude of the forcing time scale is not essential for two reasons. First, the analysis focuses on the normalized persistence time scale difference (see e.g., Figures 2A, 2B, and 3). Due to this normalization, the main findings are not affected by the exact magnitude of the forcing time scale. Second, the surface energy balance model is primarily used as a diagnostic tool (i.e., rather than a prognostic model) for interpreting the climate model results. Since this work analyzes daily temperature fluctuations, the forcing time scale must be longer than the diurnal scale (even though its exact magnitude is not needed for our analysis). The focus on daily temperature fluctuations, instead of sub-daily temperature fluctuations, alleviates the complexity associated with considering multiple forcing time scales. For example, the diurnal forcing needs to be further included if some sub-daily temperatures (e.g., daily maximum or minimum temperature) were to be studied (41). Previous work found that the persistence of sub-daily temperatures differs from that of daily mean temperature (42). However, no theory has been developed that can adequately describe the persistence of sub-daily temperatures. Developing such a theory and exploring the persistence of sub-daily temperatures are left for future investigations.

Eq. 6 can be rewritten as

$$G = \frac{\mu}{\sqrt{2\omega}} \left[\frac{dT_s}{dt} + \omega(T_s - T_{deep}) \right] = \lambda_G \left(\Gamma_f \frac{dT_s}{dt} \right) + \lambda_G T_s + C_G, \quad (7)$$

where $\lambda_G = \mu \sqrt{\frac{\omega}{2}}$, $\Gamma_f = \omega^{-1}$ (the forcing time scale), and $C_G = -\lambda_G T_{deep}$.

The emitted longwave radiation involves the surface temperature to the 4th power, which can be also linearized to give

$$T_s^4 \approx T_a^4 + 4T_a^3(T_s - T_a). \quad (8)$$

Hence, the emitted longwave radiation can be simplified to

$$\varepsilon \sigma T_s^4 \approx \lambda_{ELW} T_s + C_{ELW}, \quad (9)$$

where $\lambda_{ELW} = 4\varepsilon\sigma T_a^3$, $C_{ELW} = -\frac{3}{4}\lambda_{ELW}T_a$.

Substituting Eqs. 3, 5, 7, 9 into Eq. 1 yields:

$$\frac{dT_s}{dt} = -\frac{1}{\Gamma}T_s + C, \quad (10)$$

where

$$\Gamma = \frac{\Omega}{1+\Omega}\Gamma_f, \quad (11)$$

$$\Omega = \frac{\lambda_G}{\lambda_H + \lambda_{LE} + \lambda_{ELW}} = \frac{\lambda_G}{\lambda_O}, \quad (12)$$

$C = (\lambda_G\Gamma_f)^{-1}[SW_{in}(1 - \alpha) + \varepsilon LW_{in} - C_H - C_{LE} - C_G - C_{ELW}]$. Here Ω is a dimensionless parameter that quantifies the importance of thermal inertia (λ_G) relative to three other heat dissipative mechanisms including sensible heat transfer, latent heat transfer, and radiative heat transfer ($\lambda_O = \lambda_H + \lambda_{LE} + \lambda_{ELW}$).

The derivations so far largely follow a previous study (38) that examined the relative efficiencies of the four mechanisms on the right-hand-side of Eq. 1 in dissipating surface temperature anomalies. However, the prior work (38) did not introduce the concept of temperature persistence within this surface energy balance framework, which is the primary focus of this study and is elaborated on in the next section.

The interpretation and estimation of Γ

When T_s is decomposed into a mean component ($\bar{T}_s$) and a fluctuating component (T'_s), it can be shown from Eq. 10 that:

$$\frac{dT'_s}{dt} = -\frac{1}{\Gamma}T'_s + C' \quad (13)$$

where C' is the fluctuating component of C . Given the focus on the daily temperature persistence, the mean annual cycle is treated as the mean and the daily temperature anomalies are treated as the fluctuations. For the remaining derivation, we drop the prime symbol for notational convenience and state that T_s is the temperature anomaly and C is the forcing anomaly.

If C is white noise, it can be shown that T_s is red noise. This is essentially Hasselmann's stochastic climate model (12, 13), which has been widely used to study sea surface temperature anomalies (43, 44). For a red noise process (also called a first-order autoregressive or Markov model), the stationary temporal autocorrelation (AC) is

$$AC(\tau) = e^{-\frac{\tau}{\Gamma}}, \quad (14)$$

where τ is the time lag (with a unit of d). It is clear that Γ characterizes the decay rate of the temporal autocorrelation, which explains why Γ is a good indicator for the daily temperature persistence. It can be also shown that the normalized spectrum of T_s follows the Lorentz spectrum

$$\frac{E_T(f)}{\sigma_T^2} = \frac{4/\Gamma}{4\pi^2 f^2 + \Gamma^{-2}}, \quad (15)$$

where E_T is the energy spectrum of T_s , σ_T^2 is the variance of T_s , and f is the frequency (with a unit of d^{-1}). Eq. 15 indicates that the normalized T_s spectrum approaches f^{-2} at high frequencies (red noise) and f^0 at low frequencies (white noise). The transition of the two scaling laws occurs at a frequency of $1/(2\pi\Gamma)$, corresponding to a time scale of $\sim\Gamma$. Again, this demonstrates that Γ is an important time scale characterizing the dynamics of T_s . An alternative way of identifying the transitional frequency (or the transitional time scale) is to use the normalized, pre-multiplied spectrum $fE_T(f)/\sigma_T^2$, whose peak is reached at the transitional frequency.

Hence, Γ can be estimated from lag-1 autocorrelation $AC(1)$ as

$$\Gamma = [-\ln(AC(1))]^{-1}. \quad (16)$$

We could also estimate Γ using the pre-multiplied spectrum but identifying the peak of the pre-multiplied spectrum can be ambiguous. We choose to use the decay of the autocorrelation to estimate Γ for its simplicity and following recent studies (16, 43). In the analysis of numerical simulation results, a significant urban-rural difference in Γ indicates that the difference in $AC(1)$ between urban and rural areas is significant at the 95% confidence level. This significance is determined using a two-tailed test, which employs z-scores derived from the Fisher transformation.

Changes in Γ due to further increases in urban thermal inertia

From Eq. 11, changes in Ω (represented by $\Delta\Omega$) over urban land will cause a change in Γ (represented by $\Delta\Gamma$). We are particularly interested in the fractional change in Γ due to fractional changes in Ω . When $\Delta\Omega$ is sufficiently small,

$$\frac{\Delta\Gamma}{\Gamma} = \left(\frac{1}{1+\Omega}\right) \frac{\Delta\Omega}{\Omega}. \quad (17)$$

This expression states that $\Delta\Gamma/\Gamma$ increases with $\Delta\Omega/\Omega$ when $\Delta\Omega/\Omega$ is small and the increasing trend is stronger in places with smaller Ω . On the other hand, Eq. 11 indicates that as $\Omega \rightarrow \infty$, $\Gamma \rightarrow \Gamma_f$. In other words, when Ω is sufficiently large, any additional increase in Ω will no longer

cause Γ to increase. This is understandable as when the thermal inertia is large enough, any further increase in thermal inertia will no longer cause temperature persistence to increase.

Based on Eq. 12, fractional changes in Ω can be further linked to fractional changes in thermal inertia through

$$\frac{\Delta\Omega}{\Omega} = \frac{\Delta\lambda_G}{\lambda_G} - \frac{\Delta\lambda_O}{\lambda_O} \approx \frac{\Delta\lambda_G}{\lambda_G} = \frac{\Delta\mu}{\mu}. \quad (18)$$

Here we have implicitly assumed that increases in thermal inertia will not cause λ_O to change strongly because λ_O is primarily controlled by sensible, latent, and radiative heat transfer efficiencies that are, to a leading order, not sensitive to changes in thermal inertia.

The surface energy balance model as a diagnostic tool

The correspondence and difference between the surface temperature in the surface energy balance model and the surface temperature simulated by the climate model requires further clarification. The surface energy balance model is a one-dimensional model for a homogeneous surface, and thus the surface temperature represents a bulk temperature. In contrast, the surface temperature simulated by the climate model is an ‘averaged’ or ‘aggregated’ surface temperature of multiple surfaces/facets since the climate model considers the energy balances for multiple surfaces/facets for both urban and rural land. As a result, the surface energy balance model can be viewed as a simplified version of the climate model and a diagnostic tool for understanding the persistence of surface temperature simulated by the more complicated climate model (45).

The air temperature in the surface energy balance model is also different from the near-surface air temperature simulated by the climate model. The air temperature in the surface energy balance model is a forcing for the bulk surface and thus better corresponds to the atmospheric forcing temperature used to drive the climate model instead of the simulated near-surface air temperature. In contrast, the near-surface air temperature simulated by the climate model can be viewed as an interpolated temperature between the surface temperature and the atmospheric forcing temperature (either following the well-established Monin-Obukhov similarity theory or some empirical parameterizations or a combination of both). As such, with the atmospheric forcing anomalies viewed as white noise, the day-to-day variability of near-surface air temperature simulated by the climate model largely follows the day-to-day variability of surface temperature simulated by the climate model, but damped by the mixing power of atmospheric turbulence (45). This provides the theoretical basis for using the surface energy

balance model to qualitatively diagnose the persistence of near-surface air temperature simulated by the climate model.

A decorrelation time scale that does not invoke the red-noise approximation

A decorrelation (or integral) time scale can be defined without *a priori* assuming that temperature anomalies follow a red-noise process, as follows (23, 24):

$$T_o = 1 + 2 \sum_{L=1}^N \left(1 - \frac{L}{N}\right) AC(L), \quad (19)$$

where L is the lag ranging from 1 to N and $AC(L)$ is the autocorrelation at lag L . Unlike the Γ estimated from lag-1 autocorrelation, which indicates short-term memory, the decorrelation time scale T_o encodes all the information about the autocorrelation, including long-term memory effects (14).

Figure S4 shows the results for $\delta T_o/T_o$ computed with $N = 90$. The broad pattern of $\delta T_o/T_o$ remains similar to $\delta \Gamma/\Gamma$, even though T_o and Γ are different. Hence, the main conclusions here are not affected by the red-noise approximation. Note that for continuous time series with $N \rightarrow \infty$, $T_o = 1 + 2 \int_0^\infty AC(\tau) d\tau$. For the specific choice of an exponential autocorrelation function usually associated with a first-order autoregressive process, $T_o = 1 + 2\Gamma$.

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